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Riverfront Neighbors



GERALD CHAMBERS
& MICHAEL GRÖNEBAUM:

Turning Home Into Hospitality

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Cover photo by André Johnson



October gives us two important reminders to pay attention to women's health: Pink October—Breast Cancer Awareness Month—and Menopause Awareness Month. Of course, these are conversations we should be having every day.

Both bring attention to something I think about a lot: the conversations we still don't have openly enough about women's health.

This is personal for me. As a post-menopausal woman, I know how easy it is for women to be expected to simply navigate changes in our bodies, figure out what is "normal" and keep moving. But the more we talk, the more we learn — and the better we can advocate for ourselves and one another.

This month, we are looking at some of the long-overdue changes happening around menopause care and hormone therapy. We are also talking about breast cancer—including something many people still don't realize: men get breast cancer, too.

On October 6, Tina Tyus-Shaw and WSAV will host a special hour-long show featuring three local male breast cancer survivors, along with Dr. Katherine Armstrong of St. Joseph's/Candler Telfair Breast Surgery.

These are not simply "women's issues" or "men's issues."

They are people issues.

And sometimes the conversations we are least comfortable having are exactly the ones we need to have.

With a full heart and open door,

Naja

Naja Hayward-Dobson, *Publisher*
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July 5	August
August 5	September
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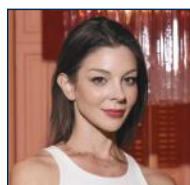
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A HOUSE BUILT FOR HOSPITALITY

AT THOMAS WEIHS HAUS, GERALD CHAMBERS AND MICHAEL GRÖNEBAUM HONOR THE PAST OF AN 1884 SAVANNAH RESIDENCE WHILE BUILDING A LIFE AROUND BEAUTY, COMMUNITY AND THE WORK THEY LOVE.

By Naja Hayward-Dobson | Photography by André L. Johnson



Gerald Chambers and Michael Grönebaum have spent enough years together to allow each other to remain fully themselves. Gerald says exactly what he thinks. Michael considers how it will land. Their conversation moves easily between candor and dry humor, with each man instinctively knowing when to press forward and when to pull the other back.

That same rhythm guides their work at Thomas Weihs Haus, the five-room bed-and-breakfast they created within an 1884 residence in Savannah's Historic District.

Their complementary instincts are most visible in the B&B's great room. Michael chose the pink walls. Gerald took one look at the shade and called it Pepto-Bismol, then introduced green to give the room balance. The finished room bears both of their signatures.

The resulting palette sits comfortably beneath the home's 14-foot ceilings, deep plaster crown molding and an original medallion dating to its construction in 1884. Crystal chandeliers illuminate handpicked antiques alongside contemporary furnishings. Everything feels considered, yet nothing is so precious that a guest would hesitate to sit down.

"We wanted you to come in and say, 'Wow, this is magical and beautiful and elegant,'" Gerald says. "But we also wanted you to feel comfortable enough to sit down."

Michael supplies the caveat: "We still want you to be careful with the furniture."

Together, the remarks offer both a design philosophy and a glimpse into their marriage. Gerald puts it plainly: "That has always been the perfect thing about us. We balance each other out."

The great room, in its improbable and entirely successful combination of pink and green, makes the same argument without saying a word.

A First Date With No Voice

Their life together began in Atlanta in 2011, when Michael arrived from Germany for a yearlong hotel internship. Gerald, raised in rural central Alabama, was living in the city. They met online.

Their first date almost failed to happen. They had planned dinner on a Saturday night, but Gerald came down with a cold and lost his voice. When he canceled, Michael assumed he was being brushed off.

Gerald spent the evening drinking tea with honey and trying every remedy he could think of. Later, he

proposed brunch the following morning.

At 11 a.m., they met at J. Christopher's. Gerald arrived with a voice that could barely rise above a rasp.

"Oh," Michael remembers thinking. "So it's true."

Less than a month later, Gerald relocated to Alabama for work. When Michael's internship ended in 2012, he returned to Germany. Their relationship stretched across states and then an ocean. Gerald made extended visits to Germany, and by his second visit, they were planning a life together.

