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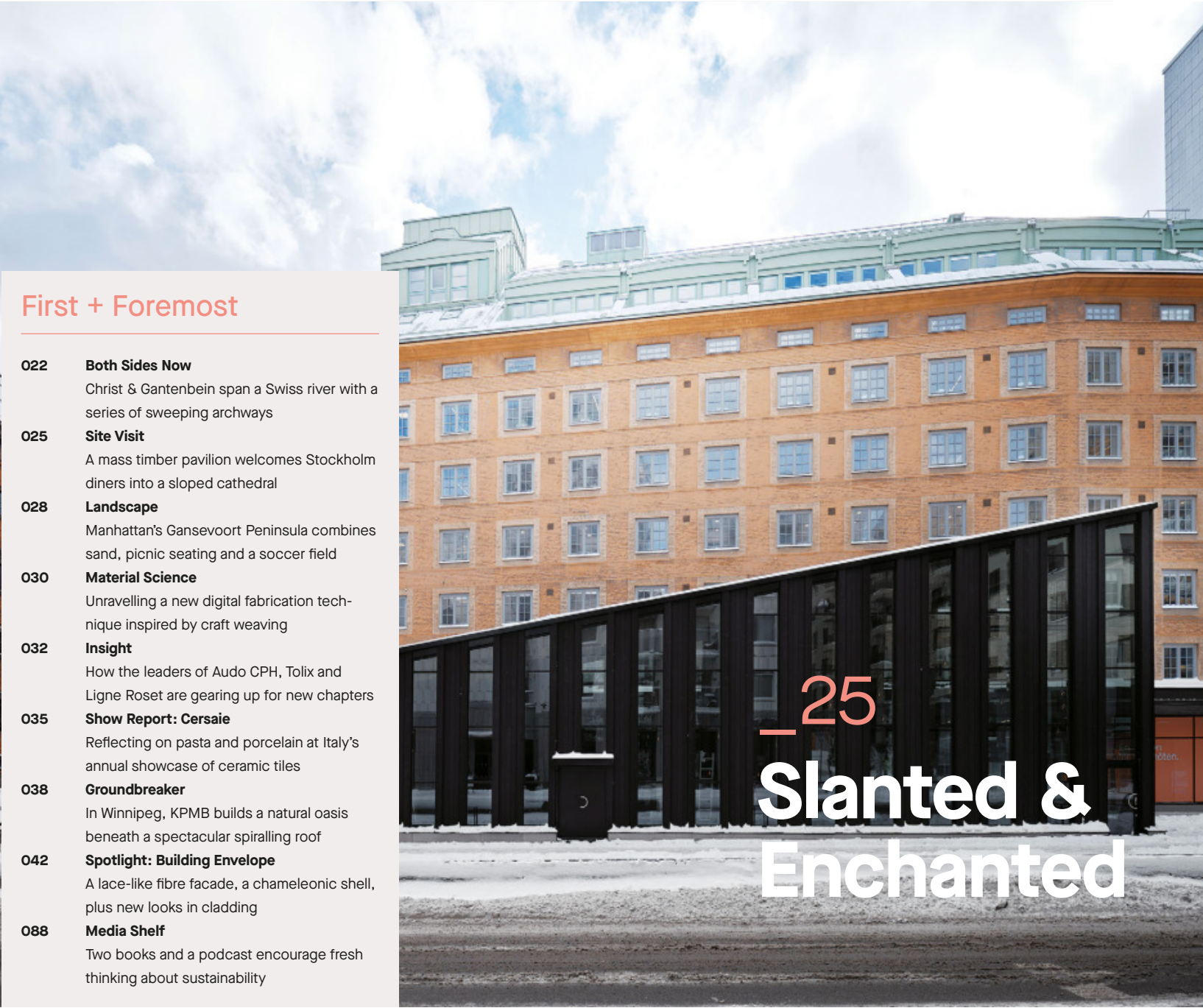
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Craft Narrative's home for two farmer brothers in India deftly harmonizes indoor and outdoor spaces. Photo by Ekansh Goel

On the cover: A glimpse into the house that Mork-Ulnes designed for Alison and Bruce Damonte, who crafted its interiors and captured it all in photographs, respectively.



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PHOTO BY EMIL FAGANDER (SLANTED & ENCHANTED)

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From the ashes of a fire, Mork-Ulness Architects crafts a gable-roofed house in San Francisco in collaboration with its clients — who boast a prodigious collection of art and furniture

Story by Rachel Gallaher
Photography by Bruce Damonte

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The Silver Linings House fits into its San Francisco neighbourhood of Bernal Heights, yet stands out with a black-stained cedar facade and a roof that seems to float above a wide, inset band of glazing.



