

FASHION LIFESTYLE ART ENTERTAINMENT

yellow™

JULY 2006

Houston, Texas

FREE

**Global Cooling**

**New York Sizzles**

**Behind the Red Door  
with Michelle Ngo**

**Hurray for Miya Shay**

**Cutting Up with  
David Chien**

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Photographer : **Debbie Porter** Stylists : **Summar Salah, Jennifer Richey** Hair : **Johnathan Luke** Makeup : **Grace Lin**



Shakespeare immortalized the famous question, “What is in a name?” It is a question that appears simple yet belies a deeper and more complex nature. Consider my last name, Hoang. To most Americans, it is simply a common Vietnamese surname. It is very likely that only a few are aware that it means “yellow” in English. Similarly, other Asian nationalities have variations of my surname such as Wong, Kwang, and Ong, amongst others that also mean “yellow”.

Yellow. It would appear to be a very simple word. Yet, when one considers the recurrent symbolic role it has played throughout the history of Asian culture, one becomes keenly aware of its importance. Symbolizing the earth that sustains all life, yellow has been embraced by Buddhist monks as an expression of their humility and by reigning emperors as an expression of unchallenged power. Such is the role of yellow, always revered but in different ways under different circumstances.

In similar fashion, the mission of *Yellow Magazine* is to introduce our readers to the artistic, fashion, lifestyle and entertainment contributions made by Asian-Americans. It is our hope that the depth and breadth of the topics and events we cover do justice to the pride that the color yellow has represented throughout the millennia. Of course, not every photo shoot or article will appeal to all readers, just as all crops produced by the yellow earth will not appeal to all who eat.

We measure our success when one reader, similar to the Buddhist monk, appreciates us for one reason, and another reader, like the Emperor, appreciates us for another. And, finally, if everyone emerges with a sense of pride and empowerment, notwithstanding whichever aspect of *Yellow Magazine* they enjoy, we will know we have accomplished all that we had hoped.

**Viet Hoang**  
Publisher

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The color yellow has played a recurrent symbolic role throughout the history of Asian culture. It symbolizes the earth that sustains all life, yet has been embraced by Buddhist monks as an expression of unchallenged power. Such is the role of yellow: always revered but in different ways under different circumstances.

The mission of *Yellow Magazine* is to introduce our readers to the artistic, fashion, lifestyle and entertainment contributions made by Asian Americans. It is our hope that the depth and breadth of the topics and events we cover do justice to the pride that the color yellow has represented throughout the millennia. As the publisher of the *Yellow Magazine*, my last name is Hoang, which also means yellow. Just as I am proud of my name, I am proud of my heritage, and proud of *Yellow Magazine*.

**Publisher**

Viet Hoang

**Associate Publisher**

Phi Hung

**Editor**

Henri Merceron

**Arts and Entertainment Director**

Celeste Tammariello

**Lifestyle Editors**

Jessica Ritter  
Tina Hernandez

**Events Calendar Editor**

Kyle Fu

**Contributing Writers**

Philip Cusimano  
Frances Trotter  
Hien Tammy Vu  
Tammy Duong

**Art Director**

Jeff Martin

**Photographer**

Debbie Porter  
debbieporter.com

**Stylists**

Summar Salah  
Jennifer Richey

**Hair**

Johnathan Luke  
for *Sensia Studio & Japanese Day Spa*

**Makeup**

Grace Lin

**Interns**

Rochelle Abante  
Sandra Byun  
Tammy Duong

**Business Manager**

Stephanie Vu

**National Advertising**

Verve Communications Group  
325 N. St. Paul Street  
Suite 2360  
Dallas, TX 75201  
214.965.9933 x106  
www.vervecommunications.com

**Local Advertising**

713.528.6000 x103  
sales@yellowmags.com

**Yellow Magazine**

3400 Montrose  
Suite 510  
Houston, TX 77006  
713.528.6000

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# Asian Pacific American Heritage Association 14th Anniversary Gala

Held at Hilton of Americas



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Norma Benzson, Martha Wong



Chloe Dao, Tamlyn Tomita



Derrick Nguyen, Bobbi Nguyen, Gordon Quan, Kimsa Nguyen



Lulu Tan, Hung Nguyen



Charles & Lily Foster



Miya Shay



Donna Cole, Tom Griffin, Sachi Koto



John Gonda, Tammy Cole



Sam Brier, Aki Shimada, Munir Ibrahim, Oliver Luck



Dr. Pavan Grover, Yuki Rogers



Sadri Koto, Munir Ibrahim, Helen Chang



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An Outstanding Houstonian  
On the News/In the News

# Miya Shay

by JESSICA RITTER

Photo by Bill Olive



Television news reporter, Miya Shay, is among a select few this year – joining the ranks of Debra Duncan, Dan Rather, and even President George H.W. Bush. In addition to covering politics for ABC 13, Miya takes time to make a difference in her community and loves life. The vivaciously sanguine journalist is about to receive a huge honor reserved only for the community's finest young leaders, presented by the Houston Junior Chamber of Commerce. This will be the 74th year of the Five Outstanding Young Houstonians Awards, and *Yellow Magazine* went straight to the source to discover that this daughter of nuclear physicists is indeed a standout.

*Do you know how you became nominated for the honor of one of Five Outstanding Young Houstonians?*

Several wonderful people in the community who I've worked with over the past few years on a number of community projects decided to nominate me. I was really flattered and humbled because the people who nominated me do so much more for Houston on a daily basis than I can ever accomplish.

*Do you share any other awards with Dan Rather?*

Not that I know of!

*Your most memorable interviews were when:*

Anytime I'm running after someone with a microphone...and they don't want to be caught...always makes for good TV.

