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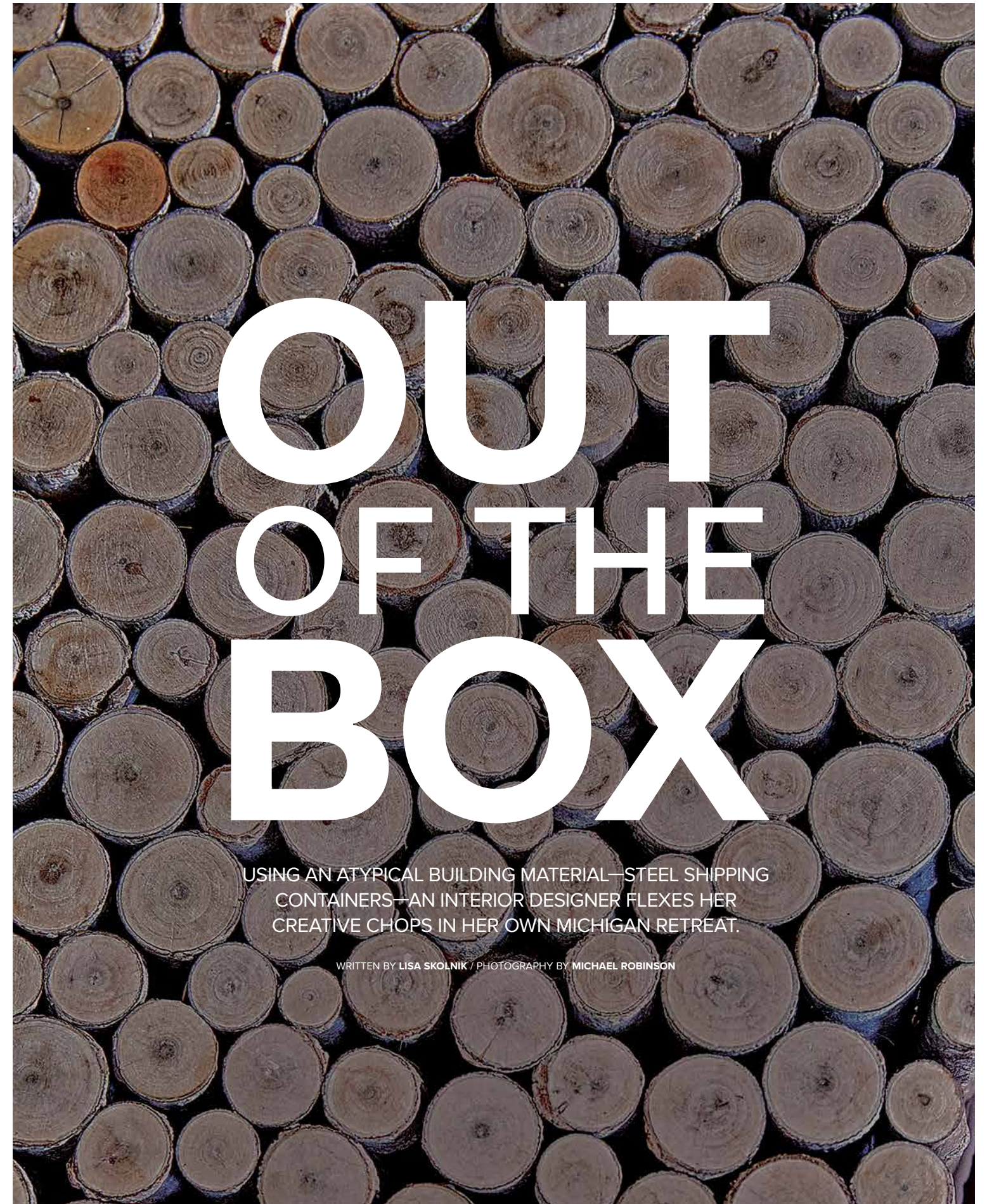


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INTERIOR DESIGN / SUSAN FREDMAN, FREDMAN DESIGN GROUP LLC
ARCHITECTURE / TERRI CRITTENDEN, FREDMAN ARCHITECTURE GROUP LLC
HOME BUILDER / JOHN CRITTENDEN, STONE'S THROW BUILDERS



USING AN ATYPICAL BUILDING MATERIAL—STEEL SHIPPING CONTAINERS—AN INTERIOR DESIGNER FLEXES HER CREATIVE CHOPS IN HER OWN MICHIGAN RETREAT.

