

# 'AUTHENTIC

By Diane Cowen

**L**AUREN Rottet's Standard Poodle and tiny Havanese bark every time the gardeners come near the doors of her River Oaks home.

It's been a busy week for the acclaimed interior designer, who just finished her work co-chairing the gala closing the 2017 International Women's Forum conference in Houston on Friday.

When we talked, she was about to host a dinner for more than a dozen women from around the world, and she was getting her home ready. Her new book, "Authentic Design: Lauren Rottet and Rottet Studio," had just launched, and her new collection of sleek modern furniture debuted as well.

She has plenty of projects underway, including two in Houston — a luxury high-rise project by Hines and the renovation of The River Oaks condo building by Arel Capital that will open early in 2018.

The Houstonian's talents are in demand around the world, and many of her projects — Goldman Sachs' New York offices, Bill Gates' personal office, the Loews Regency Hotel in Manhattan and her masterpiece, the Surrey Hotel in New York — have drawn attention and accolades.

Though her staff of 60 works in offices in Houston, New York, Los Angeles and Shanghai and her various projects could have her on any continent on any given day, Rottet always comes home to Houston.

No matter how much time she spends in airports, a return to home base — even just a day spent with her dogs — helps her regroup and feel refreshed, she says.

## ARCHITECTURE

When Rottet started school at the University of Texas, she was an dual art/pre-med major, imagining she could work as a physician and paint on the side. In her art classes, all she ever seemed to paint were buildings, prompting her then-boyfriend to suggest she consider architecture. Her fate was sealed.

She worked in San Francisco and Chicago before returning to Houston. New opportunities took her to Los Angeles for more than a decade before she came back. Along the way, she had two children, Evan and Kyle, who both work in the design world as well.

Rottet approaches every project as an intellectual pursuit: A good deal of thought, study and planning precedes each project's start, a message that's clear in her book.

"It's not like minimalism or modernism are the only good styles or that traditional is the only good style. If you do any of those with the same conviction and the same reason — understanding proportions, scale, whether the pieces work — they are all equally valid," Rottet said.

No matter what the design

style, understanding its history and precedents is important. The client's personal considerations, too.

When she recently designed the Houston offices of the Kirkland Ellis law firm, she considered the long hours that attorneys work and wanted their workplace to feel more comfortable.

"The furniture is beautiful. It's a very residential, highly designed office. That's what people want these days," Rottet says. "Those partners work so hard, such long hours, and they really wanted a great space. They wanted their space to represent the best, like they feel their practice represents the best."

One of her newest challenges has been in cruise-ship interior design. A friend asked her to redesign his megayacht's interior, and she had just a week to do it. The challenge made it fun.

The cruise-ship work is handled by Richard Riveire, the principal in Rottet Studio's Los Angeles office.

"I put together the one ship and a brochure and said, 'Someday we'll market a cruise line,'" she says of the experience. "By Tuesday of the next week, Viking River Cruises called. They said that they didn't want anyone with cruise experience — they wanted someone with a fresh design background and an architectural background."

## BOOK

"Authentic Design's" 336 pages are organized by vernacular, filled with photos of art, architecture and design, with Rottet's words about each space and its significance. Combined, they're a master class in doing things right.

She and her staff curated the best of their work of the past two decades, since her last book, "Lauren Rottet: The Substance of Style," was published in 2000. As they evaluated their body of work, they tacked up images all over the office walls. Rottet joked that her publisher worried that they wouldn't get the book out on time because she had enough content for three books.

"Everything we do is of today and appropriate for today. That's why we call it authentic design. It's not just, 'Oh, I think we'll do Spanish' or, 'I think we'll do 1925,'" she said. "There's always a reason, whether it's the history of the building or the brand of hotel — The James Royal Palm in Miami is vintage Deco."

The new book includes photos of her second home in Montauk, N.Y., and two private homes in Houston. Nearly 20 pages are devoted to the Surrey Hotel, which was built in 2009. Although she was its interior designer, she was involved in many aspects, from the furnishings to uniforms and even table place settings.

It's been rated a top hotel in the U.S. every year since it opened.

The concierge must have her on speed dial, consulting her regularly on everything from Christmas decorations to art placement.

Another special project was the Four Seasons in Bogota, Colombia. She was worried about safety but



Courtesy photo

Lauren Rottet



A hallway at the St. Regis Aspen Resort holds a 19th-century-style sofa, with wallpaper of over-

## ART AND ARCHITECTURE INFORM



Eric Laignel

A glazed staircase allows Viking Star passengers to see through to either side of the ocean view. The curved shape of the line between wood flooring and carpet represents the ship's hull gliding through the water.

was well cared for, and she immersed herself in the art, food and culture.

She filled the historic hotel with Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean décor, sourcing as much as she could locally and using only Colombian artwork.

## FURNITURE

It was a sofa that started Rottet on her journey into residential furniture. In 1991, she was living in Los Angeles and needed a new sofa but couldn't find one that suited her.

