

What you can do about a coffee table . . . and answers to other decorating dilemmas

stylish solutions



Elizabeth Gaynor and Kari Haavisto



Designer Bruce Bierman is a master at using refined materials in understated contemporary ways. He concocted this wafer-thin coffee table by marrying a piece of anigre wood with a set of curvy steel legs that he appropriated from a Philippe Starck chair—a modern take on Queen Anne style. He had the wood beveled on the underside (it's 1½ inches thick, thinner toward the edges), then stained it and gave it a satin urethane finish. Accessories are also of wood and metal. Gauze gives a fashionable wrap to a flat of orchids. A handsome lacquer box camouflages TV remote controls. The table stands before a big, cushy sofa, 9 feet by 39 inches, covered in nubby cream silk, where Bruce goes horizontal after long days on the run with clients. The alley between table and couch is minimal. "Don't think of it as a thoroughfare," he advises. "You should be able to reach over and easily put something down." Photos by Jeannette Montgomery Barron are hung low, in a sight line with the orchids and candlesticks, at a level geared to seating height.