

Aragonés

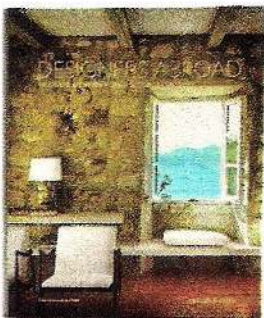
by Miguel Ángel Aragonés

New York: Rizzoli International Publications, \$75

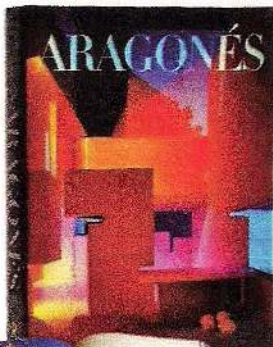
430 Pages, 250 color illustrations

It is always a delight to come across a book filled with images of stunning buildings and interiors, especially when you have never seen any of them before, and most especially when their designer is unknown to you. Where has the talented Señor Aragonés sprung from? Born in 1962 in Mexico City and self-taught, he has lectured at a number of international architecture schools and taught at Mexico's Universidad Anáhuac and the Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos Vasco-Navarro in Bilbao, Spain. He also participated in the first Bienal Nacional de Arquitectura Mexicana sponsored in part by his native city's Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes. The designer's work comprises white-walled lyrical geometries, selectively open to the sun during the day, illuminated in strong colors at night. In his foreword, Michael Sorkin suggests influences from Dan Flavin, Richard Meier, Richard Neutra, Carlo Scarpa, James Turrell, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Robert Venturi. But the Aragonés amalgam, as Sorkin rightly says, "is strikingly his own."

The book shows 14 Aragonés designs. Most are residential, but perhaps the standout is Hotel Encanto in the Las Brisas section of Acapulco de Juárez. We are treated to 54 mostly single-image pages of the Encanto. It was built "with few resources, economic materials, and local labor," yet it "is also a great labyrinth, whose exits open out onto and are completed by the ocean." The book itself is an enchantment, with floor plans, locations, dates, and square footages all relegated to an appendix, leaving much of it uninterrupted by text. When words appear (in both Spanish and English), blocks of type are appropriately arranged in compositions we may soon be calling Aragonian. Let Sorkin have the penultimate word: "A discovery has been made and—seemingly out of nowhere—my sense of possible architectures greatly enlarged." Which leaves the last word to Aragonés himself: "Architecture envelops, blankets us. This is the essence of its nobility and power."



Thomas Bartlett's house in La Peña de Jaltemba, Mexico, mixes Portuguese chairs, an 18th-century French chest, rugs from Oaxaca and India, and a wealth of *talavera* pottery on traditional terra-cotta floors. *Interior Design Hall of Fame*



member Trisha Wilson escapes from Dallas all the way to Vaalwater, South Africa, where, within sand-colored, hand-plastered walls, she enjoys woven-grass rugs, indigenous masks, and Zulu telephone wire baskets. Fences keep out the lions.

Ciodagh, another Hall of Famer, goes back to Ballinspittle in her native Ireland, where she restored a 300-year-old stone cowshed, juxtaposing a steel-faced fireplace with Connemara mountain sheepskins, a collection of old boat propellers, and furniture, rugs, and custom lamps by the designer and her children. When Juan Montoya returns to Bogotá, Colombia, he heads to an apartment featuring pre-Columbian sculpture, lambskin-padded closet doors, and elaborately carved and gilded (but empty) picture frames.

Juan Pablo Molyneux's Paris flat in the Marais boasts walls covered in silk damask, gilt-wood sconces, Russian mahogany chairs, and tall bronze lamps on Louis XV tables. Tapestries, too. Mica Ertegun, another Hall of Fame member, retreats to Bodrum, Turkey, to relax with whitewashed walls, native ceramic tiles, white canvas sailing over an outdoor dining area, and a collection of framed calligraphy.

What They're Reading...

Michael Davis

Principal and founder of Michael Davis Architects & Interiors

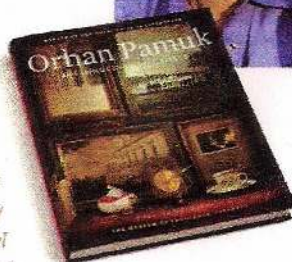


The Innocence of Objects

by Orhan Pamuk

New York: Abrams, \$35

272 pages, 526 color illustrations



Drawn to Istanbul by the traditional textile trade, architect Michael Davis's interest in Turkey's cultural capital has grown deeper since discovering the novels of Orhan Pamuk. As the Swedish Academy wrote in awarding Pamuk the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature, "In the quest for the melancholic soul of his native city, [he] has discovered new symbols for the clash and interlocking of cultures." Sometimes that quest involves the examination of domestic ephemera, "when his writing draws a connection between the emotions objects provoke and their physical appearance," Davis says. In fact, the plot of Pamuk's novel, *The Museum of Innocence*, was inspired by an actual collection of everyday items he had assembled. After its publication, the author turned curator and established a house museum for his holdings. *The Innocence of Objects*, a catalogue of those artifacts, is both emotional and objective—part fiction, part reality. "I've read it twice, and it's still revealing itself to me," Davis continues. "It's heartbreakingly delicious in every way." When not engrossed in the literary romance of place, Davis has been working on a restaurant for chef Zakary Pelaccio in Hudson, New York, where he spends weekends. But being housed in a former blacksmith shop, the project is sure to benefit from the architect's meditations on transformation. —Deborah Wilk