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INTERIORS & DESIGN

ISSUE 27 OCTOBER 2008

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MOEL armchair and sofa. Design: Inga Sempé. Catalogue: www.ligne-roset.co.uk or 0870 7777 202

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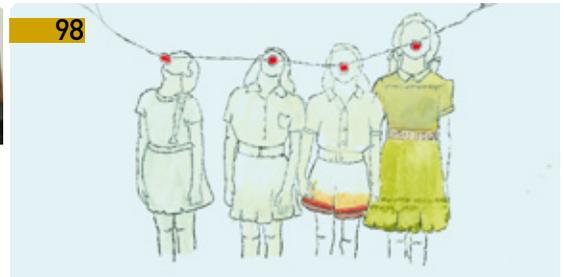
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As our city planners become ever more cautious about public safety, a brave few are throwing caution to wind and running, jumping and swinging their way through the urban jungle.

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EDITORIAL

WELCOME TO THE OCTOBER ISSUE, WHICH IS BURSTING WITH OFF-BEAT AND ORIGINAL PROJECTS WITH A TRULY INTERNATIONAL FLAVOUR.

This month we've had fun seeking out homes with guts - from the house that thinks it's a water-feature on p50 to the pad designed to help you live forever (p108), or how about the charming McGonigle home with its deceptively simple design and bold but beautiful lines.

I like to think of these projects as being a little like the people who stand on soap boxes in our cities, eternally hopeful that they can change our minds, or even our lives, in our lunchbreak when all we really want is a quick cup of coffee and a sandwich. While you may not care for this kind of evangelising, you can't help but admire the architectural equivalent: dropping unconventional buildings into your path to challenging your preconceptions just when you least expect it. Forget about politely putting your own stamp on the ubiquitous white box, a new breed of architects are unashamedly pushing the envelope and while not to everybody's tastes the resulting projects are certainly worth talking about.

When we haven't been busy championing unconventional building projects, the Spaces team has been on the move this month, looking for inspiration in London, New York and Sri Lanka. Sadly I couldn't find a good enough

excuse to join my colleagues on their travels, but I've been reaping the rewards in the form of some great travel-inspired features. Don't miss Dan Roberts' engaging account of his time in Sri Lanka on p118, an intriguing selection of American homes and stylist Rohini Wahi's Scandi-inspired shopping ideas from p10.

To celebrate Spaces' recent re-launch in a new monthly format we're extending our half-price subscriptions offer, so if you'd like to have the magazine delivered to your door pretty much anywhere in the world please give us a call on +44 (0)1244 663400 ext.324 and ask for this offer. Alternatively visit: spacesmagazine.co.uk to subscribe online. Also, as we've been attracting new readers in some really far-flung locations (causing me to brush up on that sub-GCSE level geography and stare at a map of the world in wonderment) I'd love to hear from anyone who's currently reading this magazine in an exotic part of the world. Why not email: info@spacesmagazine.co.uk and make us all jealous!

Until next time...

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PARIS

this page
String Plex System,
£778, Funktion Alley.

below
'Smalltown' sofa with
wooden frame, Nozag
spring system and
chromed legs, p.o.a.
Eero Koivisto, Object.

below right
'I'm Boo' carafe, €55,
Norway Says, Muuto.



RETAIL THERAPY SCANDI STYLE

'Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.'
Leonardo Da Vinci

far left above
Walnut and handblown
glass **cheese dome**,
£25, Sagaform at
Formahouse.

far left below
Teak trays, from
£32, Design House
Stockholm.

left
'Mango' serving set,
£46, Iittala.





far right
'I'm all bananas'
murano **glass bird**,
£250, iittala.



right
'Ommagio' **vases**,
p.o.a, Kahler.

below
Set of four stoneware
and acacia
serving bowls,
£19.95, Sagaform,
Formahouse.





top
Clear glass lanterns,
£270 each, iittala.



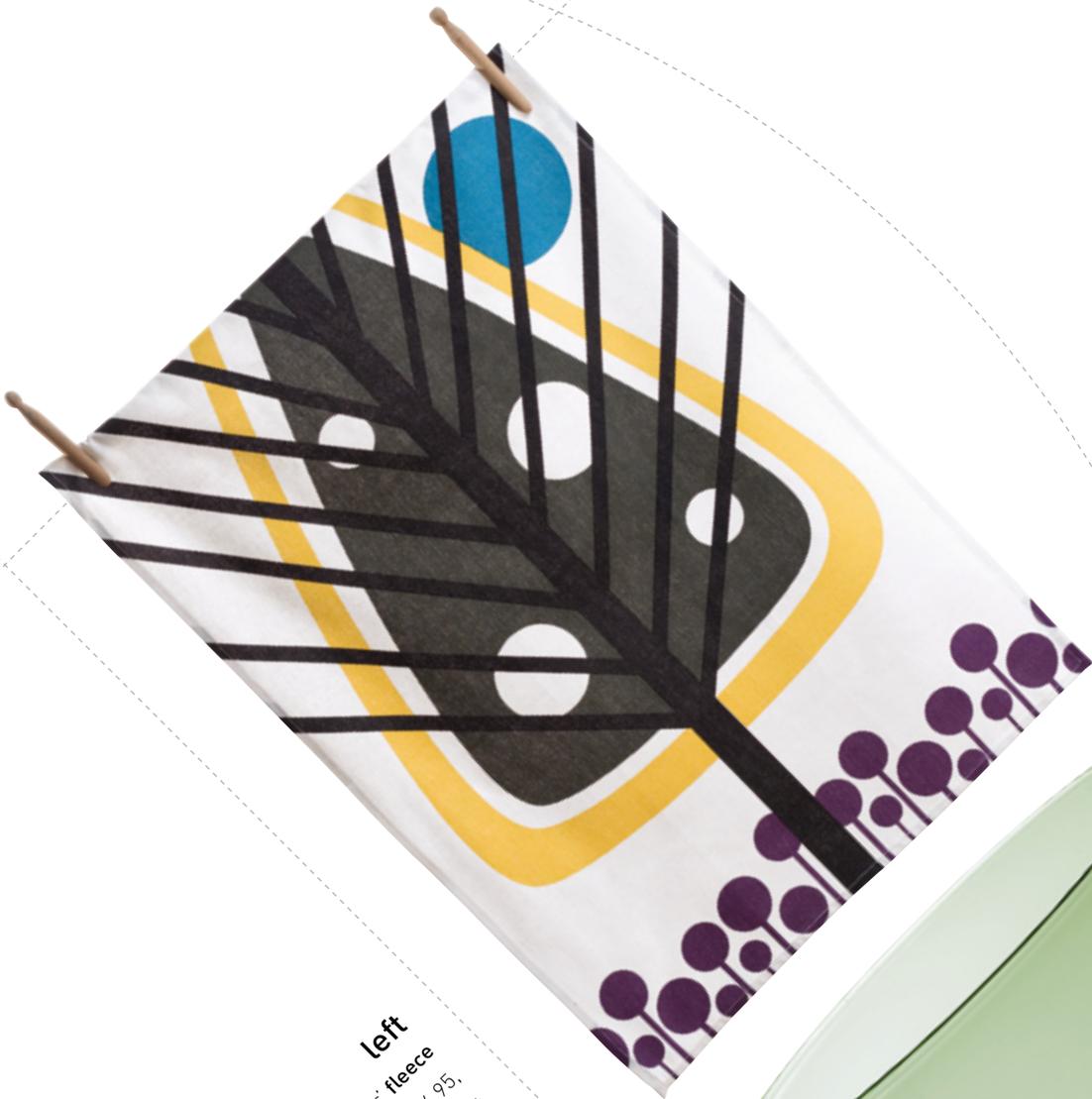
left
'Lace' mug,
£20, Rostrand,
Scandi Living.



far left
Heaven Step ladder,
£425, SKANDIUM.



below left
Black porcelain
soup tureen, £74,
Ego at 95% Danish.



left
'Ice star' fleece
throw, £14.95,
Sagaform at
Formahouse.

above right
'Pine' teatowel,
£7.95, Ferm Living,
95% Danish.

below
'Diod' in
tumblers,
£1.29, Ikea.





left and right
'Valmuska' cotton fabric, £29
per metre, Marimekko .

top
'Kartio' moss green
pitcher, £36, iittala.

centre
Cast iron casserole dish,
£89, Tools range, iittala.

above
'Storia' teapot, p.o.a, Kahler.



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left
'Blond' cotton or silk
window blinds, from
€ 1199,00, Brunklaus
Amsterdam.



below
Caravaggio Opal
Pendant light, £128 -
£396, Funktion Alley.

bottom
'1950's Art Pillow',
£41.95, Design
House Stockholm.



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A THOROUGHLY MODERN MENAGERIE

Most chichi London hotels take a pretty dim view of guests who arrive with pets, but things are very different at hotel-cum-art gallery, the Jones.

WORDS: Emma Hill
PHOTOS: Courtesy of the Jones



Since September the Jones hotel in Bayswater has been hosting a groundbreaking exhibition bringing together a number of talented avant-garde artists and designers whose work has been inspired by our furry friends. Curators Marcus Fairs and Rupinder Bhogal have managed to find exhibits that are simultaneously familiar but slightly disturbing and radical yet nostalgic; designers showcasing their work include Swedish collective Front, leading Dutch designer Hella Jongerius and Londoner Julia Lohmann.

Front will be showing their spectacular Animals series of life-size horses, pigs and rabbits that double as lamps and tables as well as new pieces that have not previously been seen in the UK. Jongerius will show a range of pieces in porcelain, leather, metal and fabric, including many new works, while Lohmann will showcase animal-inspired works including her iconic Cow bench, a stool made from a cast of a calf's organ cavity, and lamps made from intestines.

All designers have carefully

considered their art installations in relation to the design and architecture of the Jones, which is believed to have been built for King Edward VII for use by his mistress Lillie Langtry. Created by celebrated architects Mewes and Davis in 1906 following the completion of the London Ritz, the hotel features oak panelling, painted ceilings and a jewel-like Grade I listed theatre with gilded plasterwork and a domed ceiling.

The intention of the exhibition was to surprise and delight the viewer by



Eames 'house bird' by Vitra.



'Animal thing' - pig table by FRONT.



'Stag' by Nymphenberg.

placing objects in unexpected places and combining pieces for dramatic effect. Taken together, the works will give the effect of a menagerie – a spectacular private collection of wild animals that was a popular feature of royal and aristocratic palaces in the past, before the advent of public zoos.

Works on show will range in scale from life-size horses and cows to delicate, fragile works in porcelain and precious metals and the exhibition will explore the current trend whereby many designers are

returning to figurative forms in their work, rejecting abstraction and instead taking their inspiration from living creatures.

If you're tired of seeing the same old artists at the same big galleries, then we thoroughly recommend this refreshingly different exhibition. The Jones will be hosting more art-related events throughout the autumn and we hope that should they prove successful others will be emboldened to follow suit, bringing a little more art into our everyday lives. ☺

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CUPCAKE, ANYONE?

Treat yourself to one of the celebrated cupcakes at the incredibly quaint Hummingbird Bakery on Portobello Road. We recommend the Red Velvet - a red vanilla cake with a hint of chocolate - just delicious! Prices start from £1.15 each



hummingbirdbakery.com

WEB SPACE

thelollipopshoppe.co.uk

The Lollipop Shoppe has a newly opened store in Brighton, but we are most excited by their webspace. Selling classic design pieces and those harder to find 'want it now' items. Products are sourced from around the world guarantying an eclectic mix. Click on!



VIVA ITALIA!

Our heads have recently been turned by the glossy good looks of Giellesse's 'Day & Night' furniture. We stumbled upon their new Heron wardrobe with sliding gloss white doors at Michael Wright Furniture (where it's displayed to its best advantage alongside equally lovely Effeti kitchens and Carl Hansen furniture). We want one!



giellesse.it
michaelwrightfurniture.co.uk

BOOKMARK

'I Think Sometimes I Am'

If you only buy one book this month, make it this enchanting collection of illustrations by Sara Fanelli. Her work is whimsical, offering its privileged reader a moment of blissful escapism.

I Think Sometimes I Am' £19.99, illustrations by Sara Fanelli, text by Marina Warner and Steven Heller. Available from: tate.org.uk/shop



MAKE SPACE FOR...

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These contemporary pieces can act as a low-key storage solution when standing alone, or create a design statement when displayed as a trio. Match or contrast - the choice is yours.

'Dado' collection by Studio Kairos for B&B Italia. Small night table from £67, chest of drawers from £1,793, tall chest of drawers from £3,061. T.+44 (0)20 7591 8111 beitalia.it



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Drop in to the new flagship store of Bisazza - one of Italy's top luxury design brands. You will be mesmerised by the famous glass mosaics on display in this stylish Moscow store.

bisazza.com



PENCIL IN...

CRAFT CENTRAL, THURSDAY 27TH NOVEMBER, 6-8PM

Over 70 designer-makers will be showcasing their beautifully crafted gifts and trinkets at Craft Central this November. The show is the perfect place to stock up on Christmas presents you won't find on the high street, all of which are hand-made, making every purchase unique. Delightful! Admission £2.50 per person, under 16's free.

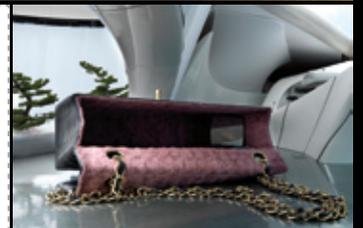
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33-35 St. John's Square, London
craftcentral.org.uk



MOBILE ART

When the likes of Karl Lagerfeld and Zaha Hadid combine creative forces you know something spectacular is about to take place. Mobile Art is a traveling exhibition commissioned by Chanel and housed in a stunning futuristic pavilion designed by Hadid. Having recently left Asia, the project is about to land in Central Park, NYC, showcasing work by 20 international artists who have created eye-catching designs inspired by Chanel's iconic handbags. This exhibition would be worth visiting for the accessories alone – the art is just the cherry on top! 'Mobile Art' will be coming to London soon; date to be confirmed.

Tickets are free and can be reserved from:
chanel-mobileart.com



CONRAN 21

21 years ago The Conran Shop famously set up residence at Michelin House. To mark their anniversary 21 designers who are affiliated with Conran have each been commissioned to produce a product. These pieces will make up a limited edition collection available in store, celebrating the strong relationship between shop and designer. Happy birthday Conran!

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theconranshop.co.uk

CONTEMPORARY COOL

We've raided the new collections to bring you a selection of our favourite new seating and storage solutions.

FEATURE BY: Georgie Dye

left: 'Flow' chair from Johanson Design.
centre: 'Albers' sofa designed by Rodolfo Dordoni for Minotti.
right: 'Fly Me' chair by Geir Sætveit for Martela.







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01. 'Scacco' sofa by CRS for Seven Salotti, price on application, for stockists contact Bianchi Furniture. 02. 'Sand' bookshelf, from £2,289, La Maison Coloniale. 03. 'Biscia' chair, £235, Ligne Roset. 04. 'Panna' chair, £1,990, The Conran Shop. 05. 'Tulip Sixty Six' chair, from £1,104 in fabric or from £1,584 in leather, B&B Italia. 06. 'Snooze' sofa (pictured in nubuck and velvet) £5499, 'Daxie' ottoman (pictured in nubuck): £1680.25, both by Ochre. 07. 'Cloud' sofa, from £1,978 + vat in fabric or from £3,022 + vat in leather, B&B Italia

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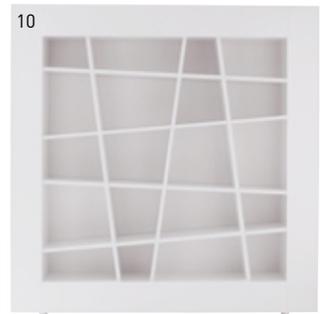
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08. 'DS-5' sofa designed by Antonella Scarpitta, 3 seat sofa from £7105, chair from £3600, ottoman stool from £2210, for De Sede. 09. 'Flat C' modular system by Antonio Citterio, as pictured from £8498, B&B Italia. 10. 'Lines' storage unit, £1860, Ligne Roset. 11. 'Chair_One' designed by Konstantin Grcic for Magis Design. 12. 'Exclusif' sofa, from £2,778, Ligne Roset. 13. 'Dentelles' sofa, from £1319.81, 'Dentelles' medium round ottoman from £ 815, 'Dentelles' large round ottoman from £ 1,000, Roche Bobois.

