



AD at 100
a century of style

PLUS
74 great
kitchen ideas

the house that
instagram built
cofounder kevin systrom's
lake tahoe getaway

go west
the california issue

BURGUNDY
ANDY WARHOL
Polaroids 1958-1987

IN THE DINING ROOM OF ROMAN ALONSO'S APARTMENT, CUSTOM COMMUNE/MICHAEL BOYD DINING CHAIRS SURROUND A TABLE BY BOYD. OPPOSITE VINTAGE FILLMORE ROCK POSTERS LINE THE KITCHEN WALLS. ABOVE STOOL, PRINT BY CORITA KENT. FOR DETAILS SEE RESOURCES.

DOUBLE



Roman Alonso and Steven Johanknecht, principals at the AD100 firm Commune Design, were catalysts in the transformation of Los Angeles into a global cultural hub. Now living in a pair of midcentury residential towers in Los Feliz, the dynamic duo are pioneering a whole new frontier—quintessentially California-style apartment living

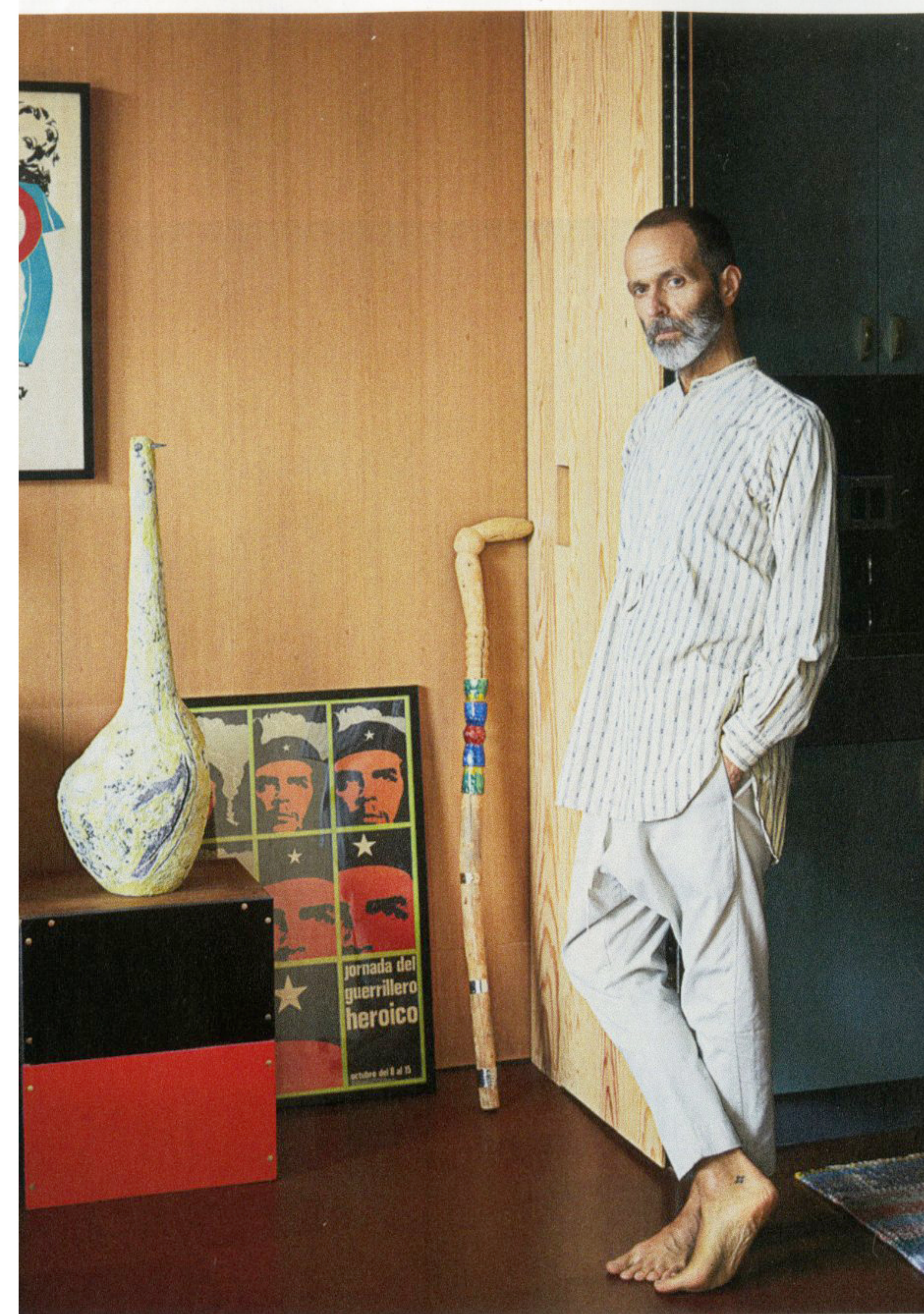
TEXT BY MAYER RUS PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON STYLED BY MICHAEL REYNOLDS

