



ILLUSTRATION BY LAUREN TAMAKI

COCKTAILS WITH ENRIQUE NORTEN

An intimate tête-à-tête series inviting prominent cultural figures to divulge their secrets.

We catch up with the Mexican architect at the height of his career. Norten, who founded his Mexico City practice, TEN Arquitectos, 30 years ago, now boasts international acclaim.

Favorite cocktail: What's your poison?

White tequila, because it's the purest. I drink Herradura Blanco. It's the simplest, most straightforward tequila. I can find it anywhere. It's reliable.

If a drink reflected your personality, what would be in it?

I'm very pragmatic. I'm simple and transparent. So it would have to be simple and clean spirits. Once in awhile, if it's very hot, I'll have a gin and tonic. If I'm in Europe, I might have a Campari. Just a Campari with soda, if I'm feeling wild. I like the red color, with sparkling bubbles. [Laughs]

What's your biggest vice?

That's a dangerous question. I don't drink heavily. I think my biggest vice is beauty. I'm really taken in by it. I'm seduced by it, and I just can't let go. Many times, it makes me just get lost and lose sight of other important things. Beauty is an eternal search for me. As a friend of mine used to say, "I don't have any dry vices. All of my vices are humid." [Laughs]

What was your best-ever night out?

For me, the most memorable nights aren't about the parties or the drinking or the dancing. It's really about having a fantastic conversation with one person. Consider the first night out with my partner, Sarah Gore Reeves [the fashion director and stylist for *Vogue México y Latinoamérica*], which was at Bar Pitti in New York's West Village. We sat there for four hours talking. Just talking, and drinking wine.

What was your most embarrassing public moment?

I get huge anxiety about saying the wrong thing, or doing the wrong thing. Lately, my issues have been with email. For example, I received an email from this lady who's giving us a very hard time on a project—and I responded: "Don't listen to her, she's a snake and a terrible person." A snake [*vibore*] in Spanish slang

means a traitor. I forgot to take her out of the chain. She's copied on the email. Digital-age problems. That's not really public. But I've never lost my pants, or anything like that. And if I did, I would be very proud, not embarrassed!

What do you do to escape?

Two things: I walk. I like to walk in cities. It brings me enormous peace of mind and enormous clarity. And I really like to enjoy what I call "public space." It's therapy for me to walk. I also go to the movies. It's so fabulous to go into this black box and be separated from the world. And somebody has chosen to open up this amazing window for you. I go to the movies two or three times a week.

What's your favorite bar in the world?

That's easy—Cantina La Providencia. It's in Mexico City, the best city in the world. I was born there, in a neighborhood called Condesa. It's an easygoing area. All the bars there are great. You can just stop there, have a tequila or two after work, and talk to anyone.

What books are on your bedside table right now?

I keep going back to the Spanish writer Jorge Luis Borges, who's a fantastic thinker and philosopher. He's both a poet and an essay writer—I have his full works. He brings me a new way of looking at life. I have Italo Calvino, the Italian writer, as well. I always go back to his *Invisible Cities*. It's had a great influence on my life. I read poetry, too. I love Federico García Lorca, Antonio Machado, and Rafael Alberti.

What words do you want to see written on your tombstone?

Just two words: Beauty and love. Because, to me, those are the two highest values. I think my life has been a pursuit of both.

THE BAR This interview, conducted by editor Jennifer Parker, took place at El Toro Blanco in New York City's West Village in Aug. 2016. Herradura Blanco tequila, served neat with lime was the drink of choice. 257 Avenue of the Americas, eltoroblanconyc.com