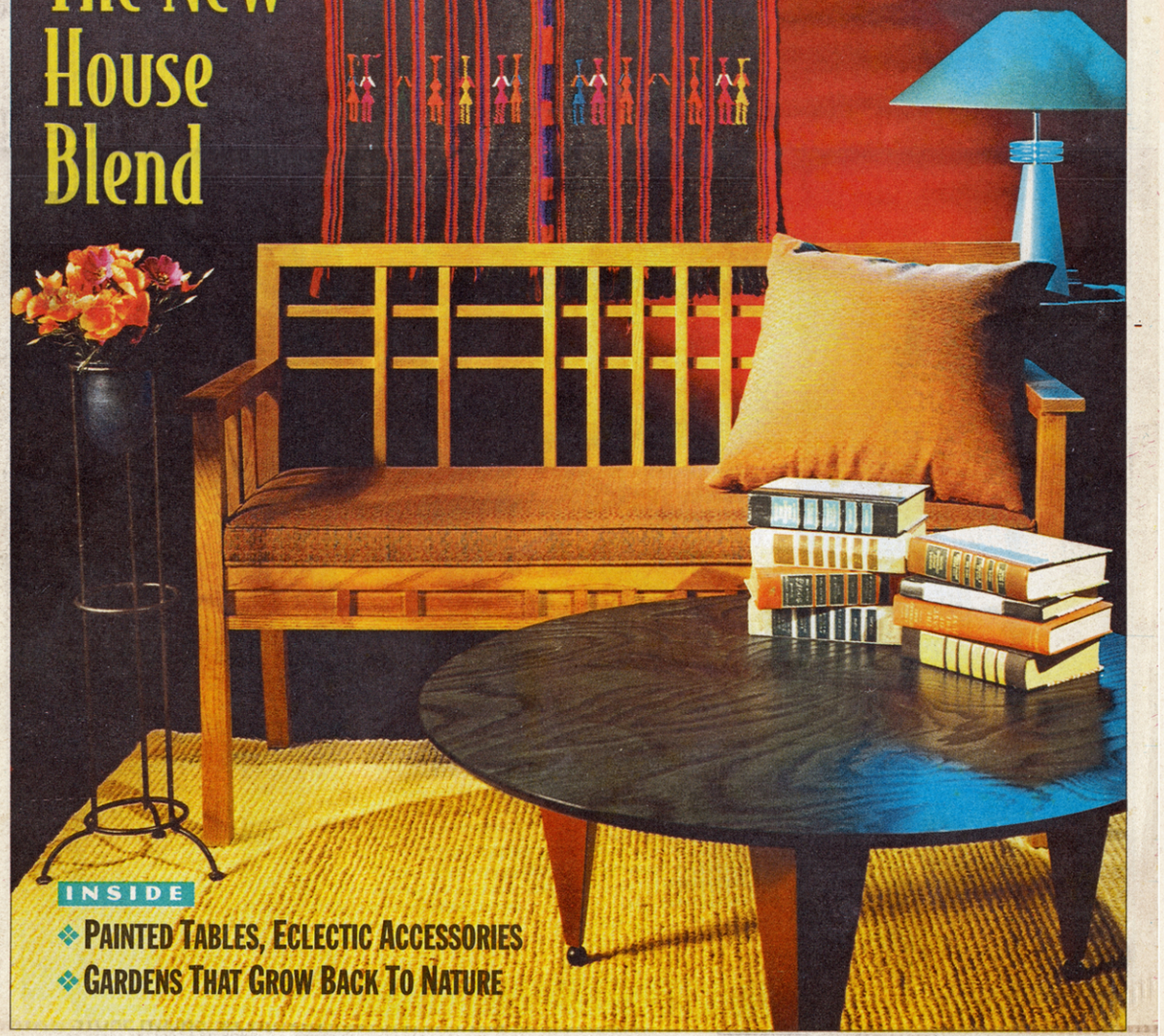
THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE ◆ APRIL 16, 1993

SD HOME

MIX-AND-MATCH STYLE

The New House Blend



INSIDE

- PAINTED TABLES, ECLECTIC ACCESSORIES
- GARDENS THAT GROW BACK TO NATURE

TURNING THE TABLES

BY ANN JARMUSCH ❖ PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL FRANKLIN

Ask and ye shall hear from artists.

When we invited readers to transform four unpainted wood tables into smorgasbords of self-expression, we heard from nearly 200 talented volunteers of all ages, abilities and artistic persuasions.

In the mail and over the fax machine came gorgeous, colorful and intricate drawings, paintings, collages, snapshots and portfolios.

Volunteers provided elaborate schemes based on African, Celtic, Chinese, French Louis XIV, Mexican, Navajo, Persian and Russian Constructivist designs.

We got entries overflowing with tropical fish, alive with jungle animals, howling with coyotes. Other artists reached for the sun, moon and stars or jazzed up their entries with faux finishes of leather and stone, real turquoise inlay, gold leaf and tassels.

Susan Molly Green of San Diego proposed to paint the table top with blackboard paint her children could draw on. She planned to stock the drawer with chalk and an eraser.

Deb Antram of Santee drew a lovely mint-and-peach-colored garden table, with trompe l'oeil gloves, flowers, shears and seed packets "left" on the table.

La Jolla architect Jeffrey Shorn sent clever collages portraying conceptual tables. Our favorites: the tuxedo-clad Butler Table and the fractured Earthquake Table — "perfect to a fault."

Choosing only four volunteers out of so many entries was difficult. We aimed for diversity; as it turned out, those selected have art experience, but none had previously turned his or her hand to the art of the table.

Transforming the tables you see here took between 30 and 40 hours each. That's a lot of work, but worthwhile when you consider that the results will last a lifetime.

Unadorned: *Our small unfinished telephone table before its transformation ($89.99, Pinocchio's Furniture and Kitchen Cabinet Center).*

FABLE OF EDEN

Call it sculpture, call it tableau, this table became as big and bold as life in the hands of Leucadia artists Katherine Ruth-Bender and Robert Bender. Under the name KAROB, the married couple collaborates on ceramics, sculpture and painting.

Titled "Two Tempting," their table took shape with pieces of plywood and masonite that Bender cut, then nailed or glued in place. With the two-dimensional figures attached, the 27-inch-high table grew to 55 inches. Bender used a jigsaw to scallop the table top and cut the points of a small radiant sun that forms a drawer knob.

This Eve is sultry. Adam's jazzed. Their color-streaked hair and club clothes emit megawatts of energy. The couple's armless hands miraculously appear on the drawer front and seem to cradle the shiny sun knob.

Lime-green fish "lie" on top of the table. Lush leaves worthy of paradise span its legs. Below the drawer, an apple-bearing serpent curves gracefully, echoing the table's own curved front.

Ruth-Bender painted the cartoonish table in the fiesta colors the couple favors, eye-tickling neon outlines and striped, spotted and spiral patterns that don't quit.

"We always like to include little surprises," she said.

Big ones, too.

Walk behind Adam and Eve, and you'll find the flip side of life. In the spirit of Mexico's Day of the Dead, the artists painted a couple of fierce skeletons on the back of the two figures. ❖