She created the Evaneau, an angular and structured piece with sharp corners and round bolster pillows on each end. When a furniture rep saw it, she declared, "I could sell that all day," Rottet recalls. It's still sold by Coalesse, for years its top seller.

Rottet designs much of the furniture she uses in her projects, so for a long time, homeowners had to hire her to bring her taste into their home. In 2013, she launched a line, Rottet Home, with Decca Home; you can still buy her sofas, chairs



'Authentic Design' by Lauren Rottet and Rottet Studio

By Lauren Rizzoli; 336

and tables.

Her new line, the Evaneau Collection, launched with 50 pieces and is available through the Chicago-based Mart.

Wood, rattan, glass and metal are the primary materials.

A tall, cubed dining table reflects light. A futuristic bench has drawer-like outlets. The collection includes everything from nothing but luxury to dark glossy lacquer frames and dark furry seats



Metal and wood Float Chair



Dichroic Table



Rattan Settee made of cerused oak wood and rattan

ST

FILE

# IC DESIGN'



Eric Laignel

oversize flowers and credenzas holding ceramic and metal vases, in the Beaux Arts style.



Eric Laignel

The floor plan in the San Francisco offices of Artis Capital Management offer a view from the conference room through the far side of the space, including views of the city and bay. The chairs were designed to emulate water lapping onto the shore.



Molly Culver

The Four Seasons Casa Medina in Bogota, Colombia, was built in the Spanish Colonial/Mediterranean style, and Rottet Studio designed its interiors with case goods, draperies, millwork and metalwork made or sourced in Bogota.

## LAURENT ROTTET'S INTERIORS



### Classic Design: Rottet Studio

by Lauren Rottet

16 pp. \$75



Eric Laignel

The dining area of the penthouse in New York's Surrey hotel was designed in the image of an Upper East Side home, with a chandelier and coffered ceiling. A Deco-style credenza separates it from the living area.

the Lauren Rottet designed this summer and is available through the Home Depot Merchandise

glass and metal materials. The chrome table is topped with Rottet's wired for electricity Montauk chair is a high-back, leather back chair.

The Wood Float chair always draws questions, but Rottet shrugs it off. "It's a hardwood frame chair with an acrylic seat and back. People say, 'You can see through it.' They ask why, and I say, 'Why not?'"

#### ART

No conversation with Rottet can pass without touching on art. It's her childhood love and still her hobby. It factors into — and sometimes even launches — every project.

"It's my night job, my easy job, my nonstress job. I love incorporating art into my work, and I think about it early on. Sometimes I manipulate a space to allow it to hold something I'm in love with," she said of the importance of displaying art.

Her own collection is varied; she describes it as "whatever moves me." It includes works by Sol LeWitt, Richard Serra, Alexander Calder, Kiki Smith, Fernand Léger and Robert Rauschenberg.

When working with a New

York client whose home was in an early-1900s building, complete with original fireplaces, floors and moldings, she finished it with an artful design.

"Classic Grandeur" is how she labels this space in her book, and Rottet's reach extended beyond rugs, furniture and lighting. The clients hadn't started an art collection; Rottet urged them to consider buying artist drawings.

Now their home is filled with contemporary pieces by Alberto Giacometti, Henry Moore, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Willem de Kooning and Robert Motherwell, all of which blend easily with their regal surroundings.

#### UP NEXT

Rottet is working on a luxury multifamily residential project for Hines, as well as a hotel in Washington, D.C. In New York, she's designing Central Park Tower, reported to be the tallest, most exclusive residential project in Manhattan.

In Houston, the River Oaks project — renovating architect Cameron Fairchild's midcentury condo property on Westheimer — will show Rottet's work, too. Richard Leibovitch, New York-based Arel Capital's managing partner, bought the building and hired Rottet to work with his architect and contractor.

Leibovitch calls it his "baby," and so does Rottet.

"I hired her to do the interior design of the building," Leibovitch

says. "She looked at the exterior and the landscaping. She wanted to make sure the overall project was as good as it could possibly be but also that it fit her vision of what she saw for the interiors."

He appreciated that as a Houstonian she could understand the building's place in the community and in the city's history.

"She understood midcentury architecture and brought it up to 2017," Leibovitch says. "It's not an easy thing to do ... the amount of research she did into midcentury architecture and making sure her design aesthetic paid homage to it and carried it into a modern-day aesthetic."

With her architectural training, Rottet says her vision is for every dimension of a project.

"When I took on the project, it was super exciting to have a modernist building in my own backyard," she says. "They let me have a lot of influence on how it would look. It was built in 1963, the epitome of indoor-outdoor, no-separation design. The view on approach would typically be all the way through to the beautiful landscaping beyond. We talked them into letting us have more input."

That included placement of the pools — one in plain view and a second one for residents who want more privacy.

"And there's a dog wash because I'm a dog lover."

diane.cowen@chron.com  
pinterest.com/ChronDesign



Montauk upholstered guest chair



Cubist curved sofa



The Powerful C-Table