



IMORE

EDITION 2026 — ISSUE 2



Photo by Jesse Suarez.

BLAZE

This issue is HOT.

In featuring a troupe of fire artists from the high desert of Bend, Oregon, I'm being quite literal. But the intensity of deeply saturated colors and psychedelic design add to this feeling.

The stories of a photographer whose luscious colorful scenes include the cover art for this issue, an adventurous couple who found their fantastical dream home, and a group of fearless performers who have each turned their passion into a way of life come together oddly easily.

Photographer **Tommy Kwak** creates striking, color-drenched imagery that graces spaces everywhere from **Louis Vuitton** boutiques to luxury hotels in Singapore. Southern California couple Scott and Kristy Parent share their passion as devoted stewards of Palm Springs' iconic **Vibe House**. And **High Desert Fire Artists** plays with fire as performance.

The thread connecting these stories may be easy to spot, but each one unfolds in its own unexpected and unforgettable way. This issue immerses you in a world of color, creativity, and pure sensation—and once you're in it, you may never want to leave.

Then again . . . who says you have to?

Kim Duval.

Founding Principal

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HYPERCOLOR

The Photography of Tommy Kwak

Sweat drips from Tommy Kwak's camera strap as he walks the **Singapore River**, pausing every few steps to study the scenes across the water. Around him, the tropical humidity is relentless. Slung across his shoulders is more than 30 pounds of equipment, and after only half an hour outdoors, his shirt is completely soaked. Making photographs isn't the hardest part of this assignment. It's surviving the heat.

"I would be shooting for 30 minutes and I'd be completely drenched in sweat," Tommy says with a laugh.

Tommy is in Singapore creating a body of work for a hotel project by a world-renowned architect, set to debut next year and still protected by a strict nondisclosure agreement. A designer on the project discovered Tommy's portfolio online and immediately recognized something the team had been searching for. They wanted a cohesive photographic series of the Singapore River—images that would establish the visual language for the development's public spaces, guest rooms, and lounges. Rather than assembling artwork from multiple photographers, they hoped to find one artist capable of creating a singular collection that felt unified from beginning to end. Tommy's deeply

saturated color palette and unmistakable visual style made him the ideal choice.

For Tommy, the challenge wasn't simply photographing an unfamiliar city. It was doing so while navigating an environment that demanded constant physical endurance. Liters of water became just as essential as memory cards, while insect repellent quickly found a permanent place alongside lenses and batteries. The pressure extended well beyond the weather. Throughout the assignment, Tommy met regularly with the interior design team to review his progress.

"Normally, a lot of my work comes together during post-production," he explains. "But on this project, the designers were seeing my raw images. There was a lot of pressure because I wanted them to understand where I was headed before everything was finished. It was definitely a good learning experience."

Whether he's photographing glaciers, city skylines, or tropical waterways, he consistently places himself in environments that demand patience, persistence, and complete immersion. The finished photographs may appear effortless, but behind every image are months - or years - of deliberate work.





Tommy's art in situ at Louis Vuitton boutique, photo courtesy Louis Vuitton.

A trip to Iceland and Greenland in 2008 fundamentally changed the trajectory of Tommy's career. There he created one of his first iconic bodies of work: solitary landscapes, rendered with a richness and depth that immediately distinguished his photography from that of his contemporaries.

Tommy returned again and again. In Greenland, after forging camaraderie with the local owners of a modest ten-foot boat, he ventured onto the water day after day, learning the rhythms of the landscape. Over the course of ten separate trips spanning more than a decade, he meticulously photographed glaciers, coastlines, and open seas from every angle.

Balancing in the tiny boat as it drifted among rolling waves and ancient ice, Tommy developed the visual language that has become his signature. Of working in constantly changing conditions taught him to stop overthinking every frame and instead respond instinctively to the moment unfolding in front of him.

"In Iceland," he says, "I learned to shoot without thinking."

That lesson continues to shape each project he undertakes.

His celebrated series documenting **Miami Beach's colorful lifeguard stands** presented an entirely different challenge. Shortly after Hurricane Andrew devastated South Florida, the City of Miami commissioned **William Lane**, a local architect, to redesign all of the lifeguard towers along its beaches, transforming each structure into a vibrant public work of art. During a visit, Tommy became fascinated by the collection and set an ambitious goal for himself: photograph every one of the 40 stands.

