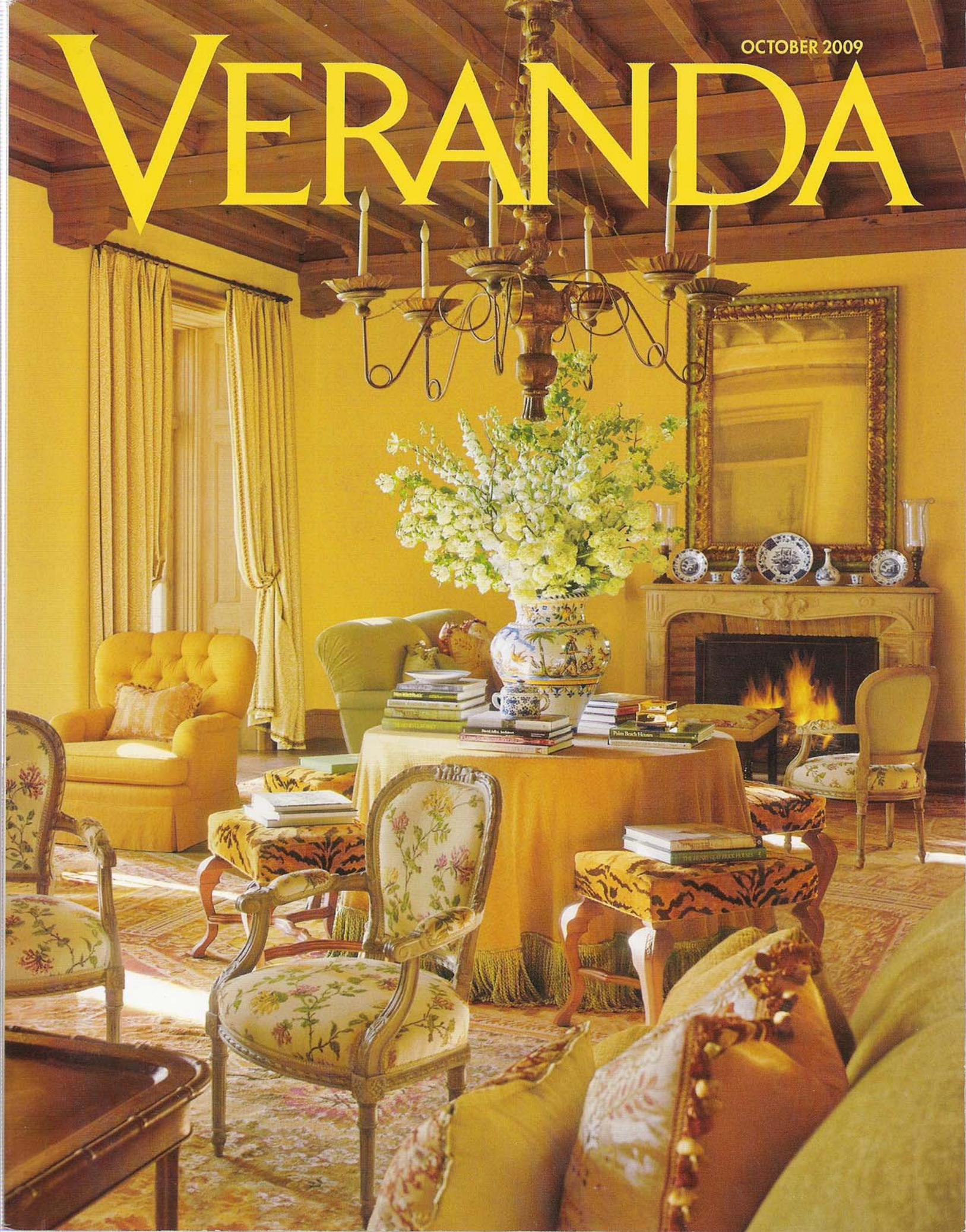


OCTOBER 2009

# VERANDA



MASTERS OF STYLE

# LAURA KIRAR

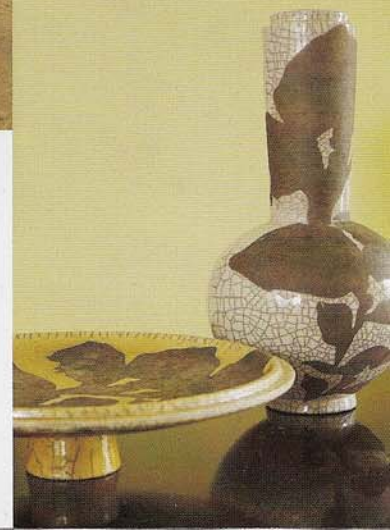
A TRU ARTIST



LEFT: Designer Laura Kirar sitting in her home in a barrel lounge chair she designed for McGuire. Other Kirar designs include Baker's Lien tray table in bronze finish with tooled leather removable tray top. BELOW: Kirar's accessories for Baker include Sakka footed bowl in flax and Sakka vase in chalk.

