

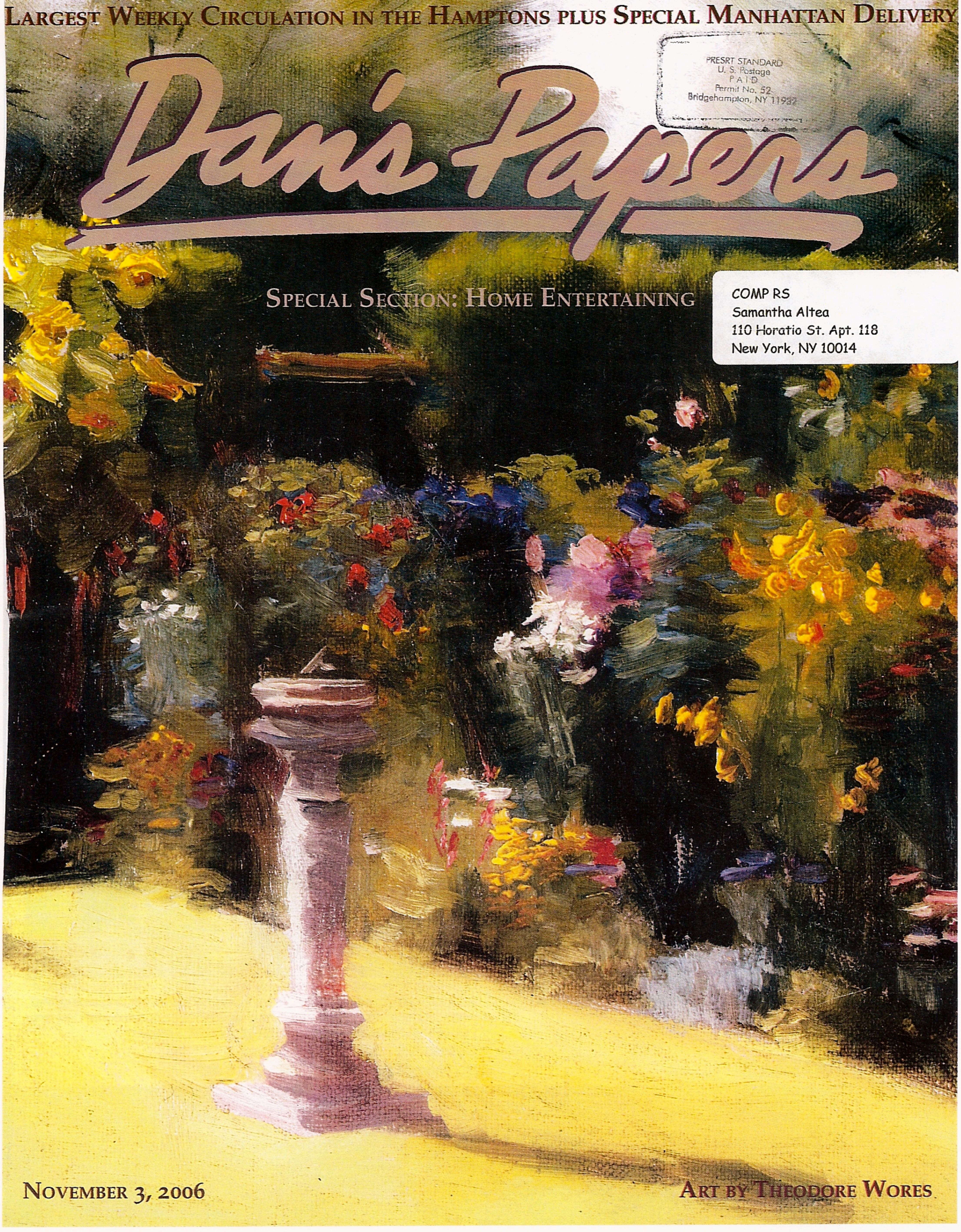
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ART BY THEODORE WORES

