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*Fall*  
2016




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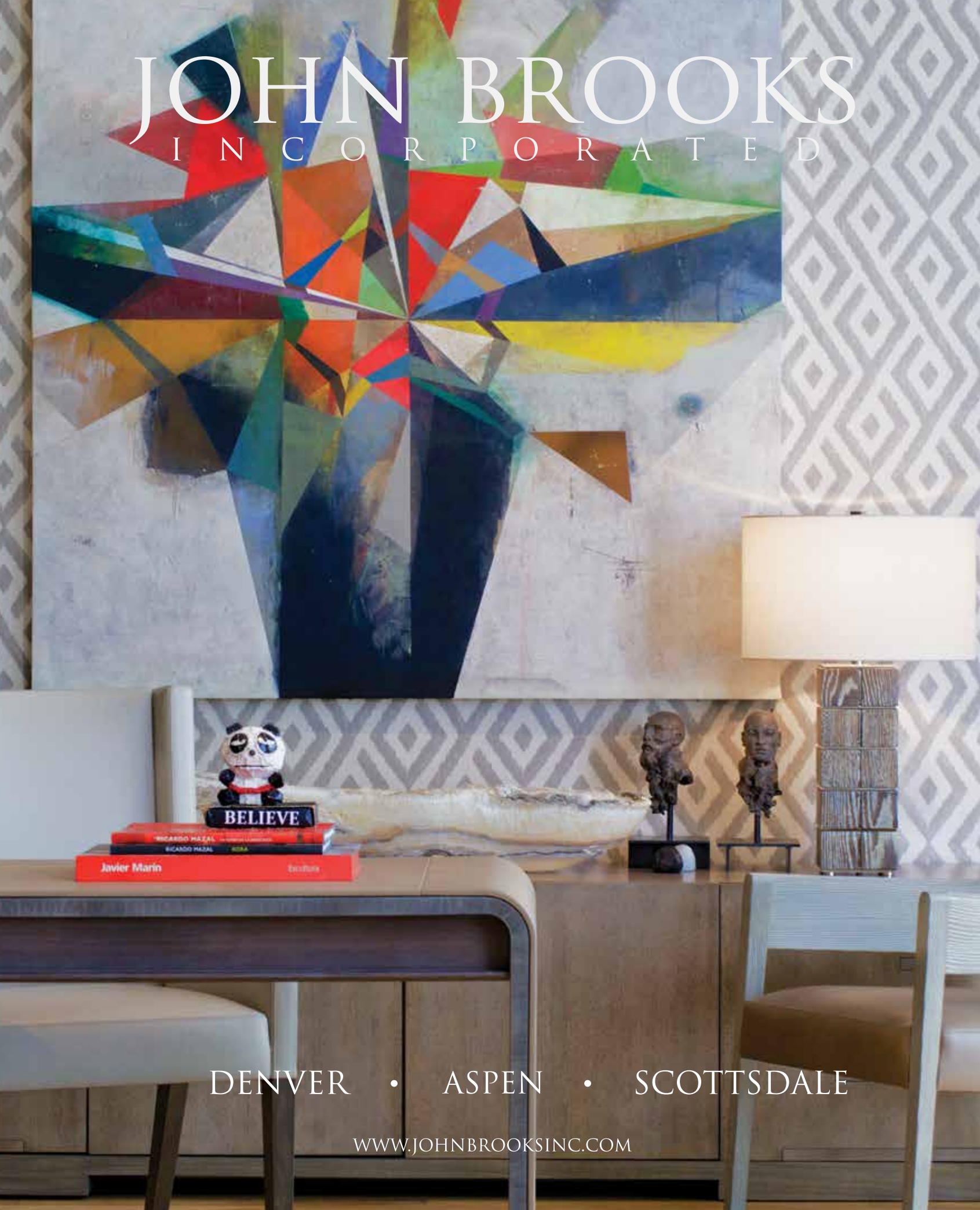
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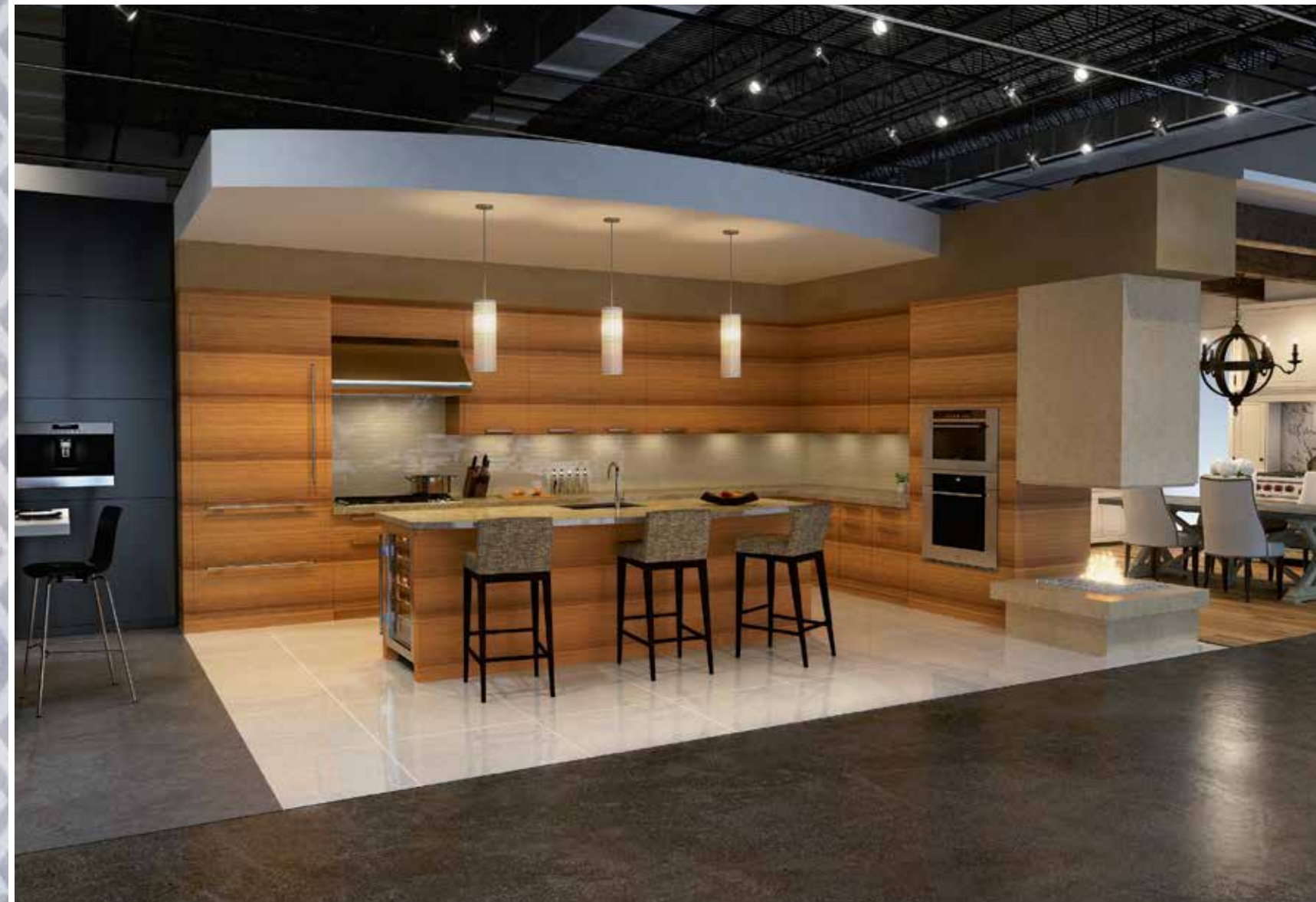
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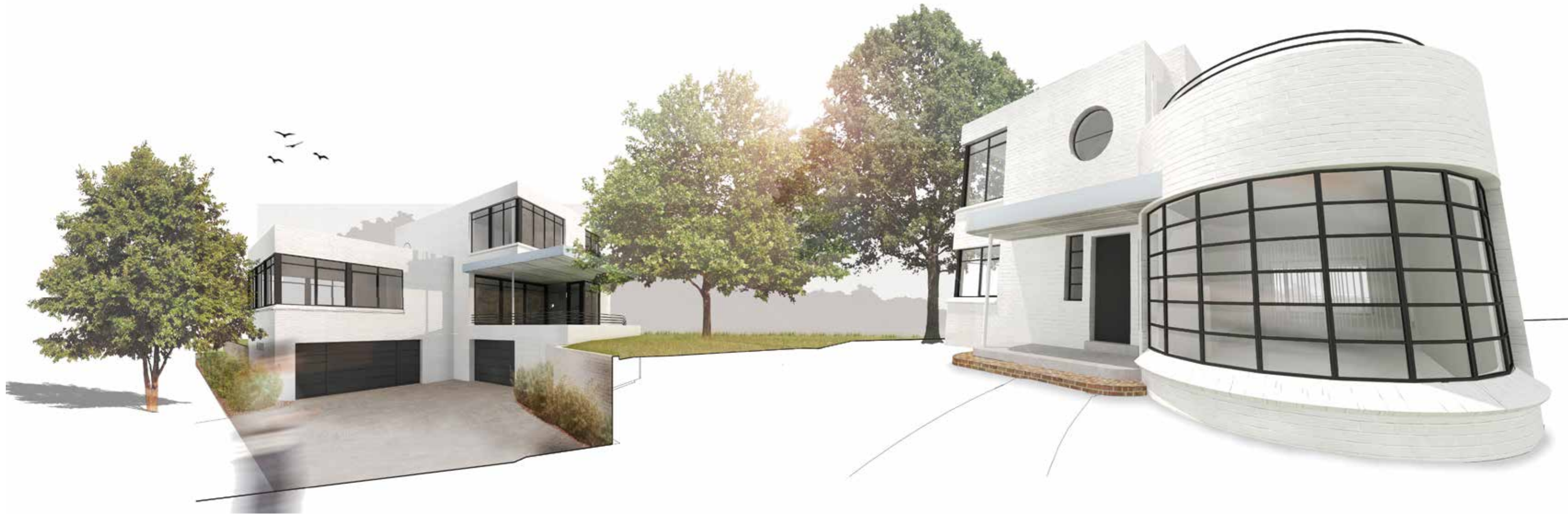
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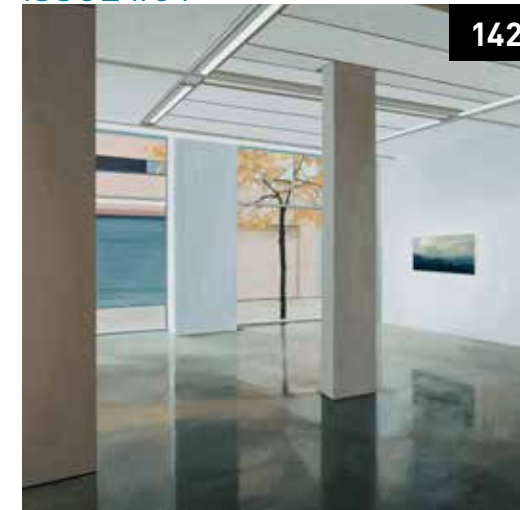


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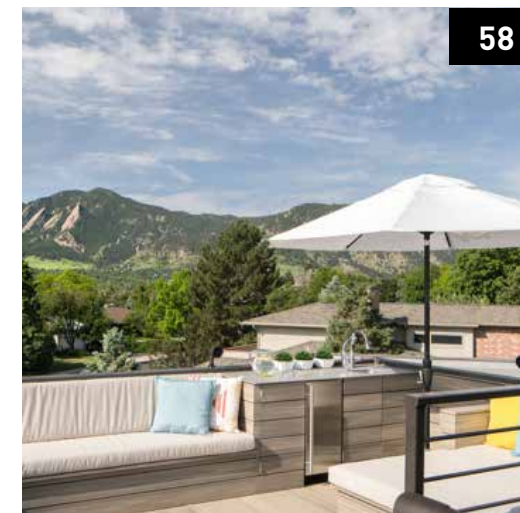
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FALL 2016

INSIDE

**40 // FIELD STUDY**

Our mildly addictive roundup of gadgets, modern accessories, and other items you didn't know you needed.

**58 // INSIDE OUT**

Bringing the outdoors inside is a fairly common goal for many Colorado architectural projects. But what happens when an ambitious new build in a prime Boulder location aims to bring the indoors out?

**70 // WHAT WOULD VICTOR DO?**

The owner of a classic Victor Hornbein home in Denver's Hilltop neighborhood gives a first-person account of the property's meticulous, loving, years-long renovation. Getting every detail right started with a simple question: WWVD?

**102 // OP-ED: LET'S PLAN DENVER RIGHT**

With the ongoing boom in our population and economy, residents can't afford to stand idly by while the city's built environment changes. A new community-driven planning process gives citizens a voice in shaping our future.

**104 // LOCAL COLOR**

The next generation of designers care about what's in their materials. An apothecary-style paint and plaster supply store in the Baker neighborhood taps into a like-minded community of artists and artisans interested in crafting a locally sourced design style.

**114 // SHINING THROUGH**

There's a striking new addition to the iconic U.S. Air Force Academy campus in Colorado Springs. Starting with design standards dating to the 1950s, the New York office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill created a thoroughly modern facility to suit a thoroughly historic site.

**126 // NEO CON**

Didn't get a chance to make the annual commercial furniture expo in Chicago? We've got you covered with the best and brightest highlights from this year's show.

**136 // DON'T WORRY, BE STRATEGIC**

For Crate Studios, creating fresh new headquarters for local advertising agency Fear Not meant more than designing cool spaces. It also meant crafting an environment to match the company's progressive ethos. Check your timidity at the door and prepare for a fearless pursuit of the good.

**142 // THE SPACE BETWEEN**

Experiencing art is about more than the work hanging on walls—it's also about the walls themselves. Boulder-based artist Sarah McKenzie brings a new exhibition to the David B. Smith Gallery.

**148 // MAKING SPACE**

A breathtaking property in a prime San Francisco neighborhood offered plenty of challenges—and plenty of opportunity—for Denver-based kitchen designer Rifugio Modern. Finding the right solution meant diving deep into the details, including a comprehensive evaluation of their clients' favorite dishes.

**154 // SOUP TO NUTS**

With their top-to-bottom work on hip new restaurant The Way Back, the design-build-fabricate team at Raw Creative is turning heads and challenging the way we think about design projects.

**160 // ANY WAY YOU SLICE IT**

To celebrate a 60-year milestone, Robert Welch Designs reintroduces the Campden Toast Rack, a classic mid-century kitchen accessory long out of circulation.

**166 // ONE LAST THING**

What exactly is electrical erosion, and how did it help turn Vertical Arts' new ping pong table into a multi-use tool that benefits staff and clients alike?





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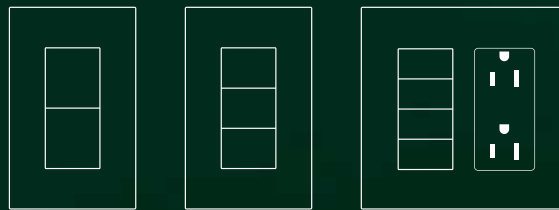
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**SINCE THE INCEPTION OF MODERN IN DENVER** almost nine years ago, mid-century modern design has been an important component of the publication. Mid-century architecture, interior design, industrial design, and graphic design have populated our residential and commercial features, product spotlights, and designer profiles. Its influence can be seen in the work of many of the contemporary architects and designers we highlight in each issue. At its core, it remains inspiring, desired, and relevant because good design is timeless. Post-World War II Colorado went through a sizable growth period, with a large number of homes and buildings designed in the then-modern style. Many of these structures have survived and interest in them continues to grow. And as the decades march on, these mid-century structures are now becoming historic and the topic of preservation for mid-century buildings becomes even more important.

So what buildings are important and should be saved and what buildings can be replaced with new design? How do we honor the best of these homes, building, neighborhoods, and campuses and still make them work for our modern lifestyles? How do we understand the original intent of the mid-century architects and designers so that any modification, demolition, or transformation is in concert with the original design? These are questions and conversations that are necessary right now.

The two cover features in this issue required thoughtful and studied attention to these issues and both benefitted from taking the time to consider them. One, a

Usonian home in Hilltop designed by famed Colorado architect Victor Hornbein, and the other: a new modern building from acclaimed design firm SOM, fitting perfectly on the storied Air Force Academy campus in Colorado Springs. The new owners of the Hornbein house spent extensive time and energy to learn and understand everything they could about the house, the architect, the design, the materials, and the people who lived there before them—all critical to informing the course they should chart in their preservation efforts and renovation needs. Starting on page 70, the unique first-person story by homeowner Bill Nelson takes you through every detail of that journey.

The Air Force Academy wanted to create a specific building for its foundational Character and Leadership Development program and smartly chose the firm that built the famed mid-century modern campus 65 years ago. They also understood how important it was to create a wholly original building that would harmonize with the purpose and principles of Walter Netsch's seminal 1950s design. The new structure's scale, proportions, and integration with the surrounding buildings is stunning. You can read the story on page 114 and see how not only is it possible to embrace and preserve the past, you can create incredible new design that makes the sum greater than the parts.

Enjoy the issue!

*William Logan*

William Logan  
william@modernindenver.com

THE COVERS



The fall 2016 issue of *Modern In Denver* once again features two distinct covers. Shot by photographers James Florio and Kyler Deutmeyer, the meticulous restoration of a 1947 Victor Hornbein home in the Hilltop neighborhood provides the backdrop for a rare first-person essay from the homeowner. Further south, the U.S. Air Force Academy also infused a rich architectural history into the creation of its gleaming new Center for Character and Leadership Development. Photographer David Lauer spent several days capturing this incredible new building. They're two very different projects with a common aim: to respect a rich legacy while forging boldly ahead..



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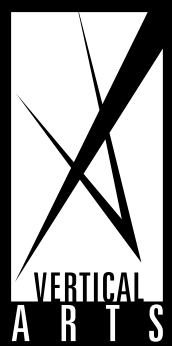
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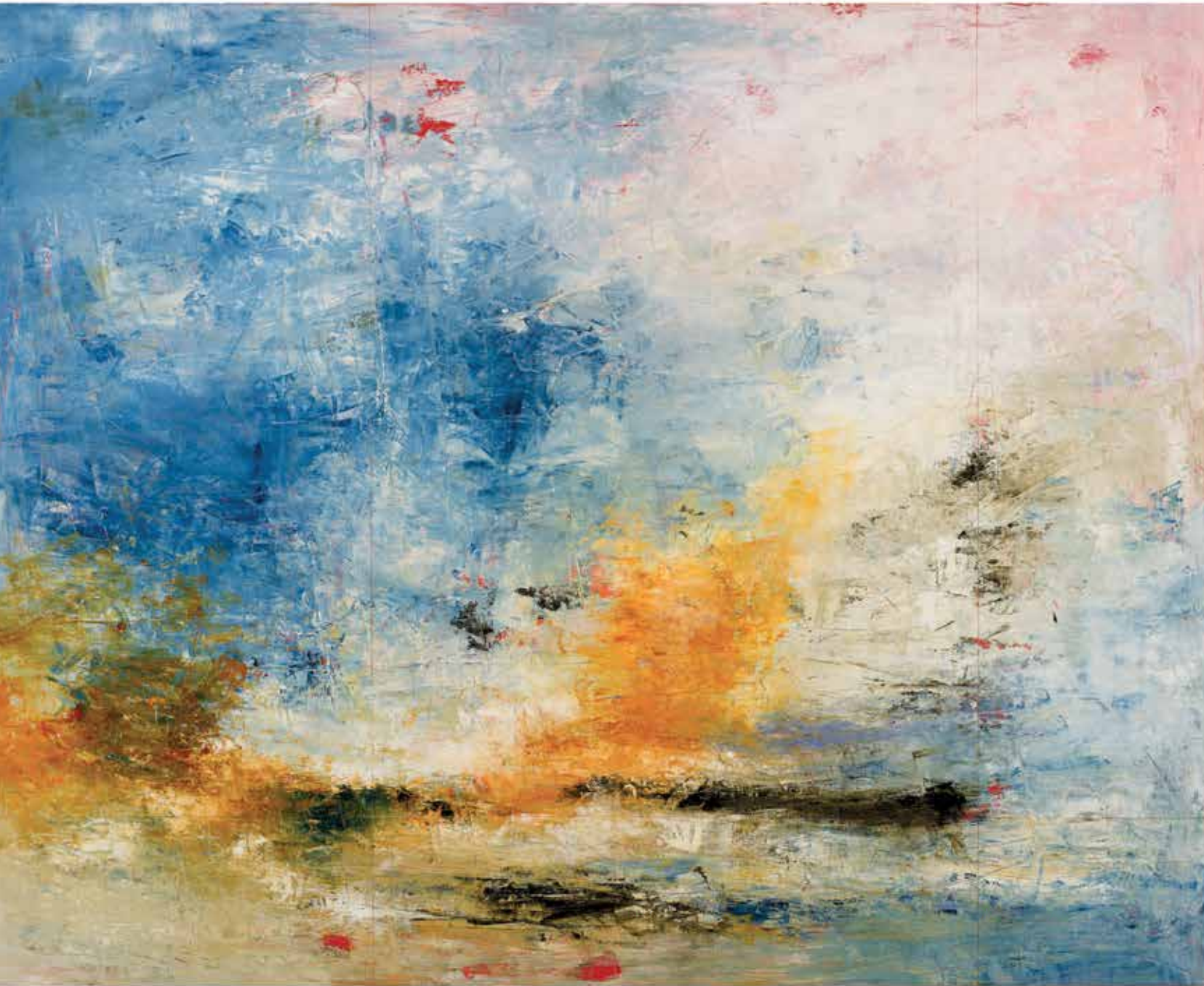
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**CIRQUE LIGHTS**

A trio of pendant lamps from lighting manufacturer Louis Poulsen looks like a floating city of meringue tips, or hot air balloons, or even soft serve ice cream swirls. And no wonder. The CIRQUE series, created by Swedish graphic artist Clara von Zweigbergk, was inspired by a trip to Tivoli, a Copenhagen city full of "carousels, candy floss makers, and wheels of fortune."

