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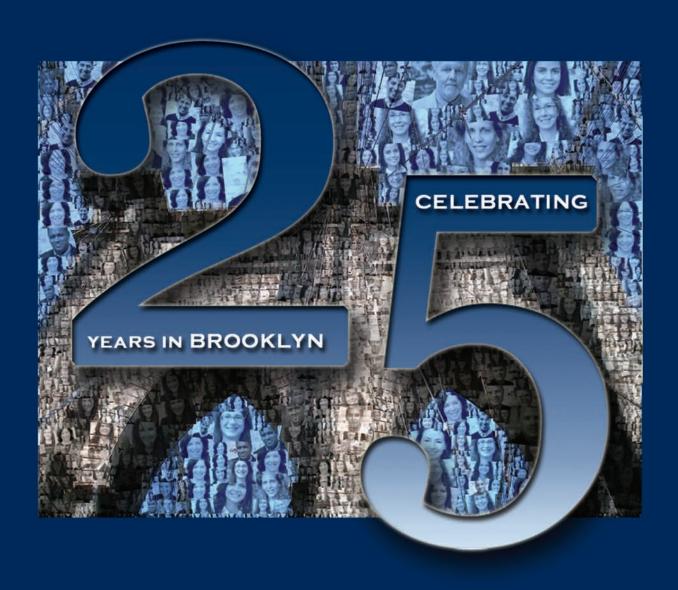








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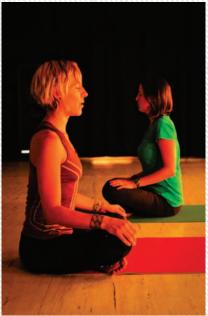
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This is where I should be waxing poetic about the ephemeral fall foliage and the thrill of the changing of the seasons, right? But who am I kidding? What it all really means is impending vitamin D deficiency. The window of daylight is shrinking, and before you know it, it will be time to cover the AC with a trash bag and turn on the radiators.

While this particular seasonal transition isn't always easy for some of us, it's probably no coincidence that many of our major holidays happen this time of year—to distract us with fun things like shopping (which, by the way, is a huge seratonin booster) and raucous office parties! This issue of Park Slope Reader is here to remind you why the holiday season in the Slope should be celebrated and embraced. We hope you enjoy! Till next season, Nancy



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Pictured on the Cover: L-R: Row 1: Diana Kane, The Gowanus Canal, BKYLN Larder; Row 2: BKYLN Larder, Cog & Pearl; Row 3: Blue Apron, Build It Green, Walk-In Cookbook, The Bell House; Row 4: Flirt, Cozbi, Hootie Couture; Row 5: Wedge











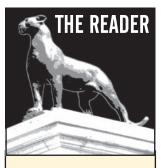












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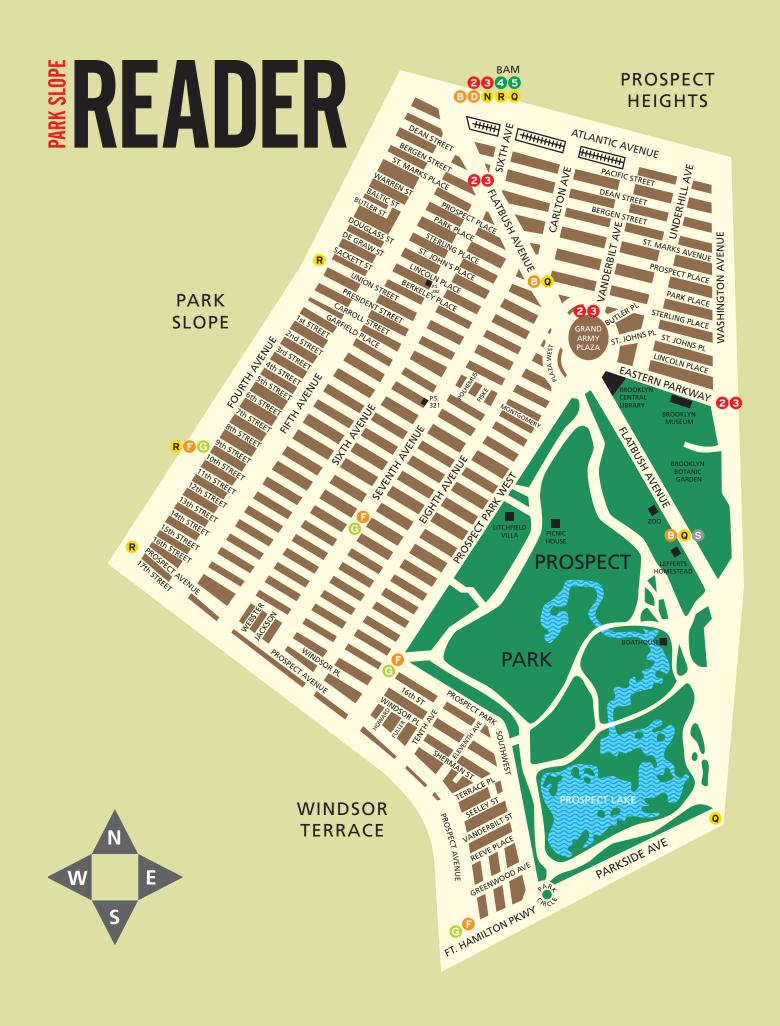
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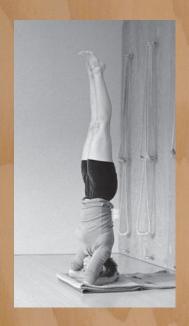
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BENDING TOWARD BROOKLYN

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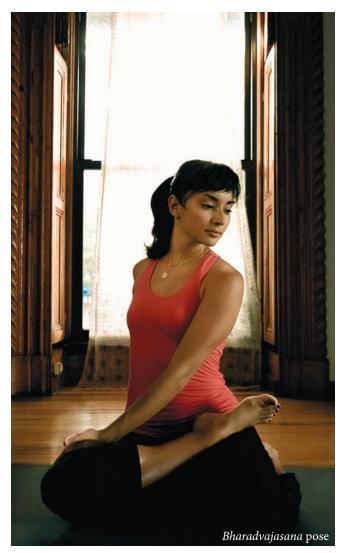
There was a day in late August when everything suddenly felt a little lighter, and a soft breeze made it easier to breathe. It happened overnight. The shift from hot, humid nights to being able to sleep with a blanket was here. The quality of the air was less heavy and there was a little pep in our step—almost like being lifted. We've spent most of September adjusting to the shifts, and now autumn has officially set in. How does that affect us and our yoga practice?

hange is constant and we all have different reactions to it. We see nature morph and respond to the presence of less or more light, wind, and water, and so our physical and subtle bodies absorb and mirror these responses. But change is hard-and sometimes our bodies don't take well to it. We may begin to notice and feel reactions that hinder our ability to stay balanced and at peace. With the help of yoga's sister science, Ayurveda, we can identify the elements that are shifting inside and outside of our bodies. Through this understanding, we can navigate the change of this season with ease with some helpful tips ranging from suggested food choices to what yoga poses to focus on.

WHAT IS AYURVEDA?

Avurveda is a Sanskrit word that means "the science of life and longevity". It allows us to find harmony with the laws of nature. Dating back 5,000 years from India, Ayurveda reveals how to prevent illness, heal through natural means, and stay in balance.

I like to think of it as preventive care at its best, being able to approach our health from an anticipatory standpoint as opposed to treating illness with drugs and surgery. Imbalances occur when there is "dis-ease" in the body. Literally, the body is not able to function with ease. The first step is identifying what we are working with and sharpening



our awareness of it.

The principles of Ayurveda are based on five natural elements that exist in nature and in our bodies: space, air, fire, water, and earth. These elements are organized into energies called primary doshas. The three doshas are: vatta (space and air), pitta (fire and water) and kapha (water and earth). Fall is known as vatta season, winter as kapha season, and summer as pitta season. Each body contains different amounts of each dosha making up our unique Ayurvedic composition. continue to be amazed by the power of Ayurveda's intuitive

The freshness of the air in this fall/vatta season wipes the slate clean, making space for new things. It is a perfect time to start something new and set some new goals. Creative energy is all around us in the autumn, so be sure to feel supported by this while also remaining aware that you may feel a bit ungrounded or tired as a result. But there are things we can do to better balance, understand, and integrate this excitement!

Having grown up in

California, the word "season" didn't really mean much to me. Living in New York for more than a decade, I have come to appreciate the transformations and see that each season has a personality. Understanding how to prevent myself from going out of balance during seasonal shifts has helped me to stay in balance through

all kinds of life transitions and ultimately, appreciate change. After all, it's New York. It's a dramatic place where so much can happen in one moment—so my practice helps remind me that this inevitability is normal and that, as my teacher Ali Cramer reminds me, "You can't control change, but you can control your reaction to it."

MAKING CHOICES

Let's look at our diet first to see how we can balance out the dominant vatta dosha that fall brings. One of the best ways to stay grounded is by paying attention to what you eat. Kapha foods come from the earth, the soil. Root vegetables are key during this time of year. Beets, carrots, turnips, leeks, parsnips, and onions will help ward off feelings of spaciness and bring us "back to earth". Even foods that grow close to the earth or out of it, such as squashes, zucchini, asparagus, and cabbage are helpful.

