

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AUTHORITY

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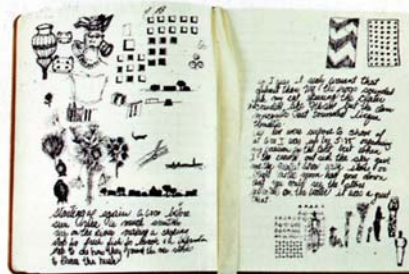
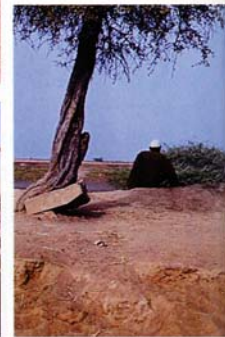
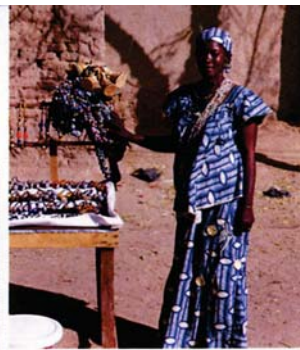
Open House

Stylish Living, Indoors and Out



Plus: AD Visits Sharon
and Ozzy Osbourne

Country-Manor Chic
Malibu Modernism
Palm Beach Grandeur



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: The author on the Niger River in Mali. The Great Mosque of Djenné. A jewelry vendor in Djenné. The color palette in this tableau caught Wolf's design eye. His leather-bound journal. A large dwelling in Dogon country, central Mali.



IMPRESSIONS OF MALI

In an excerpt from his travel journal, designer/photographer Vicente Wolf reveals inspiration he found in the Sahara

I'VE TRAVELED ALL OVER THE WORLD, BUT HAD ALWAYS WANTED TO SEE Mali—to rough it a little and immerse myself in a very old culture completely different from anything I'm accustomed to.

On the first day of my two-week trip, I'm in the capital, Bamako, watching gold- and silver-work being done. The market fascinates me, especially the way people are so relaxed and casual when going about their business. The women are dressed in colorful, patterned fabrics with rhinestones and sequins that shimmer in the sun.

I travel to the Great Mosque of Djenné, the largest mud-brick structure in the world, built in the style of a fort, with a crenellated top. Taking a long walk through nearby villages, I see an old man seated under a tree, contemplating the river. He's dressed in tobacco-color robes, with ebony skin and an ivory head covering, the clear blue sky above him. The color combination becomes a room in my head that I will design one day.

In Timbuktu, I walk the small streets and alleys and come across an enclosed market. Inside, my eyes slowly adjust and I start to see the spices, blocks of salt, ground guava leaf,

dried chilies, incense, and premixed medical potions. Also indigo fabrics that I can tell will make great pillows. (Little do I know that I will have to wash the fabric for six days to set the color!)

I am happily surprised to discover a small hotel here called La Maison, so stylish and simple but with a very clear point of view. At dinner I get the rooftop restaurant all to myself. Lo and behold, an extravagant cheese soufflé comes to the table, perfect and golden. I am truly blown away.

As I travel deeper into the Sahara, the color of the desert sand changes from terracotta to bone. In Gao on New Year's Eve, I sit in front of my hotel listening to Frank Sinatra on my iPod while a parade of people passes in front of me in their party clothes, all worn with a lot of pizzazz.

Sunsets here make you feel like you're in a separate world. The sky has shades of pink, blue, and amber. Music weaves through the air. With no electricity, the desert gets swallowed by night. —VICENTE WOLF