## I feel lucky to have a culture I cherish

*What words do you use to describe your personality?*

Outgoing, passionate, inquisitive, with a very dry sense of humor.

*What would you change about yourself, if anything?*

I definitely need a better work out habit, and more willpower against desserts!

*What does Miya do for fun?*

I'm a big foodie, and I love trying out new restaurants and revisiting my favorites in Houston. I travel when I get the chance, which isn't often enough. But mostly, I enjoy spending time with friends either working on a community project, or just relaxing on a weekend.

*So what flavor ice cream are you?*

Starbucks Light Latte (I'm addicted to Starbucks, whether frozen, iced, or extra hot!)

*Michigan, Kansas, Alabama, New York, and Texas are places with a lot of very different flavors. How do you think living in each of them have shaped the Miya we see today?*

I'm prepared for every snowstorm, tornado, and hurricane! Seriously, living in so many different places has only helped broaden my viewpoints, exposed me to different aspects of American culture, and made me a better-rounded journalist.

*At the end of the day, what do you do to relax?*

A good restaurant with great friends on weekends... and I usually don't relax during the week, unless I round up a good piece of chocolate.

*Who has influenced you the most?*

My family. Not one singular person, but my family in the U.S. and in China as a whole. Everyone, from my grandparents to my little cousins, has always placed education first. They are all dedicated to giving 110 percent everyday in their careers, and take care of each other, even halfway around the world. That's a lot to live up to!

*How has being Asian in America affected your life?*

I am proud to be Asian American, and I love sharing that with people. I grew up understanding the importance of education, and that's perhaps why I rushed through the American school system, and graduated college when I was eighteen. I know if I don't work hard, I'll have to answer to my family! But mostly, I feel lucky to have a culture I cherish.

*What would you say would be your ultimate goal in life?*

I hope that at the end of my career, whenever or wherever that may be, I can look back and know that I've made a small difference in some way.

# Friends of Asian Art Dinner

Held at The Museum of Fine Arts Houston in the Caroline Wiess Law Building



Dr. Stanislaw J. Czuma, Christine Starkman, MFAH curator, Dr. Ellin Grossman, Dr. Robert Grossman



Mrs. Josephine John and friend



Mrs. Shanta Raghuthaman and Dr. A.P



Mr. Dale Tingleaf and Mrs. Nanako Tingleaf



Dr. Ellen Gritz, Christine Starkman, MFAH curator, Dr. Jack Tausend, Dr. Marjorie G. Horning, MFAH Trustee, Mickey Rosenau

# Asian Pacific Heritage Month Honors

Held at The White House, Washington D.C.

President George W. Bush honored five Americans from the Asian American and Pacific Islander community with the Presidential Award for Volunteerism at a ceremony in the East Wing of the White House.



Sister Hang Pham and President George W. Bush



Bobbi Nguyen, Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao



Derrick Nguyen, Vinh Le, Tuan Pham



Mr. & Mrs. Nguyen, Nina Nguyen Collier, Derrick Nguyen



Mina Nguyen, Ken Mehlman, Vellie Dietrich-Hall

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Held at Peel Gallery



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Michelle Ngo has  
Designs on You

# Behind the Red Door by TAMMY DUONG

Nestled in a cozy little nook on West Gray is a modest, comfy little house that might not be noticed except for the bright, fire engine red French double-doors. It would be almost impossible to guess that inside this little home is the studio of a designing powerhouse, an up-and-coming local designer whose recognition grows with each passing year. Many local celebrities such as Dominique Sasche, Roseann Rogers, Miss Teen Texas, Miss Texas and Miss Universe are already familiar with the talents of Michelle Ngo.

Don't be fooled by her petite 5 foot frame. Michelle Ngo's presence is large and energetic. It is evident in her warm smile, bright eyes, and her fast-talking, raspy voice. "I go full force at everything I do; work hard, play hard," she says.

Over the past three years, Ngo has made a very comfortable transition into the design world from her former career in the IT industry. What might seem like a major leap to most people was a long-time coming for Ngo. She explains that the jump from the structure of her old career to a more creative endeavor was a very well thought out decision. "Sometimes you have to take on a new challenge; you have to challenge yourself to the passions you have and follow it. That's the only way you'll find out what could be instead of taking the same path [as everyone else]," says Ngo.

But pursuing her dream of making beautiful clothes that empower women has not made her lose sight of the more important things in life. "At this stage in my life, I try to focus on a balance between work and family. That, to me, is as important, or even more important, than my career. I'm really happy with what I do, but I always want to grow. My expectations and aspirations are practical. I just want for my clients to be satisfied and for the people I work with

to be happy [with my work]," she says.

As a designer who specializes in women's wear, Ngo focuses on making clothes that are distinct, unique and interesting. She explains that she would rather her designs not be recognized as "Michelle Ngo" designs but as individual pieces. She does not want her style to become so distinct that she has lost sight of her creativity, she explains. Instead, she hopes to create garments for women that meet their particular needs, individuality and personal style. "I love clothes that hang well on a body, that fit a woman well, and that are empowering. I think that it's important for a person to feel comfortable and confident in what they're wearing – nothing too complicated, just something that is fashionable, beautiful and comfortable," she explains.

Bridal gowns and special events gowns are her specialty. "Designing bridal gowns is particularly rewarding because it's such an important day for a woman, and it is such an honor when they select you to design their gown. They really have to trust you because they don't see the final product until it's done."



But designing specialty gowns is no small feat. Ngo explains that extreme attention to detail goes into choosing fine fabrics and designing a gown that is cut to fit a woman well. It is also particularly important to truly listen to the client, she says. What makes it most satisfying to Ngo is the end result.

