



[Photograph by Gideon Lewin]

A PORTRAIT OF

Jane

Mother, actress, author,
philanthropist, entrepreneur, complementary
medicine activist,
clothing designer ...

more than a classic

beauty, Jane Seymour

is a classic Renaissance

woman. In her new book

Making Yourself at Home,

Seymour offers an

intimate peek inside

Coral Canyon, her Malibu

beach house, where yet

another incarnation of her

personality is revealed:

Jane Seymour the Artist.



By Patrick Dougherty

Wielding her paintbrush, Jane Seymour the Artist creates a vibrant, colorful world that only begins on stretched canvas. As she channels her passion into brushstrokes, Seymour realizes art's transcendental power: Her colors leap off the canvas to make the

world a brighter, healthier and happier place. On a large scale, Seymour donates her artistic talent to raise money for various good causes; most recently, she completed a painting called *Water* now being used globally for a new initiative to solve the world's water crisis. With friends, Seymour delights

in throwing “painting parties,” where she introduces others to art’s therapeutic benefits. With her family, Seymour uses art to create a warm, expressive home defined by positive vibrations, natural energy and good health.

In her book *Making Yourself at Home* (DK Publishing), Seymour shows readers how to discover their own style and to affordably transform their homes into dramatic works of art, with each room a theme-inspired still life of lively color and peaceful harmony. Though Seymour has her own successful home collection of bedding, lighting, aromatherapy and accessory products (www.jane.seymour.com), her view of what constitutes attractive home décor is open. “It’s not about buying a piece of art that matches your couch, it’s about buying something that brings you in and has a special impact on you,” Seymour says. “Or you can simply have fun creating a piece yourself.”

The harvest from Seymour’s organic garden is an unexpected source of artistic inspiration and an ever-rotating array of home décor: “Vegetables and fruits are as decorative and ornamental as flowers,” Seymour says. With a palette full of colorful fruits and vegetables, Seymour brings natural beauty into her home and good health to her family. In *Making Yourself at Home*, crystals, coral and flowers are shown to continue Seymour’s natural motif, adding soothing elemental energies and striking colors to her elegant-yet-comfortable interior space.

The result of all this effort in creating an aesthetically pleasing home environment is more than superficial; to Seymour, the home is a living thing, and enhancing its vital spirit with vibrant color, living nature and ineffable energy can only benefit the well-being of its inhabitants: her family.

Healing Art

Though the photos of Coral Canyon featured in *Making Yourself at Home* project an idyllic existence, Seymour has endured her fair share of turmoil. A stormy love life and three broken



“The idea behind *Making Yourself at Home* is to create an environment that speaks to your personality, a space that brings a sense of security, joy, serenity or even drama to your life. You can do it.”

marriages left Seymour drained and distraught at age 40; meanwhile, her peak of popularity as an actress had, by all appearances, passed. “I was left close to bankruptcy,” the 56-year-old Seymour reveals. “I lost everything and had to start over. I was a mother of three children with no money.”

Facing uncertainties both professionally and personally, Seymour’s career as an artist started humbly, as she began finger-painting with her children—with no aspirations but to share time and love with them. This simple act ignited a spark in her soul. Finger-painting progressed to watercolors, and soon Seymour was

fully immersed in painting’s emotional expression and Zen-like peacefulness. In the art of creation, she had discovered a healing therapy.

As Seymour painted her way through depression and focused on raising her children, she received a serendipitous phone call that led to what ultimately became her most prominent acting role: that of Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman. In addition to the role arriving with uncannily fortunate timing, the television show’s themes of family strength and natural health resonated with Seymour’s own interests, making it a perfect fit. Soon thereafter, Seymour

met her true love, director James Keach. With life falling neatly into place, Seymour embarked on another adventure, as she became pregnant with twins at the age of 45.

But the pregnancy was complicated. After Seymour developed pre-eclampsia, a type of potentially fatal elevated blood pressure that occurs during pregnancy, she underwent an emergency Cesarean section. Though the twins were born prematurely, Seymour's innate medicine mom instincts helped them grow up healthy. "You'd never know they were both low-birth-weight babies," she laughs. "In fact quite the contrary, one of them is on a diet!"

Through the pregnancy ordeal, Seymour's lifelong interest in health intensified. Life imitated art as Seymour, so strongly identified with Dr. Quinn, became an increasingly outspoken natural health advocate. In a passionate, tearful plea before Congress in 1999, Seymour urged the inclusion of complementary medicine departments in every hospital in America, while imploring the National Institutes of Health to stop withholding billions of dollars in research funds from the implementation of natural medicines. "When I get sick, my family or my friends, I want to know that all has been done to protect their health... *everything!*" Seymour said. "There must be room for all remedies that bring health to the patient."

