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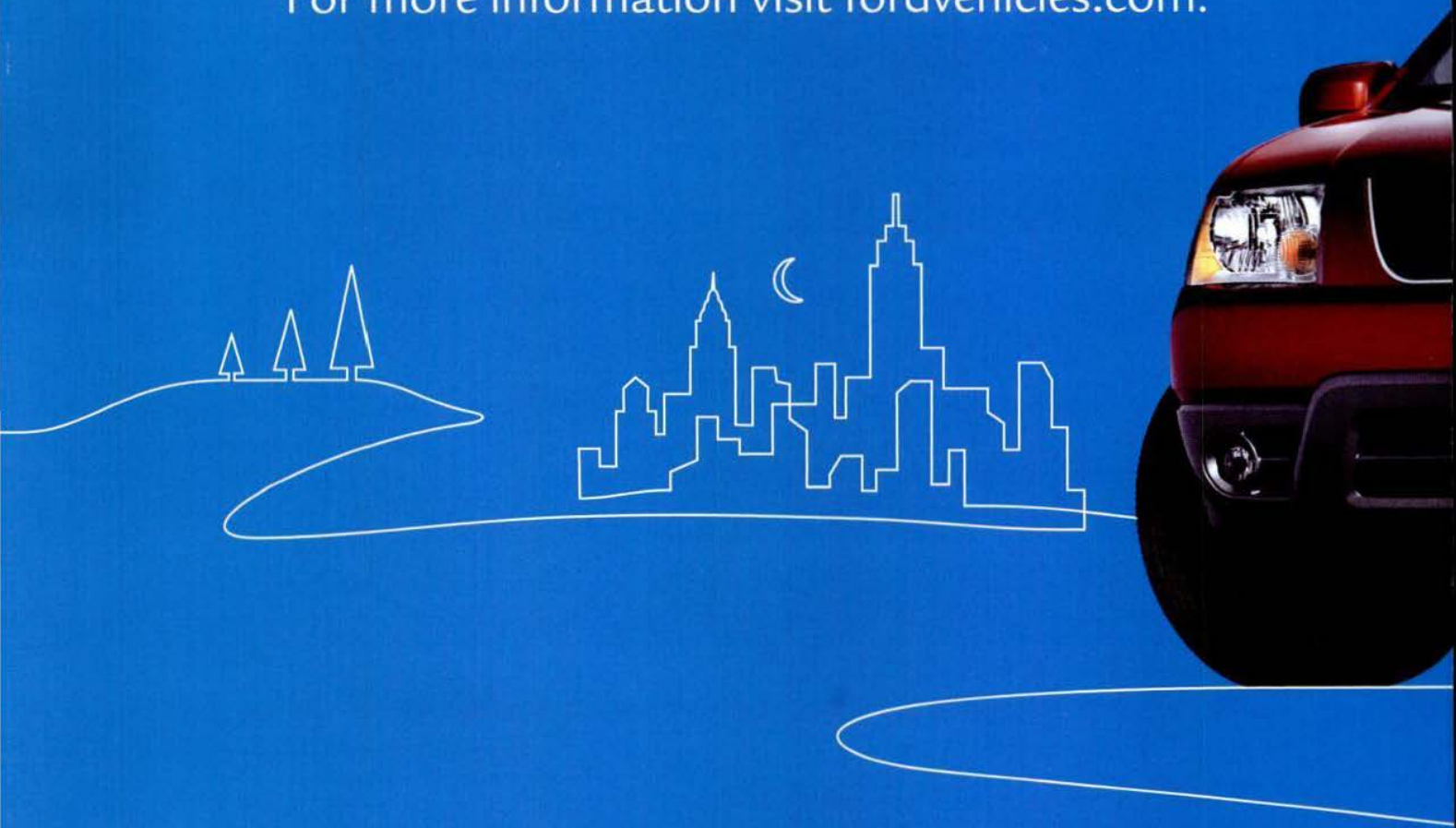


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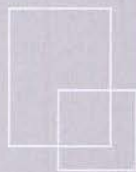


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## April/May 05 Contents:

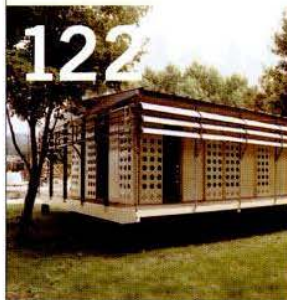
# The Promise of Prefab

### Dwellings

## 39

#### Editor's Note

Efficiency, affordability, and style are making it more popular every day. So is modern prefab on its way to becoming the Apple computer of the American housing industry?



#### Perspectives on Prefab

There's more to prefab than the factory, as illustrated by these four Q&As on history, policy, education, and community.



#### How to Play FlatPak

For Charlie Lazor, building his prefab home was as easy as assembling a Blu Dot shelving system. He should know—he designed both.

**Story by Allison Arieff / Photos by Chad Holder**



#### Manchester United

Manchester is renowned for its industrial yet culturally progressive character. It seems fitting, then, that it's home to an innovative residential prefab complex.

**Story by Amara Holstein / Photos by Peter Marlow**



#### On a Rock in a Hard Place

Few are brawny enough for a remote mountain existence, but fewer still have the resolve to build there.

**Story by Andrew Wagner / Photos by John Clark**

“Too often we equate standard building components with sterile and uniform design. But we all had the same box of Lincoln Logs as kids, and I never knew one kid who built the house on the box cover.” —Carlos Martin

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#### Cover

In Minnesota, the Lazor family makes a case for prefab's potential. **Photo by Chad Holder**

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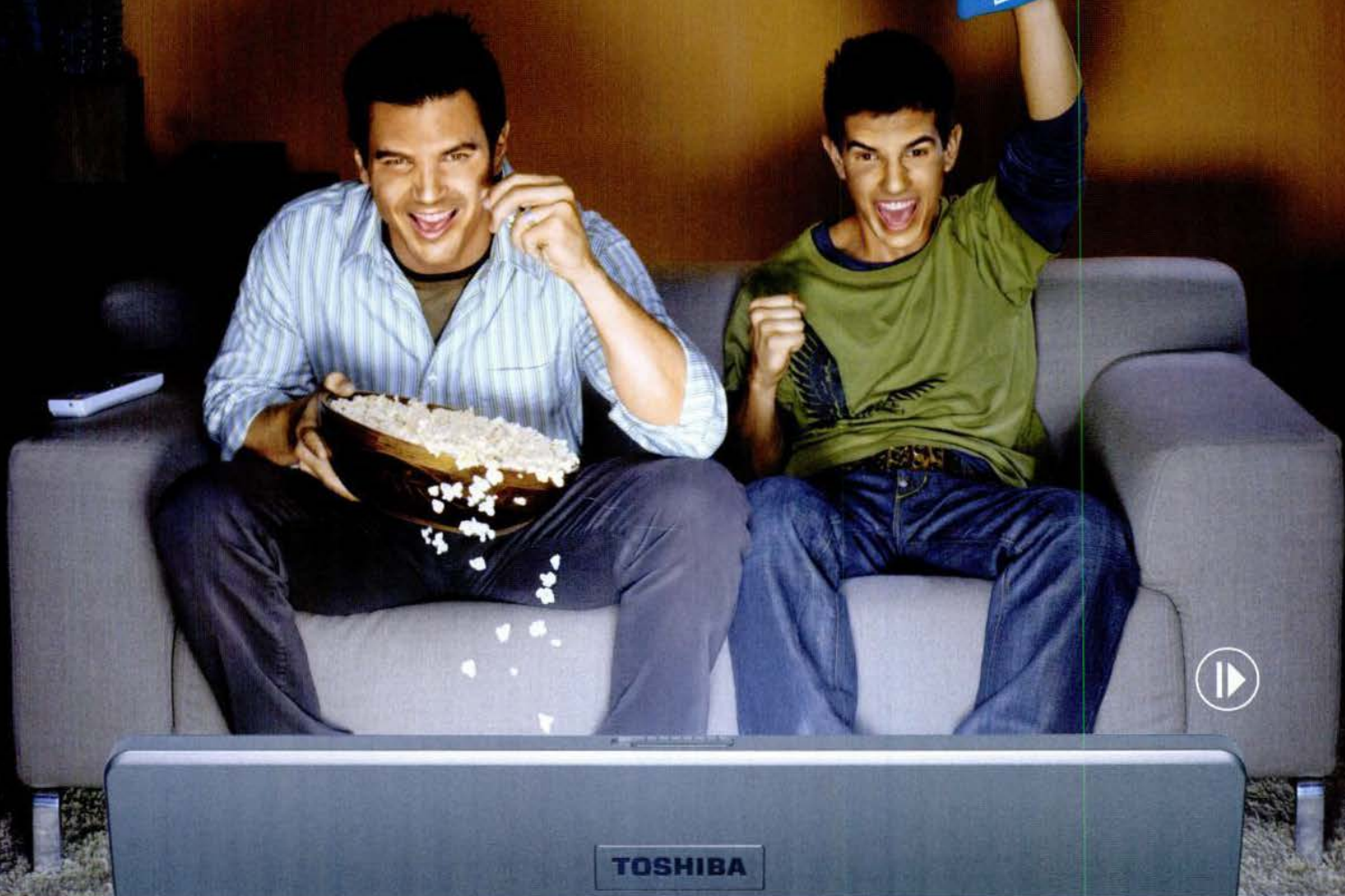
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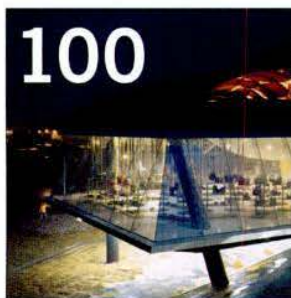
Magnet schools are nothing new to the arts and sciences, but Miami's DASH looks to give high schoolers a head start in design.

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In Edinburgh, Scotland, architect Richard Murphy goes underground to meld modernism with centuries-old architecture.

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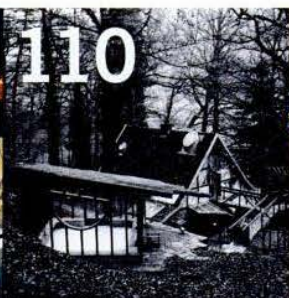
Switzerland's Art Basel takes its avant-garde art to Miami Beach and CES brings the best in consumer electronics to Vegas, baby.



## 100

### Context

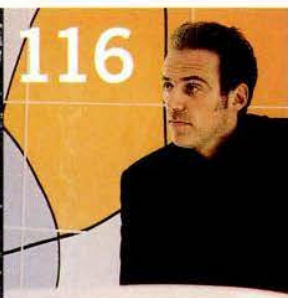
In the demilitarized zone of Korea, of all places, a spectacularly imaginative community is born.



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### Archive

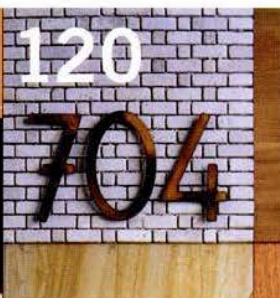
In the '60s, Brits Alison and Peter Smithson cast a spell with their bewitching Hexenhaus.



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Designer Massimo Iosa Ghini takes a moment to reflect on the hazards of speed and the merits of Europe's standard of living.



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Utilitarian doesn't have to mean anachronistic. Here, a selection of house numbers that offer modern curb appeal.

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How did such a simple act become so complex? Dwell analyzes how to cut, cook, and enjoy your food—and the plate it's served on.

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Don't fret because you can't find that name, number, or website. We've provided them for you here.

## 196 Houses We Love

Sometimes a little space goes a long way, and sometimes the only way to go is up.



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**Reading "Structure and Spirit" (December 2004).** I realized that the ashram featured was in the tsunami-ravaged region of Pondicherry. I did a Web search and found news of how the Sri Aurobindo Ghosh ashram [pictured above] became a refuge for thousands of tsunami refugees, feeding 1,400 people on the first day. How incredible that it was in this issue. I guess the dormitory building is still standing. So now I'm going to go do some meditation.

**Jacque Clarke**  
Auckland, New Zealand

**I am new to Dwell and have noticed that almost** all of your showcased modern homes are single-family residential units. I am curious how the Dwell community would address problems such as affordable housing and urban infill. I would love to move into an urban setting one day and reap the conveniences of city life; however, in northern New Jersey and New York City, the only options seem to be run-down rentals or luxury apartments or condos. Where is the middle class supposed to live without worrying about breaking the bank? Has there ever been an issue addressing modern multi-unit complexes and/or affordable housing?

**Paul DeVincentis**  
Colonia, New Jersey

**Editors' Note:** In March 2004 we dedicated a whole issue to urban living, and we plan to do so again in September 2005. In March/April 2003 we focused our whole issue on "Affordable Luxury." Back issues can be ordered by calling (877) 939-3553.

**I loved "One Room Fits All" (January/February 2005)** because the place I live in is only about 300 square feet. And I have a roommate. It's cool, though, because I have a killer view of the Brooklyn Bridge and the Empire State Building. I'm 20 years old, and I moved out of my parents' house nine months ago, and Dwell is the only magazine subscription I kept (I let *Architectural Digest* and *Elle Decor* expire). I wish that you

would cover some more beach houses, though. My mom mailed me the August 2002 issue that I left back home because I loved the beach houses in it! Right now I'm designing this little dream modern beach house for myself in AutoCAD. One day in the future I'm going to build it, but in the meantime keep up with the great design and inspiration!

**Brandon Cook**  
New York, New York

**I have been especially interested in your series** on prefabricated and energy-efficient housing. But as a design-conscious Midwesterner, I feel slighted. The majority of the designs in your recent issues focus on buildings in Southern California or somewhere where winter is a foreign language. How about some creative design thinking for cold climates? What is energy- and design-efficiency in the northern reaches of the hemisphere?

**Peter A. Beatty**  
Madison, Wisconsin

**Editors' Note:** Please take a look at the featured houses in this issue, especially the FlatPak House on p. 134. Minneapolis, Minnesota, is about as cold as you can get!

**The houses in the Dwell Home II (January/February 2005) competition** are all interesting. I really don't want to be a party pooper, but unless the houses are intended to remain unoccupied there is no way they are sustainable or, as the Pugh + Scarpa entry claims, "energy-neutral." These are houses you have to drive a car to and from every time you go to work or to the store. It would be an interesting experiment to calculate how many solar panels it would require to balance the automotive energy residents of a house like this would have to consume.

Houses can have sustainable qualities but only a community can be truly sustainable. I hope Dwell Home III is an urban dwelling, perhaps a townhouse or row house, that is within walking distance of public transit and community services. The designs should reap the advantages of higher-density living without sacrificing all the qualities people seek in a house in the 'burbs. There should be a private garden area. You should not hear your neighbors and your neighbors should not hear you. The space should be flexible enough that it could be altered to suit a series of occupants. Co-housing would be another option to consider. An urban co-housing scheme with Dwell style would be very interesting to see.

**Ted Jones**  
San Francisco, California

**I am an avid fan of both Dwell the magazine the** Dwell Home design competition. I was particularly excited about the Dwell Home II and its efforts to encourage green design. Unfortunately, I am terribly disappointed with the article in your January/February 2005 issue about the contest itself. Leaving aside the qualities of the designs, you have sold your green and sustainable theme pitifully short. By definition, a single-family home on a sensitive "fire-prone" site is not sustainable, no matter how carefully engineered it might be. Why not use this wonderful opportunity to consider a level of density that, particularly when paired with thoughtful design and engineering, can truly aid in long-term sustainability?

**Jon Meyers**  
New York, New York

**Editors' Note:** When we do these competitions, we have to operate within certain highly restricted parameters. Finding a homeowner willing to be the guinea pig for a house like this is difficult, though doable; finding a developer and/or 40 tenants for a multi-family building or development is, unfortunately, out of the realm of our current capabilities. While we agree that only a community can be truly sustainable, it is also true that people aren't likely to abandon the single-family suburban home any time soon. So, at the very least, we can advocate for the adoption of sustainable practices for this building type. Getting people to think of sustainable practices as inherent, as normal, is ultimately as important as getting those practices implemented.

**I was thrilled to see the wonderful results for** the Dwell Home II competition, but was disappointed that you didn't include any of the details of the competition parameters. Were there budget or square-footage requirements? I couldn't find any of this information on the website, either.

**Kristen Messina**  
Los Angeles, California

**Editors' Note:** Working with our Dwell Home II homeowners, we presented to the architects a program for a home of approximately 2,500 square feet and a budget not to exceed \$500,000 (exclusive of land costs). Further details will be revealed as we follow the progress of the home's construction through 2006.

**All five proposals for Dwell Home II were rich** and inspiring. I admired not only Pugh + Scarpa's recognition of rain runoff as an important building issue, but their conversion of it into an aesthetic element. Both their and Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects' schemes were striking for ▶



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## Letters

the manner in which they gently touched the landscape. And Deegan-Day's homage to Daly, Genik's unbuilt Topanga Canyon House's "lens" brought back pleasant memories of other fabulous design work for Topanga.

I'm looking forward with great interest to seeing the development of Escher GuneWardena's design, especially the endorsement by permitting agencies of the gray-water system. Although a large percentage of the homeowners in the neighborhood utilize rudimentary gray-water systems, they are all bootlegged. I have been told that the Health Department will not readily approve such proposals. Acceptance of such recycling systems is an important component for progressive home design if we are to live more thoughtfully within the natural landscape of an arid region.

**Robert Millar**  
Topanga Canyon, California

### I continue to enjoy Dwell more every month.

However, it seemed for a brief time that most of your architecture features were focused more on renewable resources than on design. I fully acknowledge that the philosophies that make up modernism include environmental awareness and a striving to coexist as efficiently as possible with our planet, but the past few issues have featured some homes that, in my opinion, threw aesthetics out the window in favor of a certain material or construction process.

Rejoice! The new issue is full of incredible design. The huge section on Dwell Home II is very exciting as well. I can't wait to see where this one goes. As always, thanks for renewing my faith in continuing generations of modernists. We are all evolving, and Dwell is here to evolve with us.

**Matt Wright**  
Brooklyn, New York

I found several of the quotes in the article "To Be or Not to Be . . . Licensed" (January/February 2005) misleading. Take one of Jay Serrao's statements, for example. He states that the training architects receive doesn't necessarily make them good designers, "but other areas, particularly dealing with structural safety, are important." This makes it sound like an architect is somehow qualified to be the structural engineer. I don't know how it is in all states, but in California, any designer (whether an architect or a designer) has to have their designs engineered by a professional engineer and approved by the local building and safety department. The safety of the structure is not dependent on the architect's knowledge but that of the engineer.

Lastly, it is completely out of line for Kate Schwensen to say that being an architect is

somehow equivalent to the Hippocratic oath. I know of far too many situations where architects design what they want to design for their portfolio with little to no regard for what their client wants. I have several friends who have been railroaded by charismatic and enthusiastic architects and ended up with a house they never wanted. Even one of the world's most famous architects, Frank Lloyd Wright, was notorious for designing houses that the homeowners hated—magnificent designs, but if no one wants to live there, is that really good architecture?

**Trevor Norton**  
Los Angeles, California

I was both thankful and slightly embarrassed to see your guide "How to Read a Floor Plan" (January/February 2005). I have completed four fairly rigorous years of undergraduate architecture education, three years of internships in various architecture firms, and am currently studying for my master's degree at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. In all of this time I have yet to learn what I learned in five minutes by reading this article. I realize that higher education focuses rightly on design as process, but it need not be at the expense of the simple standards and conventions of the profession in practice. Thank you for your acknowledgment of the simple things.

**Marke Johnson**  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

"How to Read a Floor Plan" is a great idea for absolute beginners, but when are you going to start including more complete floor plans in your house-specific articles? The features "Standout in the Crowd" and "The New Suburbanism" (January/February 2005) both suffered from less-than-articulate photos. If you want to include a bunch of additional eye candy, go right ahead. Without the plans, however, all the words and photos in the world don't communicate the essence of a building.

Regarding "Get Your House (Party) Started" (January/February 2005): Nice attempt to find useful film resources. Three Hollywood fictions out of six films unfortunately lightens the impact of the list. You should have at least included *Life as a House*, starring Kevin Kline.

**Steve Mann**  
San Luis Obispo, California

I was delighted to see "How to Read a Floor Plan." Now that your readers, who may have had difficulties understanding plans, are educated, how about including more plans with the buildings you so interestingly photograph? In the January/February issue, for instance, it would have ►



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## Letters

been great to have had plans for the Pugh + Scarpa and the Deegan-Day Design Dwell Home II designs. The small house in "Small Amidst Sprawl" is totally incomprehensible from the photos and desperately needed a plan to illustrate the virtues of its design.

The photos you provide are wonderful, but no photographer can illustrate the relationships between spaces as well as a simple plan does. That is what I often miss in your articles, the relationships between the spaces within and around the houses you illustrate.

**Robert H. Hersey**  
Petaluma, California

I have been an enthusiastic reader of your magazine for the last two years. But there is more. I have to admit that I just cannot accept to see our magazine lying far from sight on the upper shelves in some of the bookstores I go to. When confronted with that unacceptable reality, I take a look around and quickly put some copies on the most visible shelf I can find. Do you think I could get in trouble for that?

**Nicolas Ahern**  
Via email

**Editors' Note:** *Nicolas, you're our kind of reader! Thanks.*

Dwell has continued to inspire and encourage this struggling architect, as well as acquaintances who are still being made aware of your magazine. Your consistency in presenting good, modern, real-world work has put you at the top of our must-read list.

Architects 101 (January/February 2005) was much appreciated. As Donlyn Lyndon noted in "The Architectural Insider," we are often rather ineffective at explaining to the inexperienced public what it is that architects do. Meanwhile, we will continue to look forward to each arrival of the best modern architecture magazine in print.

**Kathryn McGuire**  
Tucson, Arizona

I was both saddened and uplifted to read in her Editor's Note of the lackluster reception Allison Arieff received when addressing the Automated Builders Consortium Convention ("Small Change," January/February 2005). Saddened because I'd like to believe that the prestige of being editor-in-chief of an innovative magazine would provide some protection from snickers and jeers when talking about change. Uplifted because in recommitting herself to modern prefabricated design on the streets of Philadelphia, Arieff proves herself to be among the ranks of the



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thousands of unknown artists and designers who have the courage to draw, write, build, and speak out—whether or not their work will ever ricochet across the pages of a publication such as her own.

**Whitney Morrill**  
Charlottesville, Virginia

I enjoyed Allison Arieff's brief but dead-on Editor's Note. It is no mystery that in every industry people resist change. I've been in meetings with pharmaceutical and financial institutions where I have seen those blank stares and snickers. It's a shame, but it's not an end. It's just a look at what makes up the barrier of entry. Who stands in the way, what makes them afraid, and how do they react to that fear?

I spoke to my grandfather about prefab housing the other day. He used to be an engineer at GE and Westinghouse, and he said they had designed prefab housing following World War II that came with wiring and plumbing already in each wall. He said they were wonderfully constructed and inexpensive to produce/build as compared to the normal process. It was the pipe fitters' union and other local and national unions that blocked them through zoning and other legislation. While not shocking, and probably not different from today, it's disturbing. Since then, they've only gotten stronger and more resistant. It makes sense in the fight-or-flight way. These people simply can't ever imagine flying.

Fortunately, there are people like me (and others) who read this magazine and can see how wonderful these homes can be. We see the potential partly because we see the future as being different or better than today, and partly because in order to breathe, we need to forge new paths. The funny thing is that it's not just being different that's attractive, it's almost an evolution issue. We want to evolve in how we do the things we do.

**John Beausang**  
Via email

I was dismayed to read of Allison Arieff's underwhelming reception at the Automated Builders Consortium Convention in Philly—and surprised that not a single U.S. prefab company has woken up to the opportunity of affordable but high-quality modern prefab designs.

I have a suggestion for you—why not look to Japan? I live in Tokyo and have been here for over eight years. A significant portion of homes in Japan are prefab, and some are of exceptionally high quality and contemporary design. The largest companies in this arena include Sekisui, Misawa, and Daiwa, and there are many others. I would encourage you to look at their websites ▶



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Fjord design Patricia Urquiola. The picture was taken inside the "Nordic Countries Pavillon" at Giardini di La Biennale di Venezia.

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## Contributors

**Iain Aitch**, our London contributing editor, traveled to Edinburgh ("Beyond the Garden Wall," p. 86), where he discovered the delights of vegetarian haggis and getting lost in dark alleyways.

**Deborah Baldwin** ("Fond of You," p. 170) and her *batterie de cuisine* live in New York.

**David Bowman** ("Live/Work," p. 76) is a freelance photographer located in Minneapolis and at [www.bowmanstudio.com](http://www.bowmanstudio.com). Bowman says the best part of shooting the Dwell Reports portrait was meeting Bill Stumpf.

**Heather Bradley** is a freelance writer who also serves as the urbanite editor of *Soma* magazine. For Home Cooking 101 ("Dining In, Dining Out," p. 162; "Never Dull," p. 164; "Coffee Talk," p. 166), she ate heartily and frequently, yet did not gain a single pound.

**Daniel De Souza** ([danieldesouza.com](http://danieldesouza.com)), a recent Florida transplant, found his assignment to photograph students at Miami's DASH school ("Education by Design," p. 84) "refreshing . . . a sign of the bright future of Miami."

**Catherine Franklin** ("Tait Modern," p. 72) is a Melbourne-based design writer. Her healthy fear of poisonous snakes does not keep her from writing about great contemporary architecture that just happens to be located miles from anywhere.

**Susan Guerrero** ("Iron Chef," p. 168), a staff editor at the *New York Times*, is working on a book about Rosarita, the food company named after her grandmother.

**Chad Holder** was thrilled to photograph the Lazor residence ("How to Play FlatPak," p. 134), and says, "It was great to see the wonderful design of Blu Dot in such a scale as their prefab home."

Photographer **Peter Marlow** has a strong interest in architecture. His partner plans prefabricated apartments for clients in England, so the Moho assignment ("Manchester United," p. 144) was very apposite.

**Andrew Yang** ("Magical Micropolis," p. 100) is the associate editor of *Metropolis*. On traveling to South Korea to visit the Heyri Art Valley, he says, "The relationship between the residents and their homes was heartening and made the pilgrimage completely moving."

(which are in Japanese, so please find a friend) and contact them directly to test their interest in your ideas. Who knows, it may even lead to a piece in Dwell—and, more important, a viable prefab alternative in the U.S. to the current humdrum offerings!

**Michael Devlin**  
Tokyo, Japan

**My wife and I recently purchased a townhouse** in the urban core of Cincinnati, because we just didn't fit into the bi-level, ranch, or whatever style living that suburbia offered. It was slow-going filling the void within our space due to the lack of modern complements the area offered. Hence my late, but welcomed, discovery of Dwell. We have been slowly redesigning/renovating our space into what we have long loved. We recently entered it into our city's growing downtown-living tour. I am happy to say it was very well received by the many visitors. Most responses were along the lines of "You did this yourself?" and "Great job, what was your inspiration?" I was happy to admit that Dwell was a great help.

**Chris Abernathy**  
Cincinnati, Ohio

**My wife and I have just subscribed to Dwell**, and were actually relieved to find it existed. The first issue we purchased confirmed that we aren't alone, and that other people in Houston have similar taste to ours. We were very surprised you focused on two architects in Houston, and we were equally surprised that the first time we watched the Dwell television show [on the Fine Living Network] it focused on a home in Austin. We never knew Texas was an architectural hotbed.

We are closing on our lot in January and are completing the process of meeting architects in the next couple of weeks; we think we've found our guy but want to be sure and do the proper due diligence. We spent almost two years looking for the right place to build, so we aren't rushing anything (even though we'd like to).

**Alex Down**  
Houston, Texas

**I would like to preface this email by saying that I** rarely write editors of magazines. In fact, to be honest, I have never written an editor of a magazine before (or an editor of a book or newspaper for that matter).

I happened to pick up your magazine one fateful day last summer and have been a loyal reader/admirer since. I am a medical resident with a shocking amount of student loans and my wife works for an academic publishing company.

### In Memoriam:

Philip Johnson's (1906–2005) passing away in January left many to marvel over the span and influence of his career, and his savvy knack for bringing celebrity attitude to his oft-cloistered profession. We were no exception, as we decided to reflect on our favorite Johnson creations: the exhibit about International Style at New York's Museum of Modern Art and, of course, the miraculous Glass House he erected in 1949.

Clearly, we aren't in the highest income bracket, yet we manage to scrape by with a comfortable, happy, and modest lifestyle. We recently relocated to Boston from California and have been dismayed by the exclusive prices of the housing market. Your magazine and the Dwell Home contest have opened my eyes to the idea of prefab modernist housing options, and I wanted to simply thank you. Surprisingly, this is not a plea to be the next Dwell Home recipients, but just a letter of appreciation. I am so excited by what you have done to bring simple, modern, green architecture to center stage.

Now, when we move back to the Bay Area to live near our parents, I feel there is a chance we can find or create the modern, simple, and affordable home we so desperately desire.

**Joe Hardman**  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

**As much as I enjoyed the article on building a** modern home in architecturally conservative San Francisco, I found it difficult to believe that anyone could use such a miniature refrigerator as depicted on page 113 ("Standout in a Crowd," January/February 2005). I like clean lines as much as the next person, but having to kneel to peer into a college dorm-sized fridge seems a bit much. Exactly how does someone who likes to entertain store refrigerated food in such a kitchen?

**George Meyer**  
Via email

### Please write to us:

Dwell Letters  
99 Osgood Place  
San Francisco, CA 94133  
[letters@dwellmag.com](mailto:letters@dwellmag.com)

### Correction:

In our January/February 2005 issue we neglected to credit Ben Davies, the general contractor for Haus Martin designed by Cass Calder Smith. We apologize for the oversight.




