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Volume 156, Number 10

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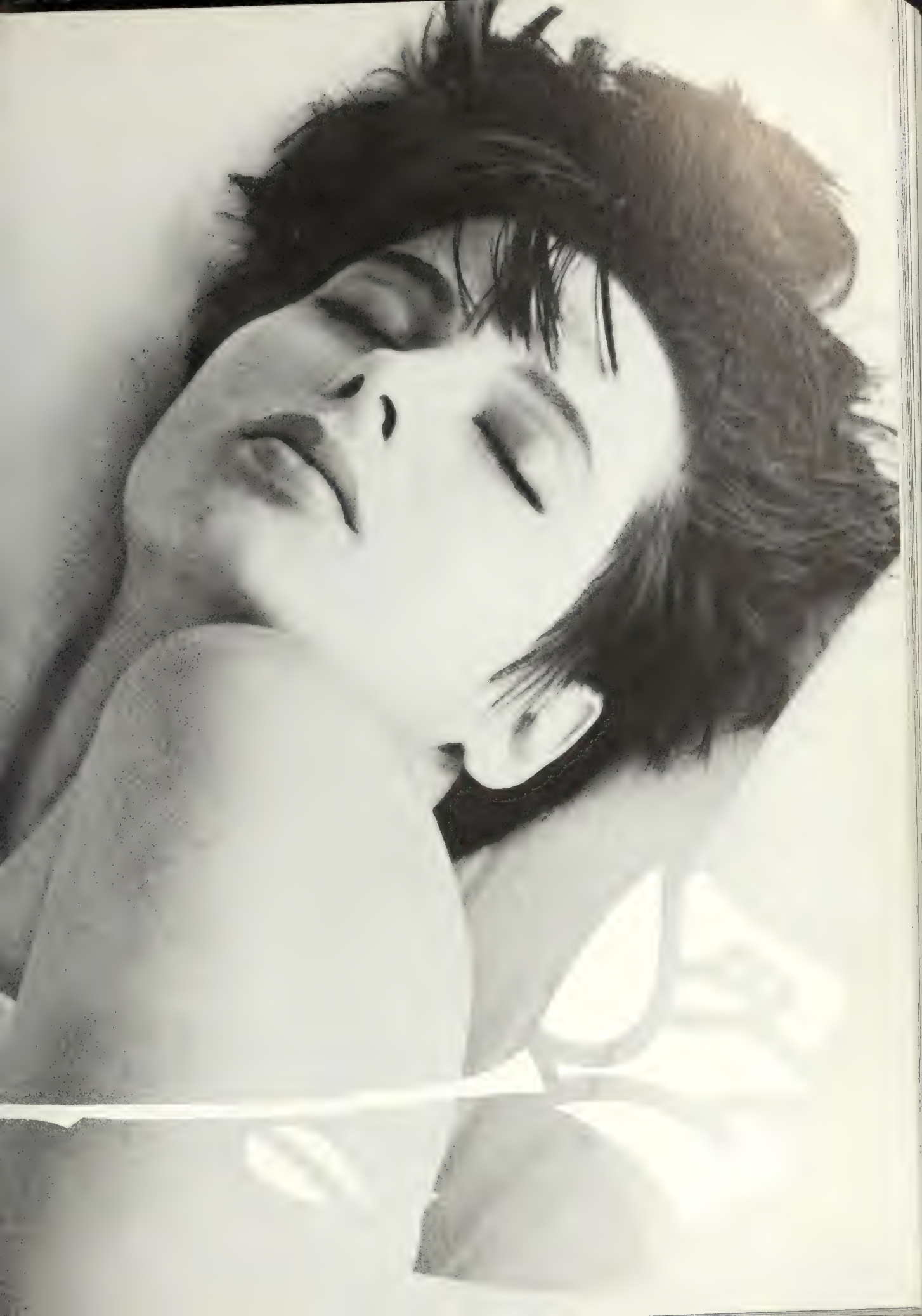
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THE EDITOR'S PAGE



The dramatic Throne Building of the new Royal Palace of Brunei is a much-magnified modern version of the traditional longhouses of Borneo

Ralph Lauren and I were having lunch at The Four Seasons when I first asked him if he would let us photograph his house in Jamaica, and we were delighted when he agreed to let House & Garden visit his private family retreat in Montego Bay, seen on our cover and on pages 126 through 137. Decorated by Angelo Donghia, it is as stylish as it is comfortable—just like the Polo shirts my daughters give me every Father's Day. They still haven't forgiven me, however, for not getting an autograph at that first lunch some months ago. Maybe if Ralph likes the story. . . .

We receive quantities of mail from people who delight in the writing in House & Garden. To all of you readers, Rachel Lambert Mellon's account of the design of the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden at the White House is one of the most moving pieces I have read in House & Garden. This talented landscape designer is a talented writer as well, as you will see on page 164.

Joan Quinn, who, with her husband, Jack, has been collecting art in Los Angeles for a decade or two, was the obvious person to write the Joe Lombardo story, page 176. New Yorkers and visitors to Manhattan will have an opportunity to see more of Lombardo's work at Fifty/50, 793 Broadway, where an exhibit is being installed during the first few days of October and will remain throughout the month. And for a future issue, we've photographed the

Quinn house and collection in Los Angeles as well.

The stories behind the furnishings almost always make good reading in the pages of House & Garden, but I can't remember one quite as intriguing as the history of the chairs and sofas in the New York apartment of the Earl of Mount Charles. For Elaine Greene's account of the George IV memorabilia there, see page 138.

Decorating Editor Kaaren Gray and the French photographer Jacques Dirand went to photograph some beautiful rooms by Boston decorator Bill Hodgins in Tori Winkler Thomas's Virginia house. On their arrival, however, their anticipation quickly escalated into amazement, for they found the landscape architect had decided to turn her garden into a larger-than-life painting. For a wonderful story on Garden Madness, see page 144.

We've spent many summer months combing the beach towns west of Los Angeles, but I never fail to be amazed at the architectural treasures tucked among the blocks of banality that line those streets. Such a treasure is a house in Hermosa Beach by Morphosis, the architectural team of Michael Rotondi and Thom Mayne. If we hadn't included Peter Aaron's exciting street photograph, page 182, no one could have guessed that this handsome and sophisticated piece of architecture fits on a site only 35 feet wide.

If L.A. architecture is the most experimental, Mario Buatta decorating is the most seasoned and familiar. Strongly rooted in the English decorative tradition, his way with chintz, needlepoint rugs, and animal paintings charms our readers more than almost anything else we publish. See page 190.

When we called Oberto Gili to ask him to go to Brunei to photograph the sultan's new palace, *above*, we discovered that a trip to Borneo was a lifetime dream come true for the Italian photographer. In the adventure stories of Gili's childhood, the action always took place in a romantic-sounding place called Borneo. In this case, real life surpassed childhood fantasy, as Gili's photographs and Martin Filler's text will demonstrate, page 154.

This month we begin a new column, On Decorating by Mark Hampton, a familiar name to House & Garden readers—and followers of decoration everywhere. We were very pleased when the New York decorator agreed to become a regular contributor to our pages. For his first column, and one of the wonderful Mark Hampton watercolors that have become coveted treasures among his clients and friends, see page 16. Welcome Mark.

Lou Gropp

Editor-in-Chief



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FRANCES ELKINS AND THE SECRETS OF AN APPEALING ROOM

By Mark Hampton



The drawing room in Casa Amesti, Frances Elkins's house in Monterey, now owned by the Old Capital Club.

The question always remains: what makes a room work? I am not talking about taste or style or decorative trends. I mean, why is a room comfortable to sit in, to read in? What makes a room good for parties? After all, entertaining plays a primary role in the planning of many rooms, even if the parties are imaginary. Some rooms, in fact, look fine; they appear to have been beautifully and successfully decorated, but they turn out not to be comfortable, and the final result is that no one uses those rooms. They do not work. Perhaps the lighting is poor, or there might be a bottleneck. More often than not, however, there is a problem with the arrangement of the furniture.

When a room works successfully, it is almost always arranged well. The

placement of the furniture not only allows it to function properly once people are in the room, but it also attracts people into the room. It creates an atmosphere separate from the actual decorative style of the room, and many people who do not focus on the details of decoration respond to the arrangement of furniture. The floor plan of a room, then, is the real starting point in decoration; without a skillful, workable plan, the decorative scheme can never really succeed.

A few months ago, I was in Monterey, California, and saw the house of

Frances Elkins, the famous decorator who died in 1953, and who did beautiful work all over the United States in the thirties and forties. Casa Amesti, the Spanish Colonial House that Mrs. Elkins renovated and decorated in the forties, was published in *House & Garden* in 1945, and the big drawing room still looks the way I remembered it from the black-and-white photograph years ago. When I returned to New York, I dug the picture out of my boxes of old *House & Garden* and *Vogue* pictures, and in fact the room is unchanged. The style of the room is difficult to pin down. The house itself was built in the 1830s and has elements of several architectural styles, a characteristic of Monterey houses. Thick adobe walls, plank ceilings painted as

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ON DECORATING

though they were plaster, and woodwork that is rather like that in Victorian and antebellum houses all over America.

The plan of the drawing room is very symmetrical. The carpets, furniture, and accessories are widely varied in period and style—Georgian, Regency, French Provincial, and Chinese. The color scheme is strict—yellow and blue and white. The arrangement, however, is enormously skillful and could have been used with any kind of furniture. It is the most important element in the design of the room, and it is what relates the decoration to the architecture.

You enter the room through double doors in the center of an end wall, and your sense of direction and entrance and what is going on in general is clear and confident. There is no confusion whatsoever, and unless confusion is what you're aiming for, it is always best to avoid it. The long wall to the right is all French windows leading onto the typical Monterey balcony (this room is on the upper floor). The long wall to the left, opposite the French windows, has a fireplace in the middle, flanked by a pair of doors. The dark polished floor is covered with rather small Chinese carpets in blue and white and yellow. In the center of the room stands a large Georgian mahogany partners' desk running parallel to the fireplace wall. There are pairs everywhere, but they are not always used together. The fireplace is flanked by a single French Provincial wing chair and a Hepplewhite open armchair whose mate stands on the other side of the room. The partners' desk has a Regency stool on either side. The walls on either side of the mantel are arranged with a pair of George III demilune tables under a pair of Chinese plaques.

The walls on either side of the door entering the room are hung with a set of eight engravings framed in simple molded frames that have been marbled in lapis blue. Under the pictures, however, are a sofa on one side and an English Regency hunt table on the other, each balancing the other in terms of weight. Since the back of the sofa is lower than the combined height of the hunt table and the objects on it, Mrs. Elkins rather freely hung two smaller pictures in the gap under the four engravings. Freedom in decoration is usually a euphemism for carelessness.

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ON DECORATING

Mrs. Elkins was not careless. The sofa has a reading lamp nearby—not two, just one. I am constantly being grilled about reading lamps. "Where are the reading lamps?" It seems to me that it is far better to select a few comfortable spots for reading and equip them with the necessary light, one or two places will do. After all, a living room is not a study hall. On the other hand, a room where you clearly cannot read looks awfully stiff and somehow limited. Like a waiting room.

The far end of the room has another, larger seating group. The small chairs around the room can clearly be drawn

No man wants to sit
down in a place
where he will
constantly have to
hop up when anyone
enters the room

up whenever and wherever they are needed. The best place for a large seating group, moreover, is away from the entrance to the room. No one wants to sit in the path of the people who are entering or leaving the room or who are standing rather than sitting. And no man wants to sit down in a place where he will constantly have to hop up when anyone enters the room. The fireplace also does not need to have a huge furniture arrangement around it. It will be cozy enough for one or two people who are alone in the room if there are a couple of comfortable chairs and a footstool. I do not mean to say that you should avoid a large seating group around the fireplace. Nor, however, should you sacrifice the comfort of a room simply because of a stubborn desire to mass all the comfortable furniture around the fireplace. The main visual roles of a fireplace are to look architectural on the one hand and to give an appearance of inviting warmth on the other.

So here is the impression of Mrs. Elkins's room. It is orderly and architectural, with walls treated in a careful,

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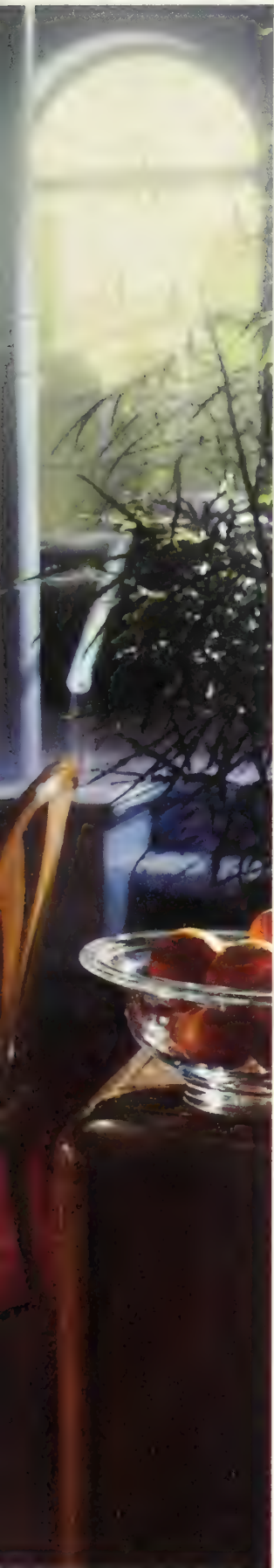
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ON DECORATING

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Mrs. Elkins's brother was, of course, the celebrated Chicago architect David Adler, who built marvelously beautiful houses in Illinois, New York, Florida, California—all over America—and the compatibility of their shared tastes and knowledge is well known. Perhaps one of the most obvious of Mrs. Elkins's decorating traits is the architectural aspect of her approach to her work. But alongside this architectural clarity, and it is the clearness of her viewpoint that makes her rooms so understandable after all these years, there is a deep understanding of what makes an atmosphere civilized without seeming trumped up. Rooms are like people—it is nice if they are pretty; but it is preferable to avoid that scorching criticism: beautiful but dumb. □

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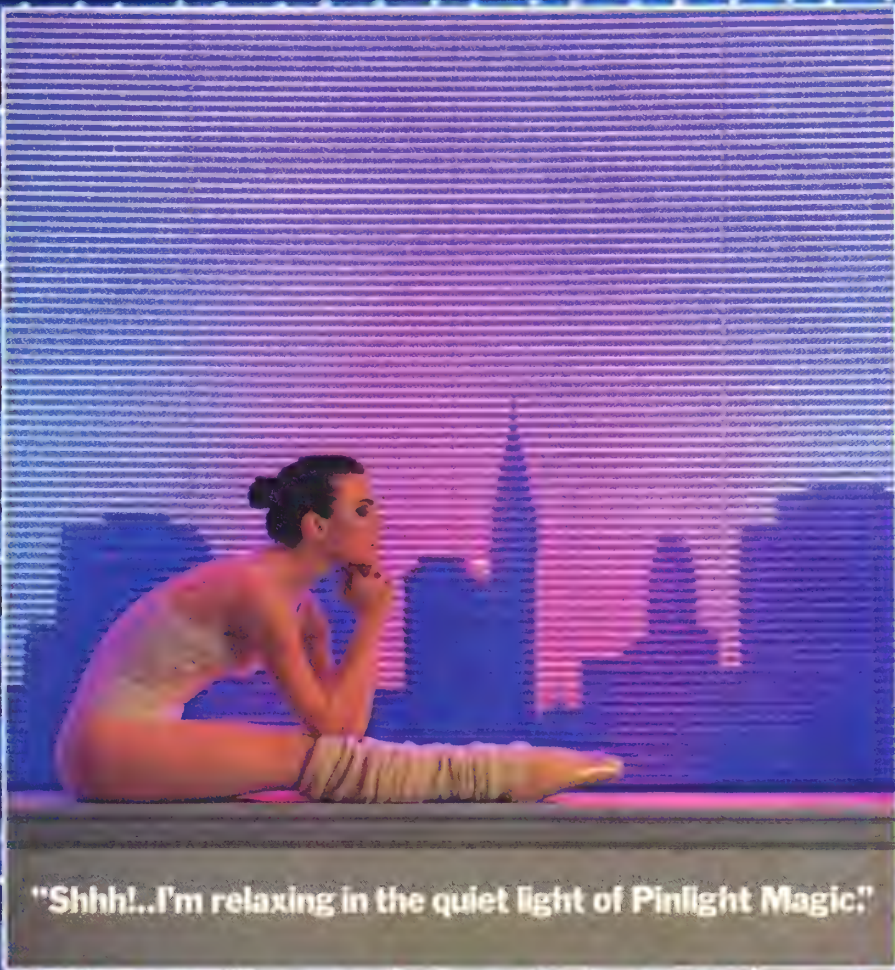
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ESCAPE FROM ESALEN

Taking flight from polarity massage, hot-seat encounter groups, and afterlife experiences on the vertiginous cliffs of Big Sur

By Jonathan Lieberman

Pushing aside a complimentary tray of passion-fruit slices, I threw myself down on the bed of my room in the inn, reputedly the most luxurious hotel in Big Sur, and asked myself how so banal a conjunction of circumstances could have soured a holiday trip. The flight from New York had been marred by my seatmate, a California business executive of enormous girth, whose buttresses of bacon spilled over the armrest onto me, and who, after marinating himself in Scotch, fell into a deep sleep, punctuated by slurred off-color dream phrases, during the projection of a James Bond thriller. We were seated to the extreme left of the screen, and almost under it, so that I could only view the screen by craning my neck and looking past him. Unfortunately, near the climax of the film, he turned in his sleep with a protracted gurgle, and now faced me so closely that our noses would have touched—they did once—had I not leaned to my far left. In order to see the film, I had to run the risk of his awakening to find me staring directly into his massive face. Apart from this circumstance, and although the airline staff behaved, contrary to the implication carried by the name of the carrier, in a thoroughly disorganized fashion, the rest of the flight was without incident. Indeed, the biggest nonevent of all was the non-arrival of my luggage in San Francisco, a trifling affair I had to neglect in order



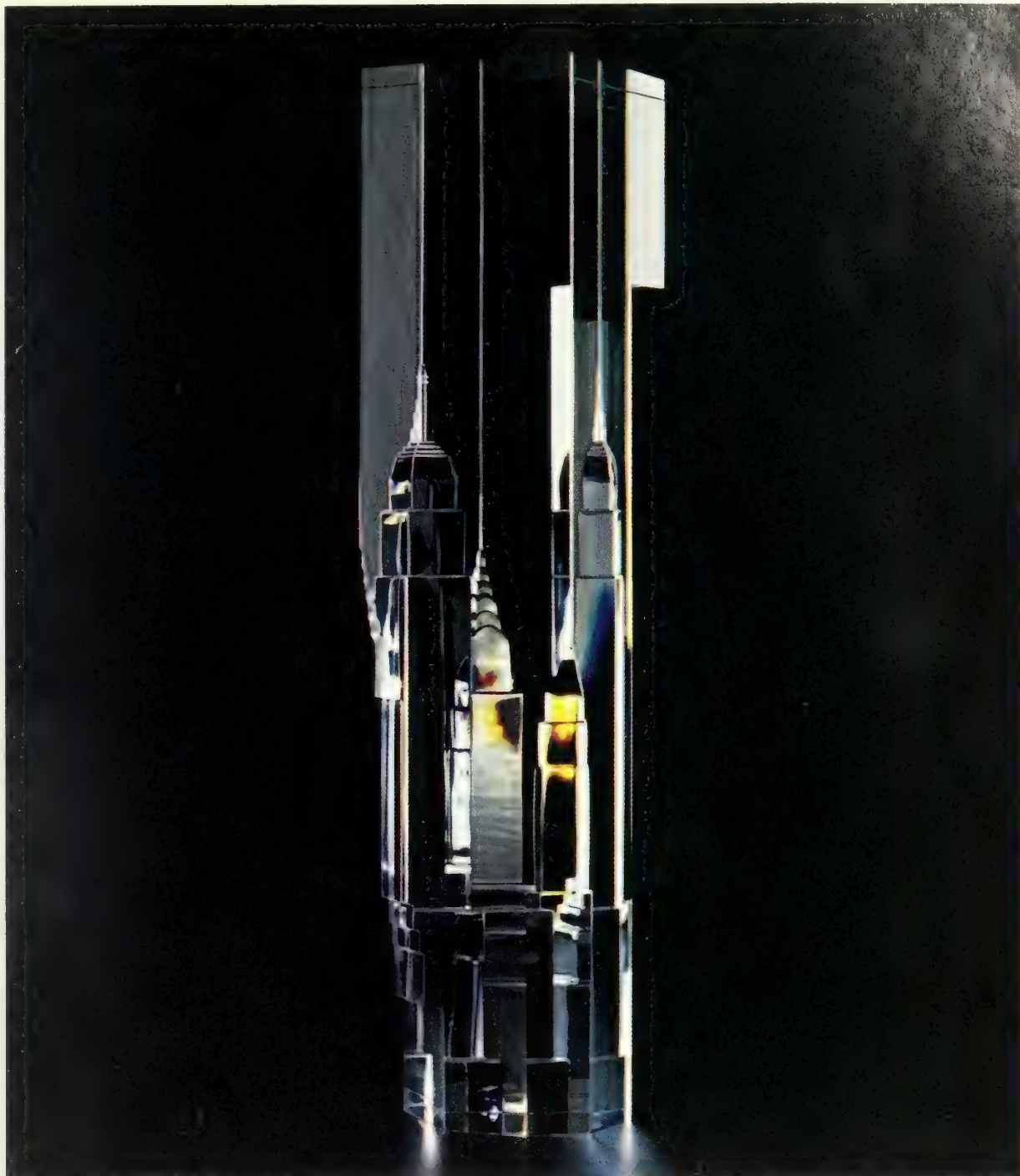
"I hurled the promotional literature they had pressed on me into the tempestuous sea with a sobbing laugh."

to sprint the length of the vast airport to make a connecting flight to Monterey. A picturesque surprise greeted me when I ran panting onto the runway to catch it, for what I saw was not a plane at all, but what looked like a laundry basket held in the beak of a listless pterodactyl. Stepping into the contraption, I saw that in fact it was an

cient reconnaissance six-seater, in the charge of two giggling teen-agers, one of whom was boning up on an airway manual held upside down. The flight operations—an absurd description of the fiddling they did with the knobs, buttons, and pedals at their disposal—certainly sent color into the cheeks of the passengers: for some forty minutes the plane passed through a series of nauseating lurches and abrupt, horrifying descents into air pockets, each of which was accompanied, as in a church responsory, by moans from the passengers as pitiful as those in the "Dies Irae" of Verdi's *Requiem*.

The inn (really a cluster of fancy dormitories perched on a hill), where I arrived a gibbering wreck some hours later, had been described to me as surpassing in luxury any similar institution in northern California. How wildly irresponsible this speculation was came home to me with peculiar force after my first interview with the desk clerk. A pretty blonde whose empty eyes and toneless manner of speech suggested a lifetime

spent strung out on hypnotic drugs among the Frisbee crowd, she told me that I would be able to pay for my room only by credit card, provided that I furnish identification in the form of a driver's license together with information about the make and year of my automobile. When I explained to her that I neither used credit cards nor drove a



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car, but offered to pay by personal check backed up by my passport, she unconvincingly suppressed a giggle at my antiquated preference for impeccable New York banks and official government documents over plastic cards.

In any case, the matter disposed of after a half-hour debate that drew attention from other guests by its ferocity and free use of invective, I went on to explain that my luggage had been orphaned. "I have no fresh changes, you see," I said airily, "so will you send the presser or the room boy for the clothes I am wearing, and also the waiter, as I'll be dining in my room tonight in about an hour. . . ." Interrupting me curtly, the clerk said that the inn had no presser, no room boy, no laundry services of any kind, and no room service; if I wished, some slices of passion fruit or a jug of spring water could be sent to my room, but for a meal I would have to go to the hotel restaurant. "There it is," she said, pointing out the window to a speck on the top of the next mountain range and easily a forty-minute walk away, "but it won't be open for another two hours and since it's Saturday night, you won't get a reservation there for another two hours after that." I subsisted the rest of the afternoon by clawing open bananas pilfered from the hotel lobby.

At eight that evening, smoothing down my disheveled city clothes, I set out on the "scenic" walk the hotel had constructed to the restaurant. It proved to be an endlessly long and winding path through a forest, with funny little fake dead ends and rickety bridges over dried-up streams. The deeper I went into the forest the more each step I took grew palpable with tension. I imagined the ghosts of murderous lumberjacks whose trade had been displaced when the hotel was built leering at me through broken branches; at every turn in the path I saw the outline of a puma ready to dispatch me. When I reached the restaurant, a glass-and-wood affair typical of northern California, I was somewhat spooked, compulsively dusting pine needles off my shoulders and disengaging burrs from my trouser legs, which may explain why the headwaiter seated me in a distant corner of the room, under a giant wooden beam and near the source of the inevitable recorded harp arrangements of Ravel and Satie. So

fearful was I of not securing another reservation for the next 24 hours that I spent many hours in this seat, alarming other guests by my gluttony and stuffing buns and rolls into my jacket. It was pleasant enough, save for one irritating feature of the place. Each waiter I encountered there had cultivated the same strange fear of making an assertion. No matter how trivial the information that I requested, it was conveyed to me in an interrogative. I would ask, "How is the veal cooked?" and I would be told, "On the barbecue?" "Where is the bar?" would be answered by "Down the hall?" I have since learned that this curious affectation has been superseded in some parts of California by the practice of responding to a question by repeating it, so that the answer to "Where is the wine list?" would be "Where is the wine list?," thus insuring that no information whatsoever is passed.

After my first day at the inn, I wearied of writing letters home and wearing earplugs at the swimming pool to drown out the laughter of debauched singles gambling in the hot tubs nearby, and decided it was time to explore the countryside. I had planned to rent a bicycle, but no service of this kind existed in Big Sur. I next considered a car and driver. This, too, appeared unavailable until after much effort I discovered a limousine service in distant Santa Clara. The car I was provided with, however—an immense silver Cadillac with circular portholes—was not ideally suited to the rustic terrain of Big Sur or its pockmarked roads, and when I was driven in it to places of interest such as state parks or nearby towns I was ogled by passers-by. Perhaps, noting my rumpled suit and distracted look, they assumed that I was a presidential candidate who had lost his way, but as that sight must be fairly common to them, the explanation could not be a complete one.

My first call in the Cadillac was at a celebrated local hangout called Nepenthe, a restaurant where I settled myself into a crowd of T-shirted, bearded cats with potbellies and their women, many of whom took after Boadicea in appearance. We all sat there munching carrots and scooping up garbanzo beans, for the most part in silence, although occasionally a recording of bell music would be played or

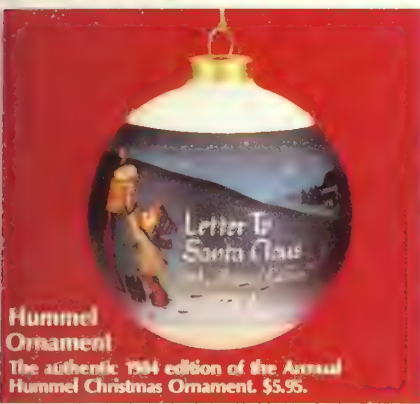
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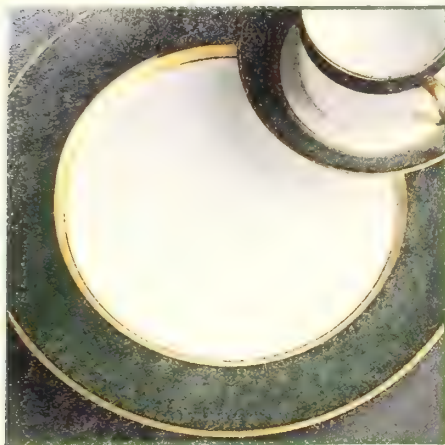
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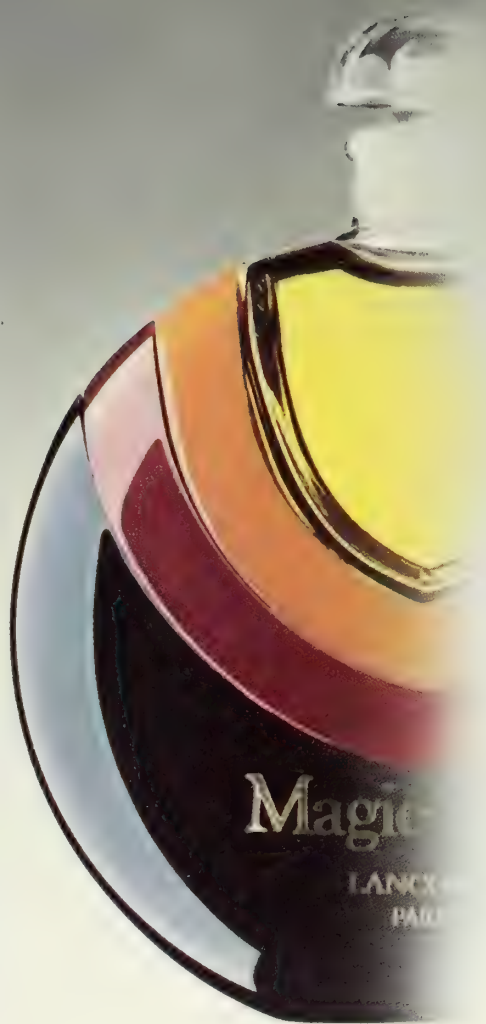
some comment from one of the couples, like "cool it, Goldilocks," would be heard. Everyone was exceedingly gentle, and even the bee that circled my ambrosiaburger for a while retreated gracefully when he realized that I would not share it willingly. And the Druid wearing large amounts of wooden jewelry and a Navaho blanket who approached me and softly inquired whether I was a member of "the healing community" begged off on her own initiative when I replied that I subscribed in every detail to the therapeutic approach of Fritz Kunkel.

The next day we drove to Carmel—a show-town with expensive stores selling, it seemed, nothing but bread—and then on to Monterey, which, if possible, appeared to have surpassed its earlier efforts to ensnare tourists. Within moments of alighting from the car, I was swept into a noisome sea of corpulent psychiatrists and unreconstructed bohemians on Fisherman's Wharf. We inspected (as if with a group mind) little clay lobsters, scrimshaw work, and cute statues of bullwhackers; smiled at a flea-bitten trained monkey snatching dollar bills from us; threw tidbits to jaded performing sea lions and pelicans; stared idiotically at piles of bug-eyed rock cod and dried blowfish. Although one can tire rapidly of bleached wood, sandpipers, and flattened cypresses, the Seventeen-Mile Drive outside Monterey and more generally the coastline highway from it to Big Sur struck me as splendid as ever. As one leaves Monterey, with its mansions and golf courses, the road takes one through large, brilliantly green fields that stretch almost to the water line, and everywhere there is light and color and the smell of the sea. Then the road climbs and passes through more green fields, dotted with horses and sheep, which overlook a turbulent sea out of which huge piles of rock rise abruptly; the effect is rather like that of the western Irish coast. As it nears Big Sur, the road climbs even more and soon is nothing but a thin strip of pavement cut into the rock of the mountain, with high cliffs on one

side and bottomless pits on the other, marked by exceedingly dangerous diabolical twists and hairpin turns, affording the motorist startling views of tremendous expanses. I regret to say that amidst all this beauty I was rent asunder by the conflicting impulses to throw myself out the window, on the one hand, and on the other to press myself to the door of the car nearest the inside of the road. And in addition, a disquieting suspicion arose within me that my driver, who had already displayed difficulties in negotiating the Cadillac through the twists in the road, was slowly becoming hypnotized by the vast expanses ahead of him and would soon plunge the car into the sea. To ensure that he was on the ball, I periodically shouted at him at the top of my voice to ignore the passing spectacles.

If I was afflicted with vertigo that afternoon, a more complicated strain of the same condition affected me the following day. I had always dreamed of visiting Esalen, the famous "human potential" institute located nearby my hotel. Unfortunately, on ringing up I was told that a rockslide blocked the road linking me to it, and that if I wished to visit, I could only do so between six at night and six in the morning when the highway workers repairing the road were not at their posts, and that I should then have to cross the slide by foot, a distance of about a mile. My enthusiasm to see Esalen suffocated the voices of reason, and I arranged with my driver to drop me at my end of the slide at 6 A.M., and with an official of the Institute to meet me at the other end shortly thereafter.

It was still dark when I started my way across the slide the next day. At first, I inched along, hugging the mountainside, every so often coming with a start against a bulldozer or a road sign warning of danger. Twice I took the wrong path and walked perilously close to the edge of a cliff, leaping back when I heard the sound of waves hundreds of feet below me. Midway across, my ears picked up something that turned my blood to ice. The wind



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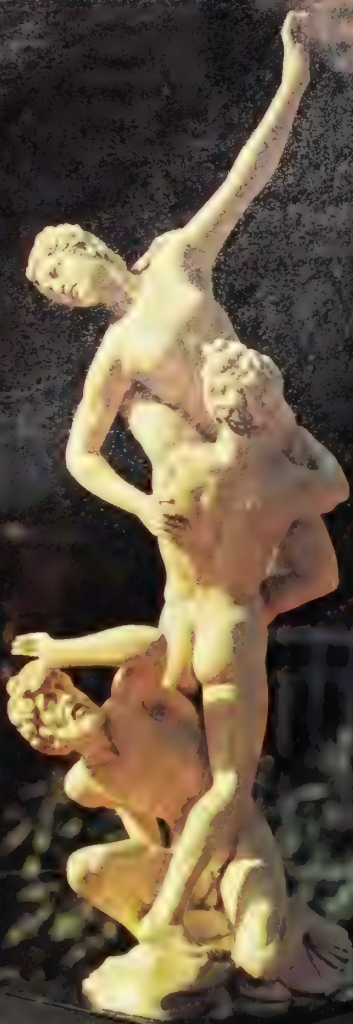
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TRAVEL

had dislodged a handful of pebbles from the mountainside above me, and they skipped down over the larger rocks. As I was for all purposes blind, I had no way of checking my immediate conjecture that this signified the beginning of another, more extensive and devastating rockslide. Electrified by fear, I doubled my efforts to reach the other side and began to scurry across the path in little steps like a Chinese peasant, my body bent almost double and my hands tracing the ground to ensure my safety. In doing all this, however, I neglected to consider what effect the previous night's dense fog might have had on the consistency of the soil at the places where the workers had plowed it with their bulldozers. At one point I sank with a piercing scream to my knees in mud and imagined that I was about to drop all the way down the mountain into Davy Jones's locker. Fortunately, the light had begun to break and I made out a tree root which I used to help me reach firmer soil, where I lay for a few minutes recovering my strength. Then, in the dimness, I saw a shape that lightened my heart: another human being was crossing the slide in the same direction as I was going. Except that he was an old, white-haired man who carried some sort of staff, I shall never know who he was, for despite my friendly cries he took no notice whatsoever of me; perhaps, as was later suggested to me, he was a Zen monk walking to the Tassajara monastery down the coast, and lost in abstraction. In any case, despite his frosty reception, I followed him, and as we painfully made our way across the rocks, it amused me to imagine that I could with justice reply to my grandchildren's query as to why I crossed the rockslide on Highway 1 at six in the morning with the remark of one who performed an equally dangerous journey: "Because it was there." Fortified by this thought, I made it to the other side, where I met my contact from Esalen, and within minutes after stepping into her car, we drove into the gate of the Institute, a compound of houses located on a strip of land between the Santa Lucia Mountains and the sea.

