

THE ATLANTAN

[THE RESTAURANT ISSUE 2011]

THE ATLANTA SUGAR SORCERESS
A SOMMELIER WHO DOESN'T DRINK
HOT LIST! RESTO NEWBIES AND OLD FAVES

PLUS:

JAMES BEARD NODS AT TAQUERIA DEL SOL?
REVEALED: ATL'S BEST RESTAURANT
THE CONDIMENT CRAZE



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[editorial]



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DESIGN STAR
 Clockwise from top left: Mark Blair in a booth at Abattoir, a restaurant he helped design; (overlay photo) the Westside bridge and Room & Board, both his designs; the unique bar at Abattoir

Sketchy Behavior

From blueprint to buildout, architect Mark Blair has been busy transforming the Westside.

| By Stephanie Davis Smith | Photography by Sarah Dorio |

Every parent who has a kid with an undeclared major in college or another one still living at home post-graduation while he “finds” himself, dreams of having a child like Mark Blair.

That’s because Blair was one of those purposeful, talented kids who, at 4 years old, was already drawing floor plans for new houses and rearranging boxes and furniture in his living room. “I knew then what I wanted to do,” says Blair, who is now the in-house architect at Jamestown Realty in Atlanta. “I was always trying to understand what was on the other side of the wall.” He soon began begging his parents for an architect’s drafting table (“I still have it,” he says), and they plopped him into art classes to see what transpired. CONTINUED...

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...CONTINUED By middle school, he had reached such a high level that he began tutoring his classmates.

Born in Clearwater, Fla., by the time Blair received a bachelor of design from the University of Florida he had already been interning with an architectural firm since high school, and continued with them after graduation.

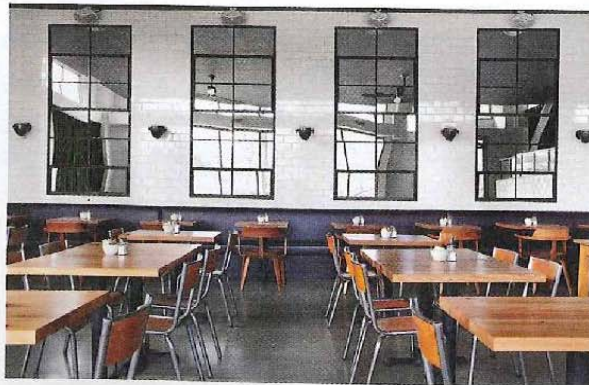
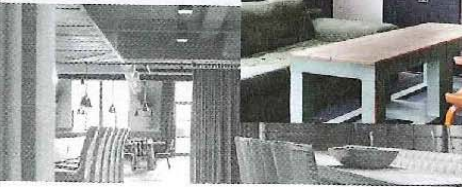
After 9/11, Blair decided to go back to school and get his master's in architecture at Georgia Tech. There he met his wife Sarah, a fellow architect. Then, after graduation, they took a seven-week, cross-country sabbatical to see the nation's best architecture and urban design and decide where they wanted to put down roots. "We didn't have real ties to anywhere, and after seeing everything, we decided to come back to Atlanta." Since then, he's been raising a family in East Atlanta and simultaneously changing the facade of our city. If you go to the Westside, you'll see his handiwork.

The Westside Provisions District has his stamp all over it. Sid Mashburn's store was the first significant project Blair designed in the area. "That sparked other things," he says. He then went on to craft the blueprints for West Egg Café. "Bringing unique and exciting spaces to life and developing sustainable properties are a big part of what we do," says Blair. One after another, the



trendy shops, restaurants and projects he's designed (Cacao, Abattoir, Dragonfly Salon, Room & Board and the Westside bridge) have gone up to much acclaim. The bridge was an interesting endeavor, and it took almost three years to negotiate a greenlight for the structure. It connects the backside of the Westside Urban Market (where JCT. Kitchen and Bacchanalia are located) and White Provision, which houses Environment Furniture, Ormsby's and Yeah! Burger.

What part of town is he itching to reconstruct next? "I have a strong belief that the east side of Atlanta is about ready to transform," says Blair. "I'd really like to see Hulsey Yard revamped." That's the CSX trainline property between DeKalb Avenue and Cabbagetown. Indeed, it could tie in nicely with what Jamestown has done in the past at Glenwood Park and is about to begin working on at City Hall East. "Now that's a really interesting project," he says. And you can almost see the wheels turning. ▣



EGG-CEPTIONAL Clockwise from top: breakfast at the bar at West Egg Café; high ceilings and windows draw the eye up; banquette seating along the wall at West Egg Café is similar to Abattoir's design as well; Mark Blair's spacious, open floor plans are his signature.

[editorial]



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