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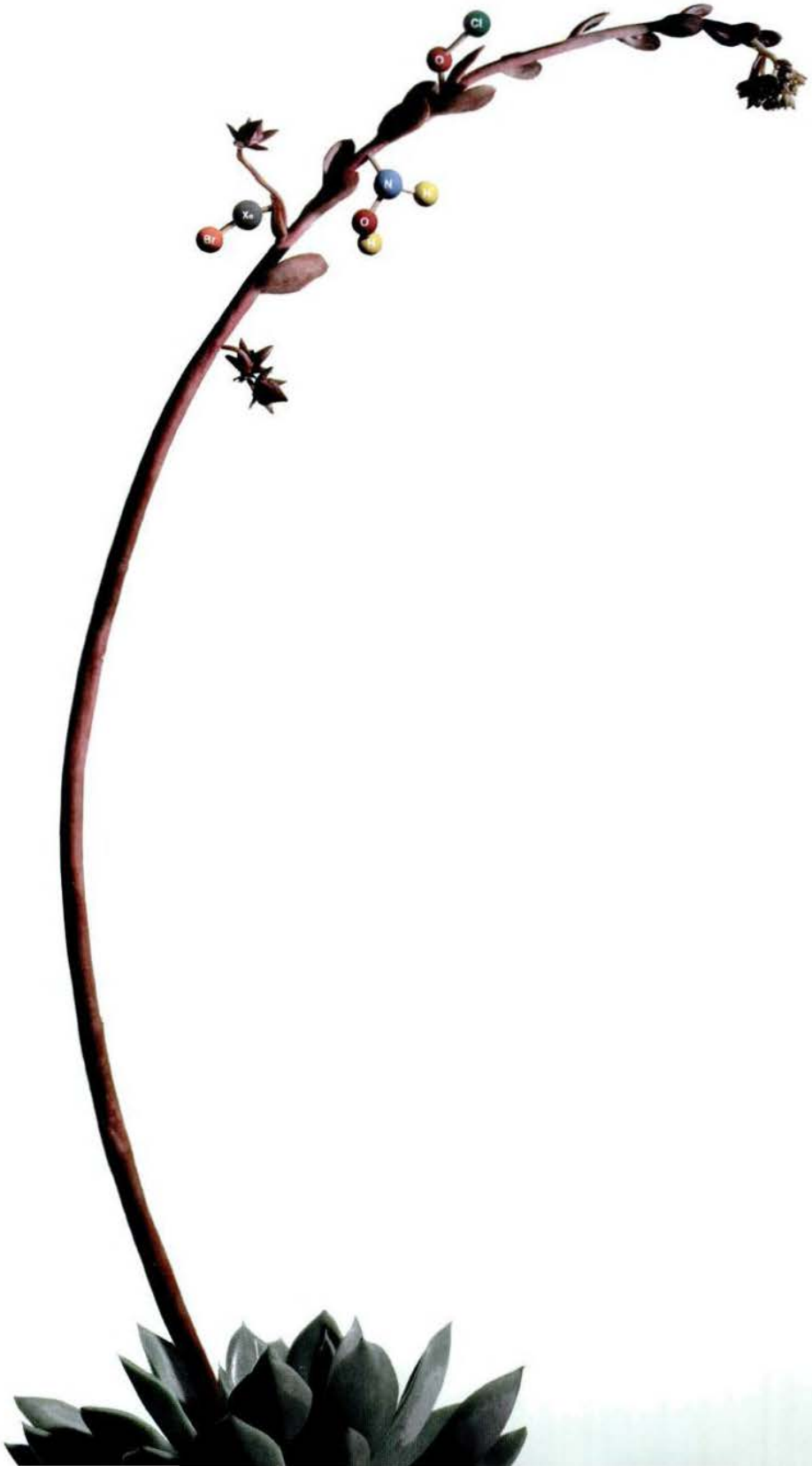

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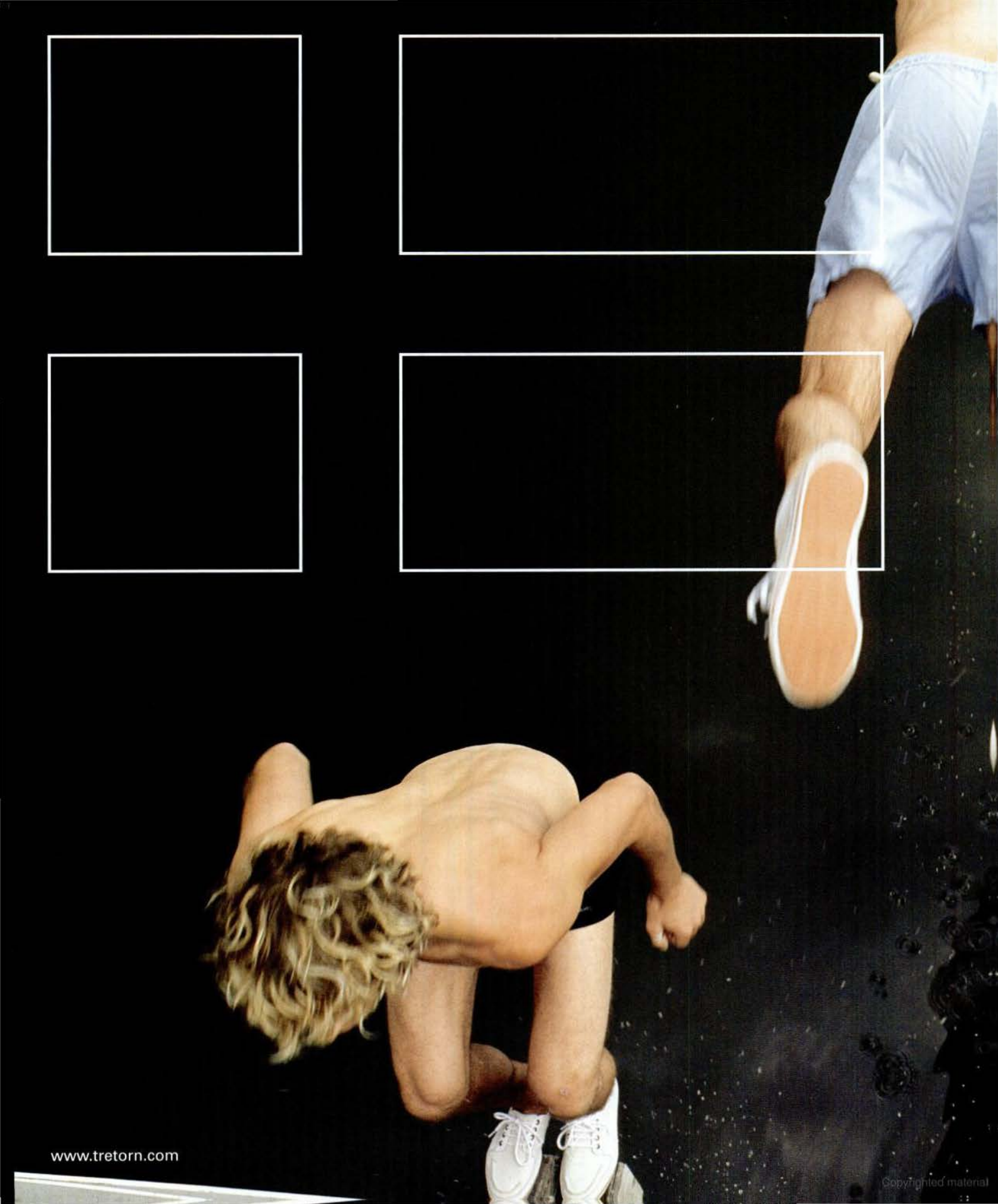

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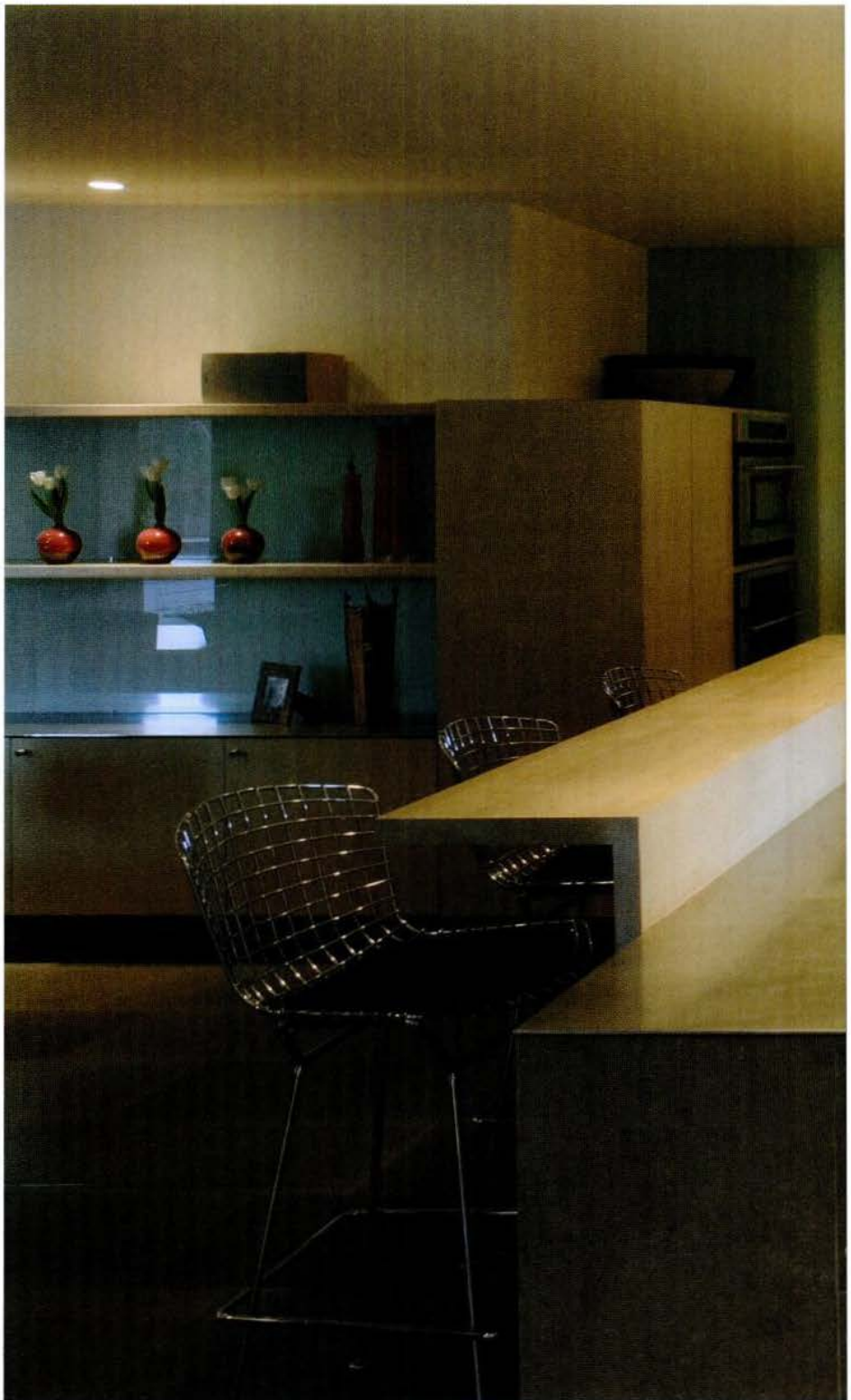

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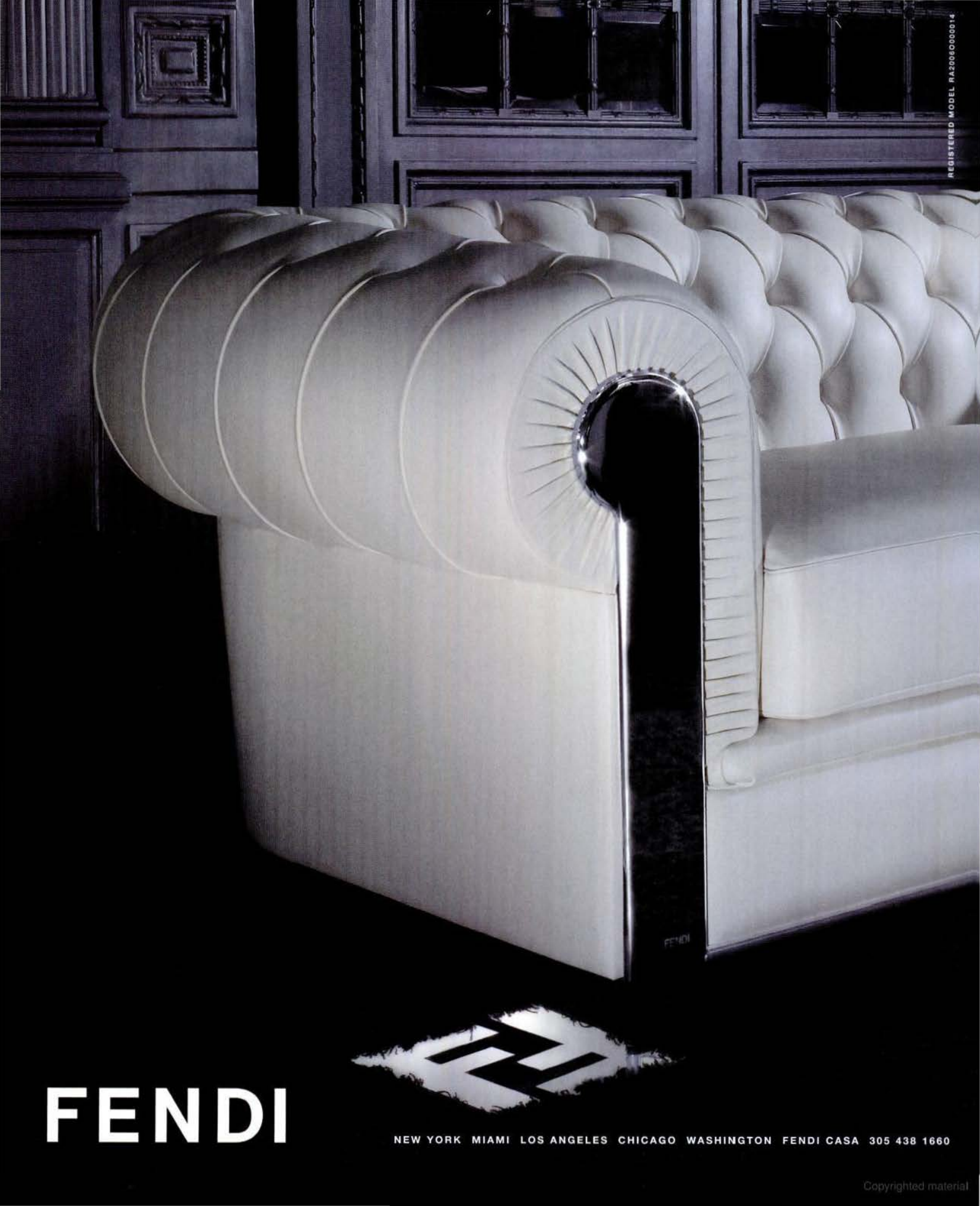

Homes With History
June 2007

"In the continuity of history of which we are a part, [the individual] must, above all, understand the motivating forces which caused the creations of his past. To do creative work, he must reject the vast heritage of the mediocre, and find the true values within the human expressions of the past."

—Henry Hill

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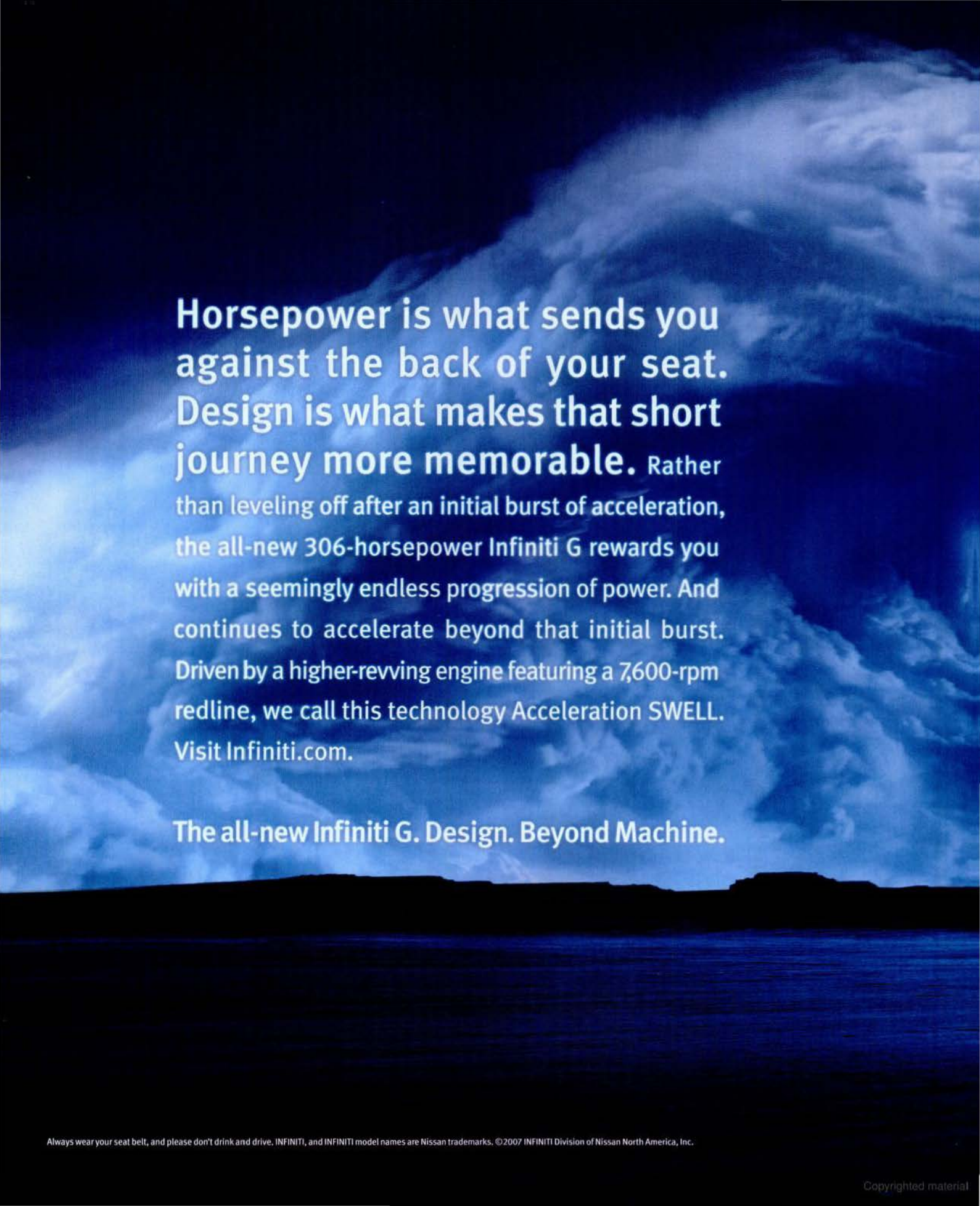

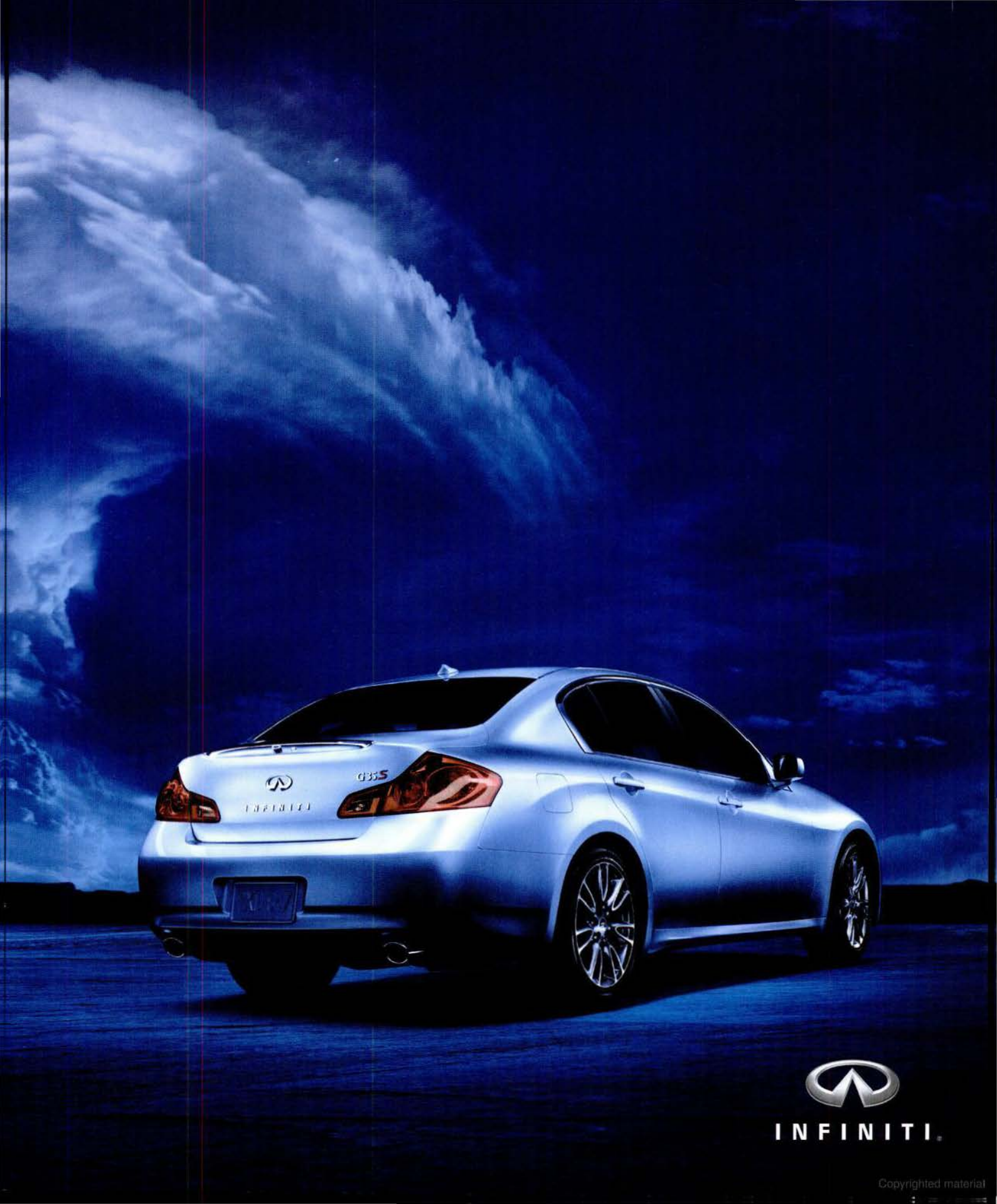

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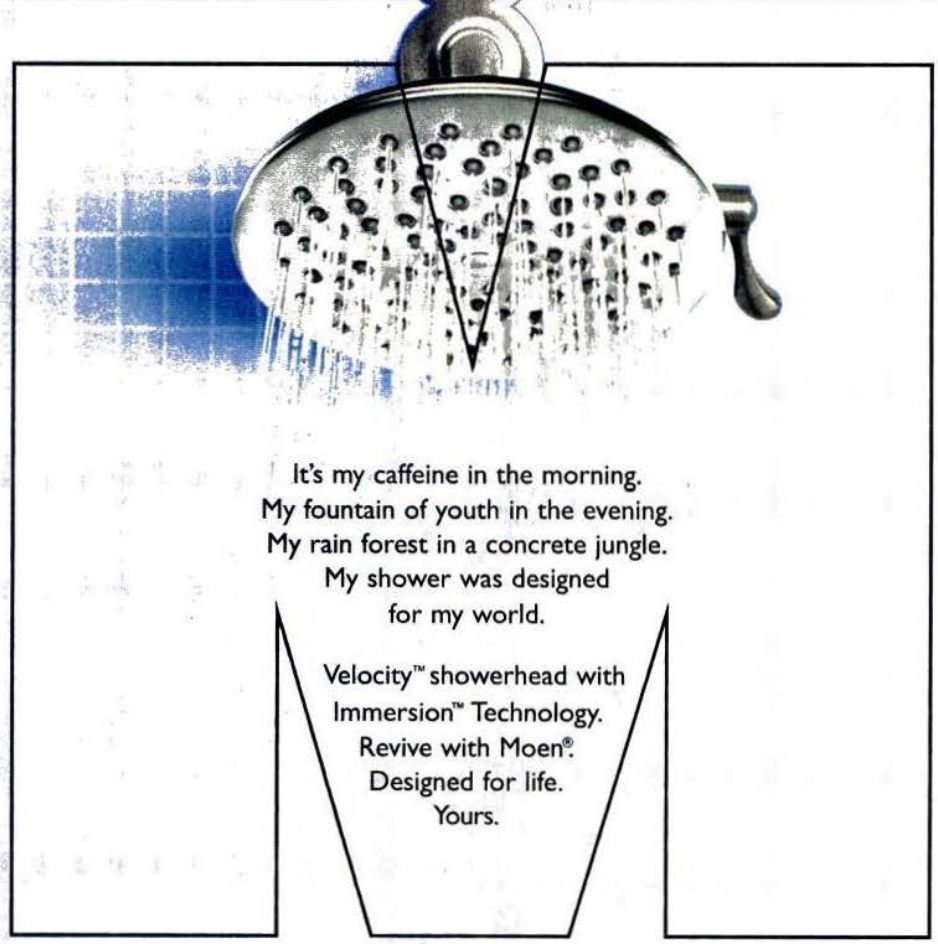

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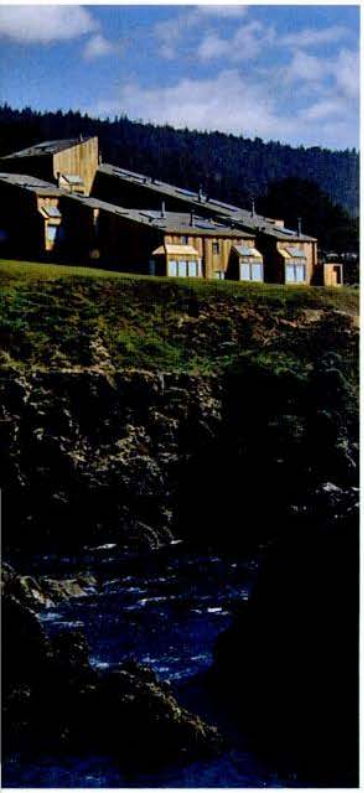

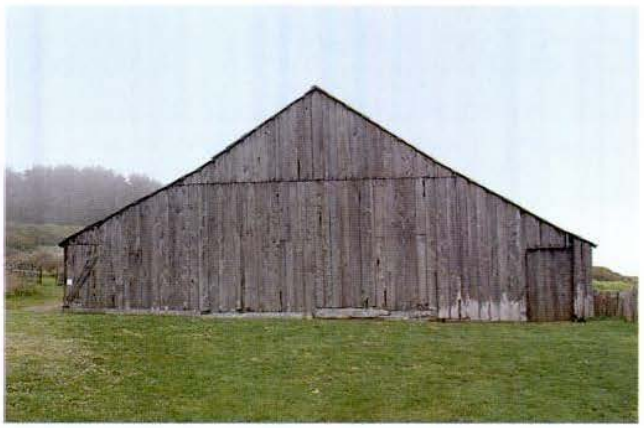

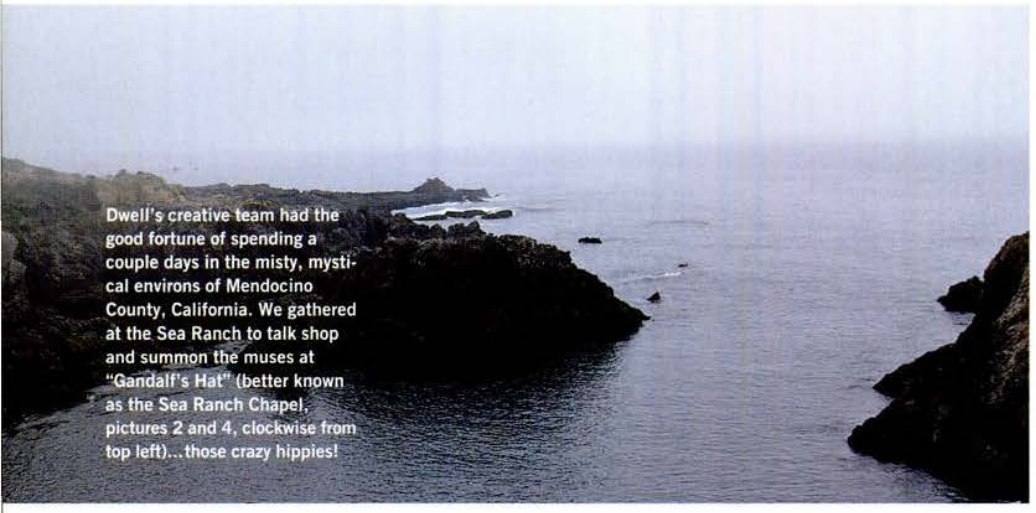

Dwell's creative team had the good fortune of spending a couple days in the misty, mystical environs of Mendocino County, California. We gathered at the Sea Ranch to talk shop and summon the muses at "Gandalf's Hat" (better known as the Sea Ranch Chapel, pictures 2 and 4, clockwise from top left)...those crazy hippies!

Thanks so much for "The Lawn Goodbye" (April 2007). As an avid gardener and modern architecture enthusiast, I was pleased to see these two worlds finally coming together in a realistic fashion. I especially like the idea of growing enough food for yourself. As we have seen a decline in farms in America—as "Razing Arizona" (April 2007) so well portrayed)—it is conceivable that the next best thing will be that we grow what food we need for our own families. Even better, people could give their extra produce away to others who are less fortunate (or just not fond of gardening) and appreciate natural foods. Isn't it great how the past (traditional gardening) can come back in new forms for the modern day and age? Thanks so much for your magazine, I've been a subscriber since Volume 2!

Sarah Daniels
Barnet, Vermont

As someone who collects Vitra miniatures (which, yes, I do buy at a discount) I was a little perturbed by your editor's letter in the [April 2007] issue of Dwell. Why does "expensive" have to be negative? Many expensive things (a good bottle of wine, a chair you'll have forever) are well worth their price tag. If it brings you joy, it is always worth the price.

I am not a millionaire. I enjoy a tie purchased from eBay for $3 as much as I do a new one bought at Paul Smith for $120. Just because something is expensive does not mean it's bad. I never understand why so many people feel this way. I've always loved Dwell because it showcased ads from companies like Vitra side by side with features of homes full of expensive and not-so-expensive things (Bernier's thrift shop lamps are fab!). Life is best mixing high and low. Expensive should not carry a negative connotation and neither should cheap.

And just so you know, I have the perfect use for those fabulous Vitra miniatures. They look dashing sitting on a desk stacked with business cards.

Bradford Shane Shellhammer
New York, New York

I read "Make New Rooms, But Keep the Old" (April 2007) with more than a little dismay. What people do in their own backyards is none of my business. However, surely useful, beautiful, and even "exciting" spaces can be added to existing homes without it looking like an alien spaceship has attacked the original structure. I couldn't help looking at some of ▶

PHOTOS BY ALEXIS TIIAN AND SAM GRAWE (VERTICAL LANDSCAPE)

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the additions with the same feelings I harbored for the 1970s paneling intended to update my 19th century Victorian—hand me the wrecking bar, please.

Maggie Niemann
Salida, Colorado

Having great taste on a modest budget is extremely torturous; my dining room table and chairs are better suited to the Keebler Elves's tree house! We don't have enough money to replace them, much less buy a home. My husband, daughter, and I live in a rented townhouse, and we dream of owning our own home. We've looked to buy, but we have no desire to move into one of those tacky "habitrails for humans" (subdivisions), which seem to be the norm in this suburban community. Like Andy and Regina ("A Lot for a Little," March 2007), we came to the conclusion that for around $100,000 we could build our own little modern paradise. Please continue to include us poor modernists in Dwell!

Christina Olinger
Portage, Michigan

I just finished reading the article titled "High Design in Denver" (March 2007). It was nice to see an article about Denver architecture, and Lewis Sharp's neighborhood. I also live in his neighborhood (for ten years). The Sharps moved into our neighborhood a few years ago and are a welcome addition.

The author has made a few mistakes, however. First and foremost is the fact that we do not live in Arapahoe Acres, Denver. We live in Arapaho Hills, Littleton, Colorado. Both neighborhoods were built by the same architects and developers in the late 1950s. Arapahoe Acres has obtained historic status, Arapaho Hills has not. The second mistake is more of an insult. Your author quotes Lewis Sharp as saying that the residents of Arapaho Hills are not knowledgeable of the architectural style, or Frank Lloyd Wright. I'm paraphrasing, but the point is, there are six architects living in Arapaho Hills and several artists that are quite aware of the architectural origin of the neighborhood. Ms. Rich has used the term "Usonian" to describe the houses in Arapaho Hills, this in not entirely correct. Sure, our homes are born of Mr. Wright's homes of the United States of North America, but they are not true Usonians. They are an interpretation of Wright's designs and of the designs for Eichler homes by firms such as Anshen+Allen, Jones & Emmons, and Claude Oakland & Associates. While Eichler homes and many of Wright's Usonians were designed as production homes with a modern aesthetic, our neighborhood is comprised of custom homes. There are only a few "model" homes that have had repeated designs; ironically the Sharp family lives in a version that has been duplicated.

The residents of Arapaho Hills have been fans of this style of architecture for 50 years and are pleased to see a renewed interest in mid-century modern architecture.

Thanks to your magazine for increasing public awareness in modern residential architecture.

Dean Hight
Littleton, Colorado

In a world of glossy-covered, attention-grabbing magazines on architecture and design, I continually feel drawn to the simple matte finish covers of Dwell. Why? It's not just because they are

printed on recycled paper *[**Editors' note:** Not all issues are printed on recycled paper, but we're working on it!]*, or because the price in the corner appeals to me as a student, but mostly because I feel that Dwell contains one of the best mixes of up-to-the moment information on the design world. Every month, I eagerly await my issue of Dwell, stopping all my studio work when it comes in the mail to peruse it cover to cover. It's the mix of irreverent wit, serious current events, and a touch of history that keeps me coming back. Thanks for doing what you do; I hope it continues into the future.

Gene Dassing
Newark, New Jersey

The photo you used to illustrate the 1957 Ford Fairlane 500 Skyliner, the car you named the "quintessential family sedan" of the era, is actually a 1956 Ford Crown Victoria. I owned a 1955 version of the car, so it is quite recognizable to me. I would also like to argue that while the Fairlane 500 was considered a family sedan, the Skyliner certainly was not. The Skyliner was Ford's technically advanced retractable hardtop/convertible. The entire top and back window folded and stowed automatically in the cavernous trunk space—quite an achievement back in the day. But, with the top down, the family's luggage would have had to be carried inside the car. Quintessential family sedan? I don't think so.

But, if that's not enough, your choice of Volkswagen's 2007 Passat as the car that carries on in the Ford Fairlane 500's tradition seems well off the mark. I'm not suggesting that the Passat is not a fine car; it is, in fact, a better car for its day than the Fairlane was in its time. I think a more logical parallel to the Fairlane 500 might be the Buick Lucerne or the Chrysler 300. Even those cars may be too good to compare to the ancient Ford. Auto technology has marched a very long way since the '50s.

Dwell is a fantastic publication, outstanding in almost every way—but you're not car people. I'll be retaining my subscriptions to *Car & Driver* and *Road & Track*.

Tom Neuenschwander
Fort Wayne, Indiana

***Editors' note:** Thanks very much for writing in with your expertise. Two other readers have mentioned the error, but they pegged the car as a '55 hardtop, not a '56—we'll have to look into that. In addition, you may enjoy our upcoming conversation with Chris Bangle, head of design for BMW, in the September issue. Our assistant editor, Christopher Bright, also recently test-drove the Hydrogen 7-series, so keep your eyes peeled on our new website for a review of that.*

I just wanted to take a few minutes to let you know how your magazine has changed my life. I am an interior designer, specializing in residential design, mostly kitchens and bathrooms. I receive about six to ten trade magazines a month but wait with anticipation for Dwell. I don't even open it right away. I save it until I have the time to read the entire thing cover to cover. I savor each moment—usually after my kids are asleep—and read it in the bathtub. I have recently bought a mid-century modern home built in 1963. It is 1,590 square feet. I love it.

I thought I would spend my days in a spec house until I could scrounge enough money to ▸

Letters

build an eco-structure or a prefab kit.

As soon as I walked into my house, I said, "This is it. I will take it!" My friends thought I was crazy. It is a great house with huge asymmetric windows, skylights in almost every room, car decking ceiling, and wood paneling (which I love). My favorite aspect of the house is that the walls read as visuals planes. I sit in my living room and am surrounded by light and space. It's delightful.

I have remodeled the kitchen—all eco-friendly, of course, and had all my cabinets made by a local cabinet maker. I ordered the Smith & Fong Plyboo sheets and finished them myself in a hardwood oil. I upgraded my refrigerator to the smallest one I could still fit five days' worth of meals in. My countertops are PaperStone and a salvaged piece of concrete I dug out of a pile of rejects. My favorite [thing in the kitchen] is my tile mosaic backsplash that I actually saved from the garbage—it had been installed on a job incorrectly so it had to be ripped out of a wall. I soaked it and put clear contact paper on it and reinstalled it myself. Thank you for inspiring me to live well and to not accept the ordinary just because it's easier.

Alinda Morris
Gig Harbor, Washington

Editors' note: *We encourage you to post your project on our website www.dwell.com/homes/show. We (and our readers) would love to see what you've done to the place.*

Correction:
In "Keep Your Eye on the Balto" (April 2007) we credited Matt Eastvold with the design of the salvaged timber table. The table was in fact designed by Soliyahn Keobounpheng of Silver Cocoon Design and built by Matt Eastvold.

In "Hz So Good" (April 2007) we refer to architect Simon Dickens as Simon Dawkins—twice! Ouch.

We deeply regret the errors.

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In addition to selling the most luggable luggage, Flight 001 (featured in this issue's "Dwell Reports") also purveys a variety of handy travel accoutrement (above) to help make the skies just that much more friendly.

Contributors

While Manhattan-based photographer **Jake Chessum** ("All Aboard," p. 88) didn't have to take a flight to get there, he did travel to the farthest reaches of Brooklyn to shoot this issue's "Dwell Reports." A native Britain, Chessum happily relocated to the colonies with his wife and two daughters.

Eviana Hartman ("Hecho en Mexico City," p. 220) is an editor at *Nylon* magazine who has also written for the *Washington Post*, *I.D.*, and *Vogue*. For her Dwell debut, she traveled from her home in Brooklyn to Mexico City to interview architect-turned-art dealer Hilario Galguera, who led her around to the city's architectural landmarks old and new. Her visit to a local goth disco later that evening, however, did not make it into the story.

Paris-based writer **Michelle Hoffman** ("Plain and Sempé," p. 213, and "What We Saw," p. 113) is perplexed by objects—specifically, our demands for their function and our desire for their uniqueness. Conversations with designers have fuelled both puzzlement and pleasure.

Pagan Kennedy ("Stuck Inside of Somerville with the Carbon Blues Again," p. 204) got hooked on biofuels when she rode in a "grease car" several years ago. On assignment for a magazine, she visited a mad scientist in Florence, Massachusetts, who had rigged his Volkswagen Rabbit so that it could run on cooking oil harvested from a nearby Chinese restaurant. After her first taste of petroleum independence, she's never stopped wanting more. Kennedy is also the author of nine books, including the recently released *The First Man-Made Man* (Bloomsbury).

Writing about a redesign by architects Jonathan Knowles and Laura Briggs for Dwell for the third time, New York contributing editor **Marc Kristal** ("The Italianate Job," p. 178) was pleased to discover that this husband-and-wife team has continued to refine and clarify its ideas about reshaping and unifying space, exploring the possibilities of light, and incorporating green strategies into old buildings.

Just days after discovering that he and his wife were expecting their first child, San Francisco–based photographer **Jason Madara** ("The Raiser's Edge," p. 73) found himself photographing the home of Michael and Jill McDonald and their two young girls. Madara was amazed at the timing: "I got to have a taste of what living with little ones is like. It was reassuring to see how they meshed modern style with the realities of having children. I'd always been fearful of the day I'd have to bring a baby gate into our house, until I saw Michael's ingenious solution to the safety issue."

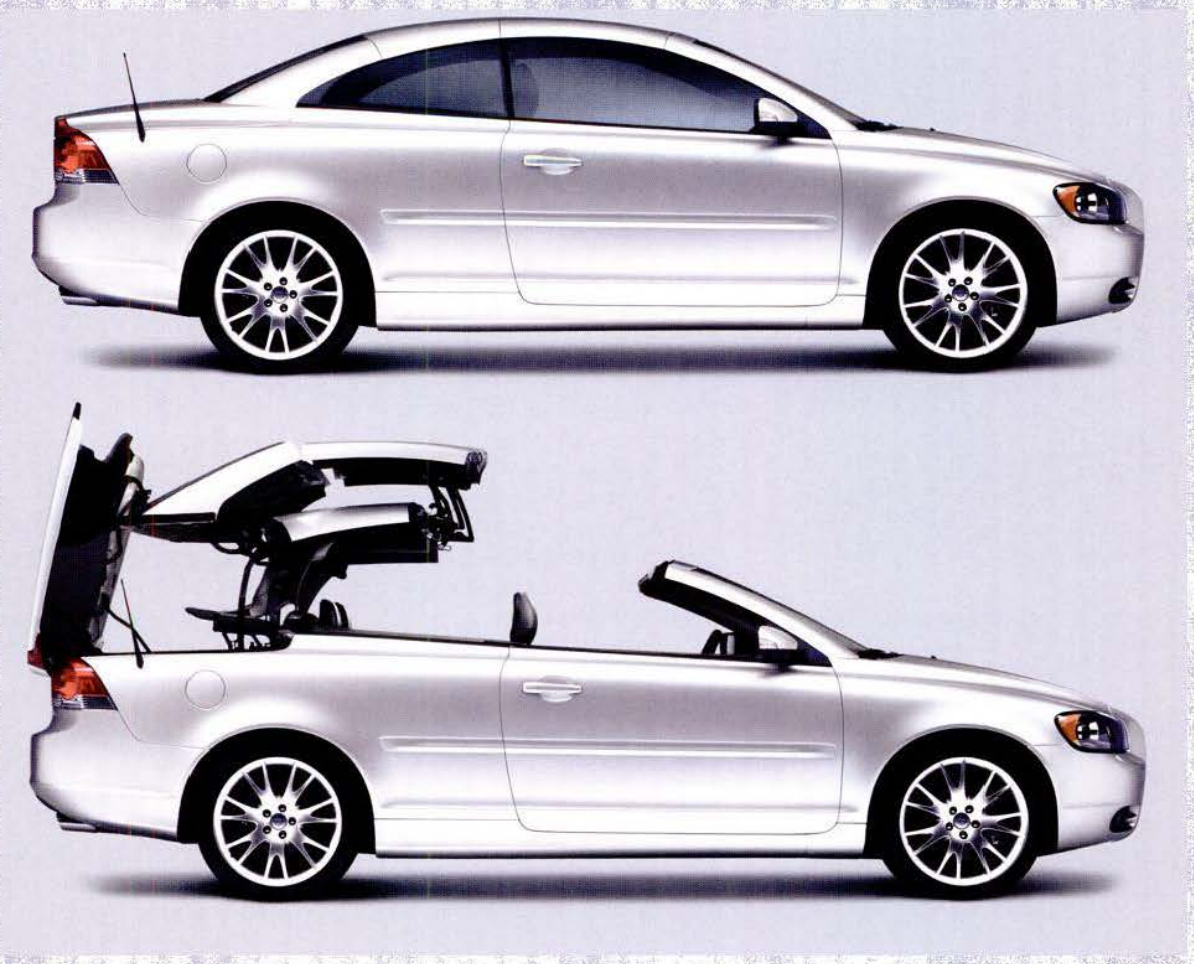
James Nestor ("It's My Trip in a Box," p. 196) is a writer living in San Francisco, California. To reconfirm sources, Nestor traveled to Central America shortly after completion of his article. It was there, in a dirt-floored Internet cafe—sipping very warm beer and munching on shrimp-flavored pork rinds—that this bio was written.

