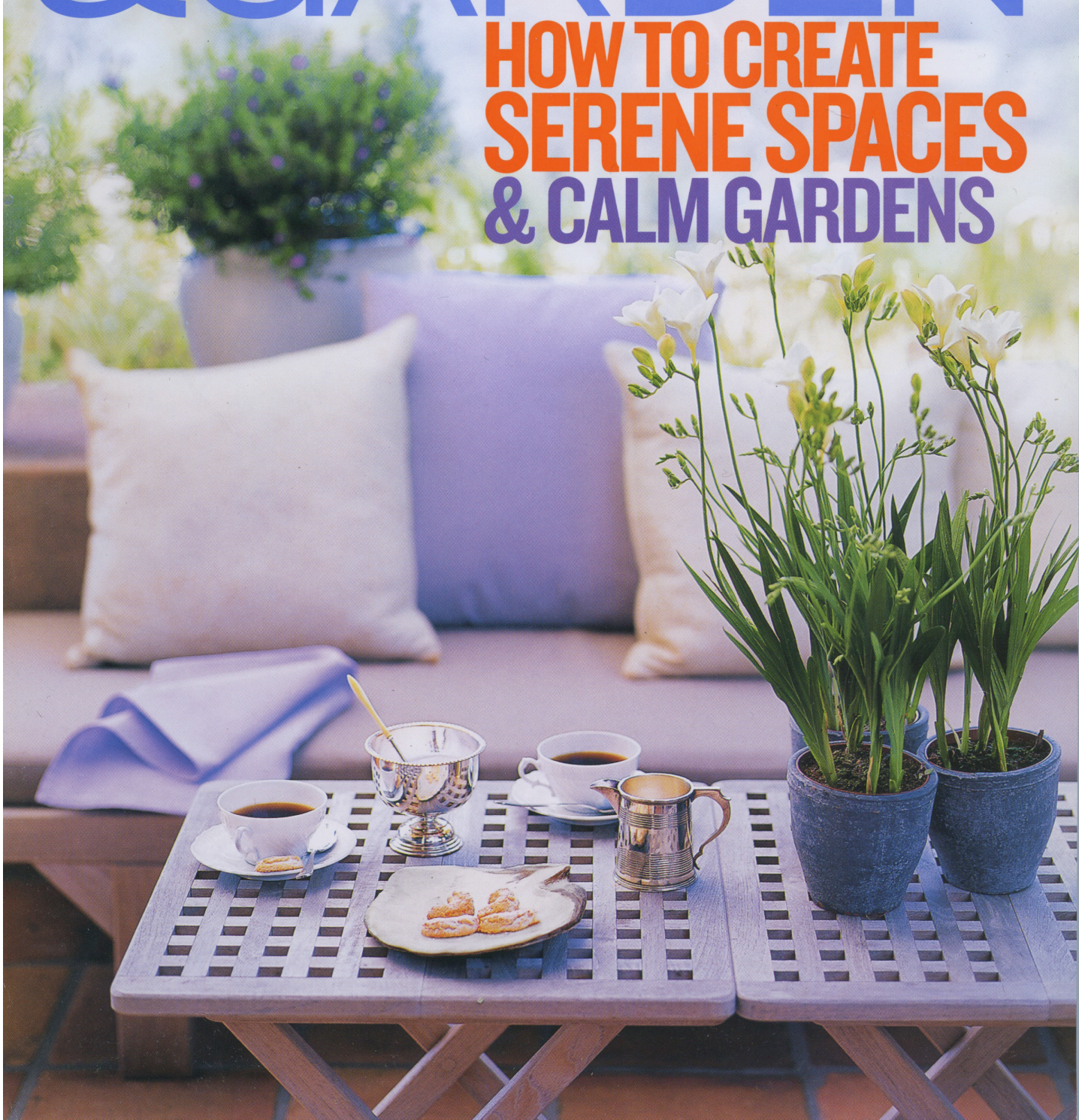


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# HOUSE & GARDEN

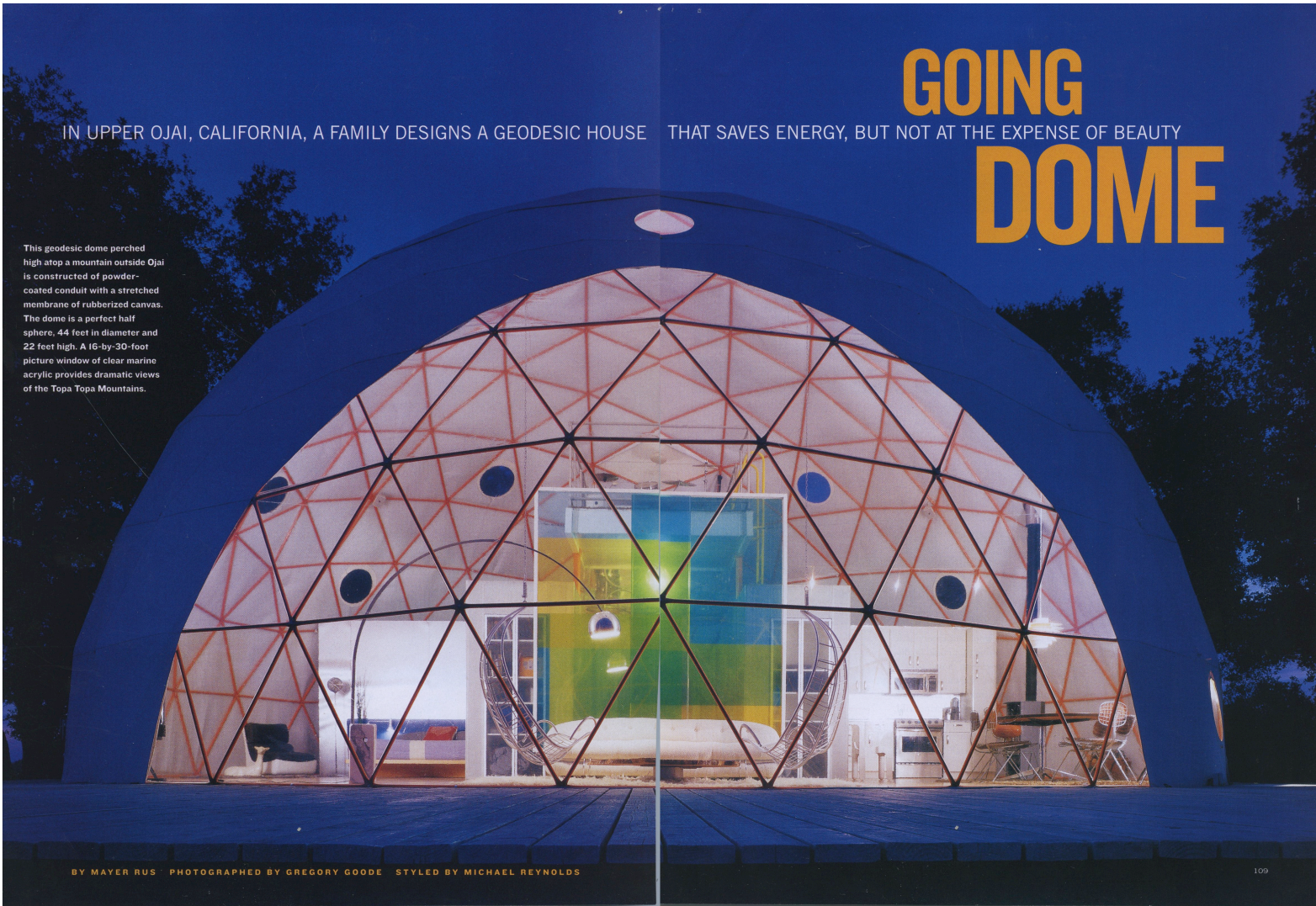
HOW TO CREATE  
SERENE SPACES  
& CALM GARDENS



IN UPPER OJAI, CALIFORNIA, A FAMILY DESIGNS A GEODESIC HOUSE THAT SAVES ENERGY, BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF BEAUTY

# GOING DOME

This geodesic dome perched high atop a mountain outside Ojai is constructed of powder-coated conduit with a stretched membrane of rubberized canvas. The dome is a perfect half sphere, 44 feet in diameter and 22 feet high. A 16-by-30-foot picture window of clear marine acrylic provides dramatic views of the Topa Topa Mountains.



