


A young girl with blonde hair, wearing a vibrant red dress, is captured in a dynamic pose as if running or dancing. She is surrounded by a long, flowing red fabric that stretches across the frame, creating a sense of movement and elegance. The background is a solid black, which makes the red elements stand out. A large, semi-transparent watermark of the letters 'PB' is visible in the background, with the 'P' on the left and the 'B' on the right, partially overlapping the girl and the fabric.

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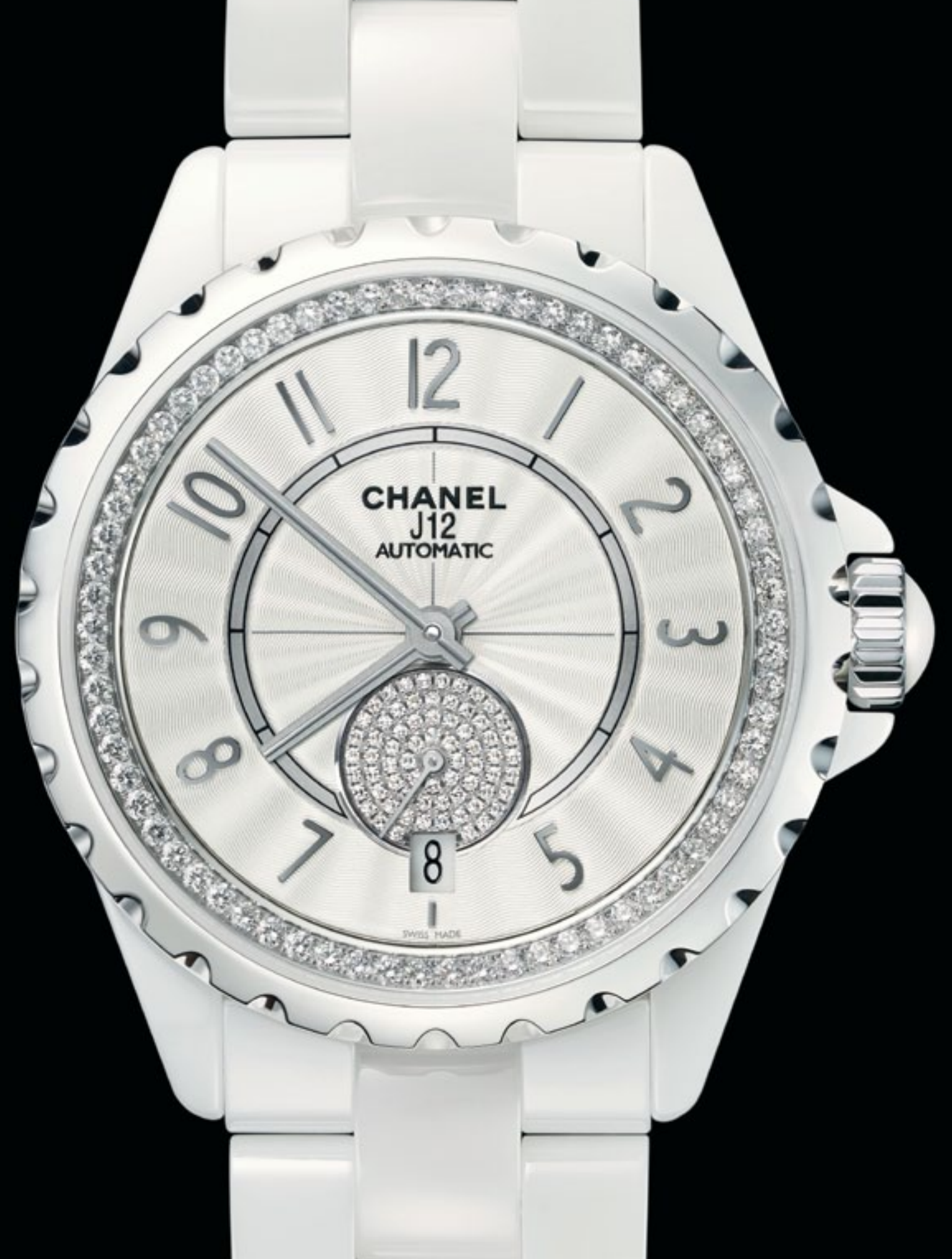
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SAINT BARTH MUST HAVE

In perfect Chanel style, Saint Barth surfers can now ride the waves from Lorient to Toiny with this monochrome carbon fiber, polyurethane, and fiberglass board that comes in its own traveling case adorned with the signature CC logo. Coco would have loved the sleek styling of her very own surfboard as seen in a fashion spread with Beyoncé. Hang ten!