To describe Esalen as devoted to research into "human potential" utterly fails to convey the staggering number and variety of its activities. For this one must turn to a document that was

placed in my hand on arrival, and which is one of the most absorbing I have ever read: the Esalen catalogue of January-June 1984. According to it, just a few of the methods for exploring the central questions of life offered by Esalen are: "psychosynthesis," "holonomic integration" (which employs "evocative music, controlled breathing, facilitative body work, and mandala drawing"), "the hypnotic approaches of Dr. Milton H. Erickson," "hypnosis for health maintenance," "bioenergetics," "group rituals," "Hawaiian Huna" (an ancient mystical teaching of Polynesia), "modern kundalini research," "singing Gestalt therapy," "hot seat" encounter groups, "neo-Reichian emotional release," and ways "to get release from chronic pain and tension" such as "Moshe Feldenkrais' awareness work, Lauren Berry's joint work, deep tissue as taught by Ida Rolf, and the trigger point work of John St. John." One can visit the Esalen hot springs on a week night (open, however, to the public only from one to five A.M.), or attend a weekend seminar, or stay for longer periods of time as a resident or student.

Although once one has been exposed to the Esalen catalogue it is difficult to put down, the descriptions in it of courses offered by the Institute present some unusual problems of interpretation. One weekend course, entitled "Exorcising the Demon 'Should,'" is described in part as follows: "within each of us there lives a demon—our own personal critic—whose greatest joy comes from criticizing, denigrating, and destroying every experience we have... this demon, who commands us to be who we aren't in order to satisfy someone we can never satisfy, is the demon that we will seek to exorcise during the weekend." The price is \$230, quite a bargain in light of the far greater price paid in similar efforts by Rimbaud or the Marquis de Sade. The promises made by other courses are not as easy to pin down. A course, also carrying the price tag of \$230, called "Zen and the Art of Fly Fishing," is described as "a combination of practical instruction, visualization, physical exercise, and guided fantasy"; it argues that "there is a focus and subtlety of movement in fly fishing akin to Eastern meditative disciplines. The possibility always exists of enter-

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ing the trout's world. In fly fishing, the trout are the teachers," a claim which suggests underwater tutorials, taught by Disney-like professor fishes.

Pitiless Teutonic rigor is implied in the following course, entitled "Polarity Massage" (\$230): "The Esalen mineral baths will be the classroom for exploring and learning by experience the basic concepts of polarity body work through the medium of massage. Emphasis will be on the dynamics of living anatomy and polarity energy balancing methods as implemented in the course of complete, full-body massage." And one course that would seem to require a stern hand if it is not to degenerate into hanky-panky claims to introduce "a new way of seeing the body, using eyes, nose, throat, hands, ears, and hara," the last named being "an energy center located two fingers below the navel." The course description that really sent thought balloons with question marks in them gliding over my head was "Shamanic Healing, Journeying, and the Afterlife Experience: Basic and Intermediate Shamanic Practice" (\$680). In it, "with the aid of traditional sonic-driving and dancing methods, the group will engage in archetypal exercises and rituals practiced by North and South American Indian shamans to awaken dormant human capabilities and forgotten connections with the powers of nature. Practice will include shamanic journeys to both the Lower- and Upper-worlds for knowledge and power, work with animal and plant powers, divination, clairvoyance, and shamanic methods of healing." In addition, "there will be an introduction to the Ghost Dance method and to shamanic ways of exploring the afterlife experience"; participants are invited to "bring drums and rattles." The faculty conducting these seminars and workshops contains many unusual personalities, including a specialist in "personal applications of video," the founder of the "Gestalt Fool Theater Family of San Francisco," a writer "with earlier careers as homemaker and fiber artist," and someone called "Hareesh," crisply described as "interested in alternative nutritional programs." A tenure-track faculty member is Jezariah Canyon Munyer, who teaches a course entitled "Miracles of Infancy" (\$230) with his par-

ents; he is one year old.

Inflamed by expectations of witnessing some of these activities during my visit to Esalen, I was distressed to find that none of them were being currently offered, and that because of the rockslide I was doomed to spend twelve hours in what can only be described as a peculiar mixture of a singles resort and a lunatic asylum. This impression was suggested to me by my first sight of residents at the Institute, a

My masseuse was a
vigorous apostle
of health who wore
only a pair of
sunglasses and
a towel around
her waist

wiry, bearded old man out of John Brown's gang jogging painfully down a hillside path in the company of two laughing young women wearing waist-length hair and feather earrings, and it was confirmed by my encounters with others, equally arresting: a tall, head-nodding man who had just been to Findhorn, in Scotland, a "community" where he had been taught to speak with affection to cabbages and roses in order to make them grow, and where he assured me, astonishing results had occurred; an earnest, bespectacled woman who had vowed never to use the word "I," and who hugged whom ever she was with before taking leave two elderly ladies in jump suits, sitting motionlessly and staring pop-eyed at the sea, then vigorously stripping of the suits and surrendering themselves to the sun; a woman who skipped down a hill singing coloratura exercises in half-voice, and then stopped to take a breath, and erupted into some deafening spectacular high notes; a man who said, "I have too many cars in my emotional garage."

I attended lunch in the mess hall of the Institute in a crowd full of saintly faces and uplifted voices; declining an offer to some malodorous organ stew, I confined myself to a stubborn glass of low-fat milk, until I observed



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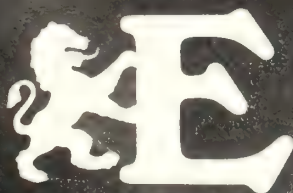


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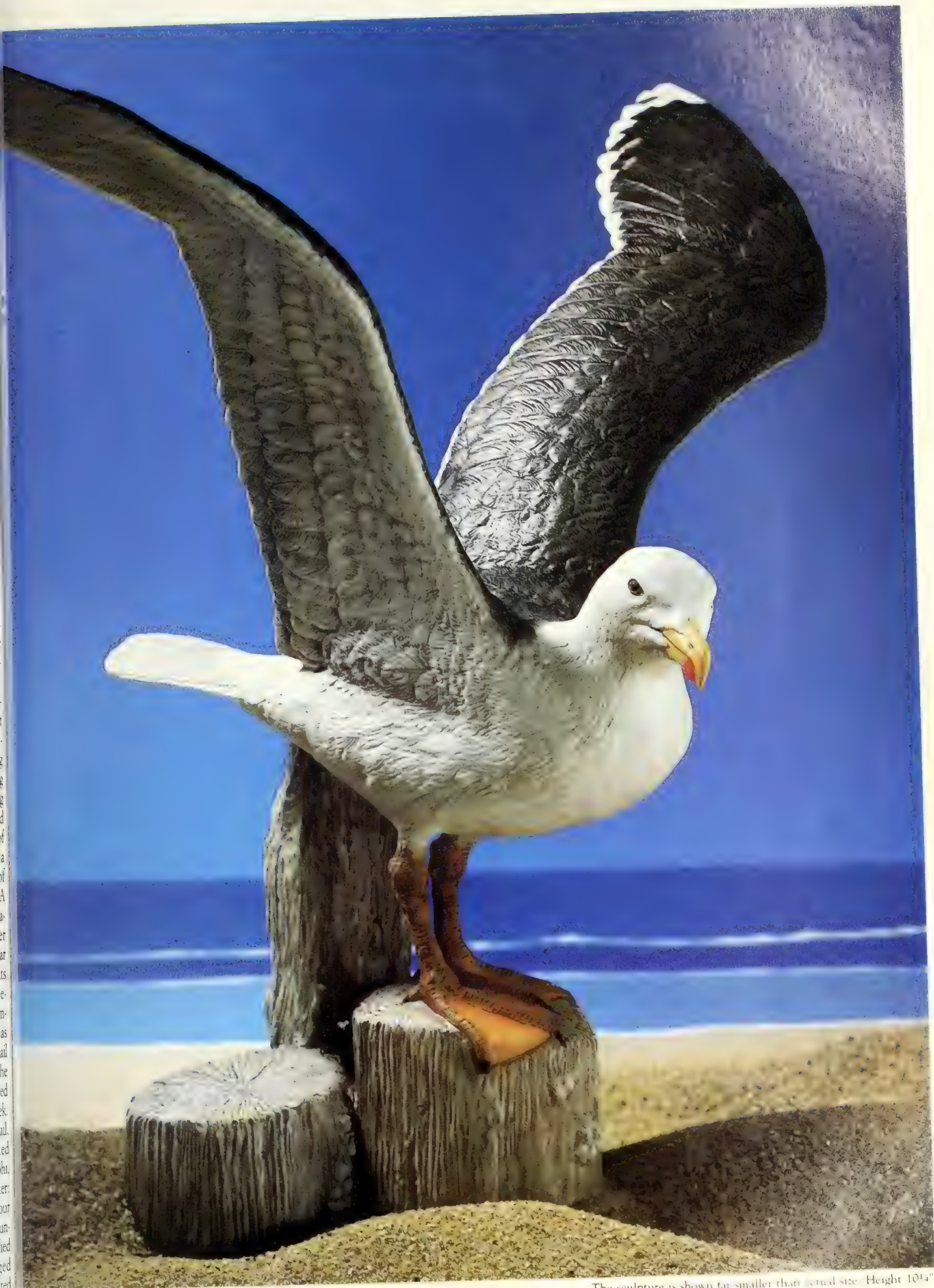
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that the glass was caked with algae and in a lightning move surreptitiously bleached a nearby cactus plant with the tainted liquid. After lunch, I elected to take a massage near the hot springs from one of Esalen's celebrated massage team. The scene that greeted me when I arrived there did not differ appreciably from that found in a typical fifties nudist colony brochure: a number of senior citizens (including some Wagnerian Rhinemaidens with braids) frolicking in outdoor stone tubs and tossing medicine balls back and forth, splendidly unashamed of their liver spots, giant bellies, and floppy udders. It would have been instructive to take a leisurely survey of the behavior but the sulfurous odors rising from the springs forced me to turn away.

My masseuse I guessed to be in her mid forties, a vigorous apostle of health, who wore only a pair of sunglasses and a towel around her waist. To my delight, she posed not a single question to me and set to work immediately. Midway through the massage, however, while I was lying face down, I noticed to my surprise that her towel had crumpled to the floor below me. Thinking that her devotion to her work made her forgetful of such details, I was about to inform her when I felt my own towel gently disengaged from my body and tossed to the floor, so that both of us were fully exposed to the meditating grandmothers I had seen earlier on the cliff above the bathhouse. Her soothing fingers soon made me semiconscious, however, and I would have remained so were it not for an unforeseen incident. A masseur who had been working over a mountain of flesh of indeterminate sex on the next sunning table decided to take this time to retail his spiritual autobiography in a voice that could be heard at San Simeon some fifty miles down the coast. At first I tried to dismiss him as a mere phenomenon in space and time, of no enduring significance, but I was unable to sustain this attitude and began to listen. The import of his story, it seems, was that he had recently discovered through painful self-analysis that he had never really been born. As he pounded and remolded the creature beneath him, he told us that he was following a new "discipline" called "rebirthing therapy," moreover of the "wet" sort that involved his being

dragged in large basins of warm water and then, with great ceremony, lifted like a neonate into the world. He subscribed, he continued, to a rigorous retraining of his character and each day would write on his wrist a guiding thought like "purify yourself," and his teachers had assigned him exercises to test his powers of forming and reforming "relationships," one of which required that he spend exactly sixty minutes in a bar with a woman. No doubt in a desperate effort to cut him off, the entity under his care stirred to life and twisted helplessly about on the mat. "Shhhhh," the masseur cooed, firmly holding him down, "muscles have memories. My deep tissue work may be reviving them. I may touch your foot and a memory of your childhood may return. You may cry, you may get angry. If you want to verbalize your feelings, here is a pillow to scream into." When my own massage was over, and I was leaving, I looked back at him: he was now violently kneading the flesh of his client, whose face was buried in the pillow, and repeating the words, "Externalize! Verbalize! Externalize! . . ."

According to the catalogue's scarcely intelligible description, Gestalt practice is "a form—nonanalytic, noncoercive, nonjudgmental—evolving out of the work of Fritz Perls, relating that work to ways of personal clearing and development both ancient and modern," and one of the highlights of my visit was to be that of attending a Gestalt encounter group led by one of Esalen's founders, Richard Price. A "hot seat" session, in which Price "facilitated" the catharsis of whoever chose to sit on a designated pillow near him, it was one of the very silliest events I have ever seen. The pillow was immediately occupied by a cute Texan woman of about twenty. Within a minute, as if on cue, she released a thin, low wail which I took to be a malfunction of the air-conditioning unit until it changed suddenly into an ear-splitting shriek. This in turn subsided and the low wail, suggestive of the smoke-intoxicated cries of the Pythian priestess at Delphi, returned. Then she began to mutter: "No, Daddy, no! Find someone your own age to play with!", words of unmistakable significance that electrified the fraternity sitting cross-legged around her. When she then shouted



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TRAVEL

these words fortissimo for about ten minutes thereafter, Price intervened and asked her what "age-space" she was "in." "Six," she snapped back, eliciting gasps of admiration and envy from her audience, many of whom were anxious to follow her in the hot seat and were perhaps less skilled at pinpointing the date of traumatic memories. "Tell Daddy you are afraid of him," Price suggested, and she did. "Now tell Daddy you need and want him," and she did. "And now alternate, experiment: say to Daddy, 'I want you,' 'I hate you,' 'I need you,' 'I don't need you,' 'I hate you.'" Then he placed his forearm against her knees (which at this stage were brought up to her chin in the manner of one of the inmates at Charenton) and asked her to "externalize" her predicament by first pushing the arm away and then drawing it close to her. In time, she produced a library of memories of such staggering dullness that it gradually became clear as day that her original complaint against Daddy had just been thrown in for glamour and that the real bone she wanted to pick with him was that he failed to adopt a "nonjudgmental" approach to her academic studies. Sensing that I had been taken in by a consummate con-artist (or two) and noting with delight that the dials on my watch nearly signified the hour of my departure, I stood up to leave; as I did so, she was reciting on Price's instruction pat little phrases like "I can get attention from you without feeling pushed" to the men in the room, each by turn, and was presently murmuring it coquettishly to a young man who, I had heard earlier, had recently been the target of a missile of hot food thrown by a man with whose wife he had been dallying. Soon I was being driven through the Institute compound on the way back to the rock-slide, and was once more ankle-deep in mud as I journeyed to meet the Cadillac on the other side. The moment I was out of view of the contingent that had driven me to the slide I furiously hurled the handfuls of promotional literature they had pressed on me into the tempestuous sea with a sobbing laugh. Funny how one can summon the full force of one's personality to get certain things done without the aid of juice fasts or afterlife experiences. □

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THE WORLD IN BRIEF

B.C. Holland's Chicago gallery is a synopsis of furniture, art, and antiquities from B.C. to A.D.

By Brooke Hayward



An Ashanti and an English root chair frame Picasso's *Femme Endormie*, 1932; Bud Holland perches on 1925 André Groult table in front of Roman bronze fragments, second century A.D.

In the world of the last 25 years, a world of rapidly expanding materialism on every front, dealers have become the gurus of the affluent. Such a man is Bud Holland, a native Chicagoan, who does not much like to travel beyond the boundaries of his city. Since his stock comes from all over the world and roughly the third millennium B.C. to the present, this poses an interesting problem. Bud shrugs. He has scouts everywhere with whom he maintains constant communication.

Randomly deployed throughout the warehouse-size gallery the day I vis-

ited: a Louis Majorelle lady's desk, a Gerrit Rietveld 1918 Red and Blue chair, a set of Josef Hoffmann parlor furniture inherited by the grandson of its first owner, complete with two armchairs, footstools, and a settee, all in their original upholstery, a tenth-century Jain torso, an eleventh-century Khmer Vishnu, a massive desk by Maurice Dufrené (with an elephant-hide top and hardware by Edgar Brandt, and a veneer of Macassar ebony cross-banded with ivory). Also by Edgar Brandt, a leading French iron-smith of the twenties, was a chandelier

with eight glass shades by Daum of Nancy. There was a self-portrait by Carlo Bugatti in a hat, two of his polychrome hall chairs, circa 1900, inlaid with pewter and brass, which had velum seats and backs painted by Pellegrini, and his mirrored hanging wall cabinet with dragonfly pulls, so bizarre it defies description. Mixed in with these things were two little Picassos from 1906, some drawings by Matisse, Bonnard, and Jackson Pollock, and a pair of stone third- or fourth-century book ends from Gandhara carved into lions' heads. Then there were the tex-



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THE DEALER'S EYE

tiles: pre-Columbian, Coptic, Indonesian, ceremonial skirts of the Kuba in Zaire up to 25 feet in length, and Tibetan rugs that were tiger-striped or leopard-spotted.

After studying the contents of four thousand square feet of luxurious gallery space ("The theory," says Holland, "is that you're entering someone's home")—the two display rooms for paintings, the vast object room, the restoration room, the well-equipped kitchen, and the bathroom papered in lizard-skin-stamped Mylar—I promptly showed my approval by deciding to buy a standing turbaned and mustachioed temple figure from Rājastān. Well actually, first I asked another dealer from London, Kasmin, who knows about these things, to have a look as he happened to be going to the Art Fair in Chicago. A few days later he called very excitedly to tell me to go ahead with my purchase by all means, and tell me furthermore he had been unable to resist a second-century fragment: a red sandstone Kushan arm and hand of heroic proportions that had once belonged to a Buddha.

Irving Blum, who deals only in twentieth-century art—mainly from the sixties on—talks about Holland with more than a trace of admiration in his voice:

"Lurking in every dealer's heart is the basic fantasy he can sell anything, that he has the ability to pursue, and subsequently to deal with, any exotic interest. However, in truth, almost all get locked into a single specialty. The astonishing thing about Bud, to me, is that wherever his attention wanders so does his business. He can become engaged in something he's never done before, become an expert in it, isolate it, and integrate it into his career. He will educate himself and then educate his clients. That, more than anything else, defines Bud Holland's uniqueness."

Holland's original training was in jewelry design and gemology. He grew up wanting to be a jeweler the way some kids want to be firemen. After a stint as a bomber pilot in World War II, he got his wish. Shortly thereafter he began studying photography at the Institute of Design in Chicago, a passion long since abandoned. Then, in the fifties came rugs—Oriental rugs, particularly Turkish village rugs, a genre that had no following at all ("I sometimes

think of myself as a dealer in unfashionable things..."). And also in the fifties, paintings, which he learned about from Aaron Siskind who was involved with the New York School of painters.

"New York, in those days, was like being in Paris in 1912. Very exciting time. Franz Kline took my only \$800 away from me, sold me one of his very best paintings, huge, that I kept brooding in my basement for a long while. At that time I didn't have two quarters to rub together, but I scraped up enough



A view of the gallery with Roman torso and a Victorian chair in foreground.

money to buy a beautiful 1957 Philip Guston, and I had a fine de Kooning. A couple of these paintings went in order to allow me to go into business later on. But I still have the Guston..."

In the early sixties, as a note of chic began to creep into the art world and there was talk of this year's or last year's paintings, Holland resisted. "I went backwards instead of forwards, backwards into the earlier part of the twentieth century. Instead of taking up Pop Art, I became involved with Cubism, Constructivism, Dada, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism. That's where I felt my work ended. After that it was someone else's game."

At the same time, Holland's interest in Oriental rugs led to a broader interest in Islamic artifacts, then to objects in general—that is to say anything that is not a rug or a painting—and ultimately to furniture ("anything not eighteenth-century French or English 'serious brown furniture,' let's say from Carlo Bugatti forward"), although it is only recently that he's had the space to display it.

"Now I can indulge myself in my

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historic walls,



...surely, Schumacher.

own eccentric outlook toward these things. But I'm narrowing my range—from absolutely everything, to, well, a stylistic and cultural range covering the last five thousand years."

Holland can also, to use his own words, indulge himself in the luxury of doing business only with people he likes. He keeps it simple: a couple of assistants, no advertising, no walk-in traffic, appointments only, everything short of an unlisted phone number. He is a contradiction, at once modest and proud, who regards himself as nothing more or less than a provincial art dealer, albeit one who has standards and believes in quality ("I'm not just doing this to make a buck"). He has neither the time nor the patience for clients who annoy him. And his greatest curse is reserved for whatever it is that constitutes the currently fashionable.

"We would like to think we're searching for eternal verities, but in the end, fashion suffuses everything. Sometimes I examine my motivations. Am I trying to be a tastemaker—or what? I know a lot of things that used to look good to me no longer do. Others do, or look better. I'd like to find out which things have stood the test of time, which are really sublime . . ."

I couldn't help wondering what his home looked like, what, if anything, he collected. Holland was typically nonchalant. He ventured to say that he "accumulates," whimsically, retaining for his own pleasure those things he isn't able to sell in the gallery, like, for instance, antique folding knives. This way he doesn't suffer from the average dealer's ambiguity about whether to keep or sell great material. Still, he's managed to stash away some first-class Régence and twelve Bugatti dining chairs caparisoned with leather and fringe. But what to do for the appropriate dining table? Or should it be tables? And he continues to ponder the notion of a trompe-l'oeil domed ceiling over all, in the style of Piranesi. I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

In the meantime, Holland's ruminations lead him to conclude: "Of all the world's expensive things that I have tampered with on one level or another, nothing has given me more lasting pleasure than a few sticks of good furniture. I've got a couple of sticks . . . and they're wonderful." □

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THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE

Experiencing the lives of other people's houses

By Alastair Reid

Having been, for many years, an itinerant, living in an alarming number of countries and places, I am no stranger to other people's houses. I am aware of a certain disreputable cast to this admission; I can almost feel my wizened little ancestors shaking their heads and wringing their hands, for in Scotland, people tend to go from the stark stone house where they first see the light to another such fortress, where they sink roots and prepare dutifully for death, their possessions encrusted around them like barnacles. Anyone who did not seem to be following the stone script was looked on as somewhat raffish, rather like the tinkers and traveling people who sometimes passed through the village where I grew up. I would watch them leave, on foot, over the horizon, pulling their worldly belongings

behind them in a handcart; and one of my earliest fantasies was to run away with them, for I felt oppressed by permanence and rootedness, and my childhood eyes strayed always to the same horizon, which promised other ways of being, a life less flinty and predictable.

My errant nature was confirmed by a long time I spent at sea during the Second World War, on a series of small, cramped ships, wandering all over the Indian Ocean. Then I learned that the greatest advantage was to have as little as possible, for anything extra usually got lost or stolen, and we frequently had to shoulder our worldly goods, from ship to ship. The habit stuck—today I have next to no possessions, and I have closed the door on more houses and apartments than I can remember,

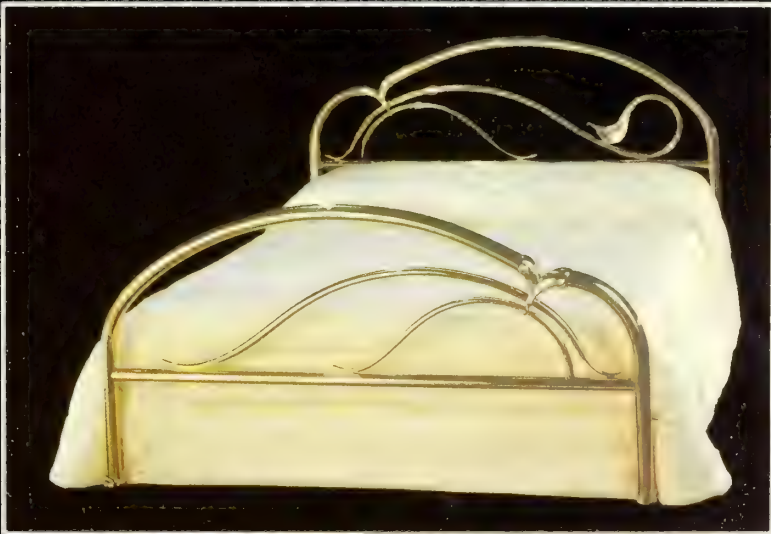
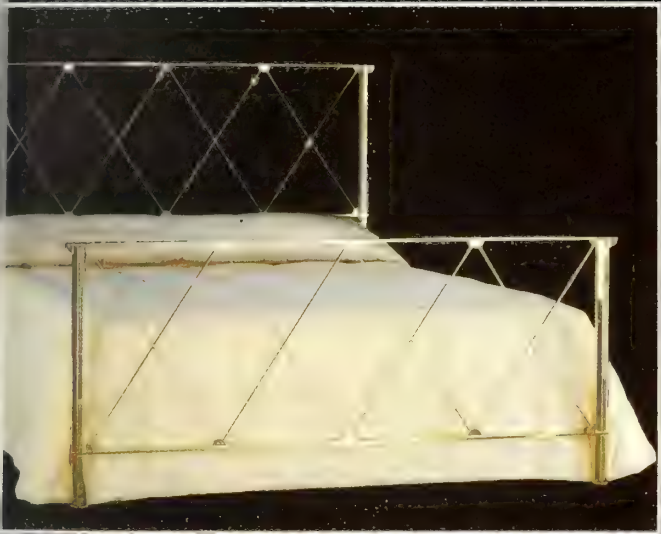
leaving behind what I did not immediately need. If I had a family crest, it should read *omnia mea mecum porto* (all that is mine I carry with me); but it would get left behind.

Innocent in themselves, houses can be given quite different auras, depending on the dispositions of their occupants—they can be seen as monuments to permanence, or as temporary shelters. In Scotland, you find abundant examples of the first on the fringes of small towns, standing in well-groomed gardens, their brasses gleaming, their blinds half-drawn like lowered eyelids, domestic museums served by near-invisible slaves. When I first came to the United States, I felt it to be immediately liberating, in its fluidity, its readiness to change. Few people lived in the place they were born, moving held no terrors, and renting was the norm. Yet people inhabited their temporary shelters as though they might live there forever; and paradoxically, I felt at home. When I began to spend a part of each year in Spain, my other adopted country, I rented a series of sturdy peasant houses devoid of decoration, with whitewashed walls and tile floors, and no furnishings beyond the essentials of beds, tables, cross, and chairs. It was a time when a number of unanchored people came to rest in Spain—painters for the light, writers for the silence—setting up working outposts in the sun, whose constant presence does simplify existence. Within these anonymous white walls, one re-created one's own world—essential books and pictures, whatever other transforming elements lay to hand.

In Spain, I grew very aware of houses as presences—perhaps the residual aura of those who had lived lifetimes in them, perhaps a peculiarity of the space they enclosed. I recall visiting



Alastair Reid in a friend's New York apartment in the fifties



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a house in Mallorca in the company of Robert Graves, and hearing him, after only a few minutes in the house, making peremptory excuses to leave. "Didn't you feel the bad luck in that house?" he said to me once we were out of earshot. With time, I came to feel what he meant, not in terms of good or bad luck, but of feeling welcome or unwelcome in the houses themselves, apart from the inhabitants.

Of all writers, Vladimir Nabokov read the interiors of other people's houses much as psychics read palms or tarot cards: with a wicked accuracy, he would decipher absent owners from the contents of rooms, from shelves, pictures, and paraphernalia. When he lectured at Cornell University, it was his practice, instead of having a house of his own, to rent the houses of others absent on sabbatical; and behind him already was a wandering life of exile in England, Germany, and France, in rented premises. Summers he spent in pursuit of butterflies, in motels across the United States; and when, with recognition, he came to rest, it was in a hotel apartment in Montreux, Switzerland. These various houses and interiors inhabit his books as vividly as living characters—he is always making precise connections between people and the places they choose to live in, between objects and their owners. His *Look at the Harlequins!* is a positive hymn to other people's houses.

I know just what he means. The act of inhabiting and humanizing a house, of changing it from impersonal space to private landscape, is an extremely complex one, a series of careful and cumulative choices; and, in living in other people's houses, one lives among their decisions, some inspired, others hardly thought through. I make for the bookshelves with a crow of expectation, for the books, however miscellaneous or specialized they may be, always yield up at least a handful I have never read, or even heard of, and traveling has deprived me of the possibility of keeping a library, beyond a shelf of essential or immediate reading. Kitchens are a less calculable adventure. Some of them are like shrines, where cooking has been raised to a level of high art, and invite culinary adventure; others, incomprehensibly, are as bare as hospital labs in plague-prone countries, their refrigerators bearing no more than a few vi-

ruses flourishing in jars, two or three bottles to what can only be assumed to be an antidote.

At one point in our lives, my son and I lived in London, on a houseboat we actually owned, though temporarily, moored at Cheyne Walk, in Chelsea. We had three special friends, families that lived in other parts of London; and we came to an arrangement with them to exchange houses from time to time, for appropriate weekends. We had a loose agreement—we left behind clean sheets and towels, a "reasonable amount" of food and drink, and, for the curious, some correspondence that could be read. We all relished these unlikely vacations, since we left one another elaborately written guidebooks, and we could take in another part of London—markets, greengrocers, pubs, restaurants. I often wonder why people never think of doing that oftener, except at the wrong times.

In our travels, my son and I occupied rented houses and apartments from Barcelona to Buenos Aires. He can remember every one of them in detail, down to its sounds—the creak and shudder of the houseboat as it rose off the Thames mud on the incoming tide, a house in Chile with a center patio cooled by the cooing of doves, a cottage in Scotland in a wood of its own, guarded by a cranky tribe of crows, and the small mountain house in Spain that was our headquarters. Moving was like putting on different lives, different clothes, and we changed easily, falling in with the ways of each country, eating late in Spain, wearing raincoats in Scotland, carrying little from one place to another except the few objects that had become talismans, observing the different domestic rites—of garden and kitchen, mail and garbage.

Since the fifties, I have lived off-and-on in many different parts of New York, but very intermittently, since I came and went from Spain and from Scotland, never settling decisively in any one of the three. This fall, I returned from a summer spent in Scotland with no apartment—I had given one up before I left, and was expecting another in the spring; but a friend of mine, a dancer, was to be away for a month, and offered me her place in the East Village. I moved in, and took stock.

The apartment itself immediately

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COMMENTARY

felt lucky to me, the kind of apartment you want to stay *in*, with high windows looking out over St. Mark's churchyard, and light filtered in through leaves to a white, high-ceilinged room, with about a third of the books new to me, and a long Indian file of records. I fell in happily with the place, explored the neighborhood, and found its Meccas—a Ukrainian butcher shop, pawnshops fat with the appliances of yesteryear, small Indian restaurants that looked as though they might fold themselves up after dinner and silently steal away. I made half-hearted attempts to find a more lasting subplot—buying *The Village Voice* early on Wednesdays, marking up the *Times* real-estate section on Sunday and then losing it—but that place made me immune to urgency, although St. Mark's chimed the hours in my ear.

One evening, I was having dinner with a friend of mine, a camerawoman, who lives in a loft in SoHo. She moves fast and often, and always seems to be attached to the ends of five or six active wires, so when we have dinner, we have a lot of ground to cover. Over dessert, she suddenly sat up straight. "By the way, I have to shoot in Arizona most of October. Do you know anyone who would stay in my loft and look after my cats?" We made a deal there and then; and, in a flash, I could see the shape of fall changing. Looking out reflectively on the churchyard the following morning, I realized that I was ideally equipped to be an itinerant. I have an office at *The New Yorker* magazine, where I keep books and papers, get my mail, and do my writing, when the time is upon me. What furniture remained to me now graced my son's apartment, and I was portable, to the tune of two small bags. I was in touch with other itinerants, some of whom would likely be going somewhere; and I was myself leaving for South America after Christmas, until the spring. So I dropped the *Voice*, and went back to reading Michel Tournier's *Friday and Robinson: Life on Esperanza Island*, my latest bookshelf discovery.

I had never lived in SoHo, and my translation there in October opened it up to me. I had to have a small course of initiation, in the hand elevator, in the fistful of keys, in the cats, and then I saw my friend off in a welter of camera gear—a less portable profession, hers,

* See page 74 for news about an unparalleled residential event.

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compared to writing. But then, I have always given thanks that I did not play the harp. The cats. Alvin, the boss-cat was called, a massive, broad-shouldered animal who looked as if he might lift weights in secret. Sadie, his sidekick, was smaller and dumber, but she simpered and purred, which Alvin never did.

Every morning, I fed them first thing, grinding up liver, cleaning their dishes; and when I came back in the evening, they would collar me and drive me toward their empty bowls. The first Saturday, Alvin got through plastic, paper, and close to a pound of sole when I wasn't looking, about an hour after his ample breakfast. But cats are unpunishable by nature, and we came to terms, which meant that I fed them just enough to keep them from breaking into those nerve-rendering cries of simulated starvation. Cats in SoHo have about the best life going, I concluded, in a loft that must have seemed like an Olympic complex to them, with me to do the shopping. Sometimes I wished they would go out jogging. But I found I could take a brisk walk without leaving the loft, and there was cable television, which kept me up the first couple of nights. Out in the street I learned to stroll all over again, and I connected up SoHo with the rest of Manhattan. I even took to working there, learning how Alvin and Sadie spent their day.

By then, I had come to count on what John Osborne once called "the blessed alchemy of word of mouth," that most human of networks, and it put me in touch with a poet-friend, who was to be away giving readings for a spell in November. Could I stay and look after their plants? Unlike Alvin and Sadie, the plants fed slowly, in a slow seep; and I grew attached to one small fern which required drowning every day, and which rewarded me with new green. Their apartment was in the West Village, the part of New York I have lived in most. The stores were familiar, the kitchen a pleasure to cook in, the books unsurpassable, almost all of them good to read or reread. You can count on poets. Eerily enough, I had stayed in the same apartment once before, on a quick visit from Spain in the sixties, when other friends occupied it. Now it was dressed altogether differently; but every so often, I

caught a whiff of its old self and experienced a time-warp, with the kind of involuntary start that often becomes a poem in the end.

As my days there were beginning to be countable, another friend called me, a woman who writes often on Latin America. She was going to Honduras quite soon, and she had two questions: Did I know anyone in Tegucigalpa? Did I know anyone who wanted to rent her apartment for December, while she was gone? Yes to both questions; and, a couple of weeks later, I gave her two addresses in exchange for her keys.

There was, however, a spell in November, between cats, plants, and travels, and also between apartments, when I was saved from the streets by being able to find a room on the Upper East Side. I was finishing a piece on writing at the time, working a long day; but even so I never became a familiar of the Upper East Side, never have. It is hardly itinerants' territory. People don't stroll much there—they seem more purposive, and you have to know where the stores are. You don't stumble on them. It was getting difficult, too, with the subways—I had to think, really *think*, where I was living, Uptown or Downtown, not to go hurtling on the subway in a wrong though familiar direction.

My last resting place lay on the Upper West Side, also a new territory to me, since I have always thought of 45th Street as the Northern Frontier. It was, however, a revelation. There were oases of movie theaters, comforting even though I never went inside, plenty of odd stores to stumble on, and the neighborhood, to my delight, was Spanish-speaking, even rich in Dominicans, the pleasantest people in Christendom. Moreover, a number of people I had always thought of as out of range turned out to live around the corner. I had had a hasty airport call from my Honduras-bound landlady that morning. "Just pile the papers so you can walk around," she told me tersely. Indeed, her apartment looked as though the negotiations over the Panama Canal had just been hastily concluded in it.

I cleared a camping space first, and then I put the place in order. I have a stern morality about occupying other people's houses: I feel they have to be left in better shape than I find them,



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COMMENTARY

and this may mean fixing faucets or supplying anything missing, from light bulbs to balloons. What her apartment needed was restoring to its original order, now only skeletally visible. Anyone who tries to keep up with Central America these days acquires a weekly layer of new information, and her layers went back a few months. When I had the papers rounded up and corralled, the books and records in their shelves and sleeves, the cups and glasses steeping, the place began to emerge and welcome me, and I found, under the sofa, an Anne Tyler novel I had not read. One thing did puzzle me: as I cleaned, I came everywhere on scatters of pennies, on the floor, on chairs, on desk and table, by the bed. I could not account for their ubiquity, but I gathered them in a jar, about enough to buy a good dinner. Christmas was coming to the Upper West Side, with great good cheer; but so was the cold weather, so I went one morning, and booked my air ticket.

