

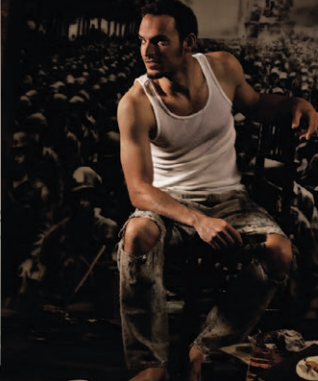
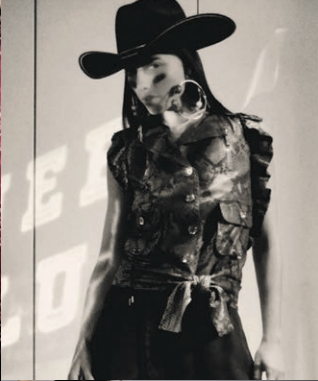
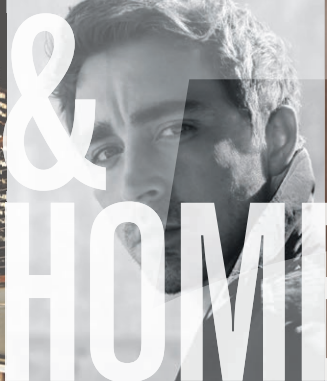
HOUSTON

CELEBRATES 5 YEARS!

FASHION & HOME SPECIAL H-TOWN CHIC!

+PLUS

HOUSTON'S MOD SQUAD PLAYS HOUSE
SPRING STYLE: NUDE, RUDE AND RUFFLED!
STAY THE NIGHT? SEXY NEW HOTELS
RODEO RUNDOWN (NO BULL!)
& 25 SMASHIN' BASHES



2700 POST OAK BLVD. SUITE 350 HOUSTON TX 77056

MODERNLUXURY.COM



MAR 2010 \$5.95

Amazing Space!

RED HOT 'The owners wanted a very dramatic look, something that sort of broke away from traditional conceptions of a sushi restaurant,' says architect-designer Hsu of Sushi Raku in Midtown.

H-Town's top design minds shake up chic!

From a sexed-up temple of a restaurant, to only-in-Houston prefab fabulousness, the city's hottest architects and designers are rethinking how we live and play now. Plus: Inside the hip new stores and buzziest buildings!

| By Allison Bagley, Peter Barnes, Holly Crawford & Mitchell Alan Parker |
| Photography by Shannon O'Hara, Debra Smail & Julie Soefer |

On the Ropes

Architect-designer **Michael Hsu**, 40, was just three when his family moved from Taiwan to Houston, but those Asian roots nonetheless inspire his richly edgy style. His first red-hot project here—after creating high-profile spots in his home base of Austin, like Sandra Bullock's resto Bess, sushi standout Uchi, and the *The Real World: Austin* house—is Midtown's new **Sushi Raku** (3201 Louisiana St., 713.526.8885), where the modern décor

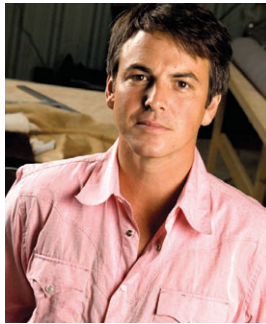
nods to the luxurious textures and saturated colors of contemporary Asian cinematography. The show-stopper is the more than a mile of thick, red cotton rope that Hsu shipped from China to festoon the interior walls and ceiling between the bar and dining area, creating a dripping, crimson conversation piece. "We wanted it to have almost a temple-like feel," he explains. And so it does—a *very* sexy temple. Let us prey.

THE BUZZ

Architect and interior designer Sharon Perry Wise has opened **Objects Lost & Found** (2815 Ferndale St., 713.523.8496), which sources 19th-century glass elixir bottles, old-school inkwells and other offbeat objects.