They formalized their relationship in Germany on May 23, 2014, Michael's father's birthday. Because Germany then recognized same-sex couples through civil partnerships rather than marriage, they later drove to Charlotte, North Carolina, where they could obtain a license and marry the same day. They had also met on Gerald's mother's birthday.

A Dream With Five Rooms

Hospitality was always Michael's field. He studied it, worked in hotels and later worked for Booking.com. Gerald took a less direct route to the innkeeper's life. He joined the military at 17, served as a medic in Europe and spent nearly 20 years in corporate America, much of it in human resources and executive recruiting.

Gerald says both worlds taught him to move between public and private versions of himself. In the corporate South, he was also conscious of the professional persona expected of him as a Black man.

Near the end of the pandemic, Gerald was ready to leave recruiting. He asked Michael what he wanted to do next.

"Whatever your dream is," Gerald told him, "let's do that."

Michael's dream was a bed-and-breakfast. A five-room inn would allow him to offer the personal attention that is difficult in a large hotel. "If you have a hundred people, you only have so much time in your day to give them," he says.

The couple lost out on two houses in Savannah's Historic District before discovering 222 East Gwinnett Street online. A relative drove past and gave a

promising report. The next day, Gerald and Michael drove from Atlanta and made an offer.

Built in 1884 for Virginia Lloyd Drane, the two-story Victorian retained its heart-pine floors, wooden balustrade, plaster ceiling medallions and crown molding more than a foot high. Gerald and Michael wanted to protect those features and make the house comfortable for modern guests.

"We never wanted to get rid of anything," Gerald says. "We wanted to enhance it."

They bought the property in late December and welcomed their first guests around Memorial Day. The guest rooms are named for former residents, and the bed usually serves as the starting point for each design. Lighting, art, rugs and custom drapery build the character from there.

Michael made the drapes himself. Fabric was difficult to source during the pandemic, especially in the yardage required for the tall windows. His mother is a seamstress in Germany; Michael solved the problem at a sewing machine.

Gerald, who once wanted to become an architect, gravitates toward bold color, furniture and landscape design. He learned carpentry from an uncle who built houses and credits his grandmother with his affection for gardens and antiques. Eula Mae Thomas grew roses and collected antiques while working for a shop owner in Alabama.

The Thomas in Thomas Weihs Haus honors her. Weihs comes from Michael's grandmother, Margarete Weihs, the family baker. The family connection continues at breakfast, where two sets of inherited silver rotate through service. Guests eat from real china and crystal.

The couple shops Savannah's antique stores with restraint. A beautiful find still has to earn its place. If something comes in, something else may have to leave.

"It's like putting a puzzle together," Gerald says. "You find a piece that's magical, and you think, 'I have to have it.' Then you have to ask, 'Will it work?'"

Breakfast Is Personal

Breakfast is cooked to order and served at one large table or outside on the porch. Phones and computers are discouraged.

*"Enjoy life. Enjoy friends.
Enjoy food." - Michael
Grönebaum*

Conversation is part of the meal.

Some guests embrace that arrangement. Others choose their breakfast time carefully to avoid everyone else.

"A bed-and-breakfast is very social," Michael says. "Some people like the idea of the historic house, but they don't like the idea of it being so personal."

Personal is precisely what he offers. During the inn's first year, a couple staying four nights mentioned that they had not found peach cobbler in Savannah. Michael had peaches, so he made one for breakfast the next morning. Cobbler required ice cream, he reasoned, so he served that too. A strawberry version with vanilla ice cream later joined the breakfast rotation.

When home and work share an address, a quick trip out the front door can become a 30-minute conversation.



Earlier this year, Michael fell from the attic and returned home from the hospital wearing a neck brace. As the spring season began, Gerald took over more of the guest duties. Michael was well enough to answer the door but prohibited from lifting. One arriving guest looked at him and asked whether he could carry their bags.

"You see that I have the neck brace," Michael remembers saying. "I cannot."

Gerald has little difficulty establishing boundaries. Each guest matters, but so do the other people staying in the house.

"No matter how someone treats me, I'm still going to treat them fairly," he says. Sometimes fairness requires a pleasant but final no.

The Pleasure of Staying Awhile

After five years, Gerald and Michael have begun easing the pace. Reservations remain available, but they advertise less and have considered taking a break or eventually passing the inn to someone else. Caring for people well takes energy, and good hosts occasionally need to close the door.