Before I left the city, I retraced my wanderings of the fall, which felt like going home again and again. If you have lived in somebody's house, after all, you have acquired a lot in common with them, a lot to talk about, to the eccentricities of their pipes and the behavior of their furniture. The tree house by St. Mark's looked properly seasonal, with a fire burning. I find I can still occupy it in my head, with pleasure. I went by the West Village, sat talking for hours in the kitchen, and then walked down to SoHo, where I called on Alvin and Sadie, who looked keenly to see if I had brought fish before withdrawing to rest up. I dropped off a winter coat with my son, and made for the airport and the warm weather with my two bags, leaving behind not one city but several, I felt, shedding a cluster of distinct lives. I just had time to call my friend, newly back from Tegucigalpa. Her time had been good, yes, she had talked at length with my friends, the apartment was great, thanks for fixing the closet door, I had turned up things she thought she'd lost, she felt maybe she had caught a bug in Honduras. I asked her about the pennies. "Oh, yes, thanks for picking them up," she laughed. "It's just that I throw the *I Ching* a lot. Have a good trip." □

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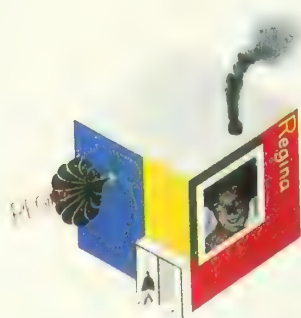
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HERBERT BAYER

At the Bauhaus he sat at the feet of Klee,
and went on to revolutionize twentieth-century graphic design

By Joseph Rykwert



"Great Ideas of Western Man" ad, left,
for Container Corporation of America,
1960; project, above, for
industrial fair exhibition pavilion, 1924.

It is not as fashionable to be post- or anti-Modern as it used to be. A good thing too, I suppose, since being either anti- or post-anything is not very rewarding. As long as modernity seemed passé and reprehensible, very little attention was paid to Herbert Bayer's work. And yet he influenced the taste of several generations; what is more, he actually altered the way we look at printed matter, the way we treat books and advertising, the very way in which we read and write.

With two or three of his immediate contemporaries, the Swiss Jan Tschichold and the Russian El Lissitzky, all three working in Germany, all three of them dandies in their different ways,

he transformed the appearance of the printed word. Of the three, Tschichold was almost exclusively concerned with typography—with the book, the occasional publication, a few posters. He repented of his earlier revolutionary tendencies later in life, but his return to "traditional" centered book design was marked by those early experiences. Lissitzky was more the architect-sculptor than the print-designer, though brilliant as both. He returned to the USSR and died in 1941. Bayer was the image maker of that group, and now lives in California—the latter part of his life as influential as anything he did in his Weimar-Berlin days. Arthur Cohen's new and in fact the only

monograph on him, *Herbert Bayer: The Complete Works* (MIT Press), which has just appeared, seems to have come at the right moment.

His credentials as a Modernist are impeccable: he was an early Bauhaus student, later a teacher there. Born in 1900, the son of a minor official near Salzburg, in Austria, he had joined the Bauhaus in a rapture of enthusiasm. At the end of the war, demobilized from the Austro-Hungarian army, he started working as a graphic designer in a kind of provincial, sub-Vienna-Secession vein, when a single reading of Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art* (which was then a few years old) and of the Bauhaus Manifesto, which was quite



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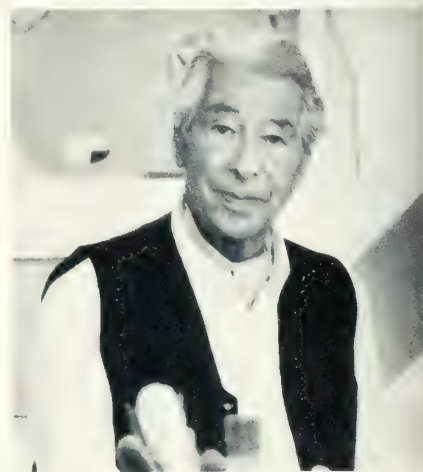
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TASTEMAKERS

new, sent him hitchhiking to Weimar to sit at the feet of the various masters. From the outset, he was both a painter and a typographer; he managed to combine the two apparently effortlessly. Very soon, not only Kandinsky but also Klee entranced him.

Typography was not overwhelmingly important to most of the early Bau-



Herbert Bayer in his studio

haus teachers: that Bauhaus manifesto Bayer had read in Salzburg was very conventionally designed. Yet, by 1920 the printed word had been broken up, splintered, even smashed by the experiments of the Futurists and the Dadaists; it had also been lovingly disassembled by one of the truly great poets of our times, Guillaume Apollinaire, who then put it together into picture-poems of enormous intensity and humor. A few years later the German bureaucracy also standardized paper sizes; and with this "rationalization" the graphic designers of the time reorganized the way in which the printed word was laid out on the page, and introduced the asymmetrical layout that we now take for granted in advertising as well as in books. From the printing workshop at the Bauhaus, which in effect he founded in 1925, Bayer led the campaign to rationalize, which to him also meant abandoning the use of upper-case letters. It is worth remembering that standard German practice at the time was to begin *every* noun with a capital letter. Bayer has stuck to his guns, and insists on this usage for his own writings, allowing only the capital "I," since he finds it visually offensive in lower case when it is isolated.

All this time Bayer was also painting;

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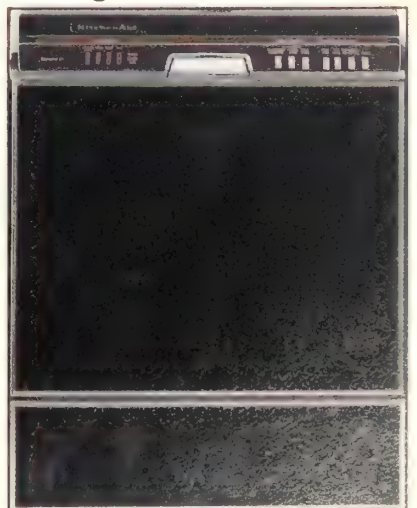
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See page 242

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He left the Bauhaus at the same time as Gropius, and established himself as a graphic artist in the Berlin branch of an American ad agency



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party invitations) at the Bauhaus was so memorable, and is still exhilarating although fifty years and the fantastic outgrowths of advertising have immured us to visual shock. He left the Bauhaus at the same time as Gropius, and established himself as a graphic artist and a designer in the Berlin branch of an American advertising agency, until it became quite clear that the Nazi threat was not a temporary one. All the work of that period is really of a piece. I write conventionally of his paintings and his graphic design, yet he has always maintained, rightly, I think, that there was only a difference of degree between all these doings of his; and in fact he describes himself, when pressed, as a painter.

Among the many memorable images he produced in his Bauhaus days were two exhibition pavilions (one, for a tobacco firm, had a cigarette-shaped chimney blowing smoke rings). There were never any buildings to go with the drawings, but Bayer got his first taste in constructing a three-dimensional design when he worked on the Bauhaus exhibition of 1923. Arriving in New York with no money and little English

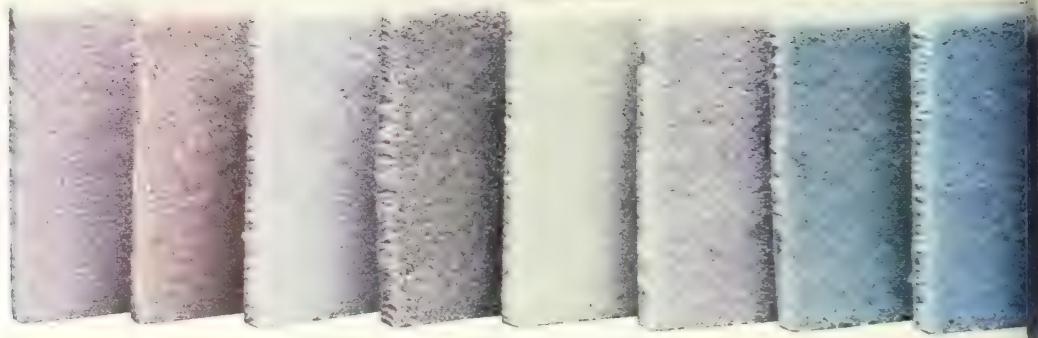
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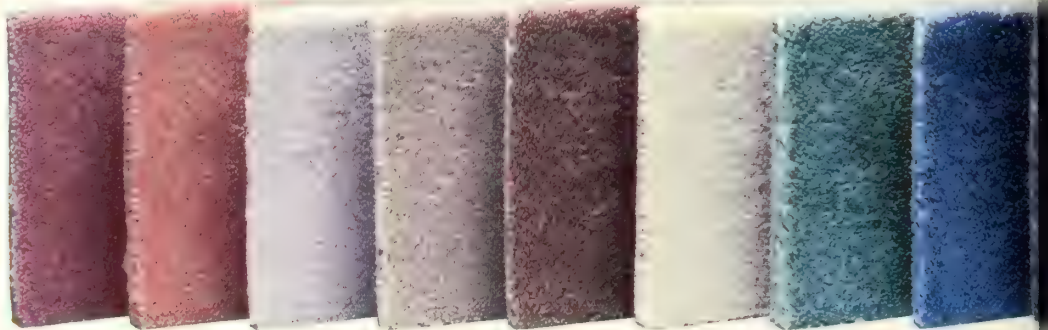
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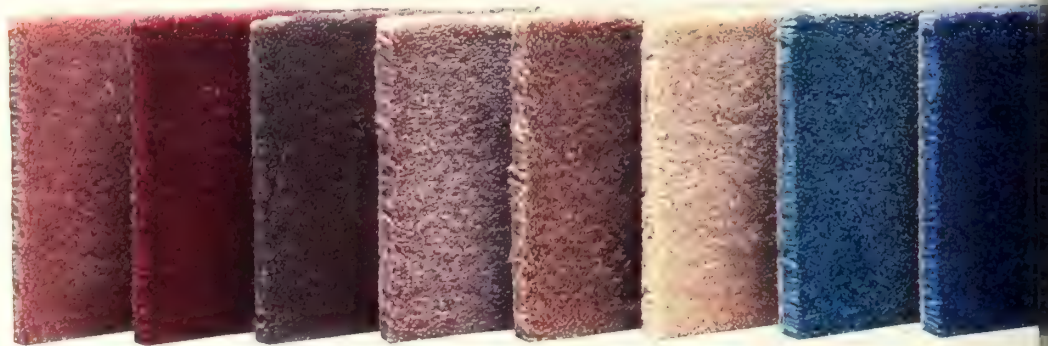
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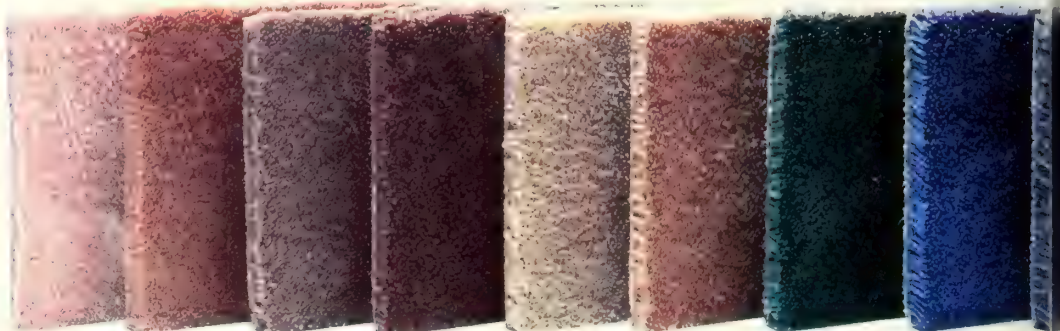
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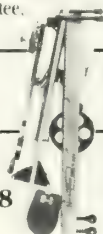
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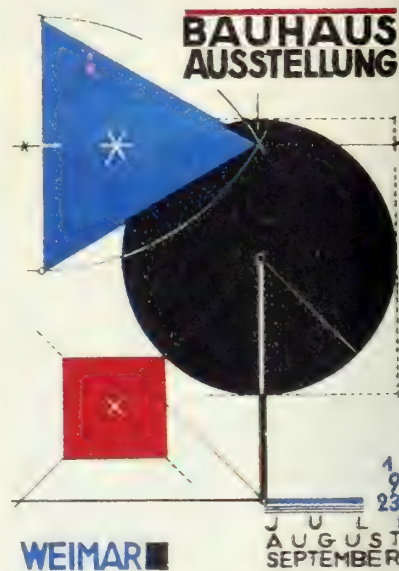
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TASTEMAKERS

in 1938, he was immediately mobilized to work on The Museum of Modern Art "Bauhaus" exhibition, perhaps the most influential single exhibition ever to be held anywhere. It was typical of him that he did everything to avoid speaking German after his arrival in New York, partly to learn English quickly and fluently, partly so as to be looking forward, not back. The adaptation to the USA was part of the dandyism: to be daring and tactful at the same time, to maintain your independence, that was the mark of the dandy as Barbey d'Aureville saw it a century and a half ago. It has curiously enough determined Bayer's career.

He was of the Bauhaus, yet carried out his own campaigns within it. And later in his life he served two major corporations, the Container Corporation of America and Atlantic Richfield; and they too did not subject him: his work



Bayer's postcard announcing Bauhaus Exhibition, 1923, Weimar.

for them became an extraordinary collaboration, in which large tracts of American taste were transformed through advertising, exhibitions—all sorts of printing. Of course wherever American publications were read, which means most of the literate world, they spread his influence. As a measure of his achievement it is worth looking at the Container Corporation's *Atlas*, which appeared in 1953. In the thirty years which followed it has affected the form of maps and atlases all over the



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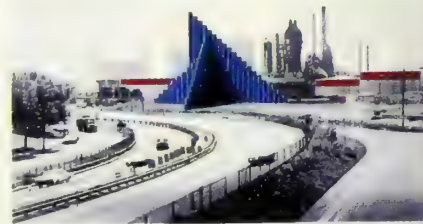
world. If you look at the pictures painted while the *Atlas* was being prepared, the *Atmospheric Arrows* and the *Ex-foliated Landscapes*, they reflect the passion with which he engaged in the cartographic exercise; but the *Stick* paintings he did afterward are in the contrasting, ebullient colors that he had used for the maps. It is not a matter of influence, but of one activity flowing directly into the other.

In the same way, he used both his own paintings and letter-forms as part of the design of the buildings with which he was associated. He has of course been asked to “decorate” any number of buildings by others, beginning with Gropius’s much-maligned Harkness Graduate Center at Harvard; some have been indifferent, some magnificent. It is interesting that on one of his own buildings, the Health Center at Aspen, the letter-forms, based on an alphabet of his from the thirties, rise higher than the building at the entrance. The building stands in a garden he designed for that roomy Colorado landscape. Lettering, building, and garden draw his many activities together—the shaping of everything from the single letter-form to the earthwork: “earthworks” he treated as something more like sculpture than as exercises in the craft of landscape gardening.

On the same scale are his vast “environmental” sculptures, mostly unexecuted, with which he sought to modify

the excesses of industrial depredation of the landscape; they are all part of an integral activity. They antedate, sometimes by several years, the first exercises in Land Art which were to work on a larger scale and toward rather different aims than Bayer’s earthworks, to which they are sometimes compared—the difference shows the true nature of his sensibility and says something important about his way of working. Land artists were primarily concerned to show the human imprint on raw nature—sometimes by shifting vast quantities of earth and rock; an imprint visible from the air, astonishing in its arbitrariness to the airman, the motorist, the pedestrian. Bayer’s earth sculptures are never irruptive, sensational; he is always concerned, passionately concerned, to reorganize the existing world by harnessing sensibility to reason.

This is in part what I meant when I said that the influence of the Surrealists on his painting had been superficial. Both reason and sensibility are so powerful and subtle that he has not only created a number of individual works of high merit, but he has also helped change the form of our books and newspapers irretrievably; the very letter-forms that have become, through the poster, the neon advertisement, and graffiti an increasingly important part of our visual experience will never recover from his attentions. □



Bayer’s range: *The Lonely Metropolitan*, left, photomontage, 1923; *Grass Mound*, top right, 1955, Aspen; *bottom right*, visual improvement project for ARCO Refinery, Philadelphia, 1972.

A woman stands in a room with a wall of vertical panels, each containing a different geometric pattern. She wears a red and white patterned strapless dress, a matching headwrap, and a large, colorful necklace. She holds a large, flowing fabric with a complex geometric pattern in shades of blue, red, and white. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures and colors of the fabrics.

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GETTING TO THE SAUCE

There's always a way to eat the unknown

By Angelo M. Pellegrini

It was my father's first dinner at the home of his employer, a wealthy French merchant in Marseilles—and his first experience at an aristocrat's dinner table. He was understandably nervous, for in such an environment he

was uncertain of his behavior. The vermouth apéritif had been served and dispatched with no difficulty. Father knew well enough how to drink even in the most elegant company. Nor had the appetizers and soup posed any perplexing problem in etiquette. But when the main course was brought to the table, Father was visibly shaken. He was served an individual casse-

role containing a neatly quartered quail, barely visible in a sauce that immediately sought and found the nostrils of a peasant who knew his bread and wine. The issue was clear-cut: what were the permissible means, at an aristocrat's table, for getting that sauce to the stomach?

Father was a man who never compromised on food and drink. He was an enlightened peasant gourmet with a remarkable catholicity of taste and an instinctive appreciation of all that is good to eat and drink. Within the confining orbit of a peasant's means, he sought to live a humane life. Even in his work, among the peasants in Tuscany, in the vineyards of Algiers, and in the lumber camps of our own Northwest, he enjoyed the reputation of one who did even the most menial tasks with distinction. The achievement of quality was his preoccupation in everything

to which he set his capable hands.

At the dinner table he was really not difficult to please. He enjoyed audibly the simplest fare so long as it had been prepared with reasonable care. Frequently he dined happily on soup,

bread, cheese, and fruit; but he insisted that each of these ingredients in the evening meal be the best possible under the circumstances. He could never forgive an unsuccessful loaf of bread, for his standard of achievement completely excluded the possibility of failure in such matters. Nor, for the same reason, could he gracefully pardon Mother for an occasional slip

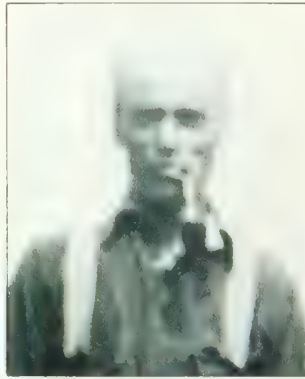
in an otherwise faultless cuisine.

His reaction to food was always unambiguous. An excellent soup, a delicious roast, his favorite vegetable from the garden, would always lift him from a dark mood and unlock his tongue. As he drew his chair to the table, he could

tell from the fragrance the quality of what he was about to eat; and when he was pleased by the promise of a good dinner, he became the most infectious happy man that ever wielded knife and fork. His good humor, released in gaiety, tall stories and happy banter, completely dominated the dinner hour. He was a joy to everyone who watched him as he sucked the bones and ground the more tender ones with his hard white teeth to extract the marrow. His ability to clean a bone and lick the platter clean, always performed with refinement and skill, I have never seen equaled.

His only praise of a dinner that pleased him thoroughly was implicit in the mood that it evoked and the manner in which he gave it to his stomach. Nor did he complain when the fare fell short of his exacting standards. Mother's most frequent aberrations in the kitchen were always explainable in terms of a demoniacal tendency to oversalt. She frequently confessed that when she shook the salt cellar over a dish, an evil power, bent on ruining the home, took possession of her. The consequence was that too often a good soup was ruined by too much salt. But

Father was too much the gentleman to make a fuss on such occasions. When he discovered that any part of the dinner had received a reckless benediction of sodium chloride, he became a dark, threatening cloud. His swarthy complexion literally darkened, and without as much as grunting a word of disapprobation, he went to the kitchen sink, spilled the contents of his dish and,

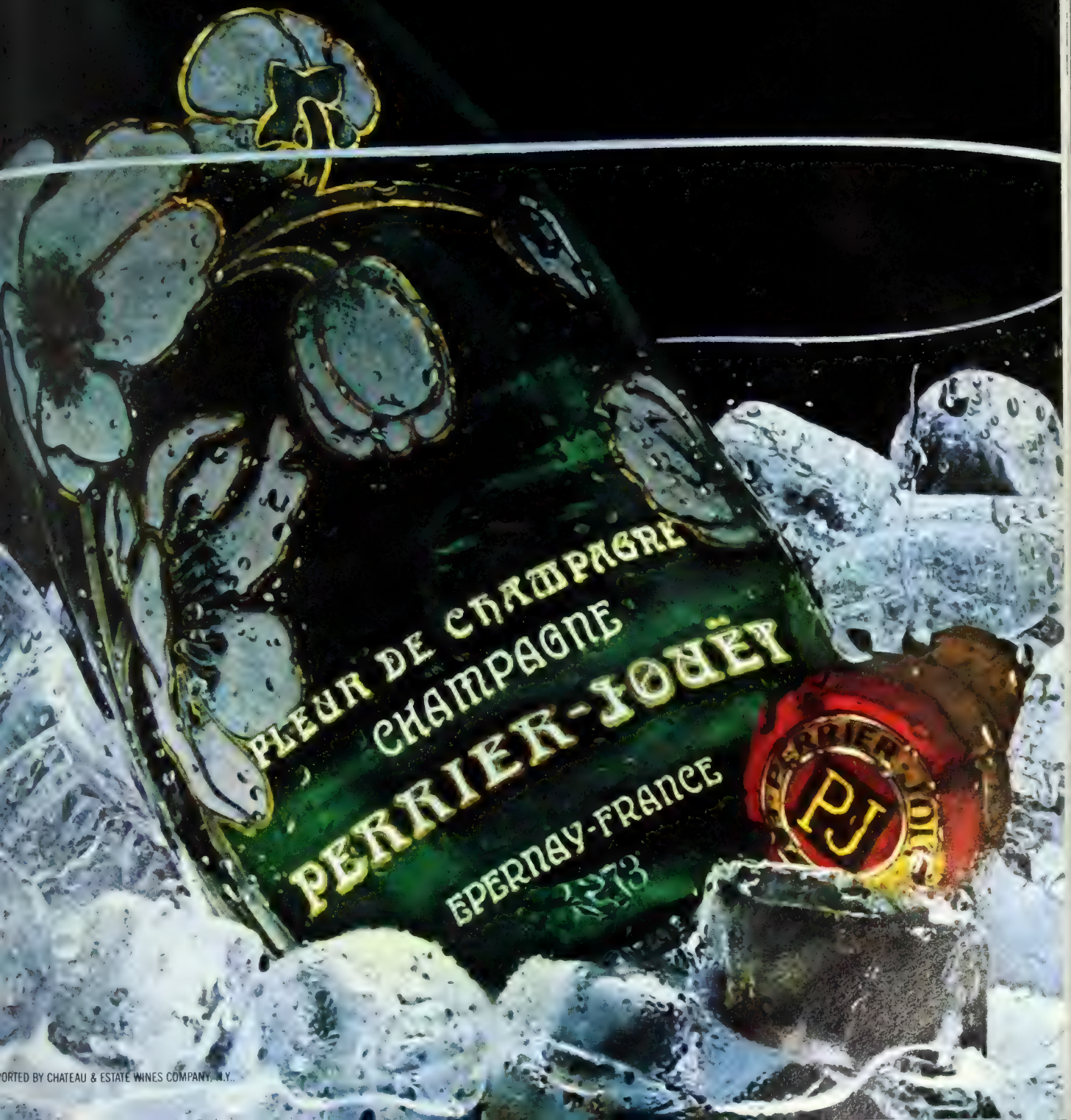


Angelo Pellegrini's father, Piacentino, in 1923.



Angelo on Pacific Beach, Washington, 1916

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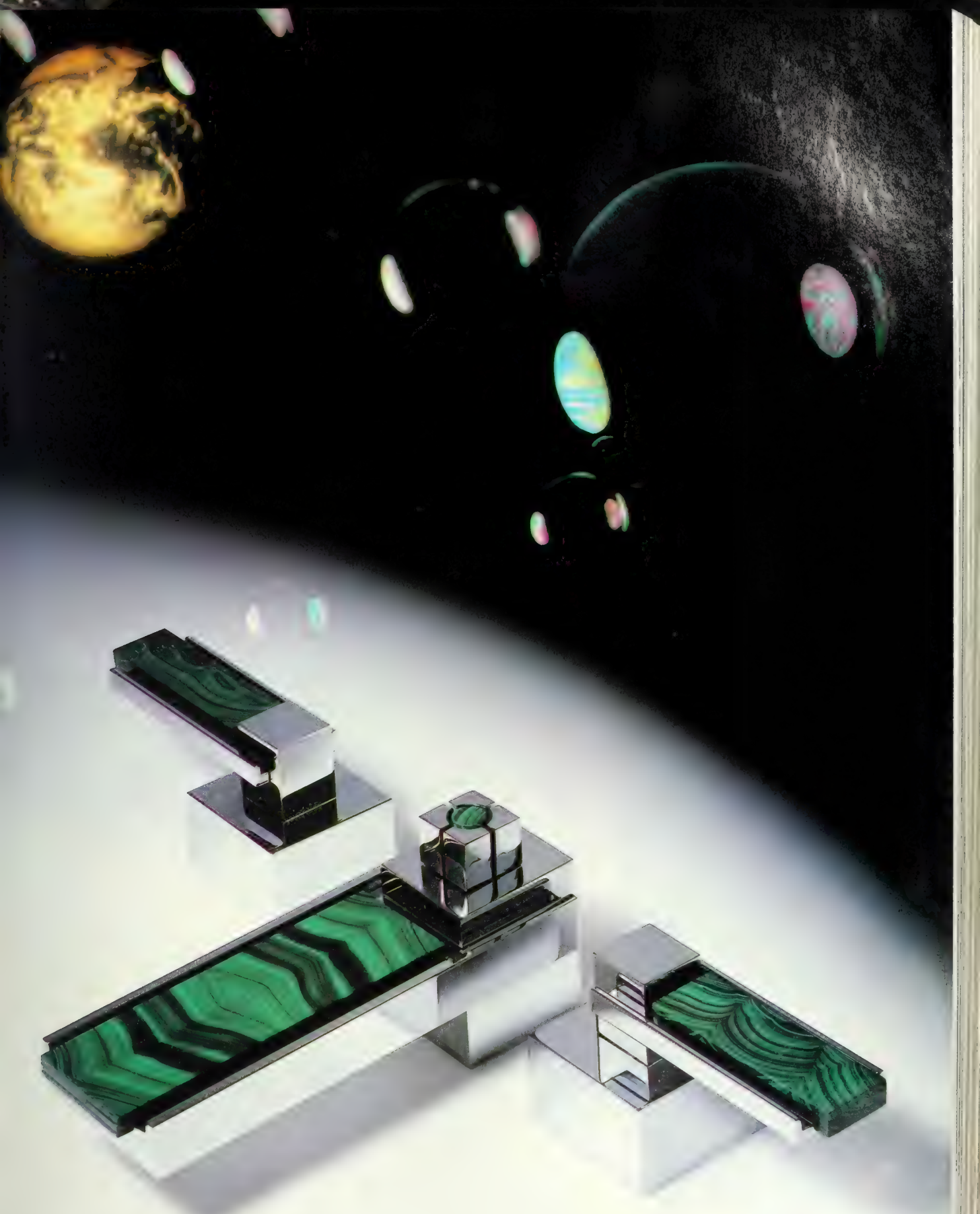
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AT THE TABLE

with ceremonious care, fried himself two eggs and returned to the table. No one in the family heard him utter a word until the next dinner—which, you may be sure, was always good. Men who grumble and growl and swear when a housewife fouls up a recipe should reflect on my father's behavior and look to their manners.

Well! This peasant gourmet found himself, at the age of 35 and after the birth of his third of six children, in the service of M. Charbonnier of Marseilles, France. It was an employment that he had secured through his shrewd and resourceful wife and eminently suited to his temperament, his talents, and his flair for distinguished cuisine.

M. Charbonnier had extensive vineyards in Algiers. My father was em-



The Pellegrini family in
Lucca, 1904-05.

ployed as general supervisor of the vineyard and wine making. His duties entailed frequent visits to his employer's home in Marseilles. Immediately before the vintage he had to consult with his chief about the wines that were to be made. That involved an inventory of the Charbonnier cellar to determine the needs, and a general report on what the vineyard might be expected to yield. When the vintage was completed and the various wines were tucked away in storage cooperage, Father was again expected to cross the Mediterra-



carpet

JACK

nean for a general report to his employer. In addition to these two visits, there were to be as many others as the competent performance of important duties made necessary.

This pleasant employment lasted from 1906 to 1911, when it was brought to an end by the Italo-Turkish war, September 29, 1911. During the five years that Father was in the service of M. Charbonnier, he lived the life of Riley. He loved his work, to which he brought unusual talents, and he came to love his employer, who was by any standards a Man. After the first year his visits to the Charbonnier residence became primarily excursions into friendship and good food. The war with Turkey called him back to Italy and soon thereafter sent him back to Africa in a corporal's uniform. But this story has to do with his initial dinner at the Charbonnier table.

What were the permissible means, at an aristocrat's table, for getting that sauce to the stomach? Father did some fast thinking. He eliminated the method of sopping it up with his bread, which he could do with extraordinary skill, because he thought that might make a bad impression on his employer and so place his new position in jeopardy. It then occurred to him that he might wait and follow safely the example of his host. But that course of action he dismissed, too, as utterly unsatisfactory. Charbonnier might be the exceptional Frenchman who did not appreciate a good sauce—or he might unduly delay the ingestion until the sauce was cold and therefore unfit to eat. What to do? A glass of Burgundy brought immediate inspiration.

"Monsieur Charbonnier," said my father, "have you ever been told how the Leaning Tower of Pisa was built?" "No," said his host, somewhat startled by a question so completely irrelevant. "Well, it isn't such a mystery as some would have us think," continued my father, visibly haunted by the fumes of the tantalizing sauce. "You know, of course, that the tower is round." As he said this, he took a piece of bread, described a complete circle in the casserole, and stuffed the bread quickly into his mouth. "Oh yes, *completely* round," he added as he repeated the gesture. "Some people can't understand why it leans on one side." He proceeded with some difficulty, as his



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mouth was crammed to capacity and he was trying to swallow as fast as he thought consistent with good manners. "From an engineering point of view, the explanation is simple. Any structure can be made to lean in any direction by the simple expedient of sinking the foundation a little deeper on the side where the slant is desired. For example, if I want the tower to lean toward me, I make the foundation deeper on this side," he said triumphantly as he hammered in rapid succession with a piece of bread the appropriate spot in the casserole. "If I want it to lean toward you, I dig deeper on that side." And he repeated the lively illustration.

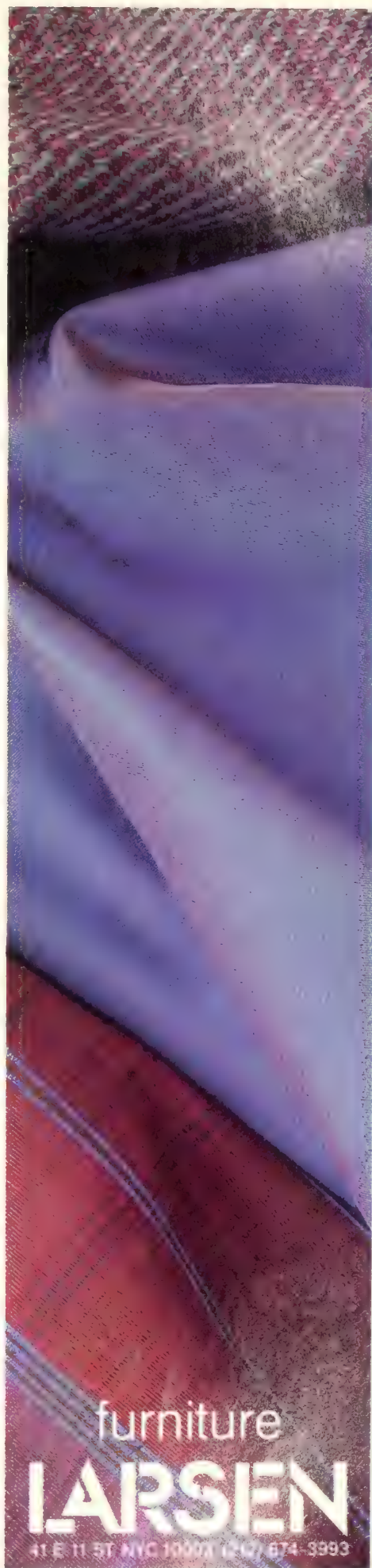
"Once the foundation has been dug, the rest is simple. The stones are then set in place, round and round and round, always following the estab-

"I make the foundation deeper," he said as he hammered with a piece of bread the appropriate spot in the casserole

lished contour, until the desired height is reached." By this time, several slices of bread had been consumed and there were only a few traces of sauce left in the casserole. With success within his grasp, he continued confidently. "When the desired altitude has been attained, all that remains is to superimpose a guard rail all around, and behold! the Leaning Tower of Pisa." The last circular swipe removed all traces of sauce from the casserole.