Austin Imports: Rad Rugs

Handsome Austin-based **Kyle Bunting**, 41, is turning heads—and heels—with his custom-made, high-end Italian cowhide rugs that weave in jet-black stripes and splashy colors. His pieces are available again to the trade at **David Sutherland** in the Decorative Center (5120 Woodway Dr., Ste. 170, 713.961.7886) after a hiatus. And speaking of Hill Country cool, stylish Edgar and Kelly Podzemny have opened a spin-off of popular Austin-based **Edgar Kelly Rugs** (2702 W. Alabama St., 713.521.1492), which features antique and contemporary styles.



HIP RUGGER Bunting outfits mega yachts, Gulfstream jets, luxury hotel lobbies and River Oaks manses with his hip hides.

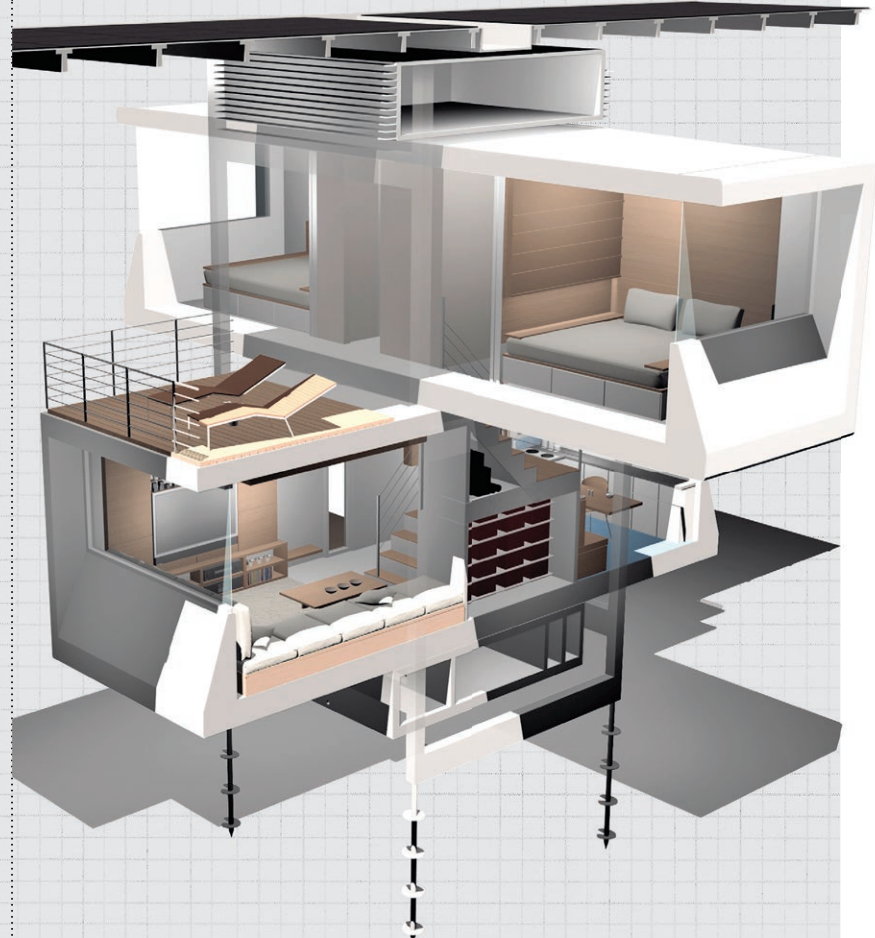
TREAD ON ME Italian tanneries apply Bunting's custom dyes to the hides, which are shipped back to Austin for cutting and styling.



The svelte lines of the prefab 'ZeroHouse' prototype enclose two bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen and living room, while, below, large steel pillars bore into the ground, able to take root in almost any terrain.

More Than 'Zero'

"ZeroHouse" may as well not exist. It has no foundation. It processes its own waste. And it doesn't need a city's electricity or water to function. But if eco-savvy homeowners start multiplying the zeroes, Austin-based architect **Scott Specht's** radical-mod prefab home design—which he plans to build with Houston-sourced materials—could revolutionize off-the-grid living. "You don't have to give up any comfort to live this way," says Specht, who's begun looking for a buyer for a \$300k prototype. Here's how it'll work: Big structural steel pieces will be delivered by flatbed trucks to your remote, formerly un-inhabitable site—think marshy coastline, or rocky slope—and be assembled in less than a day. The new house's 650 square feet will make the most out of every inch, with a roof-top 2,200-gallon rainwater storage tank for plumbing and 40 solar panels that allow it to operate self-sufficiently, year-round.

