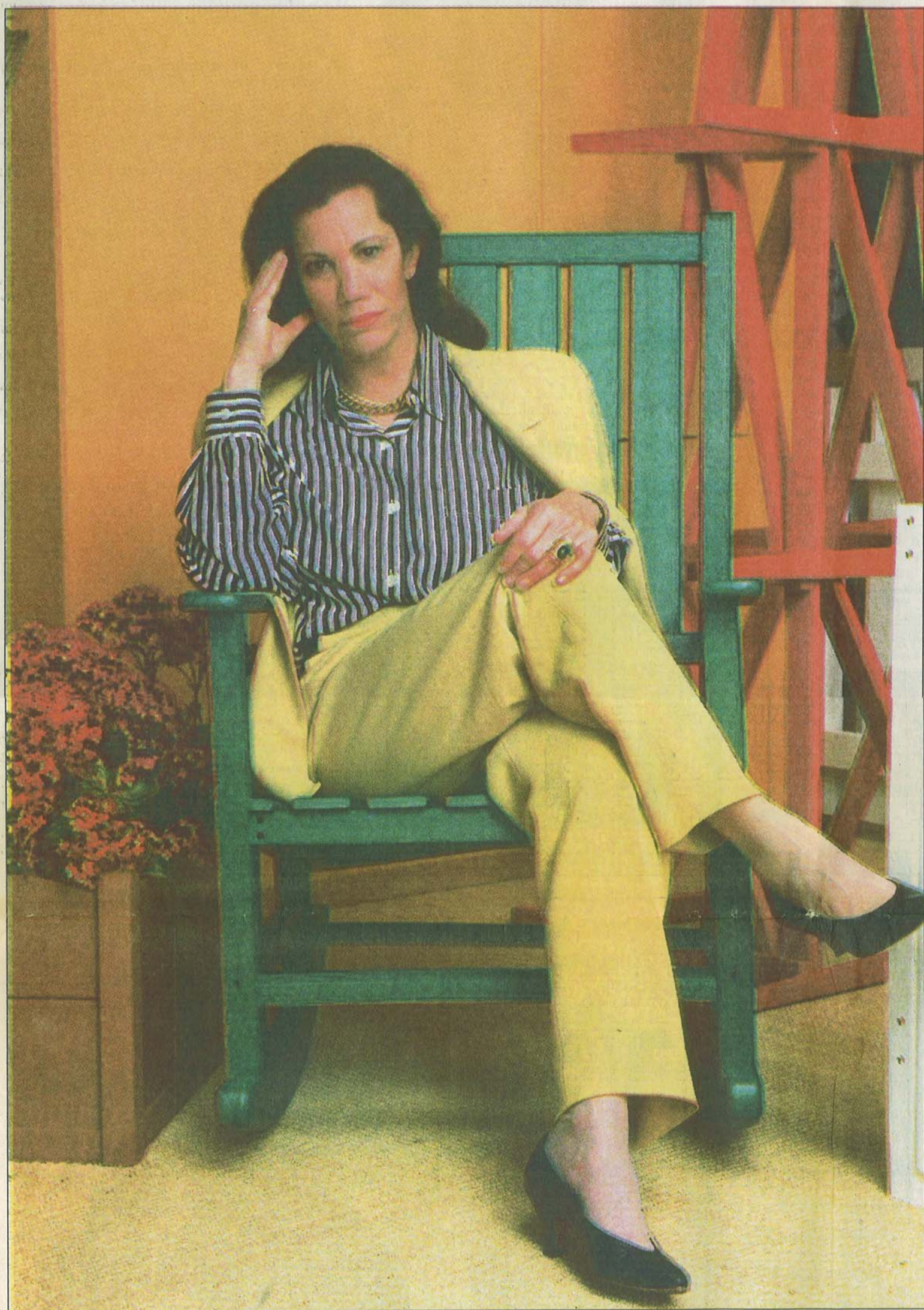


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BY DESIGN



Outdoor Outfitter

Janice Feldman has designs on your backyard. And she has the perfect furniture material: recycled plastic lumber.

Story by **GAILE ROBINSON**
Photos by **BOB CAREY**
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Janice Feldman had a successful furniture business, a devoted husband and enough money to indulge in hobbies worthy of Robin Leach-style documentation: traveling, driving race cars, drinking champagne, buying fine art and antiques.

Then, in 1987, her husband died. Murray Feldman, the former executive director of the Pacific Design Center, had been her mentor. "He was a great champion of mine. We were crazy madly in love with each other for 14 years," she says.