Michael still loves entertaining. Friends and neighbors ask about their garden parties, holiday gatherings and an over-the-top Halloween party. At those events, guests are told not to bring food, wine or a hostess gift.

"You just come," Gerald says. "Everything is done."

That instinct is rooted in the Alabama town where he grew up, a place where people waved whether they knew one another or not. Michael, raised in an industrial region of Germany where direct speech was equally valued, has found a similar familiarity in



Savannah. During walks with their dogs, the couple nearly always sees a face they recognize.

"That is what makes a place home for me," Michael says. "If I randomly walk through the city and run into at least one person I know, it's not an anonymous place. You know your neighbors."

Gerald retired before 55, fulfilling a promise he made to himself in college. From a childhood he describes as "dirt poor" in rural Alabama, he built a career and helped Michael create a home neither could have made alone.

Michael describes his own philosophy simply: "Enjoy life. Enjoy friends. Enjoy food." Use the good silver. Put ice cream beside the cobbler, even at breakfast.

Thomas Weihs Haus has stood since 1884. Gerald and Michael have preserved its past while giving it a generous present—one filled with bold color, long breakfasts, good silver and people gathered around the table.

That may be their clearest expression of hospitality: when life gives you something beautiful, you do not merely preserve it. You share it.

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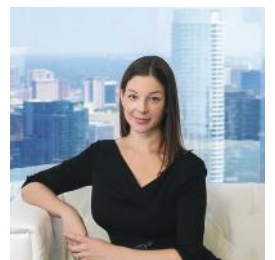
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FROM COAST TO TABLE: THE STORY BEHIND LOWCOUNTRY SEAFOOD

By Mara Birrell & Okan Bluffton

October is National Seafood Month, which makes it a fitting time to look at one of the ingredients most deeply woven into Savannah's story: shrimp.

Long before seafood became a staple on restaurant menus, shrimping was a way of life along the Georgia coast. Savannah and the surrounding waterways were home to a thriving fishing industry, supported by generations of fishermen, shrimpers and seafood workers who knew the tides, waterways and seasons by heart.

For many coastal communities, that knowledge was more than a livelihood. It was part of a cultural tradition.

Pin Point, just south of Savannah, offers one of the clearest examples. Established in 1896 by formerly enslaved people from Ossabaw, Green and Skidaway Islands, the community developed a strong connection to the surrounding waterways. Residents harvested shrimp, crabs and oysters, while local seafood factories provided work for generations of families.

Those skills were passed from one generation to the next. Fishing was taught by parents and grandparents, and the work supported not only individual families but entire communities. In places such



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as Pin Point and Sandfly, these traditions became part of the larger Gullah Geechee cultural heritage of coastal Georgia.

That history matters when we talk about Lowcountry food today.

At Ọkàn, our cooking draws inspiration from West Africa, the Caribbean and the South Carolina Coast. Those influences remind us that food is rarely confined to one place or one culture. Ingredients travel. Techniques evolve. Recipes change as people carry them into new communities.

Seafood is a perfect example. The shrimp pulled from Georgia waters can become part of countless dishes, each reflecting a different history or tradition. The ingredient may be simple, but the story behind it is anything but.

National Seafood Month gives us a chance to appreciate that story, and the people who have kept it alive. It is an opportunity to think beyond what is on the plate and consider the fishermen, families and coastal communities whose knowledge helped shape the food we know today.

For us, celebrating seafood means celebrating that connection. It means honoring the Lowcountry while recognizing the many cultures that have influenced its table.

Because here on the coast, seafood has never been just something we eat. It is part of where we come from.

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BUDDY CHECK 3

THE POWER OF CHECKING IN

By **Mara Birrell** | Photos provided by **Tina Tyus-Shaw**

Most journalists don't really get a chance to say their work saves lives. But Tina Tyus-Shaw at WSAV can – and people tell her all the time.

Like Symenthia Allen, who caught her aggressive triple-negative breast cancer early because she routinely watched Buddy Check 3.

"I'm glad I did my Buddy Check 3," Allen said when she finished treatment in 2020.



For 24 years, Buddy Check 3 has reminded Coastal Georgia and South Carolina's Low Country about the importance of checking in with yourself and checking in with a buddy.

