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ISSUE 71

DOWNTOWNER[®]

THE INSIDER GUIDE TO DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

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THE INSIDER'S VIEW OF DOWNTOWN CULTURE, FOOD, DRINKS, FASHION & THE PEOPLE WHO SHAPE IT.

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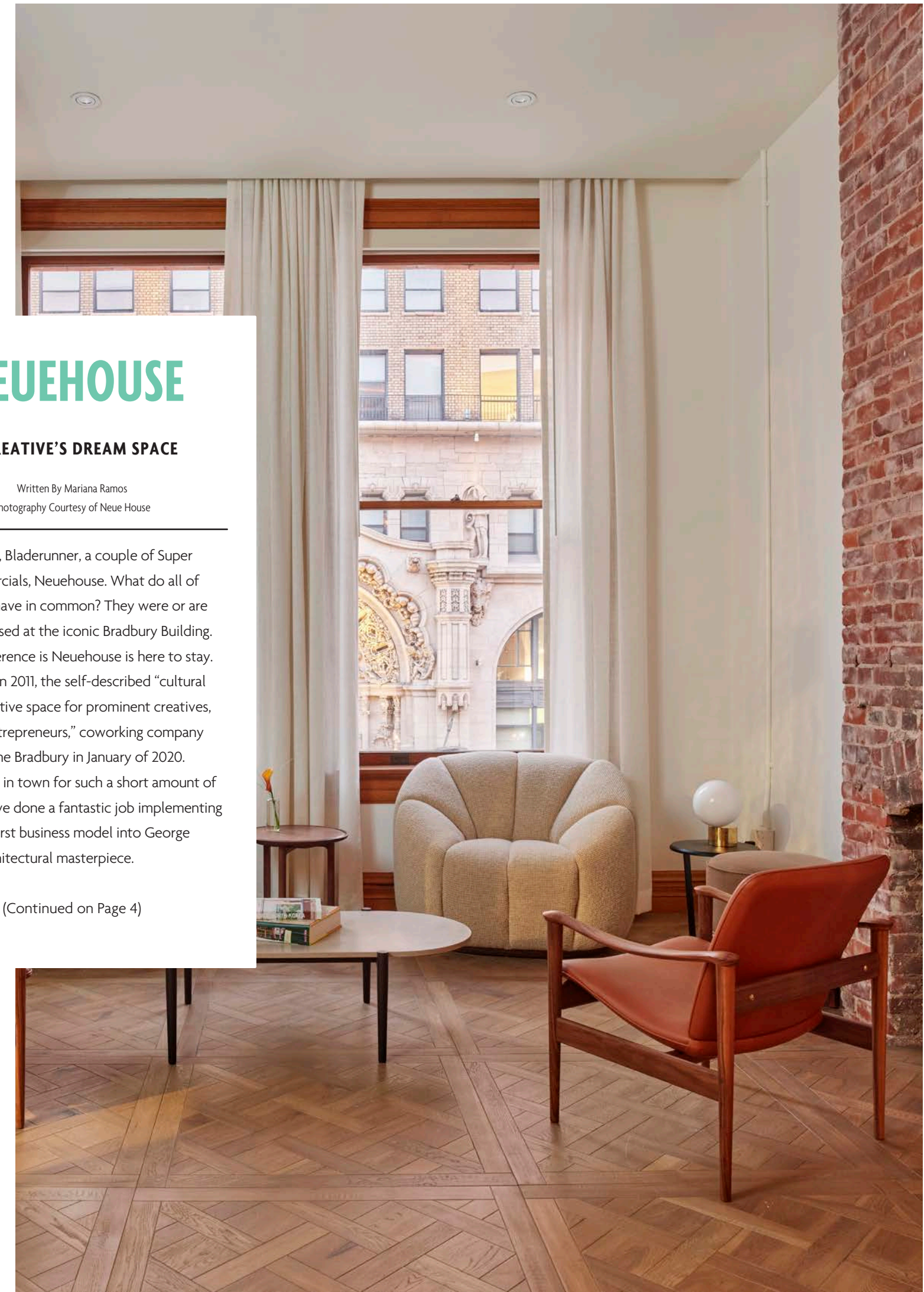
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NEUEHOUSE

A CREATIVE'S DREAM SPACE

Written By Mariana Ramos
Photography Courtesy of Neue House

The Artist, Bladerunner, a couple of Super Bowl commercials, Neuehouse. What do all of these things have in common? They were or are currently housed at the iconic Bradbury Building. The only difference is Neuehouse is here to stay.

Founded in 2011, the self-described "cultural and collaborative space for prominent creatives, artists and entrepreneurs," coworking company moved into the Bradbury in January of 2020. Despite being in town for such a short amount of time, they have done a fantastic job implementing their design-first business model into George Wyman's architectural masterpiece.

