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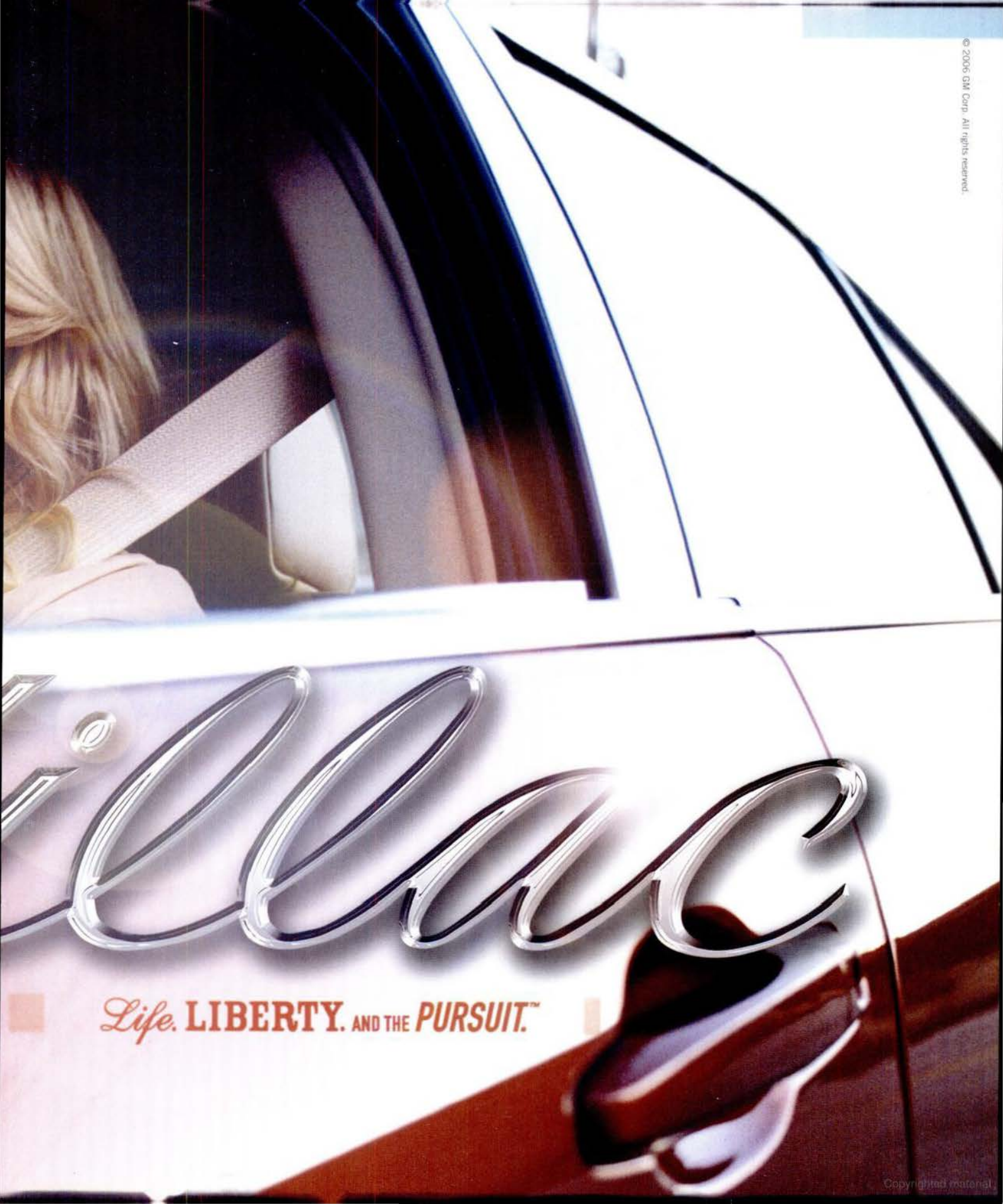

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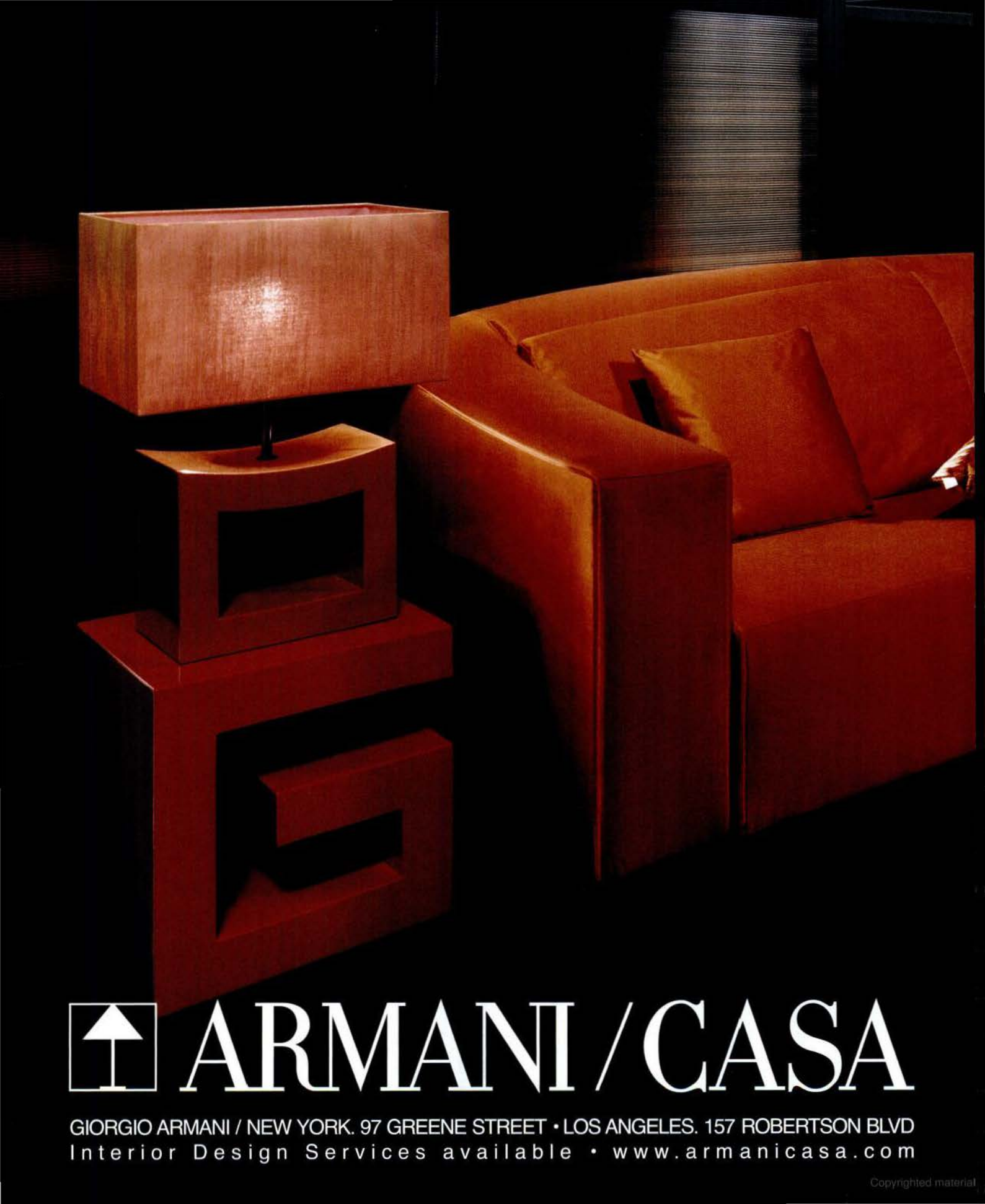

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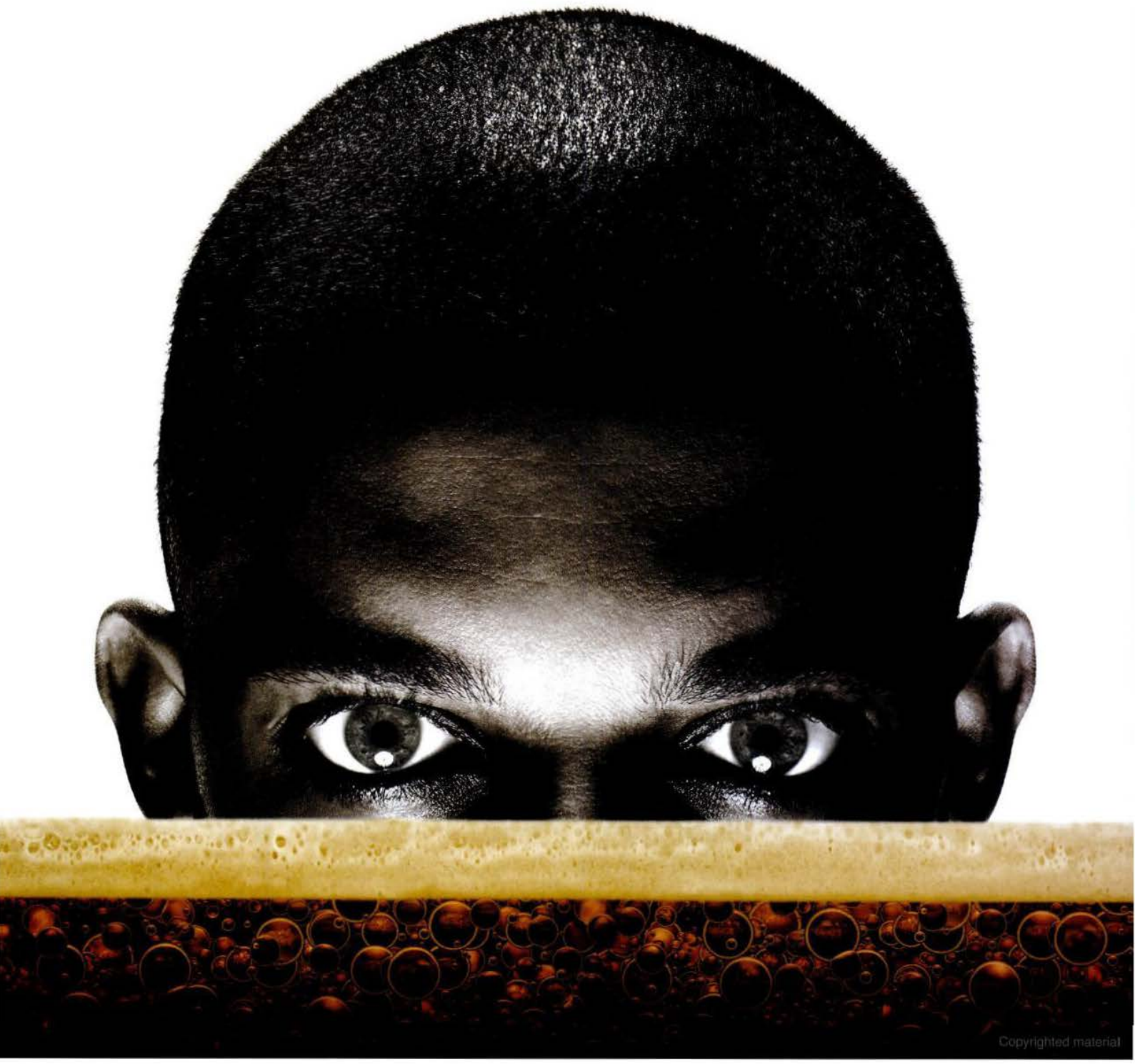

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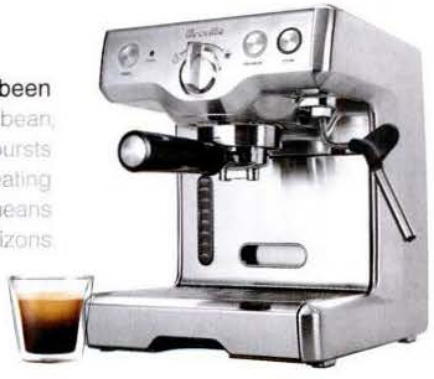

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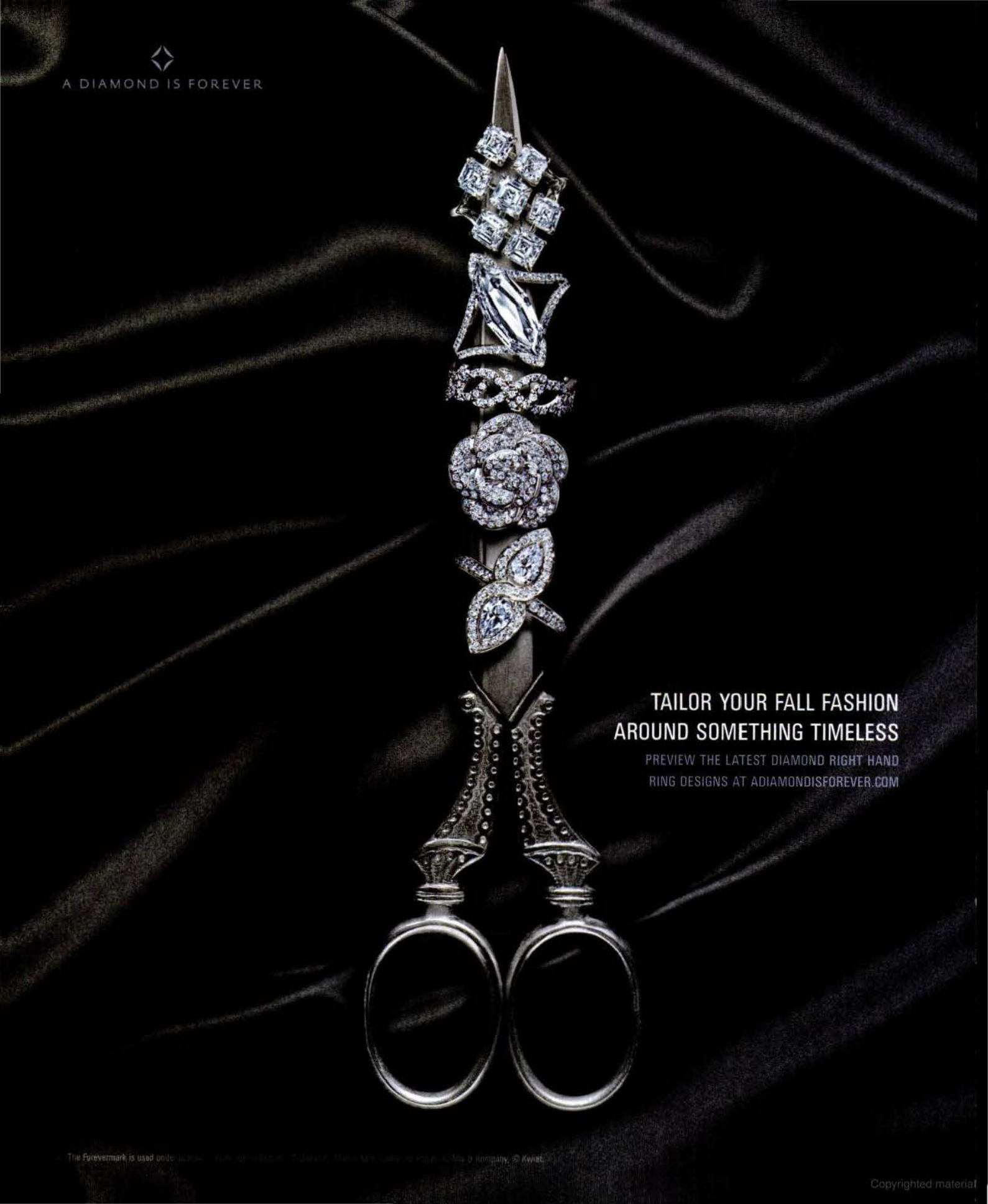

Prefab Now
November 2006

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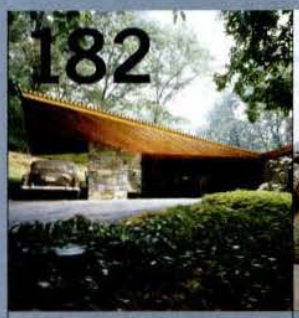
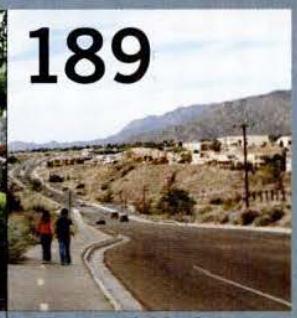
"They pieced it together like a puzzle. It all took one day, from dawn to dusk. It was spectacular." —**Alisa Becket**





Cover: Rocio Romero's LV Home, page 164
Photo by Dean Kaufman

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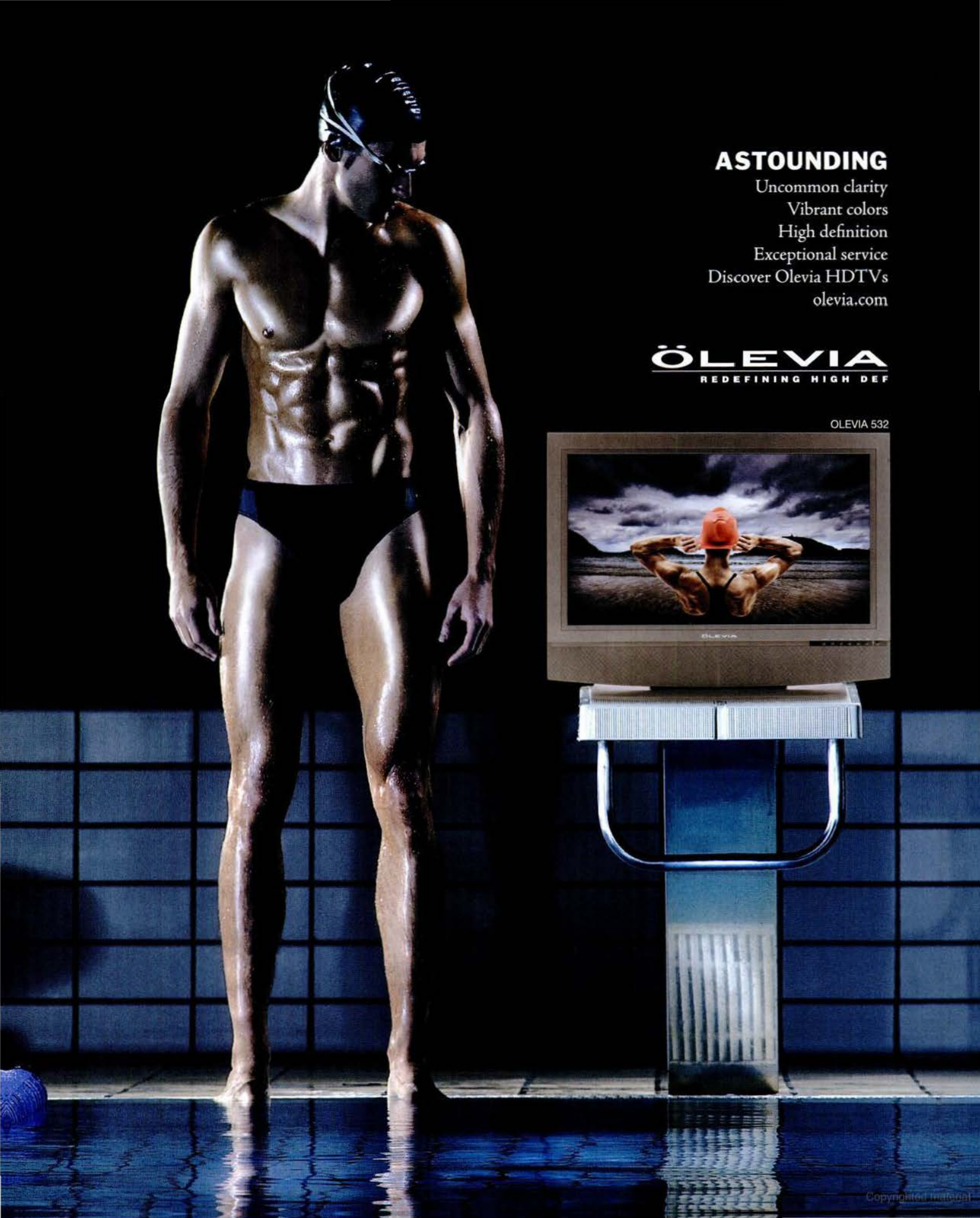

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Modern classic chair


Bertoia stool


Milano coffee table


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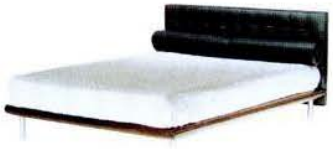
Modern classic bed


Baba


Rondo dresser


Le Corbusier ponyskin lounge


Teak tall boy


Platform bed in wenge with moveable leather cushions


Loft sectional


Saarinen table and chairs


Zen coffee table


Morgana dresser


Mies chair


Le Corbusier chrome table


Le Corbusier sofa


Barcelona bed


Mies Van Der Rohe day bed


Swiveling chair & ottoman


Wassily chair


Freedom bed with movable leather backs and tables


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Junior designer Suzanne Lagasa preps the wall so the creative team can get a good look at the issue you hold in your hands before it goes press.

PHOTO BY ANDREA LAWSON

Thank you for your issue on green and sustainable architecture ("Green Goes Mainstream," September 2006). My favorite construction in the issue was the handmade home in Cloone, Ireland ("Emerald in the Rough"). It reminded me of the homes I visited on the tiny Scoraig Peninsula in northwest Scotland. Those homes also vanish into the surrounding colors of the trees and meadows, have a small, simple design, and are entirely sustainable: Electricity comes from the locally constructed windmills; the water comes from the ground; and most homes have composting toilets. All (or nearly all) were handmade through community effort. We should all be asking ourselves how we can minimize our impact on the earth, and your issue showed how that can be done beautifully.

Misha Becker
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Thanks so much for the great Editor's Note ("Sex and Sustainability") in the September issue. You've made my homework for a business meeting this coming Tuesday easy. I'm simply going to take the article with me and suggest everyone in attendance read it.

Having returned to college at age 50, I'm enjoying the slow track, so here I am at age 54 enjoying completing my bachelor of arts at Antioch University in Seattle. My self-designed degree program is "environmental communication." The meeting I'm attending is for a volunteer project aimed at establishing a graduate program in sustainability at the Antioch Seattle campus. I have a reputation for talking too much. Consequently, your focused words on taking sustainability to the next level fit right into the flow of our ongoing discussion at school.

I'm also part of a small faction at school who are trying to encourage the development of a new campus structure, and we are doing our best (we're a small group) to promote a Platinum LEED rating as our design guideline. Thanks for the great support.

Richard McFarland
Seattle, Washington

Your September issue just arrived and I wanted to commend you, once again, for embracing environmental and sustainability issues. Thanks for continuing to support the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program. We've waited in the wings for these issues to get "hot" again and are optimistic that consumers, manufacturers, and retailers will follow along.

Jill Abelson
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Energy Star Program
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First of all, let me say how much I have enjoyed the development of Dwell; it has replaced many architectural magazines in my life and filled a void as well.

A few years ago while working on a project for SC Johnson, I was able to take photographs inside their beautiful Frank Lloyd Wright headquarters in Racine, Wisconsin. The July/August 2006 cover connected directly to an image I shot, and I took the liberty to mock up a cover to send to Dwell. The connection between the two glass-covered walkways is remarkable and one I wanted to share.

Stephen Guenther
Evanston, Illinois

I was pleased to see bamboo featured in your piece about green flooring ("Step Lightly, September 2006), and I agree that the importing of bamboo from China is a disappointing downside of the product. However, I take issue with bamboo being called "an attractive weed for your floors." "An attractive grass for your floors" would have been more appropriate. If people were more educated about bamboo, its lifecycle, and its maintenance, perhaps there would be far less fear surrounding it and it could become a financially viable domestic product.

Like its very identity, the care and culture of bamboo is misunderstood. Because bamboo grows in very predictable cycles, its spread can be reliably managed through the annual or twice-annual severing of its shallowly spreading rhizomes. Furthermore, because bamboo flowers at extremely infrequent intervals and has seeds that are limitedly viable, slow to develop, and not especially self-sufficient, it is a far less invasive ornamental than other self-sowing familiars. There are good reasons for wanting your bamboo to spread, though. Its rate of (vertical) growth, once established, is unmatched among woody plants and in terms of oxygen production, it will outshine an equivalent stand of trees. Bamboo, it should be understood, is not a "weed," but a wonderfully green choice for the garden.

Jeff Craddock
Asheville, North Carolina

I enjoyed the September issue of Dwell, especially the piece on Architecture for Humanity ("Design Like You Give a Damn"). However, I must take issue with a comment you made in the Editor's Note ("Sex and Sustainability").

It states that you'd "love to see a top-down approach" involving government-sponsored solutions. While I understand what's trying to be accomplished and support that goal, I don't agree with the approach. The top-down approach to social organization is one of the major failures of human history, and it is my belief that top-down approaches are completely antithetical to sustainability. There's nothing green about it, and I would say that this basic misunderstanding is one of the reasons why green is not mainstream. It's just standard-fare environmentalism (which has largely failed), and I think we need to look at some ideas that are little further to the left of the spectrum.

Let's start with the word "sustainable" and define what it really means. A sustainable society does not consume more natural resources than can be replenished by natural biological and geophysical cycles, and does not produce waste faster than can be dispersed by natural biological and geophysical cycles. The only way to create a sustainable society is to live within these limits.

Since the centralization of energy, power, politics, and economy has demonstrably failed, it is clearly evident that decentralization is the road we should have taken. That means we should stop looking to central authority (the federal government) for so-called solutions and answers. The real solutions and answers lie in the community and in the bioregion and with the people themselves.

The sustainable society of tomorrow will be guided by several principles, including limitations of scale, conservation and stability, self-sufficiency and cooperation, and decentralization and diversity. Any system of governance would be noncoercive, open, and democratic, and the people would be engaged daily in the processes of finding their own solutions to their problems. Seeking solutions from central authority is therefore nonsustainable.

Beau Peyton
Germantown, Tennessee

The opening paragraph of "Step Lightly" (September 2006) poses the dilemma of paper or plastic at the grocery store. I'd like to offer a third option: Bring your own bag!

Sarah Berger
Baltimore, Maryland

As an architect in one of the more rural parts of the country, I look forward to every issue of Dwell as an oasis of modern design. I greatly appreciated the September issue, as my husband (a general contractor) and I are in the process of building our home and have made every effort to incorporate sustainable design. We would appreciate an article on residential solar panels and associated energy storage and distribution systems. We haven't been able to locate a source for the panels and equipment or a guide for their installation and use. We are confident that the folks at Dwell can help us out.

Phoebe Patton Randolph
Barboursville, West Virginia

Editors' Note: *Keep an eye out for "Implementing Solar 101," in our March 2007 issue. It should help!*

My interest in building my own home is growing, especially with the various energy-saving and green options and the possibility of unique design. Has there been a past issue that outlines how someone with little design background or contractor connections can start from scratch? What are the basics I need to know in order to get started? And, more importantly, how can a single-income person do it on an affordable (okay, low) budget ($200,000–$250,000)? A step-by-step guide would be great to include in a future issue—unless there's already one I can back order?

Alyssa Moy
Mosier, Oregon

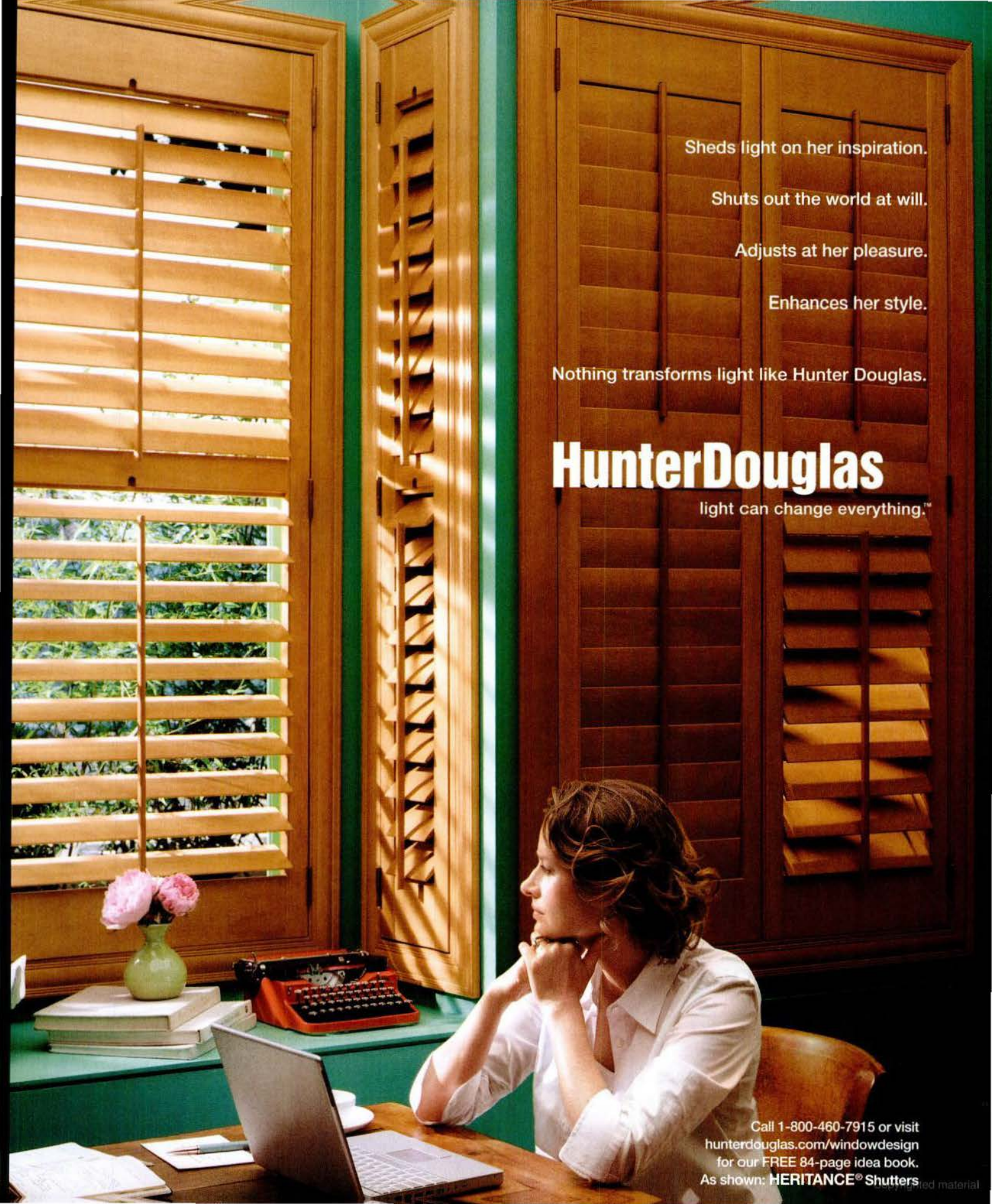
Editors' Note: *We suggest posting your query on the Dwell discussion boards at www.livemodern/dwell. Also, please try our new search engine on dwell.com to search for relevant articles that address your query.*

I am a loyal reader of your magazine, and while surfing the Internet, I came across an article on a home that I thought would fit your magazine well. I know I would most definitely read the article. As a resident of Massachusetts and a driver of Boston streets, it would be nice to read an article about and see more photos of the interior of a home that shows at least something good came out of the Big Dig.

Stephanie Crim
Boston, Massachusetts

Editors' Note: *Great idea! Please take a look at this issue's "Houses We Love," p. 268.*

Are you kidding me? Did Dwell turn into a Neiman Marcus catalogue when I wasn't looking? ▸



Letters

Was there a transitional period I missed? I mean really, suggesting I pay $930 for a reading lamp ("A Little Light Reading," July/August 2006)? In fact, the cheapest lamp in the article came in at just under $200. The prices are particularly ridiculous when I noted that each lamp was, in fact, just for reading, not lighting an entire room or even a corner of a room. Please, Dwell, don't go the way of other magazines and cater only to those readers who would not think twice about dropping a grand on a lamp that is useful four to five hours out of the week at best.

Tesa Severson
Tucson, Arizona

The July/August 2006 article "Knowing Neutra" by Thomas S. Hines, with its historic and current photographs, was a real treat. It's very encouraging to find that there are owners and tenants who still appreciate the work of one of Los Angeles's first-generation modern architects, especially when so many of the city's later, iconic Case Study Houses have been torn down or remodeled beyond recognition.

As a long-time copy editor, however, I can't resist correcting an error: The Elkay and Kelton apartments are both on the east side of Kelton, not "across the street" from each other, as a caption states.

I also enjoyed the story on Columbus, Indiana ("Columbus Explored"). Please continue to feature modernism's past successes as well as its present and future trends.

Joy Gilliam
Los Angeles, California

My in-laws in Atlanta introduced my husband and me to Dwell earlier this spring and we were quite impressed. So, naturally, while looking for reading materials in the Cincinnati airport, I was flipping through your July/August issue when I could have sworn I caught a glimpse of the North Christian Church. I flipped through again and was not mistaken. There was a thoughtful and well-written article about our fair city and its interesting legacy ("Columbus Explored").

We had a great laugh at the comment about flat roofs on page 178, as we are residents of Columbus who have chosen to dwell in a flat-roofed home built by a locally prominent architect in the 1960s and later remodeled in the early '80s. When we are finished remodeling/repairing it, perhaps you will permit us to share another version of the Columbus modern with your magazine. It could be called "When Modern Homes Go Bad: Repairing the Home While Retaining the Modern."

Elizabeth Bays
Columbus, Indiana

I wanted to point out something that may or may not be so obvious. It's your devotion to readers' letters that impresses me the most. I buy both Dwell and *This Old House*. I love both magazines; they fill needs that have now, or in the future when I buy my own place. Dwell is fantastic at printing readers' letters, sometimes three pages' worth. In *This Old House*, the letters fill maybe a half of one page. I feel it's a sign of respect when a magazine prints readers' letters in such quantity that just reading them alone takes time. So thank you for showing that the readers really do matter.

Keith Palmer
Enumclaw, Washington

What a task—to define the modern movement ("Mapping Modernism," July/August 2006). And to define the movement beyond the typical architectural constructs of popular culture is still more of an anomaly than the glossed-over version in magazines will yet allow. My thanks to author Barry Katz and the people at Dwell.

One side of modernism that was possibly missing: techno music. The year 1985 marked the entrance of pure electronic music into our modern culture. Detroit's Juan Atkins formed Metroplex Records to bring together the industrial past of the city, sci-fi futurism, and talking Apple computers..."time, space, transmat."

Living in Detroit for a decade was a lesson in the power of industry over the modern lifestyle. Yet if you looked beyond the factories and freeway ramps and looked for some artifact or clue to the past, you could see that the thirst for advancement had thrived there at some previous time. More than just buildings, architecture is an interface between buildings and people's lives.

Tony King
Avon, Colorado

Editors' Note: *Readers—what else should we have included in the modernism timeline? Let us know at letters@dwell.com and we'll add it to our upcoming expanded timeline online.*

On the cover of the July/August 2006 issue, there was a cover line about "Exploring Modern Color." Excited, I flipped to the contents and found that the story was called "Color 101." Great! I thought I was going to learn how to use color. It started out fine with a piece by Fred Bernstein ("Hueless") about how he and other modern architects have for years used white and other neutrals. I was hoping for something more like "How to apply color in a modern home." Perhaps this could be covered in a future story.

Hailee Bowler
Phoenix, Arizona ▶

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Letters

I have fallen in love with Dwell. From the layout to the photography and the subsequent detailing of design, it has made me interested in an area I once ignored.

To that end, I have become extremely interested in many of the products (or ones similar to them) that are shown in your publication. But, try as I might, I am unable to find any that are affordable. While I have been able to find many that are affordable in a middle-class sense of the word, I am a college student of limited means. Furthermore, there's a large chance that I may not be able to afford them in the future, since I plan on going into public service and nonprofit work. Do you know of any outlets for much more affordable versions of the items that you showcase that are not IKEA?

Paul Morgan
Flagstaff, Arizona

Editors' Note: *We endeavor to show a wide range of products and furnishings at all price levels in every issue. Some more affordable stores we'd suggest include Blu Dot, CB2, West Elm, and Room & Board.*

It takes me a while to get to your magazine because they seem to disappear as soon as they arrive at our office. However, I managed to see most of the May 2006 "Think Small" issue. You guys need to think smaller. My partner and I have lived in a 1,500-square-foot house for the past 12 years. It was designed by Barry Downs and built in 1959/60 for his own family. It has three bedrooms, a studio, living/dining area, kitchen and eating area, two three-piece bathrooms, a laundry/pantry closet, and a mechanical room all on one level. It is, in its simplicity, an elegant, comfortable, and contemporary home even by today's standards, and it is easy to maintain. It is currently on the City of Vancouver's "Recent Moderns" heritage list.

We used to live in a 970-square-foot apartment on the top floor of our heritage (1910) house in the Kitsilano area of Vancouver, British Columbia. Prior to that, we lived in my partner's 625-square-foot one-bedroom house. It was modest but very comfortable, in no way confining, and benefited very strongly from its open plan and views to the private outdoor garden spaces to enhance its "apparent" size.

Buildings of modest size benefit greatly from a simplified palette—both materials and color—and a simplified floor plan where spaces are multipurpose, and wasted space, which is so prevalent in larger homes, is completely eliminated.

Steve Hodder
Vancouver, British Columbia

I was happily making my way through the July/ August 2006 issue of Dwell, when I happened upon a statement in the article on Columbus, Indiana, that had quite a sting: "an Italian chain restaurant housed in a mock Tuscan villa that looks like it arrived by way of Las Vegas."

As a Las Vegas resident and modernist, I find blanket statements like this about my home frustrating and overly simplistic. I live in a home and, in fact, in a whole neighborhood of mid-century-modern homes that look nothing like Tuscany. Moreover, I live among many other Las Vegans who would rather jump off the Stratosphere than bring Tuscany into our neighborhood.

In the future, it would do your writers well to remember the diversity that exists in cities, especially those that have two faces like Las Vegas: one for tourists and another for those of us who call it home.

Dr. Heidi Swank
Las Vegas, Nevada

Editors' Note: *Agreed! Please see our "Detour" article on Las Vegas, p. 218.*

Correction:

In our September 2006 Dwell Reports article, "Step Lightly," we created the impression that Pergo laminate flooring may emit gases at unsafe levels into your home. This implication is incorrect and we apologize to our readers and to Pergo for our error.

We have reviewed information provided to us by Pergo and it is now clear to us that there is no reason to believe any gas is emitted at unsafe levels. According to Pergo's information, Pergo's products are tested regularly by official independent testing institutes throughout the world and consistently earn the highest safety rating. Pergo is a safe flooring alternative and it has consistently earned the highest air-quality rating (E1) through rigorous independent testing labs.

We sincerely regret any confusion our review may have caused. For additional information on this product, please go to www.pergo.com.

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Rear-end Haiku

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Octopus Car Wash beckons passersby to come get their cars cleaned and enjoy the scenery in the process.

Contributors

Jessica Antola ("Garden Apartment," p. 144) is a Paris-based photographer who shot the Dimanche family home for this month's issue. "Upon entering this tranquil space I really felt like I had escaped the city," Antola says. "You forget you are in a bustling metropolis, until you sit on one of their many decks and catch a glimpse of the rooftops of Paris around you."

Randi Berez ("The Proof Is in the Prefab," p. 172) is a native of Los Angeles and a frequent contributor to Dwell. Her search for housing in the brutal Los Angeles market has given her a deeper appreciation of prefab. "Affordable, modern housing should be available to people who want it. It's not about just having a nice place to live. Quality design can reduce stress and create a better environment."

Fred Bernstein ("Wright Now," p. 182) came across a Frank Lloyd Wright house in Tallahassee, Florida, where its octogenarian owner, Clifton Lewis, told him of her encounters with Mr. Wright a half a century ago and shared her hopes and dreams for the as-yet-unfinished building. Inspired by his encounter with Mrs. Lewis, Bernstein set out to meet as many original Wright homeowners as possible. "Their devotion to their houses keeps them vital," he says.

Donovan Finn ("All You Need is LV," p. 164, and "Future Building," p. 118) lives in a 95-year-old Sears Roebuck kit home—Modern Home design #162—in Champaign, Illinois. Traveling to Missouri to profile Rocio Romero for this issue, he was excited to find interesting modern prefab designs being created in his own backyard.

Catherine Franklin ("Outback Staked House," p. 89) is a Melbourne-based writer. This assignment took her to the picturesque Hawkesbury River north of Sydney. "Sue Harper, who designed the Dangar Island House, is one of the most innovative architects I've ever met," Franklin says.

David A. Greene ("Living Las Vegas," p. 218) is a screenwriter living in Los Angeles. Greene enjoyed his last visit to Las Vegas before the arrival of his first child. He'll wait until she's much older to explain how he lost the Bugaboo on Red 12.

Michelle Hoffman ("Garden Apartment," p. 144), a writer in Paris, explored vertical gardens for this issue and fantasized about becoming an urban green goddess. Botanist Patrick Blanc showed her a magical secret hidden in his most recent work, the giant vegetal wall at the Quai Branly museum: a red-breasted robin's nest, chirping with life, hidden amid the foliage just above the ground. Nature can live in the city; it just needs a place to dwell.

Dean Kaufman ("All You Need is LV," p. 164) arrived at the Missouri farm of architect Rocio Romero with temperatures hovering around 106. "Coming over the hill and seeing that metal box for the first time I thought, Okay, this place is either going to be a toaster oven or an ice box. The prefab's insulation capabilities, however, passed the extreme weather test exceptionally well."

Dave Lauridsen ("LEEDing the Way," p. 99) is a photographer living and working in Los Angeles. He grew up in Orange County, right in the middle of three Eichler tracts of homes. "It's exciting to see someone with the vision to do what Eichler did back in the '60s and make communities of modern prefab homes, and even more exciting that it isn't crazy to think of using prefab at the scale of entire communities."

Michael Perry ("The Architecture of Happiness," p. 210) always seems to be making his way lost in happy landscapes and drawing on sheets of paper. He just finished his first book on hand typography, to be published by Princeton Architectural Press in 2007.

Robert Sullivan ("Perpetual Motion, Volume 3," p. 189) is the author of *Cross Country*. For this piece about transportation and its effects on the American way of life, he biked in Albuquerque, walked in Indianapolis, and ate way too much ice cream in Austin. "They have a great ice cream shop at the Austin airport, and the ice-cream-sandwich flavor is so good that I nearly missed my flight, which hasn't happened since I lost track of time in the amazing used bookstore at the airport in Milwaukee," Sullivan says.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW MONTEITH

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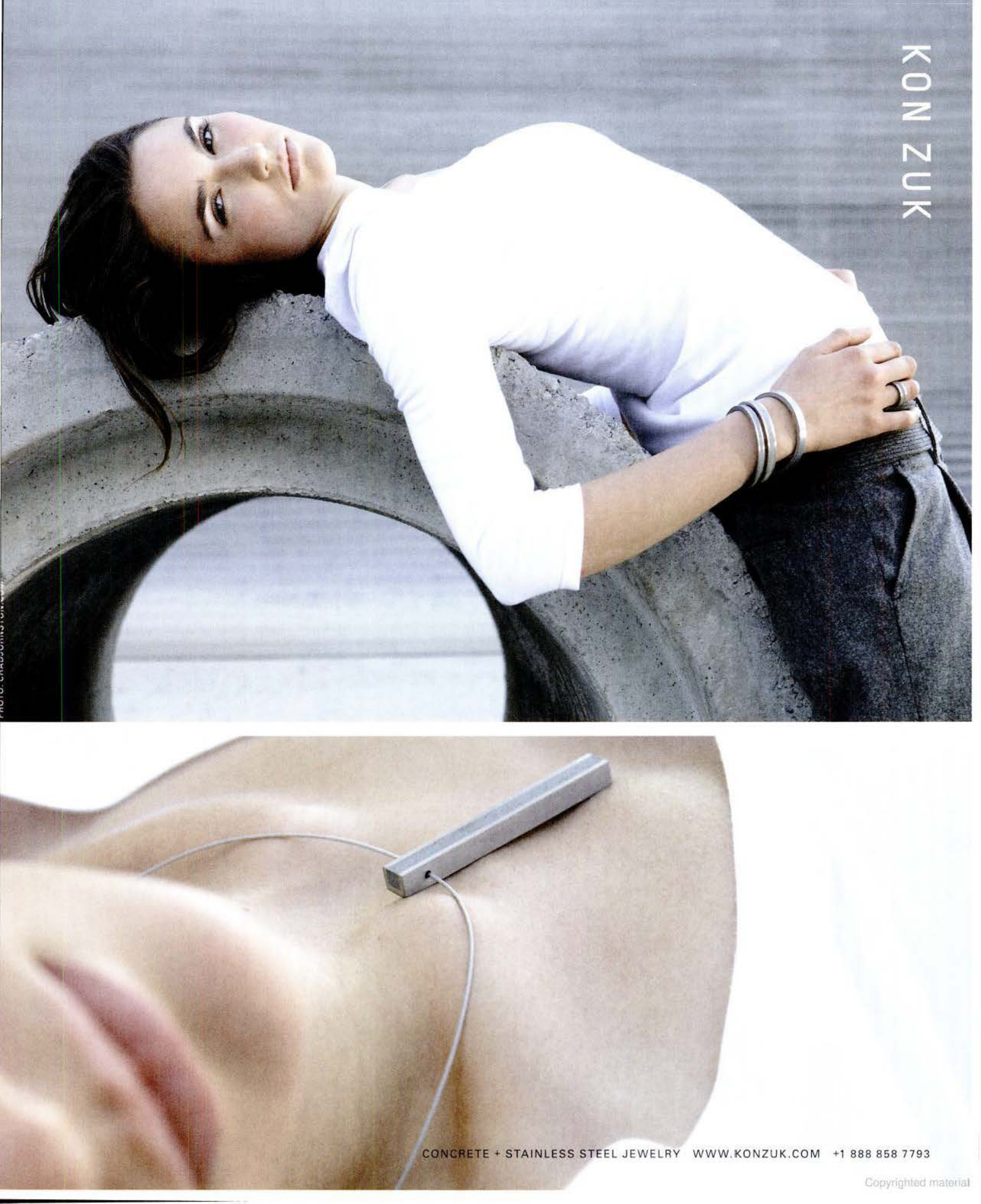

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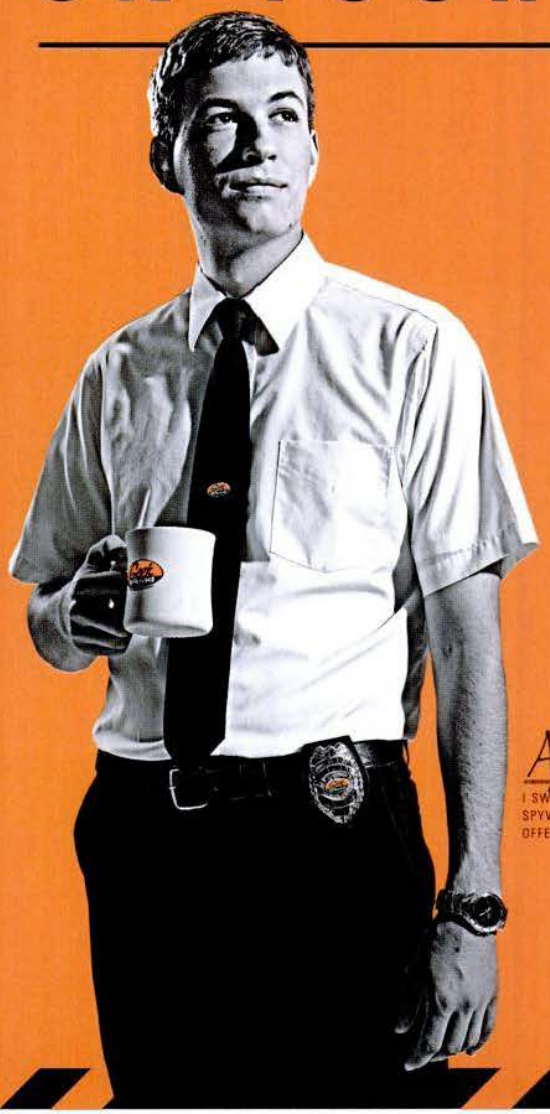

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Prefab's Progress

In 2001, we published an article about a stunning prefab retreat in Chile that Rocio Romero had designed for her mother. We liked this house for many reasons, including its amazing setting and the fact that Romero's mother had acted as general contractor.

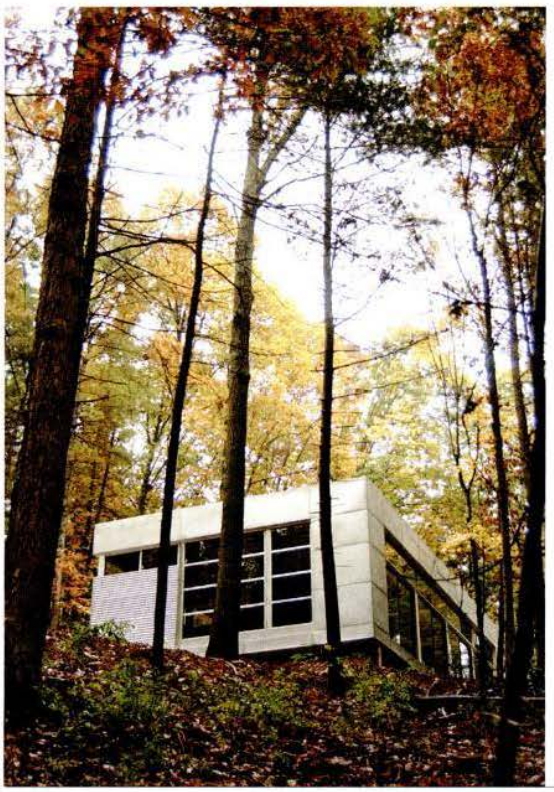
But what is most notable about this little 350-word story is how it unwittingly helped to unleash what can only be described as a prefab frenzy. In just five years, prefab has swapped its trailer trash rep for a far more reputable existence, taking form as vacation homes in Hawaii, a topic bandied about at design conferences, and reported on by journalists not just in Dwell and its kin but in *Men's Health*, *BusinessWeek*, and *Food & Wine*.

As the author of a book on modern prefab, I can take some of the responsibility (or the blame, depending on your perspective) for the preponderance of "Prefab Is Pretty Fabulous" headlines coming over the newswire. So I'd like to take this opportunity to clarify a few things that may have gotten lost in all the hype.

Prefab can significantly reduce construction time, thus reducing costs dramatically. Prefab can, due to the controlled building environment of a factory, be a more efficient and precise way of building. Prefab can cost considerably less than site-built if one or more of the following conditions exists: You are willing to roll up your sleeves for a little DIY; your building site is flat; your home is not destined for a highly bureaucratic state like New York or California, where permitting and approvals alone can take several months—and even up to two years; your home is part of a multifamily building or development; and/or you are willing to work with a preexisting design that can be modified for your site.

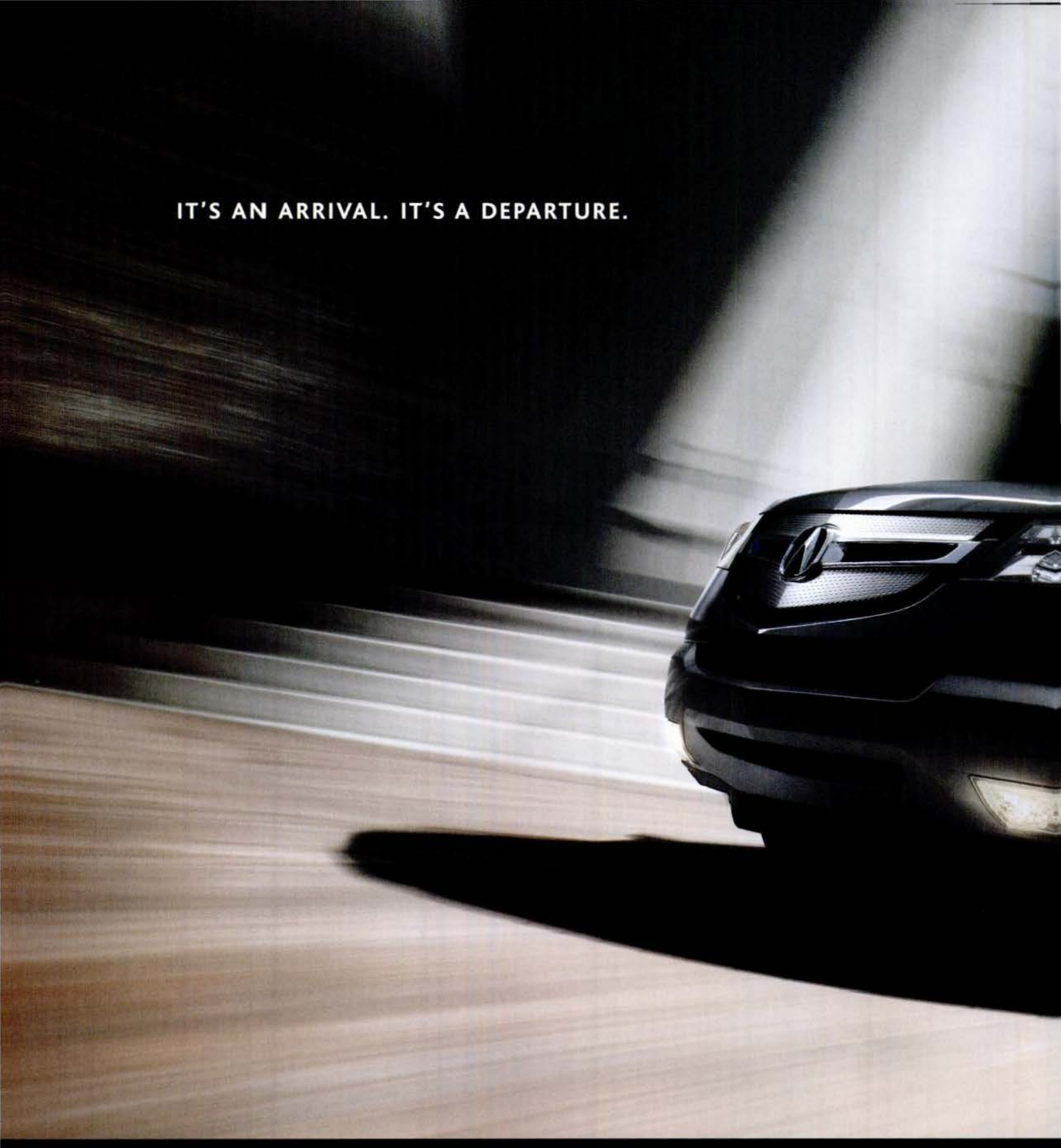
Prefab will not solve the problems of the modern residential marketplace nor, given the realities of labor and material costs and the softening but still strong real estate market, will it ensure that we will all be able to live in architect-designed $100,000 homes. But when smartly executed, it can, as the article on Michelle Kaufmann (p. 172) illustrates, save time and money and promote sustainable living. As shown below and on p. 164, prefab can be used to create intimate vacation retreats in the mold of, say, Andrew Geller's beach houses. It is an efficient way to deliver high-end, architect-designed houses not at a price most would consider "affordable" (a loaded word) but at a cost considerably less than that of the site-built design services of that same architect. Perhaps most nobly, prefab can, as the article on Fred Friedmeyer III (p. 118) demonstrates, create thoughtful and functional shelter, and make it easier for residential developers to integrate sustainability into their projects.

Love it or hate it, all this laser-focused attention on prefab has spurred on some of the most engaging and dynamic discussions about the goals and direction of future housing in decades, a benefit that cannot be underestimated. So let's keep talking! ■



Since Rocio Romero's LV Home first appeared as a prototype in a 2001 issue of Dwell, it has become the cornerstone of her successful prefab venture with over 50 kits being sold in 17 states.