Visit the **Spaces website** for the latest design and architecture news, plus exclusive sneak previews of the articles we'll be featuring in our next issue.

Our online gallery features a selection of our favourite homes and photo shoots and our useful online

directory is a great place to track down interesting stores stocking inspiring and original products from around the world.

Plus, why not subscribe or order back issues quickly and securely from the Spaces website. **e**





14. 'Soft Shell' sofa designed by Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec for Vitra. 15. 'Hollywood' armchair designed by Antonio Citterio for Flexform. 16. 'Chabada' chair designed by Daniel Rode, from E738, Roche Bobois. 17. 'Rotterdam' chair designed by Hella Jongerius for Vitra. 18. 'OneChair' white, £179, BoConcept. 19. 'Teardrop' table, £1,060, Natuzzi. 20. 'Container' with open compartments from Flexform. 21. 'Fill' modular bookcase system designed by Studio Ausenda - Greco, £4,200 for the unit shown, Desalto. 22. 'Wally' storage designed by Philip Jackson for Cattelan Italia. 23. 'Mitchell' coffee table designed by Rodolfo Dordoni for Minotti.

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24. 'Delfa' sofa from Arflex, price on application, for stockists contact Bianchi Furniture. 25. 'Billy' coffee table designed by Studio Kronos for Cattelan Italia. 26. 'Miro' sofa (modular version with chaise longue) from £3,550, cushions £90, 'Nautilus' red lacquer table £530, all by Natuzzi. 27. 'Index' storage system by Liv'it, price on application, for stockists contact Bianchi Furniture. 28. 'Moon' nest of tables, £1609.75, Ochre. 29. 'Mobius' coffee table from Kristalia, price on application, for stockists contact Bianchi Furniture. 30. 'Ellipse' bookcase, £1681, La Maison Coloniale.

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Exhibition Quality

PHOTOGRAPHER: Ken Sparkes
STYLIST: Rohini Wahi
LOCATION: Courtesy of the Village Underground



Museum Chair, £275, Heals. **Oak facet chair**, £95, Unto This Last.
Norma chair, £120, Unto This Last. **Trace chair**, £250, Shin Azumi, Twenty Twenty One.
Chair One, £151.20, Constantin Gric, Espacio.



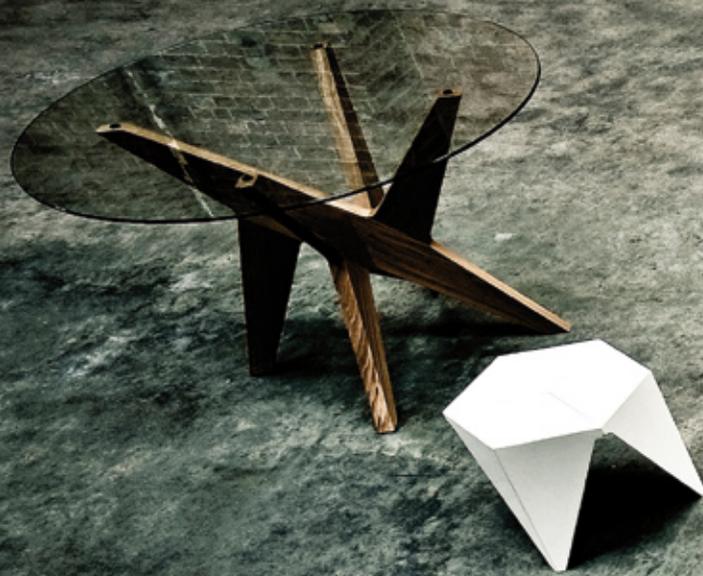


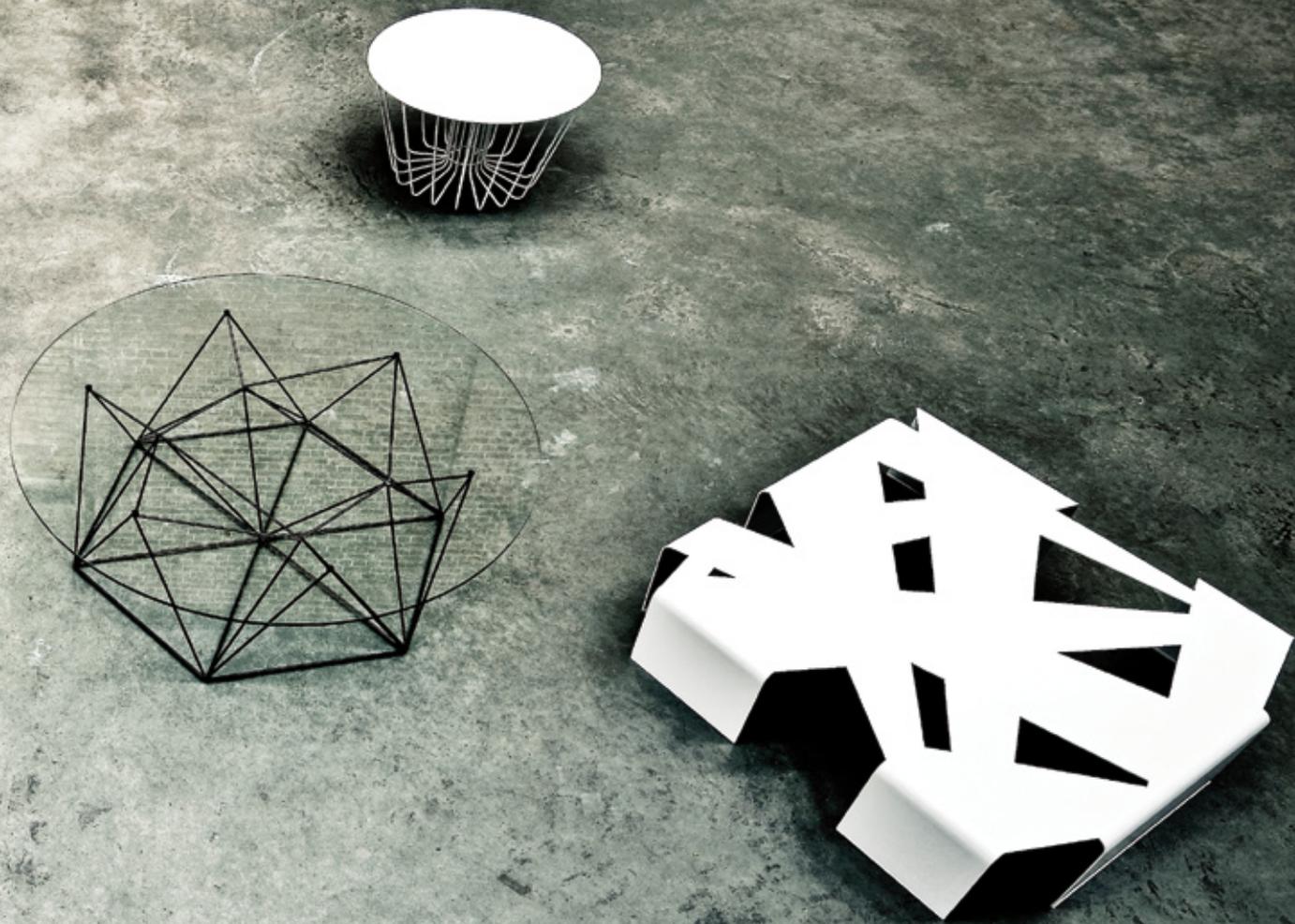
Cork stools, £241 each, Jasper Morrison, Designshop UK. **White D stool**, £55, Unto This Last.

Kartell stone smoke stool, £117, Marcel Wanders, Heals.

Hocker stool in white, £800, Vitra. **Inshogololo stool**, P.O.A, Ryan Frank.







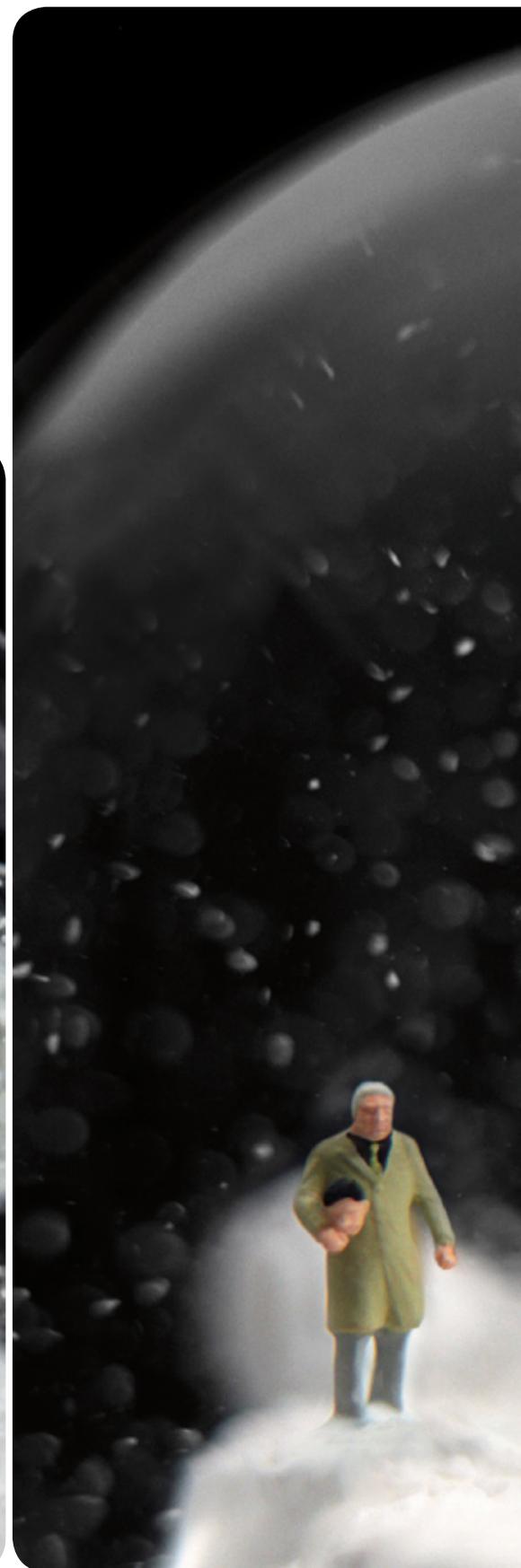
Glass top and oak Cross Pedestal table, £895, Matthew Hilton, SCP.
Prismatic table, £262, Vitra. **Wire coffee table**, £484, Arik Levy, Espacio.
Stella occasional table, £399, Habitat. **Intersection coffee table**, £1,295, Mint.





A STORM IN A SNOW GLOBE

WORDS: Emma Hill
PHOTOS: Paloma Muñoz



Before we begin I would like to lay my cards on the table and confess that I have always had a bit of a thing for snow globes. There's something strangely satisfying about cupping a tiny fairytale world in the palm of your hand and watching as the world's smallest storm brews.

However, it wasn't until Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz came along and gave the humble snow globe a vigorous shake up that I really sat up and took notice. The artists have made the simple, almost iconic, glass dome their own, filling it not just with delicate flakes of fake snow,



but with a series of beautiful but deadly scenes featuring elegantly rendered figures, many of whom look as if they have been torn from a Hopper painting and transplanted somewhere altogether more dangerous, without time for a change of clothes.

Spellbound by the artists' Travelers series (2001-2008), which features a series of beautifully realised scenes in the snow, each of which has darkness (but also, I suspect, a dash of knowing humour) at its heart, I sought out Martin and Muñoz with a handful of scribbled questions. >>>



left: 'Alone Together', 2005, C-Print.
 centre: 'Traveler 188 at Night',
 2006, C-Print.
 top right: 'The Well', 2004, C-Print.
 above right: 'Traveler 128 at Night'.



Happily their answers were every bit as darkly comic as you would hope from the artists who gave our favourite childhood collectable a distinctly grown-up twist.

When did you begin making your snow globes?

In February 2001 after a very difficult year in which we were evicted from our Brooklyn studio we bought a dilapidated 'vacation home' in a remote area of eastern Pennsylvania. We set up shop there and began with the globes not long afterwards.

How did your artistic partnership develop?

First we were lovers, but we were also two broke artists who needed to pool our resources. We found ourselves looking at each other's work because we shared the same wall in a small studio for the first few years we were living together. From time to time we would take things from the other's side and mix it up with our own work. At first it seemed intrusive and a sort of violation, but the payoff was the element of surprise we experienced in seeing our original linear ideas morph into something that was fresh and unexpected. Now things have changed and we could afford to have separate studios, but we continue to depend on each other in the same way.

Where do you find inspiration for the darkly comic scenes you depict within your snow globes?

Looking out of the window for starters. It's a deceptively hostile environment. Nine months a year the place looks like the outlands of Mordor! When spring arrives in May the trees leaf out and briefly the forest is beautiful, but within a couple of weeks the gypsy moth caterpillars have chewed the green canopy down to the bone. The deer are like locust and catch any new growth before it has a chance to sprout, the tick they carry has Lyme disease. Oh, and then there are the locals. We have lived here for six years now and the only friendly relationship I've developed since we arrived is with the UPS guy.

On the positive side house breakings are rare. The assumption is twofold: that there is nothing worth stealing and that the inhabitants are probably heavily armed. Judging by the gunfire that fills the forest during the hunting season this seems to be a fair assumption.

I think you could characterise our overall take on our country environs as 'dread and wonder'. I think, though, that we imagine a dark and wonderful presence in the woods that goes way beyond the niggling list of complaints above.

As a couple transposed from a high density urban setting to a remote and solitary one we were intrigued by some of the same insecurities our ancestors must have felt in regard to this new world.

The globes became a way of diffusing and articulating some of our apprehension in regard to our setting. It

is therapeutic, somehow, to imagine a fully realised dystopia. It relieves some of the anxiety of anticipation, even if the detailing of these fears is strictly speaking hypothetical and exaggerated.

You have created dozens of intriguing scenes. Are there any that have a particular resonance for you?

Well yes. The man and a woman chained at the ankles in a sort of resigned pose as if to say 'what now?' That works as a sort of a signature; an inside joke regarding our collaboration together. That was inspired by 'The Defiant Ones', a late 50's movie with Tony Curtis and Sidney Poitier. The two convicts escape, shackled together at the ankles.

There are also some globes and images which incorporate a type of house that is based on the home I grew up in that now exists only in memory. In one case the house is sinking; in another there is a woman at the window and a man walking away with a suitcase. Another depicts a man and a woman pushing a house up a hill on a cart.

Your snow globes have garnered a lot of interest in the art world. Did you ever worry that by working with the humble snow globe you might alienate some members of the art establishment?

We are certainly aware of the kitschy legacy of snow globes as well as the craft aspect of the object. But I think we felt



'THE GLOBES BECAME A WAY OF DIFFUSING AND ARTICULATING SOME OF OUR APPREHENSION IN REGARDS TO OUR SETTING. IT IS THERAPEUTIC, SOMEHOW, TO IMAGINE A FULLY REALISED DYSTOPIA.'

we could turn that fatal weakness into a strength. We are aware that everything depends on whether we succeed in making that conversion.

Some viewers have commented that your work is identifiably American. Do you feel that the country in which you work has had a bearing upon your creations? Absolutely, although we work in Spain for three months of the year and rural Pennsylvania and Brooklyn for the other nine. We are a bilingual, bicultural pair with a roving studio and we've developed this triangular groove. I never see America more clearly than when I'm in Spain and I think the same thing works in reverse for Paloma. Fox News, for instance, really gets under my skin when I am forced to watch it in a car dealership's waiting room or a doctor's office. Here in Spain it is part of my father in law's cable package and when I watch it here I find it hilarious and illuminating. The best way to know the enemy is to see him with fresh eyes. Being and working abroad helps give perspective to your home culture and I think we have both benefited from that. From our own experience, we draw on

the landscapes of the snowy Poconos but also on the translucent blue of the Mediterranean Sea and the rugged desert mountains that jut up behind us here in El Campello.

Are your snow globes or photographs available to buy?