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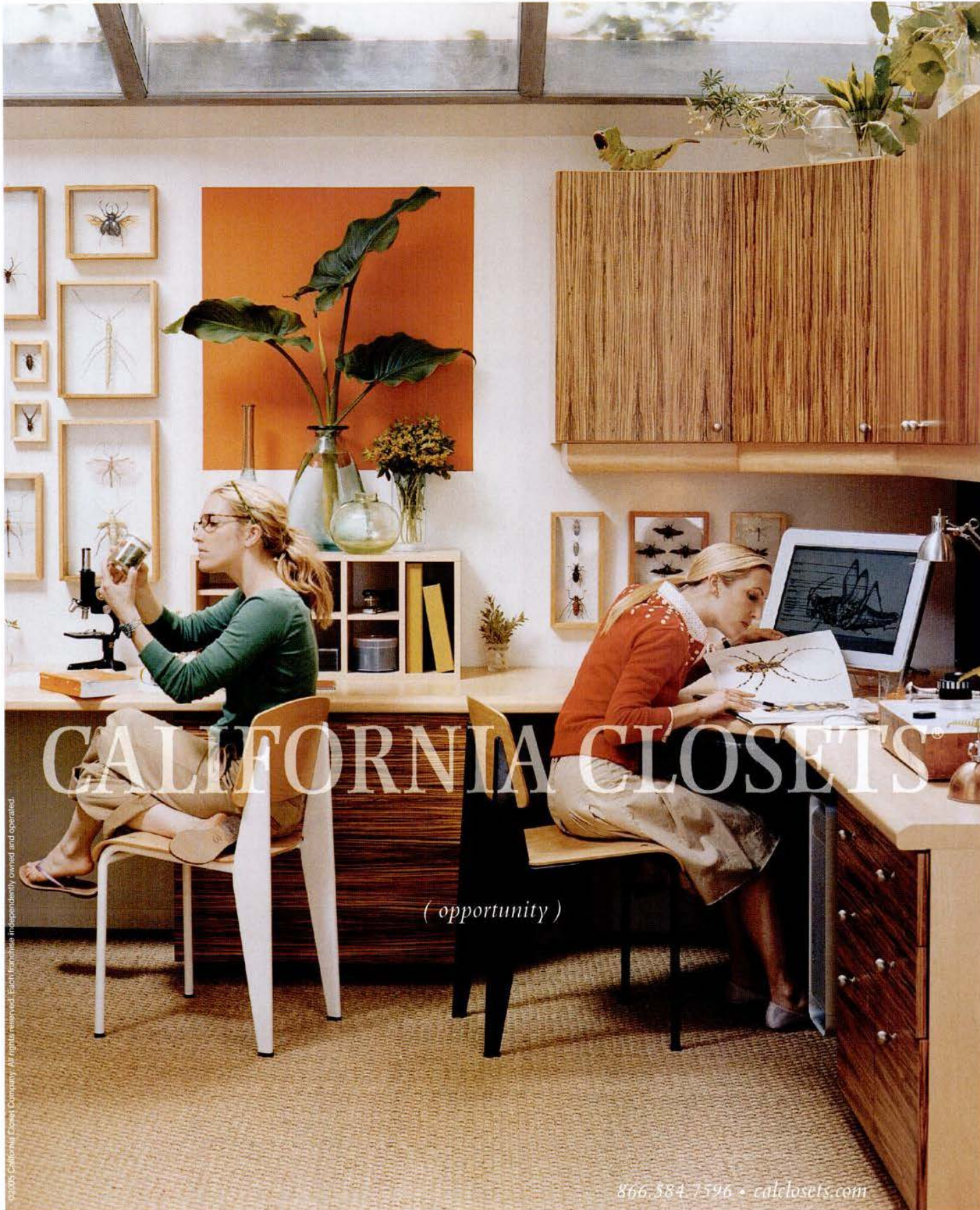


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 Thai bed with hidden storage, cantilevered night stands and a built in light	<p><b>modern furniture sale</b></p> <p>Sale ends Sunday April 10</p> <p>Your resource for the best in modern design</p>			 Glass sconce	 Techno sofa	
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 Bertoia chair	 Ginger chair bed	 Ultra granite table	 Milan Onda	 20th century lounge	 Alta bed	
 Willow chair	 Milano coffee table	 Saarinen chair	 Wassily chair	 Modern sofa bed	 Glass wheel table	
 Gyro sofa bed	 Saarinen table	 Vitro desk	 International corner sectional	 Barrel chair	 Le Corbusier chair with ottoman	
 Pasquilina leather chair	 Nelson sofa	 Expandable glass table	 Philippe Starck chair	 Bertola Twist	 Freedom bed with moveable head/foot rests and tables	
 Le Corbusier sofa	 Revolving round bed in oak or wenge with electric remote control	 Nonstop sconce	 Mies chair	 Modern Rugs	 Linea leather sectional	
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## Let's Try Optimism

A new generation of designers, like Charlie Lazor (with his FlatPak House at right), are creating architecture that is more affordable, more accessible, and, no less important, more fun.



If we eliminate from our hearts and minds all dead concepts in regards to the house, and look to the question from a critical and objective point of view, we shall arrive at the “House-Machine,” the mass-production house, healthy (and morally so, too) and beautiful. —Le Corbusier, 1919

It is now past argument that the low-cost house of the future will be manufactured in whole or in parts, in central factories, and assembled on site. —*Fortune*, 1932

The American residence is becoming a product and eventually all homes—except those of the very wealthy—will be bought in prefabricated form. —Craig Ellwood, 1957

When we first started seriously to think about the prefabricated home, everybody jumped to the conclusion that it would lead to monotony. I say it offers us a way of building truly imaginative and exciting homes. —Richard Rogers, 1968

Forget cookie cutter. Think cutting edge. —*Money*, 2003

Recently, at a lecture I gave on modern prefab architecture at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, a member of the audience asked me a very reasonable question. “I was studying architecture at UC Berkeley in the ’70s,” he said. “Prefab was a big thing back then. What makes you think things are any different now?”

He had a point. As the quotations above illustrate, the paradigm-changing power of prefab has been evangelized—and then routinely dismissed—by each successive generation for the better part of the 20th century. Will the 21st century offer a different outcome?

There’s little evidence to disprove the maxim that history repeats itself, so the easiest response would have been for me to say that it’s likely that prefab in the 21st century will embark on the same inevitable trajectory it did in the 20th. But if we all lived our lives

anticipating the inevitable, we’d be entirely without hope.

So my response to the questioner was that he was right, that things could very well come to an impasse. Or things could be different this time. “We’ve come this far,” I told him. “Let’s see where we can take it.”

Consider this: Exactly four years ago, we published an issue of *Dwell* that explored prefabricated architecture. Back then, our research yielded some yurts, a concrete dome, and R. Buckminster Fuller’s prefabricated bathroom. We struggled to find three homes to feature in that issue. In the end, one of the three we published wasn’t prefab but sort of looked like it might be: It was a barnlike house clad in corrugated metal and built by an Amish construction crew.

Fast-forward to 2005, when it was daunting to choose the projects for publication in this issue, such was the variety and quality we were presented with. No yurts this time (not that there’s anything wrong with yurts). No virtual prefabs shown as computer renderings. Instead, lots of innovative, intelligent homes from architects across the United States, using a diverse array of building systems and strategies.

Things have changed in just four years—and changed in ways that give us hope that prefab’s future just might be different from its past. There is, for example, an increased public awareness about the importance of good design that has helped focus the national conversation about housing on *design* and not just cost or code or covenants. Prefab in the first decade of the 21st century recognizes the desires of a growing marketplace, bucking conventional wisdom that available housing stock serves the needs of the public. The demand is there, so the supply should follow. Developers, investors, and major corporations have begun to take notice.

This latest incarnation of prefab has energized not only the design and architecture community, from students to those working at the top of their field, but also legions of potential homeowners. It recognizes the major role of the architect (a welcome change, as currently only 5 percent of homes are designed by architects) while also fostering a uniquely collaborative approach to architecture, wherein the contribution of all parties—from lenders to factory workers to designers—is recognized.

Prefab can reduce cost (though I must deliver the news that it will probably never be as cheap as many would hope). It can be a more efficient—and sustainable—way to build. But perhaps nothing illustrates its promise better than this: Last May, I had drinks with architect Charlie Lazor to talk about his ideas for a modern prefab house. In the first week of November, I had dinner at that house. You can check it out on page 134. It should be enough to placate the pessimists for now. ■

ALLISON ARIEFF, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
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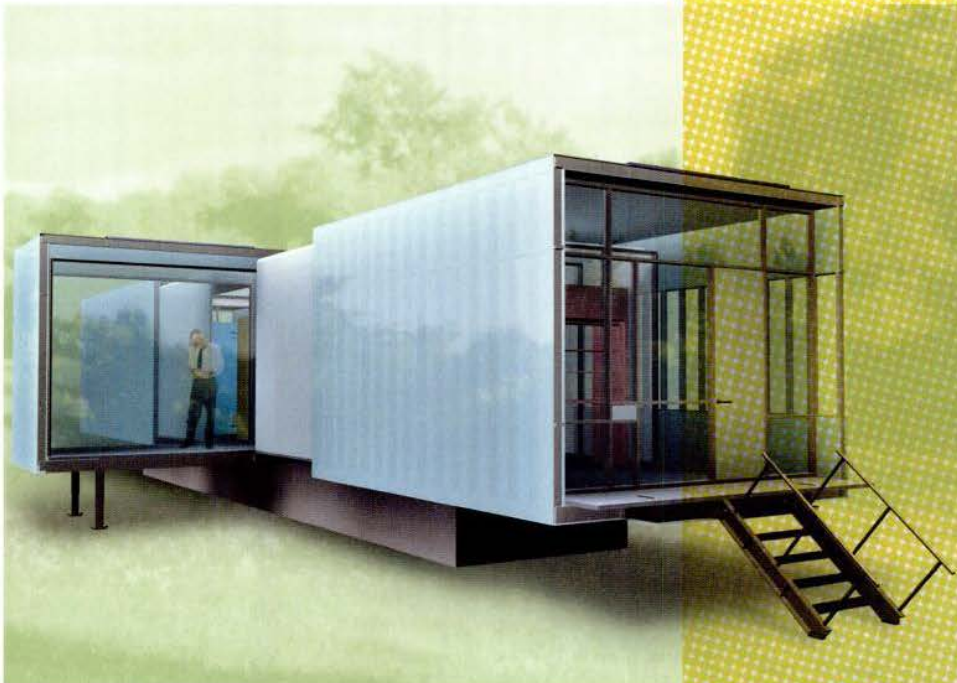




**Double High House / Bryan Bell**

Architect Bryan Bell has redefined existing limitations in a realistic and accessible capacity by utilizing current manufacturing technologies for his designs.

**Design Innovations in Manufactured Housing / 4 Feb–16 Jan / The Field Museum / Chicago, IL /** Prefab is often unduly stigmatized as being sub-par, but this exhibition features innovative residential design solutions that are anything but and that prove prefab's versatility. [www.fieldmuseum.org](http://www.fieldmuseum.org)



**Packed House Project / By COMMA**

Inspired by the packaging required to transport manufactured-housing components, COMMA designed a structure that would utilize its container to become an integral and permanent part of the final structure.



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## In the Modern World

### Cantilever Console / By Soorikian Furniture

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### The Retreat / By Retreat Homes Ltd.

This house on wheels—replete with floor-to-ceiling windows and available in multiple models and finishes—is a sleek wooden alternative to the tackiness of a traditional trailer. We'd be plenty pleased to call this our second home. [www.retreathomes.co.uk](http://www.retreathomes.co.uk)



### Studio at Large: Architecture in Service of Global Communities / By Sergio Palleroni with Christina Eichbaum Merkelbach / University of Washington Press / \$30

At the University of Washington, architects and students spend time in the field building community housing, clinics, schools, and other vital structures in areas underserved by design—from Indian reservations in the American West to sites in Cuba, India, and Africa. [www.washington.edu/uwpress](http://www.washington.edu/uwpress)



### Hats / By Ana Voog

The fantastical creations that designer Ana Voog conjures up with her knitting needles are a far cry from the chunky potholders and four-foot-long scarves our grandmothers used to make. Wisps and curls of wool dangle precipitously, feathery tufts sprout sideways, and geometric shapes proliferate. [www.anacam.com/hats](http://www.anacam.com/hats)



### Airworld—Design and Architecture in Aviation / 18 Mar–19 Jun / Design Museum / Ghent, Belgium

The renaissance of air travel is long overdue; it seems that cramped and crotchety passengers are tired of the utilitarian air shuttle, and our parents and grandparents find nostalgia an insufficient antidote to the injustice of a \$10 boxed meal. Covering everything from cabin to uniform design from air travel's heyday in the early '60s till now, this traveling exhibition proves that flying can be more inspiring than it is tiring. [design.museum.gent.be](http://design.museum.gent.be)



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**Model 2279 Chaise / By Natuzzi**

What is it about a chaise longue that begs to be redefined over and over? Perhaps it's because it is flawless in its essential idea. And while we wouldn't dare to assert a discernible ideal in any variation of the design, we have no problem publishing them. Case in point: Natuzzi's latest design, in creamy leather—a perfect perch for reading the *Symposium* perhaps. [www.natuzzi.com](http://www.natuzzi.com)



**So, You Want to Be Canadian / By Kerry Colburn and Rob Sorensen / Chronicle Books / \$7.95**  
 So your Canadian immigration visa application was denied. Don't despair. Crack open a Molson and settle down with this entertaining primer on all things Canadian. Soon you'll be talking, dressing, and apologizing like a Canuck, even if on your own soil. Well worth the loonies (that's bucks to all you wannabe Canadians). [www.chroniclebooks.com](http://www.chroniclebooks.com)



**Hexagon Mosaics / By Vitra Tiles USA**

A geodesic dome, with its intricate patterns of interlocking polygons, can be transfixing. While you might not feel the impetus to build a dome in your backyard, these tiny porcelain tiles (each one inch square) will help preserve some notion of geometric perfection in any bathroom or kitchen. Bucky would be proud. [www.vitrakaro.com](http://www.vitrakaro.com)



**Vanishing Point / 21 May–14 Aug / Wexner Center for the Arts / Columbus, OH**

Most artistic mediums long ago eschewed the rules of proportion and perspective, yet architectural depiction can't rid itself of that dogged and persistent vanishing point. This new exhibition features works that transform banal locales into surreal abstractions. [www.wexarts.org](http://www.wexarts.org)



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## Christophe Delcourt\* Rive Droite collection for Roche-Bobois

Christophe Delcourt, world-renowned designer, especially famous for his tailored upholstery, has just released his newest collection with Roche Bobois: Rive Droite. This collection emphasizes the tastes of this young designer for natural textures, fluid design, precision and special techniques. Light, sensual, and intimate, the Rive Droite collection brings the French "art of living" by drawing on its craftsmanship spirit to create modern and sophisticated furniture. Rive Droite collection, design by Christophe Delcourt. Oak veneer, solid oak edges, Sesame stain with medium-luster lacquer and patina, White-gold stain or Olive-green stain with medium-luster lacquer and patina, Bronze stain. Sofas, beds and armchairs in cowhide grain leather, satin finish.

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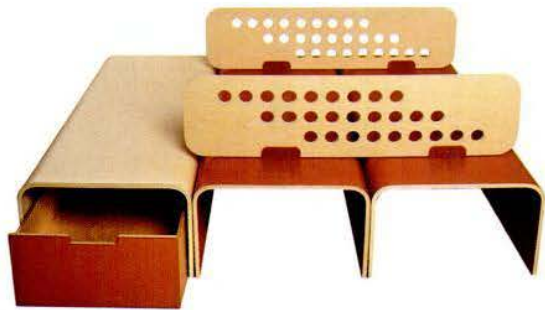
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**Modular Toddler Bed / By Pazit Kagel for Paza Design**

As any parent can attest, once a child enters the picture, one's home transforms into a storage unit for prams, cribs, and countless brightly colored plastics (the uses of which remain indecipherable to the uninitiated). Now, thanks to Paza's toddler bed, the terrible twos don't have to be quite so terrible. These laminated bent-ply units provide a stylish place for kiddo to nod off, as well as ample storage space, and can later expand to accommodate a twin mattress (bring on the fashionable fours!). [www.pazadesign.com](http://www.pazadesign.com)



**Green Investment Fund / Portland, OR**

It's no wonder that Portland attracts so many environmentally inclined folks: It has the largest urban forest in the U.S. and is now the only city to provide financial incentives for building green. Refueling its 2001 Green Investment Fund (GIF), the city will provide a total of \$2.5 million in grants over the next five years for residential and commercial developers who make a concerted effort to build within green guidelines. [www.green-rated.org](http://www.green-rated.org)



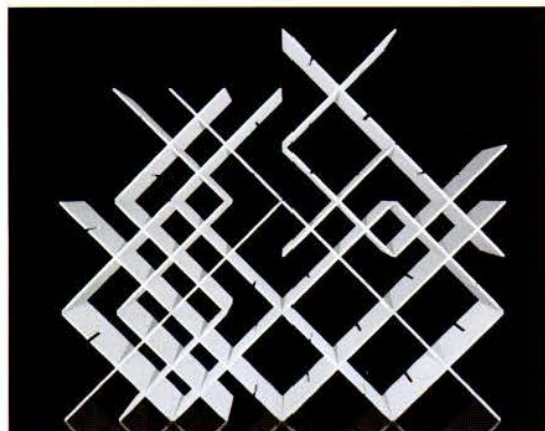
**Matchibako / By Maggie Kinser Hohle / Mark Batty Publisher / \$9**

You may believe that a matchbox's only delight is pyromaniacal. But in early 20th-century Japan, these utilitarian compartments were decorated with anonymous illustrations influenced by Cubism and the Bauhaus. [www.markbattypublisher.com](http://www.markbattypublisher.com)



**Cool '60s Design / 25 Feb–27 Nov / Canadian Museum of Civilization / Gatineau, Quebec**

The '60s were sunny, even in Canada. This exhibition's collection of furniture (like the stool, left), lamps, stereos, pottery, and macramé exposes our northerly neighbor's optimistic and largely idiosyncratic style to prove that the decade of free love and space travel was also a veritable golden age for Canadian design. [www.civilization.ca](http://www.civilization.ca)



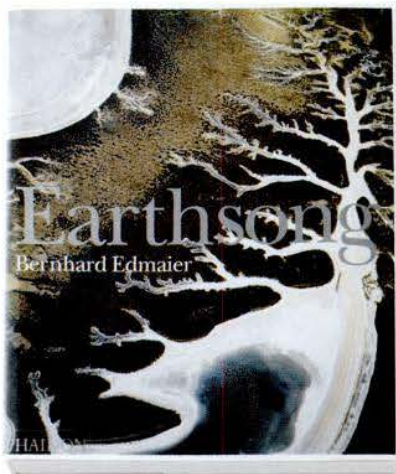
**Xv Shelving / By Seed International**

There's nothing like putting a little elbow grease into your furniture—as long as it's not too much elbow grease. The Xv tool-less shelving system banks on that childhood delight of building (à la Erector Sets and Legos). The X and V pieces are easily assembled and come with supportive clips to ensure stability; the unit's flexibility allows for more or less given the spatial parameters. One caveat: Xv shelving does not guarantee imaginative design; rather, it pins full creative license on its maker—your bookshelf is only as creative as you make it. [www.seed-international.com](http://www.seed-international.com)

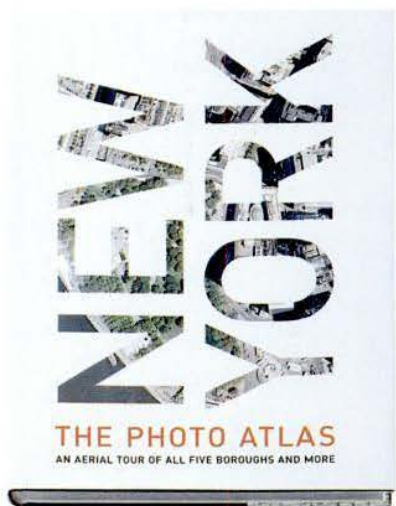




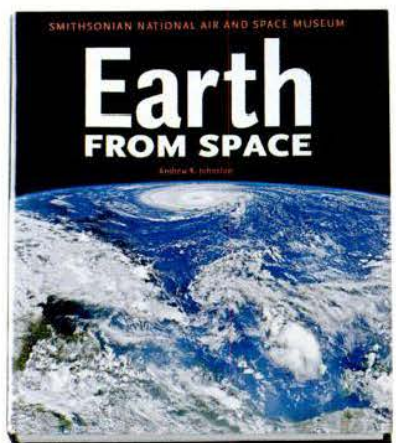
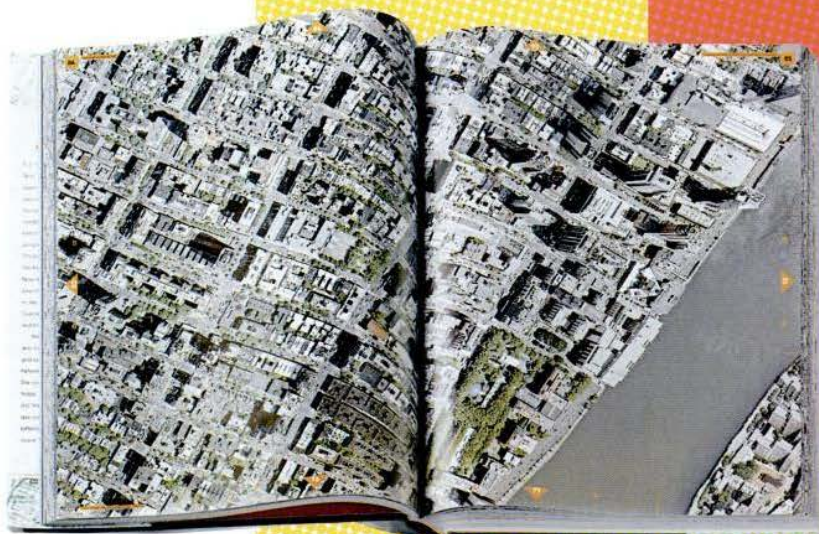




*Earthsong* / By Bernhard Edmaier / Phaidon / \$59.95 / [www.phaidon.com](http://www.phaidon.com)



*New York: The Photo Atlas* / Martin Brown / HarperResource / \$60 / [www.harpercollins.com](http://www.harpercollins.com)



*Earth From Space* / By Andrew K. Johnston / Firefly Books / \$49.95 / [www.fireflybooks.com](http://www.fireflybooks.com)

For those who dream of flight, three new books offer a vivid glimpse through the eyes of the airborne. *New York: The Photo Atlas* catalogs the five boroughs of New York from above, with a collection of maps at the back for cross-referencing. *Earth From Space* includes a vast and varied collection of images, accompanied by educational text on the conditions of the earth as we know it. From the painted striations of Afghanistan's Folded Mountains to an air force base in the Mojave Desert, the richness of the natural landscape contrasts sharply with evidence of human development. *Earthsong* divides aerial images of the earth into elemental categories. The four sections—Aqua, Barren, Desert, and Green—contain stunning photographs of some of the most astonishing natural phenomena on the planet. Urban, scientific, and artistic, these three books lend us the bird's-eye view we've always dreamed of.



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## In the Modern World



**National Museum of Art / Osaka, Japan**  
Art museums have become the latest way for architects to prove their international mettle. Perhaps it's that museums have a greater penchant for innovation than, say, the average bank. Or perhaps it's that galleries allow for cavernous interiors and flexible floor plans. Whatever the reason, Osaka's new National Art Museum, a soaring structure with sculptural steel tubes, confirms that architect Cesar Pelli's reputation is well deserved. [www.nmao.go.jp](http://www.nmao.go.jp)



### Scarves / By Cristyane Marusiak for Dedo Da Moca

We're aware that socks without shoes and scarves without coats seem odd, but exceptional quality in the one will forgive any sartorial blunder. For example, felt scarves by Brazilian designer Cristyane Marusiak offer soft and sumptuous fashion for the color connoisseur in all of us. [crismarusiak@hotmail.com](mailto:crismarusiak@hotmail.com)

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### Parts of a Rainbow / By Christian Flindt

Stackable plastic chairs, used mostly on patios or for parties, have become so ubiquitous as to be pretty much passé. Designer Christian Flindt's variegated version, however, links chairs sideways to create multiple seating arrangements whose translucent beauty should dispel any stackable bias. [www.flindtdesign.dk](http://www.flindtdesign.dk)





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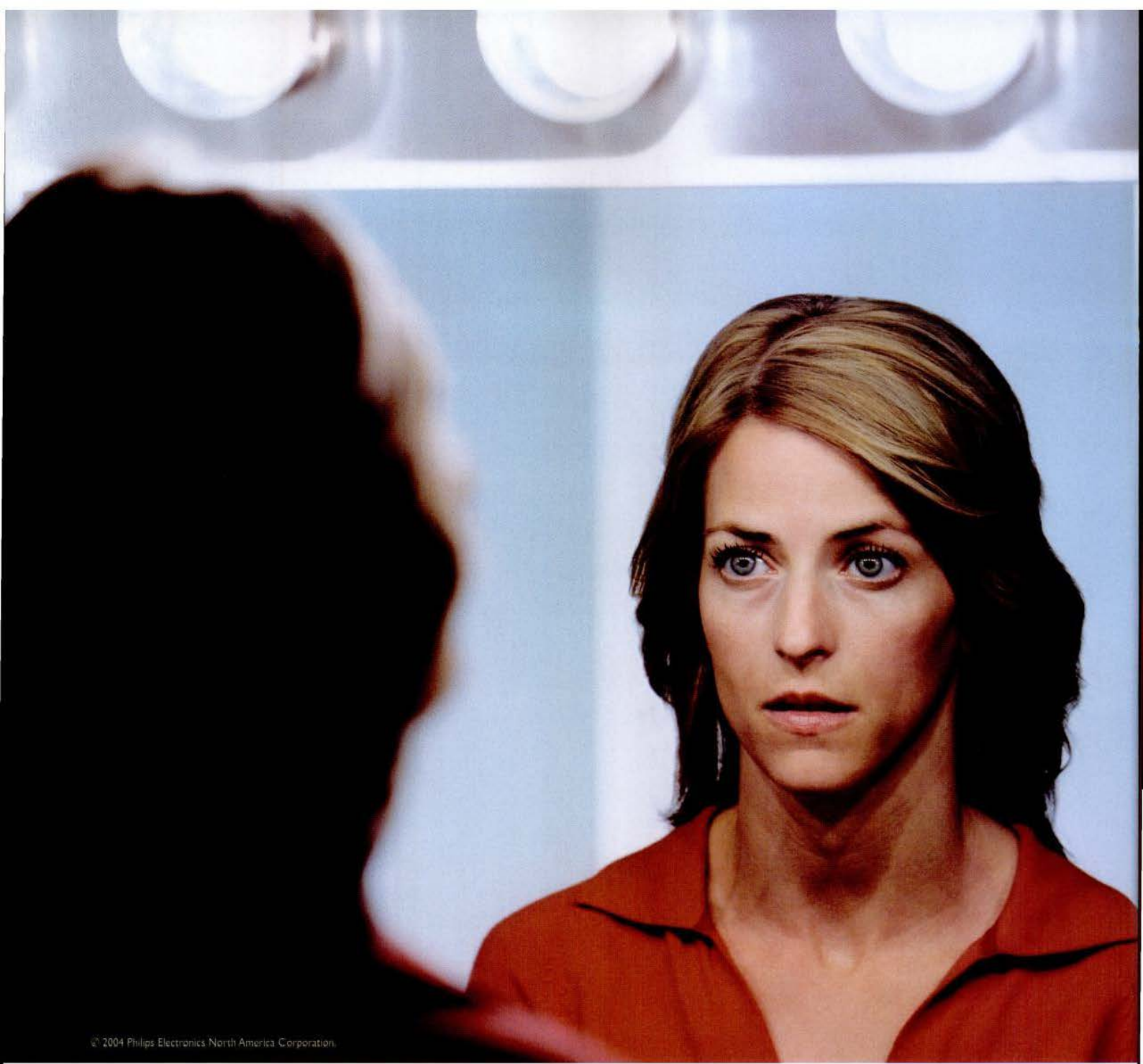
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**Extreme Textiles: Designing for High Performance** / 8 Apr–23 Oct / Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum / New York, NY  
“Extreme” has come to mean absurd, from TV shows that overhaul lives, homes, and looks to athletic events in which contestants flirt with death. But the Cooper-Hewitt brings us back to reality, focusing on textiles’ potential for practical purposes rather than for shock value. Included are polyester slings that can lift 50 tons and vascular grafts made of velour (shown here). [www.cooperhewitt.org](http://www.cooperhewitt.org)



**Riki Stool** / Designed by Riki Watanabe for Spazia  
How many editors does it take to put together a Riki stool? One (plus one goading onlooker). That’s because this 1966 Japanese classic is fashioned from recycled cardboard and can be easily assembled sans scissors or glue to make a handy place to rest and ponder the wonders of clever design. [www.spazia.com](http://www.spazia.com)



**Blue Marmalade** / 5 Feb–17 Apr / The Lighthouse / Glasgow, Scotland  
The British take great national pride in things of unfathomable appeal to outsiders: the scandalous lives of royals, gloomy weather, and the sticky goo called marmalade. But British eco-design firm Blue Marmalade reminds us that being British can also be delightfully quirky. This exhibition displays the full range of the company’s environmentally proper yet far from prim product line. [www.thelighthouse.co.uk](http://www.thelighthouse.co.uk)



**Brikka** / By Bialetti  
As every espresso lover knows, a double shot is nothing without that tawny layer of crema on top. But until recently, those unable to afford a fancy espresso machine had to content themselves with the plain black liquid produced by a stovetop Moka pot. Now, thanks to Brikka, even the frugal can have some crema in their cup. [www.bialetti.it](http://www.bialetti.it)



**Egon Eiermann (1904–1970): The Continuity of Modernism** / 29 Jan–16 May / Bauhaus-Archiv / Berlin, Germany  
German architect Egon Eiermann had a diverse career—from designing film sets to designing churches. But he’s perhaps best known for large-scale commissions like the Chancery of the German Embassy in Washington, D.C., a masterwork of subtle transparency despite steel-and-glass functionality. This show celebrates what would have been Eiermann’s hundredth birthday. [www.bauhaus.de](http://www.bauhaus.de)



**Spacebox** / By De Vrij Architects  
Living in the Dutch-designed Spacebox is sort of like living in a microwave—at least in looks and expedience. These high-grade-composite units are effortlessly dis- and reassembled, easily transported, enduring, lightweight, sturdy, and efficient. With surface areas of either 194 or 237 square feet, each Spacebox comes equipped with a complete kitchen, shower, and toilet, not to mention a large window at the front to provide optimal daylight. Their stackability affords a quick turnover, as the water, electricity, sewage, and telephone transfers are easily installed and the units easily secured. Spaceboxes—they’re boxy but rad. [www.spacebox.info](http://www.spacebox.info)





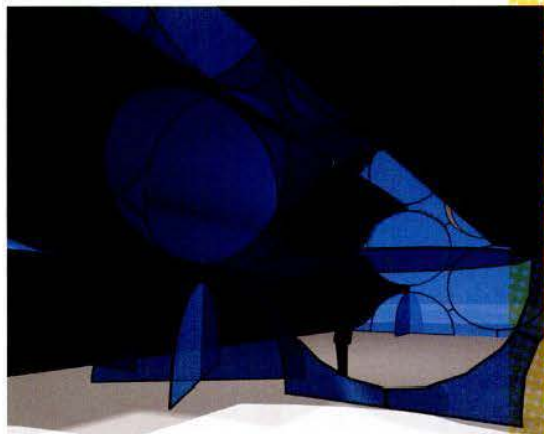
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**Invisible Hotel / 19–23 Apr / DESTE Foundation's Center for Contemporary Art / Athens, Greece**

Reality is always getting in the way of perfection, confronting great ideas with specifics, parameters, and worst of all the bottom line. This is often the case when it comes to visionary design. Invisible Hotel invites top avant-garde Greek architects to do away with actualities like site limitations, budget, and client wishes, in order to realize their ideal living environments. The projects will be presented as visual walkthroughs via digital renderings and animations. [www.invisiblehotel.com](http://www.invisiblehotel.com)



**Tube Pendant Shades / By Pad**

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* meets mod lighting. These new lamps by British-based company Pad will surely brighten any room, and with a choice of six colors, ranging from a vibrant lime green to a subtle ecru, these pervious tubes will undoubtedly blend to complement any decor. [www.padliving.com](http://www.padliving.com)



**Candito Nail Brush / By Stefano Pirovano for Alessi**

There's nothing better to administer a good cleaning than a strange and adorable little creature. Candito is not squeamish, particularly when it comes to the seedy underside of our grubby little fingernails, and he's shaped perfectly for the job. If only our toothbrushes could be so cute. [www.alessi.com](http://www.alessi.com)



**K67—The Kiosk Shots**

Architect Saša J. Mächtig designed the K67 in 1966. Today, the tiny prefab units litter Eastern Europe, hosting everything from copy shops to cafés. But because of defacement, the K67s are in danger of becoming obsolete. Through photographs, this project pleads for their preservation. [www.publicplan.com/k67](http://www.publicplan.com/k67)



**Eco-Terr / By Coverings Etc**

If you're carefully detailing every last inch of your new home to be so environmentally correct that even Al Gore can't quibble, it would be unthinkable to slap down an irresponsible toxin-leaching tile on your bathroom floor. But there are aesthetics to consider, and you don't want to compromise your style just to fit your integrity. It's lucky, then, that Eco-Terr is now on the scene. Made of recycled blends of granite, marble, river rock, and glass chips, these sustainable tiles are even available in green-friendly colors like Flamed Coral, Rocky Beach, and Dune. [www.coveringsetc.com](http://www.coveringsetc.com)





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Fig. 3.25

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Where **P** = Power, hp  
**N** = Rotational shaft speed, rpm  
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Anthony Pellecchia and Kathy Wesselman's careful site planning garnered a waterfront view at little cost to the trees.

Blessed with an enviable site on the sylvan shores of the Strait of Juan de Fuca in Washington state, architect Anthony Pellecchia and his wife, graphic designer Kathy Wesselman, wanted to create a vacation house that would be tied as much to the natural environment as to an aesthetic tradition. Pellecchia, who worked with architect Louis Kahn from 1967 to 1972, looked to his former boss for inspiration.

