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Editor’s Note

Over a month in, 2021 is looking a lot like 2020. We may have a different president occupying the White House, and several competing vaccines at the ready, but the pandemic has yet to release its grip on daily life.

Looking to the A&D industry, the inability to congregate has posed problems for designers and manufacturers alike. Trade shows, conferences, and other banner events that once structured the calendar year haven’t resumed and will not until at least the fall. The Venice Architecture Biennale, already long postponed, promises to be the exception; organizers are set on a May vernissage, hopeful that COVID infection rates will continue to decline. It’s a nervy bet.

This month, the International Builders’ Show and the Kitchen & Bath Industry Show tried reproducing aspects of their programming via Zoom. In lieu of physical stalls, manufacturers staged virtual portals, from which to give journalists and specifiers a sneak peek at their latest wares. But the setup, while certainly proactive, doesn’t provide the placement and exposure of a physical event, and for this reason we decided to forgo printing this latest issue of AN Interior.

Nevertheless, we’re proud to share this digital-only edition with you. It’s packed with fantastic projects sprinkled throughout North America, from the streets of Mexico City to the mountains of British Columbia. The cover, one of our favorites from AN Interior’s entire run, depicts an office retrofit on an old shipyard in the Jersey Meadowlands. Bucking the mood of the times, the development has seen leases fill up since opening in summer 2020. (The high-tech HVAC system helps assuage concerns about indoor air quality that the pandemic has pushed to the fore.)

Elsewhere, we polled architects for their current material obsessions. We also review the Museum of Modern Art’s latest exhibition, which is, in part, about the sorts of synthetic materials humanity will have to fashion for itself amid a wrecked world. The issue ends on a more cheerful note with a selection from curator Glenn Adamson’s exhibition Objects: USA 2020. Ingeniously conceived, these eye-popping pieces are exactly the thing design lovers need right now. Samuel Medina
In Conversation: Joyce Lin

By Adrian Madlener
Natural science and furniture making may be completely opposed fields of study and practice, yet emerging designer Joyce Lin has used their difference to demonstrate an intrinsic link. As a recent graduate of the Brown–Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Dual Degree Program, the Houston-based wunderkind combines the best of both worlds in works of art that challenge common perceptions.
The 2020 Skinned Table comprises a salvaged walnut side table and gold-painted acrylic braces.
By cutting, dismantling, and compressing ubiquitous objects such as chairs and tables, Lin seeks to uncover the internal mechanisms that make them work. This almost forensic approach, heavily informed by Lin’s background in biology and geology, allows her to create functional yet conceptual statement pieces. Her already prolific body of work often addresses the increasingly disconnected nature of our industrialized society. AN Interior products editor Adrian Madlener spoke to Lin about what makes her tick.

AN Interior: How did you decide to study both science and design? And how does this hybrid education continue to inform your work?

Joyce Lin: I knew going into college that I wanted to study a science as well as heavy sculpture. When looking at the strongest programs at both schools, I came across the highly interdisciplinary furniture design program at RISD. I was drawn to the idea of learning how to work with materials and find ways to transform them into all-encompassing and exacting results. Even if my goal was not to make functional furniture, I liked the aspect of problem-solving involved. Even now I equate this aspect of the practice to putting a thread through a needle or landing a plane.

After trying out different classes at Brown, I came across an equally interdisciplinary geology course, which covered all sciences. What stuck out to me most was the concept of narrative: telling the earth’s story, how things got to be the way they are today, how they're still interconnecting, and how we can still see the past in our environment. This understanding informs how I create and transform objects. I’m interested in emphasizing how something is made but also exploring the paradox of permanence and impermanence, as well as the opaqueness and transparency that mark our modern materials, processes, and attitudes. These are forces found in nature but that we have also manipulated as humans, resulting in anthropogenic materials like plastic, foam, and resin. As a maker, I naturally take on the role of a human being in this capacity by flattening live plants and deconstructing furniture, and sealing both of these natural and man-made elements behind sterile, meticulously crafted plastic to represent a limbo state of connection and disconnection, chaos and order.

AN: How is narrative expressed in your exploration of material properties as seen in early works like the Fluffy Furniture collection and later pieces like Skinned Chair?

JL: Early on, I thought a lot about materials and their role in our lives and what forms we associate them with. With Fluffy Furniture, I wanted to exaggerate the relationship we have with everyday things. With this collection purely composed of stuffed fabric and color, the materials become the object itself. Moving on to Skinned Chair, I started thinking about how new man-made material properties influence how we design. What I found most fascinating was the tension between the first material I worked with, wood, and easier materials like epoxy clay plastics. With this work, I was trying to delve deeper into my understanding of material and also the relationship between skin and structure. Though [Skinned Chair]’s original furniture piece is made out of wood, I wanted the inseams to be made of something synthetic that isn’t supposed to be that way but plays a visual trick that makes the wood veneer look artificial.

AN: Talk more about the role of function in your practice, both in terms of it being a point of inquiry and an essential element in your works.