PHOTOS COURTESY DAN EDMONDS-WATERS (CA), FRED BLEAKLEY (NY), JENNIFER WATSON (VA), AND RUI MONTEIRO-CLARO (ME)



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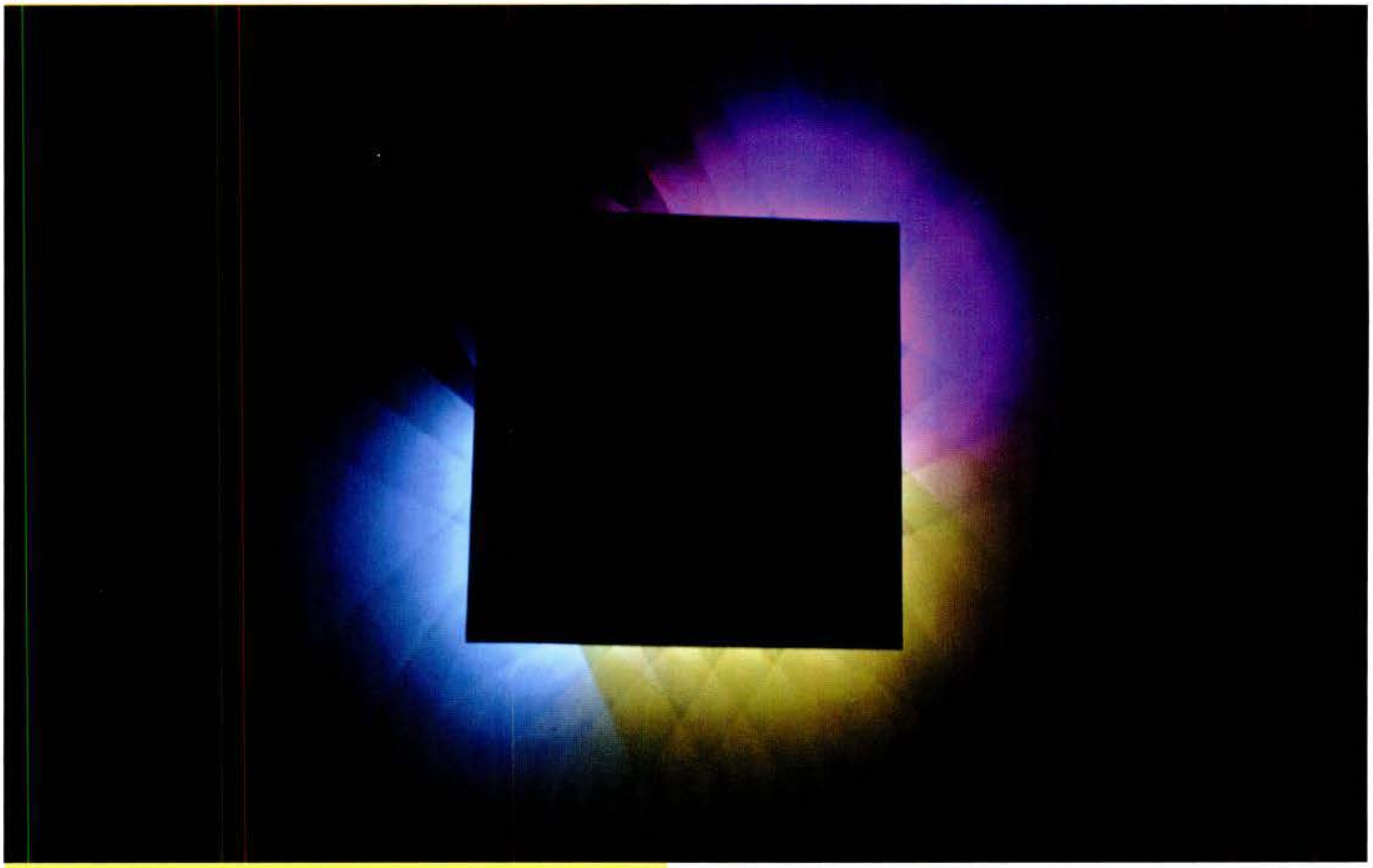
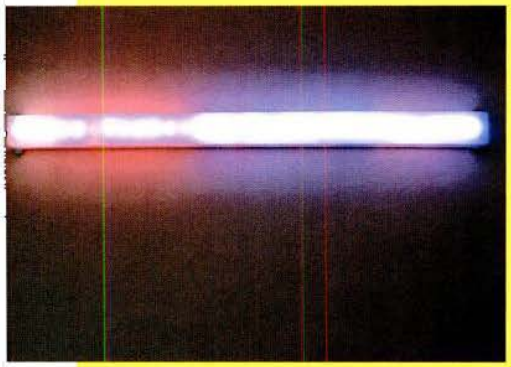
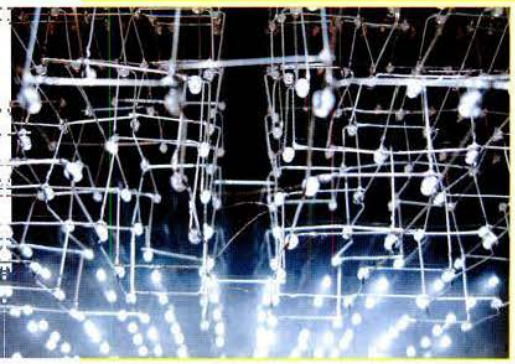




Lighting Design / By James Clar & Associates / James Clar & Associates are finally making their bright ideas available to the rest of us. This fall, the company will release a line of products developed from their most popular prototypes.



Square Eclipse/Light Kaleidoscope (above) consists of 24 tricolored LEDs obscured by a square panel, resulting in a full-spectrum variegated nimbus that looks much like a square sun eclipsed by a florid moon. If you're tired of your old fuddy-duddy analogue clock, Line (top left) uses red, blue, and green LEDs to represent hours, minutes, and seconds to create timed color patterns. The colors can also be programmed to relate any information by hue, like the weather. The 3D Display Cube (bottom left) comes with a programmable graphic display system that allows you to project video and sound—and you thought your lava lamp was cool. www.jamesclar.com

Hole collection / By l'abbate / As the saying goes, the more you take away, the bigger it becomes. The question of how to make the modern chair new again is a difficult proposition. In this case, the answer seems obvious: Make a hole. www.lacollection.it

Super Vision / 17 Sept–31 Dec / The Institute of Contemporary Art Boston / Boston, MA
We still can't see through buildings or travel at the speed of light, but modern citizens have become information juggernauts with capabilities marvelous enough to rival any of Marvel's superheroes. But does our ever-increasing omniscience enhance or hinder our human experience? A group of artists explore the idea of perception through painting, sculpture, photography, and video at the first exhibition to be held in ICA's new building designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro. The survey includes work by Anish Kapoor, Tony Oursler, Thomas Ruff, and Runa Islam (right), among others. www.icaboston.org

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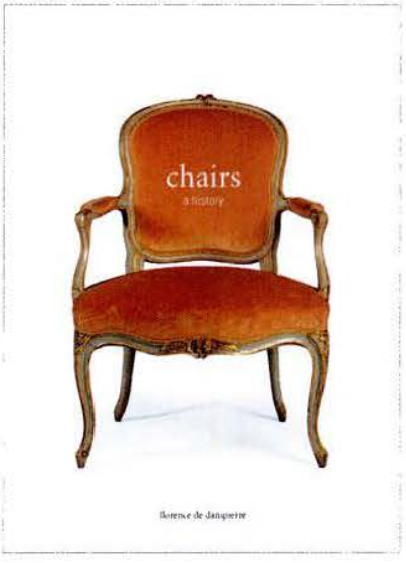
Chairs: A History / By Florence de Dampierre / Abrams / $65
If you're chair-curious, you'll find plenty to enjoy in Florence de Dampierre's exhaustive new book. From ancient Egypt to the present day, *Chairs* is peppered with anecdotes from the author—a former antique dealer and interior decorator. While modernism gets its fair share, many of the selections are better suited to the book's pages than your living room. www.hnabooks.com



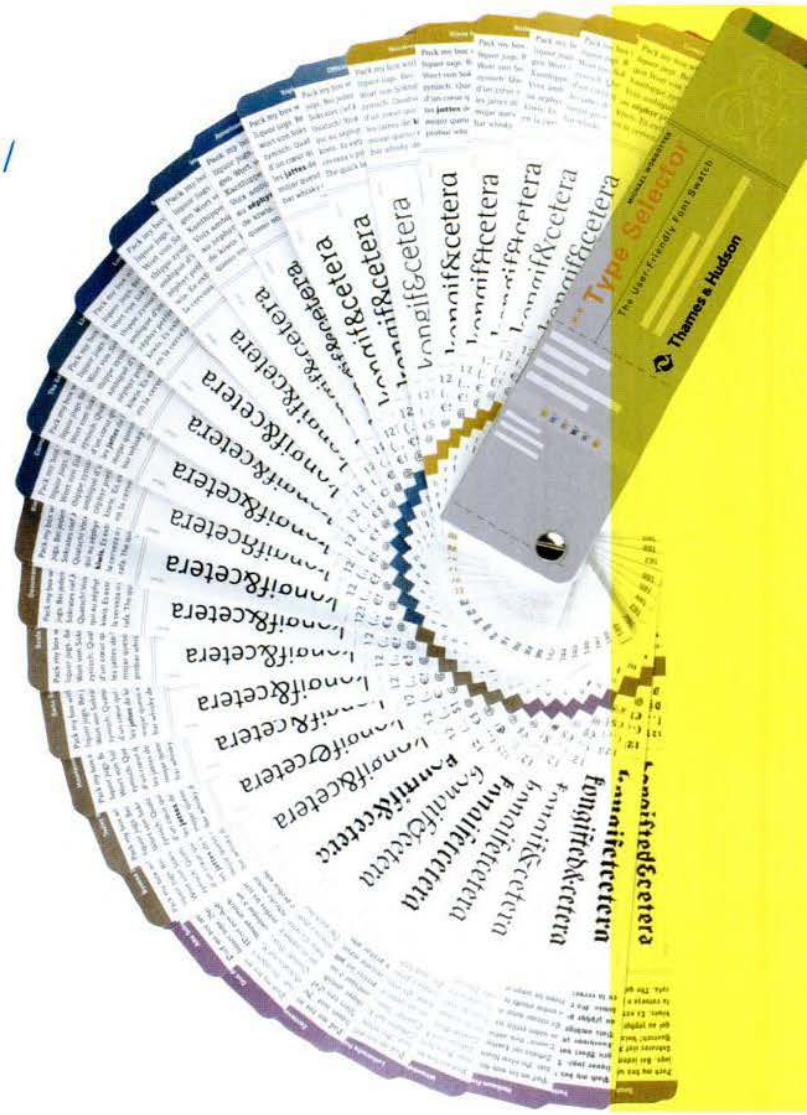
Dining table / By X-Pand Furniture Systems
Have you ever stared wistfully at that accordion in your grandfather's basement and thought, It would be totally awesome if my dining room table worked like that? No? Well, thankfully, now you'll never have to, because the good people at X-Pand Furniture already have. Forget struggling with leaves: Simply pull on each end to expand the center an extra 18 inches, creating plenty of room for additional guests. Available in seven different finishes and three sizes, this table is better looking than that crazy old wind instrument forever collecting dust. www.xpand-furniture.com

He was her humble assistant. Never in the way. Always one step ahead. Divining her every motion. Commands unspoken. Reflex immediate. Almost omniscient. He would never step in the spotlight, it was hers to be had. She had now all but forgotten his presence. So easy when nothing falters and the river's flow is smooth. But this was his job. To be there when she needed. He was her humble assistant.

brizo.com

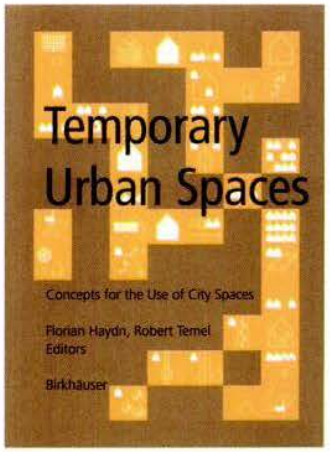
Type Selector: The User-Friendly Font Swatch / By Michael Wörgötter / Thames & Hudson / $50

Don't know the difference between vertical stress and diagonal lock? The world of typography can befuddle the best of us. Thames & Hudson has released the Type Selector, a collection of 226 font swatches in over 1,000 weights and styles, to ease the pain. The selector is separated into six categories for easier navigation, and includes samples of figures, punctuation marks, and special characters. Newcomers can learn by making side-by-side comparisons to discern the difference between a Garamond and a Galliard without having to enroll at Art Center. www.wwnorton.com



Botanist bench / By Brandon Lynne and Dario Antonioni for Orange 22

Every summer, legions of children are unceremoniously torn from TV sets and pushed outside by parents insisting they get fresh air. For those lucky kids whose parents frequent science museum stores, there are Sunprints—photographic mimicry whereby small objects such as dandelions, grass, and flowers are placed on top of special blue paper then left in the sun, creating shadowy images. The high-tech cutting process used on these aluminum benches is a far cry from the low-tech delight of *Sunprints*, but the image left behind evokes fond memories of sticky popsicle days. www.orange22.com



Temporary Urban Spaces / By Florian Haydn and Robert Temel / Birkhäuser / $40

Globalization shows no sign of letting up, changing both the cultural and physical face of cities and increasing the need for new methods and ideas in urban planning. In an attempt to kick-start this discussion, ten planning experts, including Peter Arlt and Barbara Holub, contribute companion essays to 35 temporary urban space projects. www.papress.com

What's the difference between a Mac and a PC?

Where do we begin? PCs are for the stuff we have to do, like pie charts and spreadsheets. Macs are for the stuff we want to do, like photos, music and movies. On a PC, viruses and crashing are "normal." On a Mac, everything just works the way it should. And unlike PCs, a Mac comes ready to do all the things you want, the day you bring it home. Sound like differences you could get used to? Read on.

"In my opinion (and I've been writing this for a while now), the Apple operating system is much better than Windows XP."

—Walter S. Mossberg, CNBC Power Lunch, June 8, 2006

"Making a great machine even better is a suite of upgraded applications called iLife '06 that take advantage of these new Intel® chips, and deliver such vast improvements in digital imaging and multimedia programs that no programs on any other platform can even be called rivals."

—Mike Wendland, *Detroit Free Press*, February 14, 2006

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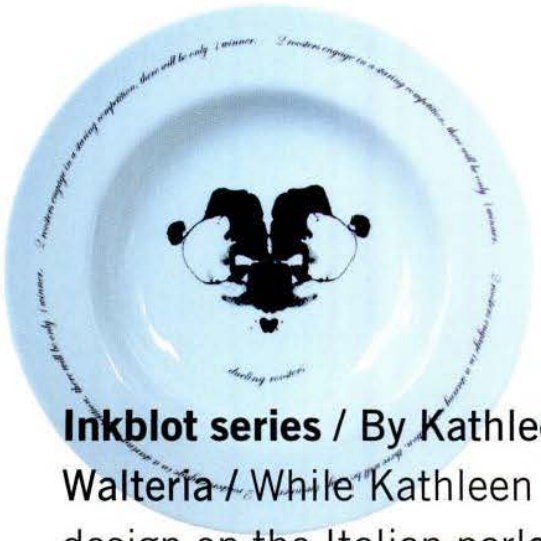
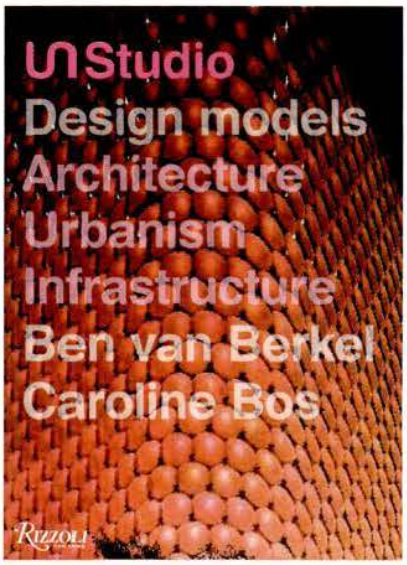


Inkblot series / By Kathleen Walsh for Walteria / While Kathleen Walsh based her design on the Italian parlor game Blotto, not Rorschach, these plates will still add pathos to your potatoes. www.walterialiving.com



UN Studio Design Models: Architecture, Urbanism, Infrastructure / By Ben van Berkel and Caroline Bos / Rizzoli / $100
In this detailed monograph, Dutch architects and educators UN Studio eschew the idea of simply designing buildings in favor of exploring "design models" that can be translated to a number of different platforms and projects. If that sounds a little heavy, it is, but their writing is sufficiently humorous and helps make sense of the amorphous architectural landscape we inhabit. www.rizzoliusa.com

Twice Untitled and Other Pictures (Looking Back) / 15 Sept–31 Dec / Wexner Center for the Arts / Columbus, OH
It's trite, but true: Many people still buy artwork to match their decor. Though it's easy to hang a painting that complements your chaise longue, most people are oblivious to the impact this has on the art itself. Photographer Louise Lawler has spent the past 30-odd years carefully documenting the ways in which art is subtly altered by its surroundings. From ornate private homes to crowded auction houses to upscale galleries, these images show how pictures are displayed—and how a Richter in a closet appears quite differently than does a Hirst hung at Christie's. www.wexarts.org

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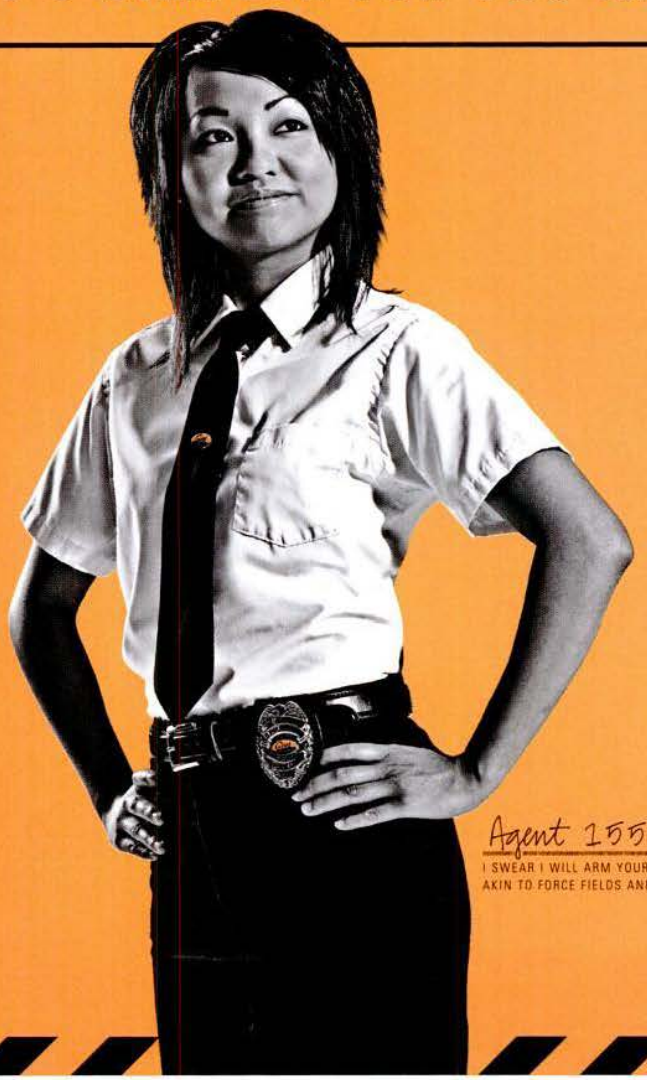

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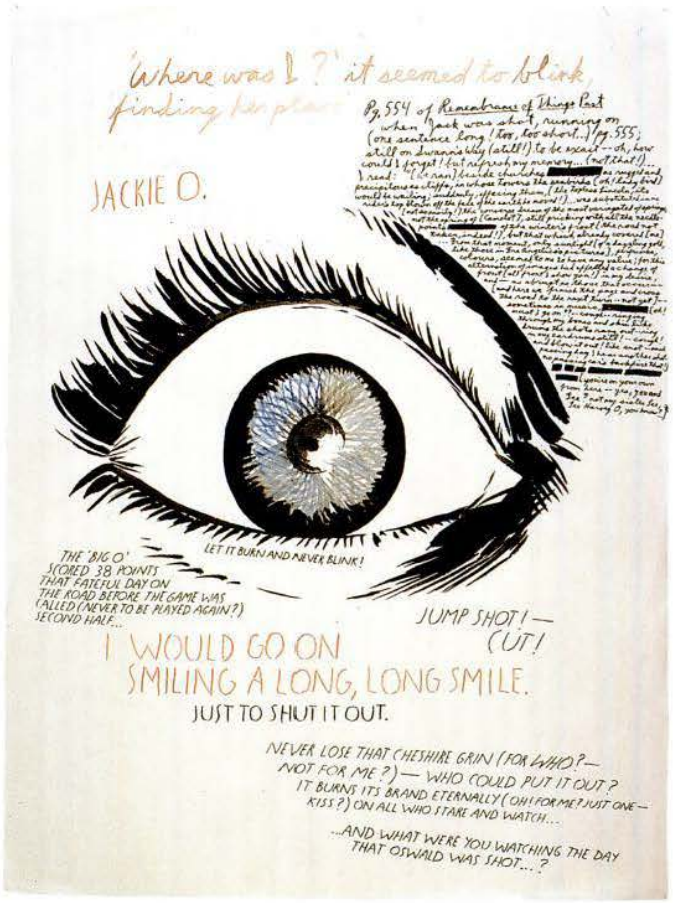
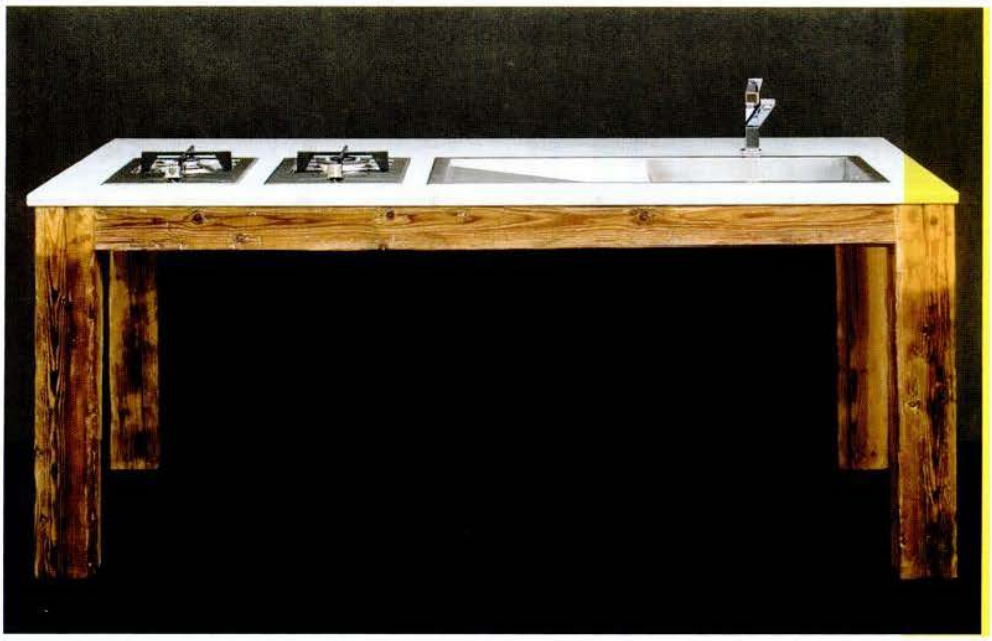


Magritte and Contemporary Art: The Treachery of Images / 19 Nov–4 Mar / Los Angeles County Museum of Art / Los Angeles, CA / *Ceci n'est pas une exposition* but an investigation of the impact Belgian surrealist Rene Magritte has had on 31 postwar U.S. and European artists like Philip Guston and Raymond Pettibon (left). www.lacma.org



#1 Kitchen collection / By Tikappa
The kitchen table is the central to this new collection from Italian designer Gianna Farina for the brand NDLC, which stands for Nice Design Low Cost. Made from special woods, like hundred-year-old fir beams salvaged from a Hungarian castle, Canadian hemlock fir, and oak from Slovenia, this modular system also includes marble tops, chests of drawers, and benches and stools. www.tikappa.com

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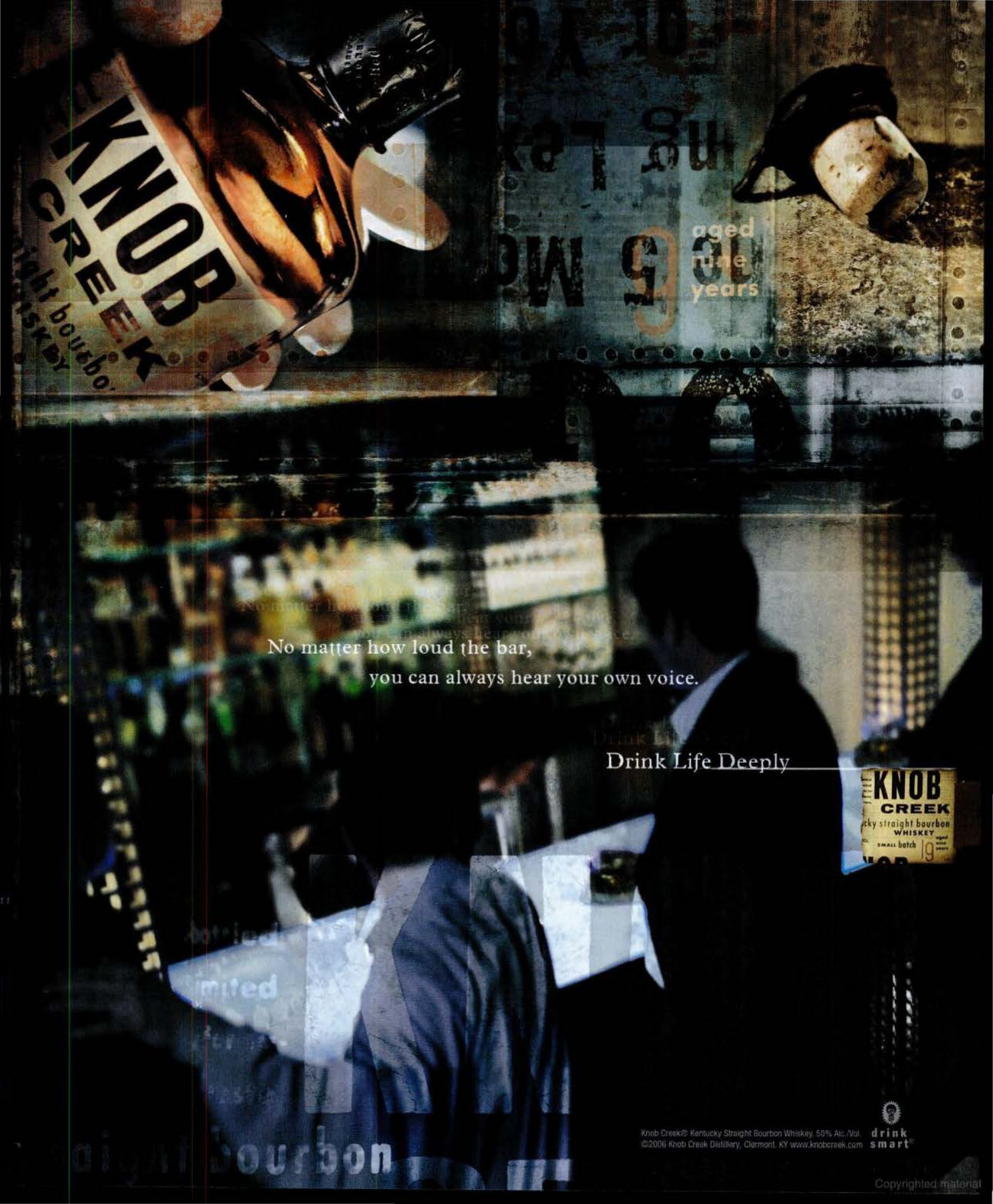
Treme Treme bookshelf / By Triptyque /
Fusing the rigidity of São Paolo's city center with the organic style of its fringe favelas, Triptyque brings together two disparate parts of Brazil's cityscape in one ready-to-hang shelving system. www.triptyque.com

Dish rack / By Simplehuman
This dish rack rather eerily recalls Philippe Starck's ubiquitous Ghost chair—and seems to have the same level of self-importance and unnecessary ostentation. But perhaps that's too harsh? After all, the stainless frame enthrones up to 26 dishes, easily ensuring that your bowls don't have to sit in a wet sink overnight—which, at the end of a long dinner party and massive clean-up effort, anyone can appreciate. www.simplehuman.com



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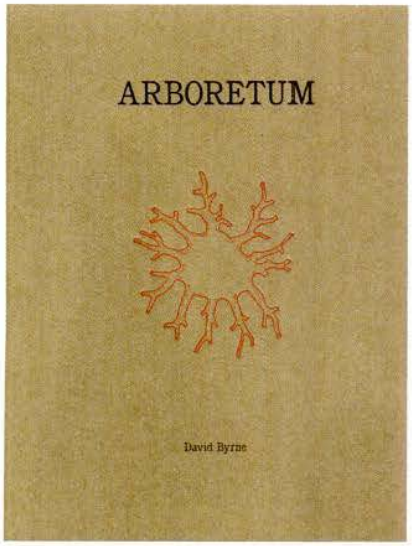
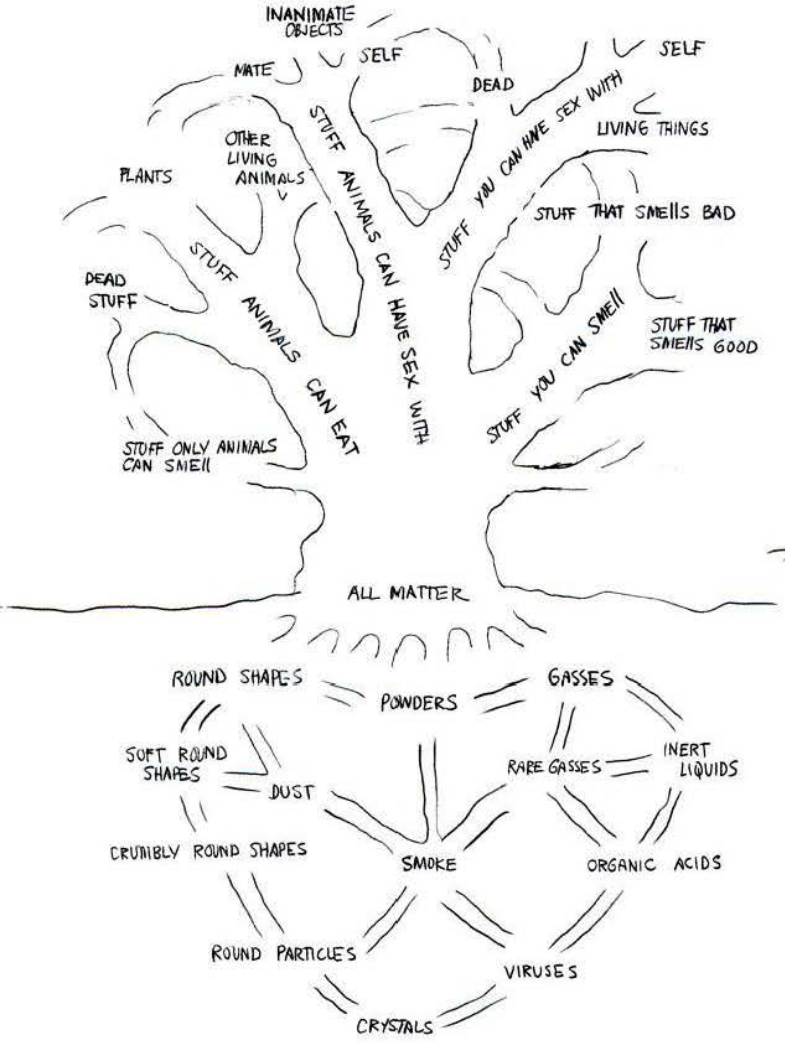
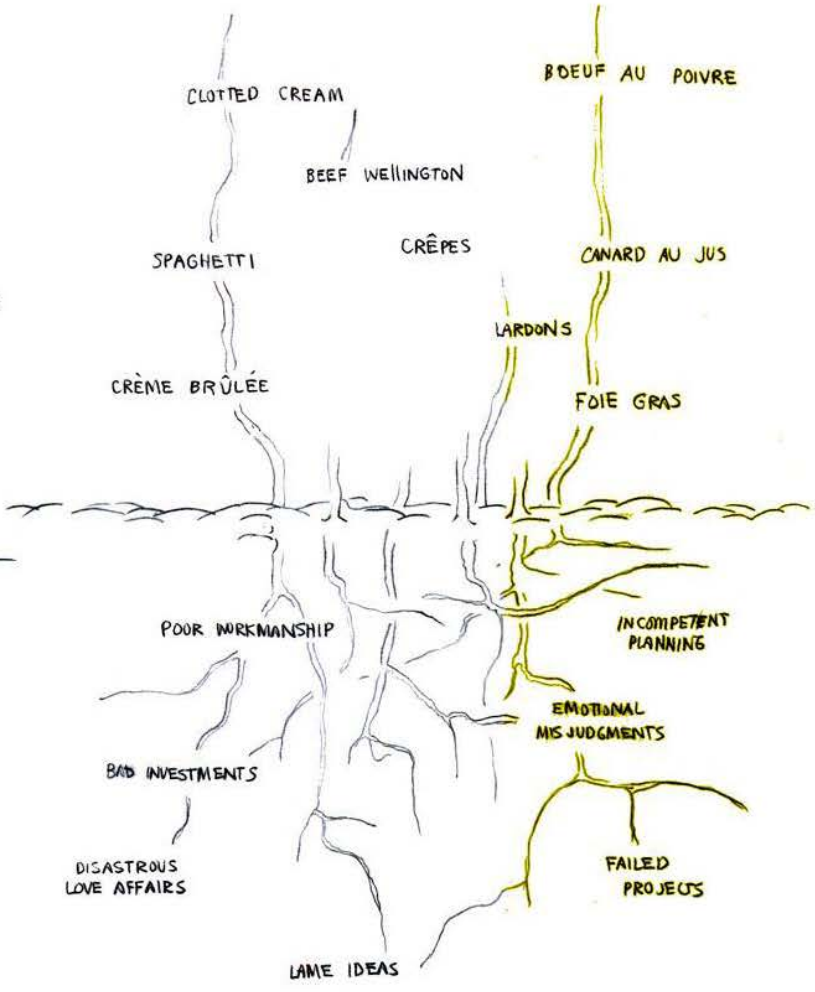


Arboretum / By David Byrne / McSweeney's Books / $24 / David Byrne's new book of mental maps and musings explores such hard-hitting topics as kissing, as well as the correlations between foie gras and poor workmanship, nimbus clouds and onanism.

At the risk of employing a facile metaphor, one's mental space is akin to an arboretum: Some thoughts are deciduous, changing with outside influence; some are coniferous, fixed and unyielding. David Byrne's thoughts are neither, really, and that's a good thing. In this book, Byrne the visual artist explores his mental space in a series of amusing renderings that look a lot like trees and contain the same wit and wonder his fans have long revered. www.mcsweeneys.net





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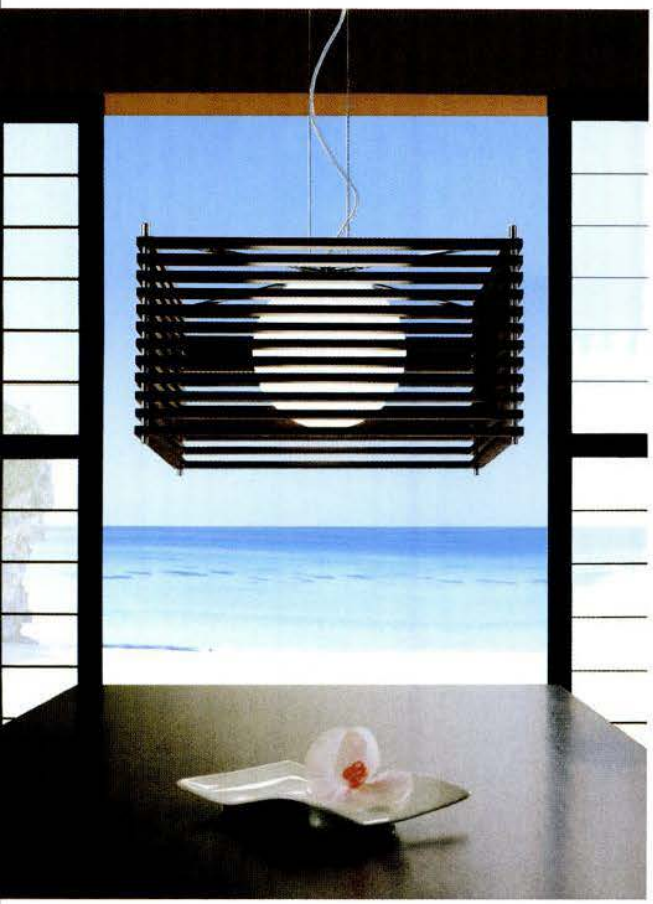
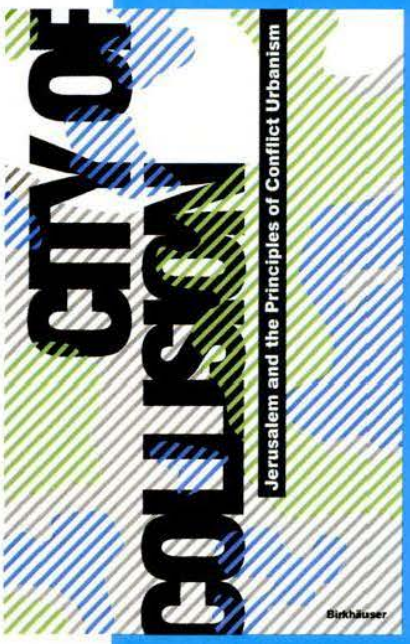


Koshi collection / By Axo Light
Named for the traditional room dividers in Japanese houses, Koshi's frame and hand-blown lights were designed for a diffused, nonglare glow that makes even the most unpalletable meal seem inviting. www.axolight.it



City of Collision: Jerusalem and the Principles of Conflict Urbanism / Edited By Philipp Misselwitz and Tim Rieniets / Birkhäuser / $50
In Jerusalem, a variety of dedicated experts, from geographers to artists, Israelis and Palestinians alike, have joined forces to try to prevent repeating history. Thirty dense, digestible essays relay the grim reality of conflict in this contested urban space, with an eye towards a positive future. www.papress.com

Universal Design / By GE
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Fall '06 line / By Marimekko
Three is an auspicious number: the trinity, the Stooges...disasters. For fall, Marimekko takes a three-pronged approach to its color palette: "spicy yellow-orange-terra cotta, strong blue-turquoise-purple, and earthy beige-brown-grey." Designers like Erja Hirvi (whose Saarni is shown at left), Maija Isola, and Fujiwo Ishimoto, among others, worked within the color palette to create a line of complementary patterns that are anything but disastrous. www.marimekko.fi

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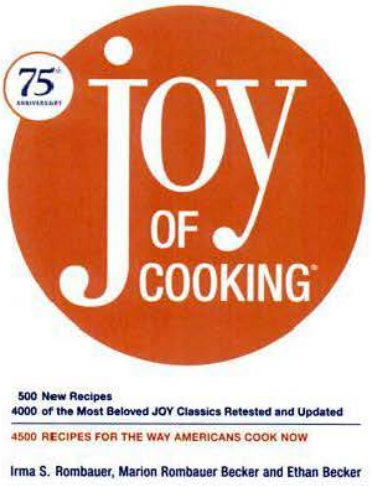

Joy of Cooking 75th Anniversary Edition / By Irma S. Rombauer, Marion Rombauer Becker, and Ethan Becker / Simon & Schuster / $30
If there's one cookbook no kitchen should be without, it's this one (although a good case could be made for *Craig Claiborne's Kitchen Primer*). *Joy*, the cookbook that introduced "the action method" (that is, it included a list of ingredients in the recipe), celebrates its 75th anniversary with a new edition that includes updates such as rolled sushi and familiar favorites like Shrimp Wiggle and Mystery Cake. www.simonsays.com

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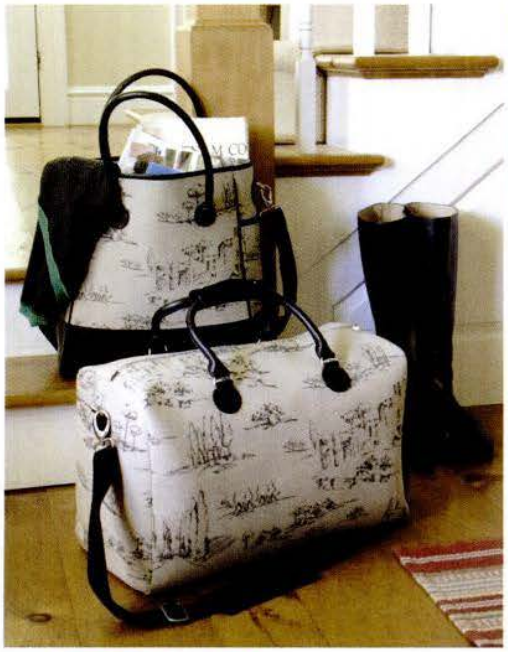




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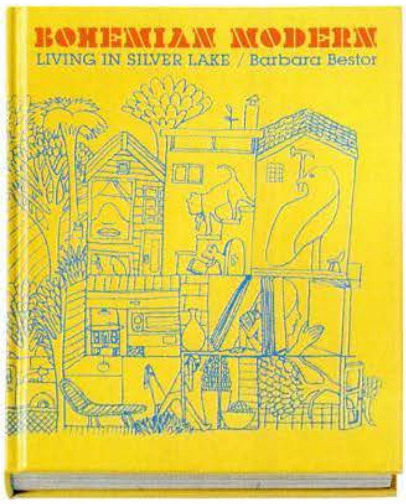
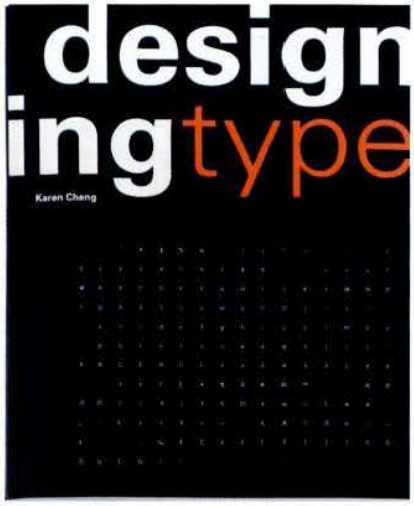


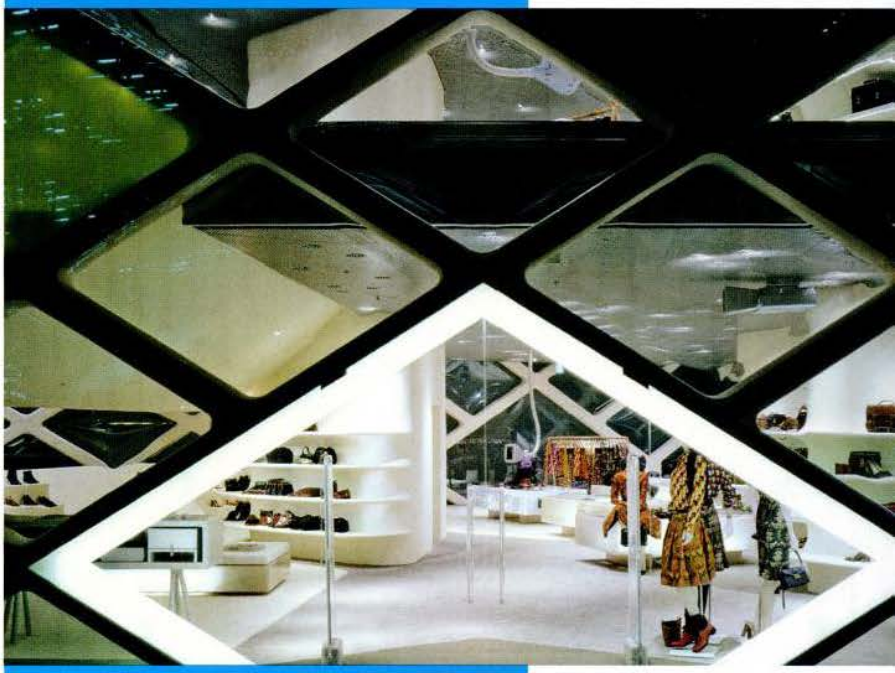
Bohemian Modern: Living in Silver Lake / By Barbara Bestor / Regan Books / $34.95
Part autobiography, part homage to the Los Angeles neighborhood of Silver Lake—with a bit of architectural monograph thrown in—Bestor's book captures the spirit of the place through a unique presentation of its architecture like only a true Angeleno can. www.harpercollins.com



Designing Type / By Karen Cheng / Yale University Press / $29.95
The sign for Ye Olde Sweet Shoppe wouldn't have the same draw without an ornate Gothic font, and e.e. cummings' poems would offend instead of captivate if they were set in all capitals. Typeface, as Cheng astutely notes, "colours, and even alters, the initial intent of a communication." This book provides a meticulous guide to the technical aspects of creating fitting fonts. www.yalebooks.com

Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture / 19 Nov–5 Mar / MOCA Grand Avenue / Los Angeles, CA / If you've ever commented on the skin of a Gehry or the bones of your house, this exhibition will make a lot of sense to you.

Over six years in the making, "Skin + Bones" explores the dichotomy between fashion and architecture as buffers between the world and people, protecting us and projecting our identity. Looking at the past two decades, curator Brooke Hodge not only saw visual analogies, like architectonic evening gowns, but heard the words of fashion picked up by architects, as new materials and techniques like "pleating," "wrapping," and "draping" emerged. While the surfaces have striking similarities despite differences in scale and material, it is process, theory, and structure that give the show legs. Plus, superficial thoughts make it fun—isn't the countenance of Karl Lagerfeld the archetype of architect? Doesn't the Rem wear Prada? www.moca.org



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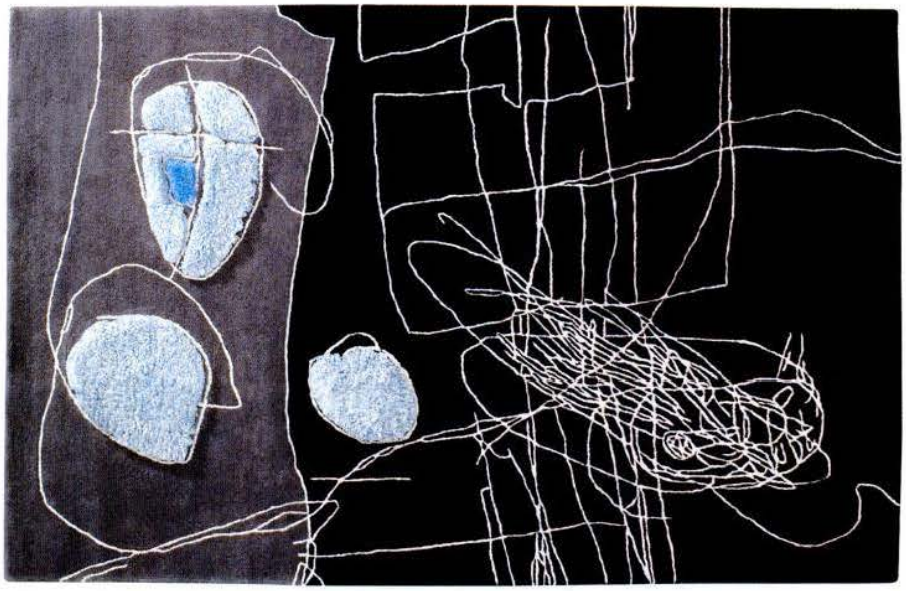
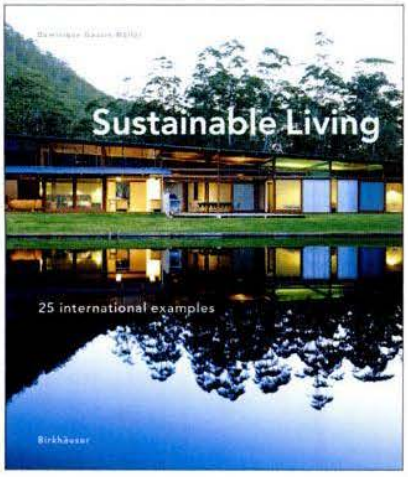


Tex-Mix collection / By Peddada
Raju Peddada has followed the novice museumgoer's mantra "A kindergartner could do that" by incorporating his four-year-old son's line drawings into the Tex-Mix collection of rugs. We think they're brilliant; a toddler exhibition at the MOMA is sure to follow. www.peddada.com



Sustainable Living / By Dominique Gauzin-Müller / Birkhäuser / $79.95
Sustainable Living could easily be called *Fantasy Living*. For design fans, it's hard not to want to pull a Goldilocks and try all 25 of the featured houses on for size. From straw bale and sandbag in the U.K. to rammed earth near the Great Wall of China, the variety of inspiring green design is impressive, and the plethora of practical information will help get your own projects under way. www.papress.com

Landscape / By Ross Lovegrove for Frighetto / Lovegrove returns from the orbiting space station where he presumably lives to produce this fiberglass dining-room set (shown below in limited-edition gold leaf). www.frighetto.it

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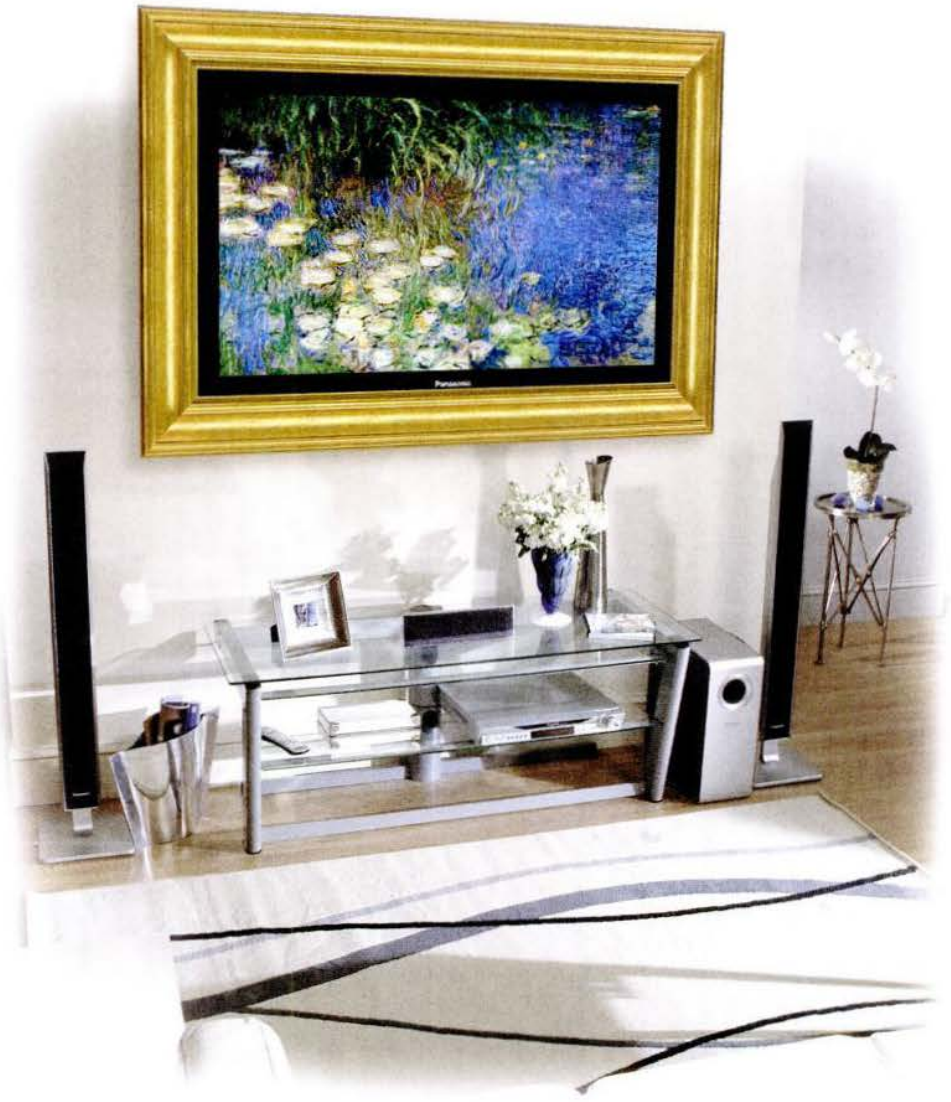
*Optional. **Airbags are supplemental restraints only and will not deploy under all accident circumstances. Always use safety belts and seat children only in the rear, using restraint systems appropriate for their sizes and ages. †Silver IIHS safety pick. ©2006 Volkswagen of America, Inc.

Extreme concrete / By Meld USA
Modernism loves concrete. Where would architectural demigods like Kahn and Corbu be without it? Meld USA has improved the iconic building block by creating extreme concrete, whose fiber-reinforced composition is available in every color imaginable. www.meldusa.com

Clay furniture / By Maarten Baas
Most kids dream of chumming around with Wallace and Gromit in their quivering, magical Claymation world; it seems Dutch designer Maarten Baas dreams of furnishing it. www.maartenbaas.com

Humans Were Here: Building in L.A. / 12 Sept–11 Nov / CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts / San Francisco, CA / Tinsel Town may be the land of Hollywood fluff, but there's nothing vacuous about its architecture scene. This exhibit highlights some of L.A.'s finest, like Taalman Koch Architecture, Alexis Rochas, and Fritz Haeg Studio (below left and right). www.wattis.org

PHOTO BY PETER BELANGER (CONCRETE)



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"Les Nymphéas, Study of the Morning Water" image provided by GalleryPlayer®. Download HD art and photography for display on your framed plasma like the one shown above at panasonic.galleryplayer.com.
*Based on point of sale data from The NPD Group for consumer plasma displays during the period 9/04–7/06.

