



edible HUDSON VALLEY

FALL 2023

FARM TO FACE

MAMA FARM + HILDEGAARD



Earthly Delights.
Lia Chavez, the artist behind
Hildegard, a collection of
organic beauty products.
Many of its ingredients are
sourced at Mama Farm.

FARM + FACE

Beauty's Avant-Garde

Hildegard & Mama Farm

BY ESTHER ACHARA

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e're not interested in anti-aging, or preying upon our clientele's insecurities," says acclaimed multidisciplinary artist Lia Chavez, who recently added a collection of organic, farm-grown beauty products to her body of work. "Instead, we want to provide a totally different space for experiencing beauty in its most pure way."

Cue Hildegard, a collection of striking, minimally packaged haute botanical face oils that seek to moisturize your skin while simultaneously dismantling shame-ridden conversations around beauty. Following the highest possible organic standards, Chavez—who studied feminism at the University of Oxford—sources upwards of 60 plant extracts (all virgin, cold pressed, and organic) from Mama Farm. Located in the hamlet of Brookhaven on Long Island, Mama Farm is less than two hours from NYC.

Largely unseen by the locals who trudge through its grounds for eggs and honey (the farm has a thriving 150-member CSA), the theme of beauty runs throughout Mama Farm. It's owned by actor, model, and Lancôme ambassador Isabella Rossellini; it's overseen by her daughter, the farm's executive director, Elettra Wiedemann—a model in her own right, as well as a cookbook author and entrepreneur.

Aside from tending to the chickens and bees, Rossellini and Wiedemann offer up sections of their land as a laboratory for creative exploration. "We come from a family of artists who know how important it is to have space to play without deadlines or an imposed sense of structure," says Wiedemann, who left Manhattan for the farm in 2018. She is the granddaughter of famed Swedish actor Ingrid Bergman and Roberto Rossellini, the film director and prominent figure in Italian neo-realist cinema. "So, when artist friends approach us with an idea, we like to offer them the room to explore it. So much is discovered in these open spaces."

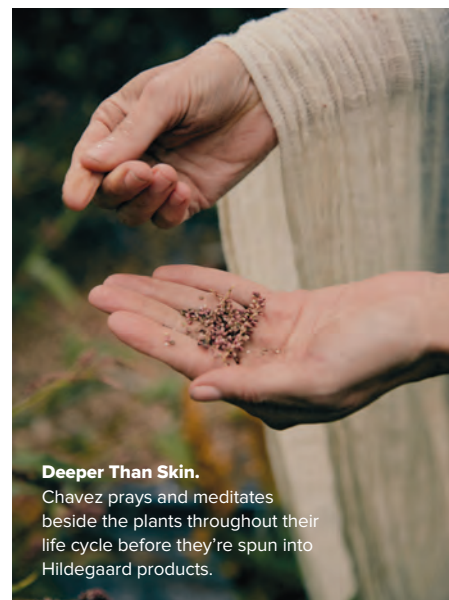
INTERSECTION

An established artist whose work includes performance, Chavez has garnered effusive praise in the art world and beyond—in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, for example. Says Chavez, “Isabella would often commission my artworks and host avant-garde performances on her farm.” Chavez basked in the free, pastoral environment of Rossellini’s farm before the idea of Hildegard came to her. “I spent a lot of time there and apprenticed under her first.”

Fast forward to today and Chavez’s nutrient-rich elixirs. Named for Saint Hildegard of Bingen—the 12th-century polymath who believed in engaging the senses through nature as a means of worship—the products are comprised of elite ingredients: celosia, marigold, and calendula grown on Mama Farm; Tunisian orange blossom, Damask rose, and olibanum from organic farms farther

afield. You can find Hildegard products at Moda Operandi and Aixen-Provence’s exclusive Château Lacoste; lauded fashion designer Gabriela Hearst is already a fan. Yet Chavez’s intention was never to mass-produce commodity cosmetics.

“As an artist, I didn’t want to create more noise,” says Chavez, who prays and meditates beside the plants throughout their life cycle. Says Wiedemann: “Lia knew she wanted to create a product grounded in artisanal practices and meditation. It was these plants and flowers that provided the insight she’d been looking for.” Other entrepreneurs are benefitting from Mama Farm’s creative laboratory. Former chef Patty Gentry of Early Girl Farm rents two of Rossellini’s 28 acres to grow produce for Mama Farm’s CSA, for a local food pantry called The Lighthouse Mission, and to supply New York’s buzzy restaurant scene.



Deeper Than Skin.

Chavez prays and meditates beside the plants throughout their life cycle before they’re spun into Hildegard products.

AVANT OVERALLS

SKY HIGH FARM UNIVERSE

Founded by artist Dan Colen and Daphne Seybold, formerly of Comme des Garçons and Dover Street Market, Sky High Farm Universe workwear is a fashion label with a difference. Featuring modern takes on functional silhouettes—sequin carpenter pants, neon-wool sweaters, and embellished Converse sneakers, for instance—each collection is crafted from vintage, deadstock, and recycled materials. But these attention-grabbing pieces are more than just eye candy.

The employee-owned setup donates half of its profits to Sky High Farm in Ancramdale. As Seybold explains, “The brand was created for the purpose of fundraising for the farm and for education around environmental and food justice.” The farm is committed to making fresh produce available to the food insecure. “Food pantries are stocked with shelf-stable products,” Colen says. “There’s no food justice until regenerative farming techniques are used to grow food for everybody.”

Sky High Farm Universe has drawn brand collaborations with Converse, Balenciaga, Dickies, and Quil Lemons, while Saks, Nordstrom, and MR PORTER have all carried this label that is flipping the usual fashion script: “My interest has always been in challenging norms and the broken ways we operate as a society,” Colen stresses. “I’m interested in doing things in a new, better, and more equitable way.” skyhighfarmuniverse.com



Brooklyn’s Lilia, Roman’s, and Misi are her customers.

Meanwhile, Brian Anderson, right hand man to the famed fashion photographers Inez and Vinoodh, came to Rossellini and Wiedemann hoping to discover whether he had a green thumb. Two years into overseeing his dedicated section of the women-run farm, he’d created, as Wiedemann puts it, “epic landscape designs worthy of *Vogue*.” Having found his footing on Mama Farm, he’s decamped to Vermont, bought some land, and started out on his own. “We give people an opportunity to explore,” says Wiedemann of the sacred magic that continually takes place on their watch. “We let them play and fail and play and succeed.”

In contrast to New York City, from which many of Brookhaven residents fled years ago, at Mama Farm it is as if time stands still. Nothing is forced or rushed—and creativity flourishes. “Being able to create beauty in all its forms is connected to a sense of joy and well-being,” says Chavez. “And to see how these different worlds come together to support one another in a symbiotic way is inspiring—in the same way a flower attracts a bee.”