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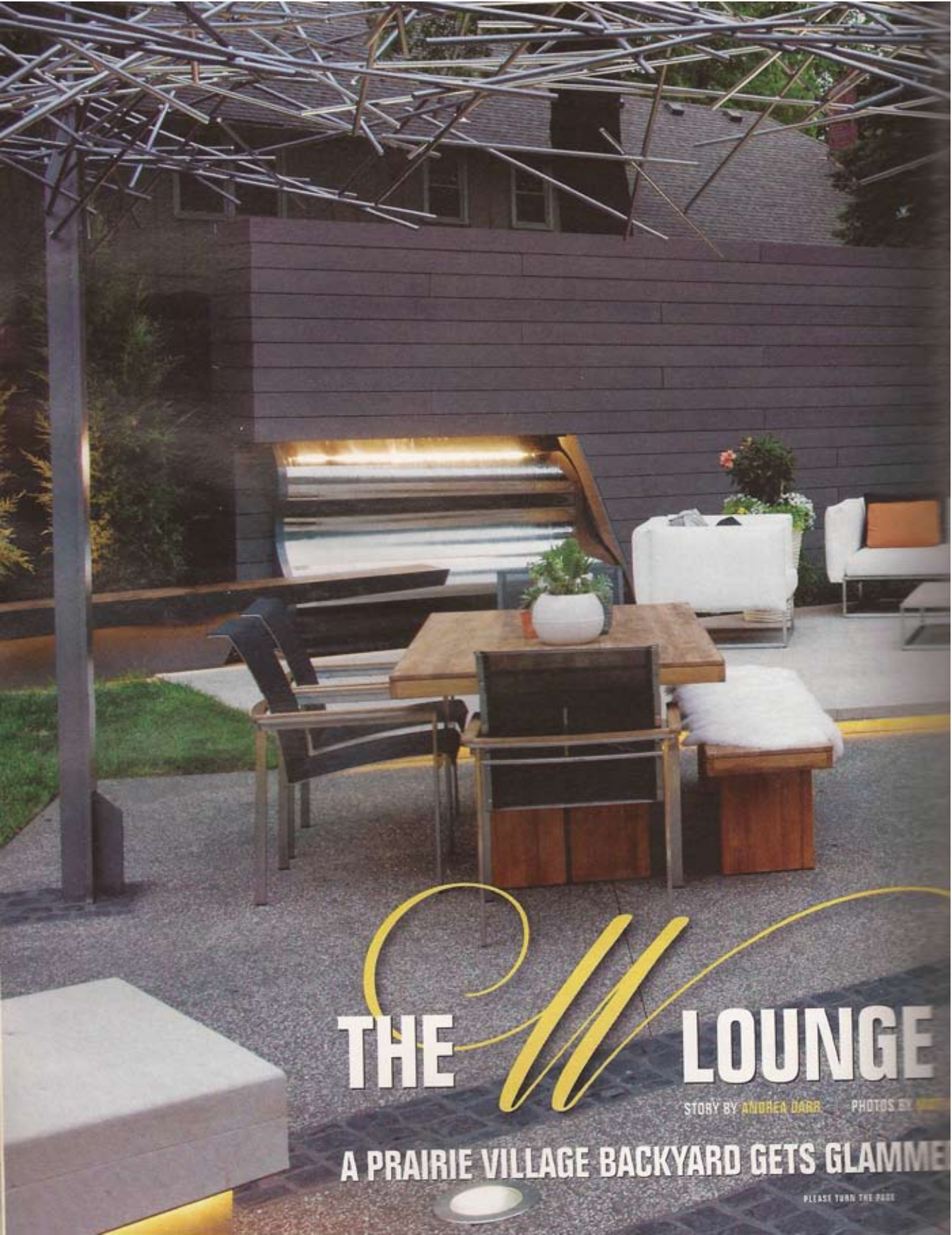
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HOME OF DISTINCTION IS BACK



THE *W* LOUNGE

STORY BY ANDREA DARR PHOTOS BY [unreadable]

A PRAIRIE VILLAGE BACKYARD GETS GLAMME

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The Gloster couches from Seasonal Concepts feature waterproof — but not stain-proof — fabric. In the spring, until the oak trees finish dropping their seeds, Hills keeps them covered. The Johnson County store didn't carry the modular line locally, so she traveled to Chicago to test it. Orange is the prevailing accent color simply because "I happen to like orange and it pops against the neutrals we used in the stone," Hills says. It became the color of choice because of the mass planting of tiger lilies to come along the back fence.



Wendy Hills was traveling in Barcelona when she saw something she had to have: the outdoor lounge at the W Hotel. "This is what I want my yard to look like," she told her friend.

But back home in Prairie Village, she had trouble getting anyone to understand and translate her vision. "I wanted something more modern but not so much that it wouldn't complement the house — no spirea or rosebud in curved beds around a wood deck and grill," she explains.

