

Long-Held SECRETS

Unlock TALENTS

for Artist & Writer
**MARCIA
AMMEEN**

By Diane Haase, photos by Dan Epstein



We often hear of people who start second careers later in life, but not often does life's sequel begin with the eruption of a buried memory—a hidden secret—a transformative affair. Such is the story of Verona resident Marcia Ammeen's transition from 45 years as a successful New York art director and book designer to a blossoming career as a painter and writer.

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Long-Held Secrets Unlock Talents for Artist & Writer Marcia Ammeen

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Following her junior year at Rhode Island School of Design, Ammeen spent the summer of 1963 in Europe, part of it studying painting at Oskar Kokoschka's "School of Vision" in Salzburg, Austria. After graduation Ammeen moved to New York City in search of a job. Ignoring advice to "become a secretary," she pushed beyond the barriers of women at the time and built a career as an award-winning art director and book designer. Caught up in her work, she found "she couldn't be a Sunday painter" and abandoned painting for 45 years.

Three years ago, while browsing a shop in Manhattan, Ammeen experienced a strange and surprising vision, prompted by a song playing in the store. Asked to recall how it happened, she says, "The music resonated subconsciously, and suddenly, I had the name and first page of a story from long ago."

The vision was powerful enough to unleash eight months of obsessive writing about that summer in Salzburg and her affair with a hugely charismatic, talented and philandering art instructor. Aided by daily journals and correspondence with a friend, her book, titled, *31 Days: A Memoir of Seduction*, is the never-before-told story of that fateful summer. Beyond Ammeen's sexual and artistic awakening, we glimpse the intrigue and mercenary underbelly of Europe's art world in the 1960's.

Writing her memoir has reignited Ammeen's original passion for painting—this time with renewed vigor and "creative emotion." Ammeen has been busy: in the last three years she has produced a broad array of nuanced styles and subjects, showing many of her works at exhibits in New York and New Jersey. First to come forth were vibrant and joyful flowers, "reminding me that I could paint." Her work then expanded to studies of light and dark, color

and contrast and the more two-dimensional, *Namibia Dunes*, for which she received an award at the Park Avenue Club in New Jersey.

Throughout, Ammeen has shown a special affinity for the female form. From her nudes to the exquisitely robed ladies strolling the Beaches at Goa, or her more recent portraits of young girls, Ammeen continues to explore the sensuality of women. Although she thanks her instructor, "every day for this gift, for this renewed energy and take on life," interestingly, her work almost never includes men.

Ammeen's forthcoming memoir, *31 Days: A Memoir of Seduction*, will be published in the US by The Story Plant. ▲



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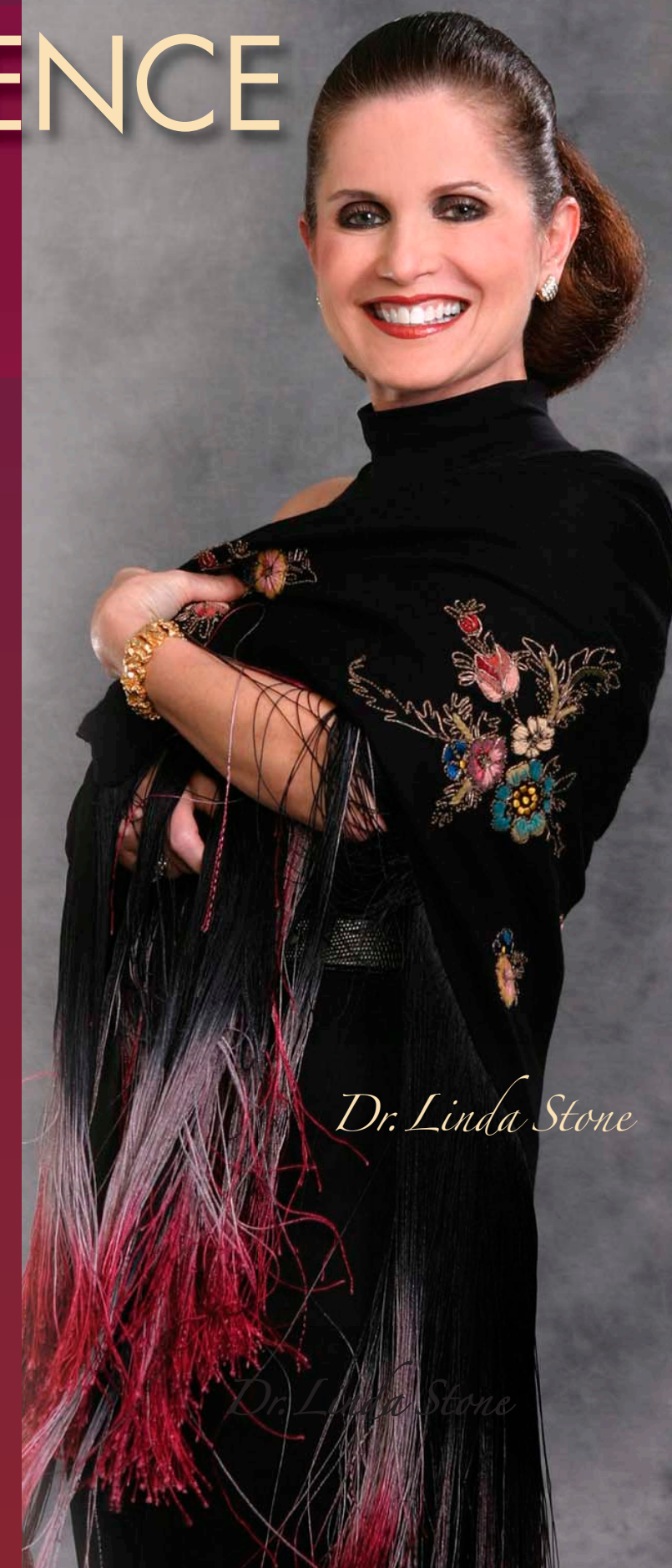
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