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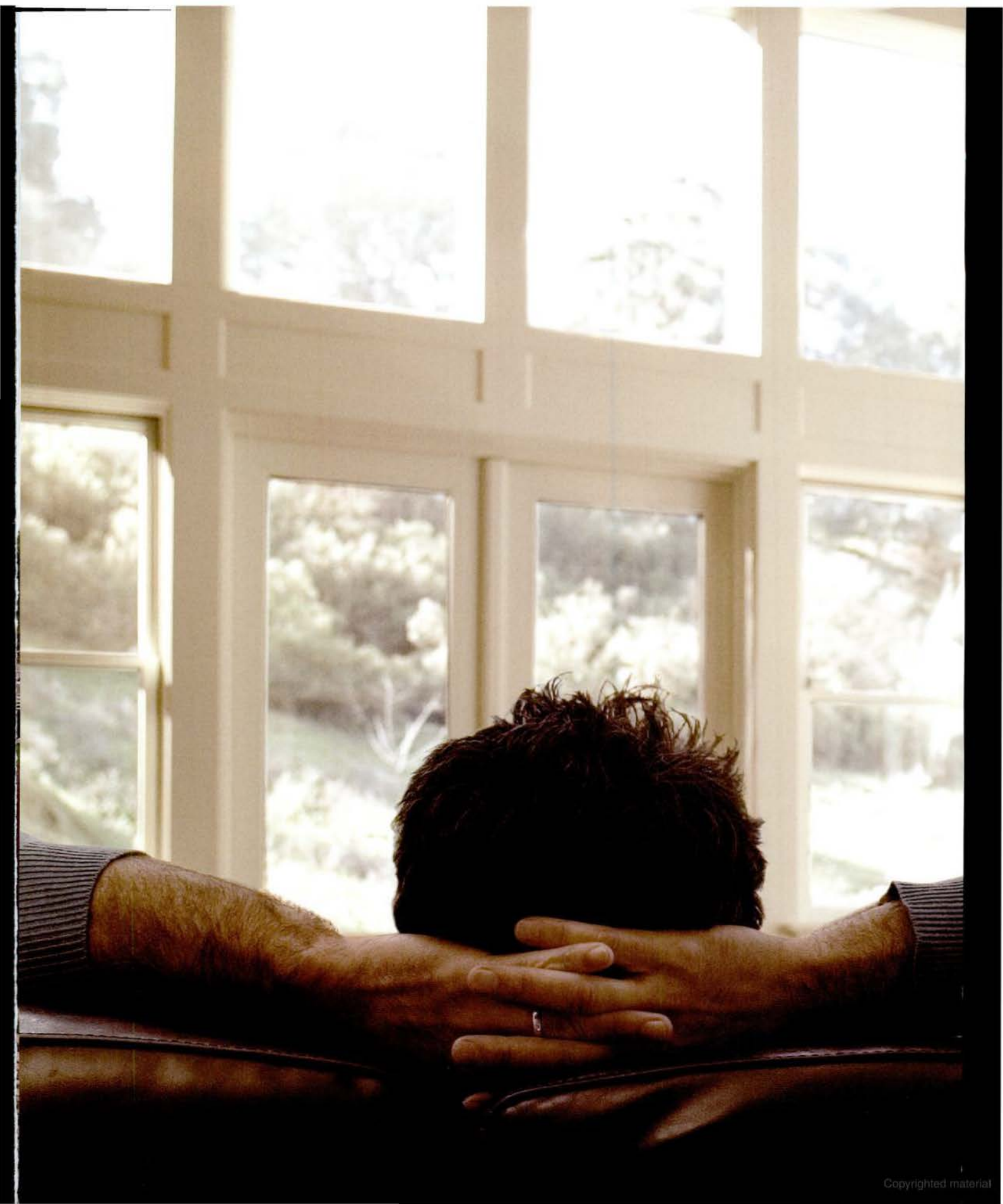

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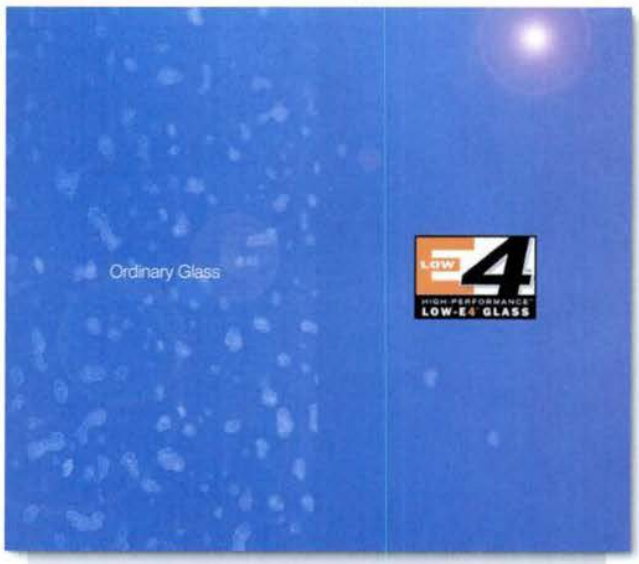

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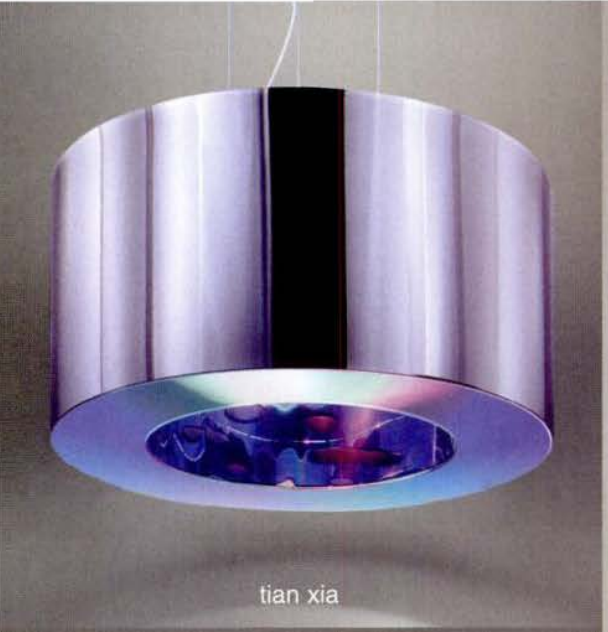

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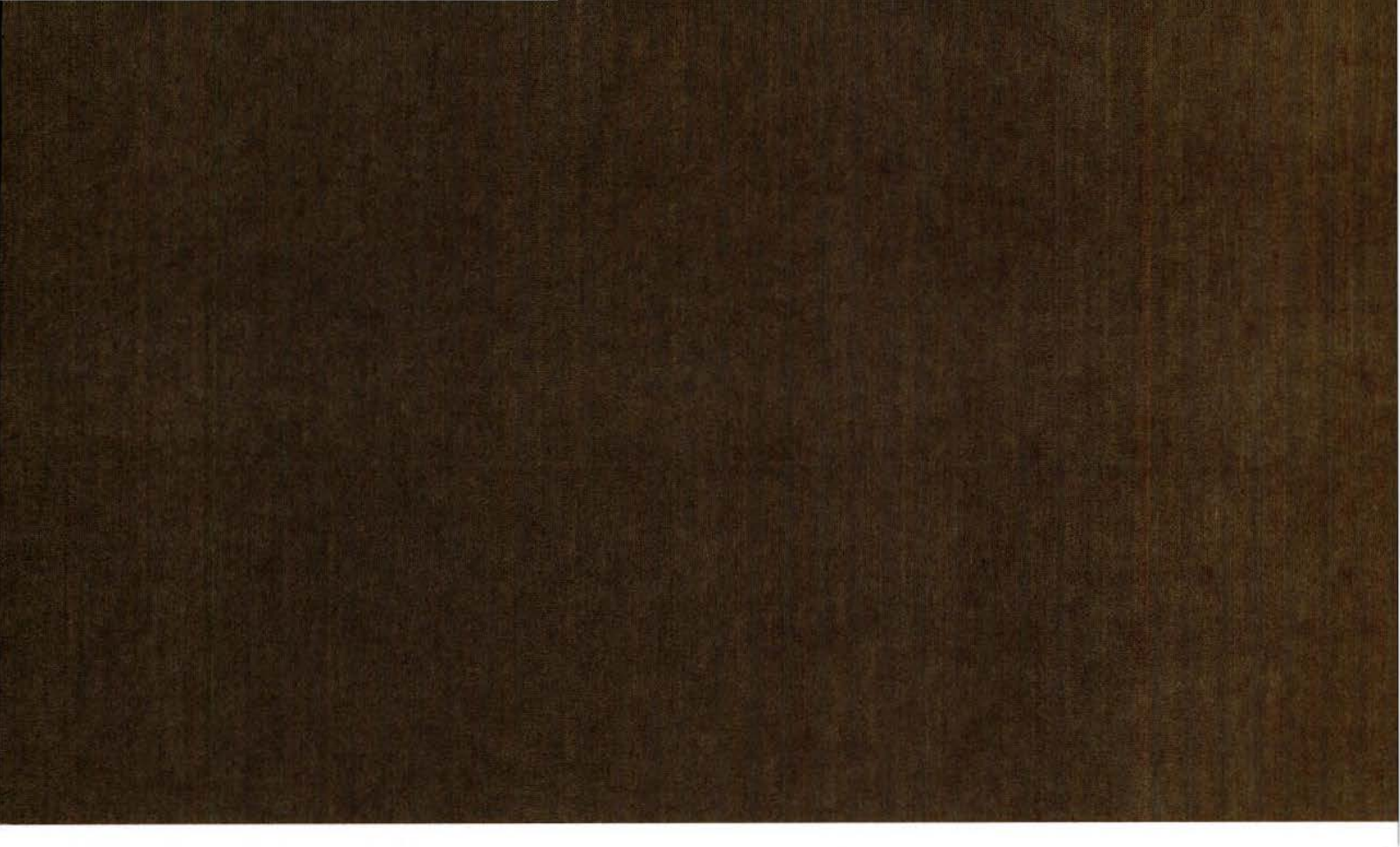

Green Goes Mainstream
September 2006

"Sustainability is just a minimum. If I asked you, 'How's your relationship with your wife?,' and you said, 'Sustainable,' I'd say, 'Oh, I'm so sorry for you!'"—**Michael Braungart**

Cover: Villa Bio, page 166
Photo by Gunnar Knechtel


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Phone (415) 743-9990
letters@dwell.com

Owner & Founder Lara Hedberg Deam
President & Publisher Michela O'Connor Abrams

Editor-in-Chief Allison Arieff
Creative Director Claudia Bruno

Managing Editor Ann Wilson Spradlin
Senior Editors Andrew Wagner, Sam Grawe
New York Editor Shonquis Moreno
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Senior Designers Brendan Callahan, Emily CM Anderson
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Brand Consultants
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Dwell Advertising Offices (New York)
(212) 382-2010
International Sales Director
W. Keven Weeks / keven@dwell.com
Eastern Regional Manager
Kathryn McKeever / kathryn@dwell.com
New England/Canada Sales Manager
Wayne Carrington / wayne@dwell.com
Sales Coordinator
Jennifer Lee / jennifer@dwell.com

West Coast
Barbara Bella & Associates
Danny Della Lana (San Francisco)
(415) 986-7762 / danny@bbasf.com
James Woods (Los Angeles)
(323) 467-5906 / jwoods@bba-la.com

Midwest
Derr Media Group, Timothy J. Derr
(847) 615-1921 / derrmediagroup@comcast.net
Karen Teegarden & Associates, Diane MacLean
(248) 642-1773 / diane@kteegarden.com

Southwest
Nuala Berrells Media, Nuala Berrells
(214) 660-9713 / nuala@sbcglobal.net

Southeast
Andy Clifton
(706) 369-7320 / clifton@fccmedia.com

Milan, Italy
Niche Srl
Paolo Capitini
39 (02) 29419059 / paolo.capitini@nicheland.com
Andrea Pipitone
39 (02) 29413148 / andrea.pipitone@nicheland.com

Modern Market Managers
East: Lauren Dismuke
(917) 941-1148 / lauren@dwell.com
Southwest: Tracey Lasko
(917) 892-4921 / tdlasko@nyc.rr.com
Northwest, Midwest: Angela Ames
(415) 898-5329 / angela@dwell.com

DesignSource Director
Nancy Alonzo
(415) 290-8532 / nancy@dwell.com

Media Relations
Shelley Tatum Kieran
(650) 838-9431 / shelley@dwell.com

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A three-foot-tall metal letter A adorns the office wall of editor-in-chief Allison Arieff. As to its origin, her husband, who got it for her, offers only the following: "If I weren't a designer, I would be a junk scavenger because I have superpowers when it comes to finding diamonds in the rough."

PHOTO BY KARLE FRIED

An enthusiastic subscriber to Dwell with a library of past issues, I would like nothing more than the ability to access current and past issues via your website—not only for my own edification but to share timely, well-written columns with people who, I'm sure, will become equally enthusiastic subscribers once they get a taste. Adding this virtual feature to your already stellar publication will most certainly be an unequivocal success for all concerned.

Todd Nelson
West Hollywood, California

Editors' Note: *By the time you read this, we will have launched the new www.dwell.com, highlighting, among many exciting new features, archived content of Dwell. Please tell us what you think at feedback@dwell.com.*

I just finished reading your June 2006 article on showerheads ("Showers Likely"). I was wondering why you didn't evaluate any detachable showerhead models. I started using detachable showerheads during trips to Europe and now I wouldn't use any other kind. They provide a good high-pressure, low-flow stream of water, usually with massage features. Best of all, they make cleaning the tiles and tub amazingly easy.

I bought mine for around $20 at Target. It wouldn't win any design awards, but one can buy more expensive versions that are more attractive. It's a small thing but it makes my life easier, and for a fraction of the cost of the showerheads evaluated in your article.

Lisa Goldberg
Silver Spring, Maryland

Leonard Koren ("Showers Likely") needs to try a showerhead made by Speakman, model S2251. I call it the "big mother." You haven't showered until you have used this baby. Lots of water, lots of pressure, and adjustable. And at around $100 you can't beat the deal.

Nothing beats this showerhead for a great shower. I've never been cleaner.

Clint Kershaw
Poughkeepsie, New York

What type of bamboo is featured in the June 2006 article "Straight and Narrow"? We are looking for a similar type of bamboo with a small footprint to line our backyard deck.

Jessica Hays
Honolulu, Hawaii

Editors' Note: *We suggest you contact the architects, Singapore-based Chang Architects, directly. They can be reached at 011-65-62718016 or cyt85@magix.com.sg.* ►

IDEA

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Your feature on Love Park in Philadelphia and Anthony Bracali's efforts to get a new skate park built ("All-Inclusive Architecture," June 2006) surprised me. Thanks for running it. The new park sounds fun, but site is everything! Nothing can replace skating the upper section at Love Park, the fountain gushing, with the feeling that all the buildings were about to topple onto you. I skated at Love Park and at City Hall in 1996, when it was a dingy, bum-filled Gothic amphitheater. So did a lot of other people. It was always a park first, a park where you could skate. Everybody met there, bike messengers, rappers, graffiti artists, not just skaters. We used to run from the cops, sure, hiding our boards in the city trashcans to escape detection, but it appears the city is finally heading in the right direction with street skating's integration. Now I'm 28 and more of a mountain biker but believe that recreational-use management of open space, trails, and parks help to define how we live and interact in our own communities. We've known this for some time, but Dwell obviously understands that design doesn't stop at the doorstep. One thing we all talked about ten years ago was that the architects who designed the parks and monuments we skated (like Freedom Plaza) probably never imagined our infiltration or intended our use of their design. Thanks for focusing on the public side of the coin, especially with a minority sport/social group.

Ian Roop
Breckenridge, Colorado

It's great you're presenting so much information on green building products, processes, and organizations ("A New Standard of Living," June 2006), but why, oh why is there never a mention of bark siding?

Exterior cladding made of poplar bark is green and sustainable in several different ways: It is a salvage product taken from the forest during plywood-industry logging operations and otherwise would have been shredded or left to rot; it lasts up to 100 years with no need for additives, paints, or sealants that could leach into groundwater; it is kiln-dried so that there naturally is no insect infestation; it can meet municipal building codes for flammability; and it minimizes the look of new construction so it fades into the background of vegetation. Although bark siding has a rustic look, it is being used in brand-new construction—residential and commercial—in many parts of the country.

Nan Chase
Boone, North Carolina

My wife and I both enjoy your remarkable magazine—she for interiors, I for design. Although I am an emergency physician by trade, at times I think that I am a frustrated industrial designer. Oh well.

Although I am not in any way offended by your recent cover (June 2006), allow me to offer a bit of insight. The prominent rubric on the cover of the June issue, "Born Again!," is a two-word phrase held quite near and dear to more readers than you may realize. Appropriately—although out of a sectarian context—you did follow with the phrase "4 Dramatic Renovations."

Expressions of faith vary widely and I realize that this particular one has come into common parlance. I'm sure that it was simply said tongue-in-cheek. Yours is a friendly publication; please consider this a friendly memo.

George Eddington McClane
Point Loma, California

Over the last 48 years of marriage I have been involved in a lot of remodeling, repairs, and even designed and built our home. The most humorous part of all the projects is what I compiled during that time: My Book of Excuses.

When a worker of any level would call and was unable to show up, they of course would give an excuse. I would say, "Thank you for calling. I'll put that in my book of excuses." Usually they were quiet for a few moments and then ask about this book. So I would explain that I was recording all excuses be they honest or not, odd or sincere. I have also replied, "Oh, I have that excuse in my book already."

Your article about the $500 sandwich ("Reader's Most Memorable Renovation Stories," June 2006) gave me a good laugh.

Pati Johnson
Redondo Beach, California

I thoroughly enjoy your magazine, particularly your emphasis on green and prefab construction, finding projects that are usually below the radar, and various information on products and building techniques.

However, the June 2006 issue falls short and is unbalanced. You present a three-page article on the Department of Energy–sponsored Solar Decathlon ("Let the Sun Shine In"), but there is no thorough, in-depth discussion of what innovations, methodologies, and technologies were used and how adaptable they are to everyday housing. The article was more concerned with who won the competition than informing the reader about what was accomplished by the participants.

You then present four longer articles. Seven pages on Shanghai ("Suddenly Shanghai"); ten pages for a Singapore house remodel ("Straight and Narrow"); eight pages on a Portland house remodel ("Cooler Ranch"); and an eight-page photo essay ("A Parallax View"). While photographically stunning, glossy, and interesting, they are long-winded and I don't think meet your usual highly informative level on innovations in dwellings. Please don't lose your touch with your gritty insights and go for the glossy high-end presentation of projects.

Bill Ollinger
San Anselmo, California

In regard to Eric Hoekstra's letter ("Letters," June 2006) concerning door slider/frameless door hardware, I would suggest readers go to Johnson Hardware (www.johnsonhardware.com). My local Home Depot carries some lower-end Johnson products, but the higher end of their line is capable of hanging several hundred pounds and is readily available.

The items I bought are very reasonably priced and wonderfully designed. However, I've been unable to complete my project because I've found no source for attractive, contemporary, lightweight panels of the kind often featured in Dwell articles. Sources mentioned in your articles—Panelight, Plexiglas—sell only "to the trade." No offense to my fellow readers who are designers, contractors, and architects, but my project is too simple to warrant that kind of expense.

So, does anyone out there know of a source for ready-made lightweight panels for sliding doors and partitions? We DIY'ers are waiting with bated breath. ►

V. Knight
Arlington, Virginia

I was extremely disappointed with the opening of "Greased Lightning" by James Nestor (June 2006). Mr. Nestor stated, "Thirty years from now, there will be no more oil." This is a shock statement, the kind of statement that gives environmentalists a bad name and causes ordinary people to tune out.

What's more, it's a number open to debate. In March 2005, the private United Kingdom–based energy consultancy IHS Energy estimated that the world's remaining recoverable reserves, excluding unconventional sources such as heavy oil or tar sands, are between 1.3 trillion and 2.4 trillion barrels. That means that it will be 30–80-some years before we need to look for unconventional sources of oil, not before we run out. Although I share Mr. Nestor's goals, because of the dubious facts of the first sentence I am unable to trust the rest of Mr. Nestor's article.

Carolynn Gockel
Chicago, Illinois

Your magazine caught my eye while scanning the racks at the bookstore for some inspiration on working with small living spaces. I love the matte covers and the beautiful clean-lined photography. Friends who have noticed a new edition to my coffee table have enjoyed your May and June 2006 issues. I look forward to future issues on beautiful, modern, and smart small-space living.

Jessica Song
Albany, New York

For the obsessed, where in Setagaya-ku is the Lucky Drop House ("A Whole Lot of Luck," May 2006)? I won't knock on the door or anything invasive. It's a great house and I'd like to see it glowing in the dark.

Is there any insulating quality to the construction materials? How is the house heated? Does heat cost a fortune? Is there room for a washer/dryer? Water heater? Where is the bathroom and how did they arrange it? Does the house leak when it rains or the snow melts? Did they ever spill a drink on the top floor and it dripped down to the bottom? Is there a kitchen?

I've seen photos of the house interior with no furniture or belongings. Is there any chance of seeing photos of the interior as lived in by the owners? Sounds like I'm trying to case the joint, but really I'm just curious.

Jan Ryan
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Editors' Note: *For answers to your questions, we suggest you contact the architects through their website, www.tekuto.com.*

My husband and I recently moved from Chicago to Las Vegas. Two months after relocating here, we found a fabulous 1956 home with most of the original interior still intact. We snatched it up and are in the process of restoring it to its original atomic self. We have also met several people who have bought in this older neighborhood and have or are in the process of restoring or making over their homes in keeping with modern style.

All of this work on mid-century homes in my neighborhood made me think of Dwell. I am wondering if you would be interested in doing a piece or an issue that looks at these wonderful vintage parts of Las Vegas. So many tourists come to Las Vegas each year and never get a sense of the town's history, a history that has been preserved in many of these vintage homes that are now being restored.

Heidi Swank
Las Vegas, Nevada

Editors' Note: *Thank you for the suggestion. We are in fact working on a Las Vegas "Detour" article for November 2006.*

Could you do a piece in a future issue on "low-maintenance" or "clean" design and architecture? Or what makes something low maintenance and easy to clean?

My wife and I don't care much for spending half our time cleaning and maintaining our home and yard (but we also like a tidy home). I am also thinking about the design of the future home we would like to retire to and grow old in. We would love to create a home that will need minimal cleaning and yard tending, so we can grow old enjoying our home instead of spending all our fixed income and physical energy maintaining it in our retired years. Are there landscape designs that look good with minimal tending? What building materials produce and attract the most dust in a home? What materials need zero painting or sealing and are easy to clean? What floors and carpets and colors hide dirt the best? What designs are physically easier to dust and clean?

Hope I don't sound like a lazy slob, but it would be great to figure out a way to clean and maintain less and live more.

David Kasparek
Grantham, Pennsylvania

Editors' Note: *You may want to order a few of our back issues (877-939-3553), including the February 2001 issue featuring an article about Frances Gabe and her "self-cleaning house" ("Geniuses, Mad Scientists, and Inventors") and "Rethinking Senior Housing," in our April 2006 issue, to name just a few. Keep reading, as we will be covering more stuff like this in the future.*

Your May 2006 issue, "Think Small," has some great examples of relatively low impact, sustainable dwellings. The house in Australia ("Rising to the Occasion") was not one of them. Concepts of sustainability and low impact extend beyond physical/biological impact on environment. Light and sound have impact. View sheds and what's in them matter. The things we build on the landscape affect our connection to others and the communities we live in.

Single second homes on large tracts of open space is not a sustainable development pattern. In-your-face homes adjacent to a "pristine forest", particularly when in view of an adjacent community, are not low impact and are destructive to any concept of community, whether they are sided in steel or cedar shakes.

There is a yearning in many of us to be king of the hill, to conquer the environment. It perhaps should be the responsibility of owners, builders, and architects to curb baser instincts. More often it falls to communities, who move slowly to enact cumbersome regulation to prevent future visual blight on their landscape.

Landon Fake
Bethel, Maine

In regards to the "Edifice Complex" (February/ March 2006), too often clients become the boss of a situation with which they have little or no experience. Too often the client is responsible for very poor decisions, choosing to veto the designer. This is the reality that most architects deal with, even the good ones. A general appreciation of our built environment needs to be introduced to the lives of people at a much earlier age. Why not teach it at school? Is geography, for example, really more important than the history of your own street?

Joseph Shields
Dublin, Ireland

Dwell recently profiled Charles Harper ("The Minimal Realism of Charles Harper," May 2006), a naturalist/modernist artist, and Edith Heath ("Breaking the Mold," June 2006), a potter and industrial designer. The profiles were fascinating and I subsequently was trying to locate books (coffee table or otherwise) on them and/or of their work. Could you recommend possible sources? Thanks for your help.

Katherine Urbon
New York, New York

Editors' Note: *Harper is working on a book with Todd Oldham. There are also some great titles already available.* Beguiled by the Wild *is the most complete retrospective and can be purchased at www.fabframes.com/book.htm.* ▸

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Letters

Another great little book is Birds and Words, *which features Harper's work for the* Ford Times. *It was published in 1973 and is sadly out of print. Chronicle Books just published a book on Edith Heath and Heath Ceramics. For info, please go to www.chroniclebooks.com.*

We are new subscribers to the magazine and were so delighted to see an article in the April issue about Harris Armstrong ("The Spirit of St. Louis"). He was my husband's grandfather. It was such a lovely representation of his beautiful work. Our family really enjoyed reading it.

Kathleen Armstrong
Seattle, Washington

Editors' Note: *You may also want to take a look at architect Andrew Raimist's blog (http://remiss63.blogspot.com), which is also filled with great information on Harris Armstrong.*

I have been subscribing to Dwell for about a year now, and I am absolutely delighted to witness the regeneration of the design genre that was the basis of my architectural education and upbringing. After the crude excesses and banality of most of the "postmodern and neo-classical" pastiches, it is refreshing to see your magazine promote a return to the clarity and logic of the best design qualities of the '50s. Fortunately it was never fully abandoned, especially in Northern Europe, and now seems to be returning in a more sophisticated and subtle manner. The continued design qualities of Scandinavian furniture and housewares; the sustained design values of such companies as Braun, Apple, Heath Ceramics, and others; and greater general understanding of the contribution made by finely educated architects guarantee a continuation and expansion of the design standards that your magazine stands for.

Derry M. Robertson
Picton, Ontario

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At this year's International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York, finding a place to rest one's weary trade-show legs was not a problem. For a full report, please see page 122.

Contributors

Frances Anderton ("Taking His Own Advice," p. 89) is Dwell's Los Angeles editor and host of KCRW's radio show *DnA: Design and Architecture*. Writing about the Culver City house was a reminder of the exciting times in which we live, where high-tech and traditional methods of building in harmony with the environment are merging to create a regional modern architecture.

Andrew Blum ("Making the Future," p. 228) found writing about manufacturing unexpectedly scary. Filmmaker Godfrey Reggio told him he was going to "take a walk on the wild side," and author Michael Braungart said he'd discover that "you're living in a gas chamber." As of this writing, Blum is safe in Brooklyn, where he is a contributing editor at *Metropolis* and *BusinessWeek* online.

Brian Cairns ("Manufacturing 101," p. 228) is a Glasgow-based communication artist. His work for clients such as Ridley Scott Associates, Nike, and the *New York Times Magazine* regularly appears in design journals and international awards annuals.

David A. Greene ("On the Waterfront," p. 104) is a screenwriter and Dwell's Los Angeles contributing editor. While writing about Venice, California, he was fondly reminded of his first Venice apartment, which featured a peek-a-boo ocean view in the kitchen, and a knife-wielding crackhead in the garage.

Gunnar Knechtel ("It Takes a Villa," p. 166) is a German photographer based in Barcelona, Spain. "Shooting Villa Bio in Figueras was great," Knechtel says. "The family really enjoyed living in this house, which looks like a space ship just touched down in the suburbs."

William Lamb ("Camp Counsel," p. 100) recently moved to New Jersey, where he works as a staff writer for the *Record of Bergen County*. He spent a weekend in Little Rock, Arkansas, researching this issue's "Nice Modernist" piece, and heartily recommends the fried shrimp at Doe's Eat Place on Markham Street.

Karim Massoteau ("It Takes a Villa," p. 166) lives in Paris. When first asked to go to Spain to write about Villa Bio, he said no. But after a quick visit to this remarkable house, he'd gladly go back any time.

Matthew Monteith ("Perpetual Motion," p. 193) lives and works in New York City. Traveling the country by planes, trains, and automobiles while shooting for Dwell, he was excited to see how much activism exists in America in regard to transportation. He is now determined to convert his car to run on vegetable oil.

James Nestor ("The High Life," p. 154) is a writer living in San Francisco. As part of his lifetime of research for this article, he sat for years within the canopy of a backyard oak tree, munching nuts and berries, pulling grubs from his wooly coat, trying doggedly to metamorphose into his childhood idol: Cha-Ka, the young Pakuni.

Cornelius Scriba ("Emerald in the Rough," p. 176) is a photographer based in Hamburg, Germany. For this issue he photographed the rough and lovely house in Ireland by architect Dominic Stevens. The house fascinated him so much that he's been back twice to photograph it, each time discovering something new.

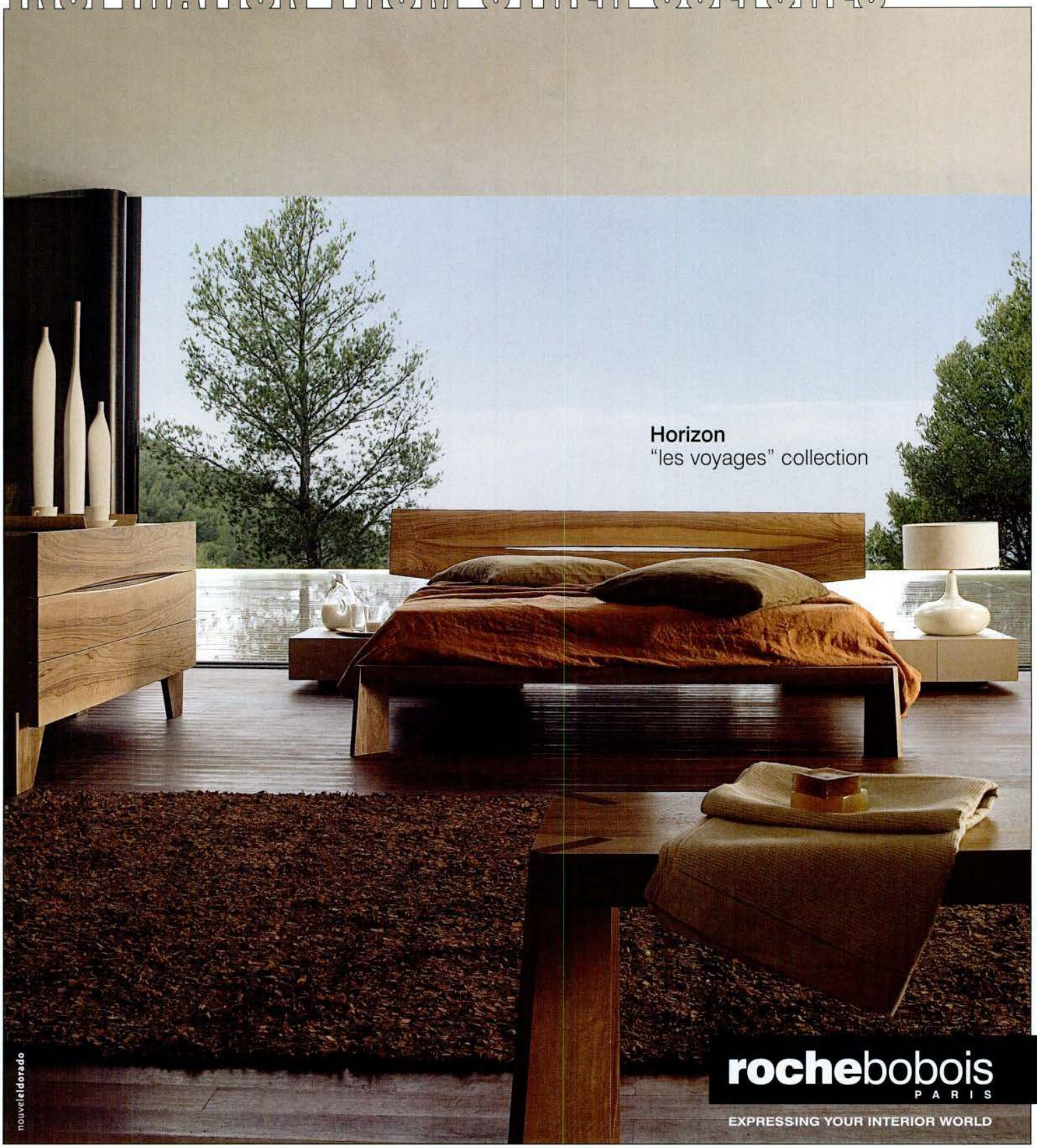
Cameron Sinclair and Kate Stohr ("Design Like You Give a Damn," p. 215) are the cofounders of Architecture for Humanity and the editors of *Design Like You Give a Damn*. They are trying to figure out what to do with all their spare time now that the book is done.

Robert Sullivan ("Perpetual Motion," p. 193) is the author of, most recently, *Cross Country: Fifteen Years and 90,000 Miles on the Roads and Interstates of America with Lewis and Clark, a Lot of Bad Motels, a Moving Van, Emily Post, Jack Kerouac, My Wife, My Mother-in-Law, Two Kids, and Enough Coffee to Kill an Elephant*, just published by Bloomsbury.

Noah Webb ("The Full Montara," p. 79) is a Los Angeles–based photographer. Though he spent much of his childhood in and around water, he oddly enough has never attempted to surf. After shooting this issue's "My House" in Montara, California, Webb has been inspired to give it a go. ■

PHOTO BY AYA BRACKETT

INSPIRATION FROM OTHER CULTURES



"HORIZON" bedroom, designed by Luigi Gorgoni. Composite panel with walnut veneer headrest, oil finish solid walnut legs, composite panel with mastic lacquer and adjustable-position nightstands. "HORIZON" bench and dresser. To purchase our "Les Voyages" catalog or to locate the Roche-Bobois store nearest you, call 1-800-972-8375 (dept 100).

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Sex and Sustainability

In early 2000, when the not-yet-launched Dwell began to take shape editorially, we decided to introduce "Off the Grid" as one of our regular features. At that time, it was nearly impossible to find well-designed, modern, sustainable homes to publish. The bulk of our searches yielded projects that fell squarely into the old paradigm of eco-consciousness—lots of hilltop yurts with batik curtains and purple carpeting.

Fast-forward six years: *Vanity Fair*'s May issue featured Julia Roberts as a cover model for sustainability. Wal-Mart has announced plans to go organic. And Kermit the Frog is hawking hybrid SUVs. What's going on here?

It seems that environmentalism has fired its old PR agency and the new one is kicking butt.

Simply put, sustainability has been sexed up. It has found its way into both fashion spreads and *Forbes*. It's even been branded: One Danish design group has launched theFLOW, which includes a product line of empty jars, cartons, and boxes labeled with conceptual contents like "renewable energy," "clean air," and "meaningfulness," and theFLOWmarket, a "supermarket selling consumer awareness" of sustainability.

While the cynic in me sees opportunism and the idealist mourns the potential loss of environmentalism's moral center, the pragmatist thinks, Finally, green's gone mainstream!

This transformation has been germinating like the seedling of an organic apple tree for some time, and indeed, for most people that organic apple provided an easy entry into a more eco-conscious way of life. Effecting real change in housing, however, is a tougher row to hoe.

Not long ago, a "green" house was, in the popular consciousness, a house painted green. Today, there is an unprecedented level of awareness about environmental issues. And the progress-stifling stigma once associated with being an environmentalist is breaking down like well-maintained compost.

But while a vast number of resources offer tips for integrating sustainable practices into one's daily life, the ability to make truly substantive changes still feels constrained. Sipping fair-trade coffee, buying energy-efficient appliances—these are fairly simple actions to take. But the actual greening of one's home, let alone purchasing a new one that is sustainable—that is still quite a challenging proposition both logistically and economically.

Your neighbors may be perfectly okay with your installing solar panels, once thought to be unsightly, for example, but your bank account may be less okay. You may want to buy a 2,000-square-foot house in a subdivision, but developers and home builders still want to sell you a 4,000-square-foot one. So while Dwell may be finding more and more examples of great sustainable design to feature on our pages, these projects are, quite often, the results of a handful of brave souls willing to tilt at windmills to get them built.

For sustainable architecture to truly have an impact, it has to reach beyond the rather specialized niche that it currently inhabits. That's happening...slowly. While there may be a flurry of attention on sustainability, Leonardo DiCaprio driving a Prius won't stop global warming. More needs to happen. There's no easy prescription to remedy this, but I would love to see a top-down approach (i.e., government-sponsored research and implementation of sustainable practices) integrated with the small but significant efforts of a populace of low-VOC-painting, window-caulking recyclers.

Like Eric Corey Freed, our sustainable-flooring expert for this month's "Dwell Reports," I share the hope that "in the near future, the words 'green architecture' will be redundant, and that saying 'green architect' would be like saying 'structurally sound building.'"

Energy-efficiency, use of sustainable building materials and practices, smaller footprints—these are the elements we need to make our buildings structurally sound today. And the sooner the better. ■

ALLISON ARIEFF, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
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ACURA

Story by Michela O'Connor Abrams

Photo by Peter Belanger

A Message to Our Readers

If you are reading this letter before you read Allison's Editor's Note, please allow me to ask you to go back and do that before continuing. If, however, you do not like being told how to read your copy of Dwell, please allow me to introduce our Sustainability issue, which we are very proud to present to you on recycled paper.

Sustainability is at the core of the Dwell mission, and since our inception we have endeavored to explore "greener" ways to design, build, and live. Given our belief that sustainability is a basic tenet for living responsibly in the modern world, you may wonder how we respect that very tenet while delivering a 270-page issue that weighs three pounds. To address this issue, I want to revisit the vision of our founder, Lara Deam.

Like any entrepreneur, Lara believed that Dwell would be successful. She knew that readers were ready for an intelligent, yet accessible, magazine about innovative architecture and design. And she knew as well that advertisers would realize the value in reaching these readers. The economics of a consumer magazine are such that advertising support is crucial to survival, and so we feel incredibly fortunate to have such great support from both constituencies.

Looking ahead, we are eager to continue your active participation in the growth and evolution of the Dwell brand. Our redesigned website (www.dwell.com), Dwell on Design conferences, and other initiatives will provide more and more ways to actively nourish community dialogue. You will also be invited to participate in our live forums, which will provide you with an even more personalized experience of Dwell.

Lara has always envisioned Dwell as a brand whose mission of "bringing modern design to everyone" could be realized anywhere, anytime, anyplace, and in any form. We hope to continue to help engage and empower you—our readers—to make a positive difference in your homes as well as your communities and the larger world.

I hope you enjoy this issue and welcome your feedback as always. ■

MICHELA O'CONNOR ABRAMS, PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER
michela@dwell.com

Take a Line for a Walk, design Alfredo Häberli, picture taken inside the PALAIS DE TOKYO, site de création contemporaine, Paris.

MOROSO

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We know you have questions, and we want to help you find the answers (and discover a few more solutions along the way).

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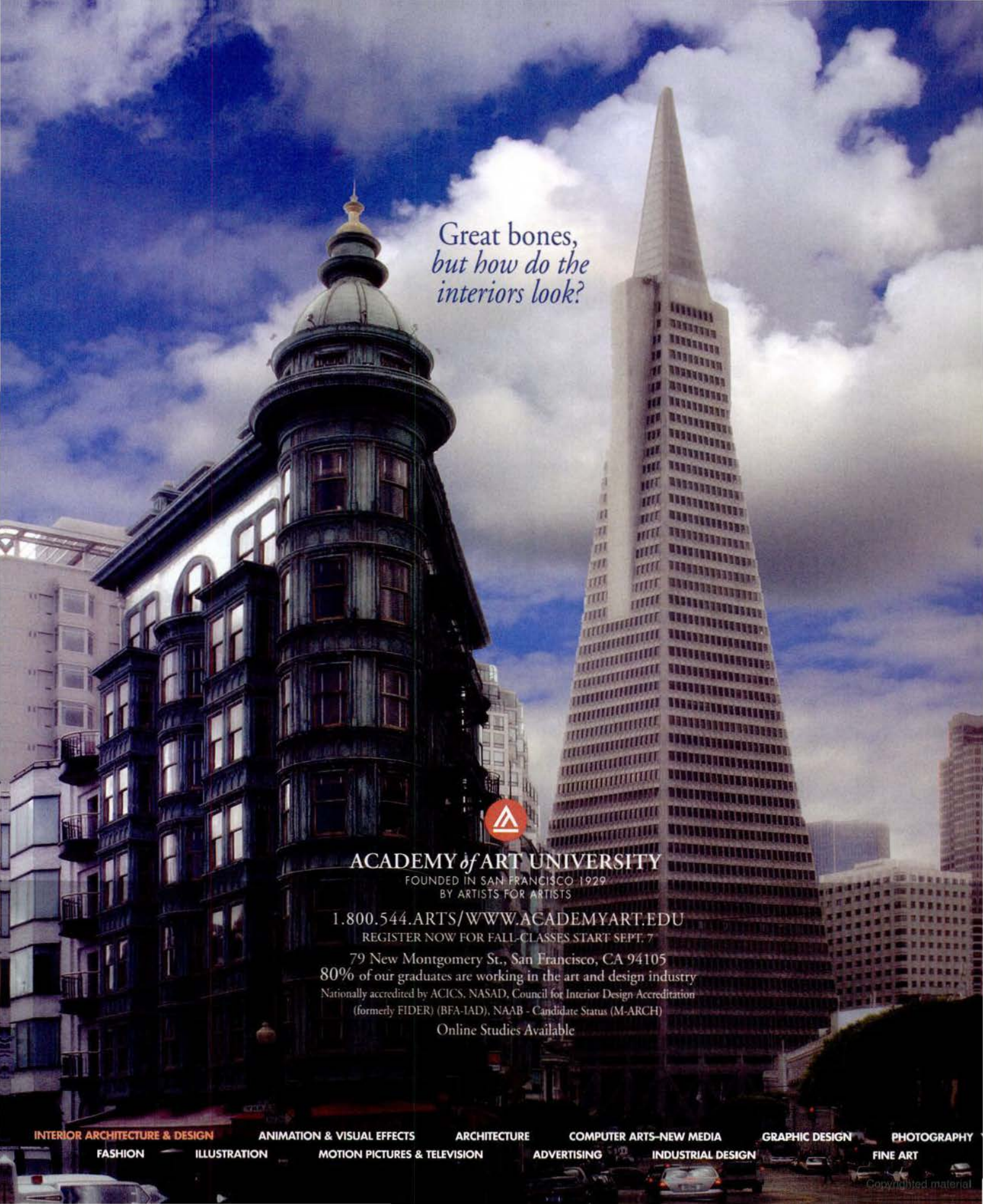
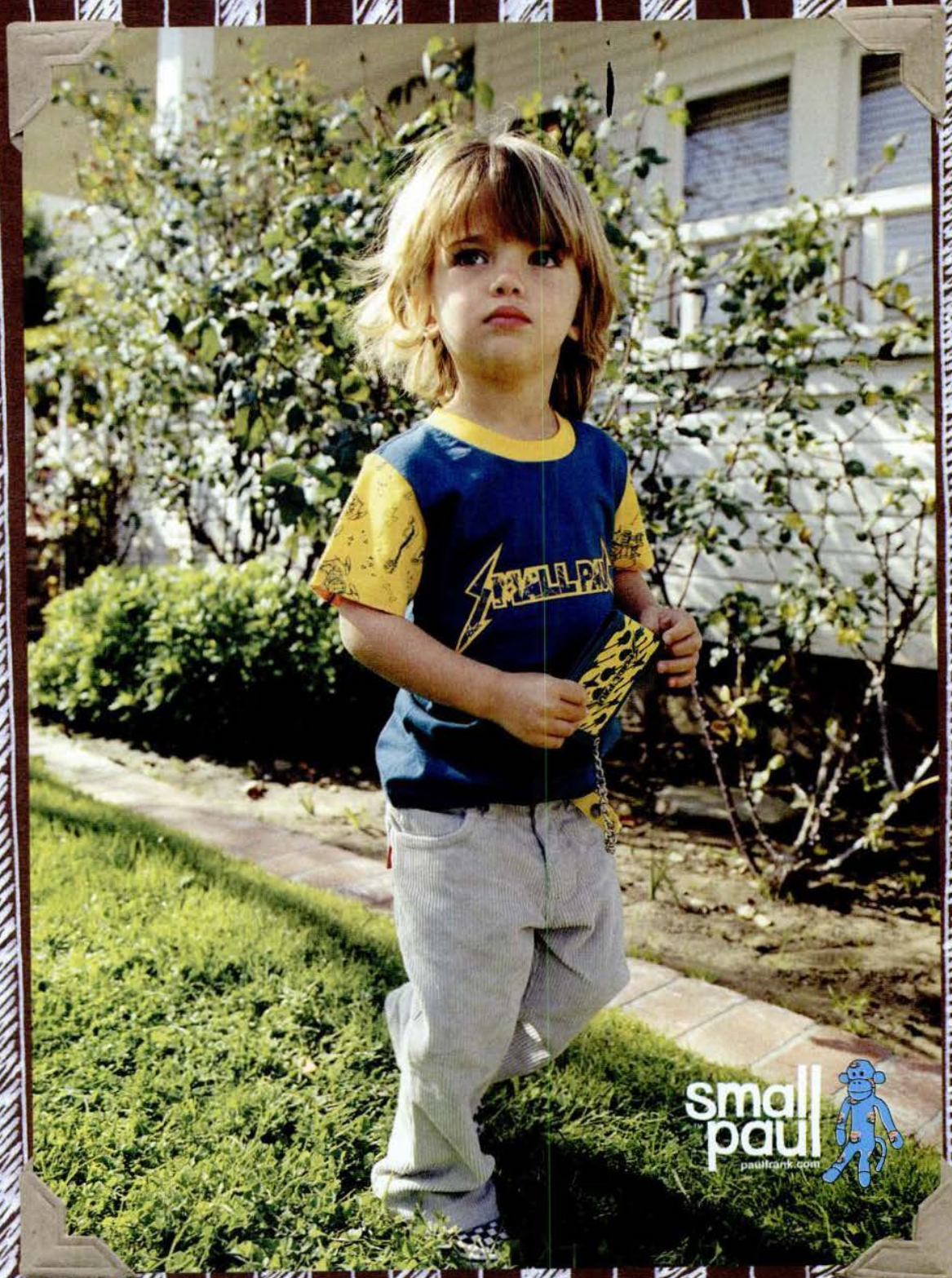
PHOTO BY DEAN KAUFMAN

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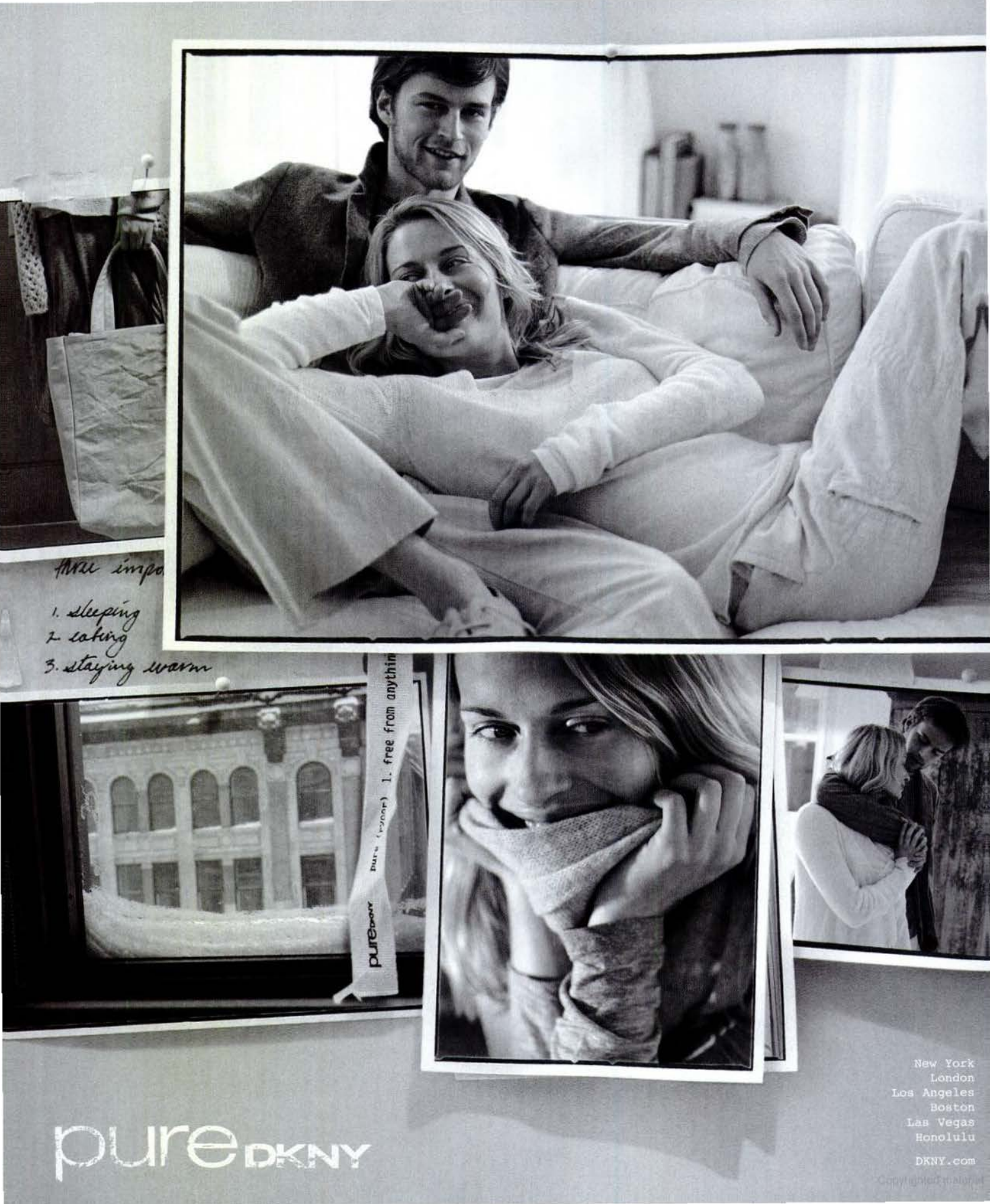
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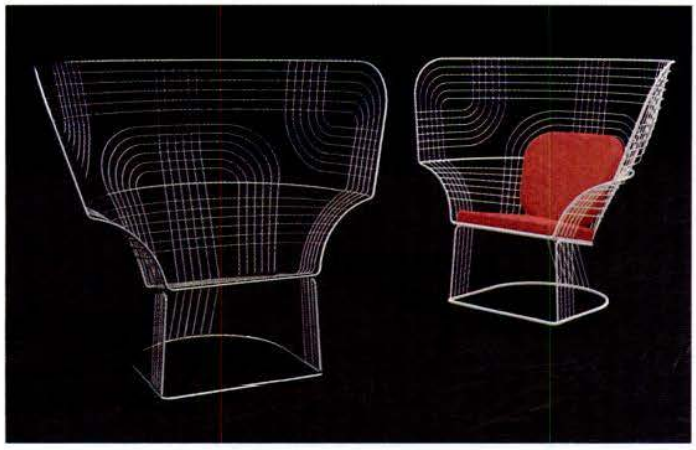
Simply Droog: 10 + 3 Years of Creating Innovation and Discussion / 21 Sept–14 Jan / Museum of Arts and Design / New York, NY

After traveling the world, a survey of the work of the progressive Dutch design collective Droog makes its only stateside stop at New York's Museum of Arts and Design.