Stay away from raw foods—they are too cooling when we need to cultivate more heat. Salad lovers, experiment with warm salads. Cook your food and eat it warm. Add a little *pitta* heat with some added spiciness, like cayenne and black pepper. Keep it warm for fruits, too. Bake, poach, or stew fruits of the season.

Baked apples are great for this time of year!

Because of the dryness that occurs with so much wind, keep your organs and skin lubricated. Try cooking with more oil: ghee (clarified butter), sesame oil, flax seed oil, pumpkin seed oil; add cheese and yogurts to your meals. Instead of drinking just plain water (which you should be drinking lots of) integrate diluted yogurt, almond milk, coconut milk, rice milk, and hemp milk.

And if you feel your head is in the clouds, experiment with the color red. Red is a grounding color and also the color of the first chakra, known as the *Muladhara* (root) chakra starting from the soles of the feet and extending to the bottom of the pelvic floor. Red pants can be awesome for the fall time, red nail polish, red socks, and even red underwear!

Consistency and routine are pathways to counteracting the flighty nature of *vatta* season. What better way to introduce routine than in your yoga and meditation practice. Setting aside just ten minutes a day, preferably the same time of day and in the same place, will anchor you. Add consistency by journaling, completing a daily chore, taking a walk, or making your breakfast every day. Regular rest is crucial during this time of year. The body



Ayurveda and yoga remind us that we all have the means to center and balance ourselves. By listening and sharpening our awareness of what is both within and around us, we can make informed, conscious decisions and take responsibility for our own well-being.

will naturally need more sleep. Give in to taking a nap or scheduling an extra hour of sleep.

Ayurveda teaches us that every choice we make about what we put into and onto our body affects our overall harmony.

AYURVEDA AND YOGA

Here are suggestions on how to calm the air element, steady the mind, strengthen the body, and enrich the soul. These are options to take with you to your next yoga class or try on your own. Just as our aim was to ground and heat ourselves with our food and lifestyle choices, the same idea goes for our yoga poses as well. (If you are recovering from a specific injury or surgery, seek the guidance of a trained yoga teacher.)

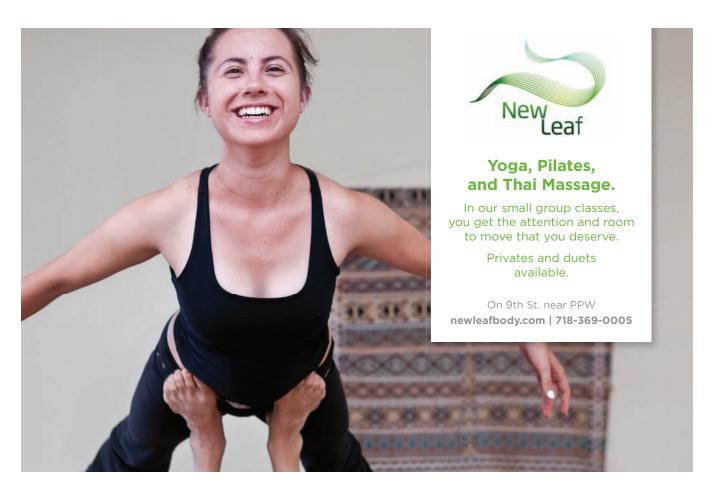
During this time, excess air gets trapped in the pelvic region and we are working to release that air. Child's pose, *Balasana*, is immediately grounding. If you are taking a fast-paced yoga class and feeling anxious, take your knees down the mat, move your seat back to your heels, reach your arms forward, and let your forehead rest on the ground or a block.

Slow it down and find more stillness in all poses to activate a sense of stability. Take slower

sun salutations, *Surya Namaskar*. Elongate your inhales and exhales. Experiment with retaining the breath between the inhales and exhales. Use more props (blocks, blankets, and straps) in poses so that the ground comes to you and you prevent yourself from straining. Are the poses and intention behind each pose bringing you into balance or taking you out of balance? Take a longer *Savasana*, corpse pose.

Squat poses are stabilizing as our pelvis draws closer to the ground and we tap into the strength of our feet and legs while releasing excess *vatta*. Take a wide squat pose, *Malasana*, (*see above*) using a block or a few pillows to support your seat. Take your hands to your chest with your left palm facing out and take your right palm facing in. Clasp the fingers. Find Ganesh mudra This hand seal represents the Hindi deity, Ganesh, the elephant god that rules the first root chakra. Inhale, soften the grasp and as you exhale, let your elbows draw away from each other. Do six rounds of breath total and then switch the facing of the palms. If your heels do not reach the ground quite yet, roll up a blanket or towel so your heels are making contact with something.

Standing, forward-bending poses create space and balance in



the feet and legs. Take a variation of your standing forward bend by crossing your ankles, Uttanasana. Use blocks or big books to support your body so you are not straining the back of the legs. Slightly bend your knees to provide relief to your lower back. Rock a bit more weight into the balls of your feet. Square off your hips and let the weight of your head go. Stay here for twelve rounds of breath. Enjoy the benefits of this inversion, where the heart is above the head. Cross the other ankle in front.

Cultivating balance comes with the testing of our balance. What better way than to stand on one leg! Release the foot that is crossed behind you into a warrior 3, Virabhadrasana 3. Keep the raised foot flexed and let the toes point down as the heel reaches behind you. The standing foot stays internally rotated and the hips are in line with each other. Stay with your hand on the blocks. For more heat in the pose, let your hands form a prayer in front of the chest. Draw your leg to be in line with your torso, and allow your gaze to move out in front of you so your chest is not collapsing down. Stay for five rounds of breath. Do the other side.

The best way to connect to the ground, is to come closer to it. Sit on the floor. This suggested pose brings instant peace with an added sweetness. Bend your left leg and slide your left foot to the outside of your left hip with your knee and shin on the ground. Take the right foot to the inside of the left thigh with the right knee open the side. Inhale your hands up, and on the exhale twist to the right, letting the left hand come on the outside of the right knee and the right hand tent behind you. Look at your left shoulder as if someone is going to give you a kiss on the right cheek. This is Bharadvajasana (see page 19). Close your eyes for added bliss. The body is experiencing a lot of twisting, creating a quiet fire while finding tranquility in the legs. Stay for nine rounds of breath.

Variation: you can take a half lotus with the right foot and the right hand can come to grab the right foot for a deeper twist. Be sure to take a little counter twist to the other side after you are done. Do the other side.

Ayurveda and yoga remind us that we all have the means to center and balance ourselves. By listening and sharpening our awareness of what is both within and around us, we can make informed, conscious decisions and take responsibility for our own well-being.

Happy fall! ◆

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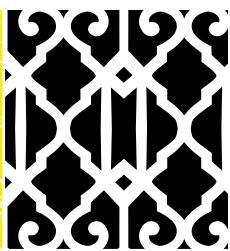
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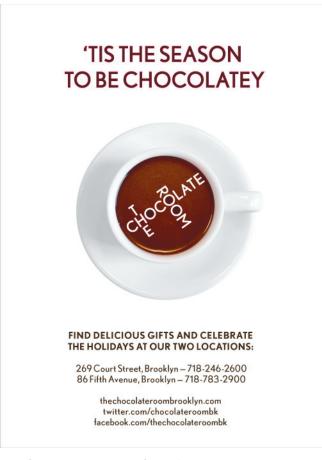
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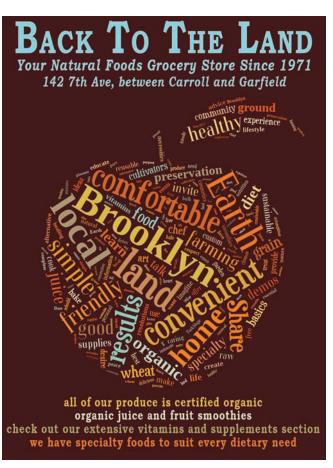


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When shopping local this holiday season, there is really no better way to represent Brooklyn than giving the gift of food. Artisanal, organic, regional, small-batch, off-beat—we've got it covered here in the headquarters of the foodie movement. You can check off everyone on your list by making the rounds of some of our favorite stores.



For Your Parents, Who Get a Kick out of Using "Brooklyn" as an Adjective: BKLYN Larder (228 Flatbush Avenue)

BKLYN Larder, opened in 2009, was one of the first specialty food purveyors in the current wave of entrepreneurs making the Brooklyn food scene the cultural phenomenon it is today. Perhaps best known for its excellent cheese selection and delicious sandwiches, you can find a wide array of local and international jams, honeys, oils, meat and dairy products, and other groceries to gather for a gift. Or, let the discerning staff do the work for you with their wonderfully-curated gift boxes. The men on your list will enjoy the Beer & Snacks basket filled with Redhead's Bacon Peanut Brittle, McClure's Potato Chips, Spanish Style Fuet Sausage, BKLYN Larder's own Olive-Oil Roasted Almonds and, of course, a few bottles of craft beer. Your family members from out of town can take a round-the-borough tour in a box with The Brooklyn: King's County gift set, packed with Mast Brothers Chocolate, McClure's Pickles, Liddabit Sweets, and much more.