Mexico / By Martin Parr / Aperture / $40
Best known for his cheeky photographs of gauche tourists in ill-fitting bathing costumes and droll *Boring Postcards* volumes, Parr turns his lens on the *Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, delighting in the cultural contradictions Mexico has to offer—commercial American logos sharing the frame with Day of the Dead skulls, or garish tourists obliviously taking in centuries-old Mayan pyramids.
www.aperture.org

Luxury collection / By Rosemary Hallgarten
Hallgarten follows in the footsteps of her mother, who once worked with Milton Avery, by reinterpreting paintings as floor coverings. Treading over modern masterpieces each day may take some getting used to, but familiarizing yourself with the natural fibers, silk, and cashmere incorporated into each rug shouldn't be a problem.
www.rosemaryhallgarten.com

who knew? the response was so overwhelming at first we figured we were getting spammed, then we started reading. to the corrections officers, teachers, surfers, soccer moms, the guy who builds x-ray space telescopes and everyone else... thanks. what better fuel for making more stuff? so we're working on something new. it'll help you get to know us, you to know you, and people you know know you... better.
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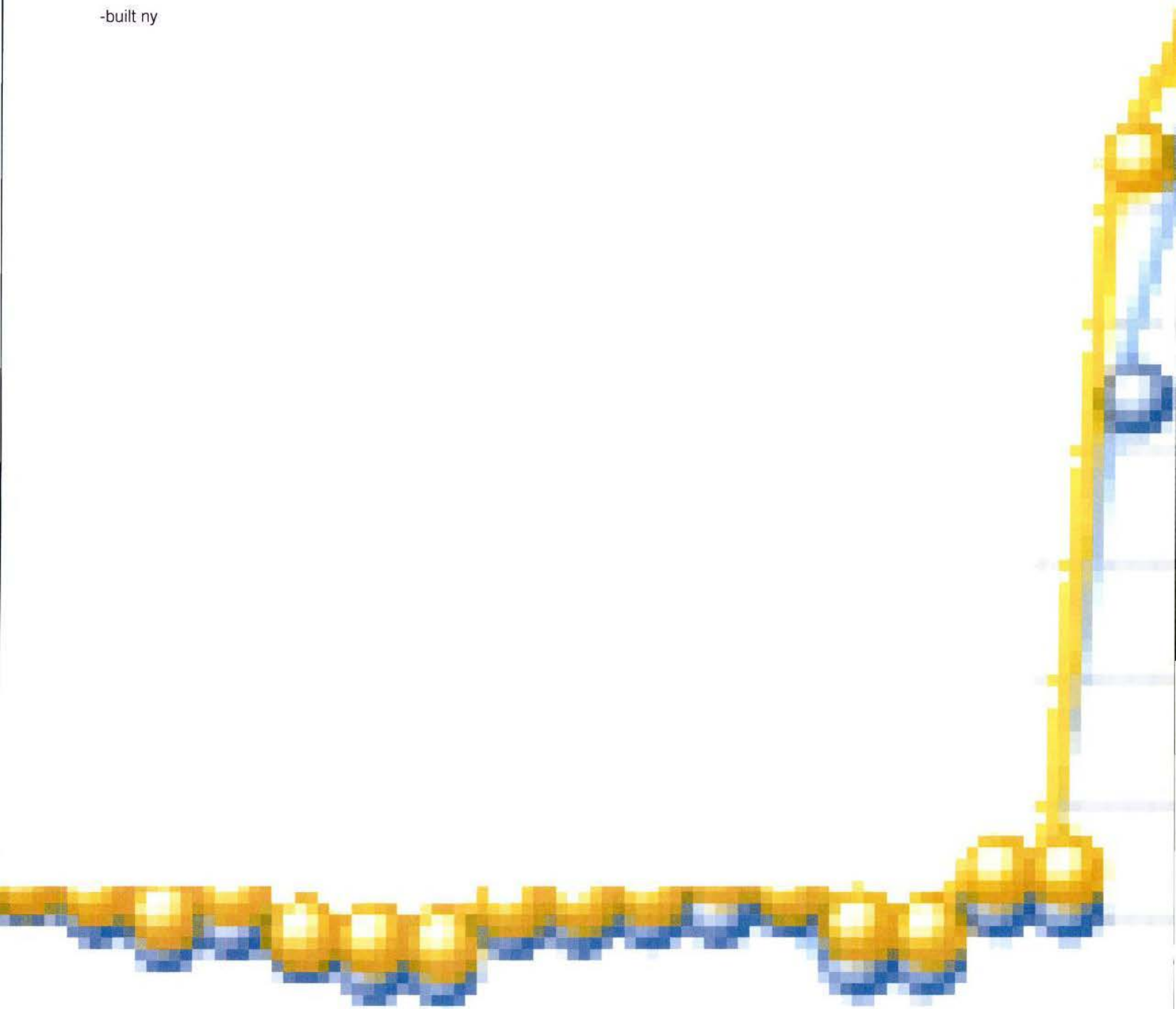

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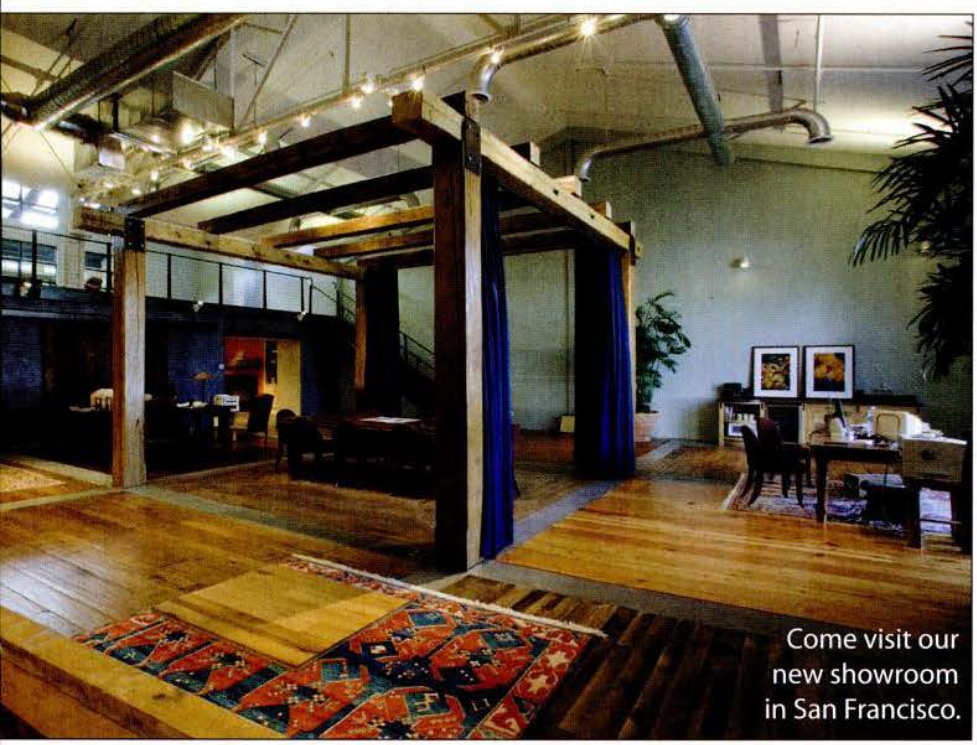

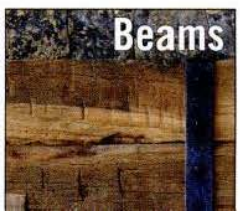

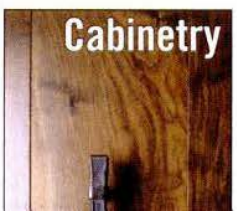

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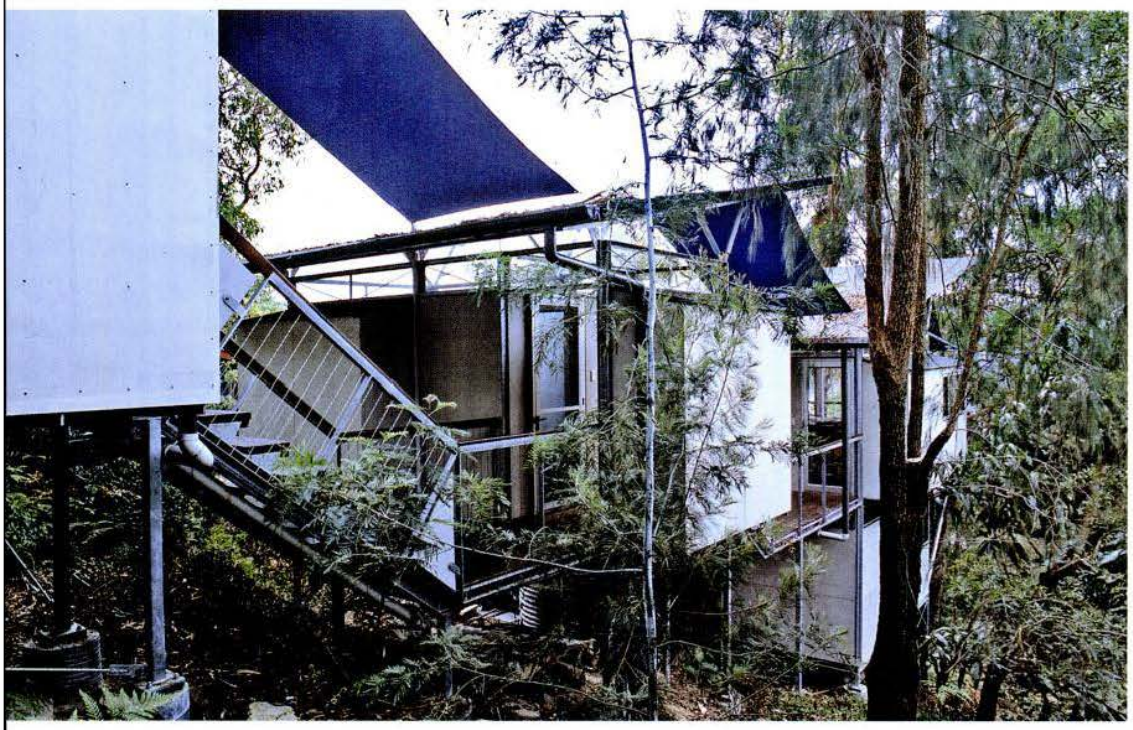
Outback Staked House

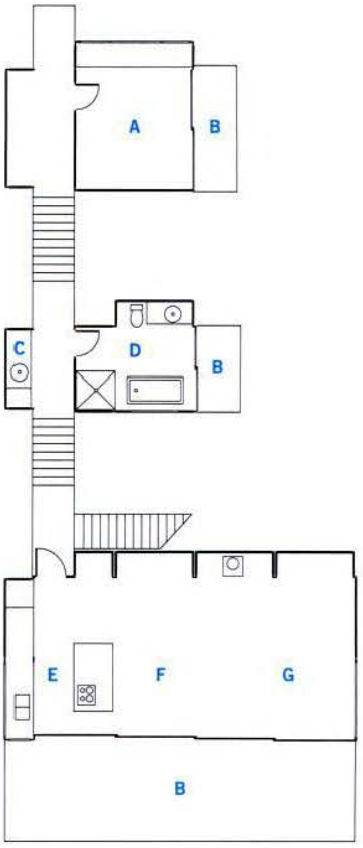
Remote living, especially on an island, requires a fair degree of self-sufficiency. Dangar Island has a limited water supply, so all the roofs on the Flood house (above) were designed to collect rainwater and channel it into a 6,600-gallon tank.

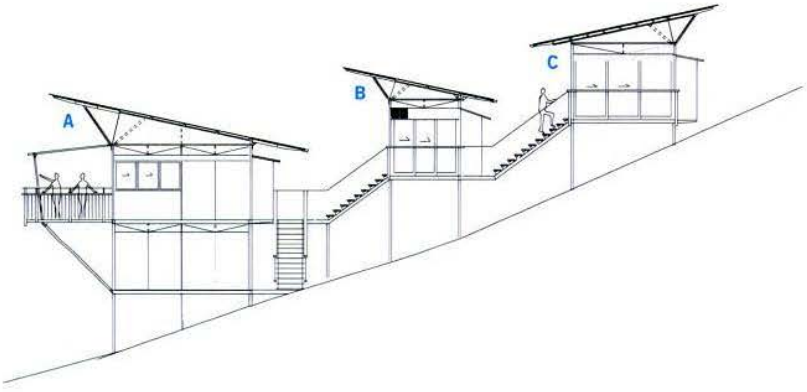
A few years ago, while working with the indigenous communities of remote Arnhem Land, in Australia's Northern Territory, architect Sue Harper became passionate about prefab. She saw local builders struggling with standard on-site construction methods in their efforts to bring housing and public buildings to rural communities—and, in response, started thinking about designs for prefab components that could be easily transported, erected, rearranged, and dismantled. In the late 1990s, Harper and her environmental engineer husband, Andy Irvine, moved back to Sydney, but they vowed one day to return to the far-flung region with a prefab system that would make lighter work of building in the outback.

By coincidence, Harper found herself dusting off those drawings a little sooner than planned—the catalyst was a commission from a young family who wanted to set up a home on Dangar Island, a picturesque parcel of land in the middle of the Hawkesbury River, an hour's drive north of Sydney. Those planning to build on the island need to be aware of a few things: that the only access is by boat, that the locals don't like having their peace disturbed, and that the risk of bushfire is high. "The solution had to be lightweight, flexible, fire resistant, and involve minimal time on site and minimal impact on the environment," explains Harper.

Harper and Irvine first set about designing and building a prototype on their own property, which is on another island, near Dangar Island, and also accessible only by boat (it took about 30 trips in a small motor boat to ferry all the components across). Their plan was to thoroughly test the system before embarking on the Dangar Island commission. "Our prototype was just big enough to allow everything to be tested for strength," says Irvine. "We have a great structural engineer in Max Irvine [no relation], and when he called in to see us, we would tie ropes to it and try to pull it over, jump up and down on it, and shake it, change some bracing around, and try it again. Max is into what we are trying to do ▸







Flood House

Elevation
A Main Pavillion
B Bathhouse
C Sleeping Pavillion

Floor Plan
A Bedroom
B Deck
C Laundry
D Bathroom
E Kitchen
F Dining Area
G Living Area

The Dangar Island house utilizes many eco-friendly tricks of the trade seen in much of modern Australian architecture. North-facing skillion roofs (above) on the main pavilion and the bathhouse usher in the warming winter sun.

and is working on ensuring the structure will be able to withstand cyclonic winds."

The pair's flexible system consists of modular frames and panels that can be bolted together in countless configurations. A smaller diagonally braced section above each larger frame means that the components are self-bracing. Bolted together, they form a sturdy skeleton that can be filled in with prefabricated, interchangeable panels of almost any material—glass, solid materials, even canvas or palm leaves. For the roof, corrugated-steel panels proved a portable and easy-to-install choice, and for the floor, precut plantation-grown hardwood strips have been used throughout.

"Because the system is self-bracing, it doesn't rely on the wall material for structural strength," Irvine explains. The panels—uniformly 7.5 by 4 feet to minimize waste—are fabricated off site, and fix onto the frames to create windows, walls, and doors, which can be rearranged or replaced to suit the occupant's changing needs. "The key aspect of the system is its flexibility," says Irvine. "You can build part of a house and use cheaper materials for the panels, then when time and money allow, you can bolt on more rooms and replace the panels with something better."

Harper conceived of the Dangar Island house as three pavilions joined by suspended walkways, weaving in among tall gum trees (none were sacrificed) and disturbing as little of the undergrowth as possible. The pavilions are elevated on steel posts to capture river views and allow breezes, lizards, and rain runoff to circulate freely underneath. The main pavilion houses the kitchen, living, dining, and deck areas, with three bedrooms and a bathroom below. Glazing to the north means the upper area, particularly, is bathed in winter sun. Covered walkways lead to a separate bathhouse and a painting studio. Harper wanted to create a house that would encourage close contact with the natural surrounds—this home practically insists on it. ▸

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Because of the relative inaccessibility of Dangar Island (above right), all building materials needed to be brought in by barge and carried to the site from the pier. The kitchen (above) has a view to the Hawkesbury River.

No sooner had the architect-engineer duo finished the design process than the initial clients had a change of plan and decided not to proceed. But Liam Flood, a builder who had worked on many projects with Harper, saw the design, fell in love with the concept and the steep, north-facing site, and decided to take on the project as owner/builder. "For Liam, we needed to create additional spaces, have more substantial walls and openings, and an increased level of finish," says Harper.

Because of the flexibility of the steel-framed panel system, she was able to simply add new rooms—pop-outs as she calls them—onto the original design without making any structural changes. Additional rooms (in this case a larger kitchen, plus laundry, storage, and office areas) needed only to be bolted onto the main structure, and actually "pop out" into the tree canopy.

As with the early prototype, all the building materials had to be taken across to the island by barge (requiring about six trips in all) and physically moved around the site, so the entire project was broken down into portable components weighing no more than 175 pounds that could be carried by two people. "This was the first water-access building job I'd ever done," notes Flood. "It was made all the more challenging by the fact that I don't like water and I can't swim! But I've worked with Sue and Andy for seven years, and we make a pretty good team. We're always talking about ways to design buildings so that they can be packed into containers and shipped anywhere in the world."

It was particularly important that the house be assembled as quietly as possible—to keep the peace with the neighbors—so on-site fabrication was kept to a minimum. Apart from the occasional use of a truck (one of the few on the island) and a mini-crane to put up the steel, the builder moved his equipment around the site using, of all things, a wheelbarrow. Despite the difficult access and site considerations, the construction process was swift—just over three months. "One of the great things about Liam is that he can deliver high-quality results in a fast-paced environment," says Irvine. "That's why he has become so interested in this kind of work."

Harper and Irvine have enjoyed the process of refining their prefab system, and seeing it work so well in its island setting. But for now, they're turning their attention back to Australia's far north to further develop their system so that it will work in the harsh outback, providing shelter and community buildings to remote and under-resourced indigenous populations. ►

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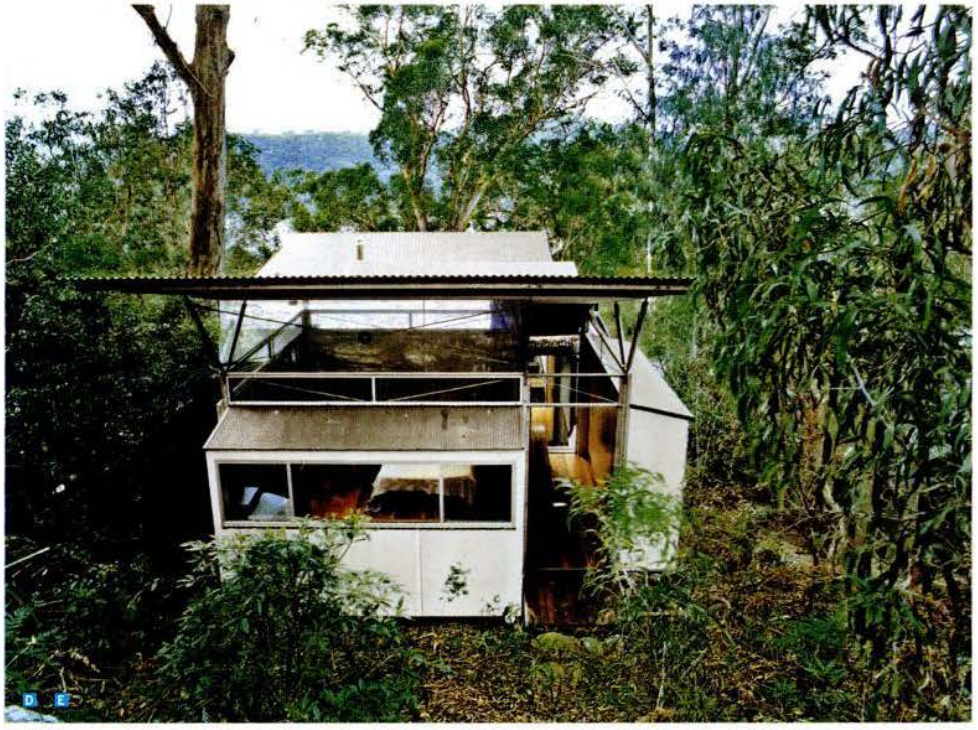

How to Make My House Your House

A Kitchen Storage
In the kitchen and bathroom, storage units on casters roll out from under the counters to double as extra counter space. The kitchen units are often wheeled out onto the deck for outdoor entertaining. These units are customized, but IKEA has a similar drawer unit called Attityd. www.ikea.com

B Zincalume Wall
One of the bathroom walls was clad in steel. Harper and Irvine used BlueScope's Zincalume Mini Orb, steel sheeting that has fine corrugations. It is usually employed as external cladding, so it is durable and highly resistant to moisture. www.bluescopesteel.com

C Tung-Oil Flooring
Harper and Irvine used tung oil (also known as China wood oil) on hardwood floors and decking to achieve a rich, satinlike finish that brings out the natural tones of the hardwood. An alternative is Waterlox Original Sealer and Finish, a clear, tung oil–based sealer available in North America. www.waterlox.com

D Energy Efficiency
Solar roof panels were ruled out because there are several large trees shading the roof. The next-best option was a Quantum Domestic Hot Water unit, which operates along the same lines as a refrigeration unit, drawing heat from one space and transferring it into another via a solar-powered heat pump. www.quantum-energy.com.au

E Waste Treatment
Waste is treated on site, in a chamber filled with worms and other invertebrates. The Simply Natural system by Aqua Clarus emulates the decomposition process that happens on the floor of a rainforest. It produces water and fertilizer suitable for distribution through the garden. www.aquaclarus.com ■

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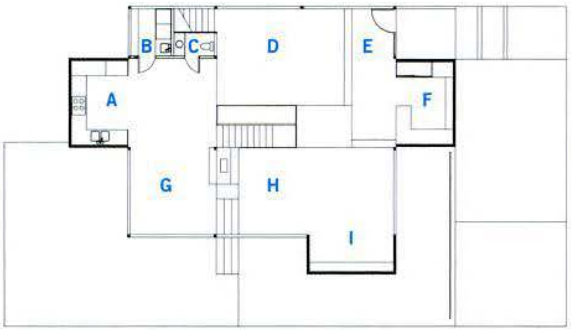
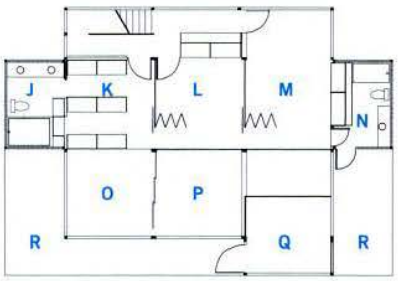
LEEDing the Way

One day last April there was great excitement on Highland Avenue, a quiet, hilly street (on which this writer happens to live) of Craftsman bungalows and 1960s apartment buildings in the Ocean Park neighborhood of Santa Monica, California. The road was closed off, and residents and TV crews turned out to watch as six huge lowboy trucks delivered their load of steel-framed modules, 11 in all, which were then craned into place and bolted and welded together over the course of eight hours. By the end of the day, the champagne was flowing and Steve Glenn was standing in the future dining/living area of his first LivingHome, toasting his architect and construction crew. Almost three months of finish work later, he moved in.

Glenn, a wired 42-year-old, is a onetime computer-technology entrepreneur and longtime architecture enthusiast, who recalls a childhood passion for Case Study Houses and Frank Lloyd Wright. After exhaustive research, he concluded, however, that it is developers rather than architects who hold the levers, and decided a couple years ago to try his hand at residential development. He identified a market of people who, like himself, "care deeply about design, and about the health and sustainability" of buildings, and launched LivingHomes, a modern prefab home company whose goal is to wed "profit and purpose" by selling stylish green homes at a price accessible to "people on the marketing pyramid below those who can afford custom." ▸

Designed by architect Ray Kappe, the first of developer Steve Glenn's modern prefab LivingHomes consists of six steel modules, clad in FSC-certified cedar. The home received a LEED Platinum rating earlier this year.





Glenn Residence

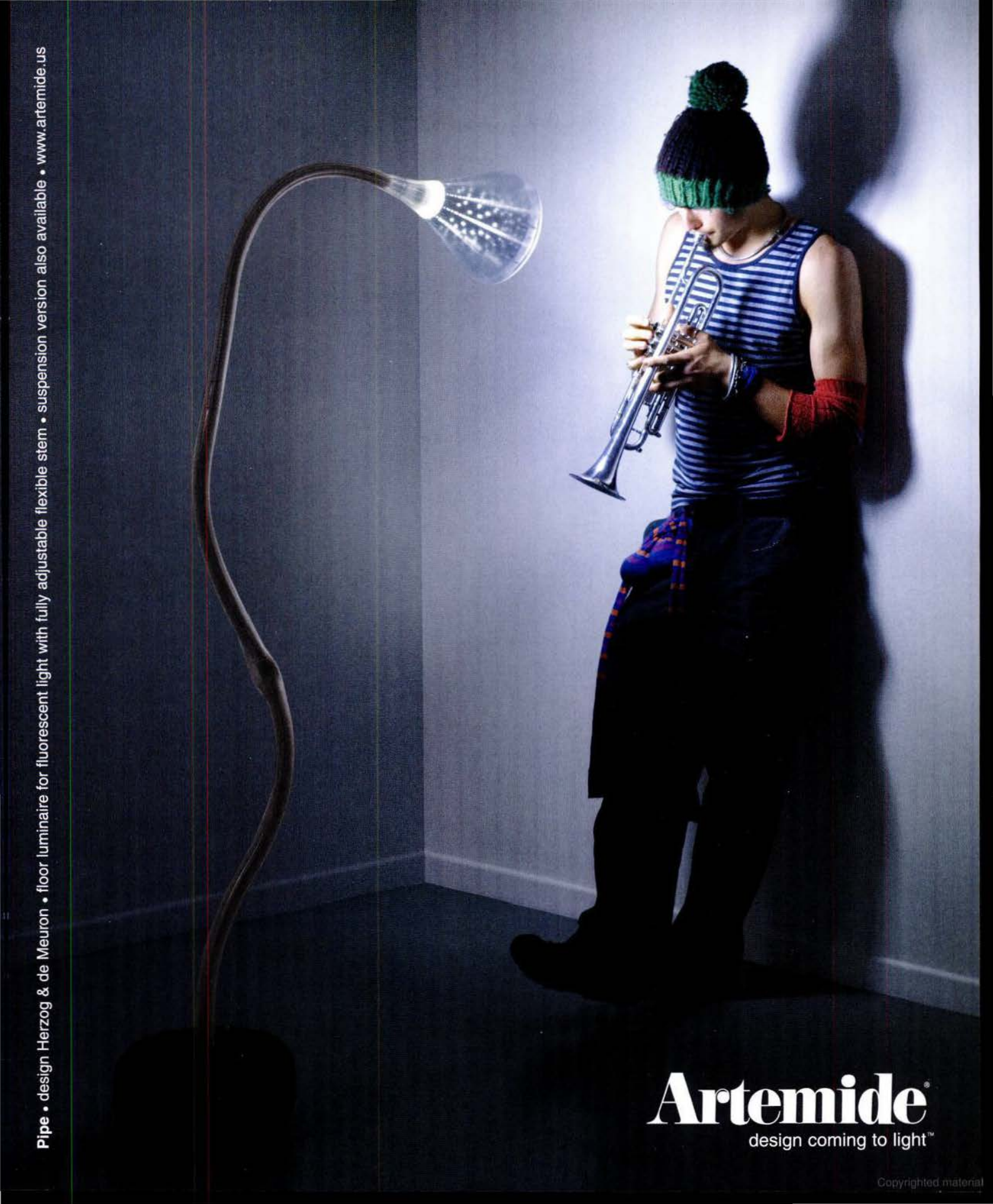
First-Floor Plan
A Kitchen
B Pantry / Laundry
C Powder Room
D Living Area
E Entry
F Study
G Dining Area
H Upper Living Area
I Media Area

Second-Floor Plan
J Master Bathroom
K Movable Wardrobes
L Guest Room
M Guest Room
N Guest Bathroom
O Master Bedroom
P Atrium (Open to First Floor)
Q Loft
R Upper Lounge Areas

A view of the lower living space on the ground floor. Green materials used include the FSC-certified cedar on the ceiling, Permlight LED downlights, and a floor of polished concrete with fly ash mix with radiant heating underneath. The couch was designed by Glenn's interior designer, Heidi Toll Design. p. 266

The designer of his first five model homes is architect Ray Kappe, founder of SCI-Arc and a living legend among many architecture enthusiasts, whose own 1967 house, a gorgeous concrete, glass, and wood structure nestled among trees, is often held up as an icon of West Coast modernism. "Ray's my favorite living architect," says Glenn. "He practices a warm modernism that is very unique." Not only that, it turned out Kappe had prior experience with prefab and with environmentally sensitive design. For him, LivingHomes are the "realization of a long-held ambition." The modular steel LivingHomes are based on a wooden system Kappe devised 40 years ago; the overtly 3-D quality of Glenn's house, with its changes in level and interlocking vertical and horizontal planes, is reminiscent of Kappe's residence, albeit compressed onto a much tighter, and less lush, site.

Glenn claims his homes "are clearly among the most environmentally considered production homes ever built," and designed his prototype house to achieve a LEED Platinum rating, which it received in August. "Zero Energy, Zero Water, Zero Waste, Zero Carbon, Zero Emissions" is his mantra, and to that end he has packed his house with energy-saving technology and sustainable and nontoxic materials. A solar-energy system on the roof is intended to provide 75 to 100 percent of the electricity and 80 to 90 percent of the hot water. There is a graywater system and a storm-water cistern for watering a garden (currently in process) of drought-resistant plants; the irrigation system will tap in to weather telemetry on the Internet to assess when to operate. A rooftop garden (also pending) is designed to divert storm water and to help with insulation and absorb sunlight, ▸



Glenn (above) looks toward the front entrance from the northeast wall of his house. The wall is exposed concrete block with translucent Polygal windows. On the second floor (right), an open balcony of FSC-certified tigerwood with a cedar trellis leads into a light-filled study/guest bedroom. p. 266

thereby, says Glenn, "reducing the heat-island effect." Materials are carefully chosen for their healthful and sustainable properties.

Though they are factory produced, LivingHomes are not currently spinning off the assembly line in identical units, to be shipped to an anonymous, mass customer base. "I think it will be a while, if ever, until you literally put a credit card in and order a home," says Glenn. "A lot of this is site-specific." The company has seven homes under contract, each of which is customized to meet individual needs, and Glenn is moving ahead with the first phase of four houses in a development in Joshua Tree, near Palm Springs, which were presold. "We are not doing kit homes," he says. "We haven't released a standard design. What we are doing is constrained custom, a level of customization that allows people to play with size and room placement." He says that, eventually, the company will offer five or six standard models designed by Ray Kappe, ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 square feet.

"Now comes the hard part, which is creating a sustainable business," says Glenn, acknowledging that his own house exceeded intended costs. The finish process proved frustrating at times, he says, and overly long, but also educational. "We've learned lots of connection details that we need to make better, cheaper, and quicker, and major systems—the frame, the windows, electrical, waterproofing, environmental systems—that we intend to refine. In the future we want to do as much of the work as possible in the factory."

Ultimately, for LivingHomes to succeed as a business, the houses need to work as living homes. Glenn candidly assesses his own prototype: "I think it turned out really well. I'm really happy, but until I actually live in it, that's the test." ■

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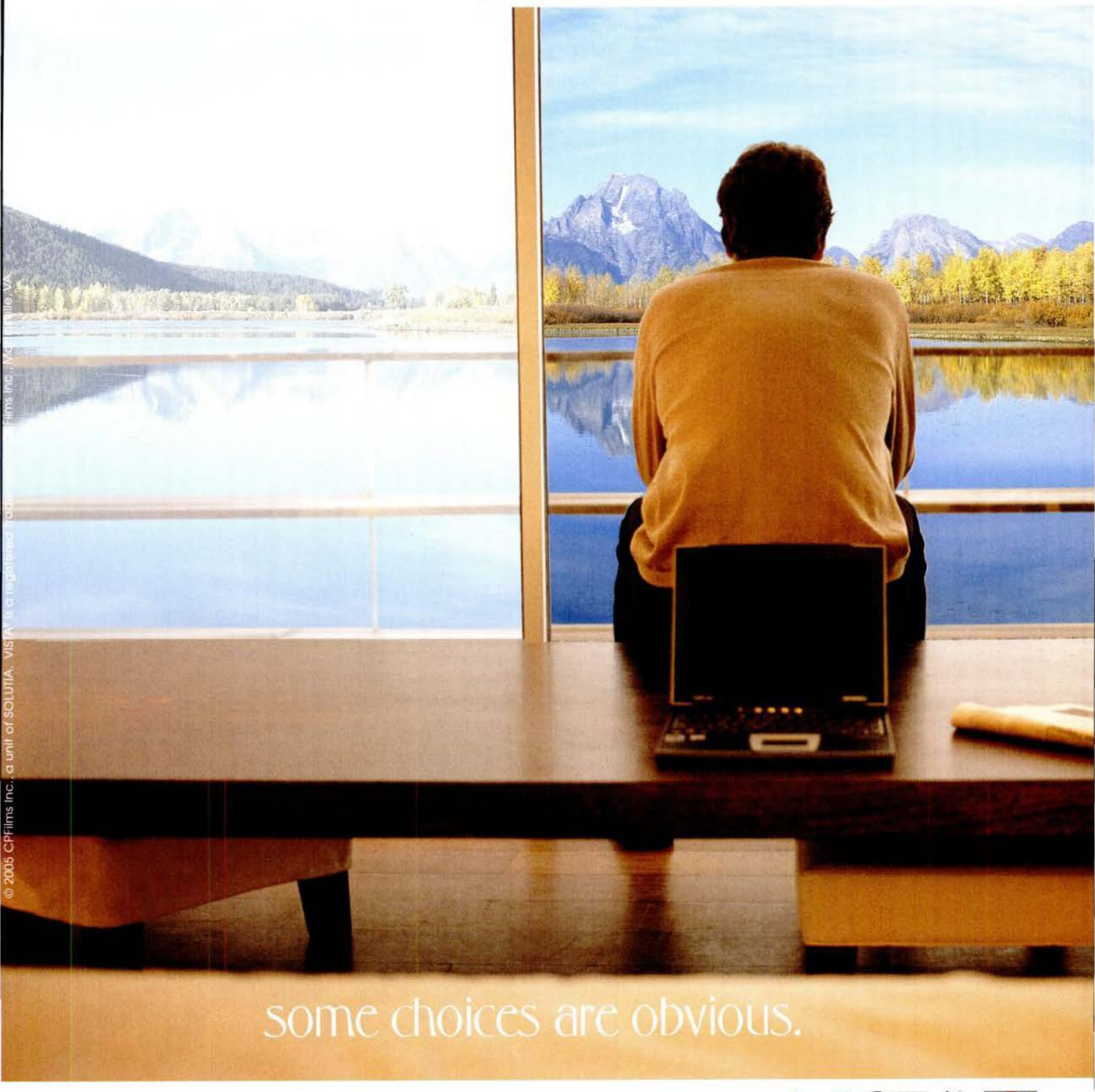

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All the cabinetry in the kitchen/dining area (above), including the door into the parlor bathroom, is of FSC-certified maple. Handblown lights of recycled glass hang over the dining table. The lower living space on the ground floor (right) features an EcoSmart fireplace fueled by denatured alcohol. The house (below), complete with Glenn's Toyota Prius. p. 266

Branding Sustainability

If LivingHomes sound more like branded products than houses, perhaps that is intentional. "One thing I'm bringing from [the world of] tech is to treat homes as products more than as homes," explains Steve Glenn. "The process feels more like industrial design than house design. And we create PRDs [product requirements documents], like we did at Apple." Glenn has carefully targeted his customers: They are not back-to-the-earthers, but relatively affluent people who want to consume guiltlessly—people who, in his words, "drive Priuses, buy Bosch appliances and Design Within Reach furniture, shop at Whole Foods, and give money to the Natural Resources Defense Council."

Just as design companies like Alessi or Knoll might get famous designers to create signature kettles or chairs, Glenn has hired brand-name architects to design LivingHomes. He even plans to attach a plaque with the architect's name to each house. His next designs will be by David Hertz, a Los Angeles–based architect who has worked on eco-sensitive design for many years. —F.A.

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Story by Amber Bravo

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A Note on Our Experts:
Peter Stathis (far left) is the principal of a leading collaborative design venture, Virtual Studio, which specializes in consumer products, and has worked with Arstecnica, KnollStudio, Nambé, and OXO. He is also the former director of the graduate design program at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. Stathis's favorite dinner set is one designed in the 1950s by Don Wallance for Lauffer.

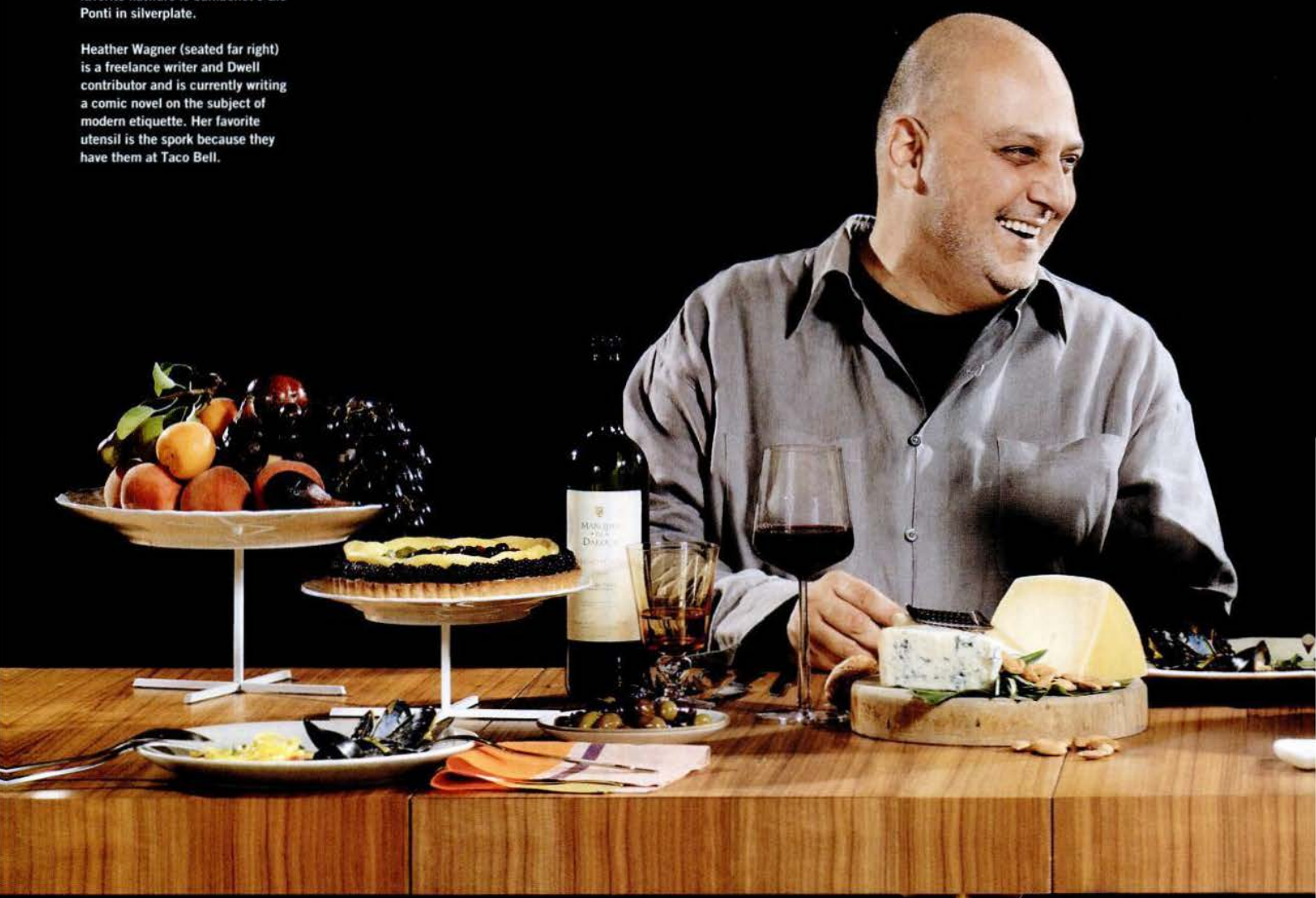
Daniel Patterson (middle) is the owner and executive chef of Coi Restaurant in San Francisco. Coi, which means "tranquil" in archaic French, is just that: a quiet refuge amid the flamboyant flash of strip clubs and bars (not to mention the ever-raucous Dwell headquarters) on Broadway Street. Known for his quirky concoctions and sensitivity to scents, Patterson is the coauthor of *Aroma: The Magic of Essential Oils in Food & Fragrance*. His favorite flatware is Sambonet's Gio Ponti in silverplate.

Heather Wagner (seated far right) is a freelance writer and Dwell contributor and is currently writing a comic novel on the subject of modern etiquette. Her favorite utensil is the spork because they have them at Taco Bell.

In the *Seinfeld* episode "The Pledge Drive," George Costanza takes to eating his handheld desserts with a knife and fork after learning that Elaine's boss slices into his Snickers bar as one would a steak or a pork chop. While this act devolves into typical Seinfeldian farce (before long, everyone on the Upper West Side is eating everything from doughnuts to cookies in the Continental style), the proliferation of Western dining etiquette and its requisite accoutrements happened in much the same way.

As Margaret Visser explains in her book *The Rituals of Dinner*, "The use of individual forks began to spread as the seventeenth century progressed. People would often share forks with others as they would spoons, wiping them carefully on their napkins before passing them on." Before the fork, people ate primarily with their hands. This was not only acceptable, it was preferable, as it still is in many places (and, it should be noted, with greater efficacy). For Westerners, however, there are few instances when forgoing the spoon, knife, and fork is forgiven; as even a sitcom episode can attest, the manner by which we wield our utensils is open for interpretation, but it's table manners that separate the genteel from the gauche.

As etiquette is an invention of the social animal, and eating is ideally a social endeavor, Dwell arranged a dinner for four (three experts, one editor) to test out six sets of exemplary cutlery—sort of like a potluck of people. While there's a lot that can go wrong at a dinner party, at the very least we had the number of guests right. As Visser relates, "Varro said that diners should number no fewer than the Graces (three) and no more than the Muses (nine)." It turns out that our three experts, Daniel Patterson, Peter Stathis, and Heather Wagner, are all graceful and inspiring to a fault, and have a lot to say about the state of their flatware. ▸



Prop Styling by Jessica Hansen

Food Styling by Aya Brackett

My Dinner with Amber

Emily Post once said, "Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use." While we agree with Ms. Manners, we found that a flattering fork can make your table setting a cut above.

Morode by Kazuhiko Tomita for Covo / Stainless steel / 3-piece dinner settings ($94); 3-piece dessert set ($72.80) / www.lekkerhome.com

Expert Opinion (Wagner): I like the forks, but I'm not sure that the detailing has anything to do with the way that they function. It's decorative, but I feel like it's kind of distracting, and the spoon feels so much like an ice-cream scoop, it makes me want ice cream.

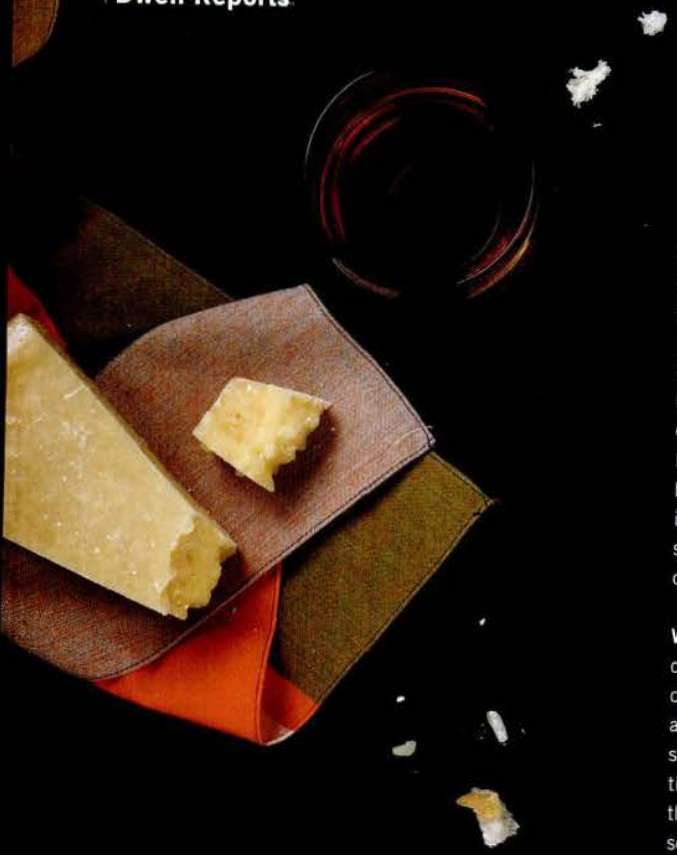
What We Think: The hole punctured in each of Tomita's utensils adds a decorative flourish that distinguishes but does not overpower. The set's form and weight is straightforward and sturdy, which makes the Covo Morode both utilitarian and stylish.

Open Air by Maarten Baptist for Michelino / Stainless steel / Six 4-piece settings / $195 / www.lekkerhome.com

Expert Opinion (Wagner): Visually, these are very elegant, but they're a little cumbersome if you're eating in the Continental style. The fork is nearly flat, so it's a bit hard to gain traction. If you were eating steak, it might be a challenge. There's also something in the width that's very difficult to navigate.

What We Think: While Open Air looks great against a dark table or cloth, we prefer our flatware to be solid and to have a certain heft. After all, it's the utensils' weight that counters our overzealous appetites—we wouldn't want tines in our eyes. These are interesting, but perhaps a little gimmicky. ▶

STYLING BY KATE STONE



Artik by Laura Partanen and Arto Kankkunen for iittala / Stainless steel / One 5-piece setting / $64.75 / www.finnishgifts.com

Expert Opinion (Patterson): They're very beautiful to look at. I like the subtle design element of the cascading tines, even though I prefer symmetry. They're reasonably well balanced, they feel good, and the design is really elegant. It's very simple. I like the soup spoon. It's a nice shape, and it feels comfortable.

What We Think: Certainly the most graceful of the six, Artik is just as adventurous in its design concept as the others, but maintains a simple, classic form. This set feels substantial in the hand, and the slightly askew tines create an interesting composition on the napkin without overwhelming the table setting.

Arne Jacobsen by Arne Jacobsen for Georg Jensen / Matte stainless steel / One 5-piece setting / $115 / www.unicahome.com

Expert Opinion (Stathis): This is the set they used in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. You almost feel like you should be eating a new kind of food with them. These are utensils made for piercing and cutting more than anything, but I do like the delicacy of them. And because the fork is smaller, it actually does encourage you to take much smaller bites.

What We Think: While we doubt the Jacobsen set will spur a new diet craze, we appreciate cutlery that dictates a certain degree of grace. However, delicacy is not always in order, and this set can feel a bit constricting at times. It feels better suited to dissecting food rather than consuming it, though the look couldn't be cooler. ▸

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Mango by Nanny Still for iittala / Matte stainless steel / One 5-piece setting / $70 / www.unicahome.com

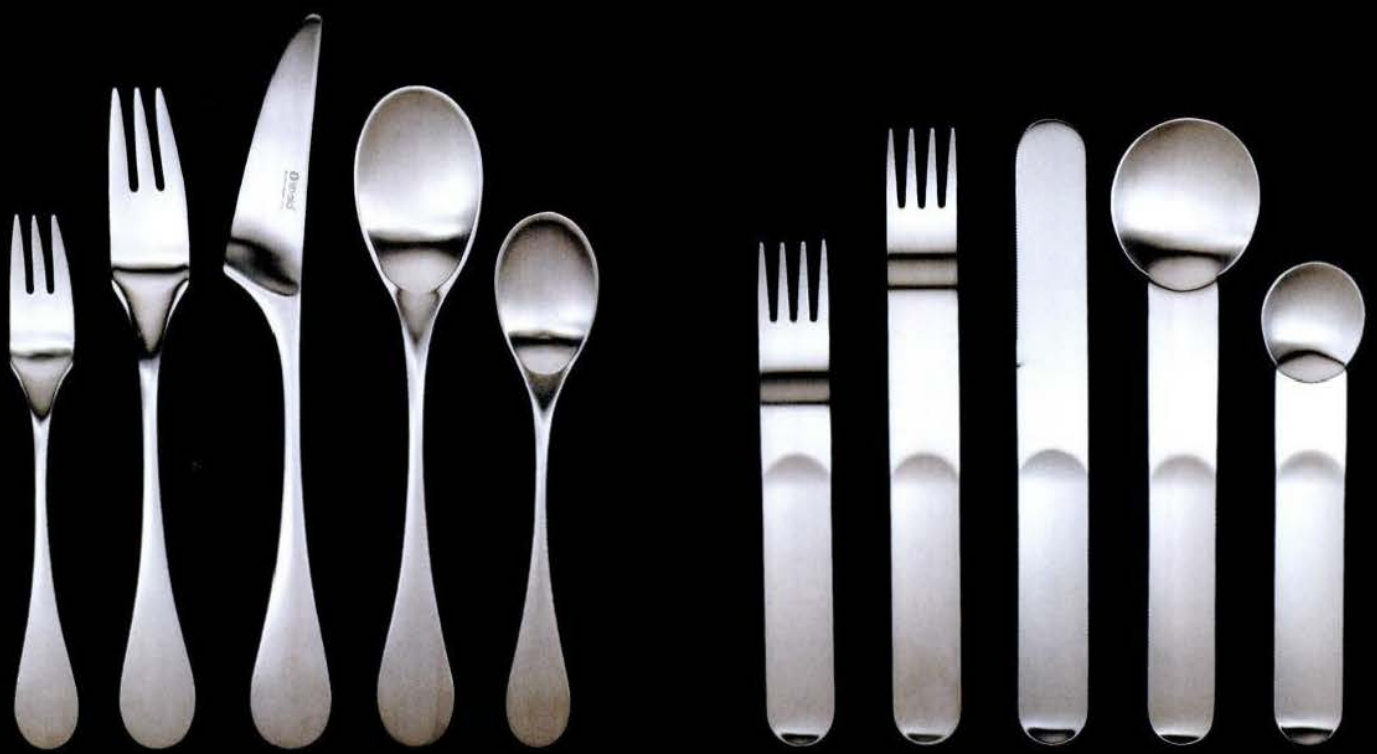
Expert Opinion (Stathis): The weight of the set is quite nice, and the handle rests well against the crotch of your hand [experts and host proceed to giggle like schoolchildren, Peter is nonplussed]—well, that's what it is!—but they get so thin in the middle that they're really difficult to hold. They're not very dexterous, you can't really manipulate them as much as you want, and it makes you very conscious of them.

What We Think: Biologists argue that attractiveness is based on ideal proportions (e.g., Kate Moss and Marilyn Monroe have nearly the same proportions despite their being in different weight classes), and if the same goes for flatware, Nanny Still's design is certainly the bombshell of the bunch. While we agree that this set isn't as easy to maneuver, we like the matte finish, which doesn't show wear as readily and maintains a classic feel.

Mono Clip by Peter Raacke for Mono / Stainless steel / One 5-piece setting / $85 / www.unicahome.com

Expert Opinion (Patterson): These feel like tongue depressors. There's no pleasure in them—there's no sensuality to it. Part of the problem is that flatware should feel good and not just look good. Another odd thing is that the knife is intended to be held only [by the right hand], whereas a normal knife you can hold with either [hand]. So if you're a lefty, you're pretty SOL. Did you know that left-handed sushi knives carry nearly a 25 percent surcharge?

What We Think: We agree that the Mono Clip is not as pleasurable to hold as the others. Raacke seems interested in the process and utility of flatware, and the design is meant to stack easily and function very simply. That said, his ability to say flatware in three dimensions does not necessarily speak to its use—lefties have rights too. ■



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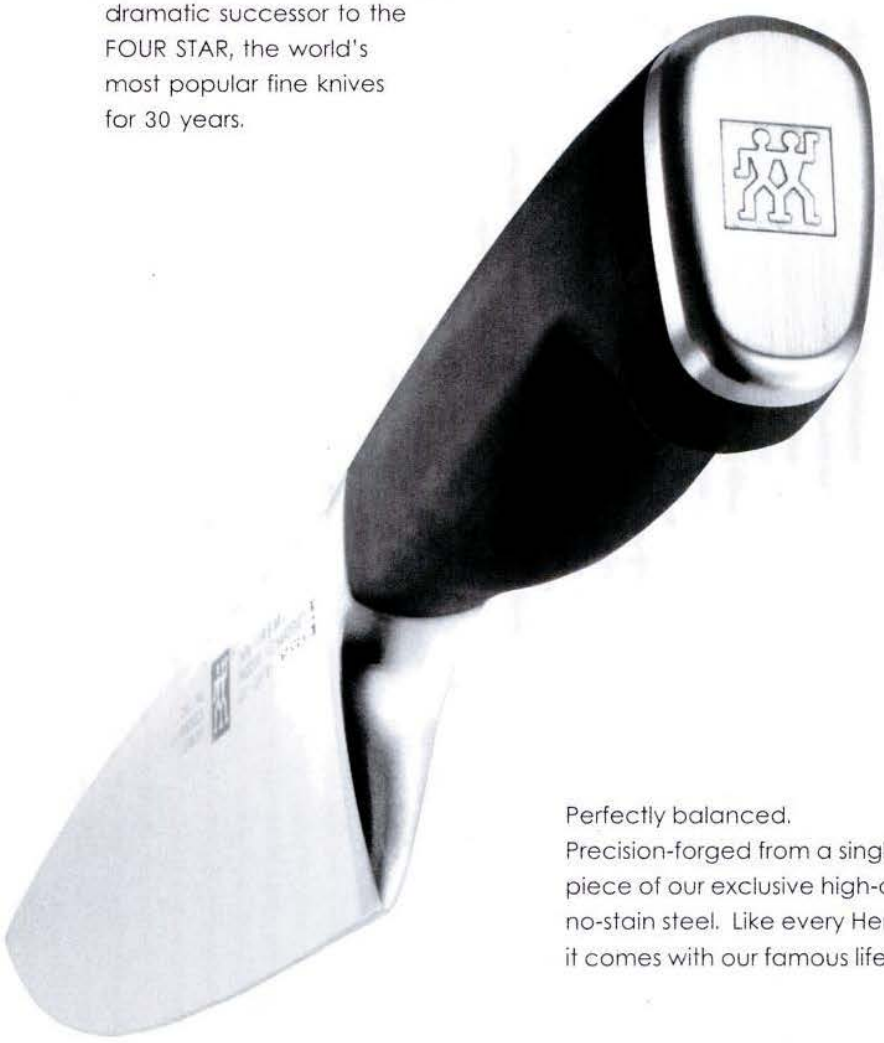

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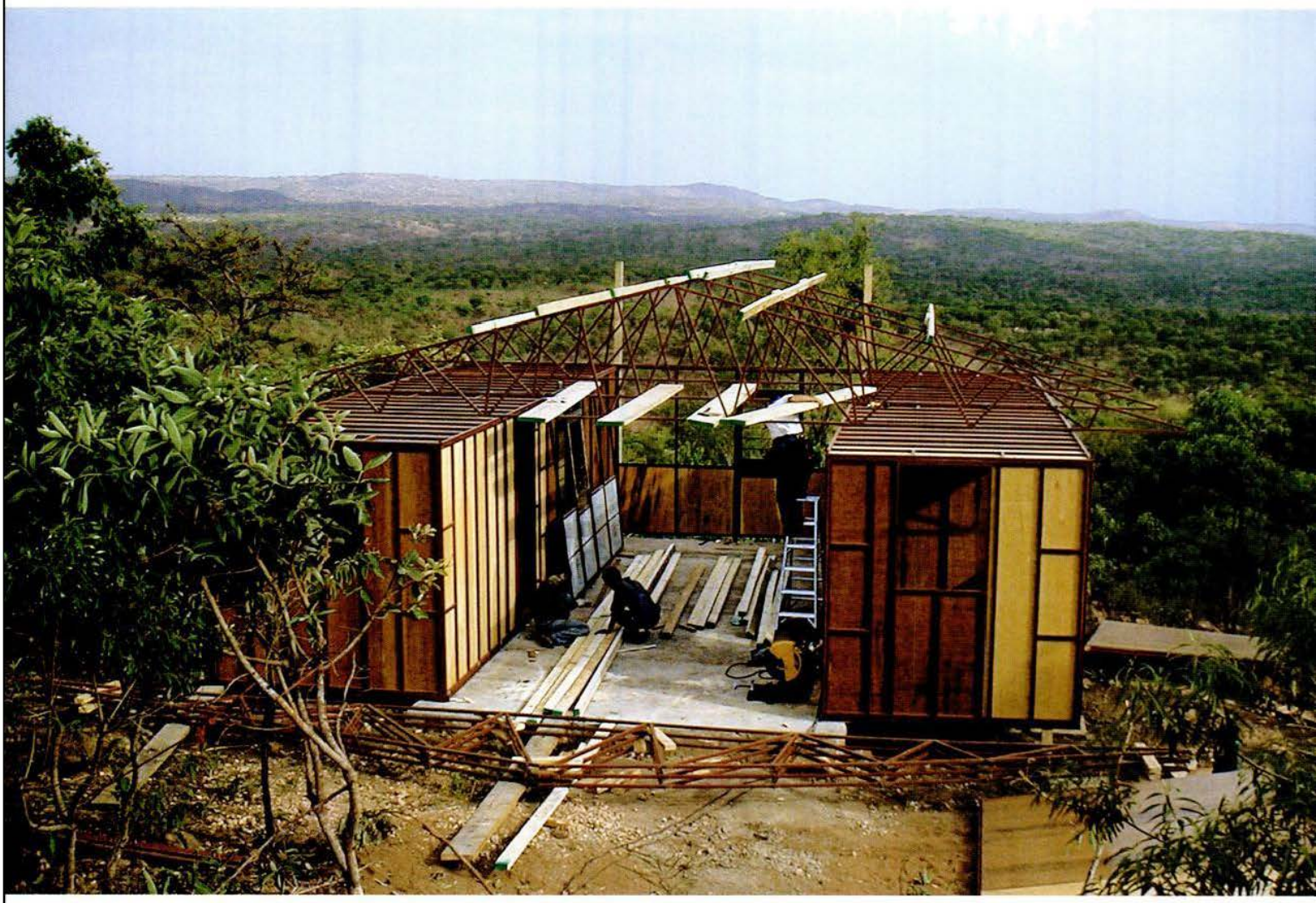

Future Building

One of Fred Friedmeyer's modular dwellings takes shape in the Ethiopian hills. Steel trusses form the sloped roof while four separate modules create bedrooms and office space for nurses, teachers, and agriculturalists.

