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Julius Shulman
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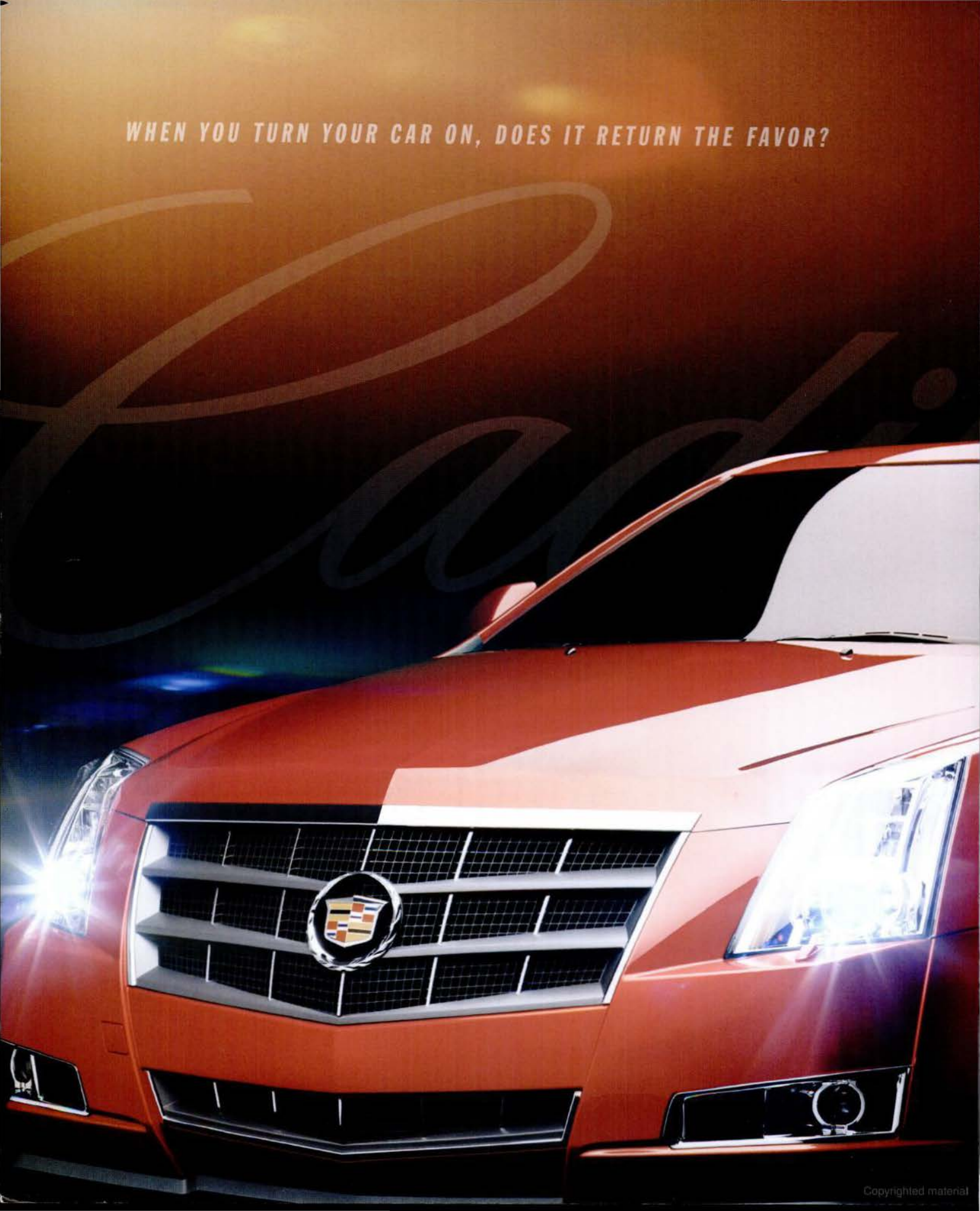

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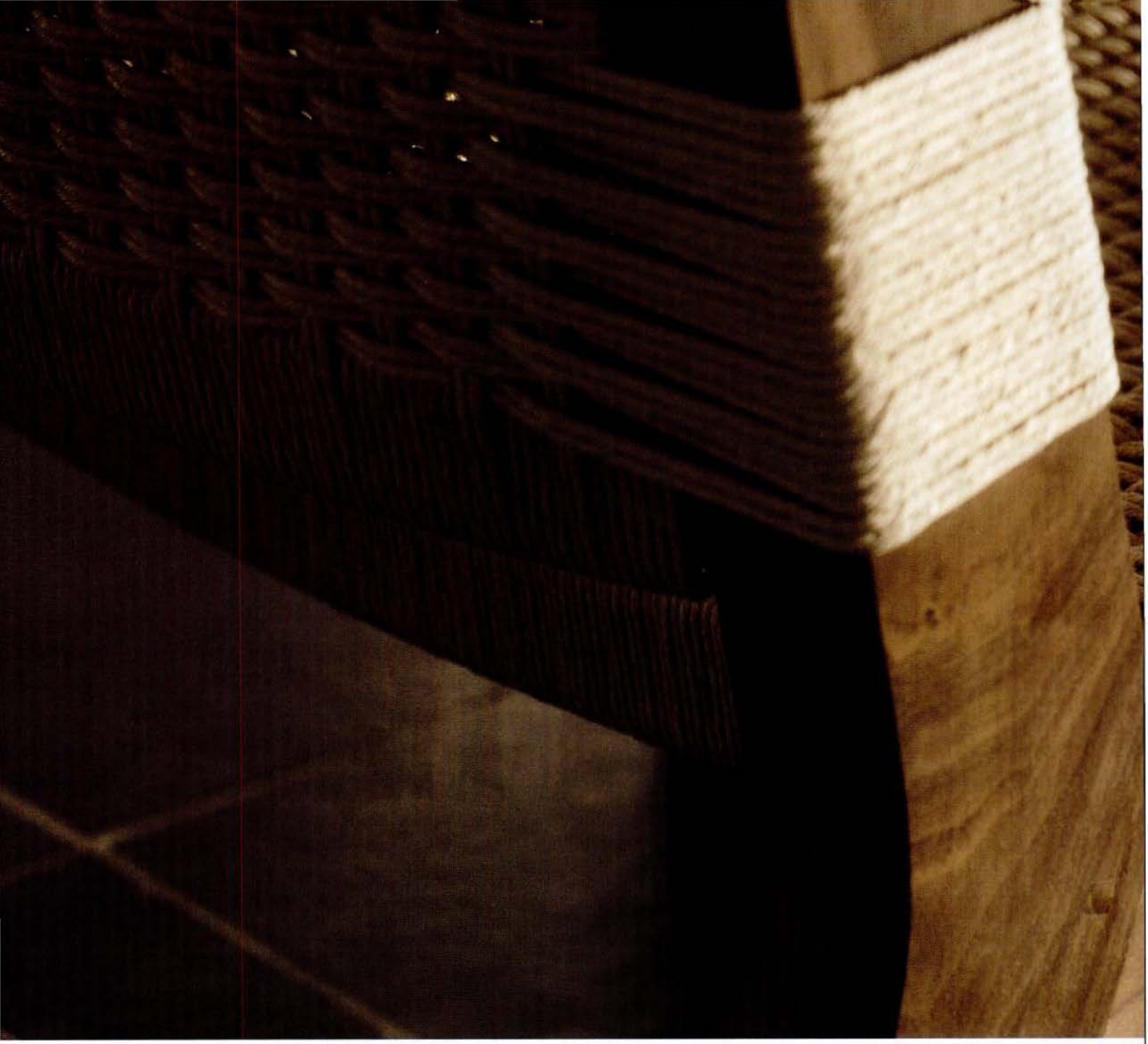

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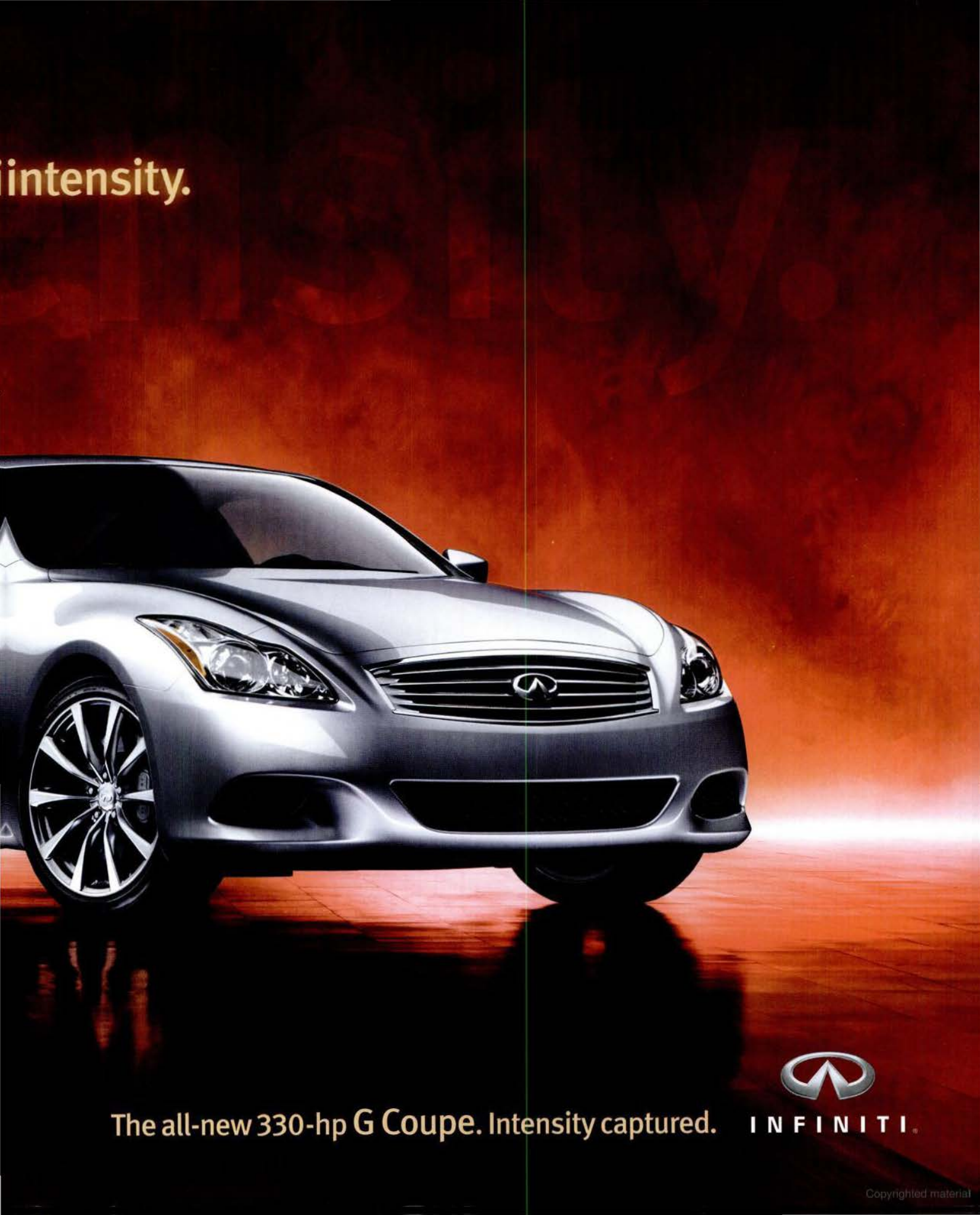

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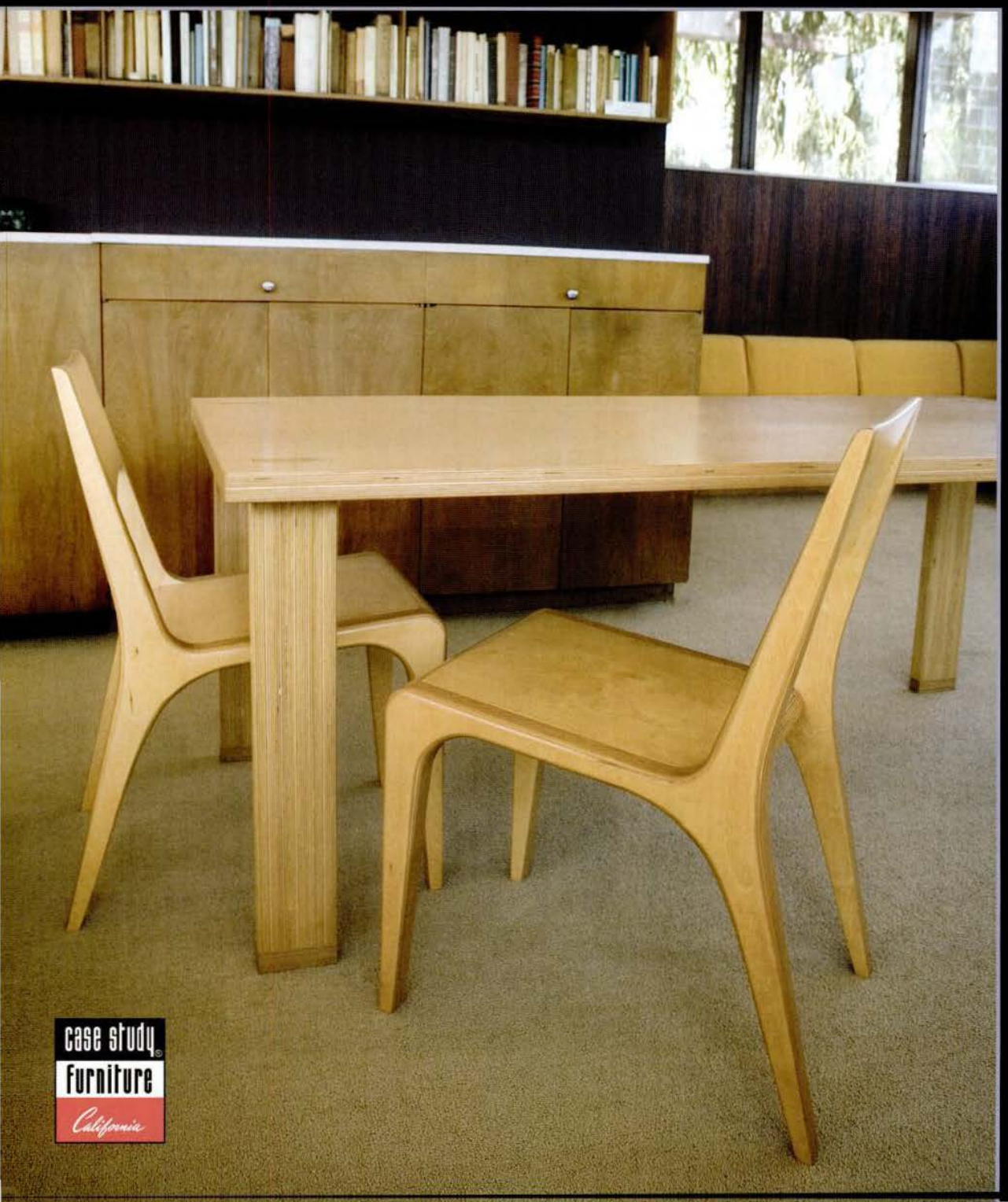

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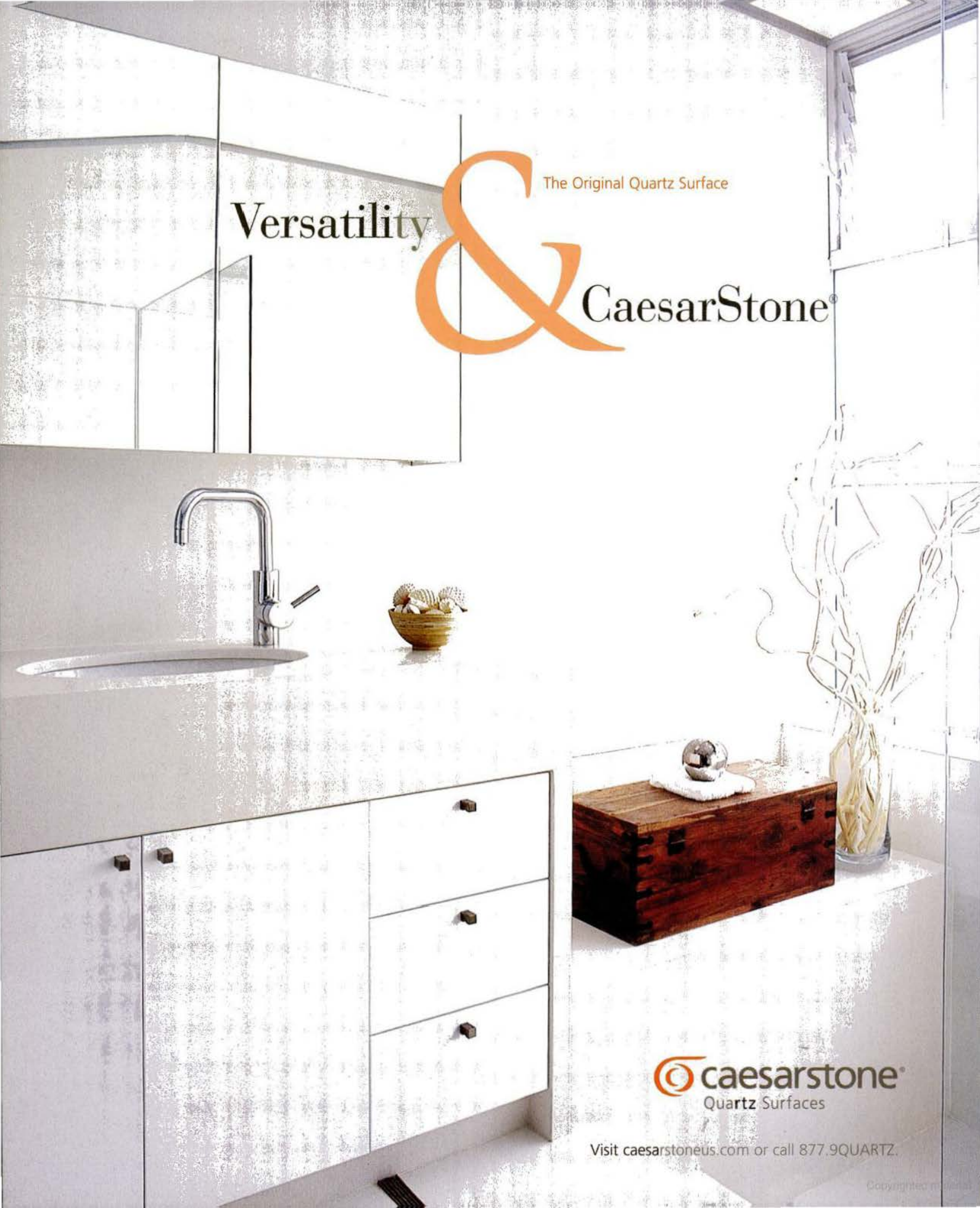
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The New American Home
October 2007

"The highway, the power lines, the bridge—some people would consider eyesores. We like them."

—Mark Wamble

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Cover
Dean Residence, Minneapolis, Minnesota, page 172
Photo by Chad Holder

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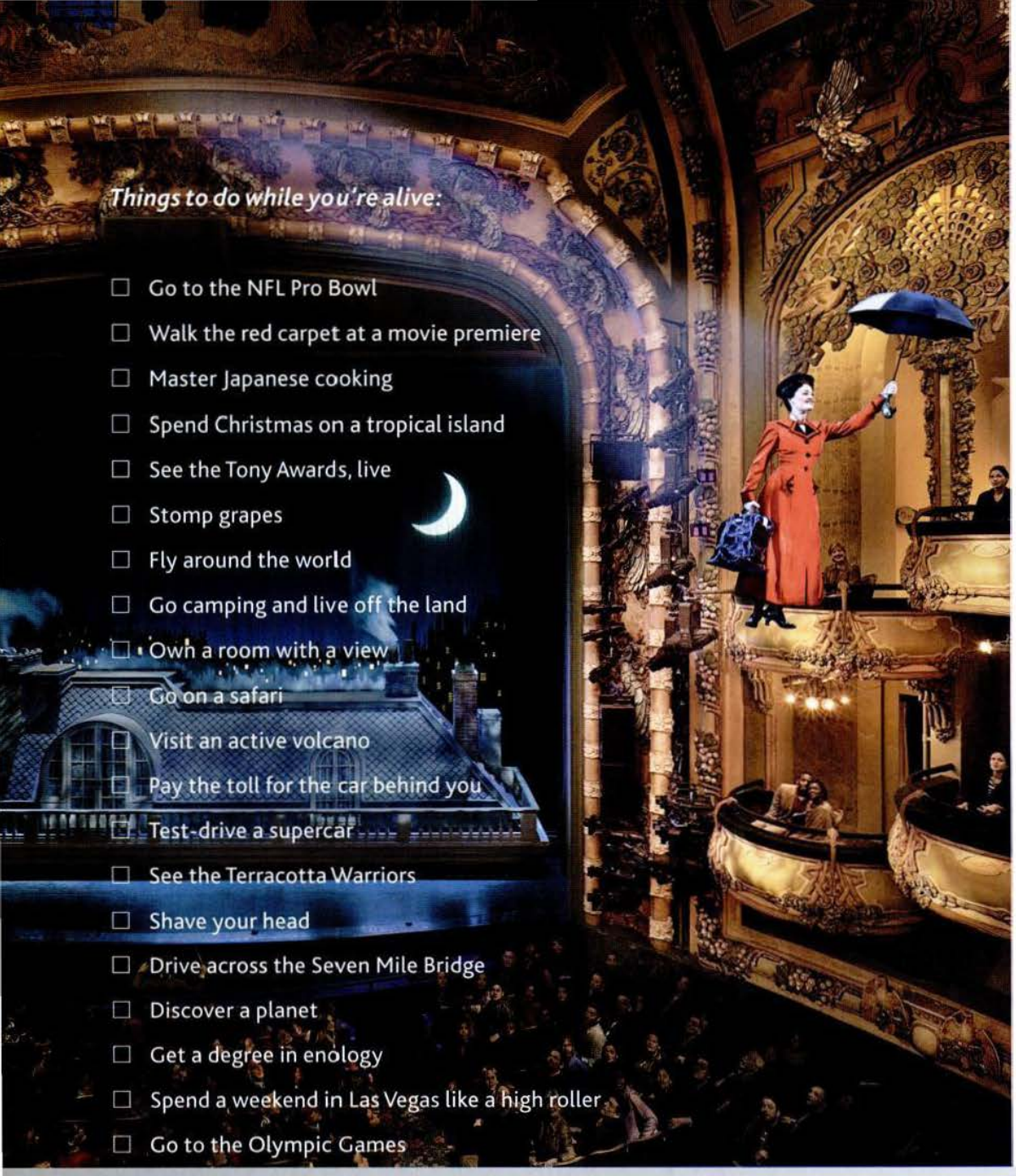

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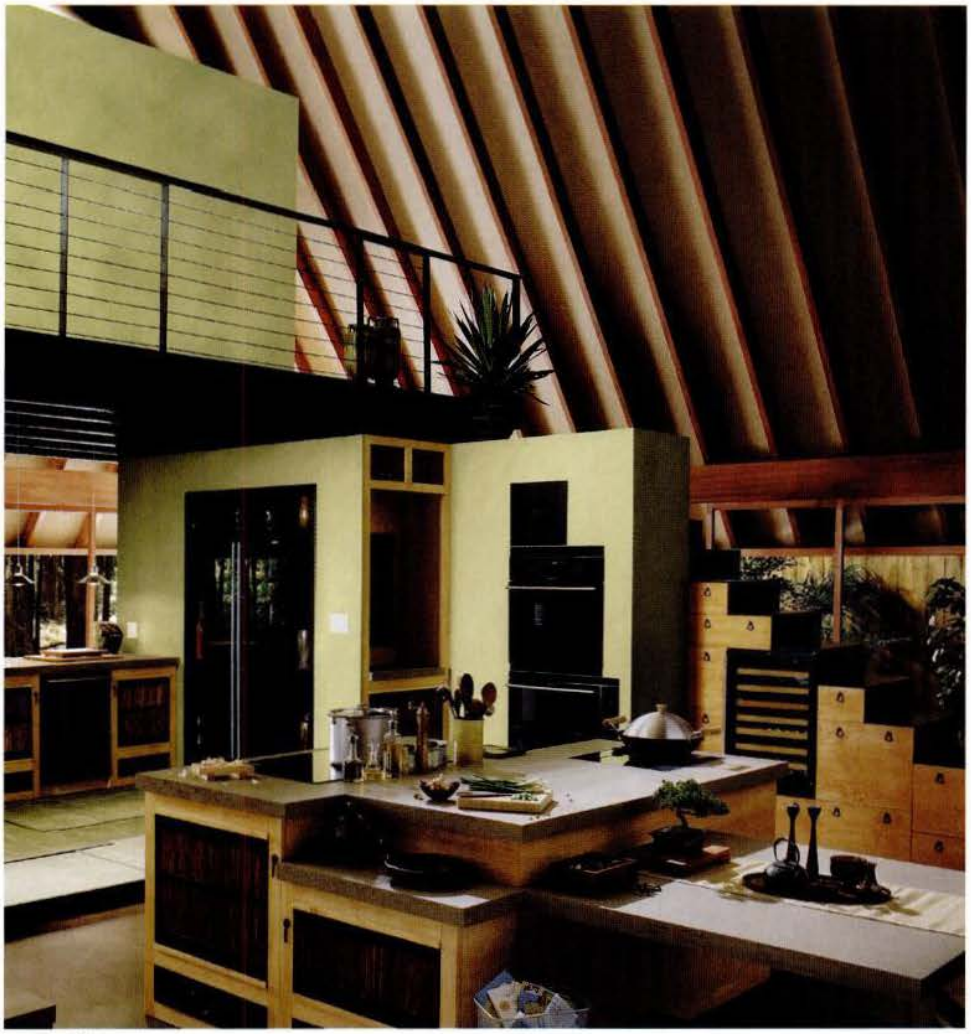

Floating Glass

Euro-Style Stainless

Oiled Bronze

Shown clockwise: The reflective, modernist Floating Glass; the sleek Euro-Style Stainless, one of two Jenn-Air stainless steel collections that also includes the commercially inspired Pro-Style® Stainless; and the warm, richly hued Oiled Bronze.

Stainless steel appliances are de rigueur, the navy suit of kitchens, versatile and always appropriate, which isn't a bad thing. It's just that sometimes you'd like to make a different statement—throw on a red dress, so to speak. Jenn-Air has cooked up four distinct suites of appliances that are anything but vanilla, each perfectly at home in an Eichler or an Edwardian.

From curvy and sexy, to industrial edgy, to sleek and chic, these built-ins deliver design that is both modern and classic. Each suite is built with the quality and reputation for performance that Jenn-Air is known for. After all, looks are just part of the package. Even if you're no culinary magician, you have to love the way they work.

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THE HOME DEPOT

Art assistant Alexis Tjian previews the office copy of our September 2007 issue. Office copies arrive about two weeks before the issue hits newsstands—just in time to give us a refresher, as we're usually headlong into producing the next issue.

PHOTO BY ANDREA LAWSON

Your magazine, which I only recently discovered, is breathtaking and awe-inspiring. Having lived and worked in South Louisiana in the early 1980s, I was deeply moved by the new community center in Pass Christian ("Mississippi Turning," June 2007). In all the chaos of our modern world, only beauty will save us.

I was also pleasantly surprised to see a design by Ben van Berkel ("Bunkering Down," June 2007). Before moving back to Canada five years ago, I lived in the city of Enschede in the Netherlands. The regional art museum there was expanded with a design by Ben van Berkel in the late '90s. Since I lived only a block away from the museum, I had an annual pass, and I spent many afternoons in the museum as well as in the phenomenally inspiring courtyard designed by van Berkel.

Elisabeth Kosters
Wolfville, Nova Scotia

I generally like your magazine and spend a fair amount of time with each issue, but the coverage of the projects you feature can be pretty spotty at times. In particular, I thought the article on the UNStudio project in the Netherlands, the Tea House ("Bunkering Down," June 2007), was all setup and no delivery. The project has an unusual starting point (the war bunker) and an unusual approach to the transformation (welded steel sculpture), but all we get is a single before and after image. This project, of all those featured in the issue, begs for more images. What is the interior like? How is the circulation handled? What was the bunker interior like, and what was the architect's approach to it in the transformation? [Why not] show us the big window and describe how something that large can actually be removed? Please tell us more: Is it mere sculpture? Or a dwelling? If a dwelling, then show us where someone would actually dwell in it!

Scott J. Newland
Minneapolis, Minnesota

I was particularly excited to read Pagan Kennedy's "Stuck Inside of Somerville With the Carbon Blues Again" (June 2007). However, I was disappointed to read some of the information she gave about biofuels. She omitted the fact that the first true biodiesel pioneers were actually putting filtered waste vegetable oils in their old diesel Volkswagens, Mercedes-Benzes, and trucks. Today there are thousands of veggie-oil burners across the country who are burning clean, unaltered (except for filtering) recycled waste vegetable oil from restaurants. While many people do install a conversion kit that heats the oil to a point where its properties are similar to ▶

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diesel fuels, they do not rely on the excessive transportation costs of a refined biodiesel, nor are they burning a product that still has any petroleum-based diesel fuel blended with it. I have to admit that many of us who burn 100 percent waste vegetable oil do have a two-tank diesel-veggie oil system that allows us to heat up the engine and the vegetable oil by running on diesel before switching over to burn on clean renewable waste vegetable oil, but that involves an average of only a few cups of diesel a day. In addition, many of the cars that people are running vegetable oil in are a few decades old with several hundred thousand miles on them. In a way, they are recycled. If they were gas cars, most of them would be bound for the junkyard. These older diesels will run half a million miles with ease! Biofuels can be green. It just depends on what fuel type you choose to burn.

Ms. Kennedy may have wrongly turned off some of your readers from incorporating biofuels into their lives. Now I think it's time for Dwell to buy a Greasecar!

Lawrence Perera
Yarmouthport, Massachusetts

Kudos to Pagan Kennedy for heating her house by hunting and gathering wood from urban sidewalks. There are more of us out there than you might expect who scavenge wood from dead or downed trees in urban areas that would otherwise be thrown out or chipped.

Some of us enjoy feeding our woodstoves and heating our houses for free, and others appreciate the fact that wood is carbon neutral and does not produce greenhouse gasses.

Heating with wood is experiencing a resurgence because of rising prices of gas and oil, and because woodstoves have become cleaner and more efficient. Kennedy found her stove consumed more wood than she expected. With government incentives, stoves could become even more efficient—delivering more heat while burning less wood, and emitting less smoke (fewer particulates). With global warming upon us, incentives to use biomass, such as wood, should be part of the solution at least in every northern state and municipality. Local and state rebates or tax incentives for purchasing the cleanest, most efficient-burning stoves would significantly help people like Kennedy who have subversive tendencies to burn carbon-neutral fuels grown in their own neighborhood instead of carbon-positive fuels. With the exception of Washington State and a few isolated stove change-out programs, few governments are acting. New, sleek designs make stoves fit into modern homes more than ever before.

I live in the suburbs of Washington D.C. and heat primarily with wood that I've found for nearly ten years. Tree trimmers are all too happy to cut wood up and leave it for whomever wants it. Yes, it involves some labor, but moving, stacking, and sometimes splitting has become a Zenlike exercise that is far more rewarding for me than an hour at the gym. However, there is at least one gas-guzzling modern appliance that I would wholeheartedly recommend to Kennedy if she is serious about this pursuit: a chainsaw.

John Ackerly
Takoma Park, Maryland

While touring the Queenstown, New Zealand, Lake Wakatipu shoreline promenade, I found an unusual housewares shop/café. Vesta Design is located in the historic Williams Cottage, the oldest house in Queenstown, but features the latest in design with an emphasis on locally made products. Since I am a landscape architect and hungry tourist, Vesta was certainly a magnet. While perusing the local wares and the cottage I found a familiar and welcome sight from home—copies of Dwell featured prominently in a shop display. The shop clerk reported Dwell has a very faithful following in New Zealand's Southland. As the Kiwis say, "It's good on you, mate."

Dennis Taniguchi
San Mateo, California

I'd love to read an article that addresses the financial side of living in a modern green space. I currently live in a standard suburban house in Phoenix, Arizona. My home is absolutely lovely and far better than anything I imagined I would have as my first home. However, it is my dream to someday have something more.

My first dream is to remodel a space in downtown Phoenix and keep it as my primary residence. My boyfriend and I imagine a warehouse space split into areas for living and playing so we can have room for our hobbies ▸

(cars and woodworking). My second dream is to have a small retreat in the desert well outside of the city. In my mind, both spaces are contemporary, green, and filled with natural light, much like the homes I see in Dwell.

I hope that both of these dreams are financially possible. It would be wonderful to read an article that would help me understand more about the financial details. While I don't make a ton of money (such as the Wall Street executive who remodeled a brownstone in Harlem ["The Italianate Job," June 2007]), I do well enough and I'm a great saver. I just need a little help understanding what I need to save. I realize that many of the green materials and prefab projects are so new it may be difficult to gather all the financial details, but something that could help educate a young person with big dreams such as myself would be incredible.

Erica Lucci
Phoenix, Arizona

While Ann Buttenweiser's floating pool project ("Pooling Our Resources," June 2007) sounds fab, please don't denigrate the environs of all of New York City's community pools.

The Olympic-size Hamilton Fish pool at the corner of Houston and Pitt streets on the Lower East Side is one of New York's unsung gems. It is located in Hamilton Fish Park, which is also home to the Beaux Arts–style Hamilton Fish Gymnasium, which was opened in 1900 and was designed by Carrère and Hastings, architects of the New York Public Library. The pool was added to the park in 1936, constructed by the WPA, and restored in 1992 under a $14 million restoration project.

It's a hidden, fabulous space—an oasis in the city, open a few short weeks every summer—and draws a vast cross section of young and old from all of the communities that surround it. And best of all, it's free!

I'm sure the floating pools will be wonderful, but they can't possibly match the history or the community of the Hamilton Fish pool.

Marian Gibbon
New York, New York

As an architect and reader since day one, I commend Dwell for providing a true counterpoint to the all-too-common newsstand design magazines. One question, though: Where is the color? We all love the modern palette of white, off-white, and gray, but every now and then a little color wouldn't hurt. I would love to see an issue that addresses both interior and exterior color for the modern enthusiast. Paint, stone, wood, fabric, you name it. Color adds a warmth and livability to a space that can transform a house into a home.

Jonathan Oltmann
Dallas, Texas

I was interested in the "All Aboard!" article in the June 2007 issue since I try to avoid checking luggage and use carry-ons instead. However, when I looked at the measurements of the attractive and functional luggage in the article, I noticed that four out of the five duffels you highlighted exceeded the maximum size of 45 linear inches that most airlines stipulate for carry-ons (i.e., the sum of the dimensions of a bag cannot be greater than 45 inches). The only bag that you reviewed that meets this requirement is the Large Weekender by LeSportsac.

I'm sure people can get by with larger bags, but with the increased security (and the fact that I'm a square loathe to break rules), I'd rather be sure that my bag isn't too large for airline regulations.

Beth M. Perry
Durham, North Carolina

I'm surprised at how much I learned from "Manifesto Destiny" in the May 2007 issue. However basic the experts may find "Architectural Movements 101" to be, it lays a perfect foundation for readers like me who wouldn't have gone near an architecture magazine before Dwell came along.

Will Leben
Emeryville, California

I've been a faithful reader of Dwell since its inception and that won't change in spite of the following criticism: It's ironic that a magazine so focused on good design, smart design, and the merits of simplicity over complexity would continue to format its publication to include those pesky subscription renewal cards. This method of subscriber acquisition and renewal seems pedestrian for a magazine that eschews bad design (try holding down the page you're reading on the plane while that heavy card stock pushes it up, or playing pick-up when the loose ones fall out at the coffee shop. Dwell readers will subscribe and renew based on the obvious broad and deep content you offer, so why not make it easy for us and reserve the back cover for perforated subscription cards?

Kentin Waits
Portland, Oregon

Thank you for your article on transforming lawns to gardens ("The Lawn Good-bye," April 2007). While the focus on Fritz Haeg's project is helpful in giving exposure to this phenomenon, it is disappointing not to see acknowledgment of the true magnitude of this movement across the country and the world. Among the pioneers in this movement are Heather C. Flores, whose book *Food Not Lawns* may be considered a primary source on this movement. Here are some of the other people who are actively involved:

- Cascadia, OR: www.foodnotlawns.com
- Arcata, CA: Wild Urban Gardeners, www.culturechange.org/food_not_lawns.html
- Bellingham, WA: foodnotlawns@gmail.com
- Bisbee, AZ: www.foodnotlawnsbisbee.org
- Montreal, Quebec: www.tao.ca/~kev
- St. Cloud, MN: www.localharvest.org
- St. Petersburg, FL: stpetefnl.cjb.net
- San Diego, CA: www.sdfoodnotlawns.com

Nik Zakrzewski
Tigard, Oregon

Correction: *In our July/August 2007 feature on the photographs of Leslie Williamson, we mistakenly attributed Wharton Esherick's Paoli, Pennsylvania, studio (now the Wharton Esherick Museum) to his nephew Joseph Esherick, the California-based architect. We regret the error.*

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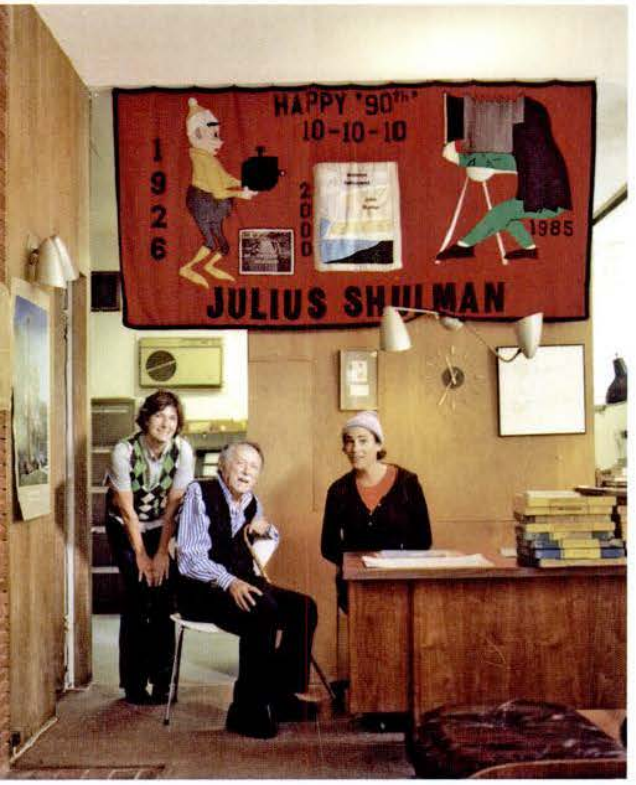

Dwell photo director Kate Stone (left) and photographer Catherine Ledner (right) pose with Julius Shulman under his auspicious birthday banner.

Contributors

Todd Hido ("Fawning Over Flora," p. 164) is a San Francisco Bay Area–based artist whose work has been featured in *Artforum*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Eyemazing*, *Metropolis*, the *Face*, *I.D.*, and *Vanity Fair*. His photographs are in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, as well as in many other public and private collections. His latest book, *Between the Two*—focusing on portraits and nudes—was published in 2007.

After marrying a Minnesotan, **Chad Holder** ("Minnesota, MN," p. 172) was blindsided when his new wife strongly suggested that they move to the Midwest. Ten years ago, he caved in and set up shop in Minneapolis. It was here that Holder photographed the Dean residence, which was just a few blocks from his own home. "One of the coolest things about photographing these homes is connecting with the families and becoming integrated in their lives for the duration of the shoot." This story was no exception: While Holder was shooting, the youngest of the three boys, Mason, took his first steps. "It was a special moment."

Eirik Johnson ("Boston Pops," p. 236) is a photographer and recent Boston transplant. The shoot gave him a new appreciation for what lies beyond the edges of the city's famed Freedom Trail. "It was the perfect opportunity to get to know another side of my newly adopted home and a good way to learn how to navigate the city's circuitous streets." When not getting lost in Boston, Johnson teaches at the Massachusetts College of Art and is currently at work on a book project about the Northwest.

It's not often that one gets to meet a living legend who also happens to be a great artist and a personal hero—so New York contributing editor **Marc Kristal** ("True Hollywood Story," p. 199) was overjoyed when he was given the opportunity to profile photographer Julius Shulman. Best of all, Kristal wasn't in any way disappointed. Indeed, his estimation for this iconoclastic, independent, entirely original individual was deepened by the experience.

Catherine Ledner ("True Hollywood Story," p. 199) is a Los Angeles–based photographer who was blessed with a dream assignment for this month's issue. Ledner writes: "Photographing the incredible Mr. Julius Shulman was a heartwarming experience. His appreciation and love of nature is reflected in his fabulous hilltop home and grounds. The well-traveled pathways were ripe with photo ops, and Mr. Shulman was ready for all of them. He is a gracious, quick, and completely hip photographer who I enjoyed immensely."

Oliver Mark ("Tisch for Taschen," p. 102) is a Berlin-based photographer who works all over Europe for magazines such as *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, and *Elle*. "I photographed Angelika Taschen in her Berlin Mitte apartment and asked her if it would be possible to move one of her Martin Eder paintings from one wall to another. She said, 'Everything that has to be moved for this picture, move it!' So we moved almost everything. It took about two hours to move everything back."

For research, **James Nestor** ("Home Buying/Home Selling 101," p. 254) bought a cruddy house in San Francisco and spent the large part of two years doing dishes in the bathtub and sleeping in the hallway while fixing it up. He has since converted half of the house into a tenancy-in-common for the price he originally paid for it and retired to Monaco, where he leads a life of almost-inhuman glamour and excess...at least that was the plan. The reality is that he now lives downstairs, takes out the garbage, and works as a freelance writer.

Davy Rothbart ("All Roads Lead to Home," p. 216) is the editor of *Found* magazine, a frequent contributor to public radio's *This American Life*, and author of the story collection *The Lone Surfer of Montana, Kansas*. He's on the road again this fall with his brother, Peter, on a 65-city tour. Do you have room on your couch? Find out when the tour hits your town at www.foundmagazine.com. ■

PHOTO BY HECTOR PRIDA

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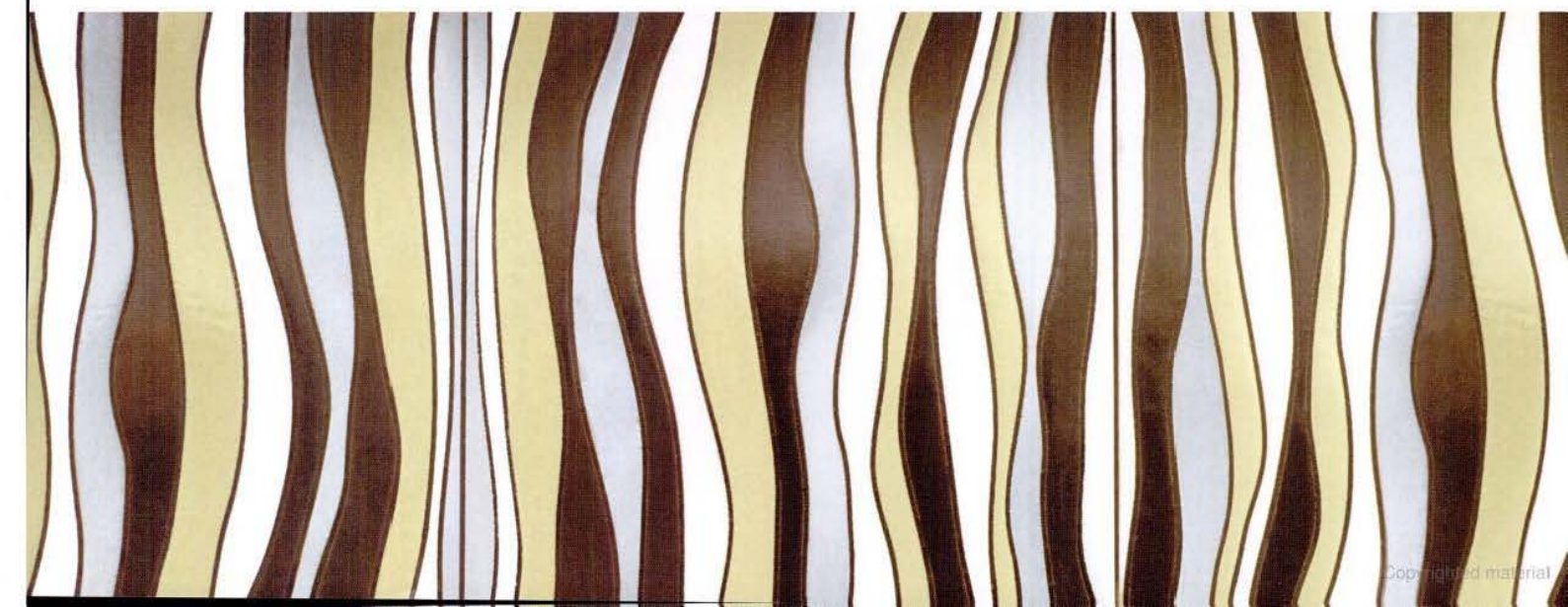

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Exploring the personal, political, and commercial dynamics of urban architecture, David Baker has successfully brought innovative design into diverse, densely populated areas. By taking on the challenge of environmental responsibility inherent in new building—from using reclaimed elements to implementing energy-efficient strategies—Baker has shown a true commitment to improving the overall community. His buildings exemplify much more than architectural structures—they are a three-dimensional testament to Baker's personal beliefs and values.

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Greetings

It's hard to believe, but this issue marks Dwell's seventh anniversary. While seven years probably flashed by with the completion of a single flying buttress for a 13th-century Gaul, or a few more feet of pyramid for an Egyptian pushing and pulling big stones, in magazine years (which are more like dog years) seven years is a long time. In those years we've put out 55 issues of the magazine; won an award or two; grown our circulation from 35,000 to 325,000; built a prefab house for $200,000; started a line of panelized prefabricated homes with Empyrean; dabbled in a season of television; sold out a run of limited-edition shoes made by Medium; produced a stunning photography exhibition at the James Nicholson Gallery; slowly worked toward building a sustainable home in Topanga Canyon, learning how best to cut red tape in the process; and, sadly, never won a softball game.

As we continue to evolve (or devolve, in the case of field sports), so too does the world we report on. Seven years ago the idea of covering modern residential architecture in places like Des Moines or Baton Rouge was unheard of—so much so that year after year we returned to that theme, at first known somewhat clumsily as "There Is Too a There There" and later "Modern Across America" or "America Goes Modern." By now we've covered almost every state in the union, as well as parts of Canada and Mexico, and found that there's plenty of good design, and extremely talented architects and designers, almost everywhere.

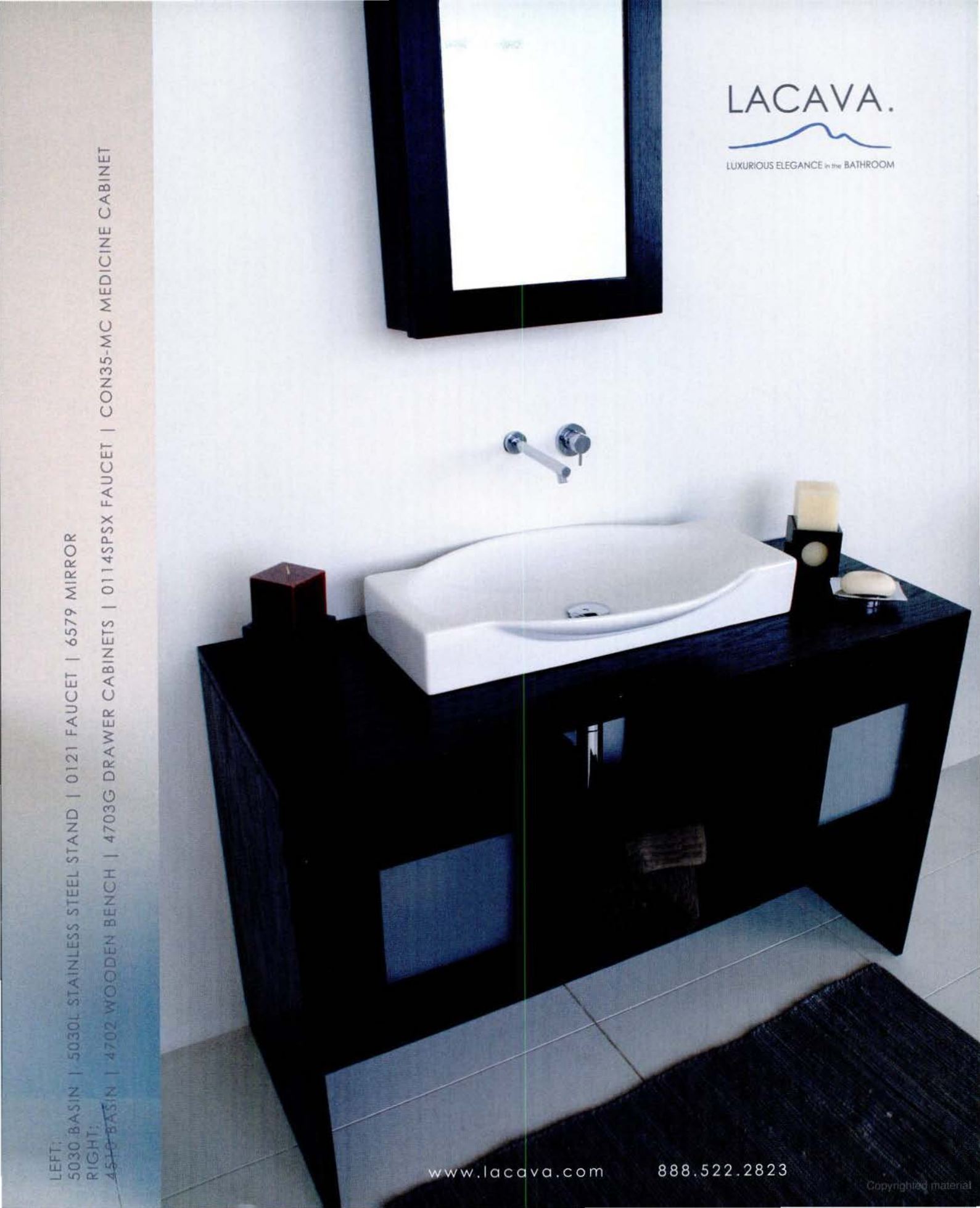
A lot of other things have changed too. Seven years ago I was just learning to use Google on a regular basis. Now Google has a picture of my apartment building's front door embedded in its map. Our collective embrace of this and many, many other technologies has meant that architects in, say, Nebraska can now check in daily on a building going up in Paris; or a product designer in Butte can look at videos from the Milan furniture fair as soon as it opens. The world is getting much smaller, and the playing field—at least of ideas—is leveling out.