VISION





ABOVE UPHOLSTERED IN A PAINTER'S LINEN, A DAYBED IS TUCKED BENEATH SALVAGED DOUGLAS-FIR SHELVING IN THE LIVING ROOM. FRIEZE ON SOFFIT BY LOUIS EISNER; ISAMU NOGUCHI FLOOR LAMP; GREGORY PARKINSON THROW; ADAM POGUE AND COMMUNE PILLOWS; HIDEKI TAKAYAMA SIDE TABLE.



ABOVE ALONSO IN HIS DINING ROOM. LIVIA GORKA CERAMIC BIRD SCULPTURE. RIGHT DIOR GRAY PAINT BY BENJAMIN MOORE COVERS ALONSO'S BEDROOM WALLS. SERGE MOUILLE SCONCE; DOUG MCCOLLOUGH NIGHTSTAND; BEDCOVER OF VINTAGE JAPANESE FABRIC.



at

the time designers Roman Alonso and Steven Johanknecht arrived in Los Angeles—in 1998 and 2002, respectively—the city was still a relatively sleepy industry town, however high-profile its industry. This was before a host of major New York and European art galleries rushed to open L.A. outposts; before elite fashion brands started cooking up reasons to head west for splashy parties in hip warehouses; and before a cavalcade of international

starchitects on the order of Renzo Piano, Peter Zumthor, and Herzog & de Meuron rolled into town. In the past two decades, L.A. has emerged as a genuine hub of global culture, beckoning wave upon wave of fresh transplants from around the world. Alonso and Johanknecht, through their work at the multidisciplinary AD100 firm Commune Design, have been prime agitators in this metamorphosis, ambassadors for the new Los Angeles, championing local talent and evangelizing a widely influential vision of California cool. From their groundbreaking work for Ace and other hotel groups to their wide-ranging forays into product and graphic design to their long-standing collaborations with established luminaries and young Turks of art and design—think Alma Allen,

Adam Silverman, Stan Bitters, and others—the Commune principals continue to spread the gospel of sophisticated but unpretentious bohemian chic.

While their work evokes images of alluring beaches and bungalows, it may come as a surprise to learn that Alonso and Johanknecht have made their own L.A. homes in a matched pair of 1966 apartment towers in Los Feliz, hard by Griffith Park, a sprawling wonderland of rugged mountain trails, wilderness areas, and famous attractions such as the Deco-era Griffith Observatory, the Greek Theatre, and the Hollywood sign. “Basically, I live in an apartment building, with a doorman, in a park,” Alonso says of the appeal of his 850-square-foot, one-bedroom residence. “I look at nature every day, and I’m in nature, every day. It’s just that I don’t have to take care of it. I’m too lazy to maintain a whole house.”