Nominate nice modernists at dwell.com.

Despite the popular notion of Ethiopia as a barren desert wasteland, the eastern African country also contains rugged inland mountains that make transportation of building materials extremely difficult, thus complicating humanitarian aid work in one of the poorest places on earth. Since 1999, Fred Friedmeyer III has been working on solutions to both of these issues, building prefabricated structures of his own design to house nurses, teachers, and agriculturalists living among the Gumuz, one of Ethiopia's approximately 80 rural tribes and ethnic groups.

The San Diego–born, Cal Poly–trained architect and former construction contractor oversees his family's 8,000-acre buffalo ranch in Alberta, Canada, for half of each year and spends the other half in Ethiopia, where he has built five of his modular dwellings to date. Each unit is composed of four units around a central open room, all enclosed by a large overhanging roof, with standard four-by-eight dimensions practically eliminating the need to cut the plywood panels used for sheathing and partitions. Materials are indigenous or easily sourced in Ethiopia, including louvered windows and the steel tubing used to create customized roof trusses. All welding is done in the city and then the parts are trucked out and bolted together on site. Since the hunter-gatherer Gumuz live in traditional thatch-roofed *tukulas*, Friedmeyer's houses are also designed so they can easily be moved if their Western occupants relocate—in fact, the whole structure can be picked up and shifted. Alternately, the trusses can be jacked up and the bedroom/office modules removed such that the interiors can be converted to churches or serve the community in other capacities.

After transporting materials into the bush on the inter-denominational Society for International Missions' ▸


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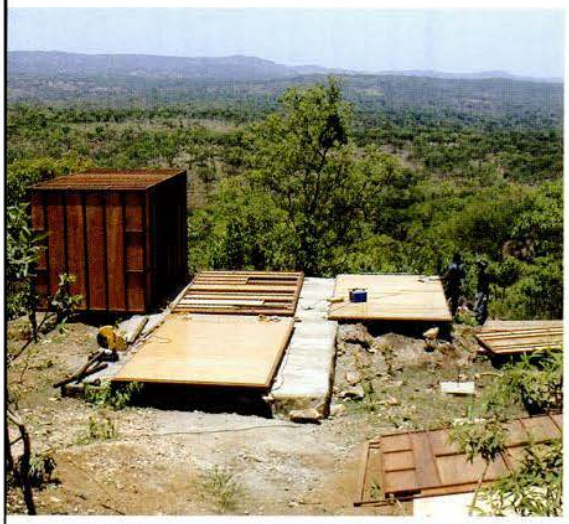

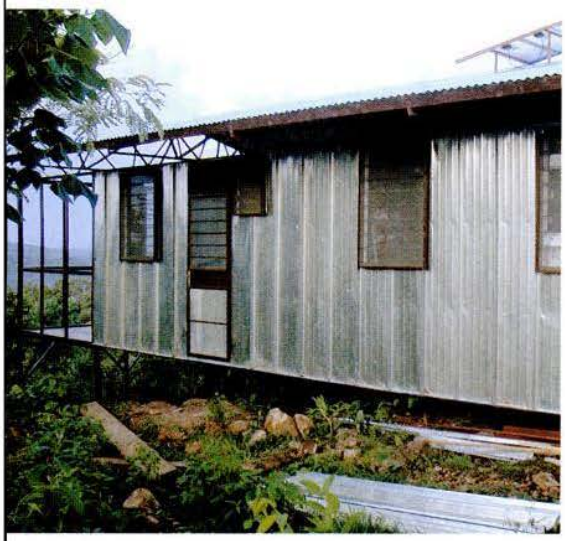

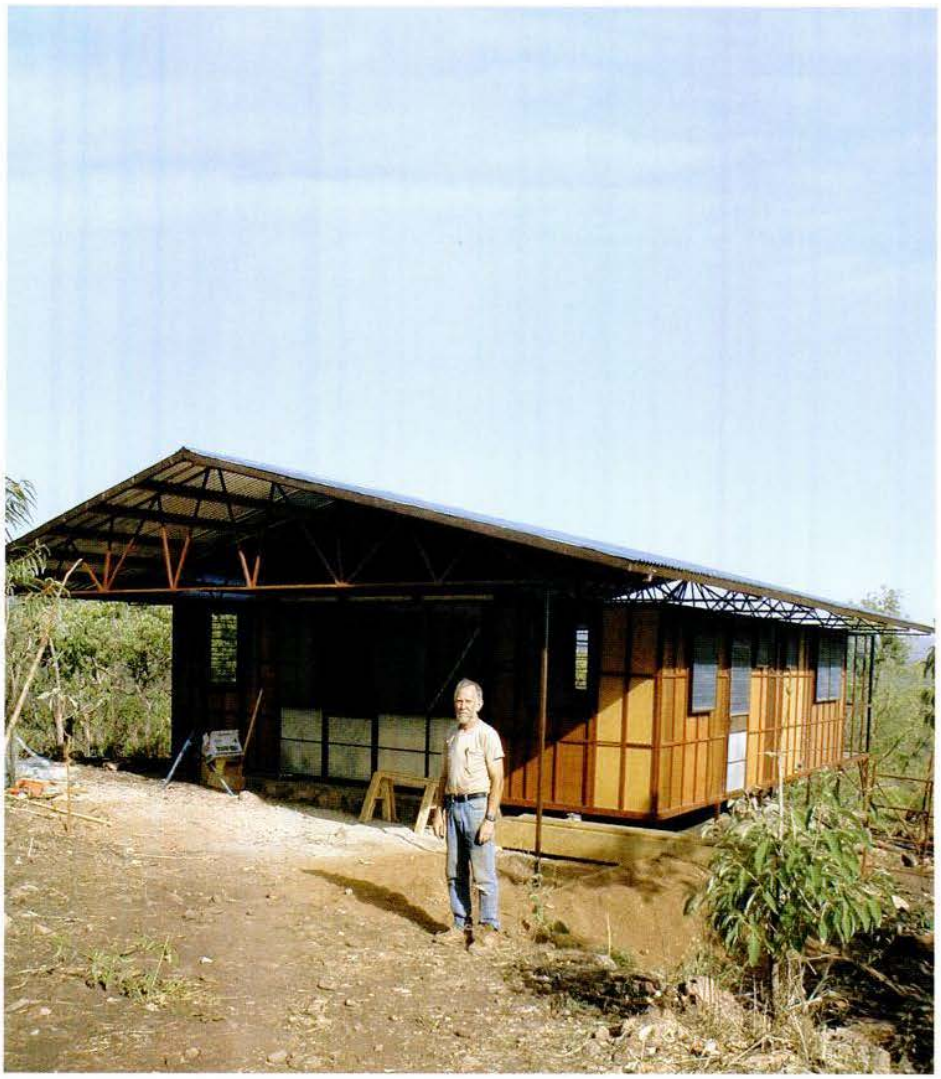

The pieces to Friedmeyer's houses are welded in city factories and then trucked to their resting spots, where they are bolted together in a matter of weeks. Friedmeyer (right) stands in front of a recently completed unit.

five-ton flatbed truck and trailer, a crew of four can have the structures, including plumbing and electrical, completed in three weeks at a cost of $25,000 to $30,000. Although this is about half the cost and a third the time necessary to build one of the area's more common masonry structures, Friedmeyer is constantly refining his designs and streamlining the construction, hoping to increase productivity beyond his current pace of erecting one unit during each of his annual Ethiopian stays.

Resembling in form and function ancestors such as Jean Prouvé's prefab Tropical House, Friedmeyer's simple designs harmonize, as much as possible, with Ethiopia's challenging natural environment. Solar panels and tubing harness the plentiful sunlight's energy for radios, computers, and hot water while large roofs catch mountain breezes and heat chimneys dissipate interior warmth; when it's 120 degrees in the African sun, the passively cooled houses are still comfortable. Despite their simplistic beauty, Friedmeyer's designs are really manifestations of the functional, egalitarian tenets of modernism. "The practical side, the cost, durability, speed, and adaptability are what I concentrate on," notes the modest but gregarious designer when asked what inspires his designs. In a country with an average annual per-capita income of $110 and a legacy of warfare, drought, famine, and political instability, Friedmeyer views his work as facilitating basic but vitally important necessities to an all-but-ignored indigenous population. "Fifty percent of Gumuz children survive to be two years old," he explains, a note of urgency piercing his otherwise placid demeanor. "They don't even give a child a name until it can walk and talk. In that situation, helping them to have a steady diet, medical care, and some education is about the most important thing you can do." ■

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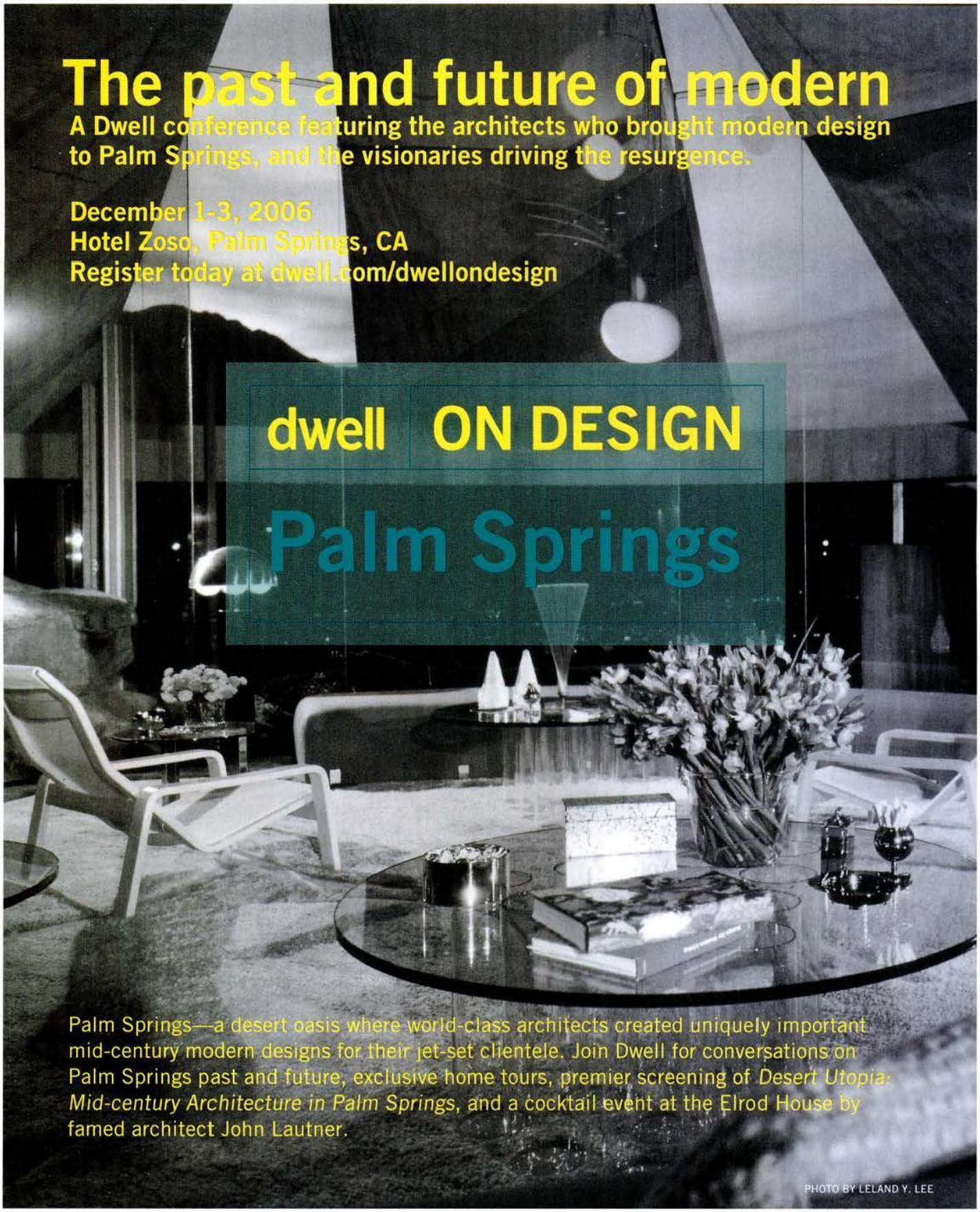
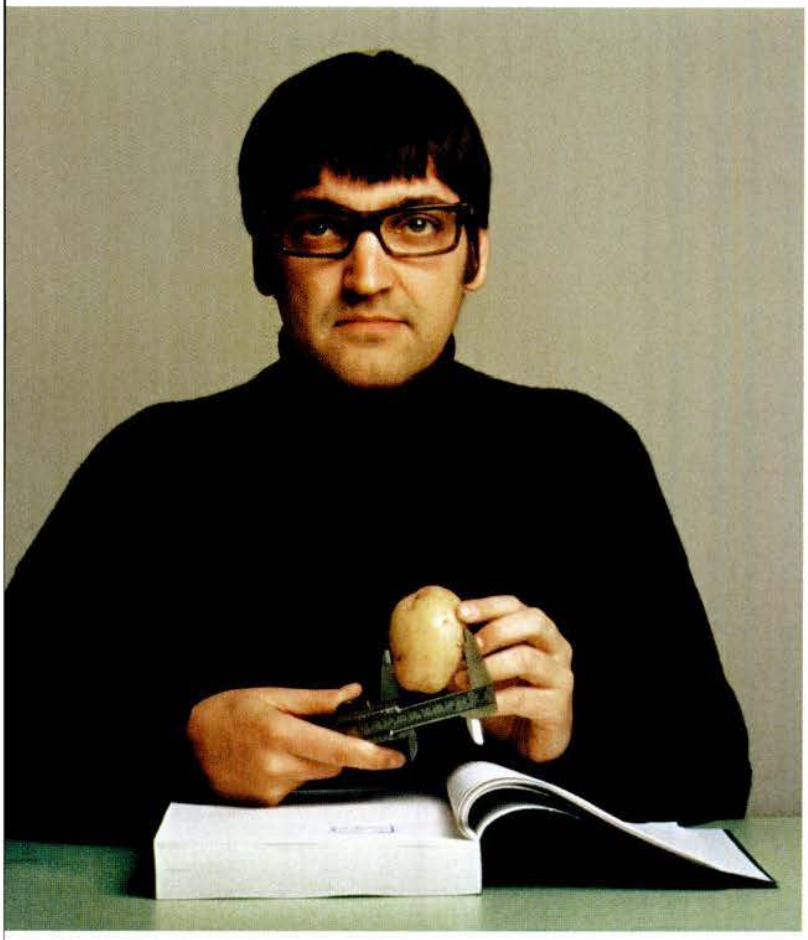


Story by Jane Szita



"Ex-designer" Martí Guixé working with one of his obsessions—food. Guixé's playful product, Do Frame (right), is a roll of tape printed with an ornate frame design.

Having a Ball

Although Catalan Martí Guixé calls himself an "ex-designer," that doesn't mean he no longer designs; in fact, he's impressively prolific. But his work is more about ideas than objects—witness his PVC shower curtain printed with a jaunty account of PVC's ill effects, or the graffiti-covered plastic chair he exhibited amid the luxurious excesses of the 2004 Milan furniture fair.

Guixé's efforts are not confined to furnishings: Since 1998, his collaborations with funky Spanish footwear company Camper have resulted in some of the world's most distinctive retail design. In his various Camper interiors worldwide (including a recent outlet in San Francisco), Guixé eschews the usual expensive trappings of exclusive brands in favor of the ironic, the anarchic, and the downright DIY: hand-drawn illustrations, stunningly simple displays (such as shoes Velcroed to the wall), and carrier bags emblazoned with subversive slogans like "If you don't need it, don't buy it." His notion of the "info shop" (a store you can effectively read) similarly challenges consumers to use their brains, not just their credit cards.

Perhaps because he'd like to erase form from design, leaving only function, Guixé has devoted much effort to food—a product that disappears in the act of being eaten. Believing that food should be functionally redesigned, Guixé has developed concepts such as I-food (food that declares its ingredients through its form) and Pharma-food (a system of nutrients that you inhale). And in 2004, together with Camper he created the Barcelona eatery FoodBALL, which he describes as "a new way of eating food fast." The restaurant interior sweeps away tables and chairs, seating diners and dishes on stairs, while the food itself is "a new type of semi-industrialized natural food in a contemporary shape—the ball."

Although Guixé has been championed by London's Design Museum, among others, as the originator of the new anti-design movement, his product design has a quirkily comforting quality about it. His work tends to demonstrate a willful simplicity that is both humorous and humanistic. Guixé divides his time between his native Barcelona and Berlin. ▸

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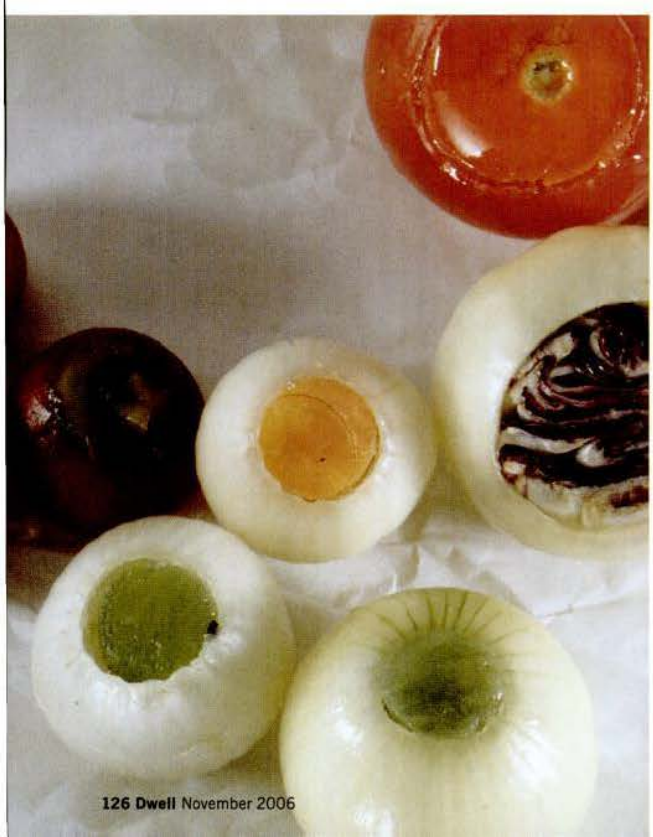
Guixé delights in playing with his food, crafting inside-out creations like Spamt (right), a sort of bruschetta wherein the bread goes into the tomato rather than the tomato going on the bread. These quirky delicacies are served at the Barcelona eatery FoodBALL, a place to "eat food fast."



You studied both industrial and interior design; what led you to food?

I was living out of a suitcase in Berlin at the time, and traveling to Seoul as a consultant, and the only real need I had was food. I wanted to work with something that was really mass market, a consumer product that everyone consumes. Also, food has been totally neglected by designers—when I did my first food exhibits in 1997, the design world found it strange.

Food has an odd position in modern life. It's no longer simply a necessity, it's subject to fashion. Yet although the packaging is designed, the food isn't. We have this very industrialized food, made by machines, but this is always imitating traditional models. Then, on the other hand, we have food that's prepared traditionally, in a very handcrafted way. But we're really missing food that is actually designed in order to complement our contemporary lifestyle. So, for example, with Spamt, which I created back in 1997, I took a traditional Catalan dish that features tomatoes, salt, and oil on bread—it's good food, but messy to eat. So I redesigned it by putting the bread inside the tomato, so that you can eat it anywhere, even in front of the computer. Pharma-food, on the other hand, was a concept for food you can inhale.

Food seems to have become more interesting to designers since you started working with it.

Yes—but when I see all these other people working with food, I think they are usually working with the rituals. I don't see a contemporary attitude. I see romanticism. I don't see any functionalism. I want to make food contemporary and fun. Their approach is more nostalgic and emotional.

Do you cook?

No, I have no idea how to cook—but when you're a designer, you follow a certain protocol in the way you develop a product for the consumer, and that works with any product. With food, I work with chefs because they are experts in taste, and I also use chemical food technicians. ▸

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Guixé's design for the Camper shoe stores, in concept (right) and in reality (below).

What was your inspiration for the Camper store interiors?
I took the spirit of the company as a starting point. I wanted to make the brand very visible through the space, but through attitude rather than expensive materials or architectonic details. The first store I did for Camper, in 1998, was on a very luxurious street in London, and I wanted to create a contrast. It had to be fun, so we put the shoes on the wall and had a running machine for trying them on, and we added these balloon seats.

That store became the first "info shop."
Yes. The idea this time was to do a very standard generic interior, but to fill it with content. So all the information in the shop relates to one subject—the Majorcan donkey (because Camper is a Majorcan company). This was a way of talking about luxury in a completely alternative way—because there are only 136 of these donkeys, and owning one is the ultimate Majorcan status symbol. After three years, I still get enthusiastic emails about that store.

What mistakes do retail designers usually make?
In many shops, the environment is too present, the product is hidden—and if you don't see the product, you can't buy it. Other shops are too generic, too aggressive. Actually, it's easy to make spaces distinctive, and to make shopping a pleasurable experience. The communication of the brand is the important thing, and the way you navigate the store. The product has to be easy to understand; it has to be clearly presented.

What has changed in your work since you began working with Camper?
The product is not as important as it was. Now it's all about the brand. So designing an interior is really affecting the brand, and the challenge is to deal with this complexity—especially on a global level. Everything is now so confusing, people cannot really have an opinion on the work of a designer—so if the designer follows a brand strategy, he or she can design anything. This explains why we have so much bad design now. ▶

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At the FoodBALL eatery in Barcelona (right), diners are seated on stairs not chairs. Guixé's hands-free lollipop (below). He's been quoted as saying, "I've been trying to eliminate the form of the object and to design it as a pure function."

You were once quoted as saying that you hate design.

No, I hate objects! I don't like objects because you have to carry them around, and they make you heavy. But I need the functionality of objects, so all my work is really trying to make the physical elements disappear, while the function remains. I work with concepts more than shapes or details for that reason. I do hate design when it's bad, though.

So how does hating objects fit with your work as a furniture designer?

I'm particularly interested in furniture in public spaces, which you use but don't own. For Saporiti, I've done three pieces for hotel, museum, and restaurant interiors in which I try to develop a more casual way of sitting in these spaces. I think it's strange to see very luxurious hotels, restaurants, and stores, when people themselves are so casual.

My idea is to make furniture that allows people to be much more casual in their postures, positions, and use of the furniture—why should it still be like it was 100 years ago? So the sofa, which refers to the FoodBALL interior, is like a set of steps. Another sofa is a circle with a table in the middle, so you can sit with your back to it. The third design is a stool that allows two or three people to sit on it. Similarly, with the carpets I've been doing for Nani Marquina, I mostly use a very basic graphic language.

Are you applying the same ideas to home interiors?

Yes, I have a couple of prototypes for domestic seating elements and rugs, made for Nani Marquina, which should be in production soon. My own home is a very neutral space, just like a hotel. It's simply functional. I think people see their homes too much as a mode of representation—by which I mean that they buy things they don't need, purely because it represents something. I think it would be more interesting to design our homes as though they are public spaces. ■

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Hussein Chalayan, various images from the *Afterwords* collection. Autumn/Winter 2000, photography Chris Moore, courtesy of Hussein Chalayan

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PHOTO BY HAROLD KOOPMANS

Up Against the Wall

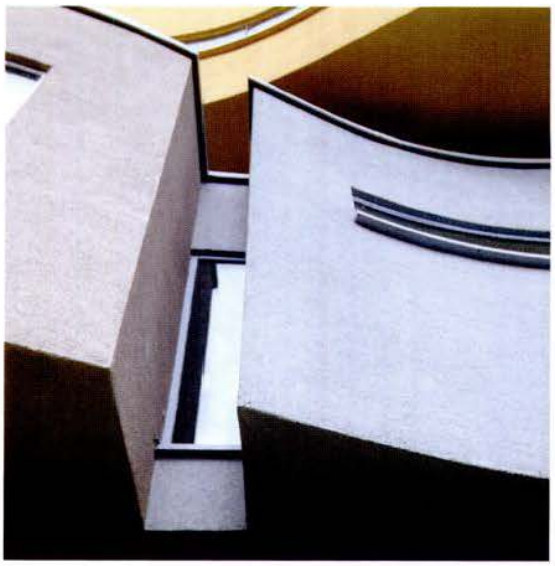
Originally designed in 1973 for a site in Ridgefield, Connecticut, John Hejduk's Wall House 2 was completed in the Dutch city of Groningen in 2001.

John Hejduk, a New York City–born architect and Renaissance man who spent most of his life in that city, built few buildings. His magnum opus, a colorfully bizarre, cubist-inspired house designed in 1973, was completed in 2001, a year after his death, in the outskirts of Groningen, a 1,000-year-old city in northern Holland.

This turn of events seems especially strange upon waking for a Saturday-morning stroll in the neighborhood, among densely uniform 1980s housing developments where mothers cycle with babies on board and locals file in and out of an Albert Heijn grocery store. The cityscape opens to Lake Hoorn, a serene brown-blue expanse surrounded by trees, footpaths, and high-rise apartments, and Hejduk's Wall House 2 emerges looking paler than in pictures. Yellow, green, blue, and purple, the façade's stacked, curved volumes and faded paint seem resigned to the lake's winding shore, gray light, crabgrass, and cattails. A fringe of mildew crowns the massive concrete wall that frames and supports the structure.

Hejduk designed this house for Arthur Edwin Bye, a landscape architect and friend, for a plot in Ridgefield, Connecticut. Perhaps because the plans seemed like what the *New York Times* called an "architectural Rorschach test," Bye never built it. But the drawings, which presented beautifully meticulous, sinuous geometries, made the house Hejduk's most famous work.

In his last decades, Hejduk acted as dean of the School of Architecture at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, inspiring students such as Daniel Libeskind with his belief in the importance of personal narratives in architecture. He also adored Dutch landscapes, and in the 1990s befriended the Groningen municipality, which was trying to improve the city's architectural image with a number of public endeavors. He participated in Libeskind's Books of Groningen project, in which artists and architects built sculptural markers around the city, and in 1989 he proposed a 14-story purple apartment building that never left the drawing ▸



The architecture firm Otonomo was hired to turn Hejduk's design into reality. To do so, the original dimensions were increased by 20 percent. The house now hosts visiting artists and exhibits their work.

board. As a kind of compensation, and in hopes of giving a showpiece to what was then a new housing development around Lake Hoorn, in 1995 the city decided to build Wall House 2. "You might say it is an amalgam of respect, disappointment, and friendship that forged the relationship," says Olof van de Wal, director of the Wall House 2 Foundation.

A local architecture firm, Otonomo, was hired to turn Hejduk's illustrations into reality. They enlarged the dimensions by 20 percent to make the house more livable and added insulation—which Hejduk had left out—into the wall structure. When they finished the house in 2001, it was still without a buyer.

"I think it proved to be too demanding," says van de Wal of the house, which remained vacant for three years. So in 2003, he started raising money for the Wall House 2 Foundation. The house's developer, BAM Woningbouw, agreed to sell it for 10 percent of the original price. Now Hejduk's posthumously completed creation hosts visiting artists in residence and presents periodic exhibits of their work.

Strangely prescient, Hejduk wrote in 1985: "I take the responsibility of introducing the problem of 'do a building in the intention of Juan Gris' [the Spanish cubist]. This has horrified many, turned off some, interested some, turned on a few, but because of the nature of the inquiry, other areas of investigation have opened up—and this is what one calls the educational process—a process in which private property becomes public."

Now a curiosity for tourists and local dog walkers who circle its surreal shape, the house is public indeed. Around the side of the massive concrete wall, a floating second-story hallway projects horizontally about three times the length of the wall's height, ending in a staircase down to a narrow front entrance. The whole assembly, painted reddish brown, could be a cubist dachshund, with its head disappearing into the concrete wall and emerging on the other side with a clown face. The house is so compelling because it's so unabashedly sculptural.

It also raises the intriguing question of how the inside is laid out. Hejduk was well known for his experimental approach to the division of space. In the Wall House, the wall—a component traditionally associated with a building's shell—becomes its center, upon which fluid volumes are hung.

Hejduk wrote of this place as it existed in his imagination: "The wall itself is the most 'present' condition possible. Life has to do with walls; we're continuously going in and out, back and forth, and through them. A wall is the quickest, the thinnest, the thing we're always transgressing, and that is why I see it as the present, the most surface condition."

Wall House 2's transgression is most impressive from several hundred feet away. An adventuresome, educational endeavor, this house embodies Hejduk's words—and suggests that his work was best suited to paper. ▸

PHOTOS BY HAROLD KOOPMANS

1. taps. Square.
2. shower. Flat d.
3. bathtub. Exline.
4. washbasin. Flat 80.
   cabinet. Flat XL.
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6. light. 369.
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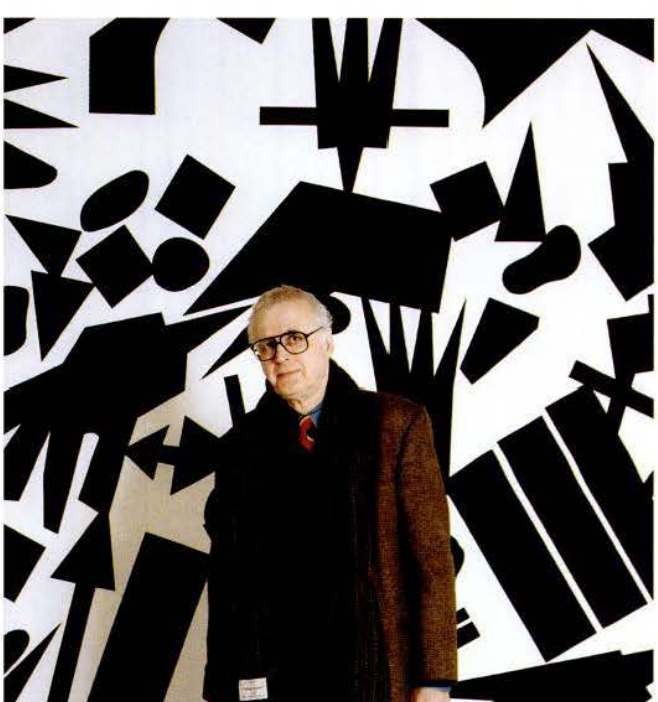

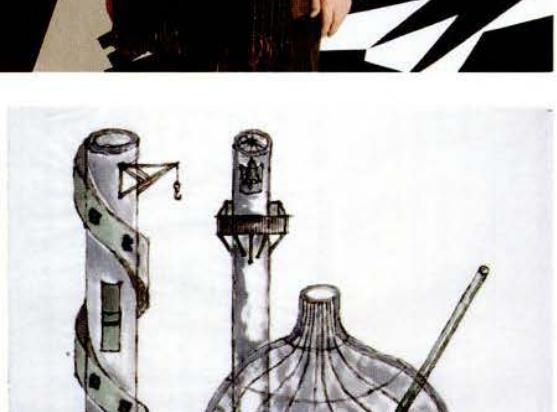

Hejduk poses at the 2000 exhibition of his work, "Other Soundings" (top left). Hejduk's bold graphic style is evident in *Object/Subject*, part of *The Riga Project* (top right). *Chapel of the Dead Angel* (above), a felt-tip-marker drawing, is from the 1986 book *Bovisa*.

Ten Things You Should Know About John Hejduk

1 / Hejduk was born in New York to Czech immigrants and had a Bronx accent, yet he loved the Netherlands—taking particular interest in Dutch landscape paintings and the transient perfection of Vermeer.

2 / The only other ground-up functional building he designed is the Kreuzberg Tower and Wings, a residential project in Berlin, Germany, which was completed in 1988.

3 / His other built works, such as the Mask of Medusa project in Buenos Aires, Argentina, tended to be large-scale sculptures informed by fantastic architectures.

4 / His teaching career began at the University of Texas at Austin in the 1950s, where he was one of the Texas Rangers, a group of architects who venerated color theorist Josef Albers.

5 / In the 1970s, he was one of the New York Five, a group of architects (including Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, and Richard Meier) celebrated in a 1969 exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art.

6 / Devotees of modernism and the early work of Le Corbusier, the New York Five also became known for the criticism they garnered in a 1973 issue of *Architectural Forum*, in which five essays accused their purism of yielding unusable buildings.

7 / Hejduk was an accomplished poet; his poems are collected in *Such Places as Memory: Poems 1953–1966 (Writing Architecture)*.

8 / His massive archive of drawings, which range from ruler-perfect geometries to amusing rough sketches, is owned by the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal.

9 / In 2002, the Whitney Museum exhibited two sculptures in an exhibition called "Sanctuaries: The Last Works of John Hejduk." One of the sculptures, a rectilinear prism crowned with spikes and titled *House of the Suicide*, was inspired by Jan Palac, a college student who died in 1969 after setting himself on fire protesting the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia.

10 / Hejduk's writings, drawings, and projects are beautifully collected in his 1985 monograph *Mask of Medusa*, published by Rizzoli, and difficult to find today. ■

PHOTO AND DRAWINGS COURTESY COLLECTION CENTRE CANADIEN D'ARCHITECTURE / CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ARCHITECTURE, MONTREAL

Story by Christopher Bright | Photos by Peter Belanger

Dear Dwell,
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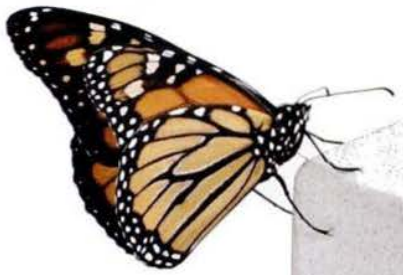

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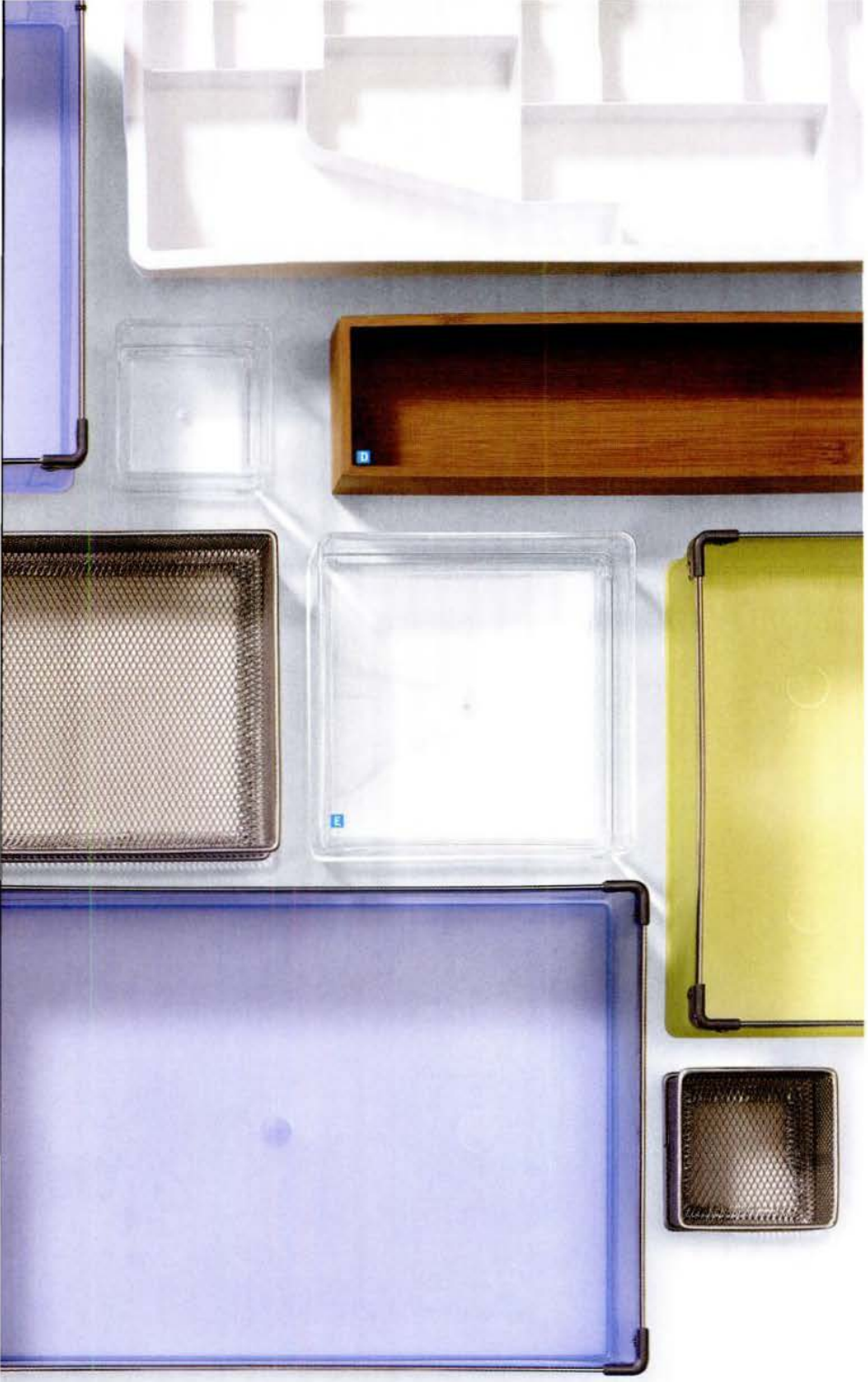
A Everything organizer with sliding tray / $6.99 / Available in white or black / www.organize.com
Smaller compartments make this design better suited for the pens and paper clips of an office drawer. Labels are provided to keep you organized, but let's be honest, you'll never actually put the Post-its in their assigned bin. The sliding tray provides additional space for the overflow of minutiae.

B Viola drawer organizer / $3.99–$7.99 / Available in green, clear, or blue / www.containerstore.com
This is one of the few products that infuses a bit of color into the gaggle of cords and batteries that typically inhabit junk drawers. These containers are bigger and deeper than the rest of the pack. The Viola takes a punk-rock approach to taxonomy—just toss it all in, no dividers to regiment uniformity.

C Silver mesh office drawer organizers / $2.49–$5.99 / www.containerstore.com
Like the Viola organizers—and NFL running back Jerome Bettis—these mesh bins are on the larger side. Junk drawers accumulate mess from the careless tossing of miscellany, and these durable metal receptacles are willing gluttons for punishment. Each compartment is sold individually, so you can customize as the demand increases.



D Bamboo drawer organizers / $3.99–$6.99 / www.containerstore.com

In addition to being a sustainable material, bamboo has a striking color striation to its grain, and is nice enough to be displayed just about anywhere. These crafted modular boxes are big enough to tackle a commercial tape measure, yet small enough to bring order to the typical origami of forgotten keys and loose thread.

E Acrylic drawer organizer set / $19.99 / www.containerstore.com

This modular set gives you the handy option of situating the separate compartments according to your needs, which could be quite helpful in the likely event that an odd-ball object won't fit. The clear acrylic construction has the mystical power to transform those banal scissors into the kind of haute, curated objects you'd see at Moss. ■

Story by Michelle Hoffman

Photos by Jessica Antola

The indoor garden wall Patrick Blanc created for his friends the Dimanches is so lush, it's almost as if someone has plopped an easy chair down in the middle of the forest.

Garden Apartment

Botanist Patrick Blanc has been bringing the wilds of the rainforests to Parisian walls for over 30 years, most recently at the Jean Nouvel–designed Quai Branly museum. One lucky family, however, doesn't have to go any farther than their living room to take in the wonders of Blanc's vertical gardens. Oh how jealous Henri Rousseau would be!

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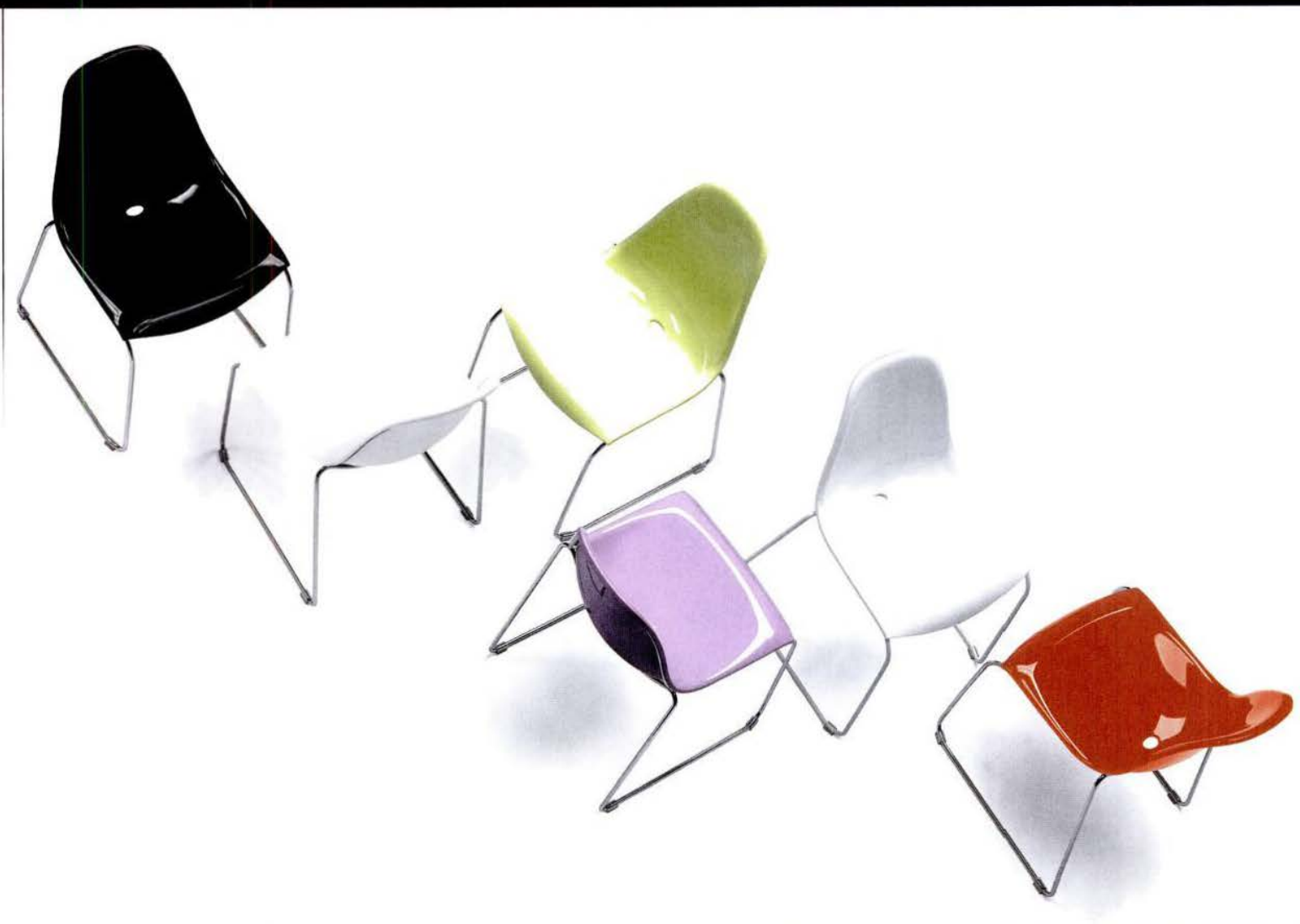

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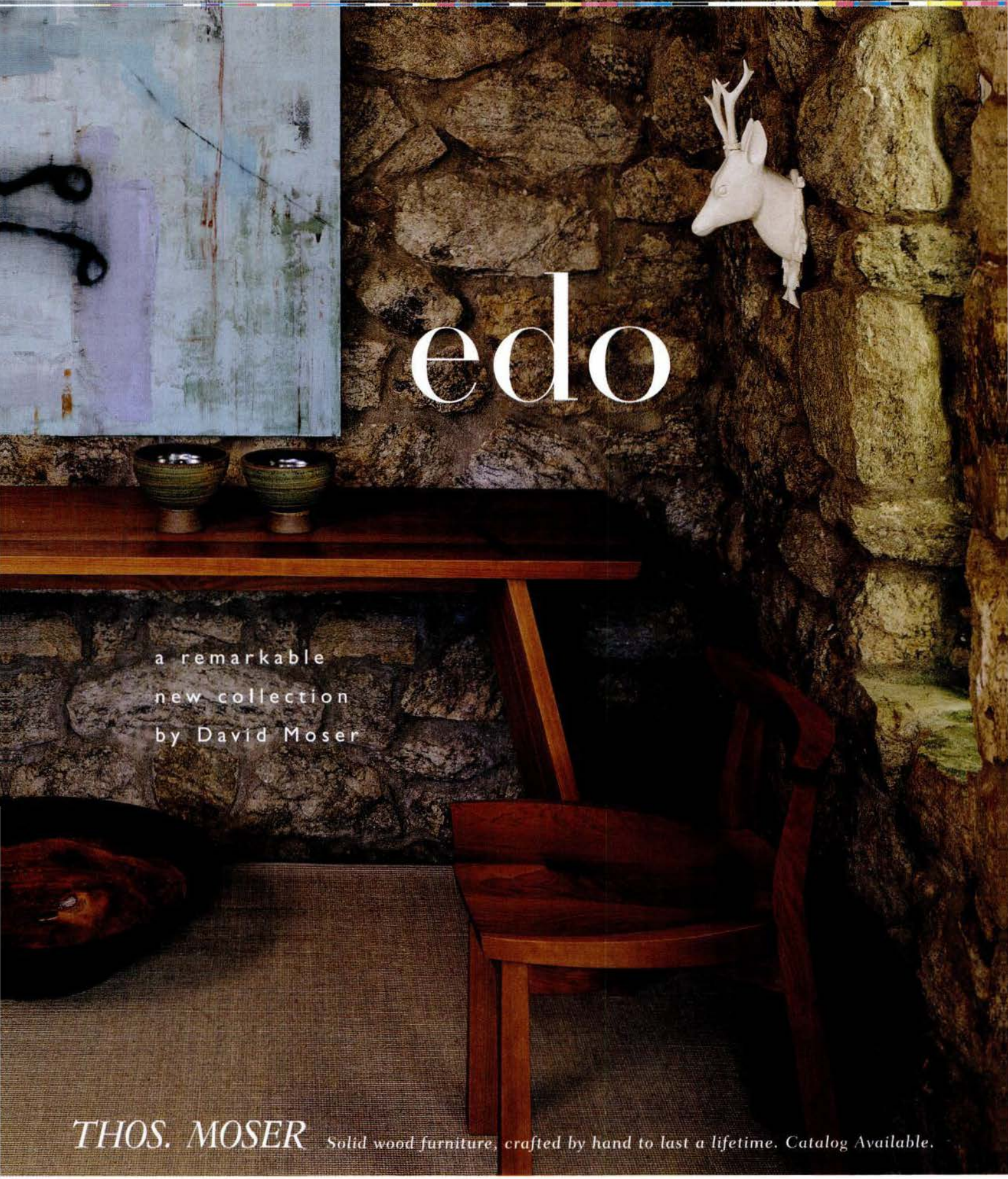
The Dimanches (above) relax in their exotic living room cum garden. Having lived in the country for many years, **the family was eager to bring nature into every room of their city home (right).**

A man who has lived among plants for 30 years is expected to have a green thumb. But Patrick Blanc has opted for the pinkie instead, with a disturbingly long nail slicked over in glittering emerald polish. He is a radiant evergreen, bedecked in Peter Pantone snakeskin shoes, khaki safari trousers, and a lime disco shirt, with mesclun highlights in his blond hair. Even his vice is green: He smokes menthols. Frankly, it wouldn't take a genius to pick the botanist out of a lineup.

Getting your hands on him is another matter entirely. The creator of the "plant wall," a living canvas for indoor and outdoor vertical space, is in high demand. His trademark technique for a top-down, no-fuss, no-muss irrigation system, not to mention the 30 years of botanical research on three continents under his belt, have made him an urban garden guru. Recent creations include the hip Pershing Hall hotel and the Fondation Cartier in Paris, the swanky Siam Paragon mall in Bangkok, boutiques in New York and Paris, and restaurants in Los Angeles and beyond. With the lavish opening of the Jean Nouvel–designed Musée du Quai Branly in Paris in June, where he created a lush, 8,600-square-foot façade with 15,000 plants, big-scale commissions are flooding in.

Blanc's work began, however, with homes—notably his own, a tropical rainforest doubling as an apartment on the outskirts of Paris, in Créteil. Even as major jobs began to elbow out most private commissions, some homeowners managed to persuade Blanc to create outdoor vertical gardens, seeking to add a "rural" element to their city views. The indoor vertical garden—Blanc's true calling as a low-light specialist—however, had to wait until 2004, when Jean-Marc Dimanche phoned up from his 4,400-square-foot home, which was under construction in the Left Bank's 14th arrondissement, with an idea for the 20-by-23-foot interior wall that was beginning to take shape.

"I told him I'd found the perfect spot, and he said, 'Fantastic! I've finally found a loon like you crazy enough ▸



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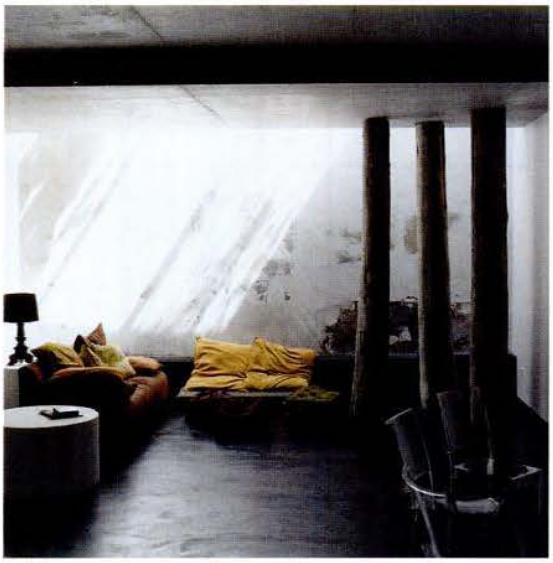

The Dimanches' indoor garden wall is 20 by 23 feet, dominating the living room in the best possible way (above). Light floods the whole house as well as the courtyard, with its more standard garden (right).

to put the wall inside his house!'" Dimanche remembers. The adventure had begun. Two years on, it is hard to imagine the space without its forest canopy, a canvas of the living with some 150 tropical, low-light species assembled in harmony. It begins as a field of texture near the ground, then runs through violet and amber arcs of flowers and other ruddy blooms, broadening out near the ceiling into trees that overhang the room like a sheltering forest. It strikes an easy balance with both the raw elements of the home (concrete, metal beams, a transparent glass elevator that pierces the heart of the five-story structure) and the charming bric-a-brac of a family's everyday existence (country-kitchen stools, orchids coaxed into bloom, battered leather armchairs that sigh beneath your weight). The effect, Dimanche agrees, is "very calming."

Though he always kept a flat in Paris to be close to the communications agency he runs, his wife, Vivette, and their children moved from outside Rambouillet, an hour's drive from the city, where they had renovated a *longère*, an ancient, low-lying elongated house nestled into a garden. "Basically, when we moved our house shifted 90 degrees, and so did the garden," Dimanche says. "This house, for us, has meant a whole new life, a new lifestyle," adds Vivette. "It's not a purely conceptual house. It's all about *le vivant, le vécu*," she explains, the living, the lived experience.

For all its urban delights, Paris is one of the densest world capitals—two million residents packed into only 40 square miles—and it just cries out for a green manifesto. Blanc's plant walls may be part of that, producing spaces that don't deny the urban grid but weave it into the realm of the living. From homes and museums Blanc now wants to move on to the city's least attractive spots—parking lots, public housing, train stations, "all those places where we don't expect living things." "The plant wall is not a criticism of the city," he adds. "I'm only trying to reconcile it with nature." ▸

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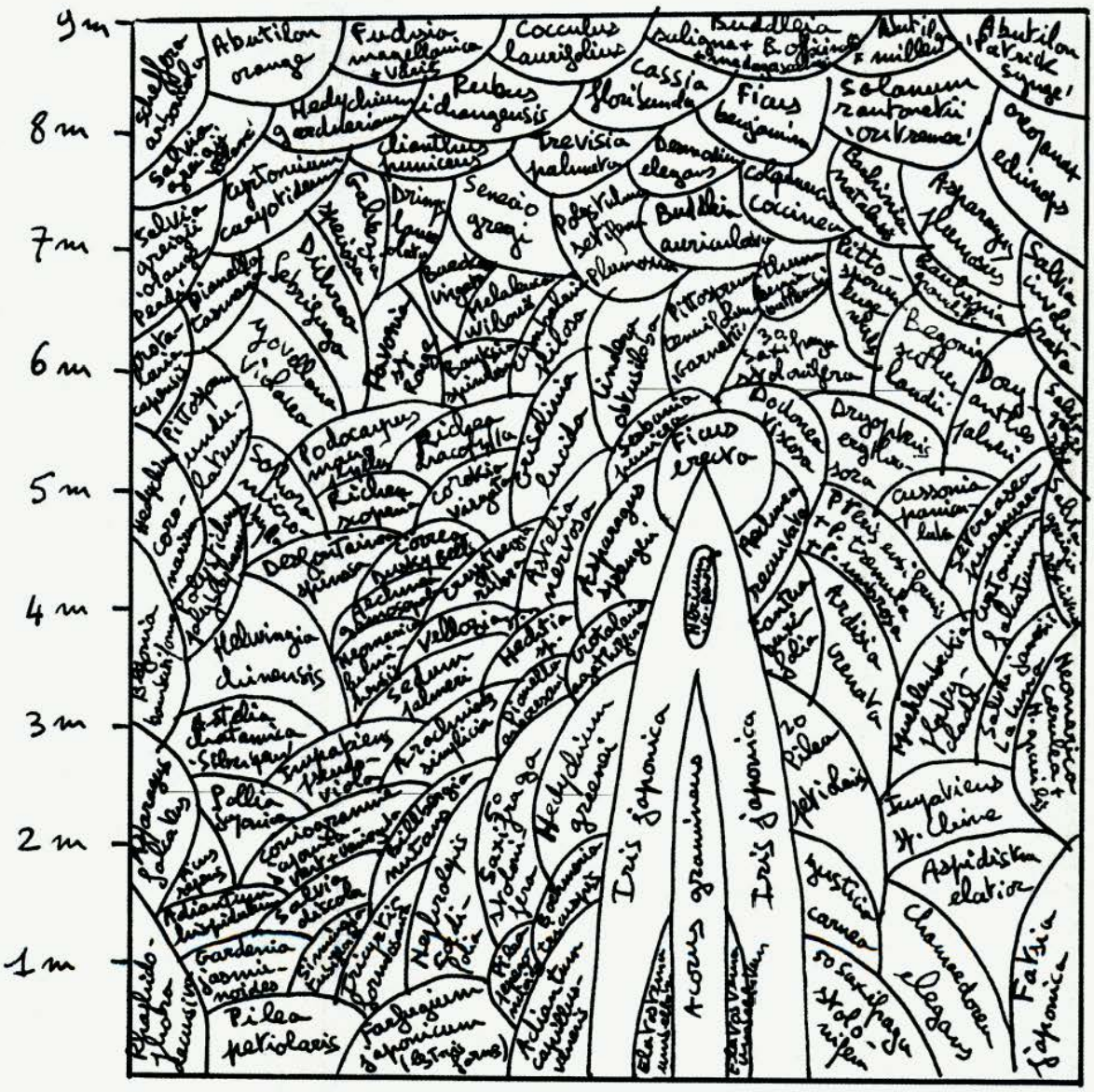
The vertical garden wall is so lush and alluring that it's tempting to try to grow one yourself at home. But Blanc's elaborate plans outlining the Dimanches' living room addition may quell that desire.



