

THE CITY

SEPTEMBER 1990 • \$2.50



**JOEY
CHEEZHEE
AND THE
VELVEETA
UNDERGROUND**





Bright Lights



JOSHUA ETS-HOORN

All the Right Angles *Riley and Her Midas Touch*

SHE HAD HER CHOCOLATE CAKE LAYERED WITH GOLD leaf because she loves gold. "Have you ever tasted it? It tastes good!" Her upholstered, pill box hat is gold, even her shoes are gold. Real gold leaf? "Hey, that's a great idea! I'll have to try it!" Outrageous? Sure. But then she's Cheryl Riley.

Four years ago, Riley left a successful advertising career to start her furniture design business, Right Angle Interiors. Being a woman, black and different left Riley "fighting tradition and the odds. I got ahead in the corporate world, but I felt like I was under a microscope. Everything I did and said was scrutinized." Riley laughs loudly, "Now I can wear 12 bracelets and it's okay."

In her Western Addition, Edwardian home, Riley displays a few of her creations; the peculiar Hands Down Table (copper arms and hands are the legs of the table, the top is granite) and the zig-zagging Zulu Console are carefully positioned next to a simple, classic-lined, white sofa. "I like juxtaposition. I like to put something really wild next to something really simple. If everything's busy, you can't focus.

"These pieces have such strong character, they name themselves," Riley claims.

"The Zulu tribe had very high energy, and these pieces look like they're in movement even when they're sitting still. I like that energy and its association with my African heritage. That's who I am."

While her designs also reflect Art Deco and Neo-Classical influences, it's impossible to pigeonhole her work. "I'm a sponge. I look at my clients' houses, the way they dress, how big or little they are. Everything about them goes into a piece."

Inspired by the fence in front of the Japanese Tea Gardens, Riley designed an office desk using lap joints instead of nails for a client who loves Asian art. "The design is super simple, but then the inside of the desk is very complicated—that's why it's the Zen Desk. It has a silver-leafed writing shelf and lots of compartments, including a hidden one."

Riley looks to the day her designs are picked up by one of the large furniture manufacturers. "I'd love to have an international clientele. Stay at fabulous villas. Get sent all over the world for inspiration." She smiles wide beneath her faux tortoise shell glasses.

"Hey, we can all dream, right?" ☺

Lori Tenny