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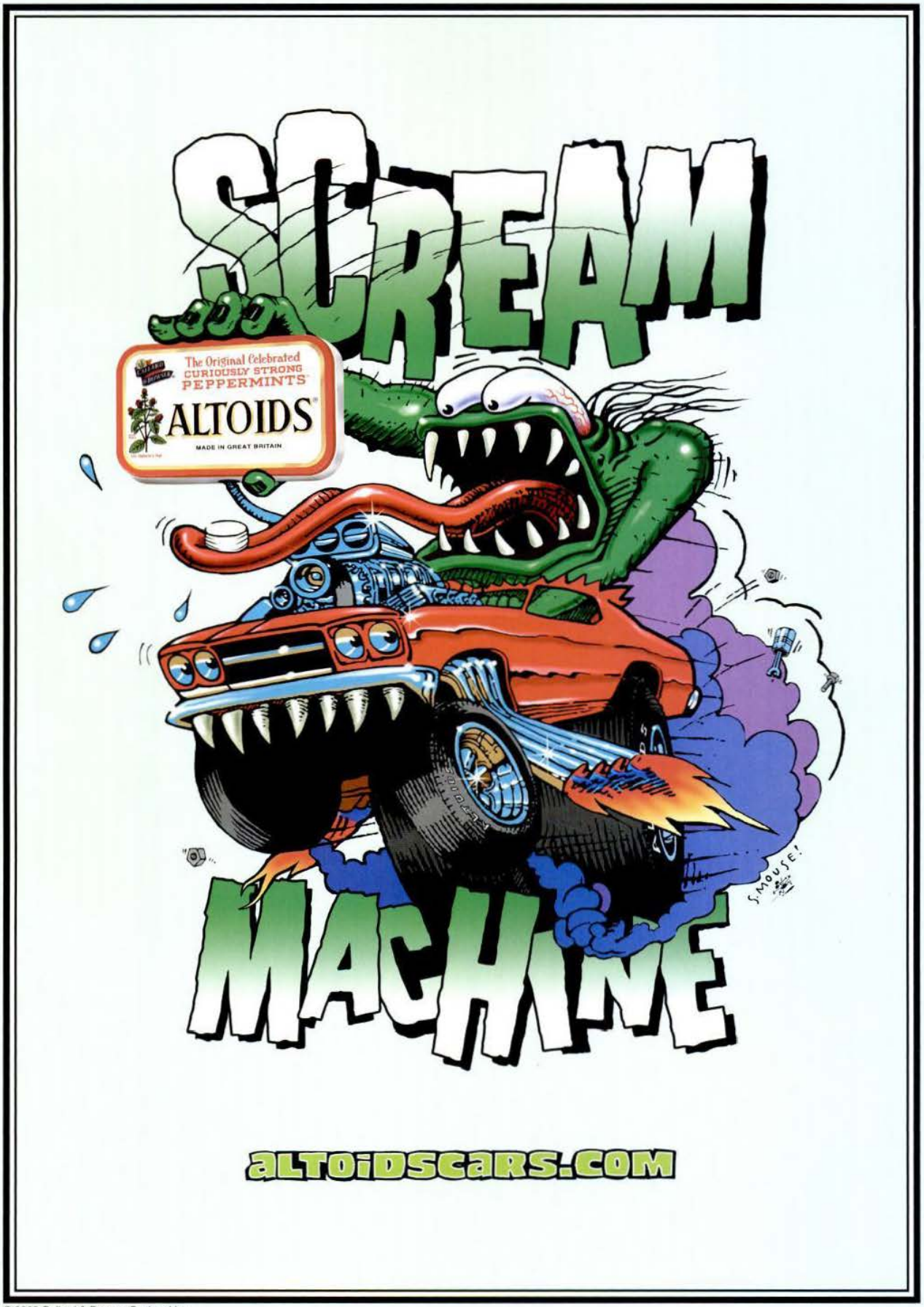

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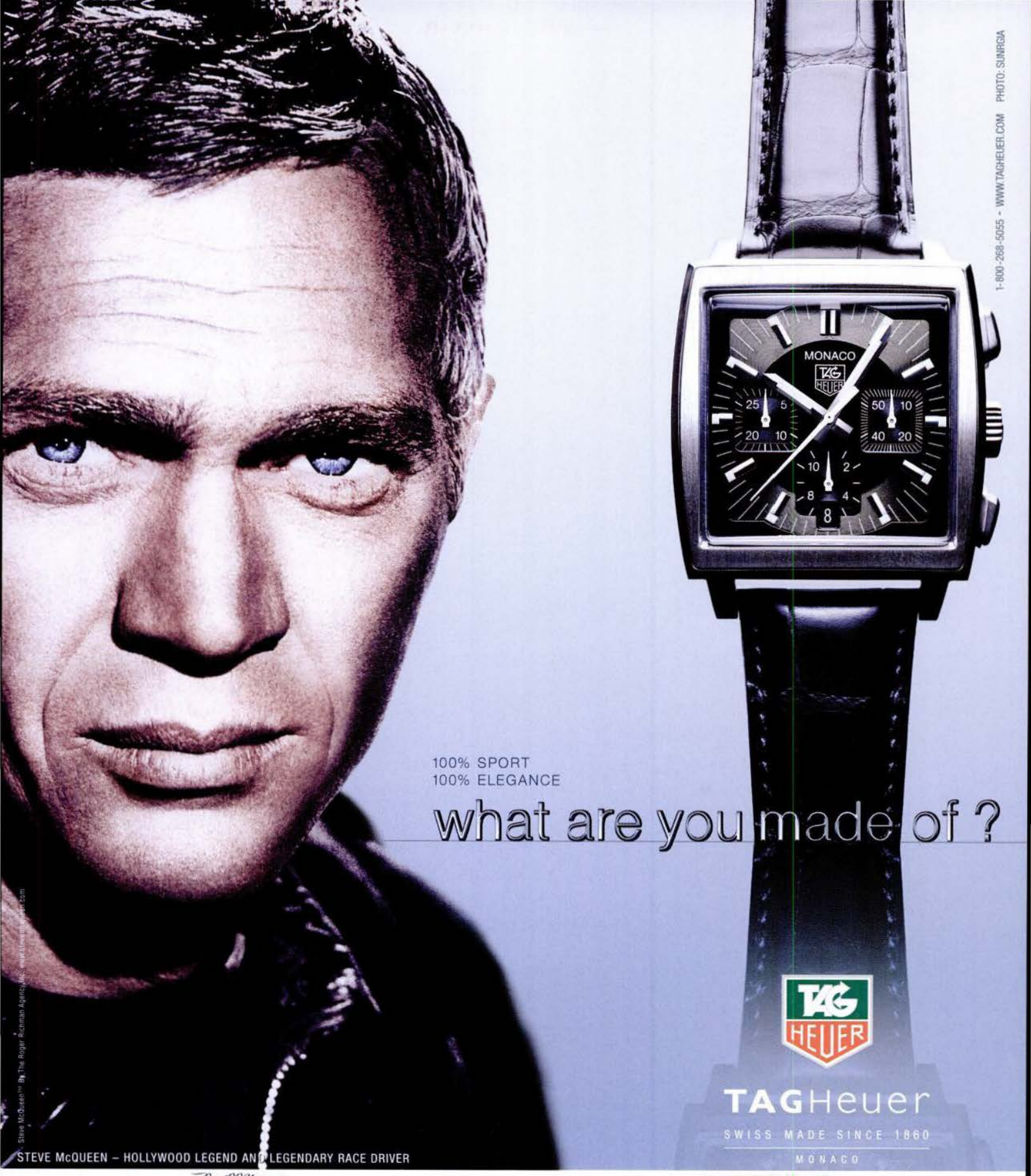
dwell

June 2002
Contents: Living High

"Compared to Toronto, where the five highest buildings are all corporate, Vancouver's tallest building is residential. It's people, not boardrooms, who are at the top of the city." —Peter Busby, page 50

Cover
The Levits' double-sized apartment in a Houston high-rise, renovated by architect David Guthrie, was opened up to look and feel like a loft. Photo by Scogin Mayo



You are destroying twenty full years of mental programming!

Your magazine has been a refreshing read this past year, but I think either: (a) it's difficult to find architecture that hasn't already been reviewed in other architectural periodicals or (b) my entire notion of Kentucky civilization is shot (with a Winchester, no less)!

Having lived the majority of my happy childhood in Louisville, Kentucky, I never found anything remotely architectural. But alas, of the ten issues published thus far, I can recall at least five stories regarding Kentucky. Incredible! Impossible! This is Kentucky we're talking about! Are you trying to ruin your reputation?

I tried to just accept it as coincidence or something astrological, but then you hit me with the big whammy! On page 38 of the April 2002 issue there is the article featuring "Goff's radical glass triangle" in Fern Creek, Kentucky. FERN CREEK, KENTUCKY! Are you insane? I grew up in "cookie-cutter" Fern Creek. Never in my wildest youthful dreams could I imagine Fern Creek to harbor anything that could be compared with a van der Rohe!

I live outside of Detroit today, but the next time I visit the parents I will search out this abode. Afterwards I'll have to be institutionalized, because Fern Creek + architecture does not compute.

Titi Tran
Howell, Michigan

As a graphic designer, I am more than impressed with Ruth and Kevin Wyatt's architect-designed home ("Slugging It Out In Louisville," April 2002). The home is creative, livable, and in comparison with the mostly staid residential architecture being built all over North America, a breath of fresh air.

In my opinion, however, it is a failure. It totally disregards two of the most important design tenets: suitability and appropriateness. It is neither. It may physically fit on the lot, but its style and perceived size do nothing more than create another reason for municipalities to have infill housing guidelines.

The author states that "suing the Wyatts for...'materials infraction' is, at best, disingenuous." What is truly disingenuous is that the couple's intuition told them the building's design would be controversial, and yet they so lacked respect for the neighborhood that they kept it in the dark—until it was too late.

Scott Pettit
Aurora, Illinois

I discovered Dwell through a friend (thankfully) and was very interested in your Wyatt house article. Unknowingly, I drove right past the house in January on my way from Fairmont, West Virginia, to Illinois. From there we drove around the neighborhood and eventually to the museum at Churchill Downs. Now I wish I'd looked more closely at the house (or had known its plight)!

I support the Wyatts' cause. People like the Wyatts need to be supported to fight for their beliefs.

John Celuch
Edwardsville, Illinois

I wanted to thank you for presenting the continuing saga of the Wyatt family and the architectural Taliban. It presents a real dilemma: Do you ▸

Meet Our First Nice Modernist

In 1999, at the tender age of 25, architect Cameron Sinclair founded Architecture for Humanity, a not-for-profit organization geared toward promoting and developing architectural solutions to global social and humanitarian problems. In its first year, AFH launched an international competition to design transitional housing for Kosovo's returning refugees, and received over 200 entries from 30 countries. On May 1, 2002, AFH will announce a new competition. The brief? To design a fully equipped mobile AIDS relief clinic that can be easily transported throughout the African continent. AFH's hope is that a cost-effective and easily transportable clinic will be easily replicated in Africa and elsewhere. The competition winners will be announced on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2002.

Sinclair runs AFH on evenings and weekends from the 400-square-foot studio apartment he shares with his wife in Manhattan. In his spare time, the transplanted Brit works as an architect at Gensler in New York, where most recently he was project architect for the School of the International Center of Photography in midtown Manhattan. We applaud his efforts. And we think he is Very Nice. For further information on Architecture for Humanity and the new competition, log on to www.architectureforhumanity.org.

To nominate someone for the Dwell Nice Modernist Prize, go to www.dwellmag.com, where you'll find the nomination form. (Please note that Nice Modernists don't have to solve major humanitarian problems to be Nice. They could just have designed a really cool toothbrush.)

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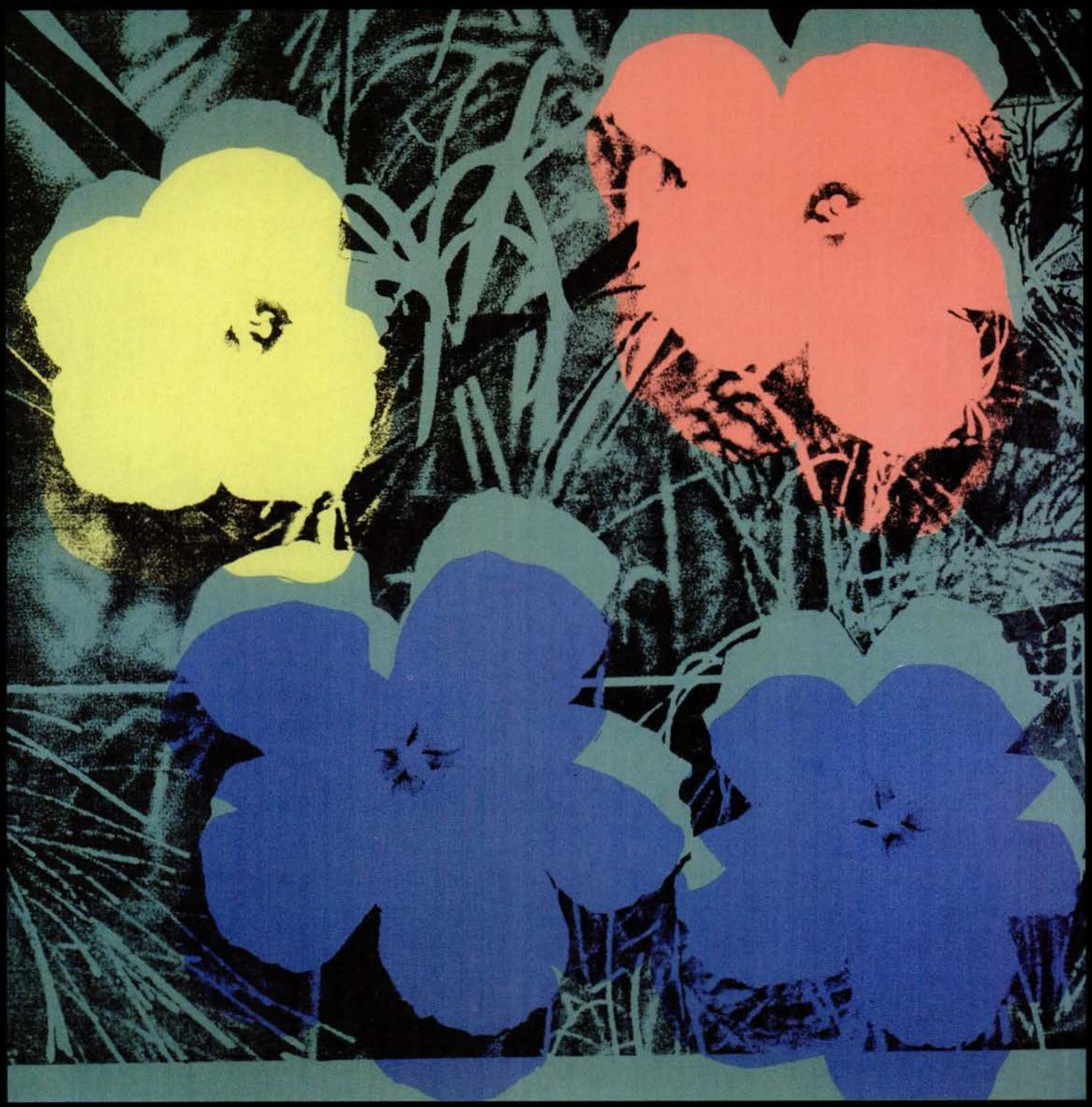

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Ten-Foot Flowers, 1967, 120 x 120 in., silkscreen ink, acrylic paint on canvas, Stiftung Sammlung Marx, Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, ©2002 Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

prepare the neighbors by keeping them fully informed during the design process and hope that they don't launch a preemptive strike, or do you say nothing and hope that their initial surprise does not turn to something more destructive? I am planning a house in the same spirit as the Wyatts'. You can be certain that I will be studying my own covenants, codes, and restrictions (CC&Rs) very carefully before proceeding.

As for your article on Prospect, Colorado, you never told me what I most wanted to know: Is the project profitable? As a real-estate investor and developer, I know that the modernist cause will never advance unless its products make money. Unfortunately, modernist housing developments have a history of being financial disappointments. I hope that tastes have advanced enough to prove me wrong, but fear I will not be.

RC Browne
Newport Beach, California

Dwell—
Where have you been all my life?

Mark Reeves
Dallas, Texas

First, let me tell you how immensely I enjoy reading Dwell, page after page, issue after issue, and fortunately, ever since the first one. Your ability to show us particularly well-realized and manageable dreams and truly lived spaces is definitely one of your best qualities. However, I have to admit that I was quite shocked by the picture of Sallie Trout sitting on the loo ("My Bathroom, Myself," February 2002). I appreciate you being true to people's home and living habits but I wouldn't go that far in sharing their intimacy. The concepts brilliantly stated in the "Fruit Bowl Manifesto" (October 2000) are what make your magazine different and good. But please don't go where even conceptual art has a tendency to fail; it kills the charm and the intelligence.

Aurelie Thiolat
Paris, France

PHOTO BY TANYA ZANI EKSTRÖM (SITTING PRETTY)

"Sitting Pretty," by Sallie Trout, 2002

Thank you so much for printing the article ("My Bathroom, Myself," February 2002) featuring my bathroom. In all my years of doing this it is my favorite image in print. Dwell is the most "real" magazine out there.

Sallie Trout
Santa Monica, California

In response to Harris Schuyler's letter (April 2002) about the woman sitting on the toilet, it is refreshing to see a magazine that allows a glimpse of reality and makes the obvious connection that these facilities are just that, facilities. In this issue you made the statement that these rooms are beautiful, expensive, and, YES, used for their intended purpose. Dwell is on the right track, don't veer off.

Philip Armand
New York, New York

I've recently realized Dwell costs me far more than the meager $20 subscription price. Every time I flip to the products section, I fall in love with something I HAVE to own. You're running me broke! Keep it up!

Karen S. Freeman
Atlanta, Georgia

Write to us

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Meet the Info Bug

This cute little icon is designed to help you find contact information for the products and people covered in our pages. And it's harmless and doesn't bite.

Coming in August:

Beach houses in Chile, California, and the Hamptons. And our Outbuilding Extravaganza featuring saunas, studios, and, yes, even an outhouse.

Correction
Addled by the number of unusual names we were dealing with in the April 2002 issue—Kiki, Coco, Kwaku, Mikko, and Markku—we made an error in our "Off the Grid" story. Mikko's last name is Heikkinen and Markku's last name is Komonen, not vice-versa, as we printed it. Our apologies to the architects and our readers.

What do you call a chain-smoking

narcissistic

fall-down drunk

fashion victim?

Mom.

Grounded

I have a confession to make. I live on the first floor. I haven't lived more than a couple of stories above street level since I was in college and bunked on the seventh floor of the tallest building for miles around, a ten-story poured-concrete dorm. In New York, where I earned my living writing about very tall buildings, I did indeed live in a 17-story apartment house, but on the fourth floor, close enough to Third Avenue to be intimate with the fire engine sirens and bus fumes.

Mostly, these low-altitude apartments chose me more than I chose them. They are always less expensive or more readily available than the kinds of places that have views. And, in some way, they answered the call of the atavistic tenement dweller in me, the ancestor who needed to be within shouting distance of the pavement.

For a few years, I rented an office on the tenth floor of a building on lower Broadway. My windows faced north. I could look out, beyond the roof of an adjacent building, across Bleecker Street and directly into the eyes of the angels along the cornice line of the Bayard-Condict Building, the only Louis Sullivan–designed building in New York City. In Manhattan, the tenth floor is nothing, but I somehow had a view of heaven.

In this issue, we explore three variations on high-rise living. The spectacular is embodied by the 48-story ovoid shaft of the Wall Tower, Vancouver's tallest building. Says one contented resident of the 39th floor, "When I wake up here on a sunny morning, I feel like the city is at my feet."

Then there is a normal middle-class, postwar New York apartment house, a typology that has little to recommend it architecturally, but is the workhorse of Manhattan real estate. In the words of our New York–based contributing editor, Victoria Milne, it's the kind of building "where our friends live."

And, finally, there is a high-rise in Houston. Although the building has only 12 stories, it is tall by local standards, and the apartment we profile there has sweeping territorial views despite its relatively low altitude. If it's possible to see heaven from Houston, you can likely see it from the sixth floor.

This issue was in our plans for a long time, probably a year before September 11, 2001. Briefly, we considered scrapping it because calling attention to height seemed to be in bad taste. But the truth is that high-rise living is, for a great many people, so routine that it would be hard for them to imagine any other sort of life. Where are they supposed to go? To a ranch house? To a bunker? One real-estate analyst told the *Chicago Tribune* late last year that he thought some people would move to Wisconsin, but this, he added, was a small minority.

For this issue, we interviewed Carol Willis, the director of the Skyscraper Museum, a new institution that for the last several years has been hopping from one borrowed space to another. It is scheduled to move into its permanent home in Battery Park City later this year.

Willis, who lives on the 30th floor of a New York high-rise, says, "We have great light. We have cross ventilation. We hardly ever use our air-conditioning. We're above the din of the city streets." Willis, like so many New Yorkers, watched the Twin Towers collapse as she stood weak-kneed on her south-facing balcony. Despite the bad memories associated with the southern perspective, she still mainly equates her high-floor apartment with light, air, and relative calm.

Personally, I keep thinking that I want a little more than the skimpy view of Alcatraz that I get only by virtue of the fact that my apartment building is set into a steep hill. I recently checked out apartments at a 43-story rental tower just south of Market Street in downtown San Francisco. I looked at high-floor apartments with spectacular views of the city and the Bay and began to see San Francisco in a different light. It's not the place where I live with small-town sight lines, but a place where downtown is a candy box of rooftops old and new, and South of Market is a broad apron leading to the Bay. The height made San Francisco seem larger and seductively urbane.

And that, I guess, is the point. The idea that by holding the high ground we became a little more secure and infinitely more powerful. That sense of territory is exhilarating. This is what people love—and hate—about tall buildings.

This is why, despite the realization that a tower can become a target, most people will stay put. The high-rise apartment still feels like the ultimate refuge.

Take Joseph Pell Lombardi, an architect and developer who lives on the top floor of a restored vintage Wall Street–area tower—his apartment was once the boardroom of Sinclair Oil. He weathered the collapse of the World Trade Center from his apartment a block away, as some crusty Floridian might weather a hurricane, watching in shock as his heavenly view was suddenly obscured by soot. He holed up for a week, surviving on dried fruit and canned tuna. "The real horror was in the streets," Lombardi later told the *New York Times*, "but when I'm in my apartment, I'm actually fine."

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

Story by Marc Kristal

Photos by Erica Freudenstein

Real Estate Magic in Alphabet City

Ben Cherner and Emma O'Neill thought they'd made magic, Manhattan-style. Having purchased (with four other couples) a four-story, 200-year-old townhouse on the Lower East Side, the pair, both architects, planned with their partners to extend the structure's depth by 20 feet, then go up and over the existing roof to create a fifth floor. Cherner and O'Neill would occupy the new 1,500-square-foot penthouse—and for just under $200,000.

The magic evaporated with the discovery that the original foundation couldn't support the weight of a fifth story, leaving them with only the extension on which to build—a paltry 20-by-25-foot space, plus an entry.

Fortunately, the challenge invigorated the two, who are in fact genetically inclined toward innovation: Cherner's father, Norman, was a pioneering designer of prefab houses and plywood furniture, while Emma's father, Cathal O'Neill, former dean of architecture at Dublin's University College, had studied and worked with Mies van der Rohe. Thus predisposed to let necessity mother invention, the pair created, says Cherner, "what's called in New York architectspeak a 'pentazine.' It's this building type shaped by the New York City code that gives you the extra square footage of the mezzanine without having to extend the infrastructure."

