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The Making of a Room**

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California Style**

**Dream Houses
on a Colorado Ranch,
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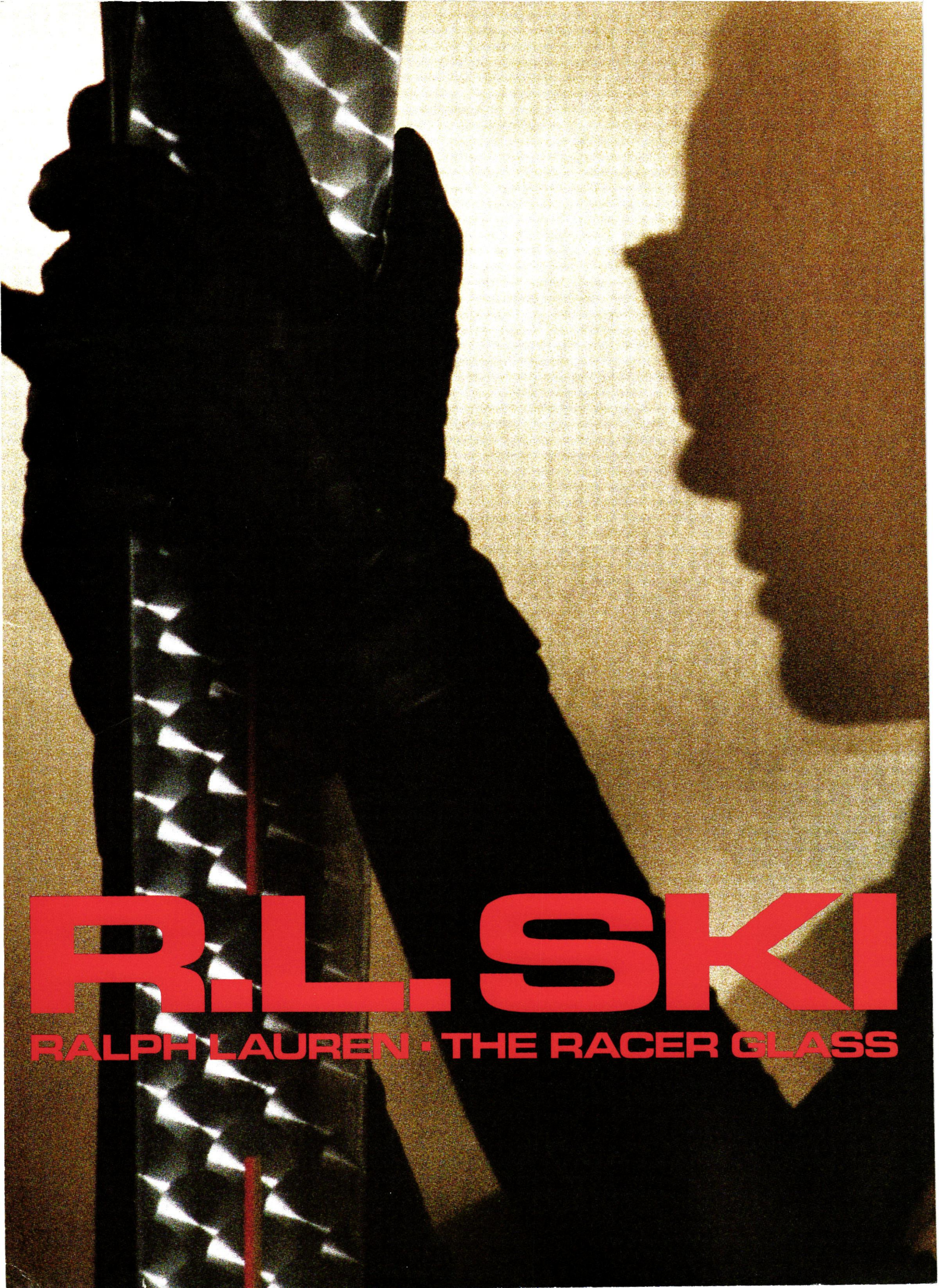
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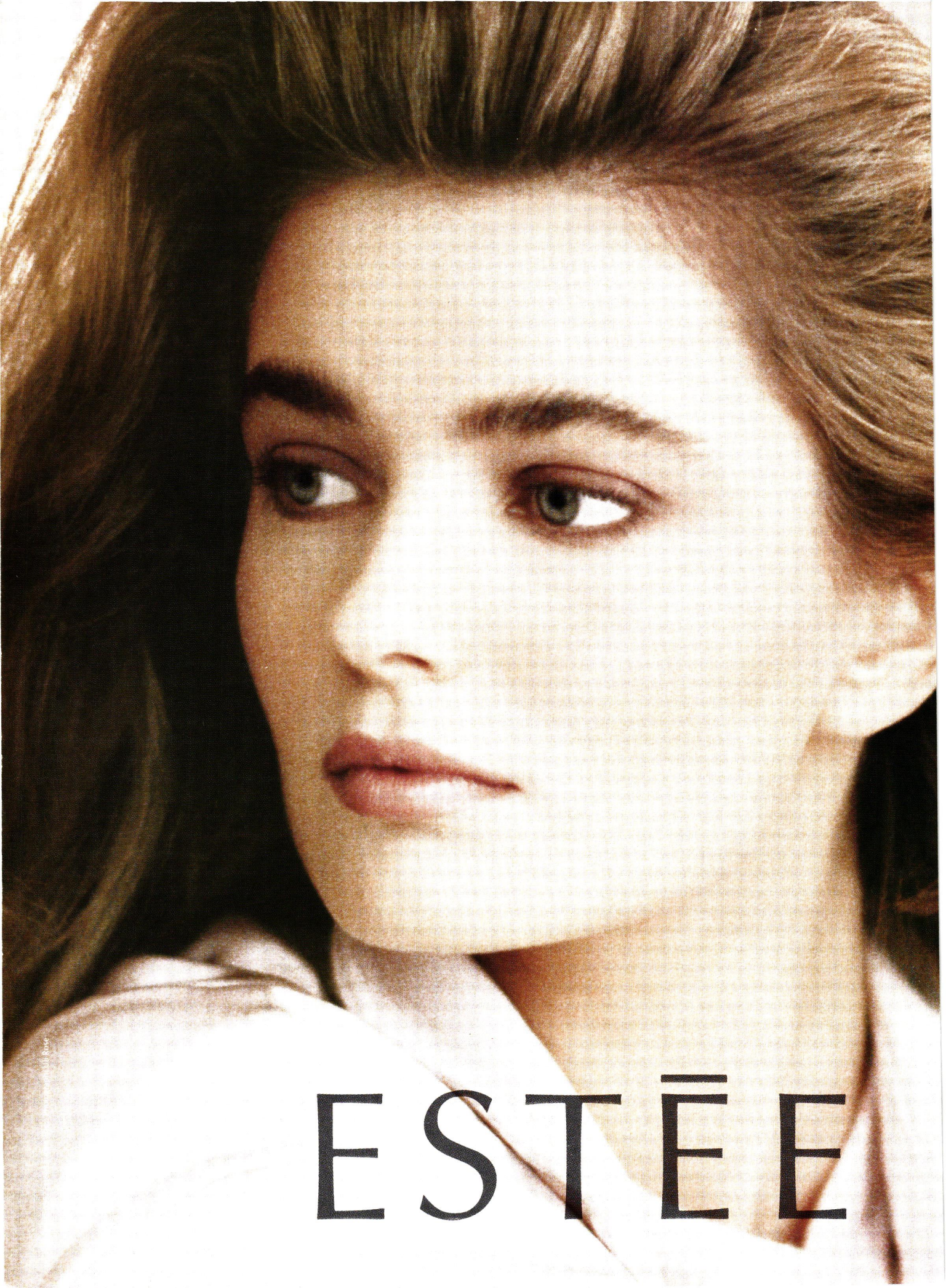
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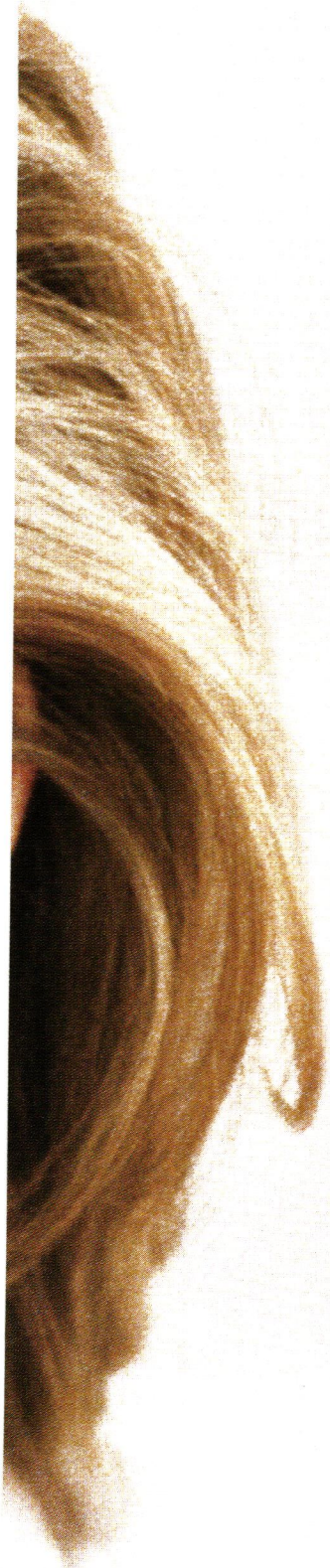

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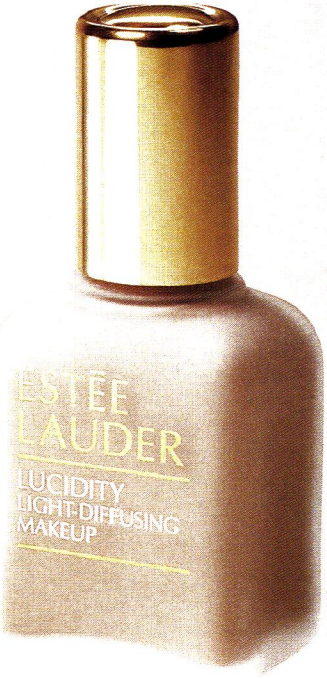

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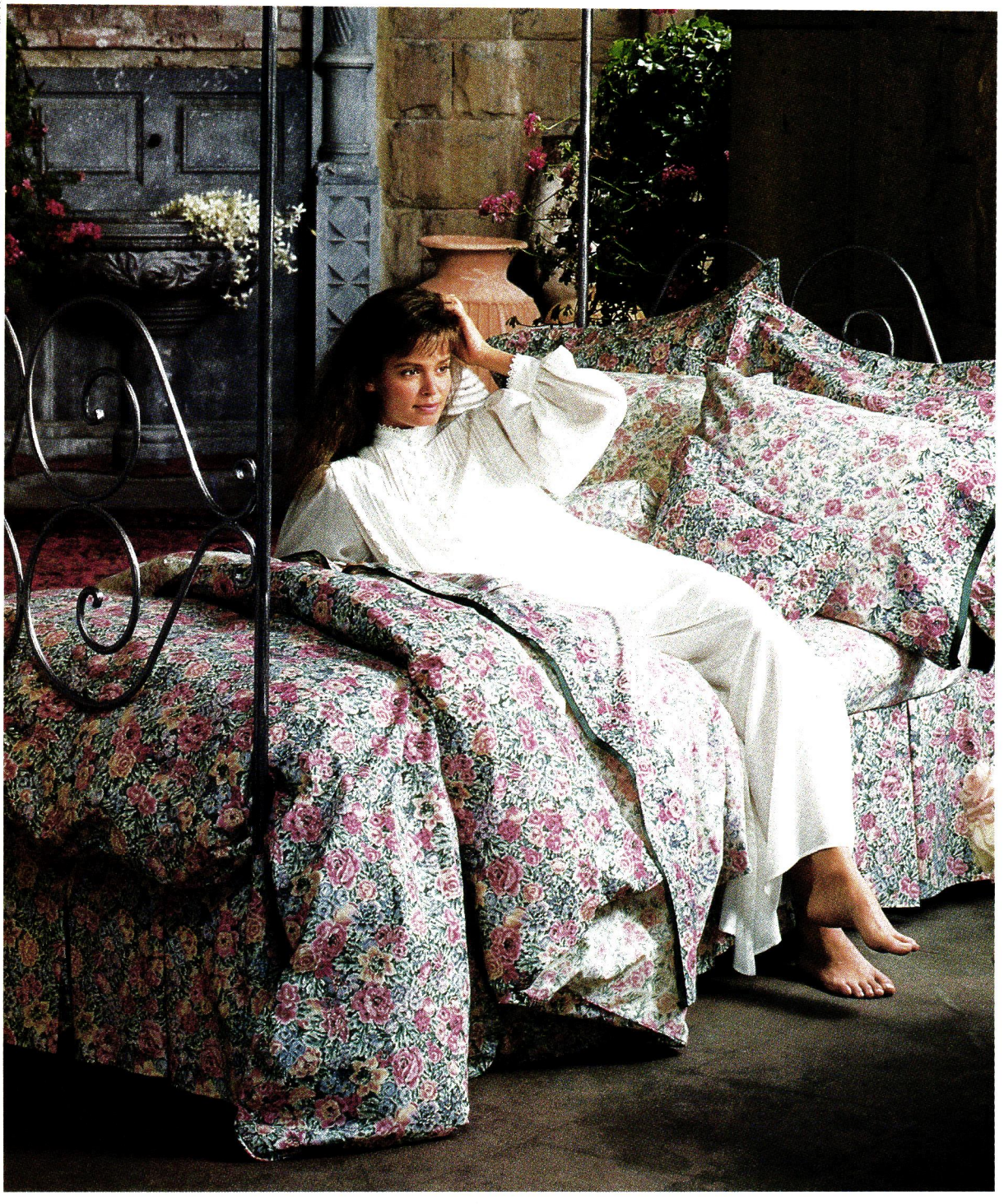

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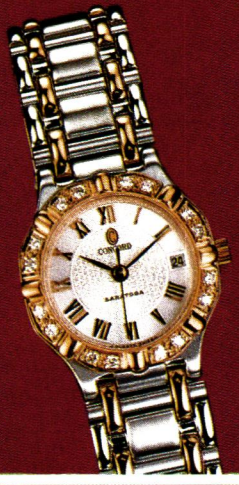

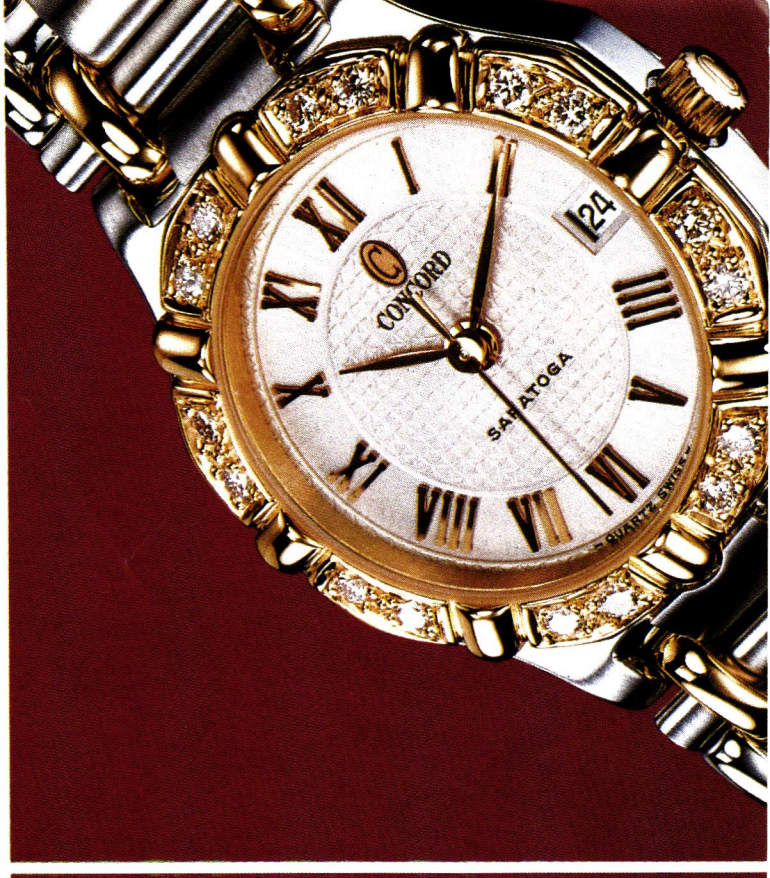

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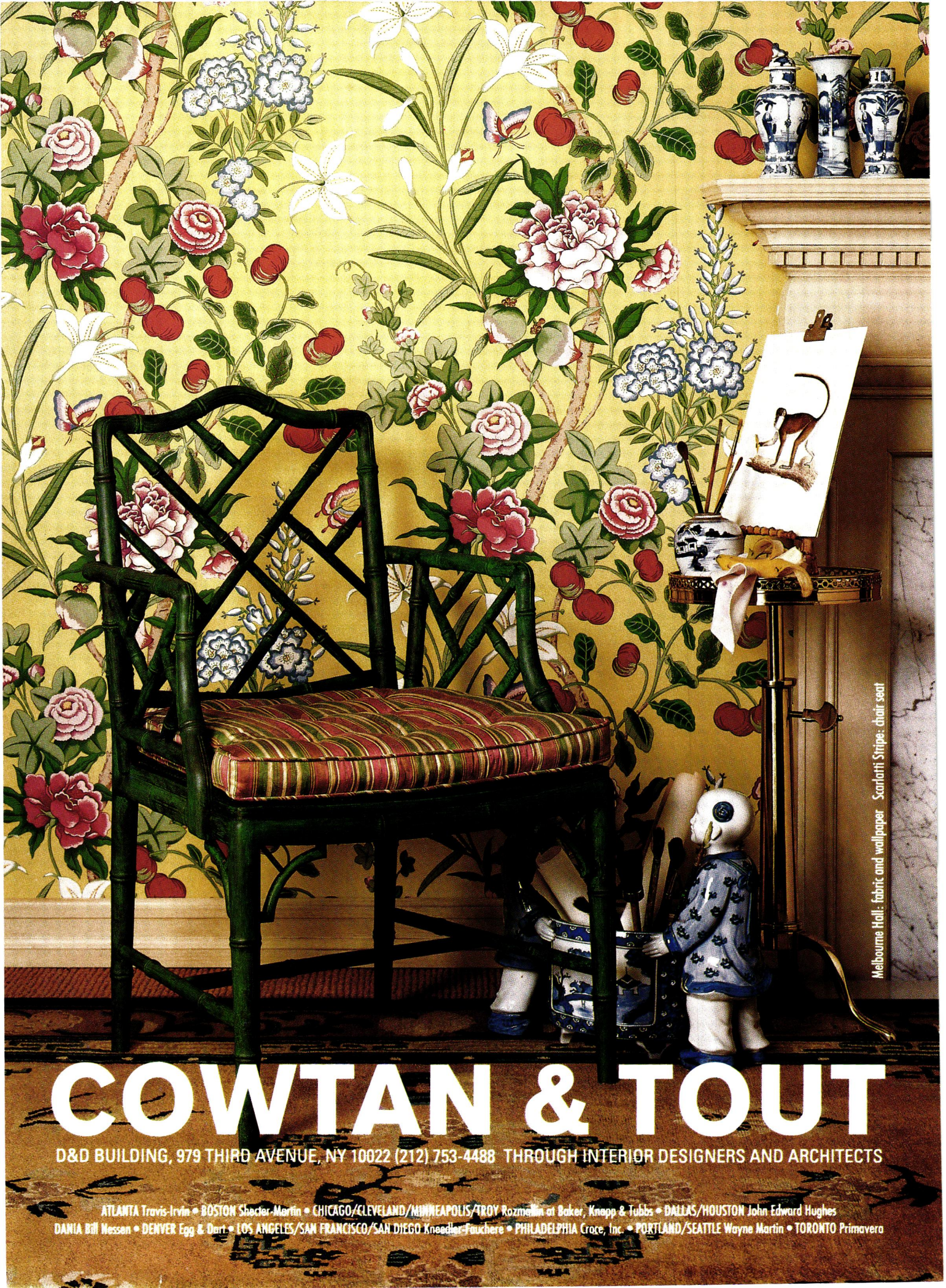

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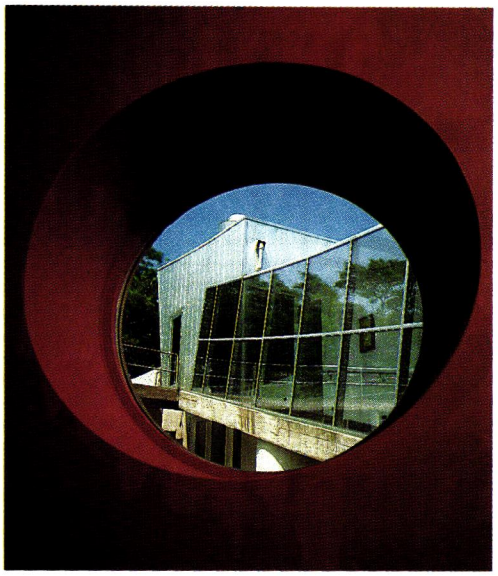

A porthole view of an East Hampton house, far left, by architect Alastair Standing. Page 170. Left: An elegant mix of periods in a New York duplex decorated by François Catroux. Page 136.

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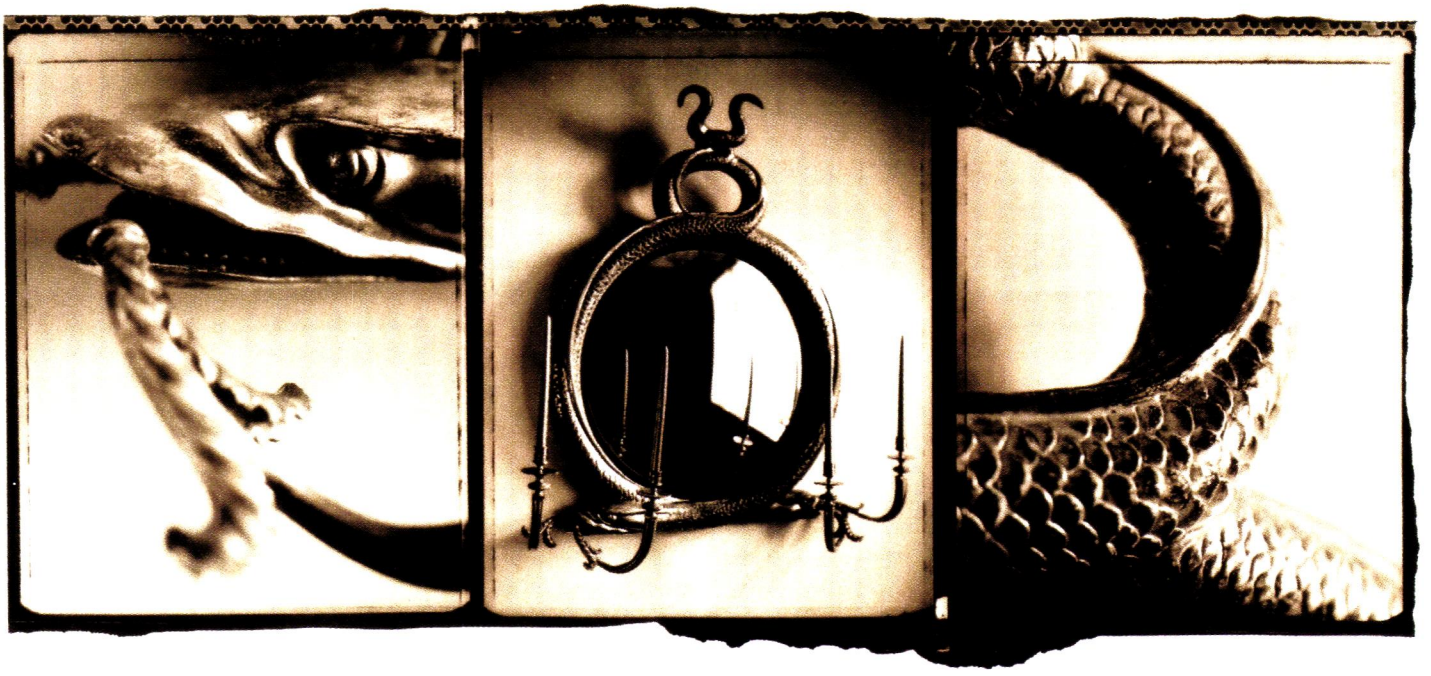

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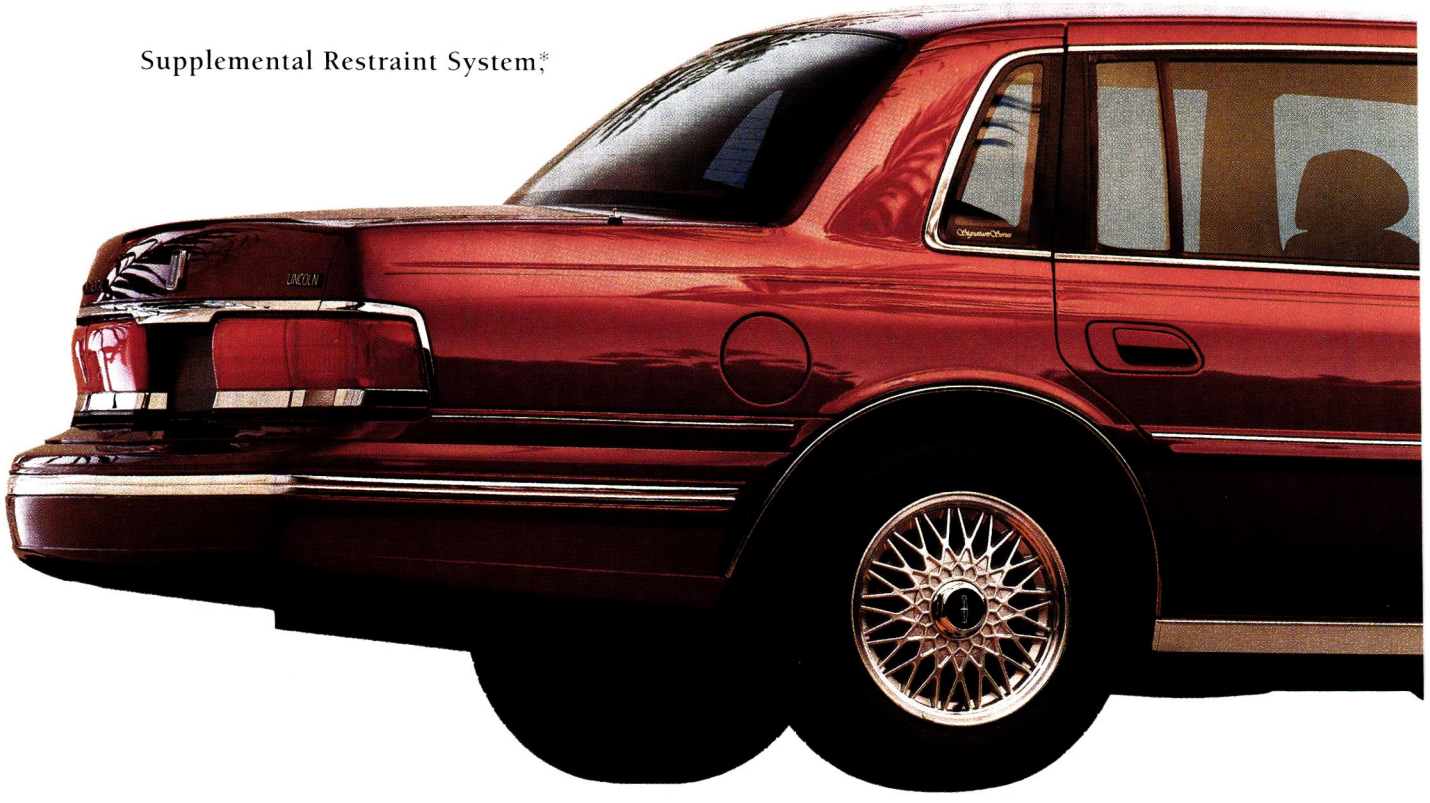

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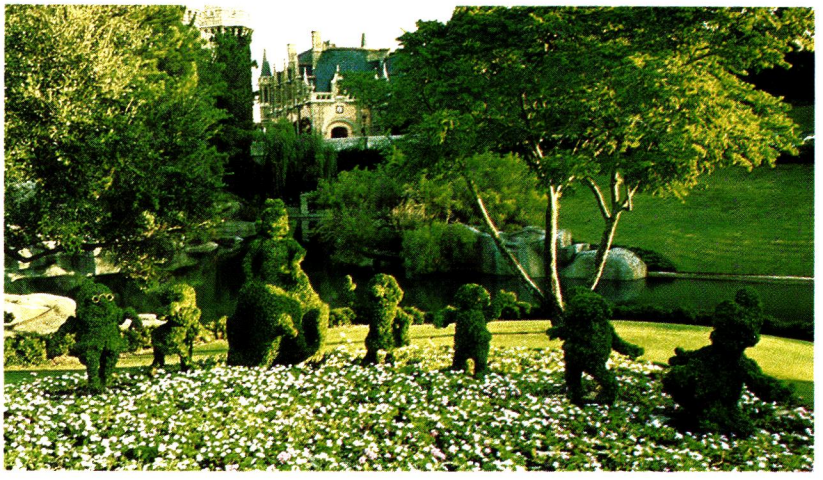

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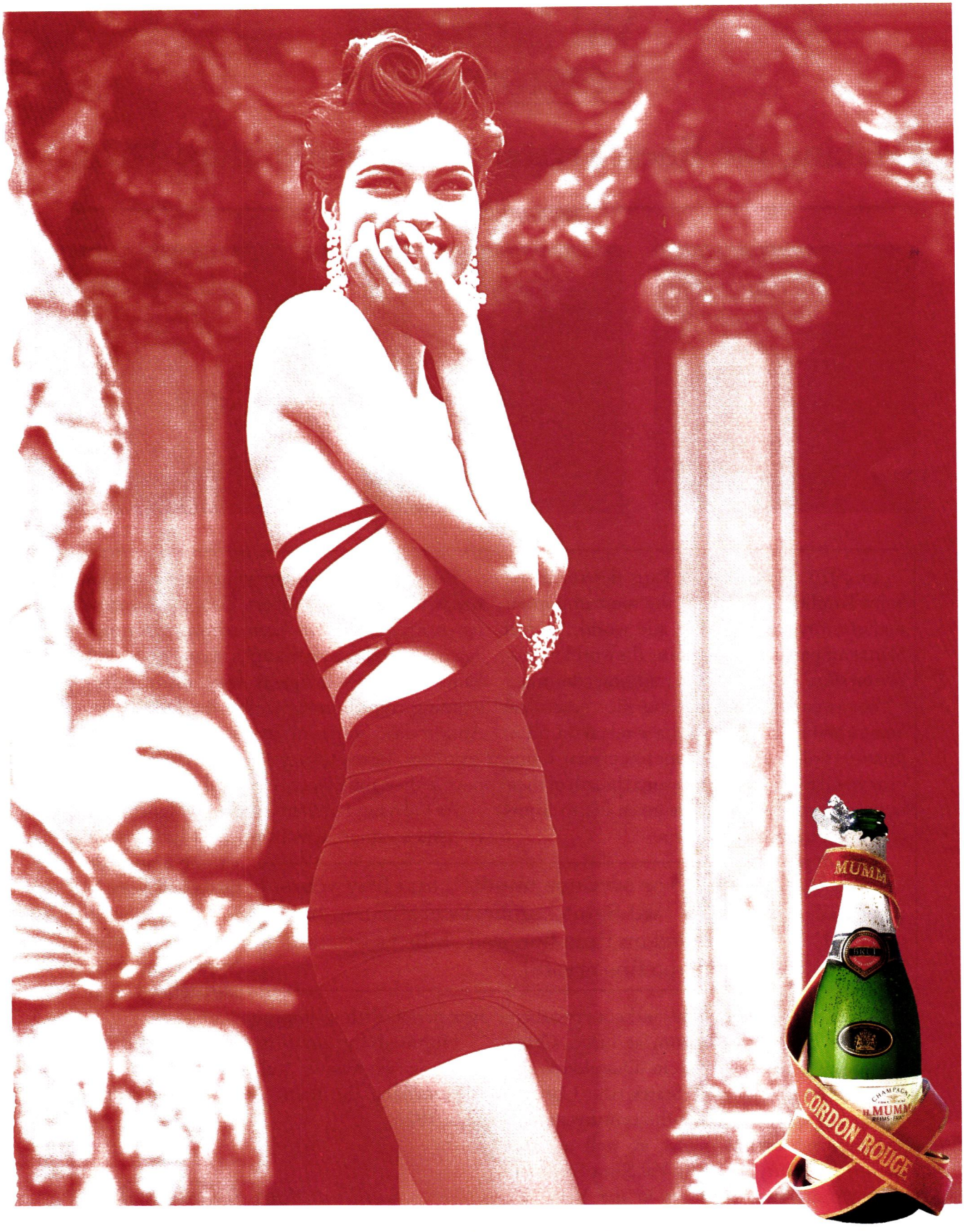

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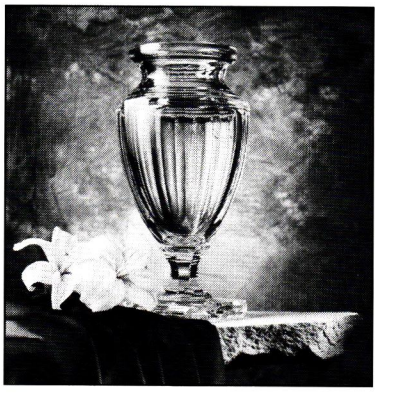

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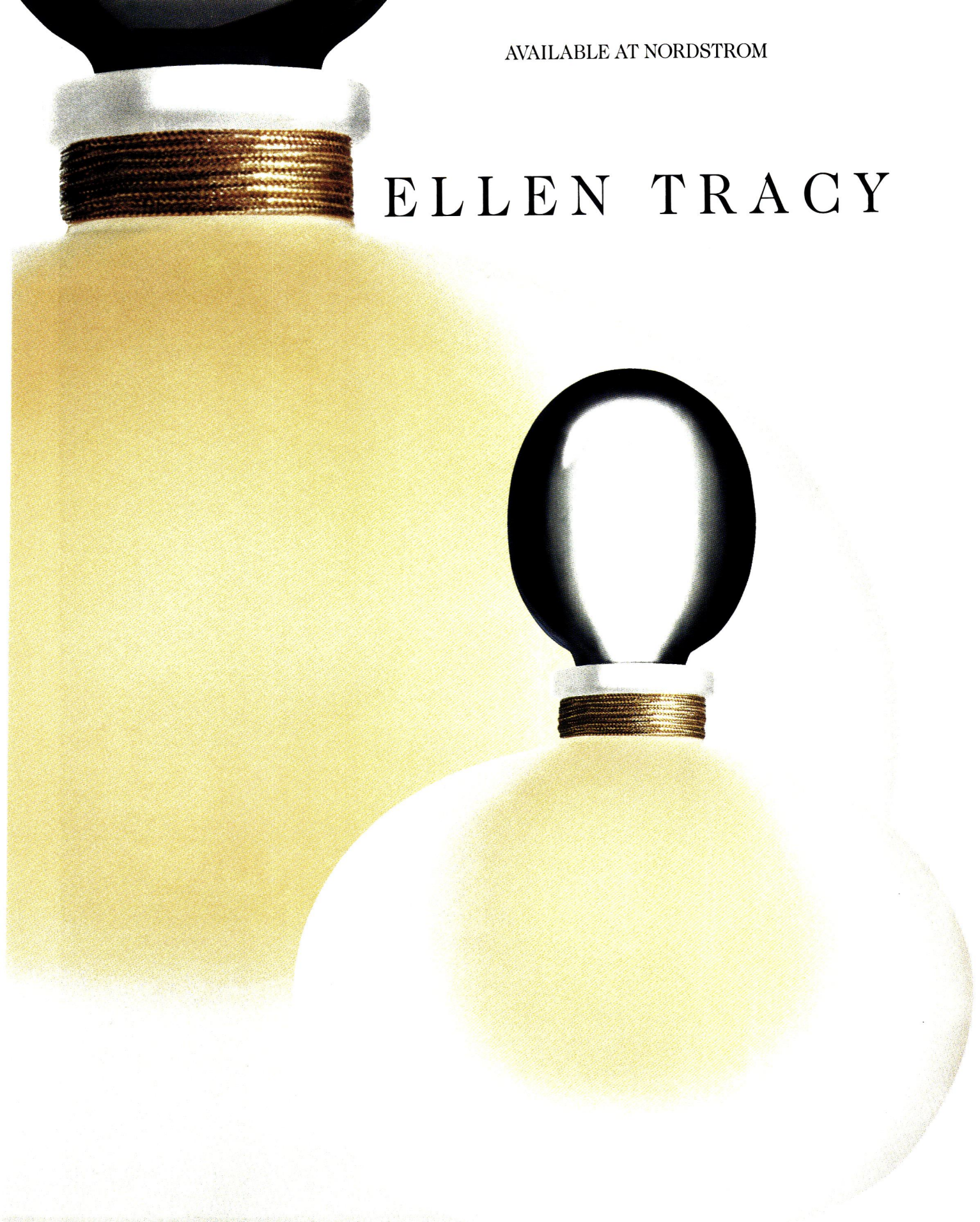

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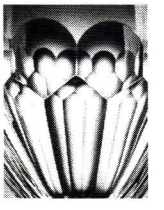

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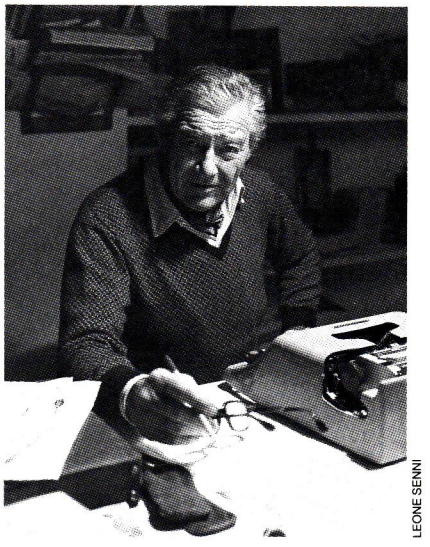
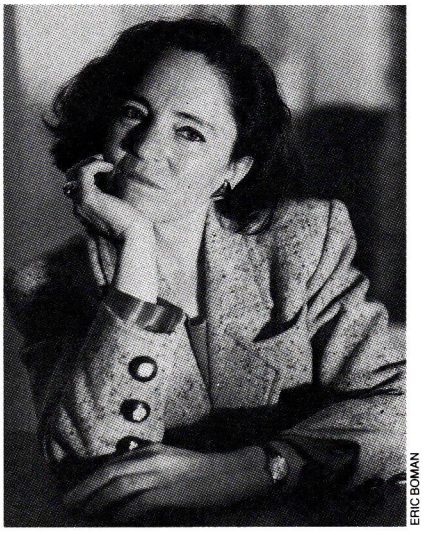


LEONIE SENNI

Gregor von Rezzori's novels include *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite, The Snows of Yesteryear,* and *The Orient Express,* published last month by Knopf. For HG he describes American art historian Milton Gendel's rooms in a Roman palazzo. "I admire Milton's ability to live graciously amid the hubbub of Rome," says Rezzori, who himself lives in a farmhouse in Tuscany with his wife, Beatrice Monti della Corte, an HG consulting editor.



ERIC BOMAN

Gabriella De Ferrari has held posts as assistant director of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard and director of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston before moving to New York. In this issue she writes about the "domestic galleries" François Catroux created in a Park Avenue apartment for a couple with an eclectic art collection. The author of *A Cloud on Sand,* Ferrari is at work on her next novel.

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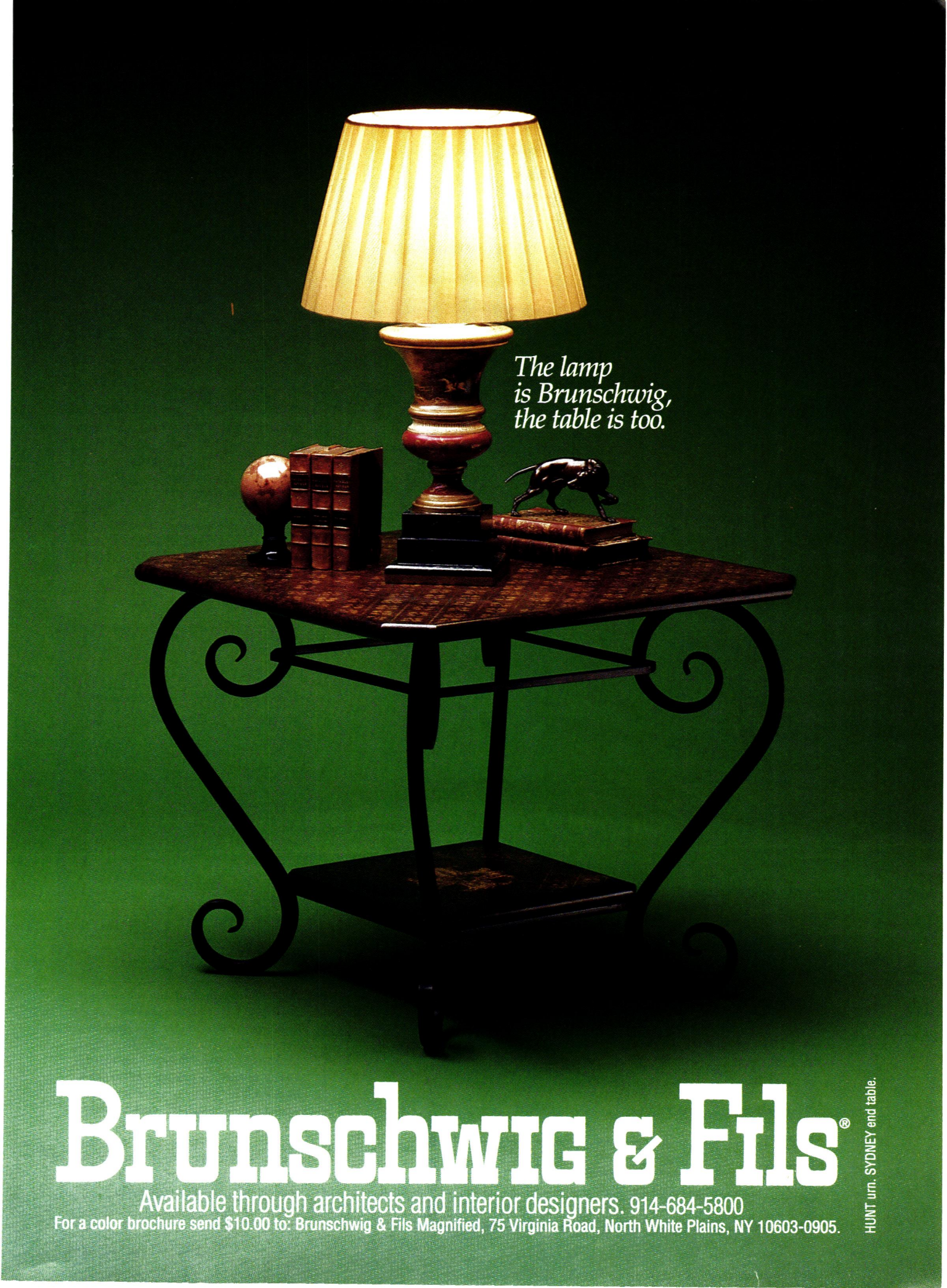

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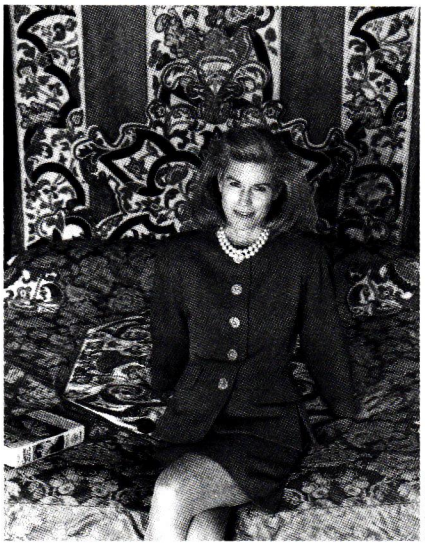
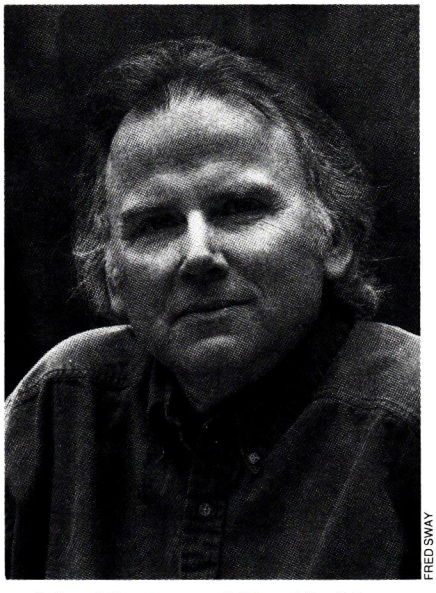


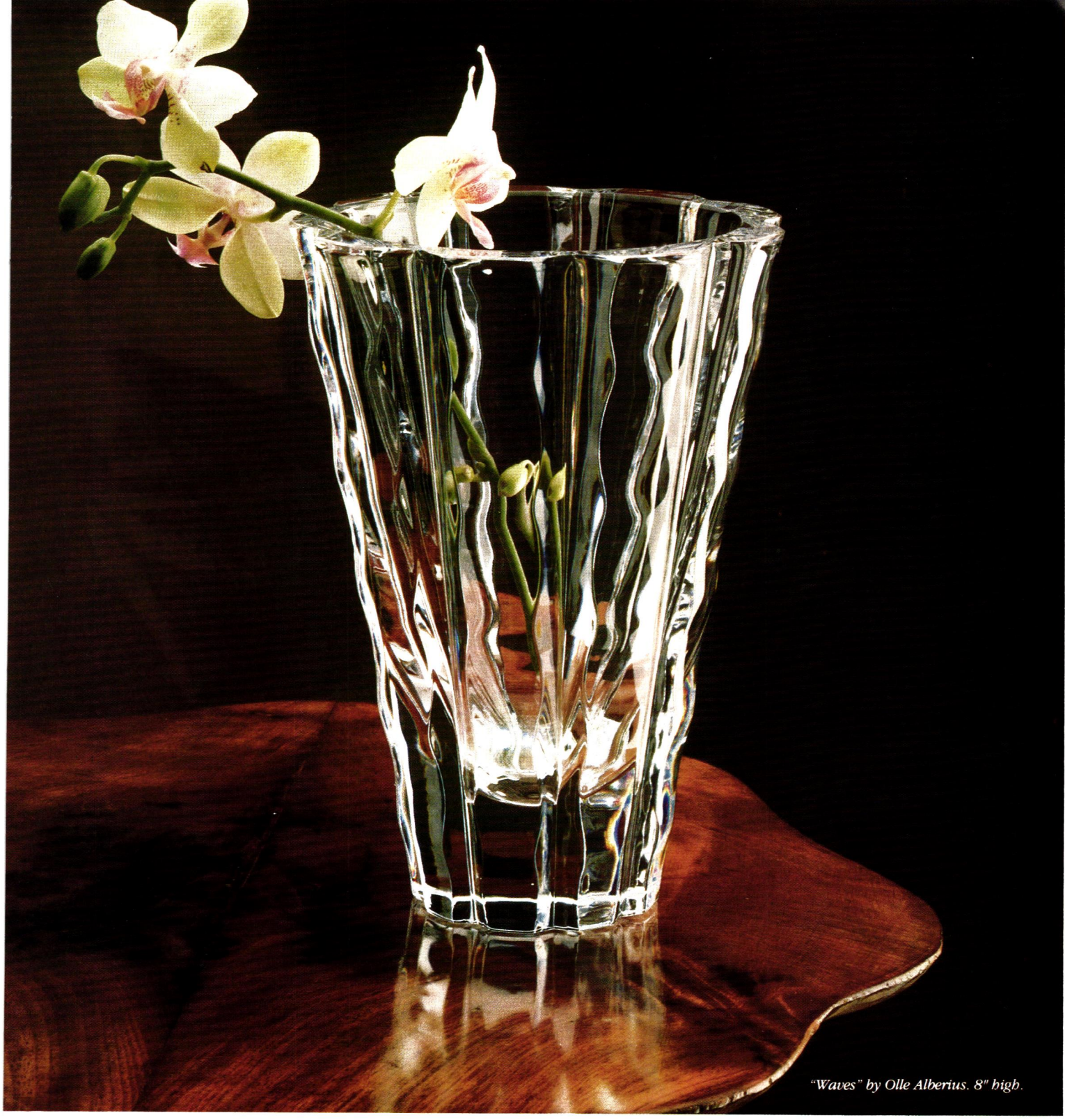
ERIC BOMAN

Nancy Richardson inaugurates her column "On Taste" with an essay about the evolution of antiques as decorative elements. A former *House & Garden* editor and a partner in Ursus Press, a new art book publisher in Manhattan, Richardson has assembled a vast library on the history of taste—a subject she will explore regularly in HG.



FRED SWAY

John Thorne and his wife, Matt, produce a newsletter called *Simple Cooking* out of their kitchen in a former fishing cabin in Steuben, Maine. For the "Food" column he writes about his fall specialty, cranberry clafoutis—"a very custardy popover or a puffy crisp-edged custard." Thorne's *Outlaw Cook* was just published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. He is assembling a collection of American recipes for his next book, *Serious Pig.*



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HG REPORTS ON THE NEW AND THE NOTEWORTHY By Eric Berthold

"I appropriate images from old-master paintings and tell new stories with them," says Nicholas Gilman (*right*) of the unique screens he paints in his SoHo studio. Vegetables from a Spanish still life take on a graphic monumentality on a four-panel screen (*above*). Another combines a traditional French medallion design with hands from Velázquez. Trained as a figurative artist, Gilman works in oils, usually on wood, in formats ranging from tabletop triptychs to seven-foot-high screens with as many as eight panels. (Nicholas Gilman, 285 West Broadway, Suite 410, New York, NY 10013; 212-274-1576)

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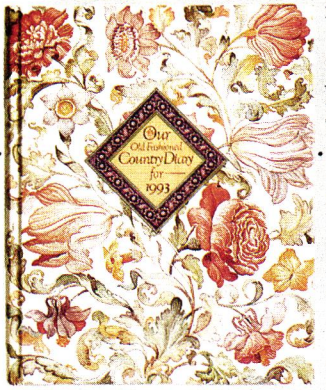

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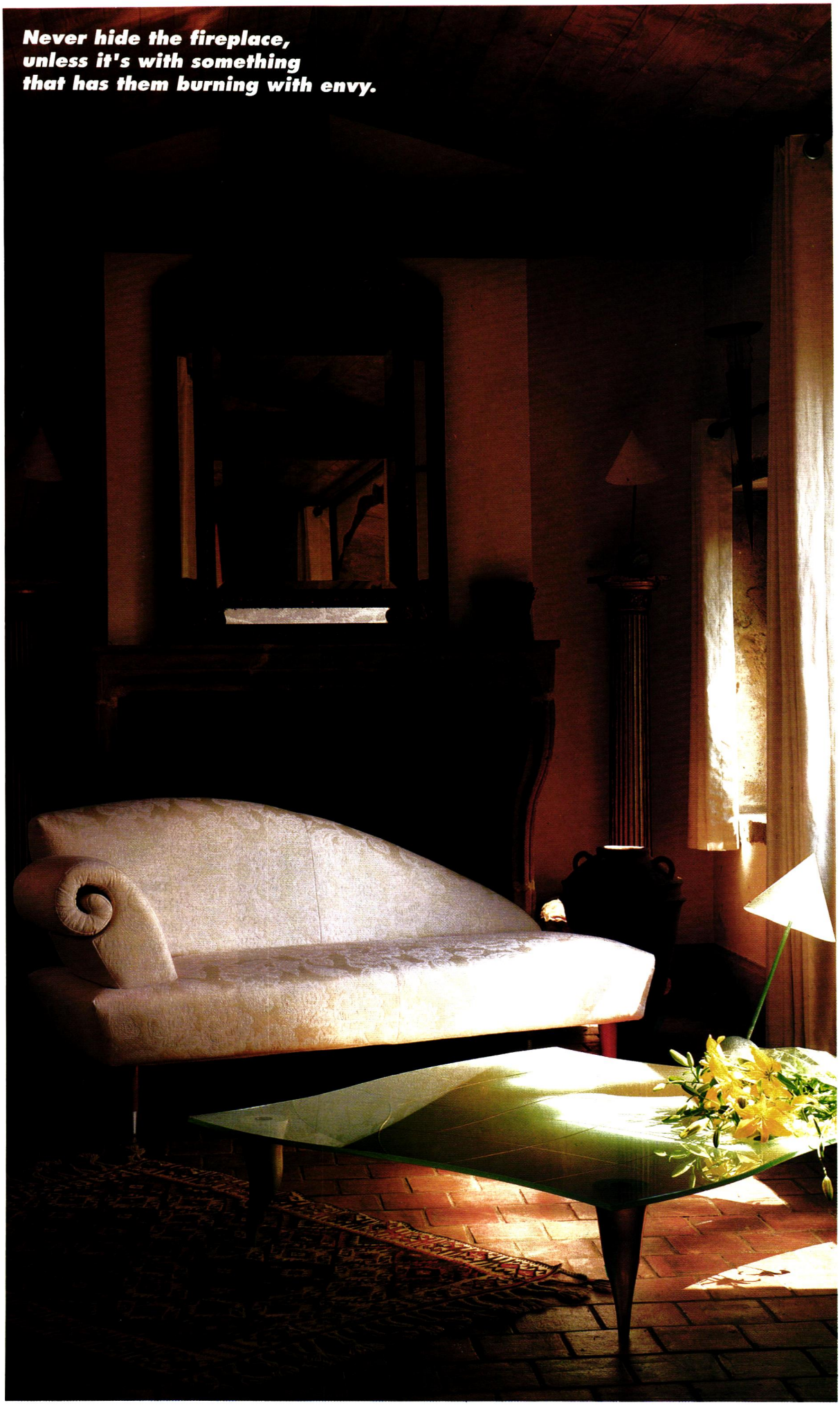

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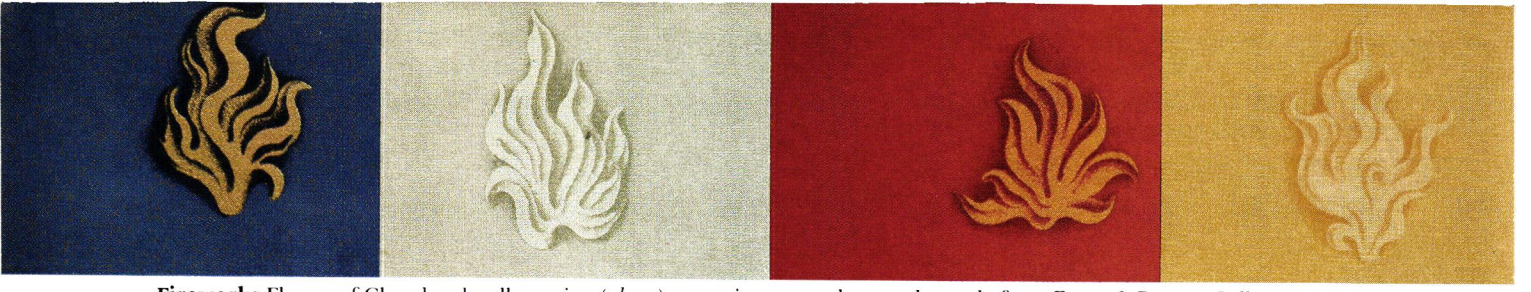

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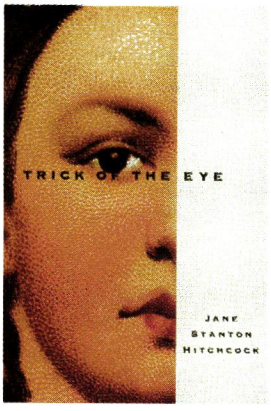

Faux Gothic Trompe l'oeil artist Faith Crowell has a brush with New York society in *Trick of the Eye* (*left*), a novel by Jane Stanton Hitchcock (Dutton, $19).