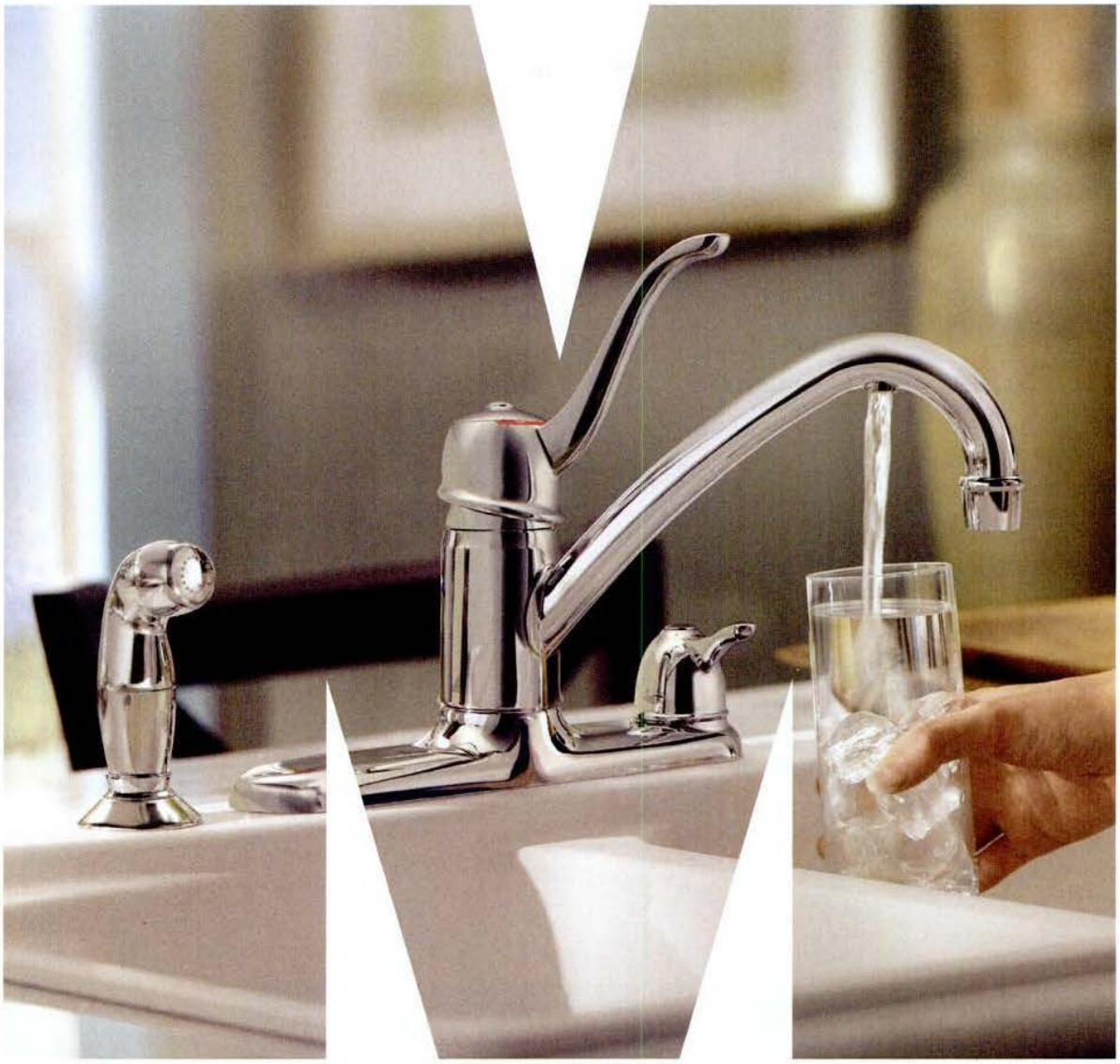
"Droog" was Anthony Burgess's term for a hooligan pal of antihero Alex de Large in *A Clockwork Orange*, but in this case it has little to do with the old ultraviolence. It's Dutch for "dry," as in "dry wit." Since 1993 the Droog collective has been making objects by turns wry and politically subversive from recycled materials and recontextualized odds and ends. Highlights include Tejo Remy's Rag chair (top left) and Rody Graumans's chandelier-as-knotted-bundle-of-lightbulbs, 85 Lamps. While beat downs are unlikely, you might still want to bring your droogs. www.madmuseum.org



Link easy chair / By Tom Dixon
The round-edged pattern of Dixon's Link, which serves both structural and decorative purposes here, reminds one not so much of metal chains and knots (as its author claims) but rather of an expertly mown ballpark outfield. Available in either stainless steel or white powder-coated steel, and with full or partial upholstery, Link provides a grand repose for umpiring your own backyard Wiffle Ball session. www.tomdixon.net

Design Secrets: Furniture: 50 Real-Life Projects Uncovered / By Brooke Stoddard and Laurel Saville / Rockport Publishers / $50
"I don't want to do dumb, boring rubbish!" says designer Ross Lovegrove. "I want to look back and think I've been involved in things that have some sense in them." Instead of the usual furniture beauty pageant, in which various products preen in front of the camera, this book gives a meaningful glimpse into the design world. A diverse group of 50 luminaries, including Ron Arad, Matali Crasset, and Alfredo Haberli, present the creation story—from conception sketch to prototype to manufacturing—of one of their various star products. www.rockpub.com

Wooden dolls / By Alexander Girard for Vitra
Alexander Girard, with his playful take on modernism, is the undisputed forerunner of the softer-edged, brighter-hued, opulently patterned designs of today—and he is finally getting the due afforded to Herman Miller cohorts Nelson and Eames (and is the only member of said triumvirate to have his designs unwittingly grace a line of Kate Spade bags). It's no great surprise, then, that Vitra recently relaunched these wooden dolls that Girard, one of the 20th century's most avid folk-art collectors, created for his Sante Fe home. www.vitra.com



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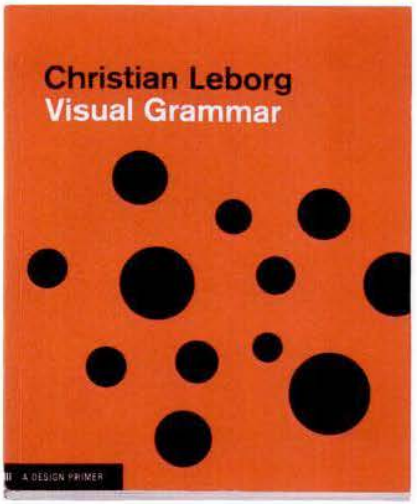
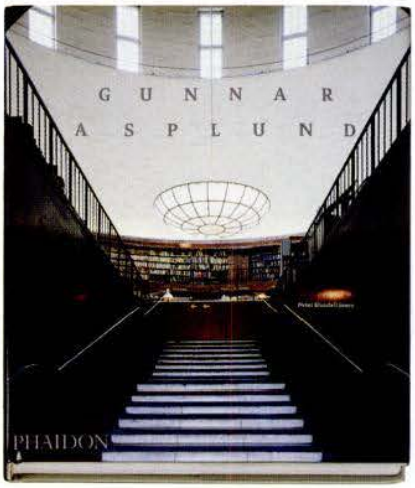
Stacks & Stripes / By Ella Doran
These placemats and coasters are created from a selection of designer Ella Doran's personal collection of records and books. Chromatic spines from albums and novels have been piled together to create these colorful coffee-table safeguards. The playful sets are also available as journals, cushions, and wallpaper. www.elladoran.co.uk



Visual Grammar / By Christian Leborg / Chronicle Books / $19.95
For those of us who learned terms like "negative/positive space" and "visual weight" the hard way—in classroom art critiques—Christian Leborg's new book will bring back painful memories. For those who have an interest but lack the language, however, this book elucidates the lexicon of visual grammar, from angles to opacity, and is replete with helpful infographics. www.chronicklebooks.com

Textiles / By Dorothy Cosonas for Knoll
Frustrated by the dearth of high-quality fabrics suitable for the company's fine furnishings, Florence Knoll established KnollTextiles in 1947. Those first Knoll fabrics were inspired by the fashions of the times, most notably the pinstripes and shirting of men's suiting. Fast-forward a half-century, and Dorothy Cosonas's debut collection harkens back to Knoll's original designs. Nubby wool patterns, aptly called Coco, look like they could as easily dress a chic career gal on her way to the office as they could a Saarinen chair; classic plaids recall the days when men carried handkerchiefs instead of iPods in their pockets. www.knolltextiles.com

PHOTOS BY PETER BELANGER (COASTERS AND BOOK)



Gunnar Asplund / By Pedter Blundell Jones / Phaidon / $75

This comprehensive survey of Swedish architect Gunnar Asplund takes an intimate look at the life and work of one of the greats of Scandinavian modernism. The expansive book studies the heady time when masters of the previous generation commingled with the pioneers of modernism like Gropius and Corbusier. Previously unpublished photography and archival drawings illustrate the unique blend of classical, modernist, and vernacular architecture with which Asplund became synonymous. www.phaidon.com

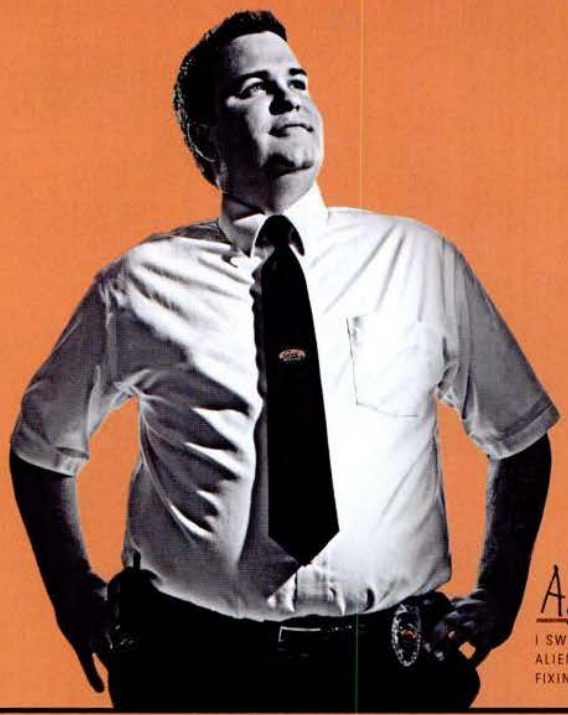
Woodline / By Eero Aarnio for Artek Projekt

If you've been following the design world for the last few years, you're probably already aware that one of the 20th century's undisputed masters of furniture design has been reawakened to make his mark on the 21st. Eero Aarnio, creator of the iconic Ball and Pony chairs, reigns in some of his more flamboyant intention here, creating a simple line of birch flat-cut plywood seating—a bench, armchair, and rocker (pictured)—for Artek (the proto IKEA created by Aino and Alvar Aalto in the 1930s). www.artek.fi

KU table set / By Toyo Ito for Alessi

C. S. Lewis once said, "Tea should be taken in solitude." This may be true, but wouldn't it be better if you could be both alone and in the company of a friendly ear? The mugs in Toyo Ito's KU line are perfect for coffee or tea, and their anthropomorphic, lobe-shaped handles act as surrogate tableside companions to unload on—finally, you can have a one-sided conversation without guilt! www.alessi.com

PHOTO BY PETER BELANGER (BOOK)



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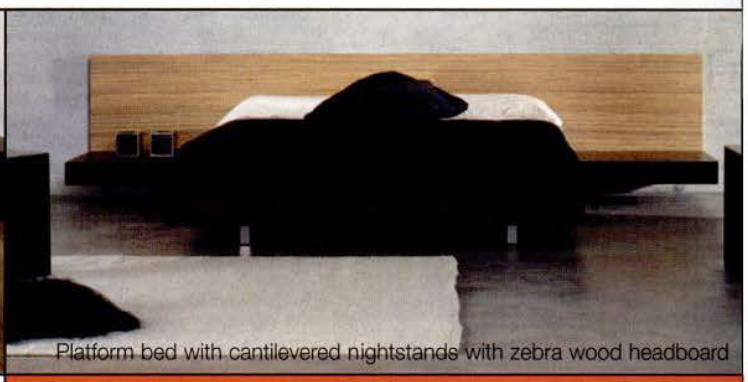

Platform bed with cantilevered nightstands with zebra wood headboard

Corbu wool rug

Modern classic chair

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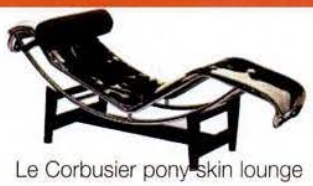

Le Corbusier pony skin lounge

Le Corbusier sofa

Modern classic bed

Como sofa

Le Corbusier chair w/ottomon

Wassily chair

Philippe Starck chair

Le Corbusier pony skin chair

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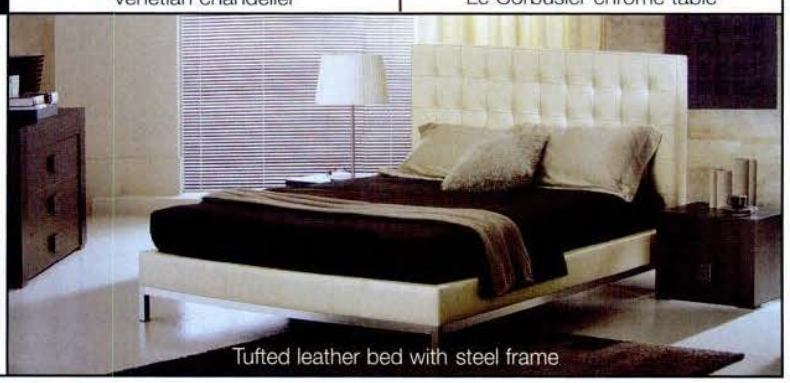


Tufted leather bed with steel frame

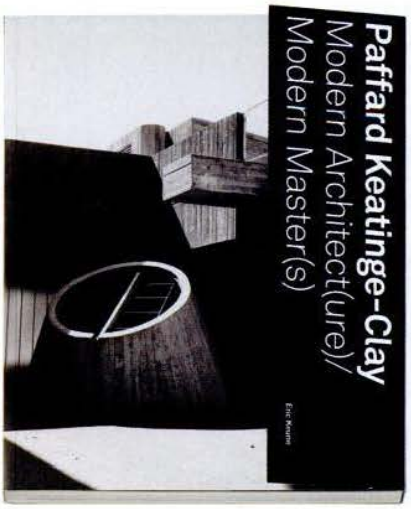
The new designs are intended for public spaces like hotels and museums, but just as easily jazz up your own home. The Concorde (at left) and Ottochair (below) stand out as particularly inviting places to take a load off. The Otto steps into the future by making use of innovative new materials to create a tension between opacity and translucency. This symbol of forward thinking is offered in four different color combinations, and with several different base structures. Staying true to the Italian company's venerated tradition, the Concorde pays homage to its namesake through its svelte aerodynamic profile and classic simplicity. Don't worry, no risk of jet lag after a few hours in this seat. www.bebitalia.it

Project Collection / By B&B Italia /

B&B Italia celebrates its 40th year with the release of the Project Collection.

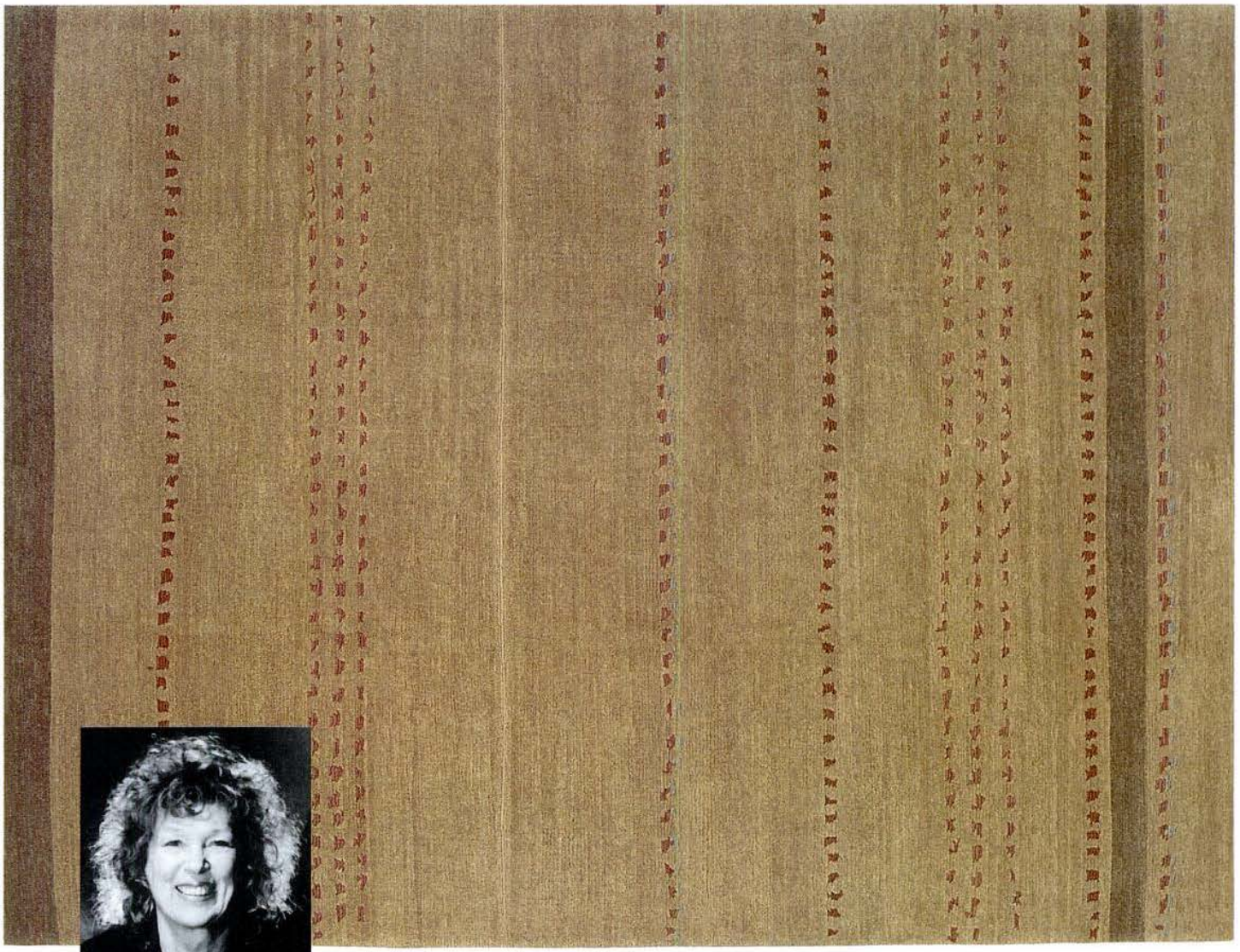
Iconic Panels / By B&N Industries
If you'd rather wield a hammer or a screwdriver than pick up a paintbrush, or more specifically, a paint roller, then these wall panels might be the antidote to the drudgery of painting your walls. Thanks to motifs that nod to well-known, quirky references like Helvetica and Hitchcock, and a number of color options, your walls will never look drippy. www.bnind.com

Uncertain States of America: American Art in the 3rd Millennium / 24 June–10 Sept / Bard College / Annandale-on-Hudson, NY
Unlike the Whitney Biennial, oft decried for its rather smug presentations, this show—featuring work by 40 young American artists—seems both smart and prescient without being overly self-aware. A canine crafted of coconut fiber by Hannah Greely (shown here) and a retooled jukebox by Christian Holstad are among the many standouts. www.bard.edu/ccs



Paffard Keatinge-Clay: Modern Architect(ure)/Modern Master(s) / By Eric Keune / SCI-Arc Press / $40
As we can well attest, San Francisco is home to a sort of reclusive modernism—tucked away between Victorian inglenooks and Barbary balustrades. Thanks to SCI-Arc, Keatinge-Clay (the San Francisco–based modernist) ascends to the pantheon of great 20th-century architects. www.sciarc.edu

PHOTO BY PETER BELANGER (BOOK)



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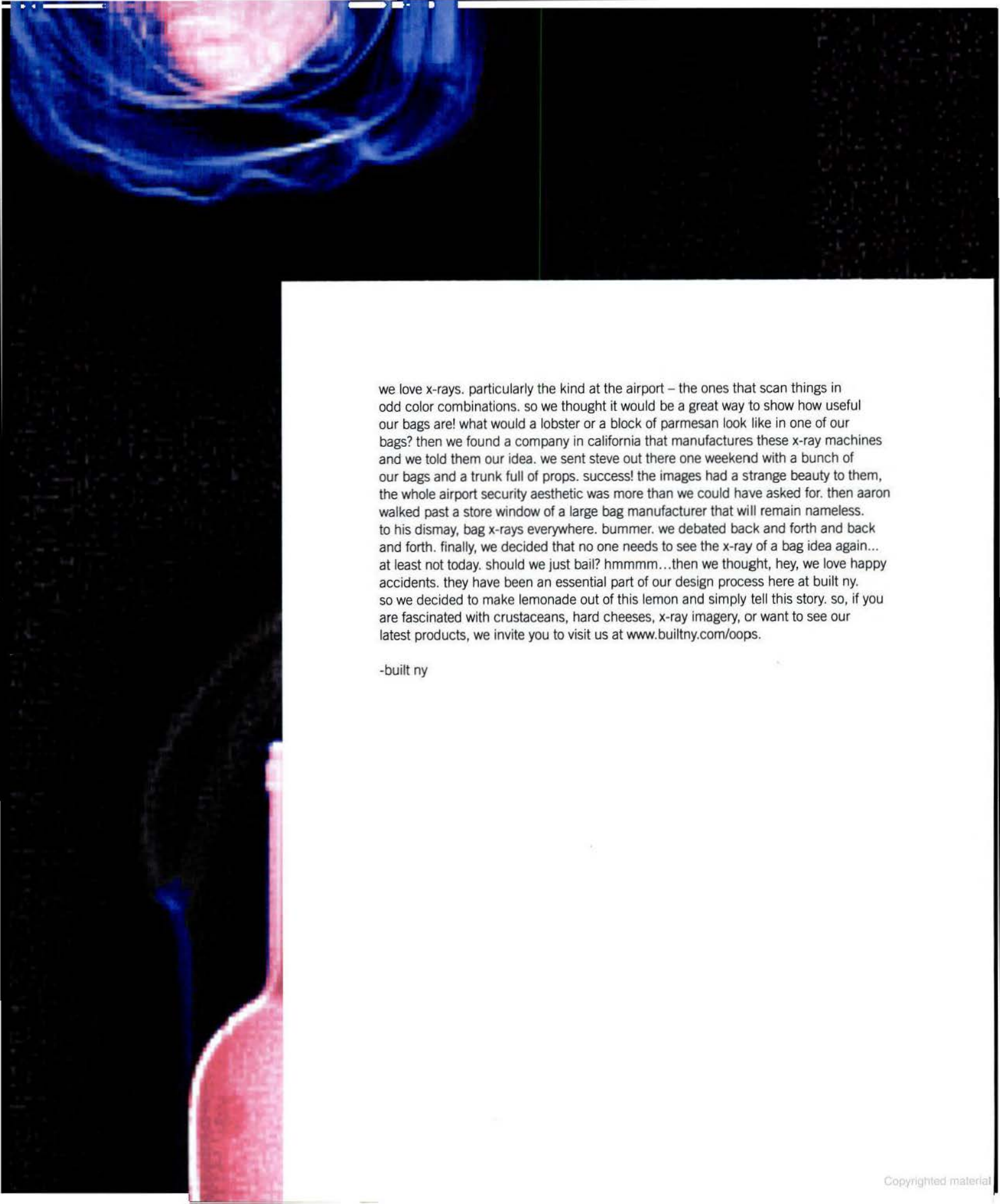
Làszlò / By Cristian Malisan for Fambuena
Three intertwined bands of plastic wrestle for attention atop a chromed black base to form this playful table lamp from Spanish lighting company Fambuena. The romantic design by Cristian Malisan casts dramatic shadows and projects bold ribbons of light that are sure to set the mood—perfect for sharing that late-night glass of Brunello or six-pack of Bud, as the case may be. www.fambuena.com

EcoSmart cup / By Insulair
If you prefer your coffee hotter than not, it's a bother to grapple with the sleeve that encircles the cup, but uncomfortable to do without. The EcoSmart cup is a clever solution to this admittedly minor but still annoying dilemma. A corrugated sheet of recycled paper baffling is sandwiched into the cup's lining, providing a handy insulated layer that keeps your hands cool and your coffee warm. And because the cup is made of recycled paper and fibers, when you're done with your drink, there's no guilt to toss. www.insulair.com

Ponte / By Team 7
Finding the right coffee table can be a daunting task—so basic yet so integral to the room. Ponte (above), from Austrian furniture manufacturer Team 7, is all about simplicity. Six different solid woods to choose from, a clean reductive design, and a variety of sizes will make this decision a cinch. www.batinau.com



we love x-rays. particularly the kind at the airport – the ones that scan things in odd color combinations. so we thought it would be a great way to show how useful our bags are! what would a lobster or a block of parmesan look like in one of our bags? then we found a company in california that manufactures these x-ray machines and we told them our idea. we sent steve out there one weekend with a bunch of our bags and a trunk full of props. success! the images had a strange beauty to them, the whole airport security aesthetic was more than we could have asked for. then aaron walked past a store window of a large bag manufacturer that will remain nameless. to his dismay, bag x-rays everywhere. bummer. we debated back and forth and back and forth. finally, we decided that no one needs to see the x-ray of a bag idea again... at least not today. should we just bail? hmmmm...then we thought, hey, we love happy accidents. they have been an essential part of our design process here at built ny. so we decided to make lemonade out of this lemon and simply tell this story. so, if you are fascinated with crustaceans, hard cheeses, x-ray imagery, or want to see our latest products, we invite you to visit us at www.builtny.com/oops.

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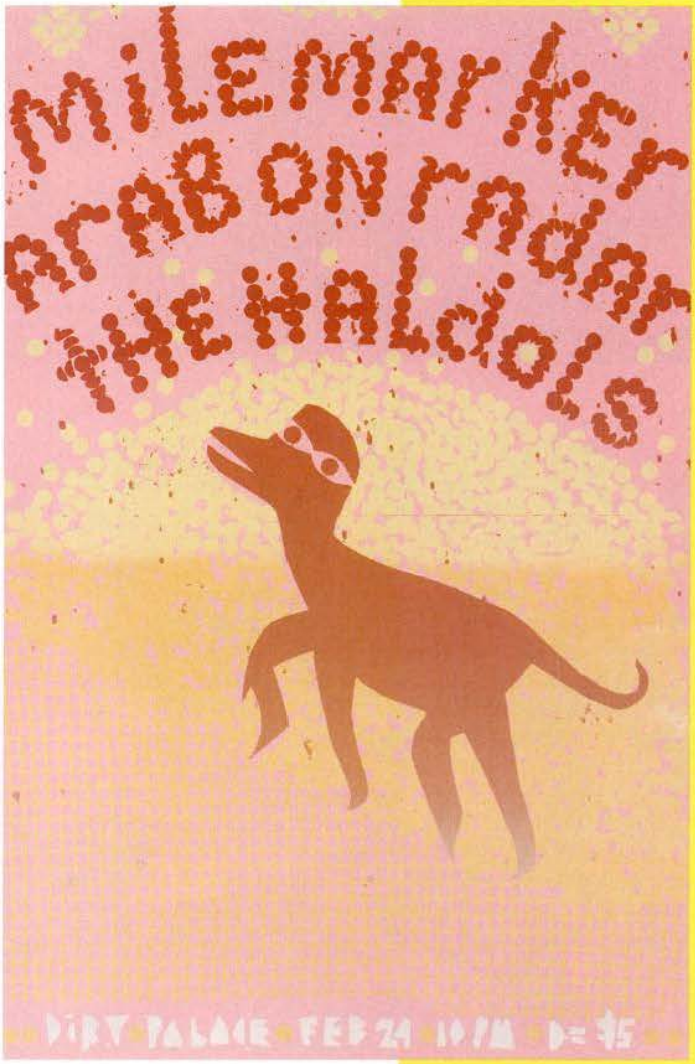
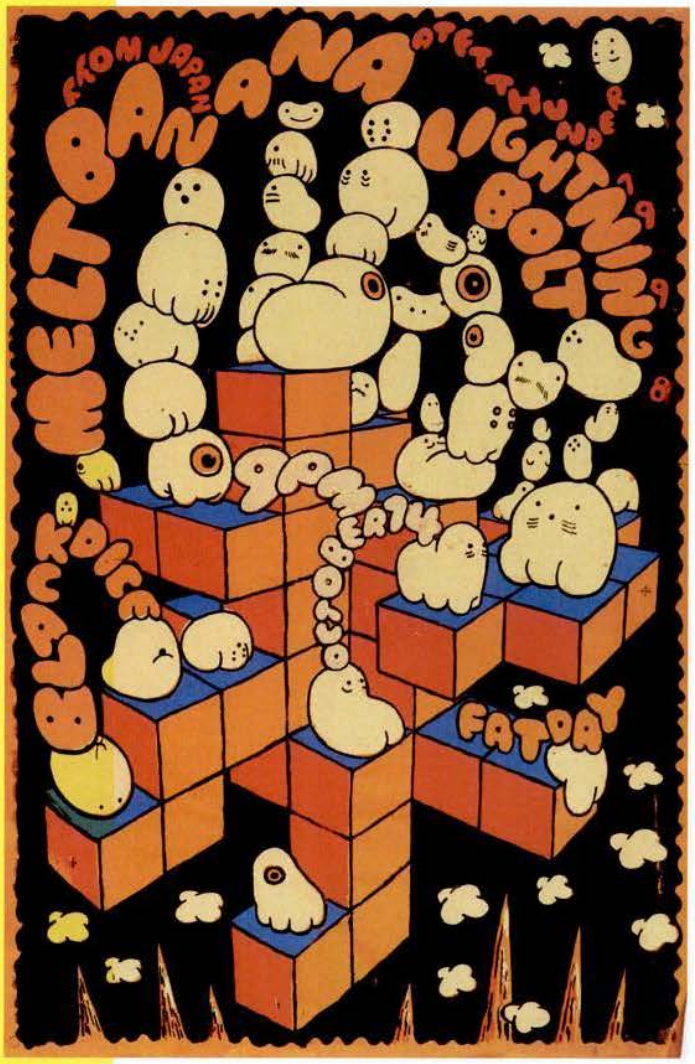
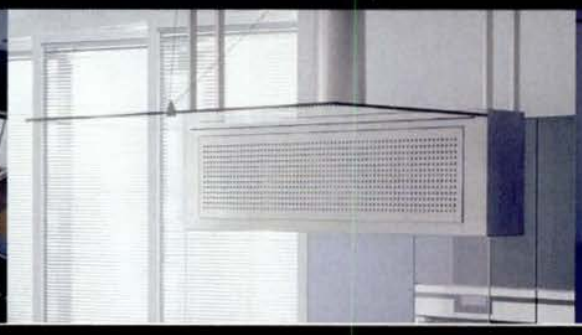


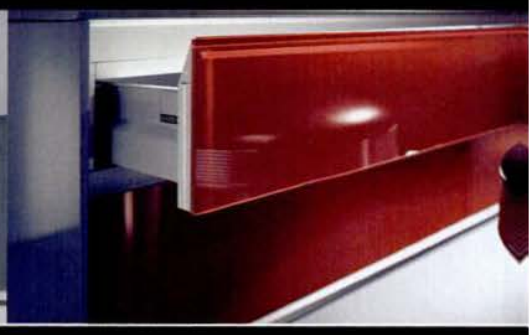


Wunderground: Providence, 1995 to the Present / 15 Sept–7 Jan / RISD Museum of Art / Providence, RI / Should we attribute these playful posters to a scruffy collective of underground artists or divine providence? Both, it seems. For the last decade the cult-fave artists of Providence's fringes have been making art, music, and performances that the art world at large is just starting to recognize.

This month the RISD Museum of Art hosts the first-ever museum show devoted to the artists of the famed Olneyville neighborhood and the West-Side. "Wunderground" takes a broad view of the whole scene—one indebted to underground music, anticommercialism, and comic books—while also looking to the future: The museum has commissioned a massive new installation for its main gallery. The show is populated by animation, sculpture, and readymade objects, but pays special attention to some 2,000 posters for community events and concerts. Turns out the stars of this rock show are the Rhodies. www.risdmuseum.org

www.songlinedesign.com





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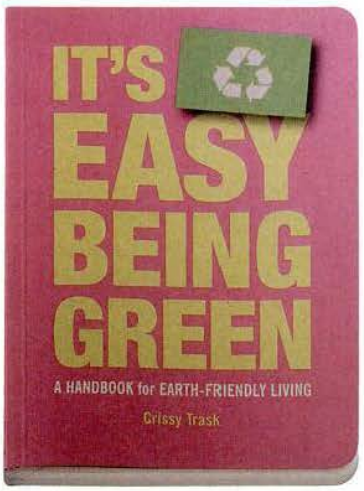
ICA Boston
This September, Boston will see the opening of its first new art museum in nearly 100 years. The Institute of Contemporary Art's new 65,000-square-foot space is home to a burgeoning permanent collection that boasts works by the likes of Nan Goldin, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Christian Janowski. This light, optimistic building by Diller Scofidio + Renfro sits right on the waterfront, making the view of Boston Harbor alone worth the trip—even when the Red Sox are on the road. www.icaboston.org

It's Easy Being Green / By Crissy Trask / Gibbs Smith / $12.95
If you've always diligently recycled your cans and newspapers but yearn to do more, this handy how-to guide is for you. Though some of the 250-plus tips, like taking short showers and maximizing natural light, might seem obvious, most of the book is informative and thoughtful. From insulation suggestions to rainwater collection to paint choices, it's a handy resource for painless ways to lessen your environmental impact. www.gibbssmith.com



The M5 table / By Frank for Established & Sons / For their new table, Pam West and Matt Edmonds (the duo behind Frank) drew inspiration from a most democratic structure—the bridge over Britain's M5 motorway. This elegant, utilitarian design is the ideal thoroughfare for all your culinary journeys. www.establishedandsons.com

PHOTO BY PETER BELANGER (BOOK)

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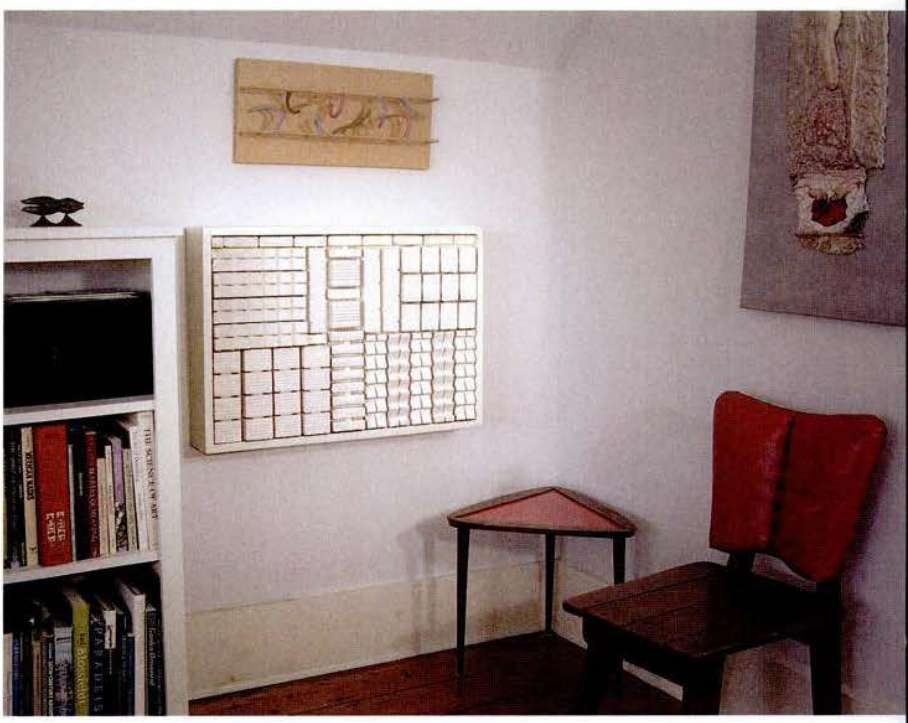
orange slice by pierre paulin for Artifort

Bird in Flight / By Alena Henessey
Did the world just discover that birds are cute? It would seem so, given the number of bird motifs pervading everything from plates to vases to T-shirts. While the craze is largely inexplicable, we appreciate any attempt at doing something novel. Alena Henessey chooses not to plaster the image, but rather plaster the bird itself, creating one of the more original incarnations of the recent fowl fanaticism. www.alenahennessy.com



Air conditioner cover / By Leslie Fry
Artist Leslie Fry used her passion for gourmet cookies as inspiration to create this unique solution to those unsightly swamp coolers many of us have intruding into our otherwise pleasant living rooms. The abstract covers, made from plaster casts of empty cookie packaging, simply fit over the frame of your air conditioner. Voilà—that humming eyesore is now tasteful art. www.lesliefry.com

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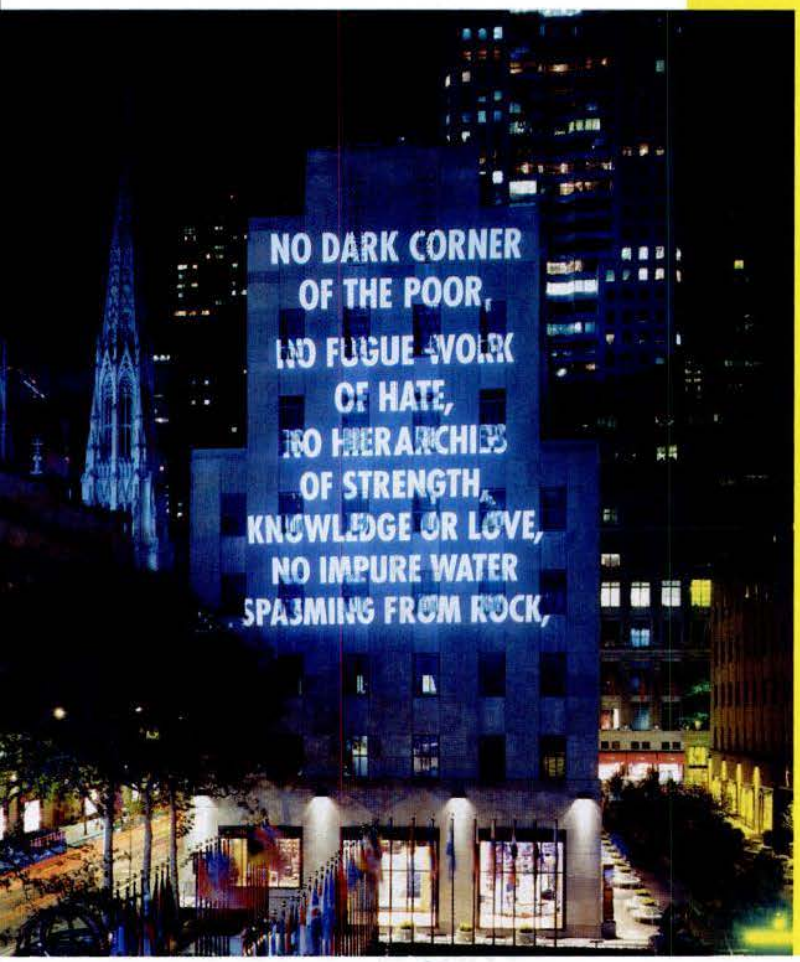
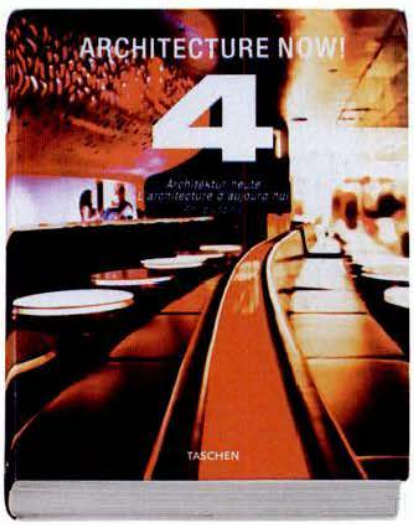
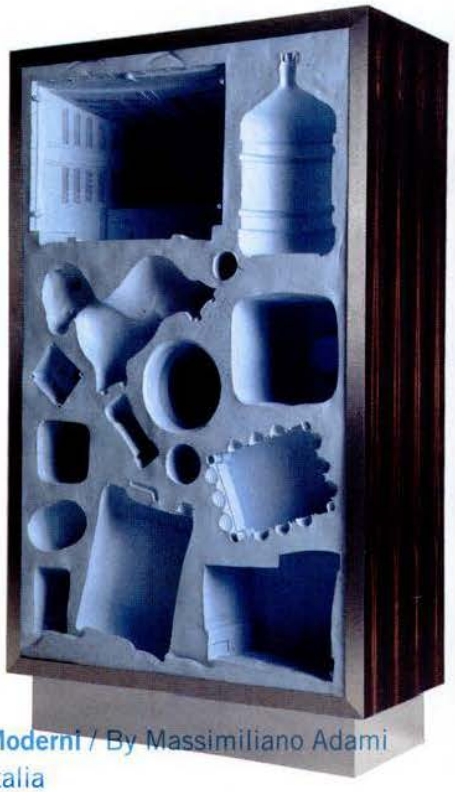


Jenny Holzer XX / 17 May–17 Sept / MAK Exhibition Hall / Vienna, Austria / American artist Jenny Holzer, well known for her LED text displays—sort of like bat signals for aesthetes—will create a site-specific piece for the MAK center featuring texts from Austrian Nobel Prize winner Elfriede Jelinek. www.mak.at



Architecture Now 4 / By Philip Jodidio / Taschen / $39.99

In this fourth volume in the series, Taschen has once again found enough inventive and innovative new projects to keep even jaded magazine editors enthralled. The trilingual text is superfluous; what matters are the 500-plus pages of photographs that show an international array of diverse projects, from a perforated wedding chapel in Japan to a pimped-out bar in Las Vegas to a futuristic water-purification plant in Connecticut. www.taschen.com



Fossili Moderni / By Massimiliano Adami for Meritalia

As we roamed through Massimiliano Fuksas's vast new trade halls in Milan this year, a few wayward objects, such as Fossili Moderni (blue polystyrene pocked with hollowed-out forms of droll artifacts of everyday life), caught our eye amidst the blur of low-slung sofas and wall-mounting entertainment units. www.meritalia.it

PHOTO BY PETER BELANGER (BOOK)

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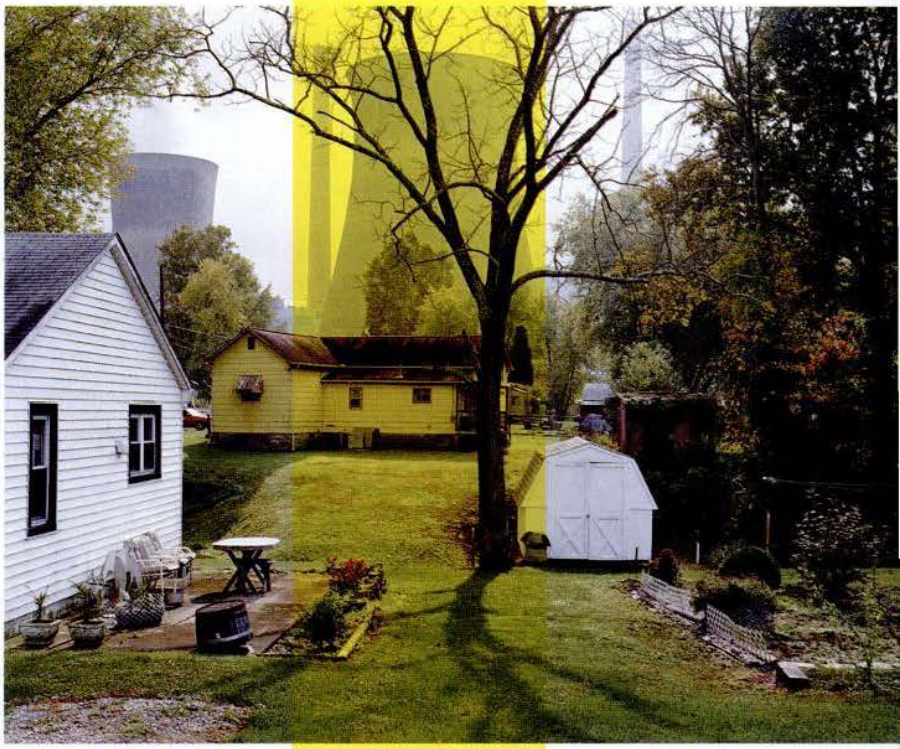
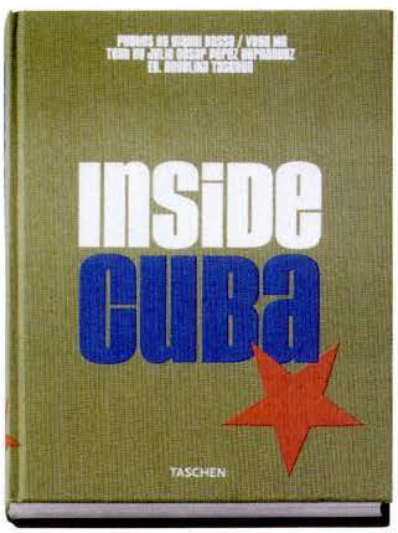