**DESIGN FIND****CONTOUR GUIDE**

Atlanta-based Shiner International proffers the mod-sculptural new Rib Chair, available at High Fashion Home (3100 Travis St., 713.528.3838). Its birch plywood spine holds 18 black-lacquer wood-plank "ribs" that can be removed and rearranged for varying contour comfort.

Sky-High Haute

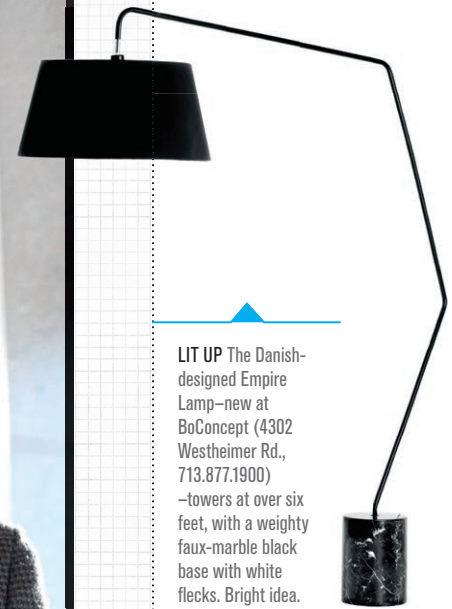
Scott Ziegler knows *wow*, having designed some of Texas' most over-the-top buildings. The architect's 60-floor Austonian is now the capital's tallest building. But it's his new skyscraper here, **2727 Kirby**, that has H-Town abuzz. For the soaring public entrance, the Rice grad planned around a conical Dale Chihuly chandelier that hangs over a \$100K Lalique crystal table with cactus-leaf legs. "Didn't want to overwhelm the lobby," jokes Ziegler. No, just the residents, who have access to not only the grand common spaces, but also the seventh-floor infinity pool, a "cognac porch" and a virtual golf course. (For more on 2727 Kirby, see "Urbane Legends," page 90.)



Architect Scott Ziegler at over-the-top 2727 Kirby

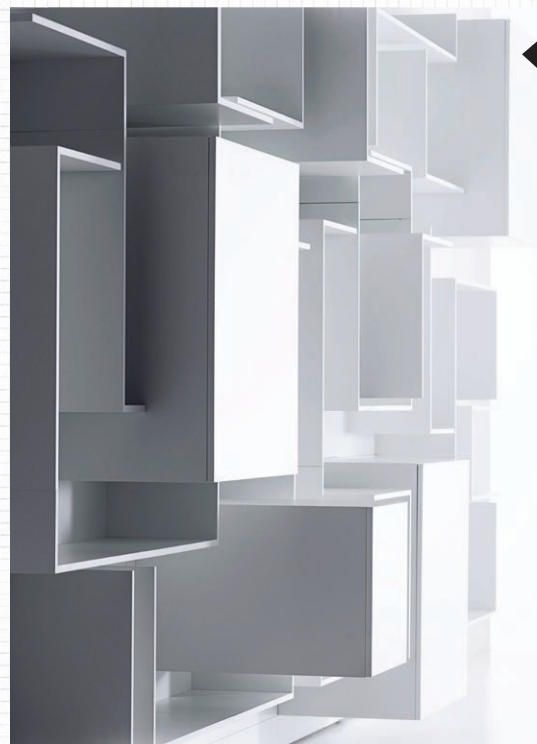
DESIGN FIND

LIT UP The Danish-designed Empire Lamp—new at BoConcept (4302 Westheimer Rd., 713.877.1900)—towers at over six feet, with a weighty faux-marble black base with white flecks. Bright idea.