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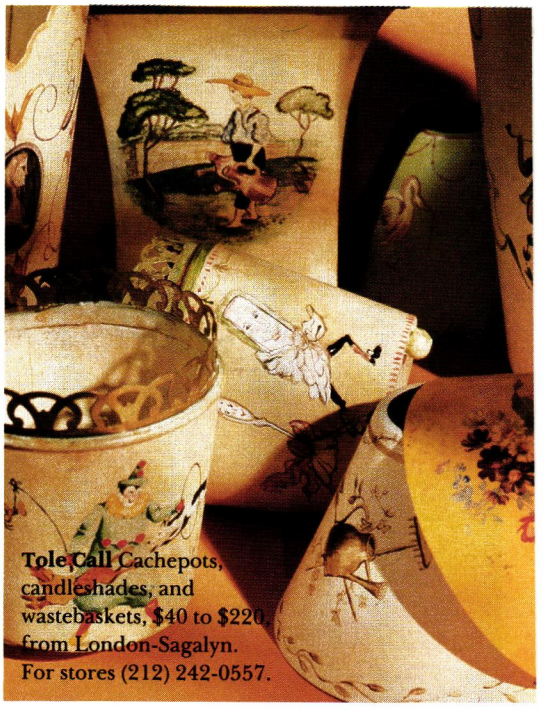
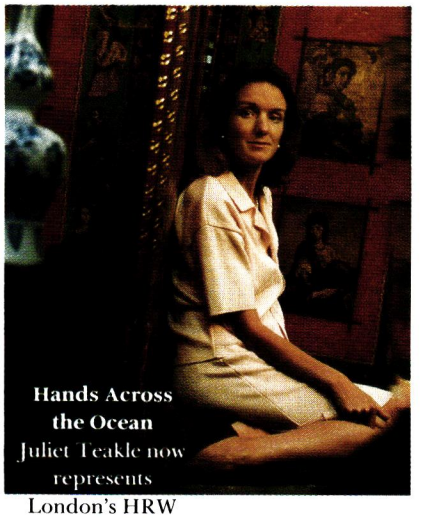


Tole Call Cachepots, candleshades, and wastebaskets, $40 to $220, from London-Sagalyn. For stores (212) 242-0557.

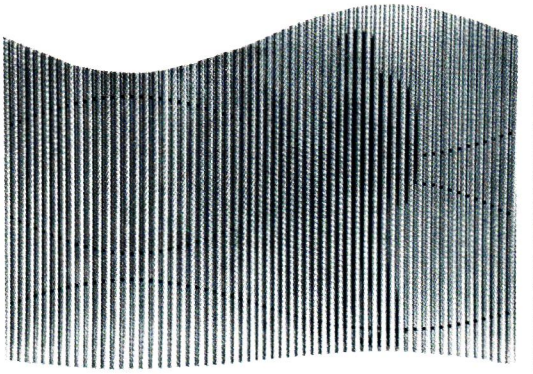
Mirror, Mirror Cartoon classics inspire Aris Paganakis's Vanity Affair (*below*) at Entrée Libre, NYC (212) 431-5279.

View for a Room Voyages d'Anthénor (*below*) is among the antique French wallpaper panels available from Carolle Thibaut-Pomerantz, (212) 759-6048 by appt.



Hands Across the Ocean Juliet Teakle now represents London's HRW Antiques in the U.S. Call (203) 637-5061.

OPEN HOUSE HG editor in chief Nancy Novogrod will speak on Oct. 26 at the Litchfield County Designer Showhouse, Roxbury, Conn., which is open Oct. 4–Nov. 1. Call (203) 753-0381.



Making Waves Brushed-aluminum Poseidon screen (*above*) by Glendon Good for Abraxas. For stores (510) 841-7767.

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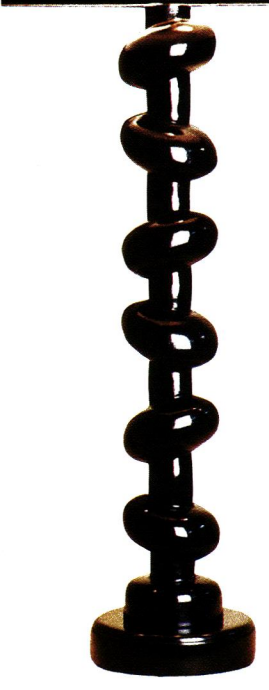

Mikado Moderne Screen by Keichū, c. 1920, from Liza Hyde, NYC (212) 752-3581, is at the Armory for the Modernism Show, Nov. 19–22. For show information (212) 777-5218.

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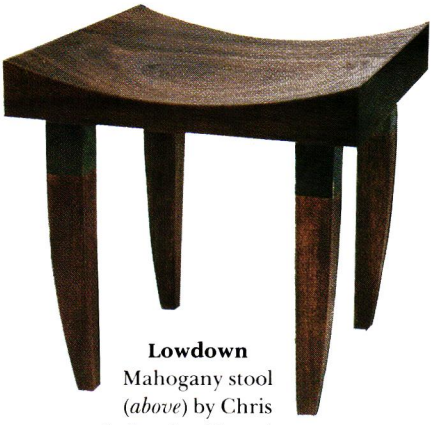

Lowdown Mahogany stool (*above*) by Chris Lehrecke. To order (718) 783-9150.

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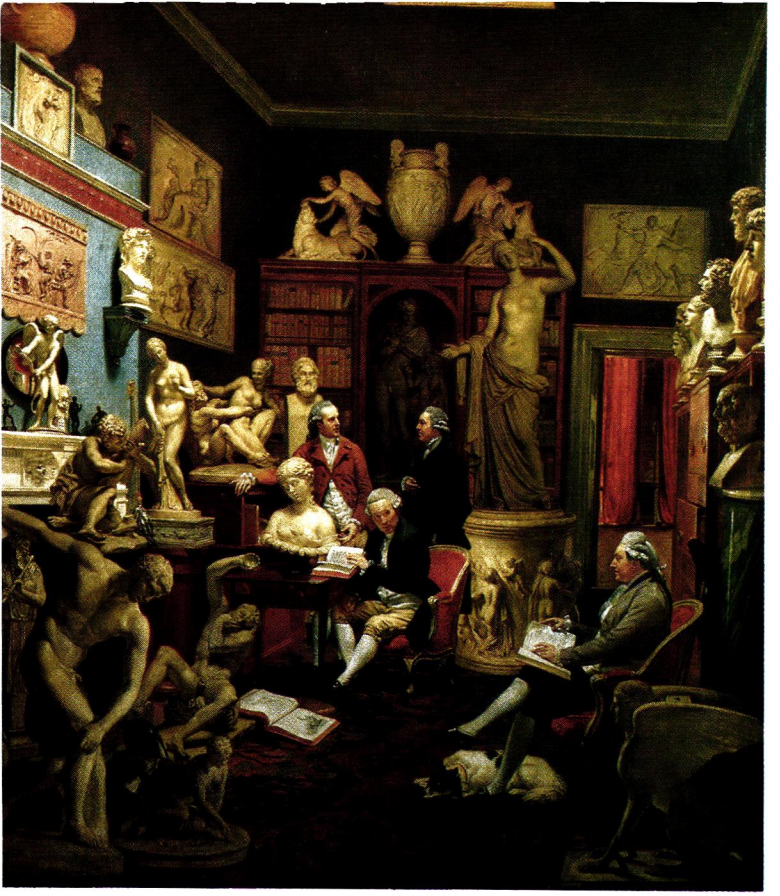


The Genealogy of Antiques

The decorative allure of age has a long and distinguished history

BY NANCY RICHARDSON

The use of old objects and furnishings in contemporary settings is as much a cultural habit as a style of decoration. The eclectic approach mixes decorative arts and ideas from several periods. The historicist approach attempts to re-create a single period. The most modern approach is perhaps the oldest: the use of anything visually affecting, not caring whether it's called art or furniture, simply as something beautiful to look at. This was how the Renaissance viewed the ancient past, and it is the origin of our use of the word "antique." In 1450 antiques meant Greek and Roman sculpture. Contemporary art done in the spirit of classical antiquity was described as "after the antique." A connoisseur—a humanist, artist, or cleric, or, more typically, a prince or his wife—collected both old and new art as a matter of the greatest pride. The finest, not the largest, of these treasures were displayed in a small refined study, or studiolo, itself a work of art intended to show the owner's erudition and cultural aspirations.

A studiolo could be thirty years in the making. In the case of Mantegna's patron Isabella d'Este, it started out as a fashionable exercise—something that went with her rank and education—and ended up a tour de force of collecting and artistic patronage. Isabella's inventory memorialized the most valued objects of the early High Renaissance. The princely cabinet of the baroque, the eighteenth-century French equivalent hung with small seventeenth-century Dutch pictures, and the English antiquarian's study or library in the manner of Sir John Soane were all successors to the Renaissance studiolo. Long after the fact, the Renaissance reverence for the classical past was to remain an absolute standard against which all art was measured. The idea of the antique—not just the admiration of ancient sculpture, but a taste for fragments and architecture in ruins—became the dusty, still, yet romantic world of antiquarians. The word "antique," however, became an umbrella term for anything old.

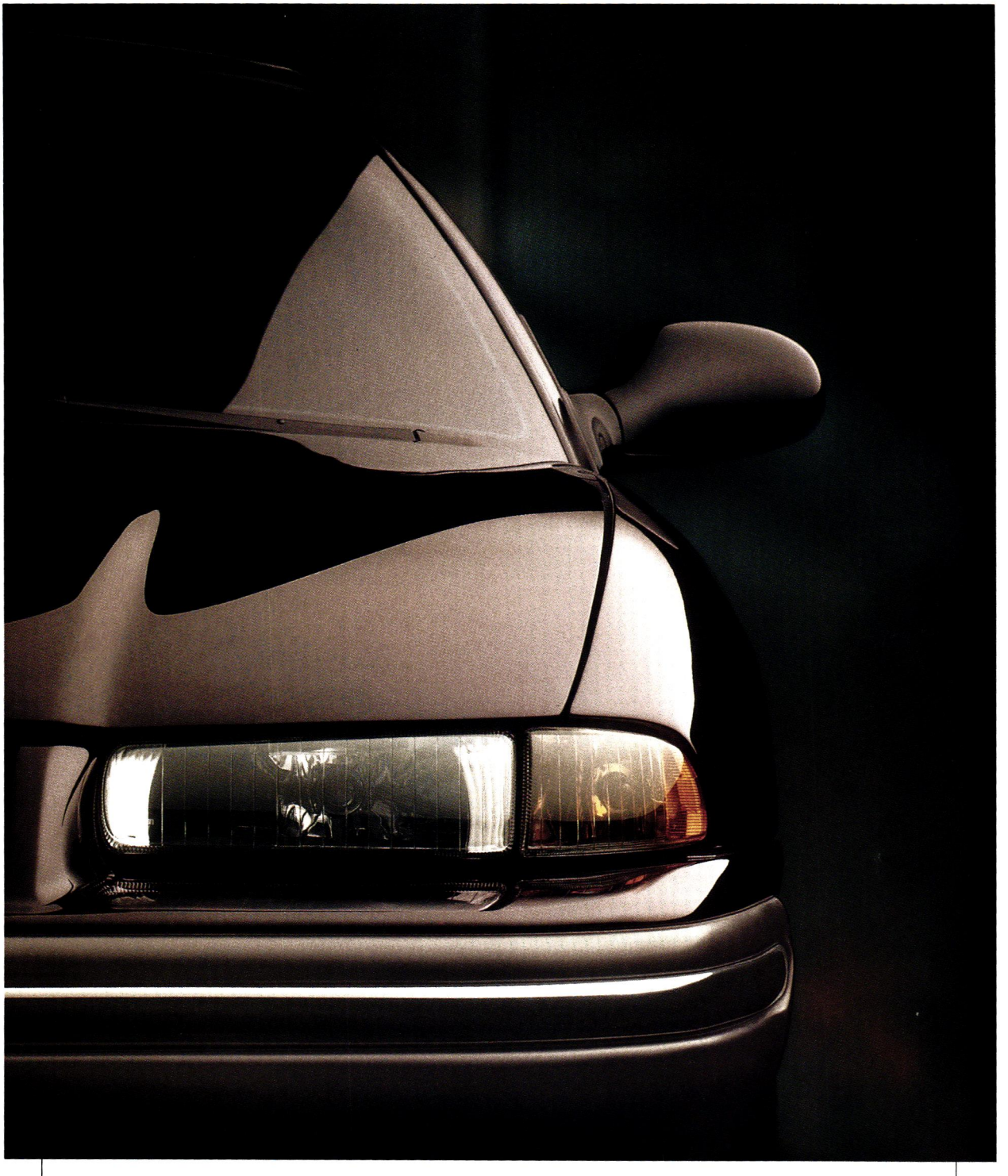
From 1600 on, certain prized possessions were handed down from generation to generation, and sometimes sold at auction. The best things from the seventeenth century—Flemish tapestries, big state beds, large Dutch ebony cupboards set with pieces of oriental porcelain, Japanese lacquer cabinets mounted on English carved giltwood bases, Italian cabinets inlaid with pietre dure panels, or French cabinets like fantasy temples—were desirable antiques for eighteenth-century collectors. A seventeenth-century cabinet was thought to be especially handsome in a room with Dutch pictures of the same period and a set of "modern" chairs.

It was in the eighteenth century that furniture both at court and in the large town houses of a prosperous bourgeoisie developed beyond the simple generic types that had been the rule for two hundred years. Tens of new kinds of seat furniture—light, elegant, and comfortable—replaced massive rectilinear armchairs, sofas, and stools. This explosion of ideas was reflected in every other aspect of decoration, from paneling to porcelain and metalwork. Even before the end of the century, furnishings made under the ancien régime were becoming the antiques that would be popular for the *next* two hundred years. The English led the way.

As early as 1786, the prince regent and his friend Lord Hertford developed a passion for black boullework: both the kind made for Louis XIV in Boulle's workshops and the equally beautiful late eighteenth century models made by Levasseur and Weisweiler, who recombined elements of old Boulle cabinets. The prince and Hertford also bought quantities of eighteenth-century porcelain, gilt-bronze ornaments, and chimneypieces. The prince's rebuilding and redecoration of Carlton House went on for thirty years. It was a scandal for a hundred reasons. It was also the first highly successful, well-documented case of a rich man with *(Continued on page 58)*

Classical marbles crowd the London library of collector Charles Towneley, shown at right with fellow antiquarians in a portrait by Zoffany, 1781–83. In reality, much of the sculpture was arranged throughout the house.

TOWNELEY HALL ART GALLERY AND MUSEUMS, BURNLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL



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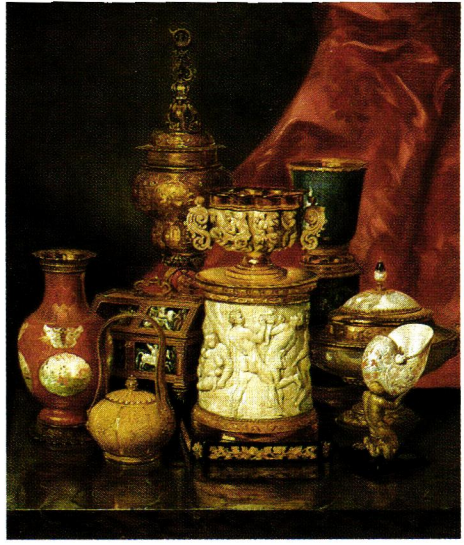
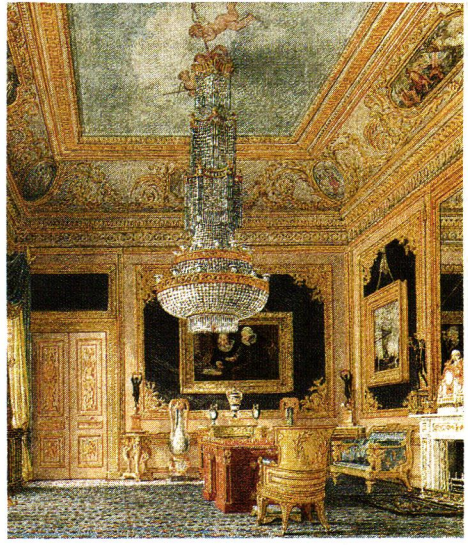
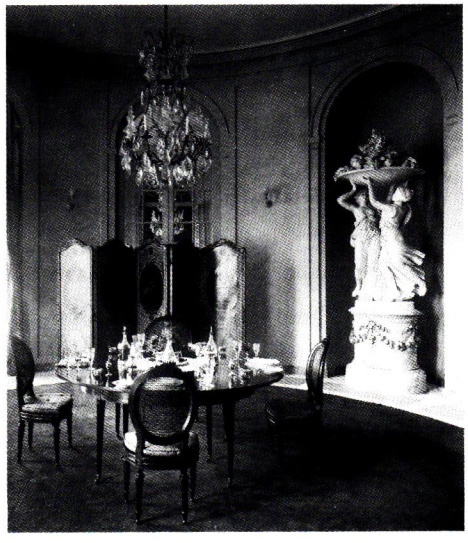




An eclectic 1844 still life of treasures at William Beckford's house near Bath, above left, displays a romantic taste for antiques as objets d'art. Above right: England's prince regent placed 18th-century French furniture in a neoclassical sitting room at Carlton House, 1819.



Fabric-clad walls and ceiling, above left, unify the mixture of antiques and modern pieces in a Paris dressing room depicted by watercolorist F. E. Villeret, 1848. Above right: In his New York dining room, decorator Ogden Codman combined Louis XVI originals with copies, 1912.

great taste who wanted to incorporate what he had collected into an elaborate scheme of decoration. He owned the finest old furniture, but his use of it was visual, not pedantic. His placement of the old pieces wasn't like the eighteenth century's nor was he wedded to the idea of pairs and sets. Carlton House wasn't meant to be a museum, it was just meant to take your breath away.

The prince may have liked the furniture of the ancien régime because it was royal, but he certainly didn't like it just because it was old. Nor did he use English furniture, new or inherited, unless it worked with his schemes. Nothing was done at Carlton House in the spirit of duty. His taste was not like country house taste with its accumulations and inherited furniture. The prince's attitudes were neither really English nor totally French. They were international, sophisticated, and personal. Except for the magnitude of his possessions and the size of his house, his use of antiques as decorative or fantasy objects in a contemporary setting was close to our own. What we would add that the prince did not is a sense of upholstered comfort. That was to be the contribution of the Victorians and their counterparts throughout Europe.

In Paris by mid century, fashionable interiors affected a bourgeois coziness in which neither antiques nor new furniture matched. What visual coherence there was came from vivid-colored, strong-patterned walls, whether papered, upholstered, or curtained. In 1848 François-Étienne Villeret did three watercolor views of a Parisian collector's quarters. These rooms are densely furnished. The antiques appear to have been chosen for their character or charm rather than their importance. There are sconces, mirrors, candelabra, and chandeliers that seem to be from different periods in the eighteenth century and not all French—some may have been later copies. Each interior has a piece of black boulle. The new upholstered furniture is all different sizes and shapes. The charm of these rooms is their intimacy. They also represent rich taste, of course, but it is low-keyed rather than pompous. More often the taste of nineteenth-century bankers and industrialists was less confident. Diaries and letters of the Second Empire are full of dinner parties given in settings described as overstuffed, overprovenanced, and parvenu.

Englishmen led the way in collecting French eighteenth-century furnishings as antiques

The empress Eugénie personified the continuing taste for Bourbon furniture, and for her, royal associations were key. She sought to have furniture of the highest renown even in small private rooms. A watercolor by Fournier of her dressing room at Saint-Cloud shows a variety of Louis XVI chairs along with modern ones that were buttoned, tufted, and upholstered over springs. (She refitted period bergères with springs to make them more comfortable.) There is a writing table by Riesener from the Petit Trianon and two low cabinets in rosewood by Wassmus in the style of Riesener. In her study the records indicate a Louis XV desk from the Pavillon Marsan at the Louvre and some extraordinary black furniture by Carlin (for Louis XV's daughters, Mesdames de France,

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BECKFORD'S TOWER, BATH, SOMERSET, ROYAL LIBRARY, WINDSOR CASTLE; SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NEW ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES, BOSTON. PRIVATE COLLECTION COURTESY HAZLITT, GOODEN & FOX, LONDON

Most things can be carried off in style.
Liz claiborne
HANDBAGS
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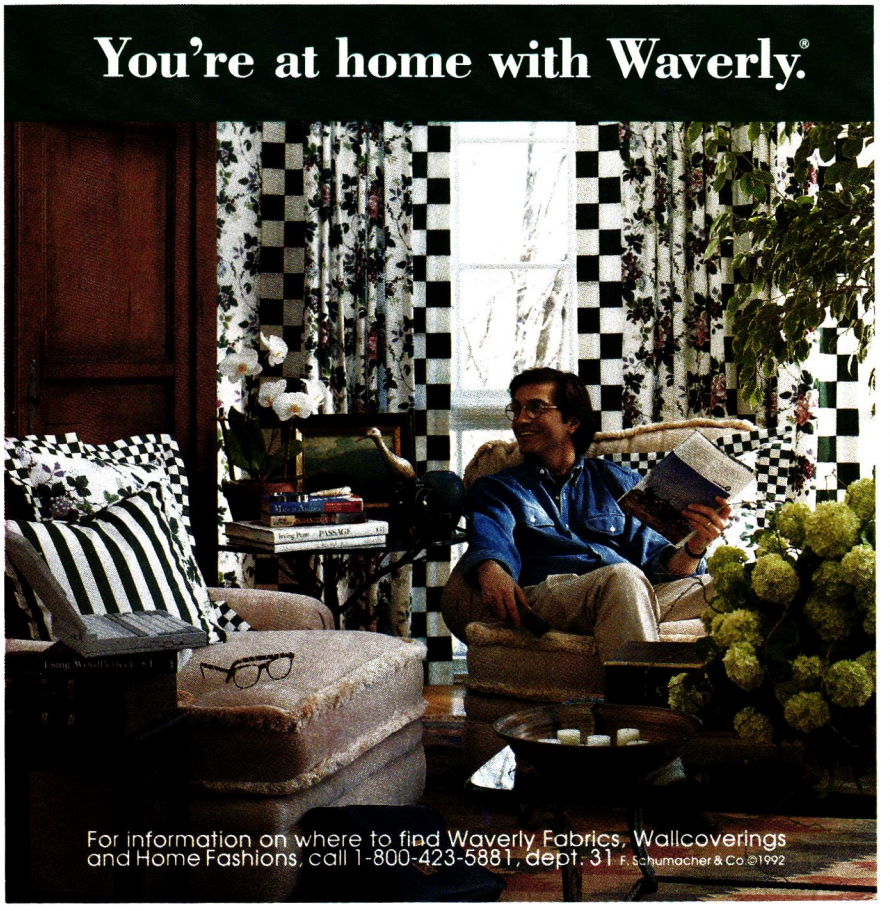
at the château de Bellevue).

Napoleon III's sister, the princess Mathilde, had one of the most beautiful houses in Paris. A painting of her salon by Charles Giraud shows her receiving in the evening, fire burning, candles ablaze. The princess preferred copies of Louis XV chairs, saying that they were better made than the originals. A mantel clock, torchères, and porcelain jars, however, were all eighteenth century. Her circle included the Goncourt brothers, the head of the Louvre, and other curators who advised her on making a collection of pictures. Both the princess Mathilde and the empress Eugénie made a point of knowing the history of art and furnishings as a social exercise. The salons of these two hostesses had to be arranged with fine things—guests, objets d'art, and pictures—all with important provenances. The purpose of their collecting was the creation of a luxurious, overwhelming setting in which to receive fashionable society. They must have achieved just that. No novelist of the period who described this world (think of Proust) could dismiss the visual impact of these interiors or the curiously demoralizing effect.

Green Wedgwood and American antiques painted to match line a room at Beauport, Henry Davis Sleeper's 1920s colonial revival house in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

By contrast, the next generation—on both sides of the Atlantic—took the collecting of art and antiques so seriously that a house wasn't a success unless it was a museum. The honor after dinner was to be taken for a "look round the house." This was the moment when rich Americans increasingly dominated the field of European art and antiques. Long before the turn of the century the Rothschilds had joined the old guard, in Henry James's view. With an intimate knowledge of Rothschild households as well as those of the oldest English families, James found it hard to understand why Americans didn't want to become cultured in the process of their collecting. And for a lifetime he examined the way that possessions seemed to gain or lose their impact according to the mentality of the owner and the aptness of the setting.

If James was fascinated by the human problems created by great wealth, the children of the tycoon generation had them bred in the bone. Their reaction to their parents' lives produced a sea change in taste. The farmhouse, the gatehouse, the old barn, and the mill all got remodeled in the twenties and thirties. The "new" antiques were American, not



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The "new" antiques of the 1920s were American: store signs, quilts, and pewter

European. It was the era of weather vanes, store signs, carved eagles, hand-painted wallpaper, quilts, painted chests, and pewter. In the twenties everyone went antiquing. The fun was to be had not on New Bond Street but at country auctions off the beaten track. These were the years of the formation of societies for preserving local antiquities. Many benefactors founded small history museums and filled them with artifacts from the preindustrial past. The most famous were Henry Ford's Greenfield Village, Electra Havemeyer Webb's Shelburne Museum, Henry Francis du Pont's Winterthur, and, above all, the entire colonial town John D. Rockefeller reinvented at Williamsburg.

The twenties and thirties were the high point of the infatuation with Americana, American period design, and the house museum with the period room approximating authentic period decor. Collectors bought not just furniture but whole houses and shipped them to large city museums where they were installed in bits and pieces in new galleries. Panelings were cut down, missing material was imagined and reproduced or something comparable from the period introduced. Country house decoration followed suit. The decades before World War II found decorators in a curatorial mood. "It's absolutely period" was the highest compliment. After the war the idea of chic replaced the idea of history. European furniture was brought out again, but stripped of old paint and gilding and covered in chintz rather than damask or velvet, thus transforming "old-fashioned" pieces into something modern.

In the tradition of Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman, American decorating firms like Parish-Hadley came into existence on a wave of good taste defined as suitability and understatement. These decorators served the long-stemmed East Coast beauties of the fifties and sixties in a spirit of mutual understanding. Perfectionism in the details, but not fancy looking. The message this generation took from modernism was the suppression of clutter and the classic appeal of beige or white rooms. They avoided the "grand meuble" approach to European antiques. They liked the wrong side of rich fabrics, but cotton linings and mattress ticking even more. They were adamant in their belief that if a room is richly dressed, the owner should not be. Like Mrs. Wharton, they were accused of being perfectionist in the narrow sense of the word.

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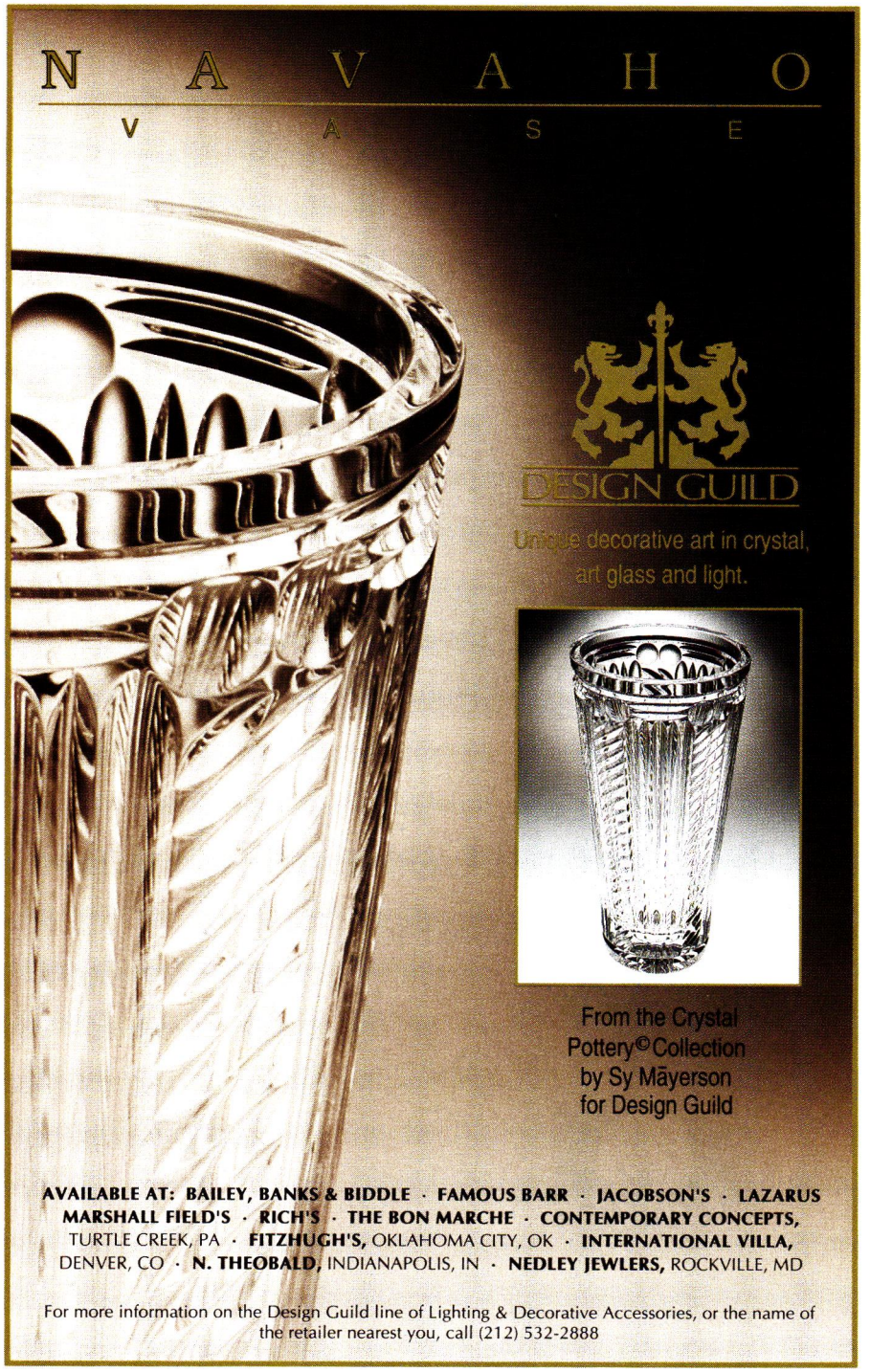

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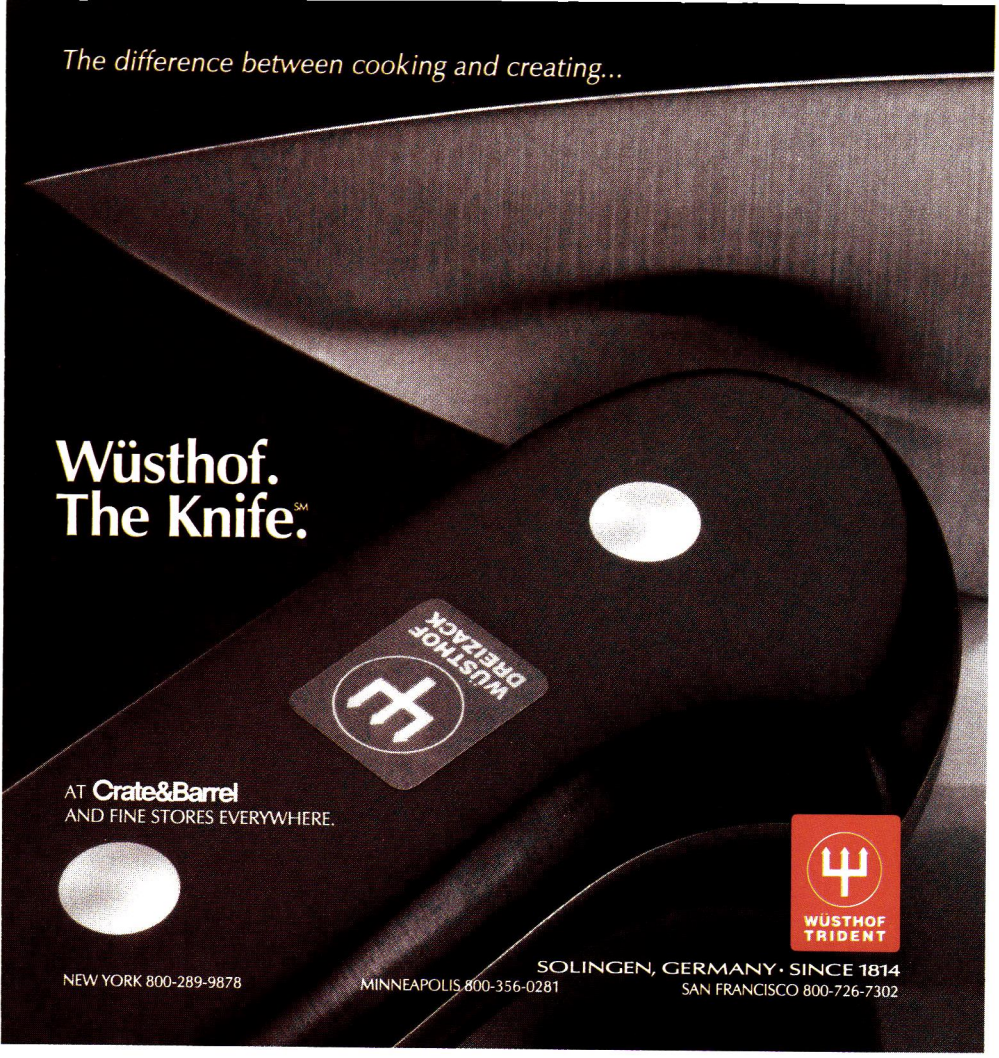

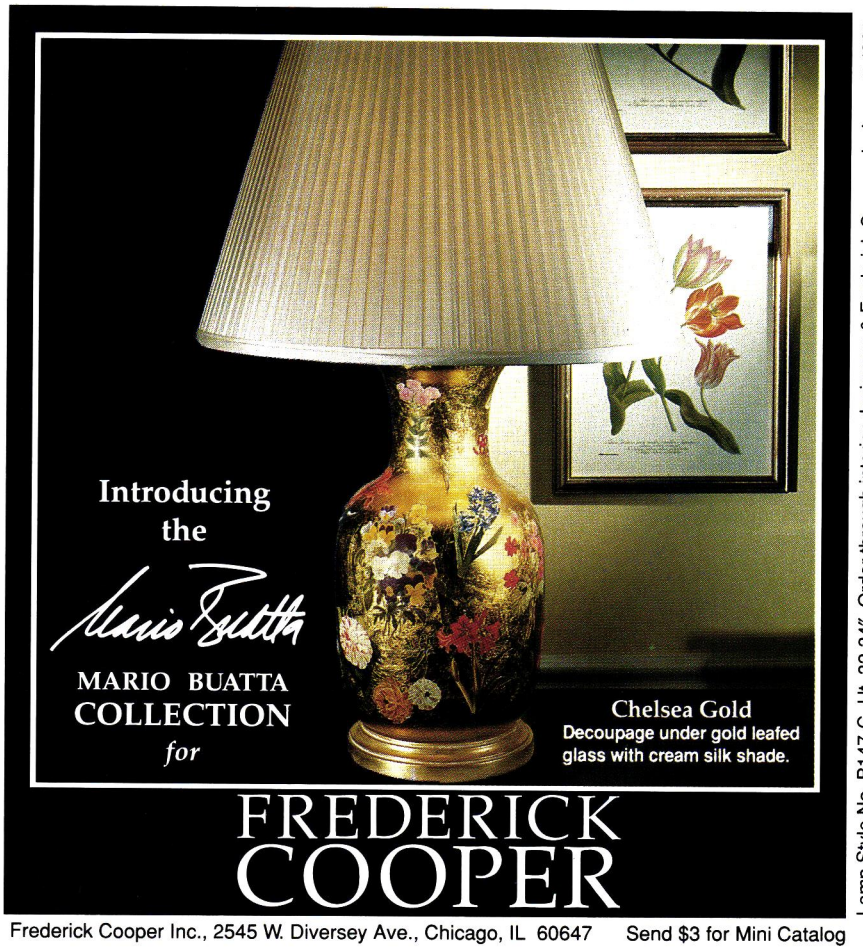

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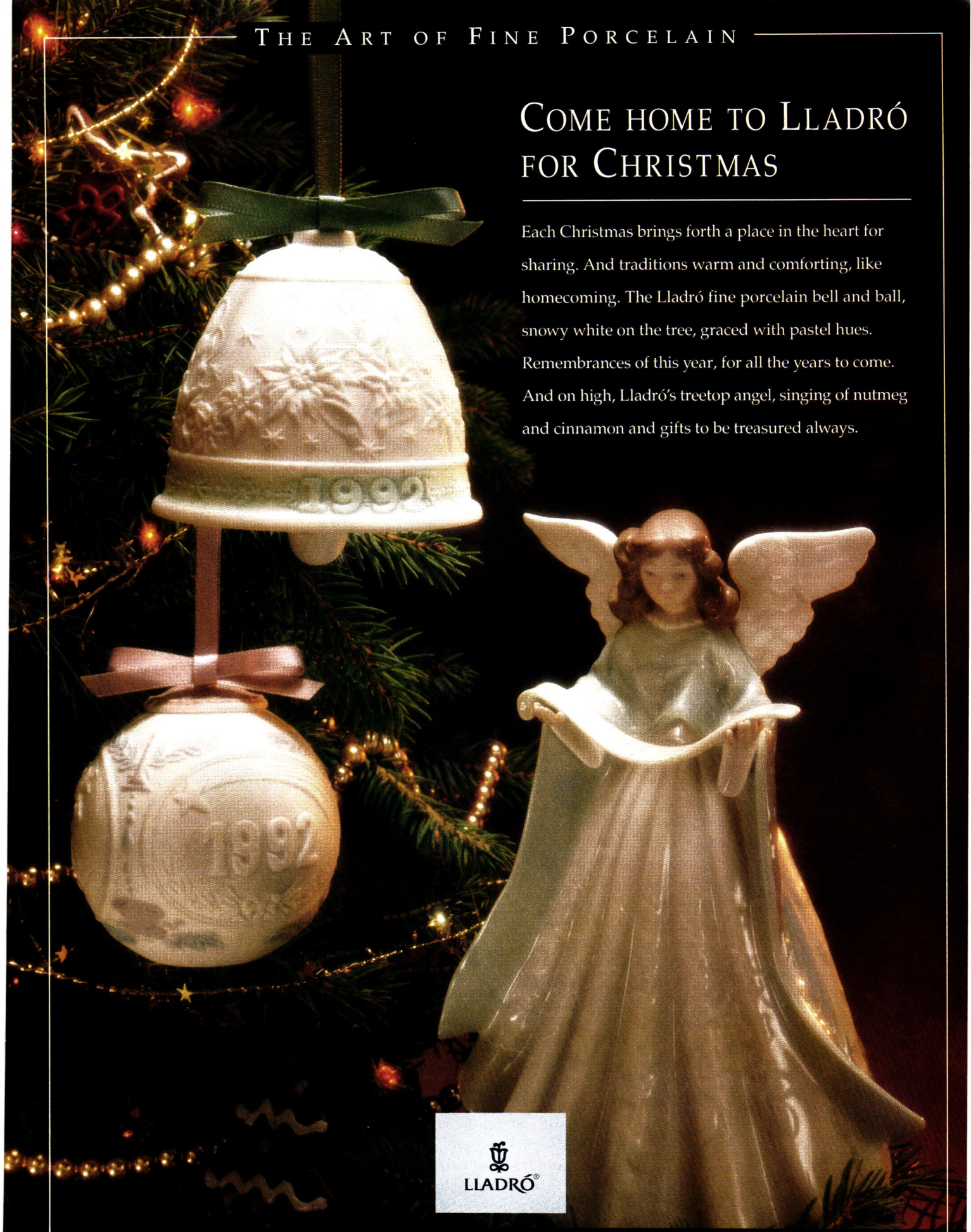
Americans have adhered to two parallel, mutually exclusive approaches to design. The modernist point of view produced the austere contemporary classicism ideally practiced by architects in new buildings; there might have been some fragments of classical sculpture or one extraordinary Queen Anne chair in these spaces but no "conventional" antiques. The other way to do things came under the aegis of the decorator, in the form of an ever-evolving eclecticism elastic enough to fit into existing architecture and accommodate any taste in old furniture.

Postmodern, architect-designed interiors of the eighties combined new furniture and new interpretations of period style with a range of antiques suitable to a strongly architectural approach. Not surprisingly, Biedermeier desks that looked like small buildings, Shaker furniture that had anticipated modernist ideas, as well as simple mahogany pieces fit the aesthetic. Early modernist artifacts—the steel, leather, and glass furniture designed by international-style architects—and art deco furniture were rapidly gaining status as antiques of the recent past.

For their part, decorators took inspiration from the long-overlooked antiques of the first sixty years of the nineteenth century. Interior views in nineteenth-century albums of watercolors offered fresh ideas for the mixture of old and new furniture. Books on the history of furnishing came first from Mario Praz, in 1964, then John Fowler and John Cornforth, in 1974. Later volumes by Peter Thornton, Jean Feray, and Charlotte Gere reinforced the habit of getting ideas from an unorthodox reading of the history of art. Who wouldn't like to own the Empire chair in the background of David's portrait of Napoleon? Or, trafficking further in David masterpieces, why not Marat's tub? Today we use the history of taste as if it were an archive of style, filled with art, architecture, and objects—an ample source of sophistication with which to furnish both mind and house. ◆



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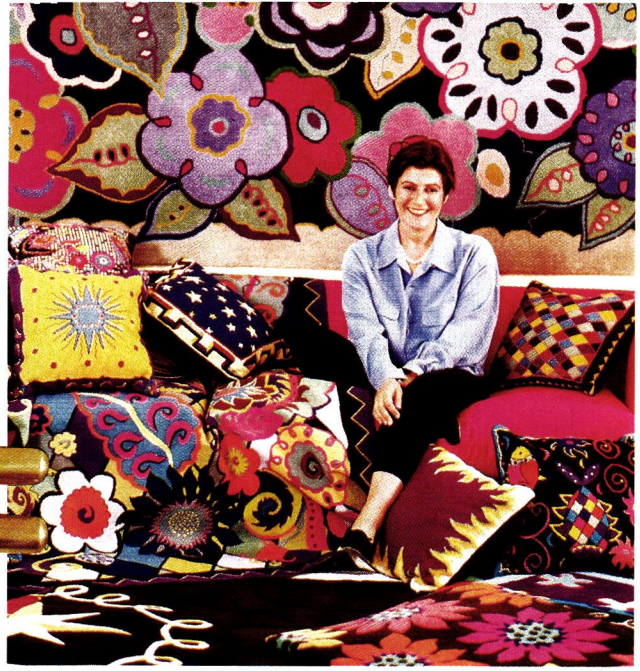

Vanderhurd, left, takes a seat in her studio amid bright new designs, including miniature floor rugs, needlepoint cushions, and the hand-tufted Fifi carpet, which hangs on the wall. Below: Three new dhurries from her Magic Carpets line. Details see Resources.

Fast on Her Feet *Christine Vanderhurd*

leaps from hand-tufting into new techniques and textures

I design rugs the way I cook," says Christine Vanderhurd. "I never follow a recipe; ideas come to me as I work." Someone who realized early on that she wanted to be "a textile designer, not a teacher or a nurse," Vanderhurd has been gathering ideas related to her craft since she was a child exploring in her parents' London antiques shop."Growing up with antiques—sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tapestries and paintings—was incredibly influential," she says. "I want my work to have the same kind of longevity."

Perhaps that's why Vanderhurd has always steered clear of pastels, neons, and other color trends, sticking instead to a palette of 128 hues, which she mixes in such adventurous combinations that she is known as much for her use of color as for her exuberant patterns of fish, flowers, and looping doodles. Initially a fabric designer, she switched her focus to hand-tufted rugs in 1982, after leaving London for New York with her husband, gallery owner David Hurd, and their two young children.

The success of her rugs has recently enabled Vanderhurd to establish her own atelier—a welcome change from the kitchen table where she worked for nearly two decades. It has also allowed her to broaden her repertoire. In the past year alone she has introduced vibrant needlepoint cushion covers and tapestry fabrics made in China; exceptionally detailed dhurrie, hand-knotted, and hand-tufted rugs whose production she oversaw in India; and a mirror and drinking glass engraved with a calligraphy-inspired motif. At her studio Vanderhurd sells her designs and takes custom orders—and surrounds herself with mountains of swatches, wool samples, and sketches. "I'm a very messy worker," she says, "with very neat results." ▲

BY HEATHER SMITH MACISAAC

Vanderhurd's Tra La La mirror and drinking glasses and Shangri-La carpet, above. Below: Her needlepoint Sea Frolics. Left: A garland of wool samples.

RICHARD DUNKLEY

Shown: Chateau China, Clarity Crystal

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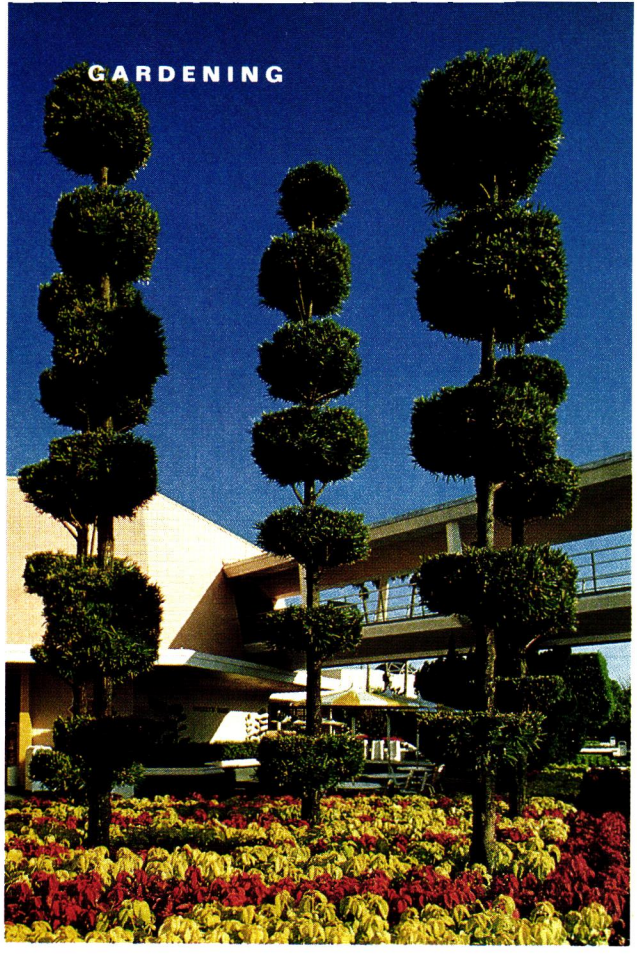

It's a Small World After All

Disney's gardeners create a horticultural microcosm

BY DENISE OTIS

Walt Disney's aspirations for his Florida property were utopian. So are those of his successors. As Katy Moss Warner, the general manager of Walt Disney World Parks Horticulture, puts it, "We have extracted what people consider to be wonderful experiences and tried to put them all together. We want the gardens to be as wonderful as the most wonderful of garden experiences, if we can." That's no mean challenge. But Warner's energy is astonishing, her enthusiasm contagious. Her responsibilities are complex, requiring sensitivity to people as well as plants, and her background seems custom-designed. She grew up helping to care for a Fletcher Steele–designed garden, has a degree in landscape architecture from the University of Arizona, and attended the Longwood Program for Public Horticultural Administration. Disney landscaping has to be ornamental plus. It must screen out unenchanting necessities like transformers and delivery trucks, separate one view from the next, provide transition between views, and tell stories and set stages to transport guests into another time or place or culture.

"How do you tell stories with plants? We represent cultural traditions—the Japanese garden, the Norwegian sod roof, the pots in the Italian plaza—and we try to give a feeling for natural environments," Warner explains. "But how much can we use in Florida that's authentic in Norway? And when we can't use what's authentic, how do we maintain the charm and integrity of a garden and still represent Norway? We try to give the effect with a mixture of authentic plants and look-alikes that we can grow, and not rely on artificial plants. We tell fantasy stories with topiary figures, fountains, and lights. For futuristic fantasies we shear plants into architectural forms and use flowers in geometric patterns. I hope the future doesn't look like that, but it's dramatic, it makes people think about the way we're using plants."

Guests may be forgiven for sometimes doubting the reality of the landscape, the maintenance is so unbelievably meticulous. That's intentional: "We want our park to be a nice place to be. It is clean. It is green. The green of plants has a serenity, a magic that little else can offer. We want birds singing and butterflies and the sense that

In Tomorrowland, top left, podocarpus standards rocket from color blocks of coleus. Top right: Shear precision—velvet lawn, topiary trees and swan. Above: Mickey as living logo, in chrysanthemums.

COURTESY WALT DISNEY WORLD CO. 1992

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Mickey directs, left, in creeping fig. Above: Loquat trees and kale in Epcot's Morocco.

Park landscapes tell stories or help transport guests into another time or culture

life is good. When people sense that things are right with the world, they take care of the world. That's where good maintenance prevents vandalism." The theme parks could serve as a laboratory for gardening in urbanized areas: with 50,000–80,000 visitors daily the paths and plants, lakes and canals can be as stressed as big city parks.

