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Editor’s Note: Mexican Moment

Latin America meets Europe meets the Indigenous in Mexico City (CDMX), and we couldn’t be more excited for the tenth annual Design Week Mexico, running from October 10 to 15. This unique blend of cultures makes for a city that is not only good for walking and eating, but also for art and design. It has become a destination for those looking to vacation somewhere warm with a chance to get in on some world-class high culture. Because it is more affordable than New York, Los Angeles, and Berlin, many creative young people are moving there to start practices.

This vibrant scene is enhanced by CDMX’s status as one of the 20 largest cities in the world, bigger than New York and London. It has recently gained even more attention as Design Week Mexico’s profile heightened in 2017, and the annual design festival Mextropoli—now in its fifth year—continues to grow as well.

Mexico City has also arguably become more assimilated into the "Western" canon and sphere of influence, as it becomes more connected to cities like Los Angeles and New York via travelers and aforementioned up-and-coming makers. The city was also featured in the sprawling multi-disciplinary exhibition Pacific Standard Time, which showed connections between California and Latin America, where art, architecture, music, and design as unbounded by borders. Mexico City has always had a strong connection to the U.S. and beyond.

CDMX is the 2018 World Design Capital and will host a year-long program that showcases how the city is dealing with the challenges of being a sprawling megapolis in the 21st century. The focus is on the “use of design to drive economic, social, cultural, and environmental development.”

In this issue we profile some of the emerging talent, including New York, Monterrey, and Mexico City–based Savvy Studio (Page 27), as well as Brian Thoreen (Page 23), a trained architect who is living in Mexico City and making furniture. We also journey to the region of Oaxaca to talk with Colectivo 1050° (Page 112), a group of designers working closely with local artisans to create experimental ceramic pieces with a unique combination of modern techniques and traditional craft.

This design legacy is not just a recent phenomenon. The year 2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the iconic 1968 Olympics, which were held in Mexico City during a time of global social unrest. The graphic scheme of the games by Lance Wyman has remained a touchpoint in design history, and the 22 massive sculptures commissioned for the Ruta de la Amistad (Page 116) were placed on the World Monuments Watch of the World Monuments Fund in 2012. We profile the ongoing efforts to preserve these sculptures and examine their design legacy.

Matt Shaw
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Neolith is an extraordinary surfacing material that adds beauty and resistance to the spaces of a home where moments happen every day. Pepita Sierra, known on social media as @Pepitamola, is a young girl with Down syndrome who gives her loved ones and her followers moments of joy, tenderness and happiness. Highlighting those who thrive despite adversity, Pepita is living proof of the many values that define Neolith—family, humility, originality, perseverance, optimism and a tireless spirit.

Extraordinary material for extraordinary times

Neolith is an extraordinary surfacing material that adds beauty and resistance to the spaces of a home where moments happen every day. Pepita Sierra, known on social media as @Pepitamola, is a young girl with Down syndrome who gives her loved ones and her followers moments of joy, tenderness and happiness. Highlighting those who thrive despite adversity, Pepita is living proof of the many values that define Neolith—family, humility, originality, perseverance, optimism and a tireless spirit.
On the occasion of Bar Basso’s 51st birthday this October, the designers of Gabriel Scott present a new lighting installation, the first addition to the infamous Milanese watering hole’s interior since 1967. AN Interior contributor Jordan Hruska sat down with the bar’s owner, Maurizio Stocchetto.

**AN** How has the design of Bar Basso changed over the last 51 years?

**MAURIZIO STOCCHETTO** Bar Basso was founded in 1947, but my father, Mirco Stocchetto, took it over in 1967. He kept most of the furniture of the previous owner, including wood paneling, mirrors, chairs, and the iconic neon sign outside.

**AN** Explain the history of how your father created the infamous Negroni Sbagliato and his overall vision for the bar.

**MS** In the 1960s, cocktails in Milan were hard to come by. Oddly enough, they were popular in Venice, Cortina, and Florence—mostly in the lounges of the big hotels. My father brought an old-school experience he gained by working at hotel bars to a small street corner in Milan. One day, while making a Negroni, a cocktail traditionally made with Campari, red vermouth, and gin, he substituted sparkling wine for gin, claiming that he picked that bottle by mistake. He finished the drink anyway. I’ve never known if it was true, but the name Sbagliato, which means “mistaken,” caught on.

**AN** Why do you think designers were initially attracted to Bar Basso as a place to gather in the 1980s?

**MS** Bar Basso attracted many creative people starting as far back as the 1960s. I think it’s because of its unpretentious atmosphere. Joe Colombo and many architects from Politecnico, the Milanese University of Architecture, were already regulars in the ‘70s, but I was too young to notice them. The first designers that I personally met were James Irvine, Jasper Morrison, Marc Newson, Stefano Giovannoni, and a few others working in the [Ettore] Sottsass studio. This community started to grow spontaneously more or less at the same time as the Salone del Mobile brought more visitors to town. After our first “British Invasion,” we started to attract Scandinavian designers, design journalists, and assorted manufacturers.

**AN** How has your knowledge of design changed since Bar Basso has become an informal hub for designers?

**MS** The sheer proximity with designers has given me an awareness of how much effort lies behind any design piece, even for objects that we always take for granted.

**AN** Thousands of designers around the world have a very intimate connection to Bar Basso. Why did you choose Gabriel Scott to design your new lighting?

**MS** Gabriel Kakon and Scott Richler, owners of Gabriel Scott, contacted me last March in order to organize an exposition of their lamps during the Salone del Mobile in two of our windows. We hit it off and agreed to develop the bar’s first ever installation to celebrate our anniversary.

**AN** How did they develop the lighting installation?

**MS** Gabriel and Scott proposed installing versions of their Myriad and Welles light fixtures with custom satin copper fixture finishes, which give off an alabaster glow that evokes the color of the Negroni Sbagliato.

**AN** What are the plans for Bar Basso in the next 51 years?

**MS** Stay alive and stay in business!
In the Know: Berlin Travelogue

For those who want to take in history, design, and nightlife, Berlin is the place. Here are some of our top picks for the design-minded. By William Menking

The Chipperfield Kantine
Joachimstrasse 11
10119 Berlin Mitte
Rosenthaler Platz

The office of English architect David Chipperfield is a converted piano factory in Mitte. The redbrick building sits behind a spare, bright white courtyard where the architect has designed a beautifully detailed concrete box that also houses the restaurant Kantine. A reasonably priced menu of fresh local products served on spare Chipperfield-designed tableware—it is the best lunch spot in the city.
Trouvé
Schwedter Strasse 9
10119 Berlin
trouve-berlin.de

This store is a fantasyland of objects for architects and designers. Its owners, Michel Vincenot and Sabine Riedel, source lighting, seating, storage, tables, and graphics by preeminent European designers of the 20th century: Carlo Scarpa, Gio Ponti, Achille Castiglioni, Christian Dell, and German designers from the Bauhaus. This Wilhelm Wagenfeld glass tea service is 200 euros (approximately $233).

Hotel Oderberger
Oderberger Strasse 57
10435 Berlin
hotel-oderberger.berlin

A Neo-Renaissance-style hotel over a 19th-century public swimming pool makes this a very Berlin experience. It’s reasonably priced, and surrounded by cafes, bars, the trendy shopping street Kastanienallee, and Mauerpark. The park is also a unique “free park” where all sorts of public gatherings go on through the night, and the grass is untended, as Berliners don’t want chemicals used to maintain any public landscape.

Topography of Terror
topographie.de

Berlin has multiple reminders of its fraught and charged history. Peter Eisenman's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum are powerful design statements, but equally powerful and less well known is the Topography of Terror Museum. On the site of what was once the headquarters of the Nazi Secret State Police, SS, and Reich Security, it was designed in 2010 by Ursula Wilms and landscape architect Heinz Hallmann. It is a truly frightening architectural experience.

The Paris Bar
Kantstrasse 152
10623 Berlin
parisbar.net

A bright red neon sign over the entrance announces The Paris Bar, the legendary Charlottenburg late night art bar. Its walls are covered with art from its regular patrons. Several years ago, it had to auction off its Martin Kippenberger for $3 million to pay back taxes. It’s the Odeon of Berlin, and its steak frites are the best in the city—but unlike its New York counterpart, it can’t make a decent martini.