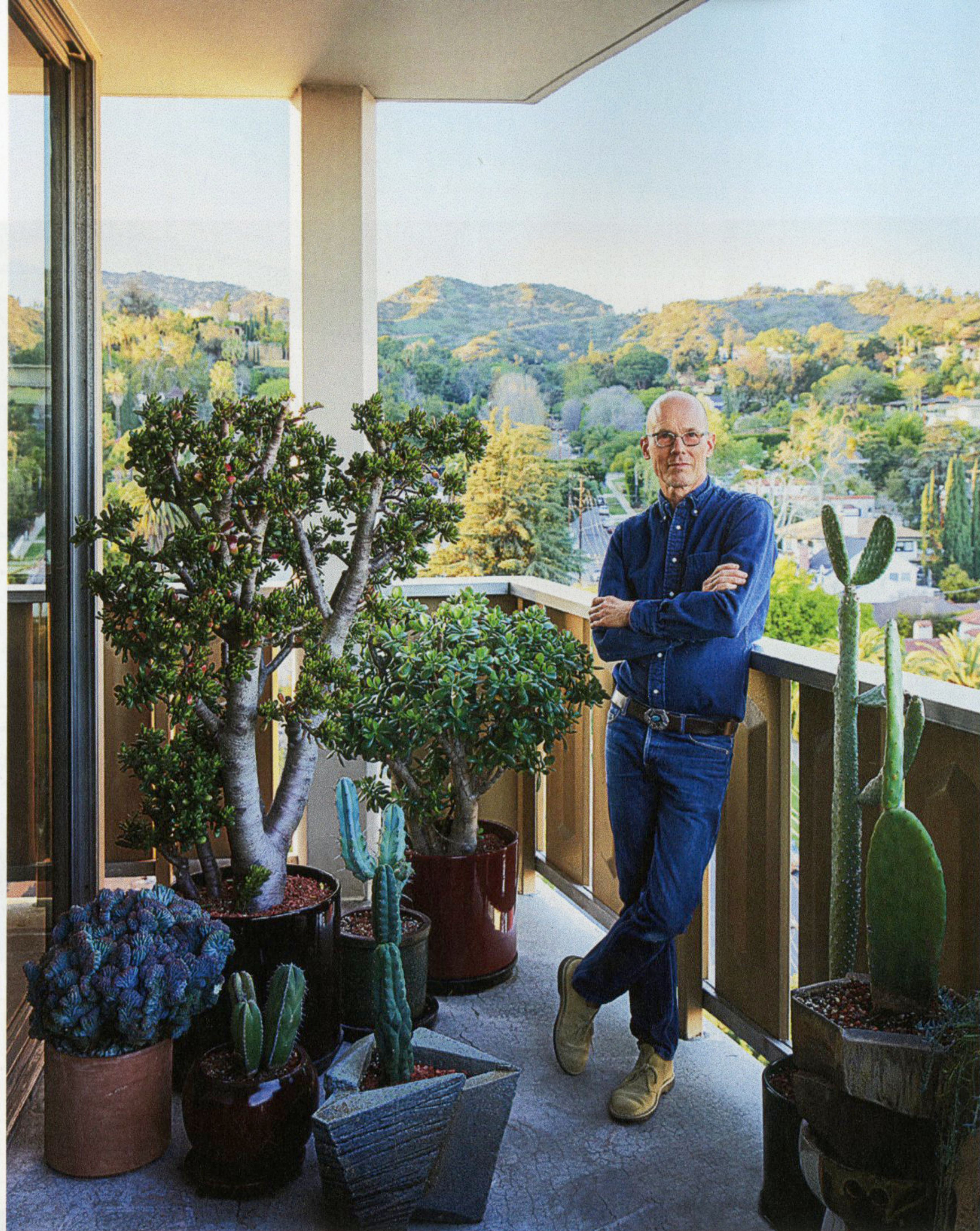
Johanknecht makes a similar case for the benefits of apartment life. “I lived in a cozy Tudor cottage for a dozen years, but I wanted a different experience. I like the efficiency of an apartment, and I like being up high—it gives you a different relationship to the landscape,” he explains, describing the panoramic vistas of the San Gabriel Mountains and the downtown L.A. skyline that unfold from the balcony of his 1,100-square-foot, two-bedroom home.

It’s tempting to imagine a Lucy-and-Ethel-style sitcom scenario, with the two designers screaming at each other across the courtyard from their high perches in the twin towers while hanging laundry on a clothesline. The reality, of course, is not quite so farcical. The principals’ personal and professional lives have crisscrossed in intricate ways for decades, from the time the two initially met while working at Barneys New York, during the glory days of the luxury retail emporium, in the late 1980s and early ’90s. Their apartments tell the story of their remarkably fertile relationship through artifacts of their past and current projects, design details lifted from the Commune lexicon, and an array of artworks and curiosities with backstories specific to one designer or the other.

The kaleidoscopic decor in Alonso’s residence includes a midcentury-flavored dining set designed by FOC (friend of Commune) Michael Boyd; tables and sculptures by Alma Allen; Indian carpets from the estate of the legendary decorative arts wizard Tony Duquette; a sofa from Commune’s collection for George Smith as well as lighting from the firm’s



ABOVE THE CUSTOM ADAM POGUE CURTAINS WERE MADE OF VINTAGE FABRICS COLLECTED BY ALONSO. MOHAIR SOFA BY COMMUNE FOR GEORGE SMITH; PIERRE PAULIN BUTTERFLY CHAIR; MICHAEL BOYD WALNUT COCKTAIL TABLE.



“We always find a place for great things,” *Alonso* declares. “If we love it, it works.”

