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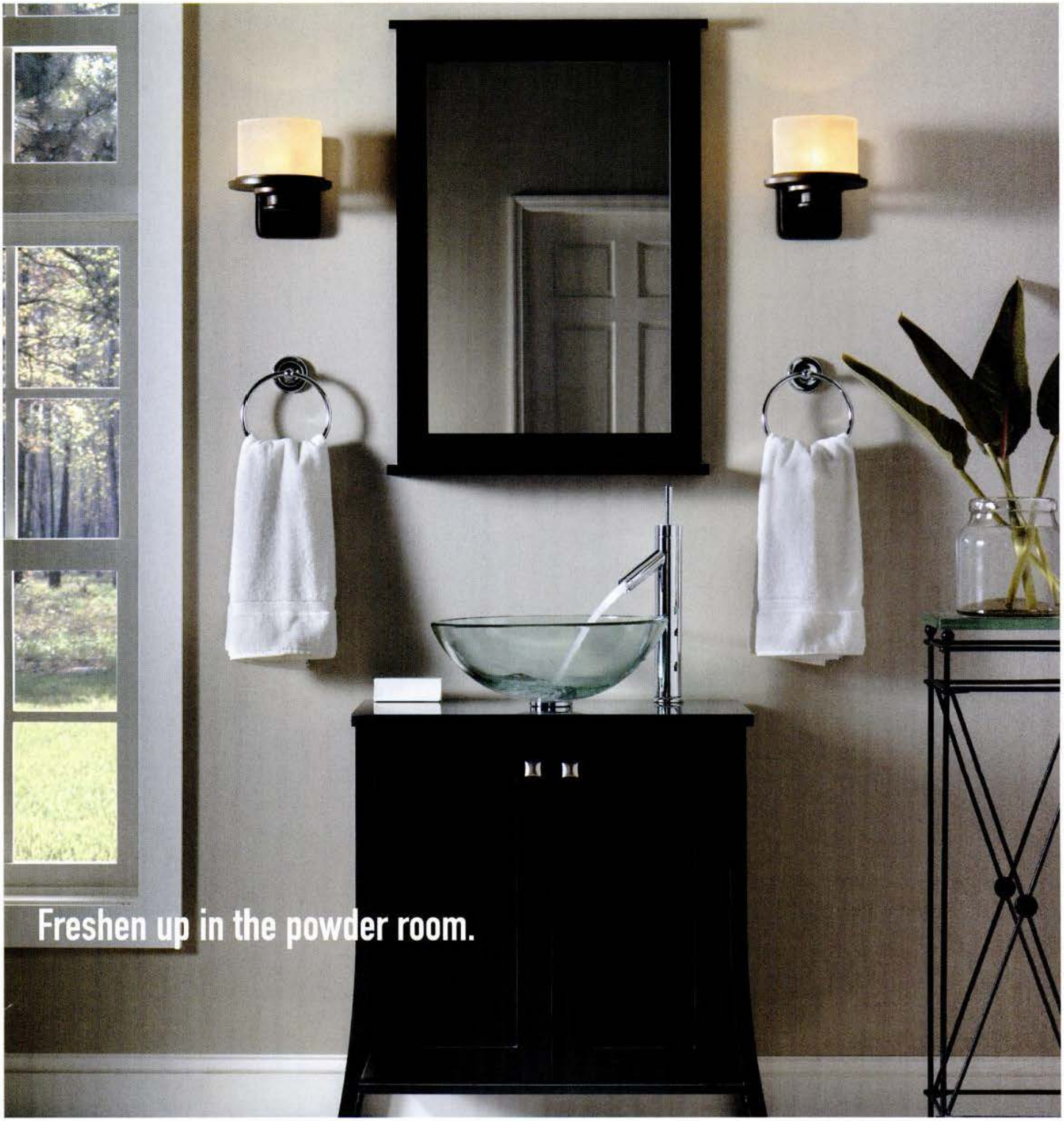

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Modern Within Reach
March 2007

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Cover: Rihn Residence, Austin, Texas, page 63
Photo by Misty Keasler

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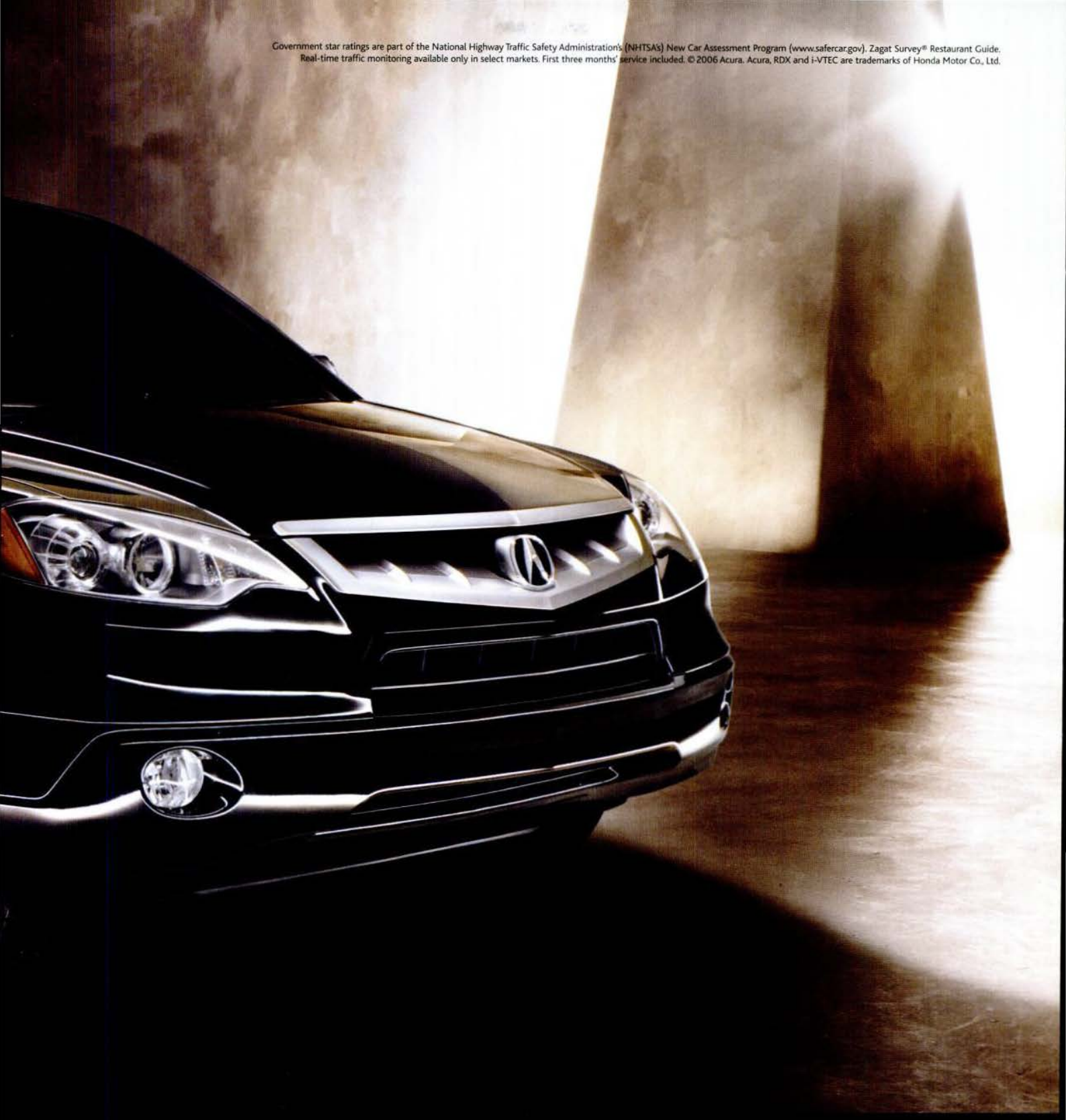

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It is with a tear in our eye that we say goodbye to the old office on Osgood alley. We will always hold dear our old digs. Loogie man, tattoo guy—in the words of Stevie Nicks, "When you were good, baby, you were very good." Oh-so-good.

PHOTO BY AYA BRACKETT

Dwell came highly recommended from the design chapter of Daniel Pink's book *The Whole New Mind*. Consequently, buying my first copy, I was immediately impressed with the December/January 2007 issue's title theme: community. In many ways, building community has been a focus throughout my life. The concept of community seems so antiquated in our modern world, yet here it is in a high-grade design publication. You've shown modern community in stimulating and innovative ways. Bravo!

Teresa Verde
Seattle, Washington

As an ex-architect who has lived in densely populated cities, I read with interest the article "Community Building" (December/January 2007). Today I am a filmmaker and multimedia professional and frequent online sites such as youtube.com almost daily—where the community chatter is nonstop. It is a stark difference, as you say, to the real world where people living next door to each other hardly ever talk.

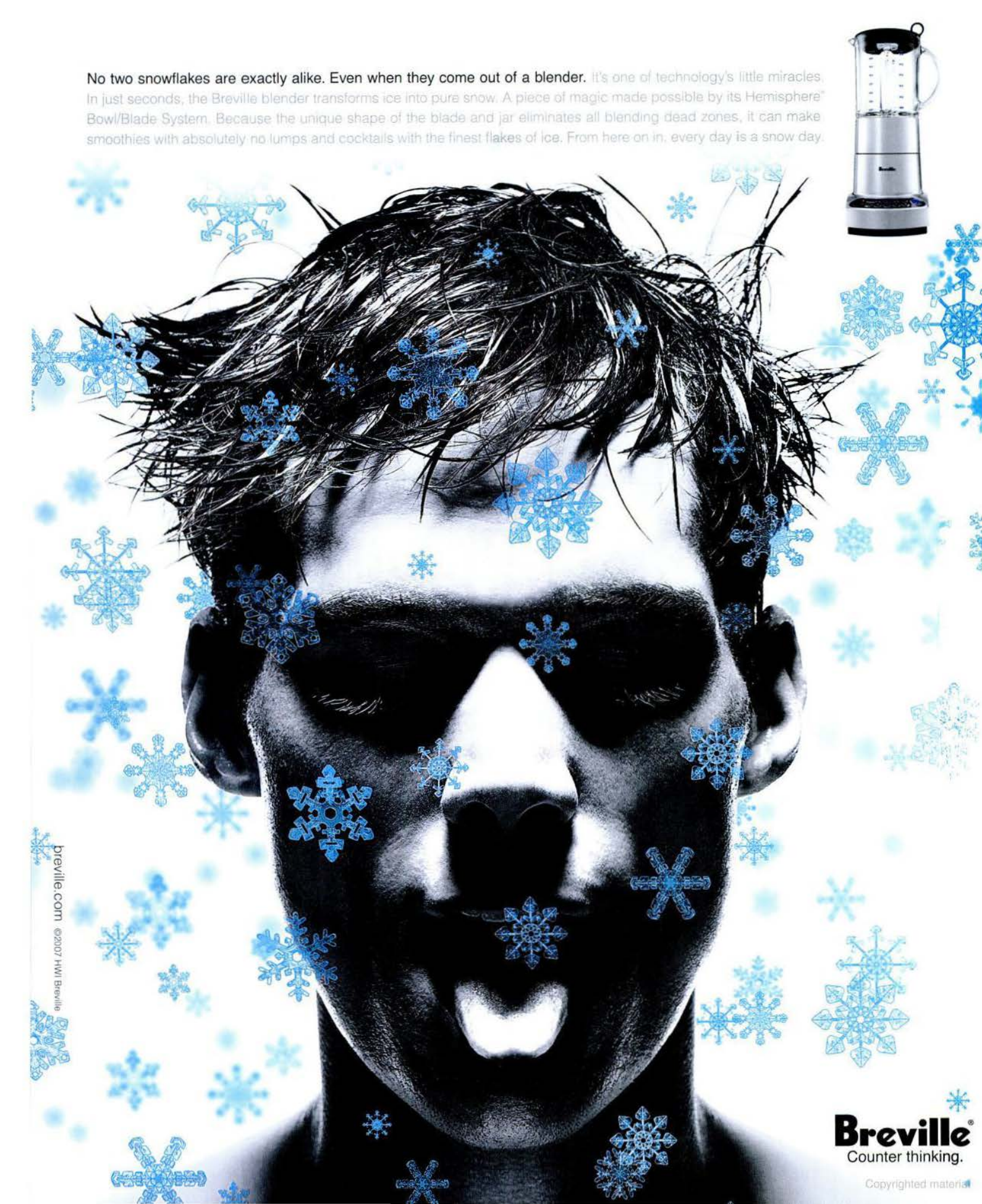
But there are parts of cities where a new kind of community is encouraging neighbors to interact with each other and the neighborhood. Take my own experience: I moved from South Beach to a working-class neighborhood three miles away called Wynwood. Every second Saturday a number of neighbors and I participate in art openings and exhibitions that are organized by the Wynwood Art District Association. It is a very successful event, where like-minded neighbors open their doors to the public and everyone wanders through the spaces to view art, video, and photography.

Where once I would never stop to talk to a neighbor, I now find myself chatting with them about events in our neighborhood and in our building. This would not be happening without the support of our neighborhood association, which not only displays street banners and uses local media advertising to encourage the public to visit on the second Saturday event, but also encourages building owners and neighbors to participate as a community.

Jon Braeley
Miami, Florida

"Capital Cleanup" (December/January 2007) reports that the planned Environmental Education Center along the Anacostia River in Washington, DC, will be designed to achieve platinum status on the LEED scale and comments, "It will be the only one in Washington."

That comment is incorrect. In September 2006, the Sidwell Friends School opened an expanded and renovated middle school that has been designed to obtain platinum certification. ►



As part of the project, there is also a constructed wetlands that will filter the water used by the middle school—another first in Washington, DC. Founded in 1883 as a Quaker school, Sidwell Friends believes the Quaker testimony to stewardship obligates our community to build green.

