

Divide

& Conquer

Good fences *do* make good neighbors—which is why New Yorkers go to mind boggling lengths to define their life-spaces. *By Ruth J. Katz*

Stuck (like most New Yorkers) with less-than-adequate living space, Didi Riley and Brian Smith came up with an ingenious solution to their space crunch.

To give their young daughter some privacy in their one-bedroom rental, they turned the tiny dressing room off their bedroom into Stephanie's room. First they created an L-shaped corridor through their room to the dressing room by positioning storage

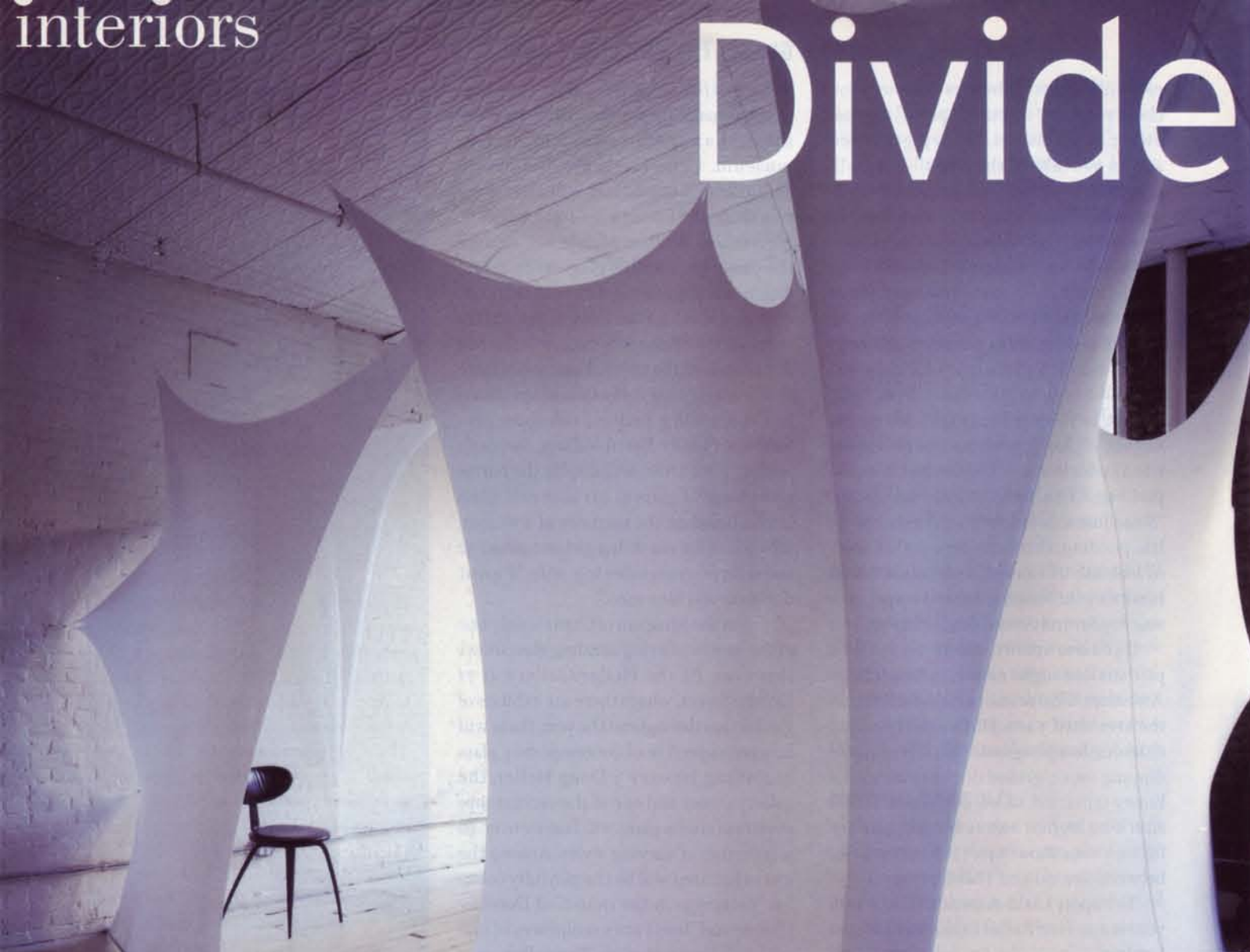
cabinets and freestanding closets along—and a hall's width away from—two of their bedroom walls. This new "hallway" not only let Stephanie walk to her room unobserved but provided lots of storage—closets, cabinets, and clothes bars with special design features that allow them to work in narrow spaces like Stephanie's hallway.

If you, too, must find a solution to a space-crunch problem, the following craftspeople stand ready to assist you.

Undulating walls

German-born artist Gisela Stromeier (406-9452) takes the tentmaker's prosaic craft and turns it into an art. Her allies in solving spatial predicaments are Spandex, netting, or a forgiving polyester, any of which she can coddle and coax into balloon-like shapes, undulating waves, and wings (see photo 1). Her finished membrane "walls," pliant vassals of her artful hands, are affixed to a room's walls, ceiling, and floors with small findings (cup-hook-like hardware). Prices vary, but few jobs are under \$1,000.

Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz (343-9709) loves using Latex to divide space (see photo 3); he allows the "hem" of the sturdy but pliant material to gather on the floor so it doesn't look stiff but resembles opulent draperies. Noriega-Ortiz hangs his dividers from industrial-style hardware on sturdy tracks, which he leaves exposed. (He is creative,



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1) Gisela Stromeier's fabrics sculpt and caress space in delicate and seductive ways.

2) Architect Stephen Alton works hard to keep his parti-

tioned spaces as light-suffused and airy as possible.

3) Interior designer Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz uses sheets of Latex, made into grommeted

curtains, as a space-separator.

4) Even the perception of a wall-like this divider from Workbench—separates space psychologically.

5) This curtain from the Museum of Modern Art Design Store will form an ideal separator for children's spaces, providing instant homes for artwork and trinkets.

too, when it comes to constructing sliding devices that need to be very wide to partition a room into separate spaces.) His works start at \$1,500, but Noriega-Ortiz believes an amateur can make these dividers. For the Latex fabric, try Canal Rubber Supply Company, Inc. (329 Canal St., 226-7339). The goods cost \$13.95 to \$29.95 per yard (Noriega-Ortiz suggests the .025 thickness). Grommets are available at any hardware store, and tracks can be purchased at a good home center like Gracious Home or Home Depot or a professional upholstery supply source like Greentex Upholstery Supplies (236 W.26th St., 206-8585), where, for example, a commercial-grade five-foot traverse rod, with all the hardware, is \$23.