

FALL • WINTER 2024

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# FALL • WINTER 2024

## 56. MEET ME AT THE PALACE

Here's an exclusive look at how Texans show their largess abroad. We'll get a behind-the-scenes look at how the American Friends of Versailles organization and its leaders created a picture-perfect gala that will always be remembered. We'll take you from a sea of gold and gilt to the pyrotechnics that lit up the sky for its celebration.

By *Lance Avery Morgan* Photography courtesy of American Friends of the Louvre



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AUCTIONS



**High Jewelry** Aurea Chandra necklace in pink gold with pavé-set diamonds (D-F IF-VVS 166.30CW). Price Upon Request. At Bulgari.com, or 1.800.BULGARI for more details.

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**18. CONTRIBUTE**

It takes a village to create this magazine and our digital media platform, SocietyTexas.com. Here's a look at some of the many talented dynamos who make it happen during these cool days ahead for fall.

**20. EDITOR'S LETTER**

Editor-in-Chief and Creative Director Lance Avery Morgan shares his always optimistically bright disposition for the cooler months ahead.

**22. SPARKLE**

We love a dynamic woman's past, especially one that is ornamental and exudes a vintage or vintage-inspired vibe. So, we have assembled the finest jewels with some of our favorite jewelry collaborators to present a few recommendations.

**24. GLOW**

Our beauty insider, Leanne Raesener, recommends the feel-better and look-better beauty products to embrace the season's new trends and incorporate them into your upcoming social festivities.



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Purse by Khaite

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Our luxe curator, Rank & Style CEO Jamie Chandlee, and her team recommend her favorite soirée accessories to make life a little more fashionable...expect it to be full of glamour.

**28. BROWSE**

The most stylishly chic books you'll want to read? Here they are, just in time to enhance your life with fall's vibrant reading opportunities.

**30. CREATE**

Ever wanted to step back in time to a more glamorous era...like the Golden Age of Hollywood in the 1930s? Join us as our Lance Avery Morgan shares an excerpt from his upcoming novel, *The Sensational Saga & Secrets Of Sarita Silva*.

**32. PURSUE**

There is always something new to discover in Texas...and beyond. Lance Avery Morgan and our editorial team share the best things, places, and people to know and experience right now

**46. CULTURE**

We've teamed with some of the state's top cultural institutions to get a glimpse behind the scenes at what makes them so beloved and interesting.

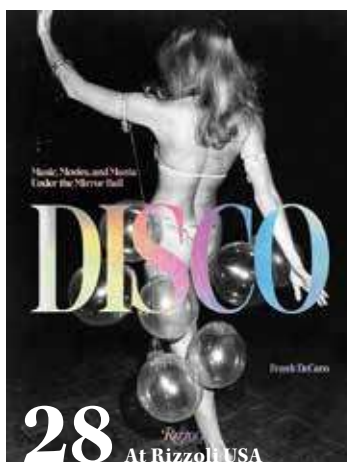
**140. ATTEND**

Here is a selection of philanthropic events Senior Social Editor Rob Giardinelli recommends.



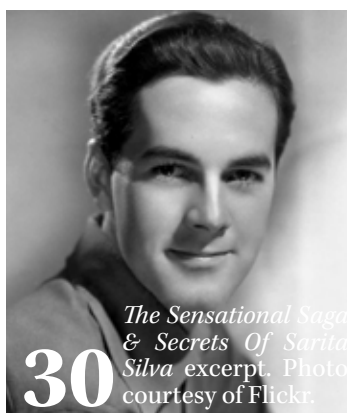
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L'Oréal Beautifood Mascara



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*The Sensational Saga & Secrets Of Sarita Silva* excerpt. Photo courtesy of Flickr.



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Building An Empire by Sarah Palmer. 48" x 36". Collage and oil



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# Meet Me At The PALACE

Gala De Versailles Series Of Events Offers Grand Opulence...And Plenty of Texans

By Lance Avery Morgan

Illustrations by Missy Harris  
Photography courtesy of American Friends of Versailles



Alicia Bryan



H.E. Sheikha Paula Al Sabah and Juan Pablo Molyneux



Marie de Noailles, Hon. Denise Bauer and Steven Bauer



Philippe and Sandrine de Montmort & Marie de Noailles and Nicolas Lhermitte



Robert and Jennifer Shemwell



WHEN AN ELABORATELY EMBOSSED INVITATION arrives to celebrate and support an international landmark for a weekend of sublime parties at a palace outside of Paris, one takes notice. After all, the French flag is one of six that has flown over Texas... and for a special weekend, it was Texans flying high at Versailles.

Benefiting the Château de Versailles restoration projects, the American Friends of Versailles organization is the brainchild of Chicago resident Catharine Cline Hamilton, originally from Amarillo. It is now helmed by its new president, San Antonian Alicia Bryan.

“The American Friends of Versailles has a rich history of fortifying the ties between the United States and France,” shares Alicia Bryan. “Its unwavering commitment to funding restoration projects at the Palace of Versailles and its magnificent gardens is a testament to its significant impact. I aim to infuse our benefit gatherings, from engaging dinners to extended moments of historical and inspirational

reflection, with a renewed sense of purpose and enjoyment.”