Despite liking neither polo nor World War II bunkers all that much, contributing editor **Jane Szita** ("Bunkering Down," p. 154) was enthused by Ben van Berkel's shiny new Tea House on a Bunker and not just because, being English, she likes tea.

Andrew Wagner ("Mississippi Turning," p. 186) is the editor-in-chief of *American Craft* magazine in New York. His ongoing love of the South, perhaps inspired by his mother's roots in Hickory, North Carolina, and concern for the residents in Mississippi and Louisiana propelled him to travel to De Lisle, Mississippi, for this story. "Still," Wagner says, "I was shocked by the devastation in the Gulf Coast almost a year after Hurricane Katrina struck." But more impressive, he says, "was the region's drive to get back on its feet."

New York–based photographer **Roy Zipstein** ("Mississippi Turning," p. 186) traveled to De Lisle, Mississippi, to photograph the new community building designed by SHoP Architects. He, too, was amazed by the devastation and the friendliness and positive outlook of the local residents. When he's not traveling the globe shooting for various clients, Zipstein enjoys walking his kids to school and prides himself on being the goalkeeper for the Montclair Microbursts, a soccer team made up of young-at-heart suburban dads. ■

PHOTO BY JAKE CHESSUM



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Home Word Bound

Any individual engaged in the effort to cope with his world is enmeshed in a tangle of phenomena relating to a near-infinity of times and places.
—George Nelson, *The Designer in the Modern World*

To this day, every issue of Dwell has been accompanied by the phrase "at home in the modern world." While it may be easy enough to dismiss this as the catchy tagline sitting below our logo, I've actually spent a good part of the past decade thinking about what those words might mean—to both myself and our readers—and the effect they have on everything we do at Dwell.

For me, "at home" implies honesty over shelter. Our personal experiences differ wildly, but we all have a conception of home. Notably, it's the place where we feel free to be ourselves, make our own judgments, and create a world formed entirely by our own views. Being at home also means its ok if you put your feet up, or spend the better part of the day in your underwear. There are no pretexts at home, just life as it is lived. "In the modern world" gives us a little context. As much as we can "cope," our world is not only inward-looking but also takes into view all that unfolds around it. Truly being in the modern world—as if walking some infinite tightrope—requires a cognizance of the steps that got us here and enables us to maintain a path forward.

The projects we selected for this issue are a manifestation of that particular intersection between past and present. UNStudio's Ben van Berkel tells us he doesn't believe in restoration because "you always put something new on top of it anyway." In the case of their Vreeland, Netherlands, Tea House (p. 154), they did just that, seamlessly fusing a gleaming steel outcrop onto a deteriorating early 20th century bunker.

We also travel to Vilnius, Lithuania (p. 166), where history is palpable but, according to architect Rytis Mikulionis, impossible to really understand if you're not Lithuanian. While we defer to his view, his home, a renovated loft in a 200-year-old building, which has formerly served as both palace and Soviet army barrack, hints at a unique interweaving of myriad Far Eastern European influences and cutting-edge continental style.

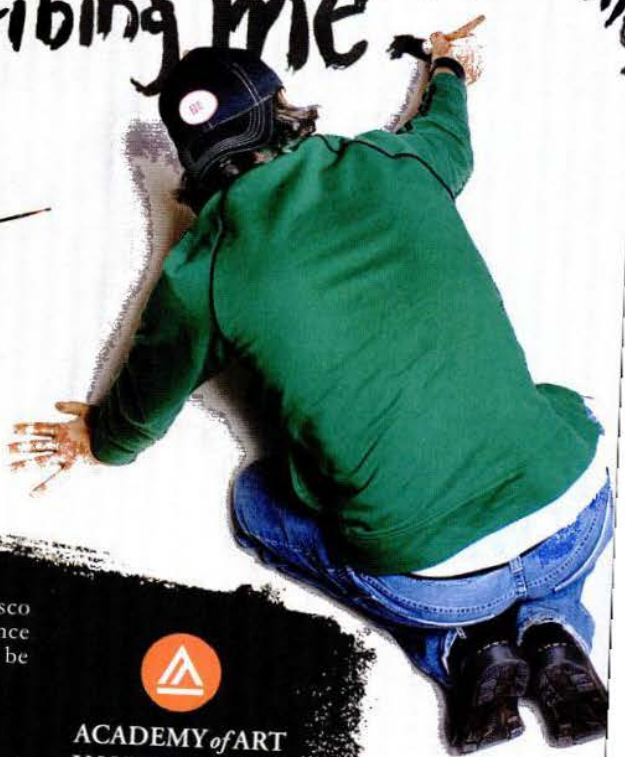
In Harlem (p. 178), architects Laura Briggs and Jonathan Knowles "dive back and forth [between present and past]." Thus, creating a modern "trunk of light" in Keisha Martin's Italianate brownstone required revisiting the 18th-century French practice of descriptive geometry.

Finally, in our backyard of San Francisco (p. 156), we meet Gretchen Rice and Kevin Farnham—owners of a house that by virtue of its unique lineage qualifies as the poster child for a new form of happenstance postmodernism. Their Russian Hill home's bones are 1908 Victorian, radically remixed in 1947 by local modernist Henry Hill. After moving in a year ago, Rice and Farnham brought the home squarely into the next century with a high-tech, high-design build-out of the formerly unfinished basement and backyard.

In the idealized setting of a magazine's pages it would be easy to portray a "modern world" composed entirely in the expected and fashionable modern style, but honestly that is a place where Dwell would never feel quite at home. ■

SAM GRAWE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
sam@dwell.com

my portfolio is me, everything I am and it's everything I'm not. It's my weakness and my strengths. my self-confidence and-esteem. my past, present, and most definitely my future. my portfolio is where I'm going. where I've been, places I shouldn't have been, gone and shouldn't go. It's everything and just a book. It's my inspiration, my generation and It's never finished, never done, always a work in progress touched, smelled, sensed and believed, and my worst ever seen, heard, fears and all my hopes at the same time. It's the beginning of the beginning and the end of an era. and so much more than a phase. It's my portfolio and describing it is describing me.



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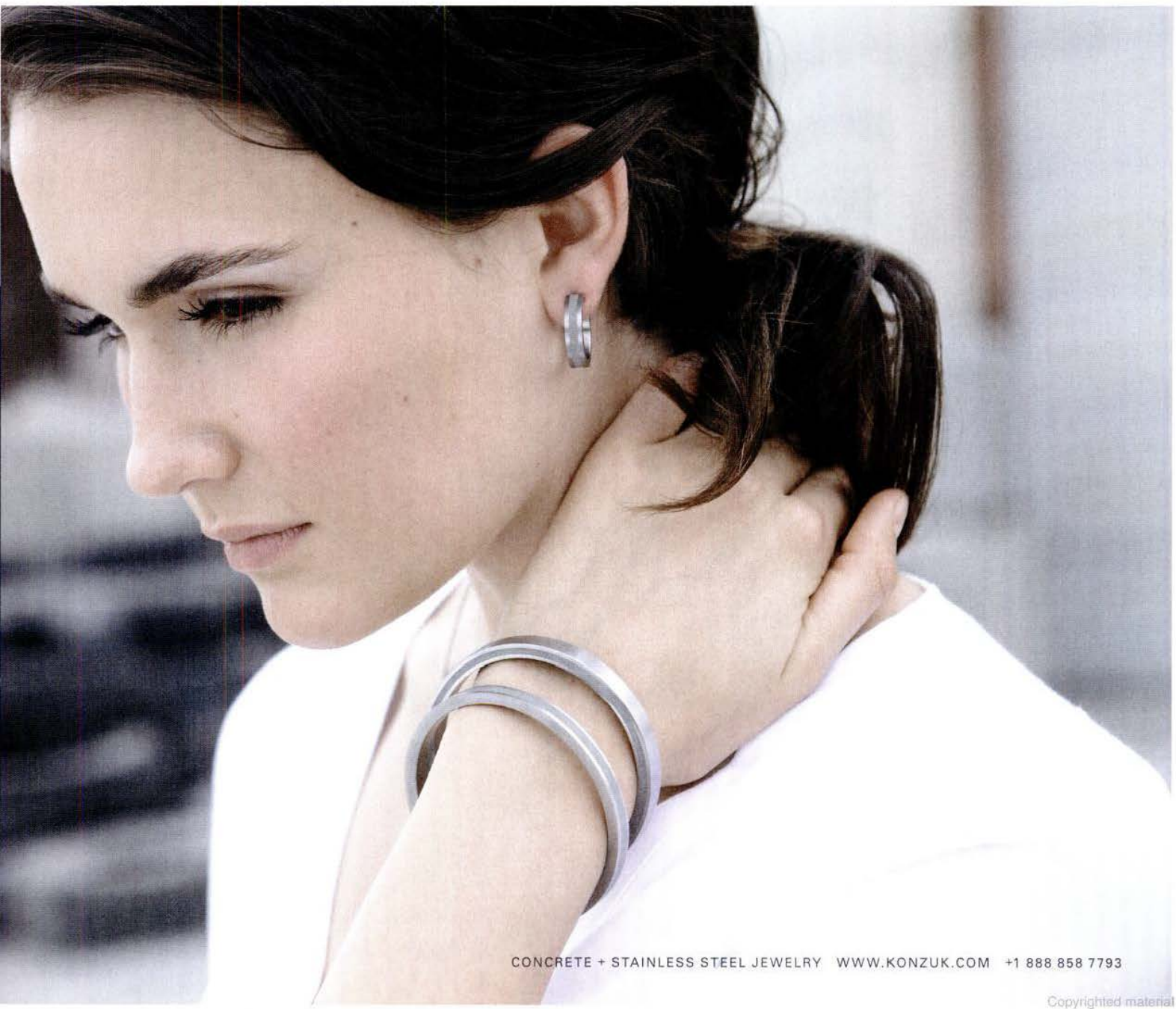

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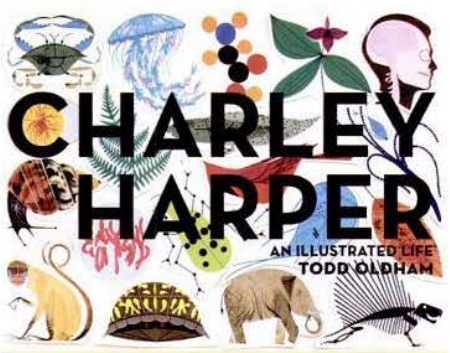
Lizards, *The Animal Kingdom*, 1968

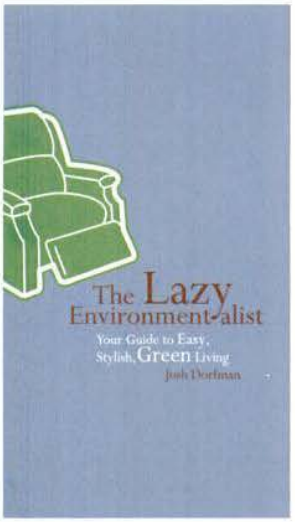
Charley Harper: An Illustrated Life / Edited by Todd Oldham / American Modern Books / $200 / www.ammobooks.com / A modernist naturalist, Charley Harper captures nature with drafting tools and a gift for wit.



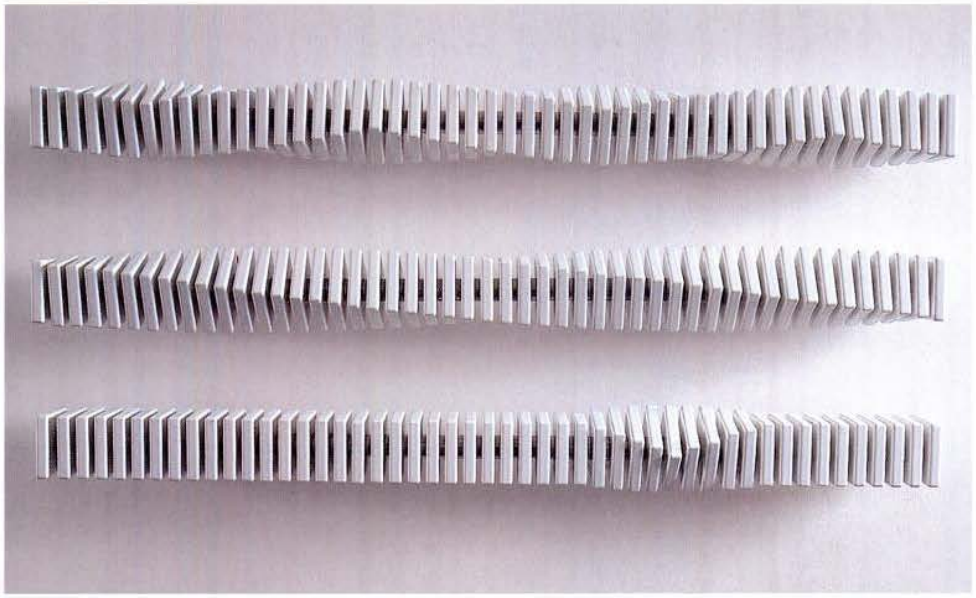
Chances are that most of us are subconsciously aware of Charley Harper's work—childhood memories of sifting through *The Giant Golden Book of Biology* (odds are good that Grandma still has a copy) or vague glimpses of national park posters. Taking time away from *Top Design*, Todd Oldham edits this massive summation of the 86-year-old illustrator's career—from his earliest commercial work for Ford and Hallmark, to his cheeky line drawings for *Betty Crocker's Dinner for Two Cookbook* (Harper jokes that he turned to animals because he couldn't draw happy enough housewives), to the now-classic compilation of serigraphs *Birds and Words*. Four limited-edition boxed variations contain an original signed serigraph.

Frank Stella
Chinese Pavilion (model), 1998

Frank Stella: Painting Into Architecture / 1 May–29 July / Metropolitan Museum of Art / New York, NY / www.metmuseum.org / Where does sculpture end and architecture begin? Frank Stella, the artist known for his colorful and chaotic works, explores that ambiguous boundary with works ranging from small models to related paintings and sculptures.



The Lazy Environmentalist / By Josh Dorfman / Stewart, Tabori & Chang / $14.95 / www.hnabooks.com / Arguing that lethargic Americans actually do care about the planet, Josh Dorfman offers a low-impact, consumer-centric environmentalism for the sloth set. Turns out that even though shopping at American Apparel might make you look like a dirty hipster, your conscience will remain clean.



Radiator / By Marco Dessì / www.marcodessi.com / Granted, old-fashioned, cast iron, coil radiators are kind of cool, but those newer baseboard models have about as much élan as a photocopier: They're the reason why radiator redesigns are *hot* these days. Marco Dessì's unit—inspired by the industrial old and built along the lines of the new—will curb your urge to pull up the floorboards for inlaid heating.

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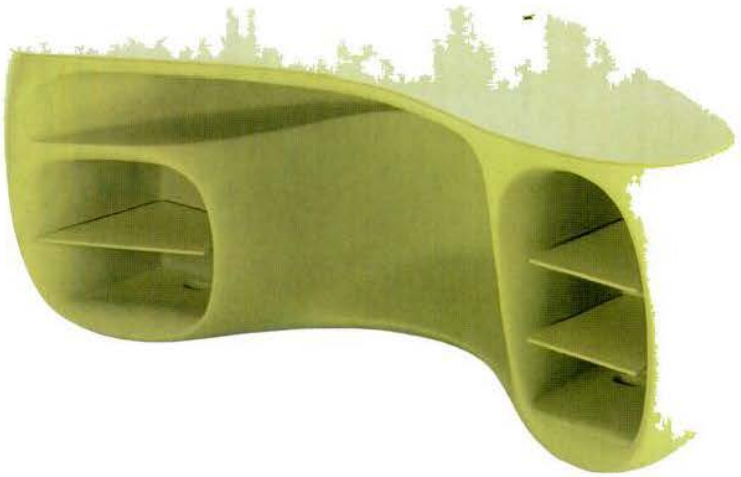
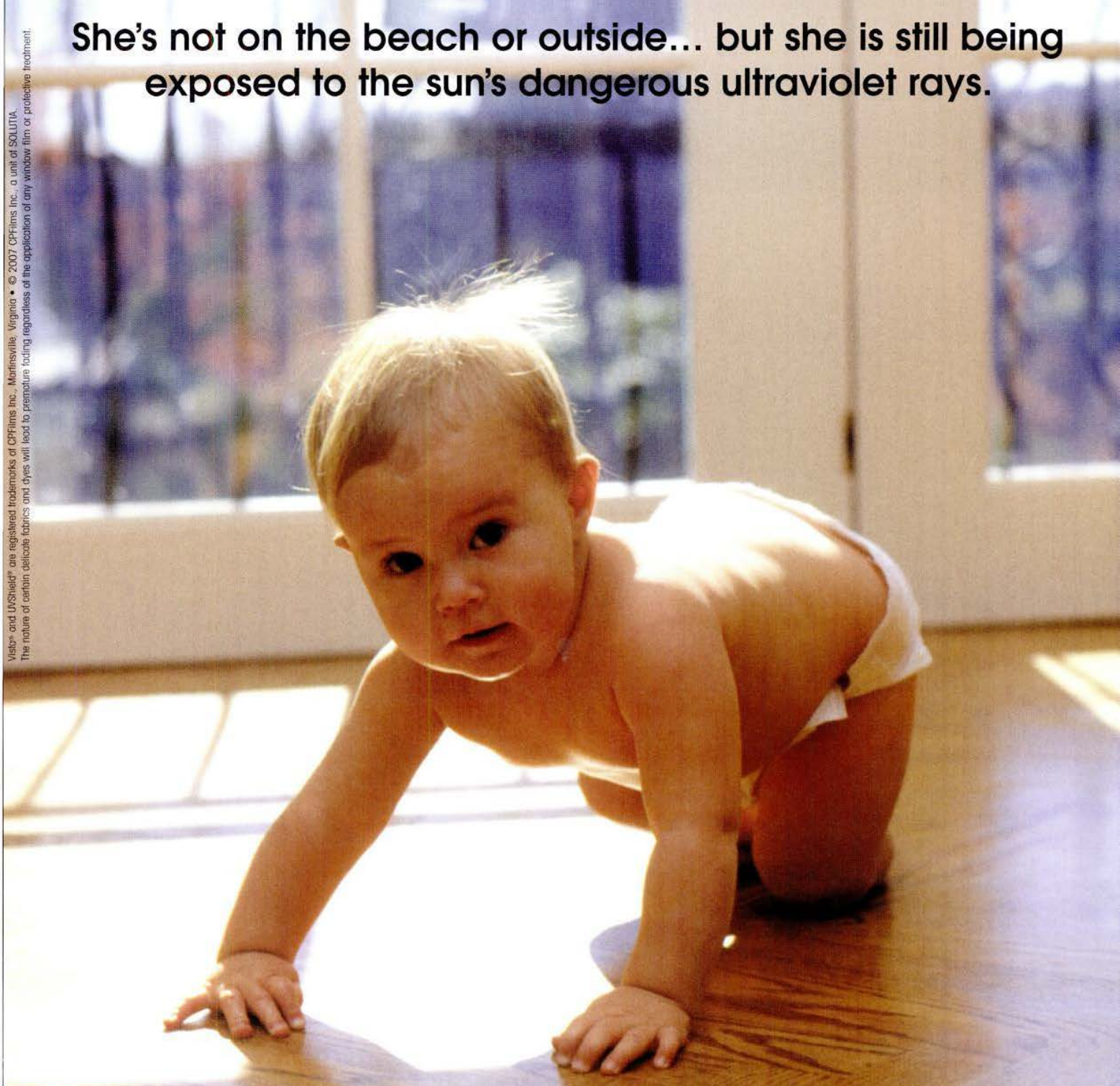
Design for the Other 90% / 4 May–23 Sept / Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum / New York, NY / www.cooperhewitt.org / Only about 10 percent of the world's population enjoys the benefit of design, while close to 5.8 billion go without. But that inequality may be changing: A groundswell of designers are working to better address the need for food, shelter, and sanitation.

BaObab / By Philippe Starck for Vitra / www.vitra.com / Le Petit Prince's escritoire ideal? BaObab's light yellow, light gray, red, aqua, and lime green palette, paired with Starck's sense of proportion, adds a whimsical accent (aigu) to the wireless office. And while "it is only with the heart that one can see rightly," what is essential is, in this case, visible to the eye.



She's not on the beach or outside... but she is still being exposed to the sun's dangerous ultraviolet rays.



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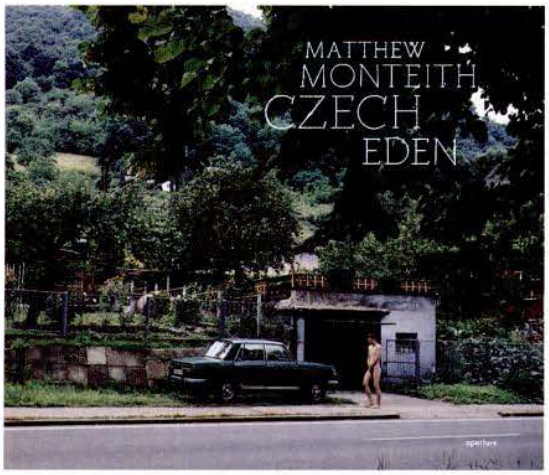
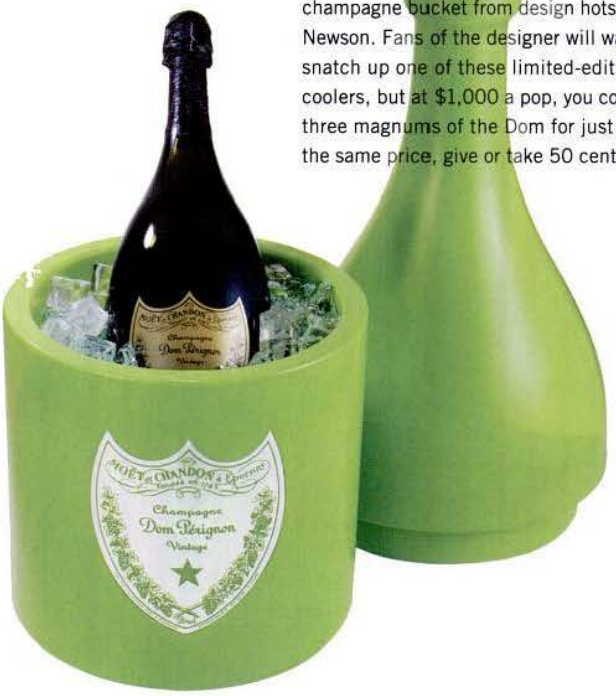
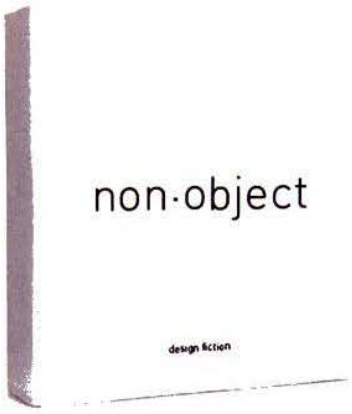
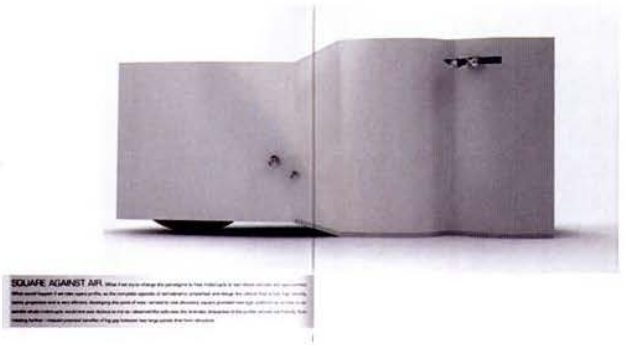


Matthew Montieth: Czech Eden / Aperture / $40 / www.aperture.org / In his introduction, Ivan Klíma discusses the perils and advantages of documenting a nation as an outsider: "Even the most ordinary news photos can be spiteful, kind, malicious, shocking, or coolly detached... people often refuse to regard a photograph as a work of art in its own right, a work that says something not only about the external world but also about the inner world of the photographer—which is his or her main intention. A photographic oeuvre says more about the photographer's relationship to reality than about reality itself." Montieth is no Josef Sudek or Emila Medková, nor does he purport to be; he is an American photographer capturing a land of collisions: absent of a political, social, or ideological lens, Montieth documents the Czech Republic personally and meditatively.

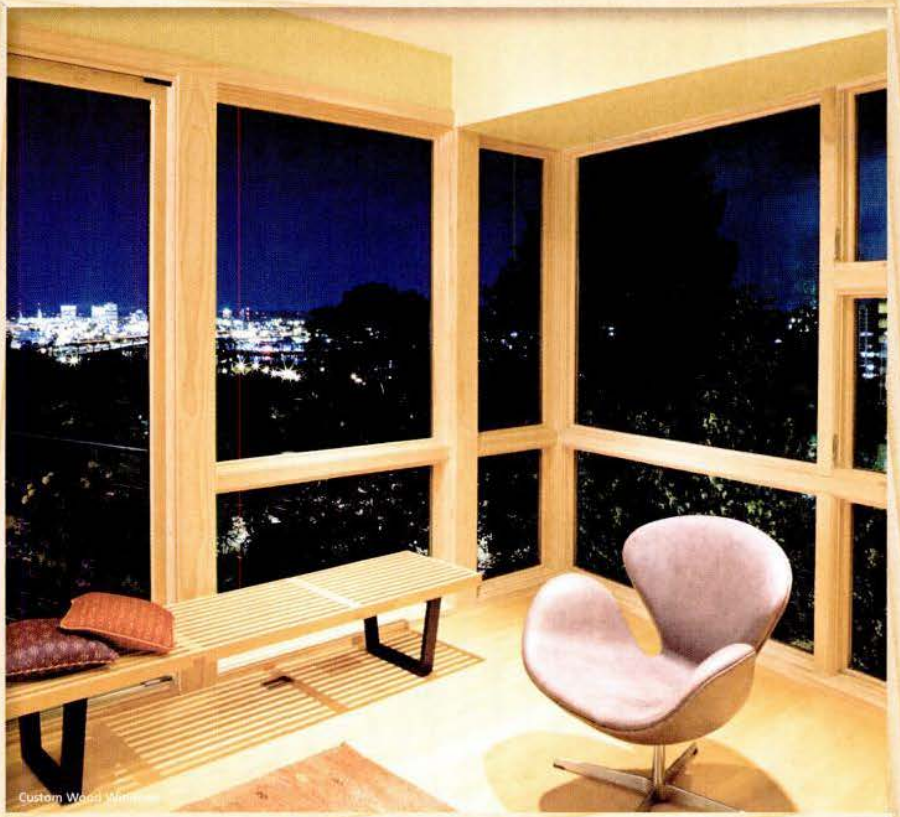
Dom Pérignon / By Marc Newson / www.mhusa.com / When 50 Cent first went "up in da club, bottle full of bub," he may very well have had a magnum of Dom Pérignon in mind. It's unclear, however, if Fiddy felt the lack of this massive new Playmobil-style champagne bucket from design hotshot Marc Newson. Fans of the designer will want to snatch up one of these limited-edition coolers, but at $1,000 a pop, you could pop three magnums of the Dom for just about the same price, give or take 50 cents.







Non·object / By Branko Lukic / www.nonobjectbook.com / The space between you and this magazine is the non·object. This foray into a new genre of "design fiction" presents inventive products as interactive experiences, rather than, well, objects. If this doesn't make sense yet, the DVD might further elucidate this non-sense, objectively speaking, of course.



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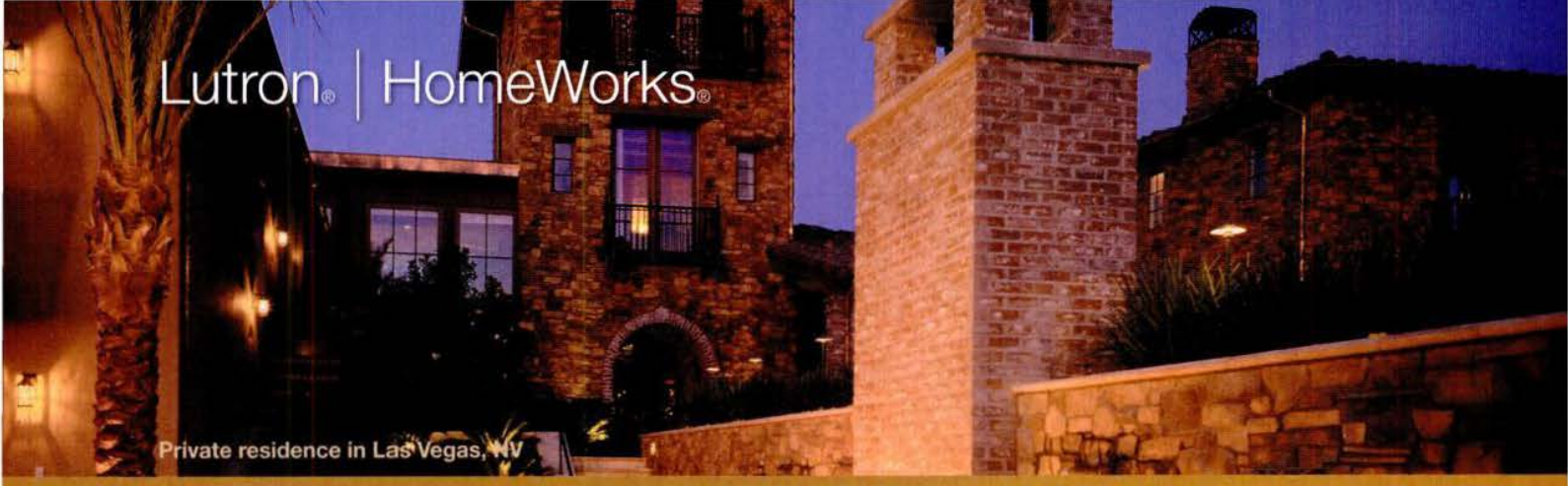
Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art / By Steven Holl / www.nelson-atkins.org /

Add Steven Holl's glowing addition for the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City to the list of things worth waiting for.

Holl had to figure out how to marry his new building with the museum's original Beaux-Arts edifice and 22-acre sculpture park. He did the integrating by excavating, creating five, mostly subterranean gallery levels that rise out of the ground to become glass-sheathed boxes. These invite and refract light into the galleries by day and float like lanterns on the landscape by night. The Holl whole is definitely greater than the sum of its parts.

PHOTOS BY ROLAND HALBE / COURTESY OF THE NELSON-ATKINS MUSEUM OF ART 2006



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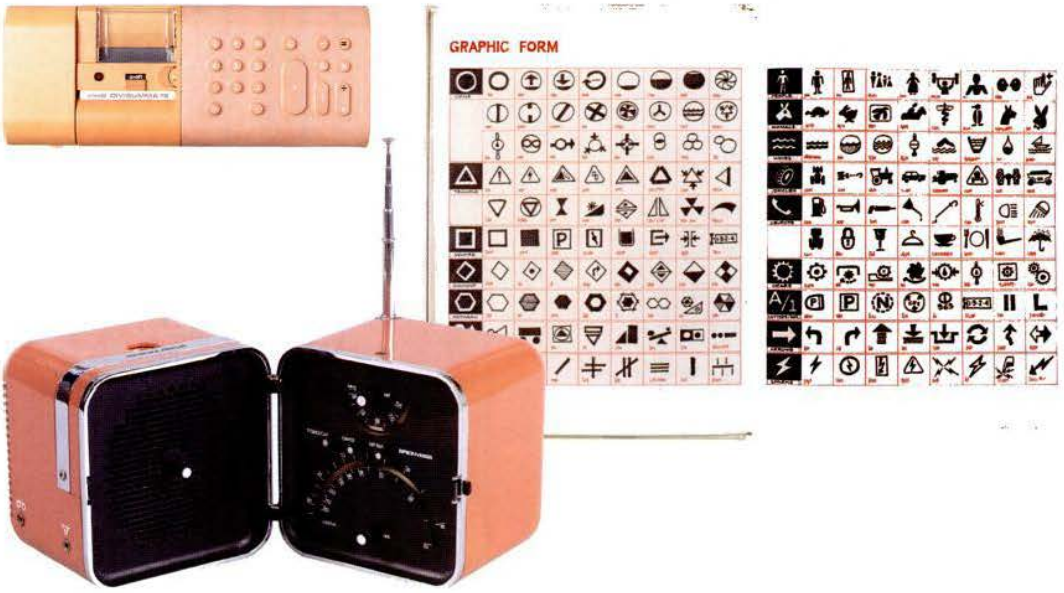
Mario Bellini
Divisumma 18, 1973

Henry Dreyfuss
International Dictionary of Symbols, 1969

Richard Sapper
ts 502 portable radio, 1964

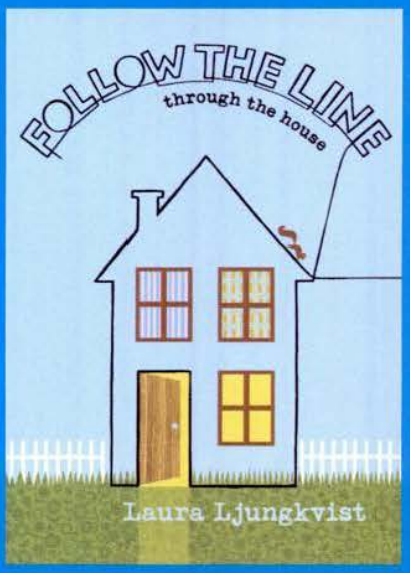
Charles and Ray Eames
Child's Chair, 1944



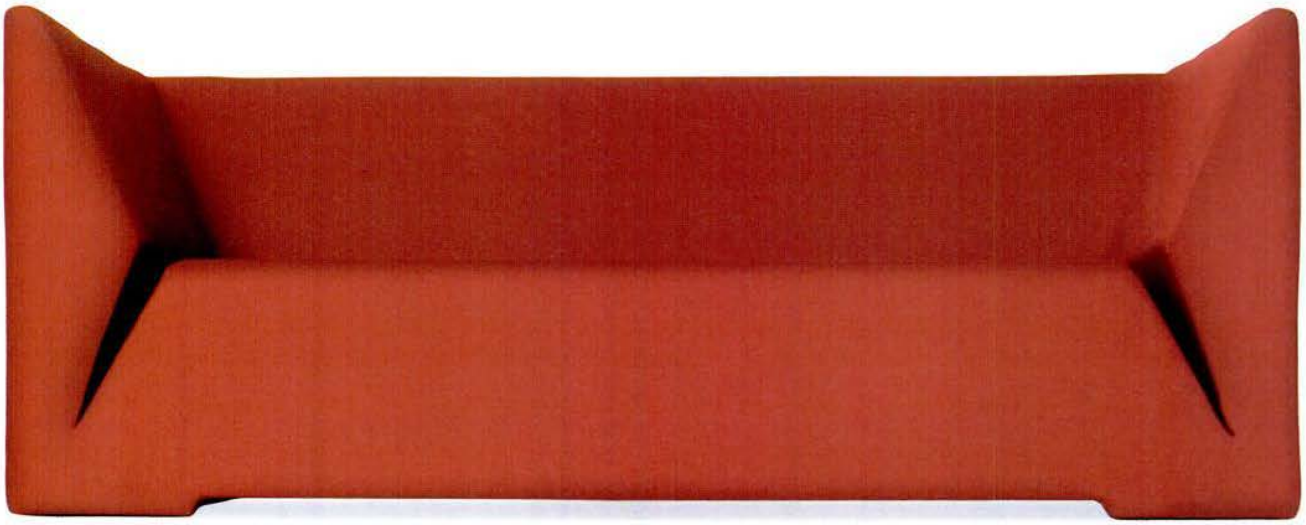
IDEO Selects: Works from the Permanent Collection / 22 June–20 Jan / Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum / New York, NY / www.cooper-hewitt.org / Design consultants IDEO have delved deep into the Cooper-Hewitt archives to curate more than 30 objects that display what they deem "design thinking." While we can't be certain what precisely is on the minds of these chairs, books, and radios, their place in the design canon is decidedly clear.

IDEO's selection of the alpha objects of pedestrian design like flashlights, typewriters, and bandages show the confluence of design and practicality. Highlights include the delightful Divisumma 18 electronic printing calculator by Mario Bellini that made early use of the microprocessor, and a winsome addition to any modernist's nursery: the Child's Chair by Charles and Ray Eames, a sleek seat that was among the first molded-plywood designs to be mass-produced.

Pasta pot / By Patrick Jouin and Alain Ducasse for Alessi / www.alessi.com / Perennial design icon Alessi turned ethnic stereotypes on their head by turning to the French to design the perfect pasta pot. Designer Patrick Jouin and chef Alain Ducasse's new pan relies on an old-world cooking method called concentration, which uses less water and doesn't dilute the food's natural flavors. Updates to the traditional design include a hollow, curved handle that prevents heat transfer and provides a handy place to stash your spoon.



Follow the Line Through the House / By Laura Ljungkvist / Penguin Young Readers Group / $16.99 / www.penguingroup.com / Normally we aren't advocates of following the straight and narrow, but *Follow the Line Through the House* is a fun adventure. The bright pages are filled with a hodgepodge of prints and graphics, stylish and smart enough to actually be enjoyed by an adult audience. Ages three and up.



Divide sofa / By Nolen Niu / www.nolenniu.com / Most oversized sofas are so wide and deep you end up lounging, whether you like it or not. Made of high-density foam (sans cushions), and measuring just 72 inches across, Los Angeles–based designer Nolen Niu's couch is less consumptive of both you and your space. The tapered gap surrounding the seat either collects dust or nicely accommodates a vacuum nozzle, depending on your point of view.

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CITIZEN : Citizen / www.citizen-citizen.com / A sort of Duchamp meets Droog meets discount bin design collective, CITIZEN : Citizen's hyperrefined offerings suggest that they're serious about high design. Dead serious. And by serious, we mean not serious at all.

Cory Ingram
Crude (tester), 2006

Tobias Wong
Doorstop, 2003

Cory Ingram
Keffiyeh Wallet, 2006

CITIZEN : Citizen
Shoplifter Tote, 2006

The creative direction of CITIZEN : Citizen is for the conceptual man who has everything. And who better to head up this entourage of irreverent design stars but Tobias Wong, the don of design decadence? He and his cadre flesh out seemingly limitless (though spare in palette) iterations of objects that confront the theme of design meets art meets conspicuous consumption.

By reappropriating objects like crude oil and a traditional Keffiyeh Scarf, Corey Ingram asks us to question our values (both literal and ideological), while Tobias Wong asseses the weight of high design by using an iconic Aalto vase as a mold, which must be broken to produce a concrete doorstop. The wit and irony of the collection—not to mention the allure of high-concept consumable art—make it an easy (golden) pill to swallow.

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The architecture of the perfect meal is just as important as planning an amazing party or renovating your new abode. It requires attention to detail, timing, beauty, and taste. Building a delicious and nutritious dining experience is easy when you start with beef. Lean beef lends itself to a simple, pleasing presentation that also ensures you hit the mark on rich taste.

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CHIPOTLE SALSA STEAK

Total preparation and cooking time: 25 to 30 minutes. Marinating time: 6 hours or overnight.

- 1 beef top round steak, cut ¾ to 1 inch thick (1 pound)
- 1½ cups prepared chipotle salsa
- 2 medium limes, peel grated, juiced
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

1. Combine salsa, lime peel and juice, and cumin in small bowl. Place beef steak in food-safe plastic bag. Pour ¾ cup salsa marinade over steak; turn steak to coat. Close bag securely and marinate in refrigerator 6 hours or overnight. Cover and reserve remaining marinade in refrigerator for sauce.
2. Remove steak from marinade; discard marinade. Place steak on grid over medium, ash-covered coals. Grill ¾-inch thick steak 8 to 9 minutes (1-inch thick steak 16 to 18 minutes) for medium rare doneness, turning occasionally. (Do not overcook.)
3. Meanwhile stir cilantro into reserved marinade. Carve steak into thin slices. Serve with sauce and garnish with additional cilantro, if desired. Makes 4 servings.

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Recipe and photo source: www.BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com.

Modernism: Designing a New World 1914–1939 / 17 Mar–29 July / Corcoran Gallery of Art / Washington, DC / www.corcoran.org / It's the best of modernism, distilled in our nation's capital: The Corcoran is host to the largest exhibition of modern art in the United States to date, flown in from London's Victoria and Albert Museum. They claim it's the most comprehensive show of modernism to hit our soil; this exquisite painting entitled *Pienture/Nature Morte* (c. 1925–6) by Patrick Henry Bruce makes us think they might be right.

Hook Box / By Luca Nichetto for Bosa Ceramiche / www.bosatrade.com / Those of us who leave a wake of clothes, cell phones, and other pocket miscellany strewn about upon returning home from a hard day's work have a chance to clean up our act. The Hook Box is an attractive ceramic solution for the organizationally challenged; now if we could just remember where we left our keys.


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XS: Small Structures, Green Architecture / By Phyllis Richardson / Universe / $49.95 / www.rizzoliusa.com / Big ideas are squeezed into *XS: Small Structures, Green Architecture.* The follow-up to *XS: Big Ideas, Small Buildings* shifts gears from the then-hot topic of prefabs to the now-hot topic of environmentally sound small-scale structures like orbital tree houses, undulating footbridges, and fashionable fruit warehouses. More than a few of the projects featured look familiar, but the majority of the compact designs are still fresh.

Renewal fabrics / By Knoll / www.knolltextiles.com / Earth-friendly furnishings continue to ingratiate themselves with the mainstream. To the delight of the heedful hoi polloi, earlier this year Knoll introduced Renewal, a collection of fabrics made from recycled polyester stripped of all backings and finishes that impede recycling. The collection consists of three patterns: Spark's subtle woven dot design is a welcome alternative to a staid solid ($24 per yard); Prep's (below) thin, metallic multicolored stripes scream post-collegiate bling ($27 per yard); and Betwixt's archaic nomenclature belies its modern arrangement of playful geometry ($28 per yard). Available in 28 colors, the patterns are numerous enough to sate the green-hungry masses.

