

WEST

OF THE CITY

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021

MEN'S *Fall* STYLES

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Astronaut
DR. DAVE WILLIAMS

MODERN
HOME
DESIGN

FASHION DESIGNER
Ana Raina

Danielle
Leonard
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



In late summer, I travelled to the United States to visit beautiful Colorado. While it was wonderful to savour a small taste of the wanderlust I've had to restrain, I also realized how trepidatious travel remains. With the stress and cost of obtaining a COVID test, and the uncertainty around contracting it (and thus being forced to extend my stay for an additional 14 days), it may be a while before I cross the border again.

I think this caution is reflective of the general sentiment that many of us are feeling as we head into the fall season. Certainly, there is excitement in the air with a return to routines that we've long missed: in-person school, workplaces re-opening, travel. But the optimism is tempered by the fact that we still have a long way to go before we can begin any conversations with "remember when we had that pandemic?"

Few people in the world can provide as unique a perspective on the state of the earth as Dr. Dave Williams – an astronaut profiled in this issue who has travelled to space twice. Witnessing our planet from afar, he explains, "there are no borders between countries that can be seen from space. It is clear that we're all in this together."

As the circumstances of the pandemic, and how we react to it, evolves, it's a unique time for all of us to view

our community – globally and locally – with a fresh perspective. And, despite the challenges, there have been reasons to celebrate.

When the pandemic hit, fashion designer Anu Raina, whose scarves are sold in cities around the world, considered calling it quits. But a holiday pop-up shop sparked so much interest that it led to the opening of her first brick and mortar boutique in downtown Oakville. She shares her story and latest collection in this issue.

You can see change in our neighbourhoods, as well, with the increasing prevalence of modern homes. Homeowners are welcoming the innovation of modern architecture where the rules that dictate the design of conventional homes are meant to be broken. This issue features three stunning modern designs that may encourage you to rethink the traditional layout of a home.

One significant change the pandemic has created for almost everyone is an increase in outdoor activity. That's one habit we'll want to keep. Roam your neighbourhood, go for a hike, visit your local shops and cafés. Autumn is a beautiful time of year – go out and enjoy it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle". The script is elegant and cursive.



Blank canvas coat



Painted canvas vest



Town square tee



Photo: Andes Lo

CELEBRATED FASHION DESIGNER

Anu Raina

OPENS HER FIRST BOUTIQUE IN DOWNTOWN OAKVILLE

by Laurie Wallace-Lynch

Fashion photography by Valerie Burke

“There is a story behind every piece of my work and every collection,” states Oakville fashion and textile designer Anu Raina, who recently opened her first ever signature boutique in downtown Oakville. Each collection is based on the designer’s childhood memories, travel experiences, or love for her local town (such as her new Oakville-inspired *Wedgewood Collection*). While Anu finds inspiration around the globe, it was her own ‘hood’ that inspired her to design her wildly popular T.O2 Toronto scarf and apparel collection which include her top selling *Toronto Skyline scarf*, *Subway Scarf*, and the *City Sign Board Scarf*.

“The story behind the T.O2 Collection and inspiration happened

during my first fall in Toronto when my son and I were riding on the subway and I suddenly became aware of the amazing energy happening all around us. The people, the traffic, the chaos, the excitement, and the fun,” says Raina. “I hurried home and put pen to paper to try to capture that electricity. People who visit Toronto see it as a clean, modern, culturally rich, and vibrant city. I wanted to capture what they see on my *Subway Scarf* and my *Toronto Skyline* collection. I have shipped these scarves around the world to countries like Ireland, Brazil and Japan.”

Her new *Wedgewood* collection is named after the street in Oakville where the Raina family live. “What I love about Oakville is that it is quiet, peaceful, lush, green, and beautiful. My collection reflects this. The *Town Square tee* has an original print illustration of Oakville’s Town Square. The *Gairloch Blouse* and scarf feature an original floral print inspired by Oakville’s Gairloch Gardens.” →



“WHAT I LOVE ABOUT OAKVILLE IS THAT IT IS QUIET, PEACEFUL, LUSH, GREEN, AND BEAUTIFUL. MY (WEDGEWOOD) COLLECTION REFLECTS THIS.”