For the Men in Your Life You've Already Given a Dozen Scarves to: Bitter & Esters (700 Washington Avenue)

Part do-it-yourself brewing site, part homebrewing supply store, and part classroom, Bitter & Esters has a little bit of everything to treat friends and family who are interested in homebrewing whether they be first-timers or experienced brewmeisters. An easy pick would be one of their Brewing Essentials kits. While they have kits tailored to certain styles, their starter kit would be a good choice for those new to the craft. If you think someone might not be ready to turn their studios into breweries but still like the idea of making their own beer, sign them up for one of the classes offered on-site, like the popular introductory Brewshop 101 or their more advanced lectures on hops or yeast. If they're hooked but don't have the space, set them up to brew on premises; the store has dedicated space, equipment, and ingredients on hand for brewing one to two batches. Come to brew the beer, return later to bottle and package it, then return once more to pick it up. Slots generally book up two to three weeks in advance during the holiday season.

For the Friend Visiting from Out of Town, Whose Itinerary Revolves Around Where They'll be Eating Each Meal: Brooklyn Brine (574 President St)

Brooklyn Brine pickles are one of the most common goods

on the scene when it comes to markets and stores showcasing Brooklyn's locally-crafted treats, but there's nothing like seeing everything that they have to offer all in one place at the store, which is located on their pickling premises. Their standard NYC deli pickles are fail-proof, but their classics-with-a-twist like Maple Bourbon Bread and Butter, Whiskey Sour Pickles, or Hop-Pickle (pickled with Dogfish Head 60 Minute IPA) are just off-kilter enough to appeal to someone who is just discovering their foodie sensibilities. Try branching out to the pickle road less travelled with their Moroccan Beans, Fennel Beats, Curried Squash, or Chipolte Carrots.

For Your Coworkers that You Actually Like and Will be Sneaking Presents to in the Elevator, Hoping Your Other Coworkers Won't See: Blue Apron Foods (814 Union St)

No list of food sources in Brooklyn would be complete without Blue Apron Foods, one of the most beloved stores in Park Slope that is full of well-known and undiscovered treats alike. Build a basket of chocolates, candies, pastas, oils, coffee, teas, honey, flour, characuterie and, well, pretty much anything you can think of to represent local tastes and trends.

For the Hosts of all of the Holiday Parties You'll be Juggling: Wedge (728 Franklin Avenue)

One of the new hot spots in ever-evolving Crown Heights is Wedge, a cheese shop brought to you by the owners of next-door-neighbor cafe, Little Zelda. This small little store carries an impressive array of cheeses representing several regions and techniques. With a rotating selection, you'll be sure to discover something new each time. (As of this writing, a particularly intriguing offering was Barely Buzzed, a cheese hand-rubbed with





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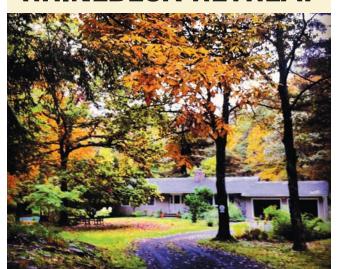
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espresso and lavender from Utah company Beehive Cheese Co.) Being short on shelving space, their selection of other provisions available for purchase is carefully curated to showcase only the best, like Sweet Deliverance Jams & Chutneys, Royal Rose simple syrups, and Sfoglini pasta.

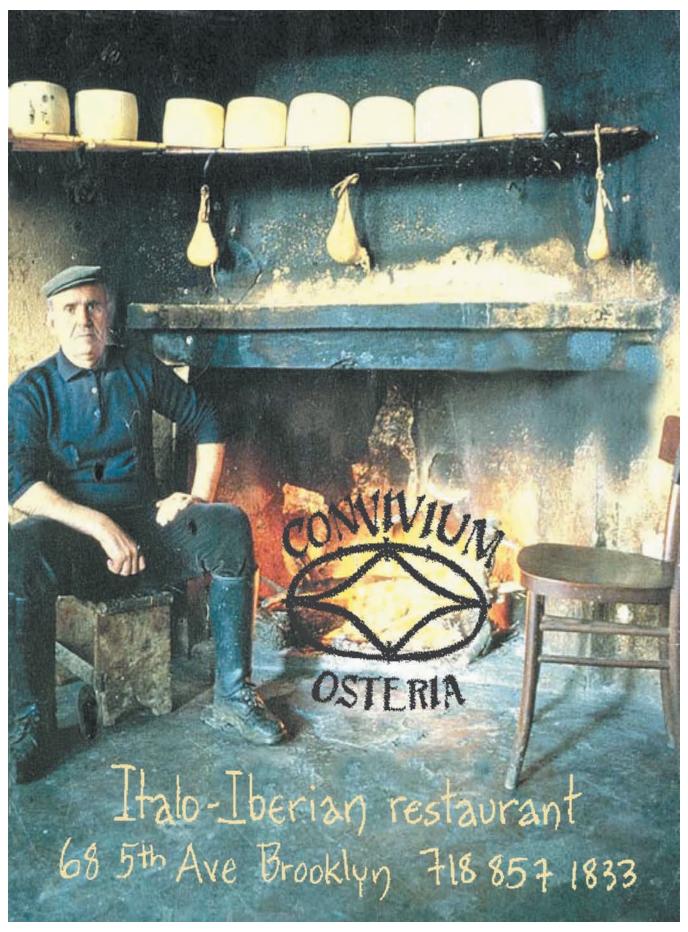
For the Friend that Instagrams all of their Meals: Empire Mayonnaise (564 Vanderbilt Avenue)

If there's a store that could best represent the artisanal food movement (some might say even cartoonishly so), it would be Empire Mayonnaise, the store selling only homemade, organic, local mayonnaise. Using non-GMO oils, local pasture-raised eggs, and seasonal ingredients, Empire Mayonnaise offers unique short-run flavors to spice up your sandwiches, dips, and salads. A good place to start is the Brookyn Assortment, a collection of bacon, white garlic, and truffle mayos. Other current offerings include rosemary, red chili, and vadouvan—a spice with notes of fenugreek, turmeric, nutmeg, cumin, curry, and citrus.

For Anyone who Wouldn't be Caught Dead Owning a Keurig: Damico Foods (309 Court St)

For the coffee connoisseur, Damico Foods is a one-stop shop. Offering a wide variety of coffee beans, blends, and accessories (like grinders, machines, and mugs) for more than fifty years, you'll find quality products in a charming, oldschool atmosphere. A collection that's crying out to be gifted is the Brownstone Collection of four original blends inspired by Brooklyn neighborhoods of Park Slope, Red Hook, Carroll Gardens, and Cobble Hill •







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VF.R M()V

Recently, I went swimming in sewage. Even for those who enjoy extreme sports, I don't recommend it. Sewage stinks, in all senses of the word.

Let me say right up front that there is a moral to this story and that moral has nothing to do with climate change or infrastructure failings. The moral is: Listen to your grandmother. Even if she is neurotic. Especially if she is neurotic. You shouldn't listen all the time, obviously, or you'll end up a shut-in, so listen only when she is right. How do you know when your overbearing, Doomsdayprepping grandmother will be right? That's just luck.

It was the end of September, and I was strapping my sixmonth-old into her stroller so we could pick up her big siblings from after-school, when my grandmother called, as she likes to do, to tell me it was raining. Nonny acts as my own personal weather advisory system, alerting me to hurricanes, flash floods, icy sidewalk conditions, and heat waves. I blew off her warnings, as I like to do, dismissing them as the ravings of a lunatic.

"Is gonna be a looooot a rain," she cautioned, "Tunderschtorms."

"We'll be fine," I assured her. "We're not going to melt in the water."

"Leave de baby wit me," she pleaded.

"Fine," I conceded. Nonny lives seven blocks away from us, conveniently located near my big kids' after-school.

Within ten minutes, I was dropping the baby off at her doorstep, and it was apparent already that she'd been right about the rain. It was pouring, the kind of rain which falls not so much in drops but in sheets. Cataclysmic thunder and lightning exploded overhead, making an End-of-Days light show.

"OK," I told my grandmother as I passed off the baby, "I'll be back soon."

"No!" Nonny gasped, "You can't go out!"

"What, am I gonna get hit by lightning?" I joked. As if replying to my hubris, a peal of thunder erupted outside the window, the subtext of which was clearly, "Keep it up, lady, and see what happens." Then, for extra measure, the rain was replaced by hail large chunks of hail—which made a racket on my grandmother's metal patio set.

Nonny held the baby tighter and shook her head.

"What?" I asked, "I have an umbrella."

That umbrella might have been useful had not the wind tunnel of Fourth Avenue blown it inside out within five seconds. I got pummeled by hail all the way down to the intersection of Fourth Avenue and First Street, at which point I stopped noticing the hail because I was confronted with bigger problems.

The curb was flooded with the nastiest-looking and most vilesmelling water I've ever seen: grayish brown, littered with floating bits of garbage. I looked to my right and realized why. A manhole had popped off the street, sending a geyser of sewage spewing into the intersection.

Trudging through the puddle, which reached my mid-calf, wasn't the most pleasant experience of my life-what with the slimy bits of refuse clinging to my bare legs-but it was still significantly less revolting than the time I stepped inside the carcass of a dead rat in Central Park, which is the barometer by which I gauge grossness. And, it was over fast—until I got to the next intersection on Garfield Street where the water level was even higher.

