

SHOPPING WITH
DEBORAH BERKE

Not Just for the Books

Searching for coffee tables that hold the room.

DEBORAH BERKE needs a coffee table. Not just any old table, but one for her library that will support some very specific functions.

"As a family, we don't watch much TV," said Ms. Berke, an architect who lives on the Upper East Side with her husband, teenage daughter and two Weimaraners. "But we decided that one night a week, we would watch it together and eat take-out Chinese food. For a long time, it was Tuesday night, 'NCIS.'"

Usually, they sit on the floor and spread out towels to protect the rug, because they don't have a coffee table. "So I have finally decided that I need to buy the right coffee table, at the right height," Ms. Berke said.

That means tall enough for eating, but low enough to allow an unobstructed view of the television, she said. "And it has to look good, of course."

It sounds simple enough, but Ms. Berke, whose current projects include interiors for the Laureate condo building on the Upper West Side, new branches of the 21c Museum Hotel in Arkansas and Ohio, and numerous private homes, is well aware that furniture can change the feeling of a room.

And in her own home, which is "very spare: — white, white walls, black floors, minimal art and minimal furnishings," she said, any new table is bound to make a strong statement.

In search of the right piece, Ms. Berke began at Lobel Modern, a vintage store in NoHo. A number of midcentury coffee tables caught her eye, but one in particular appeared to be a real contender — a 1960s Danish model with a steel base and painted tile top, priced at \$5,500.

"I love things that show the presence of the hand," she said, touching the tiles. "It's pretty fun, and could really work in my place."

After asking the store's owner to call her if someone tried to buy the piece before she returned, she moved on to Room & Board in



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'PRETTY FUN' Deborah Berke admires a 1960s Danish coffee table with a painted tile top at Lobel Modern; \$5,500, (212) 242-9075, lobelmodern.com.

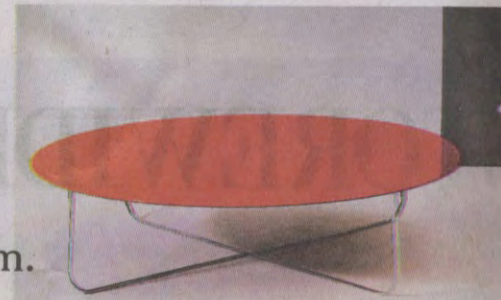
SoHo. "They have really good basics, like Levi's" for the home, she said.

Her favorite was the solid walnut Corbett cocktail table. "It's so simple, and absolutely indestructible," she noted. "It's the perfect background table." She also liked the clean-lined steel-and-quartz composite Portica table, calling it "a reliable staple."

Looking online for more distinctive pieces, she visited the Web site of Casamidy, a Mexican furniture company she has worked with in the past. She picked out the copper Symi tray table. "It's a little flashier than things I usually like," she conceded, "but there's something about the hand of copper, which looks worked. I'm drawn to that."

The final verdict? Ms. Berke wasn't sure, but she did have an idea. "I think I might design one," she said.

TIM McKEOUGH



Symi copper tray table; starting at \$375 at Casamidy, (52-415) 152-0403, casamidy.com.



Corbett cocktail table in solid walnut; from \$1,049 at Room & Board.



Moon rectangular coffee table with mercury glass top; \$3,313 at Ochre, (212) 414-4332, ochre.net.

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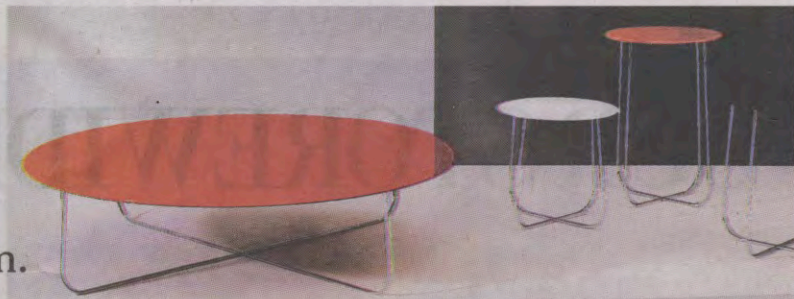


FRED R. CONRAD/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Corah Berke admires a 1960s Danish painted tile top at Lobel Modern; (212) 219-9941, lobelmodern.com.

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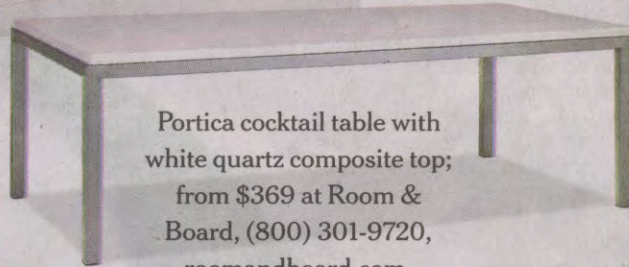
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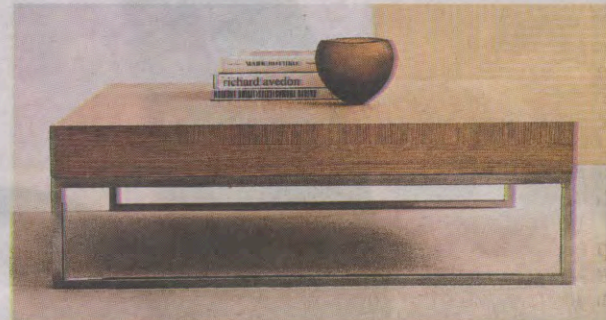
Dona Violette cocktail table with lacquered glass top; from \$1,488 at Lepere, (212) 488-7000, lepereinc.com.



Symi copper tray table; starting at \$375 at Casamidy, (52-415) 152-0403, casamidy.com.



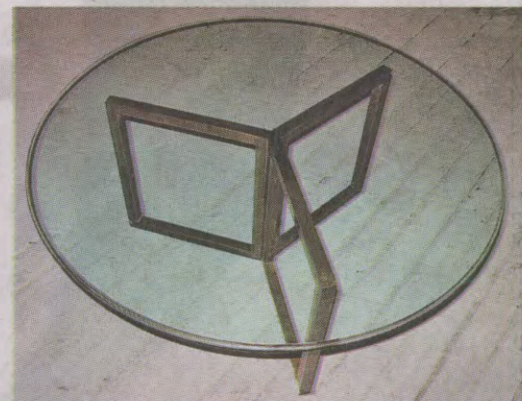
Portica cocktail table with white quartz composite top; from \$369 at Room & Board, (800) 301-9720, roomandboard.com.



Dona Delphin cocktail table; from \$1,698 at Lepere.



Corbett coffee table in solid walnut; from \$1,049 at Room & Board.



1960s coffee table by Philip & Kelvin LaVerne; \$15,000 at Cristina Grajales Gallery, (212) 219-9941, cristinagrajalesinc.com.



Moon rectangular coffee table with mercury glass top; \$3,313 at Ochre, (212) 414-4332, ochre.net.



Pair of 1970s tables in gold, lacquered resin with glass tops; \$4,500 for pair at Lobel Modern.