Town square dress

Love is life blouse



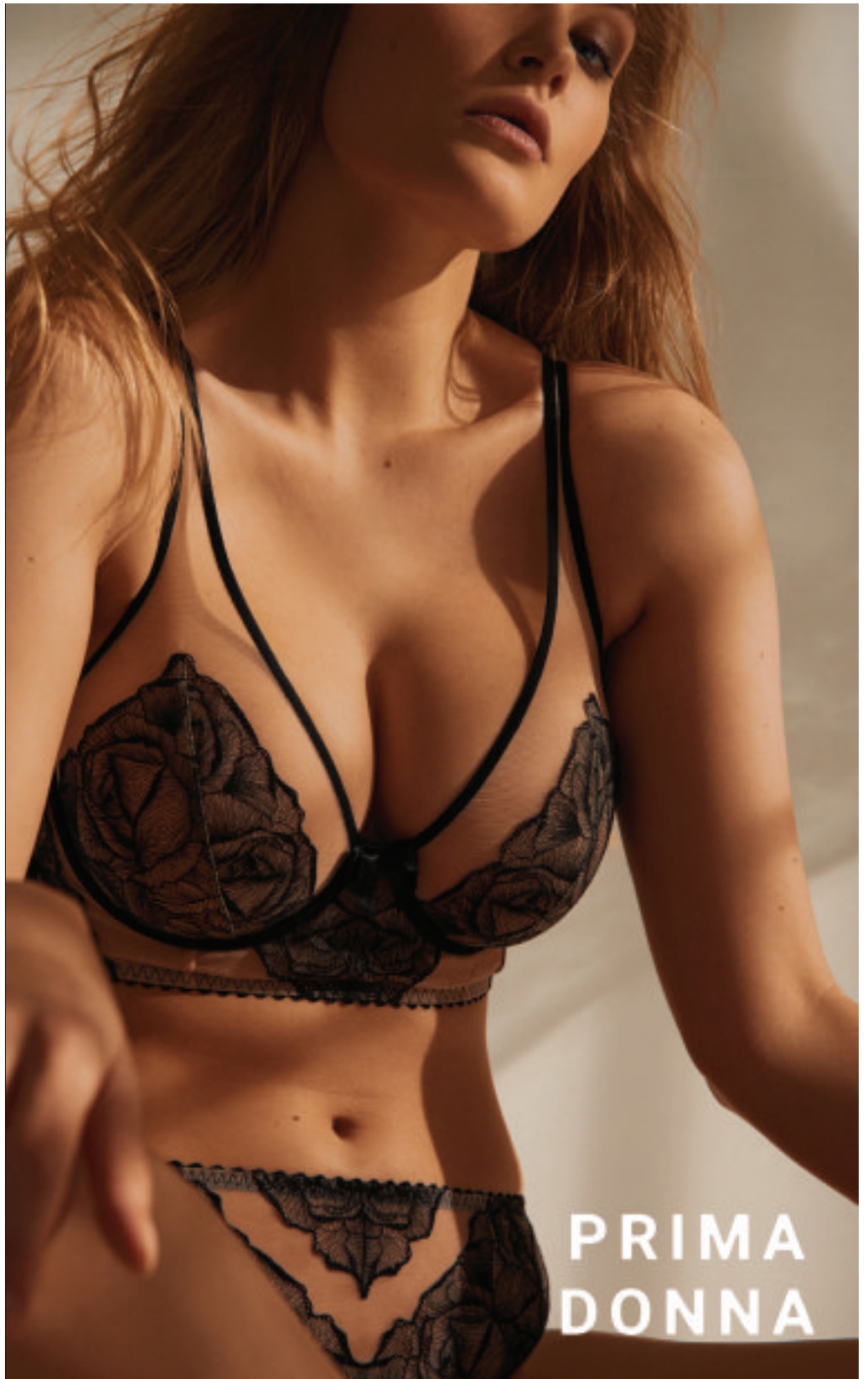
→ Raina was born and raised in Kashmir and moved to London, England to study at the University of Arts London College of Fashion. She and her family moved to Canada in 2004 and Raina enrolled in the Textile Program at Sheridan College in Oakville. “I had studied fashion in London and worked in the industry but found I couldn’t really express myself. At Sheridan I learned I could make my own prints on my own pieces and put my signature on every piece.”