DJORDIE VARDA

STORY MATHIAS DURAND-REYNALDO

*A true magician when it comes to blossoms,
a genius with blooms, Varda spreads joy with
his floral decor around the world.
An international imp, he never ceases
to surprise!*



He is one of the greatest floral designers in the world. But as he hates to be reminded of it, let's not dwell on that aspect of things and concentrate instead on the story of his life, that is unusual to say the least, and on his decidedly oddball personality. Djordje Varda is without doubt "an extreme florist," the most eccentric that you are ever likely to meet. And that's an understatement! In the microcosm of the world of flowers, he certainly does not go unnoticed. For a very good reason, Djordje couldn't care less about accepted rules of style and has a disconcerting habit of breaking all established conventions. But let's start at the beginning...

Djordje Varda was born in Belgrade. He cherishes fond memories of the Yugoslavia of the early seventies where he spent an idyllic childhood in a well-to-do urban setting. The first big change happened early: his father, a press correspondent, was relocated to France. So at the age of seven, Djordje found himself living in an upscale neighborhood of Paris and leading a life that was not really that different from before. Except for one significant detail: he was now living astride two cultures. At the same time, a taste for travel and for a cosmopolitan way of life was beginning to stir in him. Several years passed, punctuated by a long sojourn back in his old country. But the Eden of his childhood was quickly becoming a circle of hell. Indeed, Yugoslavia was being torn apart by a complex civil war. Raised in an atmosphere of tolerance, Djordje Varda could not bring himself to go into battle to fight neighbors he had always looked on as brothers! He decided to settle permanently in France where his future seemed laid out before him: he would become a journalist like his Dad or else a lawyer.

Obstinate and very persistent, he succeeded brilliantly at law while simultaneously studying to obtain a diploma in "Management of Cultural Institutions" from the Ecole du Louvre. Always restless, he started working and accumulated a wealth of eclectic experience in areas such as luxury goods, fashion and beauty. His lifestyle was more than comfortable and yet he realized that... he was on the wrong track. Highly active, Djordje Varda was not satisfied with such a superficial existence and often found himself bored to death! In those moments of boredom, he coped by opening his window and taking care of the little planter on his balcony. Who would have guessed it? He found solace in flowers, they gave him peace and more than that, he found them fascinating! For him it was a revelation. From then on, the way was clear: Djordje had an idea in the back of his mind...

Two months later he gave up everything, threw his former to the wind and opened a little flower store in the rue Montorgueil! The move was all the more crazy because, apart from repotting plants in his bathtub and his horticultural experiments on his Parisian balcony, he knew nothing at



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all about flowers. In fact, the professionals had seen him coming from afar. When he was placing orders, as he didn't know the names of the flowers he wanted, he would point to them and say; "I'd like these, these and those. And give me a few of those too!" The scene becomes even more surreal and comical, when we know that a year later he would become the official floral designer of one of the most famous luxury hotels in Paris! But Djordje doesn't worry about that kind of thing. Thirsty for knowledge and armed with common sense, he bought himself a botanical encyclopedia and started to study it very seriously in his spare time to save himself from embarrassment! Because in the early days, Djordje would blatantly and confidently invent names for certain flowers when his clients asked him what they were!

