

Interior Decoration

Discussed in this essay:

Life Style, by Bruce Mau (Phaidon, 2000).

The book *Life Style*, like the concept it names, is something you may not realize you already know a lot about. The Canadian graphic designer Bruce Mau, whose work is documented in this heavy, lush volume, is by no means yet a household name, unless perhaps the household is a garden flat in Chelsea, a loft conversion in Amsterdam, or a Lloyd Wright knock-off in the Berkeley Hills. But Mau's work has become stealthily ubiquitous, from early book design for the cult-success Zone imprint to recent advertising campaigns for mainstream bookstores and museums. His type designs, which artfully combine old-fashioned serif faces with clean modern sans-serif ones, are much imitated: countless exhibition guides and gallery pamphlets show his influence, and when he began using a sans-serif typeface called Interstate a few years ago, derived from familiar highway signage, it was suddenly everywhere in leading-edge books and design magazines.

Mau has collaborated with contemporary visual artists on gallery installations in Europe and North America, and with global-celebrity architects like Rem Koolhaas and fellow Cana-