A partnership between WSAV and the Nancy N. and J.C. Lewis Cancer & Research Pavilion at St. Joseph's/Candler, the program encourages breast self-exams, awareness of changes, and routine doctor visits.

Inspired by a similar Jacksonville initiative created by television anchor Jeannie Blaylock after losing a friend to breast cancer, Buddy Check 3 was brought to Savannah by Tyus-Shaw's former news director, Kevin Brennan.

At first, Tyus-Shaw was nervous talking openly about breast health. Over time, the monthly reminder grew into a larger conversation about early detection, survivorship, and hope.

"Early detection saves lives," she says. "This program has saved lives."

On the 3rd of each month, WSAV's 6 p.m. broadcast features a Buddy Check 3 story focused on breast health, survivors, medical advancements, or local resources.

"Every breast cancer story matters," Tyus-Shaw says.

Lizzie, whose mother died after battling breast cancer, later joined Tyus-Shaw at Cupcakes & Conversation, where teen girls learn about breast health and talk openly about a subject still sometimes treated as taboo.

"It needs to be a topic of conversation," Tyus-Shaw says.

That same spirit can be found at Healing Heroes: A Tribute to Breast Cancer Survivors Fashion Show, celebrating its fifth year October 3 at the Lewis Cancer & Research Pavilion. The event honors survivors, both women and men, and every \$25 ticket supports the Telfair Mammography Fund, providing no-cost breast health services for uninsured and underinsured women.

Throughout October, Leopold's Ice Cream will also donate 10% of proceeds from every scoop of pink ice cream to the fund in honor of Buddy Check 3.

For Tyus-Shaw, that is what Buddy Check 3 has always been about: people taking care of people.

"When we lift one, we lift all," she says.

Twenty-four years later, the message remains. Send the reminder. Make the phone call. Ask someone if they scheduled their mammogram. Share a story. Start the conversation.

On October 6, Tina Tyus-Shaw and WSAV will host a special hour-long program, *Men Get Breast Cancer Too*. Three local survivors will share their stories, and Dr. Katherine Armstrong of St. Joseph's/Candler Telfair Breast Surgery will share her expertise and answer questions.

5th Annual Healing Heroes Fashion Show

October 3 - 10AM-12PM

A celebration and tribute to breast cancer survivors with a fashion show featuring local survivors.

Lewis Cancer & Research Pavilion
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*Because sometimes,
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with simply checking on
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MENOPAUSE: BREAKING THE NARRATIVE

By John M Kurtz, MPAS, PA-C & Mara Birrell

“
How you feel
matters.
”

Menopause has become a hot topic, and for good reason. In July 2025, the FDA convened 12 experts to take a fresh look at hormone therapy and warnings that had shaped menopause treatment for decades. In February 2026, the FDA approved labeling changes to several hormone therapy products, removing boxed-warning language related to cardiovascular disease, breast cancer and probable dementia.

So what does this mean? Well, simply stated, they got it wrong—and women suffered.

For years, many women were treated symptom by symptom: antidepressants for mood changes and hot flashes, sleep medications for insomnia, and other medications for individual complaints, without enough consideration of the hormonal changes driving those symptoms.

What many women needed was appropriate menopause care, including an informed conversation about hormone therapy instead of automatically ruling it out.

Fortunately, that conversation is changing. But as with any major shift in medicine, application will be slow, and we must change how we treat women through menopause.

Perimenopause is probably the most confusing and misunderstood stage. It most often begins in a woman's 40s, although changes can start in her late 30s, and may continue for years. It can begin with cycle changes and progress to hot flashes, night sweats, mood changes, fatigue, sleep problems and changes in body composition. These are signs that the ovaries are slowly “retiring” from service.

Once a woman has gone 12 consecutive months without a menstrual cycle, she has reached menopause. For most women, this happens between their mid-40s and mid-50s, although every woman's journey is different. From there, she enters



postmenopause. Some symptoms may decrease, but the quieter effects of declining hormones can become more important, including changes in cardiovascular, bone and metabolic health.

Managing menopause is not just about treating symptoms or increasing longevity. Don't get me wrong; those are tremendous goals. But so is the quality of a woman's life.

