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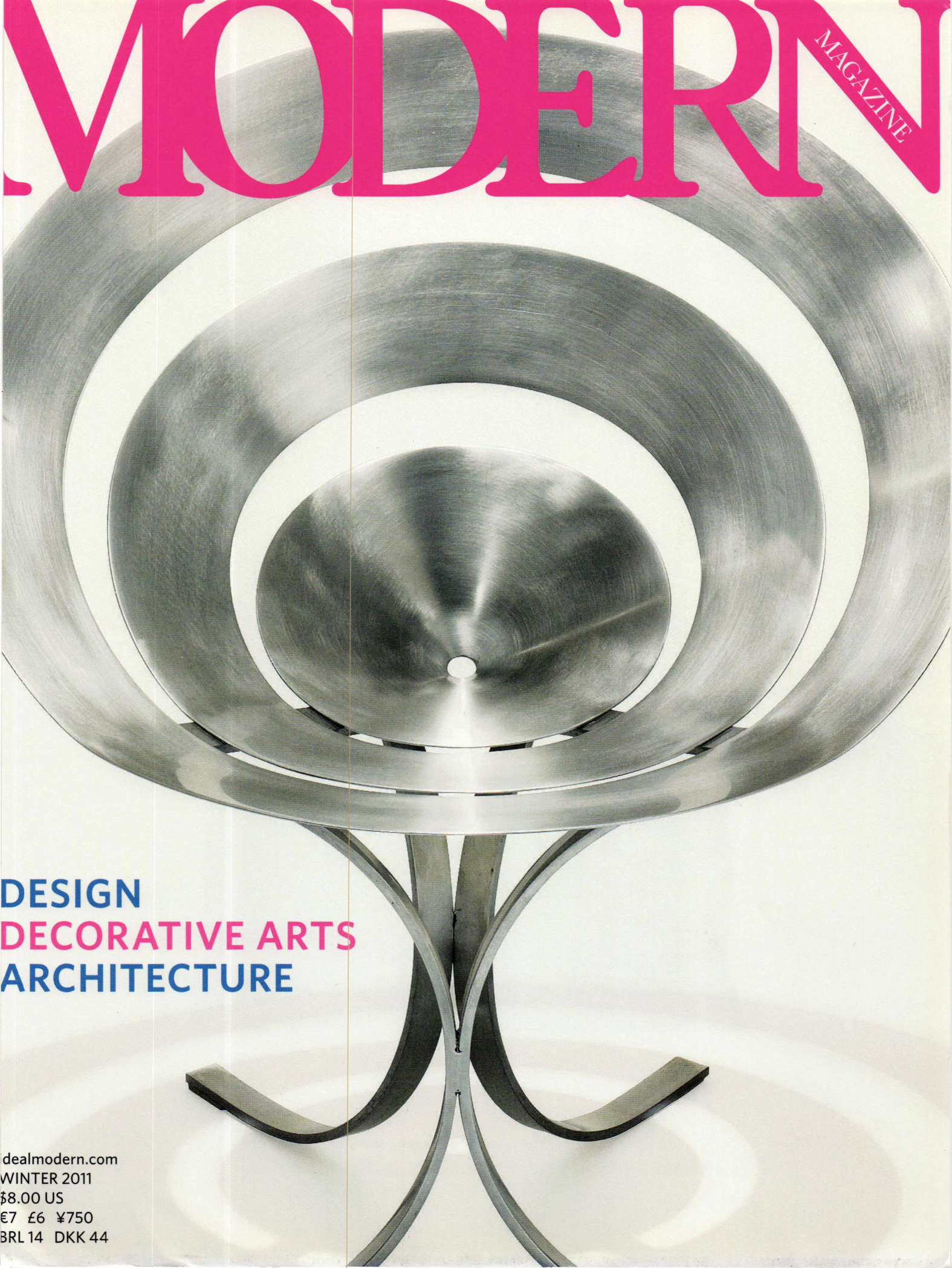

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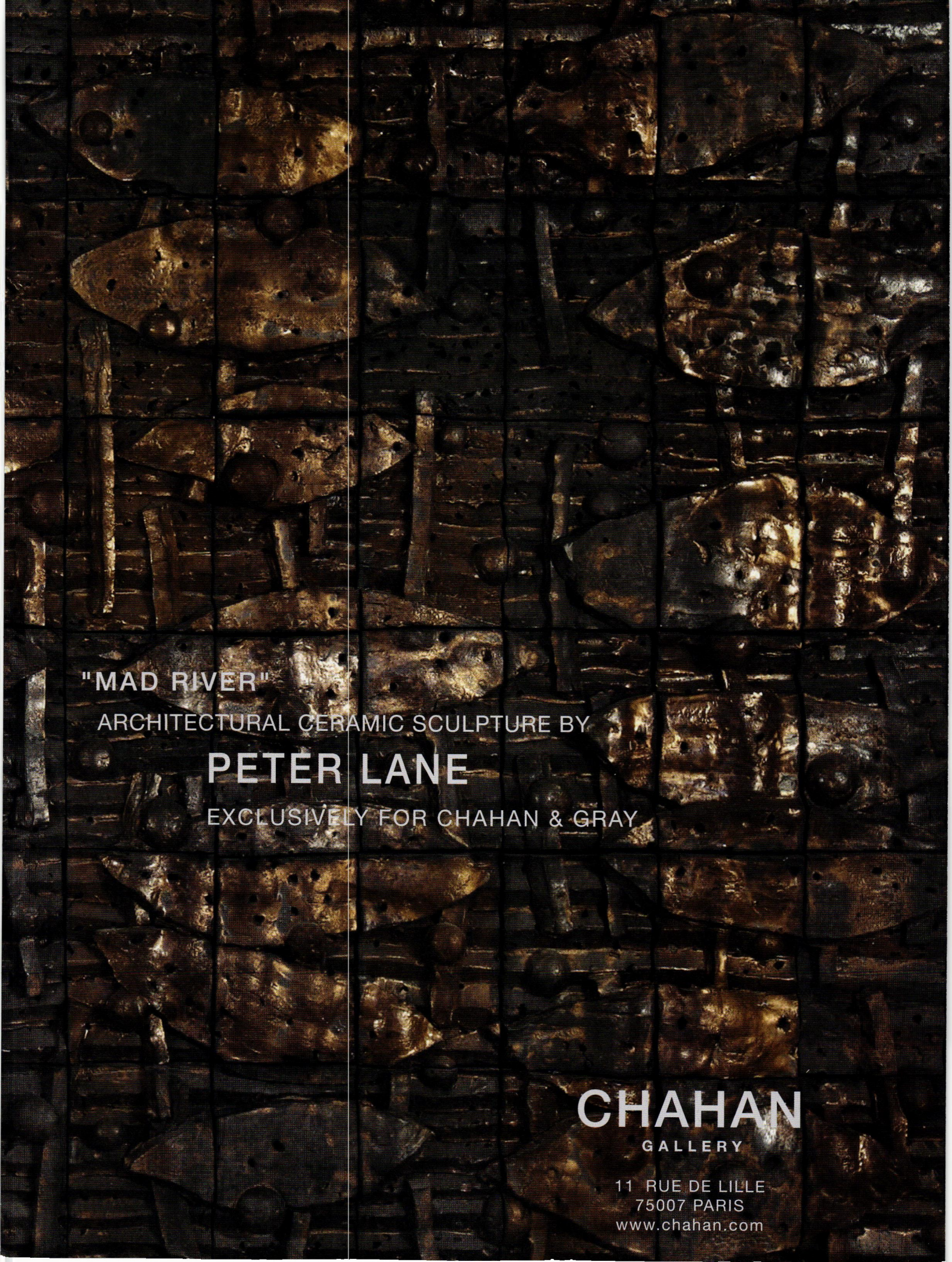
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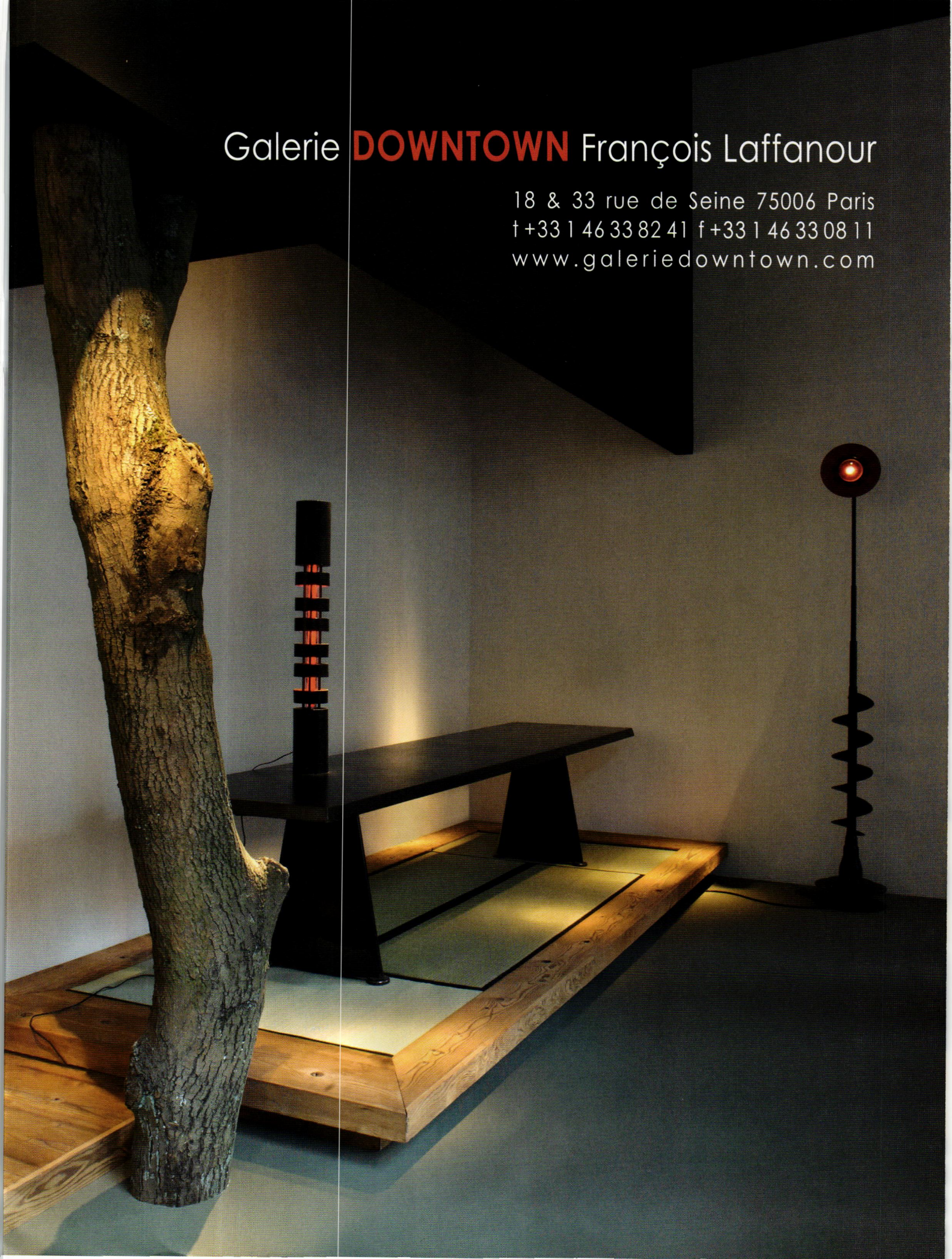
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MODERN

WINTER 2011

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A 1967 stainless-steel Maria Pergay "Ring" chair that sold at Wright auctions in Chicago for $38,750 in 2009

THIS PAGE
Vintage vessels by the Danish firm Holmegaard.

COVER: COURTESY OF WRIGHT; THIS PAGE: MELANIE ACEVEDO PHOTO

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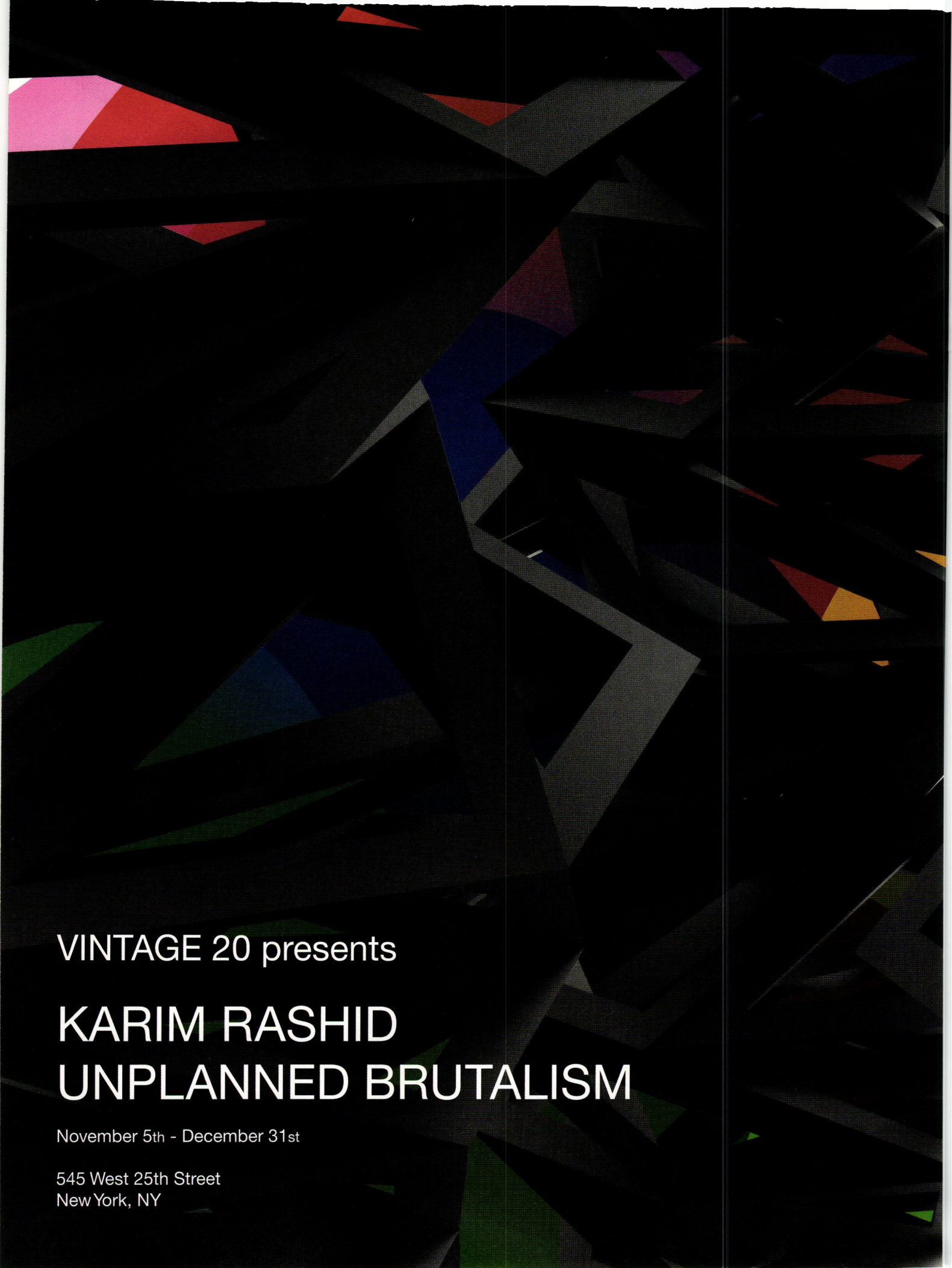
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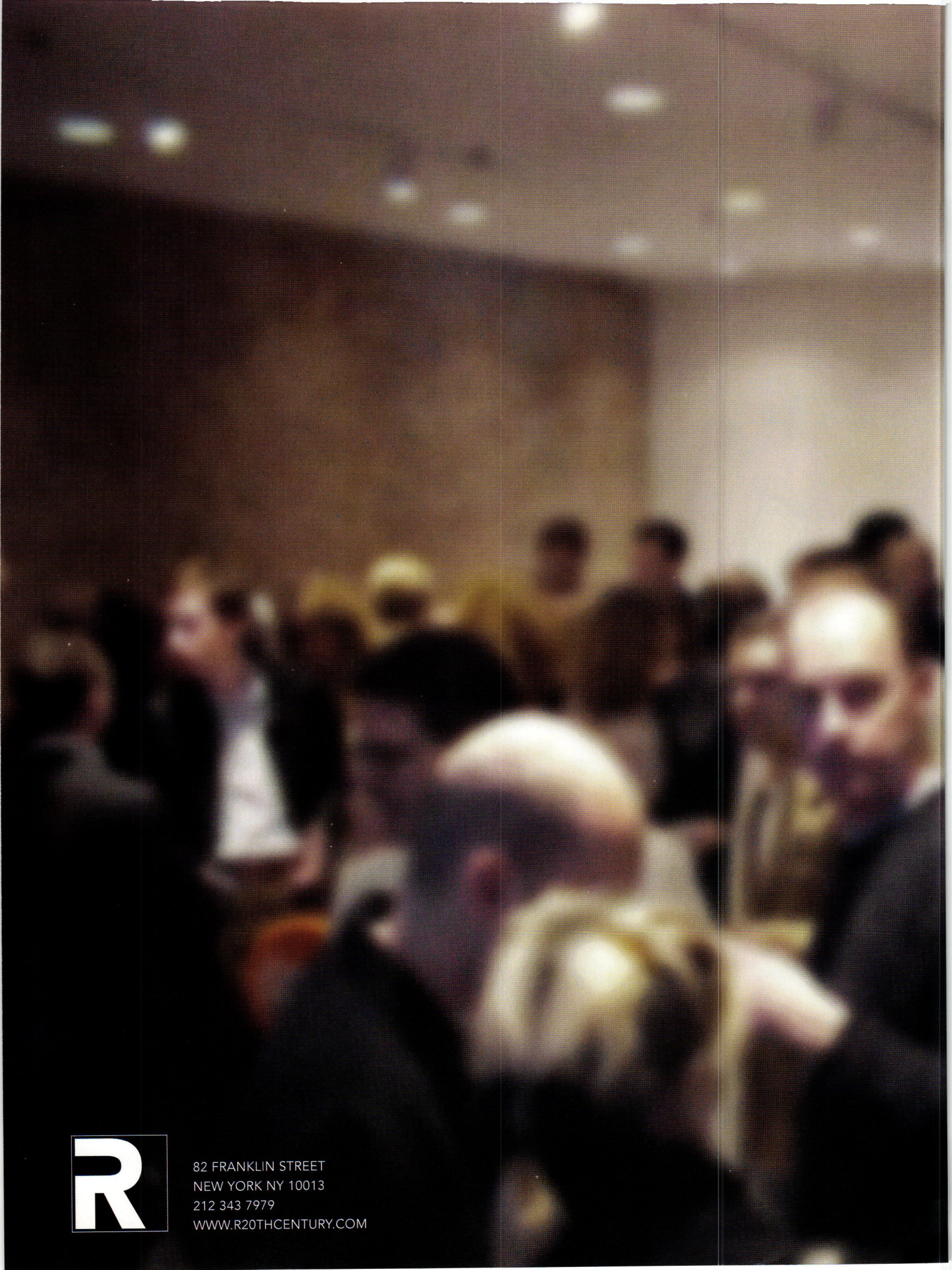

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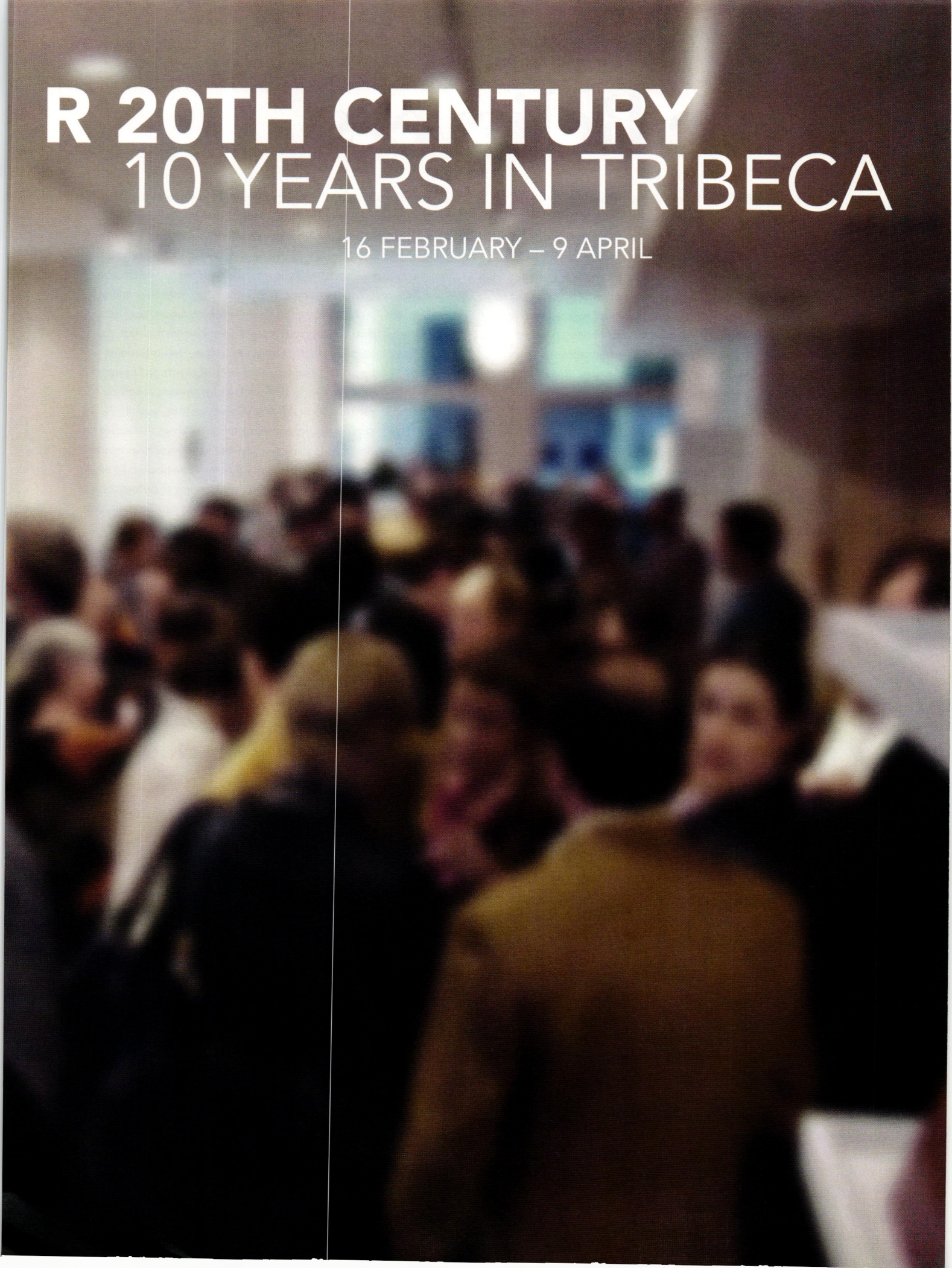
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16 FEBRUARY – 9 APRIL

True Believers

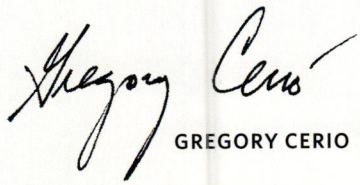
IN LATE OCTOBER OF 2010 yet another nauseating study emerged casting doubt on the claims of so-called "green" products. This report, produced by a Canadian subsidiary of the consumer watchdog group Underwriters Laboratories, concluded that 95 percent of goods marketed as "green" or "eco-friendly" were neither. Such labels were, the study declared, pure fiction—part of a marketing practice known as "greenwashing." Building materials suppliers, comfortingly, were among the most honest business blocs to fulfill promises to be ecologically responsible—yet they made up only a small proportion of the test cases. Appallingly, the worst offenders, the report stated, were the makers of children's toys.

Fortunately, in the realm of design and architecture, there are numerous firms and individuals who are passionately committed to rectifying damage done by the twin perfidies of global climate change and the waste incurred by common industrial practices. MODERN *Magazine* does not, or, at least has not yet done, "themed" issues, but there is a thematic thread running through the issue you hold. It concerns the use of waste created in the making of furnishings, or what some might consider simply garbage, in the design and creation of new, attractive, and exquisitely crafted objects.

"The thematic thread here contains the use of waste created in the making of furnishings"

Our "New Sensations" section includes a paean from Rob Forbes—the founder of Design Within Reach and now head of Studio Forbes, a San Francisco-based urban design think tank—to the work of the Dutch designer Piet Hein Eek, whose many ventures include a program called the "Waste Materials Project," in which he uses manufacturing detritus to create novel furnishings. In a similar vein Carlos Salgado, the author of this issue's "Tales from the Front" article and a high-minded environmentalist, is the cofounder of Scrapile, a Brooklyn-based design firm that has used the leavings of traditional furniture-builders to craft chairs, tables, shelving units, and other items that are elegant and practical. Lastly, in "Current Thinking," Antonio Ametrano, a dealer at San Francisco's Hedge Gallery, writes about the work of British designer Sam Orlando Miller, who hoards broken-down bits of antique furnishings—busted chairs, chipped mirrors, and such—until a "Eureka!" moment ensues that thrusts him toward the use of these junk materials in the making of something new and sublime.

The sad fact is, however, that the output of the designers cited above will likely enter the homes of a relatively small cohort of collectors. And, in an irony Salgado notes in his essay, designers who nobly create products using waste materials left over from standard manufacturing procedures must rely on the larger firms to continue to make waste—a classic tautology. Worse, even intelligent, large-scale, and forward-thinking design plans seem doomed from the start. At its National Design Triennial this year, the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum gave an award to a group of architects and designers from a range of disciplines for devising a working plan for "vertical farms." These would be, essentially, skyscraper greenhouses—urban buildings that would be designed to grow crops so that fresh vegetables would be easily available to city dwellers. The plan would allow fallow land used for traditional farming to be forested as it once was, helping to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The scheme is reasonable, feasible, and even brilliant—and, of course, it will never get off the ground. Agribusiness giants such as Archer Daniels Midland and its investors, plus farm-state legislators, will do their damnedest to see that any such plan is squashed. It is the curse laid on innovative, forwarding-looking design that its realization is left to folks who can only see that forests are nothing more than a lot of trees.



GREGORY CERIO EDITOR

Scrapile stacking trays and crates made of laminated scrapwood, designed in 2005.

COURTESY OF SCRAPILE

Louise Bourgeois [b. France 1911-2010] *Spider*

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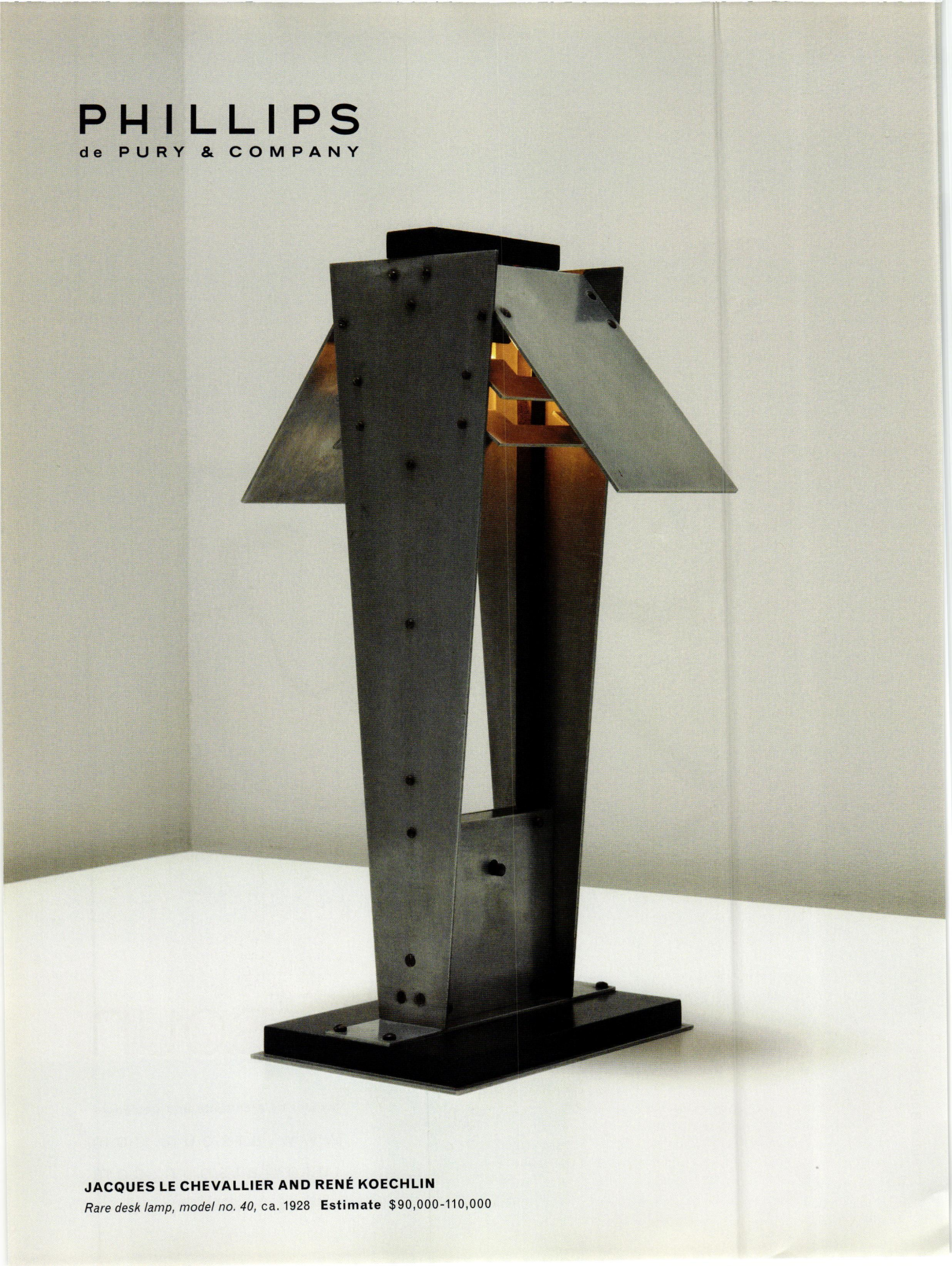

JACQUES LE CHEVALLIER AND RENÉ KOECHLIN
Rare desk lamp, model no. 40, ca. 1928 **Estimate** $90,000-110,000

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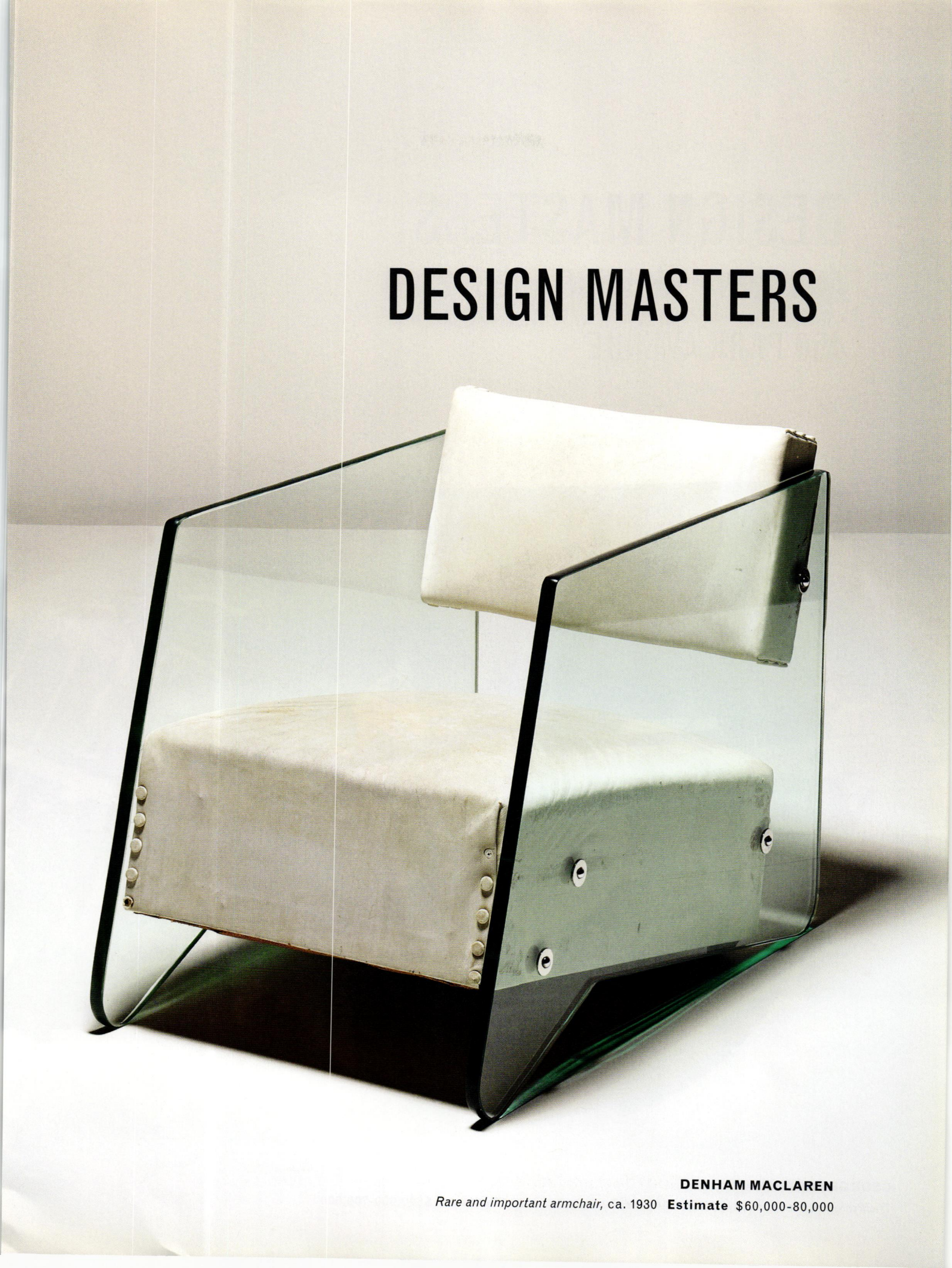

