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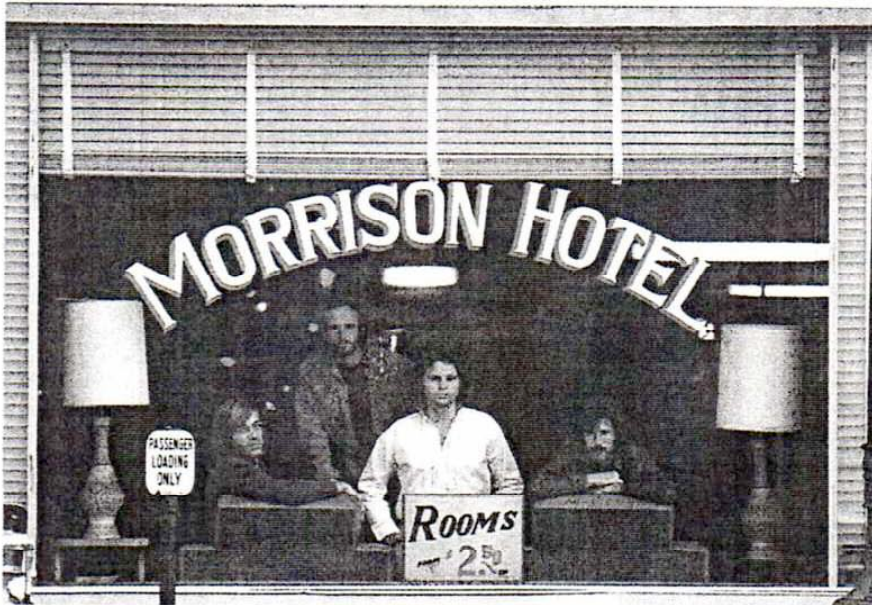
Check Out Our Expanded **Restaurant Row** Dining Section STARTING ON PAGE 31



For more information on the **Morrison Hotel Gallery**,
 please contact Matt Hanks (mhanks@shorefire.com) or
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Pictures At An Exhibition

MORRISON HOTEL GALLERY BRINGS SOHO TO MANHASSET'S MIRACLE MILE



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: **THE DOORS**, LOS ANGELES, CA, 1969. © HENRY DILTZ 1969. **PAUL & LINDA MCCARTNEY**, 1971. © HENRY DILTZ 2007. **BOB DYLAN**, 1966. © ROWLAND SCHERMAN 1966. **JANIS JOPLIN**, HOLLYWOOD, CA, 1970. © BARRY FEINSTEIN 1970. **CROSBY, STILLS & NASH**, LOS ANGELES, 1969. © HENRY DILTZ. **PATTIE BOYD & GEORGE HARRISON**, ROSE GARDEN, CIRCA 1967. © PATTIE BOYD. **ROGER DALTRY**, CONNECTICUT, 1978. © LYNN GOLDSMITH 1978
Photos courtesy of Morrison Hotel Gallery



BY DAVE GIL DE RUBIO

AMERICANA MANHASSET is one of the trendiest shopping centers in the country and is not called the Miracle Mile for nothing. It's a place where you'll find high-end retailers like Gucci, Prada, Hermes and Louis Vuitton, but it's not where you'd expect to see a picture of a slightly zonked-out Keith Richards circa 1972 standing under a sign that says, "Patience Please...A Drug Free America Comes First!"—that is, unless you happen to wander into the new Morrison Hotel Gallery. The gallery, which specializes in fine art music photography, had its soft opening at the former site of the Americana Manhasset Kate Spade store on June 7.

In the display window of this 2000-square-foot space—situated between a Fendi outpost and a London Jewelers—a slightly worn gatefold copy of the Doors' fifth studio album, 1970's *Morrison Hotel* (from where the gallery borrowed its name), greets you. Hanging above it is a pair of 30-inch-by-40-inch prints taken from the album's photo session shot by legendary rock photographer Henry Diltz. One is of the band hanging out in front of the seedy Hard Rock Café Lounge, the inspiration for Peter Morton's then-future chain of theme restaurants. The other image features the Doors pensively peering out the hotel's front window, where a small \$2.50 sign (advertising the cost of a room for one night) reflects the year the shot was taken.

As you wander into the actual gallery space at the Americana, the coolness of air conditioning gives a respite from the humidity of the 90-plus-degree heat outside. On the white and red walls that run to a 25-foot height hang images of an impressive array of famous musicians captured by a murderer's row of seminal photographers. Don Hunstein, best known for being CBS Records' decades-long house photographer, is represented via a couple of black-and-white portraits captured at the label's famed 30th Street studios: one each of Miles Davis and Bob Dylan, the former sitting cross-legged on a stool, chin on the same right hand clutching his horn, and

the latter of Zim cradling a bass, wearing a harmonica brace around his neck, looking askance at an antiquated microphone hanging just off to the right of his head.