The series took six years to finish, requiring repeated visits and meticulous planning to maintain the consistency that now defines the collection. Each lifeguard stand occupies the same visual space within the frame, isolated against soft sand and expansive skies. The repetition allows viewers to appreciate subtle differences in shape, proportion, and color, while the brilliant hues practically leap from the photographs. Looking back, it's easy to recognize the emergence of Tommy's unmistakable aesthetic: singular subjects. Precise compositions. Extraordinary color.

In 2022, Tommy published a photo book devoted entirely to the lifeguard stand series. Seen together across carefully designed spreads, the photographs become something greater than individual images. They function almost as a visual catalog of architecture and color, revealing how consistency in composition allows personality to emerge through design.

There is something undeniably methodical about Tommy's work. Every series focuses on a single subject, presented with restraint yet overflowing with atmosphere. His photographs invite viewers to slow down. Light, color, and texture become the subjects as much as the objects themselves, creating images that feel less like documentation and more like memories suspended somewhere between reality and dreams.

Much of that atmosphere comes from Tommy's willingness to embrace imperfection. He often employs analog techniques, including intentionally blurring the lens to soften reality into something more dreamlike. The effect is subtle but unmistakable.

Early in his career, Tommy second-guessed his approach. "I thought I had to have one kind of subject matter as an artist, or have an idea first and then go shoot it."

Over time, he realized that approach wasn't true to the way he naturally creates.

Instead of forcing concepts, Tommy follows intuition.

"Once I started trusting my gut," he says, "things started to come together naturally."

Tommy is drawn almost instinctively to places that feel otherworldly—windswept coastlines, floating icebergs, remote islands, and landscapes where nature still commands complete attention. Paradoxically, he makes his home just outside New York City, one of the most densely populated regions in the world.

When I ask how those two worlds coexist, he smiles. "I struggle with that a lot," he says. "But I feel like if I lived full-time in one of these far-flung places, eventually I'd get bored."

Unlike many photographers who feel compelled to shoot every day, Tommy typically photographs only three or four times each year. Those trips, however, are anything but casual. They are immersive expeditions, often lasting two weeks, during which photography becomes his sole focus from sunrise until long after sunset.

Returning to familiar places after a year—or sometimes several years—allows him to see them differently.

"It becomes a completely different landscape," he explains.

