

OJAI STRONG

Ojai, California has long been a magical escape for Angelenos, who flock to this small valley town, encircled by orange groves and mountains, to find solace and inspiration. Lately, a number of creatives have been planting permanent roots, attracted to the region's bucolic surroundings and the tight-knit community. Now, as residents are in the process of rebuilding their beloved town after the devastating Thomas Fire, we shine a light on some of the locals contributing to Ojai's dynamic scene.

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Into the Deep

Director Allen Hughes finds newfound inspiration—as well as his artistic voice—in his slice of paradise.

When you come from Detroit, California holds a certain mysticism. Hollywood—even the idea of Hollywood—can put stars in the eyes of any Midwesterner,” says writer, director and producer Allen Hughes. Raised by a single mother who started out on welfare, he and his twin bother, Albert, blossomed into the directing duo the Hughes Brothers, known for such hard-hitting dramas as *Menace II Society*, *The Book of Eli*, *American Pimp* and *Dead Presidents*. Now, after a four-year hiatus that included breaking away from his brother and moving to Ojai, Allen is making waves on his own with *The Defiant Ones*, the critically-acclaimed four-part HBO docuseries about the lives of music legends Dr. Dre and Jimmy Iovine.

Looking back on his life, Hughes can't help but be amazed. “My mother went from welfare to being an independent millionaire,” he says proudly of Aida, who left her native Iran when she was young, put herself through school and eventually opened a vocational rehabilitation firm in Pomona, just east of Los Angeles. “She’s the most visionary woman ever, a boss bitch who won’t be denied.” Because they were twins, it was decided that Allen and Albert might have a shot in the acting business. “We did the Oscar Mayer weiner and Coca-Cola commercials, but we were terrible! By 1980, we figured out that the brothers would not be the next Double Mint twins,” he says.

To keep them occupied, Aida bought Allen and Albert a video camera when they were 12 years old, and they never looked back. They dropped out of high school and began directing music videos. By 20, the Hughes Brothers made their first feature film, 1993’s *Menace II Society*, which launched their careers. Focused on black, disenfranchised youth, the groundbreaking film included then up-and-comers Jada Pinkett Smith and Samuel L. Jackson, and was made on a minuscule budget of \$3.5 million.

“The first time I traveled to Ojai, I went to an art festival with my mother. She’s a painter,” Hughes recalled. “I had just finished *Menace II Society*. I had a two-year-old son, and I was very uncomfortable with the attention that I was getting and the way I was being spoiled, as a director with some success. When I discovered Ojai and Lake Casitas, I found I could just go fishing and find peace. I felt safe there; it was like being held to a bosom.”

For years, though, it never occurred to the director that he could actually live in Ojai, as he didn’t know anyone there. “When I was shooting *The Book of Eli*, actor Malcolm McDowell had a role in the film, and he was a long-time Ojai resident,” Hughes says. “Malcolm and his wife took me under their wing and I was welcomed into the community. I realized that I could have a real life here in Ojai.” He made the decision to permanently move this past spring.

The peaceful town has served as an idyllic place for Hughes to reflect on *The Defiant Ones*, which took him three-and-a-half years to complete and was released to much fanfare in July. The documentary follows the separate career trajectories of legendary record producer Iovine—the son of a Brooklyn longshoreman—and rap icon Dre—who grew up on the streets of Compton, California. It shows how their lives eventually came together from such vastly different worlds, changing the cultural landscape in the process, and culminating with the brokerage of one of the biggest deals in music history: the sale of Beats by Dre to Apple. “One of my editors, early on, said to me, “If you do a documentary right, it can change you as a person forever,” Hughes shares. “This project really did change me; it was an evolution, a discovery process and a very emotional journey. I am changed for life—for one reason, being so intimate with Dre and Jimmy—because those guys are intense. This work pushed out bad habits that I had. I’d made a film about obsessive artists and I am obsessive.” The fast-paced film is full of candid interviews with Iovine, Dre, Bono, David Geffen, Eminem, Ice Cube, Gwen Stefani, Jon Landau, Snoop Dogg, Bruce Springsteen, and the late Tom Petty includes never-before-seen footage from a multitude of recording and writing sessions. “Additionally, I realized I had never fully processed Eazy-E’s and Tupac’s deaths—they were close friends of mine,” he says. “Making this film made me see the whole picture; how the world works. I realized that I needed to get my shit together and settle it with the insecure demons that allow a person to wallow in mediocrity.”