Perhaps the most palpable influence would be a distinct "sympathy for the site." Pellecchia and Wesselman gingerly approached their idyllic setting, designing a structure that looks as if it grew up right alongside the surrounding trees. The resulting house, named Villa Lucy as a nod to both Pellecchia's Italian heritage and his mother, Lucy, succeeds in enhancing the natural beauty of the land without overpowering it.

After moving from Denver to Seattle in 1993, Pellecchia and Wesselman merged their firms to form ▶

## Setting the Stage



## My House

WPa, a hybrid graphic design and architecture studio. "We had worked on an exhibition for the Denver Art Museum in such a way that there wouldn't be a recognizable line between the architectural and the graphic disciplines, and that got us interested in working together," Pellecchia explains. "There are some graphic components to Villa Lucy that obviously wouldn't have existed before the merger. The big red door, for instance, is very much influenced by a graphic notion of design." The galvanized grating bridge that leads up to this dramatic 6'8"-by-6'8" pivot door connects the house to the site but also maintains a sense of separation.

"The site was the most important aspect of the project for us," explains Wesselman. "We positioned the house to have a spectacular view of the water, but we didn't take down all of the trees to achieve that." This commitment to maintaining the integrity of the site and its surrounding ecosystem went as far as planning a

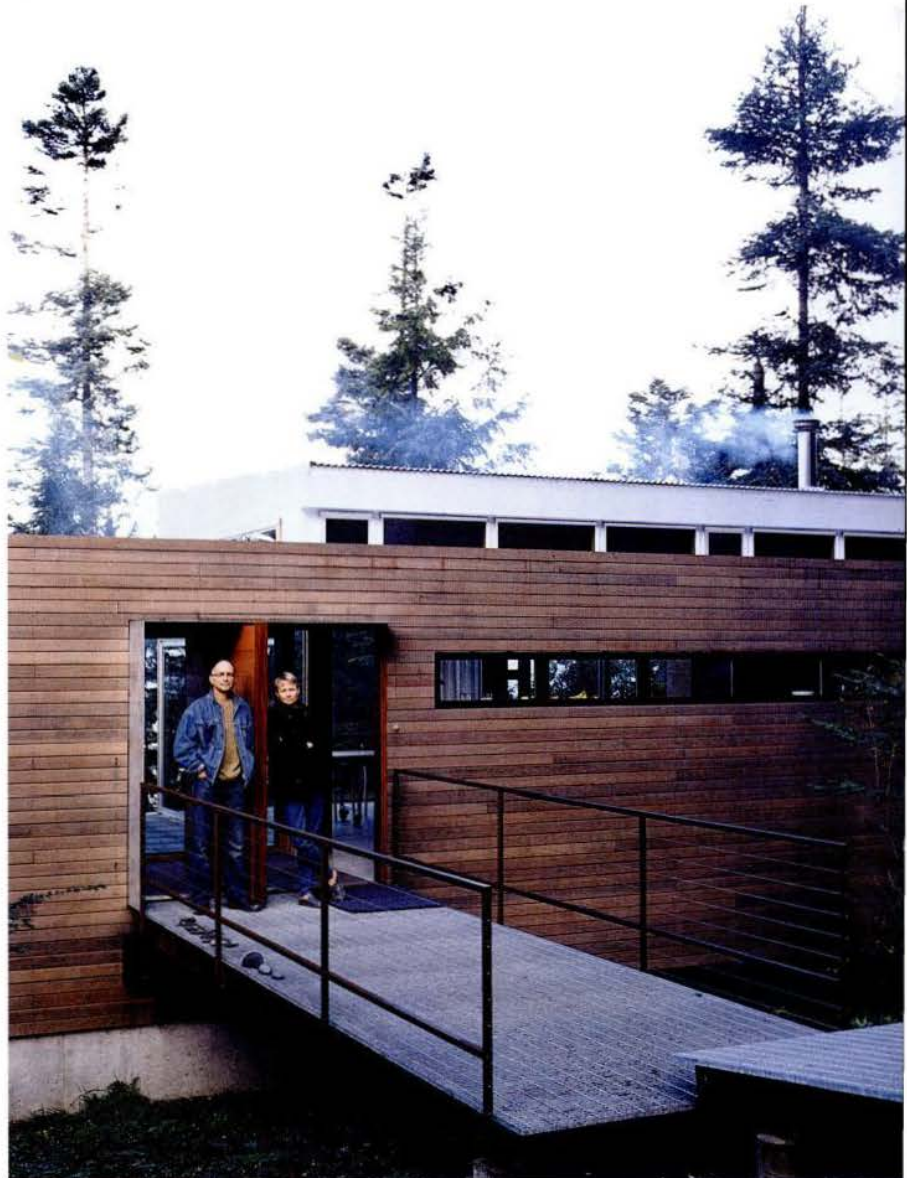
building schedule around the mating season of a neighboring eagle couple, so as not to endanger the fledglings. In addition to leaving the landscape well enough alone, Pellecchia anchored the house on six prefabricated moment frames, raising a large portion of the structure to allow the natural slope to continue untouched beneath—an approach that reduces impact in two ways. "Off-site fabrication is appealing because we can minimize the amount of storage area that's needed for equipment. It allows us to sequence the construction effectively, as the steel framings can be fabricated while we're building the foundation." The project's heavy reliance on prefabricated steel presented a welcome challenge for Pellecchia's son, Aran, who acted as the contractor on the project.

In Villa Lucy an attention to economy and organization was essential. The house is divided into two distinct zones, an opaque and a transparent zone, which the ►



Galvanized grating is used to bridge the gap between natural landscape and structure in both the entryway and the front

porch, the latter extending an extra 18 feet off the side of the house to allow for unfettered appreciation.







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The “stage” (left) allows for optimal light and viewing conditions and serves as a stark contrast to the more

opaque “bar” section (above), which houses all of the service sections like the kitchen, bathrooms, and laundry room.

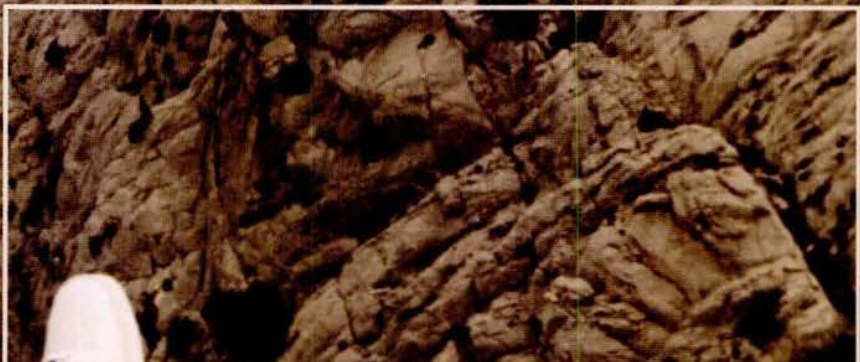
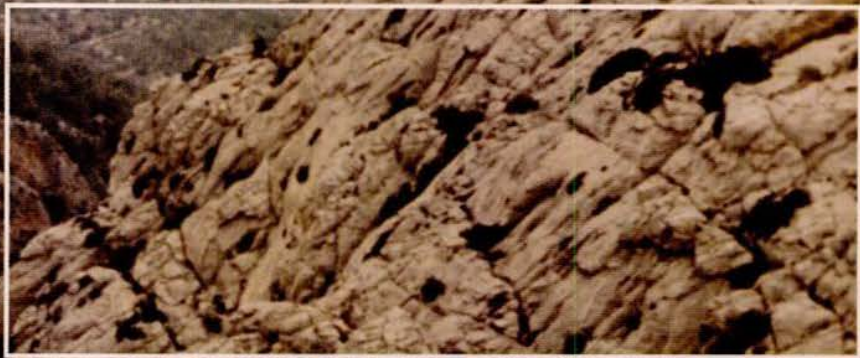
couple refers to as the “bar” and “stage,” respectively. The horizontal thrust of the bar is meant to mirror the lateral movement of the shoreline, and houses all the service areas (i.e., the bathrooms, the kitchen, and all utilities). “There are certain analogies and references we thought about when we were designing it which had to do with a sort of stage and backstage, served and service area,” Pellecchia explains. “It’s very Kahnian in that regard.” This organization system consolidates the utilities, which saves both time and space. “It’s economical when a plumber only has to run the plumbing through a small space.”

The stage zone houses the sleeping and living/dining quarters and is furnished with lightweight pieces like Alvar Aalto chairs, a Monica Armani table, and a table of Pellecchia’s own design; both tables are set on casters to facilitate movement and interior flexibility. The bathrooms are accessible from the stage by way of seamlessly

integrated sliding doors, which are virtually indistinguishable from the poplar siding that finishes the interior walls.

Most important, the stage offers access to Villa Lucy’s breathtaking view—which is what it was designed to do. “It’s a clean, modern structure. But it really is a place for us to observe, so that we can perch ourselves and watch all the activity that happens on the site, the various animals, the wind, the rain,” says Wesselman. The result is a rooted structure that tiptoes across the site but makes a dramatic visual impression. “I’m not a camper,” balks Pellecchia. “We’re urban people, so our interest is enjoying and observing. We think of the large area with all the glass being the stage, and the performers are outside.” This is certainly a humble observation, but one cannot deny that the lens through which Pellecchia and Wesselman observe is equally as compelling and lovely. ■



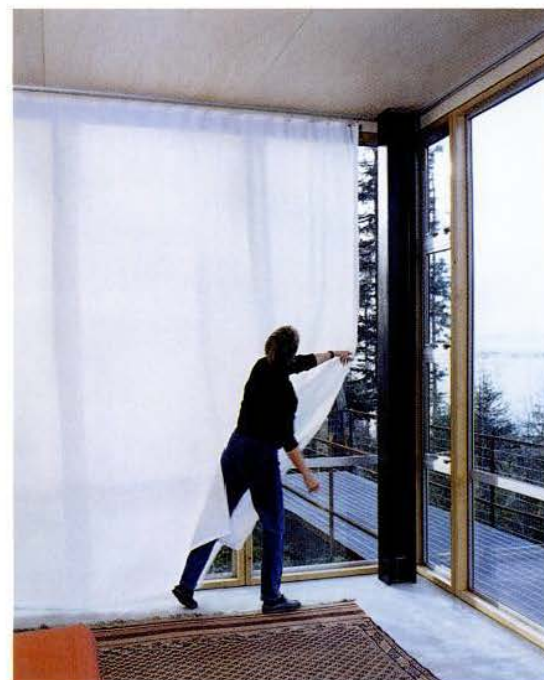


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## How to Make My House Your House

### Lite-Ply interior finish

In their search to find an alternative to dry-wall, the couple discovered this lightweight, nontoxic Italian poplar siding at a local lumberyard. "The Seattle Opera uses it for stage sets, and the lumberyard carries a large amount of the product to outfit them," says Pellecchia. Lite-Ply is about half the weight of conventional siding and can be fastened by staples. [www.northamply.com/lite-ply.html](http://www.northamply.com/lite-ply.html)

### Galvanized grating

Both the bridge and front deck (above right), which extends an extra 18 feet off the side of

the house, are made from galvanized grating. "We wanted to minimize the amount of non-porous surfaces," explains Pellecchia. "The beauty of [galvanized grating] is that the rain is able to pass through it, so vegetation can grow." Designing features like the bridge within standard-sized parameters kept the material quite economical.

### Steel beam stain

The interior steel beam stain was discovered by trial and error. Eventually the couple settled on a recipe of stove black and black shoe polish applied on top of a chemical sealant that's used on ships to change the

makeup of rust. The exterior nongalvanized steel beams were left to rust naturally.

### Curtain fabric

"Kathy found this inexpensive material called Supplex that is often used for outerwear," explains Pellecchia. "It's a treated nylon that has a crinkly, almost Issey Miyake quality to it. It was \$8 a yard and came in these large wide rolls, which was great because we had large surfaces to cover." They brought the translucent, UV-resistant fabric to a curtain maker, who fitted it to hospital runners so that they could modulate the space. [www.invista.com/prd\\_supplex.shtml](http://www.invista.com/prd_supplex.shtml)





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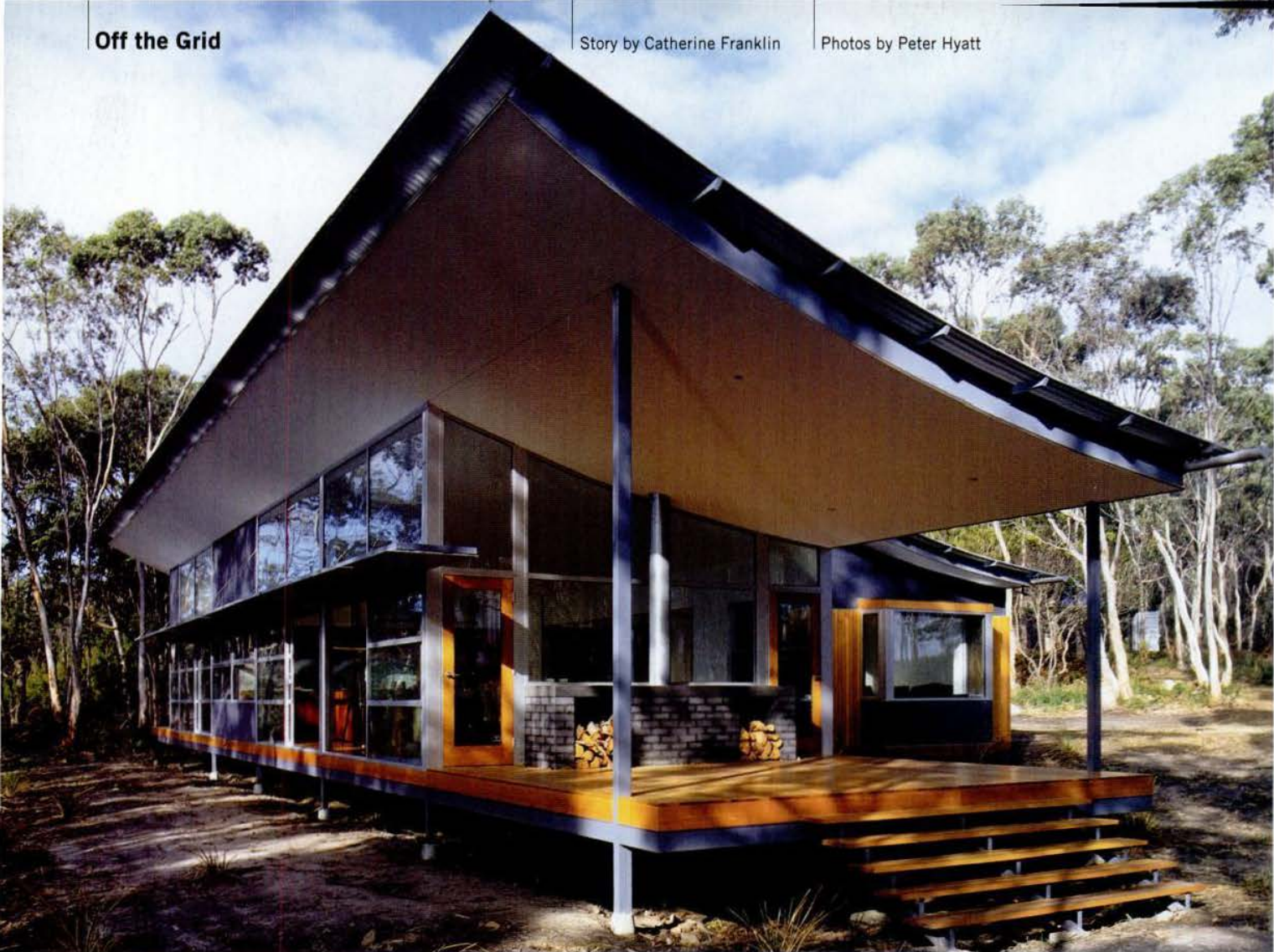


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## Tait Modern

**Rugged Bruny Island, off the southeast coast of Tasmania, is about as far away from Rochester, New York, as you can get.** Just ask Amy and Bob Tait, who call both places home. Plane-hopping from Rochester to Chicago to Los Angeles to Sydney and finally to Hobart, then driving two hours south and catching a ferry will get you there in about 30 hours. A long haul for a vacation? Perhaps, concedes Amy, but nothing a good novel, an in-flight movie, and a glass of wine can't fix.

During a "once in a lifetime" trip to Australia a few years ago, the Taites fell in love with picturesque Tasmania, Australia's southernmost island state. Back in the States after their sojourn, Amy—whose background is in real estate—surf-ed the Internet looking for Tasmanian properties. She found 500 acres on Bruny Island up for sale and before you could say "advanced search" had flown halfway around the world again to check it out in person. "As soon as I set foot on this property, I knew it was the one," she recalls. "It doesn't reveal itself to you all at once, there is just so much to discover."

Like all pioneers, the Taites then turned their thoughts to shelter. They found the Hobart firm of 1 + 2 Architecture, and began a long conversation with directors Mike Verdouw, Cath Hall, and Fred Ward. According to the architects, the out-of-towners were extremely receptive to notions of a contemporary, sensitive response to the rugged waterfront site.

"Initially they came to us and asked for a log cabin in the woods," Ward recalls. "We explained that here we don't really call it 'the woods' and that we don't really do log cabins. They were very open to our suggestion that the house be a contemporary Australian response."

The design—resolved via countless emails and conference calls—was largely driven by the remoteness of the location, which called for complete self-sufficiency. The Taites' site has no municipal water, power, or sewer connections, so the architects had to balance their clients' modern needs with certain practical considerations.

"It's all new to me," admits Amy, who is grateful that an onsite caretaker keeps things ticking when they're ►

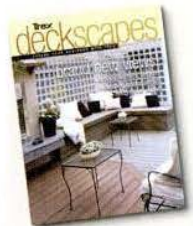
Solar panels mounted on a shipping container onsite (not pictured) heat this curvy house in Tasmania. The swooping roof cantilevered over the west-facing desk mitigates the intense afternoon sun.





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## Off the Grid

not there. They got most of their wishes—hot tub, dishwasher, clothes dryer—but had to agree to a smaller one-level house instead of a larger double-story design. “There was some compromise on their part,” says Ward. “We couldn’t have heated a really big volume.”

The house observes passive solar design principles, and most of its power comes from six photovoltaic cells mounted on a disused shipping container parked in a sunny clearing about 100 feet from the house. The architects angled the solar panels on a tilted roof to make the most of the intense sun in this somewhat ozone-depleted region. “We like to recycle where possible, so the shipping container was a good cost-effective option,” says Mike Verdouw.

Rain collects in two 2,600-gallon tanks nestled in the shade near the house and the water is channeled underground, via four-inch conduit, into the kitchen and bathrooms. Portable gas cylinders fuel the hot-water system and the cooking appliances. Bathroom and kitchen waste is collected underground and processed in a septic tank before being dispersed around the garden via a network of subterranean trenches. Rod Cooper, who designed this passive system, encouraged the Taits to plant native shrubs along the trenches, as the plants absorb the nutrients from the waste and the rest seeps into the earth or gets evaporated by the sun and wind.

Lightweight, inexpensive, low-maintenance building materials were deemed essential, especially given the site’s access difficulties and the foul weather during construction. The structure is a combination of galvanized steel and timber on a raised steel sub-frame floor, and the exterior is clad in oiled timber planks. Inside there’s low-fuss plasterboard, polished hardwood flooring, and neutral-toned carpet.

At present, the Taits visit their remote island hideaway once or twice a year to steal some quiet moments before heading back to work, school, and other commitments in Rochester. Eventually, they plan to scale things back and make much more time for Bruny Island. “The seasons are opposite, so we’ll be able to have summer in Rochester, then a second summer in Tasmania,” says Amy, with more than a hint of glee. ■



**Roughing it? Hardly.** The Taits had to make only minimal compromises to obtain their sustainable dream home.

High ceilings and generous expanses of glass more than compensate for the lack of a second floor.



## Nice Curves

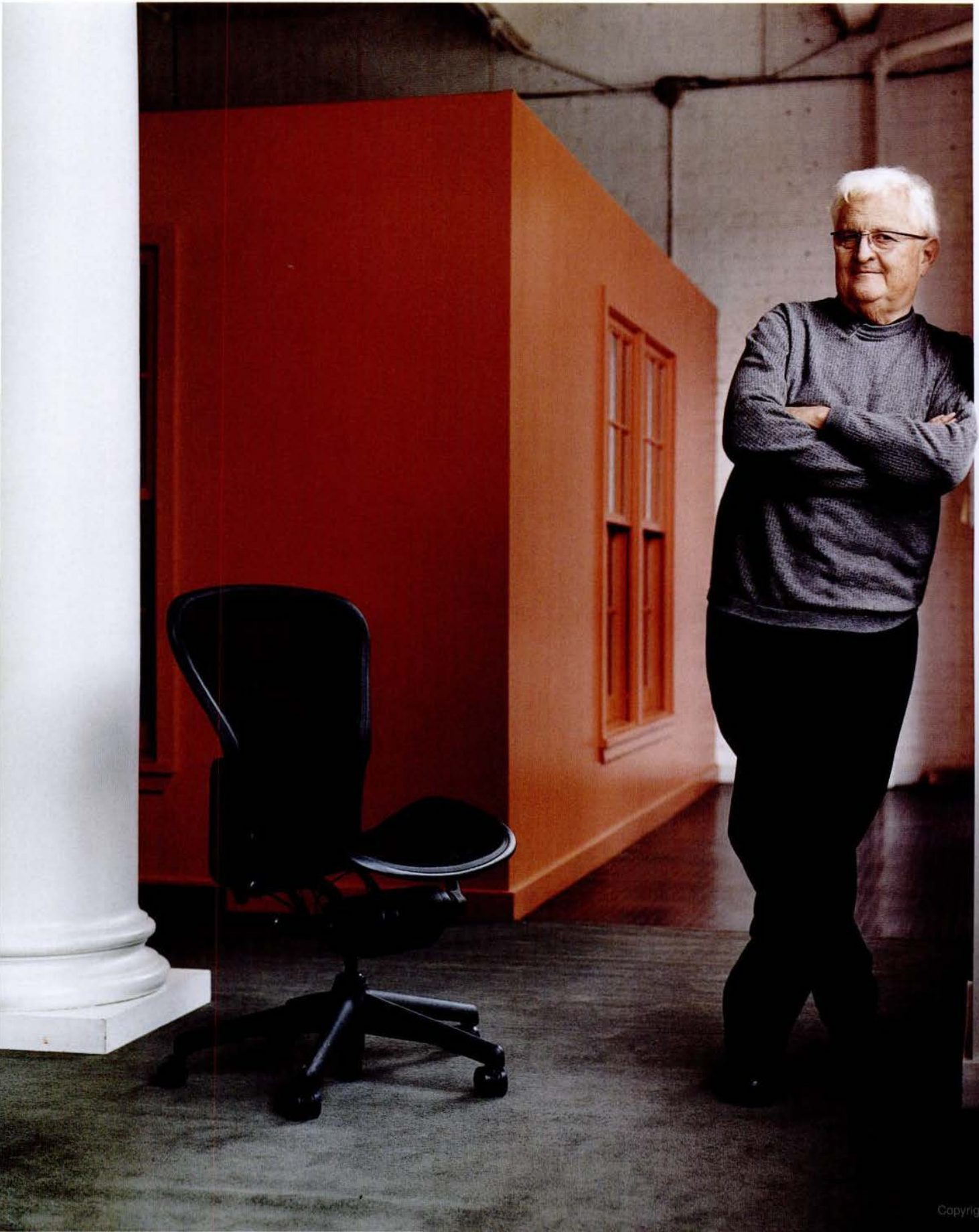
With its bold, upswept profile, the roof gives this otherwise simple house its distinctive character. But those curves are not merely for show. The concave forms are integral to the dwelling’s self-sufficiency because they act as water collectors and sun protection. When rain hits the roof, it runs down into holes punched into the valleys created by the tilt of the corrugated-steel sheets. Underneath these holes, which are too small for leaves to penetrate, the water collects in a concealed gutter and is piped down the side

of the house and underground to the nearby water tanks. Using a combination of computer technology and onsite observation, the architects calculated how far the main roof would have to overhang the north elevation to let in as much low winter sun as possible, while shielding the interior from the more extreme summer sun. The nearly 13-foot-high expanse of glazing that embraces the views really needed protecting—and the four-foot eave created by the sweep of the main roof does the job well. —C.F.











**Kant** / Designed by Patrick Frey and Markus Boge for Nils Holger Moormann / \$1,950–\$3,035

Available in both sitting and standing heights, Kant is a straightforward work table with a witty twist—a V-shaped groove in the desktop acts as a bookshelf. Modular accessories include drawers, bookends, a computer tray, and a monitor panel. Height: 29 or 44", Width: 62 or 74", Depth: 41"

**Expert Opinion:** You can't really rank these things, but this one is the best to me. It has a Gerrit Rietveld kind of excitement to it. It looks good without anything on it and would

look good with stuff too. A design has to embrace the idea of human complexity. In our suburbs the metaphors of design are early American, not modern, but a modern piece can transcend that problem. A Noguchi table can fit in any interior, and this desk could too.

**What We Think:** When we first saw the Kant series at last year's Cologne furniture fair, we were immediately drawn to its simple and adaptable design. Having a desk where the clutter tends to shift to the rear and pile up, the V-shaped notch seems like the perfect organizational solution. ▶



At work, you don't usually get to choose where you sit, but at home it's a different story. Dwell asked designer Bill Stumpf, whose ergonomically sound chairs make overtime okay, to review five new desks.

# Live/Work

**A Note by Our Expert:** "In the predigital era, desks had an architectural presence at home and the office. When my Swiss grandfather died at age 90, the family was riddled with anxiety and wonder as to what was to be found in his massive locked oak desk. He was a theologian, and wrote books and daily letters. He used real ink and a fountain pen. He sat at his desk on a swivel piano stool with the posture of a church organist. While one could enter his study, no one was allowed to sit or tinker at his desk. It was a very private domain not unlike a woman's purse. It was an adult plaything, a place more than a piece of furniture. Today, for better or worse, the laptop has replaced the desk. The designs discussed here I would call table/desks, for none of them have the architectural import of what used to be something called a desk."

**At the time of this writing, Bill Stumpf can be found** in one of his favorite places, sitting at his desk working on a manuscript in the home office he keeps in Stockholm, a small town in western Wisconsin's hilly Coulee Region. For Stumpf, writing is "serious mind work"—a task he considers, in this day and age, better accomplished at home than at the office. Speaking in a rambling first-draft stream of consciousness, he elaborates, "You can take your shoes off. You can dress any way you want. You can have one hand on your dog. You can optimize the place to work and concentrate. I just got fed up with working in an institutional environment—including my own office."

A seasoned designer whose distinguished tenure for Herman Miller has resulted in the award-winning Ergon, Equa, and dot-com-synonymous/simple ubiquitous Aeron chairs (with Don Chadwick), Stumpf not only knows enough about offices to be authoritative in their dismissal, he knows a lot about everything. Having previously authored *The Ice Palace That Melted Away: Restoring Civility and Other Lost Virtues to Everyday Life*, Stumpf's current manuscript concerns what he calls "the arts of daily living"—a maddeningly broad topic that he approaches with both wizardly acumen and childlike

curiosity. In our brief hour-long conversation, Stumpf's mind raced from his Swiss grandfather's study to IBM cubicles to beds that rock adults to sleep to an Eames Aluminum Group chair being unearthed in a trash heap of the future to Julia Child's kitchen to America's lack of educational programs in design research.

The maelstrom of anecdotes, history, and philosophy is Stumpf's response to focusing his wide-angled attention on desks—that piece of furniture on the other side of his task chairs. Stumpf asserts that one of the biggest problems in office-furniture design is that while manufacturers regularly produce both desks and chairs, they are rarely conceived by the same designer in tandem. Another frustration, Stumpf says, is that "the serious tools you'll find in an institutional environment are hard to come by in home offices." Lamenting the furniture selection in office supply stores, he continues, "If the amount of money being spent on commercial equipment in home kitchens were being spent for use on home offices, you'd see a much higher quality of design."

At the same time Stumpf remains aloof: "I'm not sure there is a direct correlation between a piece of furniture and productivity." He adds, "I'm sure Herman Miller wouldn't want to hear me say that."



## Dwell Reports

**Eileen** / Designed by Antonio Citterio for B&B Italia / \$3,243–\$3,846

Joining B&B's Eileen family of side tables is this larger cousin, a fairly simple two-drawer writing desk. Set atop a colored steel frame, the work surface is available in natural, black, or Russian leather. Height: 28 3/8", Width: 52 3/4", Depth: 18 1/8"

**Expert Opinion:** I like this one because I think it might be expensive. I know I sound like a heretic, but I would like to encourage Americans to think more seriously about and cherish their furniture more than they do. It's always called high-end, but I see more durability and better material use. It's like buying a decent pair of shoes. The idea of designing something that can be handed down from one generation to another is, I think, less environmentally consumptive than the recycling process.

**What We Think:** While many desks these days are little more than glorified workbenches, this design, especially in Russian leather, takes a step toward the elegant and tactile qualities of an antique. We might even be inspired to write more letters, while keeping the desktop pristinely clear.



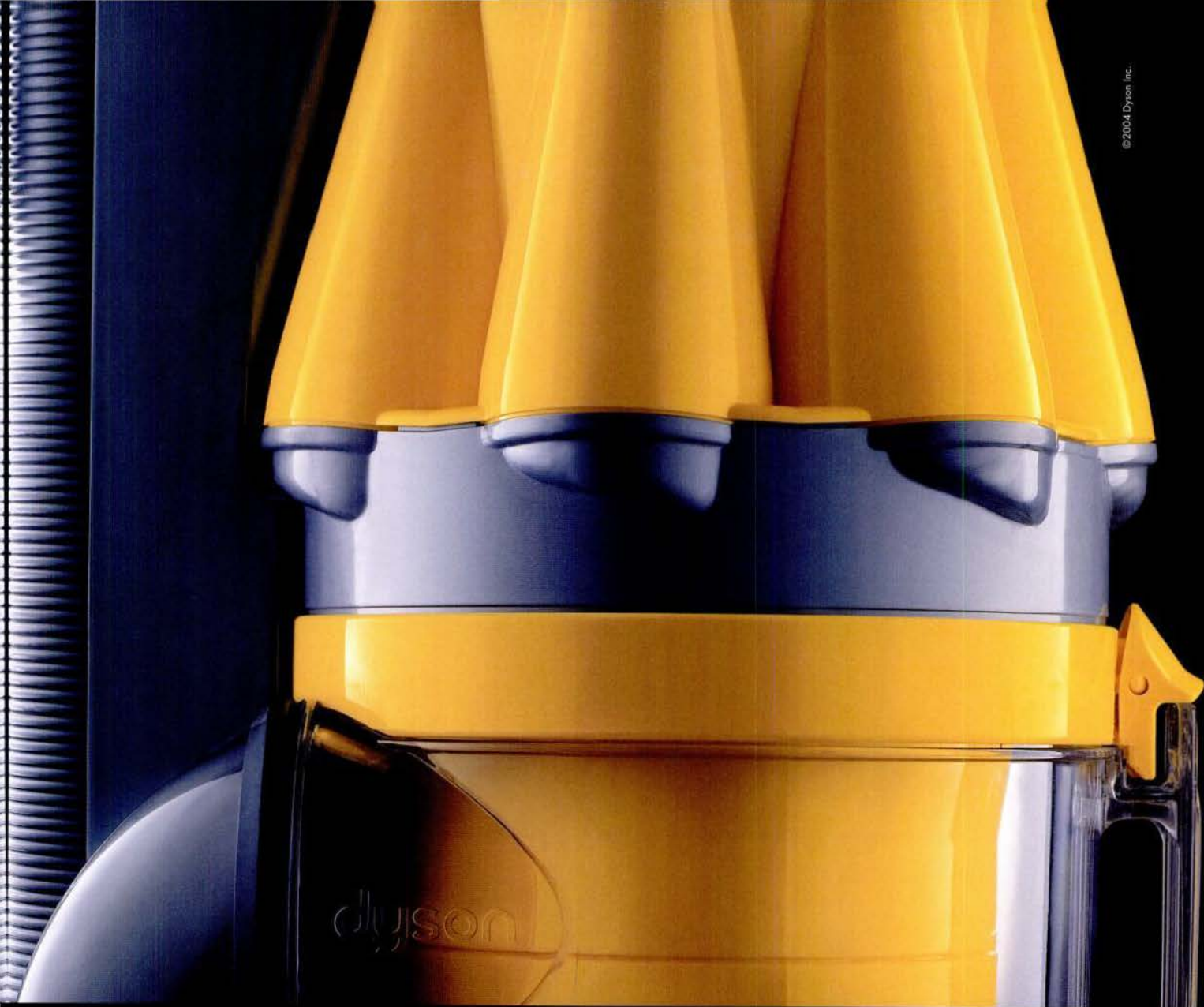
**Contours** / Designed by Didier Gomez for Ligne Roset / \$2,540

Basic rectilinear groupings and luxurious materials like white lacquer and anthracite glass are the hallmarks of Gomez's Contours line, which includes this generously proportioned writing desk. Height: 27 1/2", Width: 69", Depth: 29 1/2"

**Expert Opinion:** To me this is neither here nor there. The design is very clean, but it doesn't speak to me of anything that I haven't seen 100 times before. I believe in advancing the arts of daily living, and design should tag along behind that. I think the notion that all our nerve bundles are tied to our eyes is really stupid. I know the visual arts are an important thing, but to me design is a much more layered process. Things that look simple can have a depth to them that goes beyond one's eyeballs.