The central Florida climate may be great for year-round tourism, but to the gardener it presents difficulties: extreme summer heat and humidity, overgenerous rainfall interrupted by occasional droughts, warm winters with recurring killing freezes. Fungus and insects thrive. The 30,000-acre property, of which a bit less than a quarter has been developed, is forty percent swamp and most of the "soil" is pure sand and muck. But Warner and her team seem to take all these challenges as opportunities for creativity. The Parks Horticulture team is large, about 350 people—150 more under different management care for the resort areas—and includes specialists in pest control and irrigation, pruning and plant evaluation, topiary and tree-moving, outdoor and indoor plants, education and special effects for movies and conventions. The 120-acre nursery with its tree farm and greenhouses functions mostly as a warehouse for plants bought from commercial growers. The team grows only what is unobtainable commercially, like native and topiary trees. They work closely with finance people—"we must run as a business"—and landscape architects in the organization. And in the Disney "imagineering" tradition, designers with a variety of backgrounds—graphics, engineering, set or environmental design—may be pooled into a project team.

Experimentation never ceases. Instant landscaping is a specialty. It is unacceptable to tell a paying guest that a garden will only look right in five years. "At Epcot's Chinese pavilion you can see some tricks that make a new garden feel old: moss growing on the rocks, trees with downturned branches, mature trees and shrubs, overgrown grass." The need for mature trees has led to innovative techniques for moving large specimens, which in turn make it possible to save and reuse trees from areas undergoing development. Disney arborists excel in aesthetic pruning—Epcot is a dictionary of pruning techniques—a rare skill in the modern world. Computerized scheduling allows trees, flowerbeds, and even whole gardens to be planted or changed overnight. "An important function of the nursery is to test plants, to test cultivars," a program intended, Warner says, to find plant material "that is more authentic thematically, hardier, with better bloom, better color, more disease resistance. Our success with the tabebuias, trees from South America that burst into yellow or lavender bloom and really light up the landscape in February and March, has made them popular all over central Florida. Our pest control group is dedicated to reducing the use of harsh pesticides, both by cultural methods and alternative controls. They are constantly scouting for effective natural predators and have discovered many on the property, among them, minute pirate bugs, mealybug destroyers, and certain predatory mites that in hot weather reproduce twice as fast as the spider mites that they prey on. These they collect and move to sites where they need them."

Hanging baskets keep flower color at eye level and reflect seasonal planting themes.

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For an entertainment company like Disney to show such environmental concern may seem surprising, but the commitment appears to have been there from the outset: over 7,500 acres comprising several different ecosystems were set aside as a conservation area, never to be developed. For preservation's sake it's open only to researchers, but guests can follow a swamp trail in the Fort Wilderness Resort. Much roadside planting is native, and superb full-grown native trees—dahoon holly, liquidambar, laurel oak—are found throughout the property. Experiments with recycled water and composted sewage sludge from a wastewater treatment plant near the nursery are ongoing and promising.

Disney horticulturists are eager and organized to share their findings and their expertise. They have a lot to share, with as great a diversity of plants as a typical botanic garden. Trees, shrubs, and many flowers are labeled. Many of the gardeners know the names and characteristics of the cultivars in the beds they are working on. Computers and librarians at Epcot Outreach will answer questions. There are half-day seminars for adults and for children and intensive three-day programs for landscape professionals. Warner is particularly interested in communicating the joy of gardening to children. "The future of the environment depends on involving children as early as possible in growing and appreciating plants, yet the worst landscaped institutions in this country are the public schools." Recently Disney volunteers landscaped a local schoolyard using recycled materials and techniques they have learned for creating an economical, environmentally sound landscape.

"I've become conscious of the things that speak most loudly to people about plants," Warner says. "Flowers are powerful because they are colorful. But can we do something more striking than flowerbeds? People are not very familiar with the possibilities of hanging baskets. They are surprised to see begonias growing in big round balls. Also, when the park is crowded, flowerbeds are blocked out. Hanging baskets bring the flowers up to eye level. For the chrysanthemum show in November we push a single type of plant to its limit in the garden and use it in unusual ways—floaters, columns, standards—but in one color, yellow. This really packs a punch.

"But can any plant compete with Mickey Mouse? Or can we do something horticulturally that will grab people with the same intensity? Well, we can represent Mickey in plants. We were known for inventive topiary, but when we started doing Disney characters, topiary became a much stronger draw. We tried to have them active—Goofy isn't just standing there, he looks as if he were going to charge. Then we added flower color like the pink tutus on the dancing hippos—we can keep begonias on a topiary for two years. This year we animated Mickey and Minnie. If the first plant that children—or adults—notice is a Mickey Mouse topiary, that's just fine, because maybe the second plant they'll notice will be a tree—or the Amazon jungle." ▲

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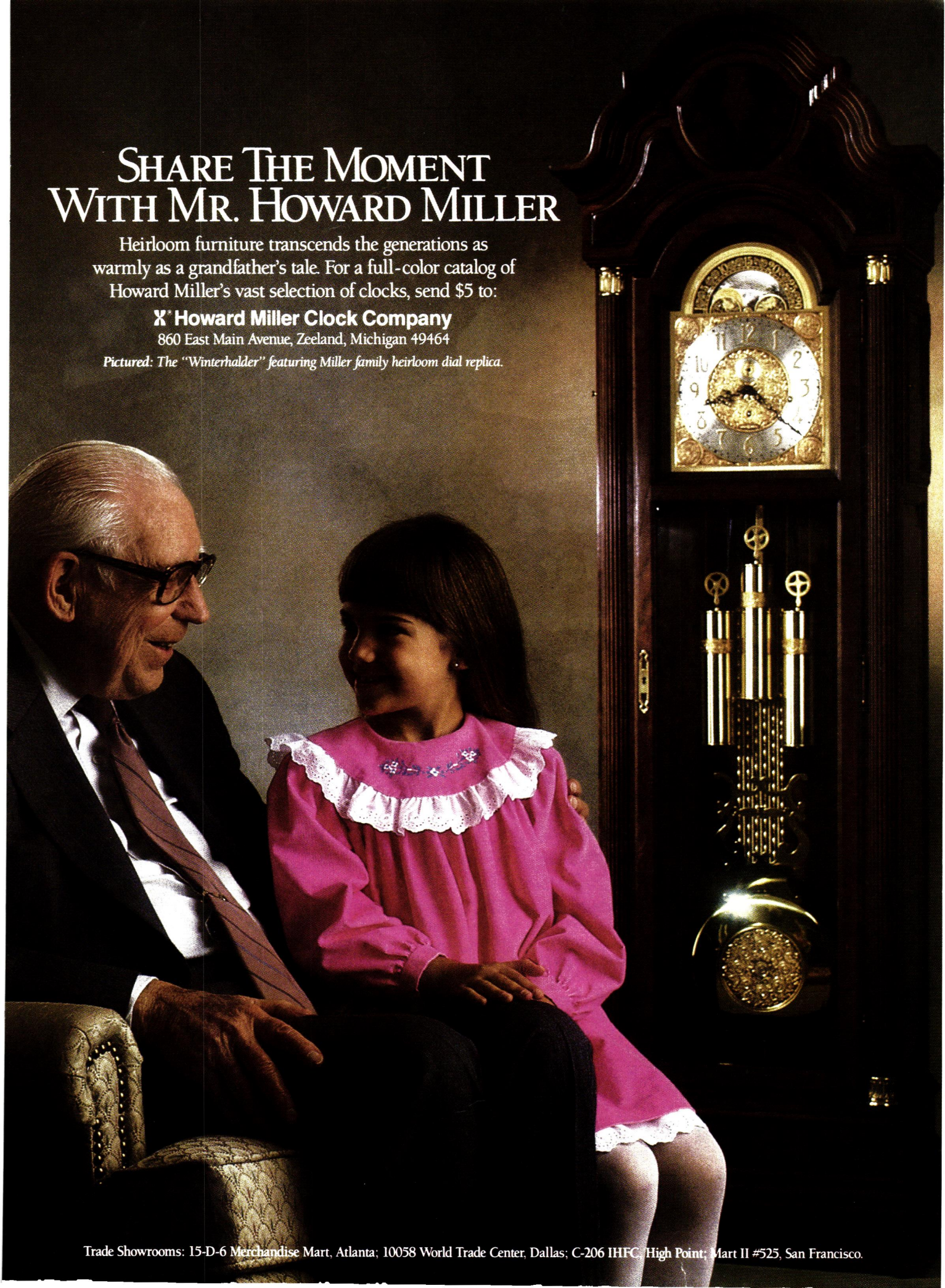
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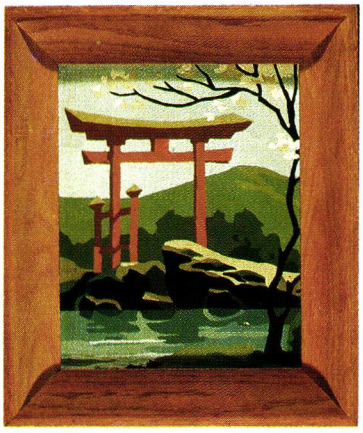
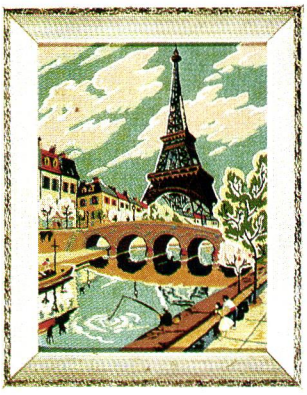




Michael O'Donoghue, top, surveys a collection he says "J. Paul Getty would envy." Above: *Torii Arch*, his first paint-by-number. Right: *Paris in the Spring*. Below: *Pinkie with an Attitude*.

One connoisseur defends the art of everyman

BY MICHAEL O'DONOGHUE

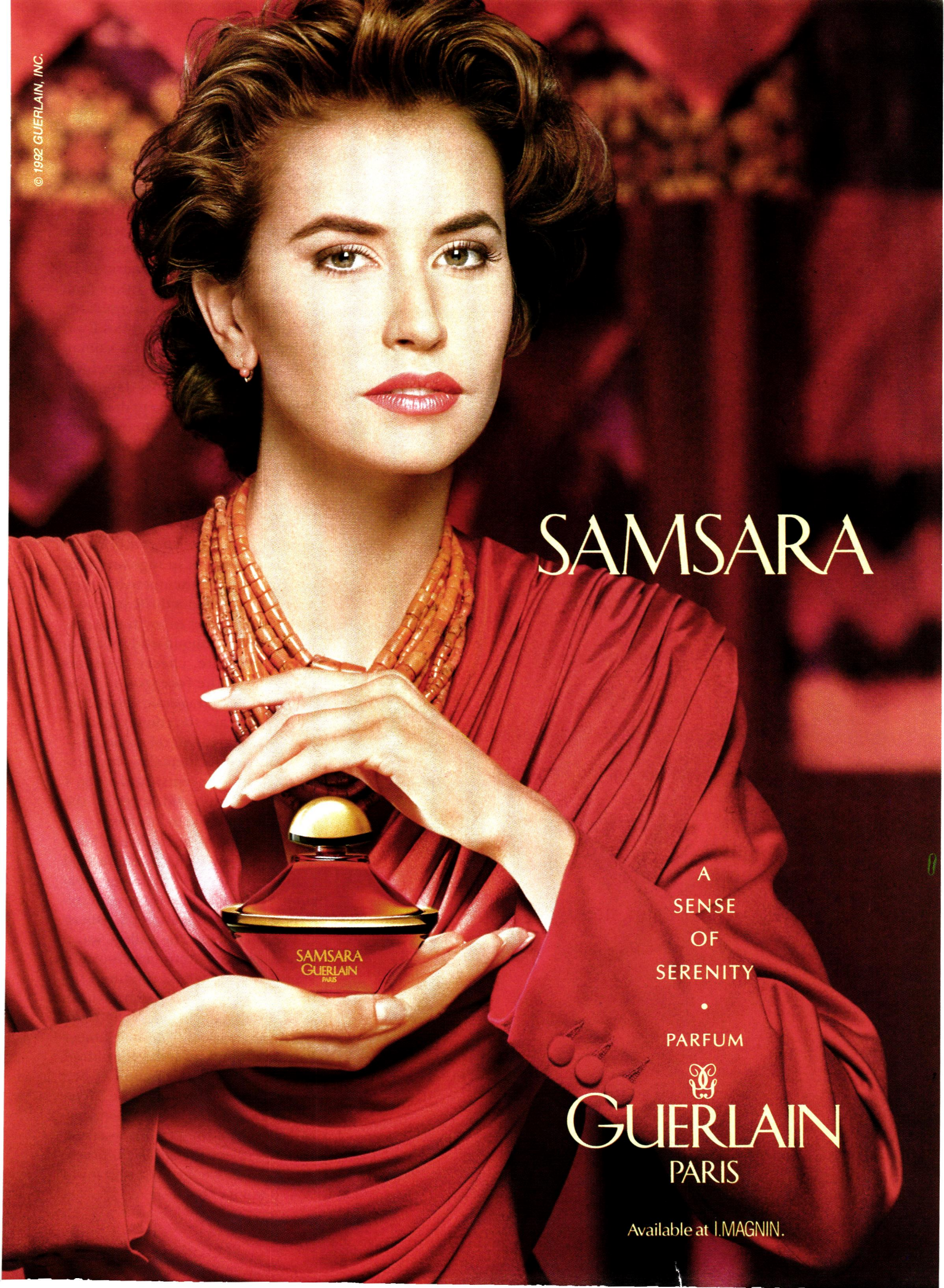
THERE WAS A TIME LONG AGO, BACK, SAY, WHEN JOHN Keats was around, a thing of beauty lasted, oh, I don't know, hundreds and hundreds of years sometimes, possibly even *forever*! Now a thing of beauty is a joy for a month or two and then you have to get a new thing of beauty. You have to change them like dirty sheets. Over the past four decades we've seen art come and go—everything from action painting to chaotic pluralism—but the paint-by-number school remains, timeless and enduring, still cranking out those pictures of saucer-eyed kittens tangled in yarn and clipper ships slicing through twilight-tinged seas.

The concept was born in the late forties when Max Klein, owner of the Palmer Paint Co. of Detroit, Michigan, teamed up with artist Dan Robbins. Under the name Craft Master they brought out the first paint-by-number kits, and by 1954, twelve million had been sold. Would-be artists were led to the easel with lurid copy such as this, penned by Klein himself, for a painting called *The Bullfighter*: "*Stand aside you weaklings!!* . . . for here the Red on your paint brush turns magically into flowing blood as the climax of Matador versus Bull draws near. As your numbered colors bring life and drama to your canvas, the excitement of the moment is without parallel for here is tension, lust, and fury." At the height of the craze, the Palmer Paint Co. was turning out 50,000 kits a day. "Every man a Rembrandt!" they promised.

So-called real painters despised this fad, railing against "number paintings" with that special contempt fifties liberals saved for Muzak, Cool Whip, and pink Christmas trees. "I don't know what America is coming to when thousands of people, many of them adults are willing to be regimented into brushing paint on a jig-saw miscellany of dictated shapes," mused a reader in a letter to *American Artist* in 1953, adding, "Can't you rescue some of these souls—or should I say 'morons'?"

Are these seemingly harmless paintings—which are, after all, nothing more than assembly line French impressionism—as soulless and dehumanizing as critics claim they are? Definitely. And so is driving a Hyundai as

FROM TOP: CHRIS SANDERS; COURTESY BRIDGEWATER LUSTBERG GALLERY, NEW YORK (3)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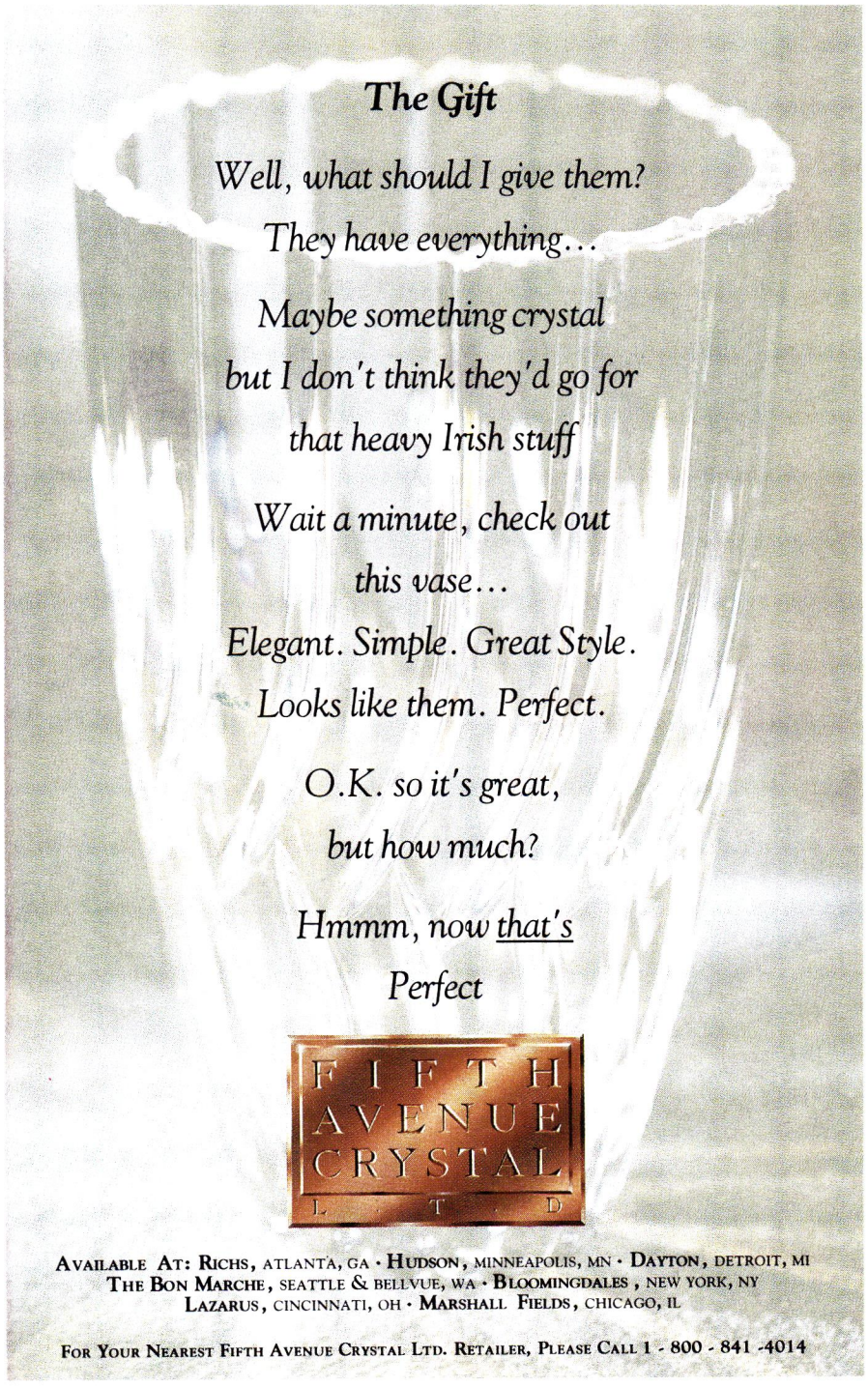
opposed to a Bugatti. Welcome to America. I maintain that 1950s paint-by-numbers mirror the hopes and dreams of this country more accurately than any museum retrospective covering the same period. What better metaphor for life under Joseph McCarthy's rigid witch-hunting regime than a style of painting in which you had to stay carefully within the lines? And if the pictures were a little shallow, a little sugary, our hopes and dreams were a little shallow and sugary. If we had dreamed of things more ennobling than kittens snagged in yarn—if we had asked the clerk at the hobby shop for visions of ineffable joy, Homeric glory, brooding pathos, spiritual odysseys, gripping insights, brutish desire, Olympian majesty, searing passions, epic struggles, arabesques of rapture and shame, indeed a spectrum of all human experience—then the folks at Craft Master would have been only too glad to oblige. But all we asked the clerk was whether he also had the kittens on velvet.

I should mention that I just collect these things, I don't paint them. Life is hard enough without doing paint-by-numbers. So why, you ask, did I choose to collect these rather than Roseville pottery or refrigerator magnets? In the early eighties I was living in Hollywood with a woman who, for purposes of accuracy, I will identify only as Hitler's daughter. When we split up, she kept the house and I moved into my writer's bungalow on the now-defunct Zoetrope movie lot. Living alone on a deserted back lot may sound romantic—it certainly looked Felliniesque littered with the derelict sets from Francis Ford Coppola's *One from the Heart*—but actually it was strange and hellish. In a pathetic attempt to brighten my room, I visited a thrift store and invested a quarter in my first paint-by-number, a tranquil study of a Japanese torii gate, cherry blossoms blooming in the foreground. The next week at a garage sale I picked up a sunny seascape for a dime. I had acquired two genuine oil paintings—both framed, incidentally—for a total of thirty-five cents. And when I hung them, they did brighten the place up. I decided to buy more.

Now, ten years later, I live in Manhattan and own over two hundred paint-by-numbers. With storage room running out, I decided to show my collection at the Bridgewater/Lustberg Gallery in SoHo. The gallery was a natural choice because its co-owner Paul Bridgewater had produced the first abstract paint-by-number kits in 1979. I called the exhibit "The Fortieth Anniversary of Paint-by-Number Paintings" and added a line lifted from the cornflakes people—"See them again for the first time." The opening was a great success. Someone in the crowd, I forget who, observed, "A masterpiece is just 10,000 brushstrokes." Oh, I remember who it was now. It was me. ◆



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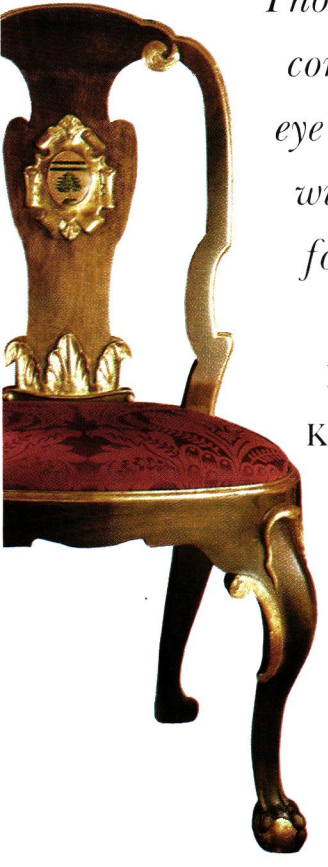
Family Resemblance

Pepe, Hal, and Thomas Messel, above, in the kitchen at Bradley Court, above left, their Tudor manor in Gloucestershire. Details see Resources.

Like his uncle Oliver, Thomas Messel combines an eye for history with a flair for drama

BY PATRICK KINMONTH



Thomas's carved and gilded Cardinal's chair, far left, and mirrored cartouche, left.

Thomas Messel, designer and dreamer, makes new things for people who like old things. His fanciful furniture and accessories are in the theatrical tradition of his uncle, the great British set designer Oliver Messel. Oliver could turn a few pipe cleaners into jewelry fit for Cleopatra or conjure the world of Sleeping Beauty from scraps of tinsel and gauze, but Thomas's designs are made of stronger stuff. In a converted carriage house and stable on the grounds of Bradley Court, his Tudor manor in Gloucestershire, he works with a team of carvers, gilders, painters, and alchemists well versed in the ways of lacquer and gesso, patina and polish. The setup allows him the luxury of being able to create to order a mirrored sconce emblazoned with his client's entwined initials in a rococo cartouche or six hundred stenciled and lacquered place mats—a request from the Sultan of Oman.

Nothing Thomas makes is quite what it seems. His well-known Library Collection features an ice bucket, side table, and matchbox, all constructed from what look like old leather-bound books. For those who wish to disguise modern life in a charming painted Venetian commode he will oblige. You never need to see your fridge or TV again. Or your paperwork for that matter—Thomas's current best-selling design is a filing cabinet disguised as a Regency bookcase.

At Bradley Court, built in 1559 from the rubble of an ancient fort, Thomas, his wife, Pepe, a landscape painter, and their young son, Hal, live surrounded by family treasures, Thomas's innovations, and Pepe's gardens—"my living still lifes," she calls them—which masterfully balance seventeenth-century formality with arts and crafts–style herbaceous plantings. The Messels found the house ten years ago with the help of Thomas's cousin Lord Snowdon, whose mother was Oliver's sister. "We invited ourselves to tea with the owners, friends of Snowdon's, to ask if they knew of any property in the district that might be for sale," recalls Thomas. "To our surprise they said we could have Bradley."

Once installed, they made a few

JAMES MORTIMER

GIANNI VERSACE

SIGNATURE

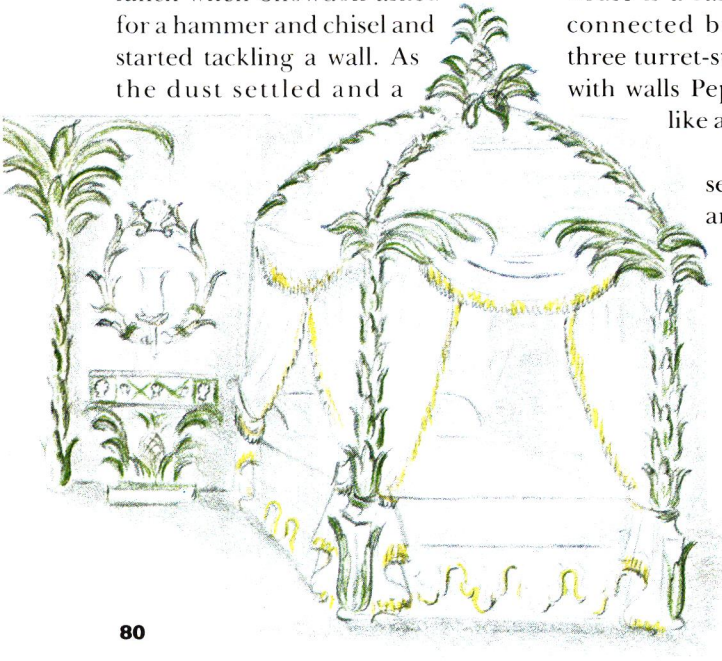
THE NEW WATCH **LE MEDUSE** BY GIANNI VERSACE

Bradley Court's 17th-century Italian mantel, above left, lined with Thomas's japanned candlesticks. Above: The Gothick bed and table Thomas created for a new villa in Regent's Park. Left: The carriage house workroom at Bradley Court.

For those who wish to disguise modern life in a painted Venetian commode, Messel will oblige

changes, principally demolition of the Victorian laundry and larder that masked the form of the original structure, otherwise little altered since the addition in 1790 of a well-proportioned drawing room. The kitchen took shape one day after lunch when Snowdon asked for a hammer and chisel and started tackling a wall. As the dust settled and a good ten feet of space had been gained, he said, "I've been wanting to do that for years." The taking down of walls continued and now the house is a rambling suite of rooms connected by spacious halls and three turret-staircases of Bath stone with walls Pepe has treated to look like aged parchment.

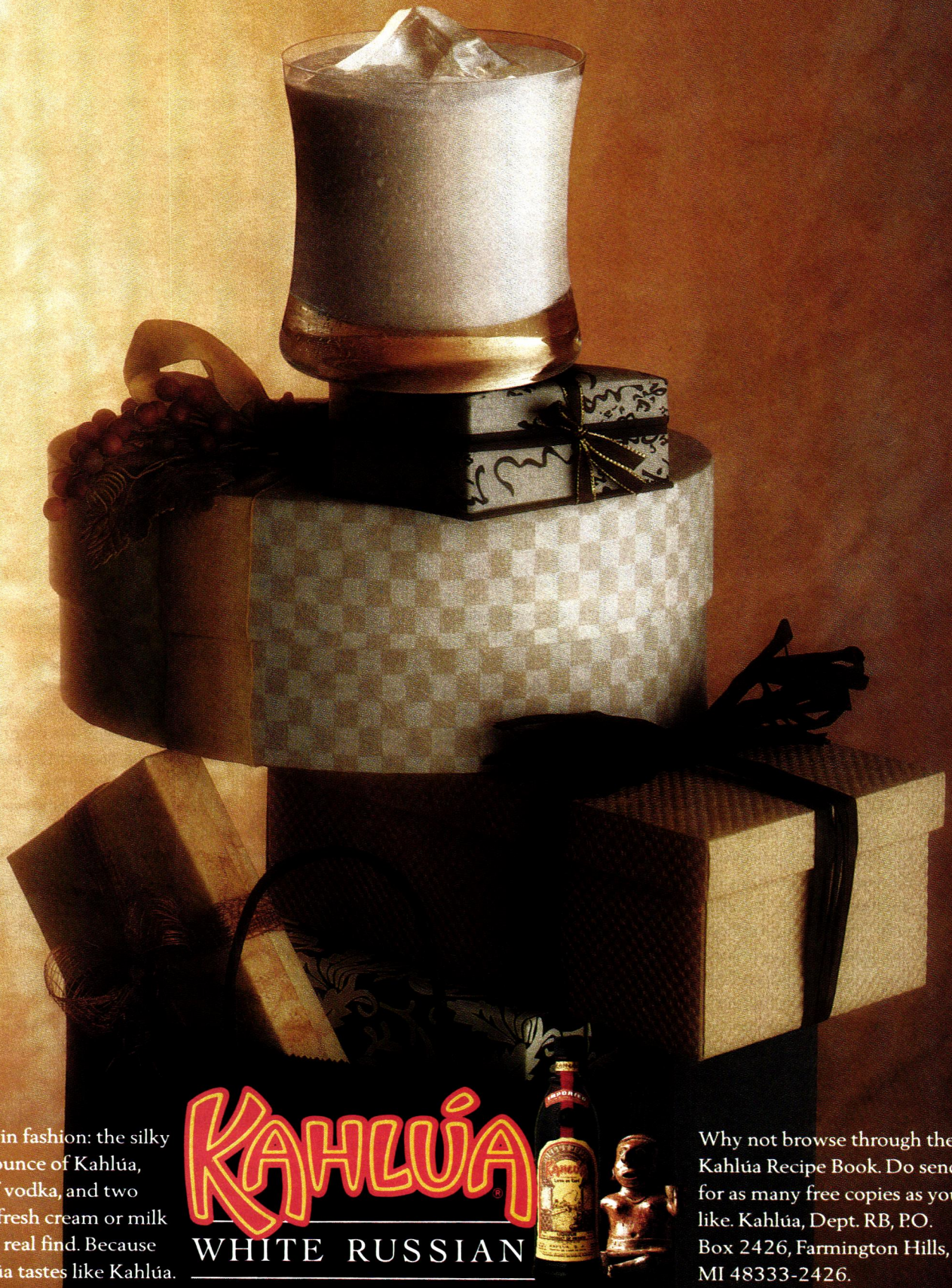
"I rely on Pepe's great sense of color for guidance in my work," says Thomas. "She sets the palette, I focus on the design." He also relies on Oliver's example. Having restored all of the exotica in the Messel suites at the Dorchester Hotel in London, Thomas has turned to a Messel repertoire of pineapples, palm trees, and seashells for furniture commissioned by a client on Mustique. And his uncle would thoroughly approve of the Gothick and Italianate designs he recently completed for Quinlan Terry's new villas in Regent's Park. For a drawing room, he replicated every detail of Pugin's richly carved rosewood banquet chairs made for Windsor Castle. And for a master bedroom, he created a vaulted four-poster—all barley twists and gold balls—even more elaborate and statuesque than the seventeenth-century model that inspired it. Meanwhile, back at Bradley Court, he is busy filling orders for filing cabinets, collaborating with Pepe on a new line of painted Queen Anne mirrors, and searching for more antiques to bring back to life. ▲



Thomas's palm and pineapple festooned design for a house on Mustique.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JAMES MORTIMER; TOM MILLER; JAMES MORTIMER; NC

The taste that tops everything.



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Tending the Landscape

A fertile mix of country life and prudent development is the soul of a New York State land trust

BY WILLIAM BRYANT LOGAN

In a positive version of the domino theory, neighbors in one valley have put more than 3,000 acres under conservation easement.

Out riding one afternoon in the country near Millbrook, New York, Mary Babcock looked back across a small valley and saw a new house sticking out like a boil on the crest of a hill. "What is that ugly house doing over there?" she demanded of her friend Farnham Collins, the chairman of the board of the Dutchess Land Conservancy. He hesitated. Finally, he answered, "Mary, it's yours."

Shortly thereafter Babcock placed a conservation easement on her 213-acre spread and painted her new house a soft gray green that blends with the trees. "If I'd known what I know now," she says, "I might not have put the house there." Under the terms of the easement, no more than three additional houses can ever be built on this land, and their locations are mapped out to fit in "building envelopes," that is, locations where they will impede neither farmers' work in the hayfields nor the views of neighbors and ordinary passersby.

"We plan our kitchens," says Babcock, "but we have never planned the big picture." Through the work of the Dutchess Land Conservancy—and more than nine hundred like-minded land trusts that have sprung up around the nation, about four hundred of them in the past decade—all that is changing. Indeed, the picture from the Babcock place is as beautiful as any to be found within ninety miles of a major city. Hay and corn seem to flow around the bends of the contour-plowed fields; horses, sheep, and cattle graze; there is even a vineyard and a herd of fallow deer being raised for New York's epicurean tables. Not a subdivision to be seen.

Benign neglect is not what has kept this area looking like the land that time forgot. The 3,100 contiguous acres of preserved farmland and woodlots in this upland valley consist of a patchwork of nine different farms, each protected by a conservation easement that forever limits development. "With traditional zoning, you simply set minimum standards for development, so the landscape comes to look like the zoning laws," says DLC executive director Ira Stern, sketching the plan of a cookie-cutter suburb in the air with his finger. "But we have a very strong land ethic here. Our decisions are based on the needs of the land."

The ink was scarcely dry on the conservancy's articles of incorporation in 1984 when it faced its first challenge. A developer had bought 500 acres of hilltop land that had been farmed for many years by the actor James Cagney and was on the verge of acquiring 200 acres of prime bottomland. The developer's plans included at least thirty dwellings and what one neighbor described as a "condominium for horses."

The conservancy had to act fast, before there was nothing left to conserve. Ten people—some of them DLC board members, others just neighbors—formed North Dutchess Properties "to purchase land that was under siege," in the words of Everett Cook, president of the real estate company and a DLC board member. The

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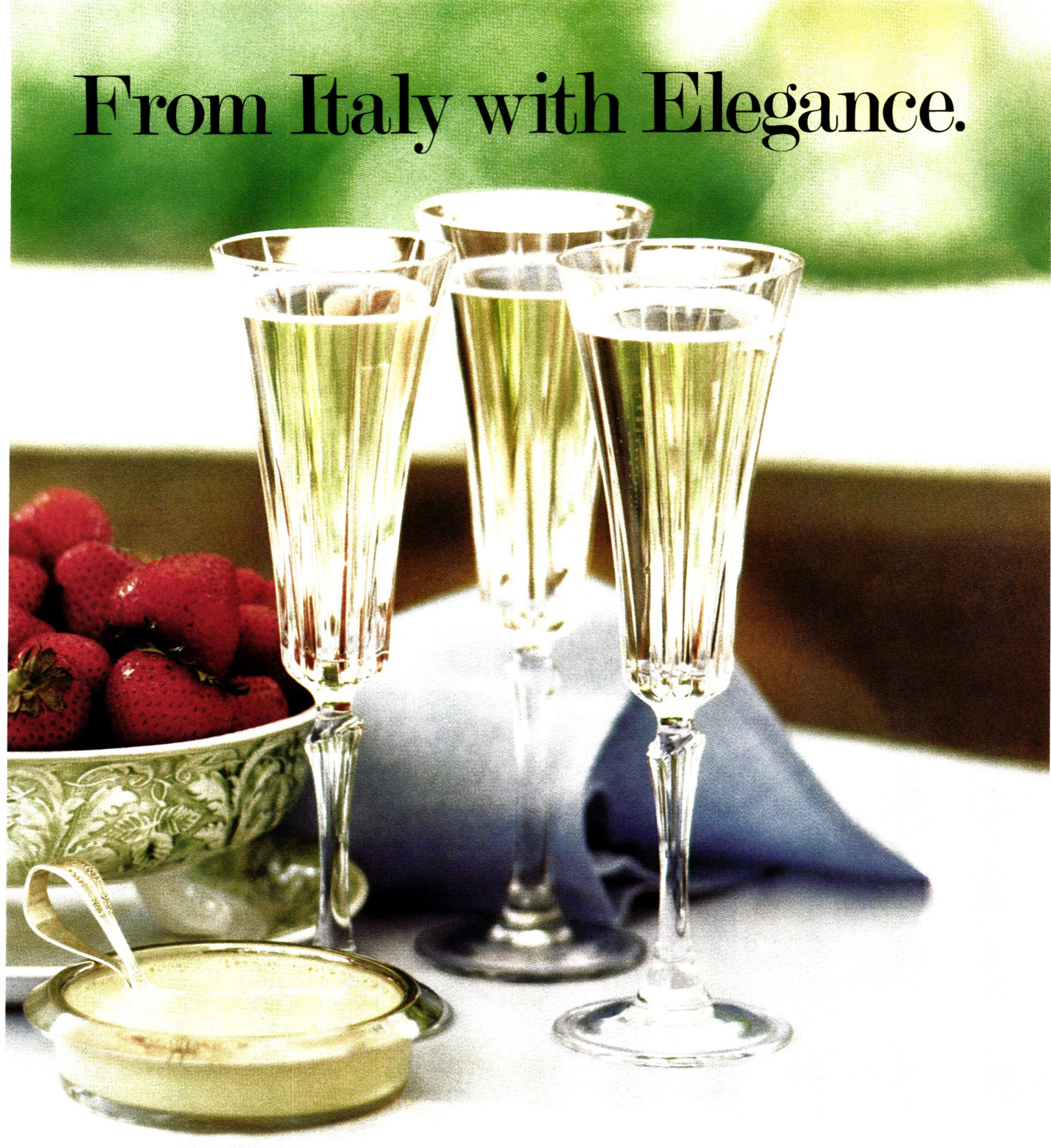

The sparkling muscat wine with the strawberries and *zabaglione* is an Asti Spumante from Piedmont. We could have chosen a still Vin Santo dessert wine from Tuscany or a sweet Marsala from Sicily. After all, the 20 regions of Italy produce more varieties of fine wine than any other country. And they go with any foods in America.

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company subsequently resold the farms, but with a string attached: a conservation easement that allowed the land to be bought and sold normally so long as no more than fourteen houses—one for every fifty acres—were placed on it, forever. The company donated the easement to the conservancy, which thereby gained the right to monitor and enforce its provisions.

"We are interested in a viable, livable landscape," asserts Stern, "not a museum." The conservancy is not opposed to development per se. In fact, the novelty and genius of a conservation easement is that it can focus and guide development instead of simply forbidding it. "As I see it," says Glenn Hoagland, past director of the conservancy and now director of the citizen action program at the Open Space Institute, based in Ossining, New York, "our land ethic means that we work within the constraints of the natural landscape, both for appropriate housing and for sustainable agriculture." That the two can go together was demonstrated when the DLC bought and resold 78 acres of a struggling dairy farm and found a buyer for another 49 acres. All 127 acres were put under a conservation easement limiting development to three houses, and the good farmland was leased back to the dairymen for free.

However they are written, good easements need good neighbors. Unlike many conservation efforts, a successful land trust is the product of local people cooperating to preserve open areas, wetlands, watersheds, and the like. In theory, it works like dominoes: two neighbors agree to put their land under conservation easements, then the neighbors' neighbors agree, and so on, until whole areas are protected. On a map in the DLC office in Stanfordville, tides of green and orange flow across property lines, indicating contiguous properties that are now under easement, more than 4,800 acres in all. Other colors mark land held by the public, by organizations like the American Farmland Trust, or under

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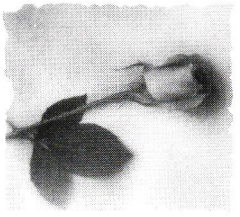

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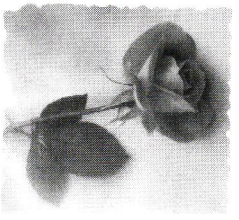

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private deed restrictions. Wherever the map is white, the planners know they have work to do.

Faith and John Tompkins had lived for forty-three years on their 58-acre farm in northern Dutchess County, but when a developer acquired a neighboring 100-acre tract and planned to plop twenty houses on it, they woke up to the fragility of their own property. Neighbor, vintner, and conservancy board member John Dyson bought the land from the developer and promptly put it under conservation easement. The Tompkinses quickly followed suit. "We didn't hesitate," says Faith Tompkins. "We owe it to the community to preserve this place as it is." Under the terms of their easement, only one other house can ever be built on the property.

Sometimes neighbors need gentle persuasion. Collins currently has his own land under an easement that is being held in escrow while he negotiates with the owners of adjoining properties. If they will agree to put their land under easement too, he suggests, the easement on his own property will be recorded, and thus be made permanent.

The more land that is preserved, the more important it becomes to take care of the rest, because a beautiful landscape permanently protected makes adjoining properties particularly attractive to developers. "I've got good neighbors all around," says Addison Berkey of his hay and straw farm, "but in that quadrant over there, I need to know what they are planning. I want to make sure they don't spoil my effort by putting up a row of houses on my border."

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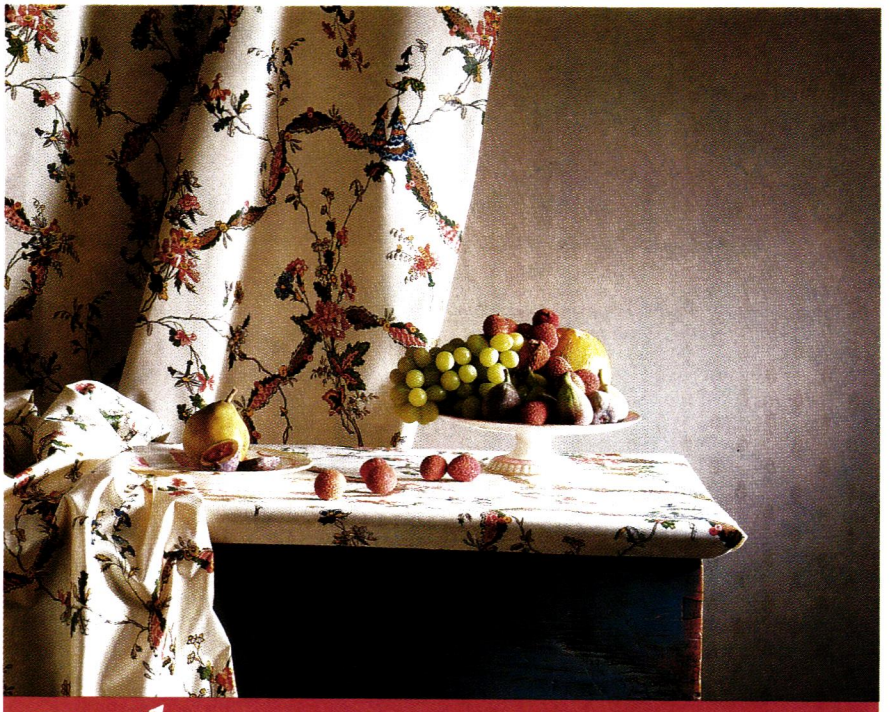

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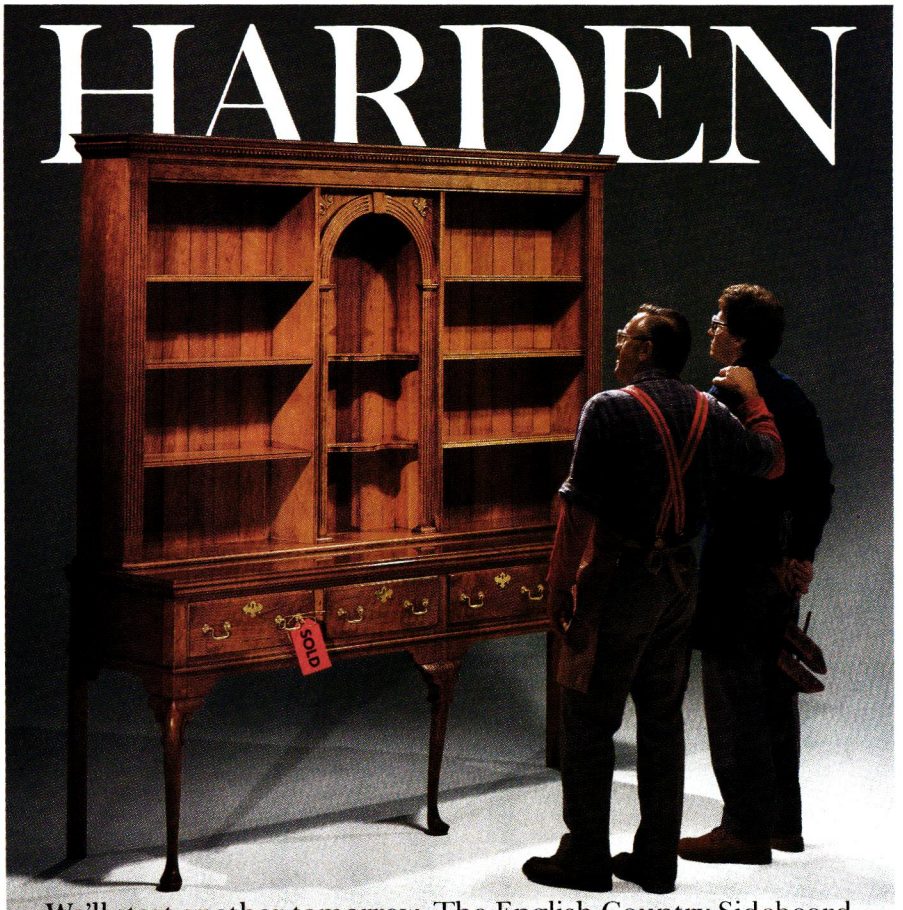

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Though "viewsheds" are important to these new conservationists, good scenery is only the sign of a healthy landscape. "There are no losers, rich or poor," says Collins. "Farmers, hunters, cross-country skiers—everybody benefits."

So too do the tiny unincorporated hamlets that still dot the county's landscape. Mabbettsville, for instance, is the sort of place that is not supposed to exist anymore. It has one general store, a town swimming pool, a gas station, a bowling alley, a drive-in hamburger stand, a garden center, and a one-man iron foundry. Right behind town the fields begin, rolling away in the sinuous lines of strip-cropped hillsides.

Nowadays the conservancy targets both town and country for preservation. When Ira Stern and Farnham Collins drive a visitor among the tight fold of a narrow valley, they admire not only the maple woodlands that crowd the fields and the beaver dam and lodge in a small pond, but also the buildings of the little town itself. Recently the DLC has applied for grants to protect and enhance the hamlets and to promote cluster development in Bangall and Stanfordville. "We want to see tight vibrant hamlets," says land planner Rebecca Thornton, "not scattered roadside strip development." More Mabbettsvilles, fewer malls.

Even if all the neighbors close ranks, it may seem that one small organization can do little about the big picture. But the web of neighbors is growing from the hamlet, to the valley, to the region; the conservancy has already spawned sister land trusts elsewhere in Dutchess County. And Stern does not draw the line there. "I look at DLC as part of a team working all up and down the Atlantic flyway," he says, "from Canada to the Caribbean." ▲

For information on land trusts: American Farmland Trust, 1920 N St. NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 659-5170. Land Trust Alliance, 900 17th St. NW, Suite 410, Washington, DC 20006; (202) 785-1410. The Trust for Public Land, 116 New Montgomery St., 4th Fl., San Francisco, CA 94105; (415) 495-4014.

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Welded Bliss

Joel Otterson fuses fragments of domestic life into sculpture

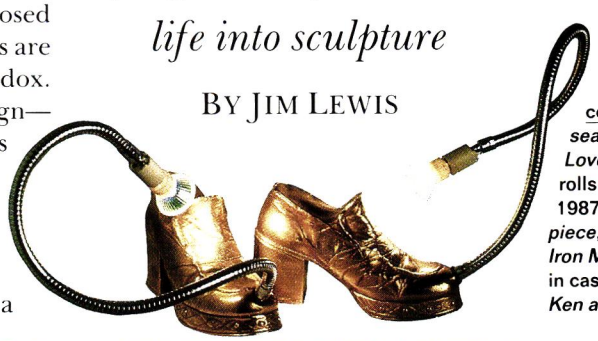
BY JIM LEWIS

An assistant of Joel Otterson's tells of showing up to meet the artist for the first time and finding him standing in the middle of his studio holding a chain saw above a sacrificial Chippendale table. The victim, it turned out, was a reproduction, and by the time Otterson was done it had been grafted onto a few other knockoff tables and fitted out with a manhole cover, a propane tank fueling an eternal flame, some metal pipes and joints, and several sets of casters. The outcome, called simply *The Table,* was among the first of Otterson's furniture works; it was followed by an enormous rolling service-bedecked display called *The Coffeetable Museum,* as well as *Teapot Museum* and *The Hot Rod, Rock-N-Roll, Microwave, TV Dinner Table,* which is probably easier to imagine than it is to describe (bear in mind that the televisions and the microwave are plugged in).

Furniture, of course, is supposed to be functional, but these pieces are functional to the point of paradox. Otterson takes the values of design—use, comfort, style—and makes them metastasize, split, and recombine, until the results work so well that it seems just working can't be all they're for.

In fact it isn't. The artist was a founding member of the school of friendly conceptualism that sprang up out of New York's East Village in the early eighties and migrated down to SoHo a few years later, and the furniture—if it's properly so called—is an outgrowth of more sculptural intentions. At first Otterson made metal molecules and rampant DNA strands out of pipes and joints, spiraling upward from circular bases composed of free weights, sinks, and hubcaps. A simultaneous series consisted of baseball bats, stretched or joined together and balanced to make tall, surprisingly elegant and organic columns, on top of which were placed pan-cultural jetsam, from a Nehi Blue Creme soda bottle to an African totem. Collected in the "projects" room at the Museum of Modern Art in 1987, the two groups of work became a forest of sculptures, an homage to the museum as Wonderland, given their odd consonance with the Brancusis on MOMA's second floor.

Legend has it that Barnett Newman once defined sculp-



Torch in hand, Joel Otterson, below center, solders *Spider Bathtub Loveseat,* 1992. Top: *Compact Disc Stereo Loveseats (Hot Wheels),* 1988, rocks and rolls on rubber casters. Left: *Gold Shoes,* 1987. Below left: *Muscle Man Fruit Centerpiece,* 1992. Below: The armless *Venus, The Iron Maiden* and *GI Joe Candelabra,* both in cast iron, stand with brass *Wet 'n Wild Ken and Barbie Fireplace Chenets,* all 1992.

