

# New England Home

CELEBRATING FINE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

January/February 2012

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January/February 2012 Issue

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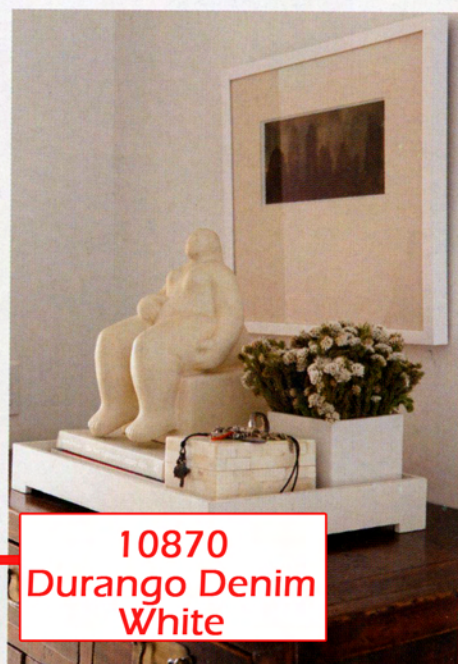
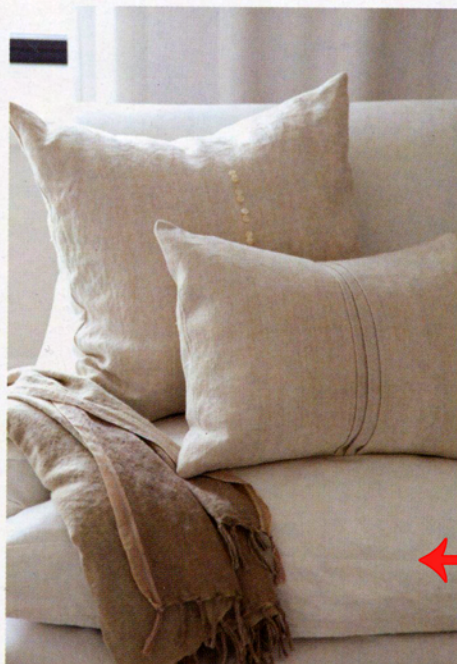


# A Passion for PALE

10870  
Durango Denim  
White

White cotton-duck slipcovers, barely there draperies, sisal and bleached old wood compose a serenity that supports a lively view. *Facing page:* Texture, proportions and art placement hold extra importance in a monochromatic design scheme.





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A design team celebrates white in all its glory, outfitting their own Boston high-rise apartment in a monochromatic scheme that forms a beautiful backdrop for well-chosen pieces of art and magnificent city views. Text by Regina Cole • Photography by Keller + Keller • Interior design: Paul White and David Nault, Weena & Spook • Produced by Kyle Hoepner

## How do you decorate

around a drop-dead gorgeous, never-take-your-eyes-off-the-wonder view? Does the decor have to take a back seat? Can the inside sing duets with the outside? "If you keep it white, the view becomes art, framed against a white background," says David Nault. • Nault, half of the delightfully named downtown Boston design firm Weena & Spook, makes it sound easy, but the all-white room is the historic *ne plus ultra* of interior design. In the absence of color, we become acutely aware of texture, scale, shade, shape, placement, line, mass, proportion—in other words, everything that composes the decor. Pure museum-white can act as a brilliant foil, but it can also create unforgiving contrast. • Two years ago Nault and his partner, Paul White, ascended to a whiter shade of pale when they moved into one of the two slender towers I.M. Pei designed for a sadly degraded East India Wharf in 1971. Followed a few decades later by the ornamented, arched mass of Rowes Wharf, Pei's two minimalist buildings sparked the renaissance of the Boston waterfront; the neighborhood is now surpassingly chic. Nault and White's fifteenth-floor apartment surely has the city's best maritime view as it looks down on the harbor. Tankers, freighters, yachts and water taxis inscribe ever-widening chevron wakes over the sparkling water between the buildings of the North End to one side and South Boston to the other, with the emerald hummocks of the Boston Harbor Islands stretching toward the horizon. • Nault and White (who named their design firm for their cats) transformed their 1,800-square-foot, two-bedroom aerie into a white composition James McNeill Whistler would have envied; Syrie Maugham first attempted just such perfection in 1927. Nault and White's rooms realize those 100-year-old ideas about the transcendent value of white, but not with insipid,





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Rugged end tables that started life as Battery Wharf pier sections join a refined upholstered wall and linen-covered coffee table. The designers favor the contrast of rough against fine, not only for texture, but to keep the decor from even a hint of predictability.



