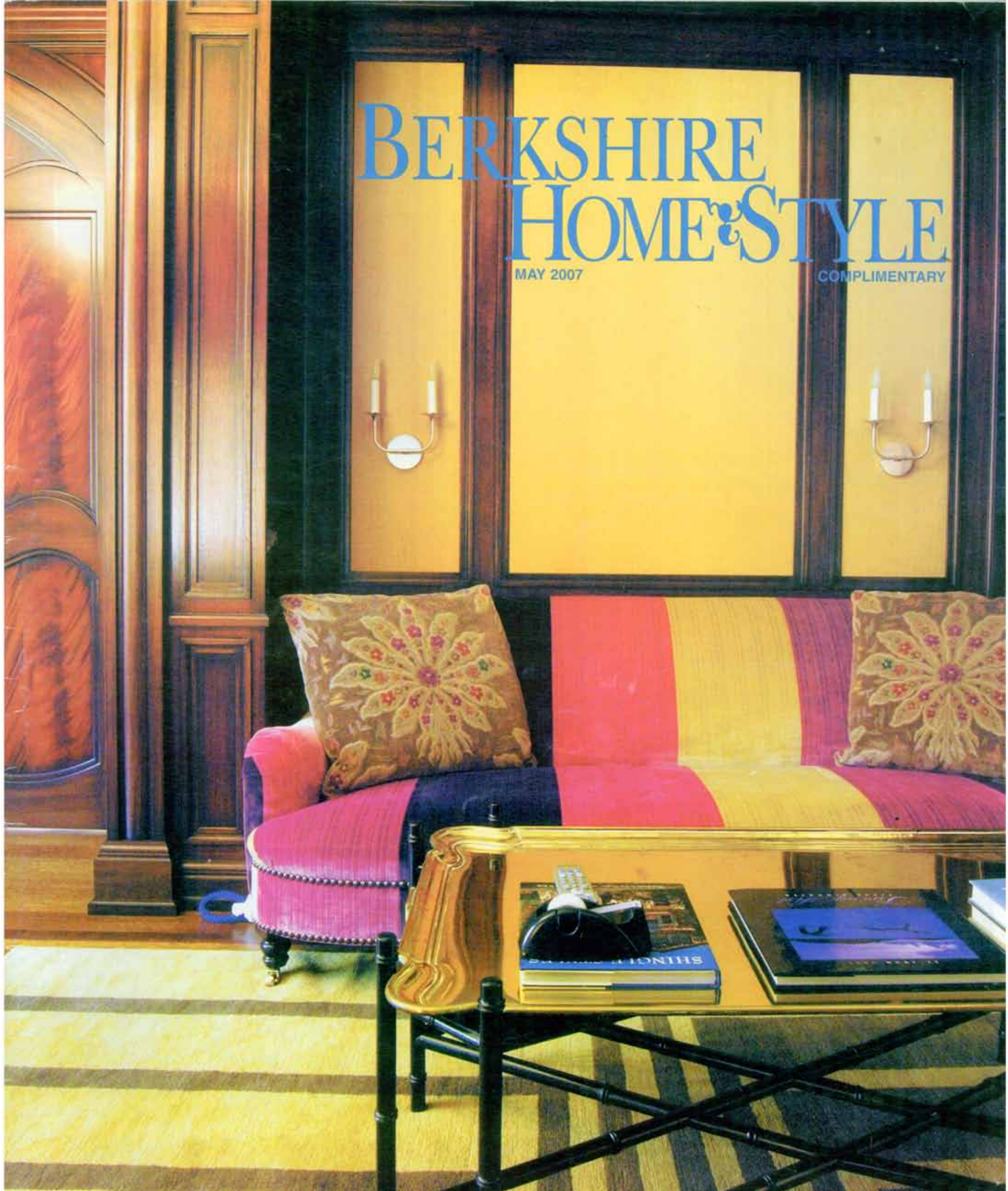


# BERKSHIRE HOME & STYLE

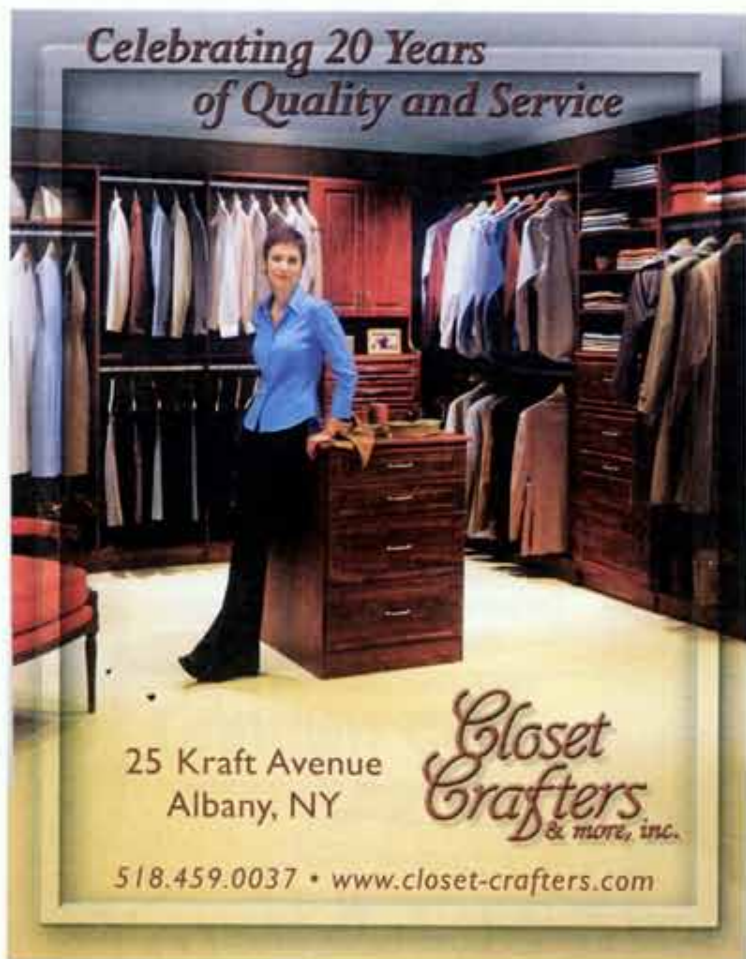
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## OUR REGION

by Ned Depew

# Idea Factory

*William Caligari Interiors / Architecture*

You've probably driven by it many times without ever noticing it. You may even have entered the building, to shop at the perennially popular Great Barrington landmark, Out Of Hand, on the first floor. But, as they say in New York, if you didn't know it was there, you'd never know it was there.

What you may have been bypassing all these years—since the early 2000's—is William Caligari Interiors / Architecture, in a sprawling office that occupies the entire second floor at 85 Main Street. It's an open plan