

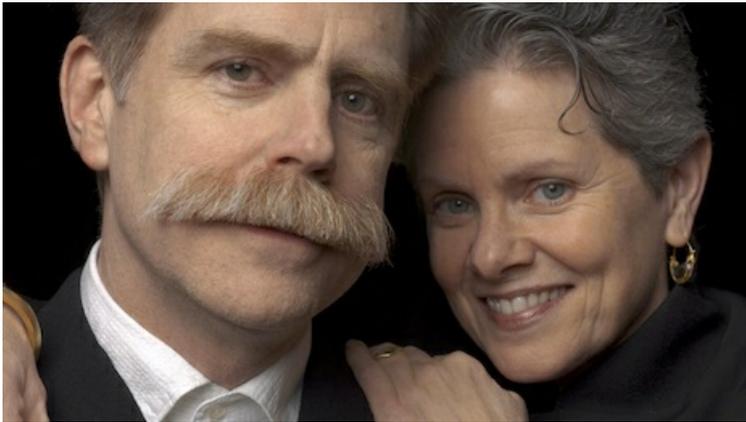
AMERICAN MARKETER

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ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

New faces of luxury: Dianne Dubler and John Bigelow Taylor, principals of Kubaba Books

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John Taylor and Dianne Dubler, principals of Kubaba Books

By [Kathryn Minckler](#)

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Kubaba Books is the creator of bespoke publications that document the architectural and collecting achievements as well as the thoughts of those who care deeply about what they have created and assembled during their lifetimes.

The ultimate gift for those who already have everything that they might wish for, these volumes become an important part of one's legacy.

Here is a conversation with Dianne Dubler and John Bigelow Taylor, principals of [Kubaba Books](#).

What does luxury mean to you?

Dianne Dubler: Two concepts inform our view.

A service or product should be as creative and well produced as possible. Period. One should not have to compare luxurious against something inferior.

Luxury should be the standard anything less is unfortunate and unacceptable.

Sadly, with today's great income disparity, good quality can name its price, while the less wealthy often make do with inferior services and products.

And from another perspective, existentially, luxury is freedom from want, or the Buddhist ideal of freedom from craving and aversion. That's true luxury: wanting nothing, hating nothing.

What does Kubaba mean and what was the inspiration for Kubaba Books?

John Bigelow Taylor: We came across Kubaba during our 10 years of traveling in Turkey.

Kubaba was originally a very early Indo-European name for the mother/Earth goddess of Anatolia. She later became Cybele for the Phrygians, Artemis for the early Greeks and eventually evolved into the Roman Diana. Her original name was almost lost and we chose it for its history and also because we loved the name.

We subscribe to the idea of caring for the Earth as she cares for us all.

After producing the photography for over 250 art books, we were commissioned by Abrams Books and Lord Jacob Rothschild to produce the images for "Waddesdon Manor: A Biography of a Rothschild House."



Waddesdon Manor, a stately home in the village of Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire, England. Built by Ferdinand de Rothschild, the house is now part of the National Trust. Photo credits: Dianne Dubler and John Taylor

While there, we came across The Red Book, a bespoke volume produced by the original owner, Ferdinand de Rothschild, in the late-19th century in an edition of fewer than 10 copies. These books celebrated the building and furnishing of the house and property, which had already become a great repository of 18th-century French decorative art.

The books were beautifully bound in red Moroccan leather. One was gifted to Queen Victoria upon her visit, the rest to family members.

The books became the ultimate takeaway. We realized that any great home could have such a book. Kubaba Books was thus born.



Only 10 copies of the Waddesdon Red Book commemorative volume were produced. Photo credits: Dianne Dubler and John Taylor

What is the process for developing one of your books?

Ms. Dubler: A client commissions us to produce a book. First we develop, through discussions and meetings, a sense of this person and family.

Out of this understanding, we determine the scope of the project: What is to be covered, for what purpose and, ultimately, what form will the book take?

Usually our books include architecture, interiors, landscapes and gardens, and, as appropriate, collections of works of art, libraries, automobiles, yachts or jewelry.

A text can be written either by a principal or a commissioned writer. Archival images and other material are often included.

After determining the scope and budget, we compose a team especially for the project, which can include designer, writer, archivist, printer and bookmaker.

We personally produce the photography and assemble any archival material necessary.

As producers, we oversee the evolution of the book from concept to fruition.

As the book develops, we inevitably develop an intimate working relationship with our client. Several of our projects have been gifts from spouse to spouse, sometimes produced in total secrecy.

What were some of your most memorable projects and photographs? Why?

Mr. Taylor: Each project is a revelation. That is the best part for us.

After an extended period of immersion in a new and interesting environment or subject, having the opportunity to create an exquisite interpretation in book form is both an honor and our delight.

Most projects require significant discretion on our part, and many of our clients prefer to remain anonymous.

Especially memorable projects, that we can mention, include photographing Elizabeth Taylor's jewelry collection in her home, redecorating the White House for a book on American craft, working with Madeleine Albright and her famous collection of pins, and traveling to Madrid to make the definitive image of Picasso's Guernica.

Other notable projects are Yoko Ono's retrospective, the Goulandris Collection of Cycladic Art in Athens, the Friede Collection of the art of New Guinea, fascinating projects with the art of Tibet and of the pre-Columbian Americas and many, many more.

Why will books always have a special place in our ever cluttered, fast-paced, technology-satiated world?

Ms. Dubler: No one knows how digital information will be accessed in the future and what will be compatible with today's technology.

Books, however, have been proven to withstand the centuries with no external support.

Books continue to remain the artifact of culture with the most impact.

And, finally, beautiful books have always been valued as works of art in their own right.



Set of commemorative volumes produced by Kubaba Books. Photo credits: Dianne Dubler and John Taylor

Do you have a favorite person, architect or art collector with whom you would like to work?

Ms. Taylor: There are so many. Sadly, some are now gone like George Ortiz, one of Europe's greatest antiquities collectors.

But looking forward, Oprah Winfrey, who is interesting to us as a philanthropist/art collector because of how deftly she uses each of these roles to support the other. She is also an aficionado of architecture.

Working with Robert Tsao, one of the world's great collector/scholars of Chinese art with far ranging interests, deep passions and an eclectic eye, would be very intriguing.

Architects of interest are Alejandro Aravena for his commitment to sustainability, Shigeru Ban for his genius utilization of recycled materials, and Glenn Murcutt because he "touches the Earth lightly."





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