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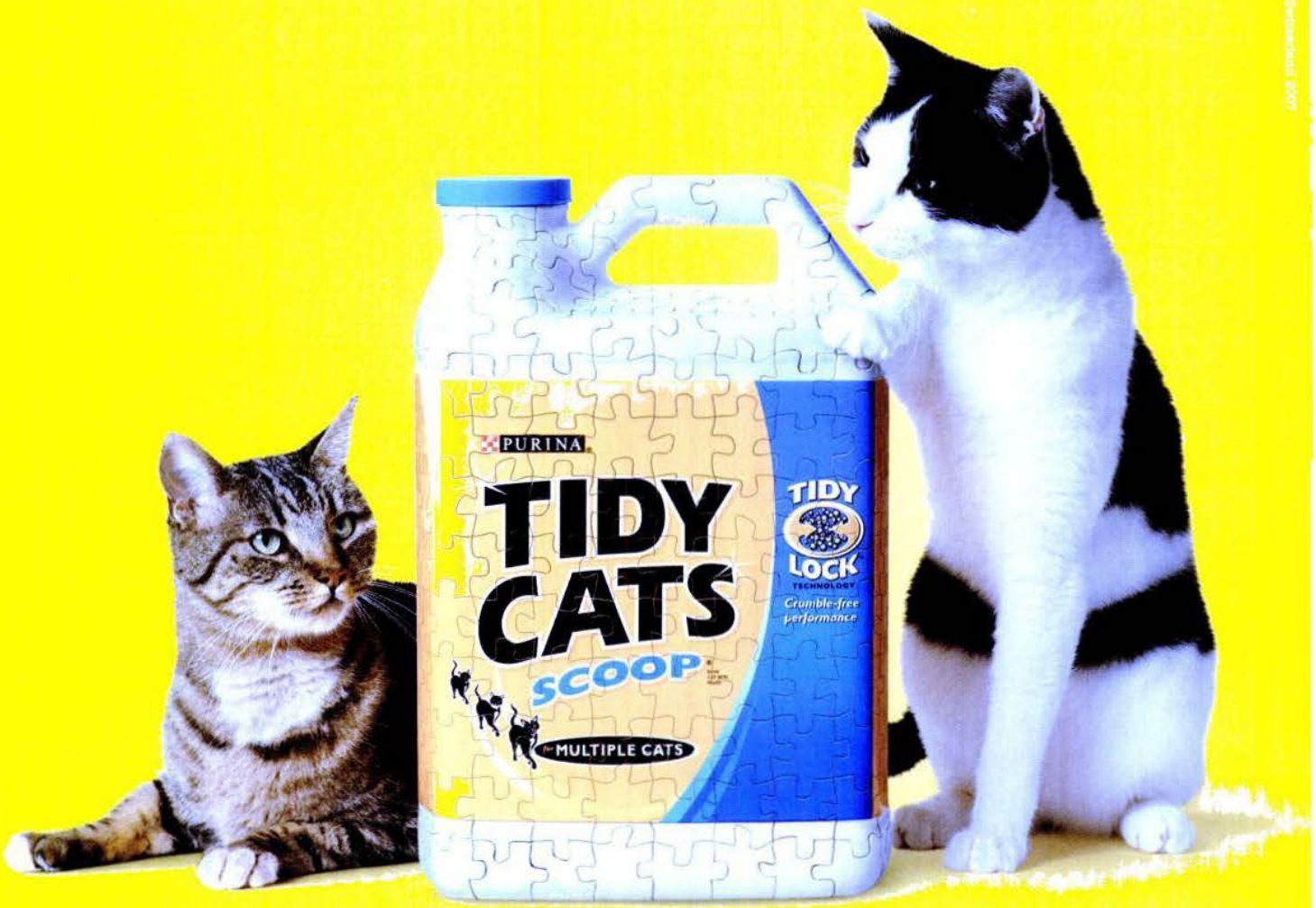

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The Raiser's Edge

Oakland, California, doesn't want for stately old Victorian houses, but heritage and zoning regulations often make them tough to renovate, particularly if you have an aesthetic departure in mind. By raising the house, Mike McDonald was able to preserve the façade and create a modern new office space below.

Mike McDonald, an Oakland, California–based builder, faced a common problem for Bay Area homeowners: an aesthetically pleasing, historically significant, but structurally shaky Victorian. A full renovation was in order, as was a solid fix to a fragile foundation. With a boom of new construction afoot in Oakland's Uptown neighborhood—a good indicator is the Whole Foods under construction a few blocks away—McDonald wanted to both preserve the charm of his 1892 abode and make an architectural gesture that would firmly plant the 115-year-old building in the 21st century. He also needed new shared office space for his construction company, McDonald Construction and Building, and oft-collaborator, designer, and architect-to-be Ian Read's Level Four Studio. Finding an answer to McDonald's problems would require a little heavy lifting.

"My company has done about a dozen lifts in Oakland in the last five years or so," McDonald says. He's not talking about free weights, or English elevators, but raising entire houses. "To lift a house, you slide two big steel I-beams under the length of the house, put hydraulic jacks under them, and press the 'up' button," he quips. Naturally it's not quite that simple—a matrix of braces and no small amount of digging go into the process—but with an experienced house mover, it's not as difficult as one may think. Though a vertical move was clearly in order, the house got a lateral adjustment as well. "It was a major chiropractic job," says McDonald, "the house was leaning about a foot toward the neighbor's place."

The foundation needed replacing, and with no fireplace or exterior set of stairs to be saved, lifting made good structural and financial sense—you can see your own house on pylons for as little as $5,000. Raising the house about four feet and digging out another four feet below created space for the shared office and garage to tuck snugly beneath his Victorian.

The office space is rough and spare, a clear allusion to its jarring origins, with exposed concrete walls and steel ▸

Ian Read (below) wanted the addition to reflect the time in which it was constructed, not the Victorian times in which the house was erected. The industrially styled doors (left) situate the office space squarely in the 21st century.

exterior doors with clear-coated steel cladding. Read, who designed the office and the renovations to the residential units above, parses the design aesthetic like this: "It was only by lifting and excavating that the studio space was created—with this in mind we decided to construct the lower level in contrast to the existing Victorian." He wanted the new level to reflect the separation, both physically and aesthetically, from the original house, as well as the time period in which it was built. "The best description I can give is a beautiful scar," he adds.

Though the new 1,200 square feet of office and parking space do the trick for now, McDonald has grander plans for the spot. "For the foreseeable future, we see this as our office space," he says. "But we did have it outfitted and permitted as a café. We saw it as potentially a cool little neighborhood wine bar or espresso bar if we ever move on." Boasting the rough elements of a café or a live/work space (how many two-man offices have a shower and the bones of a small commercial kitchen?), McDonald saw flexibility as key to Read's design.

Though he plans to move into a new home in North Oakland—to be one of California's first LEED-certified homes—McDonald, his wife, Jill, and their two daughters currently live in one of the two newly renovated upstairs units. "We weren't even planning to live here, and at the beginning I was not looking forward to it," says Jill, anxious about being downtown and without a backyard. She soon changed her mind. Read lives next door with his wife in an as-yet unlifted, soon-to-be-remodeled Victorian of his own and Jennifer Strate O'Neal—curatorial manager of Creative Growth, a studio for artists with disabilities just across the street—rents the first-floor unit where she lives with her two children. "We have our own little compound here," says Jill.

Perhaps the biggest boon, and in some ways disappointment, of the McDonald's residence is the additional 500-square-foot space upstairs, created from a converted attic. "We had grand ideas about the attic as a master bedroom," says Jill. "But with a three-year-old who still gets up at night, we didn't want to be on a different floor. We have the space, but we don't feel comfortable using it." The four McDonalds share two bedrooms and one bathroom on the first floor. "That one bathroom has become the family bathroom," says McDonald. "We got ▸

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The McDonalds (below) enjoy the extra space afforded by their attic addition. The kitchen (top right) looks toward Read's house, and the custom banister (below right) is a constant and classy reminder of the crafty designer, who is also godfather to the McDonalds' daughter, Erin.

a big bucket for the kids. That's where we wash them."

As the builder and the client, McDonald relied on a few time-tested methods for easing the strain on the pocketbook: the help of inventive friends, clever custom design, and—it almost goes without saying at this point—IKEA. "Ian was the real key to keeping the finishing costs down—his design is elegant yet simple, and he can build as well as he designs," he raves. Read managed to create what might just be the world's most stylish baby gates, and pull off the unit's coup de grâce, a bespoke banister and railing up to the attic/guest room that's as attractive as it is childproof. Mounting a series of stained two-by-sixes on a custom steel pole, he created a railing system that gives the open living space considerable character and a kind of deconstructed Tudor appeal. Add a couple translucent panels to keep mobile moppets safely on the floor, and you've got childproof chic.

While McDonald only plans to stay in the house until the new space is done, his vision for it extends well into the future. "We knew the high-rises were coming, and we thought our place could be a collision of traditional and modern and a beacon in the neighborhood of what was." ▸

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How to Make My House Your House

A Whitewashed Interior Doors

To give the interior doors a little character, Read took the cheapest solid-core doors he could find, whitewashed them to give them a splash of Tom-Sawyer-esque (not the Rush song) character, and installed a small rectangle of blue glass. Voilà, custom doors for around a hundred bucks.

B Baby Gates

Lest the young McDonalds feel the custom doors don't address their needs, Read and metalworker Chris French fashioned simple, geometric baby gates to keep the tots from toppling. The Mondrian-esque boxes in the gates are echoed in the office's window bars.

C Shotgun Bathroom

Blessed, or perhaps beset, with long and narrow "shotgun bathrooms," McDonald opted for wall-hung toilets, which not only saved space but allowed for more generously sized showers. Concrete countertops from Oakland's Concrete Works continue the industrial theme, but their refined finishes make them better suited to toothbrushes than paintbrushes.

Fluorescent Ceiling Panels

Geno Dennis, a San Francisco artist, and Read and McDonald's ice hockey buddy, affixed small Masonite panels to the vault of the loft's ceiling (page 76 above the seated McDonalds). Painted white on the bottom, they blend into the ceiling, but their upward-facing surfaces are painted fluorescent greens and reds and pick up enough ambient light to glow. "At certain times of the day," says McDonald "the pieces look as if they are hardwired and lit from within." ■

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Story by Aaron Britt

Illustrations by Mike Perry

The Country's Best Yurt

The Nomad, a natty update of the classic Mongolian yurt, differs from its modern-day peers not just in its green design but also in its light, collapsable frame and quick construction time.

Lakes of ink have been spilled over a peculiarly American wanderlust, whether it's our ancestors' push westward or our current penchant for cross-country moves at the drop of a promotion, mobility is the norm, even the expectation. Yet our houses remain models of permanence. Whether we sleep in bungalows, brownstones, or '50s-era ranch houses, we don't uproot them when we uproot ourselves. Put quite simply: Our homes don't reflect our habits.

Enter the Nomad. Modeled on that 2,000-year-old stalwart of transience, the Mongolian yurt, or *ger* (rhymes with "air"), the Nomad is Ecoshack's modernist update on the Cadillac of tents.

Stephanie Smith founded Ecoshack—whose projects have included a solar-powered beekeeper's hut made of recycled bee boxes—on a few acres just outside Joshua Tree National Park. It began in 2003 as a design studio, informal testing facility, and lifestyle think tank for designers, architects, inventors, and artists, and has since expanded to become a Los Angeles–based design studio and manufacturer.

Smith's past collaborations have included big names like Reebok and IKEA, but her abiding interests run toward community. She investigated China's cultural adaptation to globalization while at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. She studied under, and later went to work for, Rem Koolhaas, but after spending time at Arcosanti—Paolo Soleri's experimental, ecologically minded, "arcologist" city some 70 miles outside Phoenix—she committed herself to bridging the gap between the fringes of design and the culture at large.

"On a trip out to Joshua Tree I happened upon a shack," she says—a description that, it turns out, is totally apt—"fell in love with it, found out who owned it, offered him cash, and was in escrow a few days later. I realized that the high-desert area today looks a lot like what I imagine Palm Springs looked like 50 years ago: a place where extreme conditions trigger new ways of thinking about ▸


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Beyond green materials and a more compact construction, Ecoshack's innovation is, we're pleased to report, a looker. It's seven feet high, 12 feet wide, about 120 square feet, and rather suggestive of a glowing, space-age orb.

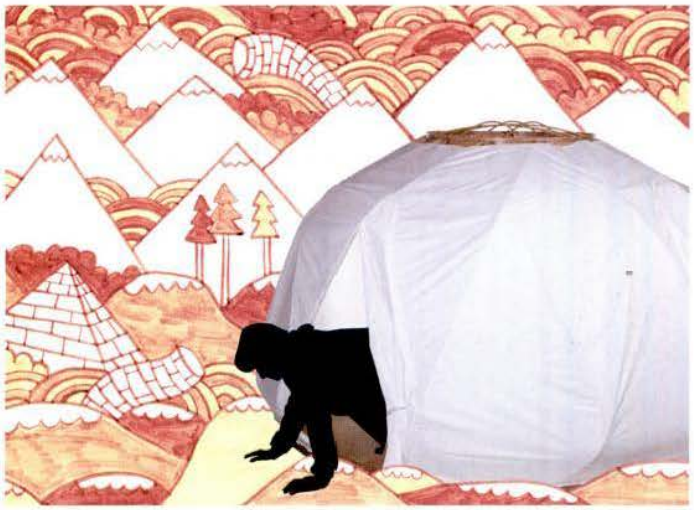
dwelling and lifestyle." After holding a design competition for a sustainable camping structure and doing several custom designs for clients, she started thinking about the hardy herders' home as architectural product.

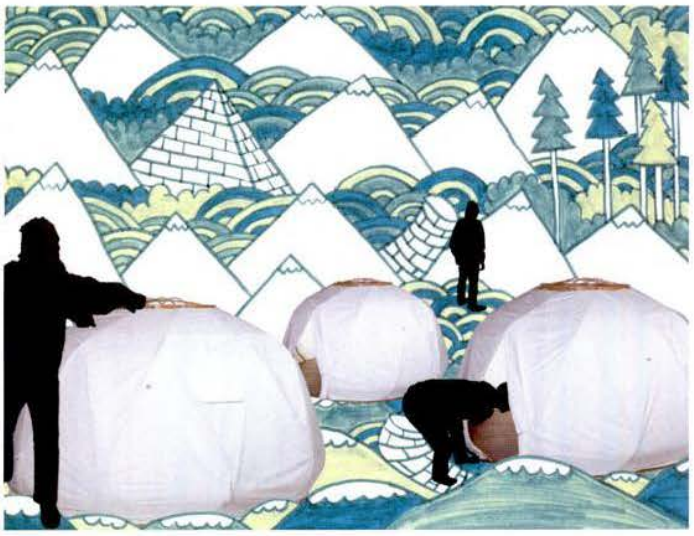
"There's a healthy niche market for yurts," Smith tells us. "But they're either copies of Mongolian yurts, or made in the traditional way out of new materials. I saw a chance to innovate, particularly in terms of modernizing the design and greening the materials."

Her view of how to use the yurt, meanwhile, is distinctly old-fashioned. "People in America are more likely to use their yurts in a permanent way, on roofs or in backyards. I wanted to get back to the nomadic yurt. That's really the genesis of the Nomad."

Traditional yurts use a fairly complex lattice framework, a platform that often has to be built anew each time the yurt is moved, and a central tension ring holding it all together. The Nomad's design is much simpler and more easily assembled. The wall and roof structures are combined into one single frame made of bamboo—an abundant, light, and remarkably strong wood. "The bamboo all comes from Vietnam and is fashioned there by local artisans," Smith explains. "We tried to get it all made closer to home, but commercial bamboo is a strictly Asian affair." The ring and platform are made of plywood, so there's no need to forage for a new one every time. They come in a modular kit, and the platform's 12 pieces lock together to form a hexagonal base. You can also have your platform's surfaces done with a plyboo (that's bamboo plywood, naturally) finish. Ecoshack also replaces the yurt's traditional felted wool covering with WeatherMax, a sustainable outdoor-use fabric that's breathable and water repellant.

Ecoshack has more in mind, though, than simple aesthetics. "My mission, if I have one," Smith adds, "is to facilitate and cultivate green experiences in nature. Small structures help realize that. When you're out in the desert in a yurt for three nights, something happens." ■



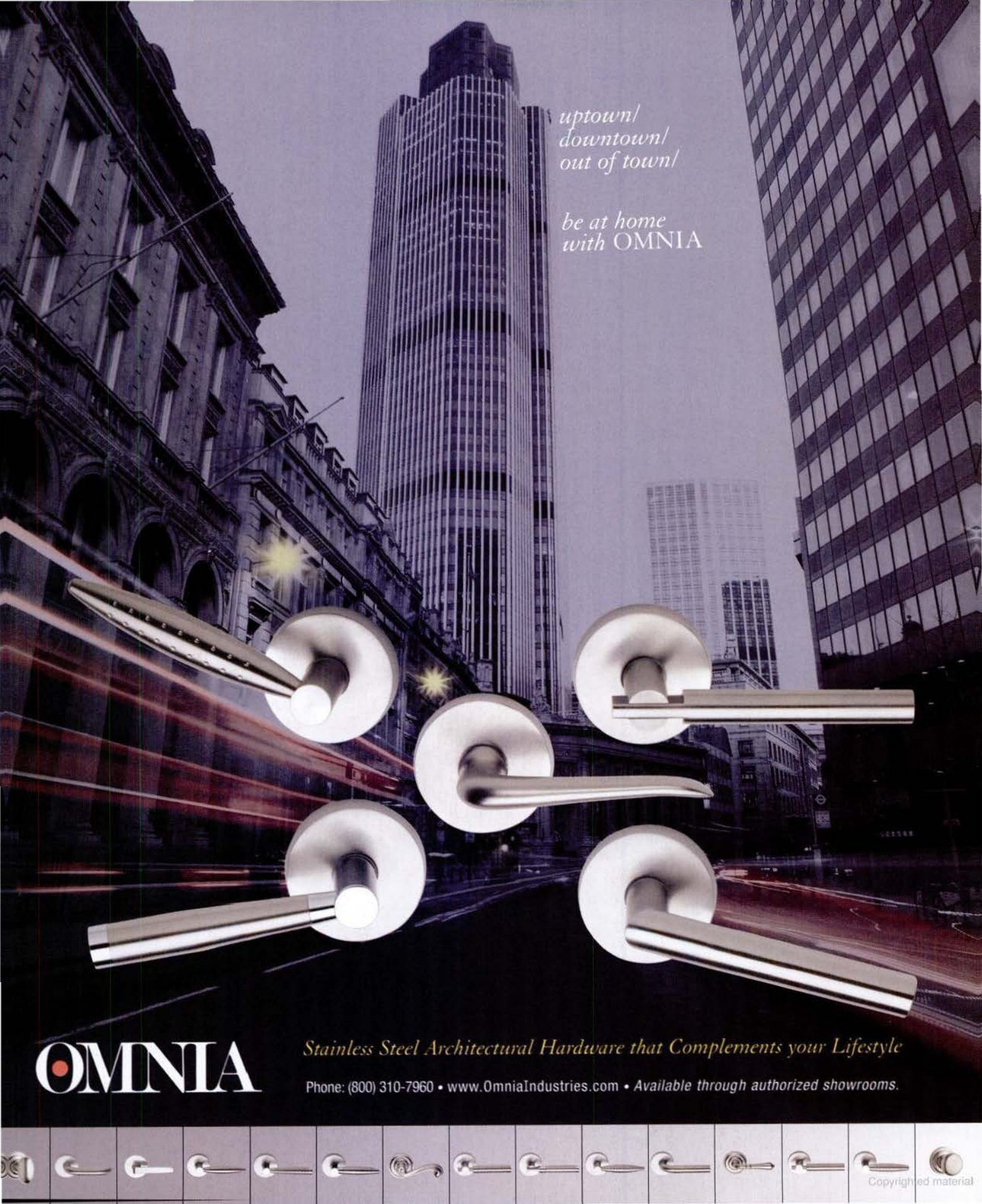


Nomad Is an Island

Much like the updates to your favorite software, video game console, or social-networking site (have you, like, totally seen our Facebook page?) the Nomad version 2.0 is at hand. Though the original came out this spring, hot on its heels comes a sleeker, svelter version for the summer.

The same design principles are at play, but Smith sees the Nomad 2.0 as the original's even more portable younger sibling. "Instead of the bamboo frame, we're using materials like aluminum and industrial plastics." Fear not, Earth Firsters, ecocons-ciousness hasn't fallen by the wayside. "These two can both be green materials, and we're making sure that what we use is in line with our values."

The benefits of the 2.0 are manifold. Smith continues, "The 2.0 is going to be lighter and more flexible, and, most notably, about half the price of the original (around $3,000 versus $8,300). You can really treat this one like a big tent." She sees the Nomad 2.0 as an appealing alternative for weekend getaways or adventure sports. "We're pitching this one to rock climbers and surfers. It's definitely for the recreational market." Though it's unclear whether you'll be able to sleep with your longboard, we're certain you'll have the space to bunk down with your favorite carabiner. –AB



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Story by Chelsea Holden Baker | Photos by Jake Chessum

If airports are anathema to you, trust us, you're not flying solo: Planes lack panache, shuttles feel like cattle cars and airports like bus depots, and the luggage claim may well be the seventh circle of hell. The trick to keeping your cool is in the bag—or, more precisely, the carry-on. With online check-in and a tote on your shoulder, you can breeze past Cerberus at the TSA checkpoint, straight to your gate, which, barring all inclement or mechanical maladies, will not be purgatorial. Just remember to travel light (and make sure all liquids, including your blood, sweat, and tears fit into a quart-sized Ziploc).

To see further merit in carry-on travel, one need only glimpse the bounty of lost luggage at the Unclaimed Baggage Center (bargain hunters refer to it as the UBC) in Scottsboro, Alabama. Everything from a 5.8-carat diamond engagement ring to an F-16 guidance system (which was returned to the Air Force) has shown up in this city-block-sized facility. Although airlines try oh-so-assiduously to reunite luggage with luggee, after 90 days, errant bags—even the ones with lucky tags and rainbow belts—are sold in bulk. The UBC stocks 7,000 items a day, plundering all you packed, and divvying up choice objects to sell at Salvation Army prices.

So with your perfect Parisian dress picked up during *les soldes* stowed beneath the seat in front of you, and your beloved Holga in the overhead bin, you may actually rest easy in coach. But if that's not enough to convince you, perhaps our selection of carry-on bags will. Our expert, John Sencion, has traversed the globe, refining a Tetris-style strategy for perfect packing. And as the man behind the brand Flight 001, he knows the difference between the good bag and the ugly.

For a roundup of wheeled trolleys please see our October 2003 issue.

A Note on Our Expert: John Sencion is "cocaptain" of Flight 001, the travel store that is every frequent flyer's jet dream. Sencion, a California native with degrees in mechanical engineering and fashion design, booked it from LAX to JFK in 1989, where he met future business partner, Brad John. The pair left their fashion careers (Sencion was once design director for Federated Department Stores) when they launched the plan for Flight 001 on a plane to Paris. Despite his many frequent flyer miles, Sencion still loves the "personal time-out" of flying the friendly skies and is loyal to a singular Samsonite (which he never checks).

All Aboard!

While styles, and items in the overhead compartment, may shift, these comely carry-ons will make you feel like a member of the jetset, even on JetBlue.

A

Scope 25-inch duffel by Samsonite Black Label / $98 / www.samsoniteblacklabel.com / 24.5" x 10" x 13" / blue/black, yellow/black, grey/black, orange/black and red/black

Expert Opinion: Because of the color options, this would have been my obvious first choice. But on second look, it seems like design-by-committee. My guess is that an accountant, not a designer, dictated adding the duffel to the line. The fact that it opens like a sandwich and has multiple pockets is great, but because of the shape and the hard, molded-foam bottom, it's not ergonomic. The duffel is supposed to be grab-and-go; it should be easy to carry. This is not. However, I'm sure the Scope still appeals to fashionistas who won't succumb to the faux pas of wheelies, even if it's a Marc Newson.

What We Think: We want to like the Scope based on looks alone, but it could never be our main squeeze; it doesn't squeeze at all. The bulky bag bounces at the hip and flip-flops as much as our feelings for it. Although we're suckers for its design, the Scope feels like a prototype. The discreet logo (good) is attached with a weak adhesive and pops off after packing, leaving a sticky residue (not good). In your mind's eye you look cool with this arm candy. In reality, it's awkward. ▶

B

AUM recycled sailcloth medium duffel by Red Flag Design / $250 / www.redflagdesign.ca / 26.8" x 13.8" x 15" / white, natural, grey, black, blue number, black number

Expert Opinion: This is a great fusion of fashion and function, but it's flawed. The pulls and handles are heavy-duty, but when full, they barely come together. However, I like the big cavity and that the material lets light in. It's nautical in a nice way; the shape is reminiscent of a buoy and the theme works throughout, including its recycled history. This is my favorite bag in terms of styling, but I wouldn't use it because of its size.

What We Think: Although totes made of recycled sails have been around for years, we've never seen such fine styling or stitching. While we were able to clip a shoulder strap from another bag onto the AUM, for the price you pay, it should come with its own. In addition, the size allows you to pack several pairs of shoes and jeans, which can make a cumbersome carry-on. But that said, the bag is well crafted, down to the fold-over that hides the zipper and the placement of the color blocks that come from numbers on the sail. The fact that each one is unique—a quality lost on most bag screeners—won us over to the AUM, our personal favorite.

C

Large Weekender by LeSportsac / $98 / www.lesportsac.com / 13.75" x 20.75" x 10.5" / various prints

Expert Opinion: It's fashionable and functional. Prints add interest and create newness for the customer—that is LeSportsac's specialty. They basically have a library of bag forms they work off and print with new patterns each season. The aesthetic is perhaps more female, in that men may expect something more rugged, but the material is durable, and it's functional for a duffel in terms of size and pockets. Katie Mullins, part of the Flight 001 Travel Innovations Team, our think tank, coined a travel term appropriate for the Big Weekender: "souvenir bag." You could pack this flat in another bag, and return from vacation with it filled.

What We Think: As San Franciscans with limited square footage, this bag's smoosh-factor was immediately appealing to us; a sweater takes up more room in the closet. Urbanite or not, that's a desirable feature. Duffels are defined by how different they are from hard cases and trolleys, so this fits the bill in terms of flexibility and accessibility. It also has nicely placed pockets. The same shape comes in a variety of sizes, and prints change each season, so you're free to play Goldilocks, or create your own set. ▸

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D

WeatherShed duffel by Patagonia / $175 / www.patagonia.com / 25" x 17" x 11.5" / grey

Expert Opinion: I love this rubberized material—it appeals to that desire for durability, even indestructibility. Although they have the same hard-foam bottoms, it's nonfunctional in a different way than the Scope. You'd have to drag it like a sled walking down an airplane aisle. But the way the wires are embedded in its opening, like a doctor's bag, makes it easy to pack, and in addition to the big exterior pocket, there's a "dry stash" on the inside. It's divided well. Simple things, like the wet-look of the logo, or the concealed zipper, show Patagonia's design expertise. This bag has the most interesting features, it's the most engineered, but it's still not the most functional.

What We Think: A Patagonia employee described it, impishly, as "bomb proof." The company is known for rugged testing, so we wouldn't be surprised. A highlight of the WeatherShed is the reflective interior that ensures the bag isn't a black hole for socks and sundries. We took it for a walk in the rain and everything inside stayed dry, and because the shoulder strap is mounted diagonally, it doesn't flip like the Scope.

E

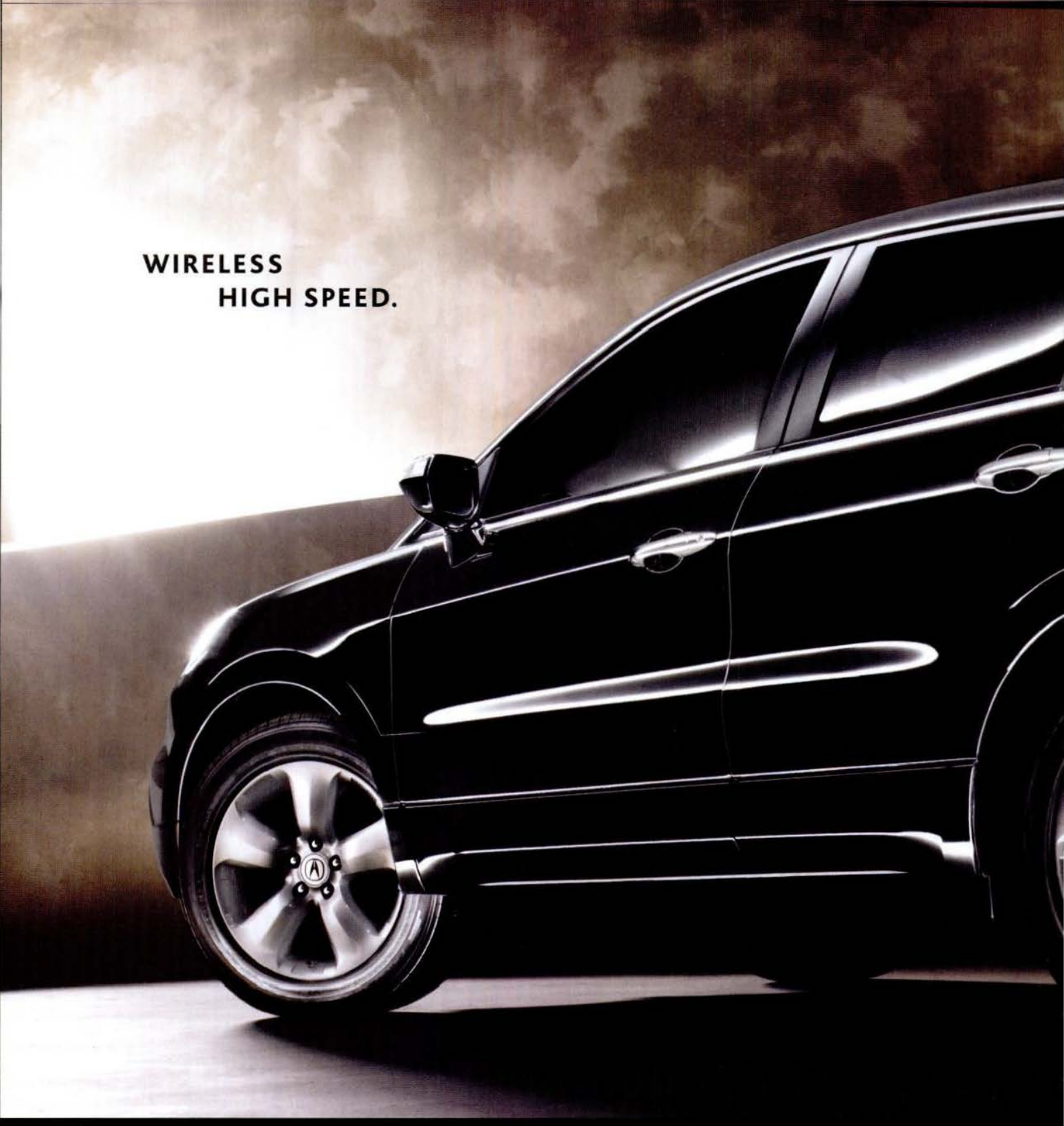
Travel-Zip, medium, by Ortlieb / $145 / www.ortlieb.com / 10.2" x 22.8" x 15" / red, blue, white

Expert Opinion: Overall, this is my favorite bag. The colors and materials are reminiscent of children's rain gear. It makes me think of the Morton Salt logo, like I could weather that storm. At a recent trade show in Paris everyone was gaga for this rubber material—we're actually planning on using it for a Flight 001 bag. But until I can make my own, this would be the bag I'd choose. It's the most functional, and I like the simplicity. Like the AUM, it's made of an industrial, not-obvious-for-travel material. It's also a more manageable size and shape than the other bags. It's just the best balance of design and function.

What We Think: Those seat-belt style straps on nearly every bag can rub your hands raw after waiting in line for food, let alone a Southwest flight. The hand-guards on the Travel-Zip are a simple step up in design, but offer a big pay-off, and the straps can be adjusted to carry it like a backpack. The Travel-Zip has a few well-placed pockets, leaving a roomy interior. It is comfortable and functional, yet it has its own identity. Although the material is reminiscent of a Freitag bag, it's unfortunately not recycled. ■

BLACK AND LIGHT BY: SEBASTIAN WRONG

FLOS



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Story by Tim McKeough

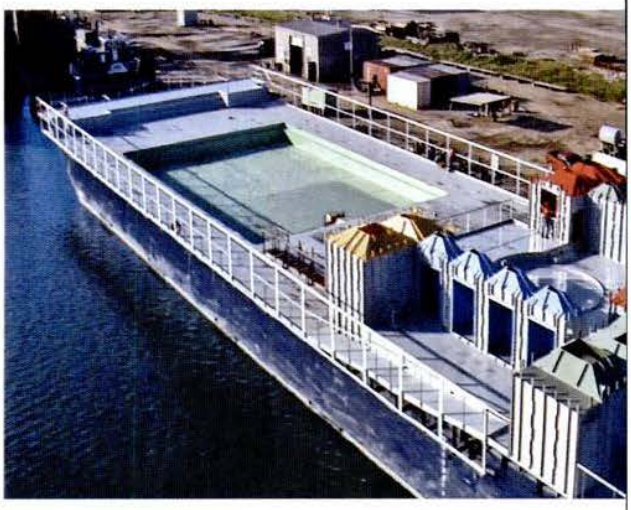
Pooling Our Resources

After disappearing almost 70 years ago, the New York floating pool is making a comeback. Introduced in the early 1800s as a private diversion for the wealthy, by 1870 the pools were being promoted as public baths to serve the city's tenement districts. They consisted of pontoon-borne structures permanently moored to the land, with the river rising up through pine slats in the middle. This time around the pool is offering a much cleaner swim, a modern design, and a watery wanderlust.

The project is the brainchild of urban planner Ann Buttenwieser, who in 1999 founded the not-for-profit Neptune Foundation. "Our goal is to develop floating pools for the New York and New Jersey region, to be placed in areas where people are recreationally underserved," she explains, noting that by making the pools nomadic, the benefits can be spread around. "One month it could be in the Bronx, the next it could be in Brooklyn, so it would be reaching a larger variety of people."

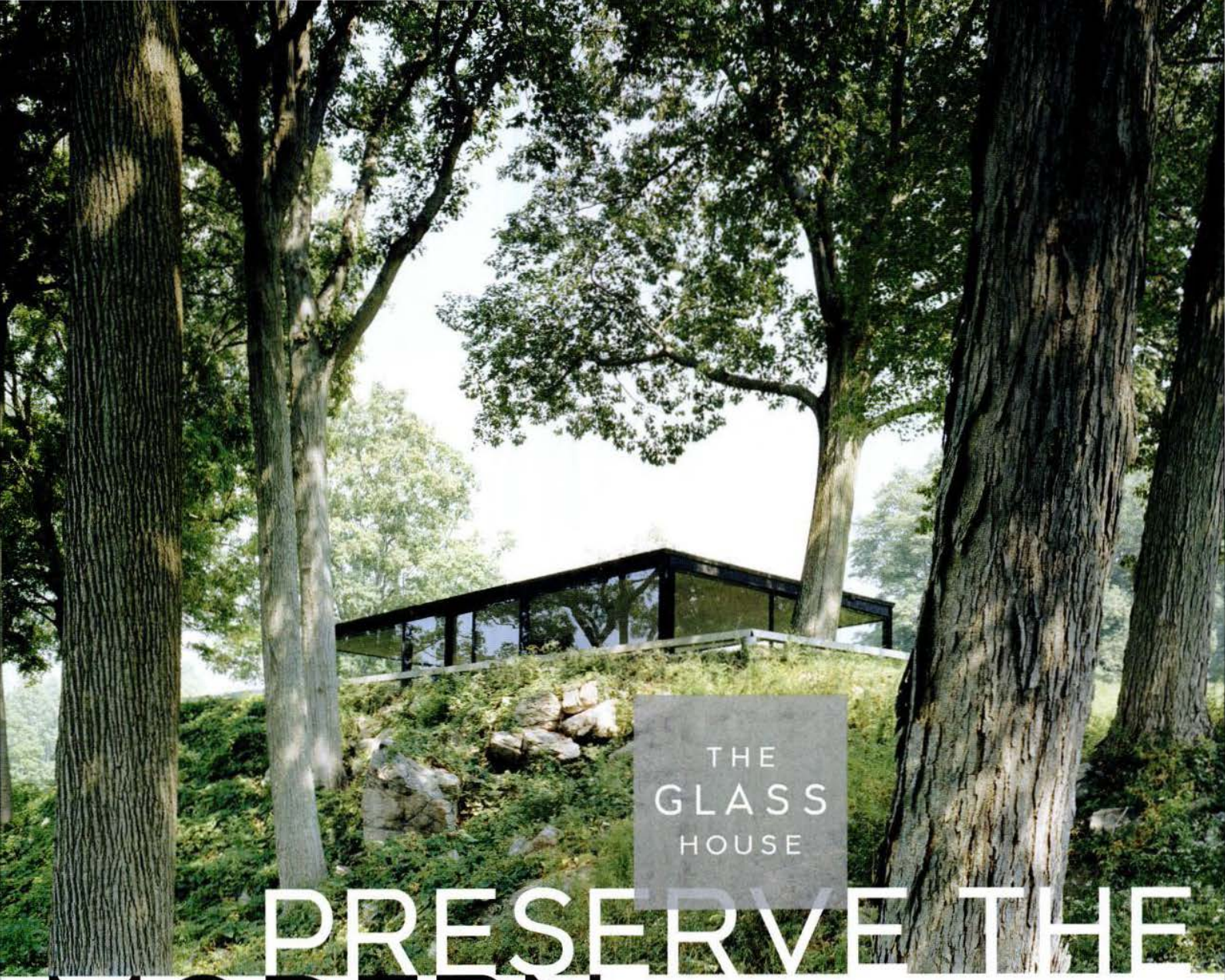
To design the first facility, she recruited architect Jonathan Kirschenfeld. "I'm interested in the public realm and trying to build things that are part of the bigger city," says Kirschenfeld, adding that the floating pool has become a personal pet project.

In 2004, they bought a 260-foot-long barge in Morgan City, Louisiana ("For the price of a studio apartment in Manhattan," quips Kirschenfeld), and hired a shipyard to transform it. Now, the floating pavilion contains a 25-meter-long swimming pool and holds steel changing rooms and shower stations capped by colorful boxy roofs—an aesthetic that's equal parts Mario Bellini and *Super Mario Brothers.* The barge made the journey to New York by tugboat last October and will be put through its first test runs this summer. The plan is to hand it over to the city's parks department by 2008. "This is something for the people of New York," says Buttenwieser. "It's really going to be used, and I think it's going to be wonderful." ■



PHOTOS BY KENT MERRILL (BRIDGE AND AERIAL); BABY SMITH (POOL)

New Yorkers fed up with the unappealing environs of their community pools are bound to take to this nifty nomadic pool barge, docking this summer at ports of call across the five boroughs.



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Going for the Green

IMAGE COURTESY SASAKI ASSOCIATES INC.

In Beijing's Olympic plan, the wild, verdant expanse of Forest Park gradually snakes its way south and gives way to the heart of the Olympic Green: the nestlike National Stadium by Swiss architects Herzog + de Meuron, and the National Aquatics Center by Australia's PTW Architects.

The story of an Olympic athlete tends to follow a particular arc: A gritty competitor fights long and hard, with little monetary compensation, for a remote shot at international sporting glory. Granted, a few do make it to the Wheaties box and post-Olympic fame, but for every Oksana Baiul (who can forget her deft defeat of Nancy Kerrigan?) there's a raft of also-rans who are lucky to spend the rest of their careers with Disney on Ice.

The built Olympics—the stadiums, public greens, infrastructure, and architectural legacy—follow much the same course: Some succeed in energizing and invigorating their host cities, while others come to function as multimillion-dollar ghost towns. Dennis Pieprz, a principal at Sasaki Associates Inc. in Boston—winner of the international competition to design the urban plan for the 2008 Beijing games—knows this all too well. His firm's unifying vision for Beijing (others will carry it out) aims toward fertile new development with a clear future instead of a grand, momentary feat that promptly devolves into underused urban space.

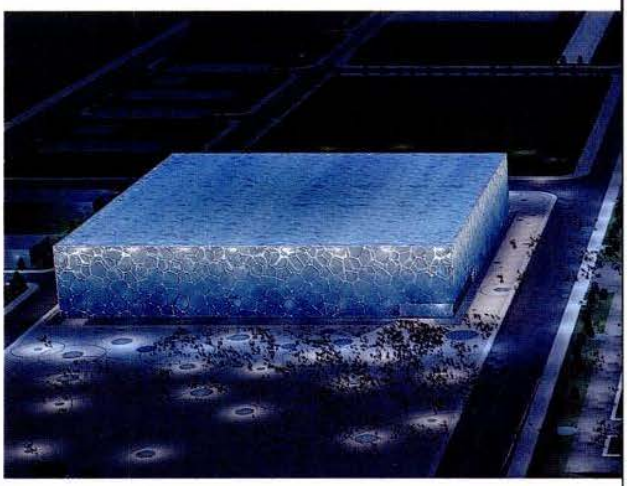
"The most important aspect of the urban planning of the Olympics is the legacy and what you have left over given the huge investment," says Pieprz. "The post-Olympic part of the project was of great interest and significance for us in Beijing. Some Olympics have been very successful at this, and others have raised issues that really need to be thought about."