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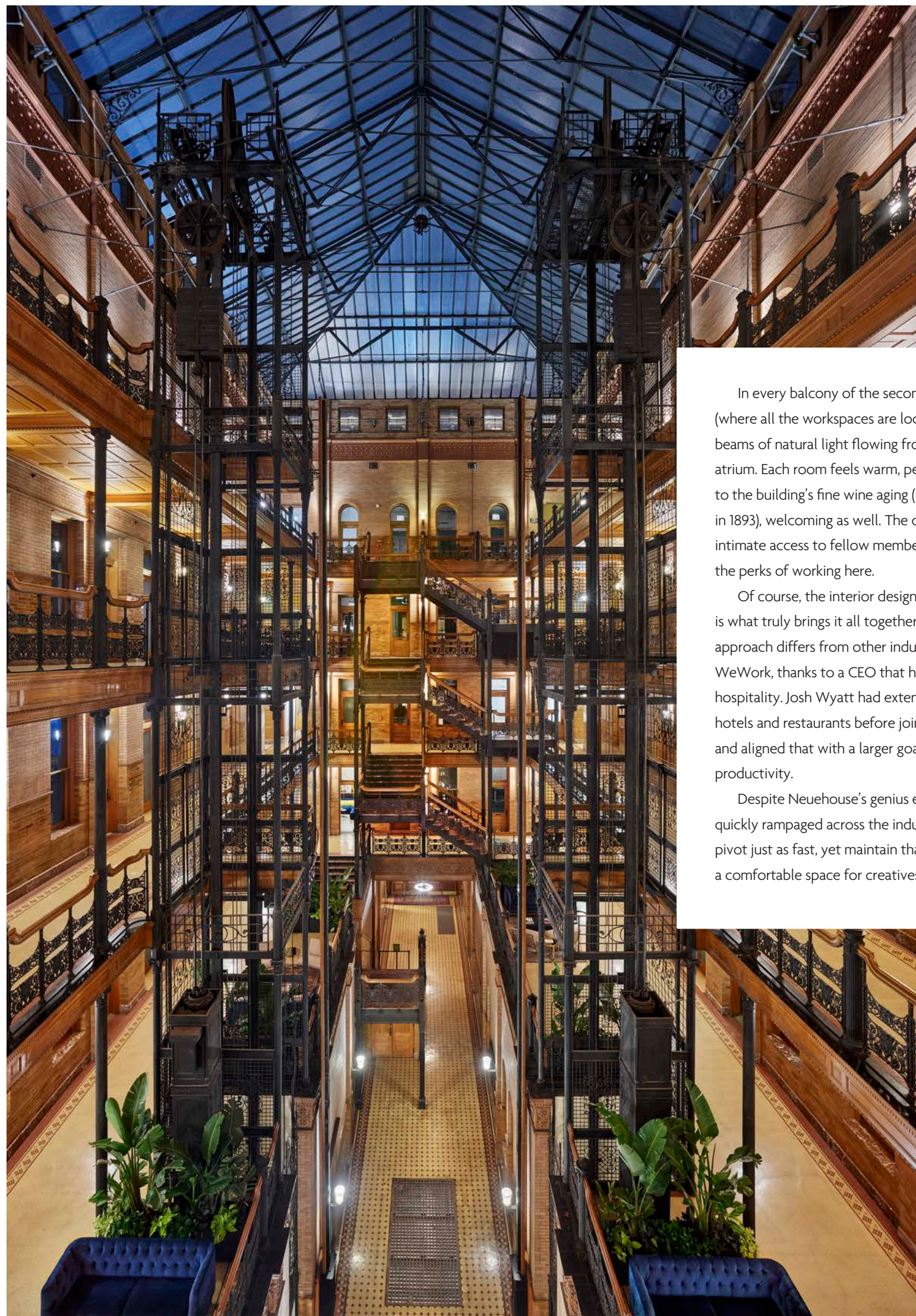
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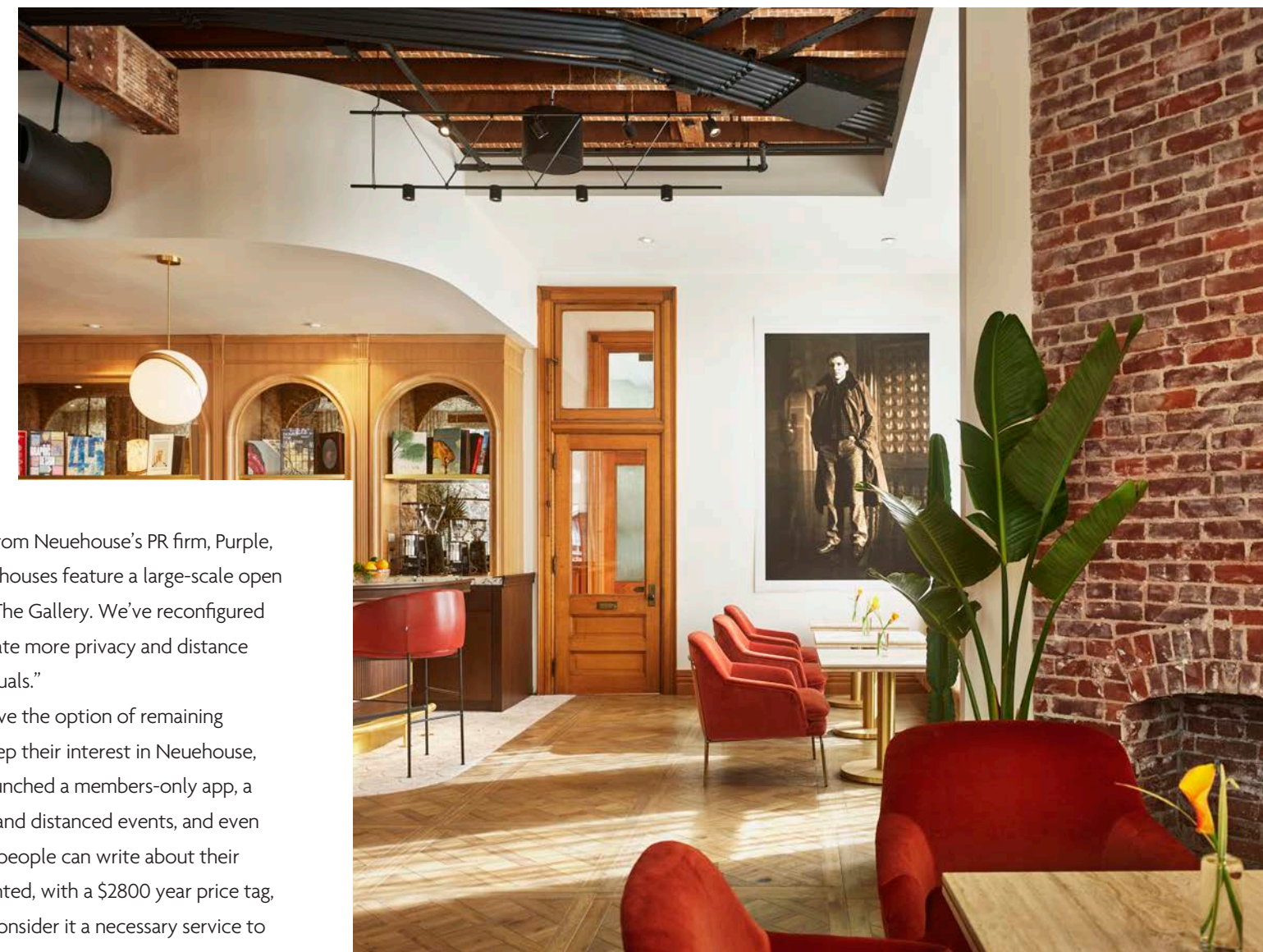
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In every balcony of the second-floor lobby (where all the workspaces are located), there are beams of natural light flowing from Bradbury's grand atrium. Each room feels warm, personal, and due to the building's fine wine aging (it was completed in 1893), welcoming as well. The casual chats and intimate access to fellow members seems part of the perks of working here.