melange of conference spaces, individual office areas, worktables, presentation spaces and computer cubicles, the diversity of which only begins to represent the range of the work that goes on there.

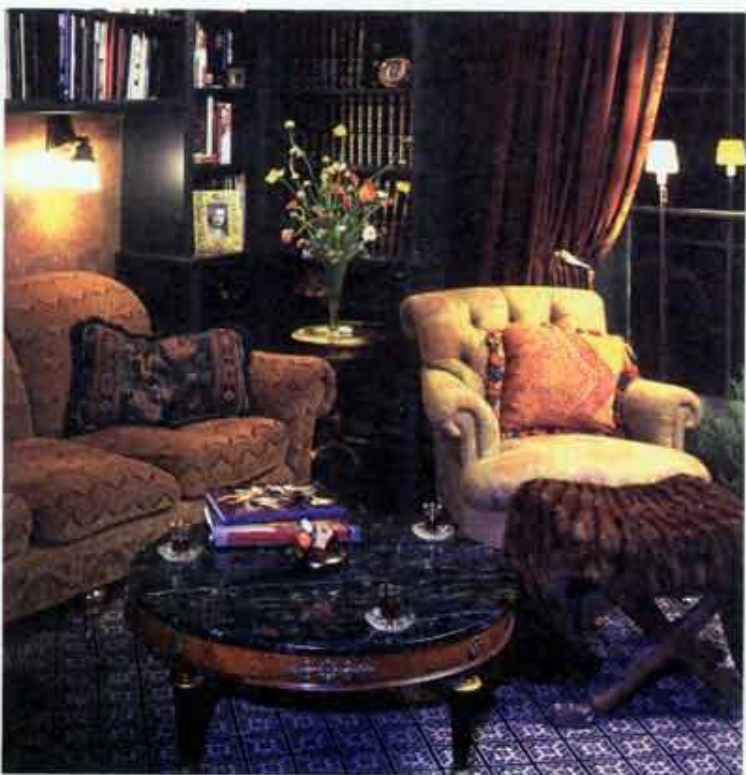
There are a variety of people closely studying their computers, but they are not necessarily doing similar things. One may be preparing a CAD (Computer Assisted Design—the powerful adjunct to traditional architectural drafting) layout of a proposal or a project in the works. Another may be reading design specs or proposal responses from a client. Yet another may be creating a visual presentation for an upcoming project. One may be consulting building codes and specifications to make recommendations to a sub-contractor.

