

In Laura Esquivel's loft, as in her life, the dining table takes center stage.

The table is humble plywood, but its covering is a rich layering of linens, topped with an Indian-print cloth turned wrong side up.



STYLIST: ANITA CALERO

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THIBAUT JEANSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



### Laura Esquivel didn't expect her book,

the award-winning "Like Water for Chocolate," now in its 52d printing, to be so successful. The transformation from anonymous writer to celebrity has made her reconsider the value of privacy. "My home is a sacred place, and I don't allow anybody to interfere with it," she says. To create an intimate atmosphere, her interior designer, Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz, combined vintage furniture, bright materials and 100 yards of theatrical gauze for the windows. Personality, so important in Esquivel's fiction, pervades the space. "Laura wants to be surrounded with things that tell a story," says Noriega-Ortiz. That's why she also enjoys her Lower East Side neighborhood, particularly the Anarchy Cafe, above, whose décor resembles her loft's.



Framed images of angels hang in the bathroom. The shower curtain is an embroidered tablecloth.

The writer's bedroom is a world unto itself, with a notebook computer and a working fireplace.

as to ask where they might buy the same furnishings. ABC Carpet and Home, a home furnishings and antiques store in Manhattan, is even installing a pool table to encourage customers to treat the store as a place to be as much as a place to buy.

"We did a lot of analysis on what people enjoy in a communal environment," says C. Lawrence Whitman, associate director, design, at The Rouse Company in Columbia, Md., and a key player in the Perimeter Mall's redesign. "We found that they react against the sterile and much prefer the familiarity of someplace homelike."

**WITHIN THE HOME ITSELF, IMAGINATIVE WAYS TO FURNISH** are as likely to cross over from urban architecture and technology as from historical residential styles. Elliott Rosenblum, an architect who has given his shop designs for J. Crew and Barneys New York a distinctly homey look, uses pieces of public architecture in his Manhattan apartment. Urban pioneering, a trend that