Yes, at the galleries which represent our work: PPOW in New York, Galeria Moriarty in Madrid and Mario Mauroner Contemporary Art in Vienna.

What are you working on at present?

New sets and photographs as part of the 'Islands' series. We're also thinking of a book featuring images of our own, but that's at an early stage.

What are your plans for the future?

Stay out of trouble, keep our eyes to the ground and try not to fall down any wells!

We can't help but smile at Martin and Muñoz's parting words, which instantly evoke the subject matter of their artworks; danger lurks around every corner, they are reminding us, but they are clearly staring it down with a wry grin and a twinkle in their eyes. We like their style. ☺

left

'The Cliff', 2006, C-Print.

centre

'Wish & Weight', 2007, C-Print.

right

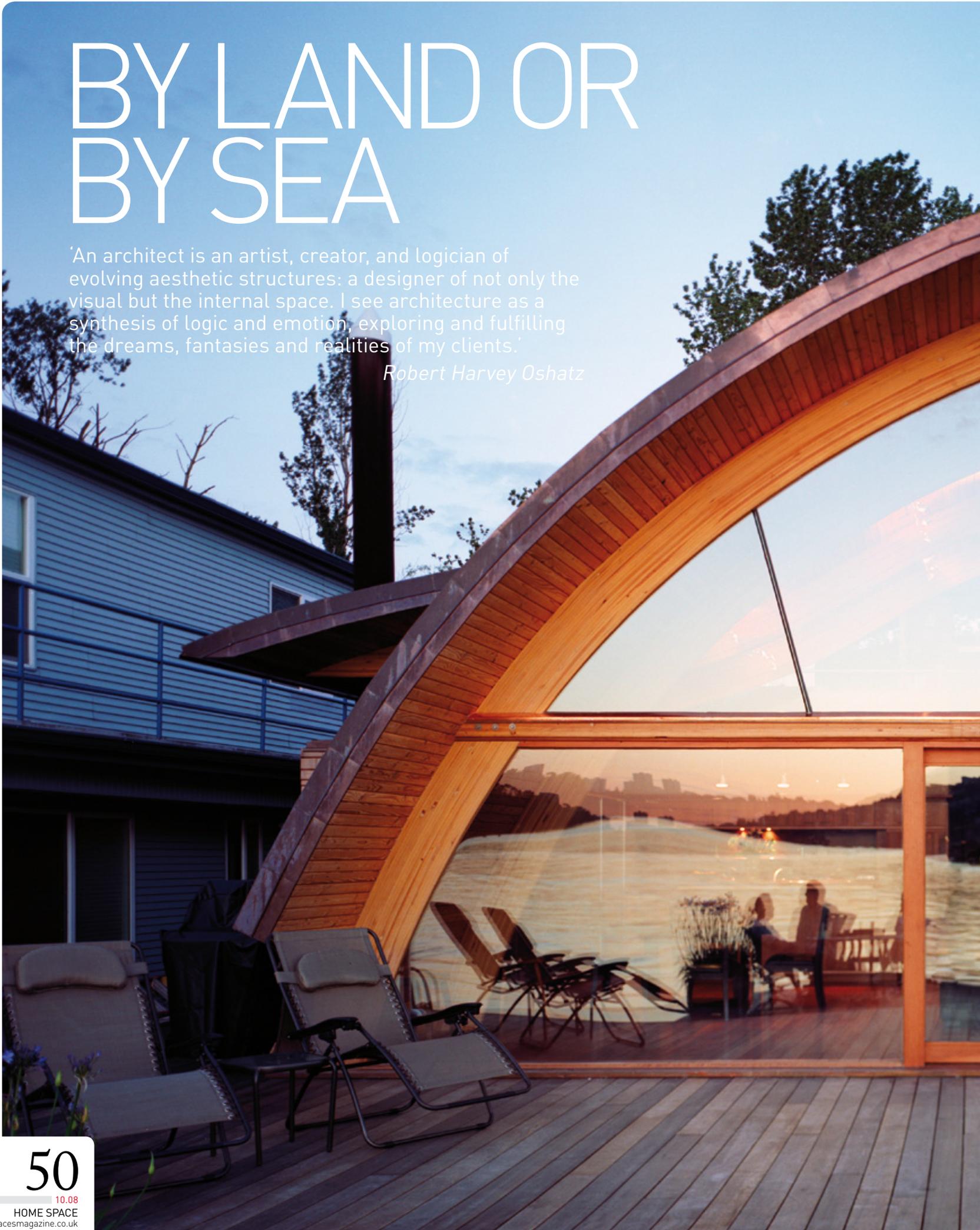
'The Mail Boat', 2007, C-Print.

Walter Martin & Paloma Muñoz
martin-munoz.com

BY LAND OR BY SEA

'An architect is an artist, creator, and logician of evolving aesthetic structures: a designer of not only the visual but the internal space. I see architecture as a synthesis of logic and emotion, exploring and fulfilling the dreams, fantasies and realities of my clients.'

Robert Harvey Oshatz





WORDS: Fergus McShane
PHOTOS: Cameron Neilson

Upon first sight of the stunning building, it strikes you as if a stationary wooden wave were crashing through the neighbouring houses.



From the very first glance at any of his finished homes it is immediately obvious that Robert Oshatz holds a unique philosophy regarding the design of his projects. This credo has led to the construction of an impressive array of beautiful buildings, including the curvaceous, floating Fennell Residence.

Architects and landscapers will often seek to utilise water for its calming and relaxing qualities, not to mention the romantic vibe it instils. Oshatz has simply gone one step further in his creation of a house that is itself a water feature. Floated on 80-foot-long Douglas fir logs, the Fennell residence can be found gently »»»



The ultimate houseboat reflects the ripples of the waves.

Copper and wooden shingles give a homely, rustic feeling to the Fennell's frame.



Architects and landscapers will often seek to utilise water for its calming and relaxing qualities.

The Douglas fir beams show off the curvaceous inner structure of this floating arc.

bobbing, moored to the riverbank on the Willamette River.

'They (the clients) wanted to take advantage of the water; that's why they bought in a location where they could have a floating home,' says Oshatz. He explains that the home's primary use would be as a summer retreat, and undoubtedly there are few places more suitable for rest and relaxation.

Water is the clear theme of the home, which is defined by its unusual location. Upon first sight of the stunning building, it strikes you as if a stationary wooden wave were crashing through the neighbouring houses. 'The structure was designed to reflect the rippling of the water,' says Oshatz. 'The intent was to create a design that looked appropriate in its environment and that could easily have been at home on land, but is actually on a flotation.'

This effect has undoubtedly been achieved. The Fennell residence has a wave-like rippling quality in its inspired structure. It appears perfectly at home on the river, mimicking its every movement, while simultaneously managing to maintain an earth-bound feel with its predominantly wooden frame.

Unbelievably the house does not even appear out-of-place among the more modest regular homes. It may not reflect the image we conjure up when we think 'house boat', but with such an inspiring appearance, no one will be complaining.

Part of Oshatz's success as an architect comes from his instinctive understanding of what is achievable from the projects he chooses. In terms of modernist architecture, his work lies far from the increasingly familiar minimalist 'white box' as he refers to it. Instead he explains how he draws on the desires and emotions of the client in order to deliver their perfect personal surroundings.

Oshatz explains: 'They wanted a loft feeling with an open-plan layout, a structure that felt very warm and comfortable. Their problem was that everyone they talked to was doing the very strict clean white modern boxes. They wanted something more. It is a very modern structure but it's not what you expect when you think of modern architecture; it's very warm, colourful and relaxing.' >>>



A room with a view:
what better place to
soak in the tub?

The interior fulfils the client's specifications and then some. The house, which has a surprisingly small floor plan, uses all of the available space perfectly. It is almost totally open with large floor-to-ceiling windows on the riverside bringing in an abundance of light and offering great views.

In terms of individual rooms, the client's only requirements were for an expansive open-plan living and kitchen space opening out onto the river. Past this, their only must was for a study, and a guest bedroom with a bathroom.

This somewhat simple list of requirements was clearly beneficial for Oshatz. He was free to focus on the finishes used in the interior spaces, which is important for him, as he states: 'I design every structure from the inside out.' He explains how his designs are born from the interior first. Everything from the wooden floor inside to the copper plating outside comes from thinking about the living space.

A simple palette of materials was used extensively throughout the house. The visible structure is made up of elegantly curved Douglas fir glulam beams. The flooring is a Brazilin Cherry hardwood, with an American Cherry being used for all the cabinets and trim work in the house. This simple blending of purposefully chosen textures and colours has resulted in the creation of a very comfortable living space.

Oshatz describes his meeting with his clients as something more than necessary design talks. He refers to it as the 'spiritual and emotional' part of their programme. The result and importance of this discussion becomes evident when you look at the smaller, personalised touches that Oshatz sporadically delivers in the house. Some of the walls hold intricately carved wave patterns in the wood, further accentuating the already established motif of the floating home.

Another unique design feature can be found in various windows in the house. These contain patterns inspired by stick maps that were once used across Micronesia in the South Pacific. The stick maps were used by native sailors as a navigation tool based on the feel and motion of the waves. Perfectly in fitting with the house, >>>



Part of Oshatz's success as an architect comes from his instinctive understanding of what is achievable from the projects he chooses.



The Fennell Residence may not reflect the image we conjure up when we think 'house boat', but with such an inspiring appearance, no one will be complaining.



The loft-style bedroom is small and simple - perfect for the client's needs.

the designs hold a special significance for the clients, who spend a large part of their year travelling or living in Saipan, one of the Micronesian islands in question.

It is often said that it is the smaller design details that ultimately highlight the quality of a project, turning a standard building project into a home. With Oshatz's style this painstaking attention to detail is more or less assured from the beginning.

'What I tried to do,' says Oshatz, 'was to design so that if the client was an architect, they would say: "this is what I would have done"'. That's what I always try and do. My desire is for every structure to be at peace with its environment and for people to be at peace within it.'

Oshatz happily remarks that he has been invited back to the house on many occasions, most recently for a 4th of July fireworks display on the river. He finds welcome praise in the reactions of those who enter the house and immediately recognise the reason behind his design.

While he is not a believer in most architecture theory, there is wonderful method to his design. 'Architecture is a synthesis of logic and design. When carried to its logical conclusion, a traditional design approach produces very imaginative structures. It is only a question of how much of an artist architects choose to be.' There is no question about the quality or artistry of the Fennell residence. Ultimately, it has injected a rare beauty into already beautiful surroundings. e

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BOXING CLEVER

When most people go house hunting it's a pretty safe bet that features like a paper-thin 1960's portakabin, dated decor and vintage electrics won't figure highly on their wish list. However, for architect and interior designer Gregory Phillips a house blighted with all these afflictions was just what the doctor ordered.

WORDS: Emma Hill
PHOTOS: Darren Chung

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HOME SPACE

www.spacemagazine.co.uk





Gregory Phillips, who runs a successful architecture firm, speaks with undisguised relish about the quirks and challenges of the 1930's North London semi which he bought several years ago with a view to transforming it into a versatile family home.

'It was in a terrible, terrible state', he chuckled; 'the extension was very fragile and the rest of the house hadn't had a major refurbishment for decades.' Sounds like an estate agent's nightmare, but Phillips is quick to point out that it

was also an architect's dream. 'I was looking for a house that I could re-model', he explained, 'and this fitted the bill. It's also very spacious.'

One of Phillips' signatures is his clever use of big sheets of glass in a way that quietly complements period buildings. He treads the line between old and new deftly – a skill that has won his firm a host of prestigious renovation projects – and clearly enjoys the process of gently nudging period properties into the 21st century.

The architect and designer also feels strongly about working with the British landscape and climate, saying: 'I like the garden to feel like part of the house and have given the extension an over-hang so that even when it's raining heavily we can have the floor-to-ceiling glass panels open. It's nice to be able to see and hear the rain while still feeling sheltered.'

He added: 'One of the key concepts was to have the whole back of the house pure glass so the views to the garden would be maximised. It was quite a »»»



'One of the key concepts was to have the whole back of the house pure glass so the views to the garden would be maximised.'

The layout encourages relaxed, informal dining in the sunshine.

If you have a family you need areas where the kids can go and play and study and you can close some doors!



The architect has retained some dividing walls, creating cosy, intimate spaces.

traditional house in the metropolitan style with a small kitchen and entertaining room, and we've added the modern extension and open-plan living areas that are defined yet have a level of decorum and differentiation.'

Phillips explained that while he is a fan of light and airy open-plan layouts, he

thinks it is crucial to differentiate between individual areas if you are to get the best from your living space, adding: 'That loft-style living phase never really worked for me. If you have a family you need areas where the kids can go and play or study any you can close some doors! My previous place had a truly open-plan >>>





The chic bathroom fittings were sourced through Alternative Plans.

layout, which worked well when the children were very young, but now they're growing up you want to be able to give them their own space.'

As getting the layout right was crucial to the success of this project, Phillips was meticulous in his planning, considering not only how his family lives at present, but also how their needs will change over time, creating a versatile floor plan which will adapt as his children grow up.

'It's a big place, so you can have lots of people round', said Phillips, 'but there are also lots of small areas where you can just sit and be cosy.' He added: 'It was important to us that it felt like a home, not a museum.' As Phillips is an interior designer as well as an architect he was at pains to select the perfect furniture to complement his home's modern style. A big fan of B&B Italia, 'which is very well put together yet relaxed', he mixed their seating and storage with other pieces sourced through Coexistence and Viaduct plus several pieces of bespoke furniture which he made himself.

One design problem was where to store all of the family's books, but Phillips found a neat solution in the form of his feature wall / library. 'I like to keep books all in one place', he said, 'but it can be hard to achieve this as when space is at a premium having a dedicated library can feel like a bit too much of an indulgence.' He is delighted with his feature wall of books and takes particular satisfaction in the fact that as it has been integrated so well into the open-plan layout his children can't help but be tempted to read.

Another success was the gleaming gloss white kitchen by Boffi, which Phillips says is a joy to use. The architect and designer explained: 'I think Boffi kitchens are fantastic and we use them extensively in clients' homes, so it was a bit of a no-brainer when we had to choose a kitchen for our own place.' We sourced the kitchen and our bathroom furniture through >>>

Simple clean lines and understated luxury set the tone in the relaxing bathrooms.



Phillips is a fan of Boffi's simple modern sanitary ware.

A photograph of a modern kitchen and dining area. In the foreground, a dark countertop holds a stainless steel sink with a modern faucet and several stainless steel pots. The background features a large window with a view of a lush green garden. A dining table with four white chairs is visible through the window. The ceiling has recessed lighting.

'I was looking for a house that I could re-model and this fitted the bill. It's also very spacious.'

Alternative Plans and opted for simple finishes which we believe will age well.'

Phillips and his family are enjoying life in their beautifully renovated home, but it seems that the architect and designer already has itchy feet. He confessed: 'I love this place and I'm always tinkering – changing the artwork (some of which he creates himself) or updating the accessories – but I'd love to embark upon my own new-build project one day.'

He added: 'I'd like to use everything I've learnt working on my own home and those of my clients to raise the bar even

higher with a new build one day. The experience of working on my own place has also made me even more ambitious about what I can offer my clients. I'm always looking for ways to improve and refine upon what we do.'

Phillips seems every bit as animated when talking about the future as he is when discussing past projects and speaks with confidence and eloquence about his plans for the coming months. At a time when some UK architects are feeling the effects of the nation's cooling housing market, his optimism may seem out of tune with the general mood.

However, bearing in mind his firm's formidable reputation for out-of-the-ordinary extension projects we suspect he has good reason to be cheerful. For those who are wary about moving or committing to a complete new-build at present, but yearn to shake up the layout of their home, an extension looks like a very tempting way to dip your toe into the world of architecture. e

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The engineered wood flooring is easy on the eye (and the feet) and works perfectly with the under-floor heating.



MULTI-MEDIUM AXIS MUNDI

Design comes in many different forms. We at Spaces often find ourselves dealing with designers who work solely in one medium, be it architecture or interiors, furniture or art. Rarely do you come across a firm that transgresses these individual fields to work in all areas at once. But Axis Mundi is one such company.