M. Charbonnier, with an understanding smile and the devil's twinkle in his eyes, looked at my father and said, "Marvelous!" He then raised his casserole to his lips, took the sauce in two experienced gulps, and burst into a belly laugh that was periodically renewed thereafter as frequently as the two men met. And that was the beginning of a friendship that, but for the intrusion of Italy's imperial ambitions, might have endured unto death. □

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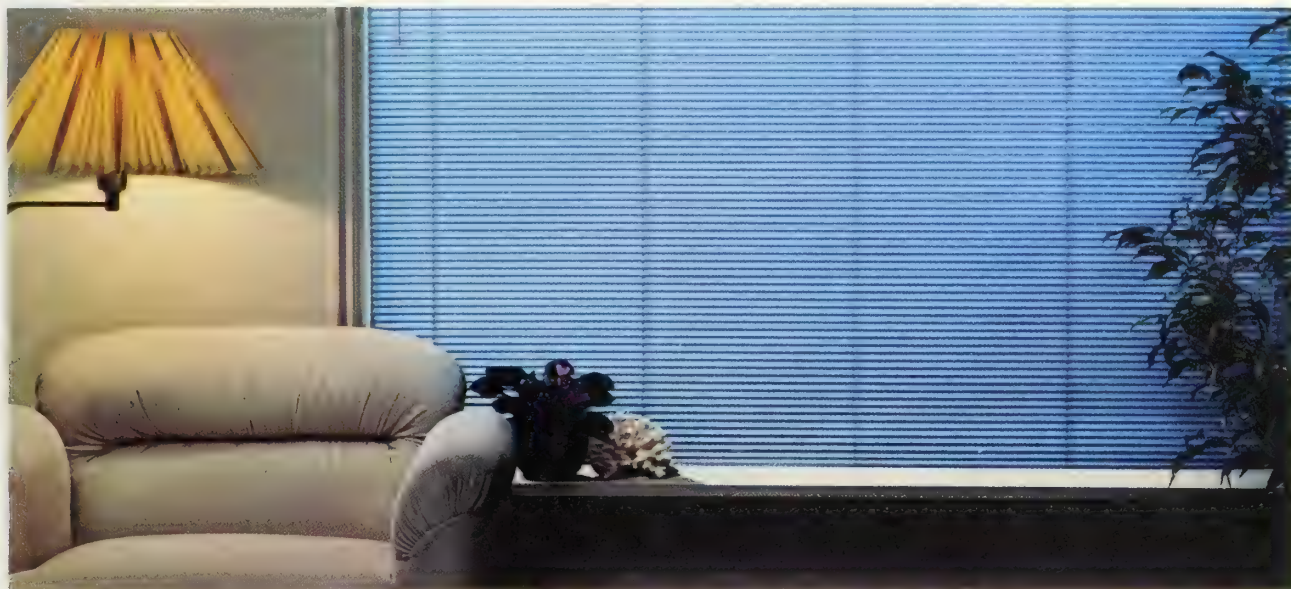


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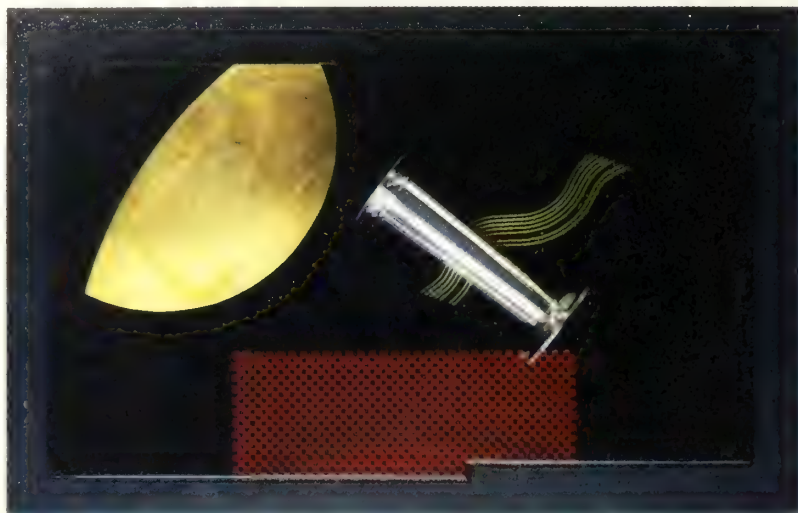
THE ARCHITECTURAL TABLETOP

New china, glassware, and silver by international architects extend even further the current interest in total design

By Martin Filler

We live in a society deluged with designer everything: jeans by socialites, chocolates by couturiers, and sheets by Romantic novelists. Somewhat lost in the shuffle have been the professionals who for centuries were responsible for a great deal more than building houses: architects once put their hand to everything from soup bowls to nutcrackers. Now that they have again returned to their traditional sideline of designing furniture—including Michael Graves for Sunar, Robert Venturi, Richard Meier, Charles Gwathmey, and Robert Siegel for Knoll, and Aldo Rossi for Longoni—architects are continuing to widen their range to a degree not seen since the years just before World War I in Vienna, when the high-style architect reigned supreme as arbiter of the designed environment and creator of consumer goods for the fully equipped bourgeois life.

Nostalgia for the days of the Wiener Werkstätte—the decorative-arts atelier founded by the architect Josef Hoffmann in 1903 to promote the artful crafts—now runs high among the international architectural community. Esteemed as highly by Hans Hollein in Vienna as Arata Isozaki in Tokyo, the Wiener Werkstätte is the major source of common inspiration among avant-garde architects at a time when



On Arata Isozaki's lacquer place mat, Robert Stern's Harmonie candlestick

historical influence in design is as heterogeneous as it is fashionable. Thus it is by no means a surprise that the spirit of the Wiener Werkstätte hangs heavily over the pieces being introduced to the public this month as part of a comprehensive effort to reengage architects in the creation of articles for entertaining and dining.

The debut offering of china, glassware, and silver designs being presented by Swid Powell—the New York firm founded two years ago with the express purpose of reestablishing the link between architecture and product design for the table—is an impressive demonstration of risk taken and won. This carefully edited selection of a much larger group of proposals submitted by a constellation of architectural superstars (including Venturi, Isozaki, and Meier), stars (Gwathmey and Siegel), meteors (Robert Stern and Stanley Tigerman), and even a nova (Laurinda Spear) can also be read as a summary of the major trends in con-

temporary architecture. It includes designs that are by turns Late Modern and Post-Modern, old guard and New Wave, witty and earnest, cartoonish and cautious. It has been said that pluralism is

less an article of design faith than an unavoidable symptom of our lack of cultural direction, but from the evidence of this confident collection one would never know it.

Even at first glance there are pieces that seem destined to become classics: Richard Meier's superbly proportioned (though unfortunately named) King Richard bowl, a shallow silver basin rimmed with a chaste band of openwork squares; Robert Venturi's mottled black-and-white Notebook plates, cup, and saucer, the pattern a playful blow-up of the one we stared at endlessly in grade school; and Gwathmey Siegel's Rays buffet plate, exquisite in its delicate play of black hairline rules given a shift so subtle that it will no doubt also become the design most palatable to traditionalists.

Other offerings have a discreet stylishness that will no doubt appeal to young urbanites who are now ready to move on to designs more sophisticated than the Art Deco imitations that proliferated in china and glassware at the beginning of this decade. Among them are the two buffet plates by Arata Isozaki: Stream, with stylized ripples in

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DESIGN

dull gold against a dark matte gray rim and Eight Bridges, with a gold-on-white zigzag deriving from a traditional Japanese bridge motif that also makes a pun on dining, since *hasbi*, the Japanese word for bridge, also means chopsticks.

Those who do not necessarily believe that dinnerware should provide a neutral background for food will find plenty to choose from as well. Robert Venturi, whose skill in handling complex pattern is more highly developed than any other member of his architectural generation, is represented with china in the same Grandmother design—a pastel floral print overlaid with black crosshatching—that he used for the plastic-laminate veneer on his molded plywood furniture for Knoll International, introduced earlier this year. Also available is matching crystal barware that is etched either with the flowers or the dashes. Clearly he means for us to mix and match.

Laurinda Spear's single buffet plate, called Miami Beach, is a sprightly and colorful abstract composition of geometric and biomorphic shapes. It is much in the mood of the work of her Florida-based architectural firm, Architectonica, typified by its affectionate toying with the bouyant forms beloved by the architects of the early International Style.

But the dominant figure among the Swid Powell architects is Richard Meier, who is represented by no fewer than three plate patterns, six crystal designs, and four pieces of silver. The explanation for this prolific outpouring



Gwathmey Siegel's Tuxedo buffet plate, Richard Meier's King Richard candlestick.

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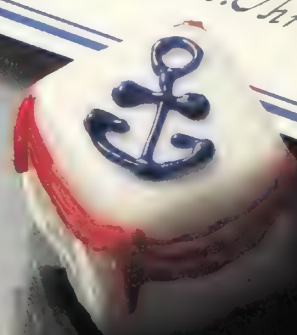
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DESIGN



Notebook buffet plate and Grandmother highball glass, both by Robert Venturi.

stems from Meier's inherent interest in the subject. He sets one of the most fastidiously arranged tables in New York in his own apartment (which contains a number of Wiener Werkstätte publications and artifacts); apparently, once he began to design china and glassware on his own, he just couldn't stop. There are geometrically patterned buffet plates named in honor of his two young children, Anna and Joseph, as well as another called Peachtree, after the Atlanta street on which stands his widely acclaimed High Museum of Art.

All in all, Meier makes a strong showing, especially in the glassware. But ironically, the closest match of china and silver in the Swid Powell collection is not between two works by Meier, as one might have expected, but rather between Meier's King Richard silver and Gwathmey Siegel's Tuxedo buffet plate. They both make remarkably similar use of the checker motif that was a hallmark of the Wiener Werkstätte (which in turn had picked it up from the Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh), but given the extent to which most of the architects in this new project have been mesmerized by that great moment in modern design history, it was perhaps inevitable that this kind of duplication would happen. If anything, though, it only serves to give the entire endeavor more of a unifying theme. (Yet another checkerboard pattern appears in a Swid Powell design that is still in the prototype stage: Arata Isozaki's set of four black, gold, and red lacquer place mats—the single most stunning scheme to emerge so far—incorporates the ancient Japanese *koshi-moyo* motif

beneath gold arcs that represent the moon in a different phase on each mat.

There is no question that the Swid Powell venture can be deemed an aesthetic success. The Metropolitan Museum of Art has already asked for pieces for its permanent collection, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis plans to offer selections from the line in its gift shop, and it will be sold in major department stores nationwide.

But will it also be a commercial hit? That is the intention of the firm's two principals, Nan Swid and Addie Powell, who are aiming as much for a business coup as an artistic triumph. Their target audience is the so-called Second Marriage Market: not the first-time homemaker looking for a full dinnerware service, but rather the older, more affluent customer seeking inventively designed "fill-in" pieces to go with their existing china and glassware. Thus they have included generously proportioned buffet plates, wineglasses and champagne flutes, and the ever-popular double old-fashioned, the pieces that everyone always seems to need more of.

Swid and Powell have believed from the start that the public—or at least a sufficiently well-heeled segment of it—is now ready for this kind of luxury-level design excellence and will be willing to pay for it as they would for Baccarat, Wedgwood, or Waterford. Not surprisingly, their previous professional experience at Knoll International (where Powell was a vice-president for sales, and Swid, who is married to one of the company's co-chairmen, worked on design development) has been an encouraging example that exceptional design can be exceptionally profitable. Quality, they are convinced, will be its own—and their—reward. □



Arata Isozaki's Stream buffet plate, Richard Meier's Spiral claret glass, and Robert Stern's Metropolitan candlestick.

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Watercolor of a bedroom in the Hofburg, left, by J.S. Decker, 1826. Biedermeier chair, below, from Schloss Schönbrunn.

EMPIRE MADE EASY

Biedermeier captured the zeitgeist of post-Napoleonic Vienna

By Simon Jervis

In 1793 Queen Marie Antoinette of France, daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Francis I and the Empress Maria Theresa, was guillotined, and the very concept of absolute monarchy appeared in mortal danger. In 1804 its embodiment, the Hapsburg Empire, much reduced in the eighteenth century by dynastic wars and Prussian victories, was confronted by Napoleon's coronation of himself as Emperor.

Revolutions, invasions, battles—for over twenty years Europe witnessed upheaval on a heroic scale. Artists as diverse as Wordsworth and Beethoven experienced and expressed hope and disillusion. A grand imperial style was promulgated throughout Napoleon's domains. In England Gothic presented a new and romantic alternative and, in the 1820s, the Rococo revival enjoyed its luxurious first flowering. But what of Vienna, the capital of an empire crucially involved in these epic events?

By the late eighteenth century Vienna had become a backwater as far as the visual arts were concerned. Its Hapsburg rulers tended to live in relatively modest style within the great Baroque palaces they had inherited. They had to concentrate on the business of holding their empire together, and the prosecution of endless wars limited their resources. Within an inflexibly centralized framework trade was encouraged, but the times were not propitious for conspicuous expenditure on the grand scale, nor for thoroughgoing stylistic innovation. Neoclassicism had arrived in Vienna late, around 1780, and tentatively. In a typically provincial manner the new vocabulary of ornament was often applied as a superficial dressing to old



forms. By 1800, however, a new spirit was evident. Thanks to the travels of journeymen and the study of imported pieces, and, equally important, the availability of prints and pattern books illustrating

modern designs, Viennese cabinetmakers had a more accurate knowledge of the new forms and how the new ornament should be applied to them. At the same time there was vigorous official support for education in design at the artisan level, and magazines published in Germany were spreading

the idea that craftsmen had it in their own power to emulate the prodigious economic success of England by the introduction of new technology, new materials, and new designs.

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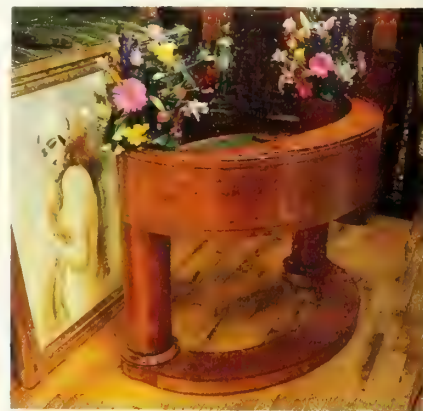
signs based on a close imitation of the latest foreign models were unusual. The massive architectural character of much French Empire furniture aroused little enthusiasm in Viennese cabinetmakers, and its icy perfection of Neoclassical detail was beyond their powers. Having nonetheless adopted the French fashion for a combination of dark mahogany and gilt mounts, they adapted it to pieces of a light, elegant late-eighteenth-century character or to novel variations on Empire themes which often seem almost to parody their prototypes through a quirky use of ornament or form, or even through sheer simplicity. English designs were also an influence, but the most important lessons from England were the virtues of combining solidity and practicality, the versatility and mechanical ingenuity of English furniture, and, above all, English comfort and informality.

It has always been convenient for historians to use the Congress of Vienna of 1814 to 1815 as a boundary mark between Empire and Biedermeier. Ironically in Vienna itself this event has little stylistic significance. As has been stated, Empire, as such, was not a style practiced in Vienna, and it is more sensible to treat the years from 1800 to 1830 as a stylistic continuum. But if Biedermeier is used in its more general social sense, 1815 does make a valid starting point, marking the beginning of a period of peace and increasing prosperity when Herr Biedermeier, that Pooter-like caricature of the simple philistine bourgeois invented in 1853, could enjoy his harmless domestic pleasures in Vienna as elsewhere in Germany. (In Metternich's police state, of course, he had little choice.)

Fortunately documents on the education of cabinetmakers in Vienna have survived in the form of designs associated with a drawing school run by Carl Schmidt. Schmidt was born in Soldin, northeast of Berlin, in 1800, and worked as a cabinetmaker in both Prague and Vienna before studying architecture at the Vienna Academy in the late 1820s. He then ran his drawing school until at least 1847 and was later made an honorary citizen of Vienna. The designs luckily include several earlier than Schmidt's arrival at the school, some as early as 1806. The whole sequence reveals a remarkable

formal consistency, typical of the conservative approach of the artisan to design. The ornament develops surprisingly little and is often deployed more with an eye to superficial charm than to learned propriety—another artisan characteristic.

The Museum of Applied Art in Vienna, where the Schmidt drawings are kept, contains an even more important archive in the form of over 2,500 designs from the Danhauser furniture manufactory. Josef Danhauser (1780–1829) was born in Vienna, the son of a sculptor, and himself studied sculpture at the Academy from 1795. Although he later styled himself “academic sculptor,” it is clear that he never made the grade as a fine artist. Instead he became an entrepreneur, manufacturing gilt, silvered, and bronzed lights and ornaments from 1807. In 1814 he was given permission to produce “all manner of furniture,” an opportunity he seized with both hands, to such effect that in 1825 he was able to take over the former Karoly Palace as showrooms, warehouse, and workshops. Danhauser's products



Biedermeier desk made in Vienna, circa 1825. From Jean-Paul Beaujard, New York.

ranged from the imitation gilt-bronze lights with which he had started to ottomans, sofas, armchairs, chairs, stools, beds, cradles, curtains, commodes, cupboards, tables, stands, and so on—every imaginable type of furniture. There are hundreds of designs for seating; there are even more than 35 designs for pipe stands and more than thirty for spittoons. Sadly Danhauser died early in 1829 and thereafter his business went downhill until its final extinction in 1842.

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The Continuing Adventure: Chapter 1

Once upon a night in Kaohsiung ...



The chairs on the page opposite have just arrived from Kaohsiung ("kow-shung") in Taiwan, which reminds us of a story.

A customer of ours was dining alone one night in the King Wang

Hotel. But she was not alone for long. A man in a rumpled white suit spoke to her as she began dessert, noticing her puzzlement over some fruits she could not identify.

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way of looking, lately, at that chair.

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A rattan bender at work.

expect in a piece made of jungle vine. And the Swedish-designed sofa on the left sensibly conceals a bed.

Not that we have become *too* sensible. We still buy oddities on impulse that have nothing to recommend them but their charm. Like the almost-antique live coal iron sitting on the floor by the sofa. We were able to pick up



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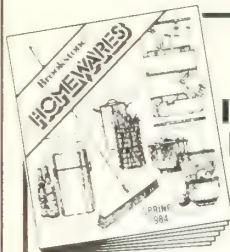
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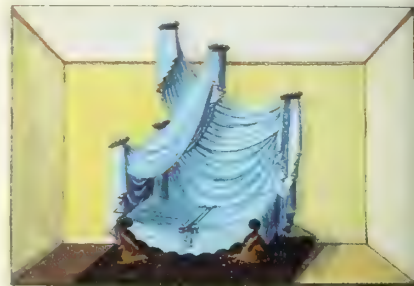
Danhauser furniture designs can use simple typically Biedermeier forms—practical, sturdy, and often blockish. But they are often less straightforward, making play of geometrical solids, spheres, cones, cubes, and cylinders, in the most unexpected combinations, or exploiting the furthest limits of skeletal lightness in construction. The original upholstery of surviving furniture of this date has usually perished. The Danhauser designs demonstrate that this upholstery was often not only dominant but also fantastic. Sofas could consist entirely of upholstered elements, no wood being visible. Beds often had the most extraordinary flying canopies, while draperies explored every possible combination and contrast of pole, pelmet, and curtain. Even with wooden furniture a wide range of color was available, from the black of ebony or ebonized wood or the rich dark brown of mahogany to the light bright tones of maple, ash, or cherry. With upholstery the choice was much greater. Lightish blues and greens were perhaps the most common colors but bright pinks, yellows, lilacs, and orange were also used, as well as darker colors.

In the painting of rooms there was also a predilection for clear light colors: greens, blues, grays, and pinks. Painting schemes were usually simple. However, the survival of a series of designs by Franz Weiner demonstrates that this was not always so. His schemes included elaborate colonnades and landscapes, fictive draperies and greenery. Yet complicated as Weiner's schemes could be, they never have a grand academic character. There is always an element of improvisation, even oddity.

The Biedermeier cult of domesticity resulted in Vienna as elsewhere in the creation of detailed watercolor records of interiors. Even when these depict the residences of the imperial family informality is a dominant characteristic. It has two principal and related symptoms. Firstly each room contains a great variety of furniture types and forms: there seems almost to have been a conscious avoidance of the repetitive suites and pairs typical of the eighteenth century. This variety reflects the second hallmark of the Biedermeier interior, its subdivision into distinct activity zones. Over and over again

Biedermeier rooms contain in one corner a desk, wastepaper basket, and chair, in another a bed, wardrobe, and bedside table, in another a piano and a chair, and so on. Even paintings or prints tend to be gathered into little groups and ornaments cluttered together on *étagères* or in vitrines. A grand unity seems to be wholly abjured.

This account commenced, to set the scene and point the contrast, with historic events on the grand scale. In 1830 that heroic ideal, the history painter, was gently and significantly mocked by the painter Josef Danhauser (1805–



Design for a bed attributed to the Danhauser factory.

1845), son of the great furniture manufacturer. In a sketch he depicted the painter asleep in his studio. Before his easel lie neglected the symbols of lofty aspiration, the classic cast of sculpture, the romantic coat of armor; outside a bright and sunny landscape beckons. As with Viennese Biedermeier itself the charm of such a representation, witty though it pretends to be, embraces a generous measure of provinciality and naïveté.

A more complex and sophisticated system of design prevailed after the failed revolution of 1848. But after an exhibition in 1896 commemorating the Congress of Vienna there was a revival of Biedermeier. Its lightness, simplicity, and directness appealed to advanced designers and commercial manufacturers alike. The present renewal of interest in Biedermeier has prized the same qualities. Perhaps a celebration of the more imaginative aspects of Viennese furniture and decoration of this period is overdue. Post-Modern designers could learn much from the unselfconscious liveliness of designs by Josef Danhauser and his contemporaries. □

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ALL ABOUT STYLE

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COURTESY NOTHBY PARKER BERNET, NYC

■ **CHÂTEAU DE MAINTENON** The disappointment in visiting many historic French houses is that so much of the furniture and most of the pictures have been sold. The Château de Montgeoffroy, the Château d'Anet, and Vaux le Vicomte with its newly redone eighteenth-century bedrooms are rich exceptions. Less well-known is Maintenon, which sits a little south and west of Versailles and is owned in this generation by Mme. de Maintenon's descendants Genevieve de Noailles and her husband Jean Raindre. Recently the Raindres have mounted an exhibition of prints, paintings, furniture, and objects to celebrate the

three-hundredth anniversary of Mme. de Maintenon's morganatic marriage to Louis XIV. What not to miss: at the end of the park, a Hubert Robert-like ruin of three kilometers-worth of Roman-style aqueduct, which Louis XIV started to build in the 1680s in order to bring water to the gardens of Versailles. Inside: Mme. de Maintenon's own small apartment, with its sunny prayer room, tiny bedroom—warmer than a larger one—and leather-lined anteroom in which the Swiss guards sat and smoked, still gives off an atmosphere of elegance, intellect, piety, and common sense. Françoise Chandernagor's recent fictionalized account of Mme. de Maintenon's world, *The King's Way* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich), brings to life, just as Nancy Mitford did in her biographies of Louis XIV and Mme. de Pompadour, the atmosphere of court life—

the fatigue of the routine, the isolation at the top, the barbaric treatments by court doctors, the fear of exile from Versailles, the lust for power and for romance, and Mme. de Maintenon's own special hold on the king. Maintenon was her refuge. The exhibition ends November 4. Open daily 2–6:30; Sundays 10:30–12. Have lunch at the Préjugé in Montfort.

■ **ENGLISH GOODS** At the center of the Grosvenor House Fair in London was a garden done by fashionable Clifton Nurseries, which is the latest venture of financier-collector Jacob Rothschild. Just off this oasis stood a bold piece of furniture of the sort that visitors come thousands of miles to see. Like other world-class furniture it looked like some prize animal, a great sire who when asked to stand extends his body and his legs until the feet are planted far out in front and back of the body's center. The bronze mounts added dignity and suitable elaboration—like a caparison worn only for a coronation. This particular beast is a serpentine commode, by an unknown maker, circa 1750, that wipes all the dreariness off the phrase "brown wood." At Stair in London.

■ **PRINT SCREEN** Ever since the eighteenth century women

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ALL ABOUT STYLE



Chair exhibition

Colefax's Hydrangea fabric; Mrs. Lancaster.



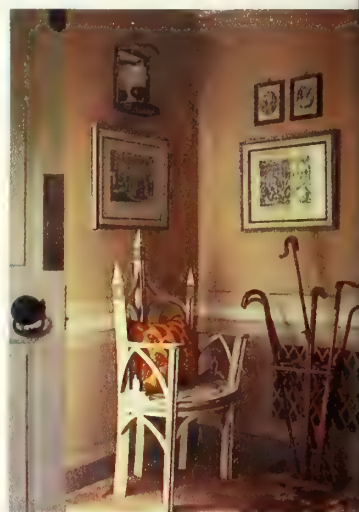
have enjoyed cutting out prints and pasting them on a wall or a screen. The Mary Ellen Best watercolor, *page 120*, shows a print screen in the 1840s. A modern one is by Nicola Wingate-Saul, who glues engravings and borders from the English National Trust onto gold-leafed wooden panels. To order: 61 Ebury Mews, London. Tel: (01) 730-3275. ■ CHAIRS IN NEW YORK Art dealers have always put on exhibitions, and now furniture dealers are following suit. One of the first New York dealers to get the idea was Tony Victoria, who several years ago organized a show around the decorations from the ballroom of the Villa Trianon, Elsie de Wolfe's house at Versailles. Now he is taking a look at an amazing range of French chairs to make the point that form followed function in the eighteenth century as surely as it did in the twentieth. Thus we are shown a desk chair with a straight back and an extra leg in front to keep a balance as the owner tucked his legs under him. An unusual Georges Jacob settee is made from four lyre-backed side chairs joined together. Seen from above it looks like what Louis XVI would have ordered if he wanted seating for a small royal screening room. An eighteenth-century shaving chair looks wonderful in profile, with the top half of the back tilted backwards like any modern barber's chair. Some of the chairs look like spiders standing on tiptoe. The best union of French frivolity and fine design: a *chaise d'amour*—a shortened, narrow-fronted chaise longue with a padded headrest on top of the chair back. One of Tony's own contributions to the exhibition, which is made up of examples from private collections and museums, is a multilegged centipede of a corner sofa with an asymmetrical back. Also on view, miniature furniture that Tony and his father Frederick P. Victoria collected—chairs for children and cabinetmakers' models. 154 East 55th Street, NYC, October 15–November 9. For more child-sized chairs go downtown to Kentshire Galleries, 37 East 12th Street, where from October 10–November 2 there will be an exhibition of English, German, and American examples from a private collection. Two tiny Belter chairs and rare Biedermeier and Eastlake models are worth a trip in themselves. Most of these chairs are for sale. ■ JOIE DE VIVRE What has a gold body, a money-green tail and flies? Malcolm Forbes's latest toy. The new plane, a Boeing 727 from the Braniff fleet, is already serving as a party palace in the same spirit as the *Highlander*, the Forbes yacht that steams up and down the Hudson in the summer with heads of corporations and heads of state on board. The plane lives at Newark Airport and makes junkets to the ranch in Colorado, a hideaway in Fiji, houses in Morocco, France,

and England. The most renowned yacht designer in the world, Jon Bannenberg, supervised the renovation. The Forbeses did not want a "good taste" airplane, some sleek corporate bullet lined with mirror, gray leather, and natural wood paneling, but—tongue-in-cheek—explored the boundaries of that other end of the spectrum of taste with a double-bedded, foil-walled stateroom and a huge central cabin with enormous padded armchairs arranged in semicircular "conversation pits." ■ COLEFAX JUBILEE For fifteen years Americans have felt the influence of the taste of John Fowler and Nancy Lancaster through the Colefax and Fowler fabrics sold in this

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COURTESY BUD SHANNON FOR PAGE AVJET



John Fowler's front hall at Odiham.

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ALL ABOUT STYLE

country at Clarence House. The chintze implied that glazed cotton suited contemporary rooms—even in the city—better than damasks and taffetas. Tiny-patterned simply-colored cotton materials copied from carriage linings and trimmings of eighteenth-century dresses after the war long ago set the standard for children's bedrooms and guest rooms. The haute couture treatment of these simple materials in beautiful festoon curtains, bed hangings, ruffled cushions, and slipcover skirtings was a Fowler hallmark and has been widely and mostly unsuccessfully copied. John Fowler died in 1973, and Mrs. Lancaster is

What has a gold body, a money-green tail and flies? Malcolm Forbes's latest toy, a 727 from the Braniff fleet

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no longer active in the business. Her eldest son Michael Tree and the management of Colefax in London have planned a fiftieth-birthday celebration for the firm, September 25–October 10, 39 Brook Street, London. Examples of curtains, trimming, upholstery, objects, photographs of rooms, and other documents all from the heyday of the Fowler-Lancaster partnership will be on display in Mrs. Lancaster's famous yellow drawing room. ■ BROOKLYN SYMPOSIUM In celebration of the redoing of the latest group of period rooms at The Brooklyn Museum, there will be a weekend symposium, October 19–20, on the controversial topic of how museum curators ought to approach the process that Brooklyn curator Dianne Pilgrim has just completed. There will be speakers from Colonial Williamsburg, Winterthur, Yale, and others. Issues such as the doing up of a museum room as it might have been rather than as it was, the use of reproductions, costumed mannequins, and painted views placed outside false windows to simulate the outdoors, the virtue of showing only the most high-style rooms as opposed to the most typical. To me the biggest question of all: If a room or house didn't have any particular charm when it was first done, why bother people with it today? Preregistration required. Call The Brooklyn Museum: (212) 638-5000, ext. 232. □

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HIGH STYLE IN JAMAICA

Angelo Donghia uses
thirties bamboo and cool,
white linen and duck
for the Ralph Laurens'
Montego Bay house

BY STEVEN M.L. ARONSON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
EDGAR DE EVIA



Ricky and Ralph Lauren, *this page*.

Left: Off the living room, a corner of the veranda, with a table designed by Angelo Donghia, bamboo chairs covered in white duck, and white canvas curtains.





In the living room, Donghia designed the wall brackets holding candles, lamps on antique Italian table behind sofa, and white-duck-covered banquettes. He put in crown moldings here and in all rooms, mahogany around doors, and stripped mahogany shutters. The 1930 bamboo chairs are covered in white duck, mirror over fireplace is 18th-century French.



Jamaica: the sun-shot island where so many of the world's celebrated have left impressions in the sand. "I found your footsteps in Noel Coward's bungalow," Evelyn Waugh, visiting Ian Fleming, wrote to Graham Greene.

Waugh, breakfasting on a Jamaican veranda as tiny hummingbirds hovered round flowering trees, resigned himself to the inescapable peace of the place; he described his retreat as "a fine airy house on a hill overlooking the sea. . . It is rather like Pixton if you can imagine the sea starting at the gates & running to the horizon brilliant blue."

A landscape whose colors are preternatural; the charm and romance of another age, for even today Jamaica, with its Pimm's cups, cricket fields, and hill stations looks back over its shoulder to a vanished England—these are the qualities that pervade the Burrall Hoffman-designed house in Montego Bay that Angelo Donghia has restored for the Ralph Laurens.

A high, breathless hill gives the house its pride of place. It looks coolly out over a steaming tangle of bamboo and

broad-leaved banana trees, past the golden scimitar of beach, to a vast stretch of the Caribbean. The property extends as far as one can ride on a horse in a day.

The house is approached by a long driveway; the banks surrounding it are ablaze with the bougainvilleae cultivated by the previous owner, investment banker Clarence Dillon. The look and character of the house are British-Colonial; it was built in the fifties, in the last, undreaming days of Empire.

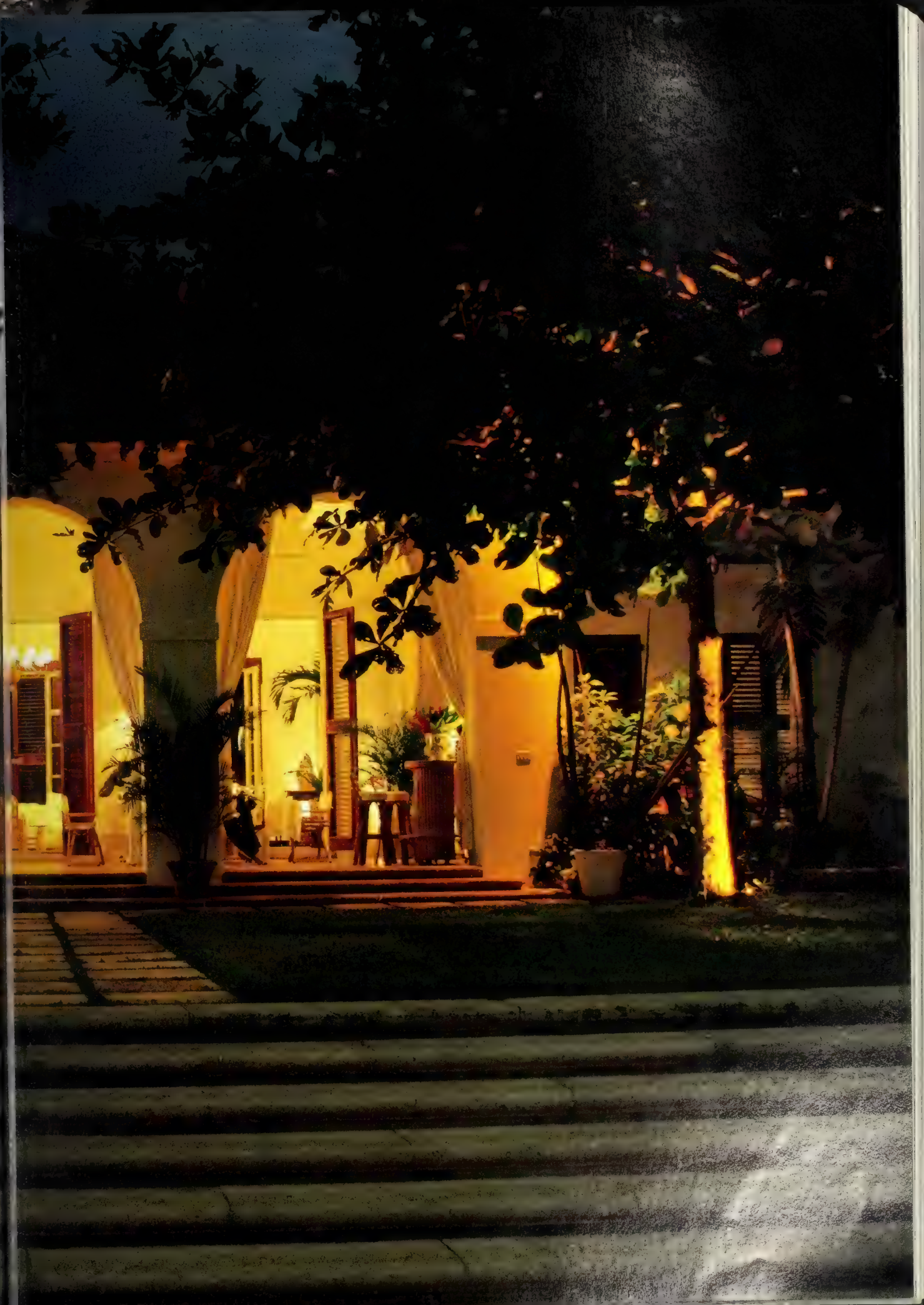
"I didn't want to destroy the mood of the house," Angelo Donghia says. "I didn't want to invade the place. I had a great respect for the natural architecture—even the new bathrooms we put in we made the way they would have been." But Angelo (Text continued on page 230)

Beyond the swimming pool, thirties chairs and table, *above*, found in Jamaica sit next to a hammock from New York strung between two sea-almond trees. *Opposite*: Tropical vegetation in the garden.





Looking up from the pool at night into the living room of the house, which is framed by the veranda arches.







Guest-room windows, *opposite*, look out on a big pond and rock fountain. In a corner of veranda is a thirties bar and stools from Los Angeles and McGuire dining table and chairs. *This page*: A view toward the white coral stone rectangle pool with rounded end designed by Donghia and Lauren.

In the master bedroom the theme of white and bamboo continues, and a gauzy fabric over the bed nostalgically evokes mosquito netting. The bed linens are from Ralph Lauren's home furnishings collection. The antique rattan dressing table and stool were bought in Los Angeles; the woven hemp carpet is from Stark.







LORDLY MANNER

The Earl of Mount Charles keeps one foot on this side of the ocean in a New York flat decorated by Arnold Copper

BY ELAINE GREENE PHOTOGRAPHS BY KAREN RADKAI

In a 17th-century Flemish mode, *opposite*, a live monkey is made part of a still life by José Vilela, who also did the flowers here. Irish landscape by Robertson.
Above: George IV's gift, chairs of Adam style and period in original petit point.





On the sunny, street side of the broad Manhattan house, the second-floor ballroom is Lord Mount Charles's sumptuous drawing room. Various gilt-bronze figures represent King George IV, the great family benefactor. Derby urns on mantel and skirted table from James Robinson. Turquoise opaline and crystal chandelier from New Laura Ashley striped curtain and table fabric.





In the early 1800s the Irish Lady Conyngham of Mount Charles became the favorite mistress of King George IV. This alliance moved her husband up one notch in the peerage, produced a trove of excellent furniture and works of art, and provided the family with a hobby that has not palled: collecting George IV memorabilia. Part of that trove and some of the memorabilia have now come to America, where the young Earl of Mount Charles—a sometime antiquarian and Sotheby's executive, a sometime rock-music promoter, and an aspiring politician—resides when he is not at his castle in Slane, County Meath, Ireland.