The series has already garnered Hughes multiple accolades, including the prize for Best Limited Series at the December IDA Documentary Awards and a Grammy nomination for Best Music Film. “I never thought I could do a project that I could be happy with,” he says. “I finally got my voice back, which I had lost being part of the Hughes Brothers. I got my life back and then finally moved to Ojai.”

Allen Hughes finds time to reflect from his new homebase in Ojai.



Mix and Match

Anna and Kirk Nozaki inject Ojai's craft scene with a modern dose of fun.

By definition, Cattywampus implies something not arranged correctly, but walk into Anna and Kirk Nozaki's craft store in Ojai and you'll find a neatly arranged, curated almost to a fault, cave of wonderment.

Filled with rich visual and tactile treats, Cattywampus Crafts is what happens when take you a pair of creatives from Silver Lake and transport them to California's Shangri-La. "It is our collective goal to inspire," says Anna, whose background is in graphic design. "It is as simple as that." It's their shared desire to tap into everyone's latent, artistic feelings and talents, no matter how deep, in some instances, they may be buried.

The couple made the move to Ojai in 2013, mainly to raise their daughter away from the city. When they arrived, they wanted to contribute to their new community. Their way of giving back was to establish a craft store that not only sells beautiful wares and materials for makers, but also serves as somewhat of a creative community center. They hold classes in all sorts of crafting modalities—especially popular is the Wednesday night knit group. The Nozakis also host many sessions taught by local artists, such as macramé maker Sally England and fiber virtuosa Carol Shaw Sutton.

Everything in Cattywampus is influenced and inspired by Ojai. The ample space is dotted with huge, vintage macramé pieces by Murray Rodkin, as well as jewelry by Tammi Reinhardt. Also on display are works by ceramicist Mark Churchill and Fanny Penny, who makes wall hangings and jewelry with rope and clay. The Nozakis have even begun their own women's clothing line, as well as one for children, both of which they soon plan to sell in-store.

Kirk, who is a restorer of houses and spent 20 years as a streetwear designer, decorated the interior of Cattywampus, which features soaring ceilings and expansive windows. He designed butcher block furniture for the shop and walls of shelves featuring basketweave patterns for yarn and other storage, which keenly help to keep the interior light and contemporary. "We wanted to keep the space feeling as open and uplifting as possible," Anna says.

Their desire has been met. The store they have created is a welcoming one, full of warmth and laughter. "Most of our customers are people who are new to crafts," says Anna, in a moment of quiet reflection. "We did not anticipate the emotional response people have when they learn new things, and tap into their creative spirit."



Anna and Kirk Nozaki at their store, Cattywampus Crafts.



Cassandra C. Jones holds with a stream of her digital wallpaper on the street outside her studio.

Soaring Vision

Artist Cassandra C. Jones digitizes nature, presenting a complex world far beyond what is immediately noticeable to the naked eye.

When asked how she would describe herself, artist Cassandra C. Jones takes a moment. “Okay, I was just working on this earlier today,” she laughs. “Here it is: I am a photography-based digital artist, focusing on large-scale collage.” It’s a mouthful, but just scratches at the surface of the experience of being up close to Jones’s work. Her compositions of meticulously arranged collages illustrate woven patterns, reimagined wildlife, floral arrangements and geometric shapes which have an uncanny way of drawing the viewer into a completely different world.

“When I was a child, we had wallpaper in the bathroom that I would stare at, and I could see things that others didn’t,” explains Jones. “Part of my work is wanting others to see the things that I see.”

Jones started out as a photographer. It was not until she was writing her graduate school thesis, while on holiday in Greece with her grandmother, that her focus changed. “It was not the Greece one might imagine,” she says. “It was not the beautiful, white-washed buildings with blue trim. We were staying on an island no one had ever heard of in a dilapidated village, with no young people, where no one spoke English. I was repeatedly sent to the beach.”

