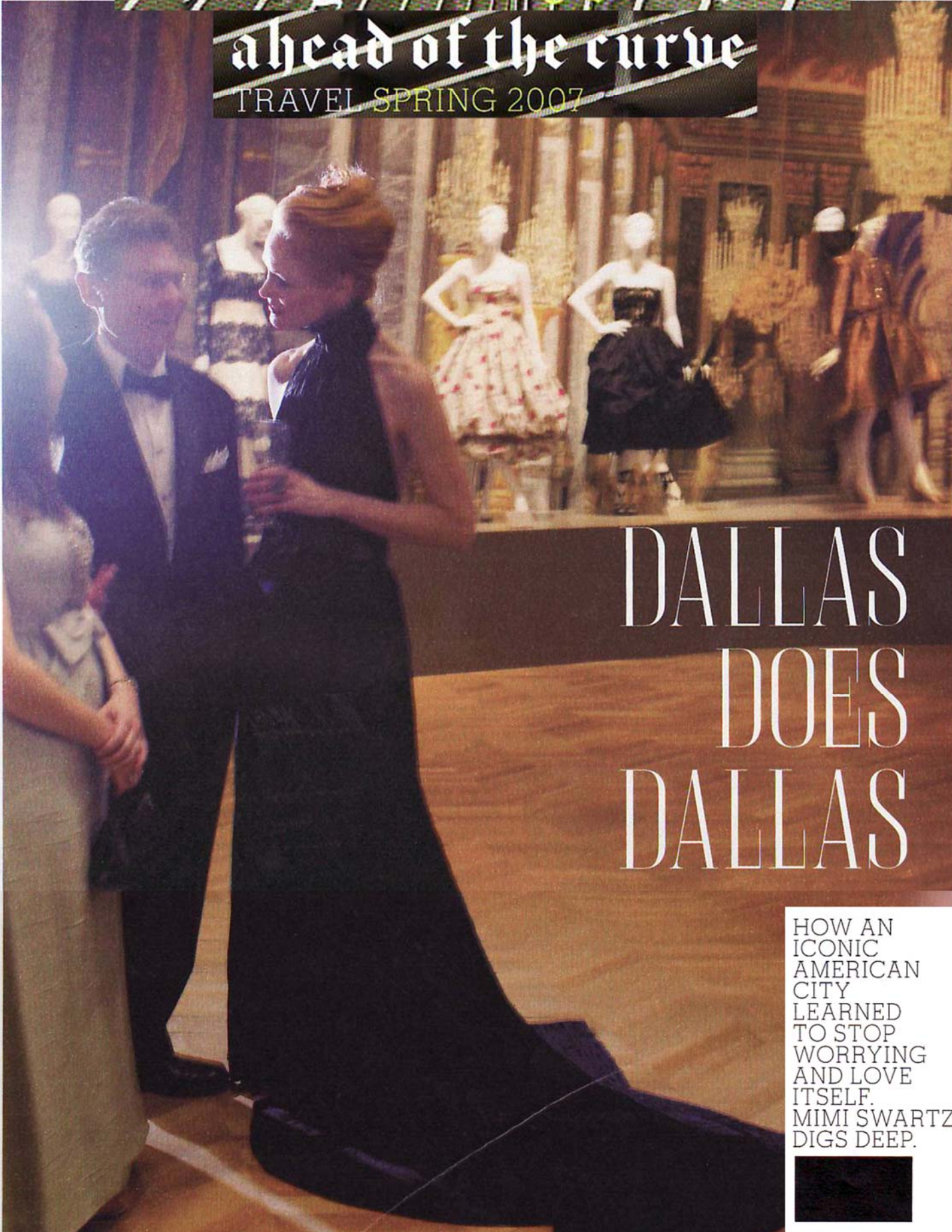


The New York Times Style Magazine

ahead of the curve

TRAVEL SPRING 2007



DALLAS  
DOES  
DALLAS

HOW AN  
ICONIC  
AMERICAN  
CITY  
LEARNED  
TO STOP  
WORRYING  
AND LOVE  
ITSELF.  
MIMI SWARTZ  
DIGS DEEP.