Our "Modern Across America" issues used to be filled with stories of whining neighbors, ostracized residents, and the impression that modern houses were up to no good. I'd like to think that, thanks in part to seven years of Dwell, but mostly due to a raised consciousness of design issues, these stories are finally behind us. Today we simply have the New American Home. Our features in this issue—which take us from Minneapolis to Houston to San Juan—are not about a prescriptive style, but rather a question of attitude. They are about people who consider their options, and have the courage to go their own way. They are stories about good honest design solving problems both functional and aesthetic. They are about context and consideration. Ultimately, they are about achieving a higher degree of thoughtfulness—not only in laying out rooms, but in living life.

There's still a long way to go before your average development of McMansions shares this sensibility, and a decent chance it never will, but there's always hope, and in another seven years we'll be there to document it. ■

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

AQUASTAND VANITY PORTRAYS ANDREA PASCALE'S IDEA OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT LIGHTNESS' EMBODIMENT.



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Video

Uptown Address

After months of elation and frustration, David and Alysia's Harlem renovation is finally finished. The couple successfully turned a run-down brownstone into a glistening green beauty. Watch the final episode of the *Building Green in Harlem* series.
dwell.com/video

Listen & Learn

Podcasts

Los Angeles editor Frances Anderton talks trowel with Flora Grubb, a landscaper and owner of a nursery specializing in hardy plants for the Bay Area climate.
dwell.com/audio

Dwell Daily

Blog

As a supplement to "Home Buying/Home Selling 101" on page 252, Amara Holstein writes a series of postings on unconventional real-estate strategies, from going halfsies with friends to buying with no money down. Send your own home-buying tales to tips@dwell.com.
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Revamping your home? Go to DesignSource for a comprehensive list of services and resources, from couches to countertops.
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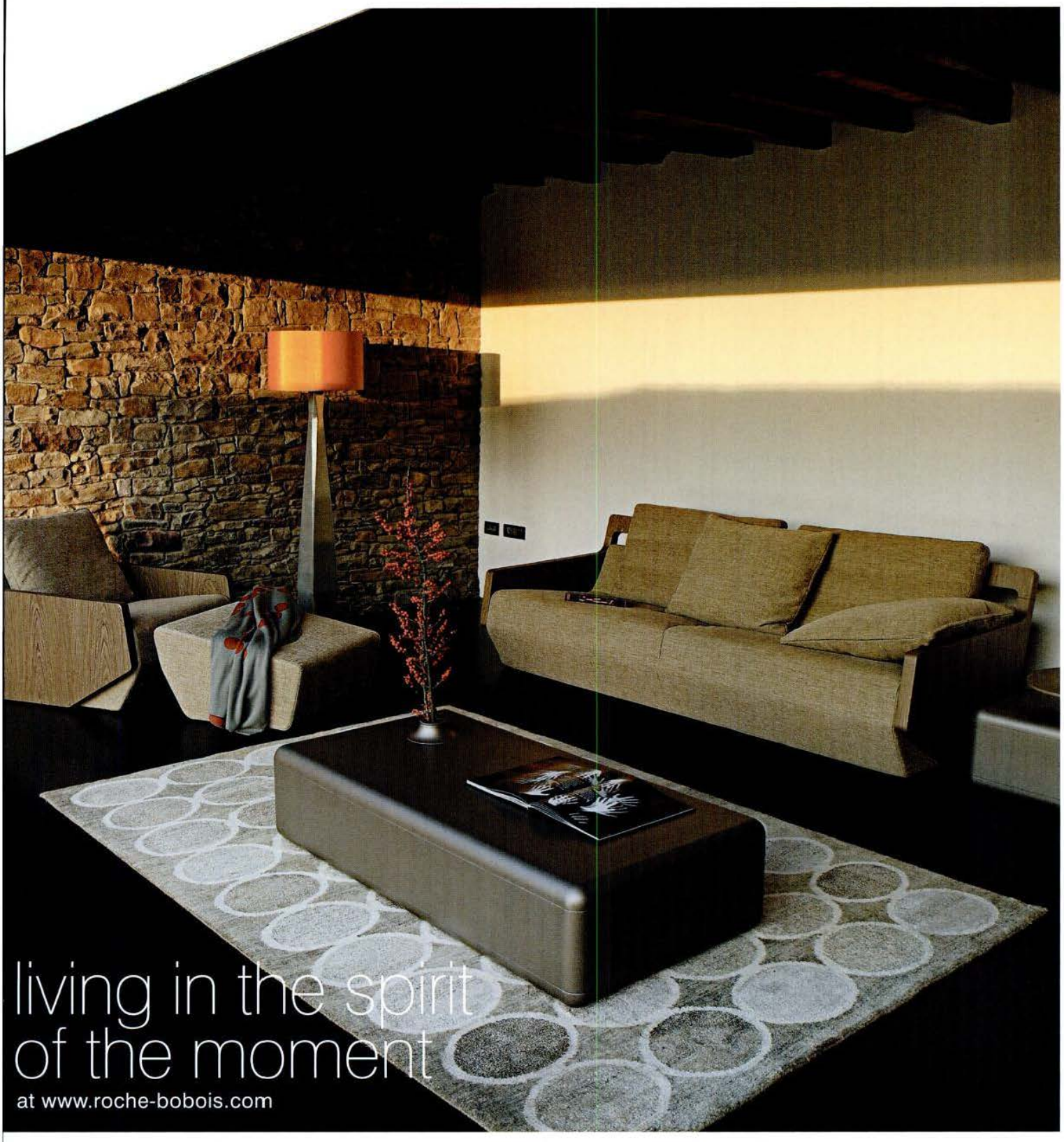
PHOTOS BY CHRISTIAN GRATTAN



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Dear Ketel One Drinker
Hello again.

Turner Prize / 19 Oct–13 Jan / Tate Liverpool / Liverpool, UK / www.tate.org.uk /

Go for Europe's most important and prestigious contemporary art award, stay for the riot. Will the Stuckists strike again?

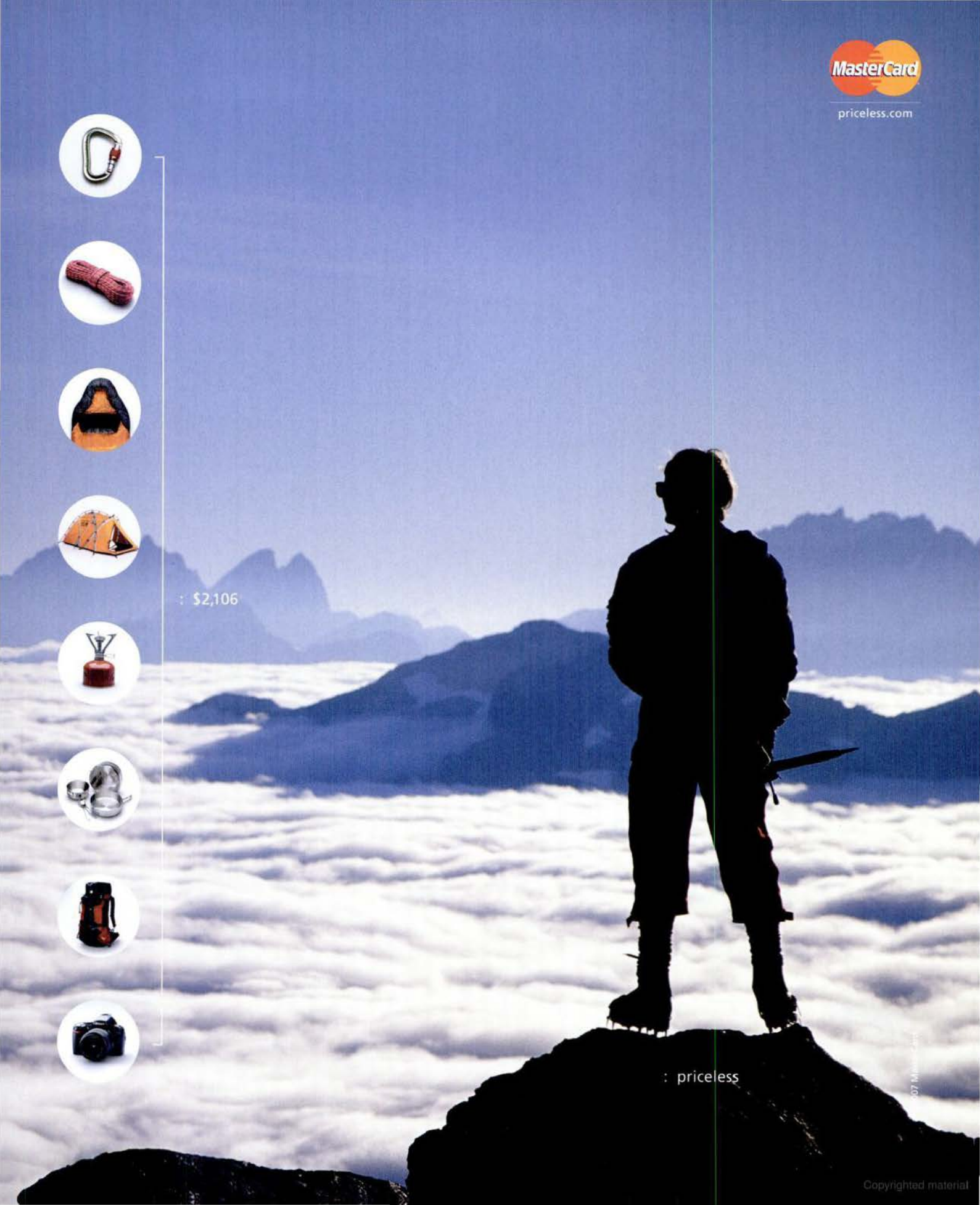
Sparking scathing criticism from the British Ministry of Culture and provoking egg-throwing protesters and rants from Madonna, the Turner Prize has always been controversial. This year, the awarding of the U.K.'s most publicized art prize will be held in Liverpool, not London. But don't expect the hubbub surrounding the event to die down with a change of scenery; the stakes have risen to £40,000 in total prize money. The shortlist (Zarina Bhimji, Nathan Coley, Mike Nelson, and Mark Wallinger) proves that art is not dead—at least not in Britain.

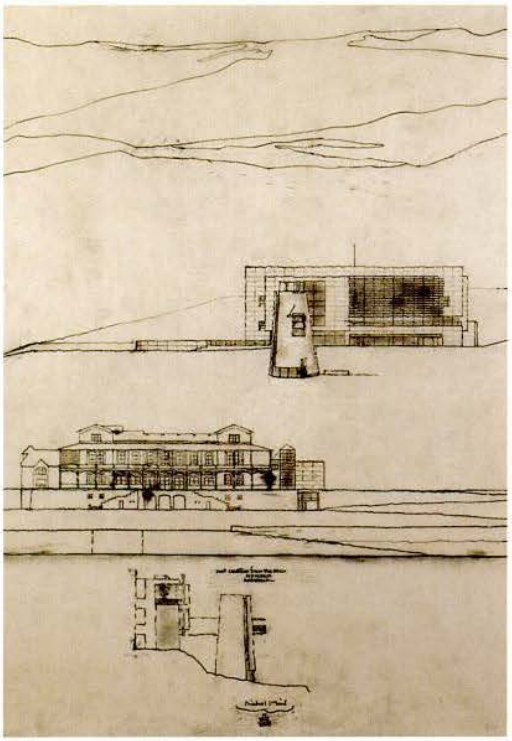
Nathan Coley
There Will Be No Miracles Here, 2006

Zarina Bhimji
Your Sadness Is Drunk, 2001–2006

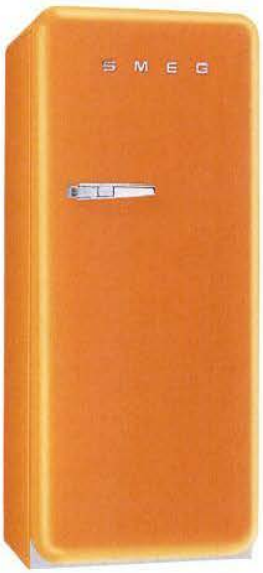
Refinery29 / www.refinery29.com / Serving up the top-shelf moonshine of fashion and design, Refinery29 is an interactive and informative treasure hunt (plus online shopping venue) that reports on the best independent designers, trends, and stores in New York City and beyond. General warning: Browsing this site will require a good deal of temperance.

Magazine Basket / By Enzo Berti for l'abbate, s.r.l. / www.lacollection.it / While it mimics the shape of a picnic basket, this magazine rack clearly does a better job cradling your periodicals than delicate tarts and watercress sandwiches. Its two-tiered system permits all manner of magazine storage and display for those who get fussy when the current issue of the *Economist* covers *Birds and Blooms*. The birch basket is available in three soft hues, and is sturdy enough to handle a bit of target practice when you hurl your copy of *Time* in disgust.

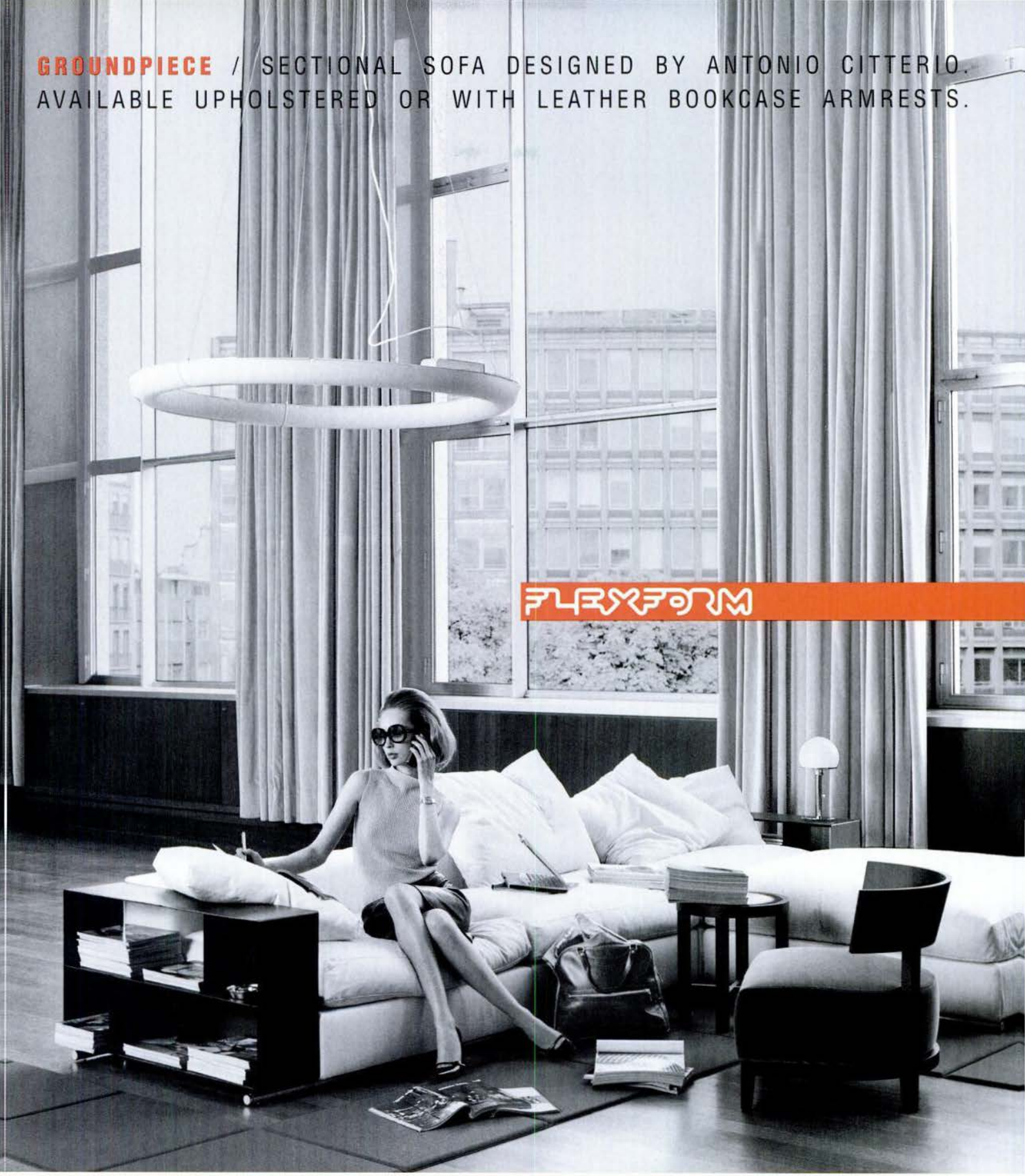


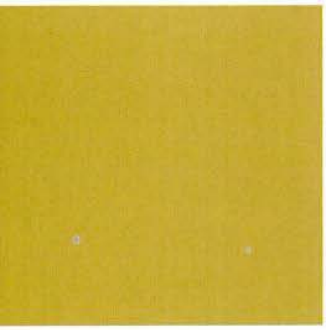


Arp Museum / By Richard Meier & Partners / Rolandseck, Germany / Opens 28 Sept / www.arpmuseum.org / A 130-foot subterranean elevator connects the former train station turned gallery and gift shop to the new Richard Meier–designed museum housing the work of Hans Arp and his wife, Sophie Taeuber-Arp.



Fab 28 refrigerator / By Smeg / www.smeg.com / Though Donna Stone, Harriet Nelson, and Lucy Ricardo were no strangers to the icebox (likely a Frigidaire), this retro-styled refrigerator from Italian appliance manufacturer Smeg would take them by surprise. New to American shores, Smeg still wears its name proudly, despite inciting Yankee snickers. But if you're willing to put your money where your mouth is, the Fab 28—with all the modern conveniences and in ten colors that put "olive drab" to shame—is a welcome addition to our dingy market, especially at a low 305 kilowatts per year. Milkman not included.





Designer in Focus: Eric Cohler

New York City-based interior designer Eric Cohler is known for mixing traditional pieces with eclectic, classic elements and the unexpected to create unique and immensely livable spaces.

As a member of Armstrong's Michelangelo Design Council, a group of respected designers advising Armstrong on consumer product design and real world use, Eric brings his extensive residential and commercial experience to bear on new product launches. A true fan of the recently introduced Definitions™ Decorative Interior Accents, Eric explains what he likes about them, suggests innovative ways to use them to great effect and lets us know what modern means to him.

How do Definitions fit in with your design aesthetic?
To me they are art; to me they are sculptures themselves—and they can define a space as a decoration element. Two select applications excited me first: dining rooms and powder rooms. We created a pavilion effect in a very large dining room that meant when you sat down to dinner you could actually hear the conversation, the light transmitted through the eco-resin panels, you could see the art through them. It created a lovely gallery space in the room.

What are some other inventive ways to use the panels?
Place a panel between two children's beds in a room and create privacy for both in a simple and attractive way. Place one behind the couch to catch the light and you have a very chic look. Use them to create extra closet space by floating them around good-looking canvas closet shelving, drawers and poles. They are perfect in loft spaces and in older, classic homes as they bridge traditional and contemporary, and the range of colors and textures is phenomenal.

What is modern to you now?
Modern is what you make it. It can be pared down, it needs to be clean, it needs to be shocking, it needs to be fresh. It's like visual sorbet—it has to clear your palette of the past. Do what you feel you can do to strip down—that's how I work with my clients. We empty the room, we decide on the paint colors and the floor, then decide what can go back into the room. You reduce to the bare essentials, edit it, and that's when you have a platform to build contemporary on. That's when you get a fresh quality. Maybe that's when you take down the curtains and let the light in....

Don't miss your opportunity to chat with Eric Cohler on Dwell Connect—check dwell.com for dates and times. See his recent projects at www.ericcohler.com.

To see more design ideas with Definitions, go to www.armstrong.com.

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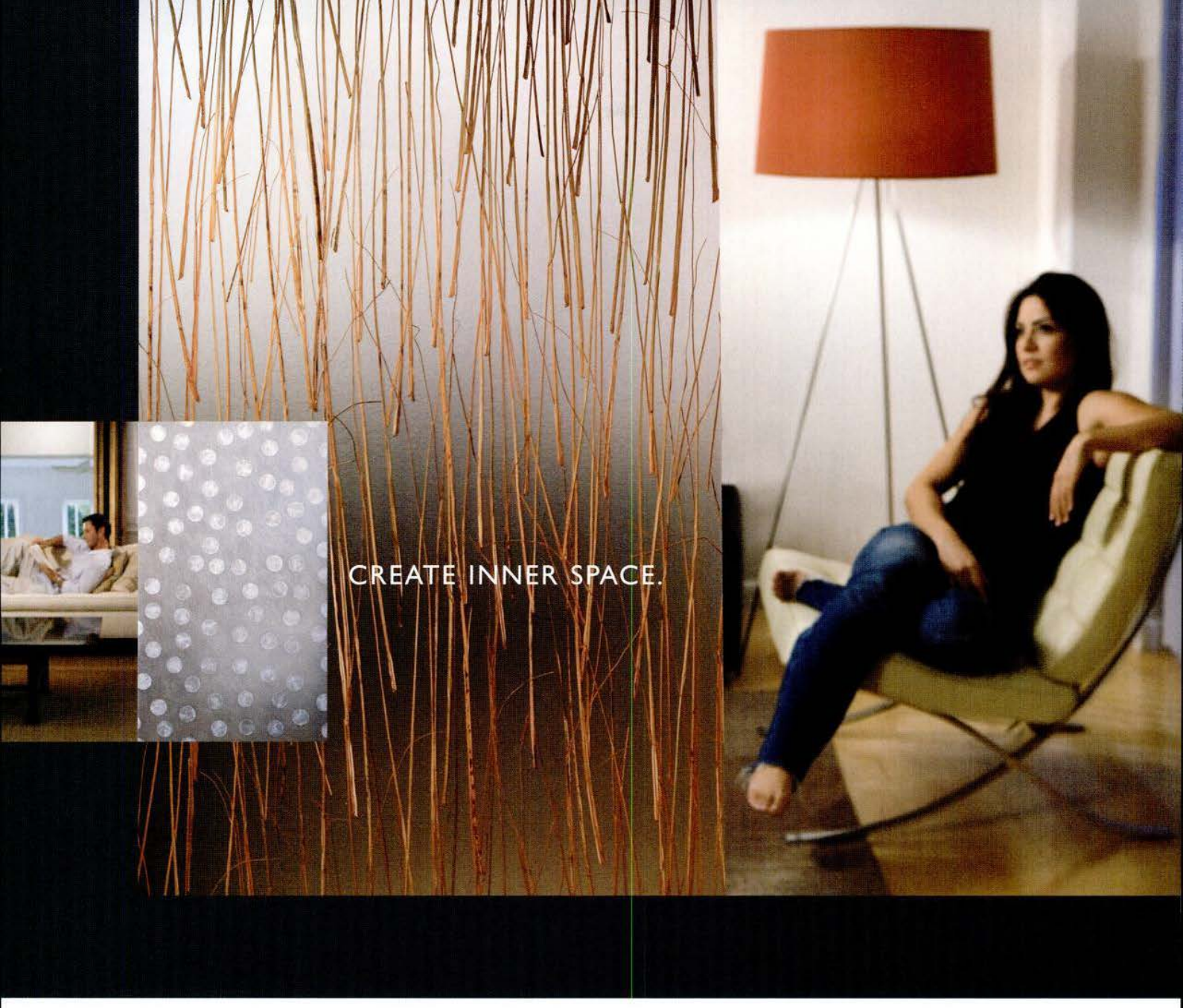

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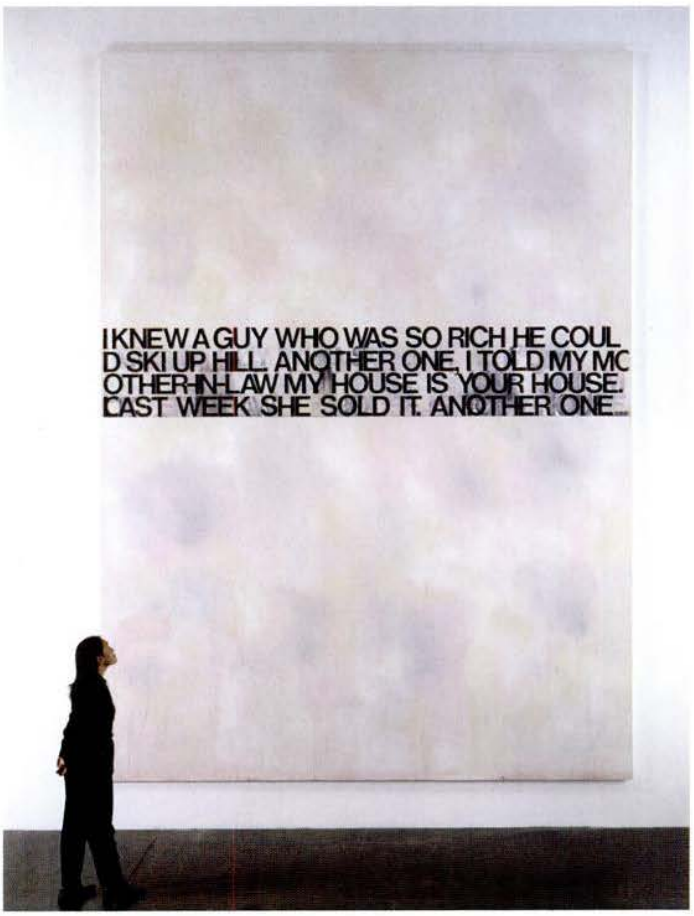
From November 2005 to February 2006, Richard Prince's *Untitled (Cowboy)* held the world photograph record for fetching the highest price at auction: $1,248,000. While it may seem absurd that a photograph of a commercial photograph (a Marlboro advertisement) hit that mark, consider that the print that broke Prince's record—Edward Steichen's *The Pond—Moonlight,* at $2,900,000—was just a pretty pond in the woods.

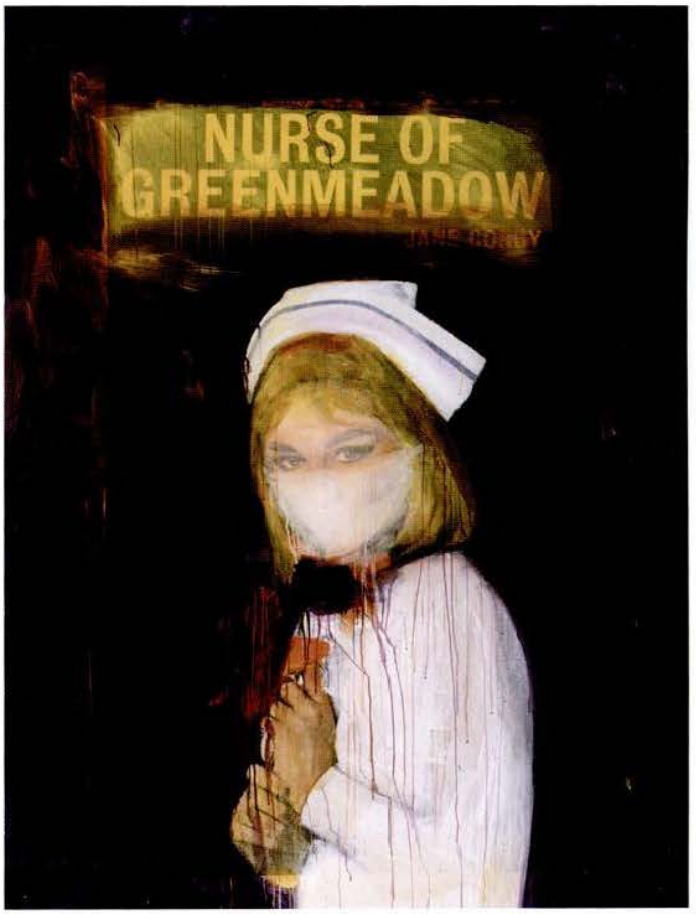
Richard Prince
Untitled (Cowboy), 1989

Richard Prince
Know a Guy, 2000

Richard Prince
Nurse of Greenmeadow, 2002

Richard Prince: Spiritual America / 28 Sept–9 Jan / Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum / New York, NY / www.guggenheim.org / From his "rephotographs" to his *Jokes* and *Nurse* series, American artist Richard Prince always dangles a carrot for hungry art critics to bite. This midcareer Guggenheim retrospective seems to say, "When art gives you carrots, make carrot cake."





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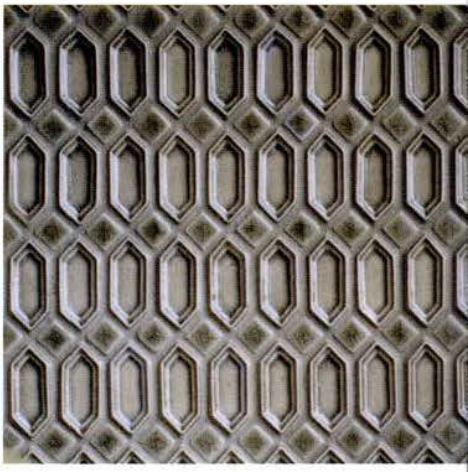
Neutra / By Ferruccio Laviani for Kartell / www.kartell.it / The plastic gurus at Kartell decided to go out on a limb, be a little crazy, and release a product made with glass. The design seems simple, but it is actually a two-part construction using a plastic disk to reflect the light source that's then diffused by the outer glass.



Oops table / By Monica Graffeo for Kristalia / www.kristalia.it / Just as your belt buckle expands for the holidays, so does the Oops, Monica Graffeo's version of the old-fashioned leaf table. The round design, made of fiberboard with a veneer of stained oak, pulls apart to reveal a hidden tray that contains two leaves. Whether you're having a feast for a *ménage à treize* or leftovers for two, the Oops always appears to be kicking up its heels.

Vibe mosaics / By Walker Zanger / www.walkerzanger.com / While the company claims to be celebrating the "bold and sassy designs of the swinging '60s and '70s," we see influences of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Hagia Sofia. Whether you credit your mosaic inspiration from BC or AD, it will always be a timeless antidote to staid tiling or other wallcoverings if placed in the living room or home office.

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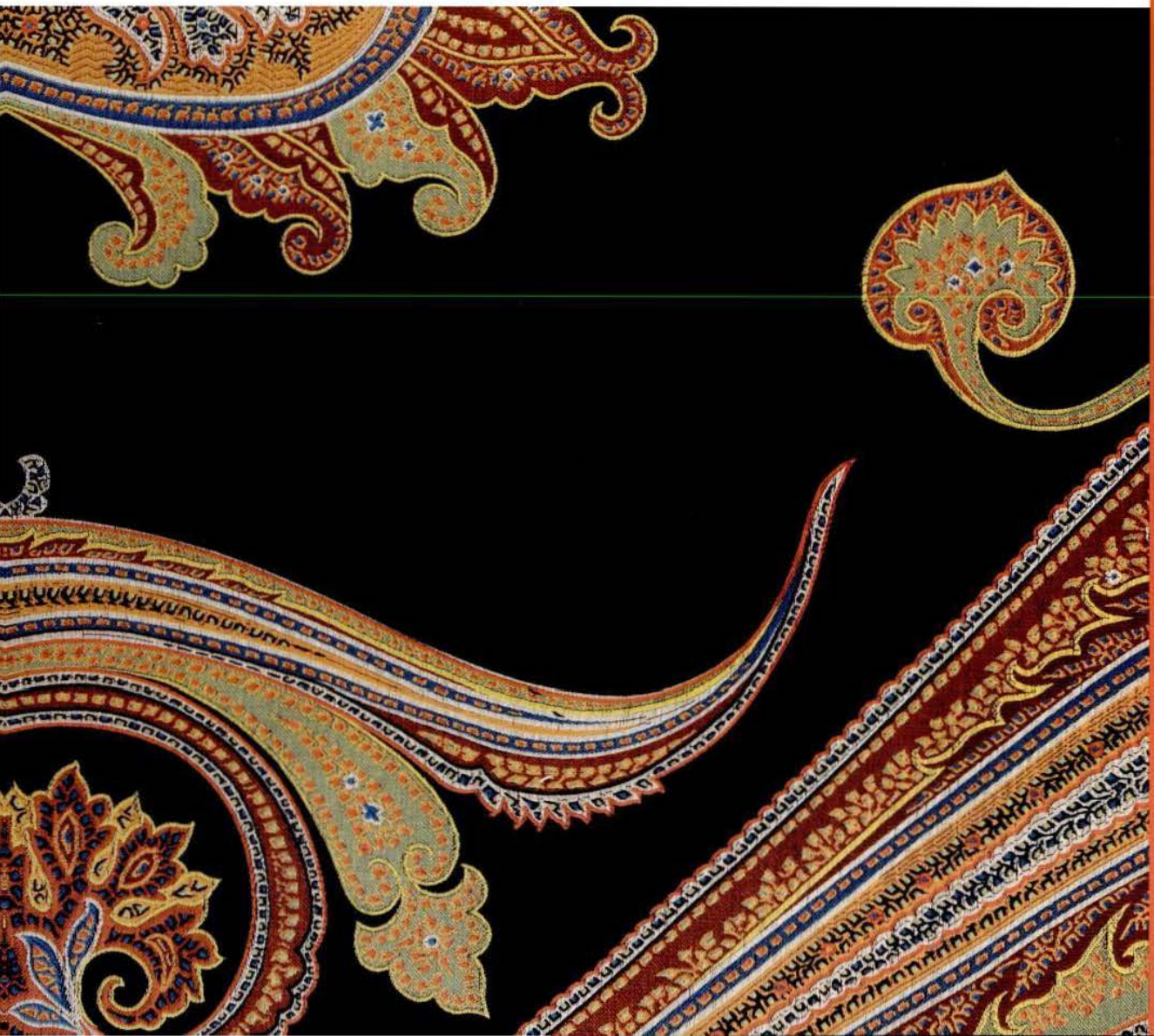
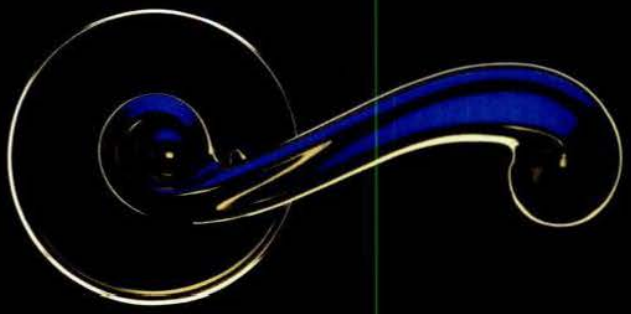


MASSIVE PAISLEY

Hand Job: A Catalog of Type / By Michael Perry / Princeton Architectural Press / $35 / www.papress.com / In reaction to the proliferation of Bézier curves and a seemingly endless supply of pixels, designers and clients (including the NFL) are returning to handmade lettering. With *Hand Job*, Michael Perry chronicles a range of exciting bespoke experiments that blur the lines between illustration and typography.

Neo Country / By Ineke Hans / www.cappellini.it / As a young Dutch designer, Ineke Hans is practically required to produce work that is playful and ironic. She did not disappoint at the Milan Furniture Fair this spring, where Cappellini introduced her line of generously proportioned wood furniture in natural or blue-tinted lime called Neo Country. A contemporary take on the solid-wood armchair, rocker, and stool once commonly found in rural Dutch homes, Neo Country was one of the sweetest surprises amidst vulgar chairs and grotesque lamps.



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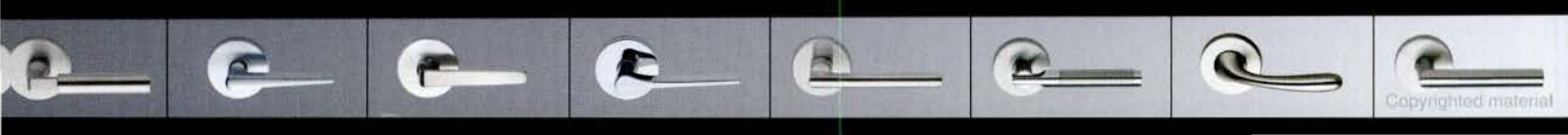
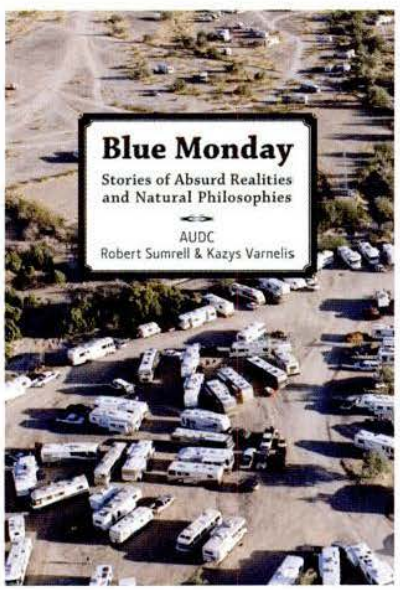
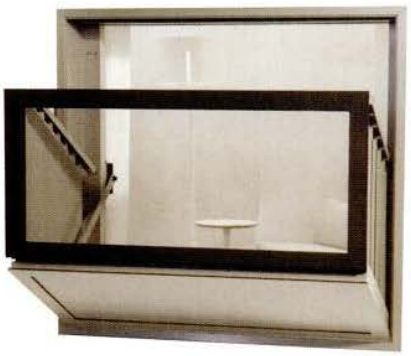


Kent lamp / By Donna Brady for Re-Surface / www.re-surface.net / Graffiti has come a long way in the past several years, with urban heroes such as Barry McGee and United Kingdom stencil maven Banksy gaining recognition in fine-art circles. Here's your chance to get a little graffito in your own home without disturbing its resale value.



Blue Monday: Stories of Absurd Realities and Natural Philosophies / By AUDC, Robert Sumrell and Kazys Varnelis / Actar / $27 / www.audc.org / *Blue Monday* could be to architects what *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit* is to environmentalists. The Architecture Urbanism Design Collaborative (AUDC) claims to "construct realities, not objects," so when reading their collection of odd and funny essays based on real-life phenomena, it's hard to imagine how they are "constructing" reality. But the larger story is a revelation of the strange, important, and sometimes random relationships individuals have to their environment, whether constructed, arranged, imagined, or ephemeral (e.g., Muzak). Take the tale of Mike the chicken: living a happy life, touring the nation, lacking a head. Absurd realities do lead to natural philosophies after all.



Bloomframe / By Hofman Dujardin Architects and Hurks geveltechniek bv / www.bloomframe.nl / Didn't get your fill of Autobots and Decepticons this summer? Well, you can have a transformer of your own with the Bloomframe convertible window; it's more than meets the eye. At the touch of a button, the window opens into a balcony in just 15 seconds. Apartment denizens and student housing residents alike will be able to benefit from this clever innovation.

20X200 / www.20X200.com / She's not your average pusher, but gallerist Jen Bekman intends 20X200 to be a gateway drug to the art market.

As a challenge to the hoity-toity art-buying world, Jen Bekman's newest venture presents prints by mostly emerging artists in limited editions of 200 for $20 each, or 20 for $200 each. By melding the inclusiveness of Internet commerce and nonprohibitive prices with the exclusivity of a curator acting as quality control, Bekman ensures that new collectors can be confident that the "buy" button will not lead to clicker's remorse. Whether it's an alternative to mass production or an alternative to high art, Bekman realizes that $100 is still a considerable chunk of change to most people.

Kate Bingaman-Burt
Sunglasses

Youngna Park
Untitled

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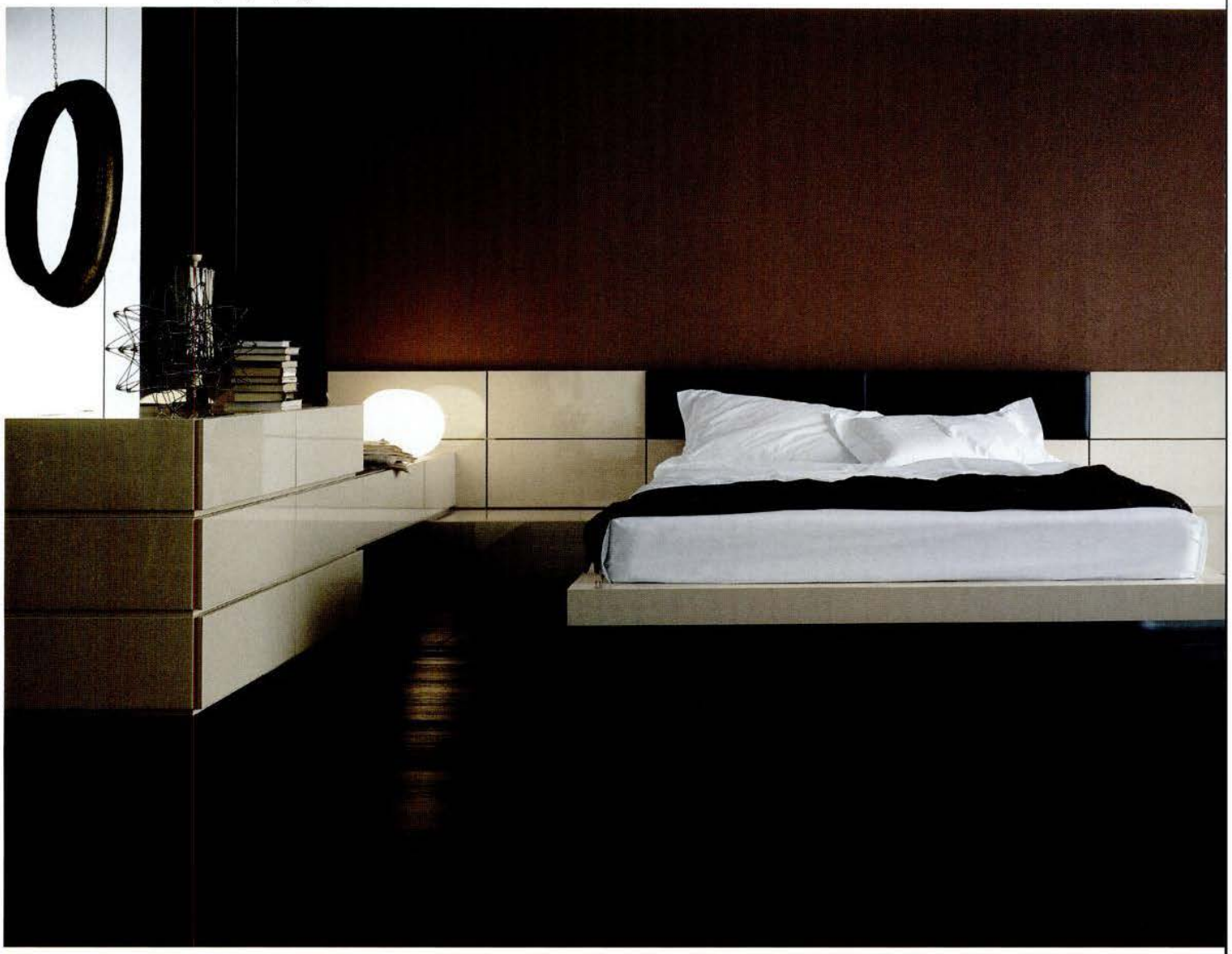

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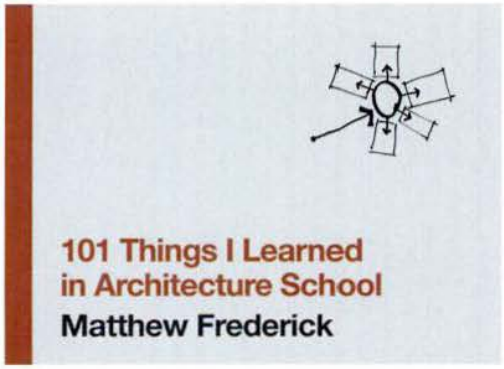
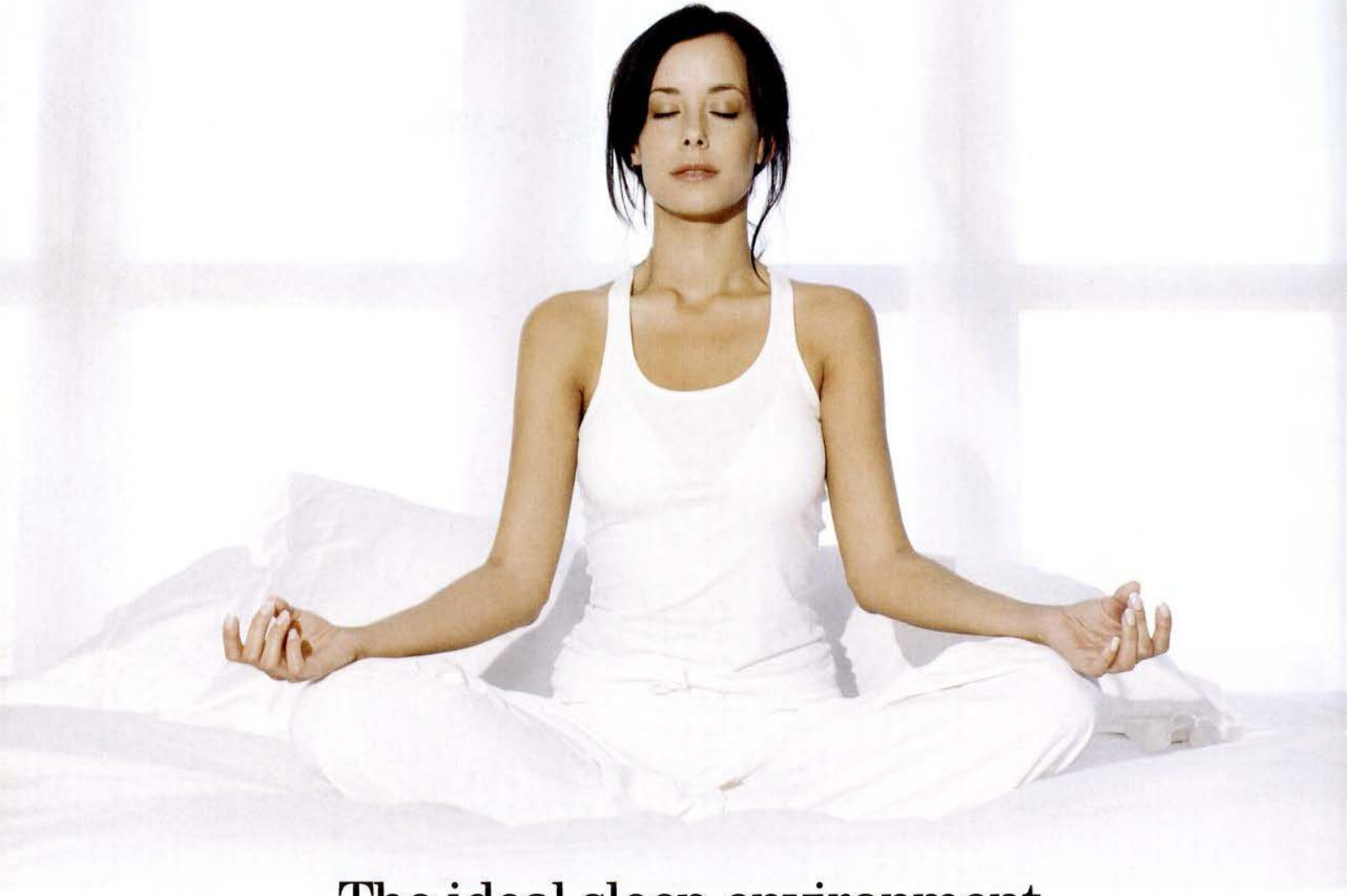
Vertigo / By Naoto Fukasawa for B+B Italia / www.bebitalia.it / With their latest objects B+B Italia moves into Bed Bath and Beyond territory. The Vertigo series, despite its Hitchcockian name, has no connection to San Francisco (but it is a little like the opening credits of the film). Japanese uber-designer Naoto Fukasawa gives the synthetic Corian a wabi-sabi element by making bowls of imperfect circles. They can be presented on a matching tray, but if you suffer from vertigo, don't look down.



101 Things I Learned in Architecture School / By Matthew Frederick / MIT Press / $12.95 / www.mitpress.mit.edu / Ranging from the utilitarian "How to draw a line" (Lesson #1) to the more abstract "Create architectural richness through *informed simplicity* or an *interaction of simples* rather than through unnecessarily busy agglomerations" (Lesson #46, and yes, it's explained in more depth), Frederick offers advice useful to most everyone. Our favorite: "Manage your ego" (Lesson #86).



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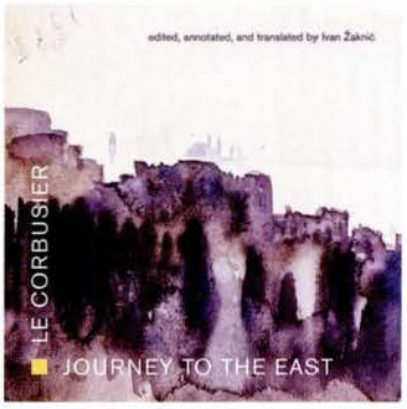
Powerpole wall sticker / By Ferm Living / www.designmyworld.net / With the welter of cell phone towers and more and more power lines being buried underground instead of borne aloft, Danish wall-treatment mavens Ferm Living aim to give the good old-fashioned power pole its interior due. Whether you're seduced by its long vinyl lines or simply a big fan of irony, this blight on the landscape can now be a blight on your living room.



Le Corbusier: Journey to the East / Edited by Ivan Zaknic / MIT Press / $19.95 / www.mitpress.mit.edu / Le Corbusier fought the publication of this intimate travel journal he filled with musings and sketches in 1911, at the tender age of 24. Corbu's "Grand Tour" took a route that did not overlap with many other debutants of his day. Through Dresden, Prague, Budapest, Bucharest, Brindisi, Pompeii, and Athens, one of modernism's champions became obsessed with the vernacular design of white stucco peasant houses and, entranced by the Parthenon, decided to become an architect.

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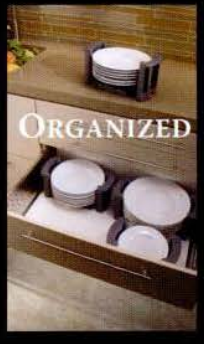
Missed Trees / By Jean-Marie Massaud for Serralunga / www.serralunga.com / Joining the ranks of highfalutin designers such as Zaha Hadid, Patrick Jouin, and Ross Lovegrove, Jean-Marie Massaud performs miracles by turning diminutive foliage or flowers into towering trees with his new trunklike vase designs for Serralunga—perfect for those nostalgia enthusiasts who want to re-create Ewok arboretums in their living rooms.

Isometric chair / By Kalon Studios / www.kalonstudios.com / If the word "isometric" makes your abs flinch, rest easy: This is not an exercise chair. The name refers to the design of this 100 percent nontoxic, sustainable seat (CNC-inscribed flair is optional). Los Angeles–based Kalon proudly states that the chair is "locally manufactured"; so if you want to brag about your green purchase but ship it beyond L.A., pony up for those carbon offsets.

IT'S...



