

# MORGAN LEHMAN

535 West 22nd Street, New York, New York 10011

MODERN LUXURY

# MANHATTAN

## I Married a Restaurateur

By Pamela Fiori | Photo: Justin Jay | January 4, 2016

As the saying goes, behind every great man is a great woman. Meet three powerhouses—all with flourishing careers of their own—who are the secret ingredients behind New York’s top culinary maestros.



**PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST** Kim Lieberman McCarty, wife of Michael McCarty, owner of Midtown power lunch spot Michael’s, paints dreamy watercolors (she’s standing in front of “A Botanical, 2015,” which hangs on a wall at her NYC apartment) that have been exhibited at a slew of galleries and museums worldwide, including the Morgan Lehman Gallery in NYC and the MoMA.

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## KIM LIEBERMAN MCCARTY

Long before she hooked up with Michael McCarty, Kim Lieberman knew she would be an artist. “It’s always been in my DNA,” she says. “I’ve been at it since I was 5.”

She and Michael fell in love in 1976, when Michael was teaching French cooking, and she was studying painting and design at the University of Colorado. Soon after, they migrated to L.A., where Kim had been born and where Michael eventually opened his eponymous restaurant in Santa Monica in 1979 at age 25 (they wed in 1984).

Kim continued her studies at the Art Center College of Design and UCLA, where she got her master’s degree. When she wasn’t working on paper or canvas, she was helping out in the new restaurant in whatever way she could. “I was painting the fireplace the night before Michael’s first opened.”

Art was, and still is, a major part of their lives—they knew and collected all the movers in that world, including David Hockney, Frank Stella and Ed Ruscha—so they decided to make the restaurant look like a gallery. “Kim was instrumental in pursuing these artists,” says Michael. “In this regard, and in others, we’ve always been in tandem.”

As for her own work, Kim makes it a point to paint every day, even after having two children, Clancy and Chas, and after the fire in 1993 that completely demolished their home in Malibu. “We just fled—the two of us, our kids and one animal. We rented a house on the beach and had the best time of our lives.” Talk about optimism.

Today, with their children now grown, the McCartys divide their time between L.A. and NYC, where the second Michael’s, which opened in 1989, is a major media hangout. But being bicoastal doesn’t deter Kim from her craft: “I have a small room to myself in our NYC apartment. It’s not ideal, but I manage.”

Apart from exhibitions, Kim’s paintings are in both restaurants and in their homes. “My perk in life in living with Kim is that I get first pick of the litter,” says Michael. “It’s a joy for me to go to work every day and see my wife’s beautiful pieces.”