Ecotopia: The Second ICP Triennial of Photography and Video / 8 Sept–26 Nov / International Center for Photography / New York, NY

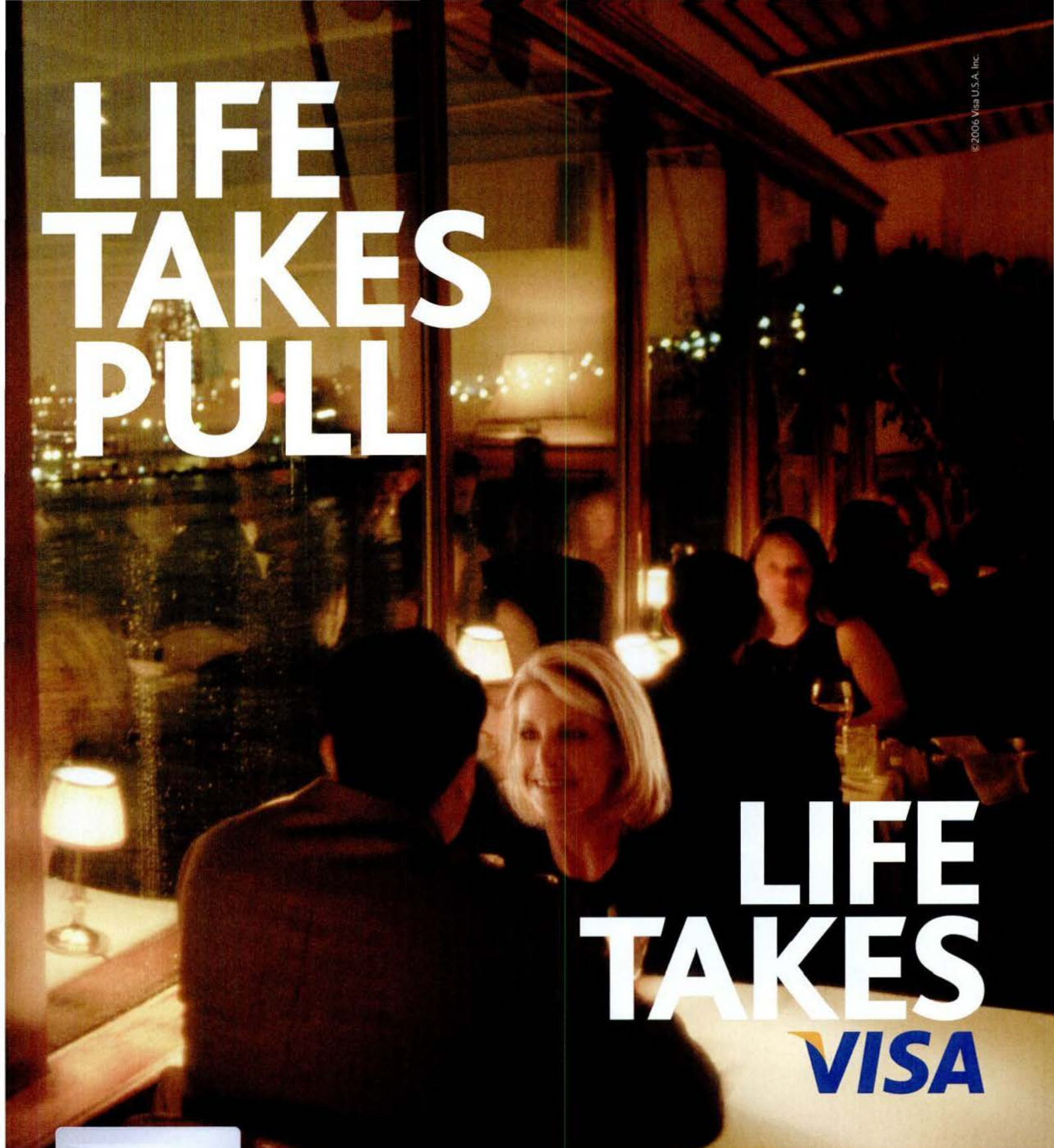
It's unlikely that you'll find any of these photographs wedged between a sad clown painting and an Ansel Adams landscape at your local mall's poster shop. For its second triennial, ICP has chosen 30 international filmmakers and photographers whose works deal with the natural world and the way in which it shapes and is shaped by us—for better or, more often than not, for worse. www.icp.org



Inside Cuba / By Julio César Pérez Hernández / Taschen / $50

If everything you know about Cuba comes from *The Buena Vista Social Club*, then it's time to take a closer look. This enormous volume realizes the difficult task of communicating the profound richness of Cuban culture and the pastoral landscapes that characterize the Caribbean's largest island. Julio César Pérez Hernández touches on a wide array of subject matter, from the famous cigar factories to the favorite hotel of infamous Charles "Lucky" Luciano. www.taschen.com

PHOTO BY PETER BELANGER (BOOK)



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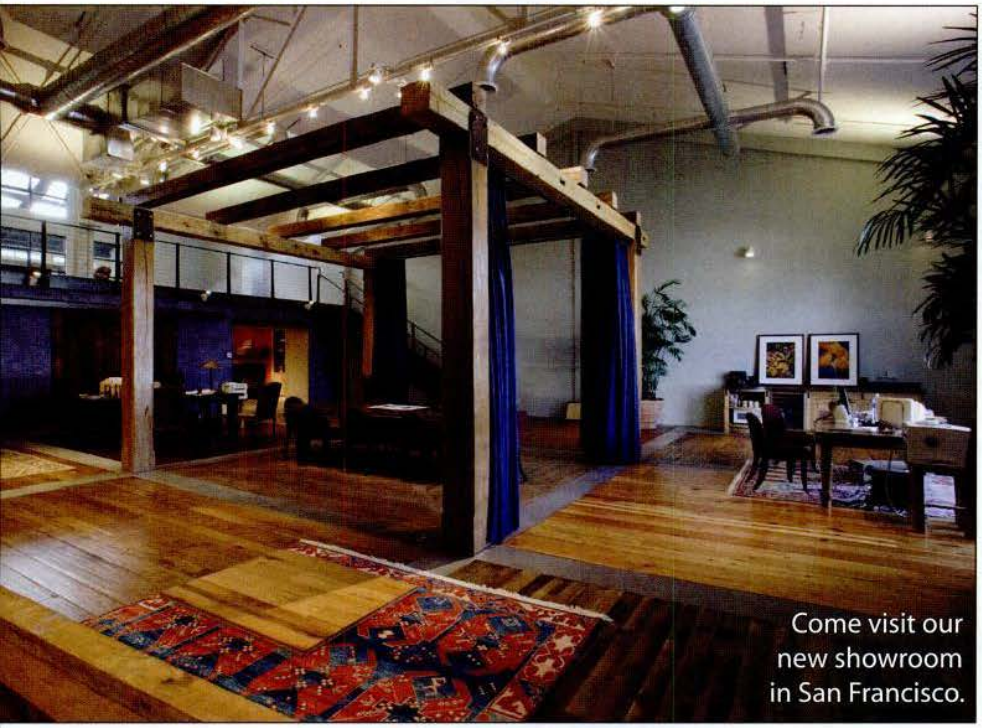

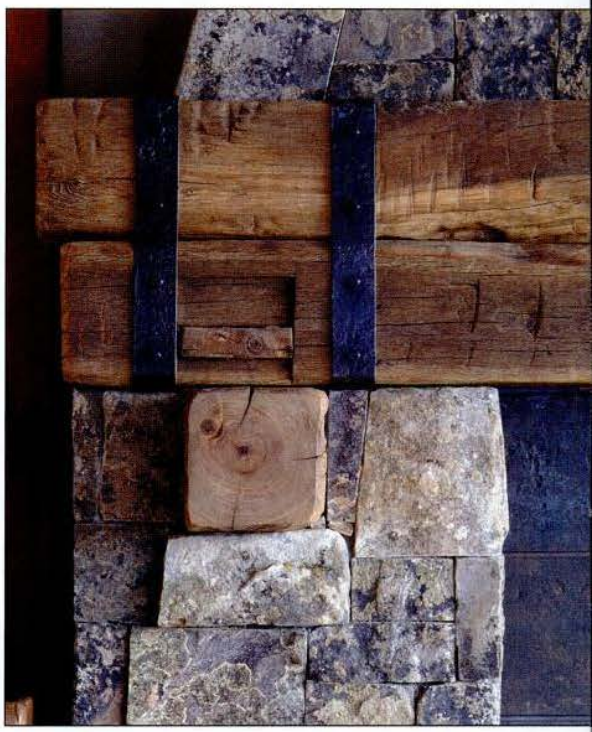

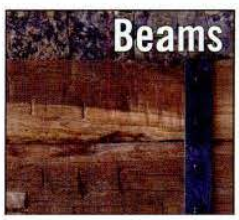

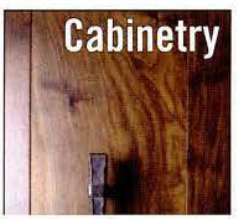

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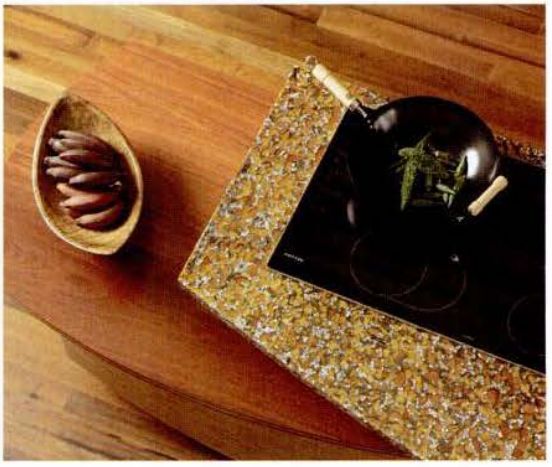

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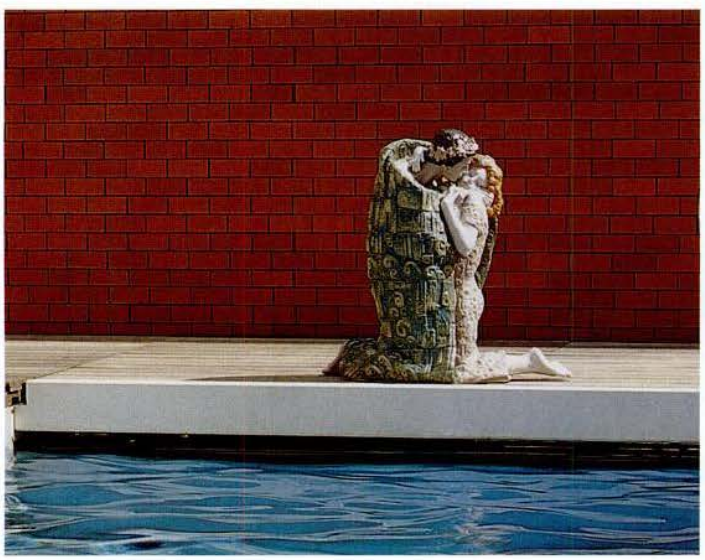

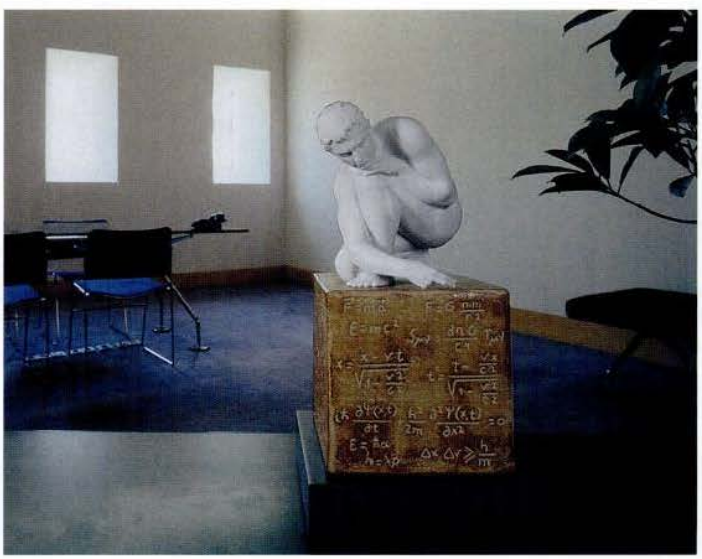

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The Full Montara

Coastal California isn't always sun and sand, so the Meyerhoffers' new house adapts to the elements.

In Montara, California, architect Michael Maltzan designed a home for, his sister and brother-in-law. From certain vantage points, the home's unique angles result in M.C. Escher–like optical illusions.

For Thomas Meyerhoffer, a product designer and avid surfer, and his wife Mary Kate, a graphic designer and serious rock climber, living in San Francisco was never about being in San Francisco. "It's one of the few places in the world you can live in a big city and be so close to nature," explains Thomas, who initially came to the Bay Area in 1993 from Sweden to work for Ideo. Nine years ago, the adventurous couple took the leap of leaving city life behind entirely, and bought a 30-by-30-foot cinder-block house in Montara, a small, sleepy seaside town just 25 minutes south of the city on Highway 1. Now nature was right outside their front door.

The new homeowners' first decision was to gut the house completely to create an open plan. "It was just one big room where we did everything," recalls Thomas. "We could just take down walls or put up walls; it was really experimental." "We called it our bunker on the beach," adds Mary Kate with a hint of sarcasm.

Although renovation was in the cards, with other interests and pursuits occupying much of the couple's time, the one-room bunker remained home for another six years.

But with the arrival of their son, Dylan, it became clear that it was time to bite the renovation bullet. The couple didn't have to look far to find an architect. They turned to Mary Kate's brother, Michael Maltzan—a one-time protégé of Frank Gehry's office who has experienced marked success with his own practice and commissions that include the MoMA QNS, a renovation of UCLA's Hammer Museum, and the Fresno Metropolitan Museum.

"Because it was her brother, we were careful to engage in the right way," concedes Thomas, acknowledging the shift the home represents from the architect's usual roster of high-profile projects. Maltzan adds, "It is different than a lot of the projects we are involved in—at some levels—but I think an approach to architecture is an approach to architecture." ▸

Thomas surveys the surf from the upstairs deck adjacent to the "quiet room." Almost every room in the house, up and downstairs, opens to the outdoors. On an overcast day, Montara's beach is almost completely deserted.

To that end, the home is a one-off descendent of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian house program: affordable designs from a big-name architect. Although getting the house built would take three years and as many contractors, Maltzan, Thomas, and Mary Kate achieved what is all too often out of reach: an architect-designed modern home on a budget.

"Everything is really basically done," says Thomas of the construction. "Michael wanted to give us a shell, not something that was really refined or detail oriented." The simple shell Maltzan designed utilized the existing foundation, going so far as to re-create a multipurpose main room over the original footprint, and even employ the same concrete cinder block throughout (which the architect also claims helped its permit status as a renovation). "There was a lot about the old place that we liked," says Thomas. "There was no reason for not doing those things in the new house."

"I think the design responds to two things," counters Maltzan, "the way Mary Kate and Thomas live, and the bigger, more general aspects of the context—where the ocean is, where the views are, and how tight the site is. I think especially the way that they live and the site are so intertwined that those two issues of context and lifestyle are in some ways the same."

Because the couple travels frequently—Thomas visits his international clients, and Mary Kate makes the four-hour trek to the mountains for rock climbing—they wanted a house that was as small as possible and as easy to maintain as possible. Because friends often drop by while motoring down Highway 1, they also needed a large enough space to accommodate their social life. "There were over a hundred people here at our midsummer party," Thomas says proudly.

On the ground level, the architect added a wing of compact bedrooms and tucked a studio for Mary Kate ▸

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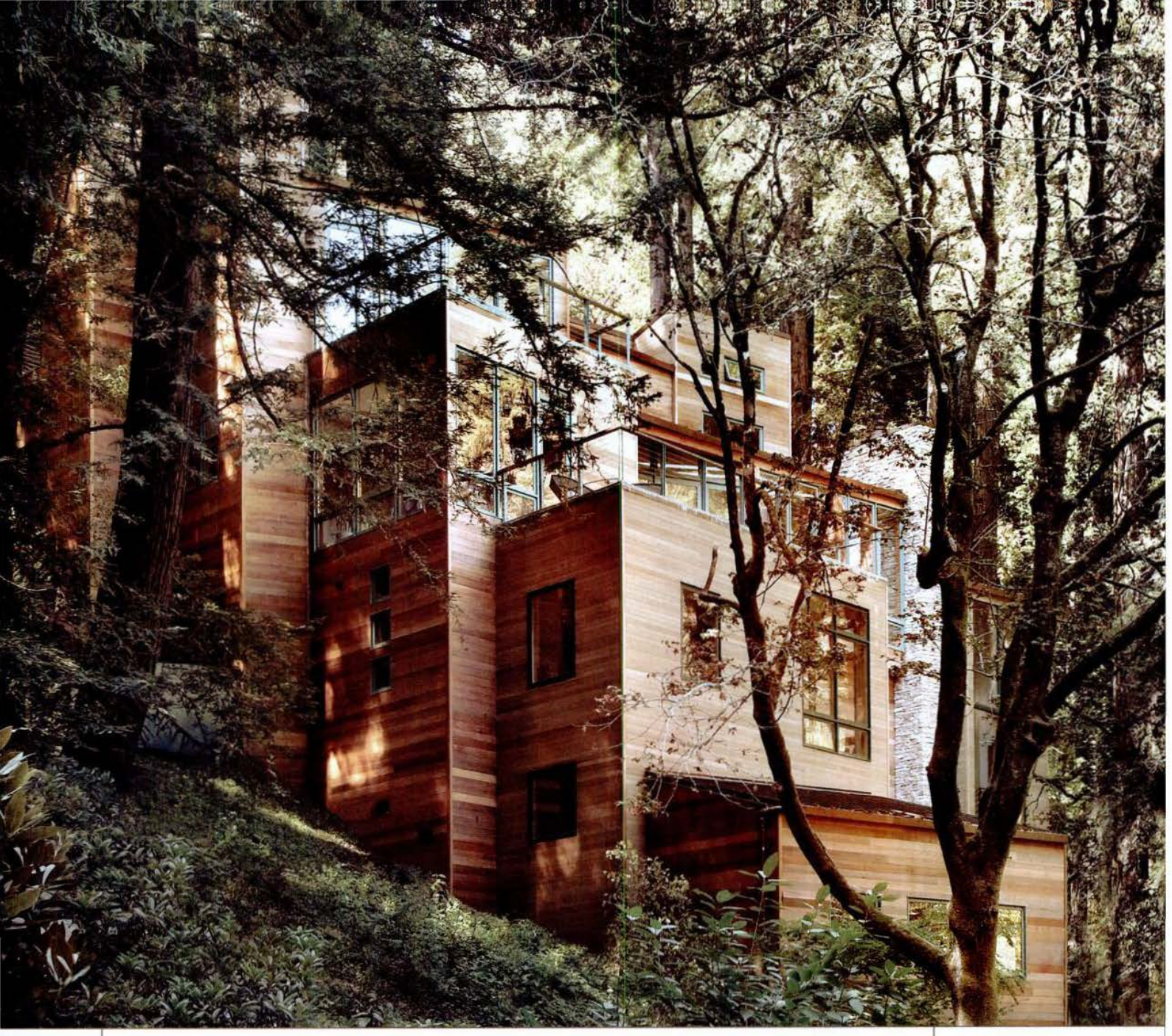
The couple's son Dylan and dog Petra enjoy the deck while Mary Kate and Thomas work in the kitchen below. Sliding doors open to the outdoors on both sides. The master bedroom (right) faces Montara's coastal mountains. The Tolomeo lamp is by Artemide.

quietly at the back of the site. A new upper floor consists of a master bedroom and bath, two large decks, and what the couple refer to as their "quiet" room: a tidy glass box of a living area outfitted with daybed and fireplace—the perfect place to read while keeping an eye on the surf. "Or a good place to have guests when you haven't cleaned up the kitchen," adds Mary Kate. Housing Thomas's substantial collection of surfboards and his vintage Cobra roadster, a detached garage with adjacent guest room rounds off the plan.

Another important consideration in designing the home was the unpredictable coastal weather. "When it's cold and foggy out, it's warm and cozy inside," explains Thomas. "And then when the sun comes out it switches very quickly and you can just roll open the doors." As most Bay Area residents (but perhaps not most tourists) are aware, blowing fog chills to the bone. Thomas clarifies: "It's not like one of those San Diego outdoor living situations; once the fog comes in, we have to protect ourselves." Part of this protection plan includes radiant heating and multiple fireplaces (there are three). "One of the first things you notice about houses around here is that they are really damp," Mary Kate remarks. "But here it's always comfortable, and we don't even have to have the heat cranked."

Although Maltzan's spirited design proved to be a challenge for the local contractors—a line from Thomas says it all: "When I told them they had to come and take off the roof the second time, it was kind of hard for the contractor to take"—the home is true to their budget, lifestyle, and aesthetic. It continues to be a work in progress as the couple focuses on launching their own brand of surfboards. With the upstairs bathroom as yet untiled and the leftover IKEA kitchen from the old bunker still in place, Thomas surmises, "Maybe we'll do that when it gets cold again. But why even bother? I like it." ▸



Architect: Ricardo Capretta **Project:** Cascade

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A Completely Floored

To inexpensively re-create a classic modern look for a wood-paneled ceiling, the couple used Douglas fir tongue-and-groove flooring. They also used flooring to cover the expansive kitchen island. "It was really funny to see the flooring guys up on the island banging away," reports Thomas. The ceiling presented a greater challenge in that regard. www.woodfloorsonline.com

B Standard Practices

To cut down on costs, the architect specified standard Marvin (new construction) windows throughout. Utilizing the maximum parameters of Marvin's predetermined sizes, Thomas and Mary Kate were able to achieve the modern open look they desired, but for a fraction of the cost. They also replaced all of the windows' vinyl interior frames with wood that complements the home's pared-down aesthetic. www.marvin.com

C Block by Block

"Michael surprised us when he suggested we do the cinder blocks again. We said, 'Is that really good for the resale value?'" jokes Thomas. Made from coal cinder and concrete, cinder blocks are lighter and cheaper than concrete block. Although the sight of so many blocks could trigger memories spent in high school detention, the couple embraced the ubiquitous material for its strength, affordability, and austere aesthetic.

D Conversation Pit

Although the multipurpose 30-foot-square main room dominates the Meyerhoffers' home, the sunken, carpeted living area creates a visually pleasing differentiation in space, and—with radiant heat underneath the concrete floor and a nearby fireplace—an exponential increase in coziness. Dylan plays with his LEGO bricks in the sunny spot behind the sofa, where at times Thomas can also be found napping. "It's like lying on a dog," he reports with satisfaction. ■

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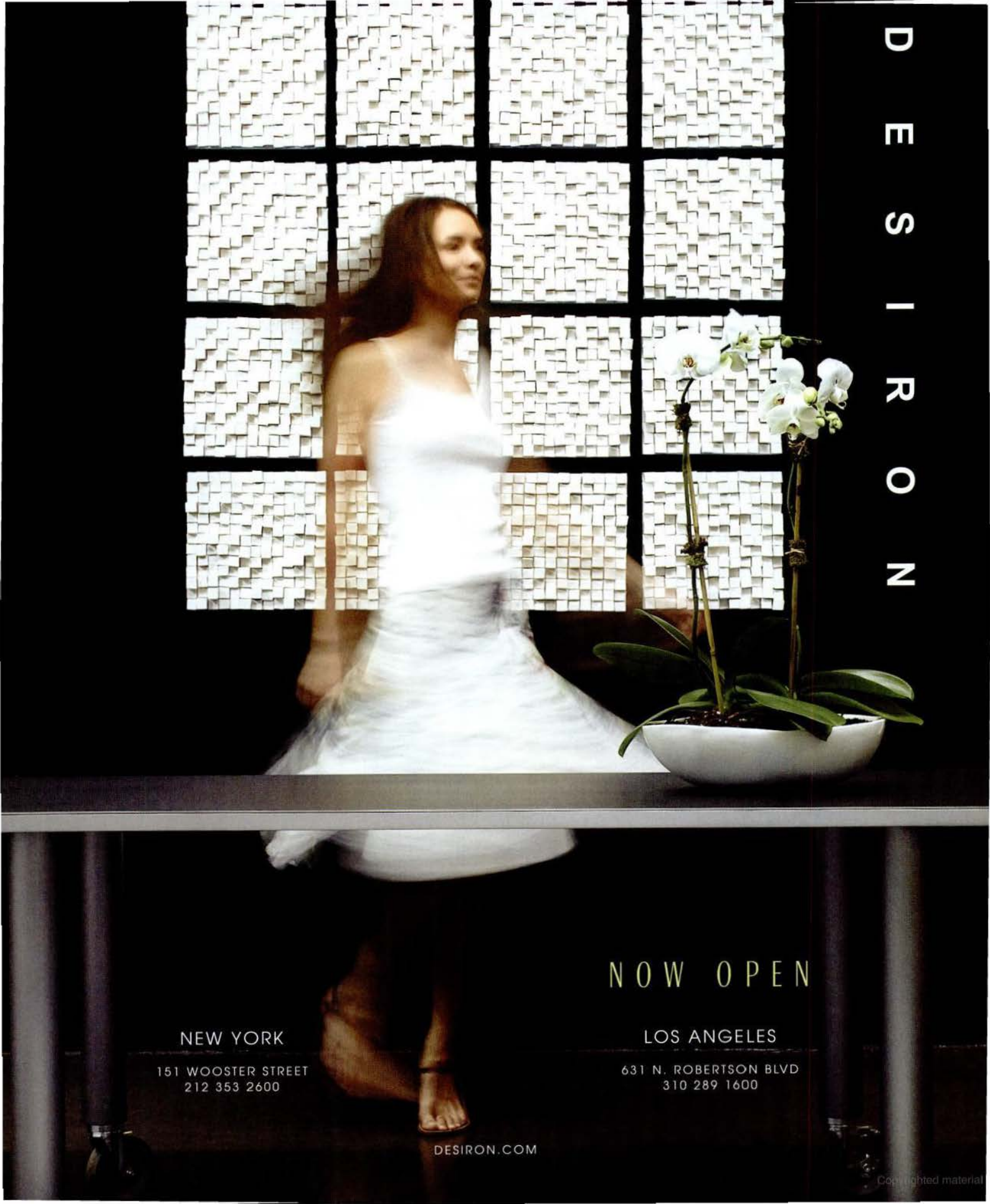

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Taking His Own Advice

An environmental-building adviser built his own sustainable home in order to better dispense advice to others.

When Greg Reitz was ten years old, he was already so worried about the state of the planet that, without prompting from his parents, he spent his allowance to join Greenpeace. Twenty years later, after an unfulfilling foray into management consulting, he turned his passion for the environment into a profession. Reitz became the green building adviser for the City of Santa Monica, advising colleagues and local property owners on how to apply green building measures to new and existing structures. At the same time, he decided to build a house that would showcase the very principles he encourages.

In Roger Kurath, the Swiss-born founder of the firm Design 21, Reitz found an architect whose ideals and approach meshed with his own. Together they created a 1,700-square-foot house on an 8,100-square-foot lot on a quiet, tree-lined residential street in Culver City, just east of Santa Monica. ▸

Energy-efficient windows and skylights, native plant landscaping, and a minimized building footprint are just some of the sustainable features of this Southern California home.

Throughout the house operable windows enable cross ventilation. The ones Reitz and Kurath used contain krypton gas, a dense gas that enables heat to be transmitted more slowly, between the panes. The dining table and chairs are vintage Danish pieces.

At first sight, the steel-frame box with its large expanse of glass would seem to defy energy conservation. But through a combination of passive energy-saving measures and advanced insulation materials, the pair claim to have achieved energy efficiencies that exceed both California's Title 24 requirements as well as the minimum requirements demanded by Santa Monica.

The house consists of a south-facing, loftlike kitchen/dining/living room with three bedrooms and two baths on the rear of the house. "Probably the most effective measure," says Reitz, "was just to look at the placement of the house on the site and then the windows on the house, so as to take advantage of passive solar heating and natural ventilation." The majority of the glazing is on the south façade, which allows for "solar control and for winter sun to penetrate."

By raising the house over the shady parking area, the collaborators were able to provide additional cooling air from below, and eliminate the need for air-conditioning. "The stack effect cooling, the ventilation through the skylights, and intake from the ground floor are the things that are free," explains Reitz. "And they are something we forgot how to do when we found all the cheap fossil fuels."

Reitz and Kurath's contemporary design melds time-tested temperature-control methods with advanced materials. It was possible to have such a large expanse of glass by using high-performance, double-glazed windows imported from Switzerland—an added expense, says Reitz, that was offset by the long-term energy savings. The home's in-floor radiant heating is a more efficient form of heating, says Kurath, because "if your feet are warm, you feel the increased temperature quickly and don't need to run the heating for so long or so high." The thick concrete floors provide thermal mass, moderating dramatic heat swings and storing ▸

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Reitz (below) in the kitchen, which is outfitted with efficient fluorescent lighting and Energy Star appliances. The home's entryway (right) features fly-ash concrete floors and stairs cut from recycled steel.

heat for when it is cool and vice versa. The stud-and-drywall walls are highly insulated, stuffed with blown-in insulation material made of recycled newsprint.

In addition, Reitz and Kurath selected materials according to their environmental properties: rice straw core doors, recyclable steel, and concrete partly made of fly ash. But Reitz went a step further and conducted a life-cycle analysis of the wood, steel, and concrete they planned to use, discovering which materials used the most (and least) energy in their production. He found that wood and steel came out even, both ahead of the concrete. He chose steel, on the grounds that it would last longer, and would not harbor termites or mold.

Construction of the house came in at a relatively low cost of around $200 per square foot, excluding the expense of the site, thanks in large part to Reitz himself taking on the "headaches" of functioning as contractor. He says that the additional cost of making the home green was less than 1 percent. "Some things, like the elimination of A/C, reduced costs; many things were cost neutral; and only a few of the strategies—like the demand hot water circulation system—added cost."

Despite these cost savings, Reitz invested substantially, in time and money, to create his showpiece green house—so much so that for a while he had to rent it out, and live in the 900-square-foot 1922 bungalow already on the lot. Now he occupies the house by night and on weekends, and rents it out to a friend for use as an office during the day. But he considers the investment wholly worthwhile. He's not only proven "you can build green and contemporary and make it affordable," but by doing all the research to design and build the house, he feels more credible when giving advice to others. His efforts have also paid off in helping spread the faith a little further. The City of Culver City is now, with his input, developing green building policies of its own. ■

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Story by Amara Holstein

Photos by Hunter Freeman

Step Lightly

There's trouble underfoot if you're building a green home without considering your flooring. Take stock of these sustainable wood options that let you tread lightly on the land.

Smith & Fong *Neopolitan Bamboo Plywood*

STYLING BY DIANE MCGAULEY

Portrait by Noah Webb

A Note on Our Expert:
Eric Corey Freed, principal of San Francisco–based firm organicARCHITECT, designs houses that incorporate sustainability as a matter of course. "I'm not saying, 'Oh, Mother Earth is dying, please help the butterflies'—because no one would respond to that," he says of his approach to design. "For me, sustainability is always a very logical, common-sense thing. Why fill a home with toxic materials, or use materials that hurt economies or cultures? It just seems silly." Inspired by holistic predecessors such as Bruce Goff and Frank Lloyd Wright, Freed spreads his green gospel through various college classes, numerous publications, and a monthly "ask the expert" column on the Greener Buildings website, www.greenerbuildings.com.

It's a familiar scenario. You're standing in the check-out line at the supermarket watching your goods trundle down the belt toward the cash register when suddenly the checkout clerk asks, "Paper or plastic?" and you're stuck: Do you contribute to worldwide deforestation by choosing paper, or do you select plastic and resign yourself to living on landfill?

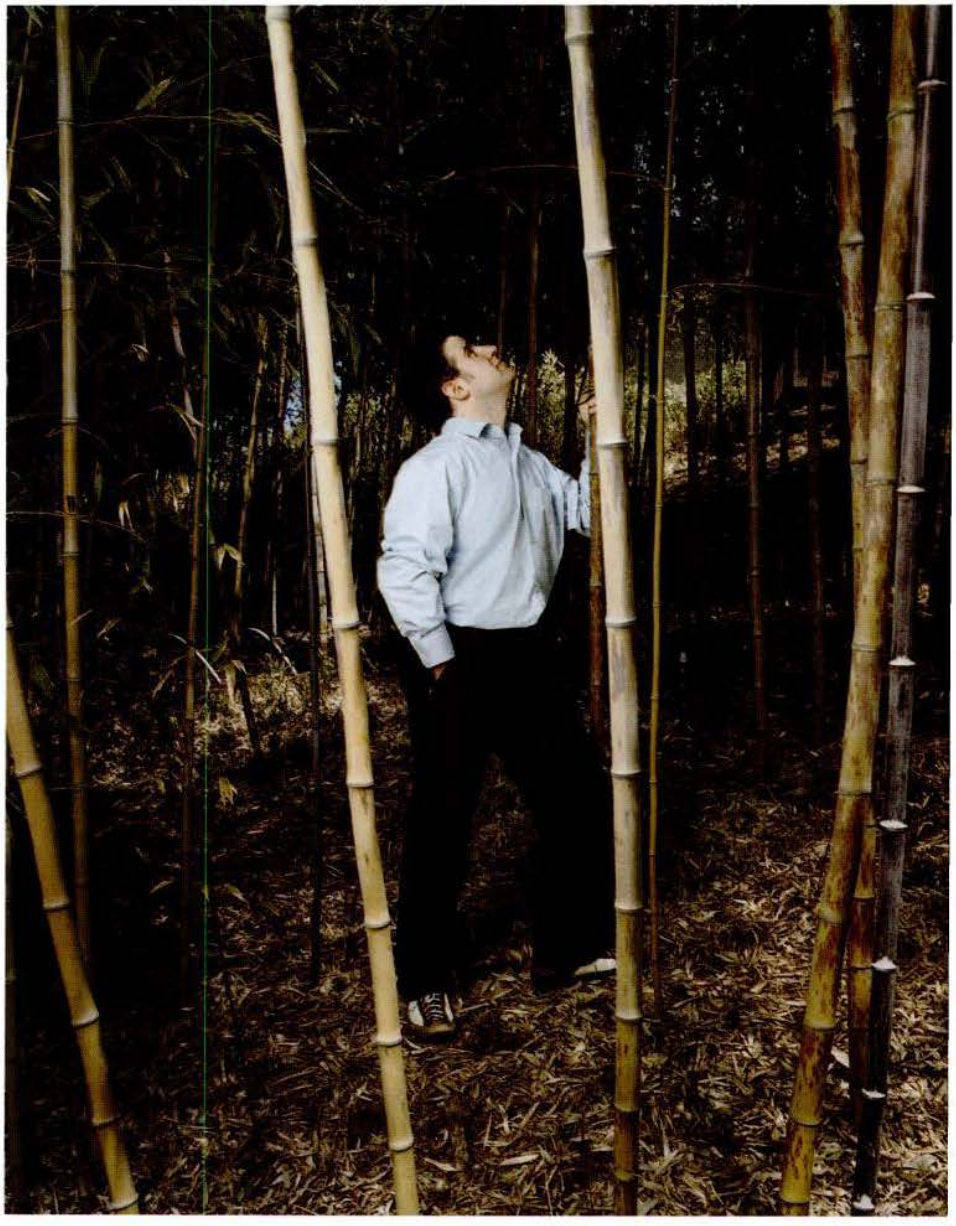
For homeowners trying to be green while yearning for the natural look and feel of wood on their floors, the issues become ever more amplified. After all, if you're depleting the canopy by using only one paper bag, imagine the implications of 2,000 square feet of wood flooring. That's a lot of leafy trees.

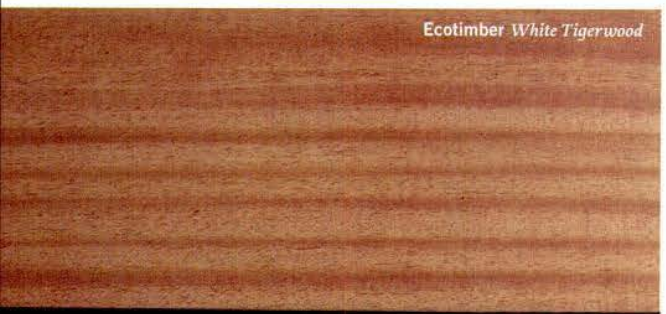
There's no reason, however, to hang your head in shame when selecting a wood floor, as architect Eric Corey Freed, an expert in sustainability, gently chides: "Guilt is no way to approach environmentalism. You shouldn't feel guilty. What you should do is question where the wood for your floor comes from."

No one wants their lovely new floor to be the cause of a rare parrot or toad's extinction, so it's nice to know there's a whole spate of tree-friendly products on the market. "A lot of the woods now are rapidly renewable, meaning they're either sustainably grown and harvested, or they're like bamboo—a grass that can be cut and continues to grow, as much as three feet a day," Freed explains.

In addition to the different varieties of wood, there are also different kinds of flooring options, from engineered wood (where thin strips of wood are lain over each other in alternating directions then compressed) to reclaimed wood to wood laminate (plywood with a photo of wood adhered on top)—all of which have diverse levels of green credibility.

Whatever you do, however, once your sustainable solution is installed underfoot, don't forget to apply an earth-friendly product to its surface. "The worst thing is to have a green floor and then put some nasty oil-based toxic lacquer on it," Freed warns. And feel free to toss your chemical cleansers; all you really need are water, white vinegar, and a mop. ►




Ecotimber *White Tigerwood*


EcoTimber *Chocolate Oak*


EcoTimber *Australian Chesnut*


Pergo *Brazilian Cherry*

Neapolitan Bamboo Plywood by Smith & Fong (page 94)
$11.33 per sq. ft. / www.plyboo.com
Strips of different lengths and widths of bamboo glued to a solid core of plywood with natural adhesive. Bamboo is from managed forests in China.

Expert Opinion: Bamboo is a very hard wood. Unlike pine floors, it's so hard that the installers complain when they're cutting it because pushing the saw tires them out. They're usually pretty whiney about cutting bamboo. Since this is an engineered wood, it's even more durable than solid bamboo. I've seen bamboo so much that I'm sick of it—it's a little too trendy. But the strips have been fired differently here, so you get that zebra appearance, which I think is gorgeous. I would use it everywhere. This is my favorite of all the choices, because it's the most unusual.

What We Think: You can't beat the sustainable claim of using what's essentially a very attractive weed for your floors. Although we wish it didn't have to travel halfway across the world on an oil-chugging boat in order to be installed stateside.

Engineered Flooring by EcoTimber
$5–$12 per sq. ft. / www.ecotimber.com
A layer of hardwood bonded to two wood sublayers. More than 15 choices of wood available, including Australian chestnut, White tigerwood, and Chocolate oak.

Expert Opinion: EcoTimber has been diligent in where their wood comes from. But it's not in the nature of this company to be avant-garde. They're positioning themselves to say, Look, we make very pretty wood; buy our pretty woods that also happen to be sustainable. It's very traditional tongue-and-groove flooring made out of standard woods. And I think that's fine.

What We Think: These aren't the most unusual or exciting options, but overall these are excellent, attractive coverings that get the job done—and do it sustainably. Good, solid workhorses of a green floor.

Global Passage Collection by Pergo
$3.77 per sq. ft. / www.pergo.com
Photograph of wood grain laminated onto particleboard. Nine choices available, including Indian tigerwood, Brazilian cherry, and African padauk.

Expert Opinion: It's not wood; it's sawdust, a wood by-product. It's small pieces of wood put together with toxic glues. They could change that—they could use nontoxic glues. It not only off-gasses toxic chemicals, but when you're done with it, it ends up in the landfill. You can't separate the wood-grain photo and the wood. It is incredibly durable, though, which is a valid environmental quality. And that's their marketing: It's indestructible. It's the cockroach of wood flooring. It's also unfortunately become the baseline for wood flooring because it's so cheap. If you like the look of wood but don't want to pay very much, then Pergo's your man.

What We Think: We're incredibly disturbed by the idea that a photo of wood, instead of the real thing, should suffice. And we'd prefer that our floors not gas us as we sleep. But ultimately, it's Pergo's vast potential of sustainability untapped that turns us off. ▶

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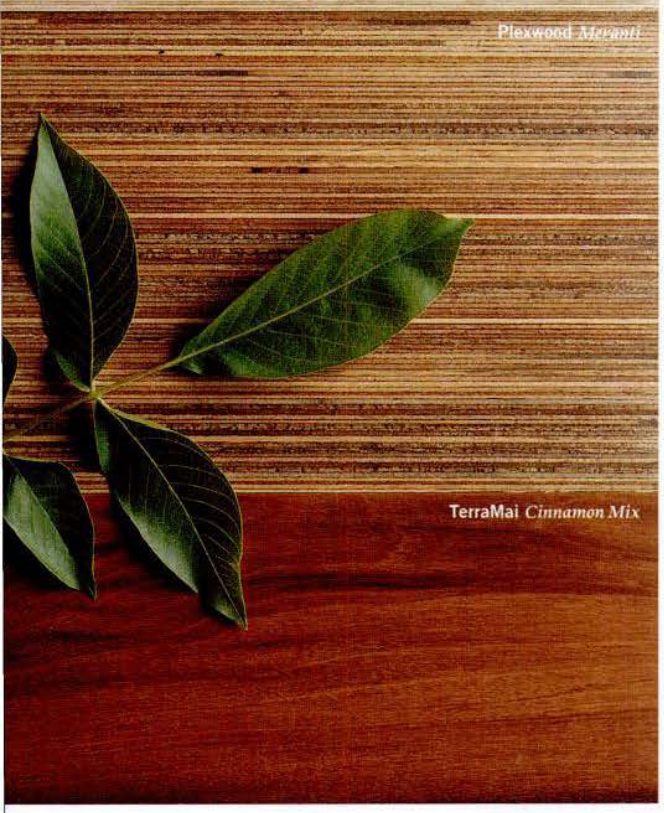

Cork Mosaic Tiles by Habitus
$15–$20 per sq. ft. / www.habitusnyc.com
Two circle sizes. Available in natural or more than 100 custom colors. Made from the waste of the cork bottle-stop industry.

Expert Opinion: Cork is the bark of a cork tree. It's considered a rapidly renewable material because it grows back in seven years. For the most part, cork comes in either tiles or sheets. But these are wicked little circles, so you can take a very traditional material and use it in a modern way. We have cork in our kitchen, and when we drop a glass, it bounces instead of breaking. That means it's also good on your back, since it's a soft, resilient, cushiony floor.

What We Think: Frank Lloyd Wright often used cork in his kitchens, and if it's good enough for Fallingwater, it's good enough for us. A springy floor would be most welcome while washing dishes, and the fact that cork maintains an even 70 degrees year-round is a cool-weather bonus.

Sustainably Harvested Woods by Plexwood
From $12.95 per sq. ft., excluding tax and shipping / www.plexwood.nl / Wood laminated in vertical strips adhered with natural glues. Available in birch, beech, pine, ocoumé, meranti, poplar, or deal wood.

Expert Opinion: You get this very modern, tight, clean striping pattern that's fairly consistent, as opposed to the bamboo plywood, which is very much a random pattern. This almost looks like the floor of the new MoMA in how striated it is. The cool thing about Plexwood is they'll mill it to anything you want. So you could make it into stair treads, cabinetry, flooring. It's a European company, so they have even higher green standards to contend with than we do.

What We Think: We're taken with the shimmering shades of this product, available in more than 400 eye-pleasing possibilities. But our pocketbook is feeling the pinch of the current exchange rate, and purchasing our floor in euros and shipping it over from the Netherlands would be quite pricey.

Reclaimed Wood by TerraMai
$12.50–$13.50 per sq. ft. / www.terramai.com / Salvaged from buildings, plantations, mines, and railroads. Stock is sold as mixes of wood sorted by color, such as Cinnamon Mix (composed of merbau, alan batu, and other species from mine shoring timbers in Southeast Asia).

Expert Opinion: Reclaimed wood is great, because now you can get old-growth wood that you couldn't get before. It's actually recycled wood: They take it off the train trestle, the barn, whatever, and mill it into flooring. I like the nail holes and little dings—it adds character. I also like that they're somewhat seasonal—it's akin to buying a melon. Sometimes there's a lot of it, and sometimes there's not. I find it charming that they don't always offer the same things.

What We Think: The patina of age wears well on wood, and these strips let you have centuries-old teak or rosewood without the stigma of arboreal irresponsibility. Unlike their thinner-skinned engineered wood counterparts, this flooring can be refinished as many times as you fancy without fear of sanding through the top layer. ■

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Camp Counsel

The wheelchair-accessible amphitheater (below) and the archery pavilion (bottom) have helped make Aldersgate a camp for all to enjoy. Laura Terry's architecture students (below right) look and learn during the building process.

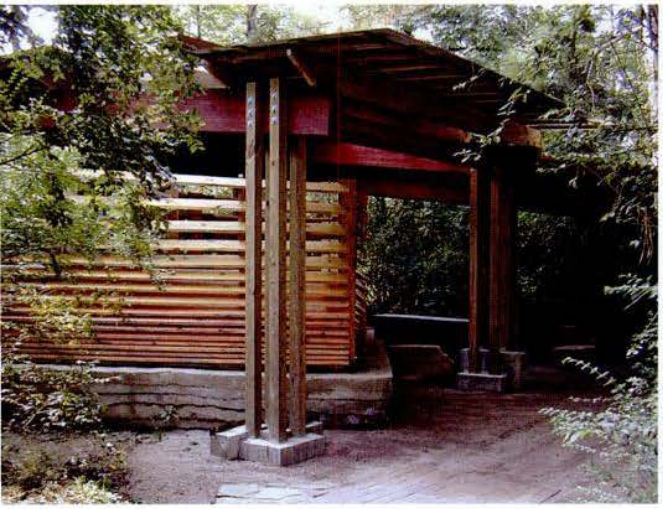
Nominate Nice Modernists at www.dwell.com.

As Laura Terry remembers it, her first visit to Camp Aldersgate in Little Rock, Arkansas, in August 2001 was an experience that instantly knocked her life onto a different course.

Martha Jane Murray, a Little Rock architect who was the president of Camp Aldersgate's board of directors at the time, had invited Terry, an assistant professor of architecture at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, to the camp to attend a design charette. The idea was to create a program that would put architecture students to work designing and building new facilities at the camp, which offers an eight-week session each summer for children with physical and developmental disabilities.

"There's no way that I could not have been involved," Terry says, recalling her first glimpse of campers shooting through the trees on a zip line, giddily oblivious to their physical limitations. "I felt an obligation to be involved after being here. If I didn't pursue it, I would have regretted it for the rest of my life."

Taking a cue from Auburn University's Rural Studio, where she had trained by building houses in the impoverished Alabama countryside, Terry and eight of her students installed themselves at Camp Aldersgate's 120-acre campus at the west end of Little Rock in the summer of 2002. The camp had added archery to its program the year before, but the facility that had been hastily constructed for the sport was not set up to easily accommodate children of different ages and abilities. Using a $20,000 grant from the Arkansas Contractors Licensing Board, the students designed and built a 700-square-foot archery pavilion in a clearing amid the camp's pine, oak, and hickory trees. A trip to the local salvage yard yielded a pair of old bicycles, a basketball backboard, and the lid from the trunk of an old Volkswagen Fox, which ▸



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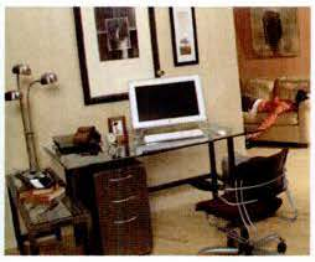



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Laura Terry (below) leads the charge in her Caterpillar tractor. Students lay down cedar planks (bottom) for the fully accessible amphitheater stage (below right).

the students fashioned into shooting platforms that can be adjusted to any child's height. A sloped corrugated roof was erected to shield the area from the unforgiving Arkansas summer sun.