At the same time, there may be someone going through sample books to choose fabric possibilities, someone cutting foam-board to assemble an architectural model, someone carving a wax model of furniture detail for a foundry to cast.

The list of tasks that goes into the work Caligari does is nearly limitless. Since their work is all "custom" and each project is



William Caligari



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approached on an individual basis, there's no way to foresee exactly what information, skills, techniques or strategies will be called on, so part of the firm's brief is to be "ready for anything." And that's just the way William Caligari, Jr., the firm's founder and head, likes it.

Caligari comes out of a long tradition of flexibility and imagination. His grandfather, Eugene, trained in his native Italy and Paris as a fine artist, was an immigrant who came to Great Barrington in the 1890's as part of the wave of highly-skilled artisans who built and decorated the "Berkshire Cottages."

He operated a painting contracting business, mixed paints for his own work and for others—in those days before mass-production, a technical specialty—and had mastered the secrets of all the traditional faux-finishes. These special skills led him to open a retail paint store as an adjunct to his painting business. When William, Sr. moved away from the painting business and into retail—much to his father's chagrin—in 1954, that sideline became the basis of the Caligari family's retail businesses, which continues to this day.

Eugene, Sr. had the imagination and flexibility to change with changing times. He opened a sideline as a real estate investor, drawing on his knowledge of the neighborhood and his eye for value. He helped his sons take the family business in new and different directions.

Those sons—Eugene, Jr. (who opened businesses in Virginia) and William, Sr.—were more interested in business than in the artistry their father had pursued. They saw in the paint store the blueprint for successful retail operations that would build on and expand what they already knew how to do.

With the advent of pre-mixed paints in the 1950's, they expanded into the retail paint business in a big way and spun off businesses retailing hardware in Lenox and Great Barrington, selling specialty chemicals and supplies to businesses, and renting tools to contractors.

William Caligari, Jr. grew up working in those businesses. He appreciated and admired the success his father and uncle had achieved, but like them, William wanted to build on what they had done, but move in his own

direction. With an artistic gift, perhaps harking back to his grandfather, he studied art and became a painter.

With an eye to incorporating this interest with the responsibility he felt to the family businesses, he attended the New York School of Interior Design in Manhattan and took his formal training there. He worked in New York City for a while, but his heart was in the Berkshires, and in 1989 he decided on a bold step—to move back to the Berkshires and try to develop his business from there.

At that time, the Berkshires were only just beginning to blossom. William opened Lenox Design Resources in Lenox and started looking for work. The early days were lean, as they are in any pioneering operation. No one had ever sustained a high-quality, professional decorating business full-time in the Berkshires. Most resort businesses and decorating clients hired out of New York or Boston, or brought their decorators with them from home.

But William persevered. He found clients and the work he did for them began to establish his reputation locally. Within a fairly short time, he began to get some repeat and referral business from satisfied clients. Jobs that started as recommending a color scheme and window treatment for a powder room renovation—to use an example from William's actual experience—blossomed over a period of months and years into whole-house renovations.

In a highly competitive industry, William Caligari Interiors / Architecture has succeeded because they offer services that

compare favorably with the best-known national design firms, and they do it in the relatively relaxed, low-key setting of the Berkshires, where many of their clients come to visit, vacation and live.

In 2001, he and his brother Jeffrey renovated the former Berkshire Woolens Mill building at 85 Main Street in Great Barrington—next to the Caligari & Son Paint store—and moved the business there.

In 2004, he decided that the old name of the business was both misleading—since the office was now in Great Barrington—and limiting, since the firm had moved well beyond the ordinary limitations of an "interior design" firm, and he changed it to its current identity.