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**TECH TYPO**

If technology makes you yearn for a simpler time but there's no way you're giving up Internet, the Freewrite is a good alternative. Cheekily calling itself the "world's first smart typewriter," it is indeed a typewriter with Wi-Fi access so text files can be stored in the cloud. There is a full keyboard and small e-ink screen to let you see what you're typing. And little else. It's not a laptop. No more getting distracted by social media or email. Of course, instead of coughing up \$499 for Freewrite, one could just turn off Wi-Fi to get work done. But what fun is that?

+getfreewrite.com

**JUST ADD PLAYFUL**

From the design house that brought us the whimsical Puppy sculpture and Spun seat, Magis didn't pick just any ordinary mascot to celebrate its 40th year. The Italian furniture firm chose a mule called Ettore to represent Magis' determination and hard work. And then it tapped designer Konstantin Grcic, already tasked with creating a new cast-iron furniture collection for the company. "I did it, and it was fun," Grcic said. "Ettore turned out a real mule, its legs firmly on the ground, determined and strong. But it is also a beautiful thing, loveable and playful. Just like Magis."

+magisdesign.com





**READING NOOK**

For the unenlightened, ON by Álvaro Díaz Hernández sounds like a unique lighting fixture. And it looks like a bolo tie. Wrong and wrong. It's a magazine rack. Huh? Just drape magazines along the heavy duty leather cord by their spines until the edge hits the wooden cube. You'll have reading material hanging on any available wall space. Each ON has room for four magazines or small books.

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**WASH TIME**

There's not much to the Simple Shower from Rainburst Inc. It's a removable, perforated plastic lid that attaches to a 2-liter bottle or other container. An air tube in the center keeps air flowing into the bottle so water flows out smoothly. It's a quick clean up on the go. With not much to explain, the Enumclaw, Washington company appears to focus on having fun with marketing. Van dwellers? You need this product that is "guaranteed to get you wet!"

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**LIGHT SHADE**

How many ways can you rebuild a lightbulb? Countless if you have a 3D printer, apparently. Formaliz3d, one of the first to cause an enlightened design frenzy with its Plumen light bulb, used 3D technology to add another design element: a lightbulb shade. The Kayan 3D cover is designed to snuggle close to a Plumen bulb so the dark case actually looks like a dark light bulb. Tiny holes let the light through and fit smaller Plumen bulbs.

+formaliz3d.com

**BAR NONE**

A bar of soap is easy for travel, simple to use, and economical. So why not shampoo bars? And laundry bars? And body wash bars? That's the thinking behind Ethique, a New Zealand body-care products company started by Brianne West, who concocted the solid shampoos while working in a university lab. But it's not just about soap. It's about the earth. The bio-chemist turned entrepreneur stays away from chemicals and only uses natural ingredients. Plus, as bars of soap there is minimal packaging and waste.

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**STEM SCHOOL**

Getting children interested in engineering, technology, and other STEM topics is way more fun if a robot is involved. And Sphero's SPRK+, the educational cousin to the Star Wars BB-8 droid toy, adds a truly inside look into robot mechanics thanks to SPRK+'s transparent but durable shell. The robot, which was designed in Boulder, works with a mobile app to help kids learn code that will move the robot in any direction and do a plethora of other nifty tricks.

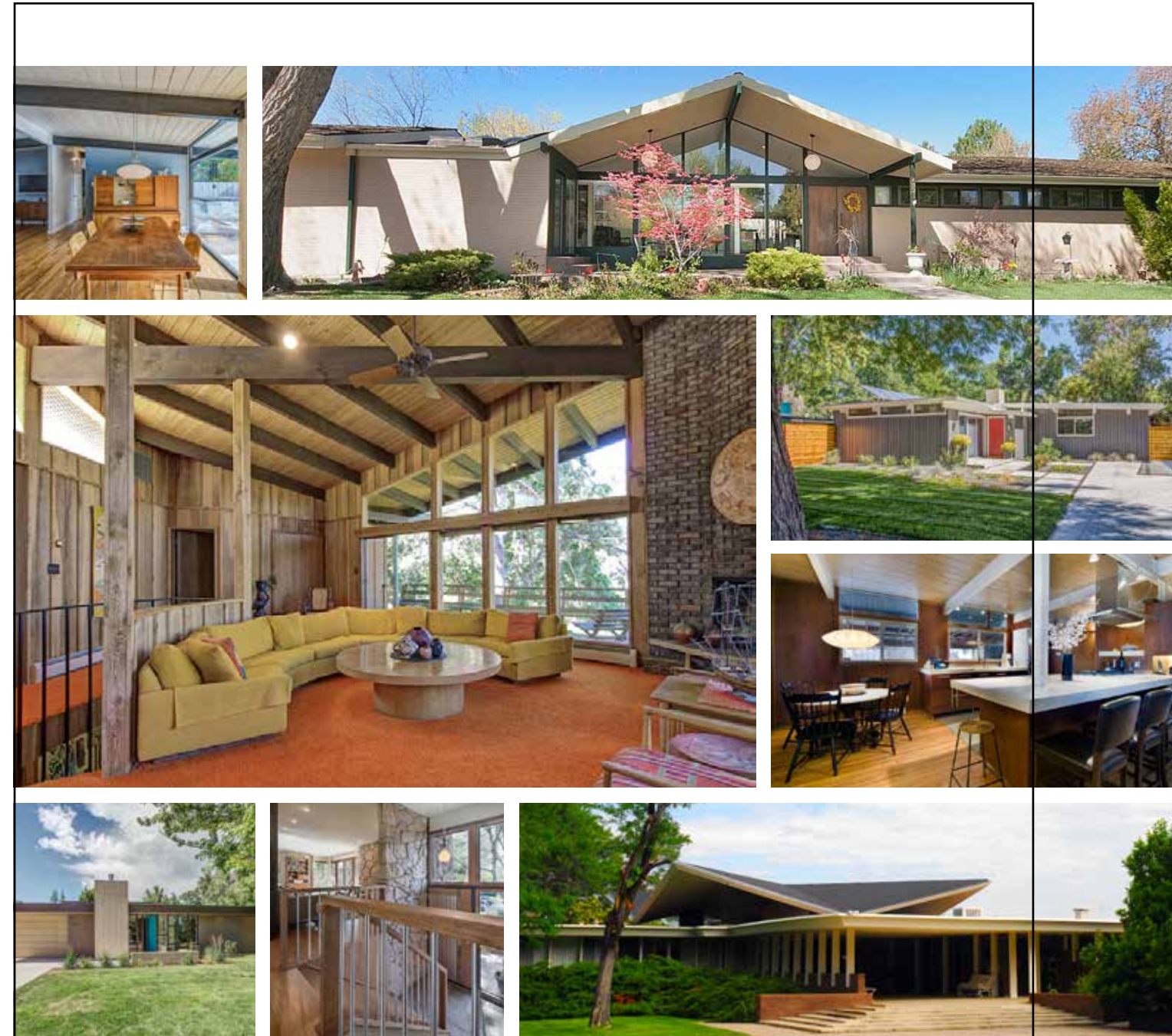
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# INSIDE OUT

A NEW BUILD FROM HMH ARCHITECTURE + INTERIORS BLURS THE LINES BETWEEN OUTSIDE AND IN. FOR AN ACTIVE YOUNG FAMILY OF FOUR, THE SKY'S THE LIMIT.

WORDS: Alison Gwinn • IMAGES: David Lauer

Bringing the outdoors in is hardly a new concept. But there's an open, rectilinear house perched on one of the highest hills north of downtown Boulder that goes a step further: It also brings the indoors out.

For a family of four who love to bicycle, kayak, and take advantage of the Colorado lifestyle, connecting their living space to the natural environment was a high priority. "The challenge was making the interior spaces feel like they were outdoors," said architect and interior designer Cherie Goff of HMH Architecture + Interiors in Boulder, who achieved that effect mainly through large sliders and accordion doors that replaced the walls separating the dining and living rooms from the spaces outside.

"It feels like we could be in Hawaii," said the homeowner. "All the rooms have big windows to let in the light. The views are amazing from the first look, and they just keep getting better with each step up." This culminates in a rooftop deck with views of the Flatirons to the south; of Mount Sanitas to the north; and in the distance, Longs Peak.

To play up those views, Goff gave the copper- and stucco-clad home a bold design of two V-shaped floors stacked one on top of the other (visible as you approach the home from the street). "The design really takes advantage of the site by creating these quadrants that naturally open up to the yard in both the front and back," she said.



The 3,970-square-foot, energy-efficient house, perched on one of Boulder's highest hills, is clad in random-sized pieces of copper (a material that looks organic, Goff says, but is easier to maintain than wood) and stucco, to emphasize the structure's unusual stacked double-V shape. A south-facing deck off the second-floor master is used in the winter, says the homeowner, because "it's snuggled in there and doesn't get a lot of snow." The front-yard berms were added by the Denver-based landscape architect R Design Studios to play up the location's natural privacy, at the end of a cul-de-sac.



That V shape forms a south-facing entry yard, created by Denver landscape architecture firm R Designs, which is accessible by a winding front walkway hugged by two gentle grassy berms. On the north side of the home, the living and dining rooms as well as the kitchen open out onto a large social space that includes an outdoor bar and lounge, a second dining area that can accommodate 10 people, and a grassy yard. (A pool is coming soon.) Because the views are really the star of the show, the furniture outside "is more background in color and style," said Goff, "so as not to distract from the mountain views."

**IT FEELS LIKE WE COULD BE IN HAWAII. ALL THE ROOMS HAVE BIG WINDOWS TO LET IN THE LIGHT. THE VIEWS ARE AMAZING FROM THE FIRST LOOK, AND THEY JUST KEEP GETTING BETTER WITH EACH STEP UP.**

Not visible from the street is a rear wing, which provides storage equal to a five-car garage. It houses three discrete spaces: one for everyday commuting cars and bikes, as the family likes to bike everywhere; a second space for the family's many toys, including a camper and kayaks; and a third space that acts as a man cave and workshop.

The family actually lived on the property for four-and-a-half years before the new four-bedroom, four-and-a-half-bath house was completed in 2015. "We'd had a vision of what we wanted for a long time," said the homeowner, "compiling a list of things we loved about different places we've traveled, as well as things we already liked about how we were living in the 1950s ranch home that was here before. But the major thing we wanted was the integration of the indoor and outdoor spaces."

Inside, Goff said, "Comfort and practicality were the two key factors for the family. Because they are so active, they needed the furniture to be relaxed, comfortable, and easy. They were too busy to fuss with materials and finishes that take time to maintain." They field-tested all of the seating for comfort, and since the dining room table is thick slabs of oiled oak, it can be dinged and scratched and that will only bring more life to the piece.

Like all of the home's social spaces, the dining room opens to the outside, in this case through accordion doors. The durable, oiled-oak dining table (E15 from Studio Como in Denver) is surrounded by comfortable but contemporary Poliform Ventura chairs, also from Studio Como. The custom "tulip" chandelier comes from Light in Art.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** For three seasons of the year, the living room extends out onto the home's main outdoor social space, with views north all the way to Longs Peak. The sleek, understated furniture is meant to allow the outdoors to be the main attraction: A large sectional and Horizon coffee table from Studio Como are balanced by a classic Eames Lounge Chair, cowhide ottomans, and an arching Streeter Floor Lamp, all from Room & Board.





The NewTechWood composite rooftop deck has 360-degree views that include the Front Range and downtown Boulder. "I call the deck 'the icing on the cake,'" said the homeowner. The custom furniture was built to be large enough to allow for easy slumber parties (for both adults and kids) under the stars.

A pocket window in the kitchen allows for a double-sided bar area, with access to the outside grill. "It's a great place to sit and drink your morning coffee and enjoy the views," said Goff, who placed two Tiffany counter stools at the pass-through bar. The kitchen cabinets are a mixture of rift-cut white oak and cabinets painted in Benjamin Moore's low-gloss Iron Mountain hue, with Caesarstone countertops.



THE INSIDE



Pillars in the back help support Zipscreens by AVCrafters (controlled by a Savant Pro control system) to help keep the patio area cool on sunny days. The room on the far left is the TV room, which includes a movie screen; a new swimming pool (and outdoor shower) are eventually planned for the backyard nearby, to create a "kids' zone."





It was also important that the new home be energy efficient. To that end, Goff worked with general contractor Hammerwell to incorporate a 10-kilowatt, photo-voltaic system and 25 solar hot water panels that provide half the home's water and space heating needs. Also added: super-tight insulation through 8" exterior stud walls and low "e" double-paned windows, which have a coating that controls the amount of ultraviolet and infrared light that enters the house. Windows on the north side bring in more light to take advantage of winter sun and warm the house when it's cold outside. Windows on the south, east, and west have a higher level of coating to minimize heat gain. Overall, the house functions close to net zero.

"This is a really, really sweet location," said the homeowner. "We have the convenience of being near town but also feel like we are actually in the mountains. It's truly everything we wanted." ■



This second-floor children's bedroom is made for fun: A jungle gym on the far wall includes a curtained-off play space, and kids can climb by ladder up to a little bed where friends can gather or sleep over. (It is removable, so the room can be made into a more grown-up space in future years.) Using the animal artwork over the bed as inspiration, Goff added a playful giraffe table lamp from Alex Marshall Studio, IKEA Odestrad bedding, and Oeuf Sparrow Nightstands from All Modern.

A light-enhancing transom window in the kids' bathroom mimics the high-floating windows in the adjacent bedroom. Large-scale gray floor tiles and sleek cabinetry contrast with the playful vertical stripe in the tile ("the owners wanted a little bit of color and pop," says Goff); the hue mimics a teal blue seen throughout the home. Remove the children's stool, and the bath will become sophisticated enough for a teen—or beyond.

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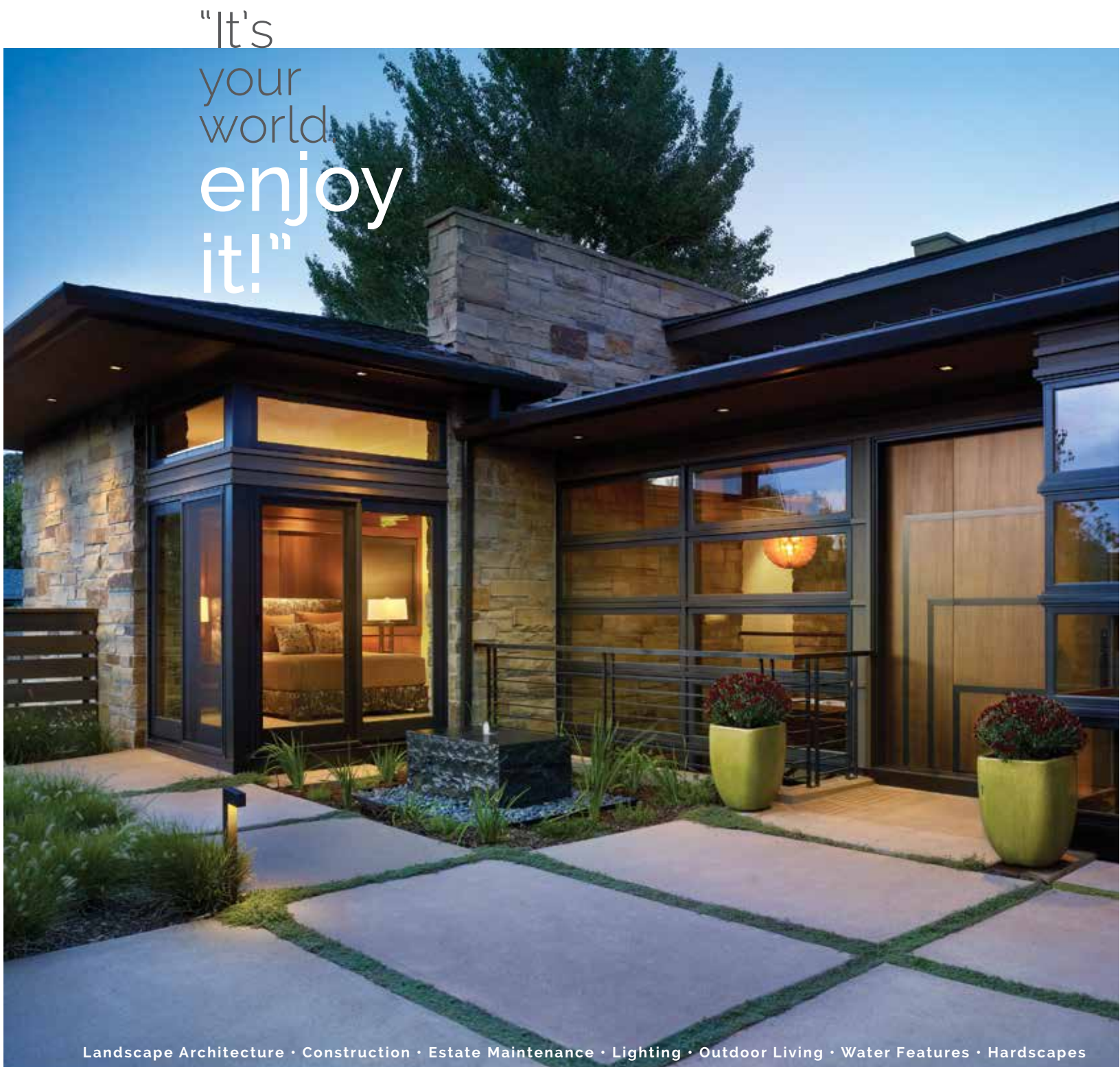
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# WHAT WOULD VICTOR DO?

WHEN DECIDING THE FUTURE RESTORATION OF A HISTORIC DENVER PROPERTY, THE PRESERVATION-MINDED HOMEOWNERS LOOKED TO THE PAST FOR ANSWERS.

STORY: Bill Nelson  
IMAGES: James Florio & Kyler Deutmeyer

**AT** ONE POINT AFTER OUR MOVE TO DENVER—A CHILLING MEMORY EVEN NOW—THE PROPERTY MY WIFE, LARA MERRIKEN, AND I PURCHASED IN THE HILLTOP AREA REACHED A LOW EBB. AFTER A WEEK OF HEAVY RAIN, LEAKS SPRUNG UP ALL OVER THE HOUSE, INCLUDING HALF A DOZEN IN THE KITCHEN THAT THREATENED TO BRING DOWN THE CEILING.

AMID THE CHAOS, MY YOUNG SON, OLIVER, DECIDED TO FEED BABYBEL CHEESE WHEELS TO AN INFESTATION OF MICE BROUGHT IN BY THE WEATHER. THE SPECTACLE ONLY ADDED TO MY WIFE'S DISILLUSIONMENT—SO MUCH SO SHE THOUGHT IT BEST TO RETREAT TO THE BEDROOM, WHICH WAS ALSO LEAKING, AND RELY ON TEXT MESSAGES TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD. MINUS A COLORFUL ADJECTIVE OR TWO, HER OPINION WAS: "LET'S GET OUT OF THIS NIGHTMARE!"

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT OUR NIGHTMARE IS ACTUALLY A PREEMINENT EXAMPLE OF MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN COLORADO? WHY DO HOMEOWNERS SIGN UP FOR THIS KIND OF MISERY? DOES HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF AN OLD HOUSE REALLY MATTER? THESE ARE VALID QUESTIONS WHEN YOUR SON IS PLAYING RUSSIAN ROULETTE WITH BUBONIC PLAGUE AND YOUR WIFE, ANGRY YOU'VE GOTTEN HER INTO THIS MESS, STARTS GOOGLING QUALIFICATIONS OF DIVORCE LAWYERS.

Native red sandstone forms compelling interconnections among walls, planters and terraces. The exterior staircase, fabricated out of steel with sandstone treads, originally led to a rooftop solarium, which did not survive decades of water damage and subsequently was replaced with a guest suite. Kale and tomato spring from a raised sandstone bed, one of four that Boulder-based Marpa established in its historically sensitive landscape design for the property.