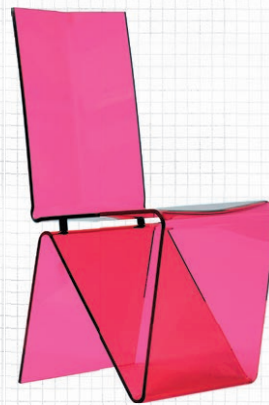
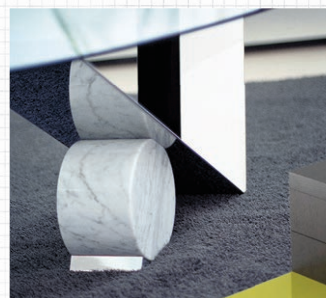
THE BUZZ

In addition to its Kirby locale, Meredith O'Donnell Fine Furniture will open a second spot this summer on Post Oak Boulevard next door to Zadok Jewelers. It's also launching its "Trosby" line of traditional and mod Euro-style furniture nationwide.

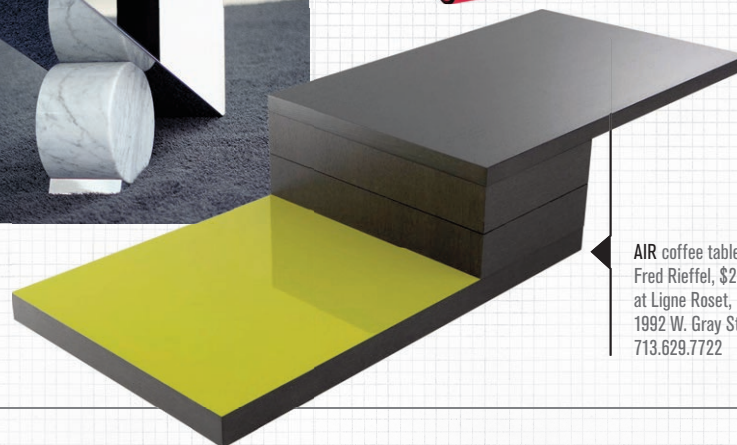


VITA modular shelving by MDF Italia, 9x6-foot unit, \$10,295, at NV4 Living, 1990 Post Oak Blvd., 713.490.2684

VALENTINOX dining table by Emanuele Zenere, \$2,959, at Cantoni, 9889 Westheimer Rd., 713.787.9494



PLI chair by Maurice Marty, \$1,019, at Roche Bobois, 4810 San Felipe St., 713.629.0442



AIR coffee table by Fred Rieffel, \$2,060, at Ligne Roset, 1992 W. Gray St., 713.629.7722

Working the Angles

Strong lines and angles have represented power and sex-appeal for decades. "From Frank Lloyd Wright's '50s Kraus House to sports cars like Maserati," says Maria Romero of new **NV4 Living**, which joins **Ligne Roset** and others, offering fresh takes on sharp turns.



Yvette Bhutani tossed a cheerful pillow with a green Ganesha she found at 2modern.com onto the neutral sofa, 'just for a punch of color.'



'All the stars aligned perfectly with this home,' says Yvette Bhutani, with husband Sumit.

Husband-and-wife architects Russell and Rame Hruska drew the Museum District contemporary.

Modern Art Smart

When art lovers **Yvette Bhutani**, 33, a Morgan Financial corporate planner, and her allergist husband **Sumit**, 34, couldn't find an existing contemporary home they loved, they turned to husband-and-wife architects **Russell and Rame Hruska** to design something new. The foursome collaborated on an open, 3,000-square-foot Museum District stunner that prizes natural light indoors, as well as outdoor details like mod, crisp-lined balconies. The Bhutanis and their daughter Samaira, nearly 2, have a house filled with splashy art by the local Ray Phillips, surrealist master Joan Miró and others. In a favorite vignette, a four-panel bamboo painting by Tattfoo Tan—which was snagged in Philly, and now watches over the room's porcelain ceramic tile floors—hangs over a simple low-backed gray sofa they found on the Internet. Yvette explains, "We didn't want anything that would compete with the art."



