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HOME DESIGN ISSUE

The loft reconsidered:
Old factory spaces
give way to soft lofts,
demi-lofts, condo
lofts and other
funky forms.

Cooking up
comfort in 5,000
square feet

Planting an
Eden in the
urban jungle



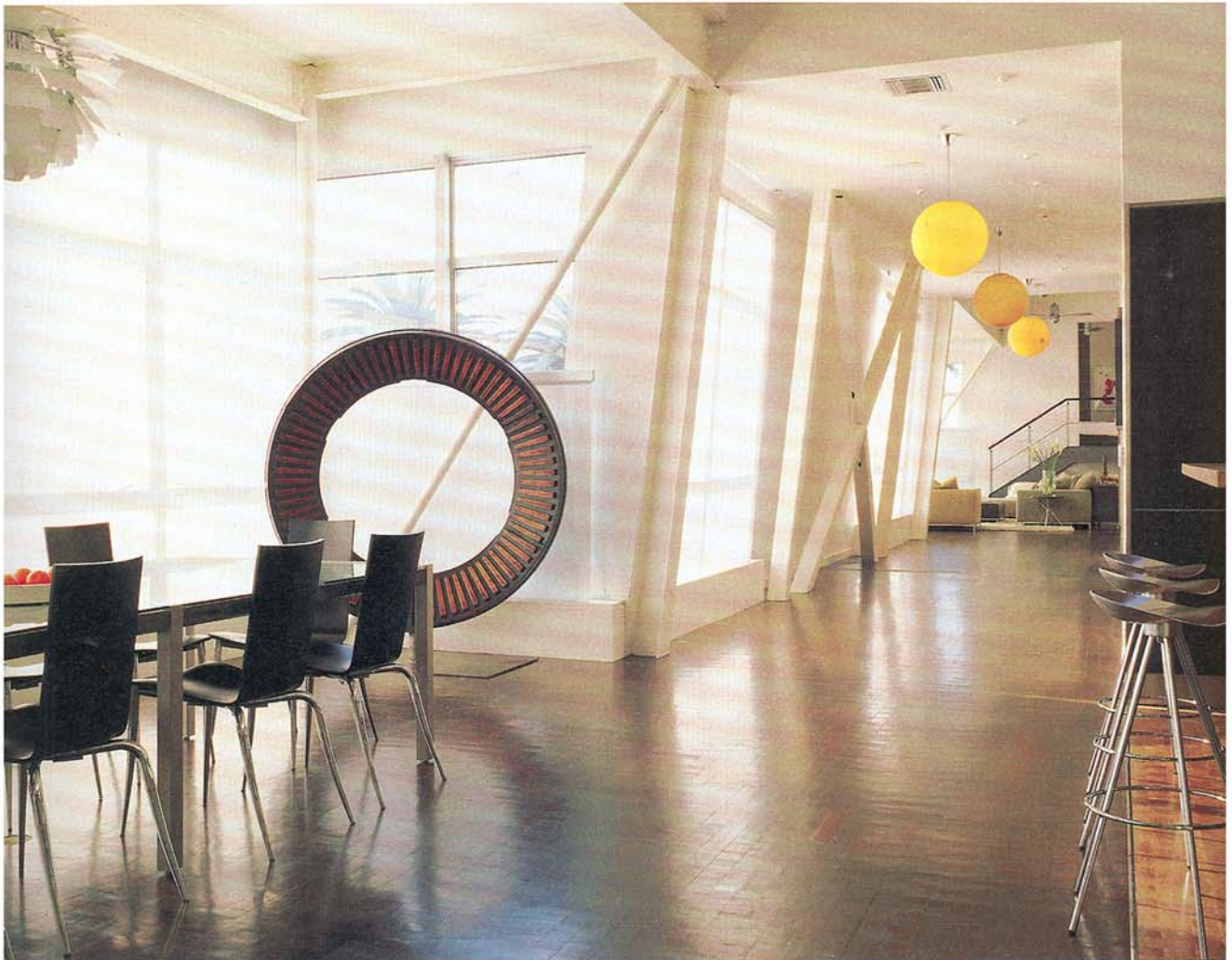
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You Call This a Loft?

They started out as bohemian art spaces in low-rent places. Now they're crafty conversions and bold new construction—and they aren't cheap anymore.

By Barbara Thornburg



THE NEW CONSTRUCTION LOFT: Dramatic seismic cross-bracing in Velvet Hammerschmidt and Mark Friedman's home recalls early lofts' exposed architectural elements.



Velvet Hammerschmidt and Mark Friedman's home office stands on an elevated platform overlooking the living room. A painted steel staircase leads to the master bedroom suite and rooftop lounge.

New-construction Loft

Living in a loft that was close to both work and the ocean was Mark Friedman's dream. Realizing it, however, was a tricky proposition.

"There weren't any big, spacious loft buildings in Santa Monica," explains Friedman, a software executive, "They didn't exist."

He solved the problem by becoming partners with five like-minded friends. Bill Brantley, a Marina Del Rey architect, designed the three-story, six-unit building of corrugated metal in Santa

Monica's Broadway Commercial District. Each partner took over a 1,900 square-foot loft.

In the four-plus years it took to complete the complex, Friedman became engaged to Velvet Hammerschmidt, an interior designer. "What looked like a decent-size unit for a single guy," he says, "suddenly looked cramped." So he bought out a friend's loft next door and combined the two into one 3,800 square-foot residence.

The loft, accessed by private elevator, is divided into two separate suites with a long gal-

lery corridor between them. On one side are the open-plan kitchen, dining room and library. The opposite wing holds the living room, office-library and powder room. Bedrooms and baths, on raised levels reached by painted steel stairs, anchor each end of the loft. Topping everything off is a roof garden with a built-in kitchen and lounge area.

Hammerschmidt's primary goal was to imbue the space with the feeling of home. For instance, she wanted a modern decor, but one that was warmed up. Instead of cold concrete floors, she installed end-cut Douglas fir for texture. She stained the floor and other woodwork espresso brown. The kitchen floor is whitewashed. Like an area rug, she explains, it helps define the space. Often barefoot, Hammerschmidt chose to cover the bedroom and library floors in wool carpet for comfort.

Hammerschmidt selected modern Euro-style furniture covered with luxurious materials in a subtle, sophisticated palette of gray, black, and coffee. A state-of-the-art AMX home automation system controls lighting, temperature, window shades and an entertainment center. Recently Friedman and Hammerschmidt acquired something else, too: a crib for their newborn - a sign that lofts may be starting to attract families with children.

Just as she'd hoped, Hammerschmidt says, "the loft has all the comforts of a real home."

It also has a price tag - well into the seven figures - that would knock L.A.'s original loft denizens off their feet.