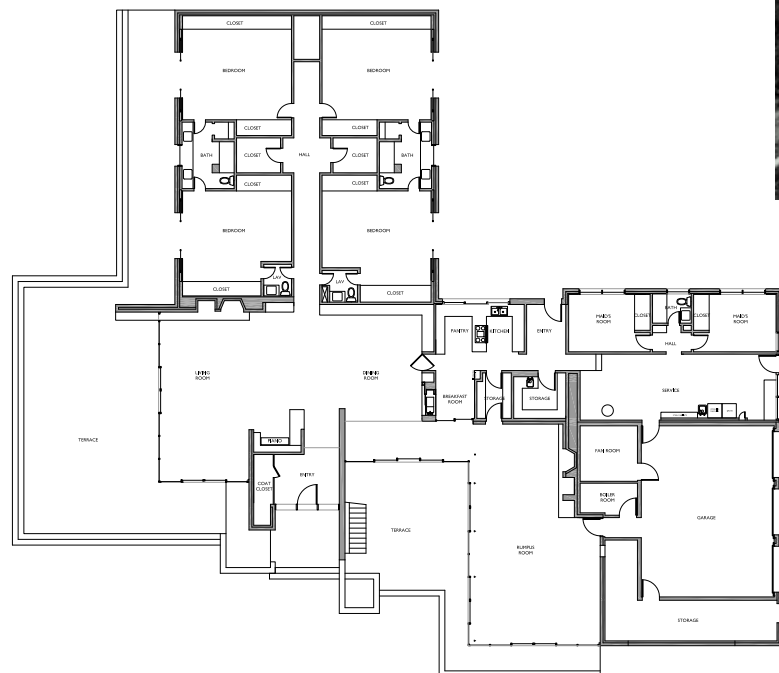




The architecture at One Eudora Street observes Usonian ideals set forth by Frank Lloyd Wright, most notably cantilevered overhangs that shade curtain walls of floor-to-ceiling glass. The sweeping transparency frames views of the natural surroundings from nearly every room in the house, a dramatic feat of construction that took workers nearly two years to complete. Radiant-heating pipes were installed under all exterior walkways and patios to encourage year-round use and aid in snow removal, very unusual for the late 1940s.



In architect Victor Hornbein's floor plan of One Eudora, you enter the living room and adjacent dining room, then navigate from there through a series of corridors. The first one heads off into the bedroom wing, where Hornbein considered gender, designing separate and materially distinct master suites for husband and wife. The adjoining master baths also connect to the kids' rooms—one specifically for girls, one for boys. Down the hallway are his and hers powder rooms. The original kitchen flowed into a rumpus room as well as a service corridor that corralled laundry and HVAC equipment and provided two bedrooms and a bath for maid staff.



**THE** best place to start this nail-biter of a story is to go back to the beginning: 1946 to be exact, when Robert Kohn and his wife, Sissy Neusteter, enlisted architect Victor Hornbein to design a modest family home at One Eudora Street. A Colorado native, Hornbein studied at the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design in Denver, which exposed him to worldwide architectural language, although his own voice—a blend of International Style and Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonia—was shaped as early as 1934 while Hornbein attended the "Homes of Tomorrow Exhibition" at the Chicago World's Fair. There he toured George Fred Keck's experimental home, a dodecagonal glass prism, and later sought out Wright's masterworks in the region, having only seen them previously in photographs. In person, the structures seemed much smaller in proportion. Beautifully so.

No doubt these seminal experiences influenced how Hornbein executed his One Eudora build. The initial cost estimate was \$55,000, but that figure soared as Kohn, president of American Furniture Co., sunk his teeth into the project. No stranger to luxury, he embraced futuristic extravagance with the zeal of a sailor on leave, encouraging Hornbein to investigate all manner of residential gizmo.

Among the approved considerations was a motion-sensitive burglar alarm, its seeing eyes hidden inside exterior columns and secret panels within the house. There was also a stereo cabinet with pullouts storing the latest in high fidelity. On movie nights, a mechanized screen dropped from the ceiling, the projector tucked in a wall. Viewers sat around a 12-foot Dunbar dining table, illuminated by telescopic spotlights. A dial widened or narrowed the beams (a feature replicated in bedrooms as reading lights). After dinner, the hosts could trigger automated curtains to close off the area during cleanup.

Hornbein often described One Eudora as "crazy," the owners likely included in that appraisal. Kohn exercised more than a few hairsplitting demands. In one missive, he stipulated the precise height he wanted his trousers to hang in the closet. Sissy, born into the family retail business, Neusteters, pursued her own interests with similar vigor. It was said if she didn't go shopping by noon every day, she got a headache. While considering the finish for wood paneling in her bedroom, she insisted on adding a splash of pink.

THE INITIAL COST ESTIMATE WAS \$55,000, BUT THAT FIGURE SOARED AS KOHN, PRESIDENT OF AMERICAN FURNITURE CO., SUNK HIS TEETH INTO THE PROJECT. NO STRANGER TO LUXURY, HE EMBRACED FUTURISTIC EXTRAVAGANCE WITH THE ZEAL OF A SAILOR ON LEAVE, ENCOURAGING HORNBEIN TO INVESTIGATE ALL MANNER OF RESIDENTIAL GIZMO.

Suffice it to say, Hornbein had his hands full. Architectural historian Rodd L. Wheaton once sat down with the prolific architect, eventually asking for Hornbein's seven favorite projects among the 126 that bear his signature. Surprisingly, the list did not include a single residence. "As I recall, he rued designing houses, particularly because of a wife's demands," Wheaton said.

On the day of that interview, the topic turned to Hornbein's interest in Usonian architecture. "He was very candid about his Wrightian influences, even though he confessed he had never studied with Wright," Wheaton said. "What he did say was that he was profoundly influenced by Wright's sense of the environment in which his buildings were sited. Hornbein believed that he was perhaps the only architect in Denver to fully understand Wright's teachings."



In applying those teachings at One Eudora, Hornbein strived to make a quintessential Colorado home, especially intent on using native materials. The key ingredient, red sandstone, was harvested near Lyons. In fact, construction depleted the designated quarry of product, prompting masons to buy up sandstone walkways around town to finish the job.

The low-slung vision for the house also showcased Hornbein's architectural grasp of prevailing local climate. Wide eaves shield the interior from sunlight, and every room has ingenious transom windows that can be opened and closed to regulate airflow. Even in the coldest winter months, it's toasty inside during the day as a result of solar gains that Hornbein anticipated.

Another triumph is the scale assigned to living spaces. Make no mistake, this

is a large house, spanning more than 7,000 square feet. But it comes off as embracing rather than overpowering. "I'm impressed by the equality of transition from inside to out," said Carroll Hansen, an expert in local architectural history. "The artistry going on underneath the roof is only half the story. The exterior structures—the planters, the patios—have no less gusto."

The original property, which encompassed a city block, got carved up over the years, thinning out parcels of former grandeur, including an orchard and a Hornbein-conceived tennis court. The court remains but now belongs to different owners. Aiming to fill in where subdivisions left holes in the greenery, we called on Marpa, a Boulder-based design firm. "By exploring ways the house could be experienced through the landscape, and the landscape could be experienced through the house, I sought

Warmth permeates the living room, where Honduran mahogany paneling, bookshelves and built-ins stand sumptuously in concert with birch ceiling tiles, all caramelized with age. Jeffrey P. Elliott executed the interior design, weaving in the homeowners' quirky collection of art, objects and furnishings — no easy task considering the Marianna von Allessch glass mural juxtaposed with a toy monkey shaking a martini. The striped chair in the background is a rare Victor Hornbein commission, one of a pair. The sculptural staircase seems to float in place, belying its satisfying weightiness underfoot. A thin metal edge inserted into the hardwood tread prevents slipping and beautifully punctuates the Lou and Romy Bieker design.

WHAT WOULD VICTOR DO?



One of many custom extravagances is an upright piano that Victor Hornbein convinced Steinway & Sons to manufacture using veneers specified for the house. Hanging above are watercolors that Hornbein himself painted, elegantly rendering his architectural vision. An accomplished artist as well as architect, Hornbein executed large murals around Denver under the tutelage of legendary muralist Allen Tupper True.

to create a series of spaces that would unveil a deep connection to the history of the property," said Marpa Principal Luke Sanzone.

Not a spot exists inside the window-laden One Eudora where you're not aware of the natural surroundings. A colossal spruce hedge wraps the property's southern boundary. Sanzone skirted it with dogwood on either side of the entrance, where a sculptural hawthorn tree blooms in May with white, aromatic flowers. Up the pathway, you're met with rows of crabapple and boxwood interwoven with yarrow, hyssop, and Russian sage. My wife farms an added grouping of raised planters, trying in vain to keep the chickens in check when they're released from a nearby coop. A cloud-pruned Niwaki pine looks right at home in another planter, as does a rare Colorado orange apple tree. Outside two of the bedrooms, Marpa established a contemplation garden, its serenity protected by sheared Bakeri. Splendor abounds, all under the shade of the tallest pin oak in the state.

Once our construction dust started flying in earnest, it was impossible to disregard Hornbein's presence when making decisions. Given our leaky introduction to living here, we tackled maintenance issues before moving on to a bigger desire: taking another swing at the aging kitchen remodel we'd inherited. That's when neighbor Dominick Sekich introduced himself as board chair for Colorado Preservation, Inc., a not-for-profit committed to saving endangered places across the state.

Sekich, himself restoring a landmark house with partner Scott Van Vleet, saw in me a familiar passion and determined I was CPI board-worthy—a post that brought into focus the value of safeguarding historic addresses. "I feel someone needs to speak for the restrained dignity of an older home," Sekich said. "When one of these places is destroyed or its character changed, we stop communicating the subtle messages of the past and lose the distinct voice of our predecessors."

“USING A OUIJA BOARD TO DIVINE WHAT A DEAD ARCHITECT WOULD DO IS VERY DIFFERENT THAN UNDERSTANDING WHAT HE OR SHE ACTUALLY DID AND WORKING TO PRESERVE IT. IT'S ALL ABOUT ESTABLISHING WHAT IS ORIGINAL IN THE HOME, RETAINING AND RESTORING THE MOST ORIGINAL MATERIAL AND DESIGN FEATURES, AND MAKING HARD DECISIONS ABOUT WHERE NEW DESIGN AND MATERIALS ARE APPROPRIATE.” -DIANE WRAY TOMASSO

Wisdom of this gravity comes in handy when stitching back together a fragile environment. Lara and I took this responsibility seriously, amassing blueprints, early property photographs, letters between Hornbein and his clients, and other material that informed our rehabilitation efforts.

Armed with research, I placed a call to Dave Steers, a historic preservation consultant who oversaw two bathroom restorations and buttoned up widespread deterioration.

The more insight we cultivated, the better the outcomes. "Using a Ouija board to divine what a dead architect would do is very different than understanding what he or she actually did and working to preserve it," said Diane Wray Tomasso, a leader in Denver's historic preservation community. "It's all about establishing what is original in the home, retaining and restoring the most original material and design features, and making hard decisions about where new design and materials are appropriate."

When the time came to address those hard decisions in our kitchen, we were lucky to hire Lou Bieker, principal at 4240 Architecture, and even luckier to bring on his sister, Romy, who works in private practice at her firm, RoBA. The duo rendered a plan so in sync with the original setting, it's not immediately

obvious what was done and what was already there.

One inspired gesture was extending into the kitchen a long run of cabinetry that originates in the living room, marrying old with new. At the end of the 37-foot span is a nifty coffee and tea cubby, which borrows design cues from an existing liquor cabinet, as does a three-door, match-grained pantry. The kitchen's other woodwork is equally masterful, daring to harmonize a range niche, clerestory windows, light boxes, vents, speaker grilles, appliance doors, and storage of every imaginable rectangularity. The maple island weighs a ton. No kidding.

The architects sorted it all out with aplomb. "Our initial impulse was, 'How are we going to raise the ghost of Victor Hornbein?'" Romy said. "But we went about it in a couple of ways—trying to match historical form and material where it made sense, and honoring architectural intent in other circumstances. We felt confident, for example, bringing in state-of-the-art appliances and lighting because Hornbein himself epitomized state-of-the-art."

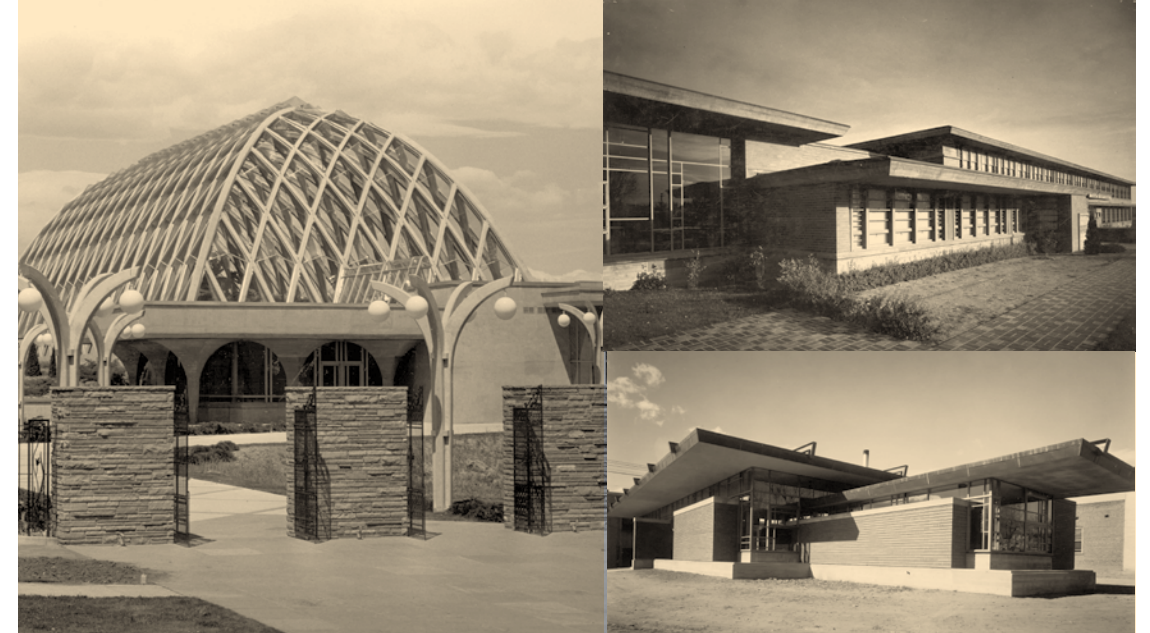
Added Lou: "What continues to strike me is the energy everyone involved took in challenging the norm and committing to the aspirations of original design and construction. The collaboration among





The immense Dunbar dining table is an original furnishing, although early on it was positioned differently to facilitate watching movies on a screen that dropped from the ceiling with the push of a button. The integrated projector was accessible through the kitchen. Another entertainment option was a stereo cabinet loaded with state-of-the-art equipment atop pullout trays. The speaker grilles are trimmed in brass to match nearby door and window hardware.

## THE ARCHITECT



**TOMORROW TODAY**  
THE ARCHITECTURE OF VICTOR HORNBEIN CELEBRATED  
THE FUTURE IN A QUINTESSENTIALLY COLORADO WAY.

**B**y the time Victor Hornbein formally retired in 1992, the renowned Colorado architect had put his name to 80 buildings and 46 residential projects. His first published work, the Holden House, was featured in the September 1944 issue of *The Architectural Forum*, and, soon after in New York City, an enlarged photograph of the house could be seen in a Museum of Modern Art exhibit surveying U.S. modernity in home building. Hornbein's inclusion appeared next to Frank Lloyd Wright's, which left Hornbein in an appreciative daze, so proud to be considered in the same light as his idol.

Much of Hornbein's output, including schools, day-care centers and libraries, expressed a career-long interest in exploring how children connect with architecture. He contributed masterfully to the built environments of Kent Denver School and Graland Country Day School, and was the architect of record for John J. Cory School—a 1550 S. Steele St. homage to Wright's Usonia, with beautifully proportioned volumes of red brick and bands of streamlined windows. On the north and south ends of the school, Hornbein stepped up his artistry, arranging odd-sized and, in some cases, tinted glass panels into striking yet functional displays.

The Frederick R. Ross-Broadway Branch Library, which Hornbein completed in 1951 at 33 E. Bayaud Ave., was his favorite commission. Granted wide creative freedom during design and construction, Hornbein produced a pure realization of his vision. The scale of the library is spatially intimate, especially the kids wing where a low ceiling and diminutive appointments embrace storytime and other bookish adventures. Light envelopes the space, emanating through spans of asymmetrically glazed windows interspersed with red and green glass. Truly stunning.

Most famously, in partnership with architect Ed White, Hornbein received international acclaim for the Boettcher Memorial Tropical Conservatory at the Denver Botanic Gardens. The landmark greenhouse—with its cast-in-place concrete ribs infilled with pyramidal Plexiglas panels—looks as otherworldly today as it did in 1966, when visitors first entered the "jungle in the city." Some three decades later, Hornbein returned to the conservatory, as well as adjacent structures he worked on, to accept a distinguished service award from the Modern Architecture Preservation League. He died a month later at age 82.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Boettcher Memorial Tropical Conservatory at the Denver Botanic Gardens, John J. Cory School, Frederick R. Ross-Broadway Branch Library, exterior and interior of the Holden House.

The rumpus room delighted the Kohn family, with its sprawling fireplace, television seating, and honed-flagstone arena for ping pong—a sport the current owners of One Eudora also enjoy. The articulated wood figures on the mantel, made for a gym in the early 20th century, were used to teach children how to box. The framed vellum is a historic Denver-area trolley sign.



owners, designers, and builders was much more than coming with a can-do attitude and willingness to explore the fantastical or whimsical. It was poetry mixed with pragmatics.”

It was Lou who suggested we hire Old Greenwich Builders to serve as general contractor. I worried the big boys wouldn’t even entertain a kitchen remodel, staircase improvement, and roof redo. When the doorbell rang, it was owner Cress Carter. “When I saw the house for the first time,” Carter recalled, “I immediately thought, ‘I’m not leaving.’ I have a weakness for cool houses, and this is a really cool house.”

Carter pulled superintendents and subcontractors from his A-list. A central figure was Flying C Woodwork’s Mitch Clark, who took on the challenging role to “match existing.” The outcomes were so good I didn’t want anybody to leave, which expanded project scope and deepened investment in a planned new staircase.

The Biekers knocked out that design, too—another tour de force—but Rob Brindley of Modern Craftsman brought it to life. His team produced a spectacular zigzag of steel with a banister echoing original metalwork at the house. Floating hardwood treads and risers completed the package. “Our approach to fabrication was not unlike most projects,” Brindley said. “We created a digital model of the space and worked through all the problem-solving prior to installation. Every cut had to be exact. Perfect. We also had the hurdle of a narrow doorway to deliver a 2,000-pound, odd-shaped system.”



The renovated kitchen honors architectural precedents in the house, including lighting coves, crescent drawer pulls, and match-grained cabinetry doors that roll along the same hardware used in 1947. The clerestory directs light onto the maple island, whose proportions and structure pay homage to the dining room’s original table. Even the terrazzo recalls the feeling of the first flooring material—*asbestos tile*—which was abated for safety. The wood-burning oven may seem contemporary, but it’s actually a former garbage incinerator now converted to cook pizza.





Throughout the two-year restoration, we've enjoyed a solid starting point, having purchased the property from Andy and Candy Roberts—Candy an accomplished architect herself. Owners for 17 years, the couple faithfully stewarded Hornbein's legacy, even returning a tasteful second level to the house, knowing the first structure up there, a solarium, had given way to time before they moved in. The new staircase connects to the Roberts' historically sensitive addition, which we use as a guest suite and occasional husband doghouse.

The Roberts clan took over from the second owners, the Millmans, who had lived in the house for almost four decades. Leonard and Elaine enjoyed their stretch and celebrated with exuberant interior design—a Buddha in the fireplace, gold-vein mirrors, and disco-era flair recalling Emilio Pucci after a second cappuccino. Fabulous!

As I contemplate the One Eudora families, my own among them, I'm intrigued how individually we've all wrapped our arms around the experience. A common thread, I believe, is recognition that this is not merely a house. It's a responsibility, a sacred one that coined a question we asked whenever indecision arose during construction:

"What would Victor do?"

The answer showed us the way. ■



**OPPOSITE:** A long clerestory illuminates the hallway dividing the bedroom wing of the house. The door at the end originally opened to racquet storage and pathway access to a subterranean tennis court. The carved greyhound dates to the 1920s. **ABOVE:** In the husband's master bedroom, the first owner, Robert Kohn, commissioned an end table to house the controller for an intercom system. It sat alongside an Edward Wormley-designed bed with mechanical armrests, a feature replicated in the current manifestation of the room, where a Marcello Fantoni lamp casts light on regional artistic endeavor, including an early bug box by David Zimmer, a John Grosse TV, and a provocative yearbook portrait featuring the bad-boy brushwork of Matt O'Neill and Jeff Starr.

WHAT WOULD  
VICTOR DO?





The swimming pool did not originate with the house, but came about later in a 1980 design by Hans Kahn Associates, Inc. The metalwork supporting the patio cover borrows rhythm and form from nearby transom windows. In the Hornbein-era backyard, grass and a swing set prevail, both in the shadow of the second-story solarium.