WORDS: Fergus McShane
IMAGES: Courtesy of Axis Mundi



PHOTO: Andrew Garm



PHOTO: Andrew Garn



PHOTO: Andrew Garn

'I try to approach furniture design like an artist would, because otherwise you just get caught up in this plastic chair throw-away kind of culture.'





PHOTO: Andrew Garn

Founder **John Beckmann** explains that the New York-based Axis Mundi is a multi-disciplinary design studio. 'I don't draw divisions between different disciplines, they all inform each other,' says Beckmann. 'The same thinking goes into any of the fields. It's a continuum.'

Essentially the studio works in three fields: architecture, interior design and furniture design. When you look at the projects the firm undertakes, every aspect of their work

is treated as a separate entity. But these individual areas seem to inform and enhance each other, creating a cyclical design process, but one that is always moving forward to create something new.

With Beckmann taking on such a varied mixture of projects, the priority for him is not to get bogged down in one particular strand of architecture, interior design, furniture design or sculpture. The thoughtful way in which he appraises each project is a »»

above & previous page
Each room in the Greenwich Town House has its own unique personality.

left
Car exhausts make for an interesting and unique series of lamps.



He declares himself on the ‘artsy’ side of design, with the desire to be positioned between the different mediums.

large part of what makes his multi-faceted company work. Like many of the great designers, he considers every fresh challenge in isolation, rather than adopting a blanket style or approach, saying: ‘I don’t like grandiose design theories. Each project is considered on its own terms, conditions, site, client and budget.’

The brunt of Axis Mundi’s work is in interior design. Anyone familiar with New York will be aware that most residential projects in the city come in the form of the numerous condominiums that have been erected over the last few years. Beckmann explains that there is little room for smaller-scale



residential projects, so interiors take over as the firm's creative core.

The range found in Beckmann's finished interiors is astounding. 'The styles we use are very contemporary,' says Beckmann, adding: 'We try to make every project different.'

Recently, the growing Axis Mundi firm seems to have entered its bachelor phase. 'Purely by chance, we've had a few recent clients that were all bachelors,' Beckmann explains. 'They tend to want a place that is pretty sexy. And I think that's something we do well.' The pinnacle of this 'sexy' style can be found in their design for the Greenwich Town House.

The renovation of this property resulted in sleek and chic interiors that are also very welcoming and colourful, quite a hard juxtaposition to achieve well. 'I think a lot of our interiors have a minimalist envelope,

but I like to use luxurious materials and fabrics,' explains Beckmann.

'I think a lot of our work has a glamorous feeling to it where a lot of minimalism doesn't. Many people come to us who like modernism, but they think it can be too cold. I think we do a more sexy kind of luxury in high-end works.'

One aspect of the multi-disciplined system Axis Mundi uses which seems to work in their favour is that everything they design, from larger projects like the Greenwich Town House to the soon-to-be constructed Weekend Retreat for a Writer right through to a simple line of lamps all has its own unique charm.

Because of the lack of available building space in New York, the location of their business could be considered a hindrance, limiting the architectural opportunities. However, there are a few standout designs soon >>>

left

Toy Soldiers adorn the Great Wall of China adding extra security.

centre

The soldier barrier may nestle away for when needed in this Parisian plaza.

right

Larger-than-life statues standing to attention outside the US Senate building.



'I don't like grandiose design theories. Each project is considered on its own terms, conditions, site, client and budget.'

to be constructed. The previously mentioned Weekend Retreat for a Writer comes in the form of a traditional American-styled 'salt-box' house completely covered in mirrors.

This is definitely a project to keep your eye on; with the exception of a few windows, everything on the exterior façade will reflect its environment. Beckmann muses, 'you can imagine, on a foggy day this place will almost disappear.' Architects >>>

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HOME SPACE

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IMAGES: Andre Tobo

above
Mirror house: The Writer's Retreat will perfectly reflect it's environment.

right
A beautifully simple modern interior with an impressive bookshelf.





‘The styles we use are very contemporary. We try to make every project different.’

are constantly struggling to create designs to match and reflect their environment, something that The Weekend Retreat will do with ease.

Architecture and interior design clearly goes hand in hand. But it is rare to find an architecture firm that designs speciality items like furniture and lamps on a completely separate

basis, especially outside of the design hubs like Milan. Beckmann explains that his furniture is often produced in relation to architectural projects he is working on, has finished, or even projects that may come in the future.

‘I try to approach furniture design like an artist would, because otherwise you just get caught up in



this plastic chair throw-away kind of culture.' There is little fear of this happening with such a wide range of beautiful, unique and practical pieces. Nothing gives a better example of this than the line of lamps made from car exhausts.

The lamps perfectly showcase the design prowess of Beckmann and his team. It's rare indeed that something more recognisable for spouting fumes can be seen releasing something as symbolic as light, but it comes as a shining example of the art behind the design found in all of Axis Mundi's projects.

It seems only appropriate to finish this look at Axis Mundi with what promises to be their most unique and artistic project to date, the 'Toy Soldier Barriers'. Beckmann says, 'It's an art project and a statement really on America's hegemony and empire. The concept is that these are enlarged toy soldiers, larger than life which form a working barricade.'

The response to the threat of

terror has had a huge impact on American life over the past few years. Axis Mundi has taken this fear and turned it into both an artistic and practical concept. It is attempting to engage debate in areas that seem outside the realm and scope of regular architects or designers, but the possibility of this security barrier model being used in the future is definitely an interesting one.

At the end of the day, Beckmann's aim is simple, to be a designer. He declares himself on the 'artsy' side of design, with the desire to be positioned between the different mediums. The successful execution of these aims is evident in any of the projects his firm, Axis Mundi have completed. And with the number of promising projects soon to come, we wait with assured anticipation. ☺

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left

The Costa Rican Pool Pavilion has an unforgettable view of the sea.

right

Axis Mundi goes over and under with the Bridge and Tunnel House.

MODERN MALAYSIAN

When Tan Wei Ming embarked upon this self-build project in Malaysia the expectation was that having purchased a large plot of land he would be anxious to fill every inch of it with an imposing home. However, Ming had different ideas.

WORDS: Emma Hill
PHOTOS: Courtesy of Holland & Tan

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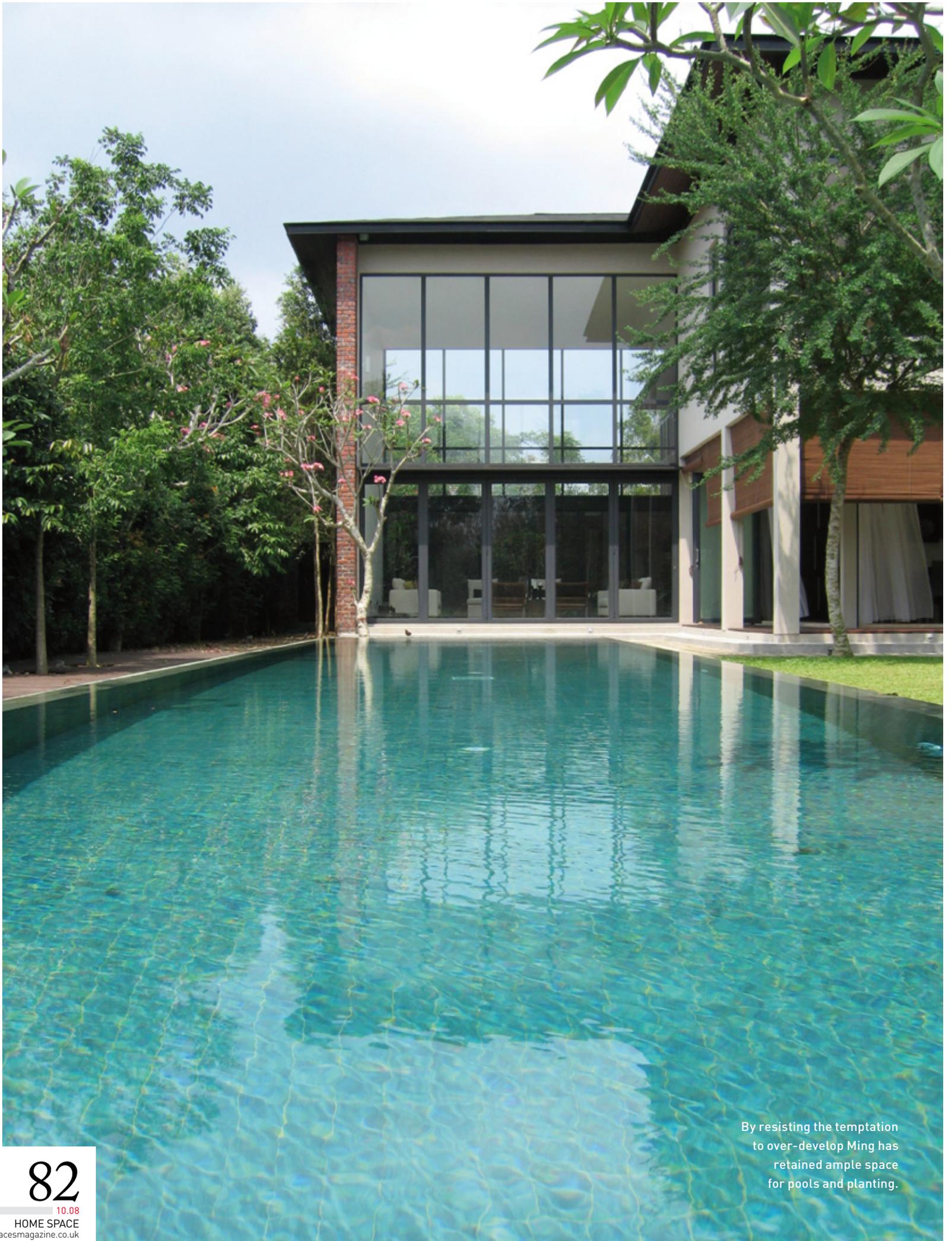
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Tan Wei Ming explained: 'In Asia people tend to think the bigger the better when they're designing houses, but I didn't have that mindset. I wanted a large garden designed for al-fresco living and I worked with a tree architect; I'm quite proud that this house was designed around the trees.' Ultimately, the grounds, which feature Koi and lily ponds and fragrant Frangipani trees, provide the perfect foil to the house, richly rewarding him for his emphasis on the design of the garden.

Ming describes the six-bedroom residence as being a 'Modern Malaysian home.' When it was being built many architects in the area were taking their inspiration from Balinese resorts, but the design of this property, with its concrete >>>



Simple teak shutters and blinds provide welcome shade within the home.



By resisting the temptation to over-develop Ming has retained ample space for pools and planting.

'Most people just think about what will suit them when they design a home, but we wanted to create somewhere that would look great long after we've moved on.'

stilts, large public reception area and teak shutters, defies this trend. Inside the home is uncompromisingly modern with a cool 21st century style that is vaguely reminiscent of chic contemporary spas or hotels.

The house is made up of two pavilions, one for the public and reception areas and one for privacy and relaxation. The narrow Koi pond divides the two and the overhanging roof was added to channel the flow of the rain for an all-round sensory experience. Full-size Rain and Frangipani trees soften the edges of the structure and give a tropical lushness while an infinity pool draws the eye to the immaculately maintained golf course beyond the grounds.

As Ming and his wife are both self-confessed perfectionists they agonised over every design detail, explaining: 'We thought a lot about things like the choice of flowers; we wanted them to be scented so that their fragrance would drift across the garden and into the home from morning right through to the evening,' Ming added: 'My background is as a consultant to luxury hotel and spa groups, so I'm acutely conscious of the fact that the difference between a good hotel and a really great one almost always comes down to the details. The same applies to homes.'

As well as focusing on the tiny luxuries that would enhance their enjoyment of the home from the day they moved in, Ming and his wife also took a longer view, thinking about how the house would look and function in 20 years. 'Most people just think about what will suit them when they design a home, but we wanted to create somewhere that would look great long after we've moved on and could be enjoyed by anybody,' said Ming, adding: 'We think the trees will come into their own in about 20

years and have opted for an unfinished brick which just keeps getting better with age. We also laid a concrete roof beneath the floating one because we suspect that in a decade or so people will prefer the simple, modern look of a flat roof.'

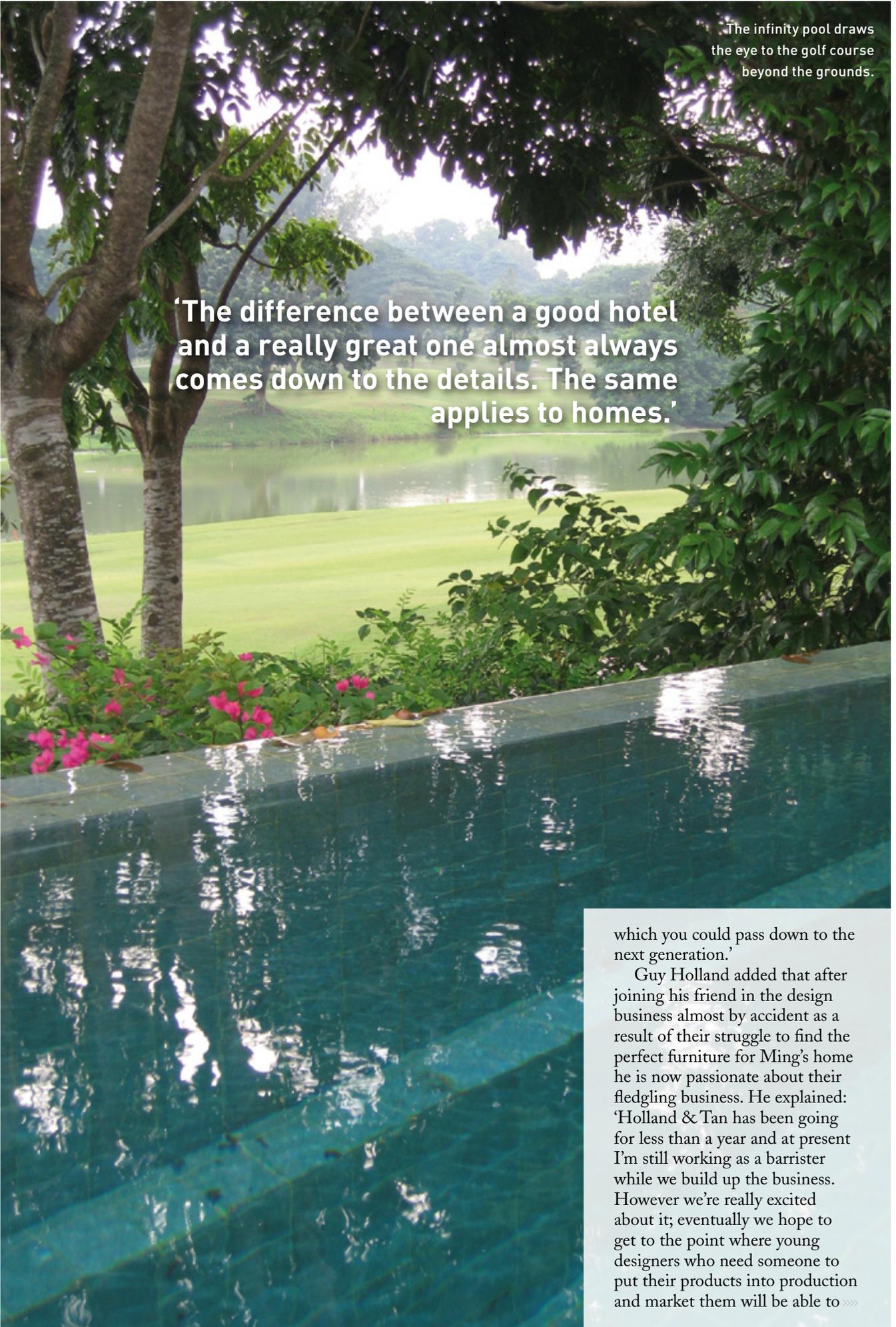
It wasn't just the bricks and mortar that were designed to last. With Ming's keen eye for design, he was determined to invest in furniture with longevity, but found it virtually impossible to find good quality bespoke furniture at a reasonable price. When faced with this problem most would either settle for an off-the-peg solution or blow the budget on something really spectacular. However, Ming wasn't willing to give up quite so easily. First he enlisted the help of London-based friend, Guy Holland, who shared his passion for design and the two men began an exhaustive search to find a company that could produce the kind of furniture Ming wanted. When they drew a blank they ultimately decided to produce their own, leading to the creation of luxury furniture company Holland & Tan. Ming's home is filled with their furniture, which he says was developed through 'a fusion of traditional techniques and modern design'.

