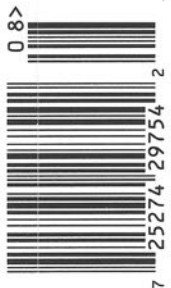
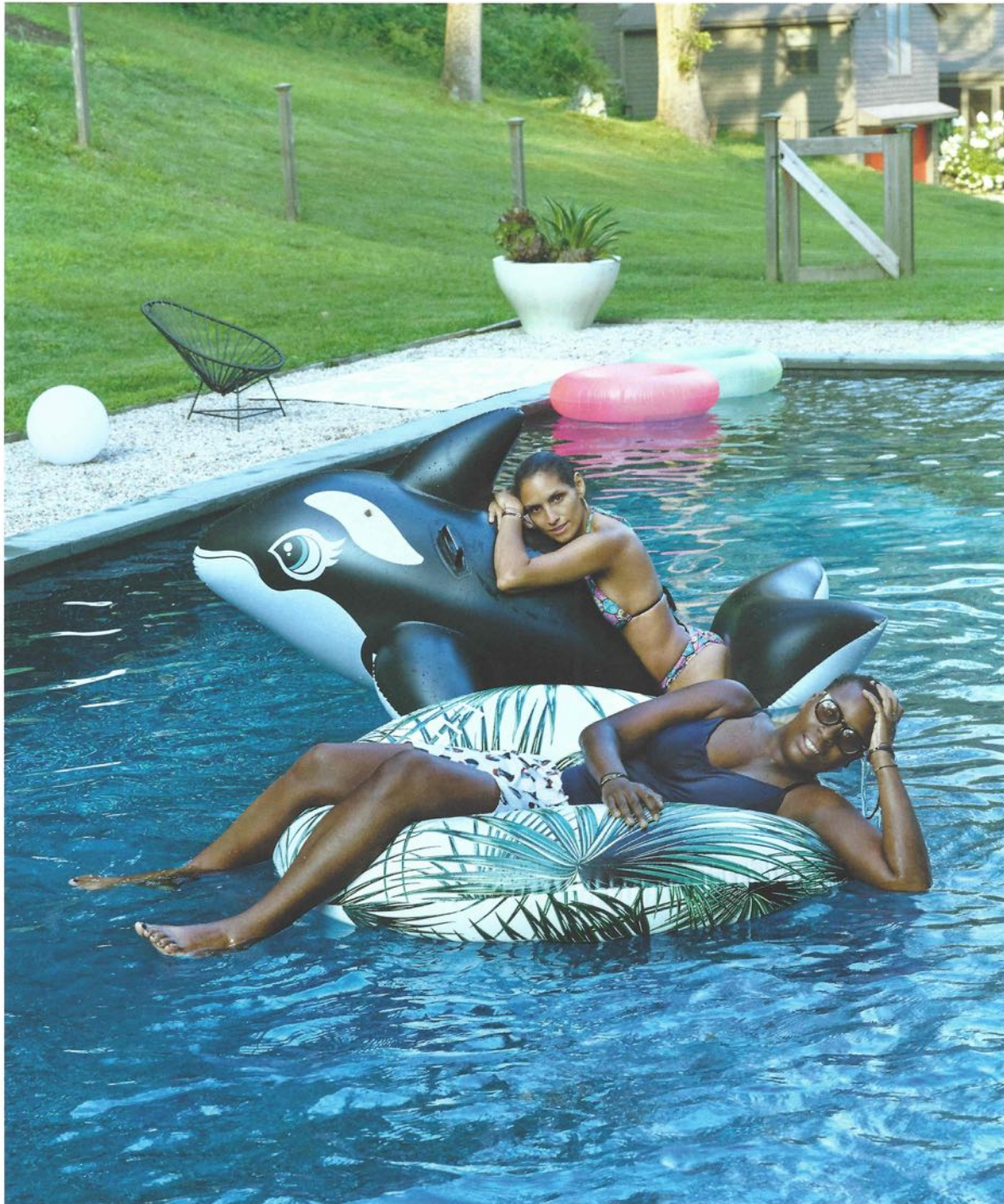