#### PROJECT CREDITS

##### ARCHITECTURE

Lou Bieker, 4240 Architecture  
Romy Bieker, RoBA

##### LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Luke Sanzone, Marpa Design Studio

##### GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Cress Carter, Old Greenwich Builders

##### CABINETS

Mitch Clark, Flying C Woodwork

##### METAL FABRICATION

Rob Brindley, Modern Craftsman

##### WOODWORKING

Rich Slusser

##### MASONRY

Mark Ward, Off the Wall Masonry

##### FLOORING

Dan Stanton,  
Colorado Design Inc., Tile & Terrazzo

##### WINDOWS

Bob Leimgruber, Abraxis Art Glass

##### INTERIOR PAINTING

Bill Campbell

##### SYSTEMS

Jerry Vandre, Expert Services  
Ed Wiese

##### HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONSULTANT

Dave Steers

##### INTERIOR DESIGN

Jeffrey P. Elliott

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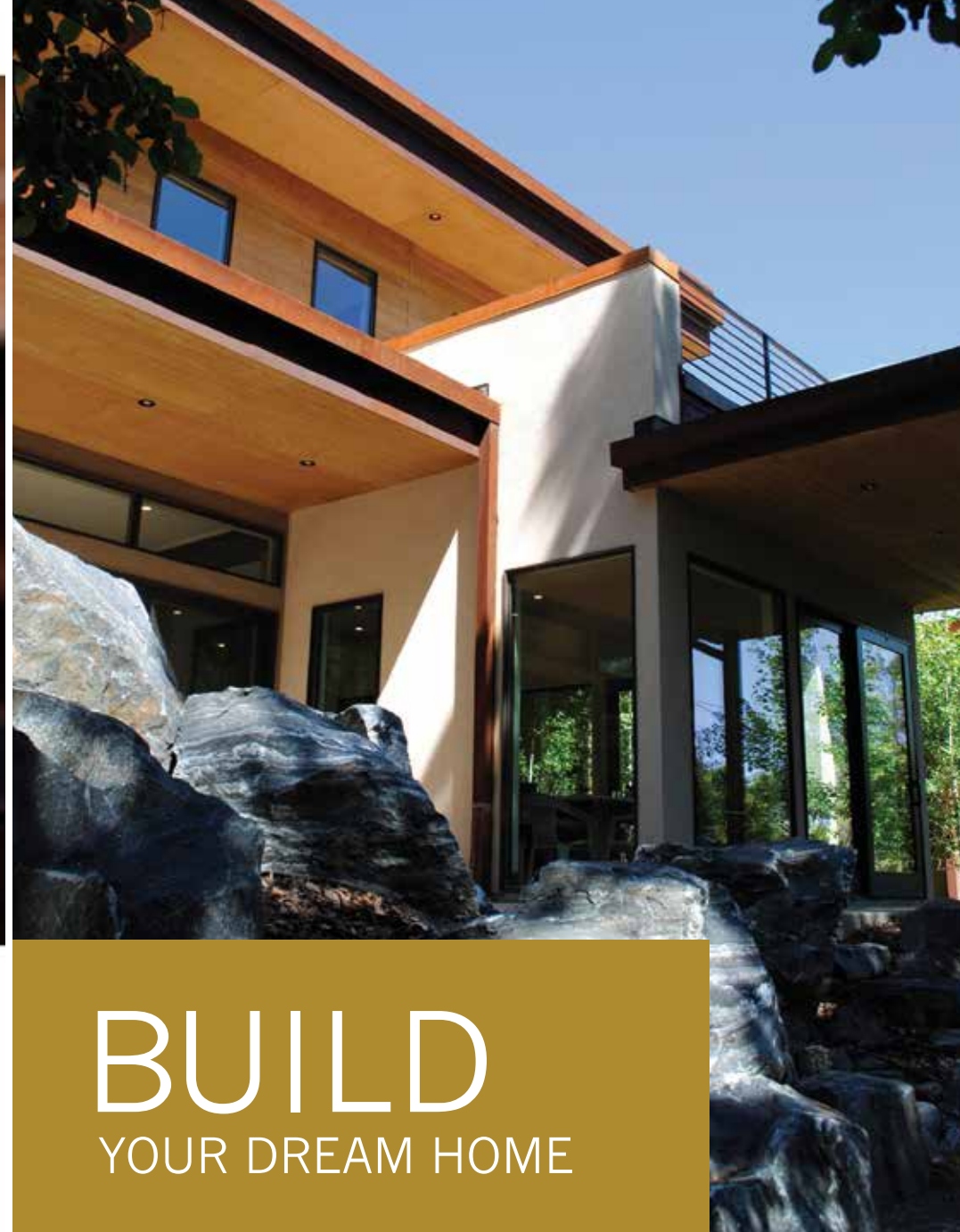
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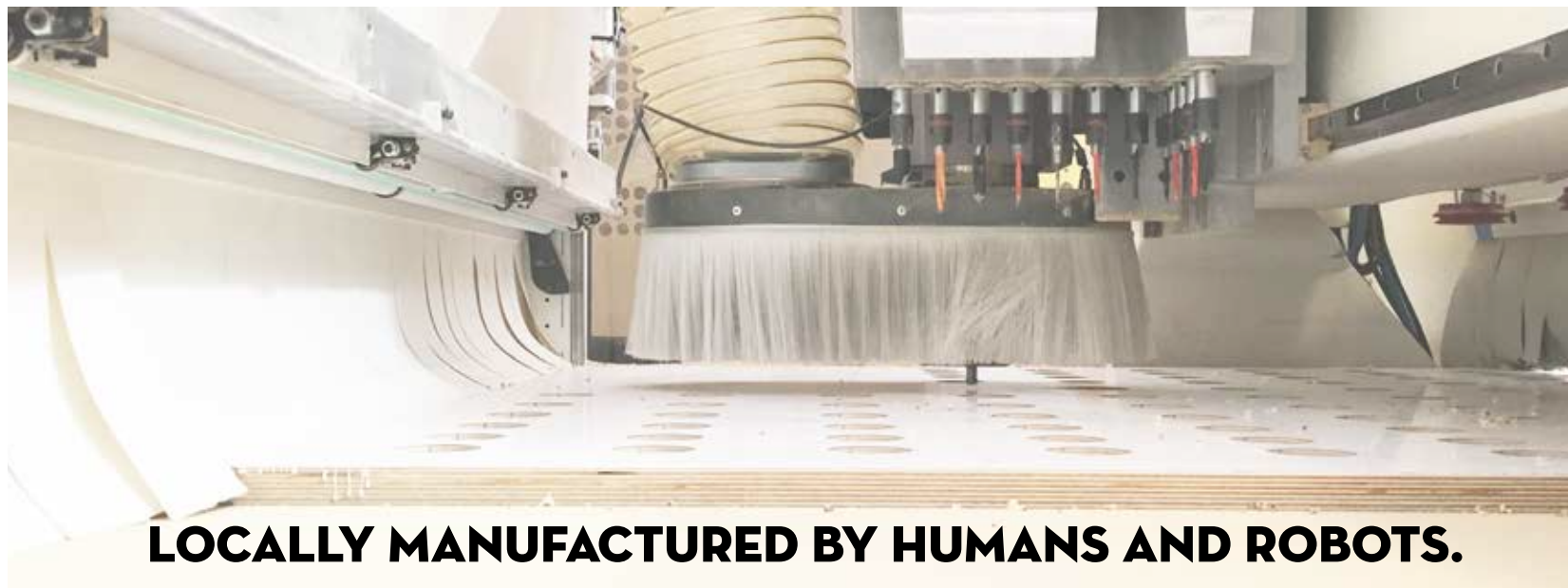
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# OP/ ED →

## LET'S PLAN DENVER RIGHT

BY BRAD BUCHANAN

### WHEN I MOVED TO DENVER IN 1982 AND BEGAN MY CAREER IN ARCHITECTURE, DENVER WAS A DIFFERENT PLACE.

Back then, Union Station was an underused building surrounded by surface parking lots. Behind it, the Central Platte Valley and what's now Confluence Park were a labyrinth of railroad tracks and an inaccessible riverfront.

Stapleton was an airport. Light rail transit was a gleam in someone's eye.

I loved Denver then, and I had big dreams for what it could be. But who could have imagined Denver would grow and evolve quite the way it has?

Fortunately, somebody did. In the 1990s, Denver Planning Director Jennifer Moulton saw this day coming. She convened a group of forward-thinkers who understood just how much Denver would grow, and that we needed to address it, stat. As the economic hub of the Rocky Mountain West, with a great climate, charming neighborhoods, friendly people and access to amazing recreation, it was bound to attract residents and businesses in increasing numbers.

THROUGH A COMBINATION OF NEWBORNS AND TRANSPLANTS, DENVER PROPER IS PROJECTED TO GROW 20 PERCENT BY 2035 TO 830,000 RESIDENTS. THE METRO AREA IS EXPECTED TO REACH 4.5 MILLION.



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

This op-ed column, authored by rotating guest writers, aims to stir conversations on architecture and design among our creative community. Note: Thoughts do not always reflect the views of MID (although they many times will). To start a conversation of your own, pitch ideas to [info@modernindenver.com](mailto:info@modernindenver.com)

After years of community outreach, Moulton and company in 2002 produced Blueprint Denver, a land use and transportation plan that laid out a citywide strategy for how our city would evolve. I had the privilege of being part of the team that wrestled with these big ideas.

Blueprint Denver made it a priority to preserve existing neighborhood character while delivering new neighborhoods that reknit the city's urban fabric. Blueprint's emphasis on mobility options and mixed-use development has kept us focused on moving more people in different ways, and allowing more people to work, shop, and play close to where they live.

Innovative for its time, Blueprint Denver has served us well. But Denver has changed considerably since 2002. Now it's time to plan for what's on the horizon.

It might be tempting to think that Denver could stay the same if we don't plan for development and transportation, parks and open space, transit and trails. That if we don't accommodate growth, perhaps growth will simply pass us by.

But let's be clear. This isn't a case of "If you build it, they will come." They're coming regardless.

Through a combination of newborns and transplants, Denver proper is projected to grow 20 percent by 2035 to 830,000 residents. The metro area is expected to reach 4.5 million.

With more change on the horizon, it's time once again to imagine what our future should look like.

### So, Denver, what do we want to be?

This spring, the city of Denver launched Denverright, a community-driven planning process that challenges you to shape how our city evolves in four key areas: land use, mobility, parks, and recreational resources. Denverright includes an update of the innovative but outdated Blueprint Denver plan.

The truth is, great cities don't happen by accident. They are the result of intentional planning, committed community members, and thoughtful public projects that guide



One of the most comprehensive features of the city's new Denverright program is an interactive map-based survey that allows residents to provide specific feedback about land use, parks, mobility, and recreational resources. Sharing successes, suggestions, and grievances is the most direct way to have an impact on Denver's future growth and development.

their evolution. We need you to bring your brainpower, your passion, and your hopes (and fears) to ensure we're creating the next great places, protecting the places we already love and making life better for all Denverites.

Denver's having a moment. It is the number one destination for millennials. Its economy is strong, and unemployment is at 3.3 percent. This year, U.S. News and World Report named it the best city in which to live.

**DENVER'S HAVING A MOMENT. IT IS THE NUMBER ONE DESTINATION FOR MILLENNIALS. ITS ECONOMY IS STRONG, AND UNEMPLOYMENT IS AT 3.3 PERCENT. THIS YEAR, U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT NAMED IT THE BEST CITY IN WHICH TO LIVE.**

**BUT ITS GREATNESS CAN'T BE SUSTAINED OR IMPROVED WITHOUT THE INVOLVEMENT OF ITS RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSPEOPLE REGARDING WHAT'S NEXT.**

But its greatness can't be sustained or improved without the involvement of its residents and businesspeople regarding what's next.

Denver's changing face is a topic of lots of conversations. Whether it's around the dinner table or on social media, we all care about the future of our city and we're not shy about it. But we need you to show

up. Go online, attend a public workshop, or come to a community event to talk to our street team. And this is important because our plans become the basis for regulations that guide what gets built and where. Whether you love the changes happening in Denver or think it's going the wrong direction, we want to hear from you. This is the opportunity to craft your plan, your vision for our future.

You really can play a part in shaping the future of your city, so don't be a bystander.

For me, Denver's best attribute has always been its authenticity—from the cow town of yesterday to co-working spaces of today. I want our city to be authentic, affordable, and approachable for everyone who lives here. I want it to be culturally rich, with sustainable, healthy communities peppered with beautiful and functional open spaces.

### So, what are your priorities for Denver?

Over the next 18 months, you can take map-based surveys, connect on social media and attend Denverright meetings to engage with your neighbors as well as city planners. Get started by visiting [denvergov.org/denverright](http://denvergov.org/denverright).

Together, we'll chart the course of the Mile High City for the next 20 years.

*Brad Buchanan is the Executive Director of Denver Community Planning and Development.*

## LOCAL COLOR

WHAT'S IT MEAN TO BE AN APOTHECARY-STYLE PAINT AND PLASTER SUPPLY STORE? FOR THE BLACK BOX IN DENVER'S BAKER NEIGHBORHOOD, IT'S TAPPING INTO A COMMUNITY OF LIKE-MINDED DESIGNERS WHO VALUE MAKING MATERIALS ORIGINATING IN OUR REGION. AND FOR FELLOW ARTISANS, THERE'S MORE THAN GOLD IN THEM THERE HILLS—IT'S THE OPPORTUNITY TO CRAFT A LOCALLY SOURCED DESIGN STYLE THAT IS, QUITE LITERALLY, CO-MADE.

**WORDS:** CORY PHARE • **IMAGES:** TREVOR BROWN JR.





Housed in a turn-of-the-century Baker brick building, Denver's Black Box paint supply store is a throwback to locally sourced color craft. Founder Francisco Martinez demonstrates bespoke processes for paints and plasters from the ingredients stashed overhead.

**NO STRANGER** to natural resources, Colorado carries a rich cross-section of mineral deposits rivaling anywhere in the world. Fine muscovite was mined around Crystal Mountain. You'll find Yule marble in the Elk Mountains (near the appropriately named city of Marble, Colorado). You might even hike across some fine calcite by Pagosa Springs.

This bevy of abundance frames a paradoxical question of material identity for Francisco Martinez, Founder of the Denver-based Black Box paint supply store: With all these riches around us, why have we historically continued to import our raw sources? And what is the direct or peripheral impact of this on our sense

of regionalism? "When you go to Italy, you can visit the quarries that Michelangelo and Raphael used," said Martinez. "How's that story being told for Colorado?"

To hear Martinez tell it, the page is starting to turn on the chapter of pure industrialization of building materials. Sourcing locally isn't just feel-good; it often makes good business sense. For example, the popular veneer finish of Venetian plaster is commonly sourced from Italy for up to \$300 per bucket, overlooking the composite materials in favor of convenient distribution channels. And better yet? We can get it in our own backyard—or, at least, in his Denver-based storefront. "Using local sources, we can



Art, meet science: Combining artisanal methods, Black Box relies on the best of both the old- and new-worlds to create custom colors. By using a fully functioning early 20th century scale, pigments can be precisely measured and added to local lime or muscovite to make materials that withstand the test of time.



Feeding an army of ideas? That's a piece of cake. Thanks to the painstaking approach of proportionality and the sweet final product, paint-making can sometimes seem like baking. And once you've got the right recipe, it's just a matter of adjusting the numbers to scale up or down to match a designer's appetite.

make [Venetian plaster] for a 10th of the cost of importing it," said Martinez. "Our goal is to eliminate the grey areas for the sourcing of building and painting materials."

Opened in April, the monochromatic building on Santa Fe Drive is one-of-a-kind in North America for sourcing raw materials from local origins. It's also ideologically connected to historic forebears that extend millennia: As far back as ancient Egypt, pharaohs would commission paints (and subsequent production of composite materials) to foretell their reign into the afterlife. Flash forward to the 18th and 19th centuries, and you'll find the aesthetic, locally driven inspiration for the cozily festooned space currently occupied by The

Black Box. According to Martinez, it's exactly what a paint supply shop would look like at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.

Though it didn't involve a steam engine or the cotton gin, this vintage vendor also owed its start to the demands of modern commerce. An established international presence in the world of decorative painting, Martinez launched and became Director of the Denver-based School of Applied Arts in 2002 with the intent of passing along his craft in the same guild-based model that preceded modern arts education. And, as an outgrowth of the school, the need to provide students materials to paint with drove the founding of the space now part of the

## THE POWER OF PIGMENT

Legendary artist Clyfford Still believed in the creative value of mixing his own paints. So does Denver-based Black Box, which is developing an experiential collaboration with the museum that bears his name.

**H**ow does making paint impact an artist's approach? For abstract expressionist luminary Clyfford Still, buying buckets of raw materials and mixing his own pigments was all part of the total creative process. And, at the Denver-based museum that bears his name, patrons benefit from the intimate connection Still forged from such genesis. "Observers walking through the galleries can feel the depth of the paintings in their textures, matte, and shine," said Sonia Rae, Director of Audience and Community Engagement with the Clyfford Still Museum.

It seems only natural, then, that museum staff organized a visit to The Black Box this past June and forged a process-based connection. According to Rae, learning happens when people have direct contact with an object; short of touching the paintings, the next best way to understand the artist's creative mindset is an experiential exploration into



Image: Clyfford Still Museum

their approach. The two organizations are working out details for an interactive collaboration. "We want our space to be a creative hub, to give people the same material spark as Clyfford Still," said Rae. "Come here to be inspired, then work with Black Box to make your own materials and paint something great."

Further exhibition information found at [clyffordstillmuseum.org](http://clyffordstillmuseum.org)

## OF THE EARTH

### DEVELOPING OUR STATE'S PALETTE IS A PROCESS ROOTED IN HISTORY

**WE** often describe custom characteristics of a place and time as "local color." But where does it come from for Colorado?

"It goes back to the ancient civilizations that originally lived here," said Bruce Geller, Director of the Colorado School of Mines Geology Museum. "People were using body paints that came directly from the earth." This included specific dyes from plants, soils, and minerals, which resulted in pigments with rich browns, reds, and yellows. And, according to Geller, the process of identifying raw materials was initially one of trial-and-error, often fraught with danger—many elements were poisonous and highly-toxic. Fortunately for us, we now have resources like the United States Geological Survey National Mineral Information to save some hassle (and trips to the hospital).

Color as embellishment became a staple of early trade and barter systems. "It wasn't just straight geology; people were integrating natural

organics and pharmaceutical approaches to what they were pulling out of the earth," said Geller. "It's amazing to find the mix of everything they were doing back in those days."

The commerce conversation continued as Geller connected with The Black Box to discuss the sourcing of local materials and building a business to scale for whatever the customer needs, from 100 grams to exponentially more. And according to proprietor Francisco Martinez, a geologically informed infrastructure is now in place thanks to the resource research. "If an architect or designer wants 40,000 square feet of plaster, we already have the silica sand source ready to go," he said.

**Find out more about the mineral history of Colorado at the School of Mines Geology Museum: [mines.edu/geology\\_museum](http://mines.edu/geology_museum).**



From Mercury to Barium, the Colorado earth is rich in elemental alluvia. Thanks to the mineral belt that passes through the state, we've got a world-class periodic table set under our feet, as indicated in the colorful geologic map of historical exposure periods.

## IT'S ALL HERE

### A SEISMIC PAST MEANS A COLORFUL COLORADO TODAY

**THE** above common geological map of Colorado is awash in a sea of colors. Not just a pretty picture, those different hues correspond to different periods of exposure during our prehistoric past. And we have the radical geologic activity through the millennia to thank for the diverse deposits throughout

our state, from Pike's Peak granite to Dakota sandstone. The different eras outlined in the map correspond with the deposits found in mines that Francisco Martinez leads groups to for raw material sourcing. Take, for example, the blue-gray areas above indicating the beneficent Cretaceous Period. "That's

where limestone has its roots," explained Martinez. "From that we get lime plasters, concrete, and gypsum." Also unique is the red rock formations indicated by the lighter green areas; this is where locally sourced red earthen plaster gets its color. And beyond the base, we're lucky to be able to tap into the malachite and

azurite that provide the ochers, blues, and greens implied by the map above. It's the result of the mineral belt we happen to call home. "Colorado is as minerally rich—if not more so—than just about anywhere else on Earth," said Martinez. "In general, we have it all here."

## LOCAL COLOR



With muller and palette knife, raw materials are mixed into canvas-ready concoctions like the rich ultramarine blue seen here. The deep hue keeps company with other striking elements like gold and silver. "Globally, we're seeing trends toward iridescent and metallic colors," said Martinez.

Arts District on Santa Fe, serving architects, designers, and artists alike. With a background so rooted in history, it's no wonder the commitment to sustainable design and future preservationism drives the conversation when patrons partake in making their paint. Or as Martinez put it, "What goes into painting? How's it going to last? And are we building something of value?"

This may sound high-level, because for The Black Box founder, it truly is a life's philosophy. A Denver Northside native, Martinez found the practice of painting—first houses, later decorative—as a route out of a self-described bad path he was headed down

in his youth. Continuing to pay it forward, he began an after-school program at North High School that used graffiti as a form and its relative components, including material structure of spray paint, geometry, and chemistry. "Painting saved me—it kept me out of nonsense," said Martinez. "The goal with the school and Black Box was to find similar painters and give the same opportunity to a younger version of me."

