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FEBRUARY 2001

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GAMMA - Jasper Morrison

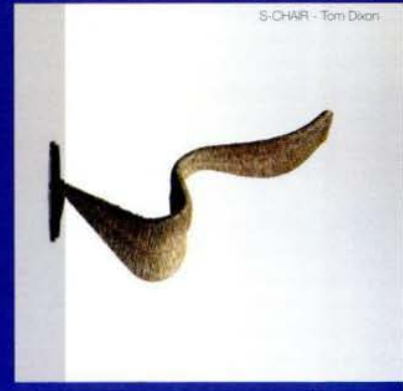
LOOP - Barber Osgerby

SUZUKA'S TABLE - Christophe Pillet

BOOKSHELF - Shiro Kuramata

THREE SOFA DE LUXE- Jasper Morrison

S-CHAIR - Tom Dixon



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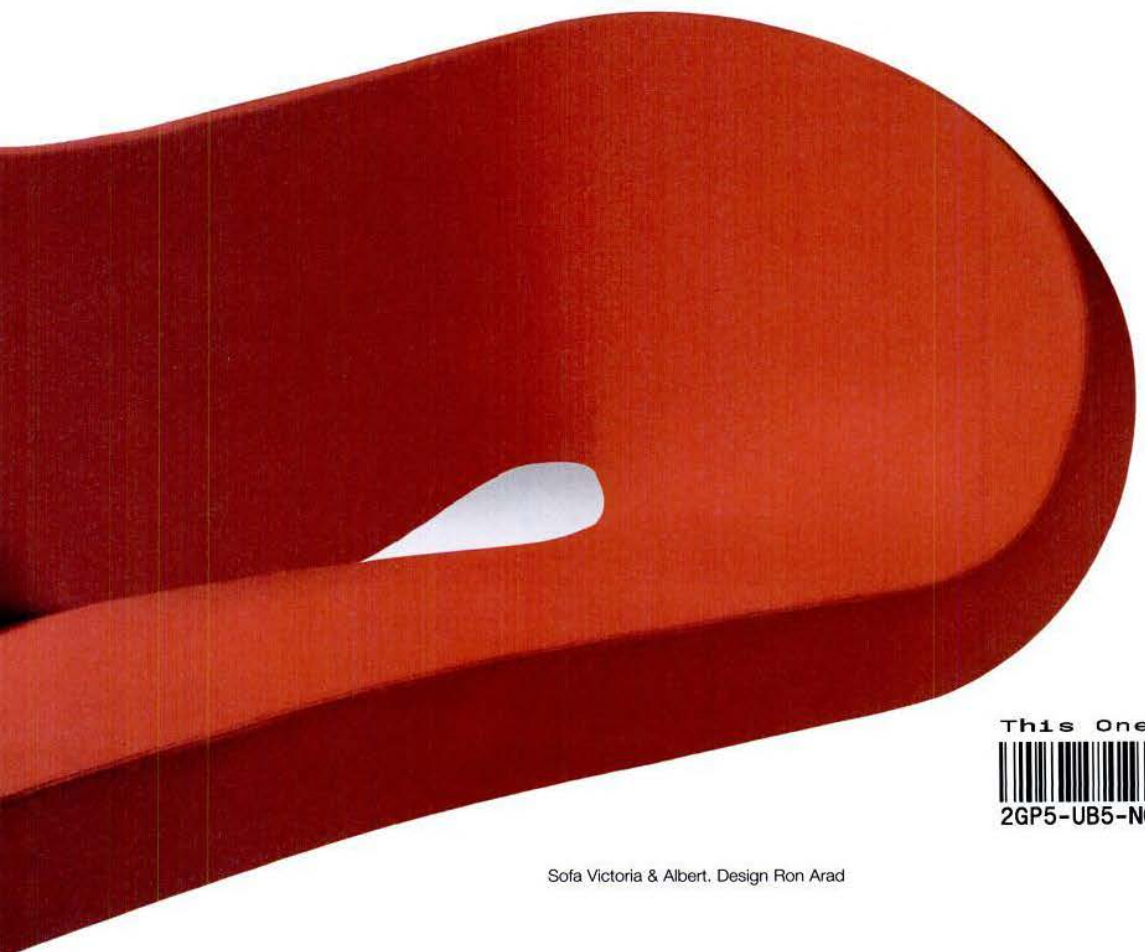

This One

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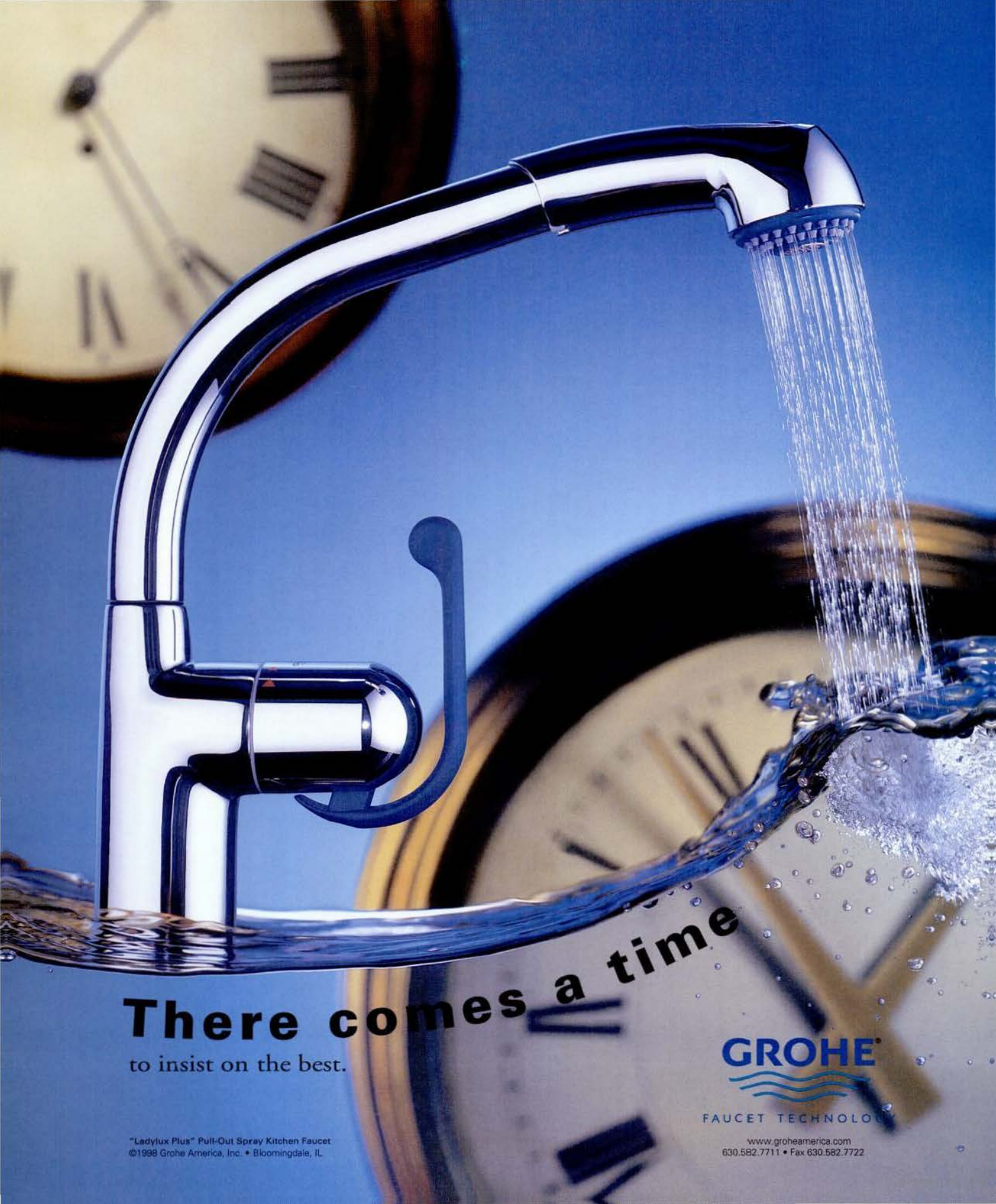
Sofa Victoria & Albert. Design Ron Arad

JOSEPH ABBOUD

HOME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COVER

From the family room of the Jaime house, designed by Los Angeles firm Escher GuneWardena, two-year-old Ryan can see a golf course, two mountain ranges, and, maybe, the future. Photo by Todd Hido.






"What the future needs, what it is struggling to bring to fruitful life, is not a machine-for-living but an organism-that-functions. Not a mechanical brain, but a house with soul."

—BRUCE STERLING, PAGE 43






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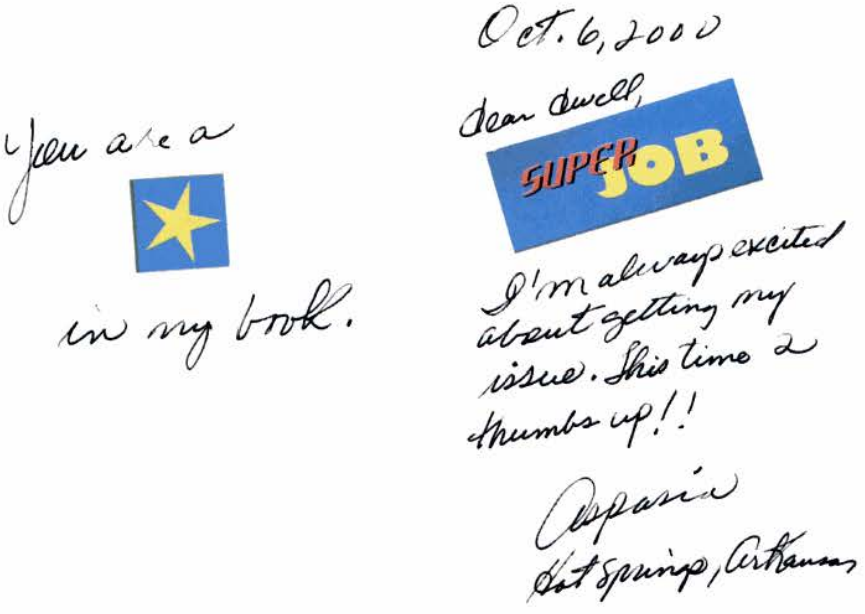

Fan mail *veritas.*

I knew you were onto something with the first issue of dwell, but the December issue was clearly assembled and published specifically for me. Thanks! Who knew my turn would come so soon?

Hitting the highlights: the clutter expert's comparison of wall units, a rainwater-collecting, solar-powered house, secure windows that are not just basically bricked up, the Tom Dixon *Rethink* story (especially Groovy, Bed-in-a-box, and Radius), the New Urbanism story, and a 1930s shotgun duplex in Baton Rouge not unlike our own 1920s shotgun duplex here in Atlanta.

I realize it's now some other lucky subscriber's turn for a custom issue, but I just have to push my luck. Next time you're looking for products to compare, please consider sofabeds, especially those that are deep and long enough to allow a six-foot-tall person to nap on them without unfolding them. It seems like everything I've seen is either stylish dollhouse furniture or hideous playpens for adults.

SHANNON O'ROURKE
Atlanta, Georgia

Editors' Note: Please keep your eyes peeled for our April 2001 issue.

We have just received our second issue of your magazine and are enjoying it very much. It has great writing and I like your focus and viewpoint. I join some of your other subscribers in wishing for more photographs of actual dwellings. Overall I find the design of the magazine to be very accessible in its graphics, layout, and even physical size—an important feature when most of one's leisure reading is done in bed at the end of the day, where it is difficult to hold up something of a larger format.

Today there was an item on the news (NPR) about the readying of the international space station for new occupants. Now there's a dwelling! I would love to see something in your magazine about this habitat—who are the architects, what were the special considerations in its design, are more being envisioned, how well has it worked so far, what spin-offs from space design today can earthbound people look forward to in the near future? I hope this sparks an interesting assignment for one of your writers.

SYLVIE BROWNE
Troy, New York

I have always been in the closet. Meaning, I secretly hold a passion I rarely speak of; even friends have no idea. What is this passion? A love for design and architecture (I'm a burly firefighter). Your magazine is wonderful. The story about the Phoenix firefighters in your first issue was my favorite (of course).

JORGE CARVAJAL
Hollywood, Florida ►

dwell

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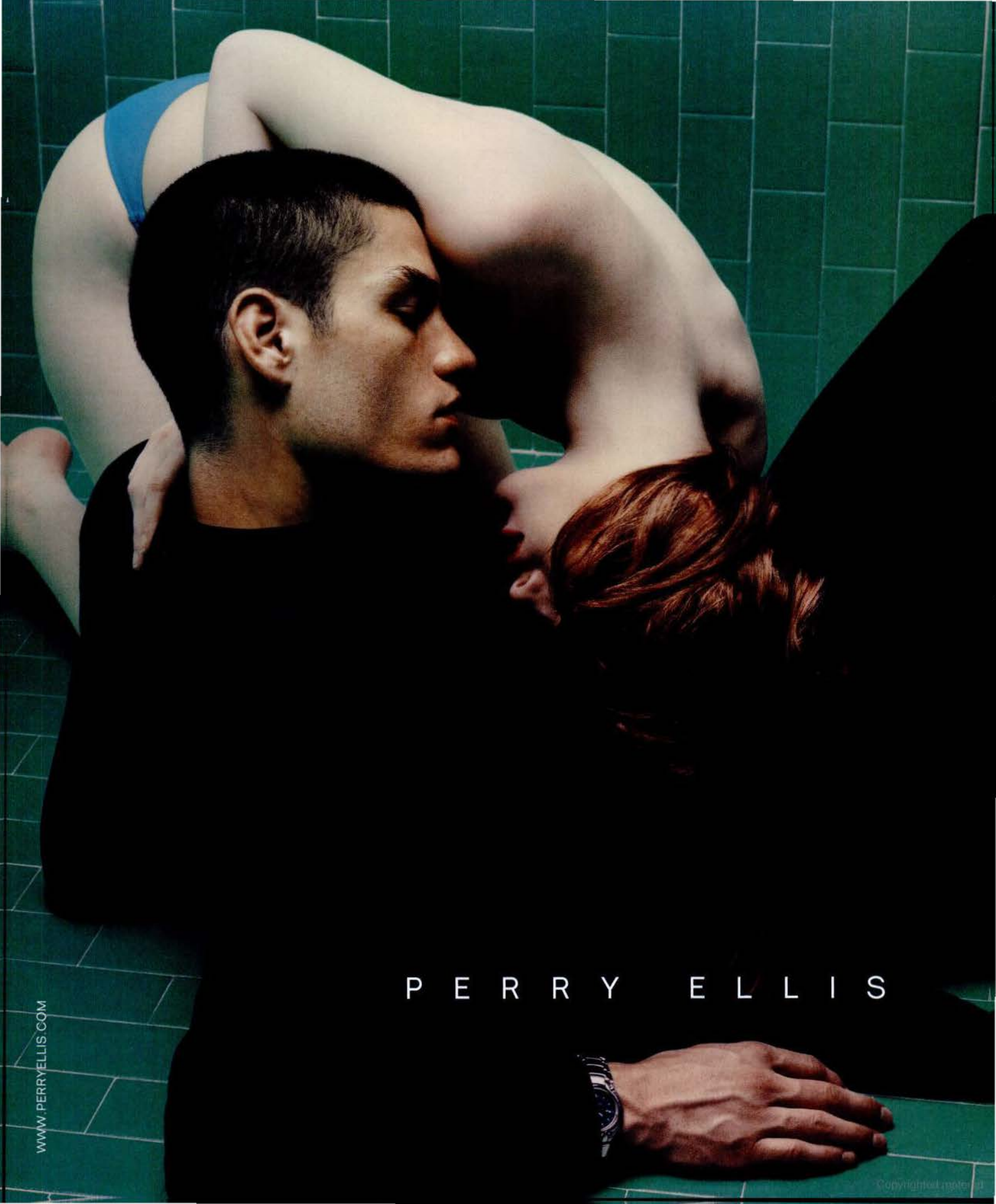
PERRY ELLIS
WWW.PERRYELLIS.COM

Please note that in the December 2000 issue of dwell on page 57, R. Buckminster Fuller is noted as the designer of the Union Tank Car Company (1958). Actually, T. C. Howard is the designer of that structure. Mr. Howard started a company with Mr. Fuller called Geodesics in 1956, and Mr. Fuller routinely receives credit for Mr. Howard's designs. For details refer to www.synergeticsinc.com/default.htm for details and more information on his designs.

BRYAN MOFFITT
Bowers, Ellis, & Watson, PA
Asheville, North Carolina

Editors' Note: We were intrigued by this letter because it brings up some interesting issues regarding attribution. As far as we could discover, from contacting both Mr. Howard and The Buckminster Fuller Institute, both dwell and Mr. Moffitt are correct. T.C. Howard was in fact the lead designer of the Union Tank Car Company; however, the design licenses a patent of Mr. Fuller's (for the geodesic principle), and Fuller was the owner and founder of the company responsible for the design and fabrication, Geodesics, Inc. Although, as Mr. Howard told us, Bucky worked on the project for a total of perhaps 10 hours, it is often the case with large-scale projects such as this that the majority of the work is done by others, and then falls under the name of the principle figure.

I just received my first issue of dwell— while moving into a tiny apartment (450 square feet) across the street from the Supreme Court in Washington, DC. If the editors are looking for a place to "make over," here's the perfect place.

If not—well—the magazine looks great, and I look forward to the next issue!

JOHN FENNELL, Landscape Architect
Oehme Van Sweden and Associates, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

I can't remember the last time a magazine lasted on my nightstand two nights; I read it cover to cover. Hopefully, you can do a bit on Eichlers in a future issue.

RANDY DELUCCHI
San Jose, California

I have just received the second issue of dwell. The magazine is fresh, lively, and stylish; a godsend for those of us who believe the obtuse and needlessly high-handed style of many architecture and design magazines has, for too long, placed a barrier between the design community and plain folk. And it is also a relief to see a magazine that deals with the issue of design—particularly home design—in an approachable manner without resorting to overblown, fawning coverage of the mansions of celebrities and the super-rich, the purview of a certain fat-cat "architecture" magazine that shall go nameless.

I'm looking forward to issue number three.

LEE BEY
Architecture Critic, Chicago Sun-Times
Chicago, Illinois

Bravo! Could it possibly be that those of us in those "third, fourth, or one hundred thirty-fourth" cities finally have an unpretentious voice? One can hope that your magazine will deliver on this potential.

CRAIG MATHENY
Louisville, Kentucky

Great magazine—I bought my issue at the local Barnes & Noble Saturday. Enjoyed the fruit bowl comments. Perhaps the late and much-maligned Monsanto "House of the Future" (Disneyland, Anaheim) could have an article someday. It was supposed to be the happenin' thing once. Thought it was pretty cool when I was a kid.

Keep it up! Thanks for your attention.

CHARLIE BURGESS
Port Richey, Florida

Editors' Note: Good idea. *Turn to page 92.*

I like your new mag. But do all the stories have to have such small fonts? You are leaving so much white space around the stories it is like a cloud around the page. Anyway, looking forward to your next issue.

MARTY ECKERMAN
Phoenix, Arizona

The art department responds: One thought is that we have a lot to say. Most magazines have less copy and bigger type. We are using nine-point type, which is a good size for text weight. It's all a matter of what you're accustomed to.

I recently received my first copy of dwell and I must say, "Congratulations!" I love the scale, the presentation, everything. The magazine is very well done.

STANLEY TIGERMAN, FAIA
Tigerman McCurry Architects
Chicago, Illinois ■

PHOTO BY BILL TIMMERMAN

The Roof Is Up

We've gotten a lot of requests for an update on the McCue house in Phoenix, Arizona, featured in the October issue of dwell. The photo above was sent to us by architect Marwan Al-Sayed and shows the interior of the completed house. The shot bears an uncanny resemblance to the architect's computer renderings. But perhaps that virtual-reality look will vanish as the McCues settle in.

Corrections

December 2000, page 24: Pictured at top right is a dark-haired man with a black baseball cap and Fruit of the Loom tan. The caption reads "Mike's friend/helper, Jim Kine" and is false on two counts: Mike's friend/helper is named Jim Kime, not Kine, and the pictured man is not Jim Kime but an anonymous guy who lives down the street and sometimes hangs around the Goszczycki site. Sincere apologies to the real Jim.

December 2000, page 33: We said that the Bubu stool, designed by Philippe Starck, was manufactured by the Italian firm Kartell. Actually a French company, XO, made the Bubu. And so did we.

COURTESY OF THE MENIL COLLECTION, HOUSTON

CATCH IT BEFORE IT RUNS AWAY

Icebox by Andy Warhol, 1961.

We are grateful, first of all, that we didn't launch dwell until well after New Year's Day 2000, liberating us from the burden of producing a special issue about the significance of the new millennium. But here it is 2001, and it's hard to write the number on a letter or a check without comparing the real 2001 to the one dreamed up by Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrick. Pan Am, of course, is not flying passengers into space, but is, instead, defunct. And the only flight attendant uniforms anywhere near as stylish as the ones worn in the 1968 film can be found on Jet Blue, which flies, not to the moon, but to Oakland and Buffalo.

We have arrived at the future, and it isn't quite what we anticipated. Who, for instance, would have predicted that the biggest transportation innovation at the dawn of the 21st century would be folding, foot-propelled scooters?

But are we disappointed? No, we're not. On the contrary, we think that much of what we were promised on visits to World's Fairs and Expos has, in fact, panned out. We have voice-recognition light switches and toasters armed with fuzzy logic. We have myriad little electronic devices with which we can instantly (and incessantly) communicate with loved ones and keep tabs on investments in firms with business plans so fantastic that even our greatest visionaries—Orwell, Huxley, Disney—could not have dreamed them up. It's possible, right now, to live something approximating the Jetsons lifestyle (sans flying car), if that's what you desire . . . So, given that the future that we've envisioned for so long is the present, we think that it's possible, finally, to just get over it. We think it's possible, at long last, to think about the future without focusing exclusively on technology.

At least, that's what we've tried to do in this issue of dwell. We've attempted to find houses that respond to needs that are more profound than the desire to turn off the coffee maker from your office work station via a dedicated website. We've found houses that address issues like the graying of the baby boom generation and the inability of many people, even in an economic upswing, especially in an economic upswing, to afford housing. We believe the houses we've chosen express a kind of enlightened pragmatism that we see as the real way to think about the future.

We're trying to look toward the future as the first modernists did, by clearing away the encrustation of the past. Maybe the 20th century's view of the future, a place as full of gadgets as Versailles was of brocade, is something we need to shed. Or at least push aside in order to see more clearly. Perhaps the future is not about more electronic conveniences, but about new ways to use color, light, texture, materials, or form.

In this issue, 94-year-old designer Eva ►

2001: A Space Odyssey
by Stanley Kubrick, 1968.

Zeisel declares that it's time for us to get beyond modernism, to figure out what comes next. What if the next great movement were an architecture so lucid and so accommodating that it makes all the microchips superfluous? We don't pretend to know what that architecture would be, but we've got our eyes open.

Meanwhile, the path to this new 21st-century movement is littered with gadgets. In the process of putting this issue together, we kept tripping over them. In fact, we encountered one particular technological idea so often that we believe it's what our friends at *Wired* would call a meme.

We kept running into the vision of a brilliant but pathological refrigerator, an ice box that is every bit as portentous and powerful as the monolith discovered by the cavemen in the movie 2001. On page 42, science fiction writer Bruce Sterling speculates about a refrigerator in which the products are imbued with enough intellect to gossip about your eating habits. On page 88, you'll find the Cisco Systems Internet Home, where there's a place in the refrigerator door for a touch screen that can control not only the food inventory but also the behavior of your stove and your coffee maker. On page 26, you'll find that Frigidaire is about to introduce a model that will read bar codes on products as you remove them and allow you to shop while you're at your most vulnerable, standing in your jammies in the feeble glow of a 25-watt bulb . . .

Someday soon, say the prophets, your refrigerator is going to be wired. It's going to be like one of those omniscient new minibar fridges that alerts the hotel computer seconds after you lift a $5 bag of M&Ms from the shelf. Except it's going to be in your very own kitchen contacting Webvan via a high-speed connection every time you eat a ham sandwich. It will phone your Weight Watchers overseer if you touch anything sugary. And it will keep tabs on all the other appliances, ratting on the dryer when the lint screen fills up.

When we read the press release about Frigidaire's "Screen Fridge" with its "networking capability," we once again look back at Kubrick's vision. We find ourselves getting nostalgic about the HAL 9000 computer. Long before the year 2001 arrived, the big, threatening IBM mainframe had withered away. But soon, if Frigidaire and Cisco and Sterling are right, every home will have a little HAL right in the middle of the kitchen. The original HAL was murderous, but the Screen Fridge will, at worst, be mischievous, ordering pizzas in the dead of night or going on eBay with your credit card to indulge a novelty-magnet fetish.

Technological forces that felt ominous and all-powerful 30 years ago have begun to seem trivial. We're ready for a new way to think about the future. How about you?

—KARRIE JACOBS, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
karrie@dwellmag.com

PHOTO BY EVERETT COLLECTION

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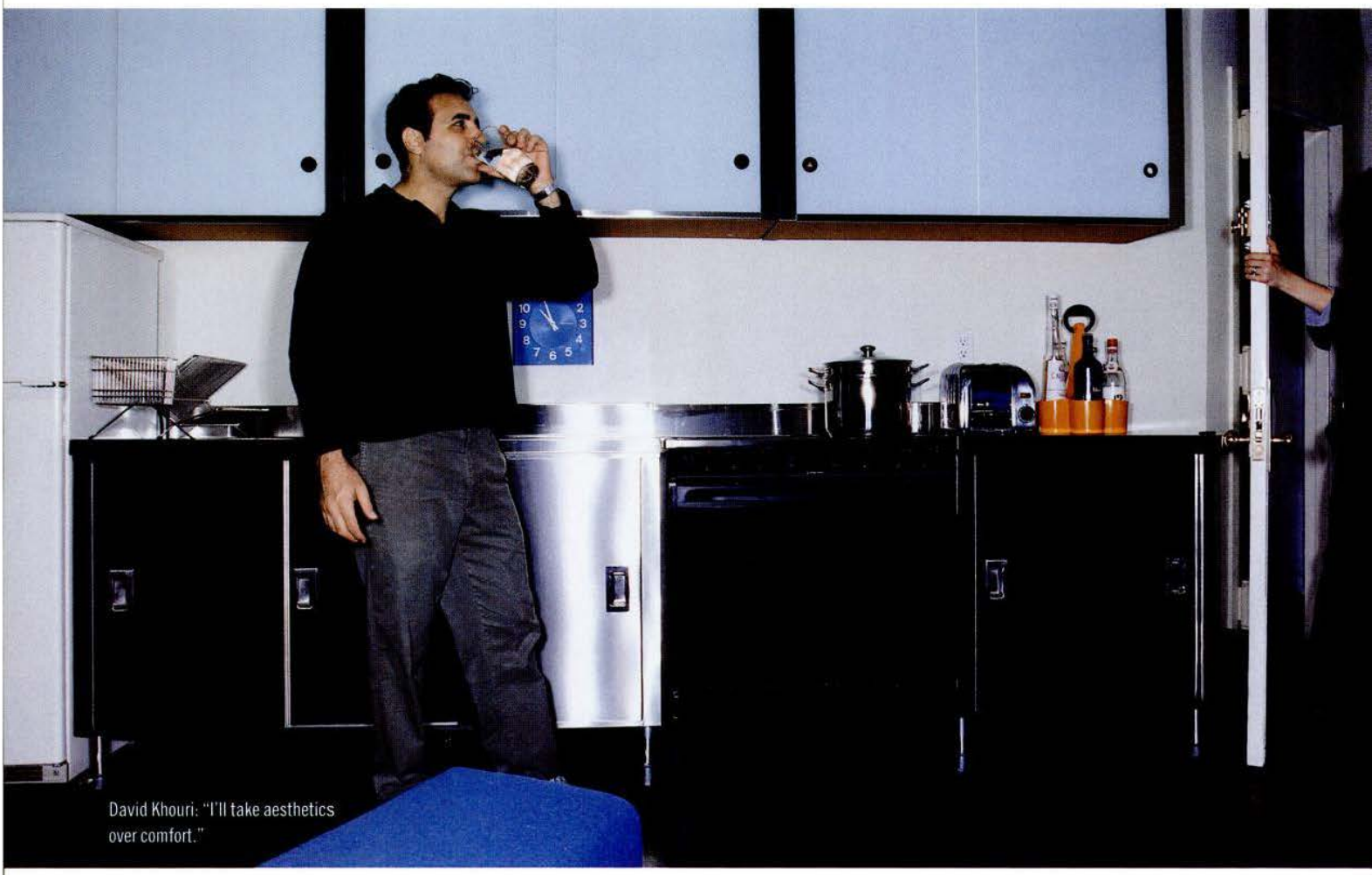

David Khouri: "I'll take aesthetics over comfort."

PHOTO BY DAVID BARRY

I LIVE IN A FURNITURE SHOWROOM

Architect and furniture designer David Khouri runs his firm Comma out of his loft on West 19th Street in Manhattan. Inside the space, a row of huge windows with southern exposure lights up the many sleek surfaces throughout. The space, which doubles as Khouri's showroom, perfectly reflects the stripped-down, clean aesthetic that informs his current design ethos and practice.

"In 1996, no one had lived here before. There were a lot of walls up, which I tore down, wires everywhere. I completely gutted the bathroom. The kitchen was really cheap and that's where most of the work was done. I lived here for six months without a kitchen, and three months without a refrigerator, but it was the middle of winter so I'd just put things on my windowsill. The stainless steel cabinets are from this kitchen-supply place on the Bowery. I got sliding doors because they are cheaper than regular doors. And there are no drawers because drawers are expensive. The thing about sliding doors is that you can't access everything at once, but it's not like I need to look at my spice selection and say, where was that chervil?

"At one point I had to get rid of the stuff that I liked because I had pieces of vintage furniture, like this Gropius chair, and people would come in and ask, 'Oh, how much is that?' I got tired of people asking what was for sale. I don't want just my own work in here but for my situation it's important. And it's OK because I get sick of everything, no matter how much I love it. I don't think it's good spiritually to have the same things around you. With objects, with furniture, you should always be thinking of the next thing. I don't want to be one of those people who everyone knows how old they are by the stuff they've got. I'm not that attached to anything.

"I think that many people are taken aback by my living here because it's kind of artificial. It doesn't look like a 'real' home, but I would live like this even if it wasn't my showroom because I can't stand that much crap, figurines, and doodads. I'm always editing. I would rather have an aesthetic over comfort. I don't mind if something is uncomfortable if I like the way it looks. Clients want to see that you've thought about the place you live in. It inspires confidence. That is one plus about living here."

—ROBYN DUTRA


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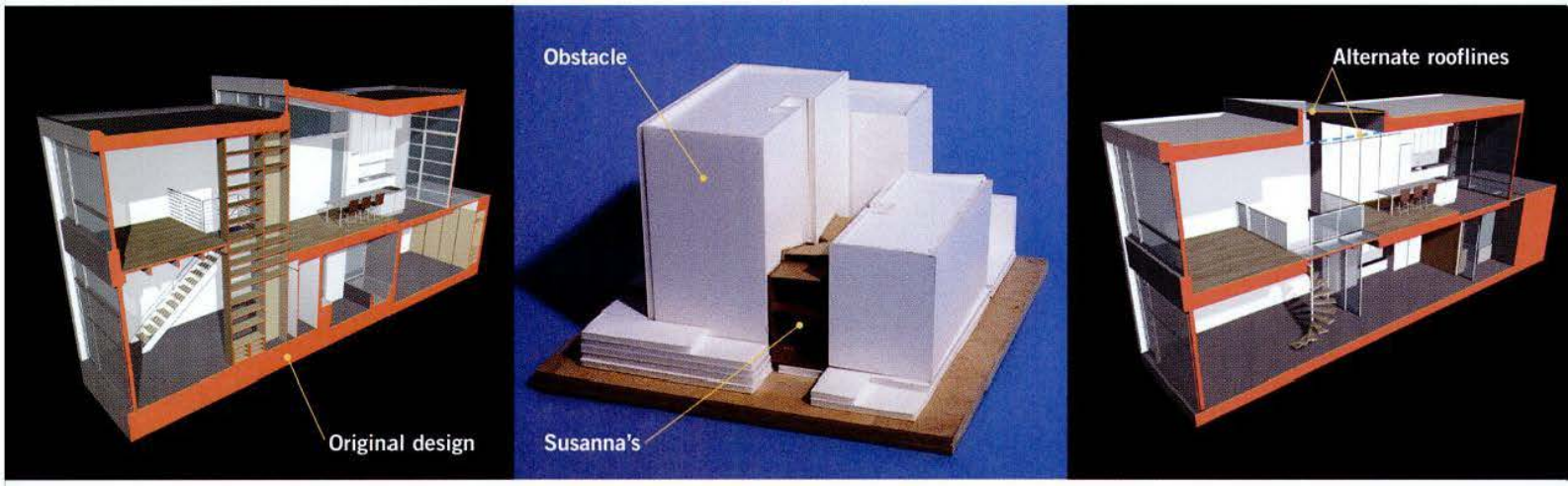


THE TINY HOUSE

Part II: Bogged Down

The Story

Three years ago, Susanna Dulkinys bought a 680-square-foot house—insanely small, but she sensed its potential. Architect Nilus de Matran devised a way to add light, air, and 264 square feet. After a couple of years of careful planning (see dwell, October 2000), Susanna and Nilus are facing some unanticipated hassles. But there's hope.

BY VIRGINIA GARDINER

PHOTO BY JONA FRANK
MODELS & RENDERINGS BY CHRISTOPHER LEITCH

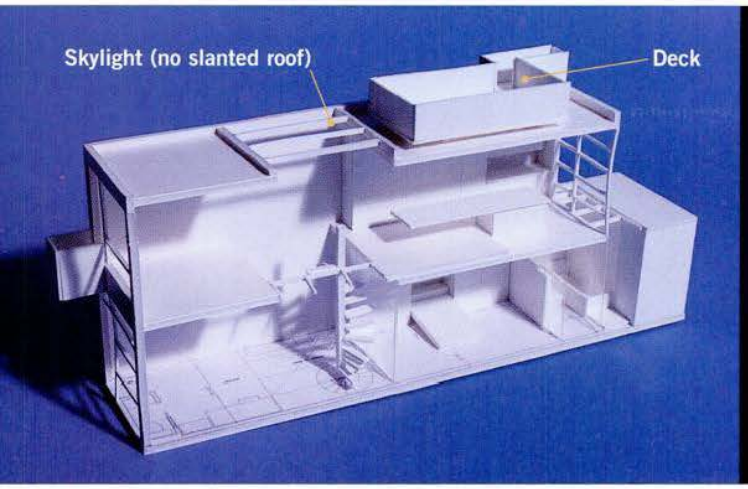
Left: Nilus and Susanna on the back patio. Top, left to right: A rendering by Christopher Leitch, project architect, of the original plan; models (brown cardboard for Susanna, white foam core for the neighbors), show the house with surrounding properties (problem neighbor owns large building on left); a rendering of one new plan, with a dotted-in alternative roofline; a model of a plan with a roof-deck; the note.

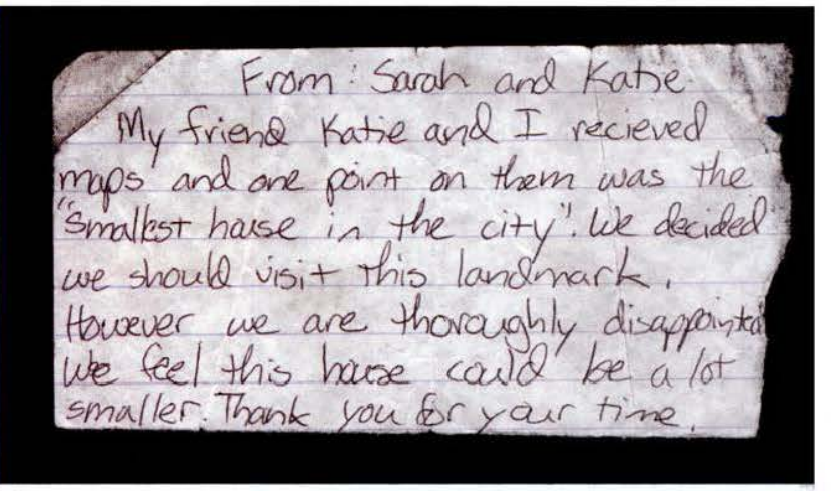
Difficulties 6/21/00

Susanna: One of the next-door neighbors is an obstacle. He's having trouble reading the drawings, and he's focusing on one detail on the roof that angles up and slightly goes beyond the restrictions in our deed. But it doesn't obstruct his view at all. It's the only way we can allow light into the back of the building. A lot of the design is meant to overcome darkness, since my house is hidden between two taller buildings.

Nilus: In San Francisco, few people own everything, so everybody has their share in controlling properties. The way this covenant happened is that formerly, the same person owned all three buildings: Susanna's, the next-door neighbor's, and the neighbor's on the lot behind. Susanna's was the least desirable financially, so they created covenants that gave the two buildings with lots of rental units priority over the little building. Then they sold the buildings with those covenants.

But the thing is, we designed the project with him in mind, in a way; we didn't try to build a chimney that blew smoke into his windows. We were thinking about him—it wasn't this purely singular entity without the neighbors' concerns. But we twisted the covenant a bit. It gives you a right to have a roof-deck on top, and instead of building a roof-deck, we raised the ceiling. There's a higher ceiling below but no roof-deck.





Change the Plan 7/13/00

Nilus: We've come up with three different alternatives since then—plans, sections, and some models. Just to see how we could take it, depending on how things go with the neighbors. We're building our bank, so if they say, "You can't build it this way," we can say, "Fine, then we'll pursue this line." All the new plan ideas work, kind of—they're all based on the same concept as the original. You start losing good bits here and there, but gaining other things.

There's the possibility of building into the back deck. We'd acquire 10 extra feet, but it wouldn't be good for Susanna, because she wouldn't get an outdoor space. Or we keep the back deck, change the layouts of the bedroom and the bathroom, and dig less. A lot of the cost is in the digging.

Susanna: We've gotten lawyers involved, to read the deeds and comb through details. We found a statement that limits roof height, "excluding perimeter walls." So theoretically, we could have a 40-foot perimeter wall, and I could go up another floor.

And we've thought about not digging, and other ways I could acquire those 400 square feet of space, without having to deal with the neighbor. Do I keep the outdoor area? I have that little deck, but I could build it into an indoor/outdoor room. Not a room you would sleep or bathe in, more like a living space.

Drop the Project? 8/16/00

Susanna: I was trying to make a decision. Nilus was out of town, and I was doing some soul-searching. I said to myself, "I'm going to go out and look around San Francisco." I met with a broker and asked what can I buy in San Francisco for the price of this project. I went to open houses, and everything was about the same—mostly condos, maybe with no view. You can find some great vintage places. But if vintage is the thing, I might as well stay here and remodel it—make it more functional. Nilus said we could just knock some walls down and make some changes.

Nilus: It's been interesting to pursue alternate plans, but how much time can you spend . . . redesigning things? You know what I mean? I'd like to get this thing built. Either that or kill it. I think it's the longest project I've ever done.

Susanna: It's all become a little convoluted. We've given ourselves some time, and now we're refocusing. I'm going back and looking at the original design and thinking, this is by far the best design. Everything else is only a variation. I know what it's like; I'm a designer. But it seems like at this point, we're going to have to meet with the neighbor and talk about why he's so afraid. He thinks his property would decrease in value—that's the bottom line, since he doesn't actually live in it, he rents it out. But the value wouldn't decrease. The whole area would increase in value.

Patience 9/18/00

Susanna: We haven't even gotten into details yet: marbles, finishes, materials, that sort of stuff. We're not at that step. It's funny, but it almost seems that—like with any business—another project manager would be great. Someone to stay on top of it, keep it moving. You forget; you keep going on with your life. I'm trying to allow reality to catch up with me, instead of it being just a cool pipe-dream vision.

Nilus: It's definitely become one of *those* projects, you know. When you find a solution, you have to go with it. Otherwise it's like tinkering with something forever; you keep on designing and designing. Architecture isn't just about design; it's about building a building. And at some point you have to stop and build it. Money is a factor, neighbors are a factor, so everything kind of alters the design.

But that's the way things go. Once you start building, your suppliers might mess up, or your electricians. Or materials can change because of the subcontractors' suppliers. You have to go with the flow; that's how buildings go up. Things can't be definite. Until the owner moves in, the project is continually being designed, in a way. When they finally move in, I try to say, "It's yours now, and you can do what you like with it." But usually I go through major withdrawals—waves of depression as I'm divorcing myself from it. It becomes your baby, basically, and you have to let it go. If you don't, you'll be saying, "Aargh! That's the wrong flower arrangement there! That's the wrong bottle of olive oil there!"

Now 10/11/00

Nilus: So it's more or less set aside for now. And when it picks up, we'll work on it again. We'll find time for it.

Susanna: This Friday, I'm sitting down with a broker to go over the money. I'm concerned, because the contractor's bids came in, and the house is going to cost about three times what we first thought—which is a lot.

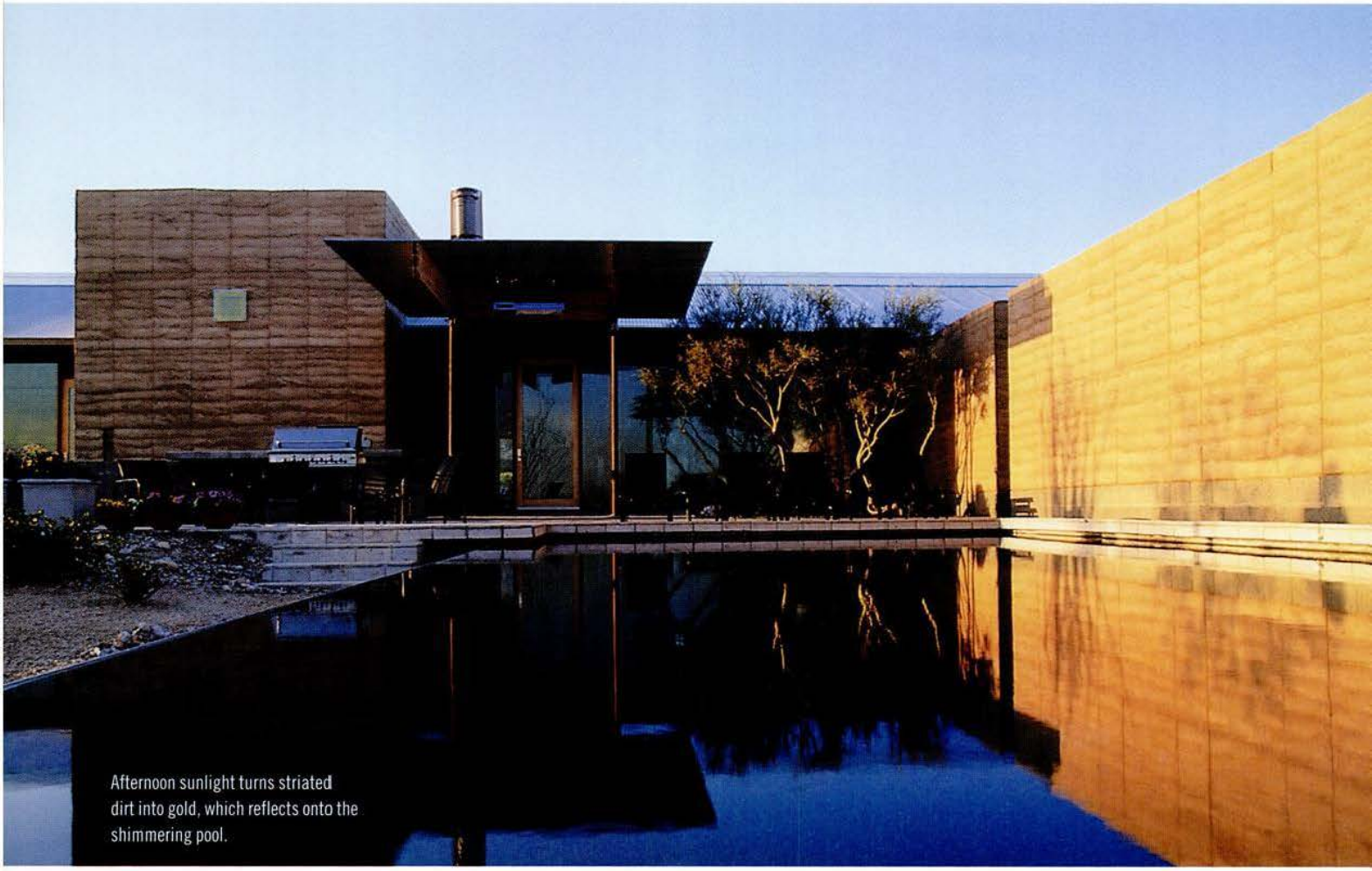
Nilus: We decided to use the same contractor I've usually had. Once the neighbor's issues are resolved, and Susanna says, "Yes, I'm going for it," then we can get the permit. She goes yes-no sometimes.

Once we start building, her life may get messy. She'll have to move out, find somewhere else to live, and time pressure will set in. Most buildings take eight months to a year to finish.

I think it's important for Susanna to have that house. I think she feels, "I have to have this house." Which is great. After all this time, she loves it as much as she did before. It hasn't worn out.

Susanna: Yesterday these two kids stuck a note on my door. It's very funny. It's on this crumpled little piece of paper. It says: "From Sarah and Katie: My friend Katie and I received maps and one point on them was the 'smallest house in the city.' We decided we should visit this landmark. However we are thoroughly disappointed. We feel this house could be a lot smaller. Thank you for your time."

For updates, check www.dwellmag.com.



Afternoon sunlight turns striated dirt into gold, which reflects onto the shimmering pool.

PHOTO BY TERRENCE MOORE

HOUSE OF DIRT

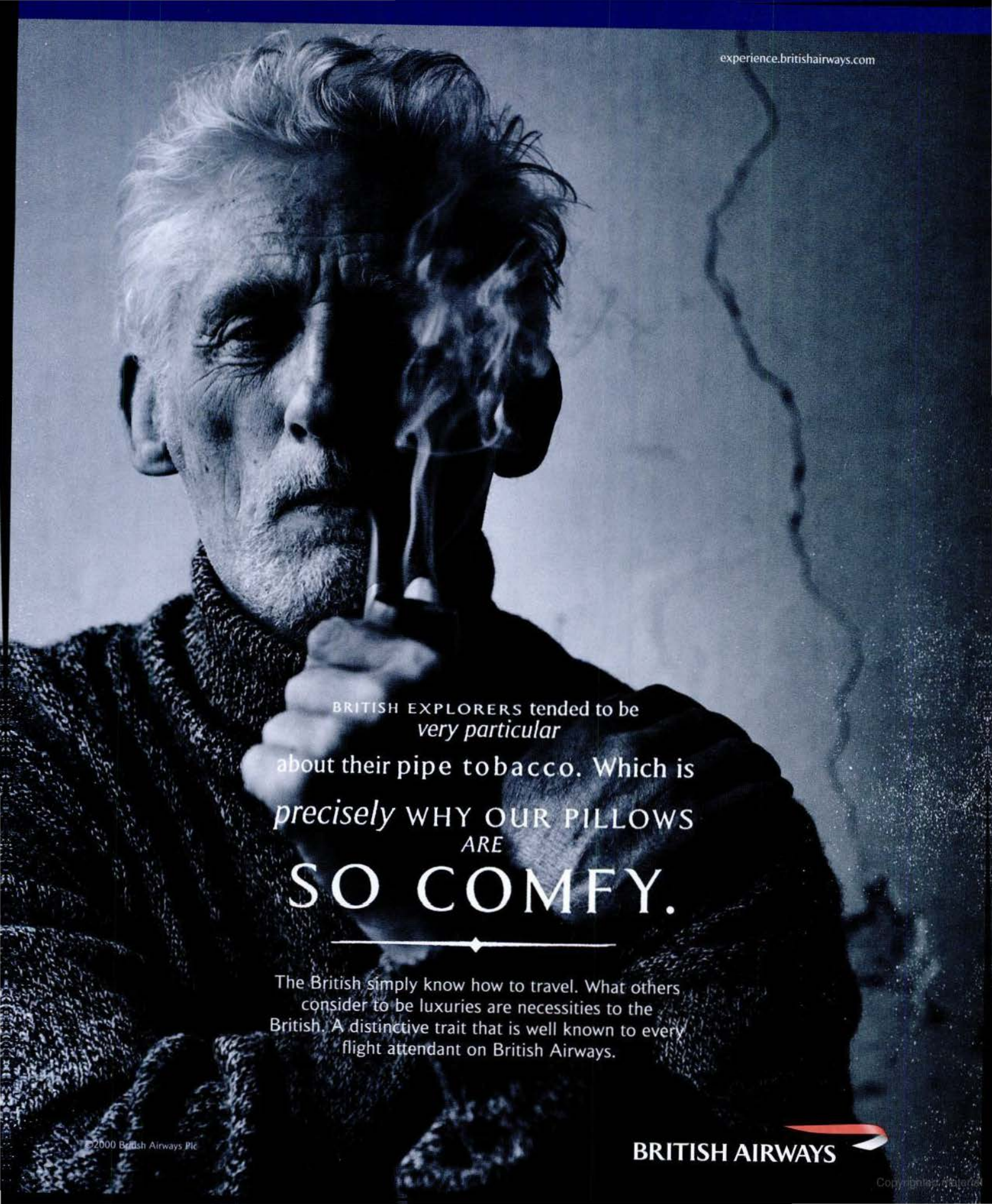
Rammed earth dates back a thousand years, but the Low residential compound, designed by Arizona architect Eddie Jones, couldn't be more contemporary in its design. "The sustainability movement has great intentions," Jones explains, "but design often gets left behind. People recognize the practical properties of sustainable materials but not their aesthetic ones."

This house should dispel any notion that "green" architecture can't embrace beauty and utility. Though neighbors may joke about "The Dirt House," the Low house is as breathtaking as it is efficient. The rough materials—rammed earth walls, rusted and galvanized metal siding, concrete, and glass—are juxtaposed with elegant details like the negative-edge reflecting pool and a narrow skylight detailed with silver leaf that runs the whole length of the house.

Mickey and Linda Low (who divide their time between Scottsdale and a wood-and-glass house they built themselves in the Hamptons) didn't come to Jones asking for rammed earth. But as the architect explains, "The property suggested something indigenous, and the Lows were willing to do something unconventional." Cool in the summer, warm in winter, rammed earth—barely moistened dirt mixed with 5 percent Portland cement—makes perfect sense for Arizona's arid climate. Once the building material was chosen, the scale of the house needed to be addressed. The Lows wanted a large house—7,800 square feet—to accommodate visiting family and friends. That was a challenge. "Even on a 10-acre site a house that size can look massive and bulky," Jones says, so he opted for a "compound" approach. Splitting the house into four smaller structures not only transformed a lot of square footage into more human-scaled components, it also allowed for the house to sit more lightly on the land.

The Lows are so pleased with their house that they are talking with Jones about doing another one. "This house is great for us because it's energy saving, requires no maintenance, and it's architecturally beautiful," Mickey Low enthuses. "Eddie really nailed it on the head." Jones was equally thrilled with the results and has since built a rammed earth house of his own in Phoenix. "I participated in the construction of this house, in the ramming of the dirt, and I've been ramming ever since."

—ALLISON ARIEFF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FREEZE!

And chill. And make ice cubes. And showcase the bottles of designer mineral water. And transmit shopping lists to the electronic grocer. And alert you when the milk goes sour. And check up on what the washer and dryer are doing down in the basement . . . Soon there will be nothing that your refrigerator can't do.

We are trying to remember the first time we heard the words "Sub Zero," the first moment that it occurred to us that one refrigerator could be more prestigious than another. We suspect it was back in the '80s when kitchen appliances began to take on a sheen that had little to do with simple hausfrau pride and a great deal to do with the frisson an investment banker might experience upon first pulling up to the valet stand in his silvery Porsche. Not that women don't covet Sub Zeros, but there is something unaccountably macho about their girth and their bank-vault weight, stainless-steel doors.

The Sub Zero was, and still is, a sport utility vehicle for the kitchen, overengineered and overequipped—two cooling systems—and with more capacity than a brood smaller than, say, the Trapp Family Singers could possibly need. With the Sub Zero and the imitators—from GE, Kitchen Aid, Amana, and the rest—the refrigerator went from being a $600 necessity to a $6,000 status item. Or, as they put it in a recent Kitchen Aid brochure, "Don't think of it as a refrigerator but rather a lifestyle."

While monster refrigerators will roam the earth for some time to come, we're happy to report that certain models—even some Sub Zeros—are getting smaller and more discreet. There is, for instance, a trend we'll call "ubiquitous cooling" in which little refrigerators are secreted in drawers and cupboards all over the kitchen and, occasionally, all over the house.

We look forward to the logical progression of this trend. We would like, for instance, a night table with a cool drawer just for ice cream sandwiches.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW BRUSSO

A NOTE ON OUR EXPERT: Executive chef at New York's Brasserie Les Halles, Anthony Bourdain is also the extremely opinionated author of *Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000). At left, Bourdain—and crustacean friends—emerges from a refrigerator that's Boffi on the outside and Kitchen Aid on the inside, a hybrid created for the American market. The real Italian Boffi, designed by Piero Lissoni, is shown in the small photo below.

Boffi Case System

Price: from $8,000–12,000

This Boffi free-standing, stainless-steel refrigerator, at six feet across and 400 pounds, is, if you can believe it, even bigger than a Sub Zero (which tends to max out at four feet across). But, because it's difficult to import major appliances to the United States, Boffi's European models are unavailable here; instead, they sell Kitchen Aids with an Italian veneer and Lissoni-designed door handles.

Expert Opinion: "I love this," declares Bourdain. "It's enormous, which I like. It looks like a professional unit, which I also like. It's beautifully designed without looking designed. I like stainless steel, which is easy to clean. It looks like it could take a good banging, day in, day out. Simple, austere, all about keeping the maximum amount of product cold in the minimum amount of space."

What We Think: This is not an appliance. This is a spare room. One of the things we've long admired about Boffi is that their designers work with a remarkable palate of materials. Their model kitchens have a grace and subtlety that isn't exactly represented by this monolith. It turns out that there's a reason. The real Italian Boffis are sensual on the outside and wonderfully functional on the inside. But, because this is a Kitchen Aid in Boffi clothing, this box lacks both Lissoni curves and European rigor. ▶

Lighthouse

Electrolux AB Sweden prototype

According to Electrolux AB, Frigidaire's parent company, the Lighthouse is a "cross between an appliance and a table." It will stand waist-high, so the top surface can be used for food preparation or, conceivably, dining. It was developed by the Swedish firm (which is not related to the American vacuum cleaner company of the same name), which believes it's time for major appliances to reflect our personalities.

Expert Opinion: "It's beautiful, it's unique, and it's useless," says Bourdain. "I could only assume that whoever buys this has another fridge where they put their real food. You certainly don't want to have a stained carton of Chinese food in there. Your guests will see it. I can see people actually saying, 'Company is coming. We'll have to empty the Lighthouse, go to the store, and buy some really gorgeous-looking vegetables and nice cute little bottles . . .' The phrase 'slave to the machine' comes to mind."

What We Think: Granted, Bourdain has a point. We could see ourselves buying the milk that comes in the prettiest bottle. But if washing machines and ovens can have windows, why not the refrigerator? Even if it's not so practical, what we appreciate about the Lighthouse is that it represents a radical rethinking of a major appliance's form. The phrase "thinking out of the box" comes to mind.

The Screen Fridge Networked Refrigerator

Frigidaire prototype

This refrigerator of the near future, unveiled at the Kitchen & Bath Industry Show this year, has a touch-screen PC monitor mounted in the door where you'd normally hang your kindergartner's masterpieces. The idea is that you can input your shopping lists and transmit them to your favorite grocery store or service. A bar-code reader would allow users to swipe products directly onto the list.

Expert Opinion: Bourdain is appalled. "The future is here and it sucks," he declares. But that's not all. "This is an invitation to obesity," he continues. "A certain distance between refrigerator and wallet seems like a good idea. I don't want anybody emailing me while I'm leaning over my refrigerator. I don't want to be able to watch TV at the fridge. It seems eerie, frightening, disturbing, and obtrusive, and in every way, something I don't need."

What We Think: We're with the chef on this one. Except that this is the kind of phenomenon we find intriguing. One of the current trends in technology is a thing called "ubiquitous computing," where the microprocessors and the screens begin migrating to objects that aren't primarily computers. We believe turnabout is fair play. We eagerly await the moment when cooling capacity gloms onto objects that aren't primarily refrigerators. We're hoping for a computer that dispenses iced coffee.

Viking Undercounter Refrigerator

Price: $1,480

A diminutive, 36-by-24-inch fridge, also available with a fluted, translucent glass door, the Viking Undercounter is designed to accommodate wine bottles, beverages, and snacks. An outdoor version comes sealed within a stainless-steel cabinet, and a dedicated wine-cooler version has an impressive 50-bottle capacity.

Expert Opinion: "Makes entirely perfect sense to me," says Bourdain. "We use them a lot in the restaurant business." He regards this as an ancillary refrigerator, something to keep by the barbecue area or the poolside cabana. "You can arrange your food by usage—by the stove, or by the cutting board. You can put stuff that's getting old into the lowboy instead of the main fridge, and then, as soon as you open it you remember to use it before it spoils. There are a lot of good reasons, if you can afford it and have the space, to have something like that."

What We Think: While we understand that most people use these babies as second refrigerators, or third refrigerators, we like to envision them as the Miata to the Sub Zero's SUV. We like the idea of refrigerators getting smaller, rather than bigger. We suspect that 6.1 cubic feet of storage is somehow saner than 30. Having a refrigerator that's too small to hold endless containers of moldy yogurt might be a good thing. We could actually envision a life in which this would be our only refrigerator.

Smeg FAB 32 "'50s Style" Fridge Freezer

Price: $2,290–$2,400, (depends on color)

The provocatively named Smeg is an Italian appliance manufacturer that produces some fairly conventional stainless-steel units. Then there's the FAB 32, one of three 1950s-inspired refrigerators. The one we've chosen has a gross capacity of 12 cubic feet, including a 4-cubic-foot freezer. The manufacturer claims the appliance is CFC-free, quiet, and energy efficient.

Expert Opinion: "It looks like a nice mix of form and function," observes chef Bourdain, who regards the Smeg as a decent off-duty refrigerator for a serious cook. "I can see myself using something like this. I'm looking for something that can accommodate my life, the refrigerator that I don't have to work for, you know. Something that's efficient more than anything else." Bourdain explains that freezer capacity is important to him because he has a big batch of stock a few times a year and also needs space for squid ink and crushed lobster shells. "Things like that are very useful to me," he says.

What We Think: With its rounded corners and automotive colors—powder blue, dark red, or pastel green—the Smeg "'50s Style" refrigerators are, perhaps, the first major appliances that use sentiment as a selling point. These are not the biggest, most powerful, or most energy-efficient machines. But they're sweet. The Smeg "'50s Style" fridges are conceptual cousins to the Chrysler PT Cruiser. ■

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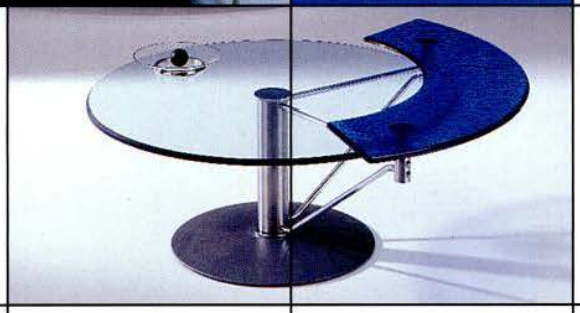

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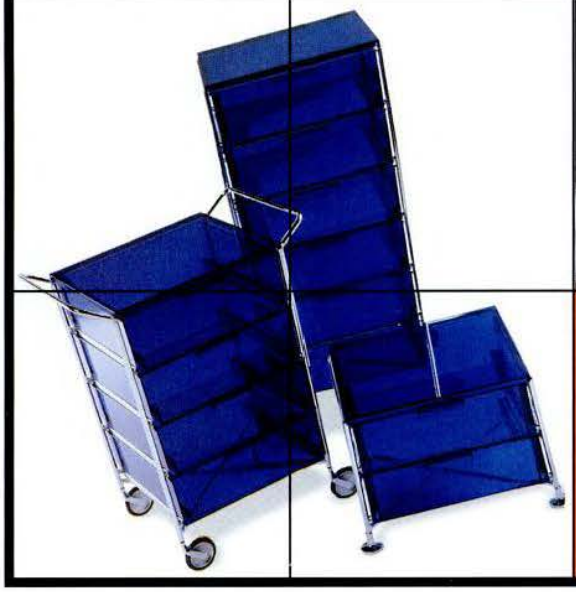

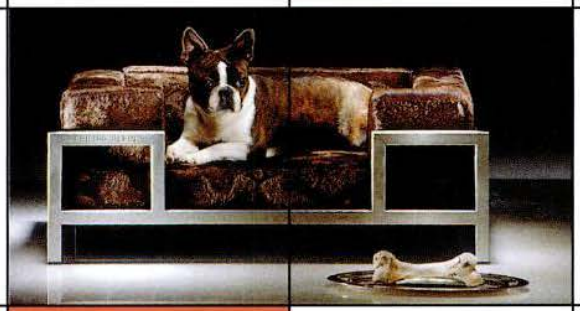

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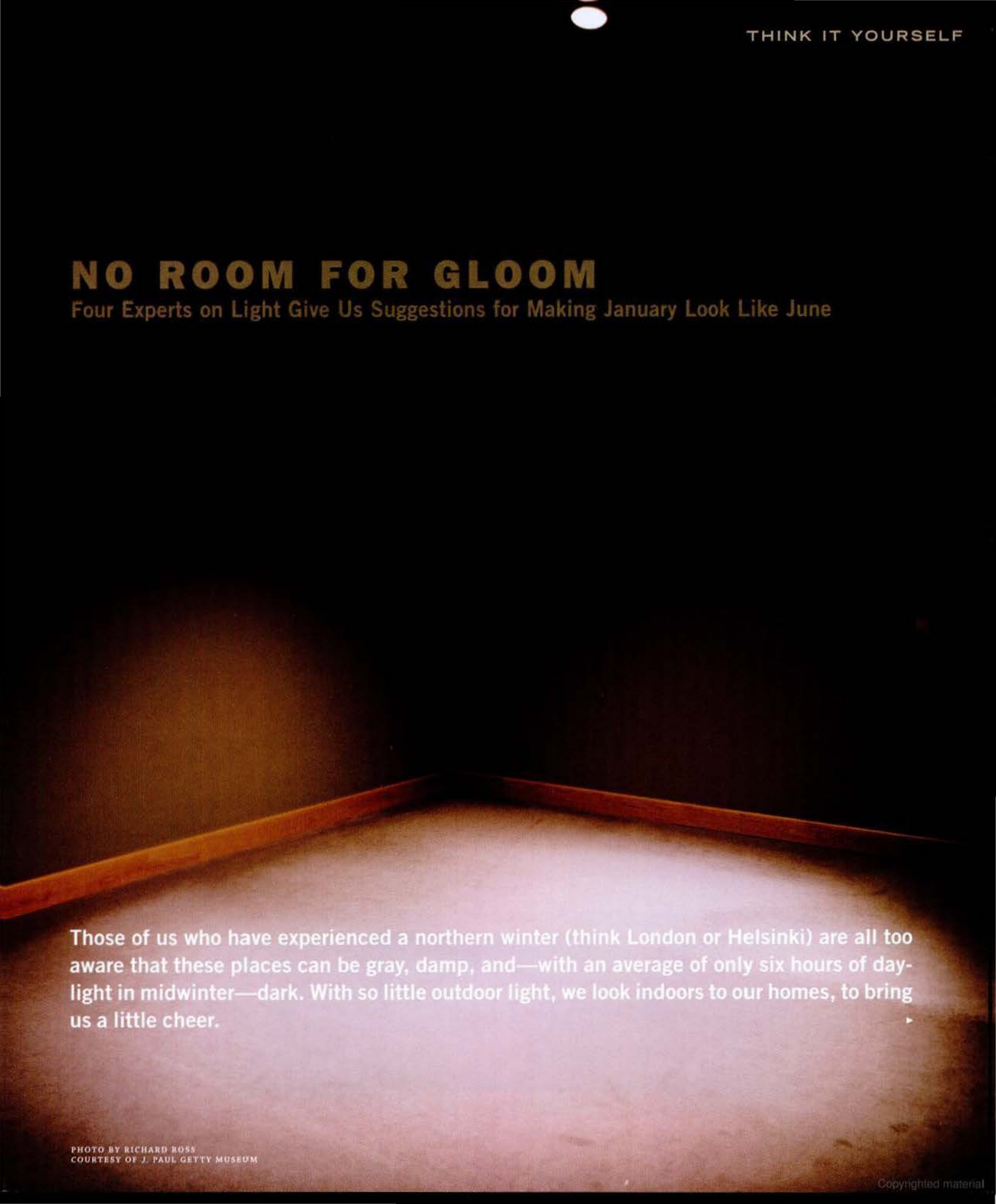
NO ROOM FOR GLOOM

Four Experts on Light Give Us Suggestions for Making January Look Like June



Those of us who have experienced a northern winter (think London or Helsinki) are all too aware that these places can be gray, damp, and—with an average of only six hours of daylight in midwinter—dark. With so little outdoor light, we look indoors to our homes, to bring us a little cheer. ▸

PHOTO BY RICHARD ROSS
COURTESY OF J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM

But as is often the case, particularly in densely packed urban areas, our homes are not much brighter than the twilight world outside. Faced with landlord "off-white" walls that haven't been painted in decades, a lone window that opens up to the air shaft, and a single light source in the middle of the room, many of us feel as if we're doomed to inhabit a Dostoevsky novel until spring.

Wrong, say the experts. There is hope and, best of all, this hope comes in all shapes, sizes, and wattages. We spoke with four people whose lives are intricately tied to the study and profession of light with the hope of gaining some insight into this often-overlooked phenomenon so essential to our sense of well-being.

"People think of lighting as a utility," says Jon DiGesu, the director of communications at Sylvania. "They tend to treat light as something that you simply change when the bulb burns out."

"You really need to mix light sources," says Greg Benke, a San Francisco–based lighting designer responsible for many unique fixtures as well as lighting sets and props for films like *Thelma and Louise*. "In a lot of rooms in newly wired buildings, you'll find just one J-Box in the middle of the room where you are supposed to hang a chandelier or some other fixture intended to light the whole space. It's really unfortunate," Benke adds.

All our experts agreed that mixing not only light sources but the types of light coming from these sources is probably the most important, and economical, thing you can do to alleviate gloom. Ayala Serfaty, founder and president of Aqua Creations, an Israeli lighting manufacturer, concurs: "You should have a lot of light sources—many different lamps, for instance—and each one should give a little bit more light, and in the end you will have enough without being overpowered by any one source."

Benke recommends "a variety of lighting sources set at different intensities and lamps of different colors—lamps that project different colors that can blend to make bright, white light." In order to achieve this goal, the light bulb you choose is crucial.

DiGesu from Sylvania says, "Most people are still quite comfortable with the old-fashioned, 60-watt bulb because the old-fashioned, 60-watt bulb still works quite well." But, he continues, "people often aren't aware that **in the last 10 years there have been a lot of exciting developments in lighting.** Halogen light sources, for example, have become more commercially accessible, as have compact fluorescents. Fluorescents aren't just for your elementary-school lunchroom anymore."

Serfaty agrees . . . but disagrees. "The bulb is obviously important, but I rely more on the covering of lamps," she says. "I am very interested in fabrics and often use silk to tone my lights. I like to use orange, red, whatever color gives me a warm tone. Always, soft and warm light."

Of course, there is a danger in trying to do too much with color toning, and Serfaty says that "when using fabrics to control light, **you have to get a balance.** For instance, if you use blue and orange, you really need to balance those carefully because you don't want the space to become too red."

There are also some simple tricks to lighting a space that can be helpful in detracting from the room gloom. "You might want to try back lighting a plant or spot lighting a piece of art," DiGesu says, "so the entire focus is not on the darkness of the room but rather on the brightness of your art."

Serfaty, on the other hand, prefers not to hide the light source but rather make it the thing that draws attention. "I tend to think of lights as some type of sculpture in the room," she says. "Since your eyes are naturally drawn to light sources, they should be something beautiful to look at."

For some, the lack of light in the winter becomes overwhelming, resulting in what is commonly known as seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. In this case, the lighting source definitely takes on a central role in a space. "The light we use to treat SAD, winter depression, and other mood disorders is about 50 times as bright as the brightest home lighting," says Dr. Raymond Lam, a professor of psychiatry at the University of British Columbia and past president of the Society for Light Treatment and Biological Rhythms.

Most SAD researchers believe that **inadequate light can create a disturbance in brain chemistry,** and while these commercially available light boxes may not be the most attractive option for lighting a room, they have proven effective in treating both SAD and even more routine winter blues.

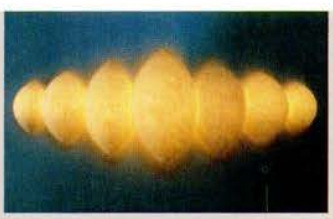
DiGesu is excited about Sylvania's less extreme attempts to confront this problem. "We are now producing some fantastic compact fluorescent bulbs with color temperatures that approximate natural light."

Benke is also happy to see that "there are a number of companies offering bulbs in a variety of color temperatures with warmer lights being closer to red in the color spectrum and cooler lights being more blue." DiGesu suggests mixing the two. "Cool blue lighting is good for task lighting for a bright light on a countertop, coffee table, or desk, and warm colors are better for bringing out woods and fabrics."

By investing a few dollars in the appropriate bulbs and a few more in lamps or fixtures, a newly brightened, gloom-free room can be yours. Buy the right bulb and you might not have to go around feeling like Raskolnikov anymore.

—ANDREW WAGNER

PHOTO COURTESY OF BIO-LIGHT BY ENVIRO-MED (BIO-LIGHT). PHOTO BY ROBERT BIRNBACH (LIGHTBEAM)



The Calma light by Aqua Creations. Ayala Serfaty recommends using fabrics such as silk to achieve a warm and soft tone.

Osram Sylvania Capsylight IR Par38. Jon DiGesu likes halogen light. "It is beautiful white light. It is bright and personal and better for the environment."

Bio-Light Ultra. Dr. Raymond Lam, a professor of psychiatry, says, "The lights we use to treat SAD are 50 times as bright as any home lighting source."

Lightbeam by Greg Benke. Benke prefers to mix lighting sources and intensities in order to give your room the look you want.

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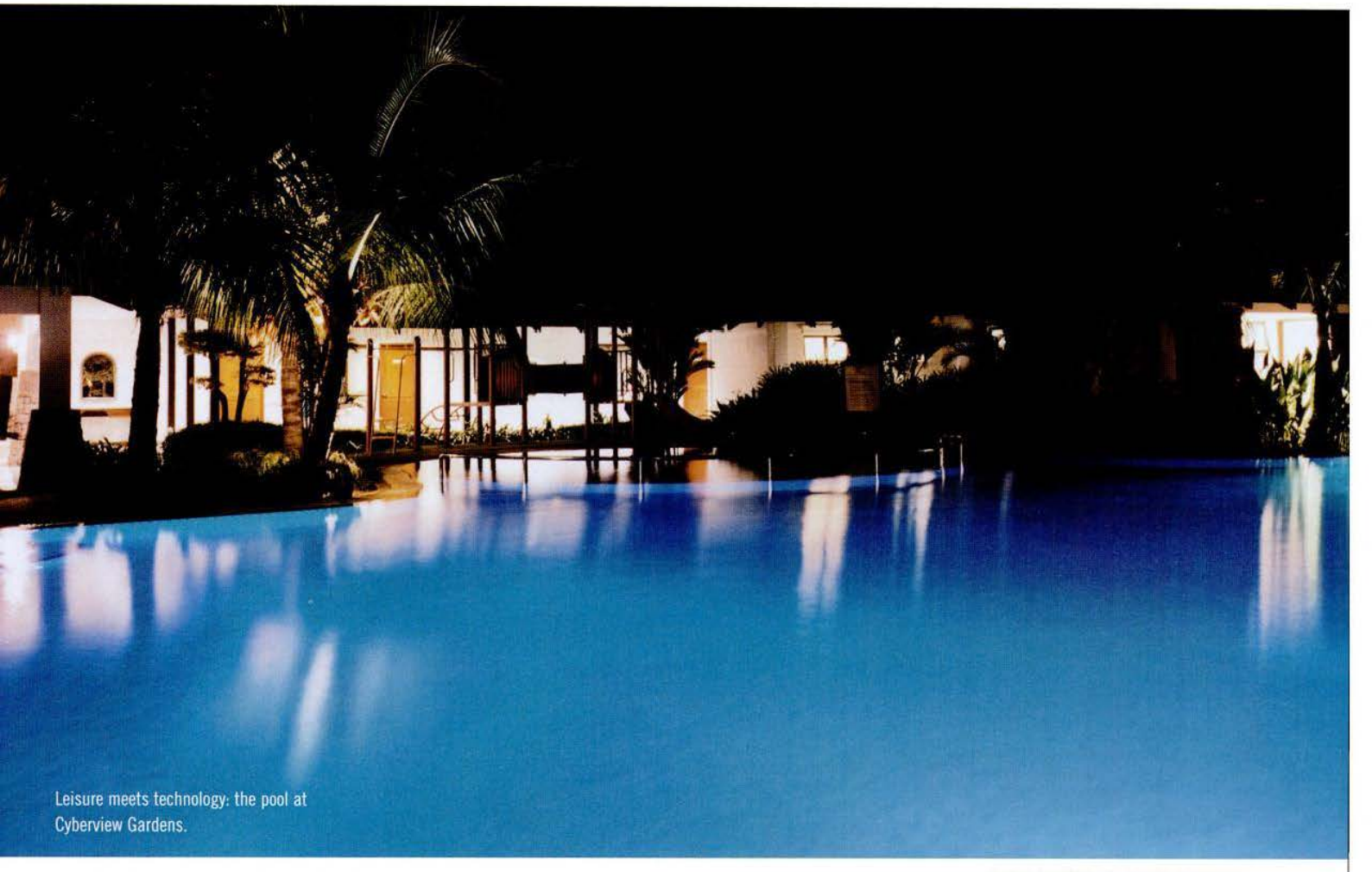


Leisure meets technology: the pool at Cyberview Gardens.

PHOTOS BY MIRANDA LICHTENSTEIN

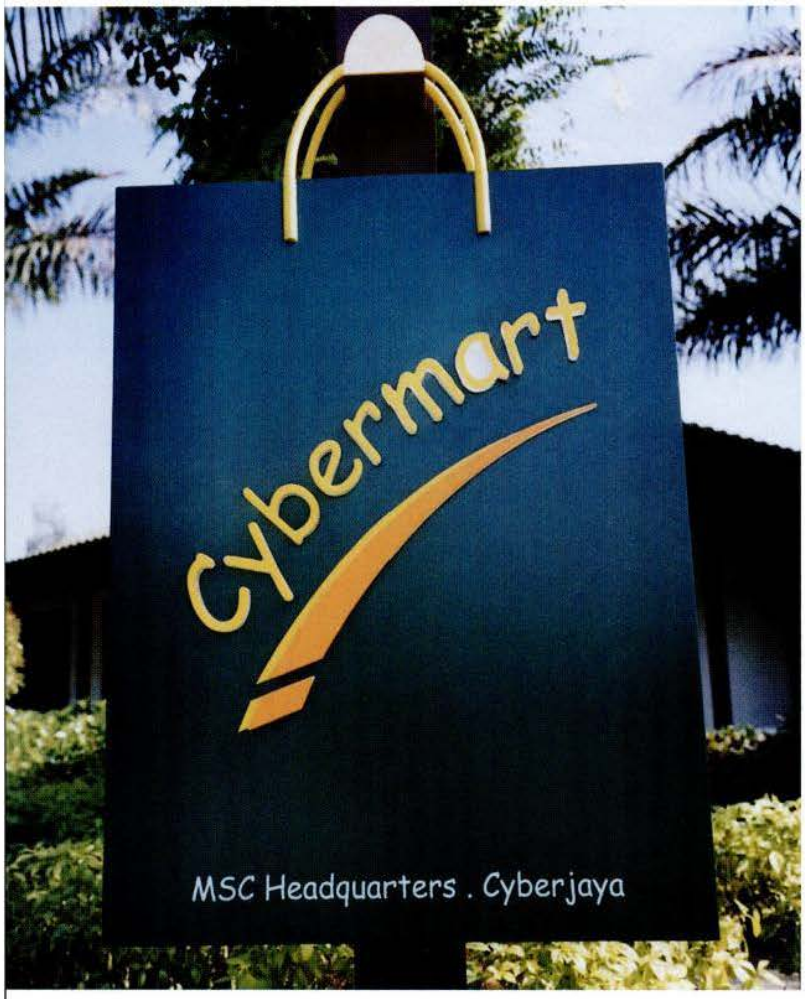
WELCOME TO CYBERVIEW GARDENS

Malaysians want to get noticed, and they are beginning to succeed. They have built the world's tallest building, a new state-of-the-art airport with its own simulated rain forest, and now Cyberjaya, a high-tech urban experiment and home to Asia's tallest sign, which reads "Multimedia Supercorridor." The brainchild of the country's quixotic prime minister, Cyberjaya hopes to attract technology companies that seek to upgrade their Asian presence—and in the process seal the deal for the country's long-coveted developed-nation status.

Cyberjaya appeals to upwardly mobile Malaysians who want to sequester themselves from the social and economic ills plaguing the rest of the country, ills that the economy generated by the new city is ostensibly meant to improve. Future tenants like Simon Pang, an IT technician who takes care of the entire computerized system installed at Cyberview Lodge Resort (the fledgling city's hotel), are enthusiastic; the response by Western companies, however, has yet to ping the servers. The prime minister's flair for xenophobic hyperbole, reaching its pinnacle during the Asian currency crisis, fueled Malaysia's competitive will to acquire first-world lifestyles and affluence, and the West's suspicion.

But Cyberjaya forges ahead, undeterred. The Multimedia University has begun holding classes; Cyberview Gardens, a complex of vaguely Floridian, two-story apartments, houses a handful of tenants; and Cybermart, their version of Kozmo.com, delivers microwave dinners and Häagen-Dazs over the Internet. Future signs of life: the world's *longest* building; a bullet train to Kuala Lumpur; a centralized information hub that will detect everything from a malfunctioning traffic light to a break-in; and Cyberia, the "smart-home" condominium complex and Pang's future residence. Cyberia (pronounced sigh-ba-REE-ya, we were told emphatically) can boast impressive sales and property appreciation long before the arrival of its first tenant.

Cyberia's "smart-home" system features prominently in the development's promotional literature (the phrase "Internet millionaire" is thrown in, too, for good measure) and was one of the deciding factors for Pang. He is genuinely excited about controlling his air conditioning from his office computer and his bedroom lights from his telephone. High-speed Internet



Clockwise from left: A convenience store, Cyberjaya-style; Simon Pang surveys Cyberia's gardens; a model unit for high-tech Cyberia.

access, Web TV, video-on-demand, and a home security system also helped to seal the deal. These technologies, together with Cyberjaya's preponderance of green spaces, make it an attractive alternative to noisy, polluted, crime-addled Kuala Lumpur. On a recent visit to Malaysia, dwell asked Pang some questions about what life would be like in his new smart home.

What brought you to this neighborhood? What do you like or dislike about it?
I've been living in an area near Cyberjaya called Puchong, which consists mainly of middle-class Chinese and Malaysians. What attracted me to Cyberjaya is its great potential for being the most high-tech town in Malaysia. But even though it's so high tech, the natural environment is still maintained.

How does Cyberjaya compare to the town where you used to live?
Fewer traffic jams and less noise pollution.

What made you choose this apartment?
High-speed Internet access, and it's close to my office, plus it just seems suitable for me.

Do you rent or own? What is your mortgage payment?
My mortgage is RM650 (U.S. $175) per month. The purchase price is between RM155,000 and RM250,000 (U.S. $40,000–$65,000), depending on the size and which floor it's on.

How do you spend your leisure time?
I am at work for most of the day, but when I am at home, I usually either watch TV, play my guitar, or go out with friends.

Do you imagine that Cyberia will be more conducive to community living than what you previously experienced?
I would guess so . . .

How do you get to work? How long is your commute? Do you work at home?
My car is my main transport. It takes me about 20 minutes to reach my office. I would love to work at home but that's not a common practice in Malaysia—yet.

—JEFFREY LAIB

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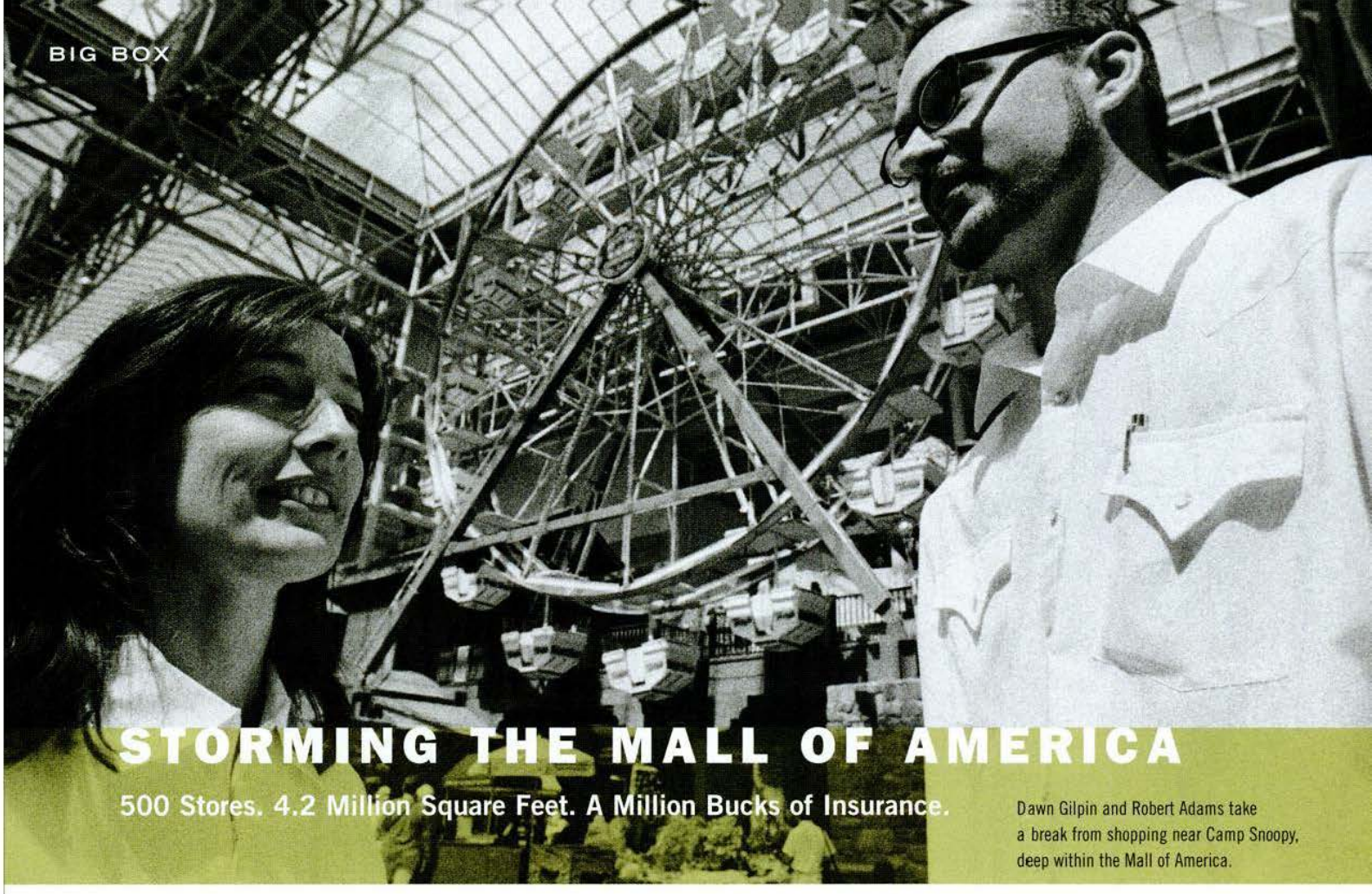

STORMING THE MALL OF AMERICA

500 Stores. 4.2 Million Square Feet. A Million Bucks of Insurance.

Dawn Gilpin and Robert Adams take a break from shopping near Camp Snoopy, deep within the Mall of America.

Mall of America attracts more visitors annually than Disney World, Graceland, and the Grand Canyon combined. The mall has more than 11,000 employees and nearly 20,000 parking spaces. At 4.2 million square feet, it is the largest fully enclosed retail and entertainment complex in the United States. "To really appreciate the significance of that," explains architect Robert Adams, "you need to have lived in Minneapolis in the dead of January."

dwell recently sent the husband-and-wife team of Robert Adams and Dawn Gilpin, both architects and instructors at the University of Minnesota, to Mall of America in search of good design. For them to visit the mall with a photographer, dwell was required to take out a hefty insurance retainer. When the trio arrived, they were routinely shooed out of store after store once salespeople spotted the cameras. Even the notepads Adams and Gilpin carried were cause for concern. "We'd be writing down info and salespeople would approach us, not out of curiosity but out of sheer paranoia. I guess they thought we were industrial spies." On their first trip to the mall, they managed to outrun the mall security (who are trained in "verbal judo") long enough to be photographed at Camp Snoopy. "We were amazed at how many people had planned their vacations around this mall!" marveled Gilpin.

Later, they made a second, camera-free visit to better focus on their assignment. (No easy task: According to the mall's promotional info, if a shopper spent 10 minutes browsing at every store, it would take them more than 86 hours to complete their visit.) Fortified with egg rolls and Big Gulps from Panda Express, the two tackled the more than 500 stores, where they discovered the following well-designed items:

1 / Wusthof knives, Williams Sonoma **$139.95**

These have a really great weight to them. They get better over time with sharpening and use. A good knife is a mandatory kitchen tool, and anything that has a good weight to it lets you do good work with it. We didn't compare these with other knives; we have Wusthof knives at home and really think they are a good brand. The more you sharpen them, the better they get. Robert's mother has one she's been using for about 15 years. It's getting thin but it's durable, and it still works great.

2 / Mesh soda siphon, Williams Sonoma **$46**

This glass bottle is used to prepare soda water and fancy cocktails. You just add carbon dioxide and it produces carbonated water instantly. These have been around forever. It seems like a specialized object, but you can use it every day. It's really beautiful, a glass canister sheathed in aluminum ▸

PHOTO BY KERI PICKETT

PHOTOS BY DWIGHT ESCHLIMAN

mesh. There's a sort of performative element to using it. You can imagine it just sitting on the counter, just an intriguing artifact, but it's actually really useful.

3 / Poulan PRO lawn mower, Sears **$389.99**

This mower is great to look at and it comes with great literature, including "The 12 Steps to Mowing Success." It's marketed like a muscle car, with features like an overhead cam engine, rear-wheel multispeed transmission, six drive speeds. It has a dome mulching deck, three-in-one cutting system, and a one-lever cutting height adjustment that we thought was pretty great.

Unlike most mowers, the bag that collects clippings actually has a structure; it doesn't just flop behind it.

4 / Lawn-aerating sandals, Brookstone **$15**

We chose these to go with the Poulan lawn mower. It's a pair of green shoes that, like a bed of nails, have three-inch spikes coming out of the bottom; you strap them onto your regular shoes. They're sort of like Teva sport sandals, only with spikes. They punch tiny holes in your lawn to let in air and speed up water absorption so your lawn grows better. If your soil has high clay content, like ours does, it perforates the soil for you so you're not bringing up huge chunks of soil (you hope). We pictured ourselves walking back and forth across the lawn, cocktail in hand, wearing these crazy sandals.

5 / Birdcage, Mi Casa **$130**

Mi Casa is a store that smells like eucalyptus and jasmine—way too many fragrances—but they had one thing there we liked: a birdcage. The store and this item are particular to Minneapolis, I think. The birdcage is a six-foot cylinder made out of wire mesh. The top/lid, about 16 inches in diameter, is made out of the guard top from a fan. Dwight Carlson, from South Minneapolis, produces these in his garage and then consigns them to Mi Casa.

It's a kind of conjugate object that uses industrial wire and this fan element I mentioned. All the hinging is made out of galvanized metal that looks like the material they use to band bird legs. It's really well made, a nice-looking object.

It's evidence of the local, regional economy at work.

Something that is quite overwhelming about being at the Mall of America is that you realize people are developing their identity within this space and then you look around and everything is so much the same. To walk into Mi Casa and see something handmade was refreshing. This birdcage was handmade, idiosyncratic, not mass-produced—unlike just about everything else we saw. ■

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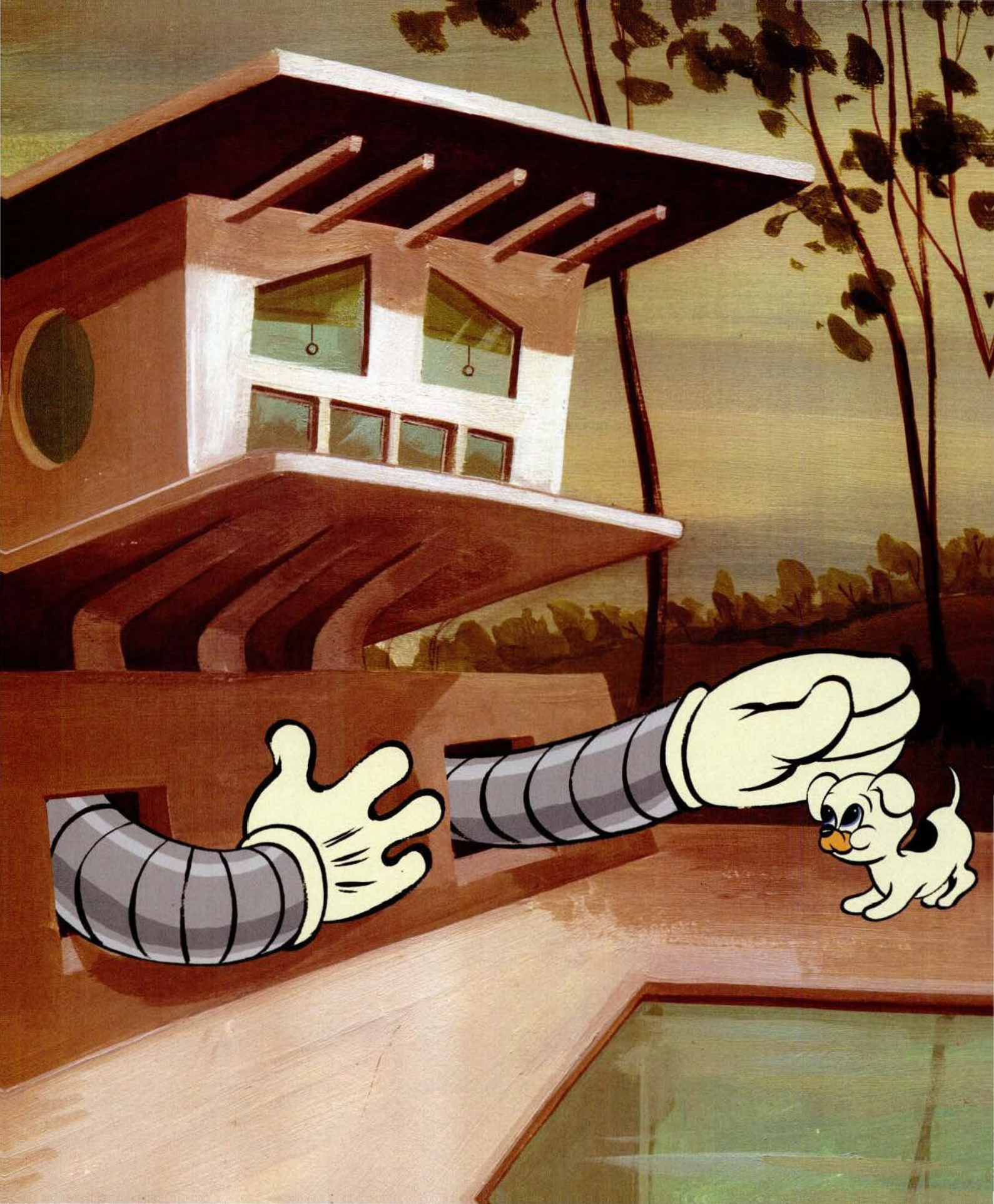


THE SENSITIVE HOUSE

In the Future, You Won't Need a Smart House. You'll Need One That's Able to Express Its Feelings.

STORY BY BRUCE STERLING
ILLUSTRATION BY ZOHAR LAZAR

You hear a strange noise in the night, you get out of bed, stumble to the wall switch, and turn on the light. It's just the cat.

But imagine living in a futuristic "smart house." Here's your algorithm: 1) Power up Windows-for-House. 2) Wait for system boot-up. 3) Grasp mouse, click "Start." 4) Go to "Programs." 5) Select "House Lighting System." 6) Wait for application to load. 7) Pull down menu for "Bedroom." 8) Click "Illuminate." 9) Get error message: "No bulb installed." 10) Click over to the automated "help" Web site. 11) Light-bulb manufacturer incompatibility requires a patch. 12) Select nearest downloading site. Begin download. 13) Receive banner ad for light-bulb e-tailer. 14) Receive pop-up screen demanding you upgrade your browser.

You are foully trapped in digital limbo, a very maelstrom of bad design. You creep downstairs (in the dark) for a restorative snack, tripping over the cat. Open smart-house refrigerator. Inside, there's a sinister cacophony: a verminous eruption of semi-sentient consumer goods.

Clustered there in freezing darkness, they've been stealthily comparing data on your most intimate consumption patterns.

Remove a quart of milk. There's a Chernobyl-like chain reaction. The fridge scans the bar code as the carton leaves. It e-mails the grocery dot-com and a delivery service. The broken coffee maker, misinterpreting a burst of e-mail, jumps into action with a vague burning stench.

"Smart house" is a dead idea. Computers in 2000 aren't one whit "smarter" now than they were in 1965. It's not about smarts—it's about *sensors*. And not a cruel automation of domestic routine that jerks you around in your own kitchen like a cubicle Dilbert. The crying need is for a house that's in full, sensitive touch with its own inherent house-ness.

The so-called smart house is a harebrained butler turned officious tyrant. It's every bit as cozy as dwelling in software shrink-wrap. What the future needs, what it is struggling to bring to fruitful life, is not a machine-for-living but an organism-that-functions. Not a mechanical brain, but a house with soul. A house with heart. A house that feels, sees, touches, smells, and tastes.

"Are you OK? Can you stand up?" Those are the first things you'd ask a blacked-out drunk, and he might even respond. But no smart house will ever answer such basic questions. At the very least, your house should tell you everything that a house inspector would properly ask of it. Is the foundation sound? Do all the load-bearing members hold up? Where are the walls sweating, where is rot slowly setting in, where are the stress cracks in the plastic and concrete? Is the stucco cracking, are shingles missing, is mortar crumbling, are windows leaking? A dog's mute scratching could tell you this much—but no house can.

Where are the sunlight and the prevailing wind? Are the ventilators working properly? Today's crude smoke alarms are a clumsy, numb kind of house-awareness. Why does the house begin its response with a piercing scream and a deadly torrent of smoke? A finer house, aware in-and-out with its subtle and delicate sensors, would smell everything 24-7, responding with timely civility. A home should never expose the people it shelters to the sick air of exhaled formaldehyde, plasticizers and varnishes, or the cancerous reek of benzene, toluene, xylene. It should sense the pollen count, the mold count, the ozone . . . It should just . . . *feel* all that, all the time.

Is the gas leaking? Anywhere? Even a little bit? A gas leak could kill you, and even your neighbors. Why don't you know?

What's in the water? The house should fully engage with that vital flow. It should never let its own taps sicken your children.

Is there any dark domestic mystery worse than the sewer pipes? A backed-up toilet is a Freudian catastrophe, yet a house never lets on about clogs, corrosion, or tree roots until it's far too late.

Why does the postbox allow itself to be robbed by strangers or bashed in by kids? Why don't doors complain aloud when pipe-wrenched by moron burglars?

The house should tend to the house plants. It should measure their performance and sense when they need light and water. A house today is freely invaded by mice, fleas, moths, roaches, dust mites. A more sensitive house would sniff out these unwelcome guests, sense their habits and location, and deal with the issue gently but effectively.

Information cables and power cables—these are the vital arteries of every modern dwelling, but they are silently entombed in brick, wood, and plaster like the Cask of Amontillado. The interior of your own walls is less known to you than the far side of the moon—because you could summon up a detailed picture of the Jules Verne Crater on a Web site, pronto.

Which devices are using power, and when, and how much does it cost you? Capitalizing on your patsy ignorance, many home devices suck power like leeches even when "turned off." They know they've cut you out of the loop, and they rob you at leisure in your very own home.

This is not at all about "computers." It's about home design, how we live, see, and feel. It's ubiquitous computing, coming out of the glass cyber-box and into a living world of space and structure. That is something the 20th century never imagined, something truly new in the world. The people who can make this tactile, soulful, and relevant—really civilized, really worth living in—they will be Modernism 2.0.

Bruce Sterling is a science fiction writer and journalist from Austin, Texas. His most recent novel is called Zeitgeist.

LEVITATION

In the Tradition of Lautner's Chemosphere, Two L.A. Architects Build a House That Very Nearly Floats.

STORY BY DAVID HAY
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD HIDO

PROJECT: THE JAIME RESIDENCE
ARCHITECT: ESCHER GUNEWARDENA ARCHITECTS
LOCATION: PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

The Chemosphere House (above), built in 1960 by visionary architect John Lautner and photographed by Julius Shulman, inspired the gravity-defying posture of Escher GuneWardena's house for the Jaime family (left).

The very first people to be shocked by architects Frank Escher and Ravi GuneWardena's supremely minimalist house, floating in space high above Pasadena, were the couple who commissioned it. Bryce Jaime, 35, had been dreaming about "a rustic, cabin-style house," but his wife, Rochelle, a Montessori schoolteacher, persuaded him to go for something more up-to-date. Yet, even Rochelle, who admits to instructing the architects—"I wanted lots of air, lots of white, and I wanted it extremely modern"—was taken aback when she saw the plans for a futuristic box perched atop two massive towers.

Had the Jaimes known the two 40-year-old architects better, perhaps they wouldn't have been surprised. Soft-spoken and cerebral, this pair's highly rational ideas about architecture are unusual in Los Angeles, where artistic heroes such as Frank Gehry, who put a premium on the lyrical exteriors of their buildings, are routinely worshiped.

"We don't design something because we think it's fashionable. Not at all," declares Escher, who, with pale complexion, unkempt black hair, and a utilitarian polo shirt, appears too intense for his thin frame.

Referring to their philosophy as "poetic rationalism," Escher and GuneWardena favor geometric, structure-based design. They play around for hours with the volumes of an interior space—eliminating what they regard as nonfunctioning in-between spaces—before they even consider the outside of a building.

"This ensures that even the smallest of houses will seem expansive," says GuneWardena, whose pinstriped shirttails tend to hang outside his pants and whose quick smile masks his seriousness. Partners in the office and at home, Escher and GuneWardena are both obsessed with cost-effectiveness; for instance, they persuaded the Jaimes to lower the ceiling height on their house so that patio doors and windows available at Windowmaster could be used.

Of course, Bryce Jaime, a senior networking engineer at Paramount Pictures, didn't know any of this when, in 1996, he telephoned the pair for advice. All he remembered was that 11 years earlier, GuneWardena, born in Sri Lanka (as were both the Jaimes), had designed a house for his uncle in San Diego.

Jaime had seen a steep hillside lot in Pasadena for sale, one that fulfilled his primary requirement: "I always wanted to look out over a golf course." Jaime hoped that, ▸

The Architects

Frank Escher and Ravi GuneWardena

More often than not, architects' ideas for the future don't pan out. Frank Escher and Ravi GuneWardena are reminded of this every day, looking out from their fifth-floor office in the rundown, MacArthur Park section of Los Angeles. A massive, woven concrete lattice—part of an exterior that wraps around and supports this 13-floor high rise—stretches the full length of their windows. Built in 1964 by the Cement Institute of America, the building, particularly its exterior, showcased an expressive, futuristic use of concrete. Unfortunately, this tower is now worse for wear and mostly empty. Not that these architects are troubled by their eerie office tower. They relish its unconventional use of a material whose normal home is the roadbed of the American freeway.

Moreover, they consider the high rise to be yet another example of a rich tradition of architectural experimentation in Los Angeles—one that still inspires them. Escher, the editor of the book *John Lautner, Architect* (Taschen, 1994), often jumps into his worn Mercedes to lecture about Lautner to groups of design aficionados. GuneWardena, who studied under Craig Ellwood, happily volunteers as a docent on modernist house tours.

Nonetheless, it's the future that truly excites them, often leading to heated discussions because each approaches design from a different starting point.

Escher, a graduate of Zurich's renowned Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, "always has to have a set of rules to define some decision or choice," according to GuneWardena. On the other hand, GuneWardena, raised in suburban Los Angeles, admits to being "more comfortable with the idea of arbitrary choice when it comes to designing something."

But, working together for five years, the two have discovered a way of reconciling their approaches. It helps that both are committed to a structure-based concept of design. "In German there are two words that describe what the architect does," explains Escher. "One is *entwerfen,* which implies that the construction of the house, the site, and so on are all part of the process. The other, imported from the

The Jaime family room (top, left) is at the west end of the house and mostly furnished with modern classics and near classics. The coffee tables were designed by Charles and Ray Eames. The chair in the foreground is an homage to Eero Saarinen's Tulip chair and the armchair in the background may or may not have been designed by Kem Weber. The area rug is from IKEA.

The living room (top, right) is at the east side of the house and has a trim Eames Sofa Compact (1954), a Swan Chair by Arne Jacobsen, and a couple of "marshmallow" footstools by designer A. C. Fernandez, who works with Escher and GuneWardena.

English, is *design,* which means simply to give form." GuneWardena mentions that *design,* in German, has a pejorative connotation. "It's like 'style-making.' "

Their distaste for the notion of architecture as style makes them apprehensive about the public perception of the Jaime house. "We're a little worried it will be accepted because it resembles things that are modernist in style," says Escher.

"Because of that," adds GuneWardena, "we are concerned that, like any style, it might go out of vogue."

In vogue or out of vogue would be equally objectionable to a pair of architects who want to ensure that the latest in construction technology will determine new design solutions, not vice versa.

like a surfer who spends hours surveying the ocean, he could improve his golf game by gazing out, day after day, at 18-hole links. Actually, standing on the road above their future home site, he and Rochelle couldn't see much besides the Brookside Golf Course. The site plunged so precipitously from the pavement that Jaime asked himself, "Could you even build here?" In desperation, he reached out to GuneWardena.

The client's love of golf should have been a tip-off for the less athletically inclined architects that their highly evolved ideas about design might not be immediately understood, let alone embraced. The Jaimes, who had come from Sri Lanka in the late 1980s in pursuit of a better life, proved to have highly conventional ideas about the house that would fulfill that goal. They wanted, all separate and enclosed, a formal dining room, four bedrooms, a family room, and, of course, a powder room by the front door. By contrast, the architects' conception involved "simply one big space with some wall partitions."

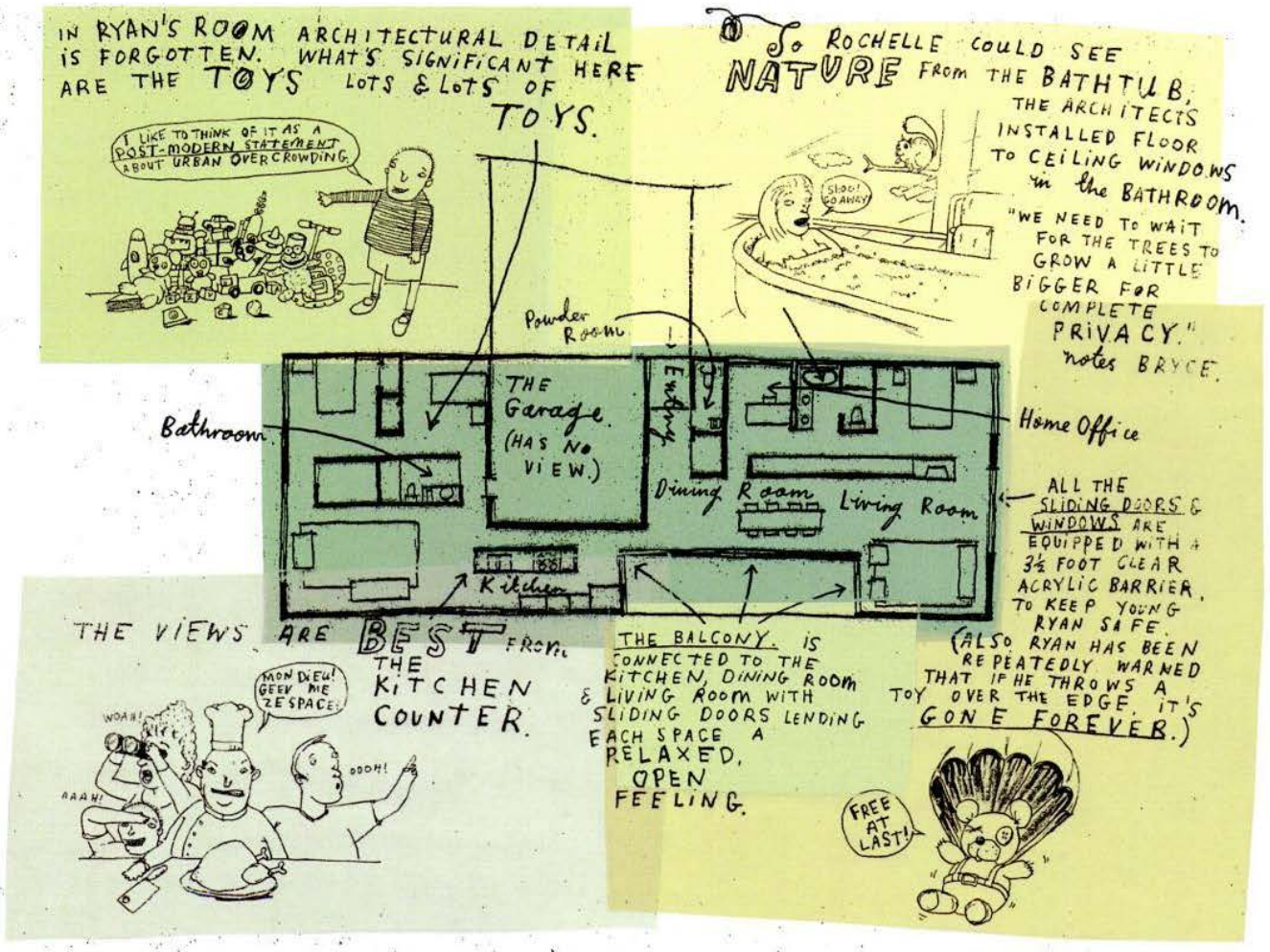
"But," says GuneWardena, "we had to acknowledge that was how *we* would like to live, and even if we'd convinced them to live 'our way,' they would have gone back to the way they were used to living."

Escher and GuneWardena decided the best way to nudge the Jaimes into their way of thinking was to give them a quick lesson in Los Angeles modernism. The subsequent tour included a visit to the Chemosphere House, a flying saucer–like home designed by John Lautner in 1960. Also on a steep hillside, and owned by the German publisher Benedikt Taschen, the Chemosphere is being restored under the guidance of GuneWardena and Escher, who administers the John Lautner Archives.

The strategy seemed to work. "They really got us wanting to build something different," Jaime recalls. "So when I talked to Frank, I said, 'I wish we could do something that nobody's even thought of before.' "

But what brought the clients squarely into the architects' camp was the 71 percent downward-sloping site. To erect a house on such a slope required imaginative engineering, given the limited budget. The unique structural solution at which the architects arrived ensured that the final design would be anything but conventional.

Enter Andrew Nasser, an engineer known for his work on tunnels, high-rise buildings, and Hollywood-specific problems such ▸



Too Modern for Pasadena

The residents of this Pasadena neighborhood have a clear model for the house of the future: It's the heavy-set, Spanish-style mini-mansion that stands right next to the Jaime house. The site has been carved out of the hillside, and a massive retaining wall keeps its courtyard and pool from sledding downward.

Escher and GuneWardena had little inkling of this community standard when, in May 1997, they requested four minor variances to the conditions laid out in the Pasadena Planning Department's Hillside Development Standards.

The architects' requests automatically triggered a public hearing, allowing members of the Linda Vista-Annandale community to enter the planning process. To community members fiercely opposed to Escher and GuneWardena's design, nothing typified its radical approach more than the exposure of the house's underside. Treated by the architects as another elevation, it has the same cement panel cladding as the walls. Among the many changes demanded by local critics was the addition of a 30-foot wall running from the bottom edge of the house to the ground, affording the appearance of greater stability. Failing that, they insisted that space be enclosed, creating a multistory home.

The critics' suggestions, made during a series of public hearings, were dismissed by the planning officer. The only limitation imposed on the architects was a reduction in square footage. The building permit was finally issued more than two years later, in October 1999, and the house was completed in June 2000.

as the giant snake in the movie *Anaconda*.

"Normally, architects come to me with their designs already done, but they came to me first," says Nasser, who in his early days advised Eero Saarinen and later, Lautner. "[Escher and GuneWardena] wanted to know what was the best and cheapest way to support a house on a steep hillside."

Nasser's advice was simple: a structural system with the least amount of contact with the hillside. The Chemosphere House has a single pillar holding it aloft, but, the engineer reasons, "This limits your design alternatives too much." He suggested a strategy for the Jaimes' home: erect a bridge, two towers rooted deep in the hillside supporting a pair of steel beams upon which the house would securely balance.

Engineering considerations aside, the Jaimes' limited budget was very much a factor. "It's not hard to design a fantastic house if you have a budget of $300 a square foot," maintains Escher. "But to design one that is accessible to anyone who wants to buy the [architectural] equivalent of IKEA furniture—that was something we were really interested in."

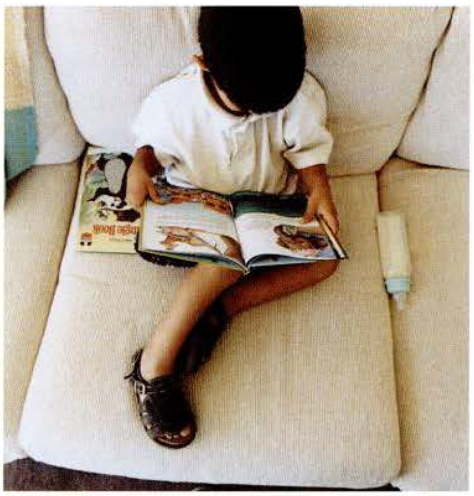
The bridge scheme, calling for eight underground caissons at $8,000 apiece, was relatively economical. (By contrast, the Spanish-style house next door, with almost the same size floor plan, necessitated 27 caissons.) In theory, a budget of $100 a square foot was possible. But the delays imposed on the project by a two-year wait for permits from the city of Pasadena, and the precision with which the house needed to be detailed, led to a final cost of $180 a square foot, or $425,000.

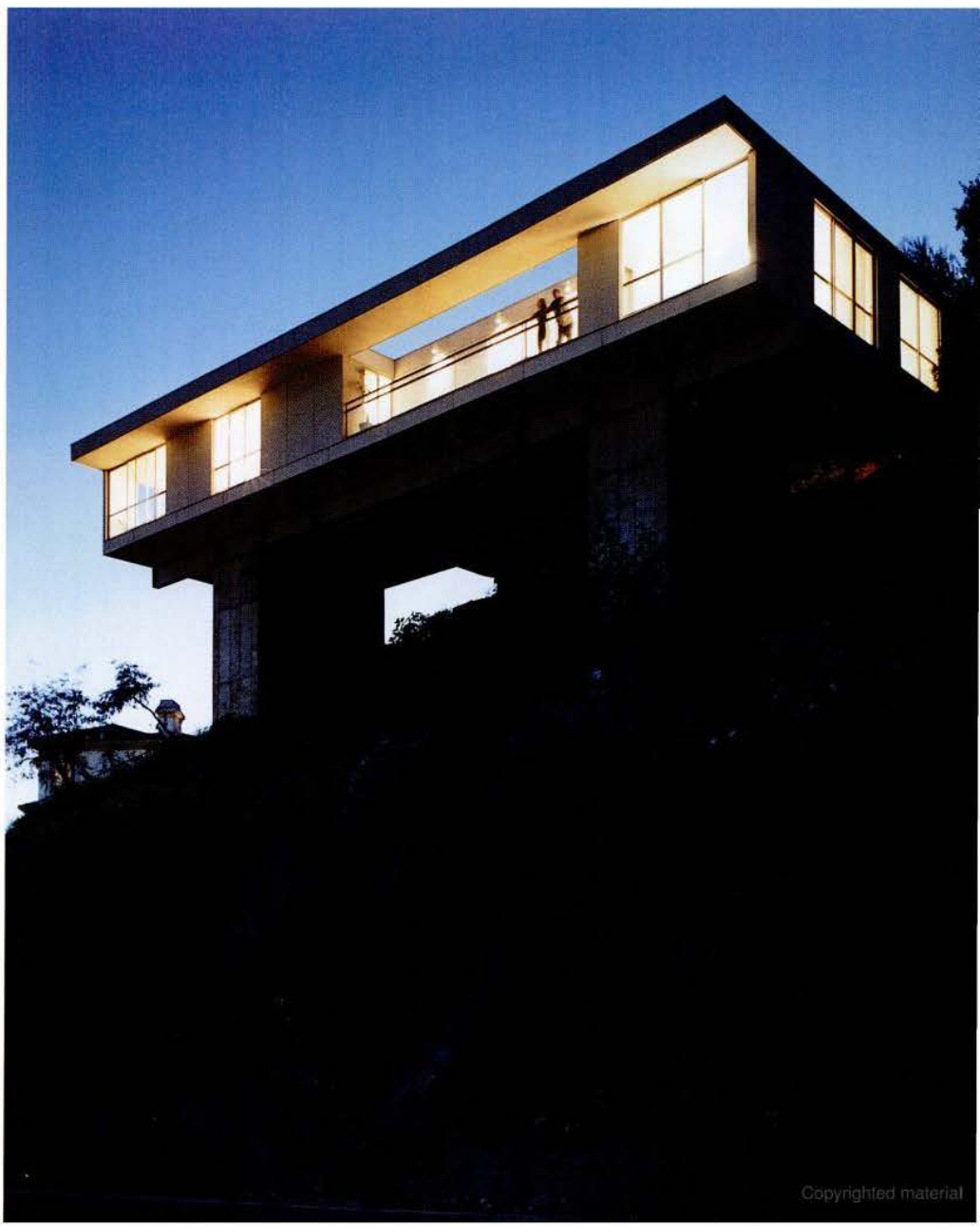
The bridge supports a rectangular floor plan, measuring 84 by 30 feet. The architects took great pleasure in making the most of this box shape. By now they had reached a compromise with the Jaimes. "They realized they didn't need 'separate spaces,' only spaces which could be used for different purposes, and that it was OK to have all the living spaces open and connected," according to GuneWardena. In fact, the interior reflects Escher and GuneWardena's obsession with mathematically precise layout.

To ensure that the floating quality of this rectangular space station would always be evident, the architects prevented views of the exterior walls from being blocked by interior walls or doors. So, no room along the house's perimeter walls is fully enclosed. ►

Ryan (top, right), at ease on the family room sofa, regards the 1,965-square-foot house as his personal playground.

The Jaime house (below) rests on a "bridge," two massive concrete towers sunk into the hillside topped with a pair of steel beams. Like all the exterior walls, the underside of the house is clad with cement panels.





The only fully enclosed spaces are deep within the interior of the house: the powder room, a laundry, a second bathroom, and, of course, the garage—which, artfully placed in the middle of the house, separates the eastern, more formal, end of the house from the western section, which contains the kitchen, family area, and children's bedrooms.

The other design concern, especially for the Jaimes, was how best to frame the extraordinary views. Of vital importance was situating the east and west windows at either end of the house so that from, say, the kitchen counter, the family could take in two different mountain ranges.

The result of all this sometimes-fidgety geometry is to give the 1,965-square-foot house (plus 400-square-foot garage) an expansiveness way beyond that of a traditional home of the same dimensions. When the Jaimes moved from their highly compartmentalized, three-bedroom house in the outer suburb of Tijunga, they were daunted by their new home's spaciousness. "At first it was hard, walking from one end to the other, but we got used to it," remarks Rochelle as if she had moved to San Simeon.

From the outside, the house is less subtle. Although its sharp edges are softened by the gray-white texture of its Cempanel siding, the rectangular box appears almost too delicate to warrant the massive supporting towers. In contrast to the Chemosphere House—a space station–like form poised for a graceful liftoff—the light-filled Jaime house, with its heavy foundations, is conspicuously earthbound. The outcome—in which proportions seem somewhat unbalanced—attests to Escher and GuneWardena's preference for design based on structure more than aesthetics.

It's the inside that the Jaimes respond to most. And respond they have, taking delight in every inch of space. They had barely moved in before a variety of relatives appeared from Sri Lanka to stay. Parties started happening. The floating box was instantly bursting with life.

There's only one problem. Life in the house with the fabulous golf course view is simply too hectic. "I haven't had time to play golf," laments Bryce Jaime, who confesses that his handicap is on its way up.

David Hay writes about the impact of design on our daily lives. A playwright and journalist, he lives in Los Angeles.

The dining area (facing page), like all the major rooms in the house, opens to the balcony.

The master bedroom (top, right) is small and minimal in its décor. Rochelle Jaime and two-year-old Ryan (below) dine at a counter made from IKEA cabinets topped with a marble slab. The sliding doors, like all the glass doors in the house, are from a chain store called Windowmaster.

PROJECT: HOUSE 00
ARCHITECT: BRETT ZAMORE
LOCATION: HOUSTON, TEXAS

Artist Burt L. Long Jr. and painter Joan Batson by the side door of their 950-square-foot double-shotgun house in Houston's Fifth Ward. Abandoned for years, the house was restored by a Rice University architecture student, Brett Zamore.

Architect Jerry Waters works in the kitchen while his wife, Anna, and daughters linger by the custom-made stainless-steel outdoor dining table beside their new 600-square-foot home in Mollala, Oregon.

PROJECT: JEDDELOH GUEST HOUSE
ARCHITECT: JERRY WATERS
LOCATION: MOLLALA, OREGON

SABA

STORY BY KARRIE JACOBS PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBBIE MCCLARAN

WHICH ONE OF THESE IS THE HOUSE OF THE FUTURE?

What if the house of the future were not the kind of technological showcase that you visit at the World's Fair, a house designed to eliminate life's minor inconveniences? What if the house of the future were intended to solve a real problem?

Brett Zamore loves Houston. Sure, after five years here, he's still tooling around with Connecticut plates on his Volkswagen GTI, but the 29-year-old graduate of Rice University's architecture program has a passion for his adopted city. To understand, you have to go with him to the Alabama Ice House, where they serve long-neck beers wrapped in napkins and, on Friday nights, free barbecued hot dogs. "This is the real Houston," he exclaims, Lone Star in hand.

Or you could visit the 1920s shotgun house that Zamore rebuilt as his thesis project.

On Buck Street, in Houston's Fifth Ward, one of a string of ragtag neighborhoods nestled between downtown's skyscrapers and the freeway loop, Zamore's shotgun sat abandoned for years before he discovered it.

"There are empty shotgun houses all over the city," he says, adding, "I fell in love with the simplicity."

Jerry Waters, by contrast, is not so emotional. But the 30-year-old architect, who works on corporate-scaled projects for the Portland, Oregon, firm Thompson Vaivoda & Associates, has a conviction that architecture can be used to give increased density and accessibility to the neighborhoods of single-family homes that ring cities such as Houston or Portland. "I tend to believe that people want better," he says.

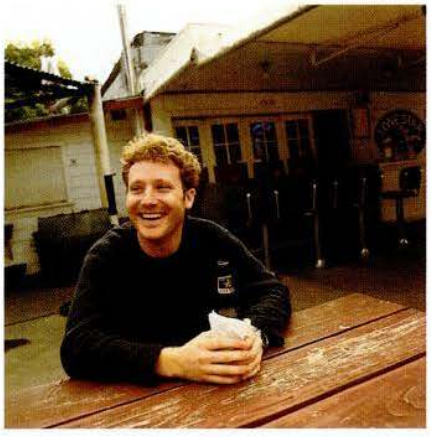
Waters' solution to the problem of homes that are inflated in size and price, designed without architectural rigor, and badly built is as modest as a shotgun house and has the same simple, end-to-end, as-the-bullet-flies quality, but his is demonstratively modern. The prototype for Waters' new brand of urban housing, however, sits surrounded by fields and forests on the eastern fringe of the Portland metropolitan area.

Waters lives with his wife, Anna, and their two young daughters in a 600-square-foot box. While it takes discipline for four people to coexist in such a small space, Waters points out that the majority of homeowners these days have no children and many of them live alone.

Both of these modest houses represent first attempts by young architects to grapple with the future. Not the future populated by a theme park of conveniences, but the future in which the position of the renter in America's white-hot real-estate markets grows increasingly tenuous, the future in which home ownership is often beyond the means of even the solidly middle class. Some of this is the effect of the economic boom we're experiencing, and some of it has to do with the fact that most new housing is overstuffed with the pretense, if not the actuality, of luxury.

Zamore addresses the problem by regarding Houston's derelict row houses as both an inventory that can be restored and as a resource that enlightened developers can draw on for inspiration. Zamore is not the first to be seduced by this traditional form of housing that, some historians believe, has roots in Africa. Beginning in 1993, a group of local artists transformed a row of shotguns in Houston's Third Ward into spaces for art installations, preserving the homes as a sort of architectural petting zoo. Zamore's approach is more utilitarian.

Through a Rice connection, Zamore found an abandoned shotgun house on property owned by Stephen Fairfield, executive director of the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation, an organization that has successfully refreshed the area's housing stock, building affordable homes for the largely black population of the neighborhood. (See page 76 for more on the CRC.) ►



Brett Zamore (top) drinks a beer at his neighborhood "ice house," an outdoor tavern that, like the shotgun house, fits into his conception of a highly sociable urban life.

Jerry Waters (bottom) enjoys a rare moment of solitude beside a set of 10-foot-tall doors that, when thrown open, allow the outdoors to function as a spare room.

When Zamore first got his hands on the shotgun he named "House 00," he says, "I had no clue what I was going to do with it." He thought he might, like the artists before him, create some sort of installation. As he began to study his house, and the history of shotguns, he developed an awareness of the typology's understated virtues.

"Why is it such a beautiful, successful house?" Zamore asked himself. "It doesn't ignore the street. It doesn't ignore the landscape as developer houses do." Zamore came to appreciate that having a door at each end promotes ventilation. He realized that setting a house on blocks, instead of on concrete pads like most contemporary Houston homes, allows air to circulate below, keeping the shotgun cooler.

Again, Zamore declares that he developed "a simple love for the house." But really, it was more like the grad student and the battered old house became physically involved, like they were having an affair.

For two years the shotgun, where Buck Street dribbles to an end, was Zamore's life. He put new beams under the house to support a sagging floor. He pulled out all the doors and windows and reinstalled them. He removed most of the interior walls and left them out, creating a more spacious interior. Those he didn't remove he preserved like archaeological treasures, under a heavy coat of clear varnish. He tore out the ceiling, but left the joists in place so you could see how the house had once been divided.

"I installed this roof," says Zamore, pointing to the sheets of corrugated metal atop the house. "I think I lost 10 pounds doing it. It was a nightmare, but it's going to last forever."

Zamore got local businesses to donate or discount supplies, such as insulation and light fixtures. IKEA sold him the kitchen cabinets at 40 percent off. He also received grant money and $16,500 financing from the CRC. All told, the house cost $70,000 to renew. The trouble was that Zamore didn't really know for whom he was working. He was pretty sure he wasn't going to live in it, that it should be occupied by someone from the community. But because the shotguns were for many years the only kind of housing available to African Americans and because they had connections, real and mythical, to slavery, neighborhood people viewed them with disdain.

Regardless, Zamore tried to make the sturdiest structure and most flexible layout that he could, for some unknown occupant. Whenever he caught himself thinking too hard about how exactly someone would live in the space, he'd stop himself. "I was becoming too much of an architect," he observes. "I was programming it."

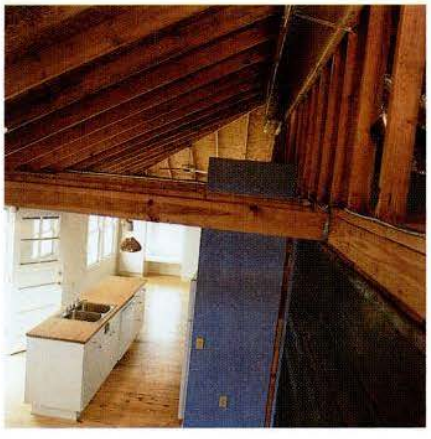
By contrast, the possibility of being "too much of an architect" would never occur to Jerry Waters. The rigorous programming of his tiny home is, in fact, what allows it to succeed, even for a growing family.

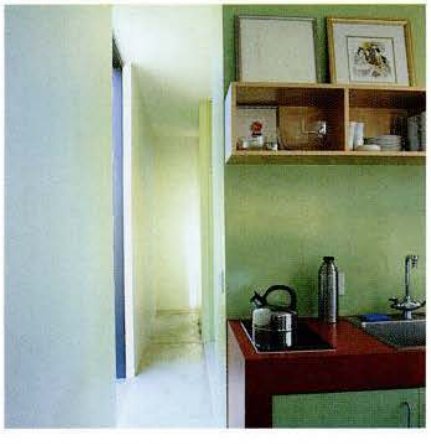
Completed in January 2000, Waters began designing the house two years earlier, when he and Anna, a speech pathologist, still lived in Brooklyn. Waters was working, at the time, for the architect Rafael Vinoly on projects ranging from the MoMA competition to the Philadelphia Philharmonic. Anna's parents purchased 92 acres of freshly logged "forest" land outside Portland. Eventually, there will be a full-size, 4,800-square-foot, two-family home on the property and the little house will become the guesthouse. Now, however, it stands alone in the middle of a field as a sort of placeholder. Cradled within a curved, wood-grain–imprinted concrete retaining wall, clad with cement paneling the color of French-roast coffee, and outfitted with shockingly tall sky blue and bright yellow metal doors, this box is the last thing you'd expect to find at the end of a meandering, cornstalk-lined, dirt drive.

But this urbane form is enhanced by the ►

In House 00 (top), Zamore removed most of the interior walls, but he left an old weathered wall running the length of the house as a divider between public and private rooms, and as a sort of historical marker.

In the Waters house (bottom), a pair of floor-to-ceiling cabinets delineate a space that is used as a playroom in the daytime and a bedroom (for the entire family) at night. The green doors conceal, among other things, a Murphy bed, a washer and dryer, bedding, and toys.





The kitchen (top) of House 00, with its shiny new appliances and bright blue walls, stands in contrast to the bathroom door, which is as old as the house. Above it is a loft containing the shotgun's mechanical systems.

The Waters family naturally gravitates toward the steel table (designed by Jerry), and regards the area outside as their warm weather dining room. (For cooler weather, there's an outdoor fireplace.) The kitchen (bottom, left), with its two-burner stove, half-sized refrigerators, and storage compartments, is a study in efficiency.

expansiveness and privacy of its rural setting. The Waters family likes to eat outdoors, on one of the stainless-steel tables that Jerry designed. There's an outdoor shower that everybody, especially three-year-old Edna, enjoys. Indoors, the narrow bathroom is a study in contrasts, hot red tiles opposite cool birch paneling.

A set of floor-to-ceiling, built-in cabinets with as many doors as an Advent calendar frame an area that's used for sleeping at night and as a playroom during the day. Behind the largest set of doors is a queen-sized Murphy bed. Behind another door are Edna's toys. Another door hides a washer-dryer.

Similarly, the kitchen is a study in space management, with two half-sized refrigerators tucked under the counter beside a small dishwasher. The stove has only two burners. It is perfectly choreographed space.

"It's a dumb box," says Jerry. "But I've done certain moves that make it architecture." He points to the narrow, asymmetrical windows. He's especially pleased that he managed to give distinct architectural qualities to each corner of this small unit.

What becomes apparent in talking with the Waters family, over a leisurely late-summer dinner at the outdoor stainless-steel table, is that the house is so much the brainchild of the architect that he barely admitted his wife into the design process.

Anna notes that, because they'd been living in New York City where few apartments have their own washer and dryer, it was important to her to "have all the amenities."

"I wanted to make sure it felt big," she says, cautiously. Then she adds, "I like the outdoor shower." Jerry interjects, "It wasn't your idea." Unfazed, Anna completes her thought about the shower: "I love it. It's the best."

It would be easy to write off this exchange as one of those things that happens between husbands and wives, but it hints at a flaw in Jerry Waters' bigger vision for the house.

"This is my research project for right now," he says. His idea is that this would be a perfect-sized house to add density in the more mature residential areas that surround Portland, or for that matter, Houston. Waters is perturbed by the thoughtless developments of "affordable housing" that have sprung up along the highway he drives to work each day. "I find them to be an absolute joke. I don't understand it."

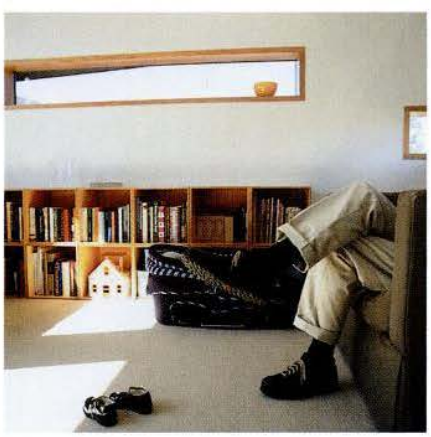
Waters thinks that his house could be broken down into a kit of parts, the walls fabricated in a shop somewhere. Even the components that seem extravagant, like the 10-foot-high doors, would be economical if mass-produced, he contends. He speculates that the house conceivably could be replicated for $90,000–$120,000 (although the original cost much more). Someone could plop one of these down in a backyard or "you could stack these, cantilever them so the bottom of one makes a carport for the other."

Undoubtedly, this house could be rejiggered to be built in multiples. The real question is whether something that is so rigorously programmed could be made flexible enough to suit the demands of the marketplace and the desires of strangers.

Interestingly, Jillian Detweiler, assistant to Portland's Commissioner of Planning and Development Review—the office that recently made headlines by banning "snout houses," homes with garages out front—has no problems with Waters' notion. She says that while neighbors might protest anything that isn't "some variation on the Portland bungalow," there are no ordinances that dictate aesthetics or materials. "There's definitely a growing market for smaller units," she says, and notes that only 24 percent of Portland households have children in the school system. Detweiler points out that a house that is dependent on outdoor space and big open doors for its livability might not be quite so comfortable when hemmed in. ▸

Zamore on the virtues of the shotgun plan: "You could open both doors and get ventilated."

Anna Waters on the outdoor hot-water shower: "I love it. It's the best."



One of Burt L. Long Jr.'s artistic contributions to his neighborhood is the "Field of Vision," an array of giant eyeballs mounted on pedestals. "I maintain that they're breasts," comments Joan Batson.

Architect Jerry Waters loves the narrow windows that he's positioned at irregular intervals throughout the house. The asymmetrical approach, he thinks, gives each corner of the house its own distinct look.

For the time being, Waters' case study is just for the use of his own family, which, with the recent addition of newborn Riley, is testing the power of architectural programming.

Zamore's shotgun, meanwhile, has been sold for $30,000 to Bert L. Long Jr., a leading Houston artist who grew up in the Fifth Ward ("They used to call it the 'Bloody Fifth,'" he says).

Long, 60, a surrealist who paints and sculpts, has a flowing beard and ample physique that makes him look like an African-American Santa Claus. A professional chef and restaurateur for 20 years, he took up painting because he boasted to his Las Vegas publicist that he could. After winning the Rome Prize, Long, his wife, Connie, and their three children began spending more and more time in Europe, settling for extended periods in Spain. But they maintained a house in a small town outside Houston. Upon returning from Spain in 1996, they discovered it had been torched, vandalized, and covered with racist graffiti.

When Fairfield of the CRC read about the incident in the local paper, he called, Long remembers, and said, " 'God this is awful. How can we help you?' "

At the time, Long wasn't looking for a new house. He and his wife, he assumed, would go back to Spain. But he did begin working with Fairfield and the CRC on reopening the Fifth Ward's historic Deluxe Theater as a community arts center.

Two years later, when Connie died of cancer, Long began to think that maybe a house in the old neighborhood wouldn't be such a bad thing. After Connie's death, he became romantically involved with a friend, the painter Joan Batson, whom he'd met more than a decade earlier, when he was an artist in residence at Omaha's Bemis Foundation, where she was an administrator. She moved to Houston, and together they live in Zamore's shotgun.

"Now I'm back home, right around the corner from my mother," says Long, who believes that his art can help to heal and grow the community. "It's a very conscious thought. Bringing back, instead of taking from, you understand."

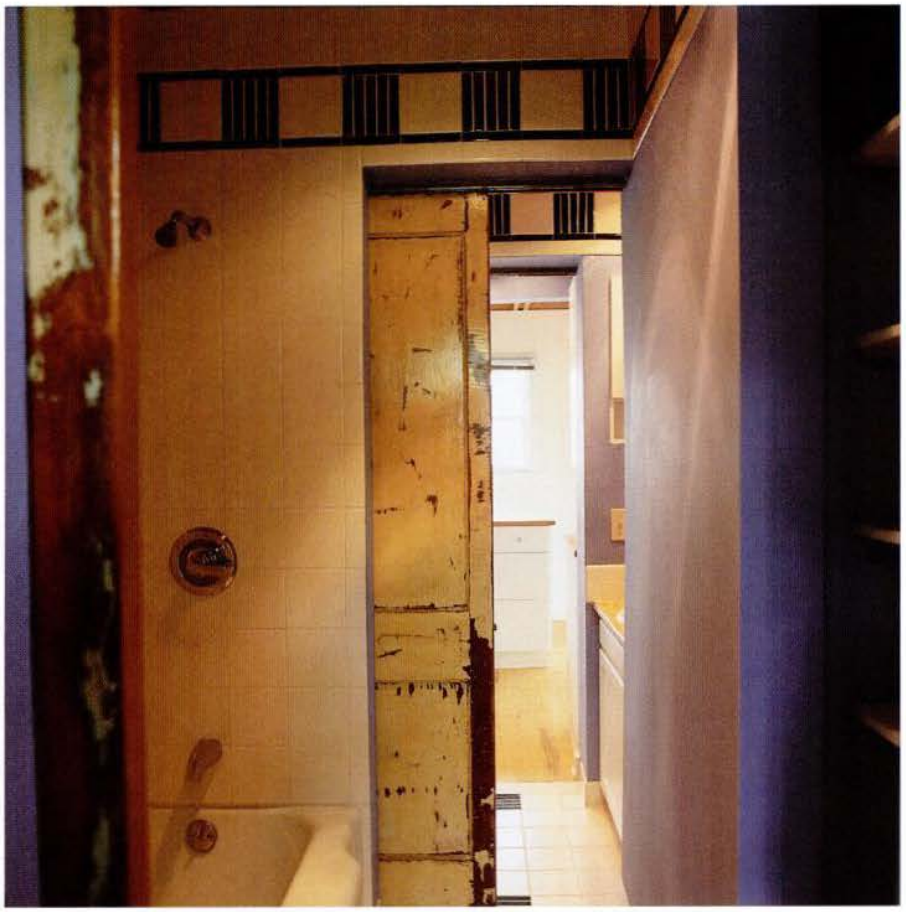
Zamore designed a simple studio building for Long, which the Fifth Ward CRC built next door. And, perhaps more than Zamore, Long sees this pairing of shotgun house and art studio as a prototype for the Fifth Ward.

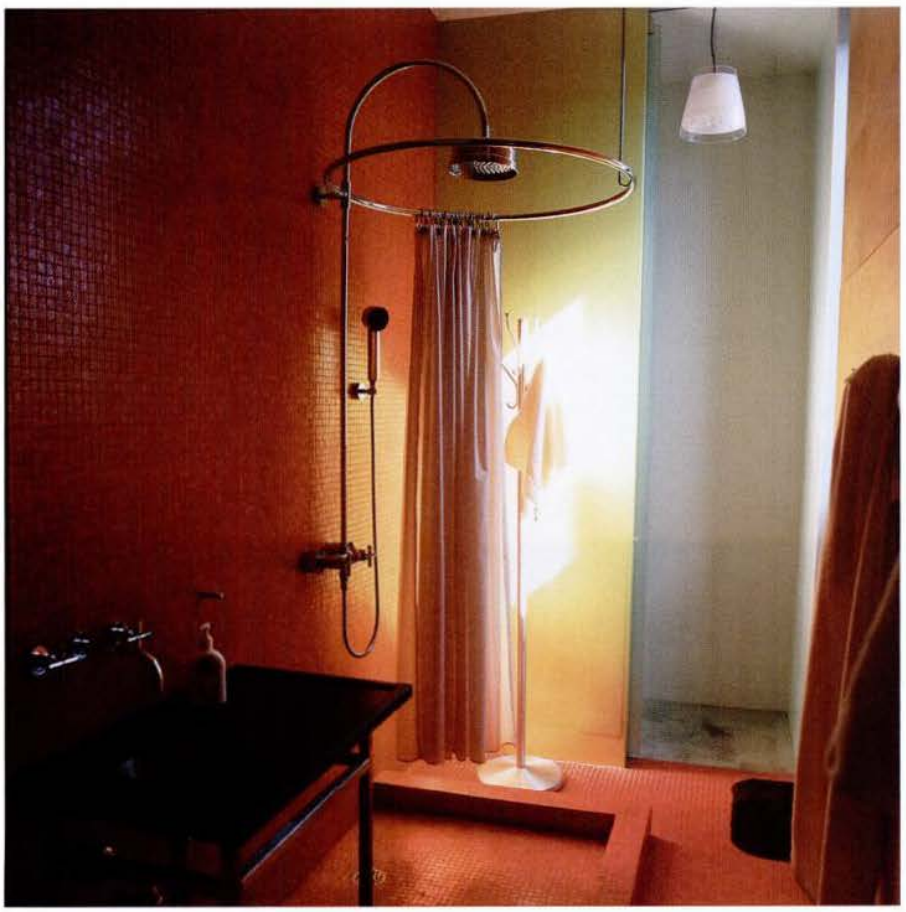
"We'll do 15 or 20 row houses with studios attached," Long imagines. "It's our way of using art to affect the community. We need a core, a cultural core. The row houses with the Deluxe Theater could be that."

Whether either Zamore's shotgun or Waters' box will influence what future builders and designers produce is uncertain. As Lars Lerup, Rice University's dean of architecture, puts it, the notion of a shotgun revival is a romantic one. The real solution isn't a type of house, he argues, it's a program that gives low-income people access to mortgages. "I think we confuse design with economics," says Lerup, "and that's a problem." He contends that poor people, given a chance to buy a house, would prefer a more lavish developer house to a humble shotgun. While Lerup praises Zamore's efforts, he says the shotgun project "is a strange thing that will only happen once." Then, almost as an afterthought, Lerup acknowledges, "I would love to live in one of those houses."

Of course, Lerup has a point. The way that homes are financed has more influence on their design than anything even the most brilliant architect could devise. But given a choice between a future determined by Fannie Mae or Bank of America and one dreamed up by someone like Brett Zamore or Jerry Waters, which would you choose?

Karrie Jacobs, editor-in-chief of dwell, aspires to live in a very small house.





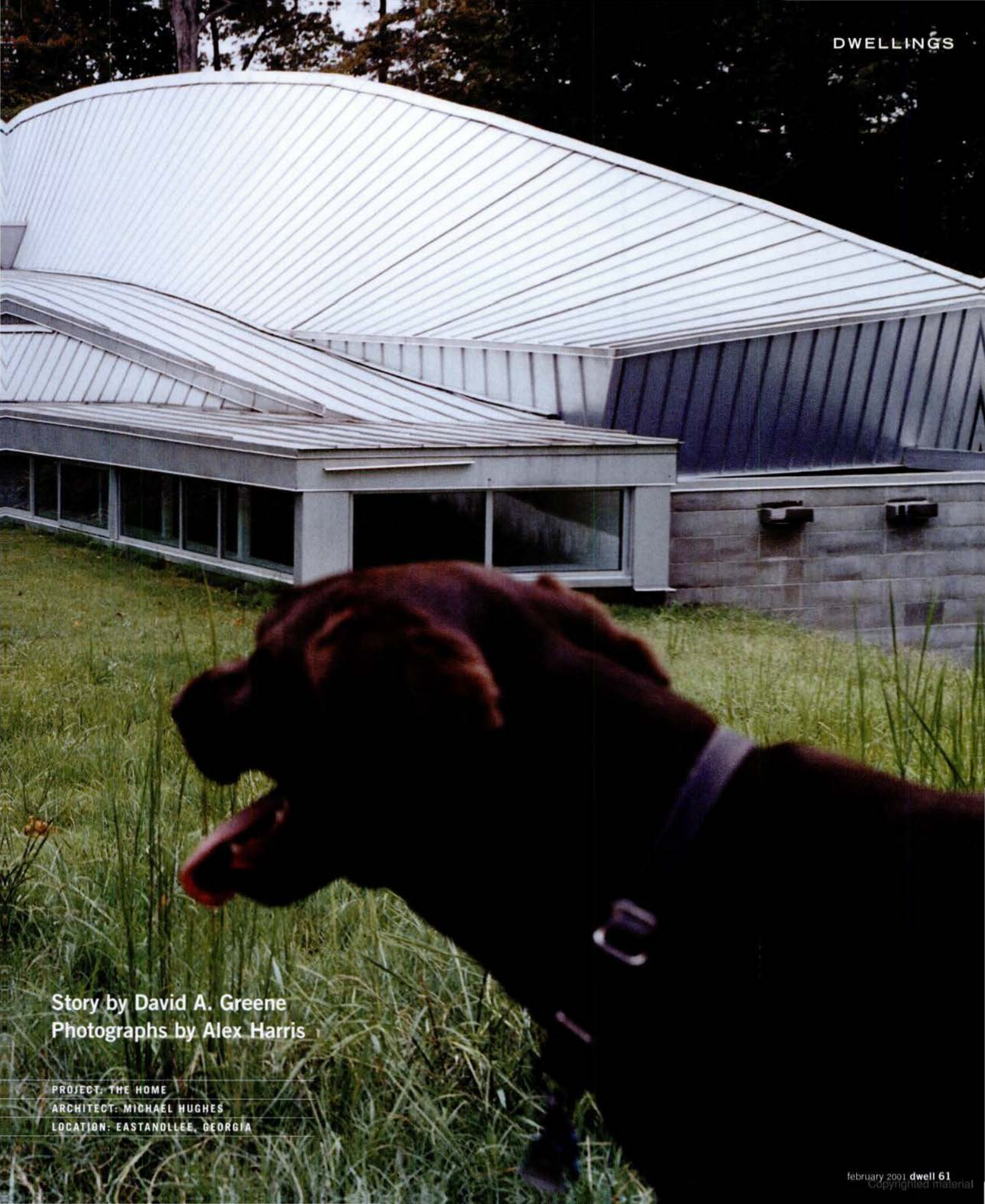
Zamore salvaged the shotgun's old tub and built a new bathroom around it. The bathing area is separated from the toilet by an old door, varnished to preserve its distressed state and mounted on a track.

Waters' use of bright red tiles contrasted by pale birch, and the oversized Dornbracht showerhead, make a modest bathroom seem luxurious. The sink is actually a high school lab table outfitted with a small basin, and the chair allows three-year-old Edna to wash her hands without adult assistance. The light fixture is an Anon Pendant Lamp from Resolute.

EXTREME RETIREMENT

Architect Michael Hughes calls the retirement house he designed for his parents "The Home." A playfully cruel moniker, it bespeaks the young architect's dual aims for the project: a warm and useful place for his folks to retire but also a challenge to current thinking about housing for the elderly. Hughes rails against the big old house, little house, "box" theory of aging, a modern process of divestiture and downsizing ending in interment. Hughes believes we can stop the madness; but first we must change the way we think about "becoming" elderly.

Joe Hughes heads home with dogs Pepper and Bella, after a walk around Stonecipher Lake.



Story by David A. Greene
Photographs by Alex Harris

PROJECT: THE HOME
ARCHITECT: MICHAEL HUGHES
LOCATION: EASTANOLLEE, GEORGIA

Joe and Barbara Hughes take a break on the balcony accessed through the second-floor master bedroom. The curving roof, also known as the upside-down boat or the "twisted stick of butter," was erected on 57 site-built trusses that are 16 inches on center. They sit on two walls that curve in both elevation and plan.

Looking down the driveway to the "backside" of the house. The main house is dug into the hill on the south side of the property while the garage stands level on the north side. A walkway runs between the house and garage, back to what Michael Hughes calls the "outdoor room" by the lake.

Repeat after me: We're all gonna get old someday, and we're gonna need a place to live. As a veritable tsunami of oldsters known as the baby boom generation prepares to emerge in all its health-conscious, Gingko-fueled glory, the elder-housing industry salivates, while the health-care system trembles. And members of that generation must come to grips with the fact that the place they're living in now may not be where they'll spend the rest of their lives—despite polls indicating an overwhelming preference for staying at home. The life span of an average American female is 79 years, which means that when she hits 50, she's got more than a third of her lifetime to go. We're becoming a nation of lingerers.

The Home is a two-story, 3,000-square-foot, three-bedroom, three-bath house and 1,000-square-foot garage/workshop on 3.5 acres on Stonecipher Lake in Eastanollee, Georgia. About two hours northeast of Atlanta on Route 17, Eastanollee was a dry county until the early 1990s; in lieu of Rotarian welcome signs, old sour-mash stills are displayed along the roadside. It seems an odd choice for a couple of retirees from suburban Alexandria, Virginia, but the story of how Joseph and Barbara Hughes got here is part of what makes The Home unique. Mrs. Hughes' brother retired to Eastanollee 10 years ago, and convinced other relatives to follow. "There are now three sets of my uncles living within five miles of this house, two sets of cousins, and three sets of third-generation relatives, both retired and not," says Michael Hughes. Eastanollee, where five acres of prime lakefront property cost just $30,000, has been colonized.

Architecturally, The Home is an apparition—or visitation—in this burg of split-levels and double-wides. Built mostly of concrete block and stucco, it announces itself only with a smooth cement driveway that drops down off a dirt road then wends and widens into a broad apron that sweeps visitors into, for want of a better term, the backside of the house. The Home is not so much discovered as stumbled upon, its least attractive, most functional elements presented first; it resembles nothing less than the service entrance of a suburban supermarket. From the middle of the lake the view is surely finer, the large windows of the house and its twisting roof disappearing back into the slope of the hill.

But then one notices that tweaky roofline ("like a stick of melting butter," says Michael) and the unmistakable flow of a human-scaled living space: The house on the left and garage on the right are bisected by a concrete ribbon that leads to the small outdoor patio and grounds, the flat plane nosing sharply down to the earthen shore of the lake and easing into thick woods on both sides. Halfway there, a ramp angles off to the front door of the house, tucked along the side of the building. Opposite is the two-car garage and work space, containing an unfinished loft and plumbing hook-ups for eventual conversion into an in-law—or live-in nurse—apartment. Here begins the unique aforethought that makes The Home retiree-ready.

Inside the main house, the floors are painted concrete (mod tinting being beyond the ken of the local contractor). Ramps and wide hallways lead to a sunken living room fronting the outdoor patio, then back up to a master bedroom, office, guest bath, and ▸

Joe and Barbara Hughes work to install mirrors in the first-floor master bathroom. Michael and Joe designed and constructed the maple vanity and concrete countertops. Joe and Barbara have been in the house for five years now and projects like this continue to pop up, keeping them active in their living environment.

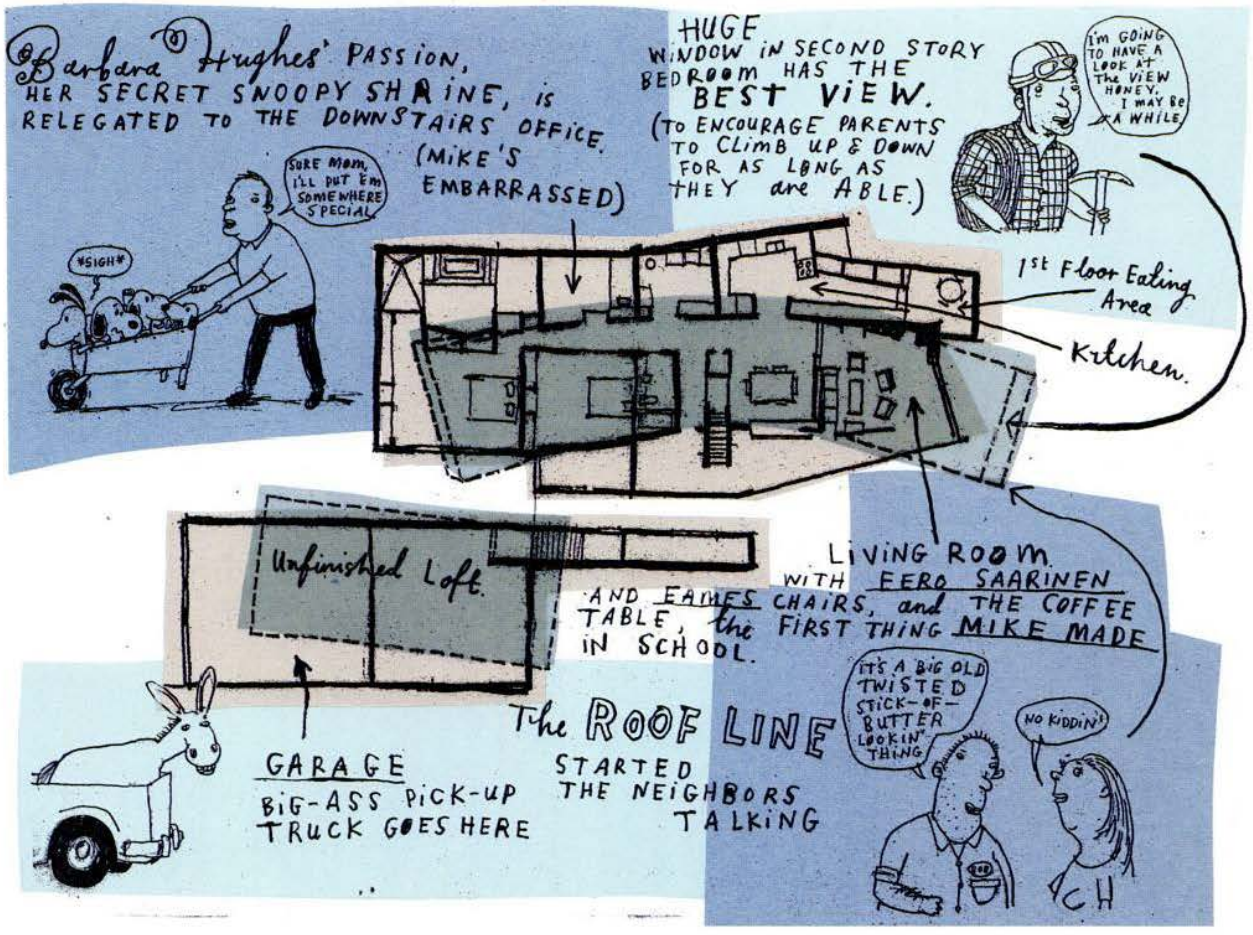
master bath with a whirlpool tub and roll-in shower. A laundry room is conveniently close to the bedroom. All doorways are a wheelchair-friendly 36 inches wide. The only part of the first floor not handicap-accessible is a small eating area off the kitchen, with its own lake view—either a refuge from rolling oldies or a matter of practicality, because ramps need room to rise. Upstairs is another large bedroom and bath, plus "attic" storage located beyond an unassuming door at the end of the hall—no stairs required. The upstairs bedroom contains one of The Home's strongest features, a huge window that juts out from the front of the house. Michael says he made sure the view up here was better than in the living room, to encourage his parents to climb up and down for as long as they are able.

Overall, The Home feels like a custom-built house by someone enamored of Gehry-esque industrial materials, with soaring walls, a floating staircase, and a bridge instead of an enclosed upstairs hallway—pretty standard stuff, really, part of the repertoire of any big-city architect. (Indeed, Michael was an intern in the offices of both Frank Gehry and Richard Meier.) From its cardboard-gray color to the lack of landscaping, The Home looks like an architect's maquette plopped into the Georgia woods. But it's toady with a purpose: Paramount are low maintenance and low cost, major concerns for retirees on a fixed income. The Home could've been clad in redwood, the better to ease its geometric shapes into the landscape. But wood requires upkeep—stain, paint, replacement—and thus both money and effort. Michael built The Home on a budget of about $250,000, all materials, land, and labor included, the latter provided mainly by himself and his relatives and friends. (A local contractor quoted a price of $350,000 for the whole thing—more if he wanted it in writing.) Only the concrete work and roofing were tackled by professionals, and all materials were purchased from local suppliers. Interior fixtures were either bought cheap at the local Home Depot or made (or are yet to be made) by Michael and his father.

The unfinished interior and bare-bones landscaping serve a purpose, too. Michael noticed certain "couch-potato tendencies" in Joe's previous retired life: In his new life in The Home, Hughes' *père* still watches TV (there's a satellite dish out back), but now "he's in much better shape than the day he retired," with a seemingly endless array of small tinkering jobs on the horizon. There's a garden to be planted, kitchen cabinets to be finished, mirrors to be hung in the bathroom. And then there's that loft in the garage, a long-term—but not imperative or overwhelming—project to tackle (or supervise). "There's more to do here than Basket Weaving 101," says Michael. "It's a fallacy that when you're 55 or 65 you're going to stop thinking, stop being capable of inventing something."

Further softening The Home's stance is that it was built for a couple with considerably more sway than in the usual architect-client relationship. Cut into the smooth Sheetrock of a gracefully curved living-room wall is a chunky alcove that houses a five-foot-tall curio cabinet, a dark-stained wood thing handmade by Michael's uncle, its faceted glass doors proudly displaying his mother's tchotchkes. "My brother cut down ▸

Joe Hughes has a word with Michael's dog Bella in the entry hall. The cherry wood stairs were designed by Michael and built with the help of his father. The stringers, cross supports, and railings are waxed steel. The throw rug is Bedouin, obtained during a recent trip to Jordan.



a tree and made this," says Barbara. "Mike wanted to stick it in the hall, but I said I'd really rather it have its own special home." Though Michael would never admit it (certainly not in front of his parents, anyway), this jarring bit of whimsy really messes with the lines of the room. But since young Mike got his stainless-steel appliances and black-slate shower, it wasn't too much to ask. (Note, however, that Barbara's prodigious "Peanuts" memorabilia collection is behind closed doors, relegated to the downstairs office.)

Though their requests weren't much—"I just wanted a coat closet by the front door," says Barbara—the elder Hugheses are obviously delighted with The Home. They revel in telling stories of locals' astounded reactions to their new house (e.g., "I bet there isn't nothin' like it for 21 counties around"). A favorite is the tale of the UPS driver, who, during The Home's construction, came skidding and sliding down the drive, gravely warning Joe that his son the architect "may be messin' with those funny mushrooms." (He's been bringing folks by for a gander ever since.) "I like to be with people the first time they see it," says Barbara. "We've had folks call it anything from a boat ramp to a Jetsons house." Mom's own reaction upon seeing the project model for the first time? "Oh, Michael, what have you done!" But now? "Every time I come up over that driveway and catch a glimpse of it, my heart just jumps."

The Home is not your average old-folks home, for better and worse. Those ample halls meander and expand, following the sinuous curves of the walls; handrails and easy-grip handles are as absent as a baby-blue pictogram of a stick figure stuck in a wheelchair. But not conforming to standards has its drawbacks, too; that roll-in shower is nice and big, but the nozzle is way too high to reach from a wheelchair, and the temperature control's a stretch. As for getting into the tub, raised high off the floor—forget it. Even the front door is manual-operation only. These idiosyncrasies reinforce the fact that The Home is not a paradigm but a conversation starter; it was designed for the current needs of the Hugheses, taking for granted the luxury of nearby relatives, and anticipating that someday Michael (and maybe his own family) will move in to help out.

Though Barbara Hughes claims she and Joe will "never, ever, ever" move again, the fact remains that standard senior group housing, especially transitional board-and-care facilities, is a more realistic long-term destination for the average aging American. But that can change: The very fact that Michael discussed the issue of aging openly with his parents—as well as the possibility of, and strategies for, one or both parents becoming handicapped—is the most impressive aspect of the project, pointing the way to a new national frankness about long-term planning. "When my father first read my write-up on the project, he said, 'Oh my God, he's building us a coffin,' " Michael recalls with a laugh. Indeed, The Home can be seen as a twisted coffinlike structure, either rising up or sinking into the swampy Georgia earth. "But one day about two years after they moved in," Michael remembers, "Dad sat down on the patio and said, 'Y'know, I really like this house—it's easy to live in.' That's the biggest compliment I could get."

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID FULLARTON

Michael Hughes (left) and his parents (on the couch) are joined in the living room by Michael's aunt and uncle, Ruth and Jim Rhodes. Michael says, "The furniture is a mishmash of leftovers from our suburban home in northern Virginia. There are also some Eames and Mies pieces from yard sales, a gray wool rug from my recent trip to India, an IKEA lamp and stool, and a coffee table I made. Fortunately, my folks have always liked modern furniture and it has translated well to the new house."

Michael next to the cabinet his uncle, Jim Rhodes, built. Jim was the third member of the construction team, along with Joe and Michael. The floor throughout the house is red polished concrete.

The Architect

In 1993, fresh from Princeton's graduate architecture program, Michael Hughes' own version of the starving-artist archetype was camping out in his parents' basement for a year while he designed his first commission. "I had to ask my dad for money to buy a CD," Hughes says, cringing. All works of art, when one scratches the surface, are created for mundane reasons (to impress a girl, to boost an ego, to pay the mortgage). In Hughes' case, The Home was a rookie's calling card: The fact that he could actually get the job done loomed larger than what statement the final product made. Still, Hughes acknowledges he was eating dessert first—building the "dream house" that all architects keep in the back of their mind while slaving on shopping-mall parking structures for large, faceless firms.

Asked how The Home inflects his work today, Hughes answers, "It's like breathing." He recounts the story of a house commissioned in New Mexico, by a client in his early 30s; up until the very final stages, a wheelchair-ready elevator was part of the plan, removed at the last moment for financial reasons—but still leaving ramped entrances and handicap-accessible, indoor-outdoor spaces in the final design. "These issues can very easily enter the dialogue of housing typology in America," Hughes evangelizes. "Your house doesn't have to have 16-foot ceilings in the kitchen, or be an odd shape [like The Home]; but it could still have a walkway leading to an outdoor space, and ramps and 36-inch doorways could be basic building blocks." Communal retirement housing doesn't have to be generic and antiseptic, either: "It doesn't cost any more to consider quality of life, myth and ritual, entertainment activity, and public and private spaces than it does to ignore them."

David A. Greene is a screenwriter living in Los Angeles. He has written for The New Yorker *and* The Village Voice, *and is a contributing editor for* Art Issues.


CHOCK

GENIUSES, MAD SCIENTISTS, AND INVENTORS

From self-cleaning houses to firefly night-lights, five independent thinkers are working to restructure domestic life in ways you would never, and might not ever, imagine.

STORY BY PAGAN KENNEDY

Masamichi Udagawa and Sigi Moeslinger visit one of the subway cars they designed.

Designer Masamichi Udagawa questions why home machines require us to sit ramrod straight before a screen, as if imposing an imaginary cubicle into our living room or bedroom. "A computer shouldn't be seen as only a work tool," he explains. Udagawa cites the candy-colored iMac as an improvement on the standard gray box, though its setup "doesn't change the fact that you have to sit at a desk."

He and his partner, Sigi Moeslinger, who run the New York firm Antenna Design, have reconfigured everything from subway cars to revolving doors to PCs. Udagawa, who is Japanese, and Moeslinger, who is Austrian, began working together in the mid-'90s, when the two were neighbors in San Francisco. They founded Antenna Design in 1997. "I take care of the hardware," Udagawa explains, "while Sigi focuses on the software side." With each project, they delve deeper and deeper into the same question: Does technology have to be so, well, uptight?

Their new InfoPortal for IBM encourages its owner to walk around the room, get his or her hands messy, check messages, talk out loud—anything but sit at a desk. The laptop-like computer roosts on an arm that can be moved and angled to suit the whims of the user. Voice-recognition software takes spoken commands. The computer's "touchless pointing" technology lets you issue commands by gesticulating an inch or so in front of the screen—a boon for cooks with dough on their fingers or for those who've just emerged from the shower. The InfoPortal does have a keyboard, but just barely. Its two halves hang off the side of the screen, like flippers or vestigial limbs. They can be rotated down for use, or snapped out of the way.

The computer itself lifts off its base, to become a wireless device. It can perch much like a picture frame on a bedside table. Or it can hang on the wall above a bathtub, allowing you to check email while you soak. A light on its face—like the blinking red light on an old-school answering machine—changes colors to indicate what kind of messages are waiting for you. Right now, IBM regards the InfoPortal as a "show car," a prototype to awaken people to the possibilities of hands-free, wireless computing. Udagawa is not sure when it will go to market.

Udagawa and Moeslinger can point to several other groundbreaking inventions. Just this summer, their subway cars began zooming along tracks in New York City, equipped with maps that light up to indicate which stations the train will stop at—great for riders who have trouble sorting out express and local routes. Another project, a revolving door they created for the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, doubles as an Internet browser. As you push the handle and begin rotating the door, websites flash in front of your face, and virtual meets physical.

PHOTO BY CATRINA GENOVESE

David Levy tosses his Nerf remote control.

In David Levy's Cambridge, Massachusetts, neighborhood, just about every house appears to be making the transition from boho to showplace. Except one. Across the street from a stained glass–studded Victorian, his asbestos-shingled triple-decker squats in a lot full of weeds.

Levy is gleeful about how terrible his house looks from the outside. "It's awful!" he says, enthusiastically. In a way, the rundown façade is one of his inventions. Levy—who was instrumental in creating the layout of the Apple PowerBook, shoving the keyboard to the back and adding a touchpad—delights in questioning assumptions. Why, for instance, should you advertise the goodies inside your house?

The inside of the seemingly abandoned house is opulent. A luxe bathroom has a Jacuzzi and customized, etched-glass tiles, and the kitchen is equipped with gleaming fixtures and slate floors. What better way to discourage crooks than to hide splendor underneath grimy shingles, Levy reasons—the way city cyclists wrap their pricey mountain bikes in black electrical tape.

He's quick to abandon tradition in the name of common sense. After observing that couch potatoes like to toss the TV remote back and forth rather than get up and hand it to one another, he came up with a Nerf ball–style remote. Another project, which he admits is "languishing," is a bed that lets a couple hold one another without either person's arm falling asleep. "There's a foam insert in the mattress, and a slit in the foam. If you want to have your arm go away—into some magic plane that's underneath the other person—you move your elbow along until you find the gap, and then it's gone."

He's also working on a device that reminds you to correct your posture, sensing the position of your body with technology that's similar to a touchpad. If incorporated into a chair, for example, Levy's invention would first ask you to sit up straight. Then, "it looks at the curvature of your back and tells you whether it's the way you wanted it to be or whether you have deviated" too far from perfect posture. The idea is classic Levy. After rethinking the computer keyboard, he has come up with a kind of control panel for the body—furniture that takes commands and, in turn, commands its users.

PHOTO BY CATRINA GENOVESE

Frances Gabe and her water-proofed living room.

"What was the worst thing to work with? Making water do what I wanted it to do," explains Frances Gabe, 85, who designed and modified the Newberg, Oregon, house in which she still lives. "Water's like electricity. It will take the easiest path, whether it spoils things or not. It doesn't give a darn. But I whipped it. Now the water does just what I want."

Gabe whipped it by spending more than 40 years rethinking how and what a house should be. The result is a cottage with units in the ceilings that spray the rooms with soapy water, then blow them dry. Sloped floors, made of wood treated with eight thick coats of Spar varnish, drain away excess liquid. Metal mesh cupboards double as dishwashers; the closets launder the clothes. More than 60 other inventions provide push-button cleaning of everything from books to furniture.

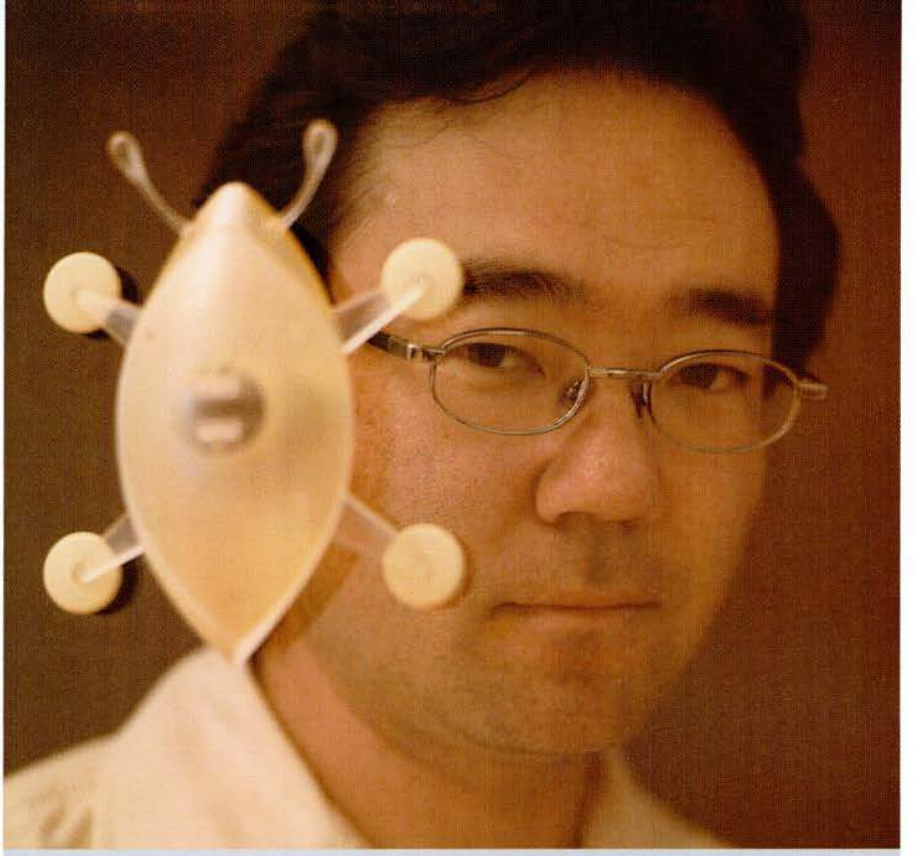
Of course, the self-cleaning life requires some concessions. Gabe has waterproofed nearly all her possessions. And she chose to avoid wood in the construction of her house; even the panes in her windows (made of plastic resin) are divided by cinder blocks.

PHOTO BY DANIEL DE SOUZA

Such innovations came easily to the woman who grew up on a construction site, trailing after her architect father. "I rode his shoulders as he walked the girders. Did it scare me to death? No! I loved it," she says. Eventually, she opened her own construction firm in Portland, which she ran for 45 years; her husband, an electrical engineer, became her employee. "I put my husband to work. I kept him busy," she says.

With her role-reversed marriage and her re-engineered house, Gabe refused to become a typical '50s wife. And she regards the traditional, hard-to-wash house as an insult to her gender. "I couldn't see why women should spend so much of their time cleaning up other peoples' dirt," she says. Rather than as a benefit to women, however, Gabe's inventions have attracted most attention as aids for the disabled and elderly.

About one or two people show up every day to ask Gabe for a tour around the site, though sometimes she's hit with a busload of 20 or 30. "People make a lot of demands, so I try to be obliging," she says. So if you've had it with Windex and Lysol, you can purchase plans of the house or arrange for a tour.



Max Yoshimoto and his glowing friend, Glimo.

There's a good chance you're using Max Yoshimoto's toothbrush. With his colleagues, Yoshimoto, senior vice president at Lunar Design, a firm with offices in Palo Alto and San Francisco, designed that ubiquitous brush with the biomorphic grip that is probably resting next to your tube of Crest right now. The product delighted Oral-B so thoroughly that the company has flooded the market with it. Lunar Design's research into ergonomics—they made more than 100 prototypes—paid off in practical gains: Studies proved that their toothbrush is the most effective model on the market.

Most people don't tend to pay much attention to the objects they use every day. So to awaken people's understanding of just how creative industrial design can be, Yoshimoto and his partners started a side project called Moonshine. By taking a break from commercial work, they can explore ideas without worrying about the bottom line or client demands. Yoshimoto refers to it as the firm's "backyard," a forum through which employees come up not just with answers but with questions. The designers recently used their maverick label to riff on the night-light—how could it be updated, reimagined, made to seem cuddly or high-tech? The result was a witty collection of prototypes. Glimo, a solar-powered bug with suction-cup feet, can be attached to a window, where it stores light during the day and glimmers, fireflylike, at night. LiteLIGHT uses bare wires and an electroluminescent panel inscribed with the word "nite." With its laptop glow and exposed guts, this one clearly belongs in a geek-boy bachelor pad.

Moonshiners have also explored new ways to configure the home computer and developed an award-winning set of bar chairs for Absolut, and a backpack for Patagonia. "It's often our strongest work conceptually, since the design process is left pure. No focus groups, no 'big committee' decision-making," says Yoshimoto. These conceptual projects aren't all blue sky; some may turn up on the market. "Our more conventional projects," he explains, "definitely benefit from the playfulness of 'Moonshine thinking.'"

Pagan Kennedy has written seven books. Her latest is Black Livingstone: A True Tale of African Adventure *(Viking Press, 2001).*

PHOTO BY DANIEL DE SOUZA

WHAT GOES IN THE NEXT ROOM?

Eva Zeisel Says Modernism's Time Is Up.

STORY BY VICTORIA MILNE

Eva Zeisel has an opinion on Putin. Also on Totem, Hillary, and Beauty. That is, Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, because she follows international politics; Totem, the New York design store, because she follows design politics; Hillary, the public figure without the last name, because she follows domestic politics; and Beauty, the life force, because she is wise.

She also has strong opinions about the design of the century she has lived through. She was born in 1906 and began work in about 1920, when she was an educated, prosperous, potter's apprentice in her native Hungary. After firsthand experience of Europe's upheavals that, for Zeisel, included solitary confinement in the Soviet Union and encounters with Nazis, she came with her family to New York just before World War II. She was welcomed with the offer to design a dinner set for the Museum of Modern Art, an affirmation for a designer if ever there was one.

In 2001, many of us have statements to make about modernism. But very few people (except Philip Johnson, who is Zeisel's age), can speak with firsthand experience of most of the design movement's decades.

In 1946, after the dinnerware commission, she was given an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. While she was setting it up, Greta Daniels, the curator of the show, told Zeisel of her idea for an exhibition on "the rise and decline of modernism."

In hindsight, Daniels was clearly early on to something half a century ago. However, rumors of modernism's death have been greatly exaggerated. And interminable, too. While this eternally ending aesthetic may outlast all of us, "I was practically born when it was born," says Zeisel.

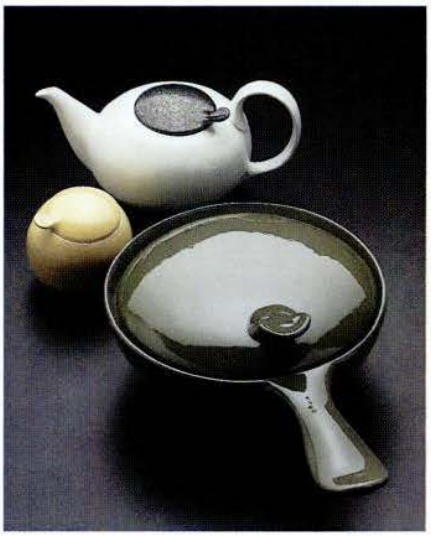
"An exhibition of [Charles Rennie] Mackintosh was in Vienna in 1904 or 5, just before my birth. That had a large influence on early Hungarian furniture design. So my parents' dining room was completely geometric. Our baby furniture was not only geometric, with round geometric rings on a square background, but was also made in unpainted fir, an influence of the Arts and Crafts movement. These were the first things I saw.

"I visited the Paris World Exhibition in 1925. It was a mixture of styles, most of them very sumptuous. However, it was the first showing of Le Corbusier's furniture. It was awe-inspiring in its Puritan atmosphere. This I well remember." ▸

PHOTO BY MATTHEW HRANEK

1929–30

1946



1949

1929–30
INKWELL
Zeisel designed this at age 23. She was the lone designer for a factory in Schramberg, Germany, her first real design job. On her way there, a friend gave her a lesson in the basics of drafting. She recalls that pride in her new skill made the Schramberg work very rectilinear.

1946
TOWN & COUNTRY DINNERWARE
This dinner set was commissioned to be "Greenwich Village-y," which meant it should suggest some kind of arty informality. Zeisel's interpretation used mix-and-match glazes and coffee mugs instead of demitasse cups.

1949
METAL CHAIR
Except for very recent work, this chair is the only furniture design associated with Zeisel. Her attempt to develop a chair that would respond to the sitter yielded this ribbon design. Produced in the U.S., it was shown at the Milan Triennale in 1964.

At this point, Zeisel became, and remained, unenthused by the coolness of the modern aesthetic. She agreed with the negative opinion of critics at the time who said Le Corbusier's work in the exhibition replaced sentimentalism with rationalism. "Simplicity is not a natural phenomenon. The shells of the sea, the leaves of the forest, the clouds of the sky, the wings of the butterfly, the palace of the spider—none would pass the test of modern simplicity," she protests.

In architecture and design circles the principles of the modern movement—"simplicity, truth in materials, geometric forms and lines, rejection of ornament"—have been dominant in the West since roughly the time they were displayed in Paris. We tend to think of Zeisel's work as modernist, in a sense, when it employs clean lines, is monochrome, and is restrained. But for her part, Zeisel says, "The principles established in this century, which dictated what was good design and what was bad, stifled its inherently communicative nature. The modern movement tried to eliminate the communication between the maker and the people who looked at or used his things. To make things mute became an aspect of good design."

And she is not for the mute: She wants to delight the user of her products. She wants someone to find the bowl as beautiful as the strawberries it contains. It is as though she makes a gift for the user when she designs a piece for production.

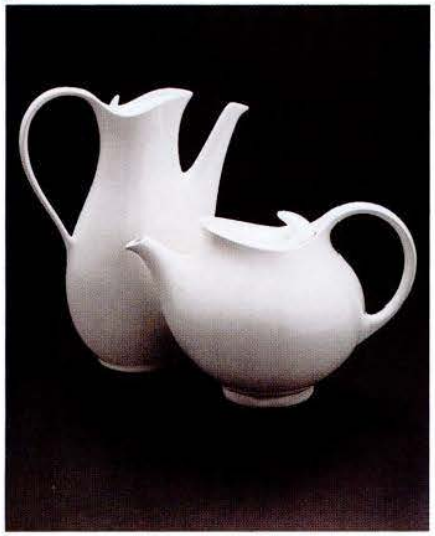
Zeisel likes to tell a story that amuses her: Her daughter had been anxiously expecting delivery of a new printer, which had gone missing. Jean Zeisel got on the phone with the international delivery company and spoke with two regional directors, three office managers, and countless dispatchers. Computer systems were consulted, logs were perused. It turns out that the driver of the neighborhood delivery truck had thought the printer was too valuable to leave overnight and had taken it home to his apartment for safekeeping. His protective impulse had thwarted the entire organization, and Eva finds this absolutely hilarious and endearing.

So it's not surprising to see that she abhors the idea of a home as a "machine for living." She has in fact embraced, if only to revile, Le Corbusier's declaration that "we want objects to be our mute slaves rather than soulful friends. We want instruments. We exact from them punctuality, accuracy, and unobtrusive presence." Zeisel opts for soulful friends all the way.

And despite its popularity, when she saw modern work in Paris, even then, she chose not to emulate it. "I was always playful. I was far from taking my design seriously as any

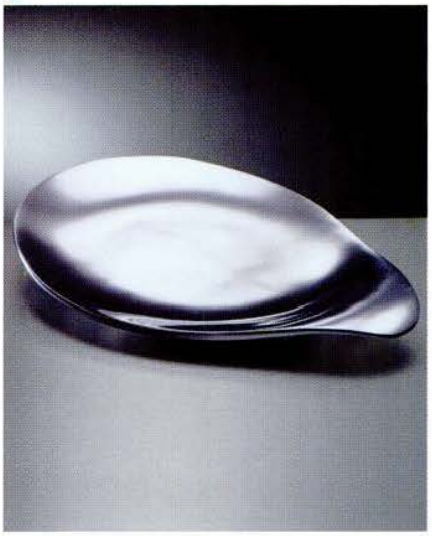
PHOTOS BY IRA GARBER (1929–30, 1946, 1957, 1983). PHOTO CREDIT ON SOURCING PAGE (1949). COURTESY OF RAMBÉ MILLS, INC. (1999)

1957



1983

1999



1957
COFFEE & TEAPOTS FOR HALLCRAFT/CENTURY
Hallcraft was Zeisel's most popular set of ceramics. If the table setting's innate grace wasn't enough to encourage one's best behavior, the little knob on the coffee and teapot's lids made dainty gestures mandatory.

1983
BOWLS FOR KISPESTER-GRANIT
In 1983 Zeisel received a senior fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, which she used to revisit Hungarian locations where she'd worked in as a young woman. This led, indirectly, to a project for what had been called Kispester, a factory where, right out of school, she made pottery.

1999
METAL BOWL FOR NAMBÉ
Whether Zeisel is more hip for working with this trendy manufacturer, or Nambé is more hip for working with her, is hard to say. This is a metal version of a plate originally from her 1946 Town and Country series.

form of art at that time. But I thought then what I think now: that the designer must make soul contact with his client."

When it comes to things, this pleasing and connecting is done through what she calls the "magic language" of design. Its alphabet includes the shapes, contours, colors, sounds, and associations we have with objects. The lines of a vase might, especially in Zeisel's hands, convey plumpness or silliness or elegance or grace or tenderness or wit.

And she may be Shakespeare—or perhaps Bach—in this language. In her Hallcraft/Century dinner service, two sensuous arcs rise to pull away from each other over a void; the whole set is a composition of echoing curves. Each element is a subtle form in itself, but they are infinitely recombinable. The shapes become like cyclical themes in a fugue, each more complex than the last through every new composition of bowl, plate, and cup.

What has been urgent for Zeisel are questions of purpose and meaning and intent in the making of objects, and she wants to know who is carrying this on. "Now, all over the world, museums are full of this good design. But it is not design itself, it is only what the modern movement said design was in this century! But what happens after that? If one museum says 20th-century design, what does the next one say? What will the curators put in the next gallery? The modernists thought that they had finished design, but now something else must be made. What goes in the next room?"

Because she is 94, Zeisel does not feel any responsibility for answering that question. She has already filled rooms with her work, from MoMA to the British Museum. But she does advocate one value over all: "To me, beauty depends on one single person, on the person who looks at something and feels joy in looking at it because it pleases him without second thoughts, irrespective of whether it is useful, whether it is art, or whether it is in good taste. It is the love affair of the eyes with the things they focus on. As its enjoyment is immediate and spontaneous, it is quite impossible to put into words how to make beauty."

Zeisel, after all, has been at it for more than 75 years. We could say that she has fought the coldness of modernism in that time, but only if it is possible for giving pleasure to others to be a weapon, and for joy in that giving to be a strategy.

Victoria Milne is a writer, designer, and curator. An exhibition she designed recently opened at the Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, Oregon.

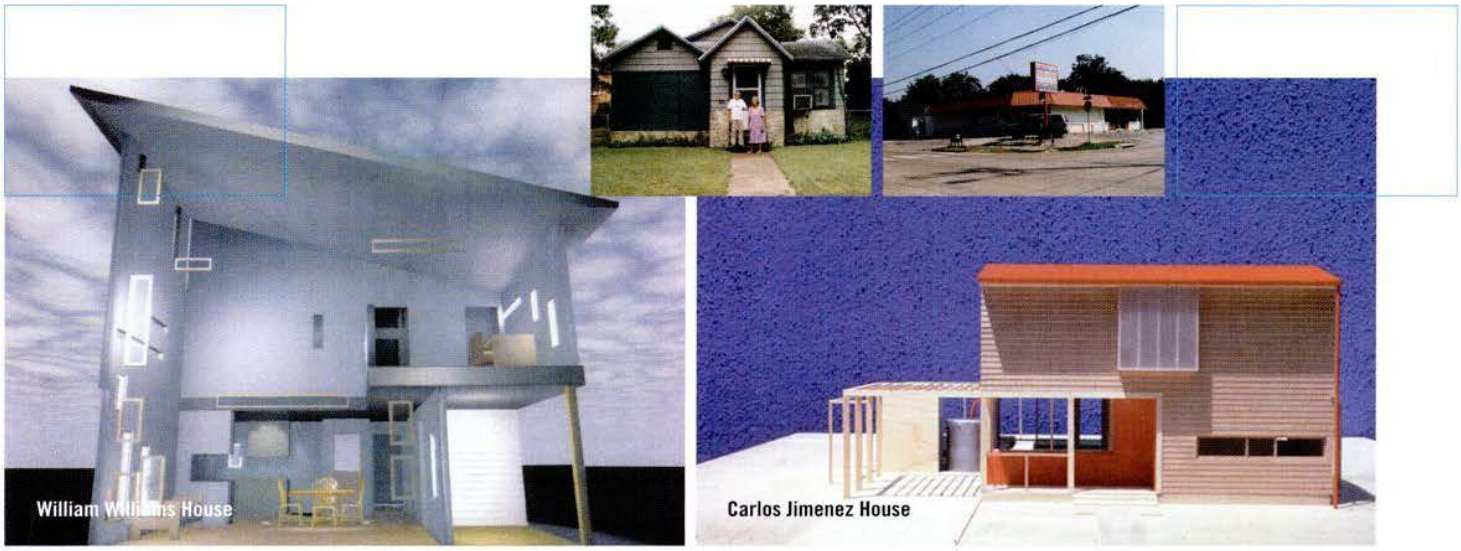
UTOPIA COMES TO THE FIFTH WARD

By Mimi Zeiger

Michael Bell's Glass House @ 2 Degrees

PHOTOS BY BRETT ZAMORE (FIFTH WARD SITE PHOTOS); RENDERING BY JOSH MUELLER

It's late, it's dark, and I'm not sure where I am. I know I'm in Houston, but it doesn't look like a part of town where I'd be likely to find a hotel. In the minutes since I got off the freeway I've driven only a few blocks, but the contrast between neighborhoods is dramatic. Canopies of oak branches and driveways stocked with minivans give way to construction zones or, because everything in Houston is continually being demolished and rebuilt, deconstruction zones. Half-built skeletons rise out of empty lots to dwarf the one-story buildings next door.



I pause at a stoplight, squint at the lousy rent-a-car map, and continue. My headlights pick out the occasional face sitting on an unlit porch, and then an abandoned gas station. The pumps are gone and the brand-name sign is obscured by rust. Rows of run-down houses, broken only by the voids where houses no longer exist, fill the rest of the blocks. It is a view of Southern poverty that is straight out of a Robert Frank photograph. But this is Texas 2000 and, although the economy is booming, poverty is still built into the landscape.

The part of Houston I'm interested in is the Fifth Ward. One of the city's oldest and poorest neighborhoods, the Fifth Ward is inside the loop formed by Highway 610, the eight-lane strip of blacktop that separates the urban core from the newer, more affluent developments beyond. The Fifth Ward's existing housing stock comprises small one- and two-bedroom cottages and shotgun houses. Traditionally a poor, African-American housing type, the homes from 1910 look much like ones built in 1950. In all cases the porches seem to be collapsing. The streets I drive down are narrow and they turn to gravel at their edges, and almost every block has a vacant lot because a house was torn down or dissolved in disrepair into the lush, Southern foliage. I am struck by how rural this place seems, but the truth is that even 25 years ago, this area, called the "Nickel," was a strong, dense neighborhood. At the time of the 1980 census, the area housed more than 26,000 people. Its population today is more like 18,000 and 62 percent of the residents live below poverty level, according to the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation (CRC).

In short, this is not the kind of neighborhood where you'd expect breakout architecture, the kinds of explorations in form and materials that are generally considered luxuries. But the Fifth Ward is the site of a remarkable new housing redevelopment. Seven innovative low-income homes, designed by experimental architects, are currently under construction. Compared with the opulent price tags attached to custom, architecturally designed projects, the $103,000 maximum on these houses makes them nearly affordable. The mission here is not only to rethink the current domestic situation of the inhabitants of the Fifth Ward, but also to house the people who live here. There is a social agenda at stake: Better housing makes a better neighborhood. Here in inner-city Houston, modern architecture is finally shaking off some of its elitist embellishments and joining in the fight.

A willowy figure in jeans with spiky, white-blond hair, Mardi Oakes, project manager of the seven innovative houses, meets me at the reception desk of the CRC with a firm handshake and a Diet Coke tucked under her arm. In her late 20s, she projects neither the black-clad seriousness of a high-design architect nor the self-styled frumpiness associated with nonprofits. Oakes possesses an intensity which makes me believe that this woman will be successful in leading the CRC from building conventional "heritage" and "cottage" style homes, complete with flowered doormats, to truly visionary housing.

Maybe it's a reaction to the architecture of her formative years in an Austin suburb—tract homes, steak houses, and 7-Elevens—but Oakes believes in the power of good design to change lives. "Architecture, that was the reason that my parents never saw me during my teenage years," says Oakes. "The walls were thin and the house wasn't organized very well, so if someone was watching TV, I could hear it in my bedroom, and if I had friends over, you could hear us talking in the den. That's why I used to spend all my time at my friend's house."

When Oakes graduated from Rice School of Architecture and signed on at the CRC, she was a lone figure making the move from the academy into the nonprofit sector, and she experienced culture shock as she changed her focus from theoretical to cost-efficient architecture. "I had been working for nonprofit [nonarchitectural] organizations in the summers and then going to architecture school the rest of the year," says Oakes. "There was a big disconnect between the two worlds. When I started at the CRC, I was able to bring the two sides together, but I was interested in the *work* of the CRC, not the design. I was amazed that clients would come into the office and wouldn't even spend five minutes deciding which house they wanted."

In 1998 Oakes met New York architect Michael Bell, who was then teaching at Rice. Bell had been researching both the economics and the architecture of home construction in the sprawling subdivisions around Houston. He discovered a program of federal "vouchers"—government-funded loans (in Houston, $9,500 per unit) given to nonprofit organizations like the CRC for bringing buyers and single-family homes together in low-income neighborhoods. Bell realized that architects, not just developers, could take advantage of this opportunity to build.

"Rice was too abstract," remarks Bell. "Mardi produced a real-life client and a place

MODEL BY R. WALKER, B. BURKE, B. ZAMORE (JIMENEZ)

to work." Together, Oakes and Bell conspired the "16 Houses Exhibition" into existence, the launching pad for the seven homes presently under construction.

A white-walled space just off a loading dock, DiverseWorks is one of a number of galleries sparking redevelopment in a warehouse district just north of Houston's downtown. It is just about as hipster-urban (read: young, white, and middle class) as the city gets. Yet the "16 Houses Exhibition," which opened in November 1998, attracted the largest and most diverse crowd in the gallery's history. Visitors participated in the exhibition by filling out comment cards. DiverseWorks tallied the respondents' current neighborhood and their top three houses in the show. A jury made up half of architect/academics and half of community members selected the final homes for construction.

The Reverend Harvey Clemons of the Fifth Ward's Pleasant Hill Missionary Baptist Church, a member of the jury, shrugs off rumors that the panel was polarized, with community members leaning toward the more conventional designs. "When you think of community," he says, "you think of people with different tastes and backgrounds coming together. It is this which brings unity. The fact that one house is more 'unique' than another is like the people—they each come with their own individual signature."

The seven houses, Clemons explains, were selected based on a careful consideration of the economic needs of the future owners, and also their environmental and emotional needs. "It is not just the brick, stick, and mortar of the buildings already here that need to be celebrated, but it is the cultural and artistic values of the neighborhood as well," he notes.

Those intangible qualities are what past modernists were famous for overlooking when designing housing for the masses. Architects of the 1920s and '30s looked to mechanistic forms—glass curtain walls, concrete slabs, and rational planning—to alleviate the cramped and unsanitary conditions of 19th-century tenements. Modernism was going to be the savior of the working class. Chants of "better living though architecture" rang out from the French avant-garde and were, eventually, heard by optimistic American urban planners of the '50s and '60s. The modern forms of the resultant housing blocks seemed socially progressive, and they were cheap to build. Ultimately, the living condition in these low-income projects came to resemble those in the tenements they replaced. Projects such as Pruitt Igoe in St. Louis were blamed for encouraging crime and civil unrest, and, guided by hindsight, local authorities across America razed their modernist ghettos and replaced them with town houses.

Michael Bell's Glass House @ 2 Degrees walks a fine line between modernism's missteps and the economic realities of the Fifth Ward. The house, which is almost entirely transparent, can be seen as a new chapter in the history of see-through houses, a history that includes Philip Johnson's Glass House (1949) and Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House (1950). Bell's house is a nod to those masterpieces, but it is also quite literally a mirror of the Fifth Ward's eccentricities. The sliding glass doors of Bell's house will reflect the nearby 610 freeway. The house itself is an elegant solution to living in a small space, and the use of mass-produced sliding glass doors makes it economically feasible, yet it is hard to say whether the inhabitants can live with all that exposure.

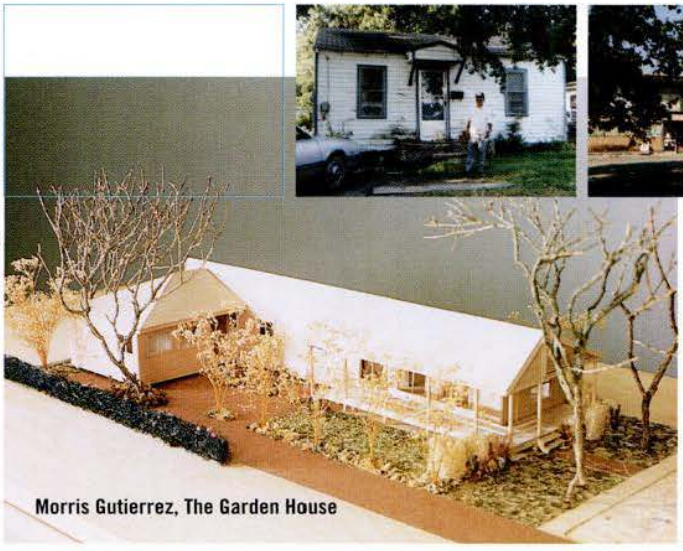
Johnson's own glass house relied on the expansive acreage of his estate to provide the privacy required so that he could promenade in his birthday suit while communing with the surrounding nature. Bell's house will have neighbors.

Of the seven houses, the Glass House proposes the most extreme cultural intervention, but by pushing the architecture this far, it stretches the possibilities and the imagination of the neighborhood. Although this may seem a bit pedantic, the house acts as a literacy project, increasing the local architectural vocabulary of the residents and letting them decide if this is their language.

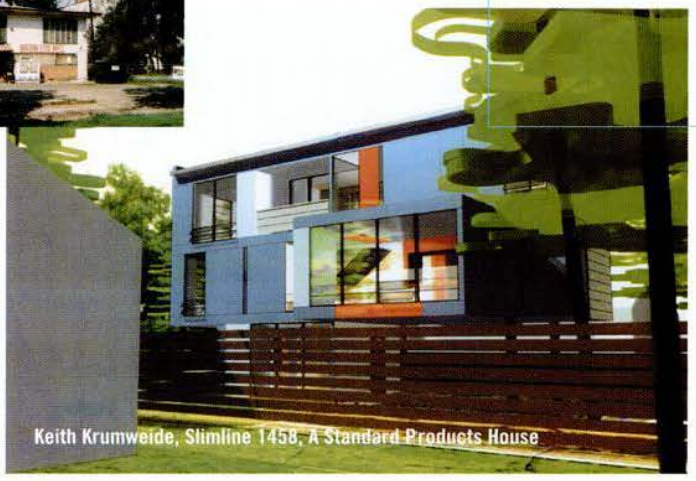
Joe Meppelink, a Houston metal worker and Rice architecture graduate whose firm METALAB is building the glass house, recognizes the situation's sensitivity: "It is a glass house in a bad neighborhood, and the glass isn't tempered. One stone will do it in." Lest he sound too negative, Meppelink adds, "It remains to be seen how [the house] will be received. I hope that it doesn't come off as a pretentious gamble, since there is a lot of integrity going into the project."

Oakes points out that the CRC requires that miniblinds be installed in every house. (Habitat for Humanity houses built in the area left the windows uncovered. Down the line, improvised window treatments included sheets, newspaper, and aluminum foil.) When asked if he thought the project would still be valid even if the community didn't embrace it, Bell replied, "I would consider it

RENDERINGS COURTESY OF ROY WITH OPENSHOP/RESEARCH (VHOUSE), STUDIO WORKS, ROBERT MANGURIAN AND MARY-ANN RAY (INSIDE OUTSIDE)



Morris Gutierrez, The Garden House



Keith Krumweide, Slimline 1458, A Standard Products House

a success anyway. I have never worked on anything that had this much collaboration and momentum behind it."

The architects of the other Fifth Ward houses have strived to design houses that marry big aesthetic ideas to the local climate and culture. New York architect Lindy Roy's gestural roof, for instance, acts as a front porch–style shelter (complete with bug zapper). Houses by Houston firms Morris Gutierrez Architects and William Williams do not so much challenge the typical domestic situation posed by the tiny, 1,100-square-foot footprint as much as they modify it to increase the quality of living in these spaces. Morris Gutierrez Architects wraps the rooms of the small structure around the garden like a modern ranch house, creating a private outdoor space and increasing the total livable area. Williams is true to the cottage and shotgun forms and textures of the houses in the area, but he opens up his interiors by adding unexpected, multi-sized windows that flood the house with patterns of light.

Oakes asks herself, "How do you prove the dollar value of good design versus bad?" The new Fifth Ward houses seem to make the answer self-evident. Sensitivity to the humanist elements of the space separates these houses from the stark public housing of the past and today's conventional low-income homes.

As Oakes drives me through the ramshackle Fifth Ward, she bemoans the fact that the bumpy streets blew the shocks on her Honda in the first year on the job. But her optimistic view of the neighborhood is infectious. I find that I can't argue with the success of earlier, "heritage" style (stripped-down antebellum) or "cottage" style (upgraded local vernacular) CRC homes. Where new construction went up, so did the quality of the neighborhood.

Poised stylistically between those early CRC homes and the seven new, adventurous models is a pair by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates (VSBA), the Philadelphia-based firm known for its embrace of American vernacular styles. The two VSBA homes, which stand across the street from sites assigned to CRC houses by Roy and Rice professor Keith Krumweide, are already changing the neighborhood. The two, whimsically appointed with pitched roofs, porch swings, and decorative railings, are painted mango yellow and periwinkle blue, respectively. A run-down cottage that sits kitty-corner to the pair was dingy white when Oakes last stopped by. Upon her return it was painted a lime green with darker green trim, entering into a colorful dialogue with its new neighbors.

From the cab of her truck, Oakes points out the sights: the Deluxe Theater, an art deco ballroom slated for conversion into an arts complex by the CRC; basketball courts covered by expressive metal canopies; and a pentagon-shaped church. The tour is Oakes' way of saying that inventive design is already a key component of a neighborhood rich with architectural diversity.

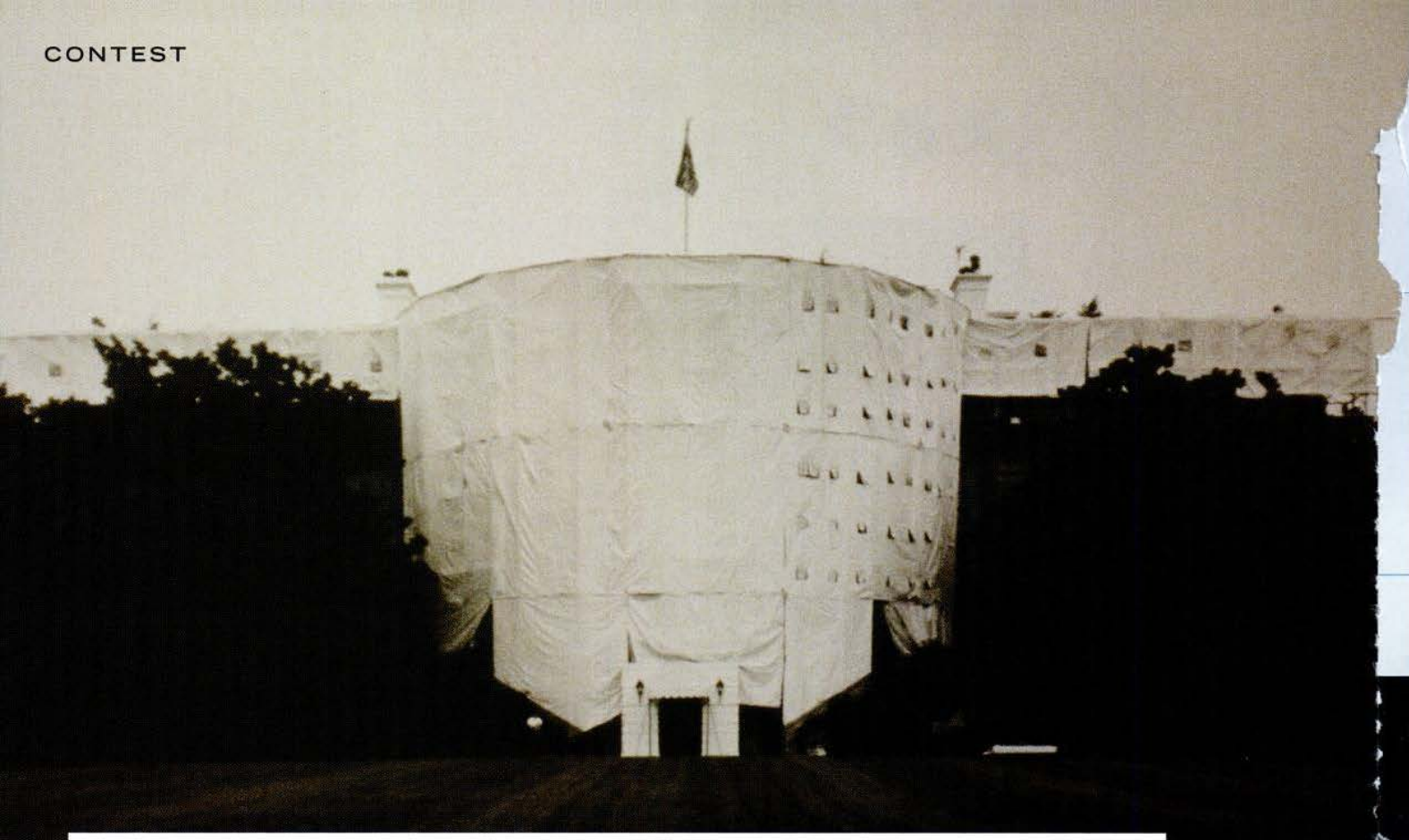
At some point during the tour, Oakes tells me that the neighborhood usually gets stuck with off-brand franchises and products, but the community members who come into her office have the same hunger for name brands and dream homes as their outside-the-loop counterparts. On my way out of town, I find myself thinking about this. It occurs to me that, because modern style has hit the mainstream with a vengeance, Fifth Ward residents don't have to buy into the social consciousness of the project or the idealism of the architects. They can just look to the marketplace for confirmation that they are getting, for once, a top-quality, name-brand version of the dream.

On the freeway, airport bound, I spy for a split second the site where Bell's Glass House @ 2 Degrees will soon stand. I imagine it as a quick glint of glass against Houston's low and seemingly endless sprawl, a bright spot amidst the Fifth Ward's poverty. These housing experiments are bringing much-needed energy and creativity to the neighborhood, restoring texture and pattern to a threadbare urban fabric. I envision the seven schemes—rooms filled with light, color, and hope—as a new deal, a reconciliation between the still-unrealized potential of modernism and the people who have been living with modernism's legacy.

Oakes began the MBA program at Harvard University this past fall. Although she's started classes in Cambridge, she is still working closely with the CRC. Her development of the seven houses in the Fifth Ward is just the first step of her innovative vision. Ultimately, she hopes to develop a new model of the investor/architect/client relationship—one that gives more weight to the architectural process and allows design to figure into the bottom line of home construction. "If the investors cared about the architecture then the building would be a good project," Oakes reflects. "But banks don't have a way to give credit for good design."

When she is not listening to records in her Oakland flat, Mimi Zeiger is editor and publisher of the architecture zine loud paper.

MODEL COURTESY OF MORRIS GUTIERRREZ ARCHITECTS AND JANE CURTIS, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT (MORRIS GUTIERRREZ), RENDERING BY STANDARD, TX (KRUMWEIDE)



DESIGN THE ULTIMATE LIVE/WORK SPACE

dwell invites architects, interior designers, artists, and concerned citizens to reimagine the White House.

On November 1, 2000, the White House celebrated its 200th anniversary.
The 67,200-square-foot, 132-room building was first occupied by President John Adams. It was originally designed by architect James Hoban and cost $232,371. It was rebuilt from 1815 to 1817 (after being torched by British troops in the War of 1812). There have been two major renovations, one by McKim, Mead, and White in 1902 and one by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1949.

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STORY BY RAUL BARRENECHE

Mention Zurich and most people can't help but think of fairy-tale chalets, tiny chocolate and watch shops, and hush-hush banks. And since Zurich is full of all of the above—clichés, after all, are based on truths—they wouldn't be too far off base. But they'd be overlooking the edgy, modern side of Switzerland's metropolis.

Though it hasn't shaken its bad rap as a stuffy banking town, Zurich has always been a fertile, if quiet, breeding ground for the avant-garde. It's where the Dada movement was born in 1916, and it was home, at different times, to James Joyce (he wrote *Ulysses* there), Carl Jung, and Richard Wagner. Le Corbusier's last building is in Zurich. And in the city's landmark 13th-century Fraumünster church are a trio of luminous stained-glass windows that Marc Chagall created in 1970, when the Russian-born artist was a formidable 83 years old.

There's an urban renaissance gripping Zurich that, in typically Swiss fashion, is strong but subtle. Hip, mid-century design shops are springing up all over town, and a recent relaxing of liquor laws has young entrepreneurs opening bars and restaurants in up-and-coming neighborhoods like the Industrial Quarter. This riverfront area, once a desolate zone of warehouses, factories, and lively drug and prostitution trades, is becoming Zurich's version of Silicon Alley. The quarter is now home to e-businesses, furniture shops, art galleries, and urban pioneers drawn by riverfront lofts with surprisingly cheap rents.

Zurich's Third and Fourth *Kreise*, or districts, make up the Aussersihl, located west of the Sihl River that runs through the city center. Home to Zurich's blue-collar workers and red light district, the Aussersihl is another quickly changing neighborhood where trendy boutiques and stylish boîtes are replacing grunge and sleaze.

There are plenty of famous architects from Switzerland—Le Corbusier, born in French-speaking La Chaux-de-Fonds, Mario Botta from Ticino in the Italian-speaking south, Peter Zumthor in Chur, and Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron in Basel—but none from Zurich. That's changing lately, with the emergence of young Zurich-based designers like Marianne Burkhalter and Christian Sumi, Angélil/Graham/Pfenninger/Scholl (A/G/P/S), and Annete Gigon and Mike Guyer, who are making their mark on the city.

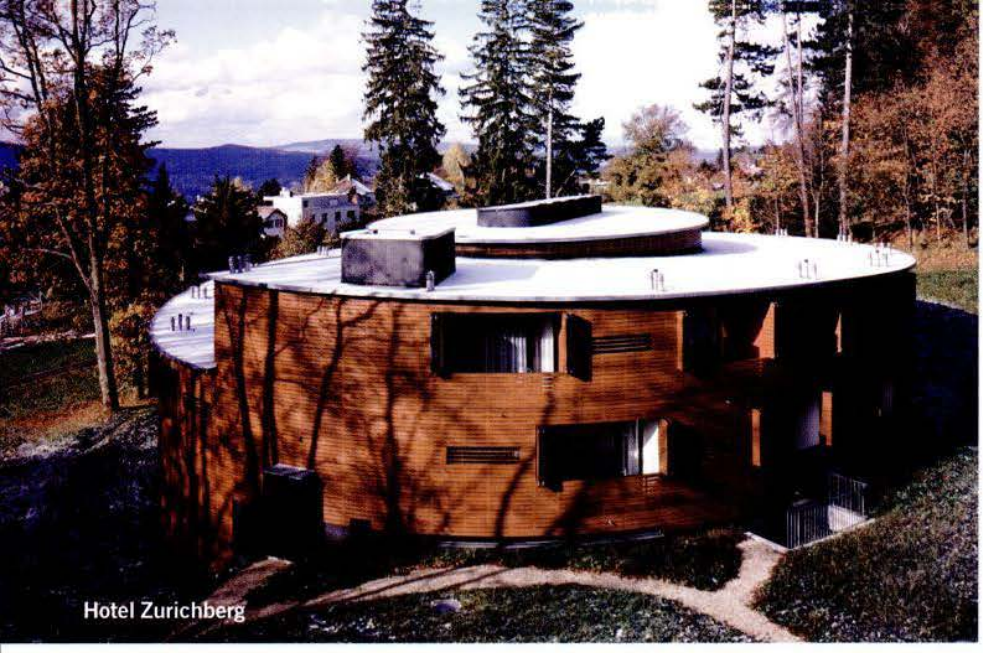
Houses

Hidden among Zurich's medieval townhouses are a few modern surprises. The Heidi Weber pavilion, also known as the Le Corbusier Center (Höschgasse 8; 41.1.383.64.70, open Sundays only) was Le Corbusier's last building, completed two years after his death, in 1967. Created as an exhibition pavilion for the eccentric gallery owner Heidi Weber in lakeside Zurichhorn Park, the houselike structure is a Technicolor cubist canvas come to life. (Surprise! Corbu didn't only build in white.) The architect determined the building's dimensions from his *modulor* system of human-scaled proportions. He wrapped its boxy volumes in brightly colored panels and sheltered them beneath a pair of umbrellalike roofs. Across the street at Höschgasse 5 is the stately beaux-arts home and studio of architect and structural maestro Santiago Calatrava, who designed the kinetic Bertoia-like sculptures scattered about his front lawn.

One of the few houses designed by the craft-obsessed Italian modernist Carlo Scarpa is at Aurorastrasse 56. Scarpa absorbed parts of a 1914 house into a new, abstract composition, which he completed in 1968. You'll recognize the master's hand at work in the notched planes and slipped forms of the street façade, now ivy-covered; around back is a series of terraces. Scarpa's signature—an almost obsessive attention to detail—is evident everywhere.

In 1944, Swiss architect Alfred Roth, a collaborator of Marcel Breuer, built a winter residence in Zurich for Hélène de Mandrot, who promoted the first Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne in 1929. A year after moving in, de Mandrot left Roth her house (at Hadlaubstrasse 59). The architect lived in the hexagonal wooden house until 1961, when he moved to another home and studio—this one with a built-in wing for visiting student interns—at Bergstrasse 67.

PHOTOS BY WILLIAM J. R. CURTIS (LE CORBUSIER CENTER); THOMAS DIX/ARCHITEKTURPHOTO (TINGUELY MUSEUM)



Hotel Zurichberg

A/G/P/S Architects

Lake Zurich

PHOTOS BY FRIEDRICH BUSAM/ARCHITEKTURPHOTO (HOTEL ZURICHBERG); REINHARD ZIMMERMANN (A/G/P/S); CAROLINE MINJOLLE/LOOKAT (LAKE ZURICH)

Like Roth and other Swiss modernists, contemporary architects Burkhalter and Sumi focus on adapting tried-and-true Swiss building traditions (think wood) to modern concepts of form, color, and space. Case in point: a house the duo designed in Langnau am Albis, just outside Zurich, at Oberrenggstrasse 4. The hillside house is essentially a long box wrapped in colored wood, with a deep roof overhang. A smaller box, containing a studio, pops out of the bigger volume, which shelters the bedrooms.

In the tony suburb of Horgen, the Zurich office of architects **A/G/P/S** (who practice in Los Angeles) designed the ultimate modern take on the Swiss wooden house: a slatted-wood wedge sprouting out of a hillside at Claridenstrasse 7 in the town of Horgen. The wedge rises from one story to two. At one end are three identical bedrooms and bathrooms for the owners' three children; at the other, an upstairs loft for Mom and Dad. The house's skin of larch-wood panels slides to cover floor-to-ceiling windows for extra security—and privacy.

Hotels/Restaurants/Shops

To experience Burkhalter and Sumi's philosophy firsthand, check yourself into one of their designs, the **Hotel Zurichberg** (Orellistrasse 21; 41.1.268.3535). Perched high atop a hillside with views of the city, Lake Zurich, and the Alps, the hotel has two wings: One is a restored Victorian inn, the other, designed by Burkhalter and Sumi, is a bright red, wooden spiral, with rooms wrapping an interior atrium with a corkscrew ramp. If you prefer a downtown location, the Widder Hotel (Rennweg 7; 41.1.224.2526) is still Zurich's top boutique hotel, made up of 10 restored houses dating from the 12th to 17th centuries. The furnishings, though, are all thoroughly modern.

The favorite dining spot of Zurich's creative types is Kaufleuten (Pelikanstrasse 18; 41.1.225.3333), housed in a restored beaux-arts theater. The adjoining bar and disco are ground zero for the city's young and beautiful, and for visiting celebrities. For more casual fare—soba and pad thai—try Lily's in the gentrifying Aussersihl (Langstrasse 197; 41.1.440.1885).

Krauthammer (Obere Zäune 24; 41.1.25 1.2010) is Zurich's top source for books on art, architecture, and design. Like the rest of the world, Zurich is on board the mid-century modern bandwagon. Peruse the expected furniture fare at Hannibal in the Aussersihl (St. Jakobstrasse 39; 41.1.242.6044), as well as a few unexpected *objets*.

Day Trips

Though there's plenty to see in Zurich, it's also a great home base from which to take easy day trips. The city's centrally located Hauptbahnhof is a major hub for the super-efficient Swiss national railway, SBB (for fares and schedules, log onto www.sbb.ch).

It takes two trains and a bus to reach Peter Zumthor's celebrated spa in the remote Alpine village of Vals, but it's worth the three-hour journey to soak in the luxurious minimalism (Therme Vals; 41.81.926.8080).

In Schaffhausen, about 50 minutes due north of Zurich, is the Hallen für Neue Kunst (Baumgartenstrasse 23; 41.52.625.2515), a huge warehouse full of art by a who's who of minimalists: Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Sol Lewitt, and Joseph Beuys, among others.

Basel, Europe's pharmaceutical capital, is also a major capital of art and architecture. Herzog and de Meuron's hometown (45 minutes from Zurich) is also home to the Renzo Piano–designed Fondation Beyeler (Baselstrasse 101; 41.61.645.9700) and the **Museum Jean Tinguely** (Solitude Park; 41.61.681.9320), designed by Botta. A 45-minute bus ride across the German border from downtown Basel takes you to Weil am Rhein, site of the modern furniture giant Vitra's museum and headquarters (Charles-Eames-Strasse 1; 49.7621.702.3578). And don't miss the buildings by design giants Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Tadao Ando, and Alvaro Siza.

Raul Barreneche is a contributing editor at Metropolitan Home *and* Travel + Leisure. *He is currently working on a book of new American houses, to be published by Rizzoli/Universe next fall.*

GOING HOME

For the First Time in Five Years, an Internet Pioneer Sees Her Brooklyn Apartment in the Light of Day.

Until 1995, I lived the life of an Arty Boho Slacker Intellectual. I purposefully kept employment to a minimum so that I could pursue the nonpaying, creative things I liked to do. I didn't like anything mainstream or established; I was always looking for the unfound, the unheralded, the undefined.

Eventually these predilections led me to the nooks and crannies of cyberspace, which, pre-Web, was a bare, one-color, text-only frontier where you could create a rudimentary world from scratch. My favorite thing to do was hang out online, where I helped manage Echo, a New York City–based virtual community founded in 1990 that was full of Arty Boho Slacker Intellectuals like me.

All day and night, I logged in from home, living in my online world while surrounded in physical space by the accumulated mass of stuff that marks the ABSI lifestyle: tons of books (Susan Sontag/Situationist/Henry James/hard-boiled), CDs and LPs (Kurt Cobain/Charlie Parker/rockabilly/Angelo Badalamenti), furniture (thrift-store mid-century), kitchen equipment (LuRay dishware/TWA silverware/'40s Formica), and art (thrift-store paint-by-numbers nature paintings). It was an odd sort of homebody life.

In 1995, my online slacker friends and I were all hired by some of the thousands and thousands of new companies that sprang up when the world realized there was a whole new medium to exploit: the Internet. We were handed good money to deploy the suddenly very marketable knowledge we'd gained from aimlessly hanging around the electronic water cooler. My job was running an arty, literary, eccentric, electronically experimental Webzine called *Word*.

Having a real job utterly changed my life. I became "successful." I got involved in business. I found a place for myself in worlds where I previously hadn't one (publishing) or that hadn't existed before (online "content").

Five years passed. I worked. All the time. Period. I was at either work or work-related events. Home, or home life, ceased to exist for me. I went there only to sleep.

Beginning in 1998, a stock market bubble inflated the value of Internet businesses. It created even more jobs. Everyone seemed to be working the way I did; "Internet Start-Up" became a sort of lifestyle.

In spring of 2000, the stock bubble began to deflate. I was sick of running *Word* and the rich guy who owned it was sick of paying for it, so we both stopped. A lot of the other start-ups stopped, too. Now I—along with many of my cohorts—am back at home, living the "unemployed" lifestyle.

Home—but it doesn't feel like exactly the right place. What it feels like is, I'm spending a lot of time in the apartment of a person who isn't quite me anymore, surrounded by the artifacts of a life I no longer live. I changed so much in those five years that I actually have to work to recall the circumstances under which I curated this collection, and who the "I" was who curated it. That self stopped evolving five years ago, or became another self, or something. And the new self doesn't have the same passion for the old self's things.

Facing me as I type is a wall of books. This person, Marisa Bowe pre-1995, had a fanatical interest in pop culture sociology and analysis. There are books about kitsch, the avant-garde, high culture, low culture, and the concept of taste in general. There are books about romance novels, about sitcoms and TV news, about punk rock and fashion and movie stars. There are books about books.

The old me sure liked to think a lot. What my friends and I liked to do best back then was think and talk, reeling out theories and opinions filtered through the books we'd all read. This was a major part of the ABSI lifestyle, and it took a lot of time. I can see now that my whole apartment was set up to facilitate this sort of grad-student-manqué way of life.

But running a small company gave me a taste for doing things, not just thinking about them. For creating pop culture, not just analyzing it. During that five-year creative spree at *Word*, I burned through all those old thoughts and ideas like logs. So now, most of my books are looking more and more to me like baggage.

And the décor here sort of embarrasses me. I collected mid-century *objets* for years because, having grown up with those styles in my parents' home, I felt a deep, psychoanalytical, aestheto-historical, retro-virtual resonance with them. And underemployed as I was, I felt a deep econo-socio resonance with the prices at the thrift stores where I bought them. In every conceivable way, this rust-and-gold furniture, these squiggly shaded lamps, and those absurd paintings with their awkward daubs of snow and clichéd autumn foliage were, five years ago, me to the core.

But things have changed. With the Internet boom fueling massive home décor consumption among young adults, fashionable magazines have promoted and institutionalized the style of my living room. Dozens of new restaurants have opened in Manhattan and Brooklyn, also in response to the boom, and it seems as if half of them look eerily like my little railroad flat retro-set. Now, it looks as if I copied them—like I am the type of person who carefully follows trends, instead of one who makes her consumption choices based on inner resonances.

There's been a deeper change, too. Some kind of Freudian thing was being worked through via the meta-diorama of my parents' living room. But I think maybe all the doing, the business, and the success of the last five years have processed my psyche more thoroughly than the furniture ever could have and cleansed the Oedipal resonance from my sofa. The signifier has become detached from the signi— Oops, that's the old me talking.

The other day I indulged a secret habit and went to an I Ching Web site to get a reading on my uncertain and changing circumstances. "Molting," it said. Perfect, I thought. I'm not betraying my roots, I'm just going through a natural evolutionary transformation. I may no longer be the ABSI I once was, but I'm not going to suddenly become an unambivalent consumer who finds happiness in a ready-made, off-the-rack "style." Nor am I going to become a design hag whose "collection" shows off her "good taste." I still prefer the unfound, the unheralded, the undefined.

I'm still undefined myself. I'm still in mid-molt. If my apartment were my shell, my skin, my feathers, I wouldn't be quite ready to shuck them. I don't have a new shell—and I don't have a new job. So I'm going to keep living for a while in this other person's apartment. She's a good landlord, though. She doesn't mind me using her stuff.

Marisa Bowe was the editor-in-chief of Word *(www.word.com) from 1995 to 2000. She is also a co-editor of* Gig: Americans Talk About Their Jobs *(Crown, 2000).*

LITTLE HOUSE ON THE NETWORK

STORY BY PHIL AGRE / PHOTO BY CYRUS ETEMAD

In René Descartes' *Meditations*, he tried to persuade himself that he wasn't a disembodied brain, kept in a vat of nutrients and connected to the outside world by wires. Today, the visionaries of cyberspace would like nothing better. One of their less febrile visions is the electronic cottage: the place in the countryside where you will live once telecommuting has eliminated the need for face-to-face interaction. It's an appealing phrase, electronic cottage, with its tension between the futuristic and the pastoral. But it's a poor representation of reality. Some people really are moving to the countryside. For most of us, however, the task ahead is not to escape the city but to reinvent it. As part of this project, let's consider how life is changing as our homes fill up with digital technology.

So how *should* we define the electronic cottage?

Pick one: (a) a house with dozens of electronic gadgets, all networked with one another and with the outside world; (b) a science fiction scenario of robot vacuum cleaners and refrigerators that know when you need milk, dreamed up by guys who don't know much about housework; (c) a way of integrating the sensuous and informational aspects of life without making a big deal out of the technology; (d) however we want.

What kinds of gadgets are we talking about?

At this point we're mostly guessing. Most of our ideas will seem foolish in retrospect. But start with the Web, and imagine that same functionality built into everything from wristwatches to picture frames to televisions—replacing the clunky desktop computer with devices that fit more easily into your life. Every appliance can include a computer that diagnoses impending breakdowns and calls for service. Appliances can also get well-designed, graphical interfaces that make their myriad features useful. Speech and gesture can take the place of keyboards. Devices that look and feel like paper books will display fresh content every month, or whenever you ask them to. Display screens and communications bandwidth will be so cheap that any object can include a video link to anyplace in the entire world. Things like tools and equipment can be tagged with simple radio-frequency devices so they never get lost.

What Is the Electronic Cottage?

Bill Moggridge is a principal of Ideo, a consulting firm dedicated to the user-centered design of products, services, and environments.

I suppose the first thing to ask is what one means by electronic cottage. To me, it means people working from home by electronic means, so you get cottage industries happening. Now the electronic cottage is different from a "smart house," like Bill Gates' house. The smart house is using electronic stuff to do all the things you would do in your own home. That seems very un-cottagey to me in that it is usually the most expensive houses, and cottage implies homey and small and not necessarily expensive and probably in the country somewhere. Whereas Bill Gates' smart house implies millions of dollars on the edge of Seattle.

The key to the future of the electronic cottage lies in when electronic means of communication will allow group communication. That is, when it is nearly as good to be virtually represented for a meeting with your colleagues as it is to go there physically. Because we are such multisensory beings, just having a picture of someone is not enough.

Hella Jongerius is an industrial designer based in the Netherlands. Her home office will be included in MoMA's *Workspheres* exhibit, which opens February 8, 2001.

For most of my friends, a "home office" is mostly a table with an iMac on it. There tends to be a lot of office and less home. My goal is to give the home a bigger role in technology. To integrate the office more

But I'm not a gadget person. I just want to get on with my life.
Believe it or not, the technical people understand this. They want computing to be invisible, so that digital functionality is built calmly and seamlessly into the environment. This might be impractical, but it's progress. The really successful digital products will combine useful functionality with a worked-through consciousness of the aesthetic and symbolic aspects of the devices, and of the activities in which people use them.

Look, I already have DSL, and it hasn't been a beautiful experience. Will this stuff ever work?
Nobody knows. The biggest problem right now is your local telephone and cable companies, who know more about lobbying than customer service or technology. Another problem is that every software company tries to make its products more cumbersome and bloated than its competitors. So the technology is not ready for prime time. As digital functionality creeps into a hundred categories of products, however, the focus will shift away from the traditional computing and communications companies. Hope lies with companies that know the real meaning of product design.

What will happen to my family when we're all completely wired?
That's up to you. But field studies suggest some patterns. On one hand, cheap media and communications technologies let everyone build their own relational world. Nobody has to come out of their room. On the other hand, wireless communications enable families to stay in touch all day. And as everyone becomes accessible to everyone else all the time, cell phones and pagers take on complicated emotional meanings. So the forces pull in different directions; happy families will use the technology in positive ways, and others won't.

Here's an intuition. With old technologies, even the telephone, people come and go. You're connected to them or you're not. With the new technologies, everyone is a continuing presence. You can keep an eye on the kids in day care through the Webcam. You can monitor the school news and homework assignments on the website. You can exchange an all-day-long, steady background of short text messages with your spouse. You become like the air-traffic controllers who maintain a mental map of where all the planes are, all the time.

Do I have to run wires into my kitchen so the gadgets can talk to one another?
You can if you want. But most of us will wait for wireless networking. For example, a technology called Bluetooth enables devices to form themselves spontaneously into wireless networks. A device that you carry in your pocket senses other devices that happen to be nearby and configures them to your liking (changing the washing machine's interface language to French, the computer to beginner's mode, and so on). A simple, handheld device with a touchscreen can serve as a universal controller for any appliance you hold it up to. Simply bringing a device home will be enough to connect it to your local network.

Should I worry about privacy?
Yes. Right now, privacy on the Web is a disaster. Personal computers lack transparency: Any program can send information out to the Internet without telling you. As cars, refrigerators, air-conditioning and electric power systems, medical instruments, and books go online, they will start to "phone home," exchanging data with their manufacturers for a variety of good and not-so-good reasons. As your life fills with networked devices, the potential for abuse becomes astronomical. After all, the main traditions of computer-system design originated in military and industrial settings where surveillance and control are good things. The same design practices are good for marketing, not to mention insurance and law enforcement. Your home should be immune to all that.

This sounds like a job for design.
You bet. We've learned how to collapse distance with new technology; now we need to re-establish a sense of place. Emotionally healthy people have good boundaries, but boundaries are collapsing all around us. The Internet makes it hard to patrol the informational boundary between your home and the rest of the world. The cell phone breaks down the traditional mappings between activities and places: Any sort of business can intrude into any other sort. The distinction between work life and home life has almost disappeared. This is not good. The job for design is to reinvent the boundaries that individuals, couples, and families create for themselves. This is partly a technological matter: Privacy-enhancing technologies like encryption can keep outsiders from peering in. But it's partly a matter of culture. Every family has its rituals that coevolve with the technologies, and well-designed technologies provide a rich space for the design of rituals. The electronic cottage is, in one sense, a building with four walls and a lot of gear in it. But in another sense it's the space—physical and digital—that people create for themselves. What are good spaces like? That's a question for you.

Phil Agre is an associate professor of information studies at UCLA. He is the co-editor of Technology and Privacy: The New Landscape *(MIT Press). His home page is http://dlis.gseis.ucla.edu/pagre.*

in the home but let the home be the dominant party. In short, a better balance between home and office, a more female touch. I've been searching for traditional and archetypal home objects that people recognize, that give people a smile of memory, and I let these things be the carrier for the office program. Examples are a kitchen table, a rocking chair, a pillow, a bed—products that don't exist in the office.

Lisa Strausfeld is the principal of InformationArt, a new company that produces digital information art products for public and private environments.

I'm particularly interested in information products that might be found in the electronic cottage. We have CD-ROM encyclopedias and always-on Internet access, but what if the information becomes as accessible and integrated in our home as the time we can read from the clocks we display in every room? And not only that, what if it's so appealing and beautiful, perhaps, that we give it the wall space in our home that was once allotted to a painting or a reproduction or whatever it is we might frame and call "art"?

I've always been fascinated by what we collect in our homes. Why do we collect artifacts, what do they mean to us, and what memories do we store in them? Maybe there's a new model for the longevity of objects. We're so compelled to save things—like letters and photos, and souvenirs from travel. But many of us hate clutter. Maybe we can have a new relationship to objects in our home but retain all the significance of our relationship to those objects or something better and never before possible. ■

IT CAME FROM PLANET SEARS

Cisco Systems' House of the Very Near Future

1 2

STORY BY ALLISON ARIEFF / PHOTOS BY CYRUS ETEMAD

We have seen the future and it is, well, not what we were expecting.

In the past, futurists offered awe-inspiring visions of where we'd live—streamlined structures, odd shapes, shiny surfaces. The emphasis was on sight and sensation and speed. It was FUN! It was FAST! There was an energy and excitement generated by the possibilities of the future that was palpable and eminently visual.

Today, the vision of the future is eminently virtual. By that we mean the futuristic elements are all but invisible. The Cisco Systems Internet Home is located on the ground floor of one of the seemingly endless identical buildings that make up the Cisco Systems campus in San Jose. It resembles nothing so much as a Sears appliance showroom—which would make sense since most of the furniture and appliances came from Sears. (This is no fault of the designers of the Internet Home, Praxis Architects, who did their best with the limiting design brief.) Every feature of the Internet Home is available now or will be within six months. It is fast—or at least the DSL connections are—but it is an invisible, functional sort of speed, not an exhilarating one.

What the Internet Home is, however, is efficient. In fact, like so much that comes out of Silicon Valley, it assumes the need for an almost pathological efficiency. As Rob Sprenger, manager of the Internet Home, explained, "The value of all of the elements presented here is that the Internet lifestyle is a connected lifestyle, one that allows you to shrink time and distance, which saves you time." And, he adds in dead earnest, "Anything that saves you time enhances your life."

Inherent in this love affair with efficiency is the idea that labor is bad, something to be avoided at all costs. And it is that attitude that drives the effort to make home technology invisible. But this hiding of technology only serves to make it more mysterious—which is precisely the opposite of what the Internet Home hopes to achieve in showcasing these features.

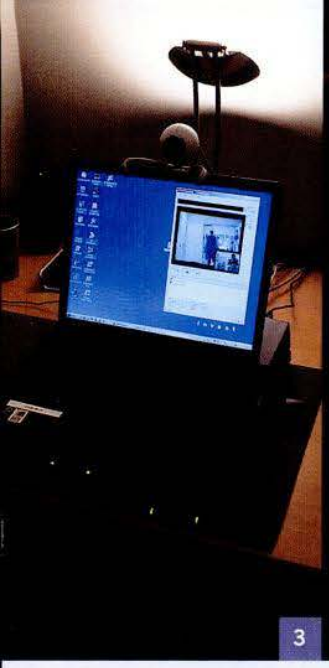
1 / Wireless Web Tablet

Frustrated by your inability to turn on the oven while you are relaxing in the backyard? With the Wireless Web Tablet (which fits into the refrigerator door when it's not out back), you can cook a chicken without getting up from your chaise lounge. You can watch that chicken cook, too, thanks to a "ham cam" inside the oven that projects images onto the tablet's screen. These and countless other timesaving tasks are made possible with this portable device that allows you to control your stereo and TV, lights, air conditioning, drapes from anywhere in your home. While at work or traveling, you can control these same things from any Web browser just by logging on to

Books

***e-topia* by William J. Mitchell**
The MIT Press, 1999, $22.50
In addressing our "wired" future, William Mitchell, dean of the School of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, tries to walk an extremely fine line between "digiphile" and "digiphobe." In his follow-up to *City of Bits,* Mitchell seeks a secure middle ground where we can embrace all digital technology and still be "a body of individuals living as members of a community." In testament to the speed of the times, however, this book already seems dated. "History repeats itself," Mitchell says, in that new technological advances routinely displace old ones, causing a community conundrum. But actually, our ability to seamlessly adapt to these advances has already relegated this book to history.

Smart Homes for Dummies—Everything You Need to Prepare Your Home for the 21st Century
By Danny Briere and Pat Hurley
IDG Books Worldwide, 1999, $19.99
You knew there had to be one, right? Here's the ". . . For Dummies" book about the "smart home." The preponderance of chapters—"Keeping the Bad Guys at Bay: Security" and "Making Your Home an Entertainment Center"—suggests that the "Future Perfect, Smart Home" is all about paranoia and fighting off boredom. But there's more to it than that—there are remote-control lawn mowers, "Super high-tech" telescopes, and Jacuzzis with built-in TV sets. If this is what you're looking for, *Smart Homes for Dummies* is the place to start.



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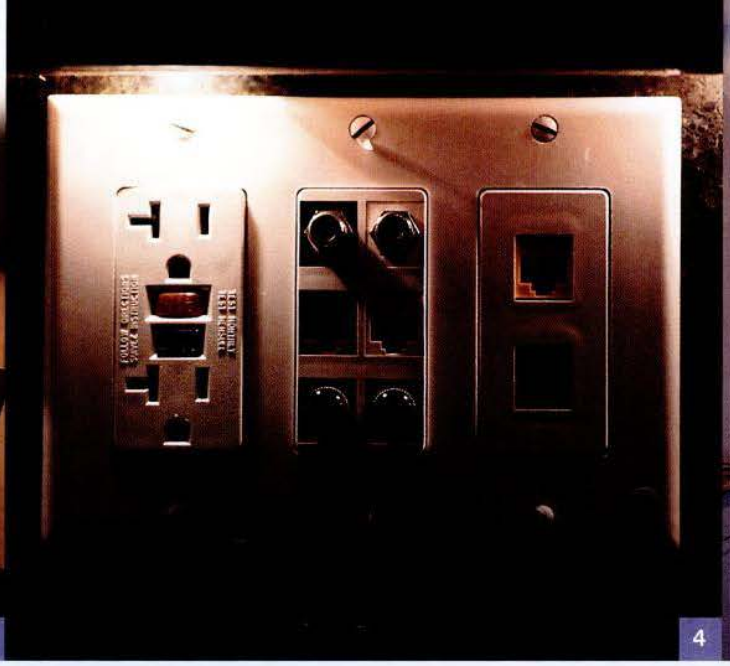

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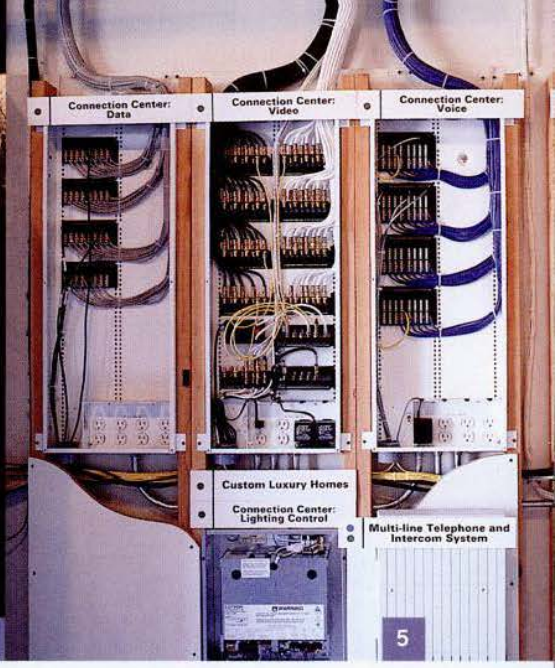


5

your home account. So if you accidentally leave the coffee pot on, you can turn it off from the office.

2 / Crestron Touchpad

This handy little system is available right now. Its slogan? "Bring Crestron Home and Leave the Twentieth Century Behind." Its function? A "custom home solution" that allows you to control the functions of your house—everything from lights to the alarm system to the Jacuzzi jets—from a central panel. It also provides stock quotes and weather updates and oodles of streaming Internet content. It also allows you to control these same functions from a portable, wireless device or from any Internet connection, anywhere in the world. The functions of the Crestron system generally fall into the "Hey, that's kinda neat" category, but the actual level of utility is questionable. And the surveillance aspects verge on the insidious (imagine if *your* parents had a Webcam in the house when you were growing up).

3 / Unified Messaging System

With this computer application you can log on to a message center and check voice mail, email, and faxes from one central place. No need to open up additional applications, no need to "Press 1 now." You can also call in to this system from your cell phone—it not only lets you listen to your voice mail, it uses voice-recognition software to read your emails to you over the phone. It can't read faxes or handwritten notes—yet.

4 / Universal Outlet

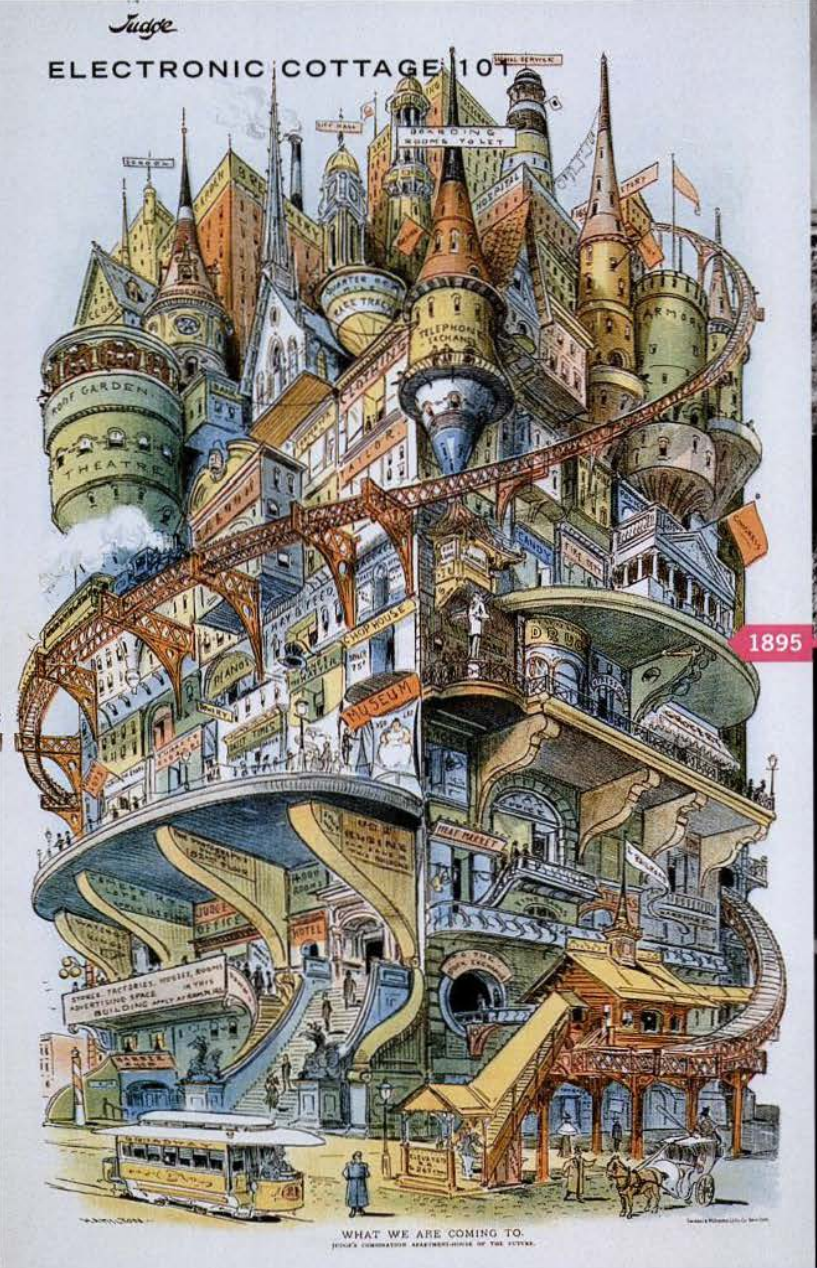
The reasoning behind the universal outlet is that the Internet is our next utility in the home, much like electricity or gas, or water. It will replace the standard American outlet found in every home today. The universal outlet will provide the structured wiring that is the motivating force behind the construction and presentation of Cisco's Internet Home. It features two coax connection plugs, one for cable and another to send signals out so that technologies can be shared throughout the house. It also features two other plugs called "RJ45" connections: One is for your network, the other for your telephone. The possibility for a multi-mode fiber connection is left open within this configuration as well.

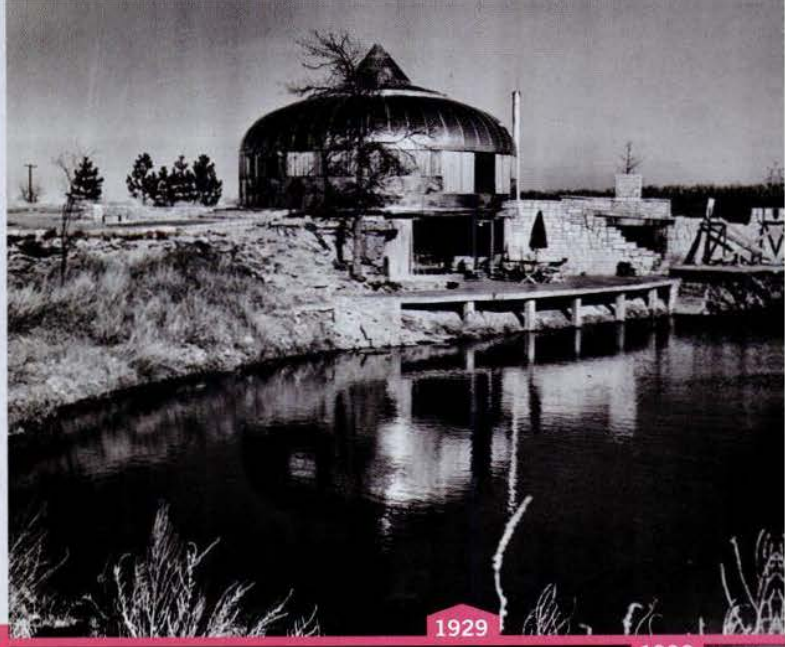
5 / Cans

Cans are the termination points for the structured wiring that runs throughout the home. The Cisco home shows three different networks in its garage, including a fiber optic model for luxury homes. In showcasing these systems, Cisco hopes to demonstrate to consumers and home builders that this sort of structured wiring is quickly on its way to becoming the norm. ■

***Out of Time: Designs for the Twentieth-Century Future* by Norman Brosterman**
Harry N. Abrams Inc., 2000, $19.95
In *Out of Time* we get a glimpse of what the year 2000 and beyond looked like to designers, artists, and illustrators from the 1890s to the 1960s. Ninety big and beautiful color and black-and-white reproductions show that the future—in the past—had a lot to do with flying. Cars will fly, boats will fly, spaceships carrying tiny green aliens will fly, people will fly, homes will fly, even entire cities will fly. Flying, as it turns out, does occupy a fair amount of our time, but in ways far less charming than had been imagined. But perhaps the illustrators here were actually taking a shot at what the future a thousand years from now will look like, in which case they might not be so far off.

Your Private Sky—R. Buckminster Fuller: The Art of Design Science
Edited by Joachim Krausse & Claude Lichtenstein
Lars Müller Publishers, 2000, $65
Essentially a "Cliffs Notes" version of Fuller's Dymaxion Chronofile, the self-assembled 750-volume record of all things Bucky, *Your Private Sky* is the ideal starting place for an exploration of the 4D world. Organized by project (or idea), relevant quotations from both Fuller and his contemporaries, photographs, drawings, and reproductions of scrawled notes demonstrate why he has reached luminary status. Much is made of Fuller's unique ability to identify and exploit interconnectivity—be it on the grand scale of "spaceship earth" or in the cozy confines of the prefabricated Dymaxion bathroom. ■

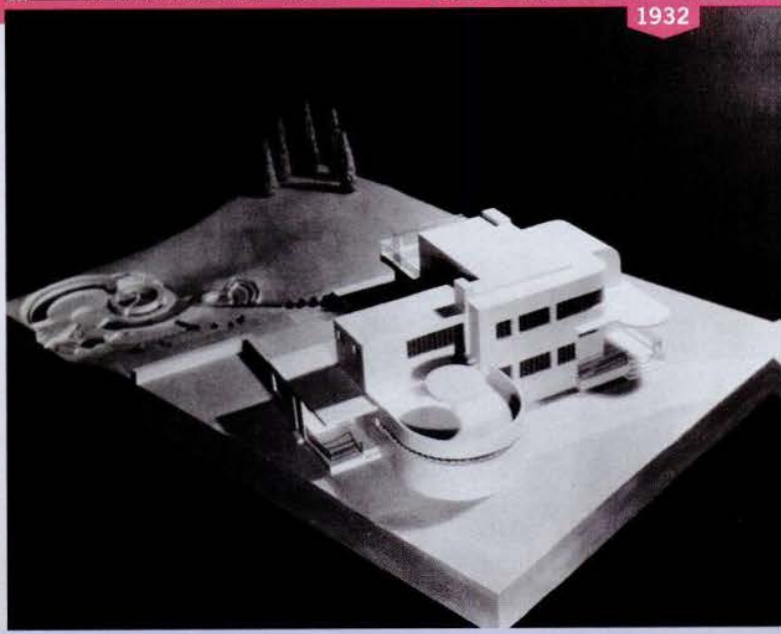




1895

1929

1932



BEFORE THE WIRED COTTAGE CAME . . .

1895

"What We Are Coming To: *Judge* Magazine's Combination Apartment-House of the Future"
Grant E. Hamilton

At the turn of the century, Americans expected enough immigrants to stuff cities with massive apartment complexes. Who would want a house on an acre lot when they could have chaos, cacophony, pastel colors, and crenellations?

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

1929

The Dymaxion House
Buckminster Fuller

Fuller peddled this house nationally and internationally, hoping someone would mass-produce it for a more sustainable future. The Dymaxion was energy efficient, fully collapsible, and transportable (via Zeppelin delivery). It was never mass-produced. But this Wichita prototype (1945) was home to entrepreneur William I. Graham until 1972.

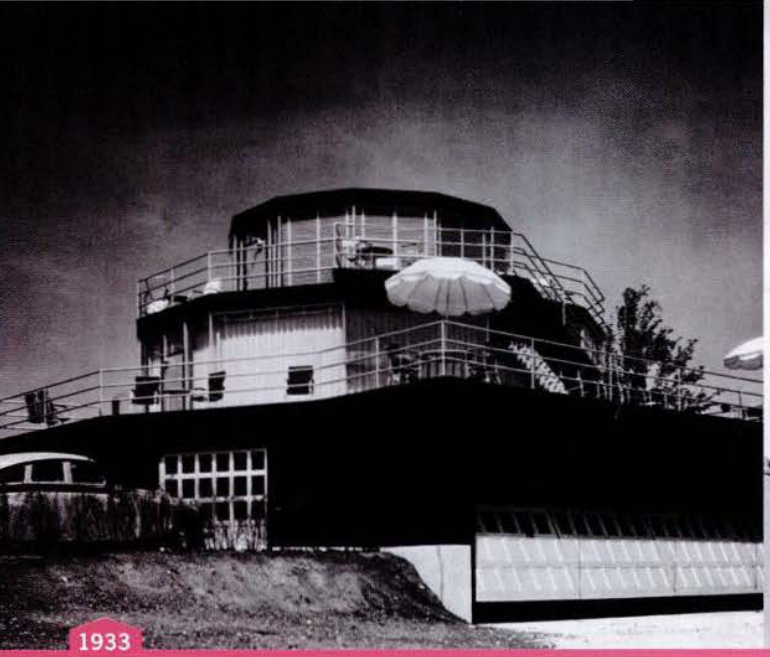
PHOTO COURTESY OF BUCKMINSTER FULLER ESTATE

1932

House of Tomorrow
Norman Bel Geddes

Industrial designers like Raymond Loewy, Henry Dreyfuss, and Norman Bel Geddes originated the "streamlined" look, which was much more practical for high-speed machines like locomotives and cars than houses, but had "futuristic" appeal—they looked resilient, high-tech, and refreshingly strange.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ESTATE OF NORMAN BEL GEDDES, EDITH LUTYENS BEL GEDDES, EXECUTRIX

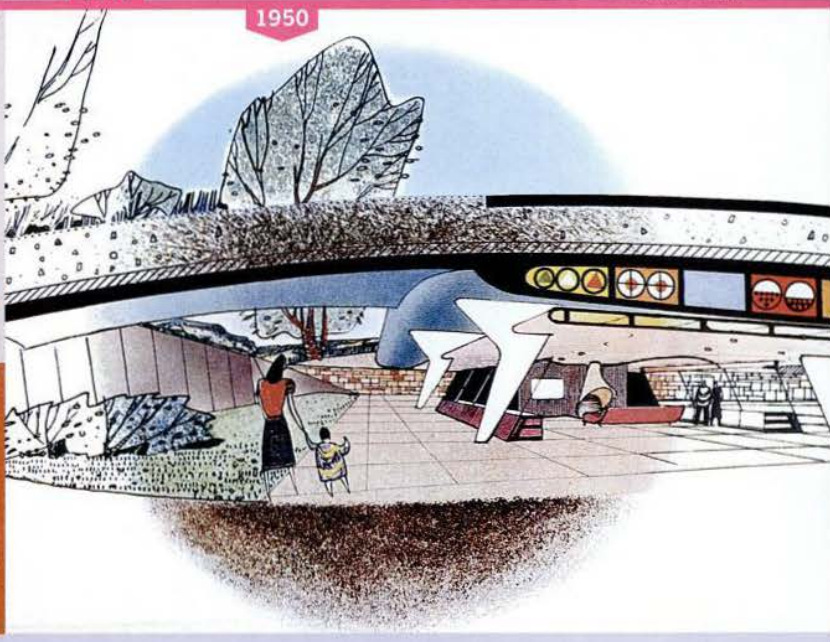


1933

1939

1947

1950



1933

House of Tomorrow
George Fred Keck

At Chicago's Century of Progress Exposition in 1933, three-quarters of a million people paid a dime to enter the steel-frame, glass-walled dodecagon prism. Most who entered witnessed climate control and dishwashers for the first time in their lives. The media hailed Keck's creation as "America's first Glass House."

PHOTO BY HEDRICH-BLESSING/CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1939

The Pittsburgh House of Glass, World's Fair, New York

The Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company and the Pittsburgh Corning Corporation sponsored Demo Home No. 4 for the "Town of Tomorrow." The house was not the first to show that glass can make rooms more like indoor/outdoor spaces, and mirrors can brighten them. But its fresh look still attracts imitators.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

1947

Levittown, designed and marketed by William Levitt, starting in 1947

After World War II and into the Cold War, single-family suburban homes with the best appliances were patriotic symbols of capitalism, and, thanks to prefabrication, everyone could have them. Levittown's idealism was iffy from the start, with racial covenants, the necessity of cars, and boring picket fences.

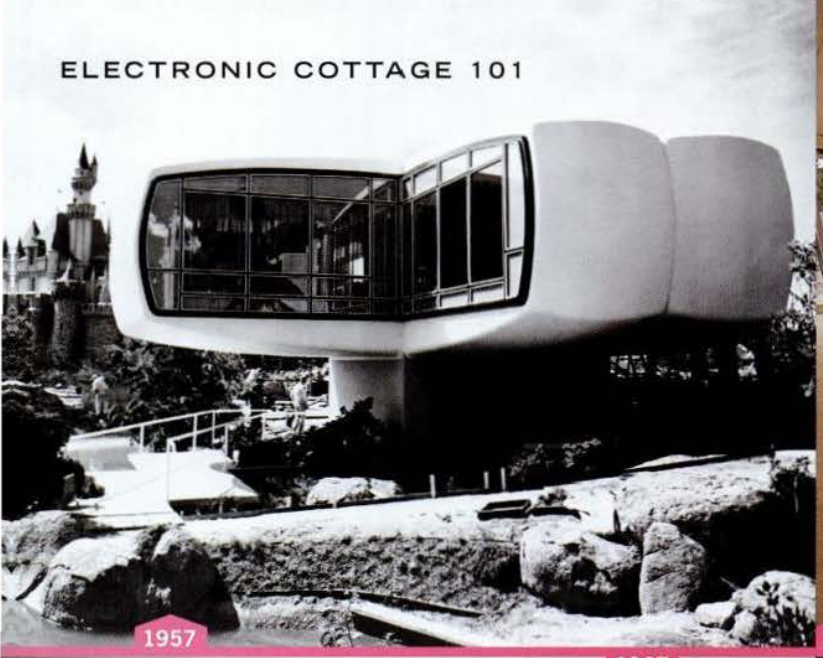
PHOTO BY BETTMANN/CORBIS

1950

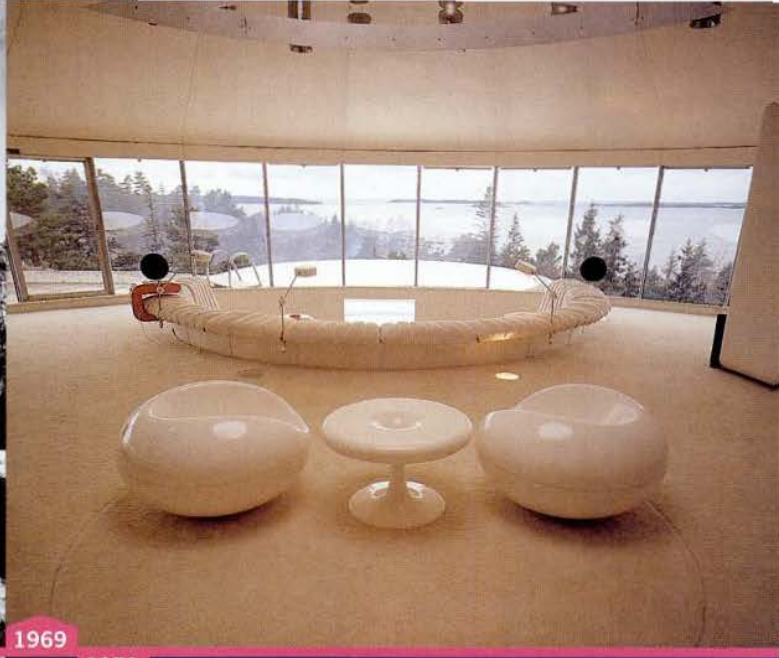
Atomville USA
Paul Laszlo

The advent of nuclear weapons made designers imagine a future home that was streamlined, encapsulated, or even underground. Laszlo's Atomville attempted to make the underground "happy" with an outdoor "roofdeck" and a bright interior. But really, who but an apocalyptic cult or fugitive mafioso would want to live in a bunker? ▸

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM, UCSB



1957



1969

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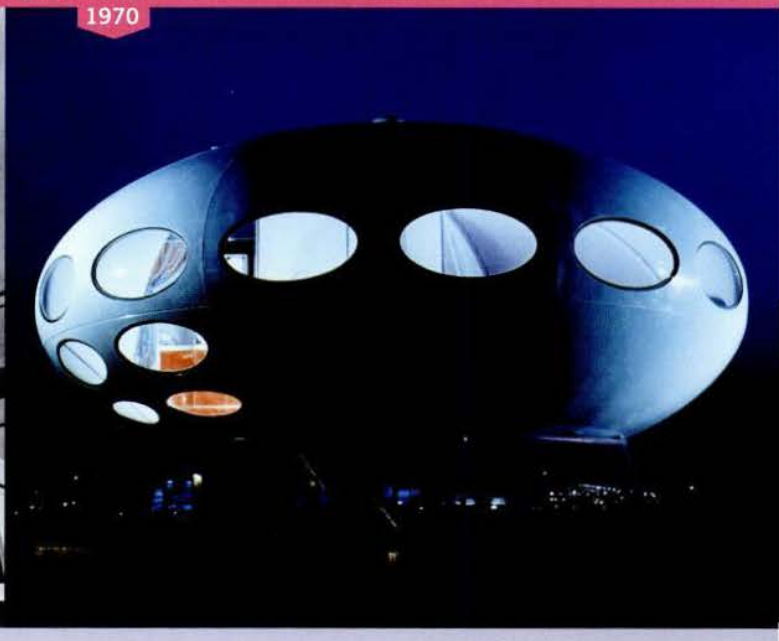
1970



1957

Disneyland House of the Future
Sponsored by Monsanto Corp.

Excitement over new, laboratory-developed building materials—like Monsanto's polyester reinforced with fibrous glass—commonly influenced post-war designs. In the '70s (the house was then out of date) the house resisted the wrecking ball (it bounced off) and the Disney workers had to take it down by hand.

PHOTO BY CORBIS

1967

Habitat 67
Moshe Safdie

At Montréal's Expo '67, the Israel-born architect Moshe Safdie presented an apartment complex made of pre-cast concrete blocks. The setup, made to fit almost any site (the blocks stack in any way you want), was designed to solve urban housing problems during population explosions.

PHOTO BY BETTMANN/CORBIS

1969

Villa Spies
Staffan Berglund

Berglund's vacation house was built the same year Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. It is circular, dome-roofed, made entirely of plastic, and contains movable translucent walls and a dining area that pops up at the push of a button. It can adapt to *any* site but remains on waterfront boulders at Toro, in the southern part of the Stockholm archipelago.

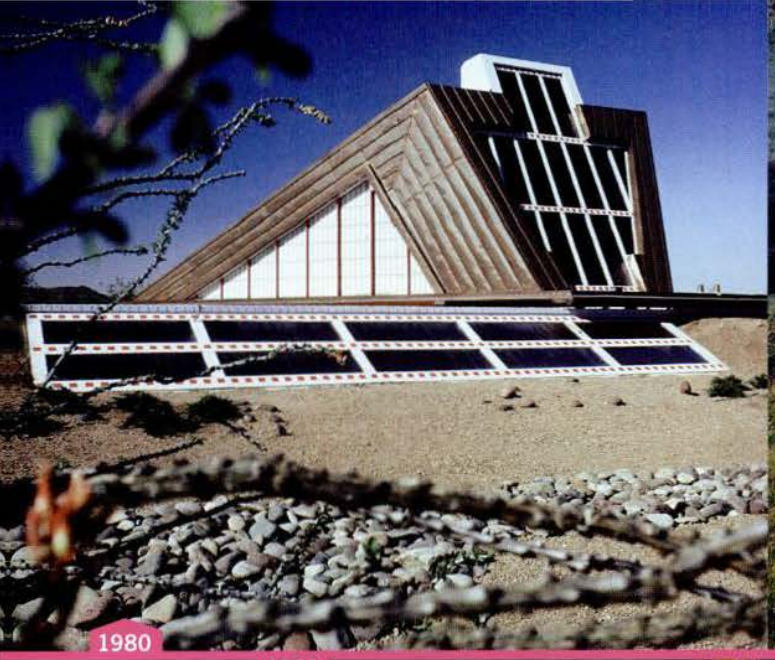
PHOTOS FROM THE BOOK *VILLA SPIES*, ERIKSSON & RONNEFALK PUBLISHING HOUSE

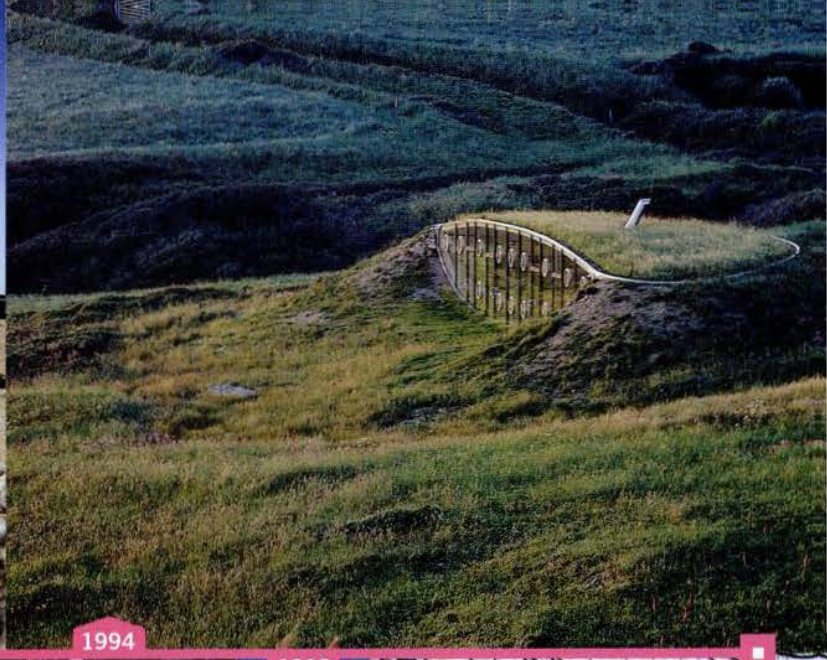
1970

Futuro

Attributed to a Finnish designer named Matti Suuronen, the Futuro was a mass-produced holiday home—a 1970 *L'Architecture D'Aujourd'hui* told us "segments of an elliptic envelope are assembled on site, on a metal footing." This Futuro hovers at the edge of the Philadelphia International Airport; others are in Pensacola, Tampa, and rural Quebec.

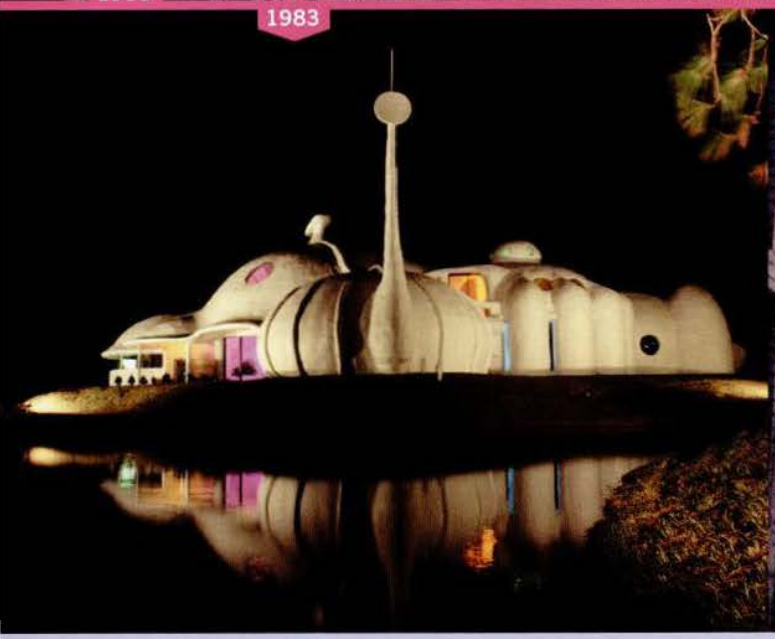
PHOTO BY BETTMANN/CORBIS



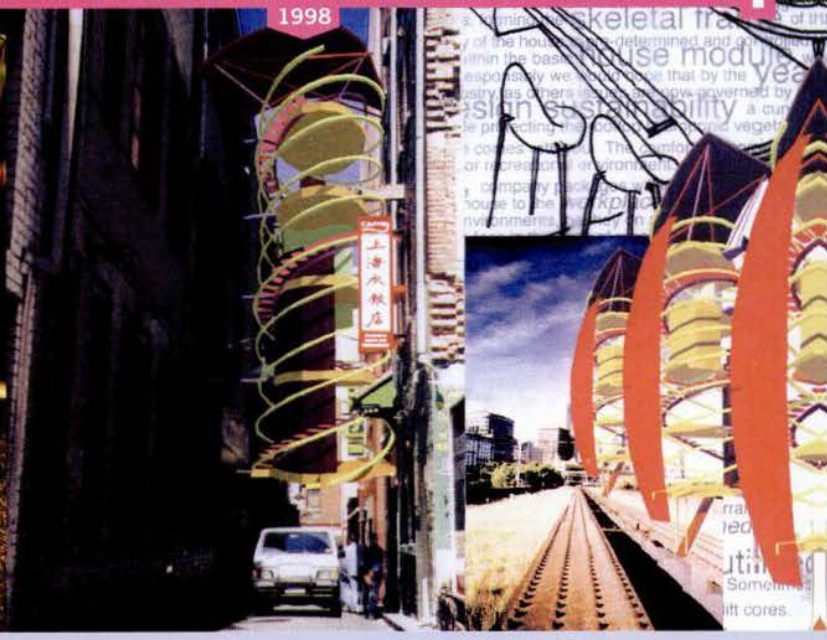


1980

1994



1983



1998

1980

The House of the Future at Ahwatukee

In 1980, the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation designed a house with Motorola whose utilities were controlled by a quarter-inch-square Motorola MC6800 microprocessor. The first microprocessor-controlled house opened and closed windows, adjusted blinds, and stored tax records, shopping lists, and video games.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MOTOROLA ARCHIVES

1983

Xanadu, the Foam House of Tomorrow

Bob Masters and Roy Mason designed these kitschy pleasure domes to be environmentally sound, too—the foam shells are great insulators and inexpensive. Polyurethane foam is sprayed into inflated forms, and hollowed out when it hardens. The process sounds like an environmental disaster, but maybe in the '80s they didn't know that yet.

PHOTO BY KEVIN FLEMING/CORBIS

1994

House in Wales by Future Systems

You might walk right over this grassy seaside hill without knowing it's a roof. The Wales house is invisible except on the oceanside, where its huge elliptical glass wall reveals a panoramic view and ventilates the rooms through 14 portholes. The bathrooms were prefabricated and delivered as finished pods.

PHOTO BY RICHARD DAVIES

1998

The Slinky House by AlsoCAN Pty. Ltd. & Multiplicity

The Slinky House was the winning entry for the Home of the Future Competition at the Museum Victoria in Australia. The house—including its bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen modules—compresses, Slinky-style, to fit on a truck's flatbed, then suspends over the middle of the street to make use of dead space. It does not go down stairs. ■

RENDERING BY ALSOCAN & ISOLATED ENTERPRISE

THE PERIWINKLE PAGE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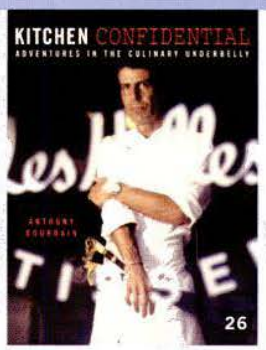
86


72



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By Anthony Bourdain
Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000
www.stmartins.com

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Viking
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The Fridgecam on the Web
Life inside the Essén family's fridge
Electrolux AB Sweden
Mr. Essén eating chocolate cake at
www.electrolux.com/node391.asp

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by A. C. Fernandez
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David Levy
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Antenna Design
New York, NY
Tel: 212-229-1106
www.antennadesign.com

EVA ZEISEL pg 72
Eva Zeisel: Designer for Industry
Le Chateau Dufresne, Inc.
Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Montréal, 1984

Photo credit pg. 74, 1949 chair:
Richard P. Goodbody, Courtesy of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal Museum of Decorative Arts, Gift of Eva Zeisel

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www.evazeisel.org
Zeisel's designs are available at Nambé
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Tel: 505-471-2912
www.nambe.com

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Tel: 718-388-9331

Museum of Modern Art Design Store
New York, NY
Tel: 800-447-6662

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Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation
Houston, TX
Tel: 713-674-0175

DiverseWorks
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www.diverseworks.org

Venturi Scott Brown Associates
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www.vsba.com

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Meditations on First Philosophy
By René Descartes
Cambridge University Press, 1996
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Out of Time: Designs for the Twentieth-Century Future
By Norman Brosterman
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Yesterday's Tomorrows: Past Visions of the American Future
By Joseph J. Corn and Brian Horrigan
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HOUSES WE LOVE pg 96
Palm Springs Modern
By Adéle Cygelman
Rizzoli International Publications, 1999
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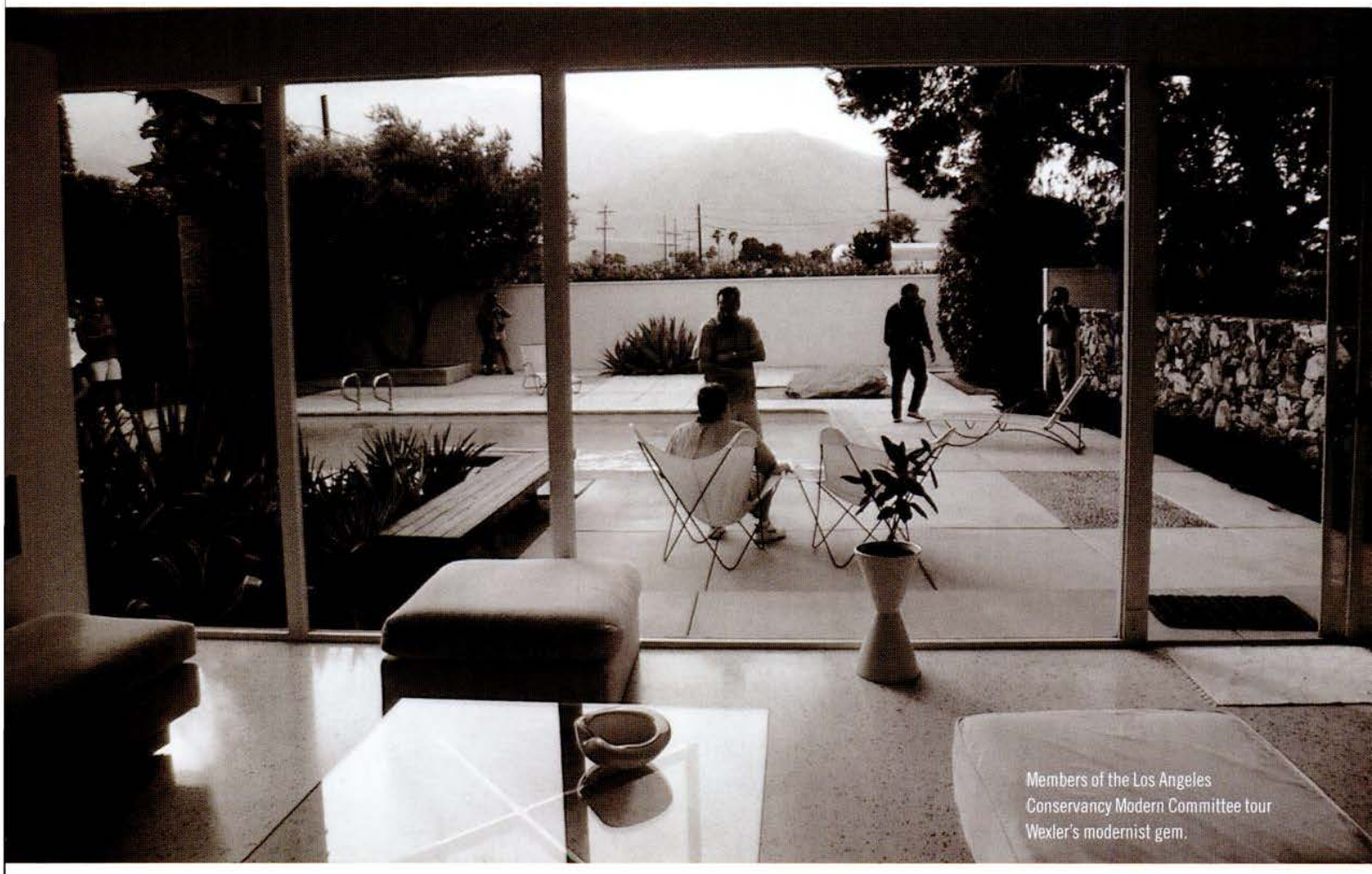

Members of the Los Angeles Conservancy Modern Committee tour Wexler's modernist gem.

PHOTO BY TERRENCE MOORE

TERRAZZO: 1, SHAG CARPET: 0

We've seen this house before. In fashion spreads, in car commercials, in expensive architecture books. But we never saw it as it looked a few years back when the neighborhood (an enclave near the Palm Springs Racket Club) had deteriorated, when the terrazzo floors were covered over by *shag carpet*. But Jim Moore—who in 1993 had been flying from Manhattan to Palm Springs every other weekend in search of something "Case Study–ish"—did. Every time his real-estate agent beckoned, Moore, the creative director of *GQ*, was on the next plane. On Sunnyview Drive Moore fell in love, not with the house with the "For Sale" sign, but with what he recognized as a gem of desert modernism on the corner. Despite the carpeting, the drapes, the dead grass surrounding the pool, it was the house he wanted. The lackadaisical homeowner was persuaded to sell, and Moore began the arduous process of restoring the house—a steel-frame model home designed by Donald Wexler in 1961—to its original glory. The neighboring homes have since been purchased by like-minded desert minimalists. "I didn't plan to rescue Palm Springs," Moore insists. "It just happened. Now, there's always someone parked out front taking snapshots."

In the early '60s, Wexler developed (with engineer Bernard Perline) these factory-fabricated and site-assembled steel-frame houses for U.S. Steel and the Alexander Company, Palm Spring's major tract developer. Due to consumer uncertainty about the comfort level of steel, and a giant increase in steel prices, the housing program stalled. Wexler shifted his focus toward schools and other institutional buildings. Now, nearly 40 years later, he is amazed by the new appreciation of his work.

Wexler, who hasn't designed a house in two decades, is today working on a 2,600-square-foot house in Palm Springs. He sees no reason why his steel-frame home couldn't be produced by contemporary developers. "If I had my way we would all use organic materials—concrete, glass, and steel. For the Sunbelt, steel is an ideal material. It should become the standard for arid climates." Moore, for his part, spouts poetry: "I get an incredible feeling when I walk in the front door. For me, this is just the most beautiful house imaginable."

We're just happy that one more shag carpet has met its fate.

—ALLISON ARIEFF

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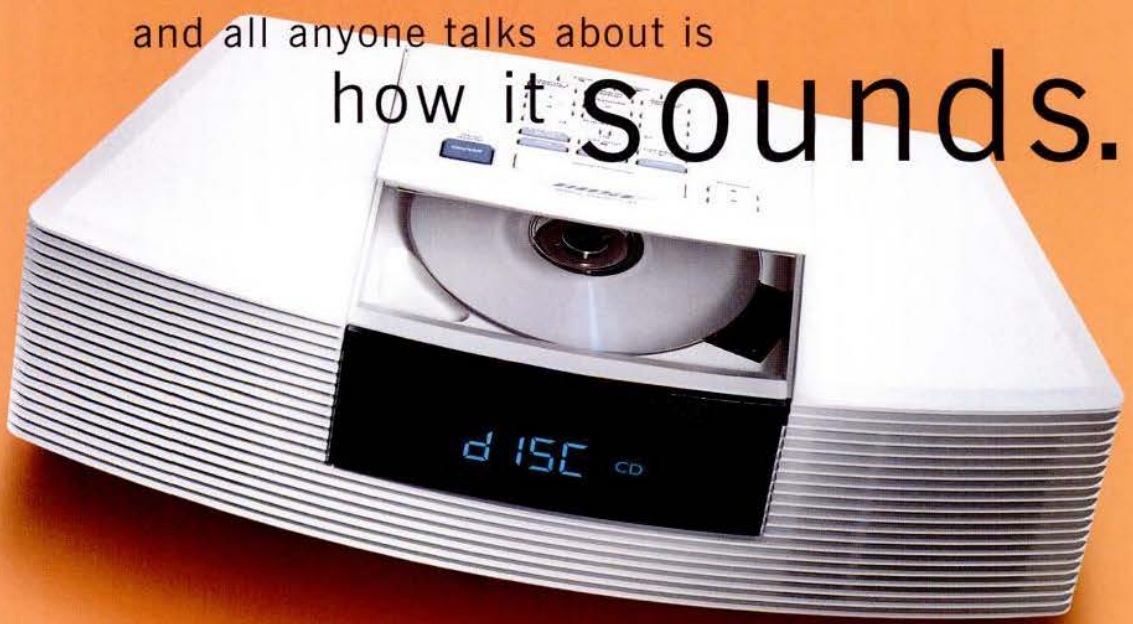

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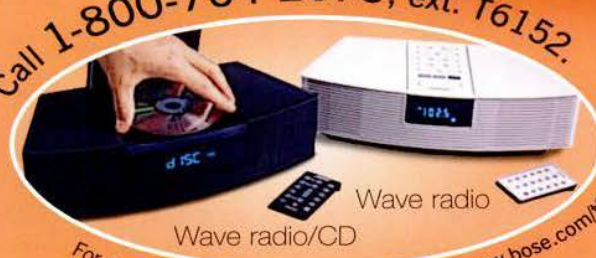

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