Seymour's activism expanded as women's heart health moved to the fore of her philanthropic interests. Working with the California Pistachio Commission (pistachios are a heart-healthy food, containing polyunsaturated omega-6 fatty acids, fiber, magnesium, potassium, beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin), Seymour created "The Ladies in Red" series of paintings to help raise money and awareness for women's heart health. Featuring dynamic scenes of women dancing in red dresses, the series mirrored the red dress symbol of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute's The Heart Truth Campaign, which

includes National Wear Red Day on the first Friday of February to remind people about heart health.

And so, with each stroke of the paintbrush, Seymour continues to demonstrate how art's power extends beyond the canvas. But even the most talented artist will stagnate without a muse. In Seymour's book, her motivation is revealed in the smiling, radiant photos of her three sons, her daughter and her husband. Above all, Seymour's family is her muse, and love is her inspiration. *Energy Times* sat down with Jane Seymour to discuss *Making Yourself at Home*, how painting saved her sanity and her secret to family health.

Energy Times: Can you discuss what inspired you to write *Making Yourself at Home*?

Jane Seymour: I felt that a lot of people, when they bought homes or when they had a home, really had no idea where to start in terms of making their environment their own, rather than what a designer would just dictate to them. The idea behind *Making Yourself at Home* was that whether you had the budget to hire a designer and try to explain what you wanted or were doing the design all by yourself, you could make your space your own. This book is a great way of showing you how you can ask yourself questions, put together your own personal tastes, find a way to manifest your style and really enjoy changing your environment.



"Flowers are an endless source of fascination to me. I display them around the house in all sorts of containers, paint them, and even toss them into a salad or on a cake."

ET: You mention that the home itself is a living thing. What do you think makes a home healthy?

JS: I think a home exudes and reflects the mood of the person that lives in it. I think that if you surround yourself with things that are beautiful and meaningful to you and personalize it, then it becomes an extension of who you are and what it is you're saying to the world. If you open your doors to other people and invite them into your space, then your home really tells people who you are and what matters to you. So whether it's having a photograph of people whom you care about on display, or whether it's enjoying some fresh fruits picked from the garden or some flowers you found walking down the lane... it could even be a piece of pottery or artwork that you

discovered at some point that spoke to you somehow and you hung it on the wall. That really reflects on who you are and how you feel.

ET: Can you talk about the health and home significance of your organic garden?

JS: We're all discovering more and more the obvious, which is that organic gardening and produce is better for you than anything that's got a million pesticides in it. That's not a surprise to anyone. I think what's surprising is how important this is becoming to people to spend that extra money to have it, or to actually try to garden themselves. I think that organic food tastes completely different and has the most amazing flavors. When you think about how hard it is to grow something and keep it for a long period and then distribute it and truck it all over the planet... obviously, if you have the privilege of eating something that's either home-grown or locally grown, it will have that amazing flavor. When you garden organically you have to share your food with nature, so sometimes it won't look perfect or a bug will get into it or you'll share it with the birds or the lizards or whatever it is that eats your produce. But that's just part of nature; that's just how it goes—that's the essence of organic gardening. I think the miracle of watching things grow and being able to pick them out of the ground, wash them off and eat them is just so spectacular.

ET: Unfortunately, kids don't always feel that way. Do you have any tips on how parents can get their children to eat fruits and vegetables like yours do?

JS: I think children, when they're young, they like to eat food with their fingers. So instead of putting fried foods in their fingers, put crunchy vegetables there and let them dip into ketchup, soy sauce or whatever it is they like. If they have these little sauces they can dip fresh broccoli, fresh carrots, celery,

cucumber, green, red and yellow peppers. Kids love color and if you get them involved with dipping into hummus, dipping into eggplant dip or whatever it is you introduce them to, if you do it early on in life, that's what they'll go to.

ET: In addition to being incredibly healthy, the colorful organic fruits and vegetables you grow seem to be good for decorating...

JS: You're absolutely decorating your home, even if you never ate that produce, if you just looked at it! When you think about some of the great art that's in museums, it's still lifes of produce, fruits and vegetables. My book really speaks to the artistic expression in still life in terms of tablescapes, whether you paint them or you just display things and move them around. In my case, I have some beautiful crab apples hanging from their stems stuck in a vase, surrounded with Chinese horses and a couple of shawls that were in my closet. Suddenly it becomes a beautiful artistic expression on the table.

ET: You faced health challenges giving birth to twins at age 46. Can you talk about that experience?