Wishing to establish a pied-à-terre in New York City, Lord Mount Charles commissioned a friend, interior designer Arnold Copper, to find him a proper place. The designer discovered a full floor in a 1901 house that was being brutally remodeled. Copper was unable to prevent the stripping of beautiful paneling from some of the walls, but he captured the house-wide ballroom almost intact with its gilded gesso ceiling and splendid carved chimney piece. In this major room, the men placed furniture given Lady Conyngham by the King, as well as other Slane pieces, gilded sculptures of the monarch, and numerous paintings of her ladyship's era and friend; Copper added several New York tables appropriate to the house. In the rooms stripped of their riches, the designer compensated with fine furnishings, color, and pattern. And New York may soon see more of Mount Charles than Slane does. □ *Editor: Babs Simpson*



The library, *top*, a room denuded of detail, was made luxurious by deep color and handsome objects like the American Empire mirror and clock over the mantel, the Chinese-style pottery by John Copper from Paul M. Jones. *Above*: Henry, Earl of Mount Charles. *Opposite, above and below*: Also rich in color is the bedroom. Copper found the bed in pieces ("slivers") in the Slane Castle attic. Small round portraits on porcelain are of George IV and his brother, the Duke of York. All hangings, Laura Ashley; all upholstery, Lee Jofa.





GARDEN MADNESS

Around her Virginia studio-home decorated by William Hodgins, Tori Winkler Thomas literally paints a landscape

BY ALICE GORDON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JACQUES DIRAND



Drenching amounts of latex house paint cover blighted boxwoods in shades of “neglected” blue and lilac to correspond in feeling, says Tori Thomas, to the old house, seen *above* from a hill across the stream and *left* from the front porch. Iron dogs are 18th-century English. *Opposite*: A line of painted leaves points to the hill that rises beyond the house, set on sixty acres of Virginia property.



For the interiors, Boston-based designer Bill Hodgins made subtle variations on the painted-boxwood colors but mostly kept to the "super-neutral" scheme Thomas requires to escape from the color in her imagination. Extra windows and glass doors were added to the house, now full of light. Above the 18th-century French stone mantel, a painting by Todd Minor.



Most of the people who saw Tori Winkler Thomas's strange garden outside Millwood, Virginia, last fall did not wonder, "What kind of crazy nut would paint her bushes pink and blue?" but rather, "What kind of crazy bushes grow pink and blue leaves?" This majority suspension of disbelief still puzzles Thomas. "Blue bushes!" she exclaims softly, then goes on to discuss her current landscape-design projects, which include a cutting garden made of glass flowers and a hillside of computer-programed wild flowers. Thomas's practical and artistic goal as a landscape architect is to stretch the function and definition of plant materials as well as the workings of people's imaginations. Interestingly, she thinks she has a long way to go.

Tori Thomas has lived with some notable contradictions. Educated to be a city planner, she worked for three years as an art director and set designer for movies. Deciding that profession was too frustrating because "you do these things and they get ripped down the next day," she entered Harvard, at age 30, as a student of landscape architecture who was drawn to nature's ephemerality. Thomas reads

Above the English mantel in the dining room is one of the Beaux-Arts architectural drawings Thomas collects. This one is of a stable, relating to the Virginia horse country where her house is situated. At a country-French kitchen table spread with some of the tools of Thomas's trade, chairs painted by John Anderson of Boston.



“a great, great deal” and collects inkwells and children’s books. She gets nervous when she has to talk about her work; she also seems to know very well what she wants to say.

“When I bought this property the boxwood was a very strong geometric form, but it wasn’t on axis with anything. Several bushes of it were dead, and I thought, ‘Well, I’ll replace these two.’ But there was a boxwood blight—hundred-year-old boxwoods all over Virginia were dying, it was really a terrible tragedy—and it wouldn’t have done any good for me to just replace a few. Still, they were such a strong feature, I thought, ‘What can I do other than tear them out?’ So, in a blaze of glory, I painted them.”

Thomas chose paint in “worn out” colors (“tattered lilac,” “old basket blue”) because the house is early-nineteenth century and therefore, she thought, called for an oldish-looking garden. The latex-embalmed bushes were to become the clear focus of a larger design tying the immediate landscape to the house as well as to the topography of the rest of the property—stream, woods, fields. The trails of





In their strands of blue and the
dying bushes take on a new, the
substantial sculptural quality, and
waves Winkler prompts the question
"What's a bonsai?" The sculpture of the
Charmis, which is a series of
scale, gives new meaning to the
"There comes"



Wood-and-chicken-wire arch is filled with painted leaves, *opposite*. In summer, it was moved farther away from the house and planted with morning-glories. *Below*: Robert Jackson painted the trompe-l'oeil tile fireplace and cabinet in the master bedroom. Bed is English Regency, left purposely uncanopied by Bill Hodgins. Two of four Louis XVI chairs wear turn-of-the-century chintz.



leaves you see on these pages started out in traditional patterns within the confines of the experimental courtyard (which Thomas had built off the kitchen and living room when she and her friend interior designer Bill Hodgins renovated the house). “I was working with the idea of reinterpreting classical garden language,” Thomas says, “by painting and ordering the leaves rather than sweeping them away, making a leaf parterre to relate to the axial geometry of the boxwood. But the parterre was too staid—the leaves broke out into the landscape and began getting more minimal. In the sixteenth century, Jacques Boyceau tried to translate the silken brocade patterns of fashionable dress into his parterres. I realized I was trying to do the same thing with modern art. It was exciting.”

Though Tori Thomas bought this Virginia horse country property as a sixty-acre landscape laboratory, making the tumble-down house livable was the first order of business. The main task Thomas and Hodgins put themselves to was punching out a lot more windows. (“Tori never does anything part way,” Bill Hodgins reports.) They also ripped up scads of (Text continued on page 254)





Tori Winkler's major professional goal, to create commercial courtyards and museum sculpture gardens, is refined in this experimental outdoor room just off the kitchen and living room. The panel can be slid all the way open or closed entirely. Leaf trails tie the summer landscape to the house, locating the boxwoods—originally on no logical axis—in the big picture.



THE REGAL EYE

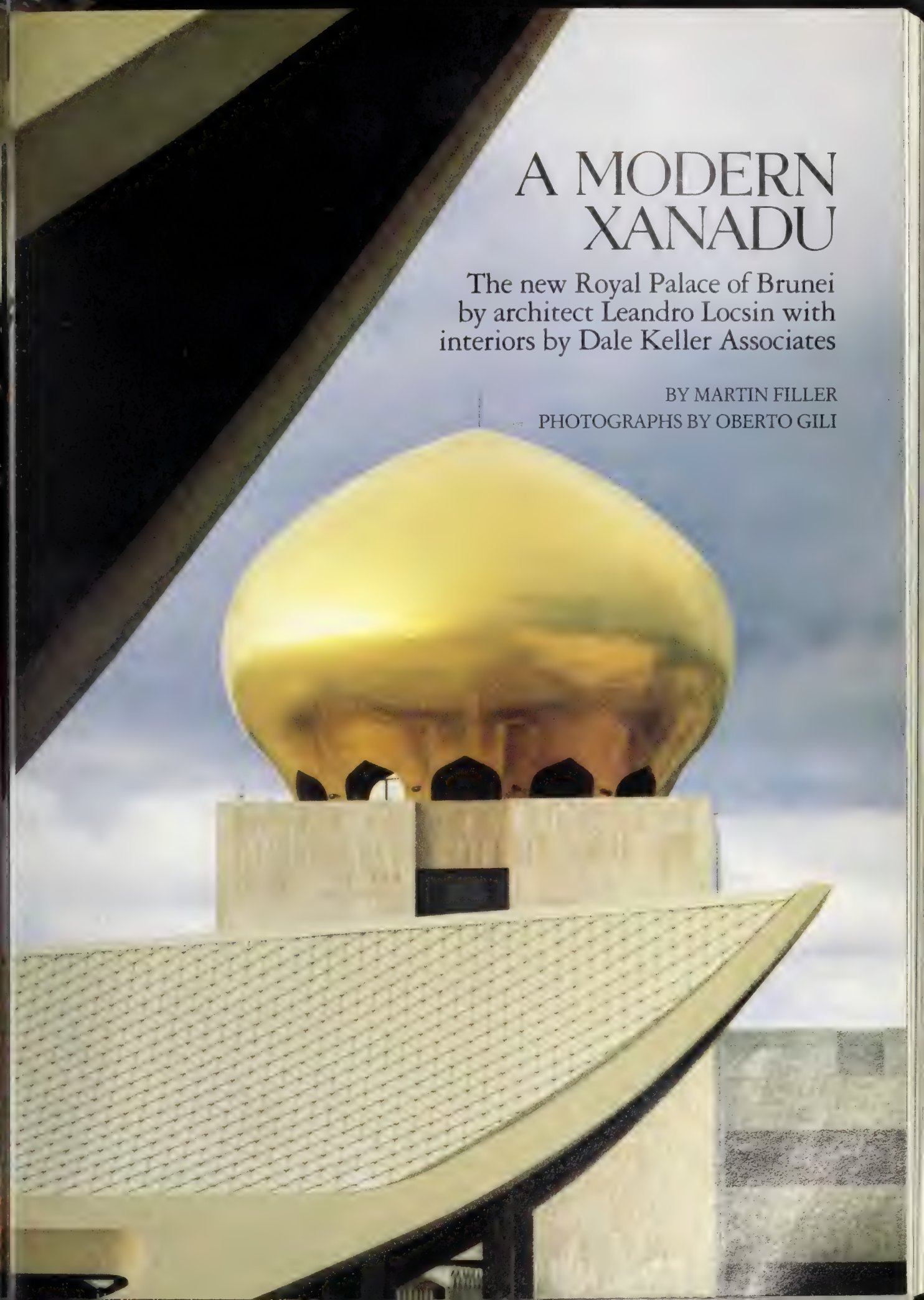
From their canopied dais in the Throne Hall, the sultan and his queen can survey 2,000 of their subjects. *Opposite:* Beyond upswept roofs recalling traditional Malay architecture, an Islamic dome clad in 22-karat gold

A MODERN XANADU

The new Royal Palace of Brunei
by architect Leandro Locsin with
interiors by Dale Keller Associates

BY MARTIN FILLER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY OBERTO GILI



Before last January, those of us who knew about Brunei were by and large philatelists: we remembered it as the British protectorate whose stamps always seemed to be missing from our Coronation sets. But that was about it. Brunei was famous for nothing, nothing had ever happened there, and no one had ever been there.

But the shifting tides of geopolitical fate eventually decreed a new destiny for this obscure enclave on the northern coast of Borneo, and not surprisingly that dramatic emergence had to do with oil. As the continuing impetus to expand the world's petroleum supply prompted exploration for new sources in a number of out-of-the-way places, interest turned to Brunei, where rich seams of coal had been mined for decades. Informed geological hunches proved to be correct, and in 1963 vast deposits of offshore oil and natural gas were discovered there by Brunei Shell, thrusting the tiny country into new and unexpected prominence a decade later during the Mideast oil crisis. Soon Brunei attained one of the highest per-capita incomes in the world—along with other minuscule oilgarchies like Qatar and Kuwait—and tales of its fabulously rich young ruler, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, began to circulate in the West. But it was not until Brunei received its independence from Britain on January 1, 1984, that the scale of the sultan's wealth became apparent.

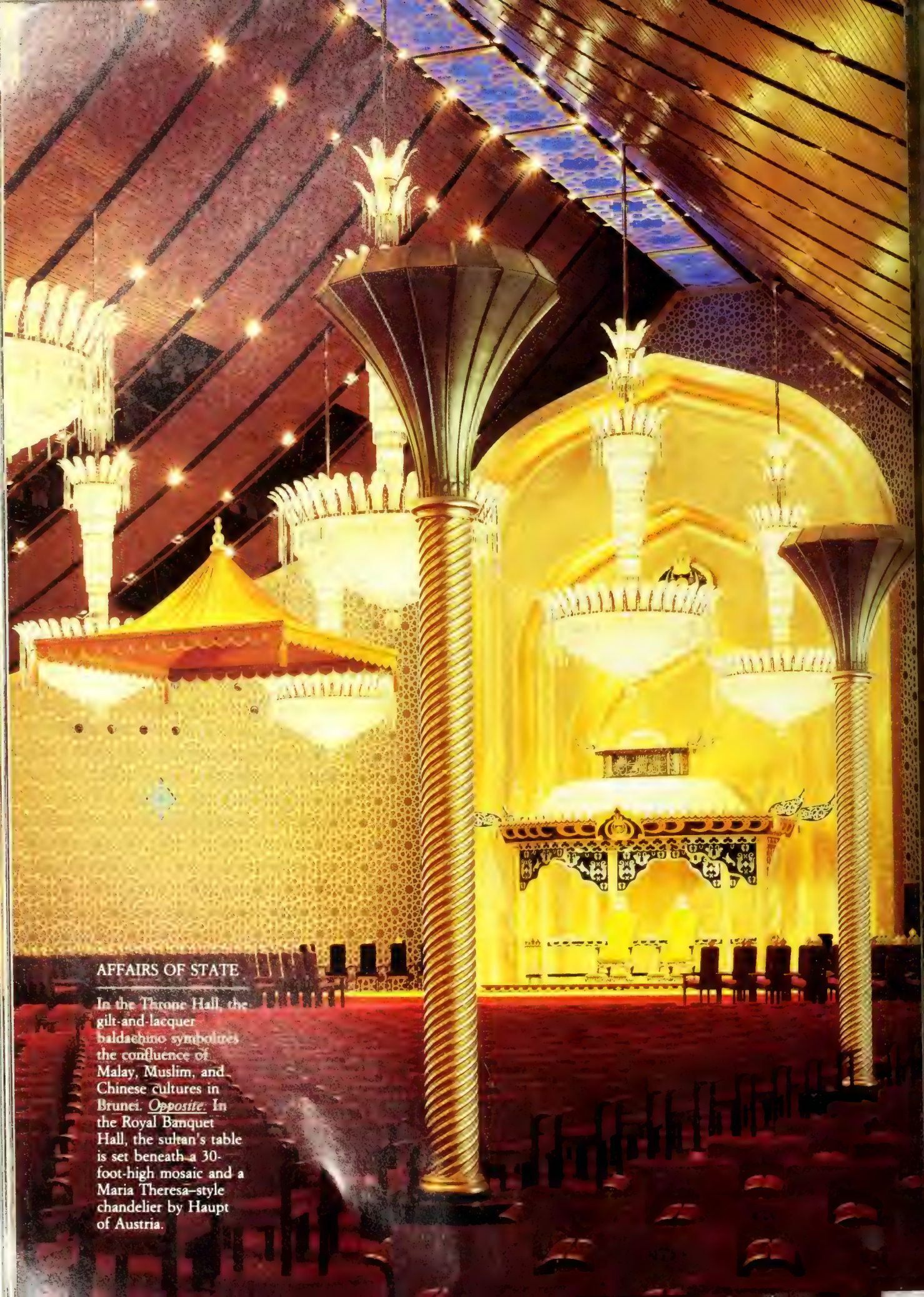
To mark his country's coming of age as a force in world events, the 38-year-old potentate built a new Royal Palace that staggered even the most jaded of the foreign guests—including the Prince of Wales, representing his mother—who attended the \$15-million ceremonies that marked Brunei's first National Day last February.

STANDING ON CEREMONY

At the center of the Throne Building is the Reception Hall. Its floor is Carrara travertine, the tentlike ceiling Philippine rosewood, the walls gold metal mesh behind an Islamic star filigree. The blue stained-glass skylight was designed by Pat Keller. Beyond the gold mosaic archway is the Throne Hall.







AFFAIRS OF STATE

In the Throne Hall, the gilt-and-lacquer baldachin symbolizes the confluence of Malay, Muslim, and Chinese cultures in Brunei. *Opposite:* In the Royal Banquet Hall, the sultan's table is set beneath a 30-foot-high mosaic and a Maria Theresa-style chandelier by Haupt of Austria.





Showpiece of the festivities was the stupendous Istana Nurul Iman, the new palace that was rushed to completion in three years, in time for the end of British rule.

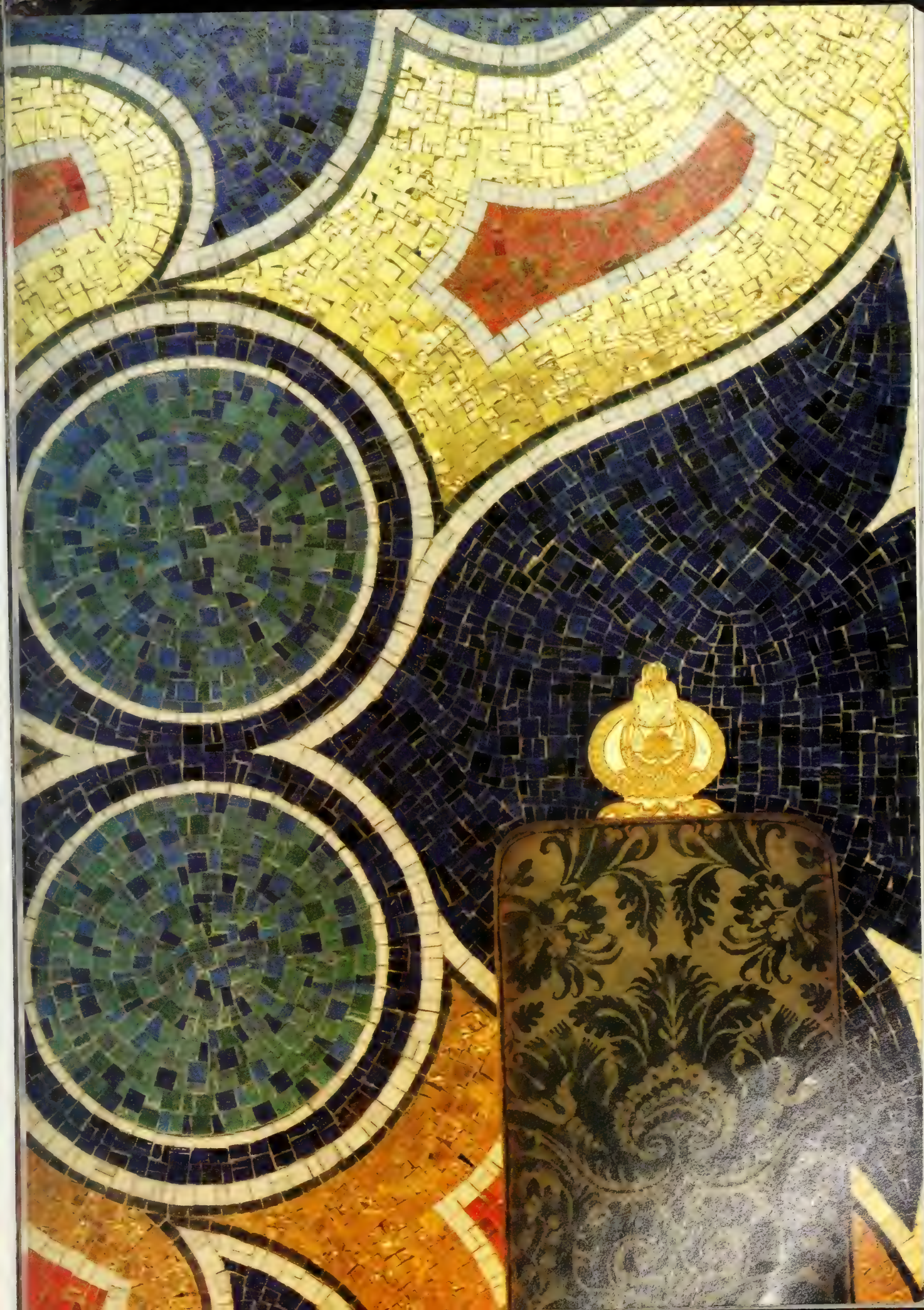
The Istana, as it is more familiarly known, can be described most accurately in superlatives, for it is unquestionably the largest and costliest royal residence ever built. With a staggering total of 1,788 rooms, it has four hundred more chambers than the Vatican. Its price tag has been variously estimated at \$300 to \$500 million, money gone toward such Arabian Nights touches as domes covered not in mere gold leaf but 22-karat plate, enough Carrara travertine to replicate the Campidoglio, and the largest order of crystal chandeliers in history, as well as more up-to-date amenities such as a rooftop heliport, underground parking for eight hundred cars, and an elaborate security system to repel would-be terrorist attacks. Suffice it to say that the world—not to mention Brunei—has never seen anything like it. But the Istana's fascination goes beyond the *Guinness Book of World Records* listing of its biggest and most expensive features.

The question of how a building can best serve as a symbol of its country is a concern that has faced both patrons and designers since the beginnings of architecture. In our own time it has become a particularly difficult dilemma, especially since several of the building types that have traditionally conveyed that essence of nationhood—including the temple and the palace—have either been totally transformed in this century or have practically disappeared.

That was the major programmatic challenge faced by the architect chosen for this improbable commission, the Philippine Leandro Locsin, whose previous work had consisted largely of flamboyant modern public buildings in his homeland for the Marcos regime. Here he was to provide a structure that would become the veritable emblem of a new state, one that would be equally

MAJESTIC ARABESQUE

Glittering Islamic-inspired mosaics in the palace's Surao, *left* and *overleaf*, and Royal Banquet Hall, *right* and *preceding page*, were set by imported Italian craftsmen. The high-backed chair, topped with a gilded royal insignia, is upholstered in resist-dyed cotton with a metallic finish by Fortuny.



understandable as such both to the 210,000 inhabitants of the still little-developed sultanate and to the outside world, whose attention was increasingly focused on Brunei. It was meant simultaneously to evoke the nation's burgeoning pride (and thus had to employ indigenous architectural forms) as well as its eagerness to be seen as an up-to-date equal in the international community (and thus had to be as stylistically and technologically advanced as any architecture anywhere).

Fortunately for Locsin, he had virtually limitless resources at his disposal, making it possible for him to create an instant Istana that fulfilled those weighty requirements. A 350-acre site was chosen on a bluff overlooking the Brunei River, just south of the capital city of Bandar Seri Begawan, half of whose sixty thousand residents live in the stilt houses of the Kampong Ayer, or water village, in the city's harbor.

It is in the distance, above those incongruously contrasting dwellings, that one first catches sight of the golden domes of the Istana. The palace (or more correctly, palace complex) is so immense that it is almost impossible for one to comprehend it architecturally from ground level, even from the open vantage point of the Brunei River. Aside from the glinting cupolas, the most eye-catching elements of the low-slung Istana's exterior are the dynamic curving forms that derive from what is one of the very few distinctive features of the local building heritage: the up-swept, tentlike roofs of the Malay longhouse, several authentic examples of which can still be found in the jungle interior of Brunei.

Here, the wing-shaped roofs have been magnified a thousandfold to a scale more like that of the two modern landmarks from which the Throne Building of the Istana most clearly derives: Jorn Utzon's Sydney Opera House in Australia (the object of immense *Text continued on page 236*)

IN THE WORDS OF THE PROPHET

The Surao, or prayer room, is the most traditional interior in the palace. The shallow dome, inscribed with an Islamic star pattern, is ringed at its base with sacred texts from the Koran. At the center is the mosaic-inlaid mihrab, the holy niche of Muslim places of worship.







THE JACQUELINE KENNEDY GARDEN

An oasis for the President's
family on the east side of the White House

BY RACHEL LAMBERT MELLON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICK HALES



After 20 years, the results here in
America have proven that
sustainability is plants as well as their
sculptural beauty.



In a sequel to her account in September of the making of the White House Rose Garden, landscape designer Rachel Lambert Mellon describes working with Jacqueline Kennedy to create a new garden for the East Wing

After the completion of the Rose Garden, President Kennedy's interest in the White House gardens was to continue. It was in the spring of 1962 that he thought of the area to the southeast of the White House as a possible garden for Mrs. Kennedy and the children. This area is about the same size and shape as the Rose Garden (lacking only twenty feet in width). It did not have the historical background of the west side, and except for being kept tidy, had never been given special attention.

The task of designing another White House garden did not seem as formidable as it did before. I had become familiar with the scale of the house, and the same people who had worked with me in the Rose Garden were still there to help. They were Everett Hicks, J.B. West, Perry Wheeler, and the head gardener, Irvin Williams, whose work remains as important today as it was then. The National Park Service would carry out the work as before.

The thoughts and ideas of President Kennedy had helped design the Rose Garden. Mrs. Kennedy would give the new East Garden a different atmosphere. We had worked together before. I knew that with her capabilities for serious planning and her profound interest in

history, she also had a joyous appreciation of life and of the imagination of other people.

Several weeks later we met there one morning under the large trees near the John Quincy Adams Elm, planted in 1826. The idea was new to her, and we sat for a long time putting together our thoughts for a garden.

In November 1961 Mrs. Kennedy had initiated the White House Historical Association. Aware that the American people could find little of the past inside The President's House, she had begun to renovate the public rooms and collect objects, pictures, and furniture that were part of its past, as well as to decorate them with the dignity and historical accuracy that she felt such an important house deserved. When finished, these rooms would have the same feeling as Mount Vernon, Stratford Hall, and Monticello. At the same time Mrs. Kennedy had planned the White House Guide Book, "for all of the people who visit the White House each year." She also explains in her introduction that "it was planned at first for children, who would visit the White House, to stimulate their sense of history and pride in their country."

The idea was that visitors would enter from the east entrance and continue along a glass corridor before reach-



In summer, grapevines cover the arbor, *above*. On the south side lattice windows open to the distant view of the Washington Monument. *Opposite*: The bronze child, his flowerpot and trowel in hand, the work of Sylvia Shaw Judson, watches the moving water of the pool at his feet. *Below*: The silver plaque dedicating the garden. *Editors note*: At Mrs. Kennedy's request, the dedication is in Mrs. Mellon's handwriting. On the back are the signatures of Perry H. Wheeler, Irvin M. Williams, J. B. West, Elmer M. Young, James D. Nelson.

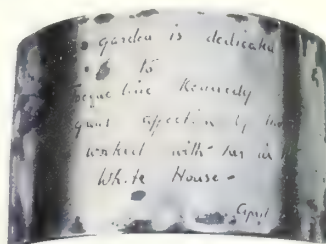
ing the main house. This corridor, like the long open porch that connects the Oval Office to the White House, would be the north boundary of the garden.

This passage facing south had been of concern because it faced the direct rays of the summer sun. Here we could plant a high hedge of linden trees, like those often seen in French parks and gardens. The trees, planted in a row eight feet apart, are kept pruned to a height of seven or eight feet, allowing one to see under them. Their spreading hedge-shaped tops would act as shade for those waiting in line. This plan was followed with a list of other possibilities. A place for the children to play. A lawn large enough for a small croquet court or badminton net and a pool of splashing water. The chef, René Verdon, had been requesting for a long time a small plot to plant fresh herbs for his kitchen. Mrs. Kennedy could see an old-fashioned grape arbor with hanging baskets of scented geraniums, and tubs of lemon verbena, heliotrope, and mignonette. Here one could read, have tea, and entertain. An arbor would be in

the tradition of this large, but nevertheless Southern, country house.

There always has to be an inspiration that awakens one's imagination to begin a garden project. Mrs. Kennedy's suggestion of a child's croquet court took me back to *Alice in Wonderland*, particularly the game of make-believe with playing cards as gardeners, standing among the standard rosebushes. A few weeks before I had seen topiary holly trees in A. Gude's Nursery in Rockville, Maryland, with marvelous high chesslike shapes made of clipped American holly.

If they were still there it would be easy. They would make the outline for this new garden, and like Alice in Wonderland, the children could play surrounded by their high presence. At the base of each we would plant the herbs for the kitchen: thyme, chives, basil, dill, sage, and parsley. Among these herbs would be children's flowers to pick as children do, taking the heads without stems: marigolds, nasturtiums, pansies, and Queen Anne's lace. At one end would be the arbor,







at the other, the splashing pool.

From this outline the garden plans grew. Beds were edged with small boxwood, and the southernmost boundary was a repetition of the Rose Garden, an osmanthus hedge.

This is the garden as it is today, twenty years later. The children's flowers have gone and the croquet wickets with their tiny bells are in the attic, but the high linden hedge protects the ever-increasing lines of visitors. The grape arbor with windows of lattice looks out on the Washington Monument and has been used by the many Presidents' wives who followed Mrs. Kennedy. In early June of this year the White House staff gave Mrs. Reagan a small surprise party there to celebrate her birthday. On one of the arbor's pillars a small plaque to Mrs. Kennedy stays shined by the loyal keepers of the garden. It was her request that it be a replica of a simple handwritten message.

The garden was begun in 1963 and was finished in the spring of 1965, with the kindness and help of Mrs. Lyndon Johnson. President Kennedy never saw the finished garden.

Two weeks after Mrs. Johnson moved into the White House she invited me to come to see her. It was a hard decision to return to the White House so soon after Mrs. Kennedy had left, and I still can't remember in which room we met. In her conversation on the telephone, she had mentioned the unfinished East Garden.

She was very concerned that everything in the White House continue as before, including the care of the flowers and gardens. She asked about the East Garden and I told her about its planning; that it was designed eventually to be a garden for the President's family, and that the present design had the atmosphere of a children's story. She was sympathetic, and with a smile asked if I would finish it.

Mrs. Kennedy's involvement and caring, both inside and outside the White House, had been very important. Inviting countless people to participate, she had earned their respect over the years.

It seemed appropriate to Mrs. Johnson and me, as we talked, to name this new garden in Mrs. Kennedy's honor. But how would such an important decision be carried out, so that it would remain in history? The only other person whose name had remained as part of the house was President Lincoln. "Surely it must go through Congress," Mrs. Johnson thought aloud. Two weeks later she called to say that Congress had accepted that the East Garden be called The Jacqueline Kennedy Garden. It now had the government's stamp of approval. When I told Mrs. Kennedy, it was again on the telephone. Her voice, never very strong, that day was barely audible. □

Editor: Babs Simpson

In early spring, tulips bring the garden back to life. Later they will be followed by herbs for the kitchen mixed with annuals. The two white benches have been part of the White House Garden since 1850.



THE FINNISH TOUCH

It all began in 1902
when Eliel Saarinen and his partners
made a bold experiment in
modern design with their own
houses at Hvitträsk

BY ELIZABETH GAYNOR
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KARI HAAVISTO





A vaulted room made intimate with painted
sculpture by Akseli Gallen-Kallela, rug by
Louis Saarinen, lighting and furniture by Eliel
Saarinen, who is represented in the stained glass
window glimpsed at right. *Opposite:* Rendering
of the studio by Eliel Saarinen, a trained artist



Seldom do architects get the opportunity to design not only a house but the whole of its interior from ornamentation to furnishings. At Hvitträsk a rare trio of talented young men was motivated to do this by the sweet taste of first success: theirs had been the much-praised design for the Finnish pavilion at the Paris World's Fair in 1900. Two years later they decided to act out their beliefs more lastingly in a new kind of inside/outside architecture based on fidelity to materials, appreciation of simple volumes, and respect for function—all radical ideas in an age of revivalist thinking. The three architects, Herman Gesellius, Armas Lindgren, and Eliel Saarinen, bought a parcel of land in the woods and started plans for a studio house for themselves—a sort of artists' paradise, experimental structure, communal living arrangement, and soon-to-be salon for all the great creators of their acquaintance.

The firm Gesellius, Lindgren & Saarinen was established in 1896 before the group had graduated from architecture school. Their union represented a balanced meeting of minds and pooling of skills. Lindgren was the scholar, Gesellius the pragmatist, and Saarinen the artist with a painter's training and eye. Together they produced a compound situated on a bluff high above Hvitträsk (White Lake) and took its name for their dwelling. Houses for the three and their wives were built, one free-standing, the other two joined by a single-story studio with skylights. The architects played up the spectacular setting in a textural structure with a rock foundation that seems to grow up out of the wooded cliff with its natural outcroppings. A system of outdoor terraces, pavilions, and porches was executed to set off the lovely open view with fretwork and dark shingles, red tiles, and climbing vines that change in autumn to the hue of the tiles.

Work began on the project in 1902. The first building to be completed was a workshop and stables, later to become the home of Gesellius. Its dark-stained timber construction and that of the partly plastered-over stony main building showed the group's admiration for strong deliberate forms and simple materials found in nature—forms

and materials used in the log houses of Finland's eastern wilderness province, Karelia, and in the high-peaked medieval churches that accent the horizon. Philosophically, looking back to those primitive structures helped impel a return to the linking of building shape and interior space. But present, too, was a new way of thinking that would make use of the latest construction techniques to create a house with interflowing rooms. The three designers paved the way to modern design through the national romantic style, an important advance beyond the then-popular façade-dominated architecture.

The house seems to have fulfilled the dream of its designers. Its studio gave birth to important architecture built by the group and, after the firm split up, by Saarinen alone. Its large halls and intimate nooks, gardens, and walkways served as an enriching atmosphere for the Saarinen children, who spent their childhoods here. A wide circle of friends, including Jean and Aino Sibelius, Maxim Gorky, Gustav Mahler, and others, was notorious for all-night celebrations at Hvitträsk, sometimes playfully recorded in the sketchbooks of Eliel Saarinen.

The integration of inside and outside was abetted by the firm's desire to design the interiors and furniture and to invite some of the great artists and craftsmen of the day to contribute their work. Like the architects working in the Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts styles, they believed that the way to beautify a house was through the handmade. Saarinen designed most of the furniture in the private rooms shown here, the wing that he and his wife Loja lived in with their family for nearly twenty years. Loja collaborated on the interiors and was herself a skilled weaver. She made the rya rugs that swept over built-in banquettes and down onto the floor. Glazed tiles for the fireplaces and stoves in all the rooms were made at the Iris factory of Count Louis Sparre in Porvoo, known for its excellent handwork. The celebrated painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela did the frescoes in a dramatically vaulted room. Color was used generously to give a rich completeness to each room and create harmony with its adjacent space. A great imaginative spirit and flair for the exotic show in the furnishings, all executed with precision.

Today, Hvitträsk endures as a museum. □

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With earth-red walls and exposed wood timbers, the great hall at Hvitträsk, *opposite above*, echoes the spirit of Karelia, Finland's wilderness province in the east. At the room's core stands a huge, cylindrical, tile fireplace (*detail, opposite below*). *Above*: One of many stoves in the house, whose every tile and metal appurtenance shows careful thought.





Once a nursery, the chamber *above* has been refitted with a double bed, over which hangs the study for the stained-glass triptych of Saarinen, his partner Gesellius, and the first Mrs. Saarinen, later Mrs. Gesellius. *Right:* Study's white furniture is clearly related to concurrent design in Vienna and Glasgow. *Below:* Copper pot and wood-inlay stand are typical early 20th century, typical of the house.







ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

Graphic designer Joe Lombardo knows just what he wants, but it took him four years to create an apartment that truly expresses his vision

BY JOAN AGAJANIAN QUINN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRUCE WOLF



I met Joe Jewel, as he called himself then, in the mid seventies. His letters, on handmade paper, arrived in an envelope with a rhinestone in the upper-left-hand corner above the return address. I came to think of him as Joe Diamond. These letters were always written on prototype paper for his stationery firm called Write Impressions, a company that proved to be ahead of its time.

Joe Jewel goes by his real name of Joe Lombardo these days. Though he presented himself as a performance artist in the late sixties, spraying color in his normally dark hair and taking three hours to paint his clothes—shirts, trousers, and gloves—in a coordinated style, Lombardo has made his mark on American graphic and industrial design: Wisk detergent, Good & Plenty, Heinz Specialty Vinegar, and Ace comb labels and logos have all been his. Last year he won a Clio for his Heinz labels—not bad for someone who dropped out of design school. But Joe Lombardo's apartment might be his most original statement yet.

