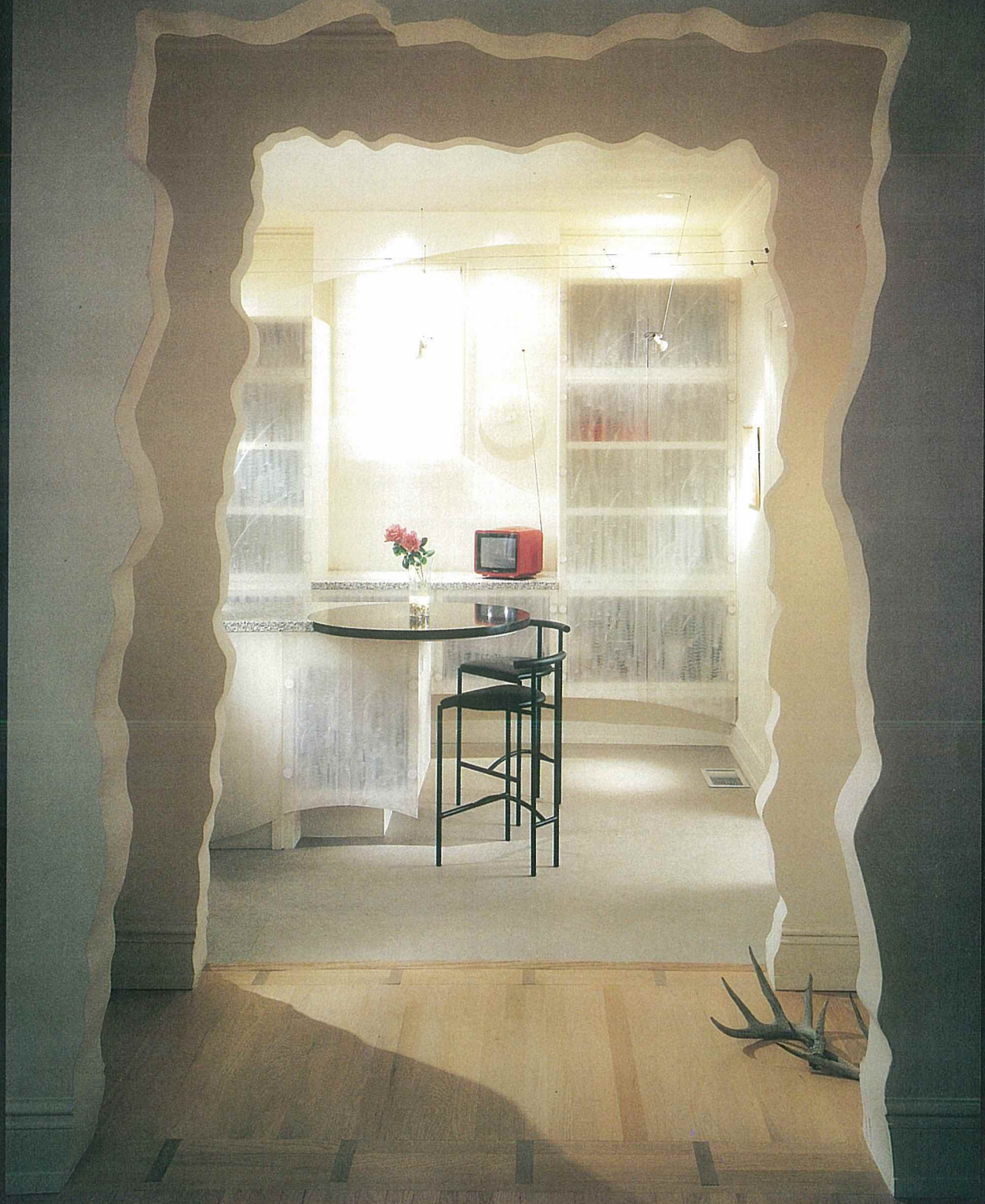


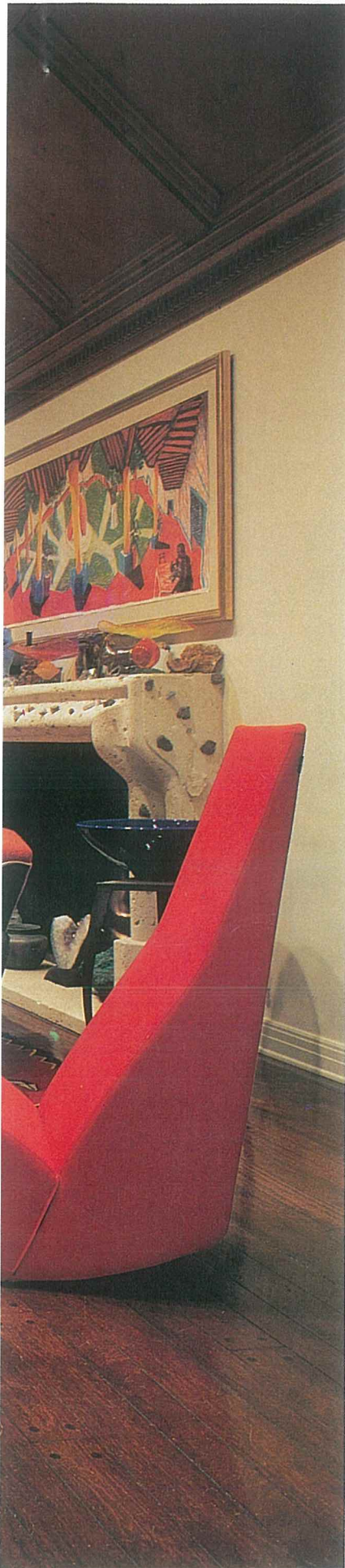
EMPOWERED SPACES



ARCHITECTS & DESIGNERS
at Home and at Work



Photography by Martin Cohen



Photography by Martin Cohen



Photography by Martin Cohen

opposite

The "vibrating living room" is filled with an eclectic mix of contemporary furniture and two Queen-Anne inspired chairs that belonged to my mother that I lacquered black and reupholstered in an avant-garde visual-pun on Chinese calligraphy. On the piano is part of my extensive collection of artisan designed frames custom made for specific photographs. Also, I am presently inlaying the fireplace mantel with crystals, geodes and stones very much the way I did at Granita restaurant. As I am busy building five restaurants at the moment, I imagine the mantel will be an ongoing process.

top

As one enters my home, this black-and-white foyer is directly in view—and then, one sees the electric-colored living room! I adore the vast contrast.

bottom

Morning light pours into our breakfast room awakening Irving, our parrot.



Photography by Martin Cohen





Photography by Martin Cohen

Barbara Lazaroff

at home

I believe the essential “secret” of the creative mind is being open to all stimuli—travel, conversation, introspection, the arts, great food and wine, and nature—for all experiences support and stimulate the designing spirit. I adhere to a few basic tenets that apply to my work and my life. I am so fond of one that I had it engraved on a huge boulder in front of our restaurant, Granita, “Time is meaningless in the face of creativity.” Another personal by-law is “More is more, less is less.” Perhaps a fabulous quote by film critic Pauline Kahl helps me explain this philosophy. It includes the sad revelation of how our society views art and the people who create it: “In this country we encourage ‘creativity’ among the mediocre, but real bursting creativity appalls us. We put it down as undisciplined, as somehow ‘too much.’... Art doesn’t come in measured quantities: it’s got to be too much or it’s not enough.”

I was always thought of as the “artistic child.” I responded to the play of light and dark so intensely that my earliest memory at merely fifteen months of age is a silhouette of my mother, backlit, returning from the hospital with my newborn brother. Color, texture and form had strong emotional effects on me; as a child I was constantly cutting, gluing and painting. On many occasions, family members would find themselves tripping over the furniture I had rearranged in the middle of the night. My family always lived in somewhat confined quarters. Our apartment was so small that I slept in a room with two brothers almost until I left for college. My earliest fantasies were of large open spaces and gardens filled with flowers of intense colors. I craved the world of museums and magical palaces, and yet I also yearned to be a cowgirl riding the open prairies surveying my ranch filled with a “Noah’s Ark” of animals—especially a llama. Most of this paradox of ambitions has come true, even the llama. In fact I have two.