"At the final fitting, when she's all lit up, I share in that happy moment, and that's what I cherish the most about designing custom gowns," says Ngo.

What's next for Michelle Ngo? Possibly, men's wear. "Fine fabrics, well-cut clothes, things that are well-fitted, are important for men," she says. But for now, she designs men's wear strictly for family and friends. Ngo is hoping that the future will allow her to branch out to other boutiques in Houston. Elizabeth Anthony on Post Oak is one of the exclusive boutiques that carry Michelle Ngo gowns but, in the future, you will certainly find her designs at boutiques across Houston.

What's the secret to her success? "If you have a passion, follow it. Think it through and be practical. Being a fashion designer is not just about being creative; it's also being business-minded. But hard work and determination are always required to be successful in anything you do."

Like the unassuming gray house with the fire-red doors, no one might have assumed the powerhouse lying within. But Michelle Ngo does not run short of all the big things it requires to be a huge success. Don't let her little frame fool you.



*michellengo.com*  
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I'm really happy with what I do,  
but I always want to grow

# Mixers Elixers & Imax

Held at the Houston Museum of Natural Science



Toan Nguyen, Amie Alcantara, Ruby Gonzales, Sean Joseph



Ryan Korsgard, Chau Nguyen, Steve Latham



Janie Bedner, Jonathan Cohen



Jackie Pham, Tammy Duong



Jackie Pham, Natassa Trinh, Philip Pablo



Erin Blatzer, Sarah Gabbart, Brianna del Castillo



Yassim Beltran, Christina Sisk, Silvia Munoz Martinez

# Identity Show Kick-Off Party

Held at Momentum Audi Dealership



Viet Hoang, Chau Nguyen, Mimi Dinh



Ann Dorn, Deb Cini, Julian Langhorn



Ruby Lee, Jeff Fantich, Angie Dinh



Mimi Dinh, John Kim and Miya Shay



Benjamin Wu



Jessika Rugley, Clanay Wheeler, Carman Martinez



Shyda Hussain and Sajid Hussain



Blanca Soto, Yuan Yuan Zhang, Holly Graves

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# White Hot American Summer

Photographer : **Debbie Porter**   Stylists : **Summar Salah, Jennifer Richey**   Hair : **Johnathan Luke**   Makeup : **Grace Lin**  
for Sensia Studio & Japanese Day Spa

Dress by Vera Wang \$395, Saks Fifth Avenue



Top by Michael Kors \$375, Neiman Marcus  
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Earrings and Bracelets, Vanessa Riley London Boutique



Top by CLASS by Roberto Cavalli \$585, Neiman Marcus  
Bikini bottom by VIX \$140, Neiman Marcus  
Lace wrap with ostrich feathers and rhinestones by Valentino Garavani \$1350, Saks Fifth Avenue  
Necklace, Vanessa Riley London Boutique



Dress by Laundry by Shelli Segal \$340, Saks Fifth Avenue



Dress by Vanessa Riley, Vanessa Riley London Boutique  
White lace top by Vanessa Riley, Vanessa Riley Boutique  
Cream ruffle lace top by Robert Rodriguez \$275, Neiman Marcus



Cream Blouse by Reem Acra New York \$880, Neiman Marcus  
Top by Bailey 44 \$155, Neiman Marcus  
Skirt by CYNTHIA by Cynthia Steffe \$240, Saks Fifth Avenue

A Floral Fairy Tale

# Mindy Lam

by HIEN TAMMY VU



Once upon a time, there was a little girl who lived in a far away land. She grew up in a hard working farming family, but, nonetheless, she was a happy child surrounded by an enchanted farm of flowers. She dreamed of having a life of extravagance and her dream became a reality. Like a fairy tale reminiscent of Cinderella or Snow White, she conquered the evil villain and awakened in the new enchanted kingdom of Mindy Lam.



Jewelry and accessories designer Mindy Lam

**Your jewelry collection has a fairy tale quality of fantasy and beauty. Was your life filled with grandeur and luxury?**

Life was hard growing up in Hong Kong. My parents were blue collar workers and they worked hard to make money. My father owned a farm where flowers were everywhere and, as a child, I loved playing with their beauty. So, my family is where my dream began. Also, I have always been attracted to the finer things because of their beauty, design, and art. My work is inspired by *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

**How did you get to where you are now?**

Surrounded by flowers as a child and being attracted to beauty, my path led me to wanting to make others beautiful. From Hong Kong to the United States, I worked as a hairstylist and later as an image consultant. From these experiences, I not only gained a strong sense of creativity and color coordination, but I learned that my clients wanted to be different.

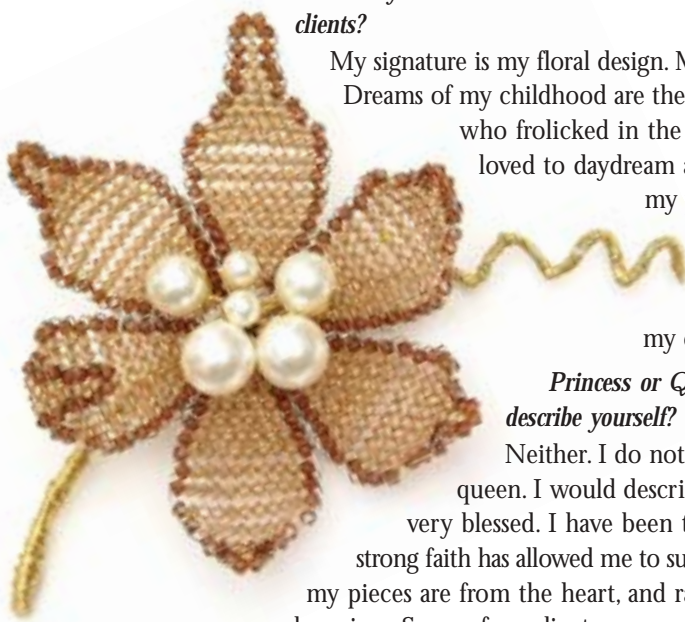
It was during a trip to Hong Kong to visit my daughter that I discovered my talent as a result of a most trying time. Diagnosed with a deadly disease, my sister gave me wires and crystals to play with to ease my mind. I used these pieces to design my first jewelry. Upon my return to the United States, clients and friends noticed the pieces that I wore. Their attraction to my beautiful creations encouraged who I am today – Mindy Lam, jewelry designer.

