

DEPARTURES

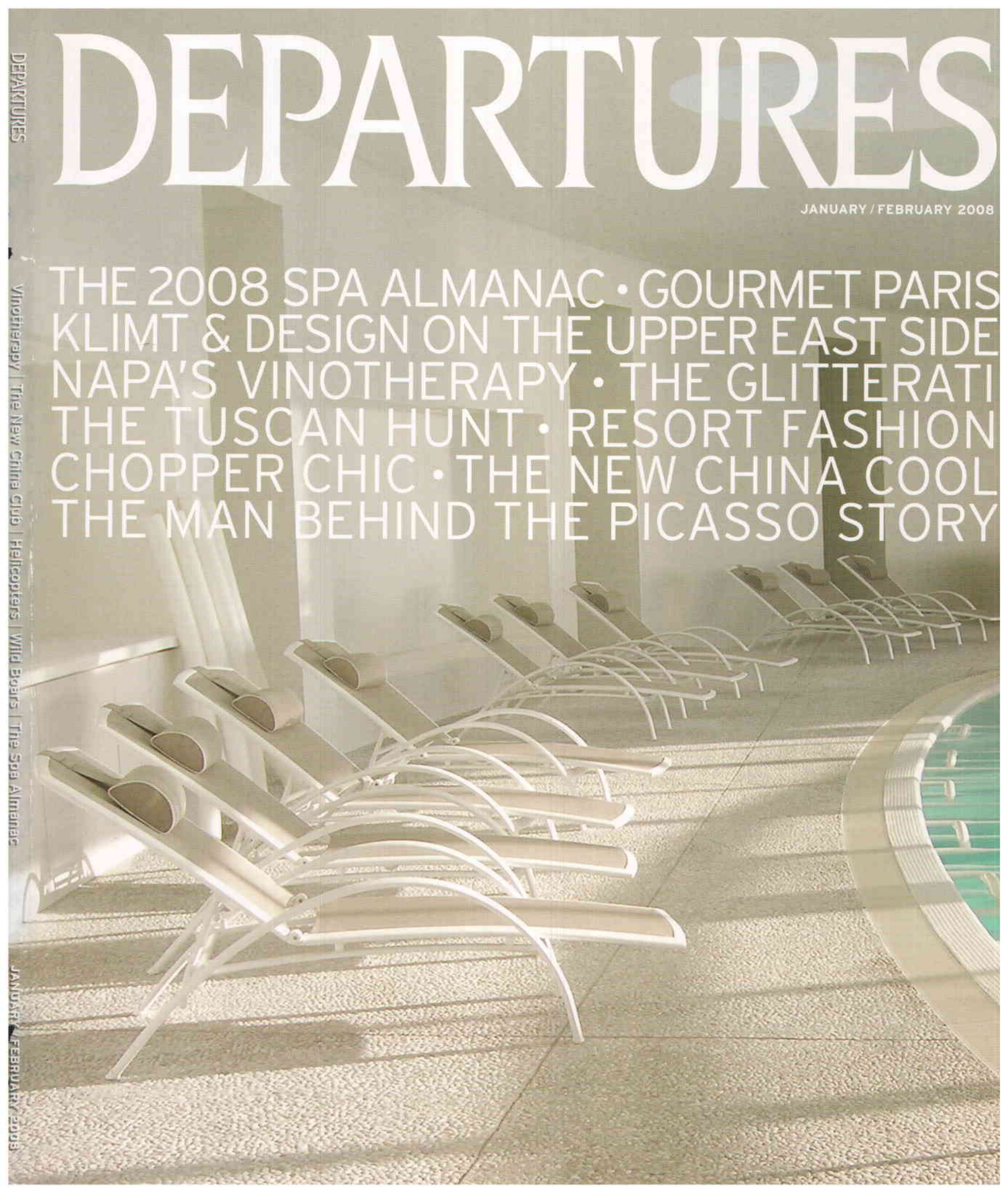
JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2008

THE 2008 SPA ALMANAC • GOURMET PARIS
KLIMT & DESIGN ON THE UPPER EAST SIDE
NAPA'S VINO THERAPY • THE GLITTERATI
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THE MAN BEHIND THE PICASSO STORY

DEPARTURES

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black **BOOK**

A GUIDE FOR THE SOPHISTICATED TRAVELER HERE & ABROAD

Antiques and ethnic accents
abound at Dhow House; here,
the master drawing room.

