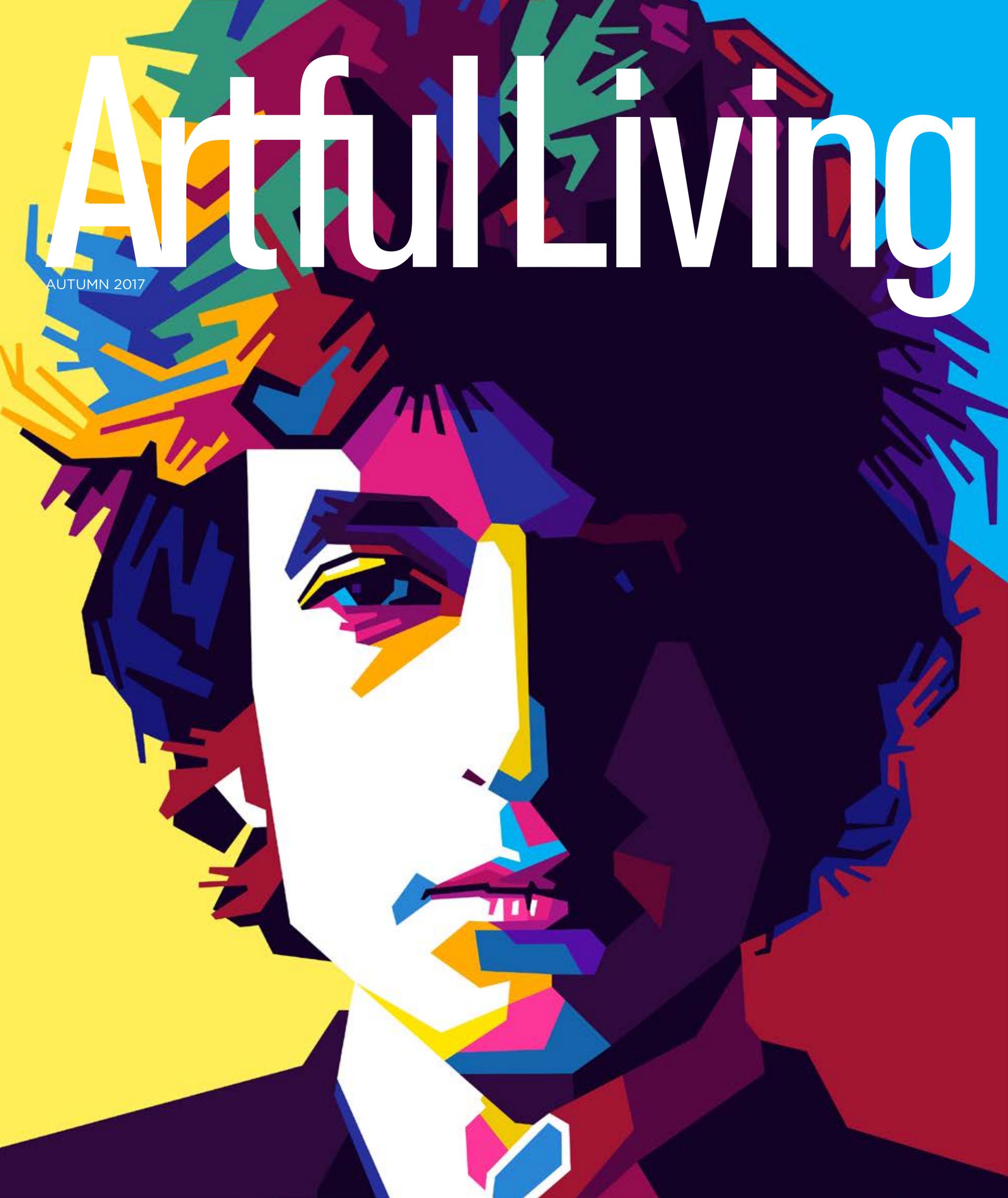


Artful Living

AUTUMN 2017



THE TOUR NORTH



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL FRITTSCH

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LAKESIDE LANDMARK

A historic Madison hotel returns to its former glory.

BY AMBER GIBSON

Frisbees fly and laughter lilt across the grand plaza at the Edgewater, just blocks from the Wisconsin state capitol. This spot is the heart of the family-owned hotel, a community gathering place hosting free outdoor movie nights and concerts during the summer and transforming into an ice-skating rink come winter.

Designed to look like a luxury steam liner, the Edgewater first opened its doors in 1948. Over the decades, it's hosted a plethora of VIPs (see them all on the wall of fame), from Bob Hope and Elvis Presley to the Dalai Lama. The hotel's current owners purchased the property in 2012 and reopened it two years later after a \$100-million renovation and expansion, including the addition of a new tower.