Photographs by  
PETER RAD





**PEOPLE, PLACES, THINGS**  
 FROM FAR LEFT, THE ROCK STAR SUITE OF  
 THE HOTEL ZAZA PROVIDES A BIT OF  
 OVER-THE-TOP FLASH

**I hadn't been to Dallas** for any length of time when I visited recently, and my first indication that things had changed was when I spied the jewelry being raffled off at the Nasher Sculpture Center's New Year's Eve benefit. The stones on the white gold necklace were not small by any standard — the piece was billed in the party program as “a stunning 2½-carat diamond necklace” valued at \$5,900 — but it didn't look like something J. R. Ewing or, for that matter, H. L. Hunt would have given any self-respecting mistress. It was understated. (This was a town, after all, where a father hired a three-ring circus complete with elephants for his daughter's debutante party, long before MTV's “My Super Sweet 16.”) The inside of the Nasher party tent looked like something from the Snow Queen — all shimmering silver and snowy white. The dinner chairwoman Heidi Dillon wore big blond hair with her silver sequined gown, but her young son was also in attendance, in a tux and matching silver sneakers, which dialed the whole thing back a bit. Some of the male guests weren't even in black tie, another sign that the city's days of trying too hard were perhaps numbered.

If anything was missing from the Dallas I remembered, it was that. Earlier, my husband and I had checked into the boutique Hotel ZaZa, just across the freeway from the city's arts district. Boutique hotels speak to the Dallas soul — they're trendy and exclusive — but the ZaZa also refuses to take itself too seriously. It is like a cross between a villa in Cannes, a West Hollywood hot spot and a *zendo*. There is a sun-washed pool in designer-approved Mediterranean hues; theme suites (the Rock Star, the Last Czar, the Crouching Tiger), some of which are bigger than my 2,000-square-foot home; moodily darkened hallways decorated, this being fashion-crazed Dallas, with Helmut Newton photographs; and pink thong underwear inscribed with the hotel's name available for purchase from a glass case in the lobby. (Bible Belt Dallas always had a thing for illicit sex.)

Our non-themed room had the requisite flat-screen TV and a frosted-glass window between the bedroom and shower with an inscription, debatably but frequently attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson about success (“To leave the world a bit better / whether by a healthy child, / a garden patch / or a redeemed social condition, / ... This is to have success”). We had a terrific view of guests arriving and departing in their Porsches, Hummers and BMWs, burdened with shopping bags from Neiman's, Barneys, etc., and I wondered whether the hotel's designers had indulged a taste for irony not commonly associated with Dallas. Then I found the tooth whitener for sale on the minibar, and remembered where I was.

#### Essentials Dallas

**HOTELS** The city's two top in-town luxury properties, Rosewood's **Mansion on Turtle Creek** (888-767-3966; [www.mansiononturtlecreek.com](http://www.mansiononturtlecreek.com); doubles from \$295) and the **Hotel Crescent Court** (888-767-3966; [www.crescentcourt.com](http://www.crescentcourt.com); doubles from \$275), will be joined within a year by a new **Ritz-Carlton** ([www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com)) and a **Mandarin Oriental** ([www.mandarin-oriental.com](http://www.mandarin-oriental.com)). For boutique-style options, consider the new **W Dallas-Victory** (877-822-0000; [www.whotels.com](http://www.whotels.com); doubles from \$239); the cozy, neighborhood **Melrose Hotel** (800-635-7673; [www.melrosehoteldallas.com](http://www.melrosehoteldallas.com); doubles from \$174); the **Hotel ZaZa**, with its glitzy interiors and busy bar scene (800-597-8399; [www.hotelzaza.com](http://www.hotelzaza.com); doubles from \$259); or the **Belmont Hotel**, a former motor lodge in the city's arts district (866-870-8010; [www.belmontdallas.com](http://www.belmontdallas.com); doubles from \$179).