"By its very essence, a flower is simply gorgeous. I just have to present it the right way in order to bring out its natural beauty"

Completely self-taught on the subject of flowers, he was well aware of one important factor: the products must be beautiful and of the highest quality. He likes to say that his only talent is knowing how to choose them well: "By its very essence, a flower is simply gorgeous. I deserve no credit. I just have to present it the right way in order to bring out its natural beauty. The rest is just blah-blah!" Don't think that he's being irreverent. Djordje has a lot of respect for the difficulties of being a florist. Having no official qualifications for the job, he cannot claim that title, but he belongs to a new generation that has been able to «reinvent» the profession. He was, for example, one of the first to post on line, simply for aesthetic reasons, photos of his most sumptuous creations. In addition, he invented the concept of "happy flowers" based on the idea of "happy hours," because he couldn't bear the thought of his flowers going to waste and preferred to give them away rather than see them thrown in the trash after just a few hours. He also changed the way that flowers were presented at all kinds of events and ceremonies by creating revolutionary custom vases that dramatically increase the options for hanging and showing flowers. Djordje has eliminated the traditional notion of a "bouquet" in favor of large-scale vertical compositions. He has perfected small cooling containers and mini irrigation systems that let him expand his craziest and most ambitious ideas almost endlessly. This has allowed him to create wedding settings so complex

that it has taken no fewer than 600 people to help him install the whole decor!

"I am a lover of flowers who channels that love through all my creations"

That's all there is to it. With that statement Djordje Varda has said it all and his work speaks for itself. On the other hand, his highly unorthodox working methods are truly amusing. Even if he admits quite freely that he has had a lot of luck, (although no one is awarded the title of "Best Floral Designer in Europe" twice in a row just by chance), his audacity is no doubt a contributing factor. And so, when bidding was opened to provide the flowers year-round for the prestigious Ritz Hotel in Paris, he entered the fray as an outsider competing against florists who were far more experienced and renowned than he was. But week after week, he demonstrated such an abundance of imagination, ingenuity and creativity that he came out on top. Journalists are dumbfounded by his output and the number of articles written about him has ensured his recent fame. However, the result was

far from guaranteed because once again Djordje flouted all convention. He refused, for example, to comply with the usual sartorial requirements when one is seeking to work in a grand hotel. Every morning, he could be seen arriving in the hotel lobby with a grin on his face wearing jeans and running shoes, with unkempt hair and a three-month beard! The Paris Ritz turned out to be a wonderful springboard for him as well as an extraordinary testing lab. It gave him a place to learn and grow as well as to try out different things. This experience, lasting several years, marked a turning point in his career because it shot him into the spotlight. In spite of the recognition he received from both professionals and the general public, he didn't lose his head or abandon his early principles. For example, Djordje refuses to accept certain highly lucrative offers. He is probably the only one of his profession to exclude all funeral work. "Funerals are disastrous for me. I show up with my flowers and I immediately burst into tears. I can't handle anything to do with grief. I like it when people are happy"...

One day, vacationing with his family in Saint Barthélemy, he fell in love with the island. On a whim, as always, Djordje decided to take his entire team along with him and settle there! Once again, it was a choice that came with considerable fall-out. It was not exactly easy to work under a burning sun in relentless heat on a tropical island far from it all in the Atlantic Ocean.



Djordje Varda has gathered around himself on the island a small but completely devoted team of professionals who are used to his “demands that are as extravagant as they are ambitious” and who will follow him blindly into every single one of his adventures with flowers.

He was now 10 000 kilometers away from his usual suppliers who were sending him goods that were perilously perishable! But that didn't seem to deter him in the least. Thanks to his experience as a sales director for a major corporation he was able to overcome the problems of transportation and logistics. “It's just a question of organization. My flowers are shipped in refrigerated containers, it's like shipping caviar”... And so he made St Barth his base camp, the center of operations from which he designs and creates his events, and they are major! The United States, Russia, India, Monaco, Puerto-Rico, requests come in from all over the world for a wide variety of events: weddings, ceremonies of all kinds, private parties, charity evenings.

And on his little pebble in the ocean, as he likes to remind us, he is the happiest of men, because he finally has time to spend with his family.

In addition, Djordje Varda has gathered around himself on the island a small but completely devoted team of professionals who are used to his “demands that are as extravagant as they are ambitious” and who will follow him blindly into every single one of his adventures with flowers. Because Djordje has just one ambition: “to create a large-scale floral mobile work space!”

Even if it means offering his services to clients just as crazy as himself...