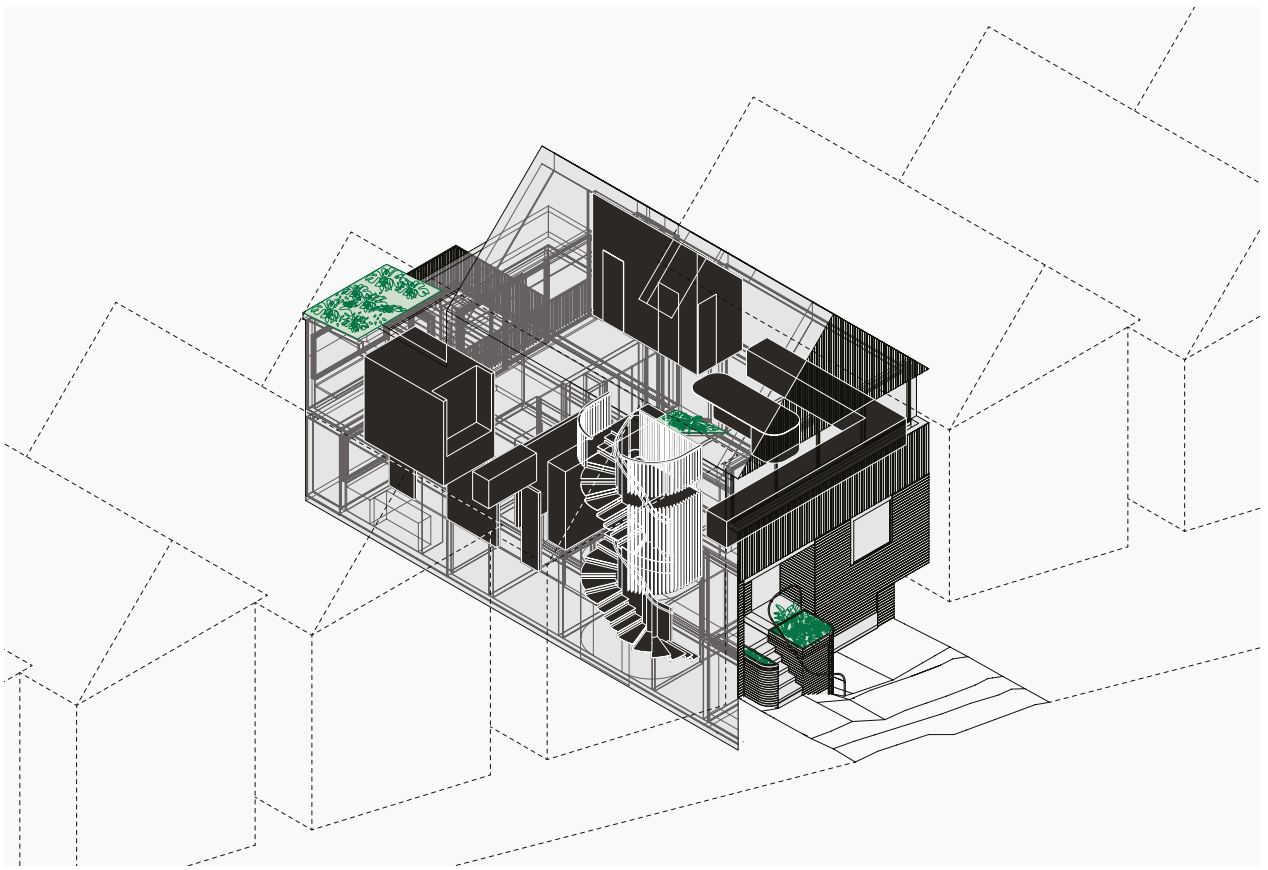


TOP: Alison Damonte, one of the clients, designed the home's built-in furniture. Architect-artist Johanna Grawunder's Disky 7 pendant light hangs above the kitchen island; Dirk van der Kooij's recycled plastic table is topped with Pucci de Rossi's candelabra.

ABOVE LEFT: A sculptural stair with half-polished chrome slats connects the top level to the second storey. The cabinet's asymmetrical contour is a key motif.

RIGHT: The exuberant powder room on the top level is wrapped in *trompe l'oeil* wallpaper by Nobilis and features a custom mirror by Andrew Molleur, a sink by Lusso Stone and faucet by Lacava.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Across from the kitchen, the living area looks onto a patio and the hills of San Francisco beyond. The burlwood coffee table is a Jean Claude Mahey design, acquired from a French vintage dealer in Marrakesh.



In 2010, after years of renting apartments in San Francisco, Bruce and Alison Damonte were finally in a position to buy a house. The creative couple (Alison is an interior designer with a namesake studio and Bruce is an architectural photographer) started looking that fall, and by the beginning of November, they viewed a modest, one-storey home in Bernal Heights that made an impression. Surrounded by quintessential Victorian and Edwardian styles, the flat-roofed wooden structure, built in 1908 for a roofer and his family of five, stood out on the steep San Francisco street.