"Gotta love city living," I grumbled as I waded through, consoling myself with the thought that I was almost there; the kids were just a block away, across Fourth Avenue. But once I'd crossed the mammoth puddle, I saw that getting across the avenue—without an ark at least—was not going to be pretty.

The sewage was lapping in waves over the sidewalk, and on the street, the water reached the car bumpers. Huge black garbage bags were floating down Fourth Avenue, just as if it were a river. I hadn't passed a pedestrian in a few blocks, but as I stood there, somewhat stunned, a middle-aged woman walked by, mincing her steps as if that might keep her legs from getting coated in toxic sludge.

"This is just naaaaaasty," she grimaced, "and it's worse that way. Do NOT go that way." She pointed across Fourth Avenue.

Then she pulled an iPhone out of her purse and started snapping pictures so people would believe her when she told them about it later, I presumed.

I cowered under my umbrella, holding the rim so it didn't blow inside out, and weighed my options. I could stand there and wait for the sewage to drain, but, I thought as thunder boomed overhead, only if I was OK with getting electrocuted. I could turn around and wait at my grandmother's until the storm died down-the kids would be OK at after-school for another half hour—but I'd have to trudge back through the massive puddles I'd just crossed. Besides, I was nearly there, just a block away, and I'd come this far. It was just a puddle, after all. It wasn't Scylla and Charybdis.

I tucked my diaper bag securely in my armpit and stepped forward, slowly making my way to the crosswalk.



BROOKLYN ARTS EXCHANGE

arts artists in progress

in the theater – for a complete list of events at BAX visit events.bax.org



Great Romance (a work-in-progress showing)

Saturday, October 12 @ 8:00pm

Written by **JESS BARBAGALLO** | Directed by Katherine Brook

Written in a panache of prose and poetry, Great Romance is a play about heightened, obsessive and romantic feelings between self-imposed exiles living in an anachronistic, isolated small town, where people make love with words as much as they do their bodies.

Jess Barbagallo was named one of the "Future legends of NY theater" by TimeOut NY magazine editors in March 2013.



Folk Play Project

Sunday, October 20 @ 7:00pm

Curated by MAYA PARRA, JOIE GOLOMB & SCOTT ADKINS

BAX Scripts in Progress (SIP) series and the Brooklyn Writers Space join forces to stage the the second annual Folk Play Project. Inspired by the power of folk music to share stories, tell truth, and bring people together, 6 new plays will be created in 24 hours, each inspired by a song from the American folk tradition. An evening featuring live music, and original theatre. A list of writers, directors and actors will be published soon.



Open Studio Series

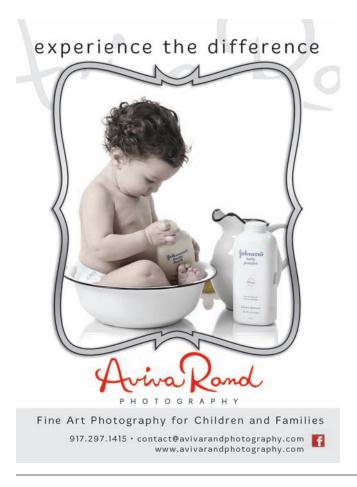
Visit events.bax.org/open-studio-series for dates & times.

This is the first in a series of showings of work created by the 2013/14 BAX **ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE** that culminate in year-end performances in May and June. This series offers a rare opportunity to engage with artists as they create their work over a long period of time.

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BAX also offers an array of classes and workshops for artists of all ages. Visit **youth.bax.org** for more information on youth education, and visit accessbax.bax.org for adult workshops.

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"Ugh blegh crap blegh," I moaned as the water crept up to my knees.

I crossed Fourth Avenue, the six lanes virtually empty, but instead of the water level receding when I got to the other side, it got higher. Within a few steps I found myself waist-deep.

A gaggle of mechanics in uniform stood under an awning further down the street, watching me.

"Hey lady, get out of there!" one yelled, and then another elaborated, "It's sewer water!"

"I'm TRYING," I bellowed back as I tried to move forward against the weight of water. It occurred to me that maybe I should give up walking and start kicking but that option, though expedient, seemed insane.

If I had the baby with me, I thought, she'd be doggie paddling in sewage right now. Nonny was right.

Just when it seemed the mechanics would have to send a tire upstream so I could float down the street, the water level dropped and I was on dry land again.

I speed-walked the rest of the block to the kids' after school program, yanking up the waist of my skirt because it was so sopping, it was sliding off my hips. My skin wasn't just wet, but gritty. I tried not to imagine little cartoon bacteria characters crawling under my skin, a devious-looking e. coli, a cackling staph, whatever-the-heck germ causes typhoid fever and cholera, doing a conga line across my epidermis.

It was official: swimming in sewage was worse than stepping in rat guts, if only because it was a far more immersive experience.

As I walked into the storefront where Primo and Seconda were waiting, I spotted a rack of T-shirts for sale—which was fortuitous,

since by my estimation, I could tolerate about sixty seconds more of being in the sewer clothes before I went cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs. In sixty seconds, I would be stripping down naked and it would really be preferable that there be another item of clothing for me to wear at that point because otherwise my children would never be able to show their faces at after school again.

I grabbed the biggest T-shirt I could find, and emerged from the bathroom two minutes later wearing a gray XXL whose hem made it as far as my mid-thigh. A shirt-dress, I reasoned.

"Oh hi Mommy," my seven-year-old, Primo said, hardly lifting his head from his work, "Did you see the rain?"

"As a matter of fact, I did."

Seconda, my five-year-old, stared at me: "Mommy," she asked, "where are your clothes?"

"They were compromised," I replied, "A little sewage problem." Then Primo looked up and began to guffaw: "No offense, Mommy, but you look like a crazy person."

It was only later, in the shower at my grandmother's, when I really looked like a crazy person, as I scrubbed my lower half like Lady Macbeth with her damn spot.

Finally, though, I felt satisfied. I had no open wounds and I hadn't drunk the stuff; I just might avoid cholera after all.

What I would avoid, with certainly, was Fourth Avenue during flash floods. You know what they say: swim in sewage once, shame on you . . .

You can read more of Nicole's misadventures in Mommyland, and beyond, in her forthcoming memoir Now I See You (June '14, St. Martin's Press) and on her blog A Mom Amok http://amomamok.com).

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PARK SLOPE READER presents

LOCAL

This holiday season *Park Slope Reader* invites you to support our local merchants and businesses. Whether you're shopping for gifts or preparing your home for a festive celebration, you're sure to find everything you need right here in the neighborhood with our SHOPLOCAL Holiday Guide.



























FASHIONED IN BROOKLYN

By Lisa Fogarty Photos by Kristen Uhrich

nce upon a time, the most fashionable New Yorkers dwelled somewhere south of Fourteenth Street and north of Canal. They shopped for designer threads in SoHo and bohemian vintage in the East Village, and there was little room for competition in a borough as gritty as Brooklyn. Boy, have times changed.

Thanks to some of the most innovative designers and entrepreneurs who have planted their flags this side of the East River, neighborhoods like Park Slope, Prospect Heights, and Gowanus offer an electrifying array of high-end boutiques, affordable vintage shops, unique jewelry and home goods stores, and even the bridal shop of an unconventional Brooklyn girl's dreams. Here is a glimpse into the lives and inspirations of some of your favorite neighborhood designers and shopkeepers:



FLIRT

93 Fifth Avenue, Park Slope (718) 783-0364 Hours: Mon.-Sun. 11:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m. flirt-brooklyn.com

Seryn Potter is the first to admit you can trip over cute clothing in Brooklyn. "But cute and looks good on you are two completely different things," the designer says. "At the end of the day it comes down to flattery of the person wearing it. We are consumed by fit, fabric, and what maximizes the potential of what everyone can wear." Alongside partners Heather Falcone and Patti Gilstrap, Potter opened the first Flirt boutique in 2000 in Carroll Gardens. In 2004, they expanded and moved to Park Slope, where Flirt has gained a loyal following of women who flip for its shoes, quirky-cute accessories, and vintage-inspired dresses, skirts, and bathing suits by local designers such as Karina Cousineau, Melissa Bell, and Emily G. "Our dresses are built for curvy figures, have nips in the waist, stretchy, soft jersey fabrics that never wrinkle, and can be hand washed," Potter says. "They're really great for moms." And if you're in the market for something completely different, choose among seven different skirt styles and collaborate with Flirt to design your very own custom skirt.

HOOTI COUTURE ←

321 Flatbush Avenue, Prospect Heights (718) 857-1977 Hours: Tue.-Sun. 11a.m.-8 p.m. hooticouture.com

Before some of her vintage '80s-loving customers were even born, Hooti Couture owner Alison Houtte could be seen rocking shoulder pads and dresses by Courrèges in magazines like *Vogue*. After a successful twelve-year run as a model, Houtte turned her attention to helping others discover the joys of vintage. Although her first boutique was locate in Park Slope, she has since found a larger space in Prospect Heights to which she credits the "best landlords



in the world" for making it possible. "North Flatbush is the Village of thirty years ago," Houtte says. She fills her shop with eclectic, but wearable pieces that range from '50s cropped bolero mink jackets to chunky gold jewelry and '70s day dresses. Most pieces are priced twenty-five to eighty-five dollars, with higher-end items mixed in for good measure. "If I like it and it's funky and fun, I buy it," she says. "Brooklyn is not about the Gucci and Prada—it's about where'd you get that funky dress? I've hopefully created a welcoming environment that is colorful, fun, and inexpensive."

