

Ideas of Order

THE CALIFORNIA CLOSETS MAGAZINE

VOLUME 1

THE ANSWERS ISSUE

Who thinks outside the box? / What leads to lasting happiness?
What's in store for the future? / When to go big? / Why live small?
How to keep track of almost everything?

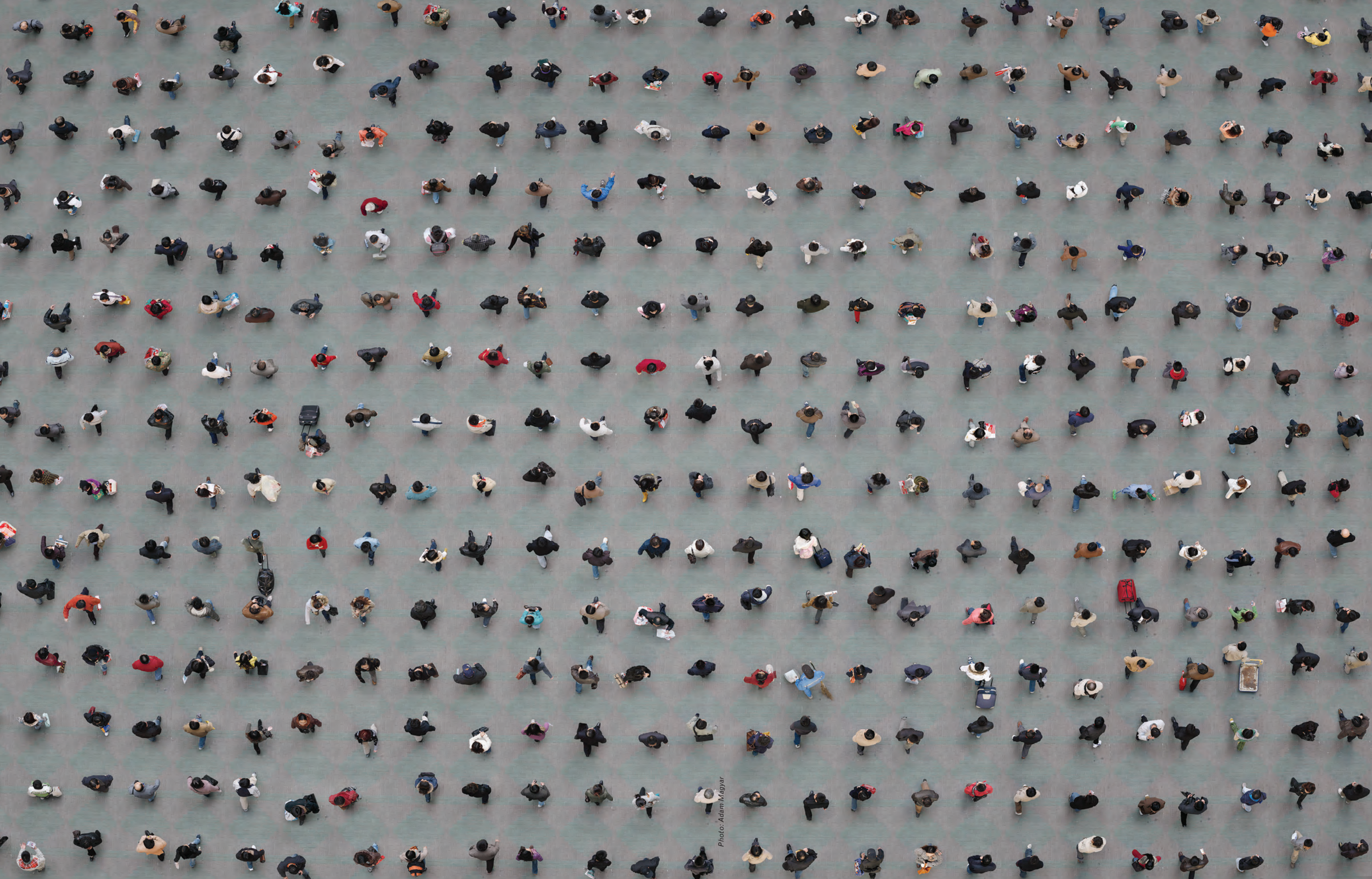


Photo: Adam Magyar

Ideas of Order

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The Fine Art *of* Organization

Every closet has a story BY | CARRIE TUHY



Clarity, sharpness, silence. What an empowering mantra. The clarity of self-understanding. The sharpness of piercing intelligence. The silence of quiet contentment. Those are the words illustrator and artist Maira Kalman chose to describe her mother's closet (shown at left). In 1980, Kalman's mother, Sara Berman, left Israel at the age of 60 to live out her final decades in a one-room apartment in Manhattan surrounded by a rigorously edited collection of her favorite things. Today, the modest closet that houses that collection sits among Frank Lloyd Wright furniture and Tiffany glass in the American Wing of The Metropolitan Museum of Art—a delightful, somewhat irreverent, yet nonetheless relevant—exhibit.

The reconstruction of Berman's humble 20th-century closet resides in notable company: around the museum's corner is the permanent installation of Arabella Worsham Huntington's dressing room (shown at right). The mistress—and later wife—of railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington and a woman of distinctive taste herself, Mrs. Huntington was the wealthiest woman of the 19th century, and her lavishly appointed bedroom includes an intricately carved wardrobe with a Parisian frock hanging front and center. Both closets provide a highly personal glimpse of a time and a place and a person.

Every closet has a story. Kalman needed only those three words—clarity, sharpness, silence—when asked about the story behind her mother's humble and hyper-organized space on view. On further consideration, however, she added: "My mother's life was filled with a sense of joy and freshness. It was not a small life, not a big life—but a true life. She lived every day with gratitude." Her closet represents her considered new

life in America, one built on self-determination and singular definition, that began when newlywed Kalman with husband Tibor Kalman took Berman from her opulent Tel Aviv apartment and deposited her in a studio apartment in Greenwich Village. Berman left behind a lifetime of possessions, not to mention a husband of 38 years who drove her nearly crazy, literally. She took to wearing only white—white jackets and trousers, white shirts, and white underwear—and she kept all of her belongings meticulously folded and expertly ironed in a standard-size closet. On the closet floor, she lined up her brogues like terra-cotta Chinese soldiers. The shelves held



mementos of a life well lived by a woman well loved and loving: a bottle of her signature fragrance, Chanel No. 19; a packet of handwritten letters from her sister Shoshana, who remained in Israel; a notebook of sketched patterns for sweaters for her children, grandchildren and the family dog Pete. Hanging from the ceiling light's pull string is just the right touch of whimsy: a red pom-pom.

This tribute to an unsung woman at the Met seems at first glance debatable as a work of art. Is it all too ordinary and unremarkable, too eccentric a time capsule for the age? Meditate further on this simple study of organization and you will discover a timeless and profound message. "If you have order in your space, it allows you to be calm in the face of chaos," explains Kalman. "It is one response to troubling times, to times of high anxiety. It allows you to continue to love those you love and gives you the strength to continue to work on the things you believe in."

Every closet has a story and, sometimes, a legacy. ♦

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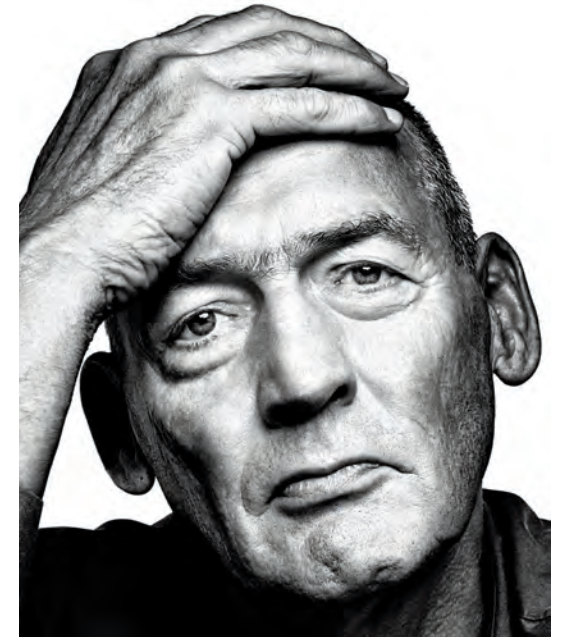
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CREATIVITY CONNECTION
EMPOWERMENT
EXPERTISE

THE ARCHITECT OF INNOVATION

and His Modern Cathedral to Books



A groundbreaking tribute that merges the old with the new, Rem Koolhaas's Seattle Central Library rose from the only question that really mattered: *How do patrons use a library?*

Rising up in the center of the city, a reflective jewel of glass and steel, with an atrium at the top cantilevered impossibly over the floors below, the structure seems to defy gravity. Entering from the street, visitors ride a glowing yellow escalator upstairs to the Living Room, where high glass ceilings offer sweeping views of the city, and large armchairs invite both chatter and contemplation. Meander the rest of the state-of-the-art building and discover art installations, meeting rooms, personnel to cater to a variety of needs, and at the very top, another light-filled lounge with breathtaking views of neighboring Elliott Bay and Mount Rainier.

Boasting all of the above—bustling glamour, accessible culture, a traveler's mecca—the Seattle Central Library is a dream realized. In fact, when it opened in 2004, *The New York Times* called it “a blazing chandelier to swing your dreams upon.” A

gleaming symbol of collaboration, innovation, and beauty, a modern cathedral to the exchange of information, the library allows old and new media to harmoniously comeingle, as do its patrons, with wildly divergent missions. In this reimagined vision of the public library, academic research, storybook time, online dating, professional teamwork, and coffee with a friend (via the coffee cart on level three) are of equal import.

This vision was not arrived at hastily. When Pritzker Prize-winning Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas and his design team OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture) delivered their final proposal to Seattle’s library board in 1999, they asserted that the current conceit of a library consisted of “one kind of literacy” that “blinded it to other emerging forms that increasingly dominate our culture, especially the huge efficiencies (and pleasures) of visual intelligence.” Rather than perceiving technology as the enemy of libraries, OMA asserted, it enabled “the realization of ancient ambitions—totality, completeness, dissemination, accessibility.” It was also of paramount importance to reclaim free public space for the city—a noncommercial haven away from inclement weather and other distractions.

The vision started with a deep analysis of the library’s current responsibilities. As part of OMA’s research, the design team organized the Seattle library board’s self-reported list of functions into a color-coded bar graph that represented categories such as books and media, programming, social roles, and administration. According to Joshua Prince-Ramus, a founding partner of OMA and a Seattle native, the board maintained that its only mandate was the dissemination of books and media. But when OMA regrouped the matrix, it was able to show that only one-third of the library’s functions related to books and media, while the bulk of activity was social. The librarians were convinced.