Lane Heard
Washington, DC

It's too bad the transportation series ("Perpetual Motion: How Transportation Shapes America") has ended; I really enjoyed it. Unfortunately, you shot a hole in your credibility by incorrectly referring to the Portland Streetcar as MAX. Portland has two streetcar systems: One is the far-ranging regional light rail know as MAX, the oldest of the two, and the other is the smaller-scale local system known as the Portland Streetcar that you pictured, and which runs only on the west side of the river, from the Pearl District through the downtown core to the university.

Portland would bear future scrutiny from a design standpoint. Its much-vaunted and regularly attacked development boundaries are something of a joke. Yes, they exist, and yes, they have kept open space open, so far, but within them they have also continued to build horizontally, and with very low density. Office parks, strip malls, and single-family homes—albeit on smaller lots. While Portland has saved most of its early-20th-century downtown buildings, and is building where parking lots or lesser buildings stood, the towers that thrust skyward do so on blocks that don't accommodate them, and grand old buildings look far more cramped than in other cities.

What struck me most on my recent visit was that Portland is a loved city. People who live there want to be there, and they're proud of their town, and you can feel it just walking the streets. Yes, you ought to go back and visit Portland again—it would be very interesting.

Paul Tominac
San Francisco, California

I have no architectural background, yet I repeat- edly find myself picking up the latest Dwell at the bookstore. The reason is simple: I find the writing very accessible and very relevant to problems facing the world today. The features on sustainable building, prefabs, and the piece on Columbus, Indiana, were all very cool (I'm a Hoosier native).

Sidhartha Mohanty
Champaign, Illinois

As a former ski bum and big fan of Dwell, I am troubled by your "Ski Lift" article (December/January 2007). I have spent many years in ski country living in places such as Colorado; Jackson Hole, Wyoming; and Teton Valley, Idaho. In addition, I grew up in Vermont and Minnesota. Therefore, I am very familiar with cold weather. The home, with its wraparound windows and energy-sucking fireplace, looks to be very cold in the winter. The homeowner, with her wool hat, also seems to support this.

Just because a building is modern looking doesn't make it sustainable or green. I currently live in a very sunny place on the east side of the Sierra Mountains. We live in an energy-efficient house with in-floor heating, concrete floors, south-facing windows, and great passive solar. However, we still need insulated blinds for the passive solar to truly last throughout a cold night. The Winter Park house seems to not only lack this essential component, but it also lacks a garage. Carports work in Southern California, but they are not good in ski towns. Additionally, any true ski bum has an assortment of skis and other outdoor recreational toys that need to be stored in a dry place. Carports are neither dry nor warm.

There may be some energy-saving elements of this house that I am missing, but it seems to be a Btu hog. Perhaps the Arizona-based designer and the former New York city homeowner should have consulted a few of the local professionals for energy-efficiency tips and spent more than five minutes on the design. By the way, who is Ungaro anyway?

Lesley Allen
Bishop, California

Note from the architect, Michael P. Johnson: *Over the span of 49 years, I have built in Arizona, Wisconsin, Colorado, New York, and Canada and always consider the importance of passive solar benefits. The Hiller residence performs so well that on most days, the client must open the windows to exit the heat gain. At night, she shuts down the radiant in-floor heating and sleeps very well.*

The house was designed with ample consideration for storage of skis and other essential outdoor recreational toys. The client did not feel the need for a garage and therefore it was not part of the building program.

Thank you for your recent article on Frank Lloyd Wright and the delightful interviews with the homeowners ("Wright Now," November 2006). I was recently allowed to tour the Ray Brandes House, one of the other two homes designed by Mr. Wright in Washington state. If you'd like to see my photos, you can find them at www.amadeo.com/blog.

Damon Buxton
Bothell, Washington

As a loyal reader of Dwell, I wanted to know if you knew about something I'd seen and whether or not it has an official connection with Dwell: www.dwellingson3rd.com. I recently saw the presentation center for this development whilst out walking in Vancouver, and was surprised to see the Dwell logo being prominently used. Great, I thought. A new development in Vancouver that was going to be in partnership with Dwell and therefore with the great ethics and philosophy of the magazine. But then I looked at their website and found no mention whatsoever of Dwell magazine. Just thought you should know, in case you don't already. I would be interested to hear your thoughts.

Dan O'Leary
Vancouver, British Columbia

Editors' Note: *While we are flattered that Dwell is being recognized as a marketable brand, it is unfortunate that our identity is being appropriated to confuse consumers and our loyal fan base. We have no affiliation with dwellingson3rd. We appreciate your discernment and hope that others have not been tricked by this regrettable marketing strategy.*

So many of the houses featured in Dwell are what I would call "bird killers." Houses with expanses of exterior glass are bright and open, but it is disconcerting—not to mention horribly sad—to be lounging about or eating lunch in the sunlight when one of our feathered friends suddenly dashes itself upon the glass. Are there artful ways to prevent this?

Keith Vargo
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Editors' Note: *We have yet to find an effective and attractive solution to this problem. However, there are organizations like FLAP (www.flap.org) that are committed to mitigating migratory bird fatalities. Dressing windows with MECO window shades (www.mecoshade.com) or any other translucent window covering (see "Shed Some Light," March 2005) is another option, as these products afford light and a view outdoors while appearing opaque from the outside. We will continue to be on the lookout for viable options.*

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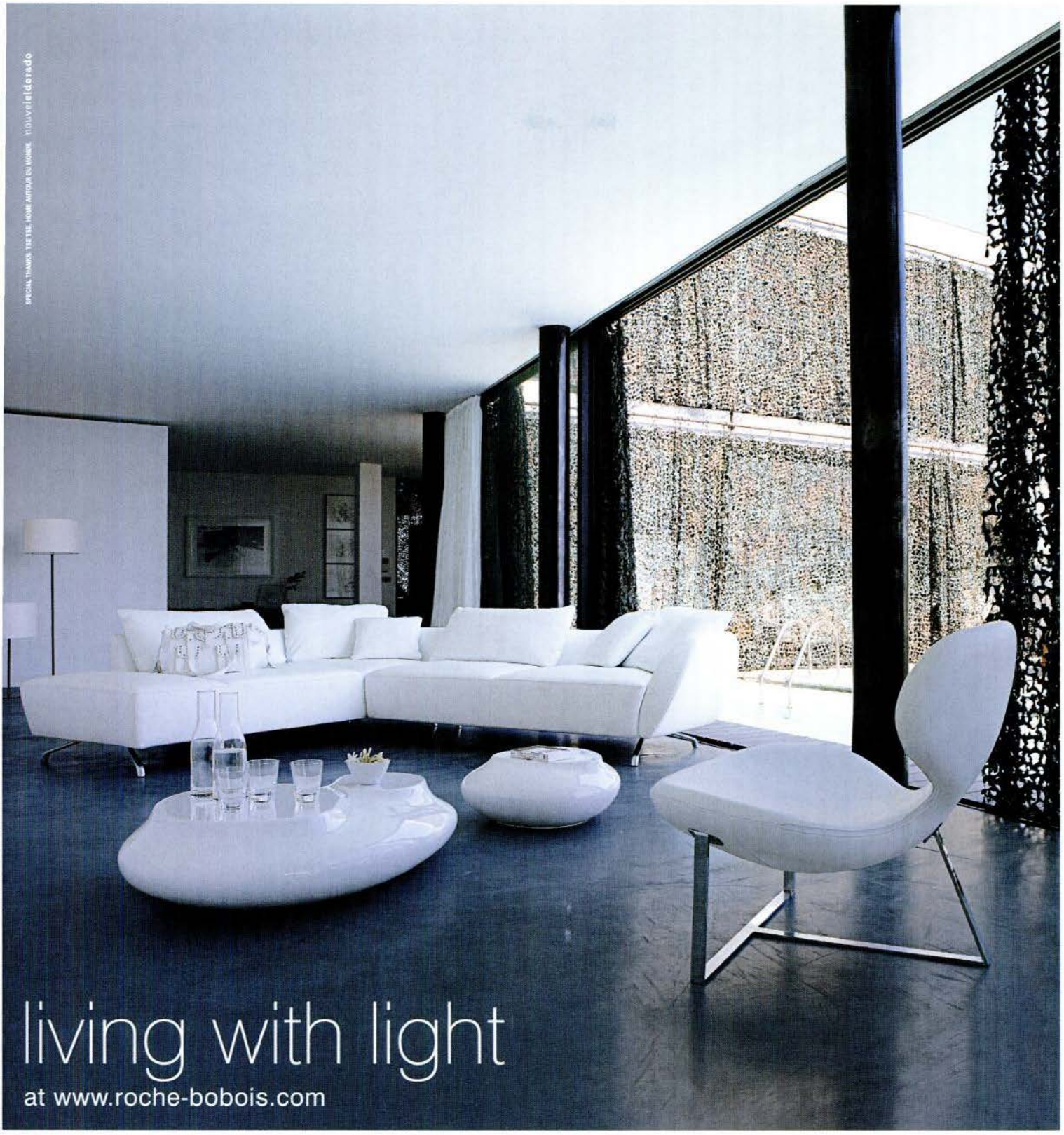

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Minnesota native and Dwell contributor Dan Monick (who snapped this photo) spent most of his childhood hating the colloquialism, but now, hearing anyone under the age of 50 use the word "pop" brings joy to his heart.

Contributors

Donovan Finn ("Roadside Attraction," p. 122) is a Brooklyner in self-imposed exile in the Midwest. Visiting Baton Rouge to interview architect David Baird, he got a crash course in Louisiana architectural history, including a trip to the top of the city's Art Deco state capitol and the stunning new Shaw Center for the Arts. The highlight of the trip, though, occurred in the hotel bar, courtesy of the conventioneers in town for the Institute of Scrap Recycling's annual meeting. Those guys know how to party.

Barry Katz ("Modern Appreciation," p. 112) is an impecunious professor who lives beyond his means in Palo Alto, California. Although he would like to own all of the classics of modern design, he has resigned himself to owning JPEGs of them. To make ends meet, Katz teaches at the California College of the Arts and at Stanford University. His last contribution to Dwell was the "Timeline of Modernism" (July/August 2006).

Marc Kristal ("The Glass House Menagerie," p. 138), Dwell's New York contributing editor, has long been interested in Philip Johnson, perhaps the only architect ever to be described in the same sentence as both elder statesman and *enfant terrible*. His visit to Johnson's famed Glass House offered Kristal the opportunity to reconsider the architect's life and work—thereby increasing both his admiration and his ambivalence.

Jason Madara ("Oh, Snap!" p. 80) is a San Francisco–based photographer whose work has appeared most recently in *Readymade*, *Cookie*, *Surface*, *Esquire*, and the *New York Times Magazine*. Madera was pleased to find the perfect spot for this shoot; however, he was especially pleased by the serendipitous arrival of a small group of pigeons. It required some impromptu wrangling, but in the end, the avian extras were a great addition to the shot.

Dan Monick ("A Labor of Loved Ones," p. 130) lives and works in Los Angeles. He returned to his Midwestern homeland to photograph the Weber residence in Black Earth, Wisconsin. The trip entailed hundreds of cow sightings, the desire to have his own barn, several plates of cheese curds, and two nights of listening to Jimmy Buffet's *Songs You Know by Heart*. Upon returning to Los Angeles, Monick renamed himself "Cheeseburger in Paradise," and has yet to convince his landlord to let him build a barn in his backyard.

Karen Pakula ("Winds of Change," p. 73) is a staff writer at the *Sydney Morning Herald* and a former editor of the newspaper's architecture and design section. Like all Australians, she has a growing respect for water as a precious resource and turns off the tap between brushing and rinsing her teeth. She hoses her garden on Wednesdays and Sundays before 10 a.m. and after 4 p.m.

Alan Rapp ("Under Studied," p. 103) is a writer and book editor with emphasis on photography, architecture, and design. It was through the process of editing the book *NorCalMod: Icons of Northern California Modernism* that his eyes were opened to the volume of untold architectural stories there still are in California—the prolific career of Jerry Lomax is part of that legacy. He is currently working on a project highlighting avant-garde architectural photography. He and his wife live in San Francisco.

Sarah Rich ("Denver's High Design," p. 146) is a writer and editor currently living in a suburb of San Francisco known as Seattle. Rich just finished a road trip touring with her new book, *Worldchanging: A User's Guide for the 21st Century*. Visiting Denver last summer (where she spent her first 18 years) revealed numerous layers—old and new—which gave her a fresh appreciation for her hometown. A little-known secret about Denver is that in spite of its position in the country's navel, it has some of the best sushi outside of Japan.