Jones admittedly does not idle well; she was going out of her mind with the mounting stress of having to complete her thesis. She had brought her photography equipment but was resolute that everything on the island had been photographed before. “I was not going to take photographs of old doors for two months!” she laughs.

Unable to find inspiration, or anything that might be conceptually interesting, Jones had put her cameras under the bed. However, one day lightning struck. “I was suddenly inspired by a line in a Susan Sontag book about how cheesy photographs of sunsets were,” Jones says. “I decided I was going to collect everyone’s sunset photos.”

Her “aha” moment sent Jones on a mission through the village, collecting every villagers’ images of sunsets. Later on, she made a video of the sun setting via the 1,400 photos that she had collected. That video not only became Jones’s thesis, but also became the pre-cursor to her present work.

Much of Jones’s recent creations have been about life in Ojai, where she lives with her musician husband, Mikael Jorgensen, pianist and keyboardist for the band Wilco, and their two small children. Jones’s own mother and father settled on Ojai in 1999, after touring the states in an RV in a quest to find Shangri-La—today it’s not uncommon for them to babysit for their daughter and son-in-law, who moved together to the idyllic town in December 2013.

“My work would be different if I was back in L.A. It would be more about being in the herd, in the crowd. I couldn’t live in L.A. ever again. It just seems too huge, dealing with crowds, and of course, the fight to get into the Whole Foods parking lot,” Jones laughs. “The Ojai environment is relaxing, and I love having the quiet.”

Recently, Jones made her largest piece to date—31 feet wide by 18 feet high—a collage with no repeating pattern, using more than 7,000 photos. It was a commission from the Wichita Art Museum in Kansas, which wanted a way to display its collection of Steuben glass. Jones photographed the pieces, and brought them into the digital realm.

And in January, Jones will have a wallpaper installation at the new Hotel Revival in Baltimore. “I was commissioned to make a wallpaper for their open stairwell, based on Baltimore album quilts. It’s made up of hundreds of digital photographs,” she explains. “I am giving it a contemporary feel by using present-day imagery. Each part of my design tells a story about my life as an artist, traveler, mother and member of the global community.”

Perfect Balance

Longtime Los Angeles resident Anna Getty seeks out a peaceful way of life for herself and her young family.

For philanthropist, cookbook author and film producer Anna Getty and her husband, former pro-skateboarder and DJ Scott Oster, the move to Ojai from Los Angeles was a gradual one. The couple, who were married in Big Sur in 2015, and who have two children together—15-month-old Bodhi and three-year-old Roman, in addition to Getty's two older children from her previous marriage—initially bought a beautiful home in Upper Ojai nestled amongst 50 acres of orchards to serve as a retreat from their city lives. They were in search of a sense of community and a simpler life for their family. “We would come up to Ojai to hike,” Getty says. “We used to come for weekends. But as of last August, we call Ojai home.”

Her love affair with Ojai began nine years ago, amid her travels around California, and grew every time she visited the picturesque valley town. It was during this time that she was invited to a screening of the 2008 documentary, *Fuel*, an exploration of fuel alternatives by husband-and-wife team Josh and Rebecca Tickell, who lived and worked in Ojai. “The film was great,” recalls Getty, who has long been an ambassador for environmental and social change and had previously served as executive producer for the PBS film *Food Forward*. “I walked right up to them and told them I wanted to be involved in future projects.” Getty got her wish when she took on the executive producer mantle for the couples' recently released documentary, *Kiss the Ground*, about how healthy soil can help balance the climate, which is also accompanied by a book of the same title. “Every time I would come up to give my notes on the latest edit, Josh and Rebecca would encourage us to take the plunge and move here,” she says.

The modern Mediterranean house that Getty eventually purchased was built by local architect Catherine Moore, and furnished by Oster, who filled the open layout with rustic natural materials, hearty woods, light colored rugs and soft sheepskin, all in a calming neutral palette. Sometimes, she has learned, it takes a move to the country to appreciate city life. “Now the irony is that I am enjoying L.A. so much more than before,” laughs Getty, who was born in Berlin and moved to Los Angeles as a young child. “Even traffic even has a charm.”