WRITTEN BY LISA SKOLNIK / PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL ROBINSON

A gabled roof from Big C Lumber and a classic wood-siding façade temper this cottage's steel architectural detailing to help it blend in with the neighboring homes. Built of steel shipping containers, this structure was conceived by interior designer and homeowner Susan Fredman, along with architect Terri Crittenden and general contractor John Crittenden.

Famed for its pristine beaches and picturesque cottages, Michigan's Harbor Country is a quick 90-mile ride from Chicago and consists of a cluster of charming towns that hug Lake Michigan. Interior designer Susan Fredman has built and furnished a few dozen homes in Harbor Country, including her own weekend retreat in the area's Union Pier community. A fine artist by training, Fredman considers all the places she designs like one of her paintings, yet the home she completed for herself and her partner, Terri Hawley, took Fredman's artistic skills in an inventive new direction given the home's noteworthy construction material: steel shipping containers. "It's new to my palette," the designer says of the material, which she mixed with the more traditional wood, concrete and glass, "but I felt that I could take a more creative license in my own home."

Fredman decided on building a shipping container home when she saw one years ago and was smitten with its industrial vibe, sustainable attributes and strength. "It's a way to recycle the containers; plus, they're fireproof, impervious to water and stronger than traditional building materials," she says. "I was sold. And who better to try it out on than myself?" A new home would also mean that Fredman and Hawley could embrace a more streamlined aesthetic. "We had a fairly traditional cottage and were ready for a move to something more sustainable and far less conventional," says the designer.

Despite Fredman's passion for the project, it took several years to design and execute the home. And there was a lot of new ground to cover for the designer and her team, which included architect Terri Crittenden and general contractor John Crittenden, who is with Fredman's construction firm, Stone's Throw Builders. The hardest part of the process was figuring out the potential of the containers—what they could or couldn't do with them—to make sure the house would be structurally sound. "All of the research we did on building with shipping containers





turned up in one book," says Terri Crittenden. "We had to be analytical about every aspect of the design because we were forging new ground. We felt like pioneers."