Pauly Saal at Jewish School for Girls
Auguststrasse 11-13
10117 Berlin
paulysaal.com
maedchenschule.org

Alexander Beer was the chief architect for the Jewish community of Berlin, and in 1927 he designed a girls’ school at Auguststrasse 11-13 in Mitte. It is a rare example of the modernist Neue Sachlichkeit style, with beautifully crafted materials. The school was eventually closed, Beer died in a concentration camp, and the building was confiscated by the government. The school was repurposed in 2012 as the Center for Art and Dining Culture, which is open to the public. Besides art galleries, it holds a New York delicatessen, Mogg & Melzer, and the pricey but excellent Pauly Saal Restaurant.
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Emerging

Who are the names you need to know? Who are the designers to watch?

The six up-and-coming talents—in architecture and design—should be on your radar.
Designers
Alda Ly likes a good piece of custom millwork. “I like to think about the purposefulness of each cut,” she says. Her namesake practice is built around a similar mission. “We’re pursuing end-user research to develop a more human-centered approach with our designs.” For Ly, both qualitative and quantitative data are imperative to design spaces that break the molds of conventional architectural programs. She designed the Wing’s private women-only professional clubs for flexibility, knowing that users might be recording a podcast on one day, and on another, working solo on their laptops. In this way, she sees herself beholden not only to the client, but also to the client’s stakeholders. Ly has made a name for herself by designing shared spaces, from incubators to offices and apartments. Most recently, the firm designed Bulletin, a store merchandising products from female-led brands that features a social area and a venue for live programming. “There are an infinite amount of situations you have to plan for, but a key point is knowing how to make people feel comfortable.” — Jordan Hruska
Brian Thoreen
LA/Mexico City

“I didn’t really know what I was doing,” said Brian Thoreen. Reflecting on the first show where he unveiled his namesake furniture company at the Sight Unseen outpost during Collective Design in 2015, he admitted: “I was thrown in the deep end—I didn’t even know how to price the pieces.”

Since then, Thoreen has gone on to show his works several times at Design Miami, create custom commissions, and be the subject of the first solo exhibit at Patrick Parrish. All of this was born out of his new focus on furniture and a recent move to Mexico City—both of which he was able to fully commit to after leaving his L.A.-based architecture practice, Thoreen+Ritter.

In the context of “being somewhere else,” Thoreen now finds himself collaborating with local artists, including Héctor Esrawe and Emiliano Godoy on a sculptural series of metal furnishings accentuated by hand-blown amorphous orbs of glass. The material will continue to be at the heart of his future work in a new studio, which he formed with Esrawe and Godoy to continue to collaborate their collaboration on glass and metal projects. As for his own studio, Thoreen also plans to design installations, spaces, and architecture where he can continue work with local artists. Gabrielle Golenda

Top: The Bedrock is a series of rough stone and glass tables and vases. Thoreen codesigned the collection with Mexican designers Héctor Esrawe and Emiliano Godoy for the 15th edition of Zona Maco art fair in Mexico City.

Above: Brian Thoreen
CAMESEgibson
Chicago

CAMESEgibson is a Chicago-based partnership between Grant Gibson and the fictitious late T.E. Cames. Gibson, also a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) School of Architecture, works at multiple scales, from small residential rehabs to a popular community arts center. The practice is not limited to conventional built work. Some of the office’s exhibition work includes a 20-foot-tall quilted column installed in the Graham Foundation foyer and a skyscraper design in collaboration with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill at the 2015 Chicago Architecture Biennial. In each of its projects, a playful sensibility fills spaces with color and soft forms. A recent project involved converting a laundry room into a cool ethereal lounge for the UIC basketball team. Deep blue tones and carefully controlled lighting brand the space instead of the typical kitschy, logo-laden locker rooms of most teams. It is this approach to cleverly transforming spaces, whether they are institutional or private, that sets CAMESEgibson apart from the average small practice.

Matthew Messner

Top: A lounge for the University of Illinois-Chicago men’s basketball team is unusually serene for the typology.

Above: Grant Gibson
Material Lust
New York City

Partners in life and partners in practice, Lauren Larson and Christian Lopez Swafford are indifferent to mass production timelines and trends. Together, they work with artisans to conjure otherworldly objects that cross the boundary between sculpture and decorative art, producing a series of furniture with true grit.

Known as Material Lust, their Lower East Side–based company was officially established in 2014 but began long before that. It has been producing works that reflect the historical context of design, including the Alchemy Altar Candelabra inspired by pagan and alchemical symbolism; and the Fictional Furniture Collection of gender-neutral, monochromatic children’s furniture inspired by surrealism.

Now the pair are venturing into lighting with their new sister company, Orphan Work. As the story goes, it began when they found lost designs from the Material Lust archive and after they visited Venice’s Olivetti Shop, by Carlo Scarpa. The result? A collection that is somewhere between Scarpa’s richly layered forms and the couple’s unapologetically “metal” aesthetic, with nods to both the musical genre and the material itself. GG

Top left: Crawl Chair, a waxed-walnut seat adorned with carved hands and feet from the gender-neutral collection of children’s furniture, Fictional Furniture.

Above: Lauren Larson and Christian Swafford of Material Lust

Top right: Alchemy Altar Candelabra features pagan and alchemical symbols cast in steel. The sculptures are a part of the symbolically dense Geometry Is God collection.
MILLIØNS
Los Angeles

Los Angeles–based MILLIØNS dubs itself an “experimental architectural practice” that liberally explores space-making as a “speculative medium” that can be manifested in any number of objects, structures, or experiences. Founded by Zeina Koreitem and John May, the growing practice recently designed a communal wash basin that aims to reintroduce shared social interactions into the act of bathing for an exhibition at Friedman Benda gallery in New York City. In the show, a 3-D printed mass reveals itself as a fluted drum containing a sink and a slender, brass spigot that is approachable from all sides.

Though better known for writing heady treatises and engineering glitchy, digital media works that use televisions and closed-circuit cameras to create new spatial dimensions, MILLIØNS has some more grounded works on the way. A forthcoming, Graham Foundation–supported exhibition designed and curated by the duo that aims to revitalize the experimental spirit of modernist housing, for example, is headed to L.A.’s A+D Museum early next year. MILLIØNS also has several brick-and-mortar projects on the way, including a retail storefront in Manhattan and a lake house in upstate New York.

Antonio Pacheco
Savvy Studio
NYC/Mexico City

Savvy Studio, an interiors and branding firm with offices in New York City and Mexico City, has been busy this summer with an array of projects popping up in New York. It has just launched a Tribeca seafood restaurant, A Summer Day Cafe (Page 32), which features a beachy interior with light woods, primary-colored metal accents, and of course, nautical stripes. The studio also redesigned Alphabet City mainstay Mast Books using plywood to elevate the space, making it a “gallery of books, rather than simply another bookstore.” And by combining interior architecture with visuals befitting a fashion campaign, Savvy Studio developed branding language, communications, and interiors of the rental offices and showrooms for the Mercedes House, a Hell’s Kitchen luxury condo designed by TEN Arquitectos.

Founder and creative director Rafael Prieto points out that there are “no specific boundaries” between branding and interior design. “The reason we do both is based on our interest in creating and designing experiences, and being able to make an impact in every interaction.” For Savvy Studio, their multifaceted practice is about making sure each space or branded element is simultaneously “emotional, aesthetic, and functional.”

Drew Zieba
As the home of *AN Interior*’s parent publication, *The Architect's Newspaper*, for 12 years, Manhattan’s Tribeca neighborhood has steadily developed a spicy, post-work hangout scene. The latest places to pop up in our community include four chic, inviting spaces that offer commuters and locals alike the chance to savor the sweet taste of good design (at a good price) any time of day. These stunning and simple venues—a timeless tea parlor, a cozy cocktail lounge, a sunny seafood spot, and a sky-high, Danny Meyer dining experience—all opened this year to rave reviews for their food, drinks, and decor. Next time you’re in Tribeca, you won’t want to forgo seeing these inspired interiors for yourself.
As culinary impresario Danny Meyer’s most recent endeavor, Manhatta serves as a home in the sky for delicious food and jaw-dropping views. With less glitz than you’d expect from a restaurant of this stature—it nearly covers the entire top floor of Manhattan’s first International Style building—its elegant yet friendly atmosphere overwhelms any sense of high society. Woods Bagot’s design for the French-American eatery and bar brings dark wood, weathered granite, brass fixtures, and jewel-toned Chinese paintings together to subtly create an intimate setting with an unparalleled perspective of New York.

