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the inventor

Industrial designer Harry Allen's downtown studio proves that a little ingenuity goes a long way



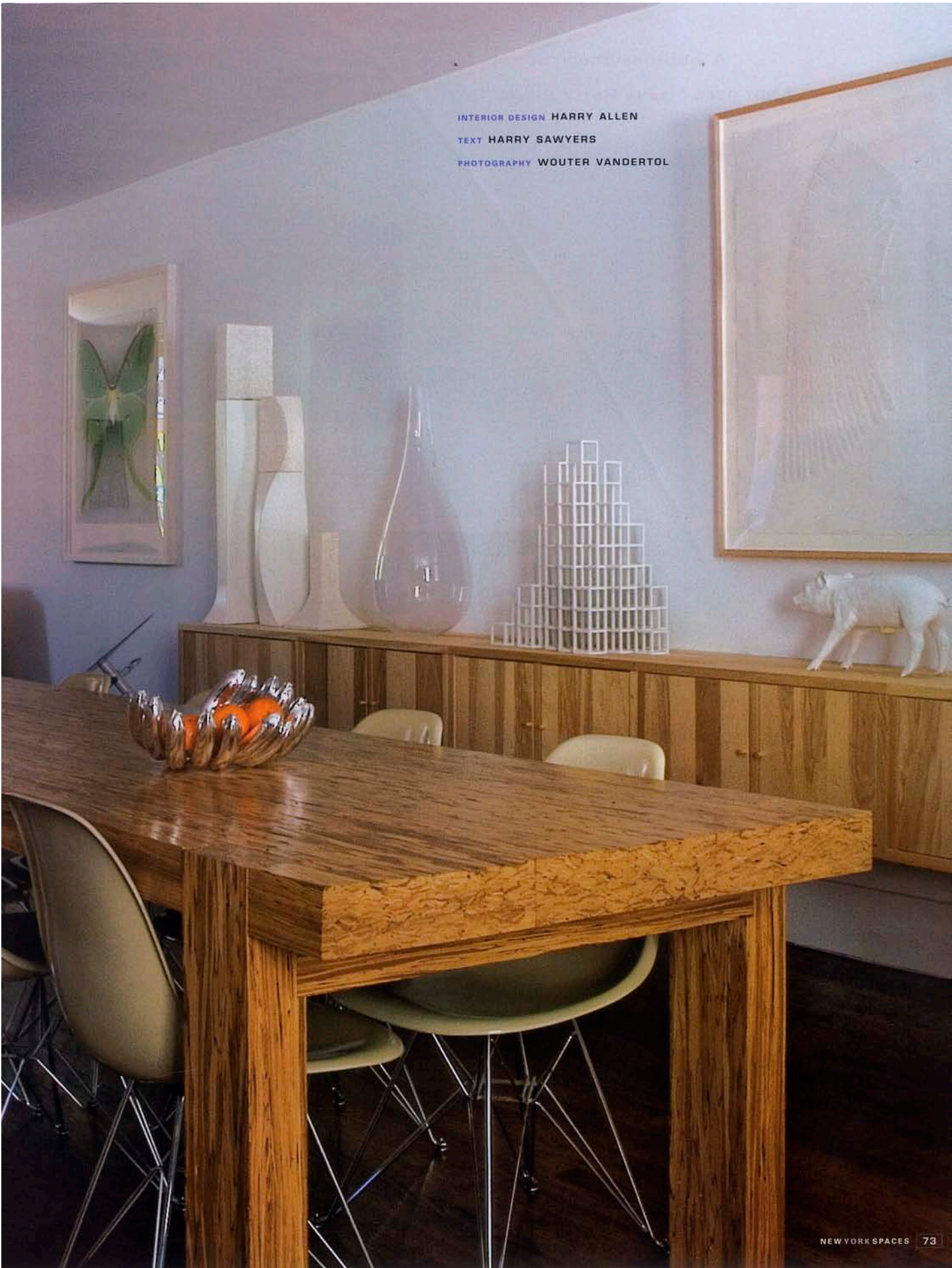
gathering place

The main living space of Harry Allen's home/studio in Manhattan's East Village demonstrates what he calls the "scale of design." Massive and multifunctional, his custom Parallam beam table commands the room; the chromed banana bowl on top is just for fun. The popular Pig Bank (far right) makes the designer fear he'll become known as "the pig guy"—but, worldwide, it's bringing home the bacon.