Of course, the interior design of their premises is what truly brings it all together. Neuehouse's approach differs from other industry giants, such as WeWork, thanks to a CEO that has a background in hospitality. Josh Wyatt had extensive experience in hotels and restaurants before joining the company, and aligned that with a larger goal to foster creative productivity.

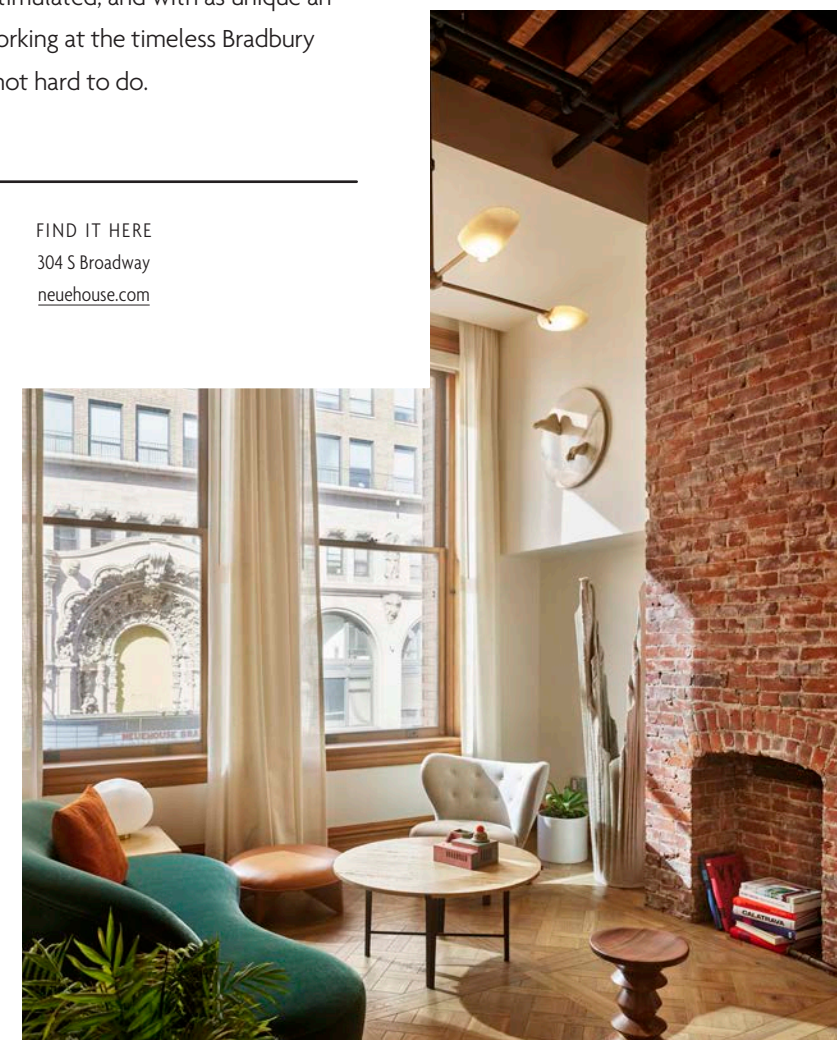
Despite Neuehouse's genius ensemble, COVID-19 quickly rampaged across the industry, so they had to pivot just as fast, yet maintain that goal of providing a comfortable space for creatives. Katherine Kerr, a