Of the 202 refreshed guest rooms, the Langdon Studio is a treat, complete with a clawfoot bathtub. The Statehouse's whole-roasted Mediterranean sea bass (dressed with fennel, olives and onions) is matched by the vivid sunset views over Lake Mendota, where the Edgewater's pier has 40 public boat slips. And the spa's excellent therapists leave your skin glowing with the help of the unique avocado and carrot oil massage cream. *The Edgewater, 1001 Wisconsin Place, Madison, Wisconsin, 608-535-8200, theedgewater.com*

THE NORTH

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ITALIAN OASIS

Bellisio's is a wine cognoscente's sanctuary.

BY KATE NELSON

Bellisio's has been a Duluth mainstay for nearly two decades, and for good reason. The eatery takes its inspiration from the Le Marche region of Italy, where its original proprietors, the Paulucci family, have deep roots. Situated amidst Canal Park's myriad grills and pubs, it's a fine-dining standout beloved by both locals and visitors for its superb service, authentic Italian cuisine and fine vinos.

In fact, the wine program here has been recognized by *Wine Spectator* since the very beginning, having earned the prestigious Best of Award of Excellence annually for the past 18 years. Bellisio's has thousands of bottles in its inventory (representing 15 different countries), with some 80 vinos available by the glass and more than 1,200 by the bottle — by far the most impressive offering in town. Not sure where to start? Try one of the 18 flights on offer.

In terms of excellence, the wine has a formidable contender — and complement — in the fare. Starters range from traditional bruschetta and mussels marinara to the signature fried green tomatoes. Fan-favorite entrées include the rigatoni *balsamico*, walleye Milanese, and lobster ravioli with grilled shrimp. And for dessert, the crème brûlée and tiramisu are not to be missed. *Bellisio's, 405 Lake Ave. S., Duluth, 218-727-4921, bellisios.com*



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SWEET SPOT

Gail Ambrosius crafts irresistible chocolates.

BY AMBER GIBSON

Gail Ambrosius first discovered the ecstasy of dark chocolate on a high-school trip to Paris. Nearly three decades later, she returned to France to apprentice with renowned chocolatiers at Michel Cluizel and Valrhona before ultimately opening up her own shop back home in 2004.

Business has boomed since then, and Ambrosius moved into a larger locale this summer. During the week, chocolatiers tempering and hand dipping truffles are on full display through a glass window. And in warmer months, housemade sorbets in fruit and dark-chocolate flavors are on offer. Caramel sea salt is the most popular flavor here, but adventurous chocolate aficionados will enjoy varieties like lemongrass ginger, shiitake mushroom, and sweet curry with saffron.

Ambrosius is quite discerning about her sourcing and has personally visited many of the farmers with whom she works. Her single-origin chocolate bars offer an opportunity to taste the terroir differences between cacao grown in Colombia, El Salvador and Peru. Local ingredients feature prominently, too, from Rishi teas in her tea collection to fresh cherries to soak in brandy for cordials, a seasonal Valentine's Day favorite. *Gail Ambrosius Chocolatier, 2083 Atwood Ave., Madison, Wisconsin, 608-249-3500, gailambrosius.com*



PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY BELLISIO'S AND TIM CHATMAN

LOS ANGELES

TOUR

SHOP

MOD MALL

Hip Hayden Tract becomes a shopping hot spot.

BY AMBER GIBSON

Culver City is proving that it's a shopping destination worth fighting Los Angeles traffic for. Since Platform opened in spring 2016, its ever-evolving assortment of innovative merchants, chefs and creatives has drawn an enthusiastic crowd.

What was once a four-acre car dealership has been transformed into a collection of eight spaces connected by meandering gardens. Its home, creative corridor Hayden Tract, has received myriad accolades for its postmodern, neo-industrial architecture.

Just as eclectic are Platform's 20 boutiques and pop-ups, from Aesop's first U.S. day spa to Linda Farrow's North American flagship. Magasin carries menswear from Camoshita, Eral 55 and Thomas Mason, while Rabbit Ladders is dedicated to high-end children's clothing. And when hunger strikes, the appetizing options range from charcuterie at the Cannibal to mesquite-grilled Mexican street food at Loqui to ice cream at Van Leeuwen. *Platform, 8850 Washington Blvd., Culver City, 310-883-5138, platformla.com*



DINE

CALIFORNIA DREAMER

Michael McCarty reinvents his acclaimed eatery.

BY KATE NELSON

Michael McCarty's eponymous Santa Monica restaurant helped pioneer what we've come to know as California cuisine when its doors opened back in April 1979. Regulars came for the stellar service, the gorgeous garden and of course the farm-to-table fare (long before the concept had caught on). The roster of culinary talent who's come through the kitchen here reads like a who's who of American cuisine: Ken Frank, Kazuto Matsusaka, Gordon Naccarato, Mark Peel, Billy Pflug, Nancy Silverton, Jonathan Waxman and Brooke Williamson, among others.

Last year, McCarty took a chance on promising young chef Miles Thompson — who, if anyone is counting, is nearly a decade younger than the eatery itself. And like many risks the restaurateur has taken over the decades, that bet is paying off in spades. Critics and customers alike are drooling over Thompson's forward-thinking, thoroughly delectable fare that simultaneously modernizes the menu and honors the Santa Monica institution's history.