Cherner and O'Neill discovered that the western wall could rise to a height of 20 feet, and by sloping the roof 20 percent (thus complying with all city codes), the eastern wall could stand at a still-impressive 14 and a half feet. Within this shell, they were allowed an interior balcony equal to one-third of the total 950-square-foot floor space—adequate, the couple decided, for a bedroom and bath.

The parameters thus established, they next wrestled with where to put the mezzanine. "There's a kind of grain to the apartment that moves north-south," Cherner notes, "so we wanted the volume to read the long way. You come in and orient yourself, then you see the design of spaces created by the mezzanine to the left, which is more dynamic than having everything right in front of you." O'Neill, who as design director of the firm Studio Sofield produces a lot of furniture plans, arrived at the same conclusion differently: "I thought, when you come in, do you want to be looking at the end of the bed?" The final configuration presents a soaring living room ▸

Framed by black walnut that rises up to the high ceiling and mezzanine, Cherner eats his oatmeal while O'Neill holds onto little Zelda.


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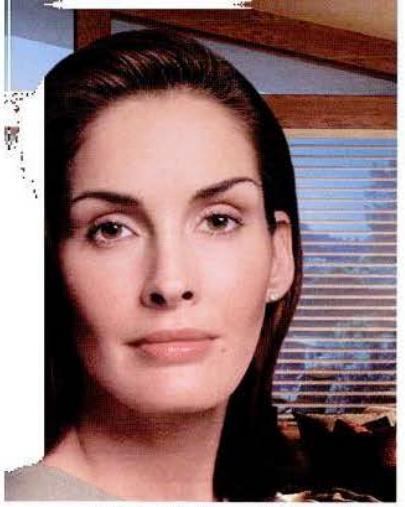
The gray modular divan unit from Property, designed by Paola Lenti, is a perfect place to lounge and enjoy the ample natural light. Its shade subtly compliments the burnished gray tone of the concrete. The kitchen table, surrounded by Cherner chairs, is also a Cherner design; Ben updated his father's 1960s base with a new blue laminate tabletop.
p. 98

with southern and western exposures and, via the mezzanine, the elegance of a section drawing: kitchen and study below, bedroom and bath above (enclosed in a sweep of black walnut), with an industrial rolling staircase and full-height "vertical library" in the center.

A major architectural element was determined by, of all things, Studio Sofield's redesign of the Gucci building on Fifth Avenue. As the overscaled, bronze-framed windows were removed from the top floor, O'Neill decided they'd be ideal for her home, scavenging them for the haul-away cost. The 16 glass expanses, most rising seven feet from the floor, both establish the mezzanine height and give the main floor a delightful, if vertiginous, porosity: Push open the living room windows, and an entire corner of the structure disappears—leaving one giddily floating on air.

"My dad saw a house as an industrial design element, like a table or chair," Cherner recalls, and the apartment, with its puzzle-like intersection of planes and dovetailing materials and finishes—including a concrete floor, soapstone counters, and steel beams—does indeed look and feel like a handsomely crafted object. Yet the couple deliberately avoided going the built-in, ship's-cabin route. "It was very important that it didn't feel like we were making the most out of the space. We've got freestanding dressers and a kitchen table," says O'Neill in her rich Irish burr. "It's key to thinking this is a bigger apartment than it is."

Though the couple—now sharing digs with their cherubic one-and-a-half-year-old, Zelda—wish design and construction had gone more quickly, they recognize the emotional value of the process. "The time it took to build has given the space a certain spirituality," Cherner observes. Or, as O'Neill puts it, "The *thrill* when we got the toilet." ■



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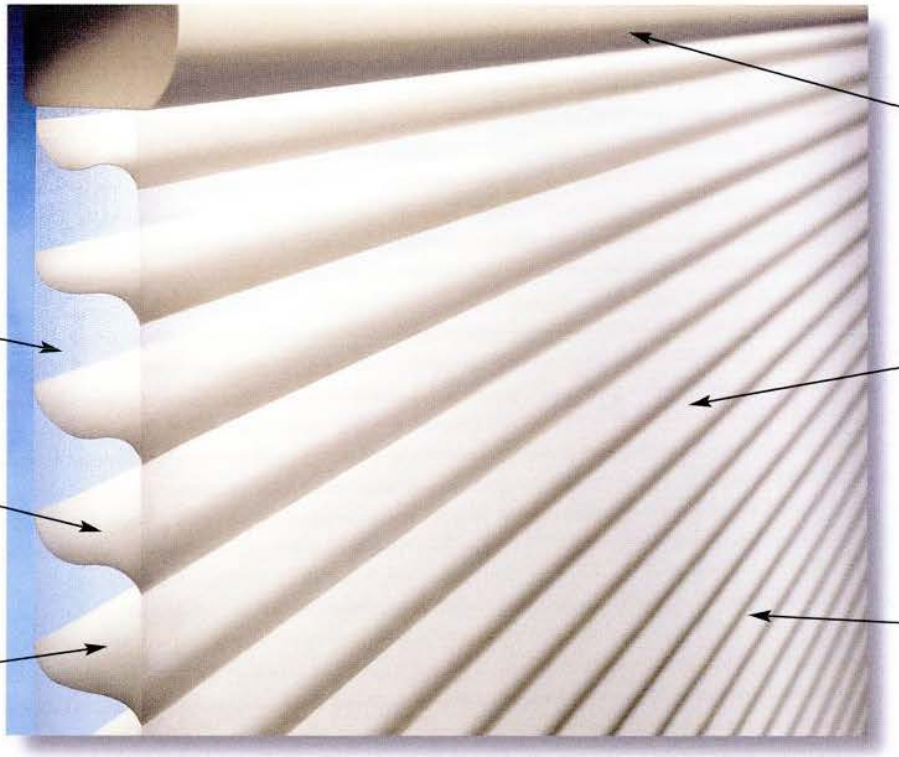

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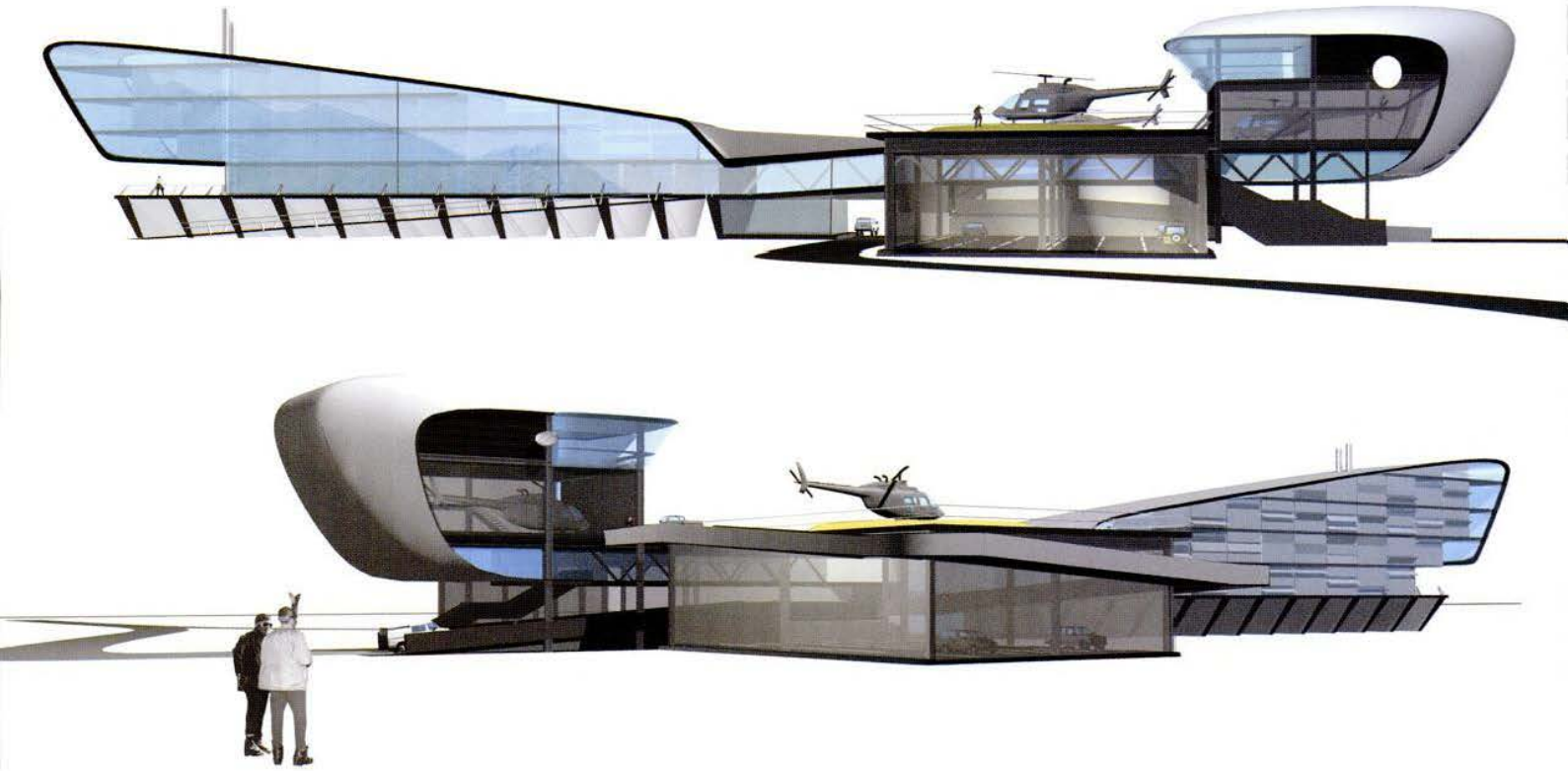


Hotel Extreme

Helicopter skiing—the sport where people pay money to be dropped onto a glacier from a helicopter and ski down—is not for everyone. It's an extreme activity for self-professed adrenaline junkies who thrive on danger. These days there's no shortage of those, which is why architect Lindy Roy was hired to design a heli-skiing lodge in Alaska's Chugach Range.

Rarely is a hotel endowed with a heliport, and hardly ever has a heliport been the centerpiece of a hotel. But never has a hotel bar looked down at the hotel heliport through a picture window like a mezzanine in a movie theater. So it makes sense, with a design like this, that some logistical issues would come into play.

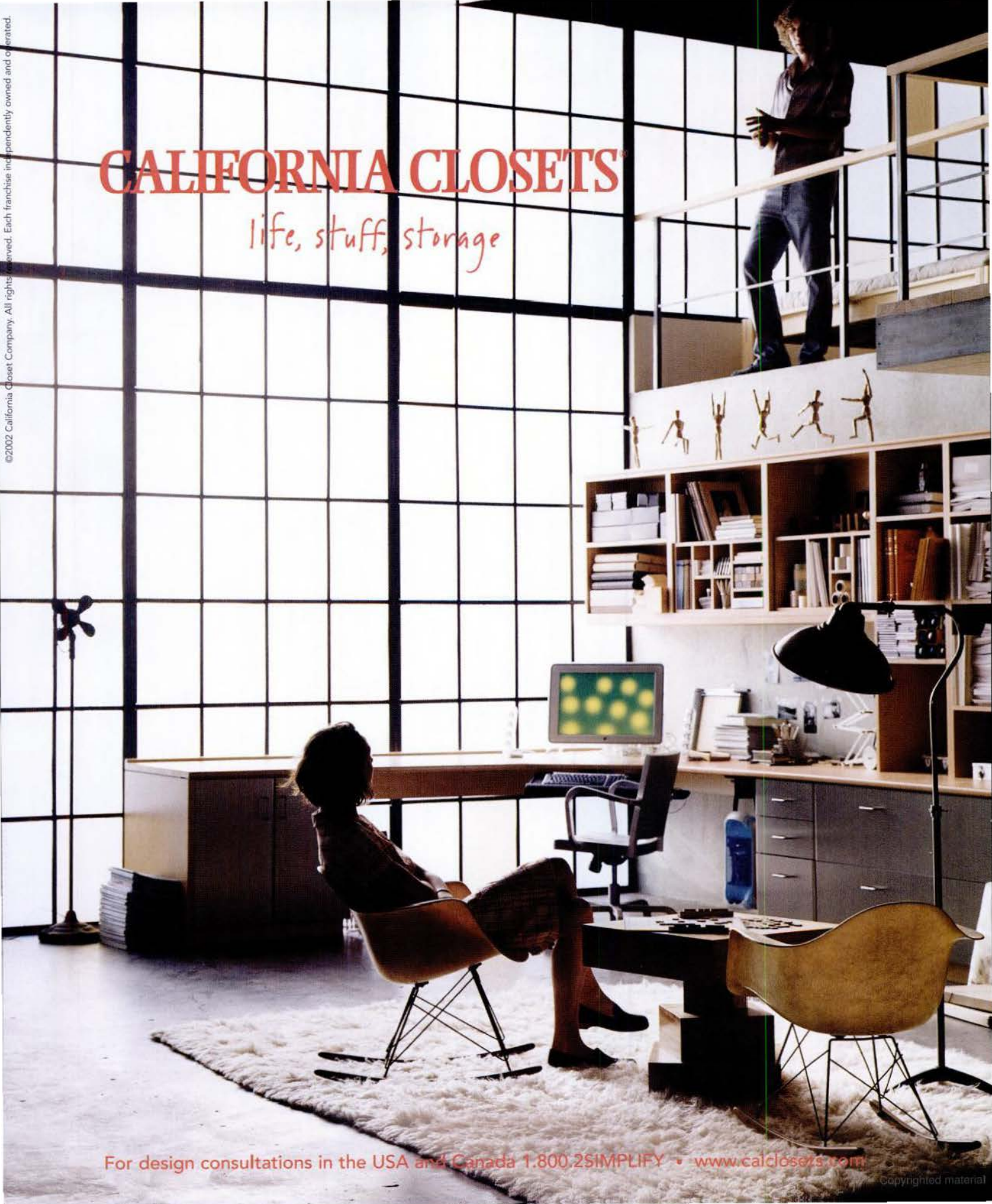
"You've got to internalize the pragmatic side—put it in your back pocket, so that you can let the building play around it," says Roy. For anyone who has tried reading FAA Advisory Circular #150-5390-2A, the 123-page PDF that lists safety requirements for designing heliports, this task is hard to imagine. Nonetheless, the document's introduction states: "While heliports can be large and elaborate, most are not. In many situations, a wind sock and a grass area with clear approaches will suffice to provide an effective and safe heliport." Despite the radical high-tech hotel swooping around it, Roy's heliport is almost that simple.

Aware that prevailing winds accommodate aircraft approaches from the north, Roy oriented the overhanging mezzanine south of the helipads, so that collisions with the bar at takeoff and landing will be impossible (a wind sock will likely be onsite as well). The helipads themselves are raised two feet off the platform, minimizing the possibility that anyone will accidentally stumble into the prop zone. A small air-traffic-control station sits in the mezzanine, next to the bar.

As for the adrenaline junkies, Roy has thought of some features to make heli-skiing safer, and more rewarding. Before taking off, the skiers convene in a room beneath the heliport, for weight gauges and a safety briefing. At the end of the day, Roy imagines the snow-covered roof as a great backdrop for photos, because it's shaped like a ski jump. In the bar, people can gaze at the wild but somewhat paramilitary setting, and mull over the day's feats. "Without being too overt about it," says Roy, "we want to flatter them with some heroic moments." ■

Roy (below) placed hotel rooms inside the Alaska Rendezvous Lodge's sloping triangular portion (above). Air-traffic control and the hotel bar hover over the heliport.

PHOTO BY KAREN STEAD



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The Soul of a Shed

Brian MacKay-Lyons' house for Bill and Esther Danielson is like an angular corrugated-metal barn with clerestory windows.

In September 1996, Bill Danielson called up Halifax architect Brian MacKay-Lyons from a pay phone in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, because he didn't have a phone. It was the end of the fourth summer that Bill and his wife, Esther, had camped for a month on their remote property at the northern end of the island, and they were ready to build a house there. A few days later, they met the architect at his Halifax office. All the conference rooms were busy, so MacKay-Lyons asked if they could please use a glider cl[illegible] on his roof as a meeting place. "We thought that [illegible]" says Esther. "We sat swinging back and for[illegible]ng about our vision of a house."

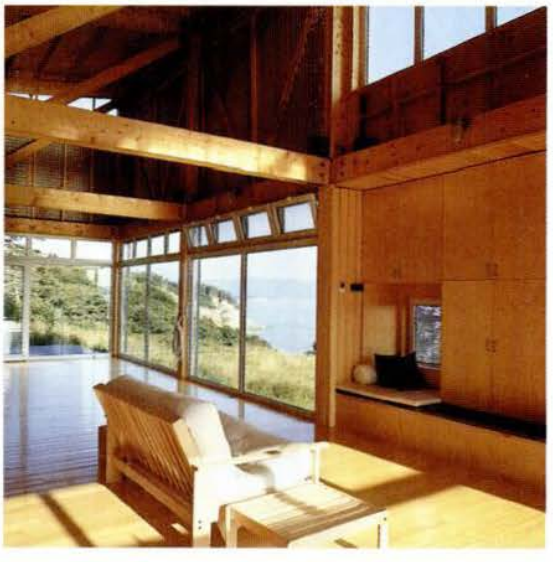
The follo[illegible] MacKay-Lyons visited the Danielsons a[illegible]operty. Bill and Esther were living in a little she[illegible] the architect saw how easily the Danielsons r[illegible]d cooking and sleeping in an eight-by-ten-foot ro[illegible]ith no electricity, he knew they would make good cl[illegible]. "He figured he could shove us into a pretty small s[illegible]e," says Bill, "and we'd be happy."

The Danie[illegible]n cottage is hardly a shed, but it's built on shed principles. The bathroom, bedroom, and kitchen—th[illegible] only rooms with plumbing and ▸

Top left: The living room's generous fireplace nook (where Esther reads) is indispensable when the weather is cold—it's the warmest part of the room.

Middle left: In winter, sliding doors can close in the heated portion of the house, where all living necessities (bath, books, and wine) are.

Bottom left: In summer, the futon in the main room usually becomes the bed, because Bill and Esther like to wake up to the sunrise over the sea.

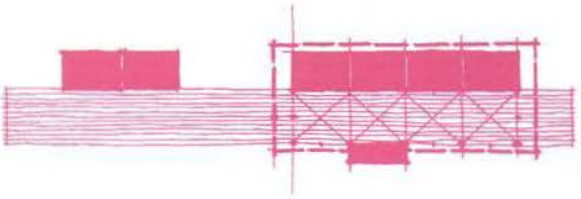


heat—are contained within about one third of the 1,500-square-foot house. From the utility-equipped portion, a broad sliding door opens to the rest of the space: the huge living room with exposed rafters, the fireplace, and views across Aspy Bay. On freezing days the Danielsons close the sliding door and hole up with the mechanical heating. When it's warm out, they keep everything open, enjoying the high ceilings and ocean views in the living room.

MacKay-Lyons devised the layout this way to save energy and minimize costs. According to Trevor Davies, the project architect, "you save tremendous energy by using only necessary heat. That's made possible by keeping the vital, mechanical parts of the house together, instead of spreading them apart. So we only needed to build insulation into the heated portion. And, by keeping the plumbing in that small area, we avoided building long plumbing runs, which saved tons of money."

Apart from its condensed mechanical areas, the house is defined by its deck, which ingeniously doubles as the living-room floor. It runs straight through the house, has an outdoor portion, and then meets a small guest shed with a woodstove. Bill, a meteorologist, and Esther, a landscape architect, had requested a platform for viewing the sea and sky. "The deck is great for watching clouds, stars, and the Northern Lights," says Esther. "And on warm late-summer nights, we sleep out there."

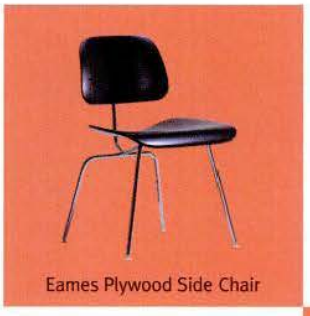
The thrift that drove MacKay-Lyons to design the house with its two parts—the small heated area, and the large non-insulated living and deck space—managed, amazingly, to make the house more expansive. As Bill explains, atmospherically, the house is two houses: "In the winter, it's a small finished insulated house that faces south, with lots of windows to let the sun in. In the summer, it's a big north-facing house on the water that's unfinished—exposed timber, not heated—and with all that space. So the house goes from south-facing, cozy, and small, to big and airy, looking out north to the ocean, with the sun behind us." ■



Salient Detail

Describing the plan, Trevor Davies refers again and again to "service boxes," which sound, confusingly, like little doors in the wall full of outlets and fuses. But in the MacKay-Lyons archispeak, a service box consists of walls whose innards are structured to accommodate plumbing, electricity, and heat—which surround the "cellular servant space," the room that enjoys those utilities. This terminology, Davies says, comes from Louis Kahn via Charles Moore, with whom Brian MacKay-Lyons studied at U.C.L.A.

Most likely, all the rooms in your house are cellular servant spaces. But in the Danielson cottage, having only a small portion of servant spaces—shown on the above floor plan in solid pink—saved tremendous resources (and continues to save every time they need heat). The uniform 12-by-8-foot-box shape of the rooms made them easy to begin building off-site. Most of the joists and studs maintained their precut lumberyard length of 12 feet, saving time and wood. Structural encumbrances inevitable to plumbing installment were confined to just the service boxes, so the majority of the house required only a simple, bare-bones construction.



Eames Plywood Side Chair

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Aalto Lounge Chair

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Story by Allison Arieff

Photos by Gail Albert Halaban

With so many options available, how can you determine which sink is right for you? Forget frills, suggests our expert, and stick with something simple, sturdy, and easy to clean.

Sink In

Unless you're one of those people who eats all of your meals out of Styrofoam containers, your kitchen sink is an essential component of your daily life. It's one of the few things in your home that you use morning, noon, and night and all those times in between when you get a glass of water, rinse off an apple, or wipe up a spill.

"If your shoes are truly comfortable, you aren't aware that you have them on," industrial designer Bill Stumpf (who created that icon of ergonomics, the Aeron chair) has written. It's a simple but important observation, one that can be applied to all the objects, gadgets, and ephemera that clutter up our daily existence. We believe the same holds true for the kitchen sink. If it functions well—that is to say, if it provides enough of a work area, drains well, doesn't splash water onto the surrounding countertop—it's probably not something you spend much time thinking about.

But if you are in need of one, what should you be looking for? "One large basin is really the way to go," explains our expert, Annie Somerville. "A surface that can be cleaned easily is crucial, as is having a really deep basin so you can maximize the use of it. As for faucets, just get something basic."

Sounds easy. But where once a sink was just a sink, these quotidian fixtures now come with more options than a fully loaded Lexus. Ceramic or stainless? One bowl or two? Square or round? Somerville offered her thoughts on a few of the latest options.

Chandler Americast Single Bowl Sink
American Standard **$225–300**

The quality of materials and simplicity of the Americast sink design make this a good bet for any kitchen. It's durable, utilitarian, and looks nice. The porcelain finish with polyester resin backing is designed to be scratch- and burn-resistant. And it's priced right.

Expert Opinion: I like this the best because it's so simple. A good basic, very functional sink. I don't see any limitations, though the drain might be too small. For a compact kitchen, I really like this one. If I needed to replace my sink at home, it would be a prime candidate, depending on how much space I had.

What We Think: This basic white fixture conjures up pleasant visions of domesticity: mom in a prim red apron, the smell of Nestlé Tollhouse cookies baking in the oven. Sinks like this one have been fixtures of the American kitchen for a long time—eons before anyone thought to rinse mesclun in an Oxo salad spinner. It may not be flashy but, like Stumpf's comfy shoes, it does what it's supposed to do.