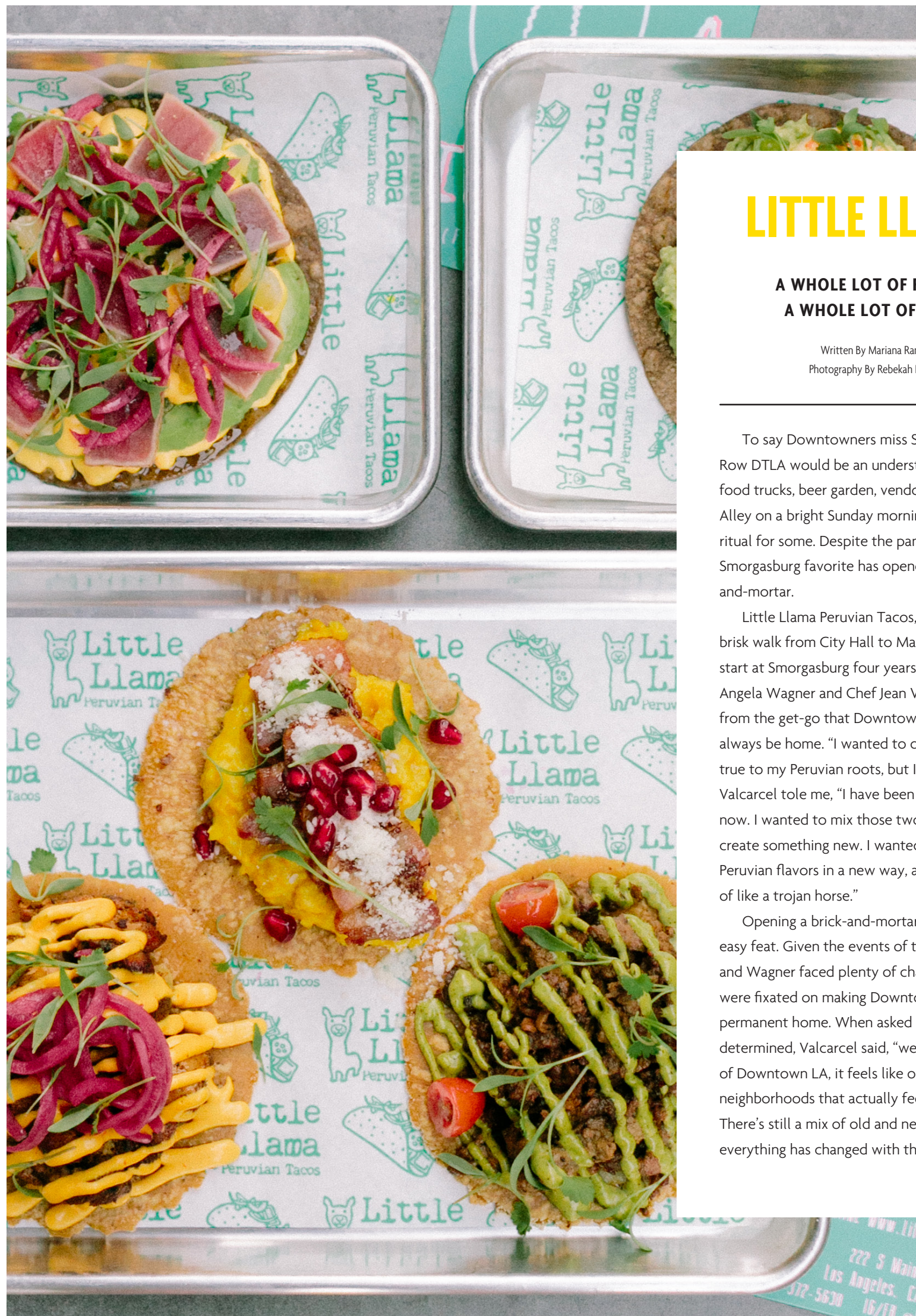


representative from Neuehouse's PR firm, Purple, said "...all of our houses feature a large-scale open floor known as The Gallery. We've reconfigured this floor to create more privacy and distance between individuals."

Members have the option of remaining home, but to keep their interest in Neuehouse, the company launched a members-only app, a series of virtual and distanced events, and even a journal where people can write about their experience. Granted, with a \$2800 year price tag, anyone would consider it a necessary service to keep members stimulated, and with as unique an experience as working at the timeless Bradbury Building, that is not hard to do.

FIND IT HERE
304 S Broadway
neuehouse.com





LITTLE LLAMA

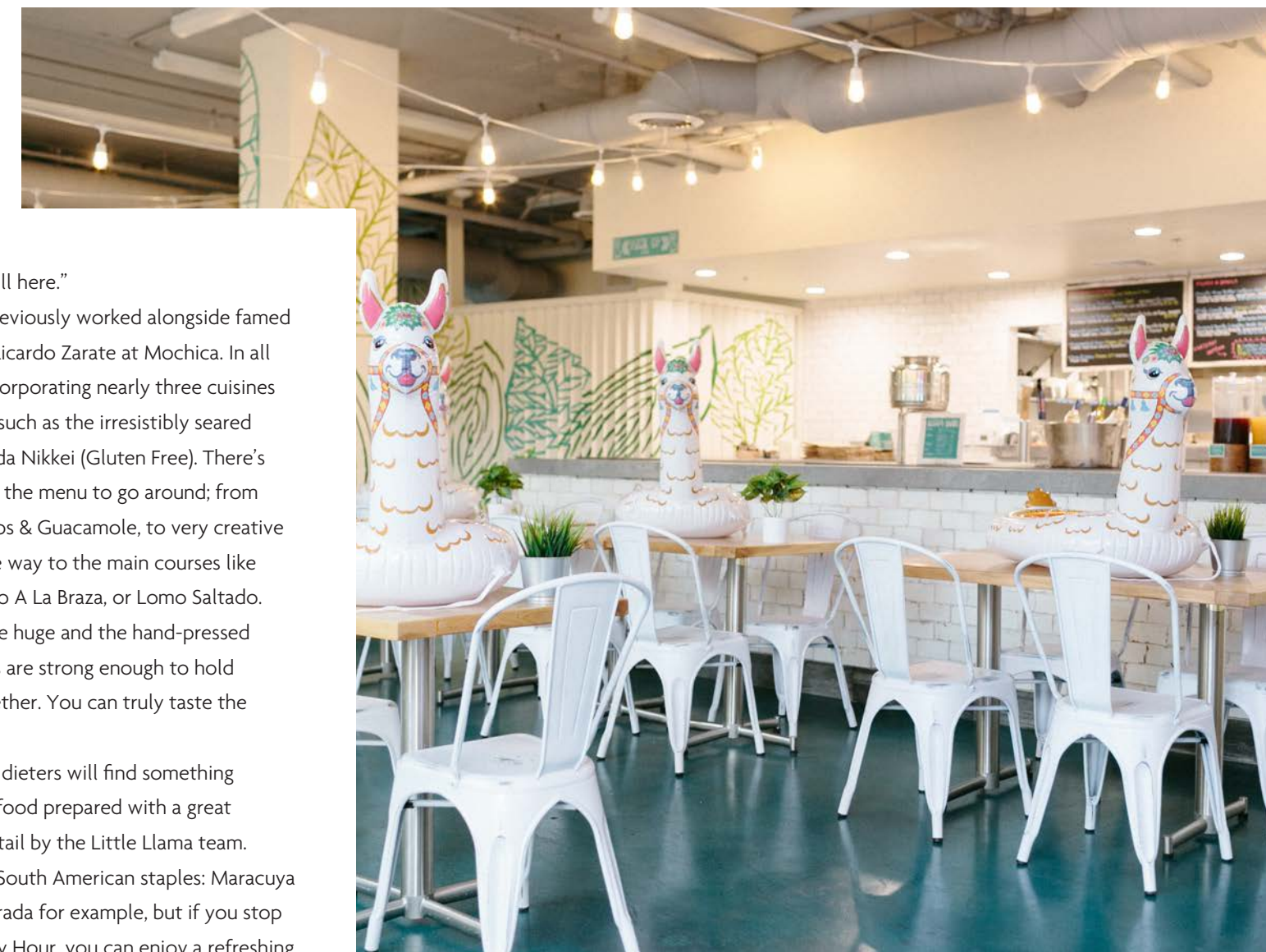
**A WHOLE LOT OF FLAVOR,
A WHOLE LOT OF TACO.**