This bar graph would turn into the physical representation of the library. Using the proportions of the graph, OMA created boxes stacked as levels, or floors. Then they pushed the bars like Jenga pieces to maximize light, height, and visibility. “We shifted the boxes so they could capture all the surrounding features of nature,” Koolhaas says. “Each layer was addressed to the mountain, addressed to the port, addressed to the skyline. So a dry, rational structure became lyrical by engaging with

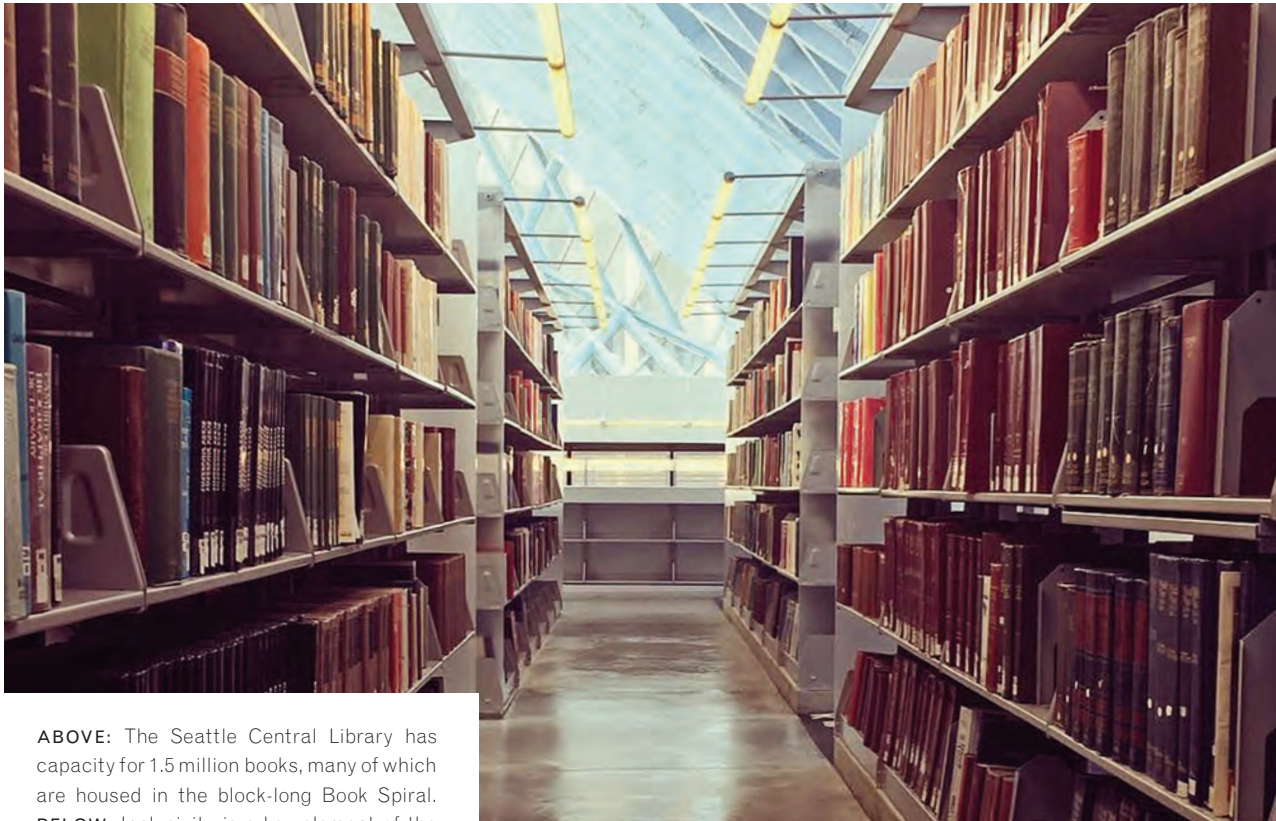
nature and capturing the imagination of the city as a whole.” A metal and glass grid, or “skin,” connected the blocks and brought the structure into cohesion.

The most innovative feature of the Seattle Central Library is the Book Spiral, a rectangular, block-long “parking garage for books,” according to Prince-Ramus. Browsers can climb, at an almost imperceptible incline, along the exterior of each level, dipping into rows of bookshelves that fan inward like parking spaces. The majority of the library’s nonfiction books has a place here in the Dewey decimal system, which accommodates for future growth of the collection (there is a 1.5 million book capacity) and accidental discoveries, “where you kind of look at books that are not necessarily the books that you’re aiming for,” Koolhaas told *The Seattle Times* in 2008.

A DRY, RATIONAL STRUCTURE
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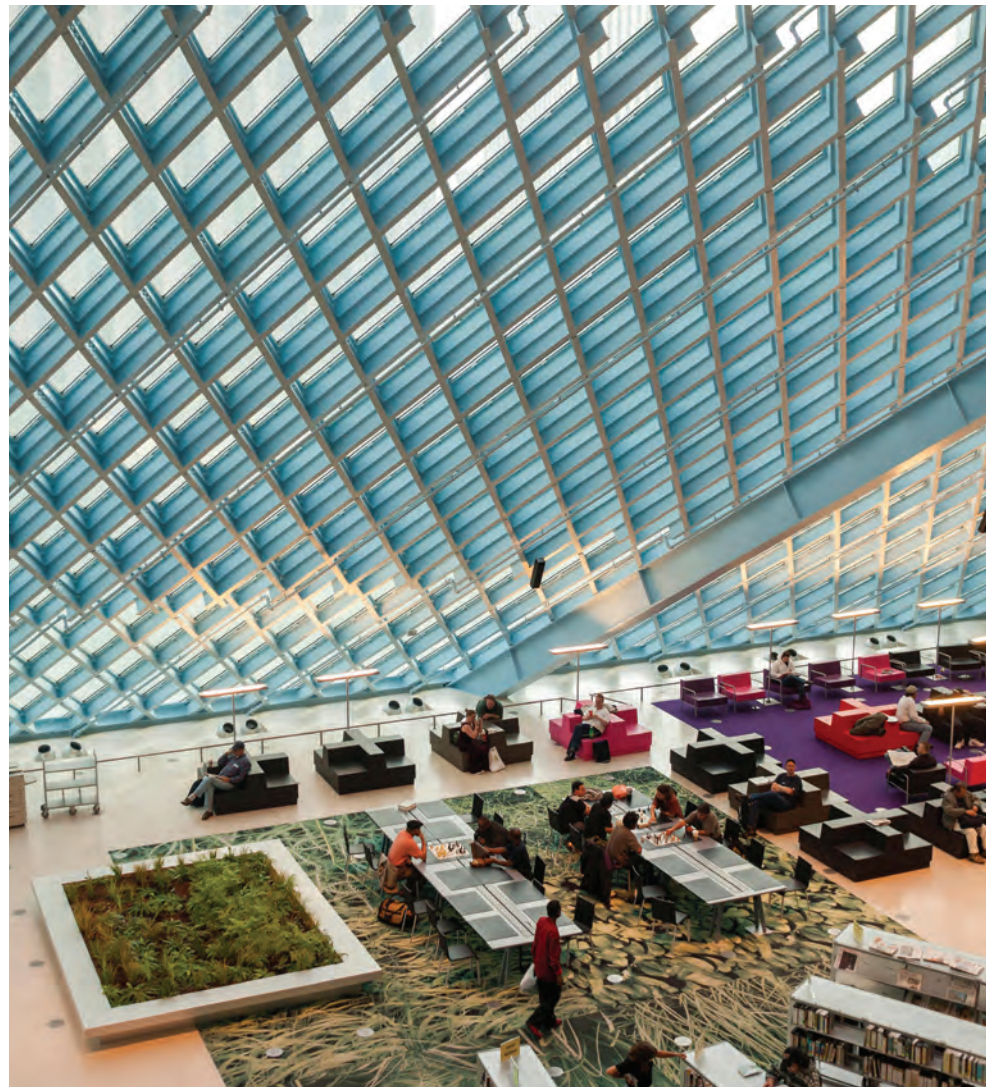
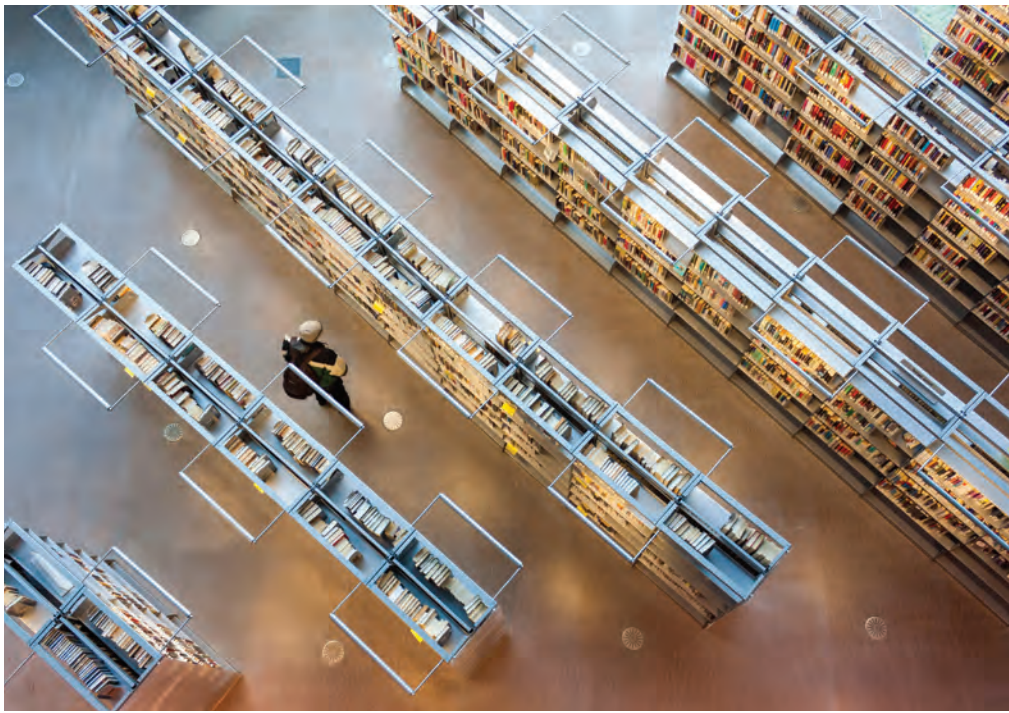
This massive spiral evokes the interwoven strands of DNA, and, like DNA, it is the generative epicenter of the structure, the stories and knowledge from which all newer technologies and human activity emanate. While this organization system is a highly structured single sequence, the experience of walking the Book Spiral is anything but. It was designed to “create a kind of almost arbitrariness,” Koolhaas said. “To create a walking experience, an urban walk.”

Every element of the rest of the library is deliberate, dynamic, efficient, and inclusive. There’s the Children’s Center, complete with stroller parking, family restrooms, story time in a variety of languages, and 80,000 books, DVDs, CDs, and other items. A Microsoft theater (the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation gave \$20 million to the project, the largest gift to a public library at the time) provides a venue for lectures, seminars, and screenings that spans two levels. Womb-like corridors bathed in red paint lead to neutral-colored meeting rooms tucked into the



ABOVE: The Seattle Central Library has capacity for 1.5 million books, many of which are housed in the block-long Book Spiral.
BELOW: Inclusivity is a key element of the library’s offerings. The Children’s Center, for example, offers story time in several languages, as well as computers for these digital natives.





fourth floor, presenting opportunities for more formal interaction and collaboration. The Mixing Chamber offers technological resources, including a large computer lab, job boards, scanners and image editing equipment, and study tables. The second level, closed to patrons, is where the magic of book sorting happens—though it's hardly magic at all. A conveyor belt system sorts books by category, positions them all with spines in the same direction, and whisks them pneumatically to their rightful spots.

Susan Hildreth, a professor of practice at the Information School at the University of Washington, has worked at libraries her entire career, including the Seattle Public Library system. “[The Central Library] is a place where people who live here bring family or friends who are visiting. It’s a tourist attraction.” Ten years after the opening of the Seattle Central Library, Koolhaas put it best when he wrote in *Content* (OMA’s follow-up to *S,M,L,XL*), “Maybe, architecture doesn’t have to be stupid, after all. Liberated from the obligation to construct, it can become a way of thinking about anything—a discipline that represents relationships, proportions, connections, effects, the diagram of everything.” —*Sally Schultheiss*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Book Spiral’s rows are slightly inclined, allowing browsers to move through the stacks and select new-to-them titles from the shelves. Large armchairs in the Living Room invite patrons to relax, contemplate, and communicate with fellow bibliophiles. The library’s fourth-floor corridors are painted a rich red; they lead to neutral-colored meeting rooms designed for interaction and collaboration among staff members. Visitors enter the library from the street on vibrant yellow escalators, which drop them in the aptly named Living Room with its sweeping views of Seattle.