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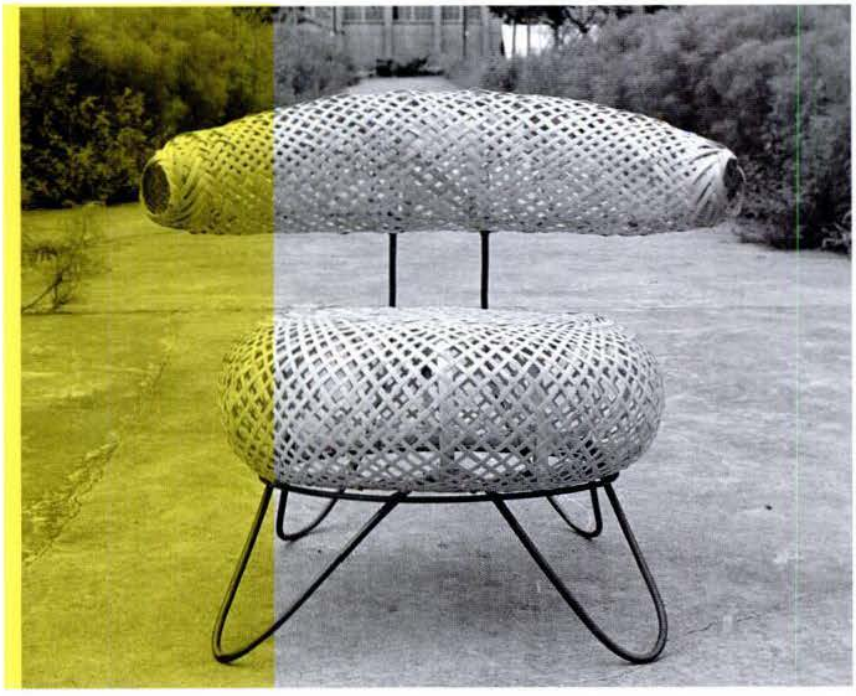

PHOTO BY MICHIO NOGUCHI / COURTESY NOGUCHI MUSEUM

Design: Isamu Kenmochi and Isamu Noguchi / 19 Sept–16 Mar / Noguchi Museum / Long Island City, NY / www.noguchi.org / Isamu Kenmochi and Isamu Noguchi shared a lot more than a first name. They were kindred spirits in creating a design idiom for postwar Japan—one which combined traditional Japanese design with the new spirit of European modernism. "Let the East learn from Western civilization," Noguchi said. "Let the West learn from the Eastern culture." Their two-year collaboration helped forge a style that came to be called Japonica Design. Today we call it fusion. Eighty-five examples of it are on view at the Noguchi Museum, including bulbous chairs made from bent wood construction (shown here)—the same method used to make dumpling steamers.

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Pittsburgh Steeler

With a nod to the Burgh's industrial heritage, and an eye toward the new, Jeff Walz replaced an aging farmhouse with a chic steel cube.

Jeff Walz gazes over the railing from the front stoop of his recycled steel-and-glass home, which replaced the quaint-but-decrepit 140-year-old farmhouse in which he'd originally planned to reside.

Still life with IKEA lampshade and ventless fireplace (right). The unfinished, black, welded-steel railing borders steps made of framing lumber, which emit a friendly, old-fashioned creak as Walz treads up and down. The threshold between the back deck and the kitchen (below) was fabricated from a commercial aluminum diamond plate often used for fenders.

The leafy streets of the Pittsburgh neighborhood known as Shadyside are filled with massive, robber baron–era mansions and modest workers' cottages—brick-and-mortar relics of a once-burgeoning steel industry. There are even a few modernist gems, by the likes of Breuer, Meier, and Venturi. What's been absent, until recently, is a domicile that most closely resembles a shipping container.

Not that its owner, Jeff Walz, was looking to be provocative when he purchased the charming, 140-year-old farmhouse—interior sight unseen—that once sat upon the lot. But there was nothing quaint, or remotely salvageable, about the dry rot and mildew that greeted him once he ventured inside.

"I was afraid I'd have to flip it," recalls Walz, who was then director of corporate relations for Carnegie Mellon University and now heads up university relations for Google. "But then I met Harry." He is referring to architect Harry Levine, an amiable bundle of energy endowed with several heads' worth of salt-and-pepper hair, whose home and office are about a block away from each other. In between is a phalanx of bars, restaurants, and cafés—many of them Levine's former projects—which double as informal clubhouses for a coterie of friends ▸

How to Make My House Your House

Hot Deals

Jeff Walz wanted a fireplace more for metaphorical toastiness than for warmth (the radiant heat and forced-air backup provide that), but he didn't want to spend more than $700. After extensive searching, architect Harry Levine located the Kentucky-made Monessen vent-free DBX24 natural gas hearth system on sale (at edswood-shed.com) with a few dollars to spare.

Garage d'Or

To further integrate the indoors and out, Levine specified a commercial rolling glass-and-aluminum garage door (about $2,400) manufactured by C.H.I. Overhead Doors that lets in light even when it's closed. A push of a button opens up almost the entire rear of the house, connecting the yard and back deck to the kitchen—perfect in warm weather and during parties.

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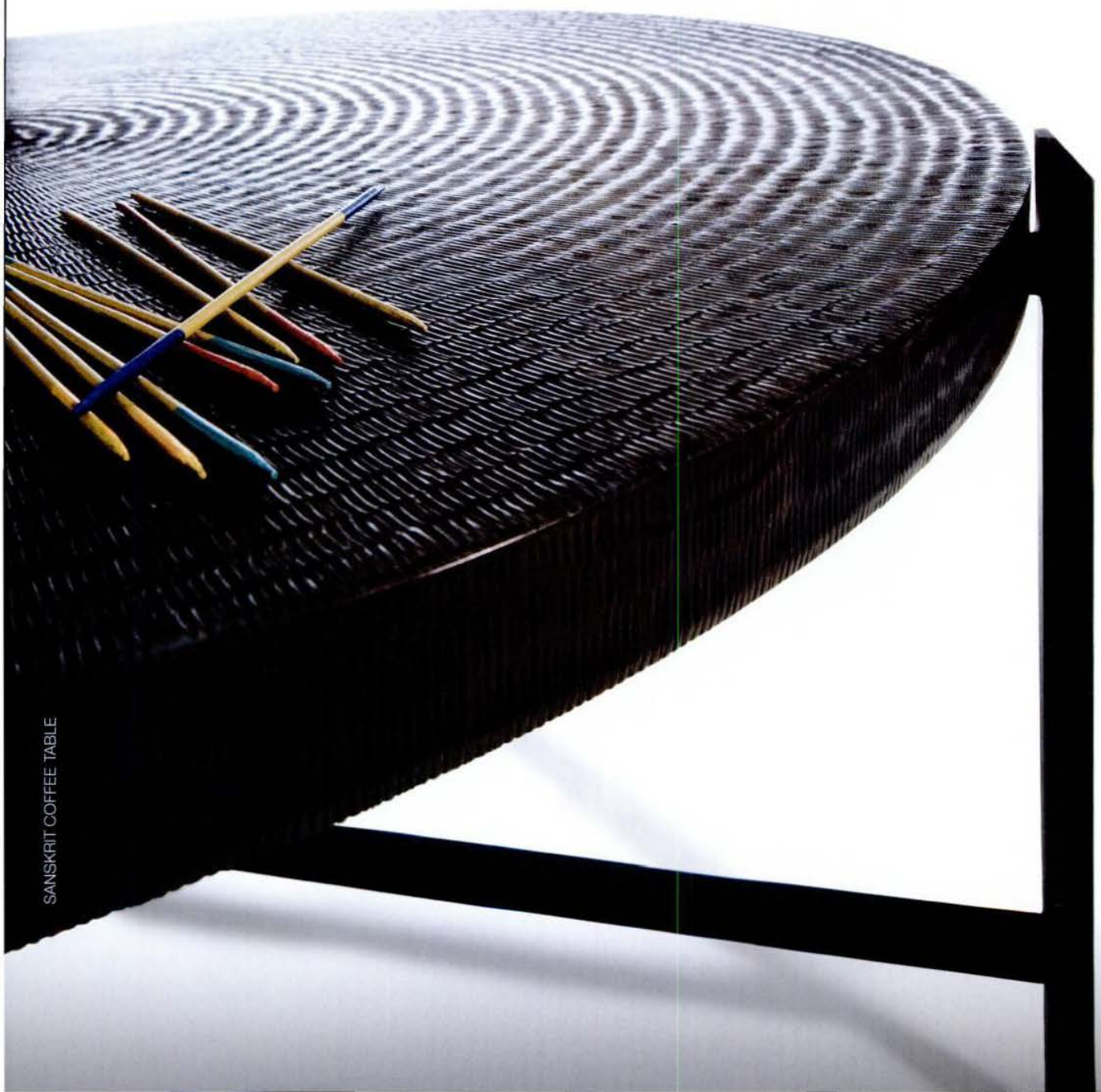

SANSKRIT COFFEE TABLE

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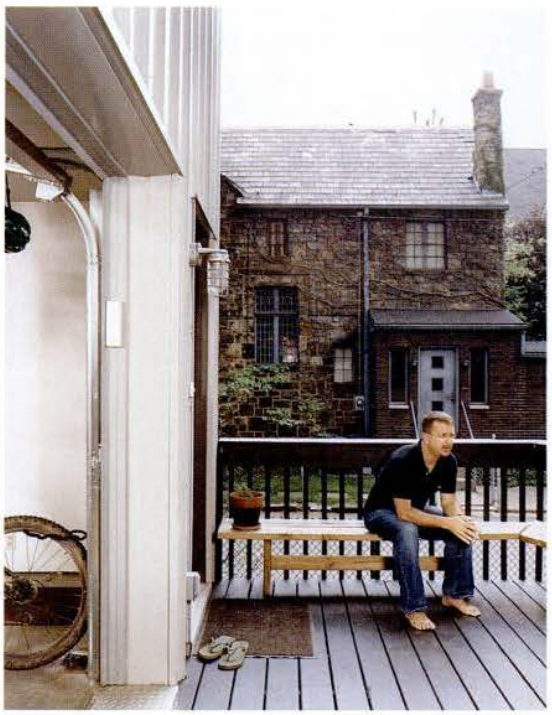
The open office and bedroom reside on either side of the second story catwalk. Below, Walz (right) rests on a George Nakashima–inspired bench designed by architect Harry Levine's Uncle Murray, while industrial designer Scott Summitt (left) sits in a vintage Eames rocker.

A natural tinkerer, sublettor Summit relished Walz's edict that he make no holes in the walls. He used plumbing pipe to craft a candelabra in the bathroom (left) and propped a plywood MDF chalkboard against the wall (below) for impromptu sketching. "It came in handy at a dinner party of biomedical engineers who wanted me to explain the principles of the golden section."



who take genuine pleasure in bumping into one another several times a day.

Walz's immediate inspiration was a workshop and snug mezzanine apartment self-built by one of the Shadyside gang from a metal prefab kit for about $50,000. Jazzed up with automotive paint, its green, blue, and yellow exterior appears downright giddy compared to Walz's austere gray shell. "Jeff's a real idea guy," says Levine, clearly delighted with both client and challenge. "He could have built something far less extreme—we could have stick-framed it—but he wanted to be on the edge of something new. And he loved the idea of celebrating steel here in Pittsburgh."

Fueled by equal parts caffeine and alcohol, a sketch on a napkin (entitled "Villa Jeff") was quickly produced and approved. About the same size as the farmhouse (1,200 square feet), the resulting recycled steel–and–glass structure sits directly atop the original fieldstone-and-mortar foundation. Early ideas for softening the façade, such as trellises with climbing vines, did not make the leap to finished product, although 11 silvery birch trees (when fully grown) will provide a natural screen.

If many of us consider our homes to be a refuge and a repository of personal expression, Walz's ideal is more of a tabula rasa. In discussions with Levine, he used the terms "gallery house" and "salon house"—suggesting a place of temporary installations of people and projects. The primary permanent adornments are light and air. With the industrial garage door rolled up, the two-story space is flooded with both, and crosscurrents preclude the need for air-conditioning except on the most extreme days. In lieu of artwork, windows frame views in three directions, capturing trees, houses, and the stained glass rose window in the old stone church across the street. ▸

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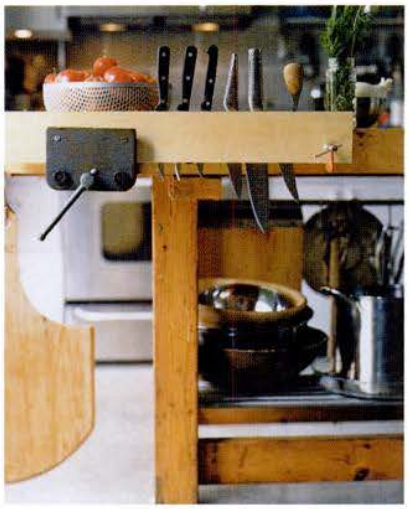


Summit created a functional kitchen island out of Walz's childhood workbench, fitting it with various IKEA parts (left). The vice makes an ideal wine grabber, and pieces of black iron pipe hold candles. "Now it's very Martha Stewart," jokes Summit.

Just as construction was getting under way, Walz was being wooed by Bay Area–based Google—with an offer to let him migrate between the two locations. Now that he was no longer available to do much of the work, the budget crept from $150,000 to about $230,000. "It was originally going to be this hippy barn raising," says Levine. But with less time on his hands, even the minimalist Walz found himself susceptible to the seductions of fixtures and finishes. The basic white Home Depot kitchen turned into a tidy arrangement of gleaming stainless appliances, and wood floors morphed into power-troweled concrete—with Levine repurposing the old boiler into a kind of Willy Wonka copper contraption to fuel the radiant heat.

When in San Francisco toiling for Google, Walz met industrial designer Scott Summit, who happened to be heading to Pittsburgh to teach at Carnegie Mellon for a year and was happy to find a place to lay his head. True to the salon vision, Summit hosted weekly Sunday suppers—multidisciplinary gatherings around the table that sits before the large, uncovered windows. "It was like performance dinner," says Summit, laughingly referring to *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (presumably without the gore). "We'd talk until all hours, with tea candles arranged on the steel stair rails like notes," as the eight built-in Bose speakers bathed the room in sound.

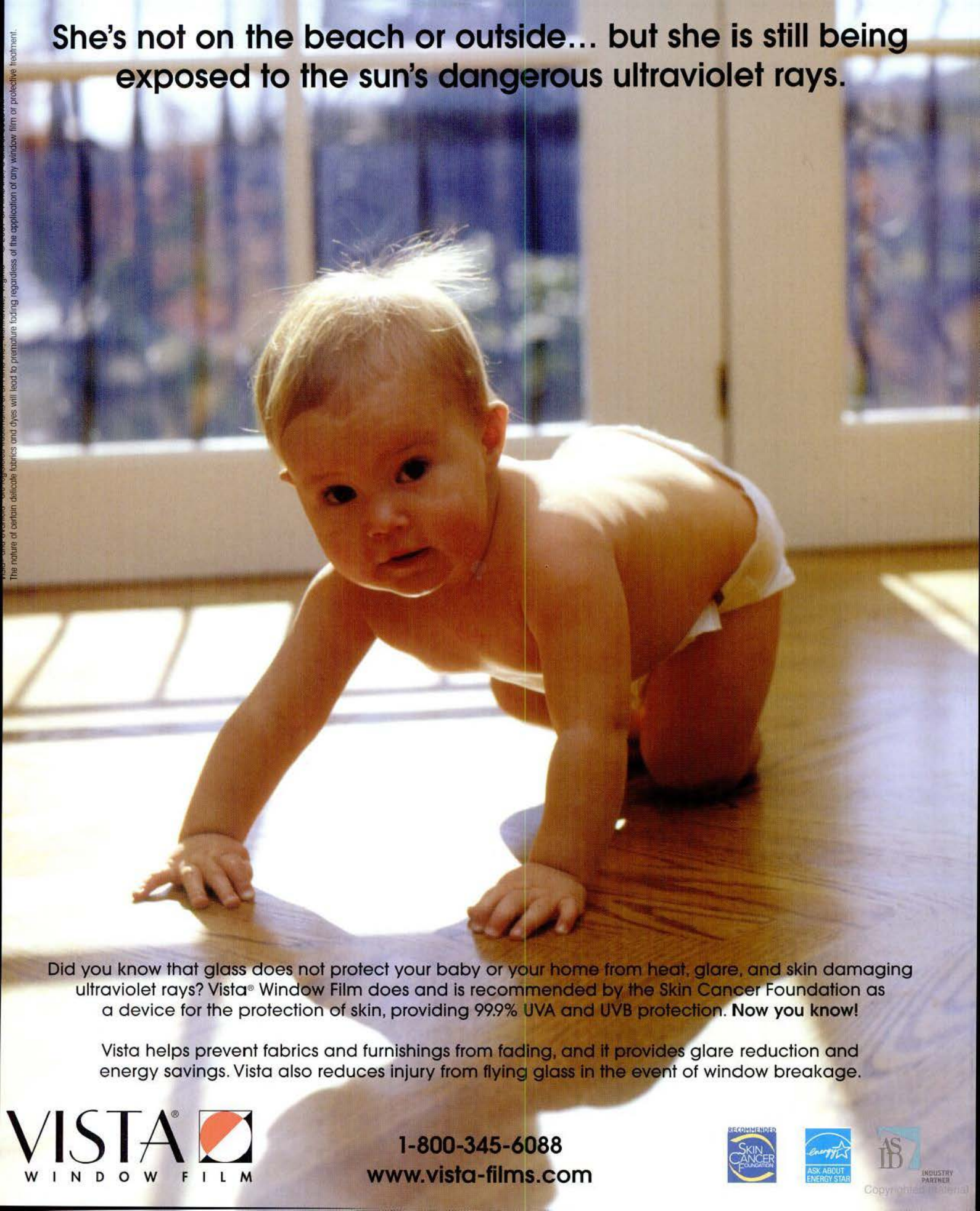
The reaction from the neighborhood has been mostly positive, although one woman marched up to Levine and demanded, "Are you responsible for that godless building?" "From the outside, I know my house can be a little startling," says Walz, who plans to spend the next few months pottering around it. "But it makes me happy. During the day, you feel like you're outdoors. And at night, it glows like a big glass lantern. It's quite beautiful." ■

Steel City

For about $25,000, the red steel frame, prefinished sheathing (in Fox Gray), and galvanized roof—all made from recycled scrap by Nucor—arrived on a flatbed truck with a set of shop drawings. Assembly took about a month. Says Scott Summit, "At night, in the bedroom upstairs, with the rain beating down on the metal roof, it's like urban camping."

Yin'side Out

"I never felt claustrophobic," says Summit. "Everywhere you look there's a window." The dark bronze-tinted aluminum commercial windows (from Custom Window Company in Englewood, Colorado) frame clear, double-glazed, low-emission glass. The awning-style windows open out, so during muggy summer storms the air can still flow in. Total cost: about $12,000, including installation.



Story by Karen Pakula

Photos by Paul McCredie

Long Division

On a rural subdivision just outside Martinborough on New Zealand's North Island, the Longhouse has been christened the Orange House by neighbors for its rich, waxed macrocarpa pine cladding.

The dark, primeval mountains and jagged ravines of New Zealand are free of rampaging Orcs, but Middle-earth, 2007, has another nuisance on the loose. It is the load-bearing truck, carrying a quaint, preloved homestead—or rather, two trucks with two halves of a quaint, preloved homestead—causing traffic chaos en route to the wine region of Wairarapa.

Dozens of these abodes have come to rest in Martinborough, a town of 800 souls, where the very concept of tradition is built into the street plan, arranged 127 years ago to mimic Britain's Union Jack. So you might imagine that Ted Preston and Anne Cornege's Longhouse—as in 131 feet long and 20 feet wide—has given locals something to talk about.

"We *built* a house—we're weird," says Preston, a freelance government management consultant, with the calm demeanor of a man in a downshifting cycle. After 26 years in Wellington, and with an empty nest, Preston and Cornege can get cozy in their contemporary retreat, a sophisticated construction of concrete, glass, and steel. Two guest bedrooms for weekend tourists bring in a little income, and the question of sustainability was a no-brainer. "I'm not an eco-warrior," Preston says. "It just seems the sensible thing to do in this day and age. And look around you—it's windy, it's sunny."

Outside, there's enough natural energy swirling around to power this planet and a dozen others. Every tree in sight is bent at the waist, as though snap-frozen during aerobics class, the result of a steady pounding by the North Island's famous nor'westerlies. And the sun is fierce, no thanks to the depleted ozone layer directly above. The task, then, for designers Cecile Bonnifait and William Giesen, of the Wellington practice Atelier-workshop, was to harness this abundant natural energy and let it seep throughout two distinct areas, the living and guest quarters.

The designers worked as they always do: from the ground up. Bonnifait recalls clearly how things began on their first visit to what was no more than a bumpy, empty paddock. "When we came here, it was a warm ▸

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[1956]

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The long corridor between the guest and main quarters provides ample light and lovely views in addition to acting as one of the Longhouse's most hard-working green elements. The concrete Trombe wall collects sunlight and distributes it as heat throughout the home.

day, and there was this very long grass and so we just walked through and felt the undulations," she says. They looked up and saw mountains. "And we wanted to express the ridge in the distance, even the formation of the landscape," she adds.

The logic of the house was born: It would reflect the natural terrain (hence its angled placement on the site) as well as the far-off peaks (note the tall gabled roof stretching along an elongated corridor). Finally, an intricate grid would radiate from the building, governing the position of 200 white paper birch and totara trees, the living and guest modules, and the courtyards that divide them. "It's important to us that every space has a different experience with the landscape," Bonnifait says.

The ambient comfort level is controlled with passive design: copious skylight cutouts, double-glazed glass, orientation toward the sun, and, crucially, "getting sun onto thermal mass, like concrete," Giesen says. "When that late-afternoon sun comes in, you've got a big concrete wall and floor that holds that heat so it can dissipate through the rest of the house." Among the advantages of a narrow house, he explains, are good cross ventilation and the opportunity of sunlight reaching all the way across every room. "We haven't had heating on for six months. You tend to forget about it," Cornege confirms.

In summer, when the mercury hits 100 degrees Farenheit, the house must be cooled without "machinery," as Preston says. "But there are louvers, lots of sliding glass doors, etc., so we can tune the place, even though the wind is quite significant."

The project was ahead of the curve. Wind power was discussed early on, but the expense, the noise level, and the primitive "eggbeater technology" still widely in use put the idea on hold. The microhoteliers use solar energy only for the hot water system.

Like the rest of the world, New Zealand's researchers are working furiously to produce cheap, efficient green power. And when it arrives, the residents of the Longhouse will be ready. Their home has been future-proofed. Preston explains, "Down in the second guest ▸

Ted Preston (above) takes charge of hot beverages in the kitchen. The architects diligently avoided cold, hard minimalism with a honey-tinged Italian poplar ceiling. The courtyard facing Anne Cornege (right) is sheltered from the Wairarapa winds year-round.

room, the internal framing has been strengthened so we can put in more solar cells or a bank of batteries so we could do the wind-power thing."

Present conditions, however, are not so bad. All that thermal concrete has been softened internally with honey-colored Italian poplar ceiling panels, cut like jigsaw pieces on site, and externally with waxed boards of rich, macrocarpa pine. "You drive up and the lights reflect on the wood and it sort of glows," Preston says. "And when I get inside, I get the feeling the house is smaller, much more intimate, because our world ends just where those little pools of light go. There's nothing more out there."

He can sit in the AV room, tucked behind the kitchen, and listen to music or watch television while a micro-courtyard away, his wife is reading in their bedroom or soaking in a sunken concrete bath taking in the rural views. Any guests are safely, privately, quietly, and eco-consciously stashed away behind the sliding door down the very long hallway. ▸

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Trombe L'oeil

For heating a space of such peculiar dimensions, Bonnifait and Giesen turned to a solar design principle called the Trombe wall—after Félix Trombe, the French engineer who popularized it in the 1960s—which they created in the corridor between the guest rooms and main house.

Oriented to catch the best afternoon and winter sun, the corridor is made of ten-inch-thick concrete blocks on the southern side, and a ten-inch insulated concrete floor. The thermal mass of these elements absorbs the heat from the sun through a double-glazed wall and distributes it throughout the house. Thus, what looks like a narrow buffer zone for privacy becomes the all-important heat sink.

"Ultimately, when there are no guests here, the door at the far end can be closed so all the heat will come through to the rest of the house," Giesen says. "And because it's a lower ceiling, the heat will want to rise up and come through here."

For particularly chilly days, underfloor heating has been installed in seven independent zones, allowing for manual and automatic, sensor-driven operation. "When the heat drops below a certain level that will kick in," Giesen explains. "Hopefully, most of the time, the sun will do that job."

If all else fails, Giesen suggests a time-honored New Zealand approach. "There used to be a saying," he says. "'If you're cold—put on a jersey.'"—K.P. ■

Warm air from the Trombe wall circulates into the guest rooms (above). Sun shines through the glass and onto the concrete, heat-storing wall and floor in the hallway (below) that separates the guestrooms from the main house. This "heat sink" keeps the Longhouse warm when the mercury dips.

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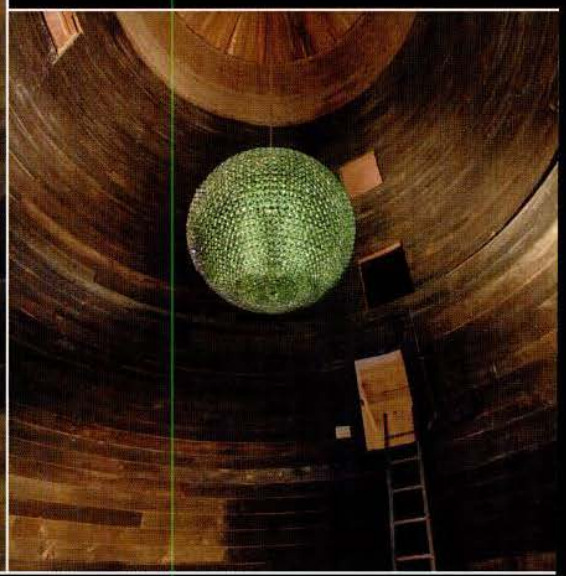

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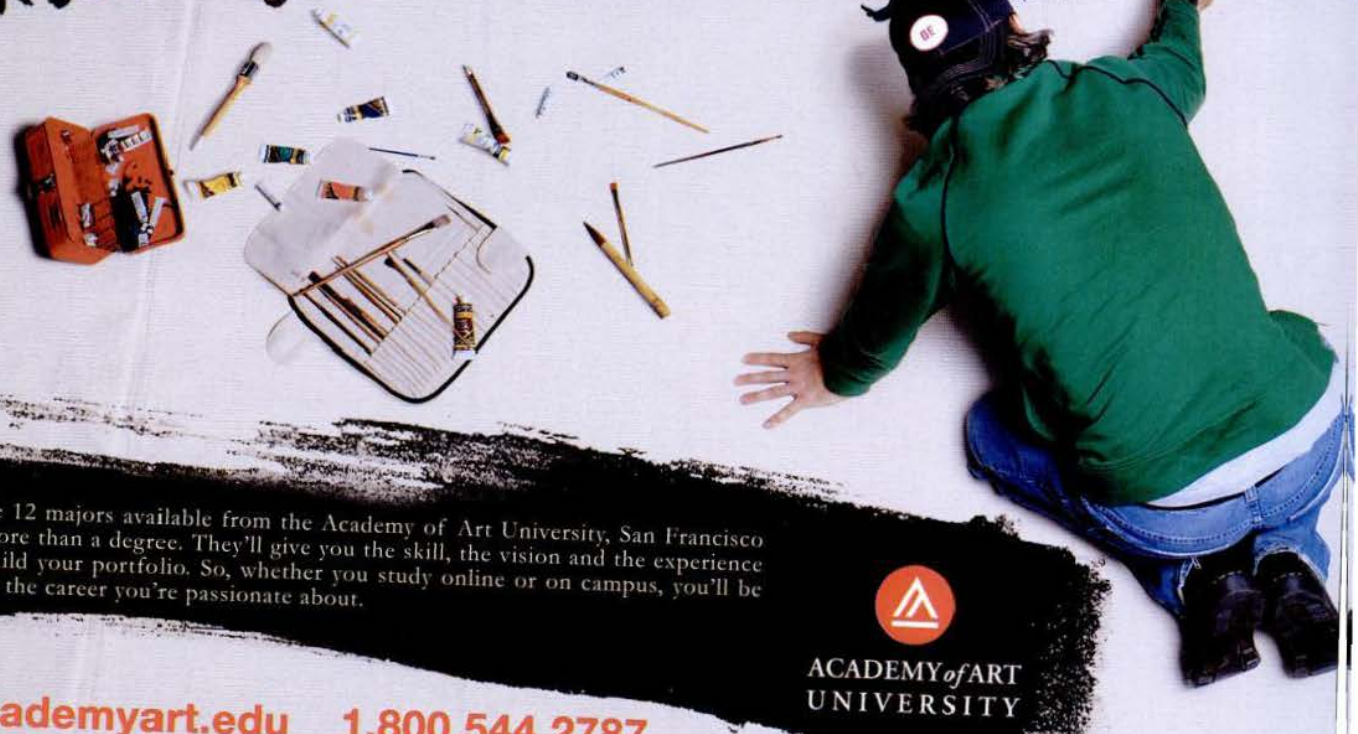

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While there exist a number of books dedicated exclusively to a type of furniture—*Living with Modern Classics: The Light* or *Chairs*, for example—the coffee table may be the only piece of furniture to have inspired a genre of book. Despite this singular achievement, the coffee table endures a much maligned existence. Neither grand enough for dining nor precious enough for "occasional" use, it dwells in a lowly state of perpetual service, readily offering up a surface for all manner of clutter (though, rarely, coffee): an artillery of remotes, back issues of the *New Yorker*, or, most ignobly, smelly feet. And yet, despite its diminished stature, or perhaps because of it, the coffee table inhabits the most coveted real estate in the home, strategically placed between the sofa and the television, the Constantinople of the geopolitical living room.

We don't call it a television table, however, because the coffee table predates TV by over 60 years. It is often viewed as a hybrid of a tea table, which was popular in Britain in the late 18th century, and a sofa table, which came into fashion when low-back sofas began being favored over high-backs. The first coffee table is said to have been designed by E. W. Godwin in 1868 and later serialized by William Watt and Collinson and Lock; at 27 inches high, it was a bit lofty compared to our more dwarfish notion of the modern coffee table. The low-lying character common to most coffee tables is often attributed to Ottoman garden tea tables, as well as Japanese furnishings, which were very popular in Europe throughout the late 19th century. But it is perhaps today that we best appreciate the coffee table's low profile; instead of gathering around it to sip potables with our entourage, we are instead afforded an unimpeded, high-definition view of *Entourage*.

But all this television watching doesn't mean that today's coffee table owner is illiterate. In fact, many have made a heavy investment in coffee table books. These tomes—large in format, heavy on pictures, light on written content—afford a breezy foray into cultural matters and can be digested intermittently. Some of the more edifying books may even be worth more than the table. Which is why we asked Angelika Taschen to tell us which, if any, of our selection of coffee tables would be fit to hold one of her invaluable volumes.

A Note on Our Expert: Angelika Taschen got her doctorate in art history from the University of Heidelberg in 1986. She has edited for Taschen since 1987, publishing numerous titles on architecture, photography, design, and contemporary art. "Now everybody is interested in design, but 20 years ago this was something very elitist, and not many people were into it," explains Taschen. "I did this Bauhaus book [*Best of Bauhaus: An In-Depth Study of the Seminal Movement in Art and Architecture*] about furniture design in the 20th century, which is a great book—we still reprint it." She conceived Taschen's Interiors series in 1993 and the Country Houses series in 1999.

Tisch for Taschen

Whether it's a place to rest your saucers or your sneakers, the coffee table is the workhorse of the most leisurely room in the house, so you might as well make it work with your décor.

U Trek coffee table by Niels Bendtsen / $1,350–$1,450 / www.propellermodern.com / 41.5" x 41.5" x 11"

Expert Opinion: As a book person, I should really love [this] table because I think you can put your books or magazines underneath and still have space for whatever else—glasses, cups, flowerpots, whatever. It's very practical. You'd have to decorate [your stuff] because it's so visible. I like straight-forward things like the Mies van der Rohe or Kjærholm [coffee tables], but this one is a little too practical.

What We Think: We were attracted to this table by its subtlety and its ability to showcase our copy of *Albertus Seba: Cabinet of Natural Curiosities*. While it does require tidiness (and Windex), its straightforward, unostentatious approach is desirable, and the option of stacking your books or magazines underneath is a plus. Taschen does have a point, however: You will have to think about presentation, because the cubby is fully visible, and does not make for the most clandestine stashing place. ▶

Breeze table by Monica Förster for Swedese / $1,295 / www.swedese.com / 31.5" x 16.25"

Expert Opinion: This table is too crazy for me; I don't understand the ripple. What is it for? This is a problem. I'm the old German: Form follows function. It's not my cup of tea.

What We Think: It's true that there's no functional purpose to Forster's flourish, but it does offer a unique take on the tradition of bent wood in Scandinavian modern design. Also, we are big fans of the Swedish manufacturer's commitment to sustainability, and apparently the Swedish government is as well: The company was awarded the ISO 14001 certificate in 2002 for its commitment to making its manufacturing processes more environmentally sound. While this piece may not be as refined as some of the other tables, it embodies a younger generation's more whimsical aesthetic and environmental conscientiousness.

Low table by Warren Platner / $1,866 and $2,446 / www.knoll.com / 36" x 15.25" and 42.25" x 15.25"

Expert Opinion: I cannot explain why, but this one is my favorite. I love it. I like the glass on top, its transparency. I think it goes with almost any furniture. It's very strange. I had this table in our house in Los Angeles, with Arne Jacobsen and Pierre Paulin [chairs]. We didn't even put the Platner chairs with it, and it still looked good. I don't know why it's so beautiful. The optical effect: It's like Op art with its fine lines that start to move and blur. It's very elegant. I like the round shape of it. The coffee table [form] is especially nice. It's classic, but it's not too simple. It's one of my favorite pieces of all time. I just like to have it around me.

What We Think: What's amazing about this table is that it is so distinct and yet, as Taschen says, it goes with anything. But also, with the Platner chairs surrounding it, the ensemble still manages to be mutable; it's not overwhelming. We agree with Taschen: Out of all the mid-century classics, the Platner is our favorite.

Osorom by Konstantin Grcic for Moroso / $1,673 / www.moroso.it / 46.8" x 13.7"

Expert Opinion: It's a seating product and I cannot see how you'd use it as a table, because a glass would fall inside and a lamp would [wobble]; it wouldn't be stable. But I think that the form is really beautiful; it's like a sculpture in the room. I like the transparency of it. If you don't need to use it, and you just put, say, a magazine on it, then it's nice. But it would not work as a table.

What We Think: Since we're likely to kick over a glass anyway, we can't help but throw caution to the wind with this table/seating element. Grcic was able to be both delicate and substantive at once, and this table would hold up well to a shod foot. If space and seating is an issue, it could double as a chair, which is useful in both small apartments and lounging areas. ▶

DEJA VU chair - ACTION table

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Low Slab table by Tom Dixon / $1,050–$1,290 / www.tomdixon.net / 23.6" x 63.8" x 12.2" and 31" x 38.6" x 12.2"

Expert Opinion: It's a little retro-looking, which I don't like so much. I think it probably goes well with many apartments and modernist furniture. It's a clever idea to make one big table that you can take apart and spread [around] in the room—I think it's the new trend, that you don't have just one corner, but you have several points with various chairs spread in the room. I think for that, it's a really nice table.

What We Think: For those who have enough trouble committing to one table, Dixon's multipiece set might be a bit overwhelming. Luckily, the material and form are quite subdued, allowing it to be paired effortlessly with a variety of furniture. The multiplicity of this piece makes it adaptable despite the threat of its aesthetic obsolescence.

Eames Elliptical table by Charles and Ray Eames / $599 / www.dwr.com / 29.5" x 89" x 10"

Expert Opinion: This is another classic that will, for me, always be beautiful. And it goes with any furniture. I have a sofa from Shabby Chic, and in front of this romantic sofa, I have this Eames table, and it works—it's very strange! You could put it in front of antique furniture, and it makes them look more refined, and the proportions are really beautiful. And I like the legs. I like the construction. It doesn't have the standard four legs, but it has this interesting wire frame construction. Maybe it's the same with the Platner—maybe they are beautiful because they don't have normal legs.

What We Think: Like the Platner, the Eames is a classic for the strength and timelessness of the design. That said, we would take the Platner over the Eames any day. Perhaps this is because all things Eames are starting to have the "Impressionist syndrome," where they seem less special due to ubiquity, like a Renoir or a Monet print. While this table is a classic, it might need to be shelved for a while for us to really get behind it again.

Plate table by Jasper Morrison for Vitra / $1,285 (medium-density fiberboard); $1,590 (marble) / www.vitra.com / 19.75" x 39.25" x 14.25"

Expert Opinion: I love [Morrison's] minimal, intellectual, and conceptual approach. I think this table is pretty great. It's a great contemporary version of the Mies van der Rohe or the Florence Knoll tables. It's really beautiful in its simplicity—here it really works. Here the simplicity has elegance and the conceptual idea about this table is much more sophisticated; it's much more deep and thought-through. You can see that Jasper Morrison is really just a great designer, when you look at this table. It will be a classic. You will still like it 50 years from now—I'm sure about that.

What We Think: Unlike the U Trek by Bendtsen, the simplicity of this table will never be trumped by the objects laid upon it. The choice of material and form give this piece an ultra-refined feel. We imagine that it could look equally elegant in a tony town-house or a claustrophobic condo. ■

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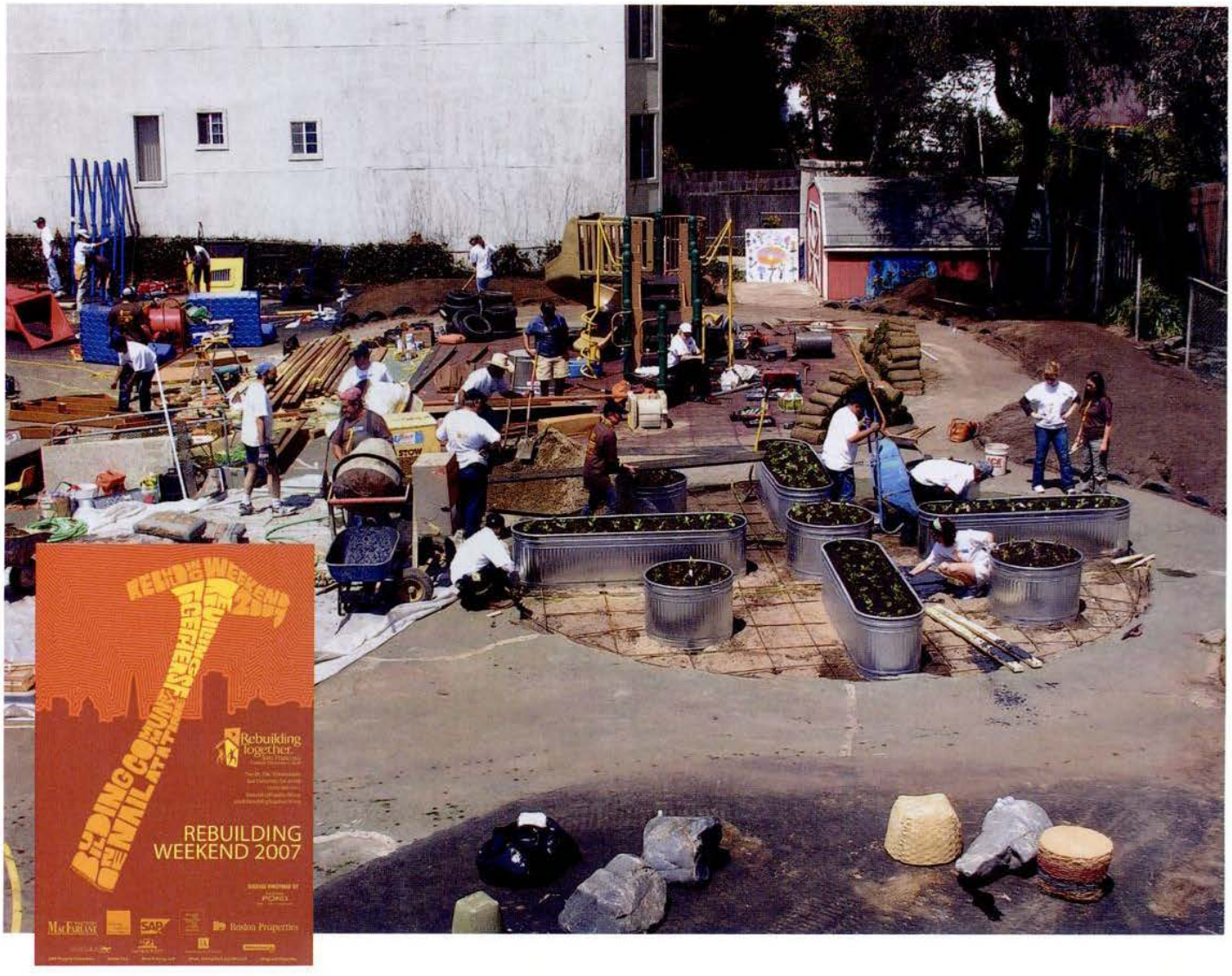

Figuring out what Rebuilding Together does isn't difficult. The nonprofit organization, originally known as Christmas in April, provides free home repair and renovation programs for low-income, elderly, and disabled people. What is confounding, however, is how much this small organization, with just five employees, can accomplish with so few resources.

The tiny staff at the San Francisco affiliate of Rebuilding Together—which was founded after the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989—coordinates and works on the rehabilitation of more than 20 homes and roughly the same number of nonprofit facilities on one overwhelming, hectic weekend every April. Other volunteer programs they run throughout the year help another 200 vulnerable households find the necessary resources and manpower to make homes safer and more livable.

Rebuilding program managers receive daily requests for renovations that facilitate crucial needs, as well as provide essential peace of mind, offering assistance to sons and daughters whose parent is recovering from an illness, bringing underprivileged families' homes up to code, or updating a dilapidated local library.

It turns out Rebuilding Together does more than just secure funding for restorations and provide the necessary volunteer labor; it also brings communities together, illustrating the impact a committed group working hand-in-hand can have. Facility program manager Kat Sawyer sums up the organization's true purpose, as well as why she and her colleagues are so dedicated: "It's about trying to create the world that you want to live in." ■

Rebuilding Together volunteers undertook a makeover of Jefferson Pre-K in San Francisco this past April, one of 40 such projects. In addition to revamping the playground, the team of volunteers (in league with some professionals, including Seam Studios Landscape and Design and Swinerton Construction) also worked on the interior.

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The Condo Generation

At Gardner 1050, a ten-unit condo complex in West Hollywood, the developer and architect aimed for the level of detail and design inventiveness one might find in a custom-designed single-family house. The U-shaped building with shared central courtyard has an external staircase encased in Profilit glass; the units are clad in painted cement board and cedar rainscreen.

Stan Bochniak was raised in the planned suburban middle-class community of Thousand Oaks, located 30 miles northwest of Los Angeles. This was quintessential postwar Southern California living: a single-family tract home with a large yard, a two-car garage, and a short drive to the nearest store. "It was meant to be neighborly," he says, "but it was actually very isolating." So when he bought a home recently, Bochniak, a regional manager for a parking management company, chose the opposite: a condo in the heart of busy, walkable West Hollywood. It is a home, he says, where residents meet in the common courtyard: "Sometimes you are standing on the catwalk on the top level and talking to a person on the lower one, and everybody's door faces each other."

Bochniak's condo is in a complex of ten units on West Hollywood's Gardner Avenue, designed in a distinctly modern spirit by Lorcan O'Herlihy for the boutique developer Richard Loring and his company, Habitat Group. "I love the aesthetic of the design," says Bochniak. "It's not just a cheesy, cookie-cutter Spanish-style knockoff." The units range from 1,200 to 1,700 square feet and feature flowing, unfussy interior spaces with ten-foot ceilings. They also have 120-square-foot balconies and double layers of drywall to enhance acoustic separation, and share a striking exterior of rain wood screen over VaproShield waterproofng with an outside stairwell encased in Profilit glass. "Quite frankly," says Bochniak, "for what I paid for the place I could have gone to the Valley and bought a house with a pool, but I didn't want that. Part of the reason our generation moves here is because they crave the interaction."

Bochniak is one of thousands in L.A. who are now buying condos in multifamily complexes instead of single-family homes, and contributing, sale by sale, to a major change in the urban form and identity of Los Angeles—from sprawling and horizontal to higher and denser.

For some, like Bochniak, the reason is social. For others it is about security—those who travel have neighbors ▸

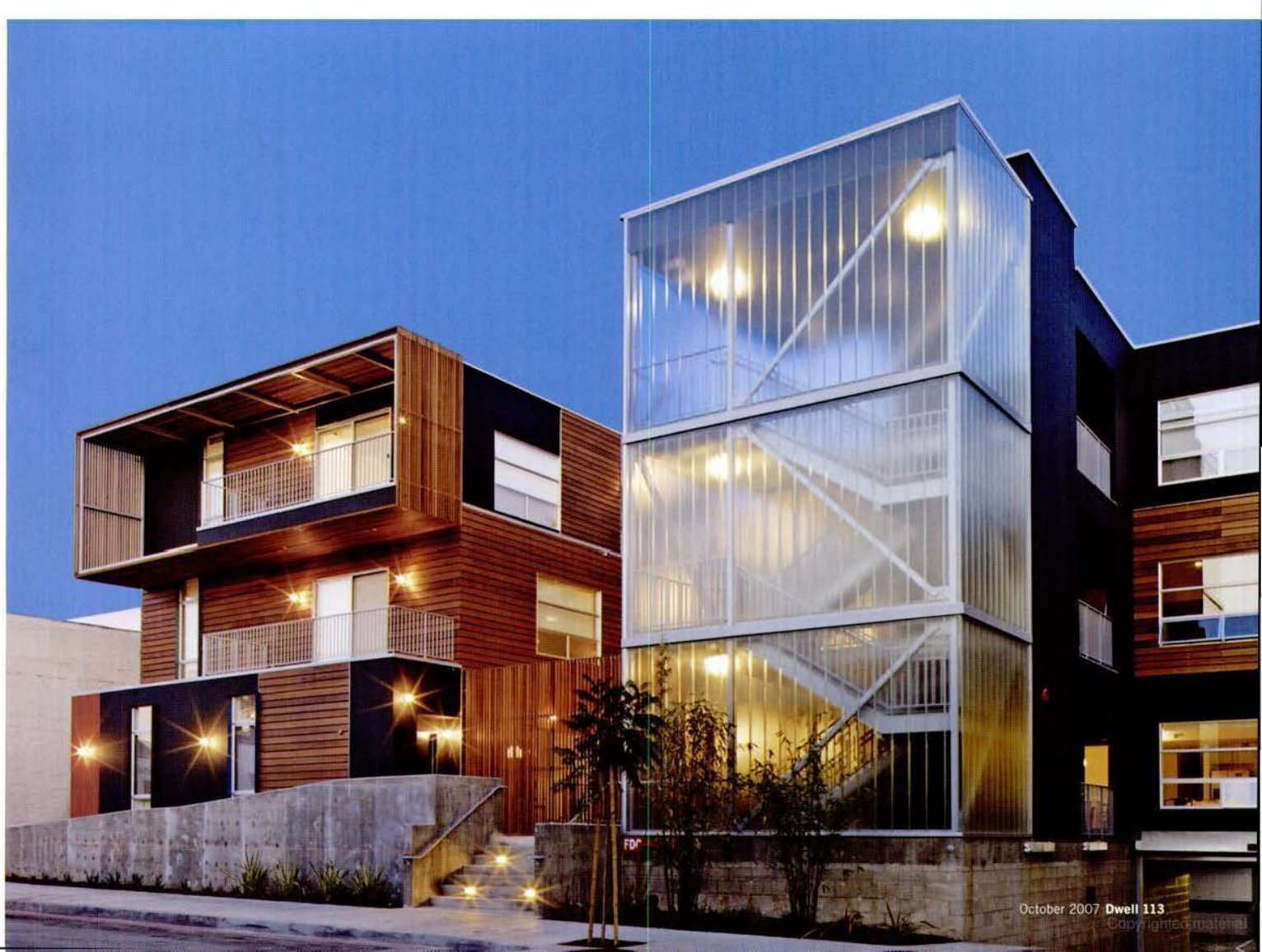


PHOTO BY LAWRENCE ANDERSON

Residents can enjoy each other's company on the bridges that crisscross above the courtyard of Gardner 1050 (above left). Habitat 825 (above right) is a 19-unit condo building in West Hollywood, shown here in renderings. Completed in summer 2007, the complex consists of two interlocking L-shaped buildings, with units that cantilever out over a landscaped public space.

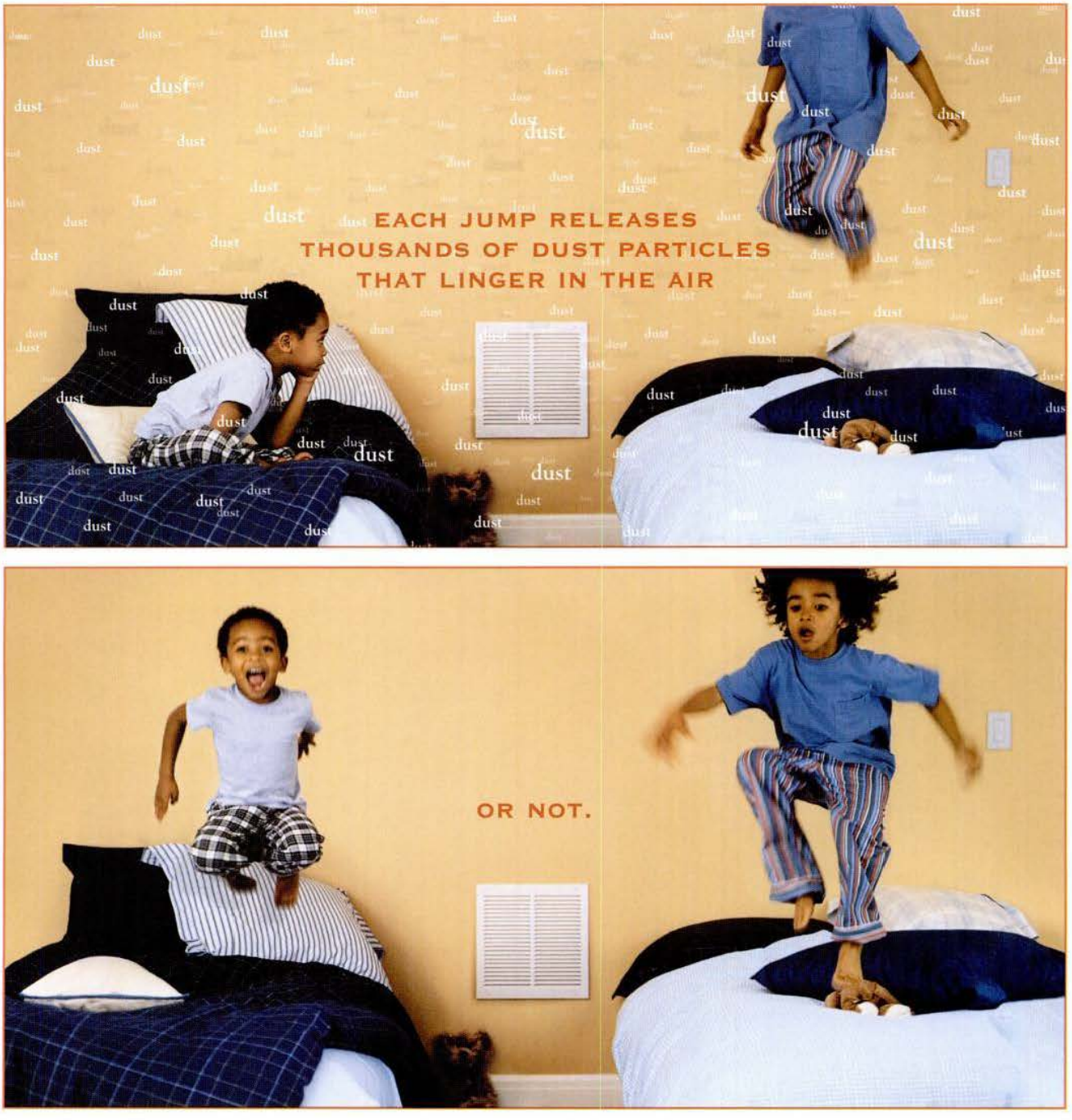
who will keep an eye out, feed pets, and pick up mail—or a hassle-free lifestyle. "I owned a single-family home, and now I don't want to spend my weekends manicuring the yard," says Gary Reichard, an administrator in the Cal State University Chancellor's Office, who is about to move into Habitat 825, another condo complex created by O'Herlihy and Loring. This one is on Kings Road, right next door to the iconic Schindler House.