Feldman went into a two-year decline after her loss, becoming so depressed that her life seemed colorless. "Everything was very white," she says. "I felt like I had lost my competence and my emotional edge."

A right-brain seminar, a change of business and plastic milk jugs brought her back around.

She has always been one to tweak her creative muse and scout for the next best business.

As a 9-year-old growing up in San Francisco, she ran a string of baby-sitters. At 13, she helped sell aluminum siding, working the phones after school to earn \$3 for each solid sales lead. She took the job to pay for her own telephone, a blue Princess model.

Stories of Feldman's early entrepreneurial ventures do not surprise her colleagues. "Janice is the quintessential merchant," says Rusty La Fleur, vice president of the Pacific Design Center. "It's in her soul."

When she decided to open Janus et Cie, a Pacific Design Center showroom of office furniture, in 1977, she was 25 and without the collateral—real estate or cash—to get a business loan. But she did have some antiques bought during her college years. Feldman insured the furniture through Lloyd's of London and used the policy to convince the bankers of her worth.

Among her best possessions was a Charles I highboy purchased for \$750—all of her rent money—at a Los Angeles auction. To pay her landlord that month, she quickly sold some of her own serigraphs to a Melrose Avenue art gallery. In a flurry of transactions, Feldman had landed a great piece of furniture—later appraised for \$30,000—at an unbelievable price, covered her rent and financed her business.

"She is not a typical showroom owner—she creates new markets," says Andrew Wolf, president of the Pacific Design Center. "And you hear about her in other cities. She is a

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The lawn bench, above, as well as the rocking chair, planter and fence at left, are made of Durawood, composed of recycled plastic bottles.

“ I’m pretty stable. I’ve only had three cars in my entire life, four houses. I’ve had my business for 17 years and I’ve never cut my hair any different. ”

—Janice Feldman, showroom owner and furniture designer

Two Firsts: One by Klein, One for Beene



Photos by **BOB CAREY** / Los Angeles Times

Geoffrey Beene showed his fall collection Monday at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The designer also picked up the museum Costume Council's first Award of Excellence.

FASHION
INSIDE OUT

By **DEBRA GENDEL**
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

You're nobody till somebody sells it to you wholesale. That was made painfully clear to us this week when we heard that Calvin Klein's fall-winter collection was being shown to *tout le Hollywood*—not in a store (that happens at Neiman Marcus later this month), but in a private suite at the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel. What's more, said our source, the merchandise was being sold at cost.

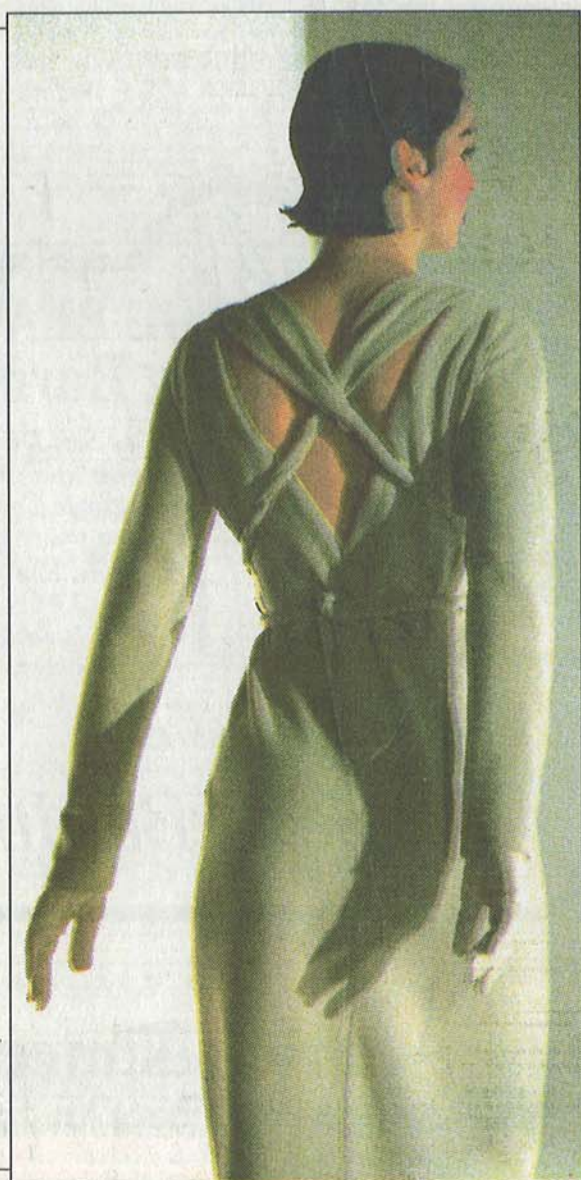
But when we tried to invite ourself to the party, guess what?

