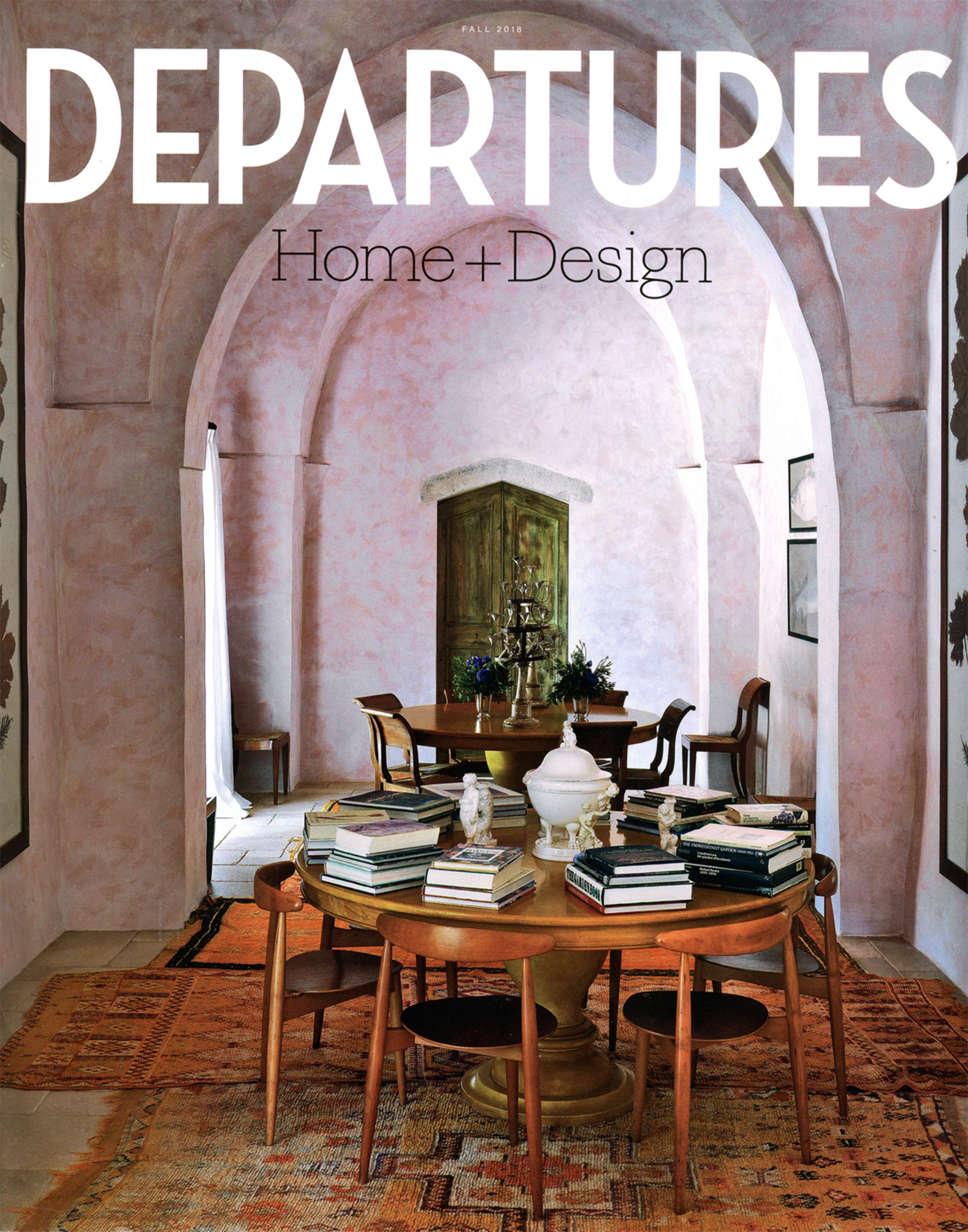


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DEPARTURES

Home + Design





This Amsterdam home, also in *Wonder Plants 2*, has a plant-filled central patio. A mistletoe cactus sits on the dining table.

