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Platt Favors Light Green Design

By Aimee Fitzpatrick Martin

Dressed in a crisp white shirt that accentuates his dark tan, and his hair slightly tousled, Camplon Platt looks right at home sitting on the super-sized custom sofa he designed for the family room in the Hamptons Cottages & Gardens Idea House in Sagaponack. 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.

"We're doing a lot more luxe-green eco 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 been around for some years, but many of the green materials for interiors are still somewhat in the hemp and hippy 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 carbon-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 adaptive re-use of found pieces," he said, taking a page from architect William McDonough's trendsetting 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 entirely 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 fisherman's website from Maine, then trimmed it with eco-fabric in linens and cotton 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 craftwork, 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 upscale 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 Hamptons artisans were also employed for the project, including Mary Lee Esquiza of Bridgehampton, who made the fishnet curtains.

"As a designer, being involved in a showhouse always gives you a chance to spread your wings and show what you can do. Yes, 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 context ... It's about a quality of space."

While some architects and designers are identified with a specific look (think "prince of chintz" designer Mario Buatta 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 70 percent of his projects he wears the "hybrid" hat of both architect and interior designer, while for the remaining 30 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 interiors. 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 say, '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 brand marketer, last year he launched his first textile collection, Metro 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 furniture collections.

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

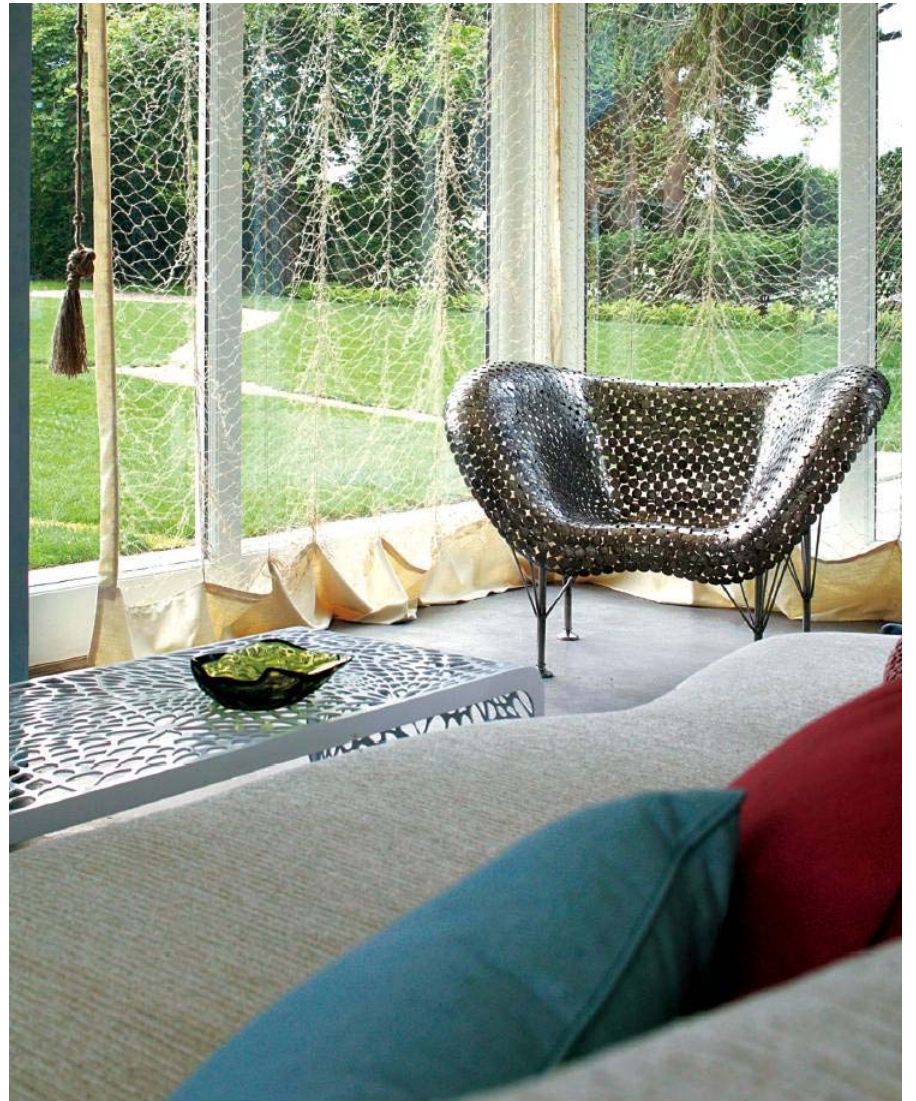
A lover of nature whose work has largely been influenced by his travels around the world, especially in Bali and other parts of Asia, Mr. Platt is also working on a book about living in a skyscraper and the idea that "you can still have a visceral connection to nature, even if you're living 40 stories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

Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1958, 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 moonlighted 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 Mercer Hotel and MercBar in New York. These splashy hospitality projects gained the attention of the media and design world, and soon Mr. Platt's portfolio included highly customized residences for a number of celebrity clients, including Meg Ryan, Al Pacino, Roger Waters, Conan O'Brien, Russell Simmons, and longtime friends author Jay McInerney and his wife, magazine heiress/socialite Anne Hearst.

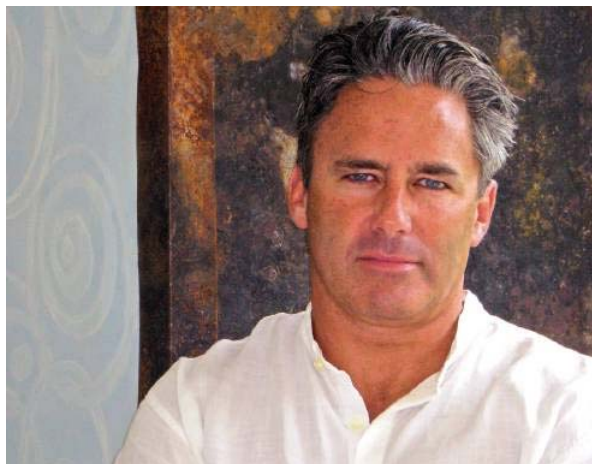
A self-described "prescient celebrity scene-maker," Mr. Platt was mentioned, along with Mr. McInerney and "Sex and the City" creator Candace Bushnell, as one of the real people who mingle with fictional characters in Bret Easton Ellis' 2005 novel, "Lunar Park," a part-faux memoir about the urban hedonistic times of the literary "brat pack" in the 1980s.

In the mid-1980s, Mr. Platt had a short-lived marriage to Alison Spear, 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 brainchild is the social-tracking website FameGame.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 Camplon Platt

AIMEE FITZPATRICK MARTIN

A true power couple, whose names and faces are regularly splashed on "Page Six" and the must-read society pages, 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 Hearst, the "Inaugural Best Buddies Hamptons Beach Bash," which drew some 400 A-listers to the McInerney estate (designed by Christie Brinkley's ex, Peter Cook).

In 2006, Forbes magazine touted Tatiana—along with Melinda Gates of the Melinda & Bill Gates Foundation and Evelyn H. Lauder of the Estee Lauder Companies—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-square-foot contemporary duplex in SoHo (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 1926 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 interiors so that Architectural Digest could photograph the home next month.

Three years ago, the couple bought a waterview "two-story clapboard shingle-style 1950s 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 former potato farms, the environmentally sensitive architect said the home will be—by Hamptons 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 Greenbrier Sporting Club, located on the grounds of the historic Greenbrier Resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. Embracing 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 turnkey home development at the Turks & Caicos Sporting Club at Ambergris Cay. The beachfront 60-unit, turn-key custom "cottages" also will have unique green interiors and furnishings. He's already designing a home for Jay McInerney and Anne Hearst on the Island Prices for those 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 spades 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.