The candid shots unfurl themselves as your eye goes from one wall to the next with the sound of Crosby, Stills and Nash's "Marrakesh Express" wafting through the air. Here is Diltz's photo of Neil Young at Broken Arrow Ranch in 1971, standing in a barn doorway offset by cattle spread out throughout a pasture in the background. Turn around and a Jim Marshall shot of June Carter Cash dozing on the chest of husband Johnny Cash reveals a candid moment between soulmates. Further on is Gered Mankowitz's slightly out-of-focus group shot of the Rolling Stones that was used for the cover of 1967's *Between the Buttons*. Images of more contemporary groups dot the wall, including Danny Clinch's 1997 New York City shot of Radiohead, featuring the group lolling on a park bench while normally staid frontman Thom Yorke, clad in knit cap and sunglasses, is caught mid-air, throwing a kick toward the camera. At the counter is gallery co-owner and Port Washington resident Peter Blachley (husband of *Long Island Press* Associate Editor Annie Blachley), beaming with pride at his newest location.

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

The gallery's temporary home at the Americana Manhasset has its origins in an e-mail sent to Blachley toward the end of April. The 59-year-old California native had just finished hosting a Bob Gruen retrospective to kick off Morrison Hotel Gallery's newest location, at the space formerly occupied by CBGB's Gallery 313. Business was picking up at the SoHo flagship store and Blachley had just returned from a pair of Pattie Boyd openings at the gallery's West Coast locations in La Jolla and Los Angeles, Calif. Boyd, a photographer, was once married to George Harrison and Eric Clapton.

"I received an e-mail from the head of marketing for the Americana Manhasset telling me about a project they were doing with Hirschleifer's department store and a

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Morrison Hotel Gallery

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specialty brand called Chrome Hearts that they were rolling out," Blachley explains as we stroll into Hirschleifer's Americana digs. "Since Chrome Hearts has a real association with rock 'n' roll in terms of design and clothing, wouldn't it be great if Morrison Hotel Gallery could hang some of our rock 'n' roll photographs in the store to accompany the boutique's unveiling?"

The e-mail also invited the gallery to occupy a 2,000-square-foot space until the fall. Blachley immediately expressed interest in both offers. Indeed, as we stroll by shelves of Jimmy Choos and Manolo Blahniks in Hirschleifer's, the kind of \$500-plus footwear that's become synonymous with *Sex and the City*, we turn the corner into another section where the clothes sport a racier black-and-silver aesthetic. Looking down on this is a self-portrait of Boyd and George Harrison shot by the former. In another part of the store is Paul Saltzman's huge panoramic color image of The Beatles' infamous 1968 visit to the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in India, featuring the participants sitting side by side on a raised dais in front of the maharishi.

So why would an extremely high-end retailer to the tonier well-heeled elite reach out to an institution whose subject matter of popular music, more specifically rock 'n' roll, is more closely associated with the gritty masses? For Rebecca Hollander, the Americana Manhasset marketing director who sent the e-mail, it was a no-brainer.

"The gallery shakes things up for the Long Island consumer," says Hollander. "It gives them a chance to experience something that's really not out here, in a sophisticated way. For our clientele, this is an experience that they wouldn't normally get at Americana Manhasset, and, frankly, it's cool—and our customers are really cool. It has a downtown feel and, it has a lot of what we see at Americana Manhasset. There's a level of sophistication that's combined with a cool vibe, so the images speak to them."

While both parties declined to discuss the lease agreement, both agree that the fit

works extremely well for all involved.

"There are some real interesting stores here and it's all about personal service and a real demanding and discerning customer. That's one of the reasons I like it, because that's our customer," says Blachley. "The people that collect and purchase our photography are the same way. They really demand the best in what they buy. So it just fit really well: the demographic, the people, the location, the size."

With an inventory starting at \$600, averaging \$1,500 per piece and going up to \$25,000—the cost of Herman Leonard's 1949 shot of Billie Holiday on the rear wall of the Americana gallery—suddenly, it doesn't seem such a stretch to be calling Dior and Giorgio Armani neighbors.

WHEN I PAINT MY MASTERPIECE

When Blachley moved to New York with his wife Annie and now-24-year-old daughter Jessica in 2001 to care for Annie's ailing mother, his life had been split between entertainment and construction. Despite having spent 10 years climbing the corporate ladder at Capitol Records in Hollywood, his last job had been as a building superintendent for a Reno, Nev. home builder. His spare time was spent working with longtime friend and famed photographer Diltz and Rich Horowitz (who was representing Yoko Ono's Bag One lithographs on the West Coast), putting on temporary shows of Diltz's work in hotel conference rooms in a number of cities, including Seattle, Portland and Denver.

"I've always been a sort of renaissance person," says Blachley, "never happy with what I'm doing at any given time. I left my job with no guarantee of anything in front of me, but I've always been that way."