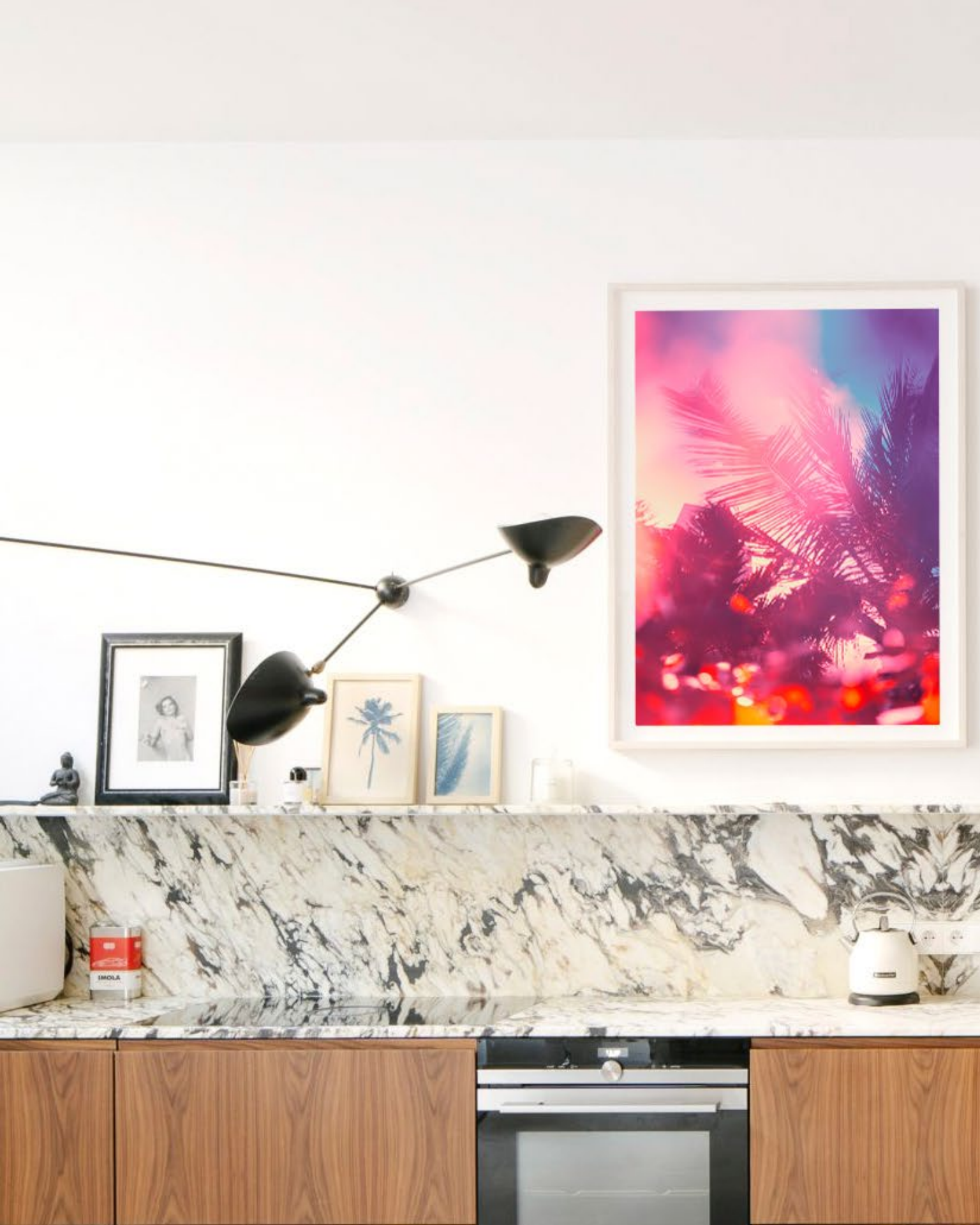
The camera records the same glacier or shoreline, but Tommy does not return as the

same photographer. Each expedition builds upon the last, and each edit becomes part of a longer conversation with the landscape itself.

While remote landscapes remain central to Tommy's portfolio, cities have become equally compelling subjects. His skyline series transforms familiar urban environments into luminous studies of architecture and color. Using his signature analog techniques, Tommy photographs Midtown Manhattan and downtown Seattle in ways that feel both recognizable and surreal, washing towers of steel and glass in saturated hues that seem to hover between reality and imagination.

Those commissions eventually found homes inside Louis Vuitton boutiques in **Germany, Seattle** and at **Brookfield Place in New York City**, where the photographs serve not simply as decoration but as part of the architectural experience. His work has also appeared in W Hotels in Barcelona, where guests encounter his immersive imagery as an extension of thoughtfully designed interiors.