Conveniences aside, the major reason for buying a condo is financial. Land and construction costs are now so high in Los Angeles that a single-family home is simply unaffordable. A friend who was recently bemoaning house prices ruefully described himself as being part of the "condo generation"—the first generation in the L.A. basin who will not be able to own a house. Kate Bartolo is a senior vice president for the Kor Group, a company that started out building boutique hotels and is now producing condo complexes. Having previously worked on housing policy, she confirms his perception: "The single-family home [in major metropolitan areas] is pretty much out of reach for all first-time home buyers. You have a whole market segment that may never transition to single-family homes, so you have to think of condos in a different way—as homes."

And the evidence of this shift? Thousands of condos are going up all over L.A. Such a large number of these have been converted from rentals in existing buildings that a city council member recently called for a moratorium on condo conversions to try and staunch the loss of homes for the next generation of renters who will never even be able to afford condos. Other condos are in converted industrial buildings or complexes being built from the ground up. Among these are some that offer an added attraction: great design.

L.A. has recently seen the emergence of a number of striking multifamily condo buildings, like the Gardner 1050 project. They are often constructed by savvy developers who recognize that today's condo generation ▸

PHOTO BY LAWRENCE ANDERSON. RENDERINGS COURTESY LORCAN O'HERLIHY ARCHITECTS



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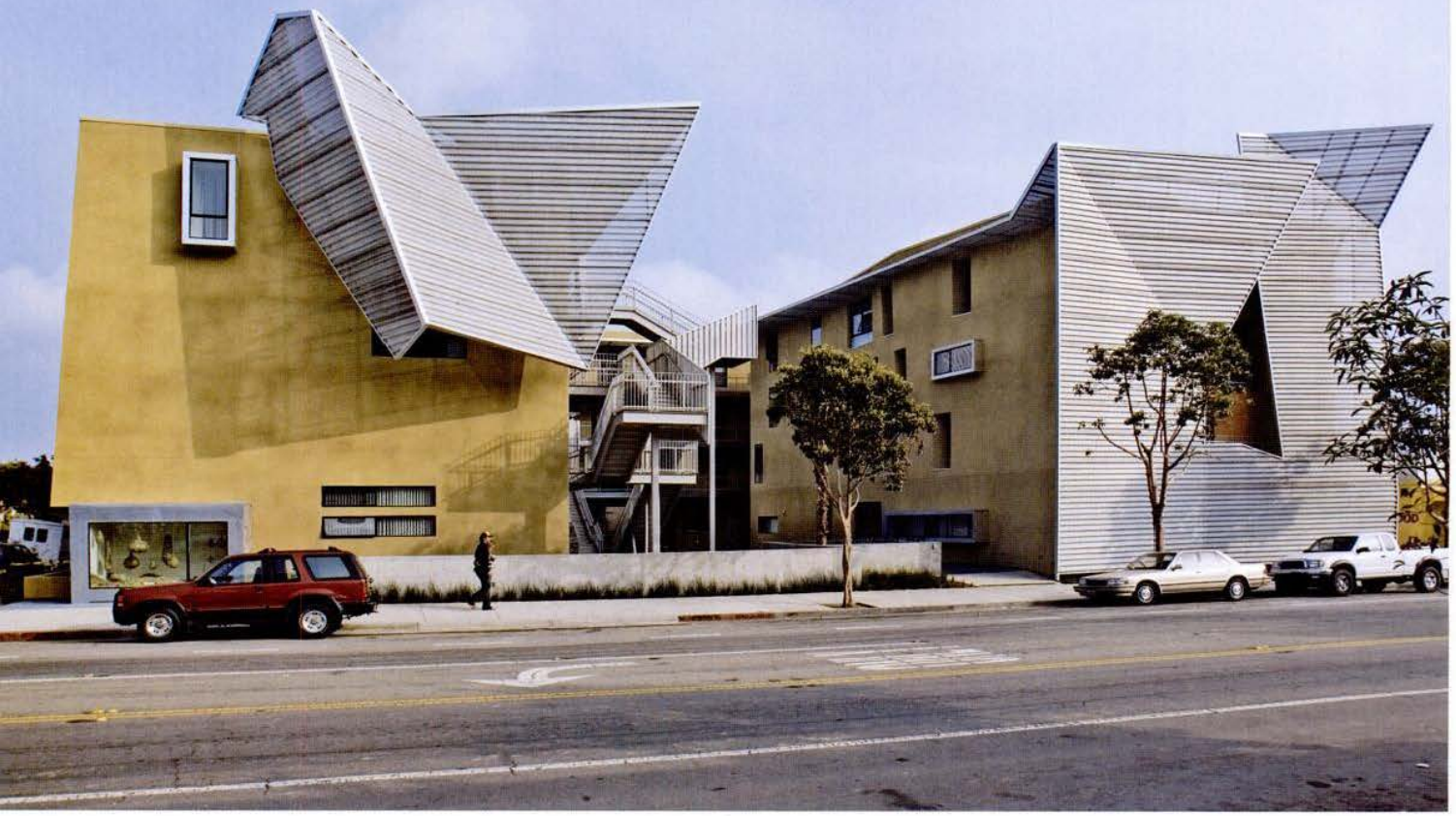
Another Los Angeles architecture firm, Pugh+Scarpa, is designing some striking multifamily rental and condo buildings. 15th and Broadway (top) was built on a commercial strip by Community Corporation of Santa Monica, a nonprofit developer that supports good design. It contains 41 rental units for households earning between $25,000 and $45,000 a year. Fuller Lofts (bottom), in a disused paint company, offers a mix of ground-floor commercial, subsidized, affordable rental units, and penthouse condos.



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leans toward well-designed, clutter-free domestic space. These are nothing like the poky dingbat apartment buildings of yore. These have the class of old Hollywood apartment buildings and the design and planning reminiscent of mid-century modernism.

John Chase is the urban designer for the City of West Hollywood and helped shepherd the Gardner 1050 project to fruition. "When I first started in this job 12 years ago," he says, "we weren't getting the caliber of projects we are now. They come out of a vision for a life lived in fully realized architecture in which every aspect of the design—from the relationship of outside to inside and the way the light comes in to the height of the ceiling—works together." Or, as Jonathan Barnett, an interior designer and Gardner 1050 resident, puts it, "We've been inundated with great modern furniture and finally we have the correct palette to display it."

Some condos take the form of lofts in adapted commercial buildings, as in the Eastern Columbia Lofts ▸

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AK Live/Work (above) is a mix of seven high-end condos over five commercial spaces. The architect, Michael Sant, was initially asked to build a single-family house on the prime corner site on the trendy high street Abbot Kinney Boulevard. He refused, saying that the project would cut off life on a pedestrian street, and ended up developing the property himself. He brought light into the narrow plots with light wells and courtyards.

by the Kor Group or the Toy and Biscuit Factory Lofts by Linear City, both in downtown and both featuring communal rooftop gardens with stunning views. Some are infill projects on tight sites, like the Gardner and Kings Road projects; others, like the Kor Group's new Sunset Silver Lake project, are set on difficult sites near main roads. Some mix housing and shops or offices on commercial strips, like a complex of stark-white, cube-like, high-end condos designed and developed by architect Michael Sant on Abbot Kinney Boulevard, Venice's once boho, now bobo main street. Then there are the Fuller Lofts, in an industrial area near a Gold Line metro station in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood. Designed by Pugh+Scarpa Architects, the lofts consist of 80 live/work condos in the concrete Fuller Paint Building, with commercial units on the ground floor and basement level. Fuller Lofts, due to be completed in January 2008, was developed by a company called Livable Places, and promises a mix of market rate and subsidized affordable condos, starting at a minimum of mid-$200,000s, and averaging $425,000. Depending on quality and location, a typical L.A. condo will run you anywhere from $400,000 to more than $1 million. At that price, even condos are out of reach for many.

On one hand, these condo developments, especially the well-designed ones, bring a welcome and potentially more sustainable urban lifestyle to L.A., as they are predicated on smart-growth ideas of locating homes near work or mass transit. In reality, though, most condo dwellers are still car-dependent (most developments require about the same amount of parking for residents as single-family properties). And the mass-transit systems promised by planners are not keeping pace with the booming residential construction. So the L.A. region is transforming, before our eyes, from a spread-out, spacious, if isolating place to a highly congested, urban-suburban hybrid. But with the endless demand for L.A. housing, like it or not, this is the only way forward. ■

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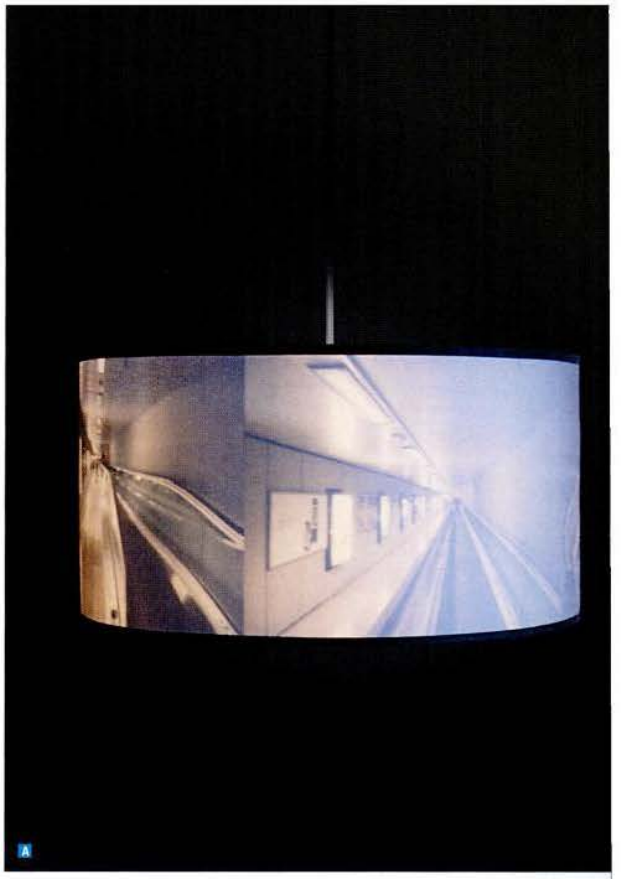
Story by Michael Cannell

Brooklyn Designs

As the profile of Brooklyn's design scene has risen, so too has its homegrown showcase. Since it began four years ago, Brooklyn Designs, held in May, has more than doubled in size, and a distinctive style—defiant and crafty—has emerged. What began as a grassroots affair is now the unofficial warm-up to, and sometimes preview of, the International Contemporary Furniture Fair.



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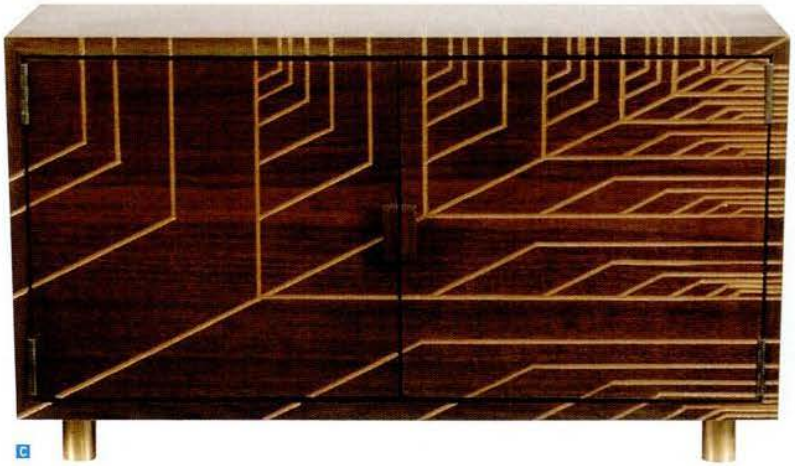

C

A Airport by Andrea Claire
www.andreaclaire.net

The show's most ethereal touch came from Andrea Claire, who superimposes photographs onto large pendant lamps. In the past she has concentrated on pastoral scenes. This year she has moved on to cemeteries, subways, and in this case, the ubiquitous airport walkway.

B Clara coffee table
by Palo Samko
www.palosamko.com

You'd never guess by looking, but the fine woodwork of Palo Samko is fashioned from scrap. His Clara coffee table, for example, is made from discarded walnut, a perfect perch for a pair of birds carved from cast-off lumber.

C Virus by Elucidesign
www.elucidesign.com

The matrix-like graphics etched across the face of this otherwise understated walnut desktop cabinet suggest a creeping computer virus. A compartment clad in copper sheets, with a handle of braided wire, is hidden like a motherboard inside its double doors. ▶

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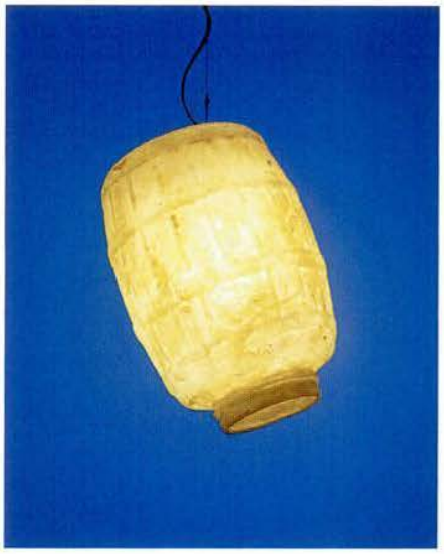


D

A Nymph
by Site Specific Design
www.sitespecificdesign.com

The Nymph is not a movie prop. It's a lamp. A bug lamp. Based on designer Rui Docouto's recollections of growing up in the Azores, it is made of molded fiberglass and epoxy, with compact fluorescent lights and steel legs.

B Uffizi by Argington
www.argington.com

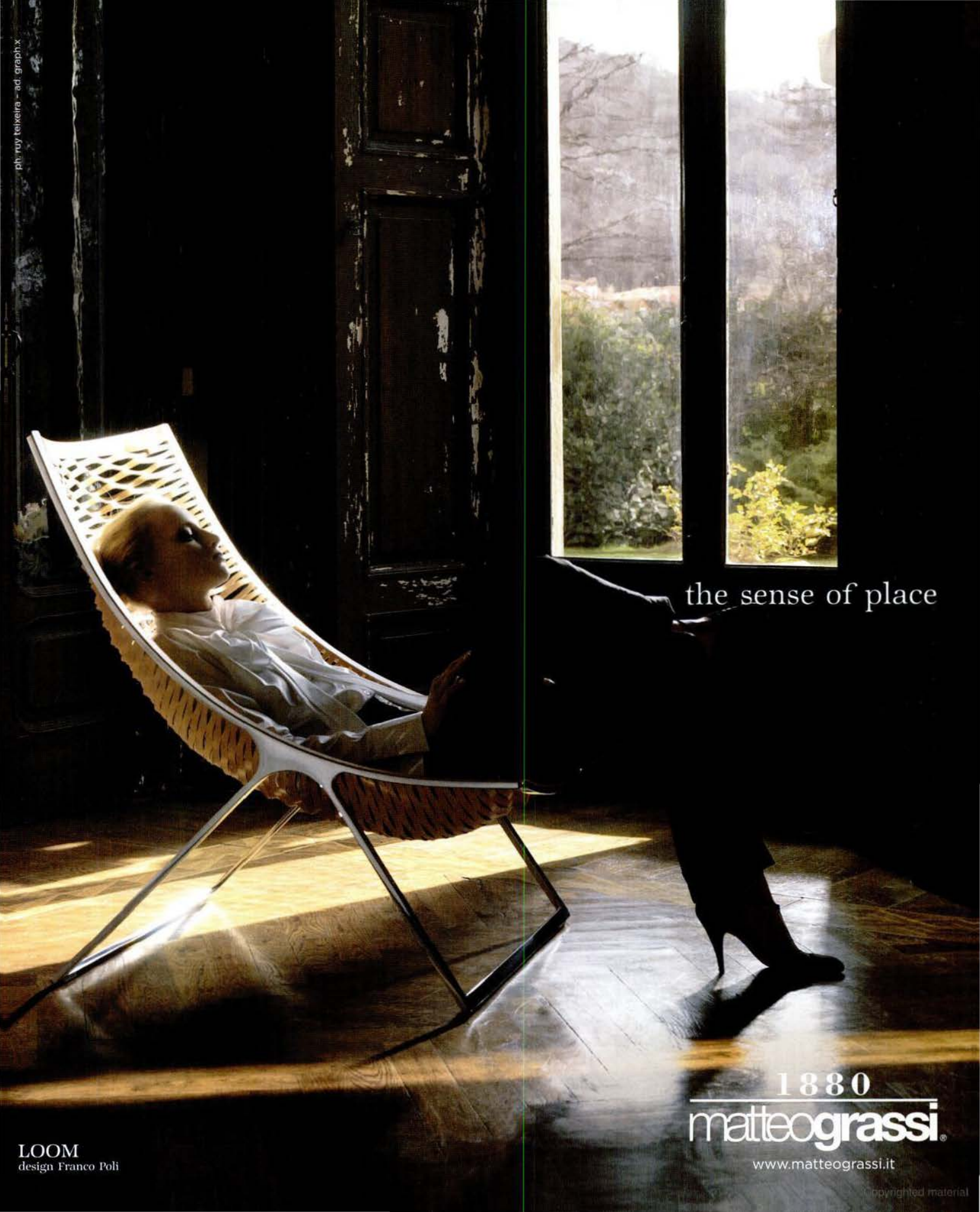
Got twins? The latest addition to Argington's growing line of children's furniture is a two-toned bunk bed with a cantilevered upper bunk. It was designed to feel like a child's playhouse (the lower bunk features windowlike cutouts), but is named after the famed museum. Titian not included.

C Hollow dining chair
by Brave Space Design
www.bravespacedesign.com

Brave Space lives up to its motto—"made green in Brooklyn"—with the Hollow dining chair. The negative spaces below and semicircular cutaways on the seat and backrest of this sustainable bamboo chair add comfort while reducing material.

D Honey Jar lamp
by Nicholas Furrow Design
www.nicholasfurrow.net

Nicholas Furrow makes lamps from ordinary kitchen objects, like this glass jar covered with beeswax. As the lamp heats up, it gives off the sweet aroma of honey. It was the only pendant lamp at Brooklyn Designs that smelled as good as it looked. ▶



Story by Sam Grawe

ICFF

Hot on the footsteps of the marathon that is Milan, New York's ICFF seems more like a Sunday afternoon stroll through the Ramble. While the scale may be smaller, the excitement factor was high—as design enthusiasts buzzed from the Javitz Center to showroom parties in SoHo to a rowdy Meatpacking District. After a day spent conferring with a round table of editors on the show's Editor's Awards, we had the opportunity to make our own picks.

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A Utility by Deborah Bowness
www.deborahbowness.com

At this year's ICFF there were more wallpapers than you could shake a seam roller at. The standout was by London's Deborah Bowness, who exhibited a range of handmade trompe l'oeil papers. Utility comes from her Ready-Made collection, and offers up a range of 2-D faux furnishings for your 3-D space.

B Real Good chair by Blu Dot
www.bludot.com

What's not to love about a well-designed, comfortable chair that costs about $100 and comes to your door in a flat box? The Real Good chair, which is available in the red shown here or white, black, and powder blue, is exactly that—and a welcome alternative to the ubiquitous Eames fiberglass shell chair.

C TransNeomatic by the Campana Brothers for Artecnica
www.artecnicainc.com

Artecnica's impressive Design With Conscience collection expands with a series of trays that put one of Vietnam's biggest landfillers (and polluters), the moped tire, to reuse, and creates a product rife with contrasts (handmade vs. industrial, movement vs. stillness) in the process. ▶

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ICFF

Council

If Council were a baseball player, they'd hit for the cycle in their major league debut. The brand-new San Francisco–based company made their first appearance at ICFF with an exciting collection of work by a cadre of skilled international designers.

A System 24 by Khodi Feiz for Council
www.councildesign.com

Here's an example of good design that's on the bevel. Amsterdam-based Khodi Feiz debuted this system in bamboo at Zona Tortona in Milan, but here Council offers the modular shelving (you can combine the basic units in any number of ways) in an array of natural woods or high-gloss finishes.

B Section by Derek Chen for Council
www.councildesign.com

Presumably the section in question is the one created by the diagonal slice through this hollow seating or storage element. Available in a broad range of finishes, including wood, stainless steel, powder coats, or upholstery, Section has almost as many material options as uses.

C Geo low tables by Arik Levy for Council
www.councildesign.com

Available in a trio of sizes and an attractive range of colors or wood veneers, these angular tables could form a veritable brutalist archipelago in your living room. We were particularly drawn to the tab-like legs (a little like geometric paper doll clothing) which each face a different direction.

D Mute chair by Mike and Maaike for Council
www.councildesign.com

Although it reminds us slightly of Ora Ito's Petal chaise for Cappellini, we couldn't help but be enamored with the subtle Mute chair—the perfect seat for those of us who prefer to turn the volume all the way down during a commercial break. A matching ottoman is also available. ▶

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ICFF

Hida

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In Japan, sugi, a fast-growing cypress, was used for reforesting devastated areas after World War II. A soft wood rife with knots, the sugi had not traditionally been used for furniture until Hida perfected a three-dimensional compression technique. The traditional manufacturer invited Italian design whiz Enzo Mari to design this playful collection, which made its U.S. debut at the ICFF.

A Carso EM190SO by Enzo Mari for Hida
www.em-hida.jp

Perhaps the most traditionally Japanese piece in Mari's collection is Carso EM190SO, a floor-height "sofa" that inspires the immediate removal of footwear and starts our stomachs rumbling for agedashi tofu and zaru soba. As with all Hida's pieces, the silken texture of the compressed sugi, is itself rather mouthwatering.

B Carso EM316L by Enzo Mari for Hida
www.em-hida.jp

The exquisite handicraft of the veneer inlay on this low table helped Hida earn the Editor's Award for craftsmanship. The whale surfacing among knotty whirlpools of sugi was a little bit much at first (Carvel's Fudgie?), but is steadily growing on us. However, the tapered, bottle-like legs, charmed us from the get-go.

C Piave, Naviglio, and Tevere by Enzo Mari for Hida
www.em-hida.jp

Mari created six different seats in his collection (in addition to two Western-height dining tables). The chairs have a certain endearing wonkiness, as though they were tested by a focus group from a local preschool. And, as one blog noted, Piave (on the far left) is remarkably similar to a toilet seat. ▶

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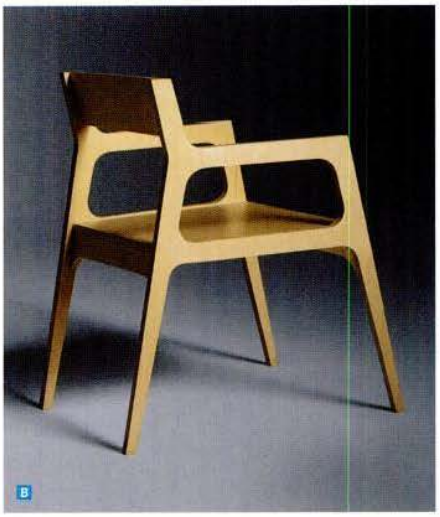

B

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A A_Stool by Jonathan Nesci for Hale
www.halefurn.com

Jonathan Nesci, who handles some of the 20th century's finest objects and furnishings in the property department of Wright Auction House in Chicago, presented a strong collection of work. His pieces, such as the A_Stool, are all crafted from powder-coated aluminum, and share a similar, no-B.S. aesthetic.

B Deer by Autoban for De La Espada
www.delaespada.com

While the design world tends to think of Rudolph as Paul, this chair's delicate legs were inspired by the red-nosed one with antlers. One of the 11 products in the Autoban Built By De La Espada range, Deer is neither conservative nor outlandish—but a piece that would feel right at home just about anywhere.

C Lizz by Piero Lissoni for Kartell
www.kartell.com

Although these chairs debuted in Milan, we editors bestowed Kartell with the ICFF's Body of Work award, and this editor thought Lizz was their strongest single work. The streamlined design is created in one single piece with gas-blowing technology. It's available in eight colors, in either a glossy or matte format. ▶

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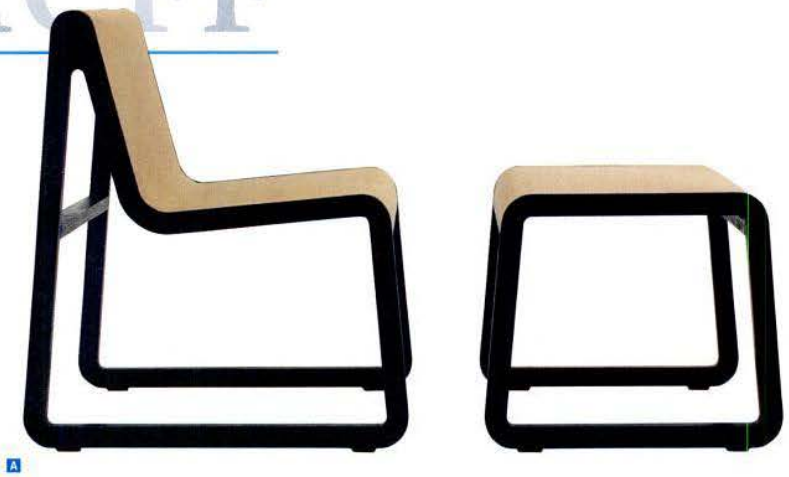

A

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A Cork Lounge by Nick Tretiak
www.tretiak.net

The well-rounded and easy-going Cork lounge was exhibited as part of the ICFF Studio with Bernhardt Design (an area that showcased the work of a select crop of young designers). The chair's design hinges on the contours of the cork veneer, and the results are completely bulletin board–worthy.

B One For All
by Christiane Högner
www.christianehoegner.com

Piled on lorries the standard European vegetable shipping pallet is nothing memorable. But housed in an elegant powder-coated-aluminum frame, the ubiquitous plastic boxes become richly textured, almost baroquely elegant drawers. A highlight from the 101% Designed in Brussels exhibit. ■

Story by Michael Cannell

MARCEL WANDERS

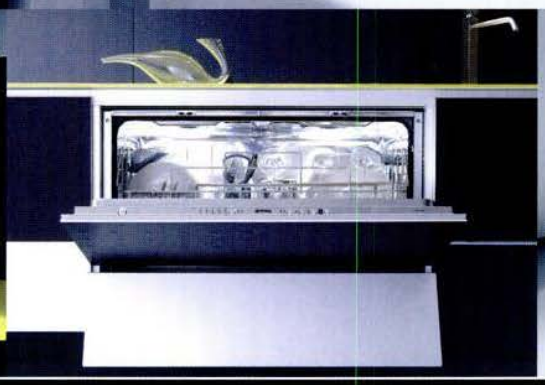
RON ARAD JAKOB WAGNER NIPA DOS HI T

RD BOONTJE

AZIZ SARIYER TOM DIXON ROSS LOVEG ROVE

FOR USE JONATHAN LEVIEN MARC NEWSON

PATRIZIA MOROSO



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Patricia Urquiola, the Spanish-born designer, was driving to the airport at 7am last May when her cell phone rang. Chatting in her animated way, despite the hour, was Patrizia Moroso, creative director of the Italian furniture company Moroso.

"Patrizia is like my sister. She knows she can call me at any hour," Urquiola says. "We're like best friends. I say this with my hand on my heart: I always want to give her my best effort."

Patrizia Moroso, 52, runs her business with an emphasis on just that kind of infectious partnership. Twenty-one years after joining the family firm, she has transformed it from an old-line upholstery business to a forward-looking furniture label known for inventive collaborations with established designers like Ron Arad, Marcel Wanders, and Ross Lovegrove and for casting a spotlight on new innovators like Urquiola and Tord Boontje.

The Moroso booth at trade shows like the Milan furniture fair has come to be seen as a reliable place to raise a wet finger to the wind. Editors and designers head there with the expectation of finding something original, and they are rarely disappointed.

For all its sizzle, Moroso is in some ways still an old-fashioned family outfit. Patrizia's parents, Agostino and Diana, started the business as newlyweds more than 50 years ago, and they continue to be a daily presence in the Moroso factory in Udine, an hour north of Venice. After the Italian economy faltered in the late 1970s, they summoned Patrizia from art school in Bologna and installed her as creative director. (Her brother Roberto runs the business side.)

By American standards, Moroso is a mid-size manufacturer with $47 million in annual sales—half residential, half for cruise ships, hotels, and offices. Moroso's long-term ambition is to become a global design brand. With that in mind, this spring it opened its first store, a 3,800-square-foot space in New York's SoHo neighborhood designed in part by Urquiola. Called Moroso at Moss, it is another of Patrizia's highly personal collaborations, this time with Murray Moss, the most influential retailer of high design in the U.S. On the eve of Moroso's American beachhead, we asked Patrizia about family, friendship, and the female struggle in the male-dominated world of Italian furniture. ►

Patrizia Moroso, guiding light of the family furniture firm, poses with a Supernatural chair by Ross Lovegrove (top). The TV chair by Marc Newson (above). The Futton chair by Tomita Kazuhiko is upholstered in traditional kimono fabric (right).

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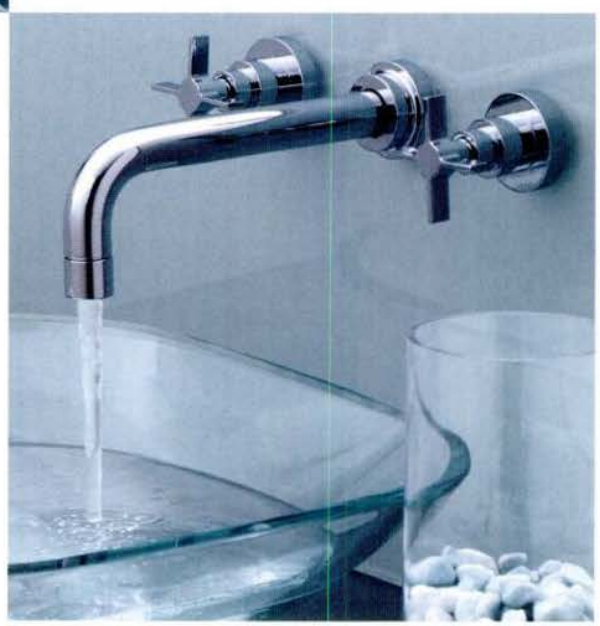

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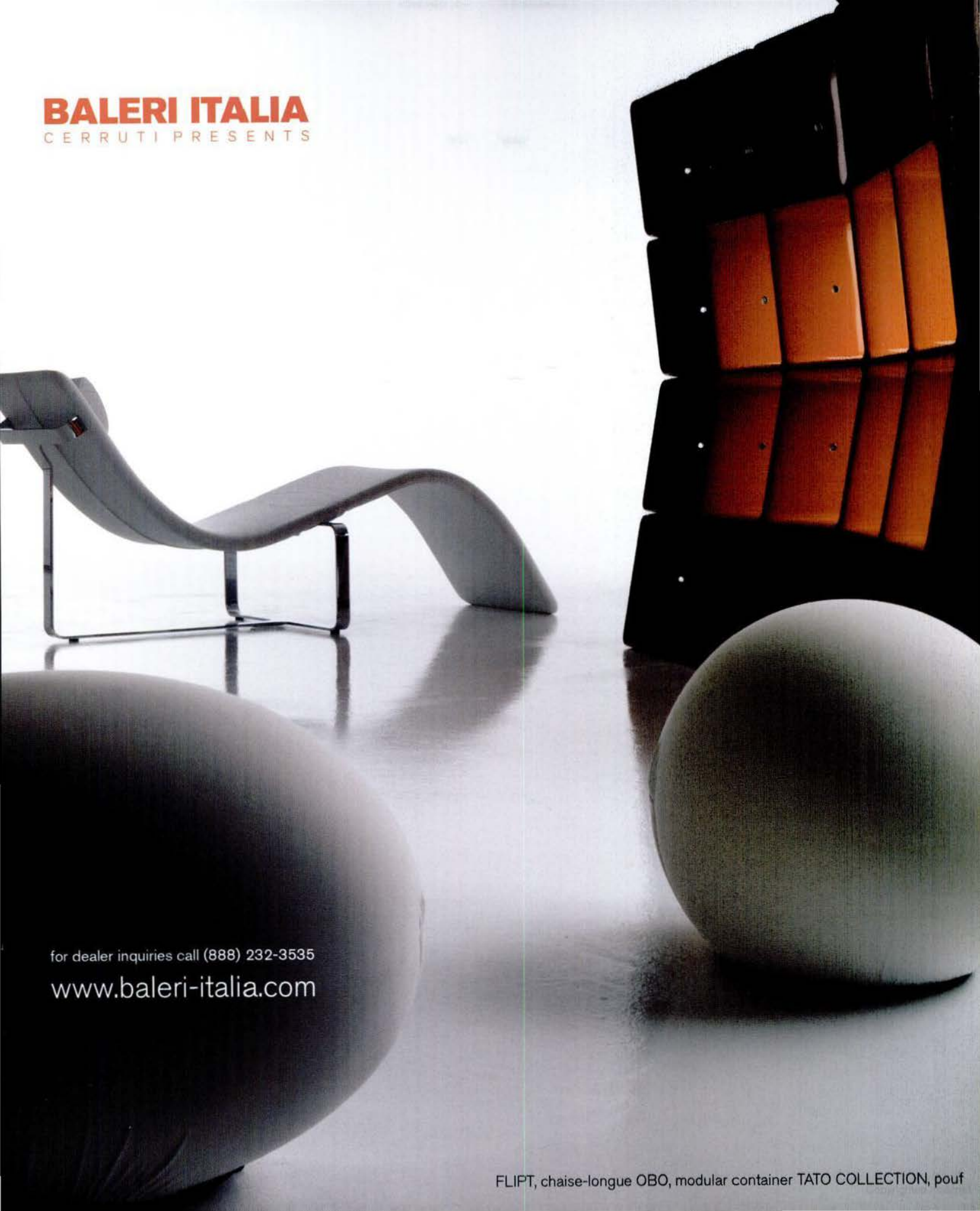
You're known for your well-attuned eye for new talent. What exactly do you look for, and how do you know when you've found it?
For me it's obvious. When I find people with a distinctive sensibility, of course I want to work with them—and I want to be friends with them too. It's not a rational thing. It's just like when you meet somebody at a party; you can tell immediately if they could possibly become a friend. In other words, the first impression is always the right impression. When a designer has a particularly personal approach—even if they don't know where they're going—I feel a kind of urgency about letting them do something. I try to help them, but of course I'm helping myself too.

You've said that you want to be a lucky charm for the designers you work with. Are you?
I love to find designers who are unknown and take them to paradise. Four years ago I found this young man, Tord Boontje, working in London. He was a little crazy, but so special and different. He had only done two things—a chandelier for Swarovski and one for Habitat. What impressed me was that the one you can buy for ten pounds was as graceful as the one dripping with crystals. I knew I had to meet him.

Your designers have pushed the boundaries of furniture in terms of form, but the Moroso line also contains elements of craft and traditional upholstery.
When you help someone cross over from another field, you know you'll create something that didn't exist before—a new baby. Often it's just a question of getting off the main highways and exploring smaller roads.

This year, for example, we worked with Nipa Doshi and Jonathan Levien, an Anglo-Indian couple who are trying to create a mixture of culture and experience. I told them I wanted the best of the West and the best of the East. The English part of their work is highly classic, and it's combined with the Indian tradition of hand embroidery. That's what I find beautiful: to put the old with the new and the new with the old. We're also working with Tomita Kazuhiko, who is designing pieces upholstered with traditional kimono fabrics that have been made in Japan for five centuries. It's another way of putting a bit of tradition into new designs. ▶

Moroso introduced these projects this year in Milan: The Volant armchair by Patricia Urquiola (top). Charpoy with traditional Indian embroidery by Nipa Doshi and Jonathan Levien (above). The modular Misfits sofa in polyurethane by Ron Arad (right). The Mikado stool by Tomita Kazuhiko (far right).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In America, the green movement is on the tip of every tongue, but there was little mention of it in Milan. Why do you think that is?
Italians are just starting to talk about it, and unfortunately we're often the last to adopt such things. I can only speak for Moroso, which is already fairly green. We were the first furniture manufacturer certified by the environmental agency of the Italian government, and we go out of our way to eliminate waste. Almost all of our fabrics are natural. The leftover fabric goes to kindergarten classrooms. All the plastic is recycled, and we're experimenting with a new material made from a mix of wood and polymers. Of course, our materials have to be not just good, but good to look at.

Before you showed Patricia Urquiola's work, there were few prominent women furniture designers. Is furniture a men's club?
You're right, but it's changing step by step. It's like architecture. The architecture schools are full of fantastic women working hard—maybe harder than the men—but the firms inevitably have men's names on the door. It's never affected me very much. I was born into a furniture family, and my parents were both involved. I don't like to manage a company with power, the way men do. I like to work in teams, and I try to be friends with the people I work with.

You're working with 34 designers from 22 countries, and your first showroom opened in New York. With this multinationalism, how does Moroso maintain its Italian identity?
Italy is still the leader in furniture production. It's a guarantee of quality, and it allows us to be near all the industry research. Italy is the starting point, but my thinking is global.

How do you feel about young designers using new technology to fabricate their own work?
It's not a bad thing; it allows them to understand more about production. It's very common in places where there aren't enough companies to produce their ideas, so designers have to do it themselves. It's changing the meaning of design. You can't produce many objects without an industry behind you. What's emerging could be called "artistic craftsmanship." Italian designers are losing a lot of that special hands-on knowledge, which is why so many Italian companies are working with foreign designers. ■

Fjord chair by Patricia Urquiola (top). The Shitake table by Marcel Wanders (above) is hollow, so it can be weighted with sand or water. Ripple chair by Ron Arad (right). Antibodi chaise by Urquiola (far right).

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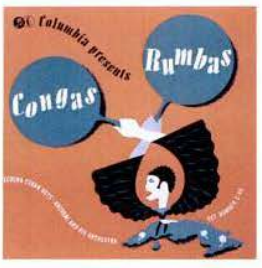
Barring a smattering of abandoned attempts by various record labels, Alex Steinweiss at Columbia Records was the first to illustrate record jackets. His 1939 design for a revue of Rodgers and Hart show tunes officially ushered in the era of album art. Many of the nearly 1,000 covers he did over his career were exemplars of 1940s and '50s design.

Jacket Required

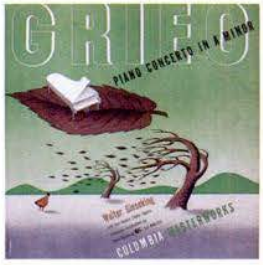
Though the Beatles are often cited as the progenitors of the album as an artistic conceit, the term's musical origin referred to the packaging of shellac 78s. Housed in paper sleeves inside an unadorned pasteboard-bound folio, a symphony could easily span four discs of the five-minutes-per-side 78s; typically only the composer's name and the title of the composition would appear on the cover. Record stores themselves didn't properly exist, as albums were sold in the "white goods" department of shops alongside refrigerators, radios, and phonographs.

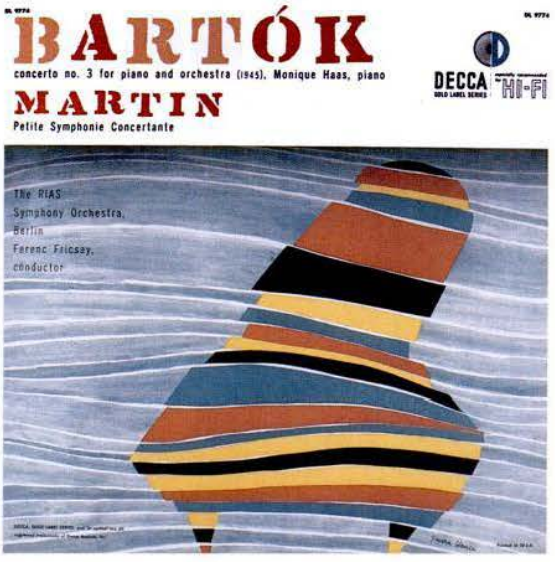
Fortunately for music fans and record execs alike, graphic designer Alex Steinweiss had an abiding love of both Gershwin, and avant-garde European posters from the 1920s and '30s, and the idea of translating his favorite music into graphic terms. After an education at what later became the Parsons School of Design in New York and a stint working under Viennese poster pioneer Joseph Binder, the 21-year-old Steinweiss signed on as artistic director at Columbia Records in 1939.

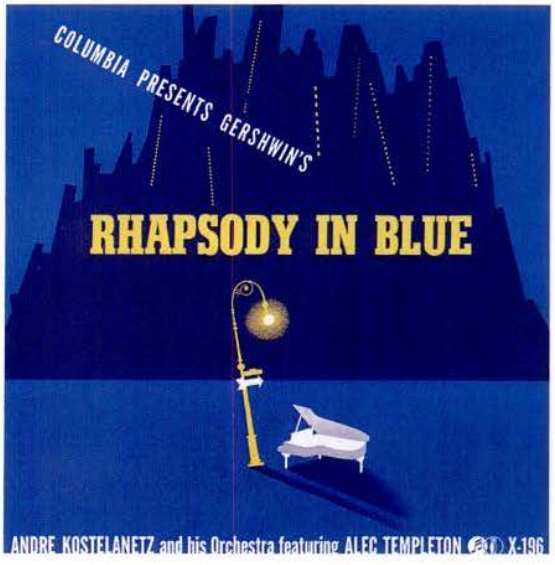
At first, Steinweiss was in charge of advertising and promotional material at Columbia, and of his early days there he says: "After several months I got disgusted with what I was doing. I realized that they weren't selling music, they were selling crappy albums." He then pressed his bosses, who initially balked at the increased cost, to allow him to design decorative, graphic covers for record albums, the first of their kind. "I offered the opportunity to do something never before done," he recounts, "to make creative album covers using principles of advanced design. They let me do five or six covers as a test, and ▸

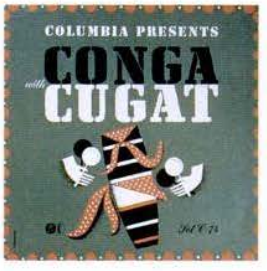


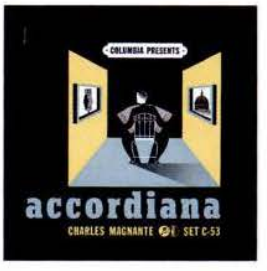
PHOTOS COURTESY PRINCETON ARCHITECTURAL PRESS / *FOR THE RECORD: THE LIFE AND WORK OF ALEX STEINWEISS* (ENTIRE STORY)

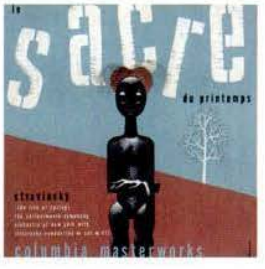


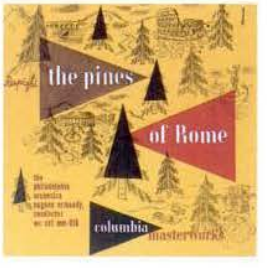












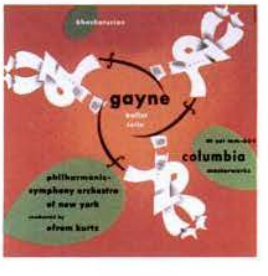
To Steinweiss's shock he and a colleague were fired from their jobs aiding Viennese poster artist Joseph Binder. Dejected, he packed up his art supplies and headed home that Friday. The next day Binder's wife called to tell him that Binder didn't have the heart to fire just one of his employees so he let them both go so as not to hurt the other man's feelings. Binder wanted Steinweiss back bright and early Monday and was sorry for the trouble.

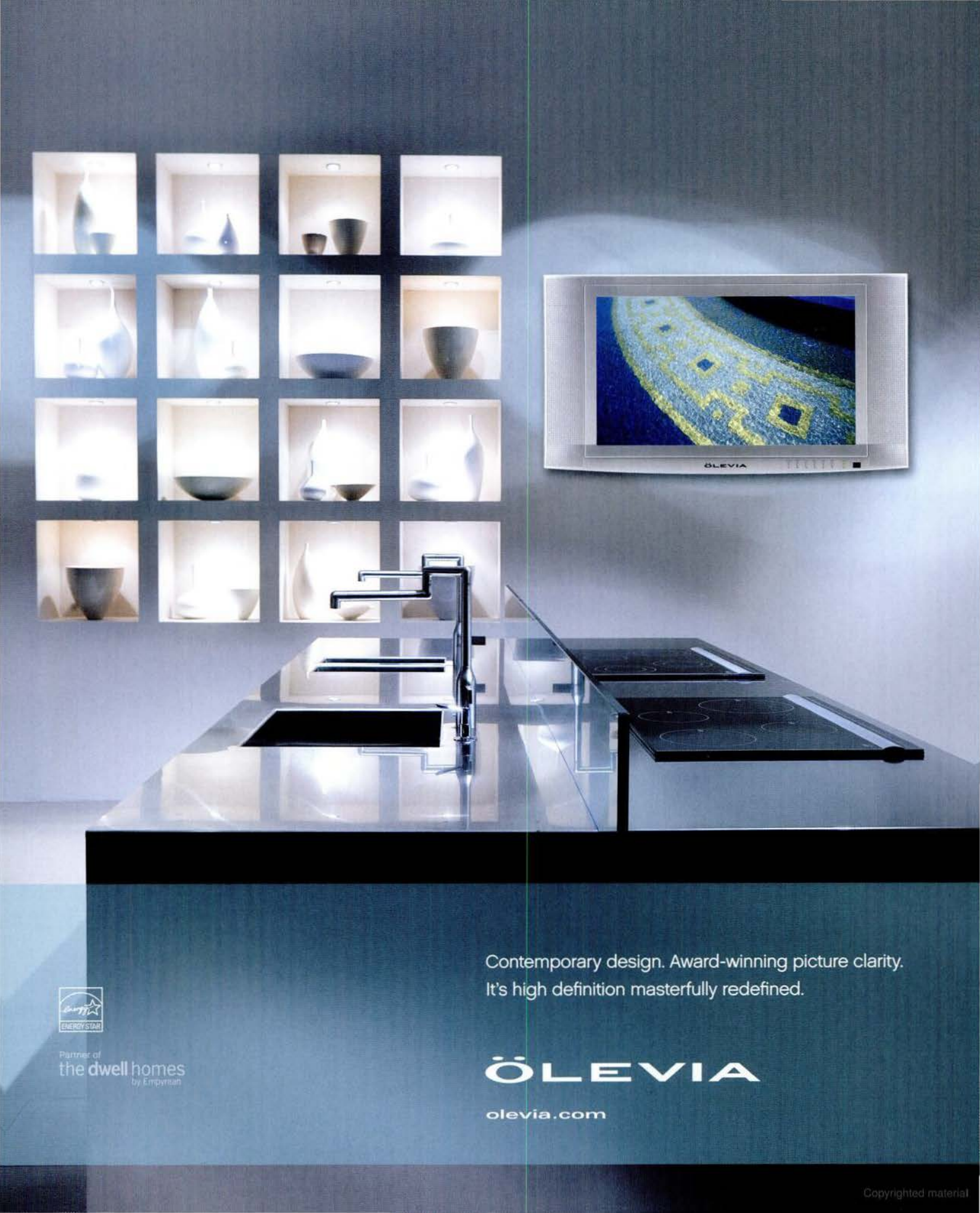
when the first one [a collection of Rodgers and Hart show tunes] hit the market in 1939, its sales went up 850 percent. They put it in *Time* magazine."

A serious music fan from his boyhood, Steinweiss was especially good with classical music. His bold, flat colors and stylized geometry owed a debt to the Bauhaus, while the figures on his covers sprang from American and European folklore. His cover for Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* alludes to the majestic piano roll midway through, while the lone streetlight and looming cityscape suggest the bawdy, crying clarinet that opens the piece and establishes its main theme.

His cover for Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* is less evocative than the Gershwin, but is marked by a distinctly exotic, primal feel. While Stravinsky's ballet owed more to Eastern European folk melodies than to those of Africa, the primitivist rhythms, embrace of harmonic dissonance, and the esoteric mysteries central to its story are all suggested by the canted type and African figure. The cover for Bartók's third piano concerto—reputedly a gift from the composer to his wife—suggests the composer's lighter moments, those less enthralled with the churning atonality of his string quartets than with the concerto's third movement, evoked through the cover's colorful, windswept piano.

