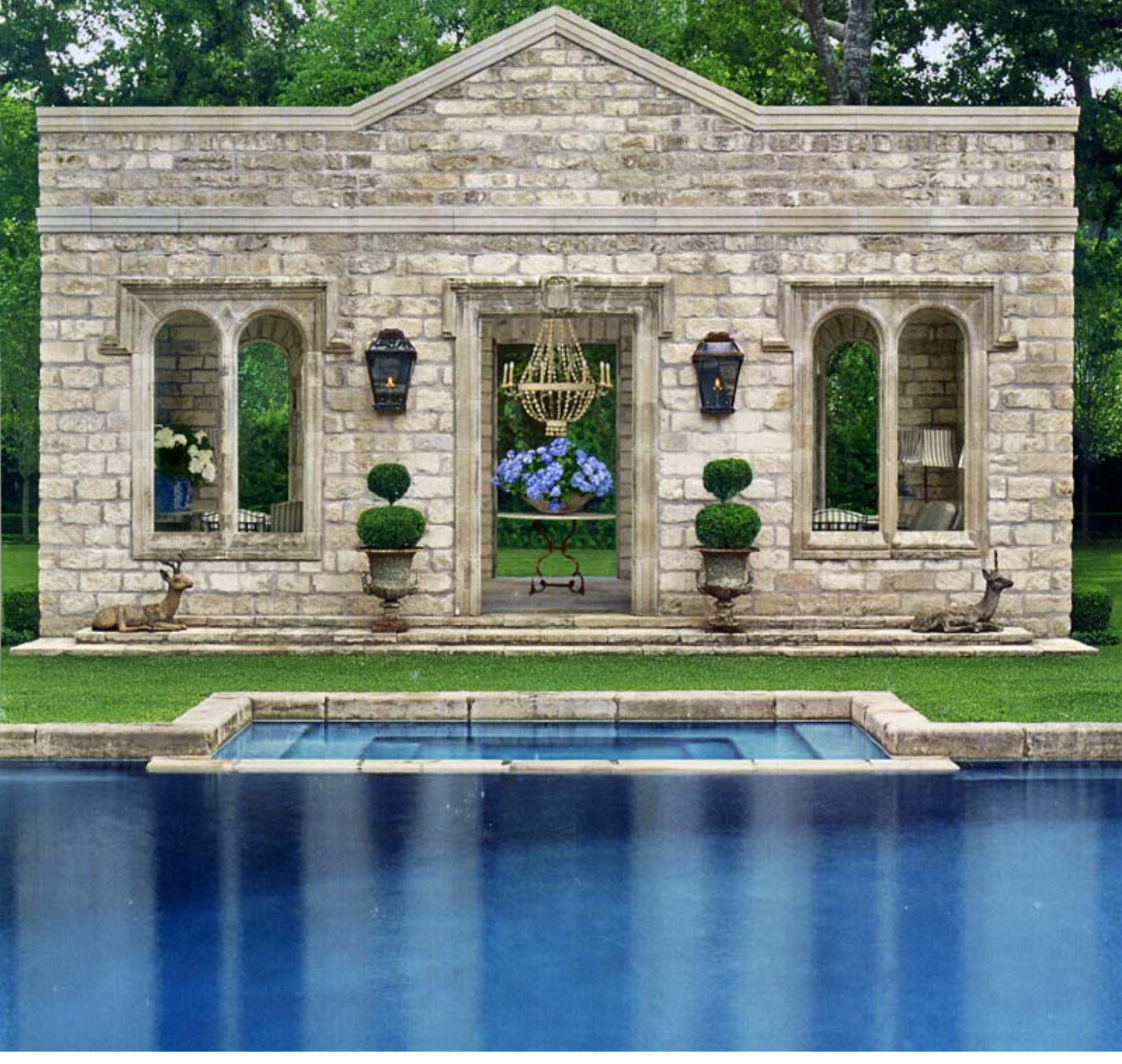


JULY-AUGUST 2009

VERANDA





ARTISTIC VISION

VICENTE WOLF AT HOME IN MANHATTAN

INTERIOR DESIGN AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICENTE WOLF PRODUCED BY CAROLYN ENGLEFIELD TEXT BY LINDA SHERBERT



PIECES OF FURNITURE IN VICENTE WOLF'S LIVING ROOM

appear to be having a conversation of their own, each speaking a different language of style. The "speakers," facing one another like guests at a party, include an upright nineteenth-century gilded Russian chair, a Swinging Sixties clear acrylic chair and a very debonair sofa designed by Wolf.

Somehow, the pieces in this diverse grouping achieve a kind of decorative diplomacy: They all get along just fine.

"You try to have a dialogue without words, a visual dialogue between pieces," says Wolf, who has worked as a designer for more than three decades. "It is a thinking process, not just a decorative selection. These pieces have real personalities."

