

WEEKLY FEATURE

CUSTOM CONTENT IS KEY FOR
NEW YORK SPACES' NEW
OWNERSHIP

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By Katy B. Olson

News broke last week that regional design mag **NEW YORK SPACES** was acquired in a private sale from **DAVLER MEDIA** by **MOD MEDIA**, joining MOD's stable of local luxury publications. *New York Spaces*, with a readership of some 200,000 (who have an average household income of \$914,000), will retain its existing editorial team, as well as its publisher **Lisa Ben-Isvy** but with a stronger focus on events, custom content and partnerships. **Shannon Steitz**, president, publisher and founder of MOD Media (she's also worked for Wainscot, a prior publisher of *New York Spaces*) and its longtime editorial director **Jason Kontos** discuss the forthcoming changes with EAL.

New York Spaces' latest cover



Prime Partnerships, Custom Content

The New York City-centric publication isn't the first to join the MOD lineup in 2017. Earlier this year, the company premiered *ChicagoMOD* (its mission: to deliver "the best in world travel, cuisine, fashion and leisure to high-income individuals") and in April, it debuted **HIGHWAYS**, an auto magazine produced in tandem with a New Jersey **MERCEDES-BENZ AND AUDI DEALERSHIP**.

New York Spaces, which has been in circulation for over a decade and publishes eight times annually, is no stranger to ownership focused on custom content. It had been **ACQUIRED** by Davler Media back in 2013 from **WAINSCOT MEDIA**. (Today Wainscot Media bills itself as a "content marketing digital agency" and produces regional healthcare and luxury titles, and Davler has also moved its primary focus to custom content.)

For Steitz, the newly acquired title was "the perfect fit" given its niche audience and the publisher's own commitment to high-production value and luxury lifestyle. The brand is ripe for forging new relationships with advertisers. "We're also able to take our partnerships really a step further, elevate them, getting into the events, digital and customized multimedia offering," Steitz says of her targeted focus, which will continue to implement the magazine's existing annual Top 50 Designers program and its participation in the **NEW YORK DESIGN CENTER**'s What's New, What's Next.

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There will be "not a lot of changes in terms of content or quality of the magazine," she explains. "*New York Spaces* is built on a solid foundation. We're just looking to make a few enhancements that really come down to the program we're looking to offer in the short- and long-term [with] offerings to our advertisers and events... MOD Media is sought after for its events. As a company, we've hosted events coast to coast and certainly plan to offer more under *New York Spaces*." MOD's business model also brings a new focus to custom content.

"It's really that multimedia, custom-tailored offering that we pride ourselves on, our ability to gain an understanding of our clients' business and tailor the offering to their needs and objectives. It ranges from custom publishing to sponsored content to digital print advertising, certainly events, and also our ability to facilitate key partnerships," explains Steitz. "It's really all about introducing the client to their prospective buyer, is what it boils down to, resulting in ROI."

(Publisher Ben-Isvy concurs, telling EAL, "This approach will help *New York Spaces* better serve the needs of our clients and help facilitate business. Our premier design partners will benefit from more specialized programs, events and an extended geographic network.")

Publisher Shannon Steitz

Kontos has been aboard the magazine for the last eight years, following experience at magazines including **HOUSE BEAUTIFUL** and **COUNTRY LIVING UK**, among others. He says the acquisition is the latest change, and a positive one, in the evolution of the magazine as a designer's go-to. He and Steitz worked together when the

title was a part of Wainscot; Steitz had served as senior vice president of finance and operations there.

"It's become New York's own magazine," Kontos says. Designers "really feel like its their book, and we work with well with the design community. We're trade-connected, for sure." It has also been a success with a traditionally difficult audience. "New York is a tough crowd. [But we hosted our] Top 50 party and last year 39 of [the honorees] came, and so did 1,300 others! Combining and connecting with MOD Media is great because it's more of a partnership within the luxury [arena]. Designers are being woven more in too."



The Fine Print

It's the question every modern publisher hears: Is there a future for print? "I think there's a misconception," explains Steitz. "I've been in the industry quite a while. It has evolved, undoubtedly. However there is a future for print—especially within our category of luxury lifestyle. Our clients really believe in print, strongly to this day, and look for print ads as part of their annual marketing campaign. They also look towards digital, events and social media now, to a much larger extent than they did many years ago, and print is still a critical

component of that."



Editorial Director Jason Kontos

For Kontos's part, he says, "I do not think print is dead. I'm so tired of hearing that nonsense! Print is alive *and* digital is alive." A publisher who embraces print, albeit with an increased focus on digital and in-person events, is welcome. "We're excited about this collaboration with Shannon," says Kontos, who continues to scout out locations for the magazine in-

person as opposed to via high-res photos and emails. "She said to me, 'You go back to being creative. I'll take over this other [business] part.' She totally believes in print, and really believes in edit. She believes content is important, at the same time mixing it with luxury brands in a way that it's more creative."

Bergdorf and Brand Identity

Who is today's *New York Spaces* reader? "Bergdorf, Barneys and flea market is who our reader is," summarizes Kontos of his audience. "We're a regional but we act like we're a national," he says, noting that the publication never uses previously-published photography in an effort to remain "very upscale but inviting." Editorial will continue to include "a lot of Park Avenue, a lot of Tribeca. But if there's some kid in Williamsburg with a [great home], we're gonna put it in."

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New front-of-book pages, however, will be more connected to product, and more product will also be "woven in through" the book. Readers can also expect a distinct international influence: "I love Japanese, Italian and French magazines and am influenced by those," he says. What will continue: the edit team's devotion to in-depth coverage and in-person editorial that works both on its own and in tandem with the publisher's new marketing focus. "Of course, I'm talking to the advertisers and owners, but you've got to hold onto the editorial point of view, otherwise it all runs together," Kontos explains.

"People like to fall into a room. There's at least five to six houses in *New York Spaces*. I feel if you remember two, I believe I've done it."