Artist and friend Barbara Nessim encouraged Lombardo to carry through on all his ideas for the apartment. In the living room, *left* and *overleaf*, he made the mantel from pieces of glass mirror, fine china, Bauer and Fiesta Ware. Painted floor incorporates the first names of good friends such as Zandra Rhodes and Divine (star of *Pink Flamingos* and *Polyester*) along with patches of trompe-l'oeil marble and the Greek key border. Poufs designed with help of a friend who is a costume designer are covered in Zandra Rhodes fabric. Atomic coatrack holds part of Lombardo's hat collection.







To Lombardo's way of thinking the height of good taste is very close to bad taste, and the wrong colors do go together in the end. "In doing this apartment, if I chose colors that I thought probably should not be used together at all, it almost always was a magnificent decision. When I selected the paint chips for the dining room, the first coat of black paint frightened me to death. I couldn't sleep that night, but whenever I find myself thinking this is going to be dreadful, I'm close to doing something right and that's the story of my life." Lombardo wanted to do all the work himself with a few hand-picked helpers. He spent months painting walls, floors, hanging and draping fabric, refinishing and reupholstering furniture.

In the living room, where Lombardo has drawn on the fifties, and on the antique to create a highly personal and humorous style, the walls of pink and lavender stripes are separated from the mint-green ceiling by gold- and silver-leaf molding. Three nonstructural Corinthian columns, with clear plastic trunks and square chartreuse bases splattered in black and white paint, divide the room. Lombardo has used only the capital of a fourth column as a stool. A lime- and emerald-green-striped French settee lurks between the columns on which two unusual pillows rest: one black moiré with fuzzy white three-dimensional snap-on polka dots the size of small hamsters; the other, three large green silk pompons strung on a cord with a hefty tassel on the end.

People have entered this apartment and immediately felt light-headed from the frenzy of design and strange concoctions of color and pattern. "Magic, a fantasy, a set!" they've exclaimed. But Joe Lombardo's hearing none of it. He's dead serious: "Creativity is the result of experimentation, and the reason many things are not created is that people have too many preconceived ideas about how something is going to look before it is made. This is a living space, I live here and it's very real to me. It's *my* reality—though possibly someone else's fantasy." □ *Editor: Lloyd Ziff*

In dining room Lombardo designed the mirror and brass curtain rods. The black lacquer chairs are from Fifty/50, a store whose logo he created. Lombardo often uses two or three cloths on table, at least one with a long train. No two plates are ever alike, and real and plastic flowers are always mixed. Venetian forties chandelier made in Paris by André Arbus hangs from canopy dressed in tulle. The baroque door pull, *above*, is on the gold-splattered dining-room door.

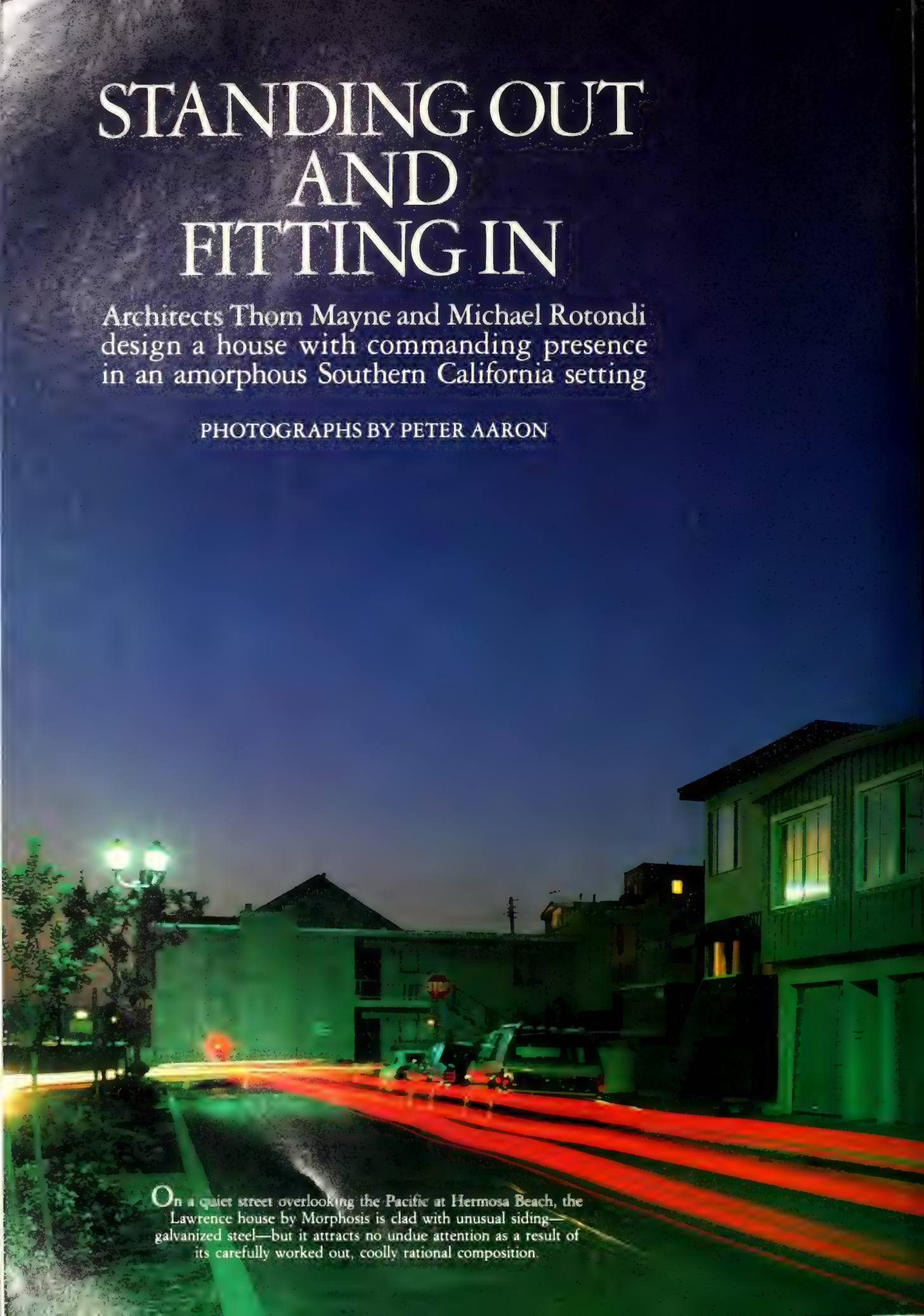




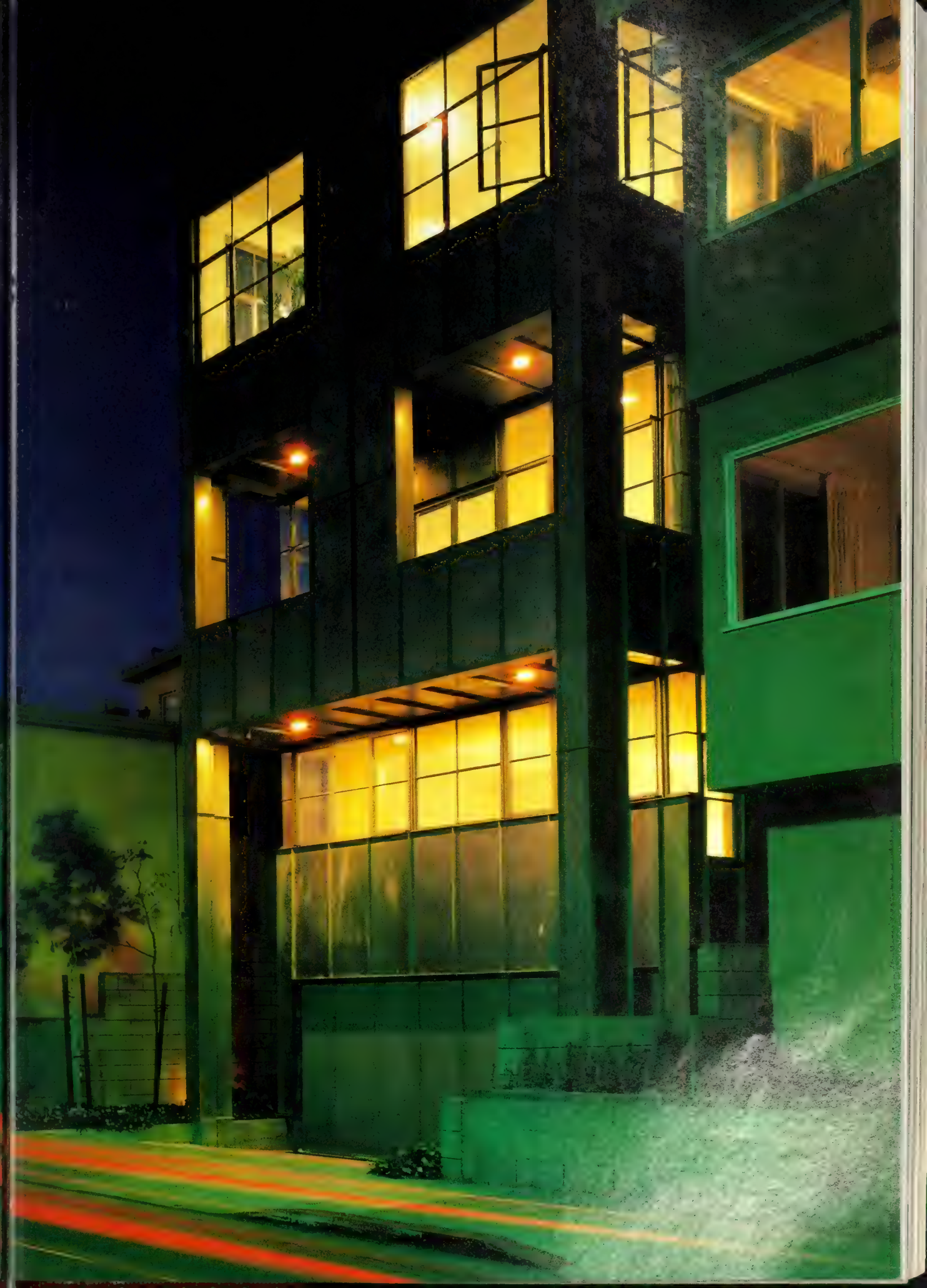
STANDING OUT AND FITTING IN

Architects Thom Mayne and Michael Rotondi design a house with commanding presence in an amorphous Southern California setting

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER AARON



On a quiet street overlooking the Pacific at Hermosa Beach, the Lawrence house by Morphosis is clad with unusual siding—galvanized steel—but it attracts no undue attention as a result of its carefully worked out, coolly rational composition.





The domestic architecture of Southern California, though the most experimental being designed in America today, still faces certain constraints. An excess of formality can look vaguely ridiculous in that most laid-back of settings, yet too much of the anything-goes approach can lead to utter chaos. The work of one of the most interesting Los Angeles firms, Morphosis, avoids both extremes. Its two principals, Michael Rotondi and Thom Mayne, have always had an essential belief in architecture as a process of compositional investigation and an interest in the sculptural handling of exterior form and interior volume. But at the same time their designs manage to seem perfectly at home even in architecturally modest surroundings, especially the beach-front communities of Los Angeles where several of their houses have been built, including their most recent (and one of their most successful), the Lawrence house in Hermosa Beach. This is architecture that can be taken for more, but it does not demand to be.

The standing seams of the siding and the nine-pane square windows, *above*, emphasize the grid that was the designers' primary conceptual pattern. *Opposite:* In contrast to the High-Tech exterior, the interior has an almost classical mood, especially around the central half-cylinder that rises the full height of the house. The pair of columns and pediment-shaped clerestory skylight (over the kitchen) add to that feeling as well.





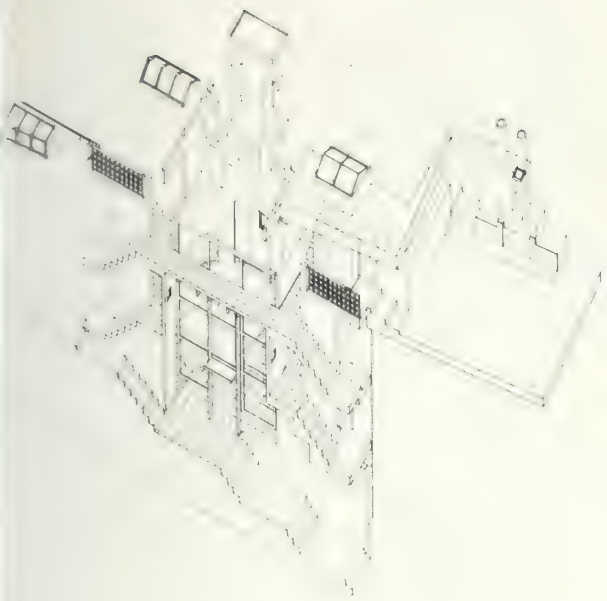
Built for a middle-aged couple who wanted to live near the ocean, the Lawrence house faces a low row of houses across the street, behind which is the Pacific. To afford the owners the view they wanted, the architects placed the main living areas on the uppermost of the house's four stories. That sense of verticality—inevitable if any significant amounts of interior space were to be wrested from the narrow 30-by-85-foot plot—has been boldly emphasized by a semi-cylindrical shaft that rises to the roof just inside the glass-block wall of the entrance, tucked away in an alley on the north side of the house. The architects' decisions to develop the interiors laterally (rather than in the conventional front-to-back format of the typical town house) and to group those areas around the rotundalike entry hall give this house a feeling of psychological spaciousness despite the fact that none of the rooms within it are physically very large.

Adding to the spatial variety that one would have thought impossible to achieve within the confines of the restricted rectangular site is the architects' extensive use of circulation spaces and level changes. Steps up and down create further stories within the four main floors, and the transition from one room to another is emphasized by making the connecting passages, whenever possible, into architectural "events." Interestingly, though some forty percent of the interior space is devoted to circulation, one does not get the impression of an endless march, typical of many Post-Modern interiors. The Lawrence house has a sure sense of presence, inside and out: one knows when one has arrived, where one is, and later that one has been there, a significant achievement in a time and at a place where such certainty cannot always be taken for granted. □

By Martin Filler. Editor: Elizabeth Sverbeyeff Byron

Looking up from the front door, *above*, one can see into the clerestory that surmounts the strongly vertical space.

Opposite, top left: An axonometric drawing shows how the interior spaces have been developed laterally from the entrance on the side elevation. *Opposite, top right:* The entrance is framed with translucent glass block, which is also used in the sleekly sensuous master bath, *far right*, which in turn looks out into the half-rotunda of the central hall, *right*.







The false perspective created by angled walls gives the entry hall an illusion of greater depth. Black ceramic vase by Niedermaier. *Opposite*. The view down into the entry hall.



ENGLISHING A BROWNSTONE

Mario Buatta translates a distinctive look for a European couple in America

BY GABRIELLE WINKEL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY EDGAR DE EVIA

Many Americans derive a great deal of comfort from the idea that there will always be an England, and consequently English things—from *Masterpiece Theatre* to Barbara Pym novels to a distinctive style of English décor. The latter now flourishes in the decorating work of New York designer Mario Buatta.

One of Buatta's most recent Englishing projects was the transformation of an American-city brownstone into a

nineteenth-century English town house at the request of a European-born writer and his family.

The basic four-story structure lent itself easily to Anglicization. Buatta was given a head start by the architectural details in the house, including the twelve-foot ceilings, tall windows, Ionic columns and pilasters in the hallways and rooms, sculptured cornices and arched bookcase niches. The furnishings were chosen in compliance with

The library's leaded-glass bay window with window seat, *right*, looks out to the rear of the house. Walls and upholstered furniture covered in Georgian Scroll chintz by J.H. Thorp. *Above*: Arched bookcases frame one of several working fireplaces. Needlepoint pillows are from Trevor Potts Antiques, New York.







The cozy library perfectly illustrates the English use of pattern and different styles of furniture. Upholstered pieces were designed by Mario Buatta. Both the Regency multicolored needlepoint rug with brown-and-gold background and the 19th-century black lacquer pembroke corner table are from Trevor Potts, New York. Hurricane lamp at right from Frederick P. Victoria, New York.



In typically English fashion, paintings in the living room, *above* and *opposite*, are hung with taffeta ribbons and bows. Yellow silk curtains and glazed walls keep the sun in. Blue-and-white petit point rug is from Stark. Empire-style jardinières from Joseph Rondina, New York.





A red lacquered Chinese chest with a collection of porcelains faces the dining-room table, *above*. Tablecloth is made of a fabric called XVII Century Antique Damask from Scalamandré. Cadenet Stripe curtains from Brunschwig & Fils frame the garden view. *Right*: The shell-pink master bedroom, says Buatta, has “the feel of a Bonnard painting.” At foot of the bed, a rococo bench. Pratesi linens on bed; curtains, headboard, and dust ruffle are Rose and Laburnum by Cowtan & Tout.

an unwritten English decorating dictum—classic English coziness and comfort come from the mixture of periods and patterns.

Favored antique furnishings found during several New York-based decorator/client shopping trips include a Chinese-style cabinet and rococo benches and several needlepoint rugs. Additional pieces were designed by Buatta and covered in an array of English prints and patterns.

Each room has the owners’ “English-casual-relaxed” requirement, but perhaps none more than the library, the family’s favorite. “We covered the

entire room in the same fabric so the off-center window doesn’t suddenly jump out at you,” Buatta recalls, “and having the pattern all around makes it very cozy.” (Perhaps the room’s coziest touch is an often-used bay-window seat.) In the living room, where three windows insured plenty of sunlight, Buatta added yellow walls and curtains to “keep the sunshine in 24 hours a day.”

In a way, Mario Buatta has proven that the sun need never set on the British Empire, or at least not on its much-loved sense of domestic style. □

Editor: Kaaren Parker Gray







LIVING THEATER

A classically inspired apartment
by architects Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti

BY HEATHER SMITH MACISAAC PHOTOGRAPHS BY NORMAN McGRATH

Miniature grand entrance hall, *opposite*, with its like-scaled bull's-eye mirror and antique Italian obelisk, is tucked neatly behind one of three bays, *above*, created by the glorified column-and-lintel system.



Were a Hollywood director to seek out *the* Manhattan pied-à-terre for his latest feature, he could find no better than this one co-produced by architects Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti. From the refined reception hall with its checkered marble floor and discreet staircase to the soignée main salon, the stage is set as much for a starlet's grand entrance as for the comings and goings of a client whose diamond business keeps him hopping around the world. But what would send our director from Los Angeles into complete abandon would be the indoor/outdoor staging that this apartment affords, for of the square "pied" of this Upper East Side base, almost as much is "à-ciel" as "à-terre."

Interestingly, the work and concerns of Machado-Silvetti could not be further from a stage-set approach to design. In fact, according to Machado, their scheme was "an early reaction to an early-detected problem"—that is, the overdecoration, overpolychromy, and overreferential thrusts of Post-Modern architecture. This is not to say that Machado-Silvetti chose an opposite tack; the apartment is decidedly more Neoclassical than Modern. But the architects wisely opted to let their client's request for "something serene" stand as the tallest order.

From a former renovation and a jumble of maids'

rooms on the top two floors of this 1890s town house, the architects shaped a well-ordered series of spaces, using classical notions in keeping with the grandeur of the lower floors and façade. A parallel column-and-lintel construction transformed an awkwardly proportioned room into an elegant salon with clearly defined living and dining areas. Materials and objects are as carefully chosen and placed as props for a set. Brass and marble quietly enrich the columns and niches, as well as the grand fireplace that anchors the longitudinal axis. Piranesi prints of antique figures inhabit three of the four corner niches.

The fourth niche opens up to the narrow stairway that leads past the second-floor bedrooms and out to a delightfully fresh and formal version of the salon below, al-fresco drawing and dining rooms reminiscent of trellis rooms in French gardens of the mid nineteenth century. Furnishing a room open to the sky with a fireplace and mirror, a famous stunt performed by Charles de Beistegui in his Le Corbusier-designed apartment, would seem to be the architects' vote for the permanence of their work. Sadly, it seems that Hollywood-style ephemerality, at least, was in on this project after all, for last they heard the client had moved and their stage had been "struck." □

Editor: Elizabeth Sverbeyeff Byron



Placement of the elegant furnishings strengthens the formality and symmetry of the main salon. *Opposite:* Superscaled fireplace commands the room, but by means of its rotated-cube sides and slanted-marble top and bottom, it also draws the seating into an intimate circle. *Above:* Richly draped silk curtains lend a romantic flavor to the disciplined pearl-gray interior; prints (in niches) and the upholstery of the dining-room chairs add a dash of Pompeian-red pepper. *Below:* Antique tapestry offsets the supremacy of the fireplace on the opposite wall and brings the dining room into the "garden."







In the rooftop dining and drawing rooms, equally well-suited for sunbathing or wine tasting, lattice is strictly architectural; plants are confined to clay pots. Paint spells out the final order—deep green for floors, lighter blue-green for upper wall panels, and white for the moldings, wainscot, chair rail, and fireplace.



Two views of the loft's hallway offer different perspectives on the Judy Pfaff wall piece, a lively work that the artist installed over a six-week period. The costume on the faceless mannequin, *right*, belongs to Freidus/Ordovery Gallery performance artist Michael Berkowitz. Other objects include a maquette for an outdoor sculpture by Niki Logis, on top of chest by Stevan Jennis.

A SOHO ORIGINAL

New York art dealer Robert Freidus's own collection is a fresh combination of photography and contemporary art

BY MARY ANN TIGHE PHOTOGRAPHS BY OBERTO GILI







Doors commissioned from artist Joe Neill are the entrance to the loft. All the furniture is vintage Art Deco. On the front wall, a series of Lisette Model photographs, and, on the left, grouped images of water towers by Hilla and Bernhard Becher, exemplifying the owner's interest in showing photographers' work in depth, as well as his belief that black-and-white photos can function effectively as decorative objects.

About eight years ago, because he thought it might be a good way to meet new people, Robert Freidus, a tool wholesaler in New York City, decided to turn one floor of his industrial loft building into a combination living quarters-art gallery. He had never had any art courses and didn't especially like museums. Even today Freidus says that "the idea of getting dressed up to go and visit a piece of art is strange to me." But instinctively he felt that a gallery of his own might be fun. In the metalworking-tool business, he had had experience handling objects, learning to respond to their abstract physical properties. And, in a curious way, this absence of formal training made Freidus open to any kind of visual experience, enabling him to assess contemporary work with a fresh eye.

Relying on instinct and enthusiasm, Freidus began with photography and sculpture, since, in his idiosyncratic view, "they're both really similar because they deal with real space." With advice from some experts, including a family member trained as a photographic historian, he began mounting shows, purchasing something from each of his exhibits. Then a group of major photographs was offered to him and he couldn't resist acquiring them for himself. Freidus also discovered that many artists were happy to trade their work in exchange for tools.

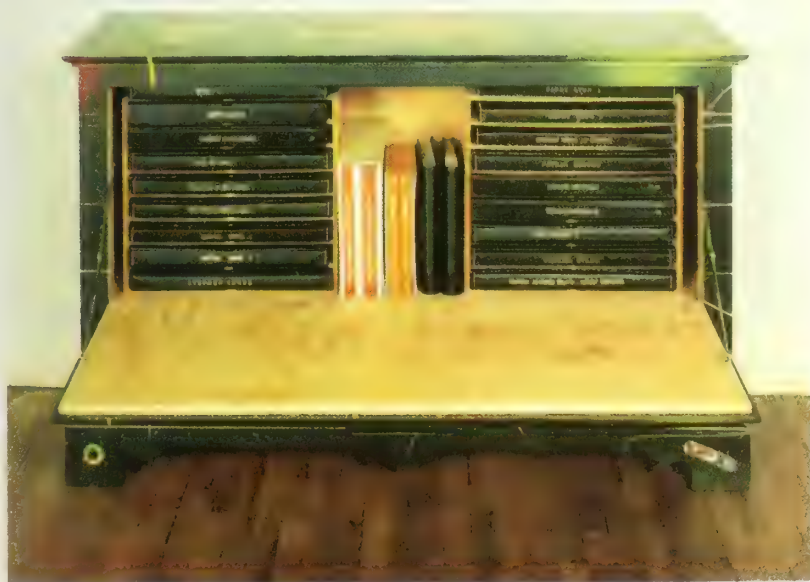
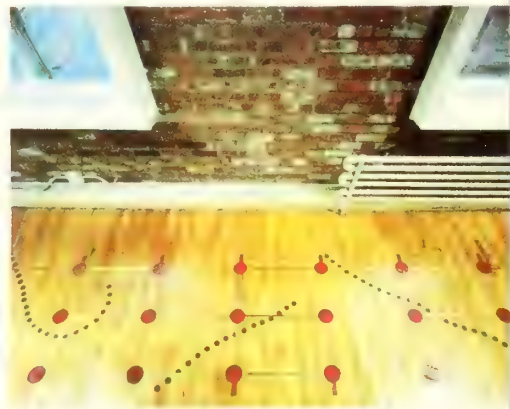
Before much time passed, Freidus had filled two floors of his building—each 3,500 square feet—with the evidence of his compulsion. "Collecting is like catching a disease," he reflects. "When I started selling, I assumed that if a collector bought something from me this month I could forget about him for a while. But an art collector is always buying, or at least always wanting to buy. That's the passion. Little by little I caught the craving to live with beautiful objects."

(Text continued on page 252)





The Richard Artschwager "piano," *far left*, was Freidus's first major purchase. The photos are from Lee Friedlander's Shiloh series. *Left*: A mélange of Deco objects occupies the loft's main sitting area. The French enamel-on-copper pots, two of them by Fauré, were obtained in a trade. *Below*: The floor near the kitchen was designed by John Christian Anderson, inspired by a photo made by the same artist, which is also in the Freidus collection.



A modern evocation of a Colonial blanket chest commissioned from artist Stevan Jennis, *far left*, opens to reveal its contents, *left*: Freidus's rare complete collections of photographic series by masters of the medium, among them Walker Evans, Harry Callahan, and Duane Michals.



In the bedroom, *above*, English antiques, a Jackie Ferrara sculpture (foreground), and Joe Neill's lyrical wood relief, floating above the bull's-eye mirror. *Below*: The master bathroom, complete with sauna and a Jacuzzi in the 5-by-6-foot pool table, was designed and built by artist Bill Stone. *Opposite*: Over the 1890 pool table, the landmark Police Headquarters building is visible. The owner traded artist Judy Pfaff tools in exchange for the stick figures on the window sill.







A Hymn To Ruin

BY WILLIAM HOWARD ADAMS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANÇOIS HALARD





The Désert de Retz, created by an eighteenth-century hedonist, is an outdoor encyclopedia of Romantic obsessions

Hidden at the edge of the forest of Marly yet only a few hundred yards off a major highway running west out of Paris, what is left of the Désert de Retz survives behind a great crumbling wall. Begun in 1774 within earshot of the revolutionary decade, the Désert is the most extraordinary garden folly conceived in that folly-haunted age. In the gloom the trespasser can barely recognize the phantom outlines of a seemingly remote and undecipherable past as he stumbles through an opening in the wall. The air of apprehension felt in the place is heightened by the hum of cars on the expressway nearby, an unease that also comes from the threat of the watchman's dogs announced on a posted sign. Colette claimed that no armed prowler would spend the night there and she was probably right.

The apparitions buried in the vine-infested snares of the Désert are a group of buildings—some hardly more than piles of stone—which in their original design and condition must have been one of the most delightful and audacious garden dream worlds ever invented. When Cyril Connolly first saw the abandoned park twenty years ago he called it “a splendid hymn to ruin” and in a way it has been that from the day its creator the Chevalier de Monville moved into the contrived ruin of the Column House, the main building of his pleasure grounds.

Monville's house was itself a daring conceit—a house disguised as a gigantic broken Tuscan column fifty feet in diameter and over eighty feet high—motivated by a monumental and uncompromising egoism. Concealed inside the damaged column the six-story house consisted of a central spiral staircase serving each of the floors where elegant little oval rooms were grouped around it. Thomas Jefferson, who visited the Désert with his friend Maria Cosway in 1786—“How grand the idea, executed by the remains of such a column,” he later wrote—adapted the circular floor plan of the Column to his Rotunda at the University of Virginia. Windows were recessed within the deep fluting, except for the top floor, where a glass ceiling was concealed behind the jagged top of the column resembling a “fragment from some colossal building which like the tower of Babel had provoked the wrath of God,” the Prince de Ligne reported.

Almost as remarkable was the exquisite Maison Chin-

oise placed at some distance below the mutilated tower in a dell overlooking a lake. Ligne claimed it would have been approved by the Emperor of China, “un model en recherches.” Damaged by soldiers during the last war, the teakwood pavilion nevertheless survived in prolonged dilapidation until it simply disappeared one day into the reeds and wild iris at the edge of the silted pond. When Colette saw it in 1953 she noted with fine irony that she was not referring to the current war in the Far East when she wrote that “one wing of the Chinese edifice has just fallen, the rest is crumbling. . . Is intervention indicated? If so it had better be soon.”

Although it was too late to salvage the delicately painted and paneled retreat with its vase-shaped chimneys, the bells hanging on the corners, and the bamboo pillars, there was some renewed effort to preserve other parts of the park that were left. The collapse of the Chinese House so outraged André Malraux that he was able to push through a special law in 1966 enabling the state to make periodic repairs on what remained in spite of the private owner's indifference to the steady disintegration. Not only had the most perfect chinoiserie garden pavilion in Europe disappeared but other elements of the Désert had also vanished and much of it through willful neglect. Those had included an obelisk of painted tole, a Chinese orangery, a thatched cottage and a dairy, a military tent also made of tin, and an extraordinary entrance built in the form of a natural rock grotto. An engraving in Le Rouge's *Jardins Anglo-Chinois* shows a couple slipping into the garden for what appears to be an evening of amusement. Perched above the visitors on the rocks on either side of the entrance are two fauns holding flaming torches dramatically aloft. One might think that the fauns were a couple of Monville's servants dressed (or undressed) for the occasion, since the place conveys a certain decadent air. Research has dispelled such fantasy by turning up an inventory listing two painted metal statues that fit the figures in the plate.

What does survive—the Column House, the Temple of Pan, the open-air theater, a splendid pyramid designed to serve as an ice house, and the actual remains of a thirteenth-century Gothic church—are still capable of evoking the basic outlines of the original Jardin Anglais that like the Chinese pavilion (Text continued on page 222)

GROTTO ENTRANCE AND GOTHIC RUIN

The theatrical satyr-guarded entrance into the Désert de Retz from the Forest of Marly, *opposite*. Like all the engravings of the garden's original fantasy structures, this one is from Le Rouge's *Jardins Anglo-chinois*, 1785. *Preceding pages*: The surviving fragment of a 13th-century Gothic chapel abandoned in the 17th century. By the end of the 18th, deterioration had transformed it into a ready-made garden “eye-catcher” and Monville incorporated it into his romantic plans without alteration.





COLUMN HOUSE

"The column, broken at the top and 48 feet in diameter, in which Monville has devised a perfect distribution of rooms, is completely his own idea. . . ." the Prince de Ligne wrote. "It is higher on one side and, from this side, one sees an immense sub-foundation which gives the impression of a height great enough to incur God's jealousy as did the tower of his first children." Trees and vines crowding in on the Column House today heighten the feeling of ancient neglect, but major structural work has reinforced foundations and walls. Careful cosmetic restoration on the exterior and in rooms are all that is needed to return the building to its original condition.

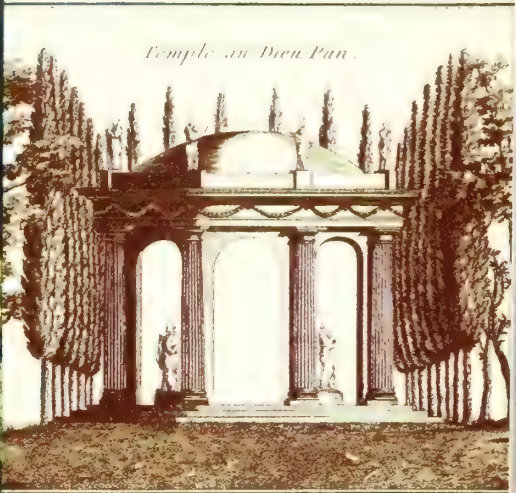




PYRAMID

A form that appealed to Neoclassical architects of the late 18th century, whose source of inspiration was the much-admired tomb of Caius Cestius in Rome, the pyramid was almost universally used as a cenotaph to a dead hero. The pyramid at the Désert, surrounded by tall, elegant, funereal poplars, actually served as an icehouse for drinks and food but its ultimate use was to be a tomb. The restoration of the pyramid under the supervision of Olivier Choppin de Janvry was one of the first preservation operations undertaken at the Désert.





TEMPLE OF PAN

With Monville's sensual tastes it is not surprising that the pleasures of music, painting, gardening, architecture, the table and the bed dominate the organization of the Désert. Behind the half-circle façade of the Temple of Pan, which resembles the ruined Roman Temple of Vesta at Tivoli, was a small supper room—only the back wall still stands—where Marie Antoinette once picnicked with a small group of courtiers.

A HYMN TO RUIN

(Continued from page 215) was far more French in style than the foreign label it had acquired. Beneath the seemingly natural setting of trees, shrubs, and waterways was the work of the concealed artist manipulating, shaping, and directing nature into the most artfully tortured garden composition. A sensuous network of paths once united the various structures and garden elements and it is possible that the appealingly perverse order of the promenade was laid out for some secret Masonic ritual.

During the eighteenth century garden design had undergone a major revolution both in England and on the Continent. The fashionable generations of the 1750s and '60s in Paris could no longer tolerate let alone support the grand châteaux and their formal garden layouts inspired by Le Nôtre's legacy. "The taste for magnificence, for great palaces and sumptuous châteaux had almost died out with Louis XIV," Louis-Philippe wrote in his memoirs, recalling the duc d'Orléans his father's generation who looked to England for its political as well as its gardening inspiration. They could not have cared less for the great baroque architectural statements left over from the Grand Siècle. "All the owners of these buildings had their little houses which they preferred; it was in these that they broke free from the restrictive grandeur of etiquette and for magnificence and display they substituted comfort and freedom. . . . What were called English gardens won preference everywhere. . . ."

The duke scored brilliantly among his gardening rivals when he hired the Scottish gardener Thomas Blaikie to work on his garden projects; but Blaikie's diary recorded a supreme contempt for what passed as an English garden in France and neither Marie Antoinette's Petit Trianon or Monville's Désert impressed him.

"He [Monville] had formed a garden and a path to his own designs adjacent to the forest of Marly, where he made his château in the form of an old round tower with a staire in the middle surrounded with flower pots which made a tolerable agreeable effect," Blai-



In the outdoor theater trees have today taken center stage, top; originally they formed wings and proscenium, above.

kie wrote of the Désert in his diary. "The whole of the park was a Labyrinth of rather narrow crooked walks without forming many agreeable landscapes. . . ." During a recent walk through the undergrowth on the edge of the park, I discovered the remains of an English Ha-Ha that once provided an unbroken vista from the Temple of Pan out over the neighboring field, refuting Blaikie's charge. In the distance the picturesque view framed the roofs of the ancient abbey of Joyenval, another ruin that Monville was able to appropriate into his scheme even though it actually belonged to a neighbor.