Time stops in Baldomero Fernandez's moody, memory-infused photographs, but his Cuban roots and passionate soul shine through

You could say that Baldomero Fernandez's career was born in a love motel, one of the rent-by-the-hour establishments that punctuate Calle Ocho, the main street of Miami's Little Havana.

Sitting outside the funeral home during his grandmother's wake, the now celebrated fashion and commercial photographer noticed garish pastel colors stretching across the muted dark asphalt, cast from nearby motel lights. Camera in hand, he returned the next day to shoot the love motels, eventually debuting the work at a local gallery—only to receive national praise. “Magazines started hiring me because of that,” he remembers. “It was the first time I got recognition for something I did on my own, something personal.”

Today, the Miami-born Fernandez shoots to tell a story. No matter the object—a

STILL

LIFE



An image from Fernandez's *Love Motel* series, which catapulted his career as a photographer. “I grew up in this neighborhood and remember seeing them all my life,” he says. “I was always intrigued.”

For this child of the exiled, little carried more magic than the chance of capturing an otherwise ephemeral moment. That's how memories are formed, he thought, and history remembered.



LEFT: A sweeping view of Fernandez's favorite Cuban town, Baracoa, which has since been demolished in a hurricane. "This was an incredible vantage point between the moonlight and the red star, which is Mars," he says. "It was the closest Mars had been to Earth in a few centuries."

ABOVE: "Havana at night is really dark because there isn't much street lighting," says Fernandez. "Then there's this beacon from a restaurant sign, creating a typical Cuban scene of a late '50s car lit by neon."



pair of jeans or a famous actor—he photographs with a narrative in mind, each shot part of a larger, intentional vision. He's not one to direct, instead shooting his subjects as if he's interrupted them in a perfectly ordinary moment. "What I love about his work is that it's honest. There are no tricks," says Jennifer Laski, photo and video editor of *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Billboard*, who has worked alongside Fernandez for years. "He's a true portraitist, whether it's a model or an actor or even a landscape or a house. He catches the authentic moment and doesn't force anything."

Fernandez assumed he'd be a scientist: as a child, he found space travel fascinating. In the eighth grade, however, the school registrar placed him in the wrong elective class, photography, which he planned to drop by the end of the day. But then he held the camera, learned about the alchemy of the darkroom, and watched chemicals mix into imagery, the way they did in the 1980s. For this child of the exiled, little carried more magic than the chance of capturing an otherwise ephemeral moment. That's how memories are formed, he thought, and history remembered—two essential components of Fernandez's upbringing.

At a young age, Fernandez's parents left Cuba and settled in Miami. His father worked as a bellman at an airport hotel and his mother as an administrator at the University of Miami. They lived a simple life, in many ways defined by a persistent longing for another place—one far away and seemingly imaginary, yet vivid through



stories of days gone by. Growing up, Fernandez recalls “I remember my dad saying, ‘One day we’ll go back to Cuba. I can show you all these things. Cuba is an amazing paradise,’” Fernandez said.

Though not the paradise his father recounted, Fernandez discovered meaning in the soil of Cuba. He’s since traveled back a handful of times, the island both stirring old memories and becoming the foundation for new stories. In 2013, Fernandez visited Cuba with his wife and young son to fulfill his father’s dying wish: return his ashes to Los Alfonsos, the dirt-poor village between two rivers where he’d grown up. Upon arriving, however, Fernandez found desolation. Flooded by local authorities to building a dam years before, the town his father knew so well lived in only one place: the mind’s eye.

But the discovery didn’t slow Fernandez. “We drove around for

hours, in horrible roads, and we didn’t have a four-wheel drive [vehicle],” he recalls. Finally, he decided on a cemetery not far from his father’s original village. “It wasn’t exactly what he wanted, but close enough.”

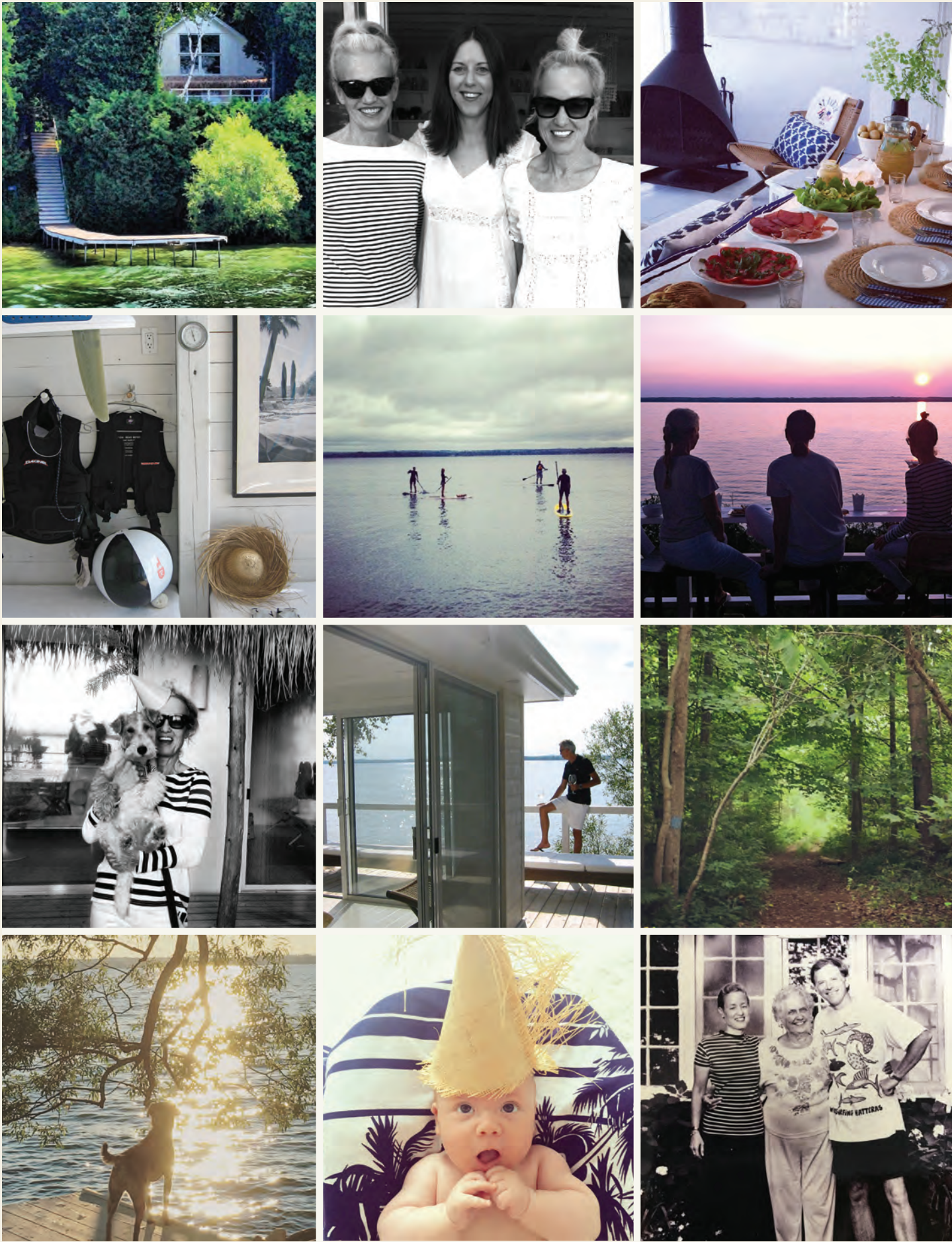
For Fernandez, life behind the lens has offered him a view of the bigger picture: the ability to honor history, solidify memories, and capture his world in stories—one photo at a time. —*Mirta Ojito*

ABOVE: Fernandez discovered this scene at a beach club in Rockaway, New York. “At the end of the day, they put in these plastic swans that hold chlorine tablets, creating a beautiful image of fake swans in a blue pool.”



no one is an island

At a cottage named Lola, Toronto interior designer Christine Ralphs finds friends her sustaining joy



For Christine Ralphs, it was love at first sight—albeit the second time around. The year was 1991 and the scene Snake Island, one of a trio of islands an hour outside Toronto. Christine and her husband, Peter, were boating the lake with friends, the wind mighty and alive. On a lark, they took to shore and happened upon a run-down cottage for sale. “Let’s buy it,” Peter urged Christine. But Christine, a former display artist for Harrods who had met Peter in London, scoffed at the idea. Who would want to spend weekends in a funky island community where everything from brie to bottled water had to be schlepped by barge and the main activity appeared to be swatting mosquitoes?

Cottaging, a term Canadians like so much they made it a verb, has a long tradition in a country where summer is savored and revered, lived in slow motion after long, brutally cold winters. Snake Island—like its siblings Fox and Georgina islands, also located on Lake Simcoe—is the property of the Chippewas, an Indian band that began leasing the land to urban expats in the 1930s and 1940s. Currently, it is home to about 200 summer cottages that tend to be passed down from generation to generation or sold by word of mouth. The limited inventory rarely hits the market.

It only took a few days for a change of heart to hit Christine so suddenly that she jumped from a table, mid-dinner party in Toronto, to exclaim, “Oh my god, we’ve made a mistake. We have to buy the cottage.” She and Peter traveled back the next day, only to learn the house had been sold the day before. Crushed, they noticed an old man, one “about to keel over,” standing near the water. They asked if he knew of anything for sale. He said, “As a matter of fact, yes.”

He pointed them in the right direction, and soon they were climbing rickety stairs to a dirty brown bungalow, marked with a tiny weathered sign that read “Lola.” It was owned

by 86-year-old Viola Patterson, who greeted them. “It was a dump. I fell in love immediately,” says Christine.

With only \$10 between them, the Ralphs made an offer and handed over the meager sum as a deposit to secure the sale. “I like you,” said Patterson, undeterred by the informality of the transaction. “It’s yours.” Realizing Patterson’s concern about moving a lifetime of belongings off the island, Christine and Peter agreed to take Lola as is. Sure enough, when they took possession of the cottage at the end of the season in 1991, “there was still toast in the toaster,” remembers Christine.

Any uncertainty about their impromptu purchase dissolved immediately upon arrival, and the couple took to cottaging with enthusiasm. Christine painted the bungalow turquoise and hung hula skirts for curtains. A few years later, they bought and renovated the shack next door for a guest house, and in 2002, they tore down Lola to build an A-frame inspired by beachfront houses in England and Uruguay. An expansive deck stretched from sliding doors at the house’s front to the forested hillside sloping toward the lake, providing room for a large communal table and chairs, his-and-her lounges, giant mushrooming beach umbrellas, and a “sky bar” perfect for sundowners. Weekend after weekend, they gladly imported friends—up to 30 at a time—for lazy lunches, starlit dinners, and endless dance parties. “Eventually, we felt like staff at a resort,” says Christine.

Fortuitously, the ranch-style house next door came up for sale, complete with a boathouse—great luck as island rules forbid the construction of boathouses, unless one already exists. David and Michelle Lloyd, dear friends of Christine and Peter’s since the women worked as senior vice presidents at Club Monaco and later opened the interior design firm Lloyd Ralphs Design, snapped it up. Shortly after, Jenn Cranston, a Toronto stylist, creative director, and recent founder of the

OPPOSITE, TOP ROW: An A-frame named Lola; cottagers (left to right) Michelle Lloyd, Jenn Cranston, Christine Ralphs; summer repast. **SECOND ROW:** Water sports paraphernalia; paddleboarders; red sky at night. **THIRD ROW:** Christine and party animal Lucky; David Lloyd outside the boathouse bedroom; a walking path through the Canadian woods. **FOURTH ROW:** Lookout dog; Ulysses goes native; Christine and Peter Ralphs with Viola Patterson in front of the original cottage named Lola.

