

DINOSAUR

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DETROIT

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REG DULLI

SHINE & SECRETS

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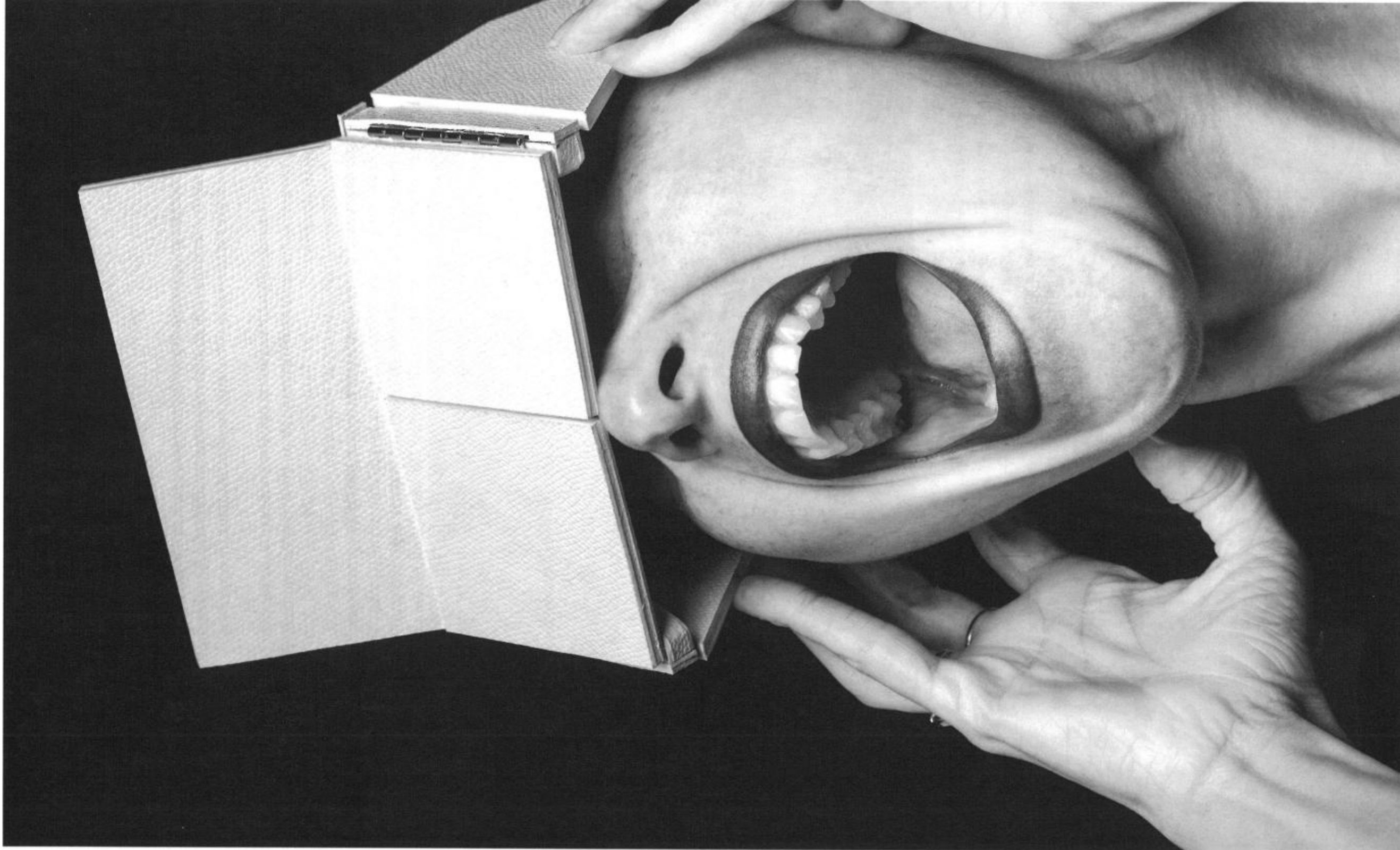
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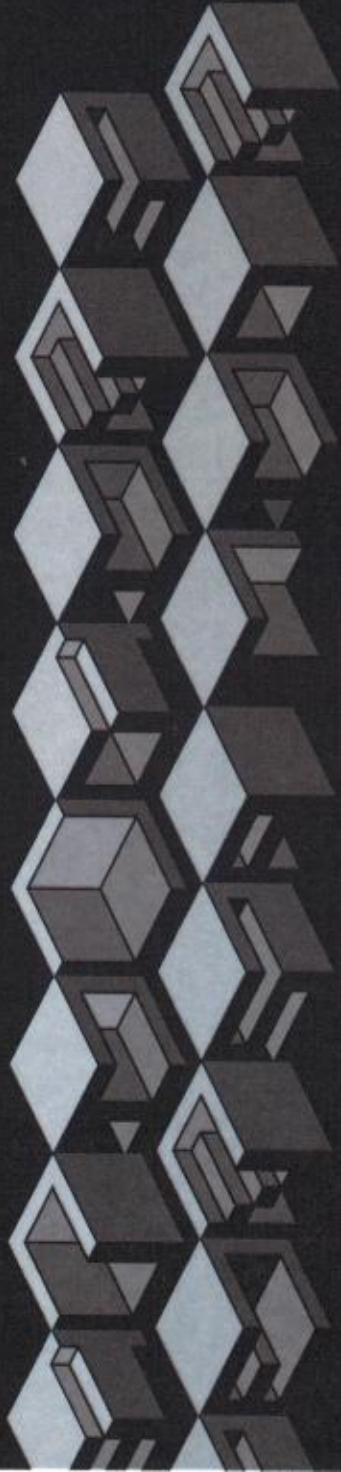