INTERIOR DESIGN HARRY ALLEN

TEXT HARRY SAWYERS

PHOTOGRAPHY WOUTER VANDERTOL



"A well-designed room PUSHES IT TO THE EDGE,
BUT NOT OVER," says Harry Allen. "It knows when to say when."





important
relationships

Clockwise from above right: Allen, third from right, brunches with friends at home. An acrylic vase from Shiro Kuramata and a CO₂-cartridge-propelled "rocket car" built by Allen's dad. Allen's iridescent, bivalve-ish Tripod Lamp. Plywood end grain figures into the designer's coffee table, couch, even window casings; the blocks here are central to a line of cube furniture debuting at ICF this May.



"YOU REALLY NEED ONLY THREE BEAUTIFUL THINGS," SAYS DESIGNER HARRY Allen. But why stop there? As the president and chief designer of Harry Allen & Associates, a consulting and design firm located in Manhattan's East Village, he's been responsible for conjuring more than his share himself—but for simplicity's sake, let's narrow down.

One: the Foam Lamps in MoMA's permanent collection. Two: the interior of Moss, the retail epicenter in the contemporary world of form and function. Three: Allen's own home, where he continuously reconsiders the three (give or take a few dozen) furnishings and decorative items that will occupy his personal space, engaging in what he calls a constant "dialogue between objects." In Allen's inventive aesthetic, the object and the packaging it occupies share importance.

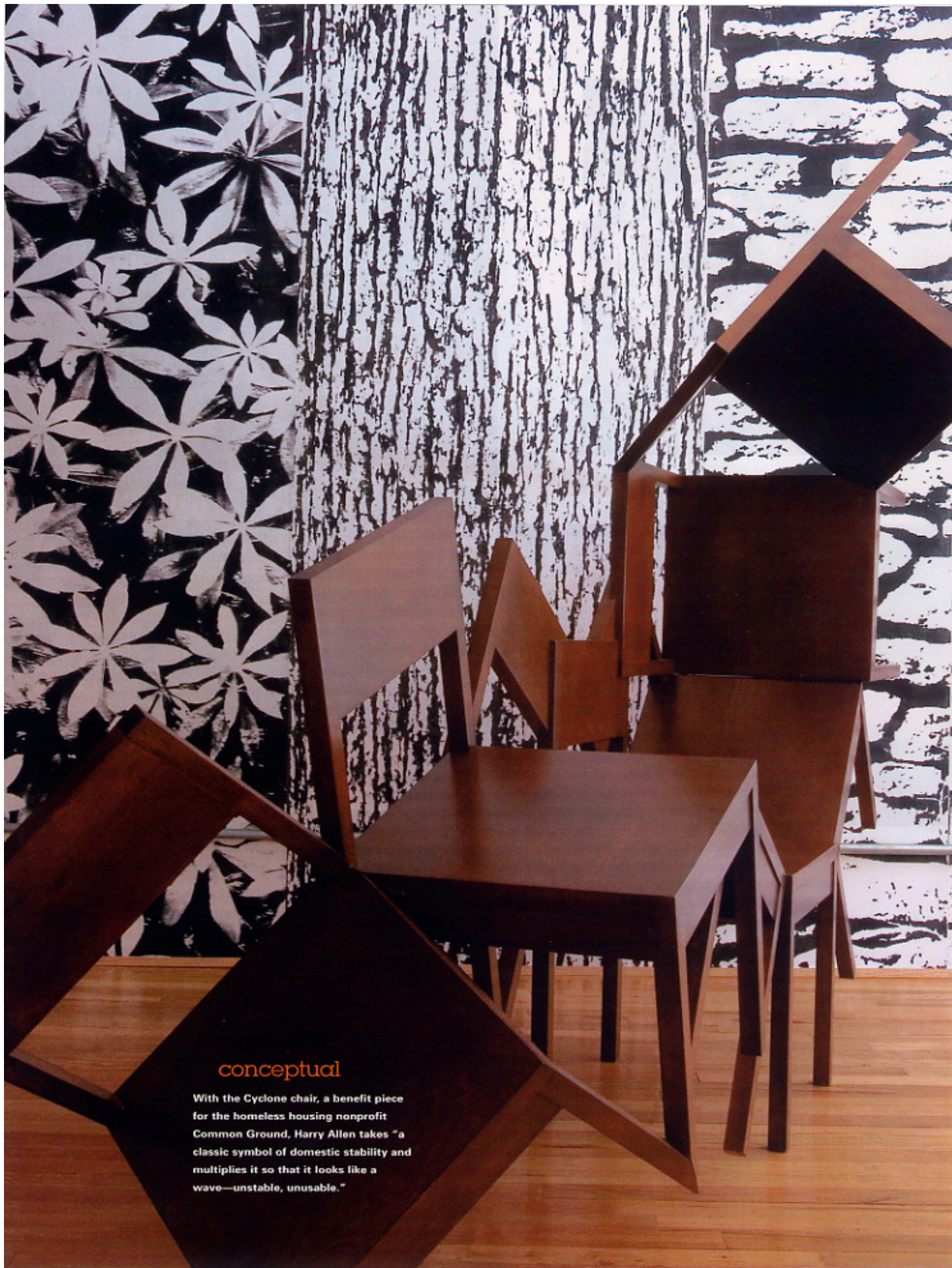
"Well," the designer concedes, "I do love things." Allen appraises materials like plywood, acrylic, chrome, and glass with the eye of an