Even though I was considered the bohemian of the family, ironically, after my first two years of studying lighting for the theater and stage design, I spent the next ten years of my university level education concentrating on the study of biochemistry and experimental psychology with the intent of becoming a neuroendocrinologist. My early life experiences, life circumstances, and these disparate elements in



my later studies are the basis of who I am, how I work, and how I realize and bring to fruition my “imaginings.” I believe my training as a scientist has taught me patience and persistence and this has helped me in the problem-solving phase of design. My empirical knowledge of the operational aspects of restaurants has aided me as well, in terms of space planning, maintenance, cost, efficiency, and issues such as what the patron and the employee need and desire.

Over the years, many of the lessons I have learned, discoveries I have made, and the relationships with craftspeople and artisans I have formed have slowly been incorporated into my home. Six years ago I purchased a large, traditional English Tudor home, this architecture being the one that most closely fit my childhood perception of what a house should look like. Ironically, I have decorated almost all of the interior with contemporary furniture and art—once again the paradox of my moods arises. Only the garden areas with their multileveled cascading stone steps and English flower beds echo the sensibility of the historical architecture. I believe the creation of one’s home environment is an ongoing, dynamic process. A home is never “finished” by virtue of one’s ever-changing and evolving life and living experiences. Both in my home and in my restaurant spaces—which indeed are also very much my home (I often spend more time in the restaurants that I created for myself than I do in my actual domicile), I want to create an element of magic and fantasy and yet it has to still be functional and comfortable. In addition, the reality of day-to-day usage, the maintenance of a menagerie of twenty-eight animals and a very active three-and-a-half year old, have taught me a sense of leniency about the “perfection of the space.”

Prior to the birth of my son Cameron, I built a design studio in my home, with doors that open to a garden

of nearly four hundred rose bushes—the majority are over forty five years old and they are priceless in their beauty and in the joy they give me. Above the studio I’ve built a large play area for Cameron. Sometimes, if I’m overwhelmed or stymied, I listen to his laughter or I exit my studio through the garden side and come up and paint or squeeze a little Play Dough with him—it’s a great refresher. When I really need to “get away” while working, I take my drafting table out to the llama area. The only drawback to that is on occasion they have eaten a few of my “tastier” fabric samples.

In the six years that I have owned this home, I’ve spent the majority of it on job-sites building restaurants for myself and others. Very little of the house is as I dream it could be. One of the first things that I made a priority before moving into the house was removing portions of the ceilings and walls in every room to install fixtures and computerized dimmable lighting systems. In the living room, the ceiling is sixteen feet high and composed of beautiful antique woods. I refinished and oiled the ceilings, added recessed lighting and duplicated the wood around the fixtures to make it appear as if the lighting had always been there. The living room is scheduled for sixteen different lighting scenes, my bedroom has eight, and the dining room has six. All of the rooms have excellent lighting for the art, combined with other light sources to give a warm attractive glow to the room. I experimented with this Lytemode system and then incorporated it on a grander scale at my restaurants. I’m a technoholic when it comes to light systems and fixtures—it’s a total obsession. I agonize over the details of lighting design. It’s certainly a by-product from my days of theater lighting.

Cameron’s room was the only space I’ve spent concentrated effort on “finishing.” I was so compulsive about it,

top left

As a child, I longed for beautiful clothes, magical palaces, bouquets of roses.... Today, my design studio in my home opens to a garden of nearly four hundred rose bushes; the majority over forty-five years old and priceless in their beauty and in the joy they give me.

top right

Six years ago I purchased a large traditional English Tudor home, for this architecture is the one that most closely fit my childhood perception of what a house should look like. Ironically, I have decorated almost all of the interior with contemporary furniture and art—but not all! The vase is by Anna Silver, my friend and one of America’s foremost contemporary ceramic artists.

that I looked down at my tummy and told him he would have to wait a bit—his room was not quite ready (he waited a full two weeks, my most understanding client!) Most people enter my home and feel that many rooms are whole and complete, but revisions abound in my head. In fact for a full two years, only the large David Hockney print over the fireplace and the enormous Navajo rug occupied the living room. There were no chairs, no couches, but it made sense—we were never home. This room is now extremely colorful, in fact, it virtually vibrates with color and people never seemed cautious about striking up lively and often controversial conversations. The room is definitely not for the weak of heart, and when recently interviewed about what colors go together and which don't, I found myself responding that God never seemed to consider such a silly question when he produced a field of wild flowers.