Cameron Wittig ("Denver's High Design," p. 146), Minneapolis-based photographer and cold-weather veteran, arrived in Denver during a snowstorm and left two days later with a sunburn, getting a crash course in the rapidly changing weather conditions in the Rocky Mountains. ■

PHOTO BY DAN MONICK

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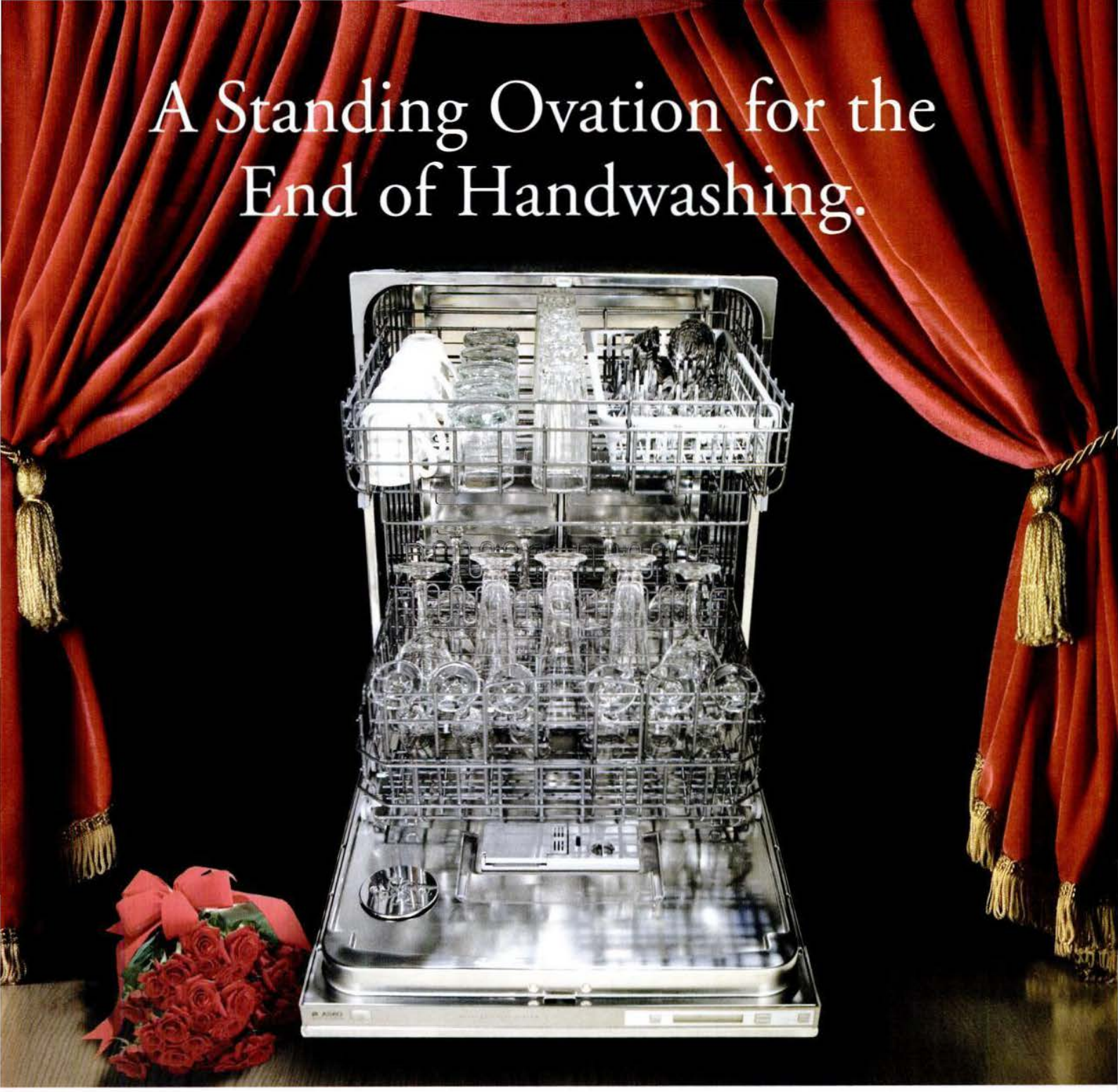

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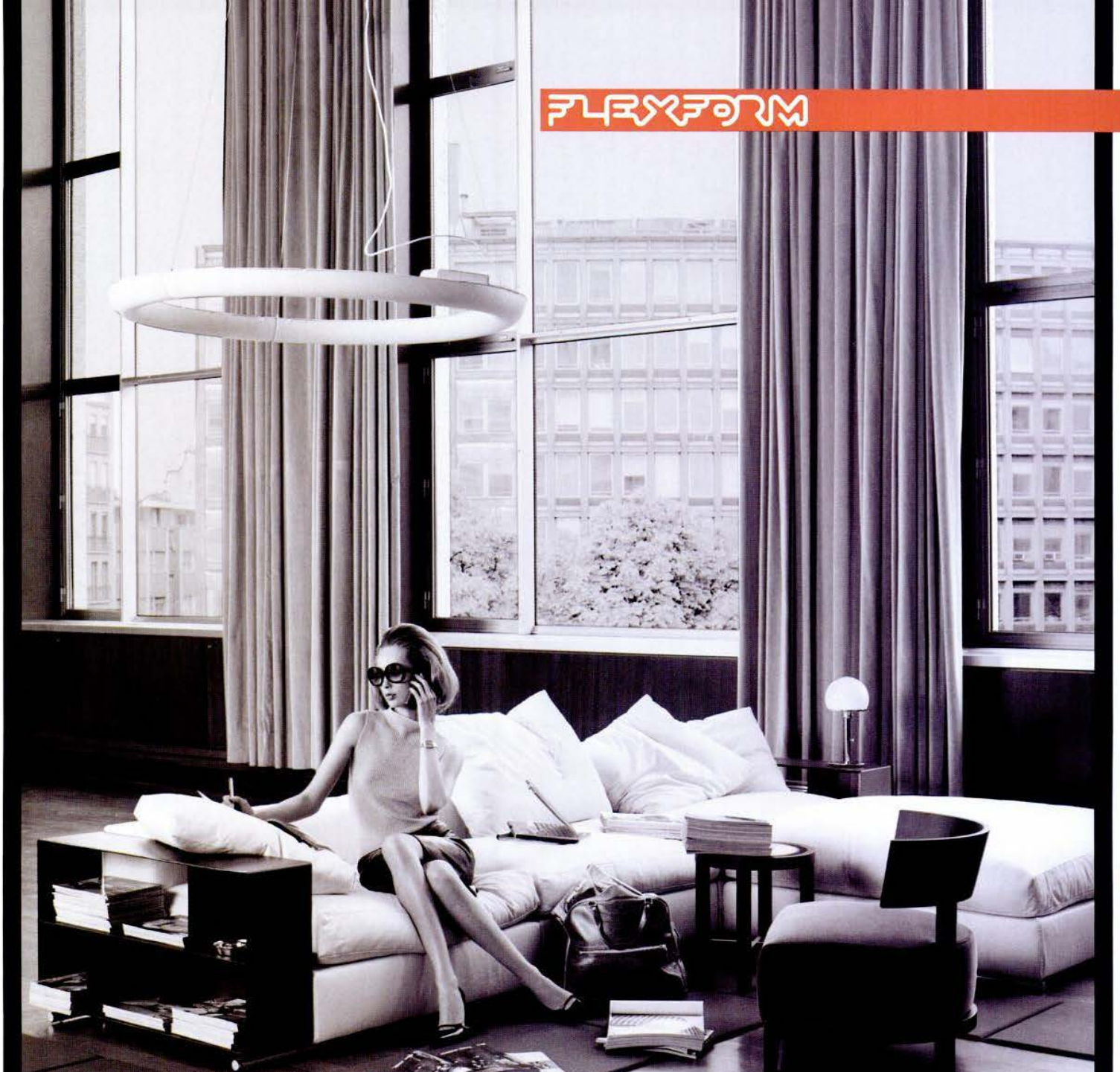

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In the summer of 2000, I spent most of my days looking for a new job, wondering why nobody else seemed to have a problem finding one, and happily chauffeuring my girlfriend to and from hers. On the way back from one of those expeditions, I drove by a building on Broadway Street, which, as an aspiring connoisseur of modern design, caught my eye. Its floor-to-ceiling storefront windows were stacked with an arrangement of orange, blue, and white Plexiglas boxes. In the era of the first iMac, the place screamed out "Cool place to work!"

About a month later, I found a posting on Craigslist for an editorial assistant position at a new architecture and design magazine. Having just about lost hope of ever working in the field of design (I applied for a job at E*Trade just one day earlier), the posting seemed like a distant mirage on the information superhighway—sure to vanish into the ether once I applied.

Unlike so many recipients of my nascent résumé, Dwell called me back. Amazingly, I arrived for my Thursday-afternoon interview at the door of the very building I'd fantasized about just a month earlier. But my surprise quickly turned to terror, because I knew this wasn't just any job, it was *the* job. After meeting with senior editor Allison Arieff, I was invited back for an interview with founding editor Karrie Jacobs. As I would later learn, Karrie wasn't overly social before lunchtime—so the 9:30 a.m. interview that seemed so devastating turned out to be par for the course. (It had ended with a solid two minutes of deadlocked silence—time to contemplate how I could have been so stupid as to phrase my responses the way I did, and where I could possibly ever find a job this promising again.) Needless to say, I got hired. Dwell's second issue came out a few weeks later. And the rest—six years and seven changes of title at a magazine that went from being an unknown start-up to a commonly used adjective—is history.

I had always thought I wanted to be an architect, but when it came time to do a five-year program, I balked and opted to pursue a course that would feed a more diverse set of interests. At times, it has been a decision I've regretted, but then I consider the past six years to have been a postgraduate degree from Dwell. From my extremely talented, funny, and lovely colleagues I've learned far more than I would have at a drafting table, and over the years I've had more amazing experiences than could ever fit into the pages of a magazine. Most significantly, I've learned that modern architecture isn't just about making the next cool building; it's about creating the most relevant context for the lives people live. Employing architecture and design as the lens through which to observe the world while inviting the rest of the world (that is, nonarchitects) to have an opinion about architecture is what makes each issue of Dwell special.

Since 2000 we've seen design evolve considerably, and I believe Dwell has been as much a documentarian of as catalyst for that change. While we've outgrown our office with the colorful Plexiglas boxes in the window, we haven't outgrown the Nice Modernism that Karrie Jacobs coined in Dwell's inaugural Editor's Note. It's alive and well in these pages. Just turn to our Dwellings section, which begins on page 114, for the latest installment.

The stories in this issue demonstrate that affordability and good design don't have to be mutually exclusive—something we've believed from day one. From maxing out 16 credit cards to pouring on the sweat equity to finding a plot of land so obscure that it's not on city zoning maps, each project achieves this in a unique way. They also prove that being modern in 2007 defies strict categorization. That's okay with us—we all like our iPods, but chances are you wouldn't like all of my playlists.

With that in mind, there's no formula for putting together an issue of Dwell. We're always trying to find new things on the horizon that excite us. We'll continue to look forward with a smile (and sometimes a smirk) and keep filling these pages with stories about the architecture, design, and, most importantly, the people who are looking forward with us. ■

SAM GRAWE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
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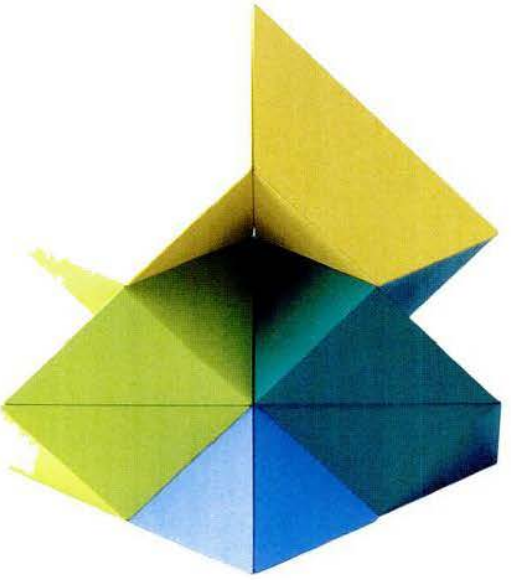
Bauhaus Optischer Farbmischer, designed by Josef Hartwig in 1923 (left)

Agon, designed by Fred Voss in 1993 (right)

Bauhaus Steckpuppen, designed by Margaretha Reichhardt in 1926–30 (below left)

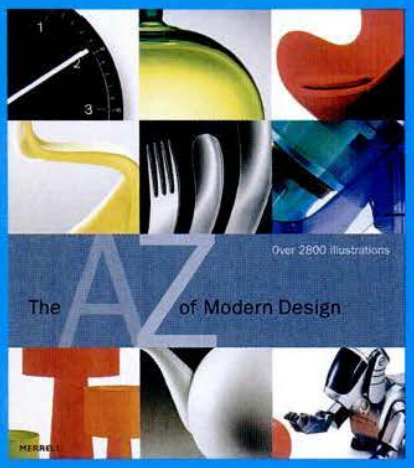
Motosolino, designed by Peter Wuthrich in 2005 (below right)



Naef Spiele toys at Porro / www.porro.com, www.naefusa.com / Italian furniture company Porro has partnered with Naef Spiele to present the Swiss firm's line of multicolored artistic wooden games. Nineteen objects will be on display in Porro's Milan showroom, from Bauhaus-devised forms to solar-driven sidecars.

These spinning tops, three-dimensional puzzles, and puppets engage the problem-solving skills and creativity of both children and grown-up children. More than simple trinkets, these cerebral gifts have weightier concepts behind them, such as color theory and ecological solar technology. The Motosolino, for instance, teaches kids about sustainable energy as they cruise the miniature wooden sidecars through the living room.

Linen rug collection / By Ürba / www.urba.ca / Like a freshly cut lawn or just-buzzed head of hair, the Linen rug collection compels you to reach out and touch it. Although the rugs (which come in four colors) could just as easily double as wall coverings, it would be a shame to miss out on the toe-curling texture.



The A to Z of Modern Design / By Bernd Polster et al. / Merrell / $34.95 / www.merrellpublishers.com / Whether you find yourself stumped at parties when people toss around names like Hella Jongerius and Marcel Wanders, or feel the need to broaden your library of references to include the more obscure, this book is a handy introduction to 350 of the most pertinent figures in design today. Buyer beware: You're on your own for pronunciation, so name-drop wisely.

Nelson Swag Leg Group / By George Nelson for Herman Miller / www.hermanmiller.com / This Swag involves nary a corporate gift basket nor calculator keychain. It's the term for the bending process that produces the elegant curves of Herman Miller's revival of this George Nelson collection. Originally introduced in 1958, the line, which includes the desk and chair shown here in addition to three tables, was designed to be easy to assemble and inexpensive to ship, and looks as good today as it did nearly 50 years ago.

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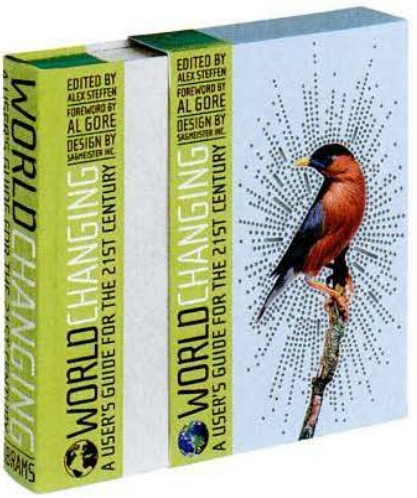
Wovin wall system / www.wovinwall.com / If that black-light Led Zeppelin poster is still gracing the walls of your pad, it's time for an update. The Wovin wall system is a savvy alternative to traditional wall coverings, and offers a slew of options sure to please even the most discerning eye. The tiles come in a variety of choices, including eight timber veneers, gloss and matte laminates, solid and translucent polypropylene, two aluminum finishes, and customizable images to boot.