JL: When working with furniture, you’re inherently concerned with function, but for me, this interest goes back to when I was making kinetic sculpture in high school. Even then, it was important for me that those objects could be activated by some form of user engagement. Function breaks down the disconnect viewers might have between viewing an object on a wall and their own experience. It’s almost like looking at a TV screen: there’s that world and there’s this world. The feeling of being able to break that boundary has always been fascinating to me. I’m intrigued by the play that occurs between reality and fantasy but also the pursuit of truth, which is why I’m so preoccupied with uncovering structures. I find learning more about a thing makes it more beautiful, but at the same time, we’re kind of living in a world where we keep pushing the boundaries of what our imagination can be, and reality is crumbling around us in different ways.
In the Know

While flipping through the following pages, imagine yourself traveling across North America and visiting new, beautifully designed spaces like Mexico City’s Octavia Casa, pictured here, or a soothing cannabis shop in Toronto, featured on page 14.
Inner-City Refresher

Pérez Palacios Arquitectos Asociados imbues a serene Mexico City guesthouse with texture and flair. By Adrian Madlener

Octavía Casa is set on a well-trod alleyway in Mexico City’s swanky La Condesa neighborhood. The 1,115-square-foot guesthouse features semioutdoor lounges, five distinctly styled suites, a side garden, and a roof terrace within discrete voids distributed throughout the compact property. Mexico City–based firm Pérez Palacios Arquitectos Asociados (PPAA) developed this oasis as an extension of the Octavia clothing brand, and, in turn, the project helps solidify the brand’s aesthetic.

PPAA opted for a pared-down earth-tone scheme that makes subtle architectonic articulations, nuanced flourishes, and textured finishes the stars of the show.

Wooden lattice screens filter natural light, helping to keep the interiors cool while projecting shadow patterns in different hues across patinated walls and ceilings.

While offering visitors a chance to escape the hustle and bustle of one of the world’s most populous cities, the building also opens up to its surroundings. Large sliding doors create a seamless transition between the entrance patio and the sidewalk. “The neighborhood has a strong urban character,” said PPAA coprincipal Pablo Pérez Palacios. “Octavía Casa responds to this condition by adding itself to the urban fabric.”
No Sleep Till Brooklyn

Roman and Williams’s design for the long-awaited Ace Hotel Brooklyn pays homage to its environs. By Adrian Madlener

Ace Hotel Brooklyn is a new ground-up 287-room property that evokes the borough’s rich cultural history. This was the approach the celebrated studio Roman and Williams took with the Ace chain’s outposts in Manhattan and New Orleans. Here, the firm decided to channel the tradition of repurposed artist studios ubiquitous in Brooklyn. A street-facing mural is a clear nod to local hero Jean-Michel Basquiat.

“We chose to embrace a governing principle of purity and artistic spirit in the building’s facade and the spaces within,” said Roman and Williams coprincipal Robin Standefer. “We employed a philosophy of primitive modernism holistically across the project.”

Spacious public areas and well-appointed suites pair rich wood paneling with deep-green textiles and cork flooring. This muted yet sophisticated material palette rests well within exposed concrete surfaces, while custom wood furnishings seamlessly integrate with tile and timber-clad feature walls. Ace Hotel Brooklyn is set to open this spring.
High Design

StudioAC infuses cannabis culture with industrial minimalism. By Adrian Madlener

As the use of marijuana is decriminalized across North America, a new architectural typology has emerged. Dispensaries are quickly becoming refined retail spaces that champion transparency and responsible consumption. Helping to shape this narrative is Canadian start-up Edition. Entrepreneur Ryan Roebuck established the brand to create a neighborhood experience that celebrates the country’s best producers and highlights top-notch accessories. Designed by StudioAC, Edition’s first Toronto brick-and-mortar dispensary imbues this evolving industry with legitimacy and sophistication.

“Cannabis stores should reflect the incredible retail experiences that already exist in our lives and not be subpar or intimidating,” Roebuck said. “Edition is breaking the stigma of cannabis retail through design, quality, and impeccable service.” The local firm implemented a minimalist scheme that incorporates industrial grate surfaces. At the core of this monochromatic interior is a central podium that discreetly displays the merchandise. In keeping with Canadian regulations, a sleek front-of-house screen conceals this mise-en-scène.

Details make all the difference in this hyper minimal dispensary. Different lighting configurations reveal the full dynamism of StudioAC’s monochromatic intervention.
Penthouse Decorum

International design platform Galerie Philia sets up shop in New York’s iconic Walker Tower. By Adrian Madlener

As fixed brick-and-mortar spaces become less important, a growing number of established and emerging collectible art and design galleries are experimenting with new exhibition formats.

International platform Galerie Philia has just taken up residence in New York’s historic Walker Tower. Integrating 70 works into a 5,000-square-foot, 18th-floor duplex, this contextualized display accentuates the luxury apartment’s art deco detailing and stunning views.

“Black, white, and brass tones set the vibe in the main rooms,” said the show’s curator, Italian architect-turned-designer Pietro Franceschini. “Primitive shapes and meticulously crafted materials bring out an ethereal character that is consistent throughout the apartment.”

