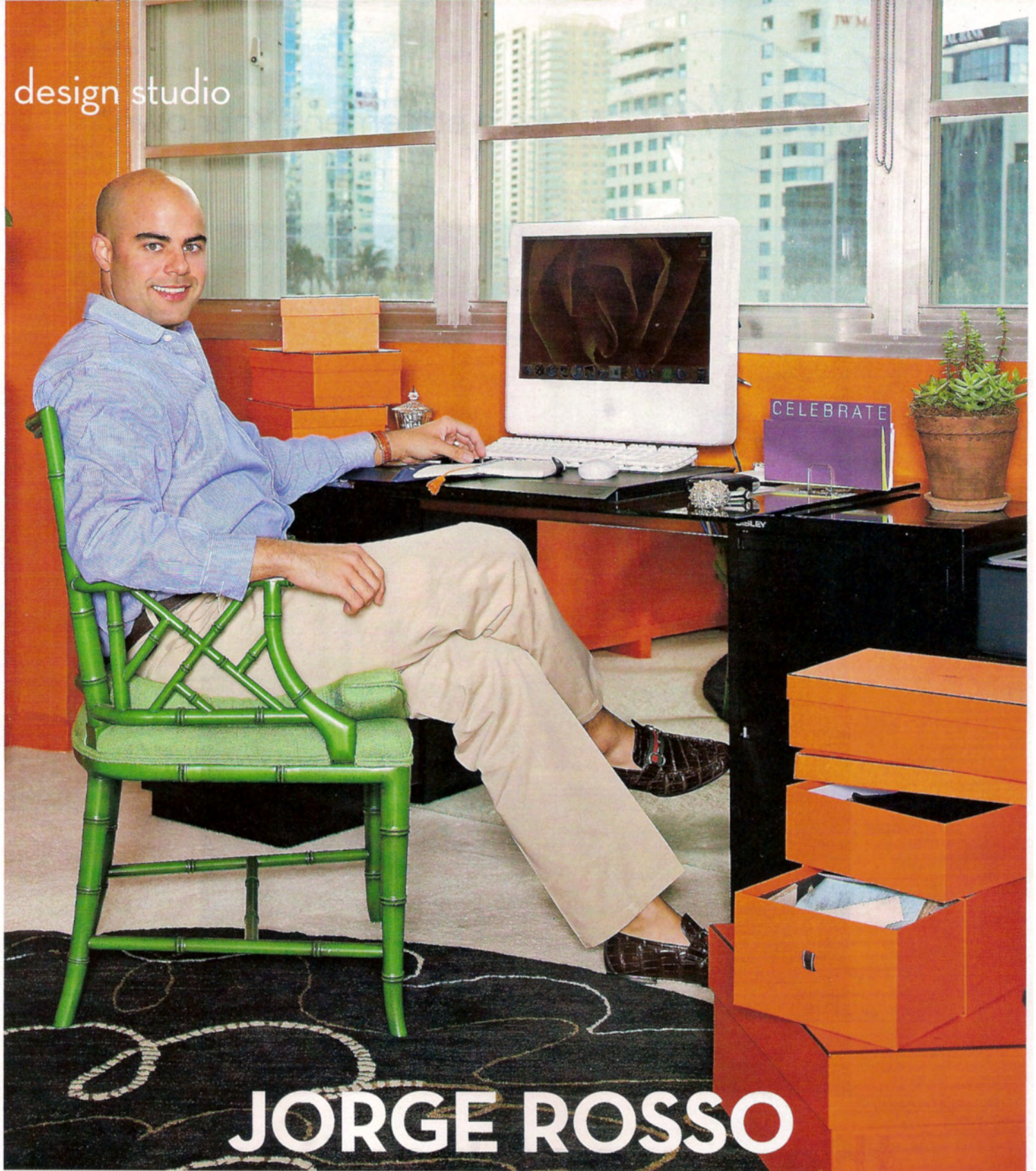


HOME & DESIGN

RECORDER ENTERTAINING GARDENING
The Miami Herald



design studio



JORGE ROSSO

A MODERN-DAY DESIGNER/ARCHITECT WHOSE PHILOSOPHIES ARE STEEPED IN TRADITION DISCUSSES HIS FAVORITE FABRIC, GREEN DESIGN AND WHY DESIGNERS NEED TO LOOK A BEYOND A SIGNATURE STYLE.