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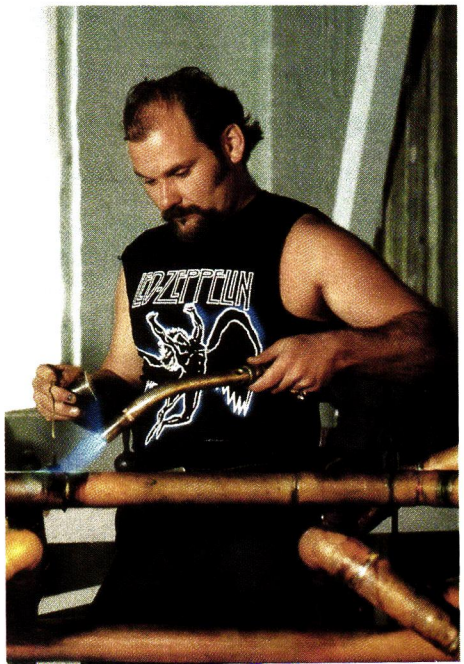

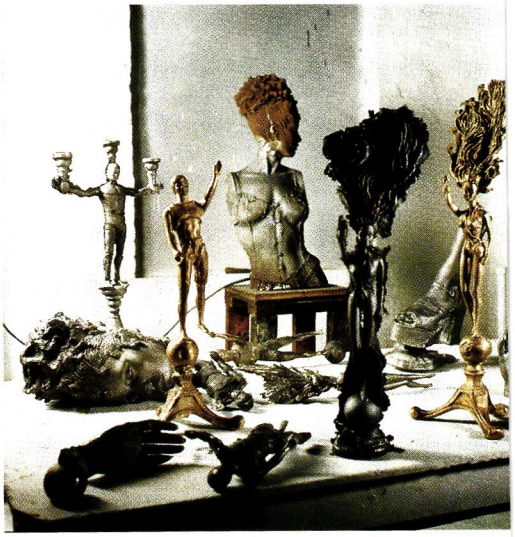

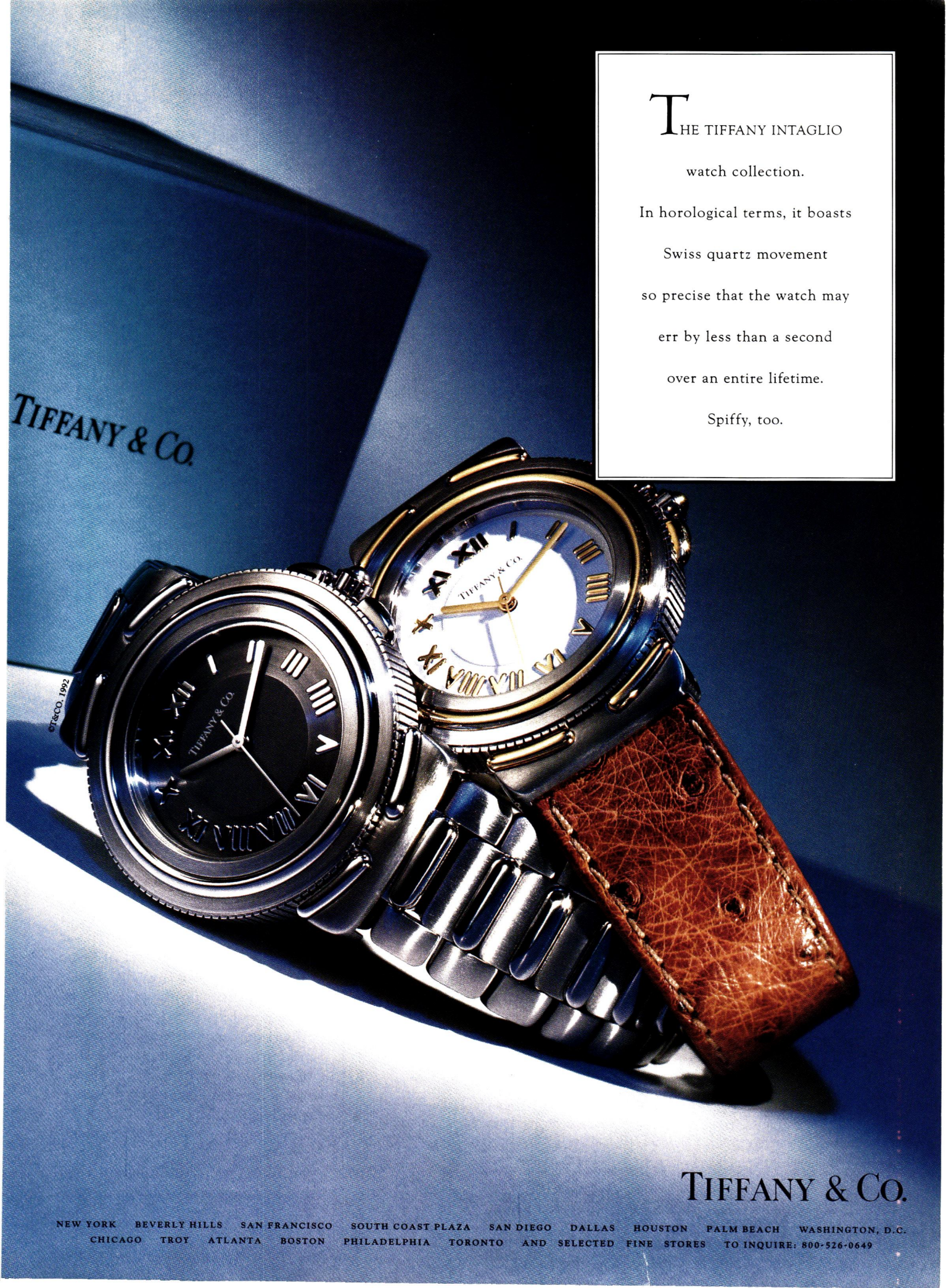
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"I want sculpture to be aggressive," says Joel Otterson. "It's there to affect how we eat, drink, talk, read, and watch TV"

ture as what you bump into when backing away from a painting for a better look. Otterson eventually decided he wanted none of that: "I'm not going to make things for the corner." A trip to the Cimitero Monumentale in Milan in 1986 and a remark by a terminally ill friend gave him a clearer sense of purpose. "I want to integrate sculpture into our lives, and I want it to be aggressive," he says. "It's there to affect how we eat, drink, talk, read, and watch TV."

You can ask the chickens whether it works: 1988 brought *The Cage*, an enormous pair of high-rise henhouses, complete with live egg-laying leghorns. Five thousand copper, bronze, and brass fittings went into the coops (the average suburban house has about one hundred); it was a feat of maniacal engineering, a vision of glorious comical excess.

The furniture pieces that followed are equally over the top, but the materials that go into them have meanings of their own, albeit seldom seen in an art context. The platform shoes that serve as a base for his pair of candelabras make them look as if they've walked off the set of some seventies remake of Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*. And the *Heavy Metal Service*, with its rock logos on Royal Albert porcelain, honors the proliferation of nth-generation rock bands (Cinderella, Poison, Skid Row), something Otterson takes almost seriously. "Rock and roll is one of the most important inventions of the second half of the twentieth century," he says. "It's a truly international language. I've always liked the way kids

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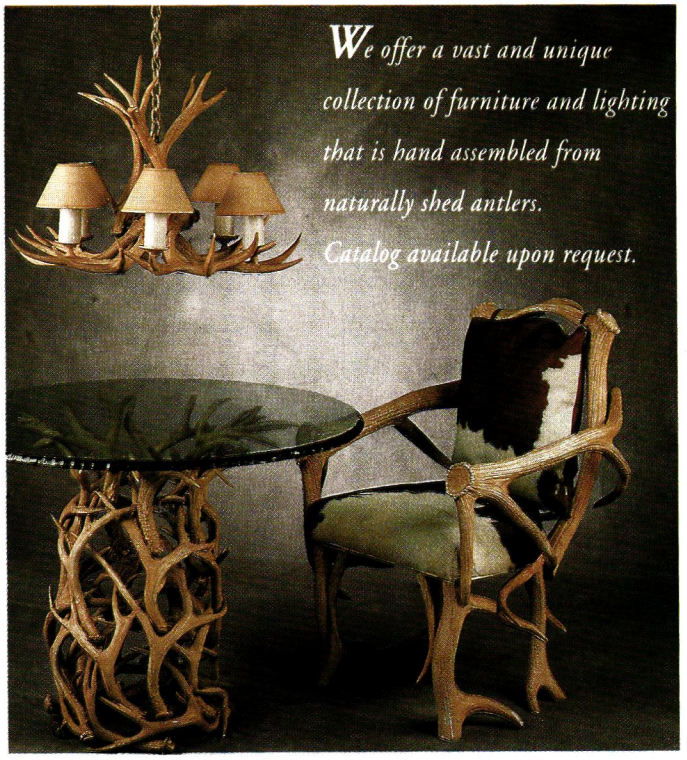
doodle band logos on high school math books. This is just the same, except I'm doodling on Grandma's good china, making heirlooms for heavy metal parents to pass on to their kids."

The attraction of domestic design is that it can support such liveliness; Otterson's work is at home in the world, and a worldly part of the home. Hence his notorious *Disco's Bed*, a Craftmatic adjustable bed mounted on rockers and fitted with spandex sheets with a sound and light system—including a mirror ball—built in; the giant gorgeous pitch-black *Afro-Cushion*, in the shape of the African continent; and *The States of Sleep (Bed from Hell)*, which took the shape of the United States with rock and roll and beer company logos sewn onto the surface. These pieces are at once parodies and celebrations of laziness, of our desire to have all pleasures at our fingertips. Moreover, Otterson insists that they're made to be used: "I want people to feel free to sleep on my beds, to spill turkey juice on the tables, to watch the TVs."

If Otterson's work has been less visible than that of his conceptualist cohorts, it's in large part because of the time and expense involved in fabrication. Though he's exhibited regularly, there's simply not enough of the work to go around, so he's been something of an artist's artist for the past few years. But a recent arts fellowship in Wisconsin at the Kohler fixture factory gave him the freedom and materials for a new line of work, now at Jay Gorney Modern Art in New York (through Nov. 7). True to form, it is a full installation, including daybeds and chairs made of upholstered bathtubs, a pair of cast-iron and brass Ken and Barbie doll andirons, centerpieces, Dead Rock Star porcelain dinner plates, and even wallpaper designed by the artist. Standing amid it all will be a seven-foot cast-iron mannequin, a latter-day Venus. She is, Otterson jokes, a "real iron maiden, the lady of the house." One imagines no less of a lady would do. ▲



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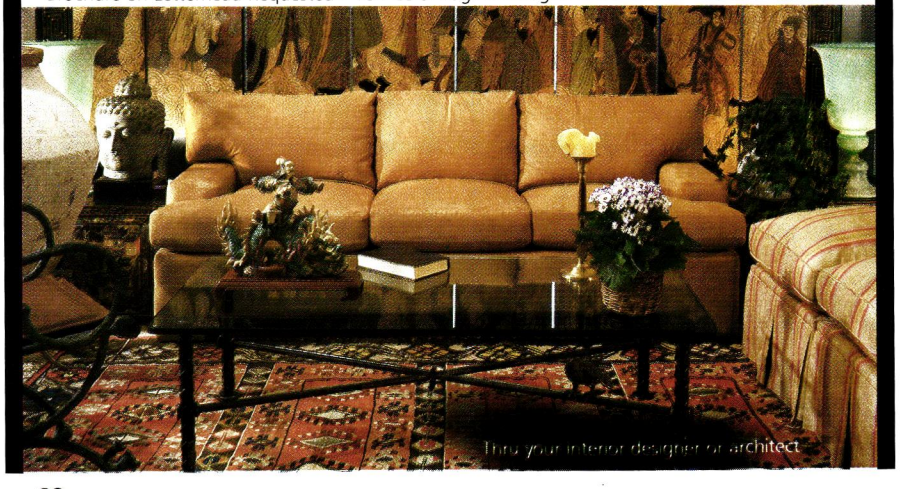

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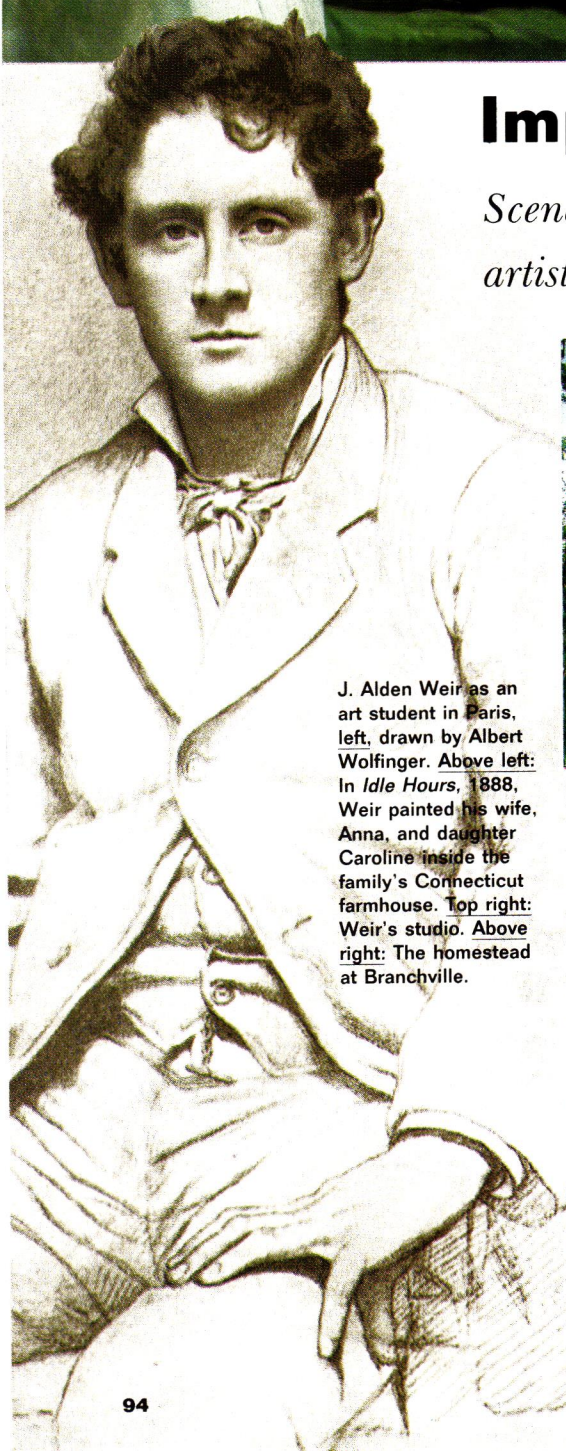
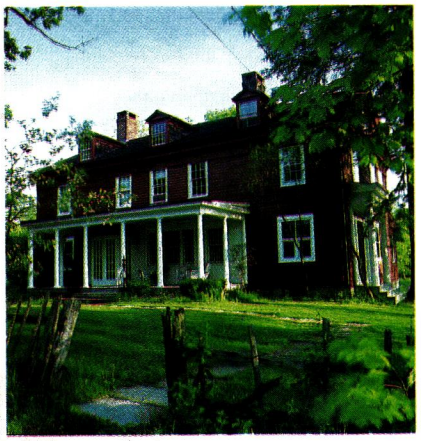
Impressions of a House

Scenes from the canvases of J. Alden Weir survive at the artist's New England farm BY PAUL HOCHMAN



J. Alden Weir as an art student in Paris, left, drawn by Albert Wolfinger. Above left: In *Idle Hours*, 1888, Weir painted his wife, Anna, and daughter Caroline inside the family's Connecticut farmhouse. Top right: Weir's studio. Above right: The homestead at Branchville.

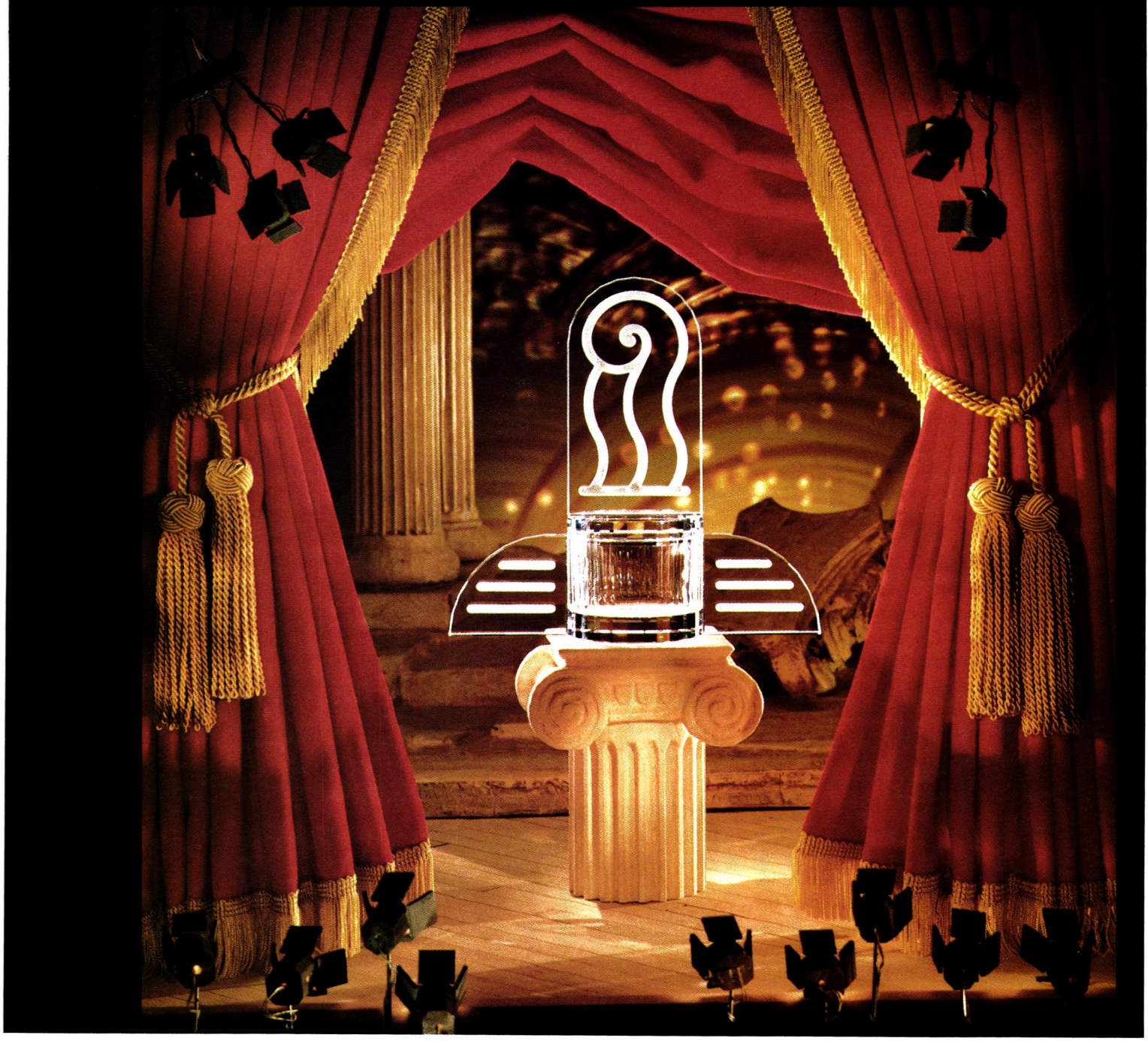


To Édouard Manet in 1881, the American impressionist J. Alden Weir was an impetuous twenty-nine-year-old upstart storming into Paris studios to pick out canvases for American collectors. To curators at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Weir was a human divining rod wandering across France, stopping only for buried masterpieces—Manet's *Boy with a Sword* now hangs on the walls of the Met. To John Singer Sargent, who sailed 3,000 miles to chase fireflies in Weir's backyard, the artist lived the "finest life I have ever seen." Now, a century later, Weir's farm in Connecticut has been designated a National Historic Site. Interpreted on canvas and paper hundreds of times by Weir and his friends John Sargent, Childe Hassam, John Twachtman, and Albert Pinkham Ryder, Weir Farm is also Connecticut's first National Historic Site and the first anywhere to commemorate an American painter.

It's certainly the only park ever traded for a work of art. In 1882, when Weir was just back from Europe, collector Erwin Davis is said to have offered his farm in Branchville near Wilton in exchange for a painting plus ten dollars. The deal went smoothly. "Mr. Davis, judging by [the farm's] rocks, thought he had the better of the artist, and Weir, judging by the inexhaustible beauty of woods, fields, hills, pond...and stone walls...knew that he had the better of the man of business," wrote Weir's friend C. E. S. Wood. A glimpse inside Weir's rustic studio—still in use by resident artist Sperry Andrews—or a stroll beside the pond he built with money he'd won in a Boston Art Club contest leaves no doubt about Weir's judgment.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART; RICHARD FELBER (2); PRIVATE COLLECTION

CRYSTAL • LE GRAND INTERPRÈTE



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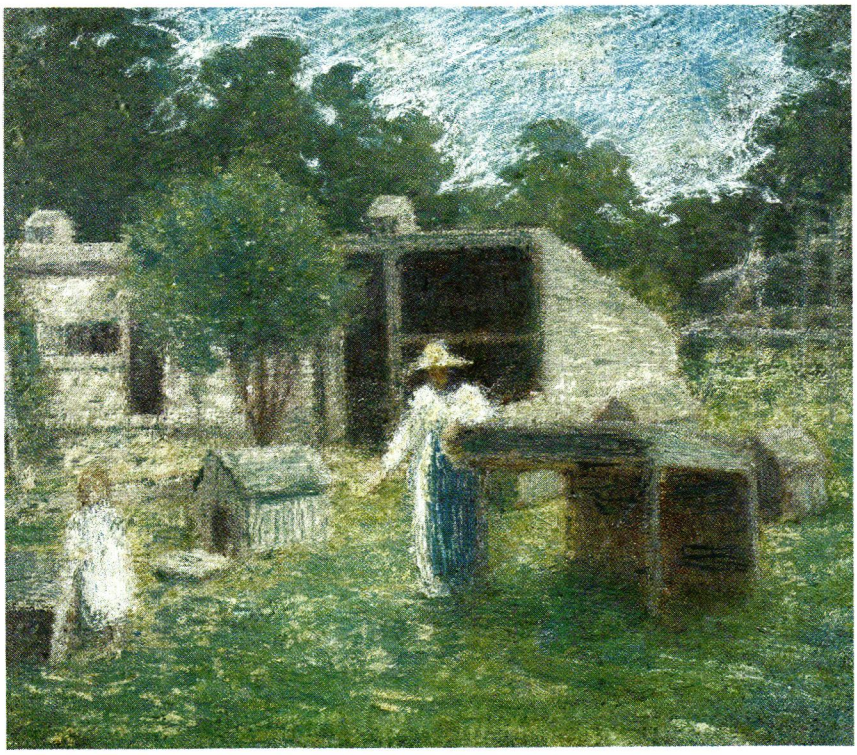
But he would have been amused at the idea of his place being called a National Historic Site. "This is not the Grand Canyon," says Connecticut senator Joseph Lieberman. "This is not Yellowstone. The dimensions are very human and very approachable." The same is true of Weir's canvases. Unlike the paintings of the Hudson River School, with their idealized frontier grandeur, which surrounded Weir as a young man, his own work focuses on a more intimate landscape—the home.

The portrait *In the Living Room*, for example, depicts Weir's wife, Anna, as she sits near the farmhouse's leaded windows. The windows and the Queen Anne secretary to Anna's left remain just as Weir painted them; visitors can literally walk into a work of art. And in his landscape *The Laundry, Branchville*, Weir avoids the big sky of the Hudson River School, concentrating instead on his backyard, his linen hanging out to dry, and his studio. The studio now looks almost exactly as it did in the 1890s: barn-red outside and stacked to the rafters inside with painters' knickknacks. There is a wood-burning stove (Weir's), a speckled easel (Sperry Andrews's), an army of empty picture frames, and a cast-iron printing press probably used by Weir's son-in-law, sculptor Mahonri Young.

At the studio door, tacked to the frame, a reproduction of Weir's *The Silhouette* mimics the barn outside. The only element missing from the view is Weir's foreground subject, his second wife, Ella. *The Silhouette* is one of the few paintings in which it's easy to determine the exact place Weir stood when he painted. One reason, explains his grandson Charles Burlingham Jr., was that Weir often fine-tuned the landscape with his brush. He called this "hollyhocking": if the yard required floral enhancement, he would paint it in. In essence, Weir was one of America's first environmentalists—his paintings not only preserved the landscape, they preserved a way of looking at it. What appealed to Weir's audience then—and what appeals to us now—is the importance he placed on homebound beauty and the value he gave to an American landscape free of bombast and commerce.

> Weir's homestead is the only farm ever traded for a work of art

In 1922, three years after Weir's death, one of the painter's best friends and devoted patrons, Duncan Phillips, wrote, "If the value of art is measured according to its expressional power, then the art of Weir is very great even if it is not entirely easy of access. It is the pure gold deep in the earth which we must



Family linen is hung near the house and studio in *The Laundry, Branchville*, c. 1894, above. Right: *Feeding the Chickens*, c. 1890.

TOP: WEIR FARM HERITAGE TRUST. GIFT OF ANNA ELY WEIR SMITH AND GREGORY SMITH. BOTTOM: PRIVATE COLLECTION

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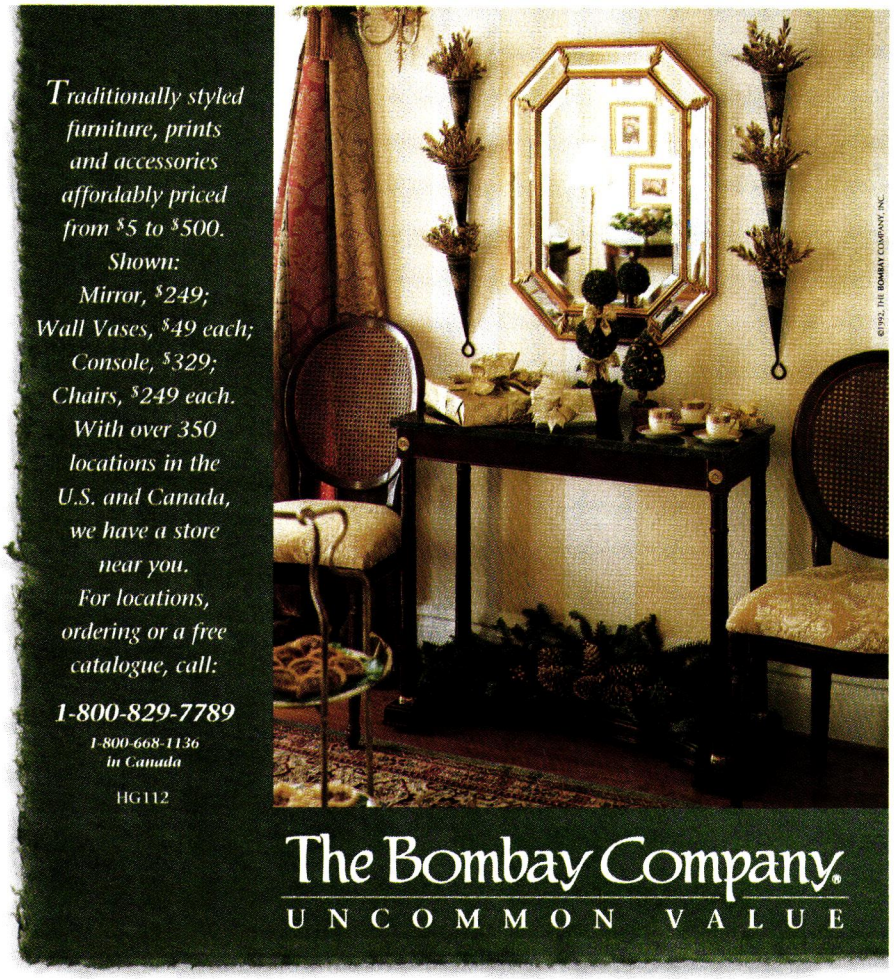
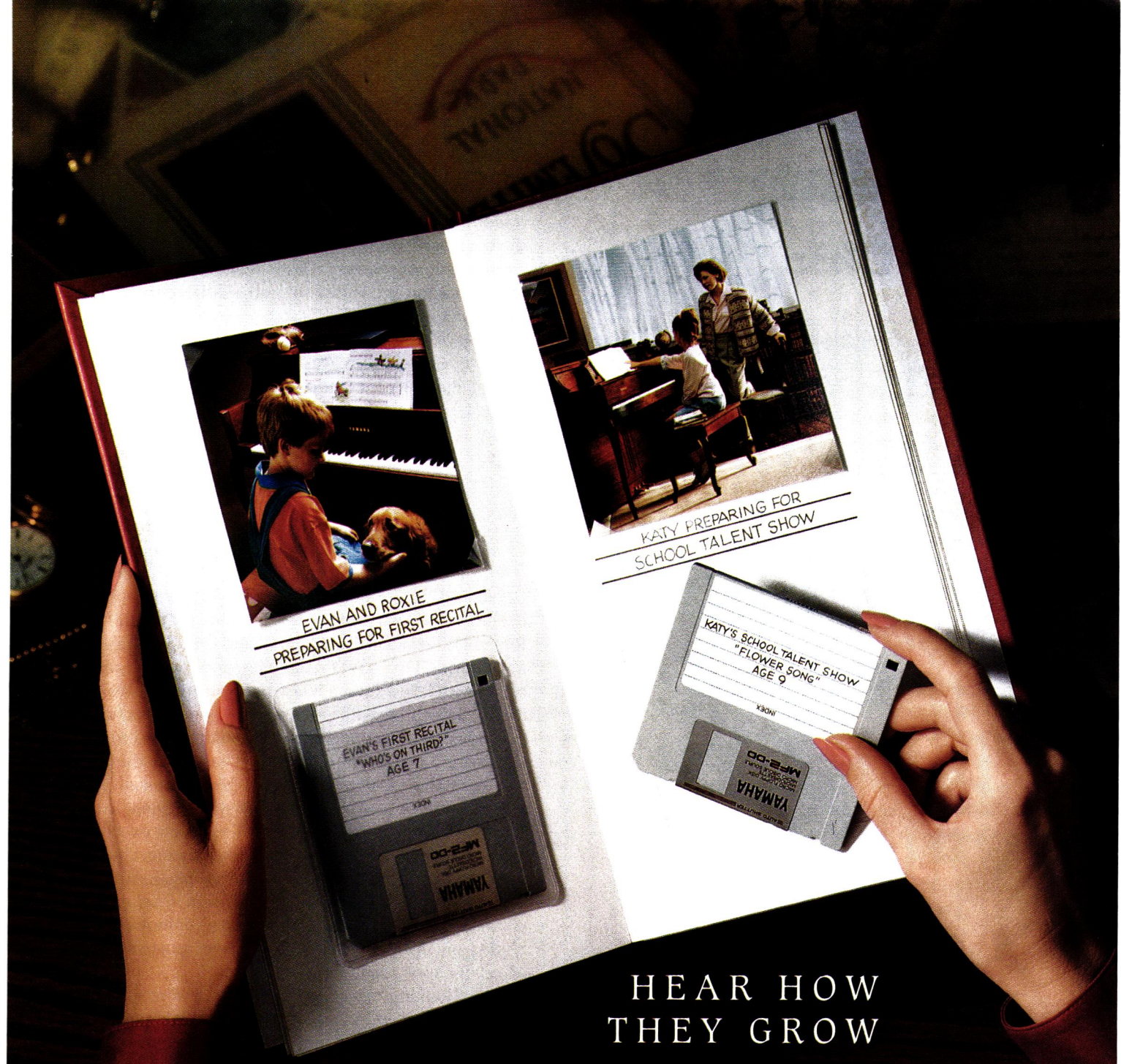
dig to find, not the cheap gilding on the gaudy surface of commercial ornaments." Even on fishing trips, recalled another friend, Harald de Raasloff, Weir saw art before he saw trout. Raasloff would implore Weir to stop making collages with the fishing flies and "would finally prevail upon him. . . . But there was always a subtle shading in his voice and a stray gleam in his eye. . . . Sure enough, the next time I took up his fly-book, I was greeted by the same riot of color, the same artistic arrangement, but alas! the same chaos, while Weir, with a smile of utter and complete guilelessness . . . would admit that somehow he liked the color scheme."

Weir's tolerance for disorder in life did not admit a haphazard technique in his work. Doreen Bolger, former curator at the Metropolitan Museum, notes that Weir's canvases have a lot going on beneath their breezy intimacy. So did Weir. Although he had moments of great technical freedom, he often left the fields or the living room and went to the studio, where he would compose a formal drawing on canvas, and then work over it—a sort of time-lapse impressionism. When Weir returned to the fields, he was back to his search. After an unsuccessful fishing trip, Raasloff recalls that "while regretting that it was only chub he had caught, [Weir] said, '. . . I thought they were two trout, really, and played them for trout, so what's the odds, and the pool certainly is lovely; let's sit down and take a good look at it.' "

Today, observers may wait minutes before a Weir painting sinks in, but their patience is rewarded with the heat of the day, the stillness of the pond, and, sometimes, the voices of visiting painters in the back rooms. Like wood that warms the man twice, once in the splitting and once in the burning, his work preserves the land twice: once in his painting and once in our slowing to see it. It is a warm and slow-burning fire indeed. ▲

For visitors information: Weir Farm National Historic Site, Branchville, CT 06897; (203) 834-1896.





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Jeep Chic

Dirt devils and city slickers will feel equally at home behind the wheel

BY ERIC BERTHOLD

Remember the old Jeep? That rugged, utilitarian, somewhat primitive vehicle left over from the war years? My brother once owned one of these American classics and proudly took me on the backroads near his Rhode Island house to show it off. It was like riding a horse bareback: every stone and rut bounced me around on those thin seats until I looked as tousled as a rodeo rider. My brother took great comfort knowing he could go just about anywhere in his Jeep. For me, however, comfort was out of the question.

Knowing full well that Jeep had changed, I was still surprised when I picked up my 1993 Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo test model in Detroit. This is a car, I thought, not a sport utility vehicle, or SUV, as today's jargon goes. It has all the appointments of the new breed of Japanese luxury car: form-fitting seats, leather-wrapped steering wheel, stereo, power everything, and computer options. "We want to set a new standard close to some of the best sports sedans on the market," explains Chrysler vice president François J. Castaing, "while continuing to improve upon the traditional off-road Jeep virtues of toughness and durability."

Those off-road virtues are what I set out to test as soon as I escaped from the eyes of Chrysler into remote areas of Michigan. My first stop was an unmarked dirt road spotted with melting snow, potholes, and ravines and not a soul in sight. Strapped in and feeling confident, I aimed for any and every obstruction, including a three-foot snow mound. I even attempted a couple of 360s—something, I decided, better left for real dirt devils. The power and traction of the four-wheel drive took me through it all with precision and never a loss of control.

The Laredo model I was driving is equipped with Command-Trac, which is two-wheel drive with a simple upshift to four-wheel drive for the wilds, although I preferred 4WD even in town. The Grand Cherokee Limited has Quadra-Trac, 4WD at all times, and the basic model comes with Selec-Trac, 4WD with downshift to 2WD. All three allow the driver to shift to low range, useful for crawling down steep inclines or through thick sand.

Leaving a trail of mud, I zoomed back onto the highway to test the horsepower of the car's electronically fuel-injected four-liter I-6 engine (a V-8 will be available this fall). Acceleration was peppy and visibility excellent. With the speed control set and music playing, the ride was smooth and quiet. Chrysler credits this to its unibody construction and Quadra-Coil suspension system, which allows each wheel to negotiate the road independently. Aside from my high perch, I might have been behind the wheel of a sports sedan.

I kept looking to see whether people were checking out this new Jeep hybrid, then realized it was camouflaged by mud. Too bad they couldn't see the softer lines, rounded contouring, wraparound front headlights, and integrated bumpers that give it a less trucklike image. Jeep's trademark vertical slotted grille is still there, but it's now angled to allow a clearer view of the road ahead.

As SUVs become ever more fashionable for families, safety is becoming a selling point. Jeep is the only SUV offering driver-side airbags, four-wheel antilock brakes, and a rearview mirror that automatically reduces glare at night. At $20,884 for the Laredo model and $28,440 for the Limited, Jeeps are competitive among SUVs and less expensive than the sports sedans they emulate. And just try driving one of those sedans through a muddy trench. ▲

RUTH MARTEN/JEEP PHOTO COURTESY CHRYSLER CORP.

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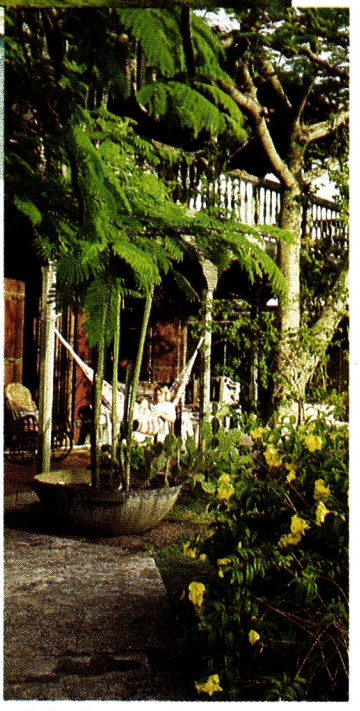
The Way to Go in Martinique

For the quiet side of the island, turn right from the airport

BY RICHARD BERNSTEIN



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: C. K. TEMPELAAR-LIETZ; JOE PETROCIK; JEAN-LOUIS DE LUCY; COURTESY FRENCH WEST INDIES TOURIST BOARD

The main roads from the airport on this lush tropical island lead to luxury hotels and Caribbean beaches, which is not surprising given that that's where most people go. Just to be different, you might turn right at the airport exit instead of left, following the less conspicuous signs to Le Robert, a ramshackle town on the less posh, more windswept Atlantic Ocean side of Martinique. You have a famous example to follow. The first western tourist to Martinique, an Italian named Christopher Columbus, landed on the Atlantic coast in 1502 on his fourth transoceanic voyage. Columbus must have noted the beauty of the place, the way the tropical forest stretched up the sides of stirring volcanic peaks and down to the edge of the surf-pounded shore. But pressed for time, he didn't linger.

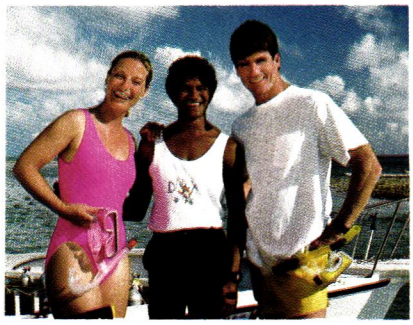
You may want to stay longer, particularly if you go to a little jewel of a hotel up in the hills above the ocean: Habitation Lagrange, named for the French family that built it as part of a sugar and banana plantation some two hundred years ago. The hotel, artfully remodeled before its opening last December, is not on the beach, and at up to $300 a day it may be the most expensive place on the island. But this elegant mansion makes visitors feel a bit like colonial planters—like Jean-Paul Belmondo and Catherine Deneuve in *The Mississippi Mermaid,* perhaps. The place harks back, after all, to a time when Martinique was an agricultural outpost for empire builders and adventurers, not a vacationland for denizens of Club Med.

I got there in a rental car, following the winding coastal road north from Le Robert, keeping the sparkling Atlantic on my right. At the big sign marked "Écrevisses Vivantes," live crayfish, I turned left. The road here is like a corrugated washboard; my teeth vibrated as I drove along, a fast-moving stream on one side and a series of ascending crayfish ponds on the other. Then, just after the ruins of the former Lagrange rum distillery, I took another left onto a road even rougher than the one before. The main house of the Habitation Lagrange, all ocher walls and wide verandas silhouetted against the sky, loomed up in front of me.

Habitation Lagrange is the most recent addition to a short list of former plantations and manor houses on the Atlantic coast of Martinique that have been converted

Habitation Lagrange, above and right, retains the character of a West Indian planter's private retreat. Even more secluded are villas on the islets of Oscar, left, and Thierry, above right.

From the first moment we dove into the crystal clear waters of The Cayman Islands, we knew that everything here was friendly.



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into hotels. The biggest is Plantation Leyritz, a sprawling and elegant hostelry surrounded by a working banana and pineapple farm and complete with swimming pool, tennis court, and forty-eight comfortable rooms done up in a variety of creole styles.

These places are not for everybody. They are particularly not for those who require a blue green lagoon, scuba diving, windsurfing, catamarans, and Jet Skis, all a few steps from their modern hotel room doors. What the old plantation hotels offer instead is quiet grace, the sense of an exclusive hideaway. Jean-Louis de Lucy, who bought the seventeen-room Habitation Lagrange a few years ago, told me he has hesitated to put a sign on the road pointing the way to the hotel: he doesn't want the place to lose its private character.

I stayed for a couple of days at Lagrange, which has an oval swimming pool, a tennis court, and tasty creole (and somewhat less impressive French) cuisine served on a terrace by a tropical garden. Mostly, however, I used the hotel as a jumping-off point for excursions to several beaches within a half-hour drive. One day I went up to Grand' Rivière, a fishing village on the northern tip of Martinique; from there a paved track leads into the verdant hills that overhang the shore and eventually, after a walk of two to three hours, down to the Caribbean side of the island.

For dinner one night I ventured inland to Le Colibri, a restaurant run by Marie-Josèphe Palladino. Sitting in a well-lighted room with views of the ocean shimmering in the moonlight, I sampled half of Palladino's remarkable menu—stuffed crabs, sea urchin on giant clamshells, steamed crayfish served beneath bouquets of tropical flowers. There was a fricassee of conch, a roast pigeon oozing a mysterious spicy, dark, ambrosial substance; there was white wine and red wine from France, fruit salad, and coconut flan. When I got back, slightly tipsy, to Habitation Lagrange, I stood on the wooden bridge to the tennis court and watched the moonlight filtering through the mango trees. Then, rejecting air conditioning, I slept with my double French doors open to the moist breeze (miraculously, no mosquitoes roiled my sleep) and the roar of the cicadas beyond the terrace.

Jean-Louis offers an alternative to Lagrange, even farther from the madding crowd. On my first morning in Martinique he took me to two small islands off the Atlantic coast, Thierry and Oscar, where he owns weather-beaten nineteenth-century villas that he rents to small groups. We went by boat from Le Robert, out past scrubby atolls and just beyond the limits of the bay. The islands, known as Les Îlets de l'Impératrice, are quiet and isolated. We passed Thierry and docked at Oscar, then climbed up a series of stone steps to a grassy promontory overlooking the cobalt and turquoise ocean. In the gardens, hummingbirds were taking dainty sips from the ardent orifices of the hibiscus. The two-story villa itself is of dark-stained wood with wide verandas, large pleasant whitewashed rooms, and wicker furniture. There is a staff of three: a cook, a housekeeper, and a boatman who takes guests windsurfing, waterskiing, scuba diving, or swimming off the coral reef that rings Martinique. There is also a small black-sand beach on the far end of the island where the local people sometimes have weekend picnics. All of it, including meals, comes for roughly $200 per person per day.

The villa on Oscar was rented out the day I was there, so I didn't spend the night. But I stood on the balcony and contemplated that vague line on the horizon where the sea meets the sky, knowing that it was someplace out there that Columbus's wooden ship had made its first appearance 490 years ago. He got there before me, that is true, but he probably didn't have as much fun. ♠

Visitors information: For Habitation Lagrange and Les Îlets de l'Impératrice, (800) 633-7411; for Plantation Leyritz, (800) 366-1510; for Le Colibri, Morne-des-Esses, Martinique (596) 66-91-95.

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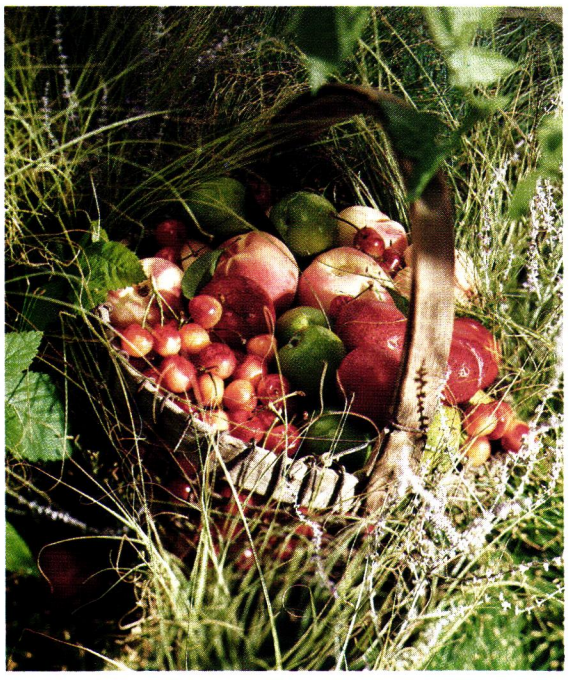

Dessert for Breakfast

Clafoutis, once thought only to end a meal, now begins the day

BY JOHN THORNE

It is the first week of autumn, and my wife, Matt, and I are down on our hands and knees in a boulder-strewn Maine field that overlooks the tidal estuaries at the end of Pigeon Hill Bay. This place is a short walk down the dirt road that runs past our house, and Matt came here in late summer to pick blueberries. There are, in fact, a few wizened blueberries still to be found, the few never uncovered by the pickers or the birds. But we're here for wild mountain cranberries.

The midmorning sky is that pure translucent blue that in Maine portends the arrival of cold weather, but it is not yet cold, even though a brisk wind blows in off the water. It brings with it what I think are seabird calls, but then realize are the sounds of children playing in the farmyard down the road. I also realize, my eyes coming to rest on Matt's bent back, that I am running on idle, looking about and listening, not picking. With a sigh, I bend over and find my hat on the ground. Its bottom is scattered—but far from covered—with tiny crimson berries.

Wild mountain cranberries. Despite their color, they aren't all that easy to find. This is partly because the blueberry leaves are turning a brilliant scarlet themselves, and partly because the leaves of the tiny cranberry bushes are as deeply and intensely green as holly. As conflicting primary colors do, these vivid reds and greens struggle to cancel each other out. You see their individual brightness clearly only when you hold them separately in your hand.

I shift and notice with chagrin that some equally visible crimson stains have appeared on the knees of my pants. As a boy I was a berrying fool; at forty-eight the thrill of the hunt has pretty much evaporated. Still, no one hereabouts has yet thought of selling wild cranberries in pint cartons by the roadside; if we want to eat them, we have to pick them. Fortunately, all we need is a modest amount to make next morning's breakfast. We're going to have a cranberry clafoutis.

Clafoutis (more and more spelled "clafouti" these days, perhaps because the "s" makes the word look plural to American eyes) is usually considered a dessert. Originating in the Limousin region of France, it is traditionally made by filling the bottom of a buttered baking dish with stemmed unpitted black cherries, covering them

Peaches, plums, and cherries, top left, and freshly picked berries, left, suit a breakfast clafoutis. Above left: Cranberry clafoutis on a spongeware platter. Baskets, table, enamel cup, and platter from Richard Mulligan–Sunset Cottage, L.A. Details see Resources.

MIKE CHESSER/STYLED BY NORMAN STEWART

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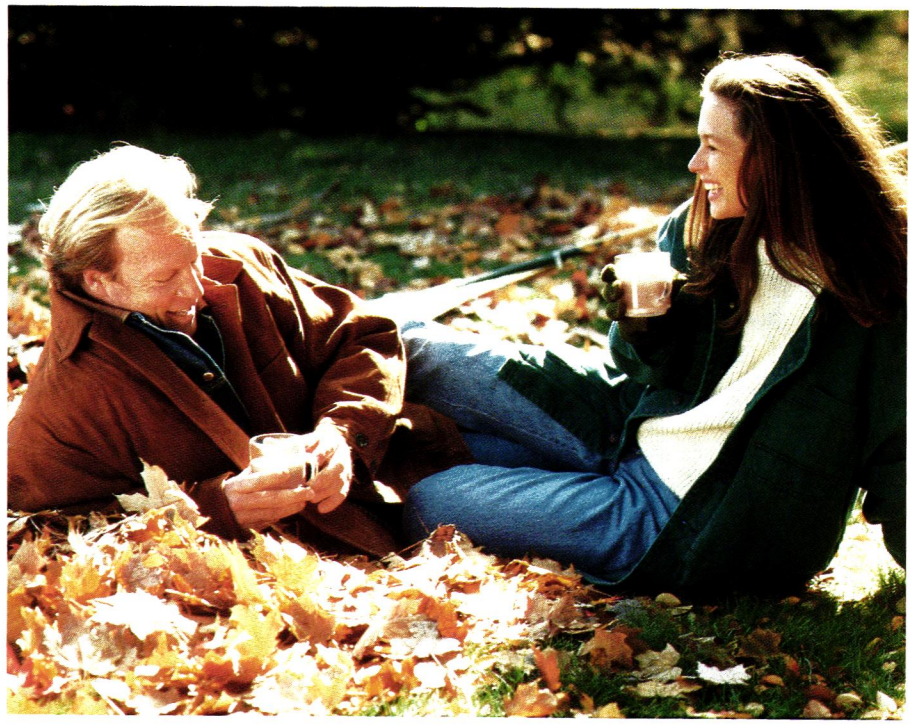
Raking leaves wasn't exactly the way I wanted to spend Sunday afternoon. But after Linda brought out the Baileys and coffee, I warmed up to the idea immediately.



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with a batter, and baking the mixture in an oven. The result is a custardy, slightly puffed, lightly browned confection, dotted with soft fresh fruit. It is eaten warm or cool, dusted with confectioners' sugar.

According to the new *Larousse Gastronomique*, the Académie Française originally defined clafoutis as "a sort of fruit flan." This drew protests from the good citizens of Limoges which forced the academy to redefine it as "a cake with black cherries." Neither definition is very helpful. A clafoutis is neither a flan nor a cake—nor for that matter is it a pancake, as American cookbooks sometimes claim. You come closest if you think of it as a very custardy popover or a puffy crisp-edged custard.

I should mention here that food writers often appropriate the name and the idea of fresh fruit baked in a custardy batter to work out fantasy clafoutis that have only a tenuous connection to the real thing. For example, in *The Way to Cook* Julia Child makes a "pear clafouti" by setting poached pears in a custard-filled prebaked pastry shell and glazing the result with apricot jam. Jacques Pépin's "blackberry clafoutis" in *The Art of Cooking* is a mixture of beaten eggs, blackberry purée, slivered almonds, and raspberry brandy baked in a cream cheese dough.

There are many other examples, but they have not yet managed to corrupt the original clafoutis, which remains, as Child herself calls it, "a puddinglike peasanty dish" put together out of a few good simple things. As its honest self, it is humbler, less polished, less sharply focused than, say, a cherry pie, yet it is not so amorphous as a cherry pudding. It is the French equivalent of an apple pan dowdy or a blueberry grunt, which is to say that the identity of a clafoutis is partly fixed and partly a product of circumstance.

This fruitful confusion ties all the disparate threads of this piece together: the autumn Maine morning, the wild mountain cranberries, the good citizens of Limoges, the disarray of definitions. It explains the trajectory of circumstances that first brought the clafoutis into our kitchen and the reason it persuaded us to keep it there, unlike the many other equally good-tasting dishes that were made, enjoyed, and then forgotten. Because it isn't by accident that a dish finds a place—a permanent place—in any particular kitchen.

I got interested in the clafoutis because of cherries. I love them, and when they're in season, I yearn to do something with them other than eat them out of hand. Sweet cherries don't bake all that well, at least in pies; cook them too much and they begin to taste like prunes. I thought that the quicker-cooking clafoutis might capture that unique meaty sweetness before it slipped away.

You come closest if you think of clafoutis as a very custardy popover

I had just met Matt when that thought occurred to me, and the clafoutis was one of the first dishes we worked on together. We simplified the traditional version to accommodate a temperamental stove and limited batterie de cuisine by heating the butter in my cast-iron skillet, rolling the cherries around in it until they were glossy all over, and then pouring the batter over them. The skillet was put straight into the oven for twenty minutes. This was easy to do and the results were, well, good.

Time passed. I moved to Maine; Matt moved up with me; we got married. It has taken us a lot longer to merge our two cuisines than our furniture, but we began to notice early on that we were eating fewer desserts and getting more enjoyment from baking something together for breakfast. We began to wonder if our clafoutis wouldn't make a delicious not-too-caloric morning meal.

The batter of a clafoutis resembles that of a popover, with this important difference: you can change the proportions of the clafoutis batter quite a bit and still produce a clafoutis. For instance, Anne Willan makes a clafoutis Limousin in *French Regional Cooking* that proportionally calls for half as much flour, almost twice as much milk, and one third again as many eggs (plus two additional yolks) as the standard formula in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Willan makes a very rich and custardy clafoutis, indeed.

Our original research into clafoutis recipes had impressed us with this adaptability, even though we had followed the traditional method rather closely. Now, to make it leaner and less sweet, we reduced the amount of sugar, eliminated butter from the batter, and substituted low-fat milk for whole. We also replaced the usual vanilla and liquor (typically cognac, kirsch, or rum) with lemon zest to give what was now a breakfast dish an uncomplicated morning freshness. Finally we replaced the cast-iron frying pan with a nonstick skillet.

During all this we had no more intention of making a dietetic dish than we do when we make our cornbread with buttermilk and without sugar. You can make a richer, sweeter cornbread if your taste runs in that direction, but a lean one may be more traditional and just as good. Our clafoutis remained a clafoutis, but it was more *our* clafoutis. And something else was about to happen that would heighten this feeling of possession.

By then it was early summer; the first local fruits and vegetables were arriving at the farm stands. Most people don't think of Maine as plum- or peach-raising country, and rightly so. But these fruits do grow here; I can still remember the intensely luscious aroma of a pint-size carton of tiny plums for sale at Mount View Fruit and Berry Farm in Thorndyke. If cherries make a good clafoutis, we thought, why not these?

We began to work the fruits in: first plums, then raspberries, blueberries, and, later still, apples and cranberries. Our success prompted us to take a more considered look at

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the not-very-inviting offerings at the local supermarket. Peaches, on the rare occasion when we could find half-decent ones, made a spectacular clafoutis. Hybrid plums, although almost always rather dense and flavorless when eaten fresh, softened and sweetened during the short cooking time to make a very good one.

Not that clafoutis is mindlessly accommodating—there are better things to do with apples, we discovered, and there were other flops as well. But these failures helped us better understand what we were doing: a clafoutis responds best to juicy, intensely flavored, slightly sour fruit. The flavor of strawberries is too evanescent; that of bananas, too bland. Blueberries teeter on the edge. Apples encouraged us to consider pears; bananas, by tropical association, canned pineapple.

We haven't tried pears or pineapple yet, but we will now that the only strictly local fruit still available are a few forlorn apples clinging to the bare boughs of the trees. What would breakfast be without the occasional promise of a clafoutis?