More than vocational philanthropy, The Black Box is part of an emerging public that sees the sourcing of commodified components just as important as the final product, whether that's free-range for poultry or a

specific hop for your IPA. Connecting to a specific antecedent grounds both individual and product within a community. Fortunately for us, that community just happens to be Denver. And according to Sonia Rae, Director of Audience and Community Engagement at the Clyfford Still Museum, the real opportunity comes from inviting people to become part of the entirety of the creative process—just like the gallery's namesake was. "The Black Box takes the mystery out of the materials," she said. "That's a good thing; it becomes grounded in reality and anybody can participate."

With the relationships Francisco Martinez has built

across the globe, customers have access to literally every material known to mankind. But don't be surprised if you can get exactly what you're looking for—or something you didn't even know you needed—right from your own state's backyard at The Black Box. "The next generation of designers care about what's in their materials; there's a story behind each item," said Martinez. The story of a region unfolds as collective authorship via incubation of an individual idea. Or as he put it, "Social responsibility takes partnerships, and that's exactly why we're here." ■

*Interested in sourcing your own paints or building materials? Visit [blackboxofdenver.com](http://blackboxofdenver.com) to schedule an appointment, facility tour, and resource presentation.*



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POWER, SYMBOLISM AND MODERN DESIGN LAUNCH AN INNOVATIVE NEW BUILDING ON THE HISTORIC U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY CAMPUS.

# SHINING THROUGH

DURING THE COURSE OF A CADET'S FOUR YEARS AT THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY, HE OR SHE EXPERIENCES ROUGHLY 160 HOURS OF APPLIED CHARACTER AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING. IN YEARS PAST, THAT WORK TOOK PLACE IN AS MANY AS 10 DIFFERENT VENUES, INCLUDING OFF-SITE LOCATIONS IN DOWNTOWN COLORADO SPRINGS. BRINGING IT ALL UNDER ONE ROOF REQUIRED VOLUMES OF PRACTICAL FUNCTIONALITY. FOR DESIGN FIRM SKIDMORE, OWINGS & MERRILL, CREATING SOMETHING AESTHETICALLY BEAUTIFUL WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT REQUIRED A THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF VIRTUALLY ALL ASPECTS OF ACADEMY LIFE—NOT TO MENTION A METICULOUS AND ARTFUL ATTENTION TO DETAIL. **UP, UP, AND AWAY.**

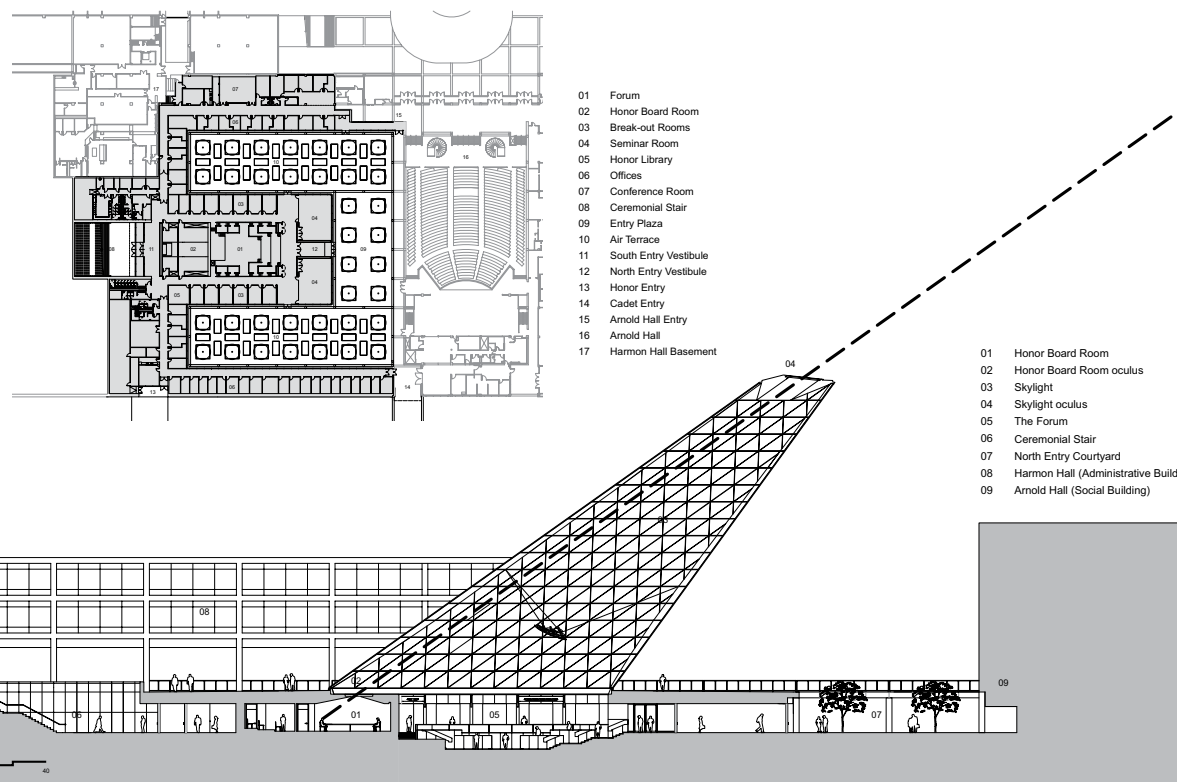
**WORDS:** Charlie Keaton  
**IMAGES:** David Lauer

**T**ucked away in the rolling foothills of northwest Colorado Springs sits a breathtaking new building on one of the nation's most architecturally significant campuses. Because of its remote location, and because it doubles as a military installation, most locals will never see it. Many know nothing of it at all. But the Center for Character and Leadership Development (CCLD) at the United States Air Force Academy, unveiled in April, is that rare project with a level of design innovation that lives up to the site's rich legacy. Fully appreciating the significance

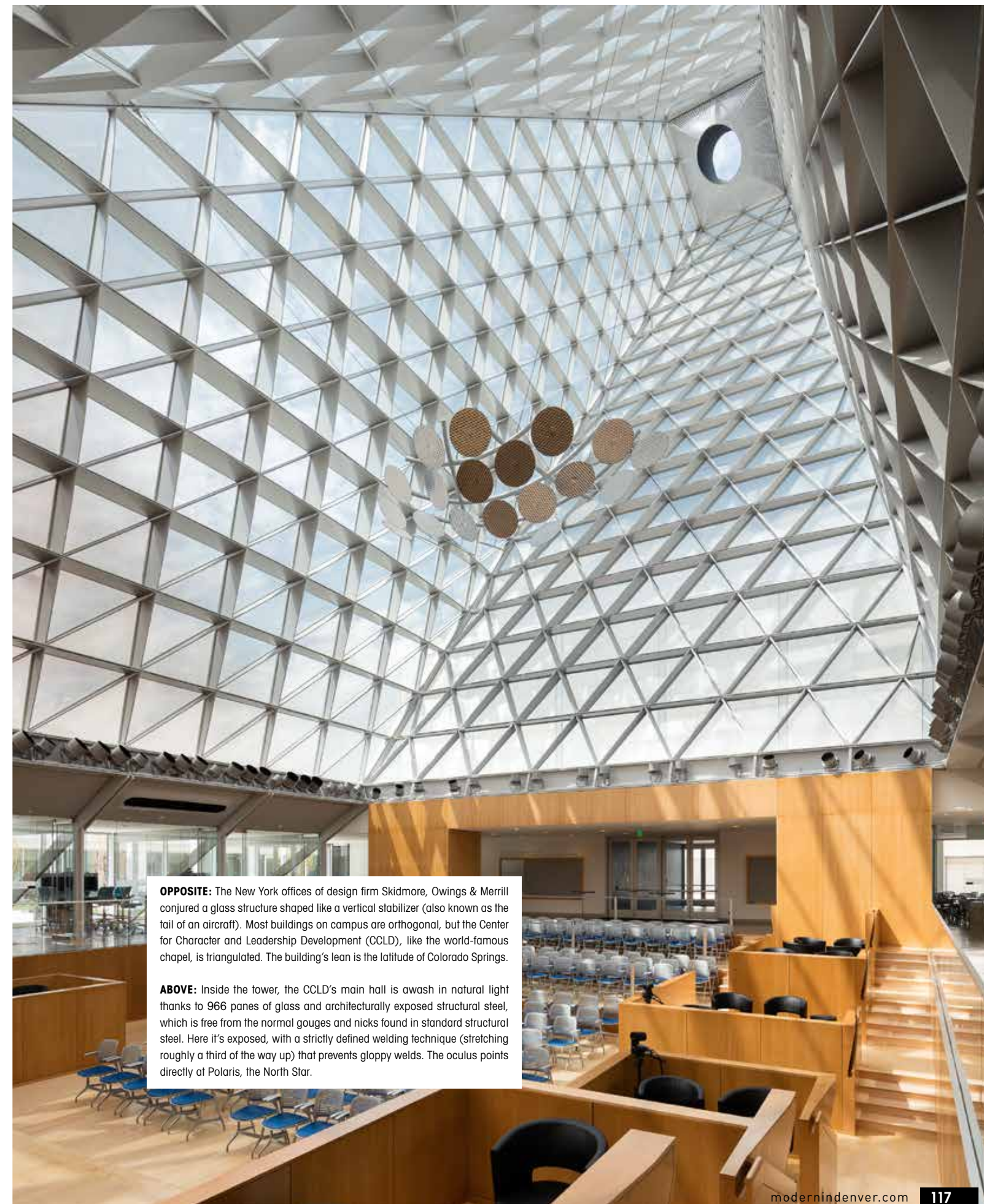
of the CCLD, however, requires context. The Academy itself sprang to life in the 1950s, and even then, the Air Force never lacked ambition. Charles Lindbergh was commissioned to fly airplanes into each of three finalist sites and provide feedback about location, flying conditions, and environmental fit. Cecil B. DeMille designed the uniforms. Dan Kiley handled landscape architecture. Ansel Adams took the photographs. And the design review board boasted a who's-who of industry icons, including Eero Saarinen, Wallace Harrison, Welton Becket, Pietro Belluschi, and, unofficially, Walt Disney, who had recent experience transforming a massive tract of

land into his own majestic, self-contained world.

The Chicago-based office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM)—and architect Walter Netsch in particular—were tasked with converting 18,500 acres of raw ranch land into a fully functioning service academy with 170 miles of roads and 600 miles of utilities. What's more, the timeline was unforgiving. The initial go-ahead came when President Eisenhower signed Public Law 325 in the spring of 1954, authorizing the Academy's establishment. Design and construction had to be sufficiently complete to accommodate the first class of cadets in 1958.



Plans courtesy of SOM.

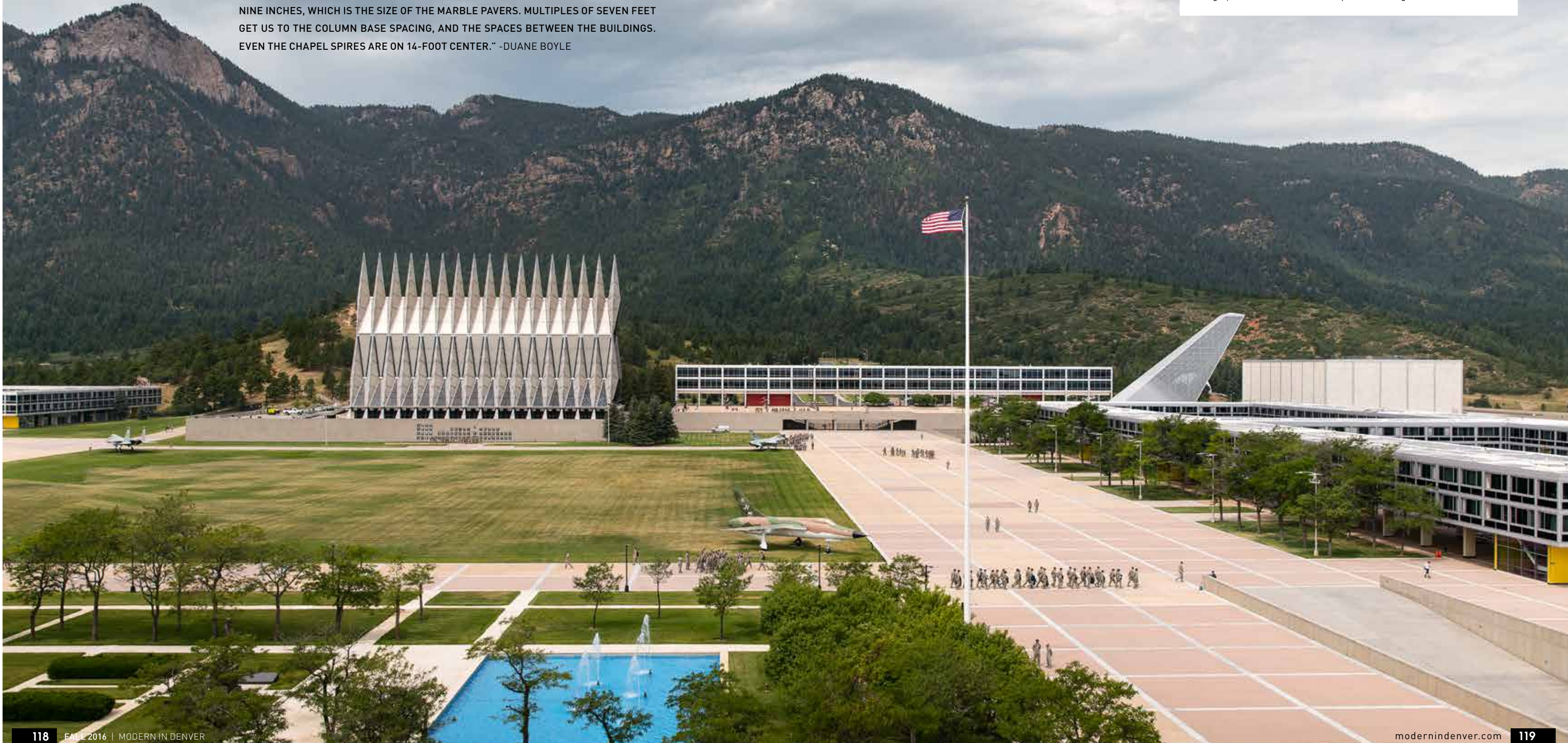


**OPPOSITE:** The New York offices of design firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill conjured a glass structure shaped like a vertical stabilizer (also known as the tail of an aircraft). Most buildings on campus are orthogonal, but the Center for Character and Leadership Development (CCLD), like the world-famous chapel, is triangulated. The building's lean is the latitude of Colorado Springs.

**ABOVE:** Inside the tower, the CCLD's main hall is awash in natural light thanks to 966 panes of glass and architecturally exposed structural steel, which is free from the normal gorges and nicks found in standard structural steel. Here it's exposed, with a strictly defined welding technique (stretching roughly a third of the way up) that prevents gloppy welds. The oculus points directly at Polaris, the North Star.

"FOR THE ENTIRE CADET AREA, WALTER [NETSCH, ORIGINAL CAMPUS ARCHITECT] LAID OUT A SEVEN-FOOT GRID. AND OUT OF THAT CAME ALL THE BUILDINGS, THE TREE LOCATIONS, EVERYTHING. SEVEN DIVIDES IN HALF TO THREE FOOT SIX INCHES, WHICH IS THE JOINT SPACING ON THE GRANITE WALLS. THAT DIVIDES IN HALF AGAIN TO ONE FOOT NINE INCHES, WHICH IS THE SIZE OF THE MARBLE PAVERS. MULTIPLES OF SEVEN FEET GET US TO THE COLUMN BASE SPACING, AND THE SPACES BETWEEN THE BUILDINGS. EVEN THE CHAPEL SPIRES ARE ON 14-FOOT CENTER." -DUANE BOYLE

The United States Air Force Academy is among the world's most influential examples of International-style architecture. When it was conceived and built in the 1950s, SOM's Walter Netsch took an approach that deftly balanced macro and micro concerns. "Walter saw it as one building with a lot of parts, so the spaces within the buildings relate," said Duane Boyle, Deputy Director of Installations and Campus Architect. "Everything is on a seven-foot grid, including the spaces between the buildings, but none of the building facades line up with each other. They slide by each other and create these interesting outdoor spaces." What's more, the scale of the cadet areas of campus relates to the scale of the cadet wing. When the entire wing forms up on the terrazzo plaza, the aggregate of all those cadets equals the massing of the buildings. Said Boyle, "It's that kind of thought process that Walter had in a very short time that got us here."





Much care was taken to match the CCLD's furniture with pieces that populated campus in the 1950s and '60s. At that time, executive suites were filled with Mies and Breuer furniture. Famed New York industrial design firm Walter Dorwin Teague and Associates was tasked with designing most everything else—right down to the salt and pepper shakers—specifically for the Academy. In later decades that furniture went to salvage, but pieces with strong ties to the Academy's heritage, like the Barcelona chairs seen here, have been reintroduced throughout the CCLD. The blue tile wall is made from Murano glass and matches walls appearing throughout the Academy. Artisans in Murano made the glass, put it in barrels, and shipped it to artists in Arizona who, based on a predetermined ratio of color, assembled it on 8x8 sheets of paper. Getting that ratio right was a painstaking process that required massing off a 1x1 square on a similar wall elsewhere on campus, then counting how many tiles of each shade of blue there were.

That deadline, which seemed so daunting at the time, turned out to be the catalyst for some truly historic design. In the name of simplification, Netsch came up with a streamlined module: The Academy would be designed around a seven-foot grid. He based his decision on the realization that the most repetitive features on campus would be cadet dorm rooms, and that American beds are approximately seven feet long. It was a modest starting point with grand implications.

"For the entire cadet area, Walter laid out a seven-foot grid," said Duane Boyle, Deputy Director of Installations and Campus Architect

for the Academy. "And out of that came all the buildings, the tree locations, everything. Seven divides in half to three-foot-six-inches, which is the joint spacing on the granite walls. That divides in half again to one-foot-nine-inches, which is the size of the marble pavers. Multiples of seven feet get us to the column base spacing, and the spaces between the buildings. Even the chapel spires are on 14-foot center."

This concept, born of time constraints, helped orient what quickly became an iconic example of International style architecture. Everything on the sprawling campus feels properly proportioned

and scaled for human use. So when the time came to add a new building—and not just any building, but a permanent home for one of the Academy's most intrinsic programs—Netsch's vision informed the design guidelines. Once again, SOM, whose relationship with the Academy now stretched back nearly six decades, was tapped to handle design. But rather than follow the path of least resistance, the Academy conjured a design competition between the Chicago, New York, and San Francisco offices. New York prevailed, based partially on, as Boyle describes it, "the power and the symbolism of the design."

### INTO THE CLOUDS

From the outside, the CCLD's 105-foot glass tower looks like a vertical stabilizer (more commonly known as the tail of an airplane). Its lean is the precise latitude of Colorado Springs, bringing the height of the tower halfway between that of nearby Arnold Hall and the top of the chapel spires. The aggressive use of glass—966 panes in all—creates a striking visual, but also presented some serious design challenges, not the least of which was solar orientation. The broadest lean side faces due south, which is high sun. The other prominent sides

face east and west, which are low-angle sun. "We didn't want people inside roasting under extreme sunlight," said Roger Duffy, Design Partner at SOM. "But we didn't want to muck up the inside with blinds because it would alter the character of the whole thing."

With that in mind, SOM struck on the idea of embedding ceramic frit in the surface of the glass to create a gradient effect. As the sun moves through the sky, the main hall interior is shielded from excessive glare or heat while still admitting loads of daylight. The trusses bow

Ringling the main hall at the base of the tower are 12 Collaboration Rooms, where cadets and faculty gather to work on projects ranging from war games to the civil engineering of a bridge. The desks are media-scape tables by Steelcase, featuring "pucks" compatible with virtually all technology platforms, which allows for immediate shifting and sharing between devices. Each room has a writeable glass wall, and the pervasive use of glass throughout ties back to the transparency and openness the Air Force builds into its programs. Intel was sufficiently impressed to co-sponsor a tech conference with the Academy and the Department of Homeland Security which brought in 200 people from around the world. "Dr. Ashton Carter came here," said Tom Berry, Deputy Director of the CCLD, "and we had a cadet first class explaining to the Secretary of Defense how we could use this in the Air Force."



The CCLD's general location was always envisioned as the public plaza known as the Court of Honor, but the exact placement was up for discussion—with a few caveats. The harmony of the building in relation to the rest of campus was not to be disrupted. Nor was the visual axis created by the chapel to the south and Cathedral Rock to the north. "The lean helps connect (student center) Arnold Hall to the rest of campus," said Roger Duffy, Design Partner at SOM. "And (administrative building) Harmon Hall has a nice linear force to it that works well with our diagonal lean. The chapel is very physical and metallic on the outside, sculptural when you see it. We decided to make something sculptural as well, appropriate to its alignment, and to do it in a way that's smooth and sleek. It's an interesting dialogue."

subtly into the space on all four sides, which began as a structural necessity but which also buffers the amount of light that shines down on the floor below. Cadets love that the effect resembles a jet ascending through the clouds.