Wolf knows how to mix and *not* match—and make it work. Combining the timeless appeal of antiques and the edgy beauty of contemporary design with touches of exoticism, he composes sensual interiors for his clients' homes. Not surprisingly, he has done the same for his own spacious Hell's Kitchen loft.

There, furniture and fabrics he designs for his firm, VW Home, keep company with treasures from trips to far-flung places like Madagascar. Backdropping this is his collection of photographs by talents such as Richard Avedon and Damien Hirst. Wolf is also a photographer. In fact, he shot the photographs for this story.

So, is Vicente Wolf an interior designer who takes photographs or a photographer who designs interiors? The native of Cuba,



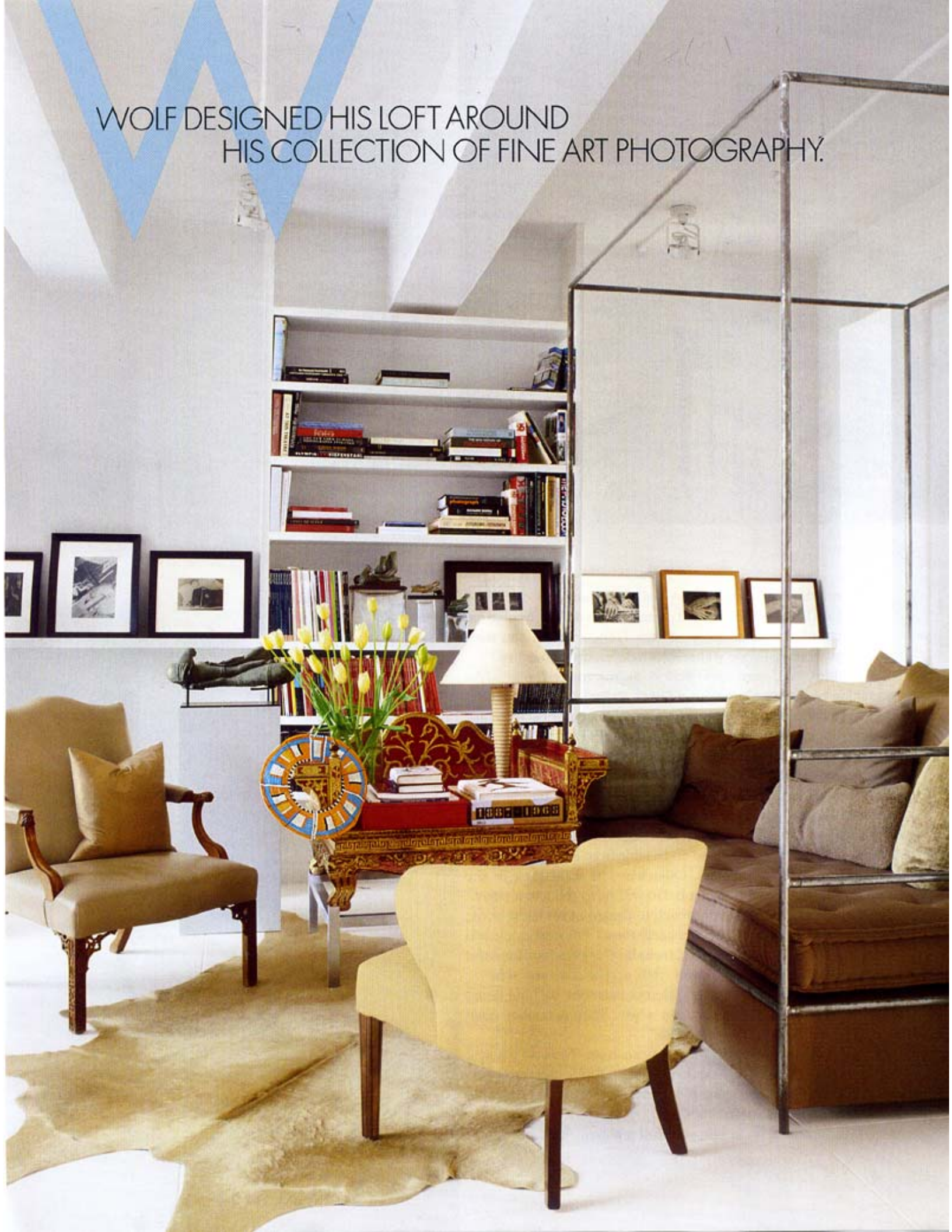


OPENING PAGES: In designer Vicente Wolf's New York loft, a Dutch Colonial daybed he bought in Borneo faces VW Home chairs in his linen, left, and his wool blend. Candlesticks, 18th c., on 1960s round table, all from Italy. Italian film set lamp, 1960s. Photography by artists such as Lisette Model, Geert Goiris and Walker Evans. LEFT: Teak screen, 19th c., and antique Dutch Colonial desk, both from Indonesia. French chair, 1940s. Photograph by Dorothea Lange. ABOVE: Also in living room, 19th-c. Russian chair, VW Home sofa in Wolf's wool blend and mid-century acrylic chair by Erwine and Estelle Laverne. Drum table by Wolf. Edelman Leather cowhide rug. Drapery in VW Home wool.



