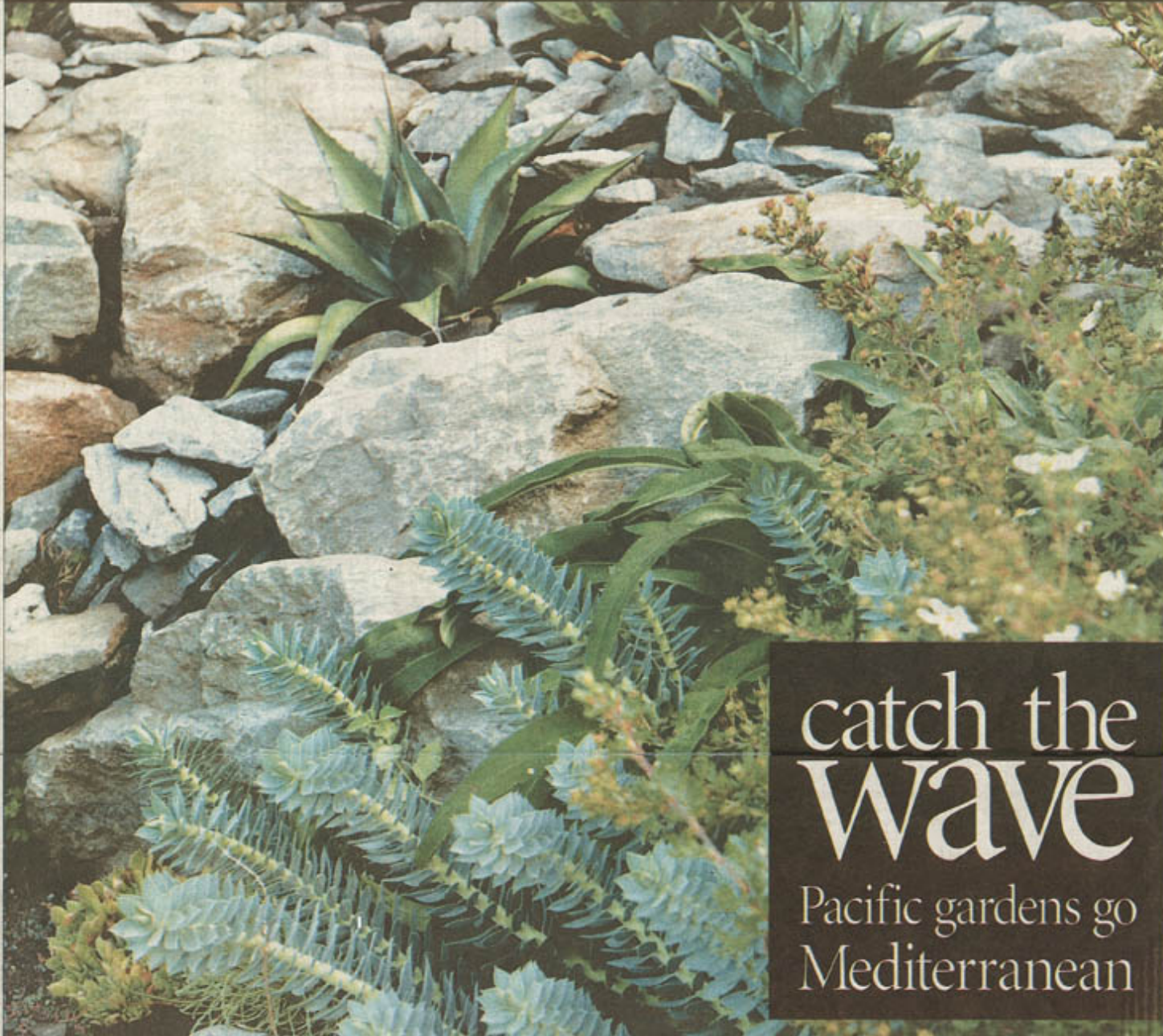


# HOMES & GARDENS

OF THE NORTHWEST



catch the  
**wave**

Pacific gardens go  
Mediterranean



Portland artist C.J. Hurley has nurtured a deep appreciation for early-20th-century art and decor throughout his career. His work includes paintings, frieze designs and gesso panels.

PHOTOS BY  
SERGE A. McCABE  
THE OREGONIAN



By Ruth Mullen

THE OREGONIAN

C.J. HURLEY SHOULD HAVE been born 100 years ago.