A Note on Our Expert: In our quest to find the perfect kitchen sink, we sought the advice of someone who spends a lot of time in front of one. As executive chef of the vegetarian restaurant Greens, in San Francisco, Annie Somerville can be found most days trimming artichokes, peeling carrots, or rinsing leeks at a giant double-basin sink with a view of the bay. With 20 years of restaurant experience and two cookbooks (*Fields of Greens* and the forthcoming *Everyday Greens*) under her belt, Somerville knows her culinary equipment. Her requirements for a good kitchen sink are simple. "I relate to function more than aesthetics," she says, a comment befitting a woman who learned to chop and sauté not at a boutique culinary academy but at the San Francisco Zen Center (which owns and operates the restaurant).

Condor 45
Villeroy & Boch — **$700**

This spare and elegant rectangular sink with ceramic worktop features CeramicPlus, Villeroy & Boch's unique version of the material, which they claim "remains clean virtually of its own accord." The attractive and utilitarian design comes in a wide variety of sizes and configurations, including a stand-alone wood-and-ceramic sink unit.

Expert Opinion: It's ceramic. It cleans itself—we love that! Love it! What more can I say? I don't actually believe that part but I'd like to—we all know what happens with coffee and beets. But it's a nice idea. It's just a large, simple, open basin, which is exactly what I'm looking for in a sink.

What We Think: We are highly in favor of anything that promises to clean itself. And this sink not only guarantees that we never have to get woozy from Clorox Clean-Up fumes again, it's also insensitive to hot pots and pans and is shock- and scratch-proof. Our tentative culinary adventures may not warrant all these features but it's comforting to know that they're there.

Double Undermount Sink
Franke — **$770**

Practical, functional, and easy to clean, Franke's stainless steel models are exceptionally resilient and won't chip, flake, or break with use. An undermounted sink like this one allows for a wide variety of design configurations that would not be possible with conventional sink formats.

Expert Opinion: It's stainless and that's good. I'm not sure about the smaller bowl—maybe it's where you rinse your carrots or fennel while you're doing something else in the larger basin? I'd rather have two substantial basins or one really large one, not one large and one small. But if I had this sink, I'd definitely make it work.

What We Think: We agree with Somerville's assessment of this particular sink setup, though an infinite number of bowl configurations are available. It's stainless, it's durable, it's hygienic, and it's attractive, so what's not to like?

Stainless Steel Built-In Sink
Alpes — **$1,300**

This high-end, high-quality stainless sink has a host of high-tech features, like drain knobs that control the opening and closing of the plug by means of a stainless steel cord (so your hands don't even have to touch the water!), fire-welded heat and sound insulation, and an array of optional bins, compartments, and cutting surfaces.

Expert Opinion: I love stainless steel. It's so cleanable. This sink looks nice and shiny, but I think it has too many compartments. I look at these bins and just think they're not very big. I can see how it would work for someone who doesn't prepare many vegetables—fine for carrot sticks but not for chard or removing leaves from romaine lettuce. I'd like the sink better if it was simpler.

What We Think: The fact that the Alpes catalog is filled with slim and fresh-faced European models in ecru cashmere sweaters suggests that Somerville was right on track. This sink is perfect for a couple whose refrigerator contains a bottle of Veuve Clicquot, some Wellness Water, a jar of blood orange marmalade, and half a lemon.

Terrazzo Farmhouse Sink
Kallista — **$2,279**

Terrazzo was created several hundred years ago in Europe, when Venetian craftsmen discovered a new use for discarded marble remnants, and it's typically used for floors and wall treatments. Kallista is the first manufacturer to use the material for sinks. It's a distinctive material to be sure, but not the easiest to maintain.

Expert Opinion: It's beautiful to look at, but not a sink I'd have in my house. The surface of this is no harder than other sinks but for some reason that rim between the basins makes me feel like I'd break things in it. I don't like the depth or the spacing. It doesn't look like it would be easy to use. This is a showpiece sink. You'd need another, more functional sink hidden in the back somewhere. But it is really pretty.

What We Think: Perhaps if we had a farmhouse, we'd feel differently. This would be a great addition to Frances Mayes' villa in Tuscany—one can imagine how lovely it looks brimming with handpicked Roma tomatoes and purple basil—but for washing the breakfast dishes and filling up the Britta pitcher, it's a bit over the top.

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Story by Andrew Wagner

Photos by Elena Dorfman

Beyond the Michael Graves

Target is like the girl next door—you saw her every day but never noticed her until she grew up. Well, Target has finally reached adulthood and is now surprisingly attractive to almost everyone. From its beginning as the Dayton Dry Goods Company in 1902, to its rebirth as Target in 1962, to its current status as the demigod of cool for the cost-conscious, Target has firmly planted its foot in America's retail landscape. With so much hubbub surrounding this purveyor of everything from groceries to Graves, Dwell had to send two experts to investigate.

Bill Moggridge is co-founder of Ideo, the industrial design firm responsible for shaping over 4,000 products, including the first P.C. His wife, Karin, is a clothing designer whose line, KarinM, is represented internationally.

Bill and Karin Moggridge get their "Target fix" in the outdoor-furniture department of the Redwood City, California, store. "Every once in a while I just have to check out what's new," says Karin.

A / Two-Room Six-Person Dome Tent
Greatland **$79.99**

Bill: [At the store] you can only see these strange shrunken versions of the actual tents on the floor; the full-size tents are kept in boxes. But it is actually a very nice way to display tents. The small ones are enough to make you feel comfortable spending $79.99. They tell the story . . . you can feel the fittings and fiddle with them, which is often the crucial part to a tent's design. Whether the zips work properly, whether the tabs are located conveniently, whether the latches are good—all those things are the differences between good quality and not-so-good quality. They use the same material and zippers on the small scale as they do with the real tents.

Karin: I like the divider down the center with a zipper so you can separate it into two spaces. I don't know if that would give you any more privacy, but . . .

B / Shoulder Bag
Xhiliration **$9.99**

Karin: This is absolutely gorgeous. It has a fabulous combination of leather and plastic. I bought one and I use it all the time. My whole filing system is in it. I particularly like that there is no tag on it because I refuse to buy anything that has a name stamped on it. The bags only come in neon, but they are well made. I probably should have bought three of them. ▶

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"It was definitely Graves that originally brought me to Target," says Bill, but the retailer's almost obscene selection keeps him coming back. Everything from bike seats to bird feeders can keep all but the pickiest shopper occupied for hours.

C / Ultra Bins

Sterilite **$3.49–$19.99**

Bill: Of all the big plastic bins in the world, I think these are the best. I like how the handle is integrated into the latch, and the lid fits over the total package quite nicely. I also like the fact that they are translucent rather than fully transparent, which means that you can see enough of what's inside to remember what was there without it looking tacky. And the plain, pale gray top is nice and simple. If you need big bins, you go to a place like Target.

Karin: Anything to do with plastic you get there. Anything to do with storage. That's what I think of when I think Target. These big bins are wonderful, because out in the country, where we live, there are a lot of rats and rodents and they can't get into these.

Bill: The forest is completely full of rodents—mice, rats, all sorts of little creatures. And they will find their way into the most amazing places and eat through the most amazing materials. Undoubtedly, they will find their way into our garage, but even if they do . . .

Karin: There are the big bins to stop them!

D / Bicycle Seat

Lemond **$19.99**

Karin: Bill and I do a lot of long-distance bicycling. One of the main problems with this is what I call "sore bottom syndrome."

Bill: If you go cycling for a week and you haven't been biking every day, the first two or three days are fine but the last two or three days are pure hell from saddle sores. After that you kind of harden up, but we usually go on a bike trip for about a week a year, so the saddle becomes the biggest problem. Something which actually stops the pain would be great and this design, we hear, makes a big difference. And it is interesting that they are designed differently for male or female, depending on the shape of your naughty parts.

E / Outdoor 25-Foot Extension Cord

Sunbeam **$10.99**

Karin: This is the most beautiful thing I ever saw. It looks plastic, which I think is gorgeous, and it's transparent. The fact that it has three outlets is incredibly important to us up here because of the lack of outlets. The color is fantastic, too. And it looks like the rodents wouldn't be able to chew through it.

F / Roll-Up Table

Greatland **$27.99**

Karin: The way this all folds up and snaps back together is very sexy—it makes a nice sound when you click it together. We used ours as a dining table for a long time.

Bill: It comes completely apart in about two minutes, and since it only weighs a couple of pounds you can fold it right up and put it in its "over-the-shoulder bag" and take it on a picnic. ■


B


D


C


E


F

Story by Allison Arieff

Photos by Zigen

After years spent running an *okonomiyaki* (sort of a Japanese pizza) restaurant, Misao and Shizuko Minato retired not to the country but to this modern industrial apartment complex in Osaka. This rooftop garden sealed the deal.

Osaka: A Slice of Life

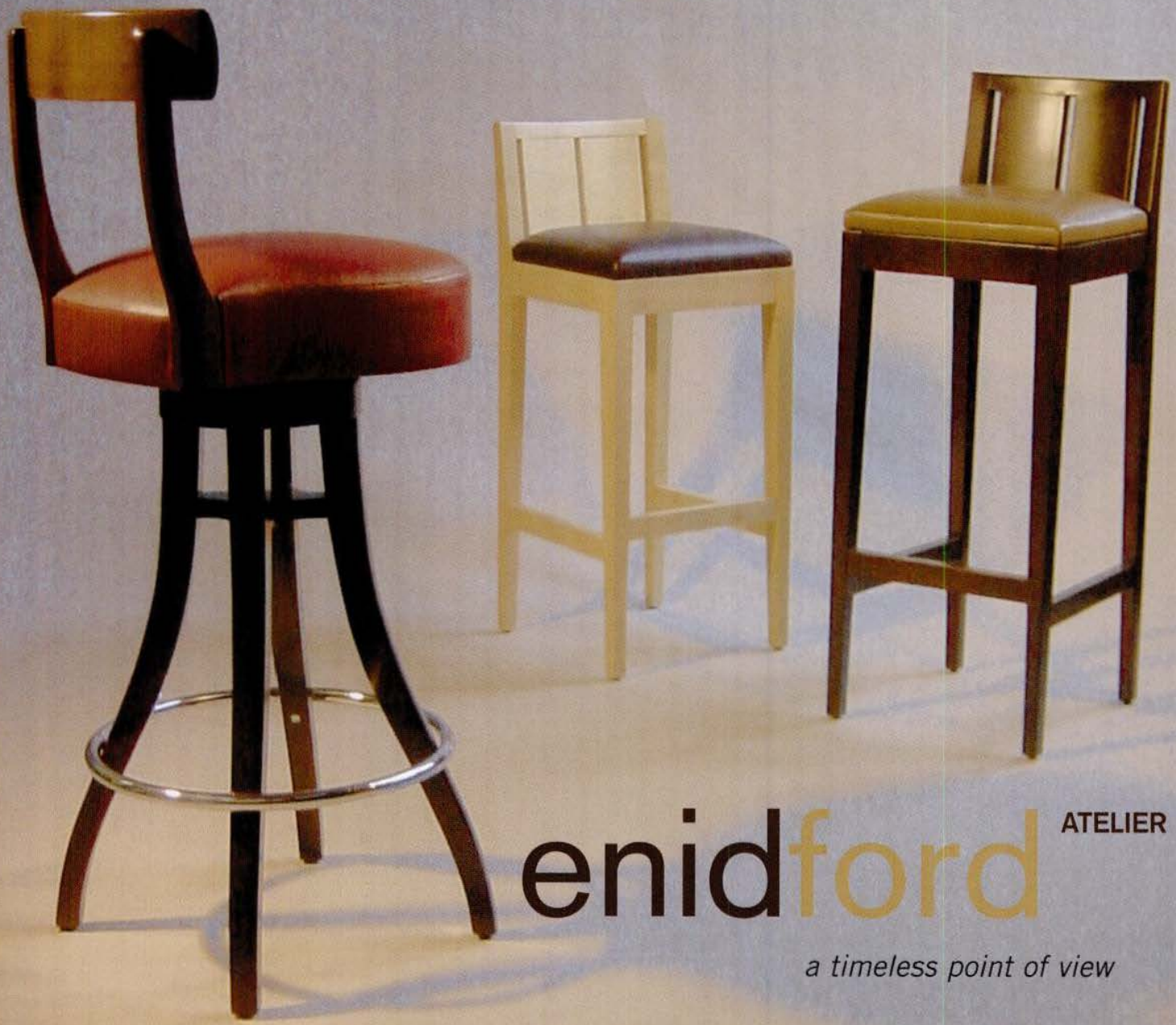
Osaka, Japan's first capital city and once the economic hub of all Japan, is known now both for its history and as a center for advanced technology. In the midst of Osaka's urban landscape, architect Katsu Umebayashi wanted to create an apartment building with enough character and individuality to distinguish it from its somewhat generic surroundings. "Many of the apartments in the area may have looked good when first built, but they tend to age very quickly and not very well, so longevity was also a big concern of the client," the architect observes. "But the planning and design of Casa Bianca was left entirely up to us, right from the idea of the screen wall to the calculation of the size and number of apartments."

The most distinctive feature of the Casa Bianca apartment complex is its striking metal circulation wall. Mostly opaque (and deceptive in its scale) from the outside, it's quite transparent from the inside. The circulation wall creates an intermediate space around the building to mediate between the living spaces and the street. "In such a chaotic context," the architect explains, "we thought the most appropriate response was something visually simple and relatively closed-off from the exterior. It's better for the inhabitants, and better for the neighbors, too."

Umebayashi designed Casa Bianca under the auspices of FOBA, a collaborative practice of 13 architects in Kyoto, Japan. The collective is perhaps best known for its FOB Homes (see Dwell, May/June 2001), a standardized housing system intended to provide an alternative to the manufactured model homes that dominate the Japanese housing market. In describing FOBA's mission, Umebayashi says, "We're interested in an architecture that is more comfortable than challenging for the users, and in buildings that actively affect their context for the better."

To see if Umebayashi and his team have succeeded in their mission, we tracked down two residents of Casa Bianca, who had recently traded their conventional kit house in the suburbs for a new rooftop apartment. Misao Minato, 65, and his wife, Shizuko, 66, used to run an *okonomiyaki* restaurant (a kind of Japanese fast food best described as a cross between a pancake and a pizza). We asked the Minatos, who moved to Casa Bianca after retiring in 2001, how they were enjoying their new environs. ►

The Audition
Barstools by Philippe Hurel



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Casa Bianca's dramatic metal circulation wall (above left) creates more privacy for the residents and greater visual interest for what could have easily become just another low-rise, high-density solution. The Minatos, who moved here from a three-story kit house in the suburbs, are happily adjusting to city life.

What brought you to this apartment?
After living in a Western-style three-story house, we decided we wanted to try living in an apartment. The rooftop garden attracted us very much. We lived in Kadoma City (part of Osaka's northern suburbs) prior to this. There's a nice mix of people in this building—we have a married couple to our left and newlyweds on the right.

Briefly describe your daily routine.
We're retired now so our time is our own. We enjoy spending time sketching the beautiful view from our rooftop terrace. Our main pleasure is cooking for ourselves. Our kitchen is a little smaller than we'd like, but it is very bright with natural light from the windows, and we like the way it's connected to the living area.

What is your rent?
We pay 112,000 yen (about $850) in rent per month, which is fairly typical for new apartments in the area.

What do you like best about Osaka and your neighborhood?
The neighborhood itself is not so interesting, but we do like the nearby Yodo River. The nearest shopping area is about a 20-minute walk from here but we always drive there. We'd have to say that our favorite place in Osaka is Osaka Castle. [The original structure was built by Emperor Hideyoshi Toyotomi in 1583 and then reconstructed by the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1629. It is, for most Osakans, the symbol of their city.]

What do you like best about your apartment? least?
The best aspect is the rooftop garden. We also love the light, especially from the clerestory window. The worst aspect is the lack of an elevator, especially when we have to carry heavy packages up the stairs to our apartment.

We lived in a very ordinary home before. The design here is clean—it is private but very bright and open. We're happy to be here. ■

When in Osaka . . .

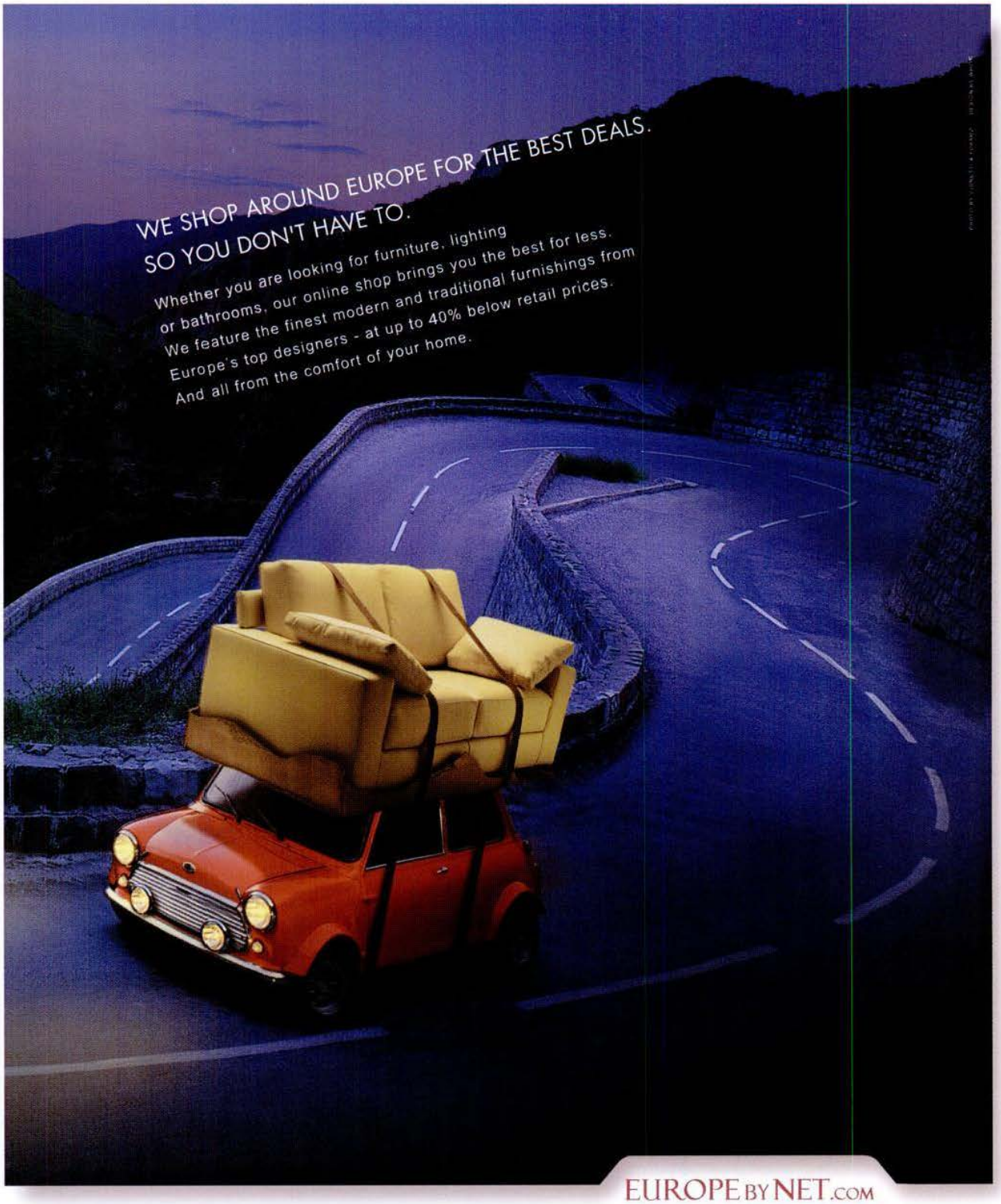
Umeda Sky Building
Floating Garden Observatory
1-1 Oyodo-naka, Kita-ku, Osaka City
Tel 011-81-06-6440-3855
Fax 011-81-06-6440-3876
You'll get one of the best views of the city from this mid-air observatory, which sits atop and between two modern glass towers. Not for the acrophobic.

Tachibana-dori
1-3 Minami-horie, Nishi-ku, Osaka City
This has been the place to buy furniture since the Edo period, when it was known as Doguyasuji (street for equipment, tools, and furniture). In the recent Heisei era, it was re-named Orange-dori to freshen its image. If only it were always that easy.

Snoopy Town
2-7-70, Matsuta-omiya, Tsurumi-ku, Osaka City
Tel 011-81-06-6913-8800
Fax 011-81-06-6913-8810
Although the press for Snoopy Town claims it is "intended to be a heartwarming place for people and help them forget their busy daily lives," it's more like a Snoopy theme mall. *Peanuts* fanatics might want to investigate.

Sewerage Science Museum
1-2-53 Takami, Konohana-ku, Osaka City
Tel 011-81-06-6466-3170
Fax 011-81-06-6466-3165
Opened in 1995 as part of a program to celebrate 100 years of modern sewage in Osaka (was there a parade?), this museum explains the roles and mechanisms of sewage today.

PHOTO BY DENNIS GILBERT / VIEW (EXTERIOR)



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Story by Karrie Jacobs

A Meditation on Solitude

Are rooms shaped by the things we put in them, or are the things we put in them shaped by the room? Maybe this is way too philosophical a question to attach to a bathroom fixture, but Solitude, the new freestanding shower/sink combination from the German company Dornbracht, suggests the possibility that a novel approach to plumbing could morph the space around it. "Over the years, we've devoted ourselves to thinking more deeply into the bathroom," explains Holger Struck, the firm's director of public relations and cultural communications. All this rumination led Dornbracht to the notion that the bathroom doesn't need to have its own room. ("Except for the toilet," Struck adds.) It could, given proper drainage and piping, be anywhere. "New ideas create new rooms," says the slogan on the company website.

While the bathtub in the kitchen has long been a part of New York tenement life, and cheap German hotels often find a way to install shower stalls adjacent to the beds, Dornbracht had something more glamorous in mind. The company's in-house design team created a shower and sink (with mirror, lights, and toothbrush holder) that, in Struck's words, "worked like a piece of furniture." Actually, Solitude, a stainless steel pillar that is a cousin to contemporary phone kiosks, works like a piece of architecture. It is a column, one more evocative of Sir Norman Foster than of ancient Rome.