Voltaic solar bags / By Voltaic Systems / www.voltaicsystems.com / Interested in solar but don't know where to begin? Start with your accessories. Voltaic bags are mobile power generators made from recycled PET (soda bottles) that offer a stylish and sustainable solution to charging all those gadgets that you just can't live without. No longer do you need to feel guilty about your bag fetish or excessive iPod use.



Worldchanging: A User's Guide to the 21st Century / Edited by Alex Steffen / Harry N. Abrams / $37.50 / www.hnabooks.com / This book is poised to be the *Whole Earth Catalog* of a new generation. Among the "planetary thinking" contributors are Al Gore, Bruce Sterling, and Leif Utne. If the state of politics, poverty, human health, planetary health, or just the future in general has got you down, get up and buy this book—it's a shade of green you haven't yet seen.

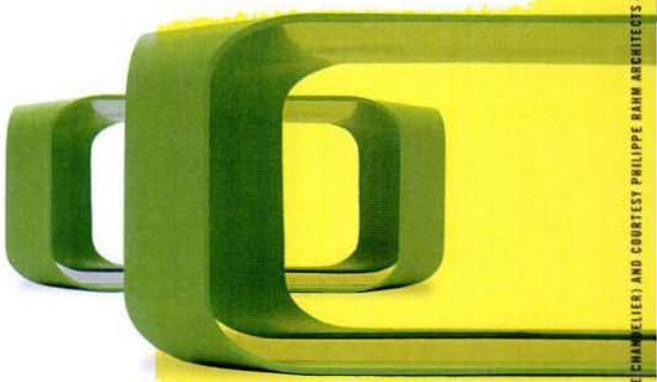
Moleskine City Notebook / www.moleskine.com / Moleskine journals were favored by the likes of Picasso and Sartre, who scribbled and scrawled their way through the smooth pages under oily black covers. But until now, the journals have always been blank upon purchase. The subtle addition of many maps and tabs tailored to different destinations makes these travel-ready, so you can easily record any existential crises you may have on the road without a glossy guidebook marking you as an easy pickpocket target.

Gilles Clément
The Chandelier, 2006

Philippe Rahm Architects
Météorologie d'intérieur, 2006

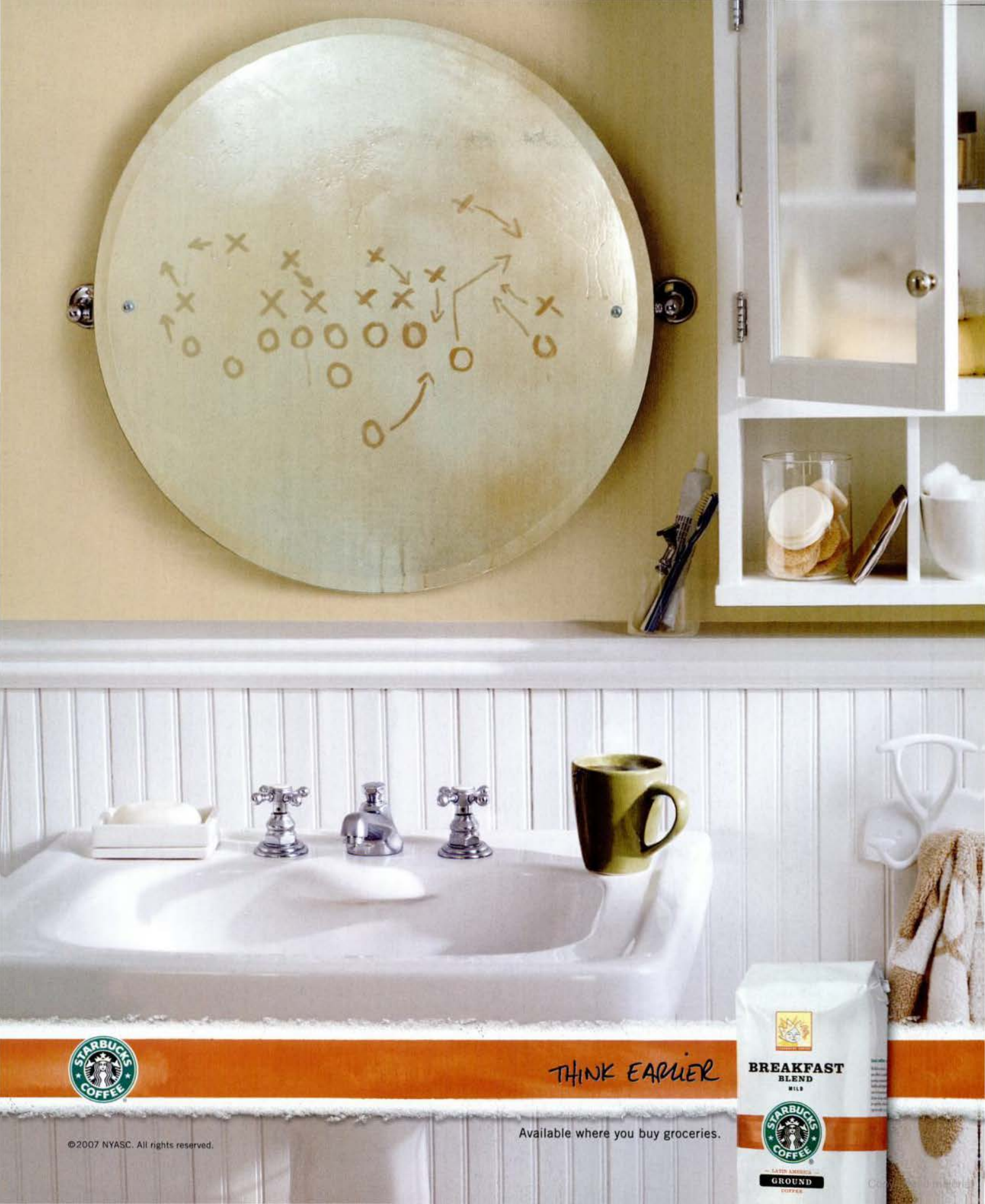
Environment: Approaches for Tomorrow / Through April 22 / The Canadian Centre for Architecture / Montreal, Canada / www.cca.qc.ca / Horticultural engineer Gilles Clément and architect Philippe Rahm elucidate our relationship with the environment in their tandem exhibition.

Cardcase / By Giles Miller / www.farmdesigns.co.uk / This cardboard creation from British designer Giles Miller bucks the bag trend by being innovative, unique, and sustainable. The transformation from recycled paper to haute object is a product of his fluting technique, which angles the corrugation and etches patterns into the surface, including your own personal design. The cases are available by commission directly from Farm, the collective Miller helped found.



Twist collection / By PearsonLloyd for MO / www.mozoo.es / We like our tables served the same as our cocktails: With a twist...and two at a time. That's the only trouble with these tables—they fit together so nicely, you'll want a full set.

PHOTO BY MICHEL LEGENDRE (THE CHANDELIER) AND COURTESY PHILIPPE RAHM ARCHITECTS (INTERIOR)



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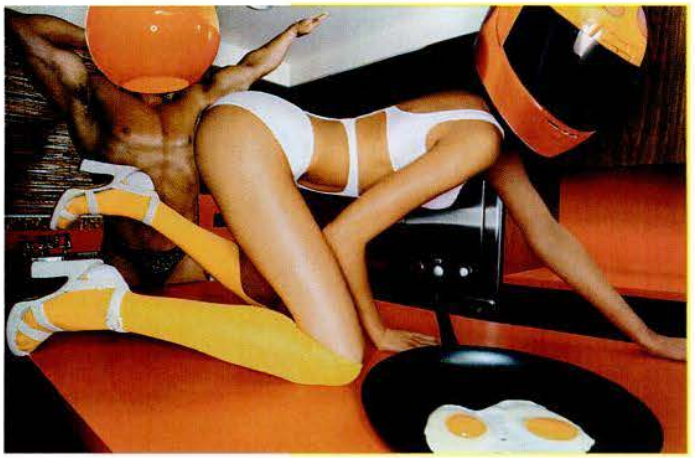

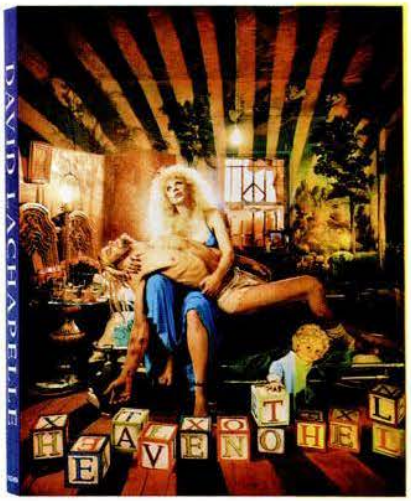

LaChapelle: Heaven to Hell / By David LaChapelle / Taschen / $59.99 / www.taschen.com / Those familiar with the unmistakably provocative and surreal style of photographer David LaChapelle will not be disappointed by this 344-page compilation of his newest work. The final book in a trilogy including *LaChapelle Land* and *Hotel LaChapelle* somehow manages to speak louder than its predecessors with its sharp social commentary, absurd juxtapositions, and vivid, far-from-G-rated images.

Kruze collection / By David Fox for Boss / www.boss-design.co.uk / Among the flashy, up-to-the-minute designs that get top billing at the international furniture fairs, it's easy to lose sight of the basic, reliable standards we use everyday. The Kruze chair could very well be one of these overlooked classics. At home in meeting rooms, hotel lobbies, and living rooms, the Kruze can be tailored to any number of environments as a four-legged stool, chair with four-star base, and either a fully upholstered or exposed wood back.

Staub cookware / www.staubusa.com / Staub's new line of colors like sunflower (above) and aubergine are a stab through the heart of Le Creuset. The international fusion of U.S. manufacturing, Alsatian one-pot cooking, and time-tested Italian *majolica* make for a palatable difference from ye olde crockpot.

Olympia table / By Oliver & Co. / www.oliverandco.com / It's a table! It's a desk! It's cubbies that aren't cumbersome. Bucking the convention (and monochrome) of hulking desks, Oliver Droillard's design allows you to stash your stuff on a horizontal plane. Plus, the lift-up drawers kill tabletop clutter.

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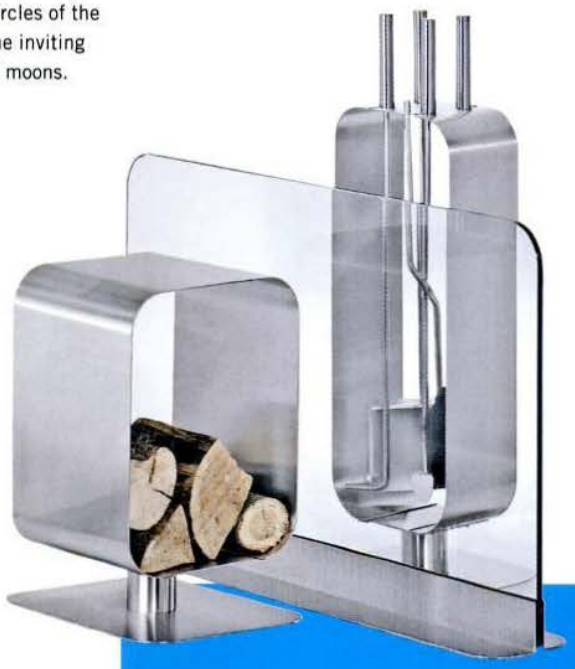
Exhibition Design / By David Dernie / W.W. Norton & Co. / $65 / www.wwnorton.com / Gone are the days when pictures hung on a white gallery wall proved sufficient; in this digital and high-tech age, viewers demand much more from exhibitions. This book provides insight into some recent innovative contemporary shows, from ceiling-suspended sharks and sting rays to interactive laser light displays, proving that at many museums, the admission fee is still worth the price.

Noon 5 lamp / By El Schmid for Zeitraum / www.zeitraum-moebel.de / Amateur astronomers and budding stargazers will like this simple, unfettered lamp. The orbital forms cast by the concentric circles of the Noon 5 could just as well be the inviting glow of your very own terrestrial moons.



Bebop fireplace accessories / By Andre Gilli for Blomus / www.lekkerhome.com / In the quest for all that's shiny and new, sometimes the most archaic items, although modern in their simplicity, seem to be left out. Gilli's new tools, log holder, and fire screen are a nice surprise. Forget bearskin rugs—these sleek accessories will stoke the fireside flames this season.

Theatre / By Marcel Wanders for HE / www.he-marcelwanders.com / It's hard not to stare at Wanders's wooden side table, which has so subtly integrated its cinema set and subwoofer, because the design hardly reveals its multipurpose function. Even the speakers elude distinction, disguised in the form of elegant, patterned stones. The collection also includes incognito wireless antennas and an undercover microwave complete with TV screen and DVD player.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Gordon Matta-Clark
Splitting 10 and 11, 1974

Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure / 22 Feb–7 June / Whitney Museum of American Art / New York, NY / www.whitney.org / The cruelest irony of a Gordon Matta-Clark retrospective is that his most compelling work, large-scale cuttings of derelict architecture, is itself absent. But this is also what makes Matta-Clark worthy of so much attention; thankfully, the artist's chimeric catalogue has been documented through remnants, photographs, and film.

Showtime collection / By Jaime Hayon for Bd Ediciones / www.bdbarcelona.com / Veteran design manufacturer Bd Ediciones and forward-thinking young designer Jaime Hayon have gotten together to produce this diverse collection of accessories, chairs, tables, and cabinets. These colorful vases (left) evoke childhood memories, while the more substantial furniture pieces that round out the collection allude to a baroque past.

Aloe collection / By Jeremy Cole / www.icon-interiors.com / Ah, sweet Agave: Queen of Thebes, mother of tequila, and inspiration for Jeremy Cole's delicate and diffused design. Choose from bud, shoot, or blossom styles in standing, table, wall, or pendant lamp form.