**What We Think:** Given that the surface of our desk rarely sees the light of day, we appreciate the fact that this design provides a cubby slightly below to stow most of our junk. We agree with Stumpf in that the design isn't aesthetically revolutionary, but the sturdiness and quality of the materials make up for it. ►





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**Motiv** / Designed by Thomas Eriksson  
for IKEA / \$399

Featuring an array of storage spaces, including cubbies for keyboards and laptops, drawers, and a hidden file holder, Motiv is constructed largely of veneered fiberboard and recycled materials. Height: 29 7/8", Width: 63", Depth: 31 1/2"

**Expert Opinion:** I don't know about this one—not because I'm too rich to buy something at IKEA, but there's something in the use of materials that reduces the importance of objects. I would rather have a very simple Shaker desk out of solid wood versus any veneered material—something I could resand and refinish. Something my great-grandson might use.

**What We Think:** While Stumpf is right in thinking that we wouldn't exactly hand this down to the next generation, for modernists on a budget, it sure beats what you'd find at OfficeMax. We like the large surface to spread our materials on, but the rear hatches are unaccommodating for anything other than a laptop computer (even our super-thin flat-screen monitor couldn't find a home).



**Lucy** / Designed by Richard Holbrook for  
Richard Holbrook Design / \$1,250

Holbrook claims the inspiration for Lucy's curves and lightweight "hollow-body" construction comes from B.B. King's signature guitar, Lucille. The desk also features an overhead shelf with built-in bookends, dry-erase tablet for notes, pencil cup, and three shallow dishes to corral clips and other small items. Height: 59", Width: 48", Depth: 30"

**Expert Opinion:** There's a utility to Holbrook's solution—he's the only one here using space above the desk, which is a useful thing. I could see a coat hanging on it. It might engage clutter more easily—which is a good thing. Maybe I shouldn't criticize it so harshly for being derivative in form, but that swagged leg has been done before. There's a moral obligation to be more creative than that. A lot of stuff today looks like George Nelson designed it.

**What We Think:** Perhaps being in the western half of the country makes us inclined to spread out horizontally, but Holbrook encourages us to think vertically—which is perfect for more cramped quarters (like an East Village studio). We're not thrilled by the aesthetics, but the "hollow-body" surface is both lightweight and, thanks to those swagged legs, sturdy. ■





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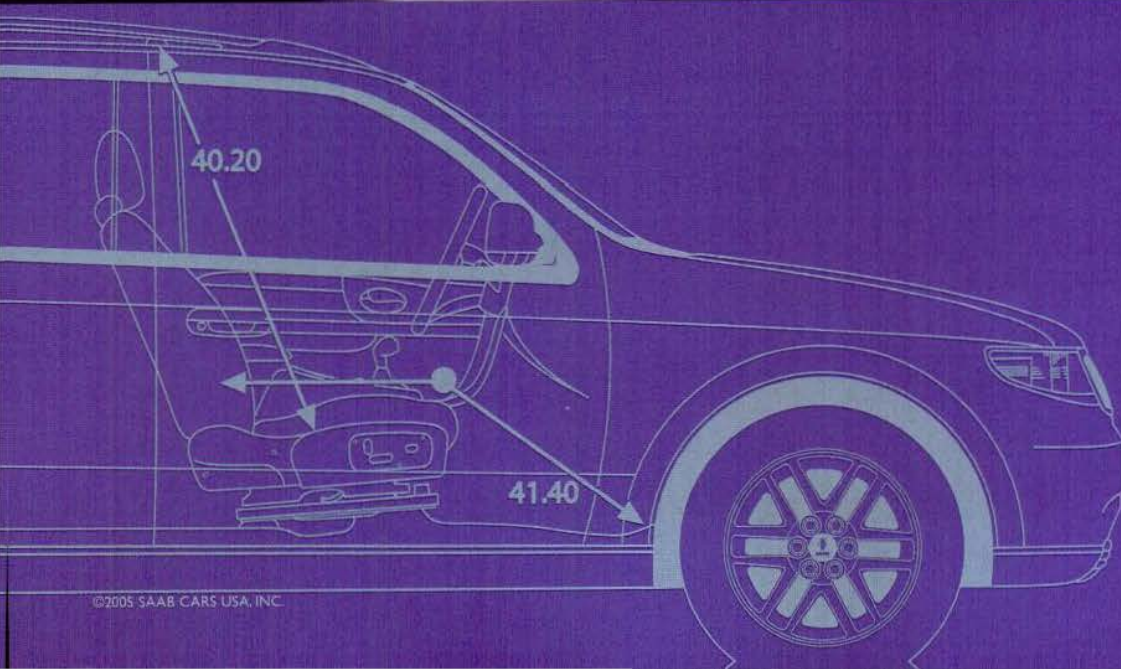
California King \$2000

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## Education by Design

You won't find the usual home economics class offered here—DASH, southern Florida's Design and Architecture Senior High School, is unlike any other magnet school in the country. Established in 1990 and located in the heart of the Miami Design District, DASH promotes innovation through its curriculum, its educators, and, most important, its students. You're likely to find dedicated pupils already working in the offices of local architects and other designers, while attending classes. Eighty percent of DASH's seniors intern in design firms in the district, explains Dr. Stacey Mancuso, DASH principal and sculpture teacher. "Students see firsthand the professional life that awaits them." More artists-in-residence than typical teachers, DASH faculty, Mancuso explains, "treat the students as professionals, not just kids."

DASH's rigorous programming sets it apart from the traditional American high school curriculum, offering classes in fashion, industrial, and architecture/interior design, fine arts, entertainment technology, and visual communications, as well as advanced placement subjects like physics and English lit. Ninety-eight percent of its graduating classes continue on to four-year colleges, including prestigious design schools like Rhode Island School of Design, Cornell, and Pratt.

DASH possesses an inspired vision, not to mention notable alumni, including fashion darling Esteban Cortazar, who began showing his women's wear collection in New York while still a senior at DASH. "Education by Design," as the DASH motto goes, represents the best of mergers between academic and real-life experience. ■

Voted "Cool School of the Month" by pop-culture barometer *Teen People*, DASH opens up the world of design to students who "are not the type to fit in a typical high school."







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## Beyond the Garden Wall

Even in winter, the very hardy Neil and Marion Thomson (shown here with their dog Dyson) enjoy the great outdoors from their expansive patio. The exterior is clad in stone that matches the house's surrounding garden walls.

**Edinburgh confronts you with history at every turn.** Look down or up and you'll see features that intrigue, from the elaborate gothic tower on the city's main shopping street to markings in the cobbles that denote former city limits. But Edinburgh is not a city-sized tourist museum; it's a living city with a thriving bar scene (aided by a sizable student population), busy shopping streets, and an ever-growing number of restaurants. It's also home to the U.K.'s largest group of cultural festivals, which ensures a huge influx of visitors every August. The Edinburgh International Festival brings theater, music, and dance to the city, though the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is equally established now, with its comic acts from around the world. There is also the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, which is a display of martial skills rather than something a drunken sailor gets on shore leave.

Among the historic buildings, it's possible to spot some modern architecture, notably the new Scottish Parliament building, but the whole city is hemmed in

by the picturesque surrounding hills and countryside, meaning that almost every sliver of land has already been developed—a fact that became all too clear to Neil and Marion Thomson when they were in pursuit of a plot on which to build. Having approached Richard Murphy Architects to design their modern retirement home, the couple spent three years searching for a plot of land, unaware that they were looking out the window every day at the perfect spot. That spot was the grass tennis court at the bottom of their steeply sloping garden, but securing it was just the start of a long slog to gain planning consent in a 900-year-old area of Edinburgh where the last new house was built in the late 1960s.

Richard Murphy finally won over the authorities with a three-bedroom "invisible" design complete with green roof and a curved glass front. The house is stepped down to make it look more like a piece of terraced garden than a 21st-century home, which means that it is partially underground, though two strips of skylights let the light flood in. Dwell recently spoke with the Thomsons ▶



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## Elsewhere

Though the local planning commission forbids development within the backyards of homes, the architects were able to persuade the powers that be

that the design of this particular house would be virtually unseen by both of its neighbors. Inside, south-facing roof lights brighten living spaces.

about what it feels like to get the first new house built in their neighborhood in nearly 40 years.

**During the lengthy planning process, did you ever feel like giving up?**

**Marion:** We were so adamant that we wanted to build the house. On the drawing board it just looked so great. I think it was called “the secret house” in the planning stages in the office and I thought that was lovely.

**Neil:** Our contention, and Richard’s, was that it is a fallacy to think that good design using good materials can’t sit in juxtaposition with older buildings. Then it was a question of trying to make it sympathetic to the area and that’s where he came up with the idea of the green roof and trying to make it look like a terraced garden. That, coupled with the stone walls, as all boundary walls are here. It is Dunmore stone, which is similar to the sandstone that Edinburgh is built on.

**What made you want to stay in Edinburgh?**

**Neil:** It’s a nice mixture, an open type city. It’s a big village really, compared with the major cities down south. In retirement we can take the city or leave it. We don’t have to go to the center to work. We go in to shop or to go to the theater.

**Marion:** The Water of Leith river is at the bottom of the garden and you are in the Pentland Hills in minutes. I make it out there every day, that’s why we’ve got the dog [a Dalmatian puppy named Dyson]. He is not up to 20 miles yet, but he will be.

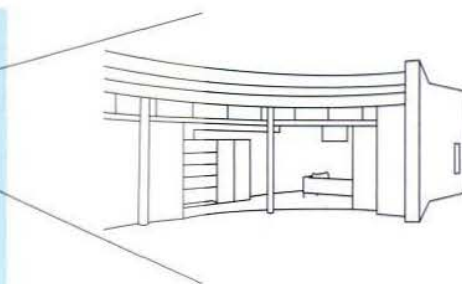
**How do you feel about living underground?**

**Neil:** As a surveyor, the thought of 600 millimeters [23 and a half inches] of earth on top of the roof—it was always my concern that it wouldn’t drain properly. But it has been ten months now and it is working fine.

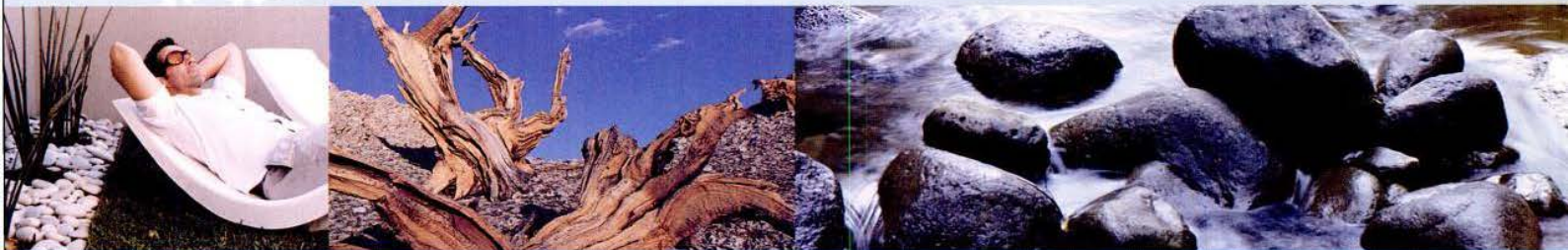
**Marion:** I always just imagined a meadow growing up on the roof.

**What do you like most about your home?**

**Marion:** The light. Even on a Scottish gray day this place is not dark. The heat from the sun is amazing. It’s wonderful. We needed a large area outside as we eat breakfast out, even in the snow. We are hardy people. The door opens all the way across, so outdoors is like another room. It is funny, because 60-plus-year-olds are meant to move into little bungalows and be quiet, but we have always fancied modern and new. People would expect to see young executives here. But here we are. ▶







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## Where to Go: Edinburgh



**Scottish Parliament** / Holyrood / [www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk)

Controversial from a political and aesthetic viewpoint, the Scottish Parliament building, designed by Enric Miralles, houses the new Scottish Assembly. It is best known for exceeding its initial budget by sevenfold, coming in at around \$814 million.

**Concrete Butterfly** / 317–319 Cowgate / 011-44-131-558-7130

This delightfully cluttered store is run by a group of young Scottish designers who sell their clothes, jewelry, and accessories in a youthful-feeling corner of the city that also houses other design shops.

**Hotel Bonham** / 35 Drumsheugh Gardens / [www.thebonham.com](http://www.thebonham.com)

Once a dorm for female medical students, this elegant Victorian became one of the city's coolest boutique hotels in 1998; its 48 rooms feature a contemporary art collection by 30 up-and-coming Scottish artists.

**Edinburgh Castle** / Castlehill / 011-44-131-225-9846

Hard to miss, as it sits on a (long dead) volcanic base overlooking the city, this is the perfect place to get the lay of the land or delve into the city's royal connections. A gun goes off at 1 p.m. each day, so set your watch and cover your ears.

**Royal Mile** / High Street

This wide thoroughfare at the heart of

historic Edinburgh is not to be missed. Stuffed full of dark, atmospheric bars and alleyways with names such as Fleshmarket Close, it's the ideal place to get the feel of the city as well as pick up whiskey and tartans for the folks back home.

**Habitat** / 32 Shandwick Place / [www.habitat.co.uk](http://www.habitat.co.uk) / 011-44-131-225-9151

This chain has long been responsible for bringing affordable contemporary design to British homes. With everything from Robin Day chairs to cut-price cutlery on offer, it's hard to leave empty-handed.

**Rick's** / 55a Frederick Street / [www.ricksedinburgh.co.uk](http://www.ricksedinburgh.co.uk) / 011-44-131-622-7800

Unsure whether it's a hotel with a bar or a hip bistro with some rooms out back, Rick's is never going to be the quietest place to stay. But the boutique-style rooms are compact and comfortable, and they place you right in the center of the shopping district.

**Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art** / 75 Belford Road / [www.natgalscot.ac.uk](http://www.natgalscot.ac.uk) / 011-44-131-624-6200

This 19th-century building on the outskirts of the city houses an impressive international collection, though its largest draw is the outstanding collection of modern British art. Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, and Francis Bacon are well represented, as is acclaimed Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh. ■

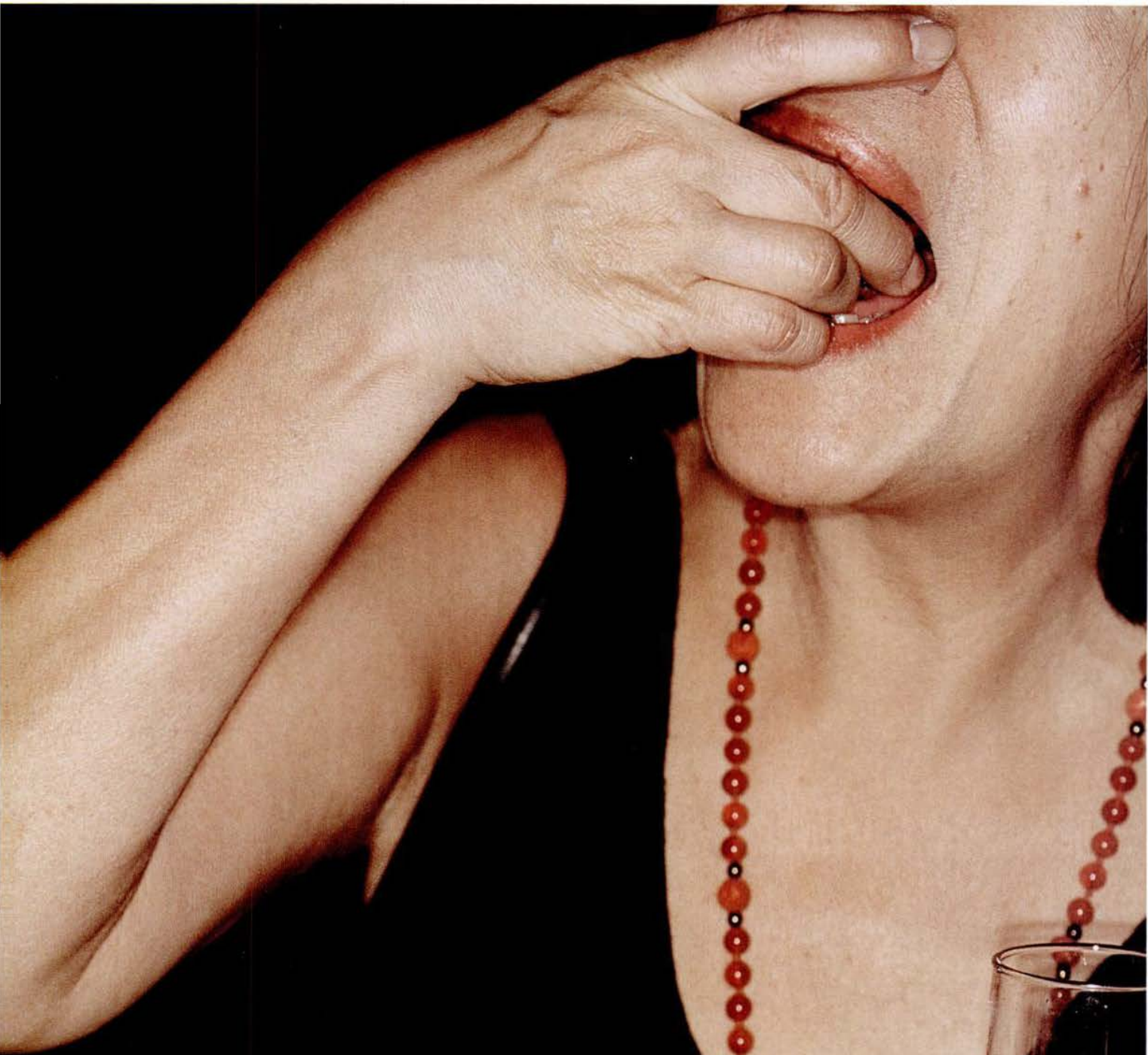




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## Art Basel Miami

Last December, art aficionados flocked to South Beach for Art Basel Miami, America's biggest contemporary art fair. An unprecedented number of European visitors celebrated the sunshine and weak dollar. Galleries from the world over filled the convention center; others had shows by the beach, in retrofitted shipping containers by LOT/EK. The Wolfsonian museum threw a big bash, and photographer Martin Parr documented the debauchery. ►



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**Éô Bicho** / By Ernesto Neto at the Margulies Collection / [www.margulieswarehouse.com](http://www.margulieswarehouse.com)



**Wiggin Village** / By Jim Drain and Ara Peterson at Moore Space / [www.themoospace.org](http://www.themoospace.org)



**Marble Slicer** / By Mona Hatoum at Alexander and Bonin / [www.alexanderandbonin.com](http://www.alexanderandbonin.com)

Miami's Design District hosted block parties two nights in a row, where showrooms stayed open late for special events. The Swarovsky crystal company filled a factory penthouse with sparkling contemporary chandeliers by designers like Ron Arad, Matali Crasset, and Yves Behar. In a vast warehouse, the Italian Trade Commission served wine to visitors of "Luxury in Living," a stimulating show of over 100 furniture pieces from Italy, unfortunately not for sale.



**Rorschach** / By Cornelia Parker at D'Amelio Terras Gallery / [www.damelioterras.com](http://www.damelioterras.com)



**Liberta Chair** / By Afra and Tobia Scarpa for Meritalia / [www.luxuryinliving.com](http://www.luxuryinliving.com)



**Untitled** / By Wayne Gonzales at Paula Cooper Gallery / [www.artnet.com](http://www.artnet.com)





**Plano** / By Silvana Angeletti and Daniele Ruzza  
for Fratelli Fantini / [www.luxuryinliving.com](http://www.luxuryinliving.com)



**Asana Chair** / By Giorgio Gurioli for Kundalini /  
[www.luxuryinliving.com](http://www.luxuryinliving.com)



**Wall Wall** / By Robert Beck at the Buena Vista  
Building / [www.crggallery.com](http://www.crggallery.com)

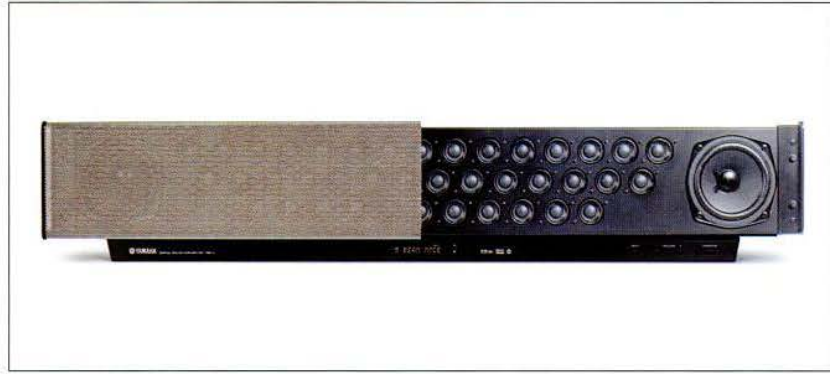


Edgar Degas, *Dancers at Rest* 1884-1885  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France





**SD Video Camera** / By Panasonic / [www.panasonic.com](http://www.panasonic.com)



**YSP-1** / By Yamaha / [www.yamaha.com](http://www.yamaha.com)

## Consumer Electronics Show

At the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas (which happens to coincide with an Adult Entertainment Expo—make your own correlations), huge crowds worked their way through huge booths (the products get smaller, but the booths get bigger) and Microsoft's fully wired NextGen Home to inspect the latest offerings from the world's leading electronics manufacturers.



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**Motorola Razzr V3** / By Motorola / [www.motorola.com](http://www.motorola.com)



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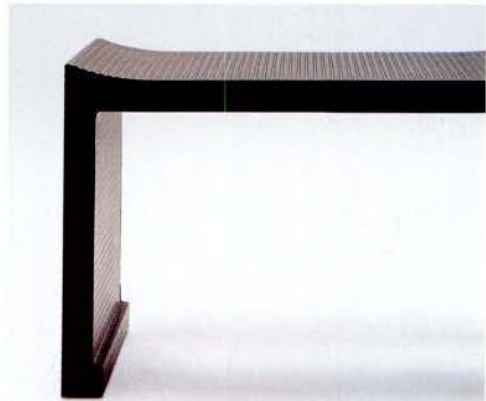
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From Seoul, South Korea, the highway that leads to the Heyri Valley is lined with chain-link and barbed-wire fencing. To the left, soldiers armed with machine guns man imposing watchtowers, while to the right, closely packed residential skyscrapers create a near solid wall of concrete and steel. From the road, the mountains and cliffs of the secret world of North Korea look close enough to touch. And until this past June, propaganda that spewed forth from loudspeakers across the half-mile-wide Imjin River could be heard throughout the day, informing residents of the North's promises of a better life.

Despite the cold war-like conditions between divided

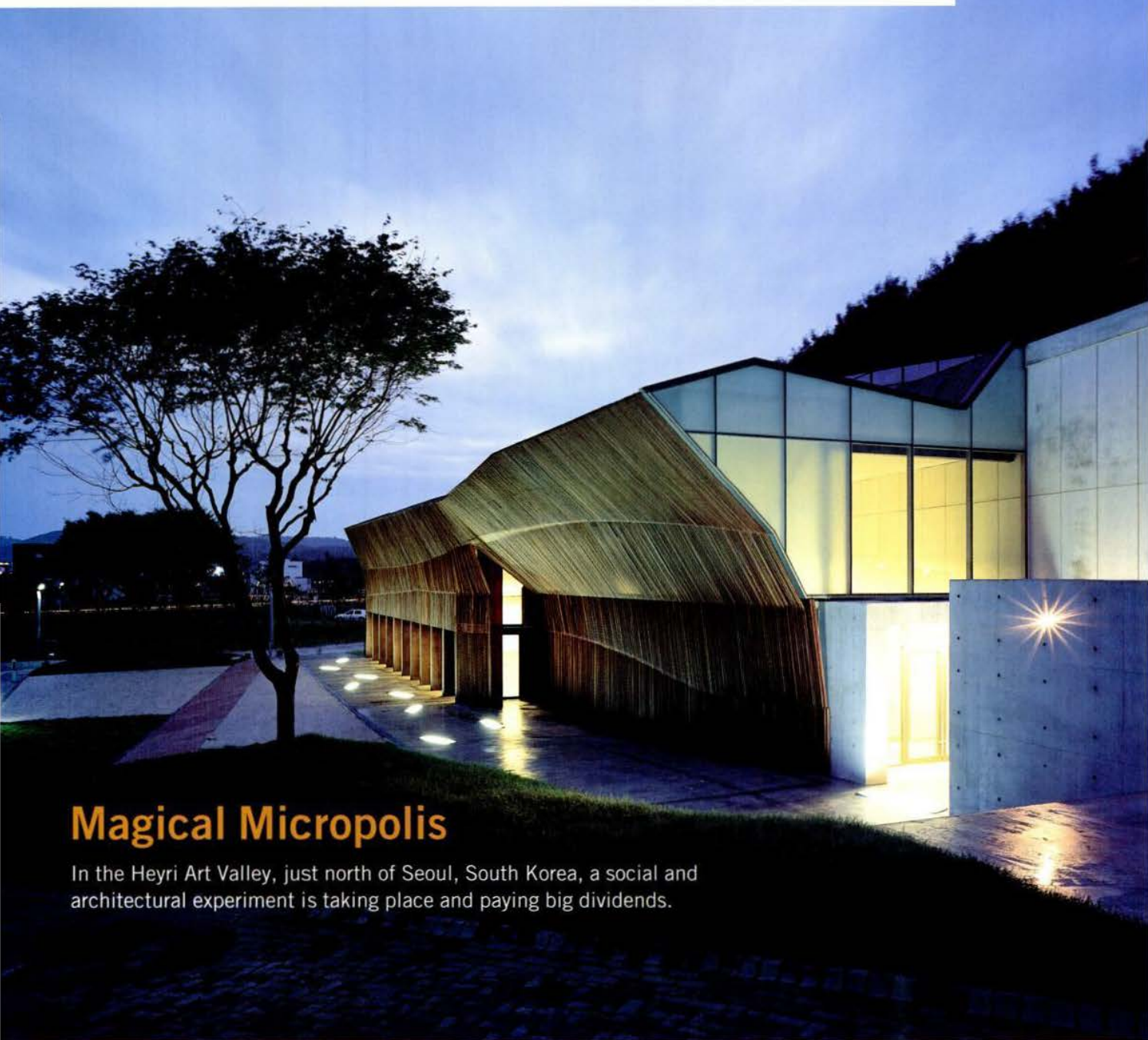
North and South Korea, the tensions between the two countries have eased somewhat in recent years. As part of burgeoning hopes of better relations, the South Korean government recently deaccessioned portions of land near the demilitarized zone, which have been purchased for nominal fees by various developers.

One of the towns to rise from this land grab is the Heyri Art Valley. This community, located less than an hour north of Seoul, was settled by a unionized group of artists, filmmakers, writers, and publishers and planned by Jun Sung Kim and Jong Kyu Kim, two foreign-trained architects based in Korea, and Un-Ho Kim, the chairman of ▶

The Hangil Bookhouse is a popular gathering place for residents. The library/restaurant is the publisher's contribution to the town's community-minded efforts.

## Magical Micropolis

In the Heyri Art Valley, just north of Seoul, South Korea, a social and architectural experiment is taking place and paying big dividends.







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## Context

both the Hangilsa publishing house (one of Korea's foremost publishers of art books) and Heyri. When approaching this valley, the two architects set out to design a community from scratch amid the green, mountainous terrain.

A master plan consisting of 390 lots was laid out in 1999 and construction began in 2001. So far, nearly 60 buildings have been erected, almost all landmarks unto themselves. With recommended design guidelines set by the two Kims (who are not related), the buildings in Heyri are constructed when there is a prospective client, and so far have sprung up from the landscape as a series

of modern structures clad in Cor-Ten steel, concrete, and glass. In addition to contributions from foreign architects like Florian Beigel of London, and James Slade and SHoP/Sharples Holden Pasquarelli of New York—many of whom were classmates or associates of the town planners from Columbia's school of architecture in New York or the Architectural Association in London—the designs for the town have come from the current vanguard of Korean architects, including Minsuk Cho of Mass Studies, Moongyu Choi of Ga.A Architects, Wook Choi, and Kyung Kook Woo, among many others.

Educated at the Architectural Association in London, ▶

The Dalki Theme Park, designed by Moongyu Choi, Minsuk Cho, and James Slade, is one of the first buildings seen upon entering Heyri, and one of the most striking.







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Jong Kyu Kim returned to Korea in 1993 to find a starkly traditionalist architectural culture. Hit particularly hard by the Asian financial crisis, the Korean government received a \$60 billion loan in 1997 and development soon followed. "People started to pay attention to design and started to select people for quality," he explains.

As fellow colleagues returned from studies abroad and the markets in Korea started to improve, Jong Kyu Kim and Jun Sung Kim, who had studied at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, began to cultivate an idea of local community that pushed forward a "new type of city life," according to Jong Kyu Kim.

One of the first social guidelines set forth for Heyri by the designing duo was the residential requirement of some sort of community contribution. For that reason, many of the houses are mixed use, and several feature coffee shops and galleries on the ground floor with residences above. All the buildings in Heyri—stores, cafés, galleries, an art school, and a film production studio—take their cues from the architectural guidelines, which emphasize a clean-lined architectural language that is spare, but with unique variations.

But perhaps the most interesting aspect of the new community blossoming among the mountain ranges is ►

Dalki's airy and open floor plan allows the building to accommodate the many children who visit on the weekends, seemingly completely at ease in the futuristic structure.





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Heyri's intensely urban, community-minded spirit—notwithstanding its quintessentially suburban form of single-family homes with crisp green yards. In terms of an urban plan, the closest relative to the ideas in Heyri may be New Urbanism, the historic-leaning, picket fence-and-porch approach to planning, but there's no doubt that the unabashedly modern structures in Heyri are worlds away from the Disneyfied pseudohistoric houses found in Celebration, Florida.

Entering Heyri, one of the first structures a visitor encounters is the Dalki Theme Park by Moongyu Choi, Minsuk Chō, and James Slade. Designed as a store for

Dalki, the Korean version of Hello Kitty with a large strawberry head, the surreal three-story building resembles a spaceship that's partly dug into the ground, populated by larger-than-life cartoon figures. On Saturday afternoons, it is often swarming with little children.

