

urbanite

BALTIMORE

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WHAT'S NEXT?

PLUS: fresh fiction from michael kun • new food for foodies: specialty salts • mario livio on the final frontier

WHAT'S NEXT?



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Globalization is changing the American city. From industry to innovation, culture to commerce, this new world economy is affecting nearly every aspect of our lives. The world, explains *New York Times* journalist Thomas L. Friedman, is now flat.

What does this mean for Baltimore? The most important factor for the future success of the city may well be our ability to build local talent. Fostering and retaining talented people—from innovators capable of solving complex issues to individuals stepping into their communities to fill a void—is paramount. “You can flourish in this flat world,” Friedman writes in *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, “but it does take the right imagination and the right motivation.” Here is a look at some of the people, innovations, and trends that will help shape your local future in this growing global environment.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Marybeth Shaw

42

Designer, Graphics and Building Products

Majid Jelveh

50

Architect

On the outside, it's an ordinary Charles Village rowhouse, a sturdy shoebox propping up its showier neighbor, a "painted lady" with a faded face. But inside, Shaw-Jelveh Design's new office is a column of light. The 106-year-old house has been cored like an apple. Inner walls are panes of glass, surrounding an original staircase topped by a 7-by-8-foot skylight. A blue and white mural looks like Moorish tile, but is actually a custom, digitally printed wallcovering—created by Shaw-Jelveh Design—featuring fragments of the street plans of Paris, New York, and Isfahan, Iran.

Those cities used to be home for Marybeth Shaw and Majid Jelveh, the husband-and-wife design team who moved here from Manhattan three years ago to make their imprint on Baltimore. The Maryland Avenue house, one of their first projects here, reflects a love of natural light and what Shaw calls a "willingness to execute careful, surgical interventions on older structures."

Shaw, a New Jersey native, studied architecture in Paris in the 1980s and fell for the "fearlessness" of European modernism. Jelveh grew up in Isfahan, one of the oldest Silk Road cities. He designed public buildings in his native Iran, including the first digital wireless telecommunications center in Tehran, before immigrating in 1989. The couple is critical of "New Urbanist" models. Too often these communities end up as quaint enclaves of wealth and reference a nostalgic fantasy of a "perfect Main Street" that has never existed. A better Baltimore would fill gaps in old neighborhoods with new buildings, they say, to create a city that is environmentally sound, egalitarian, and beautiful.

The firm's designs are thought-provoking, says Michelle Moore, vice president of communications and community for the U.S. Green Building Council. "It's not about making something prettier. It's about making something that's evocative of substance."

For now, Shaw's expertise in graphics, product design, and marketing provides the four-person firm with its bread and butter. Jelveh works full time for a Columbia architectural firm and designs for Shaw-Jelveh on the side. Eventually, the couple hopes to concentrate on architectural work that makes the Baltimore streetscape "more humane," in Shaw's words.

—H.D.