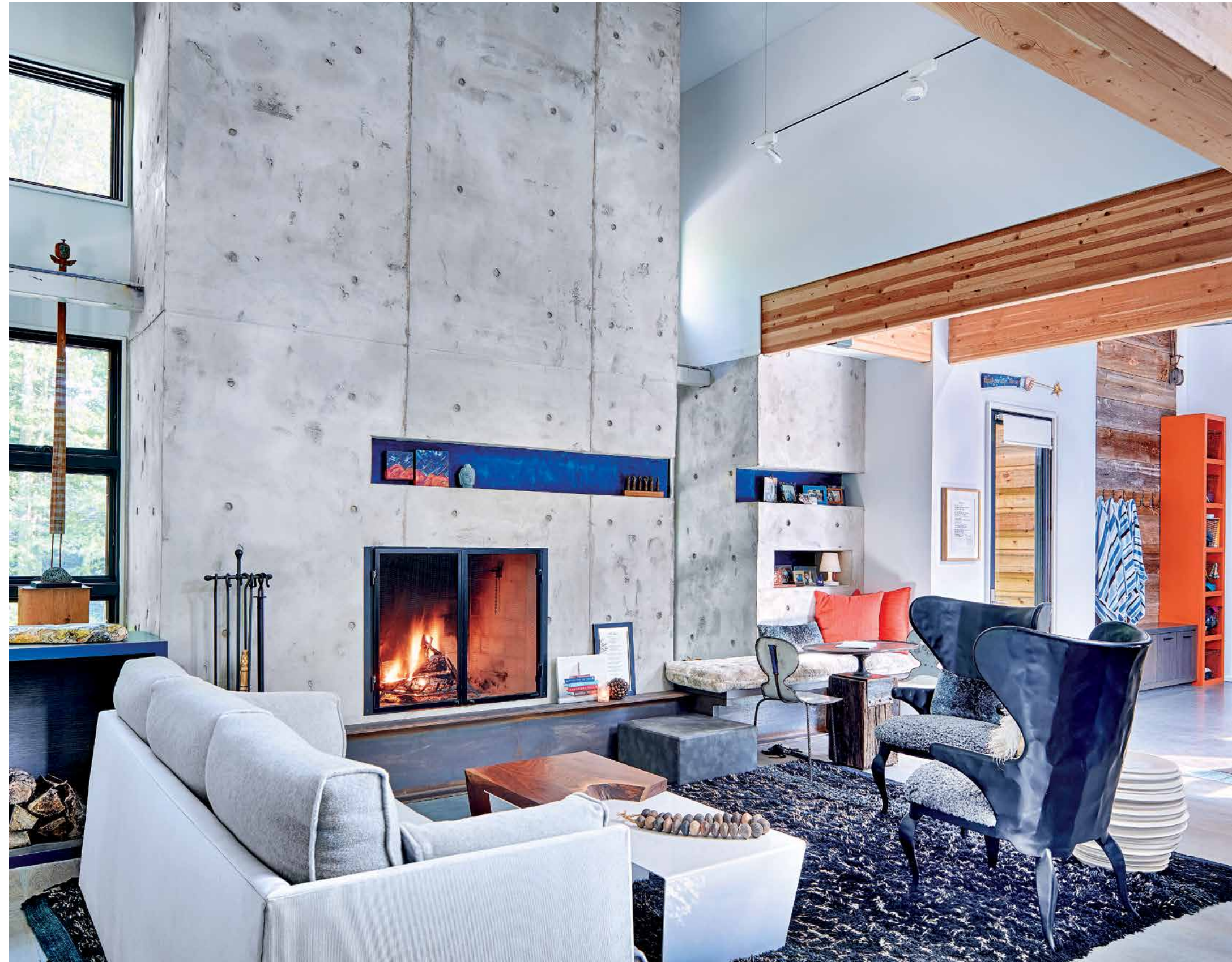
Because the surrounding homes were classic cottages, the team needed to decide just how industrial to go in terms of style. "We decided to give the house a hybrid wood-and-steel façade that blends traditional and industrial design elements so it wouldn't feel so out of place," Fredman says. And given the size constraints of the containers, the team had to think outside of the box—literally—to get the kind of expansive, architecturally intriguing spaces Fredman cherishes in her residences. Steel shipping containers are built to standard sizes, but they come in two lengths and two heights, "which gave us some leeway," John Crittenden says. To forge the light-filled home rife with long sight lines and soaring ceilings, the team massed six containers (three side by side on

two different parts of the house), cut out the walls, tore off the tops and added 20-foot-high ceilings punctuated with clerestory windows. Next, they stripped the sides off two other containers, joined the bases, added wooden support columns and wrapped them with screens to form a screened-in porch. Three more containers were then combined to build a guesthouse.

Inside, muscular concrete walls, burnished cedar beams and custom oak cabinetry give the living spaces definition, decorative might, and storage and seating options. "This is a smaller house, so there are built-ins everywhere to give us places to store everything and different areas to sit," Fredman says. Case in point: A cantilevered ledge underscoring the great room fireplace also doubles as a place to perch. Concrete clads some of the floors, along with wide rift-cut oak planks. And, in the master suite, broad wood floorboards climb up the bedroom ceiling, providing

Opposite: In the foyer, wood-and-steel joints connect the shipping containers and extend the walls that were built to yield high ceilings. Fredman turned a massive oak tree felled during construction into a sturdy bench to anchor the space. A lighting fixture, which was originally a silo top, hangs above.