Available in Europe (for around $7,300), Solitude's conceptual beauty is also its flaw. To be able to put a bathroom dramatically into the center of, say, your sun room, you have to run plumbing to places it generally doesn't go. You would, in fact, have to build your home around it. And then there is the fear factor: "People tend to be afraid to combine water and electricity in one piece," Struck sagely points out. But Solitude has been approved by TÜV, the German version of Underwriters Labs. And the company is trying to get UL approval for the American market. Still, what happens when you start playing fast and loose with the functions of rooms—fewer walls? fewer doors? new etiquette for dealing with wet, naked people where you least expect them? ■

Solitude is a shower and sink combination that is designed to bust out of the bathroom wall and implant itself in, say, the bedroom or the den.
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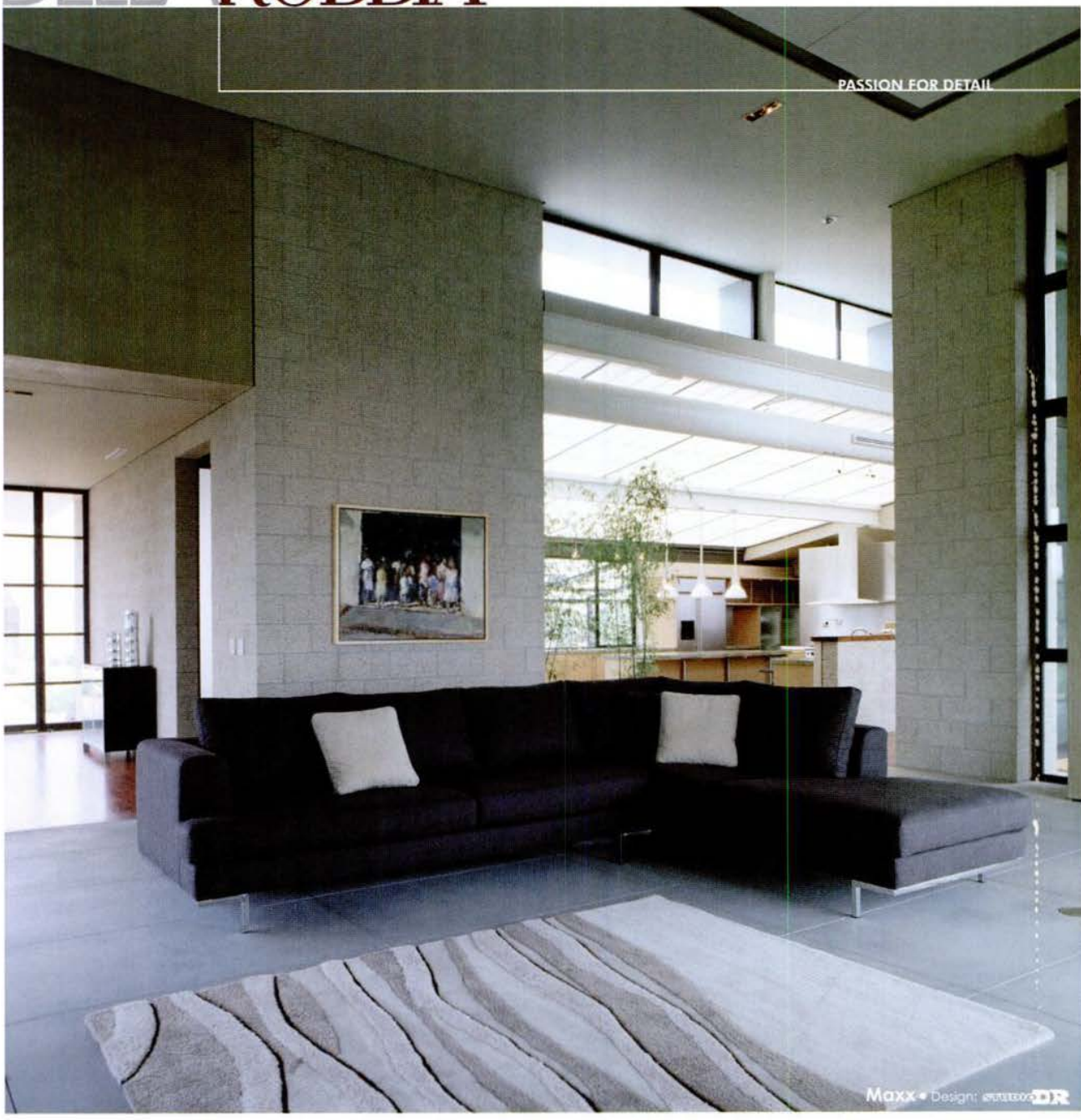

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Story by Sam Grawe

Shrink to Fit

Hello Dwell,
I live in an old, urban studio apartment—one main room with a kitchen, bathroom, and a couple of closets. Space is always an issue, so I am interested in multifunctional objects as well as ways to create separate living areas within one room.
—J. Krasnick

Dear J.,
As long as man has been decorating, he's been inventing things that fold, stack, collapse, and multitask. From an X-frame folding stool in Tutankhamen's tomb (c. 1350 B.C.) to Inflate's plastic modular bed frame that converts into a bench (c. 2001 A.D.), the desire for objects that somehow transform has remained constant. Though the nomadic lifestyle is no longer the norm, similar principles apply for today's apartment dwellers hoping to get the most out of, or rather into, the sardine cans they call home.

If you have limited space, look for ways to get things off the floor. An obvious solution is a Murphy bed. While the most (cost) effective solution is to transform an existing closet into a home for your mattress with a Murphy bed frame, you can also buy cabinet units that will play the part of closet. Most of the products aren't too visually inspiring, but Inova Furniture manufactures an attractive unit that also doubles as a table when the bed is stowed.

While wall-mounted shelves are useful and quite common, most people wouldn't think of hanging a bookshelf from the ceiling. British designer/manufacturer Diapo created an ingenious shelving system called Complice, which can either hang or stand. Essentially six boxes on a sliding and rotating system, Complice expands and contracts (like a Russian doll in cube form) to fit your needs. Diapo's Duo shelving unit can be used as a breakfast bar or transformed into a dining table with a bench. Keen Furniture makes a creased plank, appropriately titled Plank, which can assume a number of positions (like a stool or coffee table), in addition to storing flat.

The best way to divide your space is with a screen. Our favorites include Alvar Aalto's Screen 100, a classic design made by Artek, featuring a series of undulating pine slats. Newer designs by TYE3D feature tessellating panels that pivot to create a crenellated design.

Another solution to creating a space within your space is to inflate one. Room Interior Product's Chill Out Room consists of 31 hexagonal panels that expand to create your own personal Buckyball.

Got a question? Send it to: Dwell Labs, 99 Osgood Place, San Francisco, CA 94133. Or email labs@dwellmag.com. ■

Collapsibles, from top: Diapo's Complice in various stages of transformation. TYE3D's Eileen Screen affords less privacy than Alvar Aalto's Screen 100. Duo, also from Diapo, can both store your cornflakes, and provide a seat upon which to eat them. Snoozy, a plastic bed frame that turns into a bench (where does the mattress go?). Also available with a headboard.
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The little stuff is big to us. Check out our halogen headlights. Kind of jewel-like aren't they? Well, these good looks are actually in the name of aerodynamics. Our designers figured that integrating all three light functions into one unit streamlines airflow. Pretty smart for a headlight, eh?


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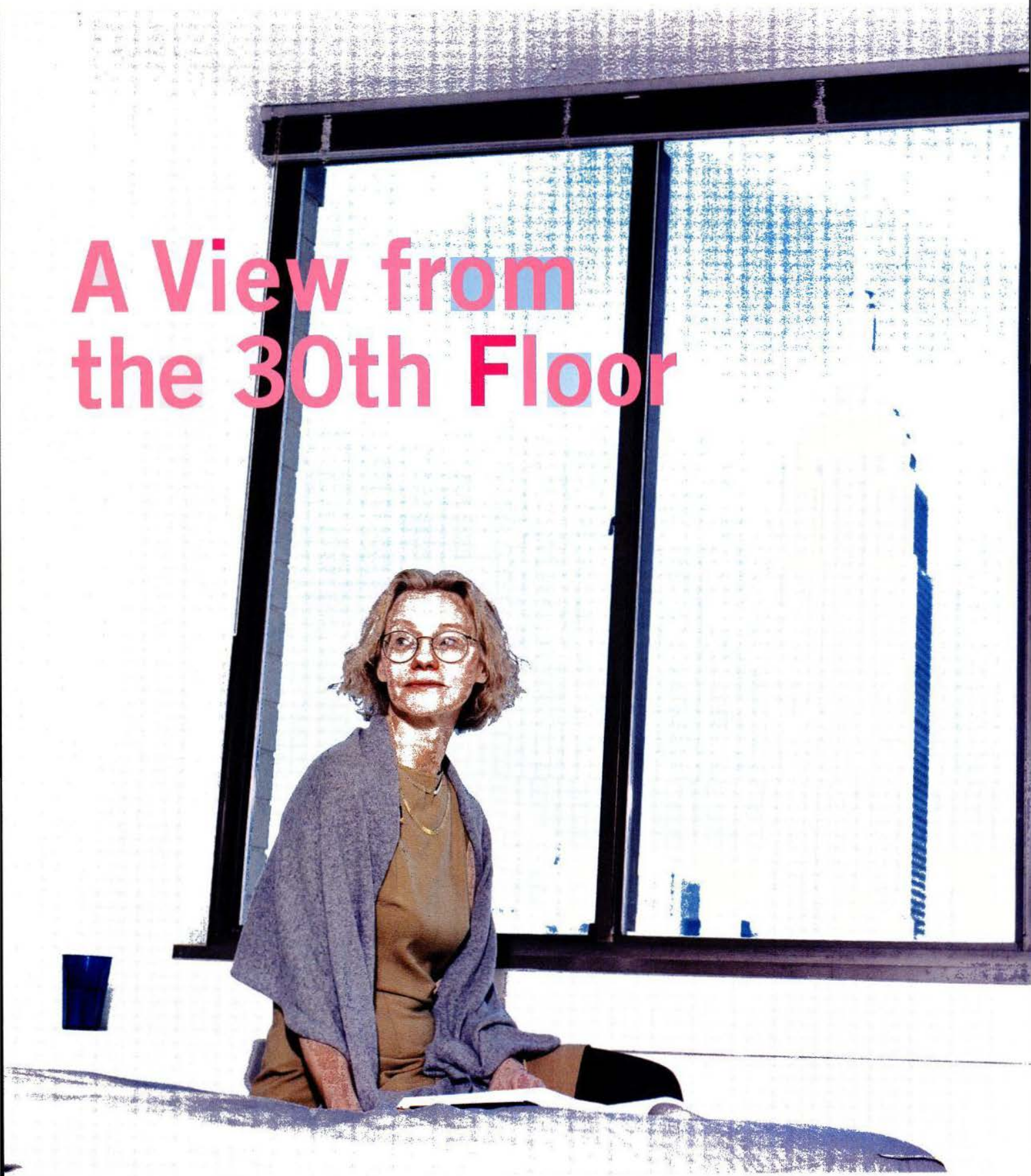
To dig deeper, just go to vw.com. Drivers wanted.

As told to Karrie Jacobs

Photo by Kyoko Hamada

A View from the 30th Floor



Carol Willis is the founder of the Skyscraper Museum, which has been mounting exhibitions since 1997. The museum will move into its permanent home in Battery Park City later this year. She is the author of several books on skyscrapers including *Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers, and Skylines in New York and Chicago.*

When my husband, Mark, and I were ready to move out of the Columbia University housing we had occupied as graduate students, we were very casually shopping for an apartment. We would ride our bikes around on the weekend to see what was available. We saw the frame of this building going up, and we saw an advertisement on the construction elevator that said "condominiums available."

We came up in the construction elevator to the sales floor, which was on 29, and came out of a dark space into a room that looked directly north at the Empire State Building. I put my hand on Mark's shoulder and pointed and nodded and that was it. It was like love at first sight.

I have this unparalleled view of not only the Empire State Building but the Chrysler Building, Rockefeller Center and the Chanin Building, and the whole sweep of the midtown skyline. I have this whole collection.

Then we added the little apartment to the south, which in the summertime gives us sunsets. Now, when I think of that south view, I immediately jump to the missing World Trade Center.

On September 11, I was just about to head downtown to the Winter Garden of the World Financial Center, where I was supposed to be meeting my Columbia students for the first time that semester. Then I heard on the radio that the airplane had hit so I turned on the TV. Then I realized that if I walked to the south end of my apartment I would be able to see this hole in the building. And it was horrible. And it made my knees shake. It's this unerasable memory that I have.

So that south view now affects my psychological equilibrium of being in New York. Not because I'm afraid. I don't think this will happen again. But it's painful. From my vantage point, I can see the paradox of New York at the moment. Looking north to midtown, we're untouched and going forward with a kind of normalcy. And downtown is now a separate city that just can't shake the presence of the devastation. ■

"WTC: Monument," an exhibition organized by the Skyscraper Museum, will be on display at the New York Historical Society through May 5. For more information: www.skyscraper.org.

Clearly Canadian?

Is Vancouver, Canada's third largest city, ready for a big, brash, American-style high-rise? Developer Peter Wall and architect Peter Busby are banking on it.

Story by Hadani Ditmars | Photographs by Bryce Duffy

The Wall Tower, one of the largest triple-glazed high-rises in North America, stands at Vancouver's highest downtown point, elegantly positioned between Arthur Erickson's courthouse to the right and the old BC Hydro building–turned–apartment complex to the left. Original plans called for 45 floors of clear glass.

Above left, Masoud Dehgan's maple kitchen is offset by granite countertops. The curvilinear hallway leading to the bedroom and the white suede Ligne Roset dining set are enhanced by halogen track lighting. Developer Peter Wall (above) takes in the ground floor courtyard. (opposite page) Masoud's brother Mamoud reads by the light of the 180°-view windows and a lamp by Foscarini from Livingspace Interiors. The red "Low-Fizz" chair is by Alivar.

At downtown Vancouver's highest point, the Wall Tower stands like a harbinger of future greatness. At 450 feet, the city's tallest building dominates the skyline of a place that has recently and rapidly evolved from suburban sprawl to vertical city. Like the title of Vancouver author Douglas Coupland's book about his home town, *City of Glass*, the Wall Tower acts as a visual metaphor for Vancouver's transformation from "terminal city"—the last stop on the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railroad) line at the end of an empire—to a dynamic metropolis that reflects the aspirations of its international inhabitants.

But the building, with its top 17 floors of clear-glazed residential units emerging from the lower 28 floors of darker-glazed hotel and time shares, also reflects the potential growing pains of a city in transition. While the glass issue remains controversial in Vancouver's architectural community (the original plan approved by city hall was entirely clear glazed), the building itself has become a focal point for discussions about the city's identity.

Situated between two of Vancouver's most architecturally important buildings—Arthur Erickson's courthouse and the old BC Hydro building—and opposite two neo-Gothic churches, the Wall Tower has become a civic landmark, visible from almost everywhere in the city.

Developer Peter Wall first conceived the high-rise as a companion to the two smaller towers he built in the early '90s. Inspired by landmark buildings in American cities, such as New York's Metropolitan Tower and San Francisco's Transamerica Pyramid, the tall, slim, elliptical shape of the building was Wall's idea. A great believer in the future of tall buildings, Wall maintains that "we need more height because it creates more open space." Consistent with his vision of the city as a "beautiful and livable" place that will continue to attract "international attention" and, he hopes, increased capital as well as the 2010 Olympics, the Wall Tower speaks to a future Vancouver gleaming with success.

Although Canada's drug-ridden downtown eastside is mere blocks away, the city's core remains the most densely residential in North America, with a relatively low crime rate and high quality of life. And though, as Wall puts it, "the world loves our city," it is still in the process of defining itself. In transition from a resource-based to a tourism/service-based economy, Vancouverites still maintain what Wall calls a "fear of big corporate structures." Meanwhile, the city has become the darling of the Hollywood film industry. Nicknamed "Brollywood," rainy Vancouver is a kinder and cheaper stand-in for Hong Kong, New York, Chicago, and a host of other cities. (The day I interviewed Wall, a nearby art gallery was festooned with American flags and klieg lights.)

In fact, says architect Peter Busby, of Busby and Associates, who translated Wall's vision into reality, there is something undeniably "American" about the Wall Tower. However, the tower—which boasts the largest installation of energy-efficient triple-glazed curtain wall in Canada—maintains its own unique character.

"Compared to Toronto," says Busby, whose firm is known more for its commercial towers than for its residential ones, "where the five highest buildings are all corporate, Vancouver's tallest building is residential. It's people, not boardrooms, who are at the top of the city."

And Busby's innovative use of the relatively shallow interior space results in an often vertigo-inducing sense ►

The stainless steel and wenge wood kitchen in businessman Carey Fouks' penthouse suite is a great space for artist Kerry James Marshall's porcelain plates. The hallway to the bedroom takes on the colors of the sunset.

of being literally in the air. The elliptical curve of the building gives the apartments an expansive quality, while the 180-degree views and floor-to-ceiling glazing dizzyingly thrust residents into urban airspace. Yet, with no other buildings rivaling its height, inhabitants can enjoy views of city, sea, and mountains, as well as a serenity and sense of being well above but simultaneously fully participating in the city below. And in Vancouver, often referred to as "Lotusland" by Canadians from the less lush and less relaxed Toronto area, this sense of calm has not been terribly affected by recent world events.

But beneath the Wall Tower's sleek style lies an earnestly ecological building. Although only about half of Busby's original plans for green elements proved economically viable, it remains the city's most residential high-rise, performing 8 percent better than Vancouver's strict energy-performance code requires. The Wall Tower is one of the largest triple-glazed high-rise buildings in North America and 20 percent of its content is recycled material—including concrete, steel, and wood products, as well as aluminum used in the glazing. High-volume fly ash concrete—which is made from waste material from incinerators and which, by replacing cement in concrete, reduces greenhouse-gas emissions—is used in the foundation, and a water tank at the top of the building is designed to function as a "heat sink," collecting energy during the day to be used at night, although it's not used in that capacity. It does, however, store water for fire fighting and works as a tuned-mass damper, absorbing the shock when high winds or earthquakes cause the building to sway.

Resident Masoud Dehgan, a property developer from Tehran, was attracted to the Wall Tower because of its views. "On the 39th floor, on a sunny morning," he says optimistically, "I feel like the city is at my feet."

Since Dehgan enjoys flying small planes as a hobby, he has a special appreciation for aerial views. He says this with no hint of irony, as we are in Vancouver, north of the 49th parallel, where any nationalist paranoia gives way to a certain sense of laid-back internationalism, and where, with action hero Jean-Claude Van Damme as a Wall Tower neighbor, anything goes.

The elliptical shape also appealed to him, he says, because "it's not built like a matchbox" like some more rectangular Vancouver high-rises. Working with designers Sue Solby and Leslie Waters, Dehgan replaced dark-stained floors with a lighter maple, which allows a sense of spaciousness in the 1,600-square-foot apartment. Simple white furniture lends a modernist touch, while Persian and Afghani rugs speak to more Eastern roots.

But in the end, the Wall Tower suite was also a good deal. Compared to Tehran, where high-rise culture is more of an established tradition, the $433,000 apartment was a steal. "In Tehran," says Dehgan, where it's quite common for whole families to live in high-rises, "real-estate prices are soaring." For Dehgan, whose three children visit him here regularly, the child-friendly amenities—such as the gym and pool—were pluses.

Architect Teresa Coady was also attracted to the child-friendly atmosphere at the Wall Tower, and saw it as a place where her family of four could make the transition from a house of teenagers to eventual retirement.

While still maintaining the family home in Maple Ridge, a rural suburb of Vancouver, Coady hopes ►

Fouks gazes north to the mountains as one of Douglas Coupland's "Toy Soldier" sculptures watches his back. (opposite page) Fouks is seen here on his Philippe Starck bed and attached night table. A Barbara Kruger silkscreen is behind him. The coffee cup is by Starbucks.


t when pride becomes contempt

Above: A peek into Teresa Coady and husband Marc's master bedroom. At top, Teresa and Marc relax with son, Matthew, 16, and daughter, Alanna, 14, on a weekend afternoon. Top right, a view of downtown Vancouver from Stanley Park, which offers acres of green space in the middle of the city. Matthew (opposite page) channel surfs in the spare bedroom. His friends think it's "cool" to live downtown.

gradually to make the two-bedroom apartment she and her husband, Marc, have purchased into a more permanent abode. For the moment, it functions as a weekend hangout for the family as well as an occasional weekday escape for Coady, whose busy downtown practice is only a few hundred meters away. Besides being the envy of their friends, who think it's really "cool" to live downtown, Coady's two teenage children also benefit from increased access to the city's parks and seawalls as well as Vancouver's art galleries and museums. "When my kids are away at university," says Coady, "Marc and I plan to sell our house and make this our main base."

Other happy residents of the Wall Tower include a young couple from San Francisco, who are "blown away" by Vancouver's natural beauty, low crime rate, and pedestrian-accessible downtown, a businessman from Hong Kong who is turning his space into a minimalist cocoon, and a divorced father of three who is making his penthouse suite into a retro-cool '70s bachelor pad. Meanwhile, Van Damme, rumor has it, has created from his two conjoined suites a French rococo fantasia.

The exciting thing about the Wall Tower is not only how individual spaces are being transformed into personal fantasies but also how such a building can contain local families from the suburbs, international business tycoons, and even Hollywood action heroes. A reflection of Vancouver's many facets, it's also a tower of dreams, as flexible as the malleable young city it inhabits.

Hadani Ditmars' writing on both cultural and political issues has been published in Wallpaper, The New York Times, *and* The Independent.

High-Rise Paradise

Vancouver came rather late into the high-rise game, when in the mid-'60s a bylaw change extended existing height restrictions in the city's West End.

But it was really Expo 86 that heralded Vancouver's rapid growth. The industrial areas around False Creek were rezoned and developed residentially, with many high-rises and some towers, like 888 Beach, that also included elements of row housing.

Today, Vancouver has one of the most densely residential and economically diverse downtown cores in North America—thanks in no small part to committed urbanists at city hall, like planner Larry Beasley.

"While most North American cities can only claim a downtown population of six to ten thousand, Vancouver," boasts Beasley, "has 77,000." And that number is growing, with populations moving in from the suburbs, as well as from other cities—and other countries—with strong urban cultures. As downtown dwellers increase, so does the height of buildings. The high-rise, notes Beasley, is both a pragmatic and green solution to housing a growing population, with more open space allowing for parks and urban green areas.

Vancouver's high-rise culture is also notable for its tendency toward slender buildings with small footprints that are proportioned and spaced in ways that do not impede views. The result of all this careful planning, says Beasley, is an "artistic skyline" where buildings of different heights interact in a decidedly nonhomogeneous manner.

And far from catering only to the wealthy, the construction of high-rises in Vancouver has been accompanied by a significant number of social housing projects (Arthur Erickson's Portland Hotel is one stylish yet socially responsible example). Many high-risers are also opting out of car culture, with half of trips downtown now taken by foot. And downtown Vancouver is becoming increasingly family-friendly, with two new schools scheduled to open next year. Although many Vancouverites remain unaware of their own city's status, the "Vancouver model" is now the toast of the international urbanists' circuit, with planners from Asia, Europe, and the United States flocking to the seaside mecca.

Ironically, notes Beasley, Vancouver—a city with a long-standing tradition of nature worship and environmental activism—has become one of the most urban cities in the world. —H.D.

Story by Victoria Milne

Photographs by Bobby Fisher

With their low ceilings and shoe-box-shaped rooms, New York's postwar apartment buildings have long been objects of scorn. But just lately they've emerged as the perfect home for one's Knoll furniture and Russel Wright dinnerware.

Ranch House in the Sky

With a brick postwar apartment building in New York, first you close in on the neighborhood, then you find the building: "Yes, this is the one." Once on the floor you pick the door you want among the identical doors. The first moment of real connection is with the doorman.

Above, the living room, the den at the far end, and on the right, the new kitchen. The lamp on the left is the "Trienniale" by Gino Sarfatti for Arteluce, c. 1952. Verner Panton's "Flower Pot" desk lamp is on the kitchen counter.

In architecture, there is glory, there is drama, there are breathtaking abodes in which money was no obstacle, and then there are the places where our friends live. In New York these less grand places are, as likely as not, apartments in brick covered '60s-era buildings. In addition to being plentiful and relatively inexpensive, these apartments have become fashionable in recent years because they offer the ideal setting for one's Eames and Panton chair collections.

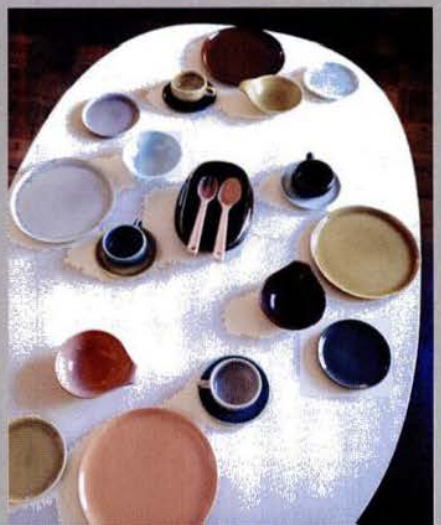
Ken Schwartz says he "couldn't live in any other kind of building." "He knew what he wanted from the beginning," says Marc Hacker, his partner, architect of their new apartment and director of strategy for the Rockwell Group. "When we decided to move, I knew I wanted to be in a building like this, and when this place came up, I was sold," says Schwartz.

