



expressive modern

THE INTERIORS OF AMY LAU

The Motacchi Press



Almost as easily as you know when you're in a room with Amy Lau, you know when you're in an Amy Lau room. The fabulously fierce yet earthy redhead, whose design mantra is "curate, don't decorate," so often incorporates big color, contemporary art and midcentury modern pieces in her interiors, these have become as signature as her wild-girl persona. Her designs have included vignettes as varied as a Miami townhouse dining room inspired by a James Turrell Skyspace, and a show-house dining room for a serial killer TV character, complete with blood-splattered white tablecloths, chairs and walls. Her bravura and savvy alike inspire talk — stories range from her scaling a climbing wall at an event in a minidress (unconfirmed) to her re-curating a dealer's gallery minutes before bringing in a high-profile client, who bought nearly everything (confirmed).

The New York-based interior designer Amy Lau in a Miami dining room inspired by the artist James Turrell, designed, she says, "so that the physical presence of light was discernible and enveloping." Photo by Melanie Acevedo

After 10 years heading her own design firm, Lau has released her first book, the somewhat clinically titled *Expressive Modern*, in which she exhibits real range as a designer — stretching well beyond Pop Art-hued modernism into brilliant moments of tranquility and sophistication, always with a robust affinity for the natural world.

Lau opens with a personal essay with tales of a childhood in Northern Arizona filled with fort building, museum visits and riding her horse, White Eagle, “bareback through the arroyos past saguaro cacti, Gila monsters, and road runners. It was pure, unadulterated adventure.” Accompanying the introduction are images of her former New York apartment, which, with its well-selected artworks and pop of bright-orange textiles, flowers and ceramics, anticipates the woman and designer she would go on to become.

The dining area of Lau’s own apartment, with a resin-on-canvas work by Jim Oliveira. Photo by Melanie Acevedo



An apartment in the Essex House on New York's Central Park South is defined by dark walls and silver accents. Photo by Barbel Miebach