US \$12.00
UK £9.00

CREATIVE LIVES IN PRIVATE LANDSCAPES

Nº8

UPSTATE DIARY

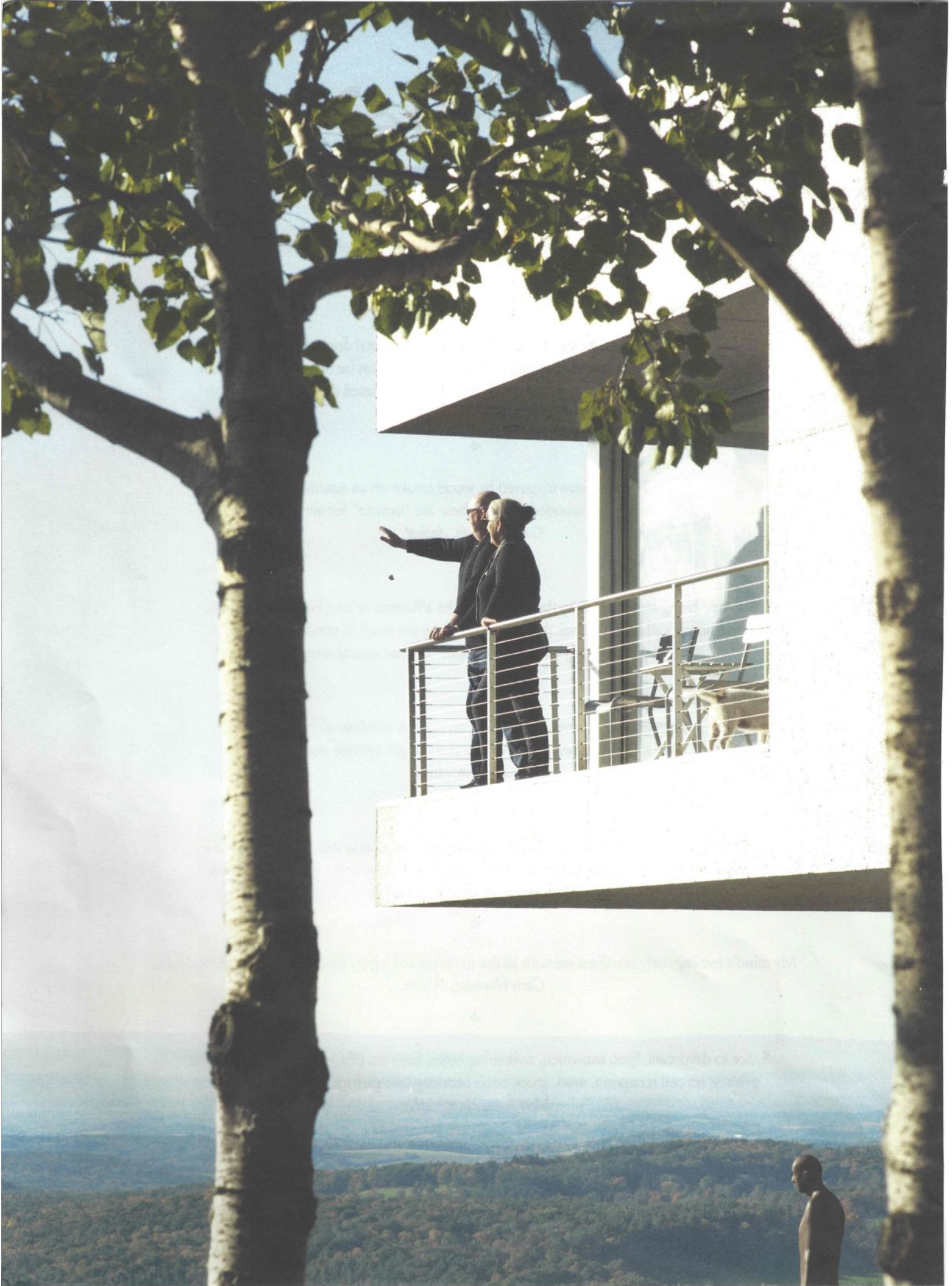


HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS

Mickalene Thomas / Sean Kelly / Judy Pfaff / Mary McCartney / Donald Judd's *Casa Perez*
Terhi Tolvanen / Brice Marden / Letha Wilson / Georgie Hopton / Kirsten Owen