"I'm afraid all of the appointments are booked up," said Elizabeth Rogers, Klein's West Coast public relations rep and Hollywood liaison, reached Tuesday by phone at the hotel. Sure, designers have their favorite clients, but even those familiar with the fashion world's courtship of Hollywood deemed this arrangement unprecedented.

One insider speculated that the move was an attempt "to build a customer base" before Calvin Klein's Rodeo Drive boutique opens for business at a not-yet disclosed date. Still another was sure that the extra-early preview of the fall collection would irritate the Wilshire Boulevard retailers—such as Saks Fifth Avenue, I. Magnin, Barneys New York and Neiman Marcus—that carry the Klein line.

Executives at Neiman Marcus' Dallas buying offices

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FURNISH

Continued from E3

California-based institution. I watch her with some amazement."

Today, Feldman lives alone in a Monterey Colonial-style house—"filled with too much stuff," she says—in the Hollywood hills. She is contemplating buying a new place, one with a pool. "But it has to be something special. I have to find the right deal or the right piece of property."

This month alone she has traveled to Hawaii, Utah and Milan—a typical schedule, she says. "But I'm pretty stable. I've only had three cars in my entire life, four houses. I've had my business for 17 years and I've never cut my hair any different."

Feldman has always seemed to land butter-side up—or as she puts it, "I always find a parking space near the front door," which in Los Angeles is even better than fat-splattered white bread.

But after the death of her husband, she lost her driving force. She did what many Angelenos do—checked into a spa, the Golden Door. An event there booted her out of her rut.

"It was a right-brain seminar called the 'Inner Door,'" she says.

"This workshop was very enlightening. It made me realize that I have a syndrome called mixed-brain dominance. I have the ability to think creatively, which is the right side, and to work the left side at the same time, which is the accountant side," she says.

Introducing her accountant self to her abstract diva resulted in dumping the contract furniture business she had spent years building.

"It was getting more difficult because of economic changes, and I was very unfulfilled," she says. The year was 1990, and Feldman foresaw changes for the new decade. Ergonomically correct office

chairs glutted the market. There was a dearth of porch swings and park benches.

Feldman bet her future on outdoor furniture.

The experts predicted we would all have more leisure time, she says. But neither she nor her friends had much of it. People who did, she figured, would spend it close to home, in their own back yards. "That was the catalyst, and it all came together," she says.

Feldman pitched the desks, filing systems and posture-perfect office chairs, and filled her showroom with outdoor wicker chairs made with aluminum wire woven with cellulose fiber, chairs made of African hardwoods coated in weather-resistant resin and chairs with every option but an air bag.

"I wanted to become the definitive source for site, garden and casual furnishings," she says.

As her showroom filled with benches from England and tables from France, Feldman found her next project by way of the local garbage dumps: Durawood, made of 100% recycled plastic bottles (specifically HDPE, high density polyethylene).

She had read about the recycled plastic lumber and immediately recognized its potential. Durawood looks and performs like wood and costs about as much as unfinished oak, but it won't absorb moisture,

preventing rot and mildew. Most paints will not adhere to it, making it almost graffiti-proof. In its processed form, Durawood is almost translucent; pigment injected with anti-fading ingredients are added in the manufacturing process to provide uniform color.

In addition to becoming the West Coast supplier for Durawood, Feldman designed outdoor furniture made of it to sell in her showroom. The line, Januswood, sticks to American basics: a large rocking chair suitable for front porches and watermelon seed-spitting contests, an Adirondack chair with arms wide enough to hold a tankard of ice tea, benches designed with Main Street U.S.A. in mind. Even the ubiquitous white picket fence can be made of Durawood.

The material has gone into sign posts and benches for Los Angeles International Airport and for playground equipment by the city Parks and Recreation department. Jerry's Famous Deli has bought it for outdoor seating and fences, and Park City ski resort in Utah has benches. Its near-overnight success has necessitated a warehouse for storage and enmeshed Feldman in both the high-end furnishings trade and the raw lumber business. And it has brought the color back into her life.

"Bright colors," she says. "Now, I see bright, brilliant, living colors."

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BOB CAREY / Los Angeles Times

Among the pieces in the Januswood line, which sticks to American basics, is this Adirondack chair.

