

VITAL STATS

FROM: Puerto Rico

TIME IN BUSINESS: fourteen years

AESTHETIC: open, bright, orderly

ENERGY: calm, cool, sensitive

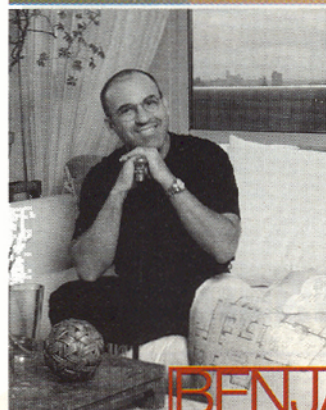
AGE: 39

FANTASY JOB: "The interiors for the Biltmore, the Vanderbilt house in North Carolina."

WHEN I KNEW I WANTED TO BE A DECORATOR: "I never exactly decided to become a decorator, per se— it was more that I decided not to become an architect.

When I was little, I always sketched houses. So when I grew up, I went to architecture school, but found that I didn't like the nitty-gritty part. What's funny is that now I end up working more with architecture than I would have as an architect—the interior space, the furniture, the planning—all the elements of architecture are there in interiors."

WHAT ONE CLIENT SAYS: "I'd had a lot of failures with designers," says fashion designer Steve Fabrikant. "A good fit has a lot to do with personality. We all have egos, but you have to get beyond that. Benjamin was really a listener. Everything happened very naturally, and the finished product didn't look done—I don't want to say ethereal, but it is sort of like a feeling. I don't think anyone but Benjamin could have accomplished that."



BENJAMIN NORIEGA-ORTIZ

TOP AND LEFT: TOM; PETER MARGONELLI; CENTER RIGHT: MAURICE TANNENBAUM;
BOTTOM: STEWART O'SHIELDS.