The camp's administrators were initially wary of having a group of college students working among the campers for weeks at a time at the height of the summer session. "For us it was sensitive," says Sarah C. Wacaster, the camp's executive director. "It was something new that we had never really thought of doing before."

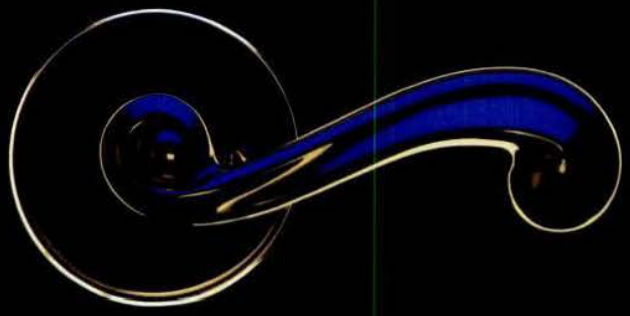
But the archery pavilion was a hit with the campers and talk quickly turned to Terry's next project. The following summer, armed with a $14,000 grant from the University of Arkansas Women's Giving Circle and $7,000 that was left over from the archery pavilion, Terry and her students got to work on an ambitious plan to design and build a 22-foot-high tree house for the camp. It wasn't easy. It rained for most of June 2003, delaying the start of construction for a month. When the project ran about $6,000 over budget, Terry charged the difference to her credit card. At the end of 12 weeks of construction, the tree house was completed and connected to a dam on the banks of the camp's lake by a 42-foot-long wheelchair-accessible bridge.

Terry returned to the camp in 2005 with a new group of students to tackle a simpler project. Aldersgate's amphitheater was not fully accessible—the layout forced campers in wheelchairs to cluster at the front, away from their peers. In a month, Terry's students designed and built a new amphitheater on the banks of the lake. The focal point is a 300-square-foot accessible stage, made of cedar. The concrete benches, each embossed with imprints of leaves from the site, are spaced so campers in wheelchairs can sit wherever they choose.

Though funding didn't come through in 2006, Terry says she'd like to return to Aldersgate next summer to build several new accessible picnic tables. Terry and Wacaster are eager to maintain the relationship, which has given the camp three popular features while providing the architecture students hands-on experience.

"We started off a little skeptical, wondering what this might entail," Wacaster says. "But now we just know that we'll be blessed to have these projects. We know that [Terry] is mindful of our needs more than anything." ■

PHOTOS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) KEVIN BROWN, LAURA TERRY, MATT HAGLER



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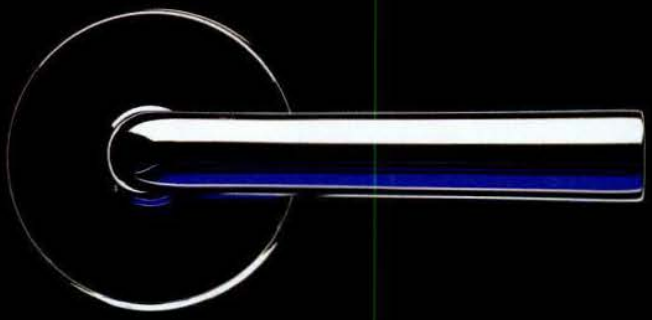

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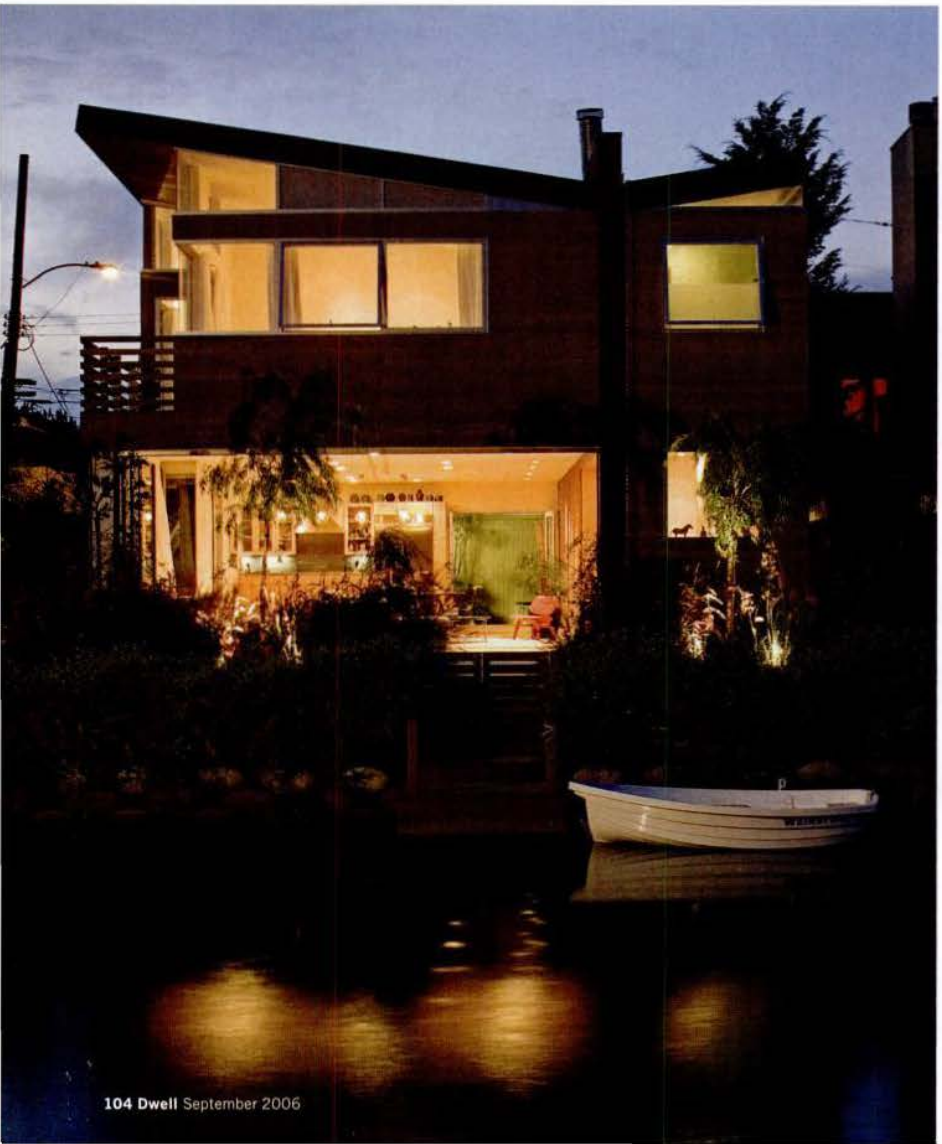
On the Waterfront

From crack houses to Julia Roberts's house, is Venice, California, the *Pretty Woman* of L.A. neighborhoods?

Upon immigrating, penniless and paint spattered, to Los Angeles in the early '90s, I made a beeline for Venice, the seaside borough envisioned by turn-of-the-century developer Abbot Kinney as a genteel homage to its Italian namesake, but which quickly devolved into a carny town pocked by oil wells, starving artists, and crack-dealing Crips. It felt like home.

Yet in the past five years, filthy, funky, freaky Venice has experienced the kind of demographic churn—a.k.a. gentrification—that forever transforms artists' neighborhoods. Today, a two-bedroom teardown bungalow on the Venice canals lists for $1.5 million, and once-desolate Abbot Kinney Boulevard teems with bars, cafés, and shops. "Venice is hipper in a commercial sense, but less affordable and less diverse," says Emily Kovner, a young designer who recently completed a house on the rejuvenated canals. And now that the Shoreline Crips ▸

Unlike much of Los Angeles, Venice is built on a pedestrian scale—a feature new residents appreciate. Emily Kovner designed this house (below) for Lynda Taylor, who had purchased a ramshackle teardown on the canal-facing lot.



Project: Taylor Residence
Designer: Emily Kovner
Location: Venice, California

PHOTOS BY TOM BONNER

Michael Saee's canalside home is a tumult of angles and materials. In the living room (below right) is a Harry Bertoia Bird lounge chair and ottoman for Knoll. p. 262

are on their way out, the term "drive-by" has taken on an entirely different meaning.

The new architecture here is a little bit of everything, but what's significant is that there's a ton of it. Old housing stock ripe for the wrecking ball abounds, as many longtime homeowners, many of them African American, are giving up their democratic, ocean-adjacent dreams for the irrefutable logic of cold, hard cash. "The price of the dirt has gone up significantly, and lots of people are cashing in their chips," says Lynda Taylor, a real estate professional who lives in the house Kovner designed.

Kovner replaced Taylor's "tiny, ramshackle bungalow" with an open, inviting house that uses every square inch of the 2,400-square-foot lot on the canal. "It was like a logic puzzle or IQ test," says Kovner of the butterfly-roofed structure. Pointing out that the entire 25-foot-wide ground floor is sheathed in glass, Kovner notes that "unlike most of L.A., Venice is built on a pedestrian rather than vehicular scale," and indeed, neighbors (and German tourists) peer—even wander—in, telling Taylor how much they like her new house. "I've been invited to a lot of great dinner parties that way," Taylor laughs.

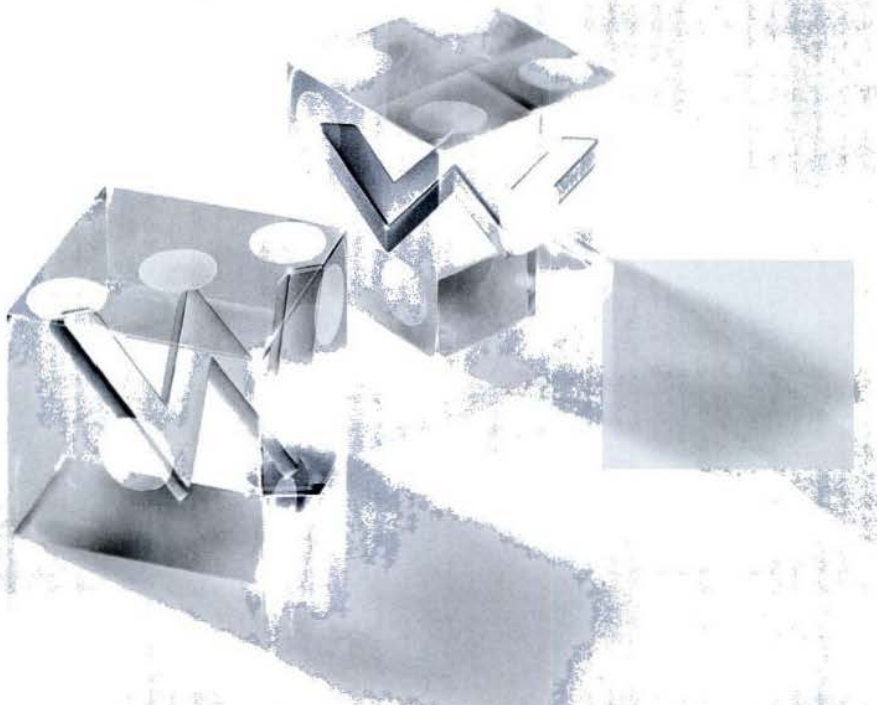
Used to be, if somebody wandered into your house in Venice you called 911. But now the homes on the canals feel like an upscale gated community; even the ducks are back, plying the once-fetid waterways. "People used to create fortresslike fronts to their houses that closed them off to the canals—but I wanted to bring the canal in," says architect Michele Saee. Saee's compact, dramatic new house is located just over a pedestrian bridge from Kovner's, but her breezy, weathered beach box feels casual (and budget-conscious) next to Saee's burnished handiwork. Like a squat, hulking Transformer, Saee's house seems ready for action, supported by a steel skeleton that allows the beefy, wood-and-glass floors to appear to tilt down toward the canal, threatening to dump their contents (and occupants) into the concrete-lined waterway.

Away from the canals, the grittier parts of Venice have not completely gone gently into that good night of Bentleys and hedge funds. When a young couple I know bought a tiny house on a cheek-by-jowl block near ▸

Project: Linnie House
Architect: Michael Saee
Location: Venice, California

PHOTOS BY RAIMOND KOCH

OWN VEGAS.



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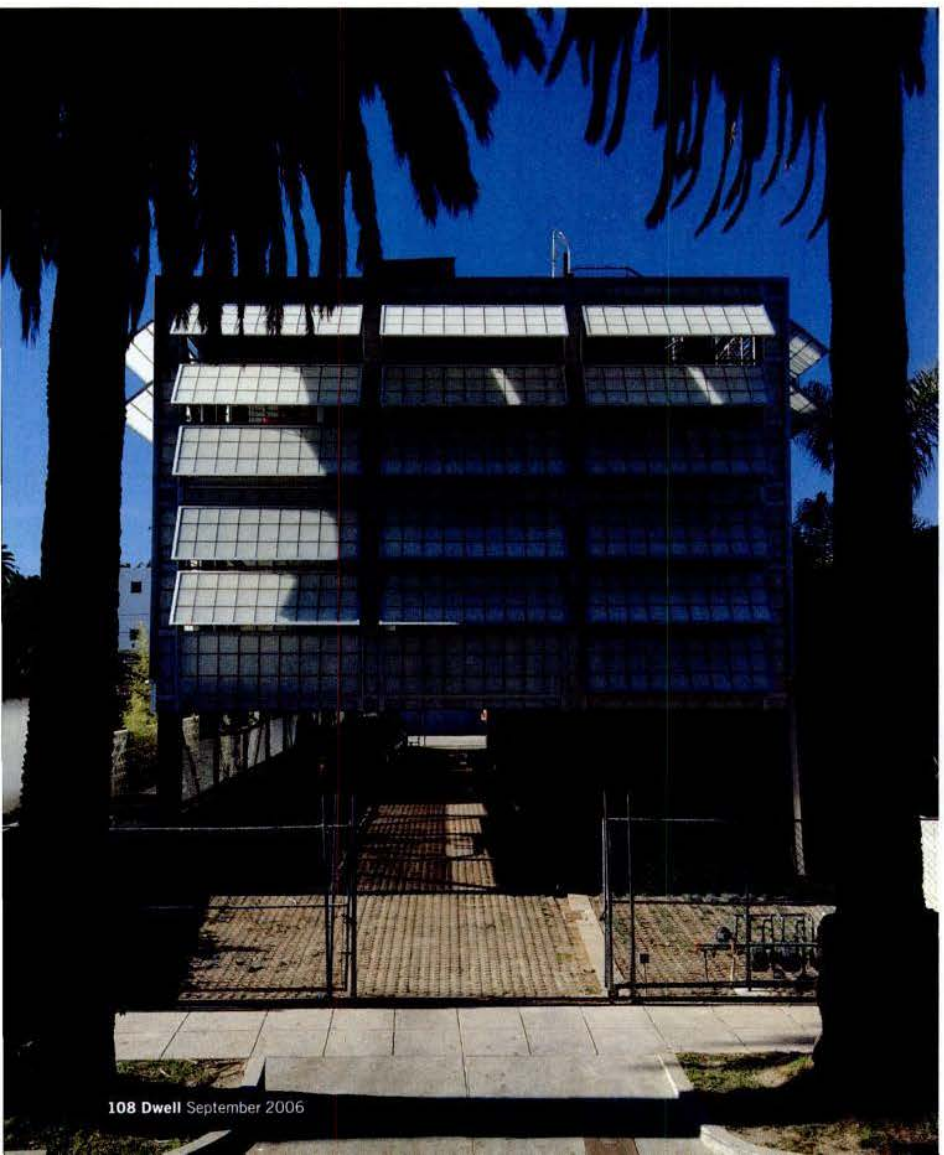
Mark Baez built The Cube for under $100 a square foot. The interior and exterior panels are made from insulated fiberglass. On a rolling table underneath a George Nelson Bubble lamp (below right), Baez exhibits his porcelain ceramic eggs.

Abbot Kinney, they were woken up by gunfire—not from the public-housing projects on nearby Oakwood Avenue, but from their voodoo-practicing neighbor, an insomniac who believed possums were after her pet duck. Then again, things quieted down soon after Julia Roberts bought a house across the street.

"If gentrification means eliminating crime, how can you argue with it?" says designer Mark Baez, a longtime Venice resident with enough local cred to see the Venice renaissance as inevitable, even overdue. "People are calling it gentrification, but it can also be called creativity, even diversity," he argues. "The new people moving in appreciate open spaces. Lots of loft-type buildings are going up." Among the most interesting is Baez's own threesome of modular boxes, "kit" units built using only standard, locally available, commercial-grade materials—erected, poetically enough, on the site of a Sears kit bungalow from the early 1900s.

On a street where mattresses still molder on sidewalks and weedy backyards engulf abandoned cars, Baez's live/work units are more environmentally friendly, and more handsome, than the stucco condo blocks metastasizing nearby. Yet they cost the same to build: "I did this for under $100 a square foot," claims Baez, thus beating prefab at its own game by using the economies of scale inherent in the materials themselves.

Each two-story, steel-beamed shell is sheathed in a curtain wall system of insulated fiberglass panels framed in anodized aluminum, which can be opened like windows. Inside, the same featherweight panels act as high-tech shoji screens that can be lifted out of their tracks in the concrete floor to create bedrooms, alcoves, or open space. Though the interior is entirely drywall-free, the raw, gray space feels uncannily serene. Baez attributes this warmth to scale and proportion, as his buildings' dimensions are based on a strict formula incorporating both Japanese and imperial units of measure. "Everyone who moves in has strange dreams the first night," Baez says. It's all very Venice: Like floating in a sensory deprivation tank or meditating under a magic pyramid, tenants are alone with their thoughts, with no extraneous decor, bad stucco—or gunshots—to give them nightmares. ■



Project: The Cube
Designer: Mark Baez
Location: Venice, California

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Photos by Roy Zipstein

Brussels Sprouts

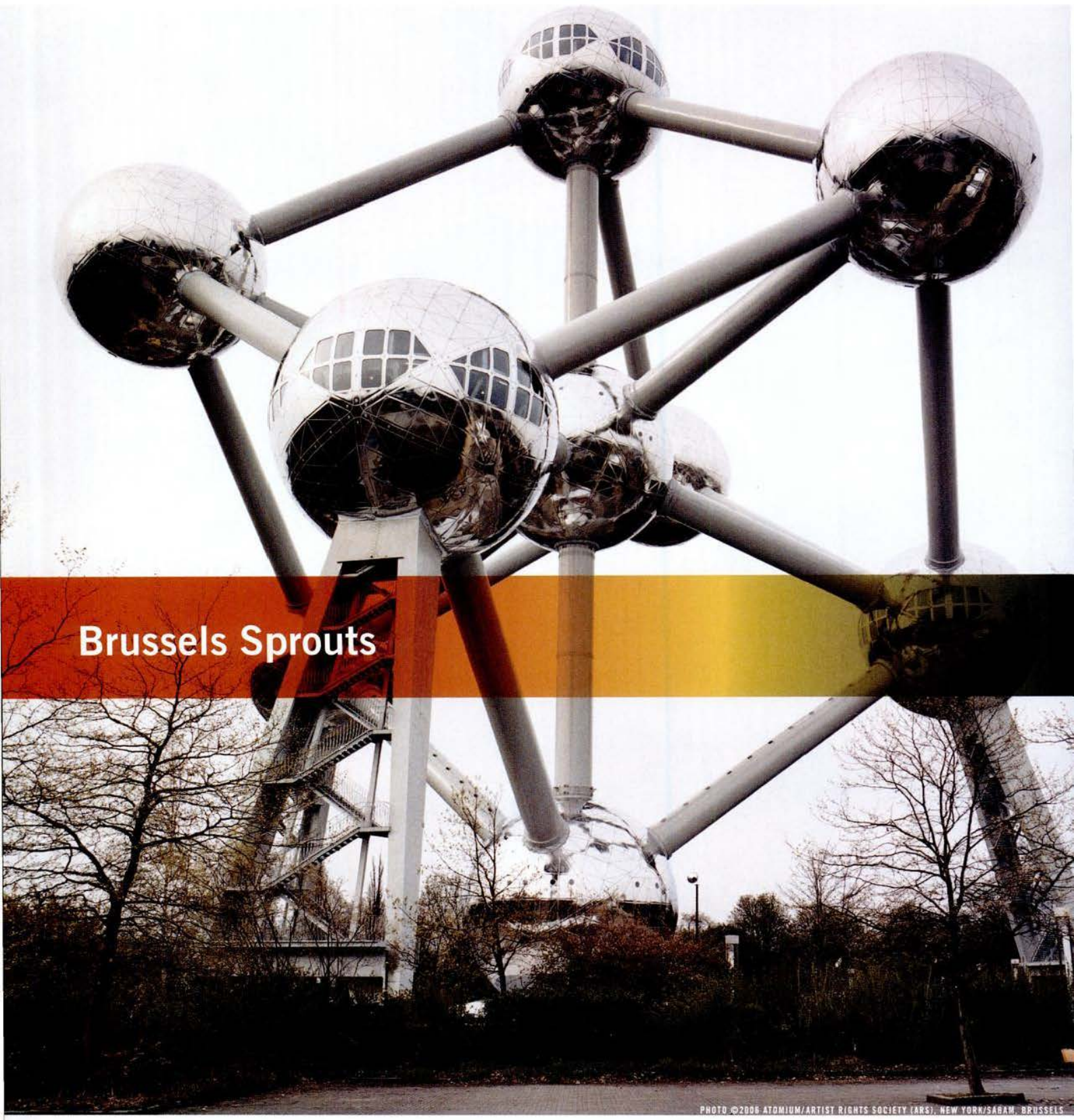


PHOTO ©2006 ATOMIUM/ARTIST RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK/SABAM, BRUSSELS

Brussels is a city of contradictions. Montgomery Square is a circle. The equivalent of a tour de force attraction (think Paris's Eiffel Tower, or San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge) is the Atomium, a giant molecule. And although it's officially bilingual, in the surreal linguistic battle between the Dutch-speaking Flemish and the French-speaking Walloons, many transactions occur in neither language. People just speak English.

Belgium assumed independence in 1830 after being taken over, and over and over, by its neighbors to the north and south—the Netherlands and France. Overlooked (Jacques Brel, french fries, and Johnny Hallyday are theirs, Belgians will tell you tersely) and underappreciated (it's the flyover between Paris and Amsterdam), Brussels has a kind of runt-of-the-litter charm. The gilded 17th-century Grand Place is surrounded by brutal office and apartment blocks that look all the more grim under almost constantly gray skies. Its unassuming character made Brussels the perfect compromise for postwar rivals choosing a headquarters for the European Union and NATO, while all the diplomats and a swirl of immigrants from North and Central Africa give it an intense international, cosmopolitan flavor rare for such a small city.

Given the Belgians' taste for contradictions, it's little surprise that in a country known for incessant rain, Dirk Wynants created the outdoor-furniture company Extremis. "When it finally is nice out, we really enjoy it," he says. We asked Wynants to help us peel off the staid surface and show us what Brussels has to offer. ▸

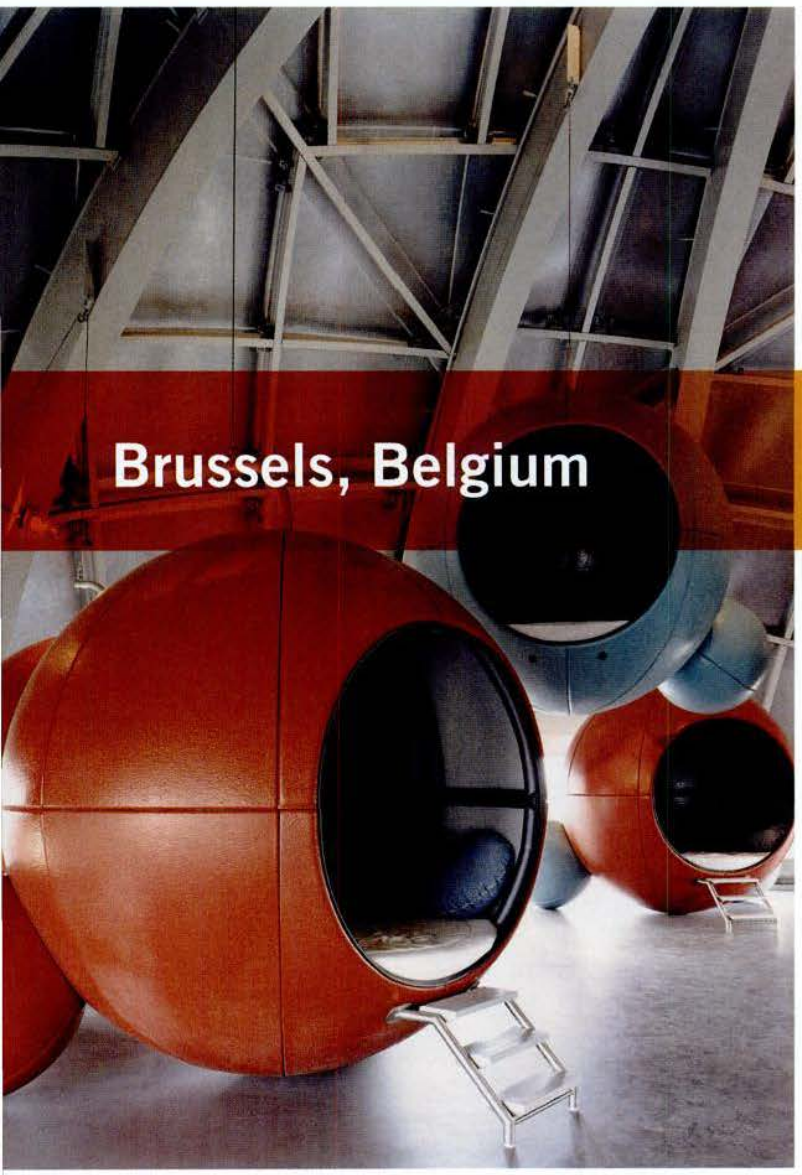
Built in 1956 for the World's Fair, the Atomium (opposite) is an homage to the future. It recently reopened after a complete renovation. The Galeries Saint-Hubert (below left) are the forerunner to the modern shopping mall. Constructed in 1847, they were the first glass-covered shopping arcades in Europe. Wynants (below right) stands outside A La Mort Subite (Sudden Death), a bar where you can try a beer of the same name.

So much of Brussels's modern architecture is downright ugly. What is your favorite modern building?
I'm afraid I can't show you great modern architecture in Brussels. The modern architecture they've built in recent years is so common—it takes no risks. My favorite building is the Atomium. It's a representation of the iron atom built in 1958 for the World's Fair and was supposed to stay up for only a few months. All the other buildings have disappeared, but the Atomium is now renovated. The designer André Waterkeyn had the foresight to get a copyright for the design, so you have to pay to print photos of the building. He got money for the rest of his life from this building that was supposed to have stood only a few months.

What, then, is good architecture in Brussels?
The Belgian Center for Comic Strip Art was originally a department store and warehouse designed by Victor Horta, the great Art Nouveau architect. What's amazing is that it was built for public rather than private use. I think that in the days when it was built, it was what architecture should be. To the last detail, even furniture, he designed it himself. How did he explain the creation of all this organic design? I think he had to stand next to the guy who was producing it. You can't do all those forms by writing it down.

Since you make outdoor furniture, what are your favorite outdoor places in Brussels?
Brussels has parks and forests, of course, but one place I especially like is both outside ▸

Brussels, Belgium



Conix Architecten of Antwerp, Belgium, were responsible for the renovation of the Atomium's interior, which includes these atomlike seating pods (below left). The Belgian Center for Comic Strip Art (below right) was designed by Art Nouveau master Victor Horta.

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and inside. The Galeries Saint-Hubert were the first glass-covered shopping arcades in Europe. They aren't as opulent as the one in Milan, for example, but at the time they were groundbreaking. There are cafés in the galleries where you can sit outside and watch people go by, but you're not in the rain.

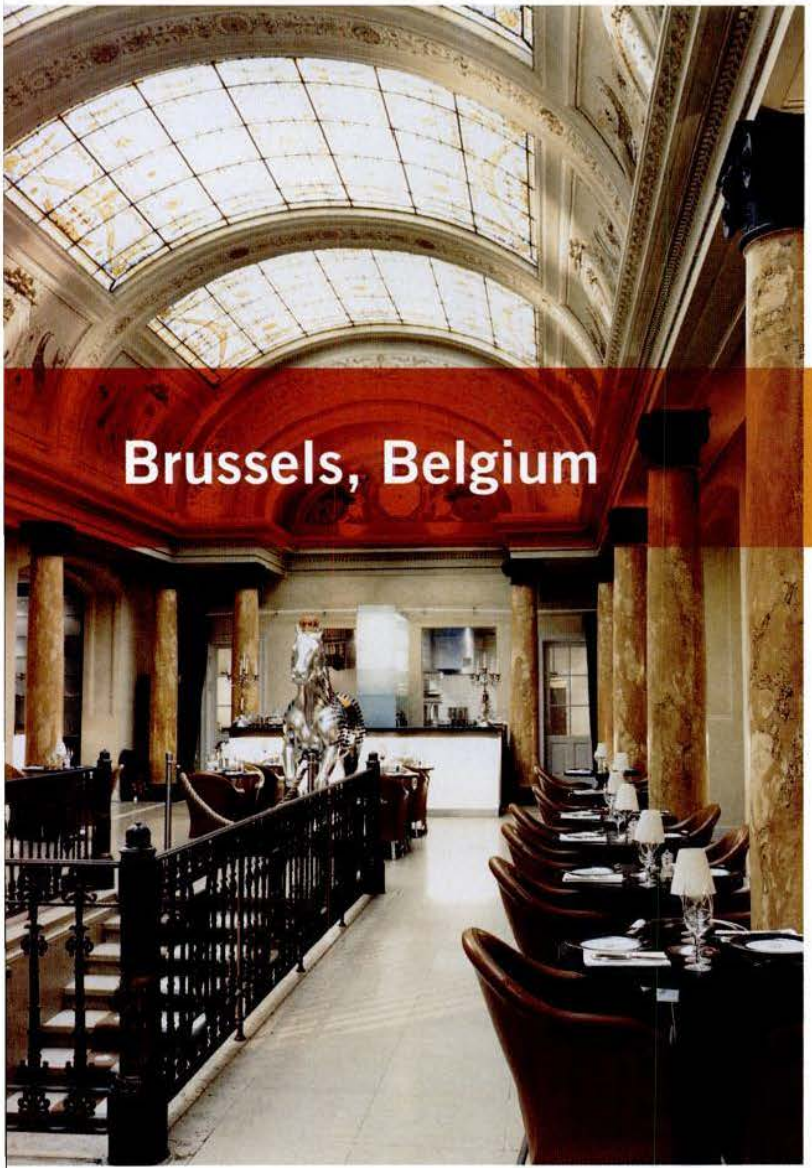
Speaking of cafés, are there any others you can suggest? Or restaurants?

The Mort Subite (the name means "Sudden Death" and is also the name of its own beer) is a place that never changes. The furniture is the same. It hasn't been painted for a very long time. Sometimes that's a good thing.

Le Cirio is another traditional bar—it's one of the only places where you really feel you're in Brussels. From the outside, with these plastic chairs in front, it looks awful, but that's leather on the walls—an expensive wall covering. This must have been one of the finest places around when it was built in 1886. The owner was Italian, and he also sold Italian goods. He invented tomato paste. The roots of ketchup are in this bar.

Belga Queen isn't the newest restaurant in Brussels, but it's special for what they did with the place. It used to be a bank—very ornate—and they did a nice job of respecting the old elements. But look at the bar's very high-tech materials. If you try to put in elements in the same style as the building itself, it's always wrong, because you can't match it. Downstairs there's a smoking room in an old vault, where customers can keep their cigars or their personal bottle of ▸

Belga Queen (below left) mixes details from the former occupant, a bank, with modern restaurant furnishings. Patrons at A La Mort Subite (below right) enjoy a modest glass of Belgian ale.



Brussels, Belgium

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Brussels, Belgium

whiskey in a safe deposit box. They didn't really do anything, they just changed the functionality. It's logical.

L'Archiduc stays open late, and I've been known to close it. And there's the original Pain Quotidien, another Belgian company that's finding international success. They came up with this idea of a big table where you sit with people you don't know. I like that. It's like our furniture—creating tools for togetherness.

Belgium is best-known for its fashion designers, mostly from Antwerp.

I'd love to wear Belgian designers, but they never make things in my size. There's a whole street, Rue Antoine Dansaert, lined with design stores, mostly fashion but also other things. I buy clothes from Marithé + François Girbaud, but they're French. For the Belgians, there's Olivier Strelli, and Natan—a favorite of the royal family. Stijl was one of the first shops to sell clothes by the Antwerp Six. Theo Depot does eyeglasses. I don't need to wear glasses, but their designer Patrick Hoet makes me wish I did.

What about other design?

Top-Mouton is the best interior design company in Belgium. They have three generations doing custom-made interiors. If you get a chance to see the installations they did in the 1970s, they are just as fresh today. They were one of the first to make an all-white kitchen in laminate.

There's also chocolate, of course. ►

Brussels's fashion movement was spurred on in no small part by the boutique Stijl, a staple of Rue Antoine Dansaert that always manages to stay ahead of the curve.

Actually, I don't like it and I don't eat it, but it's amazing what you can do with it artistically. Pierre Marcolini has an architectural way of dealing with chocolate—it puts the product on a completely different level.

Design Flanders is a center for Belgian design funded by the Flemish government. They have a rotating expo of new designers. There's also a design center sponsored by the government for the French-speaking part of the country, and one for Brussels. We have three governments, you know: Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels.

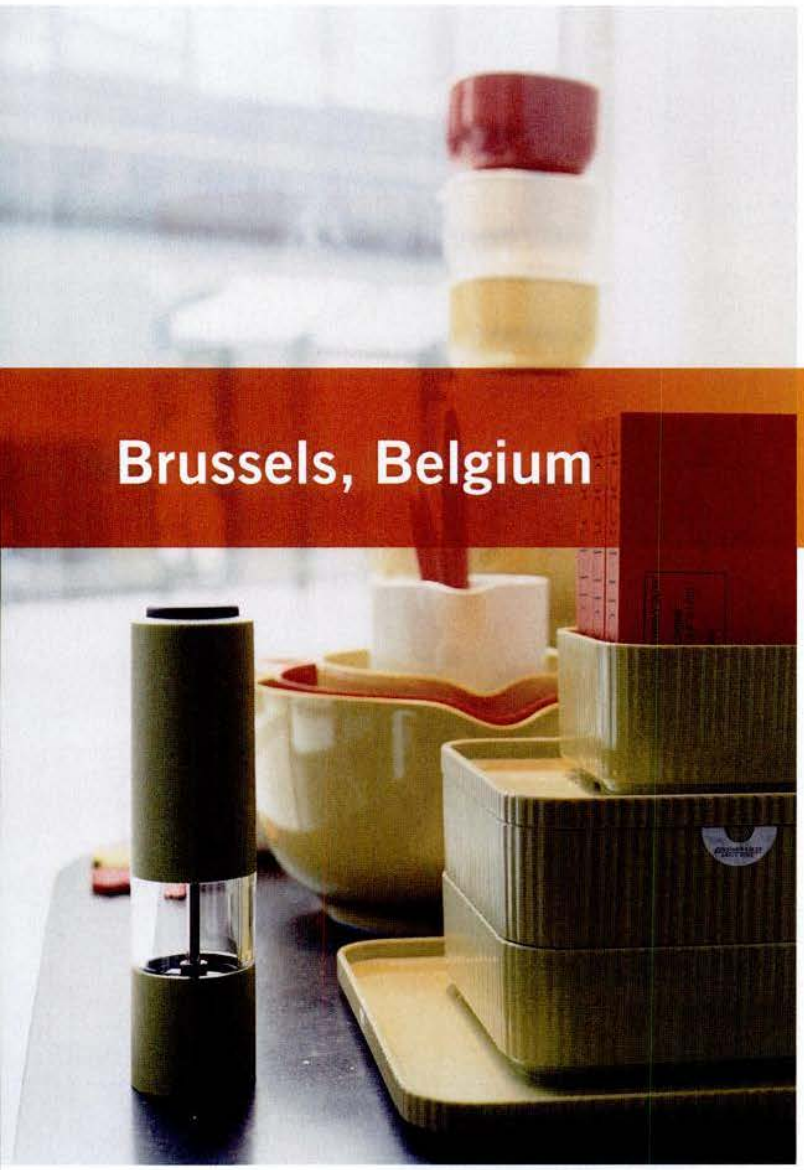
Right. Ten million people in a territory the size of Maryland—split three ways. The richer, Dutch-speaking Flanders in the north, the poorer, French-speaking Wallonia in the south, and Brussels, the capital, in the middle. It seems tense.

It's a shame we are so divided when we are so small. We spend too much time in competition with ourselves instead of promoting Belgium in the bigger world.

And it's a lot of government for a little country.

Governments are in power only a few years. If they want to make changes that are necessary, they get punished and voted out. That's why it's so hard to get government buildings that are exciting. They want something everyone will like. You will never get great design if you try to please everyone. ■

Brussels, Belgium



Top-Mouton (below left) started with interior design, but branched out into other areas, including home accesories. The Grand Place (below right)—Brussels's major tourist destination—was burned down by the French in 1695, but was rebuilt within five years.

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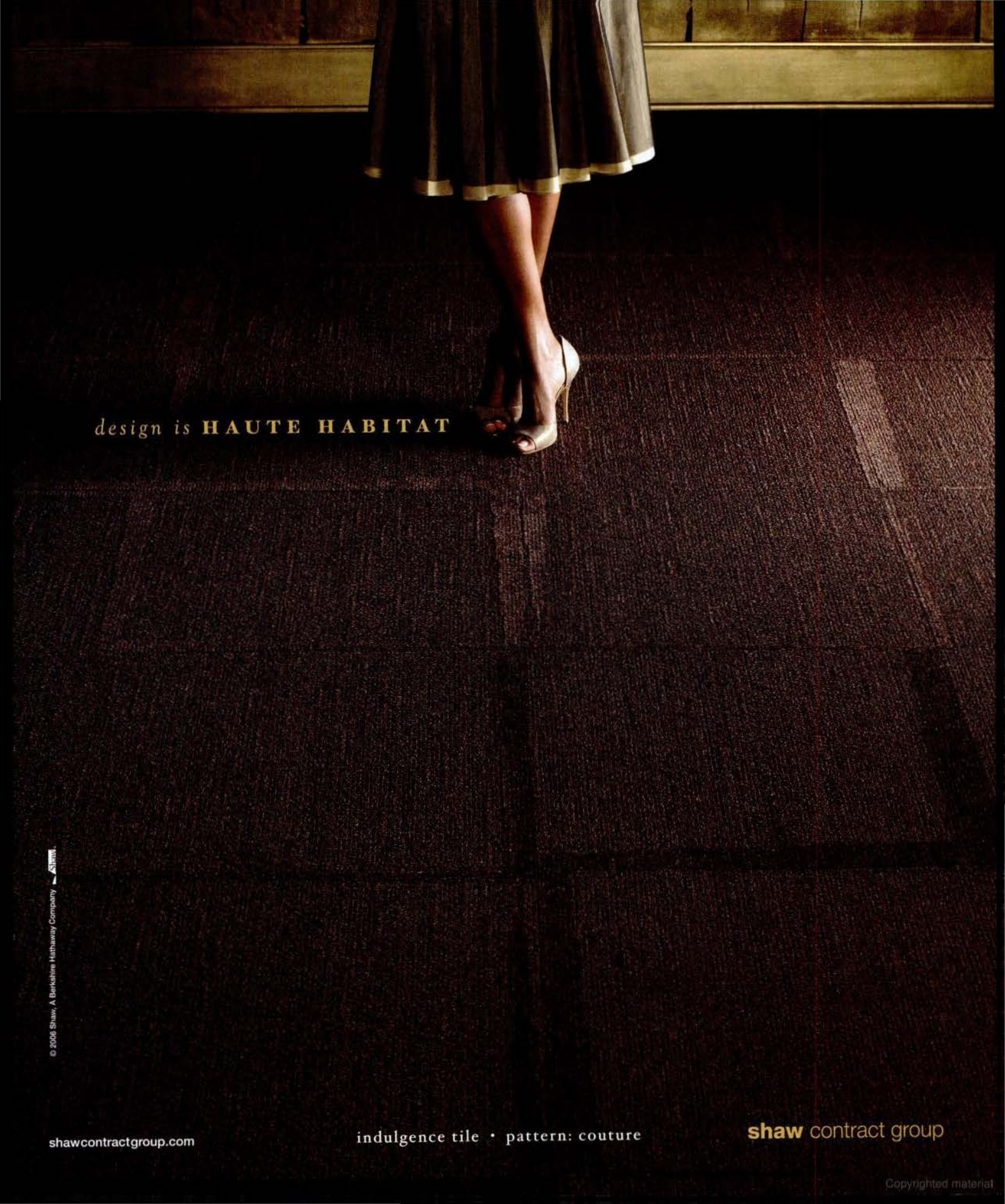
To our delight, this year's International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York City (above) felt more international than ever. Finland, Austria, Botswana, Spain, the U.K., Canada, Denmark, and even Turkey turned in fine designs. Satellite events in Williamsburg, Brooklyn—ever-cheeky shows put on by the Future Perfect and eco-friendly newcomer hauteGREEN, hosted by Firstop—also made it clear that homegrown talent is ripening right across the East River.

A

A Credenza by Blu Dot
The precocious youngsters of Blu Dot may be growing up and producing their own precocious youngsters, but they're also producing increasingly grown-up design. This is their most prolific furniture collection to date—a freshening up of the standard pieces through their signature simplicity of form, material, and color. www.bludot.com ▶

PHOTO BY AYA BRACKETT (TOP)



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A Booth with custom chandeliers by Lite Brite Neon Studio
Matt Dilling was clearly raised on one of the best toys of the 20th century since his Brooklyn-based custom lighting company is named after it. Neon is low maintenance, has a long life, and comes in a trillion colors. Today, Lite Brite's work adorns the Lever House, Bergdorf Goodman, and the Dia Center for the Arts, to name just a few. www.litebriteneon.com

B Mercer table lamp by Joan Gaspar for Marset
For this Spanish luminary, light guru Gaspar has encased a conventional, creased-cotton shade in a thoroughly modern blown-glass skin. The product name comes from the Mercer Hotel in Soho, where a Mercer is on display, and is clearly the most interesting object, in the lobby. www.marset.com

C Credenza and bookshelf by Modernlink
Piet Houtenbos is a New Yorker but he's got Dutch design DNA. His bamboo credenzas, bookshelves, dressers, beds, and desks aren't just supremely crafted, they contain discreet niches, trays, and drawers to guard all our secrets. www.modernlink.com

D Maun Windsor chair by North/South Project with Mabeo Furniture and Patty Johnson
Canadian design stalwart Patty Johnson has long been interested in sustainable issues of all kinds—economic, cultural, ecological, and aesthetic. So after years of admiring the work of furniture makers and craftspeople the world over, she finally decided to craft a partnership that would reflect her interests. Some of the nicest pieces were the Maun Windsor chairs that combined Johnson's design sensibilities with Botswana-based Mabeo furniture's craftsmanship and ecological sensitivity. www.northsouthproject.com ►


A


B

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D

PHOTO BY AYA BRACKETT (TOP LEFT)

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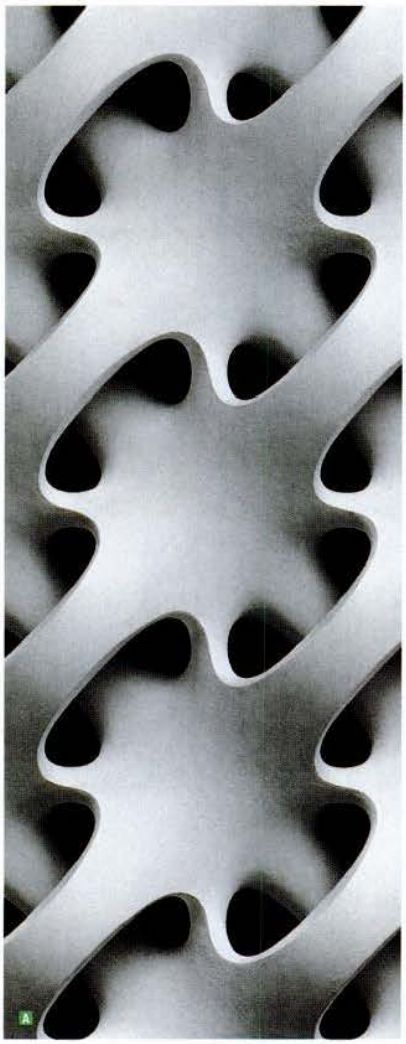
Austrian-born sculptor and professor emeritus at Yale Erwin Hauer has been producing fantastic designs for decades. However, actually having one in your home or office used to be wishful thinking. But now, thanks to a unique collaboration between Hauer and one of his former teaching assistants, Gregory Spiggle, Hauer's stunning screens can be yours to admire up close and personal. www.erwinhauerstudios.com

B BioWall by Loop.pH Ltd
Williamsburg's hauteGREEN exhibit showed off a range of sustainable products, including this shapely wall, inspired by cells and molecules. Made from bent fiberglass rods woven into interlocked dodecahedra, it can support creeping plants to form an indoor hedgerow of any dimension. www.loop.ph

C Pet food dish by the Pet Project
This year's show featured more designs for kids—and cats. This Danish studio reminds us that in ancient times, certain animals were worshipped as gods and that they have no wish to give up the pharoanic lifestyle. If you room with an Old Testament furball who tends to get cranky before breakfast, we recommend you make an offering in this walnut-bottomed bowl. www.the-pet-project.com

D Tilt table by Loadbearing
Loadbearing showed off this convertible table that can stand tall at dining-table height or shimmy down to coffee-table level in only a moment. Keep an eye on this company headed up by a Swiss-American couple residing in New York. www.loadbearing.com ▶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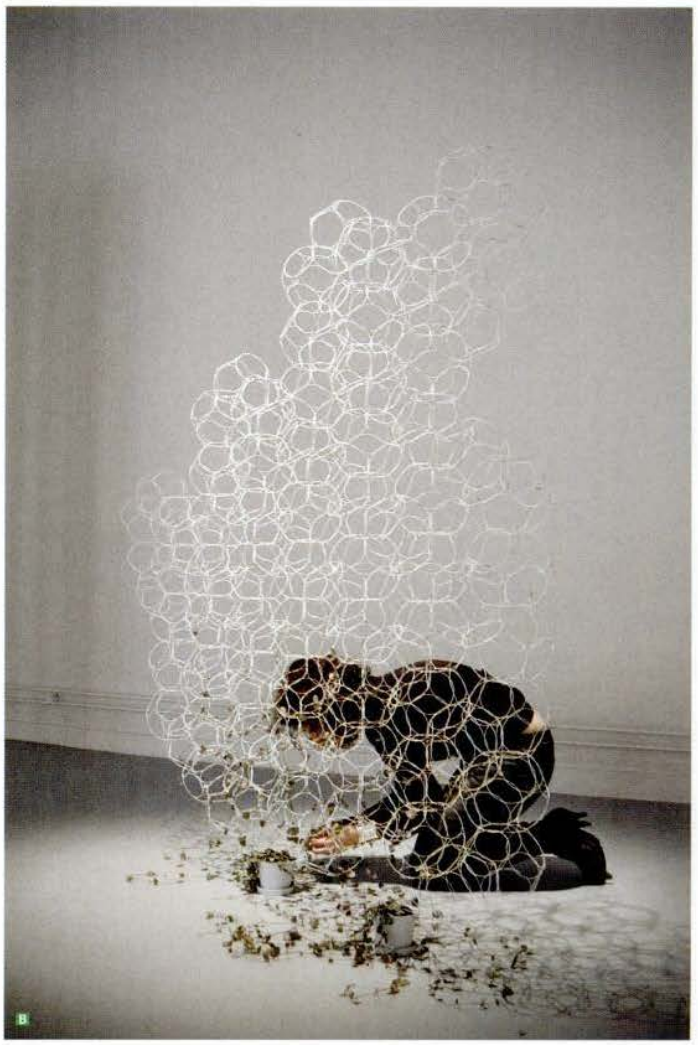
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Story by Shonquis Moreno

BKLYN DESIGNS

A

A SKEW bookshelf by the Design Can
"A SKEW on the wall creates directional deception," reads the Design Can website. "An assemblage of SKEWS produces textural transformation." Steven Tomlinson and partner Jeannie Choe graduated from Pratt not so long ago and have already been accused in the press of making products that make people think. www.thedesigncan.com

B Love chaise by Stand41Rd
An offshoot of talented local studio 3 Square Design, Andrew Raible is now making seriously sophisticated wooden furniture on his own. Aptly named, this walnut chaise longue is built for two. www.standard41.com

C Hollow table and Hollow end table by Brave Space Design
The Hollow line—finished lightly in BioShield Organic Herbal Oil—uses additional creases to provide pockets for storage and light and dark bamboo to emphasize the architecture of each piece. www.bravespacedesign.com ►

B

C

An amuse-bouche preceding ICFF, the BKLYN DESIGNS weekend in mid-May confirmed that good design is the subject of much thought in New York City's biggest borough. Though studios like the Design Can, Jason Miller, Tobias Wong, and Jun Aizaki (to name a few) are remaking the artifacts of Americana in a modern mode that is full of both mischief and celebration, this is not frivolous stuff. Frequent use of a skull-and-crossbones on dishware and mirrors didn't obscure the fact that Brooklynites are, above all, superior craftspeople.

