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PALOMA

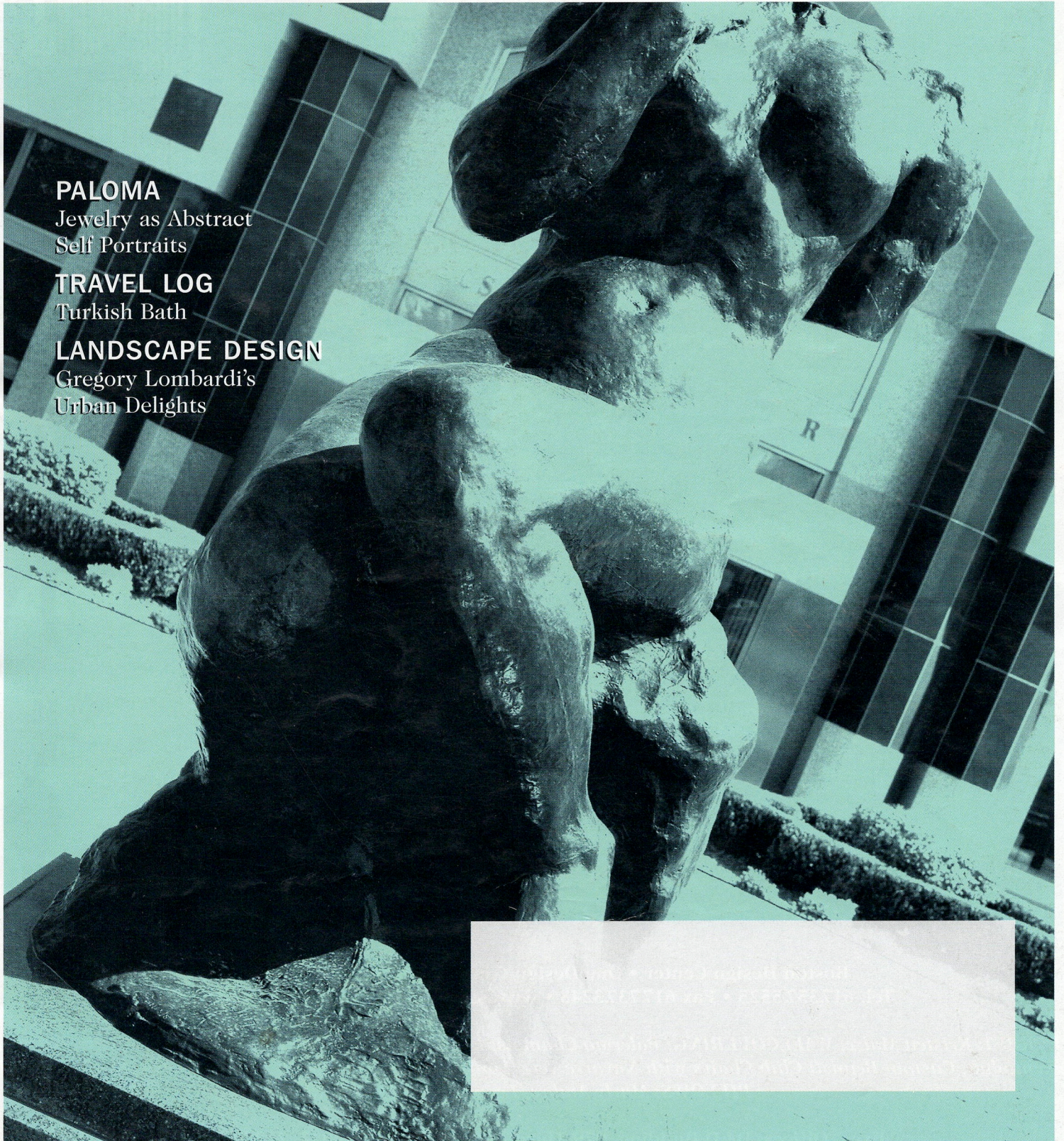
Jewelry as Abstract
Self Portraits

TRAVEL LOG

Turkish Bath

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Gregory Lombardi's
Urban Delights



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Thoroughly Modern Mollie

mollie johnson's cultured approach to design



Originally from South Carolina, Mollie Johnson spent much of her childhood growing up in France and Germany because of her father's involvement in the military. She loved growing up in Europe, especially because her father's position warranted her family living in magnificent, professionally decorated homes in Paris and Berlin. "When you're exposed to things at a young age they can exert great influence on you," she says. One particular house that had an effect on young Mollie was a residence in Berlin. "As you walked into the house, there was a mosaic turret. When you walked up to the second floor, that turret was a round cigar room with white leather chairs and a blue ceiling covered with small illuminated stars." Mollie borrowed the concept from this unique room for a home on Boston's Marlborough Street, taking advantage of the home's circular entranceway to accomplish a similar design.

Mollie's decision to pursue a career in interior design began when she revisited Europe during her college years. She had been studying French and Art History at Hollins University in Virginia and her travels rekindled her love of the neoclassic design she had been surrounded by as a child. When Mollie returned from Europe, she began working for DLJ in Manhattan. Eventually, she left the firm and began doing design work for other decorators, moving from Vermont to Virginia and finally to Boston, where she opened her own business.

Mollie loves Boston not only for its proximity to the beach and mountains, but also for the variety the city offers. She's a particular fan of the Back Bay "because the homes are architecturally rich and historic. I'm a lover of old homes more than anything." She also counts herself fortunate to have worked on several homes in the Back Bay. In addition, Mollie has done

work in surrounding Boston suburbs including Brookline, Lexington, Newton, Weston and Wellesley. Adirondack style lake homes in New Hampshire's Lake Winnepesaukee area and beach homes on Cape Cod are also among her collection of projects.

Most recently Mollie designed a home for a couple in Lexington she met serendipitously during a flight. "It was incredible timing. When we got off the plane, my father, (who was meeting me) was talking to the person they were meeting. She asked for my card and soon after I started working on their house." Two years ago, the couple decided to completely remodel and renovate the house and they hired John McDonald, a well-known architect in the area. Together they worked for a year and a half renovating the entire house, finishing the project this past August.



Mollie describes the endeavor as "an all-encompassing project" that required her to work closely with the architect and contractor, which is something Mollie thoroughly enjoys. Her favorite part of the process, though, is selecting the colors and fabrics. "The actual creating is what keeps me going. That is



my passion. When I am selecting the colors and fabrics for a room, and the furniture, I lose myself in the process." Mollie gravitates toward simpler, richer fabrics like velvets, mohairs, and solid silks, as well as elegant furniture styles. She is particularly enamored with the Biedermeier aesthetic, loving it for its rich wood, proportion and simplicity, and also for its story. The furniture became popular during the early part of the 19th century when the bourgeoisie began buying it because it was very basic and relatively inexpensive. "Of



course," she says, "now it's highly sought after." When selecting colors, Mollie isn't afraid to use bold hues, such as a deep red in the dining room, although she does mention that it can be important to have thick moldings so a vibrant color doesn't become overpowering. Mollie is also a lover of earth tones like soft blues, taupes and celadons, which she used when she designed the conservatory/family room with McDonald. "We wanted a simple and understated look so that your eye goes out to the incredible backyard."

By working on a variety of interiors, Mollie has honed her skills of visualization and has designed her rooms to evoke certain feelings. Mollie brings this talent, in addition to her knowledge of European design and neoclassical style, to her work and uses it to educate her clients. She believes deeply in Goethe's maxim that "you only see what you know." Thankfully for her clients, Mollie's knowledge runs deep.

Rebecca Swanner
Photos by Sam Gray