ABOVE: On wall, large photograph by Michal Rovner. Vintage chairs host a row of photographs by artists such as Alexander Rodchenko and Man Ray. Photographs on ledges include works by Weegee, Harry Callahan, Man Ray and Richard Avedon. Italian floor lamp, 1960s. OPPOSITE: Gainsborough armchair, 18thc. VW Home chair in Wolf's wool fabric. Beaded neckpiece from South Africa on antique Thai monk's bench. Broken antique Buddha statues on display. VW Home lamp. Metal-frame claybed designed by Wolf in VW Home ribbed cotton. Photographs by Berenice Abbott, August Sander and others. Edelman Leather cowhide rug. Flowers throughout by Vicente Wolf.

WOLF DESIGNED HIS LOFT AROUND HIS COLLECTION OF FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY.





who emigrated as a teenager, replies in his warm, good-natured way: "I am both. You might like pasta, but would you want to eat spaghetti all the time? No, you want French, Italian and fried chicken. You challenge yourself with different approaches."

For him, "different approaches" means many things—like gracing his living room with a Dutch Colonial daybed that he found in Borneo during one of his many buying trips. Its sculptural superstructure carves through the loft's vertical space.

Whether buying or designing furniture, Wolf considers its emotional effect. He cites his own curvy bed, which he built: "It's like a boat, perhaps a gondola, that takes you on travels while you're asleep. A bed should feel protective, cradling you."

This bed is one of his few furnishings—including an antique monk's bench from Thailand and a table from Paris with a twisted base—that are keepers. Otherwise, "if something in the apartment fits into the right job, I'm willing to sell it to a client."

Wolf shares his global approach to design in his latest book, *Crossing Boundaries* (The Monacelli Press). His next book will explore "the Vicente Wolf look," including his penchant for artful juxtapositions, like that Russian chair, acrylic chair and sofa.

"They are placed to create different balances, without being symmetrical," Wolf explains. "In a way, they neutralize each other, and this produces calmness."

The designer draws a dinner party analogy: "How do you seat guests at a dining table? You do not put a talkative person beside a talkative person. Each one fills in the gaps. Not too much of the same thing next to each other."

With furniture, as in life, you find a balance that pleases. □



LEFT: Kohler sink on antique Burmese desk. Under sink, table by Donald Deskey. Nessen Lighting sconces. Ron Arad chair for Vitra. Drapery in wool by VW Home. BELOW: Italian 18th-c. chair at table from Paris flea market. Candlestick by Wolf for Baccarat. Loveseat, 19th c., in VW Home wool blend. Color photograph by Damien Hirst. FOLLOWING PAGES: Drapery in VW Home wool. Italian 18th-c. table. Chinese 19th-c. bowl. Hans Wegner chair, 1960s. Ashanti stool. Bed by Wolf in VW Home mohair blend. Anichini linens. VW Home table near Italian set lamp, 1960s. Photograph by Martin Munkacsi. Eero Saarinen table for Knoll. Antique French table. For more about Wolf, see page 128.





WELL COMPOSED

DESIGNER AS COLLECTOR



An admirer of fine art photography, Vicente Wolf is also a photographer. For more about his loft, turn to page 70.

INTERIOR DESIGN AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICENTE WOLF
PRODUCED BY CAROLYN ENGLEFIELD TEXT BY LINDA SHERBERT

Vicente Wolf wakes up in his Manhattan loft and focuses his gaze upon beloved belongings: Antique chairs he bought in Ethiopia. A Georges Hugnet photographic collage from 1961. An Edward Weston photograph of sand dunes from 1936. A Franz Kline ink on paper on an easel found in Paris. And Buddhist ceremonial shells.

"My bed faces all of that," says the veteran designer, delighted by the vignette across from the foot of his bed. "I see it every morning."

Such objects speak to him. The Ethiopian chairs, for instance, have a "sculptural quality. One of them has coins attached, like a charm bracelet. And buttons on the back. That means it was used by an important person."

Wolf is a collector of both vintage chairs and fine art photography. Dozens of pictures—from his vast trove of 1,200—are perched throughout his loft.

At day's end, he comes full circle: Photographs and Ethiopian chairs are the last things he glimpses before drifting off to sleep. A designer has to dream. □