However, it doesn't seem like Getty will be rushing back to Los Angeles anytime soon. After the devastating Thomas wildfire that took place in Ojai, Getty's house miraculously still stands, and the disaster has drawn the family even closer to the adopted community that they love, support and now call home. “We have been collecting clothing from our kids' schools, and reached out to clothing stores, local designers, our own closets and friends,” she says. “We are donating masks, diapers, air purifiers and other needs on a day-to-day basis. But it is a long-term situation. As a family we will support rebuilding our community with love, time, energy and resources.”



Anna Getty at her home in Upper Ojai.

Justin Bastien explores on the Riverview Trailhead in the Ventura River Preserve.



Wild Man

Justin Bastien has found the ideal place to refuel and recharge in between his constant trips around the world.

Trying to keep up with sportsman, adventurer, director and photographer Justin Bastien might actually be humanly impossible; even reaching him by phone could be considered a sport. “I just wrapped a job that I was shooting in Santiago and took a week off to come up to the Atacama to climb and shoot some pictures for myself,” Bastien says of his current post in San Pedro de Atacama, a small town in Chile’s Atacama Desert, when we finally do connect. “I’m beat.” Somehow I don’t quite believe him, as he talks to me while swinging in a hammock. He sounds extremely energized, not like someone who just scaled an 18,000-foot volcano in 24 hours of straight climbing.

Bastien’s start in photography was directly connected to his love of adventure. An avid rock climber, he was living out of his pickup truck for about 10 years, traveling around the country and occasionally returning to his home just south of Los Angeles to do odd jobs. “I was living this climbing lifestyle, and I’d meet photographers all the time,” he says. “I started going with them on photo shoots and climbed stuff for them. I started traveling the world to help out with these photo shoots and I ended up doing a lot of work with Patagonia.” The photo editor of Patagonia suggested Bastien buy his own camera and document his travels for the outdoor clothing company. These days, his portfolio includes some pretty far-ranging projects—from shooting eagle hunters in Mongolia to documenting NASA astronauts training at the Johnson Space Center in Houston to free diving with environmentalist Kimi Werner off the coast of Hawaii—and his list of big-budget clients includes Red Bull, Microsoft and Coors Light.

A recent move to Ojai was fueled by Bastien’s need to find open space and also by the good food he’s discovered at the local farmers market. He and his girlfriend recently bought a house where he can go running, climbing and swimming directly from his front door. “My work is pretty intense so it’s nice to come home and be in nature,” says Bastien, who jokes that his city life these days consists of driving to LAX. “I love the hippie vibe and the small community.”



Orpheo McCord amongst his percussion instruments at his home studio.

The Beat Goes On

Musician Orpheo McCord is making new sounds from his Ojai home studio.

Drummer Orpheo McCord is best known for his integral role as the high-energy percussionist and drummer with Grammy Award-winning indie darlings Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros. However, his first solo album, *Recovery Inhale*, which will be released in late January, finds McCord departing from his usual role—providing a rhythm section—and instead opting for a change of pace. “After being on the road for over a decade, performing and recording with Edward Sharpe, it felt cathartic to make an album that was totally free of rhythm and the traditional verse/chorus song structure,” says McCord of his meditative, instrumental album based around the marimba, a xylophone-type percussion instrument from West and Central Africa.

For years, McCord called East Los Angeles his home, and was a part of the Echo Park cultural renaissance of the early aughts. “So much artistic collaboration was happening there, with people creating all sorts of art,” says McCord. “There was a real sense of community happening, and magic was in the air. It was such an exciting time for me.”

One can venture that McCord continues to harness the same energy in Ojai, where he decamped with his family in 2011. It was a necessary change of scenery after leading an exciting tour life and traveling the world, or as McCord puts it, being a “full-on road dog.”

