

\* The Guide to Modern Design

# Metropolitan Home

25th Anniversary

## Modern Made Easy!

## Hot Tips and Chic Shortcuts

### Small-Space Strategies

### Collecting: Modernist Classics

### Furniture That Works



\* Stylish in Seattle, p.116

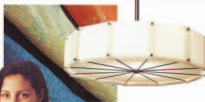
who's next

## On the Rise: Laura Kirar

With an extensive line of furnishings for Baker coming out this fall, Laura Kirar is ready for her close-up. By Flannery Hoard

Get ready to add another name to your celebrity-designer list (if you keep one). With debut collections for a major segment of the Baker-Kohler group (McGuire, Baker furniture and Kallista bathroom fittings) now reaching the marketplace, Laura Kirar, a 36-year-old native of Oak Lawn, Illinois, will be a force to reckon with. Kirar, an interior as well as product designer, is not widely known, but her latest work is certain to change that.

Kirar began her career at Holly Hunt, after studying sculpture and interior architecture at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Hunt, a preeminent purveyor of luxurious contemporary furnishings to the design trade, was just starting to develop her own products, and Kirar was able to put her artistic background to use, drawing furniture and creating what she refers to as "functional sculpture." (She also met her future husband, Richard Frasier, there.) After 3½ years, she moved to New York to work for Ralph Lauren, where she was able to try her hand at designing on a smaller scale, creating tabletop items. She left Lauren for a job at top interior design firm Jed Johnson Associates. "I'd actually sent them my résumé when I moved to New York—it only took them a year and a half to call



From top: A clean-lined wreath characterizes Kirar's work in this Manhattan residence; her Art of Light table collection for Carnegie was inspired by natural patterns (Carpenter, \$495; bed, \$495; table, \$495); Kirar's collection for Baker includes a dining table (Baker, \$2,200); Kirar's collection for Baker includes a dining table (Baker, \$2,200); Kirar's collection for Baker includes a dining table (Baker, \$2,200).

more who's next

me back," she jokes. Eventually, the firm gave her complete project responsibility; her first solo effort, the Manhattan restaurant Fresco, turned into a springboard for her career. "People started calling and asking me to redo their apartments," Kirar says. "Without really trying, I found myself with five interior clients and just thought, 'Well, I guess it's time to go out on my own.'"

In 1998, she founded The Design. The name means perfectly level, an essential ingredient in designing with integrity, a philosophy that permeates her work. A few years ago, her company was hired to develop a new spa concept for Starwood and Westin hotels, and it was the process of finding all the plumbing that led Kirar to Kohler. After a visit there, she sent her boss a thank-you note and mentioned that she would really be interested in working together on a line. The note made its way to the general manager of Kallista, one of Kohler's companies. Kirar's Viri collection for Kallista debuted in 2005. Kirar's background in sculpture lends itself to work that is beautifully crafted as well as functional. With lighting, fabric and furniture lines at Boyd, Carnegie and Dennis Miller, respectively, she has a strong track



record in several different areas of design. However, it is her work for the Kohler companies—Kallista, McGuire and Baker Furniture—that brings her name to the forefront. It's clear that the Kohler-Kirar connection has a lot of chemistry. When asked what prompted such an extensive collaboration, Rachel Kohler, group president of Kohler Interiors, explains that it was the combination of creativity, intelligence, practicality and passion that led them to trust Kirar with creating three collections for them. "Even though she may not have had as much name recognition as other designers," says Kohler, "we just thought that her strength in these areas was so profound that everyone would readily embrace her sensibility." ❖ See Resources, far page.



From top: Custom-designed by Kirar, this Powell-inspired desk and shelving system bring a touch of color to a client's home-office-cum-music-studio; the graphic, rattan dining chair, upholstered in a basic linen weave from Kirar's collection for McGuire, demonstrates her attention to craftsmanship and elegant use of materials (\$1,099); Kohler Interiors' 2005 line of her dining collection for Dennis Miller Associates, released in 2005, the Zebulon sofa incorporates modern sophistication with classic comfort (\$5,499; dennisml.com)

