

# LUXURY HOME

*quarterly*



TIMELESS  
DESIGNS... *for kids*

SELLING TORONTO  
*Canada's booming condo market*

**+** A PEEK INSIDE *Rachel Ashwell's*  
*'Shabby Chic' master bedroom*





#### LAKE FOREST PARK

Located on a secluded 3.5-acre wooded site about 25 miles north of Seattle, this 1950s Pacific Northwest contemporary house has been completely renovated while retaining its original spirit. With extensive new windows and glazed roof monitors, the house now appears to be a glass pavilion in the forest.




## FINNE Architects

Nils Finne, founder of Seattle's FINNE Architects, isn't fond of the word "style"—at least in terms of describing his firm's aesthetic. "When you talk about having a specific style, I feel like it limits you, pigeonholes you," he says. "If the architecture is really good, you can't really understand it via a buzzword like 'traditional' or 'postmodern.' I think most people would consider my work modern. There's a high level of craft, with warm textures and natural materials. I use lots of wood, custom cabinets, custom light fixtures, custom steel work. So it's not the sterile aesthetic typical of a lot of modern design."

TEXT BY **DAVID HUDNALL**  
PHOTOS BY **BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER**





*"By working on old homes you learn lessons you can apply to new homes. You learn about the vulnerability of construction, and that informs our designs of new structures."*

NILS FINNE, FOUNDER

**SPACIOUS & ILLUMINATED**

The main living and dining spaces have been slightly enlarged, and high windows have been added to bring soft natural light to the entire space. The entry door is a custom piece made of Douglas fir and etched glass, and the room features Hans Wegner wing chairs.

Finne, who was raised in Norway, established FINNE Architects in Santa Monica, in 1991. Previously, he had served as a senior associate at Richard Meier and Partners, where he worked on the Getty Center in Los Angeles, a \$1 billion project. He steadily gained business in Los Angeles and the Pacific Northwest, and in 1995 he moved the firm up to Seattle in order to focus on high-end custom residential new homes and renovations. Today, he says the firm has held steady at 50-percent new construction and 50-percent renovations. "It's a very good mix, because by working on old homes you learn lessons you can apply to new homes," he says. "You learn about the vulnerability of construction. And that informs our designs of new structures."

This connection between old and new is a concept Finne explores in much of his design work. "People love older homes, and one of the reasons for that is the touch of the human hand—the sense that craft and love were put into the home years ago," he says. "People can sense that—they sense the value that's been carried over fifty, sixty, one hundred years. What we try to communicate through our work is that new homes can be modern and still have a high level of craft, and a sense of detail and passion and caring. And you can also create interesting dialogues across time between new and old worlds."

FINNE's Lake Forest Park project—a residential renovation in a secluded area just north of Seattle that the firm completed in 2009—illustrates those

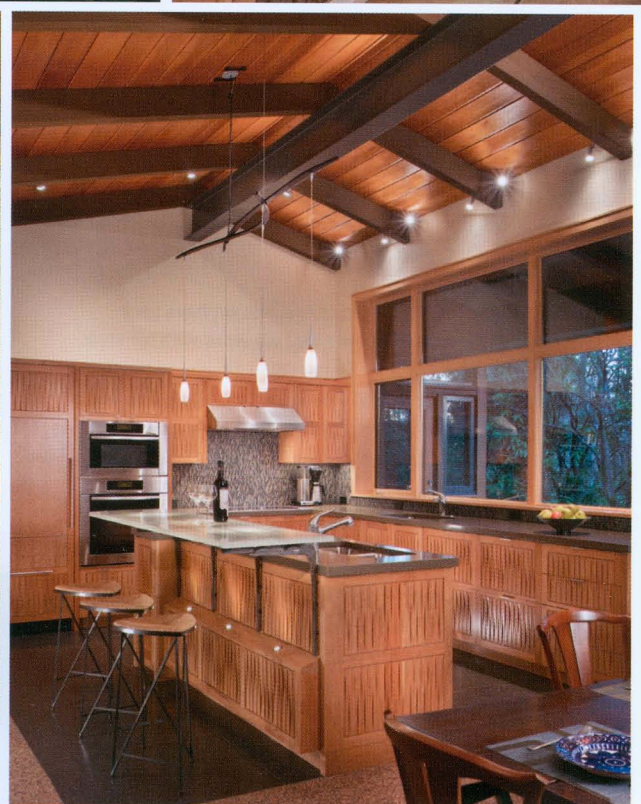


## AU NATUREL

The home's floor plan has been reorganized to create a spacious, light-filled master bedroom and luxurious master bath. Each space is surrounded by glass, revealing views of the lush Pacific Northwest forest.







ideas. "It was a contemporary 1950s house that we more or less gutted from top to bottom—to the extent that it essentially became a new house," Finne says. The floor plan was reconfigured, resulting in an enlarged kitchen tied together by a "long, undulating, forty-foot wall made of weathered steel panels that created a dramatic accent and a unifying element," he says. New windows and interior and exterior walls were installed, featuring all-new finishes. Cherry cabinets and panels made from a custom textural design were prototyped for the house, as well. "The panels have the look and feel of a woven texture," he adds. "I call it 'woven wood' because there are these alternating scoops carved out of the wood."