Opposite: “The reward of the experience had to be more than the view,” said principal Wade Little. “There are days when the building is shrouded in clouds.” Woods Bagot integrated muted colors inspired by the sky and the river. Personal banquets line the bar with dark blue upholstery by Moore & Giles Leather, as well as gray glass elements by Bendheim.

Above: Stellar Works crafted comfy, custom chairs for the more formal dining spaces. The fluted wood wall panels, designed by John Houshmand, add texture to the walls and pair with the other moody tones found throughout the restaurant.
A Summer Day Cafe
Savvy Studio
109 West Broadway

This relaxing restaurant and raw bar transports urbanites to Italy's Amalfi Coast with an enticing seafood selection and a maritime mood. Dreamed up by architecture and branding studio Savvy, the 1,290-square-foot space oozes summer simplicity. It’s one of Tribeca restaurateur Matt Abramcyk’s latest ventures and an experiment in stylishly crafting the sensation of leisure and calm. The concept is a nod to photographer Joel Meyerowitz's 1985 book *A Summer's Day*, with a material palette inspired by boats, seaside cottages, and industrial fish markets.

Opposite: The bright interior boasts a nautical theme that shines through every tiny detail. From the striped cushions by SOFFAH to the polished metal work by Offelia Estudio, the cafe looks like it docked into New York after a cruise around the Mediterranean.

Above: Savvy placed mirrors along walls and large plants throughout the restaurant to enhance the size of the space and add a touch of nature.
Primo’s
Camilla Deterre

129 Chambers Street

Primo’s exudes a surprising and sexy contemporary twist on Italian Art Deco. Designed by model Camilla Deterre, the striking bar packs speakeasy sentimentality and midcentury modern elements into a small, two-room space hidden inside the Frederick Hotel. Long drapes with rich primary colors and cotton velvet upholstery covering curvaceous banquets give Primo’s an aura of luxury, but the soon-to-be late-night Tribeca mainstay is more informal than it appears. The chrome-outlined bar boasts an impressive organic wine collection and serves an array of dreamy classic cocktails and avant-garde absinthe coolers that will knock your socks off.

Opposite: Every material inside Primo’s could be its own design centerpiece, even the branding itself. Deterre hand-picked the mismatched terrazzo flooring as well as all of the vintage items in the bar, such as the cocoon lights by Achille Castiglioni. She also sought the small statement features like the red grout lining the glass blocks.

Left: The condensed back room, with larger sofas and its own bar, provides a more private setting for guests. Here Primo’s hosts parties and a weekly jazz night.

Right: F. Schumacher crafted the gorgeous velvet on the sensuous stools and banquets. The pops of color bring a bold and bright vibe to the windowless space.
Interlude
Kimoy Studios
145 Hudson Street

Founded by Juilliard-trained classical pianist Josh Kim, Interlude is an Asian tea and coffee cafe that serves its signature matcha tonic and homemade baked goods in a light-filled, minimalist space, designed by KIMOY Studios. Kim combined his passions for gastronomy, design, and hot drinks to open the business (which he runs with his sister and girlfriend) this summer. The bright white marble, polished black granite, and warm wood tones found throughout the cafe were hand-selected to mimic the look and feel of a grand piano.

Above: The owner mixed midcentury modern style with the simplicity of Danish design by bringing in pieces like Marcel Breuer’s Cesca Chairs and the Neu Table by HAY. The focal point of the space is the dramatic L-shaped cafe counter with marble and granite from Arena Stone Products in New Jersey.
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Neon, Y’all

Goodnight Charlie’s is a contemporary honky-tonk with proud Texas vernacular roots. By Elizabeth Blasius

“We didn’t want a Disney World experience at Goodnight Charlie’s, so we pared back,” said Gin Braverman, principal of Houston-based Gin Design Group (GDG), about the city’s Montrose neighborhood’s newest (and only) honky-tonk. “We didn’t want it to feel contrived.” In order to flesh out project architects Content Architecture’s contemporary structure for a musical lineup that ranges from twang to tonk, GDG began with Goodnight Charlie’s good bones and dressed them with simple, vernacular elements. The rectangular structure’s cedar-clad exterior is complemented by interiors of warm, accessible materials that would be at home in Texas’s barns and farmhouses.
Intro page: Goodnight Charlie’s provided Content Architecture and Gin Design Group the opportunity to craft a structure with vernacular Texas elements, creating an all new, modern honky-tonk and country music venue.

Previous spread: Goodnight Charlie’s welcomes with cool neon and cedar cladding, and the same type of recessed entrance as a traditional Texas house.

Above: Farmhouse sinks and custom wallpaper in a graphic, Texas-themed pattern complement glazed tile in each restroom.
Rough cedar and plywood dominate the interior, materials evocative of the simple, collaborative approach a community might take in a barn raising—and the cooperative process that came easy for the interior designer and Content, whose practices share a building. Galvanized aluminum paneling wraps an angled wall behind the bar and around the door to the kitchen—a utilitarian choice that ends brilliantly, as the aluminum picks up and diffuses the multiple light sources in the room, including a lattice of raw lightbulbs, the fresh neon signs of the bar logo, and a cheeky crescent moon behind the stage. Bar storage is achieved with rolltop doors set within a steel structure, where a rotating narrative of bottles and ephemera is allowed to build naturally, a scheme Gin Design Group put considerable intent behind. “It was important that nothing appeared staged,” Braverman added, “so the finishes and fixtures align with that direction.” Nested tables with benches in hardwood provide a flexible gathering space within the performance area, while warm leather high-top chairs in burnt sienna encourage patrons to (figuratively) saddle up to the wide bar top, rendered in concrete and powder-coated metal.

Beyond the bar area is a real-life Texas porch that opens out to the neighborhood, complete with swings hung on long steel chains and classic picnic tables. Looking up reveals the structure’s exposed trusses and cedar louvers. The restrooms are more intimate and detailed, with a portrait of Goodnight Charlie’s namesake—Charles Goodnight, the first cattle rancher in the Texas Panhandle—separating genders. Inside there are farmhouse sinks, and white tile that has a handmade texture. Wallpaper takes on a Federalist air, the red print featuring the Texas seal, the Alamo, and an eager American eagle above a wave of stars. “The materials are just broad enough,” added Braverman. “They are a nod to Texas in general.”
Left: Louvers provide ventilation on the porch while revealing the unfinished wood trusses within.

Above: A lattice of lightbulbs glow beside the stage during a performance.
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Drill Down on the Details

Toothsome designs that make going to the dentist a piece of cake. By Antonio Pacheco

We’ve all been there—harsh lighting, outdated fitness magazines, uncomfortable chairs in windowless rooms—the truth is that dentists’ offices are often as ugly as they are fear inducing. But every now and then, it’s possible to create medical offices that soothe rather than stress. To achieve this goal, some designers might focus on interesting wall detailing, access to daylight, or even innovative circulation.

We’ve collected examples that align all three approaches to show that when designers drill down into the details of dentistry, spaces can make patients smile.
On the other side of the pond, German architects Karhard Architektur + Design divide patient rooms from circulation and waiting areas with transparency instead of the usual poché.

In the offices for KU64 Dental Specialists, the firm deploys fritted glass walls and brightly patterned wallpapers depicting local flora and fauna for maximum dissociation. These colorful spaces are intended to provide visual distraction as well as personal comfort.

The offices include a dental surgery wing divided into sterile and nonsterile areas by a faceted airlock while also offering an area of themed recovery rooms to help patients come to. These loungelike rooms—cloaked in cross-stitched end-grain plywood, accented with photo murals depicting Baroque interiors, and filled with chrome-wrapped seating—look out over leafy, urban vistas.
For Santa Monica Orthodontics in California, Los Angeles–based Sharif, Lynch: Architecture uses subtle abstraction to create surprisingly kid-friendly spaces. With an emphasis on “graphic flatness and tectonic fullness,” the designers interrupt cool materials with dramatic points of visual interest to bridge the front- and back-of-house sections of the office.

The dichotomy is most pronounced where sliding acrylic and glass panels separate an open treatment room from a mix of ancillary spaces located beyond. The prismatic, dichromatic panels change color throughout the day, running from purple to gold as the lighting conditions behind them shift.

Mohamed Sharif, founding principal at Sharif, Lynch, said, “We wanted to break free of the typical associations we might have with normative medical spaces by creating details for anyone who cares to linger.”