Long the home of middle-aged, middle-class single women, these apartments are now bought up by the Russel Wright–collecting generation. In a recent *New York Times* article, the Museum of Modern Art's Terence Riley, chief curator of architecture and design, was shown in his modernist flat and was quoted as saying that there was "no question" that he wanted a minimalist '60s building when he went apartment shopping.

"I already had an apartment in this building, which was not big enough for two, and there are only a few apartments here with windows on three sides," notes Schwartz. "While we were looking, this came on the market and I really wanted it. Marc wasn't sure. Then the seller took it off the market, but I couldn't get it off my mind. My sister said I should write a letter, which I did, and my broker took it to the owner. At the moment he received it, he had just decided to move upstate and sold it to us immediately. You don't think, living in New York, that you are going to get what you want. But we did."

Schwartz says that he has the "real-estate gene," which guides him in seeing and closing on a deal, but that Hacker can really visualize space. "We agreed that he'd do the spaces and I'd focus on the furnishings." They finally closed on the 1,300-square-foot apartment in 1998 and began the renovation. "Ken is terrific at building up the collection of modern pieces. He's on eBay all the time and, unlike me, always knows the value of everything," says Hacker. "The arrangement is that we will only show ▸

Above: One enters the apartment from the far left corner of the living room, and faces the central floating wall on the right. An abundance of modern classics greets the visitor, including George Nelson's bench and "Coconut" chair, Saarinen's white side table and his first design for Knoll, the "Grasshopper" chair. In the left foreground is a swivel chair by Charlotte Perriand and Le Corbusier from 1929. It's best not to know the provenance of the minimal blue painting on the left.



At left: Some highlights of the set of Russel Wright's "American Modern" line that Ken has sniffed out to sate his collecting bug. Always ahead of the curve, he acquired the entire set by exchanging his former Fiesta Ware holdings with a dealer in Wright. These two avid collectors agree to only show what they both like—they store everything else. Near left: Marc Hacker, left and Ken Schwartz, marvel that even though it's New York, it's still possible to get exactly what you want.

Left: Verticals can be so slimming. This narrow bookcase is one of many built-in storage areas in the apartment. Below: The mod jewelbox bathroom is entirely glass tile with exclusively Philippe Starck fixtures. The intense effect of this all-over treatment creates a tiny alternate universe within the apartment.

things in the apartment that we both agree on." The consensus plan, naturally, calls for a large storage space.

The most important new element of Hacker's redesign was to create a central hallway. It provides a connection from one end of the apartment to the other, from the den past the bathroom, through the kitchen and on through the living room. It also links the most thoroughly redesigned elements of the home: the spacious (by local standards) kitchen and the refined bathroom. "This view from window to window gives us a wonderful sense of space. That's really important in New York," Hacker observes.

Having a kitchen that is comfortable to work in changed both Marc and Ken. "This is the part of the design that has had the most impact on the way we live. We love to cook and now we spend much more time at home because we can," says Hacker. "In the summer the kitchen is filled with sunlight from the west." The continuous countertop is pietra cardosa stone, which Hacker learned about when he was designing for Calvin Klein. "They had used it in interior finishes in some stores and we developed a few products with it. I just love it."

One of Hacker's architectural achievements in the renovation was to make the central wall in the apartment appear to float. It is the plane opposite the visitor on entering the home, and it is the most modern feature Hacker brought to the space. While it may be absurdly overstating it even to think of the lighter-than-air planes of the Barcelona Pavilion in this context, nevertheless, the bare elemental quality of those walls is the quoted history here. And, indeed, in this apartment the wraparound space, living room/dining room/kitchen/hallway/passageway, is simply and subtly defined by the plane.

As all of those who try to impose a plan on the unruly world know, unexpected problems can arise in the best schemes. Hacker was utterly adamant about the purity of this wall, and yet the kitchen demolition revealed a pipe that crossed the hall and nearly joined the wall—a joining that would have been the wall's fatal tether. Hacker had briefly worked for the architect Richard Meier, who is renowned for his whiter than white designs. Under Meier's influence, he decided to create a void that was a perfect square, and left the pipe clad in a short false wall, ▸

Left: The length of the central, floating wall on the kitchen side is storage cabinets surrounding a countertop space. "Some people buy them, then never use them," says Ken, of their quotidian Russel Wright set. "That's not for me." Above: No need to search for the maker's mark—these Mapplethorpe plates were produced by Swid Powell when Marc was the company's art director in the late 1980s.

"[The kitchen] is the part of the design that has had the most impact on the way we live. We love to cook and now we spend much more time at home because we can."

Good design can withstand use and still look sharp. The den is both a refuge and a workspace. The couch, right, faces the TV, far right. One of the intelligent economies in the plan of the space was to use these prefabricated shelves for books in the den. Though simple, they create an organized volume with clean lines. Ken and Marc's dog, who is named Lilly, not Narcissus, takes a rest on a rug from ABC Carpet and Home.

The Hacker/Schwartz Method for Getting an Oval Rug

1. Go to your local carpet store.

2. Find a type of wall-to-wall carpet that you like.

3. Remember how much it costs per square foot.

4. On the way home, buy a big roll of cheap paper.

5. At home, roll out the paper where the rug will go. Tape, staple, and/or cut to secure the approximate desired rug area.

6. Draw a big oval on the paper that is the exact size and shape of your rug-to-be.

7. Make the oval better. Then make it perfect.

8. Figure the rug will cost the length times the width times the square-foot price of the carpet sample you picked out (even though you might be cutting away half of it to make the oval shape).

9. Add about $8 per linear foot to bind the edges.

10. Make sure the tape and/or staples are still holding.

11. Fold up your paper, which is now a maquette (you're designer!).

12. Take it to the nice person at the carpet store and place your order.

13. Wait four weeks.

14. Revel in your oval!

stopping mid-air. It's the kind of onsite accommodation and whimsy that may, one day, appear visionary.

There's do-it-yourself (DIY) for all of us, and then there's DIY for architects. An example of DIY within reach was Hacker and Schwartz's decision to go to ABC Carpet and Home, and pick a color for a rug. Then they came home, laid down some kraft paper in the living room, and sketched until they came up with the shape they wanted. They took their full-size paper maquette back to ABC, who cut the rug to match. And voilà! The perfect, albeit irregularly shaped carpet in the perfect color.

DIY for the architect was outfitting a beautiful bathroom with 100 percent Philippe Starck fixtures. You might be lucky enough to pull off these proportions and this glass-tile finish by telling your contractor what to do, but more than likely Hacker's special training was what made this so successful.

A last kind of DIY is highly questionable: Schwartz and Hacker have a tremendous collection of mid-century-modern furniture, posters, and tabletop pieces. All of terrific quality—and purchased, Schwartz asserts, well before the market caught up! One item of the collection stands out, though: a blue color-field painting on unframed canvas near their north window. Is that an Ad Reinhardt? Surely not an Ellsworth Kelly? Ryman didn't do Prussian blue—did he? It turns out that Ken and Marc felt that an Ellsworth Kelly was exactly what was needed there. But as there wasn't one available at Sotheby's that week, nor was there room in the budget for a Kelly, they needed another plan. Schwartz took $70 to Pearl Paint, bought a canvas and a can of blue paint, and made the "modern classic" they needed. Hey, if the grousing museum visitor's "four-year-old can do it," just look what a sophisticated, remorseless adult is capable of!

The furniture and lamps that Schwartz and Hacker collect are undoubtedly in their natural habitat in this apartment. The band windows, low ceilings, and molding-free walls sprang from the same sensibility that informs the entire collection. Yes, indeed, the traditional modernist idea of honesty in design is carried on throughout the whole apartment—as long as we don't think too much about a certain blue artwork.

Victoria Milne is Dwell's New York–based contributing editor.


JOYCE
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Economy
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LIFE ON THE NEW FRONTIER
TERMINAL IDENTITY
TO LOVE TO WORK
Prophets of Extremity
A J P TAYLOR
WINNING INTEGRITY
THE ROAD AHEAD
SONY
LAKELAND LANDSCAPES
Alvar Aalto

Dropouts from suburbia, the Levits have wholeheartedly embraced the look, the feel—and the relative freedom of high-rise living.

The Condo That Thinks It's a Loft

In Erica and Benjy Levit's sixth-floor apartment, you can see outside no matter where you are. The striking glass-and-concrete architecture is complemented by the Levits' enviable and eclectic collection of modern furnishings like the Mies vase, Aalto vase, and glass-topped Platner table seen here.

Erica, an editor for the magazine *Paper City*, and Benjy, a restaurateur, purchased two adjoining units in this 12-story '60s building in Houston in 1997. "Our house was adorable but very high maintenance," says Erica, "so it was very appealing to come to a high-rise." The couple hired architect David Guthrie to transform a traditional and highly compartmentalized apartment into a 2,200-square-foot loftlike space that is both elegant and easy to live in.

Guthrie transformed the apartment dramatically by stripping the existing envelope back to concrete. "The plan fell into place very easily," he explains. "We were all surprised at how quick and easy and agreeable it all was." The floor, created by pouring clear epoxy over the existing concrete, was a revelation. "The floor was a risk that paid off," says Guthrie. "It brought the place to life."

image
not
available

The absence of a bulky refrigerator gave Guthrie more freedom to design this simple and open galley kitchen. Refrigerator and freezer drawers by Sub-Zero are contained within the island. The stainless steel oven and dishwasher are by Bosch. The bar chairs are by Peter Danko. Benjy was definitely interested in a commercial kitchen, even though, as Erica laments, "We never have time to cook!"

Of the dramatic powder room, Erica explains, "I wanted it to be a sexy bathroom—that about sums it up." All three bathrooms are distinctive and meticulously crafted (Guthrie did the tile work himself and, in fact, took over for the contractor, who disappeared midway through the renovation). "It's the second-rate spaces, the ones we tend to ignore, like bathrooms and hallways, that I try to make the most interesting," he says. The sink is Guthrie's own design.

Story by Victoria Milne | Photographs by James Smolka

An Incomplete Guide to

Independent American Furniture Design

This glimpse into the world of furniture design is a thumbnail over-view of independent furniture designers working in America today. When we say independent, we simply mean not on staff at some corporation. Beyond that, the category is very broad. The profiles in this section range from the fledgling designer or architect who is trying to establish a firm to the designer/manufacturer/distributor with a factory, a line of ready-made pieces (as opposed to made-to-order), and nationwide distribution.

Dakota Jackson, an established designer and manufacturer of his own furniture line, sits on his ultrasuede upholstered Cargo loveseat. In the foreground is a DB-1 cocktail table with a glass-and-acrylic top wrapped in translucent PVC.

Dakota Jackson / New York, NY

Dakota Jackson's eponymous furniture company grew from a small, one-of-a-kind design practice in New York begun in the late 1960s. At that time, Jackson was part of an artistic community that was developing furniture-as-art for galleries in SoHo, and he gradually nurtured this start into a formal manufacturing company.

Now he has a mature firm with its own factory, national distribution through his own showrooms (as well as other outlets), and a full new line presented every year. One design alone, the Library Chair, fills libraries from coast to coast.

The majority of Jackson's work is for his own line, though he does some interiors and retail products. His products are made in volume, well distributed, and high quality. His work occupies a unique position between artisanal design and large-scale interior design.

nüf / New York, NY

Yeon Soo Son and Yoyo Wong are emerging independent design consultants. Both graduated from the product-design department of Parsons School of Design, in 1999 and 1998, respectively, with majors in furniture design.

Last year, hip New York company Dune added nüf's side table to its line of products. In May 2001, nüf's exhibit at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair attracted attention for embodying clear design ideas—like those espoused in their side table with a drawer that opens on the bias. Their lamps are repeated modules of folded foam. This delicate repetition yields a very organic, and very lovely, lamp.

Nüf design has worked on interiors as well as products, completing a residence in Manhattan and a restaurant in Shanghai. They have a number of furniture designs in development and are on the lookout for manufacturers for their new ideas.

Emerging young designers Yeon Soo Son and Yoyo Wong are surrounded by their modular pieces, including orange and white podlike Ori lamps made from foam. Behind them is a T.W.1 room divider composed of pockets useful for storing small objects or displaying flowers. p. 98

Harry Allen / New York, NY

Just a few years ago, Harry Allen was the new face on the New York design scene; today he has a diverse array of projects under his belt. His 1994 storage system, Living Systems, was a hit. Since then, his studio has been responsible for oft-published interiors, including the original Moss store in Manhattan.

It's hard to generalize about Allen's work, except to say that it's intelligent. One lamp consists of a light bulb glowing inside a foam envelope, while another has a bulb shining on a few suspended pretty things, apparently in its own little world. The manufacturer Magis is selling Allen's design for a medicine cabinet made from hygienic-mod white plastic.

His current projects include a series of store interiors in Japan, furniture for the Japanese company IDÉE, and graphics for Dom Perignon. At the end of 2001, Habitat in London launched a series of table/sideboard pieces based on a table that had been in Allen's studio for years. In the original and the Habitat versions a slim metal frame carries modular elements with different shapes, colors, and functions. Despite his collaborations with clients in Japan, Europe, and the U.S. on interiors, graphics, products, and furniture, Allen continues to utilize the one-of-a-kind work in gallery shows as a way to develop ideas.

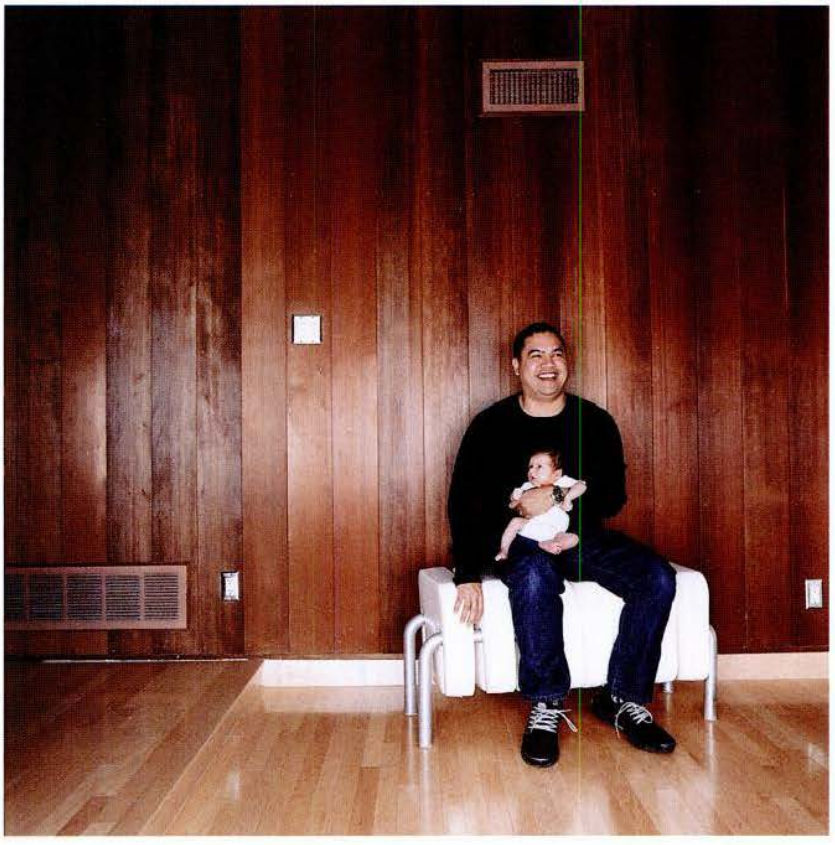
Harry Allen sits at his Living Systems table, made of aluminum and plywood veneer. The table has never been produced but it served as the inspiration for a line of modular furniture he designed for the British chain Habitat. Behind him are ideas in various stages of completion.

Michael Solis / Dallas, TX

Michael Solis showed his one-off furniture in New York for several years before selling designs to manufacturers. He moved to Dallas recently, and finds that "design is so exposed now that everyone wants to study it and do it." The furniture practice he built up in New York continues in Dallas, where he designs furnishings and environments for Neiman Marcus. A Dallas bar he designed, called Umlaut, has scenesters waiting in line for 45 minutes to get in.

One of Solis' best-known pieces is a coffee table that expands to reveal a storage space. Other pieces of his have some wit: a side table made of fused rectangular blocks, or hexagonal stools that clump together like cells in a beehive. Solis' work has been featured in exhibitions at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum and the Denver Art Museum.

"Though I can now see my work evolving," Solis says, "I'm still attracted to angles, not curves."



Michael Solis, accompanied by his "best design," the newborn Gus Rocket, sits on his second best design, the Mio bench. The cushions are made not from marshmallows but from vinyl-dipped foam, more commonly used for swimming pool floats, mounted on an aluminum frame.

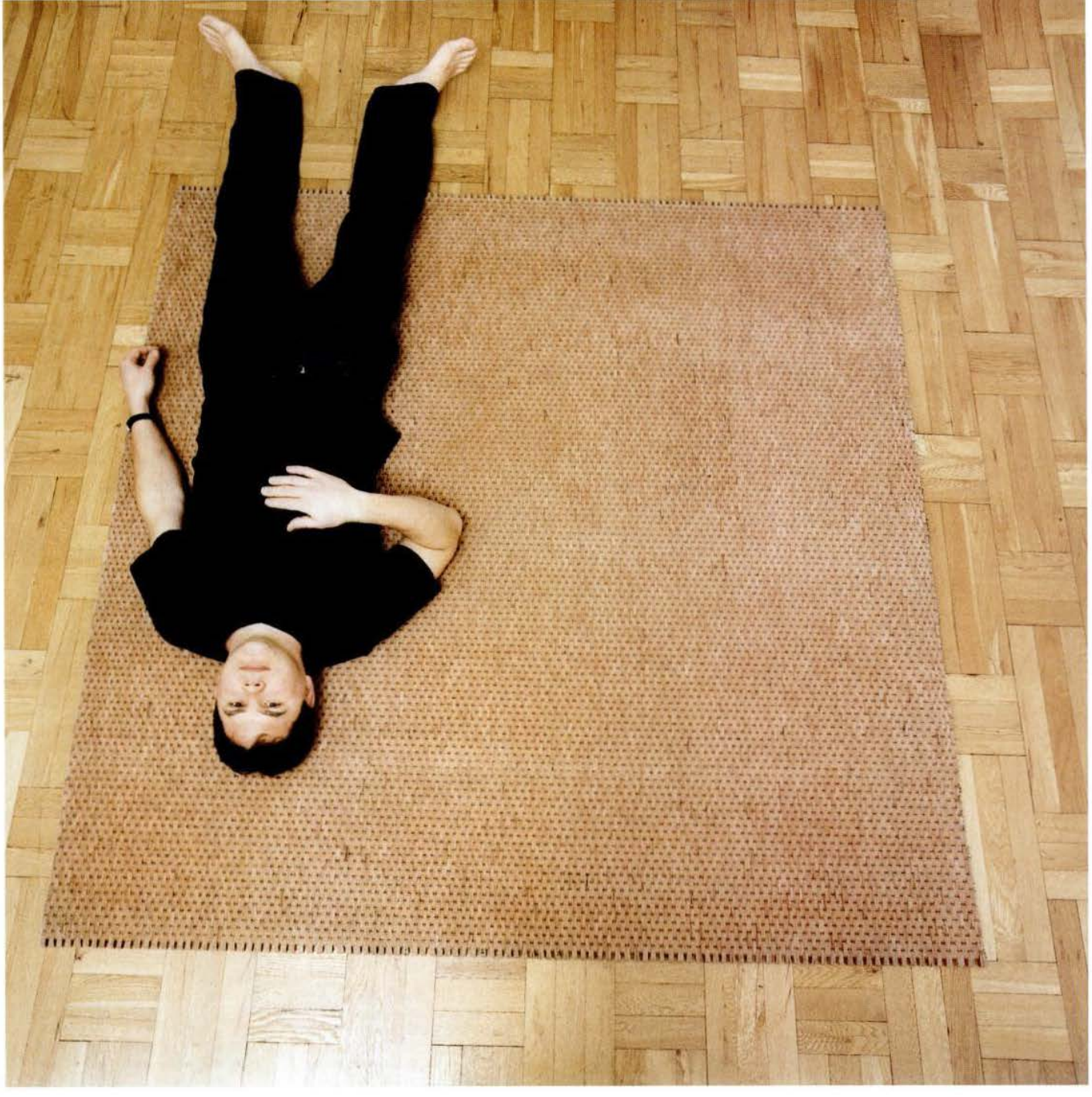
Rubilux / Geyserville, CA

Maura Harrington, head of the Geyserville, California, firm Rubilux, has designed a line of five pieces that are made to order for architects, designers, and the general public. She also works on custom projects if someone comes to her with a particular problem. This custom work has led to an upcoming addition to the line, a room divider made of Lucite vitrines.

"Independent furniture design really is a humming field," she says. "A lot of people are reacting to the Pottery Barn invasion. If you want something different, and can't afford Capellini, you can get in at this level."

Rubilux has been in business for three years, and is gradually expanding the line. Harrington's intelligent revisit to mid-century-modern furniture designs has sold well in Northern California, and is increasingly popular in Los Angeles.

Maura Harrington's Stella chaise is really more of a daybed, one that is reminiscent of a certain design by Mies van der Rohe and redolent of sessions with Freud. This one is upholstered with woven straw ("It sounds scratchy, but it's very soft," assures Harrington) and sits on a base of eastern black walnut. p. 98



Burning Relic / New York, NY

Jim Zivic is the designer and head of Burning Relic, a custom and one-off furniture studio, which until recently he shared with a partner. The signature of a Burning Relic design is the use of a raw material: rubber, coal, leather, steel. A rare upholstered piece is the Invitation Chair, which Zivic constructs, then invites a textile designer to upholster. (The current version was upholstered by Alpana Bawa, of New York.)

In recent work he carved a series of stools from solid blocks of anthracite—a.k.a. coal—and now plans to use coal bricks for interior walls. The finish ranges from chalky and rough to a spectacular polish, but every version makes you wonder: What is that stuff?

In another series he is working with a traditional manufacturer of industrial belting material. The belts, which Zivic uses for flooring and hammocks, are made of treated leather cut into tight links—it takes a designer to see the sensuous potential of this kind of standard product.

At this point, Burning Relic's work is better suited to its current custom clientele (which includes Lou Reed) than to mass production. His is the only furniture show in recent memory (in 2001, at Leslie Tonkonow Gallery) to be reviewed in the art (not design or decorative arts) section of the *New York Times*.

Jim Zivic is lying on a rug he fashioned from industrial leather link, material originally used for the transmission belts in power plants. Links of treated leather are joined by thin metal rods. This rug can roll up in Jim's head-to-toe direction but not from his right to his left.

Freecell Collective / New York, NY

Freecell Collective, whose furniture designs are an outgrowth of their work in architecture, is on the first step of the path taken by most successful independent American furniture designers. Their best-known product is Seat Storage, a wall-mounted system in which individual boxes covering a grid of shelves can be removed and used as stools. It's hard not to like the ingenious combination of versatility and attractiveness in this piece.

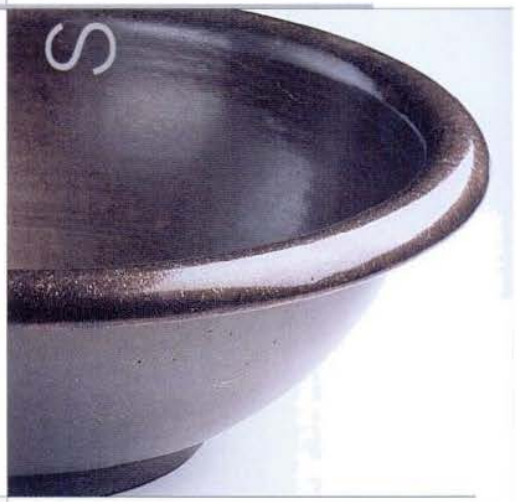
In the past year, Freecell has evolved from being the beloved moonlighting project of three recent architecture-school graduates to employing all of them full-time. In their work they are interested in finding new applications for traditional skills and technologies. They got an awning contractor to build a temporary structure for the flagship store of an alternative bookstore chain, for example, and they designed a remarkably comfortable chair made from the seats intended for the cabs of industrial equipment such as tractors and turbines.

