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# STYLE ELLE BEAT

## CLOSE-UP

**NAME:**

Clarissa Richardson

**AGE:** 28**OCCUPATION:**

Architect

**AESTHETIC:**

"If a client came to me and said she was doing a store about country living, selling chintz, I'd say no thanks to the job because I constantly want to push the envelope."

I was making the coffee runs while the head of the company did all the designing," says twenty-eight-year-old architect Clarissa Richardson, looking back on her frustrating days in the corporate design world. After less than three months, the upstart entrepreneur had had enough with paying dues and launched her own company, UT Architecture.

Best known for her work on the Bliss Spas in Manhattan—constructing the signature "feather wall," a clear laminated glass partition filled with "floating" down—Richardson believes that architecture is about more than just a pretty space. "Design isn't just building the shell of the room, it's making a concept translate to furniture, graphics, signage," she says. "And it has yet to be pushed to extremes."

**INSPIRATION:** "I'm a plastic fanatic. I'm also fascinated with unusual materials like rubber and glass," says Richardson, who treasures her post-modern, Danese plastic ashtray collection from the sixties. "Pop culture also influences me enormously," she adds. "I feed off movies, media,

fashion. What's in style directly influences what I use on a project."

**COMMUNICATION:** "Before starting the Brooklyn loft for Marcia [Kilgore, owner of Bliss], I drafted a questionnaire, asking things like, 'What do you do when you go to your bedroom? Do you want to watch TV or talk on the phone?' This forces the clients to address their lifestyle," says Richardson. The result: The converted warehouse (with an unobstructed 360-degree view encompassing the Manhattan skyline) is ultraminimalist chic. Everything folds away from the walls, perfectly preserving the open space and panoramic cityscape.

**PRODUCTION:** After a flurry of high-profile jobs, Richardson is concentrating her efforts on the "O" series, her line of circular molded fiberglass tables with a high-gloss lacquer finish that come in colors like electric tangerine, turquoise, and ruby red. "They are very Stanley Kubrick, *2001: A Space Odyssey*," she says. Perhaps a call to NASA is in order.—ALANNA FINCRE