Some things haven't changed. The walls are still adorned with museum-quality works from its proprietor's private collection (think artists like Dennis Hopper, Jasper Johns and Frank Stella). McCarty still roams from table to table to introduce himself and thank diners for their patronage. And much like it did back in the seventies, his restaurant is once again experiencing an incredible culinary revolution. *Michael's Santa Monica, 1147 Third St., Santa Monica, 310-451-0843, michaelssantamonica.com*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATIE GIBBS AND MICHAEL'S SANTA MONICA

LOS ANGELES

PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY PREFERRED HOTELS & RESORTS



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DELIGHTFULLY DISCREET

The Huntley is Santa Monica's under-the-radar stay.

BY AMBER GIBSON

The Huntley's sparsely decorated lobby is as discreet as the hotel's entrance. This prime Santa Monica spot is situated just a block from Ocean Avenue, two blocks from the beach and three blocks from the popular Third Street Promenade shopping district.

The décor here is chic and clean, with gray and white tones flowing smoothly from the lobby to the guest rooms. All the accoutrements are appropriately luxurious, from Nespresso coffee machines to huge flat-screen televisions to Voss water at turndown. Spacious bathrooms deliver on all counts, too, with Bulgari toiletries, super soft towels and excellent water pressure. A delightful bonus: iPrefer elite members receive a custom welcome amenity upon check-in (think dark chocolate-covered strawberries and a bottle of Cava). *The Huntley Hotel, 1111 Second St., Santa Monica, 310-394-5454, thehuntleyhotel.com*



SHOP

SITTING PRETTY

Les Lunes defines business-class chic.

BY AMBER GIBSON

“You never know who you are going to run into on a plane,” remarks Les Lunes CEO and founder Anna Lecat. Her dresses and pants feel like loungewear yet are elegant enough for flirting with your favorite celebrity should you hit the seat-assignment jackpot. The brand’s understated yet sophisticated pieces come in several hues, from neutral to bold, and are easily mixed and matched. A new menswear line features pants, tees and boxers.

Lecat speaks fluent French and Mandarin — useful as her clothing is designed and fitted in Paris and manufactured in Shanghai. She lived in the Chinese city for 16 years and now has her own factory there, employing 50 skilled local seamstresses. “They are paid almost triple the market rate and are treated as members of the Les Lunes family,” she explains. “We don’t do conveyer-line production. Each garment is made by one person from beginning to end.”

Ethical and sustainable production is of paramount importance, and the breathable bamboo fabric is undeniably luxurious. Bodysuits fit better than lingerie, and the leggings are softer than yoga pants (once you try on a pair, you won’t want to take them off).
Les Lunes, 500 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, 312-595-1434, leslunes.com

CHICAGO

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GILDED AGE GLAM

The Gwen is Starwood's Windy City crown jewel.

BY AMBER GIBSON

Chicago sculptress Gwen Lux was the inspiration behind Starwood's Luxury Collection art deco outpost. She designed the mythological stone bas-relief on the façade of the historic McGraw-Hill Building, and replicas of her work adorn the hotel entry. In the lobby, plush velvet couches accent bronze screens and smooth wooden floors.

For a property with 311 guest rooms, service is friendly. Junior suites are extra spacious. Luxurious bathrooms offer both marble soaking tubs and steam showers with Molton Brown toiletries.

The Gwen is attached to the Shops at North Bridge, one of Chicago's top luxury malls. In inclement weather, you can shop Nordstrom, Hugo Boss, Stuart Weitzman and the like without setting foot outside. On sunnier days, you can soak up the rays on the fifth floor terrace while enjoying craft cocktails and poptails (frozen Prosecco popsicles) courtesy of Upstairs at the Gwen. *The Gwen, 521 N. Rush St., Chicago, 312-645-1500, thegwenchicago.com*

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VEGGIE NIRVANA

Healthy eating has never been so fun.

BY AMBER GIBSON

When did crudités become so glamorous? It's the most expensive and labor-intensive item on the menu at Clever Rabbit, perfect for sharing with friends while sipping a carrot margarita. The seasonally rotating spread is stunning. Juicy plums come paired with goat cheese, and carrots, cucumbers and housemade naan are perfect for dipping in *labneh*, mushroom mousse and smoky eggplant agrodolce.

Chef Matt Lair displays a light hand, sourcing the best local produce and showing enough restraint to let its delicate flavors shine. Vegetarian, vegan, dairy-free and gluten-free options are all clearly labeled on the menu. There's also pasta, pizza, seafood and even a decadent double cheeseburger on offer.

The stretch of Division Street that Clever Rabbit calls home has long been known for its sports bars and pubs. The eatery is poised to become a Wicker Park favorite thanks to its amiable service, fairly priced wines, and thoughtful and delicious fare. *Clever Rabbit, 2015 W. Division St., Chicago, 773-697-8711, cleverrabbitchicago.com*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRANDON BARRE AND ERIC KLEINBERG