**Santa Monica Orthodontics**
Sharif, Lynch: Architecture

Above: Sharif, Lynch: Architecture’s kid-friendly orthodontics office in Santa Monica features dichromatic glass wall panels that glide on glass sliding-door hardware by C.R. Laurence and a custom-made sink basin designed by Sharif, Lynch principal Mohamed Sharif.
Höweler + Yoon Architecture (HYA), on the other hand, takes an opposite tack by using patterned millwork and monochromatic, faceted surfaces to conceal medical equipment and storage spaces for the MINT dental clinic in Boston.

Here, the designers line an interior hallway with cabinets sheathed in CNC-milled, laminated Baltic birch plywood panels studded with pointillist representations of buoyant clouds. The arrangement, an effort to be “strategic with thickness,” according to Eric Höweler, founding principal at HYA, creates an “almost spalike appeal” to the spaces while also providing clear circulation routes as well as privacy for each of the operating suites.

An accent wall located behind a stark-white reception desk uses serial end-grain panels as a faceted backdrop for the office waiting areas, elements that help the firm develop an “exceptional project with a nonexceptional budget.”

Opposite: For the project, designers from Höweler + Yoon Architecture worked to fabricate a series of laminated Baltic birch plywood fins to create visual and material interest in the waiting areas and along the office hallways.

Above: The project features integrated storage units that are used to separate operating rooms from a central hallway as well as fritted-glass room dividers that provide privacy without minimizing daylight transmission between patient rooms.
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from ocean to office
Fractured Antiquity

GRT Architects has designed a bold interpretation of classical detailing. By Matthew Marani

GRT Architects, a Brooklyn-based firm founded by Rustam-Marc Mehta and Tal Schori, has developed a classically inspired cladding template dubbed “Flutes and Reeds.”

The off-the-shelf product is designed as a modular system of triangular concrete tiles that are arranged in varying increments and grid formats—imagine Gio Ponti’s midcentury Blu Ponti ceramic tiles with protruding elements. If the tiles are set in a conventional manner, they resemble the relative formality of Greco-Roman column detailing over an expansive triangular matrix.

According to GRT Architects, “Greek columns can be thought of as modules or tiles in a way. Their proportions have fixed rules; there are options for surface embellishments, base and top details. From that small set of instructions comes literally centuries of architecture—from the most austere to the playful acts of virtuosity.” In effect, this straightforward classical detailing can serve as plug-and-play components for contemporary design.

Above: The Reed tile can be arranged diagonally, unaligned, rotated, or quilted. In this example, a Single Reed tile wall follows the “Perfect Reed” arrangement, with each fold located approximately 8 inches from the next.

Next: Fluting—the shallow grooves that traditionally run vertical or diagonal along the surface of a column—can be rearranged into a wide variety of patterns. GRT Architects has designed two versions: Single Flute, which measures 8 inches and Triple Flute, measuring 4 inches.
The tiles, as a result of their standardized size, can be rotated and arranged to create unique patterns or erratic islands across surfaces. In total, GRT Architects has designed more than two dozen tile variations for four standard patterns: Single Flute, Triple Flute, Single Reed, and Double Reed.

Over the last half year, GRT Architects has collaborated with Kaza Concrete—a Hungarian concrete manufacturer specializing in bespoke accent walls—to debut the product at both the Clerkenwell and Milan Design weeks. Kaza uses a mixture consisting of fiber-reinforced concrete, marble powder, and a broad range of powdered pigments. The mixture is subsequently poured into a cast to imprint detailing and harden.

In both circumstances, Kaza Concrete assembled, designed, and fabricated the installations to highlight the possible layouts of GRT’s panels as well as the materiality of the manufacturer’s polished concrete. Notably, Kaza Concrete’s installation for the Milan Design Week was fashioned to resemble the base of a monumental column, laid out with a wildly irregular and fractured surface treatment.

Flutes and Reeds has been on the market since June, and it is currently being incorporated into GRT Architects’ design of a family home and studio in Duchess County and the renovation of a rectory in New York’s Harlem neighborhood.
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Put a Cork in It

By Gabrielle Golenda

Cork is an unique material characterized by its porous texture, softness, and lightweight quality. Historically, architects from Frank Lloyd Wright to Eliel Saarinen to Alvar Aalto to William Massie have favored the naturally environmentally sustainable material. Cork was first introduced in the built environment in 1904 as flooring, which was disseminated widely by the ’20s. Into the ’30s, Wright favored the bark for its natural properties and look, incorporating it into his organic architecture projects (most notably in the bathrooms in Fallingwater, completed in 1937). There are also contemporary works deploying cork in pleasantly unexpected ways, like the raw cork floor in Massie’s American House in 2008. These new manifestations of the material—in furniture, interior design, and architecture—mark the beginning of a cork revival.

Cork has its drawbacks, and has thus remained a niche product: It is hand-harvested, and therefore expensive. When it is prepared for manufacturing, it is heavy to ship. Ten years ago, there were only a handful of cork molding producers around the world (mostly based in Spain and Portugal, where more than half of the world’s cork supply grows). But now more companies are willing to produce cork, and new facilities are even opening up to exclusively manufacture it.

Why? Designers and architects alike are thinking about how building materials can be utilized aesthetically, but also how they can create healthy living environments. What better than a completely nontoxic, waterproof, and highly insulating substance that is also a rapidly renewable resource? For these reasons alone, cork will become ever pervasive within architecture and design in years to come.

↑ Sobreiro Collection
Campana Studio

Humberto and Fernando Campana of Brazil-based Campana Studio designed a collection devised almost entirely of cork: a chair made from natural cork alone and three cabinets fashioned from a wooden structure made from expanded natural cork agglomerate (a material produced by heating the cork that does not contain any additives). The design duo spent time at the major Portuguese cork supplier Amorim to experiment and develop the materials they used to create the furniture before it debuted at the annual Experimenta Portugal arts and culture festival.

campanas.com.br
Assemblage Side Tables
Alain Gilles for BONALDO

Belgium-based designer Alain Gilles designed a collection of whimsical wood-topped side tables supported by a bulging cork base. The interesting composition creates a dialogue within the piece itself, considering cork is generally thought of as lightweight but is supporting the heavier material. The raw base contrasts with the stained wood, almost as if the two entities were not meant to be paired together.

bonaldo.it

ARMCHAIR
KDVA Architects

Russian architect Koloskov Dmitry of KDVA Architects dreamed up a cork and metal armchair that stays true to the classic form dating back 2,000 years. The chrome legs support the two arches that form the seat, attached together with just four screws. It is made to order, delivered all the way from Moscow.

kdva.co

Drifted Stool
Lars Beller Fjetland for Hem

Norwegian designer Lars Beller Fjetland likes to make furniture from recycled materials. This charming stool is no exception. Inspired by pieces of misshapen, smooth cork washed ashore along the beach in the small Norwegian town of Øygarden, Fjetland concocted a stool with a warm oak frame that supports a seat made with both recycled and new cork.

hem.com
Brazilian designer Gisela Simas of Original Practical Design teamed up with Portuguese cork producer Amorim to develop a coffee table that was unveiled at the Rio + Design showcase at Salone del Mobile this year. The table features a circular form with spindlelike arms attached to a central supporting base.

epoca.pt

Parisian furniture purveyor Nova Obiecta offers a limited edition of 100 stools fashioned in cork and brass. The name 3.21 refers to the average ratio between each section of cork and the dividing brass ring. The solid volume comprises new, French-harvested bark and recycled particles.

novaobiecta.com

Kevin Walz of New York–based walzworkinc designed a cork and chrome lounge chair in 1998. Newly reissued and made to order, the curvaceous seat is now entirely made out of cork, providing natural ergonomics without structural fittings.

walzworkinc.com
Aptly dubbed Mini and Standard, these child- and adult-size stools, designed by Daniel Michalik, flex and pivot under the weight of the sitter. Making calculated slices in a solid piece of cork, Michalik produces each seat himself with his simple yet laborious self-invented production process (which is why the lead time is 8–10 weeks).

ligne-roset.com

Independent, Paris-based English designer Lee West cooked up a sofa end table by heating expanded natural cork and coating it with a varnish. The lightweight material is then reinforced by injecting polyurethane foam inside, making it sturdy enough for resting legs, sitting on, or holding dinner plates.

kindermodern.com

Corkdrop
Skram

This stool/side table is made with a solid walnut core swathed in cork. Upon request, custom sizes are available.