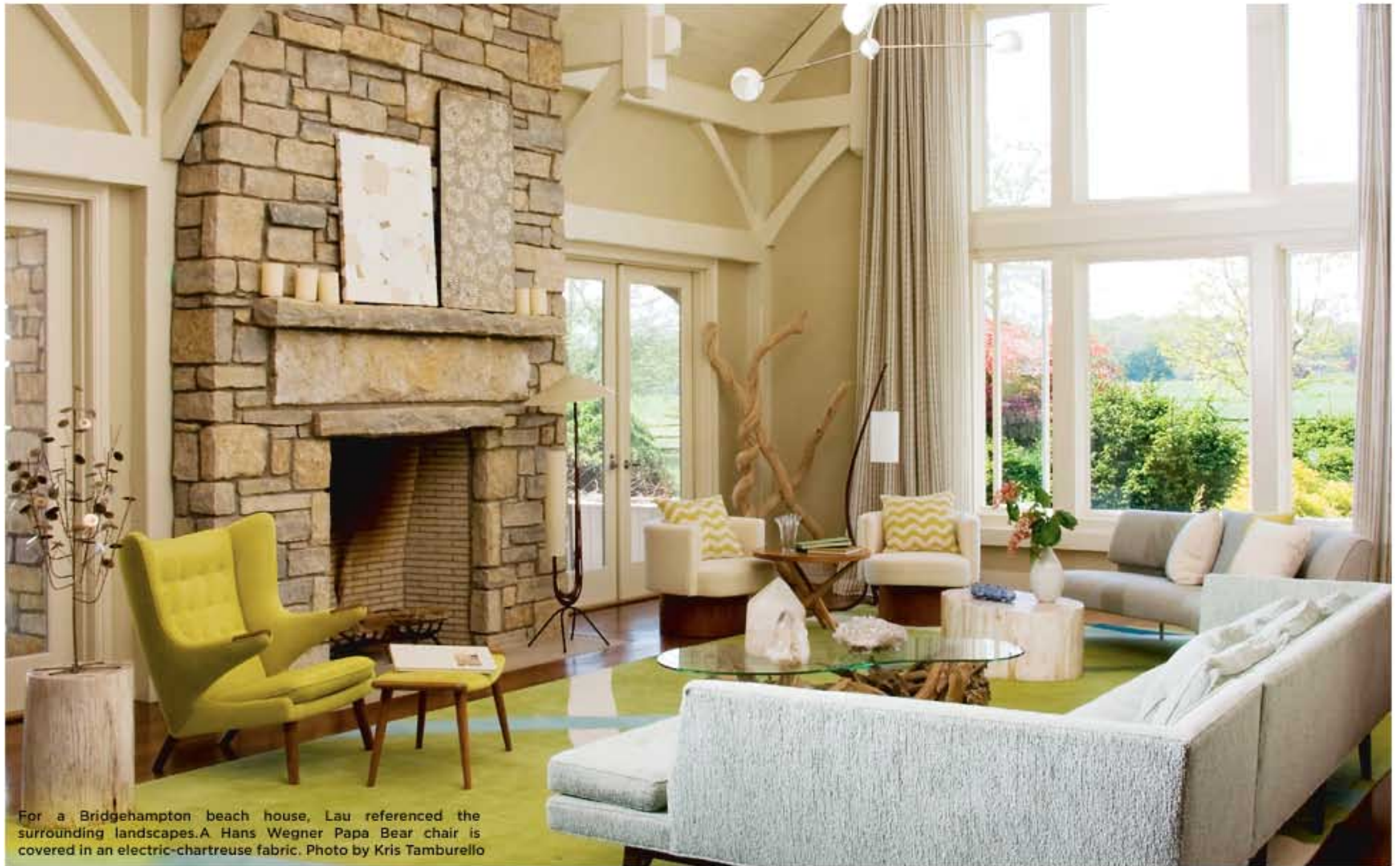
The bulk of the book is subdivided into different categories — Color and Pattern, Conceal and Flaunt, Art and Interpretation, to name a few — each illustrated by two projects. She begins with a Bridgehampton beach house, perfectly attuned to nature with huge, twisting vines by artist Jerome Abel Seguin and a seafoam-green Dunbar sofa, accompanied by a Hans Wegner Papa Bear chair covered in an electric-chartreuse fabric. The ensuing pages wend through a moody, dark-walled apartment with metallic accents, a lakeside home dominated by wood and light, and a room at a recent Kips Bay Decorator Show House that showcases Lau's unabashed use of primary colors and prints.

Lau's interpretation of Stravinsky's *Rites of Spring* includes an homage to "sea, sand and sky" for the 2007 Kips Bay Decorator Show House. Photo by Kris Tamburello.

Lau ends the book on a serene note, with an impeccably executed loft in West Chelsea whose design was spawned by two simple elements favored by the client: a 1960s root bench by Shizuhiko Watanabe and the work of environmental sculptor Andy Goldsworthy. The brick-lined space is mellowed by sliding shoji screens, a Nakashima Conoid chair, rich Asian textiles and a contemplative sitting Buddha. A Papa Bear chair sits in a corner of a room; unlike the example in the Bridgehampton beach house, this one is covered in nubbly gray wool. It is a Lau trademark: the same piece, employed in two vastly diverse decors, both equally congruous within their carefully curated surroundings.

The bedroom of a brick-walled loft in West Chelsea mixes French, Chinese and Afghan pieces. Photo by Hulya Kolabas





For a Bridgehampton beach house, Lau referenced the surrounding landscapes. A Hans Wegner Papa Bear chair is covered in an electric-chartreuse fabric. Photo by Kris Tamburello



As a sort of postscript, Lau offers a section dedicated to her muses and mentors, which vary as much as her creations and include Louis Comfort Tiffany, Beatrice Wood, Josef Albers and Georgia O'Keeffe. Just as in her commissions, she gives herself completely to *Expressive Modern* and credits her inspiration to those she says have followed the enduring advice of Mark Twain: "Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."



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A massive black-walnut bar cabinet by Pennsylvania craftsman Phillip Lloyd Powell anchors the living room of a Central Park West apartment. Photo by Roger Davies