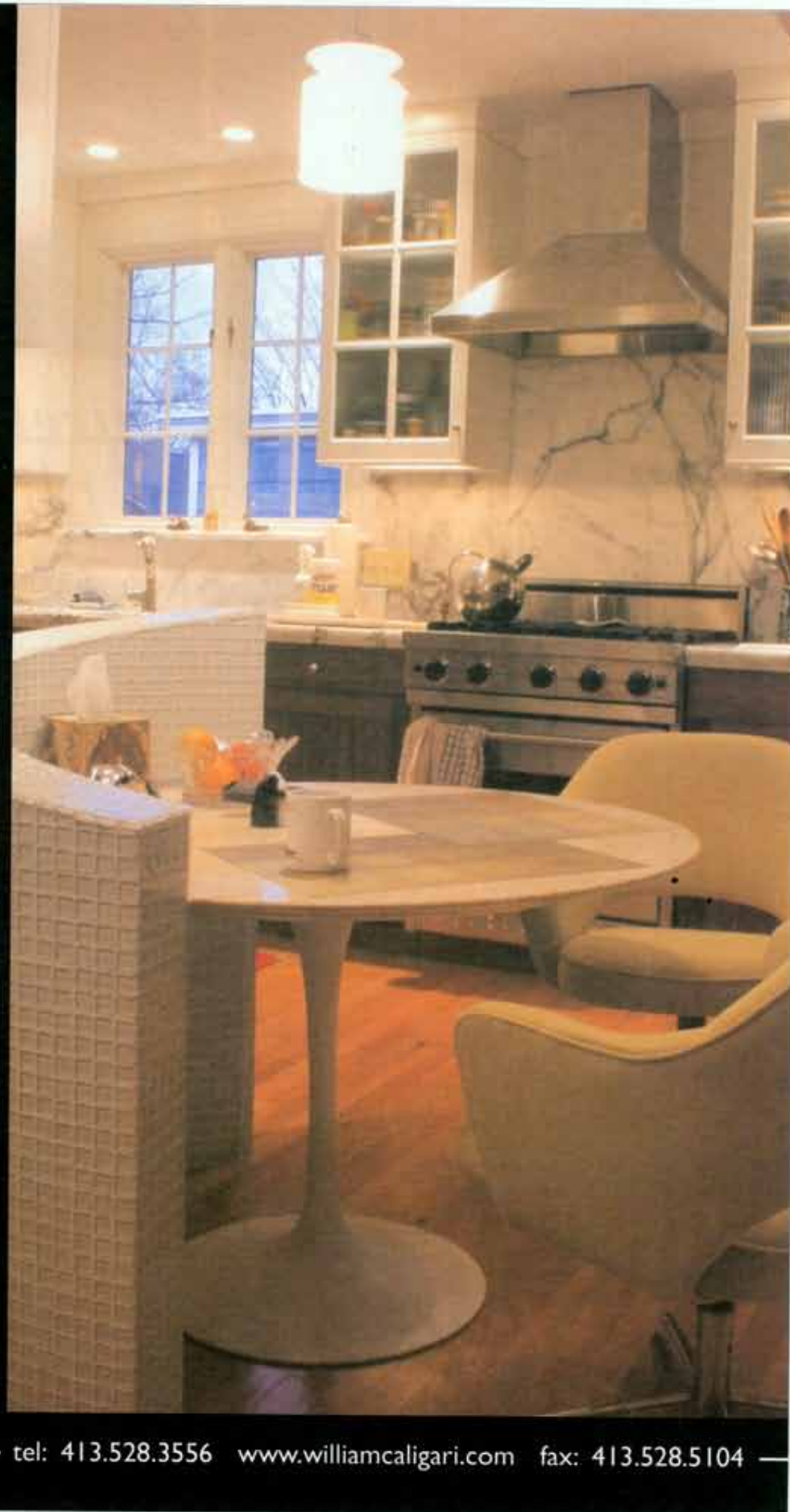
Like his grandfather and father before him, William Caligari hasn't let his business model petrify. He has kept it flex-

ible, allowing it to change and evolve with the needs of the various kinds of clients he has taken on. The firm now employs and/or partners with architects to offer full design services, in the engineering as well as the aesthetic sense. They have the personnel and resources to take on the full range of design challenges.

They can and do design very

*continued on page 51*

## WILLIAM CALIGARI INTERIORS / ARCHITECTURE



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## Themes

*continued from page 13*

tage pieces, chosen specifically for the Garden's open spaces and corners alike will offer visual and textural focal points. Pieces ranging from classical to whimsical and from rustic to formal will be integrated into the Garden's colorful perennial beds, primrose walk, terraced herb garden, award-winning daylily border, pond garden and more. The Garden will also be hosting a one-day workshop with Ms. Young entitled: "How to Find, Evaluate and Place Antiques in the Garden."