Below: Tailored pieces from Fredman's furniture line, 350 West—including a sofa covered in Kravet fabric—are mixed with new pieces in the great room, such as a pair of Made Goods chairs, a Moroccan carpet from Oscar Isberian Rugs and a Dedon side table purchased through Fredman Design Group.





Above: Thanks to the cottage's relatively trim footprint, Fredman maximized built-in cabinetry to accommodate all of her family's storage needs. The bar area near the great room features custom oak cabinetry wearing Emtex hardware and holds a variety of glassware and beverages.

Left: Burnished-oak cabinetry designed by Fredman and wide-plank oak floors from Rode Bros. offer earthy counterpoints to the kitchen's corrugated-steel container wall. Mondo Collection barstools pull up to a countertop from Marble Emporium, while a Marie Christophe chandelier provides interest. Faucets from Hydrology and Wolf appliances add shine.



Left: The dining room was added to the main six-container structure and defined with a concrete floor. Fredman mixed genres here by topping a rustic wood base she's owned for many years with a sleek marble top and then surrounded the table with curved Oly chairs.

Opposite: Three steel shipping containers—with Marvin windows and doors—were combined to build a guesthouse for visitors. The courtyard accommodates a small pool by Bontrager Pools. Fredman collaborated with Green Mansions in New Buffalo, Michigan, on the landscape.



Opposite: For a new take on the classic screened-in porch, Fredman stripped the walls off two shipping containers, joined them at the base, added wooden support columns and wrapped them with steel mesh. Bleu Nature chairs and a built-in bench surround a dry rock bed. The Zen-inspired landscaping softens the structure's industrial edge.

Below: Cedar deck boards underfoot and oak beams overhead temper the steel-mesh walls and the concrete fireplace surround in the screened-in porch. Rustic pieces with a streamlined feel include a coffee table by La Lune Collection and seating, also by Bleu Nature, covered in Kravet fabric.

**“WE GAVE THE HOUSE A
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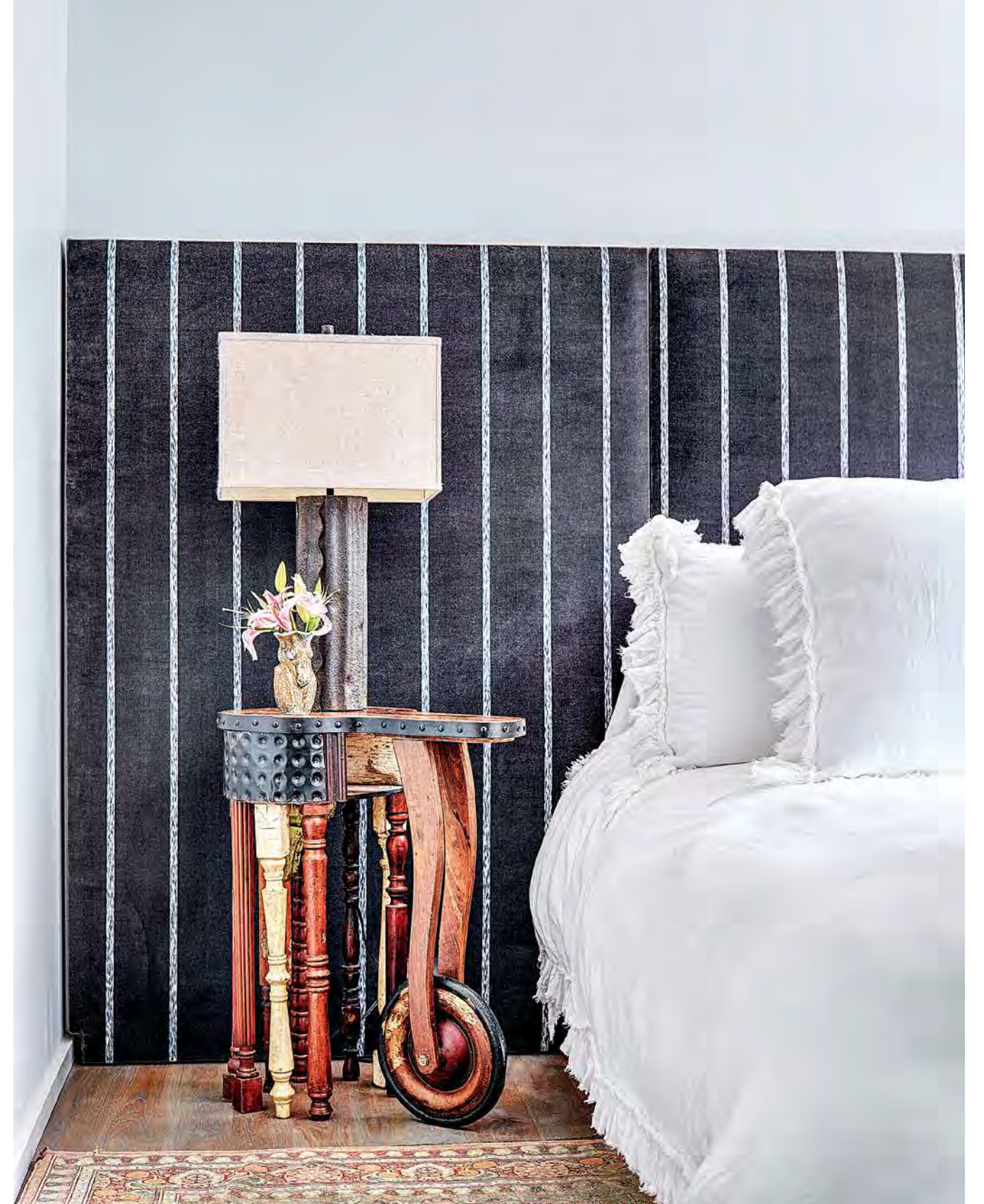
-SUSAN FREDMAN