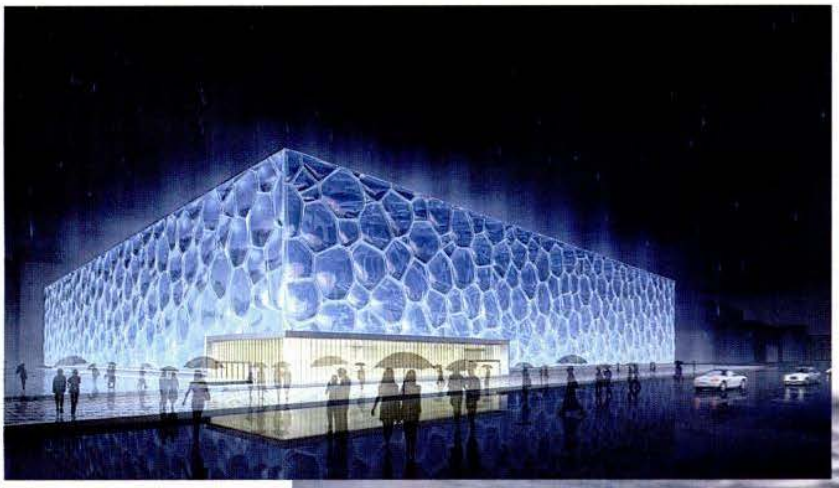
Beyond introducing extensive new green space at the northern end of the city—Forest Park, a centerpiece of the design that promises to benefit the city for years, ▸

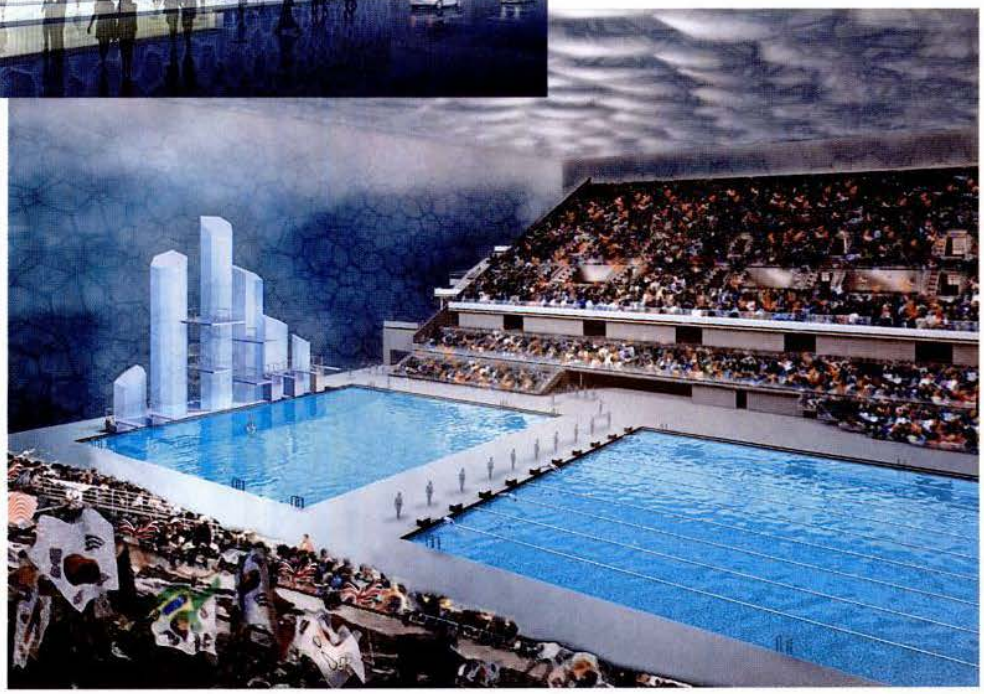
will offer nearly 1,700 acres of woods and wetlands—Pieprz and his colleagues at Sasaki have a novel plan for integrating the new Olympic Green into Beijing. And it relies on a remarkably free-market strategy, yet another indication that the communist behemoth isn't at all averse to the occasional capitalist venture.

"One big thing you have with the Olympics is international-level stadiums and facilities that may not be used much after the event," he explains. "That's what happened in Sydney. The stadium that was built there is lovely, but it's used maybe 30 times a year." The operation and management of these sports complexes threaten to become a burden on Beijing once the games are over, so Sasaki developed a unique strategy to shift the load onto those willing to take it. "We added facilities and parcels of land adjacent to the Olympic facilities for private development companies to purchase and use once the games are done," says Pieprz, who sees hotels, spas, office space, or even more densely built sports facilities filling in the grounds. These companies will "use the Olympic facilities as part of a later, integrated project that will be more than just a series of sports stadiums," he adds.

For Pieprz, this post-Olympic plan is all part of the push toward sustainability, one that the "Green Olympics," as the International Olympic Committee is billing the Beijing games, is desperate to achieve. Though certain new buildings are being constructed with green design in mind—the National Aquatics Center, a glowing, bubble-inspired creation from the Australian firm PTW Architects, will heat the pools and interior with solar ▸







PTW Architects of Sydney, Australia, offer one of the most compelling Olympic designs in recent memory: the National Aquatics Center. This ebullient, luminous indoor area will host swimming and diving events where the athletes won't be the only thing aglow.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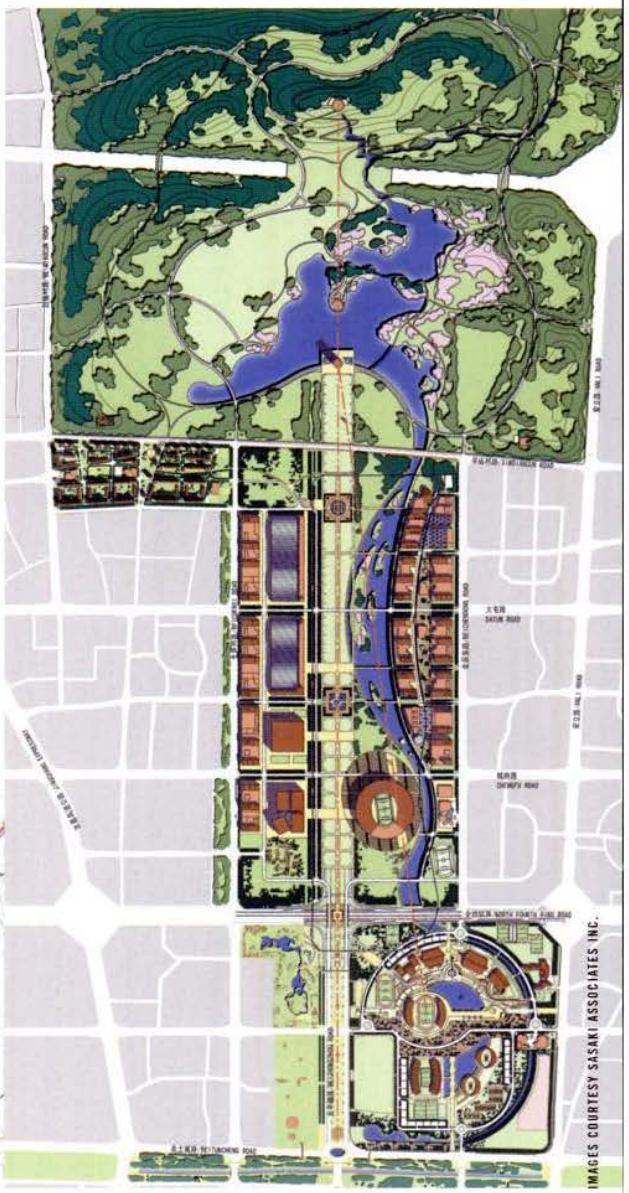
power and filter and recycle the water collected on the roof—the Sasaki team sees sustainability as more than slapping solar panels on the velodrome. Integrating the Olympic Green into the surrounding neighborhoods, providing transportation access to all parts of the city, and envisioning attractive civic spaces for the post-Olympic era are paramount in Sasaki's plan. "Green isn't really only about ecological matters, or things related to clean air or water," Pieprz notes. "Green is about the social sustainability of urban design, and discovering leftover or brown fill sites that can be regenerated to become part of a living, vital urban environment."

Part of the motivation for the Beijing plan came not from an Olympic plan that worked, but one that didn't. Concurrently with its work for the 2008 games, Sasaki is working with three Australian firms to envision the next 20 years for the decidedly underused site of the 2000 Sydney games. Built outside the city center, the Sydney site proves to be a cautionary tale: "The Sydney games were considered one of the most successful Olympiads," Pieprz says. "Great facilities and setting, well managed. They even had a substantial environmental strategy and created new parks that are still thriving ecological zones today. But the core of the Olympic site consists of sports buildings, set widely apart to accommodate crowds, sitting in an underused civic landscape that took huge investment to create." Current plans for the Sydney revitalization call for additional housing, live/work space, and entertainment and educational facilities to attract both developers and day-trippers. ►



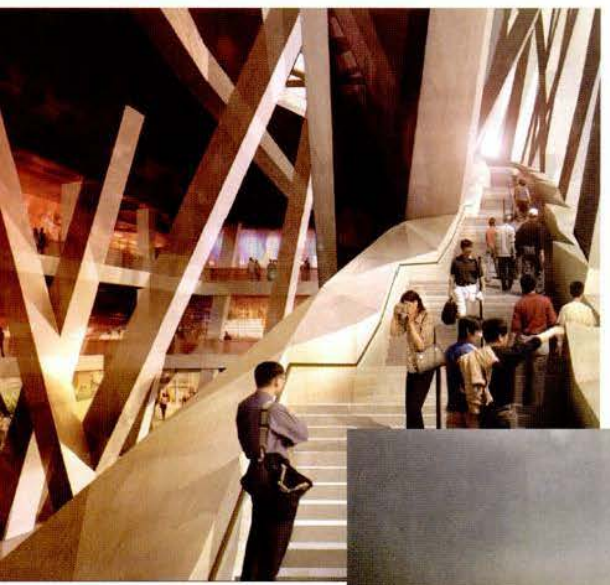
IMAGES COURTESY SASAKI ASSOCIATES INC.

Beijing's Olympic Green (far right) boasts significant new construction and ample green space as it occupies the northern central part of the city between concentric ring roads (right). Sasaki's plan for filling in the site of the Sydney games (above) shows the proposed construction in orange.

Sydney may suggest what not to do, but for further inspiration Sasaki looked back to what is, from the urban planning perspective, a clear gold medalist: Barcelona in 1992. "Barcelona is always held up as a huge success because the strategy there was to use the investment and the event to trigger a regeneration of the whole city," Pieprz says. "It set Barcelona on a great path of growth and evolution in the '90s and into the 21st century."

Certain buildings for the Beijing Olympics clearly stand out, such as the National Aquatics Center and the Olympiad's tour de force: Herzog + de Meuron's 80,000-seat National Stadium, a glistening, steel bird's nest that serves as the literal and figurative heart of the games. But Pieprz's vision for the Olympic Green extends beyond the needs of world-class athletes to those of a more humble quality: the citizens of the Chinese capital.

"In China you get huge crowds of people doing exercises to music in massive parks," he says. "You don't really see that in the States, except maybe for joggers. But in China exercise is a very public thing." Thus a commitment to accessible public spaces, integrated into not just the built environment but into the social and cultural fabric of the city, guides Sasaki's plans for the future of Beijing—and Sydney, too. "In our plan, we were very attentive to the whole city, its historic structure, and what significant addition to the urban form we can make. We began to think, wouldn't it be interesting for visitors and residents if this were more than simply a sports district? What if you could gain access to all of Chinese culture and history?" ■



Swiss starchitects Herzog + de Meuron raise the stakes from their already impressive Allianz Arena in Munich with their stunning National Stadium. Imagined as a steel bird's nest, this massive open-air arena will host track-and-field events and opening and closing ceremonies.

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Salon du Meuble

Though it attracts only a tenth of the exhibitors of its rival fair, Maison & Objet, the Salon du Meuble nevertheless packs a punch with a concentration of innovation. VIA (Valorization of Innovation in Furnishing) is partly responsible: Every year the industry group backs a handful of designers on the rise by getting manufacturers to produce their prototypes.

A Perfumed Meadows

Perhaps a mild delusion of grandeur in the name of this installation—though it wouldn't be fair to call it just a lawn. Italian landscape designers Paghera and Oikos Fragrances are the creators of a perfumed patio that gradually releases aromatherapy fragrances to waft throughout the home. It was the central element of an indoor-outdoor "dream house" (shown) conceived by Italian architect Simone Micheli for the Salon.

B Collection Tandem by Thomas Sauvage for Ego Paris / www.furniture-egoparis.com

This ego's got room for two, in the case of its modular chaise-longue system. Lounging lovebirds can stow daiquiris and sunblock within easy reach on its wide deck, made either from oiled teak or Corian.

C Entreciel mezzanine by Sylvain Rieu-Piquet / www.via.fr

Let loose your inner monkey. Steadied by its metal structure, this mezzanine, a prototype designed by 27-year-old Sylvain Rieu-Piquet, beckons to be climbed. Its graceful curve makes the outsized structure architecturally compelling. But the cane wrapping also lends it an earthen, natural feel. ▸

Maison & Objet

After serving up minimalism, retro-modernism, glitterati pop, and contemporary functionalism, it feels as if global design gurus are at a loss as to what to offer as the next earth-shattering revolution in the home. Paris's massive Maison & Objet furniture fair displayed acres of low-slung sofas, textiles both sleek and hirsute, and enough printed leather upholstery for Christo to wrap the Serengeti in.

A Missoni Home / www.missonihome.com
Rosita Missoni, honored by Maison & Objet for a half-century's work creating a signature style, has draped contemporary furniture with her Technicolor fare. Missoni Home unleashed a gargantuan sofa "island" this season that lights up a room like a firework.

B Objekto / www.objekto.fr
A two-year toddler in the furniture industry, this French company already handles a small handful of ageless pieces. Paulo Mendes da Rocha, the Brazilian architect who won the Pritzker Architecture Prize last year, designed the Paulistano armchair in 1957. A constructivist concept made from one single bent steel bar and a sensuous leather slipcover, the chair was initially released in a limited edition. Now reissued by Objekto, it is a handsome modernist exemplar.

C Kose / www.kosemilano.com
Rosaria Rattin credits *Alice in Wonderland* as her inspiration for her outsized ceramics this season. Resembling gigantic spinning tops that have come to rest, they contrast with previous collections of exquisitely delicate vases but share the same cool tones and traditional craftsmanship.

D Domestic / www.domestic.fr
With the noble goal of encouraging "participatory art," Domestic invites people to customize their dwellings with vinyl wall stickers, presented as an arty alternative to wallpaper. Vaunted French designers like Matali Crasset and François Azambourg, graffiti personalities like Fafi, and a host of international illustrators have lent their talent to the collection. ►

TIME

Linear Grace —
by Lucci Orlandini Design

"Contrasting symmetry and
stylized detail bring uncommon elegance to the kitchen environment."

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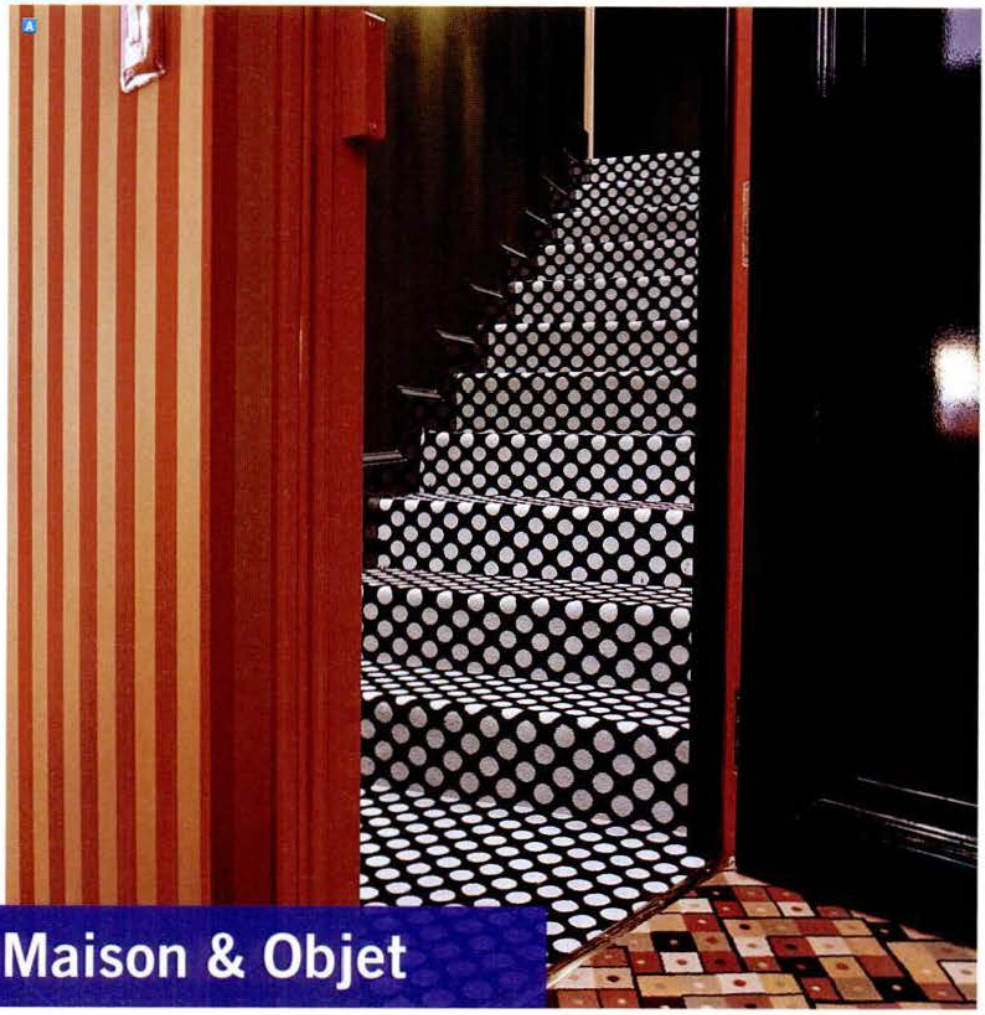

Maison & Objet

We heard no one outstanding aesthetic message ringing in 2007 at this year's Maison & Objet furniture fair. Instead, everywhere, there were shimmers of brilliance from two antipodean camps of designers: those looking to play, and those serious about keeping it real.

A Christian Lacroix / www.c-lacroix.com/english/sommaire.htm and www.paris-hotel-petitmoulin.com
In the crossover craze linking the multifarious worlds of design, Lacroix has been a pioneer. He gets a Maison & Objet nod this year, too, during his 25th anniversary of also designing haute couture. One of his newer ventures, the Paris boutique hotel, Hôtel du Petit Moulin, proves his exuberance has not been toned down over the years.

B Katayama Bunzaburo Shoten Platz Inc. / www.kyo.or.jp/premium
Kyoto Premium, a trade group also showcasing silk cushions, brought the delicate moonscape of these lampshades to Paris. Made in the venerated tradition of *shibori*—a term best translated as the aristocrats' tie-dye—the twisted, sculptural silk has traditionally been used to make kimonos.

C Ernst Gamperl / www.ernst-gamperl.de
In his studio perched above Italy's Lago di Garda, Gamperl turns carefuly selected wood on a lathe to craft a pattern and draw out the natural vein. The vessels, at once stunning and simple, rich in Arte Povere influences, aren't actually intended to hold anything. They look better, anyway, without the fruit, flowers, and baubles. ■


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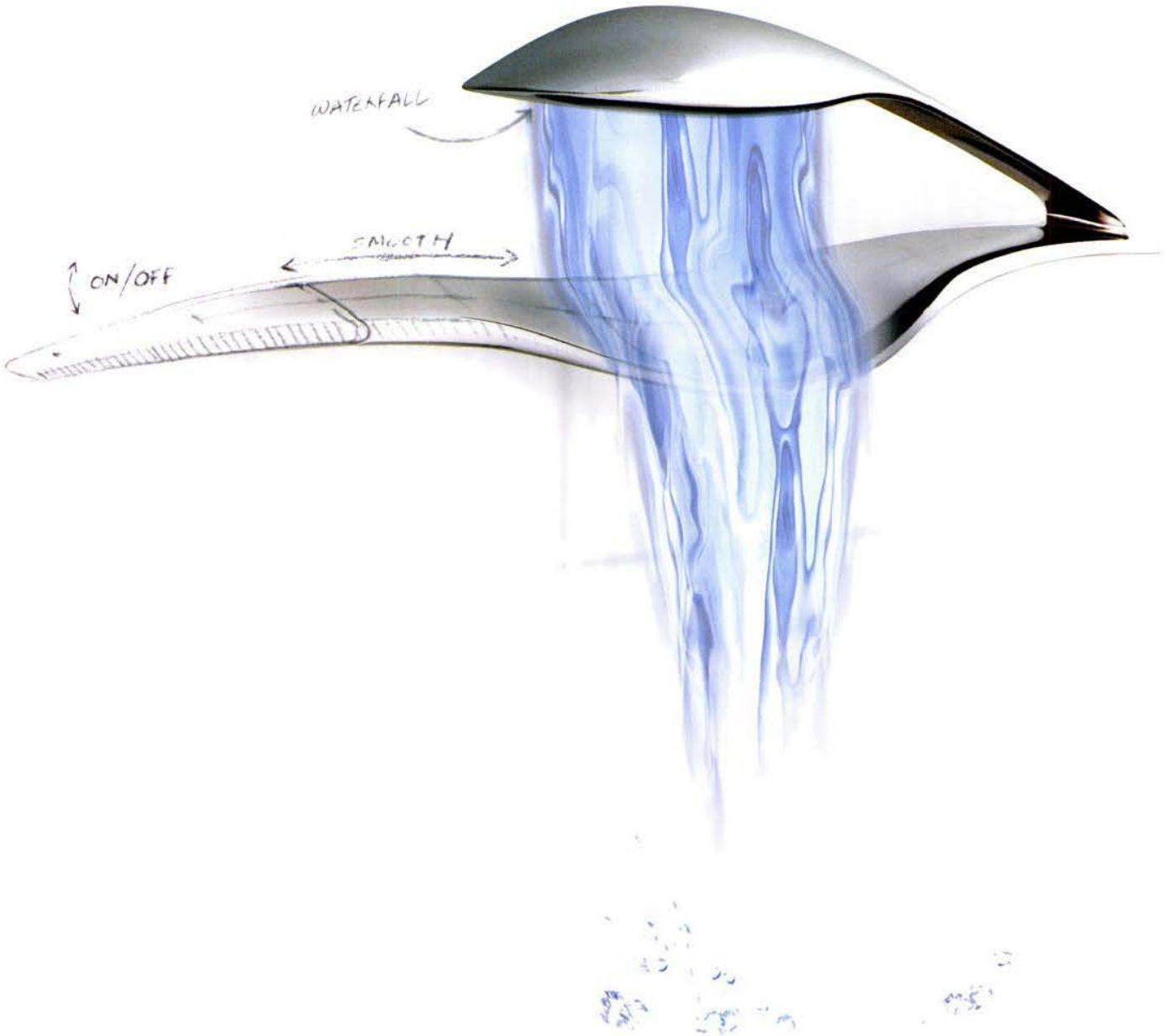

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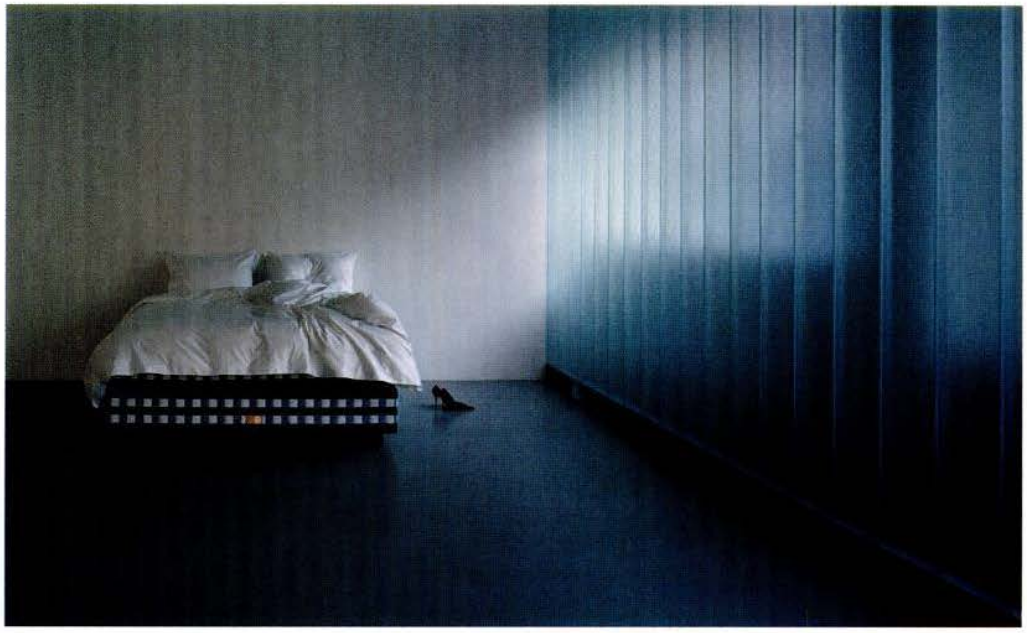

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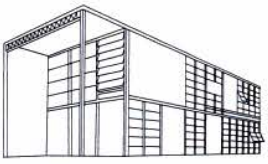
Richard Koshalek

Richard Koshalek has held positions at several art museums, including curator at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (MOCA).

Richard Koshalek, the current president of Art Center College of Art of Design in Pasadena, California, is more than an administrator: He is a man with grand ideas.

When he was the director of MOCA, Koshalek oversaw the growth of what was then a fledgling art museum, sponsoring popular shows such as "Blueprints for Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses"—an exhibition that contributed to the resurgence of modern architecture. Koshalek also helped transform Art Center by commissioning Los Angeles talents, such as Daly Genik, to design new structures, including a downtown Pasadena campus and forthcoming student residences. Most recently, Koshalek has collaborated with other arts and science institutions and developed conferences, research, and publishing projects. Currently, he is collaborating on a Stefan Sagmeister–designed book and media project focusing on what to do when the Big Earthquake hits.

The nerve center for his cultural empire is his office in the Craig Ellwood–designed Art Center building in Pasadena. It has a bright red wall and a large round black table; both are covered in sketches of buildings in process, manuscripts, layouts, synopses for future conferences, and photos of Koshalek in the company of luminaries such as Frank Gehry and Pierre Boulez. He speaks in an enthusiastic, breathless style, as if mentally racing to the next idea. I asked him about why it matters to connect with the world in this way. ▸



Why do institutions like Art Center and MOCA matter?
The whole idea is that institutions have a responsibility to deal with what happens in the classroom. But they also have a responsibility to the city and the community in which they exist. They have to set an example. And I think that there is a new leadership equation emerging where the decisions are made by the political leadership, the corporate leadership, but also by the creative leadership. The forces of change now, in society and continuing into the future, are going to be science, and the creation of new knowledge in science, and the creation of new knowledge within institutions like the Art Center College of Design. The idea was that this has to become a research institute; this has to become an institution that believes in ideas, that has the confidence to take on challenges within a larger context. If we do that then our students will become leaders in the future. They won't be marginalized as creative people. It has always bothered me that designers and, to a certain degree, architects have always been marginalized, working for other clients, whether they're corporate or government or whatever.

Do you think there is a sufficient audience out there listening? I mean, how many of our representatives—in Congress, the Senate, the World Bank, the United Nations—are designers or architects, or people who think in a creative, lateral way?
Very few, to tell you the truth. But I think there's also a very interesting seismic shift happening, and I think that is because of the new technology—like MySpace and YouTube and so forth and the Internet. What's happening now is that the individual is becoming more important than ever before, and we are going to depend less on government organizations and political leadership, and even corporate leadership to a certain degree, and we're going to be depending more on individuals to make their own decisions and provide leadership.

That concept is similar to *Time* magazine's 2006 "Person of the Year [Is]: You."
That's right, and I think there's something there. More than anything, though, I believe that architects, artists, and designers are the optimists of the future. I truly believe this. I've always listened to artists; I mean when I spent time with Robert Irwin or Richard Serra, I talk to them about the future. We talk about what's coming next. This is true with architects. It goes way back to my interviewing Richard Neutra and Marcel Breuer and asking, "Where is the future here?"

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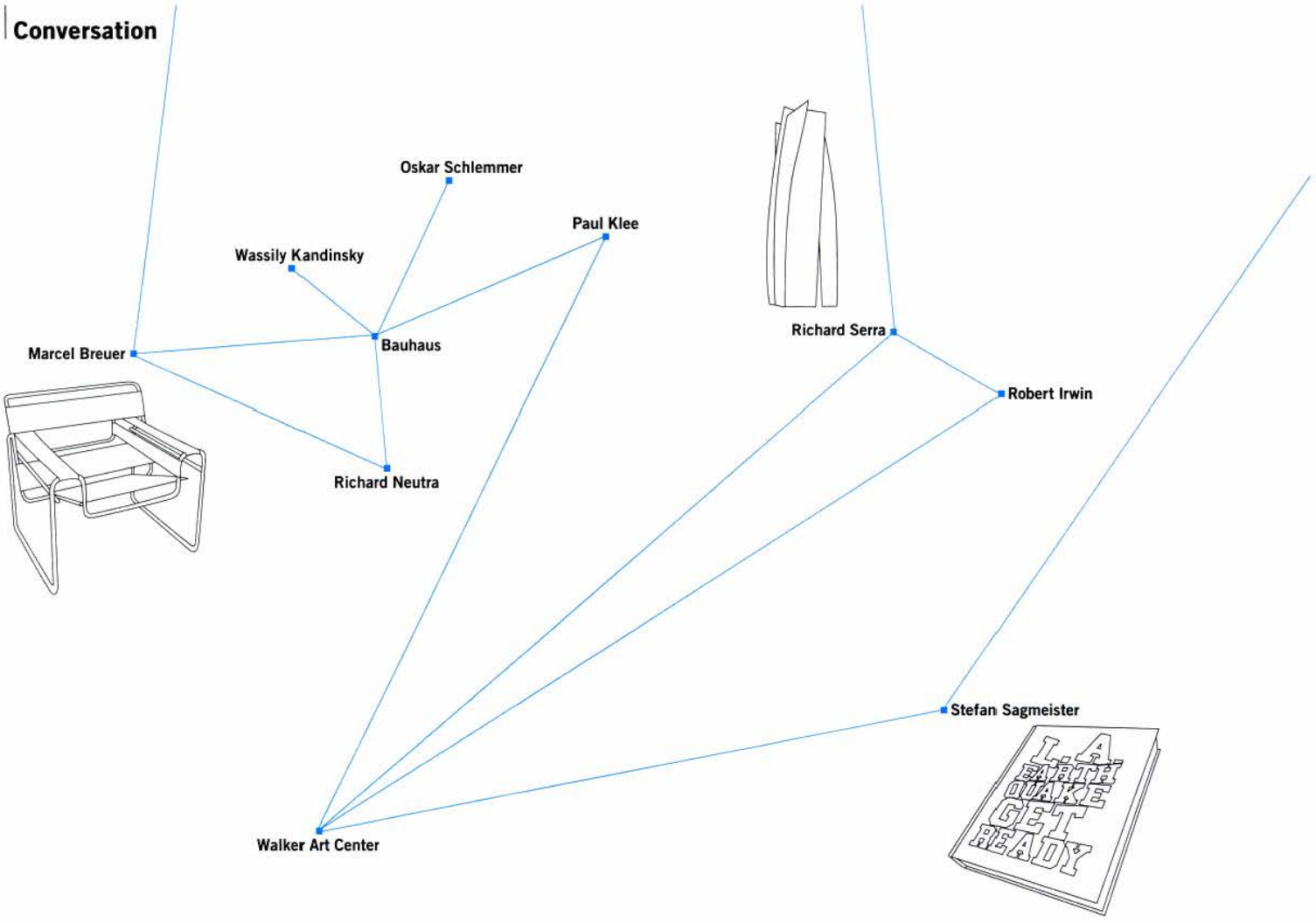

The one question that I asked of people, whether it was Pierre Boulez or Isaac Stern, or whoever it was, was, "Where is the future?" For me I never want to look back. I have this firm belief that the future might be unknowable, but it's not unthinkable.

Can we back up a second? Did you just say you interviewed Marcel Breuer?
Yes, when I was in high school, I read about Breuer and I actually made a trip to New York to see him. I talked to him about the Bauhaus and he was fantastic, extraordinary, very generous. I remember asking him, "Who were the great teachers of the Bauhaus?" And he said, "For me, it wasn't the architects." He said, "It was the artists. I learned about form from Klee. I learned about color from Kandinsky. I learned about movement from Schlemmer." He went through why and how all this impacted his architecture.

Let's circle back to 18 years ago and the "Blueprints of Modern Living" show at MOCA. Is it connected to the current interest in, even fetishization of, modernism?
I felt then that it was time to do a comprehensive exhibition on an architect who actually changed the course of modernism. We made a very, very long list. Charles and Ray Eames were at the top of the list. We realized it would be best to start, not just with one architect, or even a small group of architects, but with a major initiative in Southern California that had an impact, not only in Southern California but globally, so we focused on the Case Study exhibition program. We documented it in great detail. We built two full-scale houses.

When we first started to do this exhibition, I went to see Esther McCoy (the architecture critic who wrote extensively about the Case Study program)—this is somebody I admired greatly—and we had lunch at Michael's restaurant. It was an amazing lunch because she had an oxygen tank, and she was smoking a cigarette and she would turn off the oxygen tank, smoke the cigarette, turn on the oxygen tank. And I thought any minute Michael's restaurant was going to disappear. But she said, "Richard, please do a wonderful, substantial Case Study exhibition." She said that the work these architects did is still valid today as an influence.

So we did the exhibition, and its impact was huge. I think that architects today gained something from that experience, but then they added their own influences. That's why we have such richness now. That's why modernism, which is still alive in my mind, is much richer. It's much more relevant to the world we live in today, and there is this sort of wide-ranging diversity of expression that comes from that. That's why I think that architecture now is of greater interest than it's ever been. ■

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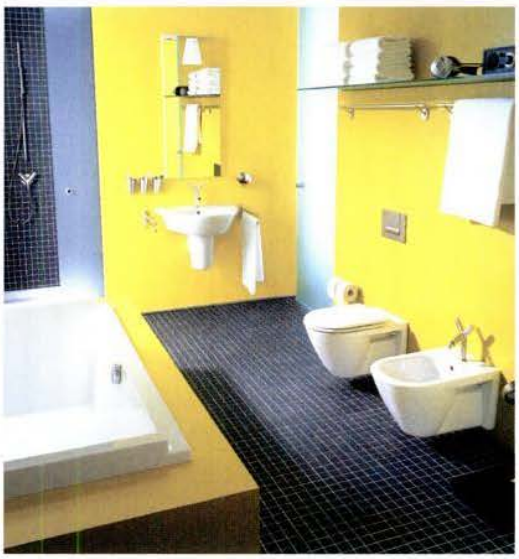


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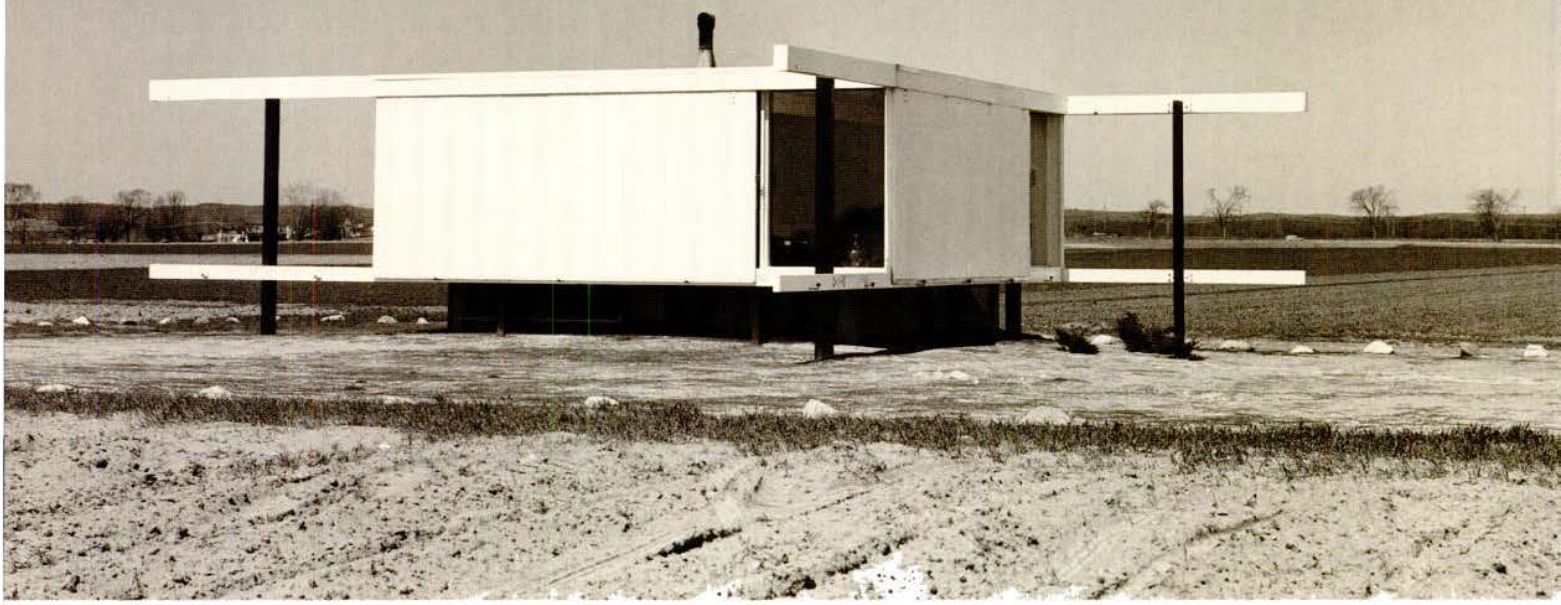


Peter Blake designed the Pinwheel House for himself in 1953 in Water Mill, New York. Based on an unrealized design for a museum, this basic box's four walls slide open on the eight runners that project outward. With no glass or screens between the outdoors and interior, Blake's house invites nature, bugs and all, right inside.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY GORDON DE VRIES STUDIO

I first became aware of the work of Peter Blake in 1984, when I was preparing an exhibition on the forgotten modernist houses of Long Island, New York. Combing through old magazines, I kept coming across these wonderful little gems: simple boxes on stilts with floor-to-ceiling glass walls, designed by someone named Peter Blake. His beach houses were the perfect antidotes to urban stress, little escape pods that were at once casual, open, inexpensive, and low maintenance, and that defined a certain moment in the history of American leisure. While he built houses elsewhere, it was Blake's dozen or so vacation houses on Long Island, built between 1954 and 1962, that best captured the excitement and possibility of that moment. They were also among the purest expressions of a multifaceted career.

It was always the landscape of eastern Long Island—then still empty, still pristine—that intrigued Blake. Like the abstract expressionist painters, he was attracted by its unique, low-lying beauty, the high sky and sea-brewed light, and the great ocean void. "All the buildings I would do were an interpretation of that landscape," he would later tell me. His houses reflected this passion in the way they were sited on the dunes or potato fields, and in how their modular plans sacrificed everything for light and connection to the outdoors. It seemed like a paradise, a place to peel back one's soul and face down all inhibitions. Blake spoke about the landscape as if it were a painter's canvas: empty, raw, and seductive, but also vaguely threatening.

He was introduced to Jackson Pollock through a mutual friend, and his visit to Pollock's studio in the hamlet of Springs came as a revelation: "I was absolutely overwhelmed," he recalled. "The sun was shining when I walked into his studio, shining in and into the paintings. It was like walking into the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles—dazzling, incredible!" Blake longed to make an architecture that wasn't so cool, so Eurocentric, so clinically detached as the modern design of his generation. He may have also longed for the kind of reckless abandon that he witnessed in Pollock's studio: The same ►

Strongly influenced by another denizen of Long Island, Jackson Pollock, Blake imagined a Miesian "Ideal Museum" to showcase the artist's work (top). Blake experiments with a model of the Pinwheel House (bottom).

energy, emotion, frantic movement—even rage—that was part of the artist's temperament.

Blake took this as a calling: Young architects were obliged to push their work to entirely new levels. "What I and others saw in the new painting in the Hamptons was only the beginning," he said. "We were sure that a similar architectural energy would soon manifest itself all around us. And we felt we were ready." In retrospect, it seems to have been an auspicious moment: the best of avant-garde art converging with architecture to create a new dynamic, a new vision of American space. But how do you turn an "action painting" into a building? How do you introduce to architecture the kind of dynamism and all-over application that Pollock brought to his work?

In 1949 Blake designed a project called the "Ideal Museum," in which Pollock's large drip paintings were to hover within an all-glass pavilion and merge with the surrounding landscape. Basing the structure loosely on Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's unbuilt "Museum for a Small City," Blake made a model with miniature reductions of Pollock's canvases. The artist got involved too, fabricating several small-scale plaster sculptures for the model.

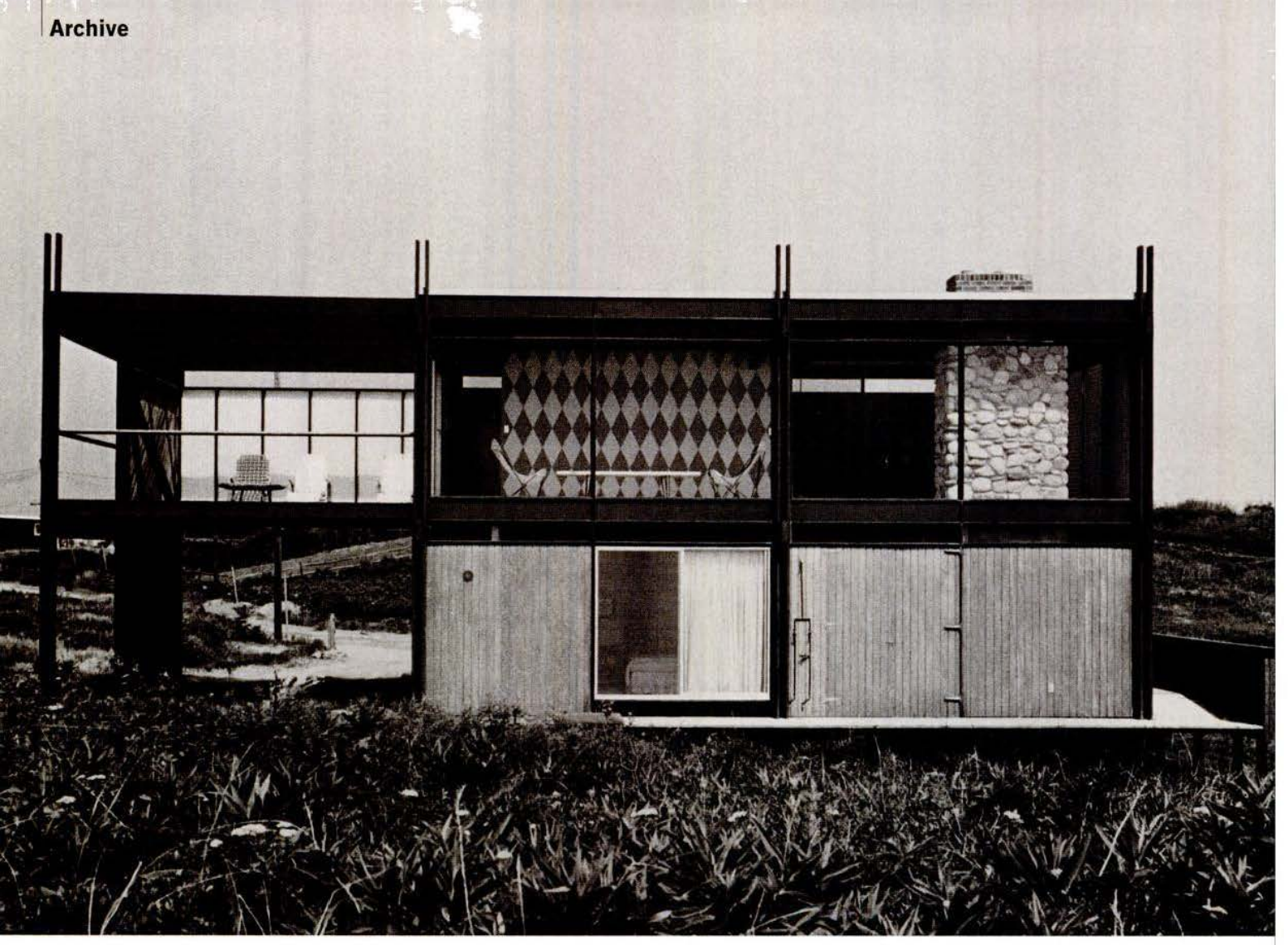
The Ideal Museum was never built, but the project led Blake to similar ideas, one of which came to fruition in the house he designed for himself in 1953, in the middle of a potato field in the village of Water Mill. The idea was deceptively simple, almost like a cartoon, but ingenious: a pinwheel configuration, 24-feet-by-24-feet square, with four barnlike walls, (8-feet high, 18-feet long) that would slide outward on metal tracks so that the home dweller could experience total oneness with the surrounding landscape. There would be no glass to interfere with the sensation; when the walls were open, the house would literally be in nature. (Mosquitoes turned out to be quite a problem.)