Not Just Another Plant in the Wall

"Technically it's a cinch," Patrick Blanc says, and with a wave of the hand ticks off the ingredients needed to build a plant wall: ten-millimeter-thick waterproof PVC slabs covered with a polyamid felt, into which holes are cut for the plants; a small hose, punctured every ten centimeters by a two-millimeter hole, to run the length of the top of the wall; a timing device to ensure regular, light watering—like a trickle slowly wending its way down a mossy rock.

The ensemble is then attached to a metal structure that stands out from a supporting wall, trapping a cushion of air, which acts as insulation. Outdoor walls take small plants and seedlings straight from the nursery, while fully mature plants are used indoors. A plant wall by Blanc is made to last at least 30 years with only minimal maintenance.

Beyond the bare guts and skeleton, however, the wall requires an expert eye to choose the flora and lay it out in harmony with light, climate, and the built environment. At the Dimanche house, Blanc took into account that the wall would be contemplated from different perspectives—from a mezzanine at eye's length with the ceiling, the staircase below, the street beyond, and the room itself. The family wanted a forest canopy feel but without any bushy branches that would diminish the room, and they wanted a variety of blooms all year long but without floral overload. Blanc, drawing on an intimate knowledge of sequencing of plants in natural environments, drew up a "tapestry" that mapped out the 150 species, mostly low-light tropical and subtropical varieties available in commercial nurseries. Gardeners brought the plan to life by weaving the plants into the felt and allowing them to take a shallow hold. Once the PVC was mounted, it was merely a question of time—a few months, in this case—for the plants to expand across the wall, creating a patchwork of texture and tone in constant evolution. —M.H. ■

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The Consultants

The well-worn but still utterly apt saying "No man is an island" is doubly germane when applied to an architecture firm taking on the design and construction of a sustainable home.

Nearly two years ago, we announced the Dwell Home II Design Invitational with the goal of establishing a model for sustainable home building for the 21st century, and Los Angeles residents Glen Martin and Claudia Plasencia offered up their land in Topanga Canyon as the testing ground. Escher GuneWardena Architecture's innovative design was selected as the winning entry. As the project got under way, it became increasingly clear that no architecture firm is autonomous—nearly all must place their trust in a network of consultants in order to bring their structures to life.

Terry Valente, Permit Expeditor, Topanga, California
While the design and building of a house is a formidable undertaking, those tasks can pale in comparison to the various steps needed to actually get to the point where construction can begin. Enter the permit expeditor, who is involved with the project right from the start. "Terry Valente is a bit of a hero in our office," project architect Bojana Banyasz explains. "The job of an expeditor can vary quite a bit, but Terry has handled a lot for us: the permitting process, negotiating with building officials, filling out paperwork, and speeding up the permitting process simply because she knows the right sequence in which to do things. Since we started working with Terry, she has managed to dispel many of the more daunting aspects of the permitting process and move the project along the bureaucratic channels as quickly as possible."

Omnispan Corporation, Structural Engineers, Pasadena, California
Banyasz explains the firm's relationship with their structural engineer, Andrew Nasser, who has also been involved with the project on the design side since nearly the beginning: "I don't think you would characterize our work as structurally inspired," Banyasz says, "but when we work with Nasser, we consult with him from the very beginning of the conceptual design phase." Architect Frank Escher adds, "Nasser is an expert in achieving the most elegant and economical structural engineering solutions in any material, but he is phenomenal with concrete, in particular thin shell structures, prestressing, and post-tensioning methods."

Environmental Planning and Design (EPD), Wastewater and Irrigation Engineers, San Pedro, California
In dealings with government building agencies not always well versed in green construction, EPD has a particular way with words, helping officials to understand the sometimes-complex processes involved in going green. "We found EPD after getting a demonstration of the advanced filtration system used to treat graywater at the Audubon Society in Los Angeles," Banyasz explains. "Though the system sold us on EPD, what was most impressive was that EPD managed to [get a] permit [for] a graywater-reuse project in the city of Los Angeles, where private septic systems are not allowed." Banyasz adds, "The professionalism and enthusiasm of EPD created a buzz even among the County Health Department officials. After cycling through a few options for the Dwell Home II, from the graywater green roof to wastewater site irrigation, EPD helped us find a solution that strikes a balance between environmentally sensitive, permittable, and affordable."

Helios International, Sustainability Consulting and Engineering, Topanga, California, and Arlington, Virginia
"Helios, and Dr. John Ingersoll in particular, help us to determine the best approach for minimizing the energy use of a house—something that is obviously very important to the Dwell Home II," Banyasz says. Ingersoll is a well-known expert on holistic sustainability (site, energy, water, materials, and human comfort) and the realization of cost-effective, net-zero-energy buildings through efficiency and renewability. Ingersoll helped the architects to quantify building solutions involving passive design and cutting-edge technology. "Among other state-of-the-art energy systems, the Dwell Home II incorporates directional floor channels that circulate air within the house based solely on the temperature differential in various parts of the house," Banyasz explains. Ingersoll also had the idea of using a nocturnal roof radiator for cooling, and internal, thermally reflective curtains to raise the insulating value of glass in the winter. In an architectural project like this, where every decision intimately affects the others, understanding whether to move forward with particular ideas or not in a timely fashion is critical. ■

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Plotting Prefab

"In case anyone regrets that the house of the future can no longer be made by hand workers, it should be borne in mind that the automobile is no longer manufactured by carriage makers." —Mies van der Rohe

Wood-framed duplex units by J.A. Brodie, Liverpool, England (1904)

Aladdin Readi-Cut Houses founded (1906)

AEG hires Peter Behrens as its artistic consultant, creating the role of industrial designer (1907)

Poured-concrete house by Thomas Edison (1908) **/ Sears, Roebuck & Co.'s Houses by Mail founded** (1908)

Walter Gropius calls for the industrialization of housing (1910)

1910

Henry Ford perfects the assembly line (1913)

Dom-Ino House by Le Corbusier (1914)

World War I spurs the need for standardization in mass production (1914–18)

The Hallidie Building, the first to use a glass curtain wall, constructed (1917–18)

Le Corbusier publishes "Mass Production Houses" essay (1919)

Buster Keaton stars in *One Week*, a silent film about building a prefab house (1920)

1920

Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer develop Building Blocks standardized housing system (1923)

Steel house prototypes developed by Muche & Paulick, the Woehr Brothers, and others (1926)

R. Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House first presented to the public (1927)

Richard Neutra's Lovell Health House with prefab steel frame built (1928–29)

1930

Albert Frey's Aluminaire house displayed at the Allied Arts and Building Products Exhibition (1931)

The MOMA presents its first architectural exhibition, "The International Style: Architecture Since 1922" (1932) **/ American Houses, Inc., introduces American Motohomes** (1932)

George Fred Keck's House of Tomorrow and Crystal House displayed at the Chicago World's Fair (1933)

Howard T. Fisher, of General Houses Corp., predicts a public taste for contemporary housing (1935)

Frank Lloyd Wright accepts a client commission to design a "decent $5,000 house" (1936) **/ William Bushnell Stout designs a mobile metal house that can be folded and towed by car** (1936)

The Farm Security Administration builds 1,000 prefab homes for sharecroppers in Missouri (1938)

The FSA builds 50 steel-framed dwellings at $1,650 each (1939) **/ The New York World's Fair proclaims the supremacy of the Modern** (1939)

1940

Approximately 18,000 prefab homes built (1941)

General Panel Corporation commissions Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann to design a system of standardized housing (1942)

IKEA founded (1943)

U.S. government establishes guaranteed home-financing program (1944)

Inspired by Henry Ford, developer William Levitt creates Levittown (1945) / Case Study Houses program introduced by John Entenza, editor of *Arts & Architecture* (1945)

President Harry Truman appoints a Housing Expediter to stimulate production of housing for returning veterans (1946) / Vultex Aircraft commissions Henry Dreyfuss and Edward Larrabee Barnes to design an affordable house (1946)

The first trailer expressly designed as a house (the Spartan) manufactured (1947)

R. Buckminster Fuller gives his students the task of designing a "Standard of Living Package," a transportable container to house six (1948) / Lustron Corporation produces prefab, all-steel houses (1948)

U.S. Housing Act passed (1949) / Developer Joseph Eichler begins producing modern, affordable Eichler Homes (1949) / Philip Johnson's Glass House built (1949) / Raymond Loewy hired to design mobile homes (1949)

1950

French government commissions Jean Prouvé to design mass-produced housing (1950)

The Farnsworth House built by Mies van der Rohe (1951) / Alcoa Building, large-scale use of prefabricated aluminum cladding (1951)

Ulm School of Design, which popularizes idea of modularity, founded (1953) / Le Corbusier's factory-produced Unite d'Habitation at Marseilles completed (1953)

Marshfield Homes introduces the Ten-Wide mobile home (1954)

Henry Dreyfuss publishes *Joe and Josephine*, bringing the idea of human factors into the world of interior architecture (1955)

Malcom McLean develops the metal shipping container (1956)

Norman Cherner publishes *Fabricating Houses from Component Parts* (1957)

Introduction of Panelák, blocks of high-rise flats in the Czech Republic and Slovakia constructed of prefabricated, pre-stressed concrete (1959)

1960

George Nelson's modular "Industrial House" presented in *Science and Mechanics* magazine (1960)

Prefab proponent Konrad Wachsman appointed director of Institute for Building Research at USC (1963)

Archigram Group creates concepts for Walking Cities and Plug-in Cities (1964) / Dante Bini builds first pneumatically raised dome in 60 minutes (1964)

Expo Dome by R. Buckminster Fuller erected in Montreal (1967) / Habitat Montreal by Moshe Safdie (1967) / Hanselmann House by Michael Graves popularizes the idea of block-massing (1967)

Mobile homes account for 25% of single-family homes (1968) / Richard Rodgers develops Zip-Up Enclosures system (1968) / Paul Rudolph designs prefab high-rise for Amalgamated Lithographers of America (unbuilt, 1968)

1970

Nakagin Capsule Tower by Kisho Kurokawa built (1972) / National Homes commissions Taliesin to design mobile homes (1972)

720-unit "beehive" by Zvi Hecker built in Jerusalem (1974) / U.S. National Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act passed (1974)

Now

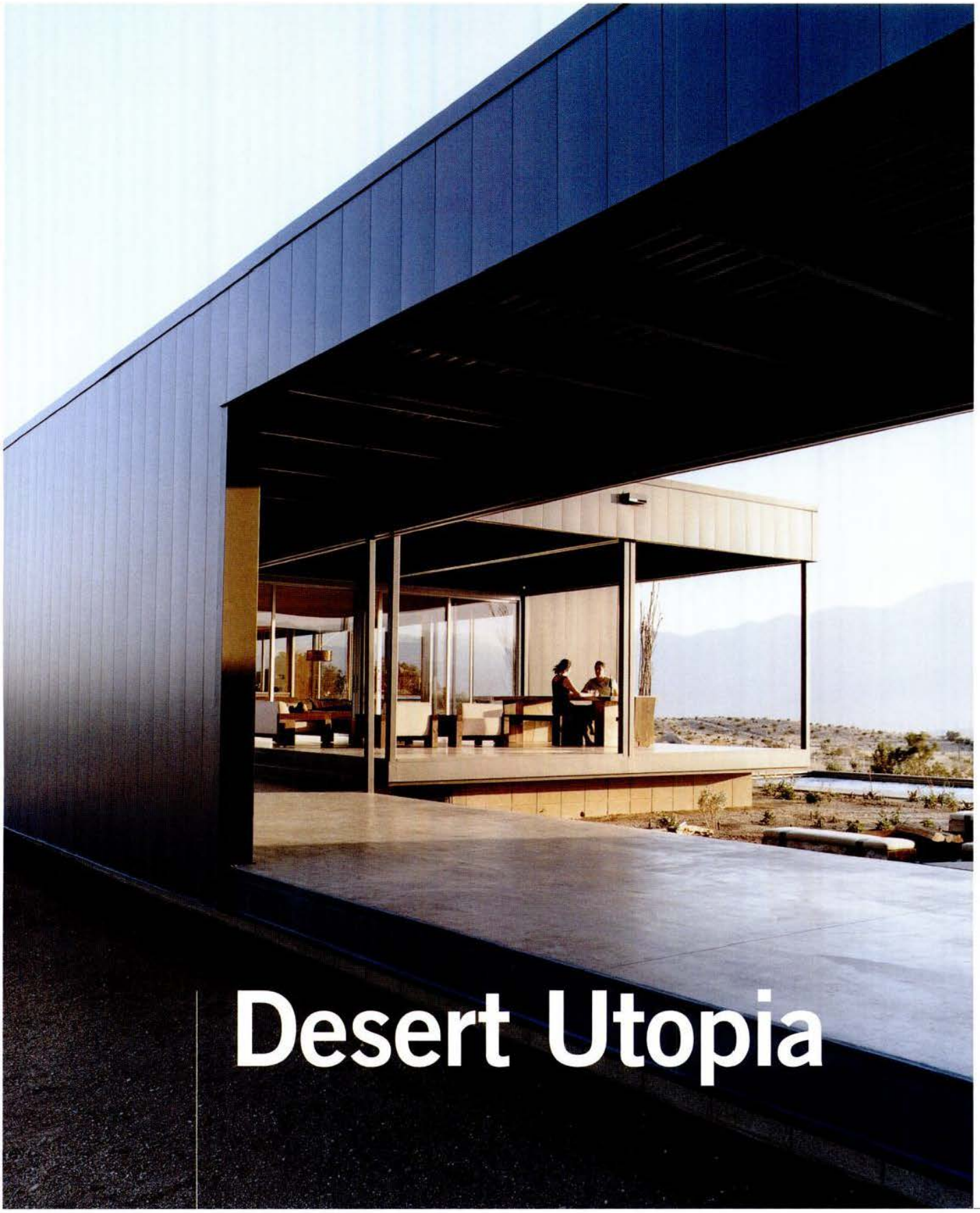
(1975–present)

The last 30 years have been a renaissance for modern prefab. A plethora of practitioners have contributed to the movement, including IKEA, Resolution: 4 Architecture, Sean Godsell, Jones Partners, LOT/EK, Marmol + Radziner, Office of Mobile Design, William Massie, Living Homes, Michelle Kaufmann, Anderson Anderson, Rocio Romero Designs, Cartwright Pickard Architects, Clever Homes, Lazor Office, Empyrean International, Lindal Cedar Homes, David Hovey, Adam Kalkin...

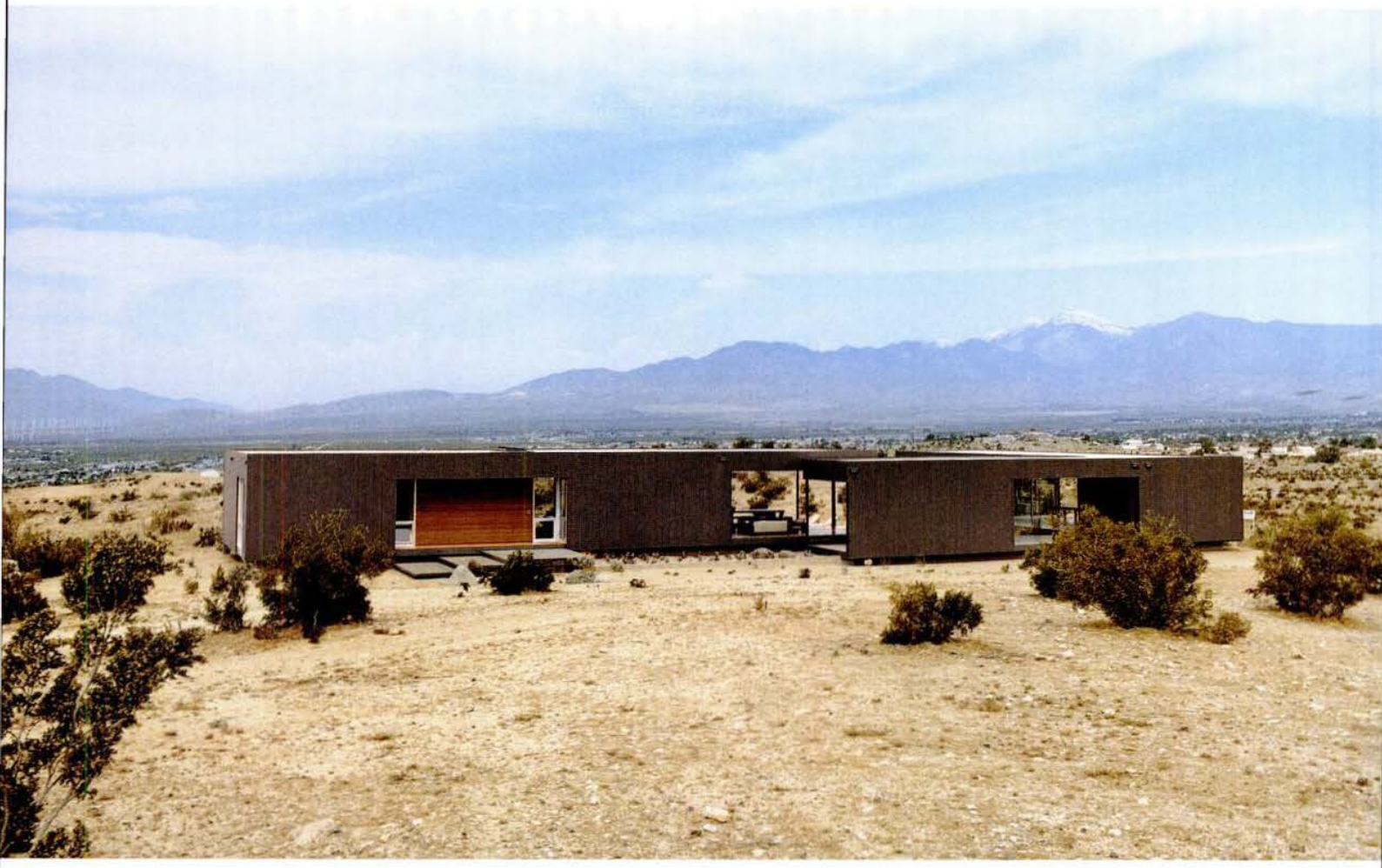
An admittedly Western-centric (especially the United States) timeline of the development of modern prefab. What did we leave out? Let us know at letters@dwell.com.

Story by Frances Anderton

Photos by Daniel Hennessy



Desert Utopia

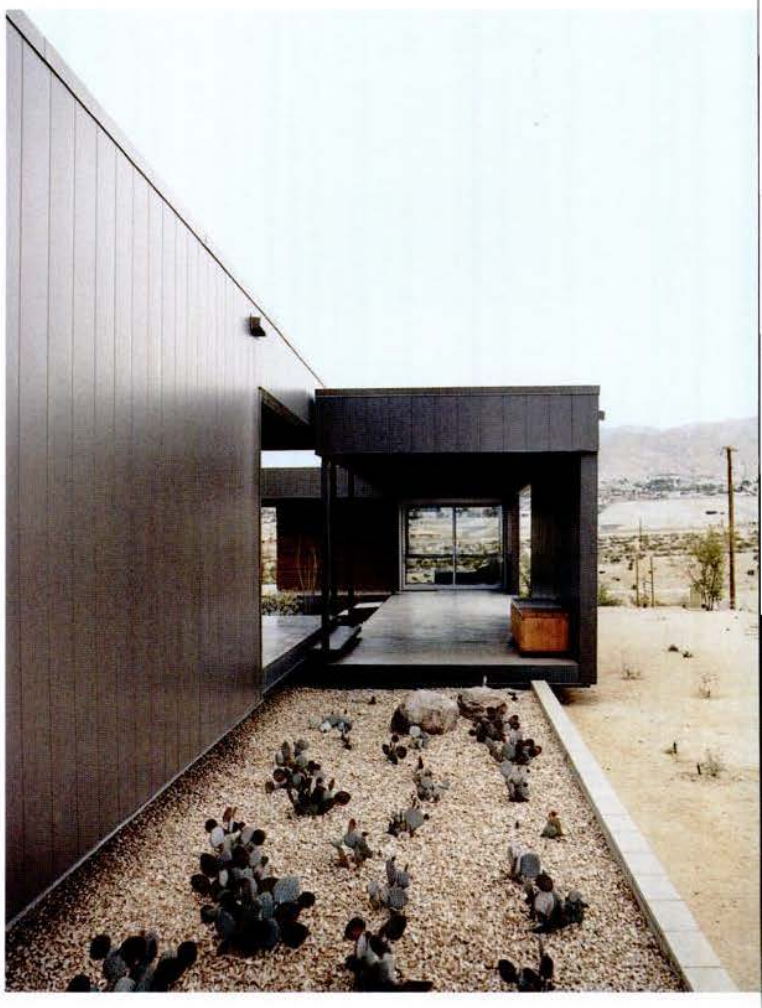


With this elegant steel prototype, Marmol Radziner and Associates launch a new prefab venture with the goal of bringing their modern design sensibilities to a broader market.

Marmol Radziner and Associates, headed up by the photogenic and personable duo of Ron Radziner and Leo Marmol, has become the name in Los Angeles for painstaking adaptive restorations of mid-century-modern classics, and for contemporary new homes in the modern tradition. They are the architecture equivalent of the couture fashion designer who knows how to sew. Rare among architects, Marmol Radziner construct most of their residential designs, often on picturesque but difficult sites, to a high level of detail and quality—and they charge a premium.

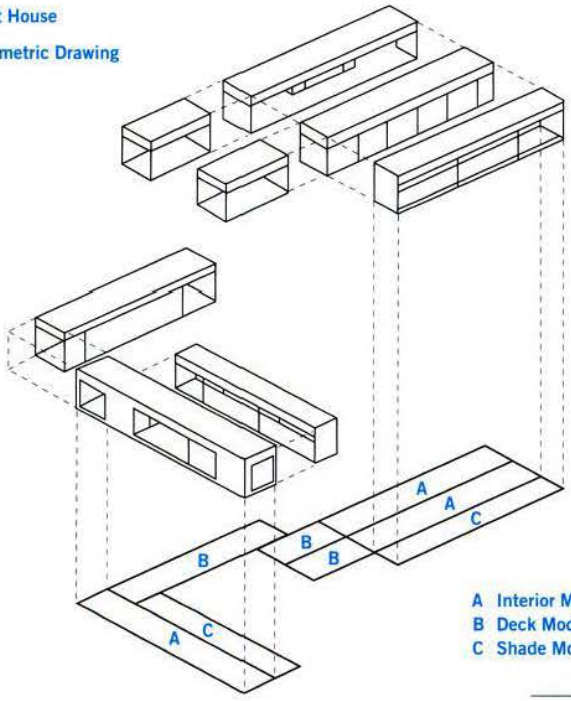
Now the enterprising pair has developed a new prefab design and manufacturing business, called Marmol Radziner Prefab, with the goal of transforming their high-end modern residential design into a product available to a larger market. ▸

Leo Marmol and Alisa Becket (opposite) enjoy one of their home's many outdoor spaces. Plants found in the surrounding landscape were used to obscure the lines between designed and natural worlds (above).



Desert House

Axonometric Drawing



A Interior Module
B Deck Module
C Shade Module

Last November, the firm launched themselves into a growing field of modern prefab entrepreneurs. They may not be the first but, according to Leo Marmol, they have the chops. They designed a scheme for the Dwell Home Design Invitational in 2003, and they have utilized commercial prefab wooden modules in some of their public-sector projects. And they have put their money where their mouth is.

"We had to prove to ourselves that we could build a prefab house and so we embarked on an experiment for ourselves and on ourselves," says Marmol. The firm built the prototypical Desert House as a vacation home for Marmol, his wife, Alisa Becket, and their daughter, Emilia, born shortly after the completion of the house. The house is located atop a sparse hill in Desert Hot Springs, a resort and retirement community near Palm

Springs known for its soft spa waters and its seasonal harsh winds.

When you think of prefab, "palatial" is probably not what comes to mind. But as you take the bend of the desert road, their house—4,500 square feet of sturdy steel modules (2,100 interior square feet and 2,450 covered exterior square feet) rooted onto a concrete pad atop an untamed hill—looms into view like a sleek metal oasis.

"Our goal is not to do prefabricated homes," says Marmol, alluding to the longtime negative public perception of prefab housing as shoddy, cheap dwellings. "Our goal is to provide high-quality modern living. We see prefab as a means to an end, which is to extend the potential number of people who can afford a good, clean, modern house."

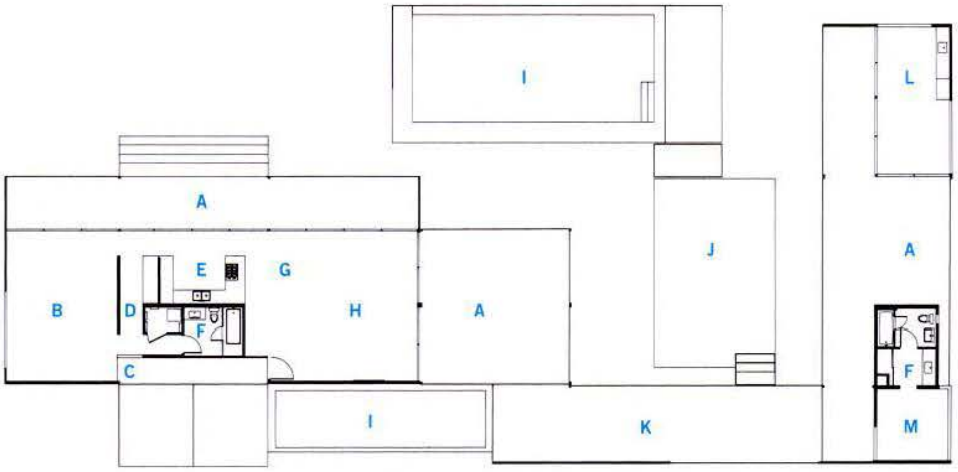
The Desert House consists of a wing at the south end of the site containing the master bedroom and a generous open dining and living area. From the west and north sides you walk onto covered concrete decks surrounding a swimming pool and leading to a guest room and studio in a separate wing at the north end of the site.

With its exposed-steel structure, large expanses of windows, and concrete floor, the house has the clean, industrial quality and direct relationship to the landscape that brings to mind Case Study Houses by Craig Ellwood or Pierre Koenig—updated in size and strength for the SUV era.

"It seems very machine-like in its structure and materials," says Alisa Becket, a former travel program manager at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), with a gentle and unassuming manner that belies her Los Angeles architecture pedigree. She is the granddaughter ►

Groupings of succulents accent the home's entry path and pool area (opposite). Ocotillo was placed in key areas as a great structural focal point.

There are generously proportioned nine-foot-high ceilings throughout the Desert House. Marmol Radziner designed and built the outdoor table and benches (above) from reclaimed Douglas fir.



Desert House

Floor Plan

A Outdoor Living
B Master Bedroom
C Entry
D Hall
E Kitchen
F Bath
G Dining
H Living
I Pool
J Uncovered Deck
K Pool Deck
L Studio
M Guest Bedroom

The open living and dining plan is flooded with natural light. The wicker PK22 lounge chairs are by Poul Kjaerholm for Fritz Hansen. The suspension lamp is by DePadova.

The bathroom and kitchen cabinetry (above), custom designed by the architects, is smooth brown teak. The faucet is by Hansgrohe, and the dishwasher is by Bosch. p. 266

of Welton Becket, architect of some of L.A.'s favorite commercial modern landmarks, including the Capitol Records Building and the Cinerama Dome. "But," she continues, "it's really warm and inviting. When you are in the house, it doesn't feel like it was made in a factory."

One of the attendees at an open house over the summer, a real estate investor and interior and furniture designer named Stefan Bishop, was so wowed that he ordered a Marmol Radziner prefab for its design, not its budget. He liked the "aesthetics and quality of the product" and its "restrained simplicity."

That simplicity comes from the construction system: seven steel moment-resistant volumetric modules, each 12 feet wide, 12 feet tall, and up to 65 feet long, plus three shade/deck modules that are each 8 feet wide, 12 feet tall, and up to 65 feet long. The firm chose this system over panelized prefabrication, explains Marmol, because, in their view, "there is great flexibility as to where to place walls and elements within the frame." With modular, he says, you can complete as much of the work as possible in the factory. "By centralizing production you minimize the lengths of trips by workers to custom sites, saving fuel costs. Plus, there are inherent savings of materials in manufacturing. The design itself is geared toward being as efficient as possible." And there's less work to be done onsite, which is especially appealing in Los Angeles, where, says Marmol, "construction has become very politicized" as homeowners get more and more angry and vociferous about disruptive building projects in their neighborhoods.

By the time the module is delivered to the site, says Marmol, "electrical is already done, all the walls are done. The only thing that needs to be done is to connect the utilities and the marriage lines. Then the modules are ▸

Marmol and Becket with their daughter, Emilia. The intersecting modules were designed to frame a range of spectacular desert vistas.

bolted together and welded to the foundation."

"I'll never forget the day the house arrived," recalls Becket. "It was four in the morning, the sun was coming up and eight modules arrived on eight flatbeds. There was this huge crane and they pieced it together like a puzzle. It all took one day, from dawn to dusk. It was spectacular."

The modules arrived in one day, but the total construction took around seven months, four spent preparing the site and foundation and three completing the house after installation. But, explains Marmol, "The Desert House was a prototype." Construction time is now three months in the factory, he says, while site prep is being done, and one and a half months onsite after installation.

Building the prototype was a valuable experiment. They found the concrete floor was heavy, slow to install, and tended to crack, so in the future, says Marmol, they are using pre-engineered structurally insulated panels in the floor and ceiling, with "hardwood floors, cork, or concrete or stone tile as a floor covering." They discovered the 65-foot-long modules were cumbersome to transport and install, and have shortened them to 55 feet. They witnessed firsthand some of the limitations of transporting modular pieces. "The volume itself is a large chunk of house, meaning challenges for access to the site," says Marmol. So sites that are too steep or out of reach are "simply untenable."

Most important, they decided in the process that to maintain the firm's high quality of building they wanted to retain control over production, instead of subcontracting out the manufacturing as they did for the Desert House. They set up a plant in the city of Vernon, south of downtown Los Angeles, which now employs 40 people.

Marmol Radziner Prefab's original goal was not just

to reduce costs for their brand of custom homes, but to standardize them so clients know in advance how much they will pay. They offer five standard models, ranging from one to three bedrooms. But so far every one of their prefab clients, who range in age and location, could have afforded custom, but chose prefab for reasons other than the budget.

"The sustainability aspect" is one, says Marmol, citing details like solar electric-generation panels, efficient triple glazing in the windows, and sustainable materials including recycled structural steel, low-VOC paint, triple-pane low-e argon-filled insulating glass, and an on-demand tankless water heater. Then, of course, there's the aesthetic appeal, and the reduced construction time.

Each customer has then customized his or her model to meet his or her own taste and site. So Marmol Radziner Prefab is providing a hybrid service—a sort of *Pimp My Ride* for standardized housing. This means that while their modular homes are significantly more affordable than their custom site-built houses—$240 to $280 per square foot (including raised concrete foundation but excluding site work) instead of $350 to $600 per square foot for custom and site-built—they are not necessarily cheaper than some competing custom-design architects. But, says Stefan Bishop, "I think Marmol Radziner has achieved their goal in terms of what a designer would do setting out to produce a really high-quality prefab."

As for the prototypical Desert House, "it's been a wonderful opportunity, says Marmol. "Such experimentation allows you to make your own mistakes and shield your future clients from them." He laughs. "Ron and I know for sure that the Desert House [a prototype that would cost a client about $985,000 to duplicate], will be the most expensive prefab home we ever produce." ■

After months of arduous design and construction, Marmol and Becket are thrilled to escape Los Angeles for their idyllic desert retreat.

Story by Donovan Finn

Photos by Dean Kaufman

All You Need Is LV

In the most unlikely of places—rural Missouri—Rocio Romero has designed and built a prefab empire.

One Saturday a month, a hundred architecture enthusiasts invade the sleepy town of Perryville, Missouri (pop. 7,803), in the rolling hills an hour south of St. Louis, for tours of designer Rocio Romero's sleek, immaculate home on a secluded hillside outside town. The house is also the showroom for the flagship model of the LV series, part of a growing line of modern prefab dwellings that combine precision and mass production in a sophisticated yet breezy and livable form, produced by Romero's firm, Rocio Romero LLC.

Most people might chafe at having strangers constantly peeking in their closets, but Romero views the intrusion as a critical marketing strategy. "In the end, my company is only as good as my product," explains the architectural designer turned entrepreneur. "So I'm very careful and I use myself as a guinea pig." As she describes it, buying prefab is akin to buying a car; these monthly tours are the home-buying equivalent of test-drives, allowing potential buyers to envision themselves and their lifestyles within the spaces in a way they could never do with models and blueprints.

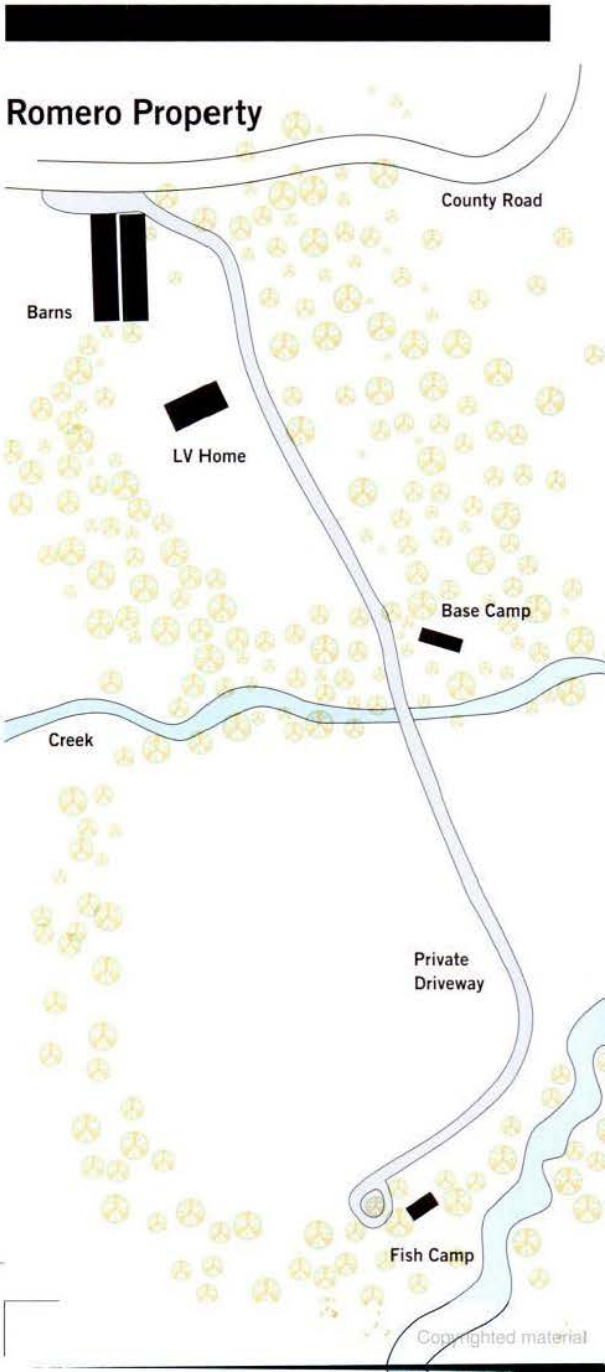
Romero, who studied at UC Berkeley and SCI-Arc, designed and built the first incarnation of her prefab line for her parents in Laguna Verde, Chile (hence the LV moniker); that home was featured on the back page of ▸

The Perryville, Missouri, show house for Rocio Romero's LV prefab series is also home to the designer and her husband, Cale Bradford. The house subtly reflects the area's utilitarian rural vernacular. The gradually inclined entrance ramp and open plan help make the house accessible to a range of users. Although most of the property is given over to cornfields and a wooded creek, Bradford (opposite) keeps the small lawn in check.

Romero and product manager Julie Schaefer at the Base Camp prototype (below). At Romero's growing rural prefab complex, two former hog barns screen the LV Home from the road. The Base Camp is barely visible from the main house in a hollow down the gravel drive, and the smaller Fish Camp feels like a weekend getaway.

Dwell's June 2001 issue, facilitating Romero's reconnection with her high school sweetheart and future husband, Cale Bradford (the two married in 2002). After moving to Missouri for her husband's career, Romero repurposed the LV as a prefab product she could sell nationwide. The prototype, originally built on the Perryville property as a weekend retreat, became the couple's primary residence not long after its completion. "We decided we liked being in this house a lot more than we did our place in St. Louis," Romero says with a laugh.

Over 50 of the kit structures have been sold to buyers in 17 states, including California, Michigan, and Virginia. Queries from potential customers arrive almost daily for a production line that includes the original 1,150-square-foot LV, the 1,453-square-foot LVL ("large"), the 625-square-foot LVM ("mini"), the LVL150 (150-mph-hurricane-wind rated), and a single-car garage (the LVG). With the basic LV model starting at $33,900 for outer shell and structural components, the units strike a delicate balance between affordability, efficiency, and aesthetics. But finding this equilibrium requires an attention to design detail unique to prefab. "It's all intrinsically married," Romero explains. "When you design prefab, it's not just having a grandiose design everyone's going to love; it's also stepping back and thinking about how things get built. Every little step is important and informs how [the house] gets put together and how it gets designed."



Most customers hire local contractors to assemble the LV's exterior shells, which utilize steel post-and-beam construction, factory-built wall panels and multitextured metal skins, and an array of floor-to ceiling glass. Only a single shear wall partially bisects the interior, allowing buyers to experiment with customized layouts, finishes, and details as tastes, needs, and resources permit. It's a flexible framework intended to make the homes accessible to do-it-yourselfers with limited budgets as well as wealthier clients.

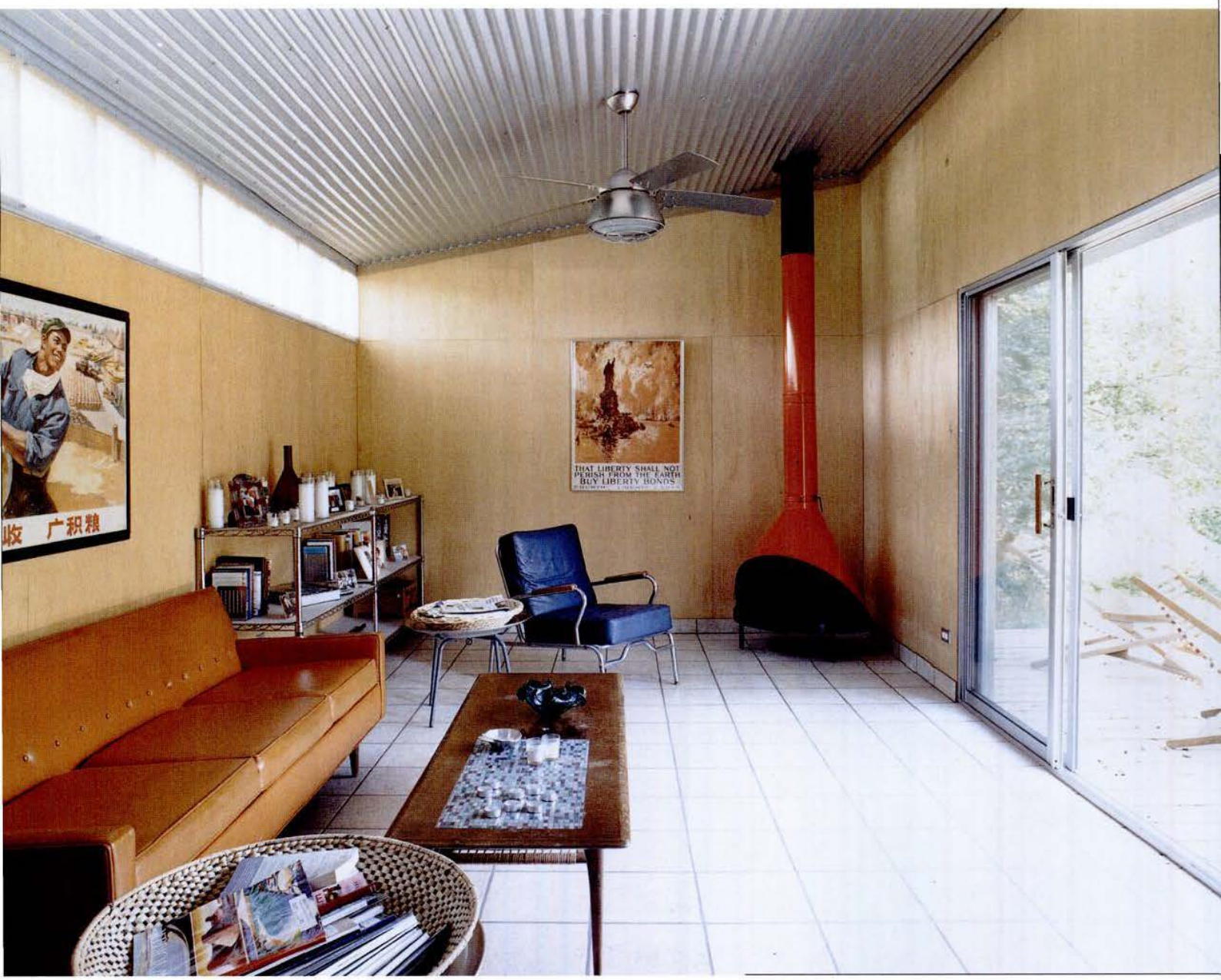
For Dan Edmonds-Waters, who owns a customized LVL in Napa Valley, California, this versatility was an important consideration. "We were looking for an affordable, sophisticated, modern design," explains the health-care ►

The open kitchen and dining area of Romero and Bradford's LV Home is flooded with natural light. Dining table and chairs by IKEA. Antique jukebox by Wurlitzer. $ p. 266

executive of the rural retreat he and his husband, Chris, built for themselves and their two young sons. "We liked the flexibility of this prefab—both in size, assembly, and level of finish. We could easily size the project to meet our budget and lifestyle."

To ensure quality, Romero sources trusses, wall panels, sheet-metal exteriors, and steel frames from individual manufacturers who work from her specifications. Once a unit is sold, components are built on demand and combined for delivery via a single flatbed semi-trailer once the buyer's foundation is in place. Because each component is factory built as part of a meticulously refined system, onsite construction is streamlined, and buyers have a better idea of what they're getting for their money. "There's more predictability, there's more precision involved," Romero says. "And costs are figured out in advance, so there aren't major surprises." Even when buyers opt for customized modifications and high-end details, the homes are often still a relative bargain. This is certainly true for Edmonds-Waters, who is adamant that he could not have afforded anything as unique as his LVL unit via more traditional routes. He has so thoroughly embraced the philosophy that he even plans to open his house to visitors as a West Coast version of Romero's Perryville showroom.

Based on the growing success of the LV line, but hoping to reach an even wider audience, Romero is also set to launch a series of more modestly sized, construct-it-your-



self structures dubbed the Camp series. Conceived as studios, backyard offices, guest cottages, and short-term getaways, the 456-square-foot Base Camp and 312-square-foot Fish Camp will both be priced in the $20,000 range. After suitable foundation prep, Romero explains, two moderately experienced DIYers should be able to complete either Camp structure in a weekend, excluding any desired plumbing and electricity. Details like a proprietary foundation-leveling system, preinstalled windows, and a detailed how-to DVD help ensure that the Camp series is user-friendly.

"I've always wanted to make architecture that's affordable for the masses, and while the LV is affordable for its design, it wasn't as affordable as I wanted it to be," explains Romero of the prefab line's genesis as a true self-build kit project. "Every single decision that went into this was about us being in the shoes of the person building it, and that's how we designed it, by walking through that process."

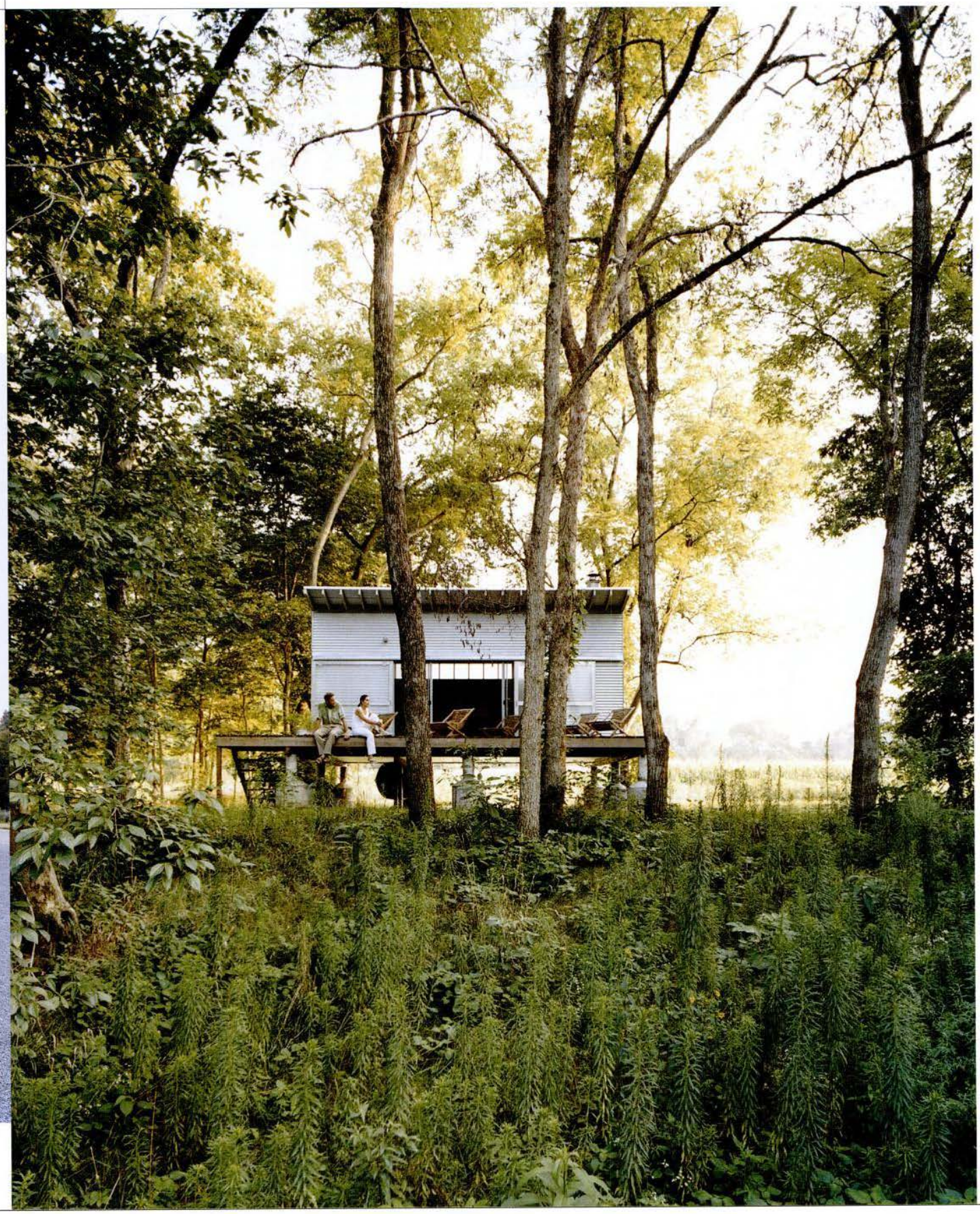
Fort Wayne, Indiana–based Branstrator Corporation manufactures the custom structural insulated panels for the Camp series using the same platen-based laminating process the company uses to create more traditional sunroom and porch enclosures. Branstrator's owner ▸

At just over 300 square feet, the Fish Camp (opposite) is the smaller of the two Camp styles, but the prototype illustrates its utility as guesthouse or office. The LV prototype's bathroom (above) shows how buyers can vary finish levels according to budget. The LV's master bedroom (right) has direct outdoor access, like every other room in the house. Bed by IKEA.

and president Jerry Branstrator explains, "We took Rocio's look and feel and morphed it into a panelized system"—which included perfecting a technique to bond the Camp's corrugated-metal façade to expanded polystyrene cores while maintaining a precise, airtight system. Prototypes of the buildings, which differ starkly from Branstrator's usual offerings, have already generated interest from visitors to the company's factory. "The look is highly utilitarian compared to our traditional products," says Branstrator, "but people interested in something a little less conventional are really struck by them."

With the debut of the Camp series and her LV line selling briskly, Romero appears busier than ever. The democratizing potential of prefab, though, seems to invigorate her to continue to refine her products while refuting the idea of good design as a luxury for the rarefied elite. When she was designing the LV prototype, Romero approached many potential manufacturers, including one who liked the designs but thought she was going at it the wrong way—don't people who like modern architecture, he asked, have the money to design whatever kind of house they want? That is precisely the myth that Romero hopes to debunk by providing functional, versatile products at accessible prices. "If you empower people," she notes optimistically, "and you give them tools that they're familiar with, that they feel comfortable with, I think they'll thrive." ■

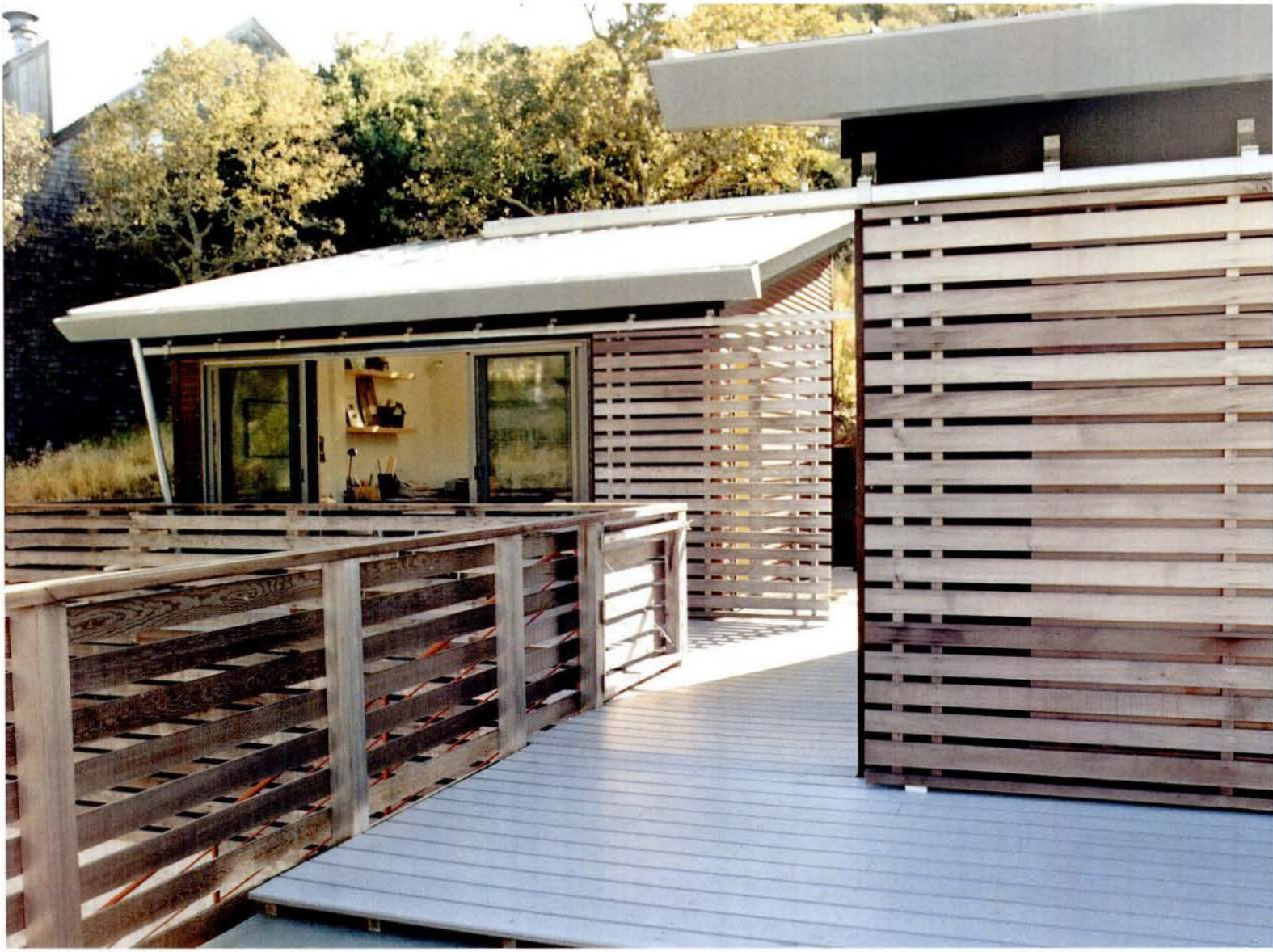
The creekside Fish Camp prototype (above) rests on oversize flood-rated pylons, one of many foundation options the Camp units can accommodate. The LV (right) can be opened to the elements when the weather cooperates, allowing for generous cross-ventilation. The Fish Camp (opposite) acts as the couple's forest getaway, just a quarter mile from their main house.



Story by Allison Arieff

Photos by Randi Berez

The Proof Is in the Prefab



Thinking she'd save time and money and be environmentally friendly all at the same time, architect Michelle Kaufmann built her own home (opposite) using structural insulated panels. What she learned from the experience, however, she put to good use building a modular version of the same home for a client (above).

With herself as guinea pig, architect Michelle Kaufmann conducted the perfect prefab experiment: Design a house. Build one onsite, one in the factory. Watch what happens.

In the much-maligned, often-overhyped, and fre-quently misunderstood world of prefabricated construction, one of the most common questions asked is "Why prefab?" And there is perhaps no better answer to that question than architect Michelle Kaufmann's first two Glidehouses—one prefab, one not.

The process of building the two homes simultaneously gave Kaufmann the perfect laboratory in which to hone her skills and perfect her process. "I'm done with site-built," she says. "Going through this convinced me of the benefits of modular."