DENHAM MACLAREN

Rare and important armchair, ca. 1930 **Estimate** $60,000-80,000

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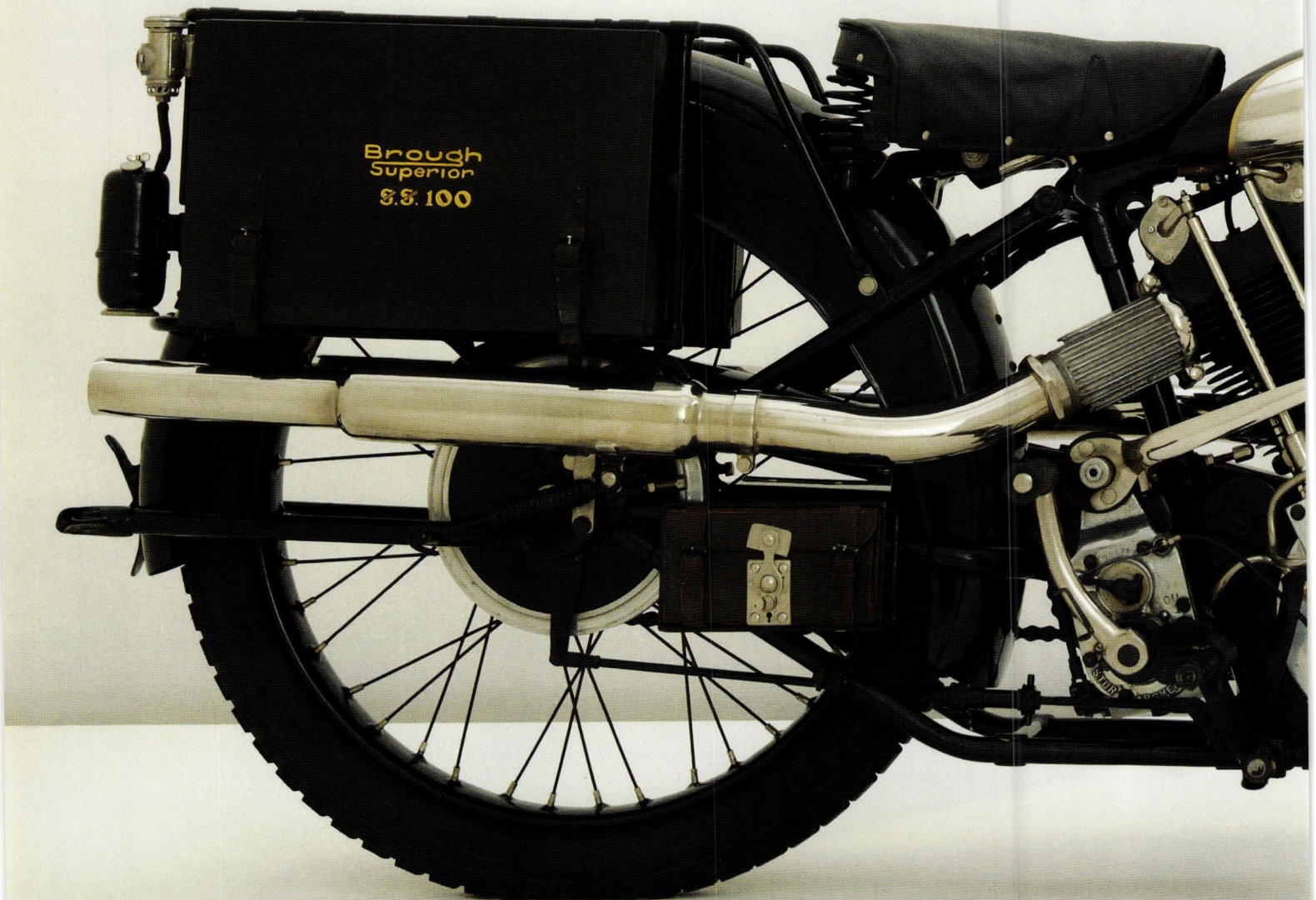

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The Prototype Brough Superior SS100 "Alpine Grand Sport", 1925 **Estimate** $600,000-700,000

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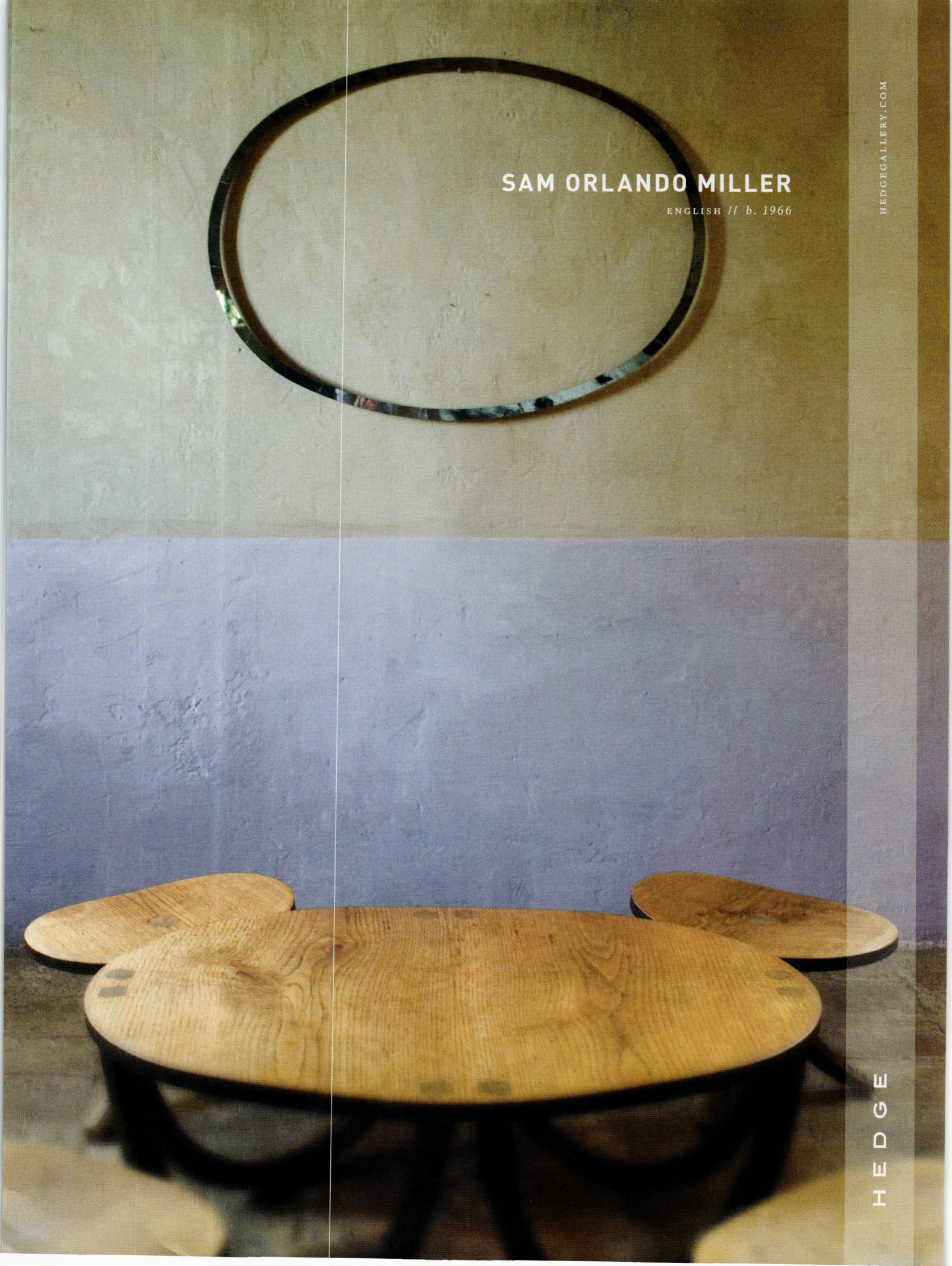

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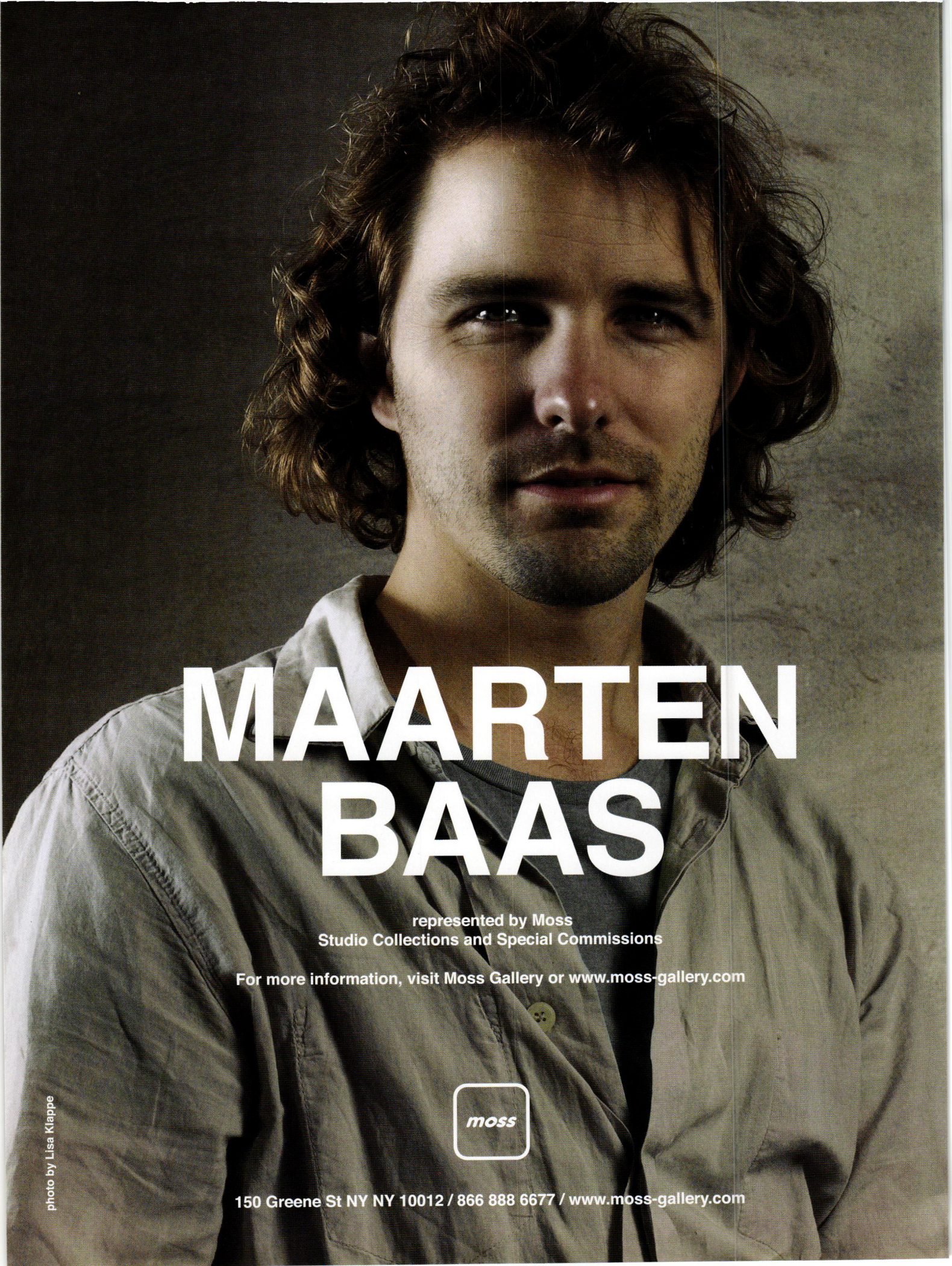
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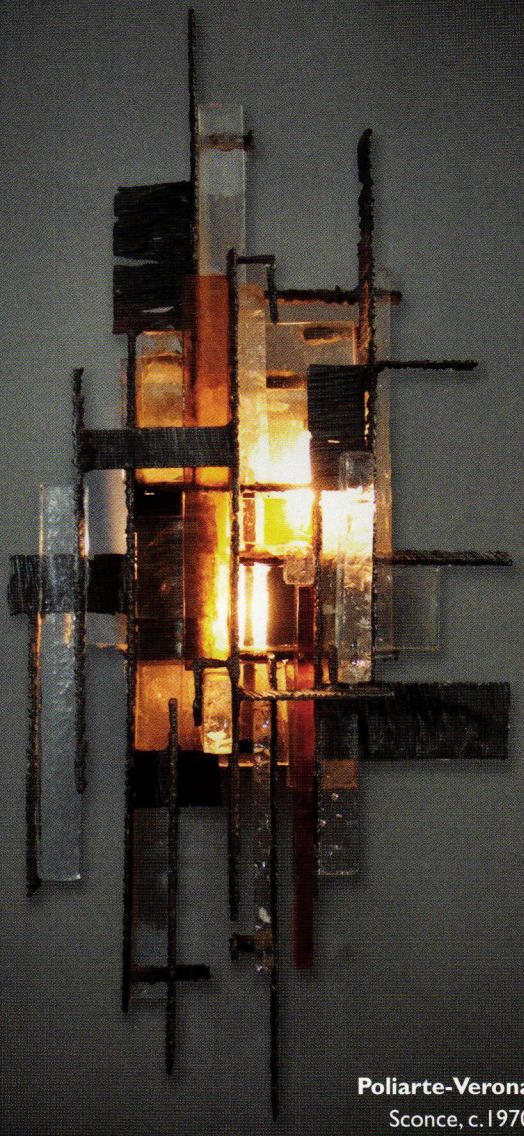

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DANIELLE DEVINE As both Deputy Editor of MODERN and Editorial Manager of its venerable sister publication, *The Magazine* ANTIQUES, Devine is in our ambit—to play off James Brown's signature tag—the hardest working woman in magazine publishing. She holds an M.A. in the History of Decorative Arts and Design, with a specialty in twentieth-century American furniture and glass, from Parsons The New School for Design/Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum and contributes to both Brant Art Media publications—her Events column can be found in most editions of ANTIQUES, while at the same time she edits articles in all issues of MODERN. Devine lives in Brooklyn with her husband and their dog, Bella, a Brussels Griffin.

ALASTAIR GORDON ("Meditative Modern," page 130) A celebrated modern architecture writer and curator, Gordon has contributed to many publications, including the *Wall Street Journal*, *Dwell*, the *New York Times*, and *Architectural Digest*. His article in this issue of MODERN draws on the spirit of his book *Weekend Utopia* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), which examines, Gordon says, "the rich legacy of forgotten modernist architecture [on eastern Long Island], especially the small-scale, inexpensive but playful beach houses." For MODERN, Gordon writes about a house in the village of Amagansett designed by architect Francois de Menil, which Gordon sees as one example of "new work that is following the same, 'less-is-more' approach."

JEN RENZI ("Best in Show, page 112) is a Brooklyn-based writer and editor who specializes in architecture and design. A former staffer at *House and Garden* and *Interior Design* magazines, she has contributed to *New York*, *Art and Auction*, *Surface*, *Wallpaper*, *Interiors*, *New York Times Magazine*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*, among other publications. Renzi wrote the text for a just-released monograph on the mid-century housewares and fashion designer Vera Neumann, published by Abrams and is the author of *The Art of Tile* (Clarkson Potter, 2009). She has also written design books for Princeton Architectural Press, Simon and Schuster, Edizioni, and Pointed Leaf Press.

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What Sold, for How Much, & Why?

LOT 110 Doyle New York's "Doyle + Design" sale in Manhattan on September 28, 2010: A pair of circa 1980 Macassar ebony veneer and upholstered club chairs attributed to the Pace Collection. The pair sold for $13,750 off of a pre-auction estimate of $1,500 to $2,000. Some reasons for the unexpectedly high price:

The Law of Twos

David A. Gallager, the Doyle department head for twentieth-century design and decorative arts, points out a noteworthy phenomenon in the auction world: "Furnishings that come in pairs always sell better than single item lots—which we call 'orphans'—even if the one piece is superior in quality to the twinned pieces. The consignor of these club chairs has a matching settee, yet I doubt it will sell for as much as the chairs, simply because it's a solo piece of furniture."

Sweet Styling

The club chairs clearly have the DNA of art deco furniture, yet are somehow sleeker and more contemporary in feel. Their lines are crisp and at the same time beefy, and as Gallager notes, the material they are made from—the richly figured ebony—is the last word in luxury.

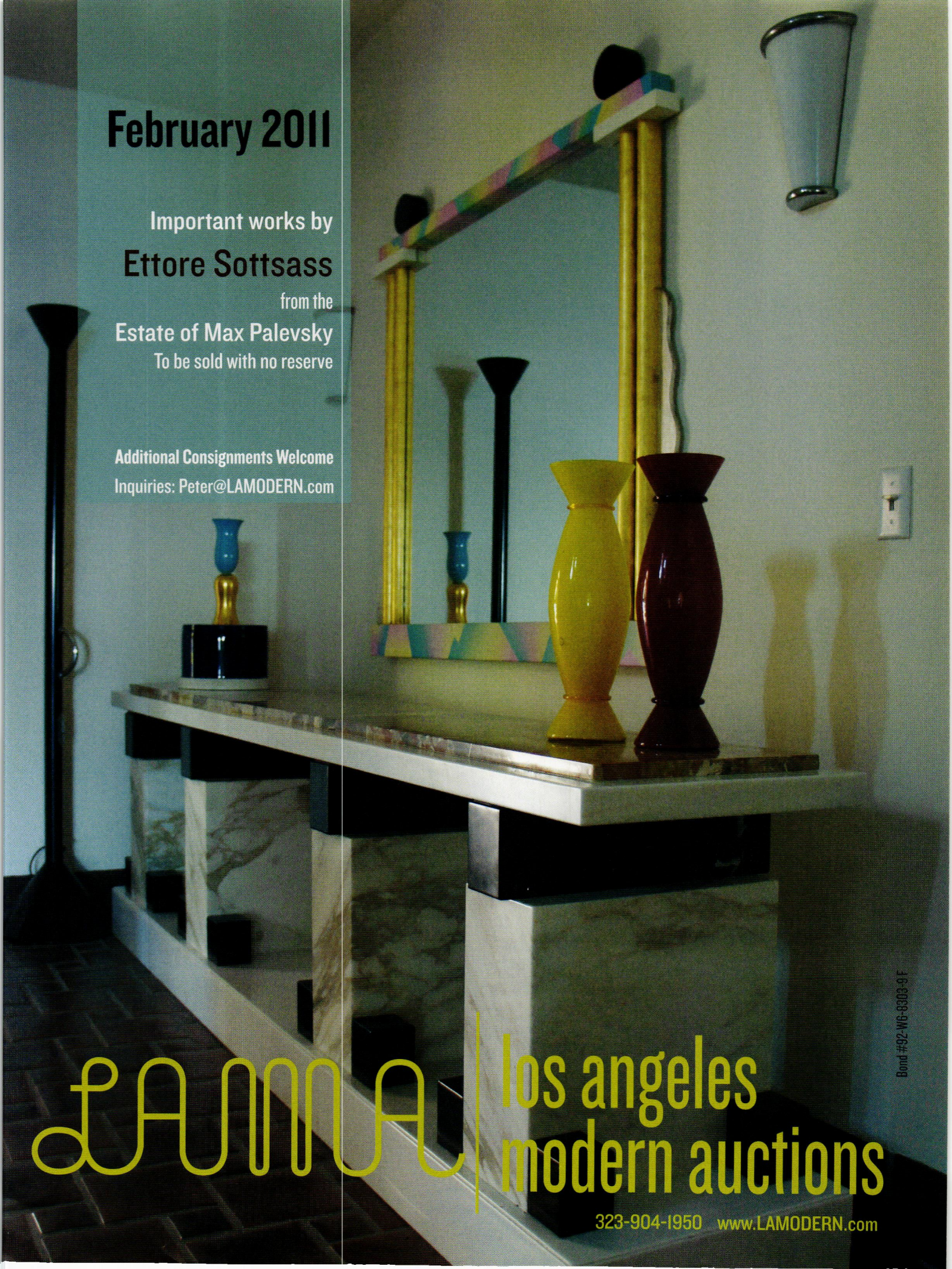
Interesting Antecedents

The Pace Collection was a high-end contemporary furniture company founded in New York City in the early 1970s by Irving and Leon Rosen. Catering to the interior design trade, the firm offered a line of desks, tables, and cabinets that were distinguished by exotic wood veneers with glossy finishes and polished and chrome-plated trim. As these chairs and the matching settee demonstrate, it apparently also offered chairs and sofas that employed rich exotic woods. In 1985 the Rosens commissioned New York architect Steven Holl—most recently acknowledged for the 2007 addition to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri—to design a showroom on the corner of Madison Avenue and East 72nd Street in Manhattan. The showroom garnered Holl an American Institute of Architects award for best architectural design the following year. Furniture in the Pace Collection appealed to an elite clientele, and was arguably the finest made furniture of the 1970s. Pieces were essentially made to order, rather than mass-produced; the case goods were handmade by Glendale Architectural Wood Products in Glendale, New York. The costs of manufacturing were known only to the Rosens, but the prices reflected the handcraftsmanship and limited production. The company went out of business in 2001, but the Glendale firm acquired the rights to the case designs, which it continues to custom-make today.

Pre-Sale Buzz

Because the Pace Collection is not a household name, and while the club chairs are quite handsome, Gallager was surprised by the large number of inquiries he received during and after the auction preview. At the sale bidding was competitive, with offers coming from numerous hopeful buyers both in attendance and via telephone. Looking back, Gallager acknowledges that the pre-auction estimates might have been low. But, he adds, "It certainly worked out nicely in the end."

DOYLE NEW YORK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Detail of a wall mounted bookcase, Italy 1955
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Plate Spinning

CASUAL GOURMET DINING IS THE ORDER OF THE DAY AND TRADITIONAL TABLEWARE NEEDS AN UPDATE. TOP PORCELAIN MAKERS HAVE STEPPED UP TO THE PLATE.

By Stephen Milne

Fashion changes at the speed of light. Trends in the decorative arts move at a comparatively glacial pace, and no place more slowly than the world of high end tableware. By long held custom, fine porcelain is a wedding gift purchased for a lifetime, and, as a result, companies only infrequently feel the need to make changes in styles and patterns. But in a world where swank eat-in kitchens have become the norm and the formal dining room has all but disappeared from blueprints, several manufacturers have made a break with the past. They have turned to some of today's most avant-garde designers, even ones fresh out of school, to re-conceive existing lines and invent new ones for today's buyers. Of all the possible design aspects of tableware, it is in the realm of patterns that the most innovative designs are occurring.

Royal Copenhagen's rollout of "Blue Fluted Mega" in 2000 was the game changer. Two years earlier, design student Karen

Above: **Royal Copenhagen's iconic "Blue Fluted" dinner plate blends seamlessly with pieces of "Blue Fluted Mega," its modern reinterpretation.**

Right: **"Mega" (pitcher) is Royal Copenhagen's best selling pattern.**

ROYAL COPENHAGEN

Left: **Ceramicist Peter Ting, in collaboration with Royal Crown Derby, launched "Hachi" in the fall of 2008. Ting states, "'Hachi' really came about from the one-off 'Constellation Series' and a one-off set of five plates that I made called 'Imari Maru' (maru is Japanese for circles)."**

Below: **"Hachi" plates joined with related Royal Crown Derby china.**

Kjældgård-Larsen had taken on as her final school project the redesign of the company's standard bearing "Blue Fluted" pattern. Kjældgård-Larsen re-imagined this pattern, which was first introduced in 1775 and which she herself had grown up with, by enlarging, then cropping, the famed Danish floral pattern. The result is a modern design—clean, graphic, and asymmetrical—that can be mixed seamlessly within a place setting in the original "Blue Fluted" pattern. The ability of "Mega" to create a fluent dialogue with its precedent is rare, yet it has become both the firm's best-selling pattern and an industry-wide benchmark.

The popularity of "Mega" prompted competitors to mine their own design archives for inspiration. England's **Royal Crown Derby,** in collaboration with Asian-born and England-based designer and ceramist Peter Ting, launched "Hachi" (the Japanese word for the number eight) in the fall of 2008. Ting's design encircles snippets of signature Crown Derby patterns such as "Aves" in a boldly outlined black figure eight with a pop art punch. It also references traditional Imari ware with small floral medallions. As with "Mega," "Hachi" eliminates a framing border and dispenses with symmetry, which makes it less formal.

Beyond their own aesthetic merits, "Mega" and "Hachi" succeed by bridging formal and informal uses. They can be easily dressed up or down, and so preclude the need to purchase multiple sets of dinnerware. Nicholas Manville, vice president for Decorative Home at Bergdorf Goodman, the luxury New York City retailer, believes that china is "headed in a more industrial direction in every sense," citing the absence of gold (which allows china to be microwave- and dishwasher-safe), the greater use of white, as well as the deconstruction of more formal patterns. On the

ROYAL CROWN DERBY

other hand, the shift, Manville argues, means the loss of craftsmanship: "I am beginning to miss the beauty and artistry that has always existed in porcelain," he says. "The artistry behind the gilding, the sculpture, the hand painting that classic patterns have, are equivalent to what one would find in a cathedral or on canvas."

Although the level of pattern detailing may not be what it was, today's designers have all the flair of their predecessors. China wares by Dutch designer Hella Jongerius, a certified rock star in the field, are a case in point. Inspired in part by the design archive of the **Porzellan Manufaktur Nymphenburg**—founded in 1747—Jongerius created the patterns for her "Nymphenburg Sketches" in 2004. As with "Hachi," Jongerius includes historical, archival motifs. However, her primary focus is deconstructing and demystifying the process of porcelain manufacturing.

In her designs applied color swatches are juxtaposed with their corresponding factory code numbers. Imagery is rendered in an incomplete state to illustrate that the work is done by hand. Just whose hands are denoted by the signature numbers and letter marks of individual craftsmen featured on the plate's face—along with two of the manufacturer's marks—rather than on the underside. The result is a kind of primer on the process of creation, yet one that also adheres to the desire to create an enduring design. "I'm trying to make products that can be loved and that people want to own their whole lives to then pass them on to the family," Jongerius notes on the company's web site.

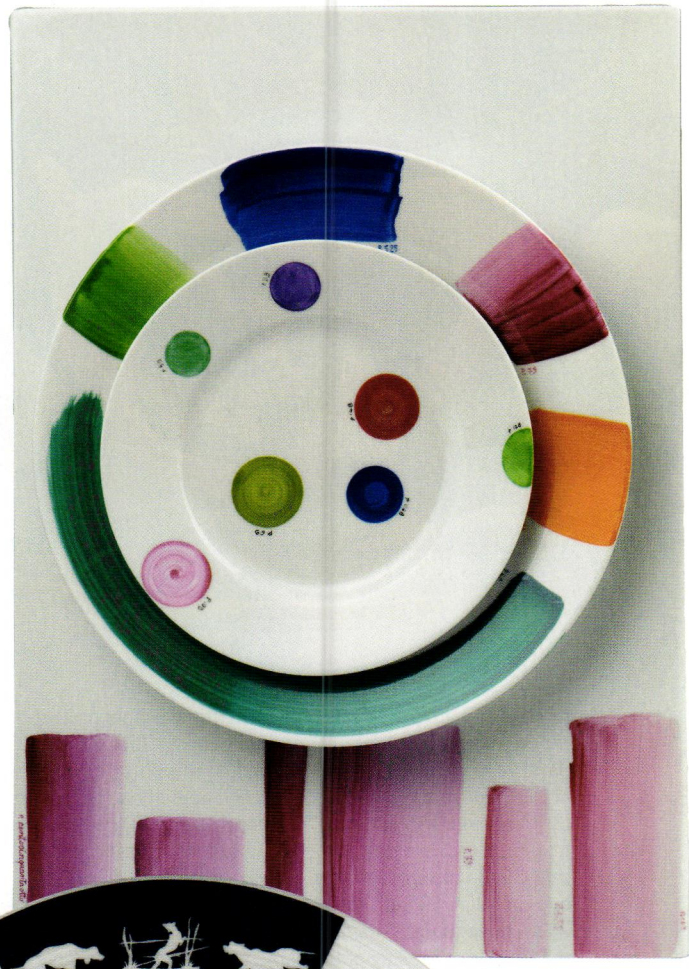
The use of industry marks as decorative pattern can also be found in Paola Navone's "Prova Prima," done in collaboration with Italian porcelain manufacturer **Richard Ginori 1735**. "Prova Prima" debuted at the Paris housewares trade fair Maison et Objet in September 2009, and was introduced to the American market in January 2010.

The goal was to reveal the process of porcelain manufacturing by using a standard factory color-swatch sample plate as a point of departure. The colors are coded by numbers and preceded by a P, which references the international Pantone color-matching standard. Asked whether this pattern merits the designation fine china, Manville replied, "Absolutely. It feels more casual because of the color palette—it's more primary. It's a whimsical pattern that is meant to be mixed and played with almost like toys." He adds that "Prova Prima" has sold very well at the store.

If the original intent of the high modernist of the early and mid-twentieth century was to break with all design traditions of the past, today's product designers, working in fields ranging from ceramics to textiles and wallpaper [see MODERN Fall 2010], appear to feel no compunction about mining classic patterns and genres for new interpretations that are at once sassy and classy. So far, it is a recipe that is serving up hot.

Works by Peter Ting in collaboration with Royal Crown Derby are on view in the exhibition "Eat Drink Art Design" at the Museum of Art and Design in New York City until March 27, 2011.

"I'm trying to make products that can be loved and that people want to own their whole lives to then pass them on to the family"



FROM TOP: RICHARD GINORI 1735 PORZELLAN MANUFAKTUR NYMPHENBURG

Above: **Paola Navone's "Prova Prima," done in collaboration with Richard Ginori 1735, is meant to be played with. Here, dessert and dinner plates are shown atop a placemat that doubles as a cheese board.**

Right: **Hella Jongerius's "Nymphenburg Sketches" for Porzellan Manufaktur Nymphenburg. Here Jongerius's primary focus is deconstructing and demystifying the process of porcelain manufacturing.**

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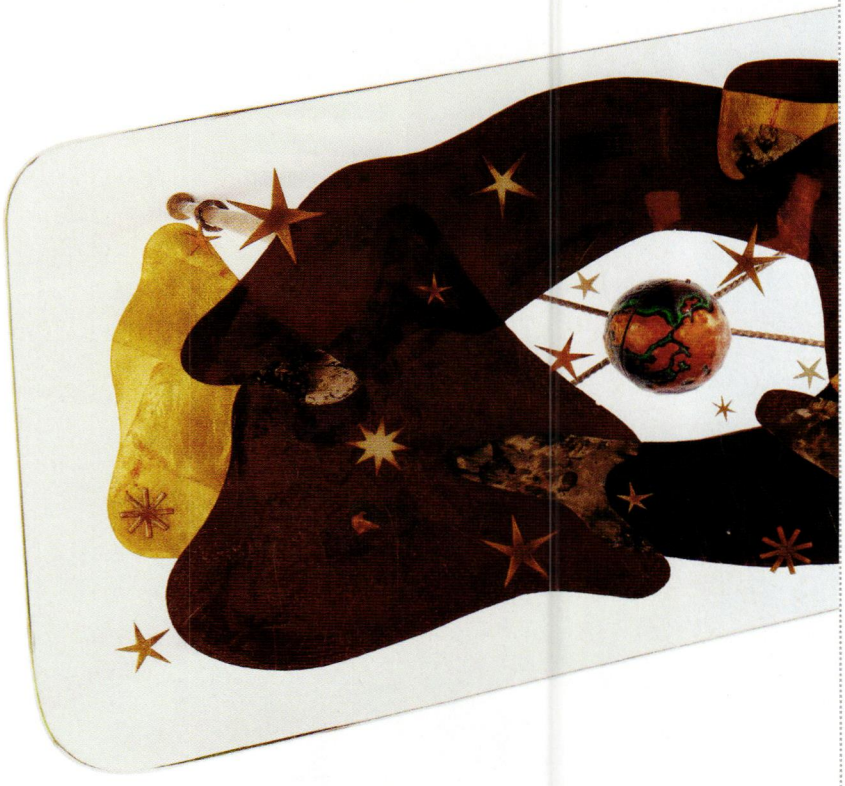

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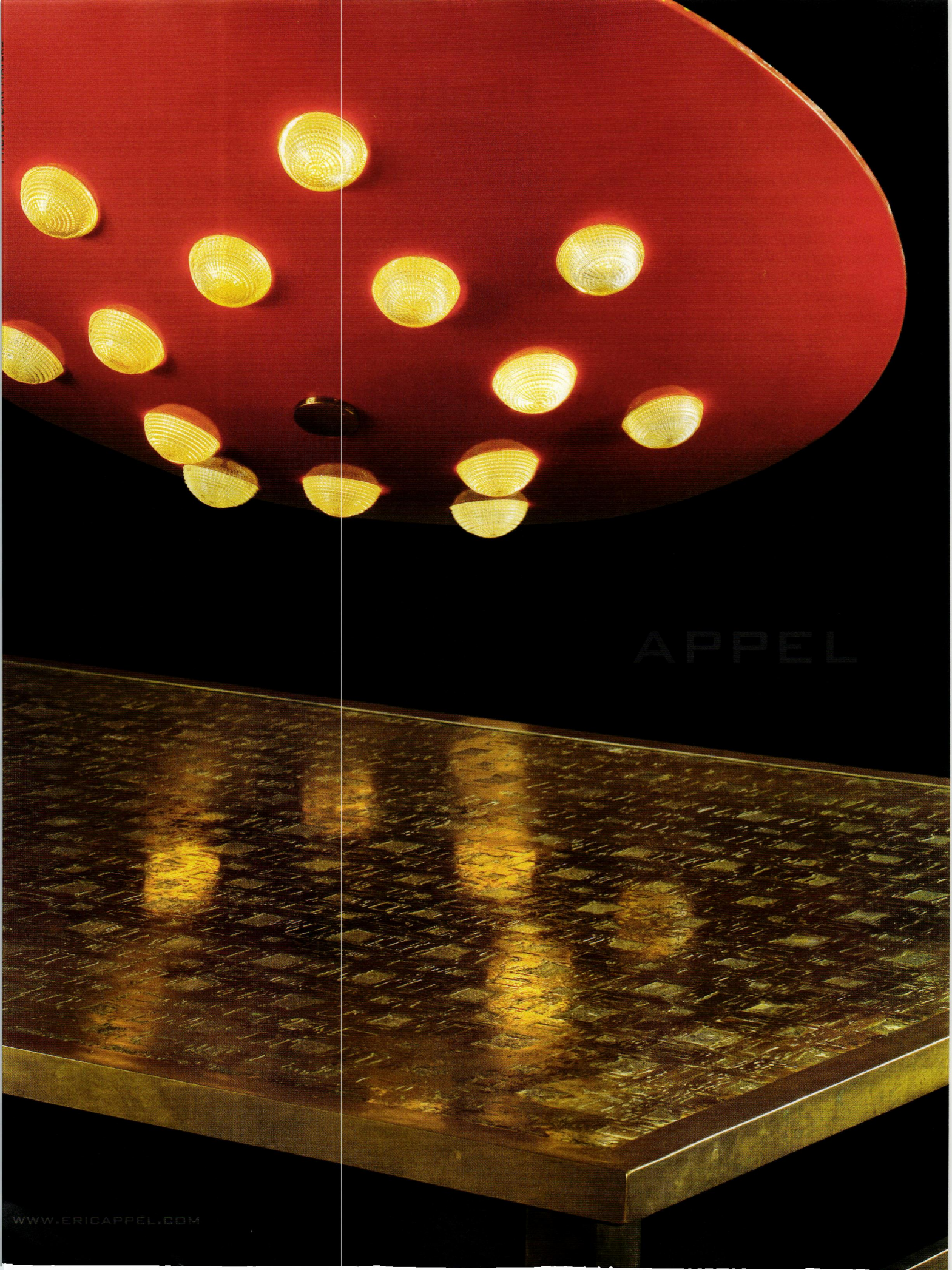
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Fired Up

THE PRINCIPAL OF LOS ANGELES MODERN AUCTIONS, **PETER LOUGHREY**, OFFERS A PRIMER ON THE WORK OF OTTO AND GERTRUD NATZLER, WHO MANY CONSIDER THE GREATEST STUDIO CERAMISTS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

To know the work of Gertrud and Otto Natzler is to know romance. Otto often said that his interest in clay and glazes was secondary to his interest in Gertrud. Beyond the sweet stories of courting and wooing in old Vienna, their native home before moving to California in 1938, the Natzlers' body of work itself is a reflection of their devotion to each other. Across three decades they produced as many as 20,000 works, their driving force being not the product so much as the process. Theirs was the story of two artists entwined, each in turn inspiring and challenging the other to perfect their craft. Gertrud's talent lay in the forming of the clay, while Otto's domain was the alchemy of the glaze. While the Natzlers rarely prized any work over another, the market has developed a hierarchy of values. The following works have sold at auction within the last six months and reflect current market values. Overall, size is the biggest contributing factor to market value. Forms that are enclosed are generally more desirable than forms that are open—thus vases tend to sell for more than bowls, which in turn sell for more than plates.

