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Platt Favors Light Green Design

By Alison Hoppatrick Martin
Dressed in a crisp white shirt that accentuates his dark tan, and his hair slightly tousled, Campion Platt looks right at home sitting on the super-sized custom sofa he designed for the luxury room in the Hampton Cottage & Gardens Idea House in Sagaponock. The sofa's neutral organic bamboo fabric perfectly complements the beachy feel of the room and its soothing palette of blues, light pinks and beiges, but the Madison Avenue architect and interior designer is partial to a color of a different hue these days: light green.

"I'm doing a lot more light-green designs in our office right now, although my work has always been very organically based," said Mr. Platt, who over the last 20 years has elevated himself to the status of one of Architectural Digest magazine's "Top 100" interior architects in the world, thanks to his highly custom (and high-profile) residential and commercial designs for celebrities, commercial and institutional clients based in Manhattan, the Hamptons and around the globe.

"Right now, you can do a lot more with green architecture than you can on the interior side. Solar, geothermal and energy-efficient building techniques have even around for some years, but many of the green materials for interiors are still somewhat in the leap and lunge phase. There just isn't a lot available on the market yet, especially on the luxury end," he explained.

So, when Mr. Platt was asked to design a custom-neutral family room for the uber-green Idea House (which closed to the public last week and is now on the market for \$12.9 million), the designer decided to take a "light green" approach.

"Decorating in a 'green' fashion isn't necessarily about buying eco-friendly products; it's also about adopting re-use of found pieces," he said, taking a page from architect William McDonough's mending book, "Cradle-to-Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things."

The Cradle-to-Cradle concept prescribes that at the end of a product's useful life, the product will decompose easily with no negative environmental impact, or can be used as post-consumer material when recycled into a new product.

"So in this room, for example," he said, pointing out some of his own examples of adaptive re-use, "we loosely covered the floor-to-ceiling glass windows with hemp organic fishnet fabric, which we found on a fabricator's website from Maine, then trimmed it with eco-fabric in blues and coppers that we bought for \$3 a yard. And these three animal skin area rugs were made from remnants that would have probably gone in the trash otherwise."

Mr. Platt and his design team were also "very purposeful" about making sure that every single component used in the room's design came from within a 500-mile radius because they didn't want a lot of energy expended in transporting the pieces.

The designer, who has a healthy respect for tradition, and believes in the importance of craftsmanship, hopes that all of his work conveys a sense that a human hand was involved in its creation. To that end, Mr. Platt regularly commissions artisans to craft, one-of-a-kind furnishings for his specific projects.

For the Idea House, he tapped Vermont furniture sculptor Johnny Swing to create one of the family room's most talked-about pieces: a butterfly chair constructed from 1,500 Kennedy half dollars welded onto a metal frame. Local Hampton artisans were also employed for the project, including Mary Lee Eagan of Bridgehampton, who made the fabric curtains.

"As a designer, being involved in a showcase always gives you a chance to spread your wings and show what you can do. So, there are some expensive pieces in this room, but we were also trying to teach people how to be creative without spending a lot of money," he said. "Luxury doesn't necessarily mean something has to be expensive. It's about both materiality and content...it's about a quality of space."

While some architects and designers are identified with a specific look (think "prince of chits" designer Mario Botta and the "white box" architecture of Richard Meier), Mr. Platt is an exception whose designs are dictated by extensive client-generated wish lists.

"Although my own particular bent leans toward modern, no two of our projects are ever the same," he said, not

ing that in 20 percent of his projects he wears the "hybrid" hat of both architect and interior designer, while for the remaining 80 percent of projects he acts as one or the other.

"The most important thing is that there is a harmonious connection between the architecture and the interior. At the end of the day, people don't care about the infrastructure; what they care about are the creature comforts. Materials, colors, textures, lighting—all of that is hugely important," he said.

On the green front, Mr. Platt finds that more and more clients "have a real interest in being green...and recognize how important it is for our planet, but others see, 'If you can bring me something that aesthetically looks the same and is green, then fine.' In a few years, however, I think it will become second nature for people to want eco-products."

And that may be, in part, because of Mr. Platt himself. A savvy businessman and trend marketer, last year he launched his first textile collection, Merry Cloth, with the Jim Thompson fabric company. A few years ago, Mr. Platt—also a highly-regarded furniture designer—launched a furniture company that markets his Campaign and Crystalline hardware collections.

Now Mr. Platt is working on a number of collection lines with a "modern green luxury" theme, including textile designs with IBBT Textiles, lighting designs with Casella Lighting, custom hardware with Nanz, custom designer rugs with Rosalind, tabletop designs with Harvard China, and smaller "urban dweller" outdoor furniture for city terraces with McGee Gharrett.

