FURNISHING THE FUTURE GREAT DESIGNERS' GREATEST ROOMS



MARINO JOHNSON GWATHMEY

HOME

HADLEY O DESPONT O ERTEGUN O BUATTA O STEWART

DESIGN

TSAO & MCKOWN HARIRI & HARIRI NORIEGA-ORTIZ AHARI

2000

BY WENDY GOODMAN

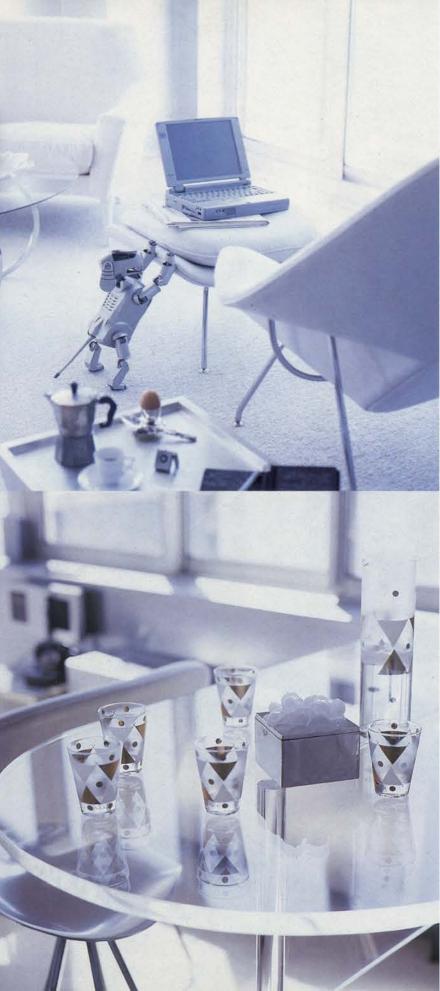


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WHERE WILL YOU BE SPENDING NEW YEAR'S Eve? For interior designer Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz, the easy answer-at home—is also the most spectacular. His forty-fourth-floor apartment, at 43rd Street and Eleventh Avenue, will have a view of the Javits Center festivities, Times Square's crystal ball, and fireworks in two states. And every millennial moment will be reflected countless times in this disco ball of an apartment.

"It had been very warm and casual, with wood floors and white furniture," Noriega-Ortiz remembers. "But now I'm in a new relationship, and I thought, New life, new everything. It's something a lot of my clients go through when they get a new wife." One day, staring at the tin ceiling of his boyfriend's store, he saw the future, and it was aluminum paint. "The metamorphosis here was astonishing," he says. "Everything was reflected; you could see the Hudson River in the ceiling."

Noriega-Ortiz was unstoppable, hunting down a fabric from the eighties called "Moonbeams" for the curtains, installing a transparently stylish acrylic countertop, building a glittery banquette out of his mirrored wall. Plastic furniture came from that exclusive showroom eBay.

"My boyfriend, Steven Wine, was in love with these seventies acrylic chairs, and I waited until the last eight seconds of the auction to put in a bid," Ortiz says. "Four chairs for \$551 and one cent, for God's sake. On Lafayette Street you can't get an acrylic chair for \$1,000!" To make the curvaceous seats comfortable, Noriega-Ortiz ordered up silvery cushions. Fabrics were inspired by a source any flat-screen-TV addict can relate to-"In Star Trek, whenever you'd see a bedspread, it was shiny," he says. "That was everybody's idea of modern."

Still is.

MOON UNITS Above, the repro Eero Saarinen womb chair and ottoman were upholstered in a Knoll fabric that's a good marriage with the wall-to-wall; it's the most comfortable modern chair Noriega-Ortiz says he knows of. Aibo, Sony's hot new robot dog, wants to get in on the eBay action. Donghia's silverleaf "Paris" tray table serves up a Porthault egg cup and spoon. Below left, the harlequin martini glasses are vintage, purchased on eBay; the box-cum-ice bucket is from Troy.



"We've been doing wood floors for so long that wall-to-wall carpet was actually a big decision. This one feels wonderful, so we're suddenly on the floor all the time. It cleans the apartment visually." -Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz

MILKY WAY Above, Noriega-Ortiz takes a time-out from the glitz in his bedroom, painted a flat Benjamin Moore white; a wall-to-wall headboard furthers the illusion of space. The Sharp TVs on the plastic-topped Chinese altar tables are new toys: "We like to switch on movies late at night," says Noriega-Ortiz, "and one person can watch with earphones while the other is sleeping." (Eventually, he'll be attaching them to swing arms.) Wine devised these bedside lamps out of bicycle reflectors. A machine-embroidered polyester from Coraggio—more often seen in curtains—makes a cloud-light bedspread.