That's when his favorite artists and architects flourished, merging their myriad talents to create a synergy of style that would dominate American popular taste in the early part of the 20th century.

For Hurley, that era is still very much alive and well, and no more so than in his own rambling Laurelhurst Foursquare. In the past two years, the Portland artist has gradually transformed his home into a period blend of early-20th-century art and decor.

There are Art Nouveau lamps, Art Deco fixtures and a handsome mix of Arts and Crafts and Victorian-era furniture collected

# FRIEZE FRAME

ARTIST'S HANDCRAFTING ECHOES CENTURY-OLD STYLES



In Hurley's master bedroom, a hand-painted frieze complements the Art Deco furniture and reproduction wallpaper from an Arts and Crafts hotel in Sweden.



during years of scavenging. There are hand-painted friezes and watercolors evocative of the early 20th century's organic, stylized forms. There's even a stunning series of intricate gesso panels, a mixed-media art form made famous by Charles Rennie Mackintosh's wife, artist Margaret MacDonald.

But here's the catch: Hurley, 36, is no well-heeled collector. He does it all himself, from the period-style lace curtains in the living room to the hand-painted dining room table and elaborate friezes he plans for every room in the house.

What's more, much of the framed artwork in his home bears his signature, from the gesso panels that took months to complete to the ink-and-watercolor pieces done in the Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts styles. Many of his paintings are done on commission, as are his frieze designs and gesso panels.

"I like the fact that he's inspired by different decorative movements, but he really does his own thing, too," says Kent Mathews, a local real estate agent and art collector. "He's not a copier. He doesn't reproduce things."

Jo Carter bought an ink-and-watercolor painting from Hurley that is displayed on her dining room buffet. The original Glasgow School design of a stylized tulip, framed in quartersawn white oak, is a perfect fit for Carter's 1907 Craftsman in Sellwood.

"As soon as we redo the dining room, we're definitely getting C.J. to do a frieze for us," Carter says. "It adds so much character to your house, and adding character back into our house is very

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Hurley's original ink-and-watercolor pieces, framed in quartersawn white oak, are often done in the Arts and Crafts (above) and Art Nouveau styles.



**Hurley's prized Art Nouveau lamp sits on the mantle in the living room filled with early-20th-century art.**

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important to us."

However eclectic, Hurley's penchant for mixing and matching early-20th-century styles (with a few midcentury-modern pieces thrown in) seems a natural fit for a Craftsman Foursquare. He and his wife, Barbara Pierce, snapped up the home in a bidding war soon after moving to