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A Axor Citterio Semi-Professional kitchen faucet
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B Fuego
Fuego's low-profile cover and sleek material palette (available in both 30-inch and 40-inch configurations) are the brain-child of Robert Brunner, partner of world-renowned Pentagram Design. www.fuegoliving.com

C Istanbul Collection by Ross Lovegrove for VitrA
VitrA, the Istanbul-based bathroom manufacturer, came to KBIS this year looking to bolster its U.S. presence and pretty much stole the show with its Istanbul Collection designed by Ross Lovegrove. www.vitra-USA.com ■

C

At most parties the kitchen and the bathroom see the heaviest traffic, so we were expecting a good time at this year's Kitchen and Bath Industry Show—America's only trade show for the rooms in your house with plumbing. Some smaller manufacturers (and lesser-known-to-the-U.S.-market manufacturers) made an impact, while the bigger companies scaled back their usual over-the-top floor shows (most likely saving up for the KBIS's return to Las Vegas in 2007).

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The San Francisco Living: Home Tours weekend is the first tour series of its kind in the Bay Area to promote a wide variety of architectural styles, neighborhoods, and residences—all from the architect's point of view. Participants will view some of the city's latest residential projects, meet with project designers, explore housing trends, and discover design solutions that inspire unique San Francisco living. This year, view projects by Stanley Saitowitz | Natoma Architects, Kuth/Ranieri Architects, Nilus Designs, Terry & Terry Architecture, Aidlin Darling Design, Paulett Taggart Architects, Charles Barnett Associates, Feldman Architecture and others.
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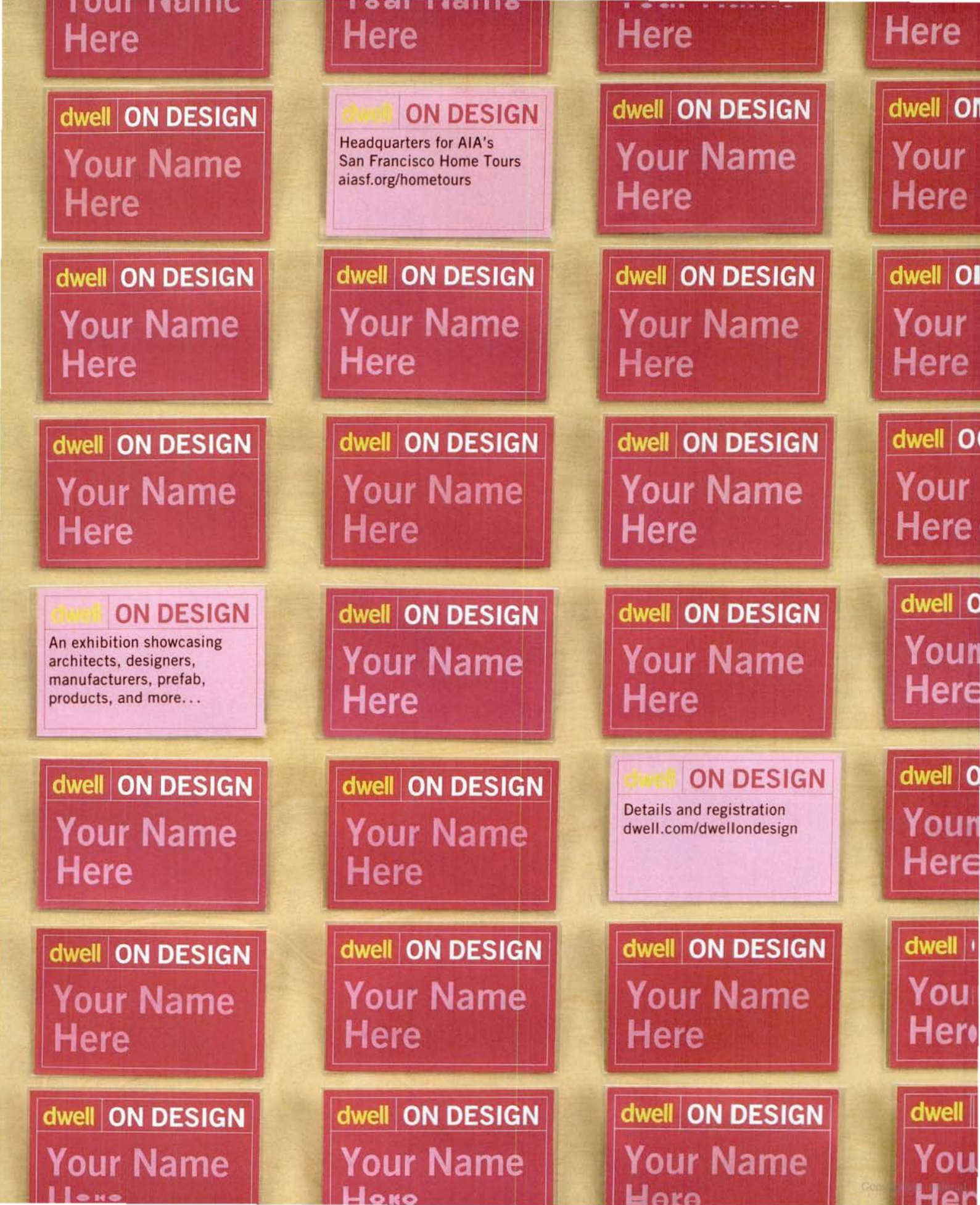
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Story by Jane Szita

Photos by Dean Kaufman

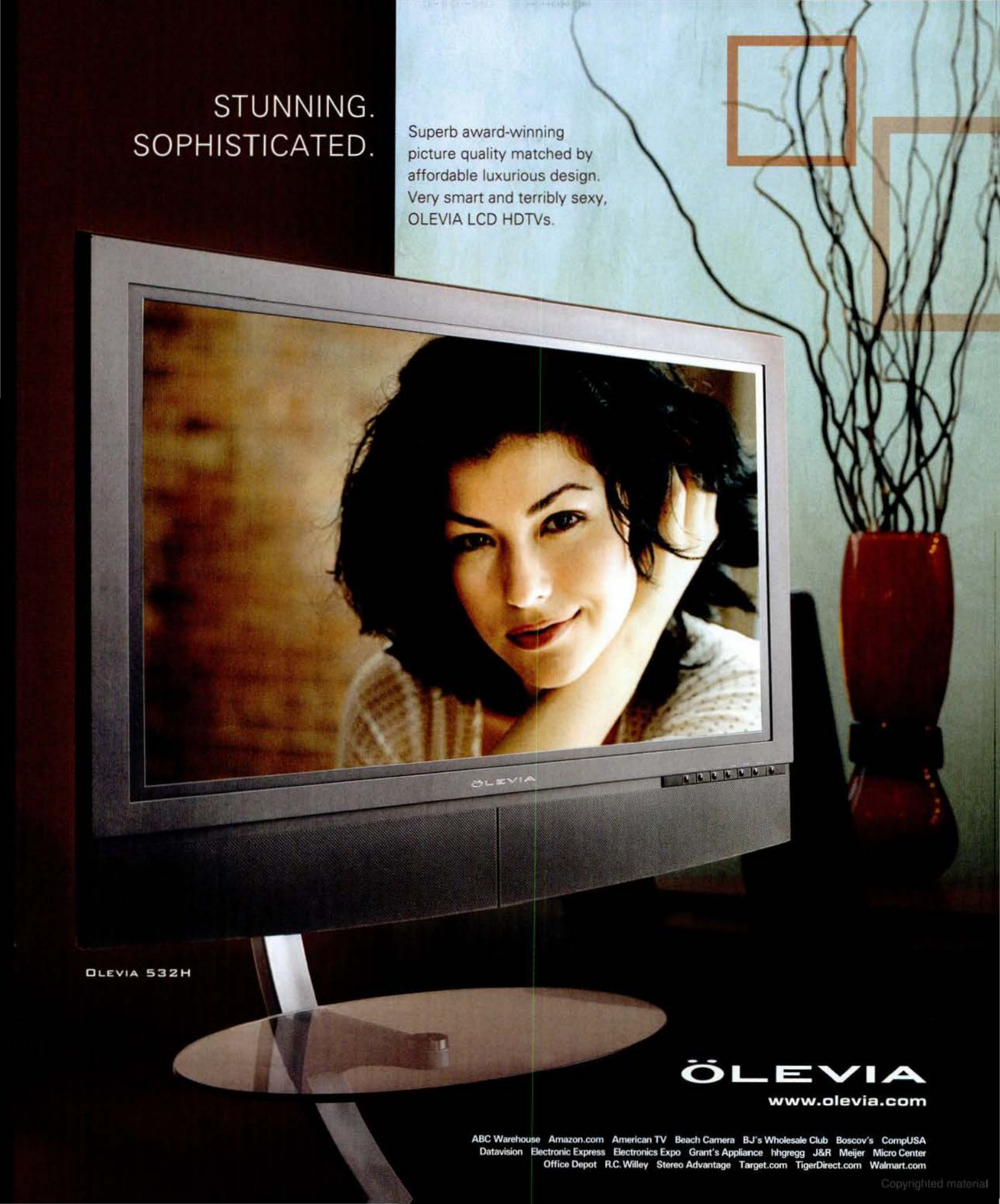
Without a Trace

"Good design means not leaving traces of the designer, and not overworking the design," says Tokyo-based Naoto Fukasawa. Despite the fact that it's his intention to erase himself totally from his products, this Japanese master's creations—from the wall-mounted CD player he designed for Muji to the white leather Ishi ottoman for Driade to the futuristic new Neon cell phone for KDDI—cannot be mistaken for the work of anyone else. Fukasawa's outright rejection of the fetishism of design objects and his determination not to assert his personality (itself a unique trait in the age of the celebrity designer) give autonomy to the relationship between his products and their users.

Fukasawa's approach to designing electronic gadgets, based on over 25 years' experience, has been called "anti-technical" dispensing with unnecessary buttons, displays, and other high-tech signifiers. His Twelve watch for Issey Miyake, for example, radically removes the clutter that is supposed to signify "precision" in watches, instead relying on the shape of the face to provide the accuracy of reading.

Fukasawa has insisted that his true strength is not in ideas, but rather in translating ideas into forms. Seductively sensuous, rather than merely cerebral, his work achieves a lyrical beauty unique in product design, leading Paola Antonelli, curator of MoMA's Department of Architecture and Design, to characterize him as "a great poet." As his almost 50 awards testify, in the field of consumer electronics he's in a class of his own—and has been credited with redefining the whole discipline of design. A former Ideo stalwart (he went to San Francisco to work for the company in 1989, returning to Japan to set up its Tokyo office), he started his own company, Naoto Fukasawa Design, in 2003, and launched the electrical appliance brand Plus Minus Zero that year. These electronic products, largely unavailable in the West, nevertheless shine as exemplars of enlightened design. ▸

Fukasawa's studio is a study in simplicity. Pared down to the most essential elements, there are no random filing boxes, extraneous shoddy furniture, or distracting artwork in this space. The designer is shown here standing next to his Nextmaruni chairs.



Even on a tabletop, surrounded by austerely beautiful utensils and bowls, Fukasawa's electronic products blend in. At left, the Ishicoro cell phone in white proves that point.

Having worked in the U.S. (for Ideo), how would you describe design differences between America and Japan?
Actually, there is really no major difference between good design in Japan and in the U.S. There are fewer differences in our culture and traditions, as everything is becoming more globalized these days, and this also affects our ideas about beauty.

Could you tell us more about your "Without Thought" philosophy of design?
People shouldn't really have to think about an object when they are using it. Not having to think about it makes the relationship between a person and an object run more smoothly. Finding ideas in people's spontaneous behavior and realizing these ideas in design is what Without Thought is about.

How did you develop this philosophy?
Designers often want to make something special, something that really grabs people's attention. But I realized that when we actually use these products, whether or not they are special is not that important. So I decided it would be a good idea to look at people's subconscious behavior instead—or, as I call this principle, "design dissolving in behavior." I realized then that design has to achieve an object "without thought."

Could you explain how the principle of design dissolves in behavior works with reference to an actual product—say, the CD player you designed for Muji?
Design dissolves in behavior is about finding products beautiful not simply because of the way they look, but from the experience of interacting with them. With the Muji CD player, when the user pulls the string, the CD slowly starts spinning and then the music follows. If the switch was not this string but something else, the same feeling could not have been achieved. In other words, our behavior in using the object is dissolved within the design.

Finding ideas in people's unconscious behavior implies some kind of psychological study. What kind of research is your design based on?
I don't base my designs on any kind of formal research. I simply believe that through subconscious behavior we can integrate and live smoothly within our environment. However, there is one psychologist who has influenced me, James J. Gibson, who introduced the ▸

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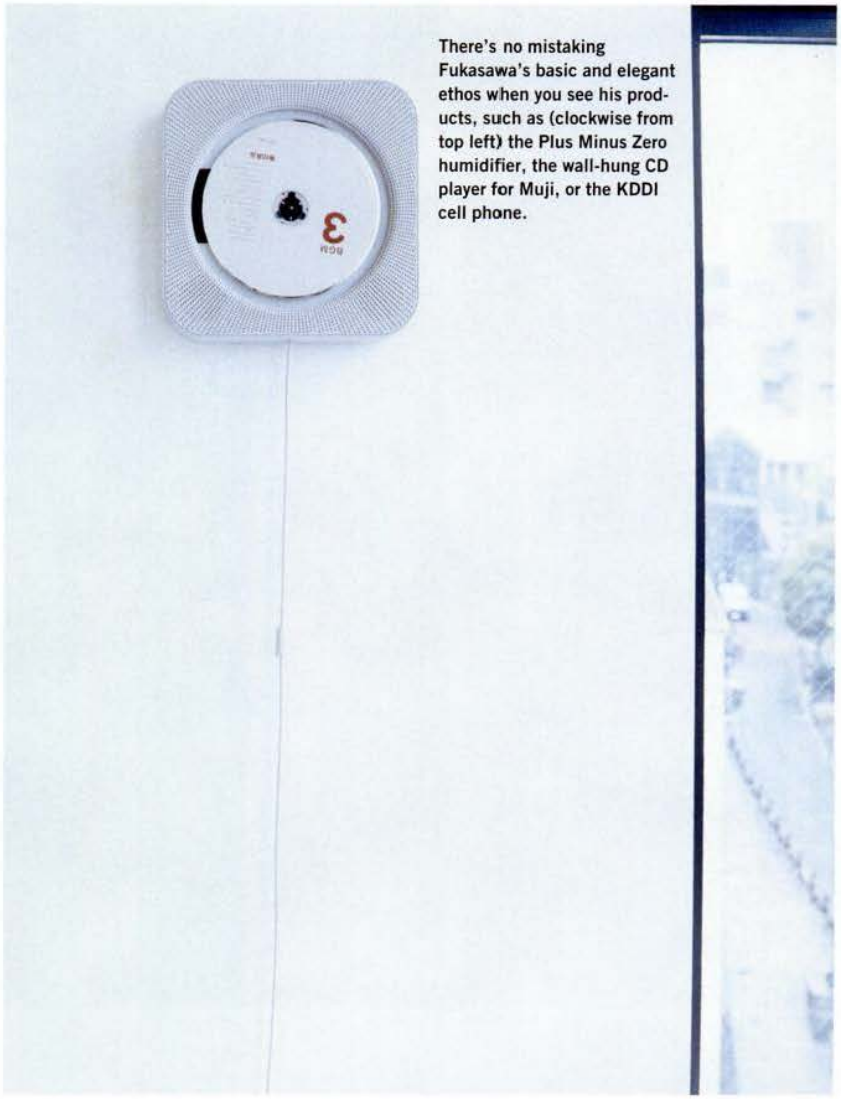


There's no mistaking Fukasawa's basic and elegant ethos when you see his products, such as (clockwise from top left) the Plus Minus Zero humidifier, the wall-hung CD player for Muji, or the KDDI cell phone.

term "affordance" in the 1960s—affordance being the quality of an object that indicates to us how to interface with it. His philosophy comes quite close to my own way of thinking.

I don't know how important research is to design in general, but for me designing is an intuitive process. But I am always interested in analyzing how I actually get these intuitive ideas for each design.

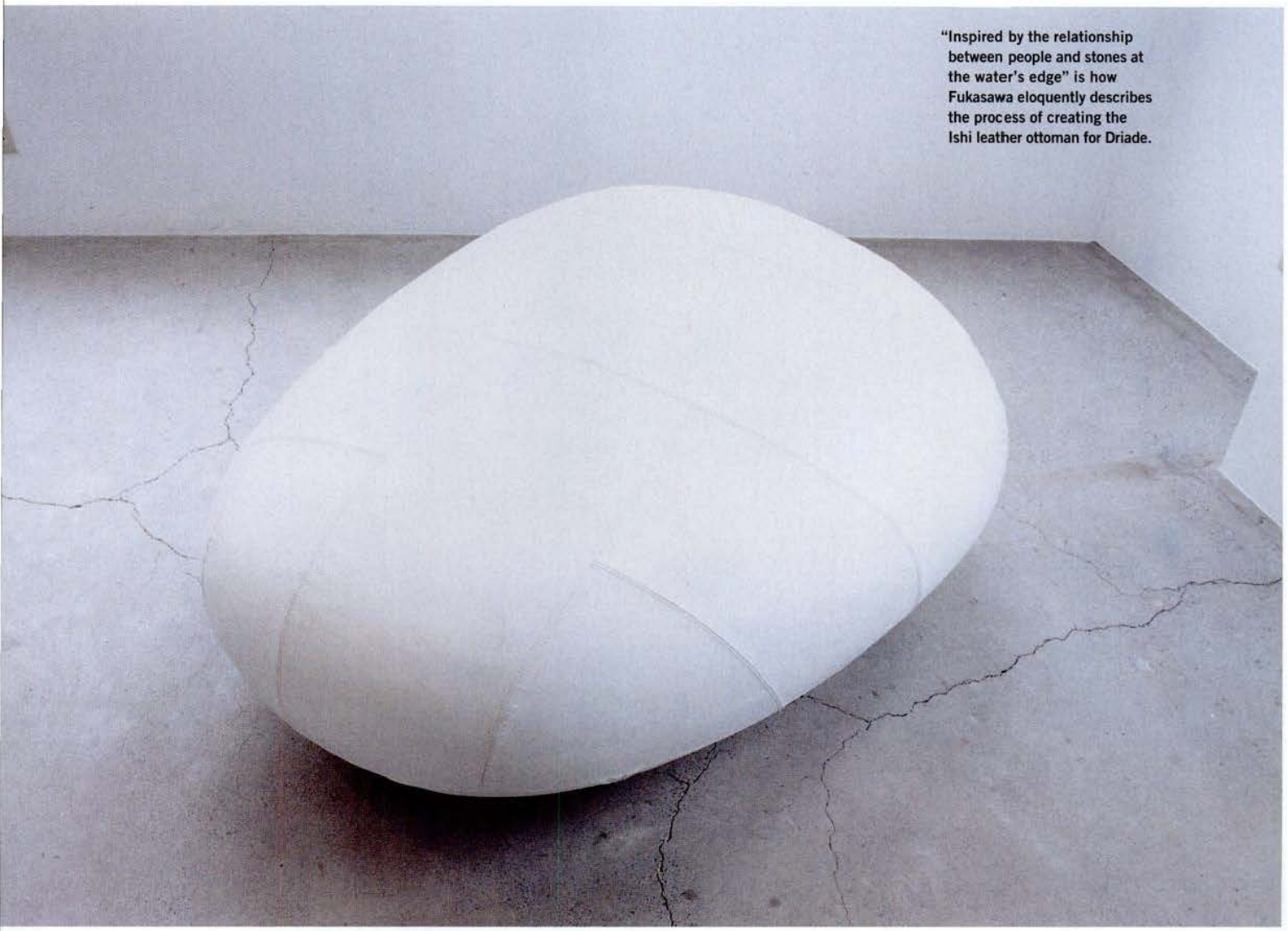
What are you working on right now?
Many different things! Consumer electronics products, furniture, electrical equipment, and space design...

How does designing electronic objects and gadgets differ from designing furniture?
I don't think they are all that different—although of course the technologies and markets are different. But design is always about creating the relationship between people, objects, and the environment. In this respect, whether you are designing a piece of furniture, a TV, or a mobile phone, there should be no boundaries in your way of thinking about and designing them. In fact, it's much more unnatural if you try to design a piece of electrical equipment as a piece of electrical equipment.

Is there a different approach you bring to your work for, say, B&B Italia versus Muji?
I don't really change my design for different clients, but each client has different tastes and factors. Combinations of these different factors, including their brand essence, naturally create different types of design.

So, to take the bookshelf with diagonal shelves you designed for B&B Italia—how did you arrive at this particular product?
Well, in order to create sufficient strength for shelves made from such thin material, cross beams were required. So I made the cross beams the same angle as the angle at which books tend to lean when people store them casually.

How about the thought process behind the Ishi leather ottoman you designed for Driade?
I was inspired by the relationship between people and stones at the water's edge. If we rest by the edge of the water, we always sit on a rock or stone. The rocks and stones afford us to sit on them, in other words. So the Ishi seats have the same quality. I always try to design with these ▸



"Inspired by the relationship between people and stones at the water's edge" is how Fukasawa eloquently describes the process of creating the Ishi leather ottoman for Driade.

complete relationships between people, objects, and the environment in mind.

How do you find the time to work on the huge number of projects you're involved in?
My office has eight assistants and myself. I don't intend to come up with ideas for each project from scratch—I find I naturally think about design all the time, so I store my ideas and use them at the right moment. So, I don't really need to spend time on generating ideas.

You have said that good design depends on erasing the traces of the designer. How do you do this, and how does this fit with today's cult of the celebrity designer?
You erase your traces as designer by not asserting your own ideas. When the product synchronizes with its users, they feel as if they've found the product they were looking for all along. At that moment, the name of the designer of the product becomes irrelevant. I am not a celebrity designer, and I would not want people to enjoy the "signature" of myself as designer before enjoying my actual products. If users enjoy the products, the question of who designed them is relatively unimportant. Naturally, they may be curious about who designed it.

What do you think are the traditional design strengths of Japan?
Harmony. Japanese people have a talent for harmonizing and for finding the appropriate answer through considering all the factors involved in a question. Call it minimalism. It doesn't necessarily involve using certain shapes, but it is about being appropriate.

Your work has been described as "things that don't exist, that should exist." How do you explain the visionary quality of your work?
It's simply about designing with an image in mind that everyone has in common.

What is the biggest mistake that designers make?
Designing using only the subjective mind.

What is your ambition as a designer?
To always produce good design and to continue designing.

What inspires you?
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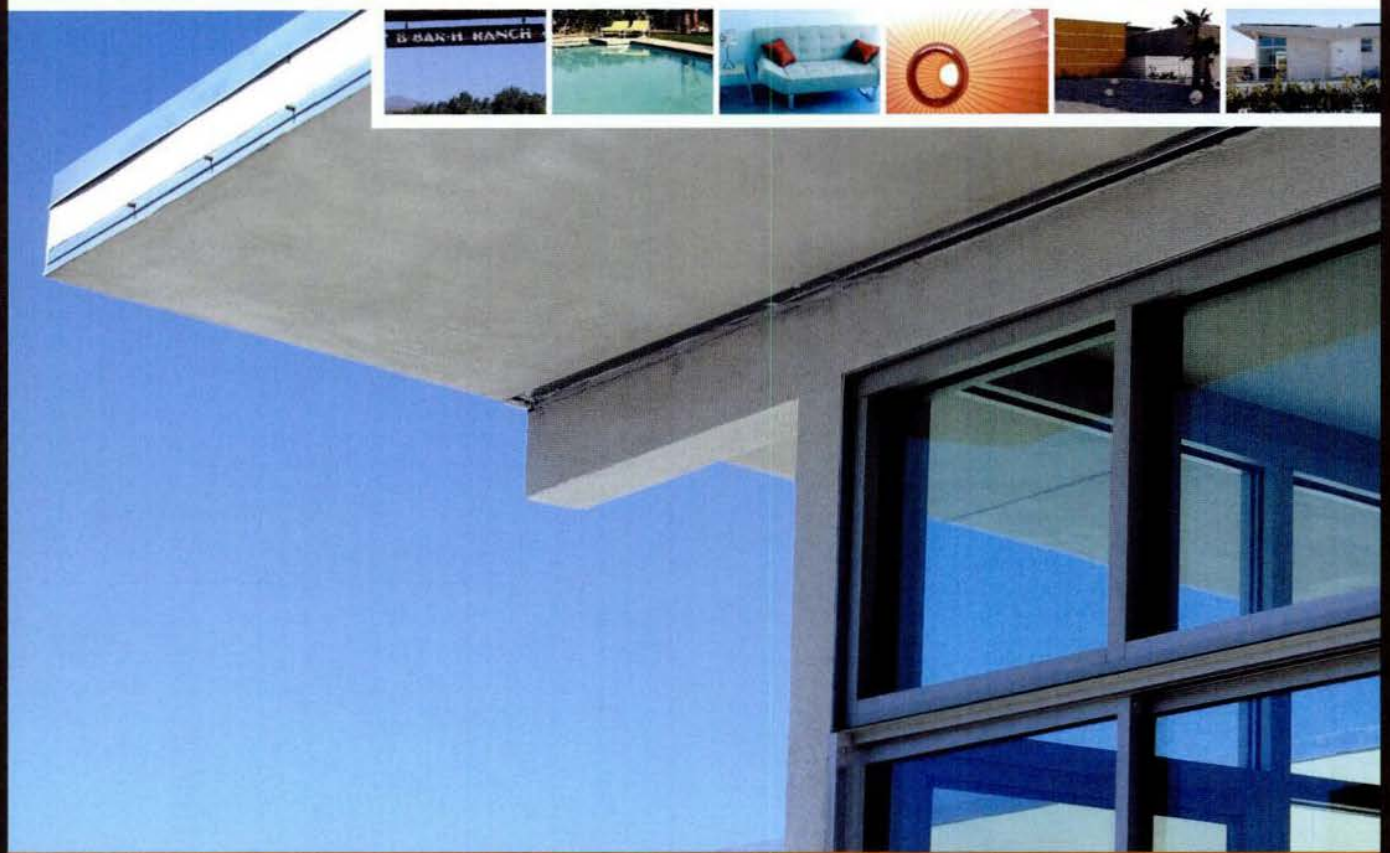

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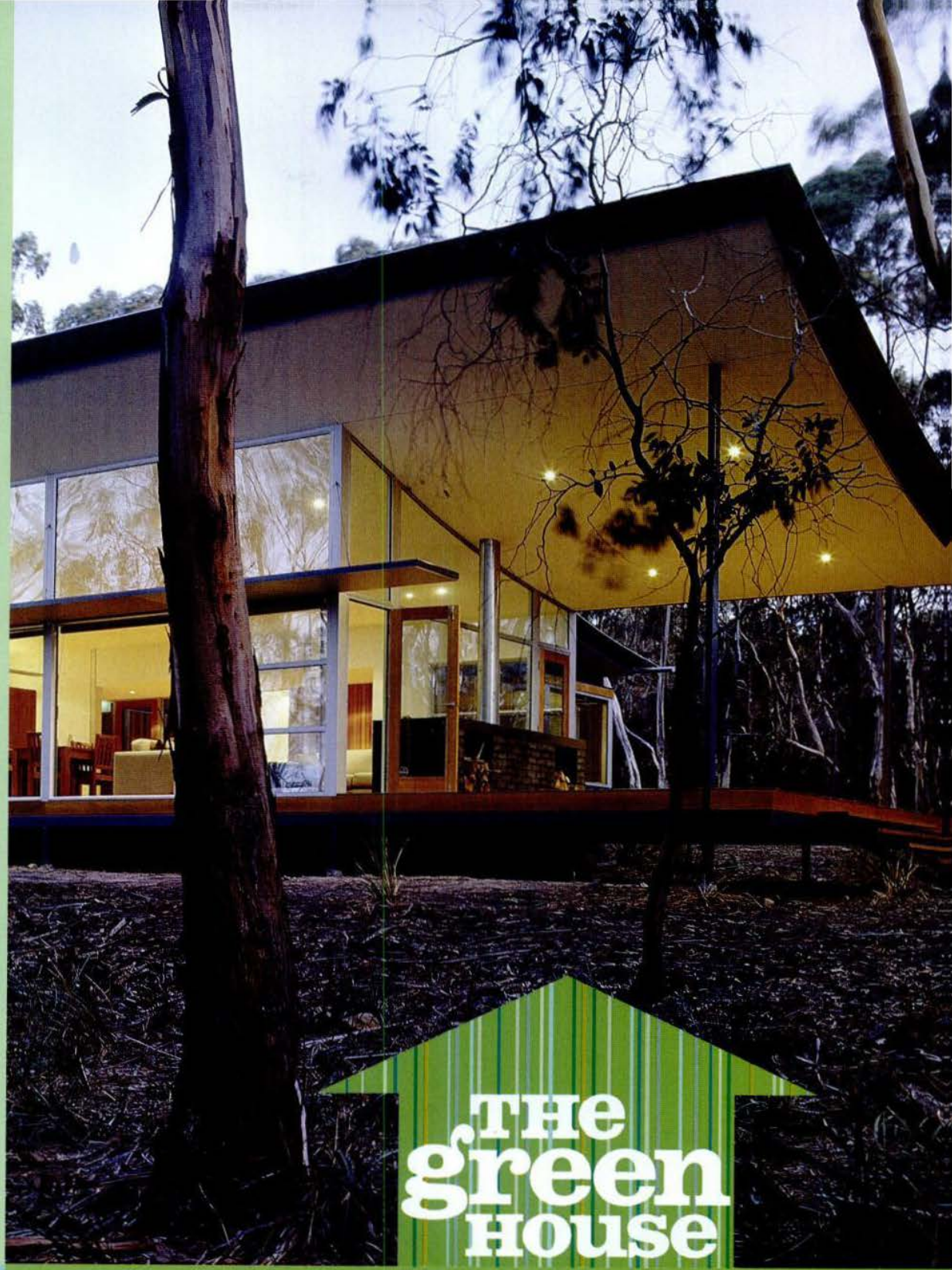

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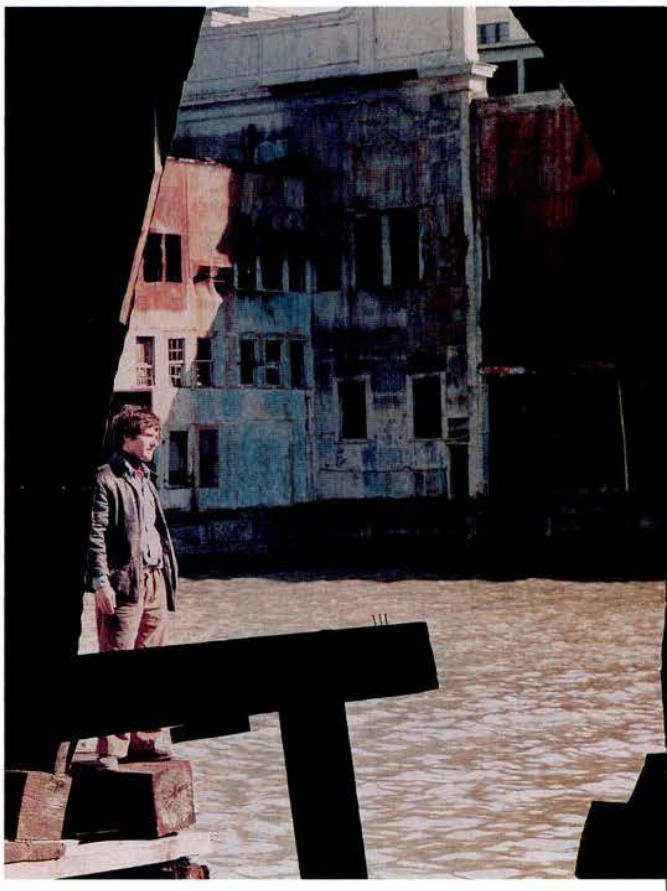

Cutting Edge

His presence in the art world was brief, but Gordon Matta-Clark's site-specific "cuttings" are some of the 20th century's most engaging explorations of architecture—and they're not even standing.

Matta-Clark (above right) stands outside Pier 52, the site of his *Day's End* piece from 1975 (above). He cut a "rose window" into a wall of the pier, which allowed light to pour into the abandoned space.

Alchemy is often regarded as a precursor to modern chemistry, but historically, the alchemist's pursuit was rarely quantitative, engaging as much in the metaphysic as in the metallurgic. As an architect-turned-artist, Gordon Matta-Clark acted as an architectural alchemist, cutting large pieces out of decrepit or uninhabitable buildings to reveal their latent worth—the structural equivalent of turning lead into gold. As his large-scale "cuttings" show, sometimes the power of architecture lies in the sum of its parts, or, rather, lack thereof.

The analogy isn't much of a stretch. Matta-Clark's first forays into the New York art scene in 1969 entailed a lot of kooky wizardry involving Bunsen burners and concoctions of bacteria strains, chocolate Yoo-hoo, and sperm oil, among other things—a sort of psychedelic alchemy. These early works and performance pieces like *Museum, Incendiary Wafers,* and *Photo-Fry* seem like mere aberrations on the path to Matta-Clark's mature work, but one can detect a common thread throughout: the distillation and transference of energy. Matta-Clark followed this line of artistic growth at breakneck speed, producing some two dozen installation and performance pieces between 1969 and 1972 before beginning the first of his iconic cuts, *Bronx Floors.*

On a formal level, his cuttings were engaging explorations of spatial energy. Matta-Clark often paid scrupulous attention to the building's structure and context, lending both a historic and architectural eye to its dismantling. He took particular glee in devising playful monikers for these pieces—like *A W-Hole House* for a structure on a factory site in Genoa, Italy, and *Office Baroque* for a building in Antwerp, Belgium, once occupied by a trading company gone broke. Sometimes the history and context of his building sites invited criticism, as was the case with *Conical Intersect,* a piece Matta-Clark was commissioned to create for the 1975 Paris Biennale. For the piece he cut two spheres through a pair of 17th-century houses scheduled for demolition—the view through one ▸

For a cutting in Englewood, New Jersey, titled *Splitting*, Matta-Clark bisected an entire house, allowing the separation to widen as it traveled vertically through each story of the structure.

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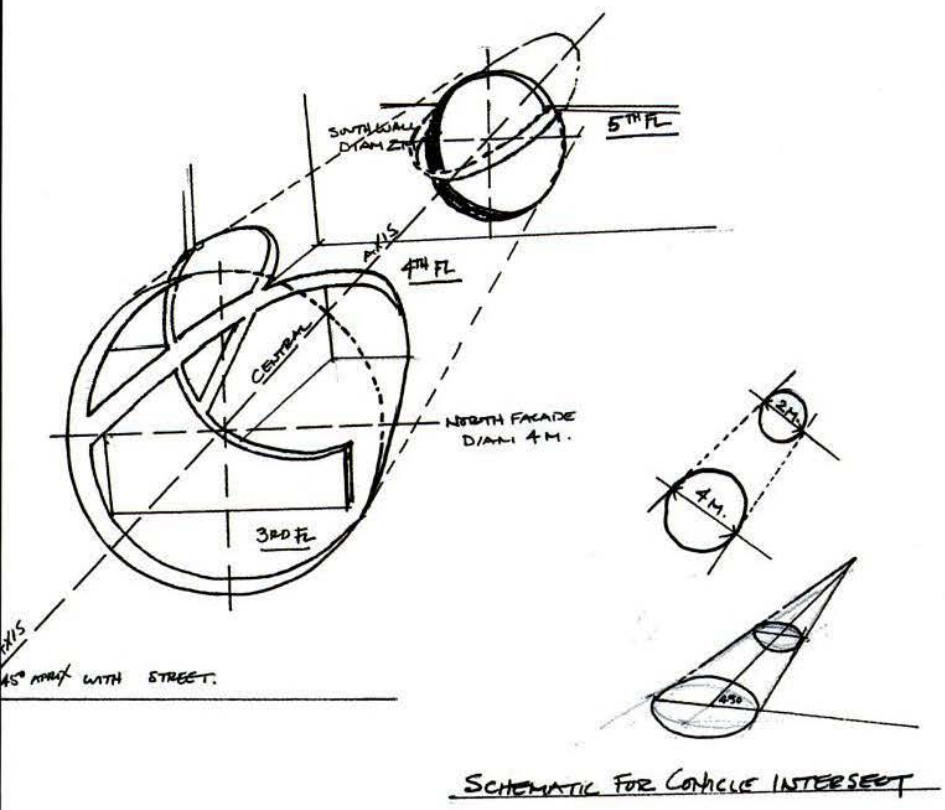

SCHEMATIC FOR CONICAL INTERSECT

As the schematic drawing and final result of *Conical Intersect* show (above), Matta-Clark paid great attention to structural components of his cuttings, often creating a series of schematic drawings before enacting any cuts.

vantage point leading down to the rue Beaubourg, the other glimpsing the exterior of the Centre Pompidou. Because the house was situated in a quarter densely populated with Paris's highest concentration of socialist voters and which the government had been condemning as a health hazard for years, many leftist critics condemned him—wrongly—for being callous and bourgeois.

But as Thomas Crow, art historian and contributor to *Gordon Matta-Clark* (Phaidon), relates, "Matta-Clark had a strong streak of socialist thinking throughout his career and his life in general, and he condemned the architectural profession for what he saw as complicity in all kinds of failed development schemes and neglect of traditional housing stock, traditional neighborhoods, and the poor. With *Conical Intersect* he was thinking about the destruction of an established fabric of housing and neighborhood life to impose this spaceship-like Pompidou Center in the middle of it."

But Matta-Clark's attempts to engage the disenfranchised were not always successful. With *Graffiti Truck and Photoglyphs*, Matta-Clark invited people to tag his car, only to disassemble the pieces and show them in gallery spaces along with hand-colored photoglyphs of the entire spectacle. One might argue that this work gave Matta-Clark a certain degree of street cred (and prescience, given the art world's yen for all things graffiti in the '80s), but in the end it fails to go any deeper; after all, inviting vandalism is, in many ways, oxymoronic.

Despite these tensions in his work, Matta-Clark created beautiful spectacles of architectural sculpture and inventive ways of capturing them on film. For *Splitting*, he completely bisected a structure in Englewood, New Jersey, given to him by the Solomons, gallerist friends in New York. His most quirky and perhaps fantastic piece was the 1975 *Day's End*, in which he set up shop in the defunct Pier 52 in New York City and began to cut. The artist, along with some assistants and members of the local S&M crowd, lived in harmony for a brief period. For these elegant slices, which included a classic nod to cathedral building, Matta-Clark saw a warrant issued for his arrest. The city, giving its own classic nod to incomprehensible bureaucracy, seized the property and restored the missing pieces so that the building could get on with its obsolescence.

Matta-Clark's work sought to reawaken a life or essence buried beneath the surface. But in the end, the only thing that could rival his artistic output was the pancreatic cancer that robbed him of his life in 1978, at the age of 35, a bitter demise for an artist so concerned with growth, transformation, and energy. He finished out his days under the care of natural health practitioners, forgoing traditional medical treatment. It was almost as if the disease that was consuming him encouraged Matta-Clark to transform and discover energy outside of himself. His life ended much the way it began, and he remained incandescent and inquisitive until the end. ▸

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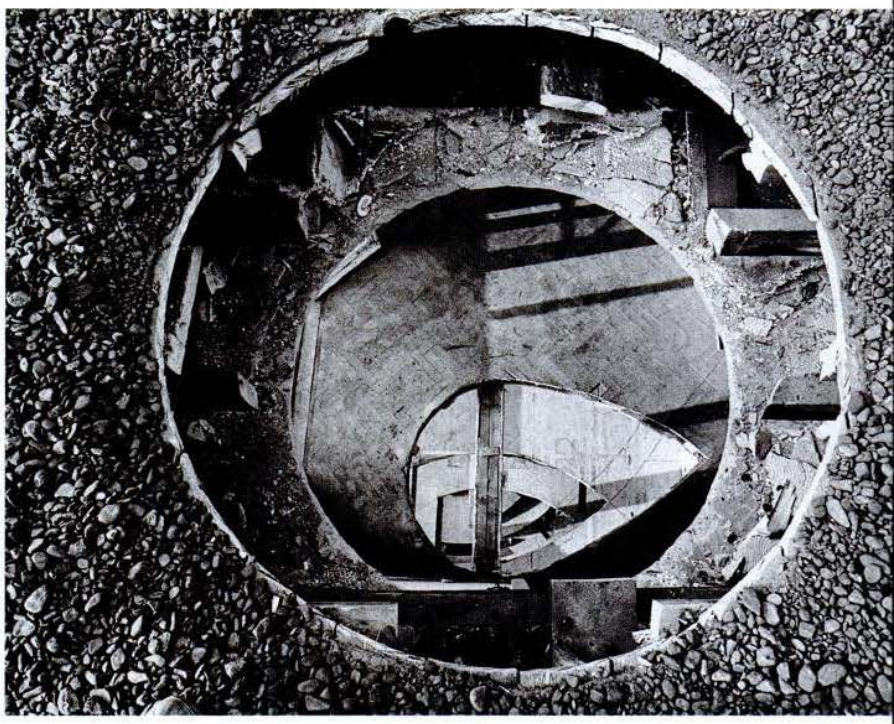

Matta-Clark standing outside the restaurant Food (above left), a joint venture embarked upon with a group of friends. A view from *Office Baroque* (above right). One of Matta-Clark's gold-leafed Polaroids cooked during *Photo-Fry* and subsequently mailed to a friend (below).

Ten Things You Should Know About Gordon Matta-Clark

1 / Gordon Matta-Clark's father was Roberto Matta, the famous Surrealist painter.

2 / Marcel Duchamp was his godfather, and his namesake was the English Surrealist artist Gordon Onslow-Ford.

3 / Matta-Clark contracted tuberculosis when he was five and developed Addison's disease for which he had to take regular cortisone shots throughout his life.

4 / Matta was a student when the Cornell art gallery organized a groundbreaking exhibition called "Earth Art"; the artists involved were Robert Smithson, Dennis Oppenheim, Jan Dibbets, Richard Long, Robert Morris, and Hans Haacke. Matta-Clark assisted Oppenheim with his *Beebe Lake Ice Cut*.

5 / Matta-Clark's first New York exhibit was a group show called "Documentations" (1969). He brought in an old-fashioned stove and started burning Polaroids, and left the remains in the gallery. Later that year, friends started receiving gifts of burnt Polaroids flecked with gold.

6 / In 1971 Matta-Clark opened a restaurant called Food with a group of friends (many of whom were associated with the Anarchitecture circle). They converted an abandoned bodega and used it to serve relatively cheap, good-quality food to the neighborhood.

7 / Matta-Clark's performance pieces were not always well received. For an exhibition titled "Idea as Model" at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, Matta-Clark created quite a stir when he blew out every window of the exhibition space with an air rifle and hung pictures of blown-out windows in a housing project in the South Bronx; people were horrified.

8 / Matta-Clark founded Loisaida (after the Loisaida neighborhood in New York), a resource center that promoted recycling and mentored children.

9 / In 1976 Matta-Clark's twin brother, Batan, fell out of a window and died. He was only 32.

10 / After Matta-Clark's death, Robert Rauschenberg paid all of the artist's outstanding medical bills. ■

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Dear Dwell,
There's nothing better than settling in to read the Sunday paper, but it's becoming difficult to enjoy with the ever-present clutter of publications getting in our way. Could you steer us in the direction of some stylish solutions? —**Eileen Thomas,** Boston, Massachusetts

Don't be intimidated by those teetering stacks of periodicals that threaten to engulf your home. Here are a few choices for reining in your reading material.

Usame table by Patricia Urquiola for Kartell / Available in crystal, smoke, red, orange, olive green, light blue, or black / $254 / www.kartell.it
Part coffee table, part storage bin, this repository will add style to any room. The vegetal patterns add Art Deco nostalgia to the modern translucent construction, making the table suitable for almost any decor.

Wallpaper magazine rack by Maria Berntsen for Rosendahl / $149 / www.fitzsu.com
This hanging rack meets all the requirements of the loft-owning glitterati: brushed anodized aluminum with a flowing, organic shape. Magazines must be folded to fit, but this Gehryesque flourish could just as well stand alone on your wall.

Sprung magazine rack by Michael Sodeau for Livit / Available in red, green, or white / $198 / www.retromodern.com
Both minimal and multipurpose, this simple design is good for both magazines and newspapers, and could also serve as an impromptu fort for the kitty. The stained metal of the sprung-open structure is durable enough to withstand long-term use.

Prop Styling by Diane McGauley

W magazine stand by Eric Pfeiffer for Offi / Available in birch, oak veneer, or walnut veneer / $142 / www.unicahome.com
Simultaneously sculptural and pragmatic, the undulating form of the W's molded plywood is both pleasing and useful. It's compact enough for small spaces, though you may be loath to cover up the figurative grain pattern of the walnut with your magazines.

Portariviste four-pocket magazine rack by Giotto Stoppino for Kartell / Available in transparent, smoke, orange-red, orange, or silver / $142 / www.kartell.it
Utilitarian with a bit of flair, the Portariviste does not baffle: The magazines go here. The built-in handle and light weight are nice for those nomadic souls who want to tote their reading materials from kitchen to bathroom to sofa.

Story by James Nestor

The High Life

Early artifacts show that hundreds of thousands of years ago, almost all human dwellings were suspended high within trees, away from scavenging animals, floods, and other dangers on the ground. Up there in the canopy, pre-Neanderthal humans would huddle together in tight circles, grunting and clicking, pawing at each other's wooly coats, enchanting one another with dances of elfin magic and wizardry.

Or at least this is what I used to daydream about up there, lolling away hot summer afternoons on the plywood floor of my childhood tree house. You see, it's a different world up in the canopy, a world devoid of earthbound distractions, where the imagination is free to run wild. It's these qualities that have attracted a handful of new designers to reinvent the tree house, and in the process remind us of something our monkey-ancestors have known for a million years: Branches are the perfect place to hang out.

PHOTO BY GREGOR MACLEAN

Eye in the Sky

Project: Free Spirit Sphere
Designer: Tom Chudleigh
Location: Errington, British Columbia

British Columbia–based Tom Chudleigh designed the Free Spirit Sphere as a have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too tree house that combines the wonder of being airborne with all manner of earthly comforts.

Handcrafted of wood or fiberglass, this lavish ten-foot-six-inch-diameter sphere is fully wired to accommodate a microwave, space heater, refrigerator, TV, Clapper—whatever. And it's plumbed for a kitchen sink. Retractable beds sleep up to four people.

But if the point is to surround one's self with all mod cons, why not just rent a condo in Barstow?

"When you're up in the trees," Chudleigh says, somewhat evasively, "you really get the sense that you are just floating up there, that you're in a different world." This sensation is produced by four flexible ropes that connect to the sides of the sphere, allowing it to suspend freely above the ground and move with the whim of the forest breeze or branches, intimately connecting the Free Spirit Sphere occupant with the surroundings. "It's a really healing place up here."

Chudleigh has built four spheres so far and is on his way to Australia to build four more. Prices range from $45,000 for the fiberglass to $150,000 for the handcrafted wood sphere.

