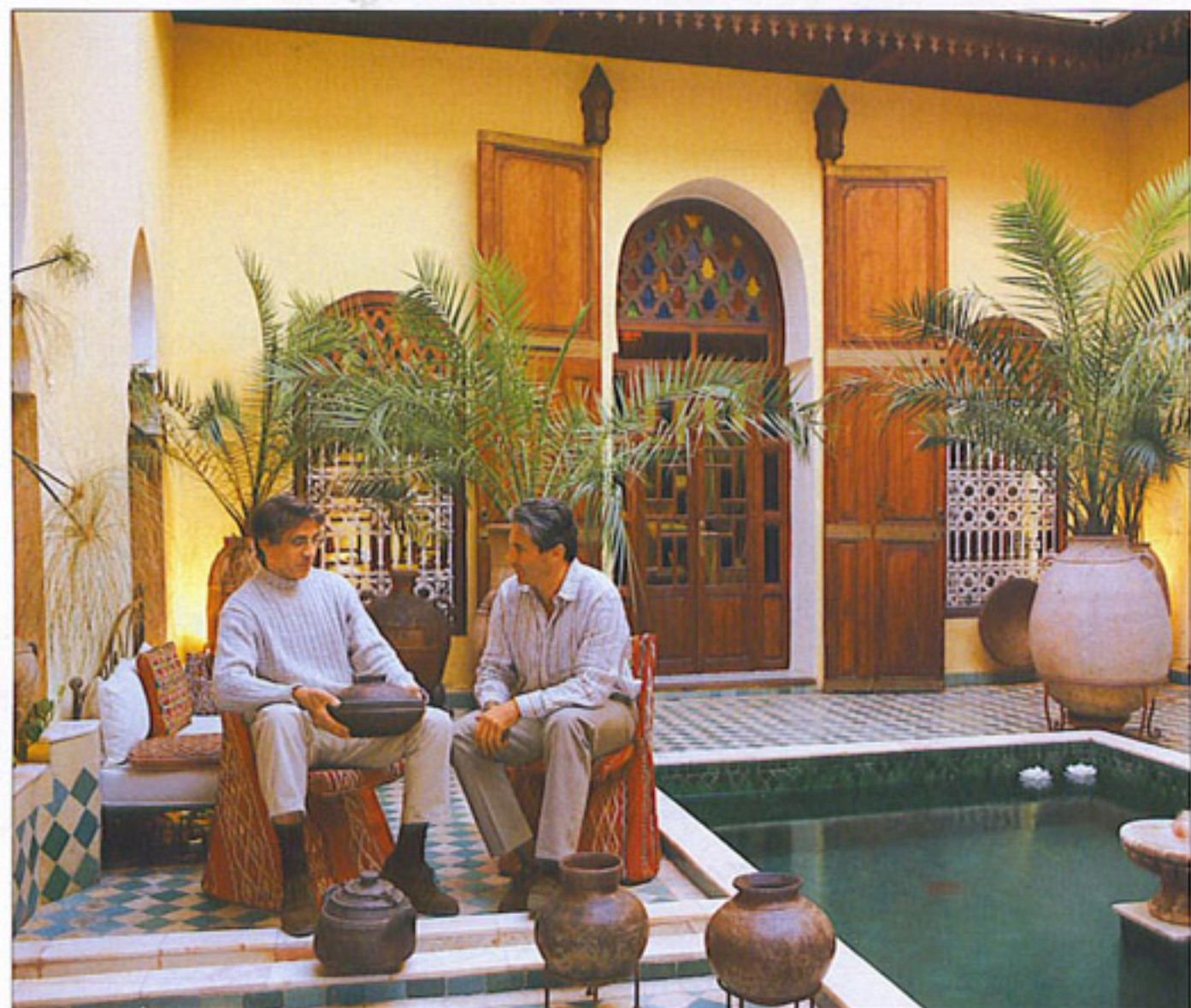


# To Market in Marrakech

Architect and Interior Designer Campion A. Platt Uncovers Morocco's Hidden Treasures

Text by Christopher Petkanas/Photography by Tim Beddow



## DAR AL CHARIJ

LEFT: One of architect Campion A. Platt's favorite sources in Marrakech is Gerard Santolini's gallery, which is in his 11th-century *riad*, or courtyard house. The owner, left, holds a *tagine*.