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ARCHITECT CHRISTOPHER HAAS

ON SHARED SPACES,



RETHINKING EYEWEAR,

AND THE REWARDS OF FOLLOWING HIS MUSE

GUIDED BY HIS OWN LIGHTS, CHRISTOPHER HAAS IS REDEFINING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN ARCHITECT.

HE CREATES STRUCTURES OF CAREFULLY CONCEIVED INGENUITY AND DECIDED VARIETY. DAZZLED – AND PERHAPS HEARTENED BY THE SIGHT OF PATHS OPENED BY HAAS WHILE FOLLOWING HIS MUSE – THE ARCHITECTURAL ESTABLISHMENT HAS TAKEN NOTICE.

The result: a cascade of praise and awards, including the 2012 Excellence in Architecture Award and California Home + Design magazine's 2014 Emerging Architect of the Year for 2014. Haas does not have a readily identifiable style, a set "architectural vocabulary" that he deploys in response to a client's brief. Instead, he approaches each project as if starting anew. Haas's work is best discussed in terms of his well-honed process and approach, and a vision for how a building will be used rather than an overarching "look." Of foremost importance to Haas are the client's needs, excellent craftsmanship, and mastery of materials that result in subtly arresting — sublime — detailing, along with ecological sensitivity and sustainability, how the building will be used in the short and long terms, and a heartfelt desire to "inspire the spirit and uplift the soul."

Before establishing HAAS Architecture in 2009, he worked in collaboration with the acclaimed Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron. The fruits of this association include San Francisco's de Young Museum — an essay in copper, stone, wood, and glass that is simultaneously visually arresting and a harmonious component of the park space that surrounds it. For 1111 Lincoln

Road in Miami Beach, Herzog & de Meuron and Haas took what could have been the most mundane of projects — a parking garage — and created something unprecedented. Their car-park serves its primary function while, with a great sense of fun, also providing a location for communal gathering and creative expression that runs the gamut from music and dance performances to art installations and beyond.

Today, Haas is creating homes and interiors; museums, galleries, and other cultural spaces; and furniture and fashion. He is as much a collaborating artist as a designer and builder of venues in which art happens. For the 2012 ZERO1 Bienal in the Bay Area, Haas set aside the idea of "galleries" as a succession of cubes and instead used flexible, transparent materials to create undulating spaces in which the viewer could engage with the art immediately at hand while catching glimpses of objects already passed and others ahead.