"You think of conventional buildings as having walls, straight lines, color patterns," says Chudleigh. "In these spheres you are completely removed from that: All walls are merged into one, you are in the air, connected to it, detached from everything familiar—it's a total escape from the conventional world." ▸

Dear Ketel One Drinker
If only everyone had such good taste.

Where Pigs Fly

Project: Flying Pigsty
Designer: Amir Sanei
Location: Suffolk, England

Those looking for a more down-to-earth option might consider wallowing in a pigsty, which is essentially what designer Amir Sanei constructed for his two sons. "The design decisions could be explained simply to them by referring to the needs of flying pigs," Sanei comments with a twinkle in his eye. Sanei, who is the cofounder of London-based Sanei Hopkins Architects, based most of his design on the "pig ark," the simple metal domes used to house pigs on farms surrounding his house in Suffolk. But since flying pigs have some special needs, some alterations to the design had to be made.

Sanei elevated the Flying Pigsty six feet off the ground with four ropes slung between two trees "because flying pigs cannot fly far from the ground, and they need good clearance when they come into land." Entrance to the ten-foot-long, galvanized steel–and–scrap wood Flying Pigsty is via a ladder or rope at back. The entire project was completed over a long weekend in August 2005 for around $850.

Though most times Sanei allows his sons to play freely in the Flying Pigsty, he has strictly forbidden them to enter during moments of twilight when the pigs return to feed. "The boys have permission to use the structure," Sanei says sternly, "only when the flying pigs aren't there." ►

A deceptively simple structure, the Flying Pigsty floats lazily above the ground, providing the perfect place for young boys—or pigs with wings—to wile away summer afternoons.

PHOTOS BY AMIR SANEI

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By Poplar Demand

Project: 02 Sustainability Treehouse
Designer: Dustin Feider
Location: Pewaukee, Wisconsin

"I kept pushing the idea of doing a new kind of tree house further and further, trying to find the best structure, the best materials," explains Dustin Feider, a 23-year-old freelance furniture designer. "Then I finally figured it out."

What Feider discovered was that instead of trying to build a traditional "box" tree house, he could use less material and construct a more stable structure if he made a geodesic dome—a mini Epcot in the sky. And that's how the 02 Sustainability Treehouse looks suspended 45 feet up a poplar tree in the front yard of the Pewaukee, Wisconsin, house in which it was built.

At the base of the tree is a basket constructed of polypropylene panels connected to an electric winch, which is tied to the roof of the tree house. As though in an elevator, occupants ascend the tree and enter superhero-style through a triangular door on the floor. Here, the real fun begins. The entire structure is clad in translucent 16th-inch triangulated polypropylene panels, half of which open to allow breezes to waft in on warm summer nights. "In daytime, the light filters in and it has a really soft quality, like a pillow room," explains Feider.

The standard model 02 Sustainability Treehouse is 13 feet wide and costs $18,800, which includes three weeks' installation labor. A do-it-yourself kit is about half that price. All materials are 100 percent recycled or recyclable, and interiors and sizes can be customized per client specifications.

"I think sunset up there is my favorite time," says Feider. "Then, you get all these amazing purple shadows. It's so much better than watching TV." ►

The 02 Sustainability Tree House would keep even the most ardent tree hugger happy. The space is constructed entirely of recycled materials and has a full view to the outdoors.

PHOTOS BY DUSTIN FEIDER

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Suspended Habitation

Project: 4Treehouse
Designer: Lukasz Kos
Location: Lake Muskoka, Ontario

"This was really a parameter-driven project," explains Lukasz Kos, a Toronto-based designer and cofounder of the architecture firm Testroom. "That is, I had to let the trees decide how the tree house would be."

What the trees decided, apparently, was that they wanted a gracefully slender, *Blade Runner*–like elevator lodged between them. They also decided they didn't want to be too mutilated in the process. Kos responded to their needs with the low-impact 4Treehouse, a lattice-frame structure that levitates above the forest floor of Lake Muskoka, Ontario, under the spell of some witchy architectural magic.

He created this effect by suspending the two-ton, 410-square-foot tree house 20 feet above the ground with steel airline cables. With only one puncture hole in each of the four trunks into which the cable is anchored, the trees get away almost entirely unscathed, and the structure attains the visual effect of being suspended weightlessly in midair.

At the base of the tree, a staircase rolls on casters upon two stone slabs, allowing occupants to enter and exit regardless of how much the tree house may be swaying or rocking in the wind. Solid plywood walls punctuated by a floor of red PVC constitute the "opaque" base story, which is largely protected from the outside elements. "The idea was to have the tree house open up as it gained elevation," explains Kos. The second story is surrounded by a vertical lattice frame, allowing for breezes, air, and light to filter softly through walls while still establishing a visual perimeter between outside and inside space. At top, the tree house is completely penned in, a suspended patio with a ceiling of sky. ■

PHOTOS BY ŁUKASZ KOS

At night, Kos' tree house lights up to become a strikingly modern beacon in the forest, levitating above the lake.

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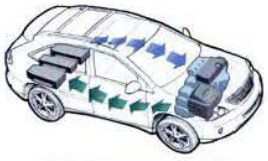

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Story by Ideal Bite

Photo by Peter Belanger

See Change

Next time you're in the supermarket, take a moment to watch people dump sacks of unwanted pennies and nickels into the Change Fairy. Note the look of glee on their faces. $10! *Amazing.* The folks at Idealbite.com are much like the green equivalent of the Change Fairy: The pennies of sustainable wisdom they dole out daily to subscribers' inboxes—small things everyone can do to make the earth healthier—bring back hearty returns. It's like a big ol' wad of Benjamins for Mother Earth.

It doesn't take a forest: Depending on the species of plant and the level of volatile organic compound (VOC) present in your house, a plant for every ten square feet should provide adequate air filtration. Plants such as English ivy, philodendrons, and peace lilies do an excellent job of absorbing airborne pollutants and are easy to keep.

Eco-Impact: If 10,000 people unplugged their 24-hour electric air purifiers in favor of air-filtering plants for one year, the electricity saved could power a 29-story office building for a month.

Bigger bang for the home-energy upgrading buck: Apply for a green mortgage and increase your buying power. Energy-efficient construction and retrofitting not only improve the resale value of your home, but can also increase your home-buying power. Lenders treat expected energy savings as income, allowing borrowers to qualify for larger mortgages.

Eco-Impact: If 10,000 people converted to Energy Star–qualified homes, the oil saved each year would fill 6,000 hot tubs.

Give green energy producers a boost: Green tags—which function like subsidies to help spur growth of alternative energy methods by paying the needed premium for them to be incorporated into the grid—help the United States move to energy independence by offsetting the carbon emissions that your home produces.

Eco-Impact: If 10,000 people opted to offset their home energy for the two hottest months of the year with green tags, it would prevent the weight of 1,797 U.S. Army helicopters in carbon emissions from entering the atmosphere.

One tile of carpet, please: Over 2.5 million tons of carpet are discarded in the United States each year. Replacing sections with modular carpeting can significantly lower this figure.

Eco-Impact: If 10,000 people purchased carpeting for their homes by the tile, it would prevent 163,000 pounds of unused carpet from ending up in a landfill.

Recycle your house: Reusing building materials decreases demand for virgin materials and landfill space. Vintage materials are often less expensive and more unique.

Eco-Impact: If 10,000 people recycled building materials, the amount of energy saved would be equal to the energy produced by 78 million gallons of gasoline—enough to drive an SUV around the earth 55,000 times (though we don't recommend doing this).

The answer comes up every morning: Serve your energy needs with clean, renewable solar energy. Federal and state rebates, in addition to new aesthetically pleasing and user-friendly applications, make installing solar panels more attractive than ever.

Eco-Impact: If 10,000 people installed solar water heating systems, it would be equivalent to taking 536 Hummers off the road for a year.

Install a minimill: The demand for home wind turbines doubled between 2005 and 2006. Newer models are silent and typically pay for themselves within the first five years of operation.

Eco-Impact: If 10,000 people installed home wind turbines, it would produce enough energy to power 98 elementary schools for one year. ■

It Takes a Village

Enric Ruiz-Geli's firm Cloud9 designed the suburban house of the future—it also happens to be sustainable.

Project: Villa Bio
Architect: Cloud9
Location: Llers, Spain

For the architectural tourist, the very mention of Barcelona brings to mind the fantastical world of Antonio Gaudí. Despite the 21st-century gloss of a sleek, high-tech, economic hub, Catalonia's capital city's greatest design export remains the eccentric turn-of-the-(last)-century designer. From high above the city in Gaudí's Park Güell, a hallucinatory vertical landscape of tiled grottos and organically unfolding gardens, the view is bullied by the Sagrada Familia, the architect's über-basilica, which has been under construction since the 1880s. In the Eixample—a neighborhood of broad avenues and octagonal intersections developed to connect the city's ancient center with once-outlying towns—the sidewalks in front of Gaudí's Casa Batlló and Casa Milà are clogged with throngs of ice cream–eating tourists.

A few blocks away from these celebrated structures, in an alien cube set within a garden courtyard, Gaudí's heir apparent, Enric Ruiz-Geli, is quietly plotting the next Catalan design revolution. Ruiz-Geli's firm, Cloud9, works at the outer reaches of design and technology's intersection—turning complex, data-powered projects into effortless and eminently livable buildings. At 38, Ruiz-Geli is transforming Le Corbusier's dream of machines for living into living machines.

Ruiz-Geli's most recently completed project, the Villa Bio, is situated a little over an hour outside of Barcelona in Llers, a green, hilly, sun-bathed sprawl near Figueres (hometown of everyone's favorite mustachioed surrealist, Salvador Dali). The area reads like a textbook Mediterranean suburb and feels oddly similar to ▸

Cloud9's Villa Bio is roughly an hour and a half outside of Barcelona in the surburban enclave of Llers. The hydroponic rooftop garden (opposite) grows out of volcanic stones. The home is conceived as a giant C-shaped spiral. The concrete volumes of the upper and lower floors (above) are independent to allow expansion and compression.

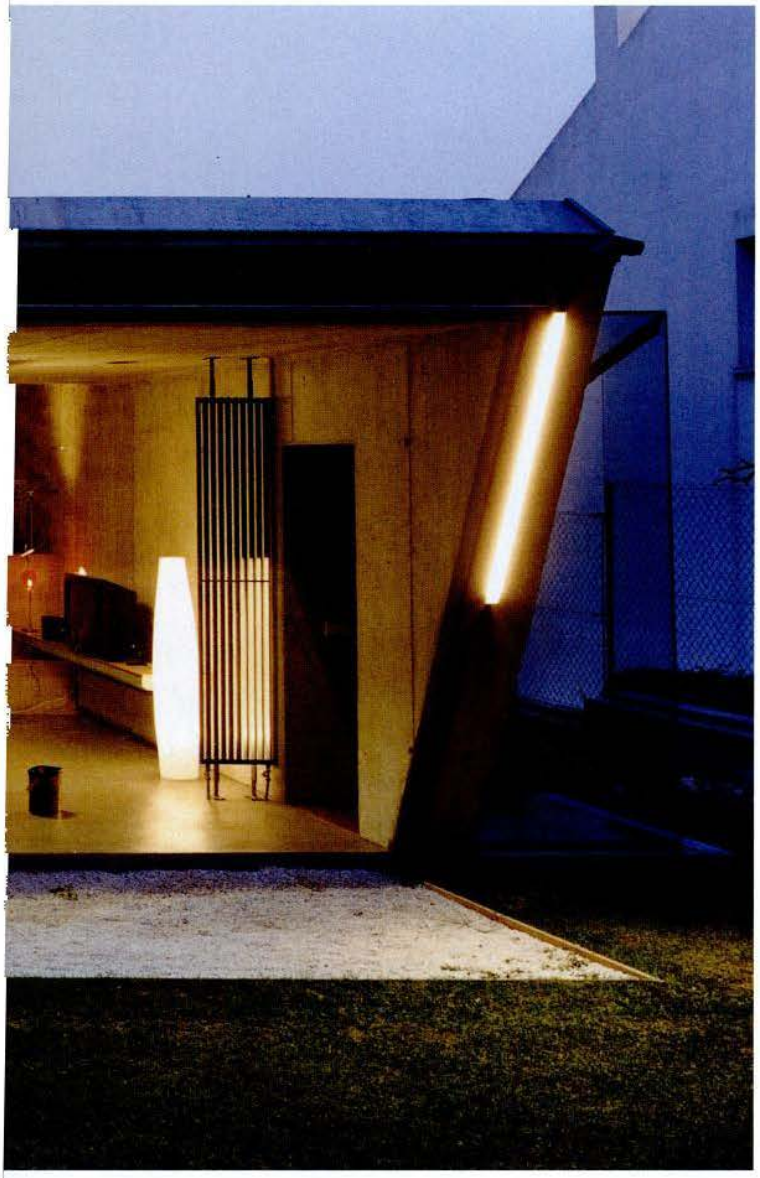
The rear of the Villa Bio features an almost 50-foot-wide expanse of glass (above). The pool (now just a large gravel pit) echoes the panoramic window's exact shape. The custom kitchen features a Silestone counter. Owner Carles Fontecha (opposite) waters his rooftop garden.

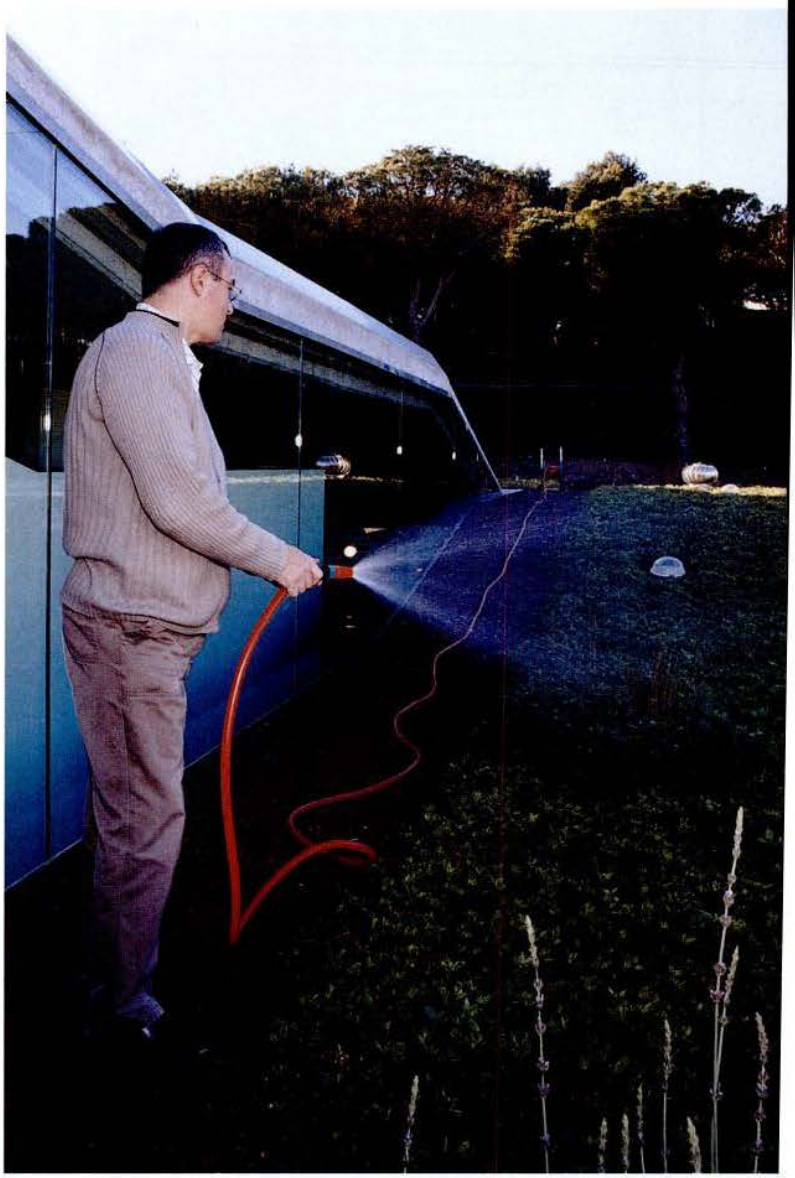
California's faux-Mediterranean enclaves—from the gleaming new terra-cotta tiles and white stucco walls down to the perfectly manicured lawns, swimming pools, nosy neighbors, and stringent *normativa* (or community building rules).

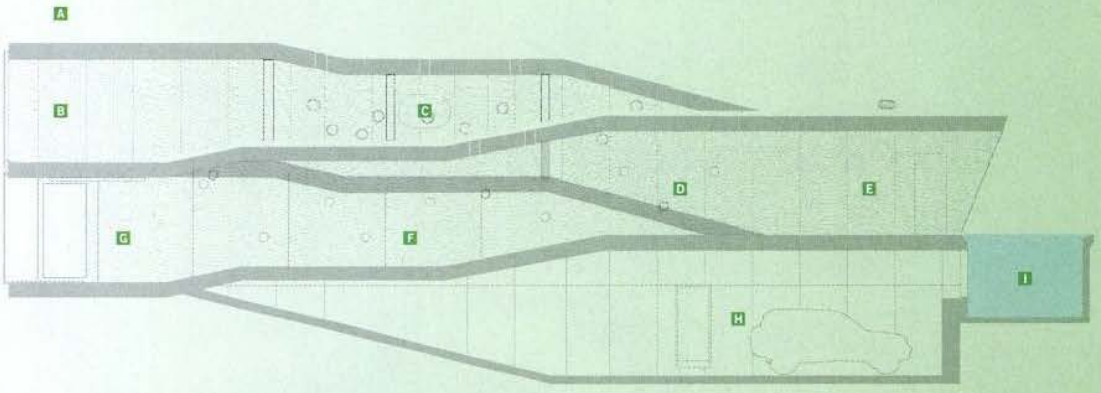
The Villa Bio is trapped in a contextual oxymoron—given the neighbors, it's utterly out of place, but one look at the natural surroundings tells you which house fits right in. Two years in the making, it was no easy task to make the most of client Carles Fontecha's small piece of land. The sloping coiled snake of a plan, with underground garage and a 50-foot cantilevered section, is no small feat of engineering. The result is economical, beautiful, and environmental. The Villa Bio is a firework of astute solutions that exemplify what the sustainable suburban home of tomorrow can be today.

"We were not looking for a green label," explains Ruiz-Geli in rapid-fire English, "We wanted a truly modern house that could seamlessly integrate in its environment. Gaudí was interested in nature in formal and spiritual terms. At Cloud9 we're interested in the performative dimension of nature—how it grows, lives, and transforms. We strive to cultivate this organic dimension."

Indeed, the Villa Bio's shape grew directly out of the land, echoing the sloping hillside forest that sits beyond the property line—and honoring the client's request for a home without stairs to accommodate his two young children and disabled father. From the street to the back of the house, the floor rises almost five feet, following the land's topography. The slope is re-created for the rising ▸



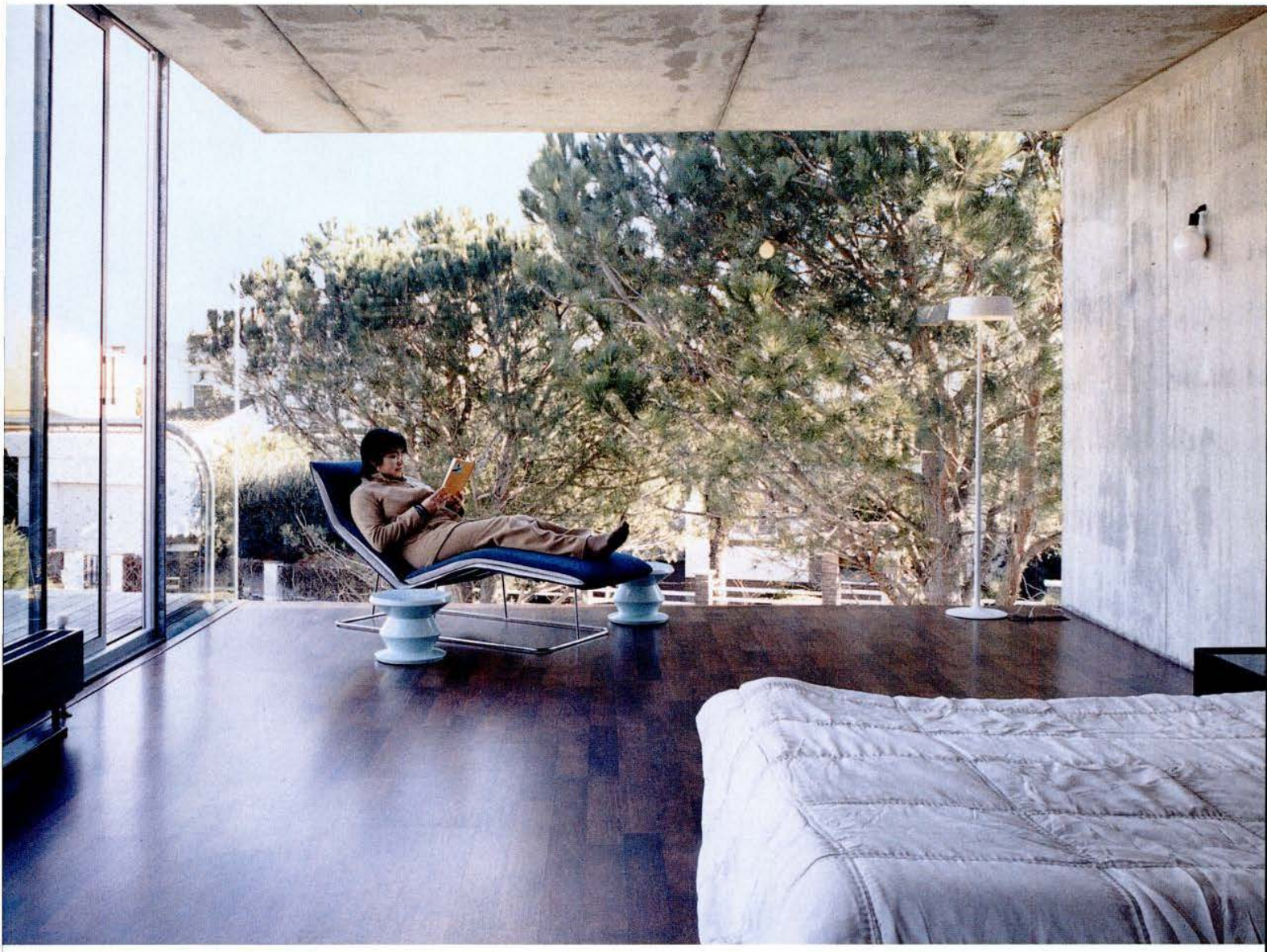


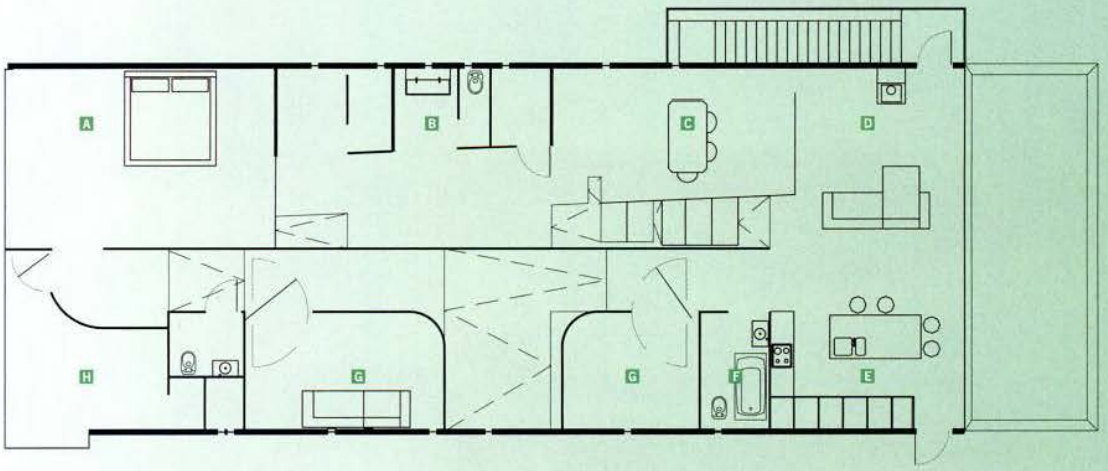


Villa Bio section

A Hydroponic Roof
B Master Bedroom
C Master Bathroom
D Dining Room
E Living Room / Kitchen
F Childrens' Rooms
G Study
H Garage
I [Future] Swimming Pool

On the living-room ceiling (this page) a Sivra fixture by iGuzzini modulates its output based on the amount of available daylight. The sofa is Wall by Piero Lissoni for Living Divani. Giovanna de Uzin Fontecha relaxes in the master bedroom (right) on a Leaf chaise by Claesson-Koivisto-Rune for Living Divani. p. 262





Villa Bio floor plan

A Master Bedroom
B Master Bathroom
C Dining Room
D Living Room
E Kitchen
F Bathroom
G Bedroom
H Study

section that leads back to the front of the home (now at an elevation of almost ten feet). Step out onto the hydroponic rooftop garden and the sloping spiral plan takes one more elongated spin, terminating atop the master bedroom. The aromatic garden is one of the home's prime sustainable features—absorbing excess runoff and protecting the house from the *tramontane*, a strong wind that blows in the region.

Though each element of the Villa Bio plays an important role in furthering Ruiz-Geli's organic approach, none is more pronounced than the home's windowless concrete walls. The fortified panels act as beams, enabling the 50-foot-wide structure to literally hang in the balance. They are also essential to the home's ventilation. Small portholes with thick glass light fixtures enable the flow of air, while keeping the neighbors out of sight.

Entering the unfurling inner space, one is struck by the harmony of the whole. Light pours in through large windowpanes at the front and the back of the building. Light amplifiers in the ceiling are equipped with energy-saving sensors that reproduce the chromaticity of daylight. "It took us some time to adapt when we moved in," says Fontecha, who works as an expert in security systems. "With all this transparency, we were worried about our privacy."

However committed to the Cloud9 design, social acceptance in the tightly knit community was a matter of concern for Fontecha. Friends found the design "rather extreme," and the villa was the talk of the town, attracting unconvinced neighbors through *boca a boca* ▸

Patterns for the tinted glass blocks (opposite) were created digitally by Cloud9. The home's ramplike form required only five steps to link the level platform of the dining room with the living area.

Cloud9's Manel Soler Caralps, who completed the home's interior design, created the tile pattern in the shower (above). A CNC-cut formwork was used to create the wavy pattern in the home's concrete outer walls (above right). Due to the lot's small size, Cloud9 placed the garage beneath the house (opposite).

(word of mouth). "Throughout the construction process, this building has been called everything," sighs Ruiz-Geli. "A bunker, a ski ramp... Big Brother!"

The finished home is a different story. "Now people just love to have a coffee on the rooftop," says Ruiz-Geli proudly. "They marvel at all the green around, because they don't have that at home. Everybody wants to go *hidroponico*. There's Disney architecture everywhere destroying the countryside, but then you meet someone like Carles who understands what you're doing and trusts you." He pauses and reflects, "It's like being a hacker in the system."

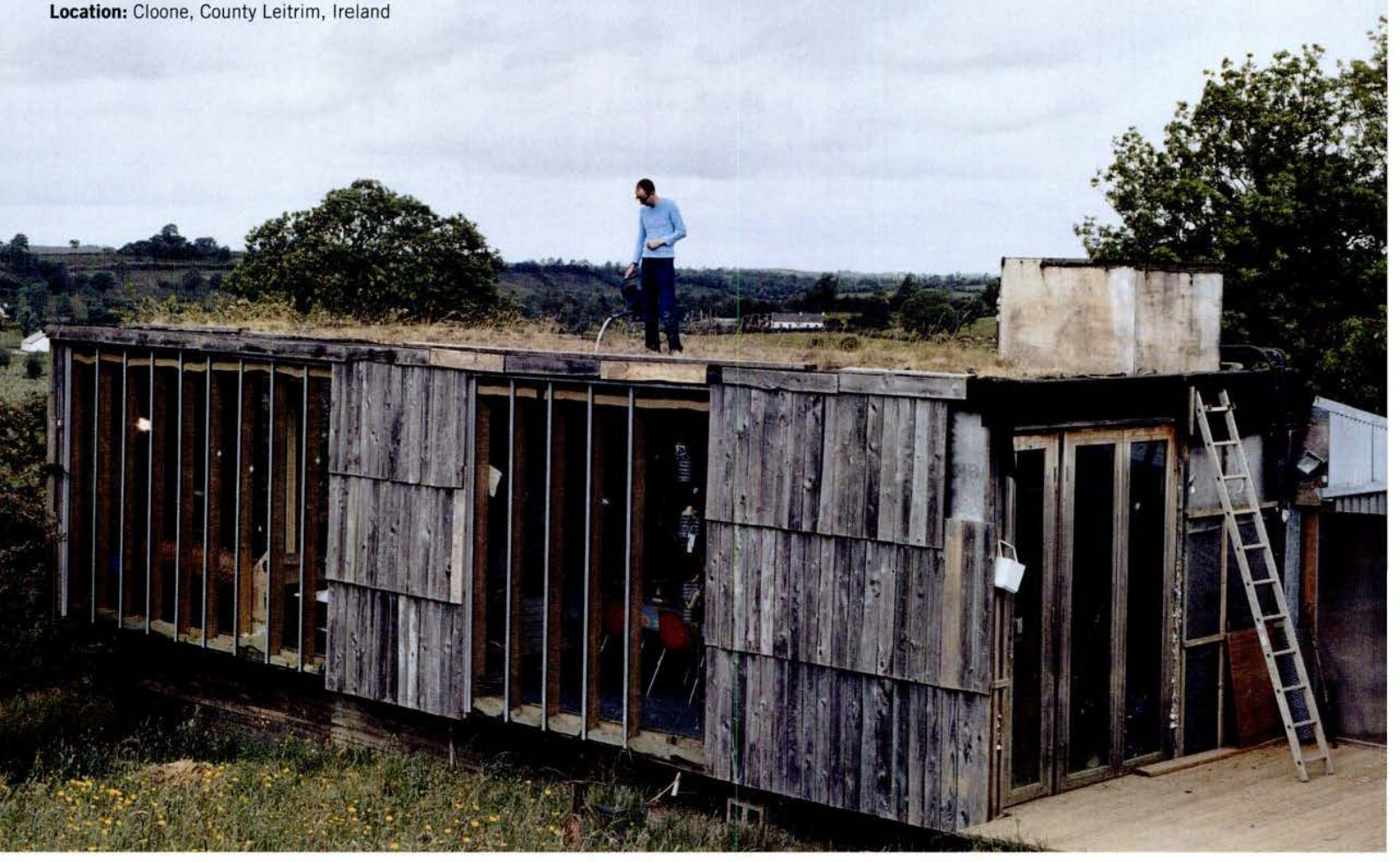
When asked where Cloud9's heady mix of theory, craftsmanship, and technology comes from, Ruiz-Geli responds with an unexpected answer that perfectly illustrates the kind of paradoxical character he is: "Robert Wilson." As in *Einstein on the Beach* Robert Wilson? "Yes. We worked on his stage design for five years. It helped me grasp one of the things that interest me most: the time factor—that ephemeral, performative dimension of architecture."

So this is what fuels Ruiz-Geli's crusade to bring the best of avant-garde architecture to life in Catalonia: a democratic process where the understanding of social norms, bureaucratic rules, and building conditions oscillates with a love of technology, awareness of nature, and pure idealism. This unique harmony gives birth to buildings that are bold and livable and, above all else, fuse effortlessly with their environment. We are only left to wonder if the ice cream–eating tourists will follow. ■

Emerald in the Rough

An architect and artist flee Dublin for the countryside to build a biodegradable house and raise their children.

Project: Handmade Home
Architect: Dominic Stevens
Location: Cloone, County Leitrim, Ireland



Atop a living module that contains a kitchen and eating and living areas, Dominic Stevens waters the sod roof, which, like the rest of the house, is a perennial work in progress.

The village of Cloone sits on a hill in Leitrim, in northwest Ireland. Leitrim, a county of farms and waterways, is best described by John McGahern, a well-known local author, who happened to pass away the day before my visit. He wrote in his memoirs: "The fields between the lakes are small, separated by thick hedges of whitethorn, ash, blackthorn, alder, sally, rowan, wild cherry, green oak, sycamore, and the lanes that link them under the Iron Mountains are narrow, often with high banks. The hedges are the glory of these small fields, especially when the hawthorn foams into streams of blossom each May and June."

In the late 1990s, Irish newspapers reported that County Leitrim had the cheapest property in the European Union. That was when Dominic Stevens, an architect in his 30s, and his wife, Mari-Aymone Djeribi, a Parisian artist and book maker, decided to leave their apartment in Dublin's Merrion Square and move to the country. They purchased a five-acre lot in Cloone for around $12,500, and began to build a house that embodies their vision of sustainability. They went as low-tech as possible, used locally sourced materials, and minimized the building's footprint. Their house all but disappears into the hillside, and will actually vanish if left unattended for a decade or so.

Stevens meets me in the village so I can follow him back home along the nameless roads. Typical of rural Ireland, Cloone centers around a pub and a church. The architect is easy to spot, arriving in a bright turquoise Renault Twingo, and wearing Robert La Roche glasses ▸

In the living room, the vertical timber columns that support the roof are in plain sight. Stevens wants his children to understand how their house stands up. His building method was partly inspired by Walter Segal, a mid-20th-century German architect who spent most of his life in London.

with half-inch-thick black oblong frames that suit his profession as well as his prescription.

On leaving the village, the Twingo stops for a few moments while Stevens chats with an old-timer walking up the road. We arrive at the house, a rustic assemblage of rectangles rising on stilts from a steep hillside, and go into the kitchen, where Djeribi is making pastries for a Saturday farmer's market in a nearby town. Stevens fixes me an espresso and we talk in the living room, which overlooks hedges through floor-to-ceiling windows set between roughly hewn timber studs. I ask Stevens about the old-timer. "He's a neighbor," he explains. "His front door is open eight months of the year."

"My grandfather was a contractor," Stevens adds, making a salient segue. "He's famous in our family for saying, in the '60s, that this newfangled American central heating would never catch on in Ireland, because you don't need it in this climate. It's true, the weather is so mild that you don't need it; on cold days you can light a woodstove or wear a jumper. But now everybody wants a new bungalow with a thermostat. They don't open their doors, and they all have asthma."

Stevens and Djeribi built their house in deliberate opposition to a new status quo that has developed in this country in the last 15 years, due to a booming economy fueled by high-tech industries, the unification of Europe, and rising property values. The resulting transformation is palpable for their generation. The living standard has improved in many ways, encouraging widespread optimism. There is more funding for scientific and artistic ▸

"I remember doing tiling in December with Mari-Aymone heavily pregnant," Stevens recalls. "The grout wasn't setting. Then we realized it wasn't setting because it was minus two degrees in the house."

endeavors. Numerous immigrants from other EU countries, drawn by the job market, are increasing diversity and cultural vibrancy. Gourmet activities like yoga and wine tasting are becoming commonplace.

But the financial boom offers plenty to lament, especially from an architect's standpoint. Suburban sprawl is spreading like a plague around cities, most of all Dublin, and engulfing the countryside. It's the kind Americans know well, replete with cookie-cutter houses, dependency on cars, trips to the mall, and unbearable commuter traffic. All this underscores a sense that community spirit, which the Irish hold dear, is giving way to the "every man for himself" mentality typically associated with capitalism.

To get away from all that—and have enough space to raise their two children, Ezekiel and Nour, now aged six and four—Stevens and Djeribi went to Cloone. They built their house themselves, erecting two timber-frame boxes during one summer, and a straw-bale addition later. Stevens designed the construction method, inspired by self-build movements in England and the United States from the 1970s. It's a modular system in which boxes can be added and subtracted to meet changing space requirements. So far, it has cost them $75,000, including the land.

"We didn't want to be saddled with a large mortgage," Stevens says. "Irish people nowadays tend to buy expensive houses that drive both members of a couple to work full-time to pay off the loan, while the children need childcare. Through inflating house prices, presto—the

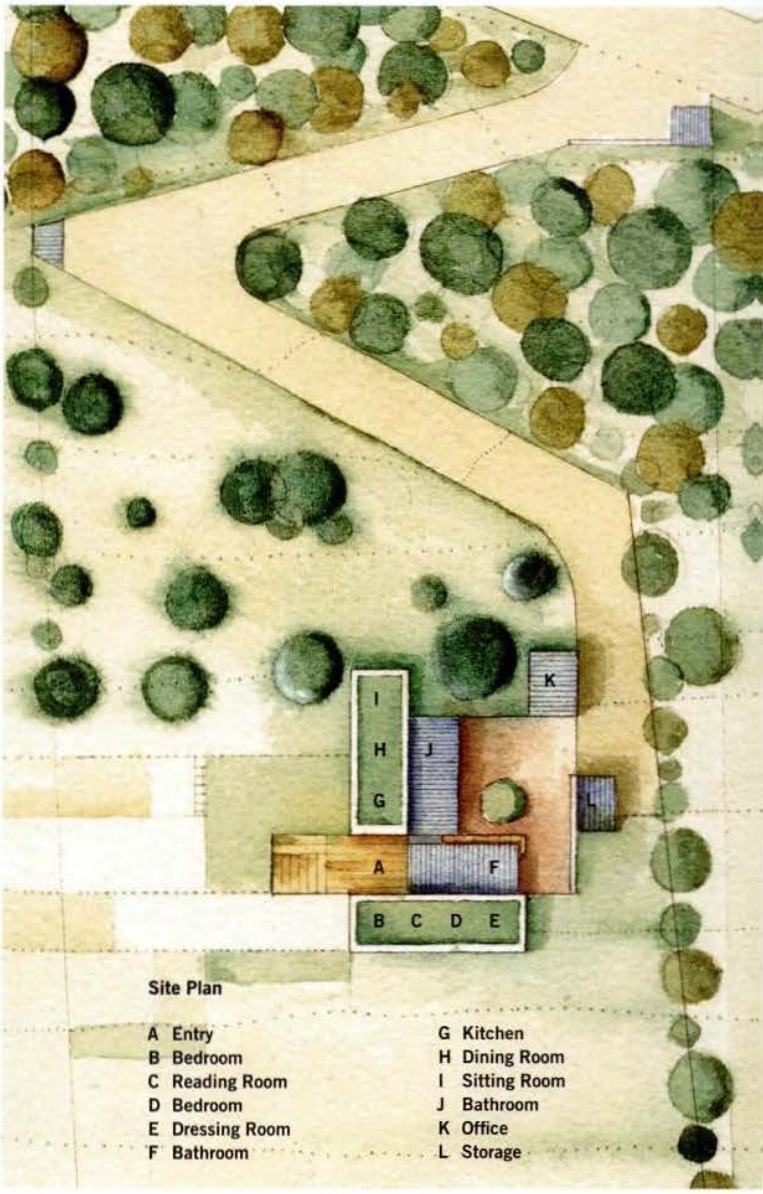
government doubled the GNP, because there's twice as many people working. So owning a house becomes the driving force behind economic growth or screwing up people's lives—whichever way you want to put it. It's a chain reaction that keeps people working hard and not thinking very much."

Djeribi and Stevens both work in outbuildings on their property. Stevens's architectural practice resides in a refrigerated transport container with a porthole window. The well-insulated box is parked up the hill from the main buildings, past the couple's ducks, geese, and goats, who graze between berry bushes.

"Our house was built in bits," Stevens explains. "At no particular point did we start, finish, and move in. It's not the house as a product, it's more the house as a process. Over the life cycle of our family growing, it can constantly adapt to the needs of different ages of children. The house is amorphous as opposed to static."

Indeed, the house began as a tent, where they lived while building the wood frame. They still had their apartment and jobs in Dublin, and Djeribi was pregnant, but they came out to Cloone four days a week and took advantage of long summer daylight hours. Stevens hired some of his architecture students at University College Dublin to help with labor. The first two boxes—for living and sleeping—were enclosed by fall. "It was a good summer, not a lot of rain," Stevens recalls. "People in the village were instinctively helpful—lending tractors, equipment, hands. It's a teamwork mentality that goes back centuries in the Irish countryside." ▸

Djeribi, an enthusiastic epicure, also raises farm animals on the property—last spring there were goats, ducks, and noisy geese. Though humble, their kitchen (opposite) contains state-of-the-art cooking equipment, including a Presso hand-operated espresso maker. Stevens's office (above) is inside a refrigerated shipping container, which he bought used for about $1,300.



Site Plan

A Entry
B Bedroom
C Reading Room
D Bedroom
E Dressing Room
F Bathroom
G Kitchen
H Dining Room
I Sitting Room
J Bathroom
K Office
L Storage

Stevens estimates that the house would disintegrate in ten years' time, should they stop maintaining it. It's built from biodegradable materials, and the exterior cladding—inexpensive spruce and a sod roof—already appears on the way out. Stevens plans to replace it this summer. "It's a week's work," he says cheerfully. "We'll use the spruce as firewood and maybe put on something more durable, like cedar. I like the idea that the building can change its appearance radically. It's just a frame you can click different panels onto."

In Ireland, where the English seized land for centuries, owning a home to pass on to your children is a cultural obsession, almost as necessary as complaining about the weather. Stevens plans a different legacy for Ezekiel and Nour. "Nowadays we rely on so many inventions that people don't know how to fix. Houses have become another one of those things, where people are always calling in experts for repairs. If our children grow up in a house that's constantly being built, we're giving them the knowledge to go and build themselves."

The house's spare materials—raw timber, panel board, and glass—form a neutral frame for the hospitable green land outside, and cheerful daily clutter inside: books, toys, good food cooking in the kitchen. Minimal architecture surrounds this family, while their practical choices offer maximum enjoyment of life. I wonder aloud how such socially and artistically minded people could live so remotely, and Stevens tells me that they are ten miles from a hundred-mile train ride to Dublin. This is rural living at its best. ■

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Kitchen storage made simple with a handmade grid of shelves; an aerial view in watercolor; IKEA chairs for sitting by the woodstove; Djeribi's studio. This page: A view from downhill shows how the architect's box system can accommodate a steep building site.

Xeros Effect

Matthew Trzebiatowski matched an extreme aesthetic to an extreme climate, but his sustainable moves took a gentler approach.

Project: Xeros
Architect: Blank Studio
Location: Phoenix, AZ

The woven wire steel mesh used to cloak Xeros's east façade stands in stark contrast to Phoenix's blue sky and the palo brea planted along the street.

If an attorney who represents himself has a fool for a client, as the expression goes, what of an architect?

Matthew Trzebiatowski didn't know the answer, but he was aware of some of the potential pitfalls and benefits when he opted to pursue this path, working in partnership with his wife, Lisa, to construct their new home/office, which they named Xeros. The recently completed three-story steel, glass, concrete, and wire mesh structure abuts the North Mountain Preserve in the edgy Phoenix neighborhood of Sunnyslope. Matthew, a self-described corn-fed, Midwest farmboy of 33, chose to head west to Phoenix to jump-start his career after studying architecture at the University of Wisconsin. "It's still the open West," Matthew says of Arizona. "If I had stayed home, I'd have spent half my career just doing interiors—I would never have had the chance to do a house so early on."

Throwing himself fully into the project, Matthew had a surfeit of ideas. "The architect as his own client can be one of the greatest blessings," Matthew says, "or one of the most complex problems. You have every idea that you want to get out, but no one to edit you. And it's not only your home, but your calling card." He managed to overcome the glut of ideas through the input of his wife, who worked as a clinical director at a mental-health hospital before joining her husband as managing partner of their firm, Blank Studio. "Some of the most brilliant editing," he says, "was done by my wife."

Ultimately, the Trzebiatowskis came up with several goals they hoped to accomplish with their new ▸

The Trzebiatowskis' bathroom retains the spirit of Arizona heat with its shocking magenta ceilings, floors, and walls. The vanity is anything but—opting for art instead of a mounted mirror—and is made from sanded and sealed oriented strand board, a waste material typically used in framing.

house, not to mention principles to abide by. "The name 'Xeros,'" Matthew says of the Greek word for dry, "is about being cognizant of where we're building. Phoenix is a hot, dry place, and you try to remind yourself of that every time you make a decision."

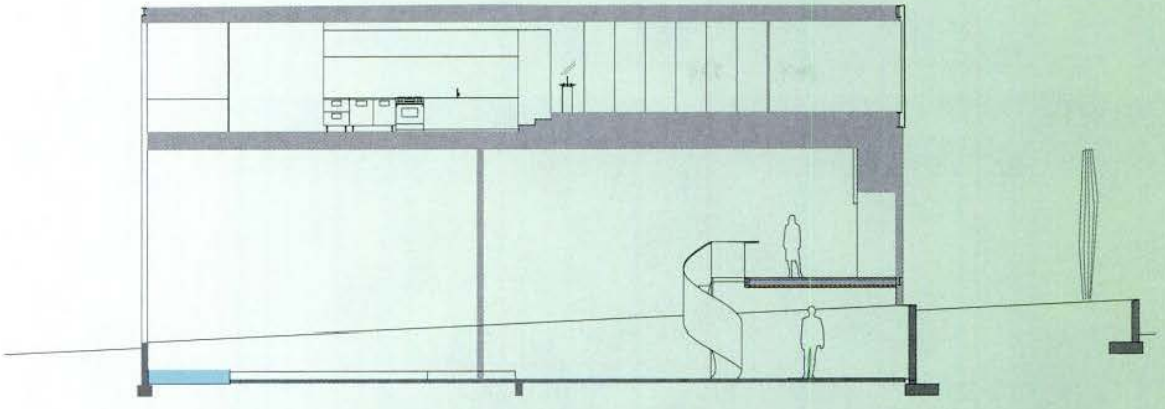
But environmental concern didn't completely drive the design. "Many more things could have been done, and should be done," Matthew admits. "We're not off the grid, and we could have used things like solar power and composting toilets. And we don't have thoroughly insulated glass."

But by following a few basic principles of sustainability and urbanism, the Trzebiatowskis achieved some of their goals. And they believe much of what they did can be replicated by others through simple design decisions.

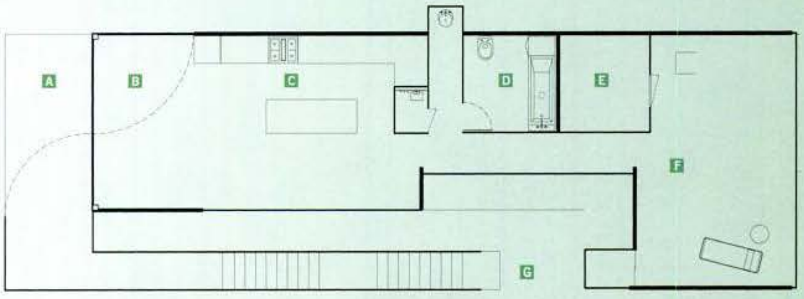
"Work with the existing infrastructure," Matthew says. "Don't keep going outward and gobbling up more real estate—go into the city, go into the texture that's already there. If you can, go in and rehab an existing residence."

Indeed, the choice of neighborhood can have a greater impact than any other decision in the process, Matthew believes. "We feel the most important thing we did was to go into a place like Sunnyslope that had not only economic depression but also some social questionability. It needed a second life. A residence like Xeros can turn that around," Matthew claims. "We can recycle a neighborhood as well as materials."

While that's not always possible, homeowners and potential buyers can definitely take home a few lessons ▸

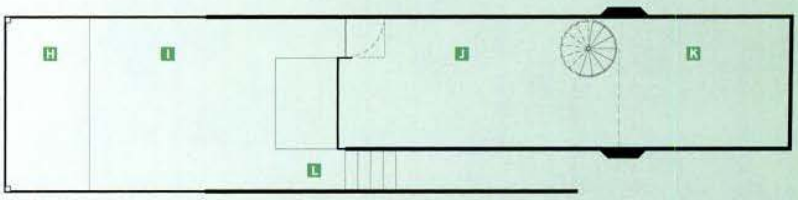


Trzebiatowski Residence
Section



Upper-Floor Plan

A Entry Balcony
B Sitting Area
C Kitchen / Dining
D Master Bathroom
E Closet
F Sleeping / Media
G Residence Entry Stair



Lower-Floor Plan

H Reflecting Pool
I Studio Entry Courtyard
J Studio
K Studio / Mezzanine Level Above
L Stairs to Studio Courtyard

from the Trzebiatowskis that will affect not only their own residences but also the cities in which they reside—and perhaps even the planet at large.