Minimalist chairs by Rick Owens play off twisted sofas by nea studio. One of Franceschini’s own architectonic consoles props up a sculptural lamp by ceramicist Elisa Uberti, while copper-clad fixtures by Paul Matter add dimension to the display. Pops of color can be found in gradient paintings by Theo Pinto and resin sideboards by Laurids Gallée. On view through May 15, the Walker Tower exhibition demonstrates Galerie Philia’s coherent offerings, which transcend stylistic and historical barriers.
Cave à Manger

Stayner Architects designs a wine bar that celebrates California’s bounty. By Utkarsha Laharia
Tilda, a 375-square-foot bar and bottle shop dedicated to Californian wines in Los Angeles’s Echo Park neighborhood, is a cross between a living room and a public space.

Many houses in this mixed-use neighborhood have small storefronts attached to them. Christian Stayner, founder and managing principal at Stayner Architects, which designed the space, adapted this local typology to connect Tilda with its urban surroundings. Stayner transformed the corner of the 1928 building that Tilda occupies into an inviting refuge for locals stepping off the street outside.

Stayner, who is also a co-owner of the bar, designed the interiors with clever economy. The roof and brick walls—the only two elements of the original building that still existed at the time of Stayner’s intervention—were retained but adapted for modern use.

“Brick walls, especially unreinforced masonry, in Los Angeles haven’t been all that ideal,” said Stayner, referring to their weakness in earthquakes. “So we did a significant amount of retrofitting to bring the building up to the current building code, and then we designed and custom-built windows to fit within the structural grid that was already established by the existing building.”

The front of Tilda’s bar is handmade terra-cotta, and the countertop is made of a recycled paper product composite called Richlite. Plenty of wood adds to the warmth of this welcoming space. A nearly century-old Douglas-fir bowstring truss roof, made of native Californian materials just like Tilda’s wine, has held up well.
Designer Favorites

Drywall in Dash Marshall’s House for Grandparents, photographer: Bruce Damonte

Drywall in Dash Marshall’s “Raft Loft” Tribeca, photographer: Mark Wickens
As we move through 2021 and reflect on last year’s tumultuous developments, it is increasingly clear that the architecture and design industry is nothing if not resilient. Projects have progressed, underlining what we all suspected: that quality spaces are even more important in times of turmoil. To provide some inspiration as work continues in the months to come, we asked some of our favorite designers to tell us about their favorite materials. The resulting list includes the opulent, the environmentally conscious, and more. As we look ahead, this eclectic mix inspires hope for the spaces of our future. By Ewa Effiom
USG Drywall

Bryan Boyer, Ritchie Yao, and Amy Yang
Founders, Dash Marshall

“Drywall with cement board is the workhorse of North American interiors. It’s everywhere and often quite dismal. At Dash, we are hyperconscious of respecting a client’s budget constraints and using this to challenge our architectural details. We find reward in using design to elevate the banality of drywall and cement board. The careful use of smooth curves helps accentuate the geometry of the spaces we design. Coordinating reveals in walls to create shadow lines between wall and millwork or doors helps elevate the simple wallboard. Usually hidden beneath plaster and paint, wallboard also works in an unfinished state, showcasing the rough beauty of the construction process. Or, as we call it, the matter battle (see also: matterbattle.com).”
“Founded in 1805 and located in England’s West Midlands, Ketley Brick is one of the oldest and best heritage quality clay brick and tile makers in the U.K. The natural color variance in its bricks creates a brindle quality that softens, warms, and grounds the spaces we’ve used them in. The material is highly durable and has an enduring character that speaks to the context of the Cultureplex building’s industrial history and context in Manchester.”
Anodized Aluminum

Rafael de Cárdenas

Founder, Rafael de Cárdenas, Ltd.

"Anodized aluminum in the hands of [fabricator] Neal Feay can almost transcend materiality and become pure effect. These stairs are an apt expression of that potential. We designed them for the interior of a large yacht. The raised liquid motif serves both an ornamental and a practical function, subtly evoking the light-catching flux of moving water while also (somewhat paradoxically) creating traction."
“Light is such an important element in our design practice. Concrete microtopping receives light beautifully while providing durability and a monolithic appearance, all without the weight (or carbon footprint) of cast concrete. It can be used in a variety of applications and substrates: walls, floors, and complex forms. We used concrete microtopping on a recently completed penthouse project on a feature stair, sinks, and a kitchen island. The penthouse stair was installed by Art In Construction, based out of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, who are masters with this material.”
Trend Terrazzo Origina from Ceramic Technics

Anne Marie Lubrano and Lea Ciavarra
Founders, Lubrano Ciavarra

“We love finding versatile materials that can reappear within and across projects, threading continuity for our clients, end users, and our design team. So far, we’ve used the Trend Origina line of resinous terrazzo tiles on walls, floors, counters, inside, outside, in signage, and underwater. We love the visual texture, color, and surface options. Installation and maintenance are easy and adaptable, and Ceramic Technics is wonderful to collaborate with. The availability of large-format slabs along with cost-competitive tiles allows us to consider the product across a wide range of projects, from boutique hospitality and healthcare to affordable housing.”
Burled Wood
Michael Hsu
Founder, Michael Hsu Office of Architecture

“One of the materials making its way into our recent designs is burled wood. The organic material provides warmth to a space, particularly in a more luxurious design. The unpredictable grain patterns created by the burl offer unexpected detailing, adding a level of interest and subtle opportunity for discovery.”
Recycled Books
Greta Hansen
Cofounder, Wolfgang & Hite

