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SEPTEMBER 2009 \$

DIANE KRUGER: FRAU POWER

Going Coastal!

Why settle for one coast when you can dominate two? We've tapped the country's top designers who've taken over both Manhattan *and* Los Angeles (and the Hamptons and Malibu, too...)

| *By Lisa Cregan* |


| *Photography by Allison Antola* |



Aqua Vitae

Alexandra and Eliot Angle may be design's reigning mixologists. The couple were not only A-list event designers (think ski-in, candlelit New Year's parties in Sun Valley), they also penned two glam books on cocktails. But eight years ago, the pair decided to take a different approach to celebrating the high life and founded their L.A.-based firm, Aqua Vitae Design. But even with the career switch, the Angles still put an event planner's premium on getting that just-so combo of color, comfort and splash. "I want you to walk in and be immediately hit by the strength of the physical surroundings," says Alexandra. (Cue the bright-red patterned wallpaper installed on the ceiling of an otherwise Shaker-austere Hamptons dining room, as well as their own perfectly color-combo'd second home on Canada's Cape Breton.)

Today the duo, both 40, clock long hours time-traveling between the coasts—from Fifth CONTINUED...



RIGHT ANGLES Alexandra and Eliot Angle of L.A.'s Aqua Vitae Design, with their daughter Elsie, in NYC.



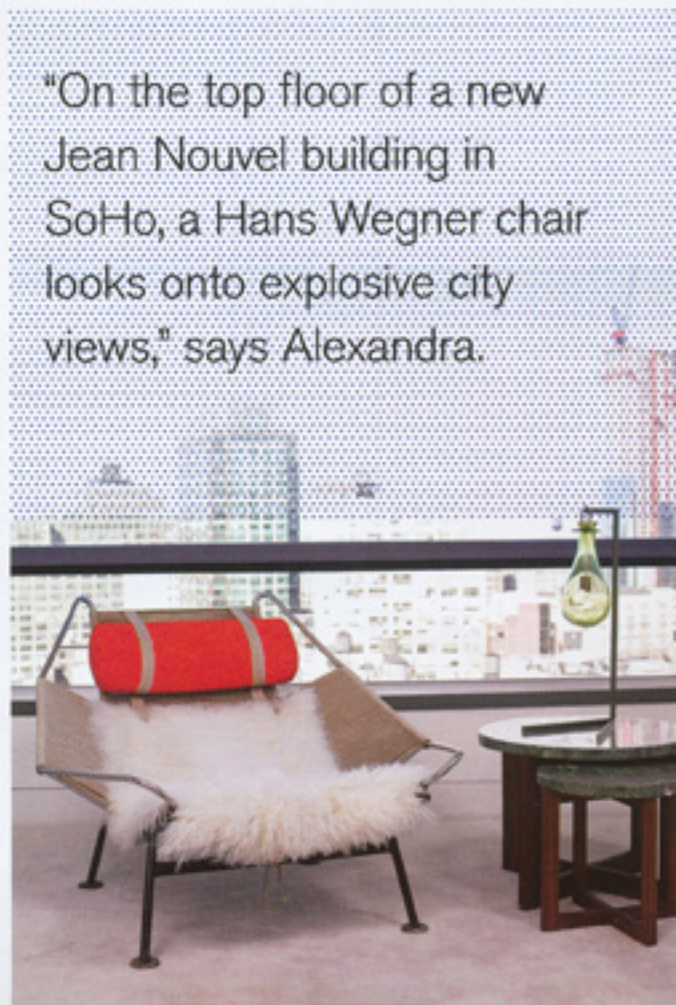
Built-ins for this Fifth Avenue project were inspired by an exhibition of Josef Hoffmann interiors at NYC's Neue Galerie. Christopher Hyland fabric on pillows.



1. The Angles' furniture line, available at aquavivadesign.com, includes the Lacquer Vanity with mirror. 2. The Arc Dining Chairs are based on human vertebrae. 3. The S Chaise is inspired by the curvy line of a classic Cabriole table leg. 4. The Wingback Chair was designed to seamlessly fit the shape of the human body.



Left: A bathroom in the house the Angles built for themselves on 52 acres on Canada's Cape Breton. Below: From her Cape Breton desk, designed by Piet Boon, Alexandra Angle can see across the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Prince Edward Island.



"On the top floor of a new Jean Nouvel building in SoHo, a Hans Wegner chair looks onto explosive city views," says Alexandra.



BEAR LAIR! In a New York City apartment for a male advertising exec, Aqua Vitae installed a brown leather Fardos sofa by Ricardo Fasanelle and three bear photos by Jill Greenberg.



In an L.A. apartment, the Angles mix it up with Philippe Starck's Louis Ghost chair, a handmade twig table and a custom rug by Fedora Design.



"L.A. has gardens and pools so you don't work to create a separation from the outdoors. But in New York people want cocoons," says Alexandra.

Above: The Angles' former L.A. house, built in the late 1940s by N. Austin Ayres.

...CONTINUED Avenue to Los Feliz, and SoHo to Bev Hills—creating their brand of high-drama décor wherever they go. "We don't use a lot of the standard stuff," says Alexandra. No kidding. Adding a piece like Aqua Vitae's Arc Chair, a side chair whose backrest mimics human vertebrae (actually quite lovely), would give any room head-turning impact. And it's a design approach that's turning out to be a business bonanza: While many in the décor biz are struggling just to stay afloat, the Angles have homeowners lining up for Aqua Vitae's theatrics. Alexandra reports business has doubled in the past year and their New York client list is growing so fast she frequently finds herself spending as many as four days a week out East while Eliot looks after the California clients and their 2-year-old daughter, Elefe.

"I guess what links our clients is that they don't take anything too seriously," says Alexandra when asked to explain the bicoastal nature of the firm's appeal. "L.A. has gardens and pools so you don't work to create a separation from the outdoors; in fact, you want to create an indoor/outdoor flow. But in New York people want cocoons, a protected space from the craziness outside." But whether they're working on a 900-square-foot pied-à-terre or a sprawling country spread, the two count on one constant: color. "I think people have an emotional response to color," says Alexandra. "It's hugely important to me."

Case in point: a fantastical weekend house in Venice, California, where they're covering an entire wall in blue-and-white 200-year-old Portuguese tiles. "I was inspired by the feeling of canals and building an Italian canal house inspired by Scandinavian design here in Venice," says Alexandra. "I don't think I could get away with that level of fantasy in New York, right?" Other times, "color" isn't quite so obvious. For a recent installation in a hyper-elegant Upper East Side pad, they kept the palette to barely-there gradations of white and blue-gray. "The amount of time we spent on how the chair colors work with the textures on the curtains is mind-boggling. I've never done anything like that in L.A., never will," she laughs.

"New York is more formal," says Eliot. "It's more European-rooted, more accustomed to antiques, more concerned with the beauty of each square inch. Los Angeles is more casual, more free-form, more open." Eliot thinks his own background in experimental N.Y. theatre provided a transition to interior design. "I co-founded a company that did site-specific, rather starkly beautiful performances. My taste for the drama of simple design, and the pairing of unusual forms, grew out of that."

As for the Angles' own home, think less staid interiors and more nonstop idea lab for the colors they love and the cutting-edge furniture they design. Avid travelers, the couple is constantly on the go. At the moment, they're moving again, renovating an old farmhouse in Los Feliz. "I think it's the oldest house in the neighborhood, a former pumpkin farm," says Alexandra. Having grown up in rural Vermont, she's happy to go through rehab headaches again to achieve that familiar, old farmhouse feeling. "It's an unusual place," she says, "but my aesthetic is always evolving. I'm a chameleon."