**What is your most charmed artwork? How do you create dreams for your clients?**

My signature is my floral design. Mindy Lam's charm is her flowers. Dreams of my childhood are the inspiration for my designs– a girl who frolicked in the sun with flowers in her hair and loved to daydream about beauty. It so happened that my past life with flowers resurfaced in my present life. So, from my flowery experiences, I create dreams for my clients influenced by my own natural dreams.

**Princess or Queen – which would you choose to describe yourself?**

Neither. I do not consider myself as a princess or a queen. I would describe myself now as a person who is very blessed. I have been through good and bad times. My strong faith has allowed me to survive the bad times. Consequently, my pieces are from the heart, and range from the simple to the very luxurious. Some of my clients wear my designs not only because it makes them feel beautiful, but also because they are inspired by my life story. I just want to make people feel important and special when they wear my designs.



**Do fairy tales exist? If so, create your own fairy tale. Do you believe in “happily ever after”?**

Yes, fairy tales do exist. With the opportunities that America has offered me, I am living my fairy tale, today.

In the past, I did not believe in “happily ever after” because I was struggling with many unknowns within my family, my career, and my own life – I was just trying to survive. Now that I have been through the battles, I believe that there is a possibility of “happily ever after.”

**What or who are the “evil villains” in your kingdom (life)?**



There are both good and bad times, not necessarily evil. God has indeed tested me and I believe that He presents us with what we are able to overcome. To have success is to go through a whole lot and I have overcome many obstacles – growing up poor as a young child, quitting my jobs, and surviving a deadly disease. Through all of those difficult times, I kept a positive outlook. I have fought and succeeded in the battle of life.

**What is the most magical moment in your life?**

There are many magical moments in my life such as seeing my designs at Tootsies, having people recognize me and stop me on the street to compliment my work, getting an award, having magazines recognize Mindy Lam, having superstars wear my jewelry, and seeing the joy of a woman for whom I signed a postcard. No matter if it is a \$38 pair of earrings or something that is considered priceless, the magic is that my designs make people feel beautiful, different, and special.

God just loves me too much.

**Wish upon a star...and dream \_\_\_\_\_.**

I dream for every woman to own a Mindy Lam piece and to feel special wearing it. Also, I dream of my soul mate so that I can live happily ever after.



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by TINA HERNANDEZ



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# Cutting Up with David Chien

by FRANCES TROTTER

It seems that you are inspired by daily life, such as walking your dog or enjoying the outdoors. Your work contains lighthearted, playful subject matter. What is the source of this? Are the characters based on reality? The finesse with which you make your objects suggests a "Type-A" attention to craftsmanship.



At the age of 26, David Chien reminds us that the most contemporary art resides within the realm of gigabytes and webpages. His current show at Art League Houston, *Popunation*, showcases his talent for ambitious large-scale cut out sculptures. Chien, a graduate of Rice University, describes his art as "user interaction within a space, with a touch of fantasy characterization." His work is reminiscent of old computer games and pop up books. The sculptures are mostly narrative, charming conglomerations that usually include humorous arrangements of brightly colored versions of himself or "everyman" walking dogs, birds, or cans of spray paint. Funny and interactive, the show also includes a projection based arcade machine with an online interactive component. The show will run through June and contains some very cheery works of art.

The characters inhabit a world that is slightly out of sync with our current world. They experience events that can readily be identified as monotonous everyday events but with a slight twist of absurdity. Historically, these characters have evolved over the course of many years for a series of editorial cartoons. Each time they rear their heads, it's in a different way – whether through sculptural form or sticker form. They have pretty much become a great source material for a lot of my work and are used in some instances as building blocks for other work. In other instances, they are the primary focus of the work.

**How long does it require to take your sculptures from concept to completion? What is involved?**

From concept to completion, it takes about 1-2 months. The sculptures began as straightforward paper mock-ups. Once the mock-ups were complete, it was more a matter of going through the process of cutting and crafting the wood.

**Please express how your Chinese-American heritage and culture influence your work. With cyberculture so prevalent in your work, do you feel that *Popunation* reaches a younger, more hip audience?**

Chinese culture, like pretty much any culture, has a standard set of cultural quirks and superstitions. It's a lot of fun to point them out because there are so many layers to go through. It's the same with youth culture and yuppie culture. Something can be readily identified as specific to just those groups but, in the end, there will always be some kind of universal quirk that everyone can appreciate and understand. *Popunation* touches on notable events/scenes that people would experience if they lived in an urban environment.