“Housed within a former Carnegie library in Atlanta is a staircase made of books. The new stairs lead to the lower level of a street-wear shop called Wish (Atlanta’s best known location for highly coveted sneakers). The books are a repurposed remix of, as well as a nod to, the building’s original purpose. Black spines surround the new stairs’ entry, with the books’ inner faces tunneling 10,000 books deep into a basement sneaker vault. Inset clay dioramas of a shoe design studio and production factory by artist Cindy Hsu peek out from carved-out spaces within the stacks.”
“Our favorite building material product to work with is BamCore, a structural bamboo hollow wall panel. In addition to the environmental and performative benefits of a hollow-wall system, we love the material’s robust simplicity, texture, and adaptability to different functions. It can be stained, painted, and charred to great effect.”
The Design Office brought the Austin staff of Clayton Korte together under one roof, with room for more. By Lila Allen

All Together Now
The 10,000-square-foot Design Office building in Austin is home to architecture firm Clayton Korte and landscape design group Word + Carr.

Both firms collaborated on the office’s design. Clayton Korte added custom blackened steel windows, which can be screened off by full-height drapes.
In the mid-2010s, development in Austin, Texas, was on an upswing. The combination of a flourishing urban center and low cost of doing business had earned the city the number two spot as a “market to watch” from the Urban Land Institute in 2015—a designation Paul Clayton was painfully aware of as his search for a new office building entered its third year.

Clayton is a principal of Clayton Korte, a Texas hospitality and residential architecture firm. His Austin-based staff was divided between two locations, and Clayton was looking for a space that would foster whole-team camaraderie. An unlikely prospect delivered the solution: the Balcones Building, a 50-year-old property on North Lamar. The structure was in questionable condition—the foundations had slipped over the years on its mushy creekside soil—and its blocky, awkward massing was broken up by small windows. Yet Clayton saw potential in the building’s bones, proximity to downtown, and abundant parking (which extends to the roof of the office, thanks to its steep siting). And though the Balcones Building offered more space than the firm needed, there was an opportunity to build a contemporary workspace that could serve a larger design community.

Today the structure—since rebranded the Design Office—is home for both Clayton Korte and Word + Carr, a landscape group that occupies the ground level. The two have worked together on several projects, including the new Albert Hotel in Fredericksburg, Texas, and Design Office itself. In combination with cohesive furniture specification across the building’s two floors, colocating the studios had a less tangible benefit: “When someone walks into the building, it isn’t apparent where each begins and the other ends,” said Clayton. “It’s a sleight of hand in terms of the perceived horsepower of our firm.”

Getting to the bright, wide-open interior that the office now boasts, however, required a three-year renovation. After stabilizing the structure, the firm was left staring down a “warren of dark spaces,” recalled Clayton, referring to the private offices that made up the complex. Scooping away the innards as though the building were a pumpkin, the architects installed a mostly open floor plan, with a handful of doored offices, conference rooms, and private areas for phone calls. They also doubled the size of windows across the building and removed a service stairway, flipping the resulting void into an airy centerpiece staircase. (The treads, sourced from Hardwood Designs, are made of reclaimed wood resulting from a 2011 Texas drought.) A full-height installation by Era Ceramics graces the abutting wall, resembling fluttering papers blown from a nearby desk. Pre-pandemic, these elements made for a welcoming backdrop at Design Office’s community events, including art openings and monthly Women in Design meetings. “It’s actually a really
Above: Clayton Korte’s office on the second floor features stationary workstations by Uhuru Design. A mixture of tracking lighting (by WAC Lighting), recessed lighting (by Juno Lighting), and canister lighting (by Progressive Lighting) offers illumination. Conference rooms are bounded by translucent glass by BermanGlass.

Facing page: A centerpiece staircase incorporates treads from Hardwood Designs (which also provide the paneling on the abutting wall) and custom railing by local fabricator Drophouse Design. A full-height installation by Era Ceramics connects both floors.
good entertainment space,” Clayton said. “People kind of circulate in and around the desks and see hand-built models and drawings. It’s like looking at Santa’s workshop.”

The team furnished the interior with a mix of contemporary standbys—Uhu-ru desking systems, Aeron chairs—and character-driven vintage finds, some of which they purchased at The Ren-ner Project, a local antiques dealer. Think a green mohair kidney-bean sofa, a Charlotte Perriand reception desk, and even a few Knoll prototypes. Felt-wrapped, sound-absorbing walls also double as pinup space. Clayton isn’t worried about the creative clutter that might arise: “We’re not so precious that everything has to be real squeaky-clean.”
Steadying the Ship

A new flexible workplace in an old New Jersey shipyard integrates the lessons (and materials) of yore. By Samuel Medina
Above: The site was once home to a shipyard, whose extant facilities are beginning to be retrofitted for light manufacturing and commercial use. Inside the Annex, an original beam anchors one of two steel-plate staircases that connects two floors of offices.

Previous page: The Annex is a 90,000-square-foot workplace located at the Kearny Point development in New Jersey. The New York office of STUDIOS shares design credit with the New York firm WXY architecture + urban design, which, in 2016, oversaw the conversion of the adjoining building (Building 78).