Of course, we know that we're not the first to make a clafoutis with fruit other than cherries. Brooke Dojny and Melanie Barnard even have a cranberry version in *Let's Eat In*. Our clafoutis is ours because, like a comfortable shirt, it has managed to shape itself to us. Neither well-fitting shirts nor recipes arrive that often in anyone's life, which is why we've been a little skittish about sharing this one—not because it's so good but because it's become so personal.

By now you can see how this clafoutis is connected to our lives, but you'd have to watch us actually make it to understand how it connects us to each other. The oven heats; Matt puts together the batter at one counter, and I cut up the fruit at the other. I put the fruit into the melted butter in the skillet and stir it around. As soon as it softens and begins to release its juice, Matt stands beside me to sprinkle in the sugar. She watches as I stir. The chunks of plum or tiny cranberries simmer in their delicately colored syrup.

Matt pours the batter over the fruit, puts the skillet in the oven, and goes upstairs for a shower. I grind beans and drip-brew the coffee. Twenty minutes later the clafoutis—puffed, brown-crusted, fruit-studded—emerges. I divide it into two large flat soup bowls, then Matt pours the coffee and dusts the servings with a little confectioners' sugar. With a tablespoon of sour cream, it is delicious and flavorful, neither too rich nor too sweet—just what a breakfast clafoutis should be.

BREAKFAST CLAFOUTIS

- 4–6 ounces cranberries, blueberries, or raspberries or 12 ounces pitted cherries, peaches, or plums
- Zest from 1 small lemon
- 4–6 tablespoons sugar
- ½ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs

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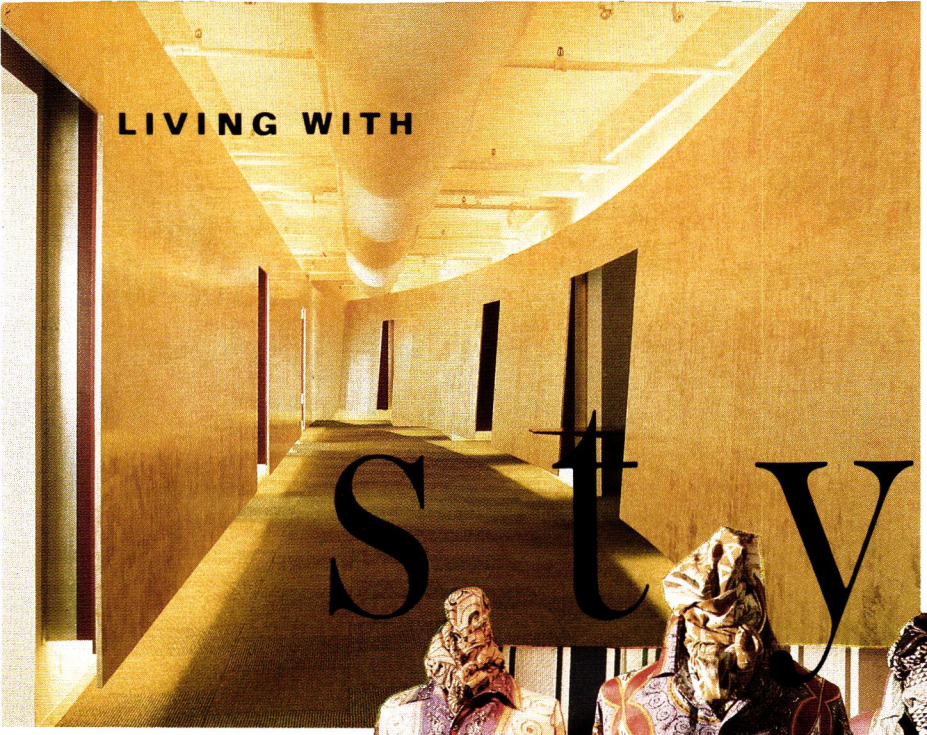
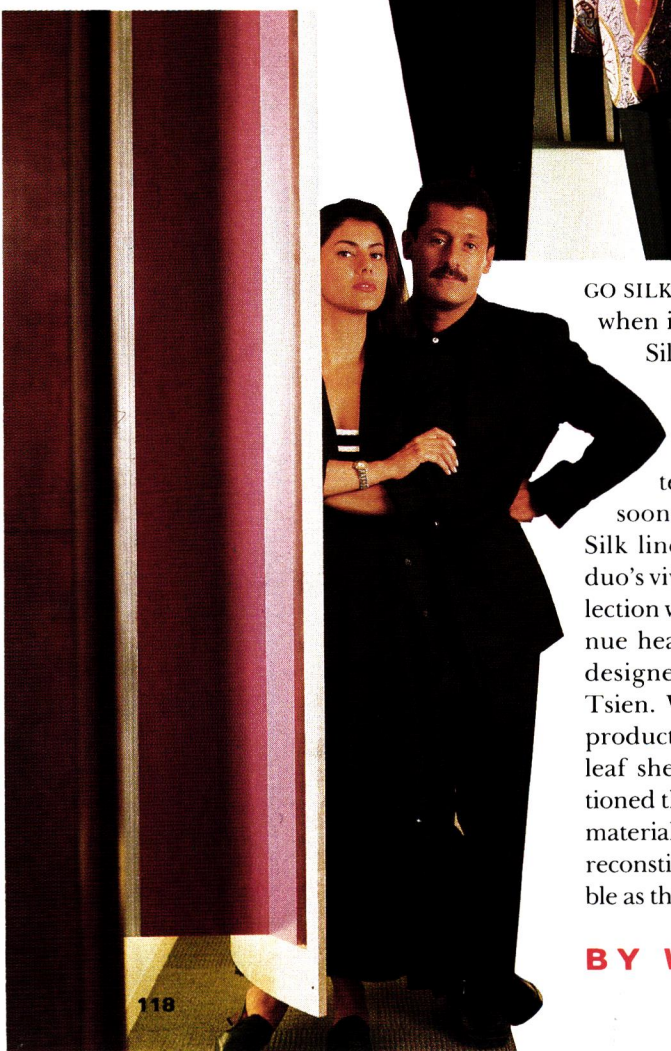
style

In its new headquarters, Go Silk showcases Timney-Fowler prints



The greening of Go Silk. Clockwise from top left: Floating walls of compressed wood shavings in the hall of Go Silk's new headquarters by Tod Williams and Billie Tsien; shirts and scarves from Timney-Fowler for Go Silk's fall collection; Timney-Fowler prints in the showroom; Gabriela and Jerry Hirsch of Go Silk. Details see Resources.



GO SILK SENT RIPPLES THROUGH THE FASHION INDUSTRY NINE YEARS AGO when it pioneered sportswear in washed and washable silk. Thanks to Go Silk president Jerry Hirsch, creative director Gabriela Hirsch, and vice president John Badum, this soft yet durable fabric, inspired by World War II parachute silk, now rivals denim for weekend comfort. More recently, the ebullient Badum introduced the Hirsches to British textile impresarios Sue Timney and Grahame Fowler. The result is a soon-to-be-expanded Timney-Fowler for Go Silk line of shirts and scarves printed with the duo's vivid neoclassical designs. This year's fall collection was launched in Go Silk's new Seventh Avenue headquarters, a serene contemporary space designed by architects Tod Williams and Billie Tsien. Working almost exclusively with recycled products, they sheathed the hall in floating silver-leaf sheets of compressed wood shavings, partitioned the rooms with burgundy panels of the same material, and tiled the floors with maroon squares of reconstituted rubber. "It's as ecologically responsible as the clothes are wearable," says Gabriela.

BY WENDY GOODMAN

DAVID FRAZIER

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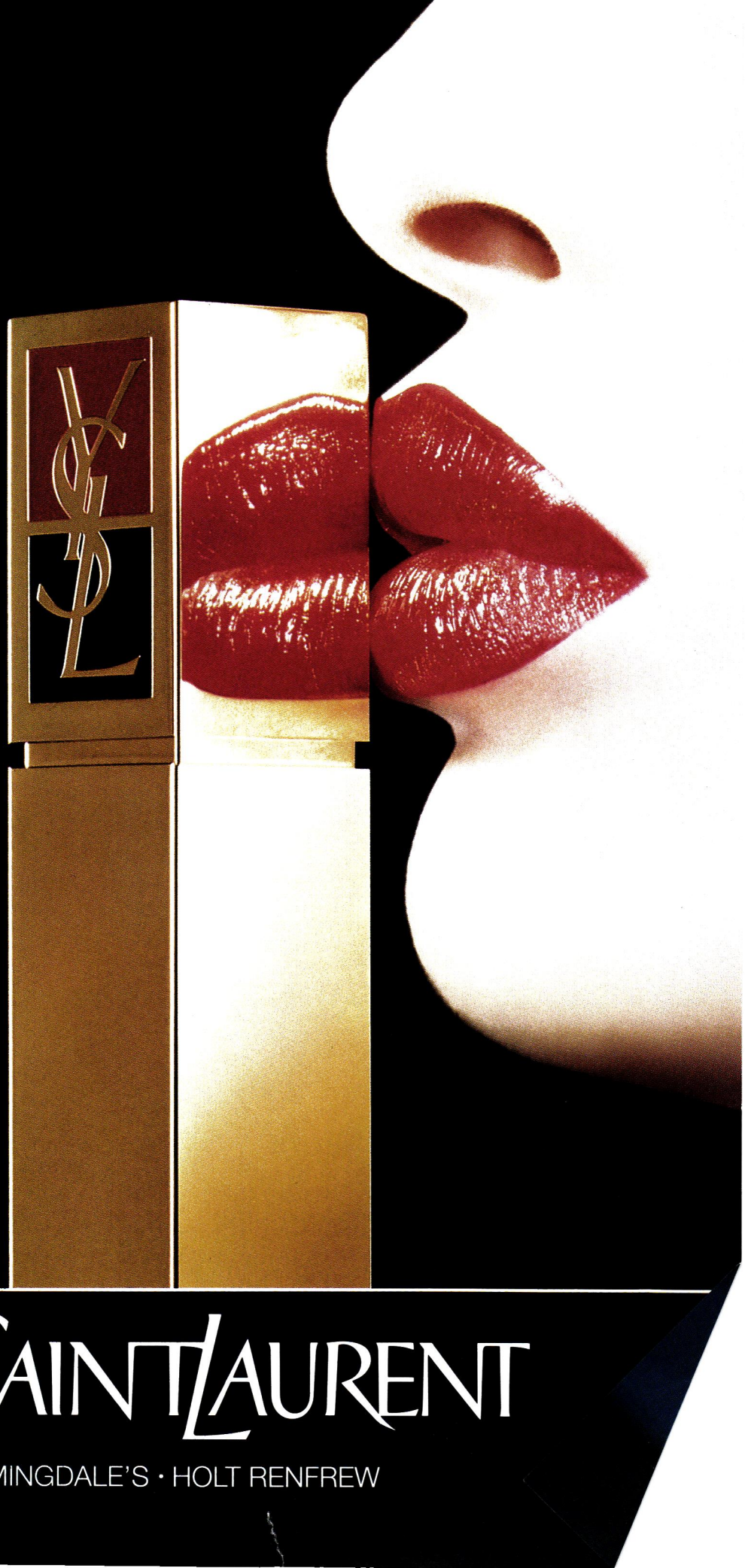
DRESS UP
YOUR LIPS



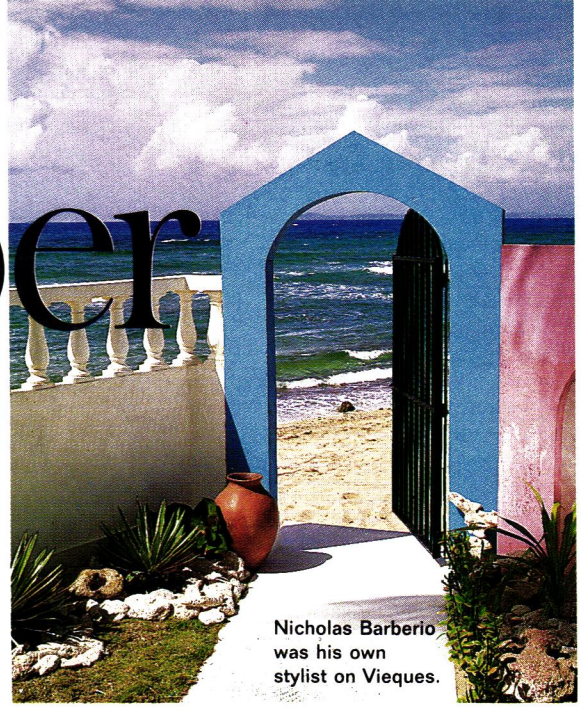
YVES SAINT LAURENT

BLOOMINGDALE'S · HOLT RENFREW

BOUCHERON
PARFUMS
PARIS
More than a perfume, a jewel.
BLOOMINGDALE'S • NEIMAN MARCUS • SAKS FIFTH AVE

Editor's Page

November



Nicholas Barberio was his own stylist on Vieques.

"YOU WOULDN'T HIRE a decorator, would you?" I remember the tone of disbelief with which the elegant Mrs. C., our friend Eleanor's mother, asked the question a number of years ago. Since that time, Mrs. C. has sadly departed, leaving an interesting legacy from a decorating point of view: an extraordinary stone house in Connecticut that was shown in a leading decorating magazine (without a single touch of a professional hand), one daughter who is a licensed decorator, and another daughter (our friend) who inherited a healthy share of her mother's wonderful Virginia furniture and her remarkable flair. Not all of us have an instinct for creating memorable rooms as part of our chromosome package, and thus we happily submit to the ministrations of experts—and often come away with a heightened sense of balance, form, and furniture. In this issue we feature the results of collaborations between accomplished designers and individuals of marked visual sophistication. Vicente Wolf was blessed with clients Michael and Ruth Burke, who have a passion for historic preservation and a wonderful Natchez, Mississippi, house they entrusted to his respectful modernist touch. Bob Currie and designer Carlos Falchi are longtime friends with a similar aesthetic, which led them to favor the same surprising chartreuse for a room in the Falchis' duplex. Barbara Barry shared a fascination for the American West with Lisa Specht and Ron Rogers and translated it into a cowboy's dream of a ranch in the mountains of Colorado. With a nod to Mrs. C.'s decorating-as-human-nature, we present art historian Milton Gendel's apartment in a Renaissance palazzo in Rome with its worldly assortment of art and objects—and its fully visible late twentieth century computer. Then there's stylist Nicholas Barberio and his hideaway on an island off Puerto Rico. In our new feature, Design Analysis, decorator Greg Jordan lets us in on how he puts a room together. In answer to Mrs. C.'s question, yes, I would hire and have hired a decorator—with pleasure—but I know there are many roads, including private ones, to rooms with a distinctive style.

In their Natchez house the Burkes collaborated with designer Vicente Wolf. Details see Resources.

TOP: OBERTO GILI. BOTTOM: LANGDON CLAY

EDITOR IN CH

For "clarity and unity," Vicente Wolf used the same natural linen, Schumacher sisal, and pure white paint in the adjoining front parlor and library, furnished with a Regency table, his own club chair and sofa for Henredon, and a Georgian-style armchair from Henredon's Historic Natchez Collection. Pillow fabrics from Manuel Canovas. *Opposite:* Live oaks shelter the 1848 plantation house. Details see Resources.

Natchez Revival

A plantation house decorated by Vicente Wolf glows with the aura of tradition. By Mimi Read

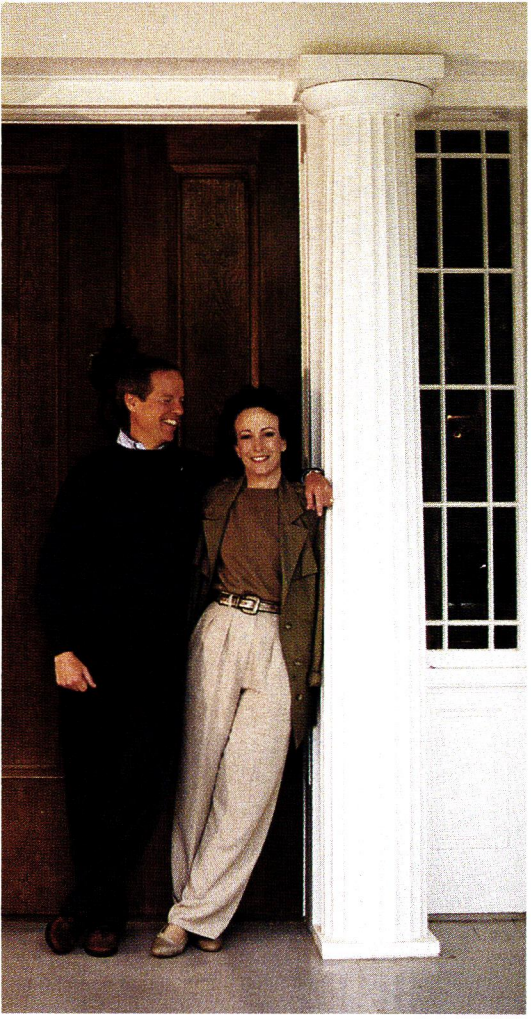
Photographs by Langdon Clay

Produced by Anne Foxley

NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI, IS A LAND OF HULKING GHOSTLY ANTEBELLUM mansions, archaic manners, and droll aristocrats. Poised on high bluffs over a misty stretch of the Mississippi River, it is also green, dramatically pretty, and, most of all, remote.

Northerners who make their way to Natchez (population 19,460) typically are tourists gleaning the area's considerable surface beauty during weekend excursions hazed in mint juleps and mosquito netting. Precious few, however, take the time to explore this Newport of the Old South at length. And almost none decide to establish roots in out-of-the-way little Natchez.

But Michael and Ruth Burke, two New Yorkers who make it a rule to combine their careers with their shared penchant for exploration, discovered some compelling reasons to stay. First they did some business: Michael, who orchestrates licensing deals for furniture and accessories manufacturers, museums, and designers, arrived for a quick tour in 1977 and spotted in parlors and porches around town pristine planter's chairs, large-scale damasks, and peach-bordered porcelain ripe for reproduction. Soon he had launched the Historic Natchez Collection, a gathering of handsome eighteenth- and nineteenth-century southern designs, now being re-created by



Wolf's Edwardian-style ottoman, bench à la Louis XVI, and classic upholstered pieces—all for Henredon—are gathered in the front parlor before his Henredon mirror hung at a slant to "reflect the furniture and draw the eye back into the room." Cashmere throw from Pratesi. *Above left:* Owners and half-time southerners Michael and Ruth Burke. *Left:* For the center hall, Wolf used gilded restaurant bases to form a trio of tables.

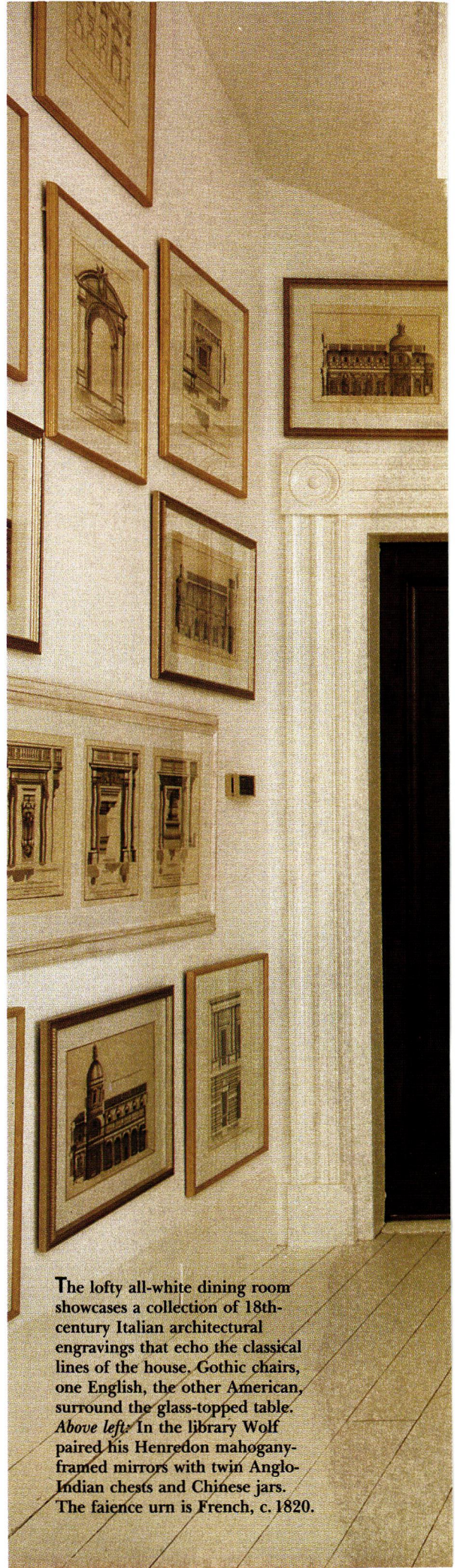
"We wanted to show traditionalists that old houses don't have to get caught in a time warp," says Wolf

Henredon, Schumacher, Mottahedeh, and others. Two years ago both Michael and Ruth, a former marketing executive with Bill Blass who now collaborates with her husband, realized they wanted to do more than "sell the Natchez lifestyle," as Michael puts it. "Why should we stay in New York when all we need for our business is a phone and a nearby airport?" he reasoned. Ruth agreed, and with the purchase of Richland, an 1848 Greek revival plantation house on a hundred pastoral acres, they became part-time southerners.

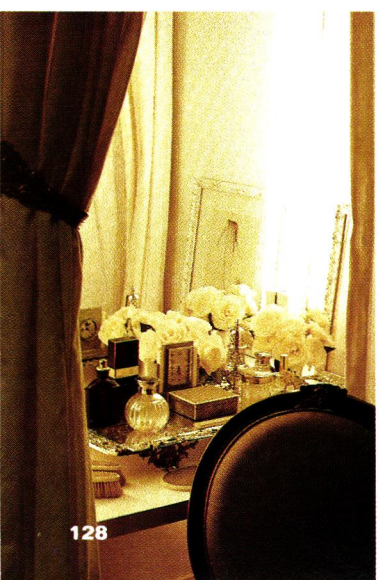
Manhattan-based designer Vicente Wolf was immediately summoned to Natchez to help pull the house together. He was enchanted with the Burkes' property from the moment he entered the long drive, a processional stretch bordered by magnolias, camellias, and live oaks dangling Spanish moss. Conferring with architectural historians Ron and Mimi Miller of the Historic Natchez Foundation, Wolf preserved the generous central hall configuration of the structure as well as period details, such as the mahogany finish on the doors. He also lined much of the downstairs with sisal, which is, he says, "just like the grass matting used for centuries on plantations." But the traditional Natchez stately house look—a style that leans in the direction of rococo revival settees stuffed with horsehair, threadbare oriental rugs, and curtains fit for Versailles—was not what the Burkes or Wolf had in mind. "We wanted to show traditionalists that old houses can be treated respectfully without getting caught in a time warp," says Wolf.

In place of the existing pastel pinks and blues, they painted the walls undiluted white. And instead of fusty Victoriana, they furnished the rooms with a clean mix of the Burkes' Anglo-Indian and English antiques, selections from the Historic Natchez Collection, and an array of Wolf's own tailored modernist furniture for Henredon—a group of versatile designs that sprang from a licensing agreement brokered, naturally, by Michael Burke.

"The idea was to keep everything neutral so as not to detract from the pure architecture of the house," explains Ruth, who, on a recent Sunday, floated into her front parlor balancing a plate of ham biscuits, another of deviled eggs, and a tray of iced tea glasses, as if she had taken graciousness lessons from the locals. "Vicente used the same white in every room, the same gilt-edged mahogany frames on all the mirrors and the same paper bag–colored linen on all of the chairs and sofas." Indeed the house now wears the decorative equivalent of a flawless Armani uniform. As Wolf sees it, the design is "like a diamond ring worn spinned around: the gems are there, but they're not hitting you over the head." ▲

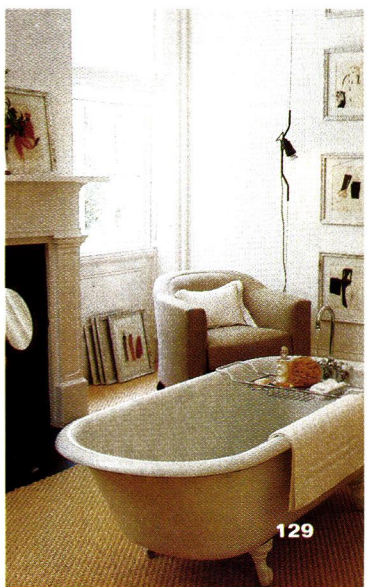


The lofty all-white dining room showcases a collection of 18th-century Italian architectural engravings that echo the classical lines of the house. Gothic chairs, one English, the other American, surround the glass-topped table. *Above left:* In the library Wolf paired his Henredon mahogany-framed mirrors with twin Anglo-Indian chests and Chinese jars. The faience urn is French, c. 1820.

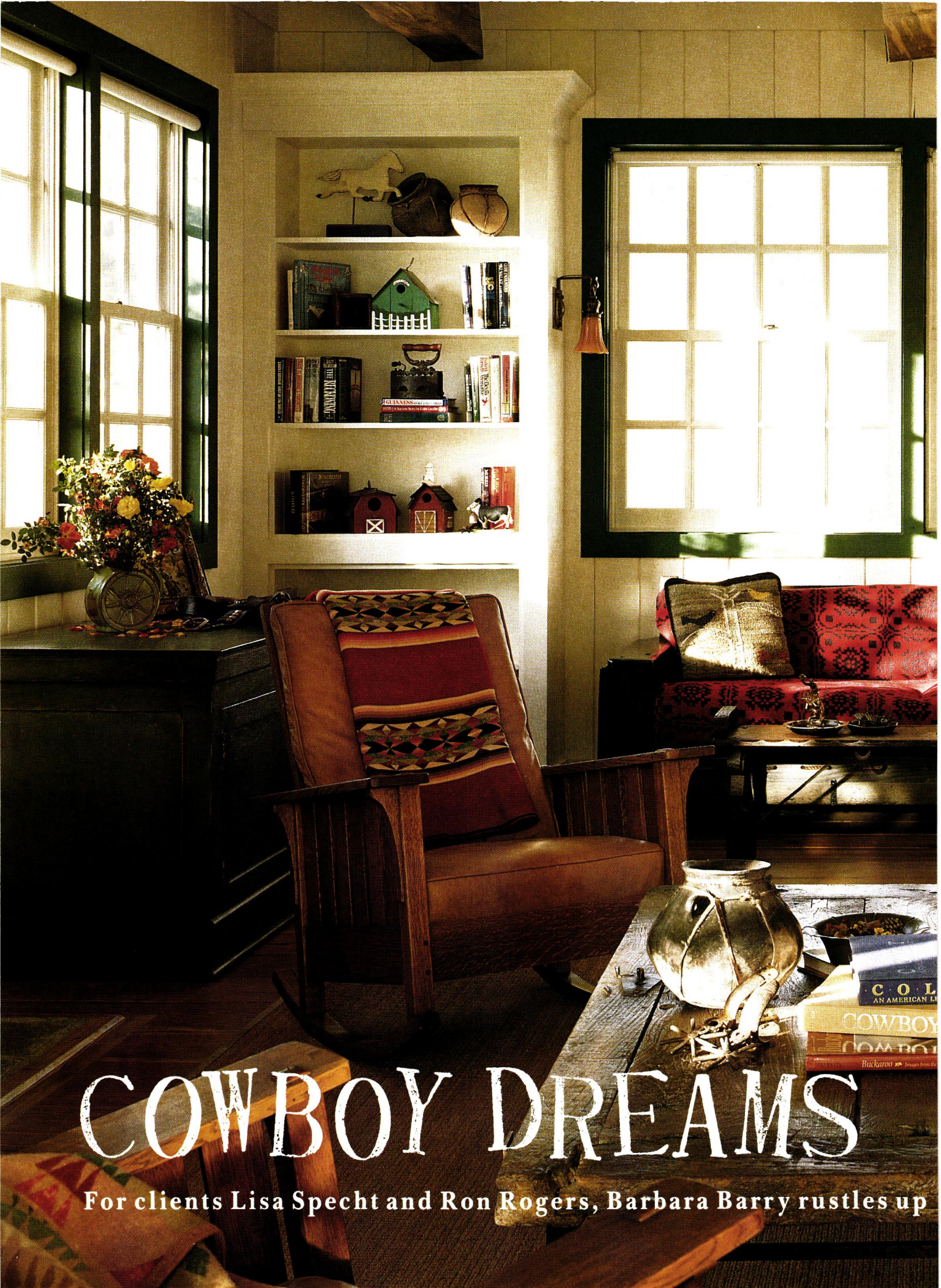


The house now wears the decorative

equivalent of a flawless Armani uniform



Wolf's linen-covered sleigh bed for Henredon and his gilded table float at one end of the master bedroom. Bed linens from Anichini. *Opposite top left:* At another end of the room, a bust of Marie Antoinette rests before a mirror by Wolf. *Opposite bottom left:* A silver-lined table in a curtained dressing room niche. *Top right:* In the shower room an Anglo-Indian rack holds towels in front of a cupboard with a cypress finish. *Right:* The dressing room features a vintage tub, a fireplace, and framed sketches by Bill Blass.



COWBOY DREAMS

For clients Lisa Specht and Ron Rogers, Barbara Barry rustles up

In the living room a leather-covered Stickley rocker faces a table made from a Mexican door and a sofa in blanket fabric from the Ralph Lauren Home Collection. The sofa and chair near the bookcases and the red glass-shaded lamp are early 20th century Monterey pieces. *Inset:* Lisa Specht and Ron Rogers nurse a calf from their herd. Details see Resources.

some western atmosphere. By Carol Wolper

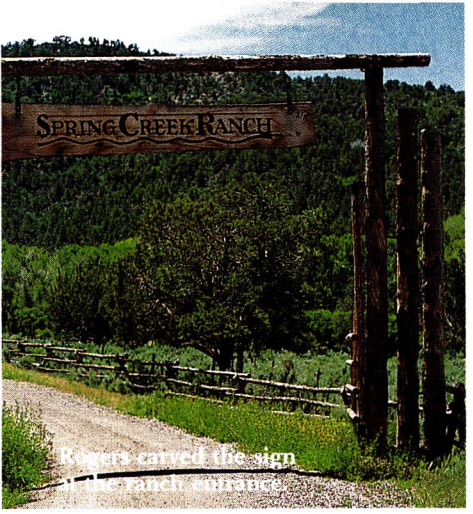
Photographs by Tim Street-Porter

Urban romantic and country pragmatist can both feel at home

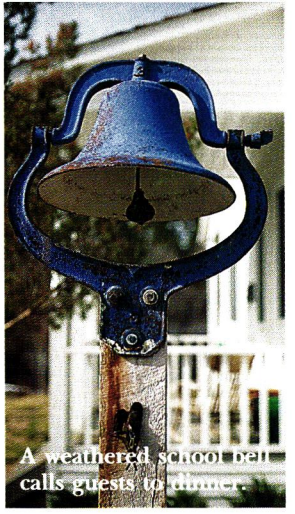
Bronzed child's cowboy boots, antique checkerboards, and a Remington horseman top a fireplace built with moss rock from the ranch. The fire screen is based on a Thomas Molesworth design. *Opposite, clockwise from top left:* Elk Mountain rises behind the new house, at left, and the foreman's house. The antler chandelier above the kitchen table was custom-made. In the mudroom, boots rest on an old church pew.

FOR A CITY SLICKER, THE DRIVE PAST HORSES AND elk grazing against a backdrop of Colorado mountains and sky might conjure up visions of the Ponderosa. A rancher's eye would take in the well-maintained buck-and-pole fences built to keep in the livestock or, in the local lingo, "turn any cow." Urban romantic and country pragmatist alike would feel welcome at the end of the road, on the 640-acre spread called Spring Creek Ranch. There Ron Rogers, owner of Rogers & Associates, a Los Angeles public relations and marketing firm, and his wife, Lisa Specht, a partner in a prestigious law firm and a television legal commentator, have built a rural retreat that combines farmhouse coziness with cowboy ruggedness.

Unlike many of his peers, Rogers is no Johnny-come-lately to the great outdoors. Growing up in Hollywood's entertainment world didn't prevent him from dreaming of a simpler life. He spent hours reading *Field & Stream,* and by the time he was fifteen he was buying and selling horses. The chaps and spurs he wore as a sixteen-year-old riding in his first rodeo now hang inside the entrance to the house at Spring Creek. For city-bred Specht, whose hectic workdays often take her from meetings at her office to taping sessions for spots on the *Home* show to speaking engagements at political functions, the joys of life on a ranch came as a surprise. She had always felt most at home in a streamlined contemporary environment—in L.A. she and Rogers live in white-on-white rooms—and never imagined she would want to sur-

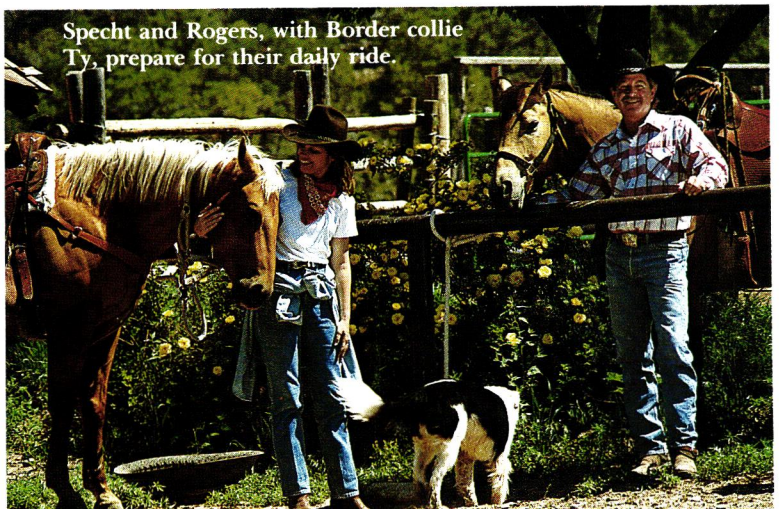


Rogers carved the sign at the ranch entrance.



A weathered school bell calls guests to dinner.

Lace curtains filter light onto the four-poster in the master bedroom.



Specht and Rogers, with Border collie Ty, prepare for their daily ride.

round herself with antiques, folk art, and quilts.

When the couple decided to scout for a place in the Rockies, privacy and a creek were at the top of their list. The property they acquired had both, but it took imagination to see the potential in overgrown pastures, a small rundown foreman's house, sheds in various stages of decay, and a cramped log cabin where Specht and Rogers ended up staying while their own house was under construction. Inspiration for the new homestead came from a photograph they found in an old book, a picture of a white clapboard farmhouse with front and back porches. For the design they turned to architect Gary Gilbar. All existing structures were remodeled, a hay barn was built, and a tack room was installed in a WPA supply shed brought to Spring Creek on a flatbed truck.

Meanwhile, Rogers set about buying horses, pigs, chickens, a "starter set" of cattle, and a bull named Sweetpea. Specht turned her attention to design. With the help of decorator Barbara Barry, she took on the challenge of creating warm inviting rooms that "look like they've been here for a hundred years—and are going to be here for a hundred more." Rogers insisted on "having a place where you can wear dirty jeans and boots and put your feet up and not worry about it." Everyone agreed that the best plan was to take the traditional farmhouse as a model and redefine it: ceilings higher, kitchen brighter, windows larger to let in the "high country" sunshine.

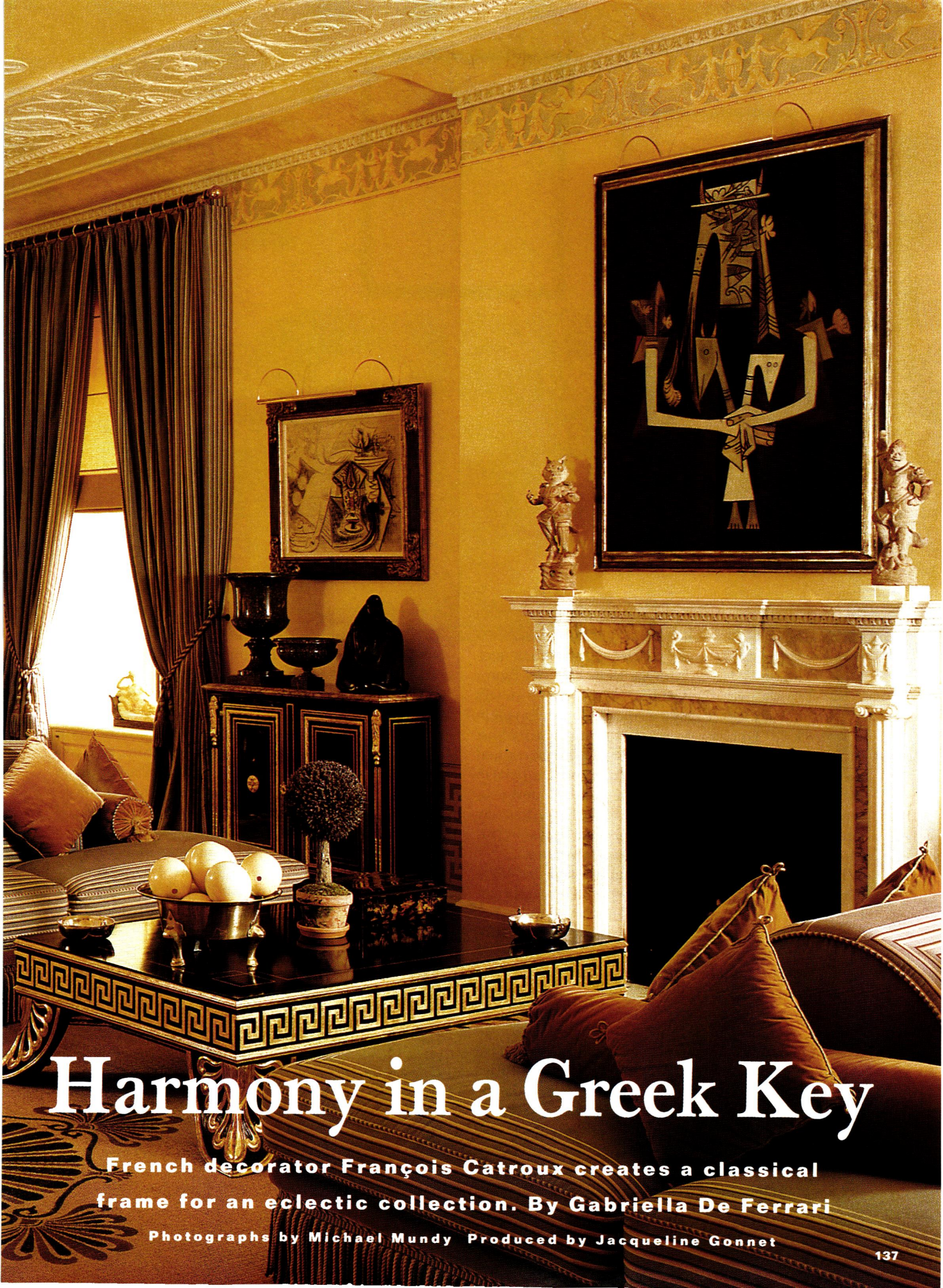
This redefinition also translated into a gentle eclecticism. The living room combines Stickley rockers, an old-fashioned sofa updated with Ralph Lauren blanket fabric, a well-worn Mexican door turned into a coffee table, a onetime chicken incubator reworked into an end table, a fire screen based on a Thomas Molesworth design but reinterpreted by a local craftsman, a few choice Monterey pieces, and a frontier-era shotgun over the fireplace. Specht explored swap meets, thrift shops, and antiques stores in California and Colorado to come up with the right ranch accessories.

Among her favorite finds are the bronzed child's cowboy boots, inscribed "To Uncle Joe from Chickie," which she uses as bookends, and the mural-size cowboy painting that for years hung in a bar in Salinas. A collection of rag dolls is displayed in one of the guest bedrooms and an array of rolling pins hangs from a kitchen cupboard—an homage to the domestic side of ranching. "Every room in this house is about small moments," says Barry, "life on an intimate scale that acts as a counterpoint to the background drama of the Rockies."

The success of these interiors comes down to a balance of coziness and open space that avoids clutter as well as still-life austerity. The desire for balance also led to a shift of mood between the ground floor and the second level. As you ascend, hard angles and wood surfaces give way to curves and softer textures, providing what Barry describes as the "pampering one needs after an active day outdoors." Garnet-colored carpeting with a subtle floral pattern, used everywhere *(Continued on page 198)*

Antique porcelain and candlesticks line the mantel above the master bedroom's Colorado sandstone hearth. A hand-painted parchment lampshade overhangs an armchair in a plaid from Pindler & Pindler. Walls are papered in a Ralph Lauren stripe.

In the living room of a Park Avenue duplex, François Catroux set modern paintings, among them a large surrealist work by Wifredo Lam, in a decorative scheme built around motifs borrowed from antiquity, a few carefully chosen silks, and furniture that ranges from chairs and ottomans by Catroux to an 18th-century cabinet by Garnier. Details see Resources.



Harmony in a Greek Key

French decorator François Catroux creates a classical frame for an eclectic collection. By Gabriella De Ferrari

Photographs by Michael Mundy Produced by Jacqueline Gonnet

IN THE ENTRY HALL, BELOW A VIEW OF ANCIENT Rome by Pierre-Antoine Demachy, red-figure Greek vases flanked by towering Etruscan jars line a French Empire console in the Egyptian style. To one side, an eighteenth-century bust of Louis XIV stands in a well-proportioned stairwell hung with architectural capriccio paintings by such masters as Hubert Robert and Giovanni Paolo Pannini. At the far end of the hall a doorway into the living room frames a large abstract canvas by Cuban modernist Wifredo Lam, next to a late Picasso.

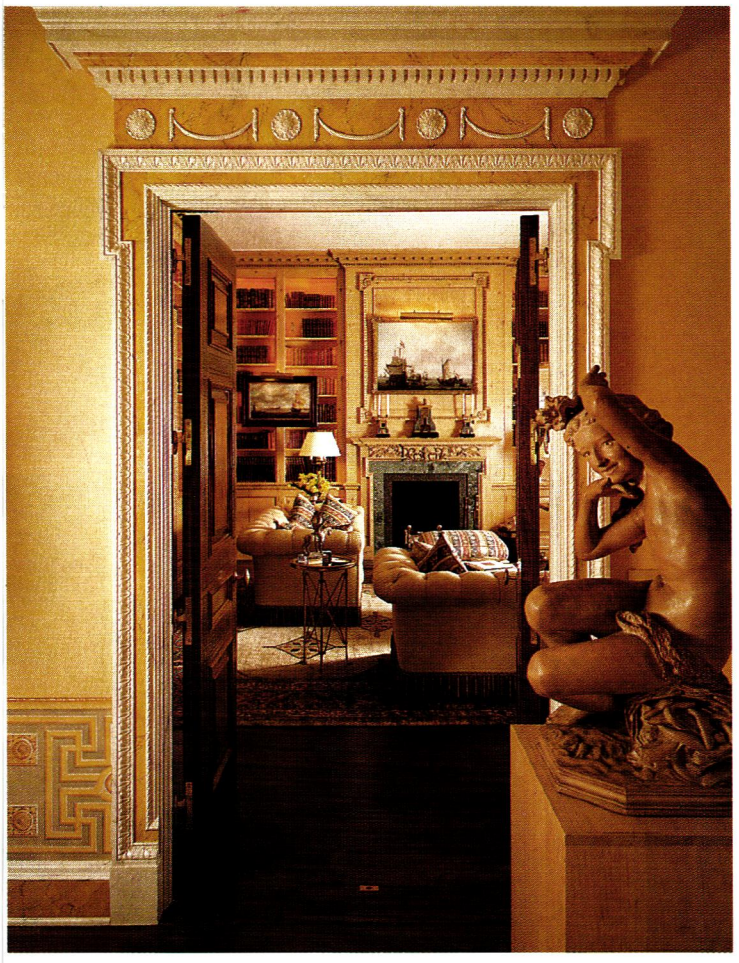
The historical range of these glimpses and the subtle play of period styles and their interpretations and reinterpretations—all against a ground of striped wallpaper in pale warm colors—provide an apt introduction to this elegant Park Avenue duplex apartment by Parisian decorator François Catroux.

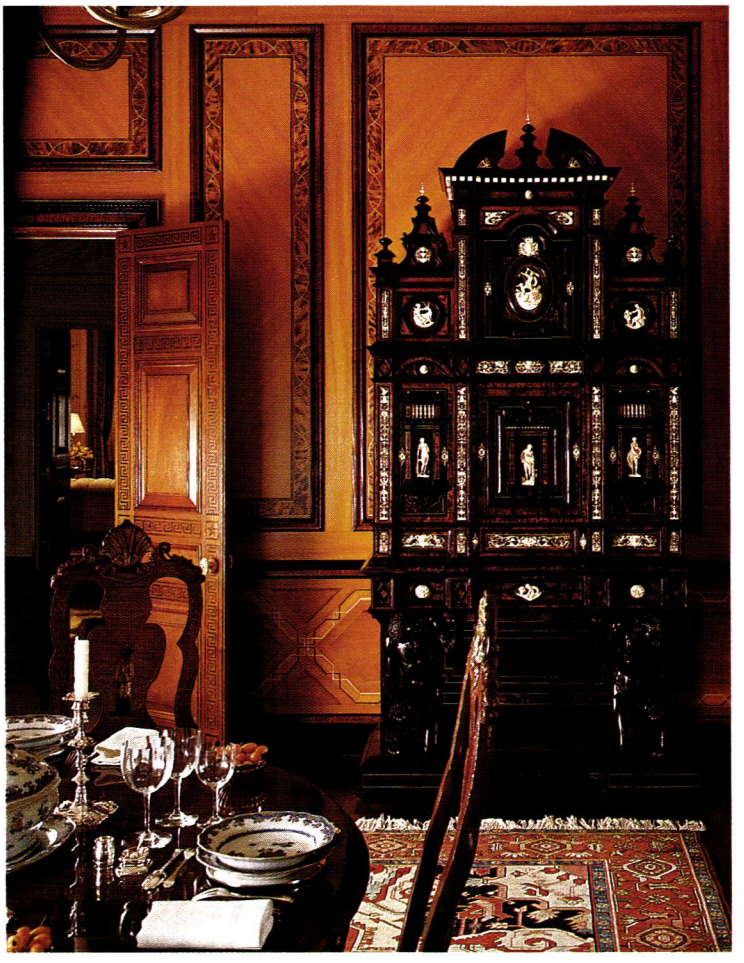
Like galleries in a museum, each of the main rooms on the first floor displays one significant period and historical style. "We started with an impressive collection of paintings that I arranged by theme," says Catroux. "It is a vast collection. We decided to divide it and use a different aspect for each room"—modern paintings in the living room, seascapes in the library, seventeenth-century Dutch still lifes and landscapes in the dining room.

What ties these distinct rooms together is an educated taste, a flair for unexpected juxtapositions, and a high degree of craftsmanship on the part of the contractor, Steven Heller of Cardinal Properties, and Parisian decorative artist Laurent Beuffe, whose team of painters devoted nearly three months to the project. Here the art does not simply embellish the interiors but provides the foundation for the overall design. Conversely, the decorative scheme—which relies, Catroux explains, on a few fabrics treated in different ways and on the "architectural parti pris of lots of Adam moldings, panels, cornices, doorways, and pediments, which for me is typical old New York"—provides a vivid context for the art.

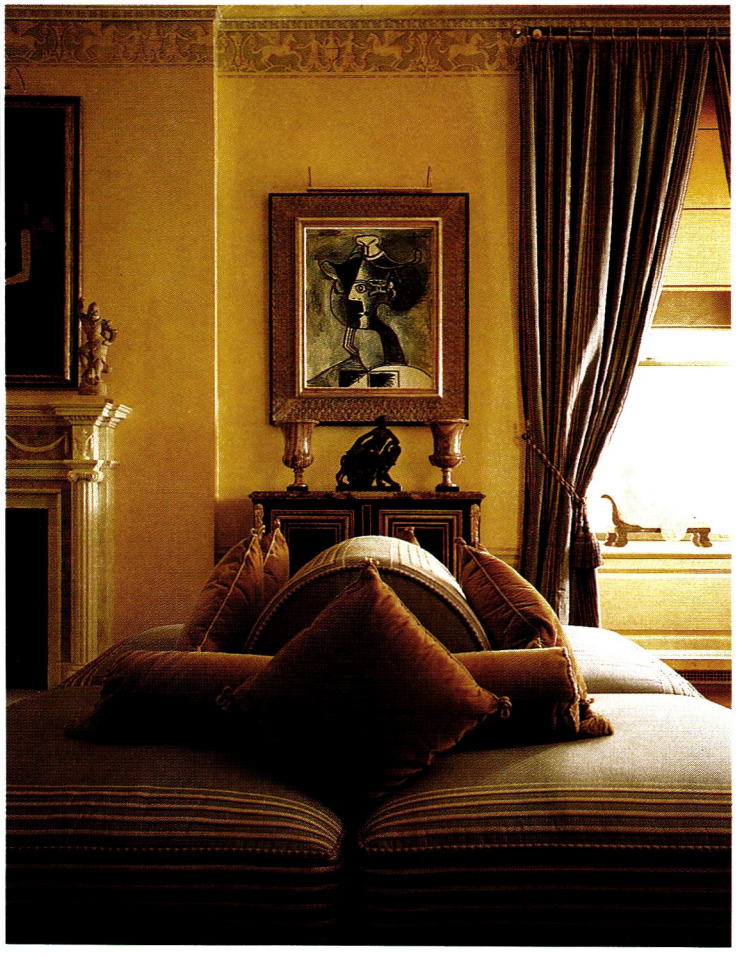
In the dining room, Dutch paintings of a domestic scale and intimate character hang in their simple dark frames against panels of trompe l'oeil tortoiseshell, ebony, ivory, and rosewood. The faux painting by Beuffe and his crew was inspired in part by the important seventeenth-century Italian inlaid cabinet against one wall and in part, says Catroux, by his research into Dutch interiors of the period. Eighteenth-century Portuguese painted chairs with chinoiserie, an austere English Regency table

Three Lam paintings hang over a sofa, *above*. A team of artists led by Laurent Beuffe painted the trompe l'oeil frieze and dado and stenciled designs on the sisal carpet. Catroux designed the two coffee tables, mounting 17th-century tops on curved bronze legs. *Opposite, clockwise from top left:* Carpeaux's terra-cotta *The Bather in the Shell* near a door opening into the antique pine library. A 17th-century Italian ebony, tortoiseshell, and ivory cabinet in the dining room. Two Légers above a chair from the Château de Compiègne and an 18th-century Levasseur commode. Picasso's *Femme au chapeau,* 1962.





"We started with an impressive collection of paintings," says Catroux



Like galleries in a museum, each of the main rooms on the first floor displays one significant period and historical style

A superlative display of faux bois painting envelops the dining room, where Catroux has arranged the owners' 17th-century Dutch landscapes and still lifes. Portuguese painted chairs surround the English Regency dining table, which is set with 18th-century porcelain and Georgian silver.

set with eighteenth-century blue and white Compagnie des Indes porcelain and Georgian silver, and a Persian rug complete the richly detailed effect.

The living room, in contrast, is spacious and light, with large windows and yellow walls. Here Catroux has taken clues from the original Adam-style ceiling and mantel and elaborated on the Greek motifs used on the imposing coffee table. Around the doors into the library, Heller's carpenters built neoclassical moldings and entablatures, following detailed drawings prepared by New York architect Boris Baranovich. Around the top of the walls Beuffe's painters created a faux marble border and neoclassical frieze, and around the bottom a trompe l'oeil dado that alternates bosses with geometric motifs related to the Greek key fret on the coffee table. On the floor is a refreshing sisal carpet on which Beuffe stenciled a border based on the room's egg and dart moldings and a central medallion and palmettes reminiscent of the table legs and the original plaster reliefs on the ceiling.

These classical references set up an interesting tension with the loose abstractions of the modern paintings on the walls. The primitive organic forms of six Wifredo Lam canvases—a rare group to find in private hands in New York—are complemented by a late Picasso head, a Dali, a charming Magritte of a bicycle, two dynamic Légers, and a small picture by the Brazilian artist Cândido Portinari. Framed in traditional gilded and ebonized wood, these paintings are placed in such a way that their strength contributes to the whole scheme.

Catroux himself designed most of the chairs and sofas and had them upholstered in French silks. For the curtains and one sofa he used a gray blue silk with bands of stripes in colors close to those in the trompe l'oeil decoration; these same striped bands are appliquéd on the cushions of the oversize ottomans to emphasize their simple forms. The third major fabric, a stylized floral on a pair of armchairs, combines with the graphic carpet to add a playful note to the room.

In the next room a complete antique English pine library purchased from T. Crowther & Son in London was installed by Crowther's craftsmen and by Heller's crew, who also concealed part of the air conditioning system in the dentil molding. The warm wood sets off the owners' collection of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch and English marine paintings.