“The reality was that, even at that point, the real estate market in the city was tough,” Bruce says. “There were only a few neighbourhoods with anything in our price range. When we happened across this house, it was the first one that felt like a step up for us.” The location, layout and historic charm were all convincing factors; the Damontes purchased it within a couple weeks of their viewing. While there was much to love about their new abode, the couple wanted to make a few renovations, so they turned to close friends Casper and Lexie Mork-Ulnes of San Francisco— and Oslo-based Mork-Ulnes Architects.

“Bruce and Alison first came to us to renovate the existing Edwardian kitchen and bathroom,” says Casper Mork-Ulnes, who met Bruce more than 20 years ago (at the time, Bruce worked with Mork-Ulnes’s brother in the management consulting field). This initial brief would end up expanding beyond what both clients and architects could ever predict. By 2017, Mork-Ulnes and the Damontes were deep in the redesign process when tragedy struck. On Christmas Eve, a devastating fire, the result of a next-door motorcycle explosion, caused extensive heat and smoke damage to Bruce and Alison’s home. They escaped unharmed but suddenly faced the prospect of rebuilding. “We had been talking to Casper about the design for years, but the fire was a big catalyst — the house was

red-tagged, so we had to do something about it,” Alison explains. That’s when the scope grew to a full-gut remodel, including the addition of a garage and a third storey.

The three-bedroom residence, totalling 261.8 square metres, is aptly called the Silver Lining House. Designed as a gallery for the Damontes’ rich collection of art and furniture, it doubles as a laboratory of sorts for the couple’s creative projects. From the outside, the home is a study in contrasts. It was important to everyone involved that it fit within the context of the neighborhood, but the homeowners also hoped for something modern. Alison wanted a dark facade, so Mork-Ulnes clad the gabled three-storey in black-stained cedar.

“We took cues from the traditional San Francisco neighbourhood, using a similar roof form, entry and massing as the Victorian and Edwardian homes





OPPOSITE: This detail of the spiral staircase shows how it pulls sunshine from a rooftop skylight all the way down to the first floor. The Crisp sconces are from RBW.

RIGHT: In the second-level “ladies’ lounge,” a disco ball by Yolanda “Yo Yo” Baker steals the scene. The space is also furnished with a Patterson Flynn rug, a bulbous wood table by Alma Allen, vintage Italian chairs and a credenza by USM Haller.



surrounding it,” the architect says. Aside from the dark exterior — which turns Victorian design elements into subtle patterning — large bands of windows add a graphic, contemporary punch.

Programmatically, the house has a “flipped” floor plan; the primary suite occupies the lowest level, with a lushly planted outdoor area just outside a sliding glass door. “It’s very peaceful,” Mork-Ulnes says. “You don’t hear city noise, and the room looks out onto a beautiful private garden.” The second level, where one enters the house, holds the guest suite, a home office, two bathrooms, and spaces for entertaining. One highlight is what Alison calls the “ladies’ lounge,” which features vintage Italian chairs clustered around an amoebic Alma Allen wooden table. Alison loves disco balls, so a black version crafted by Yolanda “Yo Yo” Baker, the last disco ball-maker in the U.S., hangs in the corner.

The top floor — kitchen, dining room, powder room and outdoor area — provides sweeping views of San Francisco’s Mission District and Twin Peaks to the west and a more intimate look at Bernal Heights to the east. “I knew we would have a view looking towards the hills,” Bruce says, “but when we moved in, I realized that, in the other direction, we have a view of our hill. If you sit at the head of the dining room table, you can enjoy both, and the scale change is very beautiful.”

A curving, sculptural staircase ties the three floors together and funnels light from the third-floor skylight through the entire volume. Its half-polished chrome slats reflect the light, bouncing it around to create the feeling of being in a disco ball. Original out-of-the-box moments like this, a hallmark of Alison’s design style, abound throughout the house. The Damontes share an affinity for Italian postmodernism, colour and pattern. Saturated graphic wallpapers, bold avant-garde lighting and modern art mix with vintage and contemporary furniture, including such standout pieces as the recycled-plastic dining

BELOW: The back of the Silver Linings House features a series of tiered, landscaped terraces.

table by Dirk van der Kooij and the custom disc light installation by Johanna Grawunder that hangs above the kitchen island.

Remarkably, Alison designed most of the home’s impeccable built-in furniture, including the bathroom, kitchen and bar cabinetry and their hardware. In her deft hands — and set against the crisp, minimal lines of Mork-Ulnes’ architecture — the mélange of items is playful yet elevated and the interiors capture the resilience and creativity of the Damontes’ lives. “I am pretty fearless when it comes to design,” Alison says. “That, combined with Bruce’s tenacity to have the best, was a really powerful combination for the house.” **AZ**