This bowl is emblematic of the vast body of work produced by the Natzlers. Although it is one of the most commonly seen forms, with a fairly nondescript glaze, many collectors see this as an icon that, when combined with similar forms, can create an exciting display of subtle textures, colors, and shapes. Because they often show up for sale, the price becomes more predictable. This medium-sized example (Height 2.125 inches, Diameter 8.25 inches) sold for $2,800.

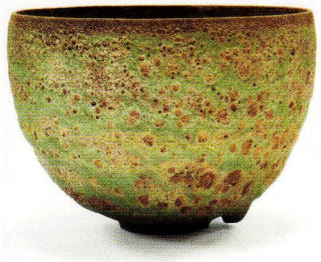
GRADE **C+**

The influence of the Bauhaus is evident in the nearly spherical form of this small vase. This piece was made very early in the Natzlers' career and may even date to the earliest work produced in Austria before the couple arrived in the United States. The glaze is as spare as the form and is applied in an economical amount, which helps emphasize the perfection of the surface. The color of the clay itself becomes a design element by being exposed. While it is considered very desirable because of the early date, the diminutive scale of this example (Height 3.3 inches, Diameter 4.5 inches) restrained some collectors. It sold for $7,350.

GRADE **B**

Over the past two decades, collectors' tastes have changed somewhat and what was popular in years past is not necessarily popular now. Bright, cheery colors like canary yellow and robin's egg blue were most desirable in the late 1980s. However, today the market is rewarding Otto's darker and rougher surfaces. His celebrated Lava and Crater glazes usually command the highest prices. This very nice example (Height 3.63 inches, Diameter 7.25 inches) has a tight, pocked surface over a subtle "flaring" bowl. It sold for $6,700.

GRADE **B+**



This example has many of the chief features collectors value. Its large size (Height 7.5 inches, Diameter 10.25 inches) makes it particularly appealing, because it will display very well. Also, collectors understand that larger sizes were not the norm, nor were they as easily achieved. Throwing a large amount of clay on a potter's wheel takes a higher degree of skill. And in the glazing process more surface area requires additional care and planning to achieve a desired effect. Otto was particularly satisfied when the glaze hardened at the moment before dripping off the body, as in this example. The glaze itself is green and brown with deep and widely dispersed craters. The combination of these factors sent the price soaring to $39,800.

GRADE **A+**

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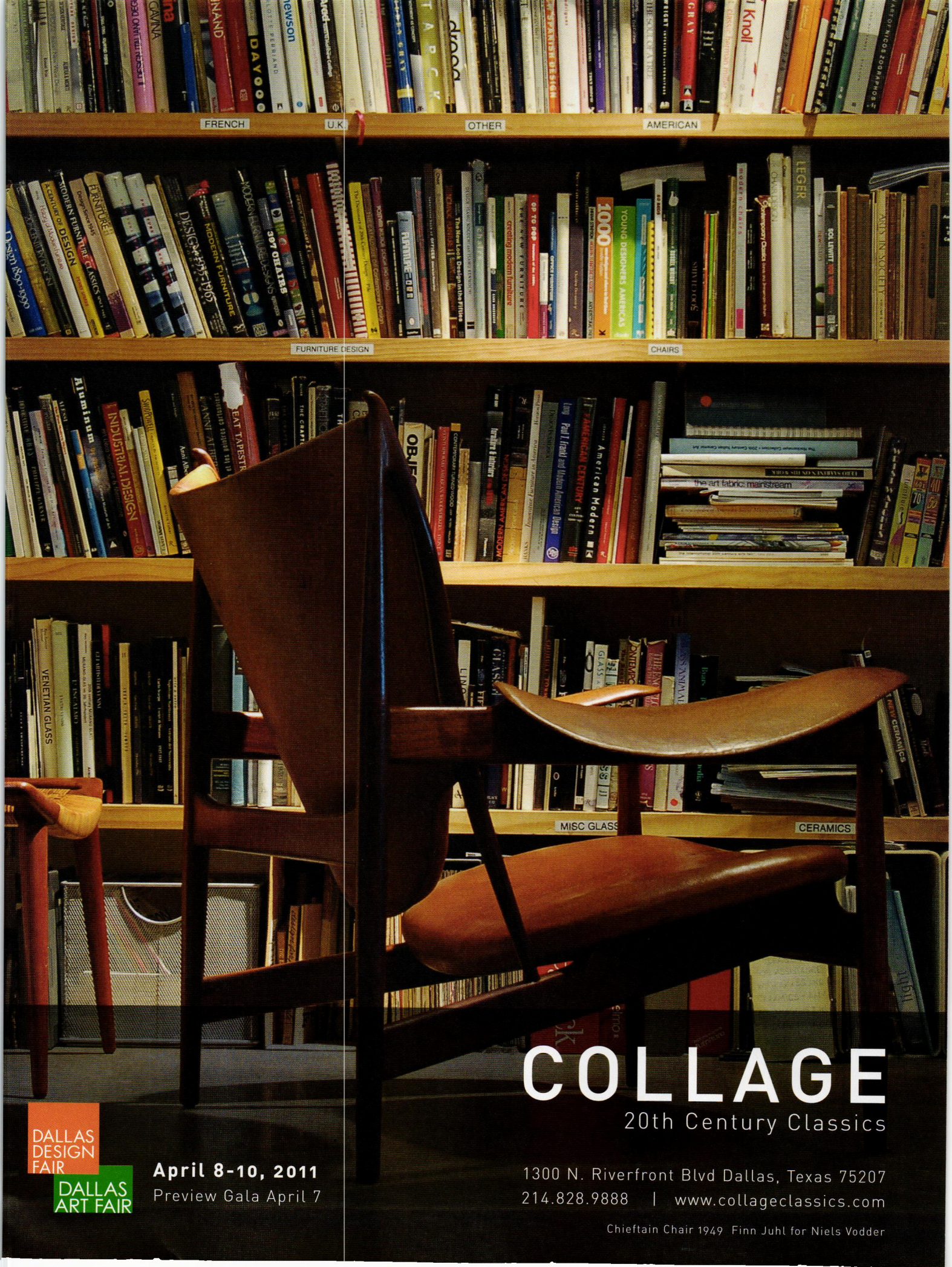
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Sharpest knife in the box

HE WAS KNOWN AS THE "CUTLERY KING," BUT DAVID MELLOR ALSO HELPED RESHAPE BRITAIN'S POSTWAR URBAN LANDSCAPE

By DORIS GOLDSTEIN

WE USE THEM EVERY DAY. They're in our kitchen drawers, or on the dining table. Knives, forks, spoons—and unless they're heirloom silver, we don't give much thought to their history, design, or manufacture. But one man devoted his life to the subject. In the catalogue accompanying the 1998 exhibition *David Mellor: Master Metalworker* at the Mappin Art Gallery in Sheffield, England, historian Fiona MacCarthy (who happened to be Mellor's wife) wrote: "He has been motivated by an extreme perfectionism ... the angle of the blade, the roundness of the spoon, the precise sharpness of the prongs ... all so carefully worked out."

If, as it's said, birthplace is destiny, Mellor is proof. The designer was born in 1930 in Sheffield, the center of English cutlery production since the seventeenth century, and throughout his life the bluff, self-effacing Yorkshireman rarely strayed from his roots. Mellor's father was a toolmaker, and it seems almost inevitable that his son would be drawn to metalwork. In a junior level class at the Sheffield Art School, he made his first piece at the age of twelve: a dessert dish of gilding metal—a type of brass—with a twist rim and handles.

Above: **Pieces from the "Pride"collection, one of Mellor's earliest tableware designs.** Left: **A showcase in the Mellor shop on London's Sloane Square**

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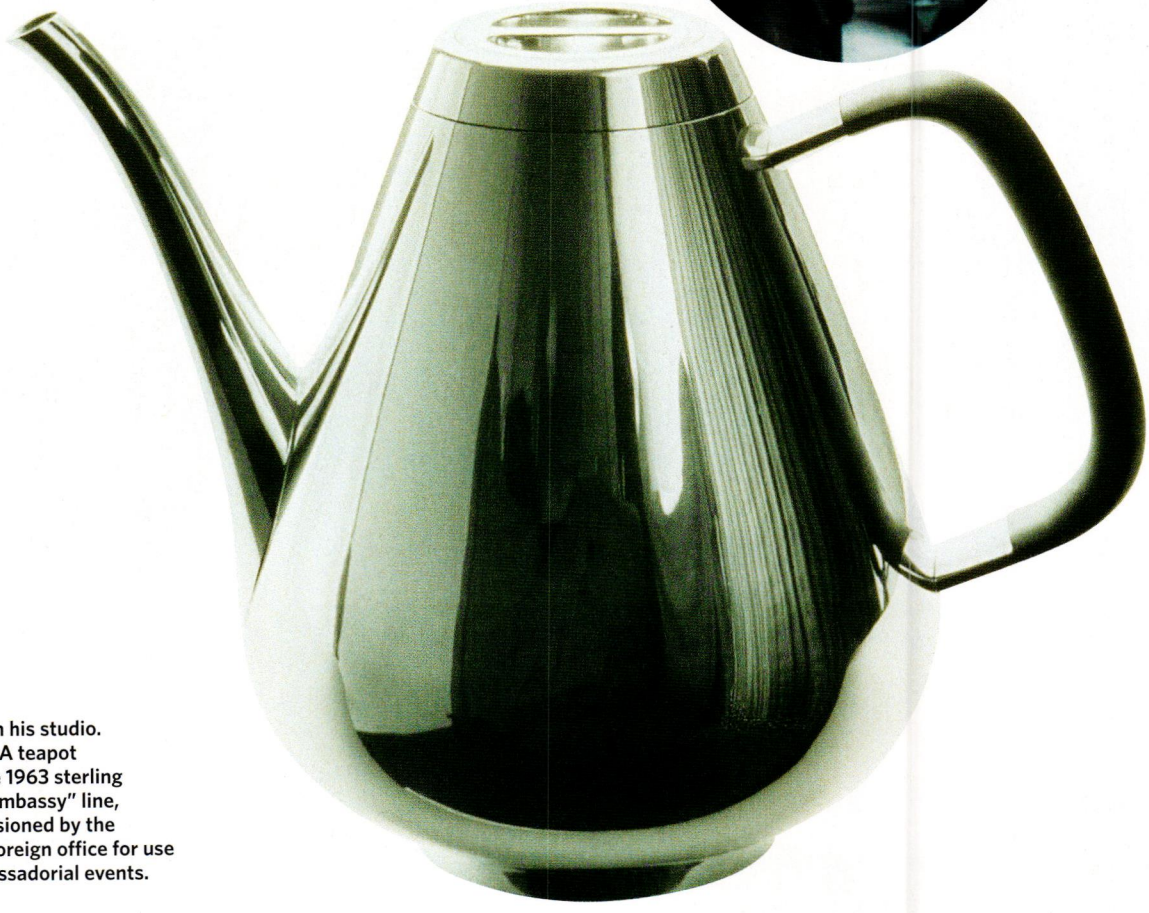
Following two years of service in an army tank corps, Mellor enrolled in 1950 at London's Royal College of Art, where the postwar mission was to revitalize the country's manufacturing by promoting new design. One of Mellor's earliest pieces was a kettle in the arts and crafts style but with a decidedly elongated spout, a signal of his move toward a contemporary sensibility. While at the RCA he designed the prototype for a line of silverplate cutlery called "Pride"—a design

> MELLOR DESIGNED AND MADE **HIS FIRST PIECE OF METALWORK AT AGE TWELVE—A DESSERT DISH**

that was simple, elegant, and restrained. After graduation in 1954 Mellor returned to Sheffield, where he set up a silversmithing workshop and became a design consultant to Walker and Hall, a venerable silverplating company. They put his "Pride" cutlery—which in 1957 won one of England's inaugural Design Centre Awards—into production and followed up with a silverplate tea service of the same name. In 1962 the company opened a new factory devoted to the production



Mellor in his studio. Bottom: **A teapot from the 1963 sterling silver "Embassy" line, commissioned by the British foreign office for use at ambassadorial events.**

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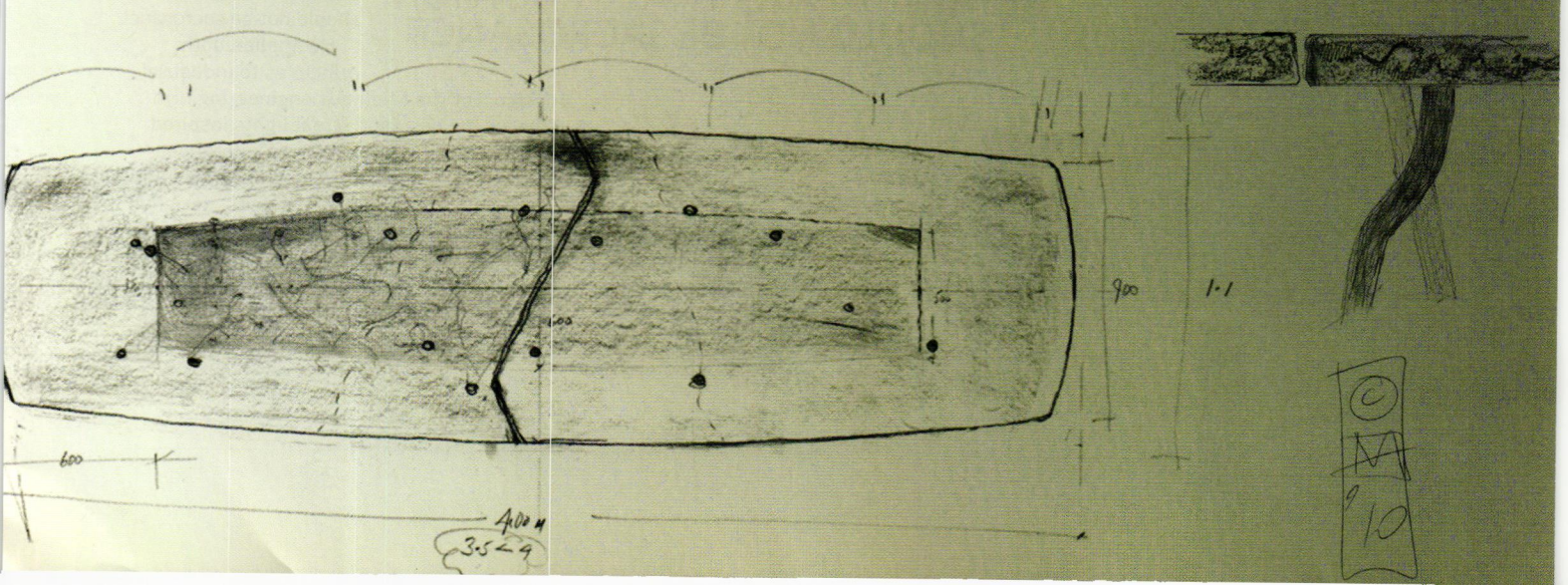

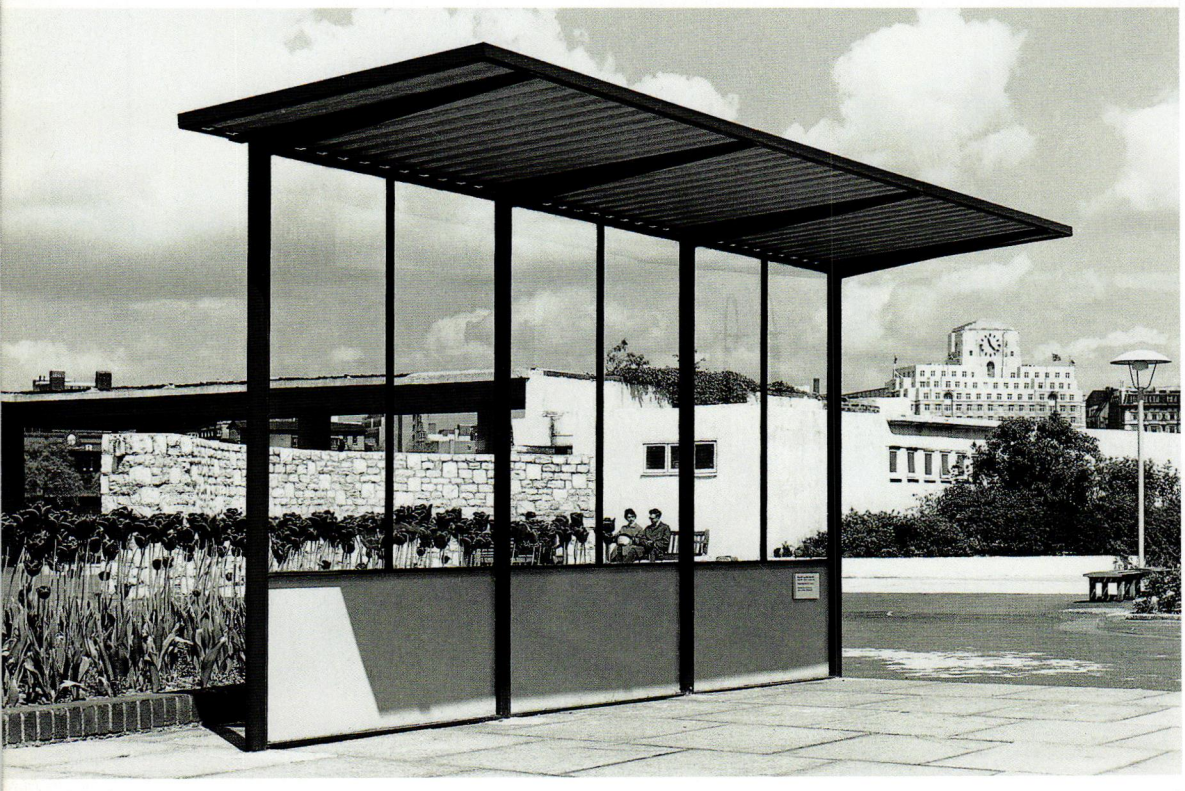

Top and center: **More than 140,000 of Mellor's minimalist bus shelters have been erected throughout the United Kingdom since 1959**

of stainless steel cutlery. The year before, Mellor had developed the "Symbol" collection—the first high quality stainless steel cutlery produced in quantity in Britain.

To put Mellor's career in tableware design in perspective, for centuries cutlery forms had barely changed. The costly materials involved meant that most people purchased only one set during their lifetime, giving manufacturers little incentive to expand beyond existing styles. Mellor's "Symbol" line, employing less expensive stainless steel, opened the door for others to devise new designs and manufacturing methods. This was all of a piece with Mellor's career. He had two guiding principles: first, that good design would enhance the quality of life; and second, that tradition should not be sacrosanct.

> "ONE GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR MELLOR **WAS THAT TRADITION SHOULD NOT BE SACROSANCT**

He applied both principles to industrial design. For the Midlands engineering firm Abacus, he designed street lights inspired by those he had seen in Rome's Borghese Gardens, as well as bus shelters—an estimated 140,000 of these minimalist units, designed to discourage vandalism have been installed since 1959—traffic lights (still in use today), and a new version of the British letter box, which had changed little since 1879.

Mellor's traffic lights designed for the Ministry of Transport debuted on British streets in 1965

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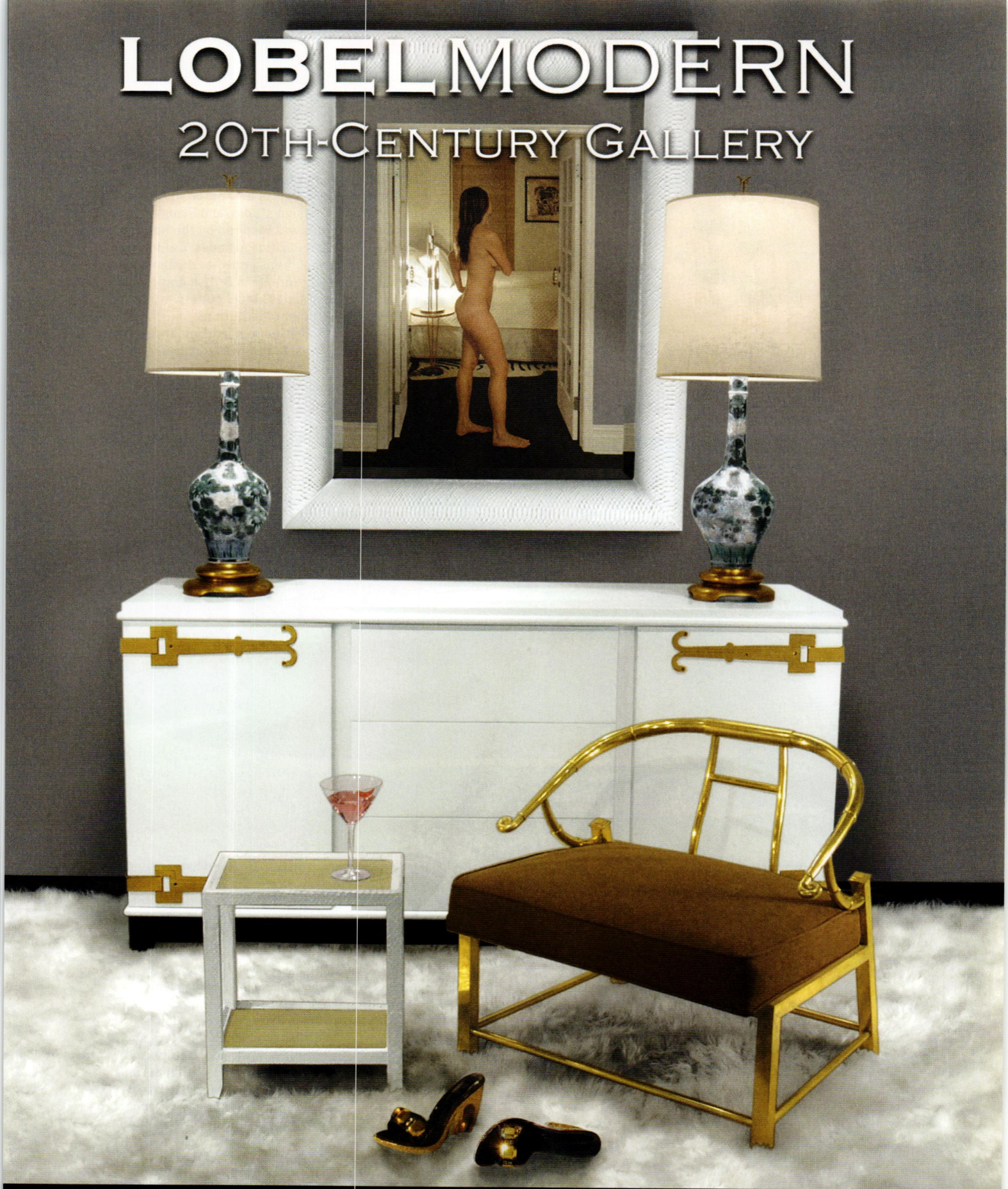
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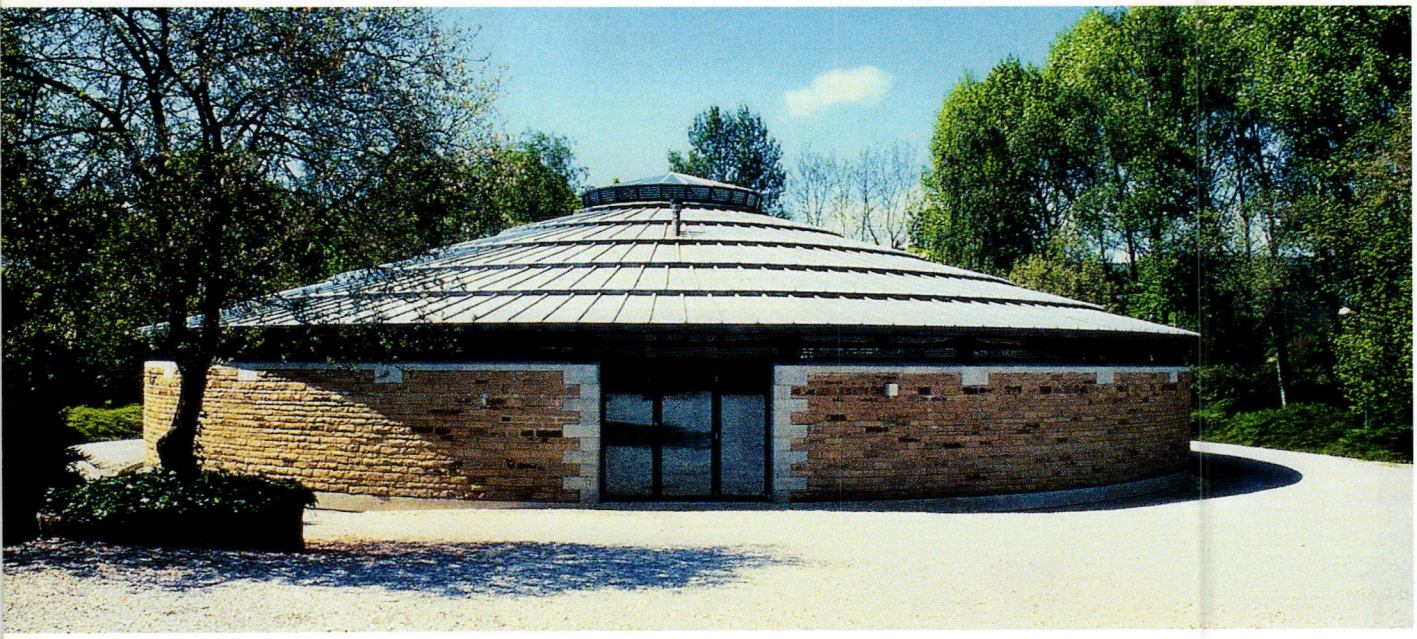
In 1960 Mellor moved to the Sheffield suburb of Broomhall, where he built a glass and timber house containing a workshop, design studio, and living quarters. The architecture was inspired by the home of Charles and Ray Eames in Pacific Palisades, California. Around this time he was commissioned to design new tableware in sterling silver for use in British embassies, and soon after a line of stainless steel cutlery, which he called "Thrift," for government institutions.

> FOUR-SQUARE NORTH ENGLANDER THAT HE WAS, **MELLOR WAS NOT AVERSE TO CATERING TO THE GENTRY**

Four-square north Englander that he was, Mellor was not averse to catering to the gentry. In 1969 he opened a shop on London's chic Sloane Square—Terence Conran's



The exterior and interior of the Round Building, built in 1990 near Sheffield, England, home of the David Mellor Design Ltd. Workshops

first Habitat store on nearby Fulham Road had opened five years earlier—stocking a selection of tableware and kitchenware, most of his own design. As one anecdote goes, Mellor helped Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis purchase a wedding gift, all the while having no idea who she was.

As the years went on Mellor grew frustrated with the fact that larger manufacturers were producing his designs, depriving him of control of the final product. In 1973 he began producing products at Broom Hall, a fifteenth-century building near Sheffield that he turned into a combination design studio, workshop, factory, and home. He hired novice cutlers and employed a rotating system that allowed workers to learn all aspects of cutlery design and manufacture, giving them involvement in all aspects of a project. By the late 1980s Mellor's business

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had outgrown Broom Hall, and he commissioned a new plant in the village of Hathersage, about twelve miles from Sheffield. Built upon the circular foundation of a disused gasworks, the new factory is a design icon called the Round Building, and is still the center of the company Mellor founded.

Pieces from the "Thrift" cutlery line. Bottom: **A "Pride" pattern tea-and-coffee service sold for $3,366 at Bonham's auction house in London in 2009**

MELLOR FIRMLY BELIEVED THAT **GOOD DESIGN WOULD ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE**

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The David Mellor Design Museum opened in 2006 opposite the factory, three years before Mellor's death in 2009. The year he died, an admiring Mellor monograph was published, which included a foreword by his old Sloane Square neighbor Terence Conran, who wrote: "I nominate David Mellor as Britain's most serious, modest and greatest postwar product designer." Well-deserved praise from Caesar.

> MELLOR WAS HAILED BY TERENCE CONRAN **AS BRITAIN'S "GREATEST POSTWAR PRODUCT DESIGNER"**

The David Mellor Design Museum, above, opened in 2006, three years before his death. As shown at right, beyond tableware, the museum showcases public amenities that have become ubiquitous in Britain, from trash bins, to street lights, to the red post box.

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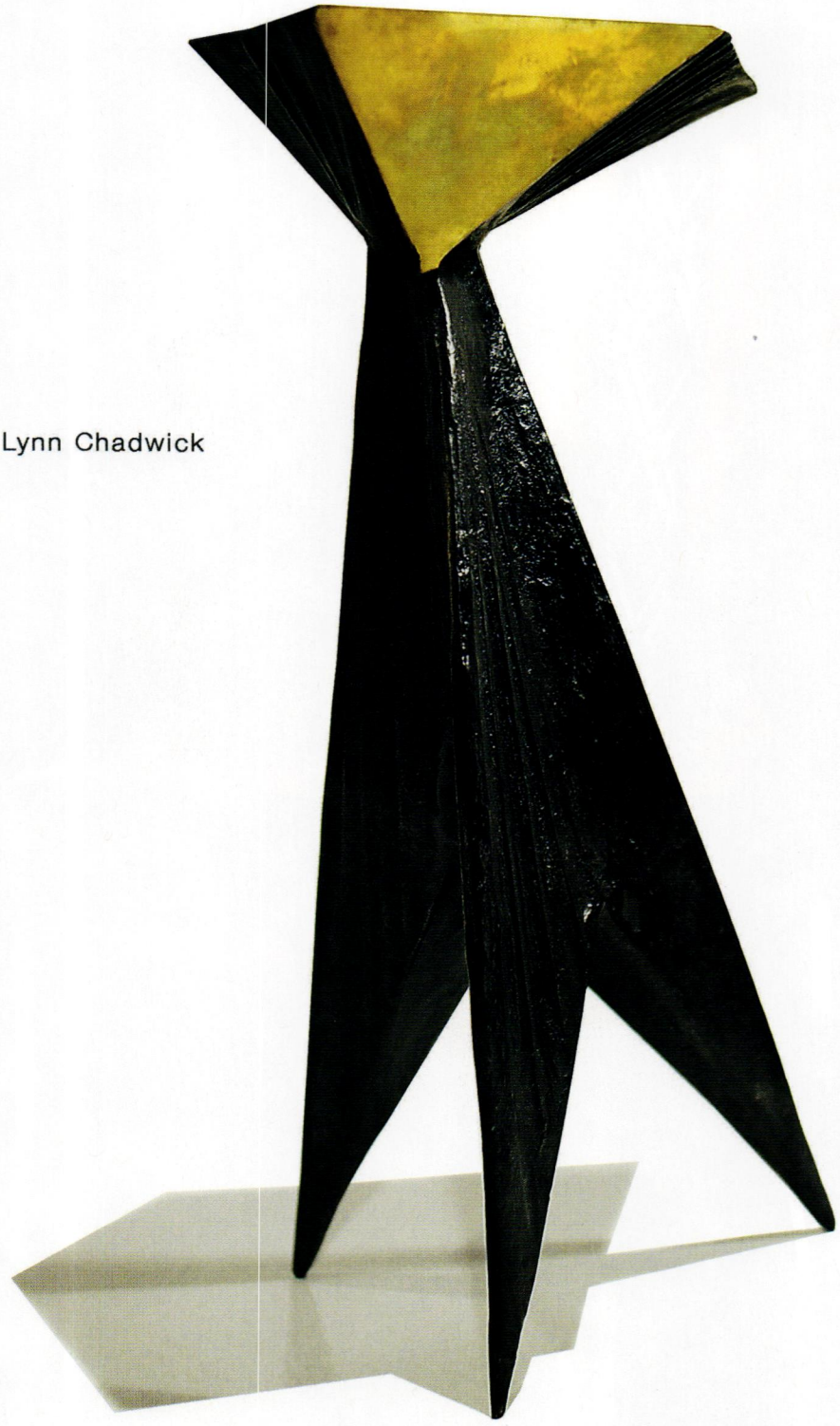

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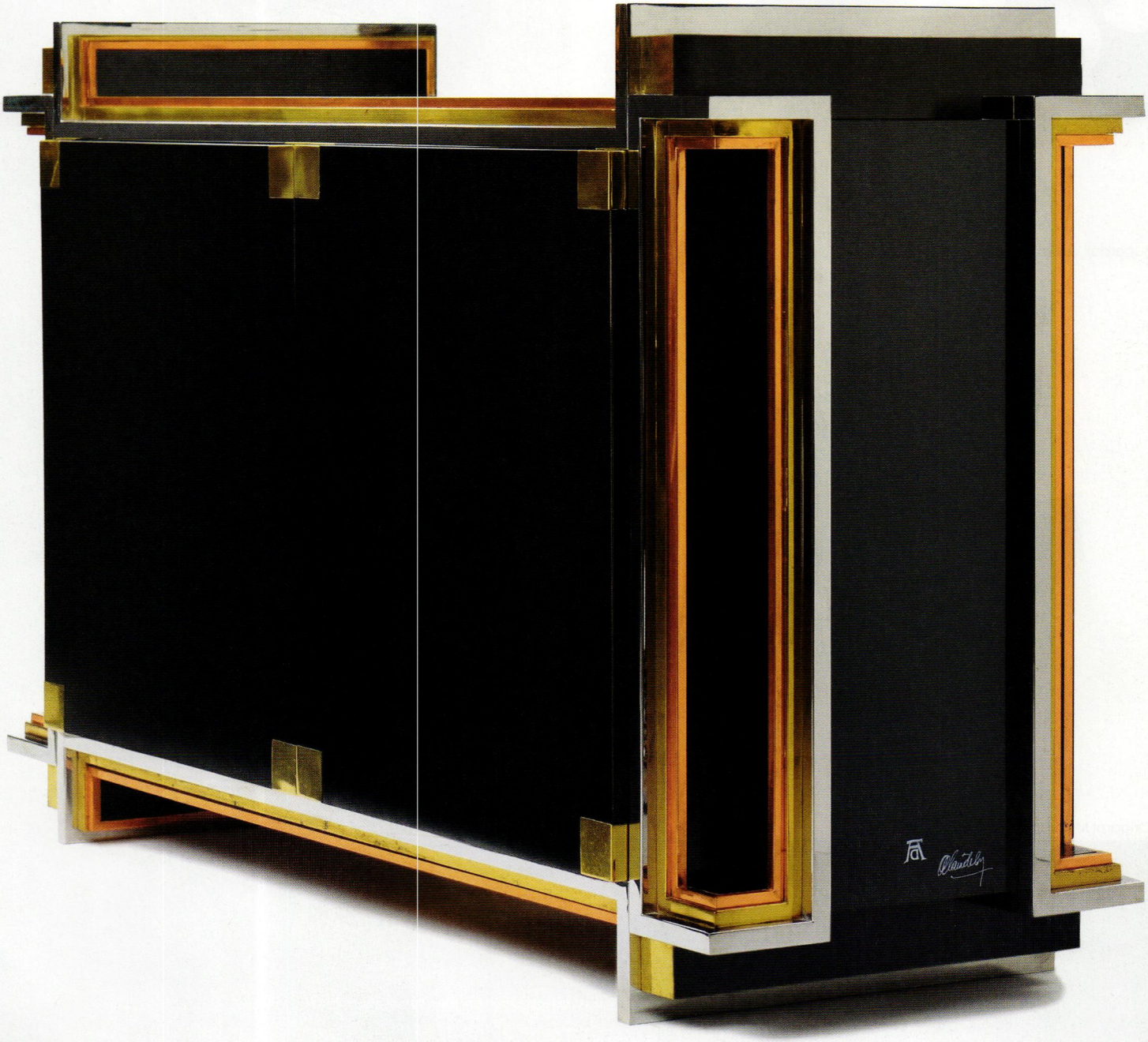
CORSET CHAIR, GLASSICS COLLECTION, DESIGNED BY LORIN JACKSON FOR GROSFELD HOUSE, CIRCA 1939.