A vintage industrial workstation topped with storage bins was turned into an intriguing and highly functional guest bathroom fixture by outfitting it with a sink from GO Home in Flushing, New York, and plumbing from Hydrology. A circular rug adds a dose of color to the space.



In a guest bedroom, Fredman paired a haberdashery-inspired upholstered headboard of her own design—featuring Romo fabric—with a mixed-media nightstand by artist Floyd Gompf. The nightstand is topped with a table lamp from Fredman Design Group, while Matteo linens and a rug from Fredman's collection soften the setting.





Sleek spa-quality fixtures including sinks, faucets and an angular tub, all from Hydrology, get a softer demeanor thanks to burnished-oak cabinetry by Fredman, a bench from Ann Sacks and an alpaca carpet from Oscar Isberian Rugs.

an added sense of warmth to the space that belies the home's heavy metal DNA. "We spend a lot of time in this space and wanted it to feel like a haven," Hawley says.

Artwork and cherished furnishings found spots in the home, as well, such as a metal cabinet that houses a dishware collection in the kitchen and a coffee table made from meticulously cut tree branches that holds court in the screened-in porch. Plenty of extraordinary new pieces increase the glamour quotient of the space, too—most notably a pair of jaunty wingback chairs made of resin in the great room and an epic wire chandelier in the kitchen. Other items were modified, like the great room's coffee table, while many furnishings came from Fredman's store,

including some of the sofas in the home, as well as the Kravet easy chairs and matching ottomans in the media room and a settee upholstered in a menswear patchwork fabric in the guesthouse.

Today, Fredman and Hawley are thrilled by the community's response to their new home. "People literally stop their cars in front of the house and start snapping pictures," Fredman says. And it was even more clear that all their hard work to get the project done was worth it when two more container homes were built in Union Pier after theirs went up. "I feel like we started a trend in the Midwest," says Fredman, "and I can see us living here for years to come." ■

Wood floor boards add warmth to the master bedroom, as does a Fredman-designed bed topped with Matteo linens and anchored by a Tai Ping Carpets rug made of recycled shoelaces. Nightstands, also by Fredman, offer extra storage and sport lamps from Bleu Nature. The window shades were made from a Kravet material; artwork above the bed is by Jennifer Webster.