#### CRAFTED MODERNISM

In keeping with other FINNE projects, this renovation has pursued the idea of "crafted modernism," the enrichment of a modernist aesthetic with highly personal, crafted materials and objects. Custom fabrications by FINNE include the cast-glass kitchen counter, steel wall panels, suspended steel mirror frames, laser-cut steel shade valences, custom steel lighting bars, hand-blown-glass light fixtures (called TROMS pendants), and a number of custom furniture pieces.





OTTA TABLE



LING TABLE

### *FINNE Custom Furniture*

Many clients of FINNE Architects have been pleased to discover that the firm not only designs exciting custom homes but also custom furniture: dining tables, coffee tables, end tables, beds, rugs, desks, chairs, lighting—even custom toilet-paper holders. To date, Finne has produced more than 80 pieces of custom fabrications for clients, which he also sells as stand-alone items.

"We don't make them by hand ourselves; we have very good fabricators here in Seattle that we work with for steel, glass, etc.," he says. "But we really enjoy designing those items, and building on certain ideas and changing and adapting them to particular projects. It's a distinguishing characteristic we possess that people seem to like."

LOFAT TABLE



HATTAN TABLE



SKLI PENDANT



FOSS PENDANT



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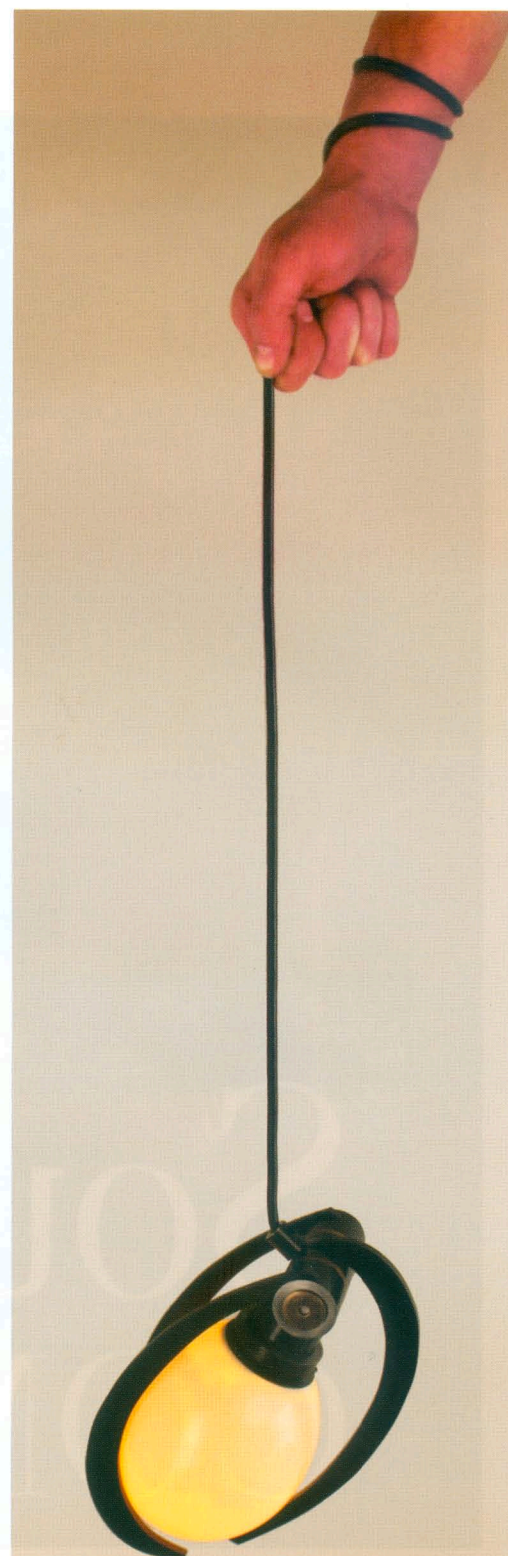
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Finne also took pains to blend the outdoors with the indoors throughout the home. Large glass walls line the tub in the master bath, from floor to ceiling, and mirrors are suspended from the ceiling behind the vanity. "When you're at the vanity and the tub, you feel like you're outside—you almost feel like you're bathing in the great outdoors," he says. "It's an amazing experience."