Upstairs the space was substantially reconfigured by Baranovich during the fourteen-month renovation to make way for two dressing rooms, one paneled in mahogany, the other octagonal in plan. In the master bedroom Catroux chose to cover the walls with a subtly textured fabric and the bed, windows, and two floor-to-ceiling folding screens with a fanciful French document print of birds and flowers, swags and urns. On the sofa this arabesque cotton is combined with a related pattern on a smaller scale. Together these fabrics make the room a quiet and intimate retreat from the busy streets outside.

The success of this apartment reflects a seamless aesthetic alliance between decorator and clients. "I know the owners very well," says Catroux. "They are good friends of mine, and they know my work. It is very important that there is an element of complicity between the client and the decorator; they have to trust you and trust that you understand them."

Like the architectural fantasies of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century paintings that grace the stairwell and entrance hall, where the artists beguile us by integrating existing architectural monuments and natural elements into an imaginary landscape all their own, so has Catroux integrated his clients' large and varied collections and his own designs into a residence that is at once sensuous and harmonious. ▲

A 19th-century French mahogany console that pays homage to ancient Egypt, *above*, holds antique Greek and Etruscan vases. The painting of imperial Rome by Pierre-Antoine Demachy is one of a group of 17th- and 18th-century architectural fantasies in the entry hall and stairwell, *opposite below*. The 18th-century terra-cotta bust of Louis XIV is from Didier Aaron, NYC. *Opposite above:* In the master bedroom Catroux used a pair of Clarence House prints for the curtains, bed, screen, and sofa and a Manuel Canovas fabric for the walls. The two Louis XVI armchairs are covered in gaufré velvet. Carpet from Stark.

Circa 1402

The Reign of Helena Rubinstein

DESPOTS WORTHY OF THEIR TITLES HAVE ALWAYS PRESIDED OVER A TASTE ALL THEIR OWN, AND HELENA RUBINSTEIN, EMPRESS OF BEAUTY, WAS NO EXCEPTION. IF THE RUBINSTEIN STYLE DID NOT

catch on as universally as Louis XV's or Napoleon's, it is because, to quote *Vogue* in 1938, she was "an adventurous soul who deviates from established routes." In other words, her taste veered toward the fantastically idiosyncratic. The scale of her houses—numbering up to seven at a time—the vastness of her collections, and the scope of her empire (all in inverse proportion to her four-foot, ten-inch frame) bring to mind Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*. While Rubinstein did not utter "rosebud"—or even "rose water"—upon expiring, she did take with her the meaning of Crème Valaze, the enigmatic name of her first face cream, which, as a willful young Polish émigré, she introduced to Australia at the turn of the century. By the end of her life more than six decades later, Rubinstein's original twelve jars of Valaze had proliferated into a line of five hundred products manufactured by a beauty conglomerate employing 30,000 people in one hundred countries. All of which generated a fortune that reportedly made her the richest woman in America.

Endowed with what Henry James has called a "monstrous vitality," Rubinstein worked ceaselessly, slept little, and still had plenty of energy left to fuel her other passions—collecting and decorating. In her autobiography, *My Life for Beauty*, Rubinstein proudly recounts how, with a stroke of Scarlett O'Hara–like resourcefulness, she whipped up curtains for her first salon, in Melbourne, "from the lovely white full-skirted dresses I had brought from Poland." The three rooms looked "light and friendly and attractive." By the time she opened the London branch of her Salons de Beauté Valaze in 1908, the glamorous entrepreneur had traded in "light and friendly" for "warm and passionate." Her husband-to-be, literary patron Edward Titus, had taken her to see the Ballets Russes, and there was no turning back. "The electric combinations of purple and magenta, orange and yellow, black and gold" in set designs by Léon Bakst and Alexandre Benois excited her "beyond measure." Another Ballets Russes enthusiast, Paul Poiret, who decorated her first Paris salon, also inspired her exotic sensibility. Rubinstein (later known simply as Madame to her familiars) was discovering with a vengeance what the philosopher Francis Bacon had proposed long ago: there is no beauty without strangeness.

A law unto herself concerning color—and everything else—Madame became famous for her chromatic table settings while entertaining her smart new London friends. She would lay out a pink dinner service on which guests ate "an all-pink meal of salmon, followed by saignant roast beef, and then strawberry mousse . . . with a vin rosé," she wrote in her autobiography. Among the regulars at Rubinstein's color-coordinated dinners was sculptor Jacob Epstein, who introduced her to African art. Bidding at auction, she relied on his eyes and her swelling pocketbook. Out of this friendly collaboration grew one of the finest collections of tribal sculpture ever assembled. But her most celebrated collecting coup during the prewar London years was her clean sweep of a comprehensive 1911 Elie Nadelman sculpture exhibition. As Lincoln Kirstein wrote, "She did not acquire merely one or two heads; she purchased the entire exhibition outright." Nadelman's suave marble figures became—like her African art—fixtures in all of her residences. Phalanxes of

BY AMY FINE COLLINS

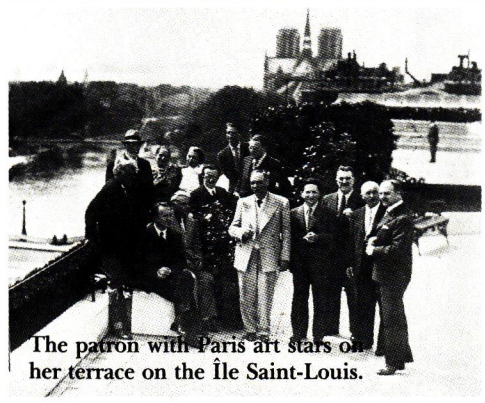
Helena Rubinstein in 1958 proudly displayed the baroque furniture and colossal jewels that beauty potions bought her. *Opposite:* A sequined portrait of Rubinstein by Pavel Tchelitchew hung in her New York penthouse, c. 1938, amid Italian and Indonesian exotica.

them commanded the entrance hall in her New York penthouse, and they showed up in publicity shots, their idealized visages paired with Madame's less regular but equally monumental profile.

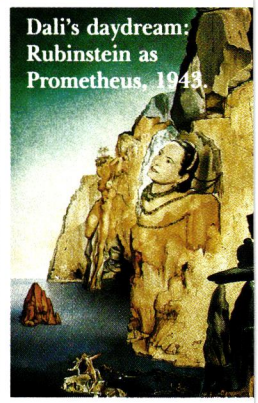
Before World War I Rubinstein moved to Paris, where she was taken up by salonnière Misia Natanson, who urged her to commission portraits from avant-garde artists. By the end of her life Rubinstein had sat for over twenty likenesses. "Good for publicity, good investment, good for all the empty walls!" she pronounced. One of the most striking portraits is Marie Laurencin's 1934 canvas of Rubinstein as an Indian maharanee. No doubt the conceit was inspired by the combination of her jet hair, bulbous pearls, and mammoth cabochons flashing like traffic lights on her wrists and fingers. Salvador Dali painted the beauty empress as a feminine Prometheus, chained to a rock by her glittering emerald ropes. But Madame was not as enslaved by her trinkets as the surrealist imagined. Never tidy, she stashed her baubles under her bed in a giant Hattie Carnegie dress box—beneath several old girdles. An assistant later improved upon this method by organizing her booty alphabetically in a filing cabinet—D for diamonds, R for rubies, etc.

Soon after the war, Rubinstein and Edward Titus—whose Black Manikin Press published D. H. Lawrence—built an apartment house in Montparnasse designed by leading modernist architect Bruno Elkouken. "One of the first modern houses in Paris," according to Madame's nephew, Oscar Kolin, it boasted among other

Holding court with her second husband, Prince Gourielli-Tchkonia of Russian Georgia, in their New York living room, c. 1950.



The patron with Paris art stars on her terrace on the Île Saint-Louis.

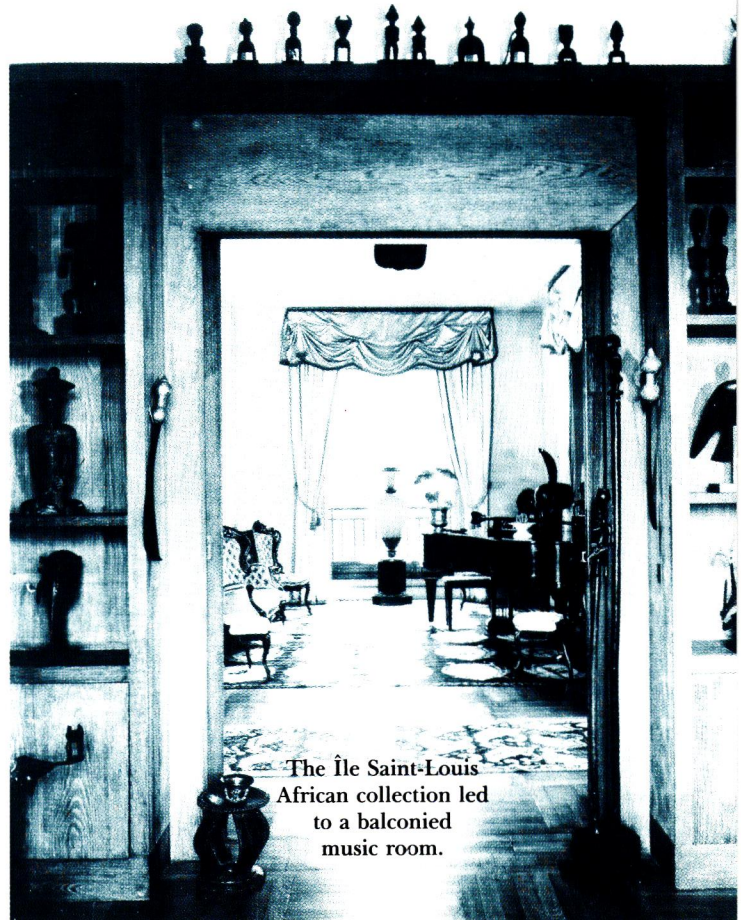


Dali's daydream: Rubinstein as Prometheus, 1943.

Her style veered between "Byzantium and the flea market"

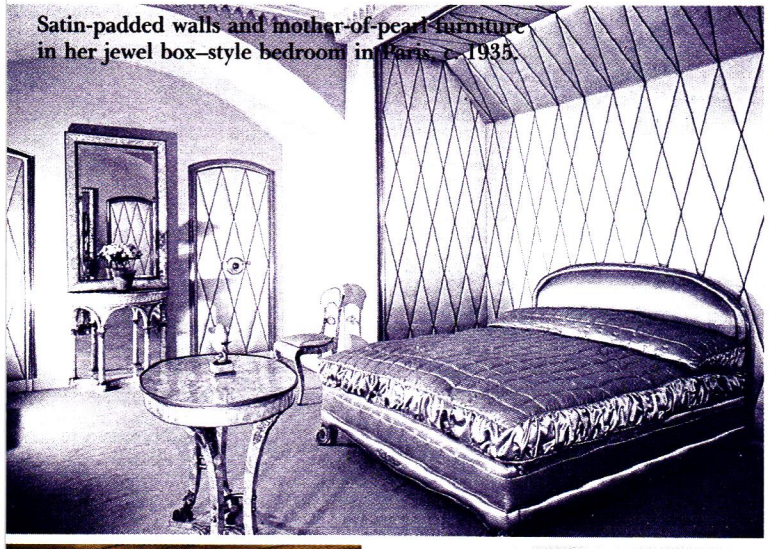
amenities a 250-seat theater where Titus's playwright friends staged productions. Nearby, at the Dôme café, Modigliani hawked his pictures for a few francs. "I have always preferred buying directly from the artist," proclaimed Rubinstein, whose divining-rod instincts, still intact years later, led her to an unknown Willem de Kooning's studio door. "Titus collected artists," Rubinstein quipped. "I collected art." Unfortunately for her, he also collected mistresses.

By the time Titus left her, Rubinstein had already planned an immense new Paris apartment building on the Île Saint-Louis. The sleek but austere structure, designed by the fashionable art deco architect Louis Süe, blended so gracefully with the neighboring Louis Le Vau houses it won a prize for the best construction of 1937. Patrick O'Higgins, author of the biography *Madame,* described its crowning glory, a spectacular roof garden: "At one end, there was a tiered fountain larger than the average Hollywood swimming pool. At the opposite end, across a hundred yards of marble, a mirrored recess reflected various pieces of statuary through a bower of evergreens." Beneath, "extending as far as the eye could see, was nearly every Parisian landmark known to the world." Dubbed the "most expensive view in Paris," it temporarily cured André *(Continued on page 198)*



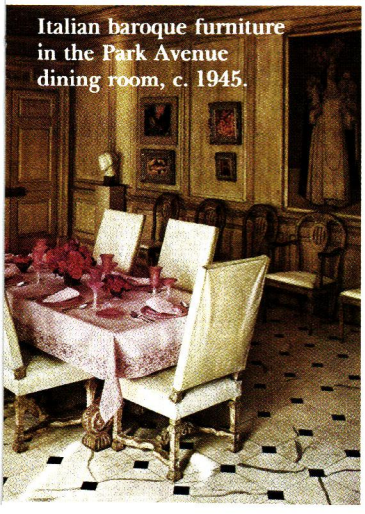
The Île Saint-Louis African collection led to a balconied music room.

African and French art, Belter furniture, and angel-crowned Spanish columns in the Park Avenue penthouse.

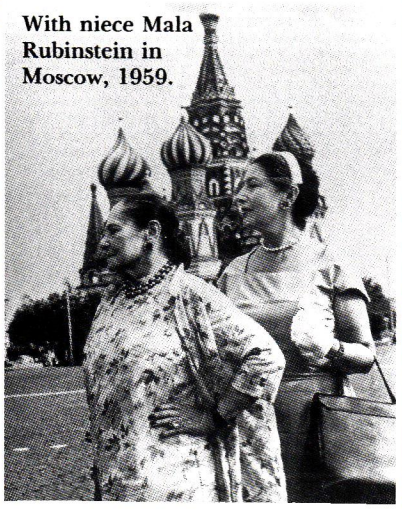


Satin-padded walls and mother-of-pearl furniture in her jewel box–style bedroom in Paris, c. 1935.

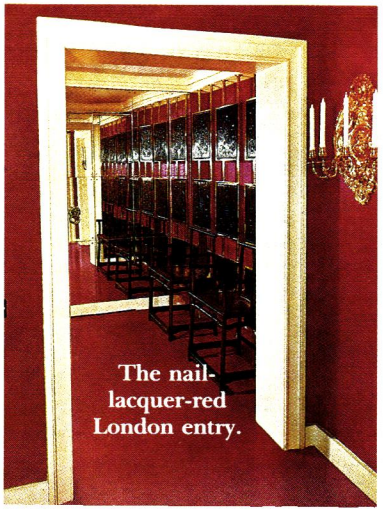
Rubinstein's London living room, c. 1960, designed by David Hicks in eye-shadow purples.



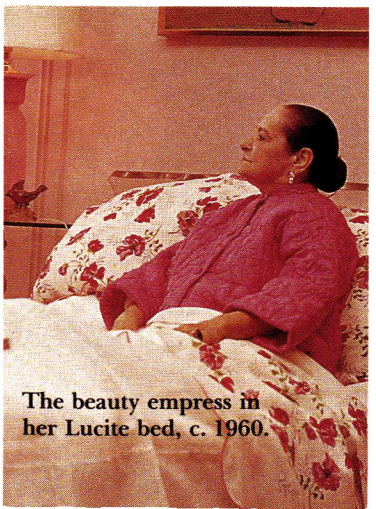
Italian baroque furniture in the Park Avenue dining room, c. 1945.



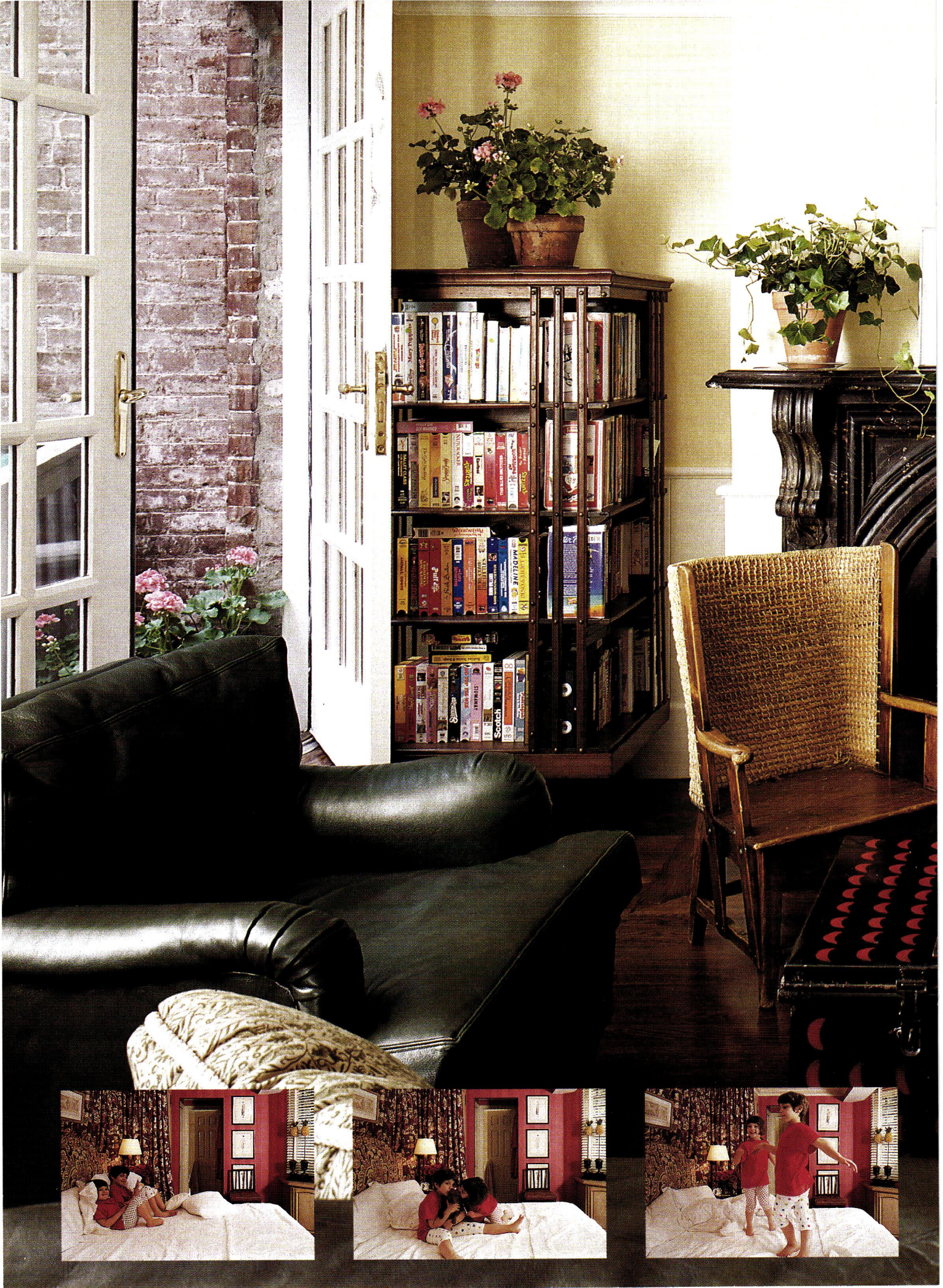
With niece Mala Rubinstein in Moscow, 1959.



The nail-lacquer-red London entry.



The beauty empress in her Lucite bed, c. 1960.


MADELINE
Scotch

The classic and the offbeat mingle comfortably in the Falchi family room where Scottish chairs rest before a Turkish ammunition trunk turned coffee table, all from J. Garvin Mecking, NYC. The armchair is in the same leather used for Carlos Falchi handbags. *Below insets:* Juliet and Katie frolic in the master bedroom. Wallpaper and curtain fabric from Clarence House. Details see Resources.

Living Rooms

For accessories designer Carlos Falchi and his family, Bob Currie fills intimate spaces with a spirited mix of comfort and style. By Eve M. Kahn

Photographs by Michael Mundy

Produced by Jacqueline Gonnet

IT'S CALLED WILD VILLA style—designer Carlos Falchi and his wife, Missy, invented the term because their Greenwich Village duplex fit no known design pigeonhole. In theory, the style's mix of colors, textures, and offbeat collections is overwhelming; in person, it makes perfect sense. Touring the Falchis' rooms, you wonder why more people don't plant Anasazi pots, 1920s pocketbooks, and statues of Mickey Mouse on library shelves; why more people don't furnish chartreuse living rooms with twig-brown 1890s curtains, nearly-neon Aubussons, and the most minimal of 1950s black metal tables.

"The rooms are a bit crazy and eccentric, but also comfortable and easy," says their designer, Bob Currie, who worked with his two longtime assistants, Richard Lee and Philip Cozzi. Notes Lee, "We hooked the Falchis' collections together with strong colors so everything sits in its place and nothing jumps out at you."

Brazilian-born, Carlos has designed accessories in New York since 1964, and, as befits his apartment's decor, his hue and texture combinations are just short of outrageous. Wavy stripes of smooth and coarse snakeskin crisscross Falchi wallets; patches of black and white cowhide interrupt crimson satchels. Missy and Carlos work together when they're not tending to their daughters, Katie, eight, and Juliet, six. But they sometimes depart on matters of taste. The self-described "less adventurous buyer" in the family, Missy gravitates toward the classics: her first acquisition, at age fourteen, was an Edward Curtis portrait of a Pueblo girl which hangs in the downstairs

Nothing goes together, and that's what makes it successful," says Bob Currie of the chartreuse living room. Missy Falchi inherited the 1930s boudoir chairs (their bubblegum-pink taffeta now replaced by a Brunschwig wool stripe), which are surrounded by curtains of English aesthetic movement fabric, art nouveau wall sconces from Marvin Alexander, NYC, and a nearly-neon Aubusson carpet found at Doris Leslie Blau, NYC.

Currie's clients surpassed his fondest hopes: offered living room color choices, they pointed unhesitatingly to chartreuse

hall. Carlos, on the other hand, brings home whatever pleases him, be it a bentwood library chair with flowing arms, a Japanese bowl glazed to look like cooled lava, or a Pre-Raphaelite portrait of a mad Ophelia. Missy relegated that picture to a red velvet easel in a bathroom. The ancient Thai clay urns scattered throughout the apartment, however, are her doing, and she and Carlos heartily agreed on the busts of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald as satyr and nymph that turned up at a Manhattan salvage store and now flank the dining room fireplace.

Both husband and wife have been friends and fans of Currie's for years—Carlos met him while selling handbags to Bendel's in the seventies, when Currie was the store's design director. Currie has since created the spare haunting sets for Calvin Klein's Obsession commercials; designed lush backdrops for the Metropolitan Museum's "The Age of Napoleon" show; and orchestrated dozens of apartments. In every project his trademark whimsy shines through, whether its an unexpected juxtaposition of romantic and minimal styles or a preposterously big vase or globe. "Bob doesn't want you to take his rooms too seriously, he wants you to live in them," says Missy, who has not discouraged her

In the living room, *above,* framed 1851 Italian opera sketches form a willfully irregular pattern above a Victorian chaise from Ann Morris Antiques, NYC. The side chair is English Regency. *Left:* A triple gourd lamp from Marvin Alexander towers over an eccentric lion-paw stool that Carlos purchased years ago at a flea market in Paris.

Busts of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald as satyr and nymph flank the dining room mantel lined with pots of thriving foxglove. A Herend tureen serves as a centerpiece under a Louis XIII chandelier from H. M. Luther, NYC. The 18th-century Italian chairs are in a Clarence House stripe.

daughters from jumping on the beds or bringing the Thai pottery to school for show-and-tell.

When the Falchis found their town house apartment six years ago, its two floors had been chopped into four units. Currie and staff streamlined the space into living room, kitchen, dining room, and library on the parlor floor and bedrooms and a family room at the garden level. The Falchis, in the meantime, shipped almost all of their furniture to their country house on Long Island, keeping only a favorite set of stools with carved swags crowning their gilded lion legs (a Carlos flea market find) and a pair of overstuffed boudoir chairs (heirlooms from Missy's great-aunt) that Currie calls "insane and quite wonderful."

To fill the rest of the apartment, the Falchis and Currie haunted local antiques shops for years. Currie then took months to position each piece—no one can remember how many times the living room chaise moved from wall to wall. Midway through the project, Currie even watched his clients surpass his fondest hopes: when presented with an array of color samples for the living room, both husband and wife pointed unhesitatingly to chartreuse.

Now infused with Currie wit, the apartment boasts a vintage carpetbag stuffed with foam which serves as a family room bench and floral wallhangings that make the red master bedroom feel like a gypsy caravan. The Falchis love to wander from room to room, here stroking a velvet sofa, there admiring an 1850s sketch of Italian opera costumes so unintended for framing the edges are torn and the images half erased. Says Carlos, patting his belly, "The whole place feels good right here." ▲

Currie outfitted the library with striped wallpaper, trim cherrywood bookshelves, cabinets, and door frames, and a fern-patterned carpet from Stark. The Falchis discreetly mix books with a few of their favorite objects, including a pair of feet-form shoes that were a gift from Pierre Cardin. The vintage William Morris fabric on the Thonet chair came from Cora Ginsburg, NYC.

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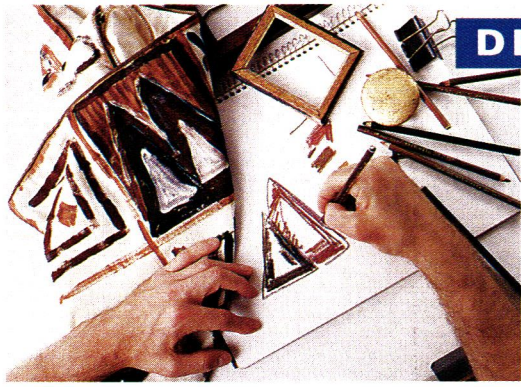


ON PAINTED FINISHES "To introduce pattern into the living room, I sketched batik-style designs and my associate, Patrick Moultney, brushed them onto pillows."

The Making of a Room

Decorator Greg Jordan explains how an idea becomes a place to live. By Dana Cowin

Photographs by Michael Mundy

"AFTER A FOUR-YEAR STRUGGLE TO FIGURE OUT THE meaning of life, I had a little talk with the universe. 'I need a sign,' I said. 'I've pretty much had it.' The next day, out of the blue, two acquaintances called and asked me to decorate their houses. 'That's it,' I said. 'That's the sign.' " And so twenty-nine-year-old Greg Jordan tied a bandanna around his coming-of-age novel, put aside notions of being a screenwriter, and dedicated himself full-time to decorating.

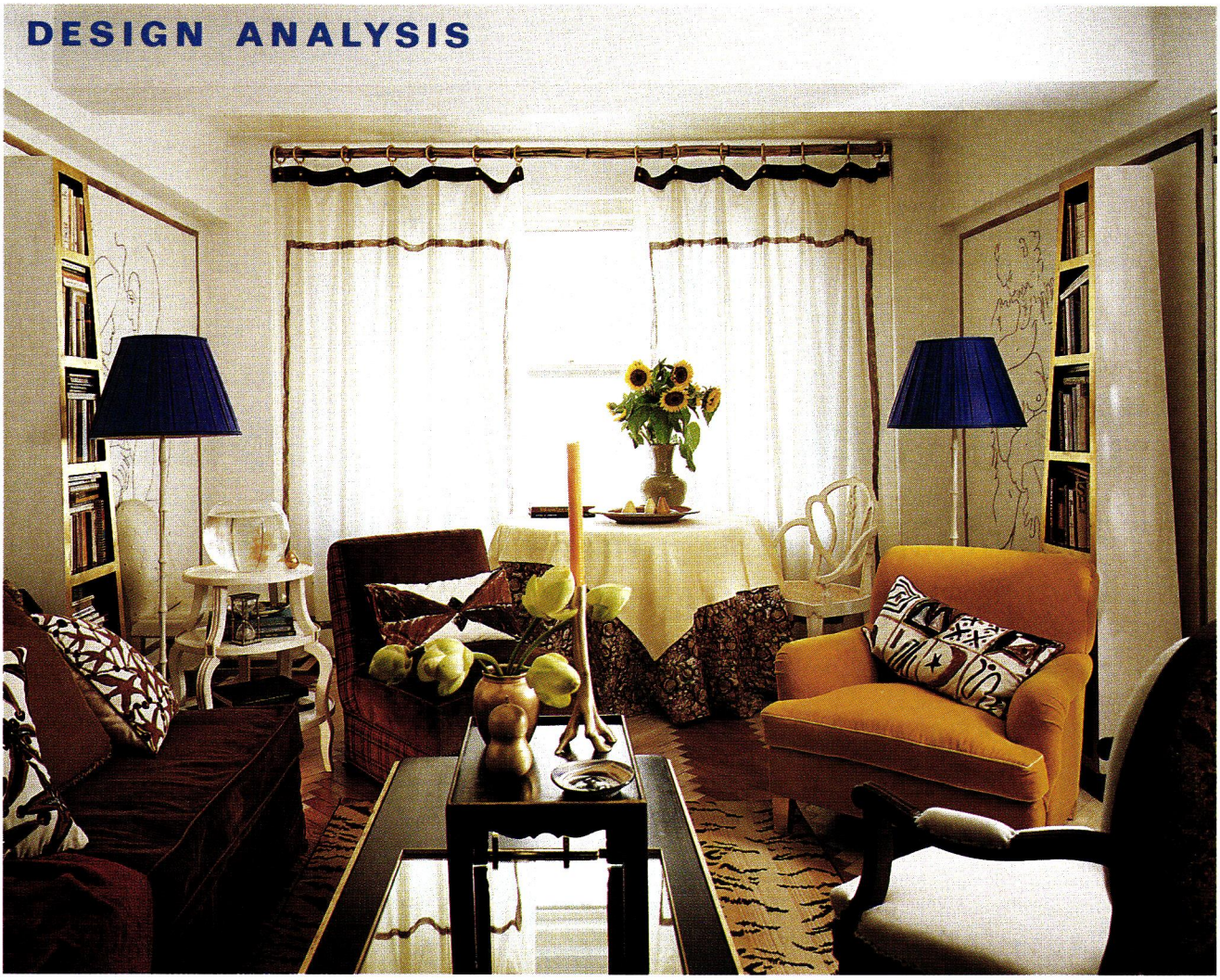
Although Jordan's decision to join the profession was made literally overnight, his upbringing in a family of uncommonly handy, there's-nothing-we-can't-do people made his choice singularly suitable. By the time he left his home in rural Louisiana for Wabash College in Indiana, his grandmother had taught him how to sew and arrange flowers; his contractor grandfather had hired him on bricklaying crews, road crews, and carpentry crews; and his mother, with her design training, had helped him draw house plans, complete down to the light sockets. Painting and furniture making he taught himself in his family's large backyard workshop.

After college Jordan arrived in New York with his typewriter and paid the rent, at least in part, by pitching in at the decorating firm of Irvine & Fleming, where he unwittingly picked up crucial exposure to the trade. His other talents notwithstanding, he always thought of himself as a writer, a worthy profession, he felt, since it offered him the chance to "change people's lives."

Thanks to those two initial commissions in 1986, Jordan discovered that decorating also enables him to change lives. Hiring him to work on your house means being coaxed to confront the real you, as in successful psychoanalysis. And the results are more a revelation of self in three dimensions than an affirmation of a decorator's signature style. When a client told Jordan she didn't

ON INSPIRATION "The idea for my living room, *opposite,* came to me one night when I was studying a book of Picasso sketches. Blowing up drawings to cover the walls strikes me as a bit audacious, but I also love the idea of art as instant decoration."

DESIGN ANALYSIS



ON VERSATILITY "This is an all-purpose room—a living room, dining room, library, guest bedroom all in one. The sofa is actually a twin bed covered with cut velvet and painted pillows. It's the largest piece in the room, and it anchors all the furniture around it. The slipper chair with tartan trim is one of a pair that I love because they're light and versatile: I move them around and sometimes join them to form a sofa. For small dinner parties there's the table covered with a batik cloth that my grandmother's sewing bee quilted for me. If I have more than six guests, the large glass-topped coffee table becomes either a buffet or a low dinner table. With so much else going on in the room, I didn't want my books to take over, so I designed four tapered bookcases that are slanted toward the wall to make them look smaller and painted white on the sides to blend in. A room has to be personal and not decorated for decorating's sake. There's something awfully scary about a place where every sofa and chair is draped with lap blankets puddling to the floor—unless, of course, the owners live in an igloo."

"A lot more decorating happens by accident than most of us like to admit"

ON CURTAINS "I wanted the living room curtains to act like a fourth wall, so I chose wool challis because it's translucent without being too sheer. For a finishing touch the rod is made of bamboo (painted to look scorched because I forgot to order them that way) and the rings are gilded wood. They're connected to the curtains by hardware store brass key chains looped through grommets punched into a cut-velvet header. I stitched that myself, sitting in the middle of the floor with a sewing machine."

ON MANTELS "I continually change the mantel. In the summer it's a sort of living still life of plates, shells, a gilded pear my mother gave me, and eucalyptus branches in Persian vases. Prayer chairs made by Christopher Maier in New Orleans, who modeled them after a French Gothic design I admired at the Metropolitan Museum's Cloisters, are stacked with my favorite books and my as yet unpublished novel, which I tied up with a bandanna. In the winter I clear away everything except the colorful Persian vases so I can enjoy the fire without distraction."

ON COLOR "Here's the inspiration for my brown apartment: I was cleaning out my closets and admiring the textures and patinas of my leather and suede shoes and cowboy boots. I lined them up in the hall and saw how great all the different shades of brown looked together. People say they *hate* brown, but almost everyone who comes to dinner here says how cozy and comfortable the apartment feels, down to the brown and white cotton satin pillows, *below.* Brown is the color of earth—and seeds, after all, grow in soil."

ON HOW TO DRAW LIKE PICASSO "I discovered that to copy a Picasso sketch, you don't have to be an artist; all you have to do is rent an opaque projector. The image is projected onto the wall and traced with a steady hand and a grease pencil. I painted a simple square frame with watered-down acrylics. For the drawings, I started using brown pencil on one side of the room but then ran out, so the other side is black. A lot more decorating happens by accident than most of us like to admit."

know what her favorite color was, he asked to look in her closet. "There it is," he said, surveying her clothes. "You love red!" She agreed and the collaboration began.

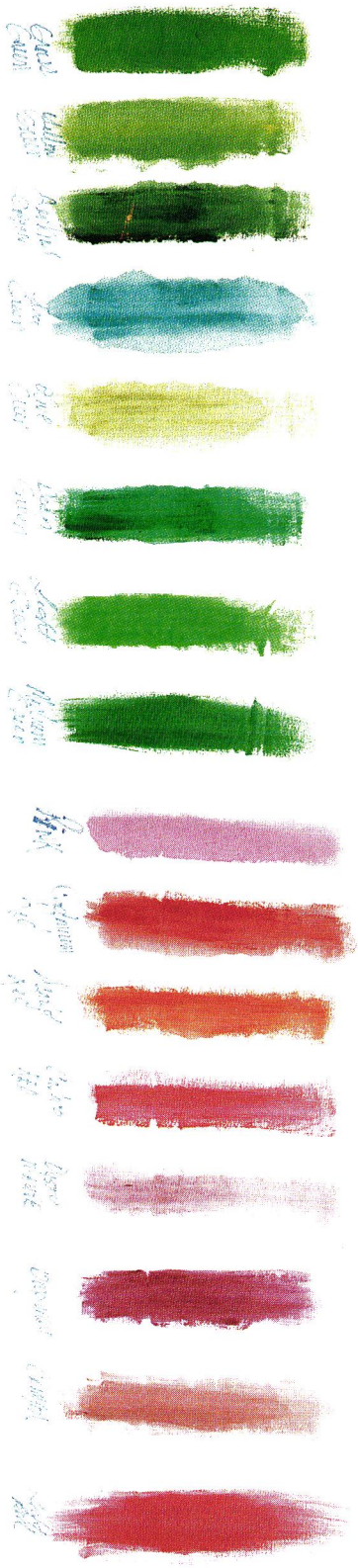
Jordan's rooms match his clients' dreams. They all begin with a scene-setting image or idea and are executed with a strong sense of color and craftsmanship. At the moment, for example, he is working on an apartment for a couple whose favorite painting, Van Gogh's *Women Picking Olives* in the Annenberg Collection, sets the tone—literally. "If I'd just thrown Van Gogh colors at them, they'd have gone, 'Ugh, I don't think so,' " says Jordan in his southern drawl. "Instead, I got samples of silks and satins in those bright shades. I put them on a table with a picture of the painting, and the couple adored it." A woman with a "crooked, fantastic East Hampton cottage" told Jordan she longed for window seats that "straddled the indoors and out"—and the decorating scheme just spun out from there.

Even when designing showhouse rooms, he creates imaginary characters and caters to their foibles. This year at Kips Bay he envisioned a "groovy grandmother lucky enough to be entering the second spring of her life" and responded to "her request for a pretty suite in clear strong colors such as turquoise and celadon."

Jordan's technique doesn't change when he's his own client. The theme for his East Side rental, which he describes as a "design laboratory or a stage set for a crazy person," occurred to him one night when he was "studying" *The Sketchbooks of Picasso*. He decided he would use brown grease pencil to draw Picasso replicas on the white walls of his living room with the help of an opaque projector. On the "neutral" brown and ivory herringbone floor he arranged architectural bookcases, lamps, and chairs of his own design—pieces which, thanks to visitor demand, are now sold through his office. To complete the room, Jordan called in his associate Patrick Moultney, a decorative finishes expert, who brushed loose, lively geometric patterns on all the pillows.

"I don't believe in sinking money into things you can't take with you or into places where you don't plan to stay long," says Jordan. Many clients have benefited from this thrifty approach. When Barry and CeCe Kieselstein-Cord asked him to revamp their weekend house in Dallas, Jordan asked them to gather all their old furniture. He then proceeded to paint, stitch, re-cover, and uniformly improve the place using tricks learned back in Louisiana. Observes Jordan, "All the things that were weird about me when I was a little kid have come together in a really nice way." ▲

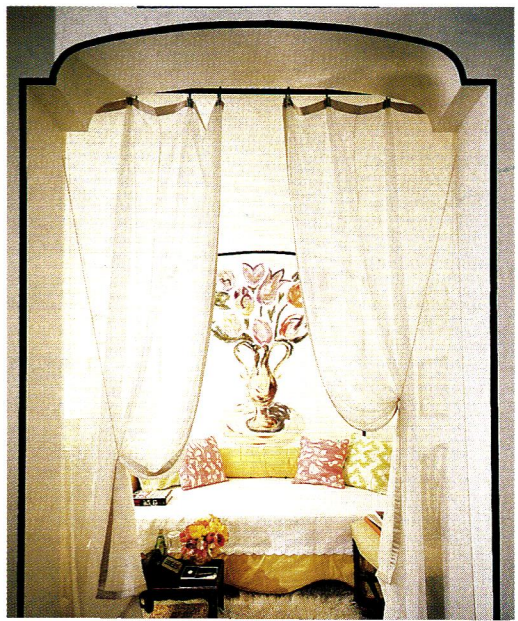
Jordan's rooms begin with a scene-setting image or idea and are executed with a strong sense of color and craftsmanship



MORE ON COLOR
"For the fabrics and the wall murals in the Kips Bay suite, I chose uplifting springtime hues. The painted pink pillows are inspired by a Raoul Dufy design, the green ones by an Indian basket I found in Aspen. I thought the profusion of color would become chaotic and saccharine—like falling into a candy dish—unless it was set against a simple background. For me that's basic black and white, the proverbial noncolors."

MORE ON INSPIRATION "Designing this 1992 Kips Bay Decorator Show House sitting room suite, *above* and *below left,* I pictured an older woman who is sensuous and a survivor. Except for the antique black japanned pieces, I designed every stick of furniture, and I wanted it all to be curvaceous and seductive. The arched doors and windows were set off with painted outlines that reappear as frames for the murals, which are after Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell. I charged up the palette a bit to suggest a feeling of abundance and new possibilities."

MORE ON CURTAINS "The curtains were made of the most beautiful silk crepe, a fabric that is surprisingly inexpensive. On the borders, I stitched silk-satin bindings bought at a bridal store. Installed in an arched doorway, *right,* the material hung gracefully, like an expensive nightgown."



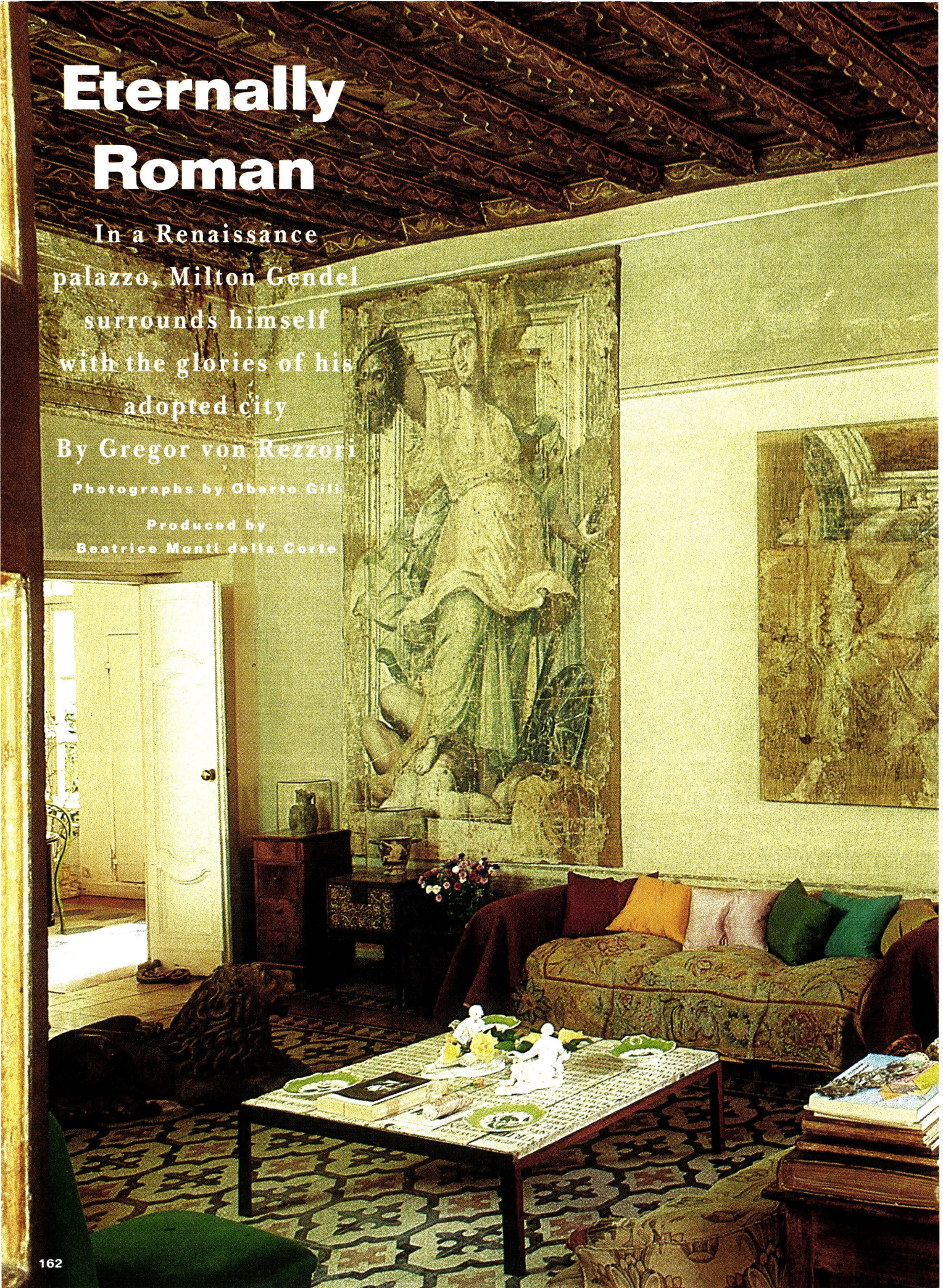
Eternally Roman

In a Renaissance palazzo, Milton Gendel surrounds himself with the glories of his adopted city

By Gregor von Rezzori

Photographs by Oberto Gili

Produced by Beatrice Monti della Corte



Under the coffered ceiling of the sitting room, an English carved wooden lion crouches near 17th-century tempera paintings attributed to Sabatini. On the table at right, books that Milton Gendel has edited are stacked beside a model locomotive, c. 1900.

TRAVELERS WHO have visited Rome more than once during the past few decades may well have gone home with the impression that some things in the Eternal City are indeed eternal: the African sky displaying its ever-changing moods, spectacularly indifferent to the vicissitudes of mankind below; the maddening traffic over, around, and through the grandiose rubble of millennia; and the slightly ironic, slightly sensual smile on the benevolent face of Milton Gendel. This permanently young American seems as integral to the image of Rome as the ruins of the Forum, the baroque ebullience of the Trevi Fountain, or the cascade of juvenile drifters on the Spanish Steps. His imperturbable good humor soothes the irritation that the city's utter vulgarity can provoke in anyone with aesthetic sensitivity—a quality that Milton himself unquestionably possesses.

It is not easy for aesthetically sensitive people to live in Rome: her numberless delights do not quite make up for her violence and contrasts of beauty and baseness. Not even her most exquisite moments—at dusk, for instance, when the eerie fading light makes huge monuments appear to float—amend the disturbing surrealism of a place where angels, club-swinging giants, and martyrs in agony stare down from the façades of crumbling palazzi at the lava flow of vehicles; a place where tourists gape at a stone elephant standing on a stone tortoise in the middle of a fountain, while twin centaurs on a speeding motorbike snatch a woman's handbag with acrobatic skill. Only love can motivate the patience to endure the pell-mell of clergymen and pickpockets, politicians and clerks, posh boutiques and tatty remnants of Fellini's dolce vita—but Milton Gendel is a loving person.

This is about the only thing everybody knows of him for sure. Most of his innumerable friends would not be able to say whether Milton is a photographer, a journalist, a gentleman of private means—or all of the above. Some remember his late wife, Judy, a formidable descendant of England's eminent Montagu family, who left him with a daughter, Anna Venetia. Some speak of a son, Sebastiano, from a previous marriage. Others admire his present wife, Monica, a graphic artist and scion of the noble Italian houses of Chigi and Incisa. But only a few are familiar with the record of Milton Gendel the art historian, former assistant to Meyer Schapiro, intimate of the artists in André Breton's circle, passionate photographer, contributor to *Art News*, corresponding editor of *Art in America*, general editor of a twenty-four-volume series on the great monuments of the world, consultant on art and publicity for Olivetti and Alitalia, commissioner of the Venice Biennale, member of the Foreign Press Club of Rome, the Architecture Club of London—and inhabitant of Rome since 1950.

For many years Milton had a ground-floor flat in a wing of the sixteenth-century Franciscan monastery, on the island of Tiberina, standing on the foundations of a tower that once guarded a bridge built in 63 B.C. It was like inhabiting what had been the very core of Rome throughout twenty centuries, so he turned the space into a museum for the vestiges of two thousand years of municipal life. When city authorities decided to convert the building into a public museum, Milton did not need to search for another roof to shelter himself or his collections. He had long maintained an apartment in the Palazzo Costaguti, residence of the marchesi Afan de' Rivera Costaguti (traditionally among the six aristocratic pole-bearers who support the papal canopy over the pontiff's head). Unlike the windows of the Tiberina Island flat, which are virtually level with the riverbank, those of the palazzo look out onto carved stone cornices and tiled rooftops under the violent sky.

Outside the palazzo in the Piazza Mattei, a Renaissance fountain heaped with gigantic shells, dolphins, and tortoises held aloft by nudes greets you as a harbinger of the exuberant abundance to be found in Milton's apartment on an upper floor. At that level in most Roman houses you would not expect anything other than servants' quarters, but what is now Milton's sitting room has a high coffered ceiling, beautifully painted in the seventeenth century with 168 different birds. One panel boasts what was then an ornithological rarity, the American turkey. The ceiling is the first thing that catches your eye after the curiosities of the entrance hall: a

The historical compendium in Gendel's sitting room, *opposite*, ranges from Greek and Etruscan vases to modern gouaches by Afro and Tancredi above the fireplace. A maquette for a monument to Gendel's former father-in-law and an early Motherwell flank the hearth. The mantel clock was a wedding present from Lady Diana Cooper. *Above:* Among the birds on the 17th-century polychrome ceiling is a turkey from the New World.

Gendel's art, scholarly treasures, and bric-a-brac tell more about him

bistro table and chairs, toy cats, a bench covered in a magnificent kilim, a model of a spiral staircase, Milton's GI trunk from World War II, his portrait painted by Calder on the soles of a pair of shoes. The huge temperas attributed to Lorenzo Sabatini on the walls of the sitting room are so astonishing that you automatically roll your eyes upward—only to discover that the ceiling matches them perfectly. Every object in the room is attuned to the same harmony, in spite of a staggering diversity of type and provenance.

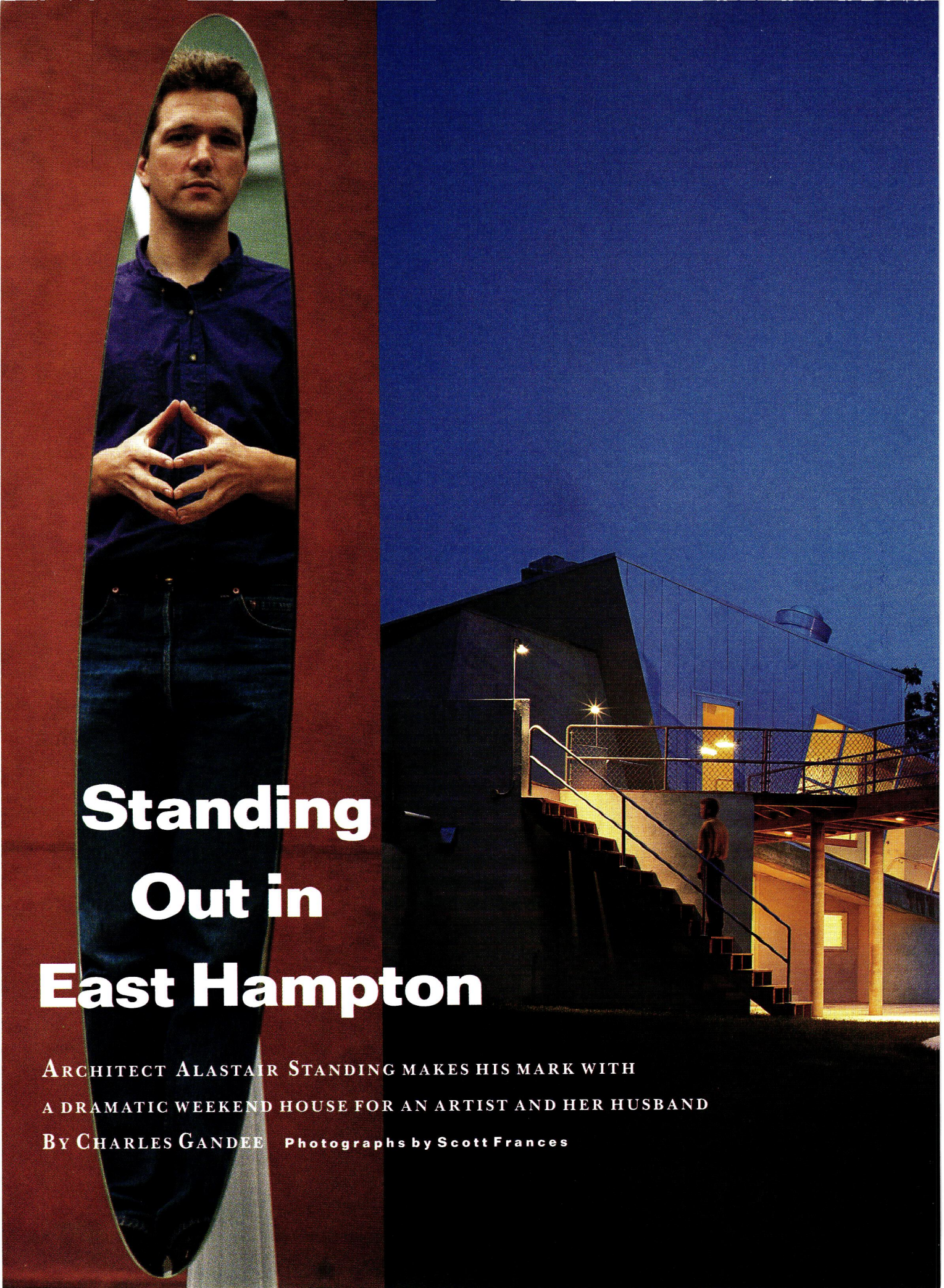
The scholar's treasures, the compulsive collector's finds, the bric-a-brac, and souvenirs tell infinitely more about the man who lives there than a biography or even an intimate diary. Ancient Greek and Etruscan vases, bronzes, marbles, and sixteenth-century paintings and sculptures speak of their owner's taste and learning as clearly as works by Motherwell, Tancredi, and a younger Milton Gendel testify to his involvement in contemporary creation. The statue leaning against the sitting room fireplace is a model for a monument to Milton's former father-in-law, the British statesman Edwin Montagu, which was erected in India; the clock on the mantelpiece was a wedding present from Lady Diana Cooper. This varied display has nothing to do with the usual cultural consumerism that amasses old and new, oriental and occidental, more or less by chance. Passing from room to room, you sense a gargantuan generosity that makes it all overwhelmingly personal—that is, human.