In the case of operas and ballets, Steinweiss often opted for a more representational style, trying to bring out the stories in the music using vibrant colors, stock characters, and national symbols. Buffalo and Native Americans adorn the cover of Dvořák's *New World* ►





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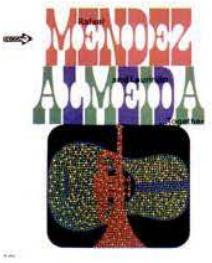
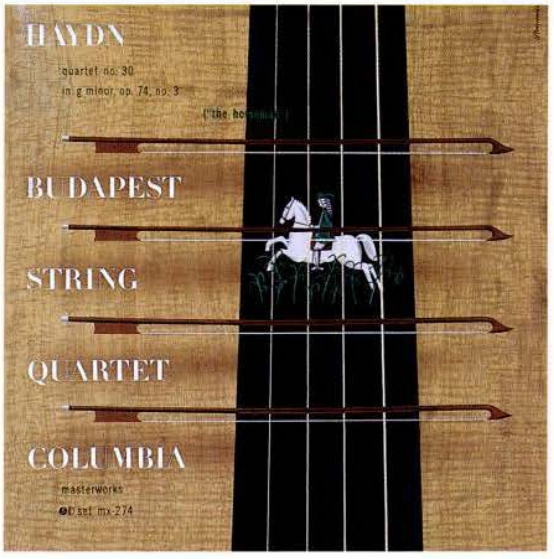
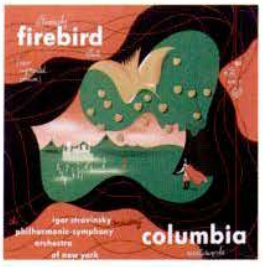
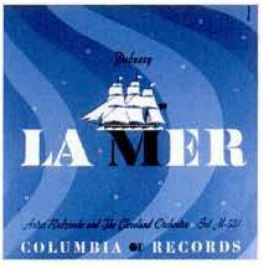
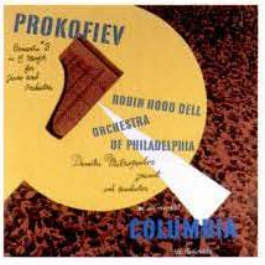


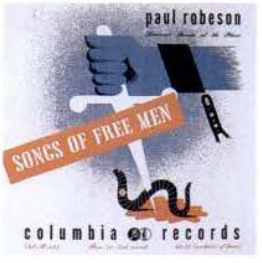
With the massive jump in sales graphic record jackets afforded, it wasn't long before recording artists made their love for Steinweiss (and their bump in pay) known. Renowned conductor Leopold Stokowski didn't want anyone but Steinweiss designing his covers; bandleader and pianist Eddy Duchin as well as Metropolitan Opera mezzo-soprano Rise Stevens were also big fans.











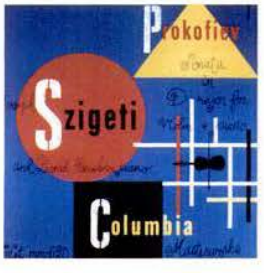
Symphony, while an album of Haydn's chamber music shows a cartoonish horseman riding across the neck of a violin. Steinweiss pays homage to art history in some cases: cubism in his cover for Prokofiev's *Fifth Symphony*, El Lissitzky's classic poster *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* for Prokofiev's *Concerto #3 in C Major for Piano and Orchestra*, and Aaron Douglas's flat, Harlem Renaissance style for Paul Robeson's *Songs of Free Men*.

After leaving Columbia Records, Steinweiss moved on to a successful freelance career, where he designed record jackets for a number of companies. At one point he even used his wife as his agent. "She didn't get me one damn job, but she was beautiful and she had guts," he recounts.

"Just plain design didn't mean a damn thing," Steinweiss says. "You had to know the music. I had to find a way to bring out the beauty of the music and the story. Other record companies started doing covers right away, but they didn't know classical music. We were miles ahead of them."

Miles ahead in design to be sure, but Steinweiss's formal innovation wasn't limited to the superficial. In 1948 the 33-rpm LP began to replace the 78. Because a whole symphony could fit on just one disc, the bound album packaging (which Steinweiss had likened to a tombstone) was no longer needed. He set to work, and after some trial and error came up with the cardboard LP sleeve that's still in use today.

"That stupid little jacket lasted 50 years, up until the CD," he muses. "That's when I gave up. You can't design anything for a little CD booklet. You can hardly see it." ▶



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10 Things You Should Know About Alex Steinweiss

1 / Steinweiss's love of graphic design began in high school in Brooklyn with his teacher Leon Friend. His classmates—known as the Art Squad—included future advertising and design greats William Taubin, Seymour Chwast, and Gene Federico.

2 / Expecting to fight during World War II, Steinweiss was stationed in New York City in the Navy's Training Aids Development Center. There he designed infographics, posters, and instructional books for sailors.

3 / Given the sometimes-short production schedules and limited choice of typography, Steinweiss often opted for his own looping handwriting. Dubbed "Steinweiss Scrawl," in the 1950s it became a legitimate typeface when Photolettering Inc. bought it.

4 / When Steinweiss developed the cardboard LP sleeve, he patented it under his own name. Columbia Records forced him to turn over the patent to them.

5 / With the advent of cover design, records began to be sold with their faces out instead of their spines. Steinweiss moved the critical information to the top third of the jacket to facilitate easy flipping by shoppers.

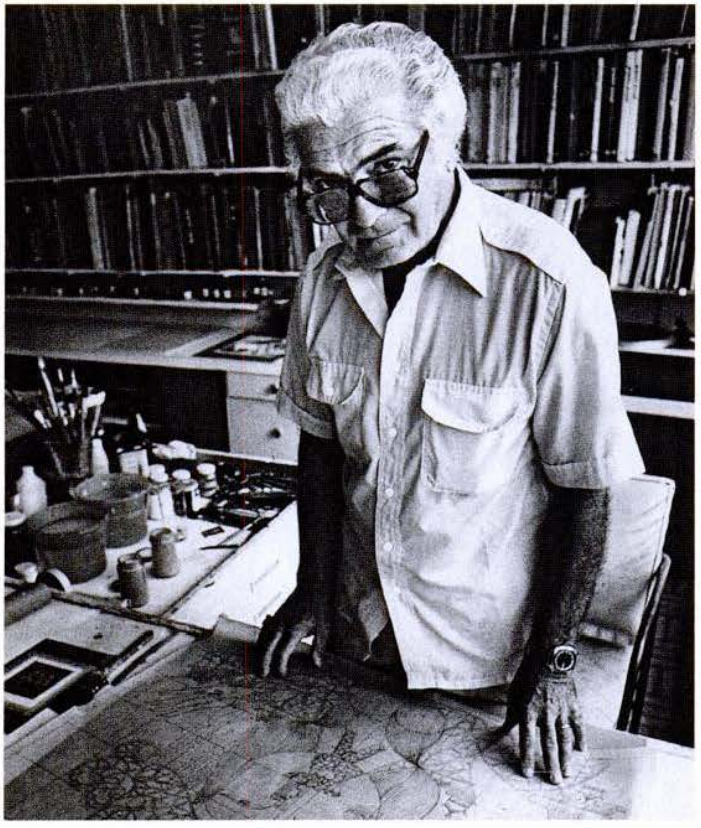
6 / Though Steinweiss's most fruitful and innovative years were with Columbia Records, he also designed numerous covers for Decca, London, and Everest Records—a company he helped launch.

7 / Not just a record-cover man, Steinweiss designed magazine covers, print ads, and labels for whiskey, wine, and candy companies. "They only remember the records," he says. "It's very annoying."

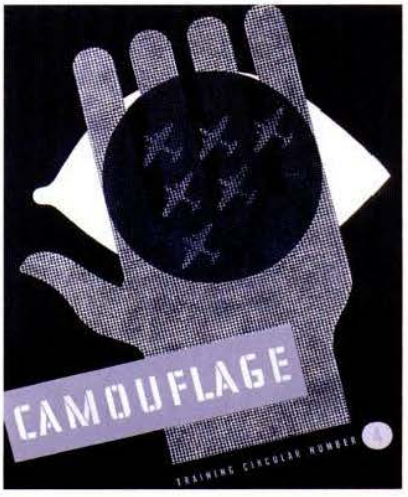
8 / In 1981 Steinweiss exhibited 30 paintings he'd made from listening to classical recordings, entitled "Homage to Music," at Lincoln Center in New York.

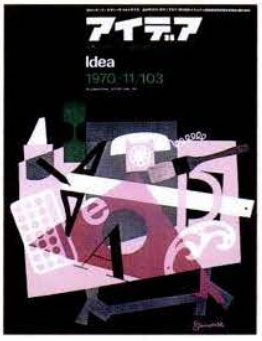
9 / Averse to digging through dusty crates of discarded vinyl for a bona fide Steinweiss jacket? Sony Classical has reissued select Steinweiss covers on CD in its Masterworks Heritage series.

10 / Now 90 years old, Steinweiss still paints and occasionally designs posters for community events in Sarasota, Florida, where he lives with his wife. ■



"Just plain design didn't mean a damn thing. You had to know the music."





Alex Steinweiss in his studio (far left). Clockwise from top left: The trumpet, an element of the logo for the Sarasota Jazz Club; a dour, abstract cover for *Idea* magazine from 1970; a bedizened record jacket from 1954; the Camouflage poster was designed for the U.S. Navy during World War II.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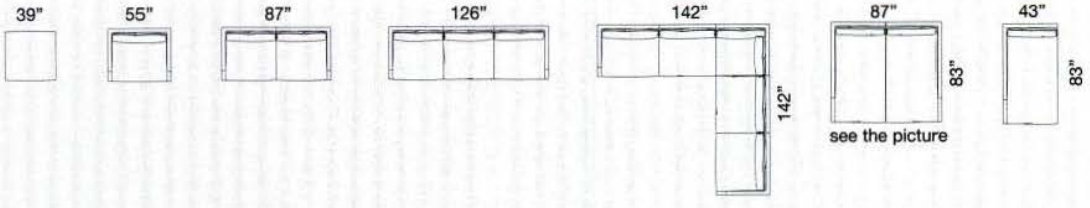

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Story by Chelsea Holden Baker

Photos by Peter Belanger

Dear Dwell: I'm not into the hard modernism of concrete floors; I miss the cushy carpet of my youth. Are there eco-friendly options for wall-to-wall?

—**Craig Dewey**, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Whether for nostalgia, warmth, or comfort, we've had many readers ask the same question. While LEED credits have enticed industrial carpet companies to go green, turnover is taking longer in the residential market. However, there are some stylish eco-options for your home; just be forewarned that going *au naturel* may give you a rug burn in the wallet.

A

B

C

A FLOR by InterfaceFlor / shown: Recycled nylon with bitumen backing / $3.34–$5.19 per square foot / www.interfaceflor.com
In the film *The Corporation*, Ray Anderson, InterfaceFlor CEO, says "We'll spend the rest of our days harvesting yesteryear's carpets and recycling them...with zero scrap going to the landfill." FLOR's modular (i.e., easy to clean and reuse) tiles stay in place with nontoxic adhesive dots and come in a variety of materials, including a Naturals line.

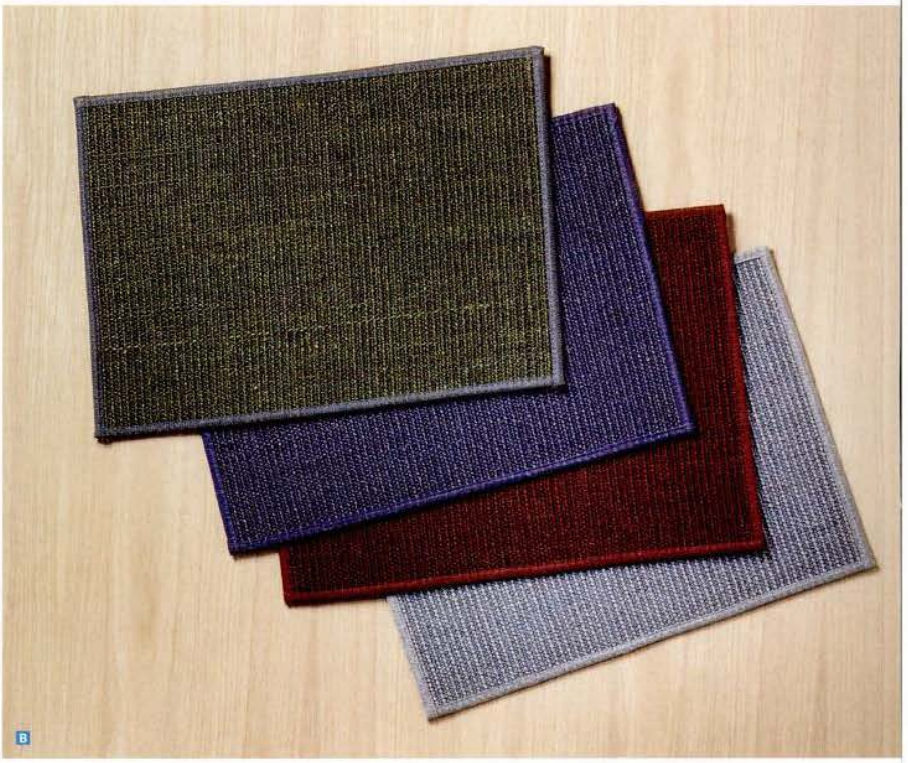
B Metropolitan Collection by Merida Meridan / shown: New Zealand wool with jute/cotton/latex backing / $47–$97 per square foot / www.meridameridian.com
Fans of fisherman's sweaters can kick off their L.L. Bean moccasins and enjoy the warmth of Metropolitan Collection's heavy piles and bright colors. Check their website for the latest styles, but be aware that you'll want to have a Dyson-strength vacuum: This wool carpet sheds like a sheepdog.

C Spartina by Nature's Carpet and York Wilton by Ulster, supplied by Hendricksen Natürlich Flooring / shown: Wool with jute backing and 80/20 wool/nylon with jute/cotton backing / $45.75 and $72.25 per square yard / www.naturalfloors.net
Build It Green, a local design resource, led us to these carpets at Hendricksen, an eco-flooring emporium. Search the Energy and Environmental Building Association's website (www.eeba.org), for a green design center near you.

D Veracruz, Artesana, and Livos by Design Materials / shown: Sisal with latex backing / $26–$38 per square yard / www.dmikc.com
Considering sisal's antistatic, sound-absorbing qualities and the fact that you can just as easily mount it on walls as floors, it could be perfect for your music studio, or any high-traffic area where you want a durable textured surface. ▶

A Bio-Floor Collection by Earth Weave Carpet Mills / shown: Undyed wool with hemp, cotton, jute, natural rubber backing / $40–$50 per square yard / www.earthweave.com
If you're sensitive to chemicals (or just got really paranoid after seeing Julianne Moore in 1995's *Safe*), you can sleep like a little lamb on top of this all-raw material, 100 percent biodegradable, and flame-retardant natural wonder. Earth Weave also supplies a variety of green-friendly underpadding.

B Natural fiber floor covering by Fibreworks Corporation / shown: Sisal with latex backing / $26.50–$38 per square yard / www.fibreworks.com
In colonial times, these kinds of carpets were used as padding beneath finer imports from the Orient, until some iconoclast realized they were tread-worthy in their own right. Fibreworks's range of natural fibers extends from paper and sisal to sea grass and coir. ■



Justin chair. $575. 27"w x 25.5"d x 32.5"h.
Fabric: Bella Buff. Wood: Alder (Mahogany stain).
Other furniture and patterns are also available.

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Story by Aaron Britt

Photos by Todd Hido

Urban gardeners and landscape pros alike dig the chilled-out community vibe and espresso at the relocated Flora Grubb Gardens.

Fawning Over Flora

Flora Grubb Gardens, the hippest plant merchant in the Bay Area, takes up residence in a new building as green as it is frondescent.

Jerry Seinfeld once quipped that when you name your child Jeeves you've pretty much laid out his career path, not unlike the way he'll lay out frock coats, kid gloves, and cummerbunds. What vocation then for a buzzing, canny woman with the moniker Flora Grubb? An hour or so into our meeting, when I asked her if Flora Grubb was in fact her real name, she disarmingly replied, "Do I really seem like someone who would make up a quirky name for myself?" She does not. "Besides, there are a lot of weird names in my family. My brother is named Moses Grubb" (he is not, as I had initially suspected, the starting left fielder for the 1918 St. Louis Cardinals). Possessed of a green thumb or not, Flora Grubb was destined for the garden.

She is currently the owner and proprietor of Flora Grubb Gardens, the greenest and most charming garden store and nursery in San Francisco. Located for four years on a sunny patch between Edwardian apartment buildings on a heavily trafficked artery of the Mission District, ▸

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Flora Grubb Gardens recently relocated to a much larger space in a much less traveled part of town: Bayview, one of the few industrial corners left of the increasingly condoed City by the Bay.

The new digs suit her, a kind of urban jungle overflowing with all manner of exotic foliage nestled between a Hells Angels club, a chandelier manufacturer, and a slate mason. The 8,000-square-foot store, a model of sustainable design, has ample indoor and outdoor space, a coffee shop, and a conference room for her landscape-design projects. Foot traffic is down significantly from the previous location (a natural effect of trading vintage stores and tapas bars for a sewage treatment plant), but the new Flora Grubb Gardens has succeeded in becoming something more than a quirky plant purveyor. It has quickly become a destination.

"What we intended was to create a hub for people who are passionate about gardening," Grubb enthuses. "We wanted a place where people could gather and geek out on their plants. We knew that the coffee shop would help create an atmosphere where people felt they could linger." Grubb's avid following already has far more on its mind than merely geeking out. During my visit a giddy, brightly appareled shopper approached Grubb, saying that she's an interactive comedian and would love to find new spaces to perform—ideally among the vegetation. Grubb was enthusiastic, if noncommittal about this odd, but not entirely unexpected, request. "I have been inundated with requests to hold birthday parties, wedding receptions, baby showers. I do think people like being near the plants."

Thanks in large part to the work of San Francisco architects Seth Boor and Bonnie Bridges, of Boor Bridges Architecture, people are near the plants everywhere they go. Grubb's building looks like a massive barn—clad in corrugated steel and worn, charismatic Douglas fir recovered from an old hops barn in Petaluma, California—and like its architectural inspiration, it's meant to open ▸

Flora Grubb (below) is rarely seen without plant in hand as she flits about her store. She purveys the plucky gardener's essentials in both tool and book form (top right) as well as both native and exotic plants, so long as they easily cotton to the Bay Area's cool, moist, Mediterranean climate.


"Beach rocks inspire endless patterns. The Haven design could easily look like a tidal pool or an aerial view of an island."
—Angela Adams
imagine a landscape indoors
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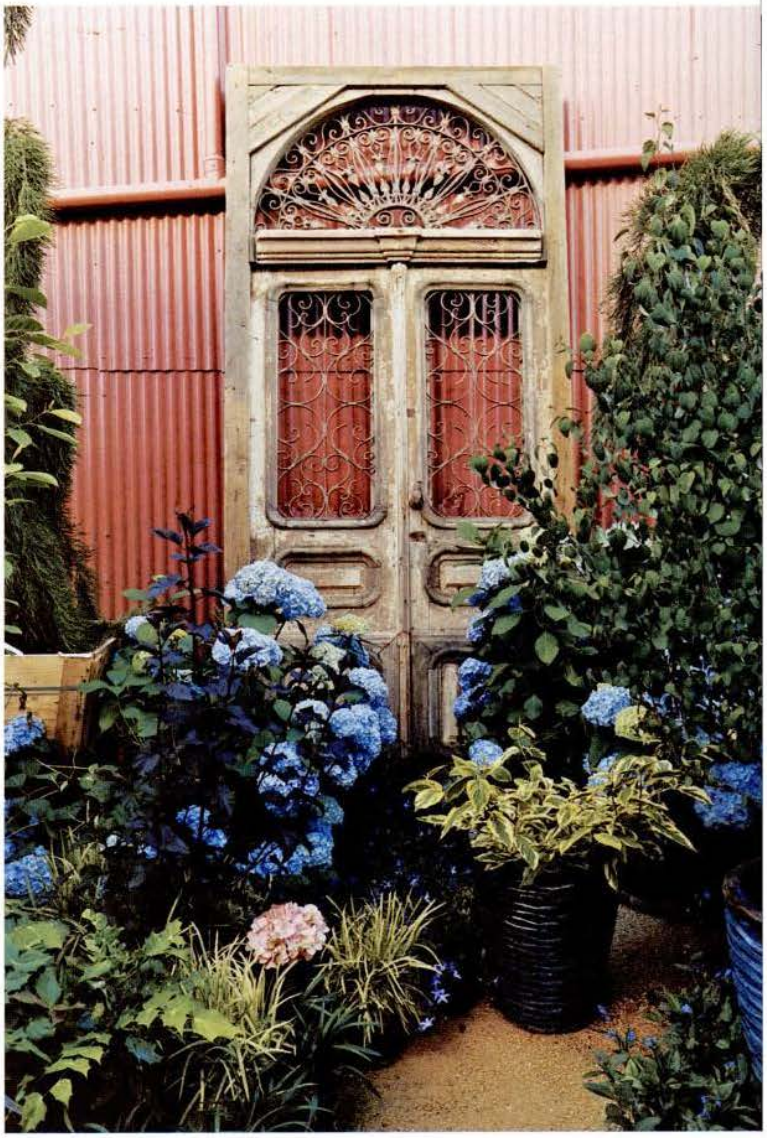
wide to the site. "With the design I wanted to mimic the industrial buildings around it but to have it dissolve at the edges, like an urban ruin overtaken by plants," says Boor. "We wanted a structure that supports the plants but doesn't contain them."

This effect is best realized by the porosity of the building. "Indoor-outdoor flow is a real buzzword right now," says Grubb. "But that's just what I wanted." Much of the outdoor space is covered by a massive steel roof reminiscent of an Erector Set. At the outmost edge sunscreens provide shade, but further in, proper steel panels shelter more delicate plants from the elements. "The building is more like a trellis that serves as a backdrop for the plants. We really wanted to open it all up," she says.

Barring inclement weather, two immense garage doors leave the inside of the shop *en plein air,* not unlike an airplane hangar. San Francisco's often-cool climes are mitigated by radiant heat in the floor powered by the 72 solar panels on the roof that generate between 90 and 105 percent of the building's electrical needs. Grubb's bustling landscape-design practice is housed in the offices and conference room behind the retail space.

And yet for all of Grubb's success as a businesswoman, a landscaper, and, increasingly, an advocate for her new neighborhood, there's still something scrappy, improvised, and DIY about her. For one, she talks about Burning Man far too often to really become a suit. She mentioned it three times in my visit, most notably when describing the provenance of the sculpture to which patrons can lock their bikes: two huge steel lotuses, each of which once shot flames. I asked, given her building's considerable green cred, if she'd gone for LEED certification. "No, we didn't," she replied. "We were in a hurry and we were broke." Maybe they'll pursue it someday, but it somehow feels too official, too by-the-books for Grubb's operation. She seems the sort far more inclined, when not extolling the merits of sustainable gardening, to host a daffy interactive comedian. ■

Flora Grubb Gardens' interior shop (below left) offers all manner of enticing plants, while the exterior retail space is adorned with relics like this ornate door (right). The moribund old car (bottom left) in time will be overgrown, like a ruin, with creeping foliage.



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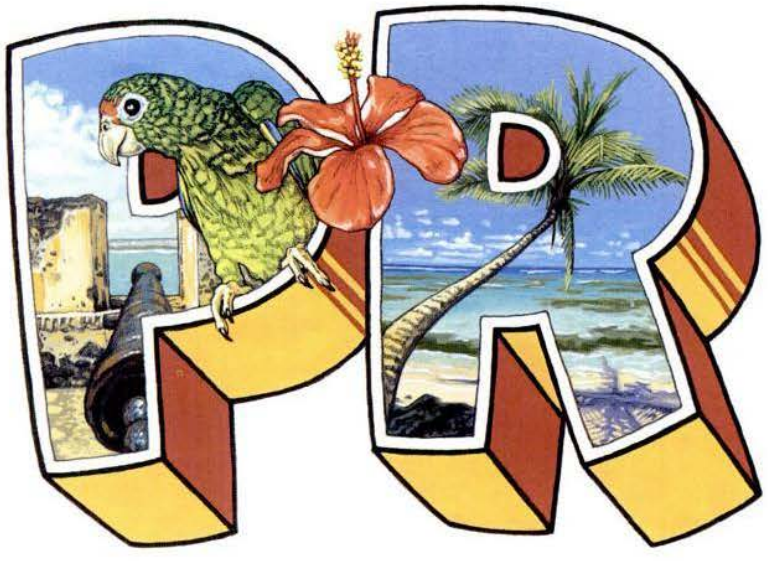
Illustrations and Postcards by Tim Tomkinson

Greetings from

Over the last seven years we've crisscrossed America's highways and byways in search of residential innovation, and we continue to find inspiring examples well off the beaten path. In the pages that follow, you'll find stories featuring homes that prove you don't need to live in the Hollywood Hills to take home the Oscar for top design. From the North Star State to the Lone Star State to the Shining Star, modernism is alive and well under the Stars and Stripes.

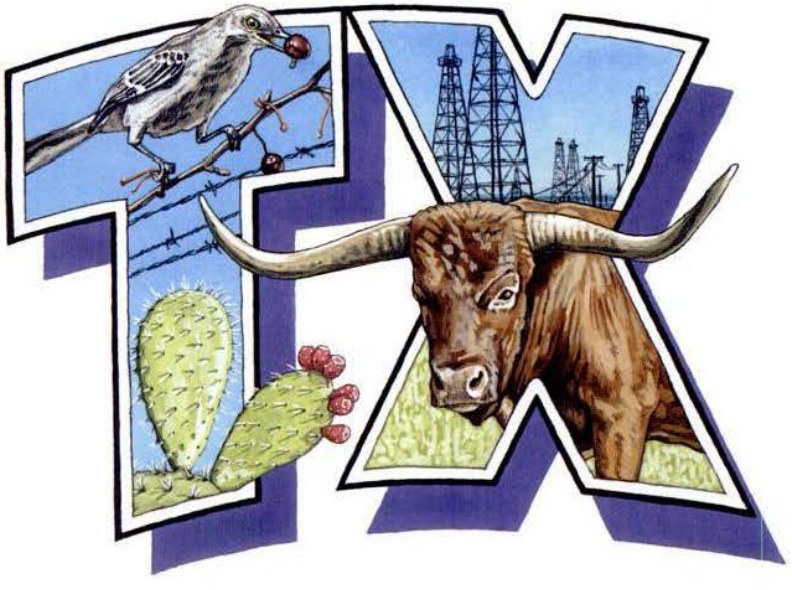
In the face of Jean Nouvel's striking Guthrie Theater (2006), Cesar Pelli's finned central branch of the public library (2006), and Herzog + de Meuron's diaphanous addition to the Walker Art Center (2005), one might easily think that Minneapolis is having a moment in the Midwestern sun. But there's so much more: low rents, a first-rate contemporary art museum (the Walker), and an abundance of neighborhood theaters, studios, and galleries.

The Minneapolis College of Art and Design and the University of Minnesota's College of Design, coupled with a strong tradition of philanthropy—from lumber baron T. B. Walker to big-box behemoths Best Buy and Target—support the city's arts infrastructure. Though flashy commissions may, at times, outshine the local arts, they're not so much isolated architectural statements as much as expressions of Minneapolis's artistic character.



Puerto Rico sits between Hispaniola and the Virgin Islands, but it feels like it straddles two worlds. Locals walk the cobblestone lanes of Old San Juan, with its 16th-century courtyards, or loiter in the garden behind Ponce de León's home, before getting stuck in highway traffic so congested it would make any Angeleno feel homesick. Some neighborhoods could pass for East Harlem—116th Street with palm trees. Most Puerto Ricans speak Spanish, but they carry dollars, which they call *pesos*.

Not surprisingly, the Spanish colonial architecture of Old San Juan gets the Baedeker treatment, but for those who care to seek it out, there's also a scattering of early modern structures in various stages of repair, such as the annex to the capitol building from the 1950s and the InterContinental Hotel built ten years later on the south coast. Though the colonial style holds court, between the cracks in the ornate tile work and stately courtyards, tropical modernism has a quiet home.



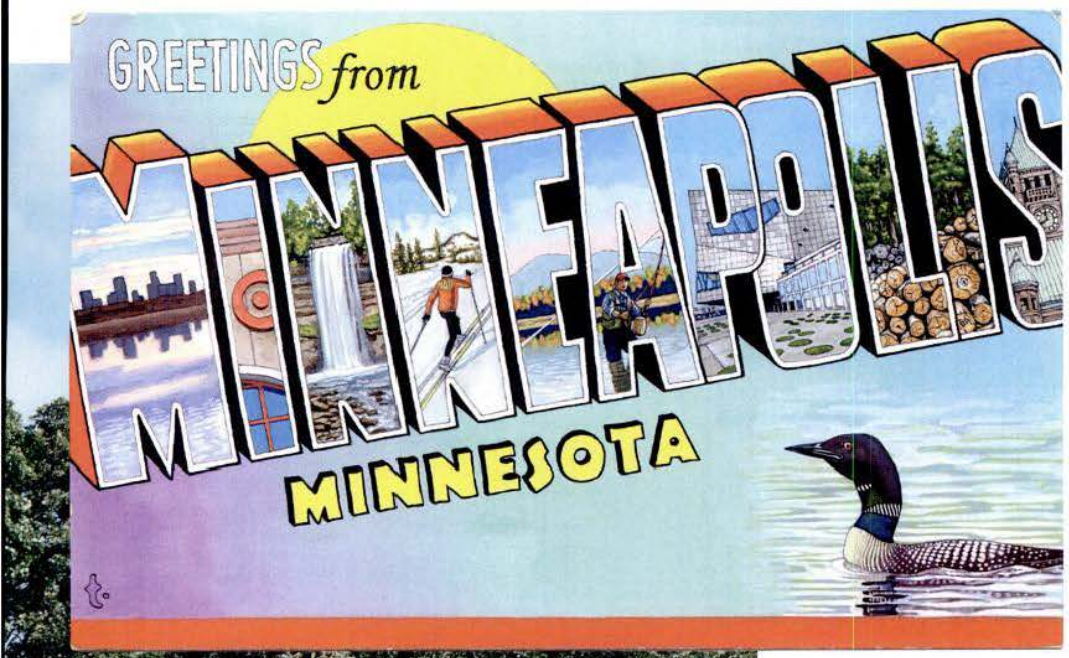
Houston was once an empty stretch of green forest and bayou. Then the oil money flooded in, trophy towers shot up, and marquee names in skyscraper design claimed their patch of the big Texas sky. Critics called it the city of the future. But Houston's future wasn't planned at all. The city's famously nonexistent zoning laws allowed anything, anywhere, creating a bizarre, sometimes ugly mishmash of structures and sprawl. When the economy tanked, the haphazard skyline became a memorial to the city's youthful swagger.

For designers and architects, the best of Houston lies closer to the ground in Mies van der Rohe's Museum of Fine Arts, the quirky Menil Collection, and a legacy of oil-made modern architecture. What remains is a madcap architectural laboratory, a designer's paradise, where you'll find things so strangely beautiful, so oddly juxtaposed, it seems it could only happen here, in the new city of the future. ■

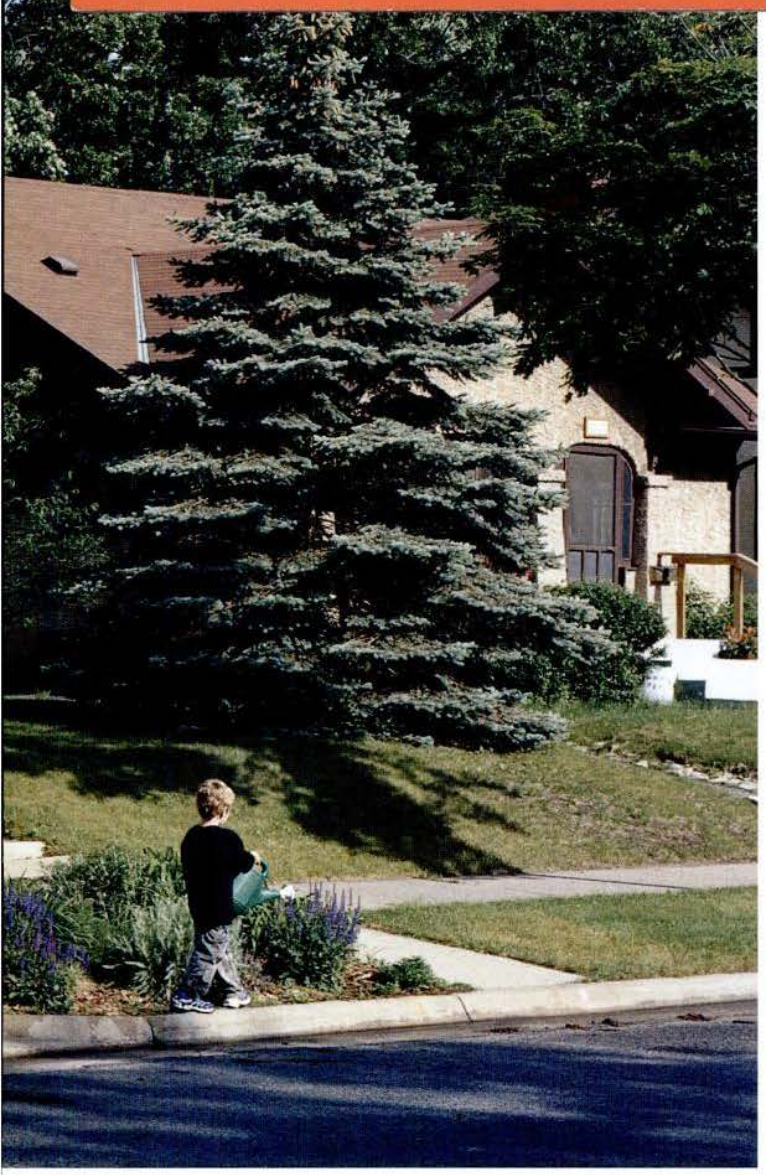
Story by Aaron Britt

Photos by Chad Holder

Project: Dean Residence
Architect: City Desk Studio Architects
Location: Minneapolis, Minnesota



Architect Christian Dean and his sons Quentin (left) and Owen (right) tend to their front yard in the Linden Hills neighborhood where their modest Cape Cod house is par for the course. The addition Dean and his colleagues at City Desk Studio designed is anything but.



Linden Hills, a leafy neighborhood in southwest Minneapolis abutting recreational Lake Calhoun, is a spot where few fences divide the ranch houses from the Cape Cods and the bungalows, most of them modest exercises in Midwestern economy. Parks abound and the place smacks of the middle-class wholesomeness and comfort of friendly public schools and copious ice-skating. Change is afoot, however, as the occasional 3,000-plus-square-foot abode muscles its way into this urban enclave, prompting unhappy residents to post signs in their lawns proclaiming "Monster Houses Make Bad Neighbors." One such brand-new monster house—complete with a sign of its own reading "For Sale"—seems a dodgy candidate for purchase given the hackles it's so manifestly raised and the damning signage from the neighbors. If you're moving into the most ostentatious house on the block, it seems, you should at least have the gall to build it yourself. Vacant lots are rare in Linden Hills, though, and more common than outsized new development are footprint-expanding renovations and additions.

Architect Christian Dean, a third of the three-man operation City Desk Studio, is tall, fair, and lean (and bears a passing resemblance, not due solely to his 6'5" frame, to NBA MVP Dirk Nowitzki). He and his wife Karie moved into a traditional, 1,000-square-foot house in Linden Hills in 1994, its cedar shakes, screened-in porch, and two dormers the picture of the neighborhood's building vernacular. But as the Dean family grew—their two cats now jockey for space with their three sons—it became clear that the crowded Cape Cod, not unlike Hyannis Port in August, would need to grow. Expanding the house well into the yard, as the Deans decided to do, may seem heretical for a family with three growing boys, but as Christian explains: ▸

A BluDot hutch and yellow painting by Minneapolis artist Ellen Richman occupy one end of the new swingroom (right). Owen and Quentin (below, with a gripping bit of *Star Wars* literature) and a vintage Eames rocker populate the other.
p. 286

Karie and Mason (opposite) enjoy a playful loll on the bed in the Deans' new master bedroom. The perforated wall facing the neighbors' backyard offers a great deal of diffuse light while still managing to conceal the Deans' boudoir from prying eyes.

"We don't need a big yard. There's a park a block and a half away and that's our social outdoor space. What we needed was more living space."

"We wanted to follow the pattern of the neighborhood," says Christian of the addition they completed in early 2005. "Many houses have added attached garages [the Deans' is detached and sits behind the house]; ours is an addition to the living space." Instead of adding to the upstairs—whose two small bedrooms and full bath house Mason, Quentin, and Owen, all under seven—the Deans opted to add to the back of the house. "Lots of the additions around here are heavy-handed," says Christian. "Usually you'll just get some more space upstairs with a dormer out back."

Christian took the lead on the project, aided by City Desk Studio partners Bob Ganser and Ben Awes, and decided to build two small, rectilinear additions to the back of the house. The larger one provides a small master bedroom and bath that connect to the original house via a "swingroom" that accommodates buckets of *Star Wars* action figures as easily as it does overnight guests. The other, shorter projection connects to the first by way of a small Mangaris wood deck, and extends the kitchen. Sorely needed space aside, the real *coup de grâce* is the 17 small windows in the kitchen and another 30 in the new bedroom, the largest no more than a foot square, glazed right into the sheathing. They provide ample diffuse light and fragmented but clear views of the outdoors. "We get some bang for our buck with the shell being more decorative," Christian says. "The windows aren't about transparency, but about porosity, which isn't always talked about in residential design."

The effect is repeated in the Deans' new bedroom, which looks out onto the backyard and into the neighbors' yard some 30 feet away. Clearly, privacy was ▸

Linden Hills offers enough public outdoor space by way of city parks and Lake Calhoun that the Deans had no qualms about extending their house and deck into the backyard and taking up all of the side yard between the master bedroom and the neighbors' yard.

a concern, but given the distance from the neighbors' house it ends up mattering little. "If you stand at one of the windows you get a pretty decent range of the view outside, and the farther you back up the less you see," Christian explains. The same is true for someone looking in; a dedicated voyeur would have to stand right at the wall to catch a glimpse of the interior. "Looking at the façade you get almost a pixelated view of the inside," reasons Christian, "though it's a very low DPI." Karie, a senior art director at Target's corporate headquarters, opines, with Midwestern modesty: "I don't mean to be too artsy, but it really is like an installation piece. The light dapples in as you move through the space."

While other denizens of Linden Hills were immediately sold on the windows—"We haven't had any complaints from the neighbors," reports Karie—it was the builders who needed reassurance. "Part of saving money on a project like this is really doing the research and knowing what you're talking about during construction," says Christian. "We worked with a great builder, but when I told him about the windows he was skeptical. He thought that it would require extra work, but when I told him that all the windows would be mounted on studs and glazed into the exterior he calmed down. To keep costs down we had to be our own advocates and get more hands-on."

Perhaps the most surprising element of the Deans' addition is how well it integrates into the existing home. Neither an ostentatious move toward modernity nor a traditionalist expansion, the new home occupies a middle ground. "It's not totally seamless," Christian says. "The pure form of the little Cape Cod is still legible, but they're not wholly distinct from each other either. I wanted that tension."

The Deans' house still looks very much like part of ▸

the neighborhood, and any hard feelings over the addition are softened by the sight of the boys playing in the yard. Massive new development still seems to be the local villain, as no one has yet put up any "Modern Houses Make Bad Neighbors" signs. And yet the residential makeup of the place is slightly changed. "I think this kind of design has a place in Minneapolis," says Christian of the art-friendly city with no shortage of starchitect projects. "I've always been inspired by Herzog + de Meuron's take on the texture of buildings' skin"—the metal façade of their addition to the Walker Art Center just miles away glints and bends, evoking the feel of crumpled paper—"I wanted to do some of the same things here, playing with textures." The Dean addition predates Herzog + de Meuron's, a fact Christian doesn't fail to point out in the midst of his admiration: "Ours was first, though."

For Christian and his partners at City Desk Studio, materiality was a point of abstraction, but one that's firmly grounded in Minnesota's architectural landscape. "The cedar shake is ubiquitous, this one-and-a-half-story house is ubiquitous," says Christian. "It gave us an opportunity to work with traditional cladding and to do a different sort of modernism, a more rustic sort. Not as taut or streamlined as some of the European stuff. There's a long tradition here in Minnesota of talented people working in the vernacular."

Though monster houses are on the minds of Linden Hills residents, there looks to be little chance of them taking over the neighborhood. But as the American building vernacular lists away from the tradition of craft, no matter the aesthetic program, toward the solipsism of maximum square footage, modest additions like the Deans' feel more thoughtful and more precious than ever. And not just for its perforated perfection. ▸

Dean Residence
Floor Plan

A New Bedroom
B New Bathroom
C New Family / Guest Room
D New Deck
E Existing Living Room
F Expanded Kitchen
G Existing Dining Room
H Existing Porch

The Deans' new kitchen (above) is long and narrow, punctuated by the small windows that dot the façade and one large light-giving window at the end. The living room (opposite) remains largely unchanged from when it was built in 1922.

Just a few blocks from the Deans' house, residents of Linden Hills are stating their opposition (right) to thoughtless new construction and gaudy remodels. Extending their 1,000-square-foot domicile to a scant 1,600 has thus far spared the Deans the ire and invective of the locals.

On sunny days fewer spots are nicer than the Mangaris deck between the Deans' kitchen and master bedroom (opposite). Long willow switches hide the water meter behind Karie, who oversees her sons from a Bertoia Diamond Lounge. This is just a fraction of the boys' formidable Lego collection.
p. 286

Christian Dean's Minneapolis

Black Forest Inn: A one-of-a-kind German restaurant and bar, with the city's most amazing beer garden. An added bonus is the outdoor chairs are all vintage Bertoia, likely original from the day the inn opened in the '60s.

1 East 26th Street
(612) 872-0812
www.blackforestinnmpls.com

Fuji-Ya: Great sushi on Lake Street, one of the most active strips in town. Sit at the bar facing the street and enjoy sushi and a saketini.

600 West Lake Street
(612) 871-4055
www.fujiyasushi.com

Any activity by or on the city's lakes: Cedar, Isles, Calhoun, and Nokomis. Kayaking has never been so accessible for an urbanite.

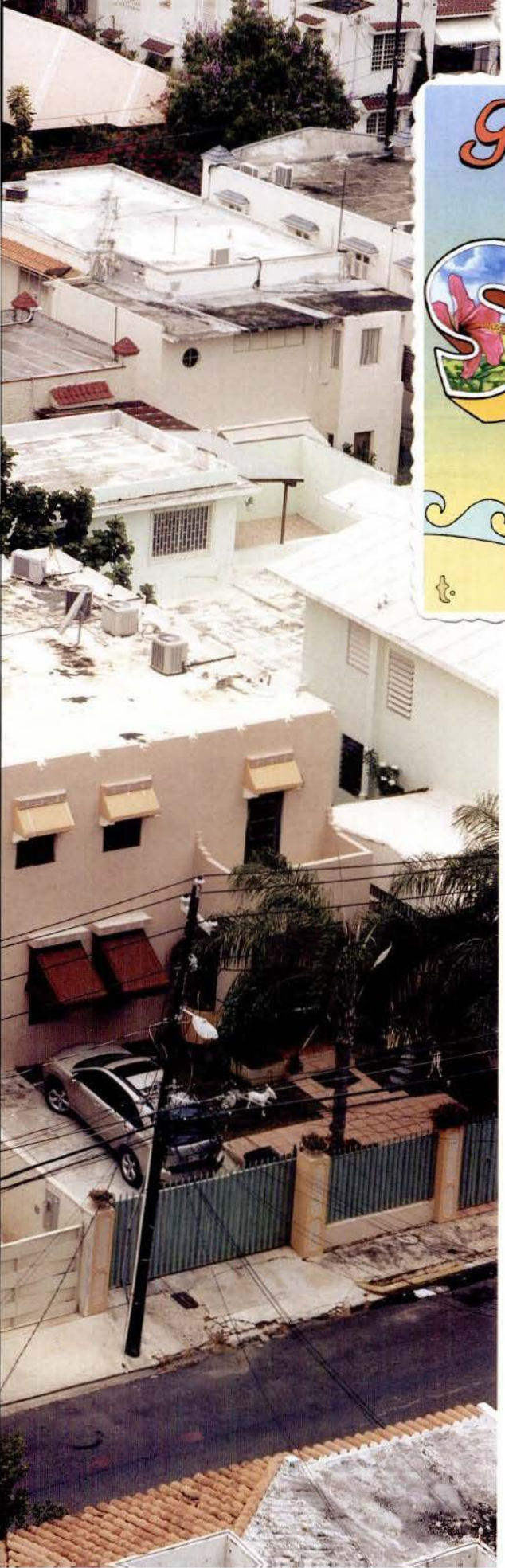
Walker Art Center and Minneapolis Sculpture Garden: Any time is great, but especially Free First Saturdays. It's really fun for kids and parents; the kids can actually make stuff with the help of engaged volunteers.

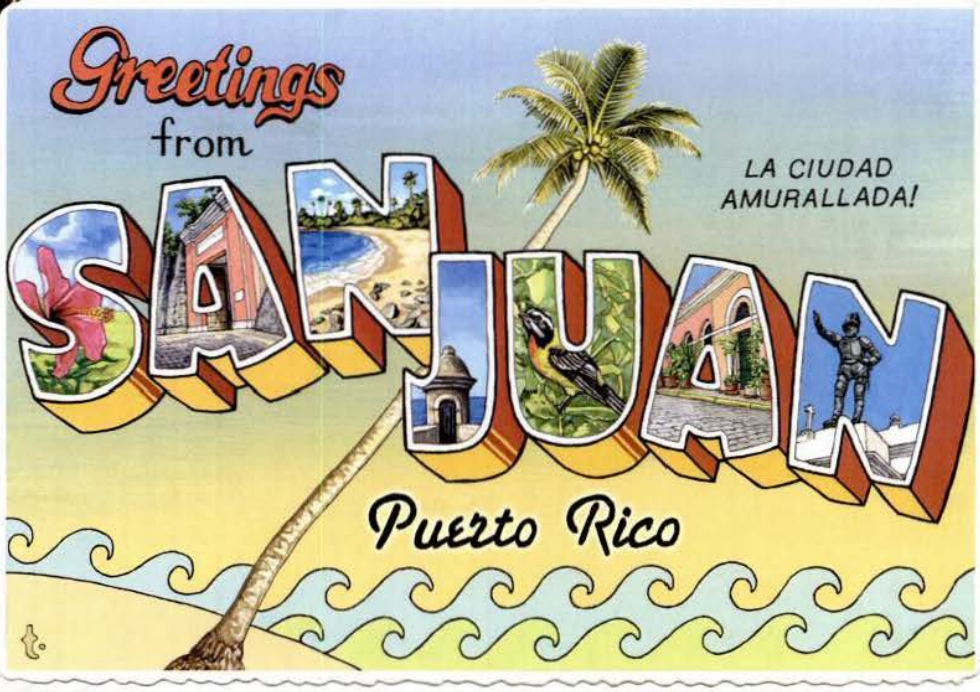
1750 Hennepin Avenue
(612) 375-7600
www.walkerart.org

Bryant Lake Bowl: Judging by my bowling game I don't do this enough. Enjoying the retro appeal of this bar/restaurant/theater/bowling alley is a quintessential Minneapolis experience.

810 West Lake Street
(612) 825-3737
www.bryantlakebowl.com ■

Hemmed in on a tight suburban lot in the Miramar district of San Juan, Carlos Delpin and Eneida Nuñez renovated their home by building up, not out.



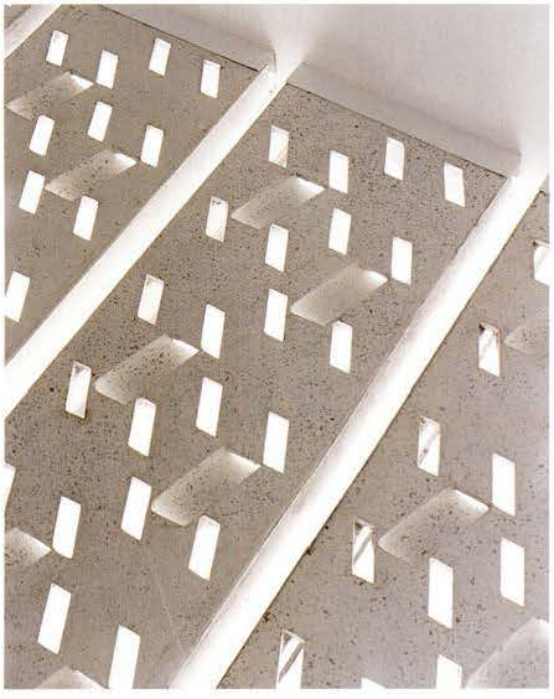


Project: Casa Delpin
Architect: Nataniel Fúster
Location: San Juan, Puerto Rico

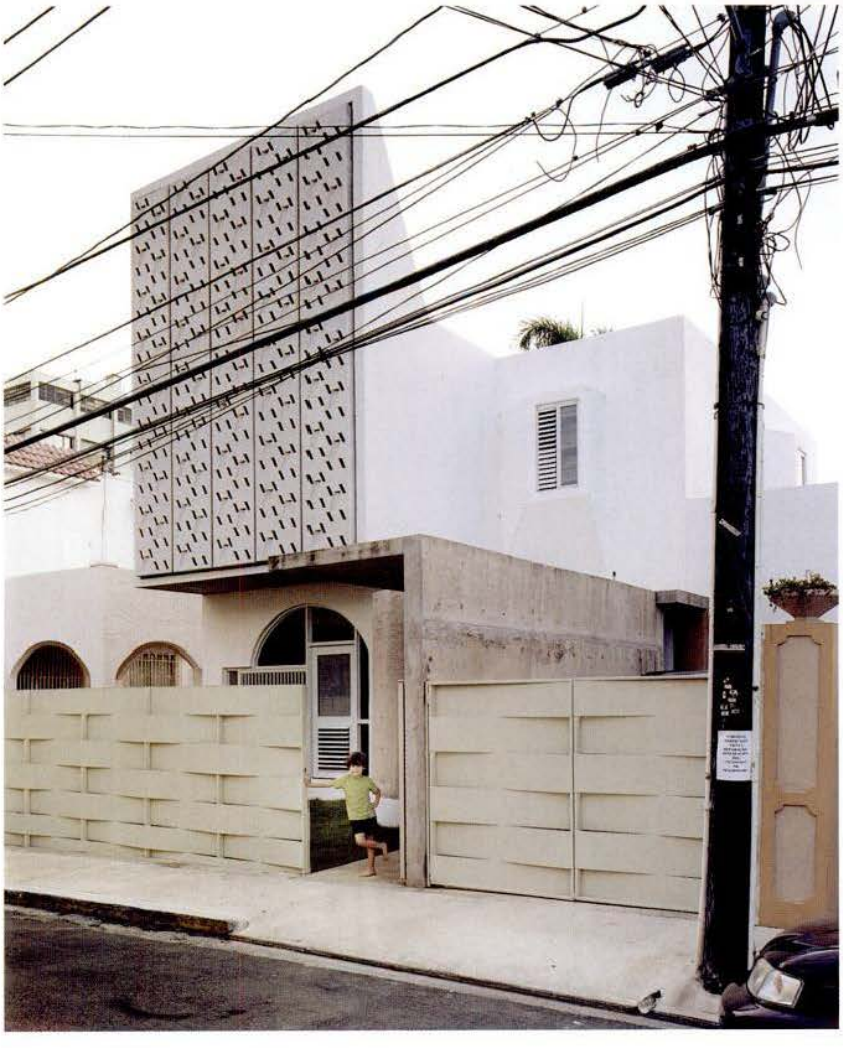
After three rainless weeks a welcome tropical shower blew into San Juan, Puerto Rico, one afternoon last May, awakening Casa Delpin with the sound of trickling water. It splattered down in sweet rivulets, dripping from diagonal slats in the concrete ceiling and dancing on the surface of a lap pool that stretches across the open living area. Eleven prefabricated ceiling panels had been perforated for just this effect. As the storm passed, sunlight filtered through the slats to reflect off the pool and onto an expanse of white wall.