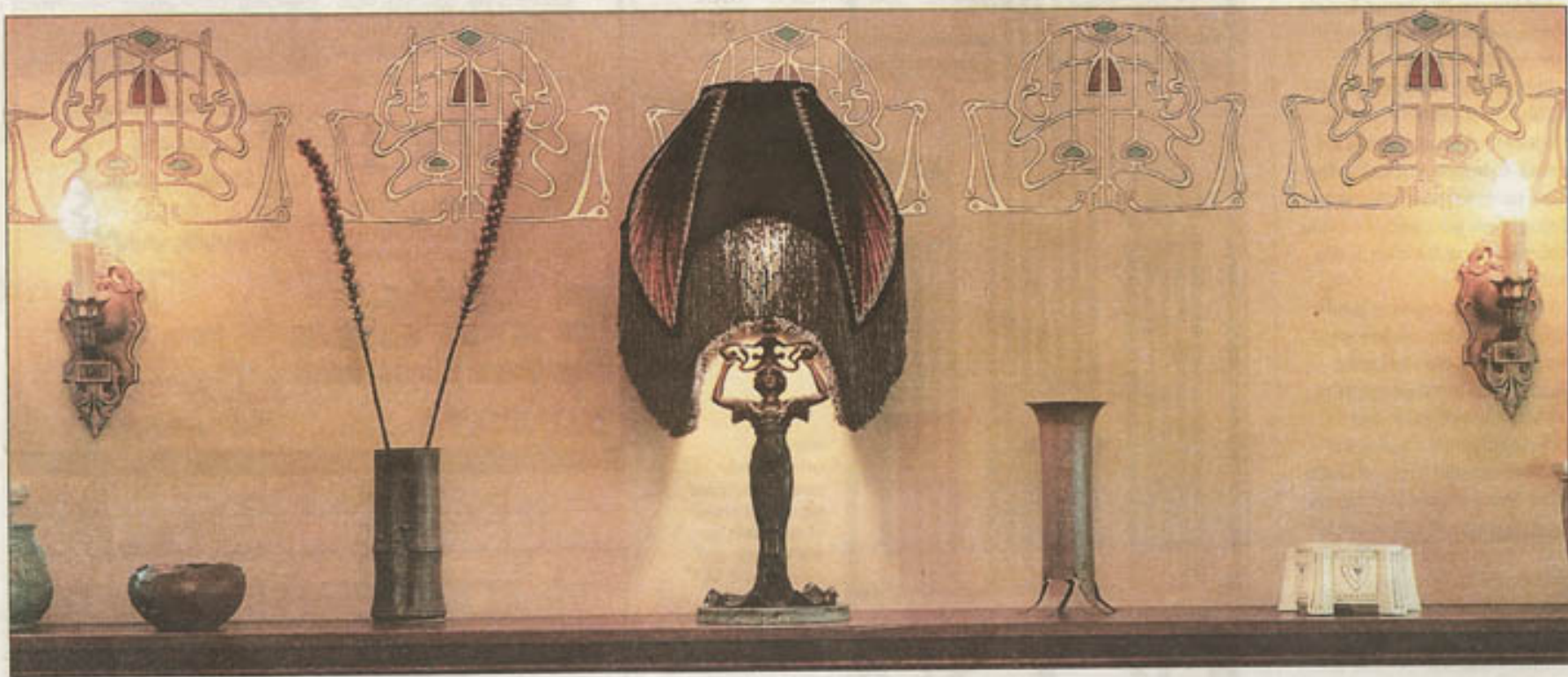
Portland two years ago.

"He's always studying, always working, always learning new things," says Pierce, 35. "And the more he learns, the more he puts his own personal spin on it."

That's because Hurley brings an artist's eye and a historian's perspective to architecture and interior design, just like the artists/architects of the early

20th century he so admires: Mackintosh, Victor Horta, the Greene brothers, Josef Hoffman and Frank Lloyd Wright, among others. "There really wasn't a purity of style on the working man's level," Hurley says. "They mixed it up — you bought what you saw and liked. It's kind of a fib on the part of the Arts and Crafts revival to stress the purity of interiors."

A fine arts major at Guilford College in North Carolina, Hurley says his never-ending research helps fuel his creativity. For him, the marriage between art and architecture really began when he and Pierce bought their first house: a charming 1921 row house in Virginia. Next came an 1853 frontier cabin in Kentucky, followed by an elegant Queen





Anne Victorian in New Hampshire, and, finally, the Laurelhurst Craftsman that has become a personal portfolio of sorts.

“Within these movements, the whole idea was to blur the line between the fine arts and the decorative arts,” Hurley says. “What we’ve lost today is that individual person like Mackintosh going in and designing everything down to the silverware.”

But Hurley is just such a guy. He’s a firm believer in that basic Arts and Crafts tenet: Everything must be done “by the hand.” When it comes to his decorative friezes, he has no use for plastic stencils or reproduction-wallpaper friezes. Nor does he employ computers as a design tool. He does the real thing, freehand, using an adapted medieval painting technique employed by another hero, German Renaissance painter Albrecht Dürer.

After all, these early-20th-century art movements began in the 1850s in Europe as a reaction to Victorian excess and the rise of the Industrial Age. What’s more, each of

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**Hurley's intricate gesso panels draw on a variety of artistic influences. The mixed-media art form was made famous by artist Margaret MacDonald.**

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Hurley's frieze designs is original and often stays that way.

"I don't want to repeat motifs," Hurley says. "If people want to repeat motifs, they can buy a ready-made stencil."

That's true for the friezework in his own home. A stylized-iris motif in the master bedroom complements period-reproduction wallpaper from an old Arts and Crafts hotel in Sweden, along with the couple's Art Deco bedroom furniture.

"I had to do what was right for the house and the period," Hurley says. "Anything that's been handed down, we want to keep in the family." ♦

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**Hurley works on the design for his dining room walls in his Laurelhurst home studio. The house is a showcase for his hand-painted Arts and Crafts frieze motifs.**