



**Sea Change**  
A quick tuna salad where the fish is in the vinaigrette  
**D12**

# OFF DUTY

FASHION | FOOD | DESIGN | TRAVEL | GEAR

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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**Go for the Green**  
One-up your neighbors' lawns with these tools and tips  
**D9**



Saturday/Sunday, June 13 - 14, 2020 | **D1**

## Do E-Tailors Measure Up?

Procuring custom suits online was gaining steam before the pandemic, but now it's even more popular

By JACOB GALLAGHER

**L**AST MONTH, Elliott Pen obtained a custom glen-plaid blazer from Yeossal, a tailor in Singapore. But Mr. Pen, a 35-year-old business manager at a media company in Toronto, has never even been to Singapore. The entire transaction—from choosing his fabric to selecting his pocket shape—took place online. To nail the fit from across the globe, Mr. Pen tapped his “very patient” wife to measure and photograph “every possible angle” of his frame to message to Yeossal. The process took eight weeks and cost Mr. Pen just over \$1,000—a good deal for custom tailoring. Mr. Pen worried until the last minute. “I opened the box with trepidation,” he said. But the results of his online experiment thoroughly pleased him and he busts it out for his more professional Zoom calls.

We’re entering a new era when it comes to shopping for custom clothes. Traditionally, buying a made-for-you suit was very hands-on: A man visits his tailor, has a drink, chats about his daughter’s Little League career, pores over swatches and submits to endless measurements and fittings. But even before Covid-19 forbade such intimacy, that way of shopping felt outmoded. “That whole expectation that I had to literally go somewhere and shop was a little daunting,” said Alex Villaseñor, 35, the creative director for a Chicago film company, who usually buys his clothes online. He craved a custom suit for his wedding so he virtually commissioned a handsome black one from Chicago tailor Nicholas Joseph.

While the idea is nothing new, the pandemic has hastened the embrace of remote everything, including tailoring. No matter how much you might love your suit guy, the thought of spending hours together elbow-to-elbow scrutinizing weights of wool might seem off-putting. Prudent men are warming to remote methods, not only for their safety, but for their efficiency, the potential for deals and the scope for creativity.

Mind you, custom digital tailoring is not yet a futuristic, Jetson-ian, instant process. Innovation has mainly focused on bringing a dusty process online, from videoconferences with tailors to nifty e-commerce ordering that lets you customize existing patterns. Once, tra-

*Please turn to page D2*



JOHN W. TOMAC



The Grand Staircase National Monument in southern Utah.

## On the Road Again, Warily

As soon as his stay-at-home order lifted, a restless New Orleanian drove across the Southwest in search of luxurious solitude

By MARK CHILDRESS

**O**N A TUESDAY in mid-May, after New Orleans relaxed its pandemic rules enough to let dentists resume practice, I went in for my checkup. When the masked-and-gowned technician brushed against my arm I realized she was the first human being to touch me in eight weeks. For some reason, this gave me a terrible urge to get out of town.

I needed a road trip. Couldn’t talk anyone into riding shotgun, but who cares? Alone on the road is no lonelier than alone at home, and the scenery is better. Coming from a city that was an early hot spot, I’d been totally isolating myself, so I was pretty sure I wasn’t a spreader. The mayor lifted her stay-at-home order just in time to keep me from going pure crazy.

I flew to San Francisco on an airplane full of people with masks trying not to breathe.

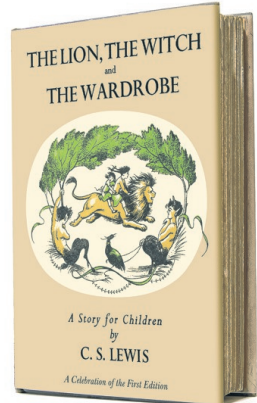
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## Inside



### SINGULAR GINS OF JAPAN

Spirits with unique flavor profiles that reflect their Asian origins **D12**



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A classic tale takes on new meaning in the summer of 2020 **D6**



### THE HOUSEDRESS CALLS

How the curious WFH dress code has revived an anachronism **D3**



### SMALL-TOWN SOPHISTICATION

She inherited her Illinois grandmother’s chairs—and found they’re design icons **D4**



# DESIGN & DECORATING

By Alysia Abbott

**E**VERY FEW weeks I would ask my husband, “Have you checked on the chairs?” And every time Jeff would answer, with a sigh, “I’ll leave another message.”