"It's like living with a light show," says Carlos Delpin, who rebuilt the house last year with his wife, Eneida Nuñez. "We've spent countless hours just watching the light change."

In this tropical outpost of the United States, home to some of the oldest buildings in the colonial Americas, trickling water and the play of light have a long history. They were the commonplace pleasures of older San Juan homes, built as early as the 16th century with intimate courtyards in the style of southern Spain. In San Juan ▸



The perforated concrete panels on the façade of Casa Delpin (below) and on the ceiling of the living area (left) cast a dappled light (shown at right). The living room is further lit by three protruding skylights angled to catch morning and afternoon light (opposite).



a subdued Moorish palette holds sway, not the candy colors one sees in much of the Caribbean.

As the city outgrew its original sandstone fortifications at the turn of the last century, outlying neighborhoods sprang up with suburban homes that turned their backs on the tropical surroundings.

The couple bought one such house, in the Miramar neighborhood, and lived in its dark warren for seven years before contemplating a change. Built in the 1940s, when Puerto Ricans tended to eat and entertain outdoors, the home had little space for guests. The yard was big enough for entertaining, but it lacked privacy and could be reached only by walking through a roundabout of first-floor rooms.

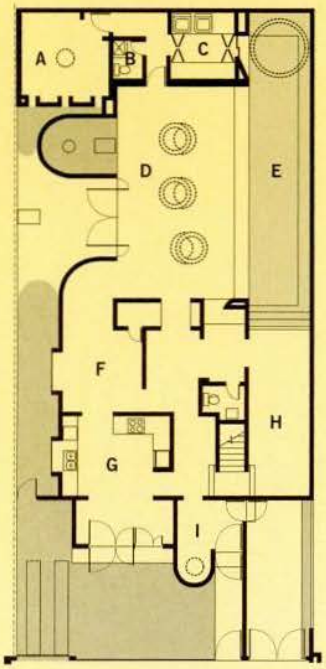
"It was like a labyrinth, and it felt very cramped," says Delpin, who is a general manager of a packaged food company. "We really bought the house for the location, and for the future. We lived in it for a while, biding our time until we had money to rebuild."

In deference to neighbors, and heritage, when the time came to rebuild the couple decided to keep parts of the original house intact—most notably the 12-foot ceilings and traditional tiles—while aspiring to a richer, more adventurous way of living. "We liked the skeleton of the house," Delpin says, "but we wanted to open it up so we could have one big space instead of lots of little ones." Most of all, they wanted to adapt the existing home to take advantage of natural light without exposing the interiors to the harsh tropical sun.

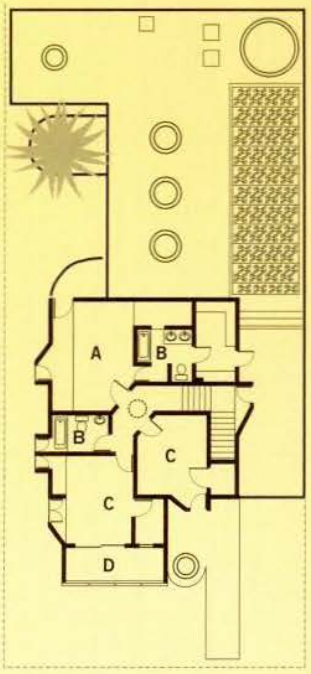
Three years ago, they consulted with Nataniel Fúster, a local architect known for a thoughtful brand of tropical modernism. He walked through the house and four days later delivered a colored-pencil sketch with a simple proposition: Reverse the arrangement of rooms so that the kitchen moved up to face the noisy street. Out back, ▸

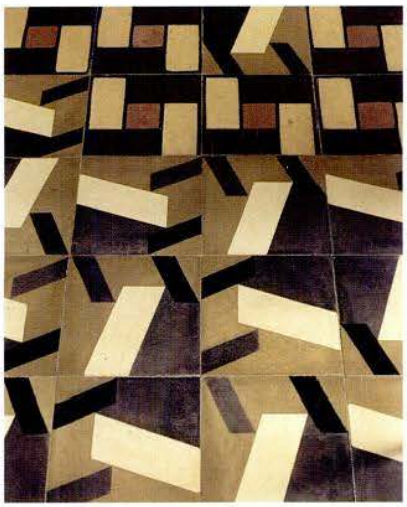
Casa Delpin
Floor Plan

First Floor
A Library
B Bathroom
C Storage / Laundry
D Living Room
E Pool
F Family Room
G Kitchen
H Dining Room
I Entrance



Second Floor
A Master Bedroom
B Bathroom
C Bedroom
D Balcony





The couple kept original touches, including the arch (opposite). Traditional *isleño* tiles (at the top of the image at left) were augmented with a new pattern by Nataniel Fúster. Windows (right) have been pushed out with deep concrete wells. The dining area (below) feels like an extension of the pool, with water channels on two sides.

in place of the yard, he proposed an open living area with sunlight filtering through a perforated ceiling into a swimming pool. There would be no walls or doors, just an iron screen in a basket-weave pattern for privacy and a silky cross breeze.

Hemmed in by neighbors on a narrow lot, there would be no view, but like the courtyards of Old San Juan, the living area would have water, light, and privacy. It was a sensitive reinvention of local traditions—Ponce de León meets Le Corbusier.

Delpin and Nuñez agreed to his proposal immediately, and without qualification. "He magnified the Caribbean lifestyle, with the water and sunlight," Delpin says, "but in a modern language." Fúster's practice is in part about putting people back in touch with their surroundings. "The climate and scenery is something Puerto Ricans have tended to ignore" he explains. "We're surrounded by water, but we turn our backs on the sea."

The renovation, completed last year on a budget of $400,000, has a graceful way of folding the past into the present. For example, the couple kept the original floor tiles, a local design with a muted geometric pattern known as *isleño* that was used for more than 200 years until a cheaper terrazzo replaced it in the 1950s. Fúster designed a new tile with complementary tones and a slightly more active pattern for the open living area and other additions, and the diagonal pattern recurs on the pre-cast concrete panels over the living area.

When Le Corbusier built his famous High Court Buildings in Chandigarh, India, in the 1950s, he accepted that the country's climate and craftsmanship would conspire to give it the appearance of an artful concrete ruin. There's some of that in the Delpin-Nuñez house, with its bush hammered walls and Rorschachs of rust around exposed metal studs. ►

Nataniel Fúster's Guide to San Juan

La Concha: Toro and Ferrer, one of Puerto Rico's earliest modern design firms, designed this newly restored hotel in the late 1950s. Don't miss the shell-shaped concrete roof.

1077 Ashford Avenue
(787) 721-8500
www.laconchahotel.com

Trois Cent Onze: Great French and Caribbean menu, not to mention the wine selection, in an Old San Juan building with Andalusian tilework.

311 Calle Fortaleza
(787) 725-7959
www.311restaurantpr.com

Río Piedras campus, University of Puerto Rico: A great place to walk around in the cool of the morning and admire the library, museum, and student center designed by Henry Klumb, a German immigrant and protégé of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Avenue Ponce de León
(787) 764-0000
www.uprrp.edu

Pikayo: A blend of Spanish, Indian, and African cooking in a modern setting within the Museum of Art of Puerto Rico. A large closed-circuit television has a live feed from the kitchen, so you can watch your tuna with onion escabeche being grilled.

299 Jose de Diego Avenue
(787) 721-6194
www.pikayo.com

Museum of Contemporary Art: A showcase for the unsung Caribbean canon, from José Campeche to Francisco Oller. Located in a former red-brick schoolhouse, it contains a generous courtyard for the foot weary.

Corner of Avenida Juan Ponce de León and Avenida Roberto H. Todd
(787) 977-4030
www.museocontemporaneopr.org

Casita Blanca: For Creole cooking as the locals like it, try this converted family home in a blue-collar barrio off the tourist map.

351 Calle Tapia
(787) 726-5501

The house is largely enclosed for privacy, but hints of the outdoors, with its tropical light, are always close by. Eneida Nuñez (right) stands on the terrace of the master bedroom. A royal palm enclosed in concrete (below) suggests the contained foliage of courtyards found in older San Juan homes.

By adopting the wisdom of age-old tropical design, the house manages a form of energy efficiency too. With cross breezes welcomed into open rooms, there is no need for air-conditioning. The clever manipulation of sunlight means the artificial lights stay off until 7:30 or so in the evenings.

More than anything, Casa Delpin is a showcase of light in its many moods. Three deep cylindrical concrete skylights protrude downward from the living room's ceiling—two tilt east toward the morning sun, the third toward the west to pick up afternoon light. Delpin and Nuñez say they can tell what time it is from the cast of light. "In the tropics, almost any opening will create a pattern of light," Fúster says. "It's a way of having sunlight without having the intense glare."

In the evening, after the couple's six-year-old son Carlos has a swim in the living room and goes to bed, the family trades sunlight for moonlight, which shines through the ceiling panels and shimmers on the pool.

"Every moment has its own shapes and patterns," says Nuñez, who until recently worked as a producer in San Juan's film industry.

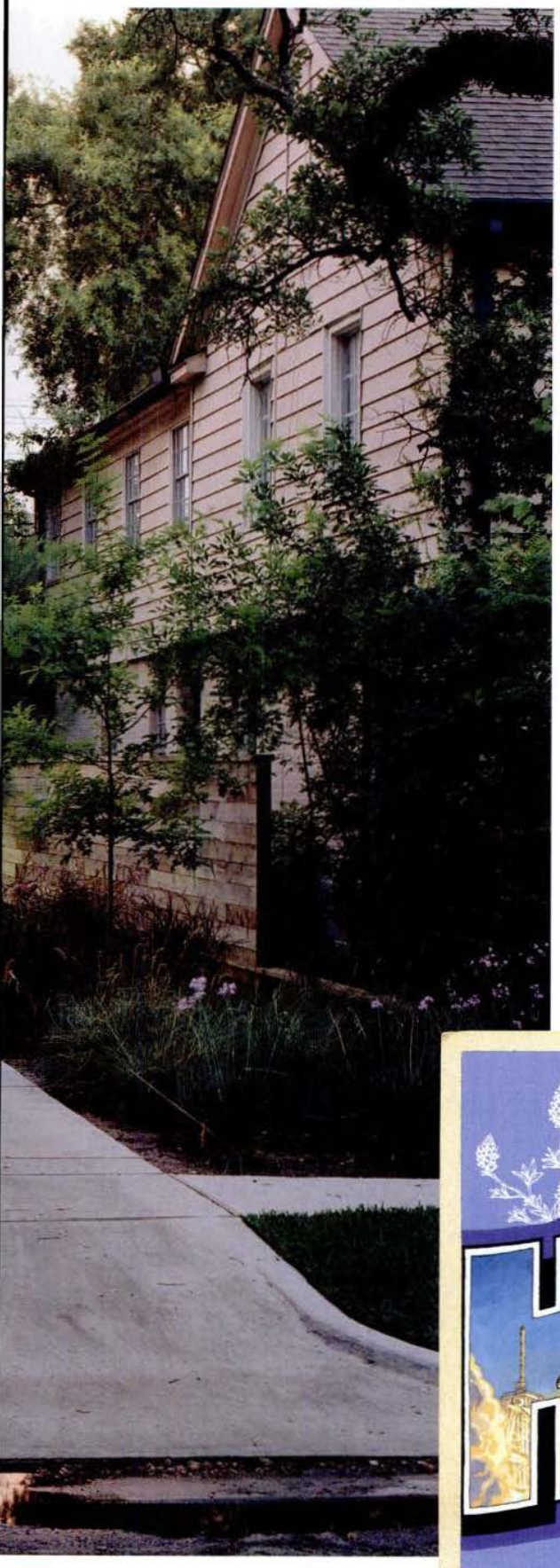
The couple entertains friends on an oversized sectional of Brazilian wenge wood, and they serve an eclectic array of dishes on a concrete ceiling panel that has been turned into a glass-topped dining table. It sits in an alcove off the pool with a shallow water channel running on two sides.

"We got what we wanted," Delpin says. "We're living the way our grandparents did, but in a new form." Intentionally or otherwise, Fúster managed to express Delpin's sentiments poetically through the design. At the far end of the living area a curved wall envelops a 45-foot-tall royal palm tree—a relic of Puerto Rico's past encased in a new concrete shell. ■

Story by Georgina Gustin

Photos by Daniel Hennessy

In the evening, family life shifts upstairs and the downstairs office sits in semi-darkness. The illuminated windows provide a diorama-like glimpse into the house from the street. "Pretty much all of our lives are on display," Dawn Finley jokes. Mark Wamble's 1953 Ford Crestline is parked in the carport, which doubles as an outdoor party space.



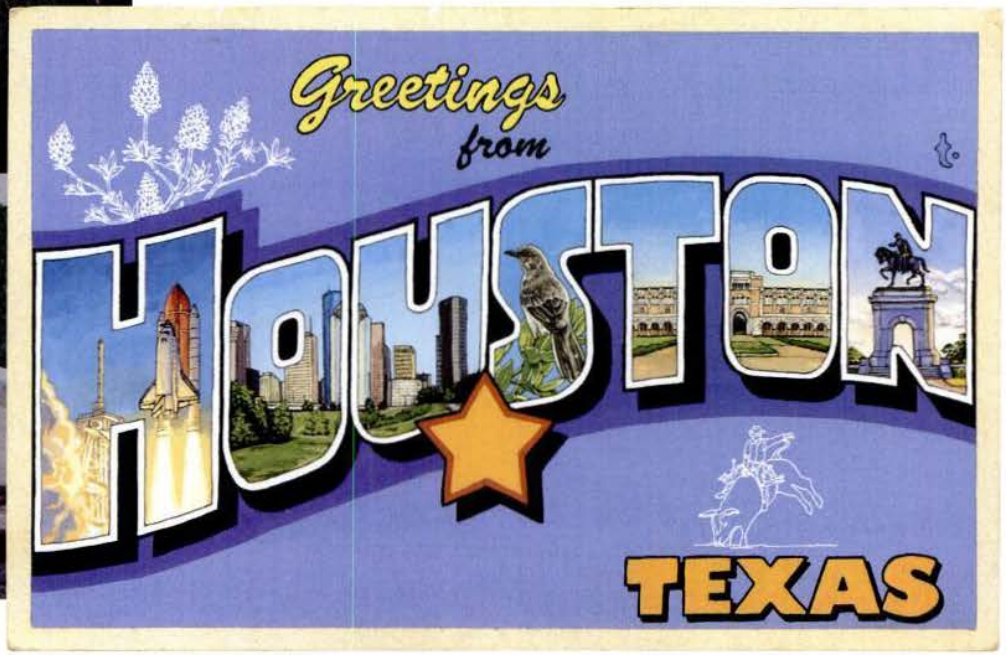
In Houston, where bigger means better and suburbanites in SUVs dominate the highways, architects Dawn Finley and Mark Wamble are anomalies: Their domestic lives fit into 1,200 square feet, and their commute to work is but a walk downstairs.

"We like the challenge of having a big life in a small house," says Wamble, "getting rid of what we don't need."

The couple spend most of their professional lives devising public projects and institutional spaces or cultivating heady architectural theories—both teach design at Rice School of Architecture, where they met—but had never designed a residence before their own. They wanted an unadorned and uncomplicated house, a reaction to the chaotic sprawl of the city around them. The result is a two-story rectangular box covered in corrugated metal that is a home upstairs and an office for their five-person design firm, Interloop—Architecture, below. At times, it's both on each floor. "We wanted to be above, separate from the work space, but sometimes they overlap," Finley says. "We have open acoustics. There are no secrets here."

After searching for a lot for two years, the couple settled on one at the edge of the city's museum district, wedged up against some trees with Highway 59 just beyond. While traffic-choked urban arteries don't always make great neighbors, particularly in a city that's notoriously congested, Finley and Wamble saw potential advantages. They oriented the 48-by-24-foot structure ▸

Project: Finley/Wamble House
Architect: Interloop—Architecture
Location: Houston, Texas



to maximize the views of the highway behind the house and some massive live oak trees in front. "The highway, the power lines, the bridge—some people would consider eyesores," Wamble notes. "We like them."

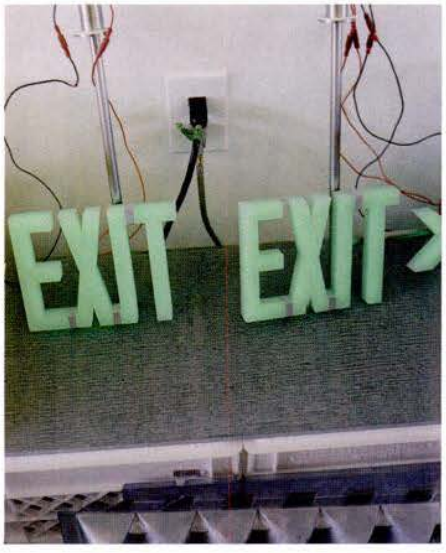
The placement has had some unexpected benefits: A breeze from the highway blows through the house, cutting the steamy Gulf Coast heat, and sometimes the traffic helps them put their three-year-old son, Leroy, to bed. "We talk about the trucks going by," Finley says. "It's a way to get him to sleep."

Finley and Wamble are known for their ingenious fabrications and elegant design solutions. In their design for the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, which features work by James Turrell, they built a contextually sympathetic and handicap-accessible bench—out of nearly 500 pounds of stone—that could fold and unfold with the touch of a hand. But for their house, they kept the plans simple and easy to execute. "This was a budget-driven project, and we tried to make the detailing as simple as possible," Wamble says, noting that most everything in the house was built with standard construction methods. "We were aware of what it would mean if we got obsessive about the details, so we made it very straightforward for the builders."

The design of the house is based on four-by-eight sheets of plywood, Wamble explains, which meant there was very little cutting and a very high yield. "Through the whole construction phase, we hauled off trash only three times, which is ridiculous," he notes. The simplicity of the design and the couple's choice of materials—sanded and stained structural pine decking for the floors, IKEA cabinets in the kitchen—kept the cost of the house at about $140 a square foot, in an area where $200 is more typical.

Houston, with its aerospace and oil-services industries, ▸

Finley rifles through one of the closets at the end of the living space next to the kitchen (opposite). The water-cut laundry-room doors and guardrail add a Houstonian touch to the otherwise spartan décor. The house is sheltered from the speeding traffic on Highway 59 by a fortress of trees (left). Leroy with his menagerie and the highway-spanning bridge beyond (above). Angus, the family's Llewellyn Setter, sleeps in the master bedroom (right).



Interloop—Architecture custom-designed these exit signs (above left) for the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas. One of the signs is also at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. A work station in the firm's office (above right). The office windows look onto the brick wall that buffers the property from the highway beyond (right). The kitchen (opposite) is IKEA; the floors, like those in the bathroom, are Brazilian slate.

has a ready population of high-tech fabricators, so when Finley and Wamble decided to indulge in just a couple of details, they turned, says Wamble, to their "little black book of super-skilled companies that don't normally do architecturally oriented projects but can."

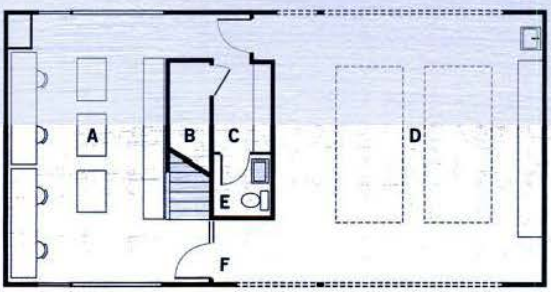
The metal doors to the laundry closet, decorated with water-cut holes, and the guardrail on the stairs were fashioned by a company that makes offshore drilling equipment. "Obviously they were overkill," Wamble says. "But they're here, so we took advantage of them." Finley and Wamble appreciate this kind of work: In addition to their office downstairs, they have a metal shop about a mile away where they build furniture and other interior pieces, such as custom-made lighted exit signs. "Mark used to take cars apart in high school," Finley explains. "He's interested in how machines work."

The corrugated-metal siding of the house bestows another Houstonian touch. The material is popular in the area because it won't get moldy and rot in the swampy air, and because it's easy to maintain. But it's also a local resource that evokes the shotgun shacks and warehouses of the city's pre–oil boom past. "This is the metal building capital of the country," Finley says. "So this material is coming off the coil in Houston."

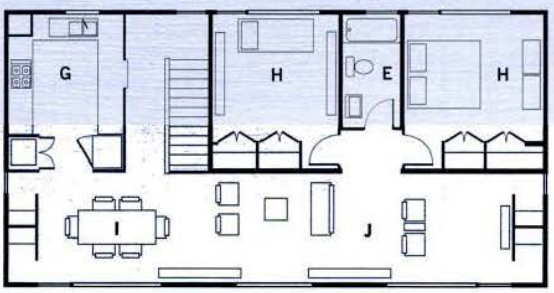
Though much of Finley and Wamble's work these days focuses on larger projects, they have designed four houses since their own, and have also contemplated solutions to meet the city's need for low-income housing. When invited by a local arts organization to design an affordable house—with an implausible price tag of $50,000—the couple instead conceived of a "high-performance housing delivery platform," known as the KLIPHouse, which, in theory, is a prefabricated adaptable foundation that allows owners to add and subtract commercially made components. ▸

Finley / Wamble House
Floor Plan

A Office
B Storage
C Printing
D Carport
E Bathroom
F Entry
G Kitchen
H Bedroom
I Dining Room
J Living Room



First Floor



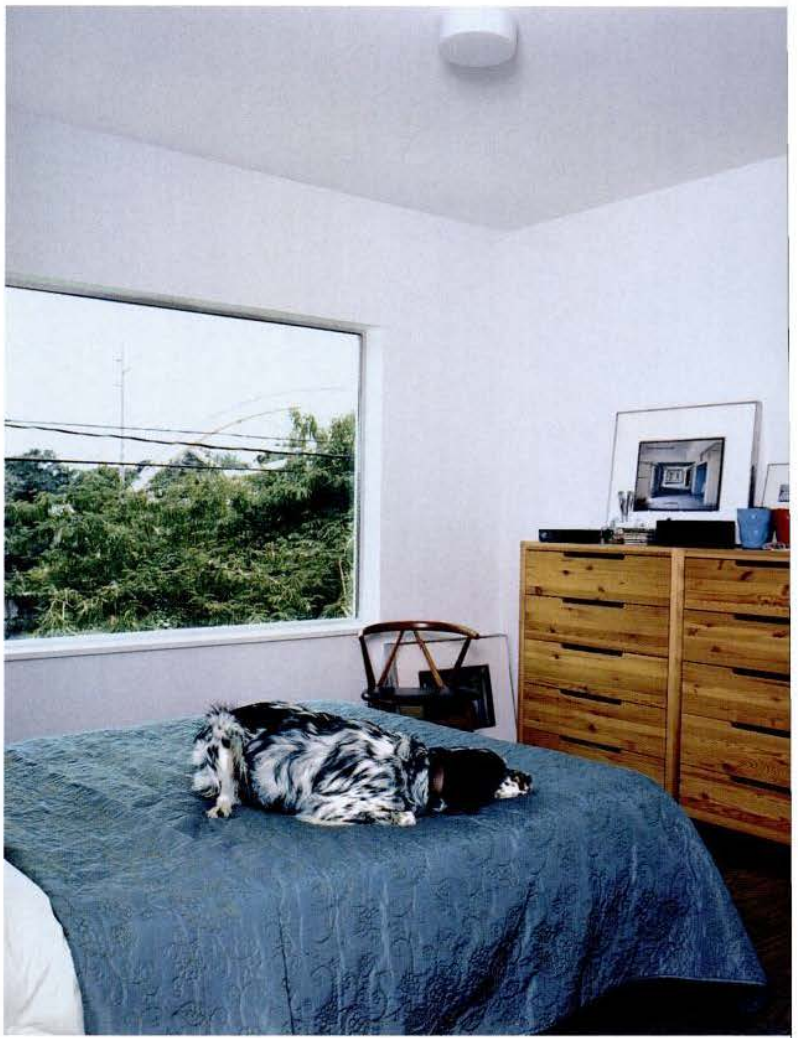
Second Floor

Yet, despite their brainy, sometimes highly conceptual work, even Finley and Wamble struggled with something as simple as the view from their very straightforward house. "We spent the most time on the windows because we didn't add anything else," explains Wamble.

Ultimately, they decided on placing two 11-by-5-foot windows plus one 8-by-5-foot window along the 48-foot living space, which runs the length of the house upstairs. The windows frame the gnarled, winding limbs of the live oaks outside and give the effect of sitting in some kind of Tolkienesque tree canopy. On the highway side of the house, eucalyptus trees and passing headlights cast shadows on the walls in the two bedrooms. In Leroy's bedroom a menagerie of plastic animals perched on the windowsill is projected into a shadowy eucalyptus jungle. "The trees make these shadows, and with the light, you get this beautiful detail," Finley explains.

The view from the windows also puts the house in its context, underscoring its distinction. "The house kind of looks like German workers' housing from the '30s," Wamble jokes. "But that wasn't the design objective." Beyond the front yard with its lawn and grid of prairie grasses, more traditional houses, in a smattering of styles, line the street. And beyond them, though out of view, lies the aesthetically hectic and random city, with all of its skyscrapers and Texas bigness.

Even Finley and Wamble— neither of whom are Texas-born (though Wamble was Texas-bred)—acknowledge they might need more space one day. The house is structured for a third story, and the lot could accommodate another building. But for now their compact home and workspace work perfectly in their non-Texan scale, and Finley, especially, is reluctant to even think about expanding. "If it got any bigger, we might ruin it," she says. "I love it the way it is." ■



Angus moves to greener pastures, opting to sleep on top of the bed rather than beneath it (above). Leroy tools around on his mini turbo tractor while munching on a gigantic cookie; his parents look on with envy (opposite).

Dawn Finley and Mark Wamble's Guide to Houston

The Menil Collection: An eccentric amalgamation of galleries, residential bungalows, and a Renzo Piano–designed museum that houses the art collection of John and Dominique de Menil. Also in the complex are the Rothko Chapel, the Cy Twombly Gallery, and Richmond Hall, which houses an installation by Dan Flavin. The residential bungalows, mostly painted "de Menil gray," can be rented. Finley and Wamble lived in one for three years.

1515 Sul Ross Street
(713) 525-9400
www.menil.org

The Live Oak Friends Meeting House: James Turrell, a practicing Quaker, designed the vaulted ceiling in the meetinghouse so it can be opened to the sky. The meetinghouse also opens its doors to the public every Friday at sunset so nonmembers can enjoy the space.

1318 West 26th Street
(713) 862-6685
www.friendshouston.org

The Glenwood Cemetery: Built in the 1870s, this cemetery is the park-like resting place of such Texas notables as Howard Hughes. A nice place for a contemplative stroll.

2525 Washington Avenue
(713) 864-7886

Kraftsmen Baking: "Because Houston is so humid, it's hard to get a good loaf of bread," Finley says. Kraftsmen Baking is an exception, with organic artisan breads, rolls and pastries, breakfast and lunch.

4100c Montrose
(713) 524-3737
www.kraftsmenbaking.com

Goode Company restaurants: This family-owned company operates six restaurants, three of which are next to each other—one serving Gulf Coast seafood with giant oyster po'boy sandwiches, a taqueria, and a BBQ joint that makes a mean Thanksgiving dinner.

Seafood: 2621 Westpark Drive
(713) 523-7154
BBQ: 5109 Kirby Drive
(713) 522-2530
Taqueria: 4902 Kirby Drive
(713) 520-9153
www.goodecompany.com


1851
TURBO

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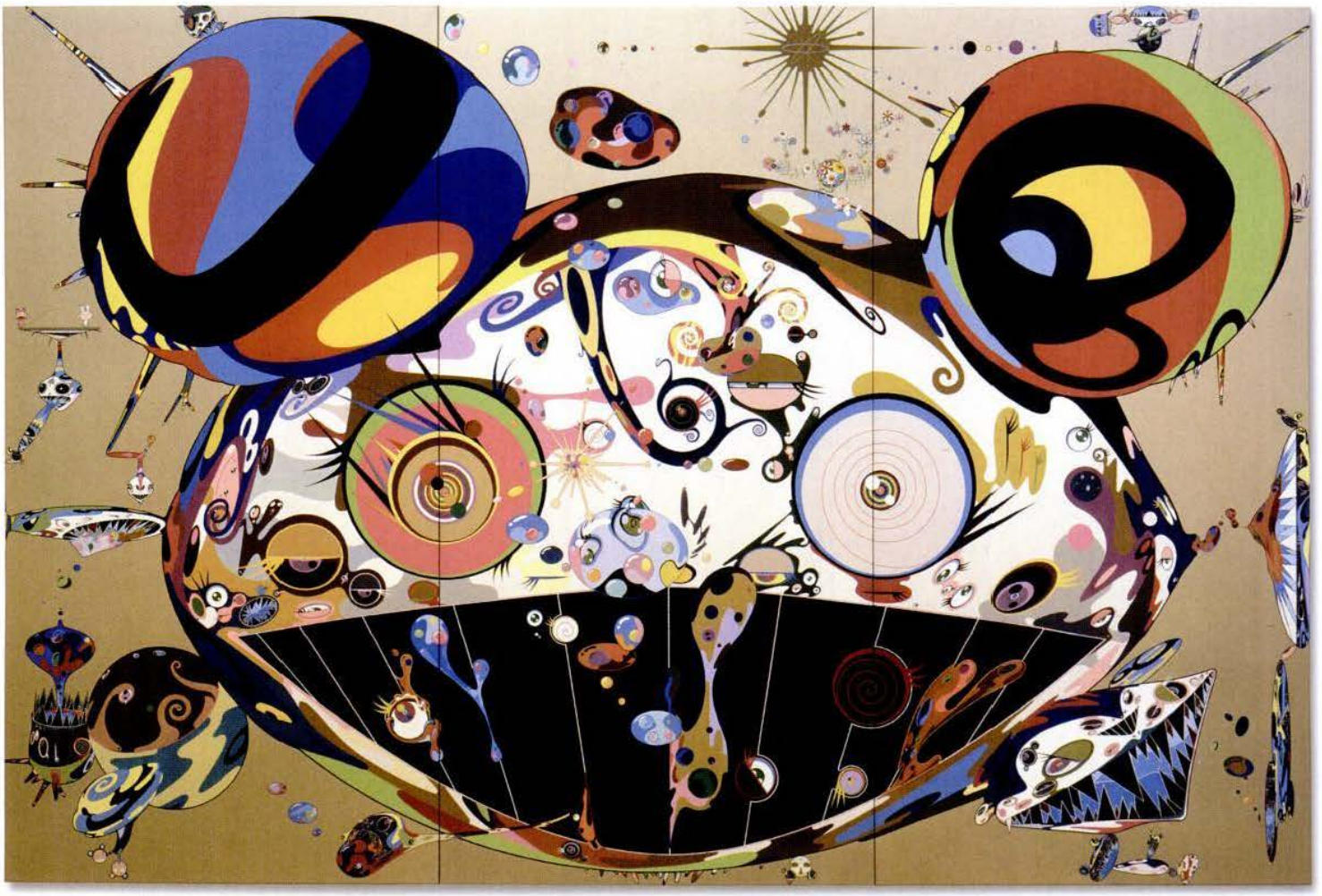


MOCA THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES moca.org

© *MURAKAMI* is made possible by endowment support from the Sydney Irmas Exhibition Endowment. The exhibition and publication are made possible by generous support from Maria and Bill Bell. Major support is provided by Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; Kathi and Gary Cypres; Gagosian Gallery; Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris and Miami; The Peter Norton Family Foundation; Dallas Price-Van Breda; Janet and Tom Unterman; Marianne Boesky; David Teiger; The MOCA Contemporaries; The Japan Foundation; and the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.

This exhibition is presented as part of the Millennium on View program. The Millennium Biltmore Hotel is MOCA's Official Hotel Sponsor.

ABOVE: *Tan Tan Bo*, 2001, acrylic on canvas mounted on board, 141½ x 212½ x 2½ in., collection of John A. Smith and Vicky Hughes, London, courtesy Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo,

True Hollywood Story

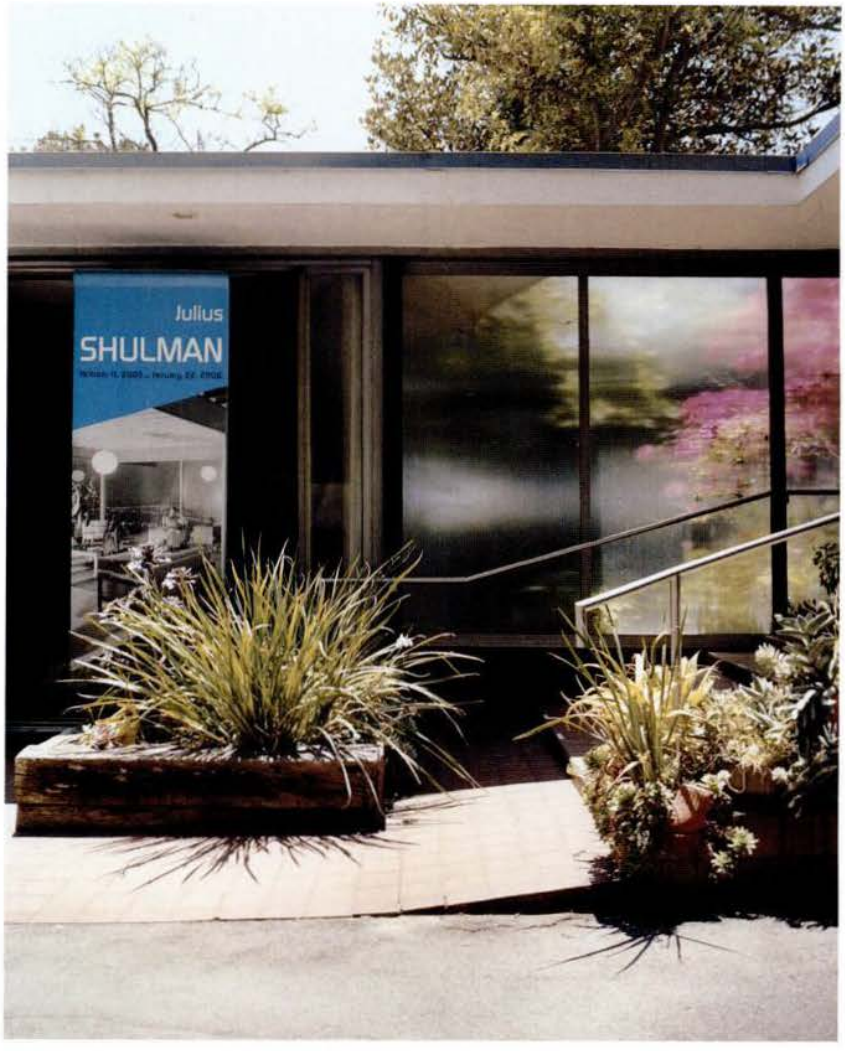
Seventy years, 7,000 photography sessions, and 70,000 negatives later, Julius Shulman still captures the elusive spirit of architecture with an unerring eye and indefatigable character.

"A wonderful mess" is how Shulman describes his desk. Interspersed among the family snapshots, mementos, and tchotchkes are several enlarged quotations, including one from *Art News*: "If buildings were people, those in Julius Shulman's photographs would be Grace Kelly: classically elegant, intriguingly remote."

Even if you're confused by the fork in the driveway, which slopes up to the Edenic apex of Laurel Canyon, or don't recognize architect Raphael Soriano's mid-century design landmark, you can't miss Julius Shulman's place. It's the one with the eight-foot-high banner bearing his name—an advertisement for his 2005 Getty Museum exhibition "Modernity and the Metropolis"—hanging before the door to the studio adjoining the house. As displays of ego go, it's hard to beat. Yet the voice calling out from behind it is friendly, even eager—"Come on in!" And drawing back the banner, one finds, not a monument, but a man: behind an appealingly messy desk, wearing blue suspenders and specs with lenses as big as Ring Dings, and offering a smile of roguish beatitude.

You'd smile, too. At 96, Shulman is the best known architectural photographer in the world, and one of the genre's most influential figures. Between 1936, when a fateful meeting with architect Richard Neutra began his career, and his semi-retirement half a century later, he used his instinctive compositional elegance and hair-trigger command of light to document more than 6,500 projects, creating images that defined many of the masterworks of 20th-century architecture. Most notably, Shulman's focus on the residential modernism of Los Angeles, which included photographing 18 of the 26 Case Study Houses commissioned by *Arts & Architecture* magazine between 1945 and 1967, resulted in a series of lyrical tableaux that invested the high-water moment of postwar American optimism with an arresting, oddly innocent glamour. Add to this the uncountable volumes and journals featuring his pictures, and unending requests for reprints, and you have an artist whose talent, timing, ubiquity, and sheer staying power have buried the competition—in some cases, literally.

Shulman's decision to call it quits in 1986 was ▸

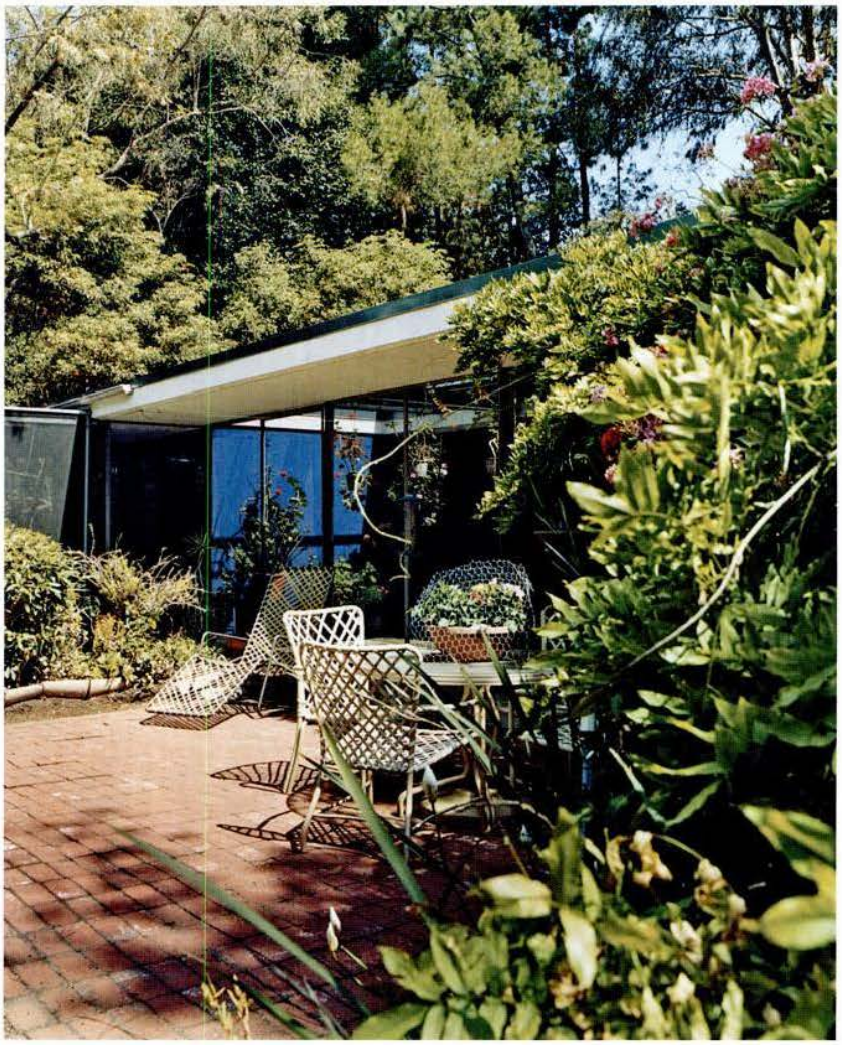


"I'm always identified as being the best architectural photographer in the world," declares Shulman. "I disclaim that. I say, 'One of the best.'" The photographer paid $2,500 for his two-acre property, and $40,000 for the Raphael Soriano–designed studio and house (above), into which he moved in 1950. "All in cash," Shulman says. "My mother taught us, 'Never have a mortgage.'" Over the ensuing decades, he says, "I planted hundreds of trees and shrubs, to emulate how I lived as a child [on a farm in Connecticut]."

motivated less by age than a distaste for postmodern architecture. But, he insists, "it wasn't quite retiring," citing the ensuing decade and a half of lectures, occasional assignments, and work on books. Then, in 2000, Shulman was introduced to a German photographer named Juergen Nogai, who was in L.A. from Bremen on assignment. The men hit it off immediately, and began partnering on work motivated by the maestro's brand-name status. "A lot of people, they think, It'd be great to have our house photographed by Julius Shulman," says Nogai. "We did a lot of jobs like that at first. Then, suddenly, people figured out, Julius is working again."

"I realized that I was embarking on another chapter of my life," Shulman says, the pleasure evident in his time-softened voice. "We've done many assignments"—Nogai puts the number at around 70—"and they all came out beautifully. People are always very cooperative," he adds. "They spend days knowing I'm coming. Everything is clean and fresh. I don't have to raise a finger." As regards the division of labor, the 54-year-old Nogai says tactfully, "The more active is me because of the age. Julius is finding the perspectives, and I'm setting up the lights, and fine-tuning the image in the camera." While Shulman acknowledges their equal partnership, and declares Nogai's lighting abilities to be unequaled, his assessment is more succinct: "I make the compositions. There's only one Shulman."

In fact, there seem to be many. There's Shulman the photographer, who handles three to five assignments a month (and never turns one down—"Don't have to. Everyone's willing to wait"), and the Shulman between hard covers, whose latest book, the three-volume, 950-page *Modernism Rediscovered*, will shortly be published by Taschen. But the Shulman of whom Shulman seems most proud is the educator. In 2005, he established an ►



"No landscape architect would do this mishmash," says Shulman of his beloved garden (opposite). "Behind my land is 53 more acres, which now belong to the Santa Monica Conservancy, so it's protected," he says. "My daughter's son will probably live here when he grows up—he's only 25 or 30 now." Though the photographer uses a walker—dubbed "the Mercedes"—to maintain his balance, he claims to have given up skiing and backpacking in the Sierras only a few years ago.

At Shulman's insistence, Soriano created a screened area (above) that protects the gardenside elevation of the house from, says the photographer, "excessive wind and glaring light. In hot weather, when I have the sliding glass doors open, I close the screens on the sides—otherwise it's all open to the coyotes and raccoons." In keeping with the off-the-shelf ethic of the Case Study era, Soriano used simple, durable materials that, after 57 years, remain intact.

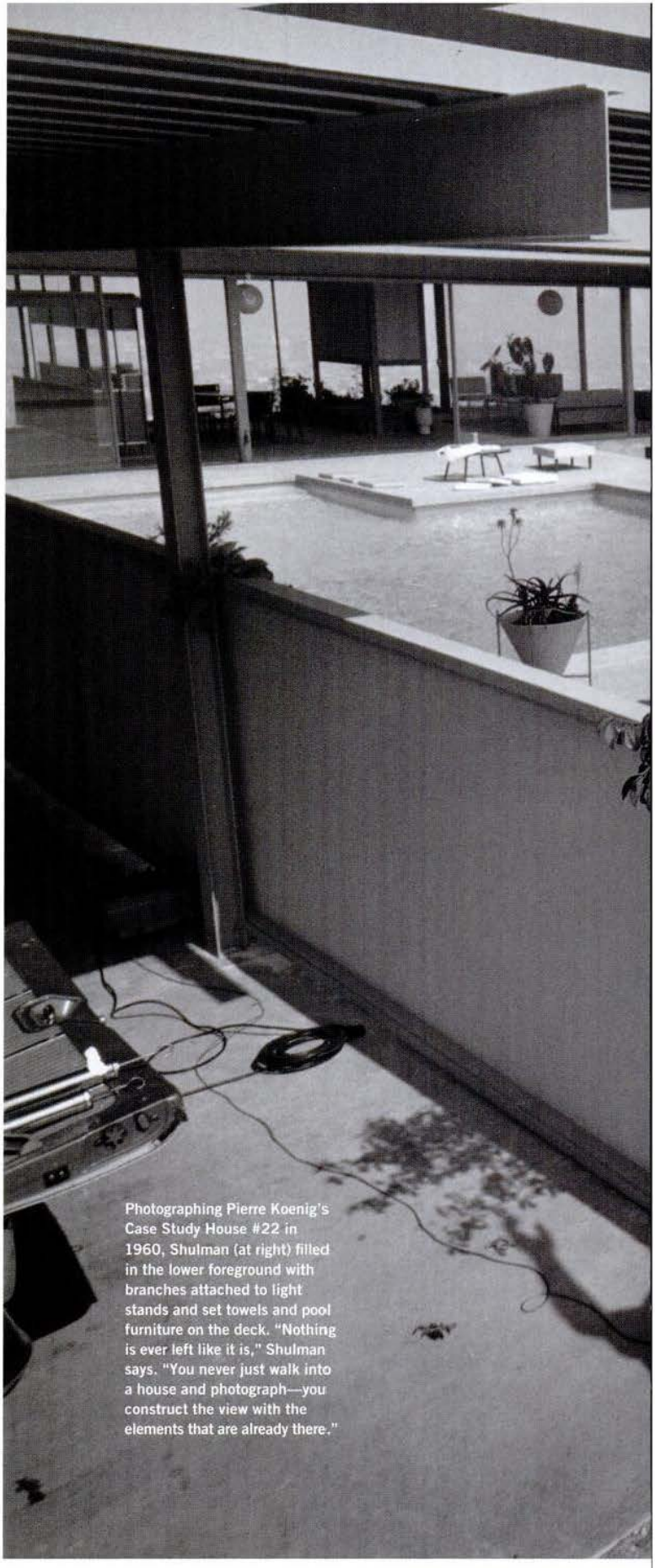
eponymous institute in conjunction with the Woodbury University in nearby Burbank, to provide, according to the school, "programs that promote the appreciation and understanding of architecture and design." Apart from a fellowship program and research center, the Julius Shulman Institute's principal asset is its founder, who has given dozens of talks at high schools across Southern California.

"The subject is the power of photography," Shulman explains. "I have thousands of slides, and Juergen and I have assembled them into almost 20 different lectures. And not just about architecture—I have pictures of cats and dogs, fashion pictures, flower photographs. I use them to do a lot of preaching to the students, to give them something to do with their lives, and keep them from dropping out of school."

It all adds up to a very full schedule, which Shulman handles largely by himself—"My daughter comes once a week from Santa Barbara and takes care of my business affairs, and does my shopping"—and with remarkable ease for a near-centenarian. Picking up the oversized calendar on which he records his appointments, Shulman walks me through a typical seven days: "Thom Mayne—we had lunch with him. Long Beach, AIA meeting. People were here for a meeting about my photography at the Getty [which houses his archive]. High school students, a lecture. Silver Lake, the Neutra house, they're opening part of the lake frontage, I'm going to see that. USC, a lecture. Then an assignment, the Griffith Observatory—we've already started that one."

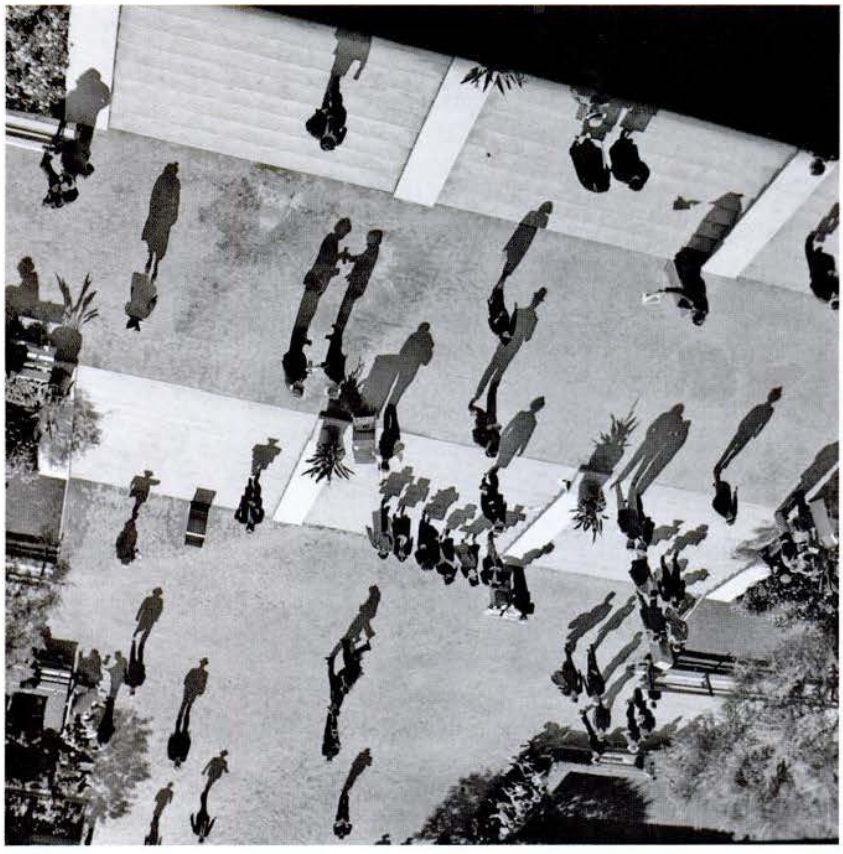
Yet rather than seeming overtaxed, Shulman fairly exudes well-being. Like many elderly people with nothing left to prove, and who remain in demand both for their talents and as figures of veneration (think of George Burns), Shulman takes things very easy: He knows what his employers and admirers want, is happy to provide it, and accepts the resulting reaffirmation of his legend with a mix of playfully rampant immodesty and heartfelt gratitude. As the man himself puts it, "The world's my onion."

Given the fun Shulman's having being Shulman, one might expect the work to suffer. But his passion for picture-making remains undiminished. "I was surprised at how engaged Julius was," admits the Chicago auction-house mogul Richard Wright, who hired Shulman to photograph Pierre Koenig's Case Study House #21 prior to selling it last year. "He did 12 shots in two days, which is a lot. And he really nailed them." Of this famous precision, says the writer Howard Rodman, whose John Lautner–designed home Shulman photographed in 2002: "There's a story about Steve McQueen, where a producer was trying to get him to sign on to a movie. The producer said, 'Look how much you change from the beginning to the end.' And McQueen said, 'I don't want to be the ▸



Photographing Pierre Koenig's Case Study House #22 in 1960, Shulman (at right) filled in the lower foreground with branches attached to light stands and set towels and pool furniture on the deck. "Nothing is ever left like it is," Shulman says. "You never just walk into a house and photograph—you construct the view with the elements that are already there."

PHOTOS COURTESY J. PAUL GETTY TRUST / JULIUS SHULMAN PHOTOGRAPHY ARCHIVE / THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE (ALL ARCHIVAL PHOTOS EXCEPT WHERE NOTED)



guy who learns. I want to be the guy who knows.' And Shulman struck me as the guy who knows."

