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The surprising backstory behind an iconic design
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Oura's subtle ring obsessively tracks your sleep, heart rate and more.

THE WATCH
Apple's polished watch ignited the elegant wearables movement.

THE GLASSES
Ray-Ban's new Stories Wayfarers surreptitiously snap photos.

THE BAND
The Whoop 4.0 monitors a mega-load of personal data.

Wearable Tech: Geeky No More

By JACOB GALLAGHER

How smart rings, wristbands and glasses, once woefully clunky and cyborgish, became sleek fashion must-haves

RAY-BAN'S Stories glasses can record video, hands free, and boast Facebook technology. They can also play music via ear speakers and respond to basic commands. ("Hey Facebook, write this article," sadly did not work.) But here's their most remarkable attribute: They just look like glasses. Released last month, Stories Wayfarers weigh just five grams more than an analog pair and if not for a tiny white light that shines when you're shooting, they appear identical to tech-free Wayfarers—a seminal frame worn by Muhammad Ali, Madonna and countless others.

The novelty of Ray-Ban's digitized frames lies in their normalcy. In 2013, Google released its \$1,500 Glass, which made the wearer look like such a Silicon Valley cyborg that the innovation was mocked into obsolescence. Glass still exists,

but have you seen anyone sporting it lately? With obvious yellow-outlined cameras on each side, the loopy \$130 Spectacles from Snap, the company behind Snapchat, a Gen-Z favorite social media app, didn't fare much better in 2016.

Ray-Ban's Stories glasses are part of a new generation of wearable accessories that downplay their techiness and actually prioritize aesthetics. Take the \$400 ring from Finnish health company Oura. Released in 2018, the second generation of this sleep-tracking device is tiny enough to pass for a gold bauble. Last month, Whoop, a wearables startup based in Boston, released the fourth iteration of its screenless activity-tracking bracelet which is 33% tinier than the last. (Subscriptions, which include a band, start at \$324 for 18 months.) Earlier this year, Milanese fashion label Prada partnered with American Express to introduce the most high-design concept yet: a sleek,

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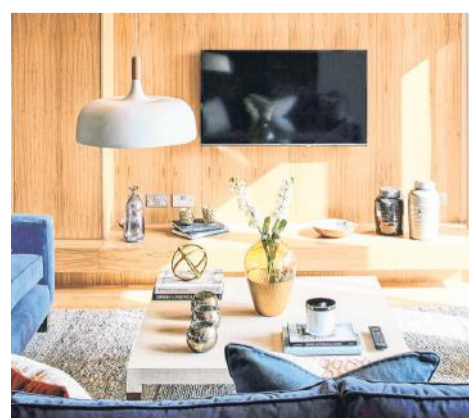
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DESIGN & DECORATING



ODD-SHAPED OPPORTUNITY

In an Oyster Bay, N.Y., basement, interior designer William Cullum made a wonky space welcoming.

ceilings, are a fixture of the past. Use new, shallow-profile overhead LED lights. Conceal ductwork and pipes in a dropped bulkhead that appears designed and purposeful around the perimeter of a ceiling, advised Bethesda, Md., designer Tamara Gorodetzky. Where a soffit is unavoidable, “paint walls, ceiling and every side of the soffit the same color so everything disappears,” Ms. Sanabria said.

Pall-Casting

Leave the flickering fluorescents to “The Exorcist.” Basements are dark spaces, “and improper lighting creates uneven, shadowy areas,” said New York designer Rozit Ardit. **Instead** Even if you’re going for a moody man cave, “you need good lighting that can be fully illuminated and also dimmed for cozy ambience,” said Charlotte, N.C., designer Layton Campbell. Incorporate a mix of light sources such as floor lamps, table lamps and sconces so you needn’t depend on one overhead fixture, advised Ms. Ardit. Linear, ceiling-tracked LED lights can help lead the way from one space into the next, said Mary Maydan, an architect in Palo Alto, Calif., who installs them with a 90-degree bend as they flow from a hallway into an adjacent family room. “This creates continuity and makes the corridor act as an invitation into the next space.”

Neglected Nooks

Irregular areas of foundations are often covered over or turned into closets. “But especially in basements that are largely open, these odd and unusual shapes offer special moments for decoration,” said William Cullum, senior designer at Jayne Design Studio, in New York City. **Instead** Knocking down walls and rejiggering spaces is expensive, so get creative with what you have and use it as an opportunity to try something you’d never risk on the first floor, Mr. Cullum said. For one Oyster Bay, N.Y., basement (shown above), Mr. Cullum made a banquette that conforms to a polygonal footprint, established by the breakfast room above, and installed curtains on an existing steel beam, creating a special reading nook with a cozy, tented feel. “It’s a small retreat within an expansive space,” he said.

