

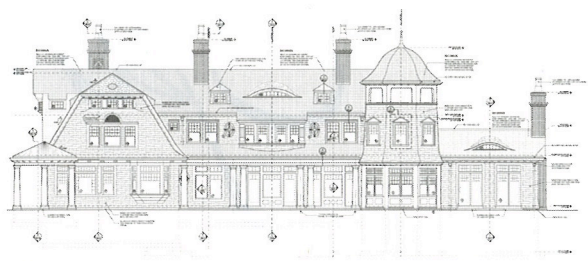
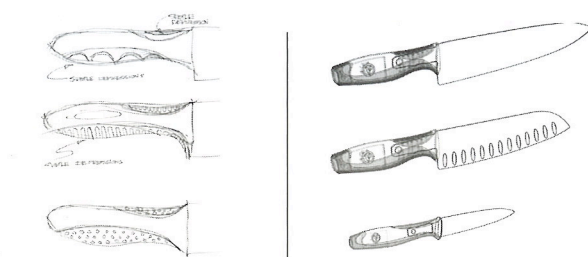
## LEARNING CURVE

After meeting as students, this dynamic couple still find new challenges in design and life



Written by **REGINA COLE**  
Photograph by **TIM GRAY**

CAROL AND TOM CATALANO MET WHEN THEY WERE students at Rhode Island School of Design, where Tom learned that he loves to design houses and Carol discovered her penchant for science, for working three-dimensionally. Notable careers have grown out of these early self-discoveries: For Tom,



IN THEIR DOWNTOWN Boston office, Carol and Tom Catalano work — separately — on designing everything from knives for Dexter-Russell (TOP) to grand houses, such as the one above in Osterville, Massachusetts. Carol's "Capelli" stools decorate the office space (LEFT), while Tom's cardboard models bring his house designs to life.

Catalano Architects has evolved into the go-to Boston firm for beautiful Shingle Style houses, while for Carol, Catalano Design has made a mark on the mysterious, far-reaching world of industrial design with objects as diverse as knife handles, stereo speakers, surge protectors, a one-handed guitar capo, and the iconic "Capelli" stool for Herman Miller.

Last year, as Catalano Design and Catalano Architects celebrated 20 years in business, Carol and Tom reached a personal milestone, marking their 25th wedding anniversary. Although the couple share teenage children, a home in Hamilton, Massachusetts, a downtown Boston office, and the daily commute, "we don't work on projects together," Carol says with a laugh. "That's why we're still married." However, lately they have agreed to work together on at least one project — an addition to their Cape Cod vacation house. "We're using our house as a lab," says Carol, "using ordinary materials in extraordinary ways."

The project is also a way for them to demonstrate a mutual passion for sustainability that informs everything they do. New Englanders by birth and upbringing, the Catalanos see their work in global terms.

"The ability of design to positively affect people's lives is immeasurable," says Tom of his and Carol's life's work. "We don't set out to make the world better, but we do make it better for the people we work with." ■