AURA & JOHAN

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

STORY
MATHIAS DURAND-REYNALDO

PHOTOGRAPHY
BRUNO DUBREUIL

EVENT & FLORAL DESIGN
VARDA DESIGNS

WEDDING PLANNER
EPIC PRESENTATIONS



This is the story of a pretty young lady from Spain by the name of Laura, who kept coming back to play in the sand on the same shore. Without knowing why, as if something mysterious kept calling her back to this small, enchanted island. Far from her country, her roots, and her family, this Iberian beauty was waiting, trying to figure out what pushed her toward a “voluntary exile.” Yet whatever should happen... would happen. She didn’t have to wait too long for the answer, as one day, she was caught by cupid’s arrow... At the same time, Johnny, a native of this same small island, was spending most of his time doing excavation on building sites. This hard-working young man was covered with dust from breaking rocks. Or moving mountains, both literally and figuratively. Yet he really wanted to be closer to the water, an element that was of vital importance to him. So it only seemed natural for him to take to the sea and become his own boss... a fisherman! The simplest love stories are often the most beautiful, as it seems that Laura and Johnny were destined to meet!

Laura had been coming to Saint Barth on vacation for a few years. Attracted by the island, she did not listen to the voice of reason but to her heart. Born into a comfortable family in San Sebastian, she could have easily continued to work in the family transport company. Luckily, she didn’t! As for Johnny, he does not regret his change of profession. As difficult and dangerous it is to work at sea, he is fundamentally happy. He fishes in the traditional way, following age-old island traditions. Over-fishing the waters is certainly not for him. The “nourishing sea” is something fragile that must be respected. A fisherman by vocation, like many islanders, Johnny is deeply attached to the maritime milieu. This is most likely the key to loving one’s job: the perfect union between a profession and a passion... And speaking of a perfect union... just one year after they met, it was evident that Laura and Johnny were ready to get married.

They didn’t have any concrete visions for their ceremony, but they knew that wanted “glamour and magic.” For that, they put themselves into the competent hands of a wedding planner and floral designer well known on the island. Melanie Smith and Djordje Varda found themselves with the delicate task of organizing and conceptualizing this wedding, and to make it the most beautiful day of the young couple’s life. The Taiwana hotel served as the backdrop for a reception dinner following their civil ceremony, with Smith coordinating the wedding with the precision of an orchestral conductor while the trained hands of the “floral prestidigitator” did the rest. All of the elements came together for a spectacular wedding... and indeed it was!

Filled with the same emotion and intensity with which

Laura and Johnny fell in love at first sight, all the guests at the wedding took home wonderful souvenirs of this extraordinary celebration. The first impression was like a return to childhood, accompanied by a remarkable voyage into a décor right out of a fairy tale. The close friends and family of the bride came directly from the Spanish Basque region. Parents, grandparents, cousins, and friends – more than 30 people whose first trip to the Caribbean was absolutely unforgettable. The charm of the hotel magnified by the sparkling table settings and stunning floral arrangements and decor will remain engraved forever in their memories.

And even as a native who knows every bit of the island like the back of his hand, the beauty of the staging and the swirling symphony of flowers took Johnny by surprise. The same can be said for the lovely church ceremony a few days later in Lorient, equally adorned with floral arrangements and a bed of petals.

In the course of just one day, two regional entities, both firmly anchored in their ancestral culture and traditions: the spirits of Saint Barth and the Basque country united under the same roof.

But that night, a radical change! The grand finale was at the water's edge with a contemporary flair – a festive, Latino ambiance at Nikki Beach, with dancing until the wee hours of the morning.

Having spent these few days in such an intensive celebration, their vision of all these emblematic places in Saint Barthélemy will never be the same for these newlyweds. Yet Laura and Johnny found it hard to believe that all this was organized “just for them,” and they freely admit that they feel every bit at home here. But it's even more than that. For Laura, showing a bit of impishness during this interview, admitted: “Ever since I met Johnny, everything became clearer. No matter what ... this is my home!”

Ah love! When it conquers all.



