

an affair to remember

A GRAND OPENING

The Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams Greenwich showroom launch party featured the ultimate in flamboyant D.J.s and a second Lady with an artistic flair

TEXT BY LINDA C. DONNELLY AND DEVON FLEMING
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN TORREGINI



FAR LEFT: Dovecote customer favorites include a new line of hand-finished, Italian leather, canvas-backed pillows in snakeskin, crocodile, and metallics, from TSHome. LEFT: A stylish vignette showcases an inviting array of goods sourced from local producers and European markets.



Yes, that was Lady Bunny in the window, deejaying the oldies at the May 8 “Dress to be Seen” party celebrating the opening of Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams’s Greenwich Store. And, of course, that was the firm’s mascot, the bulldog NAME, lumbering around, and there were lots of kids trying out the beds and comfy seating—for this, the partners’ 21st home-furnishings store, is, like the other 20, decidedly family friendly. In the center of the buzz was the featured guest, Tipper Gore.

The former Second Lady’s fine-art photography hangs in all 21 of the MG + BW emporiums. Gold and Williams have an exclusive on her photographs, gathered in her extensive journeys over some 30 years: striking vistas (a somber Wyoming lake in winter, say, or a rainy street in Shanghai); vivid portraits (Capetown Boy, Elephant Trainer, Cairo Man); and scenes whose color leaps off the wall (Women of Bolivia, Ballerinas at the Maryinsky). Black-and-white, color, or sepia-toned, each photograph is set in a hardwood frame and signed by the photographer; a portion of the proceeds of the sale of her work goes to the Climate Project, a non-profit organization that fights to diminish global warming.

Before the other guests arrived, we ambled with Gold and Williams through the big (5,200 square foot) showroom,



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which is rather dazzlingly white. They set out to make the store “very white,” Gold said, “so you can really see the furniture.” You can also see it on the Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams website, but you can’t buy it online

“No,” Gold said firmly, “people really need to see the furniture before they buy it. A lot of people think, ‘I’ll just buy it, and if it doesn’t work, I’ll send it back.’ You can’t really do that with furniture. We want people to come to the stores

and look around. It’s an investment. We want to make it easy for people, but we also want to make it a serious purchase. And part of our whole business model is that when you come in the store, everything you see is in stock and can be delivered within a week or two. Like if you want this sofa but not this leather, we can order it for you and deliver it within six weeks. And with this level of design and quality, six weeks is very good. We work really hard to do that.”

We asked how they’d come to partner with Tipper Gore. “Well, Bob and I have known the Gores for a while,” Williams said. “We’d been helping them with their daughter Karena’s? Kristin’s? house in Nashville, and ON THE WALLS? we noticed a lot of photography—for the most part small pictures.” It turned out to be Tipper’s work. Gold and William contacted Tipper and let her know how much

they admired it. They asked permission to showcase it in their stores, blown up and beautifully framed. BW AND MG, DID SHE TAKE A LOT OF PERSUADING? HOW LONG AGO WAS THIS? DID SHE “DONATE” THEM? (she uses that term, but that sounds as if she gives them to you). Say something about how it came to be that a portion of the proceeds go to the Climate Fund.

We wondered how Mrs. Gore had become a photographer, and so, during our exclusive interview with her, we asked how long she’d been shooting photographs.

“It was when Al and I were first married,” she said. “After we had gotten married, I was working for a newspaper called The National Tennessean, which is now called The Tennessean; I was a photographer and he was a reporter. I got started as a darkroom assistant. [It was her husband who had given her her first camera and a set of photography lessons.] I worked there until I was eventually doing photo essays and doing the lighting myself. Al was elected to Congress in ’76, and I built a darkroom and also did some freelance. I just basically continued to do some photography [as I was] traveling.

“I met Bob and Mitchell probably in the late ’90s, and our meeting actually had nothing to do with either of these things; [do you know what she means by “either of these

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things? Photography and...what, politics??] It had to do with the human-rights campaign which I was really involved with at the time. I became speaker of the human rights campaign in North Carolina.[what does she mean? Ask assistant...does she mean spokeswoman of some human rights campaign in North Carolina in the nineties? What, mental health?]

In her role as Second Lady, Mrs. Gore traveled throughout the world, documenting what she saw. A lot of the pictures in the Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams stores reflect those years, she told us. “When Bob and Mitchell approached me and said they’d never seen my photographs before, I’d never thought of donating them or anything. They came to my library, and they chose the images initially. The beauty of it was I just gave them the images and trusted that they would mat them and frame it correctly. They take care of all that, because I don’t want to start a business. I’m enjoying doing what I do, and I feel good, making a difference.”

Linda C. Donnelly is editor-in-chief of *The Modern Estate*; Devon Fleming (www.devonfleming.com), publisher of *The Pink Book: The Hottest Guide to Living in Fairfield County*, writes TME’s Need to Know column.

Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams’s new store is at 45 East Putnam Avenue, Greenwich; 203.661.4480.mgandbw.com



AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER

Three Fairfield County shops whose goods—and settings—will make you feel transported to France or Italy



As publisher of *The Pink Book: The Hottest Guide to Living in Lower Connecticut* (www.devonfleming.com), I find myself drawn to products with a decidedly European aesthetic. The pleasure of such finds lies in the high level of detailing on even a simple napkin or vase, or the seemingly you need to know of if you, too, seek a European-style shopping adventure here in field County. BY DEVON FLEMING



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