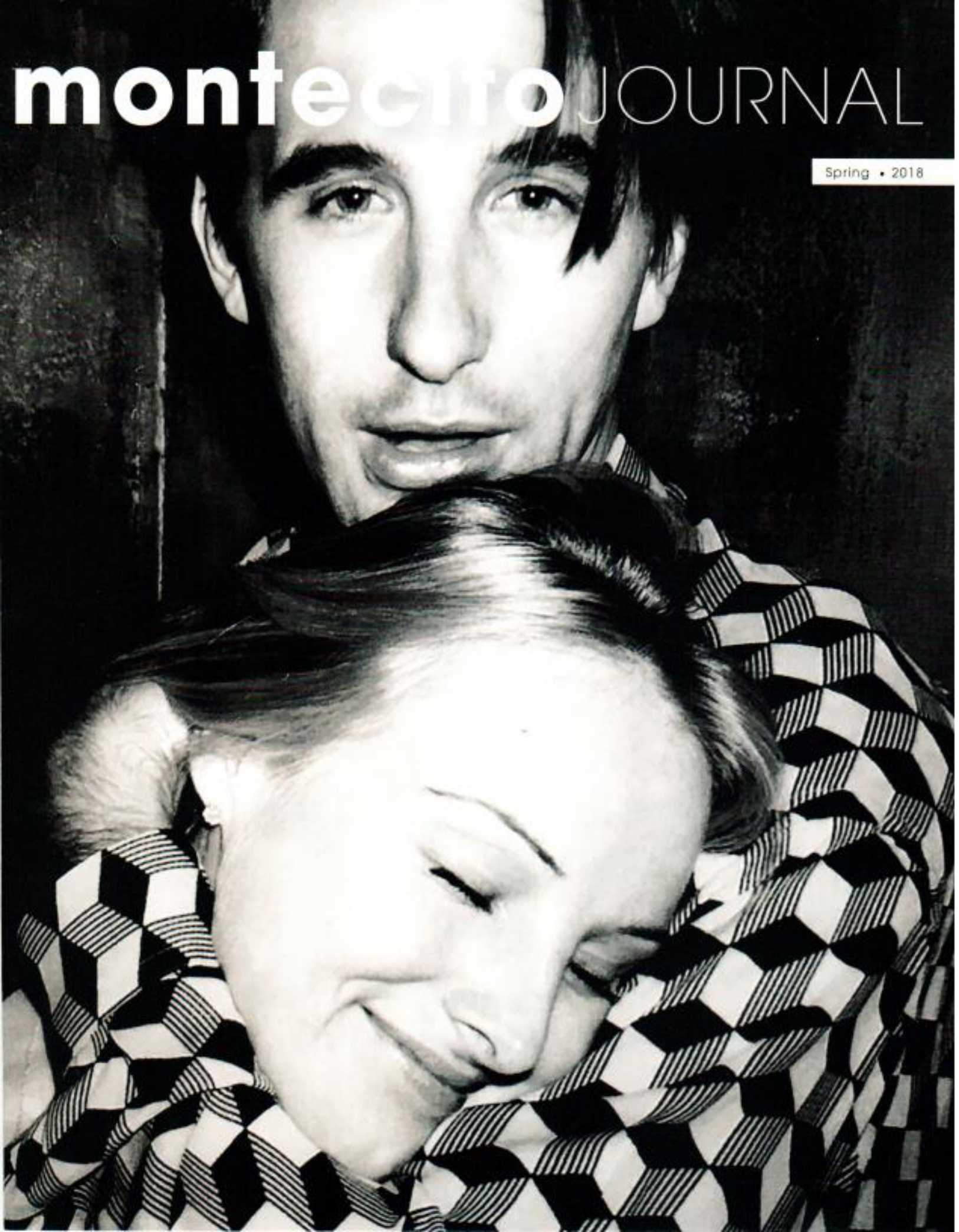


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Frame of mind: painter Carin Gerard, inspired by Georgia O'Keeffe, looks to the sky for her latest series of cloudy art – namely “Thin Air”. *Santa Barbara Sentinel* contributor Ted Mills feels the textures and Gerard's brush with greatness.

42 CONVERSATIONS

Montecito-based singer Chynna Phillips is daughter of John and Michelle (from *The Mamas & The Papas* lore), while Billy Baldwin – known for co-starring in such films as *Backdraft* and the original *Flatliners* – is the brother of fellow actors Alec and Stephen. The popular couple tied the knot circa 1995; *MJ* contributor Gwyn Lurie catches up with the successful lovebirds to learn what makes them tick and their marriage stick.

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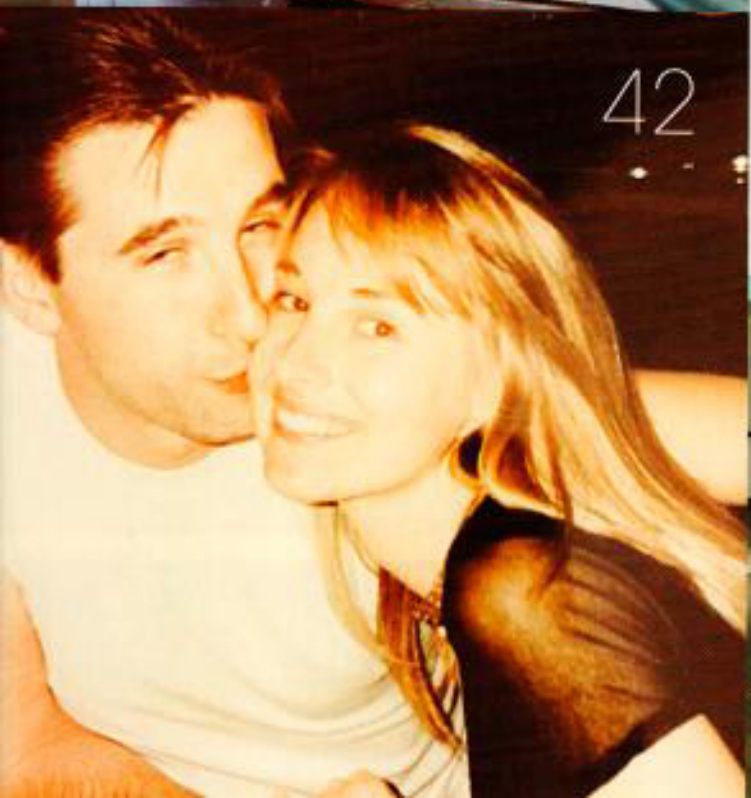
Maze craze: *MJ* contributor Jerry Camarillo Dunn Jr. returns to Great Britain and maps out a history lesson while traversing England's natural networks of labyrinths, bridges, and hedges from Hampton Court to Hever Castle.