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THE BOAT

ROMANCE AT SEA

STORY
MATHIAS DURAND-REYNALDO

PHOTOGRAPHY
JOHN ALEXANDER

EVENT & FLORAL DESIGN
VARDA DESIGNS

WEDDING PLANNER
DK EVENTS

The first contact was established in the conventional way, by e-mail. However, the request it contained was far from conventional! When Karine Bensa, wedding planner and manager of the DK Event Agency reviewed the photos in her inbox, she immediately knew that she would have to call on one of her most high-powered partners! None other than Djordje Varda...

Organizing a wedding on the high seas is in itself an unusual request, but when it involves decorating the entire surface of a 158-foot super-yacht, it becomes quite another matter. Yet that was indeed the challenge. The client specifically told Karine: "Surprise me!" Her instructions were very clear, she wanted something extraordinary, over the top, yet at the same time, paradoxically, the whole atmosphere had to be very intimate. Indeed, in spite of the outrageous scale, it was to be a family wedding with very few guests. No more than fifteen people would be honored with an invitation!

The space needed to be totally emptied of all of that to make way for a very bold concept: a floating Garden of Eden.

To help them in their task, Karine, Djordje and their respective teams could count on the assistance of the entire crew and that would soon prove not to be too much. First problem: the decks had to be cleared! It's hard to imagine how much stuff can usually be found on the deck of such a big yacht. Furniture, loungers, all kinds of accessories and fittings, and even small boats!

For meanwhile a new element had been added to the plan. When the client learned that the floral design had been entrusted to Djordje Varda, she gave him carte blanche. "What a surprise to find you here! I have often stayed at the Ritz in Paris and so I know your work well. Do just as you wish, my boat is in your hands." Knowing the kind of man he is, that was hardly the thing to say, because he immediately took her at her word! In fact, after giving it some thought, he decided that the full 300 square meters of the upper deck should be covered in grass! Taking it from there, he considered it vital to wrap the entire length of the boat's



© JOHN ALEXANDER



railing with white flowers to create a border between the blue of the sky and the blue of the sea!

What looks simple on paper often proves much less simple to install on site, especially on a gleaming yacht where not a single nail or screw can be used and where the slightest scratch can lead to instant nightmares! It would take the small team 37 hours, working around the clock, to put everything in place. The surface of the deck is so extensive that the entire first day and night would be devoted to setting up essential supports and elements of decor with the help of yards of double faced tape and protective shims. As for the flowers, they could only be positioned at the very last minute. For alas, their beauty is fleeting! The crew bent over backwards to find practical solutions to all the problems posed. Pointing out, for example, that the fixed supports for the umbrellas removed the previous day were in just the right places to hold the columns of the main structure where the ceremony would take place. Every effort was made to allow the floral team to work wonders with their orchids, garden roses, peonies and hydrangeas. And, as Karine knows full well that Americans love a touch of “French elegance,” she had created a delicately intimate setting, priding herself on paying special attention to the smallest details. Renowned for the subtlety and refinement of her designs, she makes clever use of lace and parasols that play with light and shadow. As the wedding was to take place in two stages, she also dressed the scene for a sumptuous lunch that was served in a waterfront location, featuring a fabulous hanging ceiling of plants. There too, flowers bloomed everywhere, in a profusion of roses and lisianthus flowers, as well as vanda, phalaenopsis and amaranthus orchids...

The ceremony exceeded all expectations, for Karine and Djordje ended up going far beyond the client’s initial requirements. In addition, the wedding proved to be a highly symbolic event. Purely by chance, the chosen date of March 8, fell on International Women’s Day, and it brought together two people from diametrically opposed regions. The husband hailed from Texas and his young wife... from Moscow. A beautiful message of peace and tolerance in what often seems a crazy world. And then, respecting a wonderful seafaring tradition that still prevails to comfort us about the permanence of certain values, particularly those of fellowship and sharing, as custom dictates at sea, it was the ship’s captain who joined the couple in marriage! Under a double arch, facing family and friends who were visibly moved and delighted, the happy lovers exchanged their vows, which were followed by laughter, hugs and tears of joy. The sound of glasses clinking in a heartfelt toast to love could be heard as guests began to dance on

the soft green lawn, silhouetted against the horizon of velvet sky and deep blue sea...

