



NATURE GIRL
 KWONG IN
 A STELLA
 MCCARTNEY
 JUMPSUIT.
 PHOTOGRAPHED
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 DETAILS, SEE IN
 THIS ISSUE.

DESIGN As a first-grader, Lily Kwong would lead intrepid classmates to climb trees and build forts out of stray branches in the redwood forests that surrounded her Marin County school. “Growing up among the tallest trees in the world profoundly informed my connection to our planet,” she recalls. “I realize now that I began the work much earlier than I could recognize.”

That work only really took shape fairly recently when Kwong—a one-time model who also happens to be the cousin of fashion designer Joseph Altuzarra—decided to professionally devote herself to getting her hands dirty. In 2017, she established the floral and landscape design company Studio Lily Kwong, which debuted with a 5,000-square-foot garden installation in downtown Los Angeles. Shortly after, she went on to fill Grand Central Terminal’s Vanderbilt Hall with fifteen-foot mountains, and the Whitney Museum’s

foyer with a floral homage to Grant Wood and the topography of the American Midwest.

This spring, Kwong, who now lives in a plant-filled South Williamsburg apartment with her closest friends (a “very talented and special man” is also in the picture, but she won’t tell me more than that), will open a “biophilic experience” in San Francisco’s Ferry Building focusing on botanicals with therapeutic benefits. Over the summer, in New York, she’ll design a terrace garden that overlooks Bryant Park and will continue to festoon the green spaces at the Crosby Street Hotel. And then, in the fall, her “baby”—and largest permanent project yet—will open: a three-acre garden at the Japanese-style Shou Sugi Ban House in Water Mill, Long Island, which juxtaposes a cherry tree orchard against the stark Herzog & de Meuron–designed Parrish Art Museum next door.

Kwong hopes that visitors will feel connected enough with the projects to apply themselves to their own backyards and develop a more immediate sense of responsibility for the Earth. “I could go on and on about why designing green spaces is so important for human health, but I think just looking after even one plant has a big impact on how you see the world.”—NOOR BRARA

Welcome to the Jungle

Lily Kwong wants to help city dwellers reestablish their connection to the natural world.