Two Door Cabinet, designed by Alain Delon for Jansen Collections, Circa 1972.

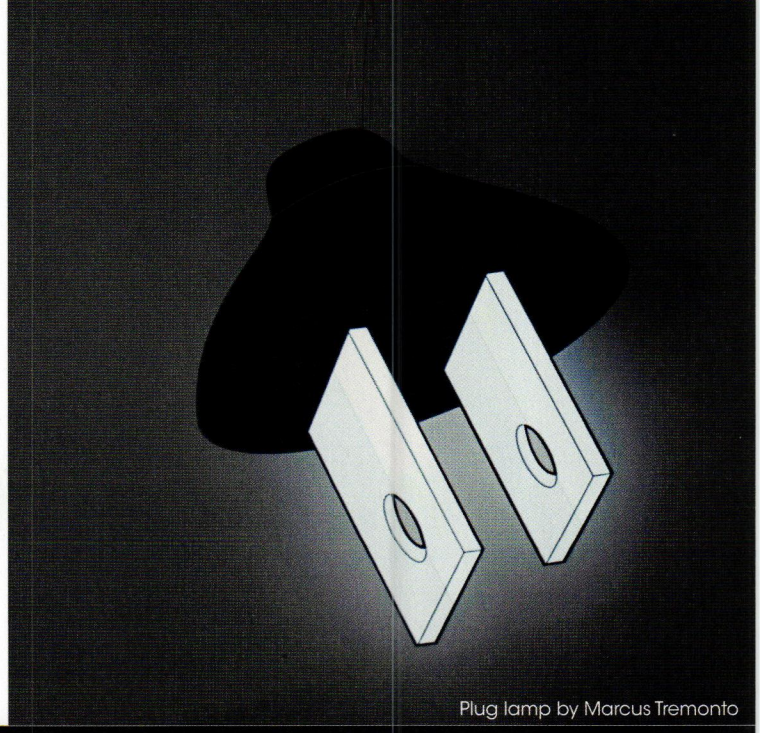
THE APARTMENT

21st century Design Art

Superball lamp by Emmanuel Babled

Reverb chair by Brodie Neill

Origami Mirror chair by P. Michael Wolfson



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Numbers Game

FURNITURE MAKER CARLOS SALGADO OF SCRAPILE CONTEMPLATES HIS OBSESSION—THONET'S ICONIC NO. 14 CHAIR—AND RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW WE VALUE FURNITURE

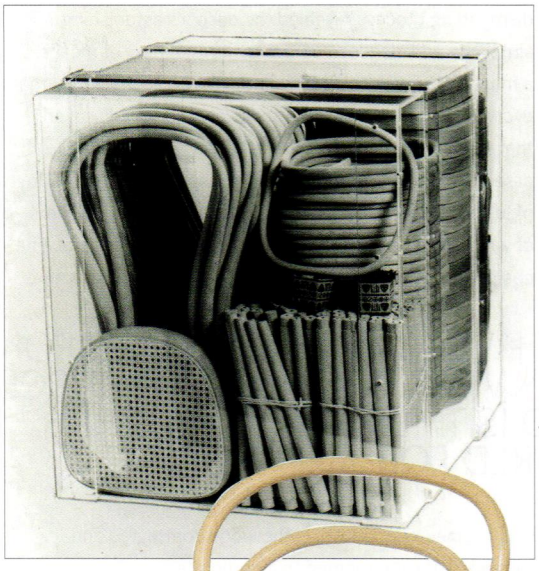
Michael Thonet's No. 14 is perhaps the only chair that can claim a truly democratic, for-the-people status, having sold over fifty million units in the last 151 years (a number that doesn't even include illegal knockoffs). By business standards, that volume is quite successful; by design standards, it's unheard of.

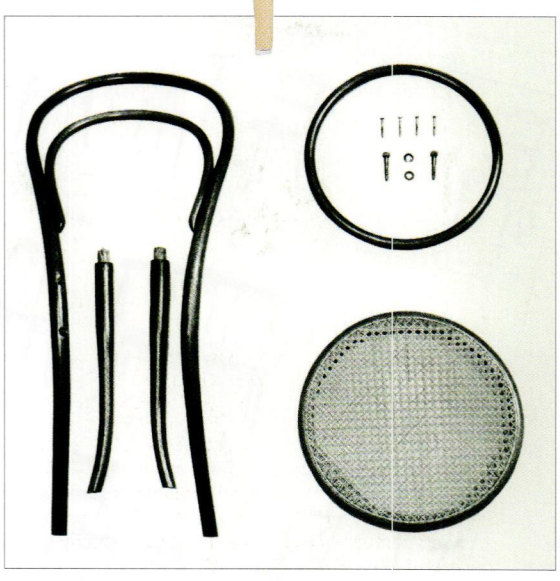
The humble bentwood chair was a global phenomenon. Manufactured in Austria, it was distributed as far away as Asia, Africa, and South America—which is where I first discovered it as a young boy, visiting my grandparents' farm in Colombia. The chairs that stood in the dining room and on the porch had originally been imported by my great-grandfather at the turn of last century for his cafe in downtown Bogotá.

At the time I was too young to give No. 14 much thought, but it became embedded into my design subconscious—and then resurfaced serendipitously. Gazing out my studio window one day in 2006, I spied a No. 14 abandoned on the sidewalk. On closer inspection I realized that the proportions were completely off. It appeared to be made at half scale—most likely a children's version or a salesman's model. Undeterred by multiple layers of purple latex paint covering the chair, I brought it back to my studio.

Left and opposite page lower left: **With just six screw-together components, Michael Thonet's classic 1859 No. 14 bentwood chair was designed for easy assembly and shipping.**

Opposite page, top and lower right: **Like the original, these contemporary reproductions (now called model 214) are sold in various wood stains and with numerous seat, arm, and back options. They are still designed for easy shipping: thirty-six can be packed into a single cubic-meter-sized box for inexpensive worldwide distribution.**





COURTESY OF THONET

The only way to strip the paint and restore the chair was to disassemble it component by component. The dismantling process revealed the design's astonishing simplicity and elegance as well as its economy of means. On a manufacturing level, the chair displayed an efficiency that every designer aspires to. In books on Thonet I discovered that the genius of No. 14's design was that it could be assembled without glue or labor-intensive joinery. It consists of just six beechwood parts, ten screws, and two washers—all of which could be packed flat to reduce shipping costs. The chairs also withstood tropical climates since the structure

> "IS IT POSSIBLE TO DESIGN RESPONSIBLY WITH A LIMITED RESOURCE? AND IS THERE ROOM IN THE WORLD FOR ANOTHER 14?

was engineered to move as the wood contracted and expanded. It even seemed to incorporate sustainable aspects: a minimal use of materials without compromising aesthetic beauty or structure; the ability to ship with a low carbon footprint; and a price point receptive to the masses.

Something stirred inside me. I think everyone has eureka moments, and this was mine. As a furniture maker and designer, creating the "perfect" chair has always been a goal. Perfection doesn't come with specific guidelines. It is about pursuing a personal solution to whatever problem you see fit to solve; for me, that is designing a pack-flat chair that uses minimal material. Secretly, designers want the entire world to covet their creations; it's an ego-driven ambition. But inspecting the No. 14 made me think: Could this be the perfect chair? Was it possible to improve upon?

I found my answer in further research, which uncovered a fundamental flaw. Ironically, the chair was a victim of its own success: it had become so popular that, in order to meet demand, the Thonet company consumed vast swaths of beech trees throughout Europe and was forced to relocate production closer to virgin forests whenever sources were drained. In the late nineteenth century it was almost impossible to

In 2010 product designer Emiliano Godoy digitally reproduced pages of an original Thonet catalogue, altering the designs by "erasing" components to visualize the chair's negative environmental impact in the early 1900s.

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Above: **Nicknamed the "coffee-house chair," the No. 14 was shipped throughout the globe.**

Right: **Another page from Godoy's "Depleted Thonet" series.**

fathom this type of enormous, consumer-driven ecological devastation. Our thinking hasn't evolved much today; most people still consider wood to be a limitless resource.

In 2009 the eco-conscious Mexican product designer Emiliano Godoy produced a conceptual piece, "Depleted Thonet," that visualized this devastation of material resources. Godoy digitally reproduced several pages of the 1904 Thonet catalogue, subtly altering the designs depicted by selectively eliminating components from various pieces—an arm here, a backrest there—to illustrate what might have happened if the company had stayed put, steadily depleting resources. Godoy's exercise showed the No. 14 for what it was: a business model that was out of tune with the availability of its raw material.

THE NO. 14 MADE ME THINK: **COULD THIS BE THE PERFECT CHAIR? WAS IT POSSIBLE TO IMPROVE UPON?**

Sustainability and material supply are two things I take seriously in my own work. Scrapile, the Brooklyn design studio I cofounded with Bart Bettencourt in 2003, produced a furniture line solely from wood waste discarded by local industries. We engineered our own material from the different wood

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and plywood we collected; the particular variety of scraps we recovered usually reflected what was fashionable at the moment. When walnut was popular, that's what we reclaimed and showcased. And the quantity of wood waste available was entirely determined by the health of the economy and local industry. By relying on other companies for our material, our own firm was, in essence, a vulture, living on pickings. As other businesses grew and expanded, so did we. But when the recession hit, our supply of scraps dried up.

A few years ago we tried to design a chair that would reflect our environmental stance and take into account what the No. 14 taught us about economy of production. Unfortunately,

> "OUR CHAIR CREATED TOO MUCH WASTE TO MEET OUR **ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND WAS UNABLE TO MEET NO. 14'S LEVEL OF MANUFACTURING EFFICIENCY**

the one chair we produced created too much waste and proved too labor and energy intensive to meet our rigorous environmental standards. We were unable to combine the level of manufacturing efficiency and economy achieved by the No. 14, and never put our chair into production.

Four years later, I'm still on a quest to design the holy grail of chairs, but further musing about the No. 14 has raised additional questions. Is it possible to design responsibly with a limited resource such as wood? And is there even room in the world for another No. 14? I don't think the market can sustain a wooden chair that sells in the tens of millions, but it can certainly sustain one that has a structure like No. 14's. Namely, all parts can be easily replaced, so you never have to throw it out—a rarity in contemporary design. Now that we are becoming better stewards of our forests, this chair has the potential to educate a younger force of designers. Or perhaps No. 14's true value lies in its ability to remain in continuous production for another 151 years—and its ability to be produced responsibly.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF THONET COURTESY OF SCRAPILE

From top: **A new twist on an old classic: Thonet's roster of models includes intriguing riffs on the 14 chair—like this 214K, which takes bentwood to its logical extreme.**

Scrapile's singular attempt to create a chair made of laminated, reclaimed wood was designed by my copartner Bart Bettencourt in 2006.

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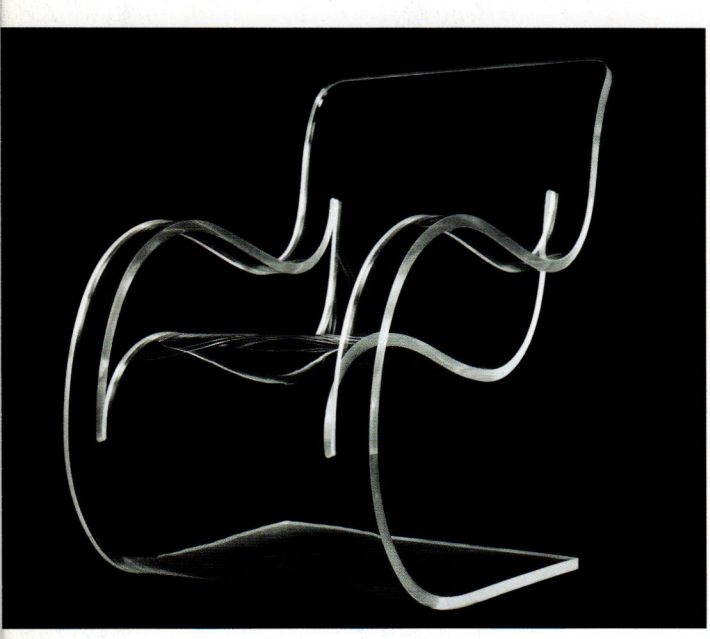
Tastemakers and leading figures in the design world discuss new finds and fresh enthusiasms

Edited by Danielle Devine



▲ FANTASTIC PLASTIC

"New Zealand designer Gregory Smith's uber-sexy new 'Retroflex' chair marries the timeless design of Garth Chester's iconic plywood 'Curvesse' chair of 1944 with the contemporary sensibility of a Philippe Starck. Available only from the fabulous Auckland design gallery Design 55, the 'Retroflex' sports dangerous curves crafted from molded acrylic, yet has a sophisticated minimalism. I think it's destined to become a cult classic."

SHELLEY JAHNKE,
Roundabout® art collection, New Zealand

▶ TRUNK SHOW

"As a young designer working for McMillen Inc., the oldest interior design firm in the country, I often find myself drawn to pieces that embody a modern interpretation of a traditional form. The Italian design firm Dedar's 'La Malle' chest-on-stand immediately caught my eye with its sleek leather cladding, boldly colored lining, and impeccable workmanship. Chests and trunks always kindle the imagination, leaving you wondering what treasures might be hiding inside. When you open the 'La Malle' to reveal a creative mix of material and forms, it enchants you."

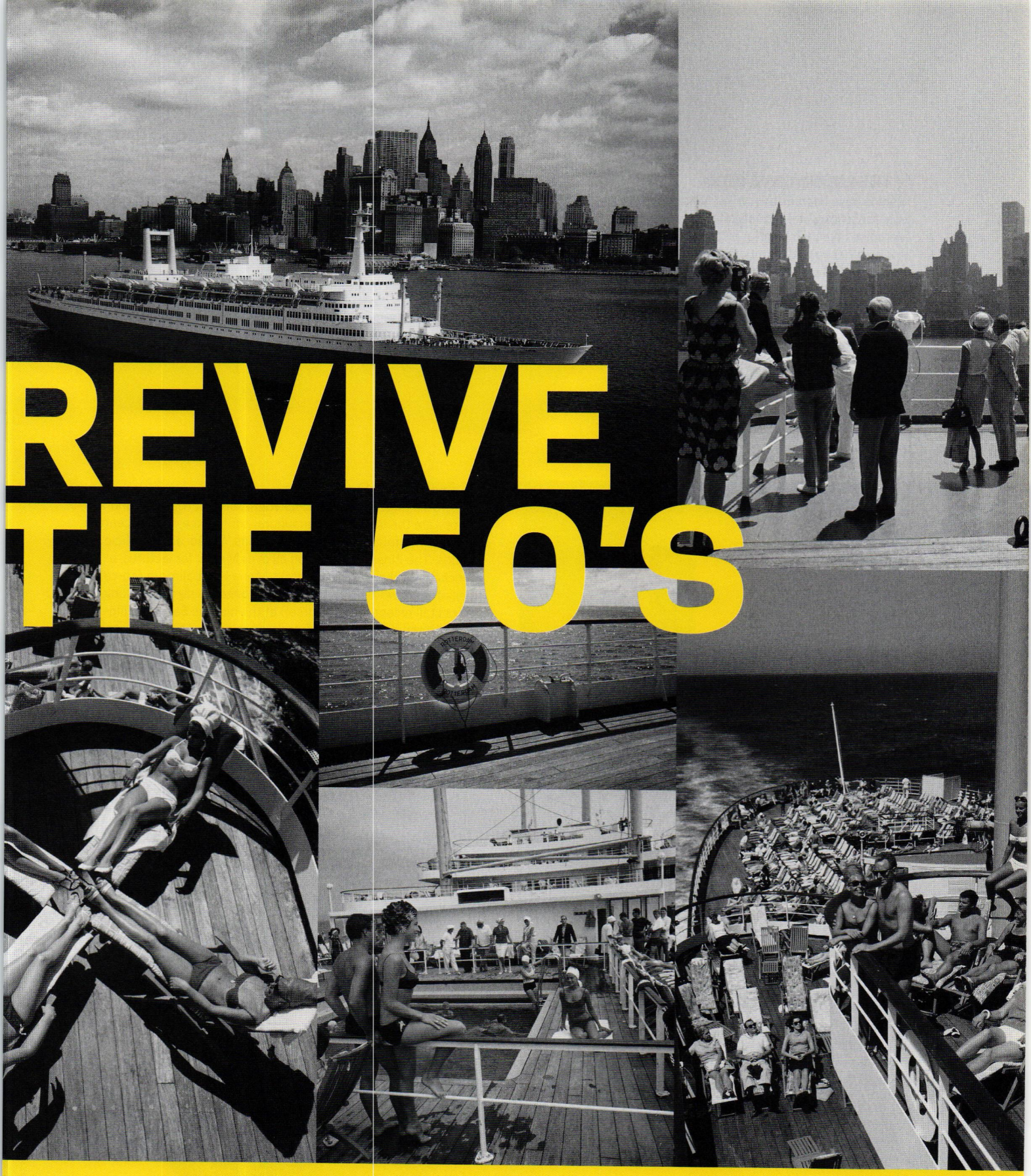
ELIZABETH PYNE,
interior designer, New York

▼ MATINÉE IDYLL

"As everyone knows, before he became an interior designer, the late William Haines was an actor—always playing the dashing young lad role—so he knew all about visual verve. I have always looked to his sense of chicness as an inspiration for interior design and television set decor projects. One of my hobbies is to try and spot Haines's originals in classic movies, like the 'Brentwood' chair that can be seen in the opening of *The Palm Beach Story,* the 1942 Preston Sturges comedy for Paramount Pictures. So I'm very pleased that the company he founded, William Haines Designs, has just reissued his 'Valentine' sofa—a piece of pure modernism that will always be in style."

PETER GURSKI,
set decorator and interior designer, Los Angeles

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF DESIGN 55 COURTESY OF DEDAR SKALICKY PHOTO



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THE SOUND SALVATION

"Radios have been dismissed as utilitarian objects for so long, it is wonderful to see vintage examples take their rightful place at auction among other valued twentieth-century works of design. Radios were born of the industrial age, but their color and design demonstrate that mass production and elegance are not mutually exclusive. Bonhams is the only global auction house with the vision to put a spotlight on these objects [radios will be featured in a December 14 sale in New York], showcasing them as the design masterpieces they are."

LAURA WOOLLEY,
Collector's Lab consultancy, Los Angeles

MEET MIMO

"There's a huge circle on my calendar for next March 11 and 12. Those are the dates for an inaugural conference on mid-century modern Miami architecture—known as 'MiMo' among aficionados. The itinerary takes you all over Miami, for lectures, a luncheon at the Eden Roc Hotel's Mona Lisa ballroom (so-called because it's where Nat King Cole crooned his signature song), a cocktail reception (of course!) at the historic Bacardi building, and tours of iconic landmarks such as the Miami Marine Stadium and residences by Alfred Browning Parker. Can't wait."

REBECCA KLEINMAN,
design writer, Miami

PUTTING ENGLISH ON IT

"I am a huge fan of vintage modern design, but I have to admit that even some of the most brilliant, classic pieces give me a 'been there, done that' sort of feeling. But not long ago I was at the Andrew Martin International gallery in New York and saw something that really impressed me: they had taken an Arne Jacobsen 'Egg' chair and painted a huge Union Jack on its back. (They're a British company, after all.) I know a purist would kill me for saying so, but I thought that gave the chair a whole new pizzazz."

ELENA MUSSO,
fashion consultant, New York

FROM TOP: BONHAMS NEW YORK TROY ROBERTSON ANDREW MARTIN INTERNATIONAL

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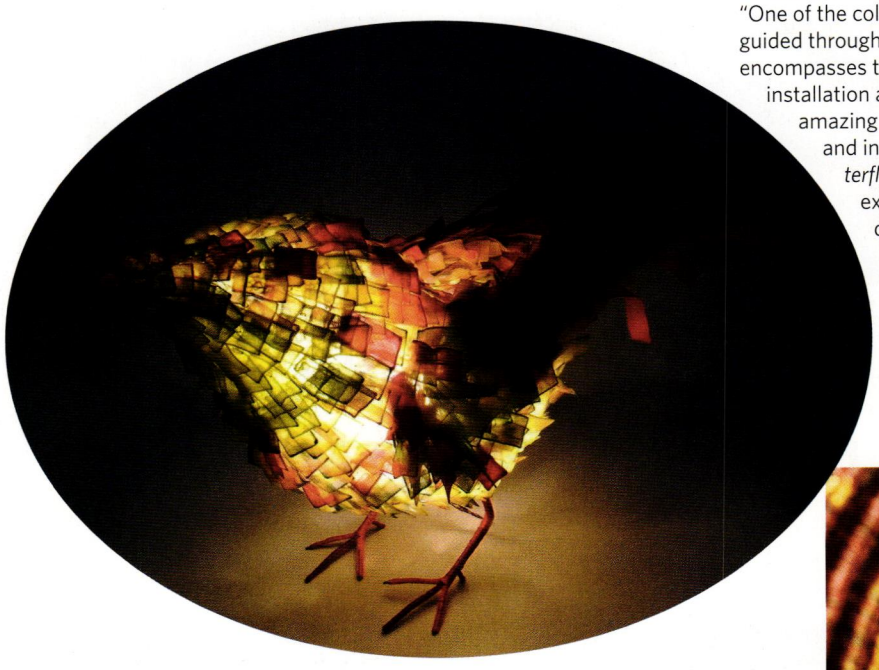


◀ BARNYARD BEACON

"One of the collateral benefits of working in China is being guided through Shanghai by designer Han Feng. Her studio encompasses the range of her interests, from art and fashion to installation and web design. I am particularly partial to her amazing bird lamps crafted from silk. Her work in fashion, and in costume design for productions of *Madama Butterfly* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter,* is inspired by her experiences as an inveterate world traveler. She distills elements of traditional Chinese and Western imagery into work that defines contemporary global culture, firmly supported by her belief in handmade craft."

RICHARD GLUCKMAN,
principal, Gluckman Mayner Architects, New York

▼ WASTE NOT

"I first encountered Piet Hein Eek's work in the Amsterdam store Frozen Fountain in 2002. It struck me as being especially rich in character and texture while still remaining simple and modern in form. The 'Scrapwood' dining table was created as part of Piet's 'Waste Materials Project'—in response to typical manufacturing processes, where 'efficient' production methods often result in wasted raw materials, Eek designed a series of objects where waste materials and skilled manual labor were the focus. The wood scraps are layered by hand and organized by eye to attain a deliberately imperfect character. Each piece has a unique pattern and combination of colors, and a strong visual presence."

ROB FORBES,
Studio Forbes,
San Francisco

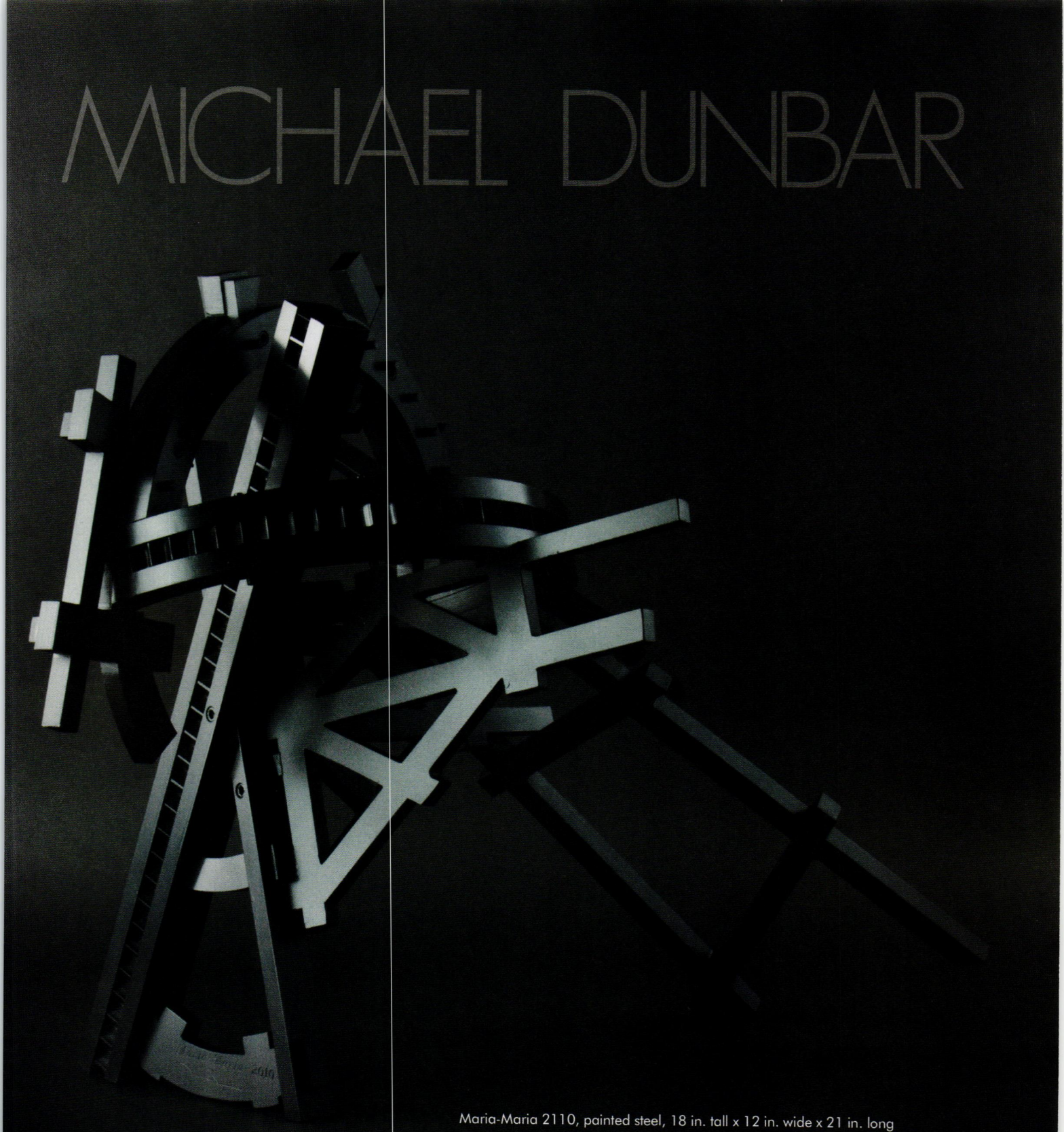
▲ FANTASY FABRICS

"Colombian architect and weaver Jorge Lizarazo has an amazing depth of textile construction knowledge, and the products of his company, Hechizoo, have brought our residential interior design clients another level of sophistication and luxury. We've incorporated his unique forms into carpets, window treatments, and, of course, wall hangings or tapestries for many of our projects. The most interesting aspect of his work is how it lends itself to all kinds of interiors—from super sleek contemporary and mid-century modern to more traditional decors. His materials range from natural, simple raffias and cottons to high-tech metal and even glass threads, which means I can always do something unique for each project. Jorge is more than worthy of the current exhibition of his work mounted by the top-line design dealer Cristina Grajales."

FRANK DE BIASI,
interior designer, New York

FROM TOP: HAN FENG COURTESY OF ANDRES VALBUENA/CRISTINA GRAJALES GALLERY PIET HEIN EEK

MICHAEL DUNBAR



Maria-Maria 2110, painted steel, 18 in. tall x 12 in. wide x 21 in. long

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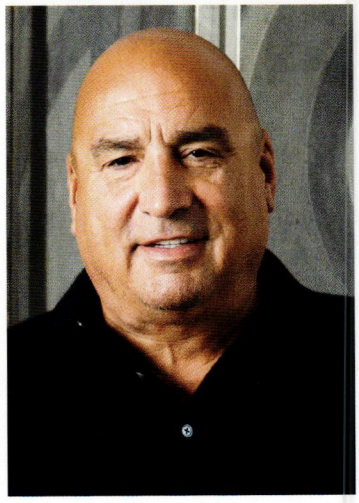
PHOTOGRAPHY and GRAPHIC DESIGN by CURT NEITZKE

Man of Distinction

A CONVERSATION WITH DEALER ANTHONY DELORENZO, WHO, STARTING FROM MODEST ROOTS IN NEW YORK CITY, IS NOW ONE OF THE PREMIER TASTEMAKERS IN ART DECO AND MODERN DESIGN

Interview by Peter M. Brant



DeLorenzo in his Madison Avenue gallery.

Thirty years in the business, New Yorker Anthony DeLorenzo (known to all as "Tony") has become one of the pre-eminent dealers in twentieth-century design—most particularly pieces from the art deco period. In that field he is regarded as the top gallery owner in New York, if not the entire United States. His gruff, plain-spoken demeanor masks a high degree of erudition, but DeLorenzo credits his business success to an almost mystical power to forecast what the "next big thing" will be in the market. Normally reticent with the media, DeLorenzo sat down with Peter M. Brant—his friend, the owner of this magazine, as well as Interview, Art in America, and The Magazine ANTIQUES, and a collector of stature in the fields of art and design—to discuss DeLorenzo's career, the state of the design market today, and its future.

Like many dealers and collectors, DeLorenzo seemingly has what a psychologist might call an "acquisitive disorder"—a need to accrue more, even when you have a lot as it is. This December, in a three-part sale at Christie's New York—highlighted by an evening sale on the 14th—DeLorenzo will sell more than 127 pieces from his personal collection and business inventory. (DeLorenzo explains that he is simply trying to downsize; Brant joshes that Tony is always saying that ...) Lots range from Eileen Gray's "Sirène" chair of 1912, made of lacquered wood with a velvet seat cushion (estimate: $2 million–$3 million), to a velour-upholstered Vladimir Kagan sofa, estimated to sell for $8,000 to $12,000. The auctions portend to be among the top events of the season.

PETER M. BRANT **We have known each other for a long time. What were you doing before you got into the furniture business?**

TONY DELORENZO I was in scrap metal, in the 1960s, in Brooklyn.

Tell me first how you got interested in furniture.

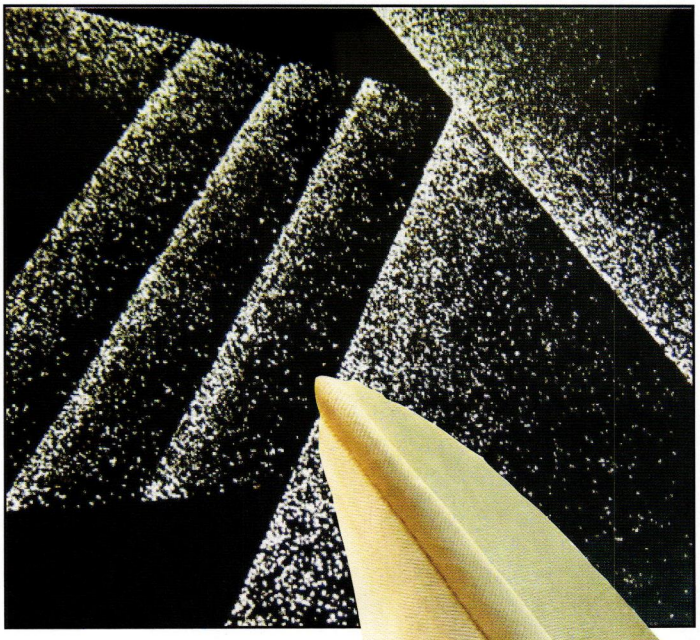
What happened was I bought a house on Long Island, while I was kind of making money in the scrap business. And the guy who owned the house said, "You want old fixtures?" I said, "I'll take them, how much?" He said, "Thirty-five bucks, except for this one. It's three thousand." I said, "Three

A stainless steel "Ring" chair designed in 1967 by Maria Pergay, one of DeLorenzo's favorite late 20th-century designers. When Pergay's work was first exhibited, in Paris in 1968, it became an immediate sensation among fashionable collectors such as Pierre Cardin. This example sold at Wright auctions for $38,750 in 2009. The "Ring" chair, one of her first creations in stainless steel, launched a career working in the material.