A short walk from Dalki, the community suddenly opens up into an area surrounded by hills and the Hangil Bookhouse comes into plain view. Completed last year by SHoP and Jun Sung Kim, the Bookhouse—a kind of library, restaurant, exhibition hall, and café—is Hangilsa Publishing's contribution to the community under construction. The structure features a series of ramps ▶




The Voidium, a private home and cultural center designed by renowned Korean modernist Kyung Kook Woo, sits adjacent to Woo's own home.





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## Context

surrounding a three-story book wall. A densely layered screen of Malaysian hardwood encloses the main exhibition hall and restaurant.

Nearby, across an open field that acts as a de facto town square, stand two buildings by Kyung Kook Woo, a renowned Korean modernist. The Voidium, a house and Buddhist cultural center enclosed by three concrete frames, sits adjacent to a long, cantilevered copper structure that doubles as the Museum of Architecture and Woo's private residence.

Woo's living quarters are spare and elegant, warmed by gracious hospitality and radiant-heated floors. "The Heyri

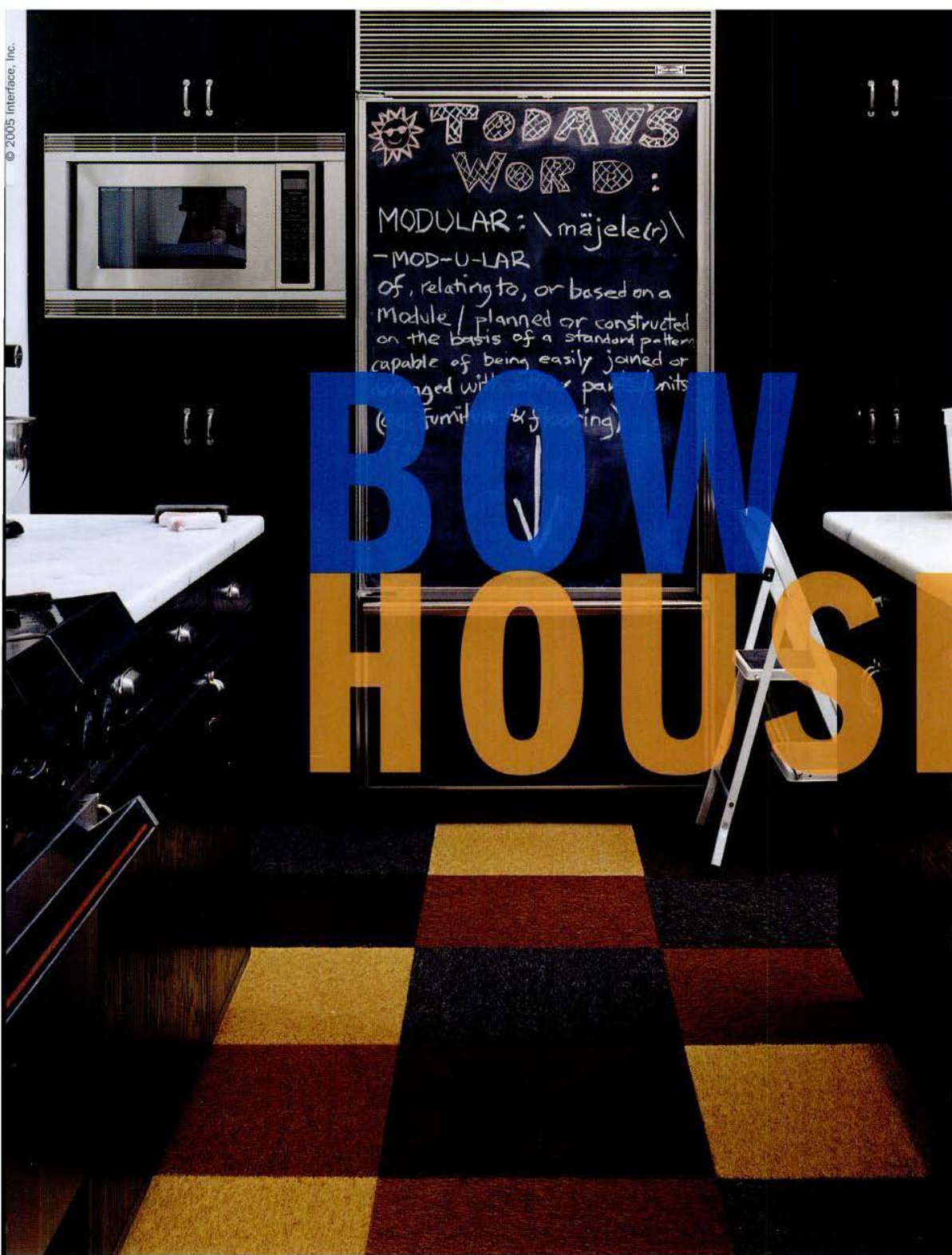
Art Valley belief is a micropolis," explains Woo. "It's like a small city."

The mix of culture and quiet refuge away from Seoul are some of the reasons that he has chosen to live in Heyri with his wife and son. "Every day, my wife says she is very happy—she feels closer to nature," Woo explains. Driven by design and balanced by nature, Heyri stands gracefully at the precipice of conflict, helping to set a new example of peace and modernity for two divided countries. Though building the full community will take almost ten more years, for all the residents and eager onlookers, the town symbolizes a new Korea—and a new world. ■

Kyung Kook Woo's copper-clad home cantilevers out toward the town's center. The floor-to-ceiling windows frame the small city the architect helped to create.







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## Bewitched

The quirky Hexenhaus, located in a forest near Bad Karlshafen, Germany, was created by British architects Alison and Peter Smithson for a man and his cat who felt they were not fully experiencing the woods that surrounded their home.

Located in the midst of the woods that inspired the fairytales of the Brothers Grimm, the Hexenhaus (“witch’s house”) inhabits the territory of both architectural discourse and timeless fantasy. If ever modernism could be said to meet *The Lord of the Rings*, it’s here.

Hyperintellectual English architects Alison and Peter Smithson are better known for their controversial Brutalist monuments built between the 1940s and 1970s, such as Robin Hood Gardens and the Economist Building (both in London), as well as for their sinuous plastic-fantastic 1956 House of the Future. Here, they took an existing “found” house and applied their principles, developed in the 1980s, of “conglomerate ordering.” Through a sequence of modest yet revolutionary

interventions, they changed the structure’s nature totally.

The Hexenhaus is typical of the Smithsons’ later work (Alison passed away in 1993, Peter in 2003) in that it featured a long-term relationship with the client, Axel Bruchhäuser, head of furniture company Tecta. Starting with Axel’s Porch in 1986 and ending with the Lantern Pavilion in 2001, the Smithsons turned a traditional house inside out, through a series of deft touches and delicately realized additions. These pierced the original four walls with a sequence of pavilions, footbridges, annexes, and even a watchtower poised on spindly legs, all linked by walkways connecting interior and exterior and the different levels of the hillside setting and wooded landscape. ▶



PHOTOS COURTESY ALISON AND PETER SMITHSON / 010 PUBLISHERS



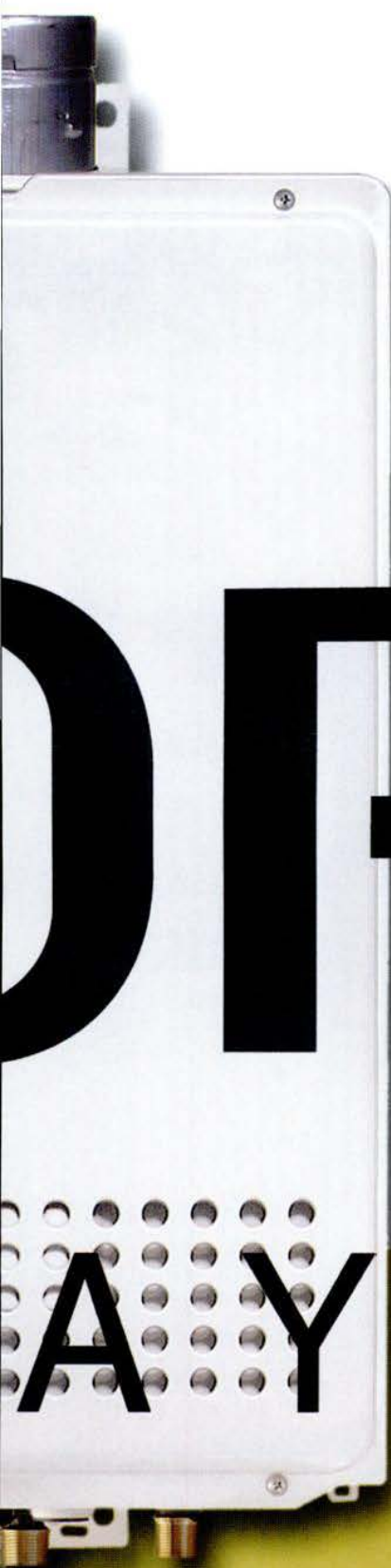
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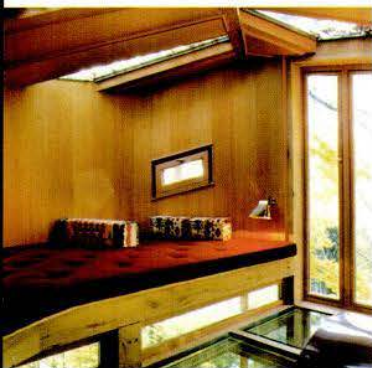
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Top: The interior of the Hexenbesenraum, featuring views to the forest floor below. Above: Reached by a bridge from the house, this tiny pavilion was designed to maximize the view of the sun as it descends through the trees to the river. Right: The Hexenhaus windows open the house to the riverbank outside.



## The Smithsons are best known for their visionary House of the Future, but with the Hexenhaus they looked to the past and to childhood fairytales.

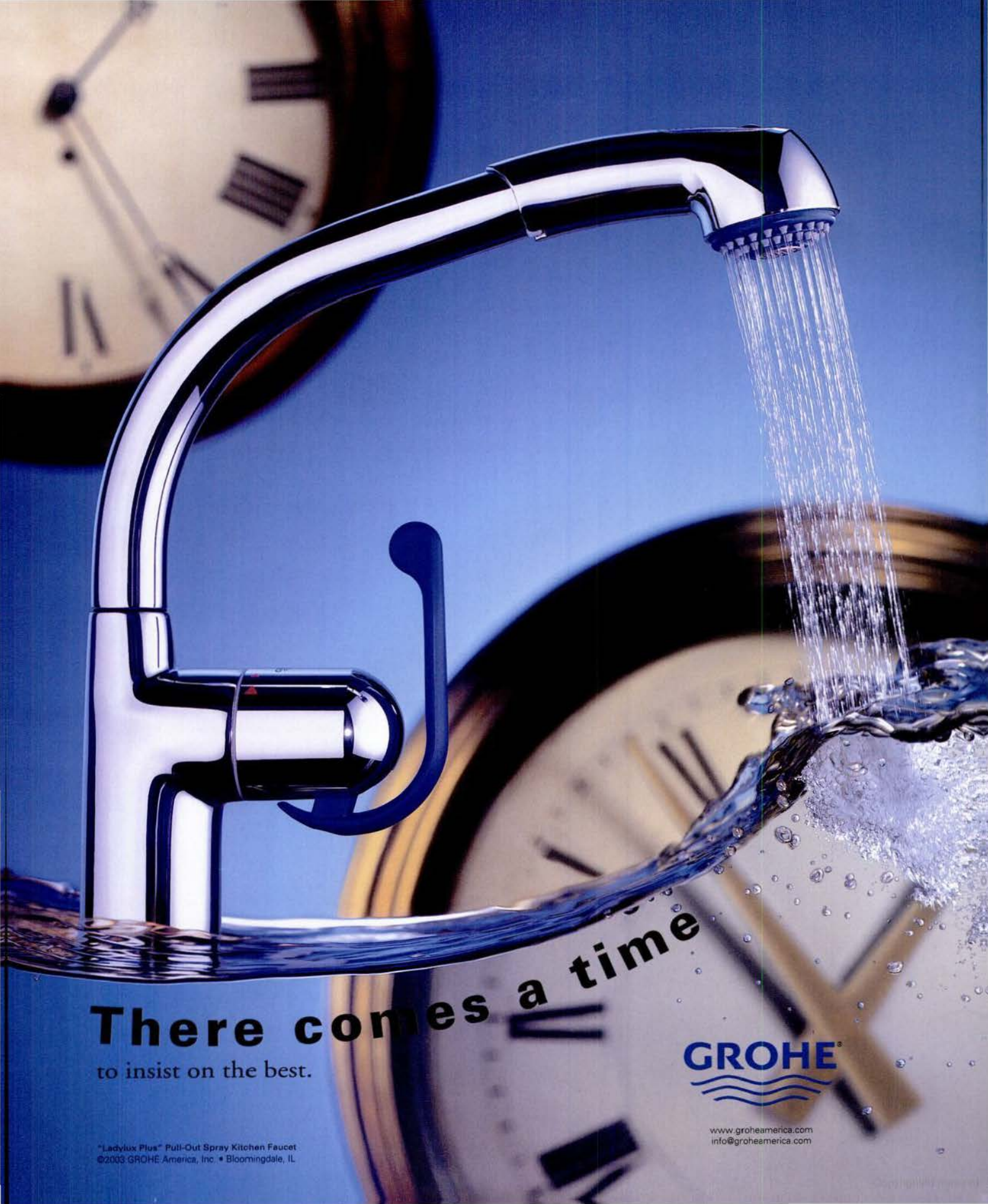
The forms are organic, with large expanses of glass framed by stepped mullions—a modernist Gothic. From all points of the house and its outposts, the view is one of “branches that move and branches that don’t,” as the Smithsons put it. The layering of real and architectural boughs is reminiscent of fan vaulting—only with a kinetic energy. The whole house, in fact, invites you to move through it, with paths appearing before you wherever you turn.

The Hexenbesenraum (“witch’s broom cupboard”), a kind of watchtower (a popular local form) perched on wooden stilts among the trees, serves as a welcome resting point. Not so much an observatory as a kind of sanctuary or hermitage, it allows views only through

narrow slits of windows. A tree-level walkway snakes its way between the bathroom of the Hexenhaus proper and the Hexenbesenraum.

The Upper Walkway also links the house with the Tree Pavilion (1997), a thatched roof hovering on unfeasibly skinny legs and pierced by glass, and the astonishing Lantern Pavilion, with its extraordinary asymmetrical form and interlaced construction. The poetry the Smithsons achieved on this project is nowhere more evident than here, with its semicircular symbols of sun and moon, its lacy structure of sectioned glass, and a white polished-marble floor reflecting the beams and branches above—all creating visionary effects of light, perspective, and a kind of fragmented unity. ■





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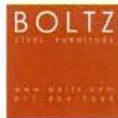
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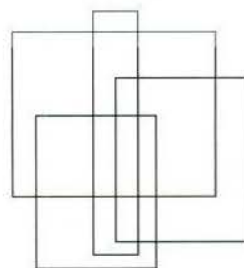
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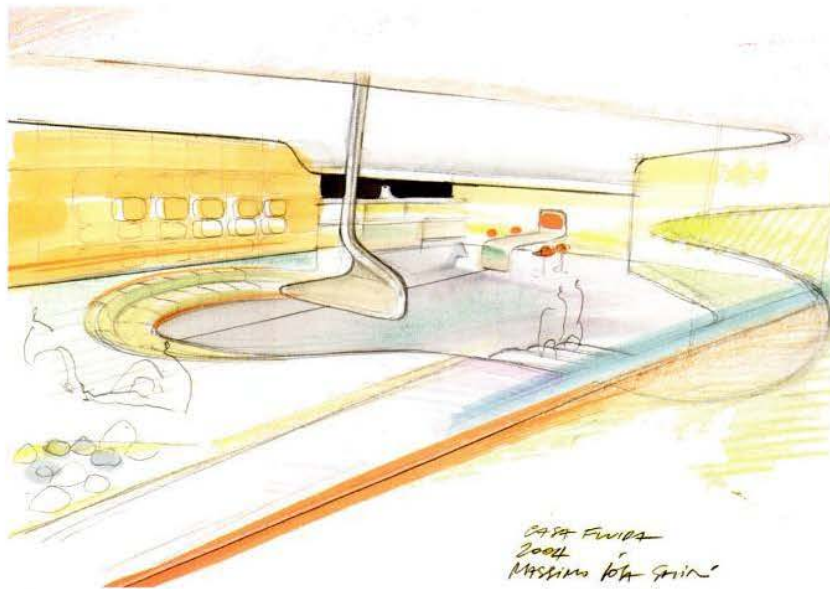
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# Massimo Iosa Ghini: The Speed of Design



Massimo Iosa Ghini has offices in Bologna and Milan. He founded his design studio in 1986.



At the 2004 *Abitare il Tempo* show in Verona, six designers were invited to create living environments. Studio Iosa Ghini showcased the Casa Fluida (above), an open layout of functionally flexible space inspired by the fluid city.

It's a balmy October afternoon in Bologna, Italy. Massimo Iosa Ghini's office is in the old city center, on the second floor of a Renaissance palazzo that now houses grand high-ceilinged offices around a central courtyard. Iosa Ghini, born in 1959, was a formative member of Italy's Bolidism and Memphis movements. Today he practices both architecture and design for clients including—but not limited to—Ferrari, Snaidero, Listone Giordano, Moroso, Poltrona Frau, Zumtobel Staff, Dornbracht, and Duravit.

In a mostly white room spotted with models of racecars, buildings, and other things bearing a streamlined, frozen movement, Iosa Ghini seats himself on one of his office chairs. Several books of his drawings and designs are on the table. After an espresso-fueled greeting, I fumble with my tape recorder. "I've never met a journalist who's comfortable operating one of those things," Iosa Ghini says. "Not even the tech-savvy ones I met in Japan."

**It's true, tape recorders are so cumbersome. But it's impossible to keep up. I remember the pre-computer days, using a typewriter in junior high. Now I need a digital voice recorder.**

That idea—the speed of technology—has long been an issue for me. Is it too quick? We've been in a period where we consider it progress.

**The Bolidism movement was about speed and technology. I heard you founded it here in Bologna. Why was it called Bolidism?**

In Italian, a *bolide* is a fast-moving object, like a projectile, a racecar, or a comet. Back in the '70s, we felt that speed was a theme of the times. But not like Italian futurism of the early 20th century—not just glorifying the power and velocity of machines. We were thinking about speed in a less material sense: computers, and the increasing speed of communication. Of course, as designers, our first inclination was to wonder what the shape of speed is. Then we began to imagine a society of speed, the fluid city—a fantasy town controlled by a constant electronic flux. In a way, it was before its time, since it was before the Internet became mainstream.

**People sometimes say that Bolidism was the precursor of Memphis in the '80s.**

That was because when we started thinking about Bolidism, we started designing things for their shape, ▶





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“All our teachers had preached the mantra ‘form follows function,’ but now I know that wasn’t quite right. Function isn’t the main point.”

—Massimo Iosa Ghini



Like the aesthetics of Bolidism, a movement Iosa Ghini founded in 1985, fluid curves characterize many of his designs, from furniture (top, Moon couch system for Cino, 2003) to interiors (bottom, Ferrari store in Rome, 2004).

their gesture—disregarding whether and how they might be manufactured. In that period design was very close to art. All our teachers had preached the mantra “form follows function,” but now I know that wasn’t quite right. Function isn’t the main point. Like that tape recorder: Why are there thousands of different tape recorders in the world, if they all share the same function? Because there are millions of different social groups, with varying aesthetic preferences. Design communicates an object’s place in human culture.

Memphis brought this idea to a further extreme, designing things deliberately devoid of function—from production to final use. After that, designers thought about materiality in a different way. The syllogism “I’m designing a cup, cups are glass, so my cup will be glass” became obsolete.

**These days the number of material choices seems to grow exponentially. What’s happened since Memphis?**

Design is a more social phenomenon—it’s moved further and further in that direction. Philippe Starck’s designs, for instance, probably wouldn’t have happened if not for Memphis. His work is distinctly communicative, and it also addresses material possibilities. A Starck chair has the same structural function chairs have always had, but it’s made of translucent plastic.

Different cultures express different priorities when it comes to materiality. For example, with houses—in Europe, they’re usually made of stone, intended to last several generations. In the United States they’re usually wood. It’s durability versus disposability. When we renovate a house, we modify the existing structure—in America you’d gut it and start over.

**By the way, what do you think about America these days?**

I think the American society and government are focused mainly on money. Europeans, we also like money. But we are obsessed with quality of life. Here in Italy it’s a prevalent notion that you must not sacrifice all your time, all your life, for money. People sometimes say I have a communist vision, but it’s really not. If a company asks me to design with a priority of fast production and fast sale, I don’t work with them. It goes back to the idea of speed. If we’re going to embrace speed, it shouldn’t be like the train that races time to get from point A to point B. It should be like a computer—elastic, flexible, taking into account situations and details. I think the role of European design is to focus on quality of life. ■



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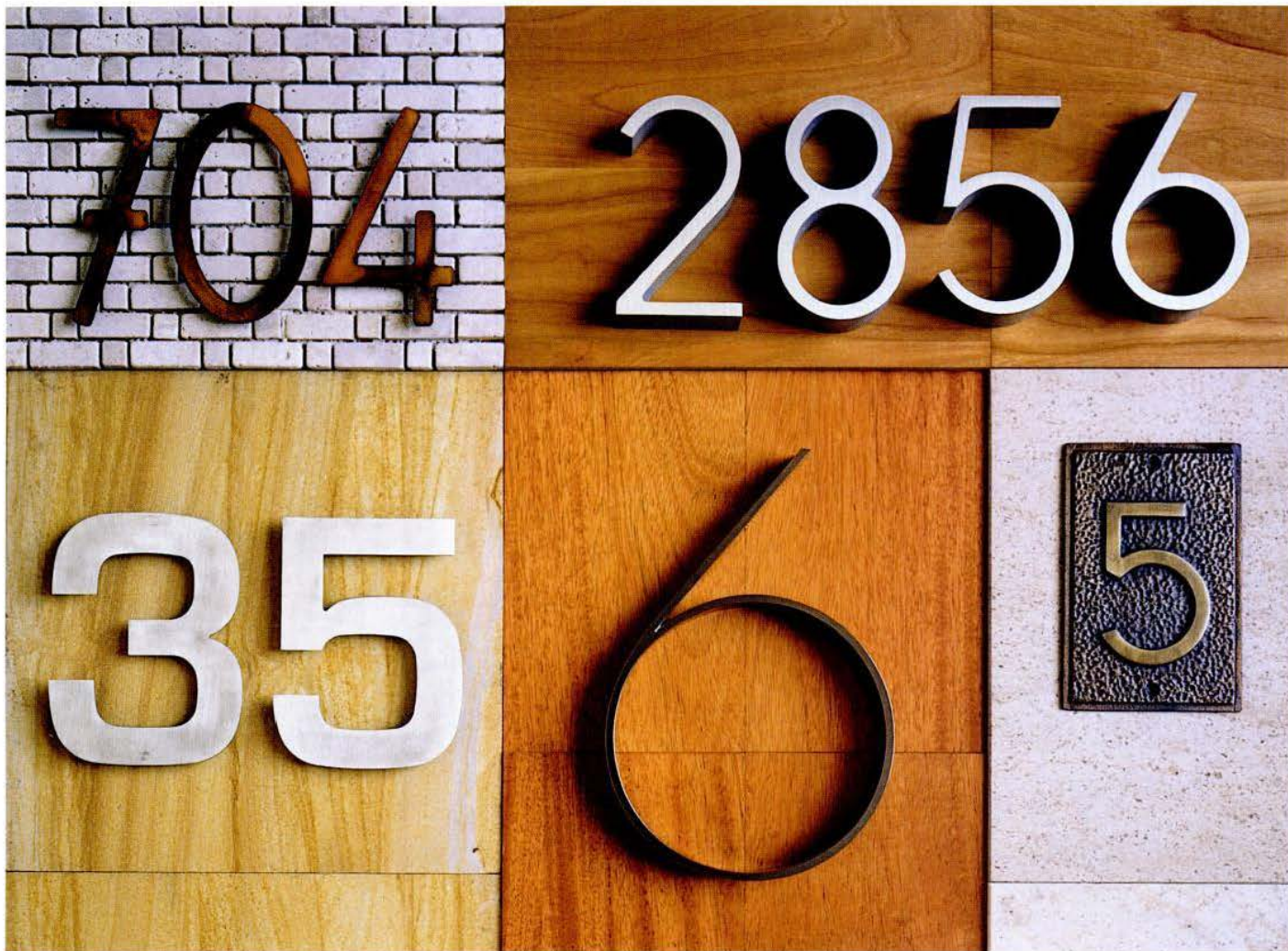


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# Prefab Perspectives



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# Robert Rubin on Jean Prouvé

Ask any architect interested in prefab what inspires them and nine times out of ten they'll say the designer Jean Prouvé. Though he's an investment banker, not an architect, Robert Rubin caught the Prouvé bug so hard that he not only put his career on pause to pursue a PhD on the enigmatic Frenchman but also spent one million dollars to purchase what he believes to be Prouvé's masterpiece: the Maison Tropicale.

## What attracted you to Prouvé's work?

My interest resulted from the convergence of two other interests: old racing cars, and furniture by slightly earlier modernist architects, notably Pierre Chareau. Prouvé was a "car guy" in real life. He was fascinated by the Citroen 2CV, the postwar French car for the masses. And he liked to drive fast, I'm told. I don't know if he was a Grand Prix racing fan but he would certainly have had an affinity for any of the Formula 1 constructeurs in the '40s and '50s independent, underfinanced, seat-of-the-pants builders sticking it to the big teams like Ferrari.

Having restored many old racing cars and addressed the issue of how to maintain the originality of a racing car while enabling its continued use, I at least knew the questions to pose with respect to Prouvé's Tropical House. In effect, we restored it as an industrial object—which is what it is: a prototype for an industrialized housing system, the same way a racing car is a prototype for production vehicles.

I was attracted by the way the technology of working and forming metal was so integral to the actual design. Prouvé was not aestheticizing the machine age, which is what many of the interwar designers were doing—for example, making chairs that looked streamlined. He was coming to grips with the real implications of industrialization for the production of design. I sensed there was a bigger story there.

## How did Prouvé's training affect his approach to architecture and furniture?

Prouvé's only formal training was as what the French call an architectural ironworker. Dealing with the implications of industrialization was a key tenet of his life's work. Prouvé felt that how a building was manufactured and erected dictated how it was designed, not vice versa. He took this notion of integrality incredibly far. How it could best be made, rather than how it ought to "look," dominated the design process.

Ideally, the one who designs something should also oversee its manufacture. As an entrepreneur, he experimented with employee incentives and other innovative commercial structures to make his workers stakeholders in the design/fabrication process. At one point he employed around 200 people. And he plowed all his revenues from the many patents he filed for curtain walls and other industrialized building components over the years into his business. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough, and he had to fold the business after six years.

## How did he use prefab in his work?

Prouvé's prefab systems touch all the bases: the newest, lightest materials—first aluminum, then plastic; maximum ease of transport; maximum portability by human beings onsite; maximum ease of assembly; integral solutions to air circulation, cooling, and insulation; easy connections; minimal moving parts—in fact, he once said a building must be made of the smallest number of elements possible. This is why he is such a hero to prefabbers today. He knew all the right questions, and had most of the right answers, even then. And he put his own capital on the line.

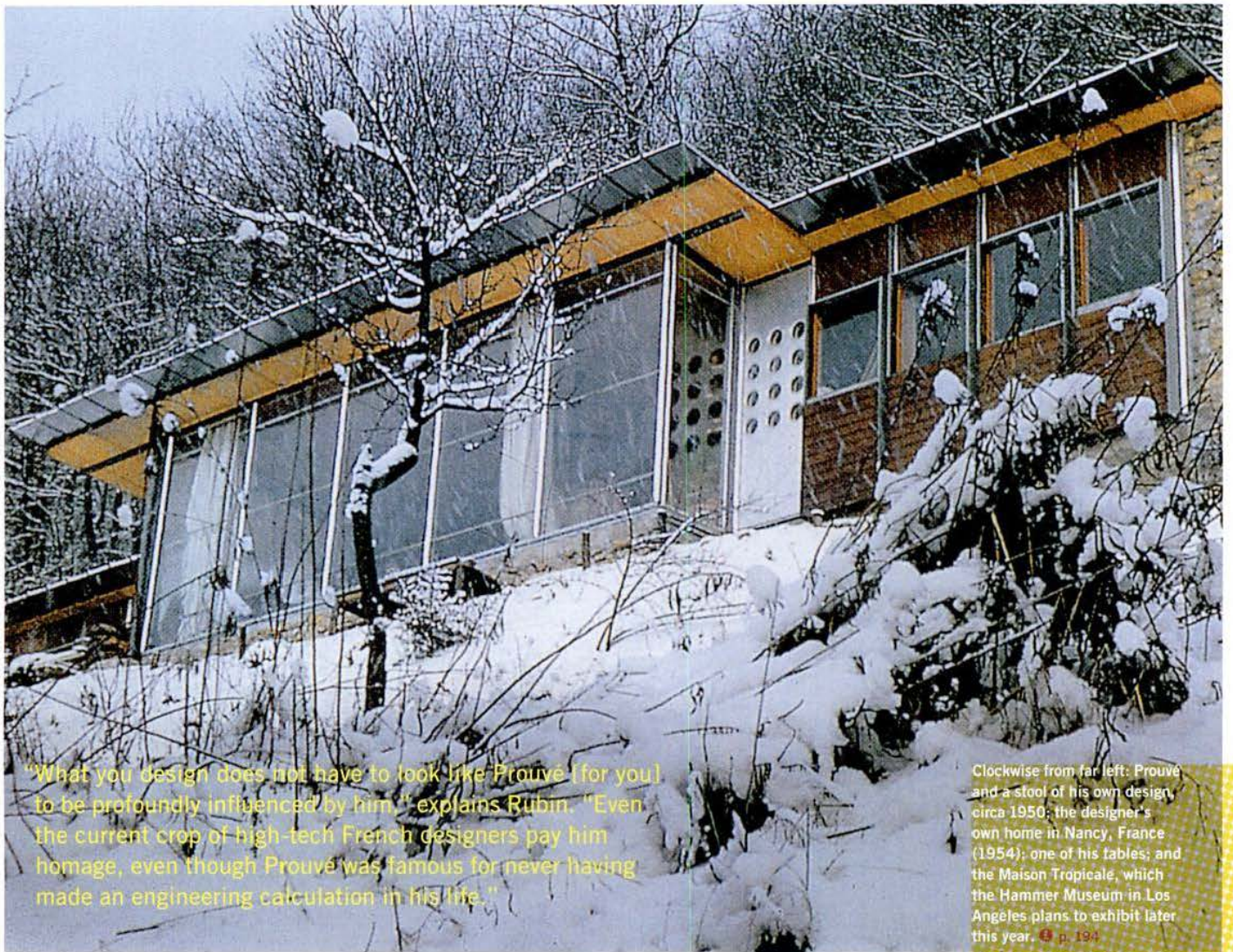
I'm sure it will come as no surprise to you that I think the Tropical House is his masterpiece of prefabrication. First, it doesn't contain a single gram of cement. Many of Prouvé's projects were diluted, or some might say debased, by the addition of masonry to make his metallic architecture seem more "homey," with dubious results. Second, the tropical system, dealing as it must with climatic extremes, is the most complex iteration of Prouvé's standard building system such as was used in schools, commercial buildings, and the occasional residence in France. The separate inner and outer skins, the roof duct for cooling, the profusion of sliding porthole doors and panels, all make for more interesting architecture than the more basic domestic variety.

## Why is Jean Prouvé such an important influence for so many architects working on modern prefab today?

Prouvé is not so much about a particular aesthetic as he is about a way of looking at things and addressing constructive problems. Thus, what you design does not have to look like Prouvé [for you] to be profoundly influenced by him. He was a risk taker, he was a brilliant innovator, he was socially conscious—in short, he was an inspiring figure. ►







"What you design does not have to look like Prouvé [for you] to be profoundly influenced by him," explains Rubin. "Even the current crop of high-tech French designers pay him homage, even though Prouvé was famous for never having made an engineering calculation in his life."