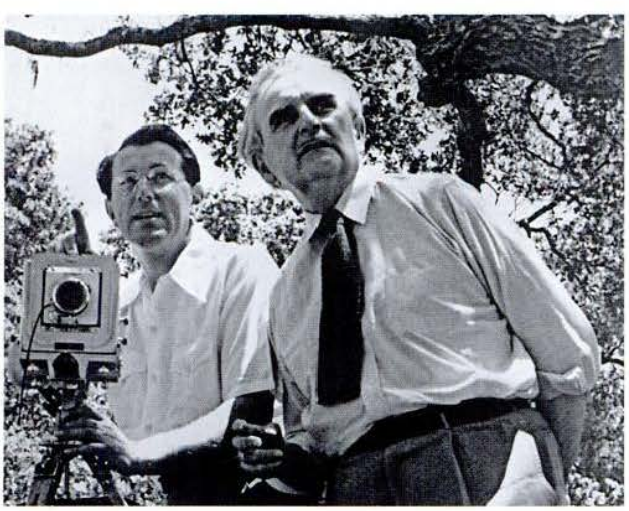
This becomes evident as, picking up the transparencies from his two most recent assignments, he delivers an impromptu master class. "We relate to the position of the sun every minute of the day," Shulman begins, holding an exterior of a 1910 Craftsman-style house in Oakland, by Bernard Maybeck, to the lamp atop his desk. "So when the sun moves around, we're ready for our picture. I have to be as specific as a sports photographer—even a little faster," he says, nodding at the image, in which light spills through a latticework overhang and patterns a façade. "This is early afternoon, when the sun is just hitting the west side of the building. If I'm not ready for that moment, I lose the day." He does not, however, need to observe the light prior to photographing: "I was a Boy Scout—I know where the sun is every month of the year. And I never use a meter."

Shulman is equally proud of his own lighting abilities. "I'll show you something fascinating," he says, holding up two exteriors of a new modernist home, designed for a family named Abidi, by architect James Tyler. In the first, the inside of the house is dark, resulting in a handsome, somewhat lifeless image. In the second, it's been lit in a way that seems a natural balance of indoor and outdoor illumination, yet expresses the structure's relationship to its site and showcases the architecture's transparency.

"The house is transfigured," Shulman explains. "I have four Ts. Transcend is, I go beyond what the architect himself has seen. Transfigure—glamorize, dramatize with lighting, time of day. Translate—there are times, when you're working with a man like Neutra, who wanted everything the way he wanted it—'Put the camera here.' And after he left, I'd put it back where I wanted it, and he wouldn't know the difference— ▸

Shulman's 1927 image of a track meet (right), taken with a Brownie box camera, got him top marks in his high school photography class—his only formal training. According to Joseph Rosa, author of a Shulman monograph, the photographer's 1938 photo of the Santa Anita racetrack (above)—printed upside down—is an example of his "testing his photographic compositions by flipping the stills to abstract the photograph and clarify the compositional frame."

PHOTOS COURTESY JULIUS SHULMAN PERSONAL ARCHIVE (THIS PAGE)

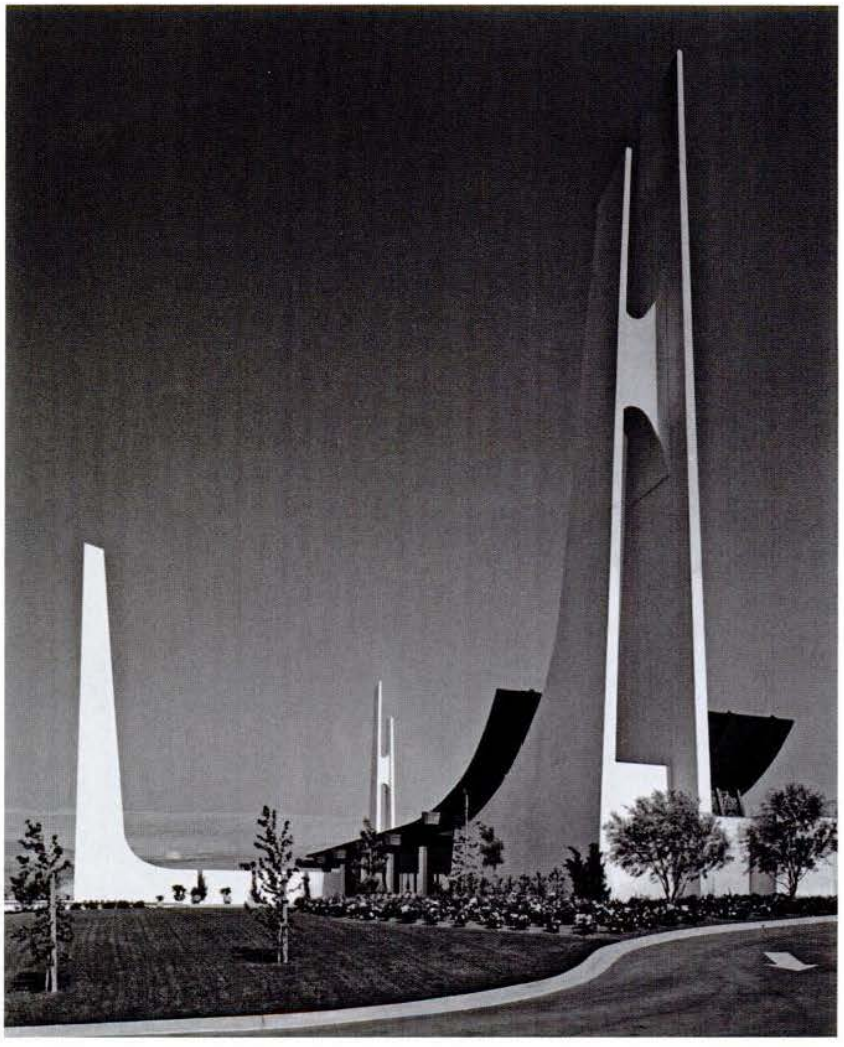


Shulman's relationship with architect Richard Neutra (seen at left with Shulman in 1950) was the most important of his professional life. His 1936 snapshots of Neutra's in-progress Kun House (above), taken when Shulman was just out of college and had yet to choose a career, so impressed the architect that he engaged the young novice to record more of his projects. By introducing him to Soriano, Gregory Ain, Rudolph Schindler, and other Southern California–based modernists, Neutra effectively handed Shulman a career. Though both men possessed big egos and strong opinions, their collaboration proved to be productive and long-lasting. "I said to Neutra's wife once, 'Richard never says anything to me about my photography,'" Shulman recalls. "'He thinks you're the best he's ever had,' she said. 'But he's afraid that if he tells you how great you are, you're going to charge him more money.'"

I translated. And fourth, I transform the composition with furniture movement."

To illustrate the latter, Shulman shows me an interior of the Abidi house that looks out from the living room, through a long glass wall, to the grounds. "Almost every one of my photographs has a diagonal leading you into the picture," he says. Taking a notecard and pen, he draws a line from the lower left corner to the upper right, then a second perpendicular line from the lower right corner to the first line. Circling the intersection, he explains, "That's the point of what we call 'dynamic symmetry.'" When he holds up the photo again, I see that the line formed by the bottom of the glass wall—dividing inside from outside—roughly mirrors the diagonal he's drawn. Shulman then indicates the second, perpendicular line created by the furniture arrangement. "My assistants moved [the coffee table] there, to complete the line. When the owner saw the Polaroid, she said to her husband, 'Why don't we do that all the time?'"

Shulman's remark references one of his signature gambits: what he calls "dressing the set," not only by moving furniture but by adding everyday objects and accessories. "I think he was trying to portray the lifestyle people might have had if they'd lived in those houses," suggests the Los Angeles–based architectural photographer Tim Street-Porter. "He was doing—with a totally positive use of the words—advertising or propagandist photographs for the cause." This impulse culminated in Shulman's introduction of people into his pictures—commonplace today, but virtually unique 50 years ago. "Those photographs—with young, attractive people having breakfast in glass rooms beside carports with two-tone cars—were remarkable in the history of architectural photography," Street-Porter says. "He took that to a wonderfully high level." ►



A glance at Shulman's 1965 photo of a San Diego parking garage (right) shows why he is so popular with architects: He can find visual elegance in almost any structure. "[Architecture critic] Esther McCoy said that I was able to detect the essence of a design," Shulman explains. "My method was to embrace what architects were trying to convey and show it in my photographs." A 1965 image of a memorial chapel (above), designed by Albert C. Martin and Associates, in Rose Hills, California, further demonstrates Shulman's compositional skill.

Though Shulman is primarily associated with California's residential architecture, he in fact photographed every kind of structure, both in America and abroad. And not just buildings, but their surroundings: According to Wim de Wit, head of special collections and visual resources at the Getty Research Center, which houses Shulman's archive, the photographer's impulse to contextualize his subjects created—almost by accident—an invaluable record of L.A.'s growth from the 1950s through the '80s. "From an urban historical point of view, it's really very important," de Wit says. In Shulman's 1975 image of an El Paso, Texas, performing arts center (above), the photographer used the principal building's watery reflection to create a horizon line and provide visual balance. Shulman's angular, off-kilter 1967 depiction of a San Diego stadium (right) captures the vitality of sport.

Surprisingly, Shulman underplays this aspect of his oeuvre. The idea, he explains, is simply to "induce a feeling of occupancy. For example, in the Abidi house, I put some wineglasses and bottles on the counter, which would indicate that people are coming for dinner. Then there are times I'll select two or three people—the owner of a house, or the children—and put them to work. Sometimes it's called for."

"Are you pleased with these photographs?" I ask as he sets them aside.

"I'm pleased with all my work," he says cheerfully. "I tell people in my lectures, 'If I were modest, I wouldn't talk about how great I am.'" Yet when I ask how he developed his eye, Shulman's expression turns philosophical. "Sometimes Juergen walks ahead of me, and he'll look for a composition. And invariably, he doesn't see what I see. Architects don't see what I see. It's God-given," he says, using the Yiddish word for an act of kindness—"a mitzvah."

I suggest a tour of the house, and Shulman moves carefully to a rolling walker he calls "the Mercedes" and heads out of the studio and up the front steps. As a plaque beside the entrance indicates, the 3,000-square-foot, three-bedroom structure, which Shulman commissioned in 1948 and moved into two years later, was landmarked by L.A.'s Cultural Heritage Commission as the only steel-frame Soriano house that remains as built. Today, such Case Study–era residences are as fetishized (and expensive) as Fabergé eggs. But when Shulman opens the door onto a wide, cork-lined hallway leading to rooms that, after six decades, remain refreshing in their clarity of function and communication, use of simple, natural materials, and openness to the out-of-doors, I'm reminded that the movement's motivation was egalitarian, not elitist: to produce well-designed, affordable homes for young, middle-class families.

"Most people whose houses I photographed didn't use their sliding doors," Shulman says, crossing the living room toward his own glass sliders. "Because flies and lizards would come in; there were strong winds. So I told Soriano I wanted a transition—a screened-in enclosure in front of the living room, kitchen, and bedroom to make an indoor/outdoor room." Shulman opens the door leading to an exterior dining area. A bird trills loudly. "That's a wren," he says, and steps out. "My wife and I had most of our meals out here," he recalls. "Beautiful."

We continue past the house to Shulman's beloved garden—he calls it "the jungle"—a riot of vegetation that overwhelms much of the site, and frames an almost completely green canyon view. "I planted hundreds of trees and shrubs—back there you can see my redwoods," he says, gesturing at the slope rising at the property's rear. "Seedlings, as big as my thumb. They're 85 feet tall now." He pauses to consider an ominously large paw print in the path. "It's too big for a dog. A bobcat wouldn't be that big, either. It's a mystery," Shulman decides, pushing the Mercedes past a ficus as big as a baobab.

The mystery I find myself pondering, as we walk beside the terraced hillside, is the one he cited himself: the source of his talent. In 1936, Shulman was an amateur photographer—gifted, but without professional ambition—when he was invited by an architect friend to visit Richard Neutra's Kun House. Shulman, who'd never seen a modern residence, took a handful of snapshots with the Kodak vest-pocket camera his sister had given him, and sent copies to his friend as a thank-you. When Neutra saw the images, he requested a meeting, bought the photos, and asked the 26-year-old if he'd like more work. Shulman accepted and—virtually on a whim—his career took off. ▸

Shulman famously introduced models into his photographs—oftentimes the true residents—to "induce a feeling of occupancy." The motivation, de Wit observes, was personal: "He loved mid-century-modern architecture, and his goal was to make people understand that it didn't have to be cold, you can really live in it." As producer, director, and set decorator, Shulman produced photographs rich in narrative, such as this comic/sinister 1959 image of architect Robert Skinner's Beverly Hills home (left)—the true protagonist of which appears to be a toy duck.

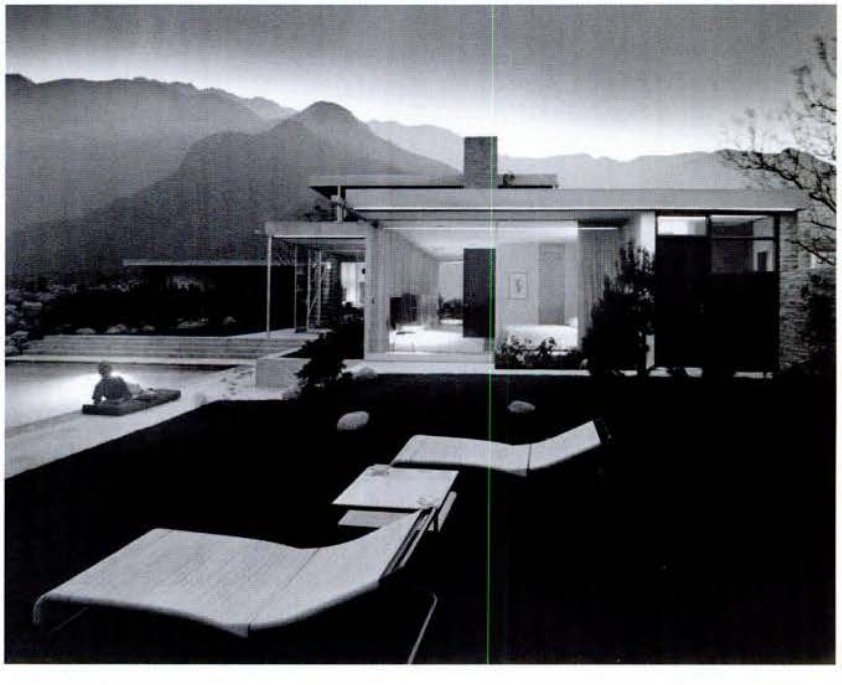
The photographer's 1959 image of Pierre Koenig's Case Study House #21 (opposite) showcases his use of color, which remains partly a business decision. "We take color and black-and-white," Shulman explains. "Magazines prefer one or the other, so we prepare to have both. But that's not enough," he continues. "All my photos show the plan of the house. I show a room looking one way, then I've got a reverse view with the same elements from the other direction. So the editors don't need a plan from the architect."

When I ask Shulman what Neutra saw in his images, he answers with a seemingly unrelated story. "I was born in Brooklyn in 1910," says this child of Russian-Jewish immigrants. "When I was three, my father went to the town of Central Village in Connecticut, and was shown this farmhouse—primitive, but [on] a big piece of land. After we moved in, he planted corn and potatoes, my mother milked the cows, and we had a farm life.

"And for seven years, I was imbued with the pleasure of living close to nature. In 1920, when we came here to Los Angeles, I joined the Boy Scouts, and enjoyed the outdoor-living aspect, hiking and camping. My father opened a clothing store in Boyle Heights, and my four brothers and sisters and my mother worked in the store. They were businesspeople." He flashes a slightly cocky smile. "I was with the Boy Scouts."

We arrive at a sitting area, with a small pool of water, a fireplace, and a large sculpture (purchased from one of his daughter's high school friends) made from Volkswagen body parts. Shulman lowers himself onto a bench and absorbs the abundant natural pleasures. "When I bought this land, my brother said, 'Why don't you subdivide? You'll make money.'" He looks amused. "Two acres at the top of Laurel Canyon, and the studio could be converted into a guest house—it could be sold for millions."

He resumes his story. "At the end of February 1936, I'd been at UCLA, and then Berkeley, for seven years. Never graduated, never majored. Just audited classes. I was driving home from Berkeley"—Shulman hesitates dramatically—"and I knew I could do anything. I was even thinking of getting a job in the parks department raking leaves, just so I could be outside. And within two weeks, I met Neutra, by chance. March 5, 1936—that day, I became a photographer. Why not?" ▶



Charles Eames at home in Case Study House #8, Pacific Palisades, 1958 (opposite). Shulman's two most famous images, of Neutra's Kaufmann House in Palm Springs, taken in 1947 (right), and Koenig's Case Study House #22, 1960 (above), have much in common. Both required long exposure times so that the twilight sky could be "burned in." Indeed, in the Koenig photo, the distant lights of Los Angeles can be seen "through" the model on the right, who took her final position long after Shulman opened the lens. Both angles, which seem the perfect culmination of careful consideration, were discovered by accident. With the Kaufmann House, Shulman says, "I suddenly looked outside, and saw the soft light above the mountains," and, walking outside the Koenig house, "I saw to my astonishment that the girl on the right was sitting on air." And in neither case did Shulman realize what he had. "I put the film away, never dreaming or anticipating anything," he says.

Photos by Catherine Ledner

Hearing this remarkable tale, I understand that Shulman has answered my question about his talent with an explanation of his nature. What Neutra perceived in the young amateur was an outdoorsman's independent spirit and an enthusiasm for life's possibilities, qualities that, as fate would have it, merged precisely with the boundless optimism of the American Century—an optimism, Shulman instinctively recognized, that was embodied in the modern houses that became, as Street-Porter says, "a muse to him."

"[Shulman] always says proudly that Soriano hated his furniture," says Wim de Wit, the Getty Research Institute curator who oversees Shulman's collection. "He says, 'I don't care; when I sit in a chair I want to be comfortable.' He does not think of himself as an artist. 'I was doing a business,' he says. But when you look at that overgrown garden, you know—there is some other streak in him." That streak—the free soul within the unpretentious, practical product of the immigrant experience—produced what Nogai calls "a seldom personality": a Jewish farm boy who grew up to create internationally recognized American cultural artifacts—icons that continue to influence our fantasies and self-perceptions.

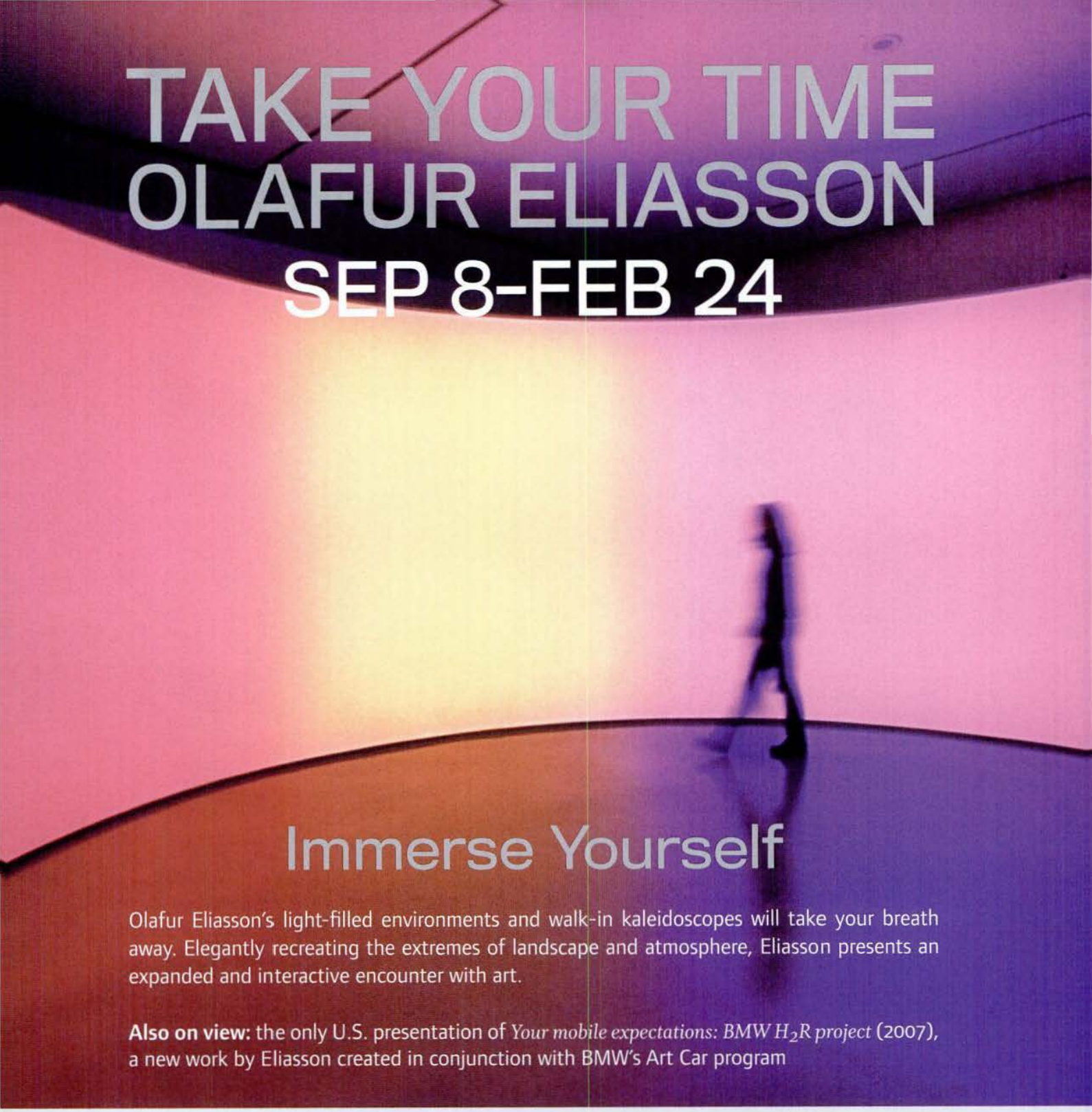
I ask Shulman if he's surprised at how well his life has turned out. "I tell students, 'Don't take life too seriously—don't plan nothing nohow,'" he replies. "But I have always observed and respected my destiny. That's the only way I can describe it. It was meant to be."

"And it was a destiny that suited you?"

At this, everything rises at once—his eyebrows, his outstretched arms, and his peaceful, satisfied smile. "Well," says Shulman, "here I am." ■

See Julius Shulman in action in a short video at dwell.com

"My birthday is 10/10/10—it's a magic number," Shulman says. His orderly studio (above) reflects a famously organized mind. "Julius had about 7,000 jobs, and there are about 70,000 negatives," says de Wit. Shulman also maintained comprehensive records. "That was his selling point to us," recalls de Wit of the discussions regarding the acquisition of Shulman's archive. "He said, 'Name a job. I'll have the negatives for you in 30 seconds.'"



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Olafur Eliasson, *360 degree room for all colours* (installation view), 2002; Private collection, courtesy Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; © 2007 Olafur Eliasson

Story by Davy Rothbart

Illustrations by Christopher Silas Neal

All Roads Lead to Home

Davy Rothbart is the editor of *Found* magazine, a frequent contributor to public radio's *This American Life*, and author of the story collection *The Lone Surfer of Montana, Kansas*. His documentary film, *How We Survive*, about the punk rock band Rise Against was released by Geffen Records in 2006.

When my first book came out, in 2004, I was 29 years old and living in my parents' basement. The publisher, Simon & Schuster, suggested a six-city book tour: They'd fly me around, feed me good food, and put me up in fancy hotels. But knowing how that story would end—two weeks later, back in my parents' basement—I proposed an eight-month, 50-state, 136-city tour instead. They told me, "You're on your own. Good luck!"

I bought a Dodge Ram van for two grand on eBay and hit the road in April with my little brother, Peter, who's a musician. Each night, at a bar, bookstore, or café, I'd read from my book, Peter would play a few songs, and then we'd cruise around the sad edges of towns like Cincinnati and Pittsburgh, looking for a dark street where we could park the van and crash out. Sometimes, after our little show, we'd just hit the highway, burning for the next city, one of us driving while the other slept in back.

Living out of a van wasn't as bad as you'd think. In a lot of ways, it was better than living in Michigan in my parents' dank basement—no earwigs; no chores. And it offered certain amenities you don't often find in a house, like a ten-disc changer, and cruise control. The back seat of the van folded down into a surprisingly comfortable bed, and the front passenger seat reclined all the way. We'd stuff cardboard displays with the cover of my book into the van windows to keep out the morning light, and we used the little cubbyholes under each seat as dressers; toothbrushes went in the glove box. In lieu of actual showers, we took "tour showers"—some Old Spice Fresh Stick deodorant under the arms and a few spritzes of body mist. At the end of the night, it felt cozy and adventurous to curl up in my sleeping bag in the back seat and drift off while we clattered down the interstate, Peter drumming his hands on the steering wheel, rocking out to the local '80s soul stations, which played, with eerie frequency, Lisa Lisa & Cult Jam's lone smash, "Head to Toe."

But inside six weeks, van life began to lose its luster. For starters, there was the question of where to pee when you woke up at 7 a.m. in a cold suburban cul-de-sac. My brother and I became adept at ducking into people's side yards undetected to water their shrubs. All dignity was lost, though, the morning I was finally caught. There was no yelling, no shotgun waving, no threats, just the sad, ▸

You guys should buy these paintings now.

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haunted stares of two eight-year-old kids. "I'm on a book tour!" I offered in miserable defense. The kids watched silently until I'd finished, before finally slinking off, world-weary, and ashamed for me.

Some nights were cold. Every night was lonely. Parked behind an auto parts store in Portland, Maine, we watched a man and his girlfriend, drunk or high or perhaps in withdrawal, shout at each other for 45 minutes at the other end of the lot. In Sioux Falls, South Dakota, a guy tried to break into the van in the middle of the night, only to dash off cursing when he realized it was our home, and that we were sleeping inside. But the low point really came in New Haven, Connecticut, where we'd unknowingly camped out in an illegal parking spot and woke up hurtling down the street at 45 miles an hour hooked to a tow truck. That had never happened when I lived in my parents' basement.

We decided to try a new tack. After our shows, we'd appeal to the audience, asking if anyone was willing to put us up for the night. The problem with this plan, we soon realized, was that the people most likely to take in a couple of scruffy guys who'd been living in a van were usually the kind of folks who lived in apartments that made our van look like the Four Seasons. In St. Louis, we followed a friendly young couple back to their home—an abandoned house where they'd been squatting for six months, sleeping on gym mats, meekly heated by Coleman lanterns. Giant spiders leered from the rafters, daring us to close our eyes. In Vancouver, a man showed us into his place, apologizing for the stench of urine. "Our kitty, Esmerelda, is so old," he explained, "she can't always find the litter box." Who was I to say anything? I'd been whizzing in hedges for the past couple of months. I went to sleep on a sagging, stinking couch with poor Esmerelda curled up at my feet, and in the morning, when I woke up and started petting her, I realized she'd died at some point during the night.

Peter and I learned to be noncommital. We'd ask if people wanted to "hang out" and "maybe put us up," which allowed us, if necessary, a window for hasty retreat. It became a general rule: If you have to move a half-eaten Hot Pocket off the sofa before you sleep, you're better off in the van. Some nights a few different people offered to let us stay over, and we'd grill each of ▸

them about the quality of their accommodations as though we were signing a 12-month lease.

In Baltimore, our luck began to change. A couple named Carly and Twig brought us home to the old three-story building they'd bought in a burned-out neighborhood. They'd restored the gloomy, dilapidated former dentist's office into a gleaming art space, with a recording studio and a storefront on the ground floor, a living space upstairs, and a finished loft on the third floor in which they hosted DJ parties and bands on the weekends. They'd even restored one room to its former glory, styling it with a reclining dentist's chair and an overhead swing lamp, while another room was kept completely untouched—absolutely trashed—a diorama-like reminder of how much work had gone into the building.

In South Florida, we stayed with a couple of guys in the jungle west of Homestead. They'd hacked a clearing in the brush, and built a primitive yet spacious open-air home out of wood and rope and canvas tarps, webbed with fine screen to keep the bugs out. We ate a delicious meal cooked over a camp stove, and, as night fell, we twirled in dangling chairs, sipping wine and listening to the swamp sounds, before falling asleep in hammocks. In Houston, a week later, a couple with two young children invited us to sleep at their place—a tiny old church they'd converted into a microcinema called Aurora Picture Show. The pews proved to be a bit stiff during the night, but in the morning we got to watch the latest Werner Herzog flick. In New Orleans, an old-timer invited us to stay on his houseboat. The engine hummed as we churned upriver, the gentle bayou breezes brushing our faces. At dawn, we watched pelicans swoop down for early breakfasts, and Peter turned to me and said, "That's the best night of sleep I've ever had in my life."

What I found amazing, as we pressed on through summer and into the fall, was the fact that our good luck held, and that we continued to be graced by the kindness of strangers. In odd corners of the country, city after city, we discovered people who had created dazzling, unusual homes with imagination, hard work, and often very little money. In Lexington, Kentucky, a man had refashioned an old, crumbling ice factory into a performance venue and living space. In Arcata, California, we stayed with a woman in a tiny house she'd lashed together in the ▸

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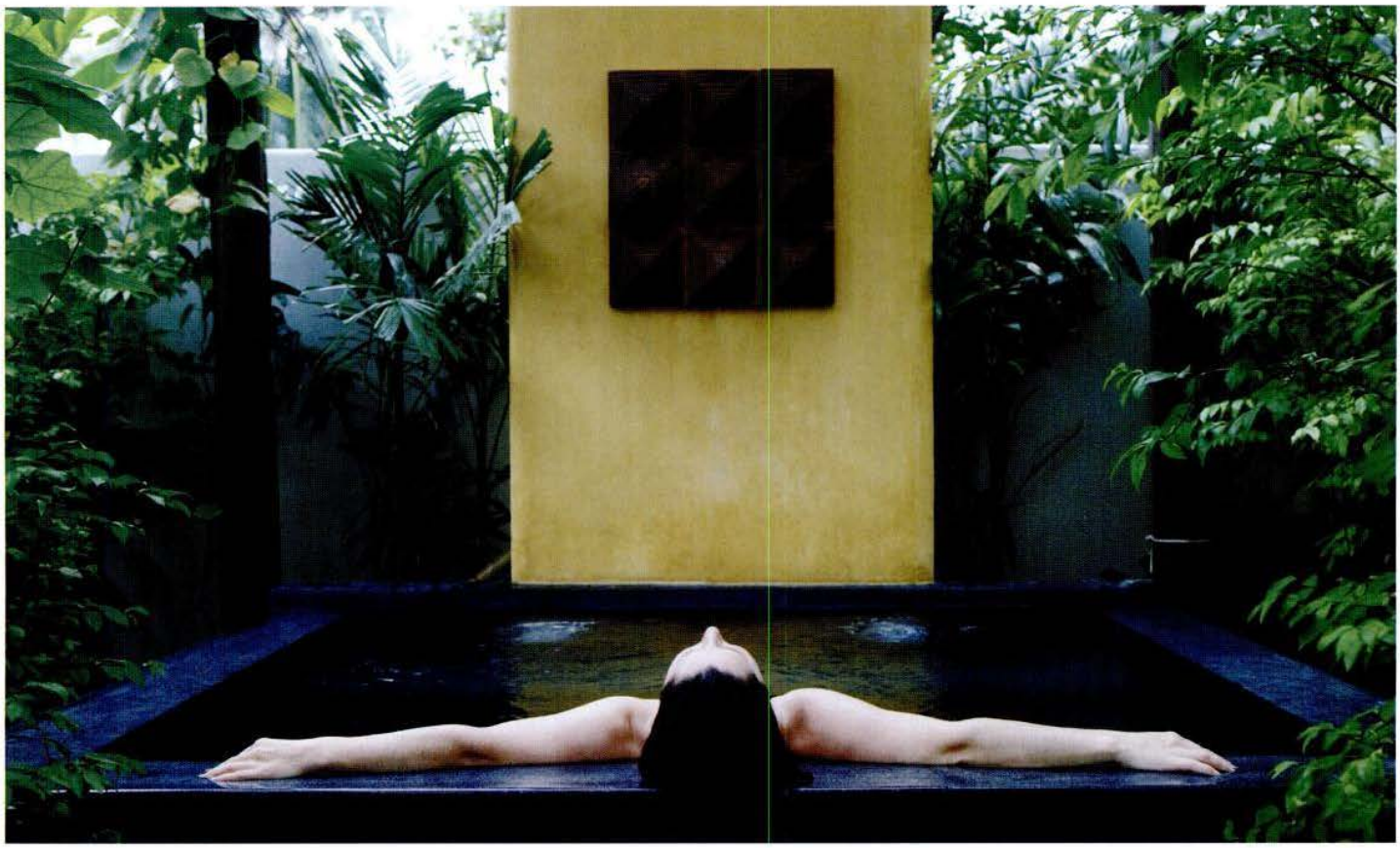

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branches of four adjacent trees. In San Luis Obispo, we slept in a teepee a guy had built on the beach.

My favorite place was outside of Taos, New Mexico. Across the Rio Grande gorge, on the high-desert plateau, a young woman had built a beautiful, solar-powered Earthship out of old tires and mud. Mostly underground, the house, from the outside, looked like a pile of debris, but the inside was stunning with its huge window framing the mountain panorama, a mini-greenhouse stocked with dozens of flowering plants, a kitchen and bathroom that ran on recycled rainwater, and a cavelike loft with an enormous bed and a skylight carved out of the clay above. Green stars glittered overhead by the thousands. Coyotes bayed. The moon swung across the sky. I very nearly abandoned the tour and anchored in.

By mid-December, we'd hit 47 states and were on the last leg of our trip, heading home to Michigan. After all the weird and wonderful places we'd stayed, the prospect of moving back into my parents' basement twisted a sword in my belly. In a week, I'd be back to the old routine—sucking up floodwater with a Shop-Vac every time a winter thaw melted off a bit of snow. Maybe I could just find a pleasant place to park the van, and make that my permanent address. But by this point, the van smelled like a hockey arena, and tour showers don't cut it when you're not on tour.

Before our eight-month road trip, I'd never put much stock into the importance of having a home I was proud of. But again and again, I'd seen the way living in splendid digs had brought a shine to the faces of those who'd invited us in. I longed to share that sense of stability and comfort. Throughout our journey, we'd been treated with great generosity—it was time for me to balance the scales, and find a home where I could welcome in wandering strangers.

Amazingly, I got a phone call out of the blue: My friend Dorothy, who lived in a magnificent brick farmhouse built in 1873 next to the train station in downtown Ann Arbor, told me that one of her roommates was moving out, and that I could move into the little room in the attic if I wanted. She offered me a few days to think it over, but I didn't need them.

It's been three years. I'm very happy here. And I can pee anytime I choose. ■

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Et tu, Bertus?

People often introduce Bertus Mulder by talking about his extraordinary pedigree. He is one of the last surviving links to the glory days of the Dutch avant-garde—a one-time pupil of the radical architect/artist Max Bill, and a longtime assistant to Gerrit Rietveld, whose architecture and design were seminal influences on what became known as the International Style. The next thing you might hear about Mulder is that he is remarkably busy these days, engaged in a host of modernist restoration projects and occasional new buildings at an age (78) when reminiscence and even retirement would be perfectly understandable pursuits. Both of these descriptions are important, but both miss the most interesting thing about Mulder, and the source of his own considerable influence: He approaches architecture as an interdisciplinary collaboration, and he is most at home with his creativity when he is sharing it.

"I'm the one they ask to do the impossible," says Mulder, with a wry smile. He's referring to the difficulties ▸

Despite having no experience in restoration, Bertus Mulder was the natural choice to renovate the iconic 1924 Rietveld Schröder House (below), because he had "inhabited Rietveld's universe."

PHOTO BY BERTUS MULDER

Rietveld's Red and Blue chair (right), designed in 1917, is a dramatic composition of planes and lines. The colors were inspired by Mondrian, a fellow member of the influential De Stijl movement.

inherent in one of his current projects—a complex plan to rescue the Anne Frank House from the wear and tear caused by the roughly 900,000 people who come to visit it each year. But extreme technical challenges characterize a lot of Mulder's work. Take, for example, the 2005 exhibition space he created in collaboration with the conceptual artist Stanley Brouwn, on a new housing estate outside Utrecht. The Building, as it's called, is a dreamlike minimalist structure composed of two white, glass-punctuated rectangles, one balancing with seeming weightlessness on top of the other. Or the design scheme that Mulder carefully superimposed on the Aula, a ceremonial building Rietveld designed in the 1960s, near the end of his life (when, coincidentally, Brouwn was beginning to win recognition for his works featuring measured distances).

Then there is the *ne plus ultra* of restorations—or collaborations, since that is closer to what happened when Mulder agreed to revitalize the Rietveld Schröder ▸

Color featured prominently in the Rietveld Schröder House (left), although Rietveld later banished it from his work. Mulder's restoration reinstated the yellow stacking cabinet on the left.

PHOTOS BY KIM ZWARTS (INTERIOR) AND COURTESY CENTRAAL MUSEUM, UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS (INTERIOR AND CHAIR)


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Despite its stylistic modernity, the house was built using the artisanal techniques and traditional materials of the 1920s. Mulder was careful to preserve this imperfect, handmade quality in his restoration.

House, a job that was completed in the mid-1980s. Built in 1924 in what was then the outskirts of Utrecht, the house grew out of a set of ideas concerning abstraction and purity in art and architecture, known as De Stijl, that are associated with Piet Mondrian, among others.

The extraordinary house that Rietveld built for his client, lover, and eventual partner, Truus Schröder, is often described as the first truly modern building. Rietveld had trained as a furniture maker and by 1908 was already experimenting with modern forms—straight lines, geometric shapes. In 1917, he designed the Red and Blue chair (a dramatic composition of planes and angles that were painted in discrete colors), which became an icon of the De Stijl movement. From there, he began designing whole interiors, advocating very simple living and the use of open-plan layouts. The interiors of the Schröder house are open plan, with movable walls and otherwise transformable features; the windows can be opened out completely, removing the indoor-outdoor boundary. None of this had been done before.

But by 1974, when Truus Schröder asked Mulder to restore her home, Rietveld had been dead for ten years and the 50-year-old structure had some serious problems. Moreover, "restoration" and "modernism" were antithetical terms then—decrepit modernist buildings were bulldozed with indifference, and restoration was still anathema to modernist thinking. Rietveld himself had suggested demolishing the house when a new public road was laid down, transforming its context. "He didn't think any building should last longer than a generation anyway," Mulder recalls. "I once asked him which he considered his most important building, and he replied, 'The next one.'"

Mulder had no official restoration credentials, but he had worked for Rietveld, befriended him, and even moved into his home when the older architect vacated it. The original furnishings and details were all there, and ▸

PHOTO BY KIM ZWARTS AND COURTESY CENTRAAL MUSEUM, UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS

The Building is a collaboration with conceptual artist Stanley Brouwn, completed in 2006. From the side, it appears to be T-shaped; actually it's a cross, composed of one rectangle balancing on another.

Mulder subsequently inherited a number of pieces, including Rietveld's first modern chair design of 1908. "I inhabited Rietveld's universe," he says, and this was ultimately his main qualification for the task.

After a half-century, Rietveld's diminutive masterpiece featured a honeycomb of widening cracks and an interior that had been modified over the years and was far removed from the original vision. "The job scared me," says Mulder. "I had absolutely no idea how to go about it. But actually that proved to be a huge advantage, because I didn't have to follow any of the usual conventions."

Many restorations later Mulder came to realize that his starting point was based on principles he learned in the 1950s from the Bauhaus-trained Max Bill, at the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm. The approach, says Mulder, is basically "define the assignment first and the solution arises from that. I studied the Rietveld Schröder House," he continues, "until I understood how it was put together. I made a model of it. Rietveld saw architecture as the art of space—he wasn't making buildings as such, he was carving space. So this house is a spatial constellation of independent elements, a composition like his Red and Blue chair. I looked at old photos and spent hours talking to Truus Schröder and others about it. In the end, the house told me what to do."

First, there were huge structural problems to solve. "Rietveld had wanted to use concrete, but it had been too expensive at the time," says Mulder. "So he combined steel posts and brickwork, in a totally experimental way. The combination didn't age well, and it was impossible to repair, so I used new, synthetic materials and new techniques." However, such adaptations raised the issue of authenticity and angered the Dutch Historic Monuments Commission. "But did Rietveld mix the plaster himself in 1924?" asks Mulder. Similarly, in choosing the exterior colors, he looked at five different layers of old paint to assess the ideal shades, "which were not necessarily the first colors Rietveld put on," Mulder says. "Or why ▸

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The steel-framed structure appears to perform a balancing act. Mulder says only Brouwn could have envisaged the Building, "because he's not an architect, and he doesn't know what's not possible."

would he have painted over them?"

For Mulder, the object of the restoration was "to return the house to what it was intended to be at the time it was built: a manifesto, a blueprint for a new architecture and a new way of living." Some of Rietveld's own later interventions were overturned. His increasing minimalism, for example, meant that he had stopped using the primary colors that had made the house resemble (in the words of the critic Reyner Banham) "a cardboard Mondrian." He had also removed some of its more sculptural elements, like a yellow stacking cabinet. Mulder decided to replace it, because it accorded with the architect's original De Stijl–inspired vision of the harmonious integration of all the arts. "Rietveld and Schröder made the house together—their cooperation was what allowed Rietveld to go so far," he says. "But the house continued to evolve over time and was much changed by Rietveld himself. After he died, I restored it to the original idea in cooperation with Schröder. So the house was finished when the restoration was finished. The circle was complete."

A notable feature of the restoration is the amount of imperfection it retains—small, handcrafted, human touches that fall short of the elegant precision of Rietveld's drawings. On this point, Mulder shows a faithfulness of another sort. "Restoration has to start with the object itself," he says. "Not with the architect's intentions, or what he wanted to build, but with what he actually managed to build." At the same time, when Mulder built a "new" Aula hall in Hoofddorp (the old one was sidelined by an airport expansion), he used 1990s technology to execute Rietveld's 1960s design, thereby improving its functionality. "I'm often asked if the Aula is a Mulder or a Rietveld," he says. "The answer is, it's a better Rietveld. The texture of the materials is the same; the quality of the building is better."

The Building, the exhibition space in Utrecht, was for Mulder a chance to achieve the purity that had eluded ▸

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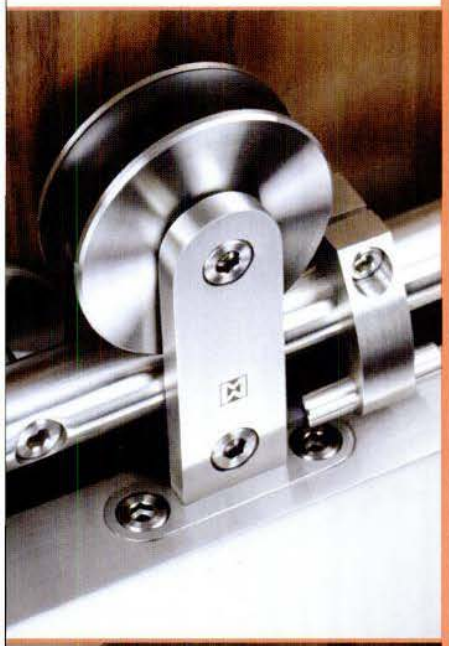
Rietveld. "It's just planes and lines," he says. "Technology allowed me to hide everything else. You know, this is what Rietveld wanted to build, but couldn't, because the technology wasn't up to it." Partnering with the famously temperamental Brouwn was not difficult, he says, although he did take the precaution of noting down exactly who was responsible for what, since "collaboration can get messy." But not, you feel, for Mulder. "For me, architecture always involves a group of people working together," he says. "The design was a sketch of Stanley Brouwn's. I expanded the scale of it, since it had to be large enough to be an exhibition space, and I made it modular, because it will eventually be moved to a new site. For the rest, I found the solutions to reach the vision that he had—a vision he could have only because he isn't an architect and doesn't know what's not possible. And so together we could make this piece of pure architecture. This is modernism with our technology. It's modernism for the 21st century." ■

Rietveld designed the Aula (above) in the 1960s. Following airport expansion, Mulder built a "new" Aula in the 1990s (shown here). "It's a better Rietveld," he says. "The quality of the building is better."

PHOTOS COURTESY ARCHITECTUURNL



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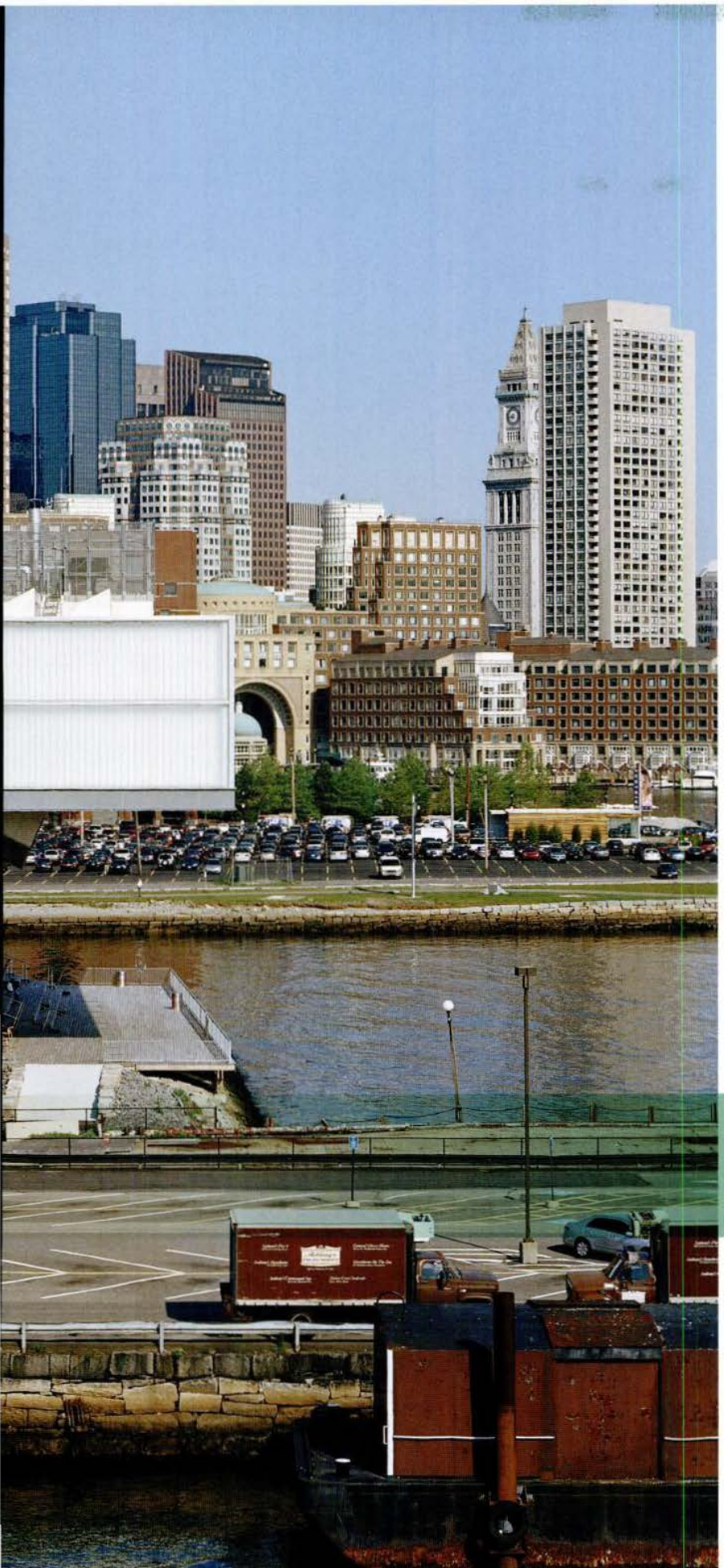
Story by Jessie Scanlon

Boston Pops

The Institute of Contemporary Art, designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, sits harborside, backed by the financial titans of the city skyline. The surrounding parking lots will disappear as the district is developed in the coming years.



Photos by Eirik Johnson

The heart of the American Revolution, Boston became home to midnight rides and at least one wild tea party. Yet this spirit of rebellion is tempered by a deep conservatism that has shaped the urban landscape since the 19th century. Drive through the South End, with its rows of Victorian-era townhouses, or up past the brick federals on Beacon Hill, and you might begin to think that the independent spirit of the city's founders lives on mostly in the local driving habits.

Now, galvanized by the Big Dig—the nearly $15 billion effort to push underground a grim elevated highway that cut through downtown—Boston is undergoing the most radical urban changes in its history. Not only has the city center been reunited with its waterfront for the first time in 50 years, but the reclaimed land along the shore is being developed into a greenway (albeit with less green than originally expected). In a ripple effect, the Seaport District, a wasteland of parking lots on the far side of the highway, is being redeveloped along with the South Boston waterfront, where old industrial buildings are being converted into lofts and restaurants.

Alongside these megaprojects, smaller-scale change is transforming the neighborhoods that make up metropolitan Boston. With no room left to grow in Cambridge, Harvard University is expanding across the river into Boston's Allston neighborhood. Up the river, a building boom at and around MIT has produced Frank Gehry's Ray and Maria Stata Center, Steven Holl's Simmons Hall dormitory, and Behnisch, Behnisch & Partner's Genzyme Center, which pushed the envelope on green building.

Bostonians typically cast a skeptical eye on urban change. When the oil company Citgo tried in 1983 to dismantle its corporate neon sign, opponents mobilized to have it declared a historic landmark. More recently, defenders and critics of City Hall have come to blows over its 1960s Brutalist-style architecture. And the Big Dig is not exempt: Before the delays and the cost overruns, and long before a woman was killed in the collapse of part of a new tunnel last summer, civic discontent had convinced the transportation department to erect a sign reading, "Rome wasn't built in a day. If it was, we would have hired its contractors." But what kind of city will Boston be when the hard hats go home? It's a question of great interest to Nicholas Baume, chief curator of the new Institute of Contemporary Art. ►

The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, cuts an unexpected profile, with its top floor cantilevering so dramatically toward the water. Is it an alien in traditionalist territory?
Sometimes creativity is left out of the New England narrative, but [the founders] were incredibly creative, radical thinkers. They fostered an American tradition of invention, self-invention, and a conceptually rich approach to culture.

You grew up in Sydney, Australia, so maybe Boston, with its harbor, feels familiar.
Just a few degrees colder. And maybe because of climate or geography, Sydney's harbor remains more a part of its identity than Boston's. When you're in Back Bay or the South End, you don't have any consciousness that the ocean is a couple of miles away. So when I started to see designs for the museum and think about the potential for this waterfront area, it made total sense to me.