Written By Mariana Ramos
Photography By Rebekah Lemire

To say Downtowners miss Smorgasburg at Row DTLA would be an understatement. The food trucks, beer garden, vendors, and Dessert Alley on a bright Sunday morning were part of a ritual for some. Despite the pandemic however, a Smorgasburg favorite has opened its own brick-and-mortar.

Little Llama Peruvian Tacos, which is just a brisk walk from City Hall to Main & 2nd, got its start at Smorgasburg four years ago. Co-owners Angela Wagner and Chef Jean Valcarcel knew from the get-go that Downtown LA would always be home. "I wanted to do something very true to my Peruvian roots, but I am an Angeleno," Valcarcel told me, "I have been here for 20 years now. I wanted to mix those two things and create something new. I wanted to introduce Peruvian flavors in a new way, and in a taco... kind of like a trojan horse."

Opening a brick-and-mortar is of course no easy feat. Given the events of this year, Valcarcel and Wagner faced plenty of challenges, yet they were fixated on making Downtown LA their permanent home. When asked why they were so determined, Valcarcel said, "we love the energy of Downtown LA, it feels like one of those few neighborhoods that actually feels like a city. There's still a mix of old and new here, and sure everything has changed with the pandemic but



the energy is still here."

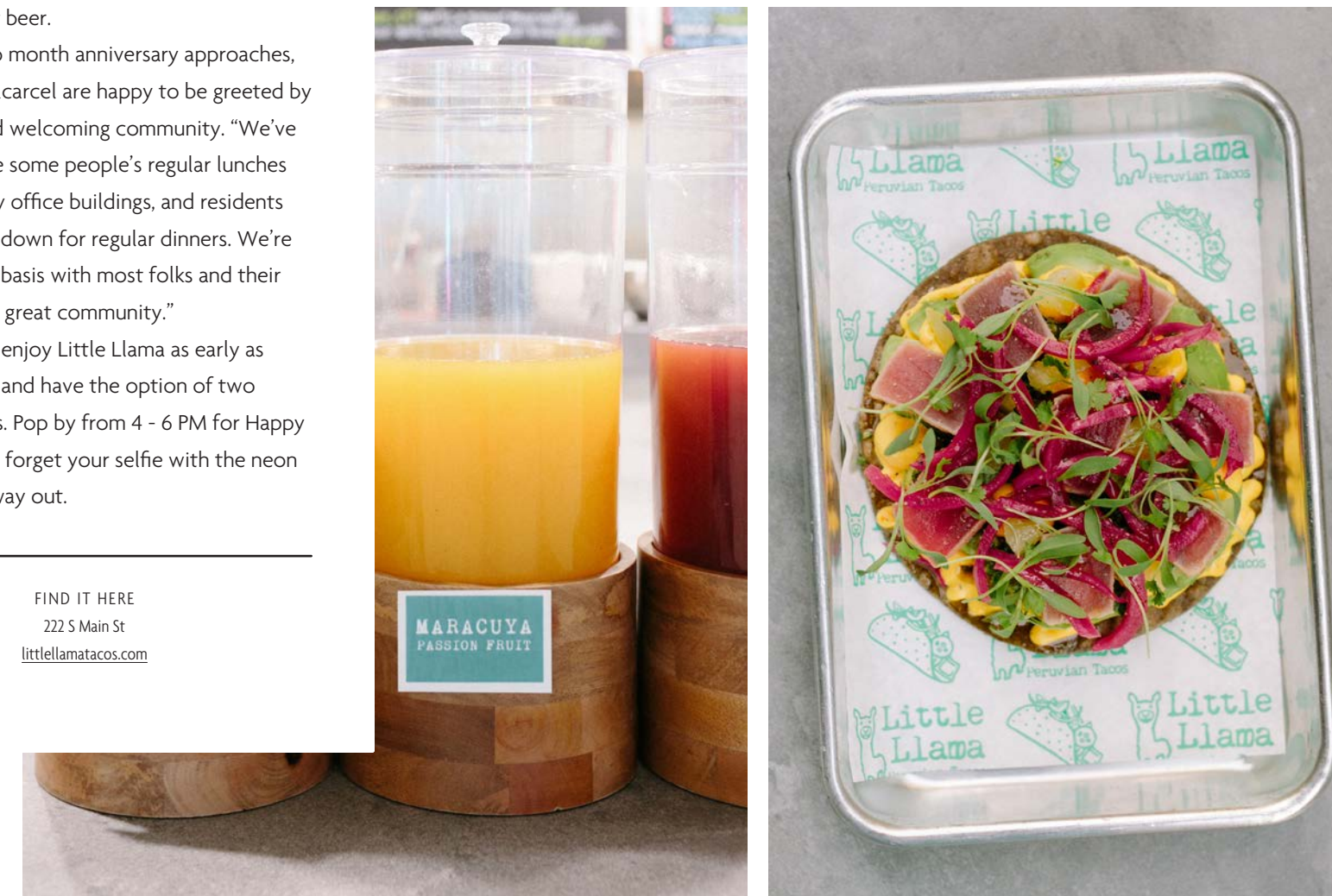
Valcarcel previously worked alongside famed Peruvian Chef Ricardo Zarate at Mochica. In all reality, he is incorporating nearly three cuisines into his dishes, such as the irresistibly seared Ahi Tuna Tostada Nikkei (Gluten Free). There's plenty more on the menu to go around; from staples like Chips & Guacamole, to very creative tostadas, all the way to the main courses like Tacos with Pollo A La Braza, or Lomo Saltado. The portions are huge and the hand-pressed organic tortillas are strong enough to hold everything together. You can truly taste the authenticity.