FROM TOP: ELLEN SILVERMAN PHOTO WRIGHT

The star of the evening sale portion of Christie's DeLorenzo auction in New York—carrying an estimate of $2 million to $3 million—is Eileen Gray's 1912 "Sirène" chair, made with a black lacquered wood frame and a splat carved in the form of a mermaid riding a seahorse.

CHRISTIE'S IMAGES LTD 2010



The chair and vanity shown here were a circa 1927 collaboration between the masterful art deco era designers Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann—whose work, DeLorenzo believes, will be the next big thing at the top end of the design market—and Jean Dunand. The former designed the pieces while the latter covered them in black lacquer with eggshell accents. A detail of this unusual finish is shown above.

DELORENZO

AS BRANT NOTES, DELORENZO'S FORMULA FROM HIS VERY BEGINNINGS IN THE DESIGN **MARKET WAS ALWAYS TO BUY THE BEST**

thousand?" He said, "Yeah, it's Tiffany." I said, "Tiffany, okay." And it stuck in my mind.

So one day I went to [New York's premier Louis Comfort Tiffany and Tiffany Studios dealer] Lillian Nassau's—she was the queen—and I looked at a lamp that blew me away. I had three thousand in my pocket and Lillian said, "nine thousand five hundred, young man." I said "ninety-five hundred?" and I left. But it was on my mind. Three months later it was still there. The price was now twelve thousand five. We talked again two months later and she offered it to for me fifteen thousand. I thought: "This is the business for me."

I bought one of my first pieces of art deco furniture from her, and it was great. I bought it in 1969 or 1970. I remember it was thirty-five hundred, and that was like a fortune to me.

But, with your interest in the lamp, your first association with decorative arts was really in glass.

Yeah, I was a Tiffany lamp collector by 1977 or '78, and I had a little shop on Long Island. I didn't have a bunch of money, but I was kind of collecting. All of a sudden I had two European dealers come to me, a French guy and a German guy. And I said, "Look I'm going to take you to my home, I've got some really great stuff at home." I had, at that time, thirty-eight really prime Tiffany lamps and two pieces of [art deco master designer Émile-Jacques] Ruhlmann furniture that I had bought cheap. They didn't pay attention to the lamps. "How much for the Ruhlmanns?" they asked. "How much for those?" I said, "wait a minute ... I took you here for the lamps!" I started to think, "you know, this is not a universal market, Tiffany lamps. I'm not going to get caught when the music stops." So I went into twentieth-century furniture.

When was the first time you went to Paris?

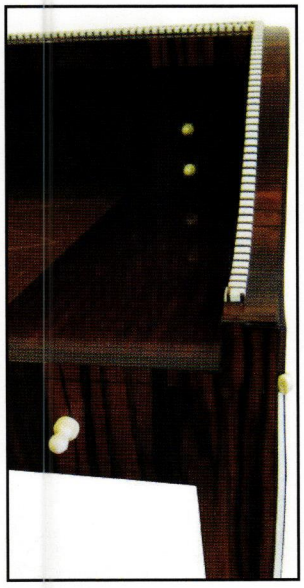
It was 1979. The Concorde was $2,900 round trip.

When you went to Paris, you first started to deal with...?

I dealt with the top dealers and I got fleeced. At that time I might have spent three hundred— five hundred—thousand,

> IN THE SIXTIES, INTEREST IN ART DECO DESIGNS HAD BEEN DEAD **FOR NEARLY THIRTY YEARS. IT WAS JUST USED FURNITURE. THAT WAS THE TIME TO BUY**

A circa 1925 roll-top desk by Ruhlmann in Macassar ebony with ivory ornament. This "Boudoir du Collectionneur" model has a retractable slatted top set within a raised border of ivory and ebony dentils. The drawers and fitted interior—which has a gilt-detailed brown leather writing surface shown below—are further ornamented in ivory.



which was a lot of money for me at that time. And when I came back I found out I had overpaid for everything. So then I hired a guy from Long Island to teach me how to buy. And that's how I started.

Did you find that provenance was very clear?

No. It was all loose then, because it was all cheap. Don't forget I'm buying 1950s pieces and art deco in '79.

But your formula from the very beginning was always to buy the best.

Right.

To try to get the best things and be very patient. Wait for your price...

Wait for my price. I don't mind overpaying, but I would prefer to overpay at auction. Because it's a record. Gives you a little press...

What's the most exciting thing you ever bought? Really made your heart tick?

Well, there are some friends of mine in Colorado that I built a collection for— Michael Chow— in 1988.

Part of his collection?

No, I bought it all. Everything: 93 pieces. It was a big, big deal—there was a *New York Times* article.

DELORENZO

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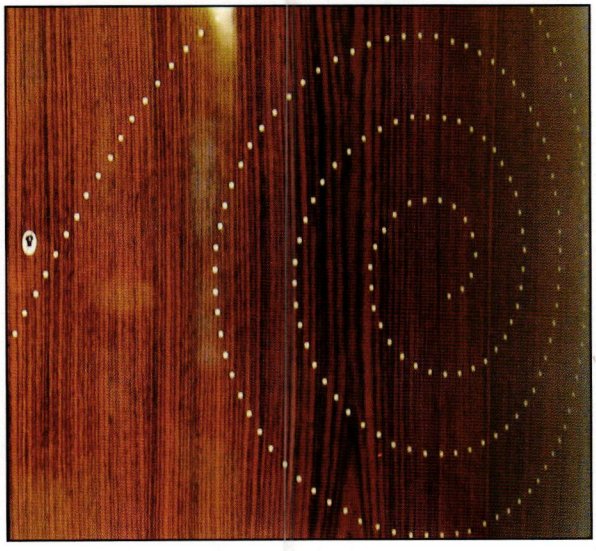
This circa 1919 rosewood cabinet by Ruhlmann is in a demi-lune shape. The designer used carved ornament—such as the floral garland on the drawer front—far less often than his peers. What gives this piece Ruhlmann's signature panache are the spirals of inset ivory dots. See detail below.

I THINK THAT THESE DAYS, MAYBE THERE'S A LITTLE MORE **INTEREST IN BEING IN THE MONEY BUSINESS RATHER THAN THE ART AND DESIGN BUSINESS**



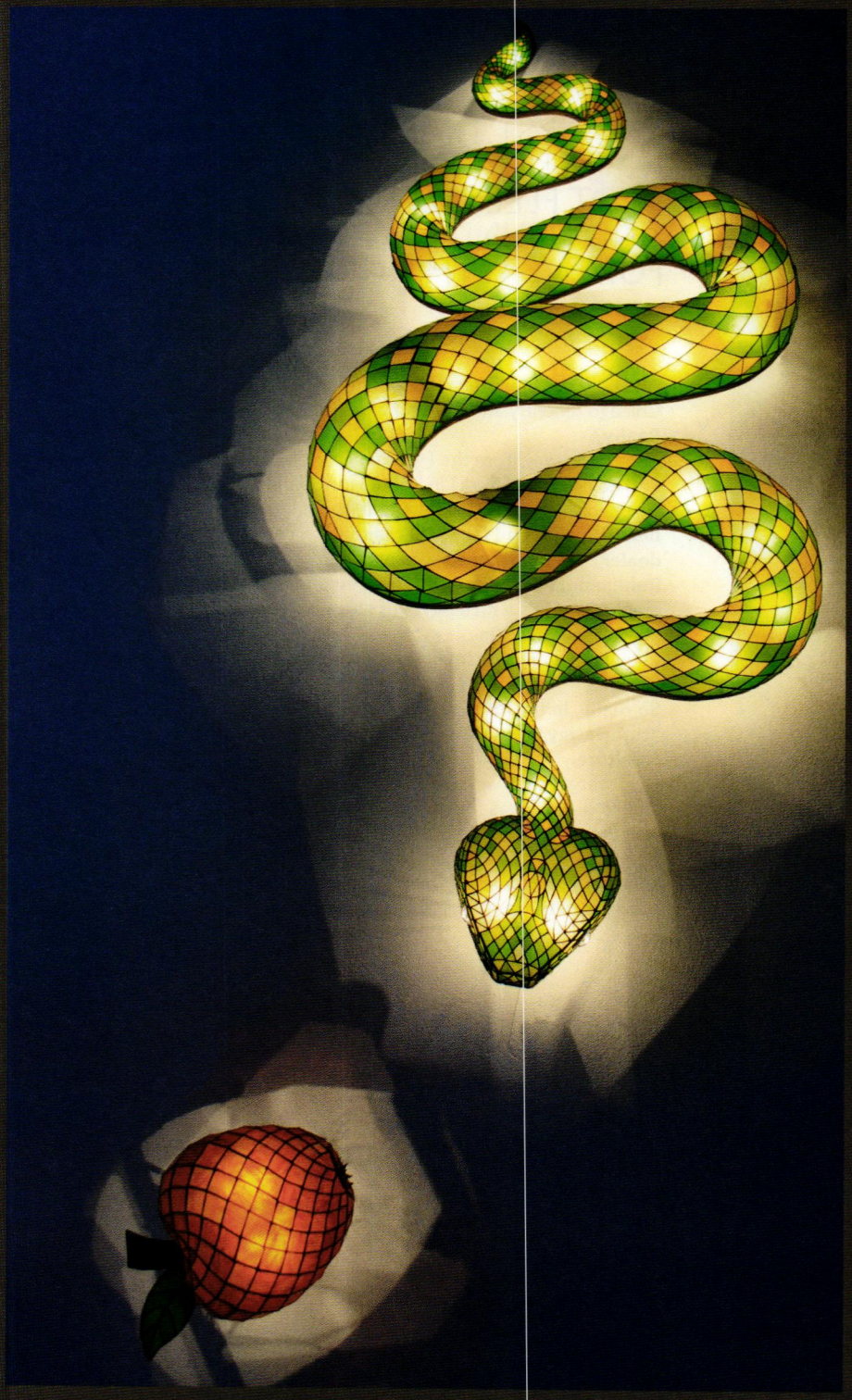
DELORENZO

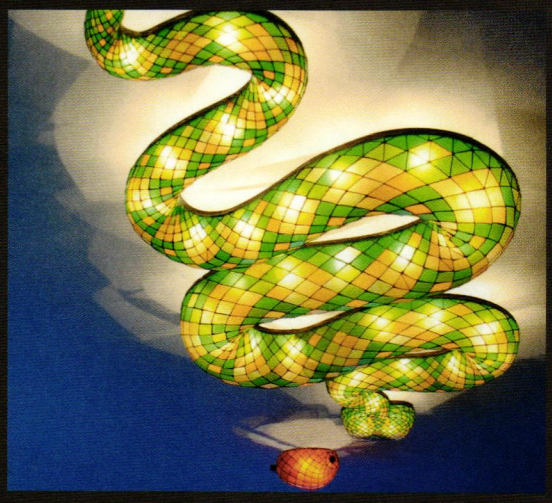
Yeah, you know it's interesting, because I was just visiting Michael at his house in California. And of course he has a lot of Ruhlmann there. He's basically filled his house with design. He's an interesting guy. I like him very much. And he's really a man of great taste.

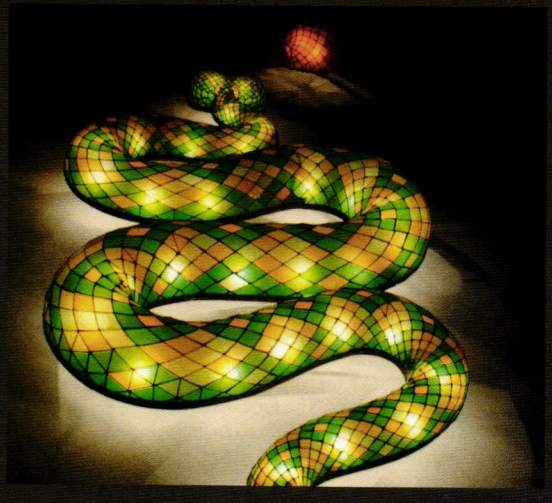
He started out as a collector. He was a stamp collector, or something. We're at one of the sales here in New York. We were really good friends and we were looking at this table and I said, "Hey Michael, what do you think of this?" And he said, "What do you want that piece of shit for?" And then he bought it. He said, "That's your first lesson." I said, "Okay. I'm a good learner."

That's a great story. Getting back to Lillian Nassau: she had a great Ruhlmann dining room set in her shop for years. Andy [Warhol] bought a lot of things from her. Did Andy ever buy from you?

Hans van Bentem







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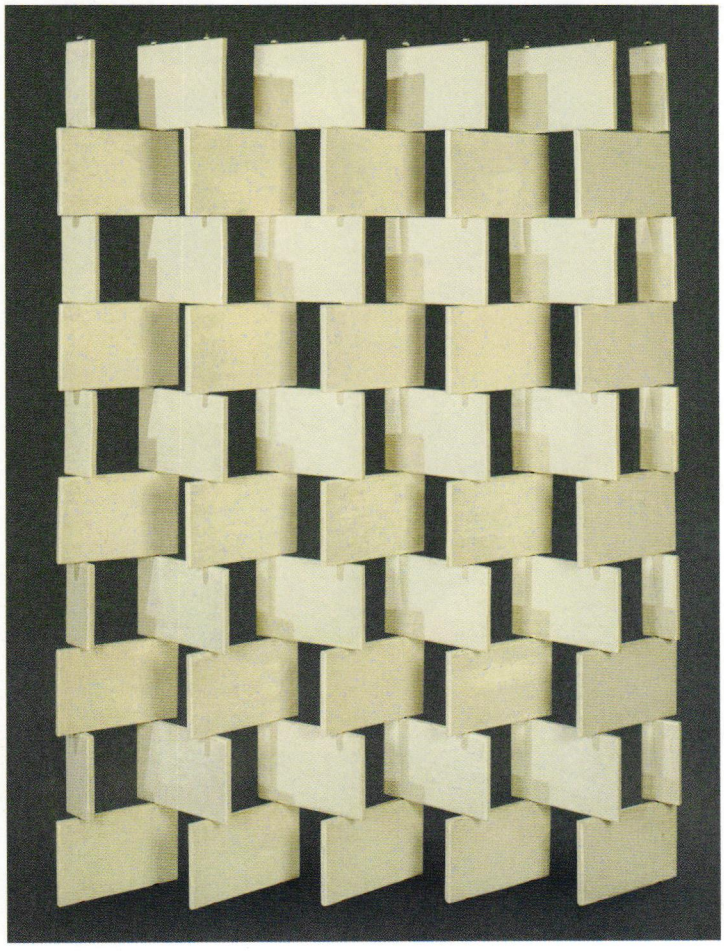
> THE FIRST TIME I WENT TO PARIS I WENT TO THE TOP DEALERS AND **I GOT FLEECED. I CAME HOME AND FOUND OUT I HAD OVERPAID FOR EVERYTHING**



Andy did not buy from me, but oddly enough I went to Chicago recently and his dining room table was there.

Really?

It made its way from the [Warhol estate auction at Sotheby's in New York] in '88 to France and then to Chicago. Nice table. I didn't get it, though ...

Ileana Sonnabend [the late Manhattan contemporary art dealer] put together a great art deco collection. A lot of Ruhlmann. I think Antonio [Homem, her adopted son] has most of it. He's a nice guy. But she started buying in flea markets in the '60s.

I bought a couple of small things from her. She traded with me.

So really, in the '60s, art deco was just really kind of "throwaway," you know—it was kind of like awkward furniture.

Don't forget they were still working in that style in 1938, and so there it was thirty years later—"used furniture." That was the time to buy.

Yeah. It generally takes, what, like twenty years for something to go out of favor? So now it's back in fashion and it's pretty rare to find great art deco.

Top: **The DeLorenzo sale includes one of Eileen Gray's most famous creations: a room divider circa 1922 to 1925. The piece is composed of painted wooden blocks—arrayed in five horizontal and ten vertical rows—that are joined and articulated on vertical steel rods. The lot carries an estimate of $700,000 to $1 million.**

Right: **The auction also features a desk by French designer Jean-Michel Frank sheathed in Hermès leather. The piece likely dates to 1924, when Frank designed a furniture collection for the luxury goods house. The desk demonstrates the simple lines that characterize much of Frank's work, though he frequently finished his pieces in lavish materials. The desk is expected to sell for between $300,000 and $500,000.**

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A patinated-bronze armchair by Armand-Albert Rateau, designed circa 1919 to 1920, will go on the block, and is estimated to fetch $1.5 million to $2 million. This chair is one of eight known examples, six of which, this one included, come from a suite of furniture commissioned by the wealthy American collectors Florence and George Blumenthal for the pool patio of their Manhattan town house. Appropriately, Rateau designed them with a marine theme, incorporating an intricate combination of linked cast-bronze shells and fish—and a fish scale motif on the legs and stiles.

The market's been pretty well mined.

So tell me: you've always been able to go on to the next level. You went into art deco. You were one of the first to collect furniture from the 1950s. You also started early buying 1960s stuff by [American studio designer] Paul Evans and people like that. So what do you think will be the next period of collectable furniture? Meaning how far back—say the '70s, the '80s?

One big problem with '70s pieces is that a lot of designers never kept good records, so you don't know what the heck they did. I like [studio designer] George Nakashima because his records are methodical. You can get a piece and [his daughter] Mira can tell you that it was carved in 1970 for so-and-so and sold for such-and-such. I kind of like that. Provenance is always there.

So what do you think of the idea today in modern furniture of making pieces in numbered editions?

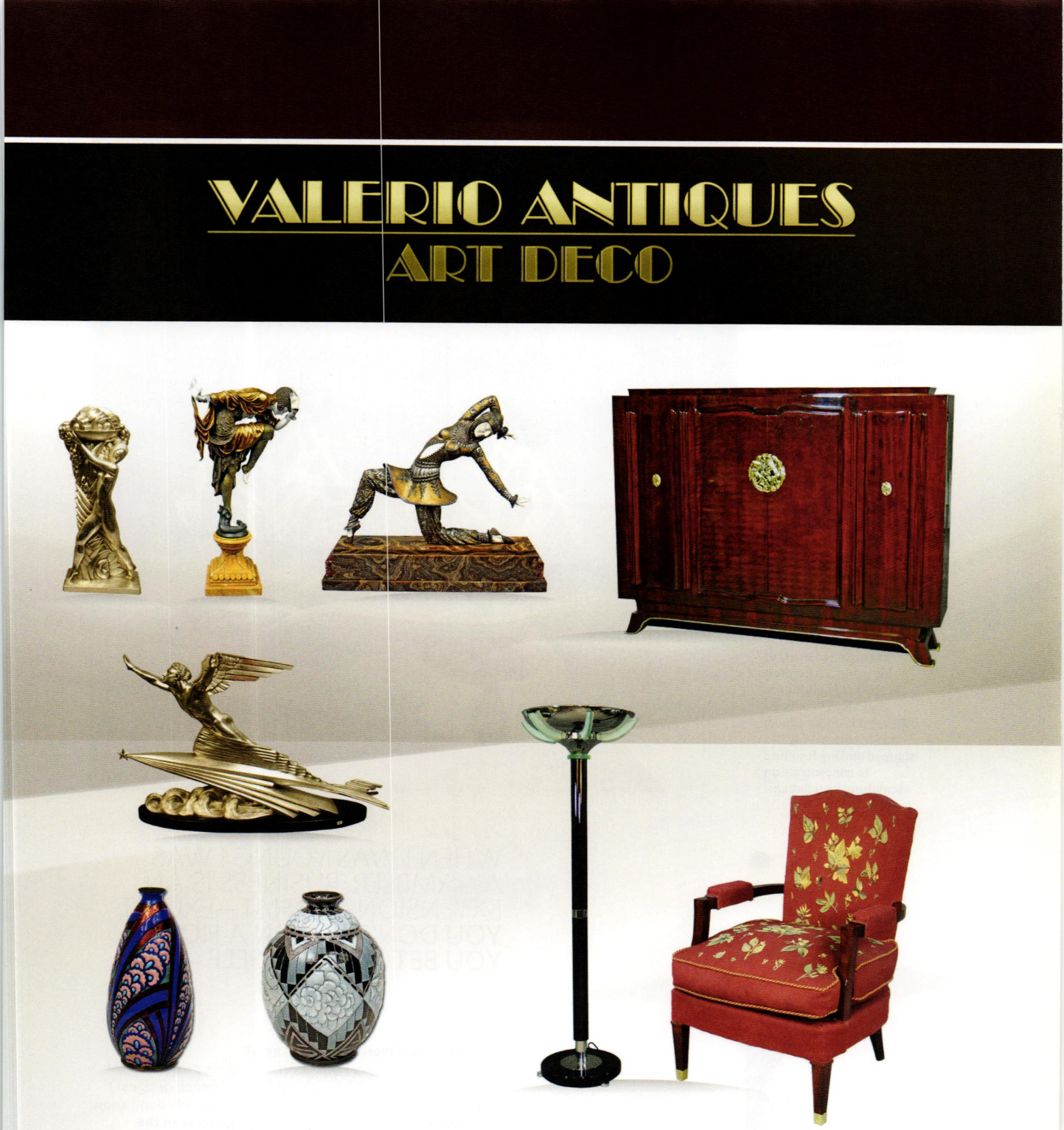
That's a whole different angle. I don't know. I don't understand it.

I think that it's basically a different way of marketing designer furniture, so you can know specifically how many there are, instead of having no idea. It gives a design some cachet.

I don't know. I think that these days maybe there's a little more interest in being in the money business than being in the art and design business. If a designer has talent and his work is followed by a lot of collectors, then the edition will be twelve instead of one or

DELORENZO

VALERIO ANTIQUES
ART DECO



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These rare "Leaf" table lamps by Maria Pergay, made of chrome-plated brass with silk shades, sold at Wright for $21,600 in 2007. The stylized naturalistic form is unusual for Pergay, whose pieces generally have a hard-edged, mechanized look.

Bottom: One of a pair of steel table lamps made by the American artist Albert Paley in 1992. Expressive, sinuous wrought vine-like forms characterize many of his works. DeLorenzo is stockpiling furniture by Paley because he believes it is undervalued, and because Paley has stopped making furniture to concentrate on sculptural installations.

> WHEN I WAS YOUNG I WAS A GAMBLER. BUSINESS IS AN EXTENSION OF THAT—EXCEPT **YOU DON'T BET ON A HORSE, YOU BET ON YOURSELF**

two or three.

Who are your favorite '70 designers?

I like [French designer] Maria Pergay. I think probably a gal who will probably start to bring prices is [French designer] Claude de Muzac, which is a name a lot of people don't know.

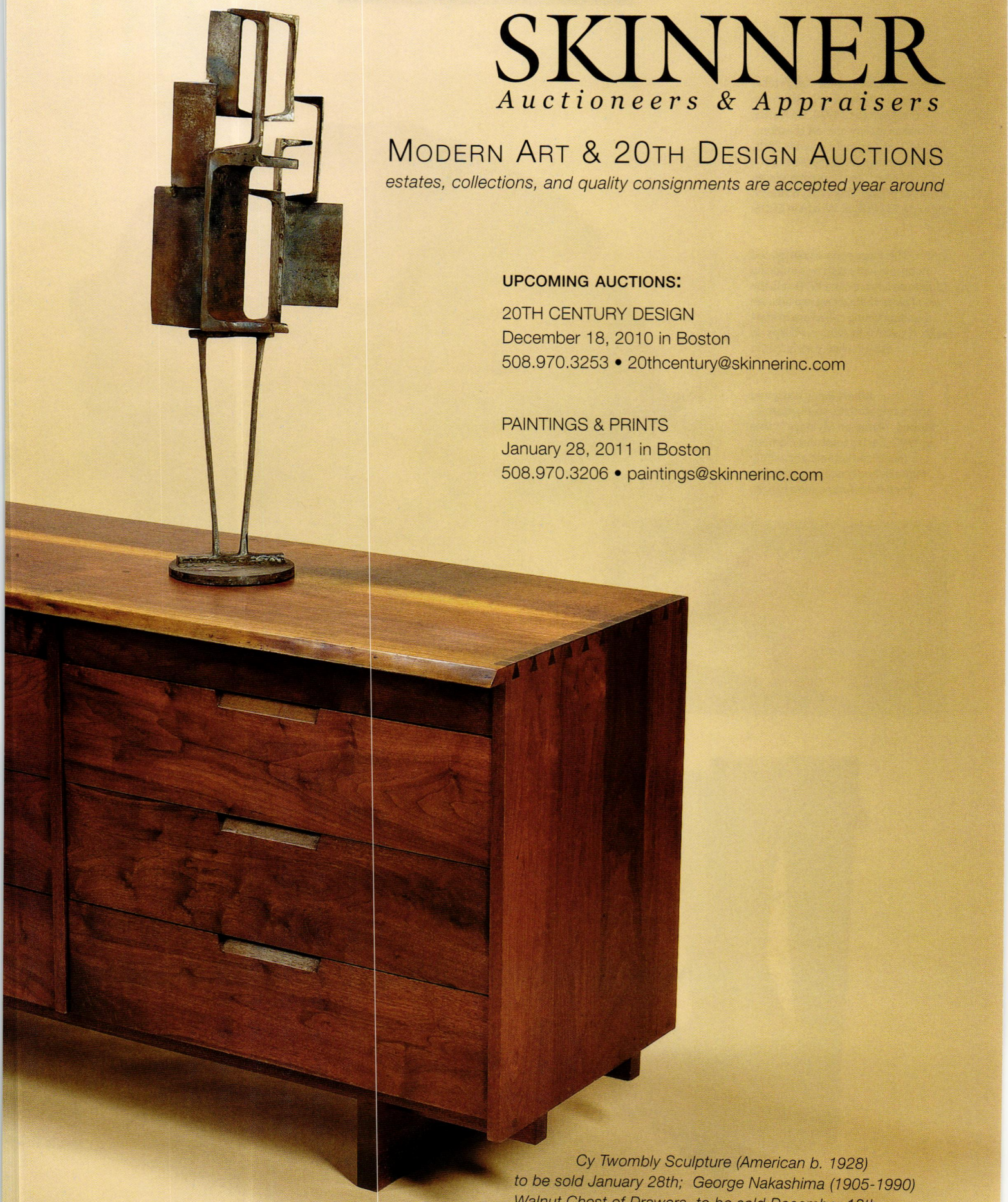
So where do you think the action is going to be in the future? The 1990s? Marc Newson?

I'm betting on the American market. I'm buying a lot of [American artist and designer] Albert Paley pieces and putting them away. It's all hand-crafted, and he doesn't do furniture any longer.

If you were giving advice to a young collector now—a person who's twenty-five or thirty years old?

I would say buy Claude de Muzac. She's good. The fashion designer, what's his name, Marc Jacobs, is collecting de Muzac stuff a little bit. I would buy Albert Paley. I mean, you know if I'm buying Paley

FROM TOP: WRIGHT DELORENZO



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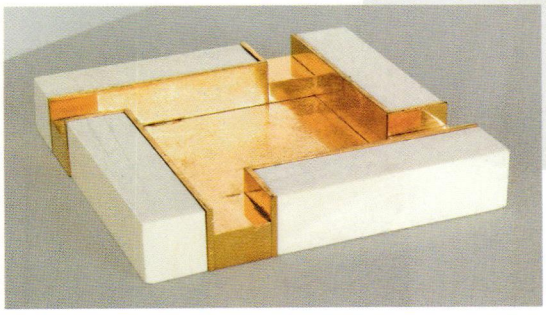
Right: **A cast-bronze "Leaf" table by Claude de Muzac, which she designed circa 1970. De Muzac makes mainly one-off creations, and while she is well-known in Paris, DeLorenzo feels she is not yet a "brand-name," and hence her pieces are underpriced. This work, however, brought $31,200 at Wright in 2006.**

Center: **This large square gold-plated metal and ivory dish was made by Claude de Muzac circa 1970. It is the sort of piece that DeLorenzo advises budding young collectors to start with. It sold for $6,000 at Phillips de Pury in New York in 2005.**

Bottom: **Albert Paley designed and fabricated his steel, marble-topped "Amazon Mystery" table in 1992. Each sculptural element in this architectonic and wildly embellished piece suggests the deep dark Amazonian jungle.**



and not selling there's got to be a reason: I think it's too cheap.

And if you were advising an older, wealthier collector ...?

The next move in the market is Ruhlmann. No question about it. This is my feeling.

Where do you find the biggest collectors of art deco right now?

Here.

Here in the U.S.? More so than in Paris, Greece, or the Middle East?

Absolutely.

Have you ever wanted to branch into art?

No, because every time I do I get burned. I don't know it. So I may as well stick to furniture.

But you're still — you still have the energy to go on.

I do, but things are getting a bit frazzled. I live in Florida. I have three houses and I have one apartment. What the hell do I need twelve bedrooms for?

I've known you for sure since 1980. And since I've known you, you've been complaining about the business. "It's too much work. I don't want do it. I'm going to Tahiti." But you always show up and you're always at the auctions and in the action.

But you know when I was young I was a gambler. This is just an extension of it except with this, you don't bet on a horse or a lottery number. You bet on yourself.

But you love to do it.

I love to gamble.

FROM TOP: WRIGHT PHILLIPS DE PURY & COMPANY DELORENZO

Illustration: **Vicke Lindstrand,** ***Sommerso Vase,*** 1950
H 19.5 cm / 8.2 inches Courtesy of Jacksons, Stockholm, Sweden

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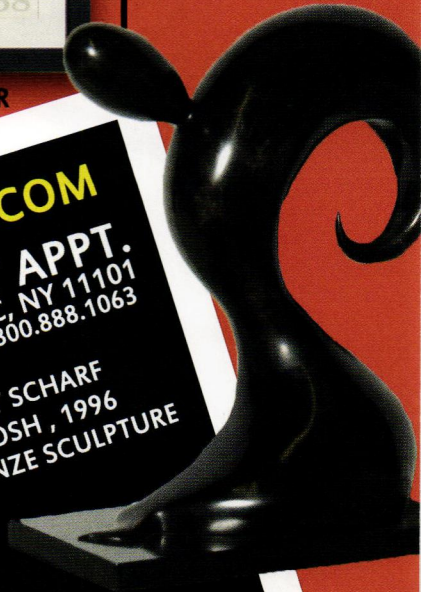

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WE ASKED CUSTODIANS OF LEADING TWENTIETH-CENTURY AND CONTEMPORARY DESIGN COLLECTIONS TO DISCUSS ONE OBJECT THAT THEY FEEL IS PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY. HERE IS A GALLERY OF THEIR CHOICES. **Edited by Danielle Devine**

"The chair was a startling innovation in its day, and an early example of the exciting possibilities of bending wood"

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SIDE CHAIR
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DARRIN ALFRED
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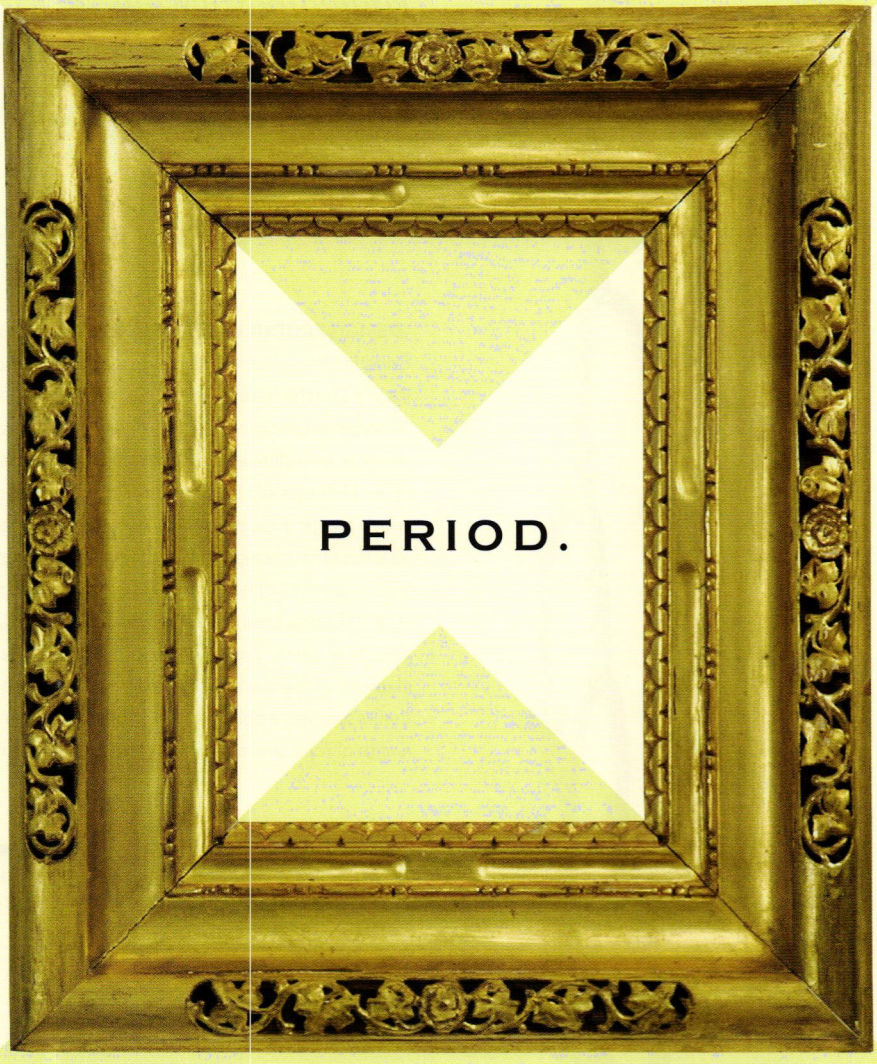

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"She used flax harvested from a Dutch farm to create simple objects for contemporary life"

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ELLEN LUPTON
curator for contemporary design,
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"The cabinet is an example of experimental use of materials, combining ebony and ivory with plastics"

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CILLA ROBACH
curator, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

SIGURD LEWERENTZ
COCKTAIL CABINET
Macassar ebony, galalite, ivory, steel, brass, and glass, with stainless steel interior
Designed 1929

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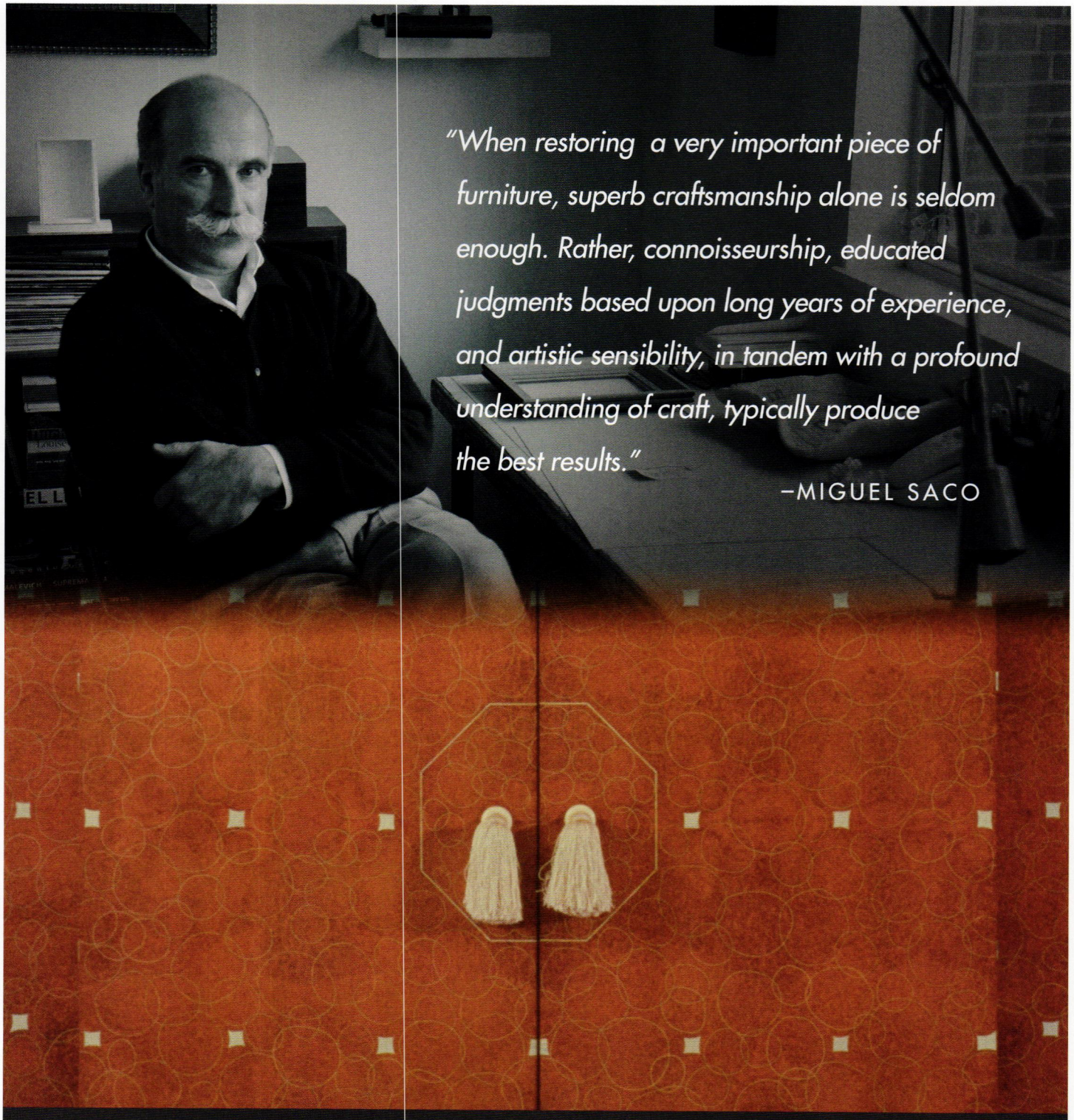

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"The gifted crew of silversmiths in Tiffany's workshop puzzled over how to translate Michael's cardboard model into a sterling silver reality"

MICHAEL GRAVES
SAMUEL C. MILLER CUP
Sterling silver
Designed 1986
Made by Tiffany & Co.