N°8 : CHEAT SHEET

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Photography Matthew Porter

Words Stephen Greco

A country house is not

a house in the country

When New York gallerist Sean Kelly and his wife Mary decided to build a private gallery space next to his modernist mountain-top house, they turned to architect Toshiko Mori, who had designed the house as well as Kelly's gallery in New York's Hudson Yards neighborhood. Since the house, which the Kellys call *Cloudline*, was of such a complexly geometric design, they decided to make the private gallery as simple as possible — "like a child's picture of the house," says Sean. The result was an elegant, multifunctional building in which the Kelly family — daughter Lauren and son Thomas both help run the New York gallery — can show and store works from their private collection and accommodate guests.

"We wanted a space where we could display larger works that we couldn't necessarily get into the house, which is very intimate and domestic in scale and all glass, effectively, on the ground floor," says Sean, whose family collection contains works by Birgir Andrésson, Antony Gormley, Rebecca Horn, Callum Inness, Richard Long, and Iran do Espírito Santo, among others. Sean and Mori worked together on several iterations of the basic parti as the building developed. He describes one visit to Mori's office in which he performed impromptu X-ACTO knife surgery on a model he was presented, to illustrate the kind of courtyard idea he was talking about — and the architect agreed on the approach. It was only after the building was finished, says Sean, that he and Mary — who grew up close to each other in western Wiltshire, England, near the town of Bradford-on-Avon — realized that the basic shape of the building resembled one of that area's historic structures: a 14th-century tithe barn, a communal spot where grain and other farm produce was stored.

Mary said she wanted a country house, and I said I wanted a house in the country. Those concepts are very different.

Stephen Greco *How did you and Mary meet?*

Sean Kelly We met when I was 15 and she was 17. I thought she was the most fantastic person I've ever met in my life. I proceeded in a very gauche, inappropriate way to tell her that I was going to marry her. And she proceeded to tell me that she wouldn't marry me if I were the last person on the planet. And we've been together ever since.

SG *What was it like back then — those times?*

SK It's a funny thing — and I've tried to explain this to people, I'm not sure they really understand. It was 1968 and in those days it was rock 'n' roll bands....

SG *A lot was happening in '68.*

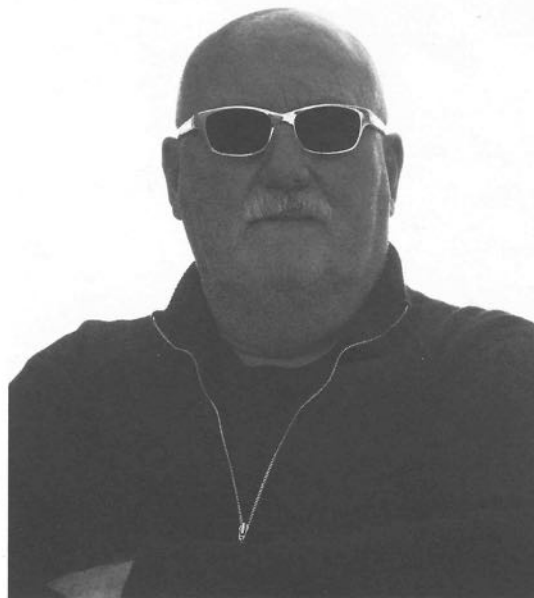
SK Loads of drugs, it was pre-AIDS, and it was the greatest education you could have ever had. It taught me to think differently and react differently to things. My grandmother, who lived until she was 99, always used to say to me, "My dear, how did you survive?" And I used to say, "Well, it was the best education anybody could have ever had. It was just not the normal one."

SG *It's clear how much thought and care has gone into these dwellings that you and Mary have built. What does home mean to you?*

SK I think home means... well, for me, it's my family.

SG *How did you and Mary first start talking about building a place outside the city?*

SK Mary said she wanted a country house, and I said I wanted a house in the country. Those two concepts are very different. [Laughs] I wanted this very modernist house that would be in the country, and Mary wanted it to be very comfortable, which is not necessarily synonymous with a country house. Toshiko was tasked with this very difficult task of making



a modernist house, which is her architectural vernacular, but we wanted it to be very comfortable, and very much a sort of expression of our personalities.