McCord recorded *Recovery Inhale* at his home studio in Ojai (co-produced and mixed by another local, Scott Hirsch). This album feels like an ode to the quieter side of life, mirroring McCord’s environment. “Living in Ojai, I began to give myself permission to free associate, and experiment with sound,” McCord shares. “I naturally needed to calm my own nervous system, so this album was all about creating these luscious tonalities that allow the listener to let go of the daily chatter that inundates us all.”



Paul Fortune, left, and Chris Brock surrounded by Brock's ceramics on the back deck of their Ojai home.

Absolutely Fabulous

Interior designer Paul Fortune and Chris Brock have quickly become Ojai's most dynamic duo.

Since launching his L.A.-based studio in 1982, British-born interior designer Paul Fortune has become known as one of the city's go-to talents, with notable clients that include Marc Jacobs, Sofia Coppola, Dasha Zhukova, Nate Ruess, Charlotte Ronson and the Sunset Tower Hotel in Hollywood. Fortune's welcoming and easy-to-live-in environments, imbued with his signature style and elegance, spills over into his personal life, too. That inviting feeling is immediately apparent in the house Fortune shares with his ceramist husband, Chris Brock, and their adored elderly tabby cat, Nelly, in Upper Ojai. With breathtaking views of the famous Topatopa Mountains, their home is not just a place of comfort but a visual feast. Everything is easy on the eye, and not so precious that you are afraid to sit down. In fact all you will want to do is sit down and talk about the world with Ojai's most fascinating couple.

Brock is calm, soft-spoken and impeccably dressed, and as striking a figure as his husband. As he welcomes me into his studio—a gutted and transformed vintage trailer—the cat lazes in a sunny spot in the open doorway, while classical music plays, giving a sense of calm in this intensely creative space. Brock is enjoying huge success with his ceramics—oversized, deco-inspired pots finished with gently mottled glazes, some of which are reminiscent of Ojai's famed “pink moment,” set against the blue sky. He sold all pieces in his inaugural show last September at fashion designer Rick Owens's store in Los Angeles, humbly chalking it up to beginner's luck. However, it's obvious there is a lot more involved.

“Being an artist is my lifelong desire, one I would have never reached without my husband,” Brock says, touting Fortune as his biggest influence. “He is the force behind the power, and he is tough, but he is very honest and he has a great eye and an impossible standard. I really listened to him and here we are, after only two or three years.” When Brock first moved to Ojai, he had trained for reiki and wanted to work as a healer. “But when I got here, I soon realized this town is full of healers and one more was literally the last thing Ojai needed,” he jokes. “What we need is a Neiman Marcus,”

Fortune accidentally discovered Ojai many years ago on his way to Santa Barbara; he ended up at the Ojai Valley Inn and jumped in the pool. He remembers looking up at the then-undeveloped mountains when Ojai was just a small, sleepy town, and it stuck in his head. “It never occurred to me that one day I would be living here,” he says. “But then we bought land and had a trailer there for weekends. I would come and stay and I loved it.” Down the street from the land was a house, which the couple acquired in 2013. A few years later, they received an offer to buy their longtime Laurel Canyon abode, and made the decision to officially move.

“I had lived in that house in Laurel Canyon for about 30 years, and it took about a year to recover from a nervous breakdown,” Fortune recalls. “We met people in Ojai and it was fine. Chris never goes back to L.A., but I still have an apartment there for work, so I kind of keep my toe in the water.” Working in this modern age makes life easier for Fortune, who laughs about once, when he was sick, doing an installation in NYC from his bed in Ojai via FaceTime. “I can do everything with my iPhone,” he says. “In the old days, of course, you couldn't do that.” Next up, Fortune is working on a book for Rizzoli, tentatively titled *Notes on Décor, Etc. 1978–2018*—“I should just call it *Forty Fuckin' Years of Work*,” he jokes— while Brock is creating a new series of pots inspired by Brutalist architecture.

“We are city people in the country and for us, that is the answer,” Brock says of the couple's love for their adopted hometown. “We only really go to the opera and when we go, we make a big fuss about it and dress up and have our go-to-town moment, but mostly, we don't leave Ojai.”

“You don't need any drugs in Ojai,” Fortune adds with a smile. “Ojai is a drug.”