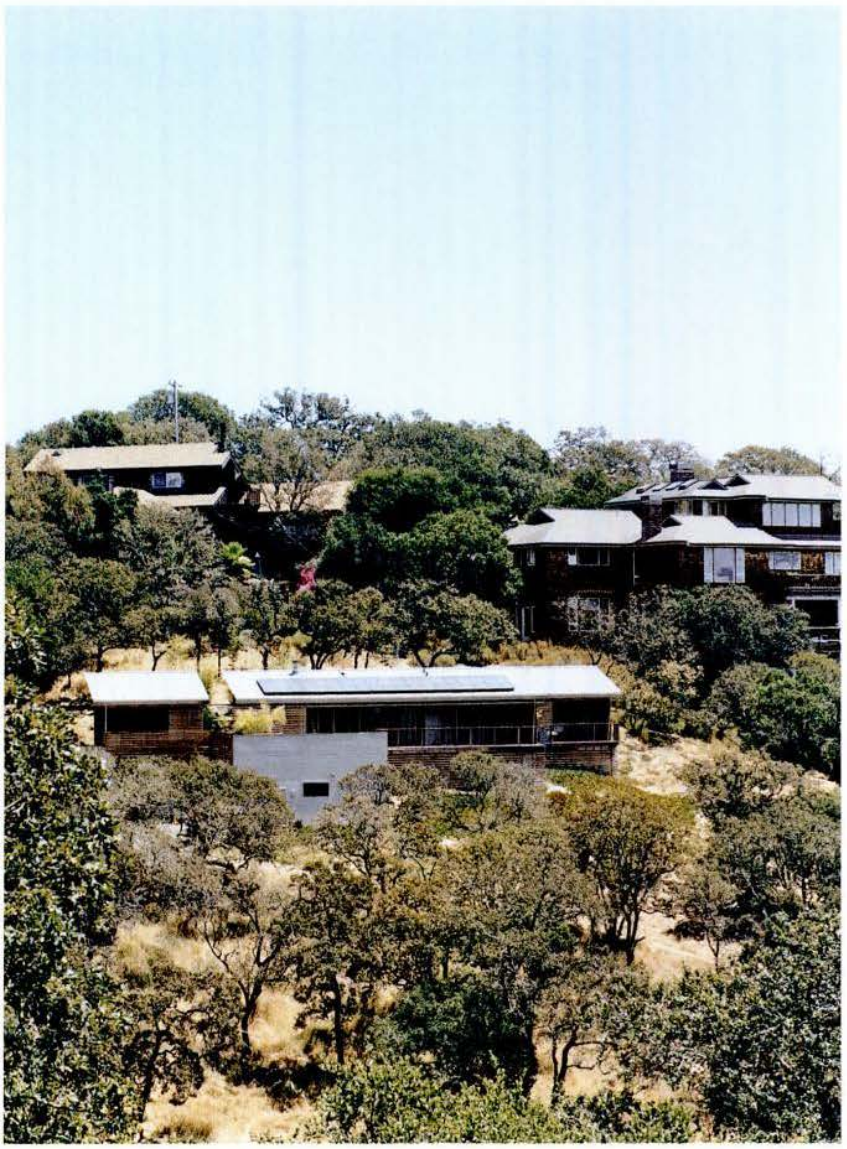
Like many first-time home buyers, Kaufmann and her husband, Kevin Cullen, were frustrated by what the market had to offer. In the astronomically priced San Francisco Bay Area, where a modest single-family home for $750,000 is considered a "deal," there were precious few houses in their price range—and those that were were not at all the sort of places they saw themselves living in. After months of Sundays spent trudging through open houses, Kaufmann, who'd recently left Frank Gehry's architectural office, and Cullen, a builder and woodworker, changed their strategy. In the spring of 2003, they found land in Novato, California (25 miles north of San Francisco), on which to build their own home. "We were excited," says Kaufmann, "and luckily naïve, not knowing what was ahead. Had we actually known, I think we would have been very afraid."

Things began to move as rapidly as their search for land. A design had to be submitted within the 45-day escrow period. Cullen, who would act as general contractor, was pushing for as sustainable a house as possible.

"My 83-year-old Uncle Joe instilled a great respect for the outdoors in me and was the first person I ever heard talk about sustainable building," explains Cullen. "So I'd been hearing about things like passive solar, photovoltaics, water catchment and renewable resources for years."

"Sustainability is the driving force of what we do," says Kaufmann of her firm, Michelle Kaufmann Designs (MKD). Accordingly, Kaufmann and Cullen opted for structural insulated panels (SIPs), believing they would ▸

PHOTOS COURTESY NICK GUNDERSON / THE OREGONIAN (DUOTONE IMAGES)



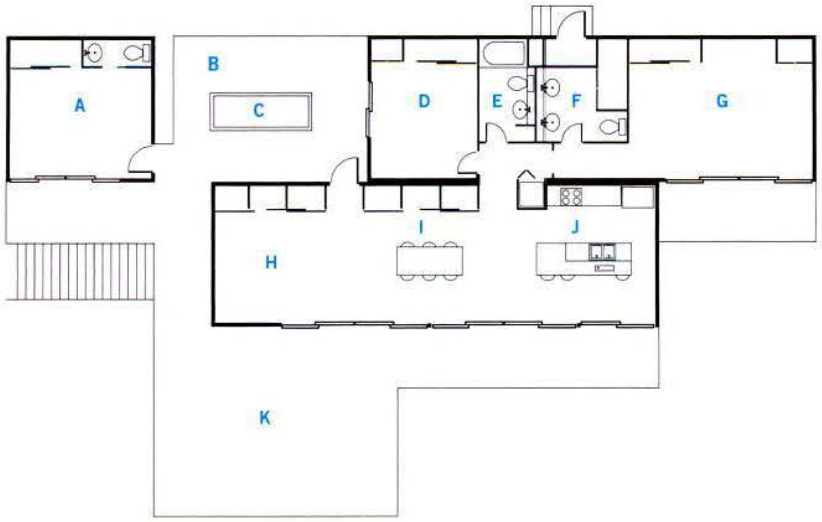
Kaufmann's firm specializes in smaller homes that accentuate quality over quantity. Her Glidehouse (bottom) and the Reids' (top) are both just 1,560 square feet. All of MKD's homes, use green building materials like bamboo floors (opposite), Richlite recycled wood countertops, tankless water heaters, and low-flow water fixtures. p. 266

offer the best insulation and save time and money in construction. However, the time and money part "ended up not being true," says Kaufmann. So even as they proceeded with SIPs for their own home, they began to explore other alternatives that would offer the same level of sustainability—and the anticipated savings in time and money they'd hoped for—in future projects.

"During this time friends and colleagues were forced to listen to us talk about our house and its design," says Kaufmann, whose affable manner no doubt made her tales of building woe intriguing to those in earshot. "Many were in similar situations and asked if I might do something like our house for them." So in the summer of 2003, Kaufmann divided her time between building her own home and researching factory fabrication options.

Most factories Kaufmann contacted didn't return her calls—an experience not uncommon among architects hoping to do modern prefab homes. Those factories that did respond did so quizzically, unable to understand why anyone would want such a house and, thus, why the factory would want to build one.

Realizing that for factories to even entertain her requests she'd have to prove the market was there, Kaufmann started working on a small website that described her project. Meanwhile, work continued on Kaufmann and Cullen's own Glidehouse and it was slow going. Drawings needed revising, bids were coming in higher than original estimates, and because of a Bay Area building and renovating boom, subcontractors were hard to come by. By September, permits had been approved for Glidehouse #1 and Kaufmann's website for the Glidehouses of the future went live. ▸



Glidehouse #1 Floor Plan

A Bedroom
B Entry Court
C Reflecting Pool
D Bedroom
E Bathroom
F Master Bathroom
G Master Bedroom
H Living Area
I Dining Area
J Kitchen
K Deck (Garage Below)

GLIDEHOUSE #1 & #2: A COMPARISON

April 2003 | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December

GLIDEHOUSE #1 (SITE BUILT)

- ARCH / STRUCTURAL DRAWINGS
- PERMIT PROCESS
- SUBCONTRACTOR BID PROCESS
- FOUNDATION / SITE WORK
- CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSE
- FINAL PAYMENT W/ CONSTRUCTION LOAN
- MOVE-IN DATE

GLIDEHOUSE #2 (MODULAR)

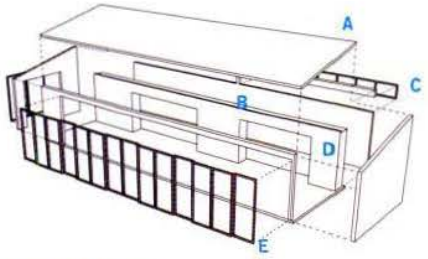
- ARCH / STRUCTURAL DRAWINGS
- PERMIT PROCESS
- FACTORY PRICING
- FOUNDATION / SITE WORK
- CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSE
- SHIPPING / SETTING
- FINAL PAYMENT
- MOVE-IN DATE

Michelle Kaufmann's nearly two-year-long test, wherein her own house was the control and her first modular home was the experiment, definitively answered the question "Why prefab?"

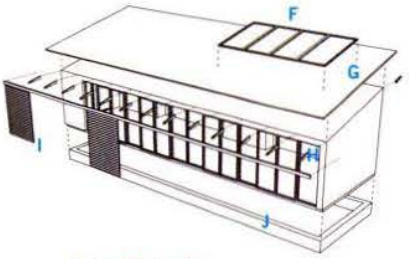
The two three-bedroom, 1,560-square-foot homes sprang from the same plans and used similar materials and finishes, but site-built Glidehouse #1 cost $197 per square foot and took 21 months to build; prefab Glidehouse #2 came in at $157 per square foot and was completed in half the time. (Prices are exclusive of land costs, foundation, grading, garages, and decking.)

January 2004 | February | March | April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December

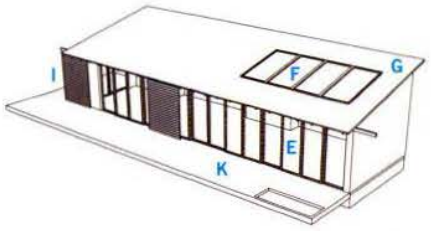
Michelle Kaufmann and her husband, Kevin Cullen, began work on their own home, which they built themselves onsite with SIPs, in April 2003. She started work on her first modular version for her clients, the Reids, eight months later. The Reids' took ten months, hers nearly two years. Knowing what she knows now, says Kaufmann, "I'll never do site-built again."



Factory Production



Onsite Button-Up



Completed Glidehouse

As the drawings above show, a significant portion of Glidehouse #2 could be completed at the factory, decreasing the amount of onsite finish work required.

A Roof Structure
B Hidden Up-Lighting
C Clerestory Windows
D Storage Bar
E Sliding Glass Wall
F Site-Installed Solar Panels
G Site-Installed Standing Seam Metal Roofing
H Roof Brackets
I Sliding Wood Screens
J Site-Built Foundation
K Site-Built Deck

The shallow footprint of the Glidehouse design allows for cross ventilation in all major rooms. Both #1 (opposite bottom) and #2 (opposite top) feature sliding doors that let the outdoors in. The site of Glidehouse #1 (right) necessitated the steel stair for access. The design is adaptable for all sorts of sites—but flat ones are always ideal.

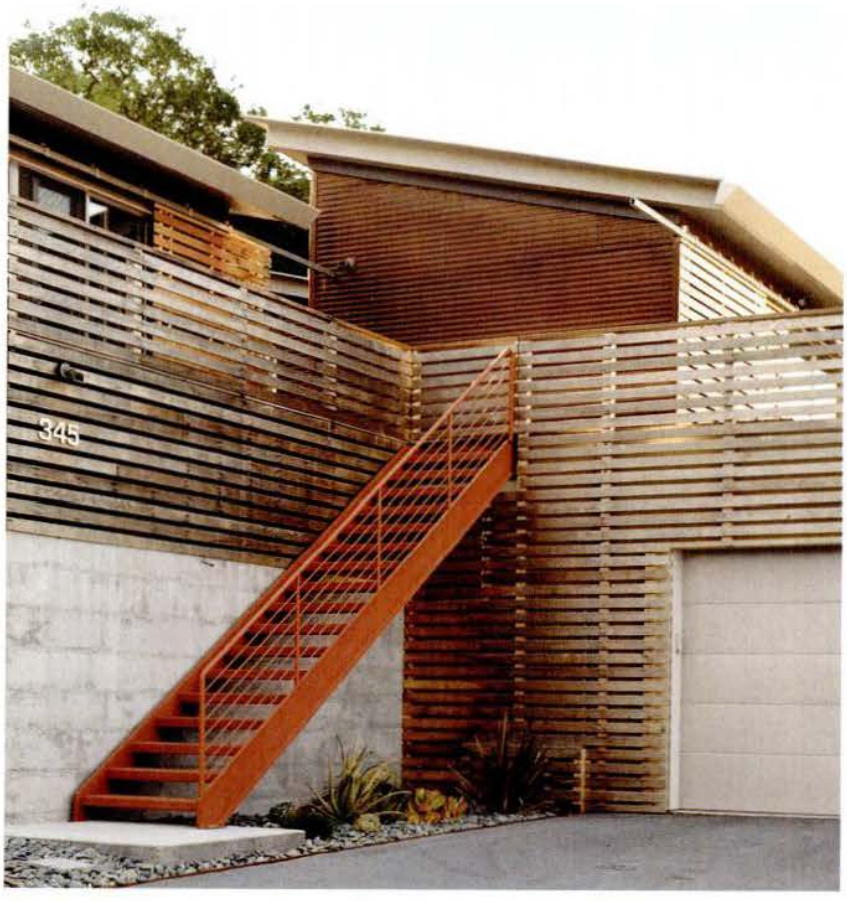
By November 2003, site work, clearing, grading, and septic construction began on her house—and, as for the modular Glidehouses, says Kaufmann, "my faith and stalking finally paid off." A mention on fabprefab.com helped: Factories began to show some interest, and *Sunset* magazine contacted her to discuss building a Glidehouse for their annual celebration weekend in Menlo Park, California. Just after Thanksgiving, Kaufmann got her first client for a modular Glidehouse (let's call it #2) in the Lake Chelan area of Washington State: Andrew Reid, a branch manager and loan consultant with Countrywide, the largest home mortgage lender in the United States (which does not treat modular any differently than a traditional stick-built home).

"Both the incredible aesthetics of the Glidehouse and its sustainable construction were huge draws for us," explains Reid. "Being prefab wasn't really important, except in that it fit nicely with our time line."

The trajectories of #1 and #2 began to diverge quite dramatically (see p. 176). Kaufmann was pleased to discover how many things could happen simultaneously with the modular project (i.e., bids could be reviewed while drawings were being approved for permits instead of waiting for that approval). But she and Cullen were both despondent that, by April 2004, the factory-built house was speeding past the SIPs house.

"Seeing Andrew's completed house," says Cullen, "was like seeing a dead relative come back to life. I returned to our own house, still in its framing stages, bare copper pipes and electrical wires sticking out from all the walls, wondering what the hell was taking me so long."

As winter approached, Kaufmann and Cullen had to ►



start paying their construction loan. Unable to afford both mortgage and rent, they moved into their not-quite-finished home. But by the end of 2004, they were settled, and immediately began enjoying their house, not to mention their $0 energy bills, thanks to the solar panels. ("We hooked into Pacific Gas & Electric, so we sell back on sunny days and buy back on gray days," says Kaufmann.)

Kaufmann's experience building #1 and #2 not only offered a lifetime's worth of character building, it was integral in helping her to become one of the few contemporary practitioners to actually make modern prefab work as both a business and a way of building.

"When I told my wife that all homes might be factory-built in the future," recalls Reid, "she thought I had lost my mind." The incredible success of Kaufmann's vision, however, made the Reids converts—and perhaps the rest of us, too. ■

The use of sun shades and glazing helps bestow better indoor air quality, as does the installation of sliding glass doors. These are just some of many greening techniques employed by Kaufmann. The firm is happy to work with clients to help them achieve residential LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification if desired.

Story by Fred A. Bernstein

Wright Now

Despite their advancing age, Frank Lloyd Wright's houses still seem young—as do many of their original owners.

In West Lafayette, Indiana, John Christian is preparing to give 83 kindergartners a tour of his house, in which triangles appear in one unusual detail after another. In Canton, Ohio, Jeanne Spielman Rubin is sewing new slipcovers for the banquette in her hexagonal living room. Christian and Rubin, both 89, have never met, but there's a good chance they would hit it off. Both seem far younger than their years, both pride themselves on their resourcefulness, and both—not coincidentally—live in homes designed for them by Frank Lloyd Wright.

According to Lisa Dewey-Mattia of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy in Chicago, there may be as many as two dozen original Wright clients still living in the houses they commissioned, most of them in the 1950s. Many of the owners are idealists whose houses give them a sense of purpose after most of their contemporaries have moved to retirement homes—or beyond.

The 1950s is remembered as a decade of standardization—the era in which industrial techniques and social

PHOTO BY PEDRO E. GUERRERO

conformity gave rise to millions of identical houses. Everyone, the official history of the period goes, wanted a square house on a square lot.

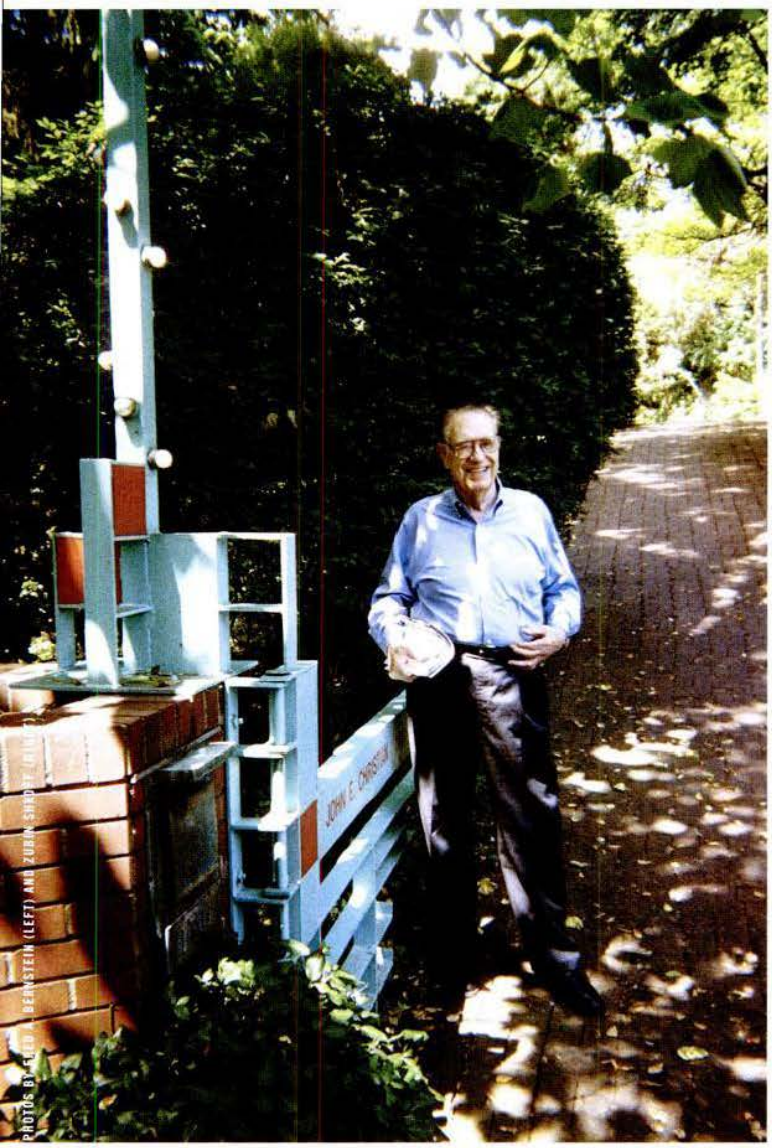
Yet in the 1950s Wright completed more than 90 houses, most of them for young couples who were determined to express their individuality. They weren't wealthy, some had to scrape together every last nickel to raise their cantilevered roofs. Christian says it took Wright five years to deliver the plans for his house, and that was fine, because he and his wife didn't have the money to build it. When they did break ground, they had to forgo some aspects of Wright's design—including a copper fascia (which the couple, keeping their promise to Wright, finally erected in the 1990s).

One thing the clients had in common was that they wanted houses that fit how they lived—not how society thought they should live. In Tallahassee, Florida, Clifton Lewis wanted small bedrooms and a large communal space where her family could gather to discuss the important issues of the day. Christian, a professor of nuclear biology at Purdue University, requested a living room where he could entertain up to 50 students at a time. Wright gave him a kind of amphitheater, with stairs on both sides of the room, plus long banquettes and interlocking stools. In Pleasantville, New York, Roland and Ronny Reisley were attracted to the notion of living cooperatively at Usonia, a Wright-designed community where land was held in common and decisions were made jointly.

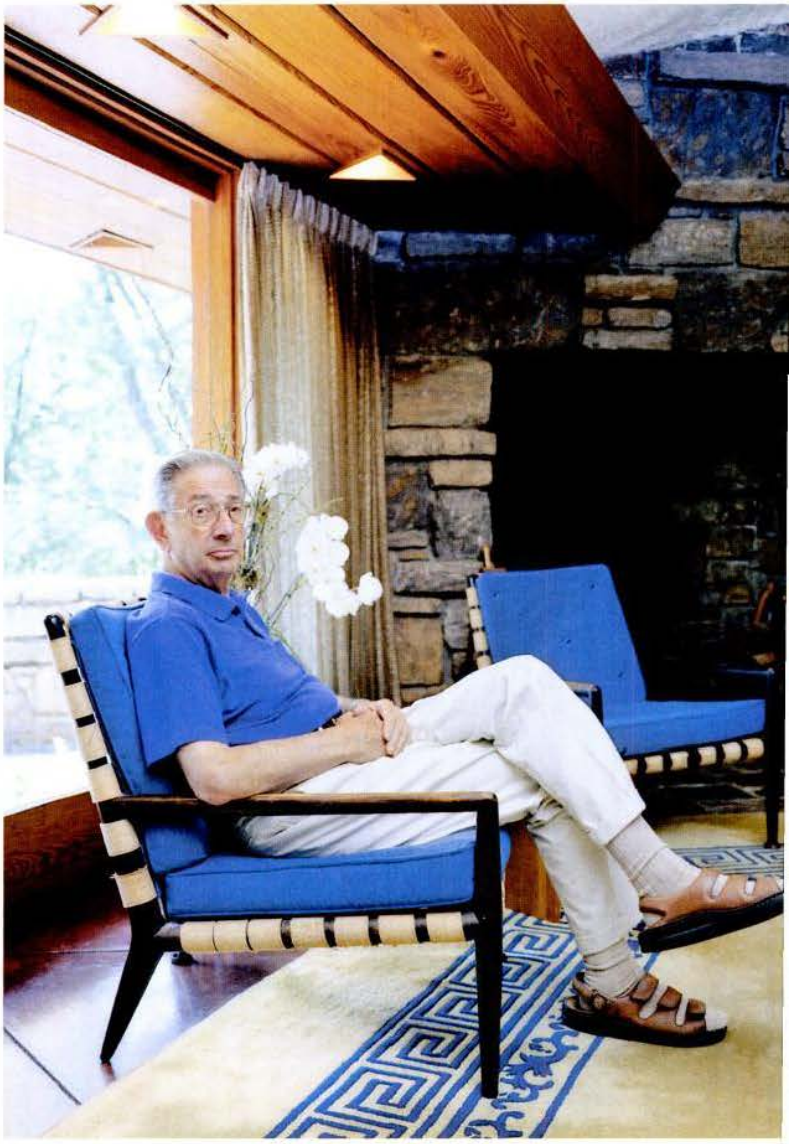
The owners, for the most part, aren't rich now, despite inhabiting important works of art. Rubin says she has to choose between keeping her house in pristine condition and providing music lessons for her six great-grandchildren. And Lewis is still hoping to get the money together to build the terraces that Wright designed as an important element of her semicircular dwelling.

So what if Lewis is already close to 90? Wright was in his 80s when he designed the house. (He died at 91, in ▸

In 1952, while visiting Roland and Ronny Reisley at their home (opposite), Frank Lloyd Wright drew them a fireplace grate. Roland (below right), now a widower, keeps the house almost exactly as it was a half century ago. In Indiana, John Christian (below left) follows a brick driveway to his Wright-designed front gate.



PHOTOS BY ALEX S. MACLEAN (LEFT) AND ZUBEN SHROFF (RIGHT)



The Reisley house—shown here in Wright's 1951 sketch and in photos from the 1970s—is both deeply rooted in its site and ready to take flight. Wright's clients, at once sturdy and inspired, seem to embody the same contradiction. Of the 1952 house and the 1960 Mercedes in the Reisley car-port, only one looks dated.

1959, at the end of an astonishingly productive decade.)

Longevity seems to go with the territory, perhaps because carrying on Wright's dreams—and their own—gives the owners a raison d'être.

"It's been a miracle for us," says Bill Tracy, who, with his wife, Elizabeth, owns a Wright house near Seattle. The Tracys (she's 93; he's 83) say they still maintain the house themselves. Which is no surprise: In the 1950s, they spent a year pouring 10,000-plus bricks before construction could begin. "We were young and strong, and it would have cost us too much to have them made," Bill explains. Rubin, who does her own upholstering, says she believes in self-reliance. "I must have read *Swiss Family Robinson* at an impressionable age," she declares, referring to the story of resourceful castaways.

All of Wright's clients brought idealism and energy to the task of figuring out where they would live. "As young marrieds, we talked about what we wanted out of life, and part of it was a home that reflected who we were,"

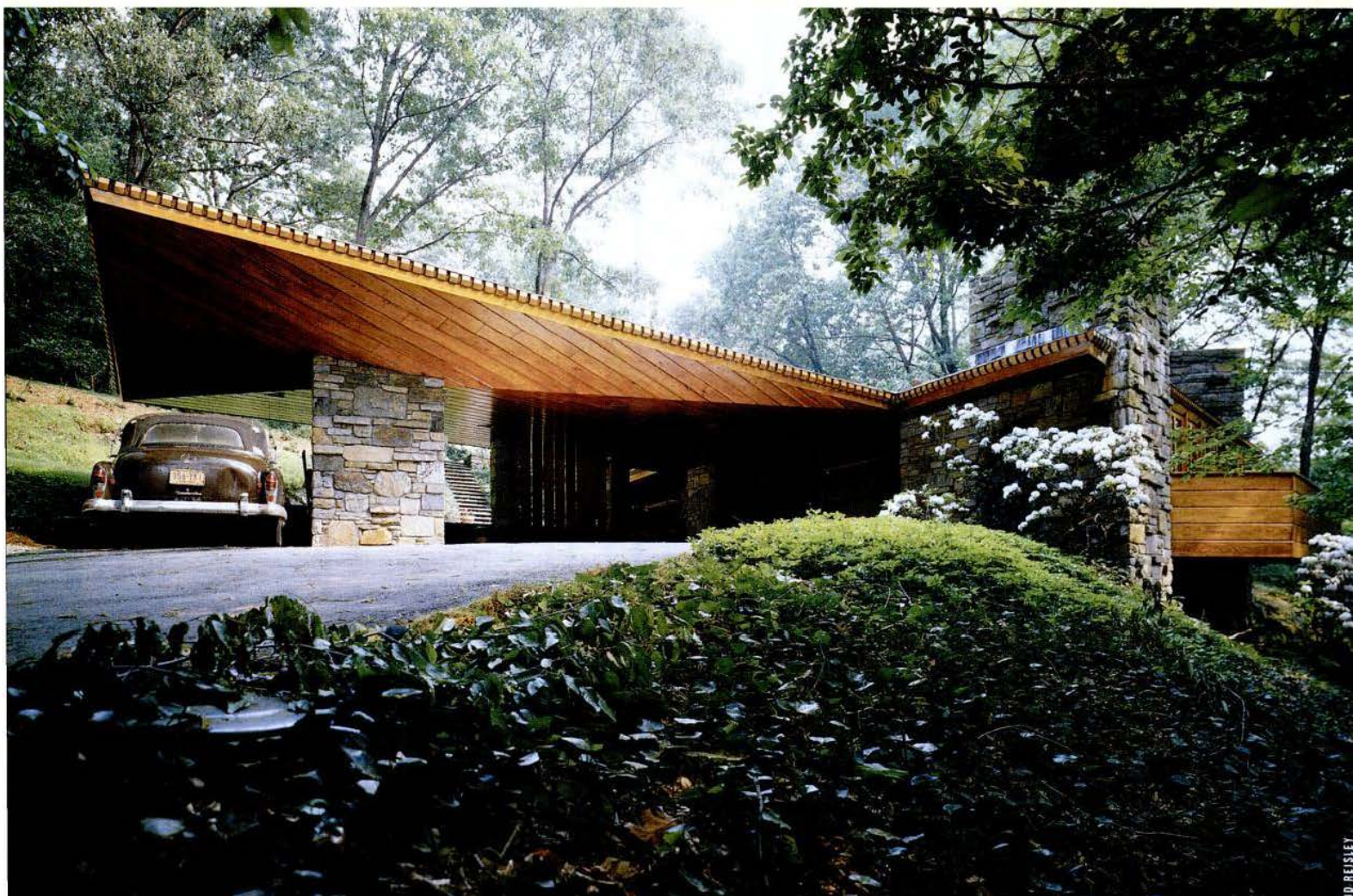


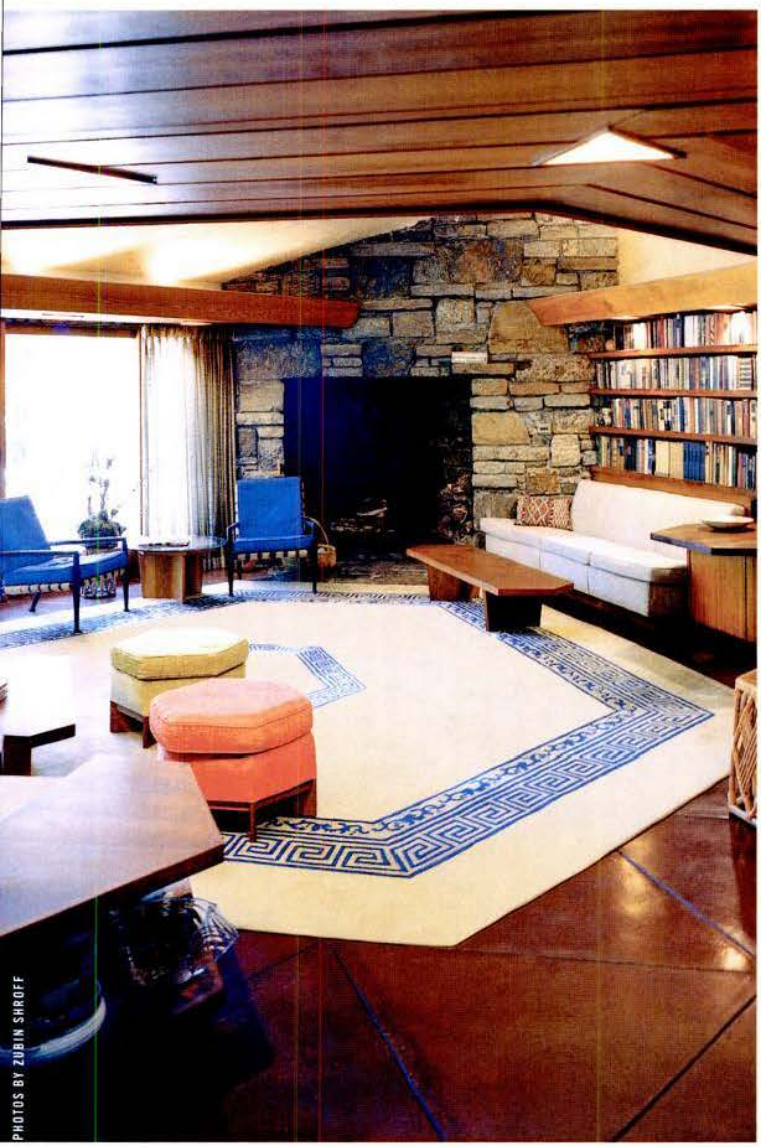
PHOTO BY ROLAND REISLEY

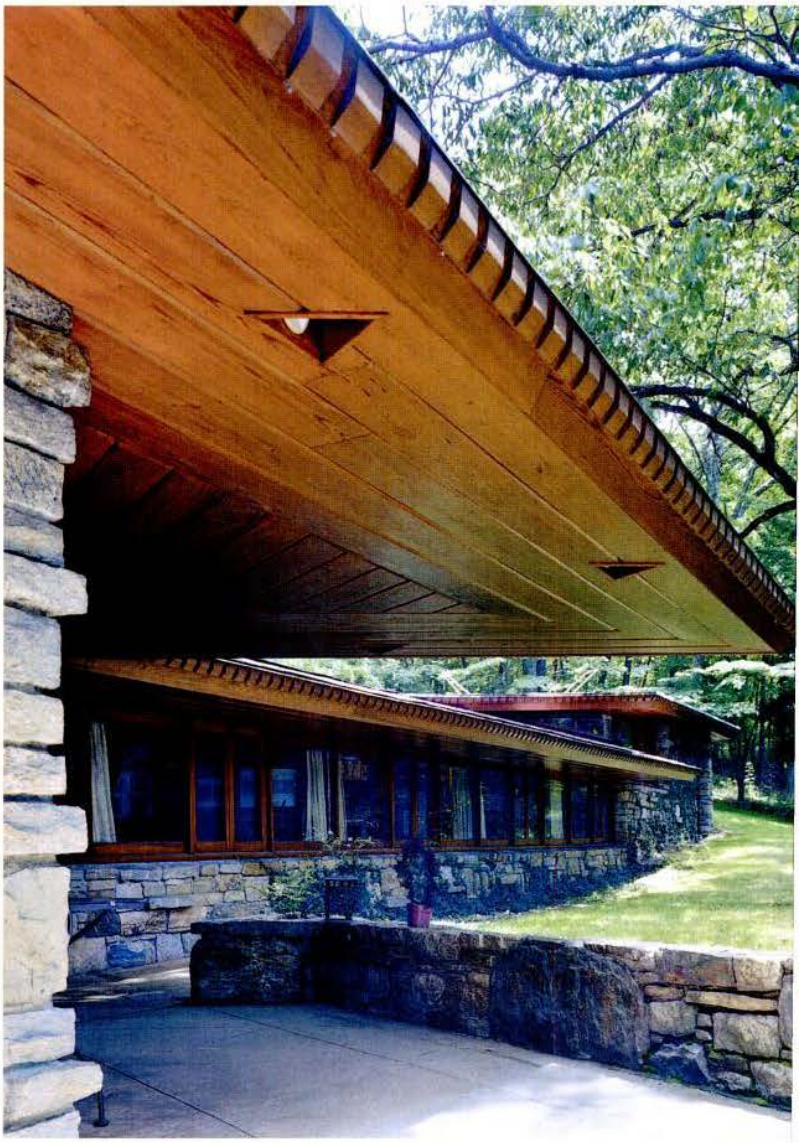
states Christian. Rubin recalls being told by a local architect that the right style for her house in Ohio was French provincial—and knowing there had to be something better. Then she saw an article in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* about a Wright house in Oberlin, Ohio, and contacted the owners, who invited her to visit. The owners of the house in Oberlin "were gracious to me," says Rubin, "and I try to follow that tradition." She proved it a few weeks ago by giving a stranger, who arrived unannounced, a tour. It concluded with a discussion of Froebel blocks, the toys that Wright said influenced him as a child; Rubin has written the leading book on Froebel—and chided the visitor for not starting his children on the mind-expanding toys at birth. Like many Wright clients, she has become a Wright disciple.

Roland Reisley, a physicist, and his wife, Ronny, a psychologist, were New Yorkers looking for a place to start a family when they heard about the cooperative community being designed by Wright. After Wright laid out the town (with its unique round lots), other architects designed most of the houses. But the Reisleys went directly to the master. Roland and Ronny (who died this past spring) raised three children in the house, without changing a thing—their goal was to ensure that future generations could see the building just as Wright envisioned it. They'd also like people to see Wright as they envision him. "There's a prevailing notion that Wright was a genius, but difficult to work with," Roland says. "We didn't find that at all, and neither did the other Wright owners we've talked to."

Christian talks about his luck in getting Wright to design his house: He happened to call the architect's studio, he says, when Wright himself was answering the phone. Over the next five years, Christian and his wife met with the architect at both Taliesins, in Wisconsin and Arizona. At one meeting Wright told them the house would be named Samara, and if they didn't know what it meant, they should look it up. ▸

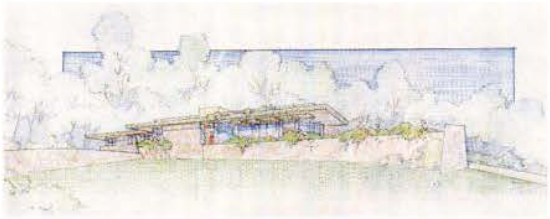
The Reisleys furnished their house (below left) with pieces by Wright, plus blue chairs by T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings. The couple returned to Wright for a bedroom addition (below) four years after they moved in. "This was a joint effort with Ronny," says Roland; as a result, he said, his late wife "is part of the house."





PHOTOS BY ZUBIN SHROFF

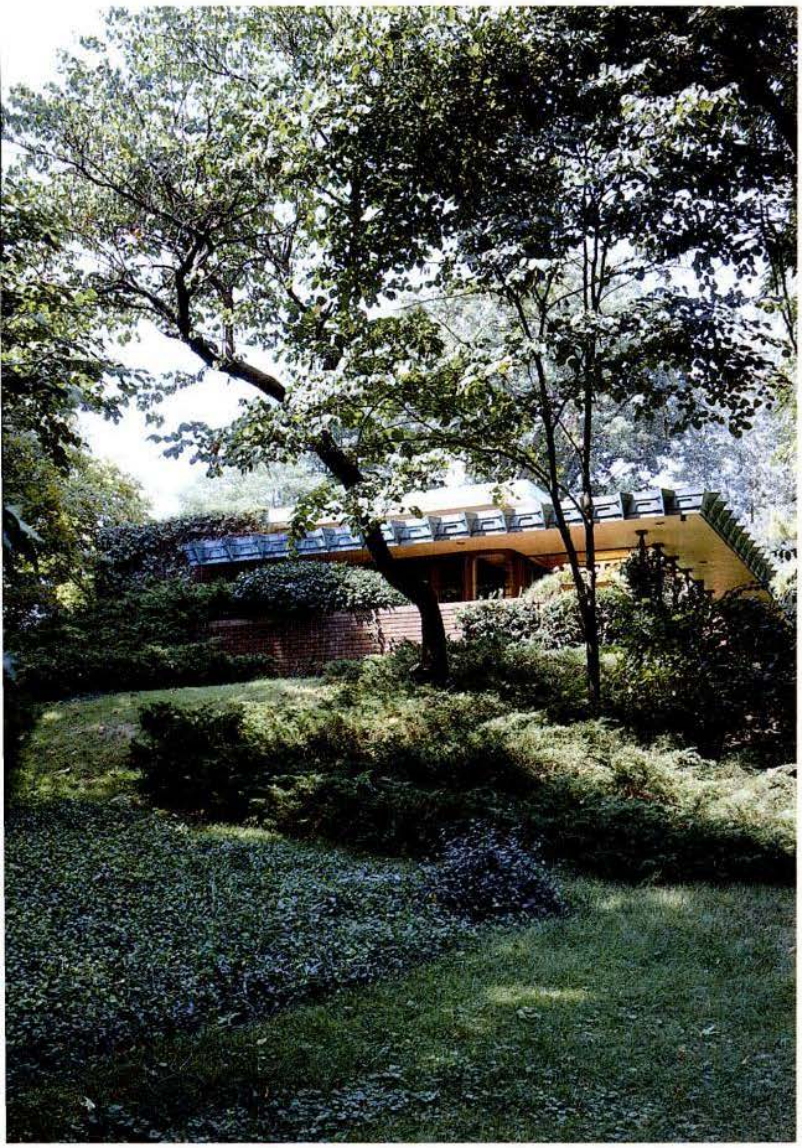
The copper soffit (so prominent in Wright's sketch of the Christian house) wasn't added until the couple could afford it, decades after they moved in. The cutouts in wood panels over the clerestory windows are abstractions of a winged seed pod—the samara motif that Wright selected for the house.

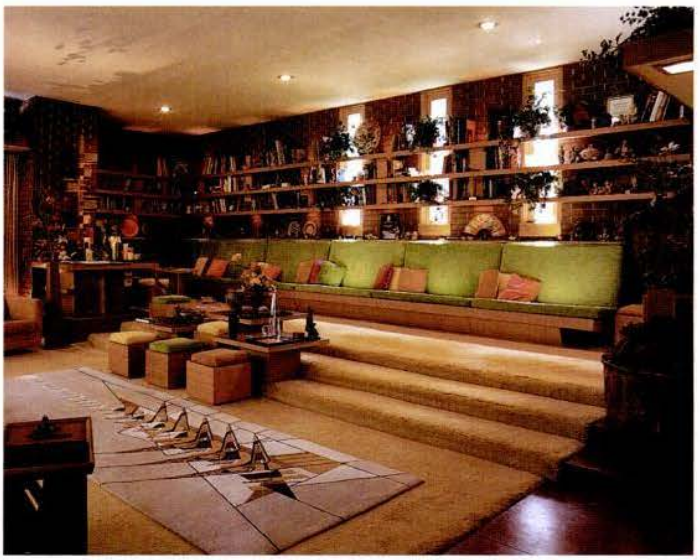


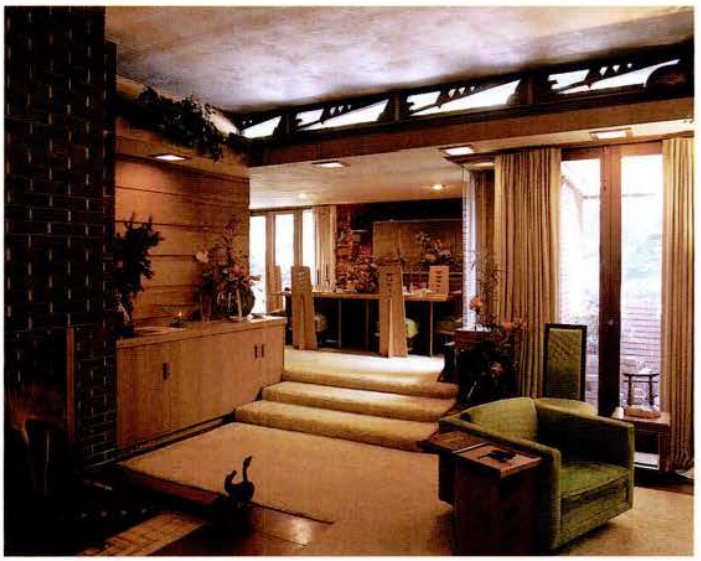
As it turns out, a samara is a winged seed pod. Wright used the abstracted form of the samara all over the house. When school groups come through, Christian shows them an actual samara, and then asks them to identify the places where Wright employed its shape, however subtly. Last year, Christian escorted some 2,500 people through the house. Says the retired professor, "I'm more of a teacher now than ever."

Preparing for the future, Christian has enlisted 30 volunteers to help him maintain the house, wrangle the school groups, and raise money for future operations. In the early 1990s, he formed a nonprofit foundation, which will eventually take over the ownership of Samara. "I wanted to start the foundation while I was still young, so I could make sure that it worked," he explains wryly.

Rubin has kept her house in good condition, but she could use the 30 volunteers. The house's unusual details, including wooden soffits cut into geometric shapes, mean that repairs tend to be costly. "I'm hanging on







PHOTOS BY ALAN WEINTRAUB / ARCAID.CO.UK

by my teeth, and my teeth aren't that good," she jokes. "But I couldn't imagine living anyplace else." Two other Wright houses (whose owners hired Wright after seeing the Rubins') still stand in the neighborhood, but their original owners are gone.

The Wright owner who faces the biggest hurdles may be Clifton Lewis, a freethinker who was born into one of Tallahassee's most prominent families. In the 1940s, she met Wright at a world federalism conference—they were both believers in international government—and she persuaded him to design a house for her young family. Not long after, Lewis became one of the leaders of the civil rights movement in Tallahassee. Her activism led some white customers to abandon her husband's bank, plunging the once-wealthy family into genteel poverty. The Wright house, still not finished at the time, suffered along with them.

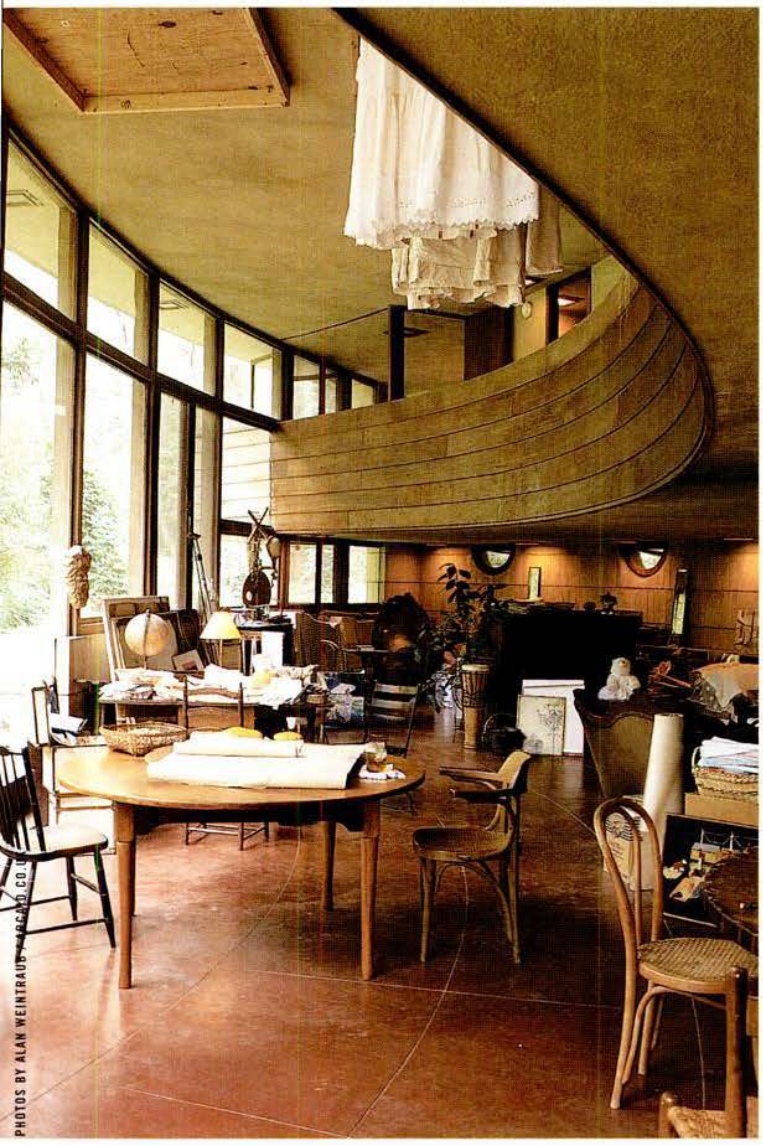
"My mother and father had a certain amount of money and ran out of money at the point when the interior was completed," says Ben, one of the Lewises' four children.

These days, the masonry on the outside of the house is crumbling, and the roof is propped up with two-by-fours. Then, too, the lack of storage space has led to an almost comical solution: Lewis has strung up clotheslines across the double-height living room. The mess was reported in a story in a Florida newspaper, which Ben says was "heartbreaking" because his mother had sold a beloved beach house, her only other remaining asset, to raise the money for a roof repair.

"She'd like help with the house, but only with no strings attached," explains Ben. Lewis hopes that when the house is finished, she can move to a new building across the street, and turn the house into a place where people, inspired by great architecture, will talk about making the world a better place.

If that sounds far-fetched, so was the idea of hiring the great Wright in the first place. As her daughter Byrd Lewis Mashburn declares, "The house is what she lives for." ■

Clifton Lewis's boat-shaped house, in Tallahassee, has seen better days—and will see them again if Lewis has her way. Inside, plywood covers a crack in the ceiling, and clothes hang from a line that definitely wasn't part of the architect's vision. Outside, wood is faded and masonry is crumbling.



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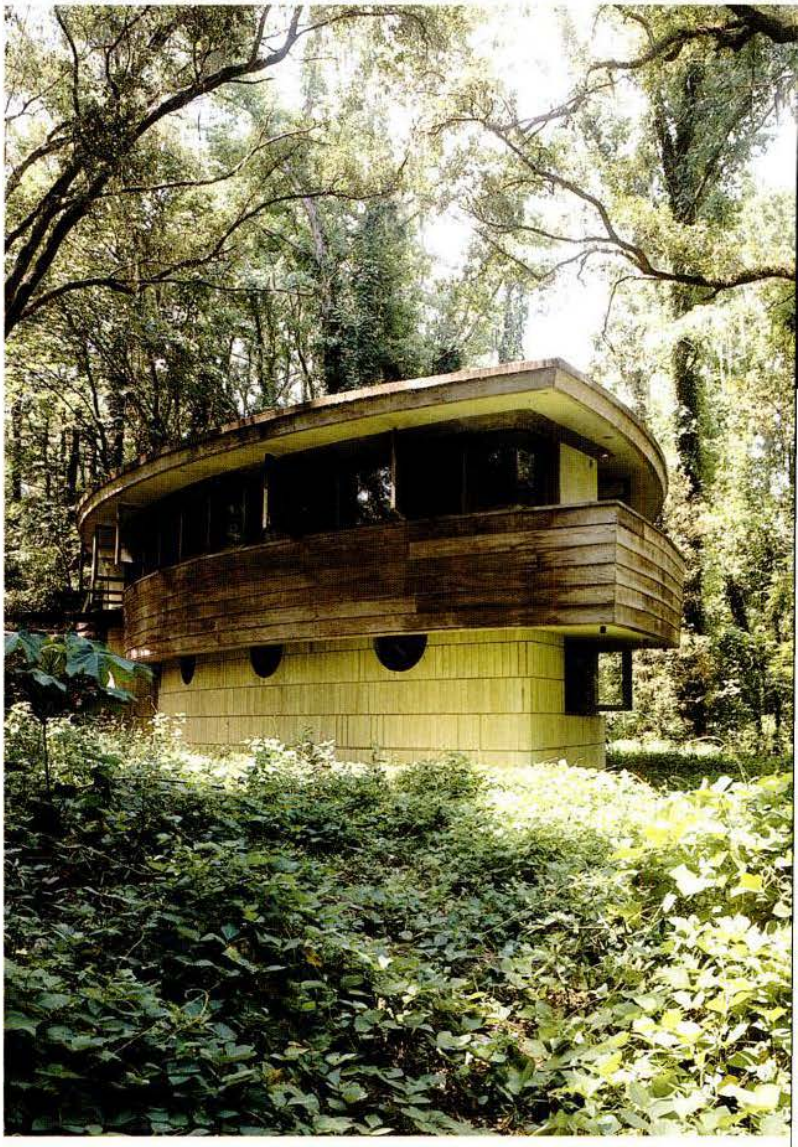

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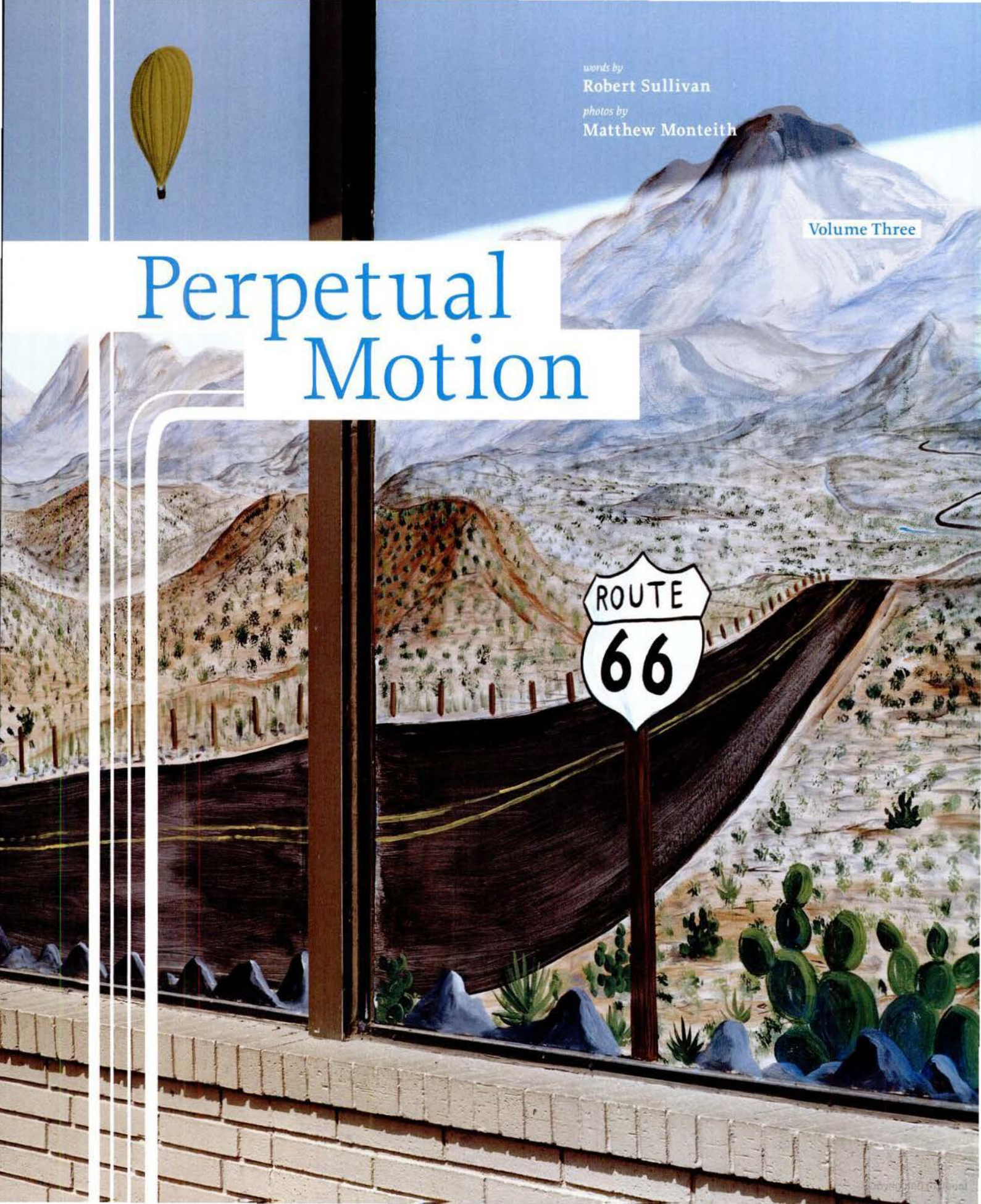


words by
Robert Sullivan

photos by
Matthew Monteith

Volume Three

Perpetual Motion


3
BAG CLAIM

Baggage claim, Bergstrom International Airport, Austin, Texas

How Transportation Shapes America

After the car, after the train and even the subway or the elevated or the various variations on the train theme, we Americans are frequent fliers, and our airports, it seems safe to say, define us as much as our highways do. We fly all the time, no big deal, even if it is amazing, when you think about it, and flying in America, not to mention the world, has also meant an airport lifestyle, an alternate transportational world that is like an alternate universe to the everyday driving lives we lead.

And what do we have to show for it? Not a lot, aside from stacks of concrete in the form of terminals and airport parking lots. We have long halls of polished floors and wall-to-wall carpet along which we find fast food. We have long lines of passengers-in-waiting, people pushing each other past ticket takers, where they race to squeeze into small seats only to wait again. There are, though, a few bright spots, which is why I'm flying to Austin—in particular Bergstrom International Airport, an airport that in trying to be a public space the public can be proud of, in attempting to be a place that has something to do with Austin rather than no particular place at all, shows what most other airports are doing wrong.

After some coffee and the paper and a talk with a flight attendant who recalled driving across the country ahead of Hurricane Katrina, dark rain clouds never quite catching her, the plane descends into a gray day, the green of Texas's Hill Country suddenly surprising me from behind the clouds. We land and taxi slowly. When I deplane, I hear music on the airport's public address system, just as I pass a poster in the jetway: "Welcome to Austin, Live Music Capital of the World."