During Menopause Awareness Month, understand that these symptoms and changes are REAL. Women don't have to suffer and ignore what they are feeling. Fatigue, inability to sleep, decreased libido, hot flashes, night sweats, irritability and mood changes, itching, weight gain and muscle loss can all be signs that you may be in a stage of menopause.

There are treatment options, including hormone therapy when appropriate. No woman should simply be told, “You are normal,” and sent on her way. Ask questions.

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SUN, OCTOBER 11TH

Time: 3pm - 5:30pm

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THU, OCTOBER 15TH

Time: 5:30pm - 7pm

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for a lecture exploring the ambitious rehabilitation of the Torrey West Home, one of Georgia's remarkable private coastal estates. Learn about the unique challenges of preserving a 100-year-old historic home on a remote barrier island accessible only by boat. 5:30pm - Wine reception. 6-7pm - Lecture. Admission is free for HSF members and \$15 for non-members.

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JUNK JOURNAL

SAVANNAH CLUB NIGHT

THU, OCTOBER 15TH

Time: 6pm - 8pm

Spend two hours connecting with the community and getting creative during Junk Journal Savannah Club Night. Bring your imagination and enjoy a relaxed evening of journaling, crafting and creativity with fellow enthusiasts.

Junk Journal Savannah Club

@ 7 Rathborne Road, Savannah, GA

FALL RIVERFRONT CONCERT SERIES AT EASTERN WHARF

FRI, OCTOBER 16TH

Time: 7pm - 10pm

Enjoy free live music along Savannah's riverfront at The Park at Eastern Wharf. The Intracoastal Playboys perform October 16. Food trucks and a mobile bar will be available. Attendees are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets.

Eastern Wharf & Savannah

Stopover Music Festival

@ 101 Port Street, Savannah, GA

www.easternwharfpark.com

ASIAN FOOD AND CULTURE FESTIVAL

FRI, OCTOBER 16TH

- SUN, OCTOBER 18TH

**Time: 4pm - 10pm FRI; 10am - 10pm SAT;
10am - 8pm SUN**

Panda Fest brings a three-day celebration of Asian food and culture to Savannah, featuring more than 80 food vendors, 20+ merchandise vendors, live cultural

performances, interactive activities and plenty of panda-themed fun. Tickets start at \$10 for a limited number of early-bird tickets. General admission is \$14 and VIP admission is \$35.

Panda Fest

@ 200 Tanger Outlets Blvd., Pooler, GA

www.pandafests.com

MIX, MAKE, & DIFFUSE CLASS WITH SEA LOVE SAVANNAH

SAT, OCTOBER 17TH

Time: 5pm

Create your very own custom diffuser personalized to your style and favorite fragrance notes during this hands-on experience with the lovely local team from Sea Love Savannah!

The Westin Savannah Harbor

Golf Resort and Spa

@ 1 Resort Drive, Savannah, GA

www.event.marriott.com

MOBILE MAMMOGRAPHY AT WSAV

WED, OCTOBER 21ST

Time: 1pm - 6:30pm

The St. Joseph's/Candler Mobile Mammography Unit will be providing mammograms. WSAV on-air talent will be stopping by to see patients and broadcasting live.

WSAV

@ 1430 E Victory Drive, Savannah, GA

bit.ly/WSAVMammograms

HISTORICAL FACT OR HYSTERICAL FICTION?

THU, OCTOBER 22ND

Time: 7:30pm - 8:30pm

Join host and comedian J. Steinbrunner for an interactive comedy show where three comedians spin stories about real objects from the Davenport House Museum's collection, but only one knows the true history behind each artifact. Admission is \$20 per person or \$30 for a table seat.

Historic Savannah Foundation

@ 323 E. Broughton Street, Savannah, GA

www.davenportmuseum.org

HORIZONS SAVANNAH HALL OF FAME GALA

FRI, OCTOBER 23RD

Time: 6pm

Join Horizons Savannah for its 2026 Hall of Fame Gala honoring local civic leader and philanthropist Leslie B. Littlejohn. The evening will include the Hall of Fame Awards ceremony, dinner and paddle raise, with proceeds supporting Horizons Savannah's tuition-free summer enrichment programs for local youth. Tickets are \$250 per person, with tables, sponsorships and ticket packages also available.