Wannabe Wood

Dark, dank 1970s-style paneling comes across as hopelessly dated and usually represents a “total departure from the rest of the house” said architect Margie Lavender, principal at New York City’s Ike Kligerman Barkley. Old-fashioned paneling is not moisture-resistant and can be a place where mold grows, added Ms. Wilson. **Instead** Ms. Wilson uses thin brick cladding or dry wall back with cement instead of paper—typically used in bathroom renovations—to prevent mold growth. Stick with light colors to maximize limited light, advised Ms. Lavender, and consider an accent wall of high-gloss tile, in cream or robin’s egg blue, to add texture and reflect light.

ERROR, ERROR ON THE WALL

Best Cellars

The basement decorating gaffes that design pros dread seeing, and their reliable fixes

By Rachel Wolfe

EVEN THE MOST casual horror-movie viewers know that basements are where protagonists go to, as TikTok teens would say, “get unalived.” For interior designers, however, the most unnerving part of these spaces isn’t who (or what) might be hiding in wait, it’s often what’s lying in plain sight: their décor.

Too many homeowners treat basements “as a second-class space where old furniture and random junk goes to die,” complained Anelle Gandelman, founder of New York’s A-List Interiors. “A basement is not the place for appeasing your husband with his ugly leather recliner,” echoed West Palm Beach, Fla., designer McCall Dulkys.

Here, architects and designers share five other frequently encountered below-ground blunders and suggest less-frightful alternatives.

The ‘All Things’ Space

New York designer Elizabeth Gill lives in fear of families who ask her to turn their cellars into an all-in-one combination gym, playroom, family room, man cave and

mother-in-law suite. “Then, I get the stare and a ‘Can you make all that work?’” she said.

Instead Prioritize. “Determine the most important use of the space and make that the focus,” said Ms. Gill. Any extra living area can be a bonus in a crowded home, she said, “but you ultimately will end up using a space that is functional and complete—not one cluttered with lots of things that detract from the original design.”

Fateful Ceiling

A common feature in basements, dropped ceilings suspend large tiles in a metal grid, thereby leaving room to conceal inset lighting, ducts and other mechanicals. But they shave height off a room, contributing to the dreaded cavelike feeling and threatening to behead your taller friends. Other misguided attempts to hide ductwork also bug design pros. Washington, D.C., designer Melissa Sanabria’s peeve is soffits whose bottoms have been painted to match the ceilings and sides to match the walls, creating a two-toned effect.

Instead According to New York designer Robin Wilson, 8-inch-deep high-hat lights, which need dropped

NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND / STRANGE BASEMENT DÉCOR

► **“I got totally freaked out** when I walked into a basement that housed an antique doll collection. Cue the scary horror music.”

—Layton Campbell, designer, Charlotte, N.C.

“A full barbecue grill with a chimney at one end and a wood-burning fireplace on the opposite side. I can understand a man cave, but to have two fire-generating things in a basement could mean that your house burns down.”

—Robin Wilson, designer, New York

“I was asked to help a client display his collection of medieval torture tools.”

—Tracy Morris, designer, McLean, Va.

“Every wall was covered with PEZ candy dispensers. It was quite the collection.”

—Sterling McDavid, designer, New York, N.Y.



“A toilet in the basement without any sort of enclosure.”

—Luke Olson, senior associate, GTM Architects, Bethesda, Md.

“A potential client had a hot tub in the basement. It was odd and immediately felt like some weird castle dungeon with the smell of chlorine and mold.”

—Miriam Verga, designer, Mimi & Hill Interiors, Westfield, N.J.

BACK STORY

Revenge, Served Up Cool

To spite a design thief, Isamu Noguchi came up with a similar table—and it sold like crazy



WHEN Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi was in an Arizona internment camp during WWII, he was granted special privileges—namely access to newspapers and magazines—because he had entered voluntarily as a political activist. In one such publication, he spotted an ad for a very familiar table, a design he’d pitched (unsuccessfully) to British furniture maker T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings a few years earlier. Cheated out of his share of the royalties, he plotted revenge by fine-tuning his creation and in 1947 releasing the version now known as the Noguchi Table for Herman Miller. It remains one of the most successful and

▲ Noguchi Table, from \$1,995, hermanmiller.com

well-known designs in the company’s catalog. Seemingly a feat of balance, with no visible hardware, the table comprises a sculptural base—two large boomerang-shaped slabs of wood that stand on edge and kissingly connect—and a piece of glass cut in a teardrop shape. “He made art and sculpture accessible to people,” said Amy Auscherman, director of archives and brand heritage for Herman Miller. “The table elicits a vibe of living in an art gallery, but one where you can actually touch and use the art.”

—Rebecca Malinsky



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