SG *How did you start working with Mori?*

SK We've been friends for the better part of thirty years. Our kids went to school together; our daughters have been very best friends from the age of six. And she did the most unbelievably brilliant job, because we both absolutely love the house — we love being there. I always think about the classic quote about architecture being your second skin.

For me, I regard it as my first skin because I never think about my first skin. I always thinking about the psychology of the spaces that I'm in. Which actually affect me very, very intensely. Architecture to me is very important. Toshiko managed to make this space that we both feel incredibly comfortable in.

The Kellys call the new gallery building *Treeline*, "for the feeling that you're up in the trees." At 30 feet wide and 150 feet long, the building is a sizeable barn comprised of three levels: a foundation level, which is partially buried into the mountain and contains a black box theater; a ground floor with a library and large gallery; and a top floor with bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchen, and living area. Though simple in design, as Sean says, the building has its twists. For instance, it may look like a vernacular kind of barn, with "standing seam" siding, but there are no windows on the sides, to better accommodate the art, and the color of the building, unlike many standing seams' standard reds, greens, and grays, is a graphite-colored metallic material that was custom-made in Switzerland.

SK *It's the most brilliant color, because it makes the building disappear in the landscape and also sort of assumes the color of the day. So if the sky is blue, it picks it up. If it's misty, it picks it up. If you're in the clouds, it picks it up. And the building kind of disappears. It's very clever.*



Previous spread: The couple take in the wide open landscape from the master bedroom balcony of their home, *Cloudline*, designed by Toshiko Mori. Standing tall below them is, *You*, 2005, by Antony Gormley. **This page:** In the close distance, *Everest Floor*, 2017, by Dorothy Cross, overlooks seemingly endless and breathtaking views of the valley from the art space. **Opposite:** Sean Kelly.