skramfurniture.com
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*Words by Gabrielle Golenda*
*Images by Veronica Sage McAvoy*

1. Brass Pull Bar  
   Buster + Punch  
   busterandpunch.us

2. Flex Knob  
   Belwith Keeler  
   belwith-keeler.com

3. Tab Edge Pull  
   Atlas Homewares  
   atlashomewares.com

4. Vale Knob  
   Belwith Keeler  
   belwith-keeler.com

5. Atlantic Knob  
   O & G Studio  
   oandgstudio.com

6. Hollywood Hills Cabinet Bar  
   Baldwin Hardware  
   baldwinhardware.com
Velvet Silvermine

1 Hollywood Hills Knob
Baldwin Hardware
baldwinhardware.com

2 U-Shape Pull
INOX
inoxproducts.com

3 Loop Pull
Atlas Homewares
atlashomewares.com

4 Voile Pull
Klodea
klodea.com

5 Chrome Knob Elisabeth
Norse Interiors
norseinteriors.com

6 Adamo & Eva cotton velvet
Dedar
dedar.com
All That Glitters Is Gold

1. Newport Rosette with White Knob
   - Grandeur Hardware
   - grandeurhardware.com

2. Vale Knob
   - Belwith Keeler
   - belwith-keeler.com

3. Hollywood Hills Knob
   - Baldwin Hardware
   - baldwinhardware.com

4. Vale Pull
   - Belwith Keeler
   - belwith-keeler.com

5. Nouveau Knob
   - Häfele
   - Hafele.com

6. Circulaire Rosette with Coventry Knob
   - Grandeur Hardware
   - grandeurhardware.com

7. Atlantic Knob
   - O & G Studio
   - oandgstudio.com

8. Flex Knob
   - Belwith Keeler
   - belwith-keeler.com

9. Splendido velvet
   - Dedar
   - dedar.com
Heavy Metal

1 ESOR Pull
Sugatsune
sugatsune.com

2 Nouveau Handle
Häfele
Hafele.com

3 Flex Knob
Belwith Keeler
belwith-keeler.com

4 Off Center Pull
Atlas Homewares
atlashomewares.com

5 Vale Pull
Belwith Keeler
belwith-keeler.com

6 Nouveau Knob
Häfele
Hafele.com

7 Ultra Euro Pull
Atlas Homewares
atlashomewares.com
Looking Glassy

1. Clear Fluted Crystal Cup Pull
   Nostalgic Warehouse
   nostalgicwarehouse.com

2. Clear Crystal Cup Pull
   Nostalgic Warehouse
   nostalgicwarehouse.com

3. Gather Vase
   Good Thing
   supergoodthing.com

4. Carre Tall Plate with Baguette
   Amber Crystal Knob
   Grandeur Hardware
   grandeurhardware.com

5. Grab Bar
   Newport Brass
   newportbrass.com

6. Cheetah Glass Square Knob
   Atlas Homewares
   atlashomewares.com
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In a Danish fjord, Studio Olafur Eliasson completes a curvaceous brick headquarters for an investment company. By William Menking

She's a Brick... Hus
Previous: 360 Degree Compass (2009), a sculpture by Eliasson and his studio, hangs in an office. The Shell chairs by Hans J. Wegner frame a table designed by Olafur Eliasson and Studio Olafur Eliasson. The curtains are by Kvadrat.

Above: At the base of a spiral stair, a mezzanine lamp designed by the artist and his studio directs light upward through a glass ring and throws a pattern of concentric circles onto the ceiling.

Opposite: In the canteen, light fixtures are placed in the elliptical voids in the concrete ceiling. These cast light on tables designed by Eliasson, Behmann, and Studio Olafur Eliasson, with seating by Hans J. Wegner for PP Møbler.
Fjordenhus in Vejle, Denmark, is the first completed building by artist Olafur Eliasson and architect Sebastian Behmann. Together with Studio Olafur Eliasson, the duo have created a thoughtfully conceived and crafted structure in the bay of a Danish fjord. In their earlier architectural collaborations—like the curtain wall design for the Harpa Reykjavik Concert Hall in Reykjavik, Iceland—their work has displayed an attention to detail, composition, materials, and craftsmanship that carries over into this unique commission.

Once they convinced their client, Kirk Kapital, to build its headquarters in the water of an underutilized shipping port, they created a cylindrical concrete structure as a reference to the area’s surrounding grain silos.

The building is composed of four intersecting concrete volumes arrayed around an open public space, and faced with nearly a million custom-designed bricks. The four-story volumes morph in elevation from ellipses to circles, and out of these are carved porous openings that dramatically frame views of the fjord. Built atop a man-made island with a basement foundation, Fjordenhus looks like a medieval rampart as imagined by Louis Kahn. But up close, its exterior walls are a pattern of endlessly and beautifully textured color.

The designers created 15 different hues of unglazed brick, added a smattering of blue, green, and silver glazed bricks, and then meticulously laid them out in digital drawings to create a patterned composition for the entire building. The brick colors were selected to reflect their immediate surroundings (more blue at the top of the building and gray for the stairwells), and they are meant to embody the changing weather and light conditions of the site. The torqued elliptical forms are intended to create a series of dynamic, flowing spaces that are “constantly calibrating to allow the user to trust themselves,” according to Eliasson, as they enter and pass through the building. The artist cited Erwin Panofsky’s criticism of neoclassicism and how it prescribes the inhabitation of buildings as an example of what not to do in designing architectural space. Eliasson wanted to move away from classical hierarchical planning to a more democratic, participatory architecture that he considers a hallmark of Danish democracy.

The building is entered from the quay by a footbridge that leads into a circular public space with three of the artist’s sculptures and a mirrored ceiling piece that reflects the light of the fjord back into the occupied public space.

A circular elevator that features dramatic top and bottom lighting, along with a surrounding stair that rises on splayed armatures, take users up into work spaces fitted with furnishings, lighting, built-in cabinets, and interior stairs all designed by the firm. The placement of furniture is purposefully haphazard so that users “democratically” negotiate their own paths through the space, giving them co-authorship of the building.

In addition, Eliasson designed table and floor lamps made of deep green glass and metal, as well as built-in lighting that is equal parts functional lighting and sculptural object. Lower floors have elegant, circular concrete pads with coffered lighting overhead. The top floor has a globular,
Faceted sculpture placed below a skylight that throws sunlight over the space. In addition, the rooms have a series of Eliasson-designed fixtures elegantly cobbled together from a hanging LED light fixture that casts light upward through a glass lens, creating a pattern of concentric circles on the ceiling.

This unique practice is based on an artistic sensibility devoted to materiality, craft, and an understanding of form, developed through Eliasson’s years of experimentation as a trained sculptor. As a result, it is a challenge to more traditional architecture practices. Furthermore, the designer’s insistence on the necessity of creating a democratic, user-controlled space means Fjordenhus comes as close to a contemporary Gesamtkunstwerk (or total work of art) as we have yet experienced in the 21st century.
Opposite: On the top floor, Eliasson’s globular sculpture *Den Indre Himmel* (The Inner Sky, 2018) is suspended in a skylight that rises out of the roof. The work scatters patterned illumination below.

Above: A footbridge leads to the double-height public space on the ground floor of Fjordenhus. The building, composed of four intersecting cylinders, rises out of the harbor and is also accessible through a subterranean passage.
Dream Factory

Corrugated steel flows like fabric in Spiegel Aihara Workshop’s design for Casper Labs.

By Sukjong Hong
Previous spread: Metal-draped pods contain project rooms among the meeting areas, flexible work stations, and prototyping spaces. Custom bar height tables by Tomlinson Woodworks and Normann Copenhagen Form Stools accent spaces of interaction and collaboration beyond the common area, where the Hem Palo Chaise offers a place to rest and converse.

Above: Rather than attaching anything to the surface of the corrugated metal walls, SAW chose to utilize the power of transparency. In the entryway, the Casper logo glows behind a layer of perforated steel. When the light goes off, the sign completely disappears. The custom desk by SAW slides completely out of the way when necessary.
A few years ago, it would have been impossible to predict that Casper, a startup with a single product, would launch an entire industry of mattresses ordered sight unseen online and become a global sleep powerhouse. It was inevitable that the company would outgrow the house where it was brainstorming the next breakthrough. That its new prototyping space, Casper Labs, is now based in a former industrial laundry service in San Francisco’s Mission District is an apt metaphor for the city’s tech-driven transformation.