Raina debuted her signature collections during 2010 Toronto Fashion Week to thunderous applause. She graduated that same year, winning the Governor’s Award for the Textile Program, numerous scholarships, and was selected to be an Artist-in-residence at Toronto’s Harbourfront Centre.

“I used the scholarship money to start my own business while I was an Artist-in-residence,” explains Raina. “I started designing and printing silk scarves and then went knocking on doors on Queen Street shops. One shop bought some scarves and then ordered more, and that was the beginning of my company.”

The designer has created exclusive collaborations with eBay Canada, The Law Society of Upper Canada and the Keilhauer and Art Gallery of Ontario. Her Toronto Skyline print was selected by the Textile Museum of Canada as part of a contemporary art exhibit in New York and London.

Raina’s Remnants I and II Collections were designed as a tribute to her grandmother. “The collections were all about my childhood, my mother and my grandmother. I used hand-dyed prints, patchwork, and blanket stitches which my grandmother used. I silkscreened →



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THE 30 MINUTE BRA-FITTING
BY APPOINTMENT FOR A CURATED BRA-FITTING EXPERIENCE



“I LOVE TEXTILES AND LOVE TO PLAY WITH FABRICS. FOR ME IT’S LIKE BEING A KID IN A CANDY STORE.”

→ burlap and made a coat using the images from a rice flour company where we used to go to buy our grains. This piece was exhibited at Harbourfront Centre and then several people asked if they could buy it, so I started making coats.”

As a textile designer, Raina mixes and matches different fabrics to create unique designs. “I love textiles and love to play with fabrics. For me it’s like being a kid in a candy store.”

She used 100 per cent cotton canvas as the base of her Blank Canvas Coat. “I designed the coat as a blank canvas so friends and family could pen messages on the coat, or your grandchildren could draw artwork on the coat to create memories,” says Raina. “It’s like a personal diary you can wear and pass on in the family.”

While sheltering at home during COVID-19, Raina was inspired to create her Love is Life, Life is Love blouses and dresses. However, she admits the last year and a half have been the most challenging time in her career.

“With everything shut down, I was at a crossroads and wondered if I should quit the business,” states Raina. “But then last Christmas before the lockdowns I did a pop-up store in Oakville and the amount of support was overwhelming. Knowing that people love my work makes me so happy. I don’t do this to become rich or famous, I design because it’s what I love to do.”

Yet another challenge the designer faces daily is an old injury to her right arm. “I broke my arm in a school bus accident. I am right-handed and doctors told me I would have to give up using it for work or lose the use of my arm. Against all odds, I have continued to use it to realize my dream to do what I want to do.”

Asked to describe her signature style, Raina answers: “My signature look is pretty artsy. My prints are busy, bold, original and there is a lot going on, so I like to keep the silhouettes simple to focus on the prints. The pieces are unique with limited editions produced in each style. I want people to know that when you are buying my pieces, you are buying an original piece of art crafted in Toronto. Each piece is expressive and is really a part of me—my memories and my story of love and appreciation which I am proud to share with others.” **W**

The Anu Raina store is located at
90 Lakeshore Road W., Oakville, and
online at www.anuraina.com