

Bamboo that's not just about doing good, but looking good, too. BY RIMA SUQI



Cooking with an iPhone, dishing with Dick Button on skating and sales.

Home

The New York Times

Goodbye To All This

The Jackie Collins of real estate is getting set to move on, while still keeping an eye on the neighbors.

By PENELOPE GREEN

Late in 2004, architectural pickers were working their way through the old Mayflower Hotel on Central Park West between 61st and 62nd Streets, harvesting pedestal sinks, bronze mail-chute boxes and cut-glass chandeliers.

Designed by Emery Roth, architect of the San Remo and the Beresford, among other well-known Manhattan apartment buildings, and open since 1926, the Mayflower had been scrubbed clean of its decorative facade decades earlier. After a student was killed by a piece of falling masonry on a property owned by Columbia University in 1979, the city adopted a law requiring buildings over five stories to have their facades inspected for safety. And rather than fuss with costly repairs,



BRUCE BUCK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Michael Gross has been chronicling the rise of 15 Central Park West from his apartment at the Alwyn Court a few blocks away.

the Mayflower's owners simply removed the exterior ornament, from cornice to pediment. By 2005, the entire building would be erased. At the time, David Dunlap of The New York Times described it as a "background building . . . offering calm in the visual storm." And he correctly predicted that what would go up in its place would not be a background building.

The Mayflower had been bought by the developers William and Arthur Zeckendorf, along with the real estate arm of Goldman Sachs and Eyal Ofer, a shipping and real estate magnate, for \$401 million. The price, which worked out to \$690 a square foot, was a record for the city, nearly double any recent land sale. What they built, the limestone-sheathed, Robert A. M. Stern-designed 15 Central Park West (the Limestone Jesus, as Curbed, the real es-

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JEREMY BITTERMANN

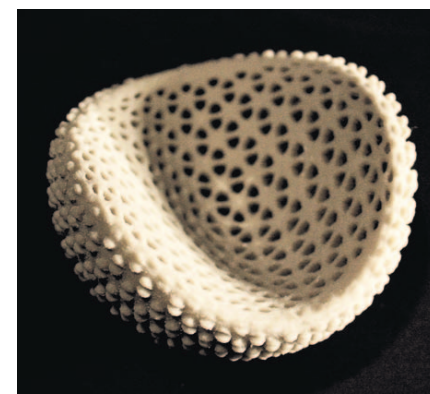
Finding Beauty In a Burn Zone

Others may have cleared the charred trees, but one couple saw truth in them. Page 6

The many shapes of food design, clockwise from top right: Lepsis, Mansour Ourasanah's unit for breeding grasshoppers; glass dishware custom-designed by Luesma & Vega for Albert Adrià, chef of Paktà in Barcelona; Susana Soares's edible 3-D printed object made from bugs; Judi Harvest's Murano glass jars that evoke her exercise in beekeeping; Sugar Lab 3-D printed edible cake topper; and Jihyun Ryou and David Artuffo's concept for extending the life of vegetables, from their Save Food from the Refrigerator series.



XAVIER VEGA



MATTHEW KLEIN

Matters of Taste

More than ever, food is a promising frontier for designers working with scientists, technologists and, yes, even chefs.

By JULIE LASKY

Growing up in the African country of Togo, Mansour Ourasanah knew what it was like to be hungry. But he assumed that limited food was a universal misfortune, like a head cold or a broken heart. Eventually he discovered that plenty of food was available for people with money; it was just that his family was poor.

Now 28 and an industrial designer in Chicago, Mr. Ourasanah has tried to startle

others into new ways of thinking about food. Last month he won a \$35,000 Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise for Lepsis, his handsome prototype for a system that breeds grasshoppers to eat.

Mr. Ourasanah understands that many Americans are disturbed by the thought of munching on insects, but points out an advantage. "You can farm them at home, which you can't do with cattle," he said, adding that with the world's population at seven billion and expected to grow to more than nine billion by 2050, we may not have much choice.

Today, designers are playing with food in growing numbers. Equipped with new technologies, motivated to solve problems of scarcity, obesity and waste, and encour-

aged by rocketing culinary enthusiasms, they are recalibrating our ideas of taste while preparing science-fiction scenarios for our kitchens.