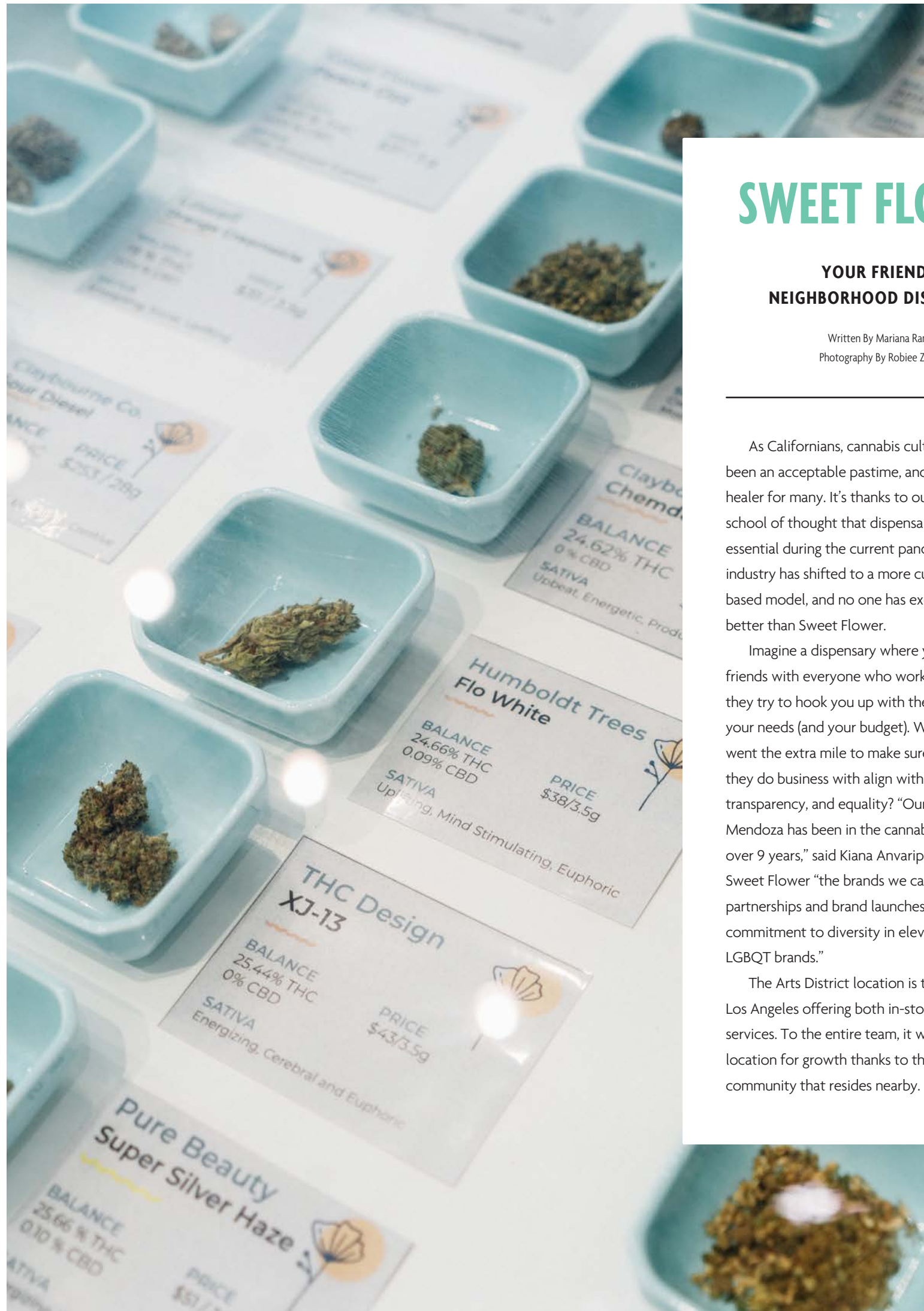
All types of dieters will find something delicious, with food prepared with a great attention to detail by the Little Llama team. Drinks are also South American staples: Maracuya and Chicha Morada for example, but if you stop by during Happy Hour, you can enjoy a refreshing glass of wine or beer.

As their two month anniversary approaches, Wagner and Valcarcel are happy to be greeted by such a loyal and welcoming community. "We've already become some people's regular lunches from the nearby office buildings, and residents above us come down for regular dinners. We're on a first-name basis with most folks and their dogs. It's such a great community."

Patrons can enjoy Little Llama as early as 11AM everyday, and have the option of two excellent patios. Pop by from 4 - 6 PM for Happy Hour, and don't forget your selfie with the neon llama on your way out.