The furniture (almost all of which has been made without the use of nails or glue) is bespoke, meaning that the scale and finish is perfectly suited to the style of the home. Ming said: 'I've put the furniture in my living room, which is basically glass on all sides and it's standing up brilliantly to the sunlight – it hasn't faded at all and looks as good as it did the day it arrived. I'm also leaving some out in the garden to see how it fares in the rain. So far I'd say that all the furniture is remarkably resilient, which is important to me as I want it to last. I like the idea of creating heirlooms >>>



The furniture pictured is all available from Holland & Tan.





The infinity pool draws the eye to the golf course beyond the grounds.

'The difference between a good hotel and a really great one almost always comes down to the details. The same applies to homes.'

which you could pass down to the next generation.'

Guy Holland added that after joining his friend in the design business almost by accident as a result of their struggle to find the perfect furniture for Ming's home he is now passionate about their fledgling business. He explained: 'Holland & Tan has been going for less than a year and at present I'm still working as a barrister while we build up the business. However we're really excited about it; eventually we hope to get to the point where young designers who need someone to put their products into production and market them will be able to >>>



The delicate scent of flowers from the garden drifts through the house throughout the day and night.



The seating has been carefully oriented to enable Ming and his wife to enjoy the garden views.

'All the furniture is remarkably resilient, which is important to me as I want it to last. I like the idea of creating heirlooms which you could pass down to the next generation.'

come to us. We would also like to create bespoke modern furniture for more homes like Ming's – I would say that working on his home was a dream project.' He added: 'Ming has excellent contacts and an understanding of the manufacturing side while I'm really interested in the design side, so I think we make a good team.'

At present, Ming is relishing the challenge of developing his furniture company and is also travelling around the world as a consultant to the hotel and spa industry. However, he admits that he still has room in his life for one more project, saying: 'I'm always looking for a plot of land to build another home. I'd love to do it all again!' ☺

The bespoke dining table and chairs are perfect for relaxed dinners or more formal dinner parties.



Holland & Tan
T. +44 (0)1273 530 148
hollandandtan.com

A WINNING DESIGN

Award-winning architecture firm Twenty Two Over Seven explores the vernacular of Northern Ireland's modern and traditional dwellings in one of their recently finished projects, the McGonigle House.

Hidden away down a narrow lane in East Belfast, this modest house may not astound at first glance. But on your second viewing of the private residence, you soon begin to see why it has swept the boards in 2008's architecture awards.

The McGonigle House is the brainchild and home of Twenty Two Over Seven lead architect Kieran McGonigle. To date, the house has been the winner of a RIBA award, the residential award in the Royal Society of Ulster Architects awards, as well as winning the prestigious 'Liam McCormick prize' for the best overall project. The house may be modest but this warm critical reception speaks for itself. 'I am extremely pleased that the house has won a variety of awards,' says McGonigle. 'It makes the effort from everyone involved worthwhile.'

Already, 2008 has been a good year for McGonigle. Their success has been compounded by winning a second

RIBA award for a building restoration project in Belfast. 'The second RIBA award makes us the only practice from Northern Ireland to win two RIBA awards in one year,' says McGonigle. 'We are thrilled that we have received recognition from our peers for all the hard work.'

The finished house has a deceptively simple structural design. It may appear restrained and modern in style, but it is a long way from the modernist 'white box' design. The two ends of the house, with their sparsely windowed white walls, owe more to the traditional two-storey cottages found in Ulster than modernist cubes.

'Obviously we wanted to create a family home,' says McGonigle, 'and a piece of contemporary architecture referenced to Ulster vernacular architecture.' Staying in keeping with the housing styles of the area was clearly an important factor in shaping the finished design. The use »»»

WORDS: Fergus McShane
PHOTOS: Aidan McGrath





this page

Simple deep-set windows show-off
the vernacular of the house.

opposite page

The plain white exterior fits perfectly
into the seclusive surrounding.

of common techniques and regularly found decorative features, such as the enlarged gables and the deep-set sporadically placed windows helps to enhance the understated appeal of the McGonigle House.

There is a childlike quality in the simplicity of the plain exterior walls, as if one of McGonigle's three young children (soon to be four) had drawn on the plans and forgotten to add a door. Echoing the structural style of the house, the materials used on the exterior are fairly simple and their application has been very well executed.

'I wanted a render finish, timber windows, lead and granite detailing with slate and lead roofs – a simple palette of materials,' says McGonigle.

The result is an exterior which is unassuming but architecturally strong, much like the other projects undertaken by Twenty Two Over Seven. In terms of their approach to the design process, McGonigle states, 'the power and gravitas achieved through the quality of materials, proportion and detail is what interests me most.' This is clearly evident throughout the finished McGonigle House. >>>



THERE IS A CHILDLIKE QUALITY IN THE SIMPLICITY
OF THE PLAIN EXTERIOR WALLS.



OUTDOOR AREAS HAVE BEEN EXPERTLY UTILISED
TO FORM A NUMBER OF UNIQUE ROOMS.



In terms of the interiors, the themes laid out in the exterior design continue while being elegantly added to. The use of earthy colours and a plain material palette enhance the aesthetic purposefully. The walls have a white plaster finish, similar to the outdoor façade. Flooring is a mixture of darkly coloured stone tiles and oak floorboards for the living spaces. All joinery and fixtures in the house are either white or a dark grey to match and complement the stone.

'Simple detailing themed the interiors, with recessed skirting boards,

no architraves and so on. Also, I wanted a subdued and neutral backdrop on which my family could impress their personality', says McGonigle. '

With an already large and growing young family, space was always going to be the key issue which would decide if this project would be deemed a success or a failure. The only real challenge was the narrowness of the site, but far from causing any restriction, the elongated linear design meant that space was utilised well in order to grant the home a much longer-lasting success. >>>

opposite page

The main outdoor room adds another dimension to the McGonigle House.

this page

A large open plan kitchen utilises space and exhibits the elegant finish.



'THE POWER AND GRAVITAS ACHIEVED THROUGH
QUALITY OF MATERIALS, PROPORTION AND DETAIL
IS WHAT INTERESTS ME MOST.'



Essentially, the house is only ever one room deep, but with excellent spatial planning the McGonigle House has opened up the interiors to outdoor areas, cleverly using all the space on the site. The large open-plan kitchen and dining area leads directly outside to an outdoor playroom and living area. A key requirement was that the house should accommodate for a disabled relative. Even with the number of transitions between inside and out, everywhere is easily accessible with wide circulation spaces and level thresholds to the outside.

The use of outdoor space becomes both the most intriguing aspect, and

best handled feature of the house. The project may appear simple in design, but that is only because outdoor areas have been expertly utilised to form a number of unique rooms. While the good-sized garden and large entry courtyard effectively bookend the house, it is not till you progress through the rest of the home that the structure really hits home.

There are two inner courtyard areas, one of which is an extension of the kitchen as previously mentioned, while the other forms a walled outdoor room. Finally there is a garden court next to the main family room that leads into the garden. The use of outdoor rooms >>>

left

The level flooring and wide gaps aid movement for a wheelchair-bound family member.

centre

Large floor-to-ceiling windows give idyllic glimpses of nature.

right

Light beams through an outer door showing the way to the many courts.



'I AM EXTREMELY PLEASED THAT THE HOUSE HAS WON A VARIETY OF AWARDS. IT MAKES THE EFFORT FROM EVERYONE INVOLVED WORTHWHILE.'



in a Northern Ireland house may be optimistic in terms of the climate. But this does add a unique appeal to a house ruled by the vernacular of the area.

Perhaps more so than any other creative discipline, architecture is a study of numbers. The initial design may be abstract or it may be linear, but when it comes time to build, it is the numbers in the design, which make the building work.

The firm's name, 'Twenty Two Over Seven', is the fraction commonly recognised as pi, that illusive

mathematical constant that has spawned countless searches for truth and meaning in the world. Perhaps the message here is that good architecture while descending from the digits, is not defined by any mathematical theory. Every house is unique, with its own hidden qualities and none more so than the McGonigle House. ☺

Twenty Two Over Seven
T. 028 9032 2726
twentytwooverseven.co.uk

left

Every ground floor room extends to an exterior counterpart.

centre

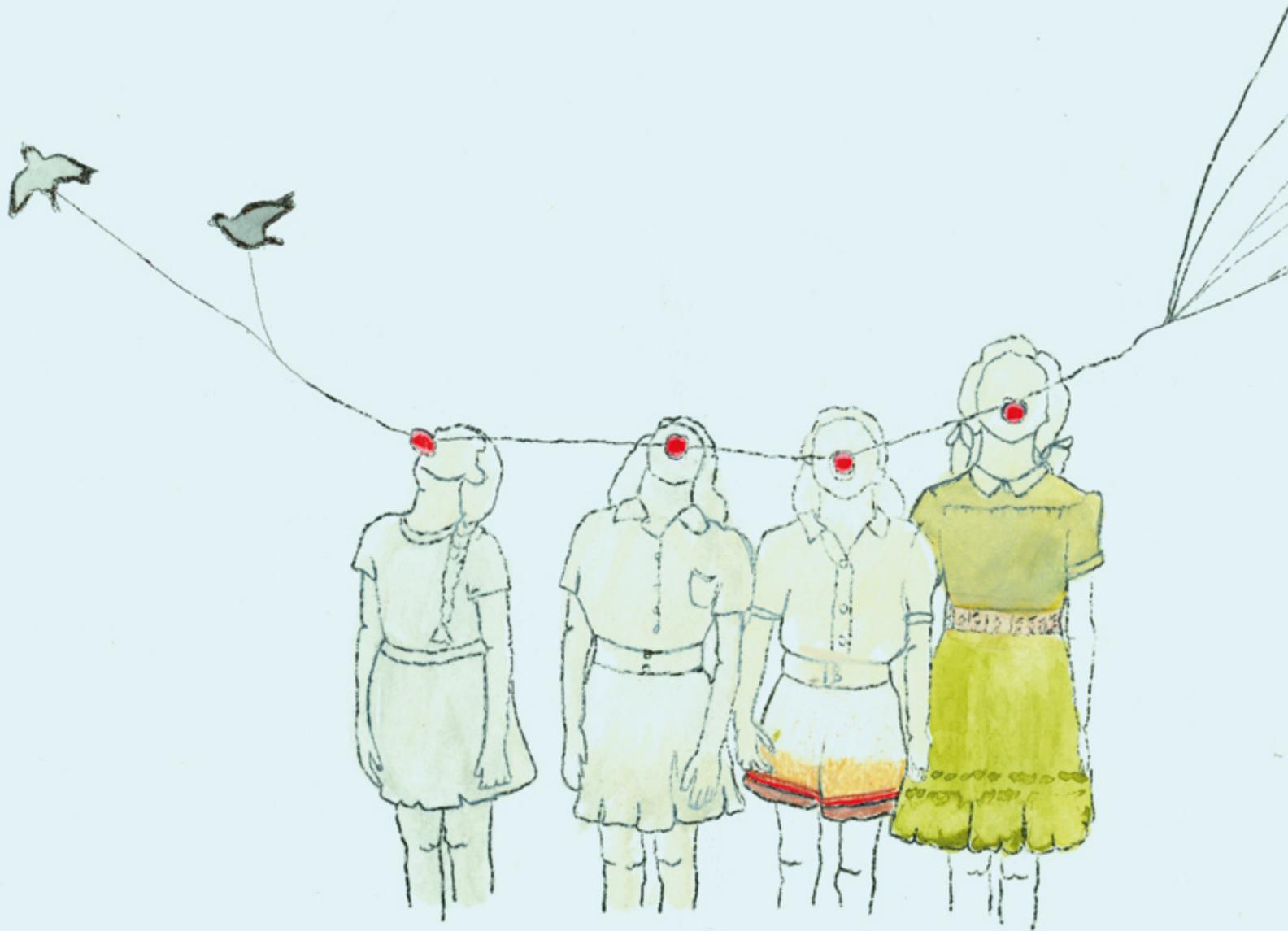
This walled outdoor room even adds seclusion to the outside.

right

The elongated linear design adds hidden depth to the site.

97

10.08
HOME SPACE
www.spacesmagazine.co.uk



WORDS: Rohini Wahi
IMAGES: Courtesy of Alyson Fox

Alyson's work is a smattering of lines and block colours somehow effortlessly forming a narrative across a blank piece of paper, giving the impression of new forms developing each time you blink. She works simply in ink, coloured pencil and watercolours.

Her artistic style was developed in childhood, when she liked to use her mother's make up pencils to draw all over the walls. However her style really evolved in university where she worked mostly with found objects. 'I had a professor in sculpture tell me that he wanted me to pile all the information on and then just strip it away to the essentials. So I began to draw

as simply and as thoughtfully as possible. I did a lot of blind contour drawings and drawing with my right hand (I am left handed). All of it just stuck' says Alyson.

Alyson works mostly from old family photographs, found images and her own imagination to make 'half true' stories that are left open-ended for the viewer to fill in the blanks. She views her imagery as 'an ongoing series of my fictional family. They have a sort of snap shot photo quality to them'.

Her imagery creates a Stepford Wives form of tension, tranquil and pristine with an underlying current of menace. Alyson describes her work as 'childlike with adult

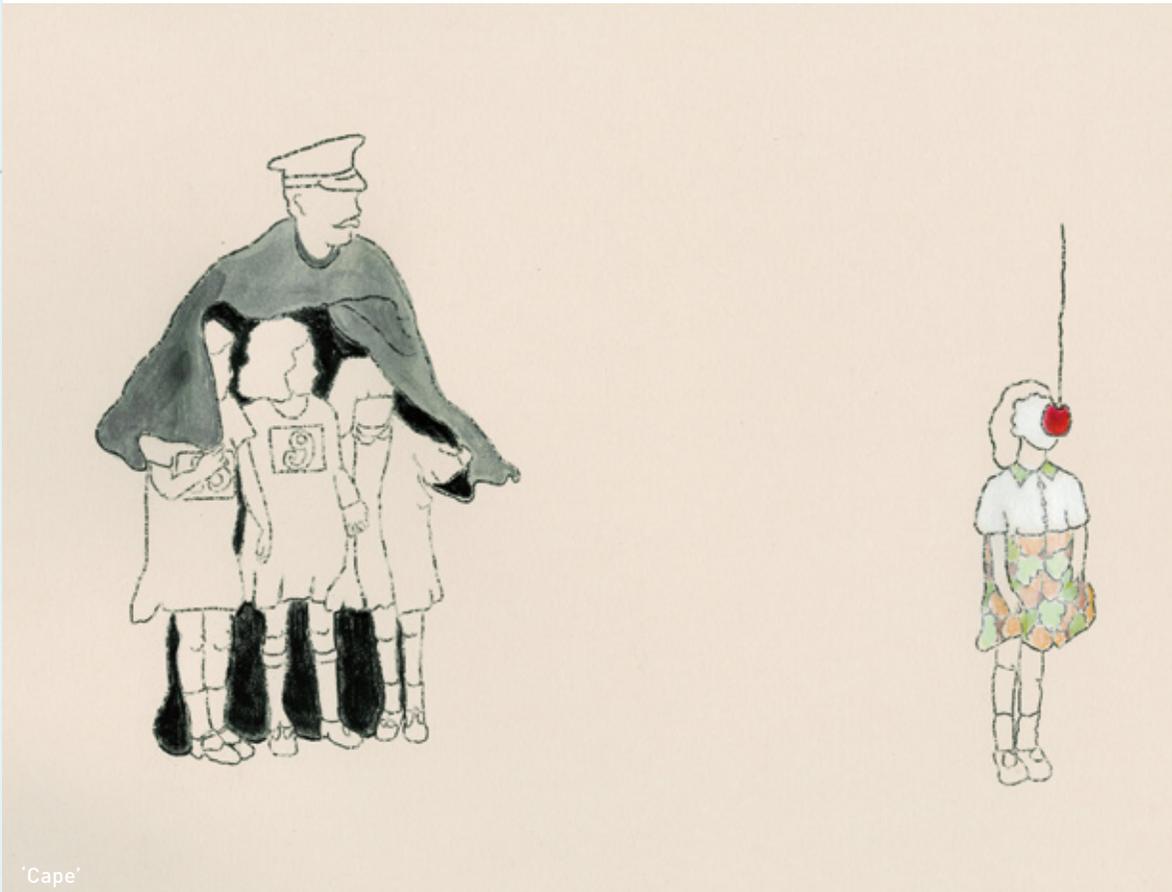
Alyson Fox
alysonfox.com
littlepaperplanes.com

AGE OF INNOCENCE

Alyson Fox is a great many things: an artist, a photographer, a clothes designer, a visual merchandiser and all-round source of inspiration. For now, though, we are mainly going to focus on her wonderfully simple but emotive illustrations. She was catapulted into recognition by Design Sponge, one of the primary online design blogs and has produced work for the New York Times.