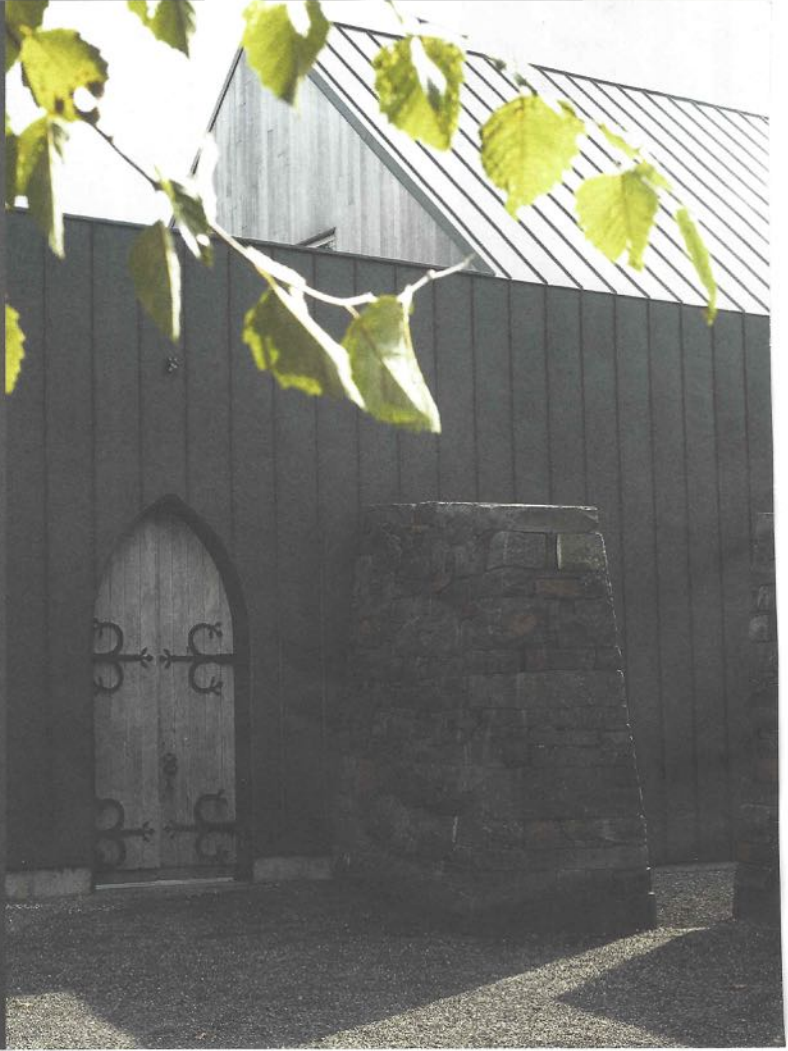
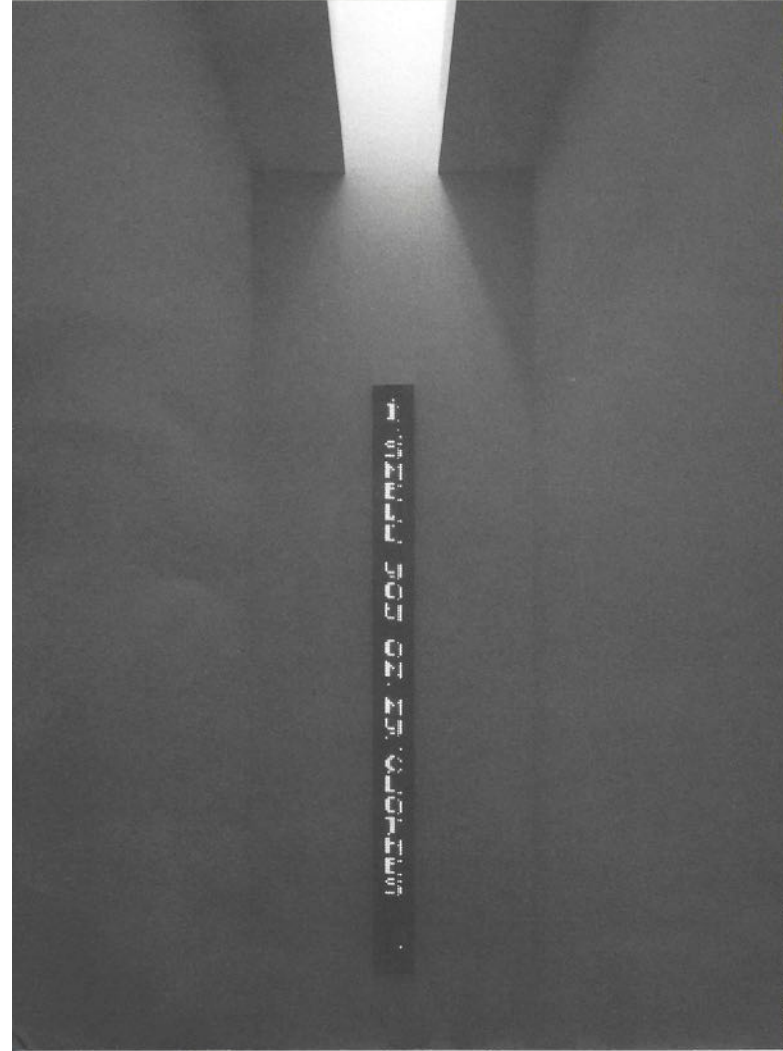


Designed by Toshiko Mori, the exterior of the Kelly's art space looks like a child's drawing. **Opposite:** *The Thrill of it All*, 2010, by Peter Liversidge sums it up.

Cloudline's living room
firewood storage. **Opposite:**
Even the art gazes outwards,
Motionless Forever, 2013, by
Kaye Donachie.







Right: Mary Kelly.
 Opposite clockwise:
Everest Floor, 2017,
 by Dorothy Cross.
Card House, 2017,
 by Sam Moyer. *Arno
 Blue*, 2005, by Jenny
 Holzer. Doors of the
 gallery space are
 from a monastery in
 the North of England.
 Wall, made of local
 stone, was built by
 local craftsmen.