A companion of the duc d'Orléans who suffered from the same Anglomania was the builder of the Désert, Francois-Nicolas-Henri Racine du Jonquois, Seigneur du Thuit, Chevalier de Monville, whose accomplishments seemed as remarkable as his name. Born Racine, Monville's titles were quickly added just before his brief mar-

riage, but as Gerald Murphy, who knew something about living well, marked, "the invented life was the one life worth living." Invention seemed to be in every detail of Monville's life. It is one of those charming, illusive figures who move tantalizingly in and out of the letters and memoirs of his age but leave little firsthand evidence. What we wouldn't give for a memoir or a portrait by Vigée-Le Brun of him posed at the door of the *Colonne de la truite* holding his iron bow and a quiver of arrows.

Without any visible means of support aside from a minor post at court and a large inheritance, Monville enjoyed a reputation as a superb dancer, tennis player, and horseman. He loved music and played the harp well enough to accompany Gluck. Blaikie also confirms his reputation as "the best Archer in France and perhaps in Europe. I saw him at the chase shoot with his Bow and Arrow Pheasants flying and many other things equally dextereous."

Extravagant, bored, and handsome, his bedroom exploits were celebrated—though Rose Macaulay has hinted that a fascination with ruins might be a sign of sexual frustration. A memorialist of the day, Chamfort, repeats the story of King Louis XV, who accused his mistress Mme. Esparbès of sleeping with all of his subjects. "You have had the duc de Choiseul." "He is so strong." "The Maréchal de Richelieu." "He is so witty!" "Monville." "He has such handsome legs," she replied with a sigh. Monville's seduction of the mistress of the chief of police of Paris assured him of a high-placed enemy who managed to keep him under surveillance as the rake moved among his high-placed friends on the eve of the revolution.

As with most amateurs with too much ability and a penchant for the exotic—William Beckford and Lord Byroners come to mind—history has had difficulty in accepting all of Monville's reputed achievements. No doubt much of Monville's creative energy was spent to ward off the boredom that seemed to assail members of the *ancien régime*, a boredom that could be broken only with enormous effort. Hunt-

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ing, music, architecture, the designing of gardens, and the compulsive changing of bed partners are the ways Monville devised for escape. His talents for survival like the talents displayed in the Désert suggest that he was more successful than others of his age.

A dashing courtier, musician, and sportsman with the architectural imagination of a Surrealist painter is simply not convincing. Hubert Robert, for example, was originally given much of the credit for the design of the Désert for obvious reasons. Later Etienne-Louis Boullée, the renowned visionary architect, became the prime candidate. The confusion has been cleared up through the work of Olivier Choppin de Janvry, the architect who has carried out extensive research. He has supervised the sporadic conservation, notably of the pyramid and the shoring up of the structure of Column House, and has established Monville's dominant role in collaboration with the otherwise obscure Parisian architect Barbieri.

Descriptions of the furnishings of the Désert are sketchy, but judging by Monville's taste and the quality of the decorations of the Paris house designed by Boullée they would have been impressive. Dufort de Cheverny's account of a visit to Monville's Paris house gives us a picture of the urbane, even operatic splendor in which Monville lived.

"I climbed eight steps and entered a very hot stucco room furnished with a magnificent stove. A valet opened and closed the double doors, and I found myself in a gilded antechamber lit by a chandelier with eight candles and by six pairs of candelabra with three branches. At the far end I saw an impressive sideboard laden with finery; a clock chimed and through the paneling, came the strains of a piece by Rameau for several instruments. I passed into the first salon adorned with projecting columns, brilliant with concealed lights and resplendent as a sunlit day. I continued and came to a most elegant bedroom all in crimson velvet fringed with gold. . . I imagined myself in a fairyland palace or in a palace from the Arabian nights. I proceeded into another room and saw Monville, superbly dressed, posed writing in front of a porcelain desk, exquisitely handsome and pleasing. . ."

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Louisville, Louisville Galleria
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Boston, Faneuil Hall Marketplace
Burlington, Burlington Mall
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Nantucket, 14 Centre Street
Salem, Pickering Wharf
Sturbridge, Rte. 20 at Sturbridge Village

MISSOURI:

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Kansas City, Bannister Mall

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Omaha, Westroads Shopping Center

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Humble, Deerbrook Mall
Plano, Collin Creek Mall
San Antonio, North Star Mall
Tyler, 4300 Richmond Rd.

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Salt Lake City, Crossroads Plaza

VERMONT:

Winooski, Champlain Mill

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McLean, Tysons Corner
Norfolk, #240 The Waterside

WASHINGTON:

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WISCONSIN:

Madison, 319 State Street

CANADA:

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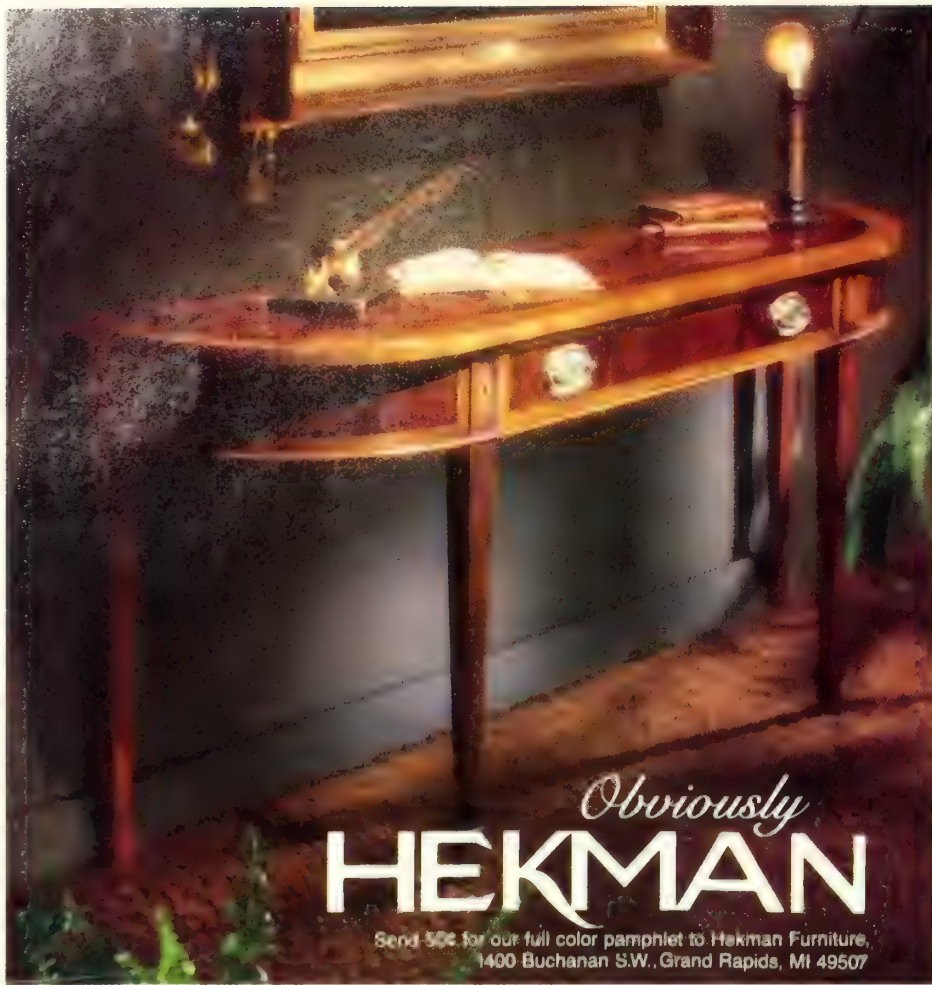
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A HYMN TO RUIN

In the next room the visitor discovers a windowless Turkish salon lined with mirrors and lit by a skylight. "The doors of this enchanting retreat move in slots conforming to the shape of the room. A secret device in the wall, when lightly pressed, opened them with marvelous expedition." Chevrny fair swooned when he heard yet another small orchestra of wind instruments playing in a hidden alcove nearby.

The furnishings at the Désert were undoubtedly much simpler in keeping with a country retreat. The ground floor contained the salon, the dining room, the main bedroom, and the sunlit entrance hall lined with terra-cotta pots of heliotropes, geraniums, carnations, periwinkles, and arum lilies. The furniture was painted gray and covered with toile de Jouy. The windows were hung with plain fabric bordered with toile de Jouy in Indian patterns. Like many men of the Enlightenment, Monville was fascinated with scientific experiments so he installed a laboratory on one of the upper floors.

When Mrs. Thrale saw Monville's Paris apartments, she called them "obscene." The nude female figures painted in trompe l'oeil on the columns in one of the rooms were too much for the English visitor. The place struck her as having been "conceived on the model of the apartments of a Roman emperor." Such style in his living and person made some people, especially blue stocking ladies like Mme. de Genlis, the governess of the Orléans children, uncomfortable. Mme. de Genlis's description of the Chevalier—"a great suitor, young, a widower, rich, and very handsome, noble and romantic, but not of the court"—has something of the tone of a rejected admirer. She probably only meant that he was not among the 942 families who could trace their genealogy to the fourteenth century thereby qualifying their descendants for admission to the royal circles of Versailles according to Louis XV's formula for solving the housing problem.

Jacques de Tilly thought Monville mediocre but admitted that he had what it took to charm and be liked by the most distinguished people of his day. It was an impressive set and it is said that Marie Antoinette visited Monville at the Désert, where he kept a botanical library, to get his advice on

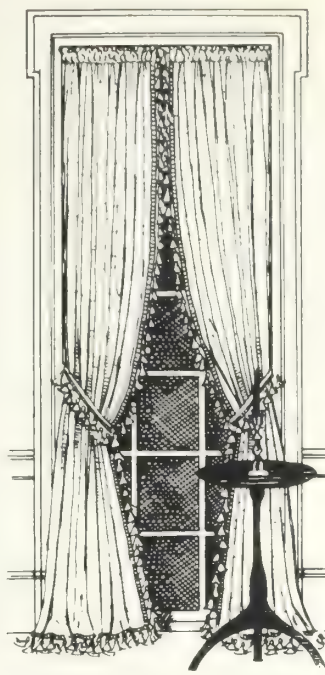
rdening matters. The Queen over-
oked the fact that her host had once
een the lover of her enemy Madame
u Barry as she pursued her horticultu-
ral interests with her neighbor.

He was having dinner with his friend
e duc d'Orléans when the latter was
rested by the revolutionary commit-
e in 1793. When the duke protested
s arrest to Monville, his companion,
ho was preparing to eat a freshly
illed sole, coolly replied, "It is terri-
e, my Lord, but what can you ex-
ect? They have gotten all they want
om your highness and are simply do-
g with you what I am doing with this
mon squeezed of all its juice." And
ith that, he tossed the lemon halves
to the fireplace, reminding the duke
eat his sole while it was hot.

Monville survived the revolution
at his Désert was confiscated, the fur-
shings sold and some of his more ex-
ic trees and plants, including some
om America, were taken to the bot-
anical gardens in Paris. In order to
ve his skin, he tried to sell his town
ouse to his friend the playwright
eumarchais for £400,000 but with-
ut success. An Englishman with the
nlikely name of Disney Ffytche
ought the Désert in a sale of confisca-
d property during the chaos of 1792.
onville in the meantime hid in the
e de Clichy entertaining and charm-
ig friends of all political persuasion.
e died in his bed in April 1797 after
sacrificing himself to all the girls, a
fferent one each night," Tilly wrote.
aving passed through a number of in-
fferent hands in the nineteenth and
ventieth centuries the Désert is now
wned by a Paris investment group,
ot a comfortable curator of such a
easure. An international effort could
ill be mounted to save and restore
onville's garden fantasy before all is
ost; but as Colette wrote thirty years
go, it had better be soon. □

CORRECTION

n the August book column, *Bertram
Grosvenor Goodhue* by Richard Oliver
ould have been listed as part of the
American Monograph Series, which is
ublished by the Architectural History
oundation and distributed by The
MIT Press.

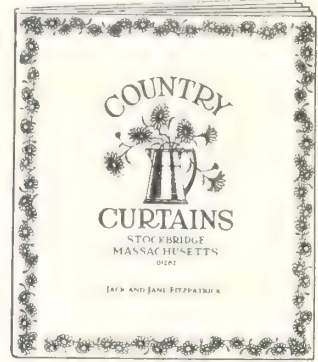


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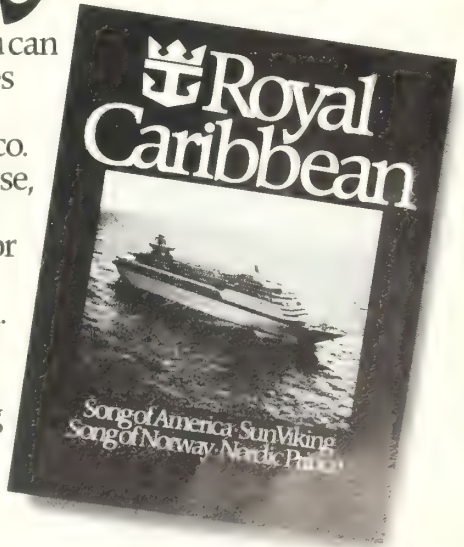
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HIGH STYLE IN JAMAICA

(Continued from page 130) Donghia's achievement here as a decorator, not unlike Ralph Lauren's as a designer, lies not only in his having restored a Colonial classic but in his having adapted that classic to a style of life markedly American in its comfort, simplicity, and ease.

"The air of the fifties was in the house," Donghia concedes, "but the scale and proportions were so wonderful—high arches and high, high ceilings. And practically no walls—it was all windows, just big giant windows everywhere to open up and let the air of the fifties out! And ten-foot-high mahogany shutters, and mahogany floors. I added moldings, changed all the trims, stripped coats of paint off those shutters, and polished the brass I found underneath.

"I'd already decorated the Laurens' Fifth Avenue duplex, and the one thing Ralph has always said to me is, 'Angelo, I want it to be not good but great. So go all out.' You can see why he's my ideal client."

With Lauren's encouragement, Donghia even decided to oversee the landscaping himself. "It was something I'd never done for a client before," he confesses. "But I'd had a lot of experience with my own house in Key West, which I subsequently sold to Calvin Klein. Anyway, in places like Jamaica and Key West, you can't go wrong as long as you garden with a machete—you just have to keep slicing everything back, it grows so violently."

After cutting nature down to size, Donghia rectified a man-made mistake. "We tore out the pool," he says. "It was too small for the scale of the house, so we designed a bigger one. There was an old coral stone wall near the pool, intertwined with really thick vines, and I had the idea of putting a big wonderful Jamaican shingle roof over it. We made a bar in there, and a place to eat."

We drift back to the main house; the not unmysterious scents of botanical exotica outside mingle with the delicious smell of flowers coming from within. Donghia pauses at the threshold to explain that the previous owner had used the entrance that went right into the living room. "I designed a fountain and water-lily pond to block that access. And I reactivated a little entry hall that wasn't being used.

"Ralph and I discussed all the fabrics for the house, which are really just white duck and white canvas. With Ralph, everything is always basically white, white or blue. He doesn't like pattern. That's very much his feeling about things—he likes calm and peace. He has to deal with color all day and he wants a change when he goes home."

In Montego Bay, Donghia found a highly skilled cabinet-maker; he also ransacked the shops for native crafts, coming away with several rugs made out of banana leaves. The antiques for the house he bought in Los Angeles and New York—"mostly that wonderful thirties bamboo."

"My own win on the house," Donghia says, "is that when it was finished it didn't look as if I had done it, it didn't look as if it had been done. It just looked natural, underdecorated. Anything that's overdecorated Ralph hates. He loves simplicity—simplicity with style. And he hates lack of quality.

"I wear only Ralph Lauren," Donghia makes a point of mentioning. (The son of a small-town Pennsylvania tailor—his first job, at age eleven, was decorating his father's shop—he went on to be elected to the International Best Dressed List's permanent Hall of Fame.) Does Donghia try to im-

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HIGH STYLE IN JAMAICA

merse himself in the ambiance of every client, the way an actor researches a part? If, for instance, he were decorating a house for Claude Montana, would he wear Claude Montana clothes to get in the mood for the job? "That's not my look," he replies matter-of-factly. "I like Ralph's classic clothes. That's why we see eye to eye—because we're both drawn to classicism. You can't date his clothes, and that's the way his houses look, too.

"Ralph Lauren's clothes," says Kennedy Fraser, the fashion critic of *The New Yorker* and author of *The Fashion*



McGuire chaises around the redesigned pool

ionable Mind: Reflections on Fashion, "are comfortable-looking, self-assured, profoundly satisfying—they have a distinct air of peace; they happen even to be quite pretty and flattering. In other words, they're perfectly nice, you know, but the world was always full of things just like them that were perfectly nice but that were never quite given this kind of uniform coherence, this cohesive image that's very bound up with the way one lives and what one is socially.

"It's even gone over well in England. Which is interesting, because Calvin Klein, I don't think, ever made a mark there at all. And Ralph Lauren is selling the English look—the *idea* of Englishness—to the English! That's what's so ironic. And that's what's so clever. Of course, it *is* somewhat modified—it fits better than the real English gentry look."

But Ralph Lauren is more than a catalyst marvelously adept at pulling threads out of the social atmosphere and summing them up through a product; he is a creative stylist who in 1976

became the only American designer ever to win Coty awards for both men's and women's clothing.

Anne Hollander, an art historian with a special interest in costume history, and the author of *Seeing Through Clothes*, places Ralph Lauren high in the catalogue of costume design. "The most remarkable development in costume in the last three hundred years," she maintains, "was that of ready-to-wear garments: that is, how to make a whole lot of clothes fit, with minimal alterations, a whole lot of people—particularly in male dress, which was begun and promoted, mainly by Americans, at the very beginning of the nineteenth century and which came out of the mass-producing of military uniforms. It was not until a hundred years later, the beginning of *this* century, that women's mass-produced clothing became interesting. Ralph Lauren is a wonderful way-station in the history of this progress, because of course he uses those classical characteristics of tailoring that made it possible for one thing to fit many people. He goes back to those magnificent inventions that are still not out of date, such as lapels, neat shoulders, stitching—the fundamentally conservative-looking design that is revolutionary in its origins. And the way you can tell it's original and revolutionary is that it's still good, it works, and everybody loves it."

The quality of the product aside, people like the label—it's a kind of instant club. Less than ten years after Lauren chose the name Polo—because, he says, it had "that vaguely English sense to it"—Prince Charles was sighted wearing a knitted cotton crew-neck Rugby shirt with the Polo insignia during a tournament at the Palm Beach Polo and Country Club—living proof of French sociologist Jean Stoezel's definition not of polo but of fashion: "adventure without risk."

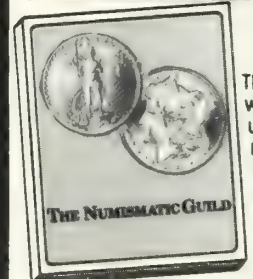
Anthropologist Lionel Tiger sees the Polo insignia as a symbolic statement of a material kind, "a readily recognizable cross-national totem that defines the owner as somebody with notions of taste that are shared by similarly affluent people"—indeed, as part of a whole tendency toward the metropolitanization of systems of taste.

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HIGH STYLE IN JAMAICA

... in economic terms, "what is fascinating about the Polo emblem," Tiger adds "is how readily people are willing to comport themselves in terms of social hierarchy that has nothing whatever to do with their own family or station in life. This emphasis on displaying brand names signifies a commitment on the part of a large contemporary public to enter into the realm of heraldry—a commitment of an almost Renaissance kind, the Renaissance being the age of individual display within a social context." Indeed, as Roland Barthes has reminded us in *The Fashion System*, "in the Renaissance, as soon as one got a new costume, one had a new portrait done."

Ralph Lauren's portrait comes insistently to mind: his presentation of self in everyday advertising life—silver-haired, sun-tanned, smiling, casually dressed in well-broken-in denims and trademark cowboy boots, leading the life of pleasure and comfort founded upon what Anne Hollander calls "the perfect, original beauty of his kind of garment."

But clothing is only one part of the environment. Ice buckets, flatware, sheets, and towels are also part of the continuum which is pleasure. So Ralph Lauren who began with clothing, next to the skin, can—without a pause and without its seeming in any way odd—move outward from the skin to the room, and "dress the home." He recently launched, in collaboration with the textile firm of J.P. Stevens, nine complete "lifestyle" collections of "home-furnishing theme packages," including more than 2,500 individual pieces. The collection was hailed as the most complete of its kind conceived by a fashion designer.

The names of Lauren's nine lines are characteristically iconographic: "Thoroughbred," "New England," "Color," "Cottage," "Cricket," "Mariner," "Safari," "Log Cabin"—inspired by his new ten-thousand-acre Colorado ranch, the "RRL" (for Ralph and Ricky Lauren).

And finally the "Jamaica" line—"an island of refinement in home furnishings... a romantic fantasy environment... an aura of old-world elegance in a contemporary milieu"—inspired by his Montego Bay estate. Thus do Ralph Lauren's dreams and the world he lives in coincide. □ Editor: Kaare Parker Gray

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(Continued from page 162) admiration in the Far East) and Eero Saarinen's TWA international terminal at Kennedy Airport in New York. These swooping roofs, together with the gilded Islamic domes (one surmounting the Surao, or prayer room, the higher one enclosing elevator equipment), make the overall effect of the exterior of the Istana much like that of a peculiar pavilion from the 1964 New York World's Fair.

Entering the palace is no easy matter, even when one is expected. Although the Istana Nurul Iman has an impressive front gate—behind which

stand Gurkha guards in Brighton Pavilion-style sentry boxes—one's arrival route is surprisingly circuitous. A heavily manned (and armed) pillbox to one side of the main highway fronting the Istana is the initial point of vehicular entry (you had better not arrive on foot), and for security purposes the long and winding road from there to the palace snakes around for miles before one arrives back behind the unused front gate, ready to begin the final ascent up the steep incline to the front door of the Istana.

Actually, one will be allowed to use that ceremonial portal only if one is a

visitor of considerable importance; otherwise your car will be directed to one of the two gaping garage entrances that flank the travertine-and-rosewood porte-cochère. Beneath the palace is a huge, immaculate, and depressing car park, certainly a nonregal way of arriving at any building, especially a royal palace. Except on great occasions of state, the garage is eerily empty beyond the section in which the sultan's extensive fleet of automobiles is kept: Rolls Royces in a spectrum of black, white, red, and gold, Lamborghinis and other sports cars in a similar array of colors, some sixty luxury conveyances in all.

If the typical Muslim home possesses a strict separation between public and private domains, then that is especially true of the Istana Nurul Iman, for it is not just a residential palace but a state palace as well, accommodating many functions that a capitol building would fulfill in other countries. Thus the public areas of the Istana seem very public, indeed institutional, rather like a cultural center or a convention hall.

In the manner of traditional Islamic houses, the palace revolves around an open courtyard, here composed of four equal-sized rectangular spaces that together form one immense atrium. Three of them have reflecting pools and fountains (including one with a canopied music pavilion that could have been designed by Philip Johnson during the sixties); the fourth is an underground sunken garden. Although the materials are expensive (travertine walls and pavements, rosewood coffering overhead), the atmosphere does not feel truly luxurious. Yet it is remarkably refreshing, a reminder of the psychologically cooling effect that the sound of splashing water can have even when the temperature is 100 and the humidity 100 percent.

A seemingly endless red carpet stretches down the center of the colonnade-encircled courtyards from the formal front door to the stairways that link the entry wing to the Throne Building—the longhouse to end all longhouses—stretched laterally behind it. Even though by now Locsin's tendency to mix his stylistic metaphors has become inescapably apparent, one is still a bit unprepared for his having gone quite this far.

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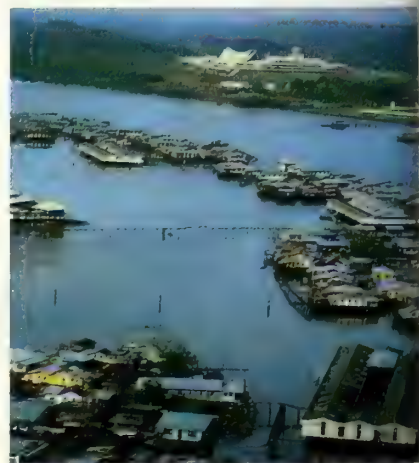
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Standing beneath the glass-roof (and, not surprisingly, stifling) High Tech space frame that shelters the stairs that flank an incongruous escator, one can view the modernized Islamic courtyards, the superscale folkloric Throne Building, the Petrodollar domed tower, and the concrete-balconied private living quarters that are woefully reminiscent of a corporate headquarters building in New Jersey. There is something for everyone, and something from almost every phase of modern architectural history. It has everything except coherence and that diminishes the impact that the Istana would have had if the architect had been able to stick to just one of his many stylistic ideas.

The interiors of the Throne Building, however, do quite a bit to compensate for the feeling of confusion that has set in by this point in one's visit to the Borneo Versailles, for here's where the real fun begins. The interior throughout the palace, designed by the New York-based (but internationally affiliated) firm of Dale Keller Associates, certainly do not lack for the kind of astounding glamour and exoticism that one has come to the ends of the earth in search of. Their scheme has those qualities galore, and as preposterous as much of it seems at first sight, it succeeds surprisingly well in providing an image of a certain appropriateness for the ambitious patron of this grandiose project.

The gigantic Throne Building is divided into three approximately equal segments: the central Reception Hall



Beyond the stilt houses of the Kampong Ayer rise the gold dome of the Istana. (For another view, see page 12.)



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through which one enters; to the south, the Royal Banquet Hall; and to the north, the Throne Hall. It is hard to place a stylistic definition on what the Keller firm has created here, except to say that it seems to derive in large measure from bygone Hollywood.

It is impossible, for example, not to be reminded of *The Wizard of Oz* as one approaches the gold-mosaic triple arch that surrounds the doorway to the Throne Hall, or not to think of *The King and I* as one slowly advances toward the gilded, wing-eaved canopy

beneath which the sultan and his queen (the first of his two concurrent wives) sit on state occasions. As a dozen two-ton crystal chandeliers tinkle noisily under the air-conditioning vents, one would not be startled if "The March of the Siamese Children" were to commence forthwith. In fact, the interiors recall not just movies, but movie palaces: is there, perhaps, a Loew's Borneo or a Grauman's Malay Theater?

Technically, these vast spaces are as adeptly worked out as those theatrical

comparisons imply: the lighting is frankly stagy but superb in creating just the right effects, especially when the sultan and his diamond-studded queen are ensconced on their thrones and bathed in a positively supernal aura. In that hall, which seats two thousand (on contemporary Danish chairs that are stackable but bear no resemblance to conventional auditorium seating), perspectives were carefully worked out to provide unbroken sight lines for the concealed television cameras that record ceremonies of state for the Brunei channel that broadcasts little else except the sultan's daily public appearances. Loudspeakers are cleverly concealed in flaring, golden-twist torchères that native Bruneians are convinced are based on traditional types, but which in fact are the decorators' pure invention.

At the other end of the Throne Building—at a stately pace, it is a five-minute walk from throne to dinner table—the Royal Banquet Hall is another marvel of mass logistics. What else could one term an arrangement that allows for the synchronous feeding of 4,500 people—the equivalent of 2.25 percent of Brunei's total population? That feat was actually carried off during the recent National Day celebrations, at a dinner that would have made Belshazzar's Feast seem like a potluck supper. In truth, the Royal Banquet Hall proper can accommodate only an intimate group of 450 to dine in uncrowded splendor, so the remainder were seated in the adjacent open courtyard and under the mirror-image reinforced concrete pavilions (inspired by Le Corbusier's famous capital city of Chandigarh in India) that flank it. On the story beneath the Royal Banquet Hall are enormous service kitchens, which come to life only on such grand occasions.

Acting as a kind of buffer between the most public and most private portions of the palace is a whole series of lesser rooms suitable for a host of events of varying hierarchic importance: there is the so-called Sitting Hall, which is in fact a secondary throne room, the seat of grace there being a very ornate Chippendale armchair under a gold-and-silver brocade-draped canopy; the Titled Persons' Room, a parliamentary-looking council chamber paneled in dark

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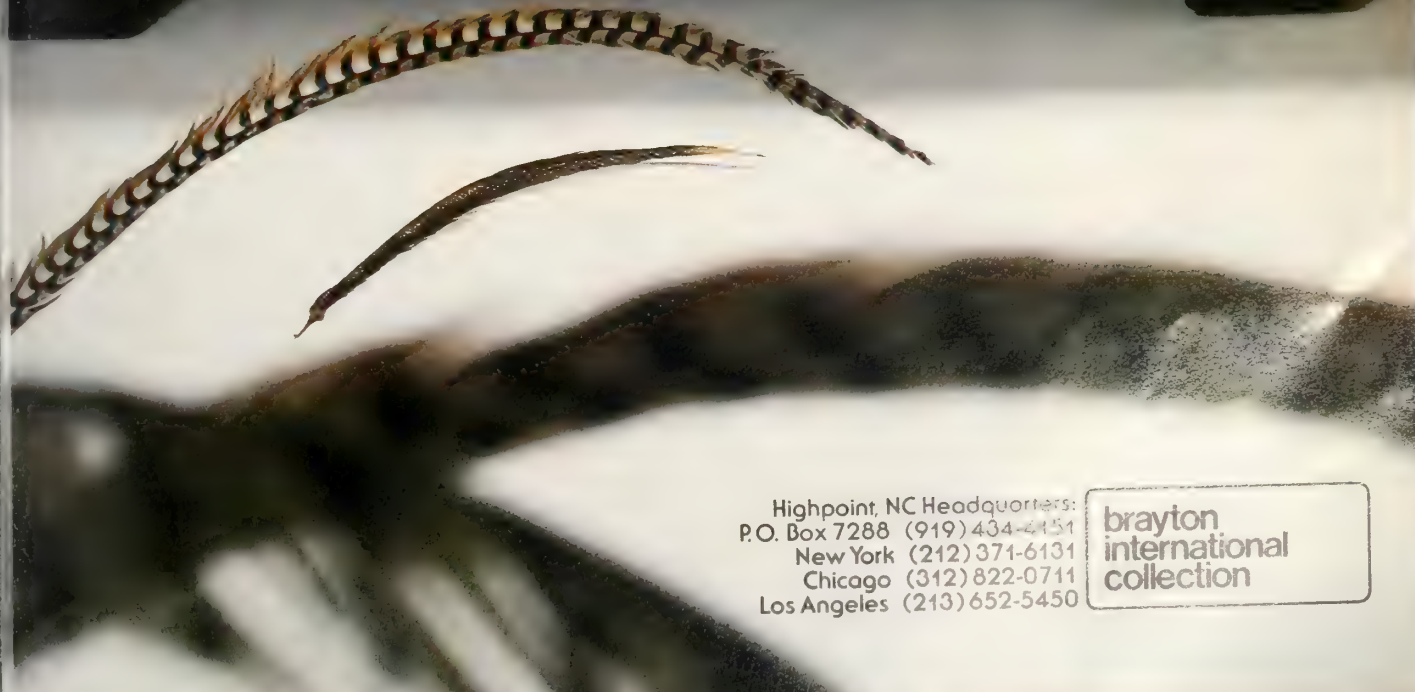


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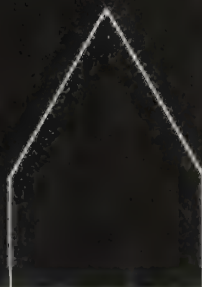


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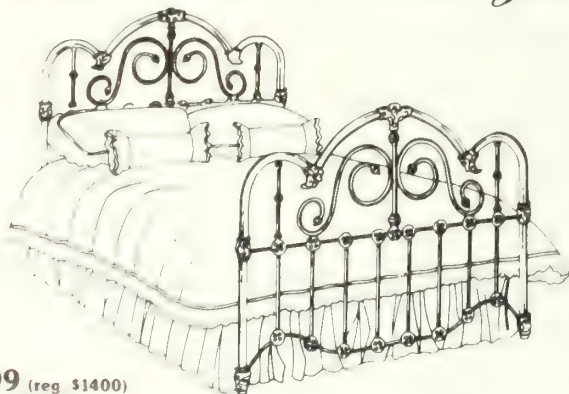
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A MODERN XANADU

green velour and verde antique marble; and a series of audience rooms used for visits of the least formality above the personal level. These range from those with the chilly modern anonymity of a VIP lounge at an airport to the most eye-filling of them all, an apricot octagonal salon.

Here the incredibly ornate furniture—bulbously baroque armchairs and settees heavily gilded and upholstered in the most opulent velvet brocade imaginable—is ranged around the perimeter of the room in the characteristic Arabic fashion, both to obviate hierarchic differences and avoid the gaffe (and, in days gone by, the danger) of sitting with one's back to another. Windowless (as all the preceding rooms are), devoid of art, and swathed in a cocoon of plush fabrics, it is so hermetic that even the suffocating heat of the outdoor portions of the palace comes as a welcome relief after



An octagonal audience room, top, is encircled by an ornate suite of heavily gilded furniture, detail above, upholstered in opulent velvet brocade.

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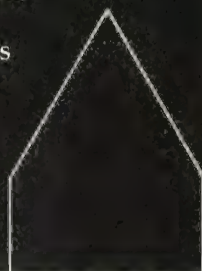
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A MODERN XANADU

short time inside this jeweler's display case of a room.

Certainly the most pleasing of the interiors at the Istana is the Surao, or prayer room, a domed circular sanctuary that is as visually refreshing for the infidel as it is spiritually restorative for the faithful. A calming oasis of blue and white amid the unrelieved richness of the rest of the Royal Palace, the design of the Surao was closely monitored by the Grand Mufti of Brunei, the sultanate's spiritual leader. He was responsible for the calligraphy of the Koranic verses that encircle the room; the inscriptions were dispatched to Saudi Arabia for proofreading before they were sent to England to be cut from brass sheets character by character. The Grand Mufti also decreed the moving of the mihrab—the sacred niche that must point precisely toward the holy city of Mecca—when he found it to be three degrees off from his calculations. The Surao's columns thus had to be repositioned as well, but this was a less difficult alteration as they are merely decorative, not structural.

Thus far, we have accounted for only very few of the Istana's almost 1,800 rooms. Where are all the others? For the most part, they are used for governmental and administrative purposes, as well as maintenance, mechanical services, and storage. Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah is also his country's Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, and Minister of Internal Affairs (his father, who abdicated in his favor in 1967, is Brunei's Defense Minister, one of the sultan's brothers is Minister of External Affairs, while another is the Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sports, as well as Deputy Minister of Finance, making the government of Brunei pretty much a family affair); the monarch's offices are located in the Istana, as are those of the army garrison maintained there for his protection.

Actually, the sultan and his family occupy a private suite of only about twenty rooms, although the residential north wing of the palace contains space enough for eight additional duplex suites, which have been left unfinished pending the future needs of the ruler's children (a son and five daughters, by his first wife, the queen, who now awaits another child; one son by his second wife, who is also expecting; it is said that the sultan will soon take a

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third wife, four being the limit allowed by Islamic law).

Obviously, the sultan's domestic requirements are unusual by Western standards, and even the largest palace in the world has turned out to be not big enough for the sultan's entire ménage. Plans are now under way for the construction of a so-called "mini-Istana" for the sultan's second wife, and it is to be expected that any subsequent spouses would receive similar establishments of their own as well.

