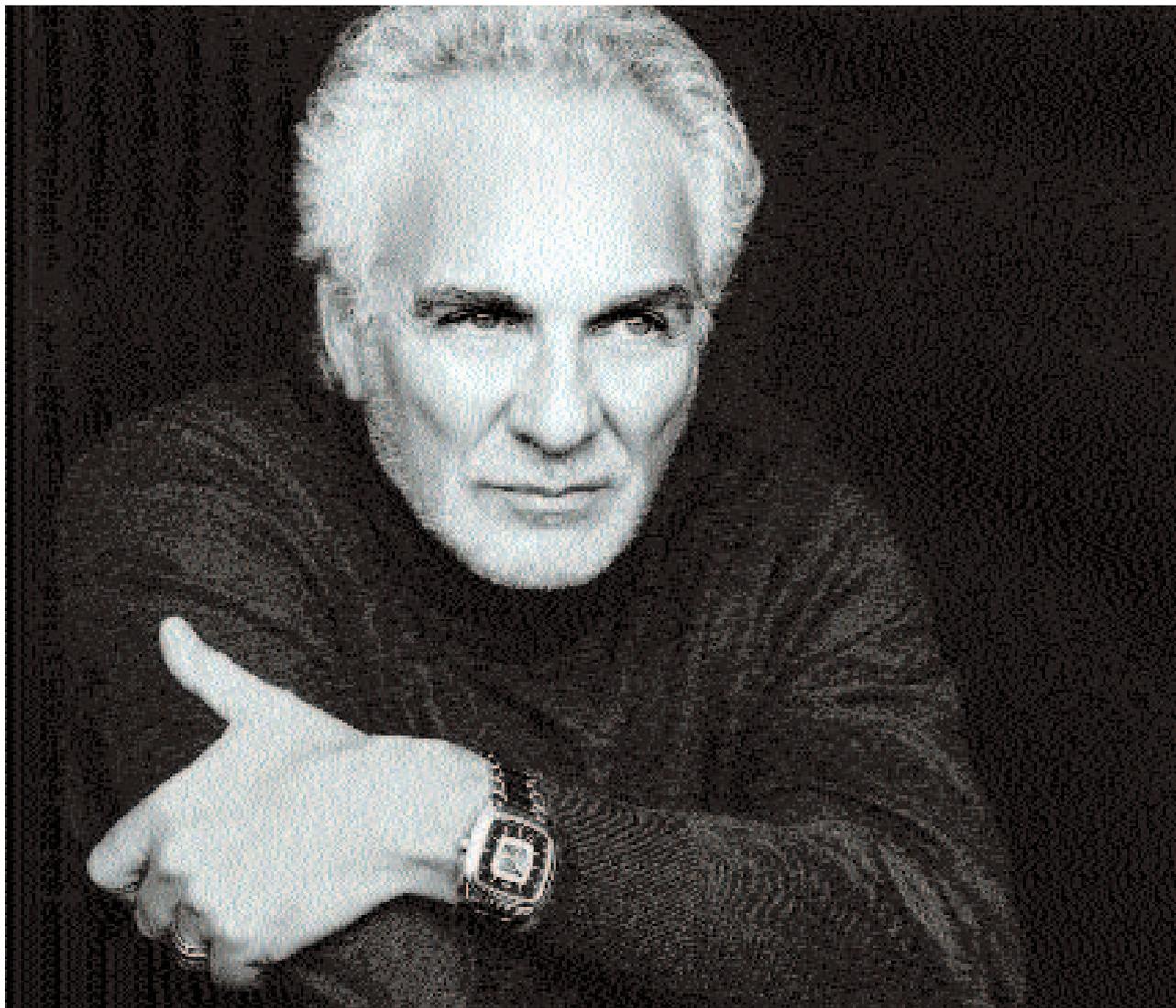


THE RADAR JEWELRY

BY TRAVIS NEIGHBOR WARD
PORTRAIT BY PETER LINDBERGH



GOLDFINGERS: David Yurman has the Midas touch.

BRILLIANT CUT *A private breakfast with David Yurman reveals this famed jeweler to the stars is more complex than meets the eye.*

Judging from his portrait by Peter Lindbergh and his company's \$450 million annual profits, it would not be far-fetched to expect David Yurman to enter a room with bravado. In this photo—salt-and-pepper hair brushed back from his prominent brow, steely gaze off to one side, stubble, a black turtleneck clinging to his chest with Armani-esque adhesion—Yurman exudes the pent-up intensity and athleticism of a man prepared to win the America's Cup. It's easy to picture this ex-high school sports star arriving on any scene and instantly dominating it with hearty handshakes and kisses on ladies' cheeks that result in peals of high-pitched laughter. And the proof is in the red-carpet photos of Yurman at New York high society parties: One arm is almost always embracing his wife, Sybil, and the other is around some gorgeous starlet like two of his ad campaign muses, Kate Moss and Naomi Watts. And the ladies are, more often than not, laughing.