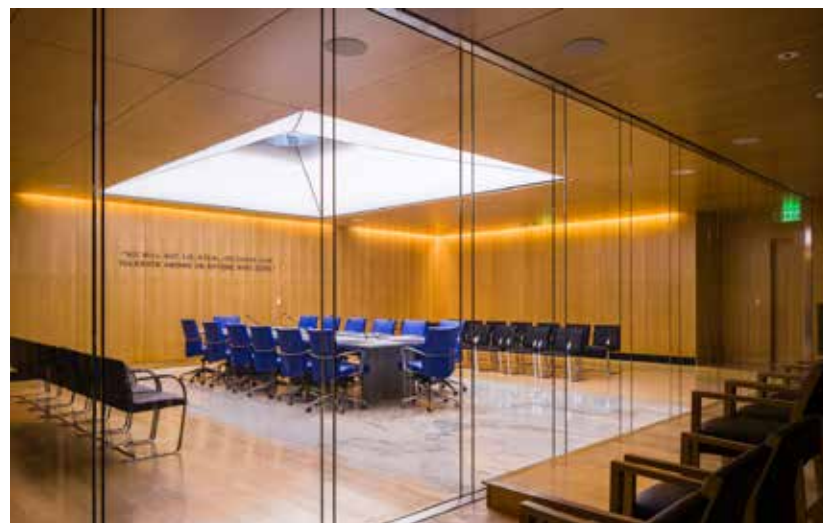
Beneath the upward reach of the glass tower sits a main hall with the flexibility (and appeal) to host everything from a guest appearance by Vice President Joe Biden to a causal breakout session between classmates or faculty. A bevy of large theatrical lights rings the presentation space, pointing discreetly toward an array of suspended mirrors resembling a sculpture. "The last thing we wanted was to hang all kinds of technical-looking lights to shine on speakers or events," said Duffy. "So we came up with the idea to embed all the lights within the structure and then use the mirrors to precisely reflect the lights onto appropriate parts of the space."

This approach had the added benefit of giving the room what Duffy calls a "dual life"—by day the building is sleek and minimally transparent, but by night it draws the eyes inward and reveals the physicality of the space. Along the perimeter of the main hall is a series of collaboration rooms, each interconnected and filled with cutting edge technology. And atop the tower is an oculus that points directly at Polaris, the North Star, which has been a powerful symbol for the Air Force since its inception. No matter how the earth rotates, Polaris will be visible through the





The Academy adheres to a strict honor code, and cadets who run afoul of those standards are brought to the honor committee for evaluation by their peers. For 60 years this rotating committee met in a borrowed conference room. Providing a dedicated space at the heart of the building was an explicit directive given to SOM during the design process. Recessive areas on either side provide ample seating for cadets interested in watching the proceedings. So too does a highly reflective glassed-in room that gives more flexibility to those wanting to pop in or out without disrupting the proceedings. Maple wood matches that of the Commandant of Cadets conference room, creating a connection that stretches back to 1958. The middle of the room is brilliantly lit as a means of creating a single focal point. The respondent seated at the head of the white reflective glass table has a direct view of Polaris, the North Star, which serves as a powerful symbol in the Air Force.



## SHINING THROUGH

oculus for thousands of years, reminding cadets to fly right (literally and figuratively), and to make good character and leadership decisions.

The rest of the CCLD snakes in all directions, designed to serve many masters. There are five different entrances for five different constituencies, including everything from cadets and faculty to outside visitors, but from any trajectory the orientation is appropriate and intuitive. At 14 feet below the public plaza, this is essentially a below grade building, but copious windows and modular glass walls pull in a healthy dose of natural light, and more than a little transparency. Clever, meticulous details emerge throughout: glass Murano tile from Italy painstakingly sampled and arranged to match similar features elsewhere on campus; polished concrete poured higher than the finished surface level, so that it could be ground down to resemble the polished terrazzo in other buildings; designer furniture consistent with the original, iconic midcentury pieces that adorned the Academy in the 1950s and 1960s; an inlaid handrail subtly carved into maple walls.

Getting these details just right required strategic vision and willing collaboration—especially considering the constraints imposed by Walter Netsch's original design philosophy. But constraints can lead to unexpected breakthroughs, too. That was true for SOM in the 1950s, when Netsch's seven-foot grid produced an International-style



campus that continues to draw international acclaim. And it once again proved true during the design and construction of the CCLD.

To illustrate the point, Roger Duffy called on a quote from legendary composer Igor Stravinsky: "The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees one's self of the chains that shackle the spirit... the more art is controlled, limited, worked over, the more it is free."

In other words, flying right isn't merely the result of unfettered creativity. Instead, for cadets and architects alike, it's the product of artful improvisation within thoughtful boundaries. Trust the process, respect the flight plan, and gear up for blue skies ahead. ■

In a nod to the Academy's mid-century roots, the design philosophy for the courtyard was to blur the interior and exterior. Pocket areas give cadets plenty of breakout space to sit and talk—on benches that measure seven feet by one-foot-nine, adhering to the original seven-foot grid devised by SOM in the 1950s. The fountains were an aesthetic choice, with black granite that looks much deeper than it actually is, but also provide enough white noise to allow for privacy.

## PROJECT CREDITS

ARCHITECT  
**Skidmore, Owings & Merrill**

ENGINEER  
**Skidmore, Owings & Merrill**

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
**Matrix Design Group**

GENERAL CONTRACTOR (BUILDING)  
**ECC**

GENERAL CONTRACTOR (COURTYARDS)  
**iiCON Construction Group**



**IN THE ZONE**

Teknion Zones took both Gold and Best of Competition at NeoCon 2016, and it's no surprise why. Building upon the concepts of community, fluidity, and well-being, Zones emerges as a series that challenges convention and adapts to today's new way of work. Comprised of seating, tables, screens, easels, accessories, and semi-private hubs, the forward-looking line creates an environment where people can freely network, meet, retreat, or gather.

+ [citronworkspaces.com](http://citronworkspaces.com)



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Warmth, movement, simplicity, community—welcome to the progressive office of today. The open concept is no longer a trend but a mainstay, and as the cloud and cordless technologies free us from desks, designers are shifting to support the new social spaces. For the latest, we look to the NeoCon trade show. Each June, some 50,000 designers descend on Chicago for this event to take in the latest commercial design and business trends. **In 2016, the cubicle is out and customization is in.**



**MAKE IT YOUR OWN**

While Michael Young's LessThanFive chair from Coalesse isn't new, its new feature is one to write home about. That's because you become the designer! Colors, gradients, a company logo, a picture of your dog—the new Customizer web app let's you personalize the chair, which, aptly named, weighs less than 5 pounds.

+[pearcom.com](http://pearcom.com) +[officescapes.com](http://officescapes.com)



**ALL THE BUZZ**

Sit, swivel, stand—the BuzziBalance is designed to shake things up. Fight the mid-afternoon slump by standing on the BuzziBalance Board for muscle activation. And while sitting on the rocking pouf, you can stretch away. The non-traditional rocking board adds movement and play to an otherwise desk-bound day. BuzziSpace gets bonus points for this one with the added acoustical benefits. Now that's a breath of fresh air.

+[wrcolo.com](http://wrcolo.com)

**BACK AT IT**

As offices become more open, furniture has become more reclusive. With its high back and upholstered seat and backrest, the Alya Chair reaffirms that home and work are blurring lines. Born from a lounge chair archetype, Andreu World developed this chair with a modern twist—and ergonomics in mind. Make it your own with options galore from backrests and bases to a bent plywood ottoman.

+[andreuworld.com](http://andreuworld.com)







#### MATERIAL WORLD

It's digitally inspired and digitally printed—meet Pixel by Designtex. Based on the original artwork of Jenny McGee Dougherty, this pattern was just one of 50 fabric introductions Designtex unveiled at NeoCon. The company designs and manufactures textiles ranging from upholstery to wall coverings, offering a whopping catalog of over 8,000 materials.

+[designtex.com](http://designtex.com)

#### MIX AND MATCH

Swiss architect and designer Daniel Korb developed the Eleven series around a fundamental concept: Furniture is architecture on a different scale. The line has reached a warmer level with the Eleven Wood series—and plenty of customization. The tables are now available with veneer, laminate, solid surface, and back painted glass tops. A solid ash leg option in matching or contrasting finishes complements the top to create new mixes.

+[sourcefour.com](http://sourcefour.com)



#### RAW CONCEPT

Konstantin Grcic has taken the workstation and stripped it down to the basics. Hack, for Vitra, counters traditional desks with innovative functionality: Adjust the desk to sit, stand, or lounge in just seconds. With its mechanical operation, Hack is easy to dismantle, transport, and store—plus it's ecologically sustainable.

+[dwr.com](http://dwr.com)

+[wrcolo.com](http://wrcolo.com)

#### THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

Inspired by landscape architecture, Mohawk's new collection, Topography, creates unique floorscapes, which harmonize natural forms with geometric design. The carpet tiles feature five styles with varying surfaces of relief and dimension. Designed in collaboration with 13&9 Design, make it your own with a choice of 14 colors.

+[mohawkflooring.com](http://mohawkflooring.com)





### FOR US BY US

Working in conjunction with the Art Center College of Design, Bernhardt Design has sponsored a design studio for more than a decade—projects from which are introduced into the commercial market. This year, the students were to focus on designing a product they would use, and with that, Studio: twenty-something was born. “Together but separate” provided inspiration for the project, which consists of flexible seating, tables, and privacy screens.

+[diazgroupco.com](http://diazgroupco.com)



### TABLES IN TUNE

Available in any size, shape or surface, the new Bassline Tables from Turnstone took home the Innovation Award at this year’s NeoCon. Signaling a level of personalization, the near limitless Bassline collection lets you reflect your office’s personality, brand, and values. Turnstone is the modern, startup-focused division of Steelcase.

+ [connectpeopleandspace.com](http://connectpeopleandspace.com)

### SOUND OFF

Say goodbye to sound panels of the past. Arper has carved a new path with its Parentesit wall panel featuring an integrated light and sound system. Designed by Lievore Altherr Molina, Parentesit allows you to adjust light and sound from your smartphone for increased concentration. Also available: freestanding models, so you can create new workspaces—suited to your ideal environment, of course.

+[wrcolo.com](http://wrcolo.com)



### ROCK AND ROLL

Designed to promote movement and healthy body motion, Müm (pronounced moom), is a collection of perch seating with modular components. Sit high or low—in place or in motion—and like most NeoCon highlights, it’s all about customization. Take personalization one step further with a variety of fabrics and bases.

+[psfurniture.com](http://psfurniture.com)



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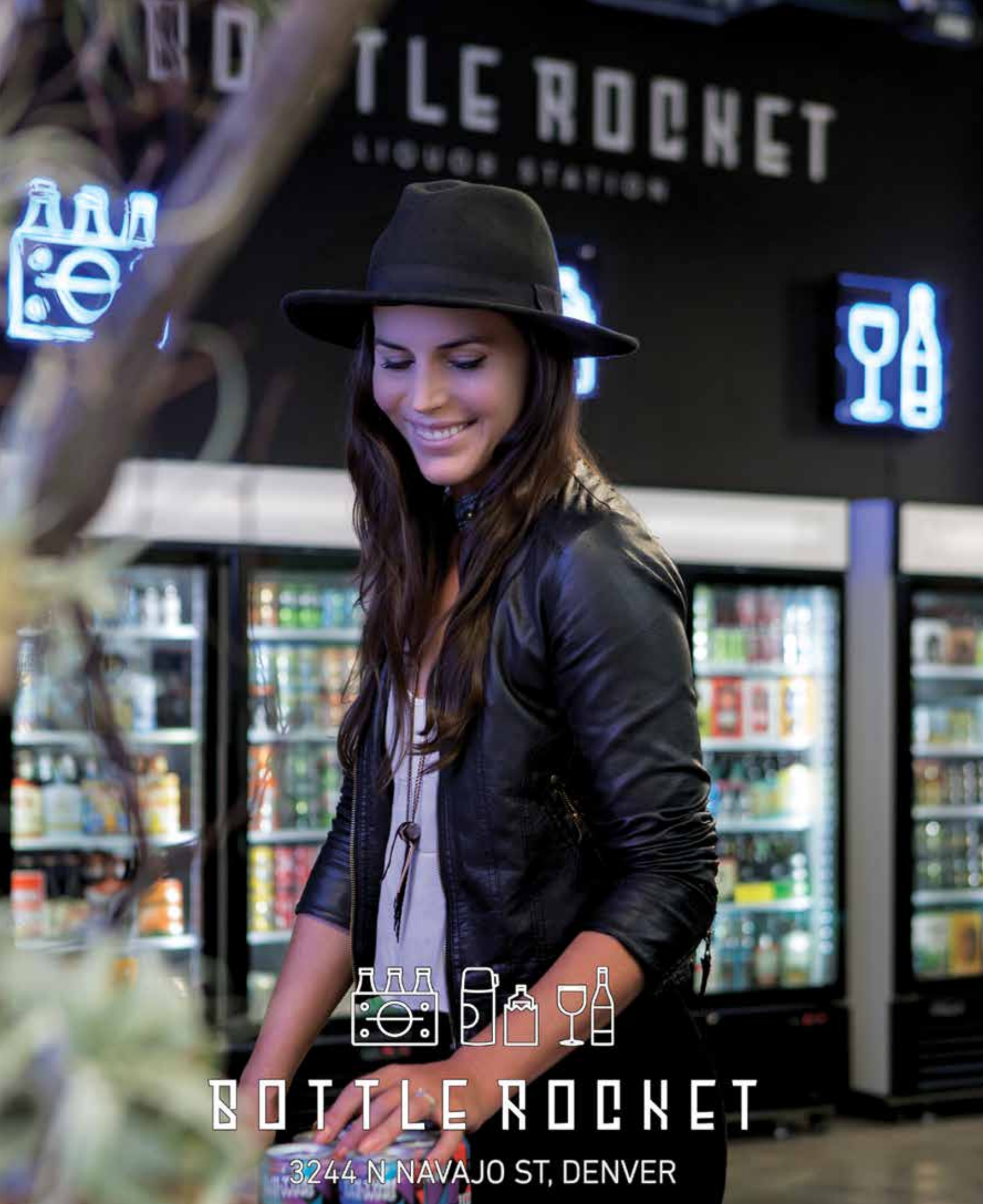


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"Everything you ever wanted is on the other side of fear." -George Addair



## DON'T WORRY, BE STRATEGIC

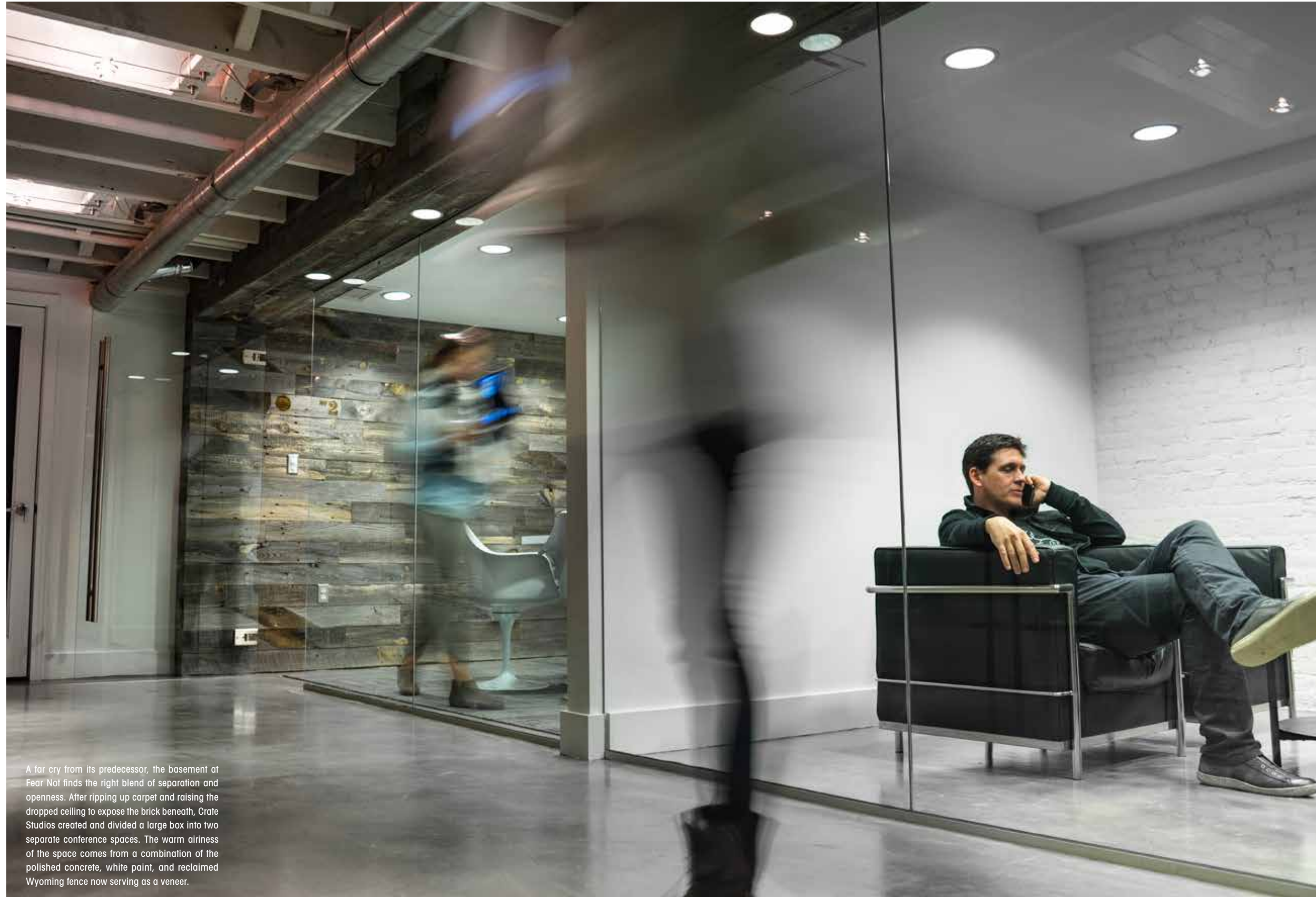
"Fearless pursuit of the good" is the ethos emblazoned on the back wall of LoDo-based advertising agency Fear Not. But how do you apply a business mission to space redevelopment in a way that enhances both? When you design from a place of experience and innovation, there really is nothing to fear.

WORDS: CORY PHARE • IMAGES: JOSH JEVONS

**STEPPING OFF BLAKE STREET** into Fear Not's minimal, smartly adorned open office space, a curious transformation takes place. The bustle outside is replaced with a different energy as a more filtered and refined sensibility takes hold. Things move fast, but fluidly; it's familiar, yet unique. More than anything, it feels like a creative home: Someone might be drinking a pint of Odell 90 Shilling from the upstairs kegerator while sketching out an idea at a main floor work station, or stopping to pet Kobe (the "house mutt") en route to flesh out copy by the backyard pool.

Don't let the amenities fool you, though. The atmosphere is part of a carefully cultivated method to optimize both workspace and headspace. According to Blake Ebel, Founder and Chief Creative Officer of Fear Not, building an international agency required precision and dexterity. The environment, obviously, needed to enhance this. Functional flexibility meant providing creatives the opportunity to find inspiration in multiple places—not to mention doughnuts and Colorado craft beer. "We wanted a full kitchen to give it a residential feel," said Ebel. "When you can step outside to the pool, it makes you feel like you're at home instead of stuck at the office."

"The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek." - Joseph Campbell



A far cry from its predecessor, the basement at Fear Not finds the right blend of separation and openness. After ripping up carpet and raising the dropped ceiling to expose the brick beneath, Crate Studios created and divided a large box into two separate conference spaces. The warm airiness of the space comes from a combination of the polished concrete, white paint, and reclaimed Wyoming fence now serving as a veneer.

**DON'T WORRY, BE STRATEGIC**

Bringing that home wasn't a foregone conclusion, however. After purchasing two properties near their original location, the full-service advertising, design, and strategy agency faced the daunting conversion of a former chiropractic office and musty-carpeted unfinished basement into a space befitting an organization with global reach. Through a mutual acquaintance, Ebel connected with Denver-based design firm Crate Studios, which developed a plan of action for the agency's vision and inspiration. "The approach was to create a boutique environment," said Thomas Richmond, Founding Principal of Crate. "That required providing a sense of intimacy within the space."

**"WE SPECIFICALLY WANTED TO PROVIDE FUNCTIONAL SPACE FOR DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS. THAT MEANT PURPOSEFULLY MIXING PUBLIC, PRIVATE, AND SEMI-PRIVATE ELEMENTS."** -THOMAS RICHMOND

To do that, Richmond and partner Eric Jones had to create continuity across three levels. They chose to open the stairway between the open-concept main floor and vaulted second level to strike a balance between airy cohesiveness and functional division. Another connective element tying the levels together is the chalkboard paint-covered accent walls, which provide both a generative surface and a separation from the restrooms. Texturally, the space balances the warmth of existing brick with expansive white interiors, original wood flooring restored with a dark gray finish, and reclaimed wood veneers throughout that began their journey to downtown Denver as fences in Wyoming.

"Your fear is 100 percent dependent on you for its survival." -Steve Maraboli



The second floor soars, thanks to the overhead skylights casting natural light down to the main level. Soffits descend over the white quartz waterfall island in the middle of the subway tile backsplashed kitchen, which is flanked by bar tables and a cozy sitting area for coffee and contemplation. Bracketing the upper story is the crown jewel of client presentations: The conference room features expansive windows looking down to Blake Street below, as well as a handcrafted 10-foot walnut table as the centerpiece behind floor-to-ceiling glass walls. "We specifically wanted to provide functional space for different environments," said Richmond. "That meant purposefully mixing public, private, and semi-private elements."