82 BEHIND THE WHEEL

Randy Lioz revs up the engine, kicks the tires, and checks under the hood – all in the name of The Porsche Effect, courtesy of The Petersen Automotive Museum based in Los Angeles. Here's a look at which of the showcase's eclectic cars best combine form and function.

*cover photo courtesy of
Billy Baldwin and Chynna Phillips*

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ON CANVAS

BY
TED
MILLS

PORTRAIT PHOTOS BY CHRISTY GUTZEIT
PAINTING PHOTOS BY BILL DEWEY

CARIN GERARD

Take a base layer of the old masters and apply a coat of contemporary art, a mix of European style and American boldness, a traditional subject with a modern sensibility, and you have the paintings of Carin Gerard.

Her series of large monochromatic paintings of flowers in extreme close-up called "Organic Origins" demands such a mix of Old World still-life objects and pop-art aesthetics. These sensual blooms, as well as the occasional fruit subject, are rendered so large and so close that they start to shrug off meaning and become surreal. Georgia O'Keeffe, Carin says, is one of her inspirations. At the same time, Gerard has also begun a series of cloud paintings called "Thin Air", which are intense studies of color gradients. This is shaping up to be big year for Gerard, currently represented by John Pence Gallery in San Francisco and S.C.A.P.E. in Corona Del Mar.



Her mother was a fine artist and her father was an architect, but they got divorced; her mother died when she was young, and Carin wound up in foster care. But she was "lucky, lucky, lucky" to be raised by a pastor and his wife in a loving home.

Gerard got her B.F.A. at Bowling Green University in Ohio, with a style that was "very different" from her current one. Her early work was very impressionistic "really pastel California colors," she says. From there, she found herself making hand-painted fabrics and making money from it, until it became "monotonous."

It was studying with representational painter Martha Mayer Erlebacher up in Seattle that got her on the road to her current style. The teacher encouraged Gerard to follow her inclination, moving from impressionism to slowing "way, way down" and focusing on realism.

She studied outside of Florence, Italy, in 1991, studying at the Charles H. Cecil atelier, where she learned in the traditional Academy style, studying still life in several media, working up to oils. It's also where she really tuned into her own ideology of painting. "It's not just making a pretty picture, but really asking what you're painting and why."

So... why?

That's a question that never really gets answered during our visit. When we meet for this interview, she'd only recently moved back after the evacuations in January. Too much anxiety, too much death and



destruction: Gerard says she found it hard to snap back into a routine in the studio. And now her softer, more feminine flower paintings have changed, she says. They've gone darker, more high-contrast.

"More drama, perhaps?" she asks herself.

Four years ago, she was commissioned to paint a very large canvas, and since then she's continued to work large.

"It was a new world," she says. "It's intimidating also. These are big pieces to place, and nerve-wracking. They have to be substantial if I'm going to do all this work."

But this shift from classical still-life arrangements to these extreme close-ups have been very "empowering and freeing."

She really only works on one painting at a time – which then promptly leaves the studio to be shipped to her buyers – and when I visit her home at Birnam Wood Golf Club, she only has a preliminary black-and-white sketch of vellum to show me, which is dominating the far wall. A camera is set up opposite to document the entire process in time-lapse, which will then be uploaded to her Instagram.

The studio is impeccably tidy – even in the throes of painting the studio only gets a little less so. If anything dominates, it's her neat piles of paint tubes and stacks of sketchbooks.

The books, in particular, are fascinating: since her time in Italy, Gerard loves a special brand of handmade paper sketchbooks with a classical leather binding. There is lots and lots of writing in them too, and Gerard even has a handwriting style that looks flown in from the Renaissance. She tries out colors and sketches, but you might really mistake it all for a diary.

"I'm not a good writer or a speaker, but I'll write down quotes from artists I love," she says.

She makes sure to spend time at least once a year in her beloved Florence, Italy, and now owns a studio there in a palazzo once owned by the Medici family. That's going right back to the source.

She came to Montecito in 1997 when she returned from Italy and met her husband on a blind date, then moved here permanently in 1999.

However, she said, it was hard to find her artistic community here, but later she met realist painter John Nava, who was more on her wavelength, and has



found a small group of fellow painters. With two major galleries representing her, she's admittedly less a Montecito artist and more an artist who lives in Montecito.

"Montecito reminds me of Italy," she says. "It reminds me of the countryside when you drive around in the mountains. Because I'm not a sun person, I love the greenery here. When I come off the 101, the world looks different. It's so close to L.A., which is so crazy and busy. And then you come here, and it's serenity and quiet and there's no street lights, so you can see the stars at night. I just fell in love with it."

The year looks great for Gerard, and she says she going to keep things a bit looser.

"My goal is to be even more contemporary," she says. "So, I'm going to be a little bit more free."

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