She assembled a folder of tear sheets showing images that inspired her and tagged a book that became her modern-design bible: "1,000 Visual Tips on Garden Design" by Marta Serrats. She interviewed two landscape architects and, underwhelmed by both of their approaches, almost gave up. "They didn't get it," Hills says.

Her landscaper, Matt Bolger of Wardrip Landscaping, who designed and maintains the beds at the front of her home, then introduced her to Kurt Kraisinger of LORAX Design Group. "I honestly didn't have that much faith after

having been through two landscape architects," she says. "But he nailed it."

When Kraisinger handed her his drawings, she asked for a few days to think about how some of the design features would function — then she decided not to change anything except a couple of plants. "I hope he understands what a huge compliment that is," says Hills, who was an architecture undergrad before switching to law. "I'm normally such a control freak in the nitty-gritty details."

Kraisinger took an angular approach to the awkwardly shaped yard rather than the smooth curves Hills was trying to avoid. His design begins at the side entrance to the yard, where an 8-foot sliding door opens to limestone steps through a path of clump Aspen trees to a wood boardwalk that hugs the back of the house. An elevated patio was designated for seating, sited up next to a horizontally sided backdrop that contains a subtle-sounding waterfall. The ground level comprises a dining table, fire feature and kitchen.

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WENDY HILLS: "My small contribution to the yard is the pots," Hills comments. But the lit-up "rocks" are her favorite thing in the yard at night.

WENDY HILLS: "I love how everything is so angular," Hills says of Kraisinger's design. While getting the living space she dreamed of, she still gets to keep a piece of suburbia with some grass. "I love yard work, and the green softens up the stone and concrete," she adds.

WENDY HILLS: Hills waited five years to do anything with her space while she looked for inspiration and an architect who could put the vision in her head down on paper. Kraisinger's design was so well-thought-out and professionally presented that there was only a minor battle with the review board on the fence. "I think I have the only 8-foot fence in city of Prairie Village," Hills says.



Hills wanted a sculptural piece in the yard, so Kraisinger designed the metal pergola that they took to Asheer Akram, who fabricated and painted it. Hills describes it as looking like a bird's nest or the game Pick-Up Sticks.

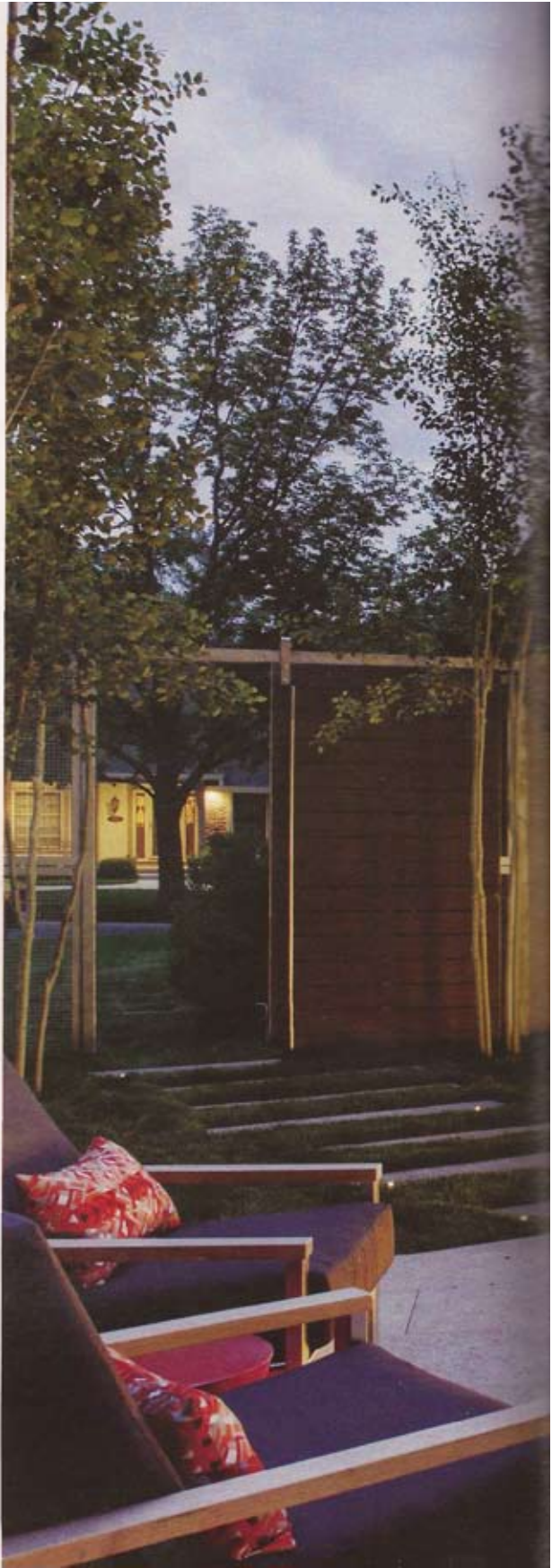
She also had Kraisinger include a raised bed for growing vegetables on the south side of the yard and even found orange metal tomato trellises that match her color palette perfectly. "We had gardens growing up, but I've never done one on my own. I'm excited about it this year," she notes.