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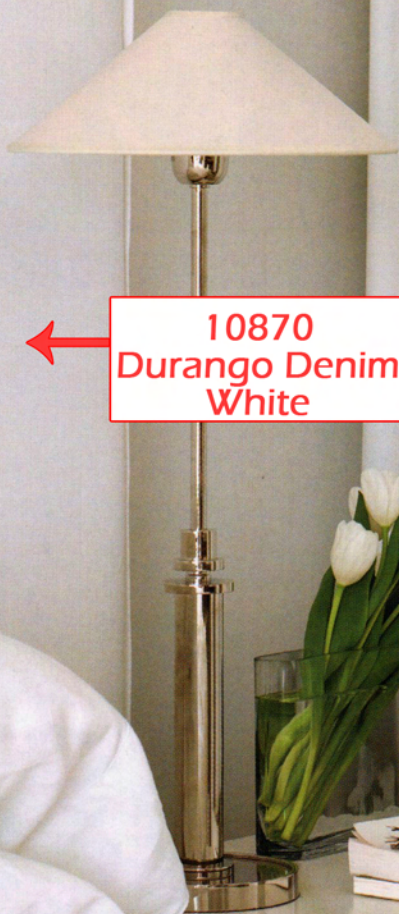
Gerald Gavzy's painting of his swinging grand-daughter overlooks the dining table. The homeowners designed the curvaceous wing chairs. *Facing page top:* Wood starburst mirrors, antique candlesticks and a ghost chair bring zest to the bath. *Facing page bottom:* David Nault (seated) and Paul White on their terrace.



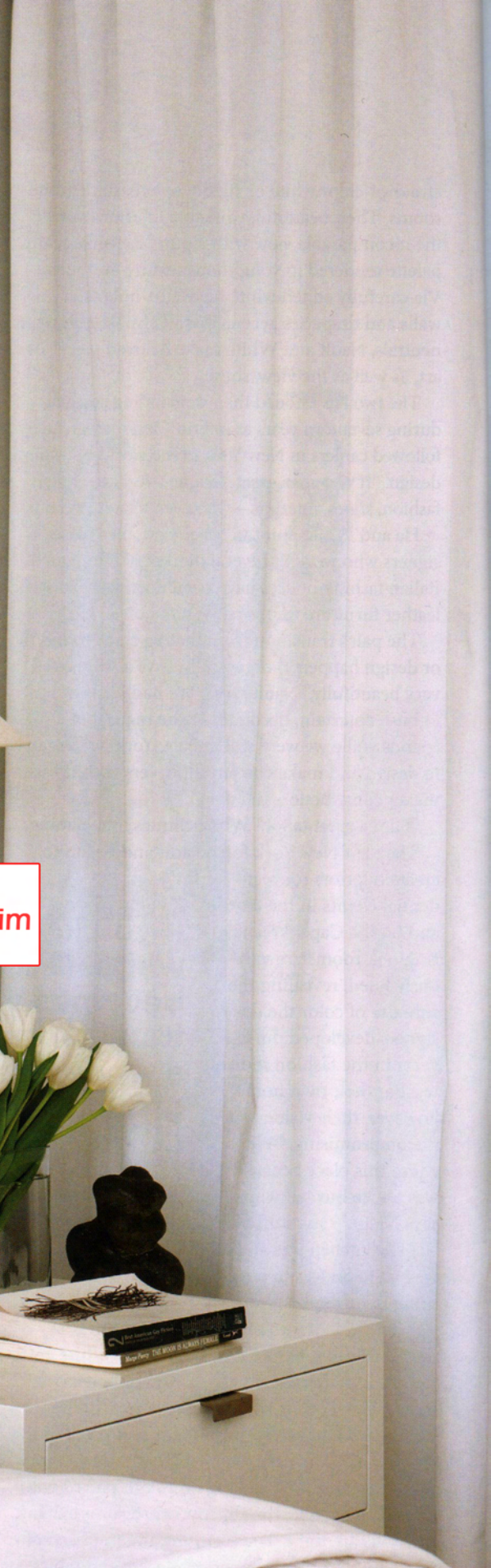
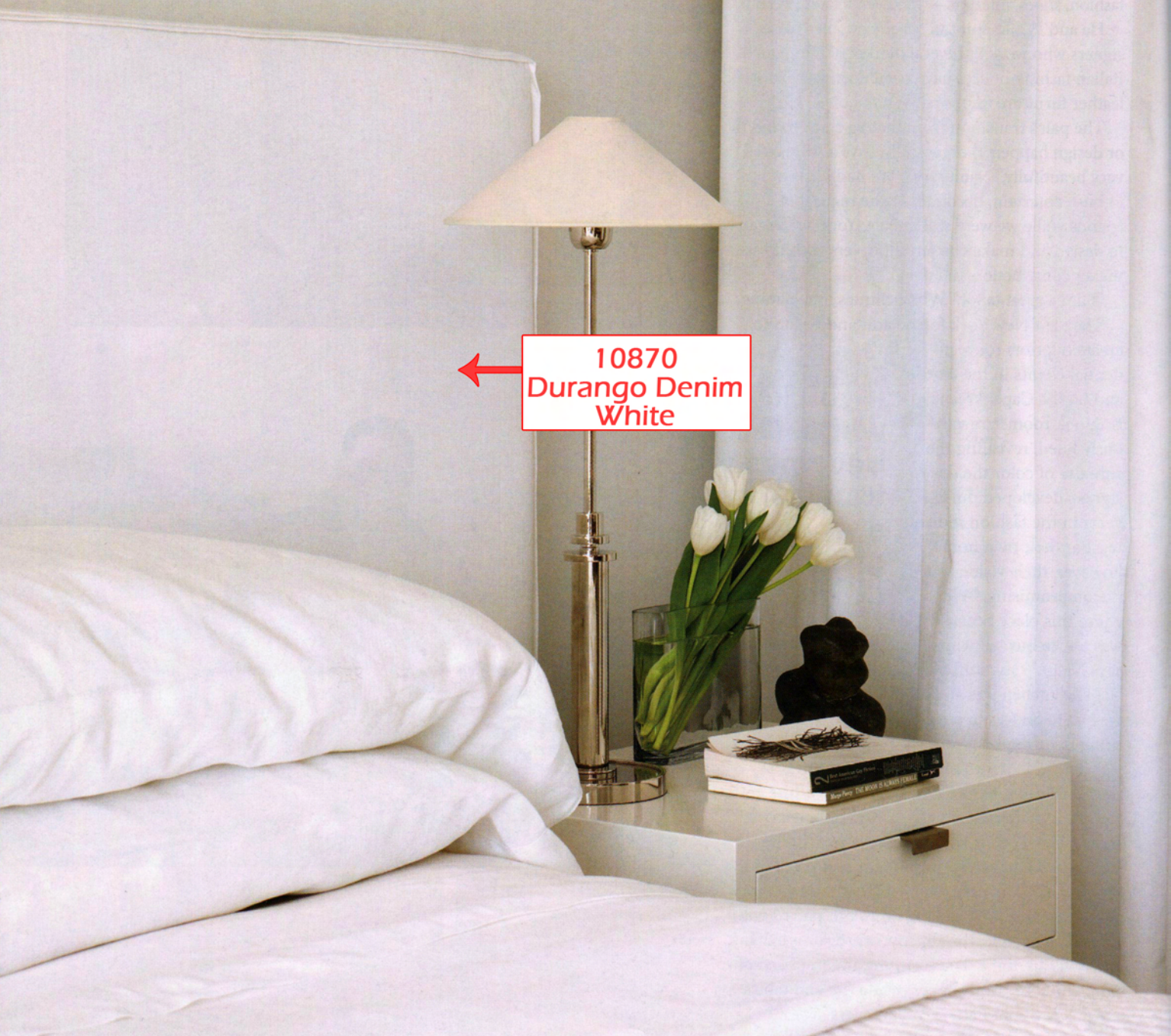
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The slipcovered headboard is, like all the pristine white fabric in the apartment, easily removed and cleaned. *Facing page top:* An antique console table contrasts with a white-framed mirror. *Facing page bottom:* Chris Chernow's painting of a woman in a brown skirt is a favorite artwork.