**Being computer savvy is definitely evident in your approach. You have several websites that are interesting and funny with one focusing on your work, another is an interactive storyline, and so on. What are these websites and can we visit them? You also use video games in your work. How do you think this reflects upon you as an artist, and how do you differentiate between yourself as an artist and as a person? It seems the two are closely linked.**

The basis for a lot of my work is user interaction. In a piece like "The Story of [fill in the blank]" ([thestoryoffillintheblank.com](http://thestoryoffillintheblank.com)), the viewer submits a story that is used in an upcoming multi-panel narrative comic strip. The story might not be what the viewer intended because there will always be a bit of "artistic flair" thrown into the mix. In a piece like "Adopt-a-Gremlin" ([nakedgremlin.com/card/](http://nakedgremlin.com/card/)), the specific user interaction I focused on was the typical business card exchange. In this case, each business card given is a unique drawing of a gremlin character. The recipient can go to the website, input their unique code and officially adopt their gremlin by giving it a name.

As far as the differentiation between myself as an artist and as a person, I find that to be a very blurry line.

Learn more about David Chien at [nakedgremlin.com](http://nakedgremlin.com)

Coffee Drinker  
2006, David Chien



Birdwalker  
2006, David Chien



Yuppie Graffiti Tagger  
2006, David Chien



**Describe the project that you created for *Glasstire*, a series of online installations created from email spam ....**

*Spamgraffiti* ([residency.glasstire.com/spamgraffiti/](http://residency.glasstire.com/spamgraffiti/)) is a series of online installations created from spam. The project articulates spam email as graffiti art – as new spam arrives, the old spam is visually pushed back into the background. *Spamgraffiti* is a piece that is constantly updated. As the rate of spam increases in a particular email account, the aesthetics of that environment change. Picture it like two rival gangs going at it on a public wall, but instead of gang signs and tags, you have Viagra testimonials and mortgage payment plan options.

My biggest crush is for art that can be repurposed – it's like a gift that keeps on giving

**Are you interested in doing public art? It seems your work is conducive to that, and you have done quite a bit with BBAP and large murals...**

The public art forum is ideal for a lot of my work. It's great to see people interact with art less in a gallery setting and more in the public forum – it just makes the barrier for acceptance that much less restrictive.

**What videogames, webpages or artists' work has most influenced you? Keith Haring, perhaps? The graphic quality and choice of color in your work also suggest an 80's influence.**

Keith Haring is a big influence, as are all works by current graphic artists and graffiti artists. My biggest crush is for art that can be repurposed – it's like a gift that keeps on giving. In essence, that is similar to the sharing and collaborative feel of 80s pop culture, but with the magic of the internet, you can take collaboration and sharing to a whole other realm, today.

**Evident on your webpages, you are interested in comics, graphic novels, and possibly animation. Tell us more about this and if you have plans to publish.**

Currently in the works for publication is a catalog of a photos series of mine – 366 Polaroids, one for each day in 2004. It's one of the many "time-based-persistent-Oh my god-I-have-to-do-this-again" type of projects that I've been working on. Other than that, there is always the constant sticker production that will hopefully be sold online soon at [nakedgremlin.com](http://nakedgremlin.com).

**Talk about your name meaning "dog" in French, and the character of the dog. Are you also a cat person?**

Dogs are great, especially in a stew. Just kidding.

At an early age, a stranger informed me that my last name meant dog in French. It was one of those bizarre occasions when you just have to ask yourself, why is this person even talking to me, let alone telling me this? I'm actually a bit allergic to cats, but I hear they're great with parsley and paprika...

**What are your plans for the future? Where will you go next? Do you live in Houston, and do you plan on staying here?**

Houston has been and still is a great place to work on your art. The public art support is fantastic but there just seems to be a lack of technology and internet focused work. So, I think there might be a bit of traveling in the future to solve that lack.

**If while cleaning out your car, you stumble across a wrapped green Starburst candy buried deep in a crevice on the floor next to old wadded up Kleenex, errant spare change, little mounds of dirt, and you were able to date that Starburst to a pack you ate on a road trip four months ago, do you:**

- throw the Starburst away.
- leave the Starburst where it is.
- save the Starburst for a very special sibling.
- eat the Starburst.

It's C. Everything else just doesn't bring me enough joy.

# What's Going On and Where It's Going Where Art Thou?

## Tansu

321-B West 19th Street Houston, TX 77008  
713.880.5100, tansustyle.com

### 2nd Annual Origami Festival

July 1-9, 2006

Tansu in the Houston Heights is proud to present its second annual festival celebrating origami, the ancient art of Japanese paper folding. San Francisco's master origami artist Linda Mihara will be featured this year teaching a multitude of workshops, displaying her artwork, and premiering her latest creation, the 3D Connected Crane Pyramid! Workshops and unique origami models will also be offered by Houston's finest origami artists including Joan Son, Kyle Fu, Nancy Munson, Ping Lau, and Sandy Atha. For more information, visit tansustyle.com.



64 Crane Quilt by Linda Mihara

Photo Lby isa Hoke



## Rice Gallery

6100 Main Street, Sewall Hall, Houston, TX 77005  
713.348.6069, ricegallery.org

### Summer Window Series: Light My Fire by Lisa Hoke

May 19-August 31, 2006

Light My Fire, is the fourth installation in Rice Gallery's Summer Window series. This series features installations that can be viewed through

the gallery's front glass wall while the gallery is closed for the summer. The Summer Window installation is visible only through the gallery's front window during regular building hours: Mon-Sat, 9am-6:00pm. Although no gallery attendant is on duty, free educational materials are available.