'Apples and Tongues'



'Cape'

experience'. On one hand, Alyson's imagery contains the most innocent of elements: the doll-like clothes of her subjects, their childlike features and big cuddly polar bears, but her unlikely narratives touch on themes such as gender roles, violence, childhood, memories and sexuality.

There is something unsettling, in what looks like an illustration of a European soldier shielding a trio of young girls from the sight of another young girl biting into an apple hanging from an invisible tree. Could it be the body language of the three girls, which alludes to some threat? Perhaps it is the distance between the solitary girl and the grouping, which

guarantees their safety? Or maybe, it's because the figure of the lone girl looks as though rather than standing and reaching for the apple on a string, she may be hanging from it.

All of Alyson's imagery has an element of discovery, an almost cinematic vision encompassed within an uneasy circumstance or with something about to occur. 'I like my work to be very familiar but alarming', says Alyson. Perhaps this is where the Stepford Wife peculiarity stems from – a faceless, sinister mono-society that builds up Alyson's familial infrastructure.

Alyson's narratives often emerge

from fragmented sentences that creep into her head in everyday life, which she then writes down. Words and sentences like 'trophies' and 'a pool' or 'tents with a string of animals'. She explains that her inspiration may stem from: 'things that come to me throughout the day from either an image I see, a poem I read or as I am falling asleep. I can't break apart each drawing and its meaning. I think if I ever could I would stop.'

Keep an eye out for Alyson's next project, a whimsical home-ware and jewellery range with her illustrations printed on. Her art is currently available to buy through littlepaperplanes.com. ●

PANORAMIC PERFECTION

Anyone who has travelled to gaze upon distant lands knows that opportunities abound to capture the image of something unique and beautiful. Long-standing artist Peter Jansen has taken this idea to heart as he continues his own worldwide odyssey. The results are nothing short of astounding.

WORDS: Fergus McShane
IMAGE: Courtesy of Peter Jansen

Jansen's illustrious career started in 1963 when he trained in fine art at the Royal Academy at The Hague. Since then his experimentation with new media and the use of computers has defined his art. Jansen proclaims, 'I used computer techniques at a time when computers were only used in offices.'

The development of new media over the years has now paid Jansen back, offering up the chance to travel along with his wife, and his 'virtual studio' while still being able to create these wonderful panoramic art works.

Jansen created the first of these 'photo paintings' in 1977 from a series of images taken showing a Cadillac range in Amarillo, Texas. Around that time, you may recall that David Hockney was famously experimenting with a similar technique. Jansen, however, is quick to explain that: 'I certainly would not suggest that he was inspired by mine. It is just a

coincidence, or the spirit of the time.'

The 'spirit of the time' is a key phrase when talking about Jansen's own 'photo paintings'. Art is a constantly evolving medium, with styles coming and going, always in flux. The beauty of Jansen's panoramas is that they are truly timeless. Natural images captured in their moment.

'I am only interested in a landscape or building when I feel that it will deliver me a good piece of art. I knew that the mist of the Victoria Falls would produce a long-drawn white piece. Or that the Namib Desert and the sky above it would result in a good work of art. So, indeed, I only start to work when I accidentally stumble across it and I see the opportunity.'

Jansen's panoramas are a glimpse into the freedom he has found in life. He is free from restriction in what he captures and how he captures it. All he needs to continue to create is his trusty 10 Megapixel camera.



There are limitless possibilities of what to 'paint' when a man can find inspiration anywhere; the view from a hotel room, a desert landscape. Each panorama plays with the form of the image, always revealing something new. 'I am not a photographer, so I am not looking for a photographic style', says Jansen.

'Every picture I take is a "brush stroke". During the shooting I decide how many brush strokes there will be next to each other, where a concentration of images will be, how many side by side, how many from the top down.' The result is a series of 'paintings' showing moments of tranquillity and beauty caught in time. We look forward to any moments yet to come. ☺

Peter Jansen
peter-jansen.com

JANSEN'S PANORAMAS ARE A GLIMPSE INTO THE FREEDOM HE HAS FOUND IN LIFE.



A vertical decorative border on the left side of the page, featuring a repeating pattern of marine life illustrations. The illustrations include various species of coral, sea anemones, and small fish, rendered in a detailed, hand-drawn style with muted colors like teal, brown, and grey against a light cream background.

ROLL UP! ROLL OUT!

This is the century of affordable art and of a generation that values and rejoices in past traditions with an eclectic twist.

WORDS: Rohini Wahi
IMAGES: Courtesy of Rollout

I am one of the millions currently trawling the internet for my art obsessions, visiting websites such as 'Etsy' where the public can display and sell their creative wares and independent online galleries where you can purchase works by emerging artists. These days there is no joy in chasing the established artist, no particular kudos in bathing in their reflected glory – it's all about the buzz you get when you stumble across something unique.

Rollout is the on-trend company that has sprung up to cater for those

who demand something a little more challenging than the usual mass market ranges by big name designers or artists. You can choose between their thrilling and ever-evolving wallpaper collection, which allows you to select your own art, or can make your selection from an existing range printed onto wallpaper for your home or office. With art and illustration at the forefront of interior design and the growing trend for accent walls and wallpaper to create statements in modernist homes, Rollout mixes affordable art with bold statements. >>>



left

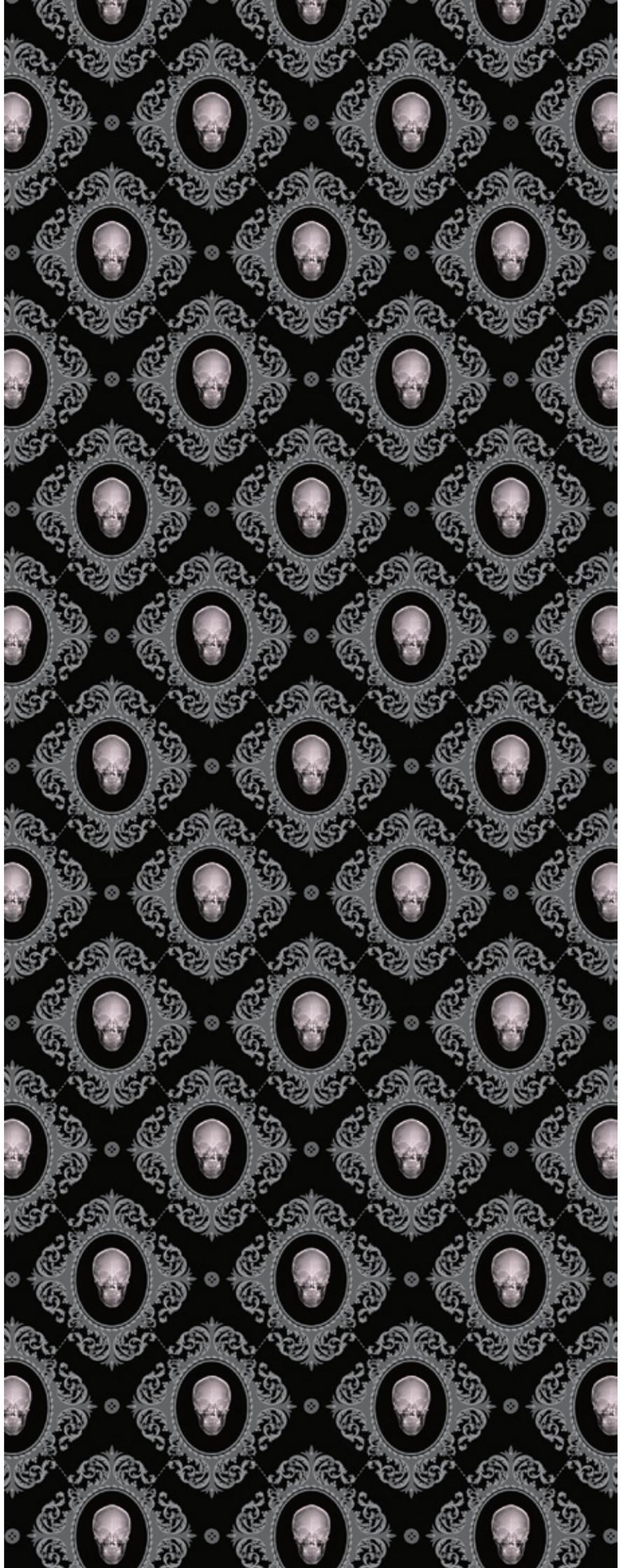
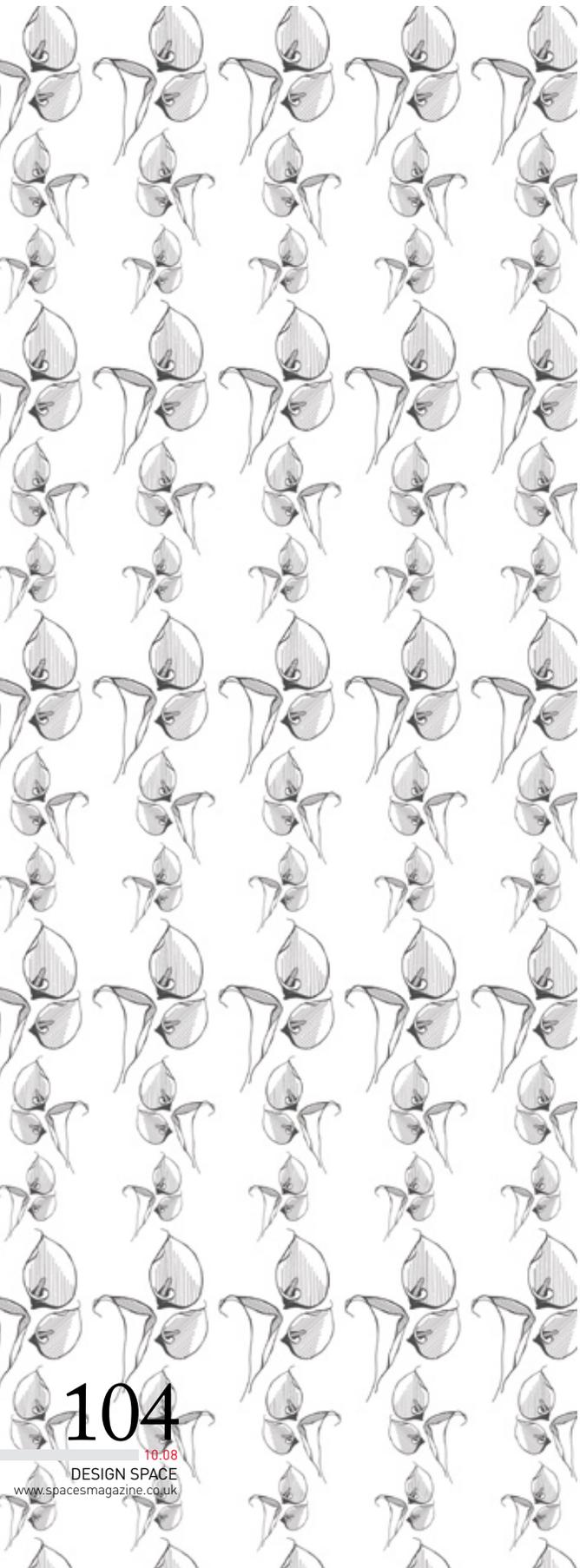
Coral with Eye Flowers, designed
by Julie Morstad, Artist Series.

right

Adopt-A-Monster customisable wallpaper,
designed by Sonja Schneider, Artist Series.



from left to right
Lilies 02, designed by Anita Modha
and Melody Glait, Custom Wallpaper.
Worth Paper, Custom Wallpaper.
The Owl the Cat and the Hand,
designed by Pandarosa, Artist Series.
Golden Fawn, collaboration between Anita Modha,
Jonathan Nordic and David Hall, Artist Series.





Worth Paper mashes together punk rock, granny chic and brothel themes into a beautifully eerie statement on vanity and voyeurism.

The founders of Rollout are Jonathan Nordick and Anita Modha who met six years ago in Calgary, Canada when Jonathan stumbled across Anita and a group of her girlfriends drinking wine in a park on a summers day. They had many friends in common already but were fated never to meet till that day.

The catalyst for the birth of Rollout occurred when Jonathan found a notice on 'Craigslist' from a man with a large format printer which was collecting dust. Jonathan was offered the printer on the one condition he built a business around it. Next, the pair organised an art show 'Rollout: An Exhibition of Wallpaper as Art', where thirty of their creative friends submitted wild ideas of what they thought wallpaper could be. They discovered people agreed that wallpaper could and should be more.

Jonathan and Anita produce all of the papers from their own studio in Canada. As the wallpaper is printed digitally, it is possible to produce designs from photography, illustration, graphic design and many other mediums and the company offers a vast array of options for their customers to choose from.

Their most collaborative service is for the 'Custom Wallpaper' range where they brainstorm with the client and perhaps

commission other artists to achieve the desired result. An immensely successful example of this is their collaboration with high-end boutique 'Worth Clothing'

'Together we came up with a store that looks like an art piece,' says Carl Abad the owner of Worth. 'Past and present eras are brought together, transporting the shopper into a realm of supreme chic.'

In the words of Rollout, 'Worth Paper mashes together punk rock, granny chic and brothel themes into a beautifully eerie statement on voyeurism and vanity. From a distance, the decorative filigree draws the viewer into the gaze of a wall filled with x-ray human skulls.' A white on cream version of the wallpaper was made for the Worth fitting rooms.

'We have worked with architects, traditional artists, photographers, designers and even creative people who have good ideas but lack the skills to make their ideas a reality. We get a sense of what they want to do and help make it happen – whether that entails printing, or design and layout, or putting them in touch with artists they will like, we are here to make it happen. The collaborative process begins when they tell us or show us an idea. I will then tell them what they can do in order to provide me with proper materials to blow an image up to wall size; >>>

'We have a lot of creative friends doing crazy things and we are regularly contacted by people who see our website, are excited by what we are doing and want to get involved.'

I'll print samples for them and if they are happy, will print the wallpaper and then pass it on to our paper hanger to install," explains Jonathan.

'The Artist Series' is Rollout's current range of wallpaper, which is available to buy for \$10 per square metre. It is produced by prominent illustrators and also by Jonathan and Anita.

'We have a lot of creative friends doing crazy things and we are regularly contacted by people who see our website, are excited by what we are doing and want to get involved. I'm always pleasantly surprised by the interesting people we hear from and blown away by the work they send our way.'

As Anita and Jonathan are artists/designers themselves they pay a higher than average royalty on every square metre sold as they believe it is important to pay the 'creatives' what they deserve.

The 'Print your Artwork' option is when the client designs or provides their own artwork. This was originally a service provided for independent and boutique-type businesses but Rollout have found themselves producing papers for digital music giant Microsoft Zune and graphics-heavy luxury clothing brand Marc Ecko Cut & Sew stores throughout the US.

'I guess the common thread is that these people and organisations are looking for wallpapers that make them stand out and this can be done in both bold and subtle ways. Customers are realising that we can do almost anything with digital printing technology and we are here to give them exactly what they want.'

Rollout recommends professionally installing their wallpapers as this will show off the artwork to its best advantage.

'We have a master paper hanger who does most of our jobs in Vancouver. He's been hanging for over 25 years and was really excited by what we were doing. When we found out he was an illustrator, painter and printmaker, it made sense to get him involved in the creation of our papers as well. Parrot Fly and Golden

Fawn are two papers that have come about because of this collaboration.'