The Freecell Collective, from left to right: John Hartmann, Troy Ostrander, and Lauren Crahan. The yellow Tractor Chair is a vinyl-coated foam cushion mounted on a continuous zinc-galvanized steel tube. The Seat Storage unit is a birch plywood shelving system, with removable foam seats painted with automobile enamel. p. 98

window

bath

sink



door

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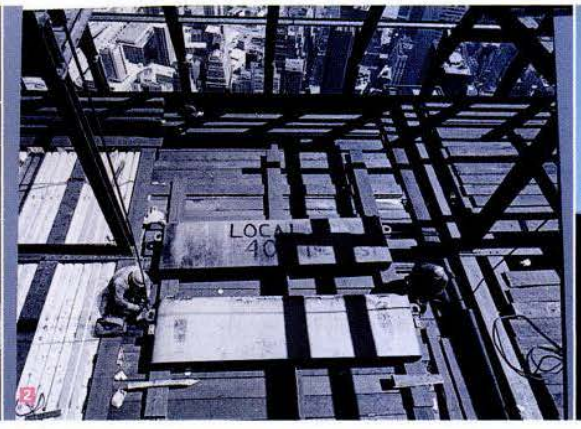
dwell

In the Modern World...

Knox Garden
Minneapolis, MN, 1996
For this public space in a transitional neighborhood, Raveevarn Choksombatchai and Ralph Nelson of Loom Design layered a warm assortment of paint colors on a maze-like geometry of salvaged fences to make them look vivacious and tempting. In the center is an apple tree surrounded by a serpentine wall—a tongue-in-cheek reference to Eden and original sin. www.loomstudio.com

PHOTOS BY CHRIS FAUST



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DDC (SAS HOTEL, 1960S), PANYNJ (WTC CONSTRUCTION), *SURVIVAL RACING CAR* BY KENJI YANOBE (3)

Exhibits

1 Arne Jacobsen: Evergreens & Nevergreens
11 Feb–2 June
Danish Design Center
Copenhagen, Denmark
Rarely photographed without a pipe and buoyant smile, Arne Jacobsen gave the impression of a ruddy-cheeked sea captain. Not exactly the super-slick image you would expect from a man who created some of the 20th century's most space-age designs—including the 1957 AJ flatware used in Kubrick's *2001* (incidentally, the only existing product used in that film). This February marked the 100th anniversary of the Danish master designer's birth, and to celebrate the DDC put together this career-spanning exhibition. The breadth of his style (mastering both the organic and rectilinear) and scope of his work (from large-scale architecture to smoked caviar labels) are mind-boggling. In a conversation with fellow Danish architect Jørn Utzon, Jacobsen explained his workload with a box of matches. Lying it flat he said, "I am working on a school," turning on its long side, "a city hall," and upright, "a hotel."
www.ddc.dk

2 WTC: Monument
5 Feb–5 May
Skyscraper Museum
New York, NY
This exhibit, parts of which were originally intended for an October 2001 display at Windows on the World, focuses on both the grand undertaking of the Towers' creation and their disastrous undoing. The display features the only surviving architect's model of the towers (which stands seven feet tall), a 1983 Port Authority documentary, *Building the World Trade Center,* and photographs from September 11th.
www.skyscraper.org

Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930
10 Mar–2 June
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Los Angeles, CA
Before European designs could just be tagged (and mimicked) as the International Style, there were Russian Constructivists, German Expressionists, French Functionalists, Italian Futurists, and Dutch De Stijl (to name a few). This exhibition of paintings, photographs, drawings, and objects reveals how Central Europe, where styles clashed and converged, was a cauldron of energetic and radical design between world wars.
www.lacma.org

The Geometry of Seeing
16 Apr–7 July
The Getty Center
Los Angeles, CA
The Renaissance invention of pictorial perspective frightened people. Just as Parisians ran for their lives the first time they saw cinematic footage of a train's arrival, 15th-century frescoes had the Florentines shivering in churches. Born from the desire to depict architecture in two dimensions, perspective evolved in many convincing forms. The Getty will explore its various illusory mechanics, with practitioners ranging from Leon Battista Alberti to Jacques-Louis David.
www.getty.org

Laboratories
18 Apr–15 Sept
Canadian Centre for Architecture
Montreal, Quebec
Montrealers—whose city hosted many New Yorkers when airplanes were unexpectedly grounded last September—are eager to stay local while exploring, architecturally, "intense human interaction." Architecture, they say, will never be the same after that Tuesday morning—or will it? Consulting curators Mark Wigley and Frederic Migayrou have approached several of Montreal's best firms, including Atelier BRAQ and Atelier Big City, to create site-specific installations that address our current situation.
http://cca.qc.ca

3 My Reality: Contemporary Art and the Culture of Japanese Animation
21 Apr–23 June
Tampa Museum of Art
Tampa, FL
From cutesy Sailor Moon and Digimon to X-rated flicks so violent and graphic American censors don't even let them through customs, Japanese animation, known to the comic-book-store guy as "manga," has never been appreciated as widely as it is today. Much

Super Structure

PHOTO BY RICHARD PAYNE (MADRID)

The Torres Puerta de Europa in Madrid, designed by Johnson & Burgee Architects in 1996, are 27-story parallelepipeds that lean toward one another at an angle of 14 degrees. But the elevators don't go up crooked. Leslie Robertson Associates, one of the world's greatest structural engineering firms (they engineered four of the world's tallest buildings, including the World Trade Center), masterminded a system to make the towers rock-solid despite their tenuous appearance. According to engineer Richard Zottola, the project director, "luckily, in Madrid, earthquakes aren't a problem. Wind was an issue as usual, but nothing compared to the lean." Each tower has at its center a vertical reinforced-concrete service core—delineated by vertical stripes, and containing the elevators, stair shafts, and mechanical shafts—from which the tilted frame, in effect, leans. Twenty-four post-tensioning cables stretch down the back sides of the glass-and-steel buildings and into the nine-meter-deep foundations, to keep the steel from deflecting under its own inclined weight. Framing the boulevard that runs exactly between them, the towers have now stood long enough so they no longer make local passersby nervous. And according to Zottola, there's no reason for worry.

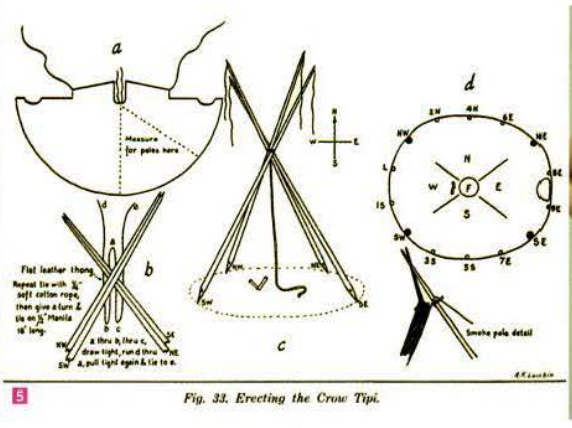


Fig. 33. Erecting the Crow Tipi.

like the effect 19th-century Japanese woodblock prints had on contemporary Western artists, this show demonstrates a pop influence on today's fine artists.
www.tampamuseum.com

New Herbarium and Sculpture from MoMA
25 Apr–31 Aug 2003
New York Botanical Garden
Bronx, NY
A Polshek Partners building is finished. It is, we hope, commensurate with the amazing world it houses: the largest collection of plant specimens and fungi in the Western Hemisphere (over 6.5 million). An enormous trellis covering one side of the new herbarium is unlikely to wear ordinary ivy. Also at the Botanical Garden this spring will be sculptures on loan from the Museum of Modern Art, carefully installed in the verdant landscape. Suggestion: a walk, then a picnic.
www.nybg.org

4 Gio Ponti
3 May–6 Oct
Design Museum
London, England
To trace modern design to one man would be folly, but with Gio Ponti, one could come close. With a 60-year career encompassing everything from architecture to editing, Ponti served, with his enthusiasm and output, as one of modern design's great propagandists. To be the founder and editor-in-chief of *Domus* would, for many, be an adequate legacy, but Ponti left much more.
www.designmuseum.org

5 Houses x Artists
8 May–23 Oct
MAK Center
Los Angeles, CA
In what sounds like a sure-fire hit for next season on House and Garden TV, but is in fact an ongoing exhibition at the Schindler House, the MAK Center unleashes 12 artists on the wacky world of designing houses. While your average architect might be as exciting as your average dentist, your average "artist" tends to be a bit more unpredictable and hubba-hubba. Many of the designs, rendered by architects OpenOffice, eschew traditional forms and functions for the conceptual.
www.makcenter.com

6 Skin: Surface, Substance, and Design
14 May–15 Sept
Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum
New York, NY
This may be the catchiest exhibit title Cooper Hewitt has ever introduced. "Skin" is design's most overtly sensual manifestation, the part that touches back if we touch. A beguiling generation of designers—not rookie, but youthfully in touch with their sexuality—monopolizes "Skin." The group includes Petra Blaisse, Marcel Wanders, Ross Lovegrove, and Greg Lynn. All kinds of objects with varying numbers of dimensions will comprise the display. Stroke, don't scratch.
www.si.edu/ndm

Metropolis in the Machine Age
28 Feb–2 Sept
Hirshhorn Museum
Washington, DC
Remember when Mrs. Hannigan tells the little orphans "you'll scrub until this dump shines like the top of the Chrysler Building"? That nugget describes what's in this exhibit—a tense panoply of the 1910s–'30s, from grubby-faced Great Depression city kids to gleaming Art Deco skyscrapers. Artists in this show, such as Vladimir Tatlin and Lewis Hine, explore social and aesthetic implications of the metropolis from the years of fascism, communism, and seminal skyscrapers.
www.hirshhorn.si.edu

Sarah Morris: Capital
22 June–8 Sept
SITE Santa Fe
Santa Fe, NM
With this 18-minute film assembled from live footage of meetings at the White House (none of them, however, involving pretzels, cigars, psychics, aliens, or Elvis) and goings-on about that low-slung and power-hungry town, Sarah Morris explores the relationships between personality, power, and place and their ramifications for citizens everywhere. Not just another sound bite.
www.sitesantafe.com

Fairs

11–12 May
Annual California Wildflower Show
Oakland Museum, Oakland, CA
www.museumca.org

18–21 May
International Contemporary Furniture Fair
Javits Center, New York, NY
www.icff.com

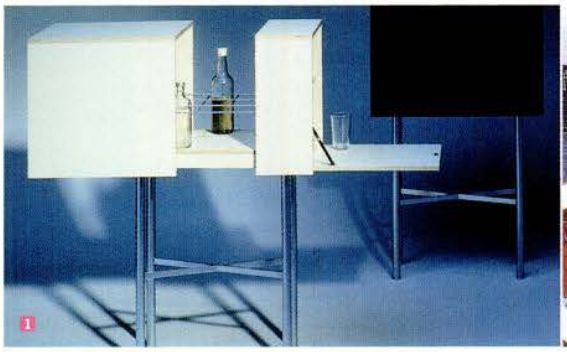
5–8 June
Royal Architecture Institute of Canada
Festival of Architecture, theme "Global City: Urban World"
Winnipeg, Manitoba
www.raic.org/eventsEarch.asp

10–12 June
NeoCon
Merchandise Mart, Chicago, IL
www.mmart.com/neocon

12–17 June
Art 33 Basel
Basel, Switzerland
www.artbasel.com

Second Chance

Before missives traveled down fiber-optic cables in flashes of light, actual messages actually traveled through tubes, in carriers, on cushions of air. In the late 19th century, cutting-edge pneumatic systems were employed for mail distribution in cities as varied as London and St. Louis. Parisians were particularly fond of their "pneus." Thanks in part to unreliable telephone service, their system of over 200 miles of tubes remained operational until 1983. While this Victorian technology may seem quaint today (and most likely is experienced only in the secondary drive-through lane of your local savings bank), a pneumatic carrier industry still thrives, and one modern-day visionary (or crackpot, depending on how you look at it) hopes to bring tube travel into the 21st century. Daryl Oster, founder and creator of Evacuated Tube Transport, foresees a network that would enable people to travel from New York to Miami in about 25 minutes (or, with a more advanced system, DC to Beijing in two hours). By removing air from the tubes (and thereby creating frictionless space) carriers would use energy more efficiently and achieve unheard-of speeds—at a lower cost and with less damage to the environment than our present travel standards. Keep dreaming, Daryl.
www.e3t.com



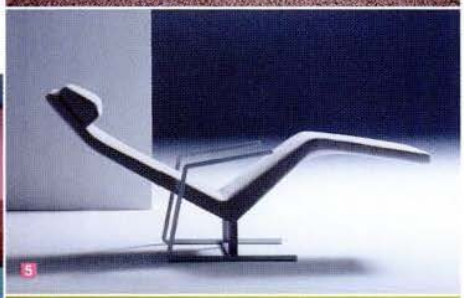


PHOTO BY TANYA ZANI ENGSTRÖM (3)

Products

1 Pandora
M2L Design
By Konstantin Grcic
Pandora's name always inspires some mischievous curiosity and thirst. True, the story has a dark side—but so, more mildly, should the home bar. Grcic (pronounced "grcic") has devised this 26-by-14-by-24-inch maple box with four metal legs to innocently adorn your living room. But when the right guest arrives, it opens to reveal your collection of spirits—yours (unlike Pandora's) will be relatively harmless.
www.m2L.com

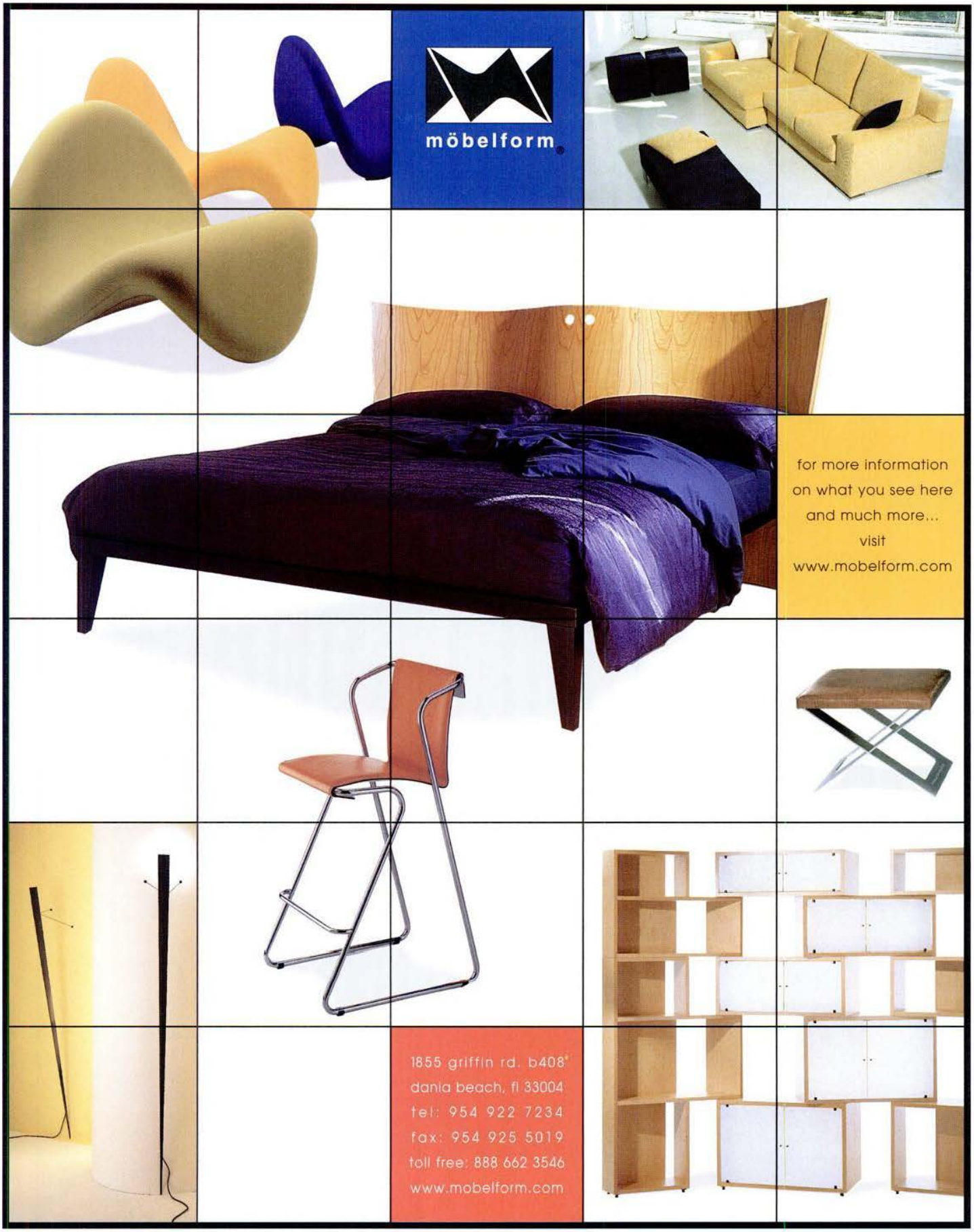
2 Halo Cards
Halo's line of note cards features hand-drawn scenes of flowers, cakes, and colorful mid-century-modern interiors. They are a whole lot nicer for your friends to find in their mailbox than another credit card offer or "Have You Seen Me?" circular.
halocards@earthlink.net
www.e-zliving.net

3 Method Home Care Products
Finally. A "cleaner way of cleaning." This easily could have wound up in the Disturbing Trend column, but then again, how can you not like a shower cleaner with the exotic scent of ylang-ylang (think Windex you could wear out on a Saturday night)? This product line hopes to take on the big boys (Clorox, Procter & Gamble) with help from the international perfumery Givaudan (who bottled Michael Jordan into a cologne) and translucent design boffin Karim Rashid, who will be responsible for future product design.
www.methodhome.com

4 Boo! Interactive Sensory Lamp/Stool
Totem Design Ltd.
By Christine Marchese and Ian Hume
The Boo! stool lights up when you sit on it—the designers say this is to remind you of Newton's 2nd Law that "every action has an equal and opposite reaction." A secret mechanism causes the bulb inside—a low-energy 20-watt compact fluorescent—to light up under your rump pressure. Boo! can also work as a lamp, table, or planter, depending on what you do with the removable cushion and the switch that controls the action/reaction light-up function.
www.totem-uk.com

5 Couch MaRe
TEAM by Wellis
Design by Christophe Marchand
Wellis AG distinguishes itself with impeccable mechanisms that would make any Rolex jealous. Their Swiss-made lounge chair looks like a graceful snowy egret. Its steel-frame seat has a sophisticated and invisible device—just a delicate nudge allows you to achieve your ideal ergonomic state.
www.roombywellis.com

6 Glob Lighting
extremorigin
With cylindrical form and rounded openings, Glob Lighting could be a relic of Lando Calrissian's Cloud City, or Billy Dee Williams' 1970s shag. The ceramic lamps might not be best for reading Joe Johnston's *Star Wars Sketchbook* by, but you could make a date with a lady, crack open a couple of Colt 45s, and turn on the romance.
www.extremorigin.com



Materialism

Bendywood

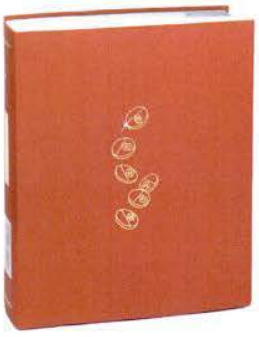
If you like it when wood splits and splinters, Bendywood is not for you. No matter how much it twists, this intensely compressed invention by Guy Mallinson hardly resists, and never breaks. Mallinson, a Brit who admits that he "really knows wood," selects the raw material for his product with the utmost care—only high-quality, even-grained, partially seasoned hardwood can become Bendywood. Planks are steamed in an autoclave until the wood's cellular walls become malleable; on a microscopic level, the cells compress like folds on a paper fan. Bendywood comes in both dowel and plank forms.
www.bendywood.com

Disturbing Trend

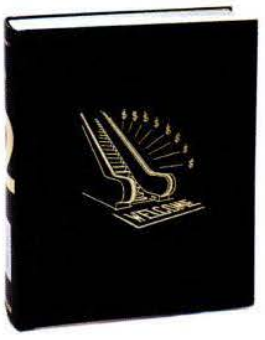
Be assured, feng shui is *not* a trend. After all, the "Chinese art of placement" was developed over 5,000 years ago and is to this day helping folks get their chi channeled in the right direction. Despite the recently published *Feng Sh*t*, a parody of countless DIY feng shui manuals (including the absurd *Feng Shui for Dummies*), the Doubletree Hotel Boston hired an interior decorator to incorporate Eastern design elements, including a fish tank with nine different colored fish, which promote a "well-balanced environment." The hotel also plans to introduce a "Find Feng Shui" scavenger hunt for "those fact-finding families who come to Boston and can't get enough of things like the Freedom Trail." Further proof of feng shui's un-trendiness: a feng shui martini lounge in San Francisco, and Allied Van Lines' new pamphlet, "Moving with Harmony—The Feng Shui Way." With tips like "clear your clutter" and "energize the front door," chi is sure to be flowing freely from coast to coast.

Books

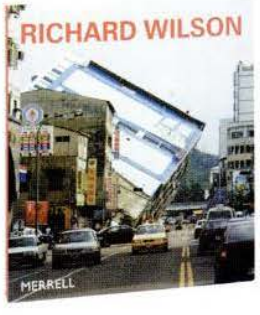
XS: Big Ideas, Small Buildings
By Phyllis Richardson
Universe, $29.95
Though the title appears cued by Rem Koolhaas' overused obsession with size acronyms (as in *S, M, L, XL*), this book is remarkably original. Richardson tours readers through an eclectic array of small shelters—in which humble proportions allow for fantastic experimentation—from treetop observation structures to floating homes to bus stops. The 40 featured architects include Hiroshi Nakao, UN Studio, and Martin Ruiz de Azua.



Project on the City 1: Great Leap Forward
Edited by Chung, Inaba, Koolhaas, and Leong
Taschen, $50
The accelerated urbanization of China's Pearl River Delta may not be as sexy a topic as shopping but it's more important—isn't it? The five cities that make up Pearl River have a population of 12 million, a number expected to triple by 2020. The myriad effects of rampant capitalist development in the region are explored in this giant red tome, the first of several spin-offs from Koolhaas-led research into the effects of modernization on the urban condition. Next up, Lagos.

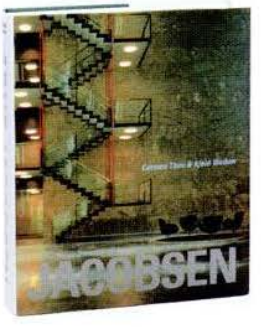


Project on the City 2: Harvard Guide to Shopping
Edited by Chung, Inaba, Koolhaas, and Leong
Taschen, $50
In future editions, they may need to add an analysis of shopping as a patriotic act post-9/11, but otherwise this encyclopedic work is—hype notwithstanding—an excellent work of scholarship and a mesmerizing visual document. At 900-plus pages, it's hard to navigate, but where else can you read about enviropreneurial marketing, Nike, the Great Exhibition of 1851, air-conditioning, and Adolph Loos all in one place?