Blake asked Pollock to paint the inside surfaces of the walls, so that when they were closed one would be sitting inside an all-around painting, and when they were open there would be four Pollocks floating on air. By 1954, though, Pollock was too busy and too successful to accept the proposal. "You can't afford me," he said. Instead, Blake hung a large abstract painting by Alfonso Ossorio on one of the walls, fulfilling his idea of creating seamless movement between art, architecture, furniture (low-lying Noguchi tables), and landscape.

There is a photograph that shows Blake in motion, slightly blurred, pulling open one of the sliding walls of the Pinwheel House. It conveys the feeling of a kind of "action architecture," almost as if he had built the proverbial box but was, at the same time, struggling to break free from it. (The shot happens to have been taken by Hans Namuth, the same photographer who took the iconic photos of Pollock working in his studio.)

The layouts for Blake's other houses followed a similar logic, arranged and balanced in a variety of configurations: basic geometric forms, elevated, stacked, splayed, separated by a breezeway, and so on. There was the slablike Russell House (Bridgehampton, 1956), which was cantilevered on steel pilotis to gain water views. ▸

LEA CERAMICHE. PASSION FOR THE DETAILS.



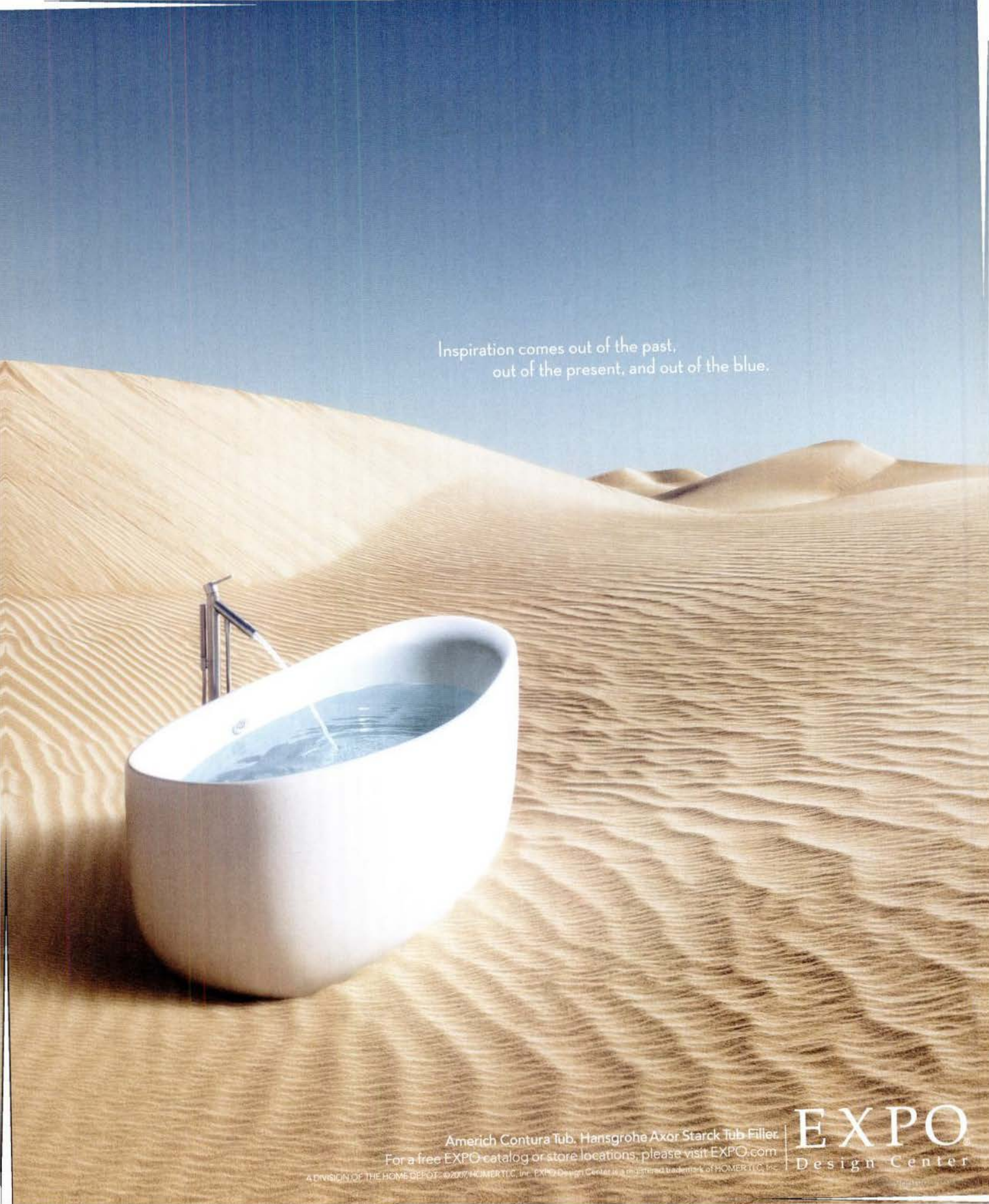
Blake designed summer homes all over Long Island, inspired by the raw landscape and intersection of sea and sky. The Armstrong House (above) in Montauk was built in 1962 and can be shut up for the winter like a Chinese box.

The Kent House (Water Mill, 1956) was propped on telephone poles to lift it safely above hurricane floods. The second Blake House (Bridgehampton, 1960) was a Mies van der Rohe–inspired expansion on the Pinwheel House, essentially two 24-foot-by-24-foot boxes connected by an open-air breezeway. The Hagen House (Sagaponack, 1960) consisted of a pair of pavilions connected by a deck, while the Armstrong House (Montauk, 1962) was a double stack that could be closed up for the winter like a Chinese box.

Blake died on December 5, 2006, at the age of 86. Despite the fact that he was very much a part of the architectural establishment—he was architecture/design curator at MoMA, editor of *Architectural Forum*, and dean of architecture at Catholic University—he somehow retained the personality of a free-spirited outsider, some might say a loose cannon. It was as if he never really wanted to fit too comfortably in a world that he nevertheless appreciated and understood deeply.

Among his 17 books are seminal monographs on Marcel Breuer, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Philip Johnson. While he venerated the modern movement, he was always wary of the heroic architect role, the sweeping master plans, soulless equations, and what he called the "monumental arrogance" that some of modernism's masters displayed. In *God's Own Junkyard* (1964), he decried corporate modernism and the desecration of the environment by commercial interests. "This book is not written in anger," he wrote. "It is written in fury."

Whenever I asked him for a good image to use for an article or exhibition he would send me the same photograph, of his young son Casey and his cousin Elizabeth sitting in the breezeway of the Blake house in Bridgehampton. "Isn't this wonderful?" he would say. Although I didn't get it at the time—surely there were better images of the architecture—I think I now understand why he liked it so much. It was a shot that portrayed youthful innocence within a perfectly ordered framework of Euclidian space. ►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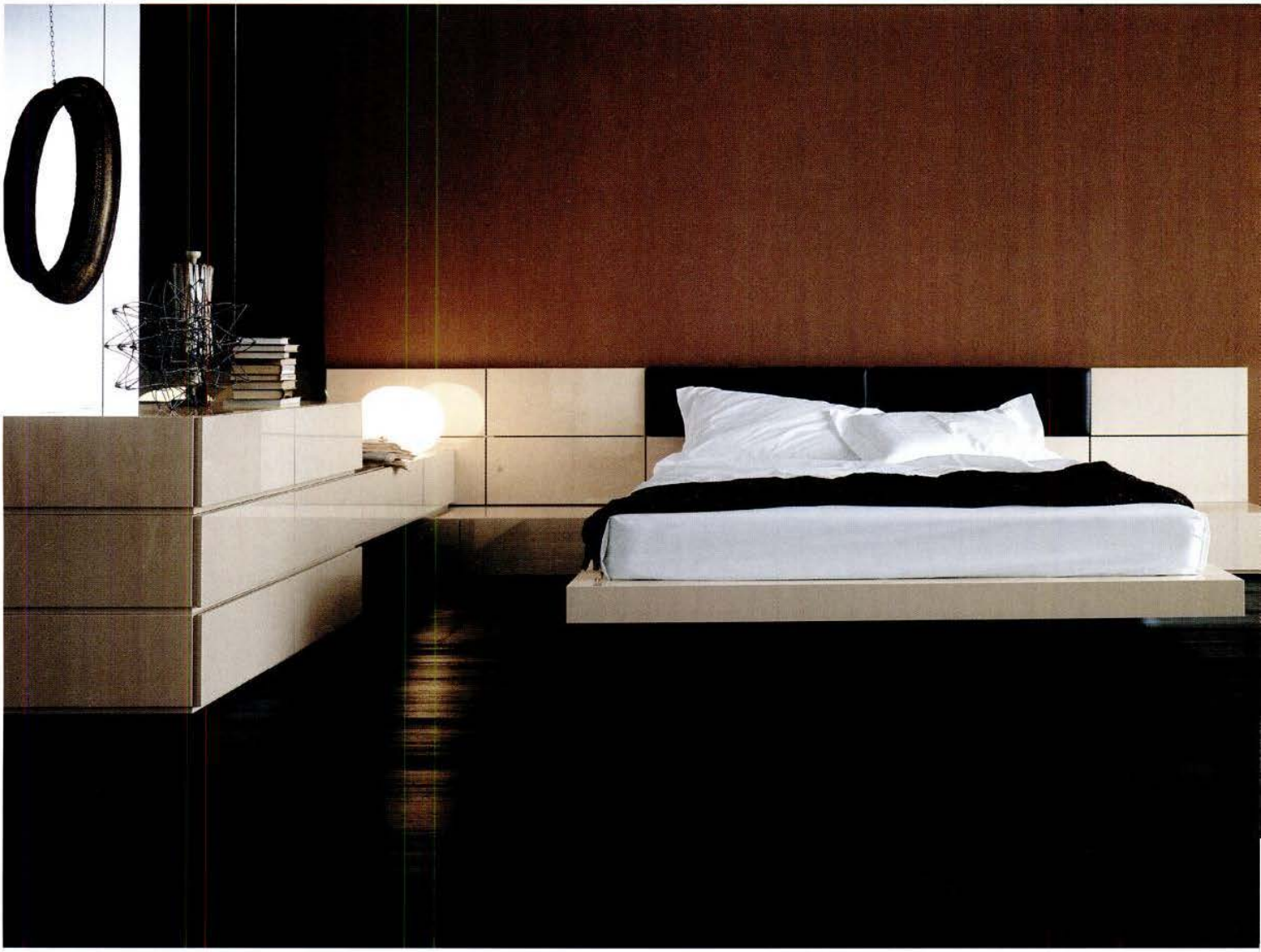
The Russell House's (left) cantilevered living space shows the influence of another modern giant: Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye. Peter Blake (below) at right with Jackson Pollock at left. Pollock was enthusiastic about the "Ideal Museum," a glass and metal pavilion to house his large-scale drip paintings, and made small plaster sculptures for the model. The Kent House (bottom left) was built in 1956 and was situated near enough to the water to warrant propping up on piles. Blake's son, Casey, and his cousin, Elizabeth, (bottom right) enjoy the sun at the second Blake House.

people progetto notte



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The second Blake House was built in Bridgehampton in 1960 as a summertime idyll. Comprised of two 24-foot-by-24-foot boxes with a breezeway in between, the house seems perfectly attuned to Long Island summers, with an all-encompassing relationship to the outdoors.

Ten Things You Should Know About Peter Blake

1 / Born Peter Jost Blach, in Berlin, to prosperous Jewish parents, Blake was sent to school in England in 1933 when the Nazis came to power.

2 / Blake was an intelligence officer in the U.S. Army and among the first Allied troops to enter Berlin after Hitler's death.

3 / He studied with Louis Kahn at the University of Pennsylvania.

4 / In 1959, Blake curated a highly influential exhibition on new American architecture for a U.S.-Soviet trade show in Moscow. The famous Kitchen Debate between Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and Vice President Richard Nixon took place in the exhibition's model suburban house.

5 / Blake was the outspoken editor-in-chief of *Architectural Forum* from 1964 to 1972. Subsequently, he was the founder and editor of the short-lived but influential magazine *Architecture Plus* (1972 to 1975).

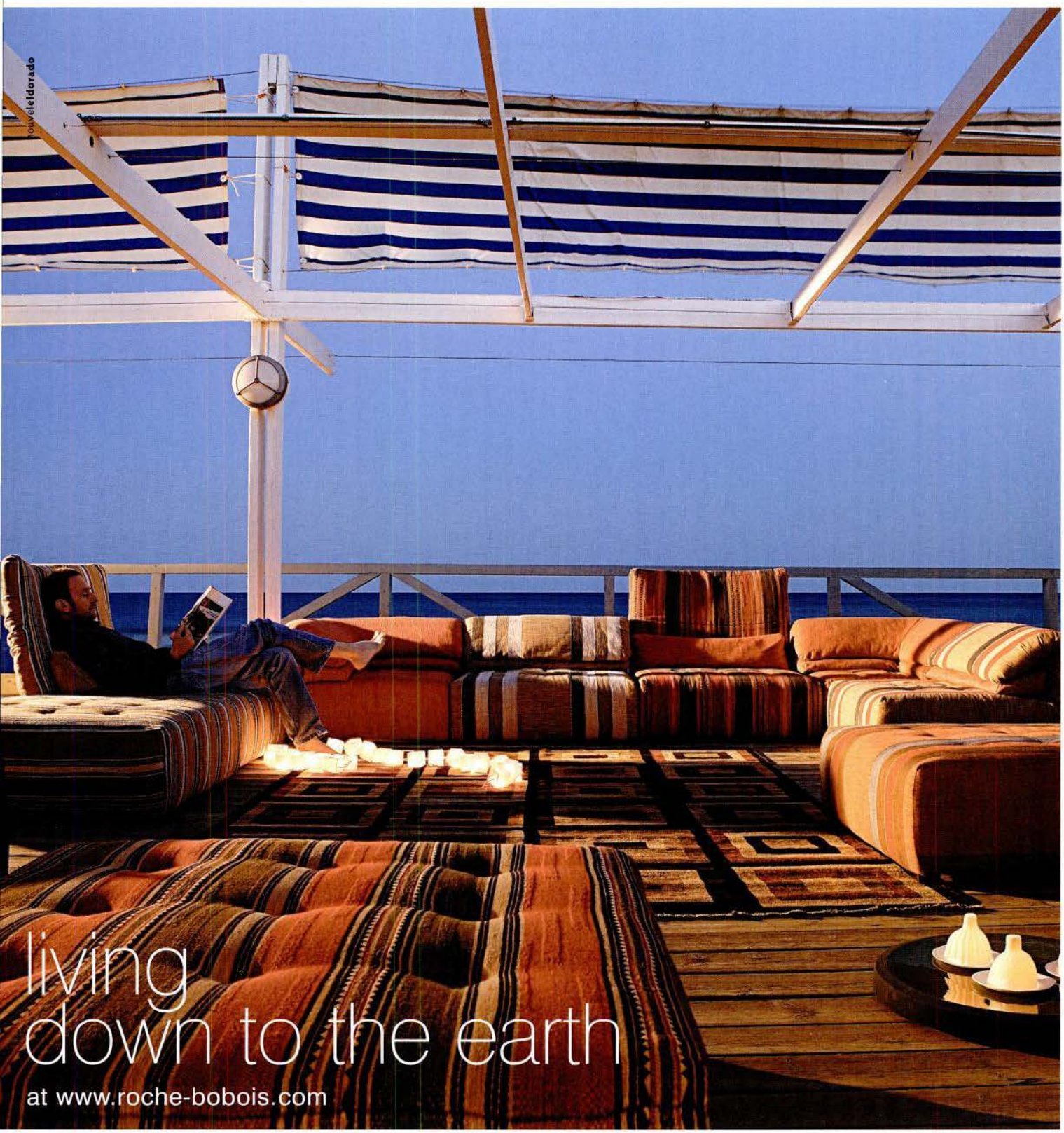
6 / Besides his innovative weekend houses, Blake designed a number of institutional buildings including an experimental theater at Vanderbilt University; a synagogue in Livingston, New Jersey; and a psychiatric hospital in Binghamton, New York.

7 / Blake designed the cabinets and kitchen counters for Philip Johnson's Glass House.

8 / He designed a good number of his built projects in collaboration with the architect Julian Neski.

9 / When he wrote about fellow architect Edward Larrabee Barnes, Blake was also expressing his own lifelong conviction: "He seems to have grasped what few others understood as clearly or creatively—that a designed building in a participatory democracy should respond to a great variety of factors and that its ultimate form should express those conditions and demands rather than provide a memorial to its architect or to those who paid the bill."

10 / Subsequent owners of Blake's Pinwheel House "remodeled" it beyond recognition and incorporated it into a much larger house. Blake devised a way to save the purity of the original by building a tunnel to a new house, but the local zoning board wouldn't approve it. ■



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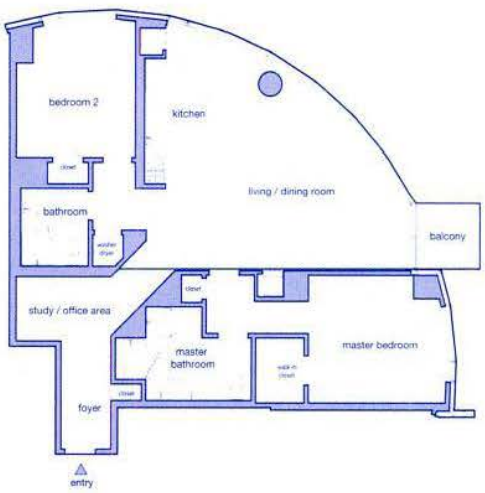

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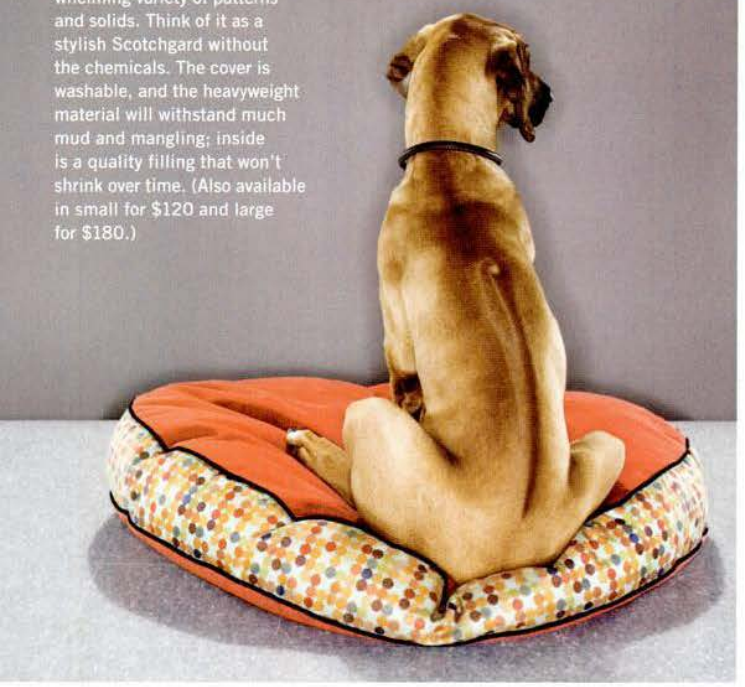
George burlap mattress cover / $70 for large (mattress sold separately) / www.georgesf.com / This bed is characterized by quality materials and a refined stick logo detailing in the center. It's a discerning option for even the pickiest of pointers, understated yet stylish, and the durable cover is washable. (Also available in small for $60, medium for $65, XL for $75, and XXL for $80.)

Valle bed / Available in yellow, blue, and orange / $169 for large / www.ossoandco.com / This progressive design is for those who refuse to compromise their decor. Some dogs may take advantage of the support offered by the upturned wings on each side, but it's hard to imagine a mastiff fitting between them. The removable cover makes for easy washing, but given its light weight, some dogs may mistake the Valle for an enormous plush toy. (Also available in small for $149.)

Crypton dog bed / $150 for medium / www.redhoundpets.com / Crypton is a bulletproof, nontoxic, and stain-resistant fabric that comes in an overwhelming variety of patterns and solids. Think of it as a stylish Scotchgard without the chemicals. The cover is washable, and the heavyweight material will withstand much mud and mangling; inside is a quality filling that won't shrink over time. (Also available in small for $120 and large for $180.)



Fatboy Doggy Boy bed / Available in camouflage, lime, black, brown, orange, pink, red, and sand / $139 for large / www.designpublic.com / These beanbag–like beds are so comfortable, you may even be tempted to lounge a bit yourself. The simple bone graphic adds a savvy industrial element, and there's myriad color options. The downside is that the nylon fabric makes loud DJ scratching sounds when your dog indulges that genetic impulse to turn around three times before settling down. (Also available in small for $99.)

Big Shrimpy Nest bed / Available in walnut, marigold, henna, coffee, aqua, and plum / $140 for medium / www.redhoundpets.com / This is a thoughtful choice not just for the recycled fleece filling, but for the sleep-inducing form as well. Dogs love the raised sides because the extra cushioning reminds them of being huddled in a pack as pups. The dense nylon pack-cloth base pad protects elbows and chins from hardwood and kitchen floors, and the faux-suede cover is soft, stain-resistant, and washable. (Also available in small for $100 and large for $170.)

Sak pet's basket by Michael Young / $250 / www.nova68.com / Here's one for the non-sporting group. This may be the first blobject dog bed to hit the market—fashion triumphs over function! Plastic is an inedible and bold material choice, and while it seems a bit cold, small dogs can still curl up in its recessed shape (although a design revision could include a small circular pad).

Story by Deborah Bishop | Photos by Jeremy Harris

Stoked to Soak

Compelling custom solutions to off-the-shelf problems are often hard to come by. But landscape architects James A. Lord and Roderick Wyllie relished the challenge of making a standard hot tub the most exciting element in the garden. The American Association of Landscape Architects gave Surfacedesign a Residential Design Honor Award for the project.

While nature abhors a vacuum, it's not much fonder of a hot tub, which tends to grace the landscape with all the élan of a hair-sprouting mole upon a pristine, milky cheek. However, when a client has only two firm requests for his little patch of Eden—easy maintenance and a body-soaking respite for his work-weary limbs—the designer must find a way to marry programmatic needs with aesthetic principles.

"There was a very long pause when I mentioned the spa," recalls Mark Erman with a laugh. Erman's schedule as a research analyst for a hedge fund compels him to arrive at the office by 5:30 a.m., and he rarely makes it back to his home in the Noe Valley neighborhood of San Francisco before six in the evening. "But," he adds, "I think they were intrigued by the challenge." They being James A. Lord and Roderick Wyllie, two of the partners in the San Francisco landscape architecture firm Surfacedesign Inc. "Given the modest budget, we knew we weren't going to be creating a custom soaking pool," says Wyllie, a tad wistfully. "But it's also the kind of thing we love to do—take off-the-shelf materials and make something that feels crafted and personal."

"The hot tub wasn't the only challenge," adds Lord. "In order to maximize every inch, the developer had dug the garden right into the existing grade." Defined by a 14-foot retaining wall on the north side, a ten-foot wall to the west, and the house itself—a two-flat, four-story elevation that fairly looms over the rear—the yard felt smaller and more constrained than it actually was. "We wanted to find ways of creating movement and life in the garden, and offer Mark a way to experience nature without getting his hands dirty."

Lord and Wyllie—who met years ago at Harvard's Graduate School of Design and spent time in the offices ▸

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More than just a clever cover, the ipe wood shell of Mark Erman's spa, thanks to its 40-foot tracks, niftily navigates the rocky straits between spa shelter, dapper deck, and bespoke buffet table.

of George Hargraves, Martha Schwartz, Peter Walker, and Ron Lutsko before setting up their own shop—started by organizing the space into three zones. Working with design associate Moritz Moellers, they expanded a stone patio at the back of the house, where Erman entertains. From there, a path of parallelogram-shaped stone slabs now leads to the middle zone, a bamboo grove underplanted with a dense carpet of mondo grass, self-naturalizing spring bulbs, and hellebores. A diagonal boxwood hedge signals the sybaritic rear zone, where the hot tub is flanked by three Japanese snowdrop trees rising from a field of decomposed granite.

The hot tub, shielded in front by a fixed steel plate, is encased within an 8-foot-square, steel-framed cover made of ecosourced ipe wood. Closed, it looks more like some Donald Judd–inspired garden folly than any lingering relic of fodue-era California. When it's time for a soak, the cover slides on tracks to become a waterside deck, then travels 40 feet up to the terrace, where it doubles as a buffet table beside the built-in grill. The garden feels private but no longer claustrophobic, with new side and rear fences that conceal the oppressive verticality of the original walls. The designers took variously sized off-the-shelf redwood planks, stained them black, and intermittently canted them inward to create a sense of movement. As evening approaches, lights embedded between the walls and the fence glow through the gaps, softly illuminating the space.

"I got way more than I imagined," says Erman, who will soon have more time to enjoy his yard, as he anticipates a sabbatical. As promised, the space has a "just add water" simplicity year round—from winter, when the hellebores bloom, to summer, when the snowdrop trees sag with white blossoms and rain petals onto the ground. ■

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Story by Glen Martin and Claudia Plasencia

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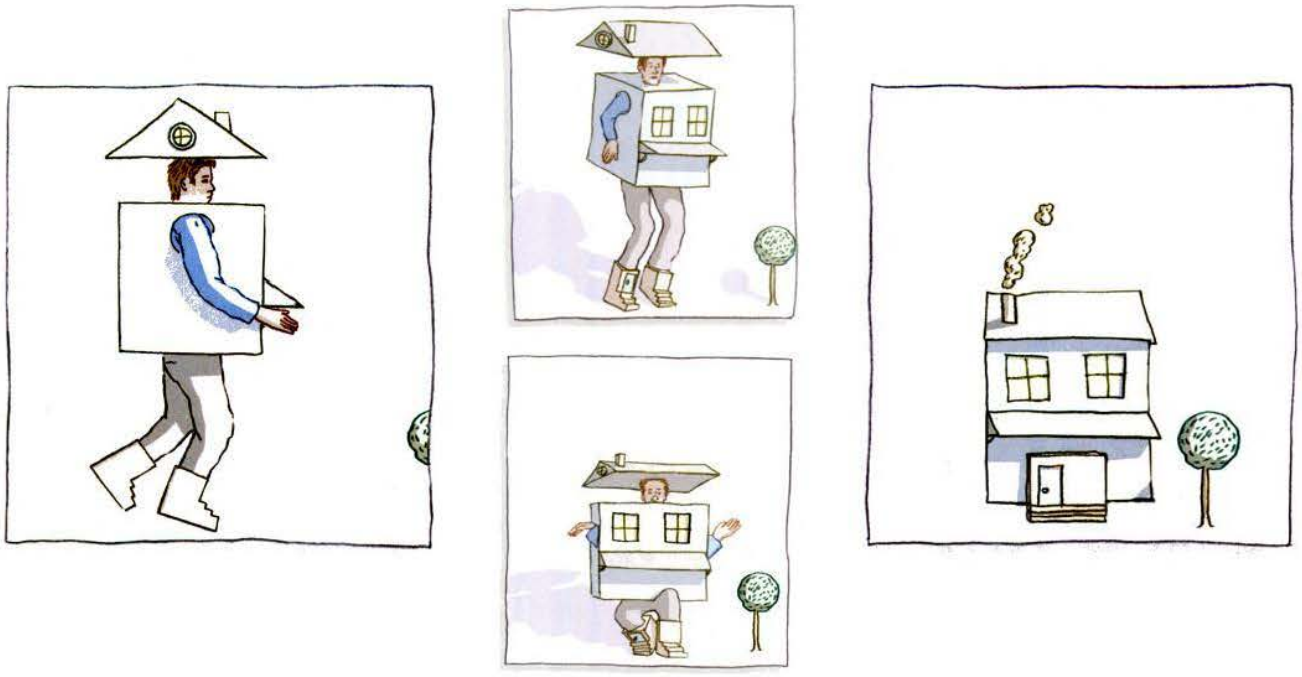


The Long and Winding Road

It began as the house of our dreams. Also known as Dwell Home II, it's an approach to sustainable design that became an architectural project that turned into a waiting game. For the last three years, we have been working to secure the various permits needed to build our home in Topanga Canyon, on the northwestern edge of Los Angeles. The prelude to groundbreaking has been complicated and lengthened by the fact that some of the sustainable building materials we're using are only newly available, and that our property falls into multiple permit jurisdictions, each with its own particular priorities and concerns. Although we didn't think about this at the outset, it turns out we will likely also be breaking ground on a greener approach to local building regulations. Meanwhile, if you've been following the Dwell Home II updates in these pages, you've read about the various hows and whys (if not the whens) of our preconstruction odyssey. But there's also a personal side to the saga. You might wonder, for example, what it's like to live inside the idea of a home, and how one stands up to the pressures of domestic limbo. We've compiled a journal of the ups and downs and are happy to share it, if only because the process can seem lonely at times.

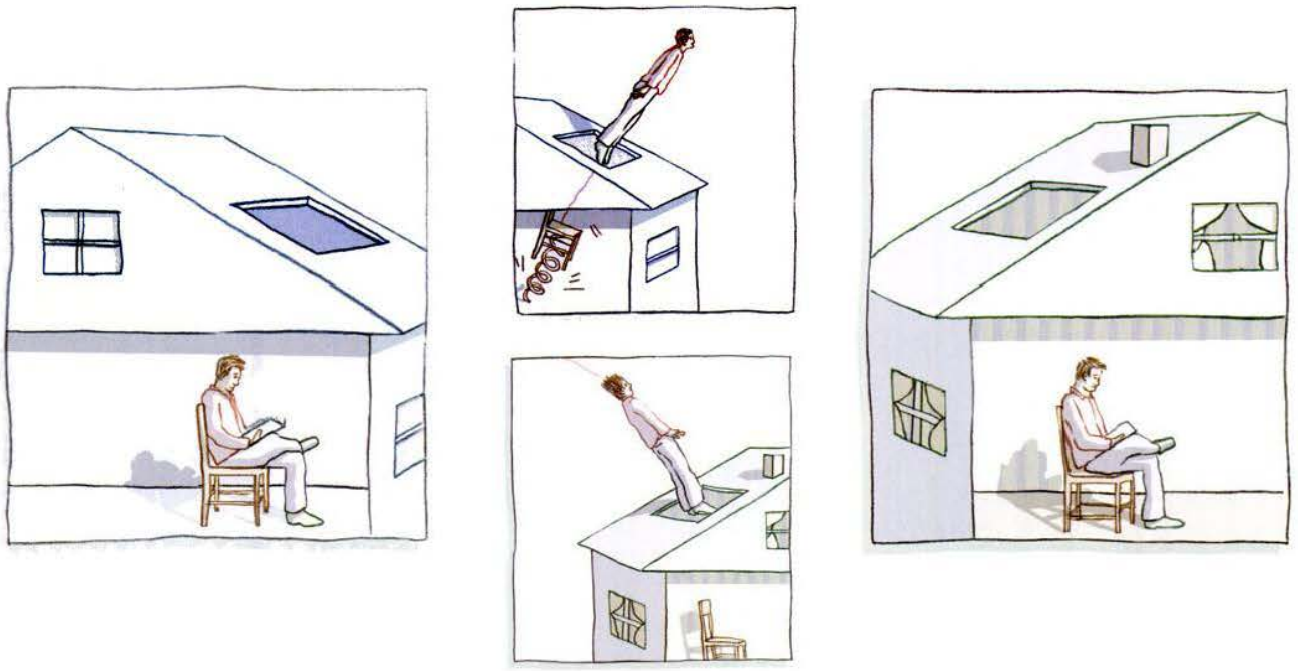
In 2004, Dwell asked us to write a brief under the heading, "The House We Would Love." Our first sentence was: "A great place to live and raise our kid(s)." From there, the rest flowed. We wanted a modern home, which we defined as on a human scale and at peace with its surroundings: simple and functional, uncluttered and comfortable.

And green. We wanted cross-breeze ventilation and natural cooling for low power usage, and, where possible, passive solar for heating, with walls of glass on the southern exposure. Indoor-outdoor living with privacy, and California native landscaping, with desert plants, for low water usage.

In short order, our brief was distributed to five architecture firms, followed by meetings with all the architects at the building site we had by then purchased in Topanga Canyon. The design competition was on.

We were stunned by the beauty of the designs that were submitted. We chose the Los Angeles firm of Escher GuneWardena Architecture, which met, and even exceeded, our goals with a compact (roughly 2,000-square-foot) and efficient design. The question Ravi GuneWardena and Frank Escher asked was: "Can a glass box be green?" And they answered it with natural cooling and ventilation systems, solar panels, and a green roof for thermal insulation. They are also going to preserve our wooded, hilly site, with its oak and sage trees, seasonal wildflowers, and grasses.

Everything was moving along so quickly... ▸



Glen: When Claudia and I first started the project, we were happily ensconced in a home that we had owned for almost ten years, in a neighborhood that we loved, with family and many longtime friends close by. We were on our way to having our first child, Leif, when we decided that we needed to expand our living space. Having looked at houses and seen nothing that felt like us, we decided to build. This meant selling our house—we needed the capital to purchase land and hire an architect. It's hard to believe that was three years ago. What seemed like a fairly straightforward process has become a seemingly infinite number of invoices to pay and papers that must be filed in just the right order. Our experience can't be described as a roller coaster, which would indicate that things are happening faster than your brain can process. It feels more like a long walk through the woods. Well, maybe not a walk, either, but more of a march. A really long march.

Claudia: We've been building a house for about two and a half years already. Not that we have anything that remotely looks like a house—but when we get going, it will be quick and we will have done everything per the request of the California Coastal Commission, the Topanga Canyon community, and Los Angeles County. At least that's what we tell people when they look at us like we're mad, because we still have nothing but paperwork, stakes, and holes to show for our efforts. And, of course, many, many canceled checks.

Glen: We're just now arranging the loan for construction; the architect has submitted all of our permits to the county for checking, the engineers have submitted our designs to the health department, and our expeditor is working furiously to close the final Coastal Commission permits. If all goes well, a shovel should be hitting the dirt soon. Meanwhile, it remains hard to think of ourselves as renters after so many years of having owned a home, but that is what we have become. Many days, I feel a little bit like a vagrant. Coming home from the airport after a long and exhausting business trip, I've sometimes actually ended up in Silver Lake, where our old house was, when I should be in Topanga Canyon, the location of our current rental. For those of you not from Los Angeles, that's 25 miles out of my way. After we sold our house, we were sitting on a sizeable chunk of cash. Weren't we the clever ones, we thought. We moved into a very large, very nice rental at the top of one of the mountains near downtown. But once we kick-started the building process and started writing checks that were, um, pretty large, we decided to scale back on our living expenses. We moved to a tiny bungalow in Silver Lake, and I rented an office nearby to get some work done and avoid stepping on the dog. We were now ▸

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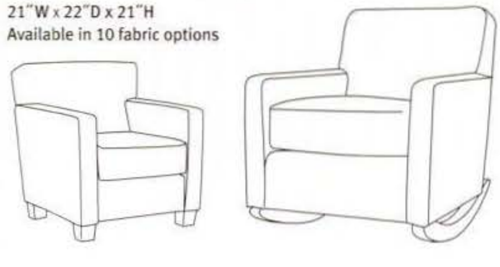

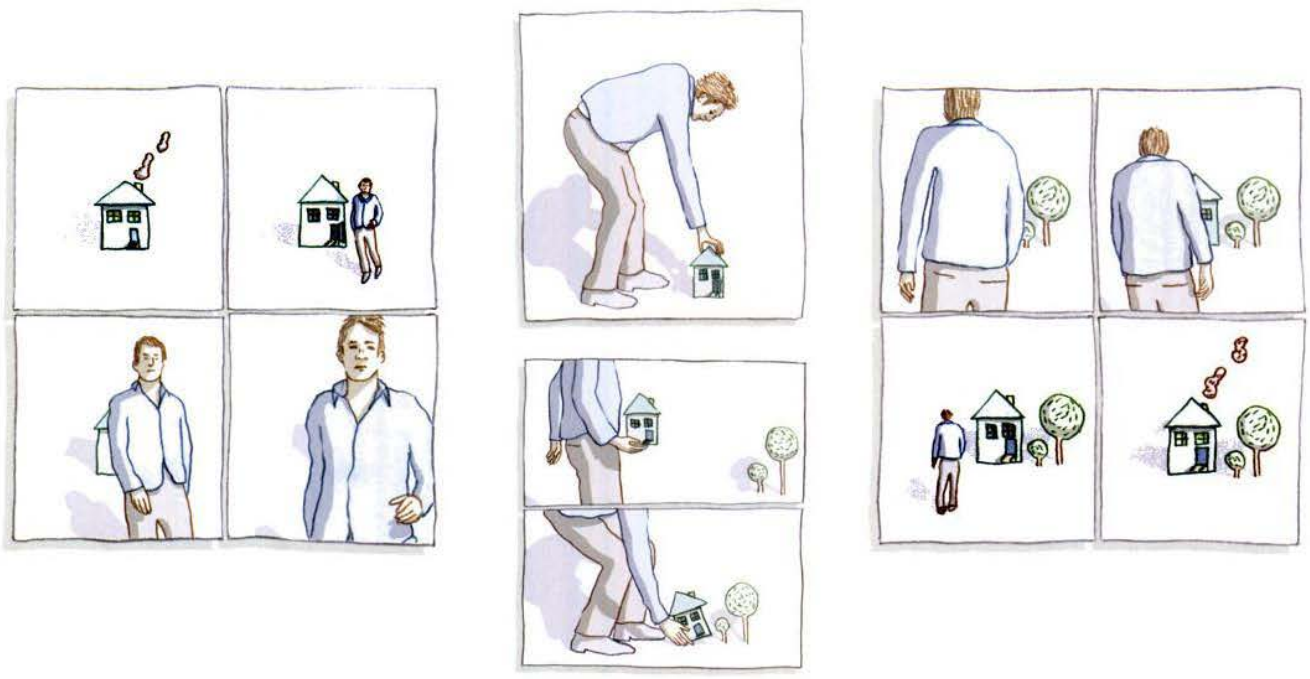

quite near our architect's office and seemingly making great progress. By the fall of 2006, we had put Leif into school in Topanga Canyon. As the date approached for him to begin, however, it dawned on us that we were nowhere near completion on our house. So, after about three days of driving him those aforementioned 25 miles to school and back (not very green of us), we decided to move again, to a rental in Topanga Canyon.

Claudia: Rental number one was a huge affair with a heated Toto toilet seat. And I really loved that. But the oven didn't work. Rental number two was significantly smaller, but my mom was five minutes away and our neighbor Bob would give daily dog treats to Rocky. Unfortunately, that couldn't compensate for the fact that we had to put Rocky outside a lot and that he spent much of that time trying to get back inside. We lost most of our deposit on that house. Now, we're happily moved into our third rental, which is just the right size for our son, our new daughter, and the dog.

Glen: So, we were like Goldilocks—our first rental was toooo big, our second rental was toooo small, and our third rental was just right.

Claudia: My husband is very optimistic about this process, whereas I have been more crabbily tenacious. I'm impatient and typically need more immediate gratification so I can pine for the next thing. But I have to say, this slow-bake process has forced me to make the best of every shift. Each house is a little adventure, with its own personality and stories. As for the stuff that travels with us, I've become ruthless—purging has become a mania. At the same time, I'm annoyed that there are things I haven't been able to take with me. I measured Leif's growth on the cabinets of two previous kitchens. I'm sure the pencil marks have been painted over, along with the tiny little stickers he put inside some of those cabinets. Lesson learned: Get smart about memento portability. And then I remember—once we slog to completion, there will be no more domestic dalliances with other people's houses.

Glen: We've made a solemn vow to ourselves: Once we move into our Dwell Home, we will never move again.

Claudia: Okay, I must confess, we still have a garage full of boxes that have made the journey with us. There's nothing I need in them, though there are a few items that my mind's eye still fancies: ceramic vases I got for a wedding anniversary, an old Artemide light fixture I refused to sell with our old house. I should have left a few boxes behind each time we moved.

Glen: We're also sitting on a small mountain of drawings, letters from various government agencies and banks, ▸


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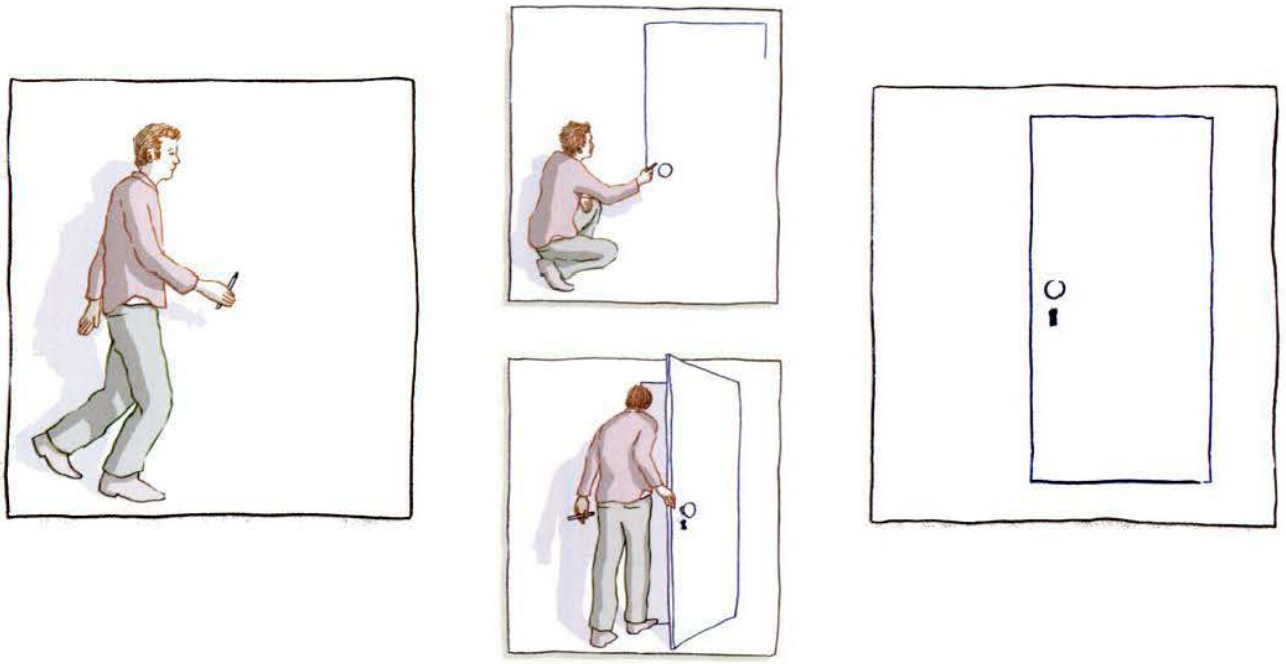

and all those canceled checks. And, needless to say, not feeling quite as clever as we did when we were sitting on a mountain of cash. Late at night, when Claudia and I talk about the house, we're no longer giddy with anticipation. Instead, we reassure ourselves that it's always darkest before the dawn.