COZBI •

351 Fifth Avenue, Park Slope (718) 246-7960 Hours: Tue.-Sat. 11 a.m.-7 p.m., Sun. 12 p.m.-5 p.m. cozbi.com

If you're looking to build your wardrobe with well-made, mostly classic pieces that boast an impeccable fit, Cozbi is your haven. Owner and designer Cozbi A. Cabrera got her start designing for Sony Music, where she dabbled at first in creating gorgeous cloth dolls that immediately garnered the attention of art collectors. After experiencing success with her first shop in Carroll Gardens where she sold her dolls and children's clothing, she felt committed to responding to her client's needs. "A lot of women had difficulty fitting clothing," Cabrera says. "What is standard in the fashion industry doesn't work for them. So I would actually take their measurements and fit the clothes to them." In 2011, Cabrera moved to her Park Slope location, where she expanded her line of women's attire. "We're not offering fast-food clothing," she says. "We are warm, welcoming, and flexible. And we're not too sexy for our shorts."





COG & PEARL

190 Fifth Avenue, Park Slope (718) 623-8200 Hours: Tue.-Sat. 12 p.m.-8 p.m., Sun. 12 p.m.-6 p.m. cogandpearl.com

What do you get when a musician and a writer open up a home goods shop in Park Slope? A successful neighborhood favorite that carries everything from terrarium kits to embroidered pillows by Coral & Tusk to gorgeous handsoldered necklaces by Marjorie Victor made—where else but in Brooklyn. Since opening in 2002, owners Seth Walter and Kristin Overson have remained committed to offering customers one-of-a-kind goods that won't break the bank. "Our customers want things that are well priced, beautiful, and functional," Walter says. The enterprising duo are so immersed in the community that there was no question where they could open shop. "Our favorite restaurants and stores are on Fifth Avenue," Walter says. "We wanted to be part of the renaissance."



KIWI

119 Seventh Avenue, Park Slope (718) 622-5551 Hours: Mon-Fri 11 a.m. -7 p.m., Sat. 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Sun. 12 p.m.-6 p.m. kiwidesignco.com

Before opening Kiwi, Christine Alcalay embarked on a corporate design career that had little to do with Brooklyn—until she met friend and future business partner Marlene Siegel. "I had never stepped foot in Brooklyn, but Marlene convinced me to check out Park Slope," Alcalay says. "I felt like I walked into this romantic storybook neighborhood." When they opened shop in 2002, naysayers predicted the high-end boutique wouldn't last. Eleven years later, they're still going strong, thanks to the duo's meticulously selected clothing and accessories by designers like Vince, Splendid, J Brand, Qi Cashmere, and Michael Stars. "Our customers range from women in their early twenties to eighties," Alcalay says. "They are modern women juggling a million things at a time who want fashion to be effortless."

DIANA KANE -

229-b Fifth Avenue, Park Slope (718) 638-6520 Hours: Tue.-Fri. 12 p.m.-7 p.m., Sat. 11 a.m.-8 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m.-7 p.m. dianakane.com

Diana Kane admits she followed her husband to Park Slope in 1995 kicking and screaming. "I was like, what do you mean you can't get Chinese at two in the morning?" Kane laughs. "Then I had kids and realized it was the best place in the world." The jewelry designer and boutique owner has held court in the Slope since 2002 and her customers have come to trust her instincts when it comes to jewelry, handmade perfumes, beautiful candles, and sustainable and well-made women's clothing, most of which is manufactured in the USA. Kane focuses on selling pieces that are made from fine quality fabrics and that meet her clientele's desire for "refined comfort." Needless to say, she's changed her tune about the neighborhood. "It's very much a small town in a big city," she says. "You have the best of both worlds."

HOMEBODY BOUTIQUE

449 Seventh Avenue, Park Slope (718) 369-8980 Hours: Wed.–Sat. 12 p.m.–8 p.m.; Sun. 1p.m.–8 p.m.; Tue. 12 p.m.–7 p.m. homebodyboutique.com

Kate Silver may have settled in Williamsburg and Greenpoint when she moved here from Missouri in 1996, but while hunting for spots in which to open her houseware, gift, and jewelry shop, the art school alum fell in love with Park Slope. "I just love how neighborhoody it is," Silver says.



"It's not like in the city where people don't know each other. They share." In addition to selling her own unique line of housewares, Silver has given other Brooklyn artists a chance to display their talents. The result is a shop that carries colorful blown glass goblets alongside gun-shaped combs, skull nightlights, soy candles, and agate snake rings.

REBECCA SCHONEVELD BRIDAL DESIGN STUDIO

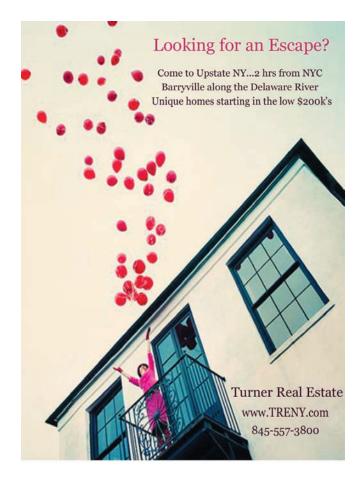
516 Third Avenue, Gowanus (718) 788-3849 Hours: Mon.-Wed. and Fri-Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. rebeccaschoneveld.com

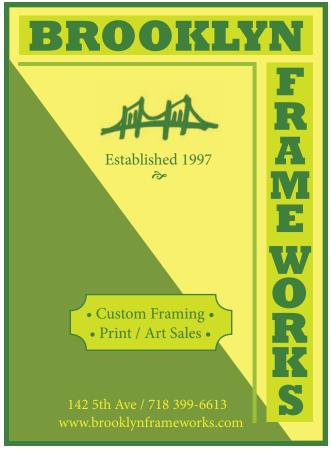
A few years ago, Rebecca Schoneveld was let go of from her corporate design job. A few weeks later, a fire ripped through her Park Slope apartment—around the same time she discovered she was pregnant. Instead of panicking, the California-born transport cleaned out her studio, designed a few pretty maternity dresses, and tried her luck with them on Etsy. She sold her first dress within two hours and realized she never had to work for someone else again. While creating streamlined and modern bridal dresses within the confines of her 220 square-foot apartment, Schoneveld became overwhelmed with orders and sought a bigger space in Gowanus. She designs each dress with her Brooklyn client in mind. "A lot of girls feel like wedding dresses are so old-fashioned, but they don't want to upset their moms," Schoneveld says. "I design dresses that have a really nice fabric, quality fit and cut, and that are easy and not trying too hard."

1 OF A FIND

633 Vanderbilt Avenue, Prospect Heights (718) 789-2008 Hours: Daily, 12 p.m.-8 p.m. 1ofafindvintage.com

There's vintage, and then there's cocktail vintage. With racks dripping in deliciously decadent dresses and blouses by Guy Laroche, Christian Dior, and Morgane Le Fay, 1 of a Find owner Honey Moon knows her customers expect unique, but impeccably well-made party pieces. The savvy shopper relocated to Prospect Heights three years ago from Park Slope and has since gotten to know her clientele. "Everyone has their own definition of vintage," Moon says. "We have grandmothers who come in and are amazed by the Victorian pieces and twenty-year-olds who love the '90s pieces."





SHOPLOCAL HOLIDAY GUIDE

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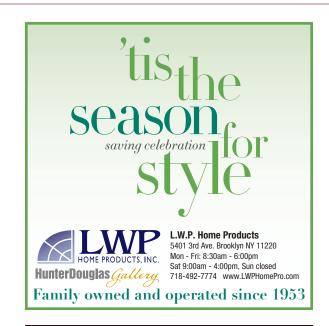
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) MAKE IT IN PARK S

By Nancy Lippincott

ast year Fornino, which had opened in 2010, closed its doors. Nothing too unusual, right? Businesses come and go here in the Slope. It's not always pleasant, but it's been the cruel reality of the circle of life on commercial strips like Fifth and Seventh Avenues. However, Here's Park Slope, a website monitoring the shifting of facades in the neighborhood, gave us all a scare when they shared the landlord's hope to lease the space to a chain like McDonalds or Olive Garden.

Aside from the obvious horrors of Happy Meals or unlimited soup, salad, and breadstick lunches, the rumor seemed to be the harbinger of something much more depressing—that it's only going to get harder for local business owners to compete with corporate bohemoths.

While the Fornino space never did end up falling into the hands of the Darden Restaurant dynasty, we were left wondering what it takes for the little guy to hack it in a neighborhood with such fierce competition and ever-rising rents.

To answer this question, we decided to go straight to the source and talk to three business new to the neighborhood. Here is what they have to say about how to make it in Park Slope:

STORYKEEP

Two-and-a-half years ago, Lisa Madison and Jamie Yuenger started a business concept no one was searching for, at least not on the web. "The biggest challenge with our business is that we're not something anyone Googles," explains Madison. "We have few competitors, but we also face the challenge of explaining to people what we are."