Clockwise from far left: Prouvé and a stool of his own design, circa 1950; the designer's own home in Nancy, France (1954); one of his tables; and the Maison Tropicale, which the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles plans to exhibit later this year. **E** p. 194



PHOTOS COURTESY SOTHEBY'S, INC (TABLE), CATHERINE PROUVÉ (NANCY HOUSE)



## Dan Rockhill on Studio 804

Dan Rockhill and Kent Spreckelmeyer founded Studio 804 seven years ago at the University of Kansas in Lawrence to give graduate students in architecture the opportunity to build. Since then, the studio and its students have completed six homes with an emphasis on providing affordable housing. The Modular 1 House, in Kansas City, is their first prefabricated project. We asked Rockhill why the architecture studio turned to prefab.

### What interested you in taking on a prefab building project for Studio 804?

Necessity is the mother of invention. We've been pretty well driven out of Lawrence because it's provincial and there's no property available in the immediate area anymore.

Students come [to the school] with the expectation that they will be participating in some type of building project, so we were compelled to do something. We thought, Well, let's go to Kansas City, which is only an hour away. The city was into the idea of providing some land to experiment on and said, "How many blocks do you want?"

That was great but then we were faced with the problem of all the students living in Lawrence; we didn't want them racing back and forth every day at all hours. So we said, "Let's just make [the house] in Lawrence and we'll haul it to Kansas City." So we built the thing in a Lawrence warehouse, which was perfect because of our long winters. It was the best thing we ever did.

Prefab construction forces you to work with proportions and scale and tactile qualities and surfaces in a way that you're not forced to when you can do anything.

### Was building a prefab structure a positive experience for your students?

Absolutely. Just as the connections can be made to architects—to force their hand, to simplify, to think through, to really focus on solving small problems very creatively—I think it is only heightened for students who are just getting into [architecture].

**It's a cool idea, introducing students to this type of building at such an influential part of their lives.**





I agree. The reason I started Studio 804 was to give students a bit of building experience so that they could get a little wind in their sails and see what it takes to do good work. Someday, when they look out that office building window two or three years from now totally disgruntled, they're going to say, "Dammit, I'm going to take charge and make something happen myself."

Students are full of idealism—and I love 'em for it—but then they get out in the real world and go "My god!" The whole idea of prefab is based on this great idealism not unlike a student's and I hope that this experience instills that spirit in them. In the end, that's probably the biggest value of this project. ▶

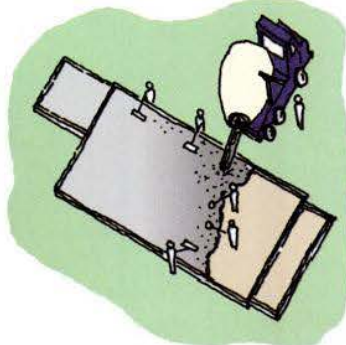


This page and opposite: Exterior and interior views of the Modular 1 House, a low-income prefab house in Kansas City built by Studio 804 architecture students in 2004.

"The unique part of the prefab experience," explains architect Dan Rockhill, "is that it forces you to come up with very simple solutions for housing needs, but there is a real elegance to that simplicity."



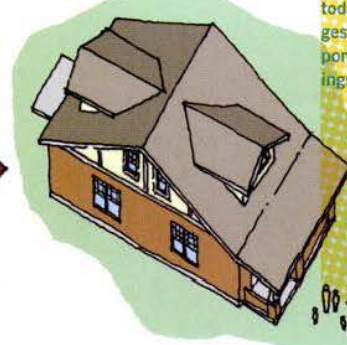
## Proposed Building Method



Site Preparation



Exterior and Interior Structure



Finished Home

The first PATH project resulted in schematic designs for prototype homes with components that could be implemented today. The designs also suggested some visionary components, though HUD renderings don't do them justice.

## Carlos Martin on the PATH Concept Home

An integral part of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the Partnership in Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH), whose primary mission is encapsulated in its name: to advance technological innovation in the housing industry. PATH's initiatives include culling the best ideas from leaders in the home-building industry to present a vision of what can be (such as the PATH Concept Home), while also working on other more mundane R&D, information, and policy issues, like code approvals and barriers to innovation. We spoke with HUD researcher Carlos Martin, PhD, about how prefab figures into PATH.

**The PATH website describes the lack of investment in new building technologies. How does prefab factor into this?**

Prefab's design is defined by its production, and its production requires specific design constraints and social contexts. The industry's products, processes, and social economic parameters are so inherently interwoven—and have become ever more entrenched and complex over time—that a change in one thread will change the entire fabric. If we can assume that one of the problems of American housing is its apparently traditional design, construction, function, and land use, then something like prefab, which has implications for all these areas, is actually a feasible solution.

**Briefly describe the PATH Concept Home. What obstacles did this project pinpoint and then try to overcome?**

The PATH Concept Home came out of the need to provide a formal synthesis to the many PATH-related research projects, outreach campaigns, and policy initiatives—like a rallying cry for the industry, if you will. I imagine that the discussions we had while generating the Concept Home were very similar to the ones held during the formative stages of your Dwell Home: What are homeowners looking for? What do we know is technologically possible now, and [what] can be possible in just a few years? How does that translate into design and map onto changing homeowner demographics? How do we get industry to get on board?

So, throughout 2004, PATH asked the home-building industry whether it was ready to take on the challenge of building a high-quality, affordable home that could 1) accommodate changing lifestyles (to address America's demographic shifts); 2) adapt to technological advances; 3) be easy to repair and remodel (to address life-cycle concerns); 4) look like custom-built (to improve design); and 5) be built in 20 days (to respond to market shifts quickly).

The first year's project resulted in schematic designs for prototype homes with components that could be implemented today—ideas and technologies that can be adopted into current building practices and that fit well into current market changes. These designs also suggested some visionary components, challenging manufacturers and builders to translate ideas into reality.

**Do you believe prefabrication can help facilitate well-designed housing?**

Too often we equate standard building components with sterile and uniform design. But we all had the same box of Lincoln Logs as kids, and I never knew one kid who built the house on the box cover, or who would build the same structure every time they emptied the contents. This myth of prefab's banality couldn't be further from the truth, and comes more from standardizing outside the home than standardizing its insides. The trick is finding that magic tipping point where you can use prefabricated materials, components, systems, and modules and still create innovative and site-specific buildings.

**Are you optimistic about prefab's future as a progenitor of well-designed housing?**

There have been numerous moments in the past century when prefab has risen as a technologically or economically available alternative. The difference now is that there is a vast market opening up for the first time in U.S. history: Almost 33 percent of U.S. households are now two-person occupied, and almost 27 percent are single-person occupied. The shift from married-with-children households of only a generation ago means not only that there needs to be a different method for producing homes for these many, smaller households, but also that this demographic has dramatically different preferences in home design and needs in home functions. This is a wonderful time to be a booster, but also an ideal time to be a booster who has two feet on the ground. ▶





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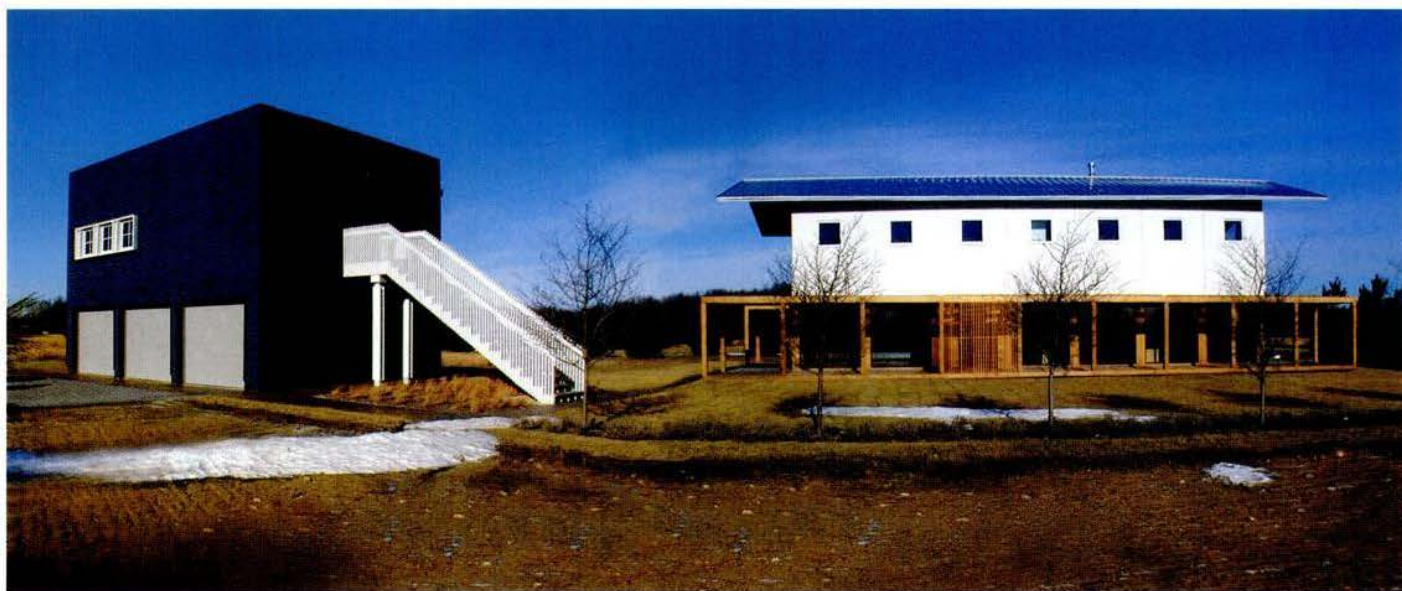
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The Mayo Woodlands development was structured around the idea of three distinct neighborhoods—the Village (a large open field), the Prairie (a secluded meadow), and the Woods (a forested street)—which would be identified by differing landscape and architectural expressions.



## Time Alt on the Mayo Woodlands

In 2003, a collaborative design team consisting of landscape architecture firm Coen + Partners, Altus Architecture + Design, and Salmela Architects was commissioned to create Mayo Woodlands, a community in Rochester, Minnesota, developed by the heirs of the Mayo Clinic as a model for innovative residential planning and design. Working within pre-existing site conditions that conveyed the typical American suburban design approach, the Mayo team incorporated landscape and architectural strategies that sought to overwhelm the infrastructure and define a new community identity and experience. Prefab was part of the overall strategy, as architect Tim Alt of Altus Architecture + Design explains.

### How did prefabrication play a role in the Mayo Woodlands concept?

The progressive direction of Mayo Woodlands lent itself to incorporating prefab strategies that would further extend the innovation of the development. There is also a social and economic benefit to these systems that we felt the Mayo family would identify with and embrace as consistent with the legacy of the Mayo Clinic—doing something for the greater common good. So we developed architectural concepts that incorporated houses with 20-, 22-, and 24-foot widths, allowing a free-span structure. This enabled the houses to have no interior structural walls (and remarkably flexible floor plans). And, most importantly, it allowed natural light to flow through the ►



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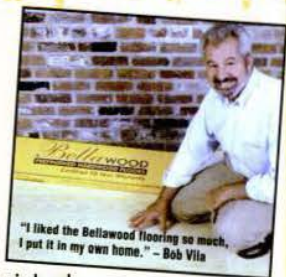
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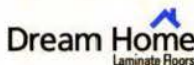
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## Dwellings

depth of the entire plan—light being the quality (or spiritual food) that separates architecture from mere building. We also adopted a modular order to the plans that would relate to the order of the trees in the landscape and establish a relationship between the houses that is both modern and classical at the same time.

### **People fear that prefab homes cannot have context. How does Mayo Woodlands prove that assertion wrong?**

Prefab houses typically present a preconceived image in [our] collective minds that they are merely fancy mobile homes. This stigma takes a great effort to overcome. [With] MW we did not start the design problem with prefabricated architecture as a goal. It emerged as part of an overall architectural strategy that was an outcome of the landscape strategies we employed.

### **I believe it was your intent originally to market the MW development as prefab. What has happened since then?**

We felt that with the progressive nature of the Mayo Clinic, and the fact that people come from all over the world to work there, the market would embrace our comprehensive design objectives. So far it has been a big challenge to convey the truth about what we are doing for the community in general. Most agents, builders, and owners want to buy a lot and do whatever they want with it. That phenomenon exists throughout the U.S., not just in Rochester. It is our challenge to demonstrate the variety, site sensitivity, and wisdom of our design approach through the current owners and welcome people to experience how great these houses live and feel. The prefab aspects are secondary.

### **How do you think the public can be better educated about the benefits of prefab?**

The public first needs to understand that houses and how they are built are one of the last holdovers from the age of the guilds. Virtually everything else you buy has been manufactured. The emergence of prefabrication as a methodology for housing is only a natural evolution of building components integration catching up with every other thing we purchase. The best way to illustrate this idea and educate the public is to design and build great projects. If the public can see and feel good examples of this approach, the collective perception will change and so will the marketplace. Who wouldn't want to have a house that was better and cheaper? ■



"I believe architects should lead by example through developing processes or protocols that demonstrate flexibility and creativity, not predictability," says architect Tim All. "If we can do that, consumers and builders will be drawn to the process."



# Planning a Trip to Chicago?

Visit the Design Innovations in Manufactured Housing exhibition at The Field Museum.  
February 4, 2005–January 16, 2006  
[www.fieldmuseum.org](http://www.fieldmuseum.org)

Original models and drawings by noted architects and industrial designers present the latest designs for prefabricated homes. Especially commissioned for this exhibition, the featured designs present creative solutions to fill the demand for affordable, high-quality housing.

Architects include COMMA, Taylor + Burns Architects, Garofalo Architects, Parallel Design, SUMO, Design Corps, David Baker + Partners, and estudio teddy cruz.

April 16, 2005  
Design Innovations in Manufactured Housing Symposium

Graduate Students from the School of Architecture, University of Illinois will have their plans for manufactured housing critiqued by experts in the field. Architects represented in the exhibition will discuss how the future of prefabricated housing will meet the needs of moderate to low-income families as well as the impact of their designs on environmental sustainability.

The symposium will be followed by a reception and an opportunity to meet the architects and designers in the exhibition gallery.

For ticket and exhibit information, please visit [www.fieldmuseum.org](http://www.fieldmuseum.org)

Dwell is hosting a drawing for two tickets to the symposium. To enter: [www.dwellmag.com/community/contest](http://www.dwellmag.com/community/contest).

The **Field**  
Museum

This exhibition was developed by the City Design Center, College of Architecture and the Arts, UIC in collaboration with The Field Museum. The City Design Center, College of Architecture and the Arts, University of Illinois at Chicago received funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts to create this exhibition.



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Intelligent, appealing, and affordable, Charlie Lazor's user-friendly FlatPak just might be the project that revolutionizes the prefab industry.

# How to Play FlatPak



**Project:** FlatPak House  
**Architect:** Charlie Lazor, Lazor Office  
**Location:** Minneapolis, Minnesota



Front and side views of the FlatPak House in Minneapolis, Minnesota. When the architect first told his wife about his idea, she said, "It's about time you focus on a house for me!" He continues, "It's like the old story about the cobbler whose kids have no shoes."

See if this story doesn't sound familiar. You've grown tired of landlords, upstairs neighbors fond of vacuuming in the middle of the night, and throwing your money away on rent. You start perusing the weekend open-home listings in the paper and begin to think seriously about moving your growing family into a home of your own. But once you start looking at what's out there, depression sets in and the realization hits: If you have more than a casual interest in modern architecture and less than a six-figure salary, your dream home might remain just that.

Such was the story of architect Charlie Lazor, who began looking for a house in Minneapolis for himself, his wife Zelda, and their two children, Jasper, six, and Maeve, eight. The prospects weren't looking good. But instead of settling or giving up, Lazor took action and launched FlatPak, a prefabricated house system that aims to provide "architecture for the ordinary pocketbook."

"FlatPak didn't start out as a grand plan," Lazor explains. "It started from my own frustration. Zelda and I wanted a house. We didn't like what was out there. So I started to design a system appropriate to my needs."

One of those needs was the knowledge that his family of four would "only last a year in a rental," jokes Lazor. Notwithstanding the challenges of any temporary living situation, the Lazor brood was supportive from the start. Zelda, who teaches high school literature, was thrilled. "I knew he would come up with a fabulous idea. In our first apartment in New York," she recalls, "he devised furniture out of found objects and made them exquisite. Our first dining room table was made from two-by-fours, cinder blocks, and a piece of glass. His ability to take material and make it beautiful is his forte. I completely trusted him with the concept and design of our house."

Granted, Lazor was uniquely qualified to put the plan for something like FlatPak in motion. As cofounder with architect Maurice Blanks and sculptor John Christakos ▶





of the modern furniture company Blu Dot, he'd already devoted eight years to the creation of modern, affordable design. Blu Dot's simple and elegant furniture has long been recognized for its precise and inventive use of materials, fabrication technologies, and methods of assembly. FlatPak was a direct outgrowth of that.

Other models for Lazor's venture were architect Jean Prouvé and designer Charles Eames, both of whom developed easily manufactured components for the furniture and houses they designed. "Both tapped into the technology of their time," observes Lazor. "Prouvé wasn't depending on the nascent housing industry to get his stuff made, he was looking at the steel industry."

Building a house is far more complex than making a chair or table, however, and Lazor realized that in order for the FlatPak system to work, he would "need to be the case study inhabitant *and* the builder *and* the assembler of the first house. Only through doing do you find the efficiencies. An incredibly rich amount of data and experience comes out of the process."

His first step was, quite simply, to think about the best way to get off the ground. "One idea," says Lazor, "was a house that was largely underground—almost [Japanese architect Tadao] Ando-like. It's what they call here in Minnesota a 'walkout' where you sleep below and live on the ground floor. Ultimately, excavation costs were too high—and besides, people didn't respond well to the sleeping-underground concept at all."

Lazor saw the need for a panel system that could receive different types of cladding (cedar, corrugated metal, Douglas fir) and simultaneously allow walls to be opened up generously in a single stroke (that is to say, by a large piece of glass). "I wanted to simplify the deployment of the components," Lazor explains. "That meant minimizing the number of corners. Really, the ideal rhythm is A, A, A, only putting in B or C when completely necessary." ▶

Having lived, he says, in "a number of houses where the living room is the most adorned and the least used," it was important for Lazor to create a functional family living space. As the gathering above attests, it worked. The carpet is by InterfaceFLOR, and the armchairs by Blu Dot. The industrial stair (at right) leads to the upper level, where the bedrooms, bathrooms, and play space are located.

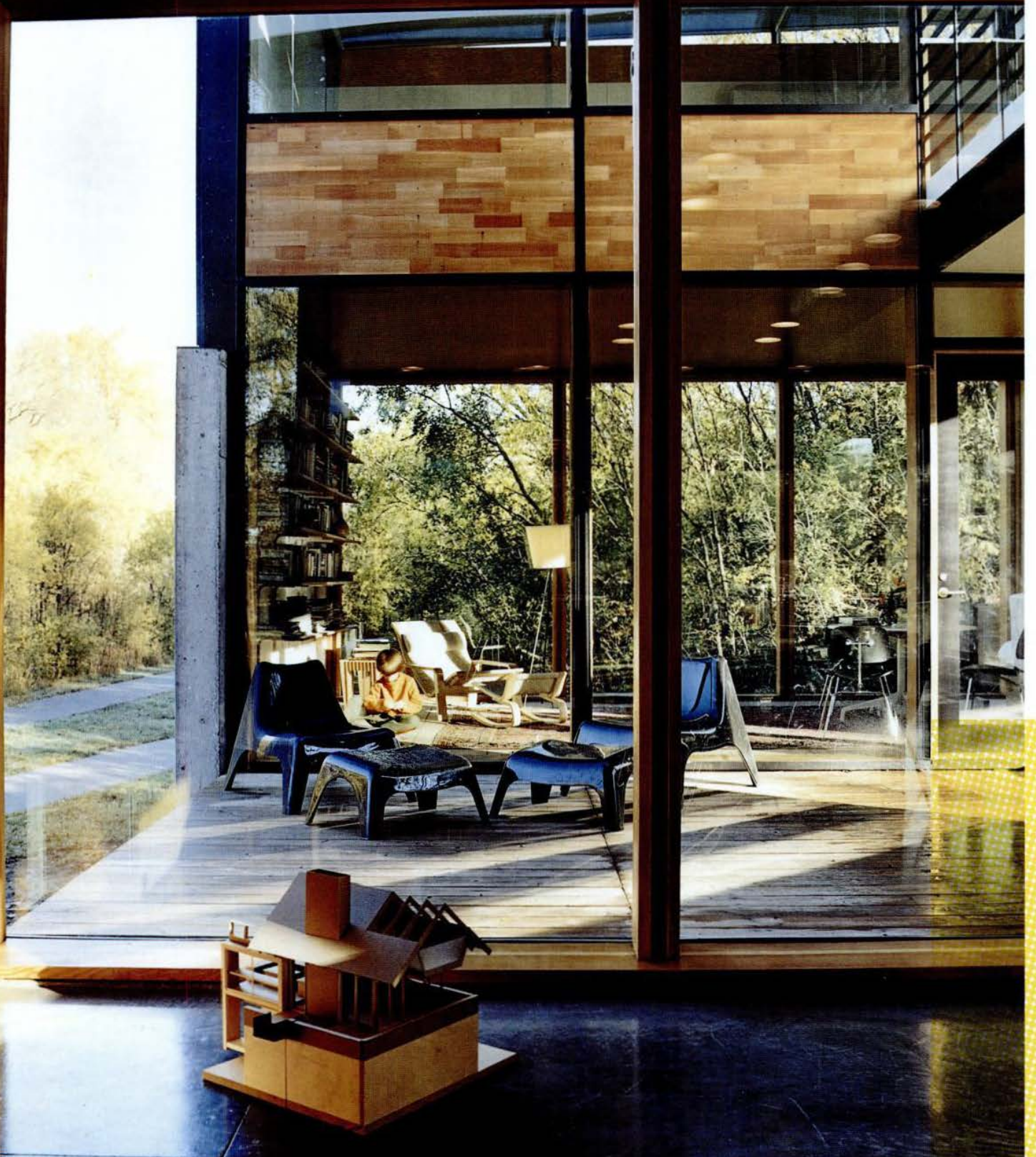
"It was a major decision to put the kitchen in the center where everything would revolve around it," says Lazor. "We did this simply by following what patterns we observed—it was just where people gravitated." The bar stools (opposite) are by Blu Dot, and the chairs by Charles and Ray Eames. [p. 194](#)















The big 'move' was to create the little box, a separate stand-alone piece that gave us a resolutely private sanctuary, says Lazov. "It's a place with no phone, no TV, no other person. The second big thing was the space in between the courtyard, which cements the house to the site and takes advantage of the greenway behind the space."







The resulting FlatPak system is a highly flexible kit of parts that boils down to three basic components: concrete wall panels; wood-framed panels with wood, metal, or cement-board siding; and a wood frame infilled with large expanses of glass. The roof is a metal structural insulated panel (SIP) of Kynar-painted steel and rigid insulation. ("Imagine a sandwich," Lazor explains. "The bread is steel and the bologna is insulation.") And the way the house is put together couldn't be more basic: in a word, bolts. "FlatPak is a design game that even a kid can play," says Lazor. "It's designed to be easily understood and manipulated by a layperson."

"In Denmark," he continues, "there is bread that is sublime, there is butter that is sublime. I don't need complicated sauces to feel fulfilled, just sublime bread and butter."

In a profession where complexity is often valued over practicality, Lazor's approach to architecture is refreshingly straightforward and unburdened by the ego of its creator—it's also rife with possibility. His system isn't about reinventing the wheel; it's about drawing from existing conditions and allowing them to flourish. Instead of asking a single manufacturer to fabricate a newly designed building module, for example, Lazor took a lesson from his experience at Blu Dot, where elements like panels and drawer pulls are sourced from a variety of different manufacturers, allowing each supplier to continue doing what it does best. "If you go with a single manufacturer, you have to use their tools, their materials, and that's limiting," says Lazor. "So I searched for off-the-shelf systems that I could tweak aesthetically, systems that could be used in a new way. This ensures flexibility and a design that isn't bound by what a certain company or manufacturer can provide."

Ease of construction is also key to FlatPak's present and future success. Its post-and-beam construction with engineered assembly is designed to be builder- and ▶



Jasper and Maeve take five (opposite). One of their requests was for their dad to create a secret door to connect their bedrooms together.

The master bedroom (above) features a low-level picture window that opens out to the green space behind the house.

The master bath contains all functions in the white fiberglass panel that runs the length of the wall. Lazor designed the vanity; the tub is by Duravit.

📍 p. 194





inspector-friendly—and it is. It took a crew of four two days to install the foundation and the first-floor walls, two days to set the second-floor walls and floor, a day and a half for the roof, and four days to set the glass. And it's as easy to disassemble, a feature Lazor describes as its most ecological, albeit with one caveat. "I don't subscribe to the idea that you reassemble it somewhere else," he explains, referring to the oft-repeated mantra of the portable architecture movement. "But rather than its ultimate disposal is handled in a more green manner. The parts of this house can be reused. In another context, they could still perform."

Now that his 2,600-square-foot home is complete, Lazor is eager to deliver its future incarnations to the masses. His FlatPak catalog features four prototypes with varying floor-plan configurations and a variety of cladding materials, interior wall surfaces, and flooring options that include modular carpet squares from InterfaceFLOR. Lazor is hoping to deliver a complete, erected FlatPak house for \$140 per square foot, contingent of course on location (he estimates \$190–\$200 per square foot on both coasts), site conditions, and local building codes. Design services are offered as part of the package—not at the typical architects' rate of 10 to 15 percent but at the customer-friendly rate of \$999 for a home without a site, \$1,999 if a site has already been procured. Manufacturing and construction of the first house took six months from start to finish; Lazor is hoping to deliver subsequent ones in four.

Since stories on the house appeared in the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* and the *New York Times*, Lazor has been busy fielding queries from potential clients. But for now, his greatest satisfaction comes from living with his family in FlatPak House. "I never thought I'd be able to build a house for my family that I designed," he says. "By just looking at the problem in a different way, it became possible. I am thrilled I could do this." ■

Above: A glass-fronted walkway leads from the main house to the office/play area, and at right, the same passageway is shown straight on from the street. The courtyard below is just one of many open spaces that will be highly utilized—in the nonwinter months anyway.

As shown at right, concrete worked well with developing the language of FlatPak. The second level is a wood panel that can be clad in corrugated metal or cedar—different layers that can be plugged in like covers on your cellphone.

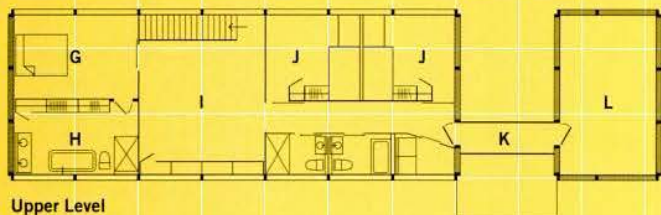




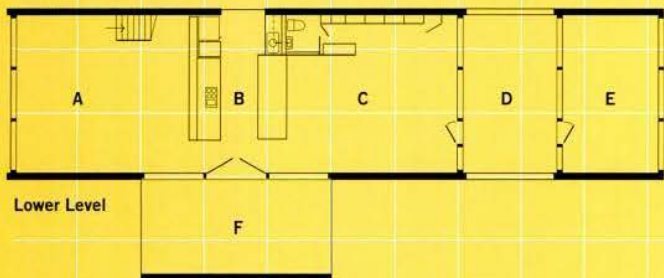
## Do You FlatPak?

As the designer for the furniture company Blu Dot, architect Charlie Lazor was committed to making design accessible. Now, as with FlatPak, he has turned his attention to affordable modern housing.

The FlatPak system is highly adaptable and easy to use. You can tailor the basic components to create the floor plan that works best for your individual needs. For more information, log on to [www.flatpackhouse.com](http://www.flatpackhouse.com)



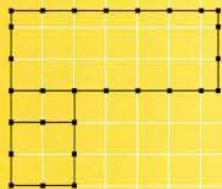
Upper Level



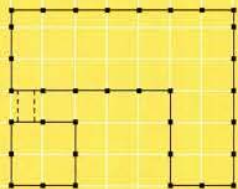
Lower Level

FlatPak 001 Floor Plan

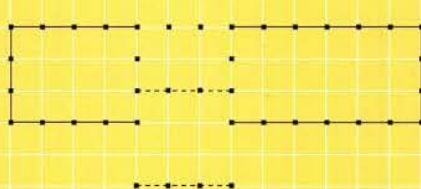
- A Living Room
- B Kitchen
- C Dining Room
- D Courtyard
- E Office / Garage
- F Patio
- G Master Bedroom
- H Master Bathroom
- I Play Area
- J Kids Bedroom
- K Bridge
- L Studio / Guest Room



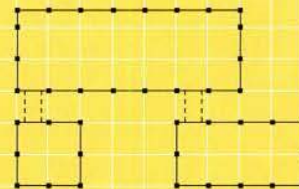
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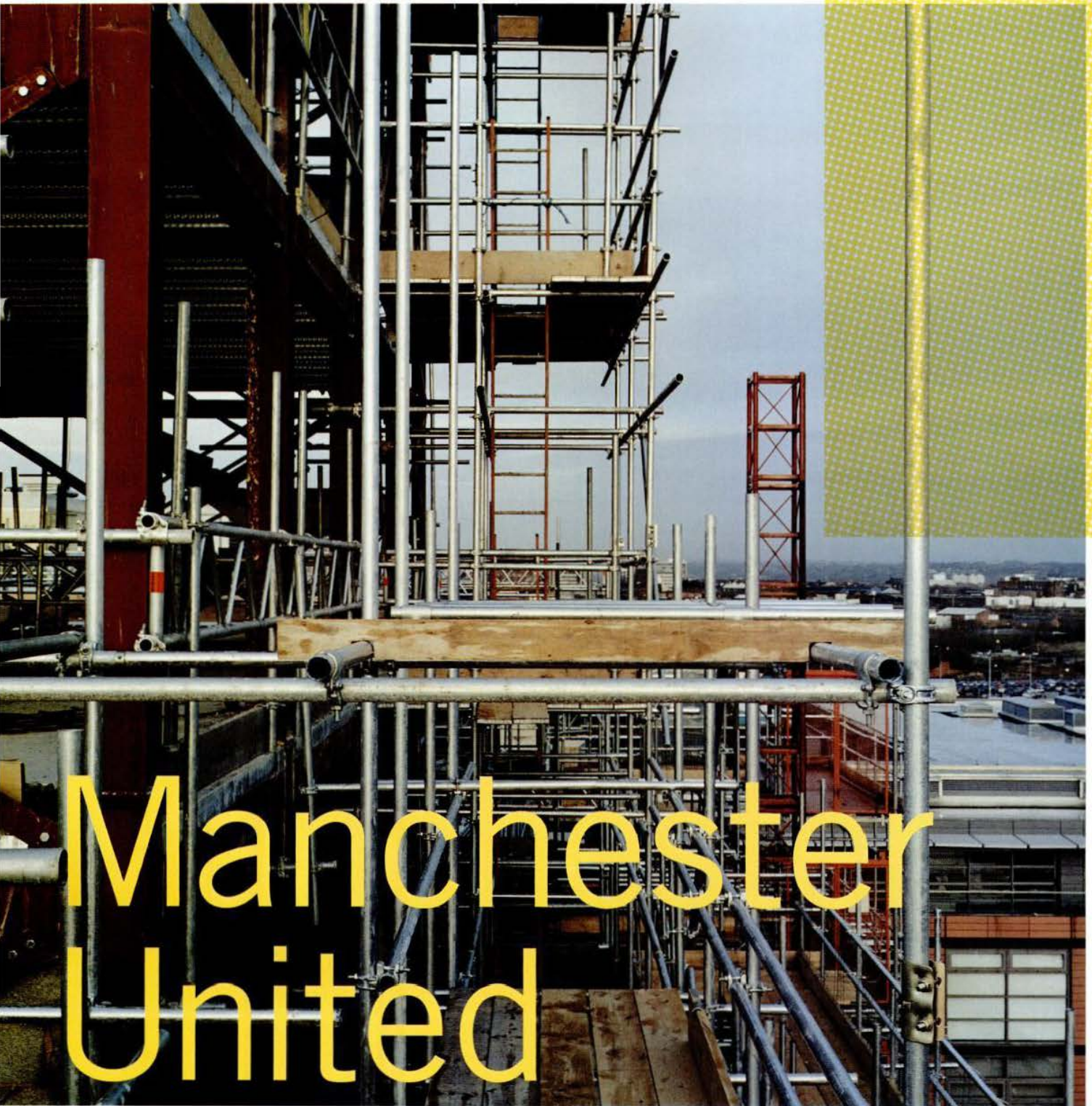
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Dwell's FlatPak Sketch

## Draw Your Own FlatPak:





# Manchester United

Postwar preconceptions about factory-built housing in England have held strong for decades. Now, a new modern apartment complex in Manchester should help put a positive spin back on prefab.