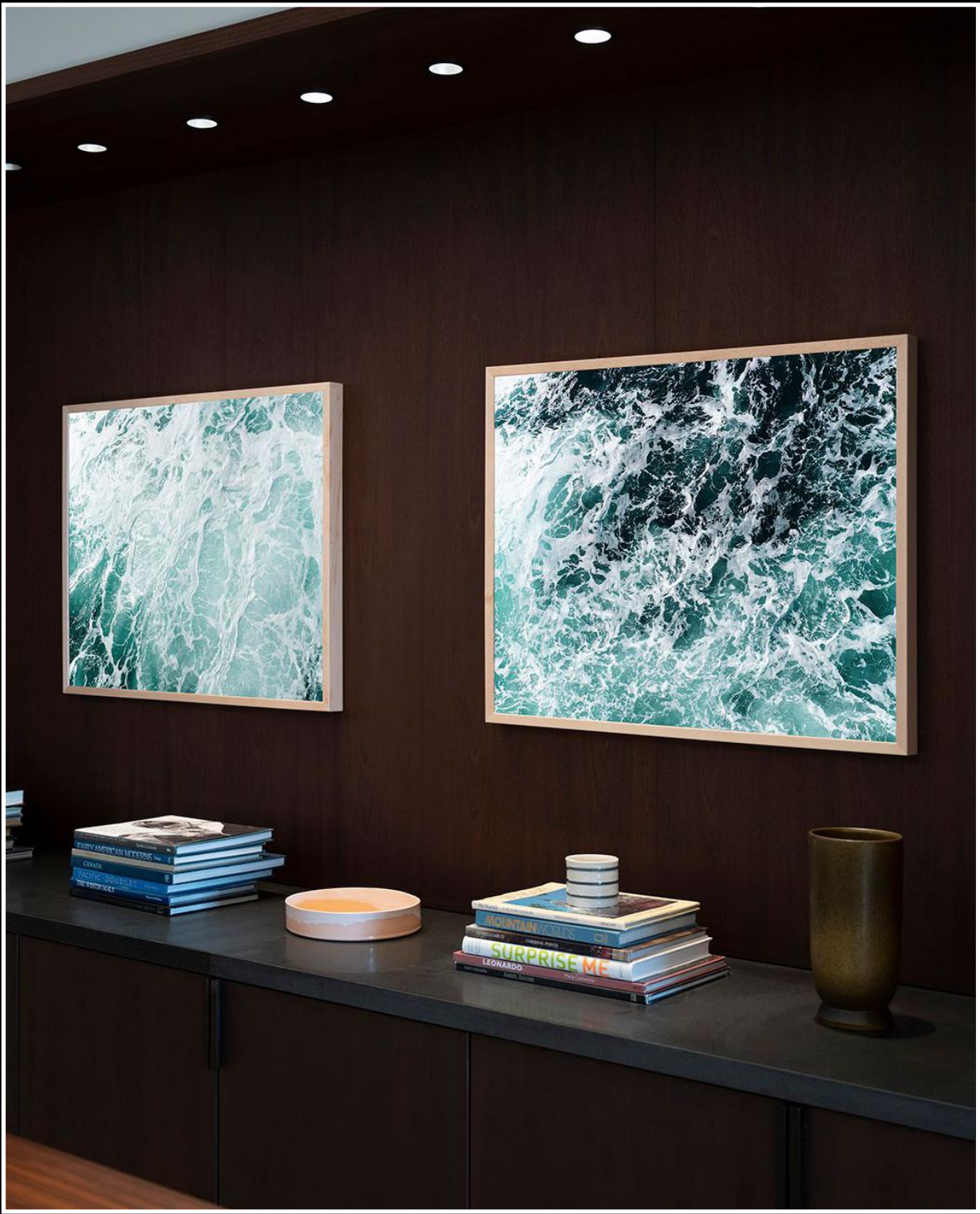
Even with an impressive list of international commissions, Tommy continues looking toward places he has yet to experience. The Canadian Arctic and the North Pole remain at the top of his travel list, destinations whose vastness and isolation promise new opportunities for discovery. For an artist whose work is driven as much by curiosity as composition, there is always another horizon waiting.





Tommy's art in situ, photo by Giaime Meloni.





Tommy's art in situ, photo by Blanca Guerrero.





FUSCHIA

The Most Maximal House. Ever.

Photos by Ernie Westman



It's been said that if you grew up in Southern California from the 1960s through the 1990s, you couldn't turn on the television without seeing an ad for **Jack Stephan**. He was something of a celebrity—in fact, he was known as the "Plumber to the Stars" (yes, you read that right). He rose to fame through a series of wildly successful television advertising campaigns that began in the 1960s, featuring catchy jingles that became nearly as famous as the man himself. Driving around in a Rolls-Royce and wearing diamond rings on both hands, Jack was as much a persona as he was a successful entrepreneur in the water system industry.

When he died in 2014 at the age of 94, the **Los Angeles Times** described him as "a flamboyant entrepreneur with a flair for marketing who founded two of the region's most heavily advertised plumbing companies."