But what about that dingy basement? After disposing of the decrepit carpet, Crate got to work brightening up the subterranean vivarium. By removing the dropped ceiling, sectioned continuity took the form of a large box, with glass



As everyone is assured from the laser-engraved sayings found throughout the agency (above), fear is optional—but for the team at Fear Not, years of experience forge a focus that needs no reminder. The resulting choices are often between a dip in the space's pool (below), or taking part in an impromptu tennis match on the shared court.



bisecting the design to create cubbied conference rooms covered in whiteboard paint. The result rendered each inch of space a potential idea canvas. Outside the rooms, a small sitting area is made bright and open by an industrial minimalist approach of white-painted brick walls and polished concrete floors. And a name that doubles as a constant call to action—Fear Not—is permanently etched into the wooden facade by laser-engraved lettering.

These aphorisms appear throughout the agency, reminding all that—among other things—fear is a choice. Like the successful work they've done for high-profile brands like Einstein Bros. Bagels and Instagram to local stalwarts Wynkoop Brewing Company and the Cherry Cricket, Fear Not prides itself on holistically understanding the context and goals of each client. Whether rebranding or providing integrated product campaigns, practice is driven by the agency's eponymous philosophy.

DON'T WORRY, BE STRATEGIC

It transcends limitations that standard operating procedures impose on creative environments at scale.

That means forging a way of work which mitigates the human tendency toward fear-based aversion. Formerly Chief Creative Officer at Havas in Chicago, Ebel draws on decades of experience to construct a battle-tested approach to environment. Through acumen and maneuverability, Fear Not puts the client's mind at ease and gets somewhere great without worry. "Fear is a barrier that gets in the way of creating something wonderful," said Ebel. "It's a freeing approach to do something fearlessly."

By assembling a small team of the right people to nimbly deliver rapid results, and facilitated by the environment executed by Crate Studios—yes, that includes both swimming pool and tennis court, often filled with pets and family for celebratory barbecues—it's evident they take this to heart. After all, it's in their name. But beyond that, Fear Not's success story has to do with the lessons gleaned from strategic innovation, now living on as gentle reminders burned into Wyoming wood. "We approach each project with the mindset of doing the right thing," said Ebel. "When you do your homework, the fear goes away and we get something great." ■

The open layout of the space lends itself to a natural flow of ideas, whether in the open-concept main floor to give a campaign some legs or up to an airy, vaulted second story where concepts take flight. And whether at the handmade walnut conference table from David Pellier at Parker-based Squirrels Burls or sitting on a Trent Austin Design Delavan bar stool at the kitchen's island enjoying a Colorado brew, effective agency design means clients have nothing to fear.



# THE SPACE BETWEEN

ART HANGING ON GALLERY WALLS TELLS ITS OWN STORY. BUT IN HER LATEST EXHIBITION, SARAH MCKENZIE SHIFTS HER FOCUS TO THE GALLERIES THEMSELVES, PROVING ONCE AGAIN THAT OUR SPACES HELP DEFINE OUR EXPERIENCES.

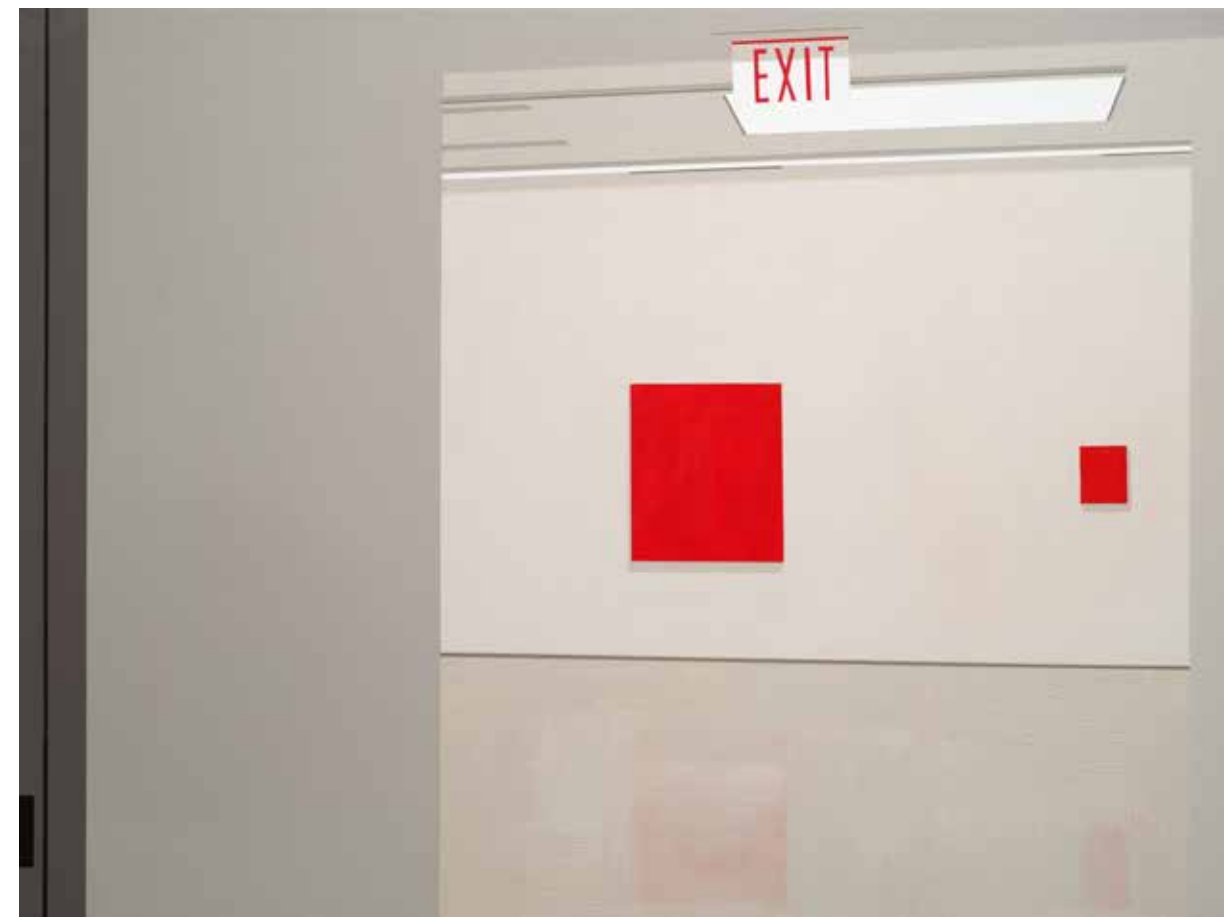


**A**t first glance, the white expanse of a gallery wall might seem empty. But as Boulder-based artist Sarah McKenzie reveals through her recent series of works, there is much to uncover about the relationship between artwork and the space it inhabits.

McKenzie has long been fascinated by the built environment, and has explored urban sprawl, buildings in various states of construction, and transitional spaces defined by windows and thresholds. At the core of this body of work is an examination of the dialogue between different elements—whether it's urban structures spreading out into rural areas, how a building under construction is in the process of becoming, or the way a threshold separates two spaces. Her current series, *White Walls*, extends this exploration with a look at the architecture of contemporary exhibition spaces.

While visiting the Tate Museum in London in the fall of 2013, McKenzie found herself taking photographs of the art as any tourist might do, when she started to become increasingly aware of the way the space was setting up her artistic experience. "The art was definitely what I was responding to, but it had as much to do with spatial dynamics and the lighting and the

WORDS: TARA BARDEEN



*Exit/Sign (Roberts & Tilton with James Hayward, 2015), 2016, oil and acrylic on canvas, 24 x 32 inches*

experience of moving through the rooms and how you'd enter a space and be surprised by something, or the way the artwork would interact with the entry to the next space," she explained. McKenzie returned home with source photos that sparked her *White Walls* series, which is on display as a solo exhibition at the David B. Smith Gallery through October 8.

To be sure, the philosophy guiding best practices for displaying art has evolved over the years. In the 19th century, art was frequently kept in a richly decorated home setting,

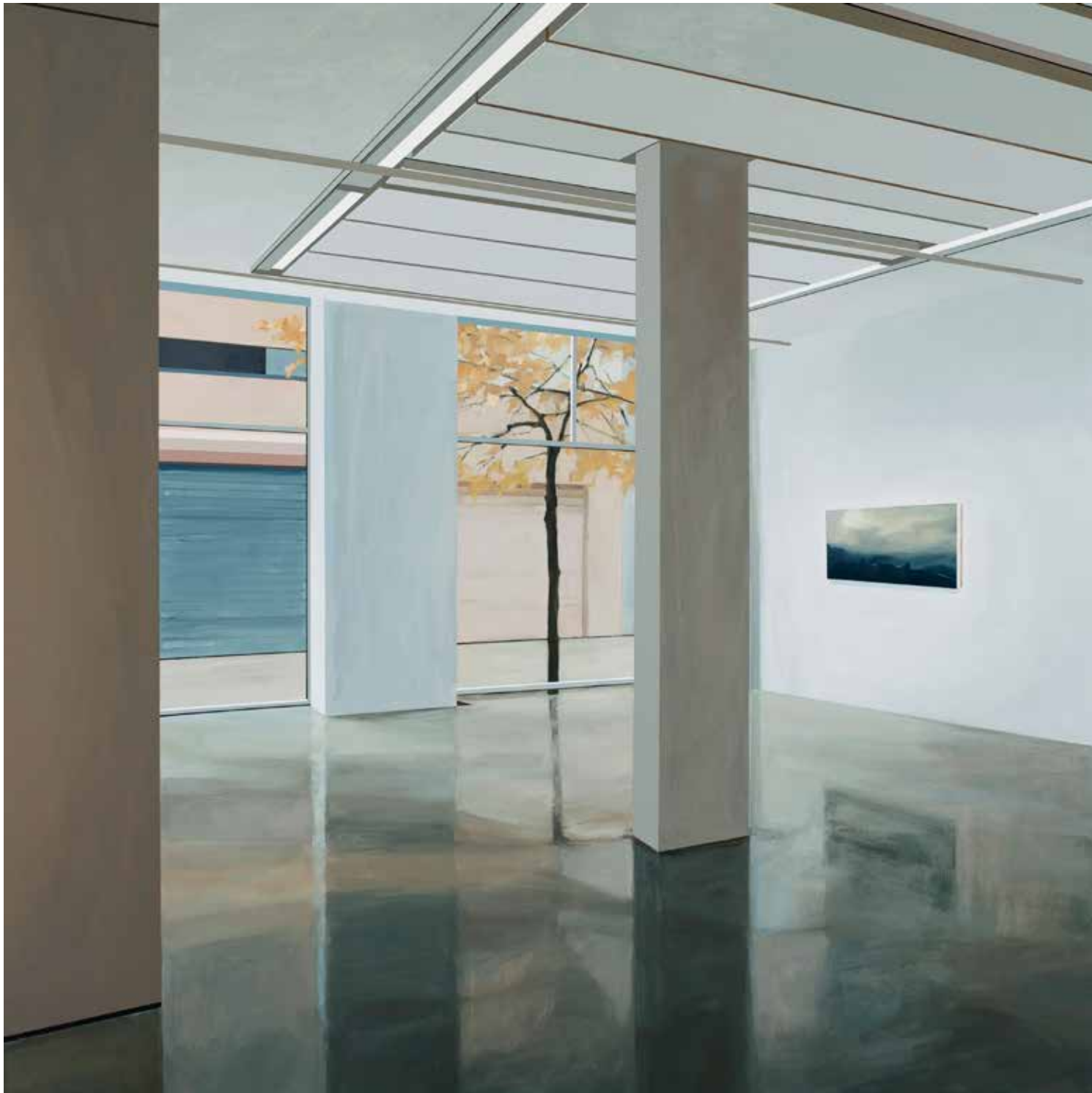
where the gilded surroundings reinforced the value of the work and offered a glimpse of how it might be displayed once purchased. But by the mid-20th century, minimalist, white-walled rooms were quickly becoming the norm. What was driving this shift?

As author Brian O'Doherty observed in his collection of essays, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, this shift was a response to the way the modern art movement pushed art beyond the traditional boundaries of the frame. Suddenly, the exhibition space itself became

**"I WANT TO UNCOVER SOMETHING ABOUT THE WAY THE ART AND THE SPACE ARE INTERACTING THAT ANOTHER PERSON IN THAT SPACE MIGHT BE PERCEIVING SUBCONSCIOUSLY, BUT ISN'T MAYBE ARTICULATING FOR HIM OR HERSELF, AND THEN MY PAINTING HELPS THEM UNDERSTAND THAT CONNECTION."**

-SARAH MCKENZIE





Landscape 1 (Danese Corey with Dozier Bell, 2014), 2015, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 inches



Entry (Mitchell-Innes & Nash), 2016, oil and acrylic on canvas, 36 x 36 inches

THE SPACE BETWEEN



Still (Clyfford Still Museum, 2014), 2015, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48 x 72 inches

a receptacle for the art. Everything else was cleared away in order to make room for the bold new ideas of the era.

In creating a void, however, something new also emerged. McKenzie is quick to point out these spaces exist on both polarities: They are empty, and yet full of cultural significance. It is this depth of meaning that drives McKenzie's work as an artist and occupies her thoughts as she sits on a museum bench or strolls through a gallery.

Working with both oil and acrylic paint, each of McKenzie's paintings contains a variety of surface textures and stylis-

tic approaches that create depth and nuance. While she works from a source photograph, she measures out every detail and transfers it by hand instead of using a projector, so that she can truly understand the dynamics of the space being captured. Her paintings not only invite the viewer to consider the intersection of art, architecture and space, but are also physical objects that have their own presence when experienced in person.

Gallery owner David B. Smith said he was drawn to McKenzie's work in part because it's culturally relevant and

conceptually engaging to local audiences. Galleries, said Smith, are places "to come in and learn a little bit about the artist, and to talk to us about the artwork on the walls. Galleries are places where people are able to have these conversations ... and you're just not able to do that on Instagram." ■

*Sarah McKenzie's exhibition at David B. Smith Gallery runs through October 8.*

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KITCHEN DESIGN

# MAKING SPACE

DENVER-BASED RIFUGIO MODERN RELIES ON CLIENT CUSTOMIZATION TO DELIVER CLEAN, CONTEMPORARY DESIGN. FOR A CHALLENGING KITCHEN PROJECT IN SAN FRANCISCO, STRICT ATTENTION TO PRECISION AND CRAFT LED TO A PERSONALIZED SPACE THAT ELEVATES THE HOME AROUND IT.

**THE** spectrum of sound kitchen design philosophies is deep and wide, but after 16 years in the business, Brian Pignanelli had a vision of his own. He wanted to forge a more comprehensive approach to luxury custom interior delivery. Something along the lines of Italian elegance with modern sensibility, developed for each individual user. This approach led to the creation of his Rifugio Modern showroom, recently opened in RiNo. The name is a nod to classic Alpen mountain shelters. “Whatever the stressors—work, traffic, life in general—we look at the home as the ultimate refuge from the modern world,” said Pignanelli.

Due in part to his reputation as a problem solver, Pignanelli got a call from Tai Ikegami, Partner at Feldman Architecture. Ikegami was dealing with a formidable challenge of his own: San Francisco-based clients needed a fully-functional kitchen for their narrow Telegraph Hill building. The project began with a holistic approach to both the architectural realities and the fundamental appreciation of user experience. “It goes beyond just selecting a wood sample,” said Pignanelli. “With any kitchen design project, there are problems to be solved.”

**WORDS:** Cory Phare

**IMAGES:** Joe Fletcher



**OPPOSITE PAGE:** With a long and narrow layout common to San Francisco homes, natural light is often limited to only two ends of the house. The solution? The airy warmth of bleached white oak, and translucent glass used to bring light from the well-fenestrated top floor down to the lower levels along with the stairwell.

**BELOW:** The backsplash consists of two anodized aluminum door panels that lift up via specialized hardware. It also contains a built-in spice cabinet and recessed steam oven, and provides access to an array of cooking utensils, cookware, and oils. A custom anodized aluminum ladder rail also offers access to the upper storage.

The main floor space had to accommodate clients who more-or-less live in their kitchen. To these homeowners, the kitchen is more than a simple room. It is a venue for honoring lineage and preparing large family meals. Facilitating that lifestyle required an in-depth understanding of each individual, including what cooking meant to them and what specific dishes they prepared. For instance, one of the homeowners is Chinese American and regularly cooks traditional Chinese dishes. Said Pignanelli, "It's beautiful food with fresh and wild ingredients, but it involves a lot of oil and open frying. Clean-ability was essential."

This meant paying careful attention to the backsplash. Tile and stainless steel were good options, but the choice instead was anodized aluminum, which balances sleek modern aesthetics with an easy-to-clean surface. It's also a lightweight material that was better suited to the hardware for the door panels that fully raise to reveal a hidden storage component. Along with the blum-outfitted cabinets and drawers, every inch accounts for the precise specifications of how the clients use their kitchen. Storage is defining and transitional, as it travels with natural light throughout the

**RIFUGIO MODERN FOUNDER BRIAN PIGNANELLI IS AN ARCHITECT WITH MORE THAN 16 YEARS' EXPERIENCE CREATING KITCHENS AND SYSTEMS ARCHITECTURE. WE ASKED HIM TO SHARE A FEW FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS THAT EVERY HOMEOWNER SHOULD DISCUSS WITH THEIR DESIGNER.**

**WHAT'S THE BIG PICTURE?**

"While I want to know what they like—materials, appliances, etc.—what I really want to know is, how do they use (and think about) their kitchens? Are they family focused, or entertainers, or both? Do they bring in celebrity chefs, or is their mother-in-law the all-star in the kitchen?"

**WHERE ARE THE PAIN POINTS?**

"The best projects start by exploring their existing kitchen. What are the challenges, problems, or shortcomings of what they have already? It's difficult for anyone to design solutions prior to fully understanding the underlying problems. I'm actually flying to California soon to have a new client make me lunch in her existing kitchen, so we can explore exactly the things I'm describing."

**ARE YOU FOCUSED ON THE RIGHT THINGS?**

"Lots of clients worry about costs, particularly design details they saw in a magazine or a designer's portfolio. I believe it's most important for the client to build a connection with their designer, and vice versa. That's when design really comes to life, and when clients really get what they need rather than ending up with a nice portfolio piece for their designer and a space that falls short of meeting their everyday needs."



home in cabinetry that wraps around walls. "We really used the entire depth of the space to transform each bit into a functional component," said Pignanelli. "After all, in San Francisco, space is at a premium."

Creating that system in such an environment brought about new logistical challenges. Installing wall panels and building custom soffits is already a labor intensive process. But the engineering prowess required to support all of the upper cabinets in a way that would

allow for the flip-up backsplashes was extensive. The back-and-forth collaboration between the project architect, hardware manufacturer, general contractor, engineer, and Rifugio Modern eventually produced an elegant solution. In the end, they even added a nested rail and ladder system to access a second tier of storage for the family's culinary antiques.

Given the level of precision required, it's no wonder the installation lasted more than seven weeks. But this is precisely

why Pignanelli shifted the focus away from individual brands and toward the work of holistically integrating the best components to support the clients' lifestyle. "Ultimately the process is about plugging in and truly understanding the goals," he said. "Sometimes that means coming into the showroom, having a glass of wine, and talking through the best way to work together on a project." ■

**OPPOSITE, LEFT:** An overhead lighting fixture by ALW hangs above the island's grey/white stained engineered oak, which contrasts with the cabinet's darker grey engineered oak. **OPPOSITE, RIGHT:** With varying depths and designed to client specifications, the touch-operated drawers are outfitted with blum hardware to make access second-nature. **ABOVE, LEFT:** White Caesarstone frames the island's sitting area and bar sink. Gaggenau appliances are outfitted against the wall, as a secondary electric burner sits next to the gas cooktop under a custom hood by Rifugio Modern. **ABOVE, RIGHT:** Custom-commissioned artwork hangs by the stairwell, as the natural light traverses from living space through the kitchen. **RIGHT:** Continuity throughout the space was key to creating openness, maximizing the sun and surrounding views of Telegraph Hill.





To create an intimate, "why not stay awhile?" feel in the restaurant's back section, Mike Blea and Breton Lujan created a snug slatted cedar division screen (which visually "folds down" from the identical, aromatic, cedar ceiling slats), adding tables and chairs they hand-built out of maple, with powder-coated steel bases. The banquette was covered in a matte forest green vinyl by Denver Upholstery. The floors are low-maintenance LVT luxury vinyl tiles. "The idea here was for diners to be able to focus on the food and each other, without distractions," said Blea.