For instance, hot, sunny locations require substantial shade, and simple efforts like well-placed trees can provide that. "If you can use organic material," Matthew says, "that's always the most pleasant way, both psychologically and in reality." Even in cooler climates, vegetation can help, but proper selection is essential. "Plant deciduous trees: In the summer, they're in full foliage and give the shade you need; in winter, they drop those and you get the heat energy you need at that time."

Homes built on tight lots may not allow the addition of new trees, but other solutions are available. "You can add an exterior screen effect," Matthew offers. "People do this in different ways, including something as basic as installing awnings."

The Trzebiatowskis know about this firsthand, as Xeros sits on a narrow footprint—just 12 feet wide for most of the structure. The building's severe lines catch the eye, but it's the rusting steel frame and exterior curtains of metal mesh that really demand attention. At Xeros, the mesh curtain is not simply an overhanging shade. "It's truly a veil," Matthew says. "There's so much intensity of the outdoor amount of lumens and lights, but when you're inside it completely evaporates, disappears. The amount of glazing we have in this space would be really overpowered if we didn't have it."

If the live/work space sounds small, it feels wildly spacious to its occupants, who lived in the site's original ▸

The steel mesh veil (opposite) casts a soft light into the lower-level courtyard, where black stone and Mexican river stone come up against a three-eighth-inch minus pea gravel.

Le Corbusier's LC2 chair is set alongside Pablo Pardo's Elise lamp (left). The hallway (above) leading to the sparsely furnished bedroom opens to a wall of glass, where the light reflects off the dark NAP board floors and walls. The lighter walls are thin-coat gypsum plaster with a beeswax coating.
p.262

20-by-20-foot uninsulated shoe-box house for a year and a half before beginning construction. Blank Studio occupies the ground floor and a mezzanine level, the latter of which is complete with shower and espresso machine; a spiral staircase crafted from a single piece of steel connects those two levels. The compact residential section, reached by climbing an exposed steel staircase, sits above.

Both Matthew and Lisa express delight with Xeros. "We call it sensual minimalism," Matthew says of their home's style. "We're definitely modernists and minimalists at heart when it comes to design."

While not everyone can build their own house, Matthew insists that anyone—architect or not—can apply the couple's ideas in order to take the right step toward a sustainable future. For instance, it may seem obvious, but mindful placement of windows can have a substantial impact on a home and its power needs. Matthew and Lisa chose to exclude major windows on the west side of their home because that's the side that takes the brunt of the sun every day. "All these spec houses going up [put windows everywhere no matter what]," Matthew muses. "Just don't put a window on those surfaces [that get sun all day]. Simple off-the-shelf design decisions like that can really affect energy needs."

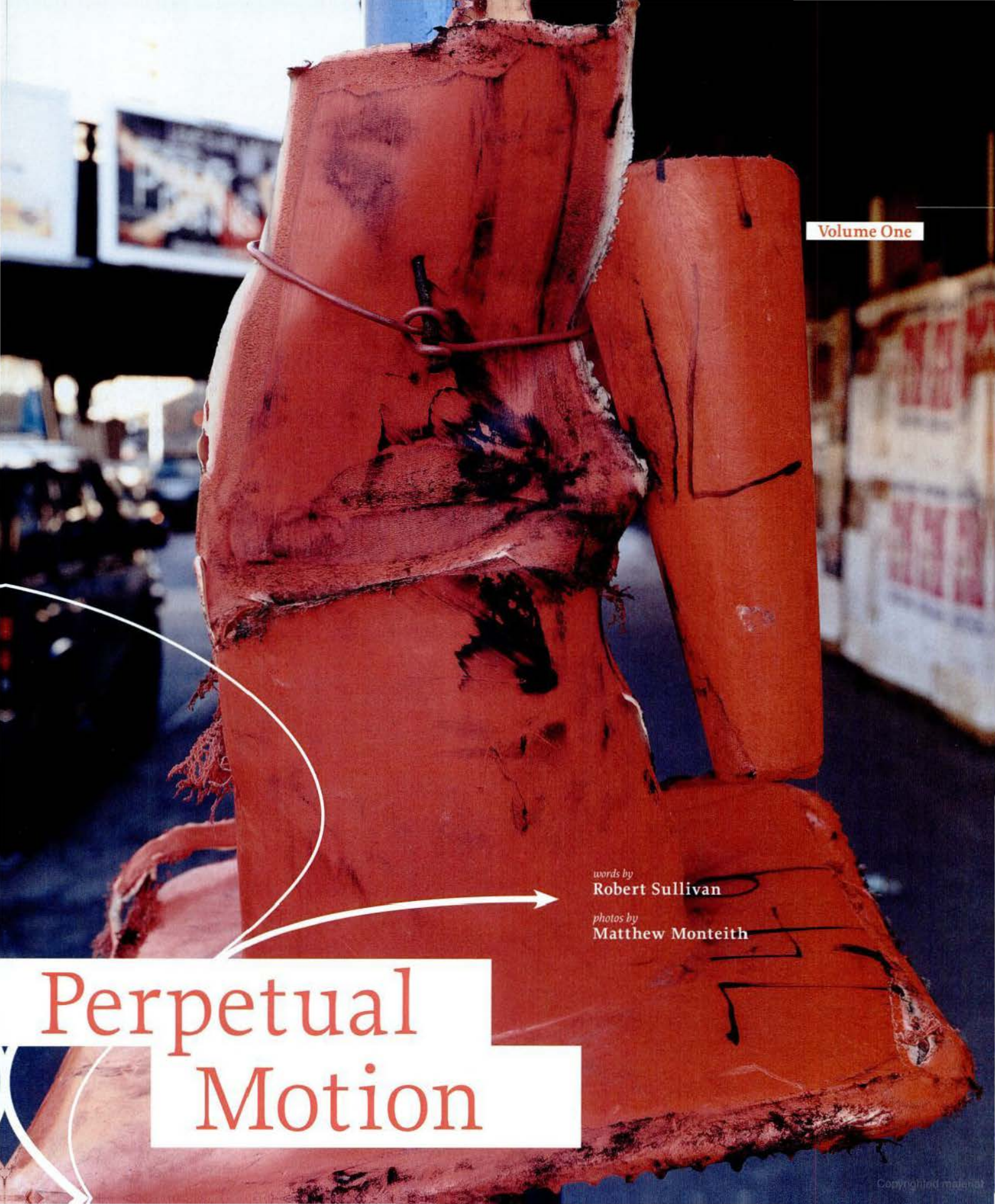
The Trzebiatowskis will no doubt outgrow the compact Xeros house, so Matthew may then design and build a new home for himself and his family. If that means having a fool for a client once again, he will at the very least be a wiser fool—and one with new concepts ripe for experimentation. ■

Mobility has always been at the crux of where and how we live. Our cities, towns, suburbs—even our houses—are largely the way they are because of transportation's demands on the environment. Given Dwell's interest in looking at domestic life through the lens of design, it seems fitting that we should explore the past, present, and future of transportation in the United States—a country whose very existence and evolving fabric is based on its citizens' innate desire to keep on moving.

To tackle such a mammoth undertaking, we enlisted the help of intrepid adventurer and award-winning author Robert Sullivan. Amicably accepting the assignment, Sullivan agreed that the field research should be conducted in four parts—East, Midwest, West, and Southwest.

With the generous support of Saturn, who shares our mobile fascination, we're pleased to present Sullivan's travels as a four-part series appearing in four consecutive issues of Dwell (September, October, November, and December/January).

See you down the road...



Volume One

words by
Robert Sullivan

photos by
Matthew Monteith

Perpetual Motion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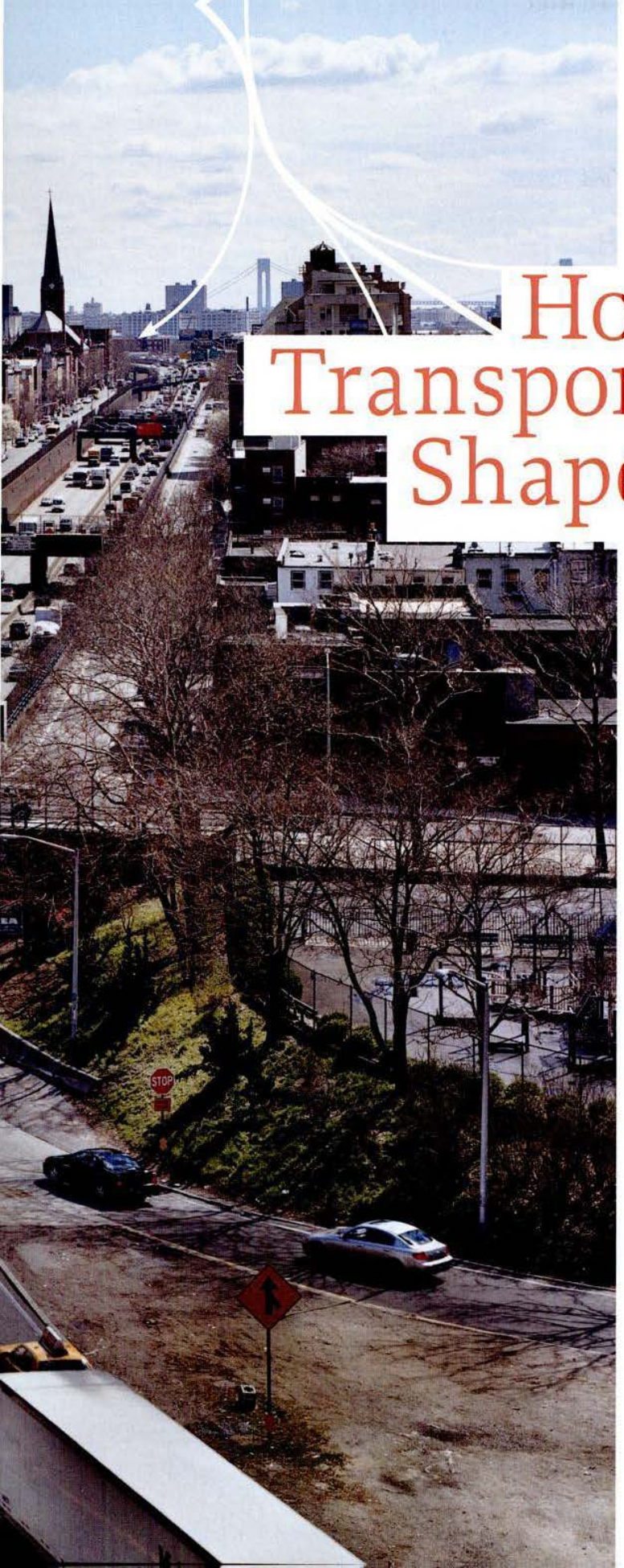


Brooklyn-Queens Expressway

How Transportation Shapes America

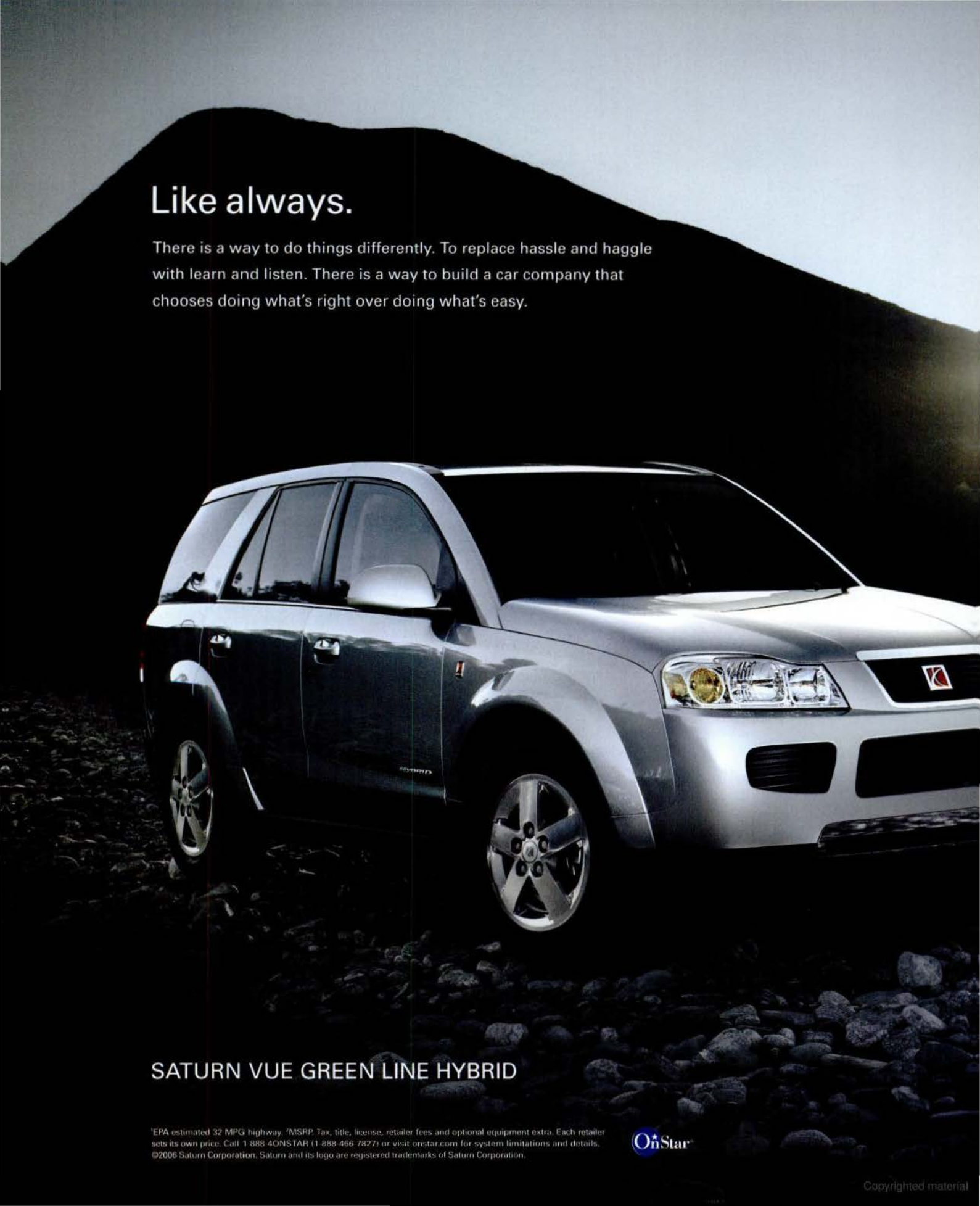
What does the interstate have to do with your house or apartment and the food in your fridge? What does the widened state highway down the block have to do with the shape of your town or city? What does the automobile have to do with where kids hang out on the weekend? Why are bus routes a reflection of the quality of social justice? It is these and other questions I have been thinking about while traveling the country for the past few months, checking out cities and towns and seeing how people get around. And I don't want to get ahead of myself, but you should know right off that even though the word "transportation" might make your head fall toward to the pillow or make you roll your tired-from-commuting eyes, there's nothing that could be more elemental to the state of your community (or to the lack thereof). The roads—and the routes and the paths, the trails and the rights-of-way—take us away and they bring us home. They make us who we are and they make the places where we live.

So on this, my very first excursion, I am off into the past, kind of—to think about where we have been, as corny as it sounds. And then to come back, to return home, in this case to the city, in my case New York. In the morning, I climb into the family station wagon, and in a time-machine kind of way, I set out into the east, to New England's (and America's) oldest highways. For help in road explication, my destination on this roads-for-roads'-sake day is a little town in Connecticut—Guilford, the home of Dolores Hayden, a professor of architecture and American studies at Yale, and the author of such books as *Redesigning the American Dream* and *Building Suburbia.* She is a kind of naturalist of modern road-inspired building, especially with her latest book, *A Field Guide to Sprawl.* "Words such as city, suburb, and countryside no longer capture the reality of real estate development in the United States," she writes. Thus, she has given us a list of new ones: logo building, sitcom suburb, zoomburb. ►

New Rochelle, New York

As I set out—in a very tame Kerouacian kind of way—to meet this New England–based diviner of meaning in the interstate existence, I am on a side street in New York City, a street run with row houses, delis, little stores, and restaurants, a street laid out for streetcars and horses, and taken over by the auto. Then on Atlantic Avenue, I touch the border of Brooklyn Heights, the first commuter development in New York City, an 1820s precursor of the suburb—and then in a few blocks I head onto an interstate highway, I-278, a.k.a. the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, a.k.a. the BQE. My soundtrack is the news radio station, blaring the traffic report that is the traffic report of all America, the car unifying us as rush-hour beings: "jammed... backed up... starting to move... bumper to bumper." I drive north, toward the Bronx, to the beginning of what in the mind of many road historians is the first modern roadway, the road that led to the interstate—the Bronx River Parkway.

The Bronx River: How not-at-all bucolic it must sound to the non–New Yorkers of America today, mostly because of the word "Bronx," a word that is derived from the name Bronck, as in Jonas Bronck, who arrived in the 17th century, and which for many years has been a synonym for urban decay and blight, in many ways because of the interstate highway system. Rest assured that when the Bronx River Parkway was begun, in 1907, it was a bucolic experience, a kind of fancy hike without any hiking. The parkway—like the parkways that would subsequently be built all around the Eastern Seaboard and then in the west—was exactly that: a way through a ►



Merritt Parkway, Connecticut

park, a trip along the banks of the Bronx River, an outing.

The parkway still feels bucolic, if small for a modern car. After a few minutes, I pull off to cut through a suburb, the likes of which are all over the outskirts of cities in America: see Lakewood near Cleveland, or Newton in Boston, the older suburbs that set up along the first train lines out of an old downtown. The Hutchinson Parkway, the next place I am not stopping, was built wider than the Bronx River Parkway, since roads began to kill thousands of people in the 1930s. It is almost a freeway, for the '30s were also the time of the first freeways, as in free to not stop. The "free" replaced the "park" in terminology and in fact.

As I cross the border into Connecticut, the Hutchinson becomes the Merritt Parkway. The Merritt was built partly to relieve the traffic on Route 1, the old road from Boston to Philadelphia—the oldest road, actually, officially so designated in 1673, when the main mode of travel, aside from foot, was horse. But the Merritt was also built to encourage real estate development: When the area's property values were faltering, developers believed highways were the answer to their prayers. I stop at a little stone house rest stop befitting a highway that is a National Register of Historic Places; buy coffee from Africa via Vermont; cruise north for a few miles along the Merritt—the banked curves! the beautiful trees! the joy of cruising! the intoxicating and addictive rush!—and then cut through Westport, Connecticut, the sometime-home of Martha Stewart, to reach I-95. I-95 is so not Martha Stewart. I-95 is the longest north-to-south

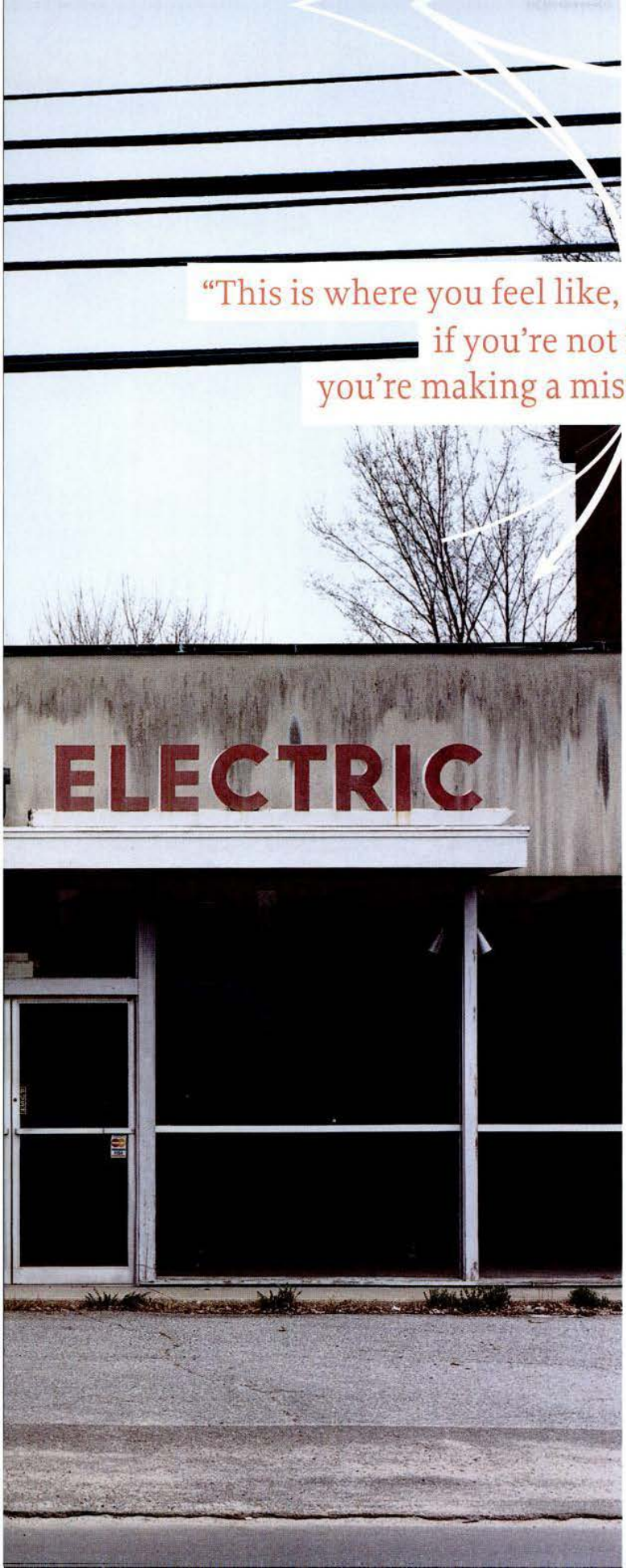
McDonald's, I-95, Connecticut

interstate—1,927 miles long, passing from Maine to Florida—and one of the most heavily traveled roads in America. Its rest stops, fast-food places with bathrooms larger than those in most public schools, are the loneliest places in the world.

"Well, I don't know how you felt driving up I-95," says Dolores Hayden, just after she pulls up to the Guilford Green, "but I often feel just so dreadfully sad." She is happy-seeming now, setting out on the green. But then the green is a jewel, a mood-lifting eight-acre plot of public lawn that dates from the town's founding in 1639. The first Guilfordians, a group of Puritans from England, grazed cattle communally and lived in thatched-roofed houses along the green, a nearly medieval America. Today, to live in Guilford is mostly to commute.

But the green, crisscrossed with paths and dotted with monuments, still works, Hayden points out. High-school graduations are held on the green, and in the fall there is an agricultural fair and a parade of farmers and trades, an actual medieval remnant. "That's what makes the green seem very important in people's lives," she says. "In other towns they'd take a piece to widen an intersection. They'd take a piece to do something else. Here they don't." In the very center of the green, you can look past Ben Franklin's Post Road, past houses from nearly every decade and a strip mall that was added in the '90s, and you can see the concrete overpass of the interstate, with traffic racing by obliviously. "Sometimes when the wind is just right you can hear it," Hayden says of I-95, and she sets off on a little walk, a mile or so long, to see what ►


NOTICE
INTENT TO
DEMOLISH



"This is where you feel like, if you're not in your car, you're making a mistake."

roads have done and are still doing. It's a walk to where you can't walk anymore.

We turn on Fair Street, an original street, which is fair. In sight: an 18th-century house with a 19th-century addition and a factory from the 1800s, when labor was close to consumption, when it was close to the labor force, distances that are today crossed by highways and container ships. "It's condos now," Hayden says, "and I think [the conversion] worked pretty well." On Fair Street, the older the house, the closer it is to the road. Once, people wanted to be near the road.

This is a neighborhood that Hayden has photographed from the sky; aerial photography illustrates the pressure the highway puts on a town. "One of the better shots is looking at the size of this strip mall versus the size of these houses. The town has not been as aggressive as I would like in terms of giving people support for structures in the historic district," she says.

You can hear the suddenly speedy traffic at the corner, and see it on the old Post Road, only two lanes but fast, a race. "Okay," she says, "now here's where we get to the point where it starts to come apart. This is where you feel like, if you're not in your car, you're making a mistake."

Here at Route 1 and Fair Street, Fair Street is no longer so fair. On the side marked "historic" is the 17th-century home of Thomas Cooke, still used, the plaque by the door noting that he arrived in 1639 by ship. Kitty-corner is a Sunoco and a Deli Unlimited, then an old school being condoized, then Tommy's Tanning in the strip mall. "You see, it's not like everything is going to disappear in one night," Hayden says. "It tends to just wear away at old neighborhoods. The cars and the trucks invade serenity and change its scale. It's relentless pressure. This is not an edge to be treated lightly," she says. "I-95, once you come off it, it bleeds into the town."

Walking no longer a good idea, we get in Hayden's car and drive down Route 1, to the land where no one walks, ▸

Guilford, Connecticut

the land that looks like everywhere, the mood changing. We drive into another strip mall, to see the expanding supermarket alongside a Dunkin' Donuts and various chains. Hayden surveys, sadness creeping into her voice, into her professorial tone. Her car's blinker is blinking and her head is shaking as she opines about the year the federal government changed the tax code to encourage edge-of-town development and the year that the edge-of-town-development-feeding interstate program was begun, 1954 and 1956, respectively—arcane-seeming dates that made monumental changes to the American landscape. "It [was a] direct response to feeling that the production of suburban housing might be slowing down a little bit," she says. "And instead of saying, Okay, let's do more public housing, let's do more inner-city preservation, they pumped money straight to the greenfield construction of supermarkets, fast-food places, chain hotels. So that's the worst possible choice in terms of obsolescence, and in terms of moving economic activity out to beyond where the tract houses are and letting everything else go, and the roads just enhance it. That's what was subsidized. I mean, out of all the money that could have been spent on community planning and decent architecture—it went to bogus, banal, cheap architecture."

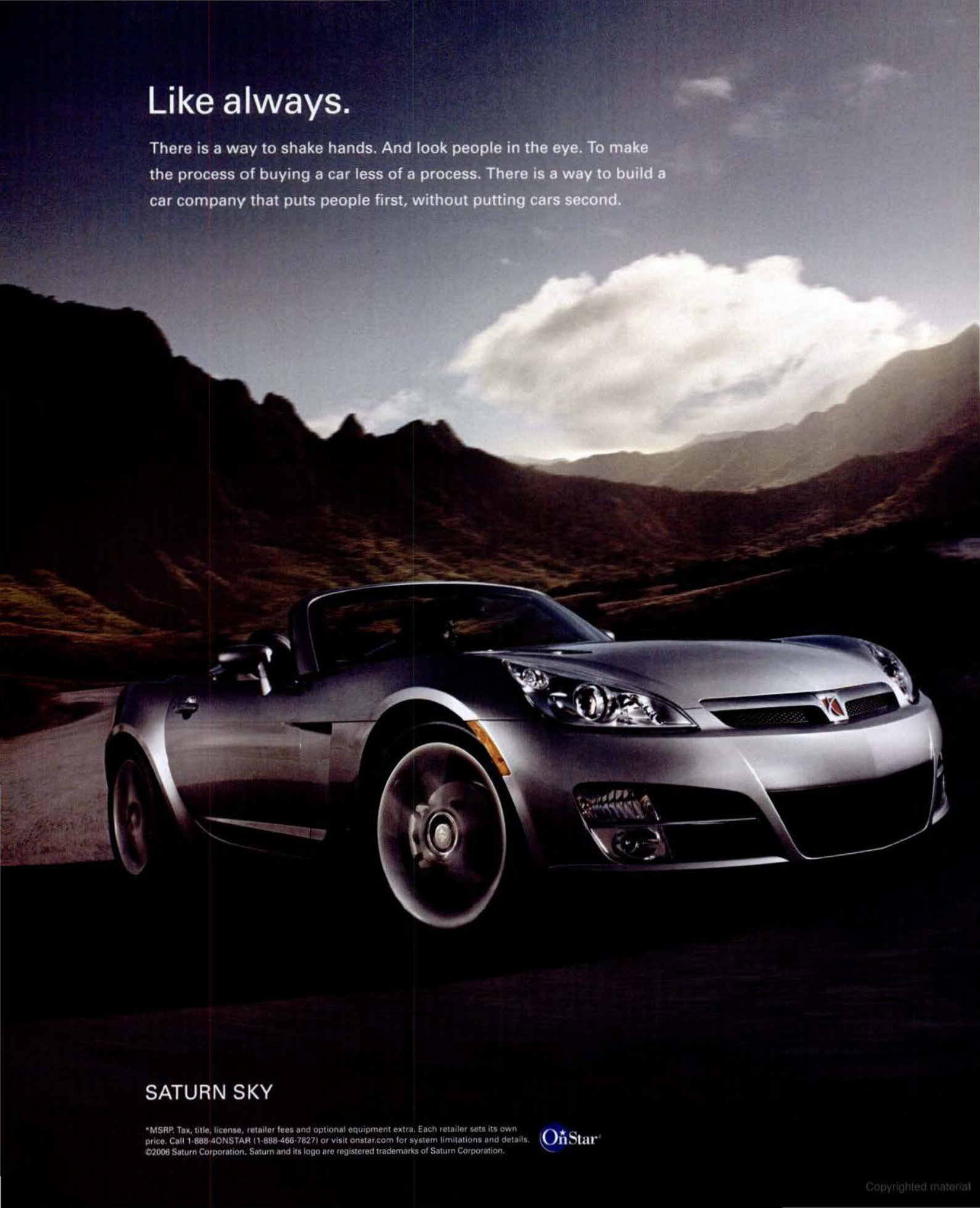
"Yes," she says, using the words that fill her *Field Guide*, "the big-box, category-killer, strip-mall office-park stuff just bears down on everything. Once a community that has been around for 300 years has been ripped apart, it's pretty fragile," she continues. "It's gone. You see other towns that are gone, and you see how fragile they can be.

Metro North Station, Connecticut

A few more gas stations and big-box stores, the scale is gone and there's nothing left to hold onto, no sense of place—and you can see towns like that all over."

From Connecticut, or anywhere in New England—or anywhere in the U.S., for that matter—there are a couple of highways to choose from if you are returning (literally or metaphorically) back to New York City, back to the present. You can take the FDR Drive, which cruises down the east side of Manhattan—a multilaned expressway that isn't always express, due to the number of cars. Or you can take the West Side Highway. The West Side Highway was supposed to be an interstate; in plans it was I-478 and referred to as Westway, but then in the '80s, when the tide was turning against new interstates and people were protesting what interstates had already done, it was killed. After decades of squabbling, the West Side Highway was made into a different kind of highway—a Lessway, as it is sometimes called. And it is near the corner of the West Side Highway and Gansevoort Street that I meet Andy Wiley-Schwartz, vice president for transportation of Project for Public Places, who is out of the car and who will cross the West Side Highway on foot, and on purpose. "I have some nice things to say about that highway," he told me on the phone a day before. When I meet him downtown, he stands in the stream of Chelsea pedestrians and is, as a result, cheery.

In fact, I meet him a block away from the highway, at the intersection of Gansevoort and Ninth Avenue, which happens to intersect as well with Little West ▸



"People just don't get that if you build faster roads and you build more parking, there will be faster roads and more parking."

Chinatown, New York City

12th Street, in a cobblestone square, an accidental piazza that has Wiley-Schwartz pretty revved up—he is an evangelist of the foot. "Isn't this great?" he says. He's talking about the place, the street, the intersection. "Watch this," he continues. "The sidewalk is here but the desire line is there." "Desire line" is Wiley-Schwartz's term for the way people really want to walk, despite what traffic engineers suggest. He points from the far corner and draws an imaginary line across the cobblestones at the end of Ninth Avenue, from the French restaurant toward the haute-cool Hotel Gansevoort.

Wiley-Schwartz is an intellectual descendant of William H. Whyte, a writer and researcher who, in the late '60s, began to study the way people used streets and public places. Whyte analyzed jaywalking, for instance, and the way people greeted each other on the streets, the so-called schmooze—work with charts and time-lapse photography that eventually led to his book *City: Rediscovering the Center*. "What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people," Whyte wrote. Today, the Project for Public Spaces brings Whyte's tools and thinking to cities around the country: to consider parking in Buffalo (where more than half of downtown space had been allocated for parking lots and garages); to the rethinking and reformulation of El Camino Real in San Mateo, California; and to Bryant Park, once a drug dealer's paradise in Midtown Manhattan, now a lunchtime pedestrian's oasis. "Organization has been made by man; it can be changed by man," Whyte said.

"So the sidewalk should be out here," where he's

Staten Island Ferry, New York City

walking, explains Wiley-Schwartz. At that, a woman walks from the south, walks the same exact way. "You know, you don't have to elevate the automobile," he says. "If you can just get [drivers] to come through here on your terms, then they'll make eye contact with all the pedestrians and everything will be much safer." Wiley-Schwartz then makes a point that is the opposite of what the first interstate highway builders had in mind. "The street needs to be designed for all users," he says. "A street is a public space."

Wiley-Schwartz comes prepared in cap and windbreaker, toting a biography of famed historian and urban theorist Lewis Mumford, which he has been reading on the subway. And as we stand at the corner of Horatio Street and the West Side Highway, cars are rushing past at 50 miles an hour. "Right here, it doesn't feel like it," Wiley-Schwartz says, over the wind, "but I think this is major progress."

The traffic light changes. He crosses. Three lanes, landscaping, three lanes, another landscaped berm, then a bike trail, a pedestrian trail, a ribbon of parks, and the water. "Of course, it takes a big draw to get people across the highway," he continues, "and that's this park." We face the Hudson River.

For the record, Wiley-Schwartz is not anti-car. He drives. But he likes the West Side Highway for the way it tempts drivers with non-car-related activity. "You have to create an experience for drivers as well, where they understand their part of the bargain," he says. "People make decisions about mode. Transportation designers ▸

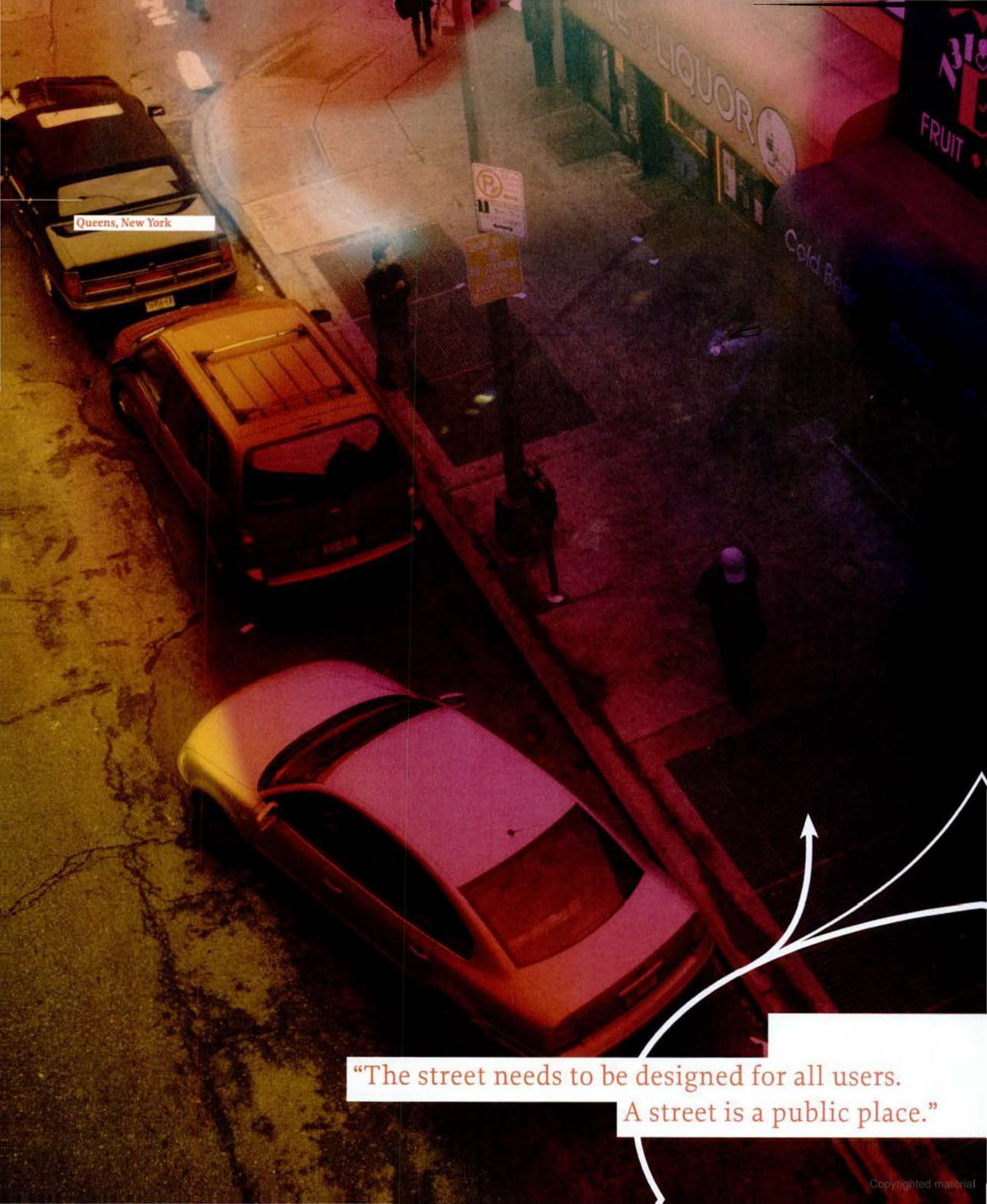
Charles Street, New York City

think that people are always going to choose their cars. People aren't given choices. But the thing is, I don't always drive the shortest way."

We walk a few blocks south, the Hudson River sparkling on our right, the roadway moving on our left. While critics insist that the West Side Highway will have to be rebuilt to accommodate future traffic needs, Wiley-Schwartz argues that traffic needs are created by the creation of roads and parking. In his Brooklyn neighborhood he visits neighborhood groups who think that the way to solve parking problems is to add parking—this in what he calls "the most walkable city in the world." "People just don't get that if you build faster roads and you build more parking, there will be faster roads and more parking," he says.

We cross the highway, in front of the recently built Richard Meier glass towers on Charles Street. The architecture of the road is banal box stores; the architecture of a park full of pedestrians is beautiful buildings. "Without the park, these buildings would not be here," Wiley-Schwartz says. From Meier's own description: "The relative narrowness of the Charles Street site dictates a more contained approach."

Then we head to Wiley-Schwartz's office, on Broadway, part of that same pre-I-95 Route 1 that Ben Franklin ran to Connecticut. We cross the Village on Bleecker, businesses thriving in the run of people and slow-moving cars. And then, after another block, and then a left and a right, as the blocks and the streets continue to shrink and nearly hug the walker—i.e., me—we come into the opening at the end of Fifth Avenue, which is Washington Square Park. Wiley-Schwartz stops, points, and I realize my trip into the history of roads is over. "You know, there used to be a street right there," he says. He is pointing to a wide park entry, to what is now a way to walk, the ghost of the dead street bookended by old fountains. "It went away and the world didn't stop," he says. ■



Queens, New York

"The street needs to be designed for all users.
A street is a public place."

To be continued...

From the tree-lined streets of the Tri-State area, Robert Sullivan jets to the Midwest to ride the rails in Chicago, the turnpikes in Grand Rapids, and, surprisingly, his bike in Detroit. All across the flat plains he discovers that everyone—hardened urbanites, suburban settlers, townies—possesses an unbridled enthusiasm for futuristic transportation.

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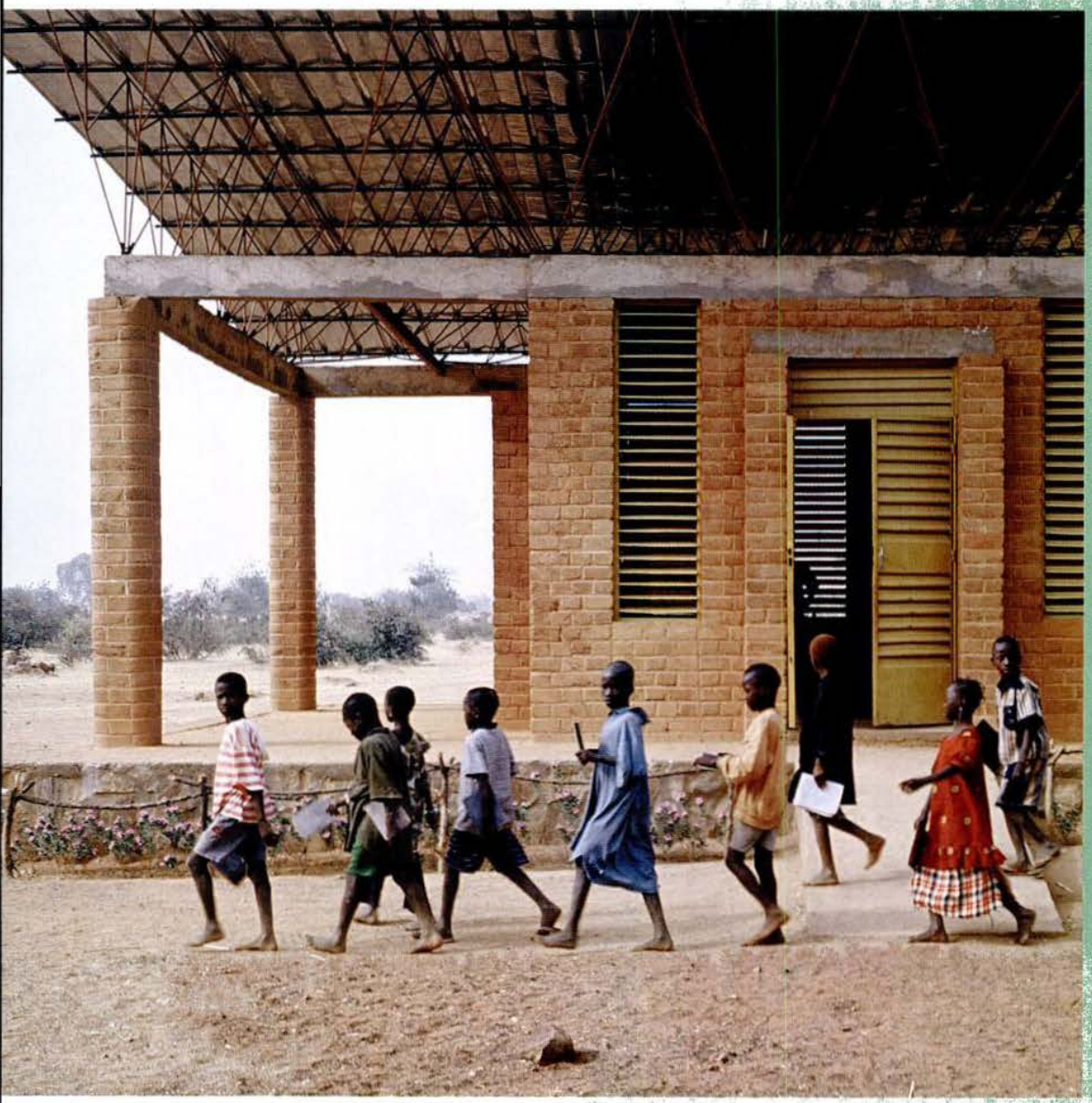

Design Like You Give a Damn

Architecture for Humanity's new book features projects of designers around the world, like Diébédo Francis Kéré's Gando Primary School (above), who are working to show that it is not just how we build but what we build that truly matters.

PHOTO COURTESY DIÉBÉDO FRANCIS KÉRÉ / AGA KHAN FOUNDATION

The greatest humanitarian challenge we face today is providing shelter. Currently one in seven people lives in a slum or refugee camp, and more than three billion people—nearly half the world's population—do not have access to clean water or adequate sanitation. The physical design of our homes, neighborhoods, and communities shapes every aspect of our lives. Yet all too often architects are desperately needed in the places where they are least affordable.

For decades architects have been called upon to provide solutions to the world's shelter crises. However, as designers embraced the idealism of the machine age, the increasingly technology-driven, often utopian ideas they proposed carried little resonance for aid workers and others wrestling with the day-to-day realities of providing a roof, clean water, and sanitation to families in need. Over time, the world of relief and development became divorced from the world of architecture and design. What architects considered a design challenge, aid workers considered an issue of planning and policy.

This disconnect has led to a crisis of faith: What role should design play in providing basic shelter? How can architects best address the needs of the displaced and disenfranchised? And, at the heart of these questions: Should design be considered a luxury or a necessity? This issue plagues not just architects but also planners, policy makers, and aid organizations struggling to balance the logistics of providing shelter with the human longing for a place to call home.

Since 2000, Architecture for Humanity has been working to create opportunities for designers to get involved and to bring their services to those in need. The projects in our new book, *Design Like You Give a Damn*, represent just a sampling of their efforts. ▸

Project: BOLD (Building Opportunities and Livelihoods in Darfur)
Location: Darfur Province, Sudan
Date: 2004–2005
Cost per Unit: $90
Design Team: Scott Mulrooney and Isaac Boyd
Photos: Isaac Boyd

This transitional shelter (above) built with woven mats and styled after a traditional rakuba, can house four to five people. The mats (right), woven in South Darfur, where grass is plentiful, are used locally but are also transported to arid regions in the north where grass does not grow. ►

DESIGN WITHIN REACH

Deneb table and Gas chair both designed by the founder of STUA Jesus Gasca.