Villa to Rent

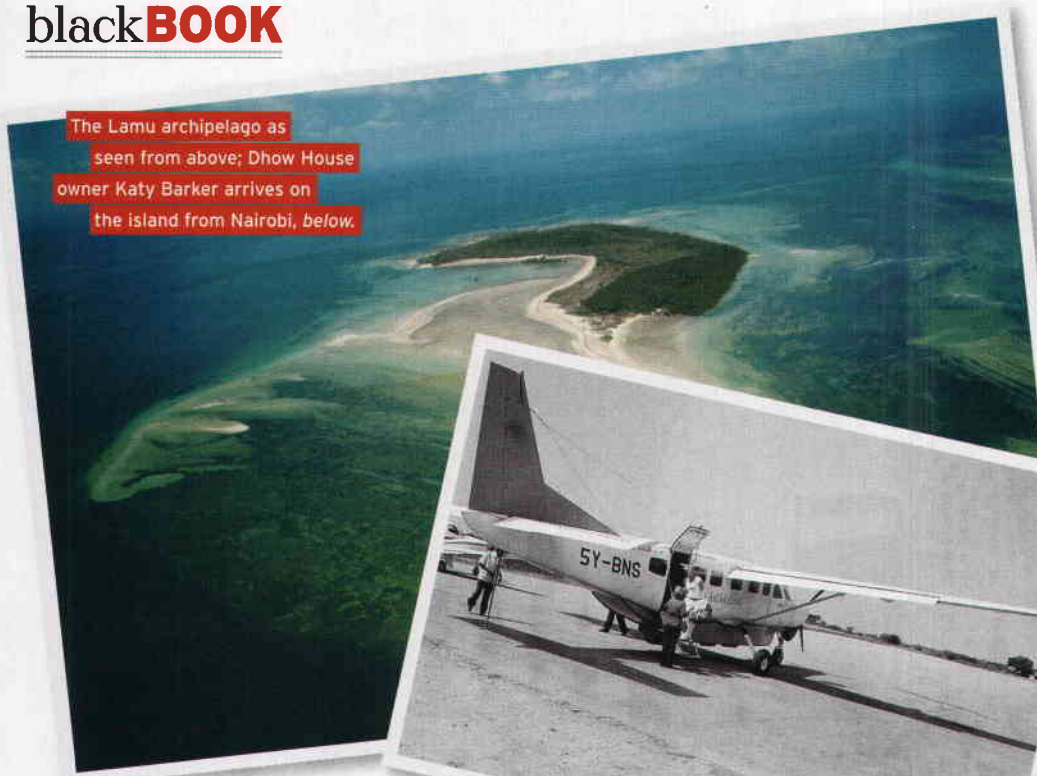
African Queen



The circuitous journey to **Dhow House**, a spectacular private villa on the Kenyan island of Lamu, is all part of its charm. First there's the one-and-a-half-hour flight from Nairobi, which delivers a glimpse of the Lamu archipelago, separated from the mainland by a narrow channel and protected from the Indian Ocean by dunes and coral reefs. Upon landing, it's another ride—this one by boat and 20 minutes long—past lateen-sailed dhows and into the shallows surrounding Shela

village. But after all that, throw off everything but your shorts, caftan, or bikini, and voilà. You've arrived at possibly the chicest beach house in Africa.

"Finding this island was like waking from a sublime dream and realizing it was true. The place had that kind of impact," says Dhow House's owner, British photography agent Katy Barker, who built the property with French architect Laurent Buttazoni. "It needed to feel open, spacious, and, above all, sexy, like it belonged to me and wasn't just another rental." **CONTINUED »**



The Lamu archipelago as seen from above; Dhow House owner Katy Barker arrives on the island from Nairobi, below.



The seven-bedroom house is indeed generously proportioned, comfortably accommodating 14 people, and as such it has been much in demand, with past guests like singer Marianne Faithfull and actress Gillian Anderson. The airy, sunshine-flooded rooms, which were created with cement using an old Swahili method, open onto a large blue-and-black checkerboard-tiled pool and lush three-acre gardens. These are stuffed with palm trees, hibiscus, and flat-topped acacias; Barker's giant tortoise resides there and a tamarind tree produces the fruit from which fresh juice is made every morning.

The main feature of the thatched-roof outdoor living area is a sunken sofa stuffed with pillows—ideal for lounging. And throughout the house tasteful accents (that perfect antique Persian chair, an Indian Mogul painting here and there) reflect not only Barker's eclectic style but also Lamu's exotic past. A 14th-century Swahili settlement, the island eventually attracted Portuguese explorers, Turkish traders, and Omani Arabs, and each group left its mark.

Today Lamu retains a slow, relaxed pace, the manner of its people so charming and the lobster so fresh, devotees easily forgive the occasionally lackadaisical service and the dearth of contemporary cuisine. They come to enjoy the sea breeze, not air-conditioning, after all, and to read and read and read, sipping fresh coconut milk as they laze away the beachfront hours. *Dhow House rents from \$21,000 per week, not including meals (journeysbydesign.com).* —SOPHY ROBERTS

Light fills the stairway to the master bedroom and roof; the sunken living and dining area opens onto the grounds, below.



Five Questions For

Jeffrey Chodorow

1 What's the most outrageous entrée you've seen on a restaurant menu?

It's a tie: the cod sperm sushi at Sushi of Gari in New York and the raw chicken heart, gizzard, breast, and leg I tried in Tokyo. There are quite a few of these raw chicken restaurants in Japan and I figured, when in Tokyo...I wouldn't say I'd order it again, but it was interesting.

2 Your choice: Critical darling with an empty dining room or a thorough panning with a packed house?

Packed house any day. I respect the opinion of diners more than the critics', generally speaking. I would be happiest if critics didn't exist and all restaurants thrived only on word of mouth.

3 What is the most decadent meal you have ever had?

If you look at me, you can tell I've had a lot of decadent meals. Two standouts are an 18-course, white-truffle dinner at Alain Ducasse in New York and a ten-course caviar dinner paired with the world's best vodka at Caviar Kaspia in Paris.

4 Nothing goes with steak quite like...

Linguine with clam sauce. It's why I created Tuscan Steak in Miami Beach. The Palm in New York has an Italian bent and makes an incredible linguine with clam sauce. I wanted a steakhouse where I could have this dish with my T-bone.

5 It's your last meal—you can order one item off the menu of any restaurant you've ever owned. What would it be?

This is a difficult one. If pressed, I'd choose a Japanese Wagyu rib eye with shaved black truffles accompanied by white-truffle creamed corn with more truffles shaved on top from Kobe Club in New York.

Chodorow's China Grill Management owns 25 restaurants across the United States and three international locations in Mexico City and London. The most recent additions to his empire are Asia de Cuba in Scottsdale, Arizona; Suka in London; and Borough Food & Drink in New York.