Cottaging, a term Canadians like so much they made it a verb, has a long tradition in a country where summer is savored and revered, lived in slow motion after the long, brutally cold winters.

blog Outsider, bought the renovated guest house. All the houses are painted “pioneer white”—an anomaly for Snake Island, which favors “ramshackle brown.”

The three white cottages have become a kind of accidental family compound. Atop the boathouse, David and Michelle built a bedroom to accommodate their daughter Olympia, a designer for J.Crew in New York; her French filmmaker husband, Matt; and baby Ulysses, when they visit for summers. Nearby, Peter’s brother and family bought a house, adding “bunkies”—bedroom-only outbuildings for their three adult sons. Sadly, in 2014, Peter died, but his invigorating spirit lives on through his curated mix tapes that never fail to inspire dance parties. Donning the hula skirts once used as window curtains, guests dance late into the evening, like a band of stranded castaways beneath an illuminating moon.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The pier to Lake Simcoe; Jenn’s patio; an island soiree invite featuring Peter and Bitsy; Lola’s deck with terry-cloth-covered chaises; the welcoming committee: David, Christine, and Michelle; a “bunkie.”



Partying aside, the beauty of Snake Island lies in the low-key, stress-free reprieve from city life. Planning is kept to a minimum, and working is frowned upon. The one routine adamantly followed is “family dinner” two nights a weekend, featuring a honed rotation of chefs from all three houses. And, of course, the long walks—the circumference of the island is about 2.25 miles among towering Canadian firs and gypsy wildflowers—and July’s annual summer regalia, complete with a spirited 5K run and three-legged sack races for the kids. From May to October, windsurfing, swimming, and boating fill the days, trails of laughter carrying from wake to shore along summer’s warm, lazy breeze.

But what Christine loves most—as do Michelle and Olympia—is a dry scotch martini at the “sky bar,” the lake stretching before her. “I could sit there in the evening and gaze endlessly at the water. It’s heaven,” says Christine, the once reluctant cottager. “It’s just heaven.” —*Carrie Tuhy*

ABOVE: Feather-adorned party hats await guests at the “sky bar.”

SEEING THE LIGHT



LEFT: Inspired by theatrical lighting, *Pink Void* was Grawunder's first piece manufactured in the United States. **RIGHT:** *Limelight* features modules that move via remote control to change how much light is emitted.



Artist and architect Johanna Grawunder's brilliant creations combine function, technology, performance, and, of course, beauty



Johanna Grawunder grew up in *that* kind of house. There's one in every neighborhood: the home that becomes a multicolor, electrified extravaganza every holiday season. "We were huge Christmas people," says Grawunder, remembering her childhood in San Diego, California. "Putting the tree up was a three-day affair, and we covered it in tons and tons of light. My dad would then go out on a specific day, December 10th, and cover all the landscaping with Christmas lights. I loved it."

The family's holiday spectacle stirred a notion much grander than awe in local kids or envy in the neighbors. Now an internationally acclaimed light designer,

Grawunder creates glowing public installations, exuberant light fixtures, and even lit furniture. It’s evident the direct line of inspiration she draws from luminous holidays past.

Other quintessentially American influences—the giddy, gaudy Las Vegas strip; eerily glowing California freeway signs—in-form her designs. After graduating from California Polytechnic State University with a degree in architecture, Grawunder finished her studies in Florence, Italy. In 1986, she started at Sottsass Associati, the studio of the influential Italian designer Ettore Sottsass, where, for the next 18 years, she designed buildings and interiors with Sottsass, working her way up to partner. During that time, she began to hone her focus until she unveiled her sweet spot, her creative comfort zone: light.

**SHE SEES HER EXPERTISE AS A
NATURAL OUTGROWTH OF NOT
ONLY HER CHILDHOOD INFLUENCES
BUT ALSO HER CLASSICAL
TRAINING AS AN ARCHITECT.**

“The Milan studio did everything from graphics to spoons to master planning of cities. But for me personally, I like the idea of drilling down and getting to know a subject matter,” Grawunder says. “It’s easier to have expertise.” Her narrowed focus led her to lighting spaces she designed and creating light fixtures for existing designs. The magical quality of light captivates Grawunder, and she integrates it into her work as one would texture, color, or form. “Light colors are different than paint colors,” she once told vintage and contemporary design dealer, Pamono. “There is more vibration and essence—more soul in the luminous, electrified colors.”

She sees her expertise as a natural outgrowth of both her early, American roots and her classic training as an architect. “The history of architecture is about controlling natural light with windows, skylights, porticos, courtyards,” she says. “But it’s rare to see much concern about what happens when it gets darker.” Typically, she notes, a decorator or homeowner would choose lamps or chandeliers to create artificial light. She saw

an opportunity for change. “I began integrating light into architecture and making collections of light pieces, which morphed into experimental light and light sculpture,” she says. “Now my work is more about the light being the protagonist. It’s no longer an afterthought.”

Her first solo show in the mid-1990s, *Air Conditioning*, featured furniture with light and industrial materials, and created instant buzz in Milan. She left Sottsass Associati in 2001 to set up her own shop, and says her time in Italy had an unexpected impact on her work. “Part of what I learned in Italy is to see your own roots,” she says. “I saw American culture through the eyes of foreigners living abroad, and I appreciated it much more.” Drawn to the aesthetics of subcultures, she produced a collection called *Lowrider*, inspired by souped-up lowrider cars. It featured a table and sofa with colored light pools bursting from underneath, mimicking the glow seen under lowrider chassis.

Her artistic sculptures and commercial ventures have placed her squarely in the firmament of celebrated talent. “Her work at once recalls the fluorescent light installations of Dan Flavin, the minimalism of Donald Judd and Richard Serra, and the colorful furnishings of her mentor, the Italian architect Ettore Sottsass,” Joanne Furio wrote in *Dwell* magazine. Museums such as San Francisco’s Museum of Modern Art and the Art Institute of Chicago collect her work. “Unlike light artists, who often create installations that can work in any environment, Johanna’s lit spaces are not just art for art’s sake,” adds Furio, “but designed environments that are appreciated as they are being used.”

Perhaps the key to her work’s distinction is a commitment to pushing each piece on multiple levels: function, beauty, technology, performance. “Designs based on one thing—say, the most advanced technology—would be totally obsolete in a year,” Grawunder says. “I often quote Allen Ginsberg, who said, ‘One God is not enough.’” —*Jeannie Ralston*

OPPOSITE: *Black Dot*, a piece from Grawunder’s *No Whining on the Yacht* collection at the 2013 Carpenters Workshop Gallery, in Paris and London.





A dropout from a high-stress life, Suze Yalof Schwartz wants you to find calm and contentment at her drop-in meditation studio

Suze Yalof Schwartz doesn't want to change your life. She just wants to make the one you have better. "I want everyone to meditate," says Yalof Schwartz, CEO and founder of Unplug Meditation studio in West Los Angeles. "I want to take meditation from the esoteric to the accessible." Indeed, Unplug, which opened in 2014, is a welcoming place where anyone can drop in, sit down, take a deep breath, and—just maybe—find not only one's self but life balance.

Yalof Schwartz is living proof. Not long ago, she was in the center of her own storm—juggling a demanding career at a glossy women's magazine with family, life, and the hectic everyday. In 2012, she, her husband, and three boys moved from New York City to Los Angeles, where Yalof Schwartz continued to freelance, traveling between coasts, seeking, unsuccessfully, a sense of equilibrium. As her stress increased, her mother-in-law suggested meditation. She tried it—and almost instantly was hooked.

Developing a consistent practice took longer. She wanted to find a place for a quick-shot guided meditation, like a yoga studio, to escape from the distractions of her West Coast life. "There were six-week programs, meet-up groups in temples, corporate retreats," she says, "but nowhere you could stop by feeling yucky and walk out feeling great." On a mission to fill a personal void, she created a quiet oasis where others like her could disconnect from the hyper-connected world. She fittingly christened it Unplug.

Dating back to 5000 BCE, meditation may have never been more necessary than it is today. The health benefits are plentiful: meditation lowers blood pressure, increases memory, grows the prefrontal cortex (which helps regulate cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning), and shrinks the amygdala (which controls automatic responses associated with emotional stimulation). But furthermore, there's empowerment in all that stillness. A mind uncluttered makes

room for clarity, improved focus, self-assurance, and a sense of personal direction. Paradoxically, Yalof Schwartz acknowledges, by slowing you down, meditation helps you accomplish more.

The meditation enthusiast and entrepreneur hopes to expand Unplug well beyond its initial location. Yalof Schwartz is unworried that she'll turn the ancient art into "McMindfulness" by making it trendy and accessible, making Unplug the "Drybar" of meditation, distorting the message in the medium. In her recently published book, *Unplug: A Simple Guide to Meditation for Busy Skeptics and Modern Soul Seekers*, Yalof Schwartz writes with conviction about "the gap," a transcendent state she describes as a "perfect moment of complete awareness, peace, and relaxation." Accessing that place in your brain pulls you to the present—it's there that the surrounding chaos falls mute, calm rises, and clarity is achieved. What Buddhists call Nirvana. —Sally Schultheiss



OPPOSITE: Yalof Schwartz plays a singing bowl, used in some Buddhist traditions to signal the beginning and end of silent meditation cycles. **ABOVE:** These meditation chairs also fold flat, helping Unplug attendees find the most comfortable position for their practice.

TIDYING UP:

OUR UNSTOPPABLE QUEST FOR ORDER IN THE UNIVERSE



BY | CLAUDIA DOWLING

The world is too big. We can't wrap our little minds around it, so we frame it, contain it. Stack it. Sort it. Strap it. Pat it. Prune it. Slice and dice it. We stereotype and generalize, categorize and organize. Because it's all *too much information*. We can't even.

The eye imports the unintelligible jumble, and the brain sorts it, color-codes it, tries to break it down to recognizable images and make sense of it. A photographer picks one frame from the torrent of input in his or her field of vision and simplifies, looking for some intrinsic logic. In that one selected frame, a picture can capture harmony and meaning. Outside the frame is—well,

all that other stuff. Three hundred and sixty degrees of relentless reality.

So make the world smaller. Pull the camera back, a space shot away from the chaotic mess of humankind, and experience the music of the spheres as they whirl in orderly circles. Get closer, and there are our gridlike cities and parking lots, the meticulous rows of corn and terraces of rice we have imprinted on the landscape. Rivers snake and mountains erupt according to their own natures, and still we try to groom and manicure the very earth itself.



Or get very close to a photographic frame and examine the pixels. The word comes from "picture elements," a human construct that makes an image into a pointillist grid of dots or squares, a Georges Seurat or Chuck Close writ exceeding small. Get closer still, with an electron microscope, and it's the natural order again: tiny solar systems of atoms.

The world is too dangerous. People need patterns to cope. Is that dappling the effect of the sun shining through leaves—or the spots of a leopard? You have to decide quickly, and the more deeply encoded the patterns, the faster your brain can process.

Sometimes it's good to be on autopilot. Decision-making is exhausting. Friend or enemy? Here or there? This or that? Stash or trash? What goes with what? What to put in, what to leave out.

So make the world safer. Make it more predictable. Standardize. If you can't find patterns, construct them. Make big-box stores with identical layouts. Stand in the place where you live and think about directions. Invent numbers to mark street and highway signs. Create emojis. Make symbols—a picture of a mortar and pestle for an apothecary's shop or letters to brand a chain drugstore—so you know what to expect when you walk through



Photo: Gray Malin



the door. People like familiar packaging. Pattern recognition.