FIND IT HERE
222 S Main St
littllematacos.com





SWEET FLOWER

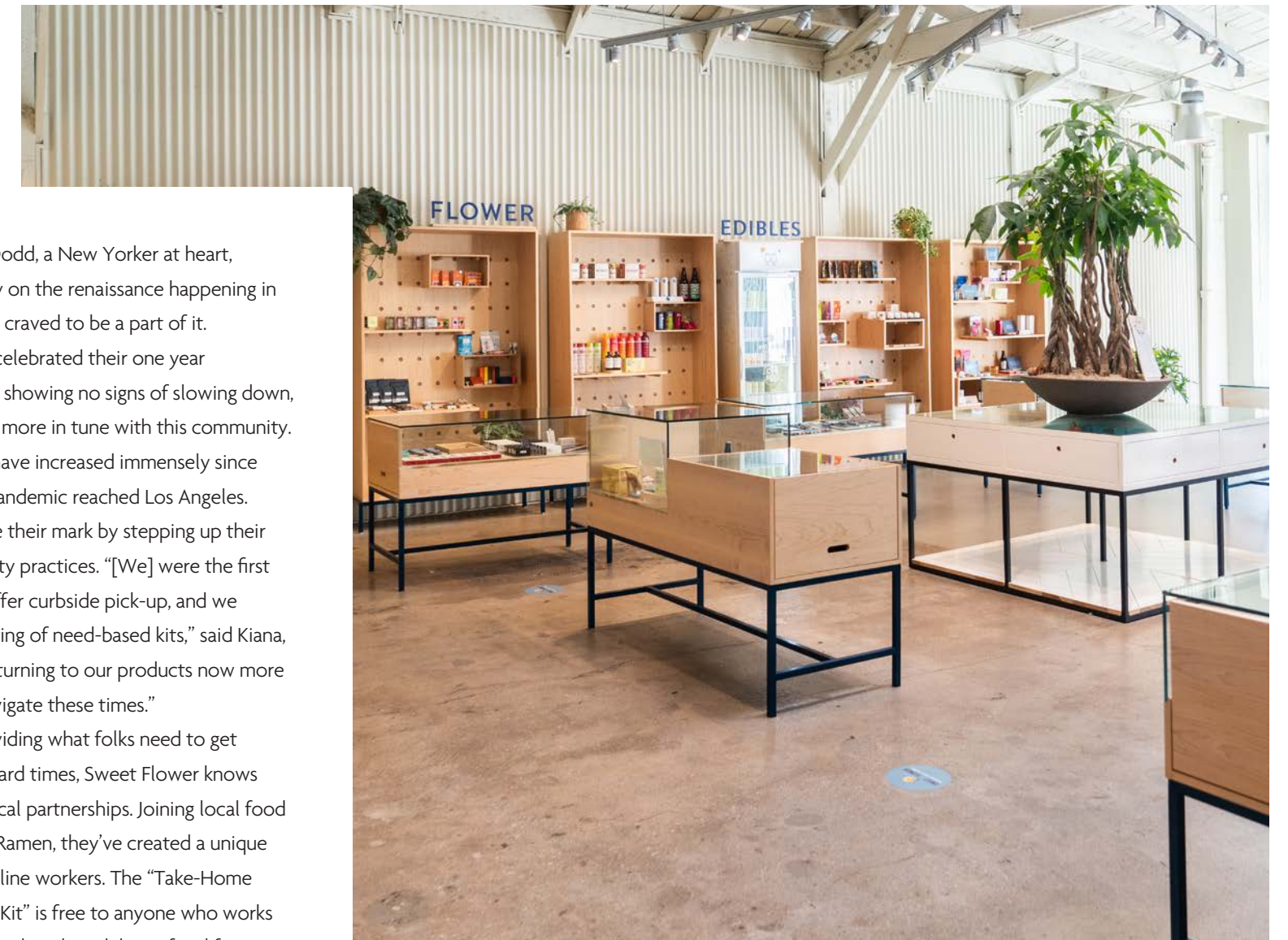
YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD DISPENSARY

Written By Mariana Ramos
Photography By Robiee Ziegler

As Californians, cannabis culture has long been an acceptable pastime, and even a medicinal healer for many. It's thanks to our more liberal school of thought that dispensaries were deemed essential during the current pandemic. It's fledgling industry has shifted to a more customer care-based model, and no one has exemplified that better than Sweet Flower.

Imagine a dispensary where you become friends with everyone who works there, where they try to hook you up with the best deals for your needs (and your budget). What if they even went the extra mile to make sure the brands they do business with align with inclusivity, transparency, and equality? "Our buyer Michelle Mendoza has been in the cannabis industry for over 9 years," said Kiana Anvaripour, CMO of Sweet Flower "the brands we carry are exclusive partnerships and brand launches, along with our commitment to diversity in elevating BIPOC and LGBTQ brands."

The Arts District location is their fourth in Los Angeles offering both in-store and delivery services. To the entire team, it was the perfect location for growth thanks to the creative community that resides nearby. Sweet Flower's



CEO, Timothy Dodd, a New Yorker at heart, recognized early on the renaissance happening in Downtown, and craved to be a part of it.