Once you have reared your grasshoppers, for instance, Susana Soares, a designer and researcher in London, has a plan for what you can do with them. Her Insects Au Gratin project involves grinding bugs into a powder that is mixed with cream cheese or butter and flavorings. "They are a very efficient way of getting protein, if you look at them in a rational way," she said of her material. But because people are more likely to regard bugs with disgust, Ms. Soares uses a 3-D printer to turn the paste into decorative squiggles or

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THE DETAILS

Matters of Taste

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attractive filigreed blobs. “They look like jewelry on purpose,” she said.

And when you’re ready to clean the mixing bowl . . . don’t bother. Tomorrow Machine, a design studio in Stockholm and Paris, has partnered with a Swedish materials company called Innventia to sketch out futuristic ideas like dishes that are based on the self-cleaning properties of lotus leaves.

THE PRACTICE OF SHAPING the tools and rituals associated with eating dates from the first use of a twig to tease grubs from a hole, or the first folded leaf used to scoop water from a stream. But only in the last 15 years or so has a discipline known as “food design,” or sometimes “eating design,” emerged.

If anyone began this latest wave, it was Martí Guixé, a Catalan who in the late ’90s began circulating ideas for tapas that could be eaten in what he called “extreme conditions” — underwater, for example — and cakes iced with pie charts that divulged the relative proportions of their ingredients.

Soon, other designers were taking up food as a medium. In 1999, Marije Vogelzang of the Netherlands organized a mock funeral at which only white foods were served on white tableware. In 2001, Francesca Sarti founded the Milan-based food-design collective Arabeschi di Latte after staging performances that satirized the kitchen as a place for women.

And seeking to fill a void in research on the material culture of food, Sonja Stummerer and Martin Hablesreiter, a Viennese architect couple, began in 2005 to produce books about global eating habits and instruments. Their latest, “Eat Design,” came out in November with a colorful analysis of the evolution of tableware. We learn, for instance, that there are 90 different types of beer glasses “in the German-speaking world alone.”

Food design has blossomed into a famed workshop in culinary design led by Marc Bretillot at the ESAD art and design academy in Reims, France. The subject has also inspired a Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum exhibition in the works for 2016. It



MATTHEW KLEIN



On the design menu: honeycomb honey jars, 3-D printed desserts and musical ice cream.

has taken strong purchase in the progressive design culture of the Netherlands, where young designers like Jihyun Ryou and David Artuffo are working out elegant ways to extend the life of refrigerated food and to raise consciousness about vanishing produce.

And it is the theme of a new class run by Emilie Baltz at Pratt Institute in New York. There, students are first immersed in the sensory experience of food (one assignment is to redesign the appearance of a cookie); later in the term, they will study the fraught systems of food production and distribution, Ms. Baltz said.

For Ms. Baltz, who grew up in the clashing culinary environments of Joliet, Ill., and Paris, a professional interest in food began in 2004, while she was a master’s student in industrial design at Pratt (she wrote her thesis on why Americans eat what they do). She later published a cookbook for which she recreated 51 elaborate recipes using junk food. In food, she said, she finds a key to the “emotional and sensory space that really starts to define us from animals on a primitive level.”

But though she embraces the primal sensations evoked by food, she is not opposed to using technology to hit those sweet spots. Two weeks ago, in New York, she staged “Lickestra,” a musical improvisation performed by four people who licked ice cream cones with embedded sensors, producing a composition of ringing and buzzing sounds.

For “Lickestra,” Ms. Baltz partnered with Carla Diana, who specializes in the development of smart technology. Food design attracts a wide field of participants; not everyone has a taste for sea urchin or brains, but almost everyone has experienced a passion for food and the bond that comes with sharing it. Scratch a food designer and you’ll find an architect, engineer, interaction designer, materials scientist, artist or crafter, or more likely some combination working together.

“DENATURED: HONEYBEES + MURANO,” an exhibition about threatened extinction that opened in Venice last year, is a low-tech example. The show resulted from the collaboration between the artist Judi Harvest and members of the shrinking community of Venetian glass blowers. After Ms. Harvest created a garden on the grounds of a glass factory on the island of Murano and planted it with trees and flowers to hold the attention of imported bees, she collected and packaged the ensuing honey and displayed it with a series of gorgeous honeycomb-textured Murano glass jars she designed.



