

NEW AMERICAN LUXURY

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PROFESSIONAL

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CHANGING FACES

Luxury-watch retailer
Westime opens a new West
Hollywood flagship store on
Sunset Boulevard

102
**HER CLAIM
TO FAME**

*Sofia Amoruso's
Hollywood store
turned into a
Miami interior
design career*

110
**OSCAR-
WORTHY**

*The new NYC
office of Oscar de
la Renta, by Meyer
Davis Studio*

118
**BAKU FLAME
TOWERS**

*DBA's inspired
interior work on
a new loan for an
ancient city*

66

CAMPION PLATT

I'm a modernist. These days, that's a hard word to discern. But I try to approach everything with a fresh beginning, without using history or past design as a crutch.

CAMPION PLATT (LEFT) IS THE CEO of Campione, a luxury clothing manufacturer. He is also the author of *The Art of the Deal*, a book on negotiation. He is married to Susan Platt and has two children. He lives in Los Angeles, California.

MADE *to* MEASURE

WORLD-RENOWNED ARCHITECT **CAMPION PLATT** EXPLORES THE CHANGING FACE OF LUXURY DESIGN AND REVEALS THE FIRST RULE OF CREATIVE INSPIRATION: GET OUT OF THE OFFICE.

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MY FATHER WAS AN INVENTOR-ENGINEER, AND MY MOTHER WAS AN ARTIST. Maybe that means my decision to become an architect and designer was somewhat organic. But I was a bit of a pragmatist when I was younger, and I really made the decision when I was about 15. At that point, I thought more about what that kind of education could give me: to become an architect, you have to know about math and science, you have to know about engineering, you have to know about culture and fine art. I was always building models, and it took a natural progression from there.

WHAT CAPTURES ME ABOUT ARCHITECTURE IS THE DESIGNER'S ABILITY TO CHOREOGRAPH AND PRODUCE. With some of the larger projects, it's a bit like making a movie. You have a story line, a beginning, and you execute it according to the narrative arc. Every design has to have a backstory, and that's the beauty of something that's made to order.

AT THE BEGINNING, THERE'S A GIVE AND TAKE WITH THE CLIENT. We try and find out where their interests lie. And often they're coming to me because they know that my firm does it all, from architecture to interiors. They also know that we'll try to look into their souls a little bit; there's an old adage in the industry that goes, "My architect is my shrink." We get to know our clients on a deep level, and that allows us to create a very personal theme.

FOR INSPIRATION, I TRAVEL. You can read style things and design magazines, but when you go into a project you get to the heart of the client's personality. On a foundational level, you really have to get out of the office to inform your taste. You can't rely on the web, because that's everyone else's information. At a certain point, you have to get that away and explore the world around you. See other people. See other cultures. Go to the Basque region of Spain and immerse yourself in Moorish design, if that's what it takes.

I'M A MODERNIST. These days, that's a hard word to discern. But I try to approach everything with a fresh beginning, without using history or past design as a crutch. They have their place, and they inform sensibilities, but dependence on them can inhibit the creation of something new. It helps to create a list about what kind of lives they want to live.

THE FIRM DOES A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF CUSTOM MILL-WORK. I've never used a kitchen or closet company in any of the work we've done, which is pretty unusual in this field. I find that kind of attention to detail is what people value. You walk into an apartment, and it's not about the utilities like air conditioning and gas; it's about the finer details.



CARRION FLATT'S TAKE ON LUXURY-MARKET TRENDS

THE BAD

"I'm not keen on the loss of unique design. When you go to many of the big-box shops, you find a lot of the same things. In many cases, they might come from the same foreign source. I think that's problematic because it begins to mute the voice of original creation."

THE GOOD

"The quality of luxury is being redefined, because exotic locales aren't just restricted to the wealthy these days. Luxury has generally been associated with that, but those experiences are more common now. That forces us to be creative about how we make something special. For us, that has meant imagining pieces that our client truly can't get anywhere else. About 80 percent of our work is custom-made for our clients, so we're creating all of their cabinetry, rugs, lighting fixtures, upholstery, etc. There's a schism, I think, between the old world of decorators and the new world of designers. Designing implies that you're manipulating everything."

THE BEST

"I'm excited that, despite our economy, the United States is looking inward once again. A lot of the rug mills and fabric mills are looking at producing here again, and they're trying to find economic ways of producing the same quality, but in America. It's a social thing as well. Many towns across this country were created because of industry. To have everything made overseas doesn't help our economy or our culture. We're bringing trade and commerce back home, and that's something to be proud of."





THE FEW TIMES WE DO COLLABORATE WITH OUTSIDE FIRMS, WE LOOK FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE OF THE SAME MENTALITY. Eagle Home Center comes to mind—we were working together on a very old townhouse, and we had to install-excavate the entire sub-basement of that home. The working relationship with the company becomes very important because it requires flexibility and understanding.

WE TRY VERY HARD TO DEVELOP TACTILE QUALITIES, whether it's in the fabrics, the stones, or the wood we use. I love working with great artisans who bring their own level of expertise to the table. The idea is to give them something they can hold and feel the texture of. If we're talking about upholstery, we're going to put different textures of leather in their hands. These are the nuances we think about.

OUR HUDSON RIVER VALLEY HOME IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF OUR PROCESS. It was a beautiful property upstate, about an hour from New York City. There was an original 1907 house on site, with sweeping views down to the Hudson. We went through a long period

of considering whether to renovate or move or build a completely new house. We went with the latter, and the goal was to re-create the sensibilities of the 1907 house with a modern function overlay. At that time, you would have had a bar/ler's area and formal dining room. In this case, we had an open kitchen next to the main living room. The husband loved a more antique look, so the next step was to create furniture that was stenoily old but had a contemporary function. We spent a lot of time on colors, textures, and fabrics. You're looking at a historical precedent for a home applied to a young, modern family.

FOR ME, LUXURY IS SYNONYMOUS WITH HAVING SOMETHING THAT IS ONE OF A KIND. Historically, objects had a specific function whereas now they're meant to do many different things. I'm a big fan of our Campaign Collection because it takes turn-of-the-20th-century aesthetic, but it also does multiple things (think a table becoming a chair). It's important to consider what luxury means in the present day, and that's the plumb line. ●