Considering I am married to a celebrated chef, one might wonder why the kitchen and dining areas are not more elaborate than they are. Actually in the home that we owned prior to this one, this was the first consideration and I designed a wonderfully warm and fanciful performance kitchen with a dining area that opened to the living room as well. No expense or detail was spared in terms of equipment or finishes. If I win

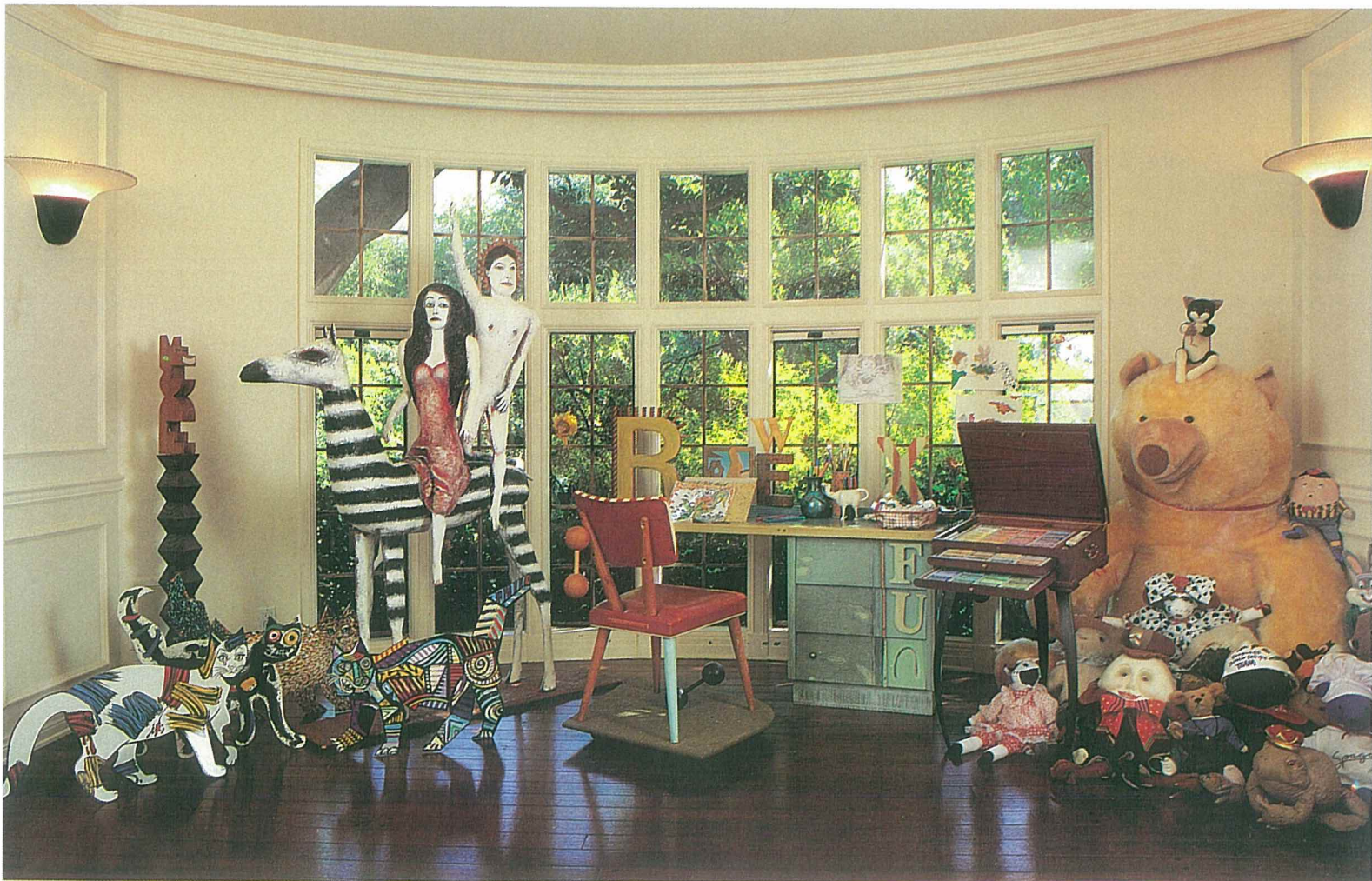
the lottery in the near future, I intend to do a similar culinary extravaganza in this home: wood-burning pizza oven, built in woks, custom tiles. . . oh well, dream on. Actually, we do so much entertaining in the restaurants that, on those rare opportunities when we do entertain at home, we tend to do it quite casually by setting up a long table amongst the roses and other flowers in the garden. For the truly special holidays such as Thanksgiving or Christmas Eve/Chanukah dinner, I remove all the furniture from the large living room and set up a long table for thirty-five or forty people which I decorate quite festively as I do the rest of the house.

