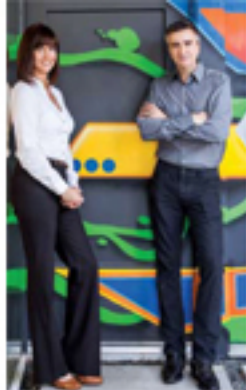




INTERIOR  
DESIGN



## Don't Mess With Texas

Aspects of Houston defined a lounge by MaRS for a contemporary art fair

**Young'uns.** That's what you could call MaRS, a design firm established in 2010, and the Texas Contemporary Art Fair, which debuted in Houston in 2011. But newly formed doesn't mean novice, especially when it comes to MaRS founders Kelle Mayfield and Erick Ragni, architects who first worked together at DDM Rotter a decade ago. Houston natives, their knowledge of the city and art won them the VIP lounge commission at the 2012 Texas Contemporary Art Fair—and they've been hired again for 2013. Here's the skinny.

*Clockwise from top: MaRS founders Kelle Mayfield and Erick Ragni in front of an Aerosol Warfare mural at their office. Umbrellas, nylon carpet tile, and repurposed shipping pallets, all donated, like MaRS's design services, defining the VIP lounge. An An Wood installation in a corner of the lounge. Former cable spools as tables. Exercise ball ottomans made from suction cups, glue, and zip ties.*



### Why the umbrellas and shipping pallets?

Our hurdle was to create an intimate space in a cavernous convention hall. We brainstormed themes specific to Houston. The grid of 24 umbrellas referenced the city being the sixth rainiest in the U.S.—and tempered the 35-foot ceiling. As well as defining the lounge's perimeter, the stacked pallets symbolized the city's port being the country's

second busiest. The tables of repurposed cable spools tied into our energy-sector prominence.

### And the exercise balls?

That was our nod to the ongoing effort to change Houston's image as one of the fastest cities. We grouped five different-size balls into ottomans, connecting them with suction cups, glue, and zip ties. We're actually in discussions with an investor to produce them.

### How about the color palette?

The fair's logo is white and red, the latter specifically Pantone 1917 U. So of course we incorporated red to emphasize the brand. Shaw donated the carpet tiles, which we plan to reuse for this year's fair, but only had so much red in their inventory. We then turned to gray, which complemented and softened the red and is relaxed yet elegant.



### Anything funny written on the two chalkboard walls that flanked the lounge?

Yes, TX IS: big and juicy. ART IS: ding dong delicious. People would add on to what others write—the walls became an evolving work of art.

### MaRS is an acronym for your names, but is there also an extra-space aspect to it?

Not directly, but we do find the planetary connection lends a bit of personality to the studio. To answer the phone "Welcome to MaRS" is quite enjoyable. We try to include humor in every job. We feel seriousness is sufficiently covered in the marketplace.