The company tapped hometown design firm Spiegel Aihara Workshop (SAW), led by principals Dan Spiegel and Megumi Aihara, to convert the warehouse space into its R&D headquarters. SAW’s design for the 11,500-square-foot, two-story office attests to the demands of an industrial workspace where mattresses and heavy prototypes are tested and hauled around. But it is also filled with nods to the company’s association with pillowy softness.

The architects achieve this with an unlikely material—corrugated steel in a range of perforated profiles that are meticulously layered to read like fabric. “With a rough industrial material, it was about finding ways to give it a textile nature,” explained principal Dan Spiegel. “Once we had that in play, we could experiment with transparency.”

On the ground floor, the white, powder-coated steel unravels at different heights, wrapping the metal shop, a testing lab, and a wood shop with rounded corners that reference the company’s iconic mattress. The opaque surface fades to a translucent screen as it rises above eye level. In other areas, the steel walls mask storage and service areas through a one-way transparency, admitting natural light without allowing views in. This play between opacity and transparency is further demonstrated in the entry area, where the Casper logo glows behind a corrugated surface. All it takes is the flick of a light switch for the letters, along with all the other signage in the space, to disappear. “We like the mystery that set up,” said Spiegel. “Even though there’s a lot of what ended up being opaque surfaces, you could begin to imagine that all of them had something going on just behind that skin.”

With much of the program left open-ended for collaboration, the main work areas feature doorless openings lined in oiled steel plate that echo the steel columns that came with the space. The custom entryway desk continues the motif of rounded corners and transparency but incorporates a warm wood framing that takes its cue from the wood joists in the ceiling, with the whole piece sliding easily out of the way to access storage beyond it.

Another design touch that highlights the tension between heavy and light, the industrial and the domestic, hovers above the common area for all-hands meetings. There, SAW’s custom lighting fixture floats like a geometric cloud composed of 117 Casper pillowcases folded and twisted onto a welded, tubed steel frame. It is details like these that elevate the lab beyond a typical industrial facility and gesture at the space’s raison d’être: a good night’s sleep.
Above: Shop and project spaces are arranged to provide a continuous flow between design and prototyping. Projects are displayed on the custom magnetic pin-up boards designed by SAW in each room, which are outfitted with maple top project tables by Bench-Tek and Steelcase’s Think 3D Knit Back chairs.

Next: The Pillow Cloud by SAW incorporates Casper’s own pillow-cases and floats above the main common space, softening sound and light for all-hands meetings or break-out groups. A custom sliding door, also made out of perforated steel, masks industrial shelving and storage areas while still offering a hint of what lies beyond.
Quite the Conundrum

Madderlake’s simple vision for this hillside mountain house protects it from avalanches. By Sydney Franklin
A modernist-inspired mountain home outside of Aspen, Colorado, sports gorgeous wood paneling and concrete walls detailed in the style of Louis Kahn’s early architecture. Dreamed up by Madderlake Design for an active couple and their championship hunting dogs, the 7,500-square-foot Conundrum House and Studio brings a minimalist Japanese sensibility to the remote landscape of the Rockies’ Castle Creek Valley.

Design principal Tom Pritchard, a former long-time resident of Aspen, said his team was trying to create a twist on the typical chaletlike, rustic cabin. “We were aiming for luxury rooted in simplicity,” he said. “As you move throughout the house, from space to space, the details feel as if they came from the hands of craftsmen.”

But that personal touch was intentional. Madderlake selected materials that fell in line with this natural and effortless aesthetic, such as the simple graining found in Douglas fir, weathered western red cedar, and reclaimed heart pine that are featured on the floors, siding, and ceiling. According to Pritchard, mountain homes tend to be grandiose with massive logs and heavy patterns. Madderlake’s low-hanging, multistory structure combines stucco, soapstone, and Japanese plaster to bring the overall tone of the building back down to earth.

One of the biggest design challenges Madderlake faced was protecting the Conundrum House from the threat of an avalanche. The design team incorporated a concrete retaining wall to complement the structure’s steel core, and broke up the mass of the building by burying the majority of living spaces deep within the hillside. They then sculpted the landscape to minimize the impact of a potential snowslide.

Though much of the house is underground, Madderlake designed the inside levels as a series of steps with small window units that diffuse light into the depths of the building. The result is a bright, inviting interior that’s as elegant as it is cozy.
Opposite: Using various types of wood with simple grains such as Longleaf Lumber’s reclaimed heart pine, Madderlake outfitted the interior balustrades, floors, and ceilings with warm, timber tones.

Above: “We designed the house specifically for flow,” said Pritchard. “You can access the outside from almost every place in the house, and in terms of visual quality, you almost never look into just one room.”
Above: The luxurious quality of the interior, Pritchard said, came from “lovingly putting together quiet and appropriate materials.” Madderlake worked with Colorado Architectural Millwork Supply and M. Bohike Veneers to create the smooth, Siberian larch-clad cabinets in the closet.

Opposite: Daylight can even reach the deepest parts of the house, including the edge of the wine cellar, which features a Shou Sugi Ban wall from Delta Millworks.
Opposite: Madderlake constructed a concrete impact wall that’s sculpted into the hillside. It provides additional support for the steel-framed structure in case of an avalanche.

Above: The couple’s studio sits at the highest point in the home. Windows by Albertini offer seamless views of the valley.
Norman Jaffe

By William Menking
Modernized
Norman Jaffe's iconic Long Island houses were designed in the 1970s and '80s, when the island's East End went from a beach getaway of primarily small, nonwinterized summer bungalows to a posh resort of gigantic, ostentatious mansions. Though Jaffe was displeased with the change, it's hard not to think his houses unwittingly anticipated or precipitated the shift. Along with Andrew Geller and Horace Gifford, Jaffe made the island a leading location for experimental architecture. His material palette of weathered wood, taken from the farmhouses of the area, along with his bold, striking forms, created the Hamptons look. The literal flatness of the island and its extraordinary quality of light, bouncing off the surrounding sea, provided the perfect tableaux for a holiday architecture that wanted to stand out and be seen.

By the time Jaffe drowned swimming off a Hampton beach in 1993, he had designed more than 50 houses on Long Island. While some have been torn down, there are still dozens that dot the region and are beloved and carefully maintained by their owners. In 2014, his Schlachter beach house in Bridgehampton was restored by a respectful owner. More recently, Jaffe's own 1986 house has received a careful modernization that shows perfectly how to update and at the same time improve an iconic work of architecture. Nick Martin of Martin Architects, a Hamptons-based architect and builder, found the house for a client and set to work redesigning and restoring it. The original residence was a single structure, but over time, Jaffe added three additional outbuildings surrounding a swimming pool, like so many other farm compounds on Long Island. Martin removed a seldom-used second floor balcony in the main house, merged the space into a new master bedroom, enlarged the living room by joining it with the original foyer, and added new public and private entry points on a north/south axis with the pool. In order to capture the special light of the Hamptons, he dramatically enlarged the windows facing the swimming pool courtyard. As in most modernizations of older houses, the kitchen and bathroom received the most upgrades. The house is now the definition of the perfect Hamptons summer home in 2018. Its striking shingled facade, with a large sloping roof and prominent central chimney cleared of an overgrown pergola, now stands out without overwhelming its site, as so many contemporary Hampton houses do today.
Previous spread: Looking out over the pool at the East End home

Above: The music room with wood trusses above, refurbished by Martin Architects
Bubbletecture: A Temporal State of Affairs in Architecture

By Gabrielle Golenda

There’s been something of a renaissance in inflatable architecture. In the past few years alone, this ephemeral typology has been at Collective Design Fair, Performa 17, and the Park Avenue Armory. Inflatables emerged in the 1960s as a means of expressing dissatisfaction with established cultural norms about life, work, and society. They were seen as potentially revolutionary structures that allowed for experimentation with space in order to influence social, psychological, and physical cognition through the built environment.

Inflatables were originally invented by the U.S. military with Cornell aeronautical lab engineer Walter Bird to deploy radio antennae in 1948. Bird, often referred to as the father of the field, is credited for taking this military technology and popularizing it in 1959 by collaborating with Paul Weidlinger on an inflatable roof for the Boston Arts Center Theater. In the ’60s and ’70s, when techno-optimism about the future reached its peak, Buckminster Fuller proposed a massive dome over Manhattan, while Frei Otto envisioned one to shelter 40,000 people in the Arctic Circle.