**I**S THERE A DESIGNER WORTH his resale number who hasn't mined the souks of Marrakech? If you have spent any time getting happily lost in the markets' labyrinth of alleys, you know the answer is no.

Professionals from all over the map can be regularly observed in the solemn busi-

ness of appraising child-size wrought iron lanterns, finely chased brass trays with picrust edges and carved octagonal stools inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Wasn't that Campion A. Platt, the New York architect and designer, fingering a kilim and threat-

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LEFT: The leather *babouches*, or slippers, and the early-19th-century necklace are among the housewares, clothing and jewelry offered. The tribal rug is Saharan.



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ening to walk if the merchant didn't slash his price? It was, and he got his price: \$100.

Platt experienced the often deliriously exhilarating shopping phenomenon that is Marrakech on a recent first visit to the city, accompanied by his fiancée, Tatiana Gau. (They have since married.) The couple's trip combined probing retail therapy with a very social stay with Gau's godfather, Frederick Vreeland, fashion empress Diana's son and a former American ambassador to Morocco. For two people intent on getting the inside track, they



certainly had the right host.

"To me, Marrakech is like a Moroccan version of Milan, with its long streets and mysterious, inward-looking *riads*—houses whose façades give no indication of the beautiful courtyards on the other side," says Platt. "Many of the places I went to turned out to be in *riads*—a bonus for the shopper who's also a student of architecture."

Platt's Marrakech consumer education got off to a sophisticated start at TM Design,

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## TRESOR DES NOMADES

ABOVE: "It's a great place to find furniture from Africa, as well as Moroccan art, rugs and lamps," says Platt. Assorted storage boxes, pottery dishes and olive jars fill a corner.

ABOVE LEFT: Owner Mustapha Blaoui and Platt examine a rug made of doom palm fronds in the gallery. LEFT: Copper and brass Moroccan lamps hang from the ceiling.



## RYAD TAMNSA

RICARR: "She's the most industrious retailer," Platt says of Meryanne Loum-Martin. Philippe Deltour's *Prayer I*, 2004, is on the wall. Silk shawls are draped on the wrought iron daybeds she designed.

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which specializes in decorative objects and light fixtures using *mailecbort*, a copper, zinc and nickel alloy. Sheets of the metal, minutely decorated with a pinpoint awl, partially wrap boxes, beech lamps and canisters.

"While a lot of the local metalwork is encrusted with ornament, TM's is subtler, more refined," says Platt. "I commissioned chargers with a shiny rim, and it's the shininess that makes them modern."

Platt also left an order with the reluctant Marrakech embroidery queen Brigitte Perkins, for towels with filigree



## BRIGITTE PERKINS

LEFT AND ABOVE: The appointment-only showroom on the rue Ben Salah, in the medina, has embroidered fabrics, including tablecloths, scarves, pareus and pillow shams.

"If Brigitte didn't do mostly custom work, I would have bought everything she had, dropped it in a big suitcase and brought it all back to New York," says the architect.

