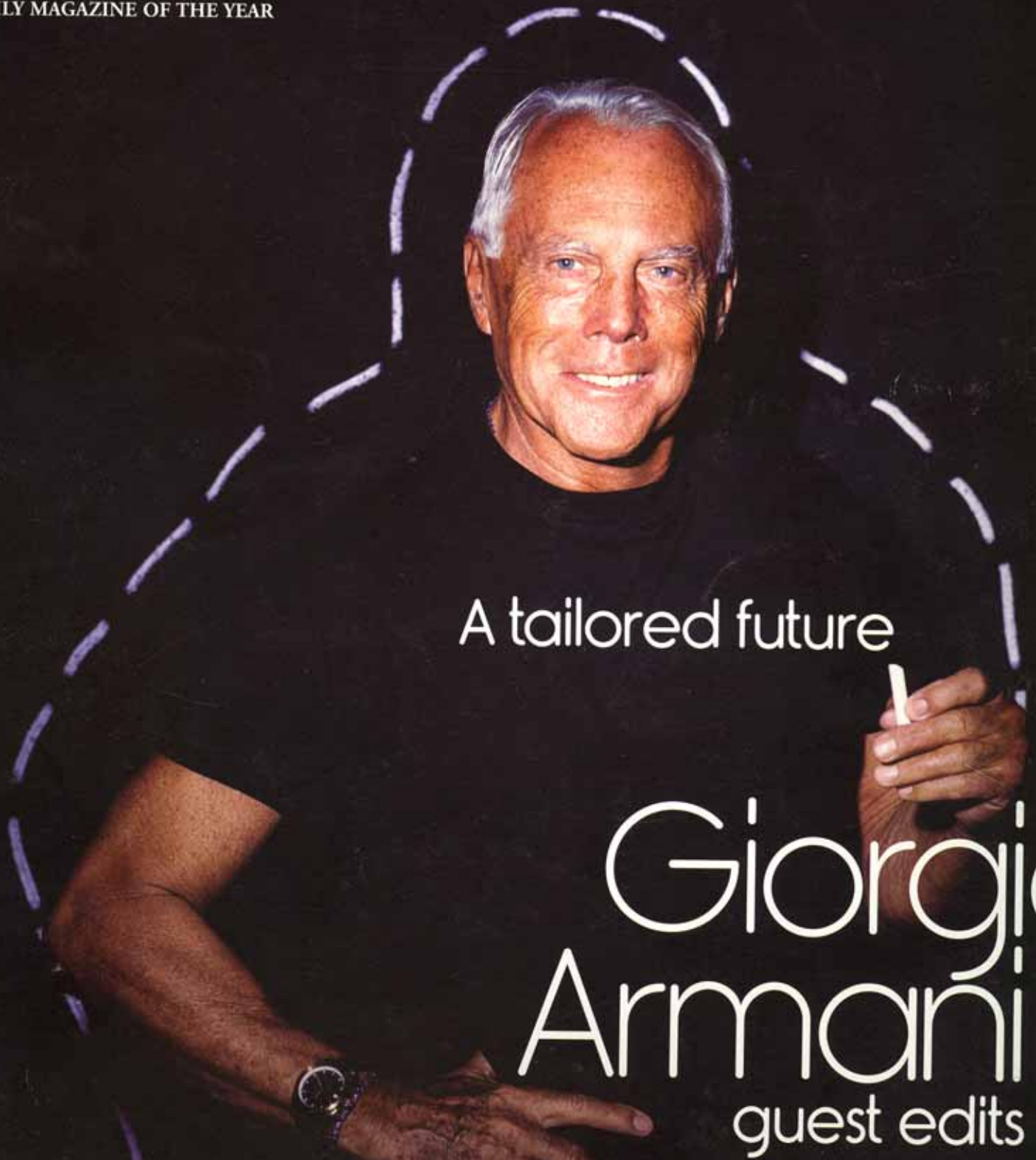


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A tailored future

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guest edits





Ball Nogues

is in some ways the exception on this architectural tour. Although partners Benjamin Ball and Gastón Nogues are digital practitioners, the two former SCI-Arc students belong to the school's earlier tradition of making things by hand. There is a craft sensibility in which the forms happen to be generated by parametric modelling. However, what they have in common with a number of the practices here is the desire to create a rich sensory experience.

Below: Rip Curl Canyon Installation, Rice Gallery, Houston, 2006

Working out of a graffiti-covered garage in Echo Park, the pair may play the part of the alternative-scene hipsters but this year they built the annual Urban Beach installation at PS1 in New York, really the only significant platform for young architects in the US. And while Ball's background is in set design for the film industry, Argentinian-born Nogues spent ten years working for Frank Gehry. "What I took away from Gehry was a sense of exploration and discovery through playing – it was pretty amazing watching him work," says Nogues. Ironically, Ball does most of the computer modelling.

Ball Nogues' work draws on an interesting range of references, from the super-light structures of engineer Frei Otto to, naturally, Hollywood movies. An early work, Maximilian's Schell (named after the actor), simulated a black hole-like structure out of translucent golden mylar petals. Like the tent-shaped accretions at PS1 this summer, every piece was unique, calculated on the computer before being numbered and assembled. The petals sit



NASH BAKER

This page: Liquid Sky,
New York, 2007, winning
entry for MoMA/PSI
Young Architects
Programme, 2007

somewhere between Gehry's beloved fish scales and village fete bunting. "Part of that is a reaction against the minimalist surface, that real tiny thin surface of just material, and to create an effect by the way that the light comes through and filters and reflects," says Nogues.

Nogues says the language is based on nature but the practice clearly has none of the theoretical pretensions of its local counterparts. A cardboard installation at Rice University in Houston earlier this year (icon 043) alluded to images from American landscape painting but was essentially a beautiful climbing frame. "We wanted people to have a very child-like attitude of exploration, letting them climb all over it."

Regardless of the computer modelling, it is the collaborative act of building, which they invest with an almost performative quality, that seems most important. Though still operating at the level of installation architecture, they aim higher. "We both have an ambition to make buildings," Nogues says. "We just have to have somebody that wants to make a building the way that we want to make a building."

