

At home

An occasional look at what's new & noteworthy

OFFICE SPACES

Isaac Mizrahi has room to grow his collections



Photos by Robert Deutsch, USA TODAY

In the work studio: Mizrahi, Harry and Singer (the sewing machine).

NEW YORK — When your office is more — way more — than the size of a cubicle, the decorating possibilities extend well beyond the frame of a corkboard.

Just west of Manhattan's Garment District, designer and emerging lifestyle maven Isaac Mizrahi has 18,000 square feet of new workspace to play with — enough room to nurture all his projects, including his Target lines and couture collection. (The studio for his Style Network show, *Isaac*, is even located here.)

But Mizrahi's workplace, the entire fourth floor, is no maze of drywalled rooms. White columns, about 20 feet high, are just about all that interrupt the flow. "What I love about the space is that it really has no boundaries," says Mizrahi, who began moving in last fall. "It is so amorphous, and it can change in a second."

Likewise, there's little division among the businesses: Seamstresses stitch custom gowns mere feet from where ideas for Target togs are hatched. "It really is a high/low world," Mizrahi says.

Office furniture references everything but the office. To wit, there are no Aeron chairs here. Instead, there are white upholstered formal antiques and old iron-and-wood factory seats. Something red

and modern from Design Within Reach and something low and cozy Mizrahi plucked off the streets of the Upper West Side more than two decades ago. Sleek black club chairs from the '50s and plain wood school chairs Mizrahi picked up at a nearby flea market and had stripped and refinished, originally used as dining room chairs for his Bridgehampton beach house. And, of course, Target's \$19.99 folding white metal Isaac chairs, with their hot pink seats and mandarin-orange backs.

"I don't like sets of chairs," Mizrahi says. "I only like hodgepodge." A motley assortment is stationed around the conference table.

Lines between Mizrahi's home and work are blurred in other ways. Harry, his 6-year-old golden/border collie mix, is as much a fixture here as the early 20th-century Singer sewing machine in a corner. One of many once owned by Mizrahi's dad, a manufacturer of children's clothes, it has followed Mizrahi from his family's Brooklyn basement (he learned to sew on it), to his Upper West Side studio apartment, to his former Soho studio, to here.

"It really should be bronzed, shouldn't it?"

— Olivia Barker



Have a seat: Factory iron/wood chair.



Parisian banquet table: 17 feet long, seating 16, ranging from \$10,000 to \$15,000.

FURNITURE

Banquet table is a feast for the eyes

The trend in dining tables — in an era when large, formal dining rooms are disappearing — is supposed to be smaller, more casual. So why is Century Furniture introducing a formal banquet table that seats 16 or more and checks in at a minimum of 17 feet?

"The countertrend is that there are many genuine-scale mansions being built that are way beyond McMansions," says Ed Tashjian, marketing vice president for Century, which introduced its Parisian banquet table, part of its

Bordeaux Collection, at spring's High Point International Home Furnishings Market. "If you've just built a multimillion-dollar mansion, the best way to show it off is to invite 14 of your closest friends to dinner."

The table, available later this summer, will sell for \$10,000-\$15,000, depending on finish and length. But it's not even the most expensive dining table Century makes: Its Oscar de la Renta radical expansion table is \$23,000.

— Maria Puente

DESIGN

Exhibit celebrates 'Tools of the Table'



Who knew flatware could be so — artful?

Feeding Desire: Design and the Tools of the Table, 1500-2005, on display at the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York through Oct. 29, is a celebration, with solid scholarly credentials, of 500 years of the history of European and American dining and the things we use while dining.

And *such* things. There are knives, forks and spoons that have intricately beaded, carved red coral or flowery enameled grips. For the patriotic, there's a steel-and-silver pistol-gripped fork once owned by George Washington. For amusement, there's an 1860 silver-gilt macaroni server that resembles an elegant porcupine.

The exhibit features more than 300 objects, some being seen for the first time. The idea is to demonstrate that dining is about more than meeting a physical need — it's about sharing food as an expression of love, power, duty and taste.

For more immersion in design history, head up Fifth Avenue to the Museum of the City of New York, where *The High Style of Dorothy Draper* is on display through Sept. 10. From 1925-60, she was one of the most influential designers in the country, applying the "Draper touch" to big-city hotels, high-end resorts, department stores, automobiles and even airplane interiors.

— Maria Puente

By Richard Drew, AP

REAL ESTATE

Environmental risks, you ask?

It's routine by now for buyers to hire inspectors to examine the house they plan to buy, but growing numbers of buyers are also seeking information on possible environmental risks nearby.

Until recently, it was mostly commercial property buyers who sought such information, or home sellers required by state laws to disclose it. But some home inspectors and providers of environmental reports are banking on increasing demand from residential buyers nationwide who are already

seeking information about crime, the neighborhood and local schools.

"Consumers just have an insatiable appetite for more and more information at the time they're buying a home," says Robert Barber, CEO of Environmental Data Resources, which has hooked up with the home inspection franchise Pillar to Post to provide this kind of information to home buyers for a fee of \$130. "We started seeing an enormous spike in requests for information."

Barber says that at least 10 states in the last year have introduced new laws that require home sellers to disclose some environmental data to buyers, such as immediate proximity to a hazardous waste site, or a former gas station or dry cleaner.

Barber says the reports are based on searches of federal, state and local databases that list environmental hazards located within 300 feet of a residential property. More than 90% of the time the reports provide good news: no environmental hazards nearby.

"We anticipate it's just a matter of time before environmental in-

formation is part of every residential property transaction in the country," he says.

Maybe, but it's often sellers who pay for it. In California, for instance, buyers don't have to ask because sellers must disclose environmental information, and their agents hire companies such as EDR or Property I.D. to produce the report.

"It's only one in a thousand (buyers) who ask for an environmental report," says Nick Gromicko, founder of the National Association of Certified Home Inspectors. But that's still more than 10 years ago.

— Maria Puente

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