The natural light of a cloudy day fills the terminal, shifting as the smoky cumulus shifts. The dark industrial windowpanes are offset by light wooden panels. "The city council wanted lots of glass," says Charles L. Tilley, an architect with PageSoutherlandPage, who worked ▸

American Airlines check-in counter, Bergstrom International Airport, Austin, Texas

on the airport in 1993, as he walks with me through the place. "They wanted it to be friendly, open to the skies. And of course the airlines didn't want that at all."

The other thing about the terminal is that you, the passenger, can see where you are going—all the way from check-in to gate. "That's how it was designed," Tilley says. "It's called intuitive wayfinding."

We pass an American Airlines flight to St. Louis while walking down the corridor and then a Continental flight from Vermont. And, naturally, we pass food. But this is not LAX with a choice between McDonald's and something similar; this is not Dallas and Pittsburgh and La Guardia with Au Bon Pain. This is Austin's airport, where chain stores are not allowed.

At the Hill Country Bar & Grill I meet two city employees who work at the airport, Nancy Coplin, the airport music coordinator, and Matt Coldwell, the coordinator of the airport's public art.

"When it comes to traveling, this place has the ambience," Coldwell proclaims proudly. "This airport makes traveling by air a pleasure."

"We don't have elevator music," Coplin says, explaining the abundant pleasures of Bergstrom International.

"And another thing we don't have," Coldwell says, "is carts." He stops talking, and we listen. "You haven't heard a large cart beeping. This is designed more like a train station. This is my idea of the St. Louis train station in the 1920s."

And like St. Louis in the '20s, Austin is a city at its peak. Thus, Austin's airport succeeds not because of

Our public spaces are less about standing still and more about movement, or transportation.

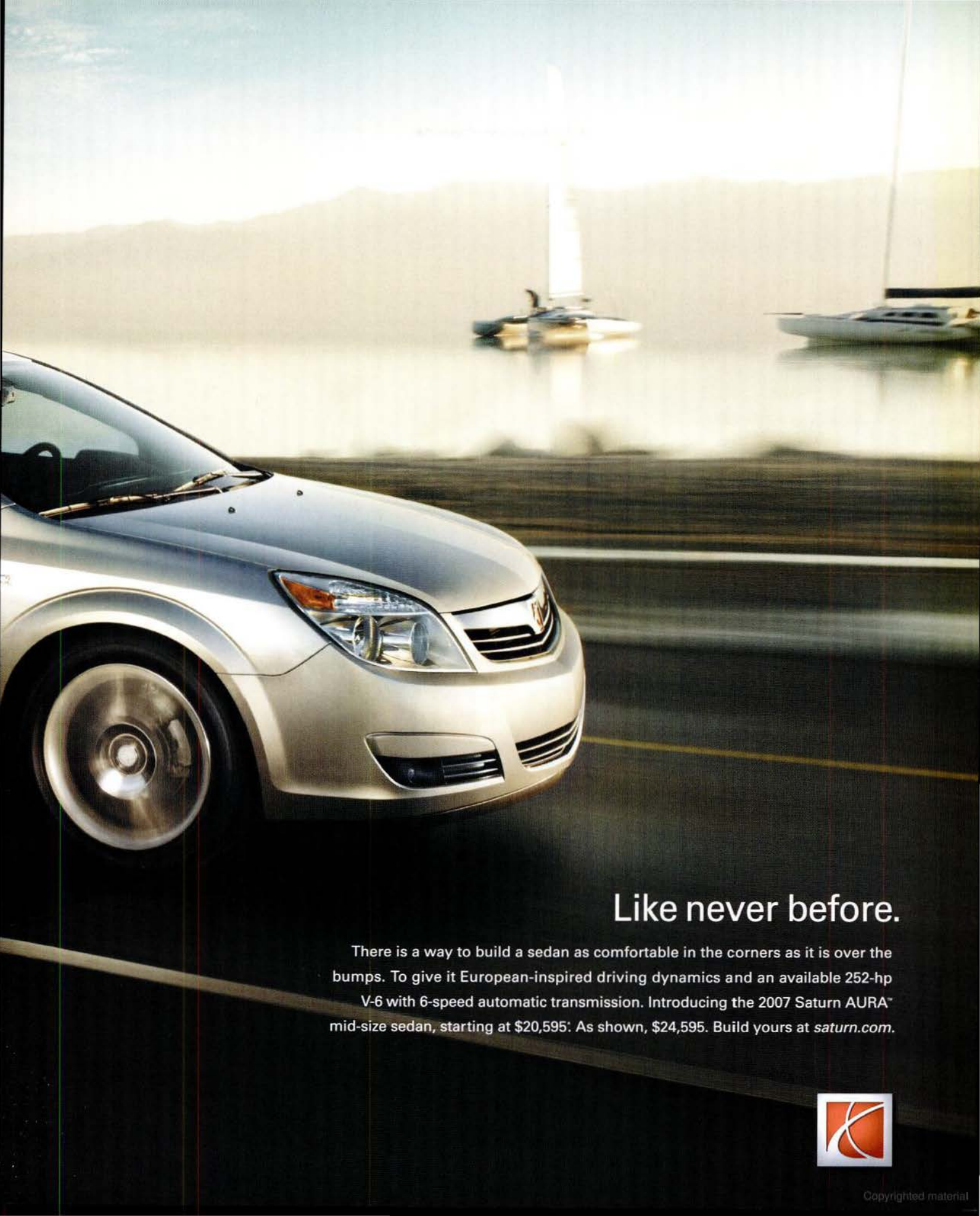
Graveyard along I-25, Albuquerque, New Mexico

how fast you get through it, but because while passing quickly through it, you want to be slowed down for just a minute. There is the efficiency of intuitive wayfinding coupled with the desire to linger, as if the train won't be boarding for a while, as if it were a time of restaurants, as opposed to take-away counters and cafeterias.

The public art, as Coldwell will attest, is the other part of the draw. The work of local artisans has been incorporated into the construction of the airport: There are the forged steel handrails by Lars Stanley, for instance; the terrazzo tile floor in baggage claim that maps the streets of Austin and the rivers of the state by the Lawrence W. Speck Studio. There's Jimmy Jalapeeno's oil paintings of the Austin-area wilderness, on the main concourse, near the security checkpoint. And most spectacularly, there is Thomas Evans' *Hill of the Medicine Man*, a 100-foot-long mural that can knock you over in the early dawn, when you haven't had enough coffee and you are wondering about the land outside the windows. It's a painting of an Austin landmark that was a landmark long before Austin was there. It's a kind of direct artistic flight to Enchanted Rock, a giant batholith just outside of town.

Austin is treating the airport as a public space—and as a kind of town center, as opposed to a back door—and recognizing that our public spaces are less about standing still and more about movement, or transportation. "We are the front door to Austin, and we're supposed to show the character and nature of Austin," Coplin says.

"I feel the fabric of life in Austin at the airport," Coldwell says. ►

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The old plazas are what the new ones want to be, full of people working, shopping, hanging out.

Bike swap, Albuquerque, New Mexico

"It's mingled," says Coplin. "It's intertwined."

"We almost choose to have an airport lifestyle," Coldwell continues. "People come here more than the library. In some ways, this is an airport town."

Air travel is up about 10 percent recently—a record-breaking 743,000 passengers traveled through Bergstrom in June—so there is a three-person-long line when I eat lunch at the Salt Lick, great barbecued chicken. I just barely avoid having a second helping of Amy's Ice Cream, ice-cream-sandwich flavor. Down near gate 21, I listen to Joe and Ellen, brother and sister musicians and new arrivals to Austin from Tulsa; they are set up in the corner playing a set on one of the airport's three stages. "We're going to do one more original song and then a ballad and then we're going to take a short break," says Ellen. "We hope you have a safe flight today."

A more primitive transportation alternative to airplanes is the auto and more primitive to that is the bike. In Austin, I board a plane with my bike helmet in hand on my way to go biking in Albuquerque, an award-winning bike town, biking being a non-car mode of transportation that planners are pushing more and more in cities, towns, and even suburbs. To bike, I am boarding a Southwest Airlines flight. It's my first time, and the open seating and slightly cheaper ticket prices feel a little like market capitalism meets a cattle call, though cattle are served food—the seating is like the pack at the Tour de France. At some point, I feel like wearing my bike helmet.

We are soon up and looking back on Austin, the hills flattening to the Great Plains, with a threatening storm ahead. We land in Albuquerque and I take a cab downtown to the Hotel Blue, where I wake up early the next day to walk the streets of the city center, old buildings and lots surrounded by renovated storefronts and brand-new apartment buildings. The Southwestern style is partly a result of the vernacular adobe architecture and ▸

Central Avenue, Route 66, Albuquerque, New Mexico

partly a remnant of railroad and tourism boosters in the early 1900s, who sought to lure Americans to an exotic vacation spot, "an American Orient."

I take a bike rack–equipped bus up the old Route 66—bus number 66, not coincidentally. The bus is clean, and the bus driver patient with a visitor's fare questions. People nod hello, and near my seat, I notice a small compartment, sponsored by the public library, meant to hold books to read while riding. I get off a mile or so up from downtown, in front of the Frontier Restaurant, an Albuquerque landmark adjacent to the University of New Mexico, where I sit for a few minutes with Chris Wilson, the J. B. Jackson Professor of Cultural Landscape Studies at the School of Architecture and Planning.

Albuquerque is, according to Wilson, the service center to Santa Fe's entertainment zone, the local architecture taking influences from the mythic Southwestern past and from the economic desires based on health care and high-tech. "There's been a real quickening of public debate over how the area's developing," Wilson tells me. And it is developing a lot, downtown being something of a poster child for New Urbanism. Though, as a breakfast with Wilson will tell you, New Urbanism has its roots in old urbanism: The old plazas are what the new ones want to be, full of people working, shopping, hanging out.

Wilson, it should be noted, generally bikes to work, and Albuquerque, it should also be noted, generally gets good marks from bikers. And though Albuquerque is spread out, and though it gets (very) hot in the summer, it is a great bike town, as is attested to by Julie Luna, the

Four Hills Road, Albuquerque, New Mexico

president of BikeABQ, whom I also meet at the Frontier. By nine, with Wilson headed to the school of architecture's ceremonial groundbreaking, Luna and I are headed downtown, me borrowing her boyfriend's bicycle. "I just think you see the city in a different way," Luna says.

The different way you see the city is slowly, and riding with an everyday biker is like riding with one of the city's best friends. Bikers are instant architectural critics, accidental experts in urban planning. They feel the success of a street's design; their legs appreciate a city's geography. "No other neighborhood in Albuquerque has houses quite like this," Luna says, as we cruise down Edith Boulevard, a designated bike route: some touches of adobe, some 1950s tract, some 1990s garage-obsessed designs, all meticulously kept, the street draped with shade trees. Just a few cars pass us cautiously when we stop at Copper and Edith to look at these particularly Southwestern-seeming Craftsman houses, part wood, part brick, and, at the crest of an arroyo, a modern home of glass and poured concrete—sometimes, it's tough to tell whether the neighborhood makes for the bikeability, or bikeability makes the neighborhood the way it is.

We coast down another arroyo, crossing under the railroad tracks into the heart of downtown. Luna takes me to the new transit center, and shouts with excitement when we see the new commuter train being tested—a line that will soon link Albuquerque and Santa Fe, a double-decker train, with wireless Internet, with coffee, with access for bikers. Around the country, a city's attention to bikes seems to mark its attention to transit in general. ▸

East Albuquerque, New Mexico

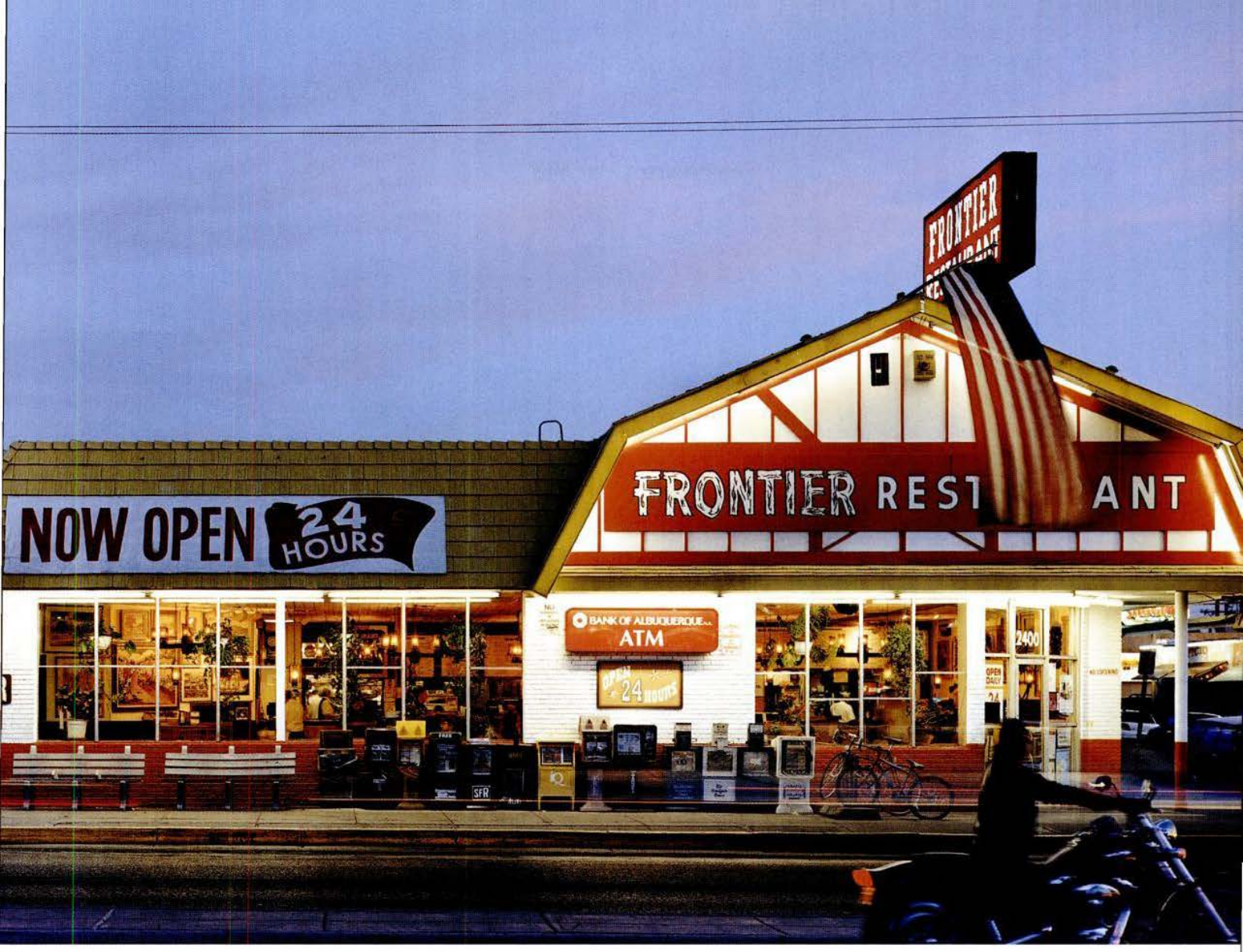
We head back toward the zoo and the city park, along the Rio Grande, and look in at the old train yards, ruins where rumors say a movie studio might end up, and back in the neighborhood of small, low houses, little yards decorated with plants and sculpture.

"Whenever I drive," Luna says, "I can't believe how different the city seems. You go by everything on the main arterials, and everything moves by so fast. When I'm biking, I get to be in the little neighborhoods and on the side streets and go slow."

She comments on the need for more bike racks as we lock up in front of city hall, where she takes me up to the office of Jim Arrowsmith, the city's bike planner.

Arrowsmith is tall with a relaxed smile, and he rides to work on most days, a six-mile trip from south of the city along a recreational bike trail, called the Riverside Trail. "I try to do a leisurely pace," he says. Arrowsmith tours me through the bike programs, bike maps, bike-awareness programs, plans for new trails. New building developments are required to conform to city bike standards. There is a street-sweeping machine dedicated to bike lanes. The city maintains a bike locker program. "Primarily, what we're trying to do with our bikeway system is connect the neighborhoods and the residential areas with our employment areas," he explains.

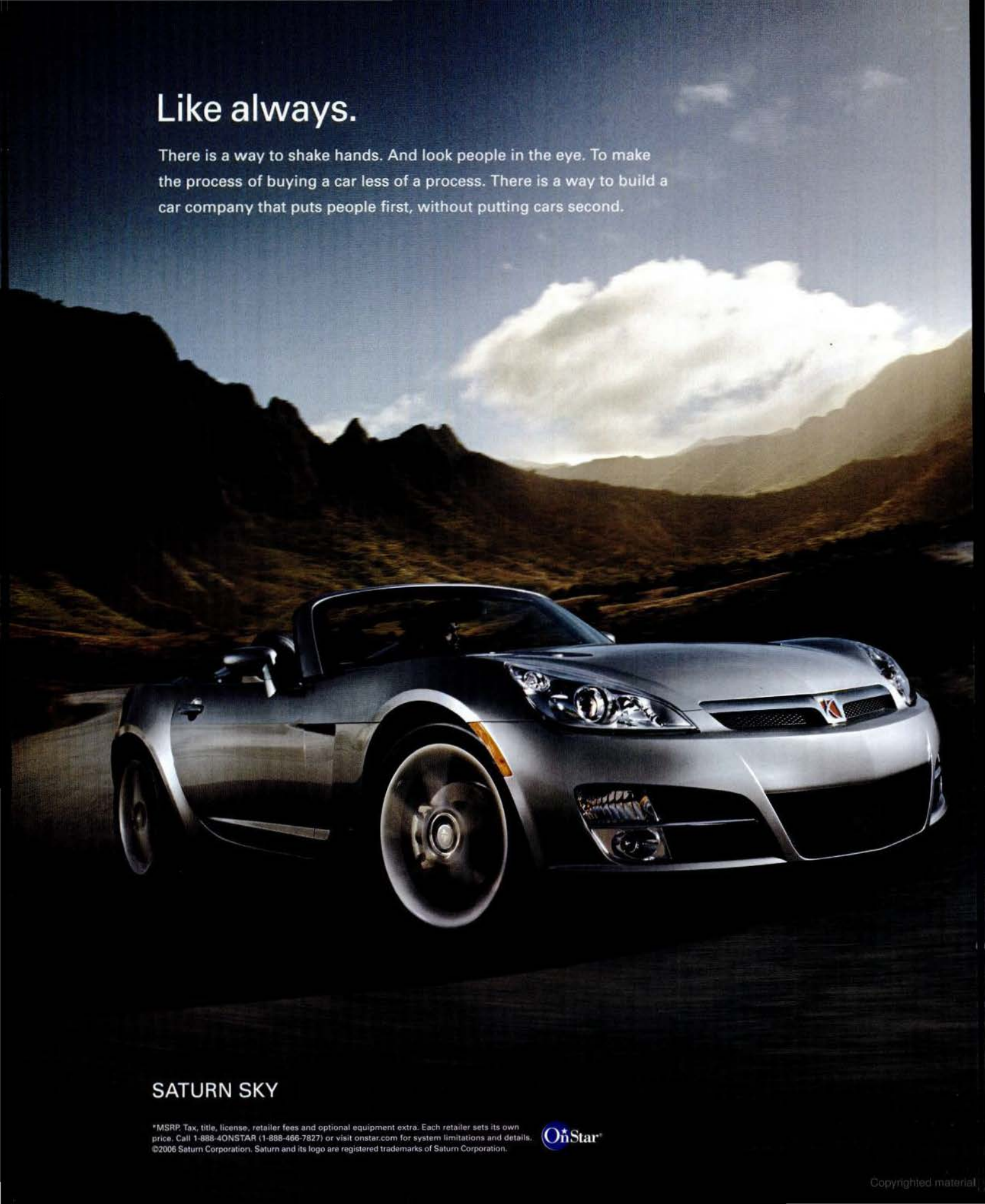
Arrowsmith wants to show me more of the system than I can ride, so we throw my borrowed bike in the back of his car and drive. We circle the city and peruse the bike trails, and eventually come into the north Valley, through a mix of expensive ranches and small farms and



Frontier Restaurant, Albuquerque, New Mexico

old houses with beautifully ramshackle, handmade coyote fence. A field of lavender waves in the breeze from the Los Poblanos Inn. We get out of the car at the Paseo del Bosque recreation trail, a popular trail along the Rio Grande, which trickles through town; even on a weekday it's full of bikers and the occasional walker. And you can sense just from these people passing by that this stretch is where people want to be and, if possible, live—the trail means a lot to them. Trails can do that.

Imagine if, in the near future, you could fly to Indianapolis, capital of car-racing America, and abandon your vehicle and tour the city just on foot, on purpose. Imagine if the city built a hiking trail not off into the woods or out to the city park, but right through downtown. It's an idea that is so radical as far as civic transportation goes that it sounds a little crazy, but that's what Indianapolis is building, an eight-mile bike and pedestrian trail that circles, in a zigzaggy way, in and through downtown Indianapolis—a trail that links neighborhoods and business districts, that would allow you to hike in the street. This is the plan, and this is the trail that is in the first stages of planning, a separate trail out in the street that is not quite a sidewalk, not quite a traffic lane, a $50 million redesign of how people might use a street. When Brian Payne, president of the Central Indiana Community Foundation, a nonprofit community group that is the lead partner on the trail, imagines the trail, he knows that the transportational stakes are high, since no city has tried this before, since they will be redesigning the downtown of the third-largest ▸




INDIANA WORLD WAR MEMORIAL

"Too often Midwestern cities look to the west and east and say, 'What do we need to copy?' Well, we don't need to copy anything—we don't want to copy."

American Legion Mall, Indianapolis, Indiana

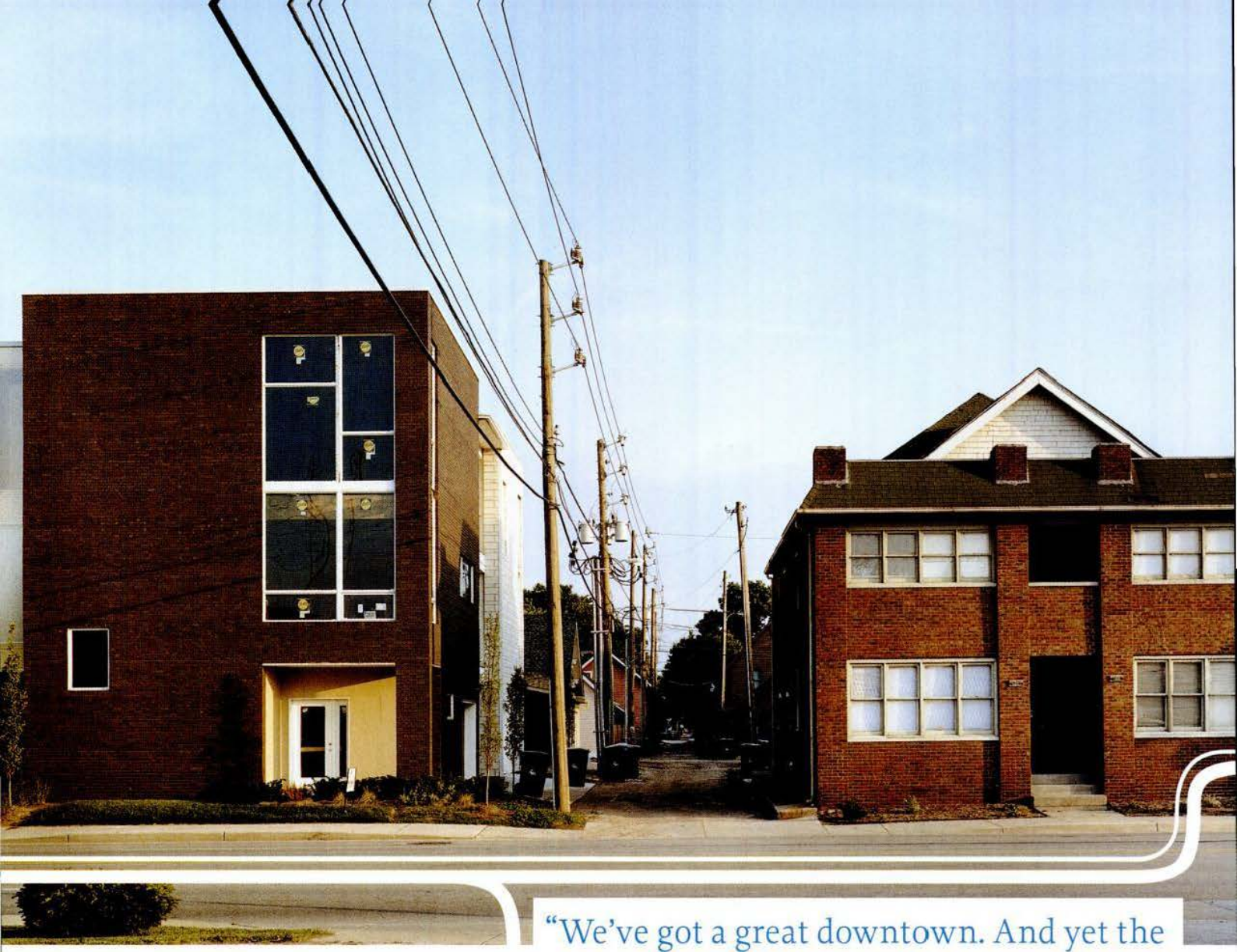
Midwestern city. "If you screw it up, you're going to set everybody back by 30 years," he says.

Touring the trail is an act of imagination at the moment: You have to imagine the markers, the pavement that is tiled or patterned somehow, the path as it is engineered through busy intersections—which is why Payne picks me up at the airport and drives me the ten minutes to downtown. The wide highway carries us onto equally wide downtown streets. "One of our problems is that we do too good a job of getting people out of town," he says. "They're going too fast to notice anything. I'm one of those people who does 50. No one does 25, because the capacity is there to do 50."

But then, in one right turn, we are in a small neighborhood of Victorian houses and cobblestoned streets, a neighborhood that I have, on previous trips to Indianapolis, completely missed—the kind of neighborhood Payne hopes that the trail will help highlight. "Too often Midwestern cities look to the west and east and say, 'What do we need to copy?' Well, we don't need to copy anything—we don't want to copy. We want to be unique. I mean, we've got to concentrate on what's unique. That's what New York and Chicago do so well."

As we park at his office, Payne describes his eureka moment, the day he was walking the Monan Trail, a hugely successful rails-to-trails project that runs on an old rail line out of Indianapolis to the north. "I was walking the Monan," he says, "and I thought, We could build an urban version of this right downtown!" At his desk, we pore over a map of downtown, and he shows how the trail would link neighborhoods—it's as if there would be a hiking path through SoHo, then onto the East Village and down to Chinatown.

With Gail Swanstrom, the director of marketing and communications for the Central Indiana Community ▸



"We've got a great downtown. And yet the rest of the world doesn't know anything about us."

Massachusetts Avenue District, Indianapolis, Indiana

Foundation, we start out near the American Legion headquarters, a vast mall in the center of the city, a beautiful war memorial that is like a miniature of the Mall in Washington, D.C. (The downtown of Indianapolis was designed by Alexander Ralston, who as an apprentice helped French-born architect Pierre L'Enfant design D.C.) When Payne takes people around, he is amazed at how many people have never seen this Beaux Arts view of their own place. "I grew up in San Diego, lived in Santa Cruz. I've studied cities most of my life. And we've got a great downtown. And yet the rest of the world doesn't know anything about us."

We head down Walnut Street, to see the old church about to change—to go co-op, to condoize. "People are selling condos," he says, "on the basis of being on the trail." I ask if the trail's potential success kill people's chances to afford to live near it. Payne points to Fall Creek Place, a downtown neighborhood with an affordable mix of historic and new housing, where residents agree to stay for five years and not turn the place over for sale. "Indianapolis is a community that watches over itself," he says.

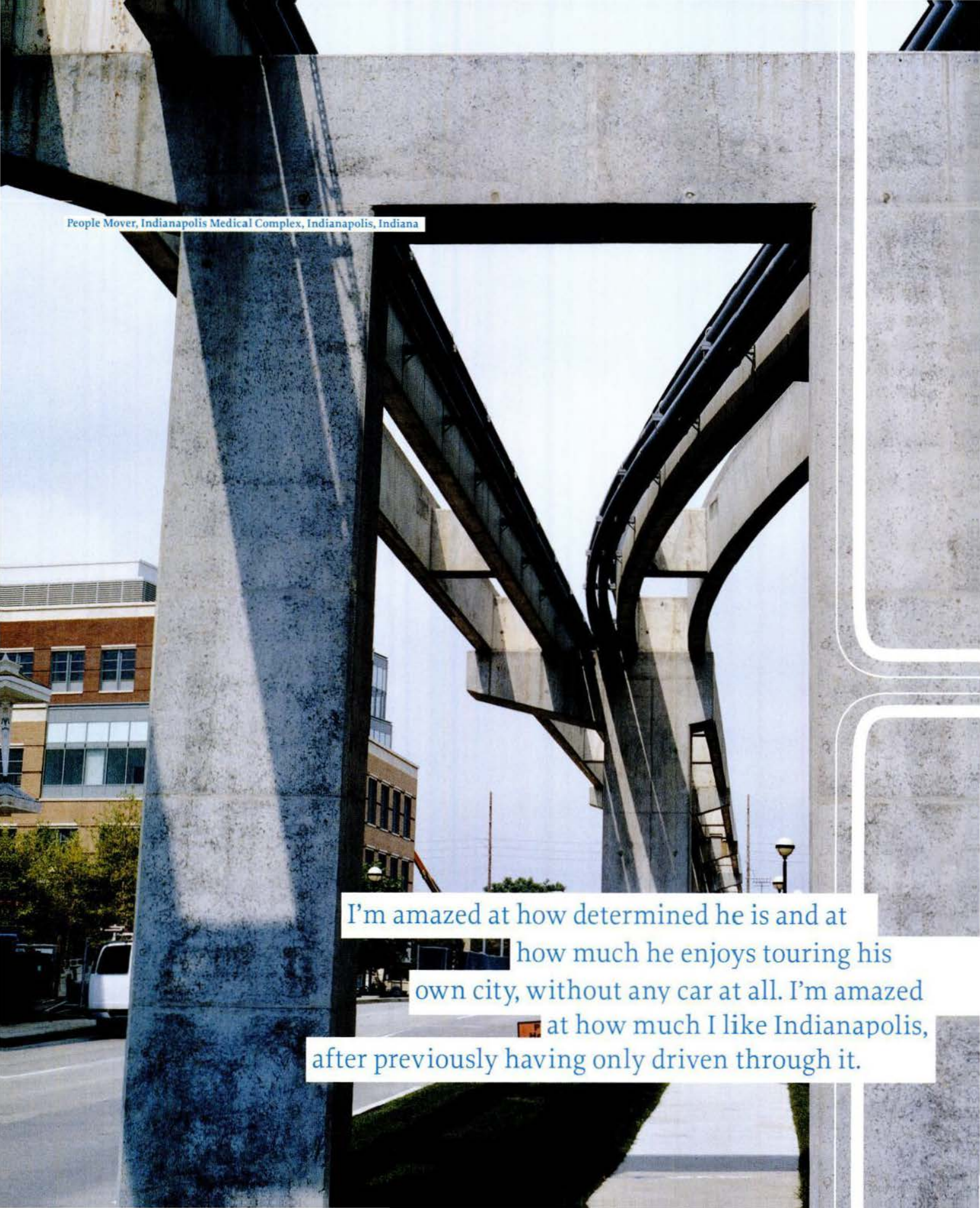
The centerpiece of the trail—and the town and my trip—is Monument Circle, the very center of the city, as designed by Ralston, and bustling with people and cars. The soldier on the 284-foot-high war monument faces south, to troops returning, and around him are buildings of all eras, from chain stores to the symphony's headquarters, the Art Deco office building, the old Christ Church Cathedral.

Fountain Diner, Fountain Square, Indianapolis, Indiana

In completing the loop, we move along a straightaway section of the proposed trail to Fountain Square, a neighborhood full of vintage stores and old sandwich places and artist's studios and small galleries that have lately closed quickly upon opening. "Things start up and they get going but then they can't keep it up and they close down," says Payne. He sees the trail as helping gallery owners stay open—outside the main square, it feels beat up, cut off from the city center by an interstate. At lunch at a Greek restaurant, Payne talks about his hopes for the trail as an economic development tool and as a tourist destination. He talks about how he envisions it being used. "Eighty percent of all users will be walkers," he says.

We end up downtown on Massachusetts Avenue. We pass by galleries and shops and pass through a little alley through which the trail will be built. We end up at the beginning of the Monan Trail, where the idea first hit Payne. I'm amazed at how determined he is and at how much he enjoys touring his own city, without any car at all. I'm amazed at how much I really like Indianapolis, after previously having only driven through it. I'm appreciative of him taking time off to tour what is not yet there.

"Are you kidding?" Payne says. "This is fun." The trail might not be finished until 2009, but when you see Payne walking it, you can see him seeing it anyway, and you can see him seeing a whole new way of visiting and living in a downtown. "We want to create a journey that's beautiful and inspiring and wonderful and as good as the destination," he says. ■



People Mover, Indianapolis Medical Complex, Indianapolis, Indiana

I'm amazed at how determined he is and at how much he enjoys touring his own city, without any car at all. I'm amazed at how much I like Indianapolis, after previously having only driven through it.

To be continued...

On the final leg of his journey, Robert Sullivan heads west to the land dominated by the automobile. In Los Angeles, he sits down with ultimate transportation futurist Syd Mead and spends an afternoon pondering what's next for transit. In the San Francisco Bay Area he observes a region stuck in the present but struggling for the future, and finally, he ends up in Portland, Oregon, where he spends time at one of those relics of the past—a family farm—to take stock of it all.

Story by Iain Aitch

Illustration by Mike Perry

London-based Alain de Botton writes on what he terms the "philosophy of everyday life," and his works happily span the breach between the self-help section and academia. So far, he has analyzed the relationship between sex, shopping, and the novel, what makes us fall in love, what the point of travel is, and why we worry about our place in society. He also examined the power of literature in the surprise bestseller *How Proust Can Change Your Life.*

For his latest book, *The Architecture of Happiness,* de Botton turns his mind to the built environment, examining our rationale for where we choose to live and discussing the emotions reflected by our choice of architectural styles. But the book may not be happy reading for many architects, as de Botton variously labels the profession as being overstaffed, overly egotistical, and unwilling to make the value judgments that he believes make for good buildings and coherent cityscapes.

Dwell's London editor Iain Aitch met up with de Botton to find out where he thinks architecture is going wrong, what can be done to right it, and why he's so down on Zaha Hadid.

The Architecture of Happiness

What is the architecture of happiness?
The reason for the title of the book is this quote from [19th-century French writer] Stendhal where he says that "beauty is the promise of happiness." I am attracted to that quote because it connects what we find beautiful to what we find good in other areas of life. It makes a bridge between aesthetics and politics, home life, relationships—all these other things that are kind of connected. It is not literally a book about how architecture can make you happy. It is about how buildings can be repositories for certain values and attitudes to life that we can find attractive and might associate with happiness.

What inspired you to cover this topic?
I have always been fascinated by architecture. I have always seen it as the leading art form, as it is the most dominant one. I was also inspired by how ugly most places are in the world. London, which I think is a very ugly city, got me thinking about why it is ugly and what I mean by that word.

What did your research involve?
The book is an attempt to define what it is that makes a building attractive or ugly. So a lot of the research was looking at buildings and seeing what made some of them work and some of them not. I was always trying to ask what works and why. Most architects or professional architecture critics would never write such a book. They would never put themselves on the line in that way. You are never supposed to say, "I like that, but I don't like that."

Did you come up with what amounted to a formula for architectural happiness?
I tried to, partly to stimulate people to attempt their own. So I give five principles of good architecture. This is what architects used to do in the Renaissance; they used to write books about how to make a building ▸

and lay down their five or six or ten laws of architecture. In a way, it is in that kind of spirit that the book is written, to rehabilitate this kind of concept.

So what are your five principles of good architecture?

I talk about the balance between order and complexity in the façade and arrangement of a building. We need things to be regular, but if they are too regular they get boring. And if they are too irregular they get chaotic. Then I look at the idea of contrasting forces within buildings. That can be between the masculine and the feminine, the old and the new.

I look at elegance, which I associate with handling weight or size gracefully. That is what makes cathedrals interesting, as you think, How is that held up? And I look at the idea of context and how buildings should reflect the context that they are in. Then I talk about the general principles that should guide designers in whom they are designing for and I look at Le Corbusier's work as an example of someone who forgot some of the finer-grained things that we need in order to be satisfied with an environment. I make the point that at some level good architecture is psychological; you have to understand whom you are designing for.

What makes you most happy in architecture?

On the whole, the sort of buildings that generally appeal to me are the calm and ordered ones, as calm and order is what I am most lacking in life. I am generally not a fan of Daniel Libeskind or Zaha Hadid because my life feels kind of how their buildings look, and I don't want more of that. So, I tend toward the more austere.

Is there any building that you think is responsible for unhappiness?

Well, Le Corbusier–inspired towers of the 20th century are a typical example of what can go wrong. There are other versions of ▸

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In a way I feel very sorry for architects, as there are too many of them.

that, such as the dull, dead suburbia that forgets about the need for quite dense environments where you can meet other people.

Should we always be trying to constantly move forward in architecture? Or do we need to keep an eye on the past?
I think there is, generally in society, a tedious overemphasis on the future and on things changing. And though they do change a lot in scientific areas, in artistic areas there is not that much change. I think the world of art has swallowed the idea of a future too forcefully. So if you read an interiors magazine, it will say what's hot this month. A month is such a short time span. The acceleration of time is a bit worrying. Many things have worked well down the ages, and we should not reinvent the wheel. I am a mixture of a traditionalist and a futurist.

You talk about how the egos and aspirations of individual architects can lead to unsatisfactory streetscapes. Do you think they need to change the way that they work?
In a way I feel very sorry for architects, as there are too many of them. But also, their whole training is to make them very individual, creative people who can break all the rules. There can only be a few Zaha Hadids, yet the system is geared to producing only Zaha Hadids. I think architecture has bought into a 19th-century idea of romantic artist as rebel, as someone who stands against his or her society, who does everything different, who might be hated at first then gradually loved, like van Gogh. Though that may be true to some extent, it is not true to the extent that architecture schools suggest that it is. I think it leads many architects down the wrong path, toward unhappiness.

Are your friends concerned you might start analyzing their homes?
Well, if they read my books they might be, but no one has commented. ■

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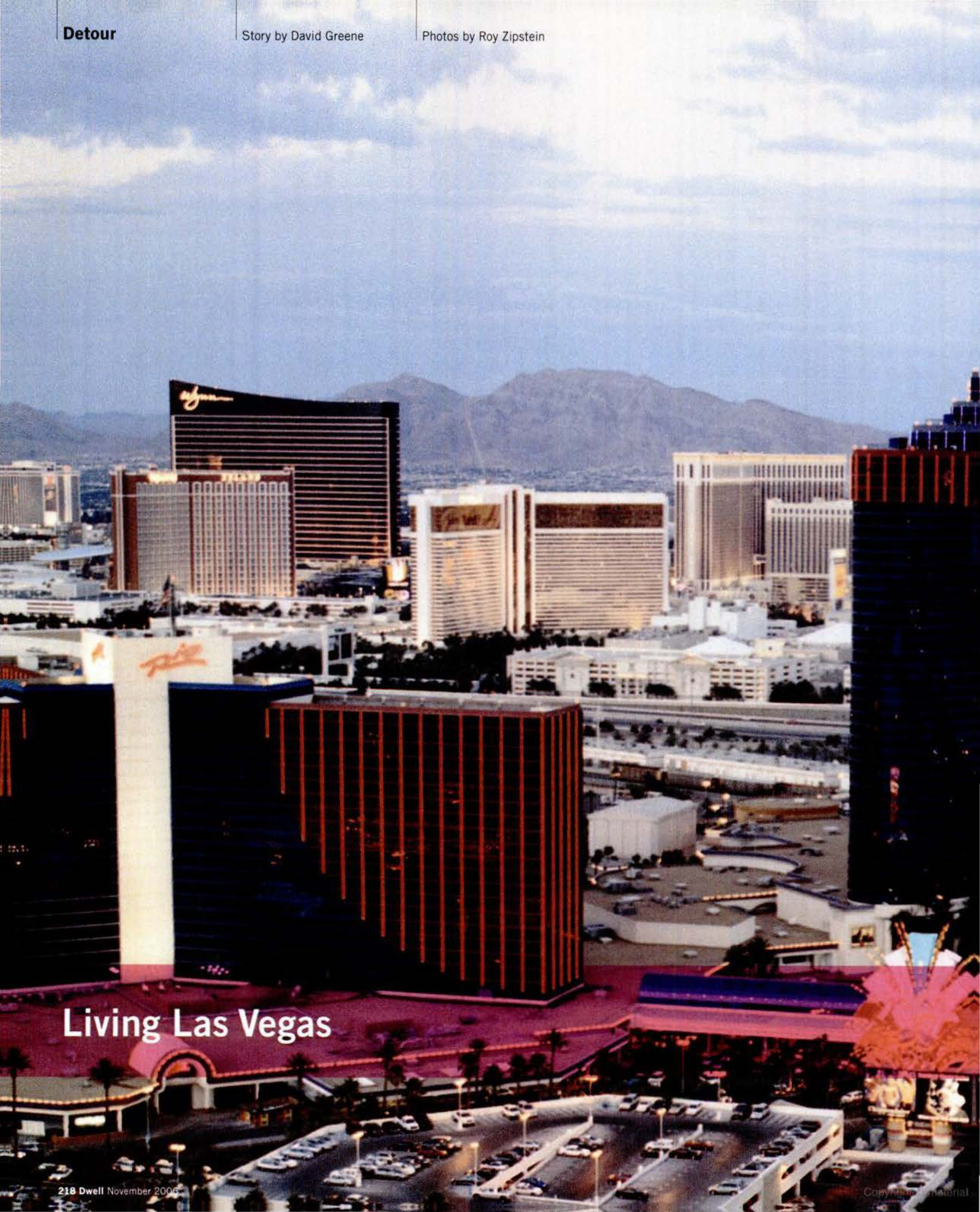


Living Las Vegas

Ever since the days of Bugsy Siegel, modern Las Vegas has suffered from the D-cup syndrome: No matter how intriguing its history, or exciting its plans and dreams, we can't help but stare at those huge, gaudy casino-resort hotels on its famous Strip. Architects and academics use the always-bigger-and-new-improved public façade of Vegas as a tidy metaphor for the American aesthetic palate, the greed, gluttony, and simulacra that push the pleasure buttons of the masses. Only Disneyland merits the same gleeful tarring, but Vegas is a real city. And it's getting more real by the day. Just ask Hugh Fogel.

"Las Vegas is always sunny and beautiful," says Fogel, with a wry smile. Fogel is a Detroit transplant who owns the modern-design superstore Unicahome with his wife, Bonnie. He's an upstanding member of the business community, a force for architectural and historic preservation, and a civic booster. But he's also a smart guy, the kind of deep-thinking forty-something normally found sipping lattes in Los Angeles or haunting museums in New York. But Fogel chose Las Vegas. He evinces genuine fondness for this adolescent metropolis, and evangelistic awe at its untapped potential. He knows the "new" Vegas didn't spring fully formed from the head of hotelier Steve Wynn; rather, its growth has been fueled by a mass migration of middle-class humanity to the Mojave Desert, who now need places to live, work, and play.

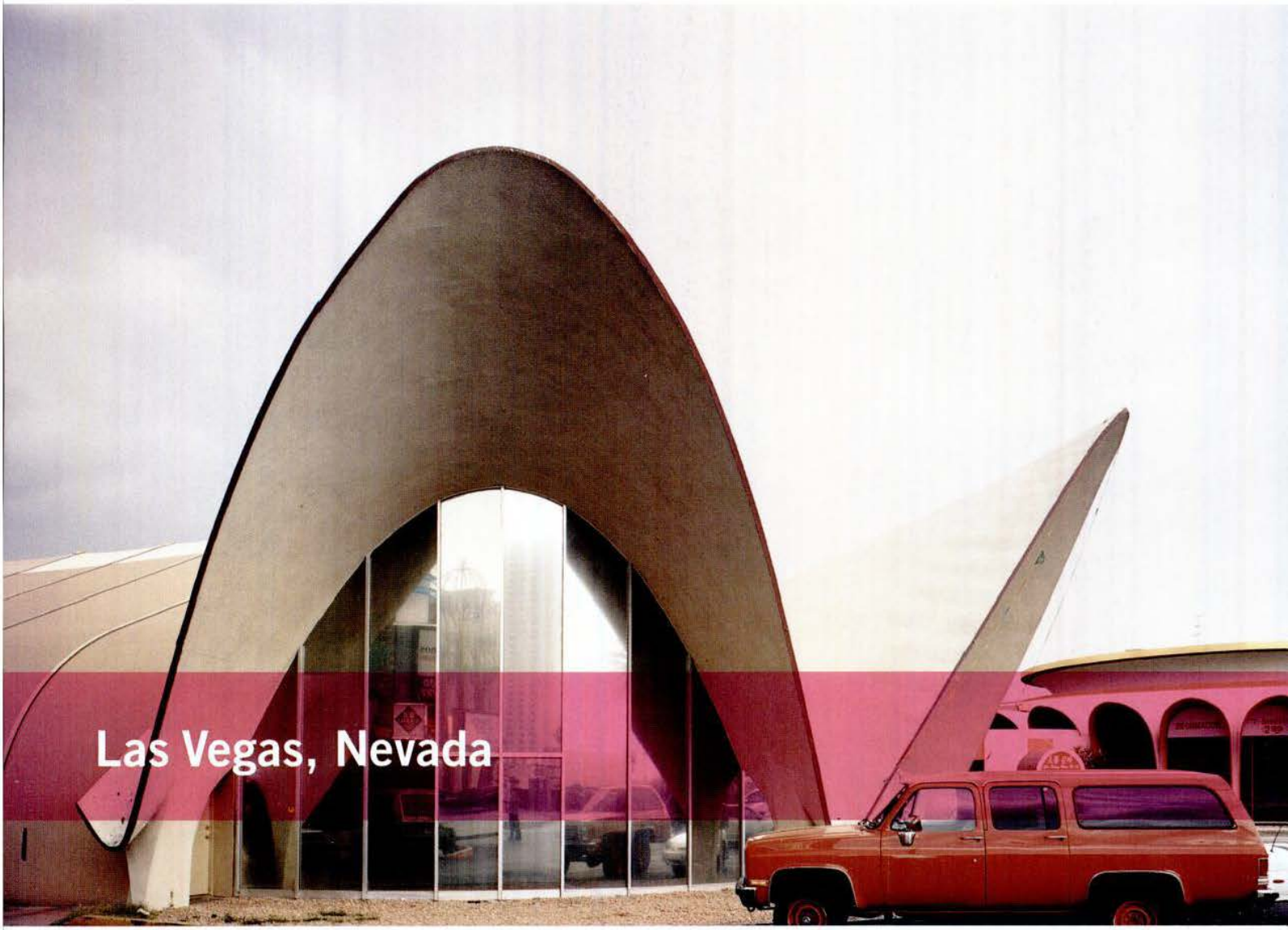
On a sizzling summer weekend when Bonnie was out of town, I spent a boys' day and night out with Fogel, touring the future architectural landmarks and well-designed watering holes of his adopted home. ►

The view from the Ghost Bar at the Palms Hotel in Las Vegas is tantalizing. Though it's hard to resist the Strip's allure, there's more to Vegas than neon.

The La Concha motel, completed in 1961 by Paul Revere Williams, the first African-American architect admitted to the American Institute of Architects, is one of the last remnants of Sinatra-era Vegas on the Strip.

Why are you taking me to a sun-baked animal shelter in the middle of nowhere? It's 120 degrees in the shade, after all.
Yeah, but remember—it's a dry heat. The Lied Animal Shelter is an example of how Las Vegas is developing into a real city, with our own homegrown, groundbreaking architecture. It was done by a local firm, Tate Snyder Kimsey, and designed in response to a local problem: Because of the transience of Las Vegas residents, we have a lot of lost pets—from feral cats to farm animals—and because we're in the desert, water is a huge issue. So the architects have addressed these things in an environmentally friendly, very attractive design, with solar panels and a "living machine" to recycle graywater.

Las Vegas seems to be a sprawl of sand, bulldozers, and acres upon acres of tile-roofed housing developments. The oldest architecture in town appears to be bad strip malls. Does Las Vegas even have any real architectural history?
Sure. And we're fighting to save it. The La Concha is a Paul Revere Williams building, one of the last remaining hotel landmarks on the Strip; in the past four years, we've seen so many torn down. The family that ran the hotel is donating it to be used as the Neon Museum. Right now, all the great old YESCO neon is stored in the Boneyard, just on the outskirts of town; it's a big outdoor lot where all the nice signs go to die. There's also the Old Mormon Fort, a historical landmark with ▸



Las Vegas, Nevada

The Boneyard, where good signs go to die before being reborn. The La Concha motel will soon be resurrected as the Neon Museum, giving all the old neon new life.

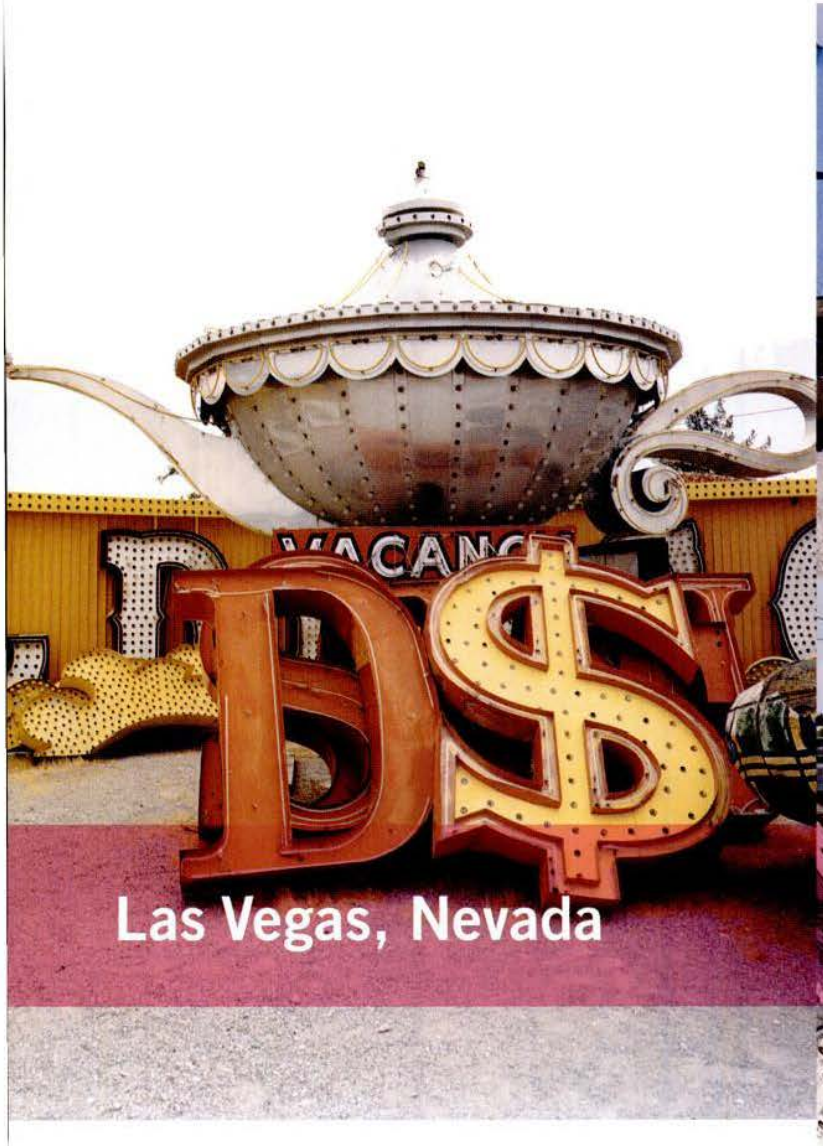
a new addition by local architect Eric Strain. There's a cantilevered entrance, and sheets of glass that run through the structure to let light in. It's another example of how every great city needs to develop its own architectural style. Strain's showing that, Hey—we're not just leopard print.

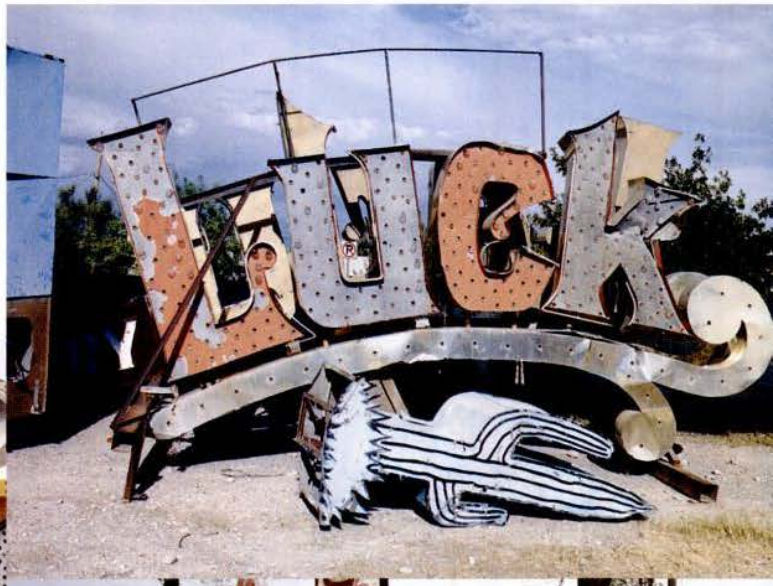
Heading for the Red Rock Casino off the Strip, in the Stepfordesque master-planned community of Summerlin, the first thing I noticed was the signage: It's in lower-case sans serif type. I thought Vegas was an all-caps town.

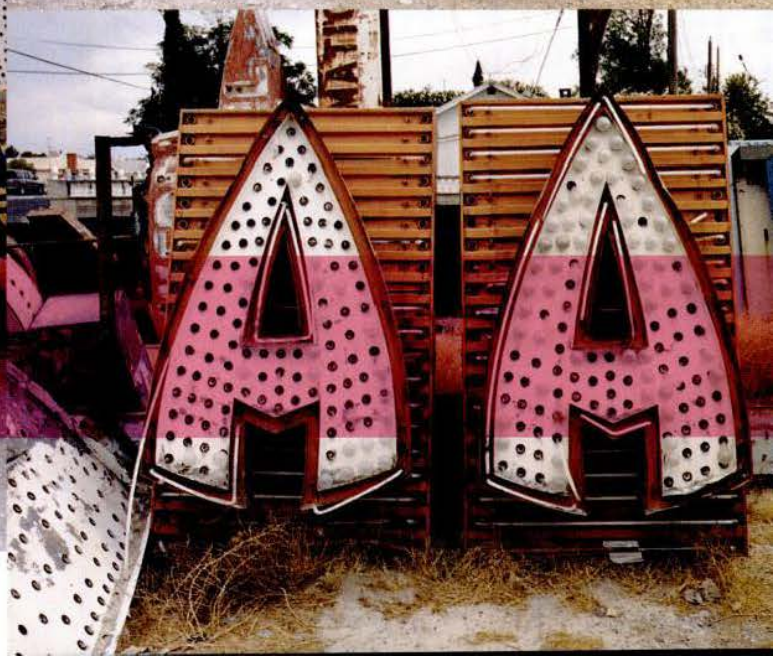
The Red Rock is considered a "locals" casino; the term used to mean Sam's Town, or Binion's, dingy little places with cheap sandwiches. But Red Rock gets it right: It's attractive, sexy, and people feel special just being there. It's not someplace special conceptually, like, Wow, we're in the MGM Grand, the world's largest hotel! Instead, there's Swarovski crystal chandeliers everywhere. The spa has great modern furniture. There are nooks and crannies that you can discover for yourself, so the experience is different each time you go. That's something you miss out on in the very large hotels.