Claudia: I listed all our likes and dislikes way back when, on the brief for the architects, but, let's face it, everything is ultimately about chemistry. I just hope that when I walk into our new home, I can happily say, "You're the one we've waited for so long." I lived in one house growing up. That was home. But it has become very clear to me that no matter where we live, it's my family that defines home. Surroundings may change, but what you do day-to-day to keep everyone happy—that pretty much stays the same. I feel very brave and adventurous now.

Glen: We had a meeting with our architects, who gave us a final "here's what we've got to get done to break ground" list. I will say it's a little longer than we'd hoped. Two major obstacles are new requirements from the fire department and the plan check on the Green Sandwich technology we're using. The fire department is now saying that we need to widen the road in front of the house and create a path to it that is neither too steep nor too soft. We're one of the the first to use Green Sandwich structural concrete insulating panels in Los Angeles County, and it's causing perturbations with the plan checkers. They're going to do extra analyses (for a fee, of course) before approving this greener approach.

Claudia: What can I say? News could be better, but trying to sound stoic, I'll say it could be worse.

Glen: Our lives are now full of emails with status reports on "soils report corrections," "civil engineering drawings," "mechanical systems approvals," "deed restrictions," "building plan check," "contractor interviews," "construction loan approval docs," and "fire department corrections." Everything had been moving along, with no real villains in our story. Now that we're at the 11th hour, 59th minute, a last few delays and deadbeats have been creating a lot of drama for us. Groundbreaking is now so tantalizingly close. We're actually starting to believe that we will be home soon.

A postscript: We just got the news that the CEO of Green Sandwich Technologies spoke to the structural division head of architectural engineering at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, and the county is going to waive the extra fees and expedite our paperwork. The county supervisor's office says they're interested in our project as a prototype for green building. Hooray! ■

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Story by Jane Szita

Bunkering Down

Amsterdam-based architects UNStudio transformed a wartime concrete bunker into a poetic, multipurpose, and thoroughly modern monument—without eradicating the original.

In the middle of a field in Vreeland, blotting the kind of rustic 17th-century Dutch landscape familiar from Rembrandt etchings, stands an implacable concrete war bunker; a conservation order forbids its demolition. The owner of the land—which is now used for polo matches—asked UNStudio to transform the bunker into a place where he could host friends, hold meetings, watch polo, and enjoy the country views. The result is the Tea House on Bunker, an elegantly contorted structure whose daring 36-foot cantilever springs directly from the earthbound bunker, effectively lifting the entire building into the sky, mirroring blue in its textured steel skin.

"We started by analyzing the bunker itself, and the views from it," says Ben van Berkel, a UNStudio principal. "The solution that we came up with was to hang the Tea House from the old concrete structure, bridging out beyond the original walls to form a space with a huge window for people to see the landscape." The single floor-to-ceiling window, 49 feet wide and floating just over 7 feet above the ground, dominates the interior structure (and can be completely removed in summer, dissolving the barrier between inside and outside); there's also a small kitchen and a bathroom, allowing the Tea House to function as a guest house, as well as a meeting space and viewing platform.

"Our strategy was to cover the bunker, yet not cover it," says van Berkel. "On the outside, just as with the bunker, the Tea House has a totally coherent structure. It's a sculpture that grows out of another sculpture. There's no seam or gap, and it's all welded together as one entity." The cladding was formed from sheets of steel welded seamlessly, punched with dots to catch the light, and folded around the frame. The welding took a year to complete. Patches of the bunker's concrete have been left visible, so as to create a visual link between the old and new; the climbing plants that were working to cover the old structure have also been permitted to creep onto the new gleaming steel façade. "It's as if you move from the archaeological aspect of the bunker to its new evolution in the Tea House," says van Berkel.

The Tea House, he continues, represents more than a building: "It's a thing in itself, a piece of art. Actually, we wanted to create a new bunker—after all, you can be really secluded here, apart from the one window. The Tea House has the same oblique quality as the bunker, and the steel exploits those angles by reflecting every change in the light. I'd say that what we've done is to reframe the original building. Restoration I don't really believe in. When you restore a building, you always put something new on top of it anyway. Much more than restructuring, I like the idea of reframing." ■

PHOTO BY MENNO KOK

PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN RICHTERS

Before the makeover, the war bunker sat, rather uselessly, slowly being subsumed by the overgrowth (opposite). With the clever design intervention, the architects were able to utilize the space without altering the landscape (above).

Mid-Century Mash-Up

Although postwar California modernism is generally associated with Southern California, the Bay Area's own tradition has begun in recent years to be more widely acknowledged, and its surviving treasures have gained an appreciative audience. San Francisco's modernists were faced with the issue of building within a firmly established stylistic tradition—think bay windows and gingerbread. Henry Hill's 1947 renovation of a 1908 Victorian tucked away on an alley in historic Russian Hill provides a remarkable response to the dilemma.

Story by Sam Grawe

Photos by Misha Gravenor

Upon completion of Harvard's graduate design program under Walter Gropius in 1937, the English-born Hill returned to Berkeley, California, and worked extensively with John Ekin Dinwiddie, one of San Francisco's modernist pioneers. After World War II—during which Hill served in London assessing damage from bombing run photographs—he and Dinwiddie went into practice for a brief period with the progressive German architect Erich Mendelsohn. By 1948 Hill was in business for himself and had established himself as an architect capable of seamlessly melding the traditions of European modernism with an almost laid-back Californian sensibility. Landscape architect Robert Royston, who once shared an office with Hill on Clay Street, paints the picture: "It was wonderful, he would show up to work with the top down on his car, with a great Beethoven or Britten symphony playing on his radio."

Project: Farnham/Rice Residence
Architect: Henry Hill
Location: San Francisco, California

Gretchen Rice and Kevin Farnham moved into the renovated Victorian in 2005. They were surprised to find a mid-century home—albeit a renovation—in their neighborhood. The mahogany-paneled vestibule (left) features gently angled stairs that rise to the living area, dominated by an impressive atrium (above). Farnham (opposite) walks the couple's Vizsla, Kasia, down the sloped alley upon which the house sits. Hill's renovation maintains some Victorian character in the decorative eaves and scaling, but the home is largely an anomaly for San Francisco. A double-height entranceway is punctuated by a bright orange door.

In 2005, Gretchen Rice and Kevin Farnham acquired the unique home. Prior to that the couple lived only a few blocks away but, according to Farnham, "couldn't believe that something like this existed in our neighborhood." The two had pretty much written off San Francisco's real estate market, but over the course of one weekend—when Farnham accidentally stumbled upon the listing on a website—everything changed. "I knew right then that I was in trouble," recounts Farnham of walking into the house for the first time. "I had never really encountered a house in San Francisco that I actually wanted. I knew I had to have this."

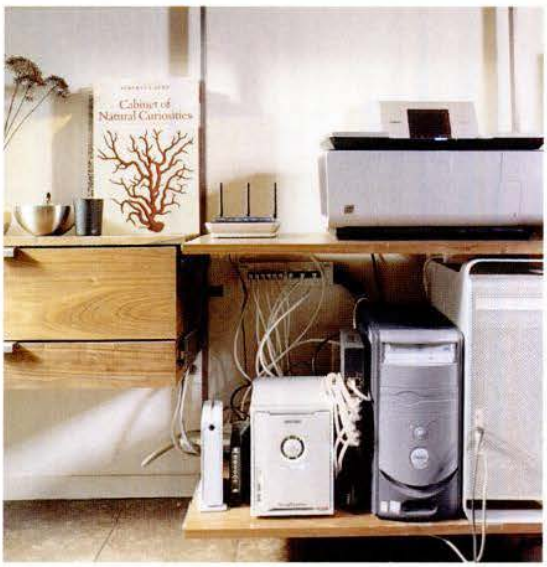
Farnham and Kasia (opposite) sit in front of the home's most impressive feature: an enclosed atrium overlooking the living area. In 2007, Dale Loughins outfitted the atrium with all manner of exotic epiphytes and an automated misting system. Clockwise from top: A 1972 ticket to the Munich Olympics, a vintage lacquer plate, and Eva Zeisel salt and pepper shakers for Nambe perch in front of the atrium which abuts the kitchen. Rice surfs the net at the built-in desk. Metropolitan side chairs by Jeffrey Bernett for B&B Italia surround a Surf Table designed by Carlo Colombo for Zanotta. p. 254

"Through [an] understanding of the world we live in, the history we have known, [the individual] can show the way to the future and show it for people now. In the continuity of history of which we are a part, he must, above all, understand the motivating forces which caused the creations of his past. To do creative work, he must reject the vast heritage of the mediocre, and find the true values within the human expressions of the past. He will then realize that these are the values of all men, all times, and all societies." —Henry Hill, *Architectural Record*, June 1952

The home's exterior is so modest you could walk by it a hundred times without a second glance, but open the oversized orange door and you are engulfed by an unexpected new world. "It's a pronounced experience," says Farnham of Hill's sweeping design statement. A slight series of stairs angles lazily up to the home's main level. Tongue-and-groove mahogany paneling elegantly cloaks the walls. A long waist-high horizontal built-in, a fireplace, and embedded hi-fi speaker (remember that in 1947 we're talking mono), extends back to the façade and its wall of opaque glass. And then there are the atriums: Near the stairs, in the corner between the dining area and kitchen, and along one whole wall of the living area, these magnificent volumetric voids dazzle the eye and flood the otherwise enclosed space with light and plant life.

The bank of translucent glass windows diffuses light evenly in the living room (opposite) and contributes to the sensation that you have left the world behind. Eames chairs for Herman Miller are accompanied by Italian manufacturer U-vola's unique speakers from Elite Audio Systems.

Clockwise from upper left: Tidy shelving provides perfect storage for Phaidon's Art and Ideas series. Joseph Albers prints hang in the background. Hill included a hidden turntable and mono speaker cabinet in the original design. Built-ins in the bedroom echo the cabinetry from the great room.



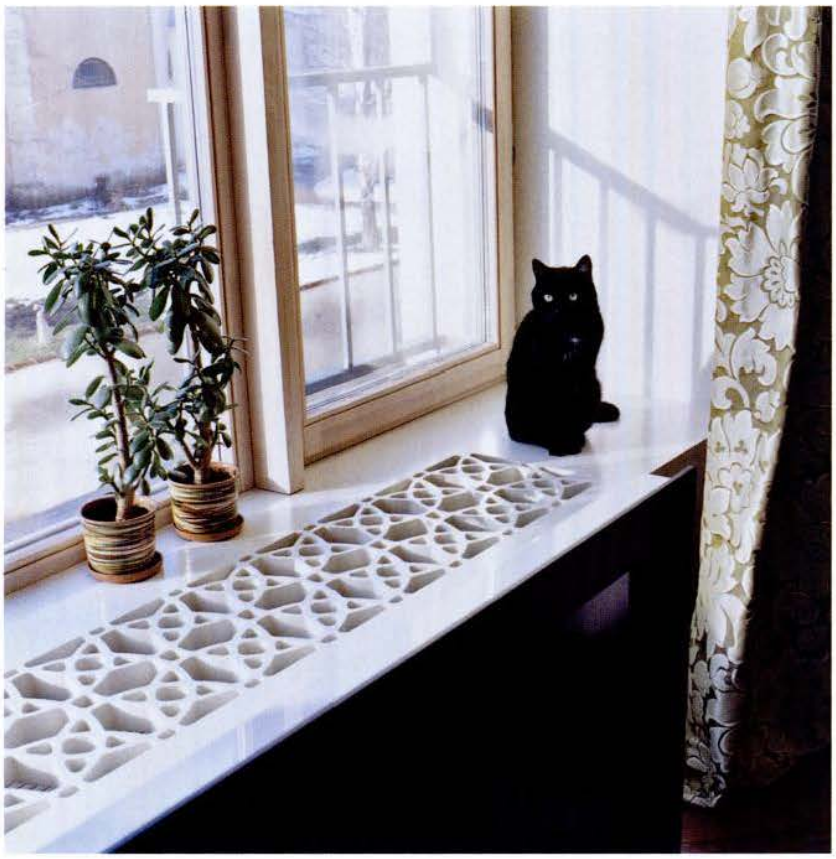
Impressive as Hill's great room was, the home's downstairs had little going for it. Designer John Randolph, whom Farnham and Rice have since commissioned to tackle a handful of domestic projects, even describes a "double happiness" symbol etched in the decaying floor. Almost immediately, Farnham set about updating the space. He hired Jeff Thomasson, a contractor now "on a semipermanent retainer," to tackle the lighting, walls, and flooring, and commissioned Atlas Industries to wrap the room with its modular shelving and storage. Eventually Atlas also designed the custom wet bar and bar, furnishing CAD drawings for Thomasson to follow. Seated on an expansive Patricia Urquiola sofa, Rice claims it's "the ultimate man palace." (However, she has been known to take in more than the occasional NFL game.)

Clockwise from upper left: Farnham installed Cat6 two-gigabit ethernet throughout the home, the epicenter of which is this herculean massing of hardware. The miniature backyard was landscaped and now accommodates a Viking grill, custom picnic table and benches by Ohio Design, and a nook which buttresses the small garden. Atlas designed the wet bar to meld seamlessly with the modular shelving that encircles the room. Atlas shelving (opposite) provides the framework for Farnham's entertainment center. Almost 100 square feet of Patricia Urquiola's Tufty-Time sofa for B&B Italia provides ample space to stretch out. p. 254

"I spend 80 percent of my time down here," admits the tech, media, and design junkie Farnham. Whether it's behind the bar mixing an eclectic array of cocktails, navigating TiVo through the evening's NBA proceedings, or keeping up with work at the "wired to the teeth" computer station, the downstairs space is a physical extension of Farnham's character (which surely includes the grill just outside the back door). While the couple is investigating if the home can be raised to accommodate a parking space or considering the possibility of a small additional story, Hill's design is in good hands. "I'm basically future-proofing the house," Farnham explains.

Palace Intrigue

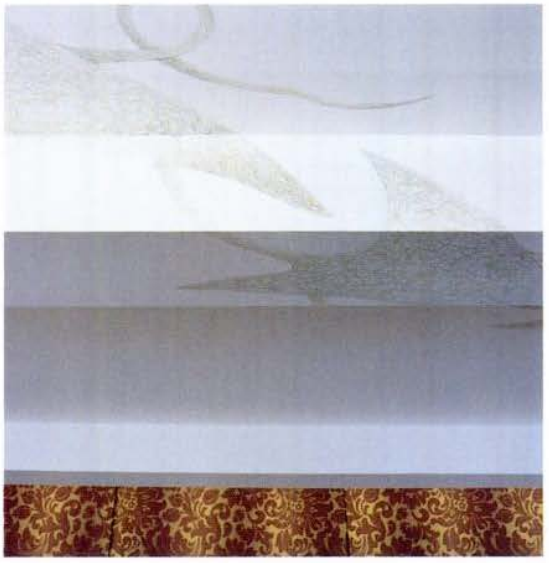
In the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, architect Rytis Mikulionis spent several years property hunting for his first nesting ground and finally ended up inside a former Soviet army barrack, which was, before that, a building on the grounds of a Baroque palace. The city's astounding collage of architectural histories, compounded with a stimulating encounter between eastern and western aesthetics, make for a unique visiting experience.



It is safe, if clichéd, to bet that an average American cannot locate Vilnius on a map. It's a city of 550,000 people and the capital of Lithuania. It populates a valley at the junction of the Vilnia and Neris rivers, some 194 miles east of the Baltic Seacoast. Now here's a patriotic confession: Yours truly scarcely knew the aforementioned until arriving in Vilnius one freezing evening last February.

Wearing a fur-lined cap with earflaps that cradle a wide bespectacled face, architect Rytis Mikulionis gives me a lift from the airport in his black Citroen sedan. Born in Kaunas, a city 62 miles outside of Vilnius, and educated at the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, he founded Plazma, a practice now eight-strong, six years ago. He is 37 and just moved into his first flat. In a booming real estate market, he took several years to find the property and spent the past couple years redoing it with his partner, Ausra Marcinkeviciute, an architect focused on interior design.

In the car, Mikulionis apologizes about his English, which is quite good, and I about my Lithuanian, which is limited to one word, *aciu*—thank you—from the passport control guy. Is Lithuanian anything like Russian or Polish? "No, we are Balts," he says with almost-indignant pride. Though all the Baltic countries have distinct languages, Lithuanian and Latvian have a prehistoric linguistic origin commonly called Balt—an Indo-European tongue in which some words resemble those of Sanskrit, ancient Greek, and Latin. ▸



Project: Mikulionis Residence
Architect: Plazma Architects
Location: Vilnius, Lithuania

Moby, the cat, (opposite) sits on the windowsill, which the architect constructed by cutting a geometric pattern into a thick sheet of MDF, a fiberboard product that's inexpensive, easy to machine, and unrecognizable when coated in white lacquer paint. An inset shows the delicate detailing of the ceiling, which was once covered in Soviet army signatures. Rytis Mikulionis (above) relaxes on a sectional sofa of his design, below a monumental Bul reading lamp by Ligne Roset. He gazes at the wintery haze streaming into a grand picture window, the flat's only source of natural light. p. 254

The architect looks toward the grounds of an 18th-century monastery, which accompanies the domed church. The large hi-fi system with Infinity acoustics is three centuries newer than the building behind it. Wall sconces, seen here and on the opposite page, are from Luzifer Lamps in Spain. Their pattern of triangular prisms is reminiscent of ceilings in the domes of the Alhambra, the ancient Moorish palace in Andalucía. The shelves are stocked with souvenirs from Mikulionis's travels—throughout both Europe and former Soviet states like Uzbekistan and Ukraine. p. 254

"We have always considered ourselves and our culture part of Europe," Mikulionis adds, referring to the national mindset that survived nearly 50 years of U.S.S.R. occupation in 1991. "The resistance was hiding in the forest the entire time."

Today, Vilnius is a great place to be an architect. Since the Iron Curtain disintegrated, the city has been building nonstop. High-rises are shooting up in the new center, an area formerly filled with sculptural concrete Soviet monoliths. The old center is a splendor of baroque churches and estates, many of which were built by Italian architects when a Lithuanian duke, Sigismund the Old, married an Italian princess, Bona Sforza, in the 16th century. Now it's full of restorations that feature contemporary interiors. There is plenty of work to be done.

There is also a surplus of historical baggage, which, as in any former Eastern-block country, is palpably fresh. In the bleak winter, when the trees are bare and matted snow and ice cover every street, the architecture is paramount. Colorful baroque buildings contrast the 20th-century Soviet architecture with keen, luscious clarity. In some cases, Soviet-era architects seem to have pulled gentle touches of baroque curves into their blocky compositions. And, even where they haven't, the difference is exhilarating.

Mikulionis is fond of history. Driving by a city square where a huge statue of Lenin was dramatically pulled off its pedestal in 1991, he points out the lanterns still standing that once surrounded it. "There is a lot of talk in the city about rebuilding this square to make it more pedestrian friendly," he says. "Our practice might be involved. Those lanterns are typically Soviet, and I'd like to keep them there."

But he is hesitant to explain the intricacies of why he wants to keep them. When pressed he simply utters "of course," without pause. We chat about how in Germany's former East there has been debate about what to do with Soviet monuments versus pre-Soviet ones—which are more worth saving, and whether it's cathartic, pointless, or shameful to erase the recent totalitarian regime. He feels the debate is irrelevant. His mantra is, evidently, "What happened, happened."

Mikulionis's 1,130-square-foot property is inside what was once the outbuilding of a baroque 19th-century palace, and more recently a Soviet army barrack. It was later converted to apartments. Though his building's façade was completely renovated due to years of weather damage, and much of the interior changed, the structure maintains its hefty 200-year-old construction and vaulted ceilings. Entering, he opens one door and then another, separated by three and a half feet of solid wall.

The apartment is comprised of a large parlor floor with a bedroom mezzanine that Mikulionis requested in the contract before signing to purchase. Scrawls and scribbles from Russian soldiers used to be on the vaulted ceiling, but were painted over during refurbishment. "They were invaders' names, and they looked really ugly," Mikulionis explains. ▸

The renovated façade of Mikulionis's flat (above), seen beyond thin snow and bare trees from the grounds of the monastery. Sconces overlook the living room (right) like a pair of eyes. The furnishings of the architect's design are fully stocked with pillows made from exotic patterned fabrics.

"Sometimes we wake up in the summer to soldiers singing the national anthem."

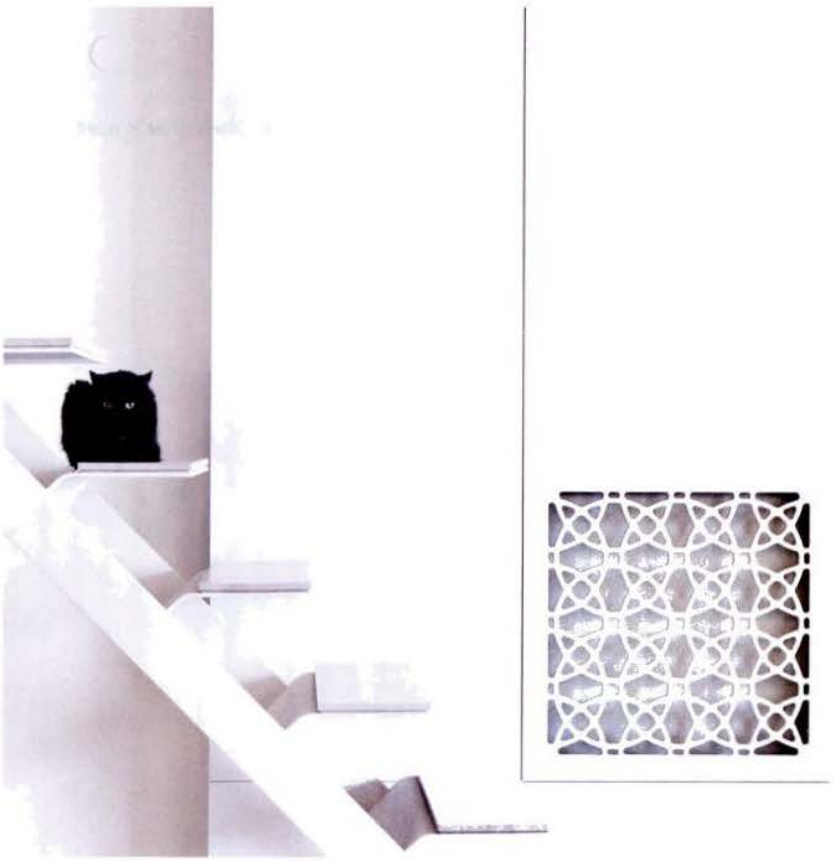
The kitchen (above) fits neatly on one wall. The architect reads at a black Ligne Roset dining set, beneath a Col pendant lamp by Francisco Luján. The tublar steel mezzanine rails were designed by Mikulionis, who enjoyed being exempt from the safety concerns that a client would force on him. p. 254

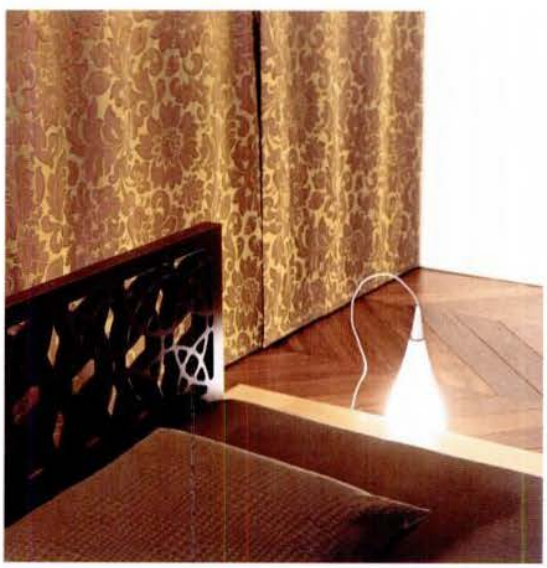
Outside the flat's one huge window is a monastery with a domed church, circa 1700, and a newer building that houses a Lithuanian army academy and barracks. "Sometimes we wake up in the summer to soldiers singing the national anthem," he says, washing down a nutty chunk of dark chocolate with some burgundy.

Below the mezzanine, the living space is neatly divided between a lounging area with wide, flat sofas; a wall-mounted kitchen; a dining area; and a spacious enclosed bathroom fitted beneath the mezzanine. Curtains with a bold leafy pattern in both avocado and eggplant hues frame the oversized window and the bedroom storage area. Their pattern unites the space, while their luminescent fibers reflect quietly from opposite sides of the room as the sun goes down.

With the exception of a few antiques and a black Ligne Roset dining set, all of the flat's furniture was designed by Mikulionis and fabricated by local manufacturers. "That's the advantage of working in interiors and knowing the right people," says the architect. He seems particularly pleased with his white steel staircase, low sofas, and heavy steel table perforated with a CNC-cut geometric pattern that holds a wood-burning stove.

"Building your own place," he says, "you can do the things clients wouldn't let you do." He is looking at the staircase to the mezzanine, which he assembled by bending thick sheets of metal and applying thin boards of stained oak to warm the steps. It rises about seven feet with no banisters—a height that borders on ▸





Clockwise from top: Moby sits on his favorite step, which almost eludes the grip of his paws. The wood stove roars atop a table designed by the architect. The bed, on the mezzanine, has a B.Lux "Nite" light at its side. The drapes, from Designers Guild, hide the wall closet. p. 254

A couple items of antique furniture (above), from Mikulionis's family, add to the flat's feeling of history. A painting by Augustinas Liatukas, subject unknown, hangs at the entrance to the mezzanine bedroom above a custom light-box featuring the ubiquitous CNC-cut geometric pattern.

The platform bed (right) was designed by the architect. The pattern on the ceiling was drawn by Rasa Baradinskiene, a local designer, in colored pencil over the off-white paint. Mikulionis and Marcinkeviciute don't worry about slipping through the rails to the living room level below.

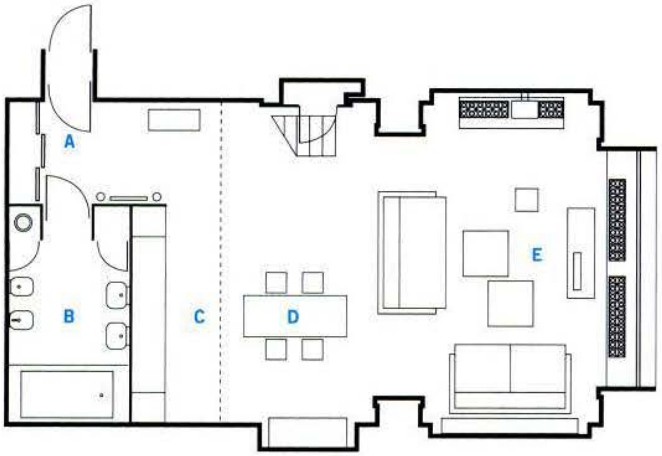
uncomfortable, and the steps are so smooth that at one point Moby, the cat, slips while grooming himself.

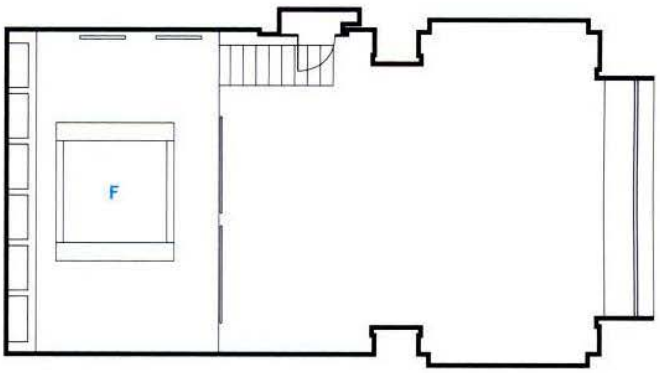
Eastern-themed decorations are here and there—at one point I knock over a hookah that's sitting by the stereo, which Mikulionis says is more for show than for shisha. A beautiful white panel covered with Arabic writing is spotlit on the wall. "It has all the words for 'God' written," says Marcinkeviciute, adding that they're not religious. "There used to be pictures of Stalin here in every shop and house. In Egypt, it's that plaque instead." A colorful assortment of pillowcases from various places, including Jordan and Egypt, adorn the sofas.

Mikulionis has been in Uzbekistan several times, and this comes as a geographic reminder (Iran is even closer). Being in Vilnius is an exotic European experience: so far east, packed with 16th-century buildings that could be in Naples, compounded with imposing architectures of the former Eastern Bloc.

Mikulionis likens Vilnius to Spain, another country he has frequented—one that combines Western and Arabic architectures with those of the somewhat recent fascist Franco regime. But this is the opposite side of the Union.

For an outsider, the Vilnius experience, its layers of history and rich contrasts, are a thrilling spectacle. "It's impossible to explain our historical experience to someone who hasn't lived it," Mikulionis says over a glass of local yeasty-flavored Vodka. His tone is wholehearted and devoid of arrogance. He is right. ■





Mikulionis Residence
Floor Plan

A Entrance
B Bathroom
C Kitchen
D Dining
E Living
F Bedroom

In the bathroom (above), which is tucked under the mezzanine, the toilet-bidet set from Pozzi Ginori boasts rounded rectangles with pleasingly deep but minimal basins. The wall sconces are from the Spanish lighting company Vibia, and fit neatly between brick-like rectangular tiles. p. 254

Mikulionis and Marcinkeviciute talk between the living and dining areas, the lamps beaconing their distinct spaces. The seating area was once separated from the kitchen by a wall that crossed the entire span of the former army barrack to create a long corridor.

The Italianate Job

With a little faith and a lot of foresight, Keisha Martin entrusted Laura Briggs and Jonathan Knowles to revitalize a derelict rowhouse, returning it to its original splendor and then some. Martin's new home is both an homage to the past and a design for the future.

Project: Martin Residence
Architect: Briggs Knowles Architecture + Design
Location: New York, New York

"This is going to sound totally sacrilegious," says Keisha Martin, "but when I started looking at homes in Harlem, I didn't love the architecture." Martin, a 33-year-old Wall Street marketing executive, felt oppressed by, as she puts it, "the Victorian style—the ornate details and dark wood...especially being young." A global traveler accustomed to good hotels with pampering amenities, and a devotee of modern materials and clean lines, Martin "wanted a place that worked for the way I live, not the house my grandmother grew up in."

Yet it was to grandmother's house—which had once been a few blocks away—that she was emotionally drawn. "I kind of liked the idea of being in Harlem," says Martin, who grew up in upstate New York. "Lots of family members had lived here over the years, so it didn't seem foreign to me." And when her wish list, which included "natural light, outdoor space, a walk-in closet, and working fireplaces," proved—big shock—hard to come by in an affordable Manhattan condo, Martin took a second look at the old neighborhood, notably a line of derelict, early-20th-century Italianate brownstones on West 118th Street. "Five years ago, the whole row was a wreck," Martin says. "But I'd seen, over time, each of these homes being renovated, and I'd been looking long enough that I was prepared to start from scratch." When one of the 3,200-square-foot, four-floor structures—which was, effectively, nothing but two façades sandwiching rubble—became available, she took the plunge.

Through her contractor, Martin found architects Laura Briggs and Jonathan Knowles six blocks away, where they were redesigning another townhouse that was in even worse shape than her own. It proved a fortuitous match: Both client and design team were interested in ►

From the front, Martin's brownstone looks like a better-kept version of its neighboring row houses (left; third house from the left), but the unmistakably modern interior can be glimpsed from the back (above); an outside deck overlooks a small yard.

Keisha Martin and her cousin, Mickeda, chat underneath the house's crowning glory, the oculus (opposite), which allows light to spill onto each floor of the house.

rethinking the relationship between the contemporary and historic. Martin wanted to reinvigorate the staid bourgeois townhouse of yesteryear by tweaking the program: Keeping the kitchen in the basement (where the servants once lived) and expanding it to include dining and hang-out zones; converting the classic parlor-floor dining area into a TV room; and using traditional materials such as penny tiles, typically found in old vestibules, in unexpected ways.

The architects' inquiry was more methodological. "We're interested in using intellectual frameworks that are offered throughout history," Briggs explains. "It's nice to dive back and forth between present and past." As an example, she cites the visually light, angular stair—made from steel rather than the usual mahogany or oak—and the challenge of turning the banister so that the balusters didn't appear off-kilter: To do so, the pair reached back to 18th-century France, for a system known as descriptive geometry, which facilitates the imagining and drawing of objects as they will appear in three dimensions. Thus, while Martin was interested in mixing old and new applications and styles, the architects were excited by the prospect of combining historic techniques with present-day innovations.

The resulting redesign suggests a young, forward-thinking individual in whom one can perceive not only the bone structure, but also the values of previous generations. The original, somewhat formal layout has been preserved nearly intact, with larger front and rear rooms linked by interstitial space, a plan enhanced by Martin's passion for symmetry. "I'm very particular about that," she says. "All of the bedrooms are the same size, and the 18-foot kitchen island downstairs is the same length as the [third- and fourth-floor] hallways." Yet in terms of its design strategies, the house is utterly 21st century, most evidently in the architects' exploitation of daylight via a delicate rooftop oculus. "The concept comes from a traditional brownstone skylight, but we wanted to make more of it," Briggs explains. So she and Knowles created a series of large-scale light models, using them to develop an orientation that would receive the sun throughout the day. No less important is the shape—which Martin likens to a flower—with its angled fins that capture and reflect light, animating what might otherwise be a passive strategy.

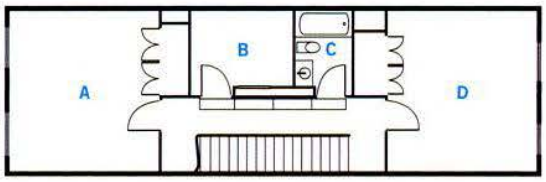
Briggs and Knowles also placed translucent glass channels into the upstairs hallway floors, expanding the downward flow of sunshine beyond the stairwell, and set a long clerestory into the otherwise windowless master bath; at Martin's suggestion, they replaced the rear brick façades of the parlor and garden floors with glass doors that permit unobstructed southern light and proper shading in the summer. And, in a sense, the sun never sets: The architects inserted fluorescent tubes into the oculus and hallway glass, replicating the daylight effect after hours, and used additional fixtures, tucked into channels, floors, and coves, to sculpt and enliven the interior volumes.

The sun's transit also influenced the colors and materials selected by Martin and her team. In the architects' imaginations, the stair and adjacent spaces formed "a trunk of light," says Briggs, one that, as in a forest, "gets darker as it moves downstairs—the kitchen, which is grounded in the garden, is really the darkest," while the spaces off the "trunk," notably the bedrooms, became the outer branches. Thus the interior is whitest at the ▸

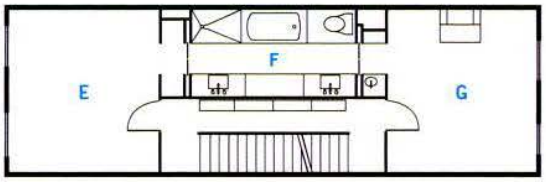
Briggs and Knowles based their design of the oculus on traditional Victorian skylights but tweaked it to fit a more modern sensibility and outfitted it with fluorescent tubing to recreate the effect in the evening.

The kitchen has ample cooking space and room for a crowd. The Ann Sacks tile backsplash softens the line of the stainless steel, while the black absolute granite countertop adds a muted counterpoint. Kohler and Grohe fixtures ensure that dishes can be tackled double-team style. p. 254

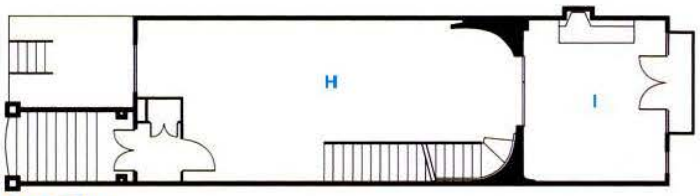
"What has surprised me the most is the openness of the place—it's very welcoming and warm. I didn't think we were going to achieve that, given that everything is modern."



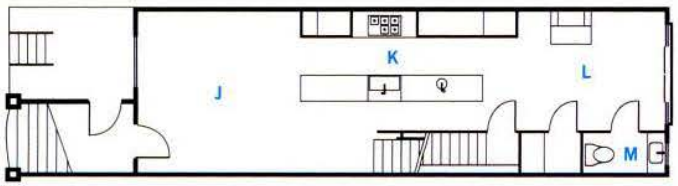
Fourth Floor



Third Floor



Second Floor



First Floor

Martin Residence
Floor Plans

A Bedroom
B Office
C Bathroom
D Bedroom
E Dressing Room
F Master Bathroom
G Master Bedroom
H Parlor
I Media Room / Library
J Dining
K Kitchen
L Sitting Room
M Bathroom

top, beneath the oculus, and clad almost completely in bamboo way down in the kitchen; similarly, the top-floor guest bedrooms feature the strongest colors—salmon and gray—while Martin's bedroom a floor below is sponge-painted a muted, almost leathery lavender. The exclusive use of bamboo throughout enhances the serene, natural environment, one in which the granite kitchen countertops, limestone fireplaces, and sandstone bath counters—each matte finished—function as textural accents.

But the house is anything but Crunchy Granola. A tour of the master bed and bathroom reveal the influence of many a luxury hotel: Along with the usual double sink, Martin specified separate shower and toilet cabinets, a tub fitted out with chromatherapy lights, and a breakfast bar with mini-fridge and sink (with the kitchen two floors below, it's a long slog to the coffee pot). And she has one-upped the walk-in closet by giving her wardrobe a space that's precisely the same size as the house's bedrooms.

"What has surprised me the most is the openness of the place—it's very welcoming and warm," Martin observes. "I didn't think we were going to achieve that, given that everything is modern." This remains the design's most impressive achievement: a resonant interplay between the interior's modern elegance and the old-world cordiality of the original—one that's fostered a highly personal blend of past, present, and future. "When my family moved out of the neighborhood, they kind of got scattered about," Martin says. "But now on holidays, we all gather here, and everyone reminisces about their childhood in Harlem. I don't feel like I have a traditional house," she adds. "But my house will enable me to carry on my family tradition." ■

Martin's master bathroom (opposite), outfitted with a tub tricked out with jets and chromatherapy lights, allows her to soak in the luxury of her own home. Her closet (which some would consider to be a perfectly habitable room—or apartment!) offers room for a growing wardrobe (right).

Briggs and Knowles's elegant staircase (above) draws upon the language of the oculus; the stairs are underlit with fluorescent lighting, which accents the line of the steps, giving them an ethereal, almost weightless quality.

Story by Andrew Wagner

Photos by Roy Zipstein

Mississippi Turning

"You have to see this town to understand this building," Martha Murphy explains, sitting on the oversized front porch of the 39571 Project, the new SHoP architects–designed community building that bears the zip code of Pass Christian (despite its technically being in De Lisle), Mississippi. The design is intended to serve the entire "four corners" community. "We didn't have anything after Katrina—everything was just washed away," Murphy says. "We wanted this building to be a gathering place, a place that would bring everyone together. A place where we could see each other, say hello, and just simply check in with each other."

Even in late July of 2006—nearly a year after Hurricane Katrina hit—the wanton damage to Pass Christian and the surrounding area, commonly referred to as "four corners," is shocking. What was once a small, thriving Mississippi coastal community now resembles something closer to a tree fort that's been pummeled by the neighborhood bully: Broken branches lie scattered across the landscape and bits of once-majestic mansions sit rotting along the Gulf Coast. With nearly every architectural trace of humanity wiped clean or rendered useless, all that residents of this town and its surrounding area were left with was each other—one big extended family that has rallied together to bring "the Pass"—as the town is often called—back from the brink. Murphy, who was born and raised in Arkansas but spent a lot of time in the Pass growing up, is the driving force behind the recently opened SHoP Architects–designed community building, and she exudes a sort of filial love for the town and its populace.

As one of the first pieces of new construction in the area since Katrina, SHoP's 11,500-square-foot low-lying wood, concrete, and steel complex may be the harbinger of a new architectural vernacular poised to command the region—now that insurance monies have finally begun to trickle in. But it can do more than act as an architectural centerpiece; it can serve as a role model for how a structure might strengthen its host community.

As construction forges on, Murphy expounds on that idea in the muggy Mississippi air: "We realize that buildings don't necessarily define us. They are not what make up our community," she says, looking out on the large, wild "front yard" that makes the building feel more like a prairie-style home than the sterile, civic architecture one expects of community centers. "What buildings do is help to contain our emotions, bring them in, and bring them together. After what happened here, there was so ▸

Bill Sharples, Federico Negro, Martha Murphy, and Reese Campbell take in the fruits of their labor on the front porch of the new community building (opposite). The large front porch and sprawling lawn (below) were critical components to the design. On rainy days, visitors can take in the passing showers from the comforts of a sheltering overhang.

Once SHoP architects got on board, they were able to draw interest from the Design Workshop at Parsons The New School for Design. Fourteen students worked around the clock for close to seven months to complete the 2,000-square-foot Laundromat (below). The open southern entrance of the community building (right) readily welcomes visitors in. The two structures complement each other with their generous use of cedar.

much chaos, so much filth. We needed a building that would give us some order—some cleanliness."

Scaling the roof directly above Murphy in the soon-to-be pouring rain is wiry 29-year-old Reese Campbell from SHoP. Dressed in a T-shirt and jeans, Campbell has flown in for a few days with Bill Sharples, one of the firm's founding partners, to monitor the construction progress. The team initially aimed for an August 29, 2006 opening, precisely one year after Katrina hit. As Sharples calmly walks visitors through the structure, explaining the project's objectives, Campbell is frantically investigating the seams and sutures. Swinging down from the roof, he plops down next to Murphy and interjects: "Architecture is all about breaking a building down to its simplest components. Once you can do that, you can do the most complicated piece of architecture."