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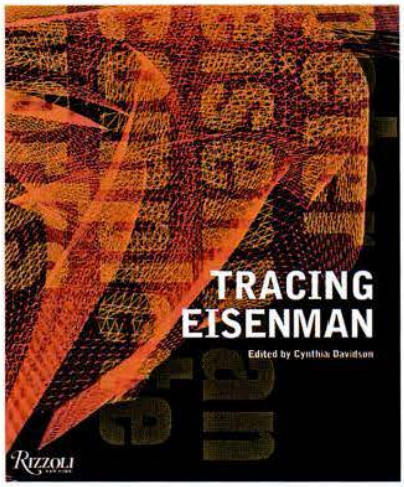
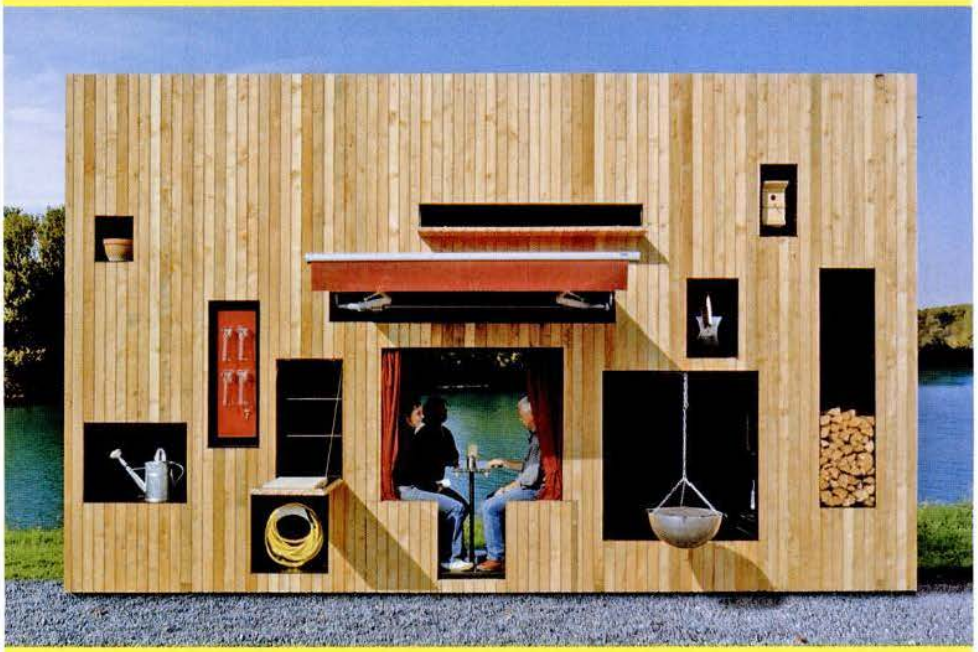
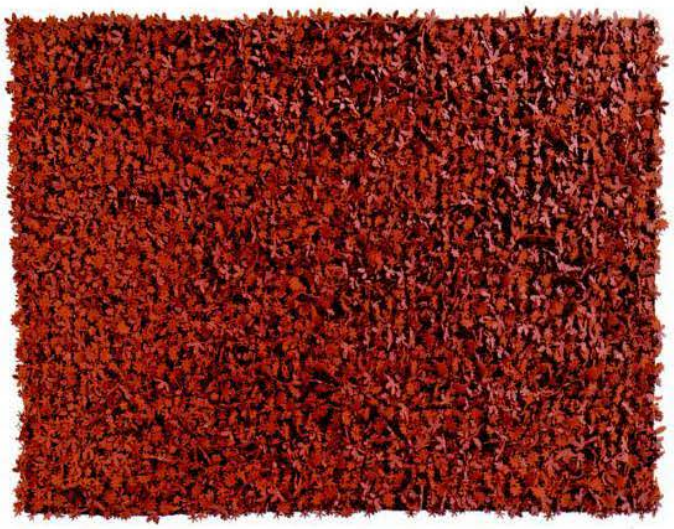


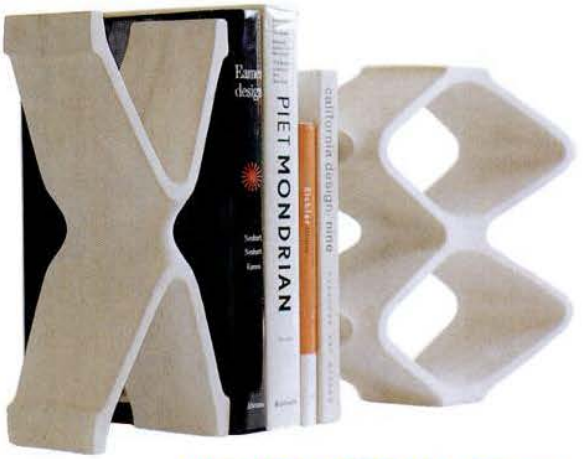
Tracing Eisenman: Complete Works / Edited by Cynthia Davidson / Rizzoli / $75 / www.rizzoliusa.com / Once upon a time, architect Peter Eisenman took a plane to a city, far, far away, where he was scheduled to lecture. When he arrived, he apologized for the fact that Peter Eisenman could not make it and gave the lecture "in his place." There's much ado about process in architecture today, and tracing Eisenman's work—or, as he would say, tracing absence to find presence—through the architect's own writing, sketches, and models, as well as commentary from critical heavyweights, shows why.



Walden / By Nils Holger Moormann / www.moormann.de / Thoreau once said, "A little thought is sexton to all the world." It seems so, too, when it comes to design. Walden's simple structure and thoughtful design multitasks to encase everything from flowerpots to beer glasses to a fire cauldron to a wheelbarrow, so that you can enjoy anything you could possibly ever think of in the great outdoors.



Little Field of Flowers rug / By Studio Tord Boontje for Nanimarquina / www.nanimarquina.com / Tord Boontje seeks to engage the imagination—to be modern without being minimal. No matter if you lack a yard, this hand-loomed rug will, like a field of magic poppies, always be the perfect place to take a dreamy nap.



Malcolm Leland XOO bookends / By Vessel / www.architecturalpottery.com / Based on Malcolm Leland's venerated American Cement Building in Los Angeles, these bookends are meant to mimic the structural façade of the Wilshire Blvd. landmark. The sculptural pieces are substantial: Heavy enough to outfit the most avid of readers, they can be rotated to support cumbersome volumes as well as lightweight paperbacks.

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.

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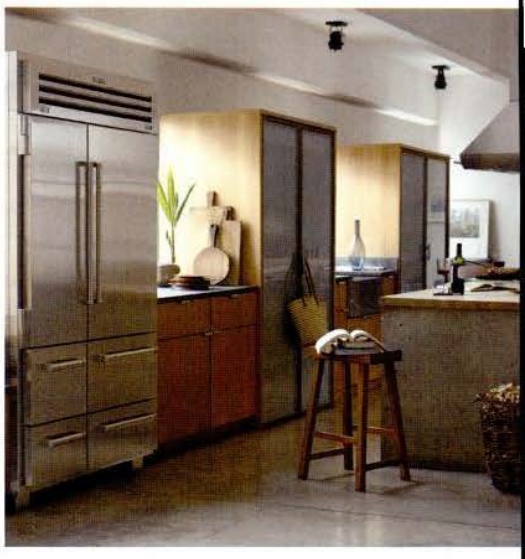

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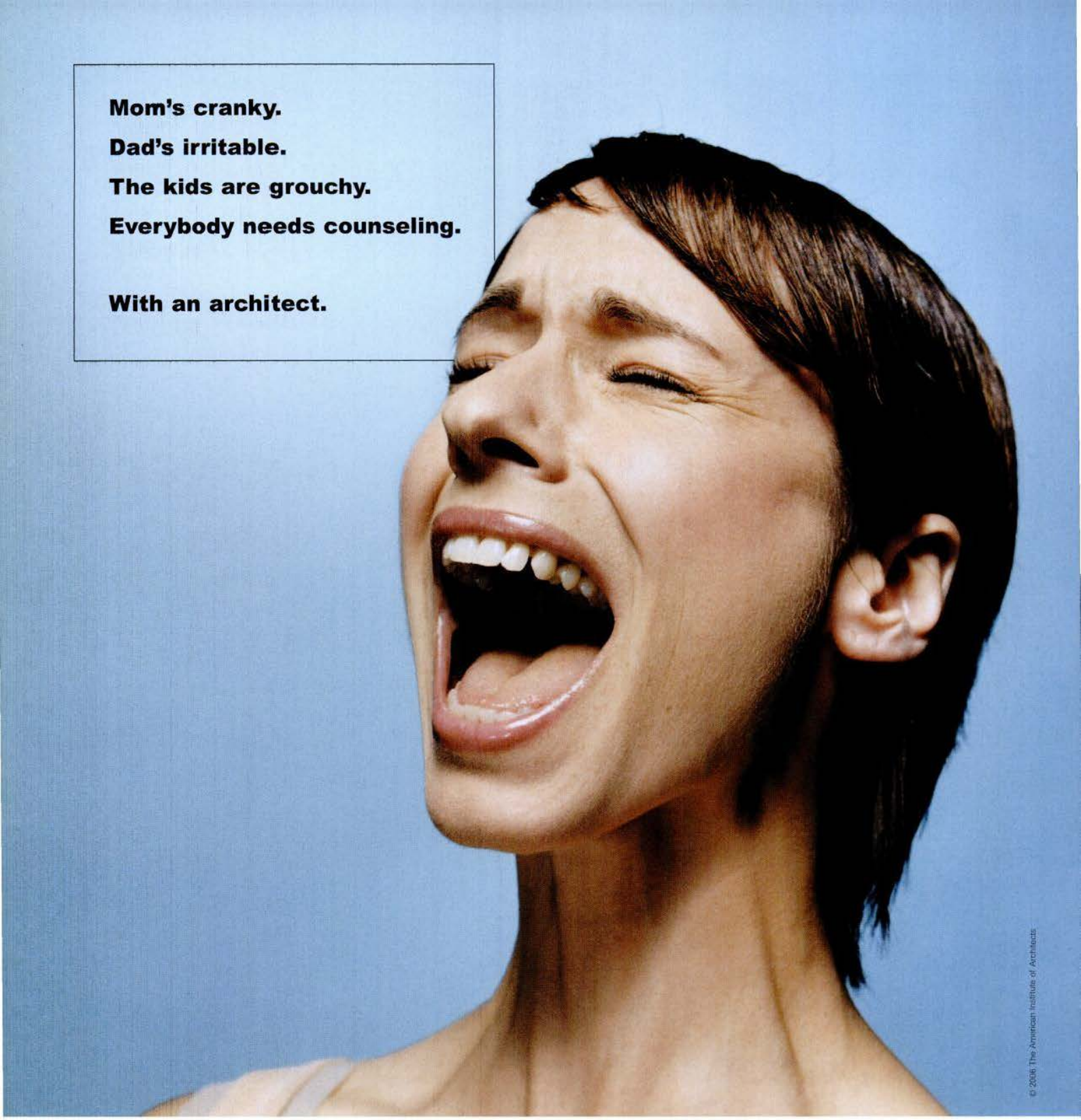

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Andy and Regina Rihn lean on their other blue-clad affordable design, a 1958 AMC Rambler Super station wagon, in front of their house in Austin, Texas.

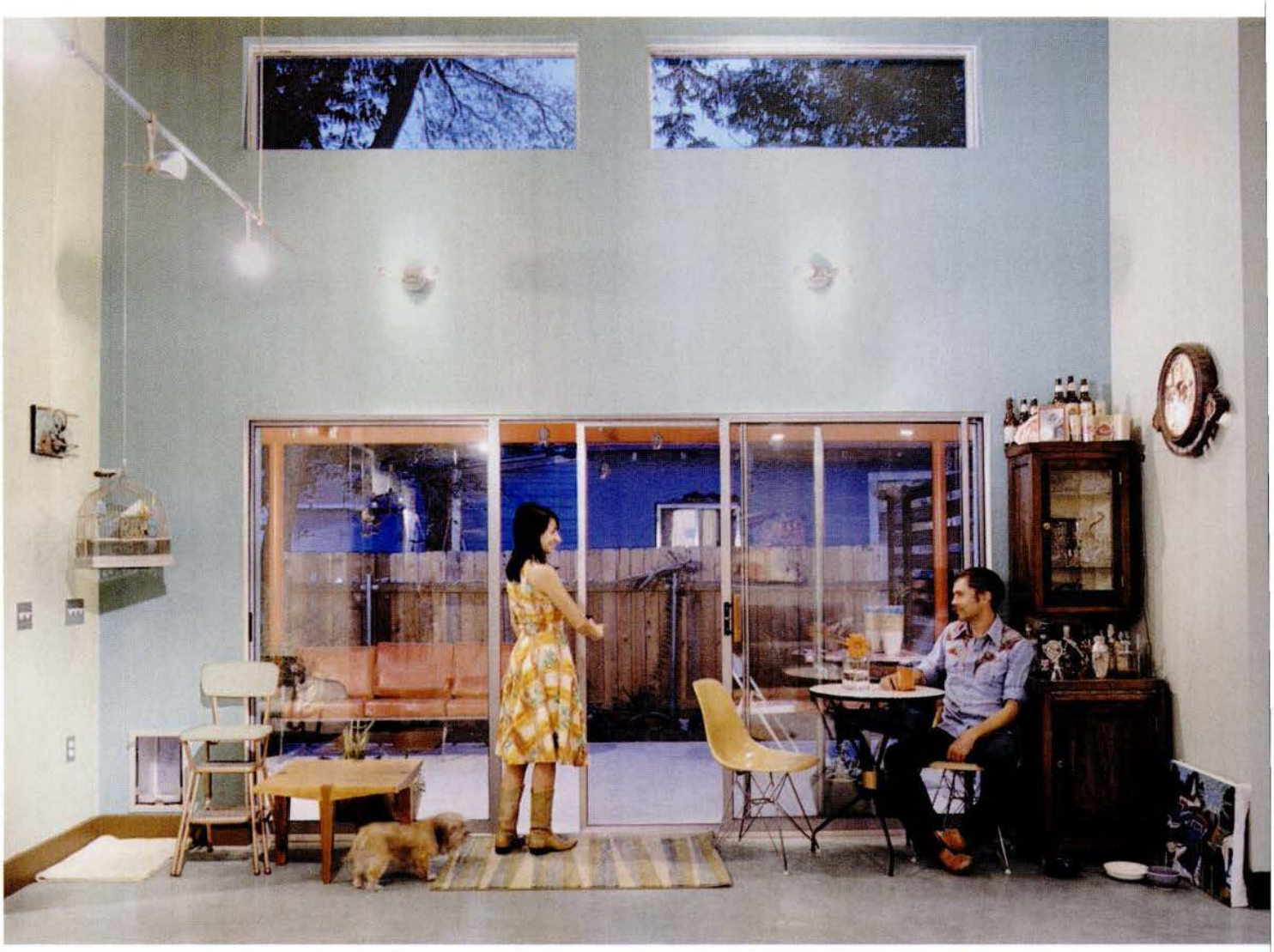
A Lot for a Little

Regina and Andy Rihn weren't exactly modernists when they first began their frustrating, unproductive slog through the pricey Austin, Texas, real estate market. "We just liked things that were old and wood," Andy says. "That was our aesthetic." But thankfully for them, the first-time homebuyers got lucky.