**Prefabricated housing has long been the bastard child** of British architecture. Born out of a postwar desperation to shelter thousands of people left homeless by bombing raids, over 150,000 prefab houses were erected in the five years immediately following World War II. Built for speed rather than aesthetics, their temporality, lack of attention to design, and shoddy construction standards became evident in the decades to follow. Though their owners often came to love them as symbols of renewed hope and modernity, the reality of deteriorating asbestos concrete, leaky window seams, and poor insulation resulted in a recent government-led demolition crusade.

"The result is that anything with the word 'prefab' in it now carries a certain negative connotation," says Chris Stalker, of Manchester-based development firm Urban Splash, known for renovating derelict buildings and reconstructing undesirable areas. The government, faced with burgeoning populations working in town centers and limited room for expansion, is desperate for new urban housing and is using the earlier prefab boom as a model for current construction. Unlike that of the postwar population, however, the aesthetic standards of today's consumers are much higher.

It seems fitting, then, that the first private, completely prefab housing project in England has just been built in

Manchester, a city that has successfully grappled with its own set of negative connotations. Over the past ten years, Manchester has gone from being a place known for its pall of industrial smoke and endless spires of Victorian architecture to a dynamic urban center. "Manchester was a center of the Industrial Revolution," Stalker explains. "An IRA terrorist bomb went off in the city center in 1996, and since then, the city has been visionary in reinventing itself as a European city. Ten years ago, everyone was living in the suburbs; now, there are probably 10,000 people living in the city center."

Urban Splash is at the forefront of this renewal effort. Its current focus is Castlefield, a brownfield area in downtown Manchester that's gone from manufacturing squalor to nighttime scene in a short time. Cotton mills have been converted to apartments and high-tech businesses, canals host annual boat festivals, and art galleries, pubs, and cafés clog the area. Over the past six years, Urban Splash has constructed or refurbished four residential buildings in Castlefield. Their fifth, however, is perhaps the most exciting.

Moho (short for modular housing) was the result of a winning brief by Liverpool-based ShedKM, a young architecture firm whose inventive ethos nicely complements Urban Splash's desire for constant innovation. ▶

Part of Manchester's ongoing urban-regeneration plan, Moho was built as space for stores and commercial businesses on the ground floor, with six stories of apartments sitting placidly overhead.

With its modern and cubist exterior, there's no attempt to hide the modular aspect. "It's raw and expressive of what it is, rather than being hidden by a façade," notes architect James Weston.



**Project:** Moho  
**Architect:** ShedKM  
**Developer:** Urban Splash  
**Location:** Manchester, England





“You can always see from one end to the other and it feels much larger than if you chopped it into a series of smaller rooms,” explains architect James Weston of the apartments.



According to ShedKM principal and director James Weston, "Urban Splash wanted to offer accommodation so that university graduates and key workers could afford to buy and live in Manchester's city center." Apart from that, Urban Splash had no other requirements in its project brief.

To meet this need for affordable housing while maintaining high design and production standards, ShedKM began researching new technologies. "We'd been aware of one or two prefab schemes in this country, such as those by Cartwright Pickard Architects and the Peabody Trust, a nonprofit housing association," Weston says. "So we contacted Yorkon, the company that was making the prefab units for these projects, and went to see their construction process. Yorkon had used the technology for hotel designs and then clamped phony brick structure on the outside. Plus, the units had entirely traditional finishes and a conventional layout and design—just done with an off-site assembly. We felt that you could celebrate the idea of a modular off-site unit rather than trying to disguise it, and that the design quality was not meeting its full potential."

ShedKM drew up plans for an apartment complex that would appeal to younger residents—and that would be completely prefabricated by Yorkon. Urban Splash,

affable and ever receptive to new ideas, immediately bought into the concept.

To maximize the possibilities of each unit, ShedKM designed apartments that literally turn the standard model on its head. Most other prefab apartments are a series of rooms that are built separately in the factory then joined together onsite. ShedKM, however, preferred to create fully formed apartments in the factory. The limiting factor, however, was the width of each unit, which had to conform to U.K. transportation codes and road sizes.

Instead of the traditional manner of joining prefab components side to side, the architects oriented the units on their ends, making all of Moho's modules extra-long—with each comprising one complete apartment, eliminating the need for messy room seams and onsite electrical or power hookups within. Everything, from bathrooms and kitchens to cupboards and decorations, was installed in the factory.

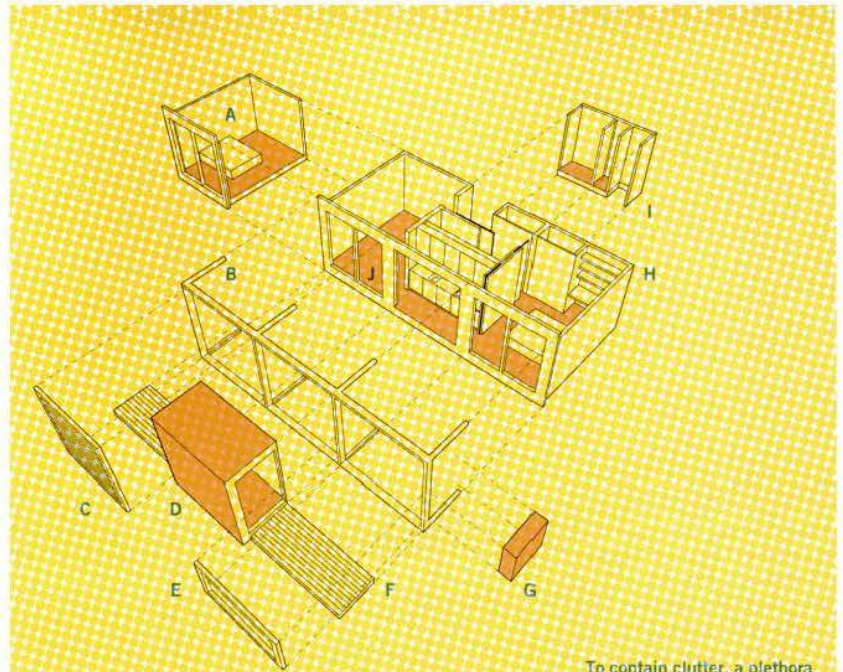
Actual construction of the components began in January 2004; by August, all 102 of the apartments had been trucked to the site and installed on the six-story prefabricated steel frame, which was erected while factory work was ongoing—saving six months in the construction process. "It's incredible to see the modules ▶

Sliding partitions separate rooms to help increase a sense of spaciousness, and cheery custom-made furniture also helps detract from the modest square footage.

"The units are compact, but we've gone to great lengths to design for that," explains developer Chris Stalker, shown below on an apartment's balcony, which provides additional living space.







Moho Exploded Floor Plan

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| A Additional Bedroom | F Terraces           |
| B Framework          | G Planter Balustrade |
| C Louvred Screen     | H Bedroom            |
| D Dining Pod         | I Entrance Pod       |
| E Balustrade         | J Living Room        |

To contain clutter, a plethora of handy storage spaces were built into the rooms. Drawers stay hidden under the bed, bathroom cabinetry abounds, and tchotchkes in the bedroom and living room can rest on multiple shelves.



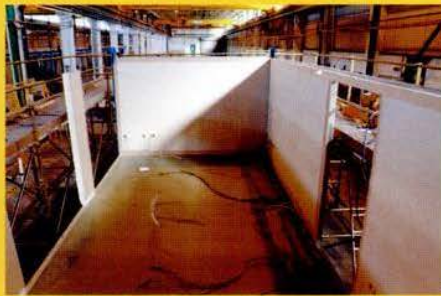




“Each unit is completed finished and furnished—you can personalize the space, but all you really need to move in is the key,” says developer Chris Stalker.



# Moho Step-by-Step



PHOTOS COURTESY YORKON, URBAN SPLASH, SHEDDM



being brought to the site," says Stalker, with awe in his voice. "Each is put onto the back of a lorry and delivered at intervals of one an hour, at the rate of six a day. They get the first one in place, just in time for the next to be called to the site, ready to be erected. It's quite amazing to see these units—complete with glazing, a front door, and a roof—lifted into position."

Though the spaces are compact (525 square feet for the one bedrooms, including balcony space, 700 square feet for two bedrooms), a number of elements were incorporated to make the apartments feel more spacious. After the modules were all put into place, separate balconies for each unit (also prefab) were lifted into position. These outdoor spaces belie the scant square footage, creating areas for residents to have parties, grow small gardens, and meet up with their neighbors for after-work drinks.

The length of the units (30.5 feet) provides a continuous line of view so, says Weston, "you can always see from one end to the other and it feels much larger than if you chopped it into a series of smaller rooms." Customized furniture by the company Mooch was built in to make good use of the space and to save money. Engineered timber floors provide visual warmth for the space and offset the starkness of the white plaster walls. To eliminate the messiness of tiling and grouting,

bathrooms were finished in the same Fermacel wallboard as the living areas.

Perhaps the most startling feature for those with prefab prejudices is the level of quality achieved in the project. "In a traditional onsite project," explains Weston, "there are too little rooms with different trades working on them, and it's very difficult for a contractor and design team to monitor workers spread all over the building. Whereas in the factory, the modules are all laid out in a long line and you can walk down the line and see very quickly if things are not quite right. The quality in Moho is absolutely better than if we did it in the traditional way." Yorkon received rave reviews from both ShedKM and Urban Splash for its ability to adapt to modern prefab design and its attention to detail.

Residents will start moving into Moho sometime this spring. Reception to the project has already been strong, a fact that Stalker attributes in part to the new architecture and building boom in Manchester over the past decade. "There's plenty to be proud about over what's being done in Manchester," Stalker says. "I think Manchester is quite tuned in to modern design."

Moho might finally help put those postwar prefab memories to rest and usher in a new generation of modular housing in England. ■

From the Fermacel wall panels and the engineered timber floors used at the outset to the units being finished in the factory and then trucked to the building site (opposite), every step of the process was meticulously detailed to maintain high standards.

A clever system of cranes and onsite workers ensured that all 102 of the apartments were installed within six months of factory completion.



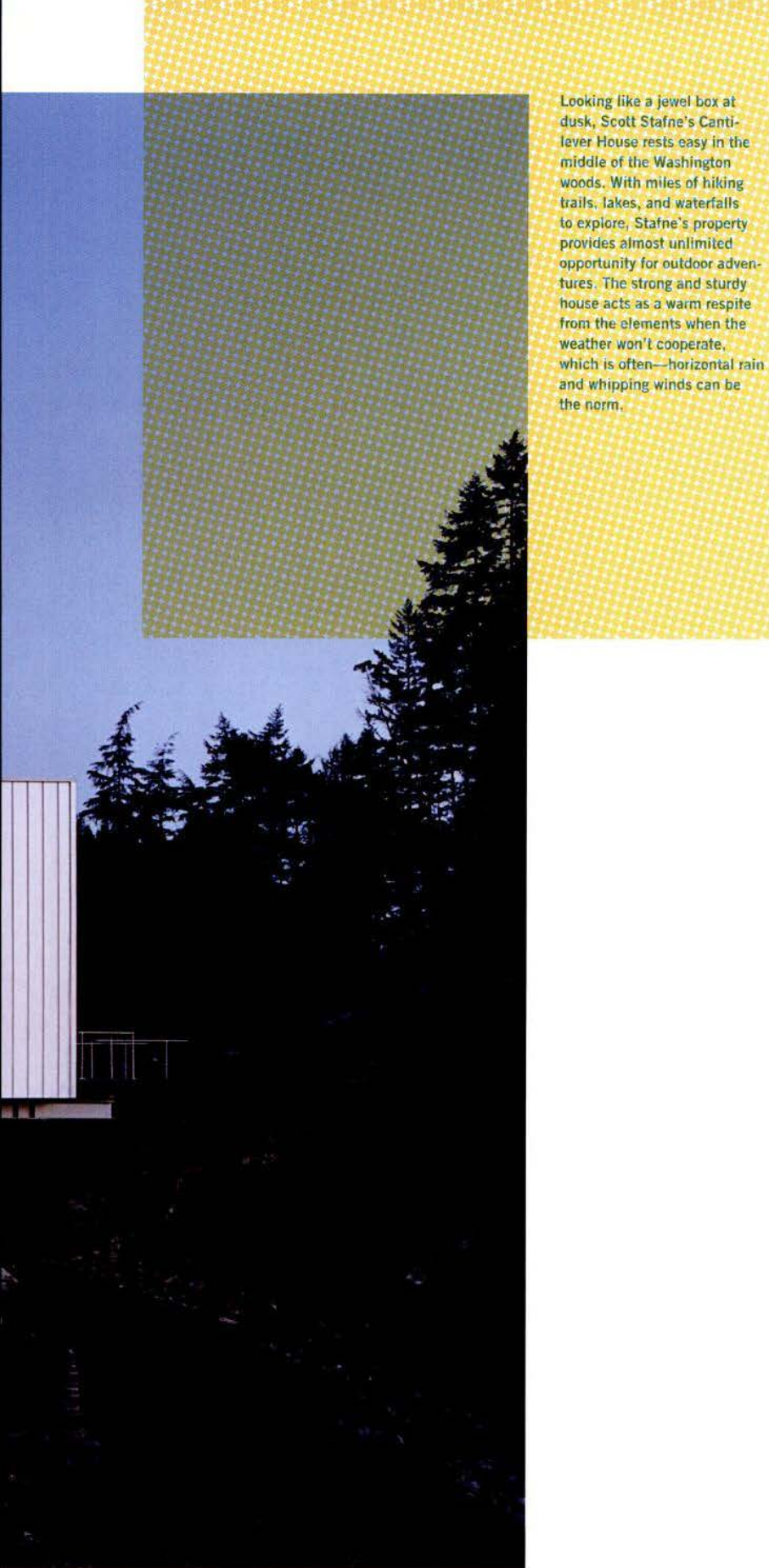


# On a Rock in a Hard Place



In an unlikely mountaintop locale, Anderson Anderson Architecture crafted a home out of a complex composition of off-the-shelf components, paving new paths for the prefabricated construction industry.





Looking like a jewel box at dusk, Scott Stafne's Cantilever House rests easy in the middle of the Washington woods. With miles of hiking trails, lakes, and waterfalls to explore, Stafne's property provides almost unlimited opportunity for outdoor adventures. The strong and sturdy house acts as a warm respite from the elements when the weather won't cooperate, which is often—horizontal rain and whipping winds can be the norm.

On a cold, drizzly, late November morning in downtown Seattle, prefab buildings are not the first thing on most people's minds—a roaring fire in a cozy cabin is more like it. But for Peter and Mark Anderson, of Anderson Anderson Architecture, the two aren't mutually exclusive. Prefab, with its ambitious ideal as an everyman's architecture, holds the promise of making that cozy cabin dream both accessible and affordable.

But the Seattle- and San Francisco-based architects have found that this dream is not necessarily the reality. "Low cost is what everyone thinks when they think prefab," Peter Anderson says with some chagrin. "We've been working with these building concepts for years, and while there is definitely a cost differential as opposed to stick-built structures, the homes we do are not what you would call cheap. Every house is different—different site, different client desires, different design—and with difference comes cost."

Despite Anderson's frustration with the common perception of prefab as the "low-cost alternative," it's also the reason so many are drawn to prefab. It's certainly what brought Scott Stafne to the Andersons' door. After seeing their Kennedy house on the cover of *Dwell* back in 2001, Stafne, a gruff, semi-retired lawyer who cut his teeth battling bureaucrats and insurance companies in Seattle, knew these were his architects. But the house Stafne desired was no ordinary structure, and the story of its development points to many of the obstacles standing in the way of modernizing the prefab housing industry.

In the mid-'90s, Stafne had acquired 360 acres of mountaintop land consisting of 16 buildable lots of 21 acres or more near Granite Falls, Washington, about an hour outside of Seattle, giving up his house in the city for the windswept, almost uninhabitable tract of land. But Stafne and his younger brother Todd, a former owner of a construction company in South America and earth-moving-equipment enthusiast, were ready to build. "There was nothing up there," Stafne explains. "Nothing except acres and acres of trees, wild animals, lakes, rivers, and waterfalls." While in some respects the site ►

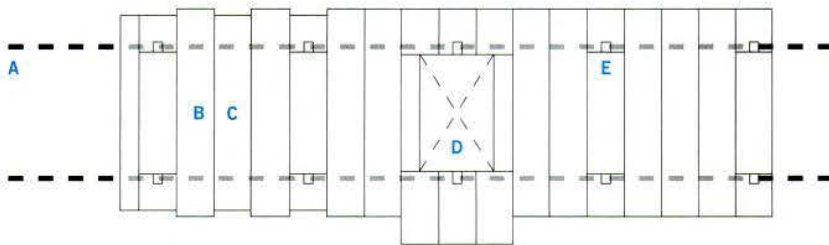
**Project:** Scott Stafne Residence

**Architect:** Anderson Anderson Architecture

**Location:** Granite Falls, Washington



## Dwellings



SIPs Panel Layout of Main Floor  
(plan view)

The use of structural insulated panels (SIPs) throughout the house helped speed the construction process. Peter Anderson explains, "The panels themselves hang from and rest upon the steel frame and

wood spline beam system, which is the link between the steel frame and the panels. The SIPs provide enclosure, insulation, and the spanning capacity to support the cast-concrete floor."

A Continuous steel beam below structural floor panels and outside deck  
B Typical 10" structural floor panel at solid wall areas

C Typical 10" structural floor panel at vertical window areas  
D Open stairwell  
E Panels cut to allow structural steel frame to pass through floor



had everything, it had none of the most basic creature comforts—no electricity, no water, and no roads, save for a primitive logging road that wound up the exceedingly steep mountainside.

Cost aside, prefabricated construction seemed like the perfect solution to Stafne's needs, given the difficult nature of the site and Stafne's desire to keep it as pristine as possible. But, as Anderson explains, "That is another misconception people have about prefab—that it is a simple, quick, clean process. While there are definite advantages, the way the process has to be conducted now, it is still quite complicated."

The design of the Cantilever House, as it's known, is based on a 14-by-86-by-22-foot steel frame resting on a 14-by-31-foot concrete foundation bolted to an existing rock. "That rock is really what allowed this to be such a unique house," says Anderson. "It's what allowed us to cantilever the whole structure and take advantage of the site, pointing the house directly at the waterfalls, which are incredible."

An early estimate from one national steel company prior to engineering and further design of the steel frame, however, presented the first obstacle. An Arlington, Washington-based steel manufacturer, chosen for their proximity to the site, quoted the Andersons the manageable sum of \$45,000—a number that seemed unrealistically low to the architects but stuck with Stafne. But when construction was set to begin—three years after this initial quote and the very early research that had confirmed the viability of the design concept—the turbulent steel market had caused the cost of the frame to spike considerably.

Frustrated but left with little choice, Anderson Anderson took the project to Seattle-based United Iron Works. The frame was now set to run upwards of \$66,000, a significant jump from the original estimate and a big chunk of the \$200,000 Stafne had hoped to spend on the entire project. But client and architect remained committed to the design scheme and the project continued. ▶



Architect Peter Anderson explains that "the floating nature of the design would not have been possible with conventional onsite framing techniques, nor any of the currently marketed modular home designs." Using a heavy structural steel frame, engineered wood spline beam system, and structural insulated panels, the architects created a truly unique hybrid structural system and, in the end, a home.









With the framing issue solved, the architects turned their attention to panels. "We wanted to use SIPs [structural insulated panels] for everything," Anderson explains. The most noticeable part of the plan had the 4-by-22-foot panels hanging off the steel frame, acting as walls, their weight shared equally by suspension from cantilevered roof structure beams (which in turn rest on the steel frame), and by support from cantilevered floor structure beams (which cantilever out from the steel frame). The panels follow a simple pattern that leaves open space for dramatic floor-to-ceiling windows throughout the house. Once some of the Andersons' more unique ideas for the SIPs were fully developed, their use for the floors, ceilings, and walls proved to be a huge time saver.

But before any of that could happen, the team had another problem to resolve. The steel frame made its way from Seattle to Granite Falls on the back of a tractor trailer, but once the truckers reached the area, they

refused to scale the mountain: The unpaved road that ascended the grade by way of narrow switchbacks was more than they'd bargained for. The driver unloaded the frame and left it sitting at the foot of the mountain in the morning fog.

"We were a little stunned," says Todd Stafne. "That put us in a tough position and cost us thousands of extra dollars." But the Stafne brothers, who'd figured out how to extract electrical power from the rivers on the property and get running water throughout, were not about to be stopped by their *Fitzcarraldo*-like dilemma. "We've gotten to know a bunch of the loggers up here and they know these logging roads," he explains. "We gave them some cash and they hooked the thing up to one of their trucks and just started dragging."

Amazingly, it worked. The frame was pulled to the top of the mountain, and then craned into position on the foundation. The project finally started to experience the effects of prefab's speedy potential. "The basic structure ▶

The living room (opposite) looks out toward the two waterfalls that are also part of the property and the inspiration for its name. Artist Constantin Hapaianu made the coffee table and the stainless steel railings surrounding the

staircase (right). Scott Stafne (below) relaxes in his upstairs office/TV room in his Natuzzi lounge chair. The stairs and the wood paneling (right) were designed and built by woodworker Noah Israel, a longtime neighbor and friend. [p. 194](#)







Stafne's office (left) showcases his ingenious use of the steel structure of the house as a handy bookcase. The master bath (above) features a tiled shower—an optimal spot for viewing the intense weather.

Mimicking the cantilever of the house, an outdoor shower (opposite) just off the master bedroom stretches out gently toward the surrounding woods.

of the home went up relatively quickly," says general contractor Kyle Keever. "All in all, it took about two weeks to come together once everything was in place."

Prefab's benefits were enticing, but Stafne also yearned for a truly unique home—representative of his varied pursuits and passions. To that end, he engaged many of his artist friends to help. Woodworker Noah Israel built the stairs that wind through the center of the house, and also lined the interior walls with Douglas fir that was planed five times in order to warm up the space and add texture to the otherwise flat surfaces. Artist Constantin Hapaianu contributed much of the stainless steel work, as well as many of the sculptures, while Brian Stephens and Dennis Coons completed much of the exterior landscaping and earth work around the house. Artist Larry Stauffer also designed much of Stafne's artwork specifically for the house. With this creative collaboration, the house, as Stafne is fond of saying, "really feels like a work of art."

While these flourishes have been critical to the structure's ability to be a home rather than just a steel box, they've also been the culprit in many of the cost overruns that have been perturbing to all involved. "We were hoping to get this place built for \$150,000 to \$200,000," Stafne says. "But that just didn't happen. It came out to be much more. There are still so many unknowns and unforeseen difficulties that can occur."

Despite all the problems, one would be hard-pressed to argue that the project has been anything but a success. And if the home didn't meet all of Stafne's budgetary goals, it has certainly made him happy. "Once the house went up, it was incredible," he says. "I don't know if any of us could have appreciated the views we were going to get—the home we were going to get—until we actually got them." And the house adds an interesting case study to the ongoing research project that is prefabricated building—another rung to the ladder the building industry needs to climb to maximize prefab's potential. ■







# Heating it Up in Las Vegas

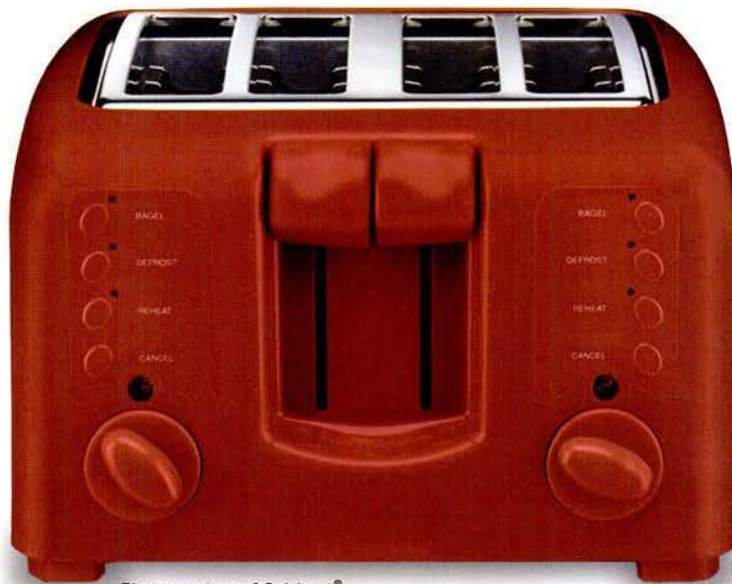


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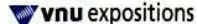
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## Dining In, Dining Out

Once while dining at a minimal-chic German restaurant in San Francisco, my date marveled at the elegant simplicity of the mid-century-modern salt and pepper shakers on our table. Their simple blue color and proletarian design created a sort of hypnotic nostalgia for his childhood tableware. Did it enhance his dining experience? Certainly. Did it concern me when he persisted in fondling the salt and pepper shakers throughout the entire meal? Slightly.

Recently, restaurants have been stylishly translating the idea of home cooking, eschewing the cold, corporate mega-restaurant concepts of the late '90s and exploring more personal, whimsical decor. Communal dining is a thriving trend in upscale establishments, and many chefs incorporate childhood favorites or "comfort food" on the menu, like grilled cheese sandwiches and chocolate milkshakes (albeit with manchego and Valrhona chocolate).

Restaurants may successfully take inspiration from the concept of home cooking, but when the home cook tries to evoke the restaurant experience, the results can be mixed. People pimp their kitchens with professional-grade appliances, polished-granite work islands the size of Guam, and industrial refrigerators/freezers in homage to the "culinary" lifestyle, creating sterile mausoleums where spilled zinfandel fears to tread. You see a kitchen like this and

instead of feeling hungry, you feel nervous.

However, home dining can also take a more graceful cue from restaurants. If a simple floating dahlia, oh-so-flattering cube lamp, or Eames chair finds its way to the table, the implication is not pretension, but a clever touch on an otherwise routine home-cooked meal.

But what does "home cooking" really mean? Is it literal, pertaining to recipes passed down through generations, or is it the whole experience of dining at home, the familiarity of the everyday china, the worn sturdiness of the dinner table, the form of a favorite utensil or serving bowl? These are all deeply personal, and nearly impossible to re-create out of context.

Ideally, one could aim to fuse the imaginative cuisine and decor of dining out with the fundamentally personal aspects of dining in—taking some risks yet retaining a sense of nostalgia. After all, a big part of enjoying food in the home is actually feeling at home.

And maybe that's the elusive feeling that restaurants, as well as amateur hosts and hostesses the world over, hope to attain when inviting strangers, friends, or family members to their table. Whether it's through design that invites not intimidates, or food that surprises yet comes from the heart, the best reaction one could hope to receive from a guest is a sigh of familiarity. ►

*Walzwerk, the San Francisco restaurant that inspired this story, outfits its tables with very rare salt and pepper shakers from the former East Germany like the ones below. These items add to the restaurant's unique ambiance but also inspire theft—more than a few shaker sets have departed the restaurant in patrons' pockets.*

► p. 194







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## Never Dull

When someone gets fired from a French kitchen, the chef de cuisine says simply, "Take your knives." To a chef, the knife is like an extra appendage, and its dismissal cuts deeper than the standard American "It's just not working out."

The knife is an instrumental tool for any culinary endeavor, whether splitting a dozen Cornish game hens or slicing open a Pizza

for One box for more intimate affairs. There's something viscerally satisfying about the stainless steel blade, reassuring in its ability to inflict honorable damage on your assembled ingredients. We enlisted Calphalon Contemporary Stainless to help cut a swath through the world of knives and knife metaphors, though J. A. Henckels and Wüsthof are other good options. Bon appétit. ▶

### Boning Knife

The boning knife varies in length from five to eight and a half inches. The blade ranges from stiff to somewhat flexible. Primarily used for trimming raw meats, fish, and poultry from the bone (hence the name), the boning knife enables you to filet a king salmon, whip up frenched lamb chops, or rock a crown roast like you mean it.

### Paring Knife

The paring knife is second in command. A small member of the cutlery family, with a three-to-four-inch blade, the paring knife is a nimble one, great for intricate jobs such as peeling onions and potatoes or coring fruits and chopping up vegetables. The most important attribute of the paring knife is precision—so keep 'er sharp and ready for action.

### The Chef Knife

The most versatile and vital piece of cutlery, the chef knife can julienne, dice, and rough chop. Aim it sideways to chiffonade or use the tip for precise cutting. The butt end of the blade can even be used as a makeshift cleaver for chopping small bones. Then there's the mincing, done by holding the tip down and slicing vigorously.

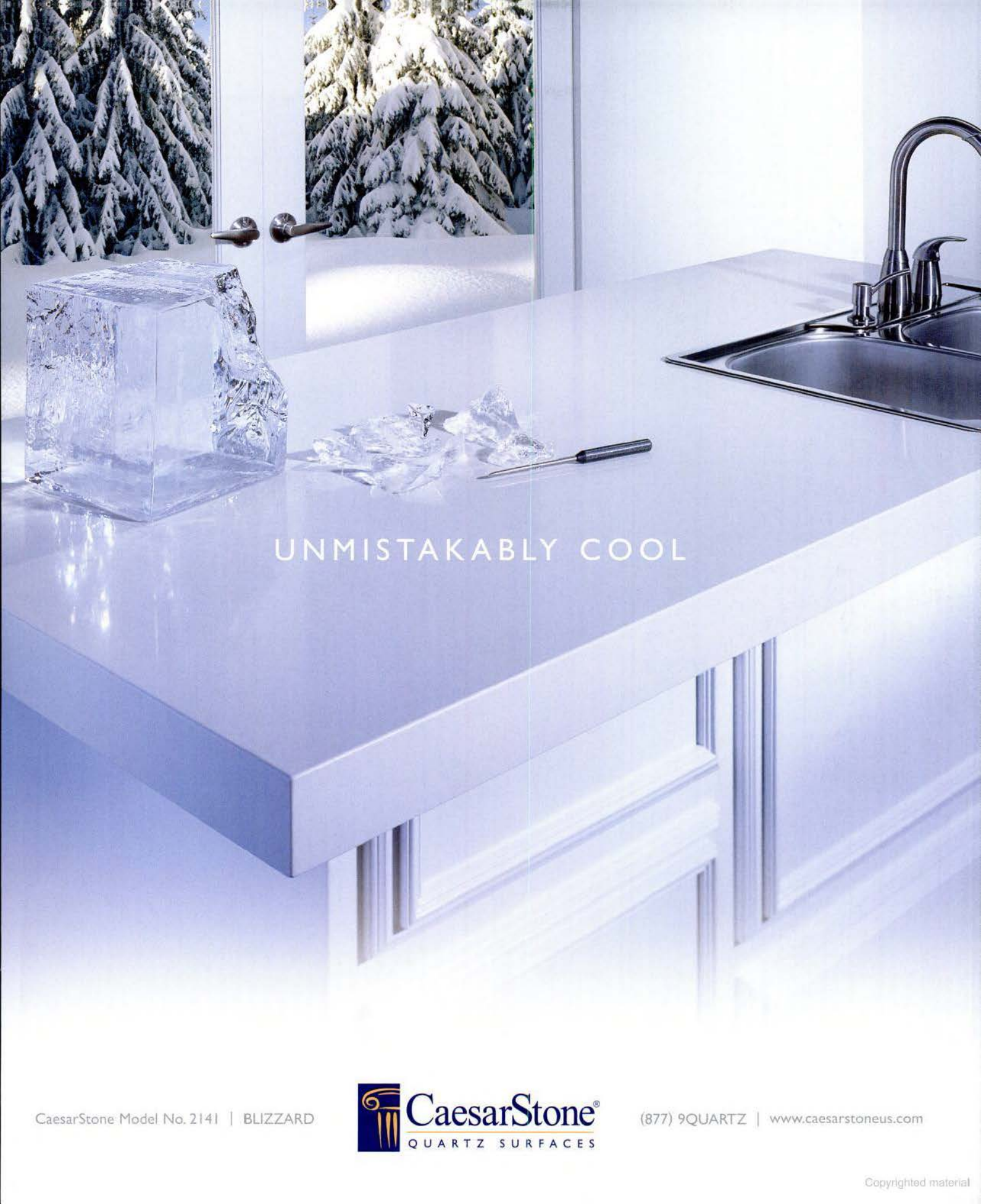
### Utility Knife

Aptly named, the utility knife is excellent for light chopping tasks and slicing. The thin blade makes it ideal for salad preparation and achieving the deli-thin cachet so coveted by the sandwich set. For vigorous slicing, a wood or polypropylene cutting board is preferred.

