

# HOOK



September/October 2017

Culture, Art & Community In The Lower Hudson Valley

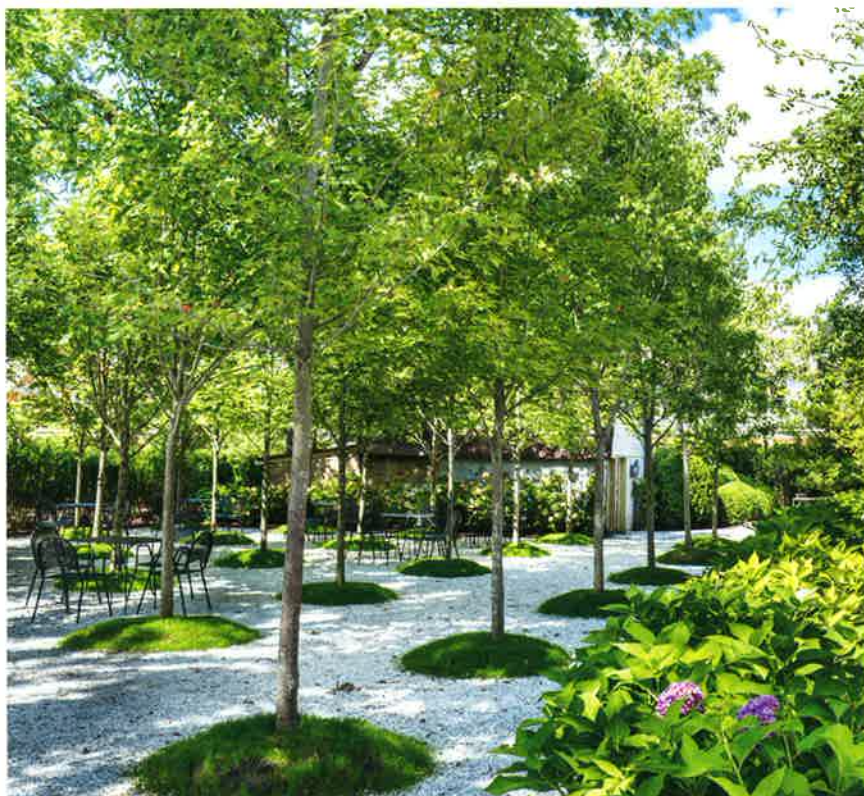
## HOME & HEALTH

Valley Rock Inn   Hiking Hudson Highlands  
Grand Views On Hudson   The Wholeness Center



# If You Build It They Will Come

**1stdibs' Michael Bruno Designs a  
Unique Sloatsburg Destination**



Story by Helen Meurer

Photography by Andrea B. Swenson, Deena Feinberg  
and courtesy of Tuxedo Hudson Company

**R**emember the film 'Field of Dreams' in which the main character builds a baseball diamond in the middle of nowhere, and lo and behold, baseball players arrive? Here in Sloatsburg, entrepreneur and visionary developer Michael Bruno is creating a wonderful destination for enjoying the great outdoors and the abundance of food that comes from the Hudson Valley along a newly revitalized stretch of Orange Turnpike. Bruno, the legendary creator of 1stdibs who soon after moving to Paris, was shopping at the Clignancourt (the largest Flea Market in Paris) to find items for his Left Bank apartment was inspired to create the online designer marketplace, foresees his newest project, where he uses his keen eye for antiques to create an enticing country destination. The new Valley Rock Inn, situated between two state parks of over 70,000 acres, is the second step in Bruno's







Fountain in middle of Rose Courtyard.  
Facing page: Tunnel from Shade Garden.





*Bedroom interior of guest room designed by Lisa Bowles; Exterior of newly renovated Valley Rock Inn guest house; Detail from landscaped garden outside Valley Rock Inn guest house. Facing page: Customers eyeing produce at the Blue Barn Farm Stand; Exterior of the Blue Barn Farm Stand.*

plan to revitalize the area, and has appeal for everyone, especially city-dwellers who want to get away from it all, but not that far away. Just one hour by train from New York City, it is a stone's throw from the Sloatsburg train station, a perfect jumping off point to the miles of bike and hiking trails in Harriman State Park.

Bruno moved to Tuxedo Park five years ago after falling in love with the charming historic private community with its eclectic and stately homes. He saw amazing potential in the neighboring area: proximity to both the city and to Harriman State Park; great locally grown produce from glacial "Black Dirt", and nearby attractions such as the Storm King Art Center and Woodbury Commons. Bruno "looked at the sad little strip with few amenities and wondered 'what could I do on this stretch of highway along the Sloatsburg-Tuxedo Corridor? Maybe something fun with an antique store?'" And one thing led to another, snowballing into an ambitious project to make Sloatsburg a 'destination designed with outdoor enthusiasts in mind.'

Over a relatively short space of time Bruno purchased a cluster of historic buildings of all sorts of styles and states of repair, and began restoring them. Last year he opened an organic farm stand offering the bountiful produce from local farmers, establishing an









*Michael Bruno at entrance to his Tuxedo Park home.*





Above, clockwise: Detail from Rose Courtyard; Citroen Valley Rock Inn food truck; Fresh, organic produce in Blue Barn Farm Stand; Detail from Shade Garden.

anchor for his enterprise. To preserve a threatened sustainable way of life, he has purchased Orange County farmland to help ensure the livelihood of our next generation of farmers, and to preserve farmland. Once-ramshackle sheds are now airy structures with chestnut-brown exposed beams. They house a new farm stand, a Garden Grill (serving 7 days a week) and a coffee house and juice bar.

The new Valley Rock Inn currently comprises four tastefully renovated houses with wooden clapboard siding, new windows, gleaming oak floors, and sleek modern bathrooms. Each has a comfortable sitting room and accommodates 6 to 8 guests. From the back porches, you step past limelight hydrangeas and across to a garden courtyard which is laid out as series of four outdoor rooms. The garden spaces are "en filade", elaborates Bruno, "where one room connects to another". The coffee house and Garden Grill are next to the courtyard, and are open to day visitors as well as overnight guests.

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Bruno has sculpted this miniature village with a spa-like feel. There is everything you need for a relaxing getaway, or for an outdoor escape, pedaling along leafy lanes in Harri-man State Park. Everything feels simply luxuriant. One of the most impressive feats is the transformation of a scruffy nondescript yard into a verdant garden. A canopy of mature hornbeam trees, red maples, Kousa dog-woods and many more fragrant and flowering shrubs create a leafy oasis. The pièce de résistance is a secluded walled courtyard where fragrant Dawn Roses climb the stone walls, white gravel crunches underfoot, and playful fountains hold center stage. Grab an espresso

and let yourself be transported to the sunny Mediterranean.

"There's much more to come," Bruno waves his hand towards more buildings, destined to be cottages with solar-tiled roofs "and next door is now a state-of-the-art bike shop, Valley Rock Bike Barn, with demo bikes, storage and accessories." Coming soon is a picture-windowed art gallery that will front Orange Turnpike reflecting Bruno's love of art and design.

Bruno is excited to be leading the charge on revitalizing the area. He wants not only vacationers and day-trippers to come and enjoy this beautiful enclave, but also for local businesses to thrive and for new ones to move in. Before the end of the year, Bruno will open a full fine dining restaurant and bar within the Valley Inn complex that will be easily accessible for all to come in and enjoy the primarily locally sourced cuisine.

"If you build it they will come" — yes, for sure they will come! And this Fall should be a perfect time to enjoy autumn colors and come see the Valley Rock Inn for yourself.

[valleyrockinn.com](http://valleyrockinn.com)