By Francesca Cruz | Photography by Mark Roskams

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—JORGE ROSSO

Being an innovator and trying to merge these two crafts, architecture with interior design, have you had any apprehension from the old guard?

No, not really. When I'm hired in an interior design capacity I don't step on the architect's toes and visa versa. I'll look at an architectural layout and make my opinions based on how I'm going to furnish a room and how I want it to feel without infringing on someone else's vision. Collaboration is key.

How do you work with sentimental design?

A lot of my clients, myself included, collect sentimental things. Whether it's items we become endeared to that are handed down from the family, tchotchkes, objects purchased while on travel, your grandmother's favorite reading chair...all of that has value. I like to work these pieces into the décor.

What era do you find most influences your work?

The '30s-'50s, I love the French style of that era. A lot of beautifully saturated colors, slight touches of Deco, interesting elements, concise detailing; I come from a Spanish background so I am very much influenced by the European symmetry, proportion, use of color and balance. I also love American designers of that time, Elsie De Wolfe, Billy Baldwin, Dorothy Draper and Billy Haines. I view interior design as an extension of the building and its architecture.

What does it cost per room to design a home?

It varies. I like to tailor [the cost] based on the client's budget. I've done everything from high-end to just recently the one-bedroom apartment of a friend for \$10,000. Again, it varies.

How has growing up in two tropical paradises, Puerto Rico and Miami, influenced your taste?

I believe the answer is color.

What is most important to you, aesthetic appeal or comfort?

That's a bit of an unfair question because as a designer our job is to take that real comfort and functionality and give it that aesthetic appeal. You don't have to sacrifice aesthetic appeal to have comfort. I'll quote Elsie De Wolfe: 'Functionality, functionality and functionality.'

What has been your biggest professional challenge to date?

I come across them every day. I believe a house is not an expression of my taste, and I need to look beyond what I love. It's about what's right for the client. An interior designer needs to look beyond a signature style.

What is the next big thing in design?

Look to Billy Haines, Billy Baldwin, Dorothy Draper and those designers. Everything is cyclical, and I think the future is taking inspiration from the past and updating it for the way we live today.

Everyone seems to be going green. How do you incorporate nature into your designs?

I love bringing the outdoors in. We live in Florida. Our climate, views and landscape lend themselves to indoor/outdoor living. Sunlight, fresh air, I incorporate all of that as much as possible. I also prefer natural materials like bronze, real wood and stone. I guess my idea on materials is that I like things to look of the era they were made.

Is there a favorite recurring theme in your work or shapes and patterns that you are more inclined toward?

Oh yes, the slipper armless chair is one. I think that is one of the



Rosso stores his fabric samples in Hermes boxes.

greatest designs ever. I like Parsons tables. I love, for Florida, anything faux bamboo, which was very in vogue in the 1960s. Something I do a lot in my interiors is a saturation of one particular shade of color, and I also love drapery. Window treatments are very important for light control as well as for privacy. It helps to give a room richness and that extra finish.

When you feel creatively blocked how do you reconnect with the muses?

I travel and experience other cultures. Inspiration can come from anything, whether it be a film, an image or a book.

What is your favorite fabric right now?

I love textured cotton solids, and my absolute favorite right now is a high-tech fabric that Maharam is doing called the Ready to Wear Collection, which is inspired by couture.

If someone was to hire you as their architect/interior designer what kind of numbers would they be looking at?

I usually do a small up-front design fee to get the idea going. Then I do a presentation. After the presentation comes the purchasing phase, and that is where I make a commission structure based on my net cost. I really like to be fair in my pricing. I really love design, and the most important thing is that the clients are happy. I want them to walk away feeling good about this.

You have been touted as the Boy Wonder of interior design and have become a force to reckon with in this business, so now it's time to name some names...

My clients are very private. They don't like to be named, and I respect that. I get very involved in people's lives and 99.9 percent of my clients end up becoming personal friends, so I like to protect their privacy and honor that privilege.

For more information: Rosso-ubarri.com