That is Yurman by night—and his favorite fashion brands for black suits and tuxedos are, in fact, Armani, Etro and Issey Miyake.

By day, when we meet, he seems none of this as he steps into the lounge of Park 75 at the Four Seasons in Atlanta, his singular procession

more like a feather floating on the faintest breeze. The room is still closed for the day; I have reserved it so we can breakfast alone. He appears quietly and summer-ready: beige linen suit and a sky blue button-down shirt, the fabric just a shade brighter than his eyes, which resemble pools of water behind his rimless glasses. As in the photo, salt-and-pepper stubble lightly covers his chin, and of course a colorful, precious, masculine ring is on one finger.

After he sits, it is evident that Yurman is uninterested in showing off his corporate prowess or tossing around prefab marketing spiel; he'd rather sprinkle creative ideas around the table for me to follow. The ideas come to him at odd moments, so unpredictable yet regular that he always carries a soft-cover, black moleskin journal in his breast pocket to record them, as well as his BlackBerry, a breakthrough for a man who doesn't "work computers," and a camera cell phone that he loads up with images. ("I don't like to carry weight," he says.) The journal is lined with tiny, Euro-style graph paper, and emerges several times as he offers up his latest brainstorm: a bottle for the fragrances he's designing with Clarins for their '08 launch; and mosaic drop earrings and CONTINUED...

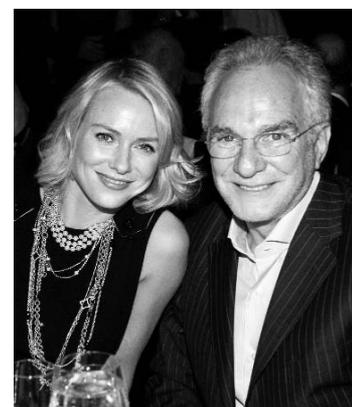
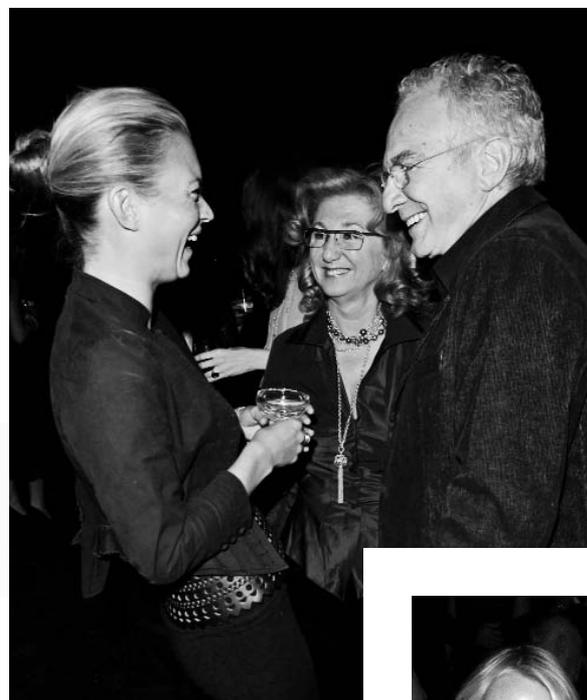


Clockwise: David Yurman jewelry. Kate Moss with Sybil and David Yurman. Yurman and Naomi Watts.

...CONTINUED elongated tubular necklaces for upcoming collections. Currently he's experimenting with fossilized dinosaur bone and Petersite, a blue/green opaque mineral with white streaks. He's also just completed two years crafting a cushion-cut diamond for which he received a patent this week. On his mind are other collaborations beyond the scope of jewelry, but he won't discuss them.

In the book all around the sketches are notes scribbled in a cursive illegible to anyone but him. "Here I'm drawing rough-cut stones," he says, showing me a page. "I can't do color so I write it. I carry a little pen in my pocket." He begins to decipher his scrawls. "So I'll write: smoky gray skies, clusters of black birds... uh... green hazy... uh... tree... The thing is when something occurs to you if you don't write it, or record it to go back to it, it's, like, lost forever. All the little thoughts that you wouldn't—'hey, that's a nice idea.' You have them all the time... At least, I do."