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ULYSSES GRANT DIETZ
senior curator and curator of decorative arts,
Newark Museum

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ROMARE BEARDEN (1912–1988)

"Jazz Village," 1967

Mixed media with collage on board • 30 x 40 inches • Signed upper right: Romare Bearden

PROVENANCE: Romare Bearden • ACA Galleries, New York • Private collection

LITERATURE: Shange, Ntozake & Bearden, Romare, I Live In Music
(Welcome Books, New York & San Francisco, 1994.) Illustrated, full color, full page, page 9.

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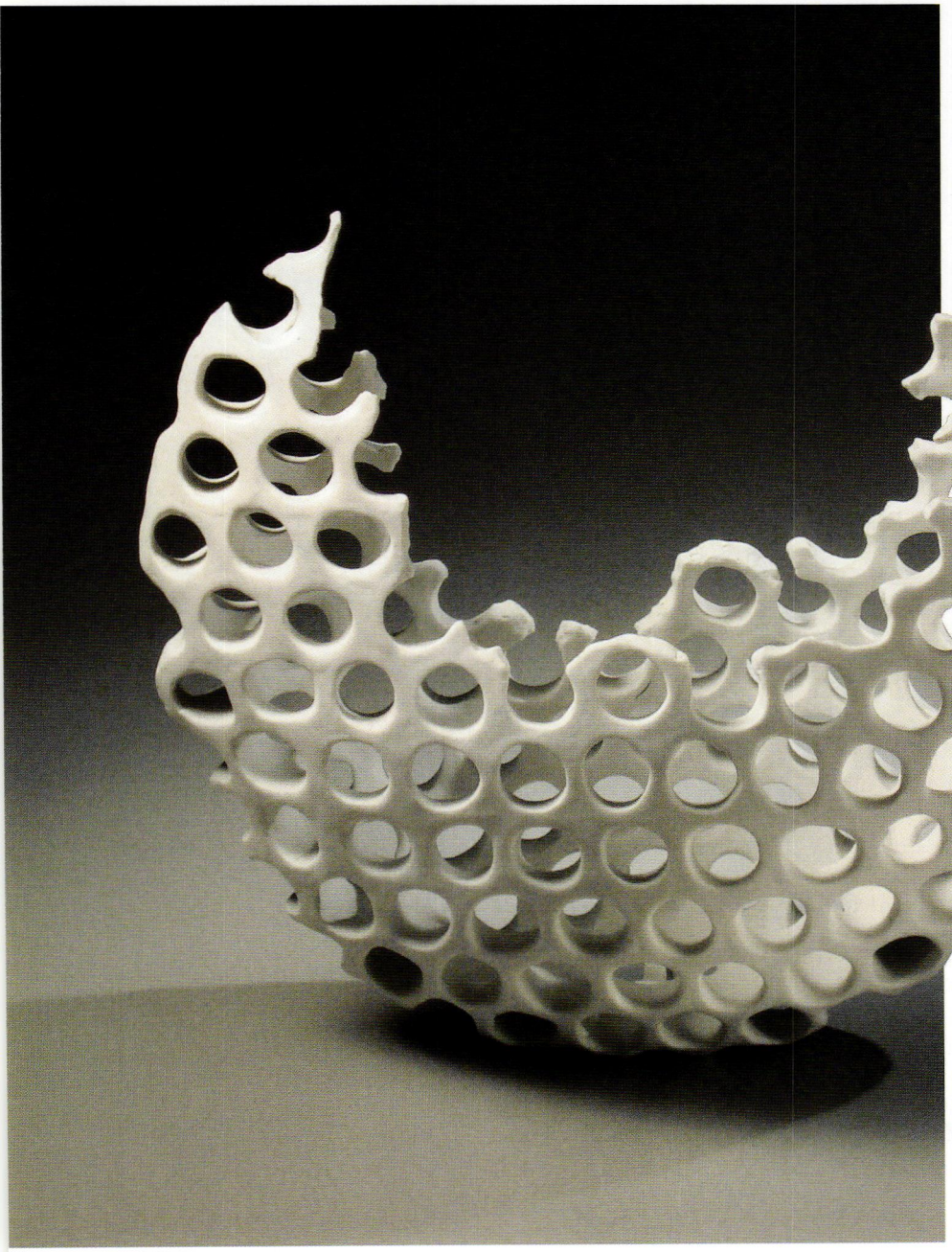
"The dramatic stark white porcelain forms engage the viewer by juxtaposing light and shadow"



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JASON STEUBER
curator of Asian art, Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida

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CRESCENT SCULPTURE
Porcelain
Created 2006

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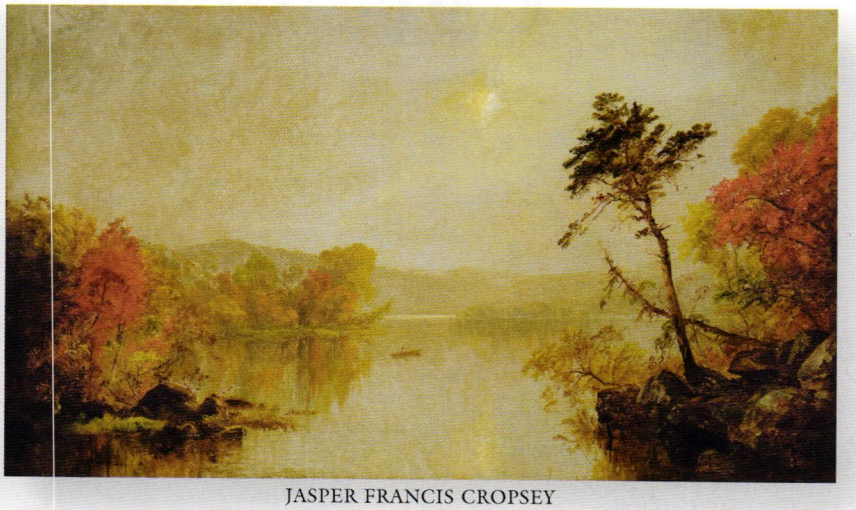

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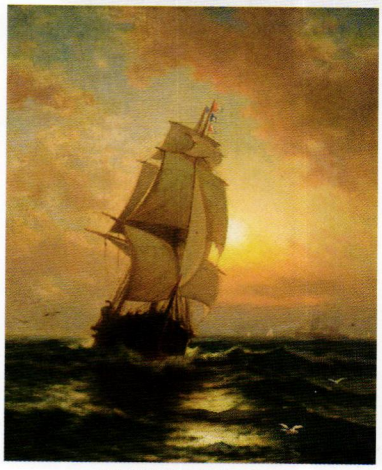
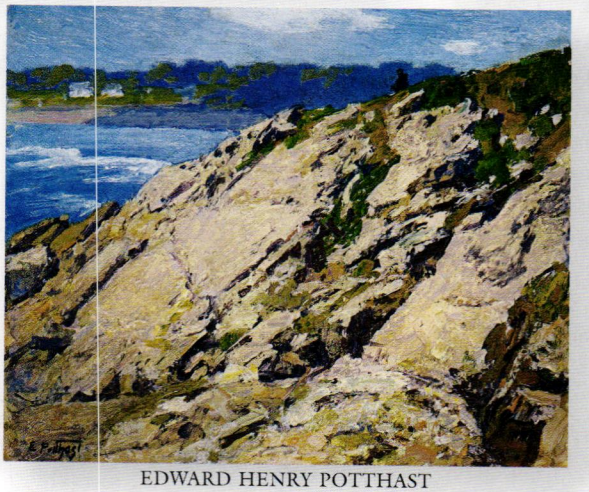


EDWARD MORAN



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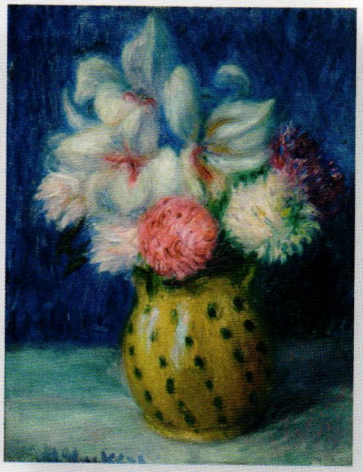

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Curator's Eye

"De Patta's jewelry was more than just decorative adornment; it was wearable miniature sculpture"

"REVOLUTIONARY JEWELRY DESIGNER MARGARET DE PATTA created modernist pieces that eschewed the opulence and sparkle of precious gems in favor of clean lines and transparent stones that seem to float on the surface. Inspired by the constructivist principles of her mentor László Moholy-Nagy, De Patta's jewelry was more than just decorative adornment; it was wearable miniature sculpture that shifted and changed with each movement of its wearer. Of all her work, this pendant is a masterpiece. Instead of cutting the crystal for brilliance, she had it cut in a cross-hatched manner, thus exploiting the optical qualities of the stone. The ebony and white gold staff behind the stone appears fractured and distorted, allowing different shapes to dance across the surface. This is just one example of the many "opti-cuts" De Patta developed with her gem cutter Francis Sperisen. Her jewelry and other design work will be the center of the exhibition *Space—Light—Structure: The Jewelry of Margaret De Patta* that will open at the Oakland Museum of California in 2012.

JULIE MUNIZ
associate curator of craft and decorative arts, Oakland Museum of California

MARGARET DE PATTA
PENDANT NECKLACE
White gold, ebony, rhomboid quartz crystal
Designed 1959

OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

STEEL AND SHADE

THE ARCHITECTURE OF DONALD WEXLER

January 29

THROUGH

May 29, 2011

Donald Wexler, *Steel House*, 1962, photography © Juergen Nogai, 2010

Organized by the Palm Springs Art Museum and California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, this exhibition is funded in part by the museum's Architecture and Design Council, Escalante Architects, and Brian Maguire.

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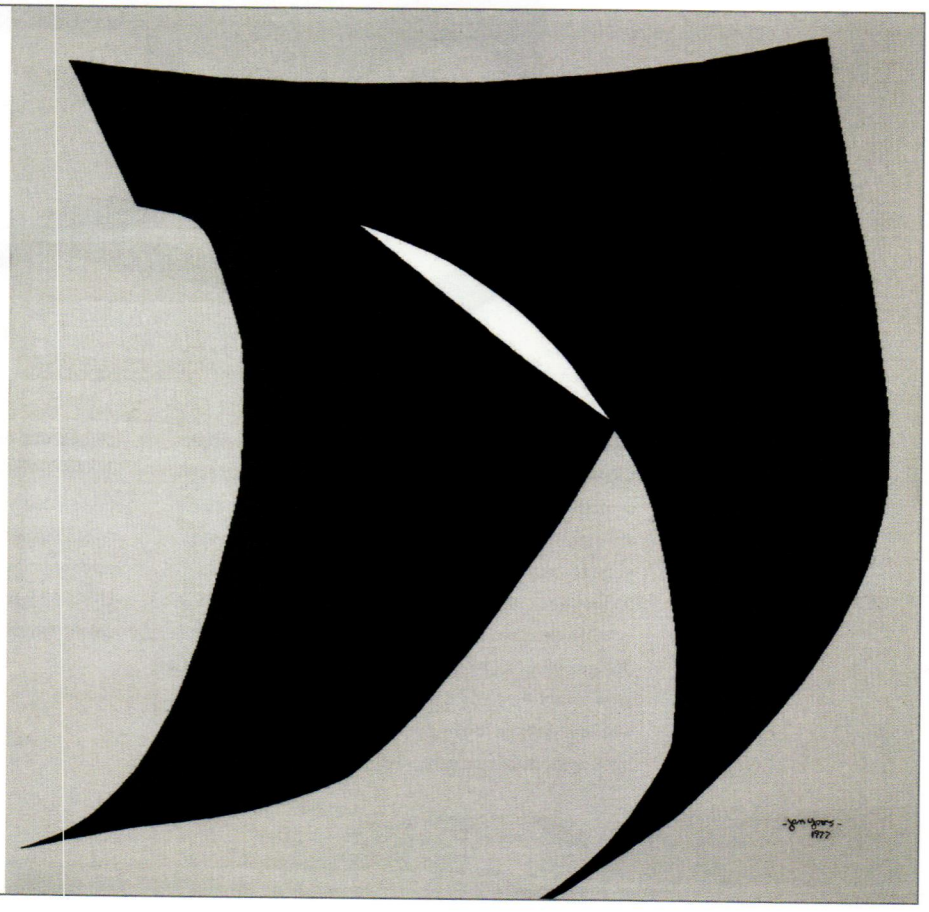
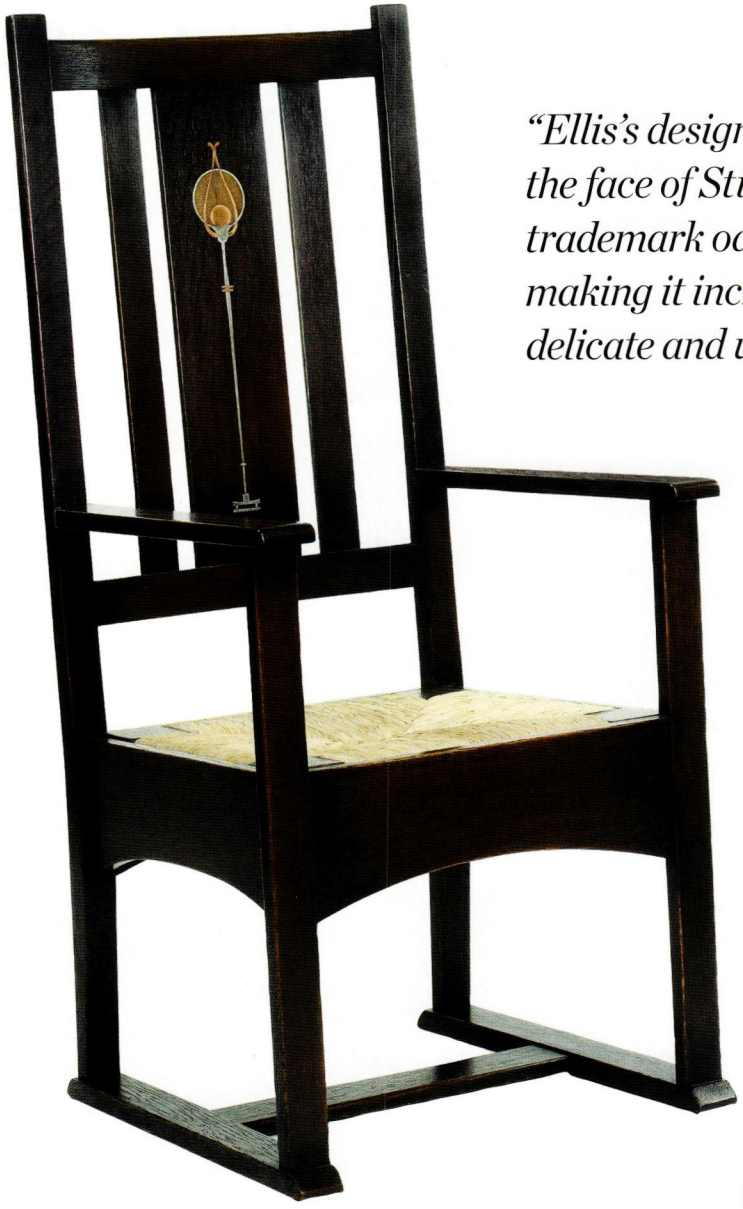


Curator's Eye



"Ellis's designs changed the face of Stickley's trademark oak furniture making it increasingly delicate and urbane"

HARVEY ELLIS
for GUSTAV STICKLEY
ARMCHAIR
Oak, copper, pewter, rush
Designed c. 1903

"GUSTAV STICKLEY, THE AMERICAN ARTS AND CRAFTS REFORMER, blended traditional craftsmanship and modern aesthetics into radically new mission style oak furnishings. As a pioneer in design he was open to new ideas, leading him to hire Harvey Ellis, an architect, painter, and designer. From April 1903 until his death in January 1904, Ellis provided endless designs for Stickley's houses, furniture, and textiles that are characterized by a sinewy, elegant style infused with naturalistic forms and motifs. Ellis designed the back splat of this armchair with his signature pewter, copper, and exotic wood inlay resembling the form of a long stemmed flower. The organic motifs grew out of Ellis's interest in Japanese prints and his preference for neoclassical forms, particularly the column and arch, evident in the verticality and proportions of the inlay. Ellis's designs changed the face of Stickley's trademark oak furniture making it increasingly delicate and urbane."

ALYCE PERRY ENGLUND
curatorial fellow of American decorative arts,
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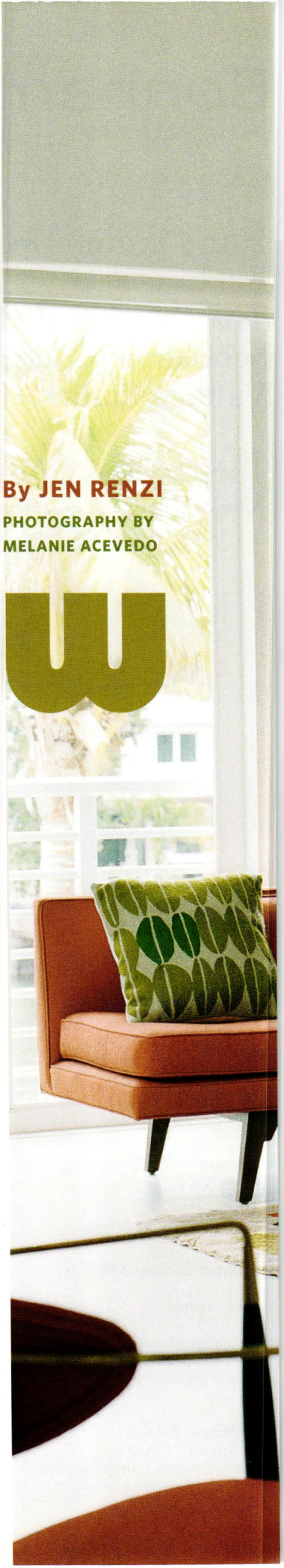
Best in show

By JEN RENZI
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
MELANIE ACEVEDO

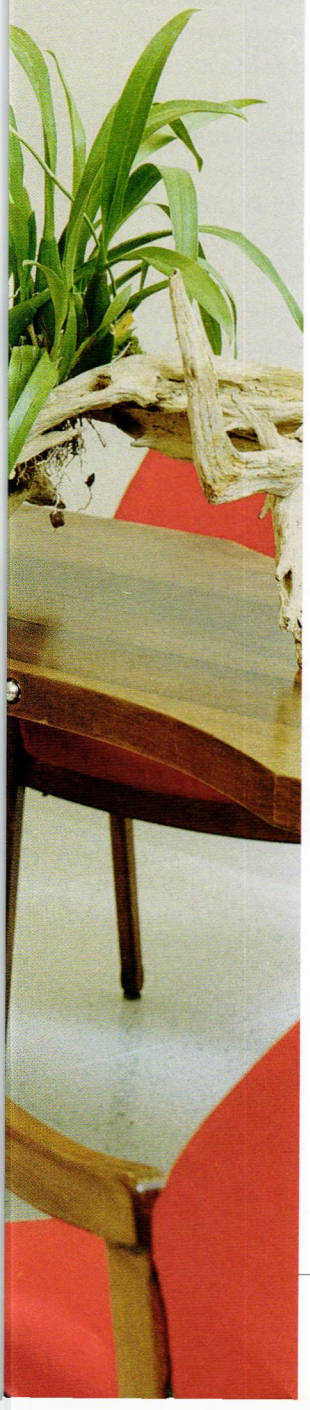
Interior designer Amy Lau considers her craft to be more about curating than decorating. Sure, the scope of her work often entails specifying curtains and throw pillows and even minutiae like soap dispensers. But her heart and mind are motivated by headier stuff: amassing heirloom quality furniture for her clients, who include such bold-face names as Elvis Costello and Elie Tahari.



Given access to a treasure trove of first-rate modern design and contemporary art, Amy Lau devised a space at once intelligent, provocative, and warm

Above: **The living room features a rare pair of c. 1951 Gio Ponti ash armchairs, a contemporary edition of Edward Wormley's sectional sofa for Dunbar, and a 1950s Max Ingrand standing lamp for Fontana Arte. The artwork is Eberhard Havekost's 2000 oil *Mobile 3*.**
Opposite page: **In another corner of the room a 1950s lacquered wood and brass Ib Kofod-Larsen chair is drawn up to a 1953 Ponti vanity. An untitled 2002 Paulina Olowska painting is propped below a Carlo Mollino-style wall lamp.**

"This was meant to be something of a fun party pad, while also telling the more serious story of fine art meeting high design"
–Amy Lau



Most of the time that means building collections from scratch or advising on new acquisitions by chaperoning clients to trade shows and galleries and suggesting reading lists tailored to a particular passion—be it Memphis or moderne. It is not often that she's handed the keys to a storage facility housing a client's museum-worthy collection and given carte blanche to shop away. Which is what happened when Craig Robins and Ambra Medda tapped Lau to transform a Miami town house into a showpiece of contemporary art and modern design.

The town house in question is a four-story, four-bedroom property that architect Allan T. Shulman designed for Aqua, the New Urbanist–influenced bay-front community Robins developed in Miami Beach. The real estate entrepreneur and art collector envisioned using the house to host private events as well as out-of-town designers, dealers, and culturati in need of a place to crash. To outfit the space, Lau was given access to Robins's holdings—which include works by John Baldessari, Marlene Dumas, and Olafur Eliasson—and to warehouses of vintage furnishings owned by Medda's mother, Giuliana, who runs the London design gallery Themes and Variations. "This was meant to be something of a fun party pad, while also telling the more serious story of fine art meeting high design," Lau explains.

When the project began the trio was planning the inaugural Design Miami fair, cofounded by Robins, Medda, and Lau (a former design director of New York's much-admired, but now shuttered Lin-Weinberg design gallery) and timed to coincide with the hugely popular Art Basel Miami Beach expo. The town house, they reasoned, should demonstrate the juxtapositions of blue chip contemporary art and the rare and

A one-off Tom Dixon table—surrounded by 1961 Ico and Luisa Parisi chairs—is the centerpiece of the kitchen dining area. An archival print of Mette Tommerup's *Digidentity* (2001), mounted under Plexiglass, hangs above a 1950s Italian credenza whose designer has not been identified. This page: **In the study an Osvaldo Borsani "P40" lounge chair is paired with a Silvio Cavatorta shelving unit.**

Above: **In a conversation space a pair of Marco Zanuso "La Donna" armchairs bracket an anonymous Italian standing lamp, likely from the '60s.** Opposite page: **In the entry area two Ponti cabinets—made of walnut, lacquer, and brass—support a pair of vintage vessels by the Danish firm Holmegaard. The wall-mounted sculpture is by Curtis Jere.**

limited edition furnishings that Design Miami would showcase. "A lot has changed in the last few years, but at the time, we didn't feel that high design was being shown in the right context," Lau says. "Talents like Marc Newson were exhibiting at Gagosian and other art galleries. Our goal was to elevate design so it wasn't a mere stepsister to fine art."

Following suit, Lau chose furnishings first. The Medda collection, dispersed among numerous warehouses, "featured all the heavy hitters—Gio Ponti, Ico Parisi, Ettore Sottsass—with an emphasis on '40s and '50s Italian design," she says. "There were pieces I'd die for, like a pair of rare Ponti open armchairs in ash." Lau and her staff made an inventory of all the pieces she could potentially use. "It was a connoisseur's job. Our team photographed and measured everything to determine what would work thematically—we went for leggy, stylized forms—and within the floor plan." The short list included a sculptural 1970s Paul Evans metal table and Ponti "Superleggera" chairs for the dining room, a Max Ingrand standing lamp and the aforementioned Ponti armchairs for the living room. A pair of 1960s Charlotte Perriand stools found a home in the master bedroom. "The pieces are all lookers yet they reflect their movements, the artistry, and technical development of their time," Lau says.

The selection process also entailed determining "what would need to be re-electrified," she continues. She upgraded the study's Silvio Cavatorta shelving system with new glass and hardware, reupholstered the insect-like Osvaldo Borsani "P40" lounge chair beside it with archivally researched fabric, and refinished wood furnishings such as a circa 1935 Ponti olivewood coffee table. "Maintaining a collection is as important as curating it," Lau notes. "We always make sure joints are tight and caning is sound so pieces don't weather more over time; otherwise, their liveliness diminishes." She is not above taking slight

The pieces are all lookers, yet they reflect their moments in the modern design movement, as well as the artistry and technical developments of their time

liberties with original condition in the interest of durability and usability. For instance, wooden pieces subject to heavy use are often treated to a sturdy, yet reversible, coating that leaves the original finish intact below. "My refinisher perfected the technique after seeing so many ruined George Nakashima and Ponti tables," Lau says.

Once furnishings were chosen, Lau worked with Robins's in-house curator, Tiffany Chestler, to finalize the selection of paintings and sculptures. A Mette Tommerup print was hung near the kitchen's one-of-a-kind Tom Dixon dining table. A Deborah Thomas chandelier and monumental Thomas Scheibitz oil bring aesthetic thunder to the dining room. "We

The town house, the designer and her clients reasoned, should demonstrate the juxtapositions of blue-chip contemporary art and classic or limited-edition design that the Design Miami fair itself would showcase

Opposite page: **The dining room is anchored by a 1970s Paul Evans metal dining table surrounded by Ponti "Superleggera" chairs, designed in 1955. But the "wow" factor is supplied by Thomas Scheibitz's 2001 oil on canvas *Eingang*, and a Deborah Thomas chandelier.** This page: **The children's bedroom is enlivened by Ferruccio Laviani's "FL/Y" suspension lamp for Kartell, a Blu Dot "Modu-licious" dresser in maple and laminate, and a Jonathan Adler lamp.**

Lau is not above taking slight liberties with original condition in the interest of durability and usability. Wood furnishings subject to heavy use are often treated to a sturdy, yet reversible, coating that leaves the original finish intact below

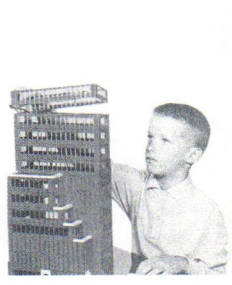
kept the envelope monochromatic—creamy terrazzo floors and white paint—so anything placed on the walls would jump out," says Lau. "The graphic quality of the artworks plays against the sculptural furnishings."

Rounding out the icons are a few contemporary interlopers (outdoor seating, reproduction Edward Wormley sofas) plus an assortment of mostly "no name" accessories that offer in quirk what they lack in provenance. "Filling up the shelves was one of the hardest parts of the process," Lau explains. "I spent a lot of time wheeling and dealing at the local mom and pop shops. The antiquing scene in Miami is so kooky and spread out, but I discovered some great resources—and deals to die for." In the spirit of a true curator, she'll keep those sources top secret, thank you very much.

The master bedroom is decorated with 1950s classics: a wall-mounted Gio Ponti headboard and a chest of drawers, plus a pair of 1960s Charlotte Perriand stools.

for nearly two centuries educators have been developing toys to foster the creativity of tomorrow's starchitects

kindergarten gehrys



By JEFFREY HEAD

On 1876 a Weymouth, Massachusetts mother returned from a trip to Philadelphia with a toy that was enthusiastically received by her nine-year-old son. The woman's name was Anna Lloyd Jones Wright, and the present was a set of "Froebel Gifts"—building blocks of plain maple wood in basic geometric shapes such as cylinders, arches, cubes, and equilateral wedges. The boy's name, of course, was Frank. In his autobiography, Wright credited his initial understanding of geometry to the blocks. He played with them all his life. Their essential forms, Wright said, helped him throughout his career to realize three-dimensional building designs.

Facing page: **Lincoln Logs set of c. 1923 by the J. L. Wright Toy Company. John Lloyd Wright developed this iconic building toy after a 1916 visit to the construction site of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, Japan, designed by his father, Frank Lloyd Wright. Like the hotel, Lincoln Logs used stackable, interlocking notched pieces for construction. One of the oldest toys still in production, Lincoln Logs were one of the first toys advertised on television in the early 1950s.**

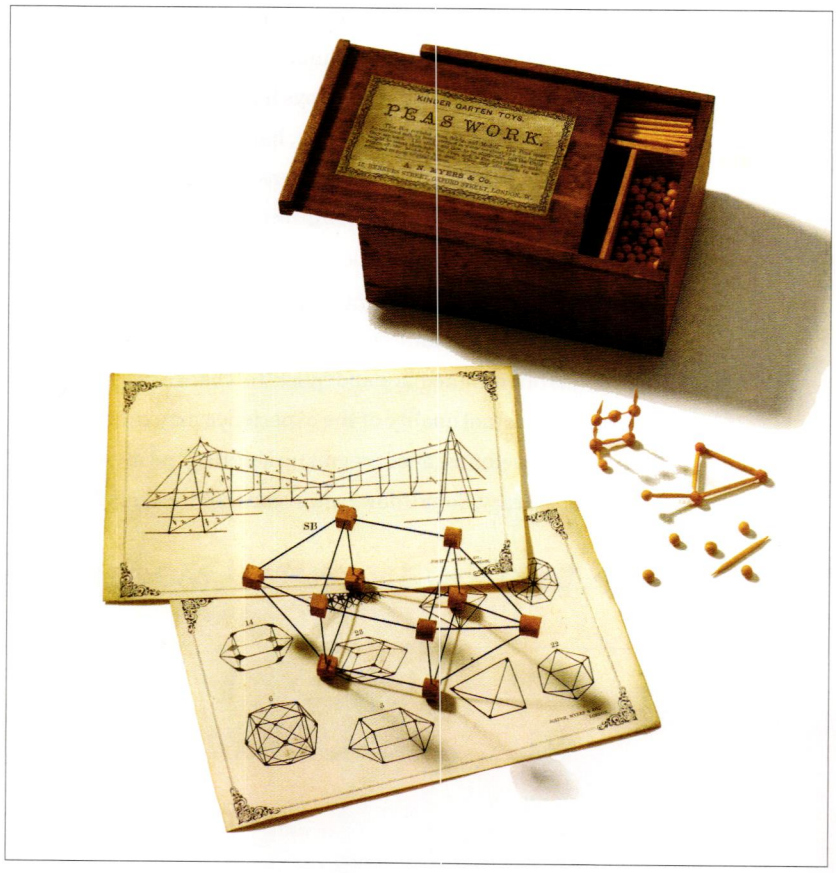
This page, top: **Set no. 6 from Richter's Anchor Stone Building Blocks series, top. Made in Germany, essentially of compressed sand, in the 1880s, the variety of sizes and shapes of the blocks make this arguably the most versatile of architectural toys.** Below: **A rendering of Le Corbusier's masterful Villa Savoye of 1929 made with Lego pieces by Matija Grguric, an architecture student in Croatia.**

As Wordsworth wrote: "The child is father of the man." Along with Wright, many leaders of the modernist movement—from Le Corbusier, Josef Albers, Wassily Kandinsky, and Paul Klee to Buckminster Fuller—enjoyed playing with Froebel toys as children. Designed in 1836 by German educator Friedrich Froebel—who devised the first kindergarten curriculum—the blocks were meant to be "gifts" for children to help their creative and functional abilities grow. But, with their unadorned simplicity, it is easy to see how the blocks might have helped shape a perspective that is apparent in the pattern-making and structural compositions of such designers and artists as those cited above. You could say that "Froebel Gifts" were the toy that created modernism.

Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, and Buckminster Fuller all enjoyed playing with Froebel toys as children

Froebel would create more than a dozen "gifts," and in subsequent decades his adherents have developed scores of other architectural toys, in materials ranging from metal, paper, plastic, and stone to good old wood. The most popular—such as Lincoln Logs (designed in 1916 by Frank Lloyd Wright's son, John), Tinkertoys, and Lego blocks—are all modular: mere variants on Froebel's

COURTESY OF NOEL BARRETT, VINTAGE TOYS AT AUCTION, NEW HOPE, PENNSYLVANIA



Facing page: **Tinkertoy's Curtain Wall Builder set was introduced in the late 1950s under the slogan "Builds scale models of modern buildings." The kit contained metal framing pieces with a baked enamel finish, yellow tinted plastic windows, plastic doors, and card stock for the roof. Tinkertoy offered five different sets, in sizes ranging from 82 to 407 pieces.**

This page: **Peas Work was one of the many building toys devised in the nineteenth century by Friedrich Froebel, the inventor of kindergarten. Actual water-softened dried peas were used to join wood or metal struts in early versions. The legumes were later replaced with tiny cork cubes. Buckminster Fuller attributed his development of the geodesic dome to his childhood play with a Peas Work set.**

Parquetry tiles were another of Froebel's "gifts" (below, an example from the 1890s). Versions were produced in wood and paper. The flat plane pieces were meant to inspire picture-making, explorations of the interactions of colors, and the formation of geometric shapes.

building blocks. Norman Brosterman, author of *Inventing Kindergarten* and a longtime collector of architectural toys, considers them perfect learning tools. "The standard 'unit' blocks common to all kindergartens since the 1920s or '30s are still the most valuable building toys available," he says. "They provide the quickest possible way to create space at child scale. It is easy to make real architecture."

Some toys, such as Erector Sets or a Lego kit for building a particular structure, permit only a single type of assembly and are more like piecing together a jigsaw puzzle. Brosterman prefers toy sets that are dynamic, and allow for many different configurations. He considers the German-made Anker Steinbaukasten (translation: Anchor Stone Blocks)—originally designed in 1879 and still produced today—particularly notable. "Taken together, the Anker sets are the most remarkable building toy enter-

TOGASHI PHOTOS FROM BROSTERMAN, INVENTING KINDERGARTEN (2)

prise by far," he says. "The company makes more than a thousand shapes. Can you think of a thousand shapes?"

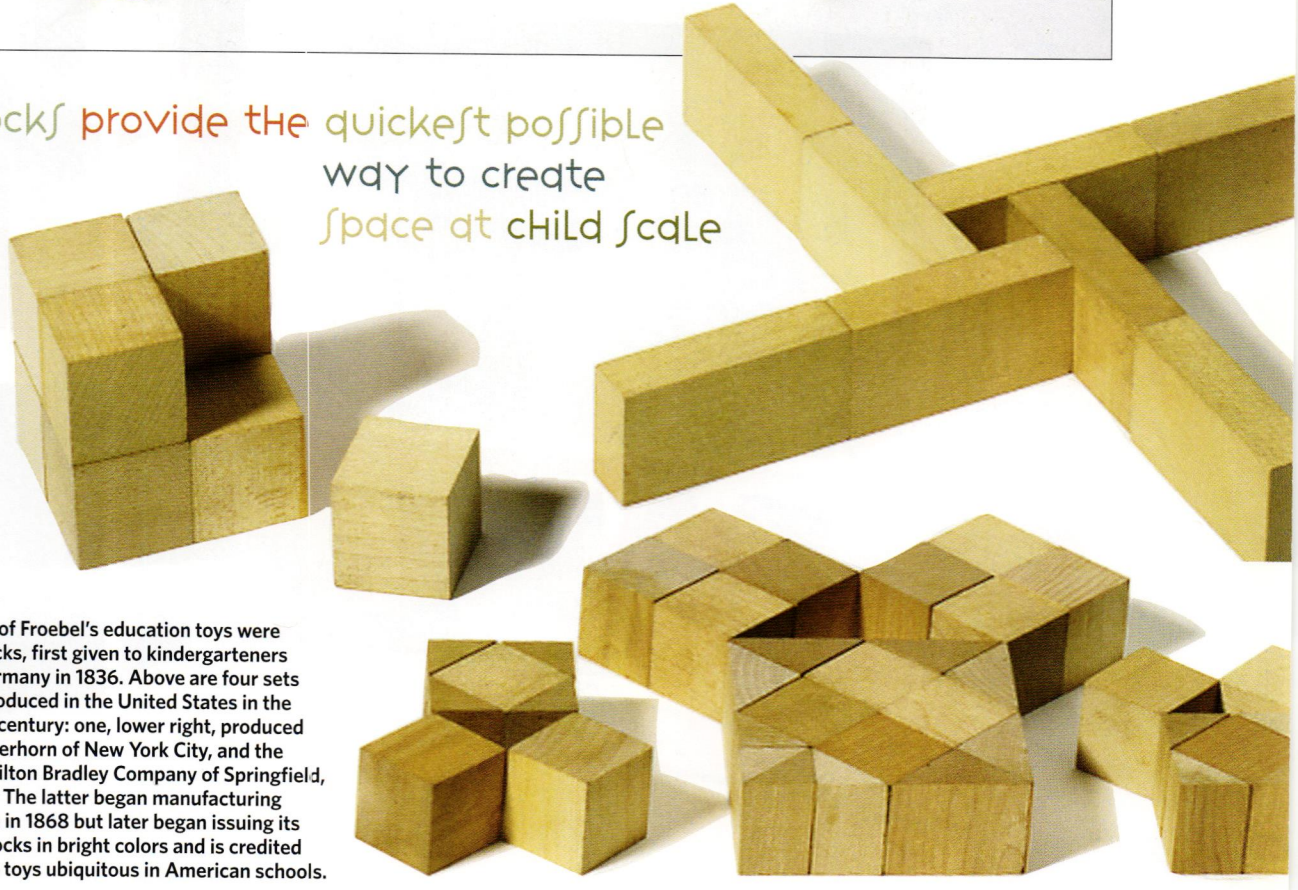
Digital architectural toys have been making headway against the tactile, hands-on kits for at least fifteen years. SimCity was the first, in 1989, followed by SimTown: The Town You Build Yourself and Kid CAD (a computer-aided design software program), both released in 1995. The latest is Google SketchUp, which lets children (or adults) create 3-D spaces. These programs offer immediacy and quick-to-change perspective, and the virtual quality of the experience may contribute to the development of pragmatic abilities and architectural literacy. Some, however, argue that the digital experi-

froebel gifts were arguably the toys that created modernism

The Erector Skyscraper Set was manufactured by the A. C. Gilbert Company and introduced in 1935. Marketed as a metal construction set to "teach boys the principles of construction and engineering," Erector Sets offered early training for the technically inclined. A variety of structures were possible from a single set, which included diagrams and instructions. The first Erector Sets were so expensive as children's toys as to be considered luxury items. Today, vintage kits are among the toys most sought after by collectors.

COURTESY OF NOEL BARRETT

standard blocks provide the quickest possible way to create space at child scale



The most basic of Froebel's education toys were his building blocks, first given to kindergarteners in his native Germany in 1836. Above are four sets of the blocks produced in the United States in the late nineteenth century: one, lower right, produced by J. W. Schermerhorn of New York City, and the others by the Milton Bradley Company of Springfield, Massachusetts. The latter began manufacturing Froebel's design in 1868 but later began issuing its own building blocks in bright colors and is credited with making the toys ubiquitous in American schools.

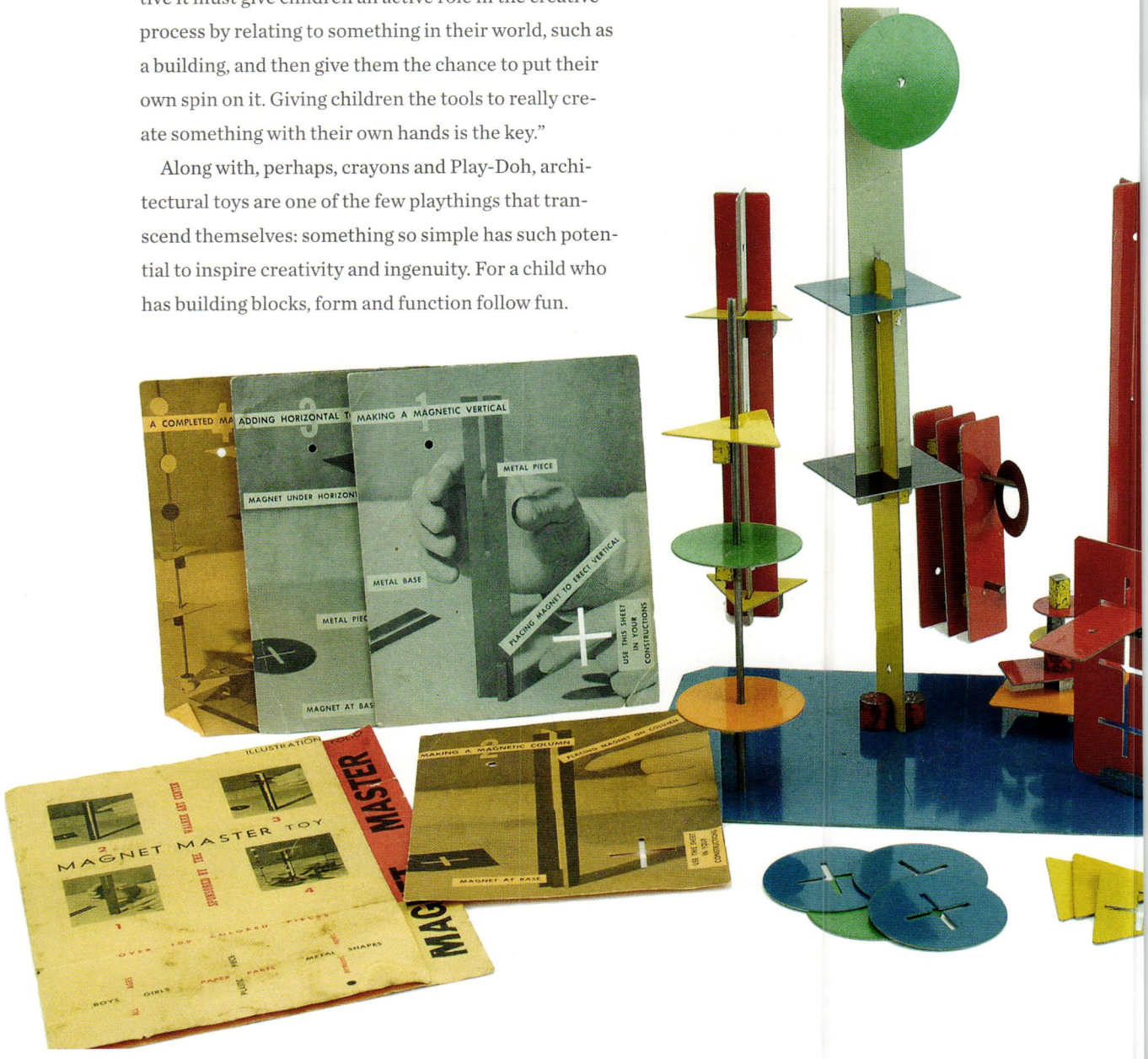
TOGASHI PHOTOS FROM BROSTERMAN, INVENTING KINDERGARTEN

ence is, for the very young, too cold and technical to produce an appreciation for envisioning real world spaces.

Michael J. Macaluso Jr., president of Architots, a New York-based company that offers educational programs in which children can explore construction and building design, emphasizes the benefits of manual trial and error activities. "Kids really do absorb more when they don't realize they're learning something," he says. "To make any architectural 'toy' effective it must give children an active role in the creative process by relating to something in their world, such as a building, and then give them the chance to put their own spin on it. Giving children the tools to really create something with their own hands is the key."

for a child who has building blocks form and function follow fun

Along with, perhaps, crayons and Play-Doh, architectural toys are one of the few playthings that transcend themselves: something so simple has such potential to inspire creativity and ingenuity. For a child who has building blocks, form and function follow fun.



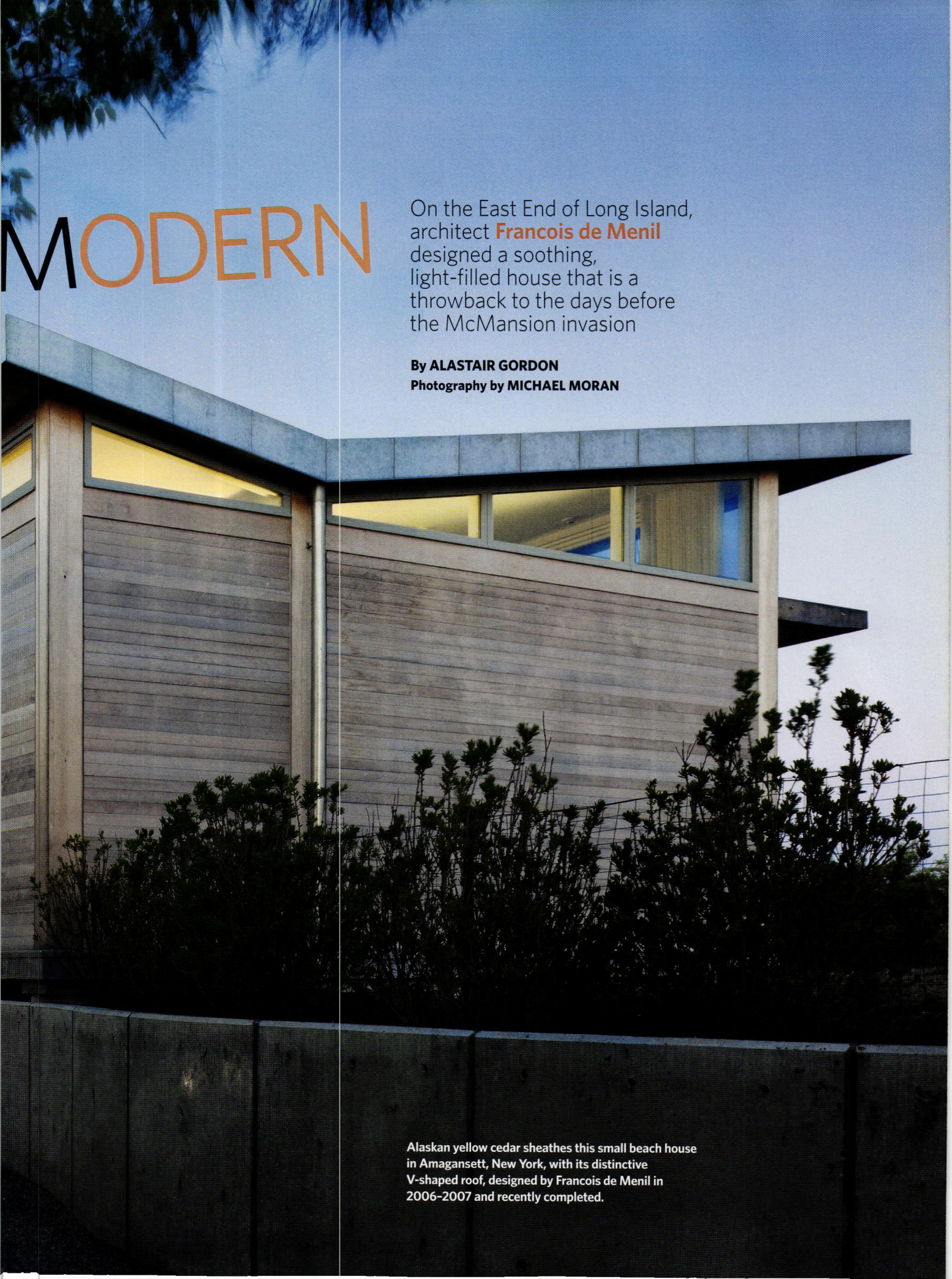
Facing page: **Chicago architect Arthur Carrara designed Magnet Master, which was first issued in 1949. The set contained both perforated or slotted metal tiles and magnets in various shapes to hold the joined tile arrangements in place. The toy encouraged the making of dynamic, abstract configurations, and was marketed to schools of higher learning as "an art tool."** Above: **The simple, but oddly stylish, Sky-Hy Building Blocks of 1920, made by the Embossing Company of Albany, New York, featured textured and painted blocks that mirror the period's skyscrapers, including their "wedding cake" setbacks.**

MEDITATIVE

MODERN

On the East End of Long Island, architect **Francois de Menil** designed a soothing, light-filled house that is a throwback to the days before the McMansion invasion

By ALASTAIR GORDON
Photography by MICHAEL MORAN

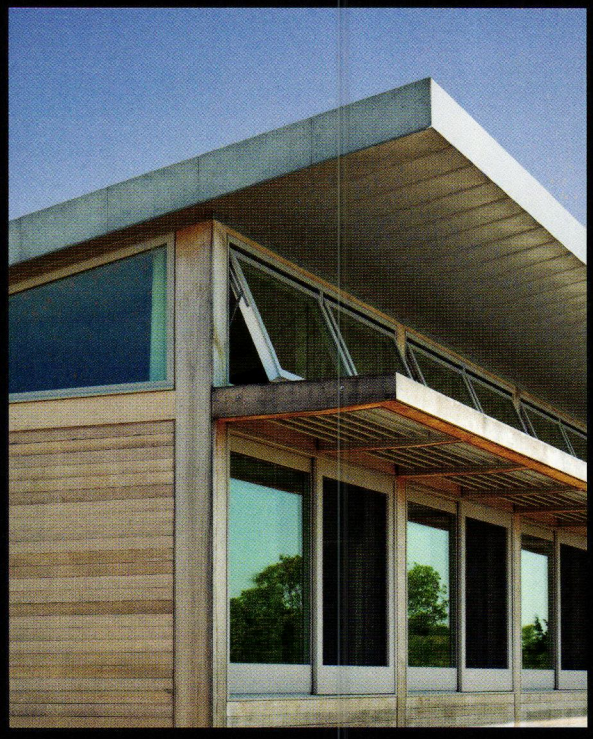


Alaskan yellow cedar sheathes this small beach house in Amagansett, New York, with its distinctive V-shaped roof, designed by Francois de Menil in 2006–2007 and recently completed.

This page: **A *brise soleil* and overhanging roof provide protection from the summer sun. The terne-coated roof, with the seams running crosswise, lends the house a somewhat utilitarian feeling.**

Opposite page top: **The easternmost bay encloses a screen porch that opens onto a deck and the ovoid outdoor shower.**

Opposite page bottom: **The south facade offers expansive ocean views.**



A NARROW 2,000-SQUARE-FOOT PAVILION stands on a small, third-of-an-acre lot set within the sprawling, sandy lowland that runs between primary ocean dunes and Route 27, east of Amagansett, before the lonely straightaway to Montauk. It is a place for escape and contemplation, designed for a couple from Houston who practice meditation as part of their daily routine.

Yet the clients did want some design verve. Explaining the house's V-shaped roof, architect Francois de Menil says, "It was about trying to have a roof element that was shading the sun while creating an interesting shape." The roof drains rain at either end through galvanized downspouts—not unlike Marcel Breuer's canonical butterfly roof on his 1945 Geller House, further west on Long Island in the town of Lawrence.

It is out of this same period of postwar modernism that the de Menil-designed house takes its cues, returning as it does to single, simple gestures that speak of informal summers at the beach, a direct response to the sandy site and the sea-reflected light. The shape and character were also

The kitchen and dining area flow directly into the living room, where the furniture includes two "Organic" chairs designed by Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen in 1940. Thonet's no. 209 bentwood dining chairs surround a Thonet dining table designed by Naoto Fukasawa in 2009. In the office (visible through the doorway at the right) is a "Swag Leg" desk, designed by George Nelson for Herman Miller in 1958.

determined in large part by the tight lot and zoning setbacks that didn't leave much room for improvisation. "The site had many constraints," admits de Menil.

The roof is what gives the otherwise minimal structure its most distinctive personality, gesturing both to the south—toward elusive ocean views—and to the north and a steep hill that drops down precipitously from the main road. The roof is made of terne-coated steel, a pale galvanized sheet metal that is sturdy and resistant to salt corrosion.

A *brise soleil* made of cedar slats runs the length of the southern facade, about three-quarters of the way up, and helps to break the harsher rays of the midsummer sun. Above these projecting louvers, clerestory windows that can be opened for cross ventilation encircle the entire perimeter of the house, giving the interior spaces a bright, almost transcendent quality, suffusing them with a sea-brewed light that reflects off the pale gray walls, white ceilings, and polished concrete floors without being harsh or glaring.

With its sliding glass doors and expansive windows, the south side is completely open to the sun and views, but the north side is shuttered and opaque, turning its back to the neighboring property and the nearby road. In fact, the entry sequence feels almost subterranean, the way the gravel drive is enclosed on one side by a concrete retaining wall (to conceal the septic system) and the way a ramped walkway leads up to the main entrance. There are no full windows on this side, only the narrow clerestory that catches light without relinquishing privacy.

While simple, almost inconspicuous, in its architectural gestures, the house has been fabricated with fine materials and meticulous detailing. Alaskan yellow cedar siding runs horizontally on the exterior walls and echoes the pale tone of the galvanized roof. Ipe hardwood was used for the narrow decking and handrails, while stainless steel was used for the stanchions and fittings that anchor the house to its foundation: a series of concrete pylons planted deep in the sand. The house stands high enough on these footings so that water can flow beneath it—a pos-

Top: **The minimalist furnishings of the master bedroom carry out the Zen-like atmosphere the owners desired for the house.**

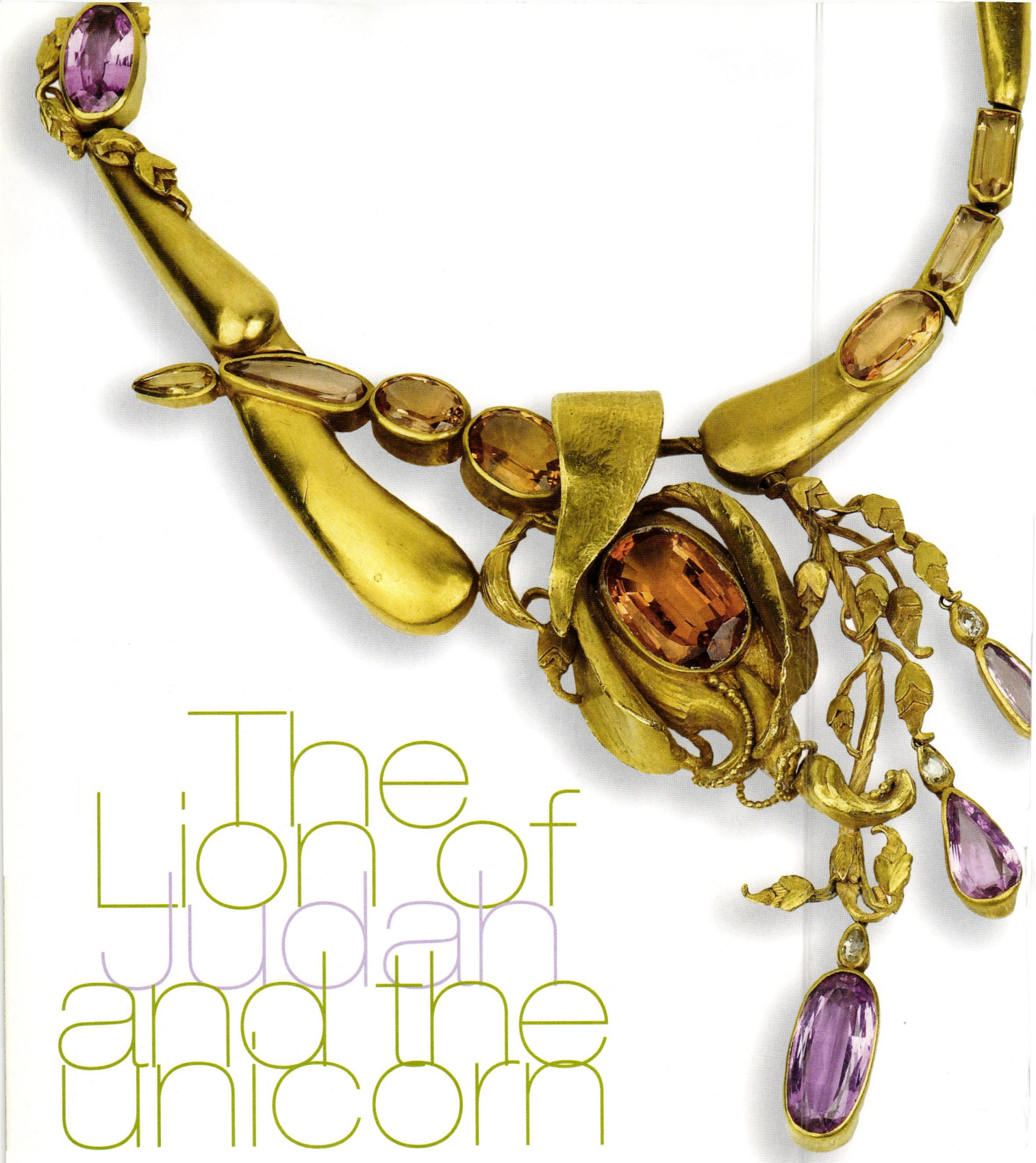
Bottom : **Natural beech and Kirby stone slate were chosen for the kitchen cabinets and countertops.**

Opposite: **Inside and out, the outdoor shower is a thing of restrained beauty.**

sibility in this low-lying flood zone. All the glass is hurricane proof since the area is designated a 120-miles-per-hour wind zone and has been slammed by more than one great storm in the past. "It's very solidly built," says the architect, who first met the client (an energy trader) in Houston when de Menil was working on an energy-efficient house that incorporated solar panels on its roof. The client and his family later moved to New York and now live at their beach house full time.

"The house is very simply organized," says de Menil, explaining how the no-frills layout was based on an 11 ½-foot module that fits within a series of seven bays, with the master bedroom at the west end, a guest room and the kitchen to the east, and a double-bay living room in between. The modular framing is highlighted with white paint throughout the interior in contrast to the pale gray walls. There's no need for air conditioning, just ceiling fans and the cross ventilation provided by the clerestory windows. (It all works together from an energy point of view. The outer walls are well insulated and the concrete floors help to retain the coolness during hot weather.) Furnishings were chosen by the clients in collaboration with the architect, again, with a kind of Zen-modern restraint: a Thonet table and chairs for the dining area; Eames-Saarinen "Organic" chairs covered in blue fabric for the living area. Beech cabinets with a linear grain are used in the kitchen with Kirby stone, a kind of black slate from England, for the countertops.

The last bay, on the eastern end, has a screened-in porch opening onto a side deck that reaches out to the only eccentrically shaped element of the house: an outdoor shower, ovoid in plan, made from vertical cedar planks. "The clients try to live very simply and wanted an outdoor shower. It was part of their program," de Menil says. As a stand-alone object, the shower serves as a sculptural counterpoint to the rest of the house—the sort of flourish an architect adores. M



The Lion of Judah and the unicorn

Born an Anglican gentlewoman, postwar British jewelry design
which included several members of the English peerage, drav

There are few talented twentieth-century jewelry makers who remain relatively undiscovered, so when jewelry aficionados first spot the work of Sah Oved, their hearts beat a little faster and their eyes widen. They recognize that they have an opportunity to own something very rare. Oved's work has all the elements that today's connoisseur looks for in jewelry: it is expertly made, original in design, and, most importantly, one-of-a-kind.

Facing page: **Gem-set collar necklace by Sah Oved, c. 1955. Gold, diamonds, orange and purple topazes.**

This page: **"Friendship" ring by Oved, c. 1930. Gold and cameo. Sah most likely used an antique cameo from Cameo Corner's stock and designed a shank around it.**

"Madonna" ring by Oved, c. 1920. Gold, diamonds, and sapphires.

Ring by Oved, c. 1930. Silver and garnet.

Very little is known about the designer's life and this contributes to the Oved mystique. From the few available photographs, we can see that she was a beautiful and elegant woman. A 1930s sculpture by the artist Jacob Epstein, a close friend, shows her with a dramatic hair comb in her neat coiffure and a sculptural pendant resting on her chest.

By BELLA NEYMAN

Sah Oved became a devotee of Judaism and built a clientele,
to a style that mixed modernism and the spiritual

When jewelry aficionados first spot the work of Sah Oved, their hearts beat a little faster and their eyes widen. They see an opportunity to own something very rare

Born in Britain in 1900, Sah Oved's given name was Gwendolyn Ethel Rendle. She was brought up in an upper-middle class Christian home and attended art school in Chichester. It was there that she was first exposed to jewelry making, and instantly fell in love with it. However, with World War I on the horizon, this was no time for avocational indulgences. Rendle instead spent her time doing medical research at Cambridge, and took jewelry-making classes in the evenings. But not until 1923, studying under John Paul Cooper, an important arts and crafts silversmith, did she truly begin to hone her jewelry skills. The few known works from this period show her predilection for the arts and crafts. Like Cooper, she favored semiprecious stones and medieval and religious themes, and they both believed in improving on jewelry-making techniques. In 1924 she opened her own boutique in London called Miss Rendle of Doughty Street.

Most scholars will say, however, that Rendle's real education began in 1927 when she met Mosheh Oved, a watchmaker by training who was also a sculptor, poet, and an expert on cameos and antique clocks and watches. He owned a well-known and much beloved London curiosities shop called Cameo Corner, which virtually exploded with antiques, jewels, cameos, and other objets d'art. The eccentric Mosheh was often found there wearing an ankle-length purple velvet caftan. While it is unknown if they officially married, Rendle changed her name to Sah Oved. She became responsible for the engraving, enameling, and repair work of objects sold by the shop, and the shop's inventory, in turn, provided inspiration for her own work. Quite often she incorporated the raw materials and minerals she found there into her fanciful creations. (She illustrated a small portion of the shop's holdings in her *Book of Necklaces*, published in 1953.)

Mosheh, a Polish-born Jew who at one point wanted to become a rabbi, and Sah lived in Jerusalem from 1927 until about 1937. Their stay there and Mosheh's influence had a profound effect on Sah, who began to incorporate Jewish folklore into her creations, such as the so-called Lion of

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF BONHAMS; COURTESY OF BRIMAR FINE ART

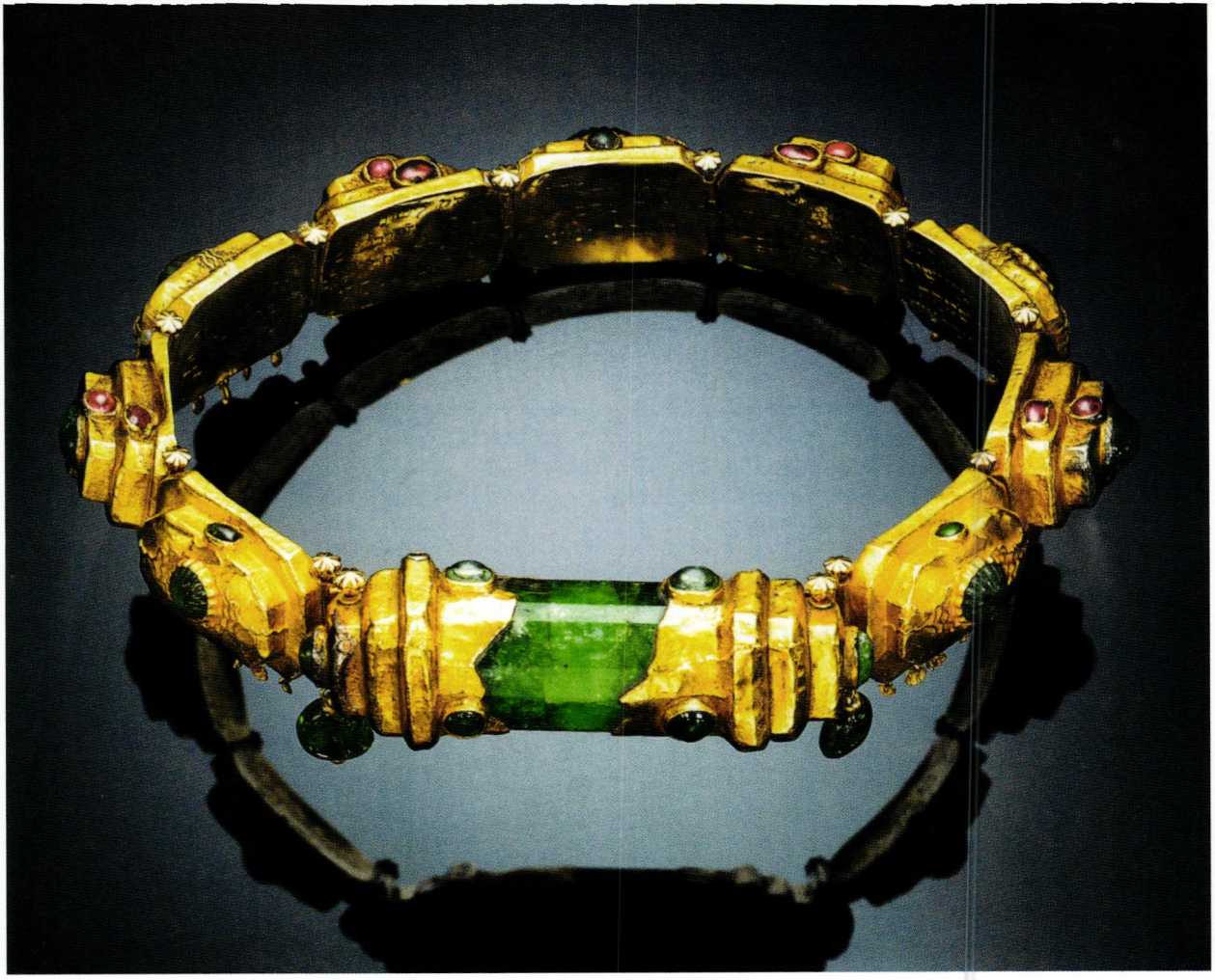
COURTESY OF BONHAMS

Facing page, from top:
Smoky quartz crystal clip with gold setting embellished with rubies and peridot .