The wealth of paintings, etchings, art deco furniture, Persian carpets, and English embroidery is exceeded only by a vast collection of Risorgimento *(Continued on page 199)*

Much of the study is devoted to objects and paintings associated with Garibaldi and the Risorgimento, but there is always room for Gendel's other pursuits as historian and collector. A Giacometti lamp stands beside the 1845 wall map, which shows Italy before unification, and across the room, a collaborative mixed-media piece by Niki de Saint-Phalle and Tinguely is propped up on a chair.

than a biography or even an intimate diary

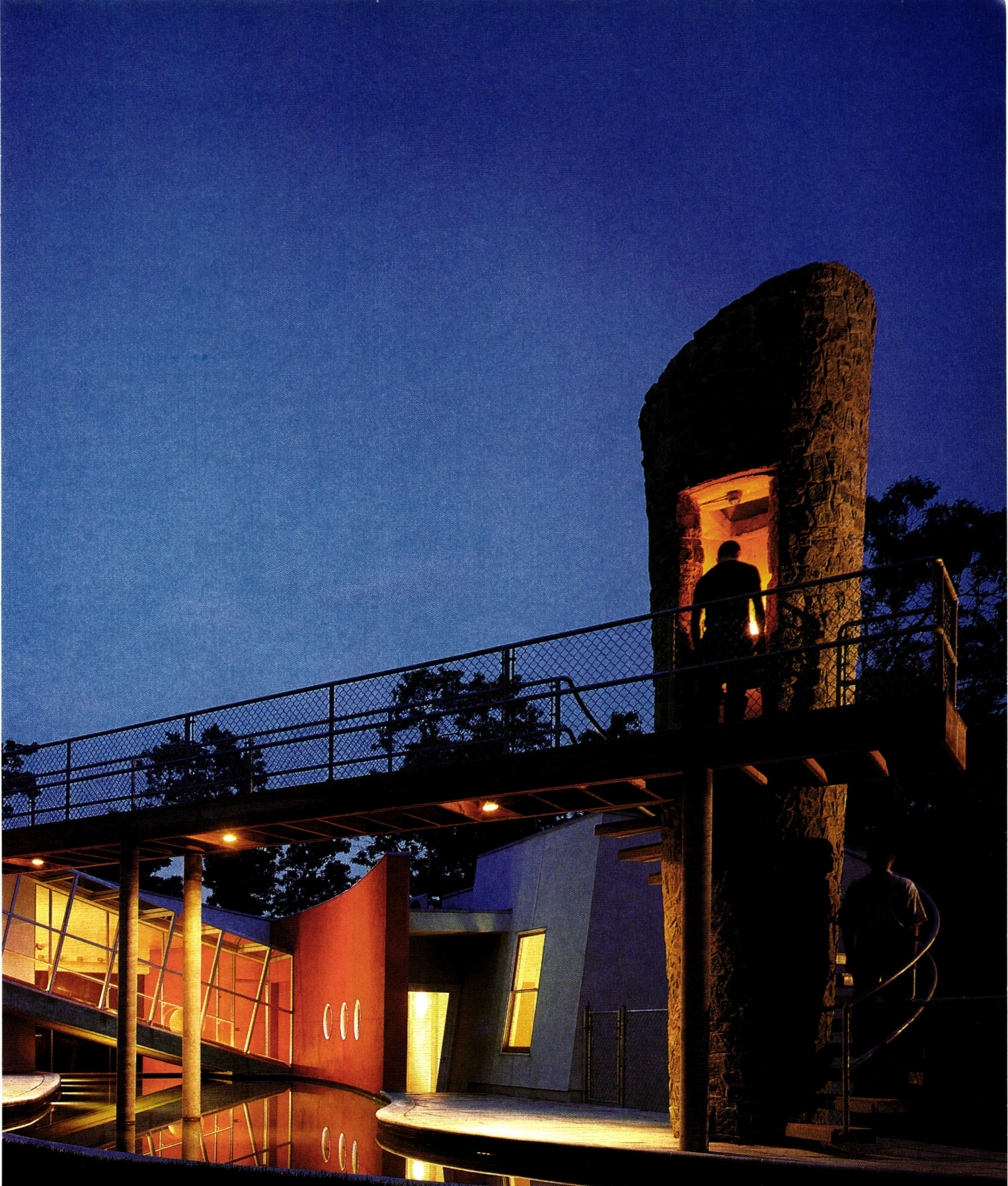
In the library Gendel pulled up a chair for G. F. Watts's *Three Furies* next to an art deco table topped with medals and metal objects. *Opposite:* An Italian orientalist chair in the master bedroom faces an 18th-century painted wooden head of Mary Magdalen and an offering dish holding an Etruscan votive breast.



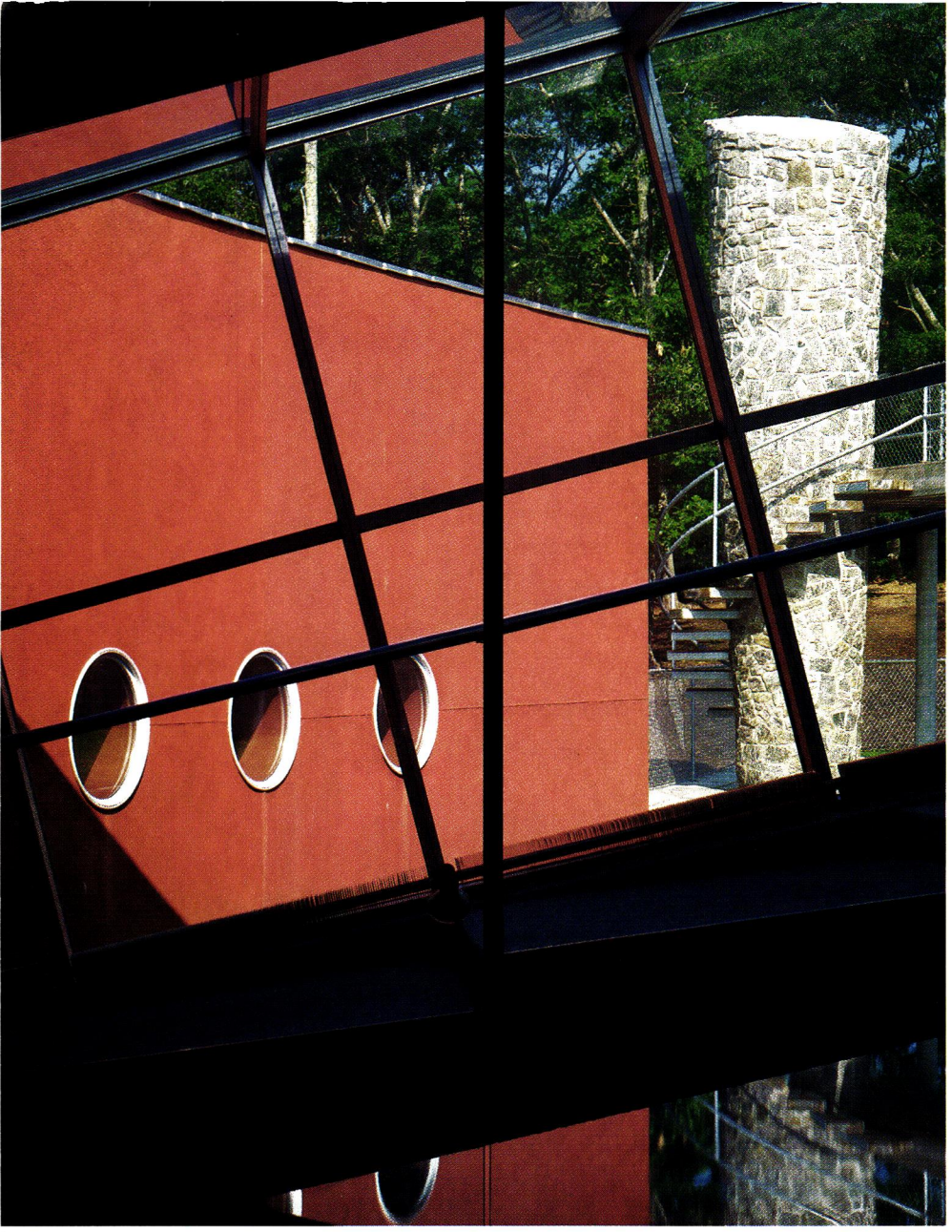
Standing Out in East Hampton

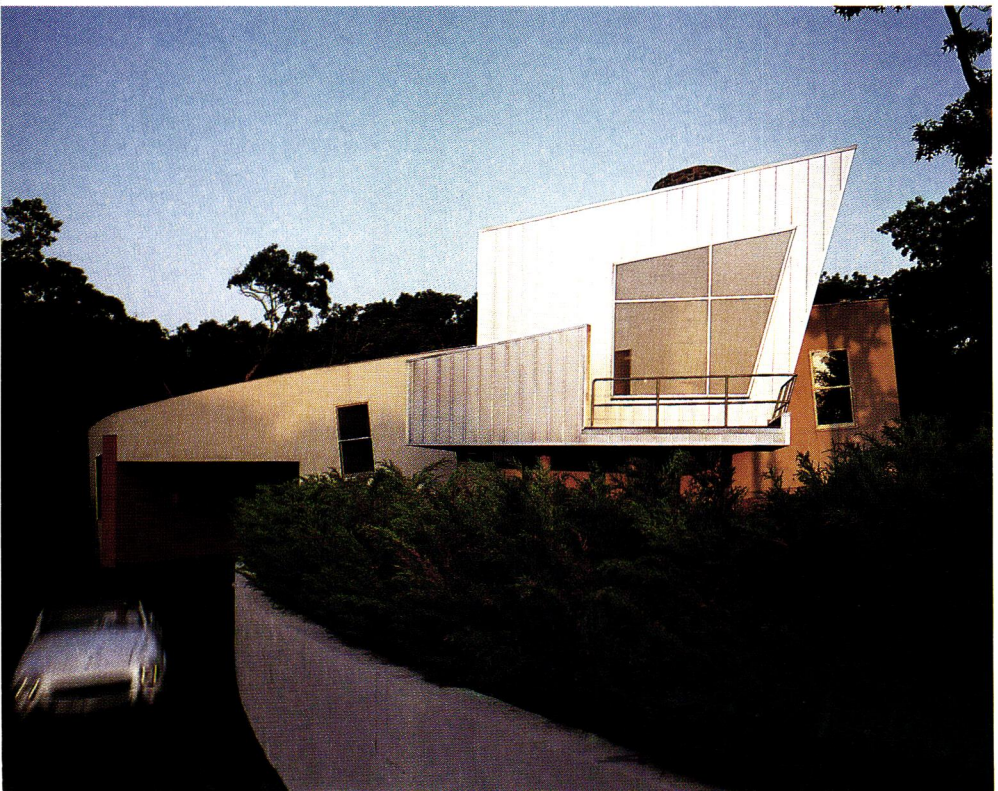
ARCHITECT ALASTAIR STANDING MAKES HIS MARK WITH A DRAMATIC WEEKEND HOUSE FOR AN ARTIST AND HER HUSBAND

BY CHARLES GANDEE **Photographs by Scott Frances**



A young architect's first house is rarely reserved and Alastair Standing's is no exception. The British immigrant makes his debut with a tip of his hat not only to the Russian constructivists but to the fabulous fifties as well. *Opposite:* Standing in a mirror. Details see Resources.





FOR GENERATIONS OF New Yorkers, the quaint villages and picturesque hamlets lacing the southern shoreline of Long Island have long been looked upon as the release valve that makes life in the high-pressure big city bearable, as the two-day pass that keeps the concrete jungle's ever-restless prisoners from rioting. Here, in Southampton and East Hampton, in Quogue and Amagansett and Sagaponack, Manhattan's well-heeled and weary trade in their business-black Lincoln Town Cars for summer-white Jeep Cherokees and reckless-red Porsche Carreras, exchange their Hermès briefcases for tennis rackets and golf clubs, forsake their Chanel suits and Armani blazers for chinos from J. Crew, pocket T's from the Gap, and rubber boots from L. L. Bean. The Hamptons, as the area's communities are collectively known, is a place, in short, where the ladies who lunch at Le Cirque let down their big hair and risk their $30 manicures in the garden.

The hair-down holiday spirit extends, not a bit surprisingly, to the domestic accommodations. To employ a perhaps dubious analogy: if a Park Avenue co-op is the residential equivalent of marriage—solid, stable, even a bit old-fashioned—a house in the Hamptons is the residential equivalent of an affair, for which quite a different set of standards apply—more freewheeling and self-indulgent, more about fantasy than reality.

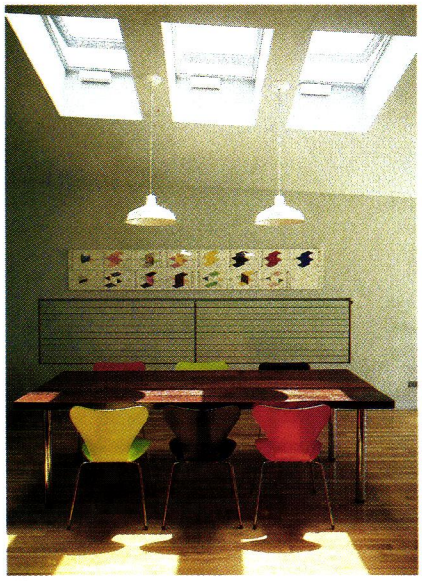
To architects this sybaritic spirit has come as very good news indeed,

From the street, *left,* the house rises defiantly above a gentle knoll partially excavated to accommodate a driveway leading directly into the garage, where, *above left,* the view is of a red bowed guest wing with portholes and a stone cone that houses a barbecue pit. *Opposite above:* The living room view explains why Standing elevated the house's public area and inserted the quirky overscale windows. *Opposite below:* Though more traditionally domestic in size, the kitchen window has its own cockeyed charm.

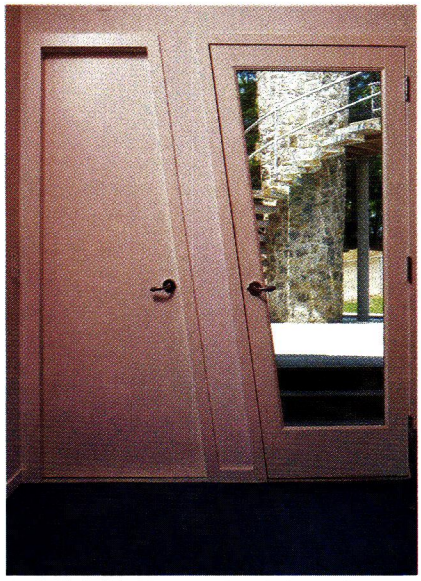
offering, as it does, a kind of aesthetic license to thrill. By tradition, a commission in the Hamptons is an opportunity to try something different, to experiment with a new idea about design in the laboratory of ocean-swept Long Island potato fields. In the late sixties and the seventies, for example, then daring young men Charles Gwathmey and Richard Meier built their seminal works here, abstract minimalist monuments to modernism that picked up where Le Corbusier left off. In the eighties a quite different group of architects raised high the postmodern flag. Robert A. M. Stern, Robert Venturi, and Jaquelin Taylor Robertson, among others, advocated a return to a kind of homey historical style, to employ the lexicon of the last decade, a return to a kind of kinder gentler vernacular of pitched roofs and shingles, of gables and dormers, of porches with wicker rocking chairs, of all things allegedly indigenous. (Although in *The Bonfire of the Vanities* spirit of the eighties, these "cottages" leaned more to the grand than the grandmotherly.)

Enter the nineties and thirty-three-year-old architect Alastair Standing, a British emigrant to New York whose first building, a year-round weekend house in East Hampton, thumbs its nose at the sleepy eighties trend for familiar comfort with a siren-loud it's-a-new-day wakeup call announcing the arrival of the international avant-garde, the daredevil deconstructivists, as they have been dubbed, who advocate a sort of futurism that appears to have one foot in early-century Russian constructivism, the other foot in the fabulous fifties.

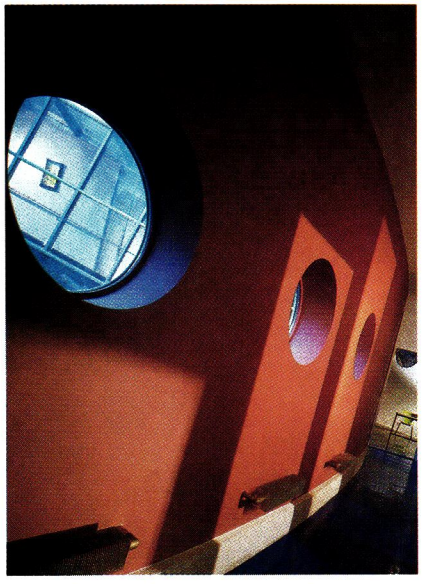
Although Standing is not yet well known outside the architectural vanguard, his credentials are impeccable. After cutting his teeth in the London office of architect Zaha Hadid, the uncontested queen of ultramodernists, he took a look around London and fled. "That was the time when Prince Charles was just getting up a full head of steam," recalls Standing, whose heroes range, rath-



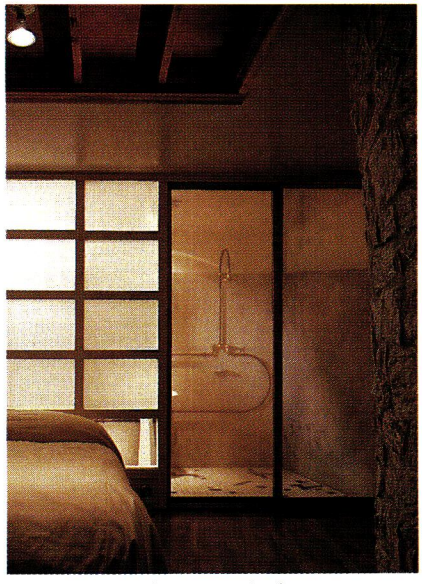
Under a trio of operable skylights, Arne Jacobsen chairs from ICF and a rough-hewn wood table define the dining area.



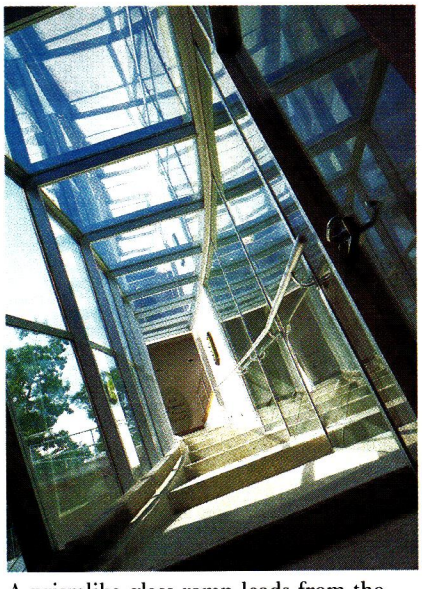
In the guest wing a pair of yin and yang doors lead on the left to a bedroom, on the right to the pool and backyard.



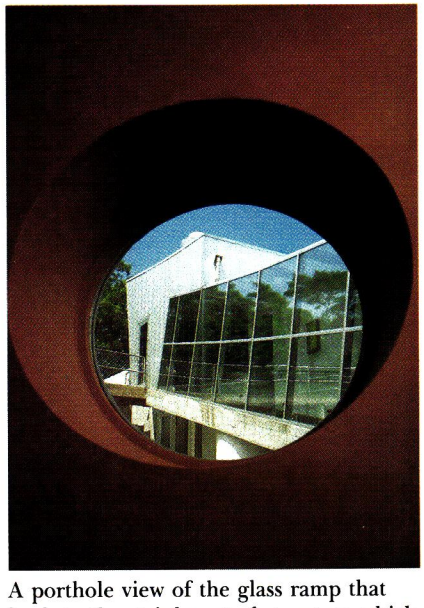
A curving corridor with a red bowed wall punctuated by portholes and wall-mounted radiators in the guest wing.



In the privacy-is-not-a-priority master suite the bed is separated from the bath by a gridded wall and a screen door.



A prismlike glass ramp leads from the front door in the garage to the second-floor living, dining, and kitchen areas.



A porthole view of the glass ramp that leads to the stainless-steel structure which contains the public rooms of the house.

er predictably, from Rem Koolhaas in Rotterdam to Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil to Frank Gehry and Eric Moss in Los Angeles, a group, in other words, that has an architectural vision very different from the one Prince Charles advocates. So while Standing's colleagues from London's Architectural Association "ended up doing historic preservation work because there's nothing else to do there," Standing bided his time in New York until he found a spot in the branch office of kindred-spirit modernists, Miami-based Arquitectonica.

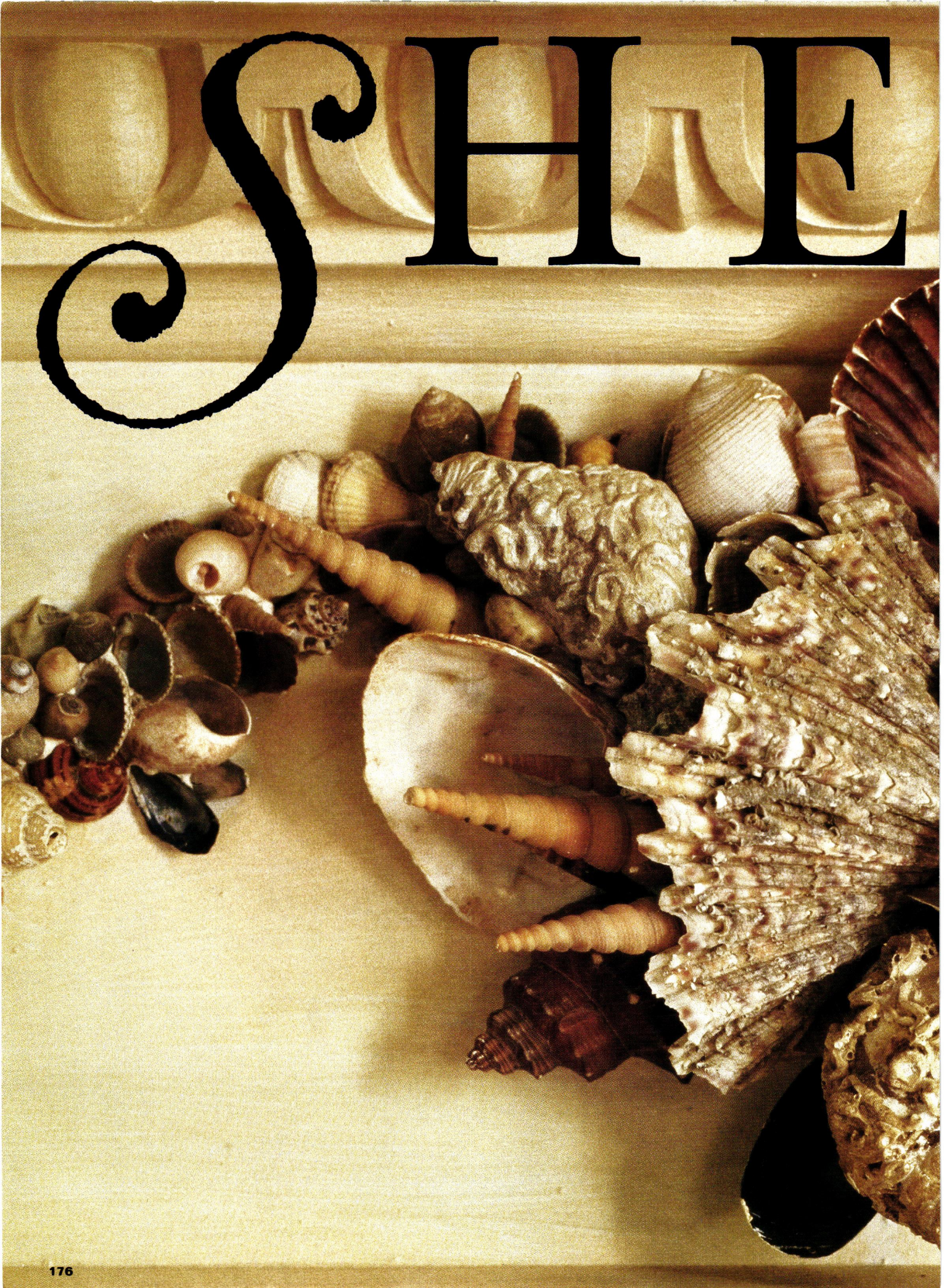
The young architect's break for independence came in 1988, courtesy of his American wife, writer Judith Zimmer, who met artist Stephanie Brody Lederman through a Bowdoin College connection. As fate would have it, Lederman and her investment banker husband, Jerry, just happened to have property in the Hamptons, but no architect. Zimmer didn't dally. The end result of the fortuitous meeting was that Standing was not only presented with his first commission, he was also able to connect with yet another Hamptons tradition, that of artists sponsoring progressive architecture. The best example dates back to 1946, when Pierre Chareau built a remarkable cinder block Quonset hut, since destroyed, for Robert Motherwell.

The big idea, as architects like to say, behind the Lederman house is a giant stucco boomerang that Standing drew after his first visit to the site and explains as responsive to the odd triangular wedge of wooded land. In addition to creating an enclosed courtyard for the backyard swimming pool nestled between its outstretched arms, the boomerang form presents a relatively private, almost discreet face to the street. Almost discreet because Standing bisects his boomerang with a flame-red curving wall that emerges on the public façade as a giant fin to mark the entry, which, rather perversely, is situated inside the garage hollowed out of the boomerang's core. "It's a fact of life," says

(Continued on page 204)

A channel built of exposed two-by-fours bisects the master bedroom ceiling, *right*, then continues outside, *above*, where it becomes the bridge between the second floor of the house and the barbecue pit in the stone tower that rises above the pool.

SHE



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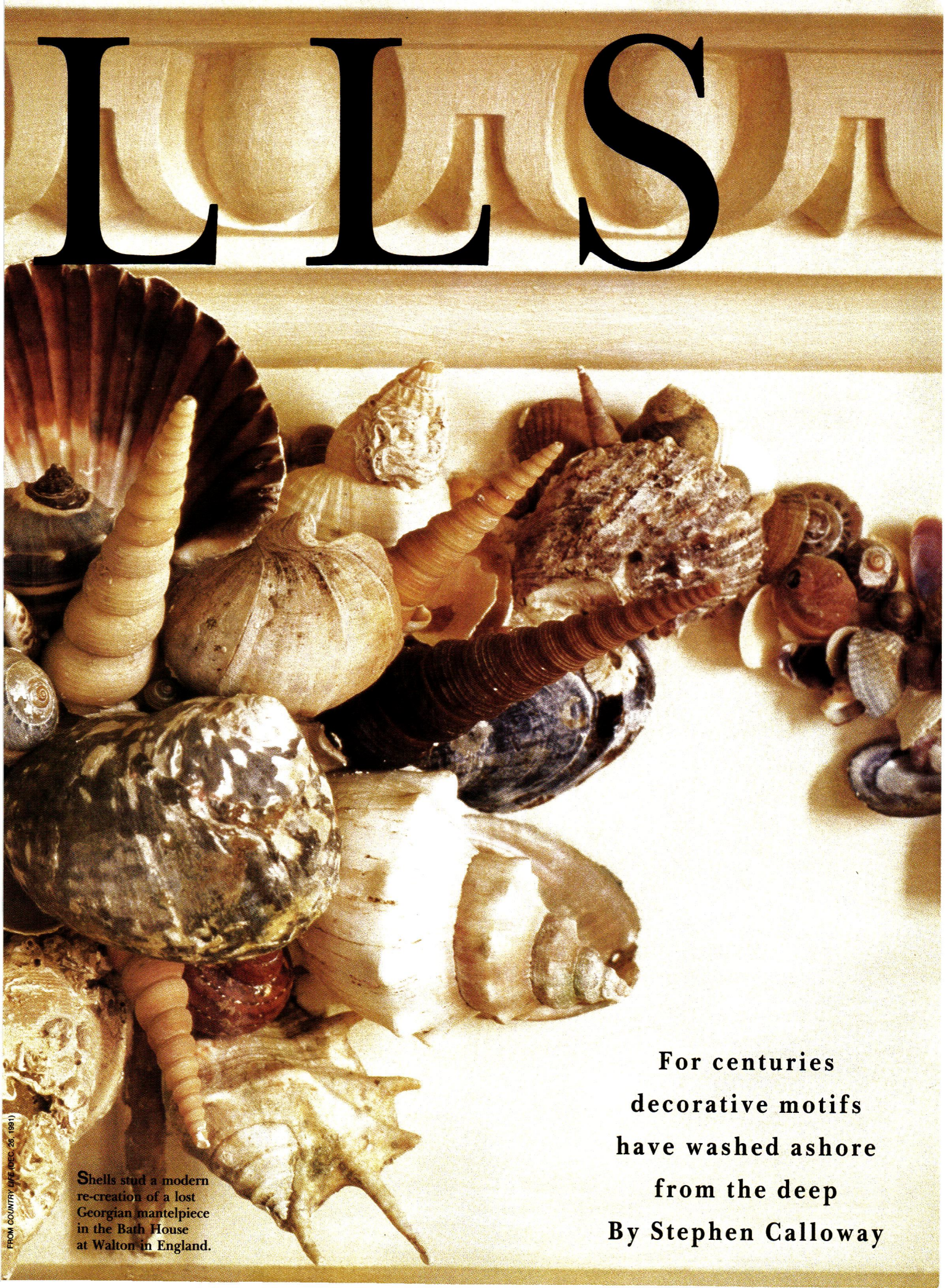


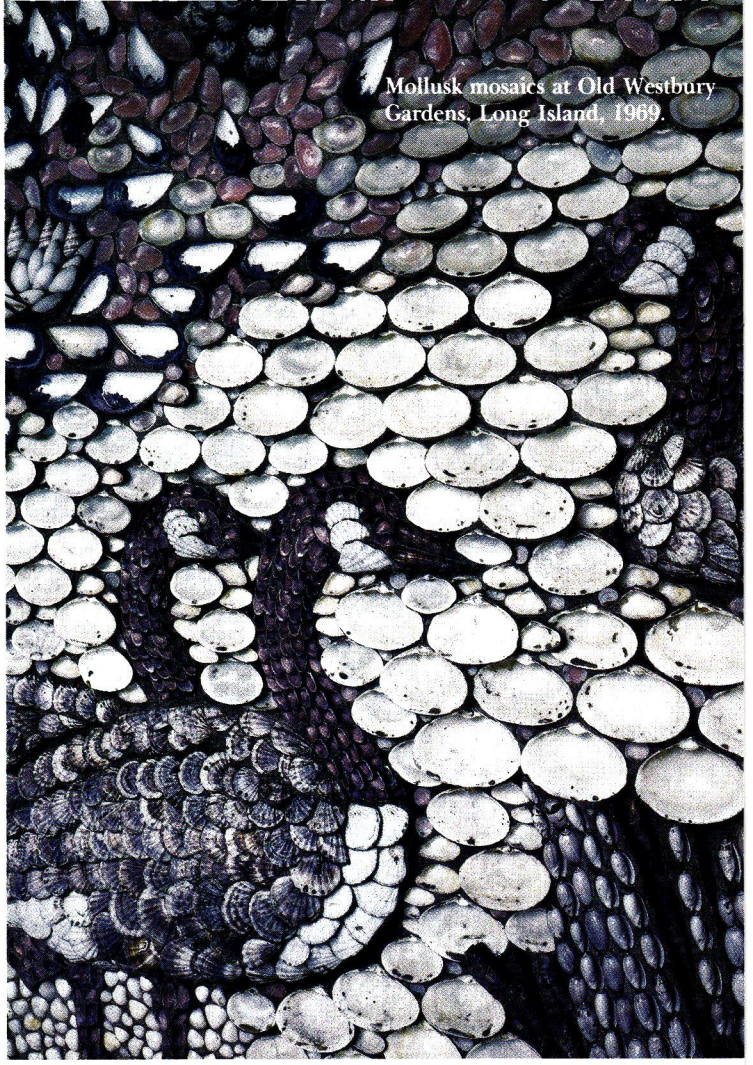
For centuries decorative motifs have washed ashore from the deep

By Stephen Calloway

Shells stud a modern re-creation of a lost Georgian mantelpiece in the Bath House at Walton in England.

FROM COUNTRY LIFE (DEC. 24, 1981)

Festoons of shells in a room above the bath at Walton, c. 1748.



Mollusk mosaics at Old Westbury Gardens, Long Island, 1969.

Frederick the Great's classical grotto hall at Sanssouci, 1763–70.

An inlaid wall at Bonnet House in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, 1932.

When you pick up a pretty seashell on the beach, you may not realize you are following a tradition that stretches back at least as far as the Renaissance. The history of shells as exquisite objects to be gathered and traded,

hoarded and displayed, can be traced to the great collectors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the founders of the cabinets of curiosities that then existed in almost every European palace and in the houses of rich merchants and scholars across the Continent. To those first enthusiasts, the appeal of magical pearly surfaces and complex natural geometries proved as irresistible as it is today to the artist, the scientist, or the child filling a bucket at the seaside.

Shells from the East or the Americas were once costly rarities, and as they passed from collector to collector they gained pedigrees as illustrious as those of their owners. In the late 1500s at the Castle of Ambras, near Innsbruck, the Habsburg archduke Ferdinand II arranged a remarkable assemblage of the works of nature to complement virtuoso pieces made by his court artists and craftsmen. Four rooms are devoted to curiosities, shells, fossils, amber, and mounted branches of semiprecious coral. Often a princely connoisseur's prize specimen—a large nautilus, say, stripped of its outer layer to reveal the mother-of-pearl concealed within—would be set in a fantastical gold mount, forming a cup with the body of a bird or sea monster. Smaller shells were combined into mosaic pictures and decorative panels or even three-dimensional sculptures, such as a remarkable figure of Neptune ordered by one of the Medici which may still be seen at the Museo degli Argenti in Florence.

Throughout the seventeenth century and on into the next the import of precious shells grew as a lucrative business. By the 1640s one of the favorite haunts of shell fanatics was a Paris emporium called Noah's Ark. Shells were sold at auction too—at prices inflated by a craze nearly as extreme as Dutch tulipomania. (Not that shells were overlooked in the Netherlands: still-life painters glorified them on canvas, and the first shell collectors' club, the Lovers of Neptune's Cabinet, began to meet in Dordrecht around 1720.) In London the distinguished gardener and collector John Tradescant the younger displayed shells he had brought back from America in the museum he and his father established in their house at Lambeth, also dubbed the Ark.

The earliest serious collectors sought the choicest individual specimens. At the same time, however, a taste for shells in profusion, informed by a sense of decorative or architectural effect, led a number of avant-garde patrons—at first in Italy, but soon all over Europe—to create whole rooms ornamented with both common and exotic varieties arranged in intricate patterns on walls and other surfaces. Although such shellwork was originally considered most appropriate for the interiors of grottoes, bathhouses, and whimsical garden buildings, enough shell rooms survive inside grand houses to demonstrate how influential the idea was among leaders of fashion. A pioneer was Isabella d'Este, who installed her collection of shells and shell cameos in the old Ducal Palace in Mantua in the 1520s. And nearby, at the summer retreat of the Gonzaga family, the Palazzo del Te, there remains an elaborate grotto ornamented with mannerist panels of shellwork. Such interiors were meant to delight both the eye and the ear. The color and sparkle of treasures from the deep were enhanced by jets and streams of water, which might cascade from one giant clamshell basin to another. To his shell-encrusted Grotto of Neptune at Hellbrunn, built around 1615, the prince-bishop of Salzburg added water organs that imitated birdcalls.

The diarist John Evelyn, traveling in Italy in the 1640s, wrote enthusiastically of several impressive constructions he visited, and we know that at least one English gentleman, Thomas Bushell, a friend of Sir Francis Bacon, had built a shell grotto in his park outside Oxford as early as the 1620s. Only a little later, the most famous shell room in England was created by the fourth earl of Bedford as a loggia at Woburn Abbey. It is a magnificent baroque conceit with bold architectural motifs, decorative panels, and three-dimensional figures in niches all worked in shells. Tradition has it that Inigo Jones had a hand in the project. Certainly there is something of the beauty and fantasy of his set designs for court masques about the room, but scholars now think it more likely to have been the work of Isaac de Caus, an architect who seems to have

A seventeen-inch Neptune made for a Medici, c. 1650.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: FROM *COUNTRY LIFE* (DEC. 26, 1991); MICK HALES, MUSEO DEGLI ARGENTI, PITTI PALACE, FLORENCE; LANGDON CLAY; COURTESY JARROLD PUBLISHING, NORWICH, ENGLAND

Artistic amateurs arranged shells in the eighteenth century, when aristocratic do-it-yourself was the rage

specialized in grottoes and bizarre garden buildings equipped with hydraulic effects.

The Woburn room stands at the head of a distinguished series of English shell rooms which continued throughout the eighteenth century. Outdoors, shellwork grottoes and other follies were believed to express a romantic, poetic sensibility. Alexander Pope began his famous shell grotto around 1720, using it as a place to indulge in pleasurable melancholy. Amid the gloom, bits of mirror glass set into the walls among the shells and rock crystals reflected the sunlit life bustling by on the Thames. By contrast, shell rooms in houses were usually bright, cheerful, and, above all, feminine places. Shellwork combined with masonry in garden structures had to be carried out by artisans, but the arranging of shells indoors was usually done by artistically minded ladies.

In the mid eighteenth century such aristocratic do-it-yourself was all the rage. Mrs. Delany, best-known for her cut-paper flower pictures and print rooms, did a good deal of shellwork at her own house near Dublin and encouraged others with advice and gifts of shells. She was much involved in the decorating of the Bath House at Walton, close to Stratford-upon-Avon, an exquisite little structure recently restored by the Landmark Trust with grants from English Heritage and the American Friends of the Georgian Group. Built in the 1740s by Sir Charles Mordaunt, who may have hoped that immersion in cool spring water would soothe his gout, the main chamber has shellwork swags. Mrs. Delany, writing from Ireland to her sister in England, explained her plan: "I have not yet got shells large enough for the festoons and fear it will be in vain to make them here, but I will send a barrel of shells to Sir Charles Mordaunt's, and hope to give myself the pleasure of making it there. Should I do it here there would not be time enough for the putty to dry, and the shells would be all jumbled together before they reach Walton." A friend and neighbor of Mrs. Delany, the duchess of Leinster, was inspired to decorate a cottage orné near Dublin with dainty mollusks.

Some amateurs had to be content with local varieties or even snail shells; the more enterprising sent off for ear shells from the Channel Islands, which looked good laid in neat rows, or begged ships' officers to bring them more exotic specimens. In 1739 a Captain Knowles landed a shipload of foreign shells which were eagerly competed for. The duke of Bedford secured the best and used them to adorn a room in Devon. How much he had to pay we do not know, but by 1788 the extravagant Lord Donegall was heard to boast that he had £10,000 worth of shells that he never bothered to unpack.

The fate of Continental and *(Continued on page 198)*

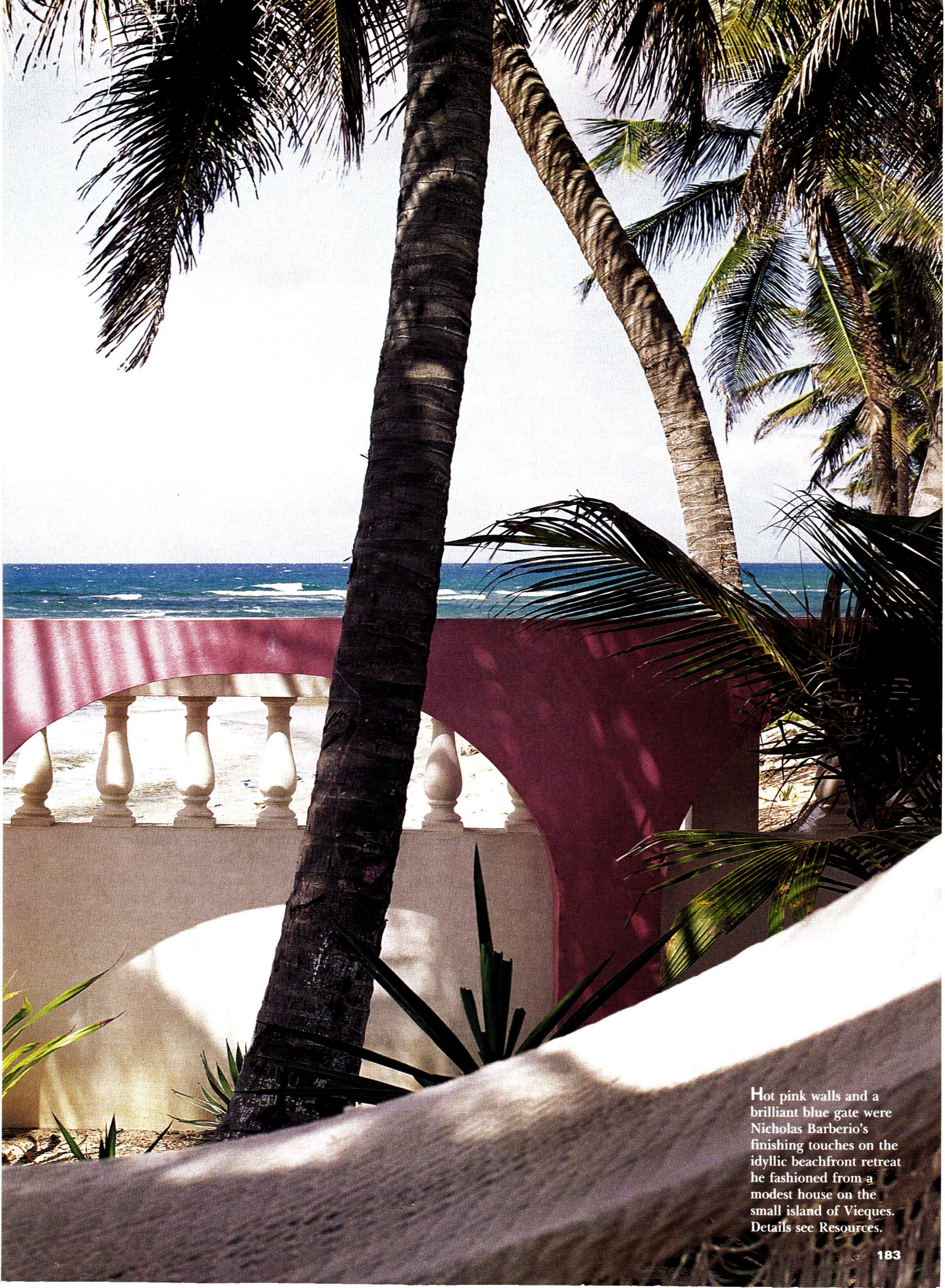
At A La Ronde, a late 18th century English house, shells collected by generations of Parminter ladies are displayed in a fireplace, *opposite*, which is lined with family artists' shell mosaics. *Above left:* Shelves hold more Parminter shells, beadwork, stones, and memorabilia. *Left:* A grotto niche at Sanssouci designed by court architect Karl von Gontard.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NATIONAL TRUST PHOTOGRAPHIC LIBRARY GEOFFREY FROSH (2); ERICH LESSING

Postcard *from* Puerto Rico

Stylist Nicholas Barberio puts his own stamp on island living. By Wendy Goodman

Photographs by Oberto Gili



Hot pink walls and a brilliant blue gate were Nicholas Barberio's finishing touches on the idyllic beachfront retreat he fashioned from a modest house on the small island of Vieques. Details see Resources.

NEVER MIND THE lottery. While most people dream of winning enough to visit some paradise by the sea, New York stylist Nicholas Barberio took fate into his own hands: he created one for himself on the island of Vieques off Puerto Rico.

It all began when he visited friends on Vieques seven years ago. "I saw this house on the beach," he recalls. "There were horses living in it and the lawn furniture was seats from a Camaro. I turned to my friend and said, 'This is divine!' He said I was crazy, but this we know. I saw the whole place coming together."

Deciding that the modest one-story building merely needed a little restructuring, Barberio interviewed Vieques contractors and realized that what he needed "wasn't an architect or a plan, it was a can of spray paint." Spray can in hand, he marked where the walls and closets would go. Virtually all of the work was done in just six months by craftsmen from the area.

With the contractor and his wife, Barberio made forays in a baby-blue Checker cab, looking at "every tile place and every window place. I looked for what was local, what was

Barberio, *left,* **painted his own surreal staircase to the sky cobalt blue, "the color of the feast of San Silvano, which is my inspiration." *Above:* He had the simple canvas-covered furniture made by island craftsmen. The antique urns and terra-cotta tiles came from a local junkyard. *Opposite:* After a day at the beach, dinner may be shellfish, with rice and beans made according to his neighbor Carmen Bermudez's recipe. Batik from Craft Caravan, NYC; bowl, pitcher, and napkins from Barneys New York, NYC.**

RIGHT: DAVID FRAZIER

Dinner on Vieques is simple: "Whatever is fresh that day, that's what you get"

Nicholas's Steamed Lobster and Shrimp

24 jumbo shrimp in shells
2 2-pound live lobsters
1 tablespoon vinegar
1 bunch chives
3 limes

In a medium-size pot, bring 4 cups salted water to a boil. Rinse shrimp, then cook 3 minutes or less, only until shrimp turn pink. Drain at once, then peel, devein, and set aside. Put 2 inches of salted water and the vinegar in a large pot and bring to a boil. Put lobsters in pot. Cover tightly, lower heat, and steam 20 minutes. Drain lobsters and set aside. Rinse chives, quarter limes, and set aside, covered.

To serve, split underside of lobsters from head to tail, then place on top of Carmen's Rice and Beans (see recipe below). Garnish with whole chives. Alternate shrimps and lime quarters around the edge of the platter. (All lobster is edible except the stomach sac, near the head, and the black vein in the tail.) Serves 4.

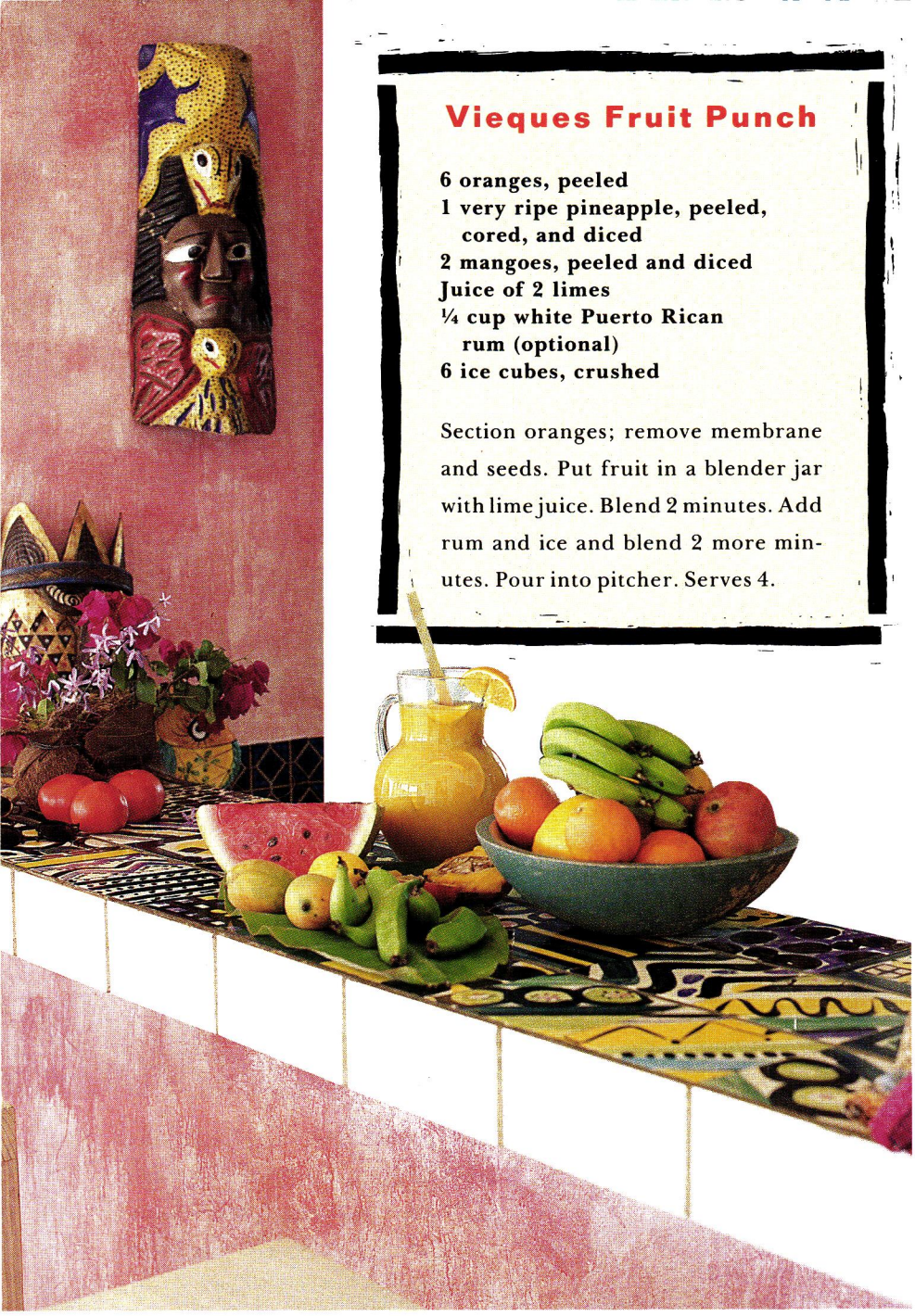
Carmen's Rice and Beans

1 pound dried small red beans
4 cloves garlic, peeled
1 green bell pepper, chopped
2 tablespoons cilantro, minced
6 ounces smoked ham, chopped
4 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion, chopped
1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
Freshly ground pepper
2 cups white rice
1 tablespoon salt

Soak beans overnight. Drain. Pour 4 cups water into a deep pot; add beans, 2 whole cloves garlic, green pepper, cilantro, and 4 ounces of ham. Simmer, stirring occasionally, 1 hour or until beans are tender.

When beans are nearly done, heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a frying pan over low heat, then add remaining ham and cook 5 minutes. Add the onion and 2 cloves of minced garlic and cook until onion is transparent, about 3 minutes. Add the tomato sauce and cook 1 minute. Add this mixture to cooked beans. Add ground pepper to taste. Cook 15 minutes covered, stirring once or twice.

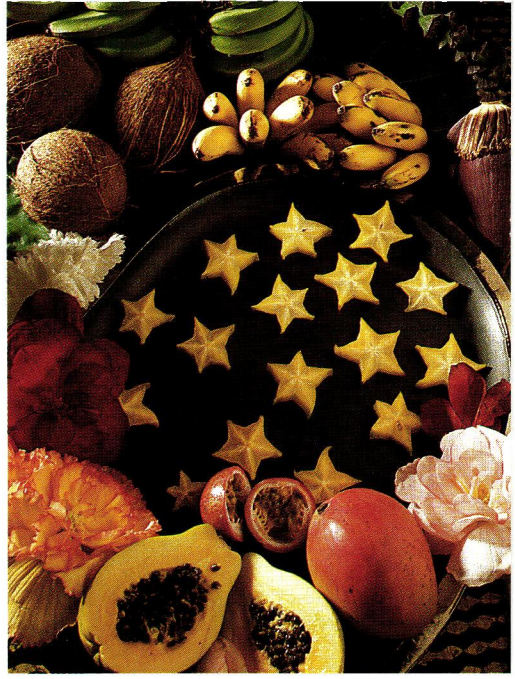
Meanwhile bring 4 cups water to a boil; add rice slowly so that the boiling does not stop. Add salt and 2 tablespoons oil. Cover, turn down heat to maintain a low boil, and stir with a fork after 10–15 minutes. Cook until all water is absorbed, about 20 minutes. When serving, mound rice on a large platter and top with beans.