BY MAYER RUS PHOTOGRAPHED BY GREGORY GOODE STYLED BY MICHAEL REYNOLDS

From the Richard Shultz Contour lounge chairs on the front deck, opposite page, you can enjoy views of the mountains and the Pacific Ocean. ■ This page, from left: The kitchen has a ladder to August's room. The Servel refrigerator runs on propane, and the cabinets are from IKEA. ■ Shawn Hausman and Jessica Kimberley travel to the dome in their rugged Ford pickup. ■ Hausman designed the bed and bedspread in the master bedroom for the Standard hotel, West Hollywood, CA. ■ The toilet stall is made from a cardboard Sonotube.



A CONVENTIONAL HOUSE was never an option. When interior and production designer Shawn Hausman first entertained the thought of building a home in Upper Ojai, just north of Los Angeles, he envisioned a tree house—something like the archetypal clubhouse in the sky, yet capable of sheltering a family in relative comfort year-round. “It was a romantic idea, but ultimately impractical,” he admits. “We wanted to find a solution

that was inexpensive but genuinely interesting, a house that would have very little impact on the environment. We were also looking for something that could be disassembled and transported to another location if we ever decided to move.”

The tree house fantasy wasn't a total failure. “When we met, Shawn completely seduced me with this idea of living in a tree,” recalls Jessica Kimberley, Hausman's design associate and partner in life. “We were both committed to exploring wild, alternative options.” Their search ultimately led them to the idea of a prefabricated dome. They gathered information from the Buckminster Fuller Institute as well as from the Internet, where they found dozens of companies that specialize in domes. The news wasn't all good.

“We liked the concept of the dome, but not the finished products,” Hausman says. “Most of the ones we saw were wood-framed, not inexpensive, and not easily transportable. A lot of them sacrificed the curving quality you expect in a dome, because of the rigid geometry of the typical triangular modules.”

Yurts were next on the agenda. Fortunately, during a yurt reconnaissance mission at the Ojai Foundation, the couple stumbled upon a dome that appeared to meet




their specific aesthetic and budgetary criteria. The designers worked with Pacific Domes, the manufacturer, to pull off the ambitious project. Hausman's 11-year-old son, August, inquisitive and remarkably design-savvy, contributed his own ideas. "This was an extraordinary creative outlet for all three of us," Hausman insists.

The dome itself, 44 feet in diameter and 22 feet high, perches on a simple wood deck supported by concrete footings. The frame—one-inch-diameter conduit, powder-coated in vibrant orange—has a canvas skin treated with rubberized paint that provides a degree of insulation as well as protection from UV rays. For ventilation, parts of the skin can be peeled back, and each of the 15 vinyl portholes can be replaced with round screens. The designers deployed furnishings—a mix of funky vintage pieces and custom elements—in an open plan that preserves the fluidity of space, light, and views within the dome.

The modesty of the structure defers to the majesty of its undeveloped mountaintop site, which offers sweeping views that extend to the ocean and the Topa Topa Mountains. There are no paved roads, no Starbucks, and no neighbors, save for coyotes, deer, rattlesnakes, owls, hawks, and the occasional mountain lion. The remote location presented serious challenges to comfortable habitation: access to running water, electricity, fuel, and telephone lines simply didn't exist.

The project took the better part of two years, and plenty of trial and error, to resolve these issues in a manner consistent with the family's environmental concerns. Solar panels supply nearly all the electricity. Water flows from a tank hoisted onto the property. Propane fuels the stove and refrigerator. As for the telephone line, Hausman purchased a spool of industrial-grade cable and ran it up the mountain himself.

"I love the isolation—it feels really wild and free up here," says August Hausman of the completed dome. "Basically, it's really cool."



The central screen of multicolored acrylic panels, Hausman's modern interpretation of a stained-glass window, encourages the spread of daylight, while subtly dividing the space. The coffee table is fashioned from black walnut burl. The Tobia Scarpa sofa is from Carla, L.A.