My preoccupation was the six Hans Wegner “Wishbone” chairs I’d inherited from my grandmother that Jeff had sent out for repair, in batches, beginning in the summer of 2013.

The times I’d spent sitting in those chairs around my grandparents’ table, also by Wegner, I now realize, are my strongest summer memories. My grandparents bought them from a Danish furniture shop in Chicago in 1972, after moving into a two-bedroom ranch home in Kewanee, a small Illinois town. Every year my family would fly in from both coasts and crowd around the table to eat dinner. But it’s the lazy mornings I remember best, with my grandmother sitting on one of the

## I didn’t think they held value beyond sentimental.

chairs, working on her crossword and coffee, and offering late-risers like me the bialys she’d grill in the oven and slather in margarine. Munca, as she was affectionately known, had a distinctly un-grandmotherly sensibility. She was a tall, athletic woman, with a big vocabulary and a disdain for anything “antique.” She rarely looked backward, perhaps because she’d lost two children, including my mother. But looking backward is among my favorite pastimes. After Munca died in 2008, all of her midcentury modern furnishings held enormous appeal. What other family members didn’t claim, I put into storage. And when my husband and I bought our first house, two years after her death, I decided to make my grandmother’s table and chairs the center of my home as well. Jeff was, at first, skeptical. Grandma’s chairs? After 35 years of heavy use and two years in storage, they were definitely ratty. But I loved them, and he loved me. So, we shipped them from Illinois to our new house, an open-plan octagon in Cambridge, Mass. I didn’t think they held value beyond sentimental, until our architect neighbor, John Lodge, came over.



## My Mended Wishbones

Covid-19 brings home a beloved set of heirloom Hans Wegner chairs

**LEG UP** Examples of the coveted chairs in designer Kevin Carrigan and architect Tim Furzer’s Bellport, N.Y., home

“I like your Hans Wegner Wishbone chairs.” “What?” “Hans Wegner, he’s a famous designer.” A little googling revealed that indeed my grandmother’s Wishbones, so-called because of their elegantly curved Y-back, are iconic in the design community. Wegner (1914-2007) is often called the “Master of the Chair,” having created 500 before his death. In 1944, he began a series inspired by portraits of Danish merchants sitting in Ming Chairs. The CH24, or “Wishbone Chair,” is the best known of these, and has been in continuous produc-

tion since 1950. “The appeal I think comes from not only the design, which is obviously beautiful, but because they’re so functional and well-built,” said Roman Alonso, co-owner and creative director of Commune, a design firm based in Los Angeles. Though visually simple, the chairs involve complex construction reflecting the extensive knowledge that Wegner, trained as a cabinet maker, had of wood. The separate parts are mass-produced, but each chair is woven and finished by hand. Since the pandemic closed his office, Mr. Alonso has been working from his own vintage Wishbone. It’s

the rare minimalist chair that’s also comfortable. “There’s just something about this chair!” Perhaps that’s why I love them. But as my family used the chairs daily, they continued to fall apart. The woven cord seats suffered the most, becoming frayed or severed. I’d tie the loose ends around the legs in a vain attempt to minimize the damaged appearance. Under our neighbor John’s direction, Jeff spent the summer of 2013 refinishing the chairs. After cutting away the seats, he sanded the oak frames, then carefully rubbed them with layers of Danish oil. That’s when he fell in love with the chairs.