LEFT JOHANKNECHT ON THE BALCONY OF HIS LOS FELIZ APARTMENT. BELOW POSTERS FROM A TRIP TO COPENHAGEN AND THE BAUHAUS HANG IN THE DEN. SHADE BY THE SHADE STORE; EAMES LEATHER CHAIR.



BELOW IN JOHANKNECHT'S MASTER BEDROOM, GEORGE NELSON SIDE TABLES EDGE A CHERRYWOOD BED. BEDCOVER OF A PIERRE FREY WEAVE; COMMUNE BOLSTER PILLOW; SAARINEN FOR KNOLL SIDE TABLE; ON WALLS, FARROW & BALL'S PELT PAINT.



line for Remains; a prototype of a standing lamp for the hippie-happy Ace Hotel & Swim Club in Palm Springs; a wealth of black-and-white photography and Cuban art (Alonso was born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela, to Cuban parents); and delightful curtains by Adam Pogue, whose textile work is represented by Commune. “This was Adam’s first commission. I gave him a collection of fabrics I’d acquired over many years and asked him to design something that feels like stained glass. What he came up with was incredible,” Alonso says.

The world of Johanknecht strikes many of the same notes found in the home of his confrere—a color-saturated bedroom; a generous built-in daybed surrounded by books; and examples of work by Allen, Silverman, Pogue, and other frequent Commune collaborators. The massive gilt-framed painting of a

shipwreck on Long Island that commands the living room was a gift from Johanknecht’s grandmother. “The painting throws everything off a little, which I like,” the designer says. “This place is my California spin on a modernist apartment, Bauhaus meets mid-century, all bathed in the light and colors of the L.A. landscape. I wanted the apartment to feel considered but not fussy or overly designed,” he adds.

Naturally, everything in Johanknecht’s and Alonso’s homes does indeed feel considered—the two have spent their entire careers engaged in the act of consideration. Asked about the specific criteria for selecting the materials, colors, artworks, furnishings, and *objets de vertu* that inhabit their enchanting homes, Alonso breaks it down to one simple imperative: “We always find a place for great things. If we love it, it works.” ▀



COCKTAIL TABLES FROM JF CHEN AND THE WINDOW GATHER IN THE LIVING ROOM. COMMUNE FOR GEORGE SMITH SOFA, ON MIES VAN DER ROHE FOR KNOLL LOUNGE CHAIR, THROW BY GRAND SPLENDID, LINEN CURTAINS BY PINDLER



“This place is my California spin on a modernist apartment, Bauhaus meets midcentury,” says *Johanknecht*.

design notes

THE DETAILS THAT MAKE THE LOOK

JOHANKNECHT'S DINING AREA FEATURES VINTAGE MATTEO GRASSI CHAIRS AND A CUSTOM WALNUT TABLE. ETTORE SOTTASS CERAMIC VASE.



FLOOR CUSHION BY ADAM POGUE FOR COMMUNE DESIGN; \$1,426. COMMUNEDESIGN.COM



THEME & VARIATIONS PLATE NO. 1 BY FORNASETTI; \$185. BARNEYS.COM



RIBBON HANDLE BY LIZ'S ANTIQUE HARDWARE FOR COMMUNE DESIGN; \$13. COMMUNEDESIGN.COM



VINTAGE KILIM; PRICE UPON REQUEST. WOVEN.IS



DESK LAMP BY FELIX AUBLET FOR ECART INTERNATIONAL FROM RALPH PUCCI; \$3,240. RALPHPUCCI.NET



JUG BY KEVIN WILLIS FOR COMMUNE DESIGN; \$600. COMMUNEDESIGN.COM

“The California craft movement has always influenced our work.”
—Roman Alonso

A FORNASETTI PLATE AND A SHIP PHOTOGRAPH BY VICTORIA SAMBUNARIS ARE DISPLAYED IN JOHANKNECHT'S KITCHEN.