▶ p.194







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## Coffee Talk

I love coffee. It's coffee shops I have a problem with. Whenever someone suggests we "grab coffee and catch up," I instinctively shudder and suggest instead a nice cocktail or root canal. Once havens for intellectual inquiry and quiet perusal of newspapers, coffee shops are now basically retail outlets and free office space.

Nursing a cappuccino the other day, I observed a frantic businessman conducting a conference call on speakerphone, a woman toting a hysterically yapping Labradoodle, and two frosty socialites loudly debating the relative appeal of the spray-on tan. Kerouac would never have got anything done.

While some resign themselves to the coffee shop, the resourceful caffeine lover knows better. A cup of coffee sipped at home from your favorite mug is a much better way to launch into your day than a barrage of goateed baristas, surcharges for "hot," and a tragic display case of objectionable croissants.

Undoubtedly there is something serene and blissfully private about a nice self-brewed cup. To this end, the Chemex coffeemaker is the home coffee brewer's holy grail. Driven by the principles of functionality and simplicity, its hourglass design was developed by chemist Peter Schlumbohm in 1942, neatly mirroring the techniques used to ensure laboratory purity.

Drawing from the design principles of a laboratory glass funnel, Schlumbohm cannily added an air channel and a pouring spout, so the air displaced by liquid could escape through a filter. The result is a near-perfect cup of coffee: pure, flavorful, and free of bitterness, gritty sediment, or that brown crayon flavor that Mr. Coffee often delivers. The carafe-like Chemex, made of heatproof borosilicate glass, has over the years received much acclaim for its merging of form, function, and sweet, sweet caffeine. It sits proudly in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Smithsonian, as well it should. A cup of home-brewed coffee is indeed a work of art—and, we hope, not a dying one. ►





# FlatPak for FLOR

Join us May 14-17 at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair (ICFF) in New York as InterfaceFLOR, Lazor Office, and Dwell present: FlatPak for FLOR

In New York's Javitz Center, Lazor Office and InterfaceFLOR plan to erect a mini-version of the house you see on this month's Dwell cover, and in the photos below. The 480 sf "pocket FlatPak" will use twelve FlatPak panels, showcasing the FlatPak exterior and interior material palette, in the spirit of FLOR's mix and match approach to carpet tile.

Included in the house will be a FlatPak powder room [non-operating] and a kitchen with Kitchenaid appliances and cabinetry. Ultimately, there will be a sweepstakes to win the house. More details will be available at ICFF in May. In the meantime, log on to [www.flatpackhouse.com](http://www.flatpackhouse.com) and [www.interfaceflor.com](http://www.interfaceflor.com) for detailed information on both companies.

Also at ICFF, in conjunction with FlatPak for FLOR, Dwell will present a panel discussion on modular design moderated by editor-in-chief Allison Arieff. Please log on to [www.dwellmag.com](http://www.dwellmag.com) for details.



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## Iron Chef

The entire town of Solomonville, Arizona, heard their bickering, even through the thick walls of their adobe house, and they say that when my great-grandfather left my great-grandmother and lit out for the border in 1898 he was one step ahead of a well-aimed cast-iron frying pan. So maybe my reliance on my ten-and-a-half-inch skillet runs in the female line, although I have never lobbed it at anyone. I like it too much.

I'm not sure when that pan entered the family, but I do remember it hanging on one of the barn doors in my parents' house in Connecticut, as a counterweight. One day many years ago I made off with it, scrubbed away the rust, and put it back in use. Since then I have rarely cooked with anything else. Oh, if I'm making a vat of something, I'll drag out its daddy, a huge and incredibly heavy 12-inch skillet, also cast iron. But that ten-and-a-half-inch pan is my favorite. These days, it is slick and black, a handsome, substantial thing, totally superior to lighter pans with their silver gleam and suspicious nonstick coatings. It has a pleasing weight in the hand, a lip at either side for pouring, a hole in the handle for hanging in the kitchen—or, as it did for so long, in the barn. If there ever was a maker's name on the bottom, it has worn off. All that is left is the legend "10-1/2 Inches Made in Taiwan."

A friend who had used cast-iron pans as a hut boy at a hostel on the Appalachian Trail told me never to wash cast iron with soap, and I never have. A well-seasoned pan is easily cleaned with hot water and, if necessary, a quick pass with a stiff brush. When food does stick, I give the skillet a good soak, attack it with coarse salt or, in dire cases, copper wool, re-oil it, and return it to the stove.

I use my pan in the morning to make omelets or pancakes and in the evening for stir-fries or steaks. I've baked upside-down cakes, cornbread, and tarts in it, indoors and out, and used it as a *comal* to warm tortillas. Put a lid on it and it's a casserole. I wouldn't trade it for a fancy dishwasher-safe titanium sauté pan—unless, of course, I found one hanging from a nail on a barn door. ►





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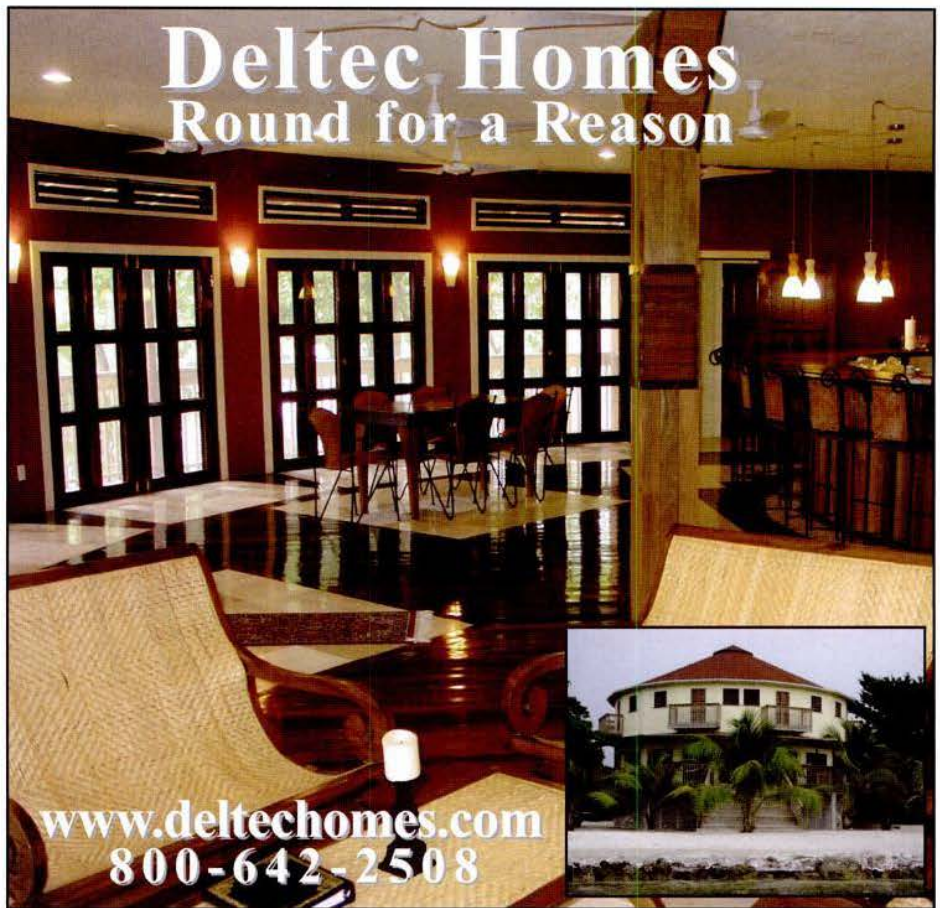
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## Fond of You

The love of my life can prepare entire meals using only a sharp knife and a cast-iron pan. It's a useful skill, but if you want to know the truth, I find his attitude a little annoying. "Never buy cooking equipment that can do just one thing," he said, catching me in front of that ultimate one-act wonder, the fondue pot, and its enabler, the long-handled fork.

We were in a secondhand store filled with kitchen castoffs, evidence of heartbreaking flings with other single-purpose equipment. The fondue pot, a mid-'70s yellow, was decorated with loopy drawings, and had a scarred nonstick interior.

There's something seductive about a utensil that simultaneously evokes child's play and French cuisine. With provenance in the Alps (a working mother, no doubt, with nothing for dinner except stale bread and cheese), the fondue pot is functional yet has a special-occasion veneer. You can do what I did last Valentine's Day and recycle flotsam from the Dansk era, or you can invest in a new model: contemporary stainless steel, perhaps, or for Francophiles, the gleaming enamel Le Creuset. The heating element, whether automated or a more atavistic flame, will require tinkering. Which is generally the idea: Hands keep moving and scintillating conversation flows.

The trick is to avoid disagreements when you're trying to spear and properly coat your croutons and someone else is getting ahead of you. If one's croutons disappear under waves created by a more dexterous partner—well, the path to true romance is never easy.

All this is assuming you have a pot in the first place. It took my husband about ten minutes to spy my vintage set, smuggled past him into the coat closet. "Totally against the rules," he said. "To melt cheese, try the stove."

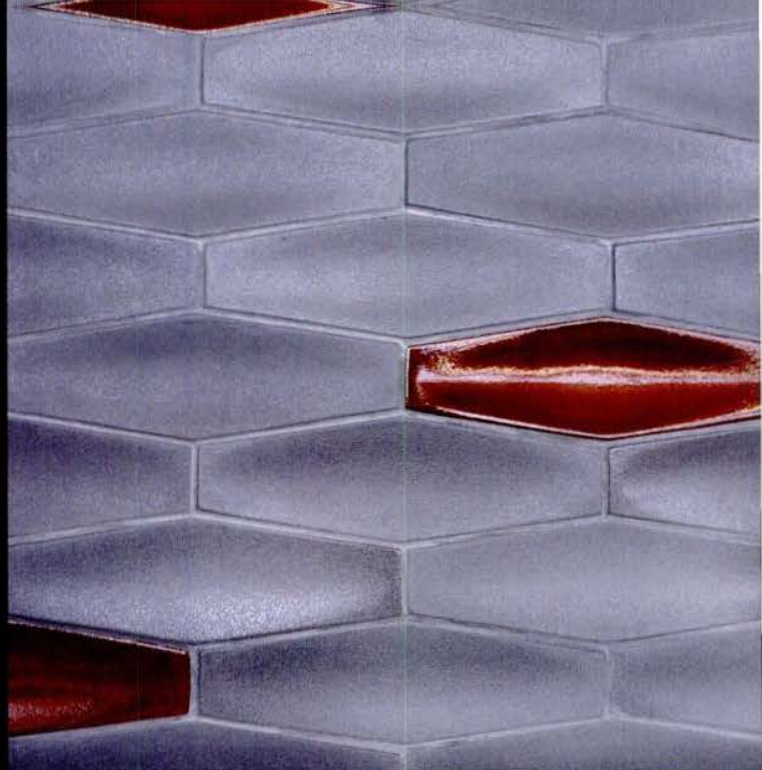
They say that's what marriage is all about: compromising your desires to please the one you love. So I rustled up my prettiest apron, a loaf of bread, a bottle of wine, and a pound of Gruyère. Then I hauled out some stubby forks and a cast-iron pan. I invited my lover to come lean with me against the stove. And when every bit was gone, I asked if he would volunteer to clean the burner. ►







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## A Square Meal

So many recipes leave so much to chance, and that is why I love the waffle iron.

Of course, not all waffles are created equal, but the printing press–like precision of the waffle iron is enviable. The batter goes in, the lid goes down, and presto—what was once a yeasty floury blob is now a chiseled and handsome cake offering an orderly canvas of crevasses ready to be filled with syrup. While that first waffle satisfies the taste buds, the brain delights in another integral aspect of waffle making: the rigid uniformity of the grid. In theory, every waffle should come out exactly the same—it's mass production for the micro kitchen.

This might help explain why waffles have been around, in one form or another, for thousands of years. In ancient Greece, flat cakes called *obleios* were cooked between two hot metal plates. Waffle irons were a common household item among the bourgeoisie in 18th-century Holland, and made it to American shores with the earliest pilgrims. Waffles were even popular with the founding fathers—it is recorded that Thomas Jefferson brought a long-handled waffle iron with a patterned griddle back to Monticello after a stint in France.

In the 19th century the conventional waffle iron satisfied America's desire for fast and easy food, but by the 20th century, the electric iron left even less to chance: Now the arduous task of flipping the heated metal griddle over an open flame was left to transistors and resistors, which instead simply heated both sides of the iron at once. Further insult came with the introduction of the frozen Eggo waffle in 1953, which threatened to render the waffle iron obsolete.

Today, frozen waffle options ranging from oatnut to Belgian banana berry may save time for soccer moms, but they do little to replicate the thrill of crafting the original. Personally, I can't ever remember ordering a waffle in a restaurant. Why? Because the joy of waffles is in their creation. Each successive waffle pour becomes an Olympian attempt at perfect form, with maximum griddle coverage and minimal runoff. Sometimes attempts for the gold may end up as splatters on your counter, but thanks to the waffle iron, the next luscious square is only a sizzle away. ▶

📍 p. 194





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## Yummy Interiors

**These designers believe that dining out definitely shouldn't make you feel like you're staying in.**

When Reuters broke the news that IKEA founder Ingvar Kamprad had overtaken Bill Gates as the richest man in the world, modern interior design was given a strange new context. Whereas not so long ago a trip to IKEA felt like an outing to a land of fairly cosmopolitan, forward-thinking minds, its brand of sleek, affordable furniture could theoretically now be found inside of more homes than a copy of Windows 2000. If everyone from college students to grandmothers has homes full of budget, knockoff mod furniture, attaining a unique modern interior becomes, well, tricky.

This presents a particular challenge for the interior designers of public spaces like restaurants, hotels, and lounges. Of course, the best (though not always the most monetarily successful) designers are those whose visions have a bit of their own magic and madness, nodding to contemporary context without giving in to ephemeral, majority-approved trends. The two who come foremost to mind are Adam D. Tihany and Kelly Wearstler.

Tihany famously shocked the old guard when he replaced the prim old New York restaurant Le Cirque with the dramatic streamlined design of the new Le Cirque 2000. He admits it was his "most whimsical and theatrical project," but explains that "once people realized how appropriate the design was for both the space and [owner] Sirio Maccioni, it was taken seriously."

The outré designer has since created daring, decidedly singular spaces for Aureole in Las Vegas, with its four-story glass wine tower; injected warmth into minimalism at New York's extravagant Per Se; and managed to make the fires of hell sexy with deeply sensual designs at the Sin restaurant and Angelo bar in Rome's chic Aleph hotel. In the works are The Line restaurant in the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore, a rooftop ▶

Dramatic restaurant interiors like Sin (top), designed by Adam Tihany, and Spice Market (bottom), designed by Jacques Garcia, focus not on the experience of home but on escapism and fantasy. **➤** p. 194







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restaurant at the Pudong Shangri-La in Shanghai, as well as a bar and restaurant in the Landmark Mandarin Oriental in Hong Kong.

Of his success as a maverick designer, Tihany observes, "There is no right or wrong. Some of us [are able to] reinvent ourselves with each project." He stresses the importance of following the evolution of restaurant design and keeping an eye toward the future.

Perhaps more of a surprise success, but no less staunchly individualistic, is Wearstler, who rose to prominence on the strength of her unexpected interior designs of Beverly Hills hotels the Avalon, with its lux update of retro-motel style, and Maison 140, with its Asia-meets-French empire lobby and minimalist eclecticism. She has since created once of L.A.'s hottest scenester spots with the Viceroy hotel in Santa Monica, whose lobby bar and Whist restaurant reflect a spectacular blend of postmodern, Asian, and classical influences.

"I was always in my own world," she explains, "dabbling in color and using a mix of furnishings in opposite architectural dwellings—modern interiors in 1920s Spanish architecture, for instance. It worked and it looked fabulous."

Next up from Wearstler: a Viceroy Anguilla and an as-yet-unnamed restaurant for posh retailer Bergdorf Goodman.

When queried about her favorite restaurant interiors, Wearstler cites the dining room at the perpetually trendy Hotel Costes in Paris as one of her favorites. Its designer, Jacques Garcia, is one of France's hottest, yet is infamous for his perhaps overly flamboyant embellishments of contemporary interiors. Indeed, in chic new restaurants the world over—from the nouveau-Baroque outlandishness of Restaurant Alchemist in Prague to the mod-meets-classical Hostaria dell'Orso in Rome to Philippe Starck's sleekly opulent restaurant in the new Baccarat headquarters in Paris—designers are giving new context to modernism by connecting it with the past.

What this means for the design-minded epicure, of course, is that there has rarely been such a time of ideas and inspiration for the design of one's own home dining space. Be a little minimal, be a little Baroque, just don't ever, ever be boring. ■

Kelly Wearstler's designs for the Viceroy hotel's Whist (top) and the Avalon hotel's Blue on Blue (bottom) manage to be both whimsical and hip.

➦ p. 194







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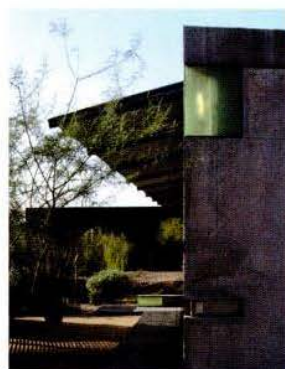
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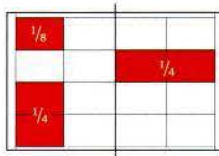




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Tel. (212) 382-2010 x25  
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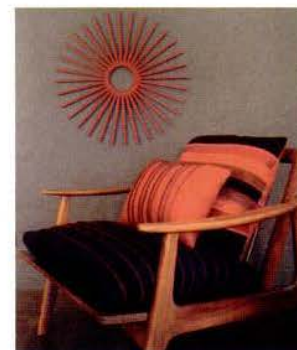
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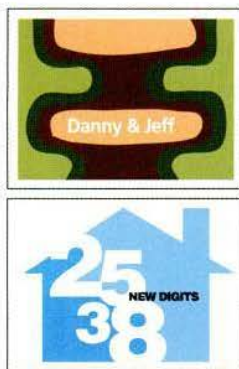


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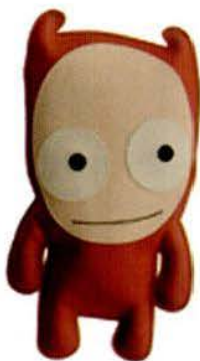
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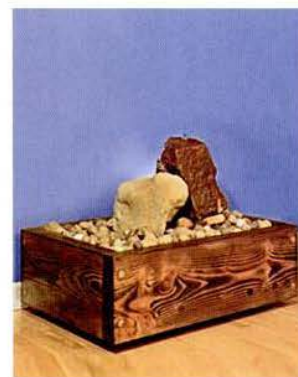
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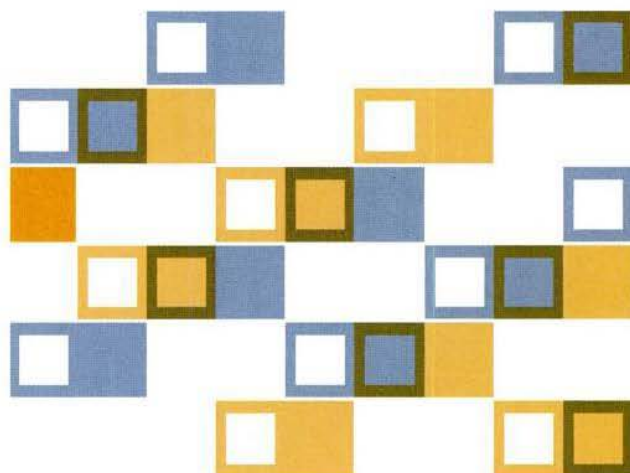
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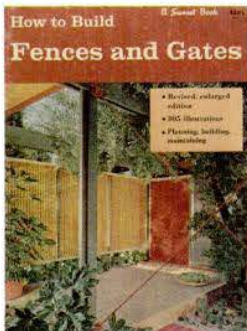


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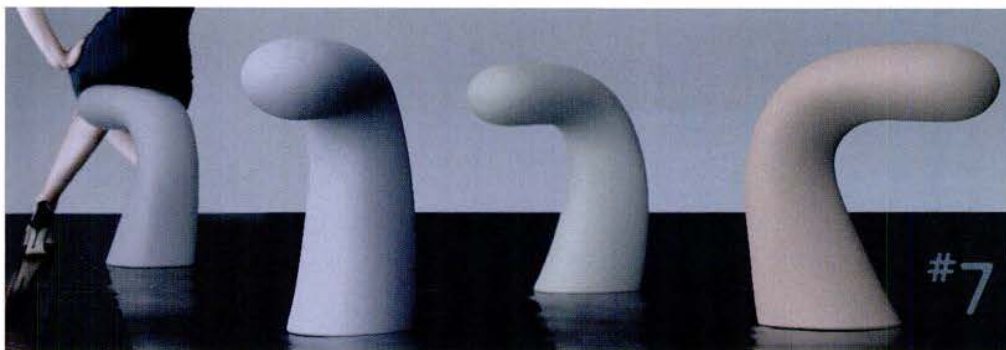
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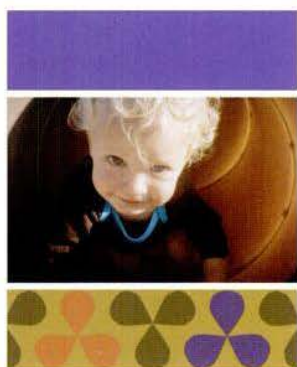
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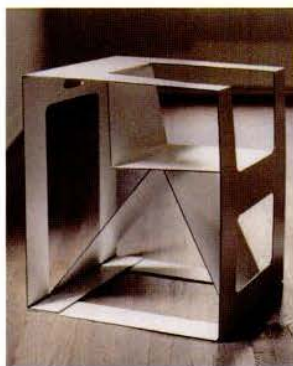
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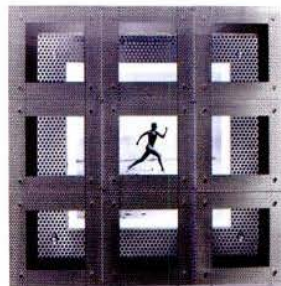
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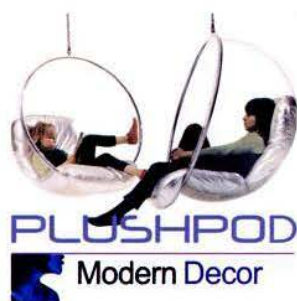


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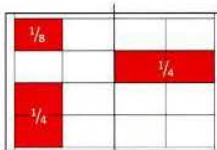
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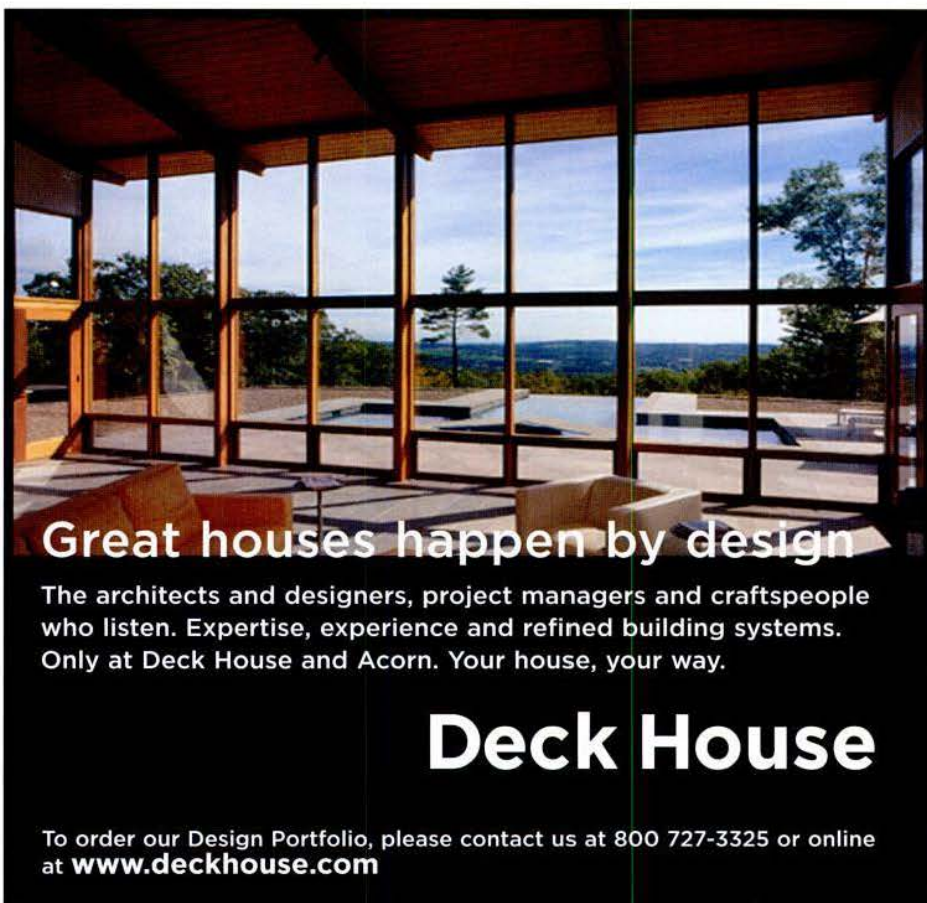
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**116 Conversation**

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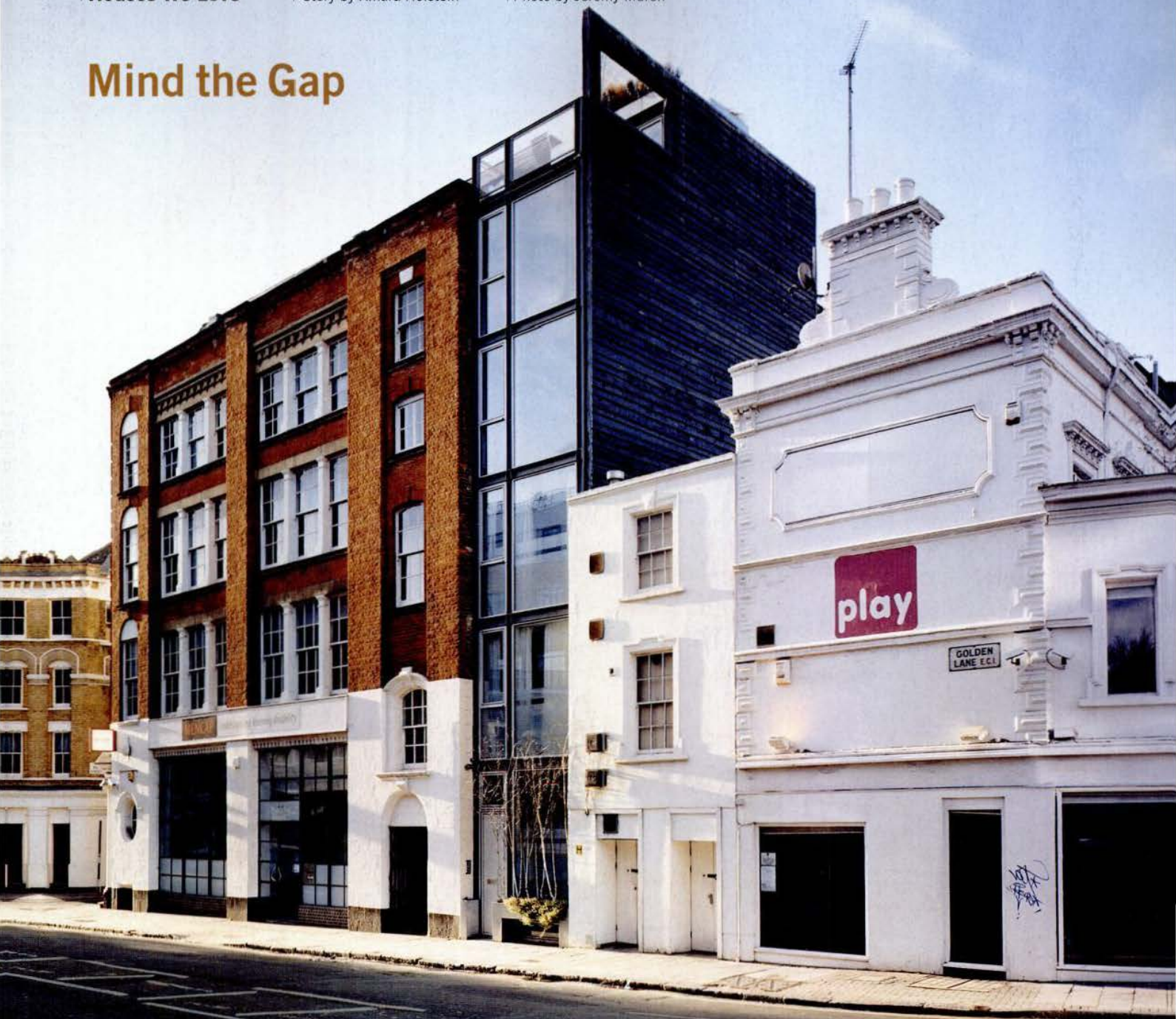
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## Mind the Gap



When architect Jo Hagan of London-based firm USE Architects decided to build on a derelict city site, he had to give notice to the lot's current residents—an entrenched community of rats. "There was an environmental health hazard notice on the site, because of the rubbish and vermin," he reminisces, none too fondly. A tiny space measuring only 11.5 feet wide by 28 feet long, the site was procured for a relative pittance in the midst of the country's economic downturn a few years ago.

After the purchase, Hagan designed a perfectly appropriate structure to slide into the narrow lot. To create his ideal of a "mini skyscraper that was elegant and had integrity to its materials," he trucked in prefabricated steel frames and premade glazing units. Lifted into place by

cranes in the early morning to avoid holding up traffic, everything was bolted into place onsite, and finishes such as wood trim and limestone flooring were inserted later.

Each floor of the 2,700-square-foot house comprises one room—bedrooms on the lower floors, with living and cooking spaces above—which are connected by a series of stairways and a minuscule elevator.

Far from feeling like they're caught in a fishbowl, the current residents, Arne Maynard and William Collinson, insist that their house is exceptionally livable. "Though we're very visible, the outside world just feels like a painting to us," Maynard says. "I forget that people can see in until friends say they saw me making a cup of tea in my underwear." ■



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