The ICA is one of the first new buildings to be completed as part of the waterfront redevelopment.
Somewhat paradoxically, the ICA—which came into existence as the cultural parcel required by the city of the developers—is up and running, and the commercial development is ten years behind. The area is similar to Sydney's Darling Harbour—an old shipping district close to downtown, filled with warehouses and all of that, that needed a complete makeover. There the government drove the process, redeveloping the whole area in a matter of five years. The good thing was that it happened quickly. On the other ▸

Boston, Massachusetts

Chief curator Nicholas Baume in the ICA's digital media room (top). Artists and others who live and work along the Fort Point Channel were less than pleased about the massive Vent Building 5 (bottom), one of five structures that deliver power and fresh air to the Big Dig's underground highways.

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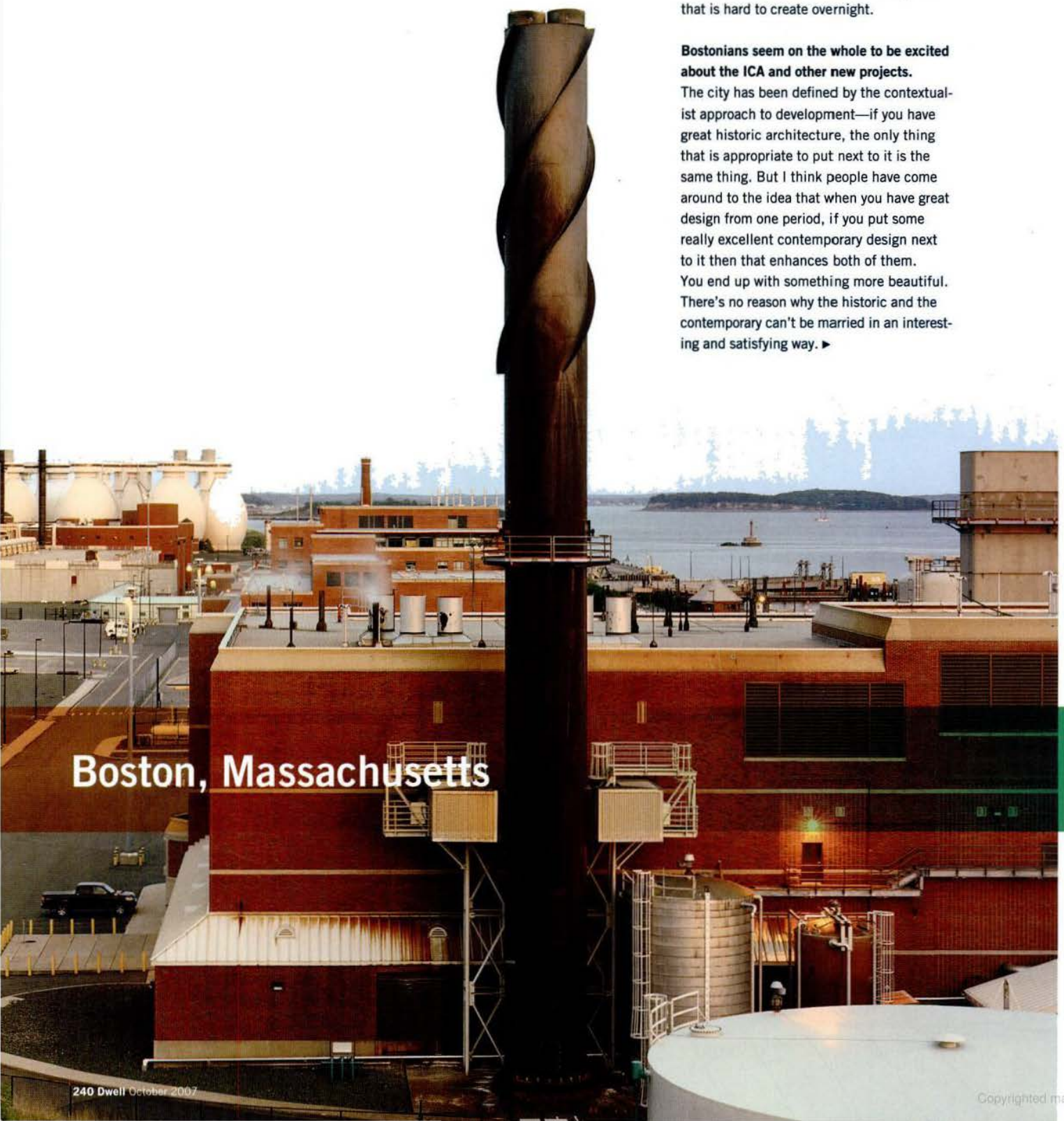
In the centuries since Boston's founding, Deer Island has been used as an internment camp for Native Americans, a point of entry for Irish immigrants, and a prison. Now it's home to a waste-water treatment plant and a state park.

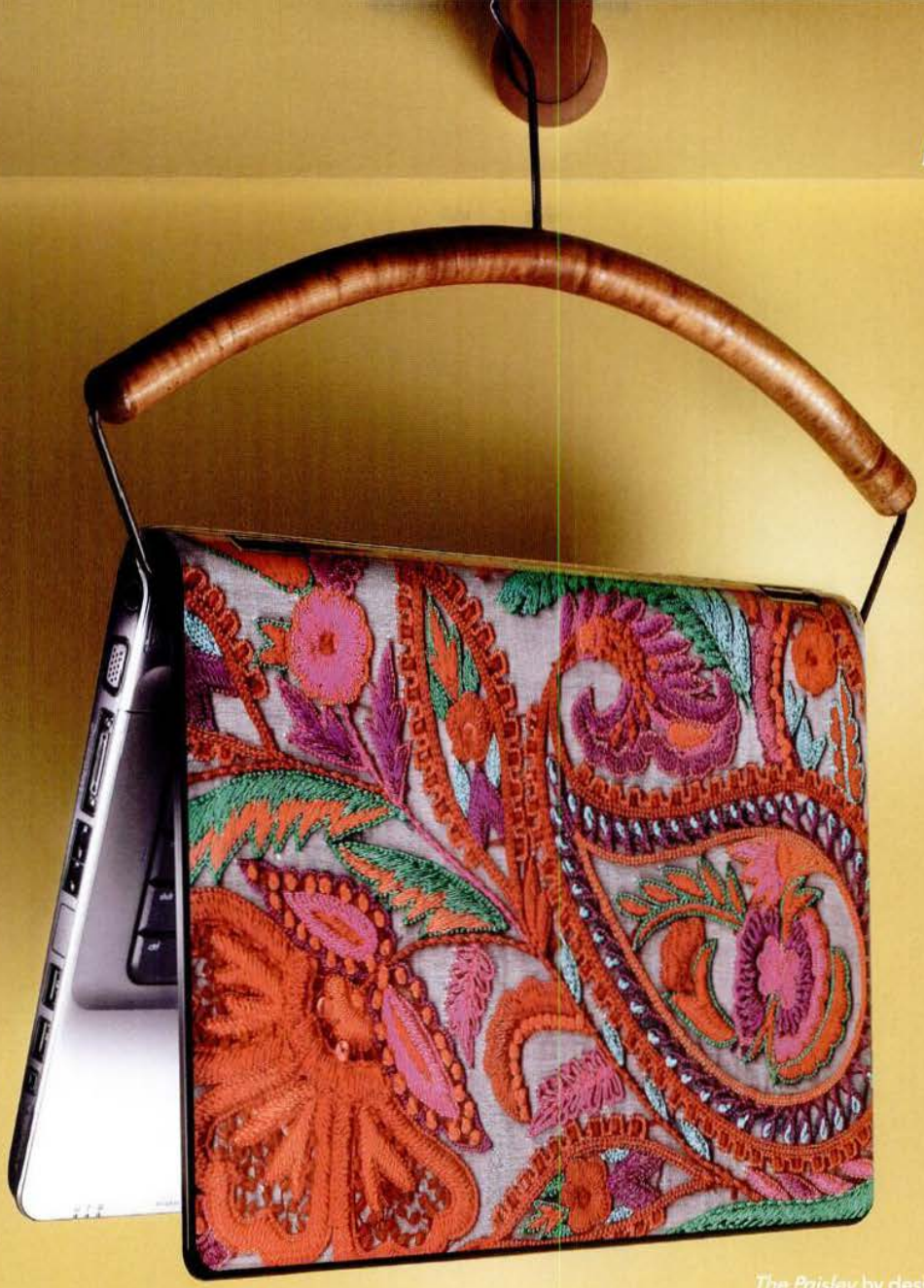
hand, it didn't develop any organic connection to the rest of the city. I'm hoping one of the side effects of the slower pace of the Boston waterfront redevelopment will be that it happens in a more organic way. We're seeing lots of great restaurants and retail coming into the Fort Point Channel area. It's the kind of natural urban development that is hard to create overnight.

Bostonians seem on the whole to be excited about the ICA and other new projects.
The city has been defined by the contextualist approach to development—if you have great historic architecture, the only thing that is appropriate to put next to it is the same thing. But I think people have come around to the idea that when you have great design from one period, if you put some really excellent contemporary design next to it then that enhances both of them. You end up with something more beautiful. There's no reason why the historic and the contemporary can't be married in an interesting and satisfying way. ►



Boston, Massachusetts

THE COMPUTER IS PERSONAL AGAIN.



The Paisley by designer Naeem Khan

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Is there still a tension between past and present in the city's urban space?
Moving here four years ago, I wanted to buy an apartment. I imagined there would be the traditional brownstones, the loft-style options, and the modern apartment buildings. But I could not find any new apartment buildings.

Where did you end up?
In the South End on Blackstone Square, which I love. In the center is the Bulfinch-designed park from the early 19th century. Around it you see the grandest houses and terraces of 19th-century Boston, a church, a simple Beaux Arts building that has been turned into a school. There's Stella restaurant, the Salvation Army, a basketball court. There's a wonderful mix that spills out into that park. It's a wonderful way to experience the diversity and the texture of the city.

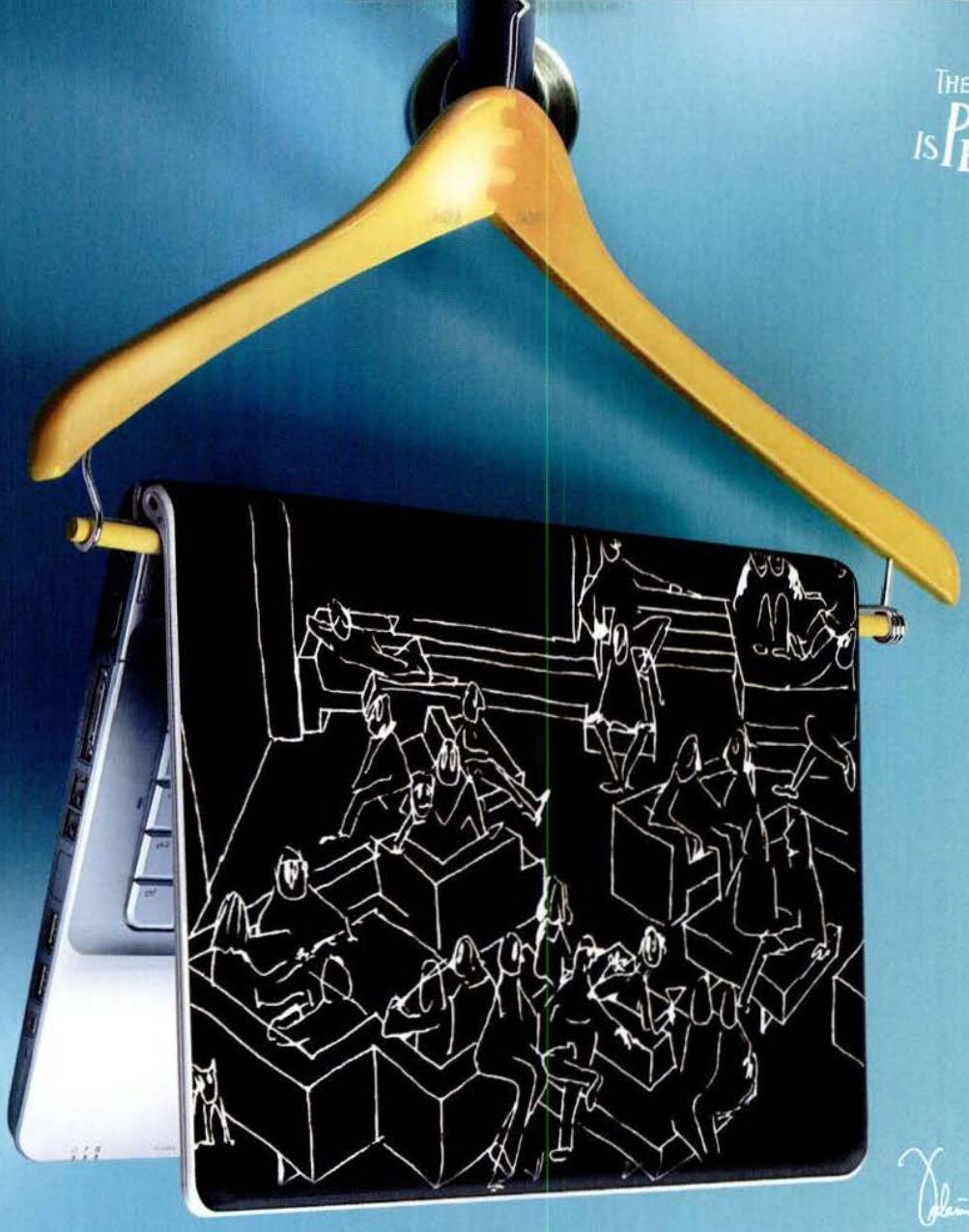
What kind of apartment did you end up in?
A brownstone. Although now I'm seeing modern buildings, like the Macallen Building condo project, that show adventurous residential design is becoming available.

Where would you recommend for dinner?
I love Orinoco, a fantastic Venezuelan restaurant in the South End. That whole neighborhood is restaurant central, though a lot of places—like Stella and Toro—are upscale. Orinoco is a neighborhood restaurant. It's small. It's cozy. The food is great. It's on the ground floor of a brownstone on the corner, and you can look out through the big plate-glass windows onto this intimate streetscape. ▸

Boston, Massachusetts

One of the dozen small public spaces that dot the South End, Blackstone Square (top) is a lively center of civic life—filled with yuppie dog owners and young parents with children. Brick bowfront rowhouses (bottom), most constructed in the mid-19th century, are a South End signature.

THE COMPUTER IS PERSONAL AGAIN.



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Museums

Institute of Contemporary Art
www.icaboston.org
100 Northern Avenue
Boston, MA
(617) 478-3100

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
www.gardnermuseum.org/information/visit.asp
280 The Fenway
Boston, MA
(617) 566-1401

Landmarks

Gropius House
www.historicnewengland.org
68 Baker Bridge Road
Lincoln, MA
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Walden Pond
www.mass.gov/dcr/parks/northeast/wldn.htm
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Boston, Massachusetts

Cherries, fava beans, fiddlehead ferns, and other organic local treats for sale at Plum Produce (top). Orinoco restaurant (bottom) is loved as much for its warm, casual environment as for the traditional Venezuelan cuisine.

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Do you tour much around greater Boston?
One lovely fall day when my dad was visiting we took a trip to Walden Pond. I read Thoreau's book when I moved here and learned about the transcendentalist movement. So it was wonderful to see the site, the ruin of where he lived, and to imagine that spirit of independence and self-reliance. From there we drove to the Gropius House nearby. It's a remarkable example of small residential modernist design. But it also struck me that some of that same spirit of Walden Pond was evident in this modernist house—the self-reliant vision, a way of living in nature, of creating a mode of living that was driven by a new way of imagining the world and the self operating in that world, an optimism about the future. It had that strain of New England independence and creativity. So then I thought, 19th century, 20th century, 21st century—ICA. It is also a building driven by a freshness of approach, designed by architects interested in not following the crowd, in trying to invent something that relates to its time and place in a new way.

There are other well-known museums here—the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which is undergoing an addition by Foster and Partners, and, of course, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.
The Gardner is a unique place because it's a museum that feels completely personal, a collection—of armor, furniture, decorative arts (some very fine, others quite ordinary), and great old master paintings mixed in with lesser, undistinguished works—validated only by one woman's personal taste. Yet it's not just a curiosity because it does have some ▸

Boston, Massachusetts

The bare cabin where Henry David Thoreau wrote *Walden* is long gone, but the pond still offers an escape from urban life (top). Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius lived in the house that bears his name from 1938 until his death in 1969 (bottom).

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True to the quirky vision of its founder, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's collection mixes major with minor. Titian's *Europa*, on a wall upholstered in French fabric, holds court over an 18th- century Italian chair and other assorted pieces.

Boston, Massachusetts

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amazing works of art, and is one of the most incredible interior spaces in Boston. I've never heard of someone going to the Gardner and not being touched at some level.

And then there's the harbor itself.
I took a trip over to Deer Island, home of those egg-shaped white structures you see when you fly into Logan Airport. It's wonderfully muscular industrial architecture that is both very prominent and also quite mysterious. New York has the Statue of Liberty, we have a water treatment facility.

What's your favorite space in the ICA?
The media room, from one of the upper rows looking down on the water. There's no horizon, foreground, distance. It's just a simple view of the water. So in that sense it's always the same. But every time you come in, it looks different. The light, the current, the wind is going in a different direction; the reflections are different. It's quite mesmerizing. I think in a way that's what this building does at its most successful moments: open you to the possibility of seeing things in a new way. And the view is not without its decentering effects. You can walk into this space and feel like you're going to fall forward. By taking away the horizon, your depth perception is turned around. The pleasure is a complex experience.

What's your favorite thing about the ICA?
Where in Boston can you go and have an experience of 21st-century culture that is not about retail? There are so many incredible historical and natural sites in and around the city. But I can't think of another place you can go to experience now. ■

Boston, Massachusetts

The Titian room at the Gardner Museum overlooks an interior courtyard (top). The windows of the ICA's theater offer an expansive view of the harbor and the cantilevered galleries above (below). The digital media room, at upper right, hangs dramatically underneath.

Behind Closed Doors

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Story by Heather Wagner

Illustration by Rinah Lang

All the Home's a Stage

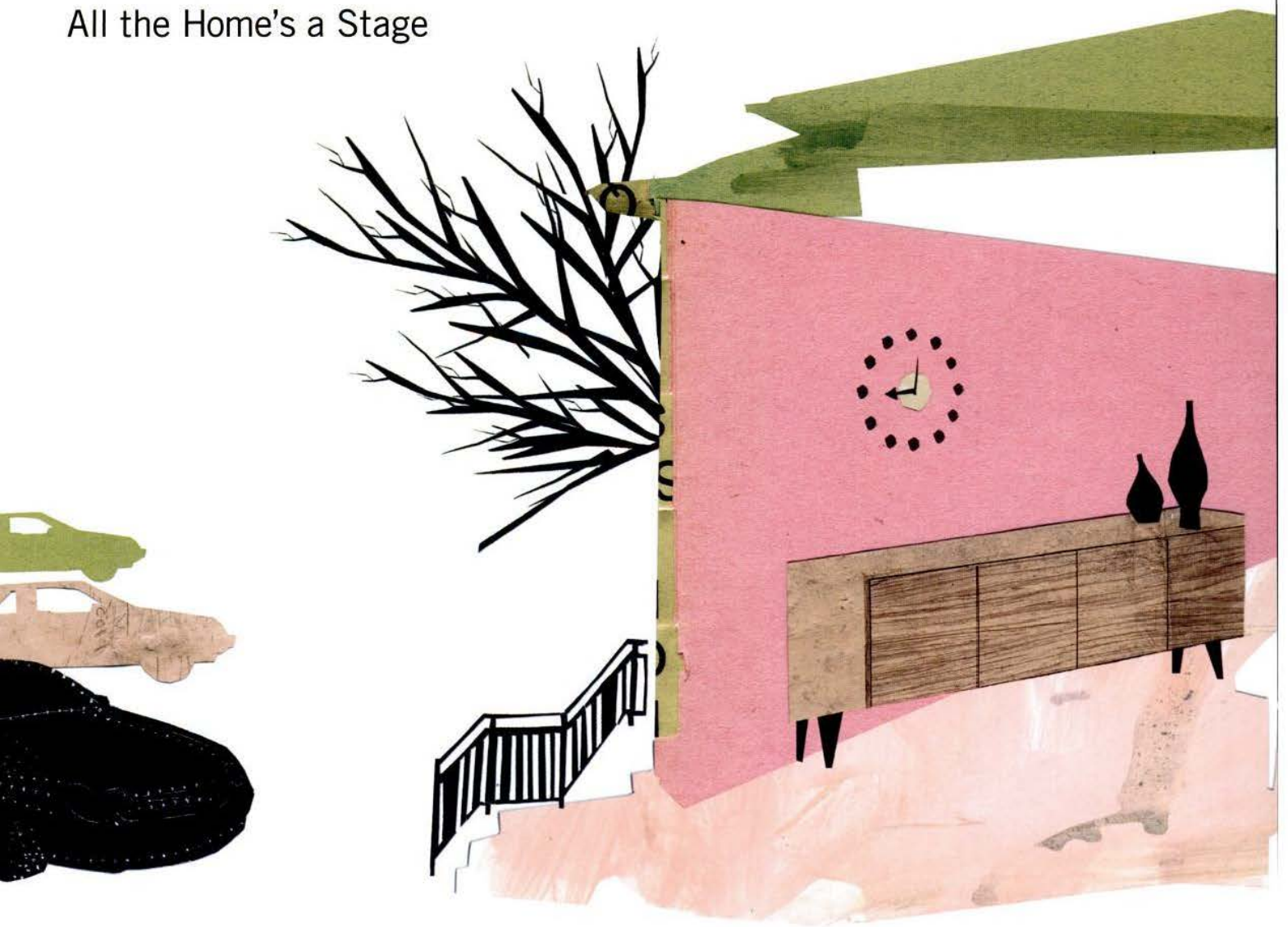
Whether you're selling a hillside Neutra or a modest carpeted condo, home staging has become the norm in today's uber-competitive real estate market. And more sellers than ever are staging modern. Modern design befits a staged living environment because of its clean lines and purity of form. It delivers a sense of cool urbanity, blissfully free of that icky lived-in feeling. You may relish the nostalgia of country floral wallpaper or grandpappy's hand-whittled bar stools, but potential buyers do not. They don't care about your kickin' eight-track collection or your Lynyrd Skynyrd airbrushed pool table—even if it is ironic.

The homeowner's equivalent of hiring a celebrity stylist for Oscar night, the modern stager's goal is to accentuate all architectural assets, making spaces that could be perceived as austere or intimidating feel warm and inviting. Hands-on staging services can cost anywhere from $1,000 for a small condo (utilizing existing furnishings) to $10,000 or more for larger homes in desirable markets.

Beth Ann Shepherd, the president of Dressed to Close, a full-service staging company based in Los Angeles, explains the physics-defying effect that staging can have on a home. "It makes small rooms larger, outdoor areas more dramatic, and expands overall square footage," she explains. And it's not merely about looks. "In my experience, [staging] always increases the sale price," she continues. "It's a short-term, high-yield investment."

High-end staging companies such as Shepherd's can turn an empty house into a swingin' mod paradise in 48 hours. They source from vendors all over the world, scouring the Milan and High Point furniture fairs for the latest "it" item. Your home can be custom designed ("done-done" in the industry vernacular) with lighting, rugs, upholstery, bedding, chairs, sofas, and even custom artwork. Shepherd calls these homes "designer perfect."

As design is increasingly democratized, buyers are adopting new ideas of what constitutes desirable decor. "People want modern," Shepherd continues. "Modern has



become symbolic of success, of happiness." And modern home staging is particularly adept at communicating a lifestyle—that elusive symbiosis of good design and subtle luxury that says, "I've made it. Not that I care..."

The most popular staging pieces represent a cadre of design classics typically found in five-star boutique hotels or the pages of, well, this magazine. Italian and mid-century chairs. Low-rise sofas. Modular sectionals. Pony-skin rugs. And, of course, our friend the Barcelona chair. "Everyone loves a Barcelona chair," Shepherd says. "It's the epitome of modern staging."

But the clincher is, surprisingly, the humble ottoman. "Oversize movable ottomans are the hot item right now," Shepherd explains. "They allow people to improvise their living spaces." As the popularity of staging increases, so does the number of buyers who purchase homes completely furnished. "Homes are selling 'to go,'" Shepherd says. "Especially single men. They buy it all."

Good news for the swanky bachelor set. But does this result in a sort of assembly-line design, the aesthetically principled version of the McMansion? Or perhaps the to-go home typifies the point of modernism, to simplify, embrace functionality, and celebrate essential objects. Either way, business is booming. Shepherd is even launching a new product line website, fabulousbyfriday.com, built around pieces used for staging purposes.

Paul Kaplan, a Palm Springs, California–based real estate agent who specializes in modern homes, also notes that staging can educate owners about the assets of their own spaces. "Often I get listings from sellers that may not have an appreciation for the modern design of their home," he explains. "Staging shows people how a space can be used."

Perhaps the most persuasive argument for modern staging is in the numbers. In a 2004 survey of almost 2,800 properties in eight U.S. cities, staged homes, on average, ended up getting 6.3 percent over their asking price. For anxious would-be sellers, that's reason enough. ►

Story by James Nestor

Illustrations by Julia Pfaller

Tenancy-in-Common

You've heard it thousands of times on TV, the radio, and in junk mail—spurious ads delivered with forehead-vein-popping enthusiasm by robot-faced dudes in shoddy suits. *Bad credit? Expensive city? First-time buyer? No problem! You—yes YOU!—can own your very own home. It's easy. We'll show you how.* If these cringe-inducing pitches aren't enough to turn you off, the ever-escalating real estate prices are. Is there any hope?

Kind of. The first thing any prospective buyer needs to know is that unlike what Tom Vu or Donald Trump say, buying a house is not quick and easy. But consider the alternatives of not buying, such as moving to Barstow, working until you're 95, or spending the equivalent of three houses' mortgages by paying rent your whole life.

So whether or not you want to believe it, the time to make the leap is now. Prices may dip, and markets may recess, but in ten years, real estate prices in most major cities could—some think will—double. And most of you complaining that you can't afford to buy in the city right now actually can. You—yes YOU!—can own your very own home. We'll show you how.

A tenancy-in-common (TIC) is when two or more people join together to own a percentage of the same property. "In San Francisco, this is becoming a very common option for first-time buyers," explains John Barnette, a partner in the real estate team The Johns.

Though common for commercial properties, TICs have expanded rapidly in the private home market. This trend so far remains relegated to San Francisco, but is likely to expand to other cities as these partnerships gain further acceptance.

To purchase apartments through TIC, partners all sign on the same mortgage. The terms of ownership—who lives where and for how much—are all documented in a TIC agreement drawn up by a lawyer.

The risk of a TIC is that each partner can be held culpable for the other partners' percentage of the mortgage. That means if one person defaults on the mortgage, the other TIC partners have to make up the difference. In the past two years, this risk has significantly lessened with the introduction of new TIC-specific financing options such as "fractional" loans that protect TIC partners if another defaults on the mortgage.

What attracts most people to TICs is their cost—up to 20 percent less than a condominium. "After eight months of looking at houses and condos, we realized a TIC was the only thing we could afford," explains Matt Deems, who purchased a two-bedroom TIC in San Francisco's Noe Valley.

Deems and his wife joined a TIC with two total strangers they met via Barnette. The group first met casually "just to see if they liked each other," explains Barnette and eventually exchanged financial statements for each other to scrutinize. Deems adds: "It was a little weird to rely on people we didn't know, but we were willing to take that risk." ▶

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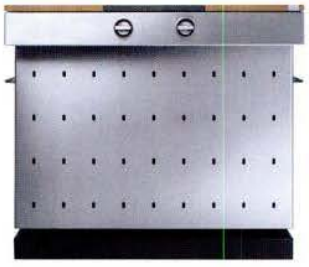
Co-op

"It is really different from anything else," explains David Burcher, who bought a co-op apartment in Manhattan with his partner, Greg Broan, almost a decade ago. "In many ways, the whole process feels like you're being violated—it's just so tedious."

Burcher is not alone. Co-ops are common in cities such as New York and Boston, and so are the horror stories about buying into them. The first step is that an applicant must prove financial solvency with a large down payment (10 to 20 percent) and a preapproval letter from the bank. Then comes approval from the board of directors, a group often composed of long-term co-op residents whose lack of business experience is guerdoned with often cantankerous and belittling attitudes. Or so say applicants on the wrong end of the co-op stick.

"They look at your financial history, what kind of job you have, your personal references, investments—everything," explains Burcher. Because a co-op is technically a corporation in which applicants buy shares (in the form of an apartment or flat), the board of directors can refuse future applicants for any reason and suffer no legal recourse. Burcher continues: "Basically, they just try to figure out if they like you or not."

But months of financial despoliation and groveling can pay off for the persistent few who survive the hazing process: Co-op prices average 10 to 15 percent less than condominiums and are often in storied buildings in central urban locations. "Through it all," says Burcher, who sold his co-op in May 2006 for double the price he paid for it, "once you're in, it ends up being just like living anywhere else." ▶



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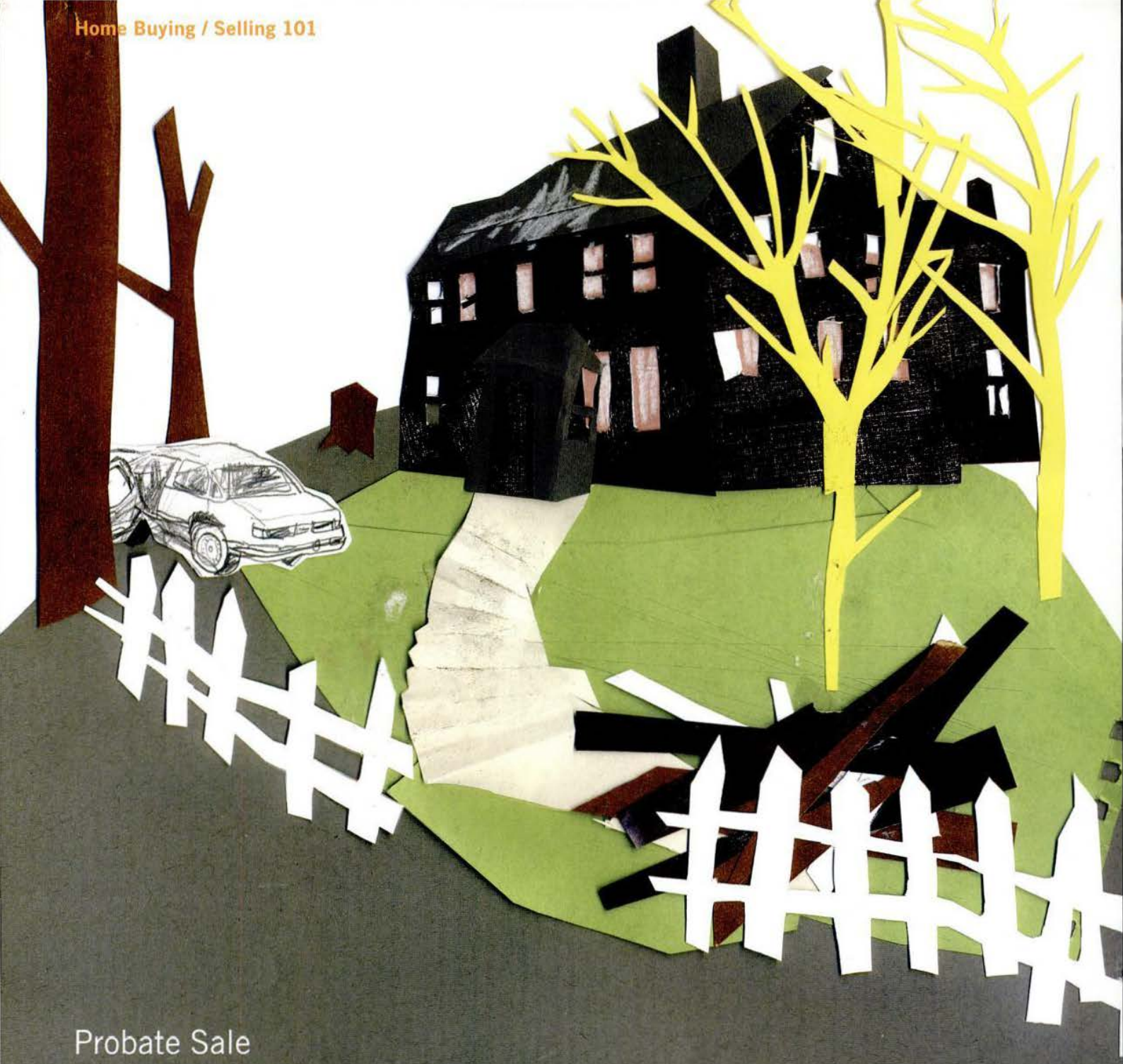

Probate Sale

When the owner of a home dies without a will or trust to allocate their estate, the property goes into probate. Legally, probate is the court's procedure to determine the validity of the deceased's will and verify the identity of the beneficiaries.

A typical scenario is that Grandma Smith died. She bequeathed everything to her loser son, Bobby. Bobby doesn't have the money or fortitude to fix up the house, so he sells it, as is, through probate. "Most of the time these houses have worn shag carpet from 1978, rhinoceros wallpaper, and will smell like an 80-year-old woman," explains real estate agent John Barnette. "This is exactly what you want."

Because of the often poor condition and the insanely frustrating and complex purchase process (every state's is different, but can include putting 10 percent down at the time of the sale), these houses generally sell for 5 to 10 percent under their value. In real estate, these are huge numbers.

Furthermore, if the deceased died in the house, the property could be even more undervalued. Many cultures view living in a house where someone died as strictly taboo; others simply view it as gross.

But if you don't mind having a clay-stained Patrick Swayze massaging your shoulders every time you do the dishes, a probate sale is a gold-mine opportunity for the truly adventurous (and nonsuperstitious). ▶


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Foreclosure

The popular myth is that foreclosures can provoke ire in sellers and bad karma for buyers, but this is rarely the case. What happens more often is the owner of the foreclosed property ends up thanking the buyer for saving him from debtors' prison.

Foreclosure is the legal process by which an owner's right to a property is terminated. This is usually caused by an owner defaulting so heavily on a loan or tax debt that the bank or government steps in to sell the owner's property to reclaim monies owed.

"The deeper into the foreclosure process the owners are, the more of a discount you can get," explains Jonathan Ainscow, real estate partner in The Johns. An early stage of preforeclosure called "financial distress" is when the owner tries to sell a house quickly before the bank or government takes it over, often at a discount.

But Ainscow touts the real deals as being in bank-managed short sales. "Banks are not in the business of acquiring properties," explains Ainscow. "Once they foreclose on a house they want to get rid of it quickly." Short sale properties can sell for 10 percent below their value.

It's this kind of foreclosure that Peter Bracher of Dayton, Ohio, bought. "This guy didn't pay his property taxes, so the government took over," explains Bracher. "It went to auction and we bought it for $15,600." Though it took Bracher four months of legal wrangling and court proceedings to get the property, he was eventually rewarded for his perseverance. ►

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Story by Philip Ferrato

Illustrations by Rinah Lang

Click Appeal

House hunting isn't just about roving the streets and stopping at For Sale signs anymore; instead, prospective buyers will spend hours trawling the Internet to find their future home. The editor of CurbedSF, the San Francisco site of Curbed.com, a real estate blog that reports on the best—and worst—currently on offer in several major cities, gives insight into the world of virtual open houses.

To learn more about unconventional real-estate strategies, visit dwell.com/blog.

The housing market may be showing signs of softness, if not outright collapse in some areas, but interest in real estate hasn't abated; it's become a form of entertainment, whether you're buying or not. Some people even arrange their Sunday afternoons to include open houses, and neighbors sometimes meet for the first time when poking about in a nearby property. Recently, a handy new voyeuristic tool known as the Internet has proven its mettle as the perfect implement for house hunters, taking on new aspects not yet imagined by the traditional real estate business—and forever altering the real estate market.

According to the National Association of Realtors, 80 percent of home buyers start looking for their next house online instead of from the front seat of a real estate agent's leased luxury car. It's estimated that 24 percent of home buyers first see their future house on the screen of a computer. So what's the best way to approach the Web as a potential buyer?

The first thing to find is a local Multiple Listing Service (MLS) that permits public access. In San Francisco, for example, the address to bookmark is the San Francisco Multiple Listing Service (www.sfarmls.com). The interfaces tend to be unglamorous, ▶

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but do allow you to search with a few basic parameters including zip code, price, and date of construction. This gives an overview of a specific area within your price range. And you can focus your hunt on mid-century houses rather than disco-era if that's the way you lean. It's also handy to check out how much your neighbor just paid for his house at such sites as PropertyShark.com—out of a sense of community concern, of course.

From the MLS listings, you'll probably move on to the websites of a specific broker; many real estate agents worth their 6 percent fees will have one, although they're predominant among premium properties.

When you find listings with addresses, link to Microsoft's Local.Live.com or Google Maps' satellite view to get an idea of how many in-ground swimming pools your neighbors have. It's also a good way to decipher if "convenient location" really means the house you're lusting after backs up to a freeway. The new Google Street View promises drive-by images of the property you may someday live in, and even has the unnerving capacity to capture your future neighbors taking out the trash.

As with any kind of house hunt—be it virtual or actual—it's easy to become mired in the overwhelming supply of McMansions and tract homes. But there are great homes to be found if you're willing to dig. Identifying what you see is part of the adventure, since real estate agents (and their clients) rarely know much about the properties beyond that they're all equally fabulous and "awaiting your personal touch" (code for "We don't know what to do with this wreck").

Our recommendation? The more houses you check out—be they actual visits or online—the better you'll be equipped to understand what your real estate agent is saying when she spouts obscure real estate terms and to decipher the good from the really, really ugly. All of which will increase the likelihood that you'll actually find the home of your dreams. Unless someone else bookmarks it first. ■

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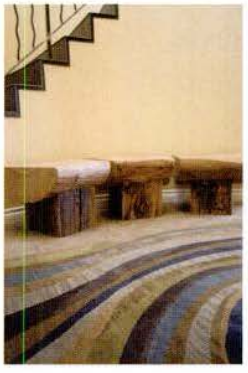

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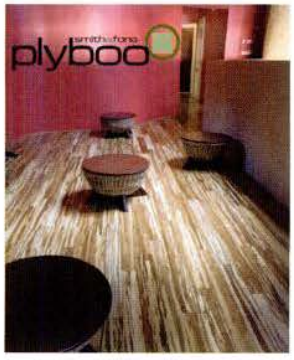

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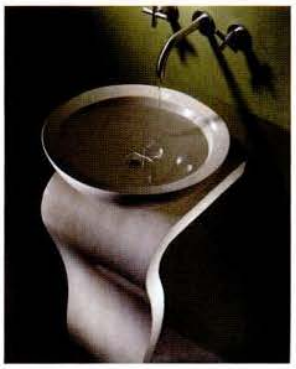

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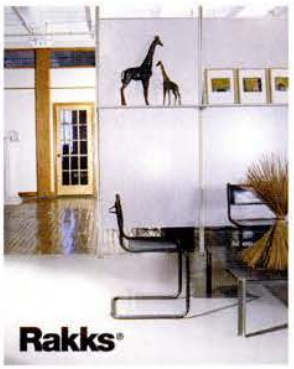

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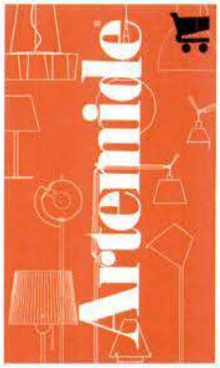

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Shown: Small Tote business brief

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www.norwellinc.com

Palette Contemporary Art & Craft

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Shown: Bambu vases, by Laura de Santallana

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For a Modern Child's Lifestyle

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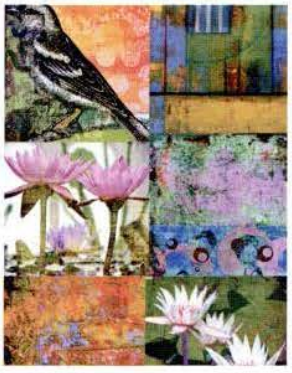
www.RickiMountain.com
rickimountainstudios@gmail.com



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Ithaca, New York, studio
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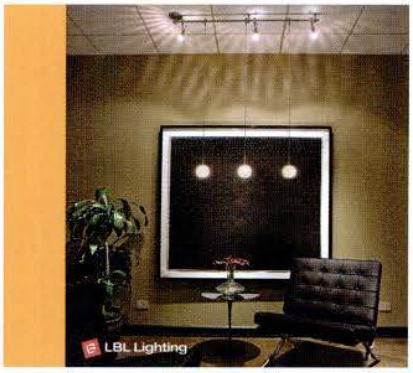

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Shown: Paperweight Pendants and Monorail from LBL Lighting

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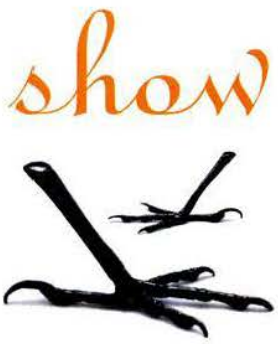

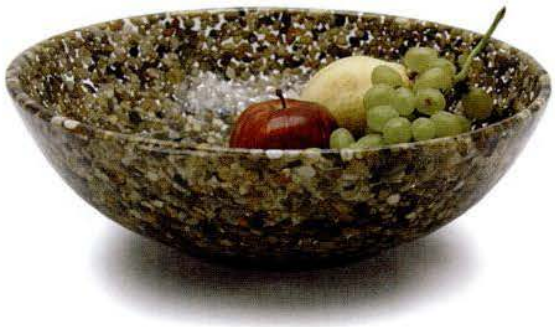

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The MoMA exclusive River Stones Bowl is made by craftspeople in Italy and is intended for both serving and display. It features hand-picked natural river stones suspended in food-safe clear resin, which replicates their native underwater appearance.

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Shown: Lambs, 2007, 4' x 3'

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Shown: Walnut natural end

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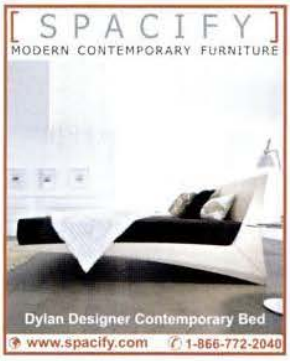

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NettoCollection's two-piece set offers the maximum power of beautiful furniture in minimum space. Cabine Crib is open on all sides for a sense of transparency. Matching dresser/changing table has four storage drawers.

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Shown: Big Trunk (36" x 14") with hand-applied patina

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Shown: C'mere hook, by Harry Allen

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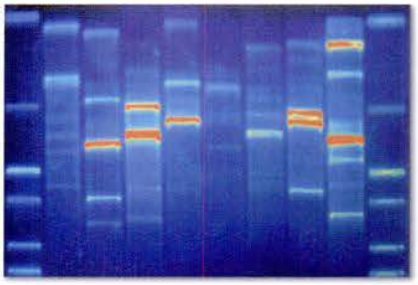

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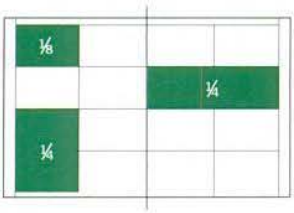

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Contact:
East: Lauren Dismuke-Zivyak
lauren@dwell.com
Tel. (212) 382-2010 x25
Southwest: Tracey Lasko
tracey@dwell.com
Tel. (917) 892-4921
Northwest-Midwest: Angela Ames
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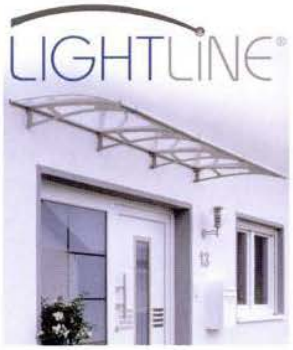

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Shown: Arndt

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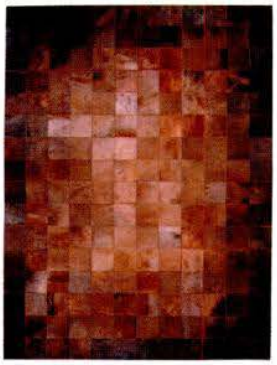

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Shown: Park rug malbec

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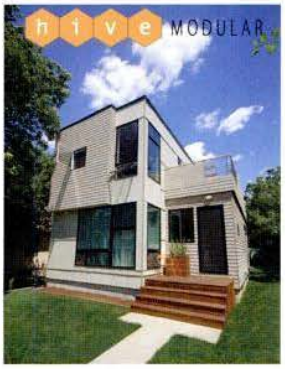

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Shown: Issa Dining Arm Chair in solid walnut, by Noriyuki Ebina

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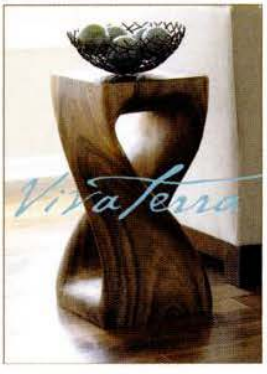

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 Subscription price for US residents: $24.00 for 10 issues. Canadian subscription rate: $29.95 (GST included) for 10 issues. All other countries: $35.95 for 10 issues. To order a subscription to Dwell or to inquire about an existing subscription, please write to: Dwell Magazine Customer Service, P.O. Box 5100, Harlan, IA 51593-0600, or call 877-939-3553. Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco, CA and at additional mailing offices.

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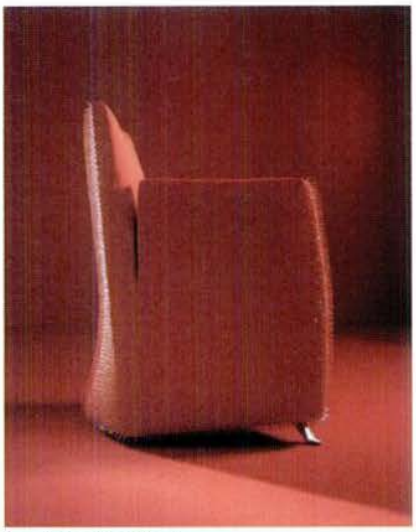

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BALERI ITALIA

Story by Chelsea Holden Baker

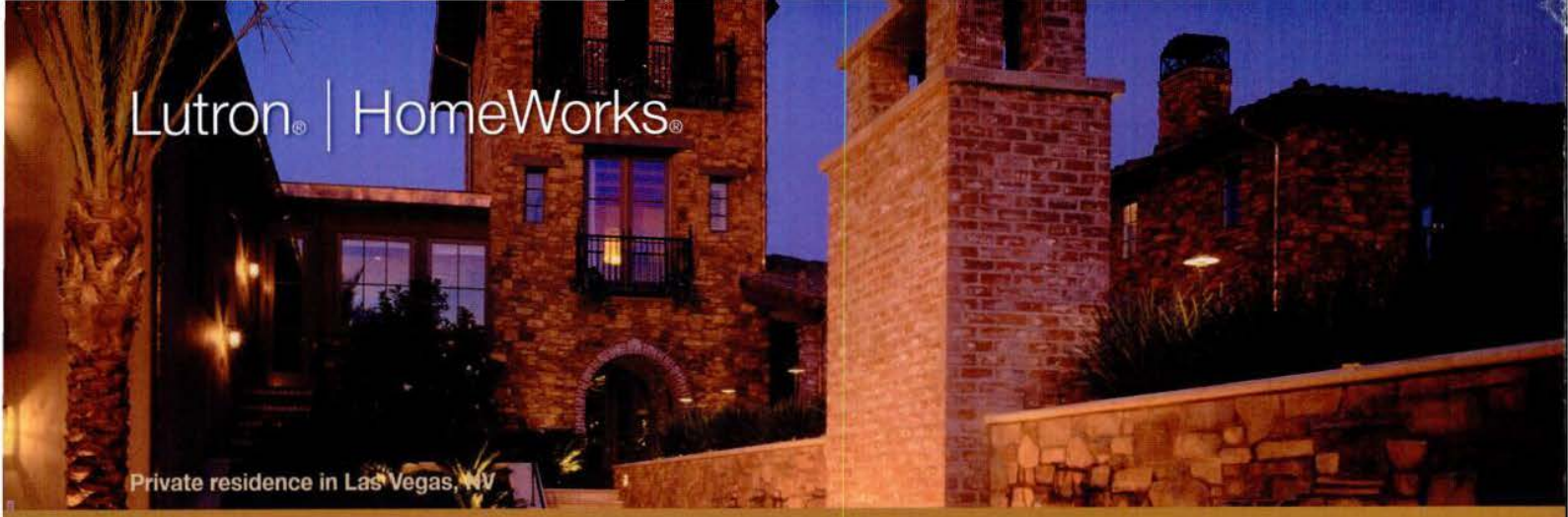
Photo by Catherine Tighe

Nights in White Stucco

John Rodgers's house in the West University Place neighborhood of Houston, Texas, is white, inside and out. "My mother saw it and said, 'It looks like a hospital!'" the single 46-year-old recalls with a subversive hint of pleasure. But an antiseptic, dispassionate bachelor pad it isn't: Rodgers and his architect (and long-lost friend) Price Harrison purposely built a blank canvas to frame his furniture and art collection, which includes pieces by pillars of modernism, from Ellsworth Kelly and Le Corbusier to Robert Motherwell.

Rodgers and Harrison, who went to boarding school together in Bell Buckle, Tennessee, reunited over the design of the house. "The thing that John did, which is unusual, is that he really educated himself in the process of building a house," says Harrison. Clearly, the two had compatible visions. The white-on-white of the concrete stucco, limestone walls, and marble window caps is a clean break from the aesthetic they grew up with in Tennessee. And because everything's bigger in Texas, including storms, steel moment frames—as used in skyscrapers—were put in around the large, one-inch-thick windows to resist hurricane-force winds. In a small house of so much glass, thunderstorms become IMAX feature presentations.

While it may sound like the ideal life, Rodgers sums up the process with a proverb: "You have to go through hell before you get to heaven." Just finding a lot took two years: "The builders here grab them, and throw up their three-story glimpse at glory." During planning, an architectural review committee objected to a cantilever over the garage, saying it didn't "add integrity to the neighborhood." Then the first builder embezzled money. By the time his home was nearly finished in 2006, Rodgers needed surgery, resulting in a titanium plate and six screws in his neck—one for every year the house was in planning and construction. Despite the strife, what matters now is that it's done, ready for Rodgers, friends, and increasingly friendly neighbors to enjoy. As Rodgers puts it, "The neighbors are realizing that although my house might look different, I'm not so different." ■



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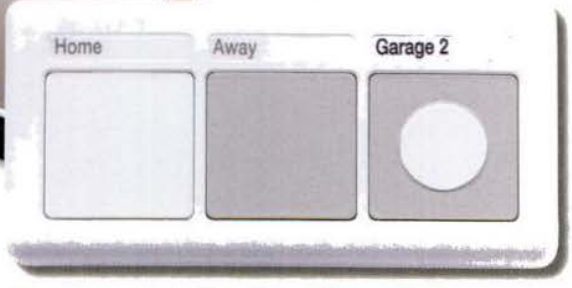

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