## Reliant Stadium

2510 Westridge, Houston, TX 77054  
ringling.com

### Inner Mongolia Acrobatic Troupe Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey The Greatest Show On Earth

July 14-23, 2006

Amazing acrobats who leap and fly through the air with astounding agility, strength and speed. Show-stopping performances of Chinese Poles, Hoop Diving and centuries-old traditional feats. For more than 2,000 years, acrobatics has been a mainspring of Chinese entertainment. It has even been claimed that Confucius' father was an acrobat – so great importance is accorded to this enthralling art, with circus performers considered as its distinguished heirs. The Troupe, along with its affiliated school, is the only professional acrobatic group in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, Peoples Republic of China, and is regarded as one of that nation's most renowned. Tickets are available online at Ringling.com or ticketmaster.com. Please call 713.629.3700 to order tickets from Ticketmaster or call 832.667.1400 for more information.

## Houston Art Dealers Association

713/522.9116, arthouston.com

### Summer Event of Art Houston

The Summer Event of ArtHouston 2006, encompassing exhibitions at 38 galleries both introducing new artists and celebrating established ones, will open Saturday, July 8. A daylong event, it is expected to be the busiest day of the year with many galleries holding evening receptions. Many other galleries will hold receptions on Friday evening, July 7. For more information, contact Rebecca O'Brien at 713,522.9116 or email information@arthouston.com

If you would like your event listed, please email the information to web@yellowmags.com.

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Don't Just *Plan*  
on Visiting... Just Do It!

# New York City

by HENRI MERCERON



The Empire State Building design is a trademark of Empire State Building Company LLC.

I grew up in New York City. As soon as I graduated college, I could not wait to get out. That was 27 years ago. While I continued to visit family in the city until my father passed away and my mother moved to Florida 15 years ago, there was no yearning on my part to return permanently. My son graduated high school this year and expressed a strong desire to go to NYC as a graduation gift. As it turned out, his wish was granted but "his" gift became a gift to us all.

When you conjure up an image of NYC, quite naturally you think of NYPD (the television show) and a host of similar shows that depict the underbelly of humanity. Certainly, you know of the many cultural and historical landmarks (not to mention shopping meccas such as the venerable Macys) for which the city is renowned but, in the back of your mind, there is the omnipresent fear factor. Watch your back, don't smile at anyone, expect rudeness and filth and crime. And let us not forget just HOW expensive everything is, from hotels and entertainment to breakfast and lunch and dinner.

This article is one about a native New Yorker's return as a tourist. Through my experiences, I hope to impart unto you the true and current flavor of New York City. To begin with, clear your mind of the images promoted by your favorite police and crime television shows.

The Radio City Apartments ([radiocityapartments.com](http://radiocityapartments.com)) is located within five blocks of fabled Times Square on 42nd Street and Broadway. As the name would suggest, it is close to Radio City Music Hall, too. Getting there from Newark Airport could not be more convenient. For \$11/person, a bus dropped us off within 5 blocks. The cozy hotel was converted from a 105 unit apartment building that was probably constructed in the early 1900s. For a relatively modest \$185/night (excluding taxes), we settled into a well-appointed one bedroom unit that included two double beds and a sleeper sofa in the living room. If you are traveling with children, management has thoughtfully placed a television in each room. While the adults slept peacefully in the bedroom, the teenagers were free to watch cable TV and talk endlessly on their cell phones to their hearts' content.

All the units at Radio City provide a small kitchen area on one side of the living room with a miniature refrigerator/freezer, microwave, coffeemaker, stove, sink, pots and pans, and utensils. The availability of a kitchen provides guests optimal flexibility in planning their spending pattern while visiting a city such as New York, which can be financially challenging. If you want to conserve dollars to spend more freely on shopping and entertainment, you can prepare as many meals as necessary in your room, thereby saving a bundle.

If you are looking for five star hotel accommodations such as room service, pool and exercise room, Radio City Apartments is not for you. However, the property is clean, free of insects and the staff is courteous and professional. The bathrooms are updated in marble tile, which complement the fixtures, pedestal sink and vanity to create a modern and comfortable environment. Now, I would not judge anyone who wants to stay at a luxury hotel. However, unless you come down with the flu, it is unlikely that you will be spending many waking hours in your room when you are in New York City. Come on. Even if it rains, the shopping opportunities are endless.

Because of the hotel's central location in the heart of Manhattan, all

the major sites are within walking distance. There are approximately 20 blocks to a mile, so by my calculations, the southern tip of the island is about three miles (60 blocks) away. Most of the other places we visited were within a radius of that distance; the Empire State Building (.75 mile), ferry to Statue of Liberty (3 miles), American Museum of Natural History (1.75 miles), SoHo, Little Italy, Chinatown, Nolita (all within 3 miles). Broadway plays, Grand Central Station and the fertile street life that defines Times Square were all within several blocks.

The title of this article is "Don't Plan on Visiting New York. Just Do It." I had googled everything we wanted to do on our trip. And while we did manage to visit six of the top ten attractions, in many respects it was the pulse of the city that grabbed us and pulled us in directions unknown but unforgettable. The point to be made here is that New York is alive and spontaneous. The city has an energy that propels you. Welcome the opportunity to explore new sites to which you become exposed along the way to planned destinations. Flexibility maximizes enjoyment and minimizes stress.

On our first morning, we planned to see an old family friend in SoHo, an abbreviation for South of Houston (*house-ton*). It is a quaint old area south of Houston Street. A half block from the hotel, we intersected one of the regular street festivals that are popular amongst tourists and natives alike. The bargains and the aroma of foods reflective of NYC's ethnic diversity were intoxicating; I called our friend and rescheduled our visit. What could I do? Fine Indian Pashmina and cashmere scarves for \$5; beautiful leather belts for \$5; jewelry, sculptures, paintings, designer clothing! My favorite cologne for \$25! Unheard of prices!! My son debated the purchase of a belt. I told him that at \$5, who cares, if he even THOUGHT he liked it, he should buy it. Within half an hour, we had to go back to the hotel to unload so we could continue where we left off. The vendors populated both sides of the street for ten blocks. After three hours of shopping and eating such things as baklava, gyros, shish-kebabs, we passed Lindy's, known for its "World Famous Cheesecake." We had shopped hard – we deserved cheesecake. If you like cheesecake, don't go to NYC without stopping here. It raises the bar on what constitutes "the best" cheesecake.

