



PLACES & THINGS

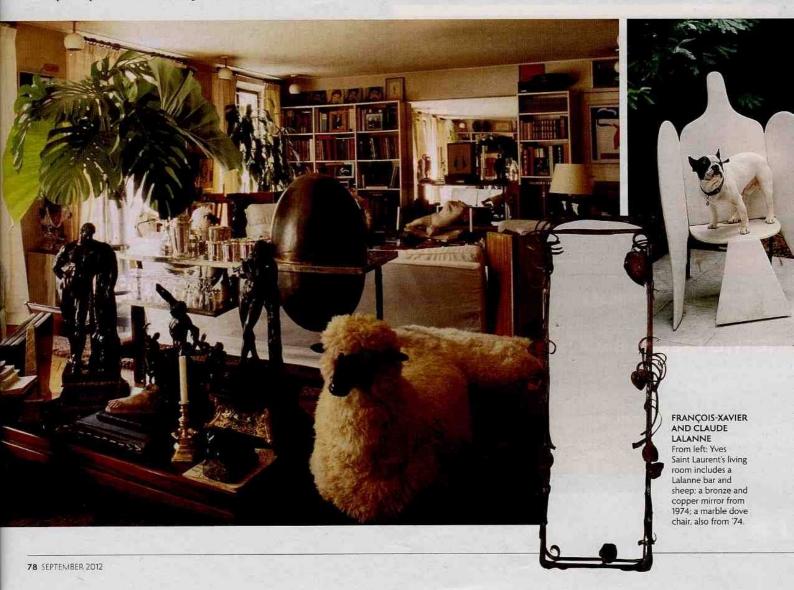
DESIGN

with mid-century modernism. Rather, a concurrent rebellion against industrial production meant that designers were able to envision one-offs that verged on fine art. In France, Maria Pergay rendered sculptural forms in painstakingly handworked stainless steel, drawing out metal's liquid quality. Pierre Paulin cre-

ated elegantly voluptuous seating for the Palais de L'Elysée. In Milan, Gabriella Crespi experimented with architectural, unadorned shapes such as her Z desk, a zigzag of brass-sheathed wood. Italian collaboratives, like Archizoom and Superstudio, made witty one-liners that verged on pranks (the palm-tree-shaped floor lamp) alongside more refined riffs on modernism. Americans like Paul Evans and Wendell Castle, meanwhile, focused on giving the craft a decidedly organic and upscale spin.

In turn, collectors began to be receptive to the idea of mixing aggressive contemporary design with more classical pieces. Henri Samuel, decorator to society fixtures like the Rothschilds and the Vanderbilts, audaciously paired Philippe Hiquily's brass and plexiglass armchairs and daring creations by short-lived collective Atelier A alongside 18th-century antiques and Persian carpets. In his Rue de









Babylone duplex, Yves Saint Laurent commingled Art Deco masterpieces with surrealist commissions from husband-wife design duo François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne. Zoomorphic seating brought whimsy to his library, while an installation of botanical-inspired mirrors blossomed across his music room.

The period's streamlined style also made it easy for decorators to assign pieces to satisfy functional needs. "Henri Samuel used '70s furnishings to fill in gaps, things like large coffee tables and lighting—accourtements for our modern lives," says 20th-century furniture dealer Liz O'Brien, who notes that prices have been slowly rising over the last decade. Today, a Pergay one-armed Banquet day-

bed can fetch \$120,000 at auction and a Crespi coffee table, \$35,000. This notion of the practical avant-garde hints at the decade's most intriguing legacy: a blend of fantasy and pragmatism that celebrated both the handcrafted and the industrial without quite kowtowing to either extreme. The most buzzed-about designs embody myriad contradictions and conceptual fixations while still being wonderful to live with. How very radical. •