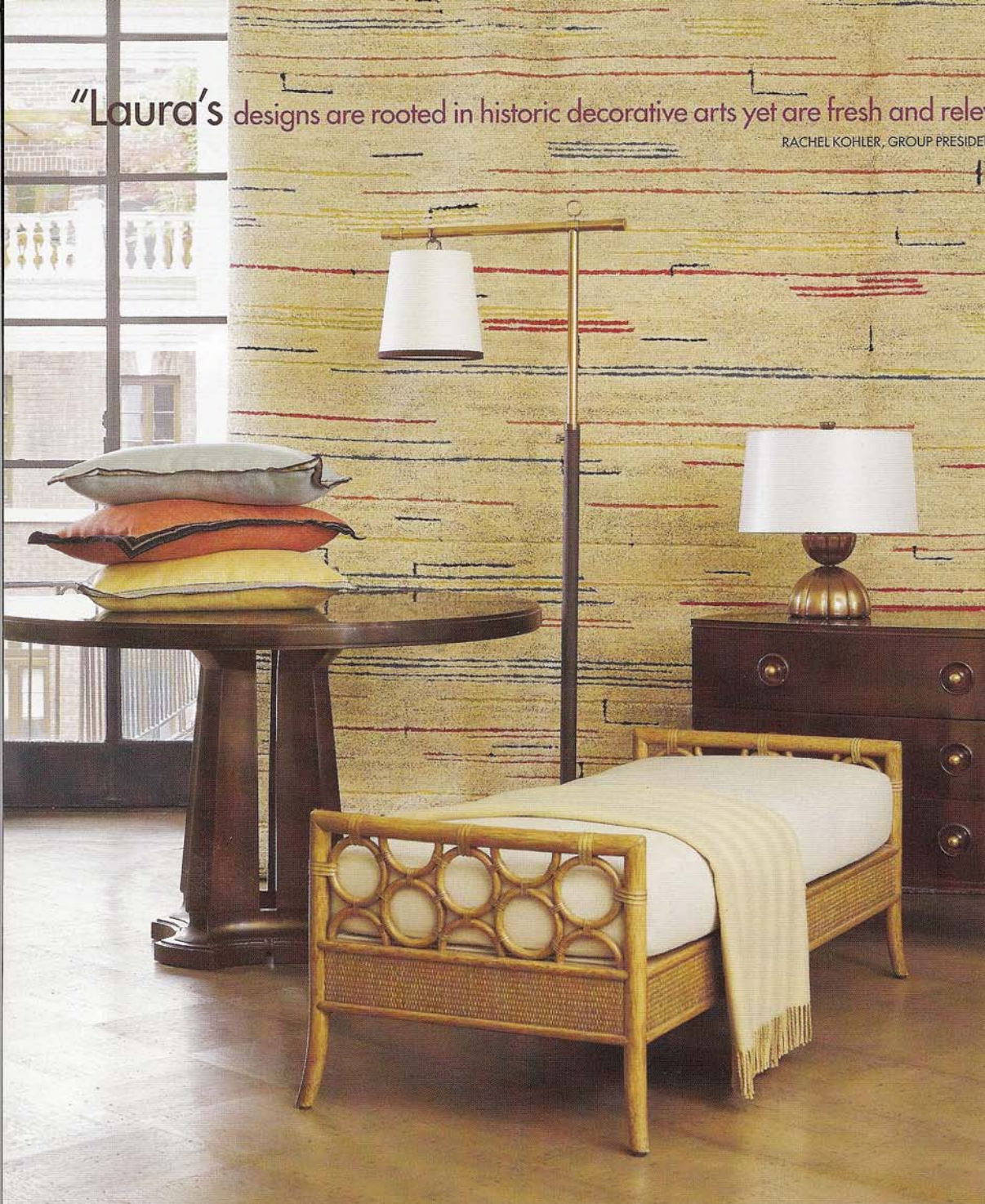
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TRIA GIOVANNI · PRODUCED BY DEBORAH SANDERS AND JILL BROWN  
TEXT BY CATHERINE LEE DAVIS · STYLED BY SARAH BLOESCH

Growing up in an outlying Chicago suburb, Laura Kirar was full of creativity, constantly drawing, painting and making things “her own” at an early age. As the founder and creator of two companies—Laura Kirar TRUdesign, a New York-based firm specializing in high-end interior design, and LKDL, which focuses on product design and licensing—she has built a reputation for refined spaces and objects that emphasize classic proportions and a unique manipulation of materials. Her hands-on approach to design has allowed her



"Laura's designs are rooted in historic decorative arts yet are fresh and relevant for today."

