

## BOOKS

edited by **Stanley Abercrombie**

**Alexander Girard: A Designer's Universe**  
text by **Susan Brown, Jochen Eisenbrand, Barbara Hauss, Alexandra Lange, Monica Obniski, and Jonathan Olivares**  
Weil am Rhein, Germany: Vitra Design Museum, distributed by D.A.P., \$85  
512 pages, 530 illustrations (360 color)

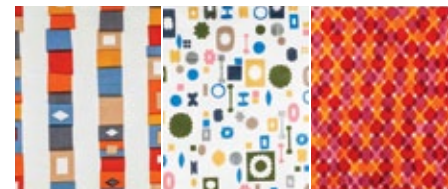


The least well known of a group of outstanding American mid-century designers, all of them close friends and sometimes collaborators, was Alexander Girard. In the 34-volume *Grove Dictionary of Art*, the team of Charles and Ray Eames is given a 1,000-word entry, George Nelson a 300-word entry, and Girard no entry at all. Which makes this new volume a major and long-needed contribution to design literature. Both the book and a related exhibition, running at the Vitra Design Museum through January, are based on Girard's archives, which Vitra owns. No other source could have produced such a beautiful and comprehensive survey.

There is much to be comprehensive about. Girard received his architecture degree in London, won a travel scholarship to Florence, and would eventually become director of textiles at Herman Miller. Its Textiles & Objects shop and the restaurants La Fonda del Sol and L'Etoile were among his New York interiors. Admired as his very best interior is the one for Eero Saarinen and Associates's Irwin Miller house in Columbus, Indiana, where he furthermore remodeled almost the entire downtown. His exhibition designs included "Good Design" at New York's Museum of Modern Art and "An Exhibition for Modern Living" at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Then there was furniture, tableware, carpets, rugs, wallpaper, murals, stage sets, packaging, logos, toys, and, for Braniff

**"Sandro Girard's secret is really very simple. He retains the eye of a child"**

International Airlines, plane exteriors and interiors. But *what* he did was less important than *how* he did it. His design was fresh, humane, lighthearted, colorful, and emotional. The emotion was joy.



**Dream of Venice Architecture**  
edited by **JoAnn Locktov**  
Mill Valley, California: Bella Figura Publications, distributed by Independent Publishers Group, \$27  
96 pages, 45 color illustrations

A dream of a book. Noted architects, interior and product designers, professors, and journalists contributed the three dozen brief yet eloquent essays, each complemented by an appropriate and often stunning image by Riccardo De Cal. From Tadao Ando, who has designed the interiors of the François Pinault Foundation's two contemporary art museums, occupying the Palazzo Grassi and the Punta della Dogana: "The projects in Venice brought me chances to contemplate what architecture

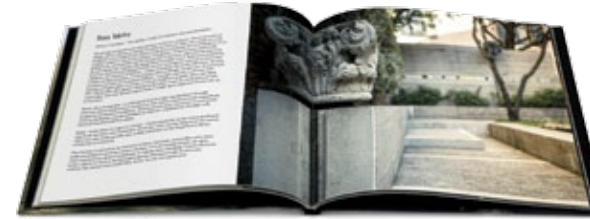


should be, which became a precious experience for me." In the words of Boym Partners's Constantin Boym, also chair of the industrial design department at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York: "I cannot rid myself of an impression that every Venetian door represents a particular year; that the city is, in fact, a museum that contains all human history and all our future as well." *Interior Design Hall of Fame* member Annabelle Selldorf adds, "Venice is... tricky. There is nothing innocent or forthright, and deception is everywhere... By challenging my sense of

order and hierarchy Venice gives me the desire to probe beyond the rational."

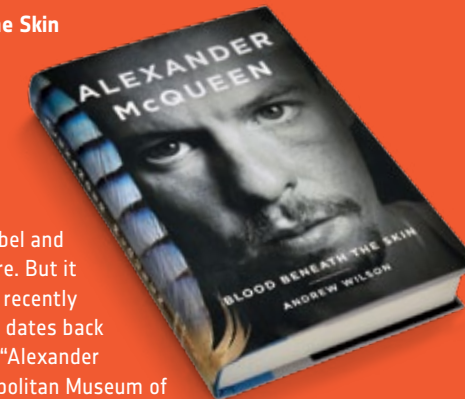
A portion of the proceeds from book sales will be donated to the Fondazione Querini Stampalia, a library and museum housed in a Renaissance palazzo with interiors by Carlo Scarpa and Mario Botta.

**"Venice was built where no land ever existed"**



**Alexander McQueen: Blood Beneath the Skin**  
by **Andrew Wilson**  
New York: Scribner, \$30  
369 pages, 41 illustrations (37 color)

The go-to designer for Alexander Wang, Ryan Korban has executed New York boutiques both for Wang's namesake label and for Balenciaga during his leadership there. But it was an earlier fashion It Boy who most recently occupied Korban's mind. The fascination dates back to 2011, when he saw the posthumous "Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty" at the Metropolitan Museum of



## What They're Reading...



Art. "I was forever inspired. The theatrical aspect was a great connect for me, so when I came across this title I knew I wanted to find out more," he says. "Sometimes I pull away from the theatrical side of my work to focus on being more modern. After reading this book, I thought about diving back into drama and romance." He'll have the chance with two of his upcoming projects, a flagship for Aquazzura shoes and a showroom that's, of course, for Wang.  
—Nicholas Tamarin

**Ryan Korban**  
Founder of Ryan Korban