What came next in inflatotecture was symptomatic of the counterculture era, which viewed it as a way to construct space for dissent and experimentation while taking advantage of lighter, stronger construction methods and new audiovisual technologies.

Ant Farm, a San Francisco–based architecture studio, designed inexpensive and disposable structures out of vinyl for counterculture “happenings,” and anyone attending them could buy the group’s Inflatocookbook, a comic detailing step-by-step how to make one’s own enclosure (a practice common among collectives to disseminate information and design about inflatables). Other contemporaries included the U.K.’s Archigram, Italy’s Archizoom, and Germany-based Haus-Rucker-Co.—all of whom envisioned inflatable architecture as a way to explore theories about spatial production, social organization, and consumption.

Experimental inflatable architecture continues to be a form that designers use to examine contemporary social problems and to radically play with form and space for its own sake.

The following projects stretch the medium to its limits, showing how the next generation of inflatables can generate new experiences.
Looking to practice new forms of architecture outside of the traditionally accepted profession, New York–based designer Jesse Seegers employs the term “spatial practice,” a framework to create structures that draw from architectural knowledge but are equally related to other disciplines.

For example, the Potlatch Pavilion was an ethereal inflatable for a gift exchange party, referencing the Pacific Northwest indigenous American tradition where one’s status is derived from how much you can give away, rather than how much wealth you possess. Here, the inflatable was deployed to “construct alternative systems of political economy.”

Seegers’s recent projects include a temporary yoga space called Yoga Dome, which premiered at the opening of Sky Ting Yoga; an installation at a Pioneer Works exhibition on Ant Farm; a concert backdrop for musician SOPHIE’s live tour; and an inflatable landscape for musician Oneohtrix Point Never’s M.Y.R.I.A.D. concert at New York’s Park Avenue Armory.

In 2017, Seegers helped French, Los Angeles–based architect François Perrin bring Reyner Banham and François Dallegret’s 1965 conceptual drawing The Environment Bubble to life as a site-specific installation for dance workshops in Brooklyn Bridge Park and Central Park as part of Performa 17.
Alex Schweder

“An inflatable space in process speaks to the bodies we have. It’s a fleshier, time-based architecture,” said Alex Schweder. The self-proclaimed performance architect began working with inflatables in 2005 at the American Academy in Rome, where his first blow-up installation, Sick Building Sequence, encapsulated feathers floating inside of a translucent plastic “room.”

Since then, his inflatables have traversed Collective Design Fair, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, the Venice Architecture Biennale, Tate Britain, and Performa 17. These include a “room” with photosensitive fur, an inflatable hotel inside of a cherry picker, a floor-to-ceiling mass that collapses and expands into and away from itself, and a spiderlike robot that inflates and deflates to reconfigure space on a dance floor.

What’s next? Schweder is working with a team of international artists on a traveling show that responds to László Moholy-Nagy’s Mechanized Eccentric, which will debut at the Bauhaus 100th anniversary next year.
Participants can pass through Schweder’s Snowballing Doorway, an archway that forms and disappears. As air is pushed back and forth, one side inflates and the other collapses.
Seattle Design Nerds

Formed in 2014 as a volunteer nonprofit organization dedicated to design for the public realm, the group is officially the Seattle-based chapter of the international Design Nerds Society. Known for their inflatables, Seattle Design Nerds is a multidisciplinary collab started by Jeremy Reeding and Trevor Dykstra. The pair works with other local architects, designers, and artists on public interest projects to “make Seattle a little more awesome.”

True to their mission, Reeding and Dykstra’s first inflatable was a large-scale installation for the 2014 Seattle Design Festival Block Party, a pop-up space shaped like a giant monster and filled with random objects for play. The team veered into the conceptual realm with The Gas Trap, a performance work where a car’s tailpipe seemingly fills the inflatable to illustrate our dependance on gasoline.

Last year they dreamed up an installation at the Seattle Art Museum’s Olympic Sculpture Park composed of eight cuddly, inflatable orbs that change color when bopped. For the 2017 Seattle Design Festival Block Party, the group envisioned an illuminated inflatable mural crafted by visitors at the event with velcro pixels. Their latest work for Cooper Hewitt’s Design with the Other 90% features a giant egg-shaped inflatable that will debut at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Discovery Center in Seattle in mid-September.
Nicolas KK

A young Nicolas KK grew up in Brazil in a family of hot air ballooners. From these beginnings, he developed an innate understanding and appreciation of the form. Putting his “family stuff” to good use, he started making his own blow-ups while studying industrial design at the Maryland Institute College of Art. That trajectory has continued through collaboration with digital, audio, and light artists in a shared studio in Bushwick, Brooklyn, called Future Space.

Inspired by the inflatables of the 1960s and '70s, Nicolas KK produces experimental structures by applying his expertise in computational design. His digitally driven experimental performance pieces create “dynamic” qualities and always include a programmable element that directly responds to existing digital infrastructures or naturally occurring biomimetic systems.

Nicolas KK plans to study Integrative technologies and architectural design research at the University of Stuttgart in Germany, where he will continue to work with inflatables and collaborate with other artists on projects that respond to the emerging computational environment. In December, New York’s New Museum will debut his work in an online exhibition described as “the original live desktop theater internet television show.”
Pneuhaus

Matt Muller, Augie Lehrecke, and Levi Bedall spearhead the Rhode Island–based design collective Pneuhaus dedicated to the mastery of all things inflatable, specifically spatial designs, temporary structures, contemporary art, and large-scale installations.

It all started at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in 2014 when Muller and Lehrecke designed a handful of different inflatables inspired by Art Farm’s Inflatocookbook. The university hired them to continue to explore those ideas and design a space for the school’s annual design conference. Soon after, Bedall joined Muller and Lehrecke when they got their first professional commission to design-build and perform a circus for the RISD Museum.

Since then, the trio have imagined transient spaces for Spotify, Burning Man, and Brown University. Ranging from inflatable fabric prisms built around the fundamental properties of light to inflatables outfitted with pinhole cameras, their growing list of projects develop as iterations of previous works. Their most recent project, Compound Camera no. 2, is a new iteration of the pinhole camera inflatable dome as a giant tunnel at the LUMA Projection Arts Festival in Binghampton, New York.
In Mexico, handcrafts and folk art have shaped society for centuries. Often referred to as *artesanía*—a blend of indigenous and European designs—the country's rich history of artisanal techniques has generated some of the most celebrated handmade objects, from the decorative to the utilitarian. Today, while crafts products enjoy a resurgence in popularity, inequalities persist, posing a number of obstacles in sustaining centuries-old traditions.

Since 2009, the Oaxaca-based organization Innovando la Tradición has been invested in rethinking the imperatives of clay-based crafts, while promoting sustainable practices. Besides running educational activities across potters’ communities in the region, the group's commercial branch, Colectivo 1050°, identifies opportunities for the distribution of handmade objects to contemporary and high-end markets. *AN Interior* contributor Benoît Loiseau speaks with cofounder Diego Mier y Terán about the organization's challenges and hopes.
AN INTERIOR  You’ve spoken extensively about the risks of seeing Oaxacan pottery disappear. Are you noticing any progress?

COLECTIVO  It’s likely that 40 percent of the villages will stop producing pottery within our lifetime. That said, I think there’s hope, and we have seen villages revive their craft traditions. There’s currently a trend in the market for crafts and handmade products, and we are witnessing an increased interest in traditional pottery and ceramics. It is one of our missions to elevate the economic value of traditional pottery, but also its cultural and symbolic value. Ultimately, though, our goal is to change the narrative around how artisans are perceived and presented in the dominant discourse of institutions—one based on the exotification of otherness—from museums, NGOs, designers, chefs, and government.

AN  Do you find that younger generations are interested in taking up the craft? Is there an issue of perception?

C  For young people, to see their parents struggling financially in the profession is clearly not an incentive. Earth is seen as something dirty, not elegant, cool, or modern. For that generation it often feels more dignified to build cars or computers. But we have seen changes when communities start earning more, with increased sales. The whole relationship within the family then changes, with children looking to take part in the workshops. We just had an exhibition at the Franz Mayer Museum [Mexico City], where we showed traditional pieces, made in the present day. It’s a big change; it’s really saying that the craft is alive. Clay is so ingrained in the history of Mexico—and of human-kind—if given a little window, people will engage.