Although the personal portions of the royal palace are off limits to photographers, the interiors there are anything but majestic. The sultan, seated in shirt sleeves in his black Naugahyde swivel chair in his wood-paneled study, might well be mistaken for an industrious young Singapore accountant. And although the royal family's personal servants wear traditional Malay garb, most of the palace staff tends toward T-shirts, designer jeans, and jogging shoes. This is not Windsor Castle, with

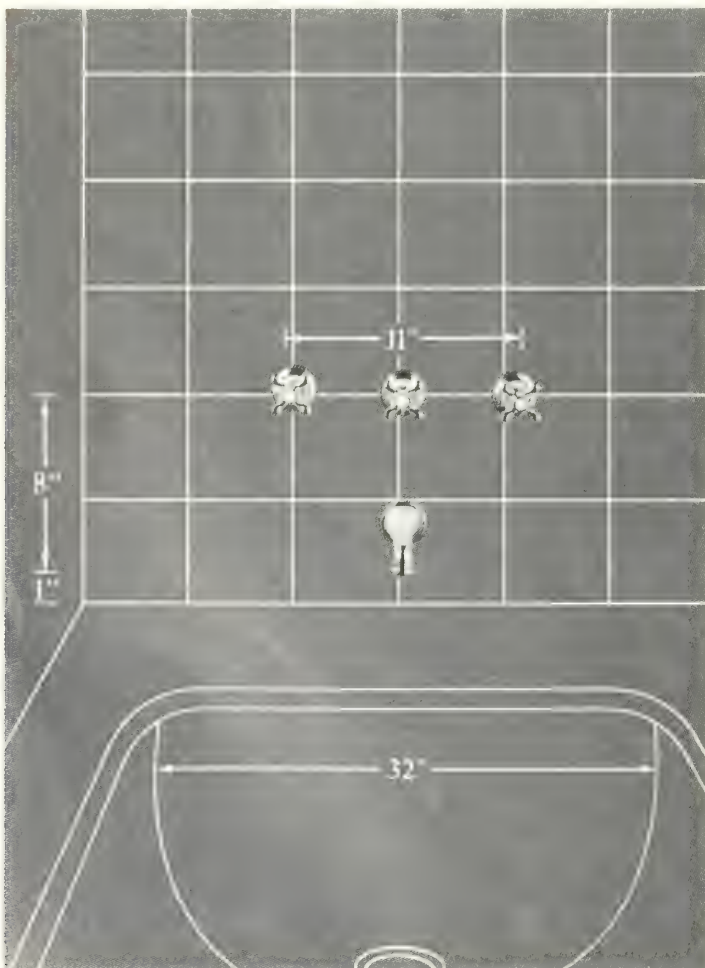
punctilious flunkies in immaculate livery day and night.

For all its attempted architectural grandeur, this pomp and circumstance on the veritable edge of the Borneo jungle is in the end almost comically Graustarkian. Still, as a serious effort to deal with a serious design question, the Royal Palace of Brunei bears comparison with other earlier efforts of the same sort.

In truth, the Houses of Parliament in London, built to the designs of Sir Charles Barry and A.W.N. Pugin between 1840 and 1865, were in their time no less of a stylistic concoction than the Istana is today. Although they were meant to summon up the imagined splendor of the Age of Chivalry, the Houses of Parliament bore absolutely no resemblance to any medieval structure, and in their overall form and minute detail were resolutely Victorian (though many took the design in all seriousness as convincing archaeology; others found it to be a modern mon-

strosity). Today, however, it has attained the unassailable status of national icon, having become the peerless symbol of all that is English about England and its architecture. Will the same someday be true of the Royal Palace of Brunei? That certainly was the intention of Sultan Hassanal Bolkiyah who recently brushed aside criticism of the Istana's incredible cost with the assertion that "This palace has been built for my descendants."

In due course, the palace might well become the kind of self-fulfilling architectural prophecy that has been known to occur when a strong design is imposed on a relatively undefined setting. It is unlikely, however, that this astonishing building will be seen by future generations as a timeless work of art or a par with the great architectural achievements of Islamic civilization. Still, it will be interesting to see if Brunei eventually lives up to the startling image it has acquired along with its sultan's 1,800 rooms with river view. □



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JOURNAL



VENI VIDI VENETIA

Venice: The American View (1860–1920), Legion of Honor, San Francisco, through Jan. 20, 1985.

Whistler, Sargent, and Prendergast set the standard for American artists who rendered the beauty of Venice. Maurice Prendergast's *St. Mark's Venice (Clocktower)*, circa 1898–99, left, stylistically flirts between Romanticism and Modernism. It embraces Carpaccio's love for color and Prendergast's own devotion to Japanese design—another Oriental influence on the Venetian Indo-European culture. This colorwash is but one blossoming of aesthetic passion for Venice in an exhibit of about 120 works. Often the panoramas of her crowning Byzantine, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque architectural jewels overlap, but one never tires of the view. *Titian Butash*

SHADOW BOXING

Manhattanites are always looking for a little space and light. Artist Susan Chorpenning was happy to oblige in her recent installation,

below, called *549 West 52nd*, at New York's Women's Interart Center. Projecting ever-changing light patterns on the gallery walls, Chorpenning paints with light on a canvas of architectural space. *AP*



PENN ULTIMATE

Irving Penn, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, through Nov. 27

Irving Penn has facetiously been described as the last of the great Victorian photographers. Indeed, the still poses and neutral backgrounds that characterize most of his photographs lend them a directness and formal simplicity reminiscent of early studio daguerreotypes. Behind these qualities in Penn's work, however, lies not naïveté, but an acceptance, even celebration, of the artifice of the medium—an approach he prefers to what he calls "simulated naturalism." The momentary and accidental have no place in his work; his subjects exist in the timeless isolation of the studio, deliberately posed and divorced from their natural context.

Much of Penn's work over the past four decades was commissioned by *Vogue*, including the *Still Life with Food* of 1947 and the *Woman with Roses* of 1950. (The model for the

latter, Lisa Fonssagrives, became Penn's wife the year this photograph was taken.)

Also chronicled in this show are Penn's portraits of the famous; his justly admired photographs of



Woman with Roses, 1950.
Top: *Still Life with Food*, 1947

ethnographic subjects, and the startling "Street Materials" series. What unites this disparate output is Penn's remarkable vision, which brings the same classically composed elegance and cool abstraction to photographs of New Guinea tribesmen, *haute couture*, and dirty cigarette butts.

Ann Priester



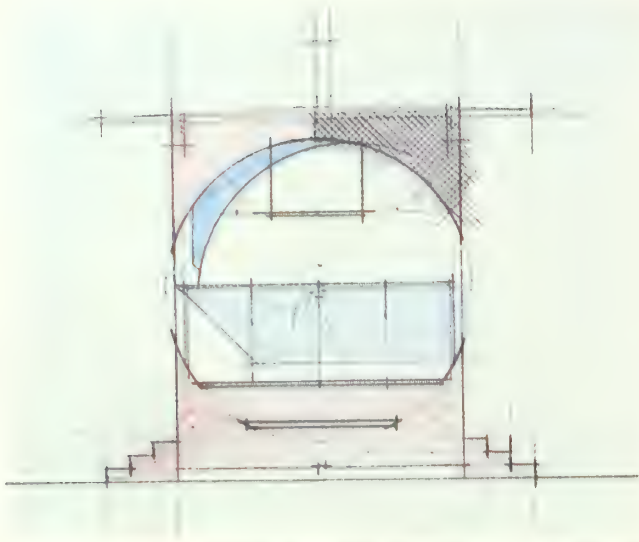
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TRACES OF GREATNESS

Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown: A Generation of Architecture, Arts Club of Chicago, through Nov. 3. The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., Nov. 17–Jan. 12, 1985.

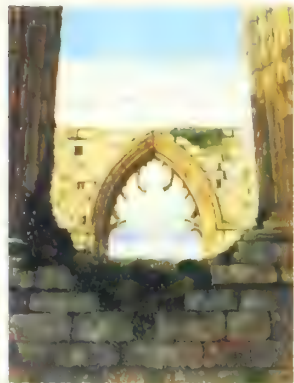
The new appreciation of the architectural drawing as art object has led many professionals to take up the medium in a self-conscious manner that succeeds neither as art nor idea. But

here is the real thing: 154 drawings, including this 1968 sketch for the Hersey house project, *left*, by the trailblazing firm of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown. Organized by the Kranner Art Gallery at the University of Illinois, this is an exhilarating display of the architectural design process at its most visually febrile and conceptually fertile. A superb catalogue designed by Raymond Perlman illuminates VR&SB's historic contributions. *Martin Fille*

BARE RUIN'D CHOIRS

A Landscape Explored: Wharfedale at Bolton Abbey. Francis Kyle Gallery, New York, through Oct. 7.

The search for the romantic and the picturesque that



sent British tourists abroad in the eighteenth century eventually focused on England itself, and by the turn of the century Wharfedale had been "discovered" by artists such as Girtin and Turner, as well as the poet Wordsworth, who recommended to "all lovers of beautiful scenery, Bolton Abbey and its

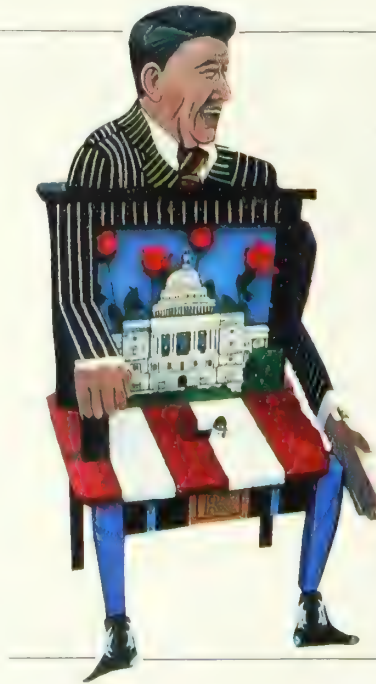
neighborhood."

Countless easels have since been set up on this three-mile stretch of Yorkshire dale. "A Landscape Explored" is thus as much a tribute to the place as to the tradition of British landscape painting. Organized by Lord Hartington, whose father, the Duke of Devonshire, owns this part of Wharfedale and the ruins of Bolton Abbey, and Francis Kyle, a London gallery owner, the exhibition contains the work of nine contemporary artists who set out to interpret anew a landscape already familiar in art if not in life.

The results include photographs, oils, water-colors, poems, and etchings by Liz Butler, Jack Chesterman, Howard Eaglestone, Ian Gardner, Andrew Griffiths, Simon Harling, Grahame Jones, Gerald Mynott, and Graeme Willson, whose *Nave, Bolton Priory*, is shown, *left*. A charming companion guide is available in limited edition.

Amy McNeish

SITTING PRESIDENT



Joseph Polinski's unthrone *Reagan Chair*, 1983, *left*, is true-blue political expression from the tip of Mr. President's allegedly Grecian Formuloid head to the toes of his spur-spangled cowboy boots. This painted wood construction is part of "Beyond Tradition: Eleven Contemporary Folk Artists" a show of about 40 paintings and sculptures at The Katonah Gallery, Katonah, N.Y., Oct. 28–Dec. 30.

TIME-TESTED RECIPES



Fifteen hundred gastronomy books go under the gavel at Sotheby's, New York, on October 9 and 10. From a Renaissance book by Mesisburgo (one of its woodcuts, *left*) to an early manuscript on vegetarianism to Carême and Escoffier, the auction offers slices of life from five centuries.



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A SOHO ORIGINAL

Doors, floors, even the lavish bathrooms were made not by conventional craftsmen but by artists Freidus has come to know

(Continued from page 208) At first, Freidus bought photographs one or two at a time, but frustration soon set in as he came to feel that this approach to collecting had no guiding philosophy. "Just seeing a photo on a wall, alone, made no sense. The process [of assembling a distinctive body of objects] seemed endless, shapeless. Without establishing some boundaries, you could never say your goal had been reached."

So Freidus began to gather his pictures in groups, buying a particular photographer's work in depth, usually conforming to some established body of images—a book, for example. All 83 prints of the first edition of Robert Frank's landmark text *The Americans* are in the Freidus collection, one of only a few sets known to be complete. (Another, with two more prints Frank added later, is in The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.) He also has all 213 of Lee Friedlander's monument series and is now assembling Brassai's *Secret Paris*, totaling 124 pictures when complete. Freidus mats each photograph and then binds them in specially made books that permit perusal of the real images as easily as a printed text might be read. "I think of each group of pictures as one piece of work. Together the photos read as a single narrative, which is, I feel, the great achievement of contemporary American photography. Its greatest practitioners, like Walker Evans or Robert Frank, were able to describe the atmosphere of a city or town, to capture a sense of place."

Freidus is not such a purist about his personal philosophy that he is unwilling to break a set up in order to display work in his loft. In fact, it is a point of pride for him that by clustering pictures photography is more successful decoratively, not eclipsed by furniture or painting and sculpture.

Over the years, Freidus's ambitions for his gallery and his collection have grown. Taking a partner, Al Ordovery, he opened a new, larger, more prominently located SoHo gallery and increased his involvement with painters.

In addition to making special purchases for himself—the Judy Pfaff wall piece was bought from another gallery, not through his business—Freidus also began giving commissions to artists for particular areas in his loft, now an entirely residential space. Doors, floors, a chest to hold his photographic series, even the lavish bathrooms were not made by conventional craftsmen, but by artists he has come to know. "I still want someone to do the air-conditioning duct," remarks the house-proud owner.



Robert Freidus in his New York SoHo loft.

Despite the fact that many of Freidus's pieces could be considered radical, there appears to be a consistency to his taste, a shape to his vision. While this unifying strain is hard to define, it is nonetheless perceptible in the fact that this unlikely combination of objects—photography, painting, sculpture, mannequins in costumes, English antiques, colorful abstract installations, Art Deco ceramics and furniture ("the last time furniture was both comfortable and beautiful," according to Freidus)—no single piece jars the eye in an unpleasant way. The sprawling space is exciting, active, but enjoyable and easy for all its lack of conventionality.

As a visitor departs, Freidus pauses by an ersatz piano, the work of sculptor Richard Artschwager. This plastic-laminate and horsehair object was Freidus's first major acquisition. "This piece is a real litmus test for people.

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They just don't know how to deal with it. It's not a piano, so then what is it? Reality and unreality—that's what so much of it is. Doors that aren't doors, floors not actually floors. I love it. I



Hanging like a tiny canopy over the bed in Freidus's loft is a painted wood construction by Stephen McKeown.

don't worry about what anybody thinks. They ask, 'What do you do with them?' As if I needed a reason to have them!"

There is a happy postscript to this story. Freidus did indeed meet someone through his interest in art. Last summer he married Ellie Packer, a British curator he encountered in connection with an exhibition of Scottish paintings held at his gallery. Ms. Packer isn't sure she likes all the art in her husband's loft, but that's all right. Freidus wants to start acquiring a few pieces for a country house. □ *Editor: Babs Simpson*

GARDEN MADNESS

(Continued from page 151) linoleum and demolished a shacklike fifties addition (later replaced with the experimental courtyard). From the start, both Thomas and Hodgins knew the interiors had to be neutral. Thomas says, "I'm thinking about color all the time, so I've got to have a neutral background. I can't take any more busyness going on than what's already in my head."

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are now the main purposes of the property since in the middle of the project (Tori fell in love, got married, and set up a second residence in Middleburg, a half-hour away), the most important part of the renovation was the replacing of the fifties addition with the changeable outdoor room for Thomas's smaller garden experiments. It has a wall of sliding panels to represent different window and wall configurations. Its grass floor can be covered with other materials, such as gravel or sand, for garden-sculpture projects, and it can be channelized for some water-garden projects she has in mind.

"I'm thinking about color all the time, so I've got to have a neutral background. I can't take any more busyness going on than what's already in my head"

But first she will be working on the computerized hillside—"a wild-flower mixture that's programmed to stay within its color selection so you always have a yellow band, a white band, and a blue band." Then will come the cutting garden of glass flowers and a project she calls Dancing Trees, both of which she will describe no further. "This is an event space," Thomas concludes. "I want to use it to delight people. It's a place to demonstrate strange landscapes that there's really not a market for yet. But to delight people, that seems pretty basic to me." □

Editor: Kaaren Parker Gray

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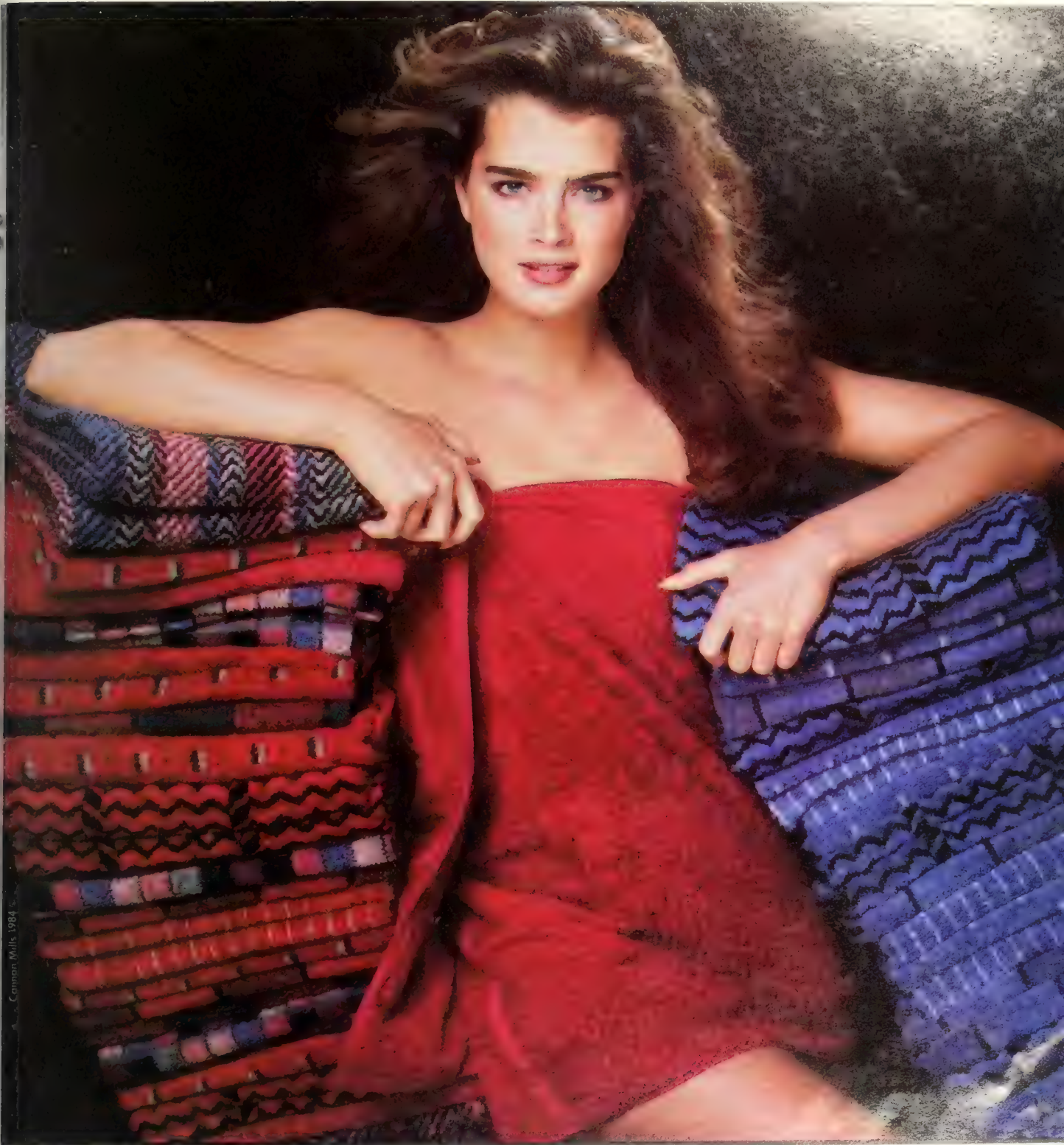
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GOOD BREEDING

After a wild start in Asia Minor,
the modern iris settled down tame and colorful

By Henry Mitchell

The greatest of garden pleasures is, of course, the iris; chiefly because it is the showiest of all garden flowers and any nitwit can grow it provided there is sun and good drainage. I, alas, no longer grow it well, either because I have entered the sub-nitwit class or because the greatest of all floral beasts refuses my heavy damp acid garden. Oh, I still grow a few. But what you want is a grand sunny enclosure with clematis-tangled cedars and dame's violets and a fine big mirror of a pool with scarlet fishes and lily pads, and a sea of irises: the tall bearded ones. In the fifty-odd years I have loved this flower, I have loved others, too, but never been unfaithful in any real sense. One is supposed to have in the brain a colored picture that one can conjure up at times when all seems worthless and lost, and it is safe to say that more people probably have the iris there—usually a sky-blue one—in that safe recess where no moth can corrupt, as it were, than any other flower. What other image could there be?

You must know that every year hundreds or thousands of new garden varieties of iris come forth from the seedling patches of the Western world and each of these strikes its breeder as a flower of infinite charm, though nobody else may see anything unusual in the production. What is not generally known is that the Iris Season, a phrase always ut-

tered in capital letters by iris growers, is much the same as far as the pitch of excitement goes, generation after generation; so that while it is true that today's irises are far brighter, better shaped, and more substantial than those of the past, still the gardener's excitement when they bloom is identical with the grand excitements of, say, 1927.

At that time, there were no good

whites, no good yellows, and the pinks were at best rosy lilac and the blues were, at best, overcast lavender. The reds were on the muddy side and were only a little redder than brown on the one hand and purple on the other. There were stratagems, however, in those days. Yellow was the worst gap. We planted kerrias and yellow pansies and roses and the earliest day lilies and hoped for the best and, if I may say so, achieved it. Nowadays, however, one can settle for the very cheapest of irises in any good catalogue and acquire irises in every iris color, every one of which would have made the iris grower of the late twenties faint with disbelief.

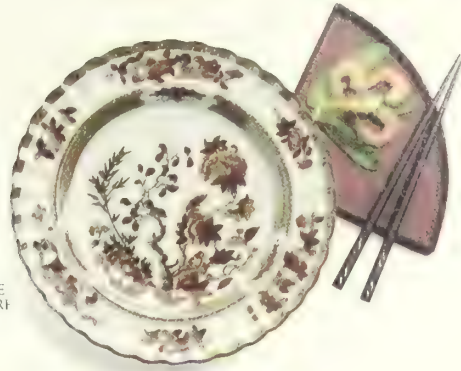
The first thing the right-thinking gardener learns is the importance of yellow in an iris garden. All the other colors are welcome but all the others are merely pleasant faces, as you might say, until you introduce the yellows (at least 25 percent of the irises should be yellow in various tints), at which point the other colors come alive in a way you cannot believe until you try it. It must have been about 1931 that we got our first great yellow, a chest-high creature with lots of flowers on the extremely well-branched stem, called 'Alta California'. I was a kid then. Dr. Mann, a physician up the street, was a billionaire (or so I assumed for some years) who did spectacular things, such as writing a check for 25 quite hard



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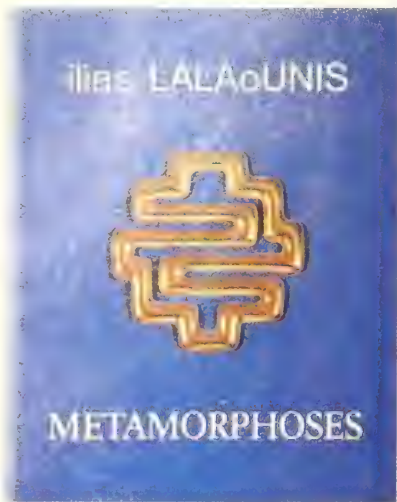


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dollars to acquire a new iris. He had imported, at incredible expense, irises from England and France. The names of Millet, Cayeux, Pilkington, Bliss, Vilmorin, Dennis, Foster, Dykes mean little to the current generation of iris gardeners, but they were everything at that time. And then, suddenly, the first great yellow (as far as our crowd was concerned, though there was a somewhat rattier yellow, 'W.R. Dykes'; a tremendous name for a less than tremendous flower) came from Mohr-Mitchell in California. I have to say that I liked being in at the start of the Great Age of irises. The great white, 'Purissima', came out in 1927. Before then, there was no good garden white, not one. And now this amazing yellow.

When I look back, I see easily that all our present riches stem from the merest handful of wild irises, chiefly *I. mesopotamica* from the eastern Mediterranean, *I. pallida* and *I. variegata* from Europe. The European wild irises are diploids; the great mesopotamica is a tetraploid. When they were intercrossed, you usually got sterile triploids, but if you kept at it long enough you could move all the genes of the European irises into the lavender tetraploids of Asia, and with twice as many chromosomes to play with, the new variations seemed (and still seem) endless. The modern gardener rarely reflects on the fact that the greatest progenitors of the iris are the wild species, especially the ones from Asia Minor.

In their day, they were not always much honored. There are some classic cases, such as 'Conquistador', which one great breeder of the time (though not the breeder of this iris, who was S.B. Mitchell of California) called "yus another lavender," since he was not very good at pronouncing the letter J. It was not just another lavender. Bred from it was 'Purissima' itself. There is scarcely a white or blue iris in any garden in the Western world now that does not spring from 'Conquistador', to say nothing of the endless irises of every color imaginable that include it in their ancestry. I don't think it ever won an award, though most recent Dykes medalists (the highest of iris awards) ultimately derive from it. There were problems. The great white 'Purissima', which produced 'Snow



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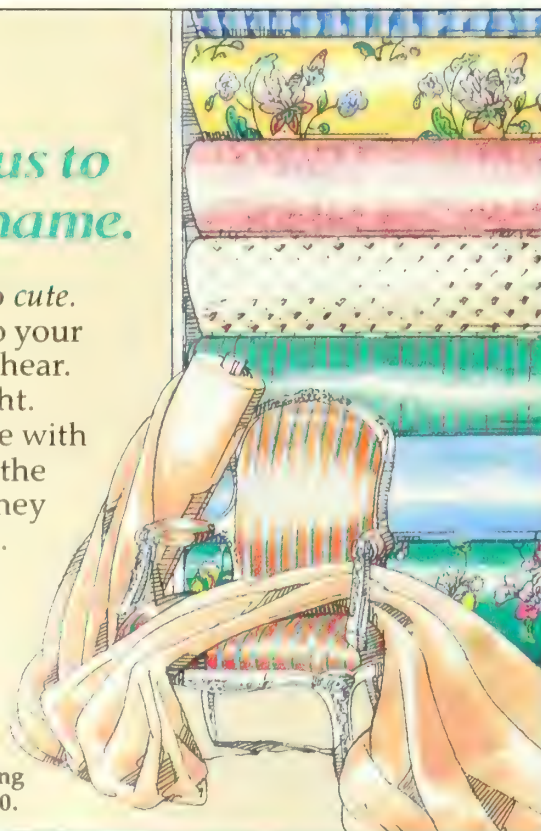
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GARDEN PLEASURES

Flurry' (which produced everything else), was tender to cold, having huge doses of *I. mesopotamica* blood in it on both sides of its ancestry. This did not bother us in the Tennessee-Mississippi border country, but it may have discouraged gardeners of harsher climates when it froze and rotted every winter. It was only when more and more genes from the hardier European species were bred into the mix that descendants of these great irises became reliable glories of northern gardens.

When these old irises bloomed, the iris gardeners of the day went fairly mad, avoiding their offices and their most solemn duties

'Argentina' was an early important white, mother of 'Purissima', though promptly eclipsed by her daughter. Still, there are important irises that descend from 'Argentina' that do not descend from 'Purissima'. Every iris that springs from 'Snow Flurry' (by common consent deemed the greatest parent of modern irises) also springs from 'Argentina' and 'Conquistador' and 'Purissima', and you sometimes wonder why the intermediate ancestor gets all the praise and not the ultimate ancestor; but no doubt it's the same reason we boast about the pedigree of Jefferson and Marshall rather than of the first slime of the prehistoric sea.

When these old irises bloomed, the iris gardeners of the day went fairly mad, avoiding their offices, their surgeries, their most solemn duties. They were out among their flowers; you could always find them in their gardens unless, very briefly, they had dashed at breakneck speed to another iris fancier's garden where (depending on what was blooming in that fellow's garden) they fell either into envy or contempt. It is still the same today, though I believe that with the years the iris gardener has been somewhat harnessed or



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housebroken and does not now invent so many lies as formerly to avoid normal human obligations during iris season. Decades after 'Purissima', one of the well-known national figures of the iris world was in my garden and headed straight for that old beauty of 1927. "What's that?" he said. "That is a remarkable flower." He was chagrined

to discover it was the outmoded ancestor of most of the irises he knew in his own garden. But then I confess I grew 'Purissima' extremely well, the flower stalk 62 inches tall, the blooms (as it happened that day) unsullied by rain, unslashed by wind and unwilted by sun.

The first Dykes medal went to 'San

Francisco', a white stitched with blue, derived from 'Purissima', and like it, sensitive to cold. The better seedling of the cross was 'Los Angeles', but judges of the day (judges nowadays do not make errors, of course) honored the wrong iris. I had both of them, with their great parent, and it was entertaining to notice how often people sailed over to them in the garden, even long after they were superseded as garden varieties.

It must have been about the time of the First World War that 'Aphrodite' appeared. This was a pink. It was as pink as a warm-lilac sweet pea. It had a stem 48 inches high, and when its grower, the great W.R. Dykes, saw it rising above a patch of blue-lavender seedlings of *Iris pallida* type, he promptly named it for the goddess. And he was right. Grown with the blue-lilac irises of that day it was startlingly pink. For years and years it was used as a breeder in an effort to get even pinker irises, but those who used it were on the wrong track. Pink irises came from a totally different and utterly unexpected direction. Not that there is time here to wander off into the pinks, beyond saying that in the forties everybody (all iris fanatics) saw pink where nobody else did. And ultimately produced it, too. Anybody can cross two beautiful irises of the same color and count on getting quite nice irises, not necessarily as nice as the parents, but very pretty all the same.

The reason Paul Cook's name was preeminent among iris gardeners of the best sort (such as our group in Tennessee, though Mr. Cook was a Yankee) was that he did difficult things. Sometimes he introduced wild species into his breeding lines, which meant an immediate setback in form and color. Garden irises, after generations of careful breeding and selection (and the destruction of literally millions of seedlings because they were not advances on existing varieties when they bloomed) had fine flower shape and color. The top three petals, the standards, were firm and domed, not flimsy and flopping. The lower three petals, the falls, were firm and flared, instead of limp and hanging down like a basset hound's ears. The colors had been purified and brightened. The hafts (the base of the fall petals) had been cleaned up of distracting brown veins

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GARDEN PLEASURES

that marred the effect of the earliest garden irises.

So when Cook introduced wild blood into this already-elegant family of garden irises, the results for the first few generations were hideous. Colors were muddy again, the hafts were messy, the stems were short. But his aim was not to produce a field of lovely children from lovely parents, but to produce, eventually, a strain of irises in colors and patterns never seen before, and he succeeded in such a variety as 'Whole Cloth'. He also succeeded in



'River Hawk' and 'Mystique' are two of the best-known bi-tones in these shades.

producing the first truly great deep blue (we called it navy, and it was that, sort of) named 'Allegiance'. We amateurs produced pretty irises by crossing pretty irises together. He, and other great breeders, produced very great irises, very great advances on anything existing at the time, by breeding ugly irises, enduring years of ugly flowers until at the last, by the wonderful segregation of the genes that was sure to come if only the breeder had skill and patience enough, the gorgeous combinations finally expressed themselves in flowers that were startling improvements over what we had.

Of course many, perhaps most, of the lovely irises were produced by sheer luck, which rested ultimately on the serious difficult breeding achieve-

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GARDEN PLEASURES

ments of the past. The great 'Snow Flurry' is the classic example. It is, in essence, a cross of the Asian mesopotamica with the European pallida, but derives more immediately from 'Argentina', 'Conquistador', and 'Purissima'. The breeder, a woman of great charm and a great lover of the iris, made an utterly improbable cross that was almost sure to fail, and she did it not knowing very much about what she was doing. Two seeds were produced in the pod (instead of the expected sixty) and one of them was shriveled. It seemed almost pointless to plant the one seed that looked all right, since you really like to grow several hundred seeds of any particular cross to give yourself a chance for the genes to segregate in beautiful ways. She planted it. It grew, it bloomed, and was a sensation. Like 'Purissima', it was white, but it was also ruffled. Something new. And, while tender in bitter winters, it was still a great deal hardier than 'Purissima'. And the greatest thing about it was that you could put the pollen of almost any iris on it and expect seedlings that would be advances over existing varieties.

In the breeding of 'Snow Flurry' nothing had been added to the long-existing genes already present in the garden irises of the day. But the segregation of the existing common genes was one of sensational beauty. All this beauty had existed from the beginning in the wild irises of Asia and Europe, but only when bred for generations, weeding out, did the flower appear that, so it seemed to us then, had dropped from heaven. One of its parents had twice as many chromosomes as the other, and you would expect a sterile triploid. It was mere accident that the diploid chromosomes failed to divide, so they matched the chromosomes of the tetraploid parent and a fertile (as rabbits are fertile) flower resulted to establish a new dynasty of garden flowers.

I myself, if I could, would like a garden of some of the sensations of past springs. Maybe 'Blue Velvet', which had the velvety look derived from 'Dominion', an immensely important iris



Bearded 'Arctic Dawn',
first listed in 1968.

that first brought velvety texture to iris falls. 'Sierra Blue', 'Cahokia', 'Blue Rhythm', 'Distance', 'South Pacific' are some of the thirty-odd blues I'd like to see every spring. I think I could be satisfied with as few as two hundred of the old discarded kinds, among them the cream and pastel lacquered 'Starshine', the full-yellow 'Foxfire', and dark purple 'Indiana Night'.

It would be perverse of the modern gardener to grow these superseded varieties in preference to current sorts. But I now understand something that was a mystery to me for years. I mentioned 'San Francisco', which came out in 1927. Old Dr. Nash, one of my boyhood garden heroes, raised a seedling of it he called 'Edith'. The flower was enormous, but somewhat floppy and the stem had to be tied to a cane or it went down in the first wind. It had a place of honor in his garden and every spring there it was, leaning every which way with flowers like cantaloupes stuck out at interesting angles. It looked sad, indeed, compared with the irises of his main planting (and those irises, too, would look sad compared to current varieties). I never could see how he grew such a weak flower when

literally thousands of far better irises were his for the asking. Now I know why he kept 'Edith' and the other sad old irises. He remembered the first year they bloomed for him. They were not sad then. They were glorious, the best to be seen. Just as one might have an old hound, somewhat weak in the kidneys and, moreover, demanding to be lugged up and down stairs—worthless, compared to new hounds bright in the field and playful in the paw. But you'd keep the mutt till God (as you might say) called her to Abraham's bosom, and quite an armful she would be, too. In gardens and kennels there is no law that says everything has to be in its prime. We do not live, after all, in the earth's first morning, and we trot through life trailing clouds no longer new.

After the years of loving the iris, I see I know little worth telling anybody new to the prince of flowers, except to have plenty of yellow, to be very stingy with brown and red irises (they make everything look heavy and dull). And do not underestimate the importance of colors you may not like at first, such as milky magenta, and watch out for whites: too many of them give a startled and restless look to the planting. Go heavy on light yellows and light blues, and when in doubt go for clear solid pastels, avoiding irises with several colors blended on a single flower and dark colors except as accents. A planting of just yellows and blues will look poor, not gorgeous as you might think (I tried it, though warned at the time by an experienced gardener), and force yourself to plant the lavenders and lilacs even if you think you dislike those colors. Without them the other colors either look garish or fail to sparkle properly. Get the cheapest, in the colors you like. The cheapest now on the market are infinitely more beautiful than any of the old ones I have mentioned, even if we paid the equivalent of \$250 for a root of them once. When they bloom, in May-June in most of America, you will feel precisely—no more and no less—what gardeners felt in the twenties and thirties and, if it comes to that, from Eden on. □