XAVIER VEGA



The intense experience of food fostered by the molecular-gastronomy movement has also brought designers into the culinary fold. In 2003, Luesma & Vega, a glass studio in Barcelona, began collaborating with Ferran Adrià to design dishware that fit his complicated cuisine at El Bulli. It has gone on to provide the same service to other celebrated chefs.

At the higher end of the technology spectrum is the partnership between David Edwards, an American scientist and inventor who founded Le Laboratoire, what he calls “a cultural lab,” in Paris, and eminent French designers. Several years ago, having introduced a chocolate product called Le Whif, which you enjoy guiltlessly by inhaling, Mr. Edwards, along with Mr.

Bretillot and the industrial designer François Azambourg, rolled out Le Whaf, a carafe that vaporizes liquid, creating a cloud of tiny droplets that is poured into a glass and swallowed.

“I’m interested in this sort of virtualization,” Mr. Edwards said recently. “So much of a great culinary experience is sensorial in a way that goes beyond caloric content.”

In another project, Mr. Edwards and Mr. Azambourg set out to erase not calories, but wasteful packaging. Borrowing from the idea of the grape and similar naturally self-contained foods, he developed Wiki-Pearls, round pieces of ice cream wrapped in edible skins. And last summer, he opened WikiBar, a café in Paris where the



PHASE ONE PHOTOGRAPHY



Clockwise from top left: Tomorrow Machine self-cleaning dish concept; WikiBar; Whaf carafe; Save Food from the Refrigerator concept; humidifying bowl by Jihyun Ryou; Luesma & Vega tableware for the culinary opera “El Somni”; Luesma & Vega plates for Pakta; Sugar Lab 3-D printed cake toppers, left, and vase; Judi Harvest’s honey jars.

ice cream is served and where people gather every other week to test new Wiki foods like yogurt, soup and cheese. Designed by Mathieu Lehanneur, who recently secured the commission to renovate the interior of the historic Grand Palais in Paris, WikiBar has an antiseptic white palette and a decorative motif of hexagons that alludes to the molecular structure of the food’s wrapping.

In July, a similar venue, Cafe ArtScience, will open in Cambridge, Mass., in a new Laboratoire complex. For this venture, Mr. Edwards is partnering with someone he describes only as “a leading mixologist,” who will run an experimental drinks program there. Glass dishware will be designed by Mr. Azambourg to complement the WikiPearl menu. (Mr. Edwards was tight-lipped about the details.) And next month, some Whole Foods stores in the Boston area will begin selling Wiki-Pearls of Stonyfield frozen yogurt.

Mr. Edwards’s inventions demonstrate that while many food design concepts are whimsical, utopian or evanescent, the introduction of technology and capital is giving others mainstream relevance and commercial potential.

And it always seems to help when 3-D printing enters the picture. Liz and Kyle von Hasseln became enamored of that

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as he put it, of his time there gave way to the pressures of the last real estate boom.

As the rising tide of wealth was metaphorically flooding his neighborhood, Mr. Gross's apartment was actually flooded by water left running in an upstairs apartment, after which the backyard enjoyed a rat infestation when the nearby restaurant Babbo excavated its basement and disturbed a nest of tunnel rats.

"Biblical waves of rats were sweeping through the backyard, and then there were the neighbors who were worse than that," Mr. Gross said, covering his face in his hands. "It was literally the plagues of Egypt."

It was 2006 when he and Ms. Hodes put the apartment on the market; they had lived there for 17 years. It sold to Mark Ronson, the D.J. and music producer, for \$1.8 million. "Uptown was moving downtown," Mr. Gross said, so they went in the opposite direction.

They found their current apartment, advertised by its owner in The New York Times, for exactly the same amount they

had sold their two-bedroom for. "We wanted an elegant wreck, which is what this was," he said. Mr. Gross still has the ad, along with the ads for the two apartments that preceded it, tucked into a miniature, portable Hermès picture frame.

THE ALWYN HAS its own interesting history. It was imagined first as a container for luxurious artists' studios. (Walter Russell, an artist who had developed the Hotel des Artistes on West 67th Street, was an early investor who dropped out of the project.) And then it was reimagined as luxury rentals, with 14-room, five-bath apartments, two to a floor. One tenant was Frederick Steinway, who moved his company headquarters a block away from his new home.