The world is out of control. Floods, hurricanes, wildfires. Deserts blooming. Tropical fish straying into northerly waters. The strange migrations of birds. We've never been able to control the weather, but it seems crazier than ever. And then there's the everyday stuff we can't control—delays, malfunctions, our children, appetites, our tempers. No wonder we have control issues.

So control your own chaotic world. We get a little OCD. We make our immediate environment more manageable by cutting it into bite-sized pieces. A two-year-old sorts her shoes into pairs and places them in a careful circle around her feet. A wage slave squares his laptop and makes a flurry of decisions about where to file each piece of paper floating around the office. A housekeeper arranges cushions symmetrically on the couch. Human beings crave symmetry. In a face, it is perceived as beauty; in

our surroundings, it is perceived as clarity. Clear the decks. Clear the desk. Clear the mind.

But the world is too big. Something always messes with our neatnik framework, an inner Oscar to our inner Felix. Perfect order is the impossible dream. We can organize into pixels and fractals and pterodactyls, but the next thing you know—*kablam!* All bets are off. There is no final cut. Fifty-two pickup. Toss all the cards in the air, and they fall in a new pattern. Synchronicity? Maybe.

Chaos theory posits that new patterns are jump-started by tiny initial actions, that a butterfly's wing or a swimmer's flutter kick can cause a concatenation of events that result in a tornado in Kansas. So, Dorothy, here's to new beginnings. Embrace the process. Chaos is creative. This is the pleasure and the paradox. A tabula rasa.

We get to start over,
creating order and serenity from chaos.
In that inchoate mess are so many possibilities.
Because the world is so big,
and so very beautiful.

Experience the before and after

CALIFORNIA CLOSETS®



dream

Homeowners are living larger than in the past. Despite stagnating wages, a disappearing middle class, and a widening equality gap, the houses Americans are building, buying, and occupying are bigger than ever. On average, today's new houses are larger by 1,000 square feet, compared with those the former generation purchased in the 1970s. And because more people are now living alone or with smaller families, the living space per person is almost twice that compared with new houses built 43 years ago.

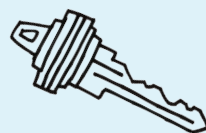
Americans have always dreamed big. In the 1940s, Eric Hodgins wrote the instant best seller *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*, complete with illustrations by *Shrek!* author William Steig. Later a comedic hit starring Cary Grant, this everyman story follows Mr. Blandings as he forsakes his cramped urban apartment and moves his wife and two children to the country, where they build the house of their dreams, with all the conveniences and “latest GE appliances” they can afford. The studio built the house (at right) on the old Fox ranch property to film the movie, and company executives raffled off 73 similar “dream houses” across the United States, from Arkansas to Washington, to promote it. The original model still stands in what is now California's Malibu Creek State Park—an enduring tribute to the American Dream.

Extravagant then, Mr. Blandings's house is modest by 21st-century standards and statistics.

Last January, in the Bel-Air section of Los Angeles, an ultra-luxury mega-mansion, the most expensive property ever listed in the United States, went on the market for \$250 million.

The four-level, 38,000-square-foot house, boasting 12 bedrooms and 21 bathrooms, is a fully furnished palace to opulence. The property includes a 40-seat movie theater, two stocked wine cellars, a state-of-the-art gym and spa, not to mention an infinity pool with swim-up bar, a helicopter landing pad, and a garage filled with exotic cars and motorcycles.

But you don't have to think *that* big to *go* big. Today's cutting-edge customization options allow anyone, regardless of living space size or budget, to expand within his or her means. The irony that the leading trend of going big in home renovation is as old-fashioned as Mr. Blandings's house is not lost. But it's that very irony that makes it universally charged, and forever chased. ♦



BIG

Walk right in . . .

Large and luxurious, these closets maintain their value as well as your wardrobe

The demand for top-of-the line and expansive walk-in closets continues with force. According to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), walk-in closets were among the top requested features for newly built single-family homes in 2016. This is especially impactful for resale: as the third-most-remodeled room in the house (after kitchens and bathrooms), the master bedroom is best when maximized. According to the National Association of Realtors Research Department, “Investing in the closets will always pay off. Any opportunity to create more storage within your current space will add value.” Plus, creating an updated closet system demands a much smaller price tag than renovating a bathroom, and the appreciation goes beyond financial.

A well-conceived closet stocked with treasured possessions may seem indulgent, but it doubles as an intimate, meaningful oasis. Storage that is both practical and beautiful introduces a grounded energy to hectic mornings of hurried dressing, and at a long day’s end, an organized walk-in closet allows one to step in and power off in a space of collective calm. The following six closets are distinct in customization yet universal in one truth: order, always, is central. —*Ronnie Citron-Fink*



1. ORGANIZED ACCESSORIES WALL With credits such as *Income Property* and *All American Handyman* under his tool belt, HGTV Canada host and producer Scott McGillivray knows a thing or two about home renovations. When it came time for Toronto-based Scott and his wife, Sabrina, to create the master dressing room of their dreams, the couple knew they were looking for something both dramatic and functional that would showcase their collections and improve visibility into their wardrobes. Their 360-square-foot dressing room with a 65-square-foot walk-in closet features a center island focal point and a variety of seating areas throughout, including storage benches next to Sabrina’s gold vanity. A dedicated wall holds and displays Sabrina’s shoes, bags, scarves, and jewelry, while custom cabinetry around the windows serves as Scott’s storage.

CC Design Consultant: *Cassandra Reinthaler*



“If you regularly clean out and edit your wardrobe, then you’ll be able to avoid a messy, difficult-to-navigate closet.”

— KIMBERLY LAPIDES
Fashion Blogger at *Eat/Sleep/Wear*



2. ISLAND ON WHEELS Kimberly Lapidés, Los Angeles-based fashion blogger at *Eat/Sleep/Wear*, wanted a clean, modern closet space that would be both functional and sanctuary-like. Her resulting 120-square-foot walk-in, a transformed spare bedroom, is a bright, well-lit oasis that organizes and showcases her carefully curated collections. A custom island on wheels—allowing Lapidés to move it when shooting photos for her blog—houses her jewelry, sunglasses, and mini bags in velvet-lined drawers. Open shelves hold and display her shoe collection, and exposed hanging rods keep her clothes within easy reach.

CC Design Consultant: Heather Daurio



TOTAL
SQ FT:
120



TOTAL
SQ FT:
227



TOTAL
SQ FT:
503



3. EIGHTY-PAIR SHOE SHOWCASE Susan Ferrier, a well-known Atlanta interior designer, crafts romantic, layered spaces for her clients' homes. For her own 227-square-foot walk-in closet, she envisioned a sophisticated and detailed personal space to store—and showcase—her carefully curated collections of clothing, jewelry, and shoes. A rich, leather-wrapped island anchors the space, while a glamorous shoe closet holds 70 to 80 pairs with designated storage for flats, heels, and boots. The addition of laundry machines, space for luggage to accommodate her extensive travel schedule, and a pop-up power station for charging devices makes the closet a functional, detail-oriented space.

CC Design Consultant: Calais McGuinness

4. JEWELRY-FILLED CENTERPIECE Linda Martinez, a Charlotte, North Carolina, stylist and founder of Styled Now, specializes in helping her clients find their signature aesthetic. So when one client needed a closet revamp, Martinez was eager to make style dreams come true for the 328-square-foot walk-in closet and adjoining 175-square-foot shoe room. The client, a frequent traveler, wanted to be able to see her trinkets and collections; glass display cabinets and open hanging space allow her to appreciate her finds. A large island holds accessories and jewelry in pull-out drawers and cabinets, and there's even space for the client's collection of hats, which are housed in a small, custom nook.

CC Design Consultant: Morgan Haynie



5. CUSTOM OFFICE IN A CLOSET For lifestyle blogger and actress Gracie Mercedes, her closet is her career. The Los Angeles-based *Style Me Gracie* founder publishes near-daily fashion posts and wanted a chic—and functional—closet space that could also serve as her office. Her approximately 100-square-foot walk-in closet, a converted spare bedroom, is now an organized spot for styling and blogging. A glass display cabinet houses her handbag collection and keeps pieces dust-free, while a custom desk space holds Mercedes's computer, jewelry, and accessories.

CC Design Consultant: Andrew Rayas



Gracie Mercedes strolls the streets of L.A.



“Organization can bring not only beauty but deep peace to your life.”

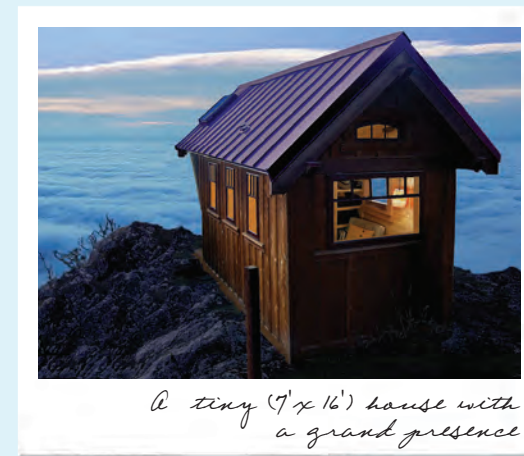
— TIFFANY PRATT
Designer and Author

6. PINK DRESSING ROOM Toronto-based Tiffany Pratt lives by a colorful aesthetic, and that includes her personal style. She needed a closet that would highlight the vibrant colors and textures of her clothing and accessories collections, but also would be functional and easily accessible. Her 110-square-foot walk-in closet and dressing room, a transformed spare bedroom, mix open and closed cabinetry, showcasing key pieces while keeping her organized. Two pull-out racks streamline accessories, such as belts and necklaces, and keep them within arm's reach.

CC Design Consultant: Polina Savchenko



LIVE SMALL



*a tiny (7' x 16') house with
a grand presence*

A tiny footprint can lead to more money, health, and happiness

Nearly two decades ago, architect and author Sarah Susanka wrote *The Not So Big House* and launched a movement that today continues to attract both empty nesters wanting to downsize and millennials whose social consciences and cautious fiscal nature are seeking a simpler life. Developers and builders have responded to the trend by creating houses and apartments that are considered small (between 400 and 1,000 square feet) or tiny (less than 400 feet). These shrinking living spaces also tend to be smarter, more efficient dwellings.

“Smaller homes are not only more affordable and gentler on the environment, but it can be empowering to have less to maintain and less to worry about acquiring,” says Katie Hutchison, author of *The New Small House*. Creating cozy, intimate, and thoughtful spaces that ease overwhelming feelings of stress and worry can be transformative, helping to relax and restore the mind. This breathing space is the emotional luxury that Hutchison sees in smaller homes: “You have less to



TOTAL LIVING SPACE:

264 sq. ft.

CLOSET SPACE:

136 sq. ft.

distract you from what matters.”

Another small-living advocate, Graham Hill, who lived in a 350-square-foot space in New York City’s Soho area, exalts the benefits of “micro-dwelling.” With space at a premium, the founder of LifeEdited removes or “edits” anything that detracts from his clients’ well-being. “Whether it’s incessant emails, texts, or social media updates, our overly packed schedules or the many hundreds of things we own, life can be overwhelming,” says Hill. “I believe we intuitively desire simpler lives filled with high-quality experiences, relationships, and possessions.”

—Ronnie Citron-Fink

SMALL-SPACE SOLUTIONS As an interior designer for Homepolish, Julia Haney Montanez is all too familiar with transforming small spaces for her New York City–based clients. In her 400-square-foot Chelsea studio, she needed a multifunctional closet space to hold not only her clothing and accessories, but also cleaning supplies, home office materials, and books. Her resulting 136-square-foot walk-in closet, a transformed 14-foot-long empty space, is a lesson in organization and maximizing storage. Shelves and drawers line the walls, making use of the apartment’s high ceilings. Shoes and Montanez’s collections are tucked away in clever cubbies alongside hanging clothes racks. Between shelves, there’s even room for a stylish vanity, which holds cosmetics and a mirror.