Madison and Yuenger first crossed paths in 2010 when



working on a documentary film together. Madison was a freelancer in the field, and Yuenger was working in broadcasting for WNYC. Both had a mutual love for storytelling and history, and in 2011 they found a way to turn their passions into their livelihoods when they founded StoryKeep. StoryKeep is a service that creates multimedia portraits of families and businesses. Their projects have ranged from interviews with oldest living family members, to historical preservation projects with civic organizations.

"One of the biggest lessons we learned was realizing what we we're not," explains Madison. In a time when services like Ancestry.com are making big business off of genealogy, the women had to figure out how to differentiate themselves as storytellers from fact-finders. "Family history is about how stories are told," says Yuenger. "There aren't a lot of family heirlooms these days, so we're hoping to create something that can passed down and shared through generations," adds Madison.

"The biggest piece of advice I can give to others is don't expect the first two years to be easy!" says Madison. In a field where there are few predecessors to learn from, the women had to figure things out on their own, from the production process, to marketing, to creating a successful working relationship. Documenting the personal lives of their clients has been a long, ongoing lesson in trust and relationship-building, and so has their developing their business partnership. "Working together is like managing an intense relationship. You have to be in tune with each other, you're dependent on each other financially, and you're going to be with each other twelve hours a day," explains Yuenger.

All the hard work and trust in one another has paid off, though. Yuenger and Madison have quadrupled their clientele and are looking forward to growing their team.





MARBELOUS

Remember when you were a little kid playing arts and crafts or opening a lemonade stand with your best friend? Maybe you tossed around the idea of flipping those macramé bracelets for some cash or slinging that juice for a quarter? That's sort of how Marbelous started.

Rachael Stone Olmi and Sue Kramer are best friends with two parallel lives. They bought brownstones on the same block, both married charming Europeans, and have daughters born on the same day and named them Tess and Lutèce, who are also best friends. One day when the families were on vacation together, the girls made clay marble necklaces and gifted them to their moms. Stone Olmi and Kramer realized they had something special after wearing them out and about the first week. "I called Sue and asked 'Did you get stopped four times on the street wearing your necklace?' People were asking us where we bought them," remembers Stone Olmi. All of the comments and compliments from their friends and neighbors got them thinking this could get bigger.

Their daughters conceived the whole idea, and Stone Olmi and Kramer were there to handle setting up the business end of things. While the girls had play dates and brainstormed new designs, the moms set up a Facebook page and started showcasing their work to local boutiques. The first big break was walking into Diana Kane Boutique. "She bought them all," explains Kramer, "and she ended up selling out of them four times." Word about the necklaces started spreading virally through the community and beyond. The girls were seeing their classmates sporting them at P.S. 321, and the moms caught wind of people Amy Poehler and Alan Cumming rocking their daughters' creations. They are now in nine different boutiques throughout the country, and Kramer and Stone Olmi couldn't be prouder of their daughters.

"Marbelous is about friendship and spreading goodness, and that part of the company is about giving. Ten percent of yearly profits go to Autism Speaks," shares Kramer. It was





their daughters' stipulation from the beginning that a portion of the profits be donated to a meaningful cause.

Both women have a strong business sense grounded in creative fields. Stone Olmi comes from an interior design background and Kramer is a writer and director. "We feed off their creativity and get back down to that level and see things from their eyes, and they learn things from the business point of view. But we share details with them about business and money," explains Stone Olmi. "As the kids grow up and the business grows, they will learn about profit and loss and other things that will teach them business sense," adds Kramer.

Though both moms are far too modest to toot their own horns, when pressed, Kramer hints to the positive impact this could be having on their daughters' self-perception: "The whole girl power of it all is really awesome. It's just us gals."

THE WALK-IN COOKBOOK

For the two years he worked as a banker in London, Guido Molinari ate nothing but take-out. After a long day at work, the last thing he wanted to do was plan a meal, go food shopping, and then spend more time cooking for himself. His business partner, Filip Nuytemans, had a similar experience during his years working as a consultant for Nestle. He spent eleven months out of the year on the road and was at the mercy of whatever hotel restaurants and airlines put in front of him, wishing there was an easier way for him to learn how to prepare healthy, delicious meals for himself.



In 2012 the gentlemen took their mutual culinary plight and turned it into a business plan. "It's a fundamental difference between life now and before," explains Molinari. "Our grandparents had something different going on. Now, we are young professionals, or couple who are both working, and despite these responsibilities we want to make sure our day ends in a fulfilling homemade meal."

The Walk-in Cookbook is designed to make dinner more streamlined—and healthy—for people who already have a full plate. It works like this: Walk in, pick out a meal, and then fill your basket with the pre-portioned ingredients listed on the recipe card. All the meals are designed to take no more than thirty minutes to prepare, and you won't be stuck with leftover ingredients doomed to camp out in your cabinet until the lease is up. The store features eighteen recipes at a time, including appetizers and mains (desserts are forthcoming), and also caters to customers who are gluten-free and vegetarian. They even offer local delivery to Park Slope and Prospect Heights. "We decided to get people to cook again. Make it fun. Make it fast. And they don't have to worry too much about what they are going to buy," says Nuytemans.

While the concept of The Walk-in Cookbook came from their guts, Nuytemans and Molinari took a measured, strategic approach when it came to putting things into practice. When scouting locations, the duo spent many a frigid afternoon sitting on the sidewalk counting pedestrians

and collecting data. "At first people told us it wouldn't work; we would have to change the way people thought about grocery shopping," confesses Molinari. But as Nuytemans observes, "People in Brooklyn are the most receptive to innovation."

That's not to say they didn't have to deal with their share of conflicts. Between building permits, renovations, and inspections, the process of opening the store in the former Noella Brew Bar space involved more money and time than anticipated. "That's probably why corporations like Starbucks are moving in—because they have much more money to work with and navigating the red tape has been much easier. They're able to pay their rent while they are sitting around waiting for approval on permits," notes Nuytemans.

The upside is that these initial growing pains have helped inspire their conviction to support their fellow small business owners and source locally whenever possible. Nuytemans explains that after months of waiting around for permits, approvals, and paying rent, the plight of the small businessman resonates with them on a visceral level. "Opening a business here has made us understand why it's so important to support what's happening here locally."

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ANART SCENE, A PLAN, A CANAL:

By Robert Balkovich
Photos by Rachael Stone Olmi

owanus is one of those New York neighborhoods that has a mythical quality about it. It's a place that many New Yorkers have heard of but few have actually been to, most likely due to the Gowanus Canal, which breaks the neighborhood into sections connected by bridges. Unlike the great canals of Venice or Amsterdam, the Gowanus Canal is anything but scenic. Heavily polluted and surrounded by warehouses and industrial lots full of gravel and garbage, it's not uncommon to see oil, raw sewage, or trash float by at any given time. When the wind hits it just right the smell is, well, something one has to experience for themselves. The canal has prevented the neighborhood from developing the way that neighboring Park Slope and Carroll Gardens have, and for many that is a blessing. In addition to the lumber yards, car shops, and recycling plants, Gowanus is also home to one of Brooklyn's—if not New York City's most enduring art scenes, one that may not still be there without the canal.

Although the Gowanus art scene has been gaining notoriety for the last several years, it has actually been around much longer. The Gowanus Open Studios, an event that invites the public to come to the neighborhood and tour artist's studios and galleries, has been held every October for the last seventeen years. Bushwick Open Studios, which celebrated its seventh anniversary this year, seems young by comparison. Bushwick, of course, has made up for lost time, as denizens of Williamsburg are forced further and further down the L line due to skyrocketing rents. In the seven years since Bushwick Open Studios started there have been condo developments and swank restaurants popping up all over the once mostly passed over neighborhood. In

contrast, in the seventeen years since Gowanus Open Studios started the neighborhood has remained mostly the same. There are a few nice restaurants and the shell of a seemingly perpetually delayed Whole Foods, but no condos and no jaded Manhattanites.

Gowanus' slow development is not for a lack of activity, especially from its art community. In just a five by five block radius there are, among other institutions, The Gowanus Ballroom, which operates as Serett Metalworks during the day, the performing arts hall The Bell House, New York Art Foundry for sculptures and metal workers, Gowanus Loft, and the Trestle Gallery, which is part of the Brooklyn Art Space, a studio space for artists that offers group or semi-private studios, classes and workshops, and even seminars on legal advice for artists. You can walk down any block in Gowanus and you will see the bright, fluttering banners and signs for studios and galleries right next to a scrap metal warehouse or a tour bus depot.

In addition to an abundance of places for art in Gowanus, there is no lack of diversity in the artistic scene. Trying to pinpoint a particular style or aesthetic of those involved in the Gowanus art scene is a fruitless endeavor. Large-scale installation sculpture sits next to water colors, which sit next to woven tapestries, which sit next to modernist abstract paintings. At the Trestle Gallery a small-works show displayed this wide range. Rhia Hurt, an artist who does administrative work with Brooklyn Art Space, gave me a tour of the studios and gallery. When I asked about the types of artists who kept studio space there, she described them as "a good mix of established artists and really talented people just coming out of school, Parsons, Pratt, places like that.







