



Life Can Be Beautiful

By Robin Jovanovich



A symbol of timeless beauty, Audrey Hepburn presides over the front desk



When longtime residents learned earlier this year that Milano's Hairdressers was closing its doors, it was more than just bad retail news; the shop was an institution, a downtown destination for generations of families. But earlier this month, John Christopher Salon opened in its place at 33 Purchase Street, and the family ties continue.

The owners are Joe Ballantoni, who grew up in Rye and whose mother, Sylvana, was an integral member of the Milano's crew, and Carlos Avalos, a master hairstylist and colorist. Both have a passion for design — Joe is a partner in a local construction company, GFX Site Development; Carlos is all about the art of beauty.

The pair, who have been together for a decade and were married in 2013, jumped at the chance to transform the old-fashioned beauty shop into a New York City loft-like space. They put a comfortable Mitchell Gold couch under the picture window. The glass orbs suspended from the ceiling are from California, the red chairs at the Color Bar are from Italy. The modern light fixture in the powder room resembles a New Wave take on those hairdryers women used to sit under for hours. Customers, of which they already have many, love the reclining shampoo chairs. They also appreciate the conveniently located cappuccino machine.

The look is sophisticated — starting with the large photo of a young and lovely Audrey Hepburn when you first walk in. The staff wears black. JWH Design in Rye made all the cabinets. A shimmering screen made of ball chains conceals the shampoo and color work areas.

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"This was a labor of love," said Joe. "I like wood and classic design; Carlos likes shine and metal. Luckily, we're both fans of adding texture."

Is there a fall look on the style menu? "The look is a little softer," said Carlos, "but every cut and color is custom-tailored to the individual." He allowed that umber is cropping up as a trendy shade.

Carlos, who is originally from Guadalajara in western Mexico, spent the last 14 years working at a salon in Rye Brook. "I was eager to have my own salon, and when this space came up Joe and I jumped at the chance," he said.

Opening the shop in three short months was nothing short of a miracle. Coming up with the name was easy. Joe's middle name is Christopher; Carlos' first name is Juan (John) Carlos.

In keeping with the times, the salon is open late on Thursdays. On Mondays, enjoy a Keratin treatment for 20 percent off. Valet parking will be available.

"We like to say we've restored a Rye classic," said Joe warmly. "For me, this was coming home."

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