dwell

AT HOME IN THE MODERN WORLD

First Anniversary Issue

REAL ESTATE 101: How to Buy and Build

NIGHT TABLES: A Sexpert Picks the Best

A NEW WHITE HOUSE: Contest Winners

When Amazing Houses Happen To Ordinary Cities

Not that there's anything wrong with these cities. They're just a little overlooked. We're talking Newark, Buffalo, Encino, Lubbock, Grand Rapids, and Lawrence.

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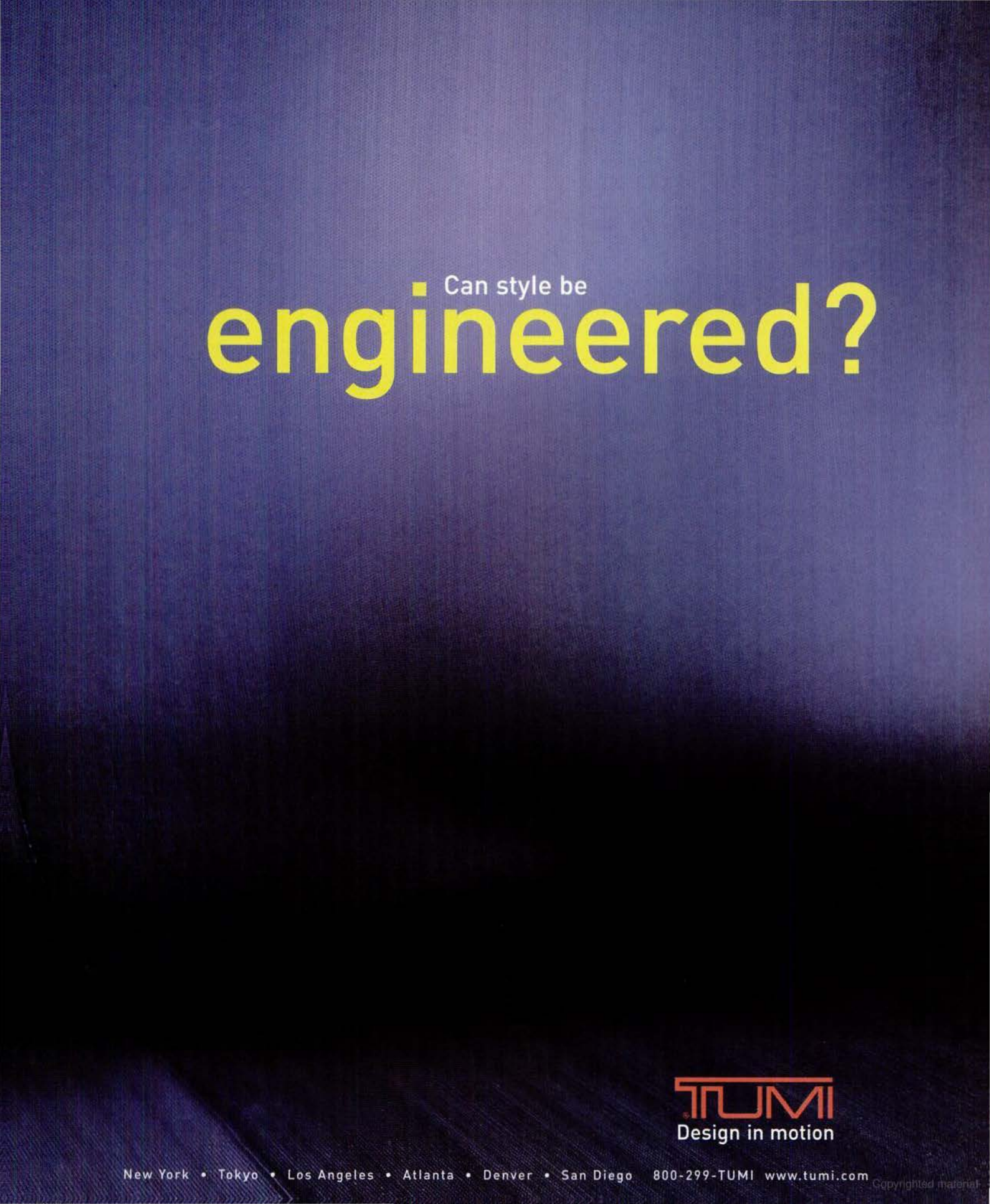

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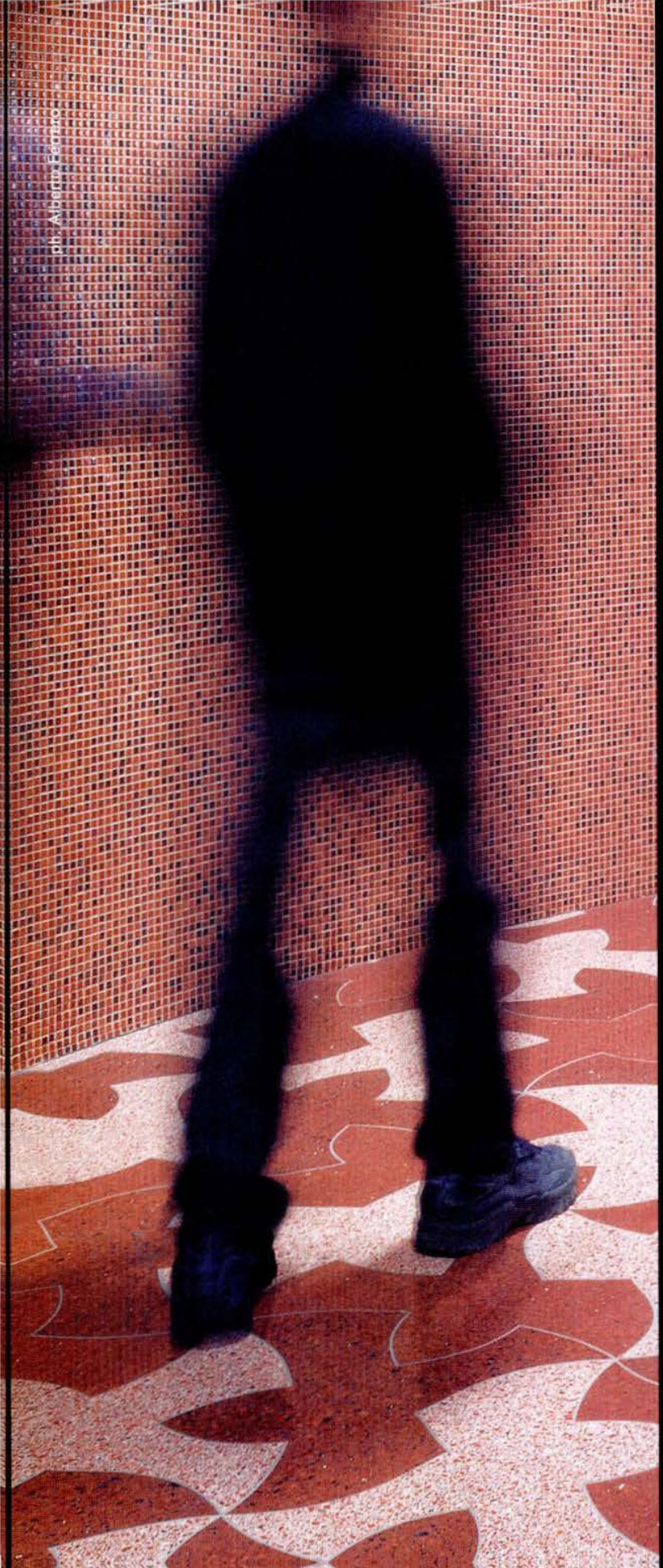

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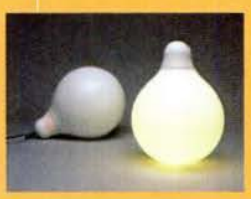
"I love it here. I love seeing the abundance of nature juxtaposed with industrial efficiency. The concrete factory is bellowing, the trucks are going by. Life is good." —JOE SABEL, PAGE 18







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A YEAR ON OSGOOD PLACE

After a year in print, dwell isn't quite what I thought it would be. When I started writing the business plan, I didn't know that I would end up with such a great team of people or that we would find so many interesting homeowners and architects tackling such unique projects (in the U.S., no less!).

I'm lucky to work with people who share a similar passion and vision. Though we come from different backgrounds, we have come together on the idea that modern design is important to us culturally and that we can communicate this message intelligently, accessibly, and even humorously. The people and projects we are exposed to continually inspire me. Just when I think that size is winning the battle over quality, I see projects in dwell that are well designed and humane, and reflect the individuals living in them.

Luckily, we are not alone in our excitement. The response we've received has far and away exceeded our expectations. Circulation has doubled in our first year, growing to over 100,000 internationally. Our reader studies have encouraged us, revealing a healthy balance between consumers and the trade, West Coast and East Coast, north and south. The success has been due to the editorial we offer, as well as an increased appetite for modern design. More and more people are exploring ways to express themselves in a culturally relevant way—modern design is once again becoming its own movement, looking forward rather than backwards. dwell has been able to create a dialogue that helps support this movement. On second thought, maybe dwell is exactly what I thought it would be.

LARA HEDBERG DEAM
president and founder
lh@dwellmag.com

LETTERS

Great article on sofa buying! ("Think It Yourself," August 2001) I am in the market (i.e., I am saving money) for a sofa. One thing I noticed, though, is that a median price for a sofa was mentioned as approximately $1,500. If you find this to be true, please contact me with your vendors' names and addresses, as I like that price much better than the median price I have been finding . . . about $2,500!

STEFANIE SMITH
Seattle, Washington

When did translucent become a color? Well, according to your August 2001 issue ("What Is Your Favorite Color?") it is designer Karim Rashid's favorite color. What is his second favorite? Could it be clear? Smoke and mirrors?

Mr. Rashid's answer to the question "What is your favorite color?" is yet further proof to me that he is a better wordsmith than designer. He relies primarily on language constructs and thick pseudo-esoteric verbiage to compensate for a lack of true design talent. Mr. Rashid has fooled the public, as well as your magazine, into believing his watered-down derivations of real design mavericks (Newson, Eames, Panton, etc.) actually deserve press attention. Hyping hype is beneath your magazine.

Mr. Rashid isn't pulling the wool over my eyes, even if it is translucent.

SCOTT P. MURPHY
Art director, *The Sopranos*, Brooklyn, New York

Your statement that fly ash is "extremely toxic" ("This Is Your Garbage," June 2001) may cause some of your readers to overreact and remove fly ash from their specifications, which would be a mistake. It may also cause them to have suspicions about fly ash that are unwarranted. The majority of fly ash sources that are being used in concrete in the United States are harmless and their use should be encouraged, not discouraged.

Fly ash provides many benefits to concrete, and I encourage anyone who has further questions to contact their local fly ash marketer, the American Coal Ash Association, the American Concrete Institute's Committee ▸

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Public Relations The Rosen Group, NY
Newsstand Consultant George Clark
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dwell magazine editorial
99 Osgood Place
San Francisco, CA 94133
Phone (415) 743-9990
Fax (415) 743-9978
www.dwellmag.com

dwell magazine advertising
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JENNY L. HITCH
ISG Resources, Inc., Las Vegas, Nevada

The new Bambi ("Houses We Love," August 2001) shows little, if any, understanding of trailer camping. Did the designer's research find a need for a mobile version of the Northern California trophy kitchen? The kitchen is the least important thing in a camping trailer. What are all those drawers for? I have lived in four-bedroom houses with less kitchen. I don't want to see good modern design get a bad rep again because styling exercises like the new Bambi peg modern design as impractical, egotistical, and vacant. Apple recovered from the useless G3 circular mouse, but Airstream has gone beyond their comfort level with the new Bambi.

MARK MARCINIK
Greenmeadow Architects, Palo Alto, California

In your August 2001 issue I saw a challenge. Your illustration for David Greene's article, "Is Modern Design Colorblind?," reminded me of the paint-by-numbers I used to do. Since the color key for the picture was included, I decided to do a high-tech paint-by-numbers.

I scanned the picture (at right) and the color key and then used a photo program to drop the colors in the appropriate spaces. My boyfriend thinks I'm totally neurotic! But it was great fun for me.

ANDREW LOVE
New Orleans, Louisiana

Painted-by-numbers

I was hesitant to send this letter because I wouldn't want to impede the recent progress of the adorable little electric cars ("dwell Reports," June 2001) that are entering the pseudo mainstream market. Phasing out of fossil-fuel-guzzling machines is the way to go.

But I felt it a matter of public safety to share the story of a recent accident I saw involving the Corbin Sparrow, a slick electric mini-car that resembles a three-wheeled motorcycle.

As the seemingly seamless molded plastic zipped down Townsend Street in San Francisco, it lost traction on a steel construction plate embedded in the pavement. I watched in horror as the Sparrow flipped head over toe into oncoming traffic, finally settling on the hood of a parked pickup truck. Amazingly, the driver walked away without a cut. The Sparrow, although totaled, protected the driver very well. But my concern is with the apparent lack of control and stability. Thousands of vehicles had navigated this patch of pavement without peril. Not the Sparrow. The driver of the ill-fated three-wheeled car even admitted to be a proficient motorcyclist.

The Sparrow may be cute, but proceed with caution.

AARON LITWIN
San Francisco, California

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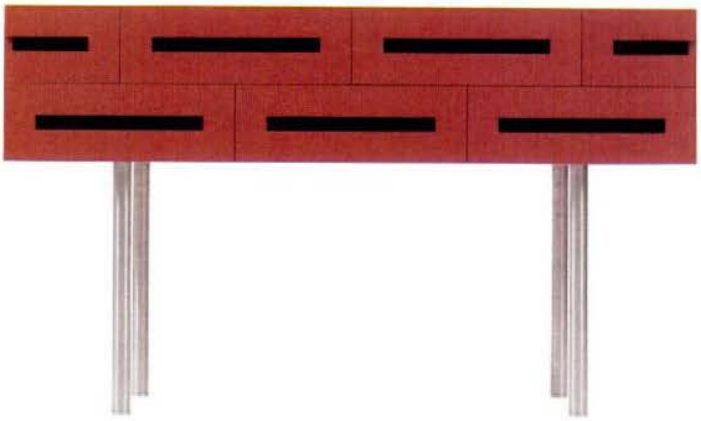

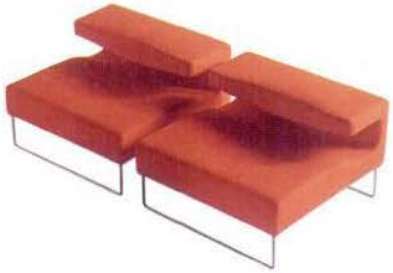

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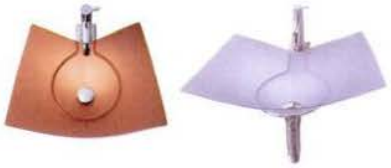

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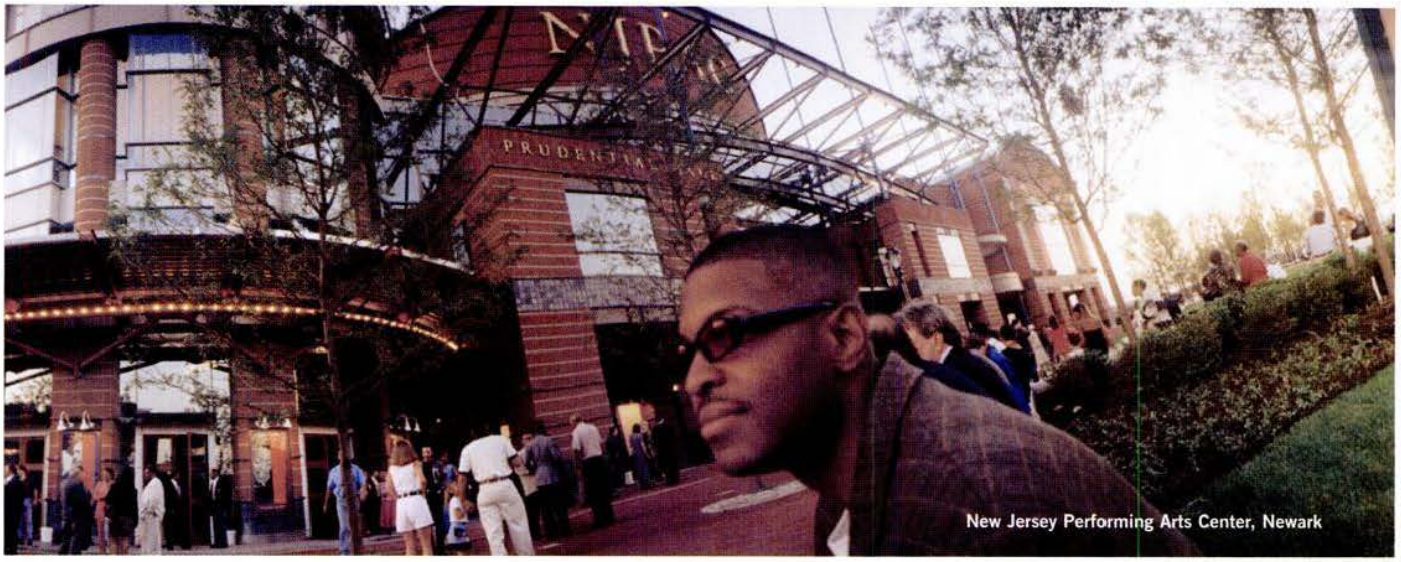


New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Newark

WELCOME TO "THERE THERE," TWO

This issue marks the first anniversary of dwell. We have survived year one nicely, thank you, and continue to grow and thrive.

And this is the second issue in which we've scoured America in search of a grassroots avant-garde. The premise of dwell, that modernism is a living language—nondoctrinaire, fluid, and vital—that can be applied to myriad circumstances, is borne out by the homes we've found in cities from Buffalo to Encino.

Which brings me to Newark, New Jersey, site of the Chocolate Factory, an apartment complex carved out of a 19th-century industrial building. It is, in appearance, the least modern of the residences in this issue, but in what it says about the potential of even our most beleaguered cities, it is the most modern in spirit.

Newark is legendary as an urban basket case. It was already in a state of profound economic decline when it was torn apart by race riots in 1967. After a solid week of fires and looting, exacerbated by the National Guard's tendency to open fire at imaginary snipers, vital shopping districts more or less disappeared, and anyone with the means, white or black, left town. Redevelopment took the form of hermetically sealed downtown office towers, set up so that workers could drive right into the buildings or enter from the train station via enclosed pedestrian ramps and never set foot on the city streets.

I have childhood memories of Newark as a real city. Before the riots, my father used to take me to the Newark Museum. The main attraction was the science exhibition, a series of rooms lined with mechanical displays that, if you turned a crank or pushed a button, would demonstrate magnetism or how primary colors could be blended to form new colors.

After the riots, we couldn't go there anymore. I didn't return to Newark for decades, until 1994, when I spent time with a number of families in the Central Ward who were participating in a project to build community via the Internet. People who had never touched a computer before were taught to use them and became the "captains" of a system linking the local school and hospital to the community and, in a district where public spaces were often monopolized by drug dealers, linking neighbors to one another.

I remember walking through the Central Ward, a landscape of modest new row houses, nearly abandoned housing project towers, and endless vacant lots, with Pamela Morgan, the computer network's organizer, as she described the shopping district that had been there before the riots. "The Springfield Avenue neighborhood was a thriving neighborhood," she said. "Now the whole thing is deserted. There's no commerce except for the liquor store."

I returned to Newark for the 1997 opening of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, a complex on the fringes of downtown, surrounded by outdoor cafés and public plazas. I was struck by the open, relaxed feeling of the architecture when compared to the fortress-like insurance company and bank headquarters in the central core. The arts center, designed by architect Barton Myers, was intentionally non-monumental. And it was the first new building that related to the streets of Newark as if those streets were a reasonable place to be.

In the late 1990s, as the real-estate market overheated in New York City, a short 20-minute train ride away, a whole range of people, from high-profile developers to impoverished artists, discovered Newark. Sadly, the so-called renaissance has not really found its way to the Central Ward. While some new housing has been built there, Springfield Avenue is still mostly barren. But the population of the city is, for the first time in decades, stable. It might even be growing.

"Newark is the new Williamsburg," writer Bonnie Schwartz informed me, heralding the arrival of an arts community, much like the one that emerged during the 1990s in a formerly industrial part of Brooklyn. "Okay," I said, "prove it." I sent her out to find the places that this renaissance called home. She located a converted 19th-century factory building, where a highly evolved sense of community has emerged among a multi-racial, multi-ethnic group of owners and tenants. Bonnie's story (see page 40) suggests that an enviable quality of life is possible in a city best known as the site where a tragic rift once opened between rich and poor, and black and white.

Or, as we like to say at dwell, there is *too* a there there.

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

PHOTO BY KRISTINE LARSEN

Dry land was too expensive, so Joe Sabel hit the water.

PHOTO BY FRANK SCHOTT

JOE'S LIVE/WORK BERTH

Architect Joe Sabel works in what looks like a freight container near the port of Redwood City, an industrial part of the San Francisco Bay. To get there you go past the ground pit, through a chain-link fence, and then look for the big metal box. But once you step inside, you're looking through glass doors at an all-encompassing view of the waterfront—and all the things that travel along it. "You can see so much wildlife," says Sabel, who designed and built the floating home himself. "Egrets, terns, sea lions—even giant rats go swimming by."

The 320-square-foot studio wasn't originally designed as a houseboat. It started its life thousands of miles away, in the mountains of New Mexico. "A friend of mine, who's a priest, wanted a getaway place where people could stay out in the wilderness for a month," says Sabel. "I'd always thought about designing small spaces, especially after living in New York. And I had a lot of theories from school about mixing design with affordability. So this was a chance to put it all into practice.

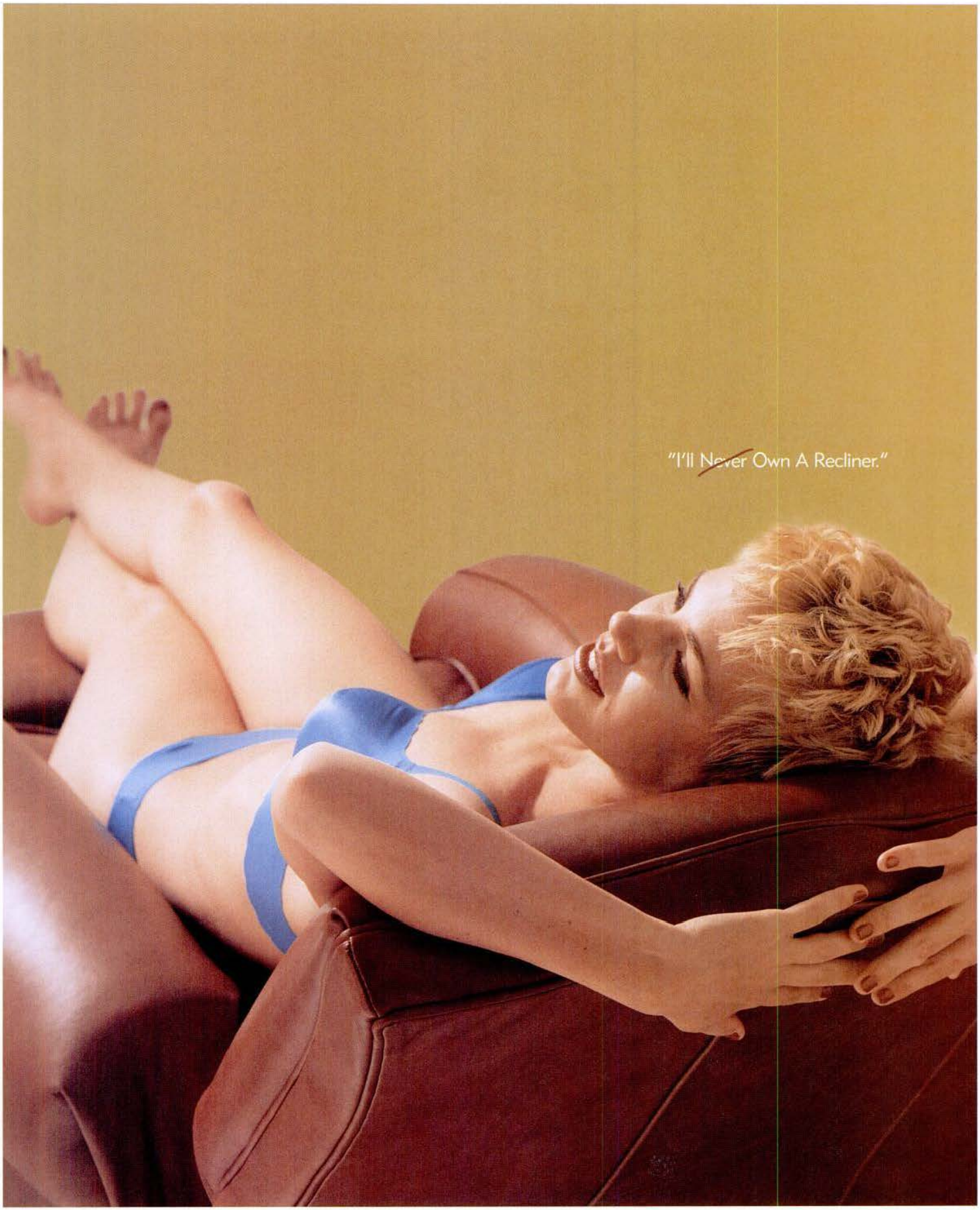
"I was funding the work myself and had no money, so I used whatever was cheap and handy. And I went with standard sizes. Whatever I could get from Hacienda, the New Mexico equivalent of Home Depot, determined the proportions. The price goes down about 400 percent if you do that." He salvaged a steel base from a dilapidated 1950s mobile home and added a wooden frame covered with sheets of corrugated metal.

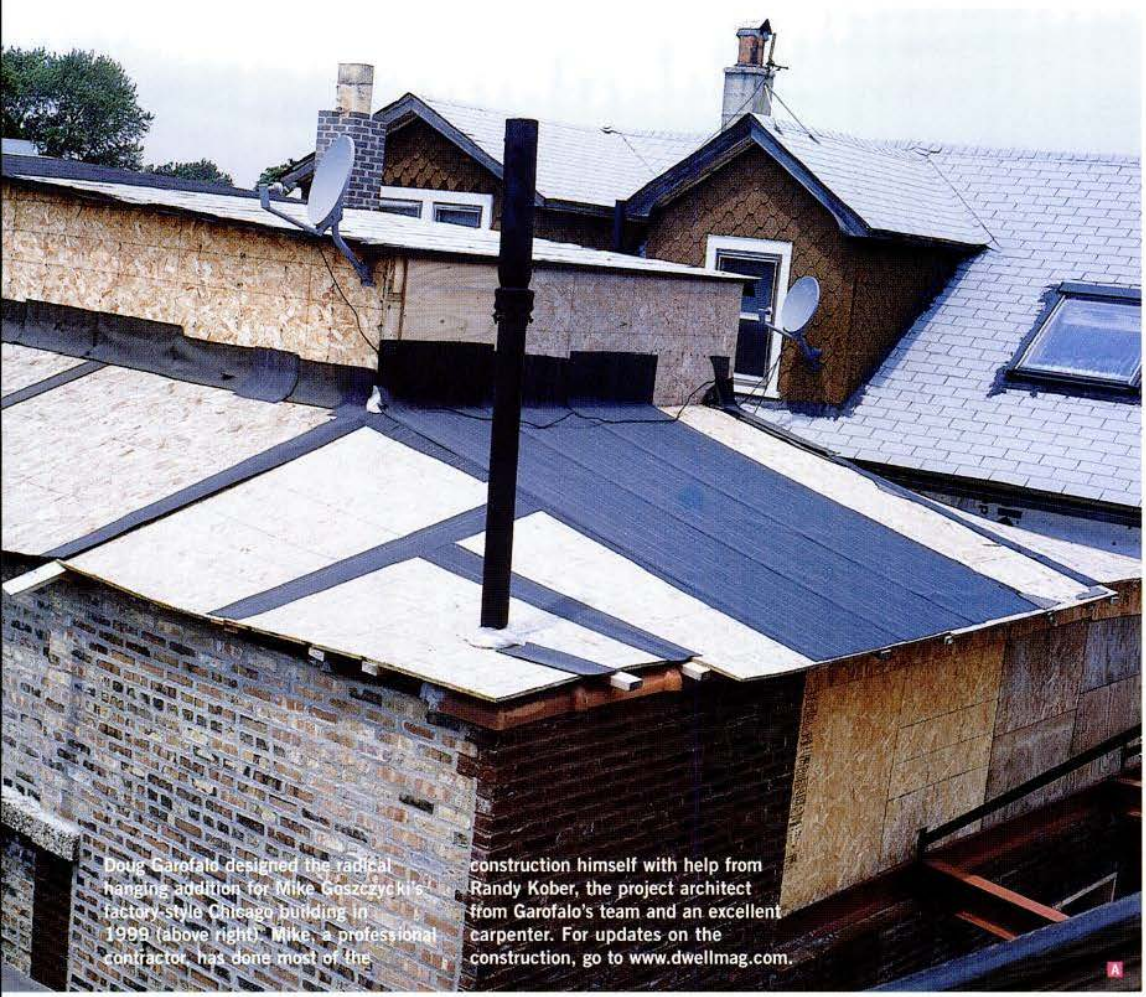
When his friend's plans changed, Sabel moved out to California and the box transmogrified into a boat. "I came out to visit a friend, and we went sailing in Sausalito and motored past these people living out in the middle of the bay. It was all about independence and living wherever you wanted to. And I said to myself, I could do that!"

The concrete foundation, built by the same methods used for World War II barges, doubles as a workspace even more vertically challenged than the seventh-and-a-half-floor office in *Being John Malkovich*. "I wish I could pretend I had it all worked out, but it was pure luck. I originally built the concrete hull with some room just for storage. But after it was finished, I realized there was just enough clearance to sit, so I turned it into an office."

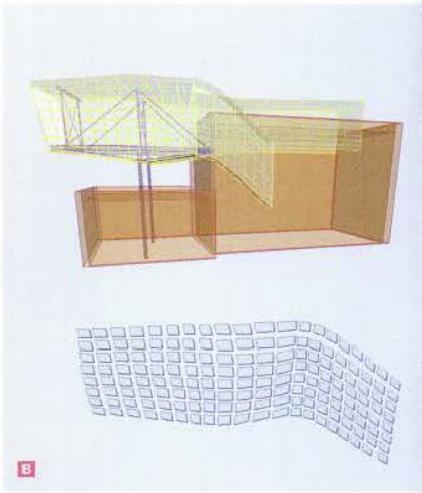
Although he now sleeps on land (he got married and lives with his wife in a cottage in Portola Valley), Sabel spends most of his day on the water. "I love it here. I love seeing the abundance of nature juxtaposed with industrial efficiency. The concrete factory is bellowing, the trucks are going by. Life is good."

—LYDIA LEE





Doug Garofalo designed the radical hanging addition for Mike Goszczycki's factory-style Chicago building in 1999 (above right). Mike, a professional contractor, has done most of the construction himself with help from Randy Kober, the project architect from Garofalo's team and an excellent carpenter. For updates on the construction, go to www.dwellmag.com. A



B

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PHOTO BY MAYUMI LAKE (A)

EVERYTHING BUT THE BITCHIN' ZINC

Negotiating Zinc, February 2001

Doug: We want zinc siding to go on the roof, sides, and underneath, so it looks like a total wrap. B But in terms of detailing surfaces to be watertight, wall and roof are two different things. We need to work out an affordable way to make the zinc roof shed water.

Mike: The zinc thing is a big deal in Europe, and they're hoping to get people to use that type of look here, instead of . . . you know, the houses around here, they all look the same. So I'm hoping the manufacturer will cut me a deal.

The zinc shell for the siding *and* roofing could be a little more expensive than I can afford. Plus, I don't know if I want to be sleeping under there, with heavy rain sounding like I'm in a damn tin can, you know? I might just do a plain old flat rubber roof. But the zinc will definitely be on the sides, and on the bottom that hangs out over the garage roof-deck.

I still have a million questions. Randy and Doug, they just want to slap on the zinc and say, "Hey, it looks beautiful." But I want to make sure it works for my life.

Randy: We've also been joking around with Mike about putting AstroTurf in the underside. AstroTurf comes in a lot of different colors these days. We could build it down low enough so he could get up in the morning, and go down to the garage roof and scratch his head by rubbing it up against the belly of his bedroom. He's not going for it.

Roofless, April 2001

Mike: Last fall, the back end of the third floor, where the steel frame ties in, went up pretty quick. But we didn't have time to put a roof around the sides.

I was getting water, and I had to do something to deflect it. It was coming into the second floor. So when winter kicked in, I put up boards that slant out over the outside of the brick parapet. A

Randy: It's like a basilica form.

Mike: The slanting boards solve the problem about 95 percent of the time. Unless I get a really strong, wind-driven rain—then I'll get water here and there.

The "April showers bring May flowers" thing is no joke. It's been raining every other day. It's been the longest winter of my damn life. C May is here, in six weeks I'm going to shut down—no more contracting jobs for other people. This summer Randy and I should be able to get that shell built within two months, and then by Labor Day have it all closed up with the zinc siding.

Randy: The goal is that by the end of the summer, it's enclosed. Encapsulated. Done. So when winter hits, Mike can begin work on the interior.

—VIRGINIA GARDINER

PHOTO BY RANDY KOBER (C), RENDERING BY GAROFALO ARCHITECTS (B)

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W W W . M I T C H E L L G O L D . C O M

A stone path leads visitors to the simple screen porch retreat that Architects Wells Woodburn O'Neil designed just outside of Des Moines.

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY HURSLEY

SQUIRRELPROOF

Creating a rural retreat with the design sophistication of an upscale resort was the challenge that Architects Wells Woodburn O'Neil faced when their client requested a perfect escape on 80 acres, only 20 minutes outside of Des Moines, Iowa.

"Our client has a great sense of adventure and a keen interest in design," says Doug Wells, the project architect. " 'Keep it simple and keep it interesting,' is all he asked," continues Wells, who quickly learned that well-designed simplicity is much harder to achieve than one might imagine.

"The house is just a screen porch with a kitchen and bathroom," says Wells. "It is not heated or cooled and there is no insulation—you can see the ground through the floor."

But this is no run-of-the-mill porch. It allows for uninterrupted views of the lake below and the surrounding woods. The 480-square-foot house's oversized roof appears to hover over the main building, as only glass windows separate the top of the porch from the roof. The building does not jump out at you but blends into the woods. Even during construction, preservation of the surrounding land was a priority. Therefore, a small motorized cart delivered all construction materials to the site, 1,500 feet off the main road.

For security reasons, Wells and his team designed shutters that retract into window heads at the top of the screens. With shutters down, the structure retreats further into the landscape. "It definitely looks closed," says Wells, "but it is very clean-looking. The shutters are dark bronze and consist of horizontal bars about two-and-a-half inches high, just like a rolltop desk." With the flip of a switch, the electrically operated shutters are quickly and simply hidden away.

The house is also environmentally sound, utilizing a recycling plumbing system and only a wood-burning stove for heat. The ventilation system is minimal, easing the impact on the land. "It was important that the floor structure be up in the air to allow for easy air flow. He wanted to feel the air," Wells says. "When the wind blows, it actually comes up through the floor. It is very cool, both literally and figuratively."

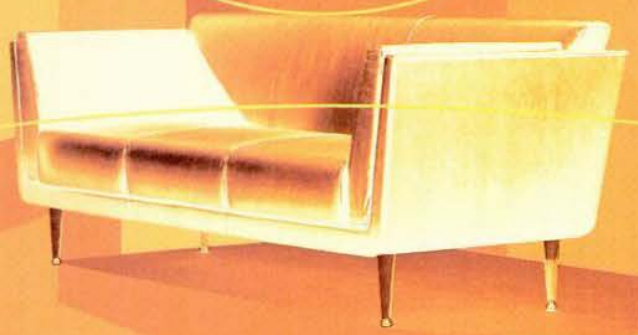
But what about furry critters that might find a screen porch a more pleasant place to rest their heads than the forest floor? "The floor is screened, too," Wells explains. "We placed screen material over the joists and then clear redwood decking on top of that to prevent insects or animals from getting in." Who knows? Maybe "roughing it" and "comfort" aren't mutually exclusive after all.

—ANDREW WAGNER

HermanMiller for the Home

goetz sofa

classic design by Mark Goetz



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A Note on Our Expert
"Sexpert" Susie Bright has written and edited a variety of books, including *The Best American Erotica* series, *The Sexual State of the Union*, and, most recently, *How to Read/Write a Dirty Story*. "Sex," she explains, "is the number-one thing that people lie about, and I often feel it is inordinately threatening to say something simple and true." We decided that Bright was uniquely qualified to understand the secret life of a night table.

SUSIE'S ONE NIGHT STAND

When we think about it—perhaps this has to do with the frame of mind we've been in lately—we find that there is something a bit disreputable about the idea of a night table. It is as if this otherwise innocuous little piece of furniture were designated for a use that is somehow risqué (think nightclub) or downright dirty (think night soil).

After all, what place harbors more secrets than the night-table drawer? What piece of furniture is more of an accomplice to our most private acts? The night table is our bed's sidekick. A diminutive Jeff to the bed's long-boned Mutt.

Or perhaps this is all wishful thinking.

Our expert, Susie Bright, tells us that she keeps on or in her night table a Leonard Maltin guide to TV movies, "monkey grooming things" (like dental floss), paper and pencil, erotic photos, vibrators, condoms, lubricants, a laptop computer, and her knitting and embroidery. We are convinced that she leads a much richer life than we do.

Our own night table, originally owned by Grandma and scheduled for imminent replacement, is something of a disappointment. At the moment, our drawer is stocked with a flashlight (in case of earthquake or blackout), a tube of Ben Gay (don't ask), and a jumbo-sized bottle of Rolaids (really, you don't want to know). We are shopping for a new night table (or two) and we're hoping that it will, by its very existence, enrich our days and jolly up our nightlife.

PHOTO BY JILL POSENER (BRIGHT)

PL02
E15
Designers: Philipp Mainzer and Florian Asche
Price: $539
This floor-hugging Douglas-fir vessel by a pair of German designers is part of a series of furniture that consists of planks resting on stubby feet. The larger pieces can be used as benches, chaises, sideboards, or monkish beds.

Expert Opinion:
"The only one I wanted to touch," notes Bright. "It's like I wanted to lick it or sit in it or pour water in it. It's very sensual and beautiful and you feel like putting a few marbles in it."

What We Think:
We came across the PL02 during a reception at the New York furniture store Troy. Upstairs was Piero Lissoni's furniture all sleek and comfy. In the basement was this outrageously spare line by E15, including the bowl-shaped table, a piece so minimalist that we couldn't decide whether it was a joke or a revelation.

PHOTOGRAPH (LEFT) BY LYN GAZA

Bauhaus Side Table

ICF

Designers: Marcel Breuer, J. Hagemann (1934)

Price: $1,280

Originally manufactured by Thonet, this table of lacquered beech mounted on a tubular steel frame is of a piece with Breuer's tubular steel chairs from the mid- to late 1920s.

Expert Opinion

"Well, out of this group it's a relief that somebody has a drawer with a handle on it," states Bright. "This seems very bacheloresque to me. Very *American Psycho.* This is what that Brett Easton Ellis character keeps his knives in."

What We Think

While we have endless admiration for Bauhaus Side Table's formal qualities, we are pretty sure that our habits and its aesthetic would clash. We would want to stack phone books and magazines on the floor inside the frame and muck up all that nice negative space.

Chicago Table Lamp

Bludot

Designers: Maurice Blanks, John Christakos, Charles Lazor

Price: $329

Part of Bludot's extremely elemental Chicago family of furniture, this cherry- or maple-veneer table stands on tubular steel legs and features a built-in lamp on either the left- or right-hand side.

Expert Opinion

"I like the notion that this one comes with a lamp and you don't have to deal with any stupid cords and trying to get the lamp to match your table," says Bright. "That's fine, but there are so many problems it doesn't solve: We have no privacy, no drawer, and no romance."

What We Think

No romance. Yup. Bludot's Chicago series is pragmatic to the point of pain. That's exactly what we like about the matching Chicago book shelves. But the table lamp has the look of something that you'd find in the rooms of a chain motel beside the Autobahn.

Magazine Table

Offi

Designer: Eric Pfeiffer

Price: $129

This exceedingly casual table in birch-veneer-coated plywood can be used as a 16-inch-tall coffee table or, if you upend it, as a 25-inch-tall night table or a wee desk for a laptop computer.

Expert Opinion

Bright comments on the Offi brochure: "The context they show is a cup of tea and magazines, and that really gets me to the place where I live. The notion that it can then become a laptop table is entertaining, but if you already have magazines in it and you're drinking tea, you can't just upend it all and have it crash onto the floor."

What We Think

It's hard for a piece of furniture to be simpler than this undulating sheet of plywood, but the Magazine Table is also clever, and graceful. It's an article of faith for us that a night table without a drawer is an invitation to disaster ("Honey, *where* did you say you put the condoms?"), but we're tempted.

n.o.d.

Dune

Designers: Nuf Design, Yeonsoo Son and Yoyo Wong

Price: $1,645

Created by two young female designers, one from Korea and the other from Hong Kong, who met at Parsons School of Design in New York, the n.o.d. table features a laminate drawer that skates outward along a diagonal path.

Expert Opinion

"It's really fun," remarks Bright. "I would love to pull the drawer out diagonally over and over and over again. It's like a little hat-trick you can show your guests. These colors and that base, though, are so ugly. Yuck."

What We Think

Not yuck. We are definitely not thinking yuck. Their first manufactured piece nicely encapsulates the Nuf girls' goal of merging functionality with a "sense of playfulness." We too like the way the drawer scoots out sideways like a crab scampering along the sand. ■

PHOTO BY MIKE PARKER (CHICAGO TABLE LAMP)

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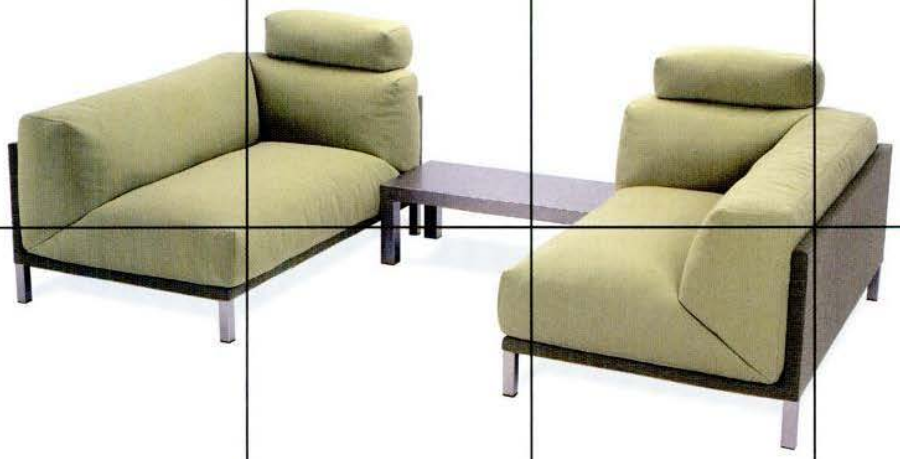

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Mabel Wilson finds Kmart to be a bit more surreal than she expected. Here she eyes a multicolored loaf of bread with disbelief.

PHOTOS BY KELLI YON

THE BLUE LIGHT *IS* SPECIAL

Sitting like dinosaurs off highways across the country, Kmarts were once America's premier shopping spots for household staples at rock-bottom prices. But with increased competition from stores like Target, a less than glowing reputation, and a whole lot of ribbing about its famed Blue Light Specials, Kmart began to lose its appeal. Now that kitsch is back and it's cool to be a bargain hunter, Kmart and the Blue Light have emerged from a deep corporate slumber. So dwell asked Mabel Wilson, an associate professor of architectural design at the California College of Arts and Crafts, a design essayist, and a partner in the architectural design collaborative KW:a, to investigate what—if anything—is behind the rekindled interest in Kmart.

Mabel: Super Kmart is really strange, if not surreal. They have groceries as well as the usual Kmart gear. It has everything in excess—15-pound bags of tortilla chips, etc. There is no division between the food and everything else. It all blends together. For instance, right above the frozen food aisle—which is about a quarter of a mile long—there are piñatas, wooden Windsor chairs, kids' bicycles. Everything is just sort of indiscriminately placed on top of the frozen food section. Very strange.

1 Blue Light Special

The Kmart corporation has been going through its ups and downs and the Blue Light Special has been something that has been really key to their identity. It is a good overall design strategy—people clearly identify with it; it's how they remember Kmart. It's a TV campaign, a billboard campaign, and a print ad. It is pretty great. The Blue Light Special happens every hour on the hour. They hang a blue, stretched tarp from the ceiling and a blue strobe light spins around and lights up. The blue strobe is reflected onto this stretched fabric frame so all of a sudden you have this glowing blue circle in the distance. That's how you know where to go to get an extra-special deal. Then they roll out a rack of something and everything on the rack is bathed in blue light. You get an added discount when you buy stuff in the Blue Light. It's a great marketing idea, but I think the light could be a little bluer.

2 Pyrex Originals casserole plate $10.99

Pyrex is bakeware by Corning, originally from the '40s or '50s. It's designed so you can take it directly from the refrigerator to the oven. They have a kind of Danish Moderne feel to them and they are clear glass. The design is very simple. A lot of people will remember ▸

image
not
available

them from their childhood. They last for years. The ones from my childhood are still around—my dad still has them. They are basically indestructible because they are really thick glass. It is a durable item and a durable design and they are a good value, which is really what people go to Kmart for.

3 Martha Stewart Paint **$17.99** per gallon

These paints have a fantastic palette that can be used for more traditional residences but are also very modern. I imagine some larger manufacturer like Dutch Boy actually makes the paints but Martha and/or her assistants design the palette. Because it is so edited it is easy for people to choose a complimentary palette of colors. And the colors are actually quite beautiful—very muted—you don't get anything garish. They are good quality paints at a reasonable price. The names of the colors are hysterical, though. My favorite is Lily Pond Blue. There's also Rue, Tortilla, and Weimaraner. I have to say, I'm not a big Martha Stewart fan but these paints are really well done.

4 Instant Bed **$89.99** Queen

The air mattress is interesting in and of itself because it's just this piece of plastic that is somehow quite comfortable. And it's great to watch it inflate. But this one also has a frame with this interesting trusslike structure. It looks like an Eames coffee table or an Eames Shelf System—except, of course, this is the sub-structure for the bed.

The frame is amazing because it is entirely collapsible and folds into a fairly small bag on rollers, so you could easily put it into a closet. I really like the fact that you can have this instant bed on an instant frame.

5 Votive Candles **$.89**

These are my favorite—the one thing I regularly buy at Kmart. They come in orange and blue and purple and red. They also have the plain clear ones and their sanctuary series with the Virgin de Guadeloupe, San Juan Batiste, and my favorite, El Niño Jesus. They're colorful, they're safe, they're cheap, and they ward off evil spirits.

6 Fire Extinguisher **$14.99**

The First Alert has something called a "sure grip trigger"—a very simple, one-handed trigger, which is undoubtedly useful in an emergency. With older fire extinguishers, you have to hold a nozzle and then with your other hand you have to grip something to spray the foam. This just has this one black plastic trigger with a tiny red nozzle and an elegant red cylinder. It is fairly small, lightweight and encased in steel. It doesn't have a lot of writing or labels, it's just very simple.

It's an interesting solution to the scenario of being stuck in your kitchen, frantic because your pan is on fire, and you have to grab something really quickly to extinguish the flames—with the First Alert you just pull the trigger and, hopefully, no more fire. I like that it has a gauge so you can tell the amount of foam left in the canister. Usually you don't know if you have to refill your fire extinguisher or not. So, someone was obviously thinking about the design and aesthetics. It is always nice to know that, at the very least, someone was thinking.

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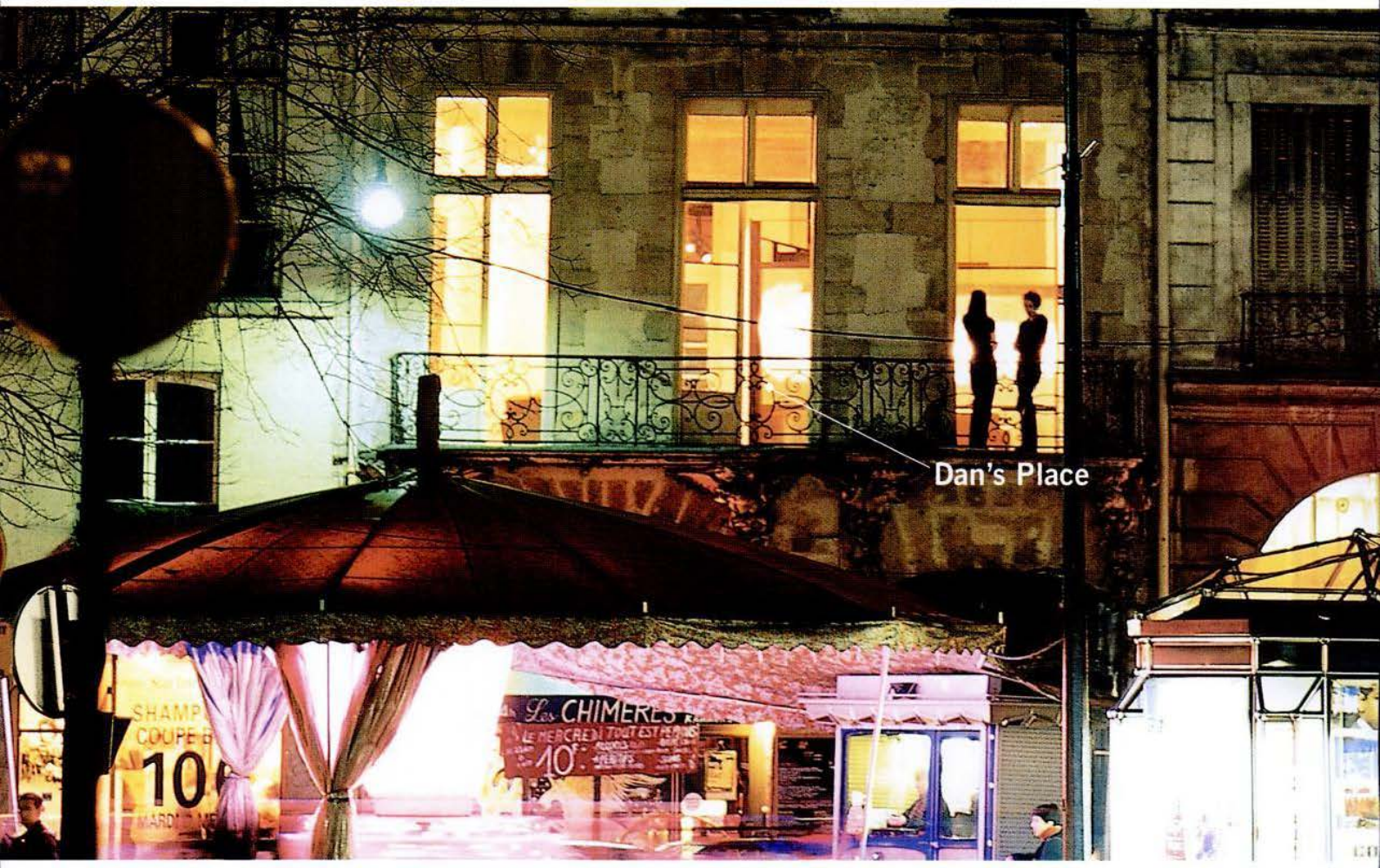

PARIS: A PLACE TO PACE

In the Marais district of Paris, in what was once the salon of a *hôtel particulier* built in 1626 (and formerly the living quarters of Voltaire's niece), is the place expatriate banker Dan Ford calls home. Two years ago, Ford decided to transform his traditional Parisian apartment into a loftlike living space and chose architects Mason Wickham and Edwin Zawadzki, of the Brooklyn-based firm In Situ Design, to tackle the challenging renovation.

Why an American firm for a Parisian project? Zawadzki had been a business associate of Ford's in the early '90s before shifting to architecture. While on vacation in Paris, Wickham and Zawadzki visited Ford's place, made a few suggestions, and within the month they were back onsite. "I'd talked to other architects," Ford explains. "They would whip out the proverbial cocktail napkin and after a few doodles would announce with supreme confidence that they had the right concept. I was just supposed to salute and open my wallet. But the In Situ team impressed me with their respect for this 1626 building, and their meticulous attention to both the theory and the detail of how it should be renovated. They made the kind of surgical intervention, in other words, that a hospital would give a VIP patient. They made a very careful study of the existing apartment, showed me several carefully elaborated new design schemes, and built scale models of the most promising alternatives. I hadn't actually wanted to get that involved in the project, but as the design phase continued, I found it great fun to follow it along."

Wickham and Zawadzki camped out in Ford's 1,000-square-foot space for six months. They acted as the architects, general contractors, and finishing crew on the project, but, Zawadzki explains, "Working in Paris was tough . . . our energetic, linear, goal-oriented, brainstorming American management style did not translate well. We had to get into the polychronic French mode of production." Fortunately, it all worked out. In the end the architects received a dozen roses from the steelworkers. "Our favorite part of the project," says Zawadzki, "is that Dan loves it so much."

We spoke with Dan about how he was enjoying his new home in his favorite city.

What got you to move from Boston to Paris? How do you like living here?

I was seduced by a salmon en croûte with sorrel sauce during my first visit 25 years ago. When I finally got the opportunity to work for an investment bank here, in 1989, I jumped at it. Lots of other cities offer interesting ►

PHOTOS BY PHILIPPE LOUZON

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The open design by In Situ fulfilled Ford's desire for varied and unobstructed pathways to pace.

things to do, but Paris really bowls you over with the number of possibilities. And it's just so beautiful.

What brought you to this neighborhood? What do you like about it? Dislike?

The Marais, which starts near Notre Dame and extends down the Seine to the Bastille, is the oldest part of the city. In recent years it's become one of the "in" places to live because the old buildings contain some really great apartments and the nightlife makes it something akin to Greenwich Village. The main problem—to which, of course, I contributed myself—is that all the apartment renovations mean that there is early morning hammering, construction dust galore, etc. For example, two other apartments right next to mine are currently being gutted and redone.

What do you like best about your apartment?

Nabokov said something to the effect that you judge literature and other art by whether it produces a tingle in your spine. Everyone who walks through the front door of the apartment says "wow," and I still gawk in amazement myself. There's such a sense of open space and such a small number of elegant lines that define the place that it's more like I'm inhabiting a piece of sculpture than anything that would go under the heading "apartment." The 15-foot ceiling is one of the most impressive features, but it's the construction, not just the height. It had been partly hidden by a false ceiling, and the old beams had been covered by who knows how many layers of varnish and dirt. It was restored to its original state, so now you have tons and tons of ancient beams that seem to float in some miraculous way above your head (an effect that is enhanced by the sophisticated lighting system). When you add to this the fact that you can now see all the way from the front balcony to the interior courtyard, you feel like you could helicopter around inside the place.

Is there anything you don't like about the renovation?

There's no toilet paper holder! Maybe they're still working on the perfect design. And I'm a bit of a slob, so the strong, clean lines of the place show when something is out of place. Let newspapers pile up on the floor, as I used to do? It makes it seem like the place has been trashed! I've become a servant of the new aesthetics and have had to clean up my act.

—ALLISON ARIEFF

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ARE YOUR WIRES CROSSED?

We never stop hearing about the wonders of wireless technology, but tell us, have you noticed any decrease in the numbers of wires spilling out from the back of your home computer, telephone, or television? We didn't think so. A wild tangle of cords and cables is not only unsightly but also unsafe—and seemingly unavoidable. But thanks to our four experts, help is on the way.

Lisa Kanarek is the founder of Dallas-based HomeOfficeLife.com, a firm that advises corporations and individuals on all aspects of working from home. She is the author of *Home Office Life: Making a Space to Work at Home* (Rockport, 2001).

Jeff Shore is a designer and the founder of DO!, a multidisciplinary design firm in Denmark. DO!'s first creation, a colorful cable organizer called Wire Snake, was launched in 2000.

Scott Herren is an Atlanta-based musician and producer who has recorded dreamy post-rock under the pseudonym Savath & Savalas, glitchy electronica as Delarosa & Asora, and scrambled hip-hop as Prefuse 73.

Marc Bonato, the owner of B&M Contracting in San Francisco, is a general contractor who has spent many years doing electrical work and who has lately been concentrating on high-end kitchen installations in California, Hawaii, and Colorado.

The Problem

Lisa: Unfortunately, along with the convenience of technology comes a large bundle of cords. At some point, cords will no longer be necessary, but for now, they have to be managed. Cord management is a hot issue and one that manufacturers are taking seriously.

Scott: I'm pretty bad about cord management, so it is a problem. All my equipment is on one desk shoved off to one side of the room. The wires all come out of the back of the computer and machines and they fall behind my table.

Jeff: "Solutions to confusions" is DO!'s principle. The concept for Wire Snake came from the notion of seeing wires as a jungle—to see this tangled jumble as a tangled jungle, with strands that could be climbed. A series of explorations resulted in the coil, like a snake, that wraps itself around an object.

Marc: When you're dealing with electricity, you should choose safety before aesthetics. There can be a lot of trouble if you don't keep them neat. Also, the wires and cables need to be accessible. Accessibility and safety are the two most important things to think about.

Solutions

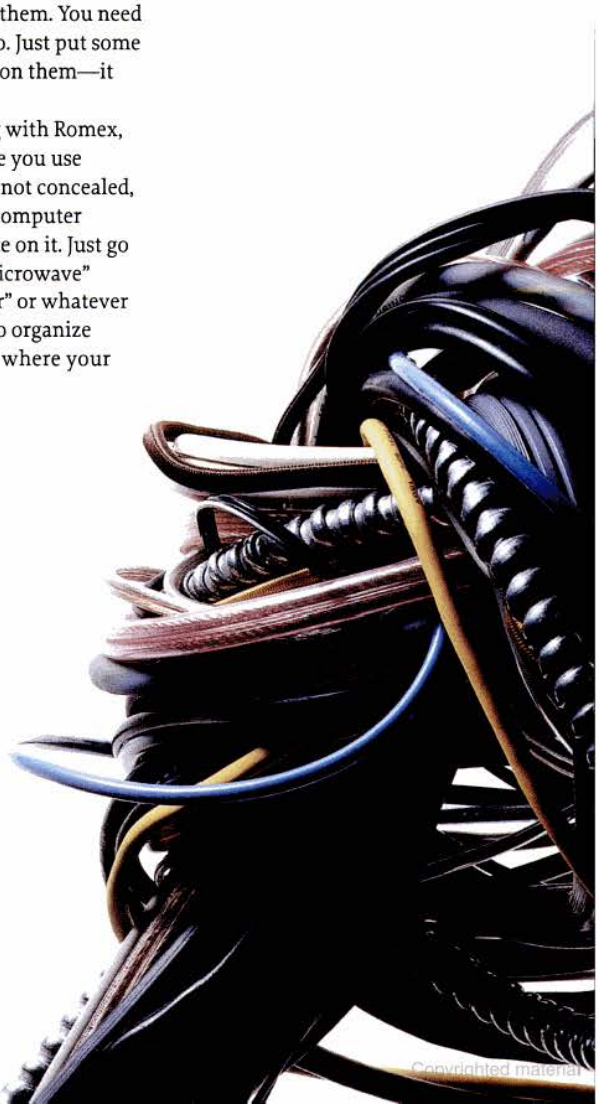
Lisa: The safest way to handle cords is to place your computer workstation or desk against the wall so no cords are accessible. All outlets within your home office need to be grounded, so a surge protector is a must. An added security measure is an uninterrupted power source (UPS), which provides at least five minutes of power after an interruption. New products on the market include the Cable Snake, which holds all cords neatly in a canvas bag, or other options like a long plastic bar that attaches to the back of the desk to lift cords out of the way. Depending on the type of cord tamer, you can fit around six cords in each.

Jeff: Whenever possible, the number of cords should be reduced. Have you ever noticed how wires are not only messy but need to be constantly rearranged and changed? That's why you need a solution that is easy and quick to put on and take off.

Scott: I just have things stacked up so I cover all the wires and cords and you can't see them.

Marc: Organize yourself. Give the cords and cables names or numbers. Make yourself a map indicating which is which and what goes to what. You can buy little books of number stickers which you can stick on the wires. You put a number at the beginning and at the end of a cord or cable so that you know where they go and you can follow them. You need to know who is who. Just put some numbered stickers on them—it helps.

If you are dealing with Romex, the soft plastic cable you use anytime the wire is not concealed, like with stereo or computer cables, you can write on it. Just go ahead and write "microwave" on it or "dishwasher" or whatever you want in order to organize yourself and know where your things are.



Hide or Not to Hide?

Jeff: Wire Snake doesn't hide the cords. It organizes them. They are held together and kept tidy.

Marc: In my work hiding the wires is one of the most important parts of the job. You have to have all of your cords or wires running at a certain depth within the walls so that people, first of all, won't see them and, secondly, won't catch them with a nail when they are hanging a picture or something and get a nasty shock.

Danger!

Jeff: Any cords with broken insulation must be replaced. Avoid winding cords together, as this can lead to undesirable heat build-up caused by an electromagnetic field being created in the cords.

Scott: I use a Furman Power Conditioner for my gear, which keeps it running at an equal wattage/voltage. It keeps the power from blowing out.

Marc: You don't want computer cables to run too close to other electric wires. If they do, you get interference. Everything should be running as quickly and efficiently as it can and that is only possible by keeping them separated. If you run a ton of things into one outlet, your circuit breaker is going to switch off constantly and you won't be too happy. Most modern houses are equipped with good-sized circuit breakers, and dedicated outlets for big energy drainers. If you can, the best thing to do is add more dedicated outlets.

[product info, pg 94] ■

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Sacramento

The books could no doubt be found, Knight had informed her, right downtown in Sacramento. She did not seem to realize that there were now paperback bookstores in Sacramento. She and his father would never seem to get it through their heads that things were changing in Sacramento, that Aerojet General and Douglas Aircraft and even the State College were bringing in a whole new class of people, people who had lived back East, people who read things.

Run River, **Joan Didion, 1963**

Newark

Am I wrong to think that we delighted in living there? No delusions are more familiar than those inspired in the elderly by nostalgia but am I completely mistaken to think that living as well-born children in Renaissance Florence could not have held a candle to growing up within aromatic distance of Tabachnik's pickle barrels? Am I mistaken to think that even back then, in the vivid present, the fullness of life stirred our emotions to an extraordinary extent? Has life anywhere since so engrossed you in its ocean of details?

American Pastoral, **Philip Roth, 1997**

Pittsburgh

I smoked and looked down at the bottom of Pittsburgh for a little while, watching the kids playing tiny baseball, the distant figures of dogs snatching at a little passing car, a miniature housewife on her back porch shaking out a snippet of red rug, and I made a sudden, frightened vow never to become that small, and to devote myself to getting bigger and bigger and bigger.

The Mysteries of Pittsburgh, **Michael Chabon, 1988**

Urban New Jersey

Rail lines marked the perimeter of Haledon, this isosceles triangle in the flat eastern part of the Garden State. Freight trains ran through it like blood cells, carrying unpronounceable compounds and toxins. They rumbled past the accidents at crossing gates, past the crime scenes and late night waste burials.

Hills rose above town to the north and west. Where Alice sat now was among the affluent homeowners on the cliffs of the town's perimeter. The vast expanses of the New Jersey plains were visible from there—to the east, Paterson, Flee, Mahwah; to the south, Jersey City, Tyre, the Oranges. The city proper sprawled down below the heights and along one side of it the trains skirted an unclaimed territory, trains so long they seemed still to inhabit the past in the present moment, trains that completed a statewide circuit of manufacturing needs.

Then, on the hills for a moment, the sun burst from the clouds over luxurious properties, each acre with its vocabulary of flora: oak, maple, ash, pine, willow, forsythia, rhododendron. Lawns dappled in sunlight. Everything in numerical proportions.

Garden State, **Rick Moody, 1992**

BEING THERE

Snapshots of America's Less Glorious Urban Landscapes

PHOTO BY CATHERINE LEDNER

St. Louis

In 1870, St. Louis was America's Fourth City. It was a booming rail center, the country's leading inland port, a wholesaler for half a continent. Only New York, Philadelphia and Brooklyn had larger populations. Granted there were newspapers in Chicago, a close Fifth, that claimed the 1870 census had counted as many as 90,000 nonexistent St. Louisians, and granted they were right. But all cities are ideas, ultimately. They create themselves and the rest of the world apprehends them or ignores them as it chooses.

The Twenty-Seventh City, **Jonathan Franzen, 1988**

San Fernando Valley

He had saved enough money to buy a second car and then a house for his small family in the San Fernando Valley...a ranch-style house in Van Nuys, reddish-brown with white trim, with a swimming pool and bougainvillea in the backyard and a lovely black walnut in front, with Sylvan Park Elementary School nearby and Van Nuys High School, alma mater of Marilyn Monroe and Robert Redford (although no one knew who Robert Redford was yet), just around the corner. The Kelbows, it seemed, were hunkering down.

Greetings from the Golden State, **Leslie Brenner, 2001**

Tucson

We all lived in model houses for a development that had flopped, gone bankrupt. These homes were priced to move, and because Ann and I thought back then that we'd like to have a few more kids, we couldn't refuse. Four bedrooms and a two-car garage. The homes were big, and all three looked exactly alike . . . sand-colored stucco, red Mexican tile roofs, natural desert xeriscaping in the front, and backyards with peanut-shaped pools enclosed by black wrought-iron fences.

Naked Pueblo, **Mark Jude Poirier, 1999**

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT LIVING IN NEWARK?

Story by Bonnie Schwartz Photographs by Evan Kafka

There's lots of sunlight, lots of windows, and lots of opportunity here.

Dave Robinson

Ken Covert

Maria Ostoyic

Rob McKinney

I was having a bad day not too long ago and went out to the courtyard to collect myself. Dave Robinson must have seen me from his window. He came out, handed me a daiquiri, and went back inside without saying a word. That kind of thing makes you feel really lucky to live in a place like this.

Susan Cliff

Kathleen Kelly

Barry McCord

The Priory, a restaurant and jazz club. Newark had a lot of jazz clubs at one point. Most have closed down, but the Priory is still around. It's got semi-elegant dining and live jazz.

Daniel Whitner

I love Latin women, so it's a great place for me to be. I plan to stay here, at least through my bachelorhood.

Wes Alzadon

I like living in multicultural, cosmopolitan places, and Newark is one. When I come home from working in Manhattan, I feel like I'm still in the city.

Pilar Rivas

Paul Santos

I love on Sundays to go to the Riviera, a Portuguese bakery on Ferry Street, and have a pressed ham and cheese sandwich while I read the newspaper.

Felicia Walker

I love Newark's industrial side, which it is losing.

Madeline Ruiz

Mike Panzer

Susan Pereira

Harold Sammy

Versushka Wray-Spirito

I worked at the Newark Museum for 12 and a half years and it's still one of my favorite places.

Betsy Wrobel

Good friends from all over the world, sangria, Brazilian coffee, the Tibetan collection at the Newark Museum, the produce stand at Mulberry and Market, low rent, 17 minutes to New York City, and $10 taxi rides to the airport.

Lis Ssenjovo

Located in the Ironbound district of Newark, New Jersey, the Chocolate Factory contains a mix of rental and condo apartments in a converted 19th-century industrial building. Its residents form an ethnically diverse enclave within an insular, heavily Portuguese neighborhood.

"I can't tell you how many people told me I was crazy to move here," says Betsy Wrobel, the Chocolate Factory's first resident, "but some of those same people are telling me today that they wish they had a bought a place here when I did."

Living in a city that's been labeled America's worst isn't always easy. Yet despite the violent uprisings of the late '60s and the decades-long period of abandonment and blight that followed, Newark has recently seen some hopeful developments, including investment in the urban infrastructure and population rolls that are starting to rise for the first time in half a century. Recent waves of immigrants from southern Europe, Brazil, and Mexico are making Newark their home, and, seeking an affordable place to live in the New York metropolitan area, a cadre of young artists, architects, and liberal arts grads have begun to rejuvenate New Jersey's most populous city, discovering spacious accommodations, cheap rent, good light, and a tangible sense of community.

"Newark is on the rise, population-wise and economically, yet a quarter of its people still live at or below the poverty level. It's got some of the worst ghetto situations I've ever seen," says ceramicist and urban activist Anker West. West moved with his father, Troy, an architect, to Newark's Ironbound district in 1974, when he was 13 years old, and has been there ever since. "Somehow, the arts survive. There's a thriving music and poetry scene and at least a half dozen buildings in this area where artists work and live."

For more recent transplants, explaining their city of choice to relatives and friends can be unpleasant. "Sometimes I don't even tell people where I live. It's too depressing to hear their response," says Pilar Rivas, who grew up in Spain and Uruguay and lives in the Chocolate Factory, a 19th-century industrial building that was converted by three local businessmen in the mid-1980s. During the economic lull of the early 1990s, buyers were able to secure studios and one- and two-bedroom apartments for $50,000 to $82,000, with basically no money down.

"I can't tell you how many people told me I was crazy to move here," says Betsy Wrobel, the Chocolate Factory's first resident, who moved into the building in 1988, "but some of those same people are telling me today that they wish they had bought a place here when I did." Adds Lis Ssenjovu, another Chocolate Factory resident, "Newark is considered the armpit of New Jersey, but I'm proud to be here. This is one of the most interesting Lusophonic neighborhoods in the country."

For the uninitiated, "Lusophonic" means "Portuguese-speaking," and the Ironbound is home to the largest concentration of Portuguese people (and some of the most amazing seafood restaurants) outside of Portugal. Moments away from downtown Newark and surrounded by railroad tracks (hence its name), the Ironbound has been a magnet for immigrants for close to two centuries. In the last few years, Mexican nationals have begun to arrive, and Ferry Street, the Ironbound's bustling main drag, now boasts two of New Jersey's most authentic Mexican restaurants alongside its Spanish tavernas, Portuguese groceries, and Brazilian bakeries.

The Chocolate Factory is about a two-minute walk from Newark's Pennsylvania train station (where, if you time it right, you can get to New York City's Penn Station in 17 minutes) and practically around the corner from Ferry Street (where a jolt of Brazilian coffee in the afternoon will keep you up all night). But whether or not the Chocolate Factory ever actually functioned as one is a matter of some debate among the building's 35 or so residents. Wrobel, a retired arts educator, believes that chocolate—or at least candy—was indeed made there. But some of her neighbors think otherwise, responding to Ironbound lore that the building actually contained a leather-sewing factory, a business more typical of the area when the structure was built. The building's developers, they posit, might have thought that a name like the Chocolate Factory would do more for sales than, say, the Sweatshop.

In some ways, the Chocolate Factory is an isolated community within an isolated community: Neighbors frequently garden or barbecue together in the building's enclosed brick courtyard or take communal art classes in Betsy Wrobel's living room. While many of the Chocolate Factory's residents are immigrants themselves (from such places as Trinidad, Spain, Puerto Rico, England, and the Philippines), few are Brazilian and even fewer are Portuguese. "Politically and socially I'm a minority in this neighborhood," says Dave Robinson, who grew up in a suburban New Jersey town, South Tom's River, and moved into the building with his girlfriend (now wife) Madeline in 1993. "I don't necessarily feel rejected by the Portuguese people who live around us, but neither do I feel accepted by them."

Nonetheless, the small-town atmosphere of the Ironbound offers many rewards, all within a stone's throw of downtown Newark and minutes from Manhattan: a neighborhood rich in culture, streets that are largely safe from crime, a burgeoning arts community, and, not least, a surfeit of air and light.

Bonnie Schwartz writes and thinks about the designs of people's lives from her home-based office in Brooklyn, New York.

IS NEWARK THE NEW WILLIAMSBURG?

Assemblage artist and musician Roy Crosse stumbled on Newark about 14 years ago and set up shop in the Ironbound. "It was accessible and affordable," Crosse says from a sun-filled corner of his 4,500-square-foot loft. "There was a lot of space available in warehouse buildings, and industrial metals, which I use in my work, were plentiful. A handful of artists and I would go on what we called shopping trips to salvage materials from abandoned factories."

Though many of those colleagues have since moved on, a new, younger crop of artists has made Newark their home. Crosse's new neighbors—a broad cross-section of creative, countercultural types, from recording artists, painters, and videographers to gallery owners, architects, and a self-described "balloonatic"—currently populate many of the Ironbound's industrial buildings. "It's cheap, there's good light, and you can't beat the proximity to the trains," says installation artist Stephen Hendee.

While many of Newark's newest residents, both in the creative community and outside of it, moved to the city to be close to Manhattan, most have found plenty of reasons to forgo Chelsea, Nolita,

The Chocolate Factory was converted to apartments in the mid-1980s by a group of local businessmen and a Jersey City–based architect, James Lindeman. Located at the corner of McWhorter and Hamilton Streets, it's steps from Ferry Street, the Ironbound district's main drag, and a few blocks from Newark's McKim Mead & White-designed Pennsylvania Station.

and Soho. Among their favorite local distractions: "Sounds of the City," Lis Ssenjovu's Thursday-night summer concert series; the Priory on West Market Street, for live jazz; the Iandor, Sumei, Aljira Multidisciplinary Art Center, and City Without Walls galleries; the seafood platters at Seabra's Portuguese restaurant in the Ironbound; the fried chicken and okra at Je's old-style Southern restaurant on William Street; picnics at the Frederick Law Olmsted–designed Branch Brook Park; and indie movie screenings at Cafe Modelo on Ferry Street. (See page 94 for more info.)

Artist Roy Crosse lives in an Ironbound loft building near the Chocolate Factory.

DAVE ROBINSON & MADELINE RUIZ

Dave Robinson (33) and Madeline Ruiz (34) first moved to the Chocolate Factory as renters in 1993, but they quickly set their sights on buying a place in the building. "We would sit in the courtyard on Sunday afternoons and stare at this one space on the ground floor," Dave remembers. "We would dream about moving in and opening it up onto the courtyard." It wasn't long before the couple, both architects, got their wish. "The place looked pretty crappy when we bought it but we weren't fazed," says Madeline, who admits to buying the doors that would eventually lead to the courtyard before the sale closed.

They moved into their first-floor duplex space in May of 1996, installed the doors, then stripped and/or moved practically every surface and fixture in the place. "We ripped out the melamine kitchen cabinets, moved the kitchen to the other side of the room, and yanked the Sheetrock off the walls to bring it back to its original brick," says Madeline.

Within a year, they fashioned a simple, modern, showplace home with custom-designed metal railings, an IKEA kitchen, recessed lighting, new red oak floors, translucent screen panels, and granite kitchen counters.

Why were they in such a big hurry? "Somewhere along the way we decided to get married and have our wedding reception in our building's courtyard," says Dave. "We needed to finish things up so people could actually get into the bathroom."

SUSAN CLIFF & LIS SSENJOVU

Down on the ground floor, a two-bedroom duplex is occupied by Garfield, New Jersey–bred Lis Ssenjovu (25), a freelance arts administrator, and Susan Cliff (27), a college student from Leeds, England. They met several summers ago in Crete. Despite her young age, Lis (at right) is a key player in Newark's current renaissance. Just out of college she got an entry-level job at the city's showplace, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. "I started the day they opened." Within a year Lis launched her own initiative: a free summer outdoor concert series every Thursday night.

"Sounds of the City," as the series is called, dedicates itself to Newark residents rather than visitors, and, arguably, has done more for hometown pride than the multimillion-dollar arts center. Says Ssenjovu's neighbor Dave Robinson, "At first maybe 25 or 50 people showed up, mostly Lis's friends. Now literally thousands come out for it."

Even for the resourceful Lis and Susan, even in Newark, life on the combined income of a freelance impresario and a full-time student can be a challenge. Susan and Lis spent their decorating dollars on thrift store furniture and paint-saturated planes define their space. "Susan's obsessed with fire, so she painted her room a deep orangey-red. My room, which I work in as well as sleep in, is more subdued," Lis says. The only thing they're missing? "An office!" says Lis. "It's getting kind of crammed working out of my bedroom."

BETSY WROBEL

From her many windows, 71-year-old Betsy Wrobel—the Chocolate Factory's first resident—has a commanding view of downtown Newark. A retired educator who oversaw the Arts Workshop at the Newark Museum for more than a dozen years, Wrobel now commissions artwork from her high-ceilinged one-bedroom tower apartment. Though her comfortable home is decorated with antique wood files, books, artwork, baskets of wool in a riot of colors, and a grand piano, Wrobel's most beloved possession is her view.

"I love my view so much I decided to turn it into a long-term project," she says. "There's so much going on in Newark that my view will change drastically if the city builds the large arena it's planning. So I called some friends—artists, musicians, actors, photographers—and invited them over to look at my view and interpret it so it won't get lost. There are now 14 projects under way in various media."

Wrobel's latest project is not the only artistic endeavor that has sprung from the third-floor corner apartment. Every month Wrobel hosts an art class for Chocolate Factory residents and posts the results in one of the building's hallways. Wrobel attributes the cultural richness of Newark and the comforts of her aerie with nurturing her creative spirit. "I love this place," she says, "I don't know much about feng shui, but it feels very good to me here, and has become very important to my feelings of well-being."

WES ALZADON

Wes Alzadon, a 38-year-old laparoscopic surgeon who is one of the Chocolate Factory's newest residents, is a confirmed gadget guy. When he recently moved into one of the building's smallest units, a 700-square-foot one-bedroom apartment on the third floor, Wes was faced not only with the task of decorating the first apartment he has lived in on his own, but also with finding enough room for his favorite possessions.

Wes wedged a 36-inch high-definition TV, oodles of exercise equipment, and a full bar into his small space. "The bedroom wasn't big enough for its own TV so I bought VR glasses instead," he says, pleased with his ingenuity.

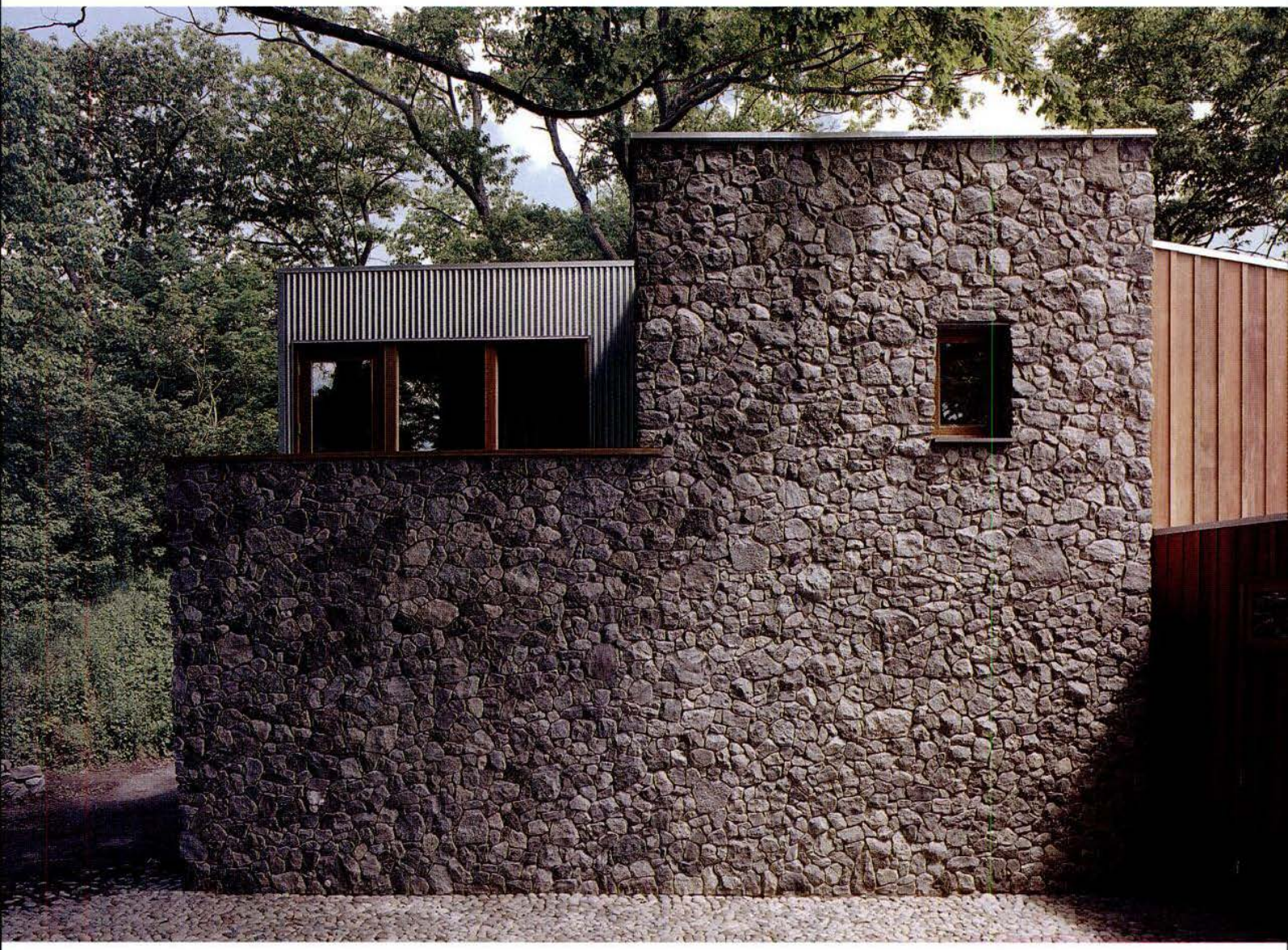
Reveling in his bachelorhood, Wes feels like he lucked out when he moved into the Ironbound. Not only does he "love Latin women" ("most of my girlfriends have been Portuguese or Brazilian," he explains), but he also appreciates the area's nightlife. "When I first moved here, I thought I'd be going out in Manhattan all the time, but I've found I haven't had to."

When it came to the nuts and bolts of decorating, Wes took some instruction from his older sister. "She did her first place in all these different colors and I loved it." So he hurried to the paint store and came back with an array of blues, oranges, greens, and yellows. "I'm having lots of fun," he says of his wild palette. "When my parents come over they think I must be on drugs to come up with this."

GREAT LAKE. SPLENDID HOUSE.

Granted, the Lake Erie house is not exactly in Buffalo, New York. Rather, it's about 25 minutes west, in Ontario, Canada. Buffalo, however, is where the homeowners live during the week, and where they run a business. The bad news is that the city is shrinking. Buffalo officials are challenging the results of the 2000 census, which puts the city's population at 294,400, the first drop below the 300,000 mark in a century. The good news is that Niagara Falls, just north of the city, is not eroding quite as fast as it once was. Manmade diversions have actually slowed the rate of erosion by reducing the flow of water over the falls. Below the falls chugs the Maid of the Mist. Above the falls sit the diversions, a half dozen jumbo hydroelectric plants.

"When you're there, you feel like you're on the ocean," says architect Emanuela Frattini Magnusson about the home she designed for a couple who own a factory in Buffalo, New York. Set on the shores of Lake Erie, not far from the city, the house was intended as a weekend retreat. The owners, however, have noticed their weekends growing longer.



PROJECT: LAKE ERIE HOUSE
ARCHITECT: EFM DESIGN
LOCATION: ONTARIO (NEAR BUFFALO, NEW YORK)

Photographs by Chad Holder

If you stand in the courtyard of the Lake Erie house, you've got a stone wall behind you (that's the 2,200-square-foot main house) and a stone wall in front of you (the garage and the upstairs guest quarters).

The stone walls that sandwich the courtyard were inspired by the farmhouses that Frattini Magnusson knew in the Alps and Tuscany, but were made possible by a nearby quarry and a local stonemason, Wayne Savage.

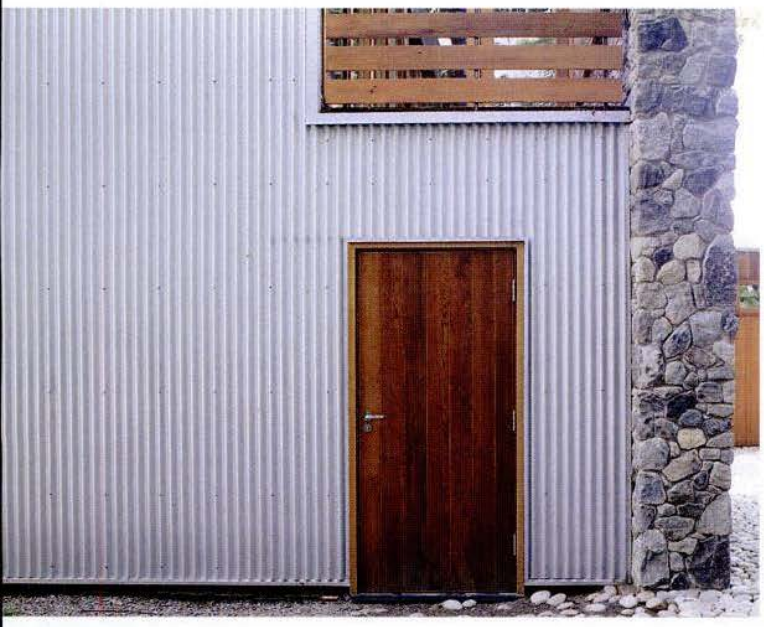
The stonework was done during the brutal winter months. While Savage worked, he was sheltered from the cold by a temporary plastic enclosure.

The Lake Erie house is all about exposure. It's all about the view. Even as you approach from the driveway, you can get little glimpses of the water through slivers of transparency. It's like "a preview of the lake," notes the architect.

Because the glass wall that faces the lake has to withstand 100-mile-per-hour winds, Frattini Magnusson decided to hold the double-glazed sheets in place with steel, for strength, and clad the metal with cedar, to add the appearance of warmth.

The living room opens to a second-story mezzanine and the double-height space is lined floor to ceiling with architect-designed bookcases.

Above the second-floor bedroom is a space the architect refers to as the "belvedere." With 360-degree views, it's the best place, says the homeowner, to gaze at the moon and stars.



Doors and windows (clockwise, from bottom left): A cedar door in a corrugated steel wall leads to the garage. Three glass doors in a stone wall lead to the main house (left) and the kitchen (middle and right). A long, horizontal window in a corrugated metal wall appears to be made of stone. It's just a reflection of the wall across the courtyard.

Architect Emanuela Frattini Magnusson was educated in her native Italy, where she first practiced architecture in collaboration with her father, Gianfranco Frattini. She has subsequently practiced on her own in London, Milan, and New York, where she opened an office after moving there with her husband, Knoll senior vice president and director of design Carl Magnusson, in 1990.

The Lake Erie house is her first built from the ground up in North America. She has done many renovation and remodel projects in the New York area, including a restoration of a Frank Lloyd Wright house in Rye. And she's well known for her furniture and product design. Right now, her four-person firm is hard at work on townhouses being built in Aqua, a modern New Urbanist development on an island near Miami.

Freedom. Flexibility. Open space. Because the house was designed for a couple without children, and because it is surrounded by water, woods, and hills, privacy was simply not an issue.

The bedroom opens onto this mezzanine/reading room. It's furnished with cedar shelves designed by Frattini Magnusson and a club chair manufactured and sold in Milan by De Padova and designed by Vico Magistretti. The side table is also from De Padova, an archival design by Achille Castiglione. Like much of the furniture in the house, these pieces were specified and imported by the architect. The carpet is a mix of linen and wool sold by Clodan Carpet in New York and the yellow-shaded light fixtures are manufactured by Luceplan especially for use on bookshelves.

In the living room, the main decorative element is Lake Erie. Upstaging the lake just a bit is an Artichoke lamp, which hangs in the double-height space adjacent to the bookshelves. The lamp was designed in the 1950s by Poul Henningson and manufactured by the Danish company Louis Poulson. It once hung in a Copenhagen restaurant and the homeowners discovered it in a warehouse there. What appear to be Adirondack chairs are actually an homage by Italian designer Gae Aulenti. This is where the homeowners like to sit and enjoy their morning coffee. The couch and club chairs are, like the mezzanine chair, from De Padova, and were imported by Frattini Magnusson. The reddish leather chair is an Egg by Arne Jacobsen and the aluminum floor lamps are from Artemide.

(Clockwise, from top left) The bathroom is paneled in cedar with a carrera marble countertop. The washbasins are from Kohler's ceramic line, the faucets are by Dornbracht, and the light fixtures are from IKEA. "It was $15 for the lamps. Can you believe it?" says Frattini Magnusson. The kitchen features cedar cabinets, a slice of stone wall, and carrera marble counters. The counter's backsplash is clear glass backed with green paint. The stove is a Thermador. The dining room set was designed by Frattini Magnusson for the Italian firm Montina. The slip-covered chairs are called Fazzoletto, (Italian for handkerchief). The small kitchen table is also from De Padova and the white ceramic pendant lamp is by British designer Sebastian Bergne.

Outside the bedroom door, a flight of stairs leads to the belvedere. Beside the steps is a vintage Cuban mahogany chair by Danish designer Ole Wanscher. The headboard of the bed, custom designed by Frattini Magnusson (and built, like all the cabinetry in the house, by local craftsman Mike Feagan), doubles as a chest of drawers. The whole unit is positioned far enough from the closets to allow the drawers to comfortably open and is topped with a galvanized aluminum tray, the perfect container for photos and knick knacks. The bedside light fixture is from IKEA.

"It's quite a different scene in the winter," says one of the homeowners. He describes the frozen lake and the ten-foot-high windrows of ice and snow on the beach. "It can be stark, but it has its own appeal. There isn't a bad season up here."

BACKYARD MODERNISM

Outdoor living and the California dream: Dan and Kathleen Cashman, the current owners of Maison Outil, take full advantage of the south-facing back deck.

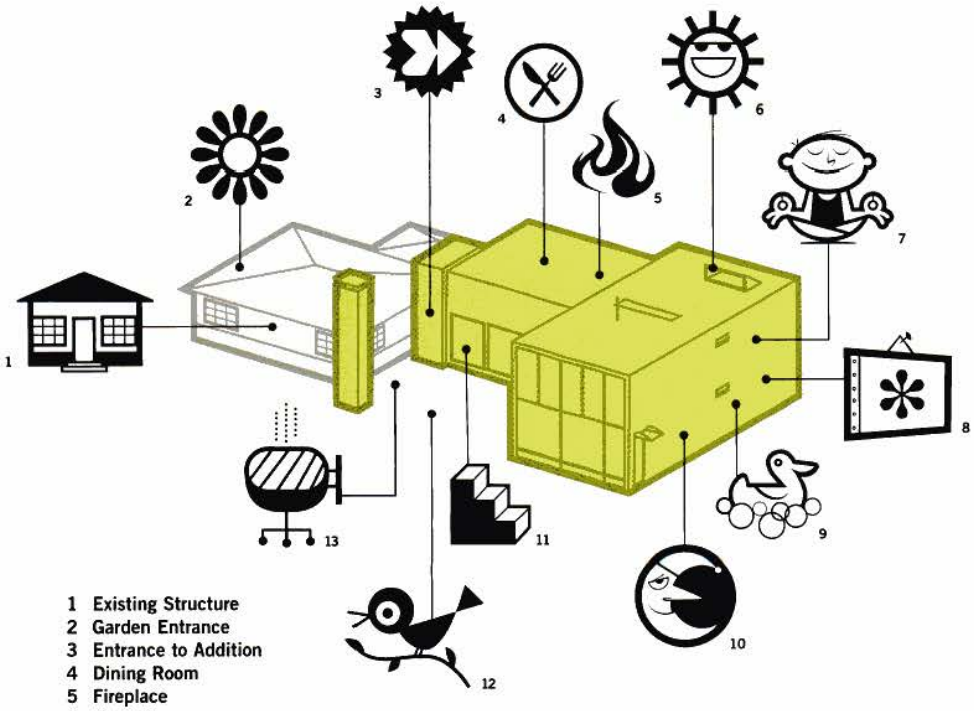
The San Fernando Valley is known for strip malls, an odd way of talking, and, lately, as the Hollywood of the adult-movie industry. But peek behind the sun-bleached tract houses, or through the slats of a wooden fence, and you might discover California modernism in all its glory.

Story by Mimi Zeiger
Photographs by Catherine Ledner

PROJECT: MAISON OUTIL
ARCHITECT: CENTRAL OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE
LOCATION: ENCINO, CALIFORNIA

Roman Janczak, contractor and former owner of the house, sits with his wife, Joan Jaeckel, in the central courtyard, which extends the main living area outside.

How do you build an aircraft hangar in a post-war subdivision?



1 Existing Structure
2 Garden Entrance
3 Entrance to Addition
4 Dining Room
5 Fireplace
6 Skylight
7 Meditation Room
8 Painting Studio
9 Bath
10 Bedroom
11 Ramp/Stairs
12 Courtyard
13 Barbecue

Opposite page, top: Transparency is key to the design of the house, be it expressed in the floor-to-ceiling windows that flank the living room or in the way the bathroom allows for visual connection to neighboring spaces. The floor of the bathroom is green slate and the sinks, designed by Roman Janczak, are salad bowls wrapped in sheet metal.

Opposite page, bottom: Architect Eric Kahn describes COA's design as "stealth." The modern addition is tucked behind a generic tract house. From the rear, the addition is a simple white stucco-clad cube.

Propped up on the wood-plank fence that divides this property from the neighbor's, contractor Roman Janczak surveys an amply weedy backyard. For him, this is all potential, a found space on which to build. Before moving, Janczak transformed his own lot (which once looked much like the one next door) from lawnmower nightmare to modernist dream. Perched on the fence between lots with Janczak, I feel like a cross between a peeping Tom and Kilroy as we peer over the boundary and crane to get glimpses of other properties. Orange, lemon, and flowering pomegranate trees flourish in this post-war subdivision. A couple of beasts, which I am told are "nice dogs," bark and scratch at the fence.

This is Encino. The San Fernando Valley. Southern California. Although it is years past the height of mid-century "keeping up with the Joneses," and the development has aged without the facelifts of other, richer suburbs, there is a sense of Arcadia in the valley on a day clear and relatively free from smog.

Our side of the fence is a different type of Eden: a utopia inspired by such modern masters as Richard Neutra and Rudolf Schindler. Maison Outil (Tool House), which was designed by the Los Angeles firm Central Office of Architecture (COA) and constructed in the backyard, fills up most of the lot, but the openness of the design gives the sense of being outdoors. COA partners Russell Thomsen, Ron Golan, and Eric Kahn picked up on Le Corbusier's doctrine "a house is a machine for living in," and integrated it with the openness afforded by California living to produce architecture that follows their philosophy of the house as functioning not only as a machine but as a tool.

The space is decadent in its airiness, but restrained in its materiality. The floor is made of polished concrete and the walls are white plaster. Crucial to the early design session was a quote by Janczak: "I want to live in an aircraft hangar." His seemingly simple request carries through into the built form.

But how do you build an aircraft hangar in a post-war subdivision filled with two-bedroom houses crowned with TV antennae? COA's solution is more discreet than one might expect. The 1,400-square-foot addition is stealthily tucked away behind the existing 860-square-foot bungalow. The result is an ▸

ILLUSTRATION BY CHIP WASS

Current owner Dan Cashman notes that the double-height space in the bedroom feels like sleeping outdoors. The mezzanine level (above) houses the library as well as exercise and meditation rooms.

Floor-to-ceiling steel and glass doors slide away and the division between indoors and out dissolves.

industrial, loftlike space hidden in suburbia.

Roman Janczak and Joan Jaeckel lived in the existing house for more than ten years before commissioning COA to design the addition, which Janczak, a contractor and an unofficial fourth partner of the architecture firm, built.

"Any job we get, we all work on it," says Kahn about the structure of the firm. "Roman negotiates with the clients. He sees the purpose in doing something well for the sake of architecture and for the clients. It's hard to get [a contractor] to really care, and Roman really does." Of course, when the contractor is the client, things run pretty smoothly. "The house was absolutely for ourselves—very personal. We looked upon it as a piece of art," offers Janczak. In fact, it is hard to get him to put a price on the cost of the addition, since he donated his time and skill, as well as pulling in a few favors amassed in his trade. The result is a home where the details are modest but refined, and well thought-out. He gestures to the specialized lighting in the art studio and the Korean-inspired master bath.

The house transitions from old to new, from the mass production of cookie-cutter tract homes to contemporary customization. A narrow skylight cuts into the existing structure, using light to join the remodeled kitchen to the double-height living area.

Jaeckel, an education advocate for the Whole Education Project, wanted to use the house to host fund-raising events. In response to her requests, the main living area embodies both the industrialism of a live/work space and the characteristics of a garden pavilion. In short, it's a great space for parties.

"The light penetrates to the heart of the house. It feels like being outside. Now that I live in a conventional house, I feel like Alice, ten feet tall, after living in a place like this," illustrates Jaeckel. Floor-to-ceiling steel and glass doors slide away and the division between indoors and out dissolves.

The opened-up room extends from a one-window wall to the fence shared with their neighbor Bob (who, I'm told, has quite a knack with the clippers), where a stand of 30-foot-high bamboo serves as a green privacy screen. The west and south zones of the addition are opaque. These white-cubed spaces hold the services—the toilets, stairs, and library. ▸

ENCINO AND THE VALLEY

"Encino hasn't changed in 25 years; still, it is an odd place to find stability," says architect Eric Kahn of COA as we drive along the Hollywood freeway and head into the San Fernando Valley. To the side of the highway, just past the sound-barrier walls, is quintessential suburbia. *Original* suburbia, since the Valley was one of the first areas to transform what were formerly orange groves to large-scale post-war development.

Other areas of the Los Angeles basin are known for good, or at least interesting, architecture. Frank Gehry, for example, master of the gesture, began building in Venice and Santa Monica in the 1970s, Richard Meier's Parthenonic Getty Center crowns a Brentwood hilltop, and '50s modern houses are owned by hip Hollywood types. But the San Fernando Valley is not known for much other than birthing the "ohmygawds" of Valley-girl speak and sprawl.

The architecture here, at the edge of the San Gabriel Mountains, when not tract homes and subdivisions, brings together retail and kitsch. Ventura Boulevard, the main drag connecting the string of inland cities—Sherman Oaks, Encino, and Studio City—to the coast, gets the brunt of this expressionism.

The Hand Car Wash, for instance, is a 20-foot hand holding a small car in its grip. The original Jerry's Deli, part coffee shop and part bowling alley, is a frenzied oasis, complete with valet parking. The rest of the street alternates between car dealerships and Italianate strip malls. Recently, dot-com offices have started to pop up along Ventura Boulevard (including the still-surviving job placement website Monster.com), bringing with them the high-tech lifestyle. Gaps, Starbucks, and other higher end chain stores mark economic shifts in the communities. —M.Z.

"It is a good house for us, it really is. When we walked in and saw the art studio, we just knew."

COA

(Central Office of Architecture)

"The building knows which part of the earth it's on. It responds to its circumstances," theorizes Russell Thomsen, in response to my questions about how the Central Office of Architecture connects its Le Corbusier–inspired modernism with issues like the site and the client.

"We wanted to think of the houses as one big work, but they also sculpt themselves around the client, so there is a double reading," comments Eric Kahn, a partner in COA, along with Ron Golan. All three also teach design studios at the Southern California Institute of Architecture.

Founded in 1987, this Los Angeles firm practices a type of "human modernism." The purism of early 20th-century architecture—clean lines, transparency, legible readings of form and structure, and even free plan—is brought back to life. "Schindler, Neutra, and Gregory Ain," says Kahn, listing California modernist architects, "are truly contemporary." This spatial vocabulary was lost in the '50s and '60s to the gray suits of International Style corporate modernism, and it is refreshing to see it again. COA also responds to the postmodern flourishes that formally marked architecture during their formative years as a practice. "Innovation comes from the architecture," says Thomsen, "not the language." —M.Z.

The success of the addition lies in the ability of the architecture to be modern, yet escape the stringent alienation often cited as modernism's Achilles heel. To keep the lure of the machine from taking out the house, COA employed Le Corbusier's concept of Le Modulor to figure the dimensions of the spaces.

Using principles of the Golden Section, Le Modulor is a proportional system based on the size of a man's body. Le Modulor takes the average proportions of a man (six feet tall, according to Corbu) and subdivides and expands it. The typical diagram of the Modulor man shows a stylized figure raising one arm to 226 centimeters, perhaps the height of a low ceiling, and the other resting at 86 centimeters on a counter or desk.

Architect Eric Kahn looks duly impressed as Janczak and Jaeckel explain their relation to Le Modulor over coffee. "There is an integration of form and structure," begins Jaeckel, while Janczak continues, "It is the Western equivalent of feng shui. There is a harmony in the place. It feels so good, so comfortable, I experience [the space] on a gut level."

"If only all clients were like this," says Kahn, beaming.

Dan and Kathleen Cashman, the new owners, and possible clients, have a great fondness for the idiosyncratic house. Although the house was customized according to the needs and desires of the previous owners, as the Cashmans move in, they are beginning to discover their own meaning in the different spaces—the meditation rooms, the art studio, and the double-height bedroom with a tall pivoting door. Kathleen uses the old part of the house for her family therapy practice, but both she and Dan are artists. The existing structure is integral to the pleasure she takes in her new home. "It is a good house for us, it really is. When we walked in and saw the art studio, we just knew," she explains.

Dan's response was just as visceral. "[The house] enables my desire to paint. It excites with prospects. It has the best light for painting." He stops and then, wistfully continues "I always wanted a loft." Who knew he would find it hidden amongst the sun decks and fruit trees of a suburban backyard?

Mimi Zeiger is the editor and publisher of the architectural zine loud paper.

to get some work done at her desk just off the dining room in the addition. From this vantage point, you can look straight through the dining area into the kitchen of the original house and out onto the front lawn and suburban Encino streets. A polished concrete floor, wide expanses of glass, and tall interlocking spaces give the home an urban-loft edge.

This page: Dan Cushman appreciates the light afforded him in the painting studio in the addition. "It enables my desire to paint," he says.

We are a nation of iconoclasts. And what icon is more ready for smashing than the typical American home? Across the country, in towns and cities where you'd least expect it, people are shunning the colonial and Mediterranean fantasias offered by developers, and inventing their own avant-garde.

THERE IS TOO A THERE THERE, TWO

"What rankles us," Ted Elden explains, "is when someone calls up and says, 'We need a new gym or health center, and can you make it look like colonial Williamsburg?' We don't like singing someone else's song."

CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

In the field of architecture, there is no shortage of eccentric visionaries. But few are as endearing as Henry Elden. His singular worldview is what led him to design Top-O-Rock, his stunning home and studio that is resolutely unlike any other in the city, let alone the state. But unlike a Wright, a Johnson, or a Howard Roark, the spry 87-year-old (he'd just returned from a ski vacation in Europe when we met) doesn't characterize his home as a work of genius—he calls it "a real party house. I'll be here 'til they carry me out feet first."

Top-O-Rock, named for the ledge on which it sits, is located in a former stone quarry overlooking downtown Charleston and the Kanawha River. Its design makes the utmost of this spectacular panorama, thanks to 10,000 square feet of floor-to-ceiling glass. The house is composed of two circular structures. The larger is the office, the smaller the house. Elden designed this "live/work space" in the late '60s before the term "live/work" really meant anything. "I've worked at home since 1948," he recounts. "I think my daughter was 12 before she realized her dad had a job." His constant presence clearly influenced the paths his children have taken. Daughter Barbara Scavullo is an interior designer now living in San Francisco and son Ted, who lives next door in a house he designed and built, became an architect.

"I crawled around on his drafting table, played with building blocks. It was sort of inescapable," explains Ted. Whereas Henry's house is all circular forms, Ted's (dubbed "LittleRock") is straight lines and angles. Though father and son were trained as architects, they are clearly quite partial to the complexities of structural engineering. The younger Elden learned a lot from his father and is quick to give credit where credit is due. "For my house, I went with hyperbolic parabolas—you know, like a Pringle's potato chip," he explains. "It's a complex form with a simple generation. As for Dad, his house is a jigsaw puzzle, quite elaborate in its framework. Every curve in the place is different. His intelligence and cleverness are evident."

The two work together in an architectural practice devoted mostly to hospitals, offices, and schools. Given the conservative architectural climate in West Virginia, they have yet to receive any commissions for Rock-style residences. But they soldier on. "There is nothing like this [house] in Charleston. And I've never had a client ask me to do anything like it," Henry muses. "But I had an idea and I was able to execute it. How many people can say that?"

—ALLISON ARIEFF

PROJECT: TOP-O-ROCK AND LITTLEROCK
ARCHITECTS: HENRY ELDEN AND TED ELDEN

PHOTOS BY MATTHEW HRANEK

Henry and Ted Elden on Charleston

Favorite Thing
"It's small," Henry explains. "You don't have to spend hours on the road to go somewhere or get things done." Ted says he "can't imagine a place in the world I'd like better. It's a place people would go away to for the weekend, but I already live here."

Least Favorite Thing
"Too much city government," Henry grumbles. "But then I ran for mayor once and lost so I'm still bitter."

Favorite Architectural Landmark
"I can't find a building in the state that I like better than my dad's," Ted says. "Thirty years later it still excites me."

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

Ray Kennedy on Grand Rapids

Favorite Thing
The diversity of people, cultures, and economic base. The parks, rivers, and lakes surrounding the city create a beautiful place to live.

Least Favorite Thing
Having to rely on automotive transportation and having the roads torn-up most of the time due to Michigan weather.

Favorite Architectural Landmark
The 19th-century Cathedral of St. Andrew and the Van Andel Research Institute, designed by Rafael Vinoly, built by Jay Van Andel, founder of Amway, and completed in 1999.

Ray Kennedy's living room doubles as a Herman Miller showroom with George Nelson Coconut Chairs and Sling Sofas, and a Bruce Burdick table. But the view is custom-made, not from Herman Miller's catalog.

In certain parts of America—say, Southern California or the beach communities along the South Fork of Long Island—no one would give a boxy, flat-roofed house like Ray Kennedy's a second glance. Grand Rapids, Michigan, however, is not one of those places.

But Kennedy, who lives with his wife, Ann, the manager of a medical office, and his teenage daughter, is the director of Herman Miller for the Home, known for manufacturing and selling a line of furniture dominated by mid-century all-stars Ray and Charles Eames and George Nelson. He is by trade—and by inclination—a modernist.

"I follow the works of Richard Meier," explains Kennedy. "I adore his sense of scale."

"He came to me and said he wanted a white box," recalls Kim DeStigter, a partner in a local firm, DeStigter/Smith Architects, best known for its work in historic restoration.

From certain angles, the big house (2,900 square feet) on Dean Lake, just outside the city of Grand Rapids, bears a passing resemblance to something Meier might have built. And there is a hint, if you look at it from the back, where it steps down to the lake, of the Cubism that Kennedy says he was after.

But, when it comes right down to it, the house that brings a whiff of the avant-garde to the cottage-lined waterfront was designed from the inside out.

"Kim forced us into focusing on programming aspects," Kennedy recalls. What was most important to the Kennedys was a wide open space for entertaining, a unified kitchen, living room, and dining area with floor-to-ceiling glass. "The view was a primary design feature," says DeStigter, who notes that walls of glass are extremely rare in Michigan homes, which are primarily intended as places to hide from winter's fury.

DeStigter adds, "It was nice to have somebody who didn't bring me five *Better Homes and Gardens* and say, 'This is what I want.' "

—KARRIE JACOBS

PROJECT: KENNEDY RESIDENCE
ARCHITECT: DESTIGTER/SMITH ARCHITECTS

PHOTO BY ETHAN HILL

LAWRENCE, KANSAS

Jennifer McKnight on Lawrence

Favorite Thing
That it's a small town.
Least Favorite Thing
That it's a small town.
Favorite Architectural Landmark
My house.

"I always thought the house looked a little intimidating from the outside," McKnight explains, "but when I came inside I couldn't believe how livable it was and how perfect for our needs."

"We decided to do this as a spec house because we couldn't find anybody to have as clients," says architect Dan Rockhill when describing the enclosed dogtrot house he designed and built on a once-vacant lot in Lawrence, Kansas. "So we produced a building we liked and hung a 'For Sale' sign on it. Eventually Jennifer emerged as the champion of our interests—and of her own."

Jennifer McKnight wouldn't have been anyone's obvious choice to move into this long industrial rectangle with flush steel windows and a corrugated aluminum roof. The owner of two used-clothing stores, McKnight had been living in a traditional Victorian and she wasn't looking to move. Then she ran into a real-estate agent friend who told her she just had to see the Rockhill house. McKnight, who now lives there with her partner, Spencer Sievers, her collection of vintage clothing, and her dog, fell in love with the place right away.

Dogtrot was influenced by local forms like the old GMC city buses that used to roam the streets of downtown Lawrence. Its galvanized steel staircase was inspired by the railroad grain-loading facilities nearby. Recycled materials are used liberally and inventively—the kitchen cabinets, for example, were made from reconstituted garbage bags.

But how does this modern structure play in an antebellum university town? Locals have egged Rockhill's projects, and spray-painted them, too, but their objections, he insists, "only make me want to irritate them more."

"There's a lot of new concepts in Lawrence that everyone hates at first and then five years later become their favorite thing," McKnight theorizes. "Dan's work is like that. It has added a new dimension to the city."

In response to which, the curmudgeonly architect softens his stance. "I'm very happy here despite all of my grumblings. I've been able to build 12 projects in town. What other city can you do that in?"

—A.A.

PROJECT: DOGTROT HOUSE
ARCHITECT: DAN ROCKHILL & ASSOCIATES

PHOTO BY SCOGIN MAYO

Facts About Belleville

Location
Abutting East St. Louis, MO. Thirty minutes outside of downtown St. Louis. Accessible on the St. Louis MetroLink.

Features
The Old Belleville Historic District is full of 19th-century brick German-style street houses. Belleville's two hospitals—Memorial and St. Elizabeth's—serve all of southwestern Illinois. The town is also proud of its fountain in the public square. For more information, go to www.belleville.net.

BELLEVILLE, ILLINOIS

When Thomas Adams, director of the Bethany Place facility for people with HIV, called architects Philip Durham and Elva Rubio to say he wanted to build the new facility inside two Quonset huts, they thought he was crazy. "Most people do," confesses Adams. "But when Phil came and saw how open the space was, he said, 'This will work.' "

Adams and the architects had considered 12 sites, but had trouble securing one. "It had to do with local politics," Durham explains. "Belleville is a conservative town. An AIDS housing facility was a tough sell there."

In 1997, Rubio/Durham began to renovate the huts. They repaired exterior rust and dealt with abatement issues such as asbestos and lead paint. By 1999, the project was finished. Five bedrooms, a living area, and kitchen now fill the rear hut; the front houses a wide-open reception area and offices for case workers, project managers, and a nurse. A glass atrium connects the two huts. Windows on many levels fill the space with sunshine all day and, at night, radiate light onto the street.

Outside of New York and San Francisco, Bethany Place is one of the few HIV support facilities that provides transitional housing, along with day services. "At most AIDS service organizations, the services are not consolidated—clients have a series of places where they have to go. People tire. So they drop out of the system, or they get lost. We made a one-stop shop, because it just made sense."

The building is so distinctive that it lures passersby. "Now," says Adams, "other organizations borrow the space. Before, other people would never set foot in Bethany Place. They said, 'If I go to Bethany Place, then it looks like I have AIDS.' But now they come in and say, 'What a great place. We want to be involved.'

"I was on the Metrolink and ran into one of my clients," Adams recalls. "He turned to me and said, 'Thank you for that beautiful building. Every time I walk into it, it's beautiful.' "

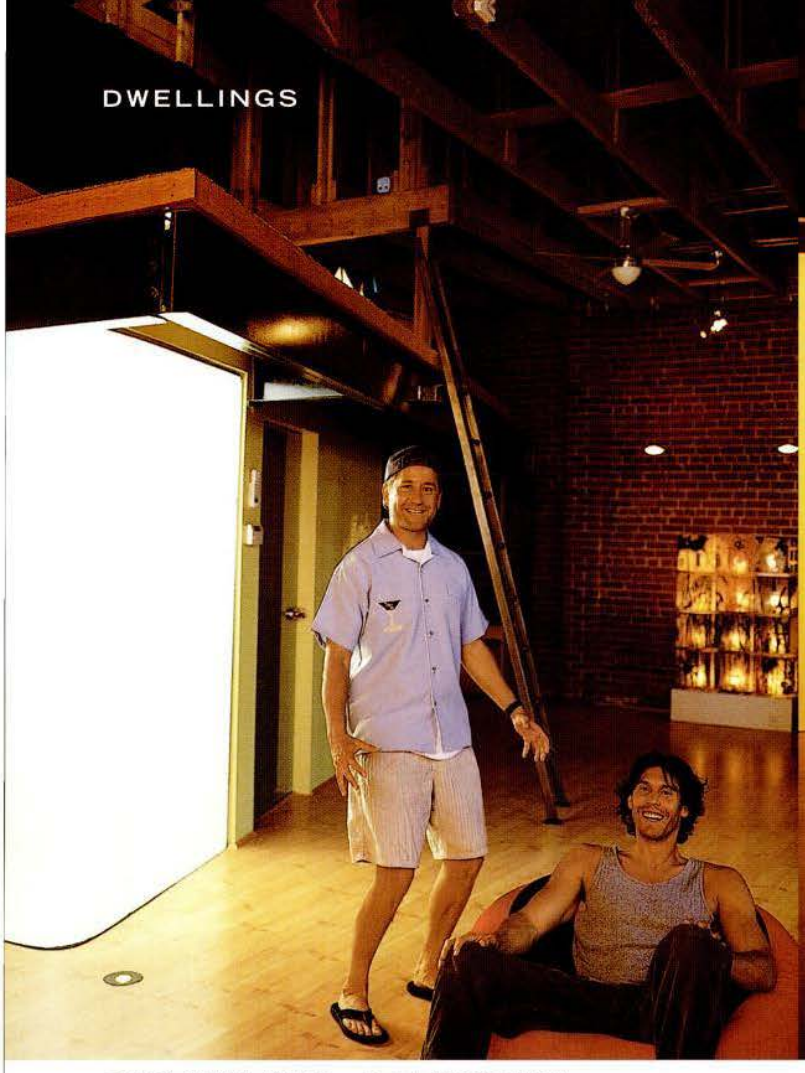
—VIRGINIA GARDINER

PROJECT: BETHANY PLACE

ARCHITECT: RUBIO/DURHAM

Since their invention during World War II, Quonset huts have been icons of wartime ingenuity and the U.S. Army. In Belleville, IL, two adjacent huts were erected for Belleville Sheet Metal in 1948. In the mid-'90s, Bethany Place AIDS Service Organization purchased the property for $75,000. They remodeled it for only $60 per square foot. They added copious windows (above and left), built temporary bedrooms for indigent people with AIDS (top, right), and improved a pre-existing open space that houses meetings and, sometimes, Wendy's lunches for the staff (right).

PHOTOS BY JEFF JACOBSON



SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

Michael Heller on Sacramento

Favorite Thing
There are incredible opportunities here.
Least Favorite Thing
The lack of culture.
Favorite Architectural Landmark
State Capitol building.

(Left) Michael Heller and Nick Bagatelos share a laugh in the living room of their new flat. The tempered glass bathroom under the sleeping loft contains a commercial steam shower as well as more standard-issue bathroom fixtures.

(Right) On the outside wall of the bathroom, projected slides illustrate city-scapes. In the kitchen, a friend makes good use of the Viking appliances.

Shady politics, oppressive heat, and cheap real estate have for years cast a negative light on Sacramento. But lately, though the politics are still questionable, the warm climate and affordable housing are making the city a little more attractive.

Of course, Sacramento is not a new discovery to everyone, particularly not to locals Michael Heller and Nick Bagatelos, good friends since high school and co-owners, developers, and designers of a new downtown loft building. "Sacramento is awesome," says Heller, owner of Sacramento-based Heller Pacific Incorporated.

For years, Heller had been thinking about what it would take to give Sacramento the lively downtown it deserves ("walking streets and downtown housing"), so when Bagatelos came across a one-story brick building six blocks from Capital Park downtown, Heller saw an opportunity to make his dream a reality. "Everyone has been talking about lofts here for years. We decided it was time to stop talking and do something about it."

After convincing the owner to sell the property, they mapped out the plans themselves.

"We wanted a place where at least two people could stay comfortably," Heller says. "The whole space is open, there's no privacy—I've known Nick too long to worry about privacy." In the kitchen they constructed Corian countertops and went with all Viking appliances, topping it off with glass cabinetry designed and constructed by Bagatelos. After shopping trips to LIMN Sacramento and Living Space Interiors in Vancouver, the unit was decked out with Ligne Roset everything, from the couch to the "overly nice" dining room chairs.

But is Sacramento ready to step out of the backwater and into the sophisticated high life? Heller and Bagatelos certainly think so. "People are excited. People want to live downtown," says Heller. "This is a dynamic place to be and it is only going to get better."

—ANDREW WAGNER

PROJECT: 13TH & S LOFT BUILDING, DOWNTOWN
DEVELOPERS: HELLER PACIFIC, INC.

PHOTOS BY DANIEL DE SOUZA

SEWARD, NEBRASKA

Charles Ore on Seward

Favorite Thing
The sense of community. We've lived here now for 35 years. You walk through the grocery store and everyone knows your name.

Least Favorite Thing
You walk through the grocery store and everyone knows your name.

Favorite Architectural Landmark
Any number of the turn-of-the-century houses that have been beautifully preserved, and the brick-paved streets around the main square.

When the builders opened the cans of bright yellow paint intended for the southern wall, they jokingly offered to pay for the job themselves, if only they could use gray instead.

The Midwest is no stranger to architectural curiosities: Mitchell, South Dakota, boasts the world's only Corn Palace, and Hayward, Wisconsin's National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame, comes in the form of a four-story muskie, the official state fish. Now Seward, Nebraska, can lay claim to the world's largest orchid, metaphorically speaking.

The Ore residence, when viewed from the south, resembles a blossom like those growing on the vines of the exotic phalaenopsis, cymbidium, and cattleya orchids Charles Ore tends in his downstairs greenhouse. The other three façades (clad in speckled brown and green roofing tile) blend seamlessly into the verdant Nebraska landscape. So seamlessly, explains, Lincoln-based project architect Deon Bahr, "you would never know there was a house there."

After spending the better part of 35 years living in a large federal-style house with "endless rooms and corridors," Constance and Charles Ore wanted a house that would serve them better in their retirement. Although they had a firm grasp of what they wanted functionally ("no rooms waiting around for something to happen"), they left the design to their friend Bahr. A professional musician, Charles Ore respects the creative process. Input, he believes, has its place, "but the [actual] design can't be a committee project."

The Ores love spending their time entertaining guests in the spacious kitchen and "great room," gardening, both indoors and out, going for walks on the acreage surrounding the house, and looking after a host of wild visitors (nine pairs of cardinals took up residency last winter). As for the lack of musical instruments in the house, Charles says, "I'm trying to separate the concept of my work space and home space. As soon as my doctor brings home his operating table, I'll have an organ in my house."

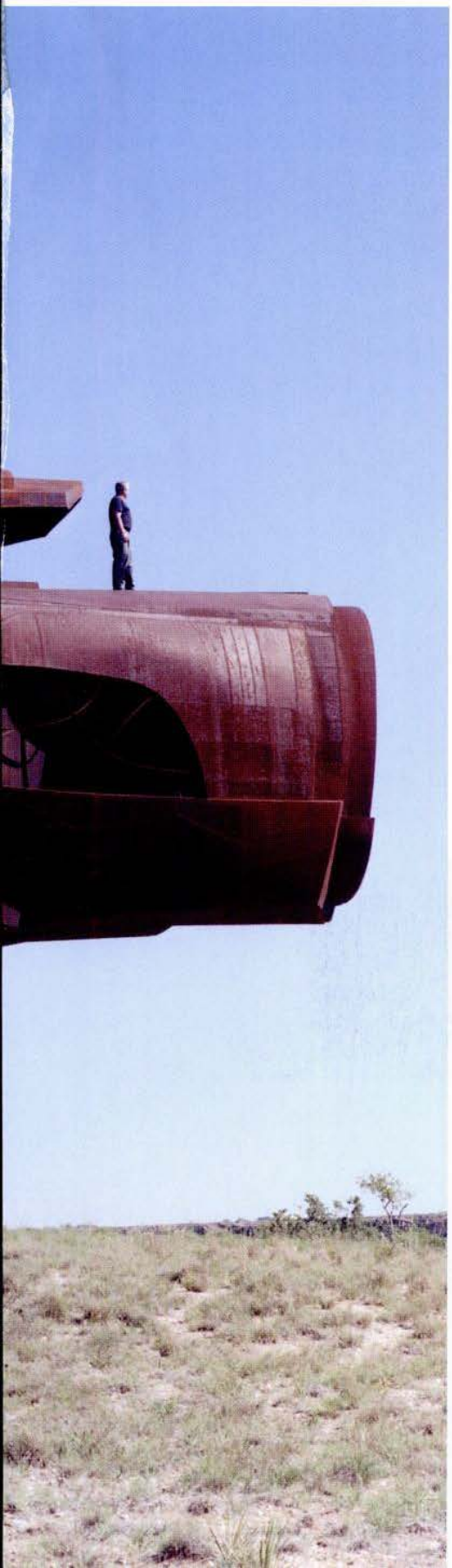
—SAMUEL GRAWE

PROJECT: ORE RESIDENCE
ARCHITECTS: BAHR VERMEER AND HAECKER

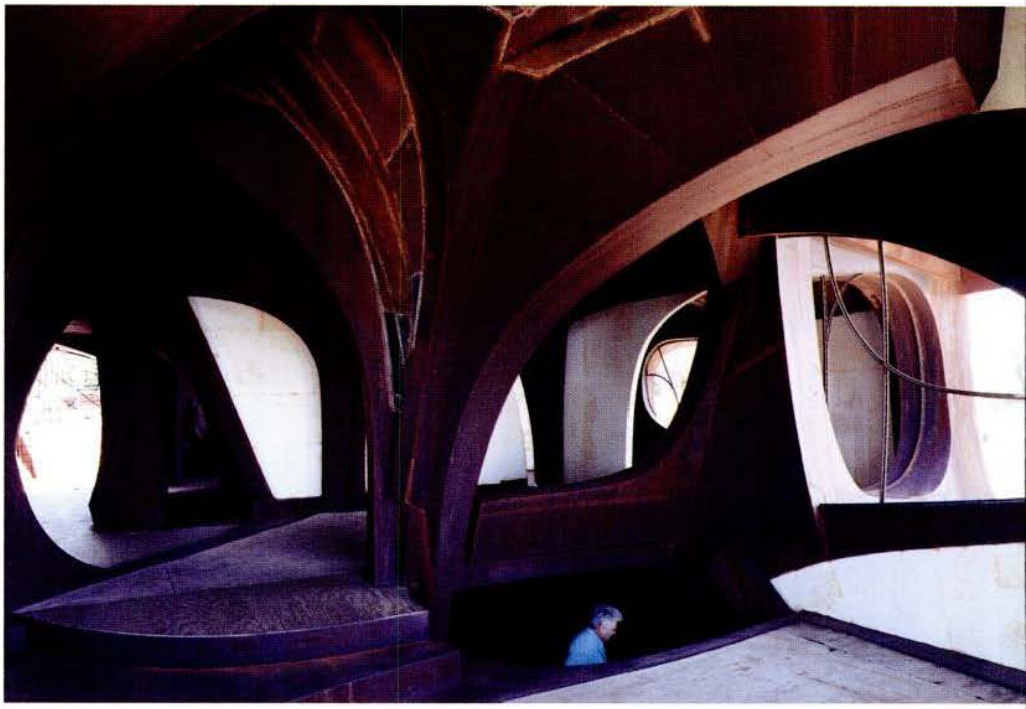
PHOTO BY PAUL BROKERING

Robert Bruno on Lubbock

Favorite Thing
The sense of hard work and productivity typical of an agricultural area.
Least Favorite Thing
That it takes the better part of a day to get from here to any other place.
Favorite Architectural Landmark
With uncomfortable immodesty, I have to say the steel house; I've worked on it 27 years but still feel like a spectator.



Robert Bruno has been working on his house outside Lubbock for 27 years. It's mostly made from unused steel scraps sheared off larger pieces destined for industrial use.



LUBBOCK, TEXAS

At Ransom Canyon, a rare rupture in the brutally flat West Texas plains just outside Lubbock, is a steel structure, startling in its originality yet somehow perfectly situated. The result of more than 27 years of sweat and personal dedication, this complex, welded-steel sculpture at first appears to be a site-specific art piece, but it will, eventually, be the home of its maker, sculptor Robert Bruno.

"I never intended the design to be seen as a style or prototype for others," says Bruno, who was trained as an architect. Instead, he acknowledges the unique nature of his design and hopes that it will inspire people to think more boldly about their homes. When asked about his motivation, he simply states that he is in the midst of an extended "personal experimentation." In other words, process, for Bruno, is everything. "It's not about owning a home," he stresses. "It is about building one."

After teaching himself welding techniques by working on a smaller sculpture, Bruno started the house in November of 1974. One reason the construction has taken so long is Bruno's critical eye. If he feels a completed portion needs revision, he dismantles the area and begins again, sometimes for the most minor changes. He has done almost all the labor himself and he even purchased an ordinary ranch house directly across the street, so at any moment he can walk a few feet and get to work. Now that Bruno is getting closer to occupying the house—maybe within a year—local observers have argued that the house is better suited as a sculpture than as a functional home. Bruno believes that "such arguments are okay but not that relevant. It is both house and sculpture."

People often ask Bruno if he will be happy when his house is finally done. Predictably, he finds this question irrelevant. He says he is happiest while working. His obsession with the crafting of this house/sculpture suggests that Bruno may never be finished.

—DARWIN HARRISON

PROJECT: BRUNO RESIDENCE

ARCHITECT: ROBERT BRUNO

PHOTOS BY PETER BROWN

David Carlson's parents bought their mid-century-modern furniture when they got married in, well, the middle of the century (1953). Growing up in the '70s, when everyone else's parents had shag carpet and orange upholstery, Carlson was embarrassed to bring his friends over after school. But today, he explains, "my parents still have that furniture and it looks more contemporary than ever."

The timelessness of his parents' classic Scandinavian modernism is what Carlson aims for with the furniture produced by his company, David Design. "You know how history books have 20 or so products to represent an entire historical period?" asks Carlson. "When the history book is written in 2050, I hope David Design furniture will be shown as the furniture that best captured the spirit of its age."

Carlson's company perhaps best captures its age by focusing on uniquely 21st-century concepts like synergy and globalism. David Design produces not only couches and coffee tables but blue jeans and bottled water, and its designers come not only from Stockholm and Mälmo (the most cosmopolitan of Swedish cities), where the company is based, but also Milan, New York, and San Francisco.

David Design is one of the companies credited with sparking the renewed global interest in Scandinavian design. But it didn't happen overnight. "In the last decade, several entities have been very important to the promotion of Swedish design: Thomas Sandell, the Asplund Brothers, and, more recently, Offecct Interiör and Swedeform. We've been working quite hard for a long time and finally we're making some money." Yet that Scandinavian focus, while helpful, could, as Carlson explains, "end next year. So we've got to do what we like, what we enjoy. We're trying to build a consistent brand and within that we're trying to do different things with it. We need to make a profit, of course, but we need to do something that's coming from our hearts."

And that's exactly what they're doing. Carlson and company are clearly having fun at the factory. A pop quiz on the David Design website asks, "Which of the following artists will never be used as Muzak in the shop?" (Answer: Bachman Turner Overdrive.) Each product catalog features a music playlist, and all the CDs are for sale in the showroom. One designer (Eero Koivisto) names all of his products after famous Davids—Bowie, Byrne, Toop; other product names are similarly quirky (Morf, Bob, Quasimodo). But the humor isn't gratuitous and doesn't get in the way of functionality. The extra-wide, extra-firm armrests of Koivisto's Hockney sofa, for example, aren't just for show—they provide a place on which to rest a stack of books and a cup of tea. And the sofa's slipcover can be taken off and thrown in the washing machine.

But how did Carlson, who has no formal design education, decide to start a design production company, anyway? "I really don't have a good answer for that," he jokes. "I was working in the music industry—I still play in a band. I wanted to be an entrepreneur, to build something myself with my own two hands. I was traveling in New York and went to lots of design shops and was really thrilled with what I saw. There was nothing like this in Sweden, so I thought I'd try and bring it there."

In 1988, Carlson made his first foray into the furniture design world by exhibiting the work of Stockholm-based architect and designer Thomas Sandell, and then began production of a few pieces of furniture. The company started participating in international fairs, expanding its network of contacts and designers. Many of the designers who work with David Design, like Johanna Egnell, Monica Förster, and the architecture trio of Claesson Koivisto Rune, saw their first pieces go into production with the company. Carlson and the designers he works with enjoy each other's company and input: They all described their working relationships in terms of friendship and collaboration.

"When you're at home on the sofa," Carlson explains, "you're listening to music, wearing clothes, eating food. All of these elements come into play and there are a lot of meeting points between them." By producing not only the sofa but the CD, the clothing, and even the refreshments, David Design connects all the dots. And at a time when design increasingly blends into lifestyle and lifestyle into design, the company is indeed capturing the spirit of its age.

In the end, Carlson is most interested in simply increasing the quality of life of what his company refers to as "sensuously open and conscious individuals." "You need to have the basics in life," Carlson explains, "food, clothing, a roof over your head. That's not what we're providing. It's our hope that you'll enjoy looking at the stuff, that hopefully your life will be more pleasurable for having it."

Allison Arieff is the senior editor of dwell.

RELAX AND ENJOY THE FURNITURE

STORY BY ALLISON ARIEFF
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNA & PETRA

David Carlson, relaxing in the David Design showroom in Mälmo, Sweden, exemplifies his company's philosophy of "stress-free living for soul and body." It's a safe bet that he's listening to his Thievery Corporation CD or maybe Hi Fidelity Lounge. He's holding the Mocca, a ceramic mug designed by Johanna Egnell. She sent him a prototype of this little cup, he liked it, and a collaboration ensued. Other David Design furniture and objects shown here include Eero Koivisto's stackable Byrne (named for David) chair, available in oak or birch or in special colors like turquoise and red. Monica Förster's Bob bean bags come in three sizes, are covered in rubberized polyester, and are described by the designer as "soft, huggable, and exceptionally airtight." Förster's Silikon lamp was produced by Carlson while she was still in design school. Her latest lighting design, the rechargeable and portable Load lamp, seen in the foreground, was introduced at the Salone Internazionale del Mobile in Milan earlier this year. Erika Mörn's cozy knitted wool wine coolers come in five different colors and are machine washable. The aluminum garden chair in the window is from Fiam in Italy. For further info, see page 94.

THE REAL WHITE HOUSE WINNERS

We think it's time to build a brand-new White House. We invite you to show us how you believe the most powerful man or woman on earth should live and work. How do we, at the beginning of a new millennium, use architecture to express abstract concepts such as freedom or democracy? Do we still need to borrow the language of the ancient Greeks, or are there fresher ways of expressing these ideas? How do we apply what we've learned about living and working at home to the life and the work of the President of the United States? Are there new ways to delineate public and private space, besides velvet ropes and armed guards? Does the White House have to be so white?

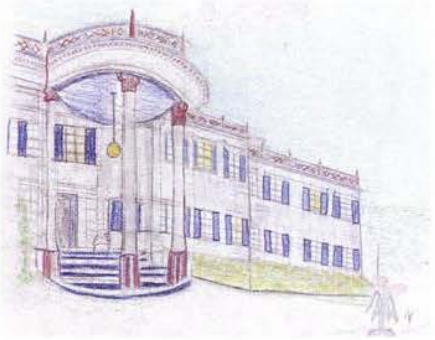
When we issued this challenge in our February 2001 issue, we hadn't a clue what we were getting ourselves into. We just thought it would be fun for our readers to think of the White House as the ultimate live/work space.

We were inspired by the 200th anniversary of the White House. At press time, the elections hadn't happened yet. We didn't know how preoccupied we all would be with the White House and its new occupants. All of a sudden, our little contest became news, the wacky, lighter side of a constitutional crisis.

Newspapers all over the country ran stories about it. And, about a month before the deadline, we got our first entry. It was from a patient at a mental health facility who had heard about the competition in his current events group and did a nice crayon drawing for us of the "Red, White, and Blue House." For several tense weeks, this was our only entry.

Eventually, we received nearly 80 White Houses—some from architects, designers, and artists, many from students, and a few from people who, we suspected, might also be housed in various sorts of institutions.

We sent 43 entries to our panel of judges: Lee Bey, who was then the architecture critic for the *Chicago Sun Times*; Wes Jones, architect and head of Jones, Partners, Los Angeles, California; Ron Reagan, interactive media correspondent and son of a former White House resident, Seattle, Washington; Craig Robins, developer of the Miami Design District and Aqua, a modern New Urbanist community in Miami, Florida; and Sarah Susanka, architect and author of *The Not So Big House* and *Creating the Not So Big House*, Raleigh, North Carolina.



Our first entry: the Red, White, and Blue House from a patient at Safe Harbor Health Care, Fresno, California.

The Grand Prize Winner

Rebecca Trump and Tom Koehl
Tenka, experience designers
New York, New York

What if the White House Were a Crappy New York Apartment?

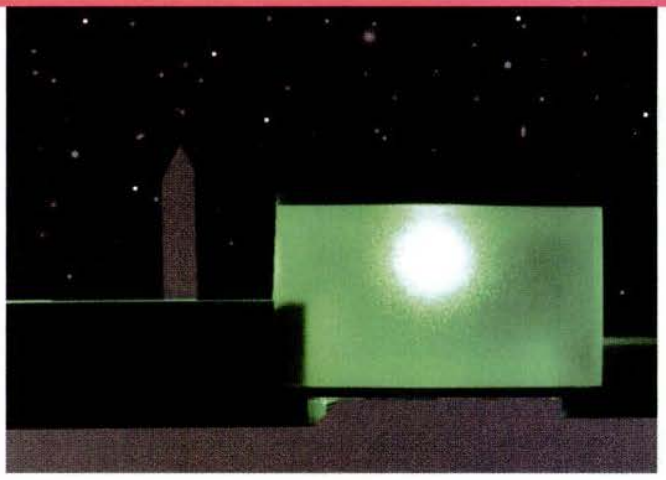
Trump and Koehl took their experience of living and working in a 250-square-foot apartment and applied it to the life and work of the president. They came up with a set of barriers that they wished somehow to eliminate: "the barrier between the White House and the public, barriers between work and home, barriers between individual and group work, and barriers between the past and the future."

They then designed a set of devices to break through these barriers:

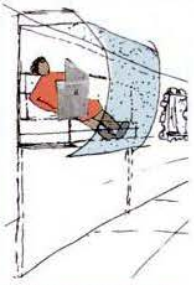
"Nerve ribbons," giant information-rich bands, could pierce the walls of the White House and act as a connection between those inside the walls and those outside.

A giant illuminated "opinion barometer" would display the tenor of public feeling on the issues of the day.

A presidential "tree fort" would offer the president a means of temporary escape from his or her workday.



Opinion Barometer



Presidential Tree Fort

Sarah Susanka What intrigues me about this submission is its extension of the White House to a "place" that can be interacted with from all over the country. The thought process engaged in by this design team is the kind of thinking we architects are capable of, and that could help to revolutionize everything from commerce to education to government. The analysis of public and private space, and boundary and barrier, is also excellent—certainly the best discussion of this issue out of all the submissions.

Ron Reagan Admittedly, nerve ribbons and a floating cube are technological long shots, but what a concept! Constant streaming poll data. Sound like a politician's wet dream? Not so fast—it'll be tough to pretend the public actually favors global warming and potable arsenic when that cube starts throbbing a dull, angry red.

First Runner-up

J. Brantley Hightower
Architect
Chicago, Illinois

A History of Proposed Renovations for 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
This is a faux history of the White House, presenting fictional redesigns by Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and Michael Graves, which leads to a proposal to set up new electronic linkages between the White House and the general public. Scenes from inside the White House could be transmitted to billboards, gas stations, and bus shelters across America.

Wes Jones A well-done critique, this one has the advantage over others like it of leading to possibly satisfying physical design. **Ron Reagan** The only entry with the good sense to recognize that the White House is a historical (and symbolic) artifact worth preserving.

This is more than a blueprint for preservation. It introduces the delightfully subversive concept of those real-time video feeds. Message: The folks who occupy the White House bear watching—now more than ever.

Proposed Billboard Projection

Second Runner-up

Peter Bollinger, Doug Michels, and Cybelle Rowe
Michels Bollinger Architects
Houston, Texas

America's Hood Ornament
The title says it all. The building, trimmed in polished chrome, is largely underground. It was inspired by a swimming pool the firm had designed for a client. (In fact, the design includes a central pool, which "on special occasions," architect Michels remarks, "could have dolphins in it.")

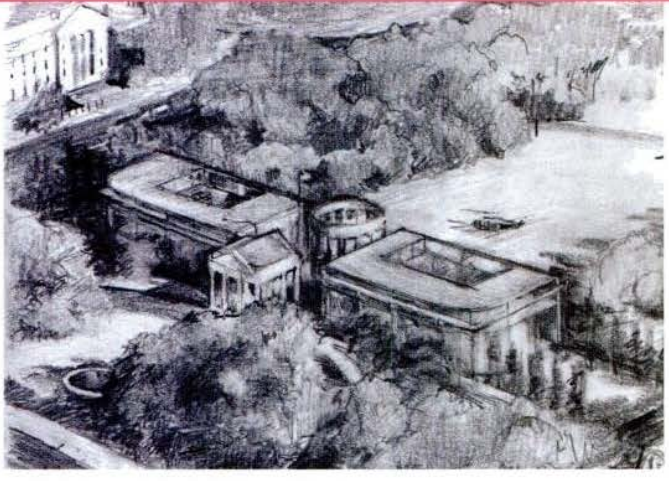
Sarah Susanka This is the only submission that has a new image that is strong enough to supplant the old. I find its form to be quite beautiful, both inside and out, and though it is definitely futuristic in look, it also appears to be appropriately scaled for human interactions, and could be quite inspiring over time. If executed well, this could have the kind of staying power and public presence that the Sydney Opera House has.

The Hood Ornament

Honorable Mention

Robert Miller
Architect
Washington, D.C.

A New-Old White House
Miller's idea was to get rid of most of the historic building, which he says is now "largely ersatz anyway," but preserve the two 1830s porticoes—"the sources," says Miller, "of the mansion's iconic power." Flanking them would be two new modern pavilions, which he compares to Niemeyer's presidential palaces in Brasília.



Lee Bey Maybe it was the unexpected joy of seeing a hand-drawn entry, but this submission did a nice job of showing a new White House. Putting state functions in a presumably transparent Miesian pavilion was a nice touch aimed at taking the mystery out of White House goings-on.

Porticoes and Pavilions

workplace

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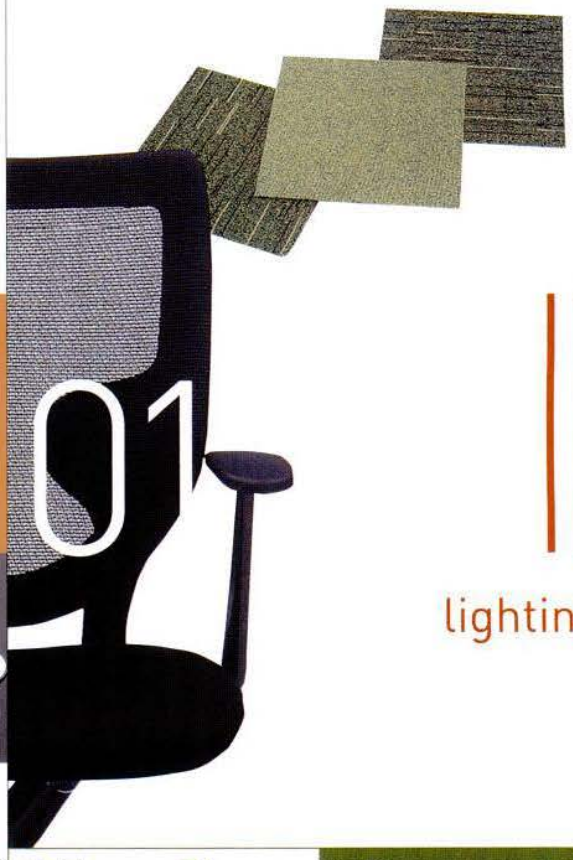

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WINDOW DISPLAY BY CHRIS JONIC FOR MAXFIELD'S

Light by the Gallon
Designer Charles Swanson was on his way to the recycling bin with an empty apple-juice jug in his hand when the idea hit him. "I realized that I could slip the jug over a steel rod because its asymmetrical weight is essentially self-supporting." The big, sand-blasted jugs-turned-bulbs balance nicely on his steel stands, but also look great as shown here, on the floor and powered from above by serpentine cords. Charles' One Gallon Lamps appeared (uncredited) in a Lenny Kravitz video, but they'd be much happier in your house, and are quite affordable. Send Charles an email: charleshswanson@earthlink.net

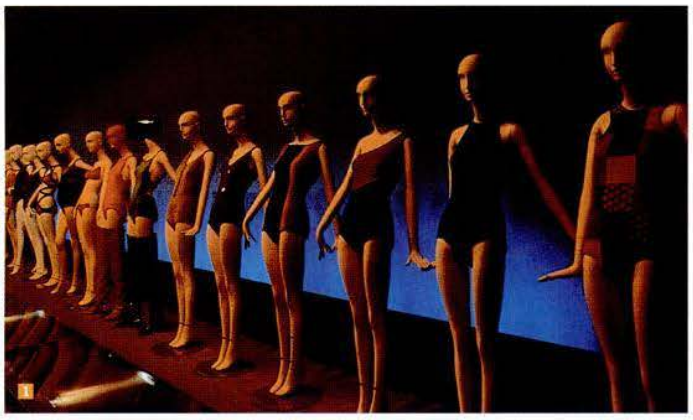


PHOTO BY AARON CHANS (2)

EXHIBITS

The Architect's Studio: Norman Foster
8 Sept–9 Dec
Louisiana Museum of Modern Art
Humlebæk, Denmark
As part of a series that has featured Frank Gehry and Henning Larsen, Louisiana now turns its attention to British über-tect Lord Foster. His designs define the high-tech aesthetic of recent years, and the steel-and-glass domes capping the British Museum and Reichstag have transformed two imperialist dinosaurs.
www.louisiana.dk

Wendy Ross: A Garden of Unearthly Delights
16 June–7 July
DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park
Lincoln, MA
DeCordova, whose birch-filled sculpture park nicely sets off Wendy Ross' gargantuan stainless steel replicas of microscopic protozoa, will also display her original maquettes indoors. Browsing in the park you might see how, with a kind of cold grandeur, her sculptures evoke the beginnings of life.
www.decordova.org

Objects for Use: Handmade by Design
13 Sept–6 Jan
American Craft Museum
New York, NY
America, home of Kraft Macaroni & Cheese, still is not immune to the beauty of things made by hand. Handmade can mean modern (not just colonial birdhouses and Italianate dishtowels). The American Craft Museum will display over 300 American handmade objects, from kitchen knives to surfboards.
www.americancraftmuseum.org

1 Rudi Gernreich: Fashion Will Go Out of Fashion
15 Sept–11 Nov
ICA Philadelphia
Philadelphia, PA
Rudi Gernreich, an Austrian fashion designer who wound up in L.A. in the '40s, and on the cover of *Time* in 1967, liberated America from gender-binding clothes. His "monokini" topless swimsuit, the transparent "no-bra bra," and androgynous suits and separates still look fresh and elegant. **www.icaphila.org**

What's Shakin': New Architecture in L.A.
16 Sept–20 Jan
The Museum of Contemporary Art
Los Angeles, CA
Neil Young called it the "uptight city in the smog." That may be true, but architecturally, L.A. progresses. This exhibit features projects currently under construction, such as Eric Owen Moss' Culver City Pterodactyl, which show that L.A. is a testing ground for fresh ideas.
www.moca-la.org

Telematic Connections: The Virtual Embrace
21 July–16 Sept
Austin Museum of Art
Austin, TX
The Virtual Embrace might not be comforting when a TV monitor, its camera trained on you as you sit on a couch, shows people sitting next to you, when in fact no one is there. In his *Telematic Vision,* Paul Sermon creates that experience. Fifteen other high-tech artists fill the museum; themes include "The Victorian Internet."
www.amoa.org

Johan van der Keuken: From *The Body & the City*
18 Sept–30 Dec
Wexner Center for the Arts
Columbus, OH
Body, context, and harsh reality have infused Johan van der Keuken's work since he was 17 and published photos of his sulky high school classmates. In the next 60 years of his life he turned to documentary and then installation. For the first time in the U.S., large-format video set-ups are on view.
www.wexarts.org

Modern Architecture on the Upper East Side: Landmarks of the Future
19 Sept–15 Dec
New York School of Interior Design
New York, NY
According to the original *Planet of the Apes,* all that will someday remain of New York is a rusty Statue of Liberty; if these exhibitors have their way, the 23 post-WWII buildings on display here—including postmodern and Brutalist styles, and the red-hued station for the Roosevelt Island Tram—will make it, too.
www.nysid.edu

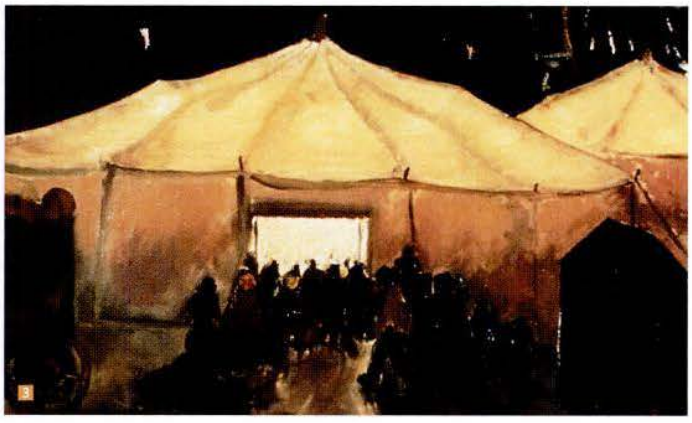
Volume: Bed of Sound
14 July–30 Sept
Henry Art Gallery
Seattle, WA
The Henry invites visitors to experience sound in a new way: on their backs, sides, or stomachs. Works range from the historical, like Walter Murch's sound effects for *Apocalypse Now,* to brand-new pieces, including one by noise-meisters Sonic Youth.
www.henryart.org

2 Un Art Populaire
21 June–4 Nov
Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain
Paris, France
Flea markets sometimes seem to contain more fine art than museums do. That is the underlying notion of Un Art Populaire. Works, from painted Alessandro Mendini horses to "assemblages of recuperated junk," will argue that just as modern art is moving into design, popular art is turning modern.
www.fondation.cartier.fr

PHOTO BY CORBIS

SECOND CHANCE

Virgin's Upper Class might have cornered the market for staying calm at high altitudes, high speeds, and high prices (with top-shelf cocktails, masseurs, and essential oils all part of the flight experience), but there are even smoother ways to fly. A German company called Zeppelin Luftschifftechnik flies "airships" for luxury rides around the countryside. Low altitudes and gentle speeds (50 mph) make for unusual viewing. "The most surprising thing I saw was a couple having sex in a park in Stuttgart right next to a tennis event," reports airship pilot Florian Kuhn. Unlike 1930s German zeppelins, which had bedrooms, smoking lounges, and baby grand pianos (and, more often than not, swastikas on their tail fins), the new Zeppelin NT is not equipped for transatlantic journeys or over-nights. And fortunately helium, not combustible hydrogen, keeps it afloat. Down the road, if they're smart, they'll install a glass-bottom swimming pool. To book a ride, go to www.zeppelinflug.de.



Isamu Noguchi
20 July–18 Nov
Design Museum
London, England
Noguchi is perhaps best known for his glass-and-wood coffee table designed for Herman Miller in 1945 and the Akari mulberry paper light sculptures. This retrospective will fill the gaps between icons. Lesser known are the many stage designs Noguchi created for Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, and John Cage. Fittingly, theater designer Robert Wilson designed the exhibition. *Noguchi on the Beach?*
www.designmuseum.org

Design + Architecture Day
1–31 Oct
Arango Design Foundation
Miami, FL
Miami's Arango Design Foundation got the notion for Design + Architecture Day in 1997 in Amsterdam. The Dutch, they discovered, drop everything for one day to celebrate modern design. Arango has scheduled architecture tours, design shows, and lectures to celebrate their version (October 1) of another bright idea from the Netherlands.
www.designandarchitectureday.com

Zero to Infinity: Arte Povera
13 Oct–13 Jan
Walker Art Center
Minneapolis, MN
In collaboration with the Tate Modern, the Walker Art Center will exhibit work by 14 Arte Povera artists, such as Boetti, Kounellis, and Merz, whose "poor art" paved the way for today's conceptual art. Drawings, performance art, and more from the '60s—all made from dirt-cheap materials like dirt, cardboard, and felt—will be shown.
www.walkerart.org

If You Forget, We'll Remember: *Bo Bedre* 40 years
21 June–21 Oct
Danish Design Centre,
Copenhagen, Denmark
Since the first issue was printed in 1961, *Bo Bedre* has become synonymous with the well-decorated Danish home. This exhibit is a designer's trip down memory lane, from the "colorful hippie decade to the organic and personal homes of the '90s."
www.ddc.dk

3 The Circus in 20th-Century American Art
19 Oct–6 Jan
Wadsworth Atheneum
Hartford, CT
The circus is fun, but according to the curators it's also "a migrant microcosm of urban society," i.e., home to freak shows and psychotic clowns. Haunting work is on display—from '30s paintings like John Steuart Curry's *Baby Ruth* to Bruce Nauman's disturbing video piece, *Clown Torture: Dark and Stormy Night with Laughter.* **www.wadsworthatheneum.org**

Wood Turning in North America Since 1930
21 Oct–30 Dec
The Minneapolis Institute of Arts
Minneapolis, MN
The Industrial Revolution rendered wood turning unnecessary in the U.S., but in the 1930s it came back—maybe thanks to baseball bats, but more likely thanks to Scandinavian influences and pure design. Lathe-borne shapes, all related topologically to the cylinder (e.g., chair legs and candlesticks), have beautiful natural wood patterns.
www.artsmia.org

4 I-5 California
Ongoing
San Diego Museum of Art
San Diego, CA
Curators sometimes need new ways to define permanent collections. Such is the case for this exhibit featuring Californian work from the '60s to the present day in configurations such as "Funk and Figuration in the Bay Area" and "Early Conceptual Art in San Diego."
www.sdmart.org

PAINTINGS BY GEORGE LUKS (3) AND JOHN ALTOON (4). PHOTO BY EZRA STOLLER © ESTO (5)

BIRTHDAYS

5 23 Oct 1918 Paul Rudolph
Commission yourself to design a Brutalist concrete jungle gym for your kids. They find it unconducive to playing, and protest by setting fire to the structure. A series of renovations mar the original design beyond recognition. Years later your kids acknowledge the originality and genius of the construction.

2 Sept 1856 **Louis Sullivan**
5 Sept 1887 **R. M. Schindler**
14 Sept 1937 **Renzo Piano**
25 Sept 1599 **Francesco Borromini**
3 Oct 1931 **Denise Scott Brown**
6 Oct 1887 **Le Corbusier**
12 Oct 1934 **Richard Meier**

PHOTO BY ROBERT WALKER

OPENINGS

Issey Miyake TriBeCa
Early fall 2001
We started to like Issey Miyake not for his clothing or scents but for his patronage of PowerBook maestro Nobukazu Takemura. With the opening of a new 15,000-square-foot retail space, he's at it again—this time with an equally unknown architect named . . . wink, wink . . . "Kibitzer" (but we could have sworn his name was Frank).

The Jewish Museum Berlin
9 Sept
Thanks to Daniel Libeskind's truly momentous design, over 150,000 people have visited the Jewish Museum Berlin before the installation of any exhibits. Like some sort of new-fangled mausoleum, the museum's zig-zagging floor plan, compressed volumes, and jagged window treatments speak volumes.

The Quadracci Pavilion Milwaukee Museum of Art
14 Sept
Santiago Calatrava's first North American construction opens all of its doors this September on the banks of Lake Michigan. The addition's highlights include a 90-foot-high glass-wall reception hall enclosed by the Burke Brise Soleil, a moveable sunscreen in the tradition of Calatrava's sculptural work.

PRODUCTS

1 1x2
Felicia Ferrone
This new design, the first to make it to production from Ferrone's sketchbooks, seriously messes around with the whole "is the glass half empty or half full" question. The hand-blown Pyrex vessels, designed to combine the functions of both wine and water glasses, and having further developed into various sizes, render even the fullest glass half empty. We recommend not testing their invertibility until fully emptied.
fferrone@tiscalinet.it

2 Pneumatic Doorbell
RADI designers
If these had been invented before the 1940s, Arthur Miller might never have written *Death of a Salesman*. Imagine the stress relief afforded by squishing this pneumatically operated silicone doorbell by RADI designers, compared with all that awful pushing and pressing of the past. Not to mention the benefits of glow-in-the-dark technology and a readable nameplate—no more reaching for our glasses in dark hallways. Would you like to buy an encyclopedia?
radi@worldnet.fr

3 Tom Twist Tom Rock Tom Roll
Vitra, Inc.
Freebasing never seemed so wholesome! Ron Arad's Tom Vac chair has developed three whole new personalities, each distinguished by a different base . . . you can guess which is named for which. The market for Eames rocking chairs is so hot these days that Vitra must have looked around for a shell to attach some varnished beech runners to, and *voilà*. As much as we like rocking, rolling, or twisting individually, we're still holding out for a single chair that can twist, rock, *and* roll.
www.vitra.com

4 2-Hanger
Studiomama
Some days we wake up and we can't decide—shirt or tie? Then it dawns on us—both at the same time! At last we can fill our closet with hangers that think the same way. Studiomama's precision-cut, heavy-duty recycled cardboard 2-Hanger gets our vote for closet product of the millennium.
www.studiomama.com

5 Glow Rug
Laurene Leon Boym
Most of us remember the warm, mysterious feeling that came with those plastic stick-um glow-in-the-dark stars, and the scolding that ensued when paint chips came off the wall and ended up under our fingernails. But the Glow Rug is for grown-ups. Can you name the objects on this rug? Let's see . . . there's a fan, and is that a sandwich maker? Their vagueness is intentional. It mixes with enigmatic glow-in-the-dark rug stitching (this is no dime-store sticker paper) and becomes all dreamy.
www.circline.com/21

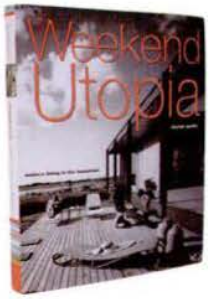
NEW TOY

A few months ago we found our roommate using our toothbrush, thinking it was his. It started when all the toothbrushes migrated from the tile counter to a flower pot. It now strikes us that if we had only had Tonsil, a PVC-and-ceramic pot designed by England's Inflate, the toothbrush in question would never have entered the wrong mouth.

DISTURBING TREND

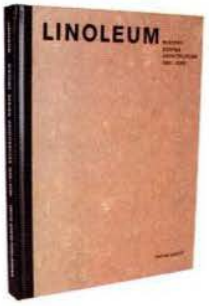
The "chic library has become all the rage" proclaimed a recent issue of *Vogue*. And even more coveted than the books shelved in it is a "book curator" to stock it. But this curator is no bespectacled octogenarian handling 13th-century illuminated manuscripts with white cotton gloves; rather, it's a 22-year-old socialite/starlet clad in Helmut Lang who advises clients that "a coffee table book must be out of print to mean anything." While we are baffled as to why anyone would forsake the pleasures of book-browsing in favor of hiring someone to select his or her tomes, we would like to apply for this job immediately.

BOOKS

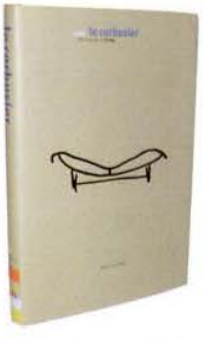


Weekend Utopia: Modern Living in the Hamptons
By Alastair Gordon
Princeton Architectural Press, $45
The flourish and excess of contemporary Hamptons' manses will make you wince once you've pined over the laid-back elegance of Peter Blake's minimalist dogtrot in Bridgehampton (1960), or Robert Motherwell's Quonset House (1948), which glowed from within. Gordon's beautiful book is part of a personal mission to swing the pendulum back toward the tiny beach retreats of his youth.

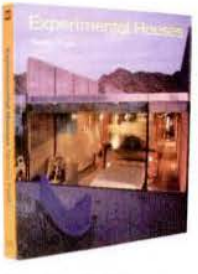
Bismarck in America
Photographs by Dirk Reinartz
Steidl, $24
Banality rules in this beautifully produced collection of photographs of the unremarkable town of Bismarck, North Dakota. At first glance Bismarck "looks like a thousand American small towns," until one starts to notice the Bank of Bismarck, the Radisson Inn Bismarck, the Church of Bismarck, Bismarck Hair College, *ad infinitum*. The late German Chancellor's omnipresence in this sleepy town is undeniably strange.



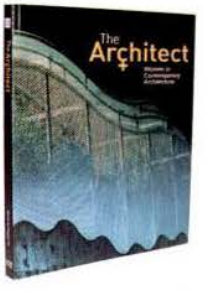
Linoleum: History, Design, Architecture 1882–2000
By Gerhard Kaldewei
Hatje Cantz Publishers, $45
It was only a matter of time before linoleum became fodder for academic discourse but the much maligned material has a surprisingly fascinating history. The late-19th-century invention became synonymous—for better or worse—with floor covering in general and a fixed component of most middle-class homes. Gropius called it the "perfect floor covering."



Le Corbusier: Inside the Machine for Living
By George H. Marcus
The Monacelli Press, $50
As his ubiquitous black leather furniture attests, Le Corbusier's ideas on modern living remain as influential and pervasive today as they were during his lifetime. Despite Corbu's attempts to standardize everything from chairs to bottles, Marcus argues here that the rationalist had a softer side, one formed by human experience and a respect for the poetic.



Experimental Houses
By Nicolas Pople
Watson Guptill, $55
Are houses fulfilling their function? Not really, says the author, who believes it's high time for a new housing paradigm. Pople's call for vernacular revisionism is bolstered by a book full of beautiful and smart buildings that put conventional housing forms to shame. Compelling alternatives include Shigeru Ban's paper house, Zvi Hecker's spiral apartment building near Tel Aviv, and the home Anthony Hoete designed for his father on the Maori island of Motiti.



The Architect: Women in Contemporary Architecture
Edited by Maggie Toy
Watson Guptill, $29.95
The original title for this book, *The Female Architect*, was rejected because it highlighted the fact that the architects were women, when most want to be considered simply architects. But as the profession lumbers toward gender equality, books like this one provide a valuable service. Despite the yearbooklike portraits, the book succeeds in presenting the incredibly strong work of 33 (women) architects.

FAIRS AND EXPOS

Interiors Kazakhstan 2001: International Interior Design & Furniture Exhibition
5–8 Sept
ITE Group, an expo organizer with offices in 16 countries, holds the Kazakhstan interiors market annually. Bath fixtures, window curtains, and decorative appliances will fill the Atakent showrooms. Try the *Shuzhuk*, a regional delicacy of smoked horseflesh.
Almaty, Kazakhstan
www.ite-exhibitions.com

Pitti Immagine Casa
21–23 Sept
Florence's annual home show is held in the Fortezza da Basso, a giant Renaissance fortress that contains a 1970s modern pavilion. Pitti Immagine Casa features high-end furnishings and decorations from all over Europe and the U.S.
Florence, Italy
www.pittimmagine.com

100% Design
27–30 Sept
Since 1995, 100% Design has been the only large-scale, high-end design show that mixes young designers with old stalwarts like Cappellini and Herman Miller. This generational jumble makes it one of the world's best places to find quality new design.
London, England
www.100percentdesign.co.uk

CERSAIE: International Exhibition of Building Ceramics and Bathroom Furnishings
2–7 Oct
For people who cannot get enough of glistening Bisazza mosaic-tiled showers and multi-feature built-in-bidet Toto toilets, CERSAIE understands. Every imaginable bathroom concept will visit the red-brick city that *didn't* bring us the Oscar Mayer.
Bologna, Italy
www.cersaie.it

Chicago Design Show
4–7 Oct
Recently enhanced by the "Italian Flair," which features about 50 Italian furniture companies rarely seen in the U.S., the Chicago Design Show also makes room for 200+ home companies from the rest of the world. Check out the dwell-sponsored Essential Home.
Chicago, IL
www.chicagodesign.com

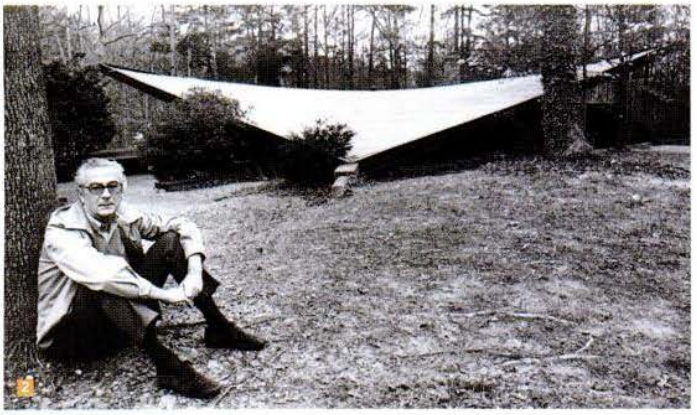
SURTEX Gallery Show 2001
12–15 Oct
A somewhat small number of exhibitors (from bed linens to window treatments) comprises the Surtex Gallery Show, a more selective version of Surtex, New York's massive springtime materials show held at Javits Convention Center.
New York, NY
www.surtex.com

Interstoff Asia 2001
9–11 Oct
A mind-boggling number of textile manufacturers will assemble at this 15th annual event in Hong Kong. Approximately 15,000 visitors from 100 countries will come to see the latest silks, fibers, synthetics, linens, waterproofs, and much more.
Hong Kong, China
www.interstoff.de

Tokyo Designers Block 2001
10–14 Oct
The target of Tokyo's vast design show is people aged 20–35. It's apt, because Tokyo is the "epicenter of distinct youth/street culture"—in other words, very cool. Highlights might be cutting-edge prefab home designs and the Window-Hijak project.
Tokyo, Japan
www. tokyodesignersblock.com

MATERIALISM

Although you won't find them sweeping your local dugout, Phenix Biocomposites collects sunflower seed hulls as an ingredient for a composite alternative to hardwood. Manufactured without glues—pressure, heat, and natural oils are all it takes to adhere—it dissolves when wet. David Pierce of San Francisco's Den has put it to good use with his series of custom tables. Varnish keeps it from melting under your gin and tonic.



HOME OF THE "POTATO CHIP"

Today it's better known for sports teams and research labs, but for a brief period in the '50s, Raleigh was the Bauhaus of the Bible Belt.

Story by Phil Patton

To some it looked like a spaceship, oddly juxtaposed with the low sheds and arcades of the North Carolina State fairgrounds. Built in 1952, the building that would improbably come to be called the signature structure of Raleigh, North Carolina, was a swooping assemblage of concrete bands—two intersecting parabolas from which hung a saddle-like roof.

Held each October, the state fair was a highlight of the years I spent growing up in Raleigh. Thousands trooped in to enjoy such rides as the Wild Mouse and folk competitions like the watermelon seed spitting contest—the winners regularly surpassed 25 feet. The Future Farmers of America had a booth each year at the fair—and some years so did the Ku Klux Klan.

Looming over it all, I remember from those fall afternoons in the 1960s, was Dorton Arena 1, called the "cow palace" by locals, many of whom had no idea that the building was world famous, found in architecture texts between the bridges of Maillart and Nervi's Olympic Stadium. In textbooks, the building was regularly described as a "stock judging pavilion"; over the years Dorton Arena has been the scene not only of dog shows and bull-judging competitions but of tractor pulls and Bigfoot trucks.

Dorton was designed by Polish-born architect Matthew Nowicki, who headed up the architecture department of North Carolina State University's design school and who died in a plane crash before the arena was completed. More than the Greek revival State Capitol, more than the Victorian Governor's Mansion, the bold structure gave North Carolina's capital a sense of itself.

That identity, however, is not entirely due to the building's architectural virtuosity, but rather owes much to the contrast between the visionary and the provincial.

Far less well known is a structure that sat about a mile or two from Dorton and was strikingly similar in shape. The house Eduardo Catalano built for himself 2 was a hyperbolic parabola of three layers of plywood, a great roof that was also the basic structure of the house. Hailed in the mid-'50s as "the house of the decade" by *House and Home* magazine and praised by Frank Lloyd Wright, the Catalano house was known locally as the "potato chip house." To Robert Burns of N.C. State's architecture department, however, the house was more like "a leaf that has drifted to ground." The house was, he says, part of "an impressive body of modern architecture that rivals that in many large American cities"—and the best known of Raleigh's modernist homes.

The oldest of these houses was built in 1949 by the man who made it all happen: Henry L. Kamphoefner, who was hired from the University of Oklahoma to establish N.C. State's School of Design. He, like many at the time, dreamed of setting up a Bauhaus in the Bible Belt. Kamphoefner was a persuasive and even bullying sort, who cast his net widely for talent. Guest faculty included Lewis Mumford, Buckminster Fuller, Mies, and Gropius. Kamphoefner also hired Catalano, Nowicki, George Matsumoto, and the California modernist Harwell Hamilton Harris.

The legacy of these teachers lies primarily in the students they influenced. But they left a clutch of important buildings in Raleigh itself, many of which are now surrounded by a half-century's expansion of greenery. The rhododendrons, azaleas, dogwoods, and towering pines make many of the homes almost invisible in neighborhoods where the more common architectural inspirations are Tara and the palaces of royal colonial governors.

PHOTOS BY PHIL PATTON (1, 3, 4), THE NEWS & OBSERVER (2), TOM ALDI (5)

More like a Wright design than the Catalano house is the wide, low Paschal house designed by James Fitzgibbon, another N.C. State faculty member. Featured on the cover of *Architectural Record Houses* in 1957 was George Matsumoto's house on Runnymede Road 3, a long, white box radiating a sense of hovering calm. There is a faint Japanese air to such details as the small entrance bridge. Matsumoto's Ritcher House of 1950 has been carefully preserved. A Miesian box floating above a parking area and a small rock garden with fountain, the 1966 office of G. Milton Small and Associates 4 is a minor local landmark. Set on the edge of a traditional Raleigh neighborhood, it, like Dorton Arena, seems to have fallen from space.

Certainly such structures were an odd fit into the local environment.

And by the end of the 1960s Raleigh's modernist experiment seemed to have stalled. Many of the stars of the N.C. State design school left; Catalano moved to M.I.T. almost as soon as his house was finished; Matsumoto returned to California.

The way modernism played out in Raleigh also suggested its limits. To keep exuberant fairgoers from marching up the Dorton's concrete parabolas, no-nonsense fair managers erected miniature chain-link fences a few feet off the ground. And the Catalano house roof proved vulnerable to rot from built-up leaves; its wings had to be re-stressed with tension cables after a few years.

Not until 1995 did the city landmark several of the important modern houses; they are also on the national register. A few years ago, however, deterioration of the Catalano house had gone so far that its owner was forced to move out. After years of efforts by Preservation NC and the North Carolina Museum of Art to raise funds to save it, the house was finally destroyed last March. That event would seem to bring closure to the strange and daring interval of experiment with modernism in North Carolina. But the owners of the existing modern houses stay in touch, a cadre of insurgents. At the N.C. State design school, which has gone on to distinction in industrial design and graphic arts, such faculty as Frank Harmon 5 and Brian Shawcroft build on the architectural tradition, of which many in Raleigh are still ignorant. Henry Kamphoefner, who died in 1990 at age 82, fought for his vision to the end, teaching until he was 79. His house is now in the hands of a sympathetic owner, who has commissioned Robert Burns to build a matching addition. And Catalano himself has offered to finance and direct the construction of a new version of the roof of his house, a pavilion without walls, on the grounds of the North Carolina Museum of Art. It would be a fitting monument.

Phil Patton graduated from Needham Broughton High School in Raleigh. He is currently writing a book on automobile design.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES: MODERN HOUSES

Ritcher House
(George Matsumoto, 1950)
3039 Churchill Road

Matsumoto House, 1952–4
821 Runnymede Road

Kamphoefner House, 1948
3060 Granville Drive

Fadum House
(James Fitzgibbon, 1950)
3056 Granville Drive

Paschal House
(James Fitzgibbon, 1951)
3334 Alamance Drive

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

The Raleigh City Museum has a good shop with old postcards and architectural books and offers temporary exhibits. The North Carolina Museum of Art Amphitheater and Outdoor Cinema, a collaboration between Smith Miller and Hawkinson Architects, artist Barbara Kruger, and landscape architect Nicholas Quennell, is a stunning example of minimalist architecture. Exploris, an innovative children's museum, helps anchor the revitalization of an area of downtown that once included the city's leading African American enterprises. As for restaurants, Don Murray's Barbecue has been one of my favorites for more than 30 years. —P.P.

I REMEMBER RENGO

A photographer of ruins and ghettos revisits his childhood home to discover that the rural place he remembers has been transformed by globalization. Story and photos by Camilo José Vergara

In the 1950s, from age 6 to 13, I lived in a big L-shaped farmhouse with adobe walls, a red tile roof, and porches along the north and south sides. This large dwelling on the outskirts of Rengo, a small town in Chile's Central Valley, housed five children, a mother and father, a maid, and a handyman. We had seven dogs, two mares, two cats, and a chicken coop with about 40 chickens and a rooster. Years after we moved away, the house burned down and was replaced by about a hundred tiny units of a densely built low-income development.

The house had walls of pressed dirt and straw, and lacked running water. It stood alone on a large plot of land, surrounded by planted fields, orchards, and hills. On the long porches we children could play protected from the rain and enjoy watching it fall. We felt the seasons intensely there. Cold weather reddened my hands and face and chilled my body. On winter nights I lay in bed shivering under five blankets, waiting to get warm. During the day, walking to school along a dirt road, I broke the ice atop deep puddles. Summer brought dry heat, dust, and flies.

Our life in Rengo was part of a long period of economic decline. My father had become an alcoholic and seemed unable to make a living. The businesses he managed to start usually lost money. By the time we moved to the farm, the family land, houses, and cars were already gone. In Rengo I saw the remaining objects of the family fortune sold one by one at bargain prices: fine furniture, cutlery and crystal, expensive jewelry, all luxury items brought from England and France by my grandfather. These were the last reminders of our privileged status. For our livelihood we increasingly depended on rich relatives. During that time I became an observer of how things fall apart and disappear.

I dreamed of futuristic cities I saw in movies and comic books: traveling to the stars, living in a skyscraper, and coming home in my own helicopter. I loved bright colors and streamlined forms made of glass, aluminum, and plastic. I admired the late-model American cars of my rich relatives and I stared at the ads for Thunderbirds and Chryslers in old issues of *Look* and *Esquire*.

About three blocks from my house, a forest of eucalyptus trees gave off an intense fragrance. The trees formed two long, narrow strips divided by a road. The dense foliage provided a place to sleep for thousands of birds of all sizes. Their songs mixed until late at night, when they were replaced by the hoots of owls and the screeches of bats. On the ground, blackberry bushes and mushrooms grew among lizards, mice, and small snakes. Today the forest has been cut and only the stumps of the trees remain.

Within walking distance of my house, a crystalline brook was overshadowed by a canopy of willow branches whose foliage was reflected in the water. The spot remains in my mind as a vision of paradise.

In Rengo the smell and taste of things became deeply ingrained in my memory, and it is still the place against which I measure my most familiar sensations. Are current destinations as far as the hills were from my house? Is the rain as hard as the drops falling on the roof tiles in winter? My taste for peaches, tomatoes, melons, pears, and olives developed there. I was amazed by the variety of worms and insects I found in the holes I dug. Even now as I encounter night skies, winds,

and stars, I compare them to those above my small town.

And now I find my current life continually leading me to my past. For the past quarter-century I have photographed struggling urban environments: ghettos, barrios, former industrial areas, and cemeteries—my Smithsonian of decline—so as not to forget what these places looked like, how they changed, what residents did to adapt to their surroundings, and what they thought of them. As my son, Charles, pointed out recently when I gave him a tour of three places in Chile where my family had lived, "Wherever you go, the ghetto has followed you." I wanted to tell him he was wrong, that I am the one who follows the ghetto, but it was hard to argue.

Traveling to San Bernardo, we found that four-story housing blocks had replaced our house there as well. We were in a modern version of the third world: noisy, crowded, menacing, polluted, and bare of greenery. There were hundreds of poor people and street vendors. I could understand this happening here, near Santiago, a city that had grown fourfold since 1965, to almost five million inhabitants. But Rengo was the country, and in my mind it could be nothing else.

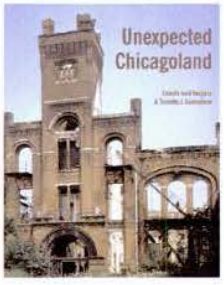
Rengo now has about 51,400 people, almost seven times as many as when I left in 1957. Globalization has transformed the local economy. Locally grown fruit is exported all over the world. In the huge warehouses along the main north-south road, agricultural products wait in cold storage to be shipped. The orchards where I used to hunt are now vineyards where Torreon de Paredes, a wine sold in my local liquor store in New York City, is made. The houses representing the vineyard on the labels look like my old home.

The rooms of the houses that replaced mine are so small that they feel crowded with only two people in them. The bedrooms can barely accommodate a bed, and the walls are so thin that a fist could easily drive a hole through them.

The residents now are retirees, factory workers, people who have never owned a home before but now could buy one with a down payment of about 80 dollars and a monthly payment of 25. They have running water and modern toilets.

Today, rustic farmhouses like my family's have become proud symbols of the nation's past. Their likenesses adorn calendars and the local currency. Two of my relatives have embarked on long-term restoration projects and are investing their savings in their old farmhouses.

For 24 years now, I have lived in the same New York City apartment. Yet I persist in remembering this house that has been lost and will never be rebuilt, the precarious way of life I lived there, the old semi-feudal system of social relations, and the beauty of an undefiled landscape. ■



Camilo José Vergara has been documenting the built (and unbuilt) environment since his student days at Notre Dame. While his first images captured the slowly decaying cities of the Midwest, he has since gone on to explore the often overlooked ghettos and ghost towns of Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, and Detroit. By photographing a single building or block year after year, often for more than a decade, Vergara provides a rare glimpse of how decay gradually envelops a neighborhood or, sometimes, an entire city. His first two books, *The New American Ghetto* and *American Ruins*, introduced the world to his obsession. His latest endeavor, *Unexpected Chicagoland*, will be published by the New Press in November 2001.

YOUR HOME IS YOUR BANK

Why is the American house so big when the American family is so small?

Story by Andrew Kirby / Photo by Marc Räder

Try your hand at a short pop quiz on housing and identify which of these statements is correct: A) Buying a home is the largest single debt that the average American family is likely to incur; or B) The home is the largest single investment that the average American family makes. If you answered "both," then you are well on your way to understanding a crucial aspect of this country's housing market. More of us are purchasing homes, as opposed to renting them, and we are going further into debt to accomplish this. Although mortgage rates are still much lower than they were in the inflation-prone 1980s, the costs of buying a house have increased steadily in the past two decades. On average, a new single-family dwelling (that's government speak for a house and a yard) now costs $160,000, which is exactly twice what it cost in 1984. And that median hides some astonishing peaks, such as in San Francisco, where the average price rose 56 percent between 1998 and 2000, to $466,000; in the Silicon Valley, it hit a dizzying $554,000.

Why this surge in house prices? It isn't the cost of land, as new homes are usually built at the edge of town, where it's cheaper. And it isn't all labor and materials, as builders are constantly trying to increase efficiency to offset rising costs. One of the key factors is simply that houses are getting bigger. Each year, the floor plans get a little larger, so that the average is now around 2,200 square feet. This is about one-third larger than it was in 1975, and much more space per person than we would find almost anywhere else on the planet. And, unlike in many other countries, family size is actually falling in the U.S., so demographics can't be blamed either.

So why buy more if we need less? Why go further into debt (answer A) than we have to? The answer lies of course with housing's other role, as an investment (answer B). Those who have been in the homeowning market for a while know that it is one of the steadiest investments around, and that's never been more true than over the past 18 months. As demand has remained strong, prices have risen and equity—which is analogous to capital gains on a stock share or mutual fund—has also increased. It's these billions of equity dollars tied up in the nation's homes that tell us about two aspects of the housing market. First, this is why banks keep lending us money: because we are sitting on the kind of collateral they like to see. And second, it explains why houses keep on getting bigger. If we are living in an investment, then it makes sense to buy the biggest pile of bricks we can afford (or the biggest amount of debt that anyone will let us have). Generally speaking, the larger and more costly the home, the bigger the resale value and the eventual profit. And unlike those capital gains we mentioned a moment ago, there is no tax penalty for making money in the housing market—just as long as the profits are plowed back into the next dwelling, which keeps demand churning. It's not surprising, therefore, that mortgage debt, when measured against disposable income, has kept on rising throughout the '90s and beyond.

Is all this money tied up in real estate a bad thing? It depends. It's a conventional wisdom that we should save more. Americans invest, but they don't actually save, because they reckon that the home will function as their retirement

account. But for that to be true, certain things will have to happen: Notably, the next generation will have to be willing to buy into the market and be able to assume big mortgages. Aging boomers will have to find buyers for the homes that they put on the market. And here's the catch: Those who have money to spend may not like a lot of what is going to be on the market by then. A 3,000- or 4,000-square-foot house that has today's lackluster insulation, a three- or four-car garage built for the biggest SUVs, and a fireplace may seem as attractive as 1970s shag carpets do today. Appraisers are already finding that for each dollar paid above the average domestic utility bill, a home's value is reduced by $20. It's possible that by 2020, higher gasoline prices and the development of public transport in edge cities will have trimmed the demand for huge vehicles, two decades of rolling blackouts will have made everyone very energy-conscious, and the enforcement of global warming protocols will have made fireplaces (not to mention barbecues and smoking outdoors) obsolete. Two decades of innovation and the shifts in design criteria that occur with each generation may leave a lot of five- and six-bedroom homes sitting on the market, until they are snapped up at discount prices and turned into apartment houses, just like the huge Victorians that came on the market in the 1950s and '60s.

So as we buy or design a house for the future, can we go against current norms? There is some good news, but first, the bad news. The country's ten largest construction firms build hundreds of thousands of houses and they don't offer a lot of choice. Features discussed in architectural journals, such as energy-efficient basements and clerestory ventilation, are not going to be on their basic list of features. Holding down costs by using standardized construction techniques ("even flow" is the current catchphrase) works only if each home is built to a narrow range of specifications; moreover, many consumers are still thinking big (as in big house, big equity). The good news is that there are tens of thousands of smaller builders in the country, who may not yet have a lot of experience with innovative designs but who are not confined by assembly-line building practices or restricted to particular design criteria. More good news is that while the finance system is still supporting big homes via big mortgage deductions, there are some incentives to buck that trend. Federal agencies are collaborating to improve home designs and to promote energy mortgages. These FHA loans either allow the purchaser to assume a larger debt (up to $8,000 for an energy-efficient structure, assuming that the larger payments will be offset by lower utility bills) or subsidize the costs of providing superior insulation, new windows, and similar features in homes being renovated.

When it comes to buying a home, you risk being sucked into a global machine in which international building corporations, shifting interest rates, and federal policy all interact to produce large tracts of large homes. Are there sound economic reasons to play along? The history of the market suggests yes, but there is no question that taste and policy will evolve. Moreover, numerous organizations are actively lobbying to bring about change (check out www.buildinggreen.com for the *Environmental Building News* and www.asla.org for *Landscape Architecture*). While it's unlikely that the suburbs are going to be deserted any time soon, there is much more interest in smaller and non-standard houses, and there are thousands of architects and contractors out there who have the skills to turn your unconventional design ideas into a desirable pile of bricks and mortgage.

Andrew Kirby is editor of Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning.

HOW TO BUY OR BUILD A HOUSE

So you're ready to buy a house. You've done the math and decided it's time to dump the roommates and become a real adult. Or maybe you're just plain tired of ponying up rent every month, never to see your hard-earned cash again. Whatever the case, now comes the hard part.

Step 1: Get the cash. Before you even open the real-estate listings, get yourself preapproved for a mortgage. This will put you in the best position to buy. Preapproval is fairly easy—assuming you haven't defaulted on previous loans and don't have a long, fraud-ridden criminal record—just contact your bank or a local mortgage broker. They'll walk you through the numbers and give you a letter stating the findings.

Step 2: Find a house. This can be done one of two ways: by browsing yourself or by getting a broker who will show you properties and represent you in a purchase. The latter has advantages and disadvantages: You get a professional advocating on your behalf in a notoriously shady business, but you'll have to agree to work with him or her only and will probably have to pay a fee.

Step 3: Make an offer. The general rule is to bid 20 percent under the asking price, but in reality each case is different and depends on a mountain of things, not the least of which is the economy. In some areas the norm has been to bid up to 20 percent over the asking price.

Step 4: This is an if clause. If the seller comes back wanting more, decide whether you're willing to haggle. In most cases, you'll end up somewhere in the middle, between your bid and the seller's counter offer.

Step 5: Lawyer up. It's not necessary but it is advisable. She will work with the seller's attorney to hammer out a contract that's amenable to both parties and make sure everything's kosher.

Step 6: Sign the contract. This is a legally binding document that contains a lot of details about how much, who does what, and when—like when you'll take possession and what will be done to the house beforehand. Be sure to include a contingency inspection—meaning you get a professional inspector to come and poke around, and if anything's not right the seller has to fix it. If something's monstrously wrong, you can back out of the deal.

Step 7: Walk through. This is somewhat ceremonial, but if, say, the sellers have kicked a hole in the wall or taken the kitchen sink to their new digs, since you haven't signed the final papers, you still have the power to beg out.

Step 8: Close the deal. This is a formal affair: You and your attorney meet the sellers, their attorney, and the broker(s) and you scribble your John Hancock on a slew of papers.

Step 9: Move in and mow the lawn. Gone are the days of the super, but it's worth it!

How to Finance a House You Are Building

Before anyone will give you the money to build, you'll need a guaranteed mortgage. Assuming your financials are in order, this is fairly straightforward—go to a bank or mortgage broker and get approved. Some lending institutions offer a program in which you can get both a construction loan and a mortgage (called a "rollover" or "all-in-one" loan), thereby saving on closing costs and hassle. The problem is, you may get stuck with a slightly higher rate of interest for the entire life of the loans. A skittish bunch, construction loan officers will want to see everything from your mortgage agreement and land deed to your contractor's insurance and blueprints to your cabinet and countertop choices. They may even want to take a gander at your pay stubs and income tax returns for the past two years. This means you have to have everything done—the contractor and architect hired, the decisions made, the numbers calculated—before you apply for a loan.

If the lending institution thinks your project is viable, they'll issue you a line of credit. However, be forewarned that unconventional designs often confuse loan officers, making this part of the process more of a headache than necessary. But don't let this stop you from building your dream home. They don't need to like your plan, they just need to know that you have one and can afford it. Every time you need to shell out cash for construction you'll make what they call a draw. Then you'll pay interest at a predetermined monthly rate as your debt accumulates, as with a credit card.

Once construction on your house is finished, it's time to get the money from the mortgage you secured all those months ago and pay back the construction loan. So now instead of owing money on one loan, you'll owe it on another. Bankers explain that the two-loan process is necessary because the first loan—the construction loan—offers the convenience of disbursements, whereas a mortgage is issued in a lump sum. But the good news for you is that the interest rate on your mortgage should be much lower and your new monthly payment will actually be buying you a house instead of just paying off interest.

Now that's something to lien on. —Hope Reeves

TRUE REAL ESTATE STORIES

As told to Hope Reeves / Illustrations by Jed Morfit

Megan
San Francisco, California

When we started looking we wanted to find what's called a tenancy in common, or a TIC, which means you buy a building with other people. The good part is that it's cheaper than buying a normal flat. The bad part is, you go in on a mortgage with total strangers. We wound up finding this beautiful three-family building on Haight Street and our broker went in search of two other buyers to take the other flats. It's a strange sort of matchmaking thing, trying to find people who want to buy, like the place, and can get along well. She found two parties and we signed the deal. Except it turned out that the woman buying the middle flat, a high-powered accountant, was buying it for her 21-year-old daughter, who had a baby and a hip-hop artist for a boyfriend. The first night we were there, all we could hear was a bunch of guys rapping and using really graphic language; all the while the scent of pot smoke was wafting up into our apartment. This went on for months, and at all hours of the day and night. Luckily, the girl eventually decided she wanted to move back to Southern California to be closer to her family. So, we and the other owner, who had become our good friend, purchased the middle apartment. These days, we rent it out and split the profit, which really helps with our expenses.

David
Los Angeles, California

We'd been looking for a house for a couple of years but were having trouble finding something that fit our criteria: affordable, in a good school district, and structurally sound. We talked to five different realtors and they all thought we were insane, that we were asking for too much. Then one day my fiancée was driving around and found our dream house. It was built in the 1940s and had wonderful views. Behind the house there was a kidney-shaped pool and a dilapidated old shack I planned to turn into my writer's studio. It was idyllic. So we went through the buying process and finally got to the disclosure part—the part where they're supposed to tell you if there's anything wrong with the house. They said they had nothing to disclose. The next step was getting an inspection, so we hired this guy for $300 and he found the expected: crossed wires here, plumbing problems there, small stuff. Then we went around back where the inspector came across this wooden gate we had never seen before. Perplexed, we climbed over it and found what it was hiding: a 40-foot-long retaining wall built to keep the boulders on the hill behind it from careening down and smashing the house. We hired a geotechnical engineer to tell us whether we'd have to replace the wall. He estimated it would cost around $50,000. We felt like we had no choice, so we backed out.

Susan
Cambridge, Massachusetts

I was lying in bed reading the classifieds one Saturday morning when I saw this teeny ad. It said something like, "Small house, needs work, no yard, $23,000." Holy mackerel, I thought. Even though it was 1981, houses in Cambridge were selling for $60,000 or $70,000. I figured it was a typo but called the number anyway. The guy who answered the phone said, "Yeah, it's $23,000," and gave me the address. I literally leapt out of bed, jumped on the bus, and was there 30 minutes later. When I saw the house I couldn't believe it. I expected some ramshackle, *Addams Family* place but it was this really cute two-story house, with, despite what the ad said, a nice backyard. I wondered if the realtor had even seen it. Without seeing the inside I ran to the nearest pay phone and told the guy I'd take it. I caught another bus to his office, plopped down my deposit—$100—and had my first house. It turned out the guy had never sold a house before and was completely out of touch with property values. Of course, when I saw the inside, I realized a serious renovation was in order—all four rooms of the house were painted mustard yellow and the living room had "I love George" spray-painted on the wall. My friends and I gutted it, my husband renovated it, and we moved in six months later. We sold the house in 1996 for $200,000—through a different broker.

John
New York, New York

I'd spent about two years sporadically looking for an apartment and last spring I finally found one I loved in the Brevoort, a 1950s co-op on lower Fifth Avenue near Ninth Street. But the asking price was $525,000, which was out of my range. My broker said the price was negotiable so I casually bid $480,000, thinking they would never accept. They came back at $490,000, which I could afford, and we signed a contract. The only detail left was the formality of getting approval from the co-op board. But as soon as I walked into the meeting, I knew I was in trouble: They were cold and antagonistic, and said bluntly they didn't think I could afford the apartment. I'd already filled out an extensive application package full of financial and personal information—they all but asked me to provide a stool sample. They said I'd have to wait five weeks for an answer, even though they knew I'd signed a contract to vacate my current place. After this delay, my broker called to say I'd been turned down, no explanation given. In New York, co-op boards have the unchecked power to turn you down for any reason. And now, I had only six weeks to be out of my old apartment. I lost somewhere between $10,000 and $15,000 in lawyer's fees and architect deposits, plus a payoff to the people who bought my old apartment. It was a four-month nightmare.

Carol
Oakland, California

I started looking to buy a house in June of 2000. I went to see places all weekend every weekend and usually a few evenings during the week. Sundays were the busiest day—I would circle everything even close to my price range and go to eight or ten open houses. That, it turned out, was the easy part. The hard part came when I decided to bid. People literally overbid by $100,000. When you're trying to decide on an offer, you have to go through this incredibly stressful psychological stage, figuring out how much you want the house, how much you can pay, how much you think other people will be willing to pay. By the time I found this house last December, I'd decided it was this or nothing. I had to go all out and if I didn't get it, I'd call it quits. Within the first hour of the open house, 300 people came through and all the information sheets were gone. By Tuesday, there were 11 offers, which always means stratospheric overbidding. I figured I didn't have a chance and went out for drinks with some friends so I wouldn't go crazy waiting for the phone call. When I got back there were two messages on my machine. The first: my broker saying to call her. The second: my broker saying if she didn't sound excited enough on the first message, she had meant to. I got the house! And I'm never moving again.

PHOTO BY EVERETT COLLECTION

UNREAL ESTATE

We all have idyllic images of the American dream home but our visions of the real-estate transactions required to get it—as evidenced in popular literature and film—are considerably less rosy.

Consider the yuppie couple terrorized by a sociopathic tenant in Pacific Heights—a film that ought to dissuade anyone from financing a home mortgage contingent on rental income. In American Beauty, Annette Bening plays Carolyn Burnham (above), a real-estate agent who is drawn to the empty houses she sells not out of an interest in the potential owners' happiness and well-being but because they are environments that she can control. Her compulsive habits—rose growing, house cleaning—help to make life miserable for her husband, Lester (played by Kevin Spacey), and adolescent daughter, as does her affair with the town's real-estate bigwig, whom she adoringly refers to as "The King." In Glengarry Glen Ross, executive "motivator" Alec Baldwin initiates a contest to spur his sagging sales force to action, but the high stakes involved—any agent who fails to reach his sales quota will lose his job—drive the real-estate agents to acts of desperation.

In Independence Day (Alfred A. Knopf), Richard Ford's Pulitzer Prize–winning novel, 44-year-old Frank Bascombe leaves his career as a sportswriter to become a real-estate agent in a misguided attempt to solve his midlife crisis. Frank's wife has left him, his girlfriend doesn't really like him, his son hates him, and the tenants in his rental property are dreadfully unpleasant. An observer of such tragic figures as this (and one himself) is Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer: The Beauty Supply District (Pantheon), the subject of Ben Katchor's comic novels, who roams the streets of New York recording the lives of the unremarkable and the overlooked. Real estate is more full of glamour and risk in Mary Higgins Clark's Pretend You Don't See Her (Simon and Schuster). Protagonist Lacy Farrell, a rising star on the high-powered Manhattan real-estate scene, witnesses the murder of one of her clients (well, it *is* hell finding a co-op in Manhattan) and subsequently enters the Witness Protection Program, assumes a new identity, moves to Minneapolis, is followed by a hit man, falls in love with a radio talk-show host, and returns to New York to solve the crime.

Life is a bit more prosaic for the benevolent broker who befriends her client, Franklin Hata, in a subplot of Chang-rae Lee's Cheever-esque novel, A Gesture Life (Riverhead). Lorrie Moore's short story "Real Estate," which appears in her anthology Birds of America (Alfred A. Knopf), lays bare the emotions bound up in the buying and selling of a house. Ruth, struggling with cancer, searches for a new house to buy while selling her old one as a means of giving her marriage and life a fresh start, all the while bravely trying to convince herself that her husband's multiple affairs are of no consequence. And in Sex and Real Estate: Why We Love Houses (Pantheon), Harvard English professor Marjorie Garber argues that looking *for* real estate may be stressful but looking *at* it can be incredibly alluring. "When you're seventeen," she writes, "you dream of a summer romance. When you're 47, you dream of a summer home."

—Allison Arieff

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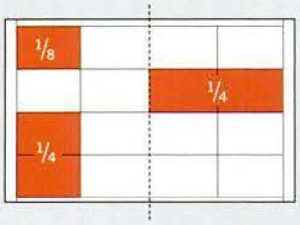

Contact

Tracey Pomponio
126 5th Avenue, Suite 14B
New York, NY 10011
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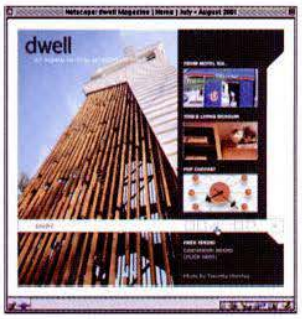

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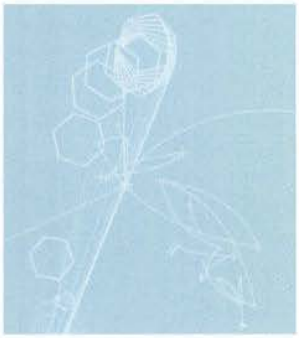

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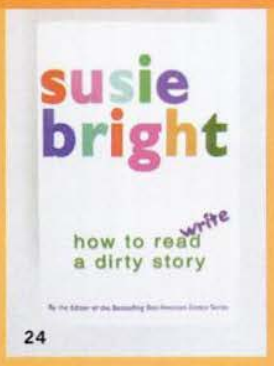

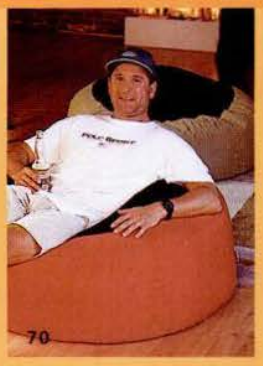

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These were just a few of the many objections raised when a New York City couple built their decidedly contemporary retreat behind a typical suburban subdivision in Westport, Connecticut. Designed by Beinfield Wagner Architects, the 4,500-square-foot home occupies two plots of land the clients bought from the town. Although zoning stated that the houses had to be produced in a "colonial style," the couple convinced the town to allow them to build whatever they wanted.

The original concept was to construct a "Mediterranean villa." But after a trip to Los Angeles (where bastardized Mediterranean reigns supreme), the clients decided that was not at all what they wanted. Correspondence between architect and client revealed memories of industrial structures at a family ranch in the village of Mazamitla, Mexico; growing up in a 1950s modernist home in Houston where, in response to the guffaws of passersby, the client's father posted signs in the yard reading "We don't like yours either!"; and a deep love for the "emotional architecture" of Luis Barragán (the centrally pivoting, extruded aluminum door of the Connecticut house is an update of his original). As the design evolved, these influences played into the choice of materials, the low-slung angular forms, and the diverse use of color.

At the core of the home's design is an imaginary 200-foot-diameter circle that links the pool house with the main house, separates the interior and exterior, and defines the use of space. A yellow wall on the circle's perimeter arcs through the entire structure, inside and out (and appears again inside the pool house). Falling within the circle are the main living area, the kitchen, a patio, the pool, and the master bedroom suite. The public areas—hallway, garage, and guest rooms—all sit outside the circle's perimeter.

Despite the initial objections, multiple influences, and colorful corrugated metal, architect Robert Wagner points out that the finished building's simple shapes and horizontality are more akin to classic 17th- and 18th-century New England buildings than are the purportedly "colonial" neighbors. Puritanical, however, it's not.

—SAMUEL GRAWE

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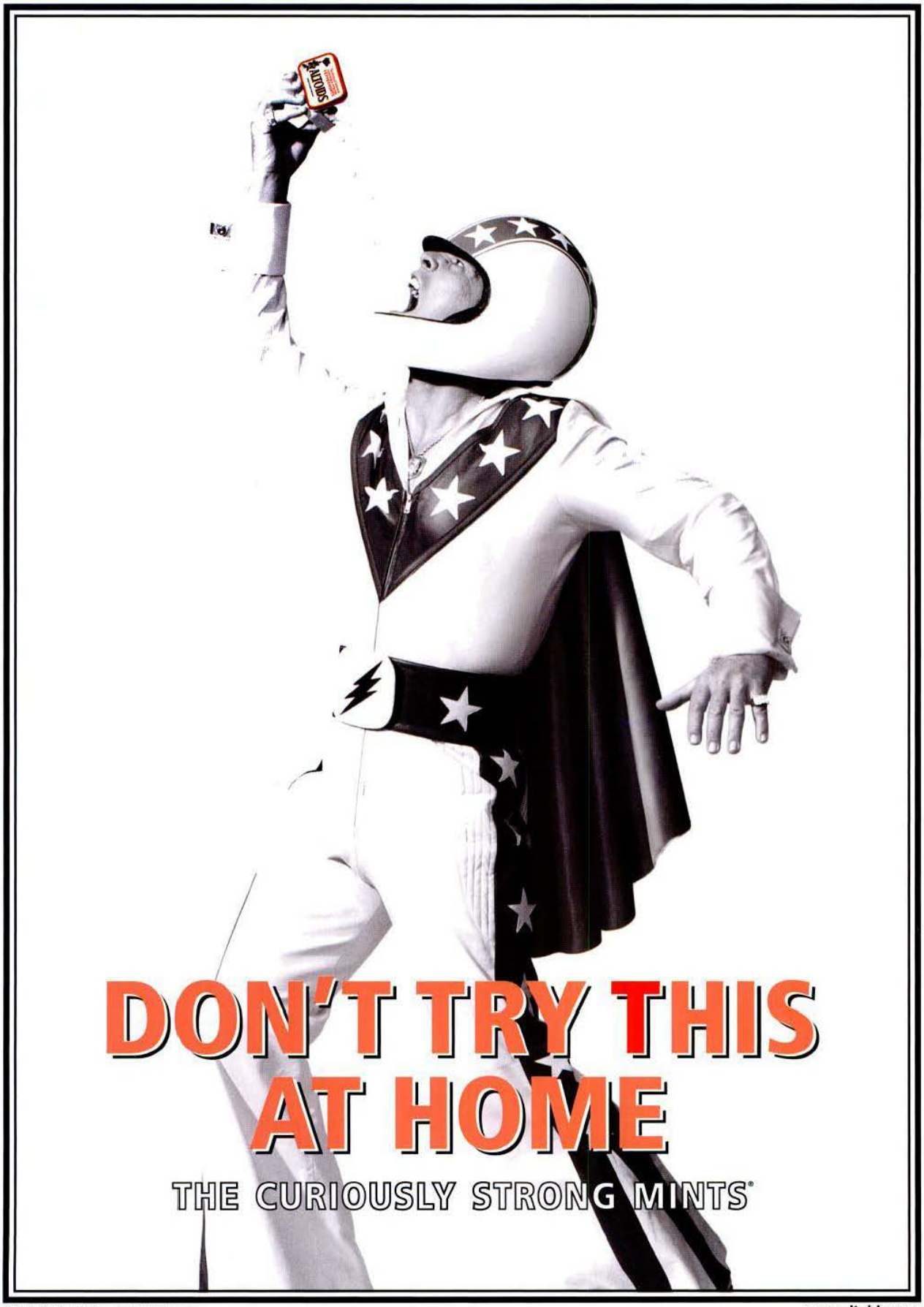

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