inventor and approaches the design of his home with the mind of a curator, creating an "experimental space" in which he can edit, reconfigure, and watch the parts cohere in new ways.

Of course, the constant rotation gets a little easier when your design studio—founded in 1993 and dedicated to "making life more thoughtful and beautiful"—is downstairs giving form to fresh ideas as fast as you can think them up.

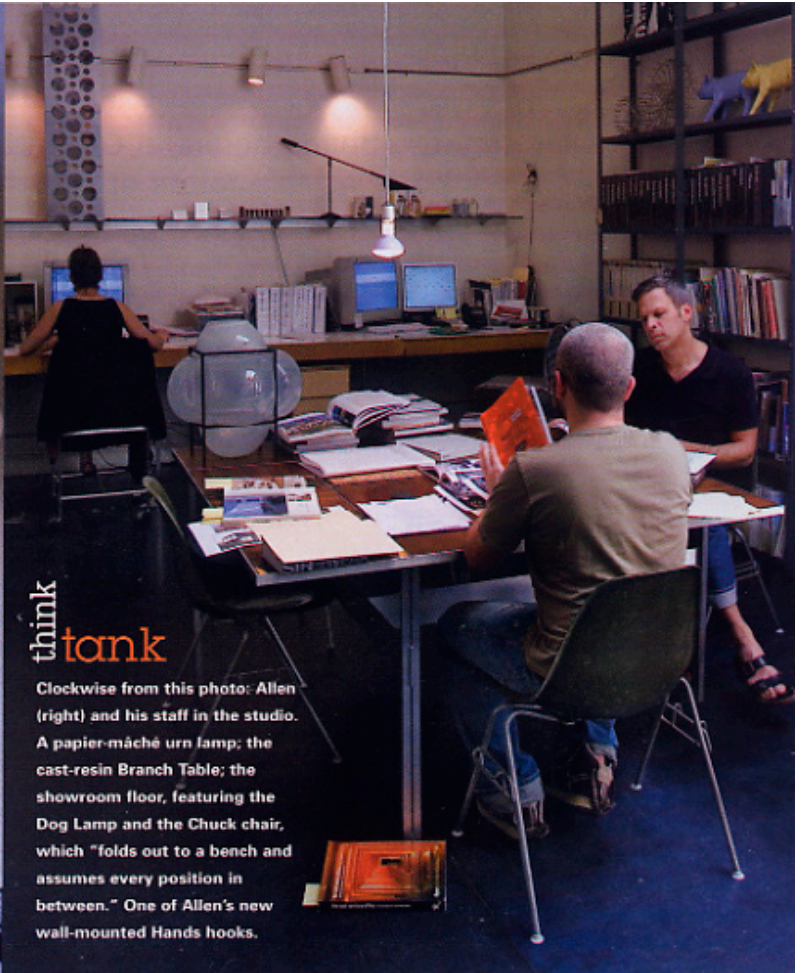
"Part of living in a space is changing it around," says Allen, who splits his time between a former schoolhouse in Bedford, New York, and this former mortuary in lively downtown Manhattan. "When you change the relationship between things, you often find threads in them that you never knew were there."

"The best design ideas," says Harry Allen, "are transferred from art, nature, a windmill—not from a book." ~ See Resources. CONTINUED



conceptual

With the Cyclone chair, a benefit piece for the homeless housing nonprofit Common Ground, Harry Allen takes "a classic symbol of domestic stability and multiplies it so that it looks like a wave—unstable, unusable."



think **think**

Clockwise from this photo: Allen (right) and his staff in the studio. A papier-mâché urn lamp; the cast-resin Branch Table; the showroom floor, featuring the Dog Lamp and the Chuck chair, which "folds out to a bench and assumes every position in between." One of Allen's new wall-mounted Hands hooks.



Julia spotted them across the room. She quickly hustled over. "The... you two finally met... you said brightly... and Peter, their... stared... ACC