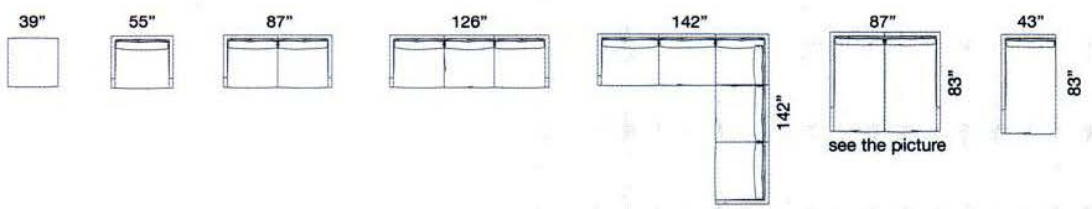
As it turns out, this is an apt description of the complex. From a distance the structure suggests the simplicity of a garden shed, but in close proximity it astounds in variety and details. Sharples, strolling down the long porch corridor with various contractors, adds, "This type of thinking really sums up our whole philosophy"—a philosophy that has manifested itself in the firm's involvement with the project from start to finish. For ▸

frighetto

What's the color of design?

White, black, yellow, red, green and all the colors that create
a new idea of design. Frighetto lives here.

Paramount Model.



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Martha Murphy and her granddaughter, Samantha, enjoy a romp on the 5,000-square-foot covered outdoor deck. According to Murphy, "When Samantha first set foot on the porch, she immediately began twirling down its length, dancing with great glee; I called Reese to tell him the project was officially a success." For the community building's unique roof structure the team used a mass-customized metal bracket system that uses computer-aided laser technology to fabricate the 236 unique plates. All the work was done through complex 3-D models and then sent to the fabricator as digital files, ready to be cut.

Wingchair / CH445_1960

Hans J. Wegner

Hans J. Wegner / Wishbone Chair, CH24_1950

Hans J. Wegner / Shell Chair, CH07_1963

Carl Hansen & Søn

Vancouver_Calgary_Toronto_Montreal_New York_
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The community building (right) now houses a restaurant, a bookshop, a computer center, a gift shop, and an art gallery. The Laundromat (below) offers community members a clean place to wash their clothes—something Murphy explains was "one of the most sorely missed [amenities] immediately after the hurricane."

the community building, this meant arriving in the battered Gulf Region just days after the hurricane hit. Murphy—who Sharples and partner, Gregg Pasquarelli, know through their affiliation with Tulane University in New Orleans—contacted SHoP immediately.

"I came back two days after the storm," says Murphy, who lost her house in nearby Henderson Point as well. "Some friends and I were thinking about what we could do to help and someone reminded me of 55 acres I had purchased at the 'four corners' some ten years ago but had never done anything with. So that's what we decided to do—put up some temporary structures that could house folks and act as a meeting place."

The team arrived on September 10th to survey the site and meet with Murphy. Along with engineer Craig Schwitter of Buro Happold (a consulting engineering firm with which SHoP frequently collaborates) Sharples and Pasquarelli sketched out some general plans for the temporary structures and returned to New York on September 12. Back in Manhattan the team pulled Campbell and Federico Negro off of other projects and sent the two young designers down to Mississippi to make the project happen.

"Martha and I lived on the site in side-by-side trailers ▸

Cafe Annie had its decades-old location washed away during the hurricane. It now resides at the new community building, and on warm nights the place gets packed as community residents try to ease back into their normal routines. On this particular evening, the renowned Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews stopped by to play a few numbers.

on and off for six months," Campbell says, though "trailer" is a generous term for the windowless steel and aluminum boxes they inhabited. The first order of business was clearing the ravaged land—a task they were able to do only with the help of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and their heavy-lifting equipment. But as the weeks passed and the land cleared, Murphy and Campbell's ideas for the project began to quickly morph.

"I had been working on some different ideas in my trailer," says Campbell. "Our trailers were right out there on what is now the front lawn and about two months into the project, Martha came over and said: 'Reese, we need to give something more, we need to give the people something permanent, something clean.'" And with that, Campbell says, "we decided that by doing 'more'—you can always do more—that we could make something really special for this community."

Campbell and his team embarked on an intense redesign; however, as Sharples is quick to point out, "The front porch was always essential to the design." Building off the 5,000-square-foot front porch, the team mirrored two "simple boxes" at a slight, easterly angle. The roof covering the front porch was paramount to the design: SHoP devised a system of billowing rafters—constructed from simple pressure-treated Southern yellow pine two-by-tens and custom plates manufactured by Maloya Laser in Long Island, New York—that allow for simple assembly and removal. The spectacular undulating roof does more than provide shelter from the late-afternoon Mississippi rain: It gives a visual cue to the people of the four corners area that their home is still valued.

People outside the area have taken notice of this investment. A team of 14 students from Parsons The New School for Design pitched in over the summer, helping to design and construct two structures directly behind the building—one which serves as a place for residents to come for advice on how to collect funds from the federal and local governments, the other, simply a place to do laundry.

While the building overshot its year-anniversary opening, instead opening in stages and reaching full operation this past October, it now houses Cafe Annie (Murphy's favorite Mississippi haunt, which had been washed away during the storm), Pass Christian Books, a gift shop, a computer center, and an art gallery. It was also completed in time to remind the world that when you have a supportive community, all is not lost. ■

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Story by James Nestor

It's My Trip in a Box

While the Sunset Cabin on Ontario's Lake Simcoe was designed to afford leisurely views of the water at dusk, one is compelled to take more than a sidelong glance at the tiny retreat itself.

The best thing about vacation is not the range of choices offered—where to go, which restaurants to try, which hotel to stay in—but the limitations imposed. Our wardrobes are cordoned off to what we can cram in a suitcase, our libraries limited to a couple of books, and our toiletries stuffed into a Dopp kit. The fewer choices we have, the more freedom there is to do what we're supposed to be doing on vacation: nothing much.

These carry-on-size vacation houses demonstrate this ethos. Through striking design, they illustrate relaxation through restraint, liberation through limitations, and the luxury of living a life (or at least a holiday) distilled. ▸

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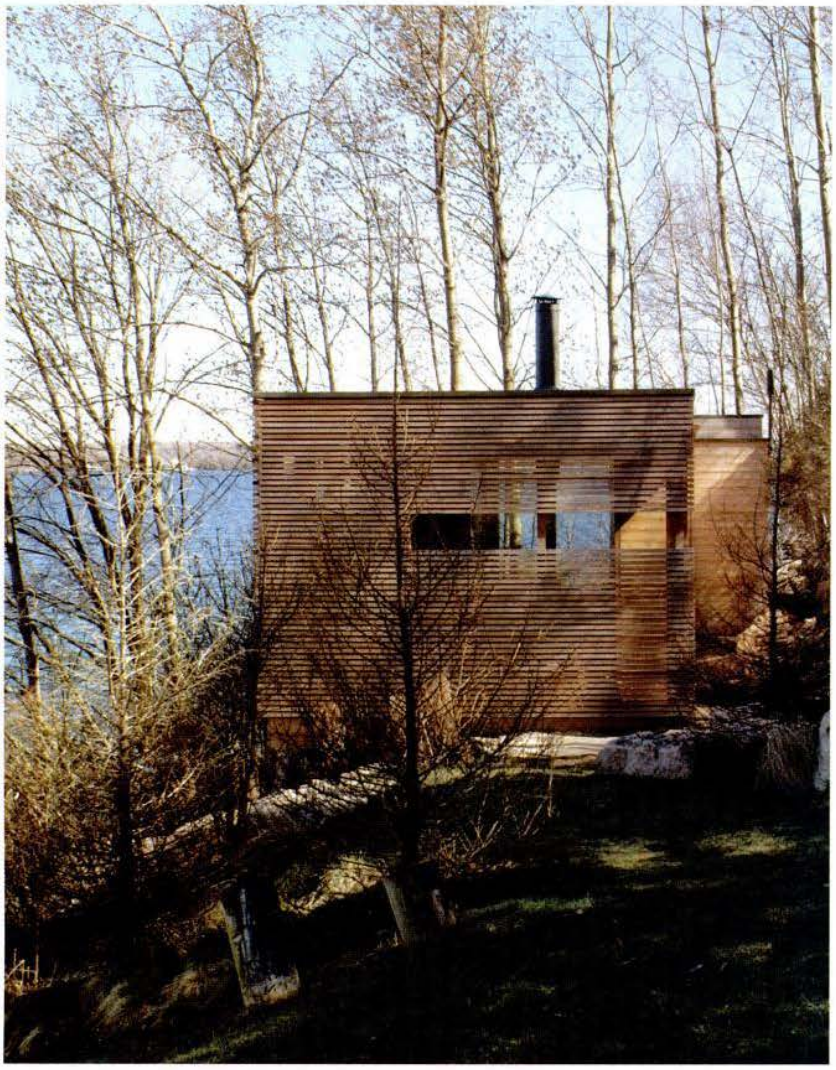

As the Griswold family taught us in *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, sometimes you need a vacation from the vacation itself. The owners of the Sunset Cabin in Lake Simcoe, Ontario, could relate. "They were having up to 15 overnight visitors at a time," explains architect Michael Taylor of Taylor Smyth Architects in Toronto. "They wanted an escape, a little place near the water where they could watch the sunset from their bed."

They also wanted to have minimal impact on the natural environment in the process. "We built it like a piece of furniture," says Taylor. Working with a local Toronto wood mill, he and his team prefabricated the one-room wooden sleeping box and then dismantled it. They then shipped all the parts and put it back together onsite in under ten days.

The result is a 275-square-foot wood-and-glass box that hovers lightly above the lakeshore. The walls with views are composed entirely of glass, augmented with an exterior horizontal cedar screen that both braces the structure from twisting and filters bright summer light. At night, the effect is reversed—electric interior light illuminates the cabin like a lantern. Window cutouts in the cedar screen fulfill the couple's single request: a bedside view of nightly sunsets.

By virtue of the limited space, the interior is minimalist—all of the surfaces are constructed of birch veneer plywood including the built-in cabinets. The east façade opens to a cedar-screened outdoor shower and chemical compost toilet; the west side opens to a small deck, which, at grade and unimpeded by handrails, spills out to the horizon in an infinity-pool-like effect.

"Another benefit of being close to the lake," explains Taylor, "is that you can now see the property—the wilderness—in a whole new way. New sounds, new views, foxes on the lake in wintertime—the kinds of things that they never knew existed before." ▸

Sunset Cabin
Lake Simcoe, Ontario

A foundation of two steel beams atop four concrete caissons allows grass to grow freely beneath and all around (above), encouraging the illusion that the whole place is gently levitating. Getting up early while on vacation is wholly undersatndable considering the view from the bed (right).

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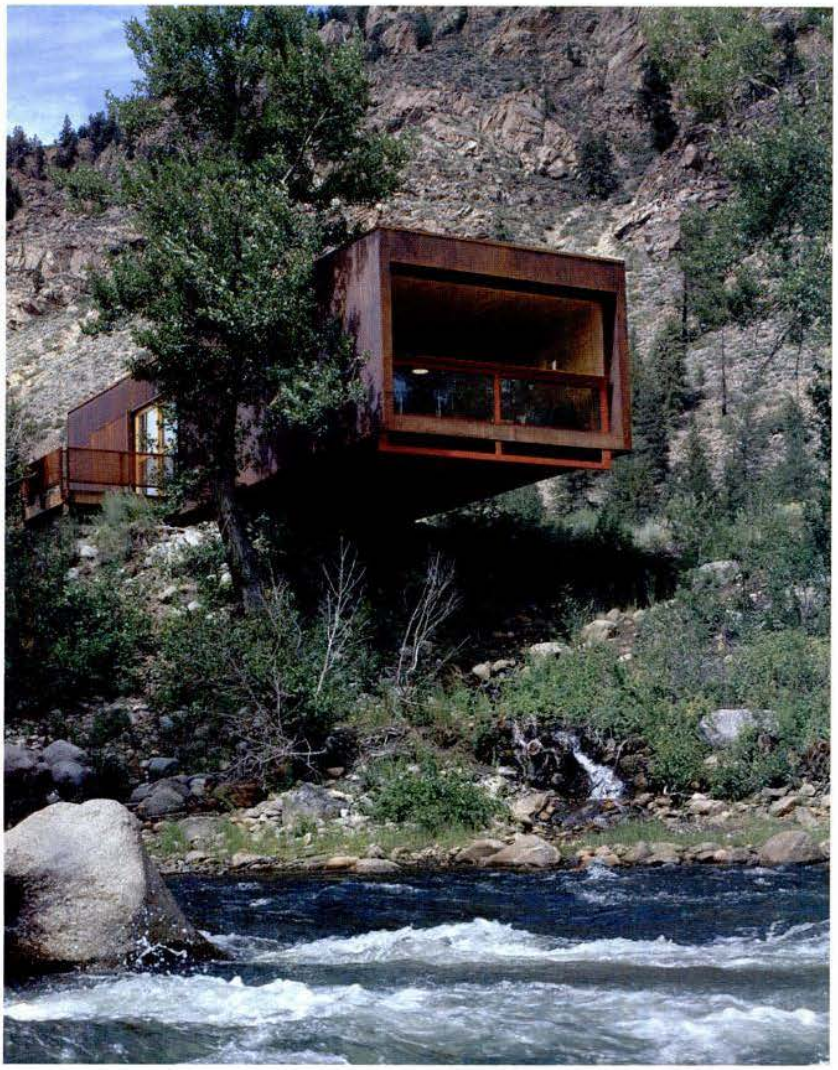


Projecting from a rocky bluff in rural Colorado, the Tube stares out over the landscape like the open shutter of a camera, its huge aperture cataloging the environment below. "That was kind of the goal," explains Ron Mason, the Tube's designer and principal of Anderson Mason Dale Architects, "to make it feel like you were inside a lens, looking out."

For Mason, "tube" refers not to the structure's shape, but rather to its orientation in the landscape. It faces the upper Arkansas River, which, from the living room, appears as though it is rushing right at you.

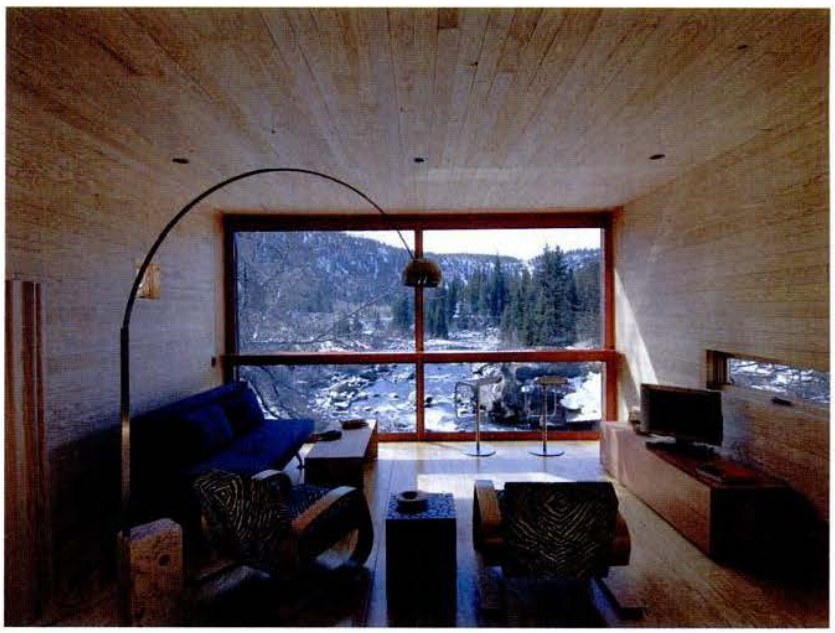
The entire house is a scant 16 feet wide and 50 feet long—the front half dedicated to the open kitchen and living room, which both face a massive wall-sized window. The back half offers a simple bed and bath. Throughout the interior, exposed southern yellow pine walls and ceilings serve as a low-impact frame for window views. In warm seasons, the top half of the 15-by-9 foot living room window slides open to create an *en-plein-air* counter on which to eat, drink, or just stare and breathe in the mountains.

To integrate the Tube into its natural surroundings, Mason clad the exterior in corrugated cold rolled steel sprayed with salt water to hasten the rusting process. As the structure ages, it patinates, appearing deeply weathered and resembling the sun-and-ice rock formations of the craggy landscape.

"It's very rural out there, the only access is off an old stagecoach road," says Mason. "And when I'm there, I never see a soul." ▸

The Tube
Granite, Colorado

Jutting out toward the upper Arkansas River, this prominent promontory of a vacation house is all momentum, pushing toward the scenic river below. With sufficient, but not exactly luxurious, living space, the whole place seems to guide its inhabitant forward toward the stunning vista.



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For most of us, a cabin's interior conjures images of bark-laden walls, burl tables, and taxidermied deer heads—indoor reminders of the great outdoors. Architect Makoto Yamaguchi also brings the outside inside in his Karuizawa, Japan, cabin, but with a wholly modern approach.

Along a rock-and-tree-lined bluff in the rural mountains about one and a half hours outside Tokyo, Yamaguchi's Villa/Gallery is angular and distinctly inorganic, a space-pod-style cabin that clearly distinguishes itself from the natural environment—popping from the earth like an exclamation point. Painted bright white, the walls and roof are fiber-reinforced plastic. Once inside, however, the Villa/Gallery reveals a different quality.

With the interior almost completely bare, a razor-sharp horizon line is visible from each room, leaving the views from the wall-size windows completely unobstructed. Both the kitchen and bath are sunken below floor level, and outfitted with glass, mirrored, or polished stainless steel finishes. The lack of accoutrements creates a perception of space in the little (737-square-foot) structure. The effect is focused and crystalline, allowing the wilderness to flood through the cabin uninterrupted—like a cyclorama of enormous plasma screen TVs all tuned in to the same stunning nature show. ■

Villa/Gallery
Karuizawa, Japan

Eschewing the standard trappings of the rural cabin, Japanese architect Makoto Yamaguchi has opted instead for a bit of futuristic geometry where you're more likely to see a *Barbarella*-esque ray gun than a vintage Winchester over the mantel. The kitchen (above) gives new meaning to minimal but offers ample counter space.

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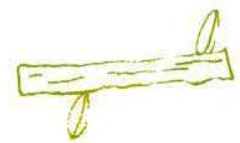

In the late winter of 2003, I watched out my window as a fuel truck idled below, belching black smoke. A hose, snaking through the frozen grass, stretched from the back of the truck to the side of our house. I'd just been marching in Washington, D.C., under a banner that read "No War for Oil." And now here I was, guzzling petroleum at home in Somerville, Massachusetts. At that moment, I vowed to find some way to kick my addiction—and not only because of the war. The black goo in my basement was a nonrenewable, climate-killing nightmare.

For years, I'd been reading about homes that used next to no power. The owners usually built their showplaces from the ground up out of materials with names that sounded like comic-book heroes: Icynene, polystyrene, HardiePlank. I fantasized about living in one of those clean boxes of light, sipping energy by the thimbleful.

But like it or not, my home is a Victorian fixer-upper that I bought many years ago; it came outfitted with a gas stove from the 1930s, a warren of dark parlors, and a pink bathroom. When I tell people how little I paid for it, they gasp. I am truly grateful to this house for being so ugly that it scared away all other buyers. But how are you supposed to inject, say, a high-tech insulation material into walls already full of horsehair, squirrel bones, and ancient newspapers? And what if your budget for renovation is as outdated as the house itself?

That afternoon four years ago, as the oil truck growled away, I decided to approach the problem differently. Rather than take the high-tech route to energy independence, I would take the cow path: I would think like a Victorian. After all, in the 19th century, before petroleum was king, people often depended on renewable resources—like whale blubber and dead trees—to power their homes. In today's lingo, they were using biomass fuels. ▸

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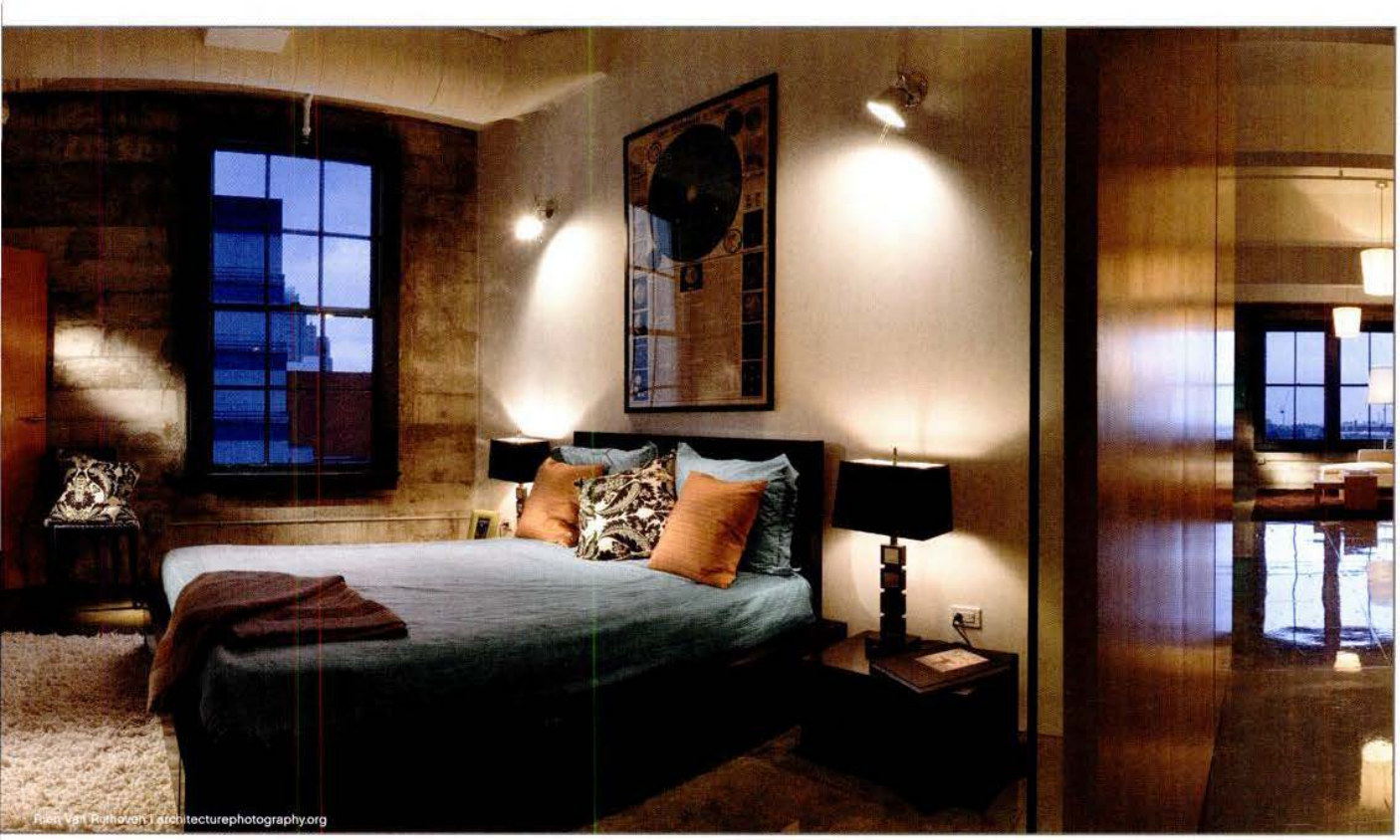

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Indeed, if not for the advent of supercheap fossil fuels in the early 20th century, we might still be relying heavily on farms and forests for renewable energy. When Rudolf Diesel debuted his engine at the Paris World's Fair in 1900, it chugged on peanut oil. He had designed it to eat just about any kind of oil, from kitchen grease to sunflower seed, believing that DIY fuel would usher in an agrarian revolution. The "common folk" would be able to brew up their own moonshine in their bathtubs and pour it into their tractors and cars. Then petroleum gushed in Texas, and the rest is history.

About a decade ago, environmentalists began to revive Diesel's dream. They discovered that vehicles with diesel engines—from a VW Rabbit to a school bus—could still run on vegetable oils. However, the food oil needed to be chemically modified into a blend called biodiesel; otherwise it would clog up the engine. In the beginning, some brave souls brewed up biodiesel in home labs. Now, it's available at hundreds of gas stations across the United States, as well as through bulk-fuel dealers. It behaves very much like regular diesel, which is to say you pump it into your car and then you forget about it.

If biodiesel could power a bus, why not the oil burner in my house? I added my name to a list at the Massachusetts Energy Consumers Alliance, a nonprofit promoting alt-fuels; as soon as thirty people signed up, a local fuel company would dedicate one of its trucks to us, selling biodiesel for about the same price as conventional fuel oil. In 2004, that truck pulled up in front of our house, silver and gleaming. My boyfriend, Kevin, and I performed a victory foxtrot in the kitchen while our oil burner juiced up.

As it turned out, the dancing was a little premature: the fuel we were buying was actually only 10 percent biodiesel, mixed in with conventional diesel. Biodiesel is still a fringe solution for home heating. But if it gains in popularity, we should all be able to look forward to a greater range of mixes.

Meanwhile, how green is veggie fuel, really? One thing is sure: It improves the air quality in your neighborhood, since it burns like popcorn oil rather than truck fuel. But when you're assessing biodiesel's impact on the wider world, the answer depends on the raw materials used to make it. Mass Energy intends to collect as much recycled cooking oil as possible when it becomes available, with the balance made from virgin soybean oil. Blends like this one, while far from eco-neutral, are cleaner than most other available energy options. But as Big Agro companies jump into the market, we're likely to see biodiesel manufactured in ways that devastate the developing world. Already, the European demand for alt-fuels has created havoc in countries that produce palm-kernel oil, such as Indonesia and Malaysia. ▸

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Asian farmers have been draining peat bogs and burning rainforests to make room for rows and rows of palm trees—so that people in Germany can buy attractively priced "green" fuel.

So, while it's important for American customers to demand a biodiesel option, the fuel has to be made the right way. And when it's made the wrong way, we need to raise hell.

Once I got a taste of biofuels, I wanted more. That was how I came up with my scheme to power our house on trash. It was in the middle of summer, and I had just sawed up apple-tree branches, stuffed them into leaf bags, and dragged them out to the curb. We live in the middle of the city; nonetheless, our yard generates an enormous amount of timber. When I looked up and down the street, I could see yard bags lined up everywhere. That was my "aha" moment: Why not turn our neighborhood into a tree farm?

In a fit of enthusiasm, I persuaded Kevin that we needed a wood stove. I explained that we could grow and harvest trees on our own postage-stamp of land, and we could trash-pick logs from the neighbors. He tried to mount counterarguments, but I was not to be talked out of my idea.

Much drama ensued. A craftsman named Vaclav spent days on his hands and knees in our dining room, using old-world techniques to wrap a slate shield into a corner. Zoning laws had to be consulted; a building inspector needed to be charmed. The stove itself—black, warty-looking, and insanely heavy—had to be fetched from a faraway store. It was one of the cleanest-burning models I could find and even contained a catalytic unit that would reburn smoke.

By mid-winter, the stove squatted in its corner, eating like a hog. We fed it wood we'd collected from our yard and those of our neighbors; it scarfed the supply in about two days' time. And then we had to buy it a huge stack of firewood, delivered on a truck that vomited diesel fumes.

Things weren't exactly going as planned. The project ended up being far more expensive than I can admit, even to myself, and despite my hopes our neighborhood made a lousy tree farm.

I became obsessed with perfecting my wood-scavenging techniques. Had I been a farmer in the 1850s, I would have tramped into the forest. This being the 21st century, I went to the Craigslist "free" section and typed "firewood." Bingo. I found a woman in a nearby suburb with the remains of an entire oak in her yard; the tree had been chainsawed into logs, the largest of which probably weighed 800 pounds. Kevin and I took two carloads of the smallest stuff and barely dented her supply—if we'd owned a truck we could have amassed enough firewood to last for years. ▸

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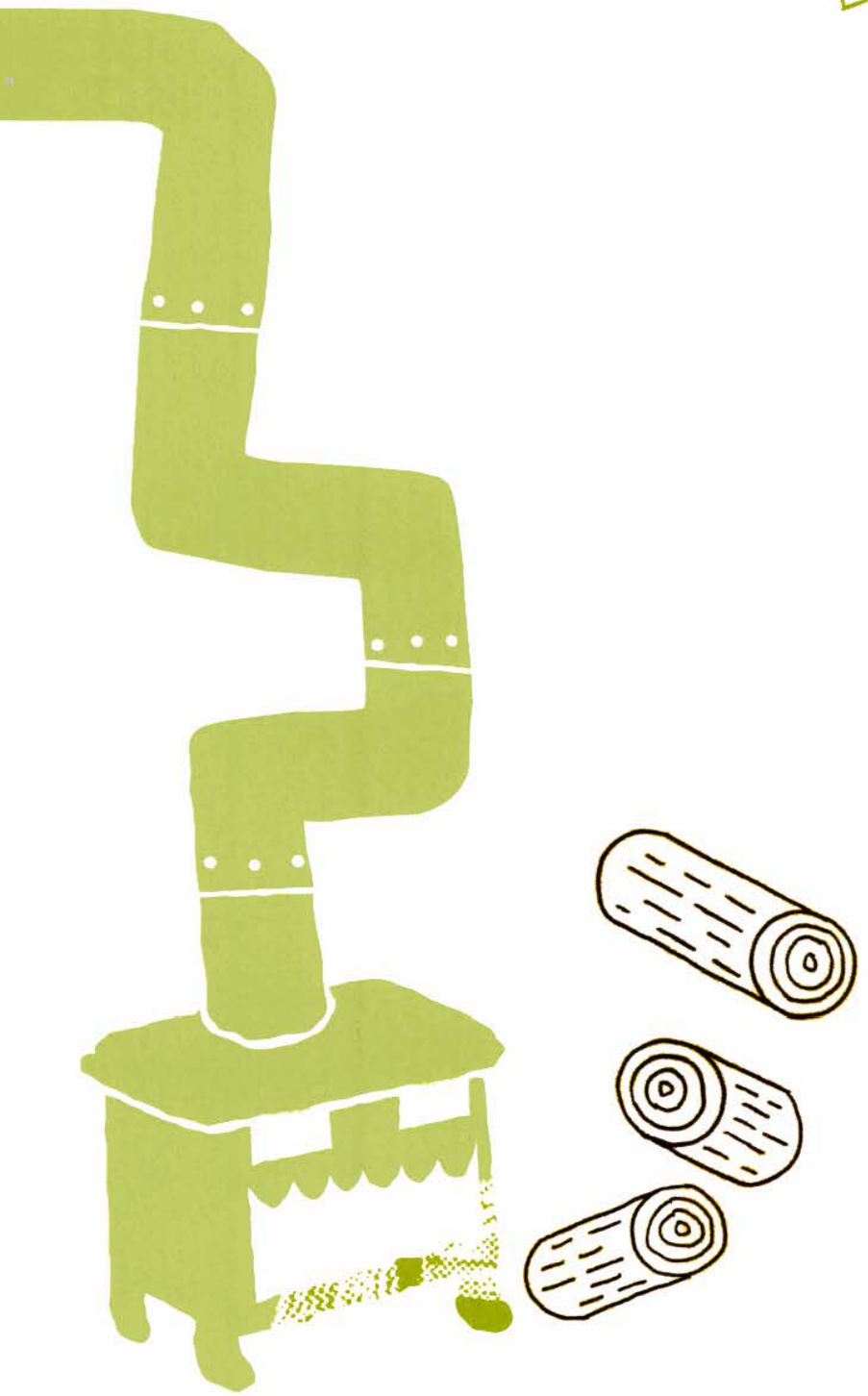


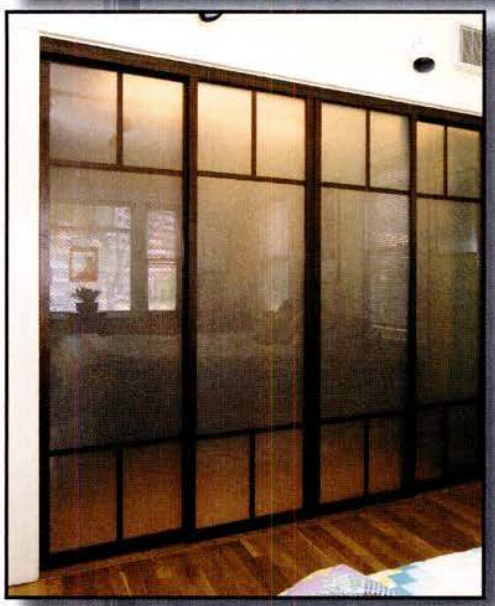
We spent almost all of last summer handsawing that wood, along with branches from our yard, into stove-sized chunks. We developed really nice-looking biceps and shoulder muscles. It was the sawing—not the amount of wood—that ended up limiting our supply. Why didn't we buy an ax and chop the wood? Because we have more in common with Paul Krugman than Paul Bunyan, and we'd be likely to get into a political debate while we chopped and end up losing fingers or toes. Still, we managed to produce enough wood chunks to get us through the winter.

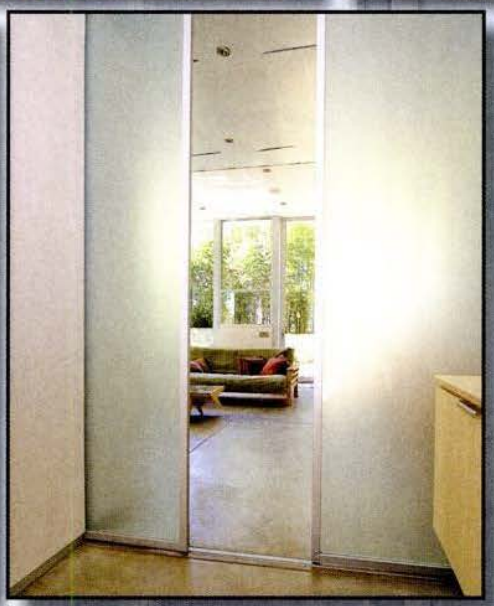
How green is our wood heat, really? While our new-fangled stove burns about 90 percent cleaner than would its forebears in the Victorian era, the smudge of gray it relelases into the sky still carries a significant dose of lung-killing particles. But the stove wins in other ways. It eats waste that comes from our own region. It's a carbon-neutral energy source, since the CO_2 produced in wood smoke is absorbed by trees, and so on, in a sustainable cycle. Petroleum fuel, by contrast, has to be extracted and hauled thousands of miles, and it pumps into the atmosphere carbon that would otherwise stay locked underground. The upshot is this: Wood stoves are far from perfect, but if your aim is to use only domestic fuel, they do the job.

And they're just so darn cozy. For the first time ever, we were warm in winter. I used to have to cook dinner wearing one of those giant Politburo fur hats with the earflaps. The first floor was a meat locker. We would burrow in offices at separate ends of the house. The stove, casting that cherry and orange light you see in Rembrandt paintings, brought us together in the dining room. We came to know our firewood by how it would burn; the split pieces flamed fast and sloppy, while the logs baked slowly. We would part a little reluctantly with each hand-gathered, hand-sawed piece. And, when the stove really got going, we would close the pocket doors that divide the living areas, shutting ourselves into the small room to roast like chestnuts.

Pocket doors! Before the stove, I thought they were just another Victorian perversity, like the frou-frou baseboards that are impossible to clean. Now, the layout makes perfect sense: You can control where the heat goes. Those doors are like blankets.

With the summer unfolding, we fling open the pocket doors and encourage the hot air to climb to the attic. With its high ceilings and upward spiral of rooms, this New England house manages to cool off entirely on its own. The living room becomes suffused with a delicious gloom that I associate with old, well-designed homes; the parlor turns shuttered and quiet, as if it has decided to nap through the afternoon. On days like these, the house feels if not modern, at least as smart. I admit it: So do we. ■





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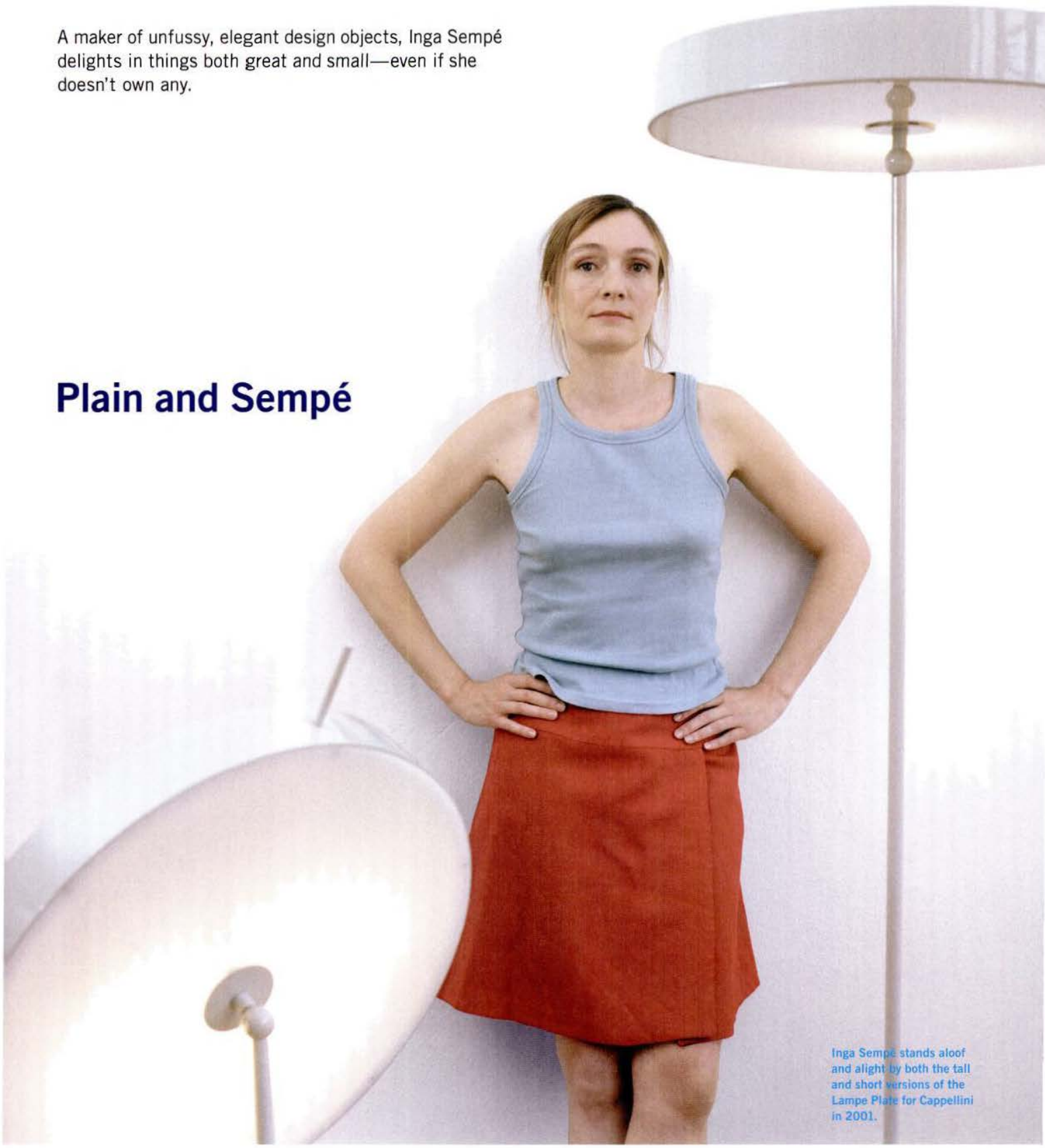
Plain and Sempé



Inga Sempé stands aloof and alight by both the tall and short versions of the Lampe Plate for Cappellini in 2001.

Inga Sempé likes objects. Not just the objects she's designed, which appear in the galleries and sleek showrooms of Milan and New York, but things like vegetable peelers, hammers, kitchen pots, screwdrivers, and baby strollers—items produced by the thousands, intended not for cultural enrichment but rather as machines for better living. "People are ashamed to say they like objects. It's always art they praise. You know, 'Art, it's the noblest thing, it's superior, I couldn't live without it,'" explains Sempé, "but I think you'd live a lot less well without a sink than without a painting on the wall."

When she graduated from the ENSCI-Les Ateliers industrial design school in Paris in 1993, Sempé thought she might design casters and screws. Instead, she has channeled her interest in the banal and utilitarian to become one of the dominant emerging talents in furniture design, taking principles of utility and simplicity and adding a singular twist: a giant pleated lamp for Cappellini evokes a paper accordion folded by an idle child's hand; a candlestick series for Baccarat flips the crystal maker's signature stemware upside down to use as a base; a new sofa line just released by Ligne Roset provides rare intimacy, cradling its inhabitants with a towering quilted backrest.

"She designs with force, without making any concessions, and that's what interests me—even if at times it can be a bit difficult," says Michel Roset, co-owner of Ligne Roset. "She's a woman in the prime of her life, with a strong personality, experience, and maturity."

Now 39, Sempé has come into her own. Though her renown still lags behind that of fellow French designers Erwan and Ronan Bouroullec and François Azambourg—part of her coterie—the pace of commissions has picked up. Current work includes a suspension lamp for Luceplan and a sofa for Edra, as well as a range of clever ▸

Subtlety in palette and form are characteristic qualities of Sempé's work. Clockwise from the top: Sempé's Grande Lampe Plissée for Cappellini, Moël armchair for Ligne Roset, and Bougeoirs for Baccarat.

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Taking the simplicity of a paper fan and applying it to both form and function, Sempé's Lampe Extensible and Suspensions Plissées, both for Cappellini, (top left and right) are refined and playful. Her Etagère à double accès (below left), a prototype designed for the VIA Carte Blanche grant, serves as an airy space divider, book or object shelf, and art piece.

prototypes that debuted in January at Salon du Meuble. Cognac maker Hennessy has commissioned a project, still under wraps, while Ligne Roset, buoyed by the success of their initial collaboration, is adding another piece to its Sempé line. "We're going to get the word out about her and make her well known even to the general public," says Roset. Ambivalent about her newfound success, Sempé admits to wanting public recognition, but adds, "You do this work for yourself—not for others—so you'd better be happy with it. And on the whole, there's much more self-doubt than overall satisfaction."

Those who write about Sempé regularly remark on her reserve and occasional frostiness. Many manufacturers cite her strength of character—which often produces an active collaborative exchange—as the source of strength in her work. Perhaps what destabilizes critics is not her willfulness (her personality, if it was ever chilly, has now defrosted), but rather the fact that she's a woman: Despite talk of democratization, the field of furniture design remains a distinctly masculine one. Sempé is conscious of standing alone, though she doesn't see herself as a poster child for affirmative action. But Alessandro Sarfatti, CEO of Luceplan, sought her out to reconcile his company's "masculine" image, believing that Sempé can tweak the "same old promise of Luceplan to the market—innovation, technology, quality—with a feminine touch."

Sempé doesn't see her work as being gendered in any way. If anything, her work is androgynous, singular, and conceptual rather than earthy or sensual: a double-sided asymmetric shelving system inspired by an ironmonger's shop, cylindrical storage containers with a magnifying-glass lid, a retractable rolling chair whose extendable back doubles as a stepladder. It is all by a woman, yes, but not feminine. "I had the disadvantage of being the ▸

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daughter of an extremely misogynistic man," she says, referring to her father, the illustrator Jean-Jacques Sempé, whose work has appeared on dozens of *New Yorker* covers. "It's something that holds you back but pushes you forward at the same time."