—Annie Block

bigidea

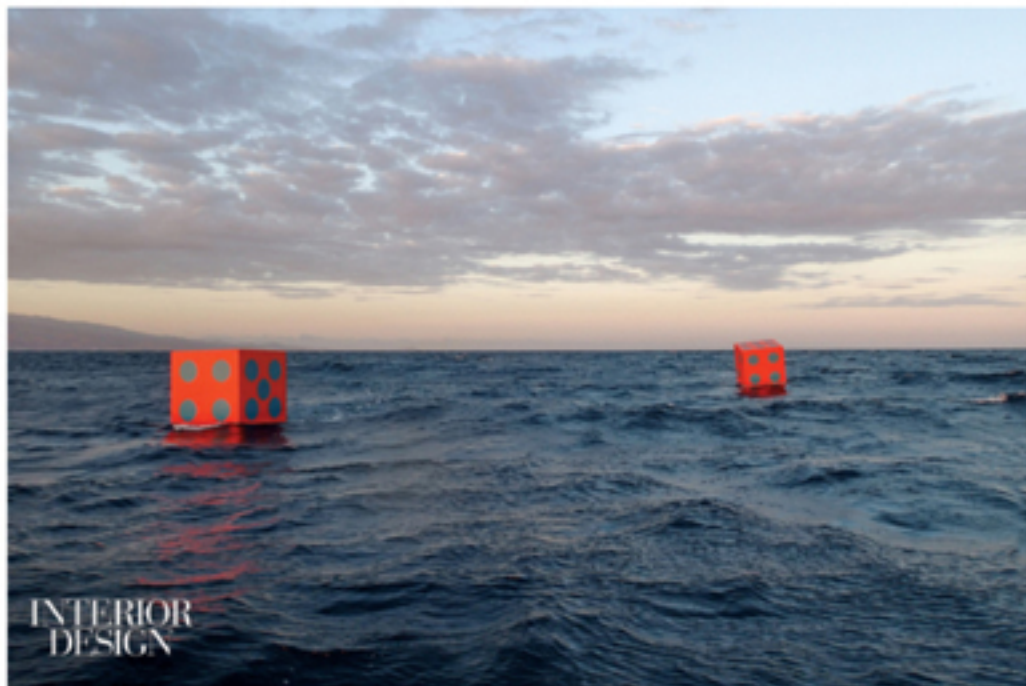


Raucous, showers and accessories.  
Beautifully handcrafted in England.

SAMUEL HEATH



samuel-heath.com  
or call 212 599 5177



Making the extraordinary from the ordinary by sculpting in paper, innovating innovation in a decaying paint factory, exploring your inner child while defying gravity. These are mere morsels of the delicious—and staggeringly creative—feast that we are proud to serve up for you in the Big Ideas issue. A first-time attempt on this theme, it proved an exhilarating mammoth of an undertaking. The old adage that the best policy is to leave well enough alone is often impossible to follow when there's a whole world to explore, discover, and rediscover.

But, heck, I will try. Why wait for me to extol this issue's many virtues when you can dig right in? Without further ado or idle chatter, we are ecstatic to bring you 100 outstanding projects and products in design, architecture, art, and everything in between. May they inspire you not just to wish for the unimaginable but also to realize it, to be your own dream-maker.

—Cindy Allen, editor in chief, Interior Design

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE +See 25  
More Big Ideas

+See Slideshow Breakout of  
the 100 Big Ideas by Market  
Sector

# 100 big ideas

24	<b>Ehrlich Architects</b>	The 300,000-square-foot home for Arizona State University's latest science and technology building needed to accommodate both the space and engineering departments: the engineers and researchers would share a building with the developers of the instruments that enable research. <a href="#">See image</a>	Tempe, Arizona	Educational
25	<b>Studio O+A</b>	A 30,000-square-foot office for youthful tech company Reputation.com projects cheerful corporate minimalism via polished concrete flooring, exposed-bulb pendant fixtures, an up-lit white block of a reception desk, and mid-century-style furniture arranged on a checkerboard patch of carpet tiles. <a href="#">See image</a>	Redwood City, California	Office
26	<b>El Equipo Creativo</b>	The 2,700-square-foot interior of Iikibana restaurant references Japanese flower-arranging, using all parts of a plant to emphasize line and form: petal-shape tables, decorative foliage and a canopy of sinuous hardwood "branches." <a href="#">See image</a>	Barcelona, Spain	Hospitality
27	<b>Laidlaw Shultz Architects</b>	The 1949 Port Theater was reopened and renovated with steel facade panels, punched and painted inky purple on the front, hot magenta on the back. Thanks to a mirror wall behind the perforations, passersby glimpse themselves as flickering, quasi-cinematic reflections. <a href="#">See image</a>	Corona Del Mar, CA	Cultural
28	<b>MaRS</b>	Houston natives Kelle Mayfield and Erick Ragni of MaRS created an intimate space within a cavernous convention hall for the VIP lounge at the 2012 Texas Contemporary Art Fair—and they've been hired again for 2013. <a href="#">See image</a>	Houston, TX	Cultural
29	<b>MGA Partners Architects</b>	By dividing a 1930's, 38,000-square-foot theater into three floors, MGA created two studios at a fraction of the cost of building new spaces. Original brick walls and steel framing were retained, lending character along with a targeted LEED Silver certification. <a href="#">See image</a>	Bloomington, IN	Educational
30	<b>Steve E. Blatz, Architect; Antonio Pio Saracino</b>	A space shared by a pediatric-dental practice and children's speech therapist is united by a system of ribbons. In the waiting area, thin layers of dry wall, which were moistened on-site, are molded over a wavy substructure to form inviting benches, shelving, stairs, and even the ceiling. <a href="#">See image</a>	Rome, Italy	Health Care
31	<b>Gensler</b>	1871 is a 55,000-square-foot shared office space at the Merchandise Mart, a compliant shell ready for digital entrepreneurs to customize their own work areas within. As members come and go, so do the walls, courtesy of a rotating series of murals by	Chicago, IL	Office