Orange topaz crystal brooch with gold cap and emeralds, 1933.

Gem-set collar necklace also shown on p. 138.

This page: **"Lion of Judah" cuff bracelet by Oved, 1936. Gold, rubies, and diamonds.**



Judah cuff of 1936. Made as a gift for Mosheh, this gold, ruby, and diamond bracelet is modeled with a Lion of Judah on one side and a winged clasp that opens to reveal an inscription from the Old Testament referencing Jacob, who called his son Judah a "young lion."

On their return to London from Jerusalem, Mosheh and Sah reopened Cameo Corner on Museum Street near the British Museum. Their clientele included scholars, actors, society people, and royalty (Queen Mary among them), who became friends and patrons of Sah's jewelry. Every piece she designed was a private commission or a present commemorating a special event, and each one could take years to complete. Today her jewelry commands attention for its striking originality: a "friendship" cameo ring; a ring with an agate inset carved to resemble faces; gem-set collar necklaces designed as stylized garlands; silver and gem-set ring bracelets with unicorns; and moonstone reliquaries.

Every piece that she designed was a private commission or a present commemorating a special event, and each one could take years to complete

Sah's work was progressive for its time. Audrey Friedman, who co-owns Primavera Gallery in New York with her husband, Haim Manishevitz, has been collecting the designer's jewelry for the past thirty years. "Sah worked from her own inspiration. Nothing from her pieces suggests the period in which they were created," Friedman says. "Her jewelry was meant to be artistic and not follow fashion." For example, while the use of rough cut crystals or minerals in jewelry is usually associated with pieces produced in the 1950s and 1960s by designers such as Andrew Grima, Sah used them much earlier. A brooch and clip from about 1933 are set, respectively, with a topaz crystal and a

When the renovation got underway, antlers were the first things to go—hunting trophies that were hung here and there throughout the cattle-baron-luxe styled house. The new owners were anxious for results and time was of the essence. Work immediately began on custom-colored carpets to cover the stone-and-plank floors, and a muralist was brought in to execute new stylish wall treatments to replace blasé finishes. Robert Couturier, the architect and decorator in charge of the makeover, had one regret: "I wish we could have done away with those awful sconces," he says, referring to the glass light-

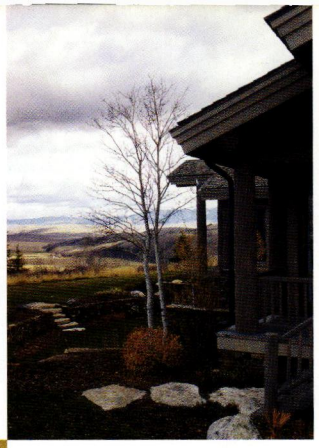
In a demonstration case of the power of modernist interventions, architect and decorator Robert Couturier gave a slap of urbane polish to a rustic retreat in Wyoming

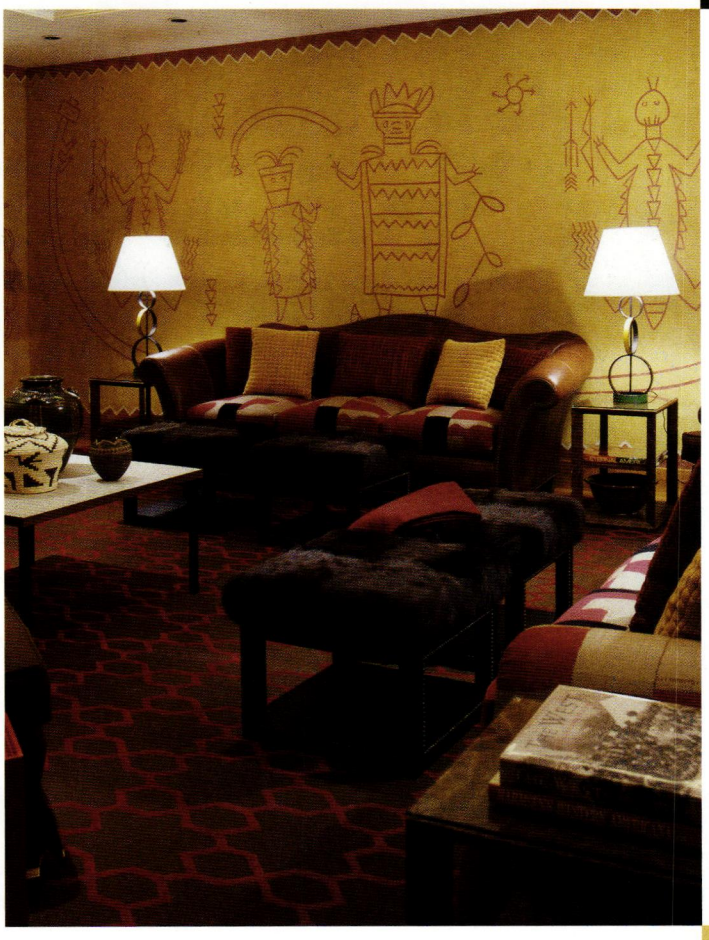
ing units on the house's structural columns, which depicted silhouetted illustrations of deer and antelopes at play, and other Western iconography. "I would have preferred no sconces at all, but the lights and the electrical connections were built into the columns, and so we simply had to leave them in place." He sighs deeply.

Opposite page: **A pair of 1950s coffee tables by the Italian designer Ico Parisi—found at Liz O'Brien's gallery in New York—a custom-colored contemporary rug by AM Collections, and a brace of sleek club chairs add a tempering dash of modern style to the Rocky Mountain ranch house**

Above, center: **The low-slung house, bows to the vista of snowy peaks.** At right, top and below: **Two views of the living room show how the incorporation of modern design elements toned down the house's original, strenuously chaps-and-spurs styling.**

Anyone familiar with the French-born, New York City-based Couturier and his work might wonder if he was a good fit in the land of cowboy boots and chili cook-offs

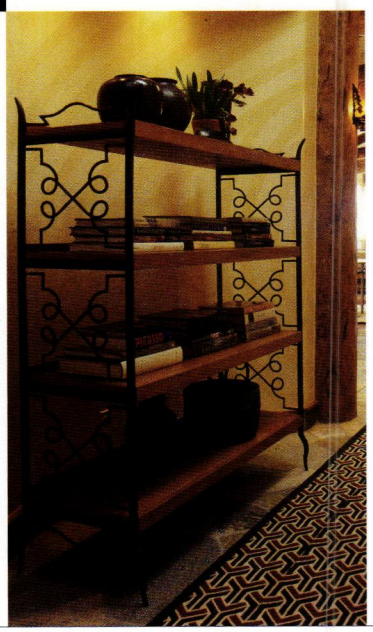




Anyone familiar with the French-born, New York City-based Couturier and his work might wonder if he was a good fit in the land of cowboy boots and chili cook-offs. The man himself is gracious, trim in mind and body, and a person with wide-ranging tastes—a sensibility reflected in the decors he creates. He has done his share of voluptuous period interiors. But lately he has been tracking more and more toward spaces grounded in sleek modernist lines, coupled with rich finishes and floor treatments, and accented with art and objects old and new that serve as aesthetic counterpoints to a deft, simple envelope. When longtime clients, who had fallen in love with the airy mountain terrain of Wyoming, found a house that suited their desires (if not Couturier's tastes), he took up the challenge to give it a sense of refinement. As he says, "I hoped to show how vintage and contemporary modern design elements could, even in a space that was created to reflect a completely different design attitude, give an interior an entirely new and more sophisticated ambience."

The house, as bought, was not without merits: it has seven bedrooms, large open-plan rooms where the clients' gaggle of grandchildren could run about, and it offered spectacular views of the Rockies. From an interior design point of view, however, the timbered structural elements made job number one, as Couturier says, "to tone down all that wood." And so the work began.

In New York Couturier commissioned rugs from the firm AM Collections, and nabbed a pair of 1950s Ico Parisi coffee tables from Liz O'Brien's gallery. But all roads lead to Paris. There, the decorator and his clients found a '40s shelving unit by René Prou, a pair of armchairs by the art deco master Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann, and, most importantly, visited the suburban Paris studio of designer Ingrid Donat. "She is brilliant. I love



From top: **An exterior photo of the house shows its expansive "don't fence me in" views.**

The media room features a mural by Paulin Pâris that is lighthearted, yet has historical antecedents in art deco design. The ottomans—studded Edelman leather boxes with sable tops—were designed by Robert Couturier.

The René Prou shelving unit from the 1940s was found at Galerie Yves Gastou in Paris.

Opposite page: **Near the foyer an Ingrid Donat "Commode de la Fille" chest of drawers in oak and bronze is placed with one of her patinated-bronze standing lamps and a circa 1920s fauteuil, one of a pair, by Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann.**

THE PRADO

her work," Couturier says. Donat, at age fifty-three, is a relatively young design eminence. She is chiefly known for her pieces in bronze and other metals—the works are reminiscent of the designs of Diego Giacometti—but often incorporate highly-figured wood. From her, Couturier and his clients commissioned a range of metal tables and lamps, along with some case pieces such as chests of drawers. Couturier wanted her to design the most complicated design element in the Wyoming house—a new stairwell and banister leading to the lower level of the house—but, he says regretfully, "it would have cost a million dollars." In the end, Couturier himself designed the minimalist patinated steel and tempered glass stairwell system, which, to these eyes, did not suffer from the lack of Donat's hand.

Those stairs lead down to one of Couturier's most striking touches. For the decoration of the media room he hired decorative painter Paulin Pâris—who executed the pale yellow and white whorls pattern on the walls of the living room—to create a mural. The work is a simple, playful take on Native American motifs, but it is also reminiscent of primitivist murals seen in many art deco decors, and in particular of the famed quirky illustration by Jean Lambert Rucki—showing a dog-like creature staring down a hedgehog—on the door of a black lacquer cabinet that was the centerpiece of the salon in Ruhlmann's "Hôtel du Collectionneur" pavilion at the 1925 Paris Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes (the fair that prompted the invention of the term art deco). "It gives the space a bit of charm and élan," Couturier says of the mural. The same words could be used to describe his entire renovation. As they don't say in France: Yippee ki-yay.

The house was not without merits: it has seven bedrooms and large open-plan rooms where the clients' gaggle of grandchildren could run about

Opposite page: **A 1950s wool tapestry entitled "Hymne à la joie (5th song)" by Louis-Marie Jullien hangs above the fireplace. A small Diego Giacometti sculpture stands on an Ingrid Donat occasional table. The armchairs, by Jean Pascaud, were found at Galerie Patrick Fourtin in Paris.**

This page, top: **In an unusual pairing, reproductions of André Arbus chairs surround a burly Western style dining table.**

Below: **This view takes in some of the keynotes in Couturier's effort to decowboy the decor, including a circular 1960 Aubusson wool rug, an Ingrid Donat-designed bronze standing lamp at rear, and Couturier's own steel-and-glass banister and stairwell.**

Fairs, Exhibitions & Events

DECEMBER 2010

FRIEDMAN & VALLOIS
New York, NY
Through January 29, 2011
Presenting Daniel Buren's "Hundred Vases" exhibition.

IRISH MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Dublin, Ireland
Through February 13, 2011
www.imma.ie
In celebration of its 20th anniversary, the museum is presenting "The Moderns," a major exhibition featuring the arts in Ireland from the 1900s to the 1970s.

REGENERATION MODERN FURNITURE
New York, NY
Through March 26, 2011
www.regenerationfurniture.com
Presenting tapestries, drawings and photographs from the Estate of Jan Yoors.

DESIGN MIAMI
Miami Beach, FL
Collectors Preview and Vernissage: November 30, 2010
Fair: December 1-5, 2010
www.designmiami.com
Design Miami brings together dealers, collectors, designers, curators and critics from around the world in celebration of design culture and commerce.

CULTURED
Miami, FL
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www.miamidesigndistrict.net
Art, Fashion, Design. The Miami Design District features an array of art installations, unique retail environments, and influential design showrooms.

DESCOURS
New Orleans, LA
Event: December 3-12, 2010
www.descours.us
International architects, artists, and designers create 16 site-specific installations in hidden and abandoned spaces throughout downtown New Orleans for this 4th annual event featuring nightly music performances. Free and open to the public.

WRIGHT
Important Design Sale
Chicago, IL
Preview: December 7-13, 2010
Auction: December 14, 2010
www.wright20.com

VON ZEZSCHWITZ
Murano Glass and Italian Design Auction
Munich, Germany
Auction: December 9, 2010
www.von-zezschwitz.de
Special sale featuring more than 500 lots of Murano Glass and Italian designs.

BONHAMS & BUTTERFIELDS AUCTIONEERS & APPRAISERS
20th Century Decorative Arts Auction
New York, NY
Preview: December 11-13, 2010
Auction: December 14, 2010
www.bonhams.com/newyork
Auction featuring the Diane and Michael Shoeman collection of Vintage Radios.

CHRISTIE'S
Delorenzo: Thirty Years
New York, NY
Evening Sale
Viewing: December 11-14, 2010
Auction: December 14
Day Sale
Viewing: December 11-15, 2010
Auction: December 15
www.christies.com

PIERRE BERGÉ & ASSOCIÉS
Philippe Denys Auction
Salle des Beaux Arts Brussels, Belgium
Auction: December 15, 2010
www.pba-auctions.com
Auction of 20th-century historical designs by Philippe Denys.

PHILLIPS DE PURY & COMPANY
Design Masters
New York, NY
Auction: December 15, 2010
www.phillipsdepury.com

SKINNER AUCTIONEERS & APPRAISERS
20th Century Design Auction
Boston, MA
Auction: December 18, 2010
www.skinnerinc.com

JANUARY 2011

MIAMI INTERNATIONAL ART FAIR
Miami Beach Convention Center
Miami Beach, FL
Preview: January 13, 2011
Fair: January 14-17, 2011
www.mia-artfair.com
Highlighting the Miami International Art Fair in 2011 is the special installation "Museum of Modern Ice," bringing Canadian artist Gordon Halloran's dazzling paintings in ice to sunny South Florida for the first time.

THE AMERICAN ANTIQUES SHOW
New York, NY
Gala Benefit Preview: January 19, 2011
Show: January 20-23, 2011
www.theamericanantiquesshow.org
The 10th anniversary of The American Antiques Show is an annual benefit for the American Folk Art Museum, and will feature 300 years of American design, including folk art, furniture, fine and decorative arts; jewelry, ceramics and silver, American arts and crafts and American Indian art.

WINTER ANTIQUES SHOW
New York, NY
Opening Night Party: January 20, 2011
Show: January 21-30, 2011
www.winterantiquesshow.com
The 57th annual benefit for East Side House Settlement features ancient through 1960s fine and decorative arts from 75 exhibitors. The special exhibition is "Grandeur Preserved: Masterworks Presented by Historic Charleston Foundation."

ART PALM BEACH
Palm Beach, FL
Preview: January 20, 2011
Fair: January 21-24, 2011
www.artpalmbeach.com
The 14th edition of the annual multimedia international fair will feature all forms of contemporary art, including painting, sculpture, photography, design, fine art glass, video and installations from modern to new cutting-edge artists.

SKINNER AUCTIONEERS & APPRAISERS
Paintings & Prints Auction
Boston, MA
Auction: January 28, 2011
www.skinnerinc.com

PALM SPRINGS ART MUSEUM
Palm Springs, CA
January 29-May 29, 2011
www.psmuseum.org
"Steel and Shade—The Architecture of Donald Wexler."

FEBRUARY

LOS ANGELES MODERN AUCTIONS
Modern Art and Design Auction
Los Angeles, CA
Auction: February 2011
www.lamodern.com
Featuring works by Ettore Sottsass from the Estate of Max Palevsky. Date to be decided.

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL FINE ART FAIR
Palm Beach, FL
Vernissage: February 4, 2011
Fair: February 5-13, 2011
www.aifaf.com
The 15th edition features international fine art from classical antiquity to contemporary, and the world's finest collection of haute and period jewelry.

R 20TH CENTURY GALLERY
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www.r20thcentury.com

PALM SPRINGS MODERNISM SHOW AND SALE
Palm Springs, CA
Preview Party: February 18, 2011, 6-9pm
Show: February 19-21, 2011
www.palmspringsmodernism.com
The 11th Annual Palm Springs Modernism Show and Sale will feature 80 premier national and international decorative and fine arts dealers presenting all design movements of the 20th century.

WRIGHT
Post War and Contemporary Art Auction
Chicago, IL
Auction: February 24, 2011
www.wright20.com

NAPLES INTERNATIONAL ART & ANTIQUE FAIR
Naples, FL
Preview: February 24, 2011
Fair: February 25-March 1, 2011
www.niaaf.com
Over 60 carefully selected dealers in old master paintings, impressionist paintings, modern and contemporary art and sculpture, furniture, decorative arts, silver, ancient arts, haute couture and period jewelry, and rare books.

MARCH

WRIGHT
Modern Design Auction
Chicago, IL
Auction: March 22, 2011
www.wright20.com

PAD PARIS
Paris, France
VIP Opening: March 29, 2011
Fair: March 30-April 3, 2011
www.padparis.net

APRIL

AD 20/21
Boston, MA
April 7-10, 2011
www.AD2021.com
50 select exhibitors from the US & Europe featuring fine art, jewelry, furniture, ceramics, fine prints, photography and more.

DALLAS DESIGN FAIR
Dallas, TX
Preview Gala: April 7, 2011
Fair: April 8 - April 10, 2011
www.dallasdesignfair.com
Prominent decorative arts dealers from around the country will exhibit at the first annual Dallas Design Fair located in the downtown Dallas Arts District.

SOFA NEW YORK
New York, NY
April 15-18, 2011
www.sofaexpo.com
Sculpture, Object and Functional Art Fair at New York's Park Avenue Armory.

LOS ANGELES MODERNISM SHOW AND SALE
Santa Monica, CA
Preview Party: April 29, 2011
Show: April 30-May 1, 2011
www.lamodernism.com
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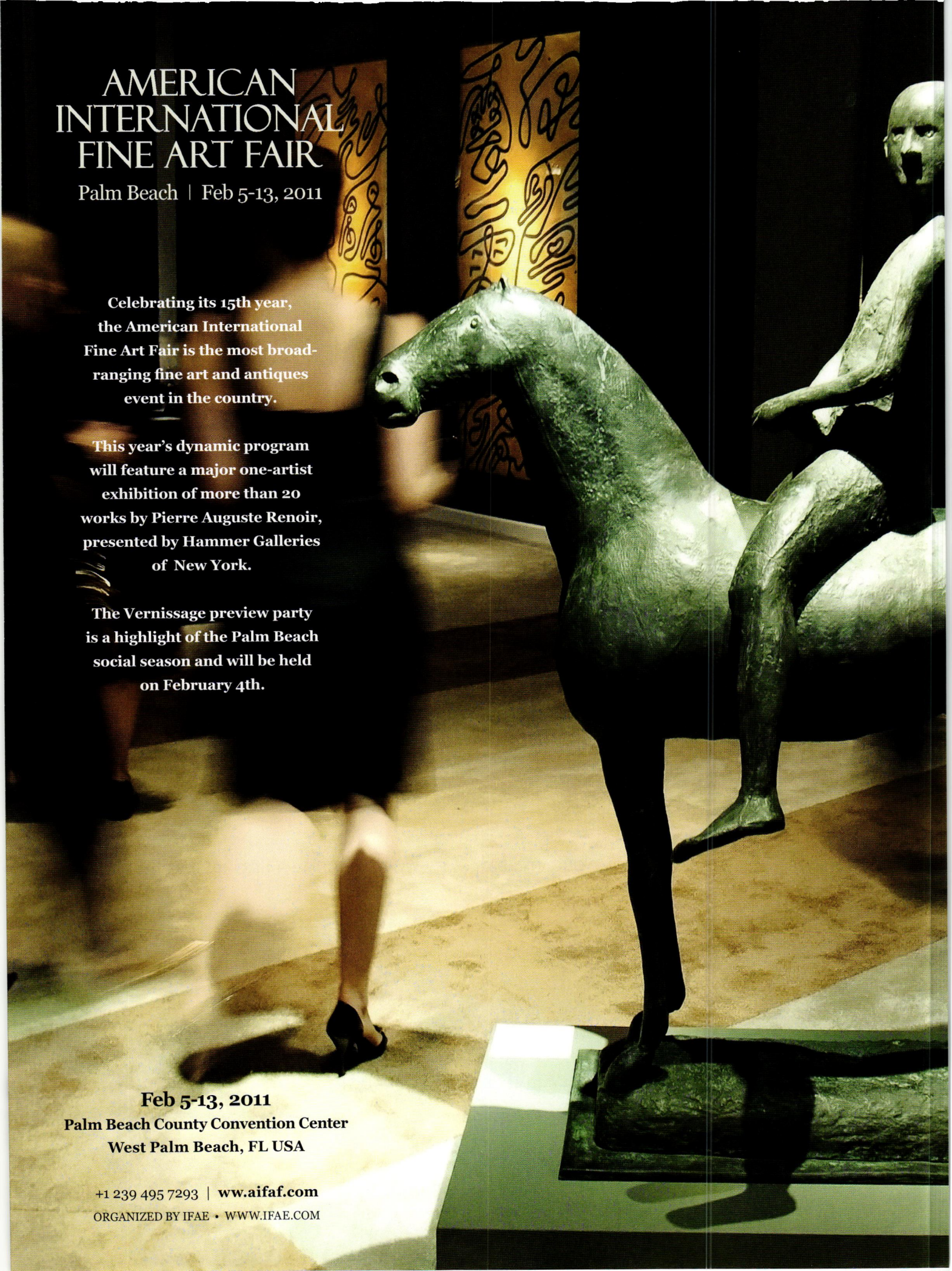
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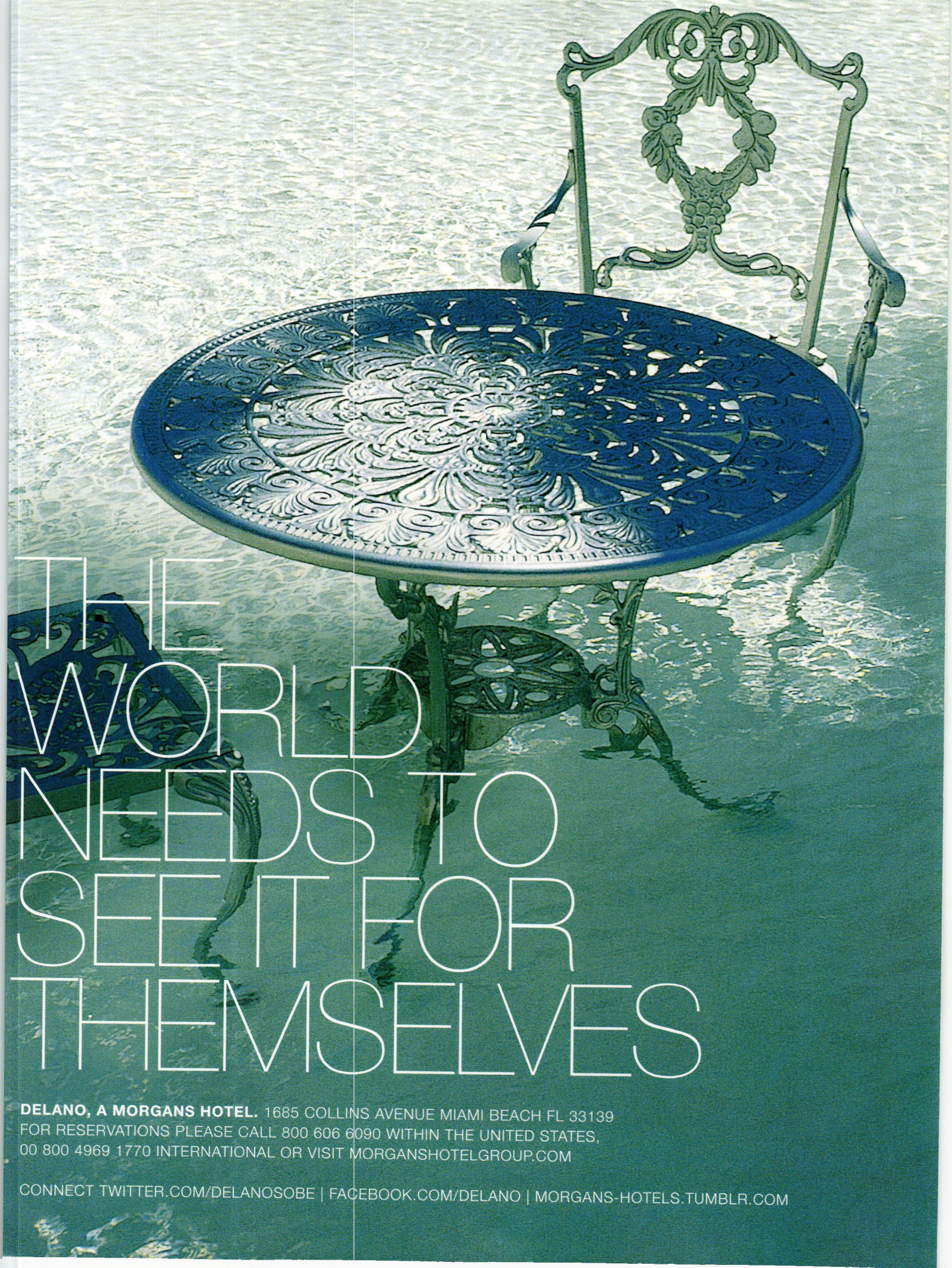

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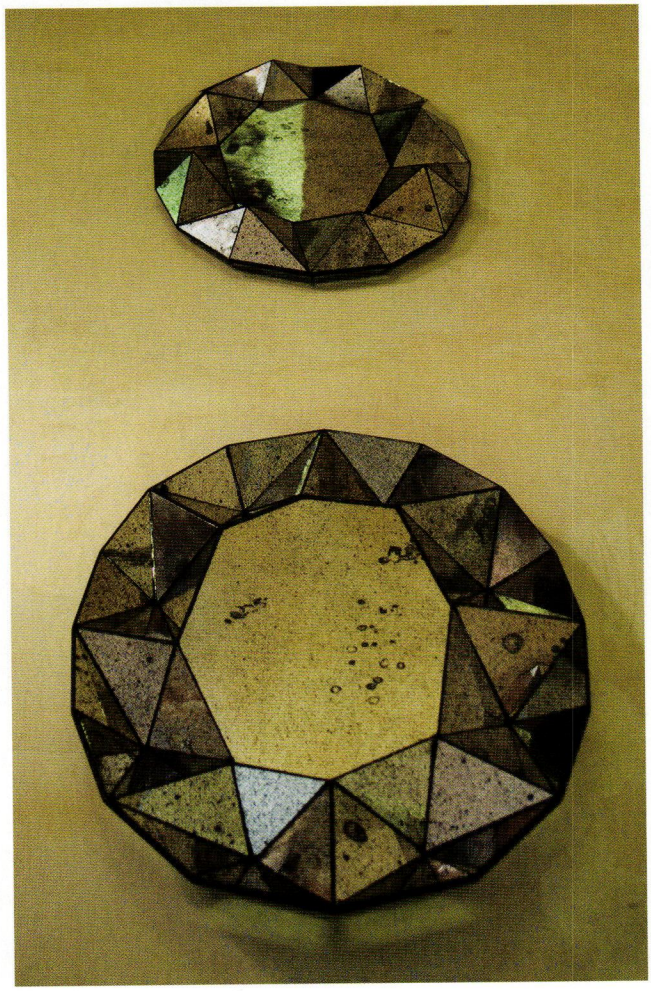
IN OUR GALLERY, WE ARE DRAWN TO OBJECTS MADE USING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES—and we feel certain such creations have a competitive advantage over those that aren't. This is because we want to believe that today's enlightened consumer is a broad-minded, conscientious person, but a connoisseur all the same. They seek out objects that satisfy what the historian and critic Richard Ingersoll calls a "millennialist quest for redemption in the Age of Global Warming," yet are also intelligent, provocative, striking, and finely made. One example of the achievement of this balance can be seen in the tremendous success of Carlo Petrini's Slow Food movement. As Ingersoll notes, the Italian activist's "ingenious contribution to eco-consciousness has been to convince people that eating local organically grown foods is the ultimate form of hedonism. Finally, environmentalism without sacrifice!" In other words, you can enjoy the best *and* do good.



With this in mind, the work of Sam Orlando Miller has been the fodder for an ongoing conversation at our gallery regarding the reuse of historical, but neglected, materials. Miller didn't invent the idea of repurposing, of course, yet more often than not objects made via this method, while conceptually intriguing, tend to be poor in craftsmanship and fail to strike a balance between good design and decoration. Miller's execution, however, is flawless.

Born in Britain in 1966 and trained as a silversmith in his father's shop, Miller is currently the creative director of several major architectural and interior restoration projects. As a craftsman, he's drawn to materials that carry the beauty of time, a patina gained by being in the world and crafted in the old, artisanal way. "I gather found elements together," he says, "often keeping them for years, not knowing what they might become, but feeling connected to them. Then one day an idea appears, and the making begins." Take, for example, the first works in his untitled mirror collection (illustrated here). "I found a piece of mirror one day and I picked it up because I saw that the silver was coming off the back. It was because it was falling apart that I noticed it. I put it in the workshop and left it there," he says. "Some time later, my wife, Helen, was photographing a room in our house, which has dark walls. Looking at her pictures it struck me that all the light was being absorbed by the building and by the furniture and little was being reflected back. So I remembered the piece of mirror and a shape came to mind from some drawings of a crystal form I had made. What is essential to me is that the disintegration of the mirror's surface makes you aware of the silver. Silver has always been part of my life, when I look at the metal so many memories emerge: of my father, his craftsmen, their workbenches, the dirt of the polishing room. An object in silver captures the world around it."

And, in taking what others might have seen as a piece of trash and using it to make a thing of sublime beauty, Miller also captured his life. That is what we in our gallery cherish. M

Antonio Ametrano is the sales director of Hedge Gallery in San Francisco

Sam Orlando Miller's Untitled Mirrors of 2008–2009

PHOTO COURTESY OF HELEN MILLER

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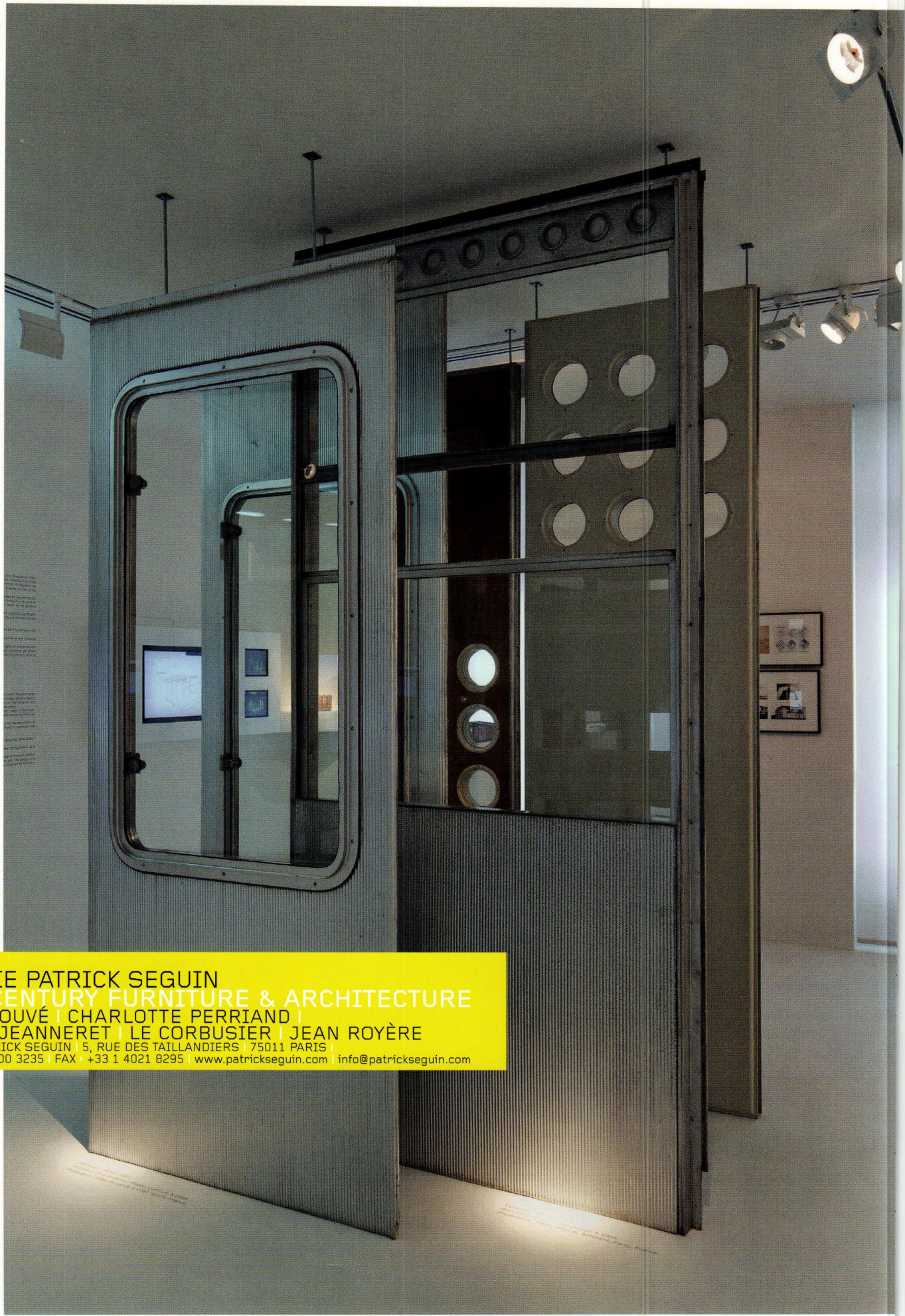

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