"We were looking at $100,000 homes, but they needed everything. New roofs, everything," Regina recalls. "We finally made an offer on one, but the inspector said it was the worst house he'd ever seen. It was horrible."

After the inspection debacle, Andy happened to talk to his mother in San Antonio, who told him that his childhood friend Amy Dempsey also lived in Austin and was building low-cost houses on the city's still-gritty east side. Initially, he dismissed it as "mom information."

A few days later, Regina and Andy were standing in a vacant, bottle-strewn lot, looking at house plans on the hood of Dempsey's gray Chevy truck. She explained she was hoping to build a compact, affordable house that connected with the outdoors, and they made a decision ▸



Regina and Andy Rihn open the sliding doors in the main living space when they need more ventilation, while the two dogs prefer to use their custom door to get a little fresh air.

to buy on the spot. "We'd never in a million years thought we could build a new home," Regina says, "and we didn't really know anything about design."

Regina, a waitress/hair stylist/clothing designer, and her handlebar-mustachioed pastry chef/musician/artist husband, had only two requests for their new home: They wanted a metal roof and a doggy door for their little mutts, Changa and Velour. "That was it as far as our input," Regina remembers. For Dempsey, a first-time home designer and builder, they were the perfect clients—open-minded and unburdened by expectations.

Dempsey worked for an Austin architecture firm at the time, primarily designing Whole Foods grocery stores, but wanted to branch into residential design. She formed a partnership with the firm's owner, John Beckham, bought the bottle-strewn double lot for $40,000 and applied for a construction loan through the city's now-defunct Small Builder Program, which offered no-interest loans to developers who built homes for low- to moderate-income buyers. Dempsey also hooked up with Austin's SMART Housing program, which waives city fees for builders who construct green low-income housing. Dempsey and Beckham each designed a house for the property, with Dempsey acting as general contractor for both.

The yearlong adventure of building the houses began in August 2004. At the outset, Dempsey wanted to be sure that residents didn't feel like their neighborhood was being invaded, so she went door-to-door introducing herself and explaining the project. Still, locals viewed the construction as a curiosity. Some asked when the "offices" would be done; one person thought the Beckham-designed house, painted a bright yellow, was destined to be a drive-through restaurant.

The construction process also met a few obstacles. Materials disappeared, windows were broken, and occasionally, Dempsey would find someone sleeping or drinking booze in the houses. She remembers when ▸

A carefully placed window illuminates the corner of the main living area (left). Andy and Regina greet their neighbor Dan Morris (top right), owner of the Beckham-designed house. The platform bed in the master bedroom (bottom right) was crafted by a local woodworker.

a neighbor, clad in a bathrobe and slippers, went into the onsite portable toilet, carrying a newspaper. "It was stressful, and I lost a lot of weight—not in a good way."

Green concepts define the house from the ground up. A concrete slab serves as the floor, while the exteriors are sustainable Hardiplank lap siding and 12-inch-thick insulated concrete blocks. The openings in the western walls are small to minimize the searing Austin heat, with most of the windows facing north and east, allowing indirect light in.

Dempsey wanted the house to offer varying views, so windows were placed at different heights. In the guest bedroom, which Regina uses for sewing, there is a "doggy window" by the floor, two waist-high windows, and one up toward the ceiling. A skylight punctuates the hallway, which leads off the main living space to the three bedrooms and two bathrooms, minimizing the need for lights, even on dark days. Sliding doors off the master bedroom and living space lead outside. At 1,230 square feet, the house is relatively small, but feels expansive.

The total construction cost, including the land, was about $110,000. For Regina and Andy the house forms a clean, unexpected backdrop for their quirky, Tex-Mex-influenced tastes. Glass shards from old bottles found on the site decorate the outdoor sills and fences, silver shoe forms hang from the patio roof, and a pair of steer horns is mounted above the stove. "My friends borrowed my van to go to Amarillo to eat 72-ounce steaks," Andy explains. "They brought those back."

Sitting in the living room, listening to a Django Reinhardt record on a 1970s turntable, the couple says they've become converts to Dempsey's vision.

"I thought we'd end up in a 1930s bungalow, but now that we're here I love it," Andy says, clutching a beer can in a personalized koozie. "Most of our friends are in the service industry or they're artists. They're still renting. They couldn't believe it when they saw this. I still can't believe it." ▸

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How to Make My House Your House

A Big Box Lighting / www.1000bulbs.com
Dempsey was shooting for spare, almost industrial-looking lighting. She made the fixture above the kitchen sink from a porcelain socket, three to four feet of electrical cord, and a ceiling canopy. The elements, all available at big-box home stores, can be wired together at a lamp shop. Dempsey fashioned another light fixture with a floodlight kit by Sigma Electric using Silver Bowl incandescent bulbs.

A Year of the Shelf / Westbrook Metals: (512) 453-6044 / www.homedepot.com
The kitchen shelving was made from three-by-three-by-one-quarter-inch aluminum angles, which Dempsey drilled at six-inch intervals and attached to the wall with anchors. The wood, two-by-ten lumber, was sanded and sealed with clear furniture wax and then attached to the angles with screws and finish washers. Andy copied the method in other areas throughout the house, like Regina's sewing area where the shelves hold miles of ribbons. "I call last year the 'Year of the Shelf,'" he says.

B Skating Doors / Westbrook Metals: (512) 453-6044 / www.homedepot.com
Sliding doors in the hallway conceal the laundry and storage areas, and also lead to Andy and Regina's bedroom and bathroom/walk-in closet. Dempsey made the doors from one-and-a-half-by-one-and-a-half-inch welded steel angle frames and two-by-fours. She had holes drilled through the steel, then fastened the wood to the frame with drywall screws. Skateboard wheels roll the doors along tracks.

C Pronomen Desk / www.ikea.com
The desk in the guest bedroom was made from IKEA's Pronomen beech countertop, cut to size, and mounted on aluminum angles attached to the walls. ■

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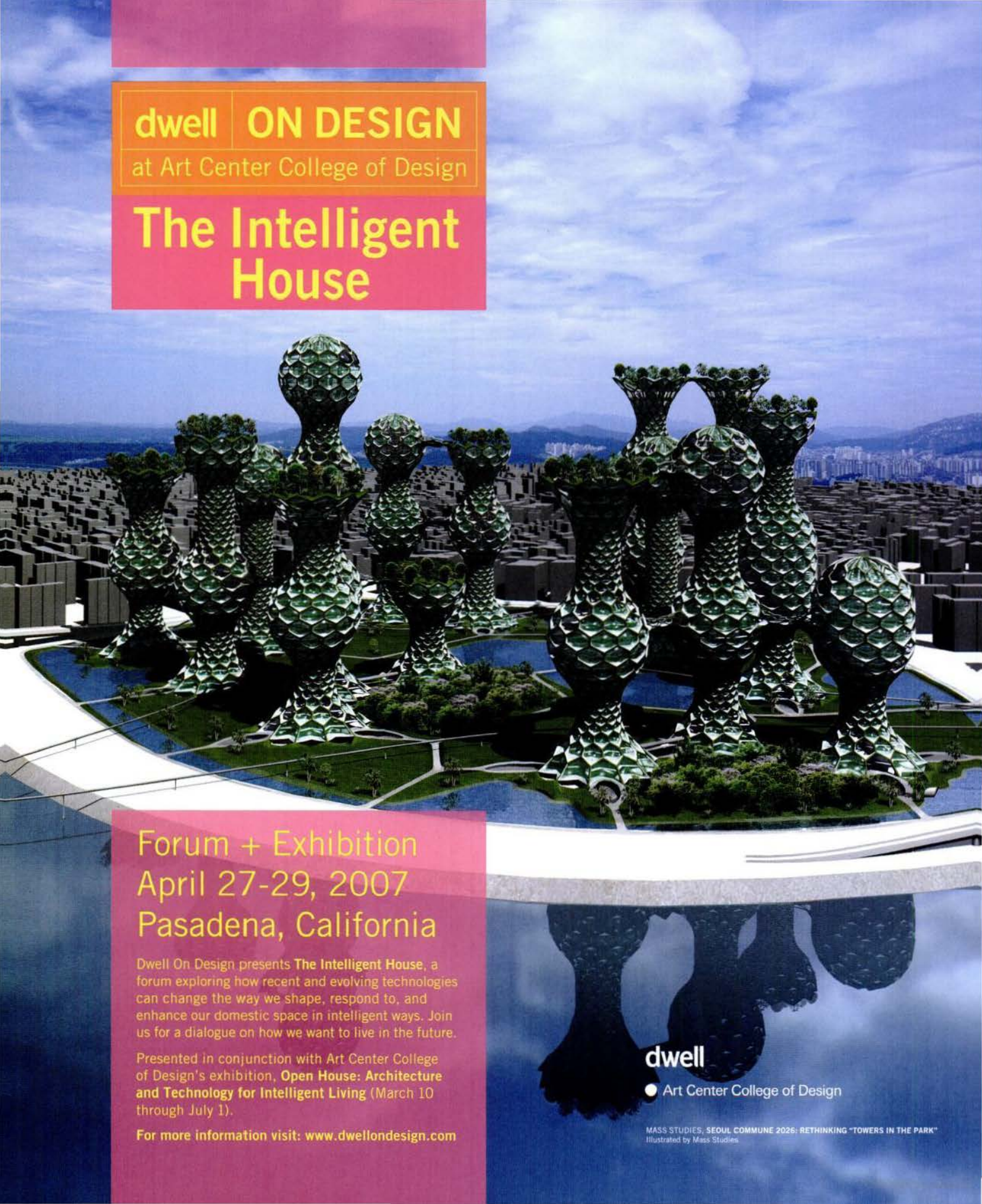
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Countrywide HOME LOANS

Sitting on a hillside just north of Sydney, Chris and Angela Medland's vacation home is accessorized with four vast water tanks, which fill easily in a storm, making them the envy of their drought-dirty neighbors.

Winds of Change

Caught in the grip of the worst drought in a century, Australians are showering together. Dam levels are reported daily in newspapers, along with the equally modern environmental barometers of pollution and UV light. All manner of water restrictions are in force. Gardeners are banned from using hoses in the heat of the day. In some towns, the family dog can't get a wash, even with a bucket.

Chris Medland has emergency measures in place. "We use efficient appliances...and maybe we throw the kids once too often in the pool instead of giving them a bath," he says. An hour-and-a-half drive to the north of Sydney, in a low-lying vacation home splayed across a hill of gum trees and scrub, Chris, his wife, Angela, and their three young boys are keeping their total water usage below 40 gallons a day. This is impressive even by local standards, where the average daily consumption for individuals has dropped to 90 gallons. For dirtier endeavors, however, the family is prepared: Four tanks, each with the capacity to hold 6,000 gallons, store water collected from the home's vast roof. "All it requires is one storm," says Chris, "and the tank is full."

But as a mechanical engineer and head of an engineering consultancy with expertise in environmental technology, Chris had more in mind for his dream green shack than just water harvesting. With architects Joel Farnan and Michelle Findlay, the Medlands have built a home that functions entirely on its own energy, created by solar cells and a wind turbine placed up high so that it's "never louder than the trees."

"The thing we loved so much about this place was that it was a big backyard," Chris says. "We already had a little cabin on the site. And it was so damn hot because it faced west. In the afternoons, we'd pack everything up and go into one of the gullies, where we'd cleared a big space of grass. And we'd cook on a barbecue because the oven was crap. We'd say, 'Come on, kids, we're having dinner,' so the kids would disappear and come back with armfuls of sticks and we'd build a fire. And that was really a lot of the fun of the place—we didn't want to lose that."

By being off the grid, the Medlands are the masters of their own energy consumption. The house is equipped with all the modern conveniences—dishwasher, pool filter, and clothes dryer, which they run early in the ▸

Furnishings such as Arne Jacobsen's Series 7 chairs in the dining room and a chaise longue covered in Alexander Girard fabric in the bedroom ensure that the house meets a more modern ideal than a sustainable stereotype. p. 194

morning to warm up the house. Under the deck, 14 industrial batteries are capable of storing a week's worth of power. "If there's not much sun coming in the batteries, we just don't run the dishwasher. We wash up by hand," Chris says. Organic waste becomes compost, while trash that can be recycled travels back to Sydney with the family when they leave.

The architects also had a mission—to avoid the down-on-the-alfalfa-farm, nuts-and-berries aesthetic associated with sustainable architecture. Following the contours of the land, the house gently wraps around the slope with two sections that butterfly in opposite directions: living area to the east; bedrooms and bathrooms to the west.