Yurman mostly gets inspiration "through the eyes, some through the ears. It occasionally happens in a museum, mostly it doesn't. Mostly it happens on the street, looking at things." Lately his greatest inspiration in the arts is René Lalique, which he viewed this May in Paris, and favorite works in his private art collection are late 20th-century Japanese prints. He is often drawn to the primitive, a passion he's had since he first saw ancient cave drawings as a child. The onslaught of impressions that traveling brings on is partly why he loves getting away from New York, counting among his favorite stomping grounds Italy, St. Barths and, more recently, Paris, which he now considers the most beautiful city in the world. "You know, the best thing about travel is that you're a foreigner, you're not familiar," he says. "You don't take things for granted. So, corners of buildings and doorknobs and the way the cement, you know,



reaches the curb... It's like a dream, like you're walking in a dream. It doesn't matter where it is actually. I remember being taken by the street in Moscow, looking down—what kind of sidewalks they have and how they were rebuilt. It's really rough. Like the Lower East side [of New York] in certain places, which I kind of like."

This tendency to chase after things that catch his eye seems the most continuous and defining thread in his life. As a young man, Yurman was uncommitted to school in Lake Success on Long Island, New York, mostly because he was easily distracted by natural beauty. "I played hooky a lot in 10th, 11th and 12th grades," he says. "I'd just walk to school, about a mile walk, and as I got closer to the school it was like, 'Oh, what a day! It's glorious!' Across from the school was a treed lot with vines and a lake, kind of like wilderness. And I'd just think, 'I'm not going,' and I'd run across the street. Sometimes I'd do a whole day. Sometimes I'd do an hour. And the impetus was: 'It's a beautiful day. I just don't want to be in class.' Usually it would be spring. But sometimes it was cold—a crisp winter day and the sun was out. And this little forest had vines. Big ropey vines. You could pull them off the tree and swing on them." CONTINUED...



Evan and David Yurman share a laugh. *Below:* David Yurman timepieces.



“What I hate talking about is boats, planes, cars and real estate. Please. Get a life. What I like talking about is emotional conflicts... self-realization...” –David Yurman

...CONTINUED Back to the journal, which has emerged again for a quick show-and-tell. Yurman takes a new one on every trip, he says—then notes that so far on this trip to Atlanta he’s recorded nothing. A bad sign? I ask. Nah, he assures me. After all, he’s been here less than 24 hours and his schedule is packed: an awards dinner last night at the Étoile Gala of the Savannah College of Art and Design; breakfast with me followed by another breakfast Q&A at SCAD; and then right to an informal meet-and-greet with top Yurman clients at his Lenox Square boutique. And then? A direct flight to his “Japanese” house in East Hampton, in the hamlet called The Springs, “where the artists are. Near the beach, but not on the beach.”

The Yurman legend begins in 1942 with his birth in New York City. His father was a belt accessory designer and businessman in Manhattan’s garment center; his mother was a “great cook who could play piano by ear.” It quickly ascends by age 16 to the moment when Yurman, who is dyslexic, began an apprenticeship under Ernesto Gonzales, a Cuban sculptor and welder, in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where he crossed orbits with the likes of Norman Mailer. Later, in 1961, Yurman would drop out of NYU and hitchhike to Venice Beach, California, and then live

in Big Sur, where he dished philosophy with existentialists in the Beatnik artists’ community there. (After our breakfast, when Yurman is back in New York, he e-mails this: “Crossed paths a few times with Norman when I was 17 or 18 in Provincetown while I was apprenticing. He was older than me so we didn’t actually hang out. Bumped into Ken Kesey on the West Coast. We were in same loose band of artists.”)

Eventually California lost its luster and in 1962 Yurman beat it back to Greenwich Village, where he apprenticed for sculptor Jacques Lipschitz and later Hans Van de Bovenkamp. He also met Sybil Kleinrock, a painter working in the studio. She became his girlfriend, he apprenticed under Theodore Rozack and the couple started the Putnam Art Works together, where Yurman learned jewelry making. In 1979, the couple married and one year later they launched David Yurman, the brand, followed a few years later by the birth of their son, Evan, who now runs the men’s division of the corporation. Fastforward to Cable Candy pink sapphire bracelets and Thoroughbred Watches being flashed around the world over by everyone from Kate Hudson to Sienna Miller—plus a slew of awards and charitable work, including the launch of the David & Sybil Yurman Humanitarian and Arts Foundation in 2001—and the timeline is fairly complete.