Ryad Tamsna is the *riad* as restaurant, tea salon, bookstore, art gallery and home furnishings boutique.

needlework. Famously shy, Perkins has an appointment-only showroom in a *riad* she shares with a blacksmith. An atmosphere of genial chaos only adds to the fun of rifling through the tablecloths, pareus and bedcoverings in bands of tightly woven silk and gauzy linen. Platt praises Perkins's "tertiary details" but admits that snagging a rendezvous with her can be de-

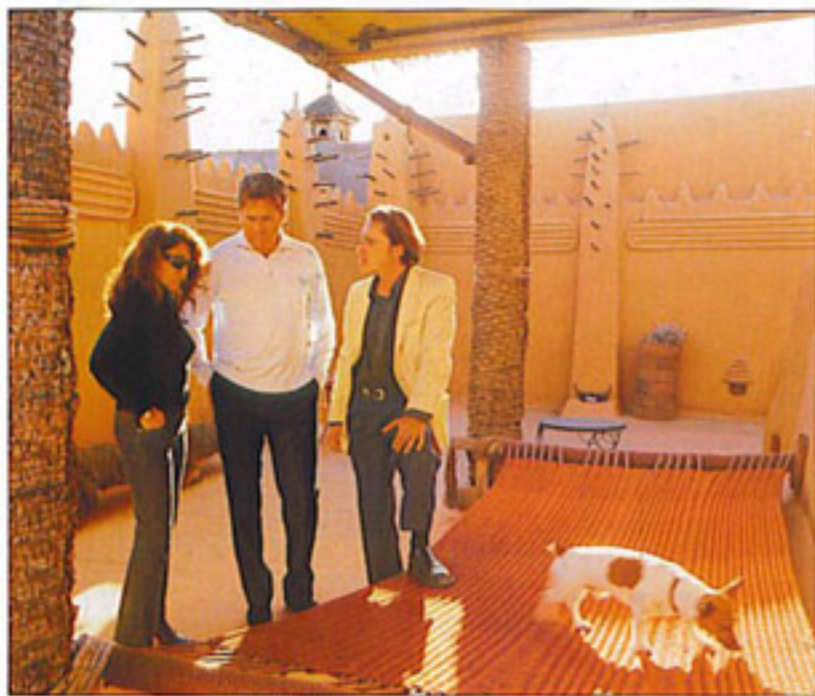
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## MINISTERO DEL GUSTO

**BELOW:** Owners Alessandra Lippini and Fabrizio Bizzarri show Platt a rope hammock on the rooftop terrace of their adobe *riad*, which houses the showroom and gallery.

**RIGHT:** Niches displaying African artifacts and masks line a wall in the first-floor salon. The owners designed the leather-topped table with a base of aluminum letters.



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feating. Luckily, the collection is also sold at the boutique in the Amanjena hotel outside of town.

Platt's understanding of vernacular Moroccan design took a sharp turn at Ministero del Gusto, the showroom and gallery of Alessandra Lippini and Fabrizio Bizzarri. Their surrealistic palazzo of a *riad* is influenced by the Malian architecture of Dogon sand dwellings, with Gaudí-esque windows, mud-and-straw columns, and courtyard walls bristling with horizontally embedded eucalyptus sticks.

"I tried to find people who share my aesthetic, which is more contemporary and not as culturally specific as what you typically find in Marrakech," says Platt. The owners repaid his search with a round white leather-topped table they designed, its base composed of aluminum let-

ters; a pouf that might be mistaken for a giant wave-lapped beach stone if it weren't covered in a velvet with giraffe spots; and jagged bowls with a kind of prehistoric chic,

as if a nursery of infant dinosaurs had just left the room.

If Lippini and Bizzarri are suggesting Ministero as a model for the next generation of *riads*, they are wasting their

breath on Gerard Santolini's Dar Al Charij. He embraces every fragment of his house's 900-year-history. "Gerard is for serious collectors of seri-

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## GALERIE TADGHART

**LEFT:** The Guéliz shop carries architectural salvage. Lucien Viola and Platt stand before a section of a Berber ceiling from the Anti-Atlas region.

"Lucien has choice antiques and wall textiles," says Platt. **FAR LEFT:** Larger pieces are exhibited in the courtyard garden. The wood cylinder was used to press olives.



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ous Islamic artifacts, from jewelry and trunks to scales and cooking vessels," says Platt.