Indoor Pastoral

Designers are cultivating a new look for their most spectacular interiors—and greenery is the secret ingredient. *by Vicky Lowry*

WHEN THE DESIGN FIRM Charlap Hyman & Herrero was asked to create a booth for furniture dealer Patrick Parrish at New York's Salon Art + Design Fair in 2016, the young design duo broke ground, literally, with their inventive use of a houseplant. They wrapped the space entirely in sisal and embedded a huge palm tree below the surface of a raised floor. Amid the dealer's array of contemporary furnishings, the mood

was exotic—and surreal. "We were playing with the idea of confusing someone about what was earth and what was flooring," says Adam Charlap Hyman. "We think about plants as a real element of the design scheme and use them like furniture to divide space."

When it comes to the humble houseplant, today's tastemakers are moving beyond the standard orchids and ferns to created elegant indoor jungles. It's

not just about bringing in a little greenery to warm up or enliven a space either. Houseplants have been proven to make us feel calmer and more relaxed and provide fresh air. And, of course, a soaring green tree in the middle of an industrial loft makes a design statement. To that end, Danish designer Oliver Gustav gives his lean interiors a touch of whimsy with delicate ficus trees. Paris duo Patrick Gilles and Dorothee Boissier-Gilles—



The Milan home of designer Antonino Scjortino features very tall succulents.



LEAF PEEPING

The book *Wonder Plants 2* (Lannoo) is a lesson in both potted-plant decor and diligent maintenance. Twenty homes, spanning five continents, are presented with practical tips on keeping healthy specimens, design advice, and a numbered index for each species featured inside.

who designed New York's Baccarat Hotel—subtly punctuated their chic, bleached-white apartment with shapely succulents. Commune, the Los Angeles design collective, has incorporated bird-of-paradise plants between the banquettes in the dining room of the Durham Hotel in North Carolina and swooping palms in the reception area of Panama's American Trade Hotel.

Andre Herrero, an architect, and Charlap Hyman, an interior designer, are always exploring inventive ways to bring nature inside. In a Brooklyn residence, for instance, they placed a terra-cotta planter in the shape of a chair by artist Chris Wolston in the center of the living room and installed a mature potted palm in the red-and-white master bath. "In a room like that, the plant takes on this very transporting role—a vehicle for imagining you are

somewhere else," says Charlap Hyman. "There's a fantastical element, like the jungle is growing out of the house."

Perhaps the most imaginative plant-filled project conceived by the talented trio behind Commune—Roman Alonso, Steven Johanknecht, and Pamela Shamshiri—lasted for just 48 hours. For the Oscars' backstage greenroom three years ago, they didn't rely solely on deep sofas and an inviting bar where the presenters could mingle and chill. To conjure the indoor-outdoor vibe of an authentic midcentury modern home in the Hollywood Hills, they trucked in houseplants—enough to fill a nursery. Palm leaves fanned out from behind the custom-made banquette. Philodendron, stephanotis, and a mad variety of ferns sprouted from built-in flower boxes. "We wanted the greenroom to feel like a

courtyard," Alonso remembers, "and the plants were key to providing that sense of lush glamour."

The sculptural and atmospheric possibilities of indoor plants are, of course, as varied as their species. Los Angeles-based designer Madeline Stuart champions specimen plants "with a really interesting trunk that can be placed in a cachepot and become an object," she explains. "I'm never going to stick a fern on a side table and call it a day." Stuart, whose first book on design will be published by Rizzoli next fall, prizes a miniature Ming tree, which she brought home years ago after a photo shoot, not only for its tropical allure but also because "it's almost like having a pet." Alas, not every plant thrives in family dynamics. Stuart's mother bought a ficus decades ago for her New York City apartment and had a special teak planter made for it. "She stuck it in the hall, where there was no light, thinking it would flourish," the designer recalls. "Then she and my father would lie awake at night and listen for the leaves to drop."

Miles Redd, meanwhile, who has made a career out of designing lavishly hued interiors, reveres the singular shade of the natural world. "It's amazing to me what something green can do," Redd says. "You can be in the most sterile room, and one leaf can transform the space. It's the power of nature."