Respecting a wonderful seafaring tradition that still prevails to comfort us about the permanence of certain values, as custom dictates at sea, it was the ship’s captain who joined the couple in marriage.



Karine Bensa has worked as a wedding and event planner in Saint Barthélemy for the past 15 years. Demanding of herself, as well as a perfectionist, she is known for the high quality of her efforts. She has orchestrated the fabulous New Year’s Eve’s parties at the Eden Rock hotel for the past eight years, and has planned some of the island’s most important marriages with upmost elegance and refinement. Every party and every ceremony is a beautiful adventure for her, and she garners great pleasure organizing these events with the same great background... the island of Saint Barthelemy!





CASEY & GABBY

STORY
MATHIAS DURAND-REYNALDO

PHOTOGRAPHY
BRUNO DUBREUIL

EVENT & FLORAL DESIGN
VARDA DESIGNS



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Even the biggest stars experience it. Just minutes before they perform, they break out in a cold sweat as a good case of anxiety kicks in: stage fright! Future brides and grooms are not immune to this phenomenon yet while most stars suffer only for seconds, unfortunately for some

couples it can last for weeks or even months!

Generally when glancing through wedding magazines you are meant to believe that everything was perfectly organized, well in advance. Down to tiniest detail to read these articles, you'd think there actually wasn't a care in the world. That may be the case for some, but not for Casey and Gabriela who didn't hesitate to choose Saint Barthélemy as the location for their wedding after being introduced to this little paradise by a close friend with links to the island.

The overwhelming pressure that comes with planning a destination wedding is challenging. The logistics of travel and lodging, the floral choices, music, lighting, and menu selections are equally important and there was much anxiety leading up to the celebration. All that changed during a pre-wedding visit to St Barth. Casey in particular felt a sense of relief the very moment the wheels of their plane hit the runway at the airport in Saint Jean.

“Every time I arrive here, I experience The St. Barth Effect. It’s magical.”

Next stop was at the Eden Rock, a legendary hotel perched atop an unusual geological curiosity; an enormous rock formation that looks as if it's anchored to the edge of a stunning bay. The Eden Rock was the first hotel to open on the island, an institution created in the 50's by eccentric adventurer Remy De Haenen, a pioneer of aviation in the Caribbean and friend to Howard Hughes, David Rockefeller, and Jacques Cousteau. During the meeting at Eden Rock they were introduced to Djordje Varda by a friend who would photograph their wedding. They secretly hoped he could work miracles and by the end of their first meeting they were sure he could! There was something special, a strong chemistry between them and after a few quick drawings on the back of a napkin the anxiety felt by the future bride and groom had completely disappeared. Later, as an aside, Casey told us: “Djordje saved our wedding. As soon as I met him I knew we could have a good night's sleep.”

A spectacular 36- foot catwalk spanning the fine sand led to a wedding canopy decorated with hundreds of flowers, and was constructed to take the bride to her groom with the translucent sea glistening in the background. Who could ask for anything more? On the night of the party, the last rays of the setting sun added a golden touch to the elegant bouquets in the center of the tables and the hanging flowers above the dance floor.

The combination of the beautiful backdrop and the lovely mix of crystal spheres, roses, and peonies was an unexpected aesthetic and time was suspended for a magical moment where everything seemed to float in a surreal atmosphere.

The music started up and the guest's danced barefoot in the sand. Unable to resist the temptation of the sea, most of the men ended up in the water for an unforgettable and fully dressed midnight swim.

The wedding was a total success! Forty guests from all horizons, a veritable melting pot of close friends and family, all connected but all very different. Guests traveled from New York, New Jersey, Boston, New England, and as far away as London and Costa Rica! "The businessman rubbed shoulders with the debutant, there were young children, adults, close friends, new friends, fashion professionals and executives, those from the Old World and the New, it was absolutely terrific. Only an open air venue like the Sand Bar at Eden Rock, on the edge of the water, could live up to the expectations of the bride and groom.

This is Saint Barth; simple, sexy, sublime, unexpected, exclusive, and perfectly romantic...



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