Meryanne Loum-Martin's Ryad Tamsna is the *riad* as restaurant, tea salon, bookstore, art gallery, and fashion and home furnishings boutique. Tamsna's mix is the envy of the medina: hand-painted shawls, Senegalese textiles and contemporary wrought iron beds. "Meryanne's talent is for tempering the ethnic aspect of traditional designs so they have wider appeal," says Platt. "She gets it."

Frédérique and Norbert Birkemeyer's shop appeals to diplomats' wives who seek to avoid the full-on Moroccan look in favor of something worldlier. Darkoum, the Birkemeyers' three-story emporium, sells its own line of

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## DARKOUM

LEFT: Furniture from Africa and Asia, and Moroccan crafts and silverware fill the first floor of Frédérique and Norbert Birkemeyer's three-story gallery on the rue de la Liberté in Guéliz.



## TM DESIGN

ABOVE: An artist uses a hammer and awl to create filigree on *maillebort*, a copper, zinc and nickel alloy. "You actually get to see the artisans at work," notes Platt.

RIGHT: Decorative objects, including canisters and trays, rest on the shelves. The wood pieces are covered with the *maillebort*, which is "polished to a brilliant shine," says Platt.







## AMANJENA BOUTIQUE

The architect inspects a Moroccan cane at the shop, which is located in the Amanjena hotel. Fabrics, handbags and a pottery vase are on the table. At rear are Saharan tent pegs.

distressed-leather chests that make great night tables.”

Platt finds shopping in the exotic city both educational and rewarding. “For quality and diversity, the crafts in Marrakech are on par with those of Bali, where I’ve done a lot of work,” says the architect. “In Marrakech it’s all about crafting.” □

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handwoven fabrics, as well as Indian silver and furniture from the Ivory Coast.

Another species of shopper, the connoisseur with deep pockets, is drawn to Lucien Viola. His Galerie Tadghart is a showcase for Berber ceremonial veils, muskets and architectural salvage. “While to find these one-of-a-kind pieces Lucien drills way down into the culture, Mustapha Blaoui, of Tresor des Nomades, is about volume,” says Platt. “His is the best of the large stores, with multiples of everything—straw mats, monumental candelabra and small



## MARRAKECH SOURCES

- 1 Tresor des Nomades, 144 rue de Bab Doukkala, Medina; 212-44-38-52-40. Moroccan furniture, crafts, rugs, china and light fixtures
- 2 Dar Al Charij, 111 Derb Al Qadi, Azbezt; 212-44-38-62-79. Islamic antiques, Berber jewelry, trunks, cooking vessels and rugs
- 3 Brigitte Perkins, 212-44-37-74-16. By appointment. Embroidered linen and silk fabrics
- 4 Ministero del Gusto, 22 Derb Azouz El Mouassine, 212-44-42-64-55. Wood and leather furniture and African masks and artifacts
- 5 Ryad Tamsna, Riad Zitoun Jdid, 23 Derbe Zanka Daika, Medina, 212-44-38-52-72; [www.tamsna.com](http://www.tamsna.com). Furniture and art
- 6 Galerie Tadghart, Place de la Liberté, Guéliz, 212-44-43-22-58; [www.ilove-marrakesh.com/tadghart](http://www.ilove-marrakesh.com/tadghart). Architectural salvage and textiles
- 7 Darkoum, 5 rue de la Liberté, Guéliz, 212-44-44-67-39; [www.ilove-marrakesh.com/darkoum](http://www.ilove-marrakesh.com/darkoum). Furniture, objets d'art and silver
- 8 TM Design, rue El Irak, Q.I, Ménara, 212-44-49-65-93; [www.tmdesignmarrakech.com](http://www.tmdesignmarrakech.com). Maillehort accessories and light fixtures
- 9 Amanjena Boutique, route de Ouarzazate, 212-44-40-33-53. Folk art, decorative objects and fabrics