Pages 38–39: STUDIOS restored the sawtooth roof that had been covered up over the years. Big Ass Fans help circulate air within the atrium.
In wartime South Kearny, New Jersey, on land that once belonged to the Federal Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, some 35,000 workers assembled ships at a quick clip. And not just cutters, cruisers, and gunboats—Federal produced a record number of destroyers over its three decades of operation before shutting down in 1948. “They were able to build a destroyer from scratch in 130 days,” said architect Graham Clegg. “Ridiculous scalability. We talk a lot about scalability in architecture, but the design process would take longer than that.”

Clegg, a principal of STUDIOS’ New York office, also marvels at the gantry buildings in which these ships were built and later dismantled. (As war production came to a halt, the site became a scrapyard.) In 2016, his team was brought on by owner Hugo Neu to convert the 130-acre property and six of its blocks into a commercial office complex called Kearny Point. STUDIOS would draw on existing plans developed by the New York firm WXY architecture + urban design, as well as an architecture vocabulary WXY had set in place at Building 78, the first structure on the site to be converted.

In early 2020, STUDIOS and WXY completed work on the 90,000-square-foot Annex, which abuts the larger Building 78. Like its neighbor, the Annex features bright interiors and a restrained palette of corrugated metal and glass, which it supplements with wood-dowel walls and plate steel. The colorful booths WXY designed for the common spaces in Building 78 are reproduced next door, only set flush with the adjoining walls. On the ground floor, an intense orange marks out a row of these enclaves, a flourish that gets picked up in the shared kitchen and in a conversation pit beneath the central staircase.

Unlike Building 78, which previously functioned as a warehouse, the single-story Annex was “essentially an outdoor building,” WXY founding principal Claire Weisz said. To raise the space to the energy code required of offices, the structure had to be refitted with a new window system and its perimeter walls reinforced with insulation. The original sawtooth skylights were uncovered, and the glass of the clerestory dormers replaced with higher-performance polycarbonate. “Most buildings of this vintage, if used for distribution, they would just close in all the clerestories,” she said. “By putting [the Annex] to this use, you are able to restore all that natural light.”

When STUDIOS became involved in 2016, it inserted a second story to increase the area of leasable workspace but carved a void in the floor plate, which allowed daylight penetrating the clerestories to reach the offices below. That would appeal to prospective tenants, larger outfits than the 150 or so small companies that occupied Building 78. These anchor tenants were likely to need additional space over time, meaning that the office fit-outs had to
Two large beams were preserved with their historical patina left intact. The other existing columns and beams were treated with a coat of aluminum paint from Sherwin-Williams.

Facing page: In the shared kitchen, employees lunch at Pisa tables from ERG International, which are paired with light gray Emeco chairs. The kitchen millwork features an Arctic White solid surface by LG Hausys. Baux acoustic ceiling tiles help mitigate sound.
be “scalable and flexible,” Clegg said. Partitions needed to come down easily, but the building systems, such as the “state-of-the-art green HVAC,” which have been a boon for leasing during COVID-19, had to stay put.

Because the upper-story offices were liable to grow, they threatened to crowd out the mezzanine, making connections to the building’s common areas all the more important. “Getting those circulation paths was critical,” Clegg said, referring to the three bridges that stretch across the upper level and the scissor staircase that anchors the atrium. “The client kept wanting more and more office space, but we had to balance it, to ‘right-size’ it.”

Early on in the design process Clegg’s and Weisz’s teams charretted to ensure continuity between Building 78 and the Annex. The result is more than a shared ambience. WXY suggested removing the brick walls on either side of a bank of freestanding freight elevators. The infill brick, which separated the two buildings, wouldn’t be missed, Weisz said. “We had little conference rooms between the elevators; we did all kinds of things with those in-between spaces.” In the end, they settled on a kitchen-and-bar setup that connects Building 78’s lobby to the Annex’s atrium.

That interconnectedness is a feature of the entire master plan. STUDIOS has completed retrofitting studies for Building 54 (whose floorplan is the length of a Manhattan block), Building 100, and others. Landscaping—including a grassy amphitheater—and amenities will help knit the campus’s individual pieces together so that, in Weisz’s words, “you’ll feel like you’re in a real district, a microcosm.”
Facing page, top: The walls surrounding a bank of freestanding freight elevators were knocked down to create a passage connecting the Annex to Building 78.

Facing page, bottom: The distinctive banquettes are lined with material from Tretford and get their vibrant color from Sherwin-Williams’s Invigorate paint.

Above: A gym is among several of the complex’s amenities. Because of the ongoing pandemic, the leasing office is keen on touting the robust HVAC system (“four fresh air changes per hour”).
Above: The primary materials of the new fit-out include corrugated metal and accent wood (sourced from New Jersey-based Dykes Lumber).

Facing page: The central staircase looms over a ground-floor “pit,” outfitted with seating and LT tables by Source International.
Elevating the Home Office

Dash Marshall creates an otherworldly workspace that floats above New York City.