Pamela Halverson at Texas Tuscan Furniture

Trendwatch: Texas-Tuscan Style!

Perhaps it's obvious that a state known for cowboy boots should have a connection with the southern European country that's shaped like one? Well, it is to some purveyors of fine furniture and fab food in H-Town.

Chef-owner Bryan Caswell uses the haute hyphenate "Texan-Tuscan" to describe the cuisine at his new **Stella Sola** (1001 Studewood St., 713.880.1001), whose Italian name translates as "Lone Star" in English. He serves Italian-inspired comfort food that embraces Texas ingredients and tastes. Think ragu of local wild boar with pasta and a dollop of Sicilian ricotta. Now, establishing a

trend, Pamela Halverson, 52, makes wooden furnishings— heavy, traditional tables, beds and more—for her **Texas Tuscan Furniture** (1302 W. Gray St., 713.426.5556).

She aspires to a rustic look hinting at the antique style in rural Italy. She finds exotic hardwoods like tamarind and lychee from Indonesia, or mesquite and pecan from Texas. Craftsmen here and in Bali carve and construct the pieces based on designs, while aiming to maintain the wood's original character.

"The Texas part is that rustic stuff we like here," says Halverson. And the Italian part? "Living authentically."

DESIGN FIND



BAUBLE MARKET

Among the designers for this season's Atelier Swarovski's jewelry lines, one name stands apart: Zaha Hadid, the lone architect amid a crew of fashion folk like Jason Wu. Her bangles and necklaces have colored crystals suspended within resin. Hadid says the collection offers a 'unique glimpse into my process.' At atelierswarovski.com.

THE BUZZ

Slick Italian furniture designer Reflex-Angelo opens a local outpost this month (4810 San Felipe St.). Think glam-mod pieces in marble, glass and iron.



Dodson's model at new Highland Tower

Top Model

Chandos Dodson's interiors have propelled her to the edge of Texas design. No surprise that she was tapped to do the first model condo at buzzy new **Highland Tower**. "It's a gorgeous space, kind of a tree house with a great view," says the designer, 35, of Pelican Builders' 16-story high-rise near Highland Village. In the model, Dodson pairs white Barcelona chairs across from a simple cream sofa; a geometric sculpture of a metal coffee table is in between. Nearby, in contrast, she surrounds a dining table of dark wood with rolled-back ivory-wood chairs upholstered in linen. The strategy? "Although the building is contemporary," she says, "we're adding a mix of traditional furnishings."



Ellman at work

Sold Signs of the Times South African photo stylist Cliff Ellman is bringing his skills to Houston after cashing in on Dallas' tough real estate market. His niche? Staging upscale modern houses for sale (\$600,000-\$6 million) with mod furniture and art from his vast personal collection. Later this year, Ellman will stock an H-Town warehouse with Mapplethorpes and other art that will spiffy up homes on the market. "From a creative standpoint, Houston is more of a cultural center that understands the staging I do, the significant art pieces," says Ellman, who launched Spiffi Decor (spiffidecor.com or 214.763.1251) early last year. He says his houses usually sell in about three months.



Pieces such as Gray's 'Adjoined' are available at Bering & James (805 Rhode Pl., 713.524.0101).

Gray Matter

Houston's **Hank Gray**, who paints large-scale decorative abstracts topping out at \$8,200 a pop, is suddenly one of the best sellers in the city, with many would-be buyers relegated to a waiting list. "I'm using a lot of negative space," explains the Memphis-born Gray. "The canvas isn't completely cluttered with color and subject matter. People like the balance."



One-Armed Glam

Want spaciousness but lack space? Architect **Eran Chen's** Sunk collection for **Moroso** provides ample seating with a modest footprint. Small chairs, corner pieces and one-armed sofas can be mix-and-matched to make a number of shapes. Add a corner cap to the sofa and it goes from chaise to high-design sectional, or add an armless unit between left- and right-armed sofas and you've got room for a group. Available at **Kuhl-Linscomb** 2424 W. Alabama, 713.526.6000.