Horizons Savannah

@ 15 E. Liberty Street, Savannah, GA

www.horizonssavannah.org

FALL FESTIVAL

SAT, OCTOBER 24TH

Time: 10am - 2pm

Enjoy a fun-filled community Fall Festival featuring a pumpkin painting contest, music, face painting, a bounce house and local vendors. Bring an already painted pumpkin to enter the contest, and vote for your favorite to win a special prize. Admission is free, Pumpkin contest is \$10. Proceeds support the Annual Community Impact Campaign, which provides financial assistance to people in the community.

Habersham YMCA

@ 6400 Habersham Street, Savannah, GA

www.ymcaofcoastalga.org

SHERWIN-WILLIAMS® REWILD:

COLORMIX® TREND FORECAST 2027

TUE, OCTOBER 27TH

Time: 11am - 12pm

Join Sherwin-Williams for a one-hour virtual exploration of the future of color through a global trend lens. Discover

48 colors and three design stories—Revive, Reignite and Reconnect—while exploring the cultural, technological and environmental forces shaping interiors, architecture and product design.

Staging-By Design

@ Online Event

www.eventbrite.com

STRONGHER: WOMEN'S SELF-DEFENSE

THU, OCTOBER 29TH

Time: 5:30pm - 7pm

Join this free women's self-defense program for women ages 18 and older, led by experienced instructors from Gracie Jiu Jitsu Savannah. Learn fundamental self-defense techniques and strategies for responding to real-world situations. No prior experience is required. Program continues weekly through December.

Savannah Recreation & Leisure Services

@ 1815 Lincoln Street, Savannah, GA

TRAWL-O-WEEN

FRI, OCTOBER 30TH

Time: 9am - 12pm

Get into the Halloween spirit aboard the 43-foot R/V Sea Dawg during this educational Halloween Estuary Trawl. Collect, identify and record species and environmental data while learning about coastal ecosystems, marine life and the impacts of marine debris. Create a Trawl to Trash bag from recycled shrimp nets to take home. Tickets are \$20 and include admission to the UGA aquarium. Children ages 10 and up are welcome with a registered adult. Registration is required.

UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant

@ 20 Ocean Science Circle, Savannah, GA

www.gacoast.uga.edu

MARTY MILQUETOAST'S HALLOWEEN

EXTRAVAGANZA

SAT, OCTOBER 31ST

Time: 8pm - 10:30pm

Celebrate Halloween with a one-of-a-kind variety show featuring burlesque, comedy, mentalism, drag and more, hosted by Marty Milquetoast. Enjoy a costume contest, participation games and prizes throughout the evening. Tickets are \$20 for standing admission, \$30 for general seating and \$40 for VIP table seating with limited free swag. This event is for ages 21 and up.

Victory North

@ 2603 Whitaker Street, Savannah, GA

www.victorynorthsavannah.com

ON-GOING

MICHELANGELO'S WOMEN: IMAGES OF FEMALE POWER AND DIVINITY

**FRI, OCTOBER 9TH - SUN,
JANUARY 24TH**

Time: See museum hours

Explore a groundbreaking exhibition focused exclusively on the women who inspired, appeared in and helped preserve the legacy of Michelangelo. Featuring drawings, poetry and letters from the artist's family collection, including works never before seen in the United States, the exhibition offers a fresh perspective on the powerful women at the center of Michelangelo's artistic vision.

Telfair Museums

@ 207 W. York Street, Savannah, GA

www.telfair.org



DON'T MISS THIS!

THE TORREY WEST HOME TURNS 100: REHABILITATING A 'SOUTHERN PLACE' ON OSSABAW ISLAND

THU, OCTOBER 15TH

Time: 5:30pm - 7pm

Join the Ossabaw Island Foundation for a lecture exploring the ambitious rehabilitation of the Torrey West Home, one of Georgia's remarkable private coastal estates. Learn about the unique challenges of preserving a 100-year-old historic home on a remote barrier island accessible only by boat. 5:30pm - Wine reception. 6-7pm - Lecture. Admission is free for HSF members and \$15 for non-members.

Historic Savannah Foundation

@ 323 E. Broughton St., Savannah, GA

www.myhsf.org/events

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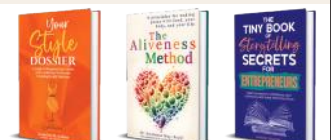
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