Increasingly, the firm is working beyond its Pacific Northwest roots, with recent projects in California, Chicago, Boston, northern Michigan, and Asheville, North Carolina. "The Internet has really changed things for us," Finne says. "People all across the country can easily see our work online. We've been getting more and more inquiries from all over." Most are no doubt drawn to Finne's elegant yet understated attention to detail. "I understood many years ago that I couldn't possibly expect a full payment for all the time I put in to these projects," he says. "You can't expect a client to foot the bill for the from-scratch items that I'm drawn to. I'm just passionate about them, and I spend a lot of time developing those items, because that's what excites me." ■

#### A MESSAGE FROM LANDBRIDGE LIGHTING

Landbridge Lighting has worked with FINNE Architects to produce furniture, hardware, and lighting for several projects. As designers ourselves, we appreciate the aesthetic of their work. As fabricators we respect the dedication that goes into each piece and respect the firm's ability to work through challenges quickly and efficiently. Landbridge Lighting wishes FINNE Architects many years of continued creativity and success.



*Kralle*  
by

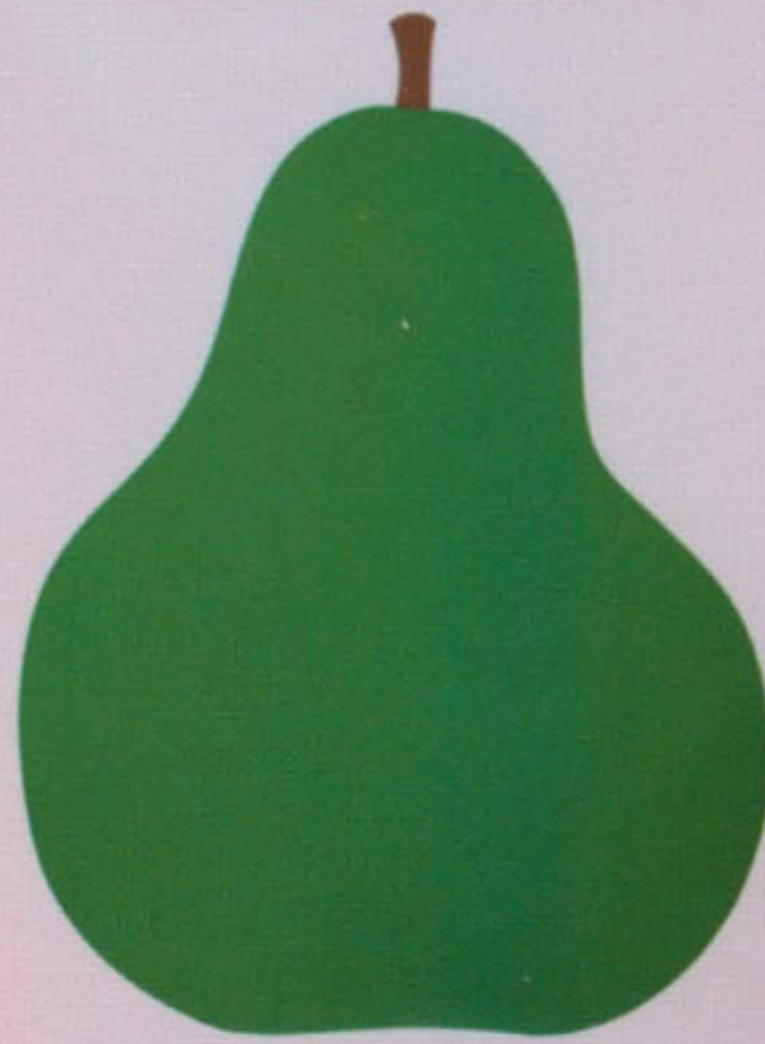
**Landbridge Lighting**  
steel, bronze, ostrich egg