How was the concept of establishing an annual theme first launched? As Ian Hooper, a Trustee, states: "Gardens change not only during the seasons but year after year. By introducing an original theme, we wish to offer our visitors a novel experience. Bringing unexpected visual excitement to the Garden will encourage them to experiment in their own gardens." The Garden's Chairperson, Jo Dare Mitchell concurs: "A yearly theme can only add a fresh dimension to the visitor's experience. In fact, it presents an evolving showcase for the many special strengths of the Garden."

Tapping into Berkshire talent and expertise, the Garden also solicited noted furniture designer, Peter Murkett to create a signature cedar chair exclusively for the Garden. His "Berkchair" will be unveiled and made first available for sale at the Plant Sale on May 11th and 12th.

Ultimately, the Berkshire Botanical Garden's central mission to educate will also benefit from annual themes by weaving a thread between its many activities, classes and workshops. To this end, the summer's workshops will include: "Garden Furniture Design" with Janice Shields of "Cut It Out" in Stockbridge and "Standing Stones in the Garden" with stone carver, Karin Sprague. Barbara Bockbrader, floral designer and co-owner of Campo di Fiori, will also be sharing her well-known skills in her workshop: "Right Plant, Right Pot: How to Successfully Grow Plants in Pots". ☛

*Honey Sharp has a landscape design business in the Berkshires and can be reached at [hs@honeysharp.com](mailto:hs@honeysharp.com) or found at [www.honeysharp.com](http://www.honeysharp.com).*

## Idea

*continued from page 9*

large, profit-oriented corporate projects like the re-development of a down-at-the-heels hotel into a world-class golf resort offering condominium units, house lots and hotel services. At the same time, they are using their skills to create proposals for practical, well-built, attractive and affordable housing projects in the region.

On the one hand, they are designing a 350,000 sq ft complex that, if it comes to fruition, will be the largest sports facility of its kind in the Northeast. They are designing it in the "Shingle Style," compatible with the aesthetics of the community in which it is to be built. On the other hand, William Caligari has designed and will oversee the hand-pressing, glazing and firing, by local artisans, of the individual tiles that will be used in the decorative facade of a proposed renovation.

He has long-term commercial clients like Canyon Ranch, whose renovations and expansions the firm has overseen for years—from the design of spa treatment rooms to guest rooms, to dining and lounge areas. They have been the design firm of record at the Lenox spa/resort since 1995 and have led the re-designing of much of the Tucson property as well. His firm, and often Caligari himself, who delights in details, takes pride in

designing every aspect of their projects, from the color schemes and layouts to the furniture, rugs and accessories, right down to fixtures and hardware.

On residential projects, Caligari often works with regional artisans including cabinet and custom furniture shops, custom millworkers, metalsmiths, tile-workers and fine artists to design and install unique environments. In fact, the residential projects have remained Caligari's favorites, giving the opportunity to attend to the design details and carry them forward in hands-on ways larger projects, because of their scale, often can't provide.

"This is what I love!" Caligari declares, flipping through a bulging sketchbook for one project that contains pages of color swatches; sketches of design ideas; technical drawings and perspective elevations; notes, and notes on the notes; floor plans and layouts; and careful drawings of individual details—a project reduced to its individual elements, to be reassembled into a harmonious and satisfying whole.

With all the firm's success and satisfaction, there are still some frustrations. "The problem with all the publicity," says Caligari, whose work has been repeatedly featured in national design magazines over the last decade, "is that people get the idea that we're somehow 'above' the kind of jobs we really

love to do. Our large scale projects are what tend to get all the press, and some potential customers get the idea that we don't want to be bothered with their 'little' projects. Nothing could be further from the truth."

What Caligari and his firm thrive on, apparently, is variety, and the challenge to their skills diverse projects pose. "We respect the budget," Caligari affirms. The undertaking of getting the best result possible from the expenditure—the most "bang-for-the-buck"—is a part of the application of his firm's skills of which Caligari is most proud. After all, he points out, everyone has a budget, however large or small, and the object is the same in every case, to give the client the most for their money.

William Caligari Interiors / Architecture is a full service design firm that can handle any project, from redecorating a single room or designing a piece of custom furniture, to ground-up site and facility design for a multi-million dollar development. In fact, they have projects at both ends of this spectrum (and pretty much every place in between) underway at any given moment.

For more information you can visit their web-site at: [www.williamcaligari.com](http://www.williamcaligari.com), write to them at 85 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230, or call them to make an appointment to see any of their portfolios at 413-528-3556. ☛

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