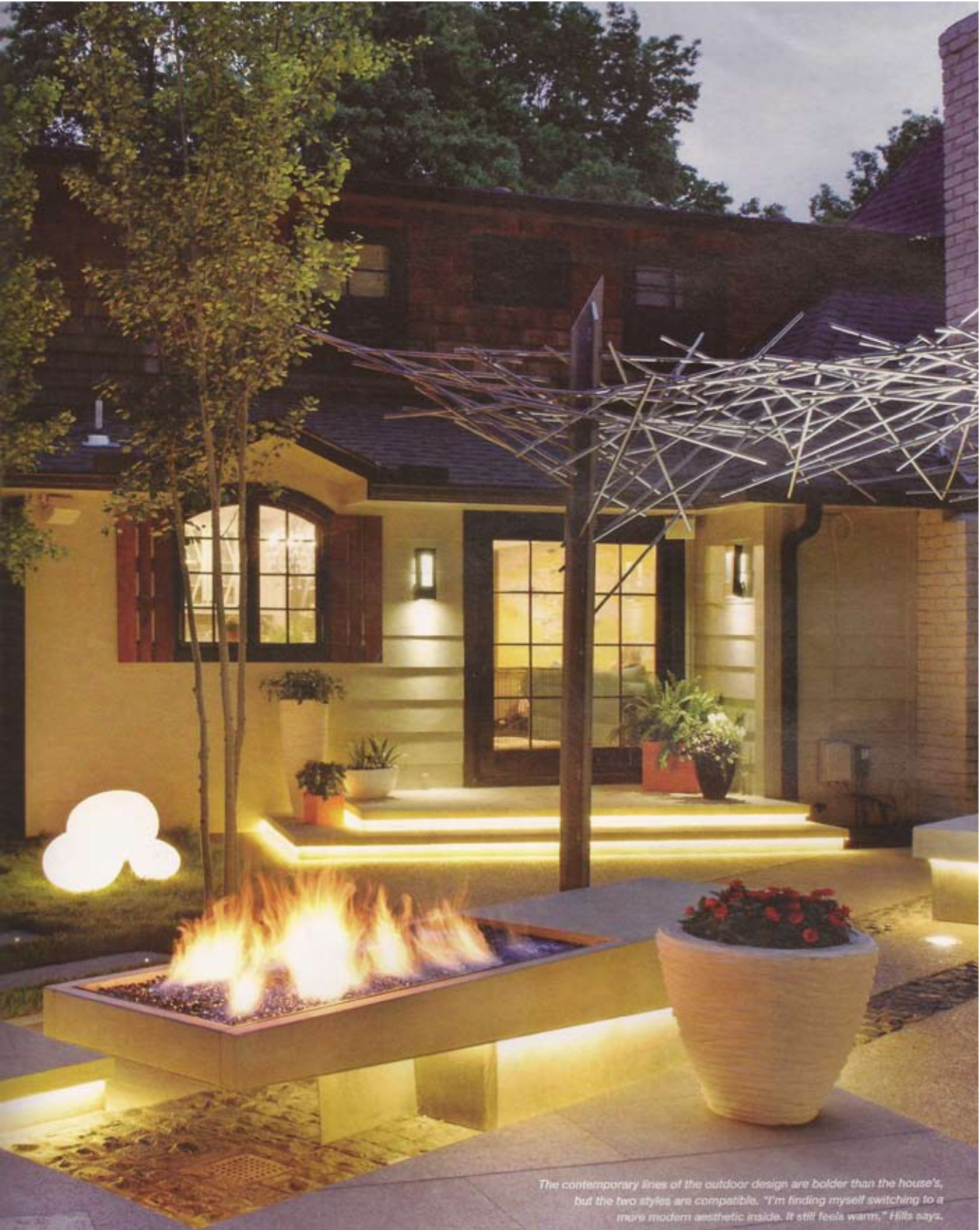
She has reason to be pleased, with summer finally here and a glamorous outdoor living space — in the spirit of a luxury hotel — for enjoying it. ●



Tip: Rees Michael of North Star Remodel went "above and beyond" as general contractor to pull the project together, from the Geolam composite wood fencing to the boardwalk with hidden drain to this cantilevered walnut bench.

Note: Hills found the modern-looking stainless steel cabinets, grill and ice cooler as a package online. The two-toned limestone counters were crafted on-site on the fly. "With angles on both the horizontal and vertical planes, the mason measured, hand cut and set each stone individually for a perfect fit," Hills says.





The contemporary lines of the outdoor design are bolder than the house's, but the two styles are compatible. "I'm finding myself switching to a more modern aesthetic inside. It still feels warm," Hills says.