

SHOPPING WITH
ROBERT D. HENRY

Creating an Oasis of Calm

How to Trigger the Five Senses to Bring Balance to Life

WITH summer winding down, many people who have burned through their vacation days may long for more relaxation. One option is to create a soothing environment at home.

"We're all navigating far more stress than usual, especially in this last year," said Robert D. Henry, a New York-based architect. "So bringing back a sense of balance is more important than ever."

Mr. Henry is something of a well-being expert, having designed a number of spas, including the one at the Hotel Gansevoort in the meatpacking district and an Upper East Side spa called Ajune. His latest, the spa at the Setai New York, a residential building in the financial district, is set to open in mid-September.

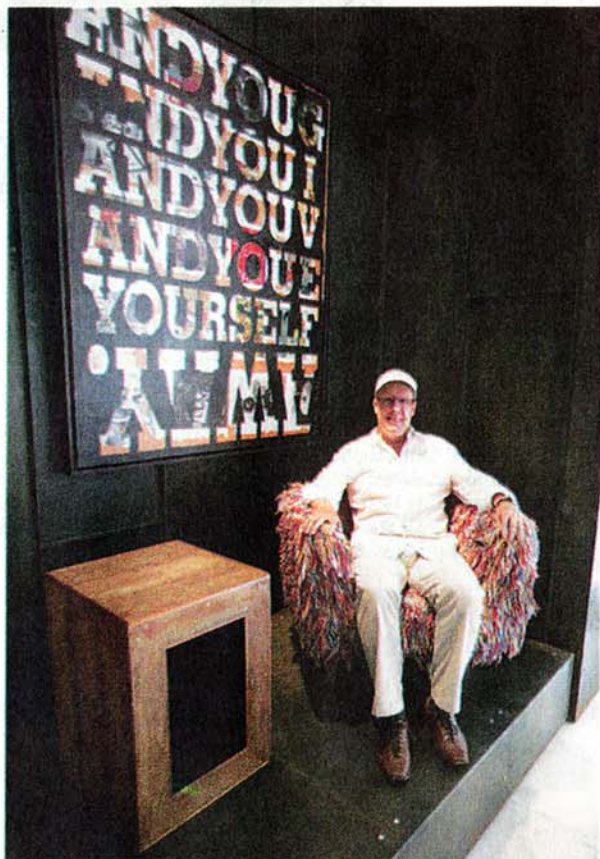
Mr. Henry, who practices what he calls "emotional architecture," said he always aims to create a comprehensive experience by triggering the five senses: sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste.

His design for the Setai spa, for instance, incorporates not only glass tile, wood and stone, for their visual and tactile appeal, but also waterfalls, which create a pleasing sound cascading into relaxation pools. To address the senses of taste and smell, he created an intimate tearoom where guests are served warm drinks between treatments.

"We want to have you leave the world you know and to set up this otherworldly experience," he said.

Shopping for products to please the senses, Mr. Henry found a number of items in Manhattan and online.

Around the corner from his office, near Union Square, he stopped at Environment, a store that sells furniture and accessories made from sustainable materials. There he spotted several pieces that would feel good against the skin, including the Giramundo Swivel Chair, a woolly seat upholstered with thousands of pieces of recycled yarn, which he described as



G. PAUL BURNETT/THE NEW YORK TIMES

TOUCH Robert D. Henry tries out the Giramundo Swivel Chair, covered with recycled yarn; \$2,150 at Environment.

comfortable and "very tactile."

At Takashimaya in Midtown, he saw many items he thought would please the senses, including that of sight, like the stoneware vases resembling rocks.

To engage the sense of hearing, Mr. Henry said, he often uses running water or flames, both of which produce muted sound.

"Water and fire are so primal," he explained. "They have such a calming effect."

His choices included the small, burbling Alto fountain at Arcadia in Chelsea and the EcoSmart Fire Aspect, a flueless fireplace, at ddcnyc.com.

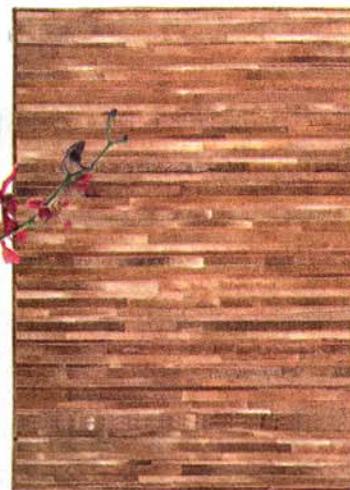
To provide scent, Mr. Henry suggested lavender candles from sabonnyc.com, and to satisfy taste, loose tea prepared with a Tea Stick Infuser from momastore.org.

Any of these products will help soothe frazzled nerves, he said, but together, they "can really recharge you."

TIM MCKEOUGH



Stoneware Rock Vase; \$22 to \$25 at Takashimaya New York, (800) 753-2038, takashimaya-ny.com.



Breton Prairie sheared-cowhide area rug; \$999 to \$3,349 at Calvin Klein, (866) 513-0513, calvinklein.com.



Lavender-scented candles with square bases; \$5 to \$28 at Sabon, (866) 697-2266, sabonnyc.com.



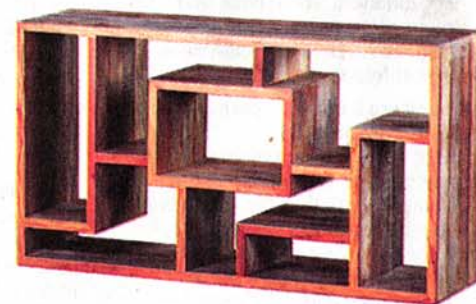
Alto stone-composite fountain; \$174.95 at Arcadia, (212) 243-5358, arcadianyc.com.



Ceramic sculptures by Maggie Wells, a New York-based artist; \$6,000 to \$8,000 a set at Karkula, (212) 645-2216, karkula.com.



Stainless-steel Tea Stick Infuser by Flöz Design; \$24 at MoMA Design Store, (800) 851-4509, momastore.org.



Dumont Console, made of reclaimed Brazilian peroba wood; \$3,395 at Environment, (212) 780-0051, environmentfurniture.com.



Porcelain potpourri diffuser (potpourri included); \$88 at Santa Maria Novella, (800) 362-3677, lafcony.com.



EcoSmart Fire Aspect stainless-steel flueless fireplace; \$5,900 at DDC, (212) 685-0800, ddcnyc.com.