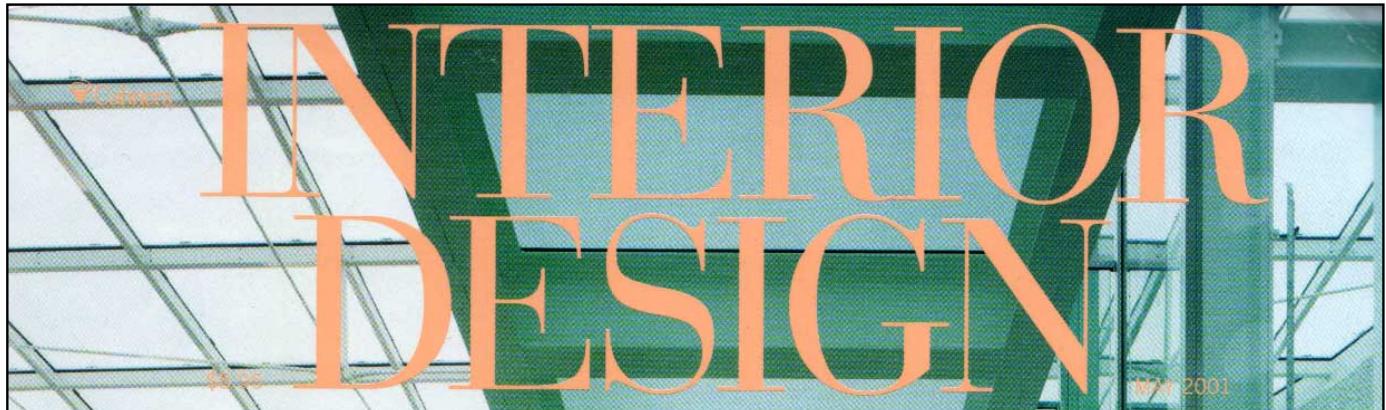




THE FRANKLIN REPORT

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reading | list **The Franklin Report: The Insider's Guide to Home Services, New York City, 2001**

by Elizabeth Franklin and staff

New York: Allgood Press

386 pages, \$22.50 paperbound.

For years, the Zagat guides have rated restaurants in various cities based on surveys of popular opinion, and they have often been more dependable than the pronouncements of critics. Elizabeth Franklin, a former investment banker who, we understand, became an allied member of ASID while renovating her own Manhattan apartment, has applied a similar approach to the rating of those providing services related to interior design: architects, designers, electricians, painters, millworkers, upholsterers, and a couple of dozen other categories of professionals, including exterminators (well, that's New York). Franklin's compilation has proven wildly successful; using her own chief criterion of popularity, that means that it is highly valuable, and so indeed it seems to be.

For designers who enjoy reading evaluations about their colleagues, it is also immensely entertaining. Sills Huniford and Naomi Leff, for example, both get top ratings for quality of work; Richard Meier is considered more expensive than Robert Stern; Thad Hayes is considered at the top of his

game; Thierry Despont is described as dressing, speaking, and decorating with the grandeur that only the French can summon with grace; and Geoffrey Bradfield is praised for opulence, quality and verve—but reportedly can be a bit much. In addition to such evaluations, there are numerical ratings, and specific achievements are also noted, such as admission into this magazine's Hall of Fame. It is all great fun if you know the players and very instructive if you do not.

Franklin's formula for success in New York is soon to be extended to Chicago, Atlanta, Houston, Boston, Los Angeles, and other cities, and annual updates of all volumes are also planned. Each book has bound-in cards for submitting opinions about those being rated, and comments can also be sent to a website. Even so, just who the voters have been and how many have contributed to the evaluations is perhaps necessarily a bit vague. The preface merely refers to "thousands of in-depth customer interviews and surveys." But the Franklin Report empire extends beyond voter opinions: designers are invited, for an annual fee, to share a portfolio of their work on the website, and the advertising states that the portfolio enhances your Franklin Report company descriptions. We assume the intended verb was "supplements" and that paid participation does not enhance one's company description.

In any case, Ms. Franklin has developed a clever, valuable, influential, and deservedly popular format for the presentation of professional profiles. Take this woman to lunch.