The consummate showman, Jack created a one-of-a-kind vacation home in Palm Springs—a place where he could entertain clients, friends, and plenty of glamorous company. The home he purchased had recently been designed by the prominent architectural firm **Robert Lewis and Associates** for another family. But Jack completely transformed its interiors in 1969.

His favorite color was red.

And red is . . . *everywhere*.

Red, pink, and orange velour and velvet cover nearly every surface of the home—from the wallpaper and draperies to the wall-to-wall shag carpeting. The kitchen still boasts its original appliances, remarkably modern for their time and all in pristine working order. Gothic sconces and dramatic chandeliers crown many of the rooms, adding an unmistakably theatrical and moody atmosphere.

Fast forward to 2025.

Kristy and Scott Parent, Southern California natives, were searching for their dream getaway in Palm Springs. Like many buyers, they envisioned a classic midcentury modern home with clean lines, a neutral palette, and light-filled interiors—think soft desert whites and sun-drenched spaces. The couple had spent years searching for the right Palm Springs property.

Then everything changed.

While taking a walk through **Deepwell Estates**, one of Palm Springs' iconic neighborhoods, and once home to stars like **Tippi Hedren** and **Jerry Lewis** - picture dozens of beautifully preserved midcentury modern homes nestled among bougainvillea, citrus trees, and towering palms - the couple happened upon a house Kristy had once admired in a magazine. It was now for sale: Stephan's Folly, the extravagant vacation retreat of the opulent, eccentric, and unforgettable Jack Stephan.

"I am a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. This home found us as much as we found it. Both Scott and I instantly knew it was our home—popcorn ceilings and all," Kristy says. "We were blown away by the peaceful beauty."

As luck would have it, Jack Stephan's former home had just come on the market. After speaking with the Realtor to express their interest, Scott and Kristy scheduled a private showing.

The house felt almost unattainable.

"It was so rare, so vintage, so unique," Kristy says. "We had no idea just how custom, iconic, and original everything in the home was."

Today, nearly every room looks almost exactly as it did in 1969. After all, that's how it looked when Kristy and Scott fell completely in love with the house.

As a fan of
all shades of
pink, I pinch
myself. I feel
like I'm living
in a Barbie
Dream House.





After a few
cocktails, Scott
looked at me
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house is a
vibe, baby'

velour multicolored striped wallpaper, once hosted Jack's legendary poker nights. Just beyond the room, through the door leading to the garage, one of Jack's signature Rolls-Royces was always parked. He even installed an alarmed keypad at the garage entrance to make sure no one drove away with it should a poker game go sideways.

Behind the original bar, Scott and Kristy discovered one of the home's greatest treasures: Jack Stephan's poker list—a who's who of old Hollywood and Palm Springs society. Names like Eva Gabor, Oscar Mayer and Hugh Hefner fill the pages.

Although Jack was a married man, he was known first and foremost as a Casanova. In the primary bathroom, he installed a salon-style hair dryer that still works. It's possible he even tried to impress women with his kitchen, where every original appliance remains in immaculate condition, gleaming as though it had just arrived from the showroom.

After closing, Scott and Kristy immersed themselves in the home's remarkable history.

In so many ways, this house is unlike anything else. It isn't simply a perfectly preserved time capsule of interior design—it is a time capsule of an entire era.

"We were in love from the beginning and always say that the original owner, Jack, chose us to be the stewards of his iconic party home," Kristy says.

The couple plans to preserve the home's original character as faithfully as possible. While electrical and plumbing systems have been updated to meet modern code, every effort has

been made to maintain—and in some cases amplify the home's bold personality.

One of their first restoration projects focused on the front entry doors. Originally stained wood, they feature hardware rumored to have once been casket handles. Scott and Kristy meticulously restored the brass finish to its original luster.

And the new paint color?

"We picked the perfect bougainvillea pink to match the flowers framing the driveway," Kristy says.

Inside the living room, which features an original oversized crushed velvet sectional, custom Moorish ottomans, orange shag carpeting, floor-to-ceiling mirrored walls, and ornate Egyptian candelabra flanking a wonderfully over-the-top fireplace, sits another conversation piece: a life-sized faux leopard perched above the sofa. Kristy and Scott named him Leopold and consider him the newest member of the family.

