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SPRING'S  
GRAPHIC  
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A LOOK AT  
CALIFORNIA'S  
MOST OPULENT  
GARDEN

THE MURDER  
MYSTERY THAT  
SHOCKED  
THE CAPITAL

IT'S A BIRD,  
IT'S A PLANE,  
IT'S

**HENRY  
CAVILL**

+ Beer, botox and more from the new high-bro culture

**K**eeping up with Michael Bruno is an impossible feat. Always two steps ahead, he's the kind of guy you meet up with to hear about his just-launched design app, Housepad, only to see him for coffee a few weeks later and learn that, in the intervening time, he's bought two new properties, opened a restaurant and started a marketplace selling decorative items sourced from Hudson Valley farms. "Oh, and did I tell you about the real estate brokerage I started?" he'll add, practically as an afterthought.

This is not hyperbole; it's a true story. Bruno's productivity rate is both maddening—how does he do it?!—and the progenitor of his success. It was 15 years ago that the former Silicon Valley real estate exec (and Paris flea-market addict) founded 1stdibs, the online aggregator of top antiques shops and vintage dealers. The site, which exploded into a \$1.2 billion lifestyle empire under his tenure (he has since stepped down from a leadership role, although he still owns 10 percent), not only helped democratize high design by making rarified merchandise more accessible, it also changed the very way we shop for it. Bruno had the foresight to launch the e-commerce portal at a time when most people, especially interior designers, were hesitant to buy so much as a side

so they can stay on top of all the moving parts and minutiae involved in maintaining a home," says Bruno. There's even an option to create a photographic reference of how you like your coffee table arranged, your dining table set and your bed made, as well as to specify how frequently you want such tasks monitored. Those needing styling ideas can access a trove of instructional videos by top designers: Alex Papachristidis on displaying china, Windsor Smith on making kitchen shelves more visually pleasing and Christopher Spitzmiller on arranging silverware drawers. (Bruno himself invites us into his immaculate pantry.)

The app will also prove a godsend for anyone building, renovating or redesigning a residence. It serves as a savvy tool for interfacing with contractors, architects and workers, allowing homeowners to generate punch lists that can be shared with specific users, check on construction updates and communicate with tradespeople about design details. They can access their dedicated to-do lists on their smartphones or via an on-site tablet loaded with the software. "It not only holds them accountable, but also you," Bruno notes. "Most of us are not as good communicators as we think we are."

Although Housepad launched in beta last summer, a trade-only version of the app will appear this year. Bruno

## Head of Estate

Michael Bruno, the mastermind behind 1stdibs, aims to again revolutionize the design world—this time with a new app that puts domestic perfection within reach *Written by Jen Renzi  
Photographed by Adam Golfer*



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### Downtown Abbey

The Housepad founder in an artist's garret at his West Village town house, one of his four assiduously curated residences.

table sight unseen—let alone a Louis XVI marquetry commode. He's also a genius at connecting dots, diving deep into the full nuances of a simple idea. "I'm not afraid to go down the rabbit hole," he says.

Bruno brings that service-minded, hyperlinked ethos to Housepad. The app is a sort of virtual estate manager that helps you run your abodes. Log in to organize files, contacts and consultants; communicate with domestic staff (housekeepers, landscapers); inventory belongings; and curate a shopping list of preferred cleaning supplies and brands. "It's all about putting control in the homeowner's hand,

conceived the professional resource as a project-management tool to replace the hard-copy three-ring binder interior designers typically compile for clients, cataloguing items purchased on their behalf—from Gustavian settees to rain showerheads, Abstract Expressionist paintings to throw pillows. Homeowners can click on invoices, provenance records, information on an item's maker, warranties and care instructions (a boon when you spill red wine on the cut-silk rug). "It's intended to revolutionize how a designer delivers a project to his or her client, and how the client in turn maintains it," says Bruno, adding that designers can make a photo gallery showing how a completed room should look. (A lamp three inches off-center gives him agita.) "That gives the client more ownership of their house, and encourages them to continue investing in it."

Bruno confesses that he conceived the program out of need. He owns four homes in various stages of completion, among them a Hamptons beach getaway and a turn-of-the-century mansion in Tuxedo Park, New York, where he also has rental property. In fact, Bruno is a renter himself, the leaseholder on a West Village town house that came complete with filigreed plaster crown molding, a skylit artist's garret and a rent-controlled nonagenarian roommate who lives on the fourth floor. "She goes out more—and stays out later—than I do!" says Bruno. Is it any surprise that the tech mogul turns out to be a major homebody? ■

**Bruno's 14,000-square-foot Regency-style mansion in Tuxedo Park, New York, built in 1900, is situated on nearly 14 acres overlooking a lake.**