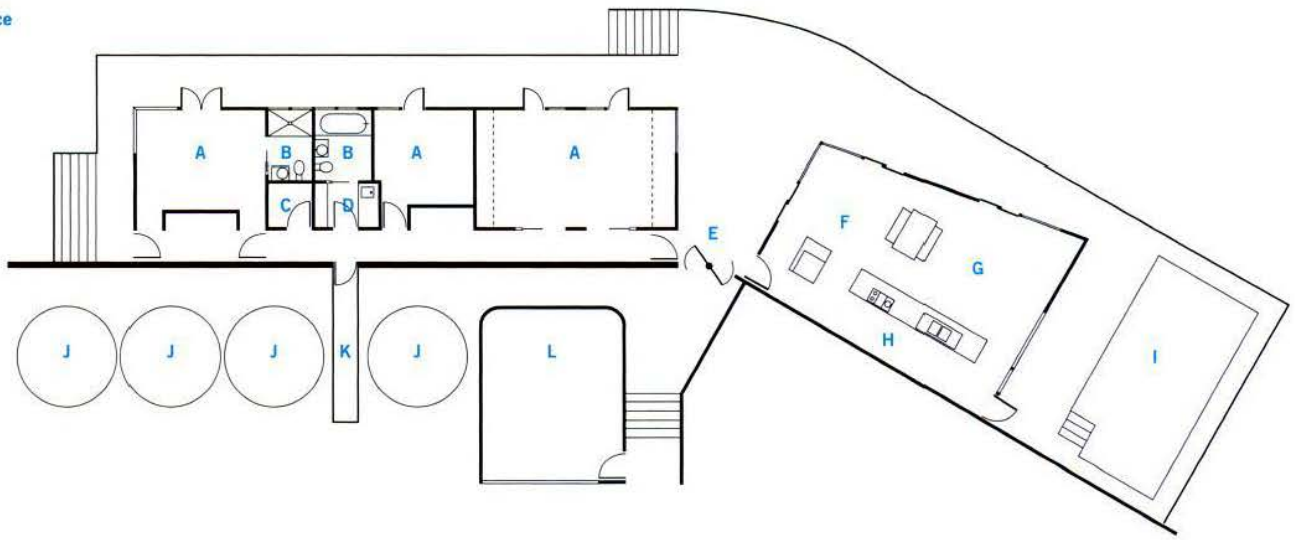
In all, the project combines sleekness with good old *Gilligan's Island* ingenuity. "You just need to get the basic building right before you bolt the technology on. If you don't, you'll be placing much higher demands on it," Farnan says. Along the deck runs a double column of pipes—one structural, the other for plumbing. A raised header tank provides pressure for showers, and when the tanks are full, water is piped into the dam. Should the sun be weak or low, the solar cells are boosted by an Australian gadget called the Outback Tracker.

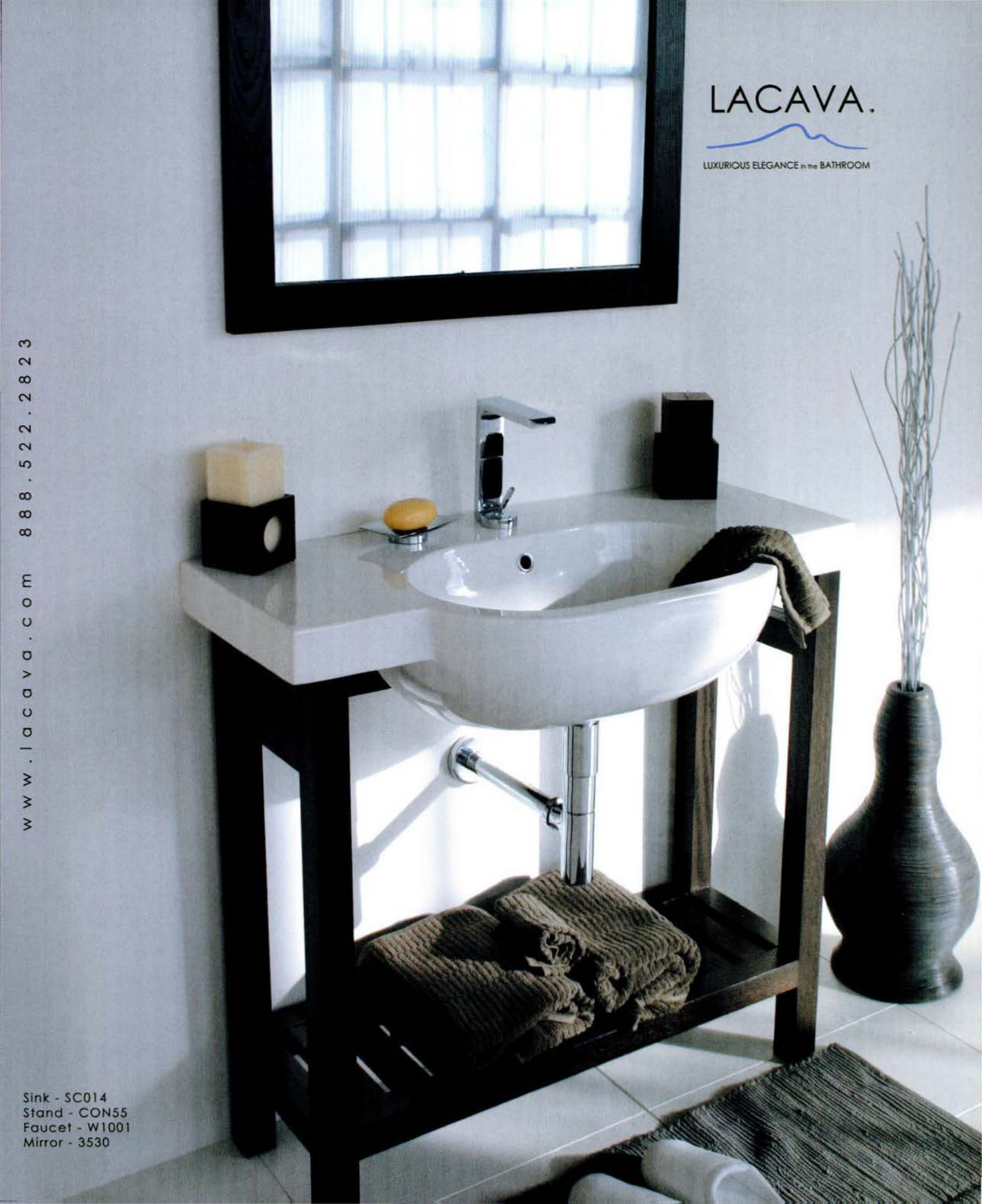
Farnan also considered the influence of "embodied energy"—or the hidden environmental toll of factors such as transport costs and upkeep. So there are no ceiling lights, just lamps and strategically placed, low-wattage LED spotlights, which are quite expensive—$47.25 each—although Farnan says they last 50,000 hours.

The bathroom floors are resilient colored epoxy resin, "like they use in pubs." A slab of ironbark, recovered ▸

Medland Residence
Floor Plan

A Bedroom
B Bathroom
C Services
D Laundry
E Entrance
F Dining Area
G Living Area
H Kitchen
I Pool
J Water Tank
K Wind Turbine
L Garage

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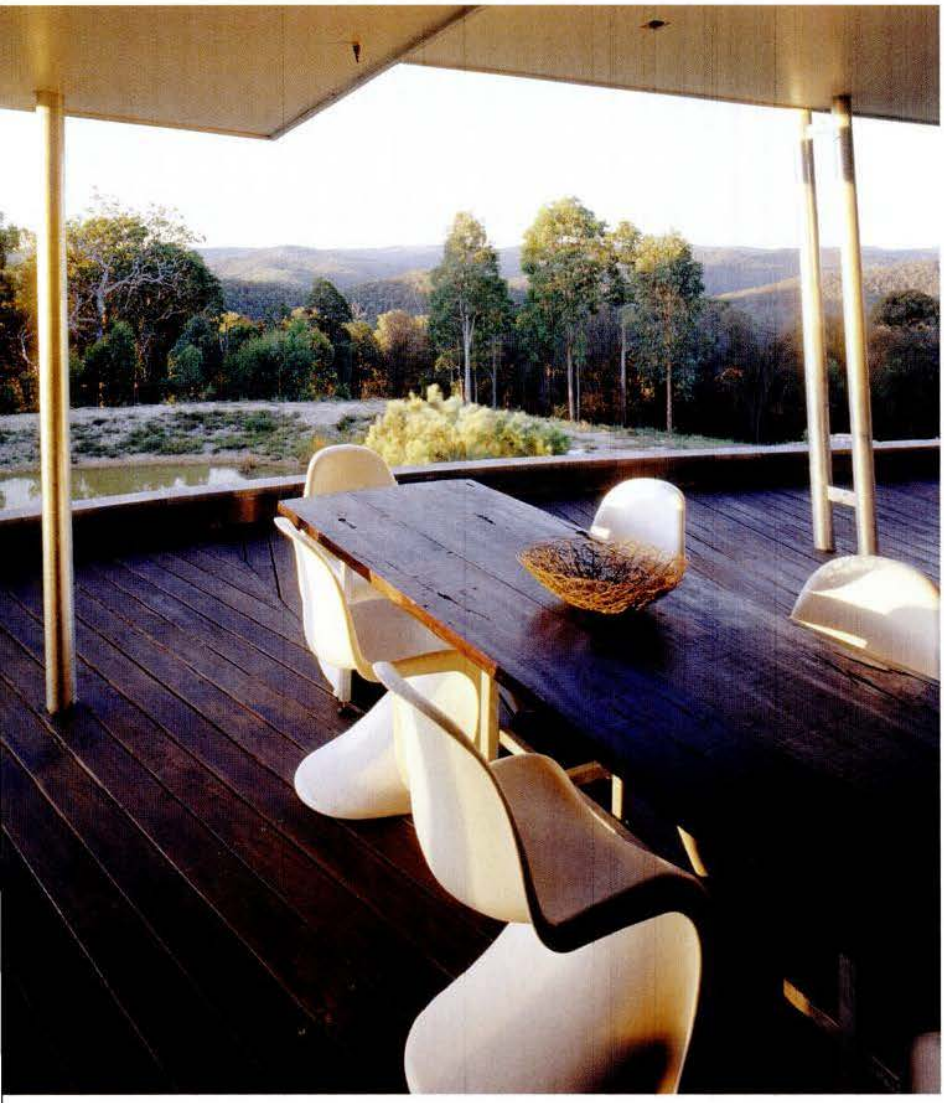


Outside, the family can enjoy an unspoiled view of their massive "backyard" from their reclaimed wood table, surrounded by Panton chairs. p.194

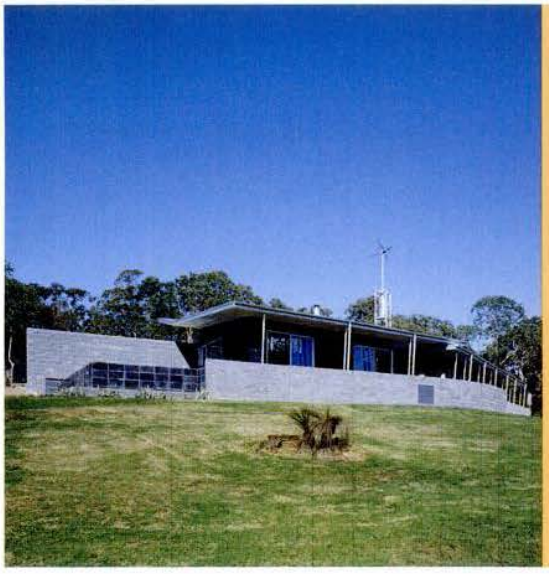
from a closed mill, has been turned into the kitchen bench. The trunks of saplings cleared for the home's construction are supports for bunk beds and tables.

Elsewhere, materials are raw and therefore durable—galvanized steel, concrete, recycled hardwood. "There are not a lot of finishes," Farnan says. "Things are expressed very basically, honestly, not with a lot of layers."

In this part of New South Wales, winter temperatures drop below zero while in summer the mercury can rise above 104 degrees Fahrenheit, so passive solar design was essential. A southern wall (remember, we are down under) of broken-face concrete blocks keeps the house appropriately cool or warm, depending on the time of year, while, off the kitchen to the east, the eaves create shade over the pool during the hotter months.

"The roof comes down like the brim of a hat to frame the view and limit the amount of sky, because it gets so bright," Farnan says. He points to a narrow beam of light hitting the living-room floor. In winter, the sun streams far into the space. In summer, it disappears. "This is the last of the sun inside—there's no more sun until May."

Yet no matter the month, there are always friendly wallabies, gum trees, and the faint sound of wind on blades. Chris and Angela expected to enjoy the family weekends and holidays in their elegant shed, but have discovered another benefit, one that could be just the thing to sell green living to the broader community. "You get a real kick out of the fact that there are no bills," says Chris. "We didn't expect it. When you're doing the solar thing, you pay once, upfront. It's incredible." ■



Smoke Signal

When building in a bushfire flame zone, call an engineer. Chris used a computer to model how a fire would travel through the property and how much water would be needed to fight it. "We found sprinkler heads from the United States; they are a funny twirly shape and use very little water; they fling around big droplets in a cone pattern," he says.

To monitor a fire's progress remotely, Chris devised an automated surveillance and communication system. When smoke is detected, an SMS is sent to his cell phone. Then, from any computer, he can activate the webcam at the top of the tower to decide on his next step: Either call the fire brigade or start the pump. "We've got about two hours of water sitting in the dedicated tanks, in case there's no one around," he says.

The building codes for a house in a zone considered to have the highest level of fire risk include the mandatory use of hardwood timbers, metal flyscreens, smoke detectors, and toughened glass. "We did all that, but it doesn't actually fix the problem. If your building gets hot enough, it will burn."

A bushfire swept through the property three years ago, which is "a great thing," says Chris, as it takes about ten years for dry debris to build up and fuel the next fire. —K.P.