CC Design Consultant: Stacy Skolsky

“By creating enough storage in a small space, I can now find everything easily and visualize what I own.”

— JULIA HANEY MONTANEZ
Homepolish Interior Designer



STOLEN SPACES

You'll find unexpected storage—and even a little bliss—in the most unexpected places



It's a universal complaint: not enough storage. Space is finite even if our appetite for additional acquisitions isn't. But you don't have to cleanse your home of everything that doesn't bring you joy, despite what organizational guru Marie Kondo, author of *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* (which ranked number one on the *New York Times* Best Sellers list), suggests.

You probably have overlooked and underutilized space. Maybe it's a bare corner in the living room or an awkward hallway closet. With some ingenuity, you can take back these underachieving spaces and turn them into dynamic, functional areas that give a home a renewed energy.

Most homes have the potential for transformation. Stairs are notorious for dead space beneath. Why not use it as storage drawers? Or consider repurposing the open air under the entire staircase as a child's study area. Likewise, bedrooms are ripe for reconsideration, particularly around the stubborn square of a bed. Think about useful design that eliminates clutter, whether it's a built-in nightstand that stores surplus shoes or sweaters, or a sculptural wall element that organizes necklaces, bracelets, and other jewelry. You can maximize that narrow space underneath by storing linens or out-of-season clothes in zippered bags. Add baskets under a mud-room bench or build shelves beneath a window seat. Go beyond Kondo's directive; after all, she lives in Tokyo where the per capita space for every person is only 750 square feet. Once underutilized, the following four spaces have transformed from nooks and crannies to functional storage. Because, when it comes to organization, if the item itself doesn't spark joy, maybe the newly found storage solution will. —*Nichol Nelson*

PANTRY UNDER THE STAIRS Taking advantage of empty space under a staircase, this resulting Seattle, Washington, pantry holds everything from food to wine, coats to sports equipment, and even a stroller.

CC Design Consultant: *Michelle Gion*



DRAWERS BENEATH THE WINDOW *(above left)*

Utilizing previously wasted space beneath a large window, this Charlotte, North Carolina, bench combines a seating area with six clever storage drawers, marrying efficiency and comfort.

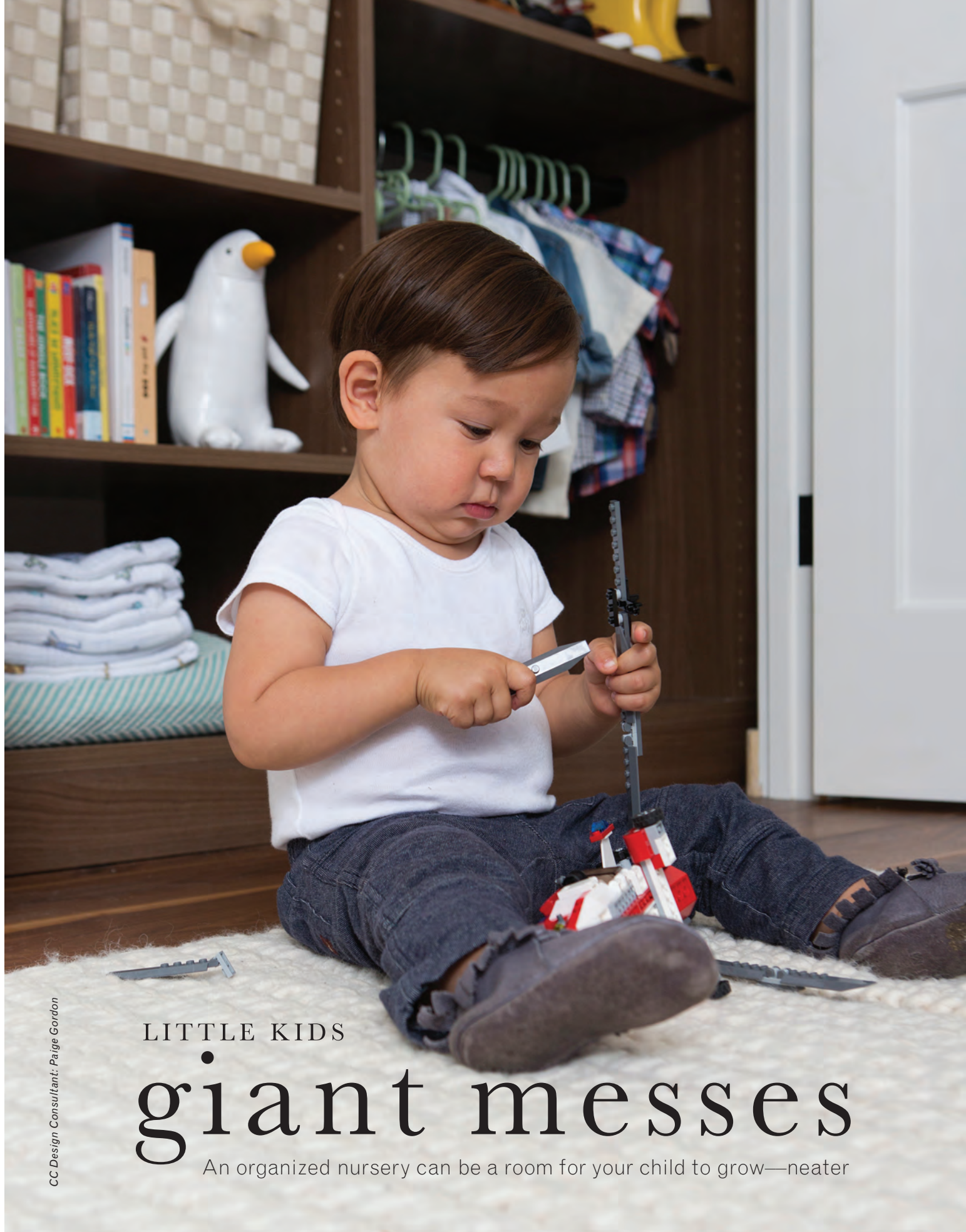
CC Design Consultant: Morgan Haynie

LIBRARY SHOE CUBBY *(above right)* This Malibu, California, library shelving system holds not only books and artwork, but also clothing and accessories. Most notably, pull-out drawers store a shoe collection in an unpredictable but still practical place.

CC Design Consultant: Sydne Keller

CLEVER STAIRCASE STORAGE *(left)* Built-in shelving that follows the rise of an Oakland, California, staircase keeps shoes, books, umbrellas, and other gear easily at hand, while hooks neatly corral children's backpacks.

CC Design Consultant: Bob Holcomb



CC Design Consultant: Paige Gordon

LITTLE KIDS
giant messes
An organized nursery can be a room for your child to grow—neater

He’s a heartbreaker—and a home wrecker.

Even at his tender age, baby Quincy (previous page) has accumulated admirable collections of blocks, books, stuffed animals, and action figures—not to mention a cache of Legos that if swallowed are deadly and if stepped on disabling for parents and kids alike. It’s a minefield in there.

There’s not a mother or father alive who doesn’t long for a perfectly organized house, where life isn’t a battleground for order but a peaceful armistice where parenting skills can shine and children prosper. Perfection, however, is not an

option when it comes to living with kids. Organization, on the other hand, is an obtainable goal—and for the health and happiness of the family, a goal that’s increasingly important to implement.

Organization for the under-six set is a fluid discipline, a minute-by-minute cycle that bounces from mess to cleanup, from spill to structure. Functionally speaking, it’s built by creating a place for everything. More important, its success relies on shared responsibility between child and parent.

Plus, there’s good reason to make it a concern. According to a 2008 study by *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, women who described their homes as cluttered were “more depressed and fatigued, with higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol.” If it’s been proved that lack of organization can lead to stress and depression, why is organization not prioritized like nutrition or exercise?

Likely, because organizing a child’s space is vexing; it’s frustrating and can feel fruitless. And with US consumers buying 40 percent of the world’s toys, today’s kids are swimming in stuff. However, a systemized approach can help. Preschool teachers exemplify this by labeling bins, color-coding drawers, and arranging containers by size, creating an environment where students find things easily. Moreover, they’re advised to hold kids accountable for maintaining systems—what they remove, they put back. Where they found it!



“Built to anticipate my organizational needs in a few years (with two growing boys), this closet can truly evolve with my family.”

— SOPHIE DONELSON, Editor in Chief of *House Beautiful*

The key here is empowerment, and a systemized approach provides this. For example, shelving books by the color of their covers helps kids find their favorite story themselves, while storing toys low to the ground or art materials in clear jars allows them to locate (and return) items easily. Folding their clothes and stacking them like file folders in the drawer permit preschoolers to dress themselves without tearing up the dresser’s contents to find a Superman cape. Developmental psychologists point to established links between independent, self-sufficient children and positive self-esteem. By giving them the tools to be self-reliant—to clean their own rooms—parents help them learn responsibility, and save their own sanity. And, that’s not the only benefit. As Sophie Donelson, editor in chief of *House Beautiful* (above right), says: “It made me a better mother.” —*Nichol Nelson*

ROOM FOR TWO

As editor in chief of *House Beautiful*, New York City-based Sophie Donelson knows a smartly done space. With her second child on the way, Donelson needed to rethink Teddy’s closet to accommodate his future sibling. With the addition of extra hanging room, cubbies for games and toys, and adjustable rods and shelves, the new closet is suitable for both toddler and baby. Plus, drawers at Teddy’s height house socks, pajamas, and underwear that he can grab himself, eliminating the need for a freestanding dresser.



CC Design Consultant: Carolyn Musher



BROTHERS & SISTERS

When Los Angeles-based creative director and style expert Emily Henderson moved to a new home with her family, she saw great potential in the children's closets. Now equipped with vertical shelving, storage for hats, shoes, and extra bedding, fabric bins for toys, and low-hanging clothing rods, the upgraded spaces keep the items in easy reach for the kids, and in check for Henderson.





english countryside

WHO: Jason Oliver Nixon and John Loecke, cofounders of design firm Madcap Cottage

WHERE: High Point, NC, in a historic Regency-style home

WHAT THEY WANTED: A pretty, practical laundry room



#englishcountryside

The English country look effortlessly masters a mix of sensibilities. In bold, punchy colors, chinoiserie prints and playful patterns complement antique furnishings and fabric-covered lampshades, resulting in an eclectic expression that celebrates both the old and the new.



THE DESIGN CHALLENGE: Stocked with unsightly equipment by nature, the laundry room required creative thinking to hide everyday essentials.

THE MUST-HAVE: Put simply: style that stood up to the rest of the home.

THE RESULT: A carefully constructed wall unit that hosts the stacked washer and dryer seamlessly and conceals cleaning supplies, such as vacuums, behind cabinets.

PLUS: Gold-handled custom cabinetry holds the couple's vintage china collection.

BONUS: Whimsical wallpaper and a floral sink skirt capture the Anglophiliac couple's penchant for patterns.

CC Design Consultant: Amanda Welch

botanical bounty

WHO: Anna Bond of Rifle Paper Co.

WHERE: Winter Park, FL, in a midcentury ranch remodel

WHAT SHE WANTED: A light-filled closet built for two



#botanicalbounty

Flowers by nature present an organic approach to color, form, and light. Translated to design, florals and their native environment dictate an instinctive ebb and flow—a space in which to exist comfortably, easily, and naturally.

THE DESIGN CHALLENGE: A prominently angled wall and three windows offered the master bedroom closet beautiful architecture, but tricky navigation.

THE MUST-HAVE: A sophisticated space that could be comfortably shared by Bond and her husband.

THE RESULT: A visually striking closet that turned its architectural challenges into advantages by making the windows the focal point. Hanging clothes, accessories, and shoes are not only easily accessible, but bathed in natural light. Outside the windows, Bond's garden view remains unobstructed.