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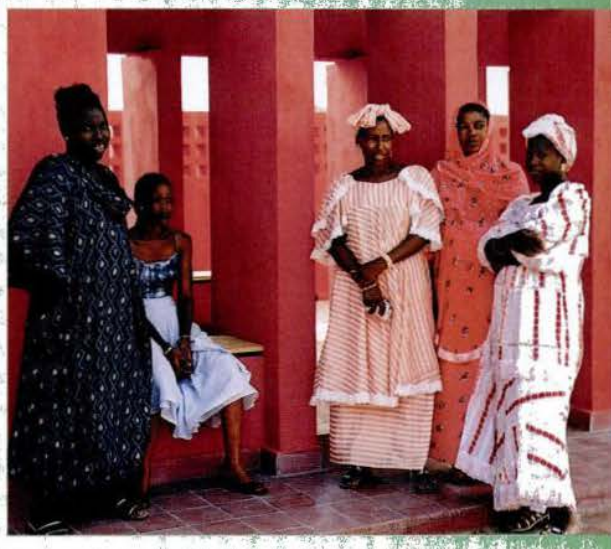
STUA

Project: Siyathemba Soccer "Clinic"
Location: Somkhele, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
Date: 2004–present (unbuilt)
Projected Budget: $350,000
Concept Architect: Swee Hong Ng
Photos: Courtesy Cameron Sinclair (top) and Steve Kinsler / Architecture for Humanity (right)

Improvised soccer fields such as this one (above) will soon be replaced by the Siyathemba site, where a new pitch, computer lab, and outreach center are planned. A healthcare worker will manage the facilites and organize prevention programs to combat HIV/AIDS, which has devastated the rural community. Design competition winner Swee Hong Ng (right) discusses project possibilites with locals. ►

Project: Rufisque Women's Centre
Location: Rufisque, Senegal
Date: 1996–2001
Cost: $100,600
Design Team: Saija Hollmen, MBacke Niang, Jenni Reuter, Helena Sandman
Photos: Juha Ilonen (top), Helena Sandman (right)

Built using concrete, recycled metals, bottles, and old car parts, this meeting place was created to galvanize the growing number of women's groups sprouting up throughout the country. Studies found that women were more often the sole providers in Senegalese households, and needed a facility where they could learn trades and exchange ideas. Thirty different groups now use the center to promote commerce. ▶



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Project: Housing in Northern Afghanistan
Location: Baghlan Province, Afghanistan
Date: 2002
Cost per Unit: $610
Design Team: Robert Bjerre, Harry van Burik, Baghlan community members
Photos: Courtesy Shelter for Life

Five thousand permanent adobe shelters were constructed in only four months with the help of Shelter For Life, an organization that had previously provided relief to the region after an earthquake in 1998. The nonprofit group was called on again in 2002, when another devastating quake hit the area, to supply shelter and seismic preparedness, such as the installation of wooden ring beams (right). ►

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Project: Lucy House
Location: Mason's Bend, Hale County, Alabama
Date: 2001–2002
Cost: $30,000
Design Team: Rural Studio, Auburn University
Photos: Tim Hursley (top), Courtesy Rural Studio (right)

A highly personalized custom solution to affordable housing, the Lucy House was developed and built by the Rural Studio for the Harris family. The structure draws on traditional vernacular forms but with a twist—quite literally. Innovation manifests itself in the materials used; extra carpet tiles from InterfaceFLOR were stacked to create the house's shell. ►

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Project: Hopi Nation Elder Home
Location: Hotevilla, Arizona
Date: 2005
Cost: $79,200
Architect: Nathaniel Corum
Photos: Courtesy Red Feather Development Group

One in eight Native Americans lives in overcrowded or substandard housing, nearly three times the national average. In response, the Red Feather Development Group was founded to address poor living conditions on reservations. This straw bale home provided a model by which tribal members could provide affordable and efficient housing for themselves. ■

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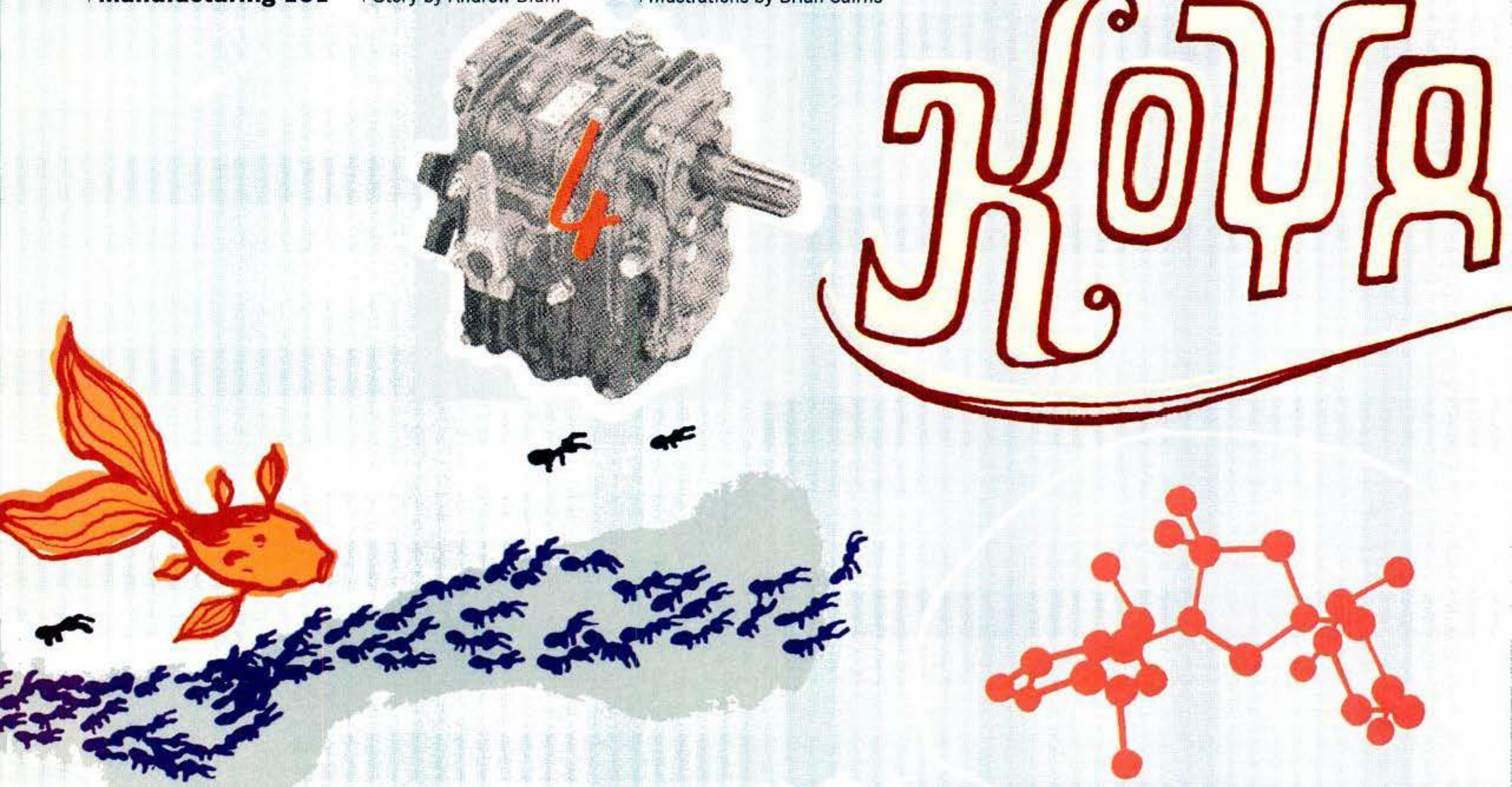


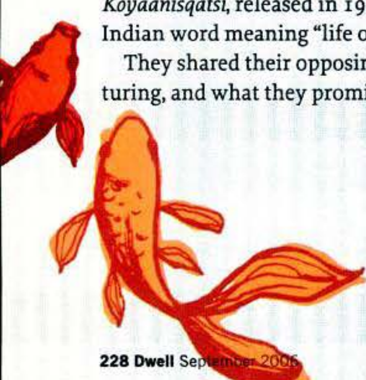
Making the Future

We live in a manufactured world. But is it some kind of utopia, full of iPods, Swiffers, and pre-cut fruit? Or is it a proverbial hell on earth, physically destroying half the planet while eating away at the souls of the other half? For Michael Braungart and Godfrey Reggio, both assertions are gross understatements.

Braungart is arguably the world's leading environmental chemist, and the coauthor of *Cradle to Cradle*, which lays out an alternative paradigm for manufacturing in which everything isn't just recycled but "upcycled." It's an optimistic vision that has seduced more than a few captains of industry—including executives at Ford, Nike, and Herman Miller.

Reggio is the auteur filmmaker behind the *Qatsi* trilogy—three plotless, dialogueless feature films that each set a thousand images (together worth one word, he says) to a sweeping score by Philip Glass. While spectacular and seductive, their vision of the world is terrifying in its revelation of the beauty of destruction. *Koyaanisqatsi*, released in 1983, uses as its title a Hopi Indian word meaning "life out of balance."

They shared their opposing cosmologies of manufacturing, and what they promise for the future.



Michael Braungart

What's the benefit of cradle-to-cradle manufacturing?

Cradle to cradle means everything that gets consumed—food, shoe soles, brake pads, detergents—is designed to be a biological nutrient. For example, we designed ice-cream packaging that's not just biodegradable, but contains seeds from rare plants. So when you throw it away, it supports the other species on this planet.

So cradle to cradle becomes a path to sustainability?

It's not about sustainability. Sustainability is just a minimum. If I asked you, "How's your relationship with your wife?," and you said, "Sustainable," I'd say, "Oh, I'm so sorry for you!"

The environmental movement has gotten to the point where we think that human beings are somehow a pain for the planet. But our first task should be to become native to this planet. The biomass of ants is four times greater than the biomass of human beings. But they are not an environmental problem, because they have learned how to process nutrients so they are beneficial to other species. So this isn't an ethical problem—it's a design problem. We can make things that are not just good for the bottom line, but also good for the top line: good for the economy, good for the environment, and good for society, all at the same time.

How does cradle to cradle change what's manufactured?

I call it total beauty. When things are made by slave labor or child labor, then I'm just not happy to have it in my hand. I don't like it. Or when things are toxic and accumulate in mothers' milk, it's not just about being unethical; it's being unintelligent. It's chemical harassment.

How does cradle to cradle suggest changing how things are manufactured?

It's a different relationship with your customer. It's no longer saying, "You better not buy my products so I can be less bad." It's about saying, "What effect do we want to achieve?"

This is an optimistic view?

I'm into celebrating human achievement. It's not just about sustainability. Every activity can be beneficial—either for biological cycles or for technical cycles. Cradle to cradle means that we can support human beings and nature at the same time.

qnisqatsi

Godfrey Reggio

What comment are your films making about manufacturing?
In *Koyaanisqatsi*, we were talking about the Wal-Martization of the planet. It was like looking at one geologic layer of commodity piled upon another. To me this is the essence of manufactured living. In the world of *Powaqqatsi*, we were looking at a handmade world, a world that is the very antithesis of global manufacturing—a world that is local rather than global, a world that lives in tradition, a world whose motto is "divided we stand."

Are you valuing one above the other?
I'm not suggesting any answers, because I think the question becomes the mother of the answer. I'm not talking about going back to the tepee or the cave, or to an unrelentingly simple, handmade way of living. Those times are gone.

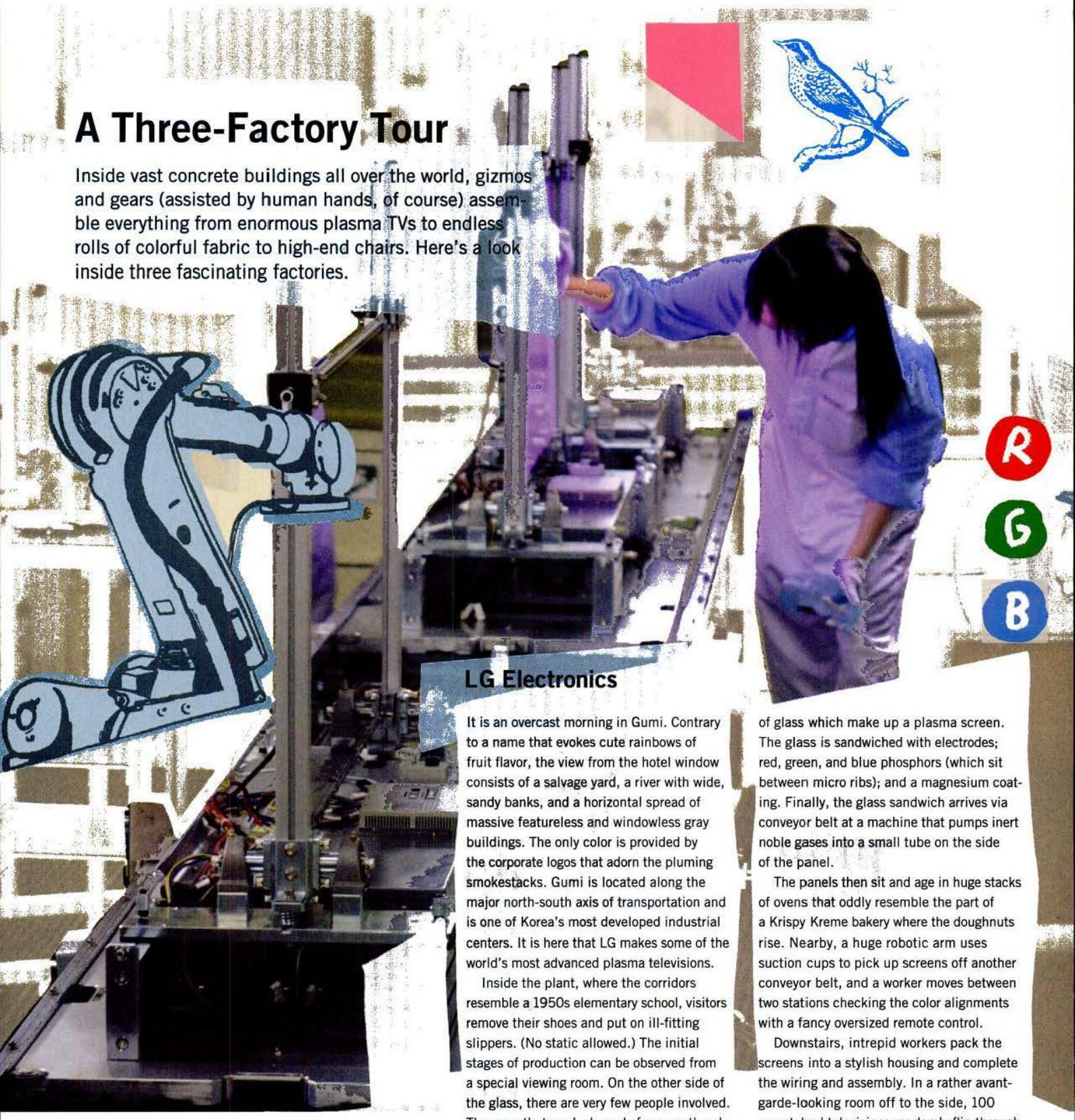
How do you see the times we live in now?
On a grand scale, we can say we are in the third epoch of human existence: the first being the natural, the organic, hunter-gatherers; the second being culture, agriculture, empire. That world has come to an end in the 20th century. Now we live in the epoch of technology.

Are you using "technology" as a stand-in for "manufacturing," or even "capitalism"?
Einstein said, "The fish will be the last to discover water." Humans will be the last to know technology, because it's our new terra firma. Technology is something we live, rather than something we use. It's become the new comprehensive host of life—like old nature was. And while the old idea of nature certainly exists, it has been reduced to the resource that we consume to inflate the synthetic world in which we live.

Is it hard to go about your daily life seeing the world like this?
I take myself as the subject of all these intensities. I am that fish that swims in the water. I'm trying to become conscious of it, by stepping outside of it, but of course that's not completely possible. We all live in a trance-altered state, as if a spell is over us. We're not addicted to technology—that's a lot of bunkum—but I think the evidence is overwhelming that life is predicated on it, and that it's homogenizing the world into a supermanufactured environment—a wonderland. But I can't reflect on it all the time or I wouldn't be able to live. I'd evaporate in a cloud of smoke! I just got off an airplane last night. It all seemed very normal. ▶

A Three-Factory Tour

Inside vast concrete buildings all over the world, gizmos and gears (assisted by human hands, of course) assemble everything from enormous plasma TVs to endless rolls of colorful fabric to high-end chairs. Here's a look inside three fascinating factories.



LG Electronics

It is an overcast morning in Gumi. Contrary to a name that evokes cute rainbows of fruit flavor, the view from the hotel window consists of a salvage yard, a river with wide, sandy banks, and a horizontal spread of massive featureless and windowless gray buildings. The only color is provided by the corporate logos that adorn the pluming smokestacks. Gumi is located along the major north-south axis of transportation and is one of Korea's most developed industrial centers. It is here that LG makes some of the world's most advanced plasma televisions.

Inside the plant, where the corridors resemble a 1950s elementary school, visitors remove their shoes and put on ill-fitting slippers. (No static allowed.) The initial stages of production can be observed from a special viewing room. On the other side of the glass, there are very few people involved. The ones that are look ready for an outbreak, in white body suits with dark masks. They move in slow, calculated motions around huge machines that prepare the two sheets of glass which make up a plasma screen. The glass is sandwiched with electrodes; red, green, and blue phosphors (which sit between micro ribs); and a magnesium coating. Finally, the glass sandwich arrives via conveyor belt at a machine that pumps inert noble gases into a small tube on the side of the panel.

The panels then sit and age in huge stacks of ovens that oddly resemble the part of a Krispy Kreme bakery where the doughnuts rise. Nearby, a huge robotic arm uses suction cups to pick up screens off another conveyor belt, and a worker moves between two stations checking the color alignments with a fancy oversized remote control.

Downstairs, intrepid workers pack the screens into a stylish housing and complete the wiring and assembly. In a rather avant-garde-looking room off to the side, 100 unwatched televisions randomly flip through colors and images. It's unclear why this is happening, but it proves Gumi may be an apt name after all. ▸

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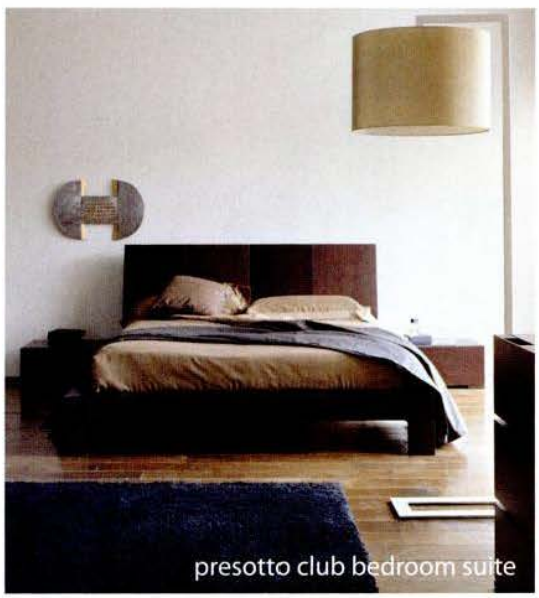
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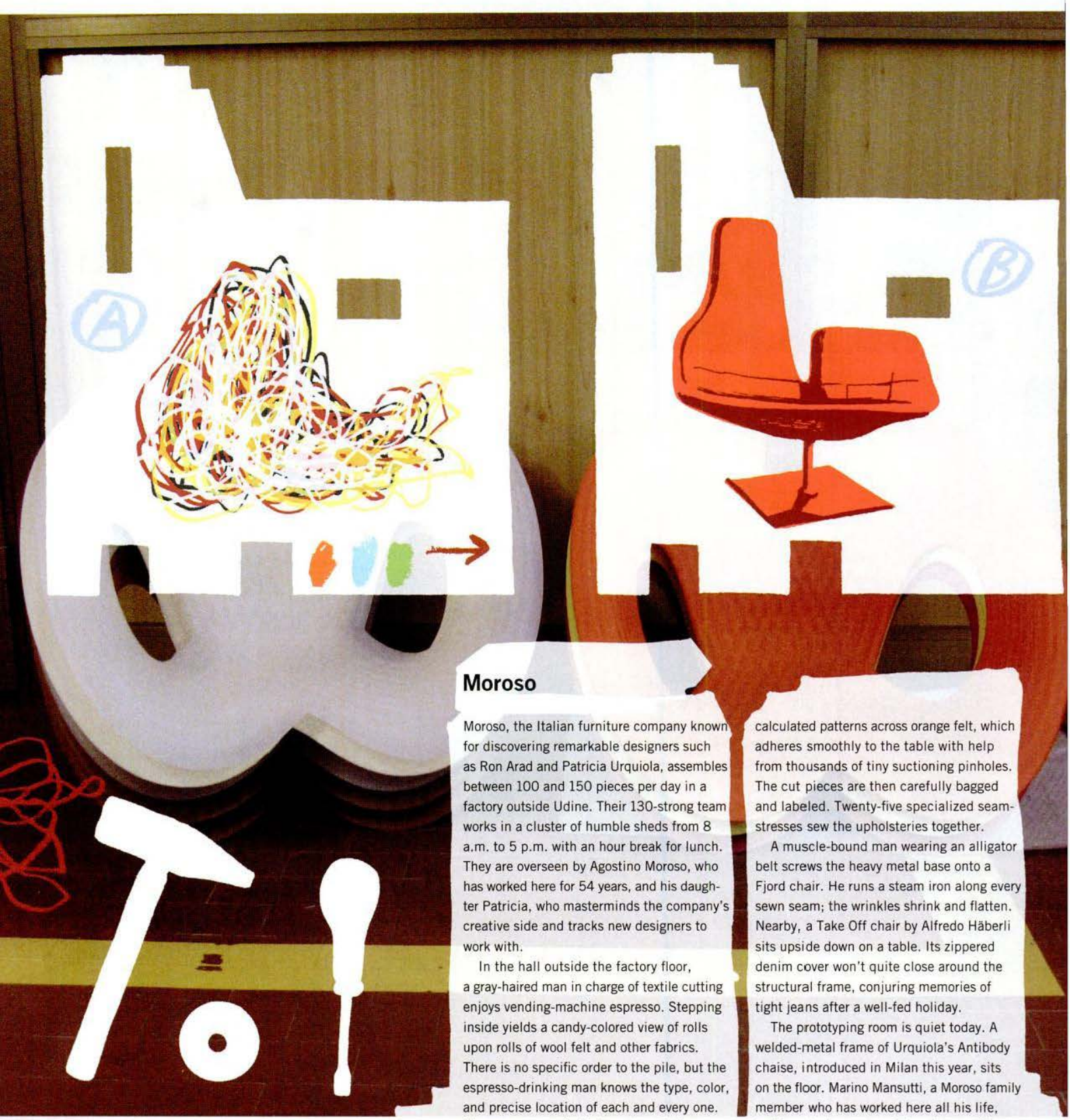

Moroso

Moroso, the Italian furniture company known for discovering remarkable designers such as Ron Arad and Patricia Urquiola, assembles between 100 and 150 pieces per day in a factory outside Udine. Their 130-strong team works in a cluster of humble sheds from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with an hour break for lunch. They are overseen by Agostino Moroso, who has worked here for 54 years, and his daughter Patricia, who masterminds the company's creative side and tracks new designers to work with.

In the hall outside the factory floor, a gray-haired man in charge of textile cutting enjoys vending-machine espresso. Stepping inside yields a candy-colored view of rolls upon rolls of wool felt and other fabrics. There is no specific order to the pile, but the espresso-drinking man knows the type, color, and precise location of each and every one. He reappears and climbs onto a platform, which is attached to a fabric roller that glides 50 feet or so along a table, unrolling the wool. A computer-operated cutter makes calculated patterns across orange felt, which adheres smoothly to the table with help from thousands of tiny suctioning pinholes. The cut pieces are then carefully bagged and labeled. Twenty-five specialized seamstresses sew the upholsteries together.

A muscle-bound man wearing an alligator belt screws the heavy metal base onto a Fjord chair. He runs a steam iron along every sewn seam; the wrinkles shrink and flatten. Nearby, a Take Off chair by Alfredo Häberli sits upside down on a table. Its zippered denim cover won't quite close around the structural frame, conjuring memories of tight jeans after a well-fed holiday.

The prototyping room is quiet today. A welded-metal frame of Urquiola's Antibody chaise, introduced in Milan this year, sits on the floor. Marino Mansutti, a Moroso family member who has worked here all his life, helping designers turn ideas into realities, is enjoying the calm after the pre-Milan rush. "It was nuts," he says. Now he finds time to dust under the phone on his desk. ►

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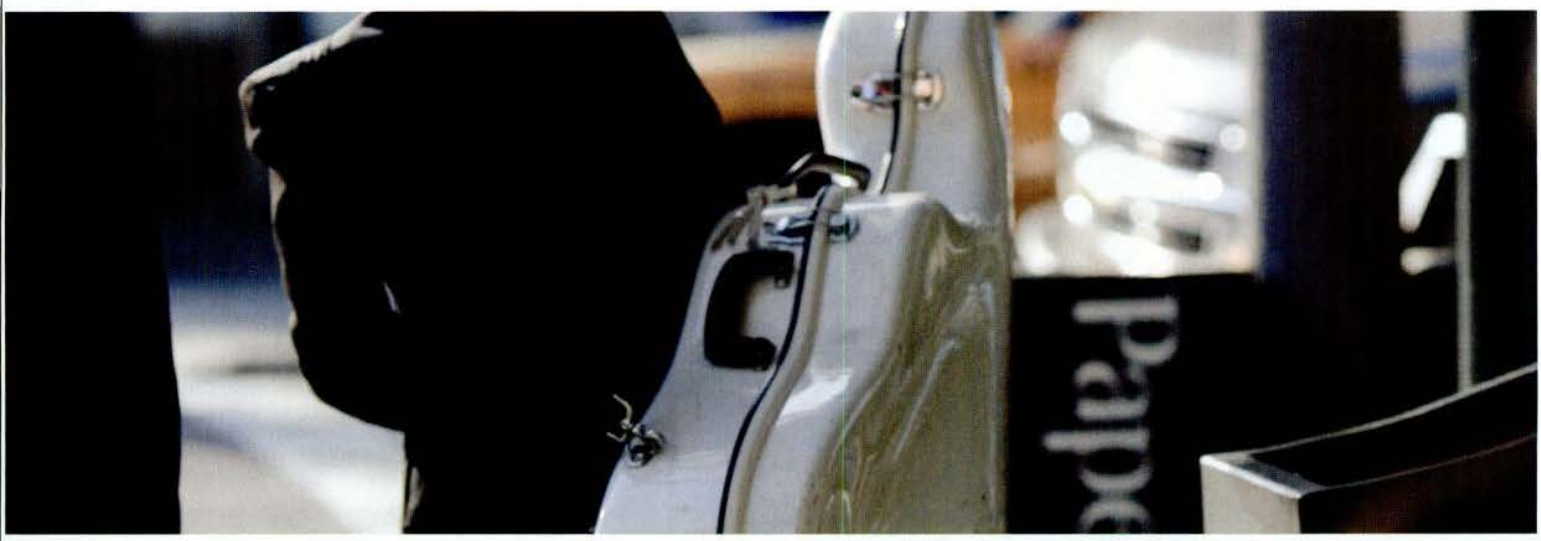

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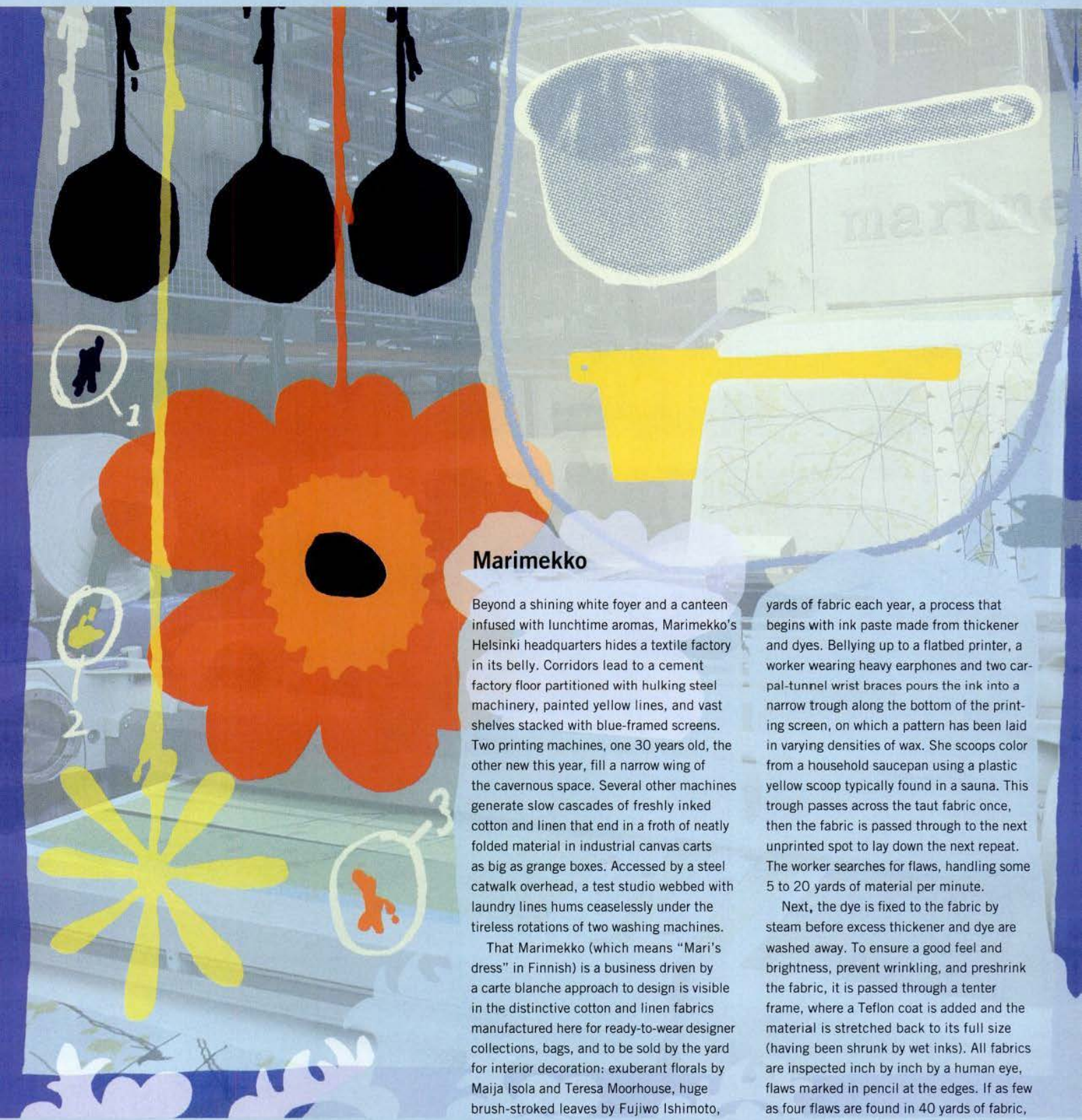


Marimekko

Beyond a shining white foyer and a canteen infused with lunchtime aromas, Marimekko's Helsinki headquarters hides a textile factory in its belly. Corridors lead to a cement factory floor partitioned with hulking steel machinery, painted yellow lines, and vast shelves stacked with blue-framed screens. Two printing machines, one 30 years old, the other new this year, fill a narrow wing of the cavernous space. Several other machines generate slow cascades of freshly inked cotton and linen that end in a froth of neatly folded material in industrial canvas carts as big as grange boxes. Accessed by a steel catwalk overhead, a test studio webbed with laundry lines hums ceaselessly under the tireless rotations of two washing machines.

That Marimekko (which means "Mari's dress" in Finnish) is a business driven by a carte blanche approach to design is visible in the distinctive cotton and linen fabrics manufactured here for ready-to-wear designer collections, bags, and to be sold by the yard for interior decoration: exuberant florals by Maija Isola and Teresa Moorhouse, huge brush-stroked leaves by Fujiwo Ishimoto, and hand-sketched city scenes and comic book–colored Finnish landscapes by 24-year-old Maija Louekari.

The factory prints around 1.6 million yards of fabric each year, a process that begins with ink paste made from thickener and dyes. Bellying up to a flatbed printer, a worker wearing heavy earphones and two carpal-tunnel wrist braces pours the ink into a narrow trough along the bottom of the printing screen, on which a pattern has been laid in varying densities of wax. She scoops color from a household saucepan using a plastic yellow scoop typically found in a sauna. This trough passes across the taut fabric once, then the fabric is passed through to the next unprinted spot to lay down the next repeat. The worker searches for flaws, handling some 5 to 20 yards of material per minute.

Next, the dye is fixed to the fabric by steam before excess thickener and dye are washed away. To ensure a good feel and brightness, prevent wrinkling, and preshrink the fabric, it is passed through a tenter frame, where a Teflon coat is added and the material is stretched back to its full size (having been shrunk by wet inks). All fabrics are inspected inch by inch by a human eye, flaws marked in pencil at the edges. If as few as four flaws are found in 40 yards of fabric, the batch is seconded. Approved fabrics are wound to cardboard bolts for sale in shops or to small rolls to be sewn into totes, frocks, or even a Fatboy beanbag. ▸

Meet Your Maker

Ever wanted to be a designer? One of the biggest parts of the job is working with your manufacturer to turn a concept into a real product. Dwell asked four designers to share their favorite manufacturing experiences.

Patricia Urquiola
T-Table by Kartell, 2006

T-Table stands for transgenic table. It is an object that seems to have grown naturally in plastic while acquiring some alien genes. It is a technological fossil. The design is in direct contrast with the usually clean-edged plastic objects that we know. The nature-inspired design, together with the crisp transparency and soft colors of the plastic, create a dialogue between natural and artificial reality.

The decoration of the table is not superficial but becomes clearly structural. The T-Table is a hybrid between a molded and an extruded product. The main technical challenge consisted in the fact that the top and the legs had to come out of a single mold, which greatly determined the design.

What most struck me in the process of developing the T-Table with Kartell was the beauty of the steel mold, the tool that allows the injection of the table. It is the negative of the object in which the emptiness generates fullness. It calls back the sensations of my childhood on the beach, building sand castles with a simple plastic bucket. The industrial context is completely different, but I like to think of my professional reality in a playful way.

Chris Kabel, Droog Design
Shady Lace parasol, 2004

In early 2003 Droog Design invited me and several other Dutch designers to collaborate with the local industries around Lille to design products for the Lille 2004 Cultural Capital of Europe festival. I chose a lace factory. During my factory tour, I was amazed to find out that lace is actually computer programmable. If you link the lace-knitting machine to a computer, you can use it as a printer. It might even laceify your emails!

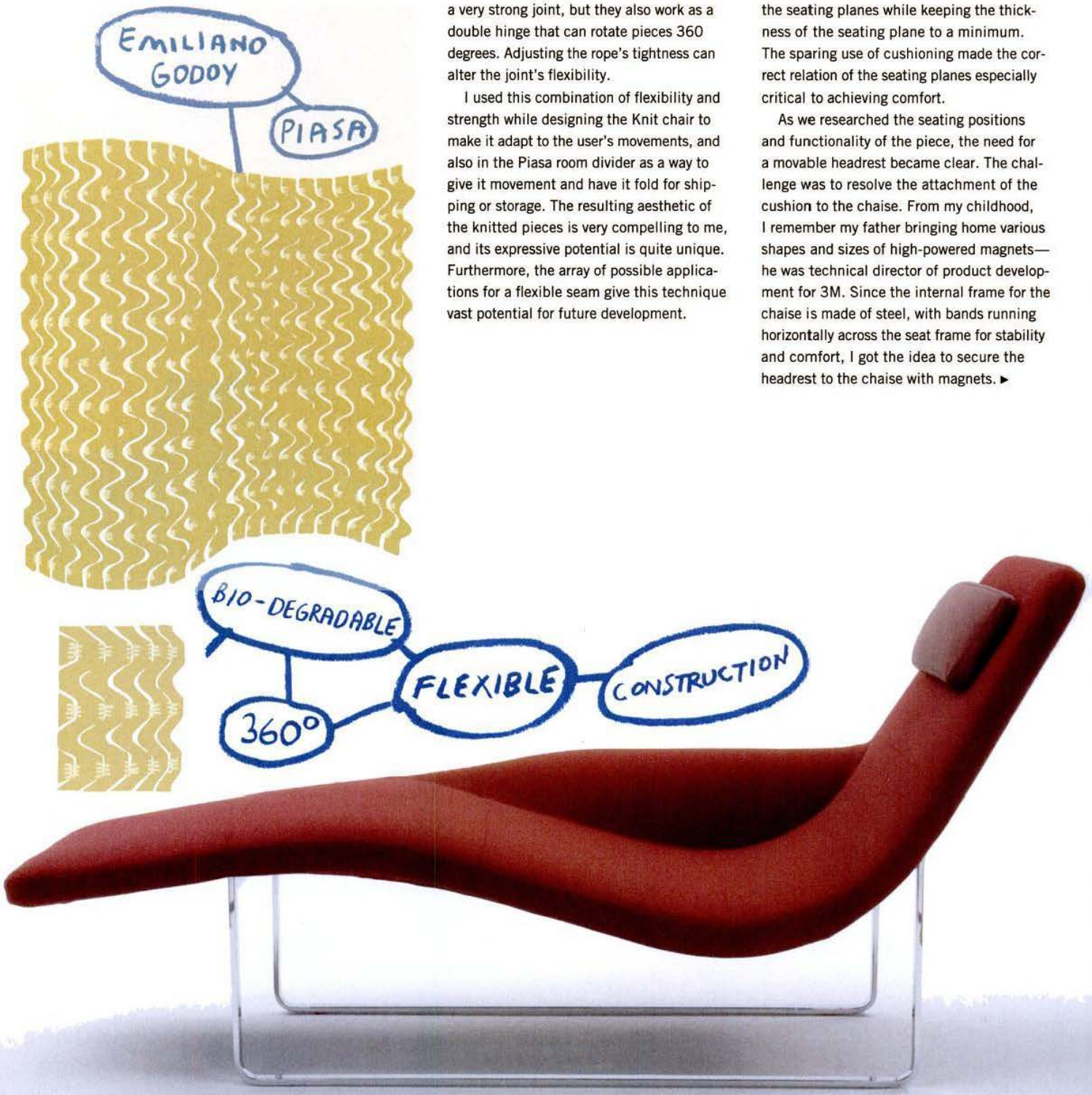
Some of the knitting machines had been operating since the 1850s. They were manufactured in England and made from very heavy cast iron. They were too heavy to be transported any farther, and they sort of got stranded in Lille and Calais. So these very big, blackened, prehistoric machines were producing the most delicate lace, used by fashion labels like Chanel and Jean Paul Gaultier. And to add even more contrast, the factory workers were these slightly obese, very rough Breton Frenchmen who actually looked more like farmers. With their hands like shovels they checked every inch of lace for flaws. This is the factory that produces the lace for my parasol. And I'm totally confident that those coarse fingers will not let any flaws come through. ▸

Emiliano Godoy
Knitted pieces for Piasa, 2005–2006
I am really interested in pieces made using vegetable-based, biodegradable materials. I developed these knitted rope hinges because I wanted to incorporate a design language that would speak about the construction of the pieces, and therefore about their deconstruction. These seams create a very strong joint, but they also work as a double hinge that can rotate pieces 360 degrees. Adjusting the rope's tightness can alter the joint's flexibility.

I used this combination of flexibility and strength while designing the Knit chair to make it adapt to the user's movements, and also in the Piasa room divider as a way to give it movement and have it fold for shipping or storage. The resulting aesthetic of the knitted pieces is very compelling to me, and its expressive potential is quite unique. Furthermore, the array of possible applications for a flexible seam give this technique vast potential for future development.

Jeffrey Bernett
Landscape chaise for B&B Italia, 2001
B&B Italia, which was founded in the mid-'60s, developed the first injection-molded polyurethane-foam seating, which today is still the basis of its upholstered seating. The Landscape chaise was developed to push the limits of this technology. We injected foam around an internal steel frame supporting the seating planes while keeping the thickness of the seating plane to a minimum. The sparing use of cushioning made the correct relation of the seating planes especially critical to achieving comfort.

As we researched the seating positions and functionality of the piece, the need for a movable headrest became clear. The challenge was to resolve the attachment of the cushion to the chaise. From my childhood, I remember my father bringing home various shapes and sizes of high-powered magnets—he was technical director of product development for 3M. Since the internal frame for the chaise is made of steel, with bands running horizontally across the seat frame for stability and comfort, I got the idea to secure the headrest to the chaise with magnets. ►



Time on the Line

You might never have thought about the work that went into making the designs around your house. For example, you might be surprised to hear that it only takes half an hour to make a vacuum cleaner, but several days to make a rug. Here, some statistics.

	Time to make in factory	Machines employed	Humans employed	Origin(s) of main materials
Orgo clothes hanger from Normann Copenhagen	1 minute	1	3–4	U.S.
Timbuk2 Classic messenger bag	10–20 minutes	13	7	Taiwan, China, Vietnam
Miele S4 vacuum cleaner	25 minutes	10	7	Germany
Fontana Arte Avico lamp	1½ hours	3	6–8	Italy
Bosch Nexxt washer/dryer	2½–3 hours	7	120	U.S., Mexico, Slovakia, Germany
Emeco Navy 1006 chair	6–10 hours	12–16	15–25	U.S., Canada, China, Germany, Austria
Alvar Aalto vase from Iittala	8 hours	2	10	Finland
Knoll Saarinen Womb chair	10 hours	3	13	U.S.
Toto Guinevere toilet	50 hours	18	20	U.S.
Herman Miller Eames lounge and ottoman	77 hours	12	15–20	U.S., Canada, China, Germany, Austria
Angela Adams tiles for Ann Sacks	160–240 hours	2	3	U.S.
Emma Gardner Tiny Stripes rug	1,920 hours	0	1–5	Tibet, China

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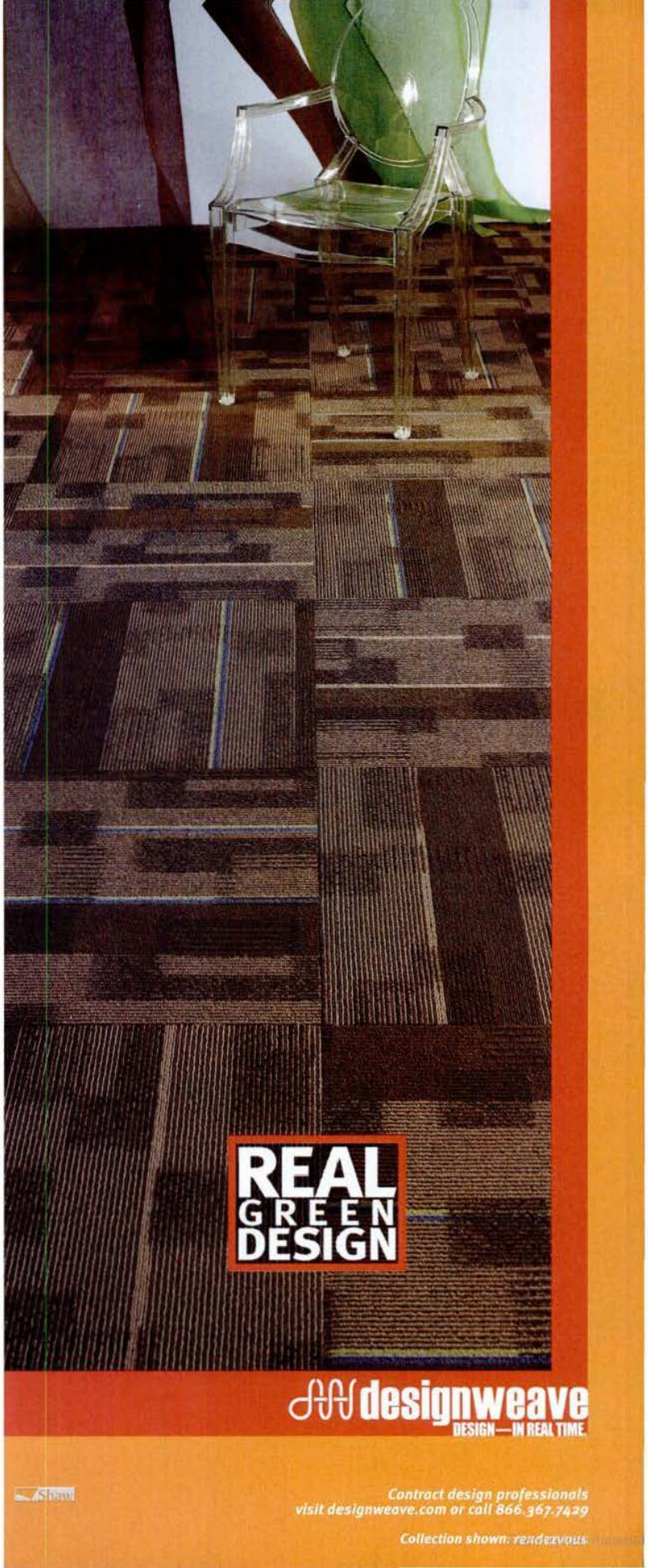

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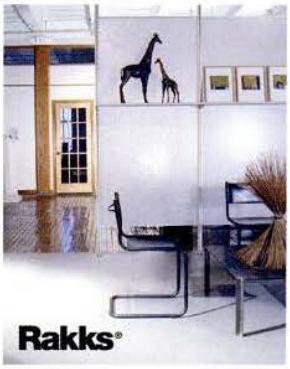

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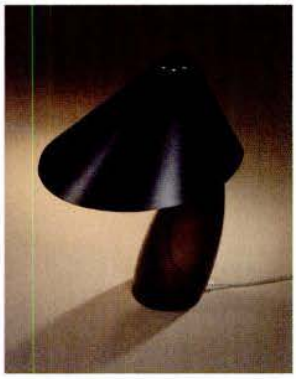

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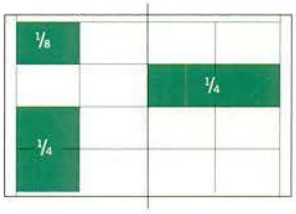

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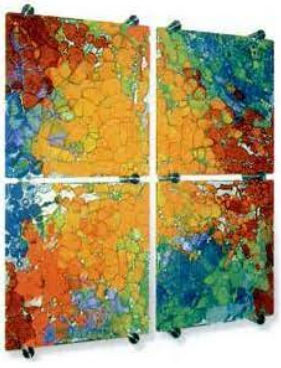

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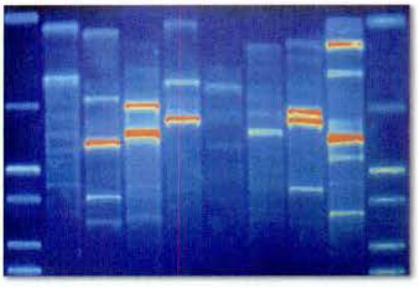

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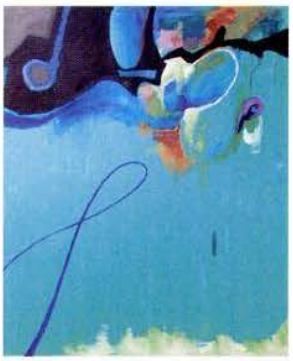

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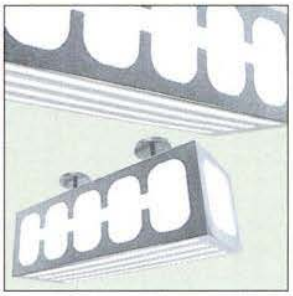

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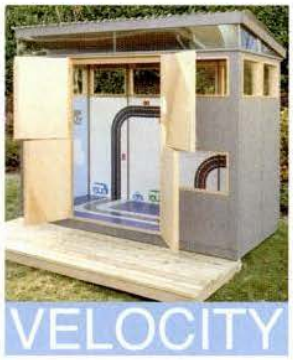

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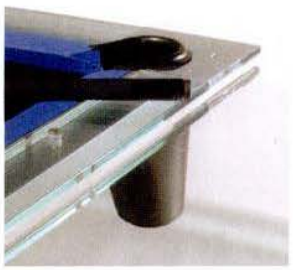

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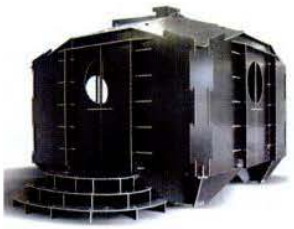

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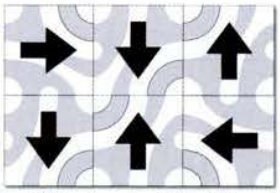

Six-Tile Assembly Shown

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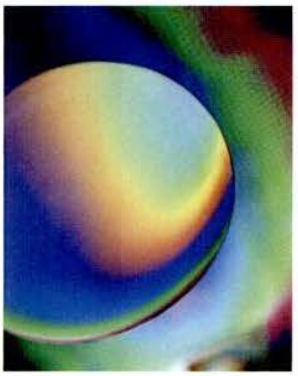

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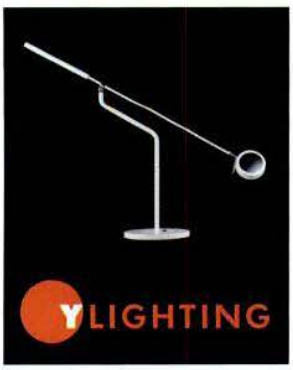

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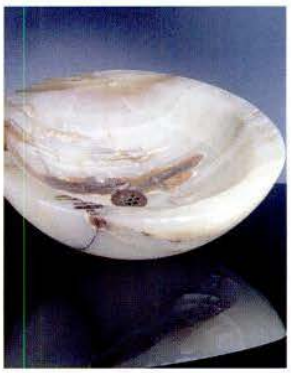

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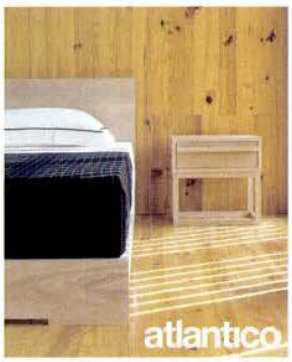

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Story by Shonquis Moreno

Photo by David Leven

Play It as It Lays

Both architecture and agriculture transform the natural world to best serve human goals. But at a site roughly two hours north of Manhattan, in Columbia County, New York, architect David Leven and partner Stella Betts of Leven Betts Studio have made the next step—fusing the two. The couple's "agritecture" translates the crop lines of a (mostly) active farm into the blueprint for their 2,000-square-foot second home and the surrounding landscaping.

"When we first went to the site, we were really struck by the crop lines in this relatively open field," says Leven. "So the design follows the direction and module of the lines that are created by the machinery to work the land." Set in the midst of hundreds of acres of farmland, these lines became markings on the flanks of the house and paving patterns for the patios, as well as models for the elongated, hovering forms of the kitchen counter and outdoor barbecue. The couple went so far as to use these pastoral designs to generate the organization of plumbing and services, and determine the shape of a low outdoor retaining wall leading to the garage.

While the house's two clean, rectangular volumes literally stemmed from the land, it's not exactly local produce. "The house has no trims or molding, and that's not what people are used to up here. At first we just had to throw out the plans, but over time the contractors have been getting more and more comfortable with it," says Betts. "We're teaching them how to 'do modern.'" ■

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