The extraordinary summer gala and events benefit the restoration of the Charles LeBrun ceiling of the Salon de Diane, within the Kings’ apartments. Ordered by Louis XIV, this room is now on the main visitors’ tour and requires cleaning and structural repair at the exquisite French landmark. From the very beginning, the Société des Amis de Versailles committed to join efforts alongside the American Friends to complete the financing of the restoration of the palace’s marbled walls and wood floor, among other projects at the palace. As the party-with-a-purpose weekend began, on Saturday evening, the black tie-attired guests descended upon the historic Galerie des Glaces (Hall of Mirrors) to the sound of a harpist and soprano performing baroque refrains. Guests felt as if they had stepped into a world of bygone elegance because this event was more than a gathering. It was a celebration of beauty and cultural unity in which bonds transcend borders.

Cont’d...



Steve and Isha Santamaria



John Guillory



Gregoire Buais and Elizabeth Petersen



Christophe Leribault



Becca Cason Thrash



John Bryan, Alicia Bryan, JP & Mary Jon Bryan and Andrea Bryan



Elizabeth Segerstrom & Bruce and Julianne Bartlett



Maha Khan



Donae Cangelosi Chramosta

Before dinner in the enchanting Orangerie, the evening's supporters had the opportunity to indulge in tequila and margarita bars, adding a delightful French-American flair to the culinary experience. In 1948, it turns out, American socialite Margaret "Margarita" Sames, famous for her extravagant parties, needed a unique cocktail for one of her legendary soirées. Drawing on her love for orange Cointreau liquor from France and tequila, she perfected her signature recipe, featuring lime juice and a rim of salt. Her creation, dubbed "The Margarita" by her husband, became an instant hit, spreading by word of mouth among her influential friends. With a delightful touch of orange, guests savored each sip.

All the while, gold-clad strolling violinists mingled with the crowd, and after passing through the apartments of Marie Antoinette, the attendees proceeded to dinner. Versailles President Christophe Leribault, French Ambassador Laurent Bili, American Ambassador Denise Bauer, and AFV President Alicia Bryan extended greetings once guests were seated. Then, Alicia's father, longtime Texas native JP Bryan and founder of the Bryan Museum in Galveston, recounted the legacy of Texan ties to France, starting with the 17<sup>th</sup>-century excursion of René-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, and noting the French Legation in Austin, a favorite Texan landmark.

The tables of ten were lavishly festooned with giant white, red, and floral décor, all designed by Houstonian-turned-Parisian event producer Lucas Somoza. Guests dined on the cuisine of Épis des Bois and Filet de Boeuf en Viennoise de Tomate Confité, all prepared by renowned Parisian caterer, Le Nôtre. Following the sumptuous dinner, how could fireworks not be in order? The sky was illuminated by a spectacular, grand display of feux d'artifice on the Orangerie's vast parterre, in the manner of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to baroque music with fountains flowing. Afterward, dessert was served, and guests danced to the band for the post-dinner entertainment.

Other weekend events included a private dinner in the royal mini château, Bagatelle, within the Bois de Boulogne, which is currently undergoing restoration and will be available for private events. Alicia Bryan was dressed in a Stephane Rolland haute couture gown for the Bagatelle dinner, and then Oscar de la Renta for the ball. Guests entered through the château's portal, bearing the inscription *Parva Sed Aptata* (Small But Suitable). Exquisite floral arrangements adorned the charming rooms as guests sipped champagne and dined in the elegantly paneled salon. Welcome greetings were given by Alicia Bryan and from Princesse Béatrice de Bourbon des Deux-Siciles, AFV French Board member Marie de Noailles, and Jérôme Plouseau, head

of the French Friends of Versailles. Guests reveled in French baritone David Serero, who performed several songs before a delectable pavlova dessert was served.

Sunday evening offered guests the opportunity to visit the Hôtel de Soubise et Hôtel de Rohan with AFOV Co-Founder the Vicomte de Rohan. The vast 18<sup>th</sup>-century estate, whose origins date to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, was built by his ancestors, one of the most esteemed families in European history. Confiscated during the French Revolution, it now houses the National Archives, displaying some of the most important documents in French history, including the last letter of Marie Antoinette, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, and Napoleon's will. French jazz singers entertained during a private cocktail reception, where some of the couples even took a spin around the floor.

Also, as part of the weekend festivities, AFV members visited the magnificent Bosquet des Trois Fontaines, AFV's first preservation project, three terraces of glorious cascades embellish this delightful garden-within-a-garden, which Louis XIV helped design. Its elaborate tiers of waterworks, rocaille decorations, and central fleur-de-lis

fountain displays were scrupulously recreated according to the original 17<sup>th</sup>-century blueprints and plans. After enjoying champagne in the bosquet, guests passed through the Petit Trianon and along its allée to a garden of potted flowers. Picnic basket lunches were served under trees near the palace's Pavillon Frais, another AFV restoration project.

On Monday, a farewell cocktail reception was hosted in the elegant Marais mansion of renowned architect Juan Pablo Molyneux and his beautiful wife, Pilar, to wrap up the regal festivities. Molyneux described the creation of the elaborate blue and white tiled entry hall, depicting the Château de Saint-Cloud and other historic French palaces, and led guests through antique-filled rooms they have sumptuously and sensitively restored. For all the activities, convenient transportation was offered from the Paris' Hôtel Ritz, Place Vendome to Versailles and back. Benefiting the American Friends of Versailles, the organization's leaders and board members helped make this year's events a rousing grand success and it was inspiring for guests to see the intense dedication it takes to bring this mission to life. Donations of any size are welcome and plans are already being made for the June 2026 gala. For more information, visit [AmericanFriendsOfVersailles.org](http://AmericanFriendsOfVersailles.org). ©



Our CEO, Jennifer Browning Shemwell and her husband Bob Shemwell at the Gala des Fleurs d'Oranger at the Palace of Versailles hosted by The American Friends of Versailles



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