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The Hamptons Boutique Betting On Women Designers

By Kristen Shirley

Founded by Patricia Assui Reed, Matriark is a boutique in Sag Harbor, New York dedicated to supporting and showcasing women-owned businesses. Matriark curates a chic assortment of clothing, jewelry, books, and home goods all created by women entrepreneurs, and aims to find pieces that you can't find anywhere else. Reed speaks to us about supporting women-owned businesses, how she launched Matriark with just an Instagram page, and why she thinks the future is female.



Inside the charming boutique

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kristenshirley/2020/12/15/the-hamptons-boutique-betting-on-women-designers/?sh=1a0558d3acfb>

What inspired you to create a boutique with products that are exclusively from women-owned companies? Did you feel like there was a lack of support in the market?

I have been frustrated with the lack of representation in the fashion industry's highest ranks, and as a shopper, I was bored with the sameness in all luxury department stores and online businesses. Then, the women's movement started to pick up steam and I thought it was time to stop complaining and do something about it. I realized I could use my experience in luxury retail to help advance women's equality.

What do you envision Matriark looking like ten years down the line?

I have a strong vision for Matriark, but I am trying not to think too much about the future. I hope Matriark contributes to the advancement of women's equality in a very significant way, whether it is through donations to women's charities, supporting women and their businesses, and other ways that may present themselves in the years to come.



Patricia Assui Reed, the founder of Matriark

Matriark

How did you launch Matriark and what were some challenges that came with it?

I started very small with literally just an Instagram page. Then, as I planned it further, I knew it would be a retail business, but wasn't quite sure how it was going to be manifested. But when I saw the Hedges House in Sag Harbor, I knew we had to start with a brick-and-mortar store. Our main challenge is seasonality. We are in the Hamptons, a well-known summer destination, so even though Sag Harbor is a year-round town, we clearly have a lot more action here in the summer months.

What is the inspiration behind the name and does Matriark have a specific message that you want to share with the world?

I knew I wanted to create a women-centric company. One that looked at inter-generational women as inspiring leaders, community builders, role models, and creators. There is also a more obvious reference as an antidote to the patriarchy. So Matriark was a natural name to represent all that.



The boutique mixes fashion and homegoods

Matriark

What has been your pinch-me moment since starting Matriark?

I haven't had one yet. I am hands-on, crazy busy trying to make it through this pandemic, and I have not had a lot of time for reflection. But I do have mini-moments every day when people come to me and either compliment me for what I am building or thank me for what I am doing. That's very heartwarming, and it keeps me motivated to continue my work.

How has this year and the Covid-19 pandemic affected your business? What advice would you give to small business owners that are struggling during these trying times?

Matriark is in the Hamptons and we cannot complain. Our businesses reopened on June 10th just in time for our summer high season, so we have not been affected as others have. But it's been a roller coaster ride nonetheless. It's impossible to plan ahead, and everyone who moved to the Hamptons to escape the pandemic in NYC is constantly trying to decide if they are staying or going back, so that creates a lot of uncertainty for our business.

It's incredibly tough to compete with giant companies with e-commerce prowess and unlimited budgets for advertising, so I think small businesses like mine need to focus on their strengths instead of trying to operate like everyone else. My suggestion to small businesses is to really focus on establishing a very strong relationship with your customer – get to know them very well, ask a lot of questions while they are in your store, try to understand how they live, what worries them, and how you can help. And also reach out to your own community to seek support – there is strength in numbers and maybe you can band together to come up with creative ideas on how to pull resources and work through this period together. We are doing this now with the Sag Harbor Chamber of Commerce, where I am a board member.



The boutique is located in Sag Harbor in the Hamptons

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What would you describe Matriark’s ready-to-wear and accessories style as? What about your home section?

Our mix is very eclectic because I want women of all ages to come to my store and feel welcomed and included. I have three generations shopping at my store, and they often come together (grandmother, daughter, and granddaughter) and everyone can find something they love. Our mix has color and lightness — fashion people take themselves way too seriously, and I didn’t want that to be the vibe at Matriark. You can come in and find incredible fashion items like brands like Lapointe and Zero + Maria Cornejo, and gorgeous jewelry from Joly Bijou and Pamela Love, but you can also get a Disobedient Woman t-shirt from Radical Girl Gang or a delicious candle by Harlem Candle Company. You can listen to our curated music, chat with our staff, and have a laugh. We want people to come in and feel that they are part of something positive and fun and that our products help women feel their best. Our home section is very much an extension of this sentiment. We have great ceramic pieces by Michele Quan, Nimerology and Liadain Smith, hand-loomed throws by Voz, home adornments made in Brazil by Casa Violeta, books, and so much more – the key here is to be welcoming and unpretentious.



Curation is the most important part of the business, according to the founder

What do you look for when choosing brands to carry in Matriark?

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First and foremost – it needs to be beautiful. I know it’s a silly thing to say, but curation is the most important part of my business. There are way too many brands and things out there in the world. It’s actually pretty overwhelming. After that, I want to know what the designer’s philosophy is, what she is trying to do, and if she connects to our mission. I don’t want my business to be transactional: the brands that are here believe in Matriark’s mission and are not here just to sell their stuff.

Do you plan on opening an online retail platform?

The e-commerce site is up! We are now in the process of growing the platform and getting the word out so people can continue to support us [online](#).

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.