HEALTH, BEAUTY & FITNESS

Skin deep with Samantha Altea

Beauty Bon Voyage

When my sister-in-law came to visit from Malawi (no, she doesn't know Madonna, though they are both very involved with humanitarian issues over there), my perspective on beauty changed. We sat one evening, talking about her experiences living in an African country for six years, while at the same time casually flicking through magazines portraying feminine beauty as images of skinny, waif-like women, and Tricia commented that in Africa, as in many "third world" countries, a more robust woman indicates affluence, while a skinny gal evokes the notion of one who is starving, neglected and underprivileged. Therefore, big is beautiful. It's shocking when you compare this ideal to that of some of the celebrities we see these days, who look very much like those literally starving in third world countries. So what is beauty, really? As the saying goes, maybe it's in the eye of the beholder. Could it just be a picture of health, instead of many starving themselves to look a certain way? It got me thinking that perhaps other countries have something to teach us about how they stay good-looking and what they value as beauty. I decided to investigate.

Join me on my trip around the globe, where I found some world class beauty tips you may not have heard of.

A quick trip to **Brazil**, synonymous with waxing and bikinis might lead one to think that these are Brazil's only beauty claims to fame. But did you know that Brazilian women are very conscious of their skin, particularly of cellulite? Their native remedy...handfuls of wet sand that they rub onto their bodies, not only to erase cellulite, but to also invigorate the skin and stimulate blood circulation, giving these

renowned beauties glowing skin. So why not head to the beach, it's only a hop and a skip away? Another Brazilian tidbit is that before going tanning, they drink carrot or beet juice, which they believe darkens the skin.

A longer jaunt, to **Japan**, reveals the secret to Japanese women's flawless skin. They have used Camellia oil for centuries to eliminate wrinkles, dark spots, flaws, and even stretch marks.

Whilst in Asia, one might as well hop over to **China**, where white tea is one of their beauty secrets. An antioxidant found in white tea has even headed west to become a fashionable cosmetic ingredient. Tea is also mixed with Rosemary in China - one answer to the glossy hair many Chinese women tend to have. The tea acts as a detoxifying agent and rids lank locks of impurities, leaving luscious locks behind.

Another Asian stop en route is **India**, where women also have beautiful, shiny, thick hair. The secret... coconut oil, which also helps if your hair is thinning. Women in India massage their scalps with it once a week! Smells good, too.

New Zealand is quite the trip (with an Australian husband, trust me, I know.) But some would say it's well worth it as it is home to the answer to any pesky, post-puberty zit. It's not too far from Asia, so I took a quick detour. New Zealanders banish bad skin by using a native plant, the Manuka tree. The extract from this plant has gained its healing reputation because of its honey-like antiseptic oil, which is also rich in minerals.



Heading now to Europe, and close to home for me (France is only an hour's hop from the UK), so this was a familiar jaunt. French women have a very important beauty tip, and one that some of us have lost sight of: less is more. They don't believe in vast amounts of makeup, or, in this new "Extreme Makeover" world, tons of plastic surgery. What they can teach us is to be comfortable with our-

selves, and that growing old is not ugly, but rather just the opposite. An older woman, wrinkles an' all, is considered very beautiful. My hubby, who's obsessed with the now-63-year-old French actress Catherine Deneuve, would whole-heartedly agree.

While in Europe, **Scandinavia** is an easy destination; and the Scandinavians have a beauty-treatment that's not to be missed, and it's free, too. H2O. They drink at least 1.5 liters of spring water every day, plus splash their faces with the ice-cold stuff roughly 20 times a day, in order to revitalize the skin and reduce puffiness.

Lastly, I reminisced in **Greece**, where as a child I used to vacation regularly. One year as a ten-year-old, I got horribly sun burnt, and a wise old Grecian recommended we apply Greek yogurt to my painful skin. When the pain diminished, my mother was sold. Grecians use yogurt as a remedy for many skin problems, because of its lactose, minerals, vitamins and proteins.

Finally, arriving back in New York, I'm looking and feeling good. But I wish that I'd found a cure for jet lag whilst on my travels.

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