Richard Wilson
By Michael Archer, Simon Morrisey, Harry Stocks
Merrell Publishers, $39.95
Sump pumps, swimming pools, gallery windows, derelict trailers, filing cabinets, I-beams, and the gamelan—these are just some of the elements that make up British artist Richard Wilson's quirky chemistry set. With this detritus Wilson conjures up impactful, often startling installations in gallery spaces, parks, billboards, and abandoned buildings. This new monograph provides a compelling visual record of over 50 of the two-time Turner Prize nominee's unique installations.

Collapsible: The Genius of Space-Saving Design
By Per Mollerup
Chronicle Books, $24.95
What do Swiss Army knives and blow-up dolls have in common? They're both collapsible, of course. Danish designer Per Mollerup explains that collapsibles are "smart man-made objects with the capacity to adjust in size to meet a practical need." Yet this simple definition belies the complexity of the ingenious, often brilliant designs presented here, which run the gamut from umbrellas to newspapers, dog leashes to convertible tops, rubber bands to room dividers—everything and anything that folds out, up, or in.



Arne Jacobsen
By Carsten Thau & Kjeld Vindum
Arkitektens Forlag/Danish Architectural Press, $69
Further celebrations of Jacobsen's 100th anniversary in the land of saga blue, Legos, and Hans Christian Andersen include the publishing of this tome—the first English-language volume to completely document his distinguished career. From his naughty school days (with classmates, he commandeered a steam locomotive in the middle of the night), to photographic studies of his SAS Hotel from different locations and times of day, to the evolution of his chair designs, highlights include both the architectural and anecdotal.

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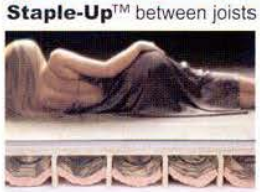

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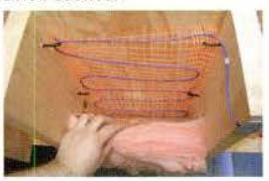

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Story and Photos by Jeff Koehler

Barcelona: Gaudi Was Just The Beginning

In 1999, the city of Barcelona was awarded a gold medal for its architecture. With projects in the works from Rogers, Nouvel, Hadid, and Perrault, it seems poised for another.

Antoni Gaudí was fatally run down by a tram in 1926, leaving unfinished his **Sagrada Família,** the grand, overwrought temple whose free-flowing lyrical rhythms occupied much of the Catalan architect's career. What a shock to realize that Mies van der Rohe's **Barcelona Pavilion** G was built just three years later. This early landmark work of Mies', with its reductive use of materials and interplay of planes on a formal grid, went largely unnoticed and was promptly dismantled. (It was rebuilt in 1986.)

Modernism got its true start in Barcelona with a plan to completely reorganize the city along utopian lines. Led by a group of rationalist Catalan architects called GATCPAC, working in collaboration with Le Corbusier, the radical plan was never realized, and GATCPAC architects completed only a handful of works before the Spanish Civil War interrupted their progress. The finest example is the L-shaped **Dispensario Antituberculoso** (1934–38), finished not long before Barcelona fell to the Fascists. Josep Lluís Sert, Josep Torres, and Juan Subirana mixed the vocabulary of the International Style with vernacular Catalan ceramic tiles and brick vaulting.

After the war, Franco used the 16th-century Escorial outside Madrid as the basis for a reactionary, nationalistic style. But Barcelona wasn't interested in trying to remake that image. Catalan architects struggled until 1950 to get new building under way, and during the culturally isolated years that followed, they expressed dissent by looking toward European Rationalists as they filled private commissions for apartment blocks in the city and houses on the Costa Brava.

The dominant mid-century figure was Jose Antonio Coderch. His finest accomplishments include the angular, precise **Apartment Building** (1951–54) in the fishing community of Barceloneta; the **Trade Buildings** (1966–68), a set of Miesian glass towers reinterpreted in a curvy, curtainlike wrap; and the isolated-feeling **Instituto Francés** (1972–75), which purposefully rejected its immediate surroundings. Xavier Busquets' **Col.legi d'Arquitectes** (1958–62) similarly ignored its neighbors, specifically the Gothic cathedral in front of it. Jutting from the base of the towering metal structure is a cement trapezoid covered with a Picasso graffito.

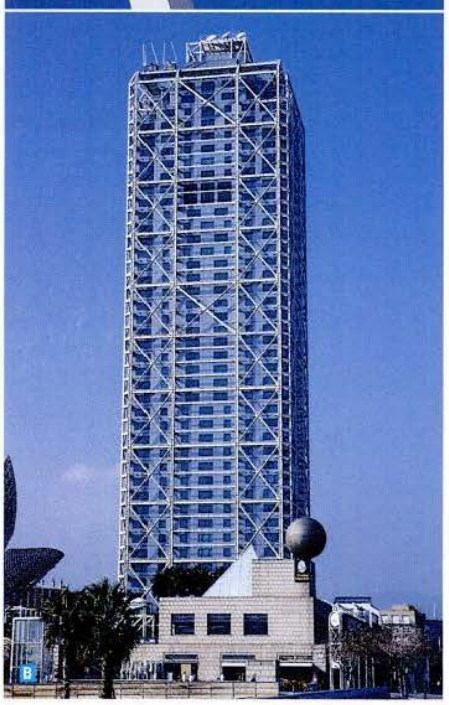
Under Franco's dictatorship, the Catalan language and any expressions of its culture were forbidden. When he died in 1975, the reinstated Catalan government began to rebuild Barcelona by commissioning public works from prominent architects. Perhaps most welcomed were new public spaces—which Franco had not allowed for fear of creating spots for dissidents to gather. The most celebrated of these was Helio Piñón Pallarés and Albert Viaplana's **Plaça dels Països Catalans** (1981–83), a minimalist "hard square" that replaced traditional foliage with a curving metal pergola and high canopy. But in this city that aches for green spots, it feels like a missed opportunity. The *plaça* sits largely empty and unused, except by a handful of young skateboarders.

The '80s were a fertile time for Barcelona design. Political freedom meant creative freedom. As the city shook off its dictatorial past, the decade's two finest structures intimated what was soon to come. Santiago Calatrava's cable-strung **Bach de Roda Felipe II Bridge** (1984–87) D introduced the sleek, white, high-tech look, while Esteve Bonell and Francesc Rius' round, taut, and balanced **Velódromo** (1983–84) broke ground for the city's important sporting future.

Nothing elicits as much passion and Catalan national pride as the city's century-old *futbol* club, Barça. When Barcelona was awarded the 1992 Summer Olympics, these two forces were tapped to create an event that flashed verve, vitality, and an independent spirit at the world. The Games were also used as a pretext to make a lasting transformation of the city, and in the build-up to the competition, a scrubbed, rebuilt, and, in parts, new city grew out of an epic-sized construction site. Drawing on a long list of local and international architects, the building plans were bold and adventurous—perhaps too adventurous, considering that some projects weren't finished until recently.

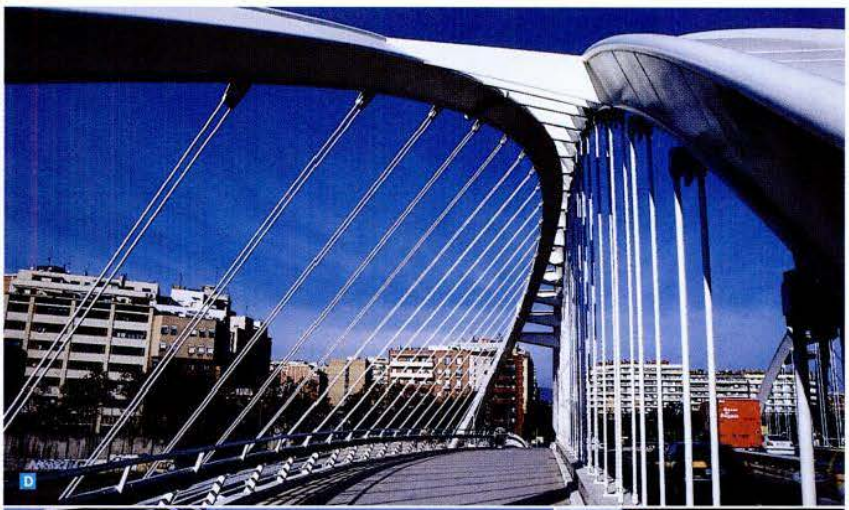
The Olympic building was largely concentrated in two areas of the city. Many of the major sporting events were held in the Olympic Ring on Montjuïc, overlooking the city and sea. Of the new venues, Arata Isozaki's **Palau Sant Jordi** (1988–91), a multipurpose sports arena with concert-hall acoustics, remains the most steadily in use. But the hill's dominant and most dazzling structure is Calatrava's graceful **Communications Tower** A, a 446-foot-tall white sci-fi jag based on a kneeling human bearing an arc with open arms. It faces Norman Foster's super-high-tech **Collserola Telecommunications Tower** (1990–92) across the valley. Foster used minimum structure for maximum effect: A 15-foot-diameter shaft holds up the 945-foot-

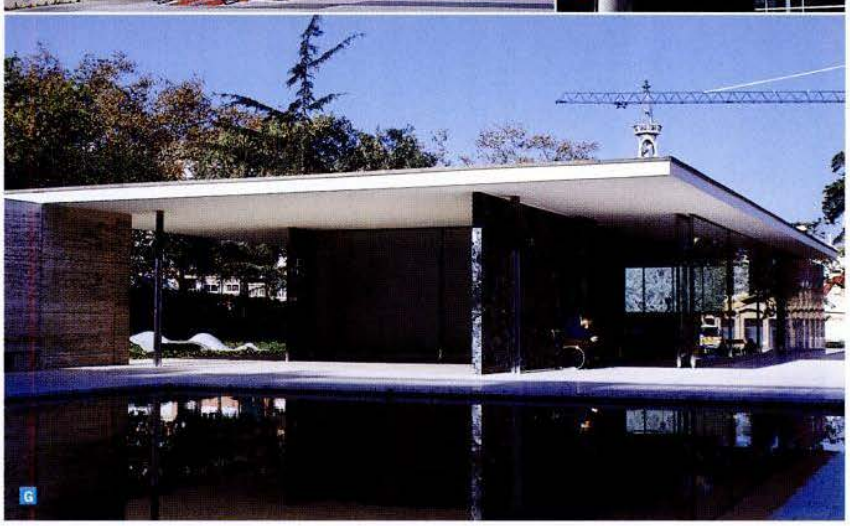

A


B

Dine Like a Catalonian


C





high tower with a pregnant mid-section of curving, triangular glass panes.

More transforming for Barcelona was the Vila Olímpica, a popular new neighborhood built out of an obsolete industrial zone at the edge of the city center. It included 2,000 Olympic Village apartments (1985–92), which were sold off once the Games finished, as well as a string of curving beaches, a pleasure-craft port, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's plush 44-story glass-and-steel-girder **Hotel Arts** B (accented by Frank Gehry's immense, reflective-mesh bronze fish E), and dozens of bars and restaurants. The refurbished area that extends from here across the city's downtown seafront to I. M. Pei and Henry Cobb's boat-shaped **World Trade Center** (1991–99) is so well integrated that it's hard to believe that Barcelona didn't always face and embrace the sea.

While the remaining Olympic projects finally were being completed—including Ricardo Bofill's glassy, neoclassic **Teatre Nacional de Catalunya** in 1997 and Rafael Moneo's gorgeous, voluminous **Auditori** beside it in 1999—a stronger emphasis was placed on renovating the old city. Vanguard amongst such projects was Richard Meier's gleaming white and glass **Museu d'Art Contemporani** (1987–95) F. Hidden in the center of a honeycomb of lanes and alleys, it offers art along with a rare open space in the poor Raval neighborhood.

The city's building momentum refuses to abate. Barcelona throbs with activity as it incorporates new structures, new urban spaces, and waves of immigration. The cafés are crowded, the streets hectic, people and mopeds come from every direction, and construction sites abound. Top-tier architects, including Jean Nouvel, Dominique Perrault, Richard Rogers, Zaha Hadid, and Herzog & de Meuron, all have projects in the works. This flourishing architectural renaissance was recognized in 1999, when Barcelona was awarded the RIBA Gold Medal—the first ever for a place instead of a person. ■

Jeff Koehler is a writer who divides his time between Barcelona and San Diego.

Food is a main ingredient of Catalan life, a substantial part of, well, nearly everything. Restaurants and cafés have long had an integral role in a social culture where few things are done alone (including designing buildings!), and considerable time is spent meeting, mingling, and having a *copa* or a meal with friends. Such spots have long integrated high design with great food. **Flash-Flash** C, an ultra-modish 1970 eatery offering 49 variations of Spanish *tortillas* (omelets), is a paradigm of this still-raging tradition. My favorite is **Tragaluz** (1989–90), justifiably celebrated for its dominating skylight, Javier Mariscal graphic designs, and excellent Mediterranean dishes. But many of the city's best restaurants are older, well-established places with an authentic, rustic feel. **Casa Leopoldo** seems to have changed little since it opened in the Raval in 1929. It serves traditional Catalan cooking at its finest. Another longtime Barcelona classic is the prestigious **Agut d'Avignon,** offering surprising and tasty modern twists on Catalan and Spanish dishes. **Can Majó,** in the fishing community of Barceloneta (near Coderch's great apartment building), specializes in seafood, and is a favorite of the city's culinary community. For a pre-dinner drink, the small, 1930s Cuban-style Art Deco **Boadas Cocktail Bar** along the Ramblas is a perennial pick. Miguel Boadas opened it in 1933 after learning to shake and stir at the legendary Floridita Bar in Havana. —J.K.

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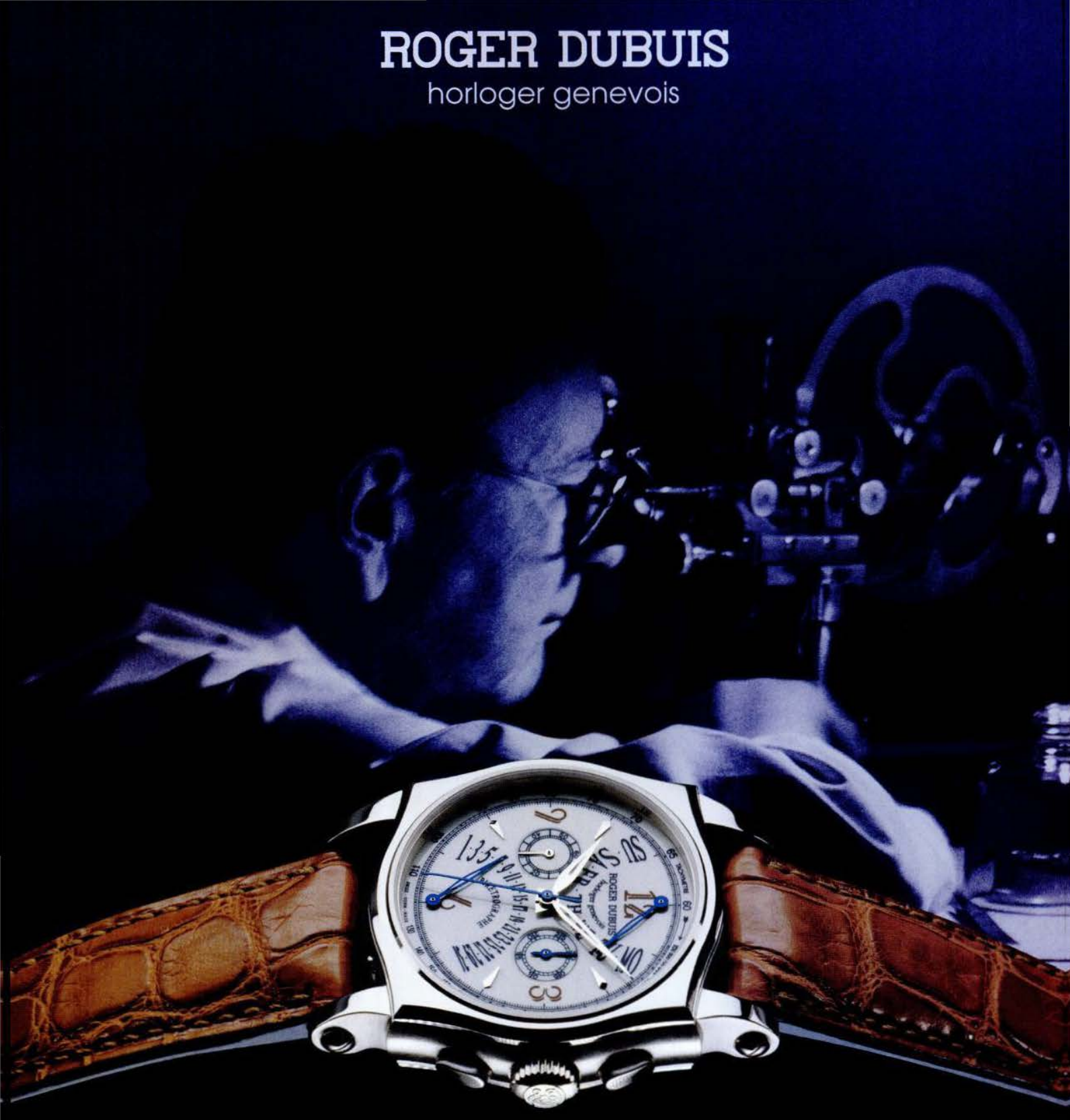

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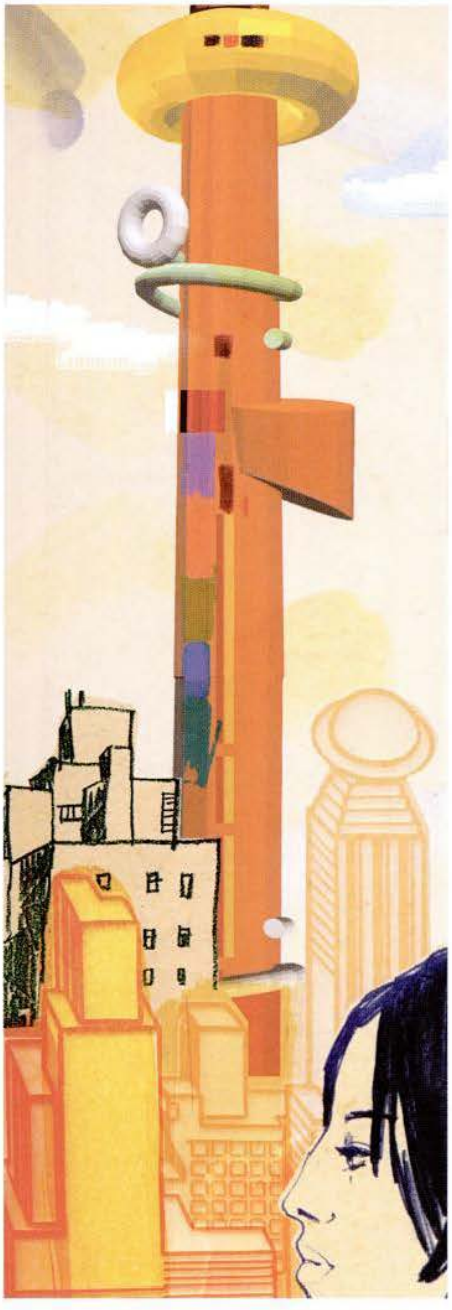
The Mile-High Tower

Why the dream of cramming an entire city sausage-style into a single building never works out, but more modest skyscrapers (see the following pages) do.



The romantic version, the infinite tower that is like a city squeezed sausage-style into one endlessly vertical container, never gets built. Frank Lloyd Wright's 1956 Mile High Illinois, a contradictory piece of architecture meant to transport elements of his earth-hugging Prairie Style heavenward, never left the drawing board. And the more recent Millennium Tower by Sir Norman Foster, a hyper-elongated tepee that was supposed to rise some 170 stories out of Tokyo Bay, containing all the attractions and amenities of a Ginza or Times Square, is on indefinite hold.

Money is the usual reason. There is nothing especially economical about building so high. At some point, the cost of engineering and systems, of things like making the toilets flush properly floor after floor after floor, outstrips the value of putting so much real estate on so little land.

So, when a corporation or developer decides to build super tall, it's usually because they want the attention. The visionary skyscraper as total city seems predicated on the idea that the tall building needs to function like a spaceship, sheltering its occupants from a hostile outside environment, catering to their every need. We've lately learned that tall buildings can't really protect us from determined acts of hostility. And, at the moment, no one especially wants the kind of attention an iconic skyscraper brings. Still, the dream persists.

For the better part of the 20th century, the skyscraper was an American obsession. Now, most of us—with the notable exception of Donald Trump—have gotten past the need to demonstrate our prowess by building extra tall. Now the Asians have caught the bug. In Japan, the Takenaka Corporation, which bills itself as the "largest construction R&D laboratory in the world," has been building condominium towers like the relatively stubby 55-story Elza, completed in 1998, which offers shopping, indoor "Sky Pocket" playgrounds, and children's libraries adjacent to elevator lobbies on various floors. The vision is condominium as vertical town. But Takenaka seems driven to take the idea of the self-contained community, the high-rise Biosphere, higher. The engineering firm has proposed showstopper projects such as Sky City 1000, a kilometer-high tower made of "concave dish-shaped aerial bases called 'Space Plateaus' stacked one upon the other." According to the firm's website, the building would house 35,000 people and another 100,000 would work there. Vast plazas in the center of each "Plateau" would offer a facsimile of outdoor space, with greenery and tennis courts surrounded by rings of buildings within buildings.

The Sky City concept, coming as it does from a major Japanese construction and engineering firm, has an air of plausibility. But it bears a striking resemblance to less-believable projects, like one proposed by Arcosanti architect Paolo Soleri. Soleri has been laboring for over 30 years in the Arizona desert, building his dream city—an amorphous blob that is more horizontal than vertical, that looks more like old album-cover art than architecture. He also longs to build upward. He has proposed a kilometer-high "Hyper Building" that, in theory, would be planted in the desert halfway between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, where it would be served by high-speed magnetic levitation trains.

"The form of the Hyper Building is an analogy," writes Soleri. "It explores the difference between male and female and the possibilities inherent in Eros." This towering hermaphrodite would, of course, encompass all the facilities of a city, from homes and offices to day-care centers and parks.

The impulse to build mile-high or, in our more modest metric era, kilometer-high towers is, it seems, an enduring phenomenon. Sadly, built reality is almost always less thrilling than architectural dream.

Here in America, the tallest mixed-use tower is Chicago's John Hancock Building, where 71 floors of condos top 29 floors of office space. On 44 there's a dry cleaner, shoe shine, florist, and perfectly nice upscale supermarket. The views beyond the rows of canned beans and paper towels are, admittedly, extraordinary, but "Big John" doesn't quite have the pizzazz that Sir Norman Foster or the Takenaka Corporation or even Paolo Soleri bring to their conceptual towers.

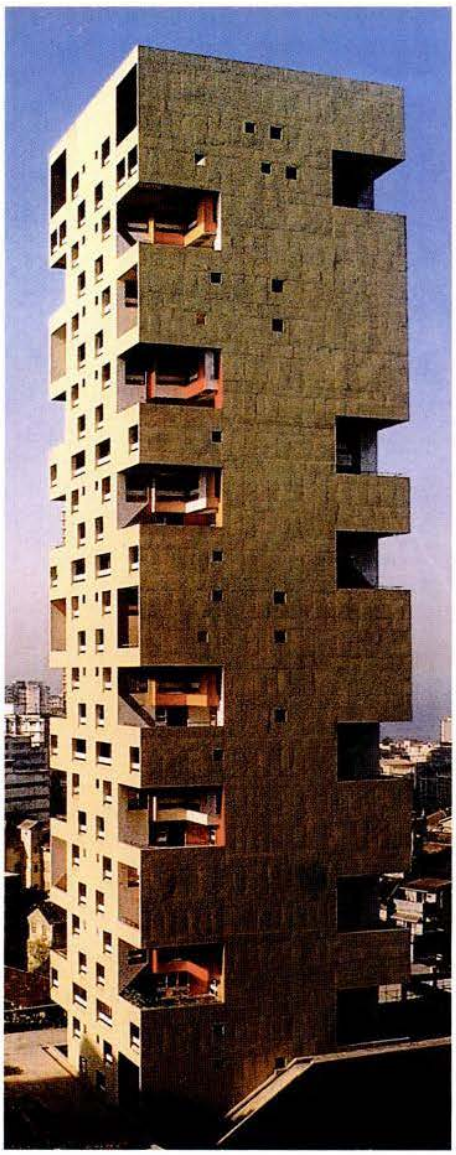
Somewhere between the visionary fantasy of the self-contained, monolithic city and the banality of developers' expectations and desires, the dream gets a little flaccid.