There are also a lot of great self-taught artists here as well." In addition to group and semi-private studio spaces—and even a large studio space for writers called Room 58—Brooklyn Art Space offers workshops and even seminars on legal advice for artists. Walking through the studios it seemed to me that Gowanus is a case of function coming out on top over style. The industrial, harsh nature of the neighborhood and the large warehouses where the artists come to work do not seem to be influencing a style of art, rather, those spaces provide an opportunity for work to be created without limitations. Several painter's studios I walked by were overflowing with giant, twelve by twelve-foot canvases, which require space that is simply unavailable in most of the city and cost prohibitive in the other art Meccas: Chelsea, SoHo, and even Bushwick.

"I think one of the big advantages for the artists here is that it's still affordable," Rhia told me when I asked about why an artist might choose Gowanus to set up shop. "And it will hopefully stay that way." For the time being it seems that that is likely the case, as the clean-up of the canal is expected to take over a decade, and it's unlikely that much large-scale development will happen in the meantime.

Another big advantage for Gowanus? It's between Park Slope and Carroll Gardens, two of Brooklyn's most affluent neighborhoods. The commercial aspect of the art world can be tricky, especially for people who are unaccustomed to purchasing art at a gallery, or directly from the artist, but Rhia would like to see those bridges broken down in Gowanus. "The goal is to put revenue in the hands of the artists."

That sentiment was echoed when I visited Ground Floor Gallery, which is located on the Gowanus-Park Slope border. Curators Jill Benson and Krista Saunders opened Ground Floor Gallery in April of 2013 after years of hosting shows in temporary spaces. Outside a sandwich board read: "Original, AFFORDABLE Art by Local, Emerging Artists", and inside was a show whose quality was typical of what I'd seen from the Gowanus art scene: well curated, diverse, and thoughtful works of art.

"We want to build collectors," they told me while we were on the subject of the untapped potential of Park Slope and

Carroll Gardens, adding, "When artists come in to show with us we help them with pricing and selling their works." Their gallery will be participating in the Gowanus Open Studios, and for the entire month of October they will have a show featuring exclusively artists that are living and working in Gowanus, or as Krista playfully described it, "Jill and Krista on the hunt for Gowanus' biggest talents." Gowanus has treated them well and has allowed them greater freedom to present work they really believe in. "We aren't focused on profit because the costs are manageable," Jill explained.

Manageable costs is exactly why artists have been able to live and work in the Gowanus area during the past seventeen years and hopefully for much longer. For the time being, the Gowanus Canal is preventing any large-scale gentrification and the art scene is only becoming more popular. Everyone I spoke to agreed that they would like to see Gowanus become a destination for not only artists, but art lovers, and especially art collectors—but they also want to see the spirit of the neighborhood preserved. One possible solution is for the artists and gallery owners to buy their spaces now while it is still reasonably cheap, so that if in ten years—once the Whole Foods is completed and the canal cleaned up—the neighborhood begins to gentrify, they will still have control over their studios and galleries.

Ideally things would be able to work as a perfect symbiotic relationship. Gowanus will stay an artist's haven, the studios large and the rent cheap, and the art loving citizens in next door Park Slope and Carroll Gardens will benefit by having a wellspring of fantastic, affordable art just a stone's throw away. As recognition of the Gowanus art scene continues to grow, this doesn't seem like an impossibility. With the Gowanus Open Studios in October, residents of Park Slope and Carroll Gardens will have a perfect opportunity to see all that their neighbor's have to offer.

It has been said recently that the dream of being an artist in New York City is an unattainable fantasy, but for the time being there is a small ray of hope, shining right up the putrid waters of one of the country's most polluted water ways. As long as artists and art lovers are pro-active we can preserve the great tradition of the neighborhood, and keep artists living and working in Brooklyn.









MAGIC THINKING VS MOVING ON

Dear Hypocrite,

I've never missed a column since I discovered you six years ago. New to Brooklyn, I ducked into a store (Diana Kane?) on Fifth to escape the rain. When the clouds cleared, I left with a new bathing suit and an issue of this magazine. Since that day, I've fallen in love, gotten married and had two kids (twins!). It's been one of the happiest times of my life. We've created a great life in Park Slope. Our kids have great friends, we have great friends, and we live in a sunny apartment close to the park.

Our landlords live in the duplex below us and we've always had a good relationship with them. About a month ago, they slipped a letter under our door telling us they have to increase our rent by \$1500 a month in order to pay for increasing property taxes and maintenance

costs. It was non-negotiable. We didn't think we were getting a deal to begin with, but when we started looking around to find comparable housing for our family we were shocked at the prices! We don't think we can afford to live here anymore. We might have to leave Park Slope and maybe Brooklyn. Our hearts are breaking. We can't imagine living anywhere else.

I'm not sure what I'm asking. Maybe I'm writing for sympathy. How do people do it? How do middle-class people survive here? My husband is thinking about quitting the job he loves to get another one that pays more so we can stay. I keep thinking we'll find a way to live here somehow. There has to be an affordable apartment somewhere near our school, near the park, right?

Signed, Heartbroken



Dear Heartbroken.

I'm sorry. I feel you. But move. We live in America and are not used to external forces deciding things for us. There's a lot of magical thinking we Yanks are guilty of, and your thought that you'll find the perfect, affordable place to relocate to in Park Slope: The Greatest Neighborhood in the World![™] falls into that category. I'm not saying it's impossible. There might be a huge two bedroom for \$2500 on the park just waiting for you ... if you could just get the final kinks out of your time machine.

But what do I know? Maybe there's a way. When I was telling Petal, my friend from Trinidad, that we were only going to have two kids because we couldn't afford another she said she didn't see the problem-all the kids can share one bedroom and my husband and I would take the other. That's what she did growing up and it was fine. Could I share our two-bedroom basement apartment with five, six, seven people and a dog? No. But for Petal, it'd be perfectly cozy. It's a personal preference issue. Could

you downsize in order to keep your friends and your Coop shift? You could find a studio on the park for \$2500. I think. Let me check The New York Times site. K. I'm back. It's not looking good. At 13th and PPW there's a one bedroom for \$2700 but it doesn't seem to have any windows. Maybe there's a roof deck they forgot to mention? And if there is, do your kids like to camp?

The option of your husband getting a job that he could potentially hate is not an option. Stress kills. It kills healthy tissue, sex drives, and marriages. Having a job you love is insanely rare—winning-the-lottery rare. Protect this asset, its rewards are incalculable.

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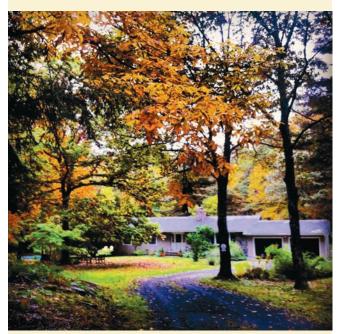
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hasn't been affordable for a lot of people for a while now, and at the moment you received the letter from your landlords, it became unaffordable to you. So, what do you do? You can muddle through until things get cheaper/you get richer or, in my opinion, you get out with your shirt on.

The big question is: where do you go? Queens? Deeper into Brooklyn? Westchester, Jersey, Connecticut? Plan some weekend trips with the kids. Find hotels with a pool in commutable areas and try out restaurants, go for nature walks, visit the public library. Check out schools, parks, coffee shops—everything that's important to you now. And if you start to feel pulled in one direction, make sure you and your husband do the commute by train once or twice. If you both hate it, look closer. Yonkers, baby! If you're a Yankees fan, the convenience is unbeatable.

As far as outer boroughs vs. suburbs, you've got to ask yourself: Am I looking for peace and quiet or a vibrant cultural scene? I'll tell you, moving to the suburbs can be quite a shock to the system as far as integration goes. In the suburbs, colors tend to stick with their own, and for someone who's coming from Brooklyn, this can feel pretty awful. If you know that's not the way you want to live, that you value diversity above most things, then Queens is your new home. You and your kids will have friends and neighbors every hue under the sun. Plus, because there's such a racial mix, there's tasty food from every country at your back door. A huge complaint of those who move to the suburbs is that there's no good take-out. What'd you think? Your favorite Cambodian sandwich place was going to follow you to Larchmont? Sorry. At least you'll have a kick-ass birdfeeder.

I've written up a short letter to give your friends when you move. It's a contract of sorts. It's a little suburbs-centric, but with some creative thinking it can be altered to to suit any location (Queens/Ditmas/SI).

Dear Friend.

I'm moving out of Park Slope: The Greatest Neighborhood in the World!™ and I want us to stay friends. The change in our lifestyles and the physical distance between us will undoubtedly test what we experienced in PS as a natural, easy relationship. Below, I list some simple rules that I will follow in order to ease the transition so that we might find ourselves on solid friendship ground in no time.

What you can expect from me:

I will commiserate with you when your bike gets stolen, when you get a ticket for not alternate side parking and when your kids get lice.

I will make a valiant attempt (but ultimately fail) to come to your kid's school auction to increase the bid on the house in the Catskills for a week in February.