By the late 1930s, however, the place was empty and in foreclosure. A bank gutted and reconfigured the apartments, making 75 units out of 24. In the 1980s, the building was converted into a co-op.

Mr. Gross and Ms. Hodes moved in just as 15 Central Park West was rising a few blocks away. They did their own stripping,

removing a weird 1970s kitchen, replacing it with a Bauhaus-inspired kitchen that Ms. Hodes designed. They lined many of the apartment's walls with bookshelves. With its French flea market furniture it feels like a Paris flat, in line with the Alwyn's early ethos.

The apartment is also well sited to clock the city's careering development, first at 15 Central Park West and then on 57th Street, where Extell's towering glass condo, One57, has been breaking its own records — a \$90 million sale in 2012 — as well as menacing the neighbors. During Hurricane Sandy, its terrifying dangling crane forced the evacuation of proximate buildings, including the Alwyn Court. Mr. Gross, Ms. Hodes and their Westie, Calpurnia, took refuge with friends for six days. Six months later, the Alwyn was emptied again, along with two other buildings, this time for 22 hours, so the crane's boom could be replaced.

In an Op-Ed for The Times, Mr. Gross worried about damage to the Alwyn's del-

icate and lovely facade from the teetering crane, and wondered why the city would allow a historic property to be threatened. He already knew the answer: "On an island apocryphally purchased for \$24 nearly four centuries ago," he wrote, "the convergence of money and power is an old story."

Since then, he seems to have softened his views on his neighbor. (That his apartment is in contract certainly helped.) "Whatever you think of Gary Barnett's taste, he is not stupid," he said of the developer of One57. "These are very smart people making very smart bets. The halo effect has been nothing but good for this micro-neighborhood. This is New York City. It's about change, and it's about tall buildings. You can cheer some buildings and jeer at others, and I have, but development is vital to the city's stature."

Mr. Gross said he is looking uptown for a new apartment. Way uptown. He would even consider Inwood. Brooklyn's over, he said. "Why not?"

In Mr. Gross's office, left, is a daybed from the Marché aux Puces in Paris; the Maison Jansen end tables are from another flea market. The dining table in the living room, above, is from Pierre Deux.

Q. Is it O.K. to leave pets and all their stuff out in my apartment during showings?

A. In a word, no. "A lot of people are fearful," said Stefania Cardinali, an associate real estate broker at Citi Habitats in Manhattan. "Not everyone is familiar with dogs and cats."

Beyond buyers' phobias and allergies, there is also the potential for mishaps like biting, jumping or clawing, Ms. Cardinali said, which could be disastrous for a sale. So as a general rule, she suggests, it's best to remove your pet from the apartment during showings: take your dog for a walk or your cat for a visit with the neighbors.

You should also do your best to minimize any evidence of shedding. "Pet hair is a nuisance: you want to make sure people can sit down on the couch," Ms. Cardinali said, without needing to use a lint brush afterward.

"A showing is not just about looking," she said, "but about relaxing and enjoying

the space."

And when it comes to pet toys and accessories, said Joan Dineen, an architect and dog owner who recently put her Upper East Side home on the market, the fewer the buyer sees, the better.

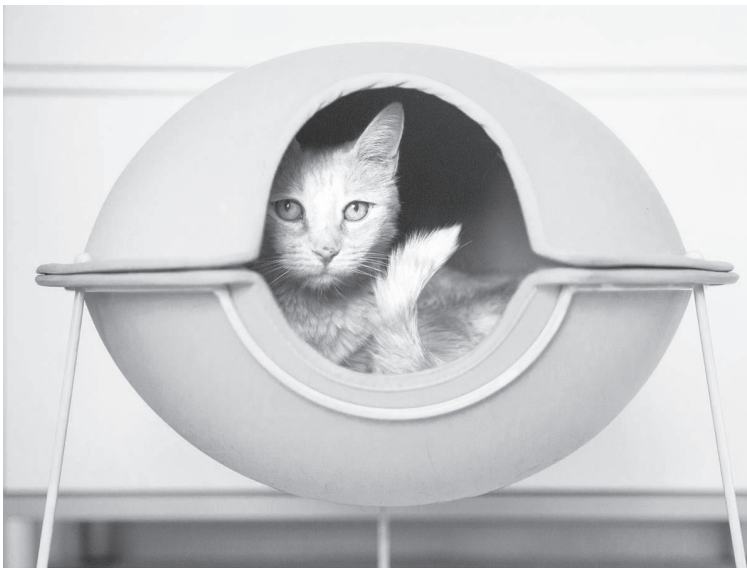
"You want to guard against someone just hating the idea that an animal lived there," she said. "People don't want to feel like, once they move in, there will be any hint of it."