Yurman loves to talk about his family and does so often. (When I ask what are the most important things in life right now, he replies, “breathing, moving and family.”) As for Evan, now 25, Yurman seems particularly proud of his son’s interest in challenging the norm within the scope of the often-quiet luxury world. Six years ago, when the Yurman men were at an arts school retreat in the French countryside, Evan turned his attitude on Prince Charles, urging him to ignore his other plans

and stay on to paint. “And [Prince Charles] stayed over,” Yurman says. “He painted in the day, and at lunchtime we came in and looked at the work and he was just one of the guys.” This spring, Evan made a cross-country trip in a jacked-up 2007 GT3 Porsche for a rally he organized with The Classic Car Club Manhattan. His aim was to celebrate “David Yurman Racing,” a new men’s collection he’s designed based on sports car aerodynamics. Evan took along three buddies, of which one, cashmere pashmina-toting Derek Blasberg, amusingly blogged about the “prince of twisted cable’s” reactions to fans when he made a Saks Fifth Avenue publicity stop in New Orleans.

Most of the time these days, when Yurman’s not overseeing his office of 350 staffers or traveling between his 15 stores (this month new ones open in Chicago, Austin, Texas, and Boston), he’s hanging out at one of his many houses, which he and Sybil are “just starting to collect.” His main haunt is their three-story “very modern” penthouse loft in lower Manhattan, just blocks from Ground Zero. His favorite place to kick back is a 30-by-30, glass-enclosed room with a drawing table, oversized flat-screen TV, L-shaped sofa in the middle covered with throws and pillows, fireplace and outdoor CONTINUED ON PAGE 202...

...BRILLIANT CUT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 90...

terrace overlooking the Hudson River. It's here that he enjoys distracting himself with TV (surfing HBO and Bravo, or watching his favorite animal shows on Animal Planet and National Geographic Channel) and listening to music—mostly old blues from the late 1920s, Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Brown, B.B. King and Blind Willy. "I've been listening to Dido for, like, a month. And I've been listening to Gnarl Barkley now for three weeks. Over and over again. And I dance to it." (Yurman wanted to be a modern jazz dancer in his teens and was the only male in a women's modern jazz club.)

The Yurmans also own a little cottage in Bedford, New York. "We got it because during 9/11 we lived right near what was the World Trade Center, down on Franklin Street, like five blocks from there. So we were frightened, there through the whole ordeal and the tragedy of it. We thought we gotta get a place outside the city that's closer than three hours away..."

It's here in Bedford that he spends the most time riding Mr. Scooter, his first full-bred foundation Quarter Horse, whose Poco Bueno and Doc Bar bloodlines go back to steeds that started the breed. Together they participate in reining competitions, which involves performing patterns in an arena—making the horse back up, walk in circles, change leads. Aside from the adrenaline rush, Yurman says, "I like the discipline because I don't know how to do it. I like the fact that I'm learning. I'm a green reiner... The first thing is trying to understand what all the cues are: where your leg is, where your body is, where your hands are. Just getting all that physical stuff down... You know, I'm sort of king of the hill in my business, in my world. And this is a very humbling experience because I have a natural ability, but when I go into the green rein competitions I'm with 12-year-olds and 15-year-olds and 60-year-olds. But they're all green, they're all just learning... The night before the competitions, I'm nervous."

When he's not competing against tweens, Yurman goes on long trail rides alone or with his riding buddies, a group of about 25 men he's known for 30-plus years who call themselves the Kosmic Kowboys. Often Yurman simply tries to get lost in nature and see how he can find his way back to civilization. "I like to sneak away from the office [in Manhattan] on a Wednesday and go riding. It's almost like playing hooky from school. If I needed to do everything that needed to be done, I'd have no time... So what is the need?" Ultimately it is a remnant of the Beatnik in him, which he says will never disappear. "It's a thing of the present... the Beatnik element. Every day was a surprise. It was like a poetic journey. When you smelled the first day of spring, you knew that summer was coming and you'd be out of school. You have a sense of freedom, of exploration, of discovery."

Put it this way: The way to his heart is not through small talk. "What I hate talking about is boats, planes, cars and real estate. Please. Get a life," he says. "What I like talking about is emotional conflicts... um... self-realization... um... Sometimes with the guys, when they're not too coarse about it and really want to talk about it, sex and love. My son talks about love a lot... Sometimes on the trail rides I'll ask [the riders], 'Have you had any good dreams?' Some will say, 'None of your f***in' business! I don't dream.' What do you mean you don't dream?... But I wouldn't do this if I wasn't married to Sybil. Sybil says, 'Sweetheart, what'd you dream last night?'... I mean, to her talking about a dream is more important than closing the deal in Dubai. 'That's all the incidents of life. Who cares? I mean, we care because we have a company to run and blah blah blah. But more important is how do you feel in your life? In your own psyche? I want to know about that David. The other David we all know about. That's the world's David.' And I say, 'Oh, my God. Do I have to go through this?'... 'Yes, you do.' ...OK, it's good for me."



To view David Yurman's collections, visit www.davidyurman.com.