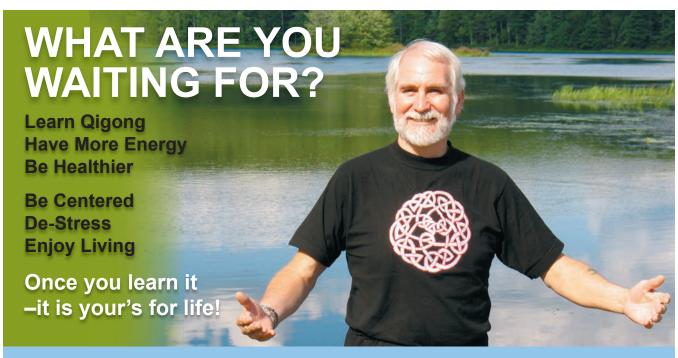
I will occasionally let you keep your car in my driveway when you go on trips so you don't have to pay for long-term at the airport. (Advance notice required.)

When in the city for cultural events (I have yet to see Wicked!), I will call you and ask you to meet me in Times Square for 6 p.m. drinks. You can say no every time without me thinking you don't like me anymore.

When we go to Chicago/Denver/Atlanta every year for Passover/Christmas/Thanksgiving, you can stay at our house if you promise to feed the dog and let him sleep in the bed with you.

Here's what I will not do.

I will not mention how we "got out just in time" or "escaped



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before it was too late."

I will not utter the phrase "Queens is the New Brooklyn."

I will not ask how you can stand living so close to the Barclays

I will not ask how the middle school application process is

When visiting, I will not double park in the bike lane.

I will not complain about how shitty your Target is.

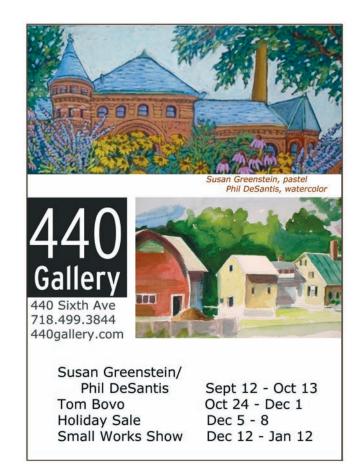
I will not ask you to stop at Sahadi's and pick up some capers and cumin before you come visit.

I will not encourage you to follow me on Instagram where I post way too many pics of my kids petting sheep at the farm where we do a CSA.

Heartbroken, I'm not pulling punches with you. Your days in Brooklyn might very well be numbered. Mine were. What's that? Oh. I moved two months ago. To the suburbs. And it's been pretty great. But I miss my friends and seeing the people from my neighborhood. Terribly.

I considered leaving this column but what sort of hypocrite would I be if I stopped giving Park Slopers advice just because I now live in a quiet house near the woods where my biggest problem is the deer eating my hostas? That would make me one lousy hypocrite. And I'm not. Nothing's going to change. You write in your letters about life in Park Slope: The Greatest Neighborhood in the World!™ and I'll do my best to answer them.

And Heartbroken, like Mary Magdalene sang to Jesus before he was nailed to the cross: "Everything's Going to be Alright." Believe me. For once, I know. See you next time. •



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THE STORYTELLER OF SHIMOKITAZAWA

It is located in the Roppongi section of Tokyo, known for its night club scene. On the second floor of an old building is Geronimo, a bar that has not much to offer except for few wooden communal tables for expats who mingle in the bar.

The etiquette for drinking sake is complicated, so I asked the waitress if she knew. She gave me a cup called sakazuki and offered me a brand of sake that is called Kunshu which is popular among foreigners.

The man sitting next to me explained how sake is made from steamed rice.

Thanking the man. I sipped my sake and started thinking about writing a short story connecting the summer drummers who play in Prospect Park, Brooklyn with the Taiko drummers of Japan. I will write a story that takes place in Tokyo—a detective story full of drum beats and music and a clever assassin. Geronimo will be where some of the action takes place.

"Are you from Indonesia?" He asked with a heavy English accent. His name was Toni.

"South of the border," I replied,

"meaning south of the United States—I am just a tourist in this beautiful city." He agreed, but was extremely inquisitive about my background. I told him that my mother spoke the Inca language called Quechua and drunk chicha which is made of fermented corn. "How about you, what do you do?" I asked him. He said he was an Englishman who lived in Brooklyn, New York. "I also live in Brooklyn," I said as he looked at me attentively. "What do you do in Tokyo?" I asked.

"I am a speleologist, interested in the famous caves north of Tokyo. They are called the Hyakuana tombs." He highlighted

that there were only eight people in the world who could compare their cave knowledge with his.

"The cave is the first habitat of mankind?" I asked.

"Yes," he said and went onto explain how cave paintings,

for instance, say much about ourselves.

"Do people die or get lost in caves?" I asked because I had read about several speleologists who were found dead outside of a cave in England.

"Look me in the eye," he said. One of his eyes was glass, so I asked him about it. He explained that it was due to an accident that happened in a cave ... "Yes. People die in caves," he replied.

"Nice meeting you. I have to get up very early to see the biggest wholesale fish market in the world," I said.

"Do you mean the Tsukiji Market?"

I explained that I was planning to photograph the market and write something about two distant neighborhoods:

Tokyo's Shimokitazawa and Park Slope, Brooklyn.

"Park Slope?" Toni jumped out of his seat. "That is my neighborhood in Brooklyn." He asked me to sit down and ordered a whiskey for both of us. He mentioned a story dealing with the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

I left the bar at midnight, which coincided with rush hour in Tokyo. I took the Hibiya line to Shibuya and went to Shimokitazawa, a lovely neighborhood in Tokyo. Once there, I felt at home passing through the many narrow streets and many restaurants of the neighborhood. I kept on thinking about





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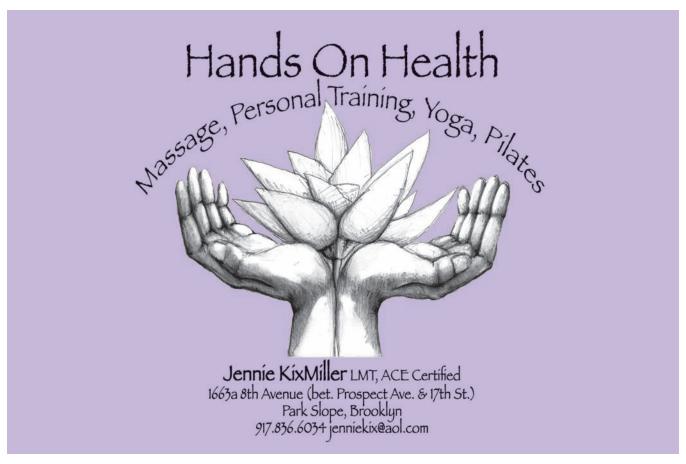
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the story I wanted to write. A story where sake, a criminal on the loose, drums, samurais, and geishas would all be part of the plot. The story would include a detective investigating a number of murders that had taken place inside a cave in England. The suspect was now living in Tokyo. The London detective in charge of the case was Mubasher de Ockam, who was a well-known psychologist and semiologist. Mubasher was in Tokyo to locate a suspect ... a speleologist who had a long criminal record.

The account starts with Mubasher sitting at Café Mogambo in the Roppongi District. The music in the background is that of Danzón No. 2, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel. Detective Nishiyama finally arrived. As a former sumo wrestler, he was now somewhat overweight. He arrived with a book titled Los Detectives Salvajes. De Ockam looked at Nishiyama and told him that the name of the English criminal they were after was Bertrand Folville. Nishiyama smiled and made a note of it on a napkin. De Ockam stared at Nishiyama and asked him if he believed in mirrors, compasses, maps, labyrinths, and infinity. Nishiyama smiled at de Ockam and said that he believed in dreams, which according to him is the infinity that mirrors life and is a map to observe unknown places that a compass may or may not show us. Nishiyama asked de Ockam if he believed in colors. He told detective Nishiyama he was in Tokyo to solve several murders, not to talk about colors. Nishiyama smiled and told de Ockam that he believed in the color green.

"Green?" asked de Ockam.

"Because the peace, serenity, and tranquility it brings to life," replied Nishiyama.

"What is wrong with a colorful forest with reds and blues?" asked de Ockam.

"A colorful forest is beautiful but not serene ... colors alter our senses," Nishiyama responded.

The two detectives were intellectually and physically different. The one from England was short and stocky with olive skin and very inquisitive black eyes. Mubasher's father was from Pakistan and his mother was a direct descendant of the well-known philosopher and theologian, William de Ockham. Nishiyama's background was also unique. He was born in Peru but went to Japan during his early teens. He read and spoke many languages. including Spanish. The two of them knew the dangers of the mission, and they also knew intuitively that the famous caves north of Tokyo were just the beginning of a puzzle that would lead them to other murders. De Ockam asked detective Nishiyama if he agreed that inside a cave one was unable to see reality as it is outside.

"Mr. De Ockam, for a Zen Buddhist the hand pointing to the moon is not the moon," replied Nishiyama.

Nishiyama gave de Ockam a letter that had arrived at the police headquarters in Shimokitazawa. De Ockam opened the letter. There was a drawing of a circle like an O in it. It was sent by Bertrand Folville.

"What is the meaning of an O?" de Ockam asked.

"The circle is not a character, but a symbol. It is the circle of enlightenment known as enso. It is the way of Zen..." Nishiyama responded. •



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