JS: I actually wrote a whole book about it called *Two At a Time: A Journey Through Twin Pregnancy* (Atria). I wrote this book because on the surface there were people who saw me suddenly getting pregnant and then miraculously having two healthy babies and being very slim afterwards. I wanted people to know I went through a major health crisis having them and it wasn't easy. In the book, I really in great detail chronicled the ups and downs, the emotional ups and downs, the physical ups and downs, and the dos and don'ts of having twins, as of course a lot of people are doing—using modern science to help them have children later in life. I felt that I really needed to convey what that experience was like. But I'm very fortunate, the twins are incredibly healthy.

ET: You're a big complementary medicine supporter. Can you discuss how you've used other modalities to keep your family healthy?

JS: Well, I've used homeopathy 'cause my sister studied it and on many occasions it's worked brilliantly. I'm really more into complementary medicine; I don't exclude western medicine and I really find a lot of preventive medicine practices work very

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well. I think diagnostically, western medicine is pretty astounding. But I'm a great believer in whole health—body, mind and spirit. And I think it's interesting now that a lot of western medical practitioners are using alternative methods and they're prescribing arnica and turning people on to the use of vitamins and they're recommending nutrition and meditation and yoga and exercise. There's definitely a combination happening now for the first time.

ET: When you addressed Congress on complementary medicine, you talked about the importance of having a “portfolio of medical choices.” Is that what we're seeing now?

JS: I think so. When I was talking then, believe it or not, there were Congresspeople who were trying to infiltrate my office to find out what I was going to say so they could say something against it! When really, at the end of the day, I wasn't damning anyone in particular... I was just saying that we should be open-minded and encourage the use of complementary medicine. There are all kinds of alternative medicine practices that are not invasive and absolutely have no downside. I mean, the worst thing that could happen is that it wouldn't work for you. The chances are that if it works for millions, it might work for you... so why not try it?

ET: One thing that worked for you is painting; you say it saved your sanity...

JS: Absolutely! And it continues to. Painting is what I do for me, it's my passion. It's what I love most because no one has to give me permission to do it and it really doesn't actually matter whether anyone even likes my paintings or not. It doesn't even matter if I like them or not! The process of creating is just such a wonderful healing experience for me and it's something that I really try and turn other people onto. And the other side of it is that, you know, a



HEART SOARS



HEART AND SOUL



HEART BEAT



JOYOUS HEART

“I feel it's important to use my art to support charitable causes. With the Ladies in Red fundraiser series for women's heart health awareness, I wanted to celebrate life by painting women who were old enough to have lived a life.”

lot of people don't realize it's not about buying the right art, it's about buying art that speaks to you.

ET: Your painting has not only saved you, but it's also working to save others. Can you discuss your Ladies in Red series of paintings?

JS: When pistachios were identified as being as heart-healthy as almonds, the California Pistachio Commission asked me to get involved with a campaign to alert woman to the heart health initiative, because a lot of woman are suffering from heart disease. In fact, women are 10 times more likely to die of heart disease than all the other diseases, so it's a huge issue for women, and really an issue that people thought happened to men rather than women... I think women were largely unaware of how dangerous and how important heart health was, so I did these paintings of women in red dresses. I chose women who were dancers; I just felt the vitality and

the other side of heart health—it's not just diet and nutrition, it's also exercise. So these women, who were middle-aged and very vital, including myself... we were all dancing. I invited them to dance with me and I photographed and filmed them and then made paintings from it. These paintings are shown at every art show I go to and continue to go to, helping to raise money for women's heart health awareness.

ET: What's your philosophy for family health?

JS: I think family health comes from well-being and well-being comes from loving and being loved, being able to communicate, being heard, being able to express, being able to be creative, being appreciated... and then it comes from diet and exercise. I think family wellness comes from eating together and being around the dining table and taking the time to enjoy food, enjoy one another and to make healthy choices.

ET: What's next for you?

JS: I just had an art show, so I've got commissions and paintings to do. I'm now designing some jewelry that I'm hoping to use to raise awareness for various organizations. I continue to work with ChildhelpUSA, which fights child abuse, along with UNICEF, the American Red Cross and the Make-a-Wish Foundation. I recently narrated a documentary called *Running Dry*, which discusses the crisis globally in terms of water, clean water and in terms of having water at all for people. I also run a program in Los Angeles called City Hearts that gives inner-city kids free art programs. I'm coming out with an art kit with art products that I've developed, including a DVD that shows you how to paint. I'm a great believer in spreading that joy to other people. You don't have to be a professional artist; you don't have to sell art to enjoy art. You can buy art, you can have fun creating art yourself... it's very healing, it's a lot of fun. ■

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