A lover of nature whose work has largely been influenced by his travels around the world, especially in Bali and other parts of Asia, Mr. Platt is also working on a book about living in a skyscraper and the idea that "you can still have a visceral connection to nature, even if you're living 40 stories above the ground."

Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1950, Mr. Platt received an undergraduate degree in architecture from the University of Michigan and attended Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture.

Early in his career, he worked as an architect with Arquitectonica International in New York and reconstituted as a male model. After hanging out his own shingle two decades ago, Mr. Platt was a pioneer of the "boutique hotel" concept as co-developer of Chateau Marmont Hotel in Hollywood, and the Meyer Hotel and Majestic in New York. These splashy hospitality projects gained the attention of the media and design world, and won Mr. Platt's portfolio included highly customized residences for a number of celebrity clients, including Meg Ryan, Al Pacino, Bugs Waters, Conan O'Brien, Russell Simmons, and longtime friends such as Jay McInerney and his wife, magazine heiress and socialite Anne Hume.

A self-described "passionist, reliability workaholic," Mr. Platt was mentioned, along with Mr. McInerney and "Sex and the City" creator Candice Bushnell, as one of the real people who mingle with fictional characters in last season's "Eli" 2005 novel, "Lunar Park," a part-life memoir about the urban hedonistic times of the literary "beat pack" in the 1960s.

In the mid-1980s, Mr. Platt had a short-lived marriage to Alison Spout, a well-known New York and Miami-based interior architect. In 2004, he married Tatiana Gau, a former chief trust officer of Time Warner subsidiary America Online, who reportedly left the company with an estimated (but never confirmed) \$75 million in Time Warner stock. Her latest business is the social-tracking website Trendline.com, which she launched last year.



The Kennedy half-dollar chair and fishnet wall hangings featured in Mr. Platt's design.

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Interior designer Campion Platt

ALISON HOPKINSON MARTIN



A lithe power couple, whose names and faces are regularly splashed on "Page Six" and the most-read society page, the Platts generously support a number of charities, including Best Buddies International. A few weeks ago, the couple co-hosted, along with pals Jay McInerney and Anne Hume, the "Inaugural Best Buddies Hangover, Kick, Bitch, Whip" (yes, some 400+ letters to the McKinley estate designed by Christine McKinley et. Petra Cook).

In 2006, Forbes magazine named Platt—along with Melinda Gates of the Melinda & Bill Gates Foundation and Evelyn H. Lauder of the L'Oréal Luxe Cosmetics—as young women philanthropists who are stepping into the shoes once worn by the late Grand Dame of New York society, Brooke Astor.

The couple lives in a 4,000-sq-ft contemporary duplex in Suffolk (which was featured in the September 2007 issue of Architectural Digest), and also have homes in Palm Beach and Southampton.

"In Palm Beach, we live in a 1920s house that we decided to landmark and return back to its original state. This year we won a preservation award for it," said Mr. Platt, who was heading to Florida to finish the interior so that Architectural Digest could photograph the home next month.

Three years ago, the couple bought a waterfront "two-story clapboard shingle-style 1930s house" in Southampton, which they are in the process of renovating. Mr. Platt is excited about designing an "all green" modern home influenced by the cutting-edge building techniques and eco-friendly products used at the Idea House. Not a fan of the McMansions that dot the landscape of Florida's posh farms, the environmentally sensitive architect said the home will be—by Hampton standards at least—relatively modest in size.

Now that his work at the Idea House is finished, Mr. Platt is back to focusing on other ventures, including designing a "green village" at The Cavalier Sporting Club, located on the grounds of the historic Greenbrier Resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. Endorsing a "whole-house" design philosophy, Mr. Platt is consulting on architectural designs for environmentally responsible and energy-efficient custom homes (in post-and-beam, bungalow and mountain chalet styles), along with green in-

terior finishes and complementary eco-friendly furniture packages. Prices range from \$750,000 to \$1.5 million, he said.

He is also working on another luxury home development at the Turks & Caicos Sporting Club at Ambergris Caye. The beachfront 60-unit, run-of-the-mill custom "cottages" also will have unique green interiors and furnishings. It's already designing a home for Jay McInerney and Anne Hume on the island. Prices for these homes will start at around \$2 million.

Green may be the color of money, but designing a green or sustainable building with eco-friendly interiors doesn't have to be more expensive, Mr. Platt stressed.

"Whatever you spend initially in making your home more insulated and energy-efficient comes back to you in savings in the long run" in the form of lower energy bills, lower water bills, lower maintenance, and improved health of everyone—and everything—on this fragile planet, he said.

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