Featured prominently at Treeline is an artwork that Mary Kelly found at Art Basel in the summer of 2017 — a sculptural floor piece in white marble by Irish artist Dorothy Cross. Sean had been occupied at his gallery's booth and hadn't yet seen much of the fair, when Mary took him to see the work, which she had fallen in love with. They agreed immediately to purchase it. The sculpture depicts a miniature, birds-eye view of the Himalayas, and in its new home it proposes an interesting parallel with the panoramic view from the mountaintop site it now occupies,

which commands a 60-mile-wide vista across the river and the mountains to the west, often encompassing a ridge of low clouds that appears in the morning.

Sean founded his New York gallery in 1991, on Mercer Street, in SoHo, after beginning his career in the UK, in museum curation and education. In the years since then, as his gallery moved from SoHo, to Chelsea, to the Hudson Yards, he has represented a diverse group of artists on the forefront of contemporary art's most interesting adventures, including Marina Abramović, James Casebere, Antony Gormley, Joseph Kosuth, and Julião Sarmento.

SK We always sort of pretentiously like to say we work with good artists. [Laughs] It doesn't matter to me particularly what age they are, or what gender they are, what their orientation in any department is. I'm interested in their artwork. And I think that it should not go unnoticed that we have worked with some of these artists for 30-plus years. We started working with them before they were successful or famous or making any money.

SG *Are you an artist yourself?*

SK I was trained as an artist, and I think as I've gotten older I've discovered that I have horrifying pretensions to being an architect, but I'd never have been any good at it. I do love working with space, and I've always worked with space with the artists — that's part of the program at the gallery. To extend into architecture feels very natural. But it's not — I mean, I can think of ideas but I don't have the patience to actually put them into the real world.

In the years since opening his first gallery, Sean has developed a reputation not only as an ethical businessman and unpretentious connoisseur but also a kind of cultural hero with a quietly heroic insistence on values before value, in art. He has been a leader in the effort to shift the often-mocked, crazy-money "art-industrial complex," that has evolved in recent decades, into a more humane relationship between artists and their audiences, meant to explore what culture is, what humanity is, and where we are all going on this planet.

The Sean Kelly Gallery's media campaign, "Collect Wisely," is a good example of Sean's creativity and commitment in this leadership role. Encompassing multiple platforms including live events and podcasts featuring prominent collectors like Jill and Peter Kraus, Monique and Myriam Vanneschi, and Rodney Miller, "Collect Wisely" was launched in 2018 "to question the art world status quo and... refocus the dialogue around core values centered upon art, artists, a passion for collecting and issues of connoisseurship." The savviness of the campaign is noteworthy — right up there with the best conceived "prestige brand" commercial campaigns.

SG *The art world has changed a lot since you first opened hasn't it?*

SK When I started out, there was no money. You didn't go into the art world to become rich or a famous artist. We were supposed to be the alternative, not the problem. But I think over the last 30 years, the die has changed — it's been cast in a very different way — and there's no point



in sort of sticking your head in the sand and trying to ignore what's going on. After 2008, technically everybody hated bankers. That's a very simplistic view of the world — but I don't want that to happen to art. It's something I care deeply about, so the challenge was, how do you have that conversation without appearing to be mean-spirited or critical, or being the person who says "the emperor has no clothes," because none of those are a good look.

SG *No, right.*

SK There's an enormous amount of wealth in the art world, an enormous amount of people interested in contemporary art. So I felt very conflicted about being, hopefully, successful at what I do. And then as a dealer I said, hang on a minute, this has become too much about money. I certainly want to be successful. I want to make money. I certainly want my artists to be successful and make money. But I think that there are... how much more can we have? How much more do we need? There is a certain point at which greed tips one's hand, whether you're thinking about our planet, ecologically, or any other respect. The campaign asks questions about what is important to us culturally, commonly, historically, and perhaps tries to make a distinction between collectors and investors. There's nothing wrong if you want to be an investor; that's totally fine. I just think collectors have been more valuable to artists as patrons.

SG *Could you ever work with someone, either an artist or collector, whom you don't like, whose values you don't respect?*

SK No. But you have to remember that the art world is comprised of people, and people are very different. ■

Learn more at www.skny.com Photographer Matthew Porter is represented by www.cxainc.com. Stephen Greco wrote the live shows *Inside Risk: Shadows of Medellín* and *Peter and the Wolf in Hollywood*. His most recent novel is *Now and Yesterday* published by Kensington.