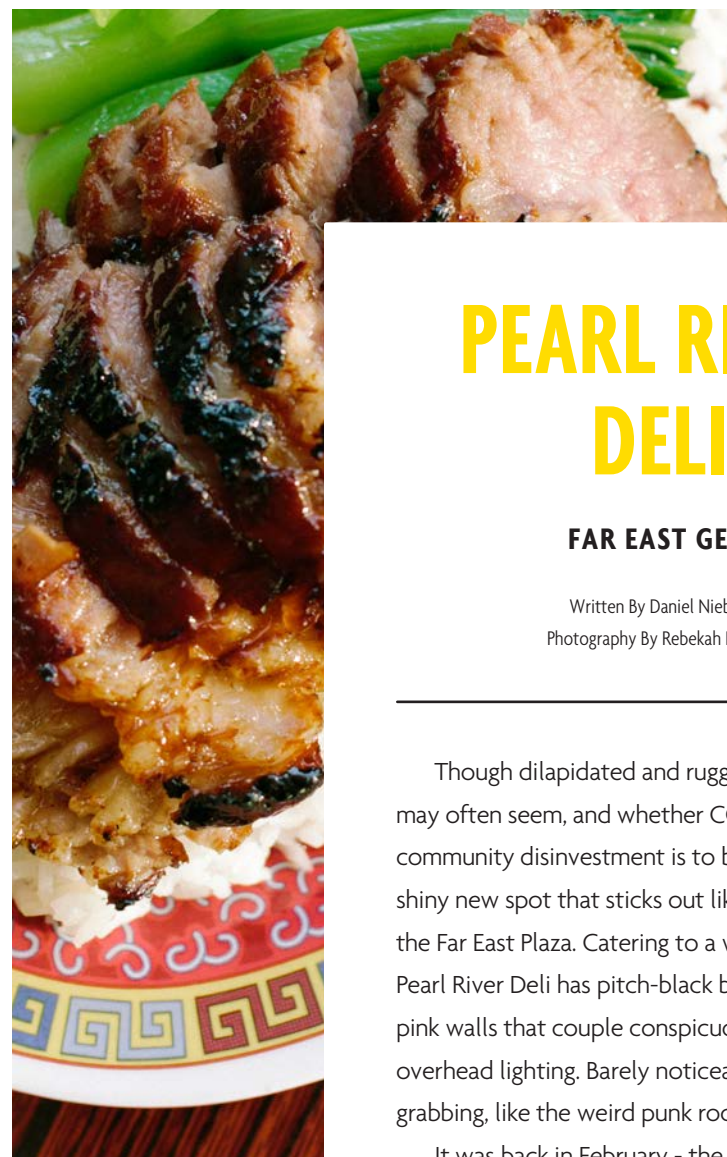
Having just celebrated their one year anniversary, and showing no signs of slowing down, Sweet Flower is more in tune with this community. Cannabis sales have increased immensely since the COVID-19 pandemic reached Los Angeles. They have made their mark by stepping up their service and safety practices. "[We] were the first dispensary to offer curbside pick-up, and we created an offering of need-based kits," said Kiana, "Angelenos are turning to our products now more than ever to navigate these times."

Besides providing what folks need to get through these hard times, Sweet Flower knows the power of local partnerships. Joining local food icon 9th Street Ramen, they've created a unique special for frontline workers. The "Take-Home Ramen + Gyoza Kit" is free to anyone who works at a grocery store, hotel, or delivers food for a living. Each recipient gets a discount on a cannabis product of their choice.

Clearly, they're looking out for others in this troubling time for the hospitality industry. But as cannabis culture continues to be destigmatized, Sweet Flower knows Downtowners embrace it as a remedy for all the uncertainty we deal with in today's world. As our city continues to battle the virus, Sweet Flower wants our community to know they can count on them to guide us on the path to wellness.

FIND IT HERE
614 Mateo St
sweetflower.com





PEARL RIVER DELI

FAR EAST GEM

Written By Daniel Nieblas
Photography By Rebekah Lemire

Though dilapidated and rugged Chinatown may often seem, and whether COVID-19 or community disinvestment is to blame, there's a shiny new spot that sticks out like a slick loner in the Far East Plaza. Catering to a with it crowd, the Pearl River Deli has pitch-black branding and soft pink walls that couple conspicuously with loud overhead lighting. Barely noticeable but attention-grabbing, like the weird punk rock kid at school.

It was back in February - the good old days when COVID-19 was just another panic attack gone viral - that Johnny Lee, Owner and Chef of Pearl River Deli, had taken over the space as a convenient opportunity to do more business during the Chinese New Year. "The landlord offered us the Baohaus space as a temporary setup. We stayed in the space ever since...our entire business existence has been during the pandemic."

Like most food spots that go viral these days, it was through good reviews on Yelp and mouth watering pics via Instagram that garnered Lee his traction. A local blogger dubbed him the "Prince of Poultry," due to his cooking at least 1000 chickens a month.

Part of the reason for this success is undoubtedly his superb staff, who he calls, "irreplaceable." Some began working with Lee



when it was all just a pop-up, but others have joined to help feed a growing base of customers yearning for his edgy twist on cantonese-chinese cuisines. "I like to think we share a common desire to create a business that strives to break free of the outdated mold of the pre-pandemic restaurant world."

But when this era of ever-changing capacity limits and nightly curfews (a stricter one has just been enforced) finally comes to an end, and restaurants can return to that lucrative thing called stability, what does Lee see for a dream that has only known this era? "My hope is that after the pandemic ends," he said, "we can focus on starting a more refined dining experience."

Lee's ambitions are a humbling perspective, as he wishes to grow sustainably within Chinatown. "It will help with the long term survival of the business," Lee said. He isn't too worried about the future of Pearl River, and that in itself is promising vigilance for a community so devastated by the lockdowns.

The deli has plans to keep its special Hainan Chicken weekends on a rotating basis, and prepare new Asian-inspired cuisines on non-Hainan weekends. Eventually, there will be more intricate dining experiences, like gourmet dishes serving claypot rice.

To get a load of this fast-paced dining experience, visit Chef Johnny Lee at the Pearl River Deli from Tuesdays through Sundays, 10AM to 8PM. Insider's tip: try visiting on two particular days - Tuesdays & Wednesdays. Apparently, Lee and his diligent staff deal with a more manageable crowd those days.

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