Where can you go to get a drink in this town?

The Foundation Room at the House of Blues. It's in Mandalay Bay, and has a fantastic view of the Strip—one of the best views in the city. It's open to the public on Mondays ▸







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Red Rock Resort and Casino is a haven away from the chaos of the Strip—and a welcome alternative to a certain other hotel off the Strip, popular with callow youth, that Fogel calls "The Loserdome."

Las Vegas, Nevada

TIME

Linear Grace — by Lucci Orlandini Design

"Contrasting symmetry and stylized detail bring uncommon elegance to the kitchen environment."

At Mix Lounge (below) at THEhotel in the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, the chandelier is made up of 15,000 glittering Murano blown-glass spheres. The Hoover Dam (below right), one of the country's great engineering feats, is just a few miles from Vegas and warrants a visit.

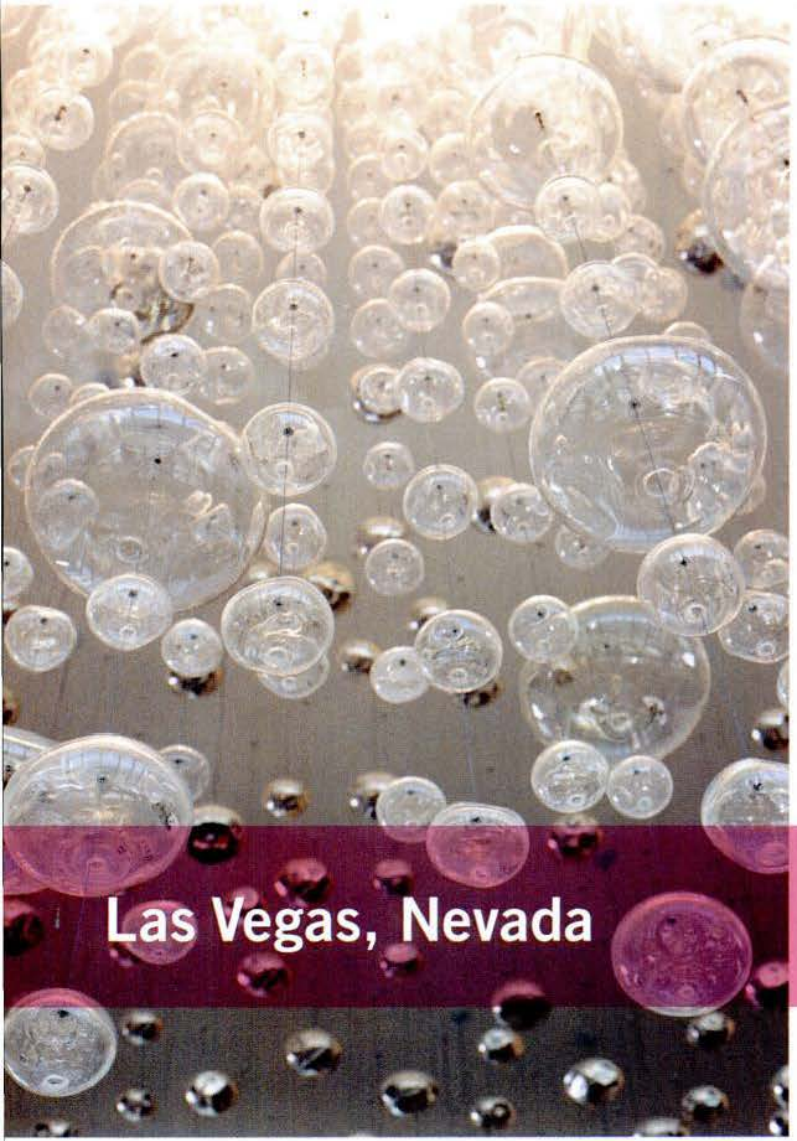
and has a great collection of outsider art—Jimmy Lee Sudduth, Purvis Young. It's very comfortable.

Yeah, but the decor at the House of Blues gives me horrible night sweats: I want clean. I want modern.

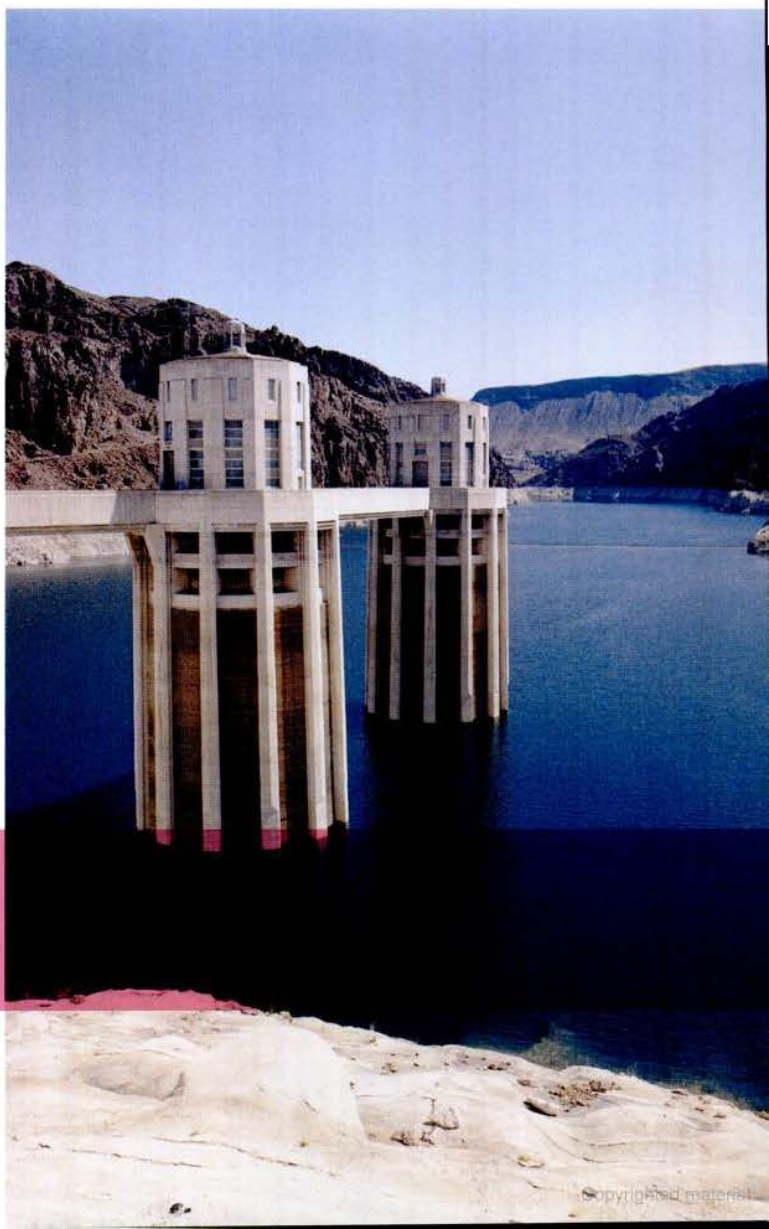
Then get in the elevator and go to Mix—it's on top of THEhotel at Mandalay Bay. Mix is the first restaurant and lounge where the hotel spent a lot of money bringing in a major-league restaurateur (Alain Ducasse) and a major-league designer (Patrick Jouin). The restaurant's chandelier is made of 15,000 Murano blown-glass baubles. Every time I look at it, I think, Who the hell's gonna clean that? But it's beautiful. The lounge is entirely upholstered—even the ashtrays—and Jouin designed all of the furniture specifically for the space. That never used to happen here. New York, sure. Paris, of course. But not Vegas. Plus, Mix has the best bathroom in all of Las Vegas: When you really want to contemplate life, there's nothing like sitting on the toilet and gazing out a full-length window at a stunning view of the Strip.

What about restaurants? The old cliché used to be that you couldn't get a good meal in Vegas, but you could belly up to the buffet with 500 of your closest friends and gorge yourself for $9.99.

In the last year or two, we've had Joël ▸



Las Vegas, Nevada



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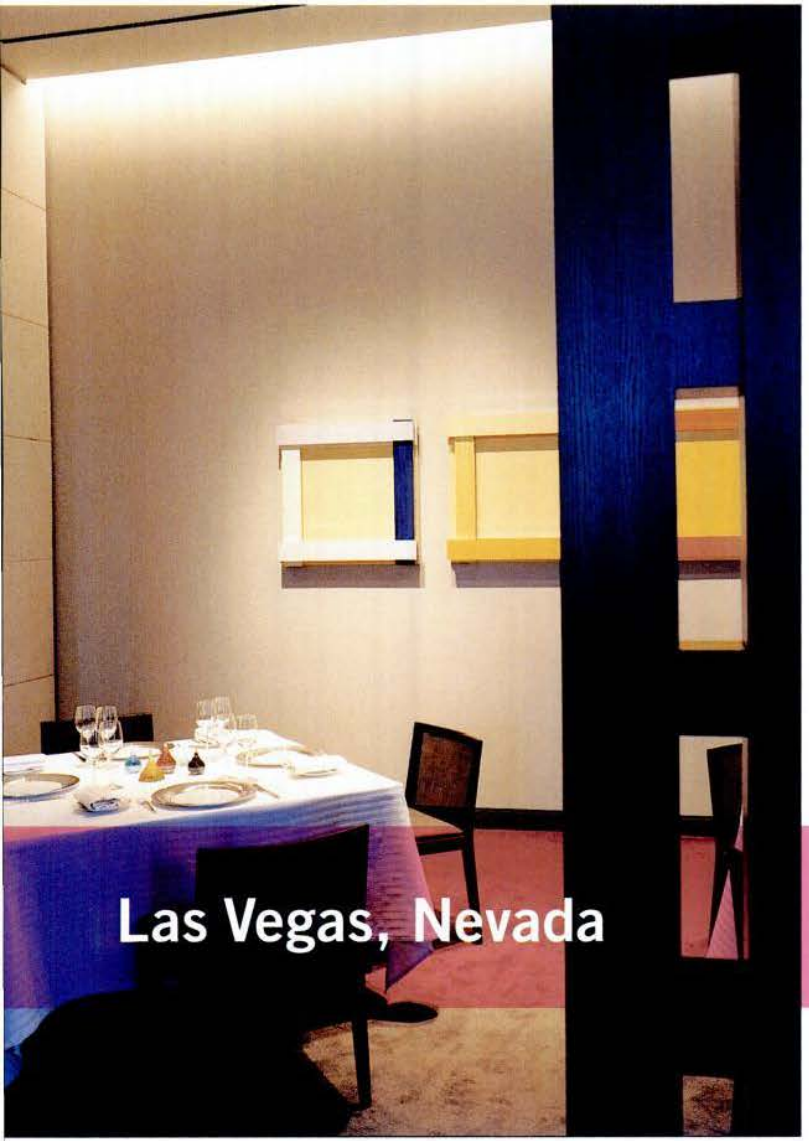
Restaurant Guy Savoy at Caesars Palace (below) signals that things are looking up in Vegas while the Golden Steer (below right) shows that for all the change, some things just stay the same.

Robuchon show up (L'Atelier de Joël and the Mansion at MGM Grand), we've had Guy Savoy show up (Restaurant Guy Savoy at Caesars Palace), plus many other top-notch chefs. You can have a phenomenal meal—a really, really superlative meal, one of the best meals in the country, if not the world—and pair it with whatever wine you desire. That's unheard of. It's mind-blowing.

In my business, I talk a lot about exposing people to new ideas and concepts. Robuchon and the others may be thinking the same thing: There's something exciting about seeing Americans exposed to purist French cuisine. You don't always have to put a hamburger on the menu.

How about something for those of us who can't swing $200 prix fixe dinners?
Try the Golden Steer Steak House. It's over on Sahara. The Rat Pack used to hang out there. They have the big slabs o' meat, huge potatoes. But the really great part is that you can sit at Buddy Hackett's favorite table—all those guys have their names on the booths. And the waiters have been there forever, which is also very cool, because everything is so transient here.

There's also a phenomenal Thai restaurant in town that is more affordable. I'd say it's one of the best Thai restaurants in the country. But it's my secret. If people want to know the name, they'll have to come into Unicahome and ask me. ■



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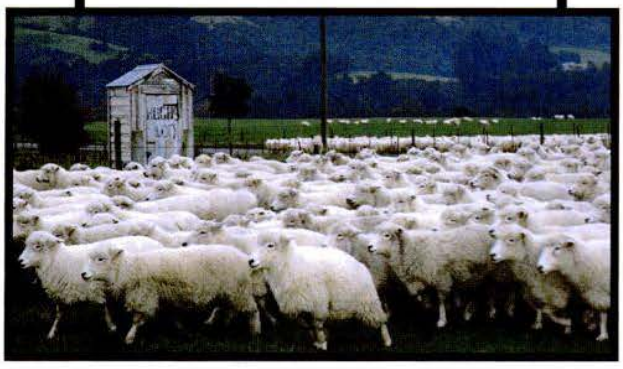


From a rural outhouse in New Zealand (far left) to a terrifying urinal in Tokyo that sings, sways, and takes pictures (opposite, near right) to a pint-size kangaroo toilet in Turkey (opposite, far right), there's a toilet out there for every taste. More photos and information on multicultural loos can be found in *Toilets of the World* by Morna E. Gregory and Sian James.

CULTURAL COMMOD(E)ITY

In 1937, as the modern movement in Europe faced the stifling rise of fascism, the leftist French Union des Artistes Modernes hosted a pavilion at the Paris World's Fair that presented, among other things, an avant-garde toilet.

Designed by a threesome at the heart of domestic modernism—Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Charlotte Perriand—the toilet combined an homage to the machine age with a resolute cosmopolitanism. Knee-level hinged seat fixtures were cantilevered together from the wall above a ceramic bowl in the floor. Depending on their preferred technique, users could position the fixtures to choose between standing, sitting, and squatting. A basin could also lower to serve as a bidet.

Pondered, presupposed, or suppressed, intimacy is inherent to every toilet design. With candid readiness, this toilet brought cultural tolerance into an intimate human function. It attempted to bridge the gap between toilet-visiting styles that can loosely be dubbed Eastern and Western: squatting and washing with water (Eastern) versus sitting and wiping with paper (Western). It carefully entwined a psychoanalytical interest in excretion with visions of a modernist utopia that might bridge the gap between distinct societies. Perhaps, the toilet silently proposed, open-mindedness begins in the bathroom.

As the Corbusier/Jeanneret/Perriand toilet approaches its 70th anniversary, human beings are traveling the globe and intermingling regional customs at unprecedented speeds, yet a cursory glance at world events suggests we are a long way from respecting each others' cultural differences. But when it comes to toilets, exactly what are those differences?

The Eastern and Western designations hold true only if we allow for exceptions. In most of the Middle and Far East, squatting toilets are the norm, though sitting toilets abound in major metropolises, tourist destinations, and Japan. Sitting toilets dominate the Americas and western Europe, but squatting ones are often found in areas of Eastern influence, such as Mediterranean countries and Chinese neighborhoods.

As for wiping versus washing, the former has been habitual in the West, perhaps ever since the ancient Romans wiped with a sponge on a stick that sat in a bucket of saltwater for reuse. Toilet paper, which has been sold by the roll in America since the late 1800s, was invented in China in the 14th century for the use

PHOTOS COURTESY MERRILL PUBLISHERS

of emperors. Washing is ubiquitous in Japan, where cleanliness is a national obsession, and all over the Middle East, as some detailed rules about washing after relieving oneself are among the edicts of Islam. The bidet is indispensable in much of southern Europe, perhaps thanks to Middle Eastern influence.

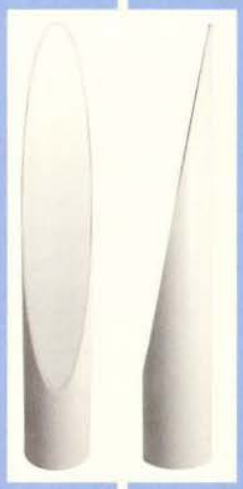
It's easy to delight in the toilet as a reflection of culture, but that relationship is only straightforward in some cases. The famed Japanese toilets, with complex bidet switch systems and automatic moving parts, neatly epitomize the country's mechanized hygiene. In the U.S., a penchant for neocolonial toilet aesthetics might reflect our ongoing interest in colonialism.

However, toilet quirks are often purely practical or merely inconsequential. In Germany, toilets that feature the "shit shelf"—a dry platform in the bowl where unmentionables land and stay until the toilet is flushed—became common because a meat-heavy diet made scat inspection a good idea until food-safety innovations in the last century. Traditional Chinese squat toilets resemble bedroom slippers, for no apparent reason.

What truly define toilet styles the world over are the practical goals of staying clean, healthy, and comfortable. Different cultures find different means to this same end. A little lack of worldliness and a touch of immaturity make it fun to scrutinize the variety, but it's not a productive pastime. This message was at the heart of Corbusier/Jeanneret/Perriand's 1937 toilet: The most avant-garde approach is to embrace the variety as a celebration of human ingenuity, and leave it at that.

Most people probably don't know about the other WTO, the World Toilet Organization—a nonprofit established in 2001 and committed to improving toilet standards in the developing and developed worlds. Its priorities make little room for cultural nuances, and focus on finding environmentally responsible ways to dispose of human waste and provide toilets for impoverished parts of the world that have none. Last year the *New York Times* reported that adolescent girls in Africa are dropping out of schools because they have no toilets; earlier this year it reported that one school in Beirut has six toilets for a thousand people.

As the 21st century greets humanity with a host of new problems, perhaps it's time for some new toilets. Taking modernism's cosmopolitan outlook as a springboard for fresh ideas, design has much to offer; the WTO anxiously awaits.



▲ **Bilboa mirror** / By PT Design / www.dutchbydesign.com

EauZone shower / By Matki / www.matki.co.uk

GLASS

No longer stuck in the '50s pink- or yellow-tiled rut, today bath fixtures come in a wide variety of materials. For those who enjoy visibility (and Windex), glass is a clear choice.

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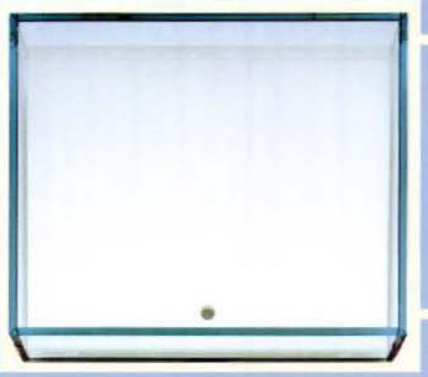
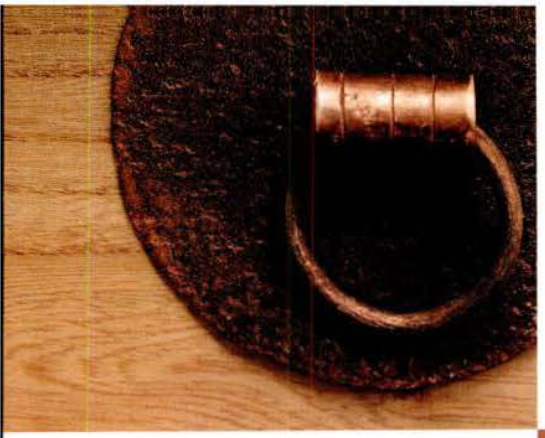
▲ **LAV002 washbasin** / By Bainedini Associati for Agape / www.agapedesign.it





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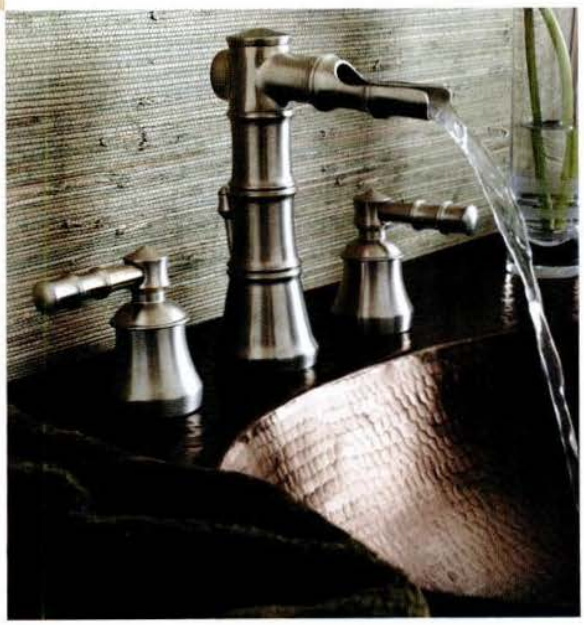

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▲ **Hinoki wood bath mat** / By VivaTerra / www.vivaterra.com

▲ **Toilet seat in teak** / By William Garvey / www.williamgarvey.co.uk

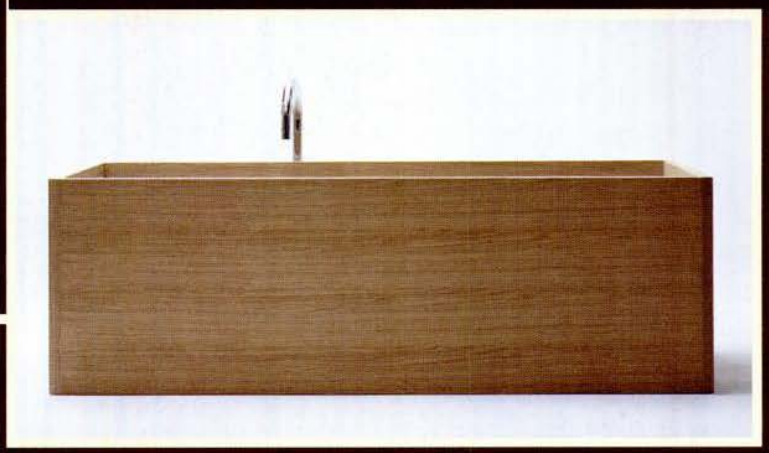
▲ **AERI sink in birch wood** / By Whitehaus Collection / www.whitehauscollection.com

WOOD

Wood has been used for centuries to submerge bathing beauties, but most people still think of it only for cabinets, furniture, and floors. A new outpouring of innovative wood-based design, from teak toilet seats to bamboo towels, should help replant wood back in the bathroom.

▲ **Bamboo and cotton towels** / By Vipp / www.vipp.dk

▼ **Woodline bathtub in plywood** / By Benedini Associati for Agape / www.agapedesign.it



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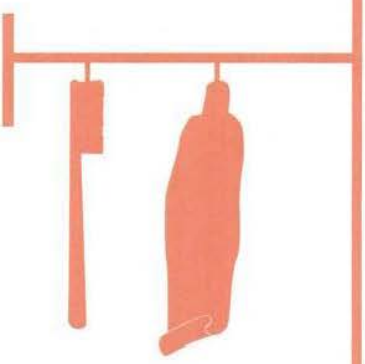
▲ **Outline washbasin and toilet** / By Maya Cohen for Althea Ceramica / www.altheaceramica.it

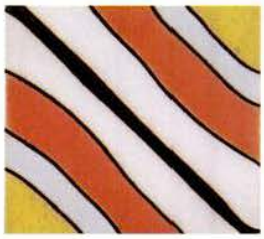
▼ **Scoop bathtub** / By Michael Schmidt for Falper / www.falper.it

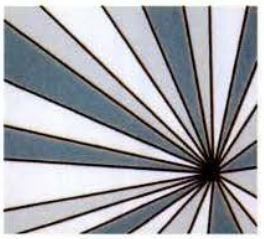
CERAMIC

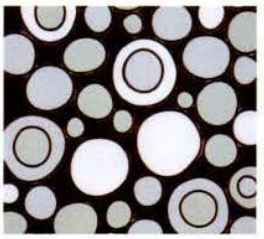
Long considered to be the standard bathroom material, ceramic is no longer boring. New shapes and colors help redefine what was once only basic bisque or beige.

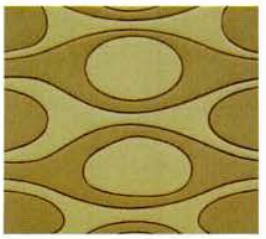


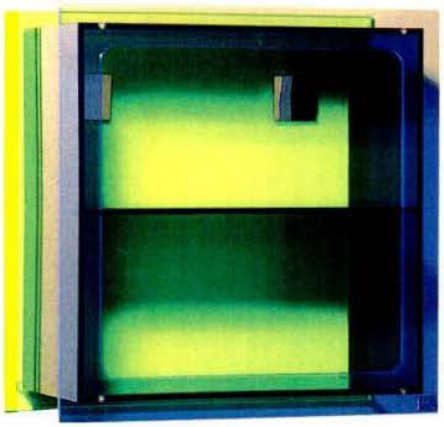
▼ **Tiles** / By Angela Adams Graphics for Ann Sacks / www.annsacks.com

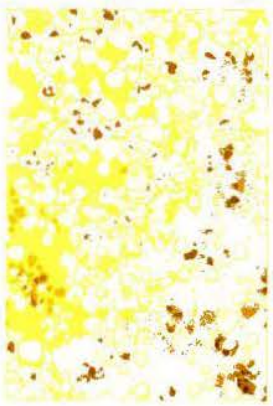












Dwell Community Events and Promotions

Win a Modern Carpet

Renowned for quality and craftsmanship, emma gardner design is proud to introduce Curio, a new hand-tufted wool rug. It was designed by Emma Gardner, who is recognized throughout the design community for her great color combinations and fresh point of view.

Made in India using 100 percent New Zealand wool, which is prized for its thick softness and bright coloration, the rugs are sheared, shaped, and finished by hand for a truly handcrafted result.

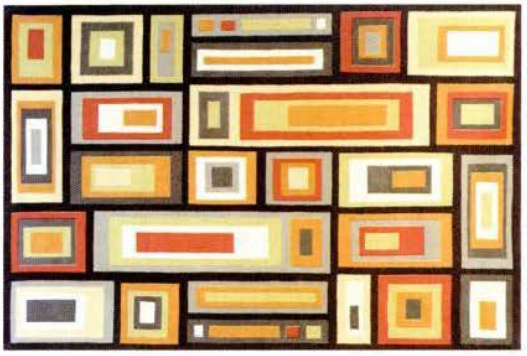
Interior Design's Green Zone points out, "N.Z. wool is a renewable resource, biodegradable, naturally fire retardant, has great insulating properties, resilient, and it's durable."

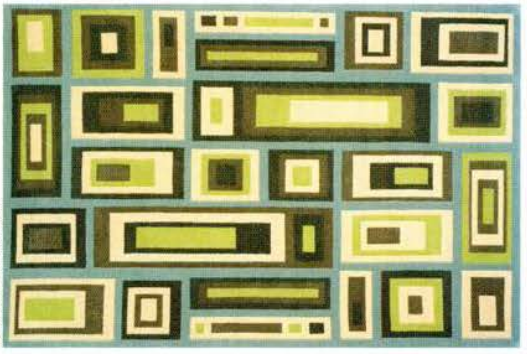
As a member of RugMark, emma gardner design is able to assure that no illegal child labor is used in the making of its rugs.

To enter to win one of these rugs—valued at $1,998—visit www.dwell.com/emmagardnerdesign.
Ten runners up will receive a 25% discount.

For more information about emma gardner design, please visit www.emmagardnerdesign.com.

emma gardner design





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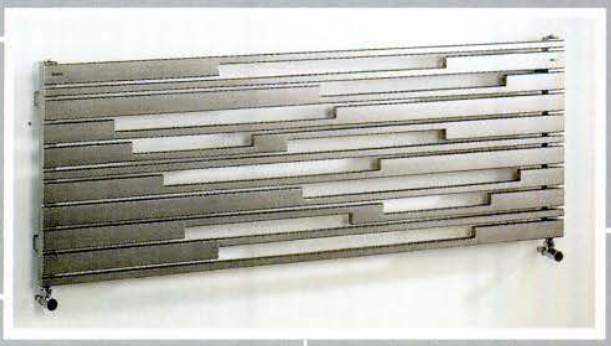

▲ **Stradivari radiator** / By Luca Scacchetti for Aestus

www.aestus-radiators.com

▲ **Sinko drain plug** / By Olof Hansson / www.scandinaviandesigncenter.com

▲ **Easyshelf** / By Blumprodukt / www.blumprodukt.de

METAL

An easy conduit for hot and cold water alike, metal assumes a multiplicity of contemporary shapes, from globular showerheads to rectilinear radiators.

▲ **WaterTile Rain overhead showering panel** / By Kohler / www.us.kohler.com

▲ **Istanbul Collection** / By Ross Lovegrove for VitrA / www.vitra-bathrooms.com

Dwell Discussion Boards at LiveModern™

Join us in the conversation about all things modern at dwell.com/forums hosted by LiveModern.

LiveModern is a free and open community for modern home buyers, architects, builders, developers, furnishers, lenders, realtors—anyone interested in modernist housing.

LiveModern gives you free tools you can use to live better:

Follow the progress of many modern house projects in LiveModern's blogs, our members' online journals.

Find other modernists, in geographic forums covering over 30 communities including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Austin, and New York, and in an open directory of over 10,000 members.

Help each other with a modernist housing project, whether it is finding that perfect piece in the Furniture, Fixtures, and Furnishings forum or that elusive construction solution in the Modernist Materials and Methods forum.

dwell LiveModern™

The Dwell Homes by Empyrean

From left: a rendering of a Resolution: 4 Architecture house in Venice, California; a FlatPak goes up in Lincoln, Massachusetts; and a rendering of a NextHouse planned for Hillsboro, North Carolina.

For your own Dwell Home, log on to www.thedwellhomes-byempyrean.com.

Last fall, we announced the Dwell Homes by Empyrean, a partnership between Dwell, Empyrean International, LLC, and the architecture firms Lazor Office and Resolution: 4 Architecture. This partnership was born out of our 2003 Dwell Home Design Invitational, a competition to design a modern prefab home for production. With the team we've assembled, we've endeavored to bring modern prefab to the marketplace, and are pleased to report that the Dwell Homes by Empyrean has, in just one year, been retained to build homes for 49 clients.

Three customizable, architect-designed homes launched the program: the Resolution: 4 Architecture Dwell Home, the FlatPak by Lazor Office, and the NextHouse by Joel Turkel of Empyrean. The first Dwell Home by Empyrean to be built, which will be completed this month, is a FlatPak house in Lincoln, Massachusetts. The first Res: 4 home is planned for Mount Desert Island, Maine, while the first NextHouse will be in Carlisle, Massachusetts. In North Carolina, construction has begun on the first Dwell Homes model home, a NextHouse, slated to open to the public in early 2007.

Building projects are currently under way in California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia. Eighteen are currently in the permitting phase, and we anticipate that construction will begin within the next few months. The majority of Dwell Home clients are building single-family homes, but we are excited to be embarking on a number of multiunit projects, the largest being an 18-unit development in Los Angeles and a 14-unit project for the city of Minneapolis.

Empyrean architect Joel Turkel has observed what he sees as a positive trend in modern prefab homebuilding—namely, using standard plans and making minor modifications, as opposed to starting from scratch each time. "I anticipate that this will make these homes much more cost-effective as time progresses," Turkel explains.

"Making a real dent in the current housing landscape with modern prefab choices requires multiple skills and capabilities," says Charlie Lazor, designer of the FlatPak house. "FlatPak, Res: 4, Empyrean, and Dwell, each doing what they do best, constitute a powerful team to deliver more good design to more people, more easily. As we end our first 'season,' our playbook has progressed from fantasy prefab to putting real houses in the field. We're excited to enter season two with a honed playbook and a team that is gelling." ■

Dwell Community Events and Promotions

Hot Plates

Seamlessly blending form into function, the Kenneth Cole Reaction tabletop collection reflects the thoughtful nature of the designer and the metropolitan inspiration of the brand Kenneth Cole has created. These sophisticated yet versatile pieces represent the point at which an aspirational lifestyle finally becomes accessible.

Kenneth Cole Reaction tabletop is available at select Macy's and Dillard's locations. For more information visit: www.kennethcolereaction.com or call 877-REACTION.

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Shown: Detail

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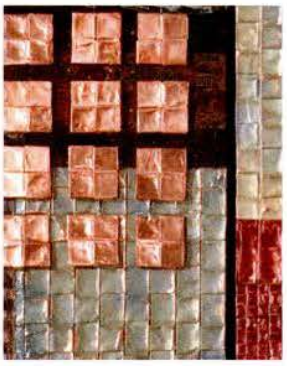

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Shown: Organic cotton crib bedding

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Shown: Stargazing, *36" x 48"*
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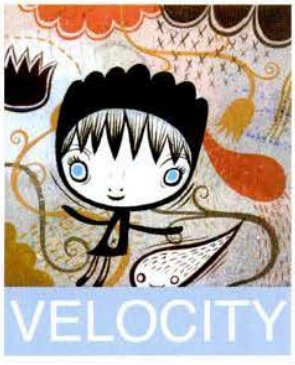

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Shown: Original artwork by Jeremiah Ketner

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The Modern Minimalist

Two new designs have now been added to the TMM gallery.

TMM seeks purity in expressions of aesthetics and functionality in design through the concept of simplicity. This approach reduces design to the essential components of space, light, mass, volume, and form.

www.tmmplans.com
www.themodernminimalist.com

The Modern Minimalist

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Visit www.momastore.org to view MoMA's complete selection of holiday cards and ornaments, to order online, or for store locations.

Shown: Contemporary Christmas, by John McDonald

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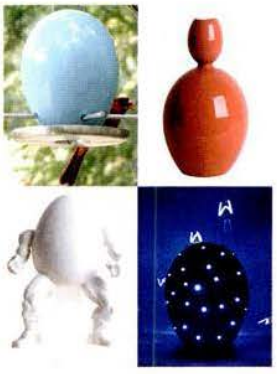

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Shown: Vogue 31 original painting 22" x 30", $175

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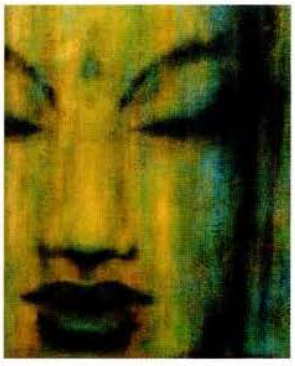

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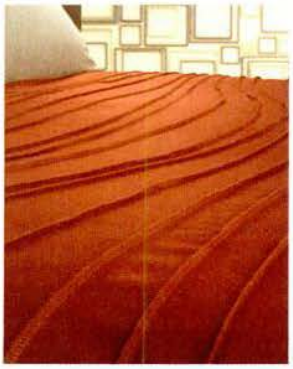

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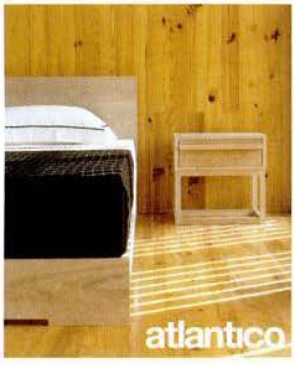

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Shown: Kate bracelet: colored concrete, sterling silver, pearls

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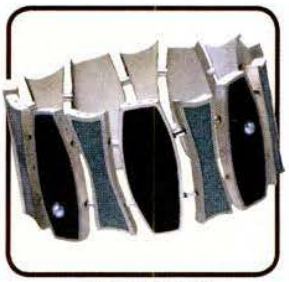

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Shown: Kazaguruma (Pinwheel) pendant, in Japanese cedar by Toshiyuki Tani, ETL listed (UL/CSA)

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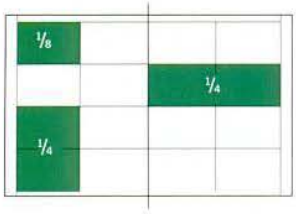
Dwell's Modern Market pages are dedicated print storefronts featuring art, products, and architecture and design services. Formatted 1/8 page or 1/4 page, four-color ads are available in the formats shown below.



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Contact:
East: Lauren Dismuke-Zivyak
lauren@dwell.com
Tel. (212) 382-2010 x25
Southwest: Tracey Lasko
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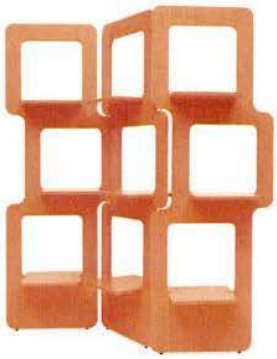

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When Objects Work

Domestic objects that are both useful and beautiful by John Pawson, Vincent Van Duysen, Bataille + iBens, and others.

Shown: Candle Holder by John Pawson

Matin
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Shown: Small Tote business brief

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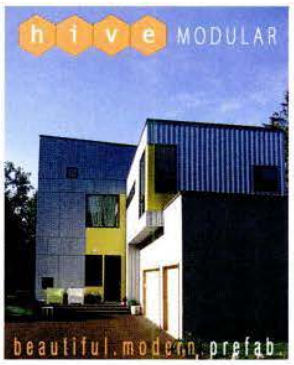

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Damian Velasquez

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Shown: Milano desk
60" L x 30" W x 30" H

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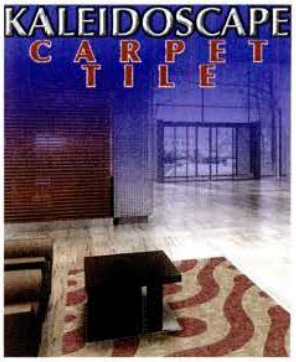

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Shown: Round, square, and oval knobs

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Shown: B52 Stainless Steel Bar, ca. 1952

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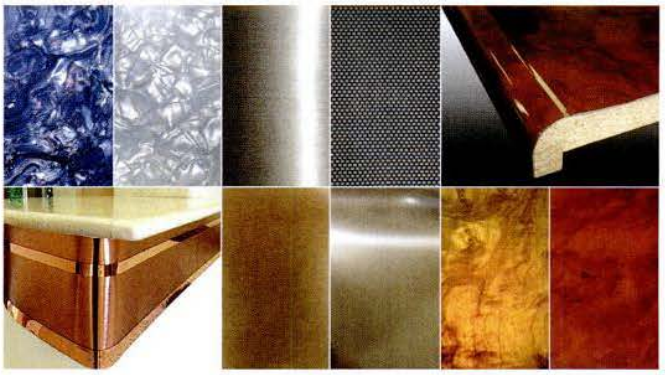

Swarm Gallery

Structural and furniture designs by Gregg Fleishman. The new DH1 made from sustainable Baltic birch and pre-finished with phenolic resin on both sides; structure assembles without fasteners. Four-point contact to slab, footings/pads, simple router-cut manufacturing; localized production and easy shipping/assembly. Insulated/waterproofed with plastic canvas or other skin (not included).

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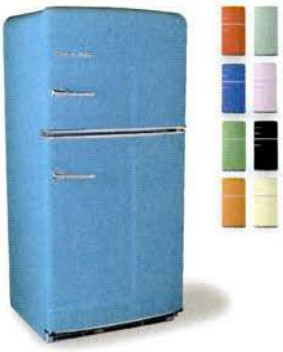

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Shown: Sand Pattern 8, by Clifford Baker

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Shown: SIU404 Island Hood

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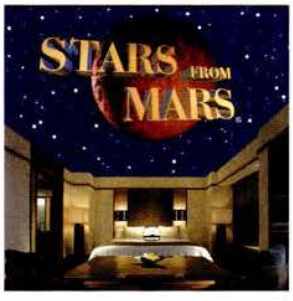

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Shown: "Oval Form," white matte surface, 14.5"W x 9"H x 2"D

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Shown: P120 Double Basin Vanity

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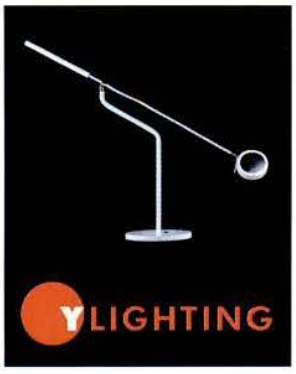

YLighting

Now shipping the long-anticipated Three Sixty table lamp by FontanaArte. Available in several finishes, Three Sixty offers the utmost in flexibility with unique joints on the arm and shaft that allow each to rotate up to 300 degrees.

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Shown: Random bookcase and Sliding sofa, both by MDF Italia

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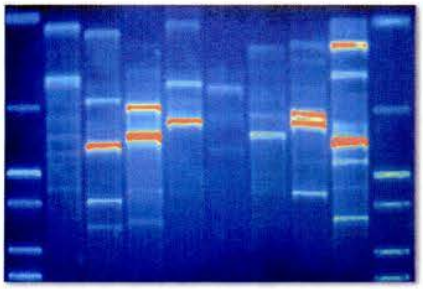

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Shown: Profil lav set with onyx inlay

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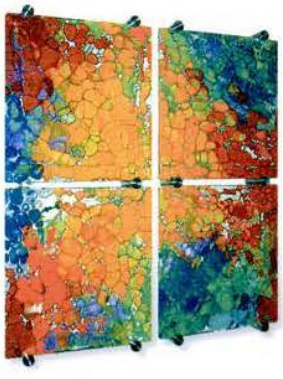

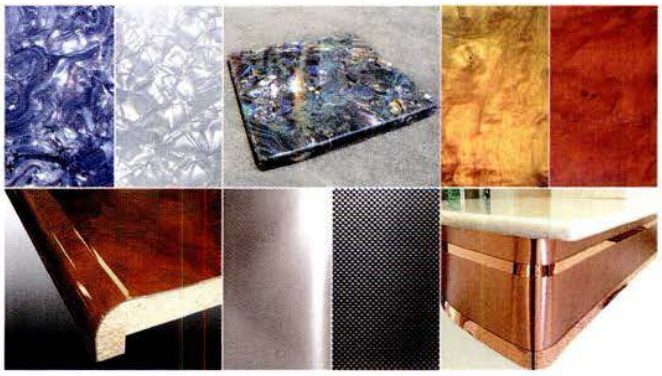

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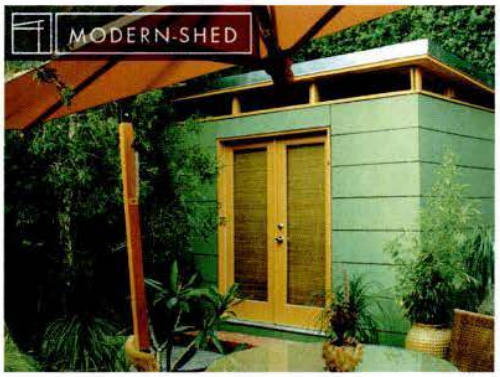

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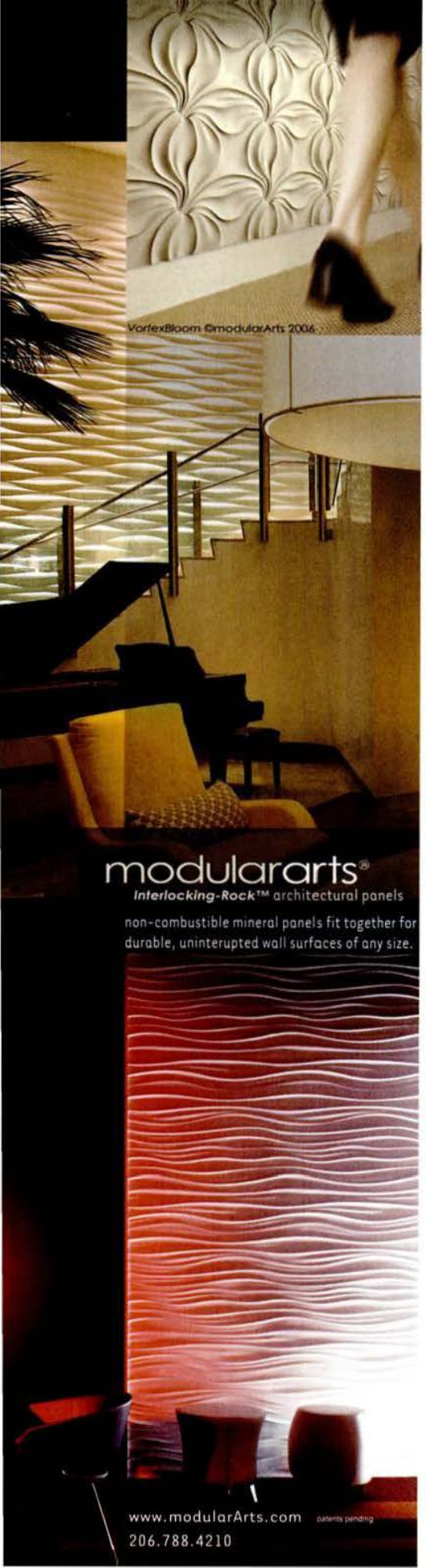

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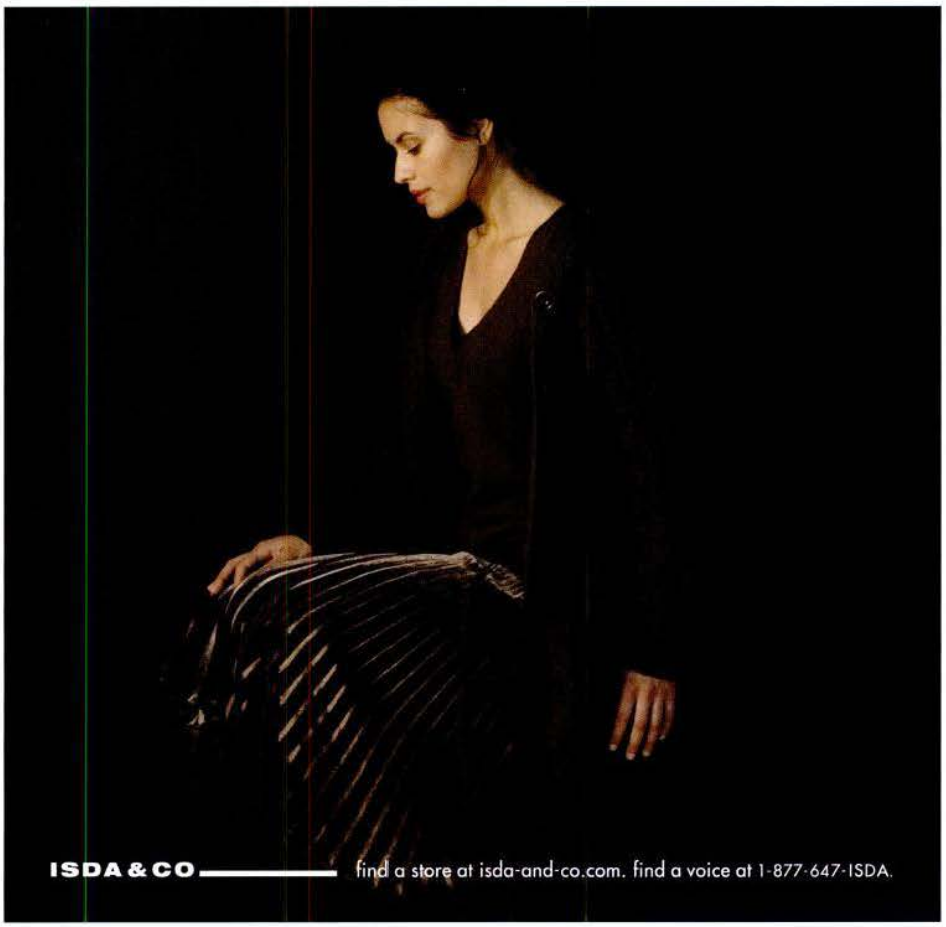

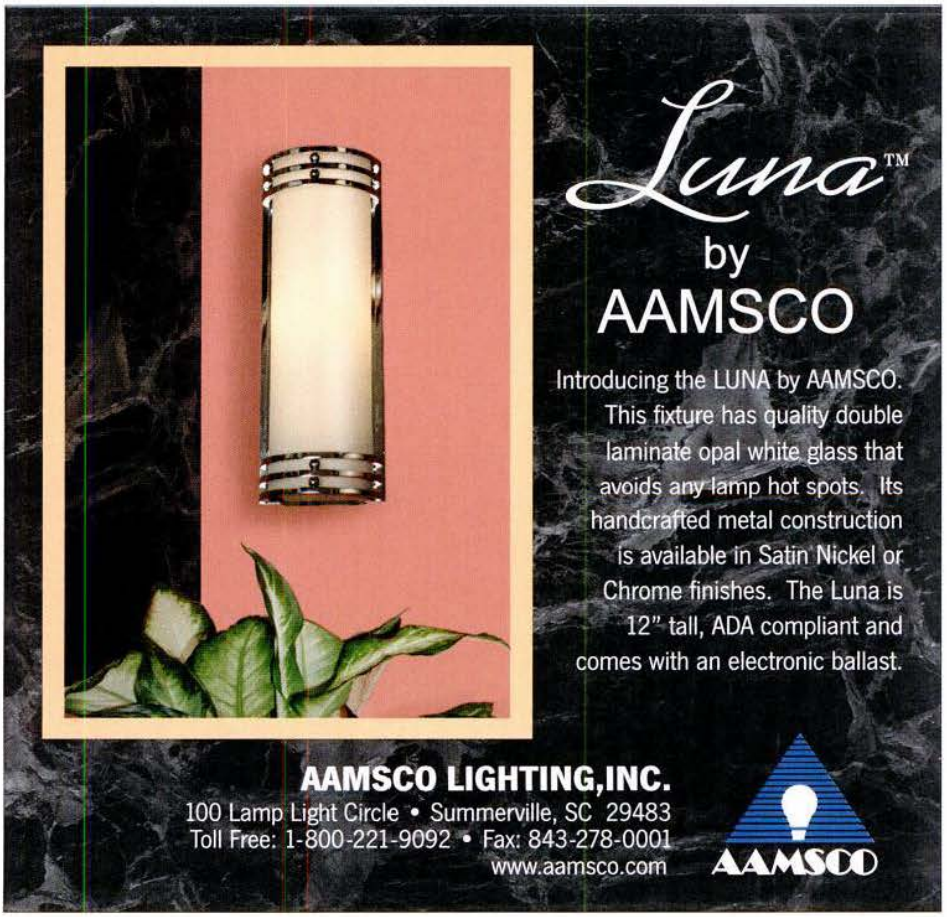

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We Dig It

"We had a ball designing and building this house," says Paul Pedini of his Lexington, Massachusetts, home, which uses 300 tons of material cast off from the Central Artery, a demolished and rerouted Boston highway. The I-beams, steel columns, century-old wooden marine piers, and 13 reinforced-concrete Inversets (weighing up to 25 tons each) were rescued from the Big Dig, one of the largest public-works projects in the country's history. "The momentum created by the reuse of the highway slabs and steel beams made us look at the recycling of many items that we would never have normally considered," Pedini continues. "It is possible to use almost any otherwise unwanted object, if you work hard enough and use a good coat of paint, to create good design."

Pedini drafted Cambridge-based Single Speed Design to design the home. Construction went quickly because the team used highway ramps and bridge piers as-is, and framed the house using the same methods employed to put up the original Interstate 93 offramps. The interlocking boxes and planes of glass, steel, concrete, and cedar retain the epic stature of their previous lives as temporary elevated roadways.

Pedini, an engineer specializing in highways and tunnels, had the idea to recycle the materials and, serving as his own general contractor, cut and drilled the steel himself, along with his wife, Cristina Perez-Pedini, and two ironworkers. The structure, which once bore the weight of a highway trafficked by 18-wheel trucks, can carry massive loads. Atop the flat garage and the highest section of roof, bamboo gardens are sustained by rainwater stored in an underground storage tank also salvaged from the Big Dig, in a rain-collection system engineered by Perez-Pedini, who is a water-resources engineer.

The house could have implications for the public realm if, in future large-scale demolitions, recycling were to become part of urban planning. Strategic, front-end efforts like this could save valuable resources, embodied energy, and taxpayer dollars. But will we listen? ■

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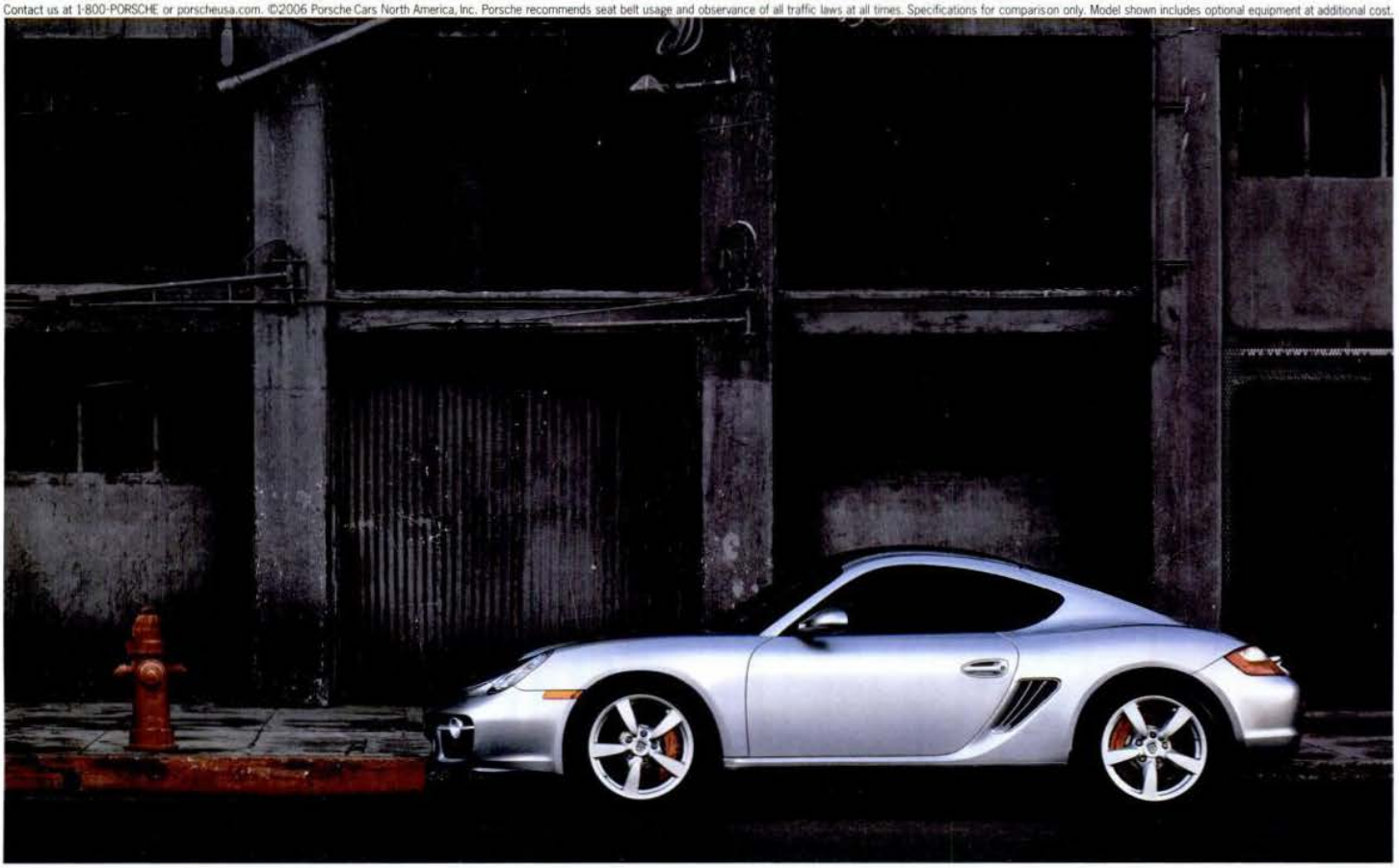

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