RACHEL KOHLER, GROUP PRESIDENT - INTERIORS, KOHLER CO.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:  
Linen and Ribbon pillows  
on Noir dining table,  
Peony floor lamp with  
leather-wrapped column,  
Mellon table lamp on  
Poignet bachelor's chest,  
all designed by Laura Kirar  
for Baker. Laura Kirar's  
woven caning and rattan  
bench for McGuire  
in pecan finish with  
Gradient throw for Baker.  
*Background, Fragment*  
rug by Laura Kirar for  
Tufenkian. BELOW: Kallista's  
Vir Stil towel bar, hook and  
sconce on Impressions tile  
collection for Ann Sacks,  
all by designer Laura Kirar.

to create what she calls "functional art" and, inevitably, her own formula for success.

Her first "interiors project" was her own childhood bedroom, using a Sharpie to draw patterns and poetry to disguise girlishly sweet gingham wallpaper. She attended the prestigious School of the Art Institute of Chicago, pursuing an interest in fine arts, but exposure to the urban setting prompted her architectural awakening and Kirar decided on a three-dimensional approach, studying both interior architecture and sculpture. She experimented with metal, wood and found materials to create large-scale, illuminated standing objects that evolved into floor lamps. After selling a few, she received a private commission to make her first chair, thus launching her career in furniture design.

In 1992, Kirar joined the design studio of Holly Hunt in Chicago, followed by a move to New York to work for Ralph Lauren Home. After three years of product design with Jed Johnson & Associates, she left to start her first project, decorating a friend's apartment.



To her own surprise, she had a handful of clients within three months. In 1999, she founded TRUdesign with a small office and five employees. "I always thought I would have my own business, but I never imagined that it would happen so soon. I was at a point in my life where I knew I needed to do something different, so I took a leap of faith."

Kirar has worked on varied residential projects for a wide array of clients—from a traditional country estate for a financial guru to a modern New York pied-à-terre for a composer. One of her earliest retail projects was the Jenne Maag store, a high-end boutique in Manhattan's NoLita neighborhood, which won awards for its outstanding design. The recognition attracted the attention of Starwood Hotels, for whom Kirar produced interiors and branding work for Sheraton and Westin hotels. "If there is a thread that connects all her projects, it's attention to subtle detail and an overall harmony of the spaces," says Richard Frazier, her husband of nine years. A furniture and antiques connoisseur, he



ABOVE: Kallista's Vir Stil basin set, shower dome and showerhead on Ann Sacks' Impressions collection tile, L'eau, in pucker by Kirar. LEFT: Baker's Sensei lounge chair and sofa, Peony table lamp in statuary bronze finish atop McGuire's open-end table and McGuire's dining armchair atop Baker's Cannelé cocktail table with travertine marble, all by Kirar. Background, Kirar's Abstract rug for Tufenkian.



# THE CLASSICS

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heads business development for TRU.

While her interior design firm flourished, Kirar never strayed from her passion for product design and a deep appreciation for materials and craftsmanship. Long hours spent in the sculpture studio gave her an intimate understanding of decorative arts. She began her product design work in the commercial arena, creating her first seating collection with Dennis Miller, followed by contracts with Carnegie Fabrics, Boyd Lighting, David Edward and Tuohy. In 2003, she founded Laura Kirar Design Licensing (LKDL) after securing her largest contract with the Kohler Company, creating concurrent collections for all four brands within the company's Interiors Group.

Her first collaboration with Kohler, Kallista's Vir Stil, brought contemporary forms to bath fixtures and faucetry, while her Impressions tile for Ann Sacks are characterized by organic, hand-drawn patterns and textures. Her casual furniture for McGuire introduced unique silhouettes in classic materials such as rattan, wood and antique bronze. For Baker, Kirar designed a complete lifestyle collection of over 150 pieces—upholstery, lighting, case goods, rugs, accessories—that incorporated the understated elements of her signature style. Says Kirar, "It was that 1940s quintessential Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall kind of chic. There must be an elegant balance."

In addition, Kirar will be introducing two new rug collections: one for Tufenkian this fall and Kyle Bunting next spring. With Arteriors, she will launch its first designer collection of lighting and decorative accessories.

Two current Manhattan projects include an Upper West Side townhouse and a Corcoran Sunshine Tower model, as well as a major restoration of a Moorish hacienda in Mexico she recently purchased with her husband.

Despite her busy schedule, Kirar has future plans for wallpaper, outdoor furniture, a restaurant, spa and hotel work. "I never see her more alive or engaged than when she's engrossed in a project," says Frazier, "and creative sparks are flying." □

[laurakirar.com](http://laurakirar.com)