PLUS: Thoughtful use of surface area allows for pretty floral accents throughout.

BONUS: A pull-out mirror, valet rod, and hidden laundry baskets improve practicality.

CC Design Consultant: Carolina Beier



cinematic lighting

WHO: Wayne Chang, serial entrepreneur and angel investor

WHERE: Los Angeles, atop the Hollywood Hills

WHAT HE WANTED: A sleek gentleman’s closet



#cinematiclighting

A cinematographer requires both technical skills and an artistic eye. The expressive results of creative lighting set the desired mood and heighten the emotional moments.

THE DESIGN CHALLENGE: Chang’s extensive wardrobe—including signature purple button-down shirts, staple sneakers, and a watch collection to rival Ray Donovan—required serious space.

THE MUST-HAVE: A movie-star-worthy aesthetic.

THE RESULT: Bachelor pad perfection lit with a Hollywood glow. By incorporating LED lighting throughout, including above clothes and shoes and behind back panels, the closet maximizes function—and dramatic visual impact.

PLUS: Cappuccino-brown walls, gray acrylic doors, lush charcoal carpet, and lustrous brushed nickel hardware mix textures and rich colors for a modern, masculine mood.

BONUS: Illuminated glass shelves behind glass doors provide a showcase for his watch collection.

CC Design Consultant: Katharine Mills-Tierney



tickled pink

WHO: Erika Altes, founder of lifestyle blog *Whiskey & Lace*

WHERE: Santa Rosa, CA, in a 1940s Craftsman-style house

WHAT SHE WANTED: A “girly” closet—all her own



#tickledpink

The color pink represents calm, compassion, thoughtfulness, and affection. As the baseline for a color palette, it paves the way for a space as nurturing as it is inviting—a soothing, comforting escape that centers the soul.

THE DESIGN CHALLENGE: A cramped space hindered Altes’s longtime dream of an open, walk-in closet—the first to call her own after years of sharing with her husband.

THE MUST-HAVE: Her love for fashion (and especially the color pink) on vivid display.

THE RESULT: A white space-enhancing room that capitalizes on vertical storage and allows her gorgeous wardrobe—and prized pinks—to pop. Customized, elongated shelving exhibits her color-coordinated shoe collection, while square nooks house handbags and hat boxes.

PLUS: A valet rod allows Altes to access and style clothes with ease.

BONUS: A crystal chandelier and delicate drawer knobs escalate the air of romance.

CC Design Consultant: Evie MacFarlane

scandinavian clean

WHO: Erin Hiemstra, founder of lifestyle site Apartment 34

WHERE: San Francisco, in a restored Victorian home

WHAT SHE WANTED: A spare, clutter-free pantry



#scandinavianclean

Functionality, simplicity, and spare lines characterize Scandinavian design. All elements work in harmony with the environment; items like these wood cutting boards (above) are handmade to last rather than be replaced.

THE DESIGN CHALLENGE: The original pantry lacked width yet featured 12-foot ceilings, resulting in an awkward area.

THE MUST-HAVE: A place for her vast cookbook collection.

THE RESULT: Minimal in design yet maximal in functionality, the new pantry takes advantage of excess vertical space with extra-high 36-inch countertops (ideal for Hiemstra and her husband, who are 5'11" and 6'6", respectively) and open shelves for storage.

PLUS: Perched on accessible shelving, Hiemstra's treasured cookbooks are always at hand, and below the counters, slide-out wire baskets store fruits, vegetables, and table linens.

BONUS: The X-shaped, cellar-inspired storage displays a selection of wines ready to serve (and above, glass jars host cooking ingredients).

CC Design Consultant: Paige Gordon





black out

WHO: Erin Swift, creative director and prop stylist
WHERE: Brooklyn, NY, in a light-filled apartment
WHAT SHE WANTED: A space strategy for tight quarters



#blackout
The psychological effect of black creates boldness and elegance, color theorists contend. If played against a light or neutral background, the color black adds a focal point that grounds, anchors, and adds sophistication to a room.



THE DESIGN CHALLENGE: After downsizing from a spacious loft to a small apartment, Swift faced a tiny closet to fit her significant wardrobe.

THE MUST-HAVE: A streamlined storage solution for a clutter-free space.

THE RESULT: A second “secret” closet and a careful color strategy provided Swift serious storage without cramping her style. In addition to a completely overhauled bedroom closet, a newly installed living room cabinet—equipped with closed shelving—easily hides clothing overflow. Black storage cubes that match her wardrobe create clean cohesion.

PLUS: With its matte finish, the wall cabinet blends in seamlessly and appears original to the space.

BONUS: A drop-down hamper hides dirty laundry.

CC Design Consultant: Carolyn Musher

moroccan mood

WHO: Brit Morin, founder and CEO of Brit + Co

WHERE: Mill Valley, CA, in a modern home

WHAT SHE WANTED: A craft space meets guest room



#moroccanmood

Moroccan design is all about depth in texture and color, and fluid lines that carry the eye. Influenced by Moorish roots, European architecture, and even the desert's rolling sands, the aesthetic provides an eclectic aura that evokes warmth and energy through spirited culture.

THE DESIGN CHALLENGE: After the birth of her second child, Morin needed extra space—and her dark, cramped workout room wasn't cutting it.

THE MUST-HAVE: A split-personality room that works hard by day and plays host at night.

THE RESULT: A modern mash-up of bright white cabinetry offset by rich walnut panels, bold-colored drawers, and a glass backdrop—all drawn from the color and texture of the room's focal point: the vibrant Moroccan rug. Custom holders and hooks stash craft tools, while a double-size, side-tilt Murphy bed tucks away when not in use.

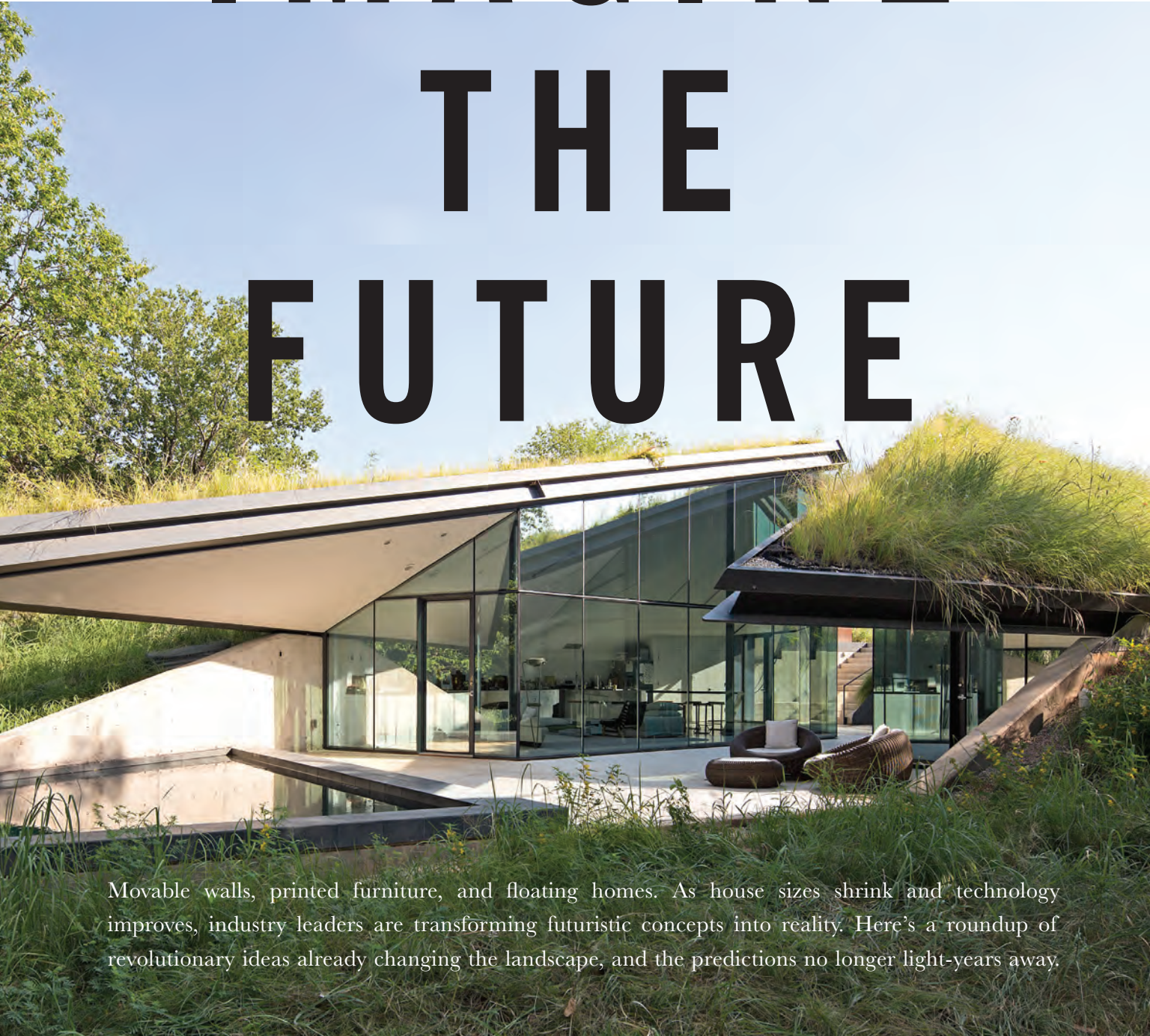
PLUS: Pop-up power outlets, a slide-out ironing board, and a drawer that extends countertop space sneak extra function into unexpected places.

CC Design Consultant: Chloe O'Keeffe



SIX HOME TRENDS THAT ARE CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

IMAGINE THE FUTURE



Movable walls, printed furniture, and floating homes. As house sizes shrink and technology improves, industry leaders are transforming futuristic concepts into reality. Here's a roundup of revolutionary ideas already changing the landscape, and the predictions no longer light-years away.



1. GROUNDBREAKING ARCHITECTURE

In dense cities, where space is at a premium, vertical living is the next frontier. But instead of going up, the world's most innovative architects are building underground. Mexican firm Productora built a modern home partially beneath the mountain's slope to accommodate changing temperatures between day and night (they vary by as much as 20 degrees). The house features massive windows that open to patios and rooftop decks, maximizing natural lighting, ventilation, and incredible views from every room.

2. UNDERWATER CITIES

Life under the sea is the wave of the future, according to one Japanese company. Shimizu Corporation recently released plans to build an underwater eco-city by 2030. Known as "Ocean Spiral," the city includes three parts: a top sphere floating just below the water's surface, a research center and energy factory built into the seabed, and a 15-kilometer-long spiral connecting the two. Inside the spiral itself: work spaces, apartments, and hotel rooms for 5,000 people.

3. PRINT YOUR OWN FURNITURE

Three dimensional printing comes home with Print the Future, a Vancouver-based start-up that allows consumers to design their own furniture and watch it materialize before their eyes (jobs are completed within 24 hours). Plus, the furniture is 100 percent recyclable and reasonably priced (\$500–\$1,500). Print the Future is currently looking for investors to expand its pop-up shops around the world.

4. FLEXIBLE SPACES

The future is on the move—literally. Joseph Wheeler, codirector of Virginia Tech's Center for Design Research, developed Future-HAUS, a prototype of the future home, sponsored by California Closets. The home features prefinished, pre-wired and pre-plumbed room "cartridges" that activate movable walls so homeowners can reconfigure their spaces—a closet expands to fit a laundry room or contracts for extra bedroom space—and high-tech electronics, such as a smart mirror touchscreen to locate a specific dress. "The concepts modeled in Future-HAUS can be used to build homes that intuitively respond to the needs of everyone," says Wheeler, "allowing people to live more sustainably."