Such gentle contradictions hold sway in Sempé's character; her inspirations are all push and pull. A child of artists "with zero DIY in them"—she grew up with her mother, painter and illustrator Mette Ivers—Sempé inherited a talent for drawing, but she was totally uninterested in art. In the face of her parents' impracticality, she became an expert tinkerer. And though she may profess a love of objects, she doesn't particularly want to own any. "I don't particularly like possessing things. It bothers me, and I don't like to be given things. I guess I just don't want them. Potential for mess."

That said, the 19th-century Parisian apartment she shares with her eight-year-old son—in which her studio takes up a large corner room—could use a few things. Despite having designed countless light fixtures and furniture pieces, including the Edra sofa she calls a "silky cloud," she suffers an "awful" single bulb dangling in her bedroom and lacks a comfortable couch. "A kitchen that works would be nice, too," she quips. Perhaps it's the absence of these home comforts that has inspired her to create them for others.

Since the age of 15, Sempé has only followed her own lead. She fiercely protects that freedom, and it has made her a more resilient designer, even if, as Edra's Massimo Morozzi said, it can make collaboration with her "look like a fight." He and other executives continue to seek out what Luceplan's Sarfatti describes as someone who is "100-percent true." At this rate, it may be quite a while before Sempé gets around to giving the banal objects she loves most—tools, wooden stoves, and lawnmowers now top the list—a redesign. ■

Sempé's Rangements Brosse (above), for Edra, is a swishy number that conceals objects flippantly and easily with its flapper-like skirt, exemplifying the designer's lighter side. The Stepladder Chair (right), designed for the VIA Carte Blanche grant, expresses her love of functionality.

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Hecho en Mexico City

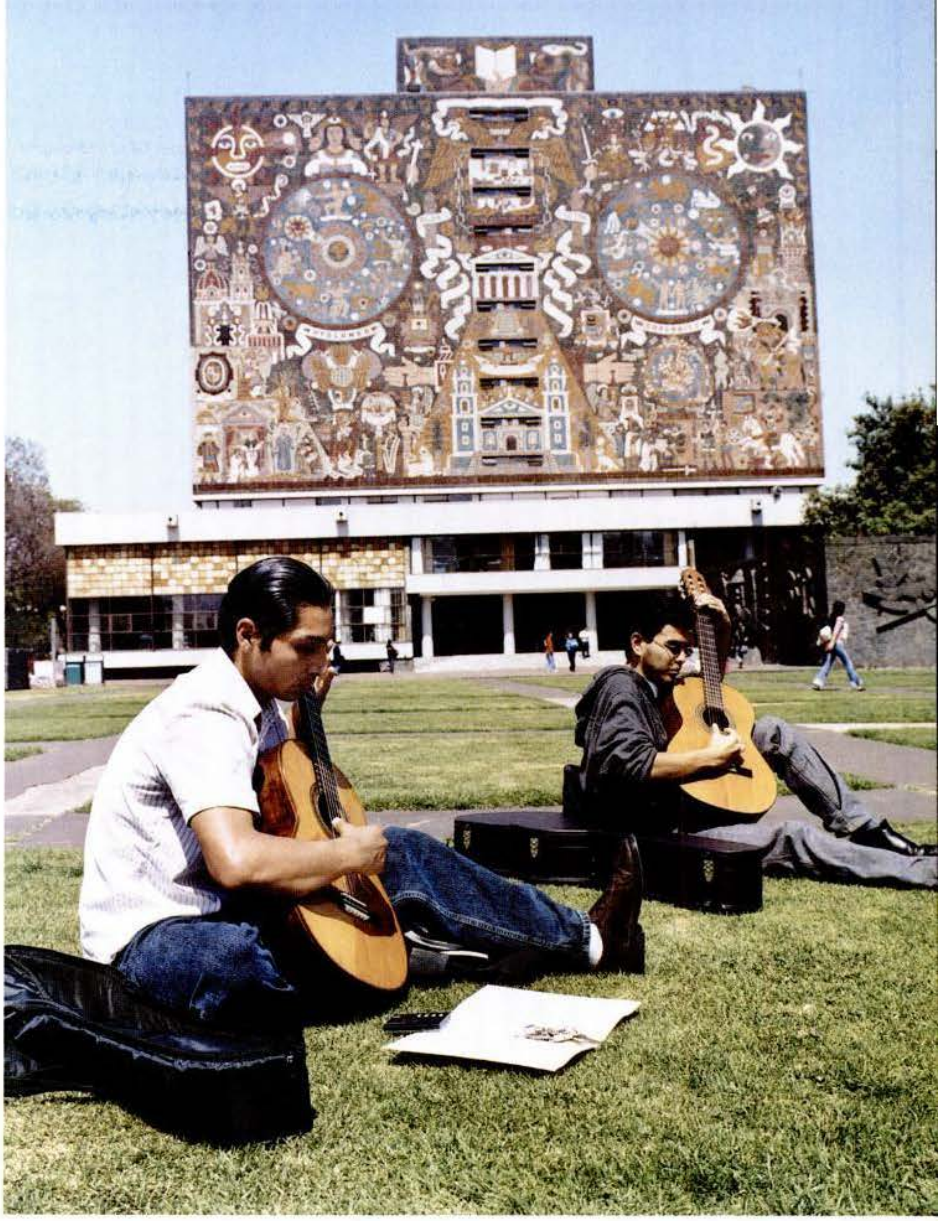
Story by Eviana Hartman | Photos by Livia Corona

Mexico City embodies both the problems and promise of globalization. It's a sprawling, smog-choked colossus whose altitude alone (nearly 7,400 feet) can leave a newcomer dazed on arrival. Charming cobblestone streets are smothered by mobs shopping at black-market junk stalls. Traffic is reliably nightmarish. Local politics often resemble a telenovela farce. The ground is sinking at a rate of up to a foot per year. Garish wealth and grim poverty coexist uneasily, sometimes violently.

But Mexico City is also a world-class urban center with an incontrovertibly cosmopolitan character, scented in recent years by a whiff of hipness. The art scene in particular—thanks to the emergence of contemporary stars like Gabriel Orozco and Miguel Calderón—is crackling. New galleries and private facilities like the Colección Jumex draw high-rolling collectors and recent art-school grads. Equally significant, the city has a tradition of elegant, progressive architecture that dates back to the 14th century.

In 1325 the Aztecs founded the capital of Tenochtitlan on an island in the now-drained Lake Texcoco. That city—connected to the mainland and other islands by an elaborate series of bridges and causeways—was so grand as to provoke the invading Spaniards, in the words of soldier-memoirist Bernal Díaz del Castillo, to react thusly: "These great towns...and buildings rising from the water, all made of stone, seemed like an enchanted vision...Indeed some of our soldiers asked whether it was not all a dream...It was all so wonderful that I do not know how to describe this first glimpse of things never heard of, seen, or dreamed of before." Nevertheless, it was razed by Hernán Cortés's army in 1521, and its stones were promptly reappropriated to build Spanish-style haciendas in the streets radiating from the new central plaza, the Zócalo.

That original city-on-top-of-a-city, called the Centro Histórico or just "downtown," is where the young and restless now flock, but it's only one of many overlapping urban and suburban layers in the 16 districts that comprise the D.F. (*day-effay*, short for Distrito Federal, as it's informally known) proper. The sheer physical diversity is by turns exhilarating and disorienting: Within an hour, one can glimpse the stately deco and Beaux Arts avenues of the chic, café-dotted Condesa and Roma enclaves, the vast 20th-century masterpieces of Luis Barragán and Abraham Zabludovsky, and the glass-walled showpieces of contemporary starchitects like Enrique Norten in the Beverly Hills–like Polanco district. For help navigating the morass, Dwell enlisted a native who understands both the city's past and its future: Hilario Galguera, an architect-turned–art dealer who opened his eponymous gallery in the San Rafael district last year, staging the first Damien Hirst exhibition in Latin America. We spent a day tooling around in his Suburban, trying to cover as much ground as possible in the 585-square-mile metropolis—which didn't mean we couldn't find time to stop for *completo*, tequila served straight up and alternated with sips of spicy red sangrita. ▸



Juan O'Gorman's 1953 library at UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico) grafts pre-Hispanic-themed mosaic art onto a modernist structure (above). The Palacio des Bellas Artes (opposite) is home to an extravagant art nouveau lobby and murals by José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera.

This city is dauntingly huge and home to some of the grandest buildings in Latin America. So why is our first stop a department store cafeteria?
The haciendas of the colonial era are important for understanding the development of Mexican architecture: These are huge spaces that are still intimate. Luis Barragán used these same elements, materials, and quality of space. In the decorations you can find a mixture of Indian and Spanish styles: Sanborns, this department store, is located in La Casa de los Azulejos [House of Tiles], which was built in 1596. It's covered in handmade blue and white tiles and has an Orozco mural inside. It's a great place to begin a walk through downtown.

Is the oldest part of the city really the coolest new neighborhood?
They're trying to bring in the young people by converting the buildings into what they're calling "artists' lofts."

What else is a must-see in the Centro?
The cathedral, of course, is one of the best examples of the Mexican baroque. Walk to Casa de la Primera Imprenta, the first printing house in America, and to the José Luis Cuevas museum and the Santa Teresa la Antigua, a crumbling church dating back to the mid-17th century that is now a contemporary art space where they've held screenings of Matthew Barney's *Cremaster Cycle* in the chapel. It's a shame that the chaos of illegal commerce in the ▶

Mexico City

Few of the city's original art nouveau buildings are still standing, but those that remain, like this one at Calle Chihuahua 78 (above), are worth a visit—as is Sanborns department store, where you can feast beneath an Orozco mural (right).

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streets scares people away from visiting the area. Many of the buildings have original Aztec ruins and sculptures in the basements or courtyards.

And the pyramids at Teotihuacán, 25 miles outside the city, are still standing. Would you recommend a day trip?
Absolutely. It's one of the most elegant examples of urban design I've seen in my life.

The same can't be said for Mexico City.
The people in charge know nothing about history, about social development, about urban design, about administration, about the way the city has moved through the times, about traditions, about all the complexity involved in services, supplies, security, justice—anything. They create a university with free access for everybody that has the lowest standards of education. They build a second level for a freeway that was already unnecessary and design it to look like the pyramids of Giza. They buy thousands of police cars and weapons for illiterate policemen. They build housing projects in the central areas of the city because they want to repopulate those areas—areas that during the day host millions of people who work, study, or use services. They create festivals with no budgets and museums without collections. In any case, this city is so powerful that it continues even without leadership in the government. They are useless. ▸

Mexico City

The patio café at Condesa df (above) is framed by the hotel's unique sliding balcony shades. Modernism, Mexican-style, is on view at UNAM's school of medicine (right). Francisco Eppens designed the elaborate mural on the Facultad de Medicina building's façade.

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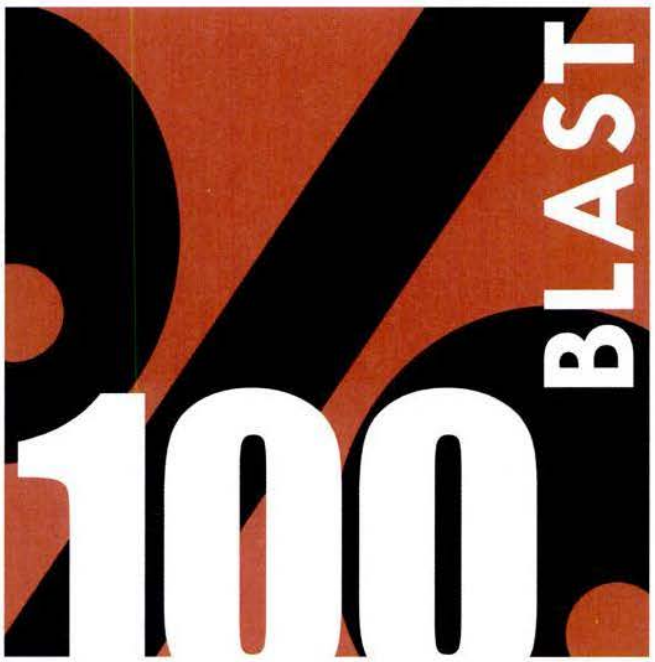

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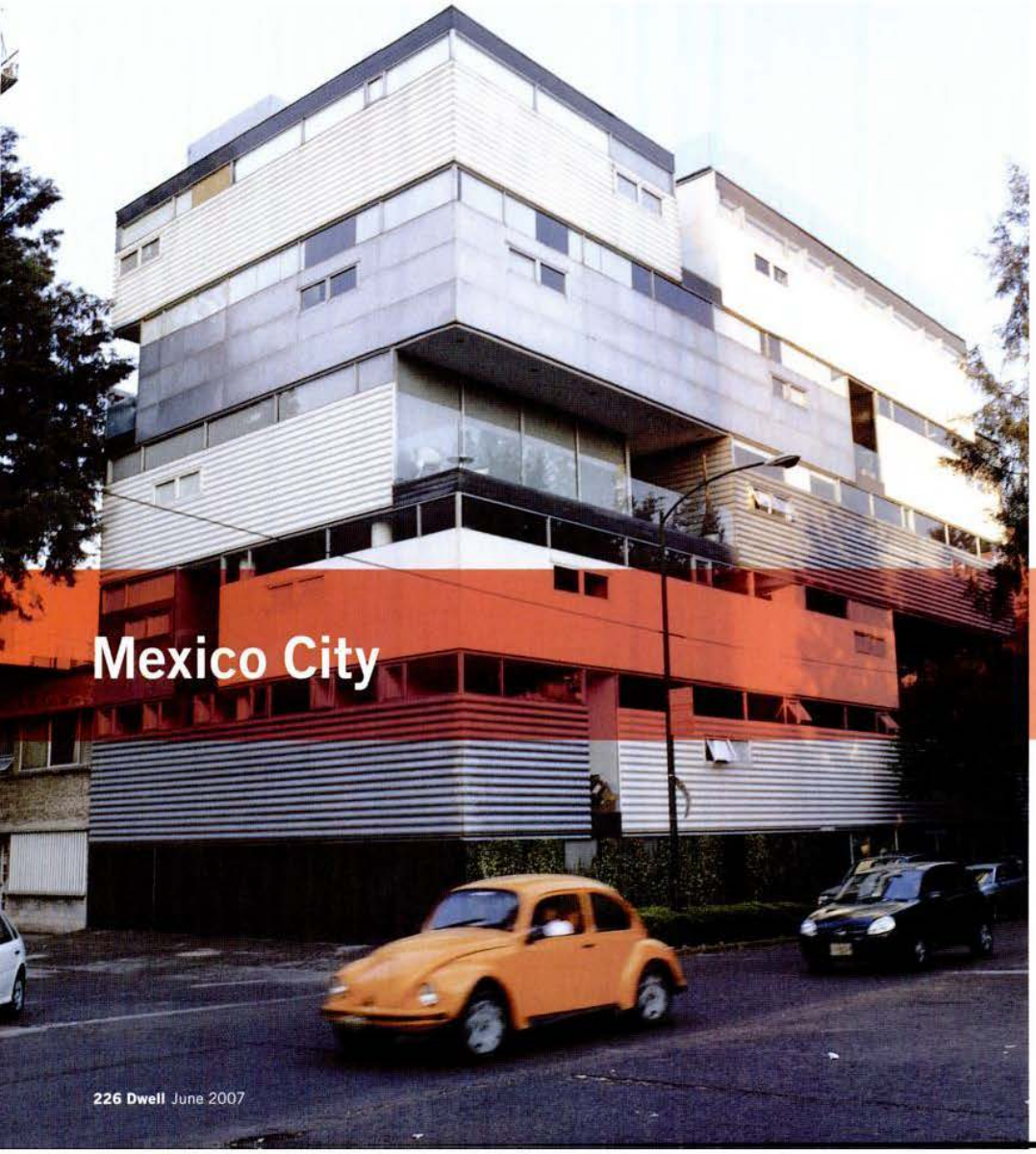
Pedro Ramírez Vázquez's Museo Nacional de Antropología (National Anthropology Muesum), with its mushroom-like courtyard fountain (right), competes for visitors' attention with the treasures inside. AR 58 (below), a Condesa apartment building by Dellekamp y Asociados, represents the new face of the once-earthquake-ravaged neighborhood.



Mexico City

Much has been made of the developing art scene here.

There are really just two or three contemporary collections and six or seven good galleries. But we retain the aura of an art scene. Maybe it's because we have been making art in this same spot for 3,000 years.

The Condesa, where you live, has been internationally hyped for its galleries, cafés, design shops, and nightlife; some see it as the epicenter of the new Mexico City, while others complain that the area has lost its longstanding bohemian allure.

I hate to make this comparison, but it's kind of like the SoHo of Mexico City. Good places to hang out, some new boutiques, many interesting people—but still a little bit pretentious. All of the young people came to this area after the earthquake of 1985, when the real estate prices went to the floor. It has beautiful parks like el Parque España and el Parque México, lots of new apartment buildings that utilize very good design, and art deco houses, many of them well-restored. The Condesa df, designed by India Mahdavi, is a brilliant little hotel; the rooftop bar has great sushi. It's a beautiful and strangely peaceful neighborhood. I've been here for the past 15 years.

What about La Roma, just to the east?

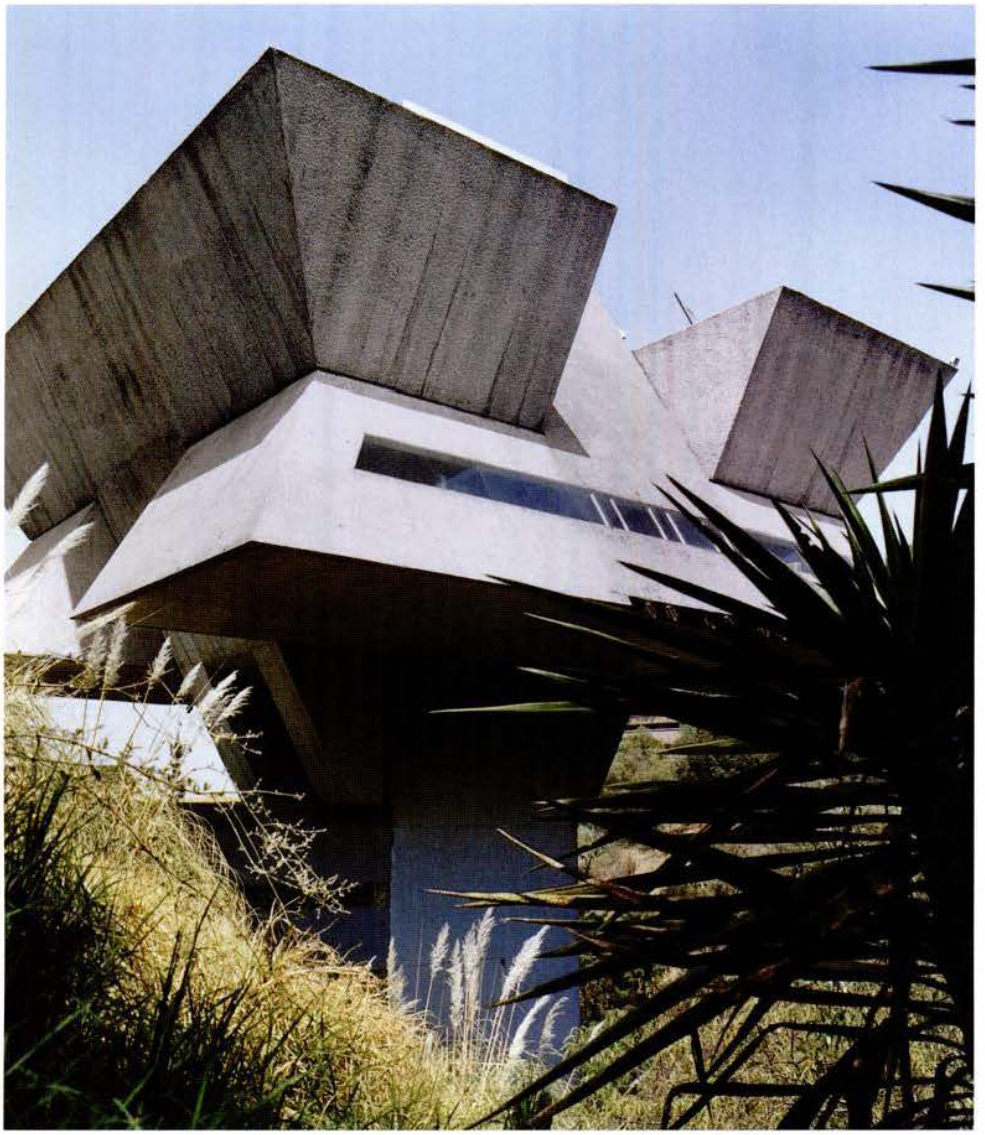
La Roma is similar to what the Condesa used to be like. It has a great little bookshop, owned by the publisher Mario del Valle, where you can find exquisite limited-edition poetry books that are signed and illustrated with original prints. It also has some of the most beautiful art nouveau and '30s deco buildings in North America—but they are in such bad shape that it makes you understand the chaos of the city. If this were Belgium or Spain or New York, they would be protected as national treasures.

The city is also a gold mine of 20th-century modern architecture. Which landmarks are essential viewing?

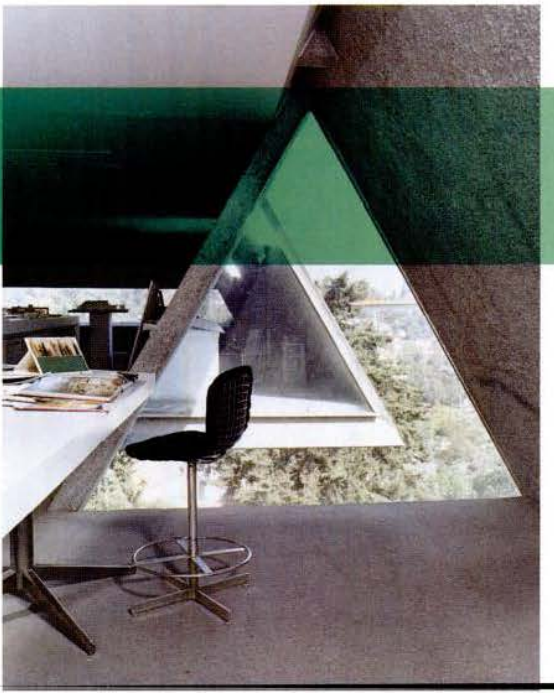
Luis Barragán's studio is one of my favorite buildings; I like the visual connection of the garden with the spaces inside the house, the geometric presence of the stairs in the library and the open space in the rooftop, with the original colors. The Camino Real hotel by Ricardo Legorreta is a great public space; open, big, generous. Many people think it was designed by Barragán. The Museo Nacional de Antropología [National Anthropology Museum] by Pedro Ramírez ▸

Mexico City

Ricardo Legorreta's Plaza Juárez, opened last year, houses Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Relations, the city's family courts, and this fountain, designed by artist Vicente Rojo. The 1,500 concrete pyramids are colored to look like tezontle, a volcanic stone first used by the Aztecs, which was also utilized throughout the complex's façade.



Mexico City



Maverick architect Agustín Hernandez was one of the first to introduce pre-Hispanic motifs into Mexican modernism. The 82-year-old lives and works in this cantilevered concrete tower high above Bosques de las Lomas.

Vázquez, built in 1964, was the first great emblem of the new contemporary architecture in Mexico. But the real reason to go is to see the magnificent sculpture of Coatlicue, the Aztec mother of gods and goddess of death and life, who wears a skirt of serpents.

The campus of the UNAM (Ciudad Universitaria) in Coyoacán is an important site because the most significant Mexican architects at the time were asked to design a specific group of buildings corresponding to each institute or faculty, library, sport, or administrative building under an extraordinary master plan with absolute freedom. The newest buildings, specifically the ones corresponding to the Centro Cultural Universitario, are also extraordinary examples of Mexican contemporary architecture. Every building is significant for something special, but the former central library, the Rectoría, and the stadium could be the most significant because of the murals by Juan O'Gorman, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Diego Rivera.

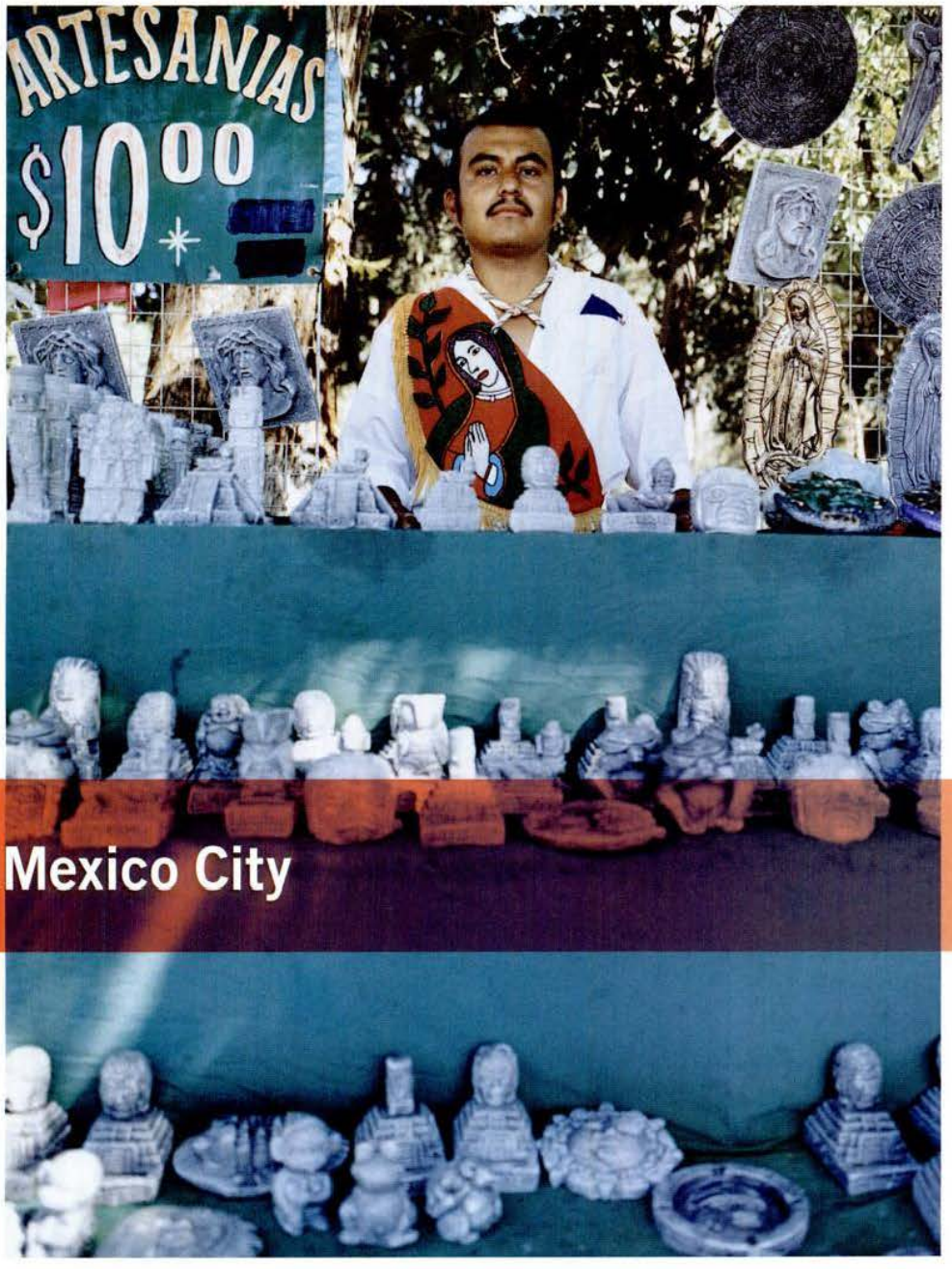
Any great houses?

In upscale areas such as Bosque de Chapultepec, there are many—built by followers of such architects as Neutra with a profound sense of design and functionalism—but they are all behind walls. It would be interesting to do a book on the secret architecture of Mexico City. Ask your driver to take you through Bosques de las Lomas to see Casa Hernandez, a private home for the former chairman of Banamex designed by Agustín Hernandez, and Hernandez's studio and residence. His work is about total risk and freedom. He's like a Martian, no?

What's your favorite new public building?

Ricardo Legorreta's Plaza Juárez, which includes the foreign ministry and family court. The volcanic stone is the same used by Aztec and Colonial builders; even the iron gates echo the entry gates of traditional haciendas. I love the clean space of the main plaza and how it interacts with the fountain and how it works in relation with the street and the park in front. Unfortunately, this beautiful, big, empty space is filled with modular structures holding exhibitions organized by bureaucrats with no idea of what the beauty of an empty space means. ▶

Espacio Escultorico (right), the sculpture garden at UNAM, is a popular gathering place for students and locals alike. The concrete wedges of this sculpture form a circle around a volcanic rock formation where visitors come to meditate. A vendor (below) sells artisanal goods outside the Museo Nacional de Antropología.



Mexico City

What else should no visitor miss?
On Sunday, go see a bullfight at Plaza México, the biggest bull ring in the world, and visit one of the markets, perhaps at Coyoacán, where you can get great things to eat. The Sunday flea market at La Lagunilla is still interesting, though it lacks the splendor of some years ago. The Bazar Plaza del Ángel at the Zona Rosa on Saturdays might be better these days.

What other shopping can you recommend?
Rodrigo Rivero Lake and Daniel Liebsohn run my two favorite antique galleries. A shop called Funcionalismo has furniture by Bertoia, Gropius, and Mies. There are some new design shops in the Condesa area where you can find some cutting-edge design ideas; if you look closely, you can find things such as a rare Pierre Chareau, for example. Librería Madero downtown has an extraordinary selection of art books and rare editions, specializing in Mexico. There is also this store for *charros*—Mexican horsemen, the refined version of the American cowboy—downtown, in front of the Museo de la Ciudad de México, where I have found magnificent belts embroidered with the thread of the agave plant (called *pita*), or with pure gold or silver thread, for my friend Damien Hirst. I think he's the only person who is not a *charro* who can get away with wearing them, for obvious reasons.

What are some good places to eat?
I don't like all this fusion cuisine. I love art and I also love to eat, but they are two totally different things, and when I see a dish that looks like an architectonic structure, I lose my appetite. I take all of my artists and clients to Casa Bell, a simple, elegant, fresh place with extraordinary service. You get what you ask for, very straightforward. Also, try Don Chon on Calle de Regina downtown for exotic pre-Hispanic food like flowers, insects, worms, and serpent meat.

I think I just lost my appetite. Let's talk tequila: Where are the best places to drink?
There are two places downtown: La Nueva Opera Bar, one of the greatest bars in the world for its setting and service, and La Faena, which is decorated with bullfighters' outfits that have been sitting there for 50 years. Everything is covered in dust. It's brilliant.

And what's your elixir of choice?
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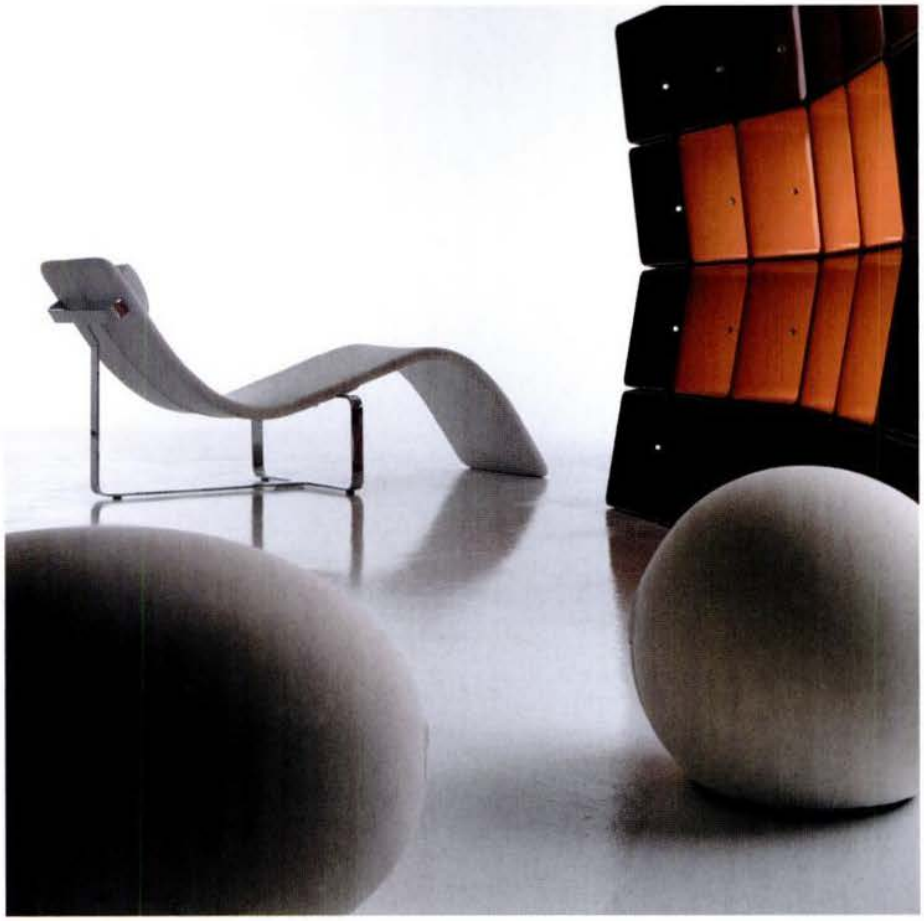

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The Modern Fan Company stands alone in bringing original design and innovation to the ceiling fan industry. The designs celebrate the modern idiom through mechanical simplification, geometric forms, and contemporary finishes. The Modern Fan Company is the only source for 21st-century ceiling fans. www.modernfan.com

emma gardner design

Emma Gardner Design, LLC is a boutique design and development company that produces fine contemporary interior products for use in residential, office and hospitality spaces. Chief designer Emma C. Gardner was the winner of a 2006 Best of Year award from *Interior Design* for her *Joy* rug. Based in Litchfield, Connecticut, the company offers its products through select showrooms and is a proud member of the RUGMARK Foundation, a global non-profit organization working to end child labor. For more information please visit www.emmagardnerdesign.com

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NYLOFT's Xera

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Shown: Stainless steel countertop with integrated sink and cook top.

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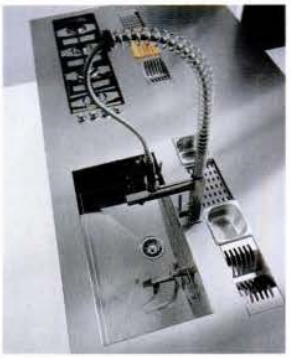

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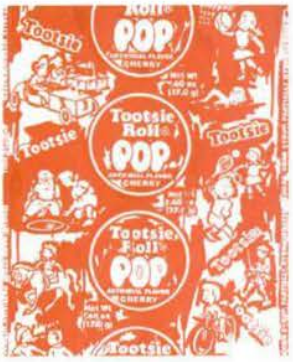

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NYLOFT's Sofa

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Shown: Multimedia #18 with covers in natural white cotton blend.

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NYLOFT's New Accademia

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Shown: Chrono

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Shown: Class collection

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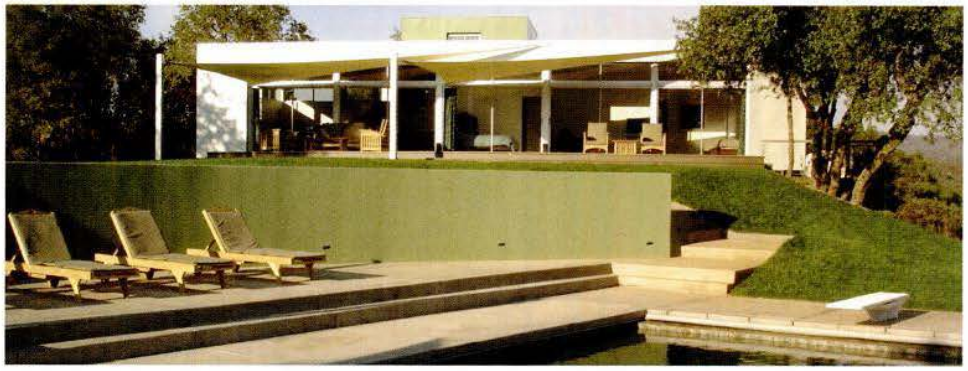

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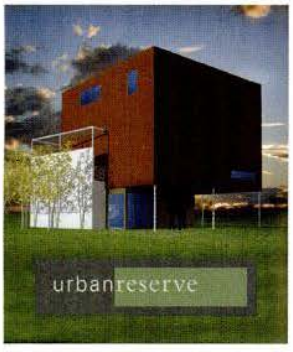

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Shown: Brisa 2000 Ceiling Fan by Matthews Fan Company

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Shown: Softseating by Molo

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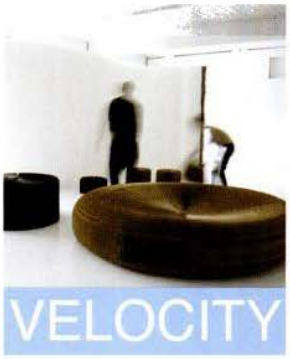

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Shown: Small Tote business brief

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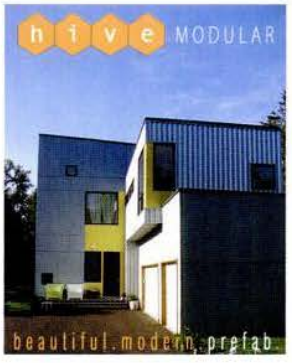

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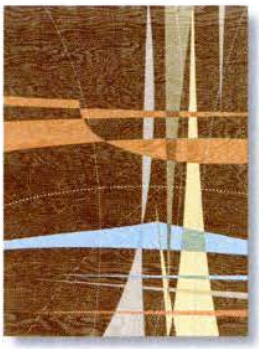

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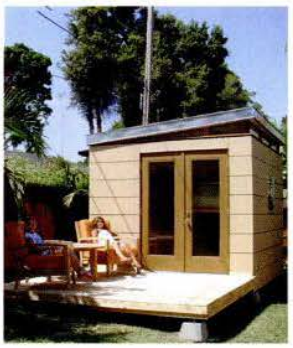

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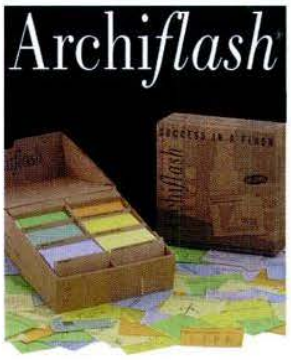

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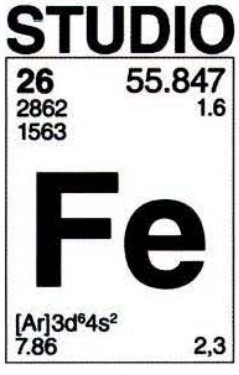

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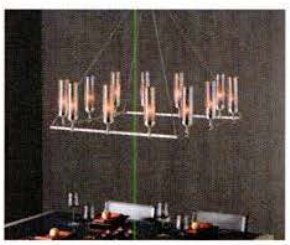

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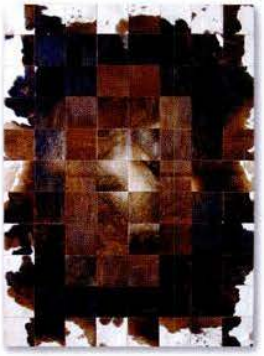

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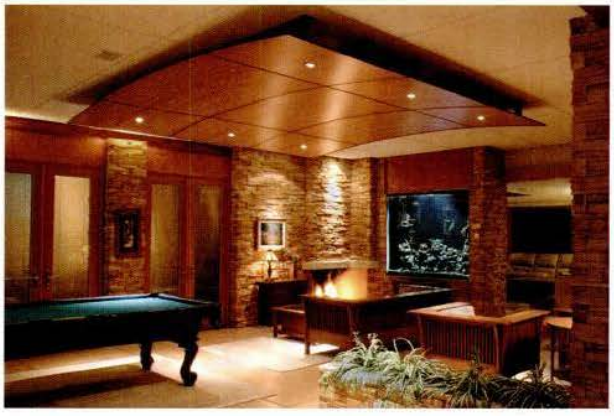

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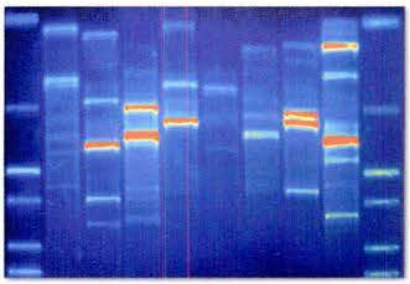

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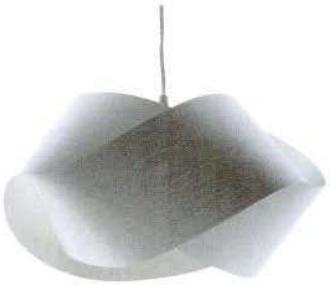

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Story by Aaron Britt

Photo by Cristobal Palma

San Candido, Italy, sits nestled just miles from the Austrian border in the awe-inspiring Dolomite Mountains. Where traditional alpine houses are *de rigueur*, the architects at the local Plasma Studio and adventurous homebody Stefan Holzer are bucking the trend.

Esker and Ye Shall Receive

When Stefan Holzer, a 36-year-old clerk at a mountain-sports store in the German-speaking, Alpine Italian town San Candido, finally decided to move out of his parents' house (Italians often stay at home until marriage), he did so in a rather unorthodox way. Instead of whimpering through a tearful goodbye and hitting up Mom and Dad for the cost of a U-Haul, Holzer convinced them to give him the top floor of their traditional mountain abode. But in lieu of just moving the TV upstairs, Holzer held an architecture competition, eventually choosing Plasma Studio—based in London, England and Sesto, Italy—to design a new living space, which was completed last fall.

Though the black steel and exposed timber of the Esker House, as it was dubbed, is a radical departure from the modest white-and-wood façades of its neighbors, it has everything to do with the majestic milieu of the Dolomites: An esker, a term typically reserved for paleo-geologists, is a serpentine ridge of gravelly and sandy drifts formed by glacial streams.

"It really stands between the mountains and the urban environment," says Plasma Studio architect Ulla Hell, who's native to the area. The central spine of the roof slopes down toward the spacious deck, both as a reference to the surrounding mountains and as a practical drainage measure. The Esker House's segmented exoskeleton only enhances what Plasma Studio saw as a "parasite" effect (one wonders if Herr und Frau Holzer felt the same way). "Stefan wanted something different from the traditional house," says Hell. "He personally expressed a dislike for any kind of conventional roof geometry." How did the elder Holzers hold up during construction? "They were very patient," Stefan reports. ■