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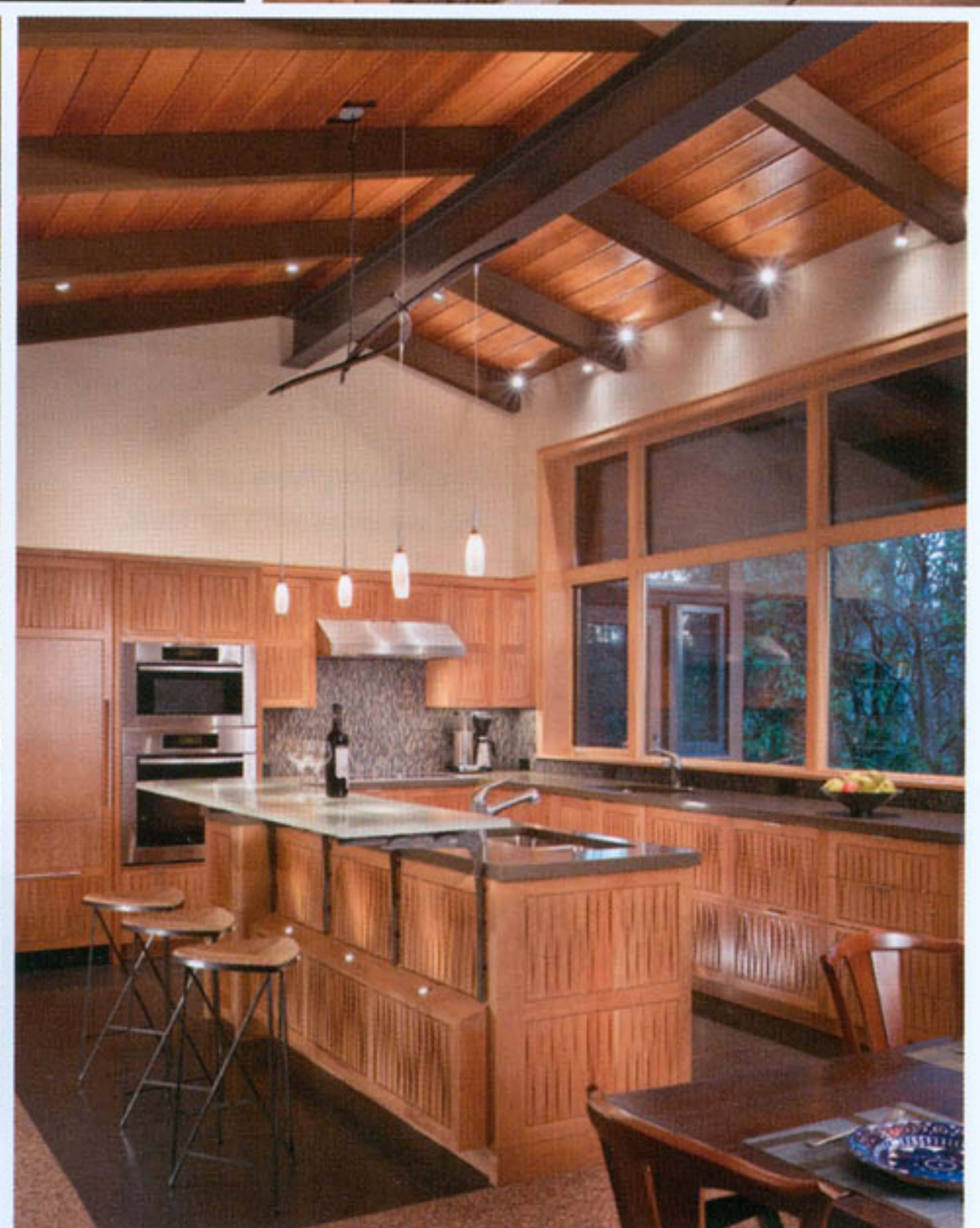


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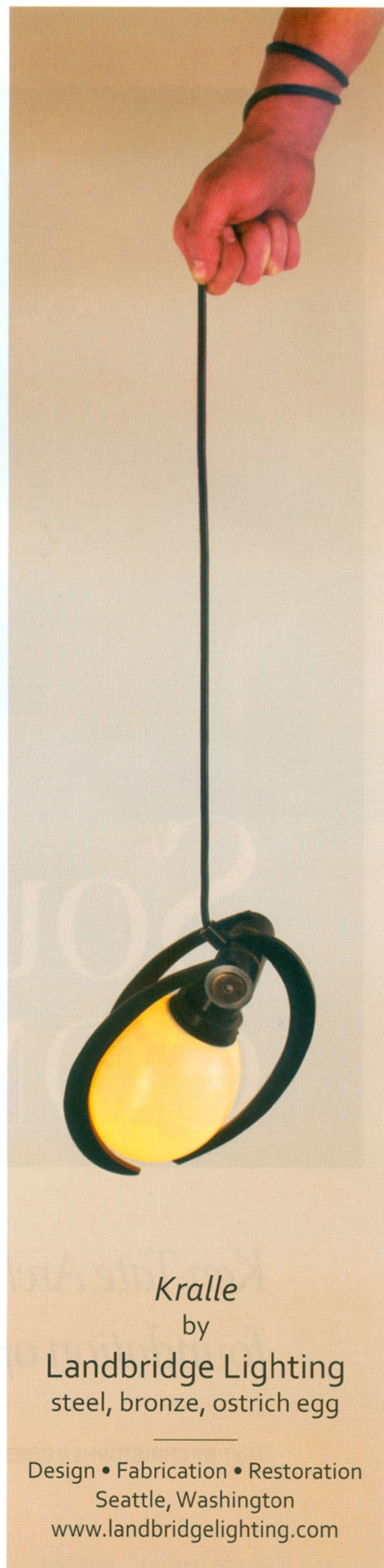
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