"The vibe of the home is happy and peaceful," Kristy says. "Despite having every color of the rainbow covering nearly every inch of the house, it's uniquely calming."

The house is no longer known as Stephan's Folly. Its new name perfectly captures its spirit. Scott and Kristy simply call it The Vibe House, after the unmistakable positive energy they felt from the moment they moved in. A few weeks after closing, while enjoying poolside cocktails, Scott couldn't stop repeating, "This house is a vibe, baby!"

The name stuck.

Sometimes Kristy feels like she's living in a



















world of make-believe. She says, "between the plush hot-pink velvet curtains, hot-pink velvet wallpaper, and hot-pink shag carpet, our primary bedroom is my dream come true! I feel like I am living in a real-life **Barbie Dreamhouse**. As a fan of every shade of pink, I have to pinch myself."

Recent improvements to the property include an extensive restoration of the swimming pool, complete with Frank Sinatra-blue tile, fresh plaster, and a conversion from chlorine to salt water. The landscaping is also undergoing much-needed revitalization after the home sat vacant for several years following Jack's death, restoring it into a cozy retreat with vintage flair.

Inside, some of the aging wallpaper is being replaced, but only with designs that honor the home's colorful spirit. Working with Jenna Gross, owner of **Color Drunk Designs** in Atlanta, Scott and Kristy are selecting vibrant vintage-inspired coverings for the damaged dining room walls.

"Our goal is to bring it back to life without feeling like we're ruining a masterpiece," Kristy says.

Because nearly every square inch of the home's interior is wrapped in fabric, velvet, or shag carpeting, the couple hired professional crews to perform an extensive deep cleaning, removing decades of dust and the evidence of fifty years of unforgettable parties.

But the parties are far from over. In 2025, **The Vibe House** was selected as one of the featured homes on **Modernism Week's** prestigious Home Tour. Scott and Kristy hosted a cocktail party for tour patrons, welcoming hundreds of visitors eager to experience Jack Stephan's legendary retreat.

"Scott and I were blown away by the love we received from guests thanking us for not

remodeling the home. One man drove all the way from Arizona just for the day to walk through the house!"

More than simply finding their dream home, Scott and Kristy discovered something they never expected: an extraordinary community. The friendships they've built and the remarkable people they've met in this desert oasis have become just as meaningful as the house itself.

"We never expected to find so many wonderful people who love the Palm Springs lifestyle as much as Scott and I do. We truly have something special here, and we love being able to share it with others," Kristy shares.

Almost as if Jack himself had given his blessing, the cocktail party eventually turned into a dance party in the living room, with guests celebrating to the hits of the 1970s.

At that moment, Kristy had a revelation.

"The house was alive again, and we knew we were doing Jack Stephan proud."

FLOW STATE

A Conversation with High Desert Fire Artists



Performance at Bend Moonlight Market. Photo by Steffan Bertrand.



Bend, Oregon, is a special place. A highly creative scene exists as a throughline of the culture here. Mixed among the towering pines and sage brush plains is an energy that pulls from within.

But that's not how I got to know the women of **High Desert Fire Artists**.

It was in St. Tropez. At **Sénéquier** - the famed harborside cafe, I met Lauren, aka Lola Snowflake, one of the featured members of the troupe. My husband and I sat down for a cocktail and asked the friendly soul next to us to take our picture. That person happened to be Lola, and we soon discovered she was American, too. Another chance meeting in town a few days later, and we knew the stars had aligned for us to become friends.

After following each other on Instagram, I came to find out that this chick had the most amazing side passion: fire dancing.

Over the next year, we kept in touch. When I had the idea for this issue, **High Desert Fire Artists** felt like natural collaborators. So I sat down with Lola and troupe founder Bridget to learn more about their connection to Bend, fire, and the pursuit of such an incredible passion.

KD: How did you both end up in Bend?

Bridget: I moved here, I think, eight years ago. I lived in Seattle for many years before that, and then moved kind of all around. But I fell in love with Bend when I was hiking there on vacation. Half the town is a pine forest and mountains, and the other half is high desert filled with sage brush and juniper. The whole eastern side is high desert. That's how we named ourselves High Desert Fire Artists; we're thousands of feet up in this desert on the east side of town.