### Seat Feats

Three of the 500 chairs that Hans Wegner designed



The Ox Chair (1960), \$8,924, [danishdesignstore.com](http://danishdesignstore.com)



CH29 Sawback Chair (1952), \$1,065, [hivemodern.com](http://hivemodern.com)



The Three-Legged Shell Chair (1963), \$3,865, [dwr.com](http://dwr.com)

Then came the re-caning. The first batch was completed in a year and nine months. The second took at least two years. I couldn’t understand why. “There’s only one guy in New England who does it,” Jeff had explained. “He’s very busy!” Jeremy Shaw is indeed very busy. As owner of the Caning Shoppe, one of only a handful of stores dedicated to caning in the U.S., he’s booked nine months out and “that’s being generous,” he tells me. Caning is also hard work. “You can’t cane all day every day without going mad or causing your fingers to go to the bone.” One of his caners, he explained, couldn’t apply for a green card because he had no more fingerprints. He had to take six months off caning to grow them back. I was about to have Jeff check on the chairs again when Mr. Shaw called with an update. Because of the Covid-19 lockdown he finally had enough time to finish the job. Our Hans Wegner table and chairs have been reunited. If only I could have people over to celebrate.

ROGER DAVIES/OTTO (DINING ROOM)

### FLOWER SCHOOL



THE ARRANGEMENT

## Pastoral Agreement

Floral designer Lindsey Taylor nods to a painting of the French seaside

**MANY CONSIDER** George Inness (1825-1894) the father of American landscape painting. Born in Newburgh, N.Y., Inness worked in his teens as a map engraver in New York, where he went on to study painting in earnest. On display at one of the nation’s oldest art museums, the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Conn., is Inness’s 1875 “Etretat,” the painting I chose as the inspi-

ration for this month’s bouquet. Its ethereal depiction of Normandy’s chalky cliffs gave me a breezy reprieve from the muggy weather in New York, transporting me to a place I’d sooner summer. The play of light and shadow fills the canvas with emotion and I immediately saw how to capture the painting’s billowing clouds and frowzy trees in flowers. To ground the arrangement, I chose an earthy, deep brown vessel and poked in Queen Anne’s lace and dense creamy white ranunculus to stand in for cliffs, clouds and surf. Young blooms of snowball viburnum, hawthorn and fritillaria evoke the pasture and other vegetation, with the hawthorn’s woody stems recalling the dark trunks of the trees. Larkspur reference the



THE INSPIRATION

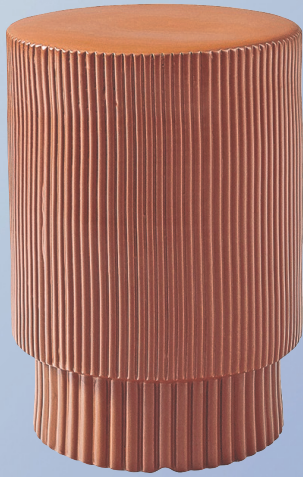
sky and sea, and rusty orange butterfly ranunculus are my take on the resting cows. I cut the stems to different lengths to mimic his gestural brush strokes. The eye travels over Inness’s scene, never pausing long as he guides you deep into his world.

Frothy Queen Anne’s lace and globes of snowball viburnum capture the color and texture of ‘Etretat’ (1875), a canvas by American landscape painter George Inness.

### CATALOG CURATION

## Seize the Clay

An interior designer’s top pick from West Elm’s summer collection



Fluted Side Table, also in white, \$149, [westelm.com](http://westelm.com)



**SHEILA BRIDGES** wants to dispel the notion that the main way to add texture to a room is through fabric, be it silken, nubby or flocked. As the New York interior designer (illustrated above) pointed out, furniture, too, can layer in complex, charismatic surfaces. Take the fluted earthenware side table she spotted in West Elm’s summer 2020 collec-

tion. Its hand-molded drum shape and irregular ribbing—unrefined and unusual—remind her of hand-made pottery. “Furniture is moving away from being rectilinear,” she noted. “The best pieces are now more fluid and organic.” The semi-matte rust color reads as a neutral, “just like a terra-cotta plant pot.” And, since it’s weatherproofed, the piece can variously, valiantly perform as a trusty bedside table or a perch for shampoo in a shower. “I love pieces that are flexible,” Ms. Bridges said—extra important today, when “suddenly your dining room has become your classroom or your home office.”