But because storing everything associated with a pet before every showing can be onerous (if not impossible, because of space constraints), she suggests a targeted approach.

First, eliminate any real eyesores. It would be a very bad idea to have kitty jungle gyms displayed prominently in the living room, Ms. Dineen said.

Leave only those accessories that work with your décor. "A dog bed should look

MARKET READY



JOHN BURCHAM FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

like a pillow you'd want to have in your house anyway," she said. "You can get some beautiful toile de Jouy and other designer-friendly fabrics," from companies

like Harry Barker and Jax & Bones.

And just before each showing, she said, thoroughly "de-fur" all surfaces and make sure there is no visible pet-related damage. Ms. Dineen's dog, Charlotte, has been known to chew bedspreeds and carpets. But once the apartment has been prepared for potential buyers, Ms. Dineen said, "there's nothing to show that she has in any way depreciated the value of the property."

Ms. Cardinali said she recently showed an Upper West Side apartment where the dog and a multitude of dog-related items were left inside, much to her dismay. "There's a gate that goes in front of the spiral staircase, a dog ball and leashes and towels," she said. "When you walk into the place, it's right there, and it spoils the flow."

Better to play it safe, she said, to "minimize the potential objections and nuisance factors." **TIM MCKEOUGH**

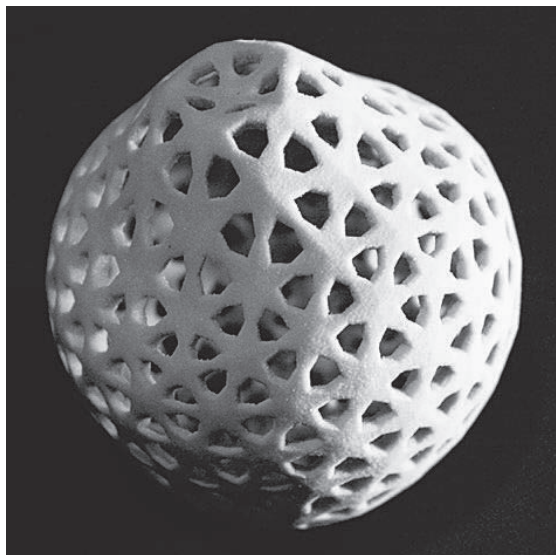
Questions about repairs or redecorating before putting a home on the market may be sent to marketready@nytimes.com. Unpublished questions cannot be answered individually.

Matters of Taste

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technology while students at the Southern California Institute of Architecture and found particular joy in building structures with sugar. This discovery led to a Los Angeles-based studio, the Sugar Lab, which made experimental confections. In September, 3D Systems, a manufacturer of 3-D printers, acquired the Sugar Lab, and the Von Hasselns are now creative directors of its food products.

At the Consumer Electronics Show last month, they displayed, along with 3D Systems' new ChefJet food printers, a wedding cake built on a printed armature of sugar and decorated, from base to ribbon-like topper, with a blue-and-white Delft pattern. The ability of the printer to handle a range of materials means that a copy of the topper can be produced in ceramic if a couple wants a souvenir of their wedding, Ms. Von Hasseln said. "Cross-culturally, people are inclined to invest in customizing and embellishing a dessert," she said. "That's what 3-D printing is good for: customization and embellishment."

Mr. Ourasanah would like his Lepsis grasshopper breeder to have commercial legs, too. But though Whirlpool funded the development of the prototype, he hasn't found investors. He is working for Whirlpool on blue-sky projects, thinking up ways to teach American children to re-



With *Insects Au Gratin*, Susana Soares combines ground-up bugs with cream cheese to promote bugs as a food source.

spect food and nutrition. His new medium is the lunch tray and lunchbox, which he sees as failed design opportunities in their existing forms. "I saw a lunchbox that had SpongeBob SquarePants on it," he said, adding that he found it really strange. "What does SpongeBob have to do with food?"

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