Lola Snowflake: I was born in Buffalo and grew up in Vermont. When I was in my 20s, I started traveling around to see all the states. When I got to Oregon, it was a no-brainer. I went to Portland and Eugene. On the drive from Eugene to Bend, I was like, 'Oh, actually, this is where I'm going to build a life.' I wasn't even planning on it, but on that drive over, and then just landing in this town, I knew. The community here is so welcoming and friendly. It's kind of this beautiful merge of lifestyles out here.

Tell me the origin story of this fantastic ensemble.

Bridget: I'd been in a fire troupe when I was in my early 20's, and then I went and got a doctorate and started a career. But I'd always thought, 'Wow, I'd really love to get art back into my life more.'

I work in psychiatry, and it's an intensive training process. Doctorates are a lot, and the beginning of your career is just rough. So what I thought would be a short break for school lasted instead seven years. Then flash forward to 2020.

We were in the middle of the insanity of national political changes and COVID, and my friends and I were sitting outside at a brewery. It was freezing. We were bundled up, but we were like, 'Let's be together.'

My friend, who is a ballerina, started doing pirouettes around the fire while Elton John's "Tiny Dancer" played in the background. And I was like, 'we should start a fire troupe. Let's fucking do this. We can do this. It's time.'"

What do rehearsals look like?

Lola Snowflake: We have open jams. In no way is it just the five of us running around. We are always letting people know, 'you can do this, too.' When kids come up to us after a

show, we're like, 'Yeah, it is pretty cool, right?' Obviously, it's with safety and Mom's permission that they could join in the fun, but the idea is that we have an opportunity to take something that looks visually stunning and beautiful, feels amazing as a performer, and we can also build a real community around it.

Bridget (smile-laughing): We are messy but beautiful. Trying to wrangle 13 artists is a lot sometimes, but we always pull it together by showtime.

Do you think the element of fire is representative of that kinship specifically? ... versus traditional dance? You could have said, 'We want to be a dance troupe,' and selected flags or ribbons as props ...but you chose fire.

Lola Snowflake: We have aerialists. We have yoga artists. We do LEDs, we do flow, and all of us have different passions. But humans have been gathering around the fire since the dawn of time. Fire arts really came out of rave culture and multiple different international traditional art forms. It is something that centralizes, that brings people together more often than not.

Bridget: We have a wide variety of people in our group—our collective—who all bring different things. I think fire is the common element that brings everyone together. There is a danger element. There's something truly captivating about the heat and the sound of it. And then there's this combination where everybody's teaching, everybody's sharing the wisdom they know. It's just a beautiful dynamic.

What does the future hold for the group?

Lola Snowflake: While I have personal goals as an artist—I wanted to make a flaming fire crown. That was a goal I had this year. Check mark. It debuts on Saturday. I said when I turned 40, I

wanted to start doing burlesque. Check mark. I just did my second show, and I'm now a formal member of Bend Burlesque Company as well.

Bridget: One of the things is that we're collaborative and multidisciplinary. There are people who do aerials and stilts and burlesque, and people associated with us who do acrobatics and things like that. I think an overarching goal—which we probably will eventually do—is to start a circus nonprofit and build more circus community here that's inclusive. And I'll say this: once you pick up one circus art, you're in. Then you're just like, 'Hey, will you teach me how to stilt so I can have flaming wings on my back?'

What thrills you?

Lola Snowflake: The opportunity to just hit flow state. That change in consciousness where you and your body and movement and expression are one. It makes happy chemicals in the brain like nothing else.

++++

Since **Dave Matthews** came up not less than once in the conversation, I leave you with these lyrics...

It's crazy I'm thinking

Just knowing that the world is round

And here, I'm dancing on the ground

Am I right side up or upside down?

And is this real, or am I dreaming?

— **"Crush," Dave Matthews Band**







Performance at Kindle Northwest. Photo by Jason Surh.

Performance at Moonlight Market. Photo by Steffan Bertrand.









Photo by Jesse Suarez.

UNTIL NEXT TIME...

Bring on the color explosion and big ideas. And keep partying like it's 1969.

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STUDIOS