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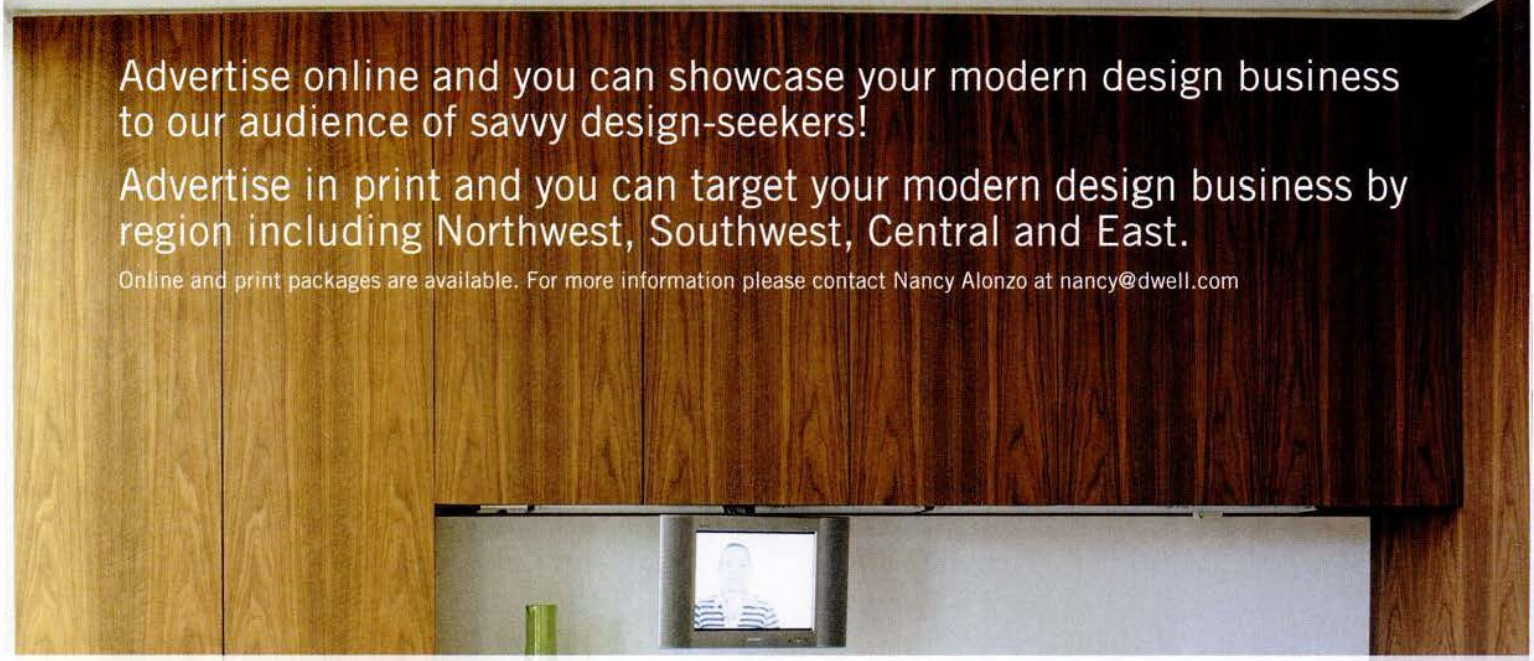

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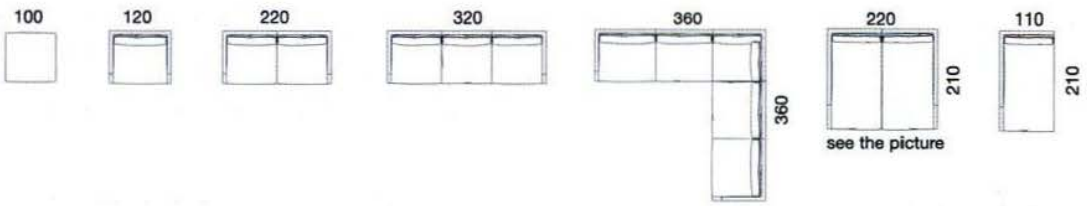

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Oh, Snap!

Not all pictures are worth a thousand words. In fact, some barely warrant an "ugh," which is why the ever-irreverent digital camera has become the favored archivist for the vain, but not always fair, public. But with the plethora of quality point-and-shoots out there, whose picture is brightest?

In 1900, Kodak released the Brownie, one of the first low-cost snapshot cameras constructed from cardboard and a meniscus lens that took two-and-one-quarter-inch square pictures on 117-roll film. The camera saw multiple iterations, upgrading from cardboard to a Bakelite exterior, but the basic idea remained the same—and its principles, while refined, guided the development of point-and-shoot photography for nearly a century. In 1996, Kodak released an early mass-market digital camera, the DC25. It was 1.3 megapixels, used a CompactFlash memory card, and retailed for a cool $500. And, as a quick eBay search shows, you can now purchase a Kodak DC25 for $13. Over the course of 15 years, the digital camera has depreciated 97.4 percent—even a nonfunctioning Brownie is worth more.

There is a certain ruthlessness to technological obsolescence, especially today. And with biannual updates and upgrades to our iPods and a spate of jazzy multidisciplinary phones, the camera has the unfortunate task of competing not only against itself, but also against a slew of electronics. Thus, yesterday's megapixel is today's minorpixel, and yes, your LCD screen is undoubtedly on the small side. In many cases, today's digital cameras produce better-quality images than film, so much so that slow or fine-grained 35 mm films with speeds of ISO 50 to 100 have megapixel equivalents of 8 to 16 megapixels, and ISO 400 films come in at about 4 megapixels. And so the early digital camera goes the way of the typewriter, the VCR, and, begrudgingly, the boom box.

With all the major camera manufacturers in clear agreement that film is no longer the cash cow (Kodak drastically reduced production of traditional 35 mm film cameras in 2004, and Nikon and Canon swiftly followed suit in 2006), few can argue with the fact that, for a point-and-shoot camera, you'd have to be a dolt not to go digital. But with the market being as competitive as it is, one wonders if the consumer isn't being hedged out of the bet. In order to make heads or tails of the options, we asked Steve Reczkowski, of the color-photo-processing lab Robyn Color, to help us rate the latest and greatest point and shoot models based on usability and image quality. ►

A Note on Our Expert: Steve Reczkowski has been a fine-art photographer for 15 years and finds working in a photo lab a most convenient occupation for supporting himself and his art. Though he is an autodidact in photography, Reczkowski studied art history at the San Francisco Art Institute. What he loves most about digital point-and-shoot cameras is the video feature.

SONY **Nikon** **Canon**

Cyber-shot DSC-T10 by Sony / $350 / www.sonystyle.com / 7.2 megapixels, 3X optical zoom, 2X digital zoom, 3.5 x 2.15 x 0.8 in., 2.5-in. LCD, 4.9 oz., plug battery charger, 4 body colors

Expert Opinion: I would definitely choose this one on the basis of looks. I like the way the lens cover slides up (and down). The functions are all clearly laid out, though it's really small and compact and easy to hold. The only thing that bothers me about this one is that the zoom is a little sluggish.

What We Think: This camera is the little black dress of the bunch. We can't say enough about the sleek aesthetics (matte silver finish; clean, boxy shape), and yet the functionality of the camera is pretty stellar as well. While we agree the zoom isn't the most alacrid of the bunch, we also aren't that extreme.

Coolpix S7c by Nikon / $350 / www.nikonusa.com / 7.1 megapixels, 3X optical zoom, 4X digital zoom, 3.9 x 2.4 x 0.8 in., 3-in. LCD, 4.9 oz., cable battery charger, 1 body color

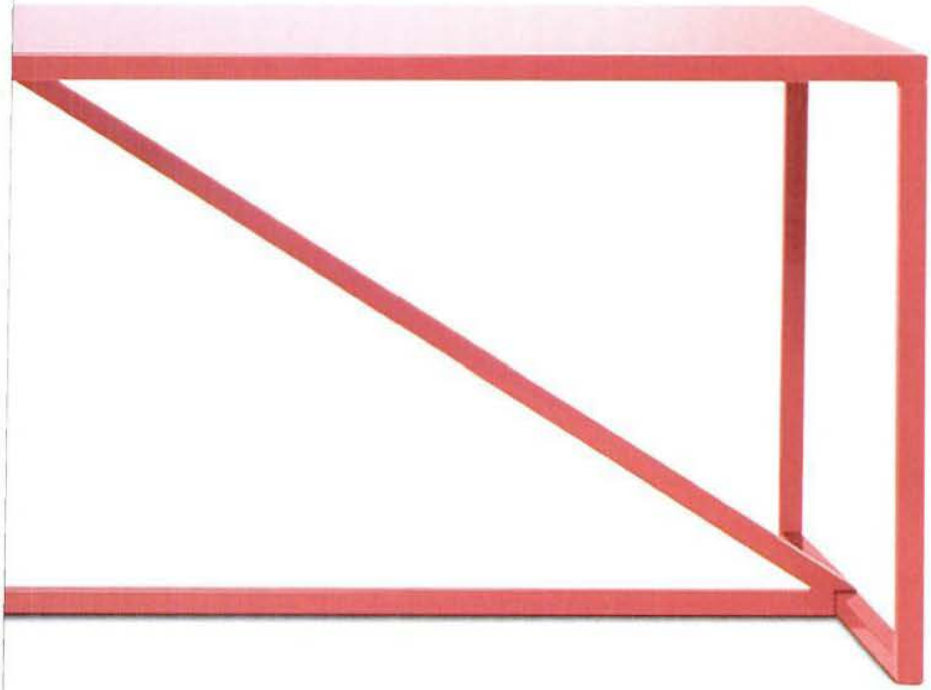
Expert Opinion: This one has the WiFi option so you can connect to your computer remotely, which is a pretty interesting feature. While the wheel feature allows you to browse rapidly, the plastic seems a little flimsy. The interface is simple and straightforward, though, making it easy to use.

What We Think: Sure, cords are a problem—they're currently sticking out of every orifice on our overwhelmed little laptop, but we're not sure how often we'd utilize the WiFi function in a camera. The feel and look of this camera are quite nice, and the interface on the camera is pared down and is predominately operable from a wheel, which makes rapid review (and subsequent expunging) quite easy.

PowerShot SD800 IS by Canon / $400 / www.usa.canon.com / 7.1 megapixels, 3.8X optical zoom, 4X digital zoom, 3.5 x 2.3 x 1 in., 2.5-in. LCD, 5.3 oz., plug battery charger, 1 body color

Expert Opinion: This one is nice to hold, and it actually has a viewfinder as an option, instead of just having a screen like all the other ones. Photographers will usually want this option of having the viewfinder in case it's really dark or if it's a sunlight situation and difficult to see the screen, so it's beneficial to have.

What We Think: We are consistently impressed with the quality images the Canon Elphs produce, and we find the little tweaks the company makes from year to year to be subtle but welcome. Canon has obviously considered the fact that people are printing their pictures less and less, and has developed an elaborate slideshow feature on this model. ►



Dining for eight. Or one, if people aren't your thing.

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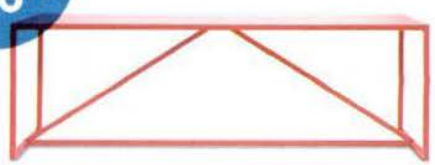

OLYMPUS

Stylus 720SW by Olympus / $400 / www.olympusamerica.com / 7.1 megapixels, 3X optical zoom, 5X digital zoom, 3.6 x 2.3 x 0.78 in., 2.5-in. LCD, 5.3 oz., cable battery charger, 3 body colors, waterproof up to 10 feet

Expert Opinion: The interesting feature on this one is that it's shock- and waterproof. You don't have to worry about taking it out in the rain or anything like that. This one is probably the thickest, which can be nice to hold. It's kind of intermediate between stylish and compact and handleable.

What We Think: We pondered over this ten-foot waterproof depth claim for some time, and we just couldn't wrap our heads around it. It's not encased in a plastic shell like those disposable underwater cameras that were all the rage in the '90s, and there's something wholly incongruous about something so literally electronic being able to plunge to Olympic-pool depths (can you say "scuba certification slideshow"?), but we also know that this claim cannot be false. So, for any avid snorkelers, this camera is for you!

Panasonic

Lumix DMC-FX50 by Panasonic / $400 / www.panasonic.com / 7.2 megapixels, 3.6X optical zoom, 4X digital zoom, 2.25 x 3.85 x 1.0 in., 3-in. LCD, 5.3 oz., plug battery charger, 2 body colors

Expert Opinion: I actually bought this one for my mother because it has a very user-friendly interface; it's good for someone who wants a simple experience, someone who doesn't want to get into changing a lot of settings. I don't care for the zooming function [that operates from this] tiny little switch at the top of the camera. It's not as convenient as the others.

What We Think: While our first inclination is to bristle at the idea of simplifying what is already a relatively simple gadget, we were impressed with the camera's sensibility when it flashed the message "back lit" when we tried to snap dusky glamour shots. This one may be simple, but sadly, it seems to be a smidge smarter than us. The camera operates mostly from a joysticklike button, and when the camera is on simple mode, with its huge graphics and straightforward instructions, it feels a bit like an Atari game.

CASIO

Exilim EX-S770 by Casio / $380 / www.exilim.casio.com / 7.2 megapixels, 3X optical zoom, 4X digital zoom, 3.7 x 2.4 x 0.7 in., 2.8-in. LCD, 4.5 oz., cradle charger, 3 body colors

Expert Opinion: This one is a little difficult to hold if you have large hands. It's quite thin and rounded around the edges. It's kind of nice to have all your options laid out on the screen—it's helpful because the interface itself is not totally clear. These cameras all have very large screens, which is beneficial, but the problem with larger screens is that they can break rather easily.

What We Think: This slick camera almost makes us forget that dog-barking sample we played over and over (to the delight of our family members) on our Casiotone keyboard. Casio has become an electronics sophisticate. While we agree that the rounded edges make the feel a bit slippery, the usability of this camera is impressive; all of the functions are easy to access and manipulate, and the image quality is strong. If only we'd had this camera back in '87 to record our dance routine to the samba preset. ■

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