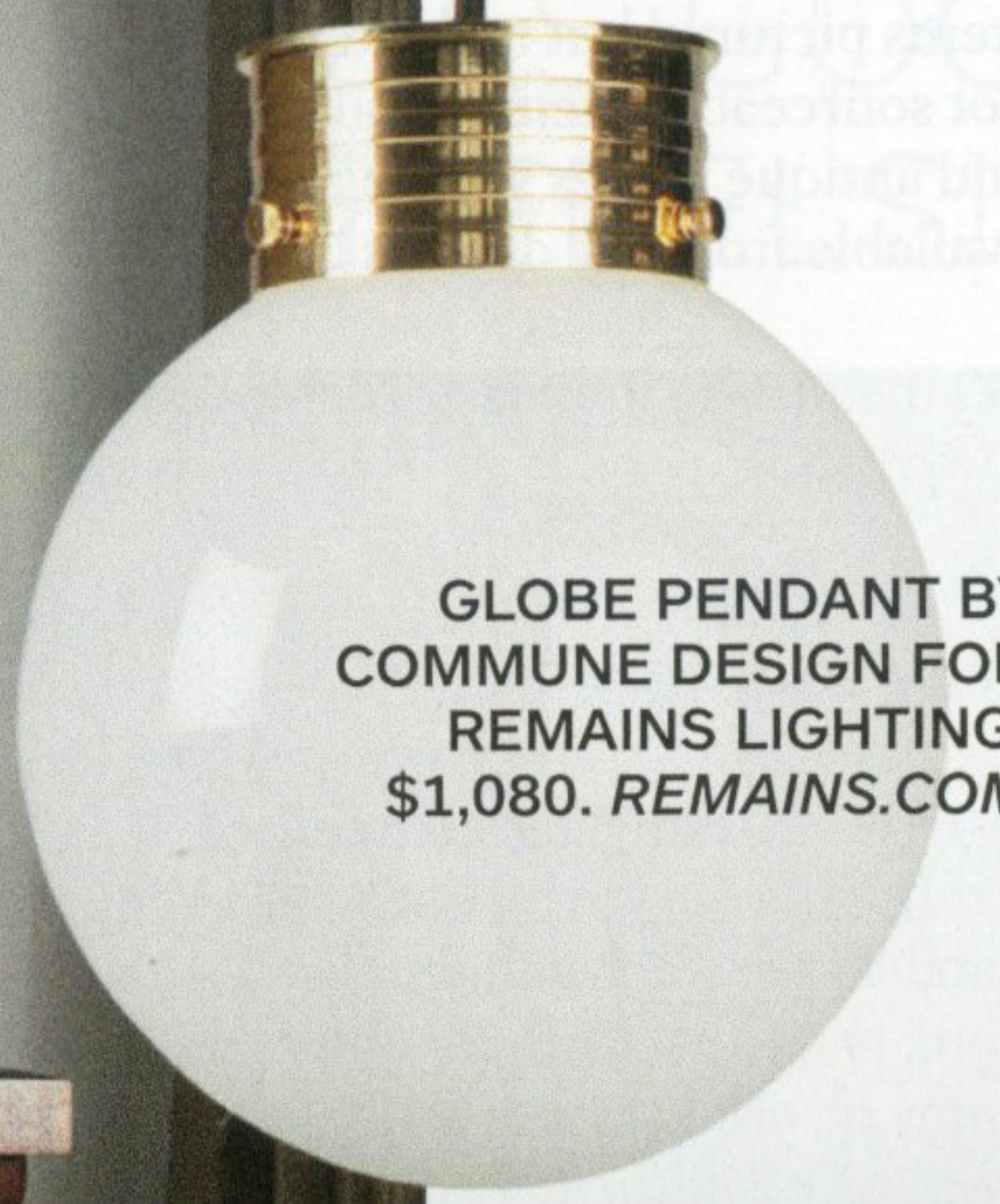


PRODUCED BY MADELINE O'MALLEY

A GILT-FRAMED PAINTING OF A SHIPWRECK STRIKES AN OFFBEAT NOTE IN JOHANKNECHT'S LIVING ROOM.



GLOBE PENDANT BY COMMUNE DESIGN FOR REMAINS LIGHTING; \$1,080. REMAINS.COM



INDIAN BEDCOVER; \$1,560. HOLLYWOODATHOME.COM



LARGE TEAPOT; \$240. HEATHCERAMICS.COM

PELT NO. 254; FROM \$110 PER GALLON. FARROW-BALL.COM



SUPER LAMP BY MARTINE BEDIN FOR MEMPHIS MILANO; \$3,500. 1STDIBS.COM

WISHBONE CHAIR BY HANS J. WEGNER FOR CARL HANSEN & SON; \$655. DWR.COM



HAND-BLOCK-PRINTED TABLECLOTH; FROM \$245. GREGORYPARKINSON.COM

“I put things together in an intuitive way. It's all about scale and composition.”
—Steven Johanknecht

INTERIORS: STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON; ALL OTHERS COURTESY OF RESPECTIVE COMPANIES