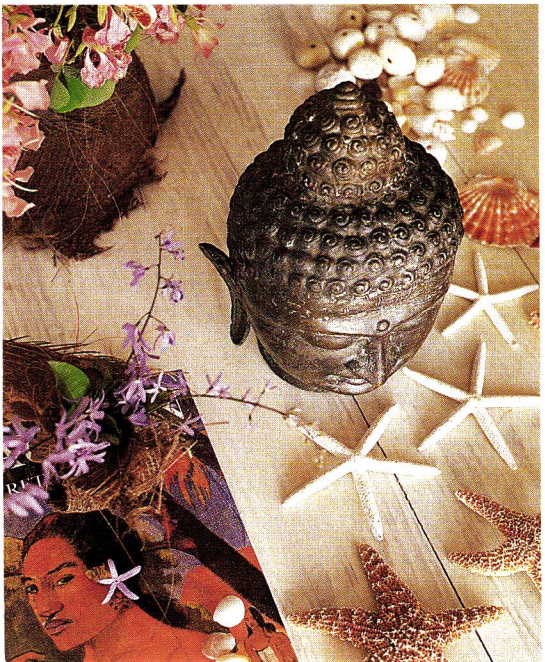


Vieques Fruit Punch

6 oranges, peeled
1 very ripe pineapple, peeled, cored, and diced
2 mangoes, peeled and diced
Juice of 2 limes
¼ cup white Puerto Rican rum (optional)
6 ice cubes, crushed

Section oranges; remove membrane and seeds. Put fruit in a blender jar with lime juice. Blend 2 minutes. Add rum and ice and blend 2 more minutes. Pour into pitcher. Serves 4.





affordable, and what I could do to make it work." One trip took him to the shop of a metalworker who made up burglar-proof window grates that suggest shoji screens rather than prison bars. Another took him to a junkyard where he found old Spanish terra-cotta tiles for the living room and bedroom floors. When the tiles ran out, he went to the nearest tile factory and mixed terra-cotta to match—"because I'm driven."

The kitchen and bathroom counters are covered in tiles that Barberio painted in New York and transported "on my little wheeler and onto TWA." He also painted the walls and gates in hot pinks and sea blues inspired by Mexican architect Luis Barragán, then had an island carpenter make mission-style daybeds, Le Corbusier–like dining chairs, and a table big enough to hold all the food for a meal at once: usually the catch of the day from the nearby pier with rice and beans and tropical fruit. "Whatever is fresh that day, that's what you get."

"This is a low-maintenance house," he says. "There is an electric bill, a water bill, and insurance, that's it. And I can go in and clean in an hour." It is also a high-energy house, full of the passion and style that have taken Barberio from designing textiles for Wamsutta to being a top stylist. "Everything has to be a picture," he says. "The place where all my travels, all my collecting, come together is here in Vieques among the kindest people in the world. I feel like a millionaire because I have this little piece of exactly what I've always dreamed about—you know, a boy from Queens has a Caribbean thing. It's completely ridiculous!" ▲

Tropical fruits and tropical colors set the mood in the kitchen, *above left.* Barberio collected the masks during his travels in Southeast Asia. *Above:* Coconut, bananas, mango, guava, and papaya surround sliced starfruit on a Luna Garcia platter from Platypus. *Left:* A living room still life with an Indonesian Buddha head and starfish. *Opposite:* A candelabra from an old church in Puerto Rico stands beside the bed. The basket holds sarongs and pareos, beach gear for houseguests.

TOP RIGHT: DAVID FRAZIER

"Everything has to be a picture," says Barberio

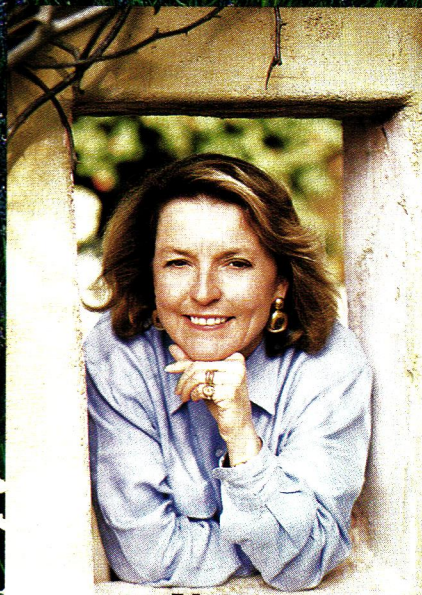
Masses of lavender, helichrysum, *Erigeron karvinskianus*, and white lychnis line the path to Nancy Power's Santa Monica garden. New Zealand flax in a pot provides a tricolor accent.

KATHLENE FERGOFF (INSET: NICOLA GILL)

Digging for a California Style

Climate, terrain, and history shape the regional approach of three garden designers

By Patricia Thorpe



NANCY GOSLEE POWER

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA is a shock for any gardener. Geraniums in January, poinsettias the size of fruit trees, orchids for foundation planting, and calla lilies for ground cover, all in the vibrant hues of early Technicolor and scented with jasmine, orange blossom, and carbon monoxide. There is money, leisure, and a passion for outdoor living; there is a climate of wonderful moderation and a terrain of dramatic extremes. There are plants beyond the dreams of science fiction. This is a land of too many possibilities and too many gardens that take advantage of them all. It takes energy, focus, and a great deal of hard work to transform some of the possibilities into an authentic vision of the landscape. Clearly this is a job for a woman.

Three women have been particularly successful in making gardens for southern California. It is easiest to discuss three very different designers by reducing their work to handy stereotypes: Nancy Goslee Power is known for the intimacy and comfort of her small gardens; Chris Rosmini is characterized by her plantsmanship; Isabelle Greene has long been recognized for her use of abstract landscape forms in combination with a dry-land palette of plants. But like most stereotypes, these labels lose their meaning in the

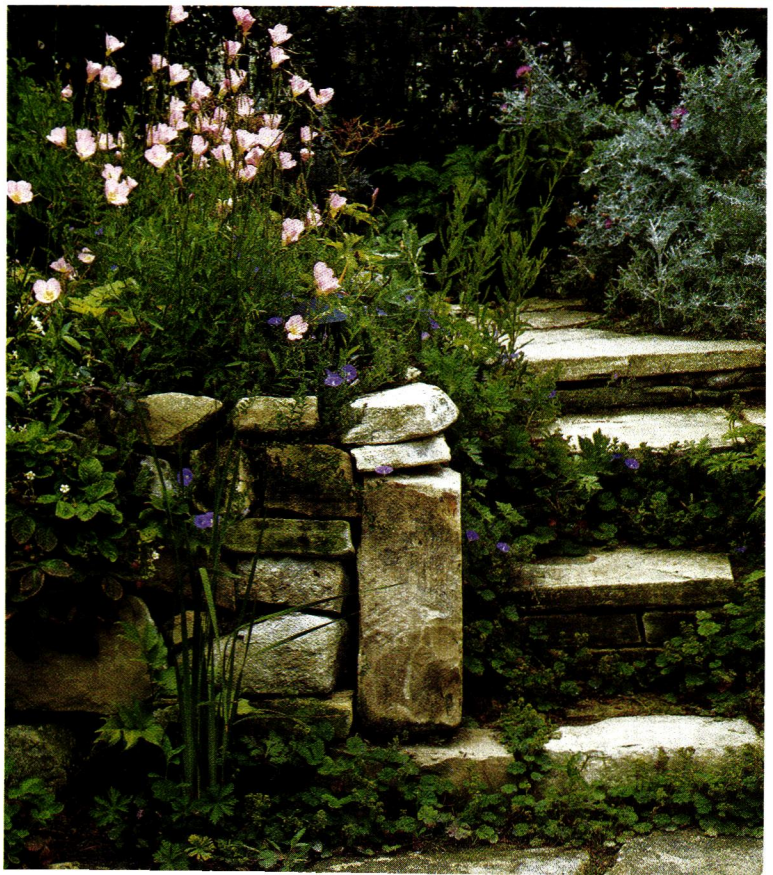
Power grew up with perennials back east, "but Italy shaped my sense of space"

gardens of these remarkable women. Power, the maker of cozy corners, has been working on a vineyard garden of some twenty acres, supervising construction of an estate in Australia, and will be providing the landscape around Frank Gehry's building for the Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles. Although Rosmini's plantsmanship is undeniable, all too little is said about the confidence and understated elegance of her designs, which bring coherence to an entire landscape, not just the flowers. And while many of Greene's gardens photograph like abstract paintings, they are unexpectedly engaging and thoroughly lived in by her clients.

The three designers have a great deal in common. None set out to make a career in this field: Power did interior design, Greene pursued bot-

MICK HALES

any, Rosmini studied classics. Although Greene studied for and passed the exam for licensing as a landscape architect, she was making gardens long before she had any formal training. Power and Rosmini never formally studied landscape design. Greene and Rosmini have been designing for more than twenty years, Power for the last eleven. They all do a great deal of residential work for private clients, an area scorned by most landscape professionals. "And," points out Power, "there is another similarity: the love of plant material. We all have great respect for the plants; a lot of people in our field don't." Power has just finished a book on California gardens, to be published next year, and has an overview of the subject. "Isabelle is a painter, she really is dealing with shapes on a canvas—I admire that



Power grouped writhing flower spikes of echium and ground covers cerastium and *Senecio mandraliscae, opposite,* to harmonize with Patsy Tisch's craftsman-style house in Rustic Canyon. *Above:* A patchwork of gray and green santolina is the centerpiece of Power's own kitchen garden. *Right:* Campanulas drape the steps down to her sunken garden; *Oenothera speciosa* tops the wall.

KATHLENE PERSOFF

In a garden near Santa Barbara, steps flow like a stream between boulders and low-growing rock rose, convolvulus, Santa Barbara daisy, armeria, and heuchera. *Opposite above right:* Isabelle Greene used silvery *Senecio vira-vira*, lavender, and manzanita to soften the transition between garden and wilderness at another Santa Barbara site, blending them with native oaks and ceanothus to frame a distant view of the sea. *Opposite below right:* Lemaireocereus towers above rosy sedum in a dry landscape at Hope Ranch.

Greene's abstract forms never betray the wild beauty of her native landscape

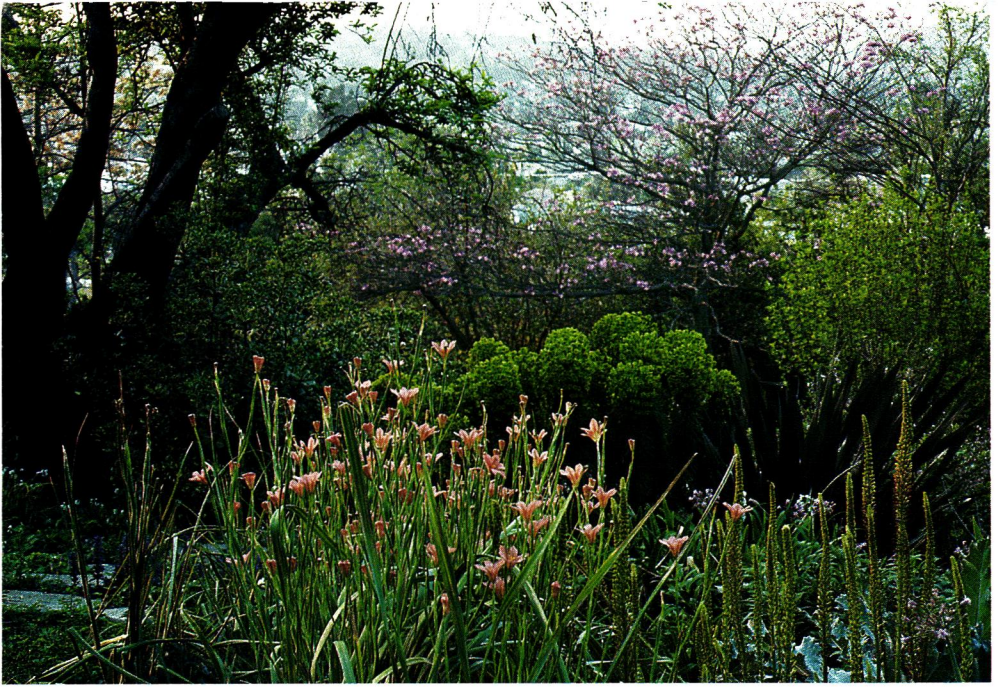
ISABELLE GREENE

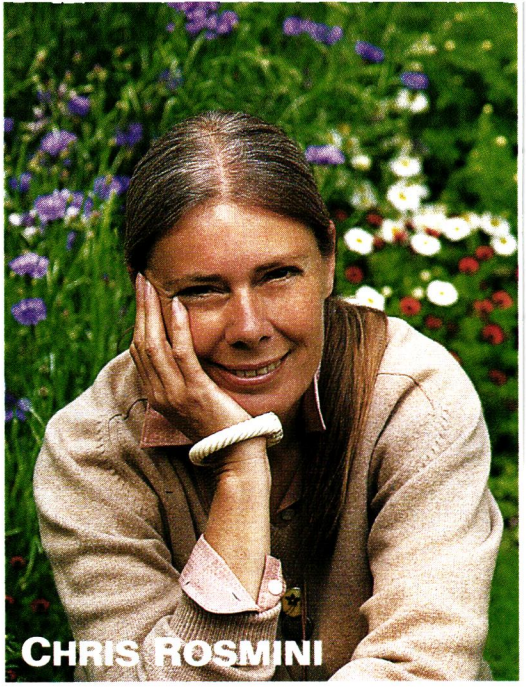
because I don't think that way. And she is a good plantswoman. Chris is a brilliant plantswoman—she has a knowledge of plants that is superior to anybody's and a real understanding of what is appropriate."

They also share a love of the California landscape—not the Beverly Hills lawnscape of Easter-basket grass dotted with azaleas and roses, but the spare dramatic hillsides that lie just beyond the sprinklers, the haunting chaparral backdrop to the fantasy houses and stage-set gardens. Those sere ridges and dry-wash valleys are a constant reminder of what this land is and what it could at any moment become again. Greene speaks passionately about this: "I hate it, frankly, that people will move here from the East for our climate and then turn their backs on this climate and try to make it an eastern climate. Part and parcel of the beauty here—the sunshine, the mild weather, the lack of bugginess—is that it is dry and things look dry and they act dry and you have to love that, you have to embrace it."

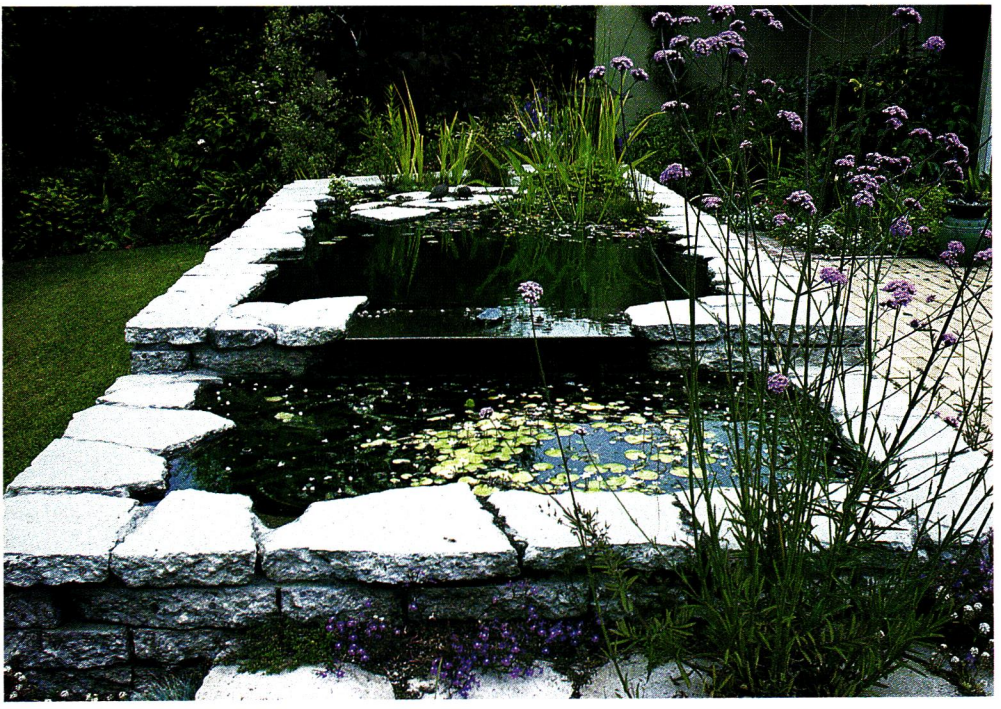
In Santa Barbara, where Greene lives and has her office, there have been severe water shortages and a general awareness of the need to conserve. Still, water rationing is not the primary reason clients turn to her: "I think people come to me because they want something that will feed their lives. And, by the way, it should be low maintenance and drought-tolerant. But make me something beautiful to live in—that's really what they're saying." Greene's use of open space and abstract shapes seems to refer more to Eastern mysticism than to Western thought, but her gardens are not

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: FELIX RIGAU (2); KATHLENE PERSOFF; FELIX RIGAU





CHRIS ROSMINI



self-consciously oriental. Her understanding of the grandeur of emptiness and the power of bare rock derives from her love of the desert, and she never betrays the wild beauty of her native landscape by trying to force it into something foreign or artificial. "The capturing quality of a garden is that it is a piece of nature that you work with, that explains one's place in nature, explains one's situation as a part of the spectrum that nature is—that must be the comfort of a garden."

Greene admits to a preference for blue-gray and khaki tones highlighted with crisp silver, but in the astonishing variety of species listed on her plans it is hard to pick out a few that dominate. When asked about plant selection, she pulls out the drawers of an oversized filing cabinet; inside are hundreds of folders devoted to plants—plants she has used, wants to use, is trying to find in cultivation. "I like plants that do whatever I visualize I need done. Sometimes I want light filtered through something lacy, sometimes I want something clean and strong and mounding or something that cascades but doesn't droop." With such a rich tapestry of colors, forms, and textures, a lawn is never missed, although Greene is not dogmatic on that point. "If clients really really have a desire for green, then I like to give it to them, but in other ways that are not so hostile to our climate."

On a series *(Continued on page 203)*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CYNTHIA WOODYARD; JERRY HARPUR; KATHLENE PERSOFF; CYNTHIA WOODYARD (2)

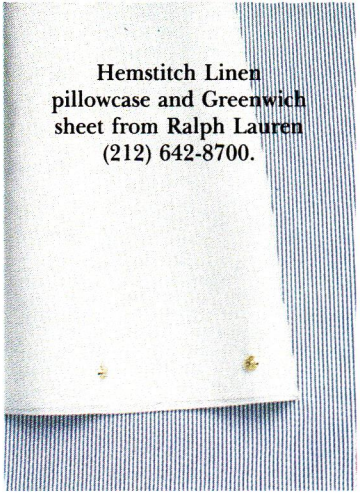
Rosmini can gracefully adapt the traditions of garden design without allowing them to dominate

Wisteria climbs an arbor at Ruth Borun's garden. *Opposite, from top:* Rosmini's own garden is a romantic jumble of homeria and bulbinella, phormium, euphorbia, and tabebuia. *Verbena bonariensis* springs from the cracks of a pool that makes the most of little water in the Borun garden. A Tuscan landscape for Andrew and Bettina Klink in the Hollywood Hills.

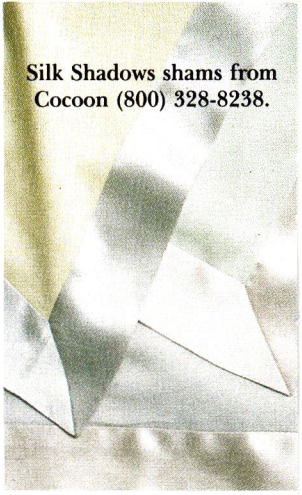
By Anne Foxley

samples

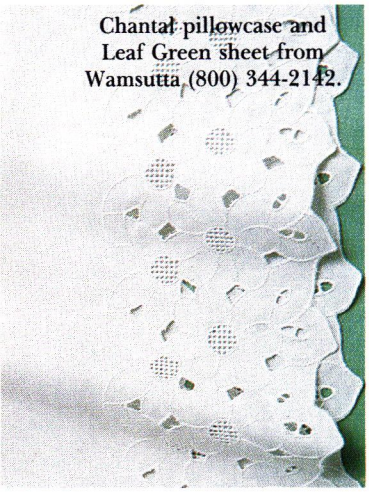
Lingerie-style lace and other decorative trims give bed linens a new edge



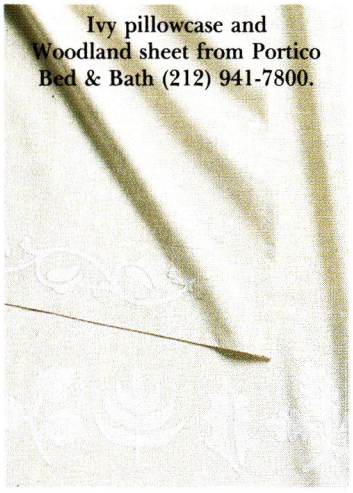
Hemstitch Linen pillowcase and Greenwich sheet from Ralph Lauren (212) 642-8700.



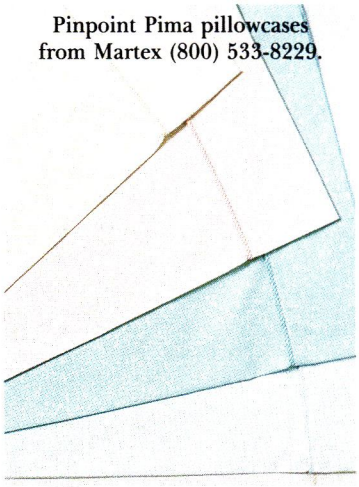
Silk Shadows shams from Cocoon (800) 328-8238.



Chantal pillowcase and Leaf Green sheet from Wamsutta (800) 344-2142.



Ivy pillowcase and Woodland sheet from Portico Bed & Bath (212) 941-7800.

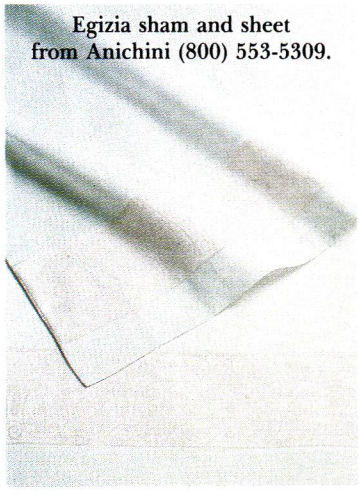


Pinpoint Pima pillowcases from Martex (800) 533-8229.

Angel Zimick's Goodnite XXX's pillowcase and sheet for Metropolitan (212) 944-6110.

Sienne shams and sheet from Palais Royal (800) 322-3911.

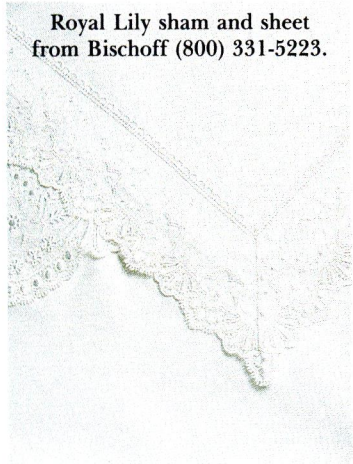
Criss sham and sheet from Frette (212) 988-5221, (310) 273-8540.



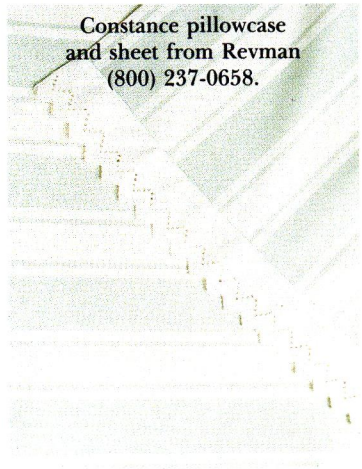
Egizia sham and sheet from Anichini (800) 553-5309.

Venetian Damask sham and Cottage sheet by Adrienne Vittadini (800) 841-3336.

Voile pillowcase and sheet from Anichini (800) 553-5309.



Royal Lily sham and sheet from Bischoff (800) 331-5223.



Constance pillowcase and sheet from Revman (800) 237-0658.

Cotton Deluxe pillowcases by Utica for J. P. Stevens (800) 533-8229.

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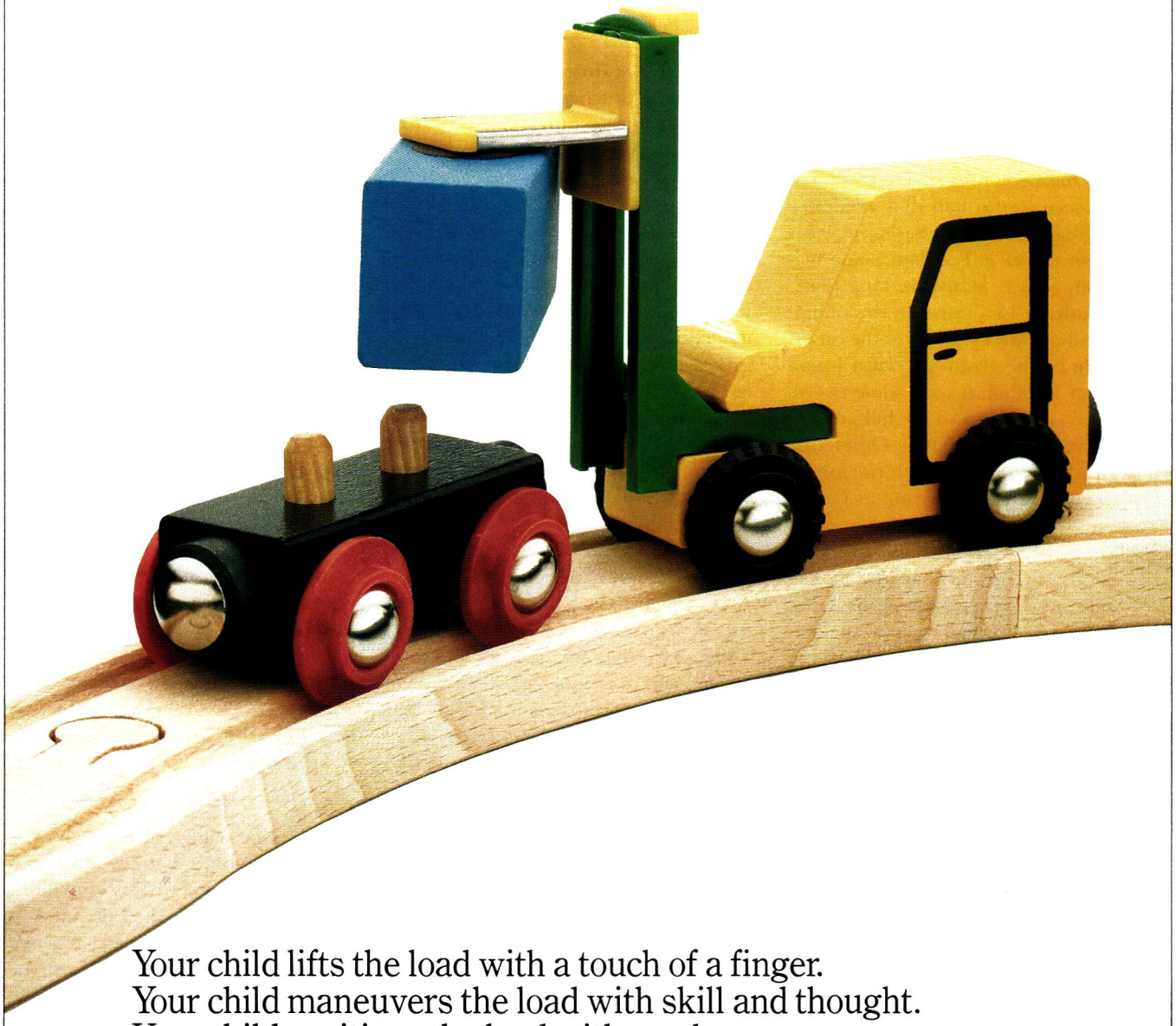

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Cowboy Dreams

(Continued from page 134) except the bathrooms, was essential to "warming up" the master bedroom. Unadorned, its lofty sloped ceiling and dormer seemed churchlike, but papered in a stripe up to the peak of the roof, it evokes, Barry says, the "comforting feeling of being inside a large hat box."

The pampering extends to guests too. Waking up in a four-poster to look out through lace curtains at blue Colorado skies, it's hard not to be seduced by the Spring Creek version of rural luxury. And out riding the trails, it's even harder not to fall under the spell of cowboy culture. Rogers comments on the lure of the land with the story of an incident that took place a year or so after he and Specht moved in: "It was Lisa's birthday and I wanted to buy her a nice piece of jewelry. When I showed her what I'd picked out she said, 'But we could buy a tractor for that kind of money'—and we did." ▲

Shells

(Continued from page 180) British shell rooms has been mixed. Some, such as the rococo grotto hall that Frederick the Great erected at Sanssouci, his summer palace in Potsdam, stand majestically intact. Many are long gone. The saddest loss must be the one at Oatlands in Surrey. Built for the earl of Lincoln by the grotto specialist Josiah Lane of Fonthill, it took some twelve years to complete and the bill in 1759 was a staggering £40,000. Other fine examples from this high period of shellwork, such as a room at Goodwood Park often cited as the most exquisite of all, are now difficult to visit. It is doubly fortunate that one of England's most remarkable houses has lately come into the hands of the National Trust and is accessible to the public. A La Ronde, a sixteen-sided centrally planned house built in Devon in 1796 which has usually descended in the female line of the Parminter family, is the finest surviving repository of handicrafts practiced by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ladies. Many rooms have shellwork, cut-paper, and featherwork decorations.

Perhaps the closest American counterpart is to be found at Bonnet House in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where another shell collection fills an octagonal private museum. It is presided over by its centenarian creator, Evelyn Fortune, who married the painter Frederic Bartlett in 1931. Bartlett had built the Caribbean-style house and studio a decade before and added the museum as a gift to his new wife, who loved seashells and orchids. Throughout Bonnet, shells are inlaid into walls, composing fanciful friezes, archways, and even trompe l'oeil obelisks. A later American variation on classic themes may be seen at Old Westbury Gardens, a Long Island estate, now open to the public, where a poolside portico was lined with shell mosaics in 1969. The artist, Artemis Jegart Housewright, used forty-five different kinds of shells to piece together Arcadian scenes.

In the 1990s shells are again fashionable as appliqués for mirrors, lamps, moldings, and furniture. A great revival of interest in shell rooms and grottoes is currently under way in England. The National Trust recently completed a brand-new shell room at Basildon Park House, and several original but decayed examples, besides the one at Walton, have been lovingly restored. A notable success story has been the rescue of a grotto at Hampton Court House, close to the palace, which was undertaken by sculptors Simon Verity and Belinda Eade along with Diana Reynell, a partner in the firm Grottoes & Castles. Convinced that shellwork can be more than just a matter of patching up crumbling eighteenth-century pavilions, Eade, Reynell, and Verity urge its use to create intriguing new effects inside houses or in garden and pool buildings. With tens of thousands of varieties of shells available, the possibilities for aesthetic beachcombing are endless. ▲

Helena Rubinstein

(Continued from page 146) Malraux's facial twitch and nearly sent Coco Chanel hurtling into the Seine below. "She leaned so far over I had to restrain her," remembers Mala Rubinstein, Madame's niece.

Rubinstein's deco dream palace had been financed by one of the shrewdest business maneuvers of the era. On the eve of the 1929 crash, she sold the American interest in her company to Lehman Brothers for $8 million. A year later it was hers for $2 million. No longer answerable to Titus's taste and flush with capital, Rubinstein was free to indulge all of her most daring decorating heterodoxies. The Rubinstein style—a lush and hardy cross between, in O'Higgins's arch words, "Byzantium and the Flea Market"—at last burst into full flower. In her new quarters Greek statuary kept company with African sculptures, Savonnerie carpets mixed with Mexican rugs, Empire wallpaper coexisted with Miró canvases, and Belter furniture mingled with Boulle. Süe helped her arrange this madly eclectic salmagundi, "although she would have liked to have been able to do it all herself," says Mala.

More familiar to the American public was the so-called New York Rubinstein Hilton, acquired in 1941, after her marriage to her second husband, Artchil Gourielli-Tchkonia, a Georgian prince. When told she could not rent the eight-bath twenty-six-room Park Avenue triplex because she was Jewish, she simply bought the building. The top floor of this enormous "castle in the air," as she called it, was given over to a picture gallery reached by a spiral staircase ascending from the middle floor of the triplex, where the public rooms were situated. The lower floor contained the bedrooms. Madame's was, as O'Higgins said, the heart and hub of this maze. Especially in her later years, Rubinstein, like Louis XIV, received her employees most mornings in bed, her silk sheets piled high with books and papers. Pink, and about forty feet long, the bedroom was adjoined by a bathroom of comparable hue and dimensions. Walls of colossal closets held her couture collection, extending all the way

back to Worth. Among the shimmer of Venetian mirrors, serendipitous kitsch, and treasure-laden vitrines, the pièce de résistance was what all Rubinstein initiates refer to with delight as the "plastic bed." Created out of Lucite by Rubinstein's package designer Ladislas Medgyes (who had previously used the material for powder boxes), the transparent bed lit up by means of hidden fluorescent bulbs. When Madame reposed upon it, the effect was of a transfiguration upon a crystal sleigh.

If she wasn't calling upon her own employees as decorators, Rubinstein astutely hired "whoever was the most chic, in, and controversial at the moment—which usually meant loads of publicity," says a longtime magazine editor. Naturally the press came running when, in 1942, she commissioned Dali to concoct three murals for her card room—lurid dreamscapes called *Dawn, Heroic Noon,* and *Evening.* Rubinstein then furnished the room with Venetian pieces even more flamboyant, if possible, than the paintings. A pair of blackamoor figures towered against one wall; iridescent grotto furniture writhing with dolphins, shells, and sea serpents served as seating, while overhead a florid blue chandelier dripped glassy stalactites. Equally fanciful, if more restrained, was Cecil Beaton's ethereal transformation of the pseudo-Gothic top-floor picture gallery into a Japanese-inspired bamboo folly. Madame was not amused. She found the room "too informal, too easygoing," Mala remembers. Both Rubinstein's displeasure and Beaton's injured pride were avenged months later when it was learned that the bamboo walls had become infested with, appropriately, Japanese beetles.

Still in the vanguard at ninety, Rubinstein in 1960 asked David Hicks, England's newest decorating star, to do a flat in Knightsbridge. When he inquired about colors she'd like to use, Madame took out her scissors, turned up the hem of her Balenciaga dress, and snipped off a swatch—"a wonderful strident purple, which we used for the walls," says Hicks. The heady palette did not stop there; Hicks covered the sofas and some of her ubiquitous Belter chairs in "cosmetics colors: scarlet, shocking pink, magenta, and puce." The result, he says, was "very eccentric. A perfect foil to her strong personality."

Though Madame's taste was wildly avant-garde, it also reflected—albeit in a brilliantly overwrought glass—the era's ideals of feminine beauty. Rather than today's virtues of youth and sex, the "first lady of beauty science," as she was identified in her ads, encouraged her customers to cultivate individuality, sophistication, and mystery. Mala believes her aunt's aesthetic arose as well from "her extremely international exposure." Unable to label, much less account for, Rubinstein's style, *Vogue* in 1945 invoked preterhuman intervention: Rubinstein's New York apartment, the magazine reported, was "rather like a collector's heaven where pixies have mixed up the collections. Everywhere 'irreconcilables' of Period meet in fabulous amity." Rubinstein, never a word-mincer, simply offered, "I like my own taste, good or bad!" ▲

Credits for The Reign of Helena Rubinstein
Page 144—From *Vogue* (Aug. 15, 1938)/photo Nyholm. Page 145—UPI/Bettmann. Page 146—*Clockwise from top:* Slim Aarons; Helena Rubinstein Foundation (3). Page 147—*Clockwise from top right:* UPI/Bettmann; from *David Hicks on Decoration* (Macmillan); Roger Prigent; from *David Hicks on Decoration* (Macmillan); UPI/Bettmann; from *Vogue* (Apr. 15, 1945)/photo Hannel Cassidy; from *Vogue* (July 15, 1937)/photo Bufotot.

Eternally Roman

(Continued from page 167) memorabilia, Milton's hobbyhorse, and by the pile of books he has edited. You recognize his slightly ironic, slightly sensuous smile in the play of contrasts and contradictions, such as the pairing of a polychrome wooden head of Mary Magdalen with an Etruscan terra-cotta votive figure shaped like a breast. He does not, however, simply follow the surrealist formula of seeing beauty in the "accidental encounter of a sewing machine with an umbrella," as the poet Lautréamont phrased it. The Gendel harmony of (apparent) incompatibles —put together with a lavish hand—is not only a self-portrait but also a tribute to a beloved place: Rome. Here Milton has regained his paradise. ▲

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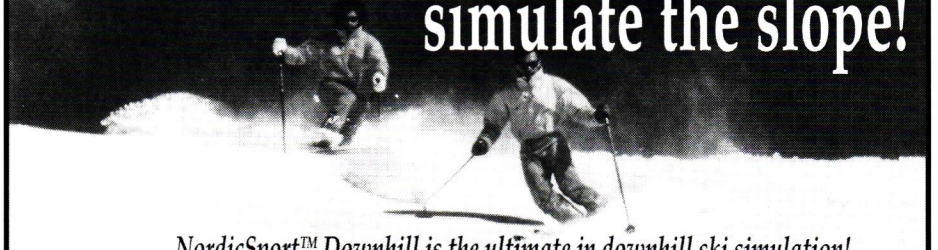

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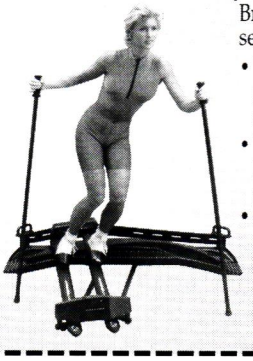

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Where to find it

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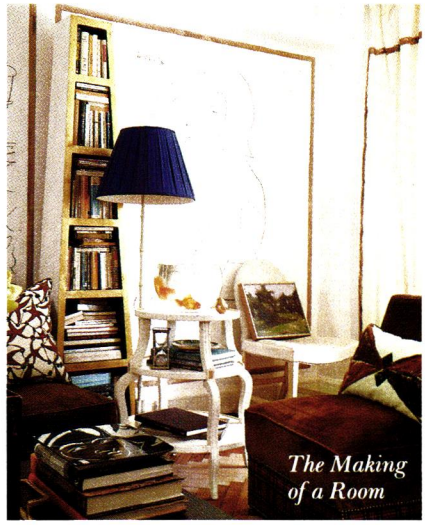

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POSTCARD FROM PUERTO RICO

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DIGGING FOR A CALIFORNIA STYLE

Pages 188–95 Nancy Goslee Power & Assocs., 615 20th St., Santa Monica, CA 90402; (310) 394-0261. **Isabelle C. Greene & Assocs.,** 34 East Sola St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101; (805) 965-6162. **Chris Rosmini,** 4800 Buchanan St., Los Angeles, CA 90042; (213) 258-1195.

California Style

(Continued from page 194) of sprawling vertical lots in Los Angeles, Chris Rosmini has made a garden for herself that seems like all the plants in Greene's file cabinet come to life: the tall skeleton of *Euphorbia zantii,* statuesque leaves of *Pedicytes peltatum,* golden reinwardtia, creamy peach sprays of cyrtanthus, penstemons, and salvias too numerous to name. Not all of these are plants you could recommend to the average Angeleno, but Rosmini is more fortunate than most designers in the level of horticulture to which at least some of her clients aspire: "They tend to be knowledgeable people who are involved in their gardens." Often passionate gardeners need to be directed by a designer who shares their enthusiasm and can provide a structure for it.

But not all her gardens are for plantsmen, and the strength of her designs is most apparent in some of the more restrained and less flowery landscapes she has created. In a recent project in the Hollywood Hills she brought together a 1920s-style villa and a new Palladian pool house with a formal design that utilizes the understated palette, the scale, and the verticality of the classic Italian garden but places them firmly in a California context with plants like hardenbergia, pittosporum, and abutilon combining with native oaks and hollylike toyon.

Nancy Power makes reference to Italian gardens in many of her designs, too. "I'm really a born-again Italian," she laughs. "Two years of living in Florence really shaped my sense of space." Her own garden in Santa Monica and some of her earlier designs demonstrate the Italian genius for enclosed spaces but give little clue of the sculptural way she uses plants in conjunction with the modern buildings and larger scale of her newest projects, which she has developed with her partner, architect Brian Tichenor. Speaking of their concept for the Disney concert hall, she says, "It's this weird kind of dinosaur building, and I'm going to use all kinds of dinosaur plants, things like araucaria. We'll have a flock of *Dracaena draco.* You can't use wimpy plants next to those buildings."

Power grew up with the English-in-

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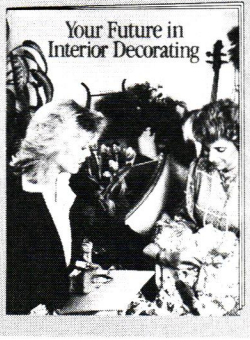

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California Style

spired garden traditions of the East Coast and a love of herbaceous perennials: "I used a lot of perennials when I first came here, but I use them less now—you need to have a client who understands what they are and realizes they're not dead." Power finds herself turning more to the signature plants of the Hollywood gardens of the 1920s and '30s: dramatic birds-of-paradise, jade plants of terrifying size, olive trees, the sculptural foliage of agave and yucca.

One final crucial quality is shared by these three women: a sense of humor. This not only makes each a delightful companion and commentator on the California scene, but it infuses their gardens with a liveliness and occasional playfulness distinct from much modern garden making. Each is able to view the traditions of garden design in a way that is fresh and graceful, enjoying and adapting cultural motifs without allowing them to dominate. From a wilderness of possibilities, three dynamic women have forged original and personal visions of California life. ▲

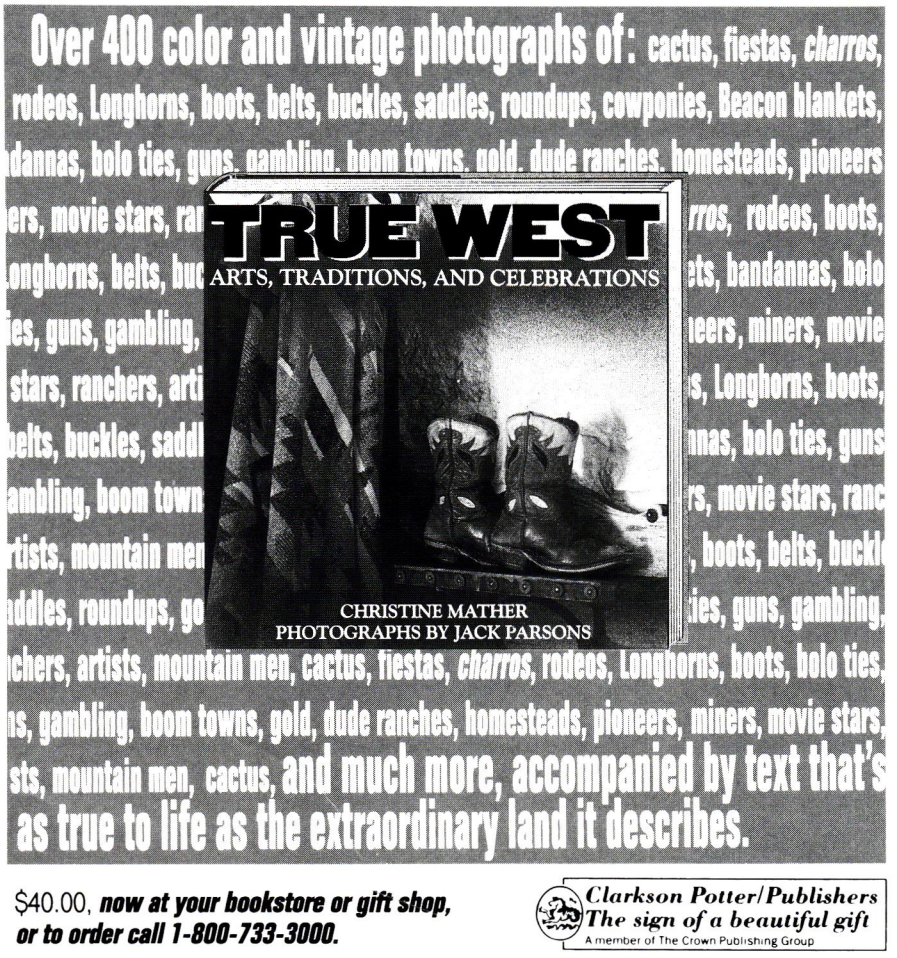
(For the three garden designers' addresses see Resources.)

Standing

(Continued from page 174) Standing. "People don't walk much here." Another even more pragmatic aspect of the red wall is that it separates the three-bedroom guest wing from the rest of the house—for privacy when there are guests, for economy when there are not since the wing can be completely closed off.

Adding to the house's look-at-me look-at-me public demeanor is a quirky aluminum pavilion with a perky pointed roofline that caps the north arm of the boomerang. The shimmering crown contains the house's open-plan upstairs living, dining, and kitchen areas, its elevation explained by Standing: "You have to be that high to get the view of Three Mile Harbor." Downstairs, the architect situated the master suite as well as a painting studio.

To keep both the boomerang and the UFO-like pavilion visually grounded, Standing introduced a pair of cone-shaped stone towers, one inside the house containing two fireplaces (one downstairs in the master bedroom, one upstairs in the living room), the other outside in the garden containing an aerial barbecue grill. The towers act as visual linchpins, suggesting stability and permanence, just as the boomerang suggests instability and impermanence or, better yet, flight. They are connected by a wooden bridge with a chain-link parapet spanning the sinuous black swimming pool that snakes along the red fin wall. Standing extended the irregular line of the pool in asphalt through the garage and beyond to the street where it stops like a frozen splash. The next wave? ▲



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We want to hear from you on BEDROOMS

We are planning a special section on decorating the bedroom. To help us answer your questions, won't you please answer ours?

What are the biggest design problems in your bedroom?

☐ Floor plan ☐ Storage space ☐ Seating ☐ Window treatments
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What pieces are the most difficult to find?

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☐ Bed linens ☐ Mattresses ☐ Pillows and shams
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Tell us more about yourself

Name _____ **Telephone (daytime)** _____

Address _____ **Fax** _____

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Please send responses to Katherine van den Blink, HG, 350 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10017, or fax them, anytime, to (212) 880-6905

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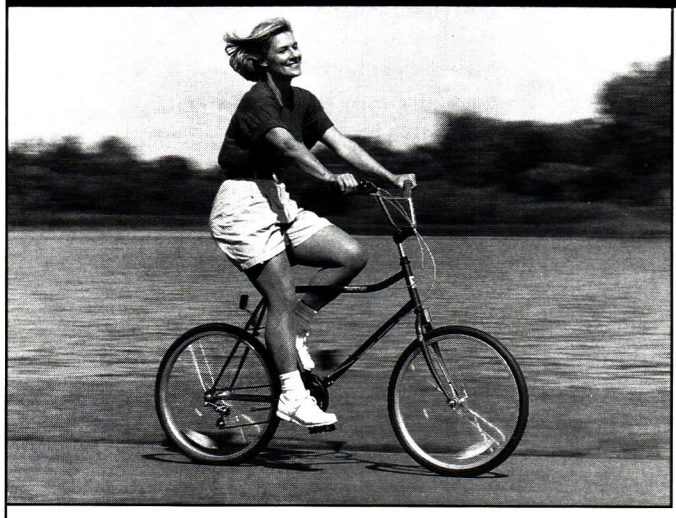

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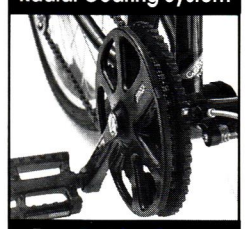

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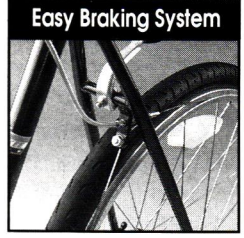

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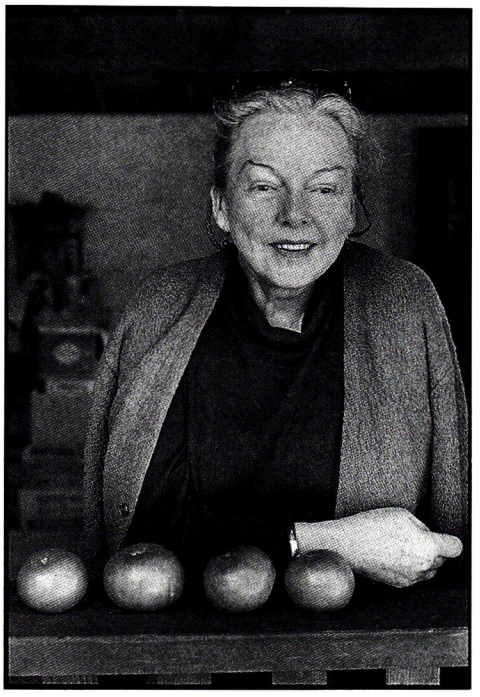
Gandee

AT LARGE

M.F.K. Fisher

1908–1992

For sixty-one years Mary Frances Kennedy Fisher wrote about joy and celebration, about warmth and love, about truth and beauty, about nourishment, both physical and spiritual, about food, especially about food, as metaphor, as allegory, as autobiography. She wrote about life as she experienced it, from childhood to motherhood to widowhood to old age, about her hopes and her dreams, which she didn't need a psychoanalyst to tell her to record, about her thoughts and her disappointments and her shortcomings. Although her essays and ruminations are personal to the point of intimacy, she succeeded, where so many others have failed, in keeping her distance from the indiscreet. For generations of devoted readers—and you're a devoted reader or you're no reader at all—M. F. K. Fisher was nothing less than a cult heroine, an old-fashioned girl from Albion, Michigan, who transformed herself into a modern woman of the world. Her first book, *Serve It Forth*, was published in 1937, after her first husband took her to live in France and her second husband took her to live in Switzerland. Her seventeenth book, *To Begin Again*, will be published this month by Pantheon, five months after Fisher's death on June 22, which was eleven days before her eighty-fourth birthday. *To Begin Again* begins with signature irony, "I find increasingly as I grow older that I do not consider myself a writer," and encompasses a characteristically quirky range of subjects, from homespun recipes for cough syrup ("equal parts of honey, glycerin, and fresh lemon juice"), and certain people's susceptibility to insects (as evidenced by the fourteen fleabites Fisher recalls receiving one afternoon in 1940 while walking through the lobby of the Ritz in Paris), to her never-quite-achieved goal "to put nostalgia into focus and to find one salient thing to write about instead of several dozen."



Last January, on the Tuesday I was scheduled to visit Fisher at the stucco and tile house in the Sonoma Valley which she called home for the last twenty-two years, her assistant asked if there was anything she would like in preparation for my visit. Fisher's answer, according to her assistant, was, "A voice." As a fitting preamble to the bittersweet anecdote, the note pushpinned to the front door sufficed: "Friends: ring bell and come in. Foes enter any old way. Mary Frances K. Fisher."

Although the chignon was gone and her eyes were all but hidden behind sunglasses, although she was wrapped in a shawl and nestled deep in a hospital bed surrounded by the medical paraphernalia required by a legion of infirmities, Fisher hadn't suffered any loss of dignity or, for that matter, elegance. And although she spoke in a barely audible whisper, bolstering herself from time to time with sips from a cyclist's bottle, she did seem to enjoy my stumbling and mumbling and fumbling around, my trying to strike up a conventional conversation with someone for whom conventional conversation was a thing of the past: "Can you remember the best meal you ever had?" "Does the Sonoma Valley remind you of Provence?" "What do you think of Jeannette Ferrary's book, *Between Friends: M. F. K. Fisher and Me*?" Her responses, respectively, were: "No." "Not a bit." "I haven't read it." Some time later, Fisher mentioned that she had completed the research for a book on the ridiculous ways people address the aged—working title, *Baby Talk*. Taking the hint, I decided to abandon the stock in favor of the specific, to say what was on my mind.

I told her how much I liked the small painting of her back I had just seen hanging in the bathroom, actually more like a gallery with plumbing, which her assistant had pointed out during a tour of the three-room house. "It's very alluring," I added. Fisher laughed a quiet warm laugh, then gave my hand a conspiratorial squeeze. From this I understood that she was willing to talk, but it had to be a bit more genuine, if I wouldn't mind. So we talked about her friends and my acquaintances, Julia Child and Alice Waters, about dreams and writing and pictures and travel. She even offered up a restaurant recommendation—Ristorante Travigne in nearby Saint Helena. I asked her what she was working on, and she said she was organizing her years of "notes" for what she hoped would be a seven-volume series. When she grew weary, she asked me to come again the following day. The tape of that second conversation is mostly filled with my voice, although I remember it otherwise. I remember in particular her answer to the question I asked as I was preparing to leave: "Can I send you anything?" Without hesitation she said, "Madeleines from Fauchon." Calling Paris and having a box of Proust's favorite cakes flown to California was an indescribable pleasure. Because what it meant is that M. F. K. Fisher never lost her appetite.

Charles Gandee

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