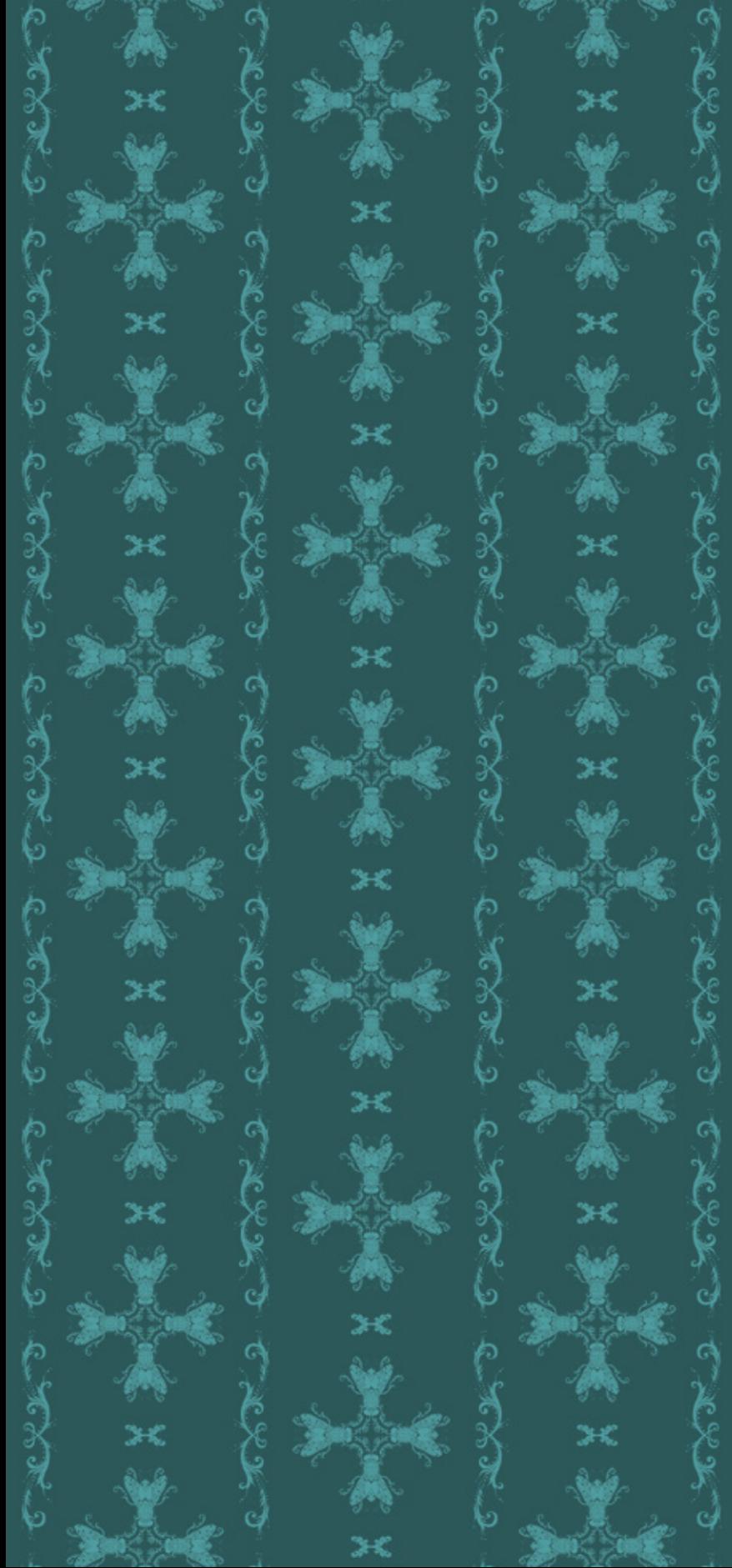
The Rollout team find that people approach them because they want 'over-the-top creative results'. All of their clients seem to have or are looking for distinct brand identities – clothes label 'Worth Clothing' wanted 'Punk Rock, Rock & Roll, Granny, Brothel' for a wallpaper design for their boutique store and recently a contemporary East Indian restaurant wanted to see 'The Beatles Going to Bollywood on an Acid Trip' in their bathrooms.

Non-wallpaper products on the Rollout website are currently limited to a T-shirt featuring a logo adapted from their work for Worth, but their creative flair surely lends itself to an exploration of the home-ware market. Jonathan doesn't divulge much but promises 'There are a lot of exciting things presenting themselves but we want to make sure we don't spread ourselves too thin and in too many directions' He does admit, however, that by having strong imagery to use in their wallpapers, 'It's quite easy to apply that graphic to a variety of different materials and products.'

As Jonathan and Anita live and work in their studio, wallpaper graphics and business receipts have crept into every available place they can. Their walls are littered with pinned up test samples and a wall of 'Words Spoken Quieter Than Actions' wallpaper (blank word bubbles that can be written in) is up in their kitchen area so their friends can leave notes and draw pictures when they come over for dinner parties. They are currently looking for a new studio in New York and when they find it, they plan to cover it from head-to-toe and inch-to-inch in wallpaper! We can't wait to see the end result. ☺

Rollout
rollout.ca





left
Moustache and Darling, designed by Julie Morstad, Custom Wallpaper.

right
Parrot Fly, Anita Modha, Jonathan Nordic and David Hall, Custom Wallpaper.

BIOSCLEAVE



above
Use it or lose it: forty
different colours ensure
that even the eyes get a
continuous workout.

After the invention of writing in the fourth millennium BC, the search for immortality was more or less the sole province of poets, mythmakers, conmen, and religions. At least until the start of the 20th century. That is when the hard sciences outside of archaeology began to investigate. Today, the question still remains. Is immortality really possible for the human animal? At the moment no one can say yeah or nay with any scientific certainty. But restate the question and ask 'can we extend the human lifespan to almost unimaginable lengths?' and everything changes. That query, it turns out, is an entirely different matter.

In the final decades of the 20th century and in the first of the 21st, science began leading the charge in the comprehensive search for true immortality. And if not immortality, then at least life extension far beyond anything ever imagined by even the most imaginative science fiction writer. Very persuasive scientific evidence is accumulating on the positive effects of a whole range of interventions from the so-called CRON diet (caloric restriction with optimal nutrition) and the manipulation of genes to duplicate CRON effects to new discoveries in cryogenics, nanotechnology and the possibility of downloading the >>>

HOUSE



A PATH TO FOREVER?

Throughout history, one of the most common themes in art and religion has been the quest for immortality. Now artists and architects Arakawa + Gins have joined scientists in the current search.

WORDS: Noel Montrucchio
PHOTOS: Courtesy of Arakawa + Gins



PHOTO: Dimitris Yeros



left
 Shy individuals may find the total lack of interior doors somewhat daunting.

centre
 This computer-generated image shows the relationship between the various spaces already built.

right
 It is a bit of an overland trek to the kitchen area seemingly buried in the centre of the house.

human personality and mind into silicon. This is not tabloid make-believe; it is ongoing, well-funded, well-designed research with nothing less than the ultimate conquering of death as its goal. But wait a minute; you didn't pick up the latest issue of *Nature*, *Lancet*, or the *New England Journal of Medicine*. So let's get back to the subject at hand: architecture, design, and lifestyle.

The husband-and-wife team of Arakawa + Gins are an indivisible amalgamation of artist, philosopher, poet, and architect. Arakawa, 71, dropped his first name more than 40 years ago. He grew up in Nagoya, Japan, and studied both medicine and art in Tokyo before moving to New York in 1961. Two years

later, he enrolled in art school in Brooklyn (for the visa he says, not the education). There, he met Madeline Gins, a fellow student, who had grown up on Long Island. Within days, they had become a couple and have been collaborating ever since on a body of work that includes architecture, conceptual art, poetry, painting, and philosophy. They are both adamant that the principal aim of their work has always been 'how to reverse the downhill course of human life.'

Over the past several years they have been working on the creation of the Bioscleave House in East Hampton, New York. It is the pair's first house to be built in the United States, although several projects have been completed in Japan. In



PHOTO: Jose Luis Perez-Griffo Yquera

retrospect, they view their past endeavours as experiments and prototypes for this current home. Their various architectural projects have included residences (Reversible Destiny Houses, Shidami Resource Recycling Model House, and nine Reversible Destiny loft-style apartments in Mitaka), a park (Site of Reversible Destiny-Yoro) and plans for housing complexes and neighbourhoods (Isle of Reversible Destiny – Venice and Isle of Reversible Destiny – Fukuoka, and Sensorium City, Tokyo). They are also pursuing the construction of a Reversible Destiny hotel, which will enable the general public to experience firsthand what they call procedural architecture.

They intend to operate Bioscleave House as an interactive laboratory and domestic setting for investigating everyday

life and aspects of the human experience. They see it, they declare, as a way to 'examine life in the here and now, as well as provide a view into how life will be lived in the future.' However, before we get into a description of the house, take a deep breath, relax, and try to clear your mind's

THE UNDERLYING CONCEPT IS THAT TOTAL, CAREFREE COMFORT IS A PRECURSOR TO DEATH.

palate. Take a moment to get rid of the background noise ricocheting around in your brain. Because what is coming will be ideas that can profoundly stretch what you may think is possible from the architects' idea of what they believe is probable. >>>



This house is replete with a wildly sloping sculpted floor and walls that connect in utterly unexpected ways, a

CAN WE EXTEND THE HUMAN LIFESPAN TO ALMOST UNIMAGINABLE LENGTHS?

myriad of colours, and windows whose placement and size seems erratic, but which have specific purposes in mind. In short, the residence is unlike anything you have ever imagined. To their eyes, it is nothing less than 'a way to map perception and diagrammatically display the set of tendencies and mind/body coordinating skills fundamental to human capability,' says Gins. Ms. Gins, 66, can be extremely

persuasive about the health benefits of their Lifespan Extending Villa. She points out that 'Its architecture makes people use their bodies in unexpected ways if they are to maintain a constant equilibrium,' and that this in turn 'will profoundly stimulate and strengthen their immune systems.' One thing is certain; the extremely irregular and seemingly random rise and fall of the floor demands one's utmost attention to negotiate safely. They believe they have come up with a design that forces people to see just how astoundingly complex even the simplest of routine tasks can be.

The sunken kitchen is at the centre of the house, surrounded by the undulating concrete floor. Walls, both interior and exterior, are painted in approximately



40 different colours. There are multiple levels that tend to induce the feeling of being in two spaces at once along with light switches and outlets at odd angles. While the floors ensure that traffic moves at no more than a deliberate pace, any direction is possible since there are no interior doors to contend with. The latter may introduce privacy concerns for the shy resident or guest.

The intent of every aspect of the design is to keep the occupants in a perpetually tentative relationship with their environment. The underlying concept is that total, carefree comfort is a precursor to death. The resident follows where the house leads. The architects maintain that they 'have invented an architecture that will lead to a stronger

immune system, a greater integration of the body's proprioceptors and the mind's conscious, subconscious, and unconscious capabilities and *ultimately the conquering of death.*'

That's right. They believe that it is not necessary to die. In fact, they would like to see dying outlawed. Okay stop. Take another deep breath and keep reading. This is not some sort of practical joke. They are serious and their ideas are being taken seriously by some very serious scientists and philosophers.

Artists in general have long been recognised for their 'love me or hate me, just don't ignore me' approach to whatever their particular discipline happens to be. But this is equally true of all creative people in all creative disciplines, including >>>

left

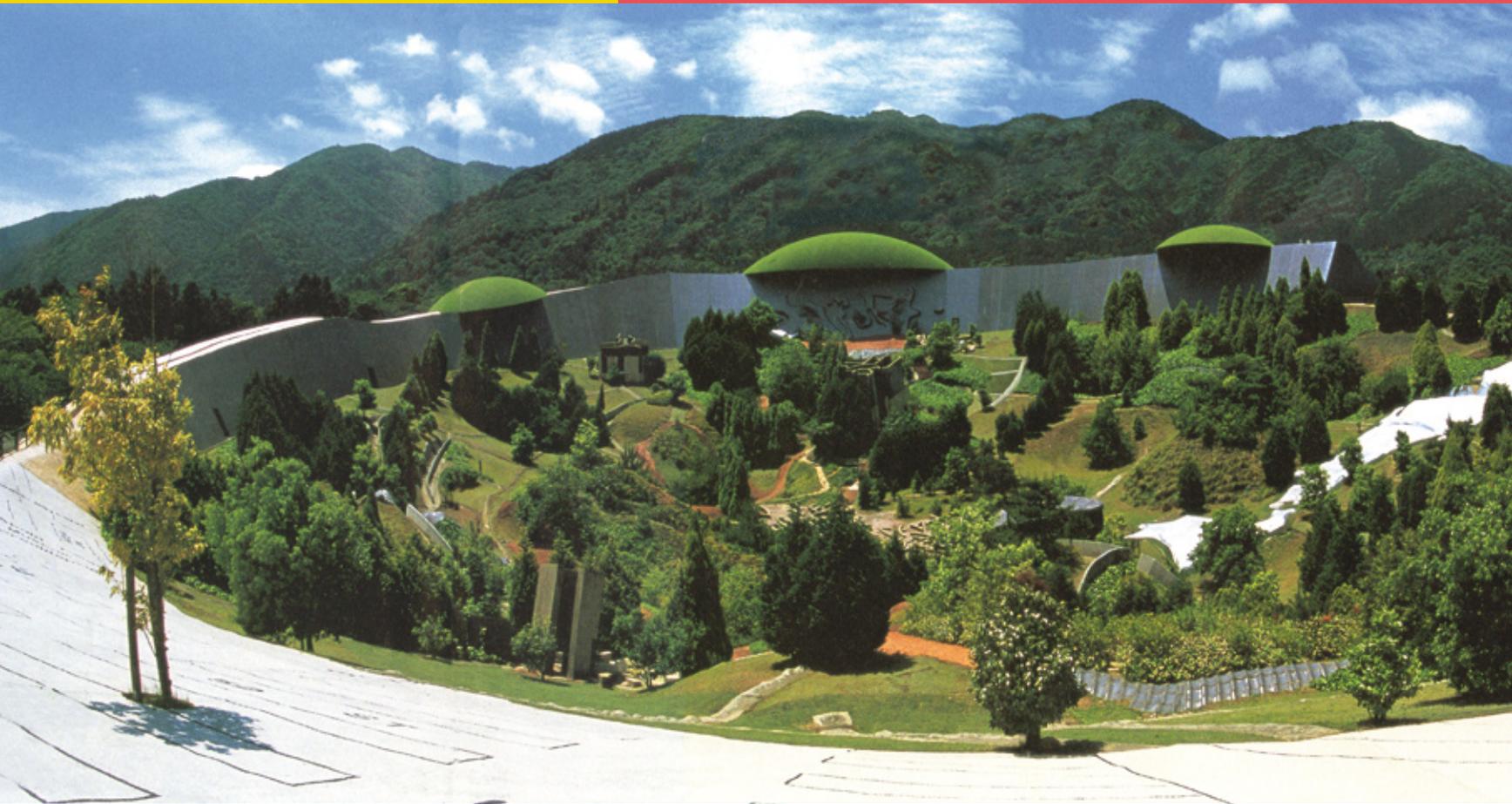
The proposed Reversible Destiny Hotel would give the public a firsthand taste of the concept.

centre

A Guest Sphere living unit in the Reversible Destiny Hotel.

right

The eighth floor of the Reversible Destiny Hotel is the Vigorous Health Transformation Level.



left
Time within the Elliptical Field, Site of Reversible Destiny — Yoro Park in Japan indeed seems relative.

right
A detail of the plans for A City Without Graveyards, first designed in 1991-92.

every branch of science. Scientific 'Eureka' moments have almost always been intuitive leaps of understanding that eventually result in better knowledge of our universe, from the quantum to the cosmic scale. Scientists rely on creativity and intuition into the human condition in the same way as William Shakespeare did for his words or Johan Sebastian Bach for his notes. Newton, Maxwell, Einstein, and Feynman all shared this ability with their creative counterparts in the arts. Arakawa and Gins see themselves as both artists and scientists in their attempt to eliminate death.