5. GROW YOUR OWN DINNER

The more we learn about nutrition, the more control we'll want over our own food. Closed-loop hydroponic and aquaponic systems will allow us to not only grow our own produce, but raise fresh fish and shellfish from the comfort of our kitchens. As detailed in Samsung's *SmartThings Future Living Report*, these systems will capture rainwater to feed plants, purify the air, and insulate our homes. And software and sensors will let us operate and analyze the whole thing from our phones.

6. FLOATING UFO-SHAPED HOMES

An Italian yacht maker has dreamed up a saucer-shaped floating home that would allow people to slowly make their way around the world. In his concept, solar panels run the motor, and a water generator converts rain or seawater to fresh drinking water and tends the on-deck vegetable garden. A special elastic anchor system keeps the structure stable in rough seas, while flexible floor plans let residents configure rooms however it floats their boat. —*Jourdan Fairchild*

Irreplaceable *You*

Why robots won't be helping you with household chores anytime soon

BY | ALEX FRANKEL



A few years ago, I spent a week helping my friend Paul with the daily operations of his ski lodge in British Columbia. One of my first tasks was to change the duvets in the 10-room hotel. It's simple: you turn the duvet inside out, reach into the far ends of the two-sided sheet, grasp the corners, and then pinch the comforter before turning the cover down around it. I then set about folding heaps of flannel sheets. And there I struggled. Unable to fold a fitted sheet so that it lay flat on the shelf, I sheepishly turned to YouTube. Online, I watched none other than domestic goddess Martha Stewart similarly struggle with the task. Since then, I've often wondered why, well into the 21st century, we don't yet have in-home robots to fold our laundry.

As an early adopter of Roomba, the much-loved mobile vacuuming robot, I am someone who would surely welcome a clothes-folding robot if there were one to be had. Having a Roomba in the house is like having a friend stop by with a broom to sweep whenever you are out. Roomba keeps the domestic peace and sucks up dog hair that would otherwise have never left the house. Unfortunately, I will be waiting for some time before Roomba has much company. This is because many of the cleaning tasks that we love to hate are extremely specialized and unlikely to be done by robots in the near future. This became clear to me after diving into the research done by a team of computer scientists at University of California, Berkeley, who studied the efforts of robots to fold towels. It turns out that vacuuming the floor is literally one dimensional, while folding laundry is another beast entirely. "Cloth," as the Berkeley researchers write, "is highly nonrigid, flexible, and deformable with an infinite dimensional configuration space." Laundry folding is something easy for people but challenging for robots. And here's why: to fold a towel is to know that a towel is a towel.

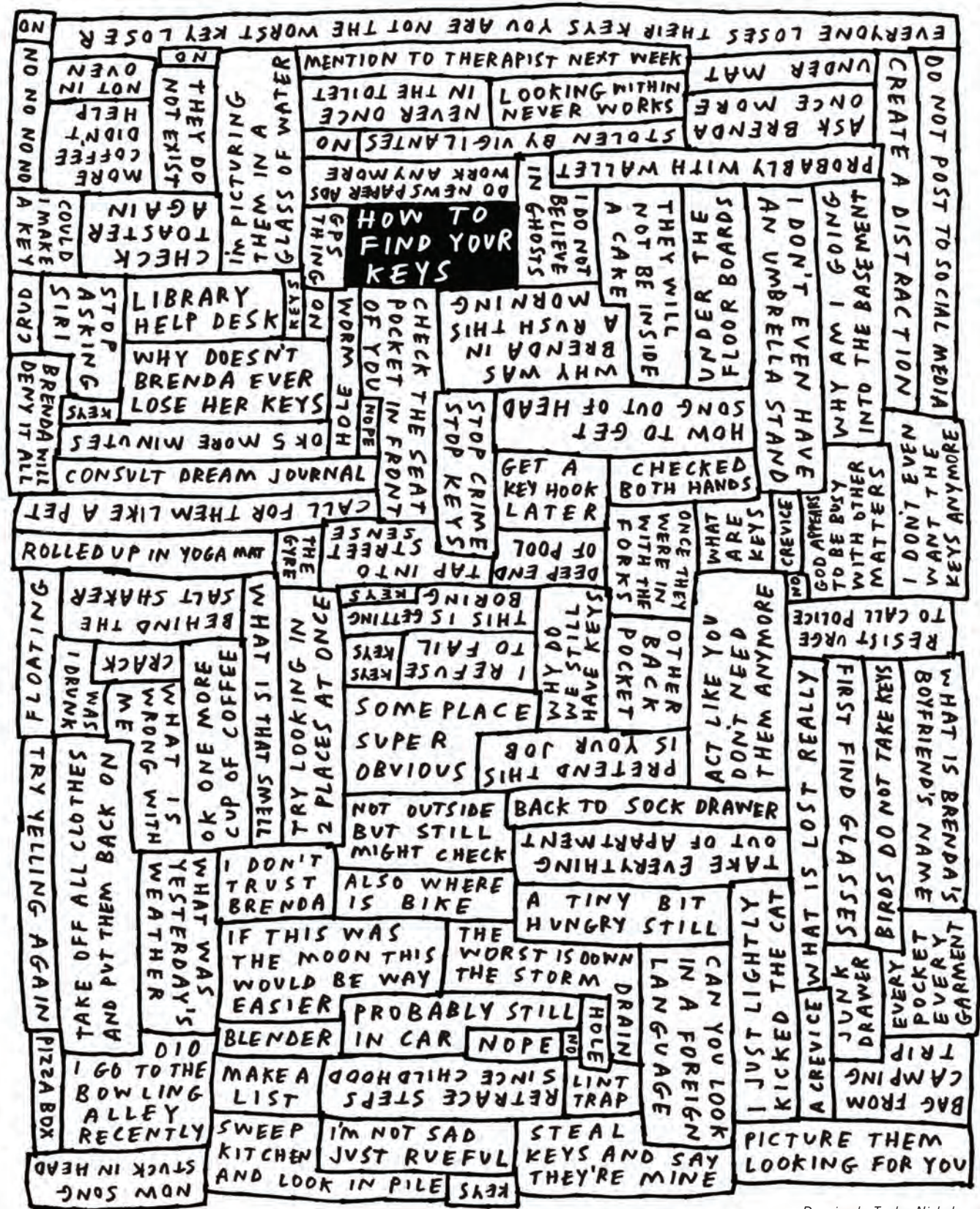
To see why robots won't take over our homes anytime soon, you need to consider the act of folding a towel through the machine mind of a robot: Once it has visually detected a towel, a robot must also detect its thickness, find a place to pinch it, and then know that it can pinch another edge within the span of its appendages. A robot must use gravity to create a new shape and then understand what to do with this new shape. A robot, as the Berkeley researchers found out, faces "challenges in grasp point detection and selection." You? You grab the towel, pull it taut between your hands, snap the first fold, and move on. And, for heaven's sake, you can fold about 50 times faster than today's state-of-the-art robots. And this is just a towel we're talking about; robots fail when it comes to T-shirts. And those pretty little underthings? Not a chance.

It's fair to say that while researching the uncertain future of the automated home, I unwittingly stumbled on the answer to why folding fitted sheets is so hard. As the Berkeley team writes, for "many articles of clothing, the ability to grasp certain corners is a key enabler towards spreading out and then folding." And fitted sheets, of course, don't really have corners. In the end, struggling, as both Martha Stewart and I have with the fitted sheet, allowed me to realize how much my human existence can't be easily replaced, how magnificently alive I truly am. And so next time I face the rounded elastic of a fitted sheet, I will rejoice in being human, being some sort of laundry-folding machine, even if a flawed one. ♦

“Laundry folding is something easy for people but challenging for robots. And here's why: to fold a towel is to know that a towel is a towel.”

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“Oh! Blessed rage for order . . .”

by Wallace Stevens from
"The Idea of Order at Key West"

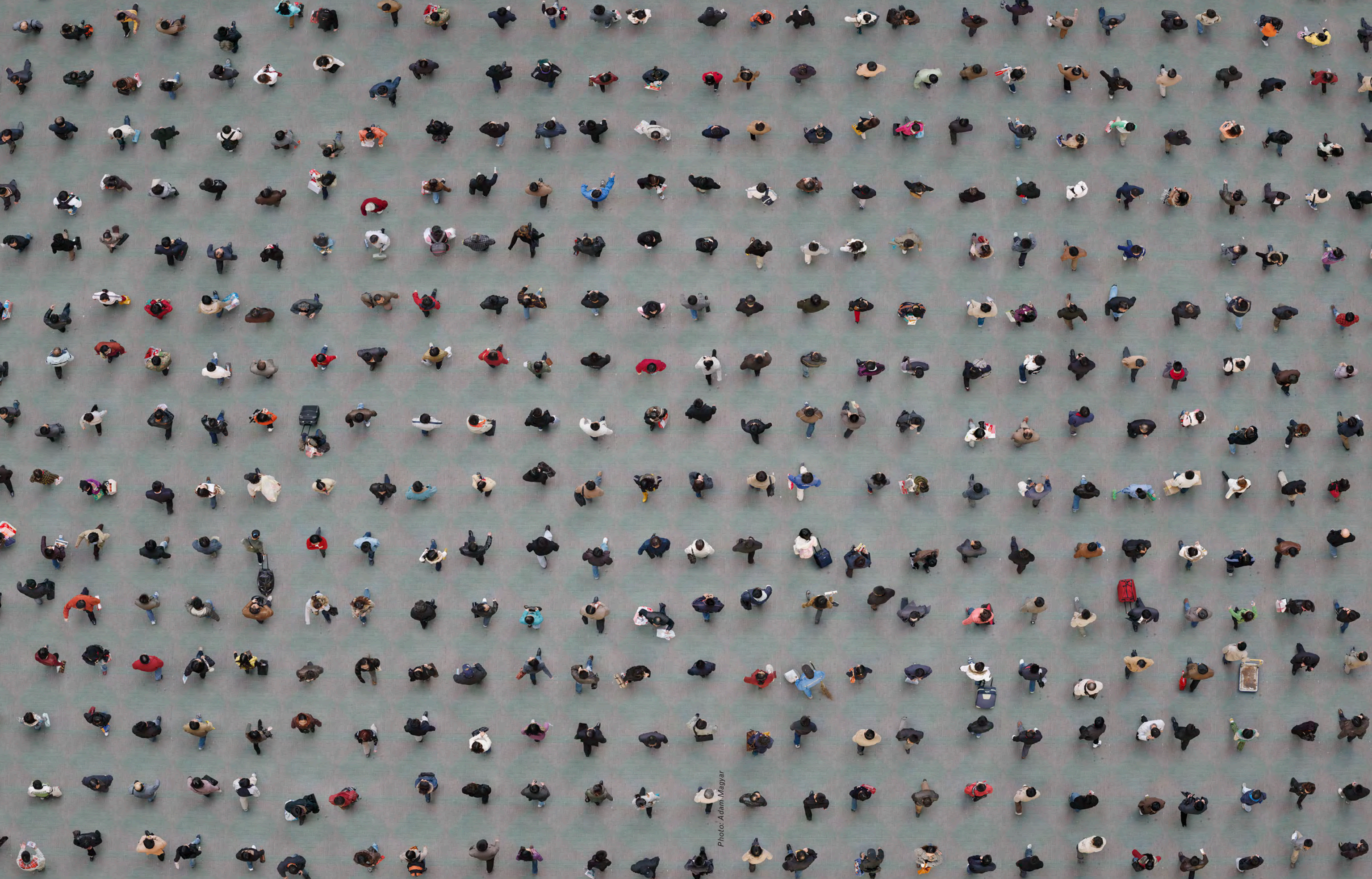


Photo: Adam Magyar

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