

HAMPTONS



MARIA SHARAPOVA

WARMING UP FOR THE US OPEN—AND A SWEET NEW VENTURE

MONTAUK MOGULS: The End Is In-Demand

PLUS Alec Baldwin, Richard Meier, Kelly Ripa, John Franco

HAMPTONS

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in an ocean swim.

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SOCIAL STUDIES

saving grace

1STDIBS FOUNDER MICHAEL BRUNO BUILT AN ONLINE EMPIRE OUT OF ANTIQUES; NOW HE'S TURNING HIS PASSION FOR STEWARDSHIP TO HOMES.

BY R. COURIHAY PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEENA FEINBERG

Michael Bruno, 1stdibs founder, lives life by the book: He rereads Napoleon Hill's *Think & Grow Rich* every summer. "It's to make sure I don't forget the goals and dreams I established when I was 19, and I'm still living each day to the fullest to make [them] true," says Bruno, whose online marketplace features high-end antiques, estate jewelry, and fine art from more than 1,500 top dealers from around the world. "It has worked like a charm for me."

Bruno's company, which launched in the US in the Hamptons in 2003, now occupies the 10th floor of the New York Design Center. The 33,000 square feet of showroom is filled with vignettes of furniture from 1stdibs dealers, as well as a gallery space that will be hosting an art show of Gloria Vanderbilt's work this fall. "It's probably the thing we are most excited to have there so far," says Bruno of the show.

In 2011, 1stdibs garnered 60 million page views per month, allowing its dealers to accumulate nearly \$500 million in sales. "The thing that's really exciting to me is I saw that we helped build the market for antique and vintage," says Bruno. "Making products available to a wide range of people is just going to continue to grow those markets."

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Michael Bruno's most significant luxury online purchase was a vintage car he had restored at Aventura Motors in Southampton.

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A Colorado competitive swimmer who won the Junior Olympics, Bruno went on to become a successful California real estate broker with a photographic memory of blueprints. “I started selling real estate when I was 19 because I was obsessed with houses,” says the entrepreneur whose career path has taken him from San Francisco to Paris to New York. “My unusual talent is that I can walk through 20 houses on a brokers’ tour and go back and draw the floor plan of every single house. I just remember them, inside and out.”

Looking for his next challenge, Bruno taught himself much of what it takes to buy and sell luxury merchandise online by purchasing his prized possession—a 220SE Mercedes-Benz convertible he bought on eBay and eventually had restored by Aventura Motors in Southampton. “I believe in stewardship,” says Bruno. “As a steward, I did make an effort to restore the car and save it from some other fate. That’s also what I love about finding old houses and restoring them because some of them won’t survive if you don’t put the money into them and bring them to a state where someone sophisticated could come in and love it.”

This past November, Benchmark Capital made a substantial investment in 1stdibs, and David Rosenblatt took over as CEO for Bruno, who still remains an active part of the company as chairman.

“The relief is that I found stewards who can help me take the company to a place where it will optimize the business in a much more sophisticated way,” says Bruno. “The more we grow the vintage market, the better off we are.”

Now with a little more free time, Bruno, a self-confessed micromanager, has returned to his real estate roots and purchased several New York properties to restore, including a historic Georgian mansion in Tuxedo Park and a shingled cottage in Southampton. He’s also committed to revitalizing the gardens of Halsey House, for which he’s planning a spring benefit. “I visually get to enjoy it, so making contributions and helping is such a pleasure,” says Bruno, who also enjoys yoga at Tapovana in Sag Harbor and morning coffee from Hampton Coffee Company. “Stewardship is such a rewarding experience that everybody should operate a little bit as a steward in their daily life, even if it’s just by picking up a piece of trash, recycling, or by buying beautiful objects that need to be cared for and passed on. I can’t imagine living any other way.” **H**

“I really saw that we helped build the market for antique and vintage.”

—MICHAEL BRUNO

Another piece from his animal collection in the living room



Bruno’s kitchen is filled with fresh vegetables from Halsey’s Green Thumb Organic Farm.

Bruno’s fish cabinet—just one of the animal-themed objects he collects



SECRETS OF SUCCESS

***on his healthy regimen**

“Joe at the Green Thumb Organic Farm turned me onto juicing; it’s my new addiction. I used to have ginger, beet, and carrot because it tastes so good, but now I’m just drinking kale and cucumber.”

***any shopping regrets?**

“I’ve seen a lot of beautiful things that I didn’t buy, and I’ve seen a lot of beautiful things that I did buy. I’ve seen beautiful houses that I would have loved to have, but I didn’t long for them—there’s a difference—so I don’t have a ‘thing that got away’ regret.”

***on routines**

“I like rote. Sometimes when I swim or do yoga I’ll remind myself of my long-term goals and it becomes part of my meditation. That’s why I keep rereading Hill’s book every summer; it’s part of my repetition.”

***on shopping in the hamptons**

“This past week I bought stuff at Laurin Copen Antiques, Ruby Beets, and Roark Antiques Design. I have friends and designers who come stay with me, and there are so many good stores in the Hamptons that I won’t see them for two days because they just shop.”