From Lindy's, we traveled a few blocks to the southern edge of Central Park, an 843 acre patch of green in the middle of Manhattan. In addition to the horse drawn carriages that carry people on romantic sojourns through the park, there are also 5-person, star-shaped bicycles, bicycle-drawn rickshaws, and even rickshaws pulled by people. You feel as though you have been transported back in time as you walk through the park (officially dedicated in 1873) and observe the character reflected in light posts, bridges, tunnels, fountains and multiple sculptures. It is within this environment that a sea of humanity representing people from all walks of life, nationalities, ethnicities, religion, orientation and age relax and enjoy themselves in myriad ways. In Sheep Meadow, a fifteen acre area within the park, perhaps a thousand people sunbathe, read, play frisbee, kick soccer balls, catch baseballs, socialize and sleep. Rising beyond the trees, perhaps a quarter mile away, soars the roof of the Dakota, where John Lennon was killed.

Moving a little deeper into the park, we followed the distinctive beat of primal dance music to a short section of a closed side street where a group of people was dancing on roller blades. Barely a block away,

It was the pulse of the city that grabbed us and pulled us in directions unknown but unforgettable



New York City's Central Park



© D. Ferrin/AMNH



Above: Members of the creative team at the Rose Center for Earth and Space guide the new Space Show, *Cosmic Collisions*, in the Hayden Planetarium to completion.  
Below: St. Paul's Chapel



Statue of Liberty



# Times Square is so safe, it is mind boggling to me.

wedding pictures were being taken at the base of a towering fountain on the edge of the lake. It was a wedding that included a Chinese bride; her mother wore a fantastic traditional dress. I respectfully asked if I could take a picture and was most respectfully denied.

When you travel to NYC, there are certain sites that are obligatory. Some are historical and others are cultural. We managed to view a little of each. Following are brief synopses:

The Statue of Liberty tops the list of most popular sites. To reach it, you board the Circle Line ship at Battery Park at the southern-most tip of Manhattan. The cost is \$11.50/person. Since the interior of the statue is no longer accessible for viewing, we opted to remain on the ship as it stopped at Liberty Island and continued on to Ellis Island (which is fourth amongst popular attractions). The immigration building on Ellis Island captures the very essence of America's core. Fully restored to its original condition and transformed into a museum, it does justice to the contributions of immigrants to the development of America. Like so many Americans, my great grandparents were processed in the very place I stood and the echoes of family history came knocking upon my consciousness. While Asian immigrants were not processed there for the most part because they generally entered the country on the West coast, there are unpleasant references to the anti-Asian sentiments pervasive during that period in American history. The museum does an honorable job representing the hardships that faced immigrants from various points of origin.

The Empire State Building is the second most popular tourist site, and on a clear day the view from the observation deck is spectacular. There is nothing like it. At the admission counter you can purchase tickets to the observation tower, "Skyride" and "Tony's AudioView". The Skyride is one of those contraptions that takes you on a simulated Star Trek Enterprise ride around NYC; you get all that cute stuff such as fake near miss collisions into bridges and your seat jerks you around. Save your money. As far as entertainment goes, it feels like a 20-year-old Disneyland ride for kids, although it is marginally informative. Do rent "Tony's AudioView" which is a handheld unit that may be shared by two people if you situate your heads close together. "Tony" is a seasoned taxi driver who very effectively points out all the key spots visible from the observation deck. He may point you to some sites you will want to visit, so be prepared to take notes.

Times Square is the third most popular site. It is so safe, it is mind boggling to me. Police are visible throughout the area. We were out past midnight and the intensity of the brilliantly lighted and supersized billboards made it appear mid-day, and the crush of people was constant. I cannot explain what they were all doing at that hour. It seems that some stores never close and street vendors populate every block in the area, selling \$2 shish-kebobs and those delicious Sabrett hotdogs with sauerkraut. Almost as plentiful are carts from which vendors sell all kinds of honey roasted nuts and bite size pieces of honey roasted coconut. I made numerous late night trips for the latter. They are THAT good.

Along Broadway near 42nd Street and along 42nd Street there are dozens of artists who set up shop. Ninety percent of them are Asian. They beckon you, brandishing exquisite samples of their caricatures or portraits that were always better than what they were producing on the street. Prices are \$5 for the art and \$15 for mat and frame. It's a hard

vocation; we witnessed one customer reject the finished product because he saw no resemblance to his daughter. If you are in the market, I suggest you entertain yourself as you observe each of the artists as they create their sketches. You will soon identify the ones who demonstrate the most talent.

Similarly, there are a number of artists who produce colorful sci-fi NYC landscapes using minimal tools (such as Tupperware lids) and spray paint. If you have not seen this form of art, it is worth watching. The finished product has an airbrushed appearance with dramatic colors. Cost is \$20 unframed.

We skipped the fifth most popular attraction, the Bronx Zoo, and visited number six, the American Museum of Natural History. I grew up two blocks from this enormous historic building which retains its original charm amongst modern influences. Founded in 1869 by prominent citizens, including Teddy Roosevelt's father, the wealth of artifacts and exhibits is too extensive to tour in one day. I quickly pointed out those exhibits that awed me as a child – the dinosaur skeletons, the Star of India, the world's largest blue star sapphire given to the museum in 1900 by JP Morgan, and a slice of a 1,500-year-old redwood tree that must be 12 feet in diameter.