By Samuel Medina
Previous spread: This 315-square-foot corner office in a penthouse unit at 56 Leonard pops, thanks to Onice Bella Rose Stone flooring by ABC Stone and furniture from the Canadian design group Susan for Susan and Korean designer Seungjin Yang. Dash Marshall, the architecture firm behind the space, custom-designed the anodized aluminum work desk.

Above: The adjoining full bathroom puts White Beauty marble from ABC Stone to dramatic use. A blue-tinted shower screen distorts the geometric effects of the marble surfaces.
In New York, Herzog & de Meuron’s 56 Leonard strains to inject variety into Tribeca’s pro forma skyline. Colloquial comparisons of its teetering upper stories to Jenga blocks are apt, but for all its purported dynamism, it remains a resolutely stolid object (just as one typically desires in a work of architecture). Girthy walking columns recessed just behind the glass ribbon facades keep the tower standing.

It’s in these penthouse units that the columns exert a real presence, particularly at the corners of rooms. When the Brooklyn- and Detroit-based architectural outfit Dash Marshall was tasked with converting a lean corner of a penthouse into an office, there was little choice “but to engage with the column,” said cofounder Ritchie Yao. “Apart from the wraparound glazing, it was the strongest element in the space.”

The residence wasn’t short on personality, however. The client, a financier with a penchant for flash, had requested a private space “to take me out of this world,” said cofounder Ritchie Yao. “Apart from the wraparound glazing, it was the strongest element in the space.”

Whereas Mishaan had a giant canvas to paint on, Yao and his partners, Amy Yang and Bryan Boyer, had just 315 square feet. Their intervention is efficient, geometrical, and cerebral, qualities Yao attributes to the work of Donald Judd (an abiding influence for the trio). “We looked at how he layers panels to create depth and shadow. Judd sees things as surfaces and constructs with them,” said Yao.

Judd’s influence is readily apparent in the custom anodized-aluminum work desk, which is tethered to that robust column. With a thin profile and hovering ever so slightly off the orange-marble veneer floor, the desk is a studied tribute to the artist. Remembering their client’s love of cars, Yao, Yang, and Boyer had a Queens auto shop treat the bureau with industry-grade coatings. “It took a lot of tries,” Yao said. “A lot of auto shops had the same reaction: ‘This thing doesn’t have wheels. What do you want us to do with it?’”

In the private bathroom, meanwhile, the design team adapted Mishaan’s liberal use of veiny marble and added a twist. A greenish-white marble from ABC Stone cuts across the gray walls at angles, interrupted by a translucent blue shower panel. “We wanted to play with perspective and redesign the limitations of the box,” explained Yao. The effect is that of a vortex and is, in a minor way, out of this world.
Rock the House
A cliff-hanging mountain retreat shows deference to its stunning surroundings.

By Jason Sayer
Page 50: The interiors of the Rock House follow the rise of the mountainous site. The architects, Gort Scott from London, designed a custom table for the dining room, which is accompanied by chairs from the Miyazaki Chair Factory.

Page 51: Picture windows offer views of nearby Alta Lake, the Coast Mountains, and hemlock forests. Pictured: Vintage furnishings, such as this FK 87 Grasshopper chair by Preben Fabricius & Jorgen Kastholm, are sprinkled throughout the 10,000-square-foot house.

Above: The living areas unfold in the house’s middle stratum, where polished concrete floors and board-formed concrete walls predominate.

Facing page: The brass entrance door, railing, and other accents are pleasing accents to the copious concrete surfaces.
Alta Lake in British Columbia, Canada, is overwhelmingly picturesque. A short drive from the ski town of Whistler, the recreational park offers panoramic views of mountain peaks and rolling forests. Visitors animate the surrounds throughout the year, the lake serving as a popular swimming hole in the summer and an ice rink in the winter.

“There's so much going on outside. You don't want to distract from that,” explained architect Jay Gort, a director at the London firm Gort Scott, which designed a holiday home in the area. The aptly named Rock House is sited on craggy terrain, with outcrop and conifers helping to conceal its sprawl—some 10,000 square feet, split across four floors and two volumes.

The dwelling emerges from the landscape—the deepest excavation was around 19 feet into the rock—with the cliff face giving way to tightly banded concrete formwork. The latter encases much of the house, as well as the terrace, pool (think Peter Zumthor’s Therme Vals), and guest annex. It also supports a structure of black-stained hemlock wood containing the bedrooms, six in the main home and two in the annex.

A rising delineation of materials occurs inside the house as well. In the kitchen and living areas, contrasting concrete finishes—polished floors, board-formed walls—emit a gallerylike chill that's relieved by a light-oak ceiling and brass accents. Wood exerts a greater presence on the uppermost floors, both in the bedrooms and the bathrooms. Moving vertically through the house, the effect is one of increasing warmth. Openness, too: large apertures in nearly every room contribute to a feeling of expansiveness.

“We plotted where the trees were and...
Above: Clustered on the house's upper levels, the bedrooms and bathrooms feature warm wood surfaces.

Facing page: The oak ceiling in the living and dining rooms has been drilled with tiny holes to aid acoustics. The former features a William Modular Sofa by Damian Williamson for Zanotta; a Stella Coffee Table from Ceccotti Collezioni; and a rug by Jan Kath.
based certain spaces around that,” said Gort Scott partner Fiona Scott. “It was about inviting the landscape in as much as possible.”