After spending several years hopping around temporary SoHo locations under the unwieldy name of Archives Gallery, Blachley, Horowitz and Diltz unveiled the 300-square-foot Morrison Hotel Gallery at 124 Prince St. in April 2004. Other locations opened,

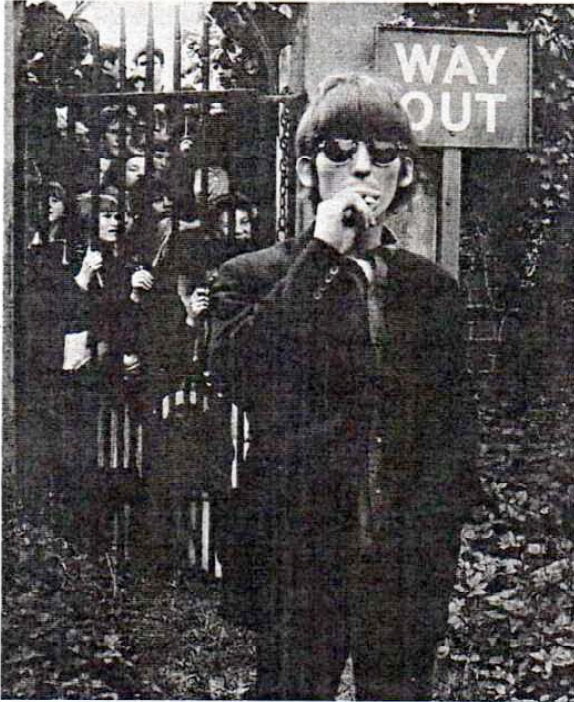
Cover Story

MORRISON
HOTEL GALLERY
AMERICANA
MANHASSET
DIRECTOR
JESSICA
BLACHLEY
Photos by Rick
Edwards



Cover Story

GEORGE HARRISON, ENGLAND, 1966. © ROBERT WHITAKER 1966. Photos courtesy of Morrison Hotel Gallery



ROLLING STONES, LONDON, ENGLAND, 1963. © PHILIP TOWNSEND 1963



BOB MARLEY, SANTA MONICA, CA, 1979. © NEIL PRESTON



and the roster of photographers went from just one—Diltz—to the current number of 55, whose ranks include Marshall, Bob Gruen, Mick Rock and Herb Greene. But for all the success that the gallery has had, not everyone is in agreement as to whether what it does is considered fine art photography.

Janet Lehr, co-owner of East Hampton's Vered Gallery and owner of Janet Lehr Inc., who's been dealing in photographs since 1968, is one such person.

"Generally speaking, it would have to be in the canon of work that's accepted in fine art museum collection," explains Lehr of the definition of "fine art." "There is a museum of rock that might have a collection of those images, but unless those photographers were collected as well by a whole international group of art museum photography collections, it would not fit into the category of fine art photography. You're talking about what makes the transfer from pop to fine art, and it's the same way every pop document isn't a Warhol."

Not surprisingly, Blachley has a different point of view.

"I think some people over-intellectualize photography," he says. "Just because these [artists] shot music doesn't make them a legitimate fine art photographer? No. I started the Morrison Hotel Gallery for exactly that purpose: to give these deserving photographers a place and home to be able to have their work looked at and judged in the same vein as a Stieglitz. We use all the same materials any fine art gallery would use. At the end of the day, it's not whether it's been in a museum—and some of our photographers have been exhibited in the Whitney and the Smithsonian—but whether a large group of people choose to have it become fine art."

Connecticut antique dealer and longtime Morrison Hotel Gallery client Jeff Tillou has purchased nearly 100 pieces of fine art rock photography, including works by Marshall and Greene. For him, the artwork aesthetic is indisputable.

"I'm not really interested in collecting

photos of famous musicians," says Tillou, 39. "I do look at it from an artistic standpoint of juxtapositions of objects and lines. I bought one of Taj Mahal and I wouldn't rush out and buy a photo of [him] except for the one I have, where he looks ethereal with the light behind his raised arms and his statuesque figure. And I have one of Bob Marley, and his arms are out with his hands grasping like he's holding the sun, even though it's just a reflection of light."

EMOTIONS IN MOTION

Those who see this as a valid art form say that nostalgia and emotion play a large part in why people pay such hefty sums for a picture of, say, Run-DMC striking a pose in their Hollis, Queens neighborhood in the mid-'80s, or Bruce Springsteen circa 1978 standing in a scrapyard, surrounded by makeshift walls of hubcaps. For Tillou, it was "seeing so many Grateful Dead shows when I was a kid." Blachley feels that 95 percent of a buyer's impetus comes from emotion. "Music is emotion, and when you think about what you're seeing and experiencing from those photographs, it's like a time tunnel that sucks you right into that moment of where you were, what you were doing and who you were with."

Bob Gruen and Henry Diltz, who will appear with Pattie Boyd on June 26 at the gallery, share similar sentiments.

"When you see a photo it's like you're off on a trip in your mind, sort of imagining being there in that time and place. It can almost be like a visual tranquilizer," says Diltz.

"When somebody wants to take one of my images that's signed and put it on their wall, that's very rewarding," Gruen proudly exclaims. "It's not just capturing a fact, but you're capturing some feelings that people want to live with." ●

—Additional reporting by
Melissa Wasserman

The Morrison Hotel Gallery Americana Manhasset (www.morrisonhotelgallery.com) will host a reception on Thursday, June 26 from 7-10 p.m. with Pattie Boyd, Henry Diltz and Bob Gruen.