Immortality, if it comes, will probably be a complex mix of many factors, perhaps including architecture. Inventor and futurist Ray Kurzweil, convincingly points out that we are already transforming a

substantial number of human beings into cyborgs to extend their useful lives with the addition of mechanical hearts, electronic pacemakers, artificial joints, synthetic scaffolding to grow bone, cochlear implants, along with all of the rest of the devices and implants being created by medical science. There is also the potential for nanorobots that will be able to course through the body as roving mechanics. He even posits the concept of uploading an individual's personality and memories (in short, their human consciousness) once computers become powerful enough. If that is not your standard for immortality, it is at least extending consciousness far beyond its present biological limits.

Perhaps that is why it is so refreshing to see artists jumping back into the



search for immortality. Thump the tree of art history and a strange thing happens. Hundreds if not thousands of harebrained and loony examples will fall to the ground. Scattered among the pile, you will find Vincent Van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, as well as Frank Lloyd Wright, e.e. cummings, John Cage, and many, many more. The creative world is full of avant-gardists who eventually became the old guard.

Study the Reversible Destiny website. Read it all. And read their other writings because art and philosophy do have everyday consequences. Then read it again and take your time to begin digesting it. But do start with small bites.

Immortality in our future? Perhaps. Extraordinary longevity? Almost certainly.

But whichever it is, I would like to be around to see what happens. So I'm going

IMMORTALITY, IF IT COMES, WILL PROBABLY BE A COMPLEX MIX OF MANY FACTORS, PERHAPS INCLUDING ARCHITECTURE.

to spend some time and see if I can't parse out some of these ideas about architecture and immortality. My God, what if Arakawa + Gins are right! ☺

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MICROBOT & THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

With the digital age well and truly underway, computer-based art and design has become a staple creative form for the new millennia. With perfect timing, relative newcomer to the scene David Fuhrer, the graphic artist behind the website, Microbot, has quickly laid the foundations for an illustrious design career ahead.



WORDS: Fergus McShane
IMAGES: courtesy of David Fuhrer

left
'Metal Heart'

top right
'Drug Free Zone'

below right
'Blue Moon'

At only 22-years-old David Fuhrer has already illustrated his versatility, working on a broad range of projects, from his more client-specific logo work to the creation of personalised large-scale images like Blue Moon, Metal Heart and Drug Free Zone. The veritable youngster of computer graphics, who is self-taught, explained: 'In 1989 when I was about four-years-old we bought our first computer with DOS 2.0. I finally found out about some new kind of digital art online back in 2002; that's when I realised what I wanted to do. Computer graphics.'

Now, most teenagers at this point would look into classes or courses they

could take in order to teach them what they needed to know to develop their art, but not Swiss-born David who took a much more challenging and precarious, but ultimately more rewarding path. 'It all became more serious in 2003 when I quit my education and taught myself the programs I would need,' says David.

His finished designs just go to show that David has chosen the right path. He has managed to find the balance between commercial and creative projects, leaving him with enough free time to express himself through his digital paintings.

He describes the style of his design as, 'surreal with a classic touch to turn



it into something unique.' Blue Moon seems to be a vision of Earth's future, and a somewhat negative one at that. 'I started Blue Moon to show off the world I think I'm living in' says David. 'Everything is getting too big. Through technology the world is becoming a big mess to me, where we increasingly forget about the beauty of our planet.'

'The main theme in my pictures is my life. Every picture I make is a part of my life or tells a part of it. In creating it, I try to explore my mind. Thinking of who I am, what I feel and so on. Also I'm very interested in the universe and physics, which also influence my work.'

Overall, his body of work is

reminiscent of a future first heralded by science fiction writers of the 1920s. It is both grandiose in design and concept, while expressing underlying fears of what the world is becoming. Blue Moon is Earth's big business future, while Drug Free Zone depicts an ironic acid-fuelled fairytale landscape.

With a plan to continue working on his own graphic paintings, while maybe making the move into illustration and 3D animation, David Fuhrer is a name to remember.

With his youthful spirit and fresh take on design he leaves Spaces with a simple but memorable message: 'Keep it real! And stay fresh!' 



David Fuhrer
microbot.ch

Colombo International Airport, last day of the year. Sebastian, my somewhat curmudgeonly travelling companion and I, uncoil ourselves after eleven gruelling hours in the air, then smile and nod, inhaling Asia's familiar humid waft.

'Here again,' I murmur, jungle memories rushing through my mind.

Once through the usual airport mundanities, we grab a taxi and whisk off into the Sri Lankan dawn, backs still flight-stiffened as we steel ourselves for yet more travel – a four-hour drive up into the lush green hill country and Kandy, a far preferable destination to Colombo's smoggy sprawl.

An introduction to the unbridled lunacy of Sri Lankan driving: everyone tries to overtake everyone else. All the time. Quirky British notions of

highway codes or, even, safety are jettisoned in a frenzied onward rush. The first of many contradictions, too – the most laid-back people on earth in a frantic hurry once behind the wheel; and the gentlest, engaged in a vicious, interminable civil war (which rages in the out-of-bounds north and east, away from most tourist spots).

Out the window an unfurling landscape at once exotic and familiar – the glistening rice paddies dotted with white flash of ibis and hulking black buffalo, the choking tangle of creeper and vine, glossy palms and scorching bursts of bougainvillea – equatorial landscape of my dreams. On we speed, hearts leaping at frequent and soon-to-be-familiar brushes with hurtling death, leaving steamy plains and barreling through jungle-encrusted foothills, road winding »»»

SRI LANKA



Writer Dan Roberts experiences a moment of pure, unadulterated happiness and (perhaps even more elusive in this day and age) a 'great train journey' on his travels in Sri Lanka. Jealous yet? You will be.

WORDS: Dan Roberts





through sleepy villages, bare-chested men in sarongs and dogs, everywhere dogs, trotting through crowded markets, sleeping at the roadside, lazing mangily in precious shade.

Little conversation as we snake through Kandyan rush-hour traffic and then, finally, blearily, dazedly there, swooping round the rippling lake and up a narrow track before lurching to a halt outside Helga's Folly – one of the world's great, and certainly most eccentric hotels. After a day's nonstop travel everything seems surreal, but this place undoubtedly is – formerly a palatial old Sri Lankan home that counts Gandhi, Nehru and Laurence Olivier among its visitors, now more installation than hotel, every wall, every inch of space bristling with murals, deer heads, spectral candles, sepia-tinged portraits of illustrious guests.

And the whole place run by Helga, archly glam heiress in saris and huge sunnies who wafts through the dining rooms like royalty, snapping at the soporific, barefoot staff. Sebastian and I shower, change and wander open-mouthed through labyrinthine corridors, each room more fantastical than the last. Then dinner and year's-ending champagne, whisky, bohemian scenes with a Belgian, some Germans and the sweetest British family – cherubic children and dippy boho mum, sculptor boyfriend (not dad, we later learn).

We sleep, finally, exhausted, then wake to birdsong, chattering monkeys who snatch our breakfast mango when backs are turned. Feeling, finally, we've arrived, gazing out at the verdant hills below, dotted with old colonial piles, legacies of occupying Portuguese, Dutch, British. After breakfast we swim

in the pool, fringed with outlandish statues and dripping vegetation, then flop, hot and holiday-happy.

Later Kandy, a friendly hubbub of yolk-yellow cabs, belching tuk-tuks and the ubiquitous strays. The town, home to Sri Lanka's last independent kingdom, offers visitors a rich feast of music, dance and architecture – grand old hotels like the Queens, where we sip beer and soak up past glories. Then around the lake to the Temple of the Tooth, the country's holiest Buddhist shrine and, allegedly, housing a three-inch incisor retrieved from the Buddha's funeral pyre.

The temple is mobbed with happy throngs of holidaying locals, filing in a good-natured crush through the gate (where we must swap too-short shorts for sarongs, much to Sebastian's chagrin) and filing through the grounds,



‘Here again,’ I murmur, jungle memories rushing through my mind.

past gilded relics and out into smoke-wreathed courtyards. Serenity descends.

Next day the train to Ella, one of the great journeys of our lives. It begins calmly enough, platform clogged with happy gangs of locals, smiling, chattering. A mad rush as the carriages pull in, wild scramble for seats. We grab two, stow rucksacks, don iPods.

As we chug away from Kandy we begin, almost immediately, to climb, an imperceptible gradient lifting us into the mythical hill country, land of misty, tea-clad summits, time-warp towns that once sheltered mustachioed Brits when summer sun scorched the plains far below. Onward through ramshackle villages, track-side vegetation still glossy and lush,

excitable gangs of children chasing us with happy waves, stern, khaki-clad soldiers eyeing our progress, guns at the ready for unruly Tamils.

Leaving Sebastian to his tunes I stand in the open door, joining knots of local boys who eye me warily at first, then smile and make the usual enquiries: ‘Where from sir?’, ‘Do you like Sri Lanka?’, ‘How long to stay?’ and then fall into companionable silence, dangling nonchalantly as the ground hurtles by.

The boys melt away and I sit on the steps, knees protruding into onrushing air, sun on my face and a great wave of joy engulfing me. I have never been happier, I think, gazing at huge vistas of valley and distant peak, nowhere to be >>>

I sit on the steps, knees protruding into onrushing air, sun on my face and a great wave of joy engulfing me. I have never been happier, I think.



but here, nothing to do but think and let life wash over me.

We climb ever higher, country morphing into alpine forest then mist-shrouded hills, as ever the quickfire scenery change breathtaking. On through small, deliciously ramshackle towns – Nawalapitiya, Nanu Oya, Ohiya – forests melting away as our brave little train chugs higher, higher. And then, finally, tea: first scrubby little bushes, then great swathes of them blanketing the hills, sari-clad pickers (the lowest of the low here, dirt-poor Tamils who put in day after back-breaking day for a pittance) traversing the slopes, great sacks of leaves perched on their rumps.

And the food, the wonderful food – wiry men stagger past bearing mounds of hoppers (pancakes with honey or egg), or crunchy lentil balls with tongue-searing chilies. On through Hapitale and Bandarawela, Sebastian joining me to drink in jaw-dropping vistas as we snake through the hills,

saying little as we munch and gawp.

Finally, we amble into Ella, a sweet little village famed for its views of the plains below. We stay two nights in a so-so guest house, drink firewater raki in seedy bars, walk in rain-soaked hills, eat great mounds of curry and rice, read, think, quaff vats of tea.

Then back on the train to Nurawa Eliya, a quaint, quirky little town touted as Sri Lanka's 'Little England', established by the Brits in the nineteenth century and still a bizarre mix of fusty guest houses, faux-Tudor villas and socking great hotels. It's best seen but briefly, to be honest – all a bit self-conscious and twee – so after one night we take a pre-dawn minibus to Horton Plains National Park, a wild stretch of moorland that could double as Brontë country.

The lack of sleep and soggy trek make grumps of us both, so we stop for a boiled-egg breakfast at World's End, where the escarpment falls dizzyingly

away to the lowlands a kilometre below. Our mood lifts with the clouds when they part and sunbeams pierce the murk, guiding the eye to far-off rivers and fields. That memory sustains us through subsequent drenchings, then a grim old drive down, down through the hills, hearts in mouths again, hour after hour to Colombo, then south along tsunami-razed coast to Galle, mile upon mile of houses smashed to oblivion. Sobering stuff. Finally, nightfall brings Unawatuna, the hippy-dippy beach where we'll spend our last days.

We stay in sweet little beachside bungalows, bask in restorative rays, read, bicker, laugh, spend nights at the reggae bar where anything (really, anything) goes, form fleeting friendships, buy batiks and boxes and Buddhas for the folks back home. Then, in a flash, it's over and we're standing back on the runway, inhaling the last drops of Asia before hurtling home – tired, happy, full. ■

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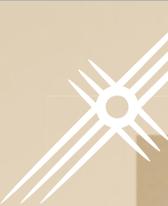
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UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

YOUNG AND GAULT IS AN INTRIGUING ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE WHICH HAS TAKEN ON A DIVERSE MIX OF PROJECTS OF VARYING SIZES IN SCOTLAND (WHERE THEY ARE BASED) AND FURTHER AFIELD IN EASTERN EUROPE, AFRICA AND INDIA.

They are known for their proactive approach to design, and like to focus heavily on their clients' specific requirements. This tailored approach has paid off with success across a range of fields, from healthcare and hotels to commercial and residential projects. The broad scope of their work is aided and reflected by the diverse group of architects assembled by Young and Gault.

The Fort William healthcare centre (pictured) is a prime example of the kind of project they are ideally suited to develop. Merging three existing services into one building, with an easy access central hub for all patients, the firm has created a building which is both attractive and practical.

One look at the striking stonemasonry façade serves to illustrate why the firm garners so much repeat business. Gillian Shields, architect, explains: 'Most of our clients come back to us with more projects, because we really focus on providing a very good service.' ☺

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WORDS: Lee Garland



SHOUT IT FROM THE ROOF TOPS

RE-APPROPRIATING THE CITY IN STYLE, WE ALL HAVE A LOT TO LEARN FROM THE CRAZE KNOWN AS PARKOUR THAT IS MAKING STRIDES ACROSS THE GLOBE.

Reducing the time it takes to get from A to B in a city is the time-poor citizen's modern Holy Grail. Hurling oneself from rooftop to balcony and beyond is sadly outside the skill-set of the average solicitor or bank clerk. For those athletes that call themselves Traceurs, however, running, jumping and swinging over the man-made structures of the modern city is all in the name of Parkour.

Although not limited to cities, it is in the highly regulated urban environment that Parkour provides the most eloquent critique of current trends toward restrictions on urban behavior, literally running roughshod over any town planner's idea of how we ought to move through a city.

Originating in France and now increasingly popular throughout the world, Parkour stands alone in the arena

of extreme sports. Being non-competitive it has more in common with martial arts. Practitioners aim to move as quickly and efficiently as possible over any obstacle in their path, creating a very close relationship with one's environment. This experience is uniquely visceral thanks to the undertaking of massive physical, as well as potentially criminal, risks.

In stark contrast, the freedom to move unhindered in the built environment is under threat now as never before. Whether it be the increasing restrictions placed upon civil liberties by the state, or the preoccupation with the mitigation of risk by the government and the private sector, the urban environment has become a suffocating place to live, work and play. Writing for CAFE in 2004 Charles Landry, founder of cultural planning consultancy Comedia says

of our current risk aversion: 'It subtly encourages us to constrain aspirations, act with over-caution, avoid challenges and be skeptical about innovation. It narrows our world into a defensive shell.'

Swimming through the sea of town planning decisions and urban design discussions is the ever-present issue of risk - the shark in the tank, and the symbiotic worms of the compensation culture living in its gut. 'The disproportionate response to risk is making our public spaces far duller for the majority of us', claims Julia Thrift, Director of CAFE Space.

Parkour makes a welcome mockery of the stifling caution that has been de rigueur for town planners in recent years. Risk, however, is not the only thumb forcing itself into the larynx of public freedom in our public spaces. Huge swathes of our towns and cities are being handed to private landlords, as Anna Minton, author of the forthcoming book *Ground Control*, explains: 'In privately owned parts of the city a whole host of behaviours are banned, from rollerblading and handing out political leaflets to taking a photograph or eating a sandwich. Jumping off a building would definitely flout the rules of private areas, making it a highly subversive activity. More and more parts of the city, from Canary Wharf to the planned Stratford City function like this, which means that all manner of liberties are under threat.'

Only established in 2003, Parkour serves as a timely reminder that public spaces, civil liberties, and the urban environment are ours and that encroachments upon them should be resisted. Whilst the Home Office spent 78% of its crime prevention budget on CCTV in the last decade, the cameras were involved in solving only 3% of crimes. Notwithstanding this, the average citizen in London is still filmed 300 times a day going about their daily business. Whether it be ID cards, the DNA database, Section 44, 42-day detention, the privatisation of our streets or RFID tracking tags, any subversive activity that wakes the general populace up from sleepwalking into compromising their rights is to be lauded.

For those who missed the World Freerunning Championships at the Roundhouse in London earlier this month, further information on Parkour can be found at urbanfreerun.com. And if you really want to get to and from work faster, avoiding the congestion charge or being tracked by your Oyster card on the underground, they also run courses! ●

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