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"No one worries about putting a drink on them," his partner says with a laugh.

White expands on their aesthetic. "We like it monochromatic, but we create texture with grass-cloth, woven papers, linens, heathery wools—materials that provide subtle contrast and that complicate the play of light."

He continues, "Make sure you do a white you can clean. That's why we use slipcovers in white cotton twill; it's basically denim, a fabric that wears like iron."

Just as it draws the eye to the brilliant, ever-changing view, white showcases the couple's favorite pieces of art, including striking contemporary works whose saturated pigments and brushstrokes sing against the clean backgrounds of the walls in the living room and bedroom. Above the master bedroom headboard, a long, horizontal composition by Victoria Wagner encapsulates the serenity and textural contrast of the entire interior.

The designers who have inspired White and Nault may come as no surprise, at least in light of their own living space. "We love Calvin Klein and, for his ability to edit, Giorgio Armani," says White.

"Also, the European hotelier and designer Anouska Hempel," Nault adds.

Distinctive as White and Nault's home looks, Weena & Spook does not have a "signature" style. "Our primary concern is to get the space and the flow right," says Nault. Still, he adds, "We almost never do prints for clients."

Although the interiors they create for clients may be more colorful than their own home, the pair understands what Pablo Picasso and John Singer Sargent knew: without white, colors don't matter. In their design work, they strategically place color to highlight important architecture or to emphasize beautiful elements of a room.

But here in their own home, most of the vibrant, saturated color comes in through the windows.

From the moment you open the front door, the whole space communicates a deeply satisfying sense of completion, a complex, perfectly proportioned frame displaying a scene full of color, movement and ever-shifting reflections. "When you deal with other people's colors all day," confesses Nault, "it's restful to come home to white." •

**Resources** For more information about this home, see page 132.



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