

This designer creates contemporary spaces of all types, each notable for a particularly refined sensibility and a determinedly subtle palette.

Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz

Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz might cavil at our labeling him a new voice. In one sense, he would be right: he launched his namesake New York-based firm two years ago; the previous nine years, six as head interior designer, marked his tenure with the world-renowned firm of John F. Saladino, Inc. So, in strict chronological terms, he's not exactly new, either to the design publications or to the practice of interior design.

He is, however, new to our pages. We first encountered him through his reductive and elegant designs for bathroom hardware (*Interior Design*, September 1994) and have been going gaga over his work ever since.

There is, as well, considerable validity in waiting a while, allowing a designer to develop his or her individual and idiosyncratic visual language, one that, however permeated with the aesthetic of former employers and informed by specific education

and experience, somehow takes on its master's distinct and recognizable voice.

Clearly, Noriega-Ortiz has found his voice. And he's projecting it, even to the balconies: in projects, in decorative displays, in products (apart from the bathroom hardware, he's developing a line of lighting), and in a host of publications from the sublime to the strictly business.

The timbre, so to speak, is characterized by a quality of light and color range centered squarely on the neutrals. A rather luxurious richness adds unexpected comfort and elegance to the commercial spaces, while a simplicity of line and pureness of eye—i.e., no over-decorative vibrato of accessories—characterizes the residential.

Currently on the boards are residences in the tri-state area and a first foray into the world of retail, an in-store boutique for Steve Fabrikant in Bergdorf Goodman. JN



Clockwise from above right: A Boston residence; a bathroom in a New York residence; a bedroom in the Hamptons; two views of an office in Rockefeller Center.

Photography: Peter Margonelli