Throughout my lifetime, seemingly unrelated elements have consciously and unconsciously inspired my work. My Neo-industrial concept for Eureka Restaurant and Brewery was founded on the overwhelming impact the movies *Metropolis* and *Modern Times* had on me. I primarily recall Charlie Chaplin standing in front of comically enormous moving gears and various mechanical parts. Eureka is my womanistic version of a cybernistic world. Chinois is my five-year-old fantasy of what I thought China would be like and I've often said "it doesn't. . . but who cares." Granita is my personalized three-dimensional metaphor for the sea. It is a complex combination of the wonders of what I

delighted in as I snorkeled in faraway waters, combined with the patterns of life I discovered under the microscope in the biology laboratory.

Design dictates so much of who we are and the quality of our life. As a scientist, I was constantly amazed at the natural order, mystery and power of life itself. As a designer, I take a multitude of elements and from chaos try to create a functioning system that incorporates beauty, harmony, excitement and a sense of joy and well-being. There are many talented people who dream about creating. But, imagination takes imagineering (hard work and tenacity) to make an idea a reality; as well as inspiration, passion for your craft, education, organization, communication skills and empirical knowledge, combined with integrity, commitment and a strong dose of "gumption." I feel my spaces are stimulating, whimsical and sometimes perhaps a little shocking. I've never been satisfied with "the status quo"; in all aspects of life the difference between good and great is in the details. I'm slightly unpredictable, irreverent and a bit flamboyant. Why wouldn't my home and work be as well!

This is my "dining room." Well, anyway, it doubles as Cameron's playroom and a place in which I can enjoyably write and illustrate my children's books.



Photography by Martin Cohen



Photography by Martin Cohen

opposite

Cameron's bedroom is a backdrop of black-and-white checkerboard with painted Holstein window frames. The white oak floor is inlaid with an alternating pattern of ebony squares. All the custom fabric is done in a combination of black, white and primary colors. I photographed our animal family and had an artist hand paint their images onto fabric which was then applied onto all the bedding, seating areas and throw pillows.

top



Photography by Martin Cohen

My late friend Eugene Jardin's six-foot-high by eight-foot-long sculpture, a combination of zebra-and-vark-and his dalmatian, dominates this part of the living room. Her name is *Felicity*, and she is joined by a German Expressionist canvas, two vases by Anna Silver, an Iguana bowl from New Mexico, chairs by Harry, our small *Dancing Table*, and a low cocktail table which I custom designed.

bottom

My son's bathroom was based on tiles we made and hand cut to resemble the patterns in Navajo eye-dazzler rugs. I first utilized this design motif in a small restaurant I designed called *Shane*. I adored the effect it had on everyone who experienced the color and optical illusion of movement the arrangement of geometrics produced.