Center for Earth and Space houses the state-of-the-art Hayden planetarium in which several shows are presented. Robert Redford narrates "Cosmic Collisions" that exposes visitors to the supersonic collisions that drive the dynamic evolution of our universe. "SonicVision" was produced in collaboration with MTV2 and is a groundbreaking digitally animated alternative music show. The dome of the planetarium explodes with a dazzling display of color that continually morphs to the music throughout the production.

We didn't see any famous people in New York on this trip. But we did eat pizza at Joe's Pizza in SoHo. Ranked as having some of the best pizza in NYC, it has the distinction of being the store that fired Peter Parker in *Spiderman 2*. (In the movie, the telephone number on Parker's helmet is the pizzeria's actual number). Notwithstanding the hype, we thought that Spiderman could find a job at other pizza parlors that made much better pies.

I suppose no trip to NYC would be complete without paying respect to Ground Zero. There is not much to see but the weight of history is heavy at the location. Of note, not more than fifty yards from the site is St. Paul's Chapel, part of the Episcopal Trinity Church. I am embarrassed that I was raised in NYC and never knew about this building. George Washington worshipped here on his Inauguration Day, April 30, 1789, and attended services at St. Paul's during the two years New York City was the country's capital. His pew is preserved and above it is an 18th-century oil painting of the Great Seal of the United States, adopted in 1782. The view from the back door of the chapel overlooks a cemetery filled with tombstones so old that the engravings have long worn away. Just beyond it is the vacuous area in which the twin towers once stood. You cannot escape the deep roots of American history that are contained within the immediate area. You can almost hear Frank Sinatra serenading patriotically... "I'll make a brand new start of it, in old New York. If I can make it there, I can make it anywhere. It's up to you, New York New, York." Happy July 4th everyone!



Above: Ellis Island  
Below: Rose Center for Earth and Space



© C. Chesek/AMNH

Below: The 563-carat Star of India, the largest and most famous star sapphire in the world. Donated to the American Museum of Natural History by J. P. Morgan in 1900.



American Museum of Natural History. Founded in 1869, the American Museum of Natural History is one of the largest natural history museums in the world. Approximately four million visitors – including more than 500,000 children in organized school groups – from around the world visit each year.



© D. Finnin/C. Chesek/AMNH

The Museum's Hall of Asian Peoples opened in 1980, and features this elaborately ornamented Chinese wedding chair.

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# Eat + Drink Wine + Food

by PHILIP CUSIMANO

Wine and food go together like the horse and carriage and love and marriage. While this is not surprising, it does beg the question, why? Well, let us explore the answer.

First, wine itself is a beverage produced from food and this can result in a mutually complimentary pairing of the two. Elements of wine can accentuate the taste of food and, similarly, food can highlight the flavors found in wine. For example, when the flavors of pepper and spice found in many red wines are paired properly with the peppers and spices contained within food, "mama mia"! Or how about a nice creamy, buttery white wine to accompany a lobster served in a butter sauce? Executed properly, these matches are examples of elegant dining.

All wine tastes better consumed in the company of friends, lovers, family and associates.

Secondly, enjoying food and wine is enhanced by social settings and, in turn, eating and drinking can enhance the social intercourse. Hence, the consumption of food and the drinking of wine share a social connection. Who really enjoys a meal alone? Surely, dining with friends and loved ones is a joyous event that serves to strengthen the bond of personal relationships. Indeed, sharing a meal is one of those cultural rites that helps to

bind our society together. Wine is the one beverage that is most enjoyed when shared.

Another argument favoring the coupling of wine and food is that stress and tension inhibit the digestive process. Wine consumed in moderation has a calming effect which relaxes the diner and makes the meal more enjoyable.

Finally – and most importantly – the tie that most firmly binds wine and eating together is wine's ability to cleanse the palate. The first bite of your meal is the best because your palate is fresh. You cannot taste the second bite as well because you still have hints of flavors in your mouth from the first one. However, if you clear your palate with a sip of wine between bites, each one can be as tasty as the first. No other beverage is as effective in refreshing your palate as wine.

So eat and drink up with the following recommendations.

#### Coppola Claret

From none other than Francis Ford Coppola comes "a deal that is hard to refuse". This is a pleasant, soft wine produced with cabernet sauvignon sourced from various areas of California. Blackberry fruit with hints of chocolate, a little touch of acidity, a pinch of spice, good balance and a light to medium body, combine to create this little treat. If you are thinking of venturing out from merlot, this may be your ticket. Serve with lighter, grilled red meats. \$13.00

#### Chateau Bianca Willamette Pinot Gris 2004

From Oregon, a terrific source of wine and best known for their pinot noir, comes this tasty pinot gris (think pinot grigio). This is a tasty, simple wine, medium-bodied with prominent pear fruit up front and tropical undertones, dry and pleasantly crisp, with good balance and a short finish. Should go well with Asian cuisine. \$10.00

#### Dama Montepulciano d' Abruzzo

Montepulciano is the grape and abruzzo is the place. This is one of Italy's best known wines. The Dama Montepulciano comes from the estate of Dante Marramiero, who is one of the region's most renowned producers. This wine is velvet and silk in the mouth, with the flavors of red berry fruit and, of course, there are hints of spice. This is medium to full-bodied and is quite good. Serve with red meats. \$12.00



Wines available at Spec's Wines, Spirits, & Finer Foods, various locations. Visit [specsonline.com](http://specsonline.com) for the store nearest you.

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