Such keen awareness of site might surprise, given how far the architects ventured from their London base. Gort Scott obtained the commission in a small, invited competition, and by Gort’s own description, the firm was something of a “wild card”; its portfolio mostly consisted of urban infill projects. But the client, a father of three stepping away from a career in finance, was looking to channel his energies into a project. That Gort Scott was less experienced in high-end, stand-alone residential only added to the appeal of a design journey, one that ended up lasting seven years.

However, the client’s desire for a “quiet” countryside retreat conflicted with its projected bulk. “There are challenges that arise from having a sizable house with everything, without being too grand,” explained Gort. “We wanted to create the feeling of enclosure and being part of the landscape—for it to be a place for reflection, but also for family time.”

The Rock’s clever spatial arrangement navigates these desires by submerging the extraneous—a cinema, a gym—and lofting the private, with the family areas slotted in between. Subtle sectional shifts in this middle, open-plan stratum enhance the discreteness of each room while also picking up on the site topography.

The terrain is ever-present, thanks to the large picture windows. The largest, in the main dining room, is 16 feet wide, while in the living room a triple slider window leads out into the woody landscape. Said Gort, “Having a lawn didn’t feel appropriate.”
Above: The black-stained timber used on the upper levels echoes the dark opaqueness of the lake when frozen over.

Facing page: The living room, with its impressive concrete-encased fireplace, looks out onto a pool (by Alka Pool) toward the guesthouse volume.
Resources

Octavia Casa, page 11
Comex
comex.com.mx
Corev
corev.com
Ente
ente.mx
Moen
moen.com
Porcelanosa
porcelanosa-usa.com
PUR
pur-studio.com
Tecnolite
tecnolite.mx
Topcret
topcret.com

Ace Hotel Brooklyn, page 12
Caroline Kaufman
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GFI Development Company
gfihospitality.com
Roman and Williams
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Stonehill Taylor
stonehiltaylor.com

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Dark Tools
darktools.com
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Tilda, page 16
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Erik Buch
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Maharam
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- **Lighting**
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Register at cestrong.com
Broken Nature
The Museum of Modern Art
New York City
November 21, 2020, through August 15, 2021
By Kathleen Langjahr
Comprising a well-researched and geographically inclusive selection of design objects, projects, and scientific testimonials about the earth’s accelerating ecological collapse, the Broken Nature exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) proffers an array of individually innovative ideas that, when considered in relationship to the situation at hand, ultimately prompt more concerns for the future of design rather than establishing (as the catalogue does) a clear ideological framework that might lead us into a less destructive future. The show is installed on MoMA’s public (free) ground floor gallery closest to 53rd Street in Manhattan, where floor-to-ceiling windows are situated across the street from and—as Blake Gopnik pointed out in The New York Times—in clear conversation with the bougie gleam of modern and contemporary design objects in the museum’s own design store.

Curated by Paola Antonelli, senior curator of MoMA’s department of architecture and design, Broken Nature proposes not so much a reimagining of the structures that delivered us to this moment as a pseudo-spiritual repentance to Gaia, suggesting that design can conceive a multitude of solutions to the exponentially accelerating forces of climate change while retaining the support of centralized wealth through the invention of environmentally conscious—yet still aesthetically pleasing—products. Fitting the original 2019 exhibition in Milan (which was nearly six times larger) into one of the smallest galleries in the museum required the exclusion of some of the more sprawling or intricate projects, and the selection on view at MoMA feels too sanitized for an exhibition about the apocalypse.

One of the best examples of restorative design included in the exhibition is the Maldives/Sandbars project, created by MIT’s Self-Assembly Lab with Sarah Yasmin Dole and Hassan Mahee Ahmed Maniku. The work uses the ocean’s wave patterns to encourage the regrowth of the island nation’s sandbars, which have been worn away by rising sea levels. Aerial photographs in the exhibition demonstrate the re-accumulation of sand beneath the lagoon, encouraged by strategically placed concrete structures anchored to the ocean floor. The structures use the ocean’s movements to rebuild the atoll’s natural defenses against flooding while breaking up incoming waves.

But much of the show’s language smacks of a selective blindness to the scope and machinations of structural inequality, one of the biggest hurdles to comprehensive, collective action in the fight to slow
climate change. In presenting Alexander Groves and Azusa Murakami’s 2013 *Palm Stool* from the *Can City* project, the show’s catalogue describes the *catadores* (trash pickers) of São Paulo, Brazil, as “breathing new life” into the materials they source from a landfill in their “artisanal enterprise” of creating jewelry and furniture from the city’s scrap. While the designers’ concept of a mobile foundry, cleverly constructed from local materials and used to create the aluminum furniture on view in the exhibition, is undoubtedly a useful one, the tired dynamic between an utterly disenfranchised caste of laborers and the appropriation of their practices by a privileged design studio is clearly present.

Aki Inomata’s *Think Evolution #1: Kiku-ichi (Ammoneite)* provides another useful metaphor for the past and future of humans’ habitation of the earth: An HD video shows a small octopus exploring the interior of a clear resin 3D print of an ammonite fossil. In an earlier stage of their evolution, the notoriously clever cephalopods inhabited shells (similar to the behavior of a hermit crab) but eventually dispensed with this tendency in order to more efficiently evade predators. Inomata’s video is both a meditation on the generational transmission of instinctual behavior and a clever visual framework through which we might consider a devolution of our own habitats.