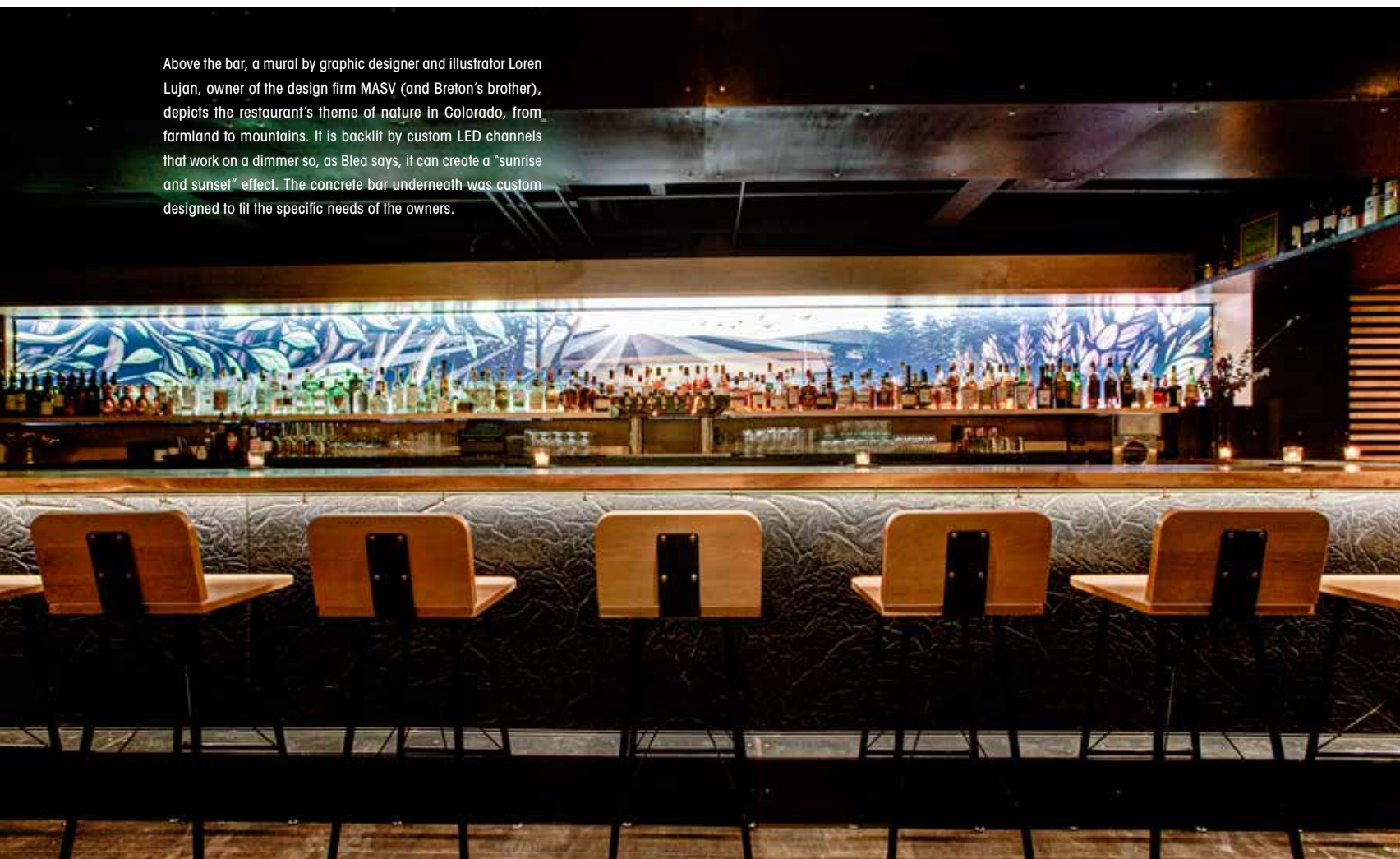
# SOUP TO NUTS

DESIGN-BUILD-FABRICATE FIRM **RAW CREATIVE** IS UPENDING THE NOTION OF WHAT ROLE ARCHITECTS PLAY IN THE DESIGN PROCESS. CASE IN POINT? THEIR BOLD, IMAGINATIVE WORK AT THE HOT BERKELEY RESTAURANT **THE WAY BACK**.

WORDS: ALISON GWINN

IMAGES: DAG LARSON

Above the bar, a mural by graphic designer and illustrator Loren Lujan, owner of the design firm MASV (and Breton's brother), depicts the restaurant's theme of nature in Colorado, from farmland to mountains. It is backlit by custom LED channels that work on a dimmer so, as Blea says, it can create a "sunrise and sunset" effect. The concrete bar underneath was custom designed to fit the specific needs of the owners.



creative new ways to manipulate them—such as blackening the steel, charring the wood, or using handmade molds to make uniquely shaped and colored concrete sinks.

Since graduation, Blea and Lujan have had a steep learning curve. Through self-study and independent courses on subjects like concrete fabrication, they now share every aspect of every job, from overall design of a space to custom furniture building to the nitty-gritty of on-site construction. "It's hard to explain to people the breadth of what we do," said Blea. "We do all the casework, all the cabinetry, all the steel work, all the hand-mixed concrete tables and sinks." Added Lujan: "We believe in being well-rounded.

And because we are building everything ourselves, we know exactly how long it will take and how much each component will cost, so people who hire us can choose where to spend their money."

After starting out doing kitchen remodels in grad school, the duo designed and built the patio for UNCLE, the hip ramen fusion restaurant in the Highlands, then did all the finishes (including a custom bar and concrete fabrication of tabletops) for UNCLE's new sister restaurant in RiNo, Hop Alley.

But the apotheosis of their work so far (and their first complete restaurant build) is The Way Back, a rustic-chic neighborhood eatery that opened this

year on West 38th Avenue in Berkeley. "Just as the name suggests, our menu tries to pull from how things once were," said Kade Gianinetti, one of three co-owners of the restaurant, which has already twice topped Denver Eater's Heat Map. "I let Raw Creative have a lot of control over how the space would be laid out and the feel of the colors, and their design totally matches our concept—they balanced the use of raw materials with new technology."

Gianinetti's faith in the duo wasn't blind. A childhood friend of Lujan's, he gave Raw Creative its first work space, at his small-batch coffee company Method Roasters in Globeville, before they moved into permanent digs. He had seen enough to



Talk about local sourcing: Lujan and Blea built the bar out of a piece of wood milled from a maple tree cut down in nearby Wheat Ridge (and sourced from Mile High Tree Care). "We tried to leave in as many imperfections as possible to give it an organic nature," said Blea, including an old, square nail that remains in the wood. "This bar really tells the story of that tree, so while you're sitting at the bar, you can think about all the decades it has been in the area."

**CALL THEM PERFECTIONISTS. CALL THEM CRAZILY AMBITIOUS. CALL THEM CONTROL FREAKS. THEY DON'T CARE.** Mike Blea and Breton Lujan, founders and owners of Denver's one-stop shop Raw Creative, don't just design spaces; they fabricate their own furniture and do all the construction, too.

Blea and Lujan met as undergraduate environmental design majors at the University of Colorado, then reconnected as architecture graduate students. While classmates were looking to land jobs at big architectural firms, Blea and Lujan opted for a different path, launching Raw Creative while still in grad school.

"We actually got ridiculed by some of our classmates," said Blea. "They were like, 'Oh that's cute. You guys are starting your own firm.' They didn't really believe us." But according to Rick Sommerfeld, Assistant Professor of Architecture at CU Denver and director of the school's Colorado Building Workshop, the two knew what they were doing.

"It's very unusual to do what they did, because for a long time the architect and the contractor were separated," Sommerfeld said. "It's only within the last 30 or 40 years that the American Institute of Architects even allowed architects to build their own projects. But Mike and Breton really wanted an intimacy with their clients, and they

wanted to be able to control the details of the fixtures and furniture and building designs they came up with. It was very gutsy, but they've done a really nice job with their company."

Blea and Lujan bring complementary skills to the business: Blea, whose two uncles are general contractors, "grew up on job sites" and later worked in the architectural fabrication shop at CU, where he learned to weld and do woodworking. Lujan, on the other hand, started out as more of a pure designer. "I'm very detail oriented," he said, "so I always want to be in control of building something." The name Raw Creative refers to their desire to use raw materials like wood, concrete, and steel, and to find



In the women's powder room, Lujan and Blea repeated many of the materials used throughout the restaurant: Maple walls are offset against a hand-cast black concrete sink with an "invisible drain" underneath a small maple screen; the brass faucets reference the brass rivets used throughout the main restaurant room. The duo also fabricated the wall and door to the toilet area (on left) out of blackened steel.



Breton Lujan (left) and Mike Blea are founders and owners of design-build-fabricate firm Raw Creative.



To create an organic texture on the front of the bar, Lujan and Blea "tried probably 100 different combinations of materials that we cast concrete against," before finally settling on a crinkled, shiny plastic that gave the concrete a unique textured quality. "We wanted it to be free-flowing, and to create shadow play and play up the light in the space," added Lujan.

**"MIKE AND BRETON REALLY WANTED AN INTIMACY WITH THEIR CLIENTS, AND THEY WANTED TO BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE DETAILS OF THE FIXTURES AND FURNITURE AND BUILDING DESIGNS THEY CAME UP WITH. IT WAS VERY GUTSY, BUT THEY'VE DONE A REALLY NICE JOB WITH THEIR COMPANY."** -RICK SOMMERFELD

know these were the right designers for The Way Back, and his confidence was rewarded. "They were able to create a functional, livable design space that felt comfortable but used techniques that push the limits of sustainable building. They had the imagination to really think outside the box. Their passion for design, and pushing the limits of what it could be, was infectious."

The result is a modern but rustic space that feels unique (with custom touches like a backlit, hand-drawn mural behind the bar and a textured bar front) and friendly (Gianinetti says that guests often want to linger for hours in the inviting spaces). And, as with all of Raw Creative's work, The Way Back was a totally hands-on project. "We'd be there at 6 o'clock in the morning, and stay until 10 at night, doing all the framing, installing sinks we had built—everything," said Lujan. "I was out here in a Bobcat one day building the rock wall around the patio. And then we also built all the interior pieces," including the maple-and-steel bar stools, concrete-topped tables, cast-concrete bathroom sinks, and raw, industrial-looking lighting fixtures.

"I think what makes us successful as a team is our collaboration," said Lujan. "We each have a different perspective on design. We'll start bouncing thoughts back and forth, and watch as an idea grows quickly and organically. The result is that the design just gets better and better." ■

Two family-style cast-concrete-and-steel tables in the middle of the dining room allow for both large group gatherings and, because The Way Back was envisioned as a neighborhood spot, a place where strangers can meet and forge friendships. The cedar slats on the ceiling and the handcrafted maple chairs make for continuity, and the capacious garage door allows for an indoor-outdoor flow onto the patio in the warmer months. Raw Creative designed and built the long light fixture that runs the length of the tables to unify the space and "create more of a community feel," said Blea.





# ANY WAY YOU SLICE IT

WORDS: Charlie Keaton



Sixty years after its debut, a limited edition re-issue of the classic Campden Toast Rack introduces the classic kitchen accessory to a whole new generation.



During and after a career that spanned more than four decades, industrial designer Robert Welch's work has appeared in museums from New York to London to Bergen, Norway. He pioneered the introduction of stainless steel cutlery to the United Kingdom. He won prestigious awards and was named Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

And yet the Campden Toast Rack, a modest accessory Welch created just one year into his design career, may be his most enduring legacy. Crafted from stainless steel which tapered slightly upward at each end, the product was produced for Old Hall in 1956. It promptly won the Design of the Year Award from the Council of Industrial Design—presented by His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, no less—in recognition of its “elegant and ingenious construction.”

The Campden Toast Rack remained in high demand until production ended in the early 1980s. Now, 60 years after its introduction, Robert Welch Designs—helmed by his children, Alice and Rupert—has re-issued a limited edition run of 600 racks. The clean lines and pragmatic minimalism that defined Welch's design are intact, thanks to a faithful recreation of his original sketches. Even the packaging is a detailed replica of the original.

Today, toast racks have all but disappeared from modern homes. But for aficionados of classic mid-century design, there's probably room in the kitchen for a timeless example back on the market for the first time since parachute pants were all the rage. We aren't trying to *jam* this down your throat, but supplies are limited, so you'd *butter* hurry.



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The list of people to be thanked (and hugged) is too long to list. But we owe a special debt of gratitude to the 45 businesses, associations, and non-profit organizations that directly invested in Denver Design Week — and to the thousands of attendees who showed up and got involved. Wait 'til you see what we've got in store for you next year.



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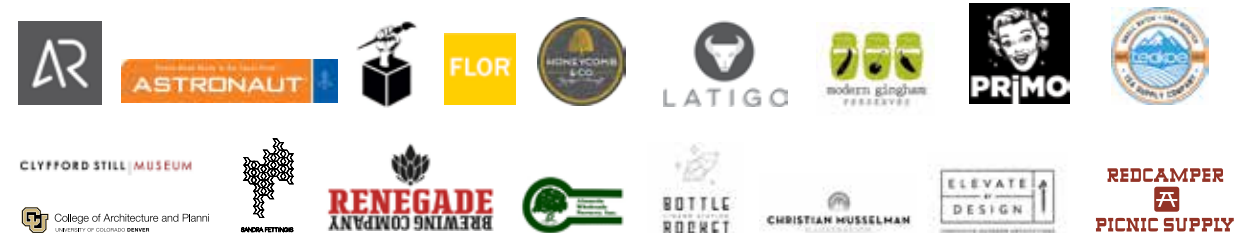
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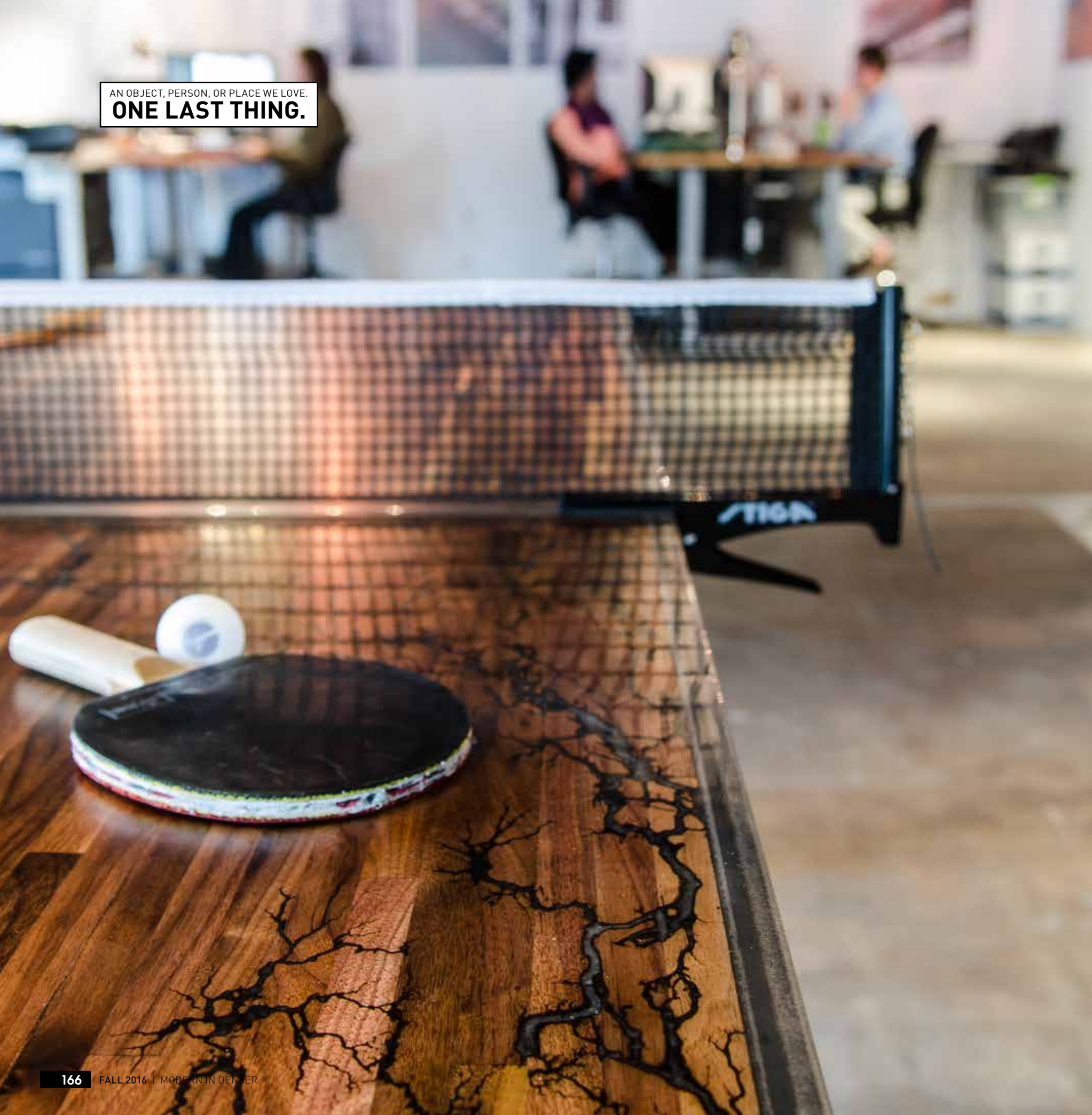
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## GAME ON 🎮⚡

HERE'S A RIDDLE: WHEN IS A PING PONG TABLE MORE THAN A PING PONG TABLE? FOR VERTICAL ARTS ARCHITECTURE, TRANSCENDING SIMPLE RECREATION ONLY HAPPENS WHEN A PIECE OF CUSTOM FURNITURE—SAY, A SLAB OF WOOD TO SUPPORT A TEAM-WIDE TABLE TENNIS HABIT—ALSO SERVES AS A TOOL FOR OFFICE UNITY, WORKFLOW FUNCTIONALITY, CLIENT ACQUISITION, AND CREATIVE EXPLORATION.

words: Charlie Keaton • images: Paul Duffy

**W**ith prime new office space looking out across Speer Boulevard, the Denver office of Vertical Arts wanted to shake things up a bit. Having moved his team from their office in RiNo's TAXI building to a more central location, Lead Architect Brian Patty was determined to distinguish the space from other local design firms, and from Vertical Arts' longstanding practices in Steamboat Springs and the Vail Valley. But in a crowded marketplace, shining a light on the firm wasn't enough—he was looking to start a fire. And while that may work as a metaphor, Patty and his team took it a step further. They literally started a fire.

"We thought, 'Let's take something you don't traditionally need, like a ping pong table, and say this is part of our culture,'" said Patty. "But we do need a real conference room table, and we need real work tables, so let's do what it takes to design this so it works."

Working with local firm James Davis Designs, Vertical Arts created a one-of-a-kind office centerpiece using a relatively unknown process called electrical erosion. Starting with a walnut butcher block, Davis, who had been experimenting with the technique for several months, brushed a solution of salt water and baking soda in a loosely governed pattern across the wood. After leaving it to sit and soak, he attached a grounded wire clamp and a separate clamp that runs through a series of microwave transformers, elevating the charge from 120 volts to more than 15,000. Doing so produced a slow-moving fire that Davis could gently soothe or nudge with a spray bottle.

"Part of it is controlled by the general borders I define with the solution and part of it is completely random chance," said Davis. "But other than the general borders of where it's going to go, what it looks like is out of my hands."

For Vertical Arts, the results were two-fold. On a positive note, the electrical erosion created a unique and eye-catching design which, once coated with wax and epoxy and sanded down, contrasts perfectly with the dark wood. On the other hand, Patty's girlfriend, who gamely offered up her own microwave in support of the project, found herself in the market for a new one when the boosted electricity fried the device. "We needed a new microwave anyway," said Patty.

The table made its office debut in August, and it didn't take long to make an impact. Removing the detachable net produces a conference table for larger, more formal meetings. Simple latches along the underside allow the table to split into two equal, more traditional square tables, making it easy for employees to convene impromptu breakout sessions. Within a week, a visiting client was sufficiently impressed to commission Vertical Arts.



Designer James Davis had been experimenting with electrical erosion for about six months before meeting Vertical Arts' Brian Patty at a networking event. They quickly devised a plan to incorporate the technique into a multi-purpose table for VA's new office space. Using a solution of baking soda and saltwater to provide a general pattern, electrical clamps run through a series of microwave transformers to create a unique design on walnut butcher block.

**"PART OF IT IS CONTROLLED BY THE GENERAL BORDERS I DEFINE WITH THE SOLUTION AND PART OF IT IS COMPLETELY RANDOM CHANCE. BUT OTHER THAN THE GENERAL BORDERS OF WHERE IT'S GOING TO GO, WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IS OUT OF MY HANDS."** - JAMES DAVIS



unsolicited, to create a custom dining room table using electrical erosion.

"Our approach was to take it to this level where you want to touch it, you want to see it, because it has this depth of natural character," said Patty. "We see a lot of clients going with Colorado designs where they want something tactile and beautiful, but not forced. And that was where we were going."

A new ping pong table, conference table, and breakout desks. A tool for educating clients on an exciting new design technique. An opportunity to showcase their commitment to collaboration with local artists and craftsmen. Vertical Arts has seen an immediate return on what was once just a quirky idea. And the only casualty was an unsuspecting microwave. ■



Once the electrical erosion was complete, Davis sanded the table down and added wax and epoxy to create a smooth, flush surface. When it's not being used for an afternoon ping pong match, Vertical Arts employees release the table into two halves that can be used for drawing, client engagement, or impromptu breakout sessions.

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