AN  A number of contemporary designers in Mexican cities work closely with artisans and craftsmen. How do you envisage best practice?

C  Best practice is in the making, but I don’t see a critical discussion taking place around design in Mexico at the moment, particularly in terms of colonizing practices. Designers are fixed on the fetishization of crafts, with little consideration for social change. It’s a dangerous and harmful situation for artisanal communities because designers are reproducing inequalities.

AN  In August you curated the IV Encuentro Nacional Alfarero Independiente, the fourth edition of the national gathering of potters and artisans from 12 states and 25 different villages, which gathered over 85 participants this year. What was the focus of the event?
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Above: Cabuche tableware is produced in Santa Maria Atzompa, the only village in Oaxaca that makes glazed clay. The glaze is the result of two years of research and is fired in experimental kilns that were developed by Innovando la Tradición in collaboration with Xaquixe studio.

C The main focus was on sharing knowledge. It is very rare for artisans, particularly potters, to share knowledge and techniques with other villages, even less so other states. On the one hand, because the work demands to be in a closed environment, but also because there’s a certain level of competition—they’re nervous their work would be copied.

AN Can you tell me about one of your most significant pieces?

C The Tonaltepec Bowl is made with a very unique technique. Archaeologists have found examples in the area dating from as far back as 4,000 years. Still 30 years ago, most of the women in that remote village worked with clay, selling their products at the local market. When we visited in 2012, only five ladies were working with clay, and two years later, they had basically stopped, because the market had disappeared. So we started a series of workshops with the children in the village and other members of the community. Altogether, this generated somewhat of a revival, and production resumed. The bowl made it to Noma’s pop-up restaurant in Tulum last year.

AN How do you redistribute profit, and ensure that your activities are sustainable?

C Most of the products we sell are continuous. We test them, to see if the market responds to them. Forty to 50 percent of the retail price of the product goes back to the artisans. The rest goes to operations—maintaining shops, administration, packaging—then there’s a marginal 10 percent profit that pays for the activities of Innovando la Tradición.
A Broken Dream Worth Saving

As it celebrates its 50th anniversary, Mexico City’s Ruta de la Amistad—the Mexican Olympics’ public sculpture corridor—is being celebrated with a program of exhibitions and educational activities. But can we really separate the route’s humanistic aspirations from the troubled realities of 1968?  

By Benoît Loiseau
Soon after Mexico City was designated to host the 1968 Olympics, the idea of a year-long cultural program emerged—one which would come to shape the ethos of the games for years to come. Hinting at the Greek Olympics' legacy, the Mexican Cultural Olympiad would deploy 20 cultural events and projects throughout the year while promoting a modern discourse of peace at a time when the cold war profoundly divided the world.

As part of the program, the Polish-born, Mexican artist and architect Mathias Goeritz (who coined the concept of “Emotional Architecture” with Luis Barragán) proposed an ambitious public sculptures route integrated with the city as a way to respond to its rapid urbanization. La Ruta de la Amistad (or the Route of Friendship), as it was named, would offer new ways of navigating the capital while making art available to the masses and celebrating international dialogue. The proposal was received with great enthusiasm from the chair of the Mexican Olympic Organizing Committee, the influential architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez.

In the lead-up to the Olympics, a total of 22 sculptures were commissioned from 19 artists and architects, including the Uruguayan artist Gonzalo Fonseca, the French artist Olivier Seguin, the American sculptor Alexander Calder, and the Mexican sculptor Ángela Gurria. Goeritz's curatorial brief was simple: All sculptures should be abstract, of monumental scale, and use concrete as their main material. The project would become the largest sculptural thoroughfare in the world, connecting Olympics venues across a distance of 11 miles—and a great source of pride for Mexico.

However, a week and a half before the official start of the games, the route, like the rest of the Cultural Olympiad, was obscured by the Massacre of Tlatelolco, in which the Mexican military and the police killed at least 300 students and civilians protesting government repression and corruption. Politicians, used to controlling every aspect of Mexican society, showed little patience for the demonstrations, which they feared would damage their cherished reputation as Olympics hosts. For the government, the games had become a platform to project its progressive, modern ideals and to challenge the perception that it was a developing country. Fifty years on, the sculptures stand neglected, in a state of near decay, like the remnants of a broken dream.
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Above: Station 13, Articulated Wall/Muro Articulo, by the Austrian Herbert Bayer. Ruta de la Amistad.
Opposite: Historical image of Station 9 by Todd Williams on La Ruta, Mexico City.

Above: Part of the Columbia GSAPP exhibition No. 9, which closed in February 2018, this work by Mexican architect Frida Escobedo reimagines Station 9, *The Magic Wheel/La Rueda Magica*, at La Ruta by artist Todd Williams, who represented the United States in 1968.
“In Mexico, the route isn’t seen as something important. Not for the people, nor the government,” lamented Luis Javier de la Torre, president of Patronato Ruta de la Amistad, as he toured us around its principal site, now overshadowed by the infamous Periferico, a dystopic, elevated highway crossing the city. The organization he cofounded in 1994 with Javier Ramírez Campuzano (the son of Ramírez Vázquez) is in charge of conserving the sculptures and promoting their legacy. Prior to this, the route was largely abandoned and subjected to vandalism. The Patronato was able to restore and relocate a number of pieces at risk of deterioration, creating a centralized location composed of 13 works between 2011 and 2013.

To mark the Route’s 50th anniversary, the Patronato is launching a number of activities with partner organizations on a shoestring budget. The Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes is opening an exhibition about it this October, scheduled to coincide with Design Week Mexico (October 10 to 15). Meanwhile, the official program of World Design Capital Mexico City 2018 has incorporated educational projects to bring awareness to the route. “Its values live on,” argued de la Torre.

So why does the route fail to receive the public interest and support it deserves? According to de la Torre, a combination of a conflicted sense of national identity, a lack of understanding, and the collective trauma of 1968 are responsible. “We don’t have a proper identity as a country,” he explained, nodding to Mexican poet Octavio Paz’s The Labyrinth of Solitude, a series of essays that discusses the existential tension between colonial and indigenous cultures in the country. “No one believed that as a society we were capable of running the Olympics in ways that would be replicated by others around the world,” he continued.

Most important, the political turmoil associated with 1968 overbearingly shaped the country’s consciousness of that moment. “This is where the dream broke,” said Mexican architect Frida Escobedo, this year’s Serpentine Pavilion designer, when we visited her studio. At the recent Biennale d’Architecture d’Orléans, Escobedo revisited the Ruta de la Amistad by presenting a reproduction of the metal frame behind the sculpture by Olivier Seguin. The precarious-looking, welded steel structure—now permanently installed at Le Parc Floral de La Source in Orléans, France—was inspired by an installation shot of the original work, which the architect discovered while visiting the archives of the FRAC Centre in France. “The picture presented the reality of 1968,” Escobedo recounted, reflecting on the ambiguous promise of modernism in the construction of Mexico’s national identity. “It’s all a spectacle.”

“We haven’t been able to separate things,” explained de la Torre of the troubled legacy of 1968. “I think that now, there is an opportunity for both narratives to coexist.” But should the Olympics’ cultural legacy really be separated from its political context? Before the army opened fire at the crowd on October 2, 1968, anti-government protesters were chanting, “¡No queremos olímpiadas, queremos revolución!” (“We don’t want the Olympics, we want a revolution!”)
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Cambridge, Massachusetts–based WOJR, named after founder and principal William O’Brien Jr., cross-pollinated these concepts to design the objects of Other Masks, a collection that transposed a cold architectural language into playful masks for a show at Balts Projects in Zurich, Switzerland. Seven unique masks and a stone bas-relief were fabricated by Quarra Stone Company using robotic milling and traditional sculpture techniques.

“For WOJR, the making of architecture is the making of artifacts,” said O’Brien. “To think about the design of a work of architecture as such is to regard the acts of making form and reading form as simultaneous and inseparable.”

The making and reading of form in this case is the inherent cultural value that nearly every society places on masks as personal objects that are often metaphors for identity, either obscuring or allowing subjects to bring their true selves to the surface, and asking viewers to imagine their fantastic backstories.

Other Masks is an offshoot of Mask House, an ongoing WOJR project that, if built, would see a cabin rise in the woods of upstate New York. Mask House was designed as a place of solemn contemplation, where the client would be able to mourn his deceased brother in peace.
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