Perhaps the most affecting objects in the exhibition are those composed of man-made materials and designed by nature. *Plastiglomerate*, created by Kelly Jazvac with Patricia Corcoran and Charles Moore, comprises a series of irregularly shaped lumps of variegated plastic compressed to sedimentary rock-like density. One might think of the catalogue’s call for “elegance under pressure,” an apt metaphor for precious gems; however, the *Plastiglomerate* objects are anything but elegant. Punctuated by flecks of neon-hued debris and tattered strands of cast-off polymers, these objects feel more like coldly prognostic markers of the late Anthropocene than emphatically ominous evidence regarding the geological characteristics of an epoch whose outcome is still unfolding. Examples of the series are well placed just to the right of the entrance, establishing a logically coherent and rather hopeful node between the chic algae-based carafes from Studio Klarenbeek & Dros for Atelier Luma and Mandy Barker’s *Beyond Drifting: Imperfectly Known Animals* from 2016.

The latter also focuses on the abundance of plastic detritus disrupting the planet’s natural processes.
but does so on the microscopic level. The long-exposure photos take the format of the natural history plates created by 19th-century marine biologist John Vaughan Thompson, who amassed and documented plankton samples off the coast of Ireland. Barker’s work uses modern technology to capture much clearer pictures of the microorganisms populating 21st-century seas—sourced from the same location Thompson used, Cork Harbour. However, instead of plankton, the images exhibit microplastics. Consumed by microscopic organisms, these fragments of plastic bags, netting, and other debris make their way into every facet of the aquatic ecosystem from the bottom up.

While every work in the show was conceived in response to the climate crisis, the Plastiglomerate pieces are the only truly “found” objects on view, representing humans’ permanent impact on the earth and invoking an eerie reassurance that the earth will endure long after we’re gone and perhaps eventually recover from our existence. While the objects’ presence between the microscopic shards of polymer and the tastefully minimalist home goods makes a clear statement regarding the aesthetic and practical possibilities for transitioning away from synthetic materials, the sleek allure of many of the objects remains predicated upon and inextricable from a global economy unlikely to de-escalate and refocus the parameters of production to an extent that will save the planet and its inhabitants—including the culprits, humans—from destruction.
Objects of Interest
Curator Glenn Adamson reflects on 50 years of American craft.

When *Objects: USA* opened at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in 1969, it immediately put craft on the map. True to its name, *Objects* was a loose collection of compelling things, the exhibition space a “free-form territory” that commingled sculpture, ceramics, fabrics, and sundry other items, notes curator Glenn Adamson. Moreover, the landmark show set the terms of craft discourse—an insistence on “impartial” designations like “objects” and “makers”—that have obtained to this day.

Adamson was the brains behind *Objects: USA 2020*, a commemorative exhibition staged by the New York art gallery R & Company in 2019. Attempting to bridge the historical gap between the two productions, he and collaborators Evan Snyderman and Zesty Meyers invited 50 participants from the original *Objects* as well as 50 new ones. The result defies naming, though Adamson offers the label “craftivism” in his catalogue essay for the democratizing impact digital media have exerted on traditional media. Now that the anniversary year has wrapped, Adamson looks back at the show and highlights a few of its key pieces for *AN Interior*. 
Textiles formed one of the most active craft areas in the 1960s. Some weavers collaborated with industry; others sought new expressive languages for fiber art. Liz Collins combines aspects of both of these directions in her vivid deconstructivist textile work.

**Sanbon Ashi**  
Jun Kaneko  
c. 1970

When Jun Kaneko arrived in America from Japan in 1963, he hardly spoke any English. But he rapidly assimilated the ideas of cutting-edge ceramics and painting. This quasi-figural, quasi-abstract work is a quintessential example of his early Pop idiom.

**Frozen**  
Liz Collins  
2020
Linenfold Armoire (Perpendicular Style)
Christopher Kurtz
2020

This hand-carved cabinet draws on a surprising source: medieval linenfold carving, with vertical lines elongating toward the heavens. Noting the historical connection between this motif and times of plague, Kurtz renewed this gesture of transcendence as an intuitive response to the ongoing pandemic.

Getting in My Own Way, Self-Imposed Blockades
Woody De Othello
2019

California-based sculptor Woody De Othello draws on many sources, among them the African American face-jug tradition and the emotive figuration of Funk ceramics, as can be seen in this allegorical and psychologically intense self-portrait.
Sikhote-Alin Meteorite Vessel
Monique Péan
2019

A traveler in time, space, and materials, Monique Péan makes jewelry that incorporates extraordinary mineral specimens, including meteorites. Her compositions recall the constructivist rigor of some postwar studio jewelers, such as the great Margaret De Patta.

Serpent Table
Wendell Castle
1967

Without Wendell Castle, there would have been no Objects: USA. His sculptural furniture reshaped the possibilities for craft and helped inspire the historic exhibition. Active right up until his death in 2018, Castle remains a model for many younger makers.
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