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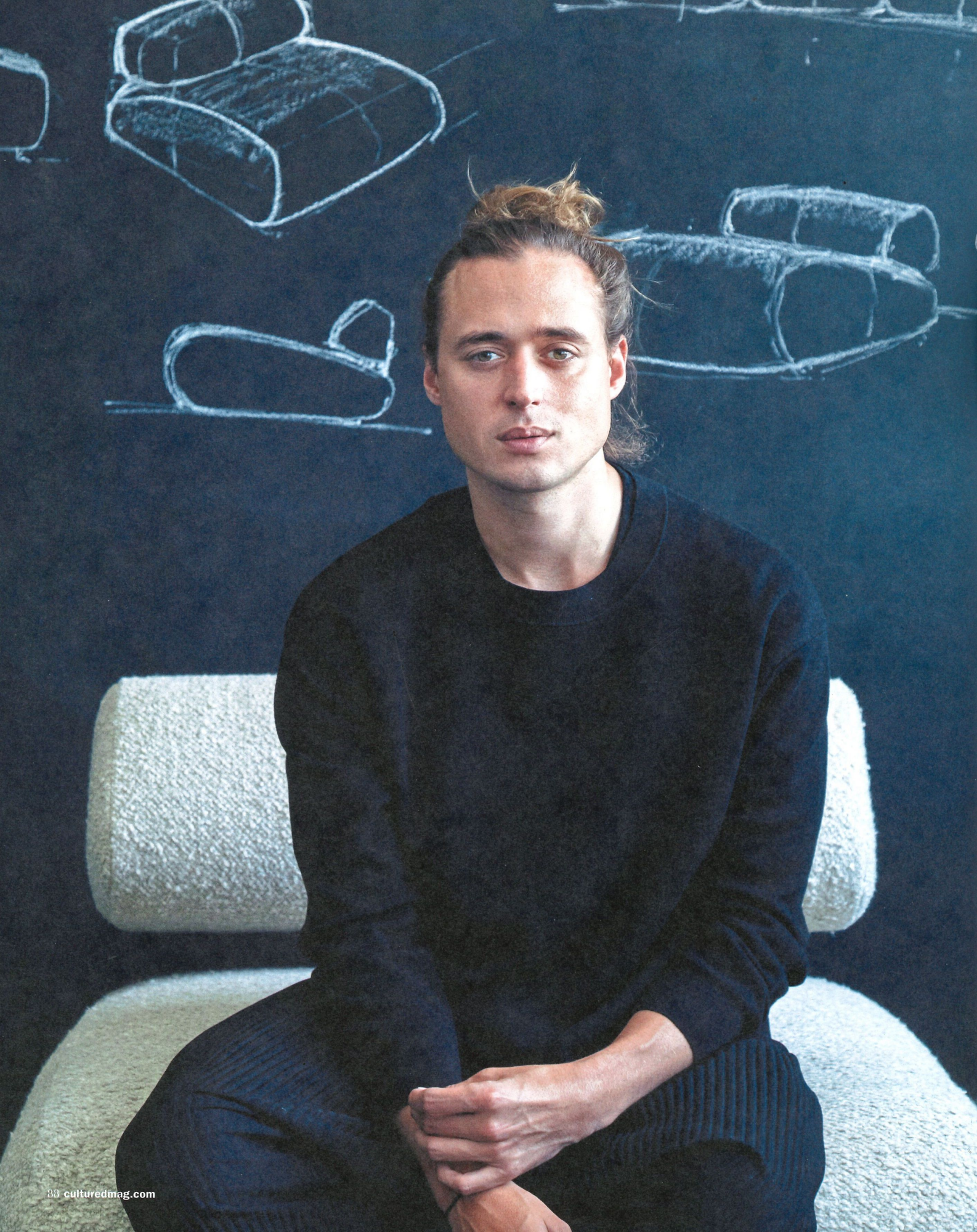
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THE CRONENBERGS
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Mexico City, Mexico

Mexico City's coolest makers take the area's rich history and reimagine it anew. Gloria Cortina, Alexander Díaz Andersson, Paola Jose, Lucas Cantú and Carlos H. Matos, and Liliana Ovalle turn the past into the future.

BY EVAN MOFFITT

Alexander Díaz Andersson

BORN AND RAISED IN Falsterbo, Sweden, Alexander Díaz Andersson was drawn to the minimalism of Scandinavian designers like Alvar Aalto at a young age. He was also obsessed with the Italian architect and designer Carlo Scarpa, whose furniture and architecture form a perfect synthesis. After studying industrial design at the Istituto Europeo di Design in Spain, he followed his mother's travels and relocated to Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, where he observed the rich local tradition of woodworking firsthand. In 2009, Andersson founded ATRA, an architecture and design studio that he describes as "an amalgamation of Scandinavian minimalism with Mexican maximalist/Brutalist design." Uniquely,

the firm's many architectural projects are inspired by their furniture, rather than the other way around: each space is built around fine details that are considered in relationship to the body. ATRA's first architectural commission was for the hejal of the Birkat Itzjak Synagogue in Mexico City, the altar-like cabinet where the holy Torah scrolls are stored. The project was fitting for Andersson, whose design philosophy prizes a sense of permanence, asking how to make an object that will decay gracefully and gain character over time. Each piece of ATRA furniture is built to last, reflecting a belief, Andersson says, in the twin values of "sustainability and durability." The Fjaril Table, for instance, pairs a sheet of

marble, cleaved gently in two, with black steel tripod legs that curve gracefully like an Alexander Calder sculpture. ATRA's Air Sofa, meanwhile, is a black leather couch stripped down to its most basic elements: with most of the back and sides cut away, it provides the sitter only with what's needed to support their body. "I always start with a silhouette," he says. This is clear from his many chairs, which come in every imaginable material, from sensuously curved walnut to wicker, leather and steel. He is currently developing a new seven-piece furniture collection—"a more hedonistic, material-heavy line with soft upholstery"—and will open a permanent studio in New York by summer.