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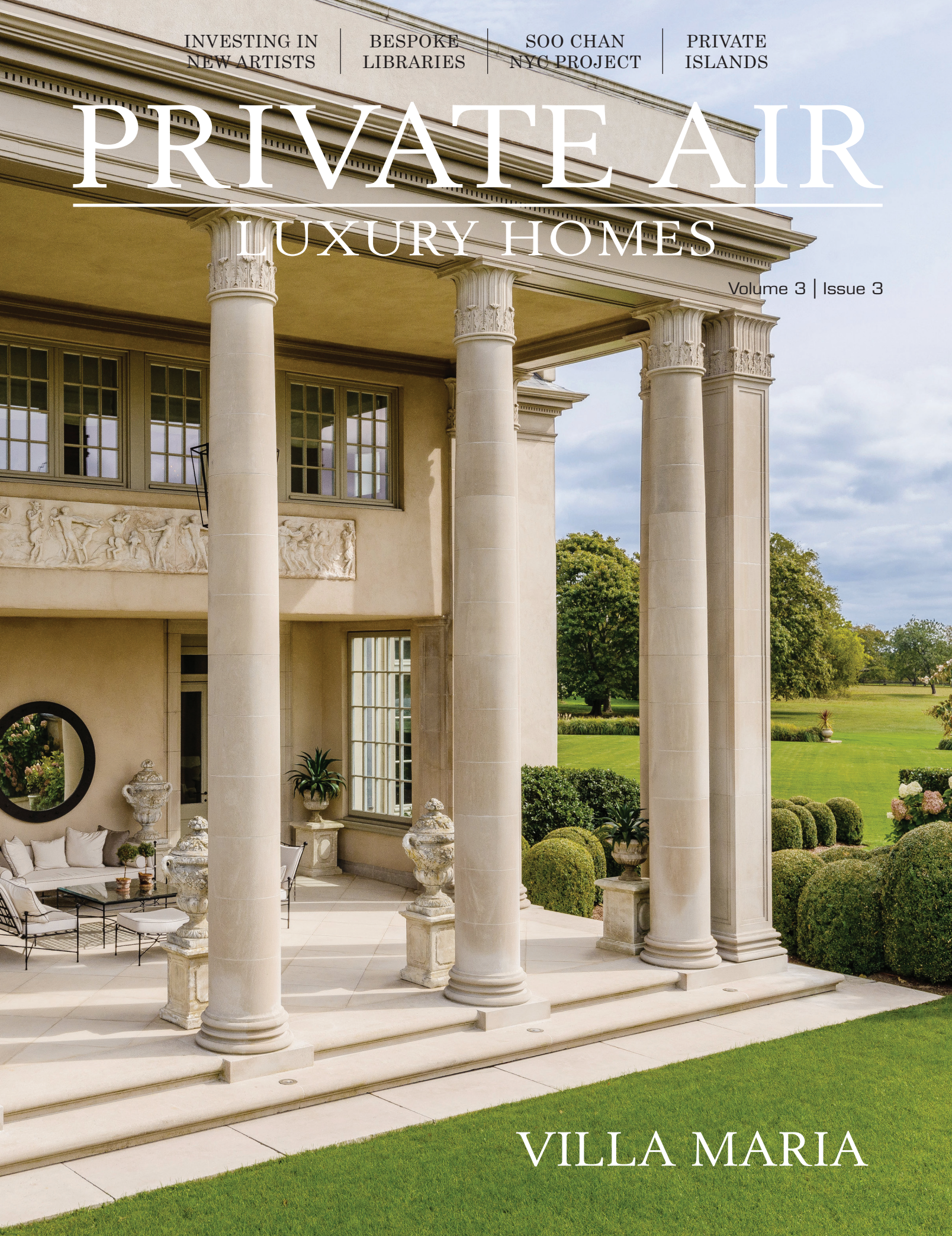
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## LUXURY HOMES

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VILLA MARIA





# A LUXURY WEEKEND IN CAMBRIDGE

By: Danae Mercer

With its historical charm and its majestic colleges, the historic city of Cambridge in the UK offers a great deal for the luxury visitor. The city's riches are understated, more "old money" than 'nouveau riche' – but if you know where to look, you can have a sumptuously refined weekend trip. Here are our recommendations.

Begin by booking yourself into one of The Varsity Hotel's Master Penthouse Suites. These rooms offer sweeping floor-to-ceiling windows with impressive views of Cambridge. Picture four-poster beds, airy structures, and historical touches. It's even possible to section off the hallway and book several of the penthouse suites, creating your own private corner of Cambridge.

After dropping your bags in your room, step next door to the The Glassworks Gym and Spa. Here you will see echoes of The Varsity's slick lines and historical flourishes. As a hotel guest, you will have complimentary access to the modern gym, a jacuzzi that overlooks the river, a steam room, and a sauna.

Don't stop with the spa's facilities – go for a luxury treatment. Glassworks offers the tempting "Signature Package," which includes an advanced anti-aging facial, a fully customized massage, and a deluxe pro-collagen manicure and pedicure.

"We treat the whole mind, body, and soul. You could be rushing in from shopping, and our goal is to really relax you," explains Stacey Mason, a beauty therapist at Glassworks. Even facials begin with a few deep soothing breaths.

If the weather is nice, ask your hotel concierge to arrange one of Scudamore's Champagne Punting Tours. Punting is the quintessential Cambridge activity, where flat boats are pushed along the river with long thin sticks. The experience offers unbeatable views.

Continue your day with a bit of shopping. Cambridge has numerous bespoke tailors and classic shops, all easily found along the main market stretch. Top recommendations include Rigby and Peller for luxury lingerie and Ede and Ravenscroft for structured jackets.

While you're out, step into Penhaligon's for a fragrance profiling. "The profiling focuses on learning about your personality, and then matching it with one of our 'personalities'." Some are shouty, loud, happy, uplifting," explains Richard Clayforth, a Penhaligon's store manager. The process walks you through various perfumes, exploring the stories and scents behind each. "What's more, our fragrances don't finish the way they started. They really come alive on the skin."

As for the atmosphere? Each store is slightly different, with the Cambridge one

resembling a jewel box, offering glass bottles and perfumes wrapped like little presents. "Although we're Victorian by birth, I would say we're a bit more 'Edwardian dandy' by nature," adds Clayforth.

Once freshly fragranced, catch a taxi across town to Alimentum, the Michelin-starred restaurant focusing on high-quality English food with complex flavours. Dishes emphasise a range of textures and subtle flavours, with modern courses mirroring the restaurant's crisp feel.

"It's just British produce cooked well," explains Mark Poynton, the chef patron of Alimentum. "We get the best ingredients we can and treat it the best way possible." Expect dashes of inventive mousse, subtly luxurious highlights like a scattering of caviar, crusty homemade bread, and attentive service.

Poynton suggests ordering the 10-course surprise menu. "None of the dishes we serve with it are on the menu itself." To drink, try Alimentum's own-label champagne or pick from their extensive wine list.

Finally, head back to The Varsity for rooftop drinks with great Cambridge views. From here you can watch the entire city slowly go to sleep. ✈

*Advanced booking for all the above is generally recommended.*