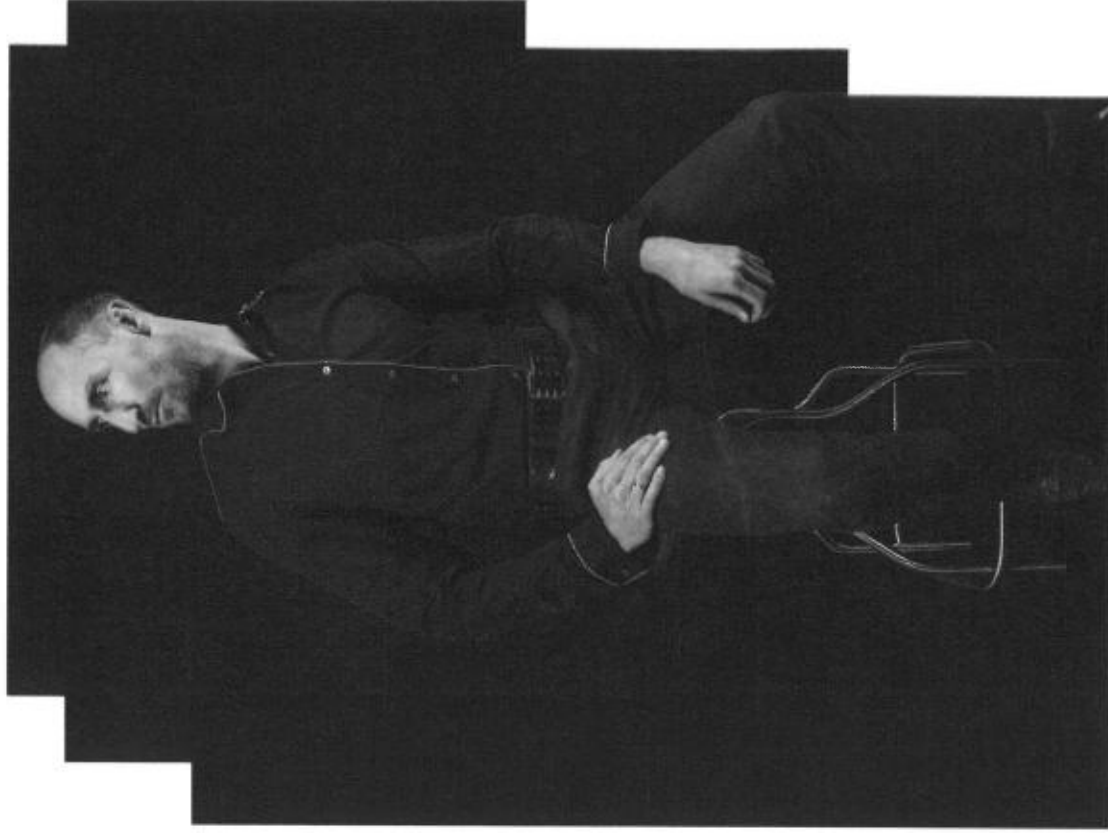
His set design for the ballet Triangle of the Squinches, presented by Alonzo King LINES Ballet in 2011 and 2012, was composed largely of bungee cords and assertively corrugated cardboard. These utilitarian — indeed, visually drab — materials inspired and shaped the danc-

ers' movements. The performers pulled, plucked, and found support in the bungee cords. They climbed the carapace of a cardboard tower. For his central contribution to the ballet, Haas received the 2012 Isadora Duncan Dance Award for Visual Content.

Caroline Rocher was a lead dancer in Triangle of the Squinches. Haas chose Rocher as his muse in designing eyewear commissioned by DINOSAUR. These spectacles offer a revealing (quite literally) glimpse into Haas's experience in working on the ballet and in designing for the arts, and — most of all — express his delight in shaping an ever-broadening design horizon.

What appealed to you about this project — designing eyewear commissioned by DINOSAUR? How did you approach it? How does it relate to your larger body of work?

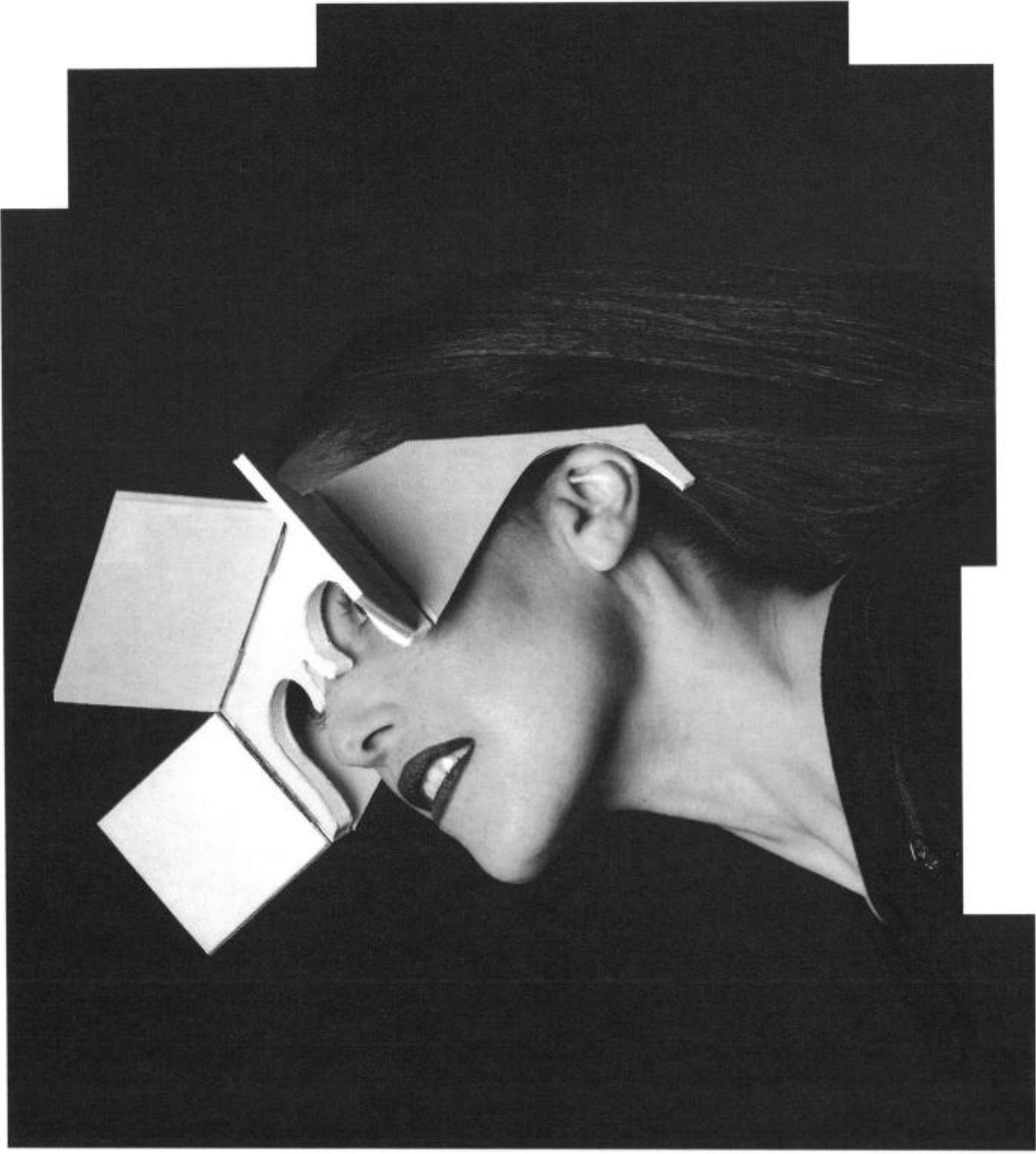
DINOSAUR commissioned me to design a pair of eyewear that related to a ballet [Triangle of the Squinches] that I collaborated on with the choreographer Alonzo King of LINES Ballet and the musician Mickey Hart. We were different artists who worked in different mediums. We wanted to explore space and movement by creating kinetic, transformable architectural objects, as opposed to fixed sets. These objects could be manipulated by the dancers, while at the same moment they forced the dancers to adapt to their unique characteristics. I was interested in reinventing what a stage set may be. With this project, I wanted to reinvent what eyewear may be, to come at it from a different angle.



The dance project was an enormous success. The shows sold out, and the ballet received numerous awards. It was filmed and re-broadcast on European television. Experiencing that gave me a lot of confidence that I could explore areas outside of traditional architecture.

The first part of the process was focusing on the materiality. The materials used in the ballet were cardboard and white elastic shock cord. But I didn't want to be so literal. I wanted to create something soft, like a piece of clothing, in a material that would also complement the features and incredible skin tone of Caroline Rocher, a gorgeous, brilliant, talented artist and renowned ballet dancer. I had the privilege of working with during the ballet collaboration.

I also thought it would be interesting to create eyewear that has



a pragmatic function. Something that would allow one to literally shut out the distractions around them by transforming the eyewear into a private space. They're really intended to be like blinders, like the flaps on theater lights. They can open up to 180 degrees, allowing full vision, or you can close them completely.

The eyewear creates a physical space for your eyes — a quiet space that you can go into to focus on the task in front of you or even meditate. It has a tie-in with theatrics but isn't literal. The eyewear is its own entity, not directly tied to the ballet. Instead, I took the opportunity to rethink the paradigm of eyewear.

If the eyewear gets a good response, I'm really serious about taking the next step and creating a production line of them, either finding a way to fabricate them myself or collaborating with a company.

It's said that museums are to the contemporary world what cathedrals were to earlier times: the embodiment of a community's or society's highest ideals — and its wealth; a preeminent, highly visible, and monumental opportunity for an architect to demonstrate his or her (his, traditionally) vision and talents; and, at last, a place where people go to reflect and contemplate, to find meaning, comfort, and uplift. Do you

agree? How does your work fit into that paradigm — or not?

Museums are trying to be much more extroverted in their relationship to the public. They're looking for public engagement. They don't want to be seen as elitist. They're moving in an inclusionary direction.

When designing for museums and art spaces, you begin to see how people use the space, how they react to art. My work has allowed me to experience the visitor's experience. I sat in the ballet audience — about 2,000 people — and experienced the audiences' responses directly. It was very intimate. Doing these collaborations has allowed me to learn how audiences react. Seeing how people approach and respond to performances — and how they approach museums and art — informs my work.

Looking at the de Young Museum, 1111 Lincoln Road, and the 2012 ZERO1 biennial design, all seem to include erstwhile walls and/or facades that suggest permeability, flexibility, lightness, and irregularity rather than the characteristics typically associated with walls and facades: solidity, stability, mass. Why?

Walls are powerful objects; they keep things out and hold things in and shape the way we engage our built surroundings. A wall's shape and materiality has significance in the way we interact with space. The walls I designed for the ZERO1 biennial were made in taut translucent fabric — they create a space, but one that is layered with other spaces beyond. You could see and

Christopher Haas sees things differently. His designs can seem almost counterintuitive when considering the norm they're compared to, from parking garages that are sculpturally defiant, putting their temporary tenants on display rather than hiding them beneath the ground, to museum exteriors that invite tactile interaction as opposed to the long-imposed look-but-don't-touch rule of most institutions.

So when we asked Christopher to design eyewear for someone who has worked in, or with, one of his environments, we had no idea what to expect.

The project was intended as a twist on the famous 1931 Beaux-Arts Ball, to which architects such as William Van Alen and Leonard Schultze came dressed as buildings they had designed, complete with elaborate Art Deco headgear.

Christopher chose as his model and muse Caroline Rocher, a dancer with the Alonzo King LINES Ballet, for which he'd designed an Isadora Duncan Dance Award-winning set.

The resulting object is as sculptural as we expected it to be, though still quite surprising: In the true spirit of Christopher's other work, his eyewear challenges the notion of what exactly "vision" means, and where it is that our gaze ultimately settles.

STEVEN GDULA