A few years ago, the observation deck atop Two World Trade Center was renovated and transformed into a themed attraction. The theme was New York City, the city right outside the glass. There was a fake brownstone stoop that you could sit on, a snack bar tricked out as a subway car, and a simulation ride where you could fly an imaginary helicopter through the canyons of New York's man-made topography. In some strange, wrongheaded way, it was a literal interpretation of the skyscraper as the container of an entire city.

But this now lost tourist attraction actually points up the contradiction of trying to stuff an entire city inside a building. The problem being that this obsessive inwardness isn't the true purpose of tall buildings. Tall buildings are extroverts. They are about seeing and being seen. They are about the view out from the inside and the place the building creates for itself on the skyline. Any attempt at building a microcosmic city within the walls of any skyscraper is always a little sad, a little underwhelming, because it's a sideshow. The primary relationship in the life of any tall building—whether it's a full kilometer high or a mere 100 stories—is with the city all around it. ▸▸

Tall is Beautiful

Le Corbusier's "City of Tomorrow" was a parade of identical, boxy residential skyscrapers. The real city of tomorrow is much more fun.



Kanchanjunga

Architect: Charles Correa

Location: Bombay, India

Completed: 1983

Height / Floors: 275 ft / 27

In Bombay, India's sprawling yottalopolis (computer nerds know that's really big), a building has to be oriented east-west to catch the much-needed sea breeze. Unfortunately, it also catches heavy equatorial sun and monsoon rains. Correa resolves these problems by adopting elements of the classic bungalow, like shade-providing balconies and veranda cutaways, to work for a high-rise structure.

Highcliff

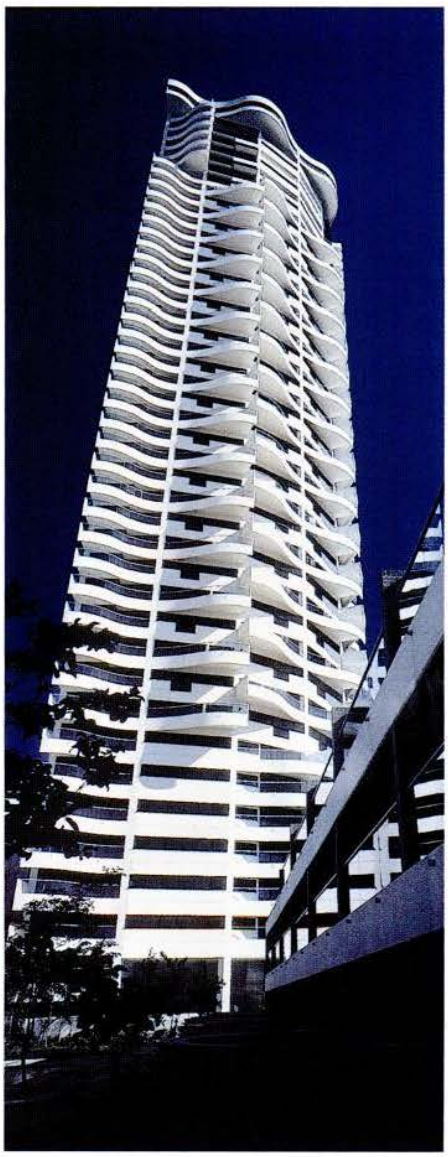
Architect: DC Lau and NC Man

Location: Hong Kong, China

Completed: under construction

Height / Floors: 827 ft / 73

Skyscrapers are a way of life in Hong Kong. How else could over two million residences be crammed into such a tight spot? The Highcliff, with its razor-clam elevation and twin-ellipse plan (each floor houses just two units), is the tallest residential structure thus far constructed. The curved, glazed panels of curtain-wall glass, which will withstand extreme wind-load pressure, are unique to this structure.



Horizon Apartments

Architect: Harry Seidler and Associates

Location: Sydney, Australia

Completed: 1998

Height / Floors: 466 ft / 43

Just slightly taller than Sydney's Harbour Bridge (which is far easier to ascend by foot, unless you're Alain Robert, France's skyscraper-climbing "spider-man"), the Horizon's crisp, white, and vaguely nautical design give it the appearance of an architectural yeoman-purser for the cruise ship that is life in Sydney. Visitors are greeted with a lobby installation by Sol LeWitt.

PHOTO BY SAM GRAWE (EICHLER SUMMIT)

Eichler Summit

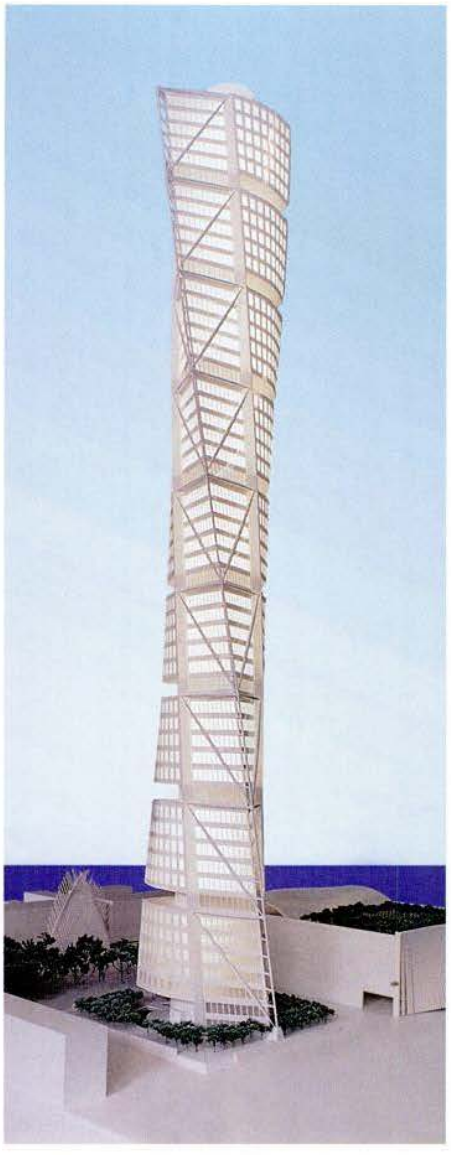
Architect: Neil Smith / Tibor Fesces

Location: San Francisco, CA

Completed: 1965

Height / Floors: 360 ft / 33

Building the Summit put Joseph Eichler firmly in the red. Two massive concrete piers frame cantilevered floors, which increase in size, giving the penthouses (both owned by former Secretary of State George P. Shultz) more real estate. Public dismay with the building, which rises 600 feet above sea level, led to new zoning for buildings atop hills. Multiple renovations—bay windows in one case—marr the original modernist spirit.



Turning Torso

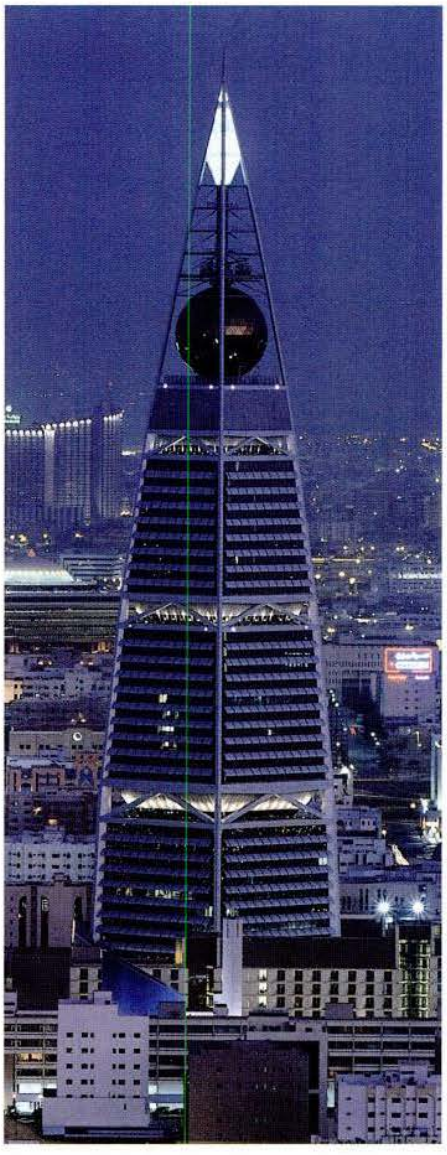
Architect: Santiago Calatrava

Location: Malmö, Sweden

Completed: under construction

Height / Floors: 613 ft / 45

Turning Torso is the visual centerpiece of Malmö's bo01 City of Tomorrow, an ecologically sustainable urban renewal/housing project. The design, which evokes an ice skater about to launch into a triple lutz, evolved from one of Calatrava's sculptures. In fact, it's being billed as a public work of art—albeit one with 405 flats.



Al Faisaliah Complex

Architect: Sir Norman Foster

Location: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

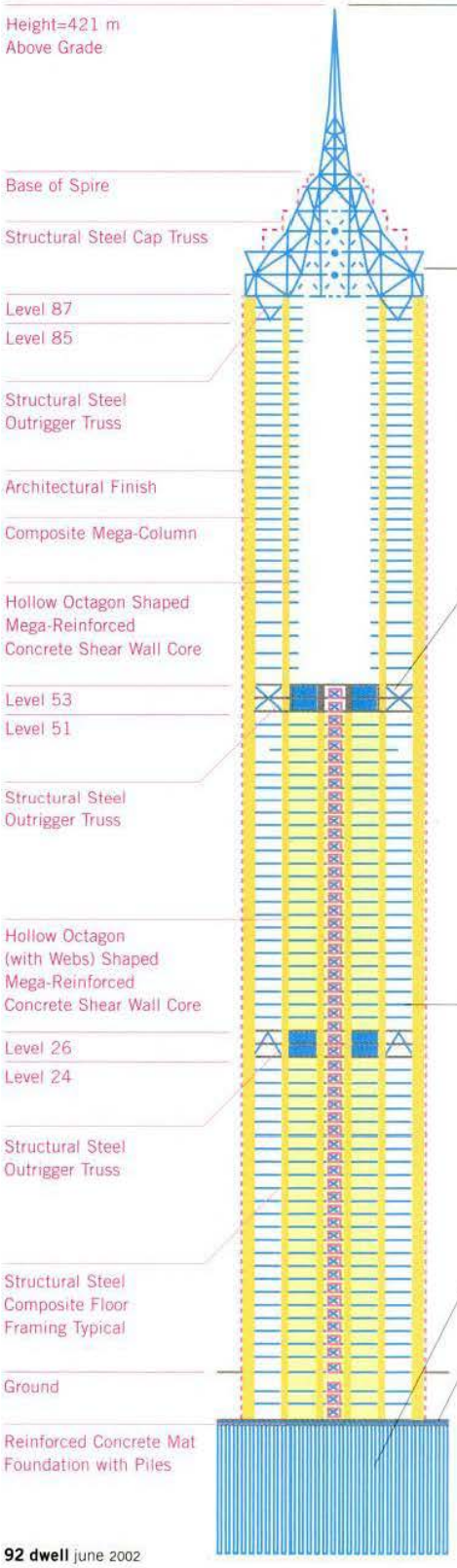
Completed: 2000

Height / Floors: 876 ft / 30

Commissioned by the Saudi royal family and constructed by the Binladin Group, the Al Faisaliah Center was Riyadh's first building to exceed 14 floors (a new city bylaw was enacted to enable the construction). Looking like a bloated Transamerica Pyramid, the complex contains offices, a hotel, and seven floors of residences, topped by a three-story geodesic sphere that houses a restaurant.

The World's Third Tallest Building

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill has long been known for creating some of the world's most recognizable and tallest structures including the 88-story Jin Mao Tower, the tallest building in China, with three million square feet of offices, retail units, and a hotel. The 1381-feet-tall structure was completed in 1998. Adrian Smith, the building's lead designer, and Mark Sarkisian, who headed the structural engineering team, agreed to give Dwell a structural tour of the Jin Mao Tower.



The scale really doesn't make any difference in terms of level of completion and detail in doing an 88-story building versus an 11-story building. Many of the components are the same—it's the concept that's different. You have a lot more people in an 88-story building.

The concept was to create not only a modernist interpretation of a traditional form—the Chinese pagoda—but segments within the form that respected the eight, which in Chinese culture represents good fortune.

The trusses act like a lever. For example, when you walk with a cane, the cane is on the outside and it's the composite column, the core is your body, and your arm is the truss. The way it works is that as your body moves, you use your arm to brace yourself by leaning on that outside crutch, which in turn stabilizes you.

By introducing pins into the truss, the trusses were able to move like mechanisms over a long period of time during construction. We put the trusses in place, we put the pins in place, and they act like joints in your arm or wrist, and they just moved freely. After the weight of the building was on, we put all the bolts in.

Once we got on to repetitive floors, we could build a floor every three days. It went very, very quickly.

The mat, being 16,500 cubic meters of concrete, was one of the biggest single pours ever done.

We designed a cooling system in the mat, because when concrete hydrates a chemical change creates heat, and if the heat in the concrete gets very, very high, it boils the water within the concrete and could actually change the chemistry and strength of the material. You can't afford a mistake.

It has a bit of mystery about it, when you compare this to the other tall buildings we've done, like the Hancock Center in Chicago, where you know that there's something happening on the outside of the building. You see an exterior bracing that allows you to understand a bit about how it works, whereas Jin Mao is a bit more mysterious.

The base of the building is 16 stories tall; as you proceed up, the segments decrease by one-eighth, or two stories. The next segment is 14, then 12, 10, and 8. Once you're at the eight-story segment, the building reduces by one-eighth, or one story, until you reach the very top, which is the 88th floor. And if you take all those segments, they add up to 88.

They built it the way we drew it and that's very rare in the office-building world these days.

Every service element is in the center core—elevators, washrooms, mechanical rooms—and that's perfect because all the viewing areas are now on the exterior.

We used a series of piles below a four-meter-thick reinforced-concrete mat—which acts as a transition between the tower structure and the foundation piles. The piles are made of steel, about three feet in diameter, and sink almost a football field below the surface.

Because there's no bedrock for any reasonable distance, we just rammed hollow pipes into the sand, creating high friction that locks the piles. That got us through to the soft soil, with the superstructure on top.

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Arachno à Go-Go

From the living room of an apartment on the 51st floor of the John Hancock Building in downtown Chicago, the spectacular views of Lake Shore Drive and Lake Michigan are unimpeded—almost. A closer look reveals wispy webs and the frighteningly large, hairy bodies of *Araneus sericatus,* or high-rise spiders.

Immigrants from rural Michigan, the high-rise spiders make their way up the skyscrapers of downtown Chicago by surfing the southwesterly winds blowing across Lake Michigan. Genetically programmed to hitch a ride on the breeze while just days old, the spiders' progress is halted by the skyscrapers fronting the lake. "Spiders balloon from place to place, that's how they get around," says Louis Sorkin, an arachnologist at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. "The convection currents in the air deposit them on the buildings. It is not a naturally occurring transition, they are just blown right up there." Many stories up, the usual threats quickly disappear and feasts of midges, mayflies, and the occasional yellow jacket or mosquito await.

But the spiders are not completely free from predators. With no bushes or trees in which to hide, they are an easy snack for the larger winged and feathered creatures that have been known to make their way up to such heights. In these instances the spiders' only chance of survival is to take the same route used to avoid weekly window washings: abandoning their webs and squeezing, abdomen and all, into any available cracks and crevices until the coast is clear. While window washers give themselves away by vibrating the structure ever so slightly, a bird's aerial sneak attack often outstrips the spiders' ability to escape.

But even as a complex ecological system adapts to life hundreds of feet above the ground, the high-rise spiders are a good bet to continue to rule the vast, majestic skyline. "Spiders are survivors," writes Stoy Hedges of Terminix International Pest Control in Memphis, Tennessee, in his treatise on controlling spider populations. "The architecture of their bodies, their solitary nature, and their ability to adapt make them a formidable adversary to control in and around structures. They are constructed by nature to withstand adverse environmental conditions."

PHOTO BY SAM GRAWE & TANYA ZANI ENGSTRÖM

Lofty Tomes

Mies van der Rohe: Lake Shore Drive Apartments
By Werner Blaser
Birkhäuser, 1999
Gorgeous black-and-white photographs document the evolution of Mies' Lake Shore Apartments, which were among the first modern residential skyscrapers. Though they sway in the wind and are hard to heat, the stately 26-story steel-and-glass towers are no less impressive today than when they were built in 1948–50.

The Tall Building Artistically Reconsidered: The Search for a Skyscraper Style
By Ada Louise Huxtable
Pantheon, 1986
"The tall building is the landmark of our age," Huxtable wrote twenty years ago—a statement that has perhaps never rang truer than it does today. The *Wall Street Journal* architecture critic thoughtfully examines the skyscraper in the context of art and politics, business and economics.

Building the Empire State
Edited by Carol Willis
Norton & Company, 1998
Complete with meticulous typewritten descriptions of nuts, bolts, stonecutters and pipe fitters, these reproduced construction notes provide enough information to build another Empire State. Or not. This book explores the realities behind a miracle: that New York City's tallest building was completed within just 20 months.

The Metropolis of Tomorrow
By Hugh Ferris
Princeton Architectural Press, 1986
If only to enjoy Hugh Ferris' atmospheric drawings and passionate descriptions of the metropolis experience, this book—a tasteful 1986 reprint of Ferris' 1929 manifesto—merits room on the bedside table. His insights on the future of "tower-buildings" are a revelation.

Story and Photo by Camilo José Vergara

Skylines

In 1907, Henry James commented that Manhattan skyscrapers looked "like extravagant pins in a cushion already overplanted, and stuck in as in the dark, anywhere and anyhow." James was in the minority in his dislike for the new shape of the city. Skylines attract many admirers, who are awed by their size, their fanciful forms, and the power they represent. To those immigrating from Europe, New York's concentration of skyscrapers announced a new world. And to millions of ordinary people, these buildings speak of wealth and immense possibilities.

The Sears Tower and the Hancock Building rise above the cornfields of the Midwest. Viewed from the freeways on the way downtown, Los Angeles seems to grow out of the concrete. And approaching New York City from the south, a traveler sees the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, and, until recently, the World Trade Center Towers standing over the rooftops of Jersey City and Bayonne. Our perception of skylines is a dynamic process. As one nears the downtown, buildings become bigger and gain substance and definition. Eventually, the tops of the structures vanish and the skyline disappears.

Skylines grow organically and express no one person or institution's point of view. Planning officials in Chicago favored picturesque sky-scrapers. In New York City, zoning laws enacted in the 1920s for the purpose of preventing the streets from becoming dark canyons have had a lasting effect: skyscrapers shaped like ziggurats so that sunlight can penetrate below. And in Philadelphia, until the 1980s, buildings could not be taller than the hat adorning William Penn's likeness atop City Hall.

Typically, if a city replaced a huge building, it did so with an even larger one. The first exception occurred in Detroit in the 1990s, when the city began flattening its skyline by demolishing derelict skyscrapers, leaving empty lots or erecting parking garages in their place. Detroit has an extraordinary collection of high-rises with trees growing on their roofs. They represent a shame in the eyes of the city establishment, but are a source of wonder and delight for visitors inspired by the mystery of these man-made mountains.

The skyline is collectively owned, but people envision them according to their own personal experience. In the ghetto, muralists use blackened skylines as backdrops for their memorial walls. And suburbanites who may otherwise feel little allegiance to the central city say, "I live in New York" or "I live in Boston," because strangers will recognize these cities, partly from their skylines having appeared in movies and television and on postcards.

In the 95 years since James' comment, the randomly distributed "pins" have grown taller, and huge, boxy new skyscrapers have filled the spaces in between. Transcending social class, the skyline is not just an icon for tourists but the most pervasive symbol of the place we inhabit. ■

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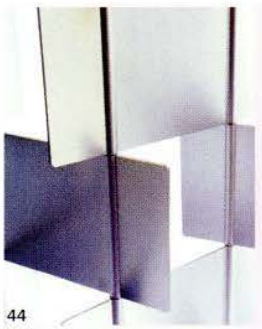

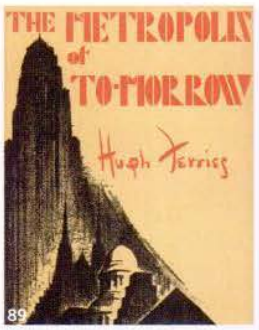

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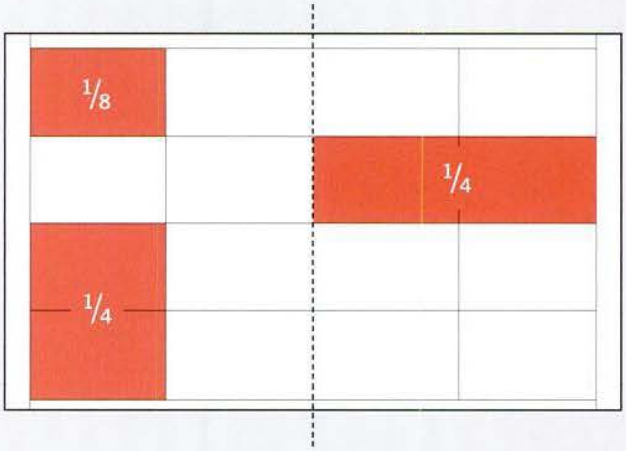

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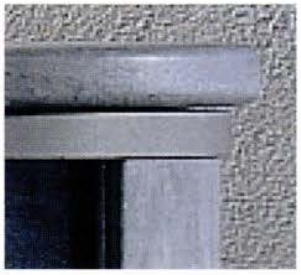

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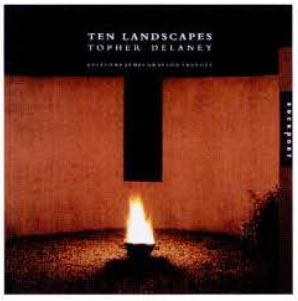

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Story by Allison Arieff

Nobody's Home

We'd love to show you how people really live in this stunning high-rise apartment designed by Hong Kong architect Gary Chang. But no one lives here.

This luxurious residence is one of three model units in the aptly named Treasure Palace, a development of six residential towers in central Taipei designed by Pritzker Prize–winning architect Kenzo Tange of Japan. No doubt Chang's design is a successful selling tool for the estate agents ascending to the 22nd floor, eager clients in tow. What up-and-coming young executive could resist the allure of Chang's interiors?

With projects like his own blue-lit, stark minimalist apartment in Hong Kong and the glowing Broadway Cineplex in Hong Kong, Chang's embrace of Eastern aesthetic influences has veered more toward *Blade Runner* than feng shui. The Jen-Ai model unit fuses that drama with some more traditional Asian design elements. In lieu of the expected terrace dotted with houseplants, for example, the flat has its own indoor Zen garden.

Perhaps the most striking feature is the kitchen. A welcoming bar area seems to float weightlessly over Italian marble floors, an effect achieved by linear luminaries that light up the whole volume from below. This dramatic lighting, typical of Chang's projects, lures you right in.

If only there were a tenant to invite us for a drink! ■

The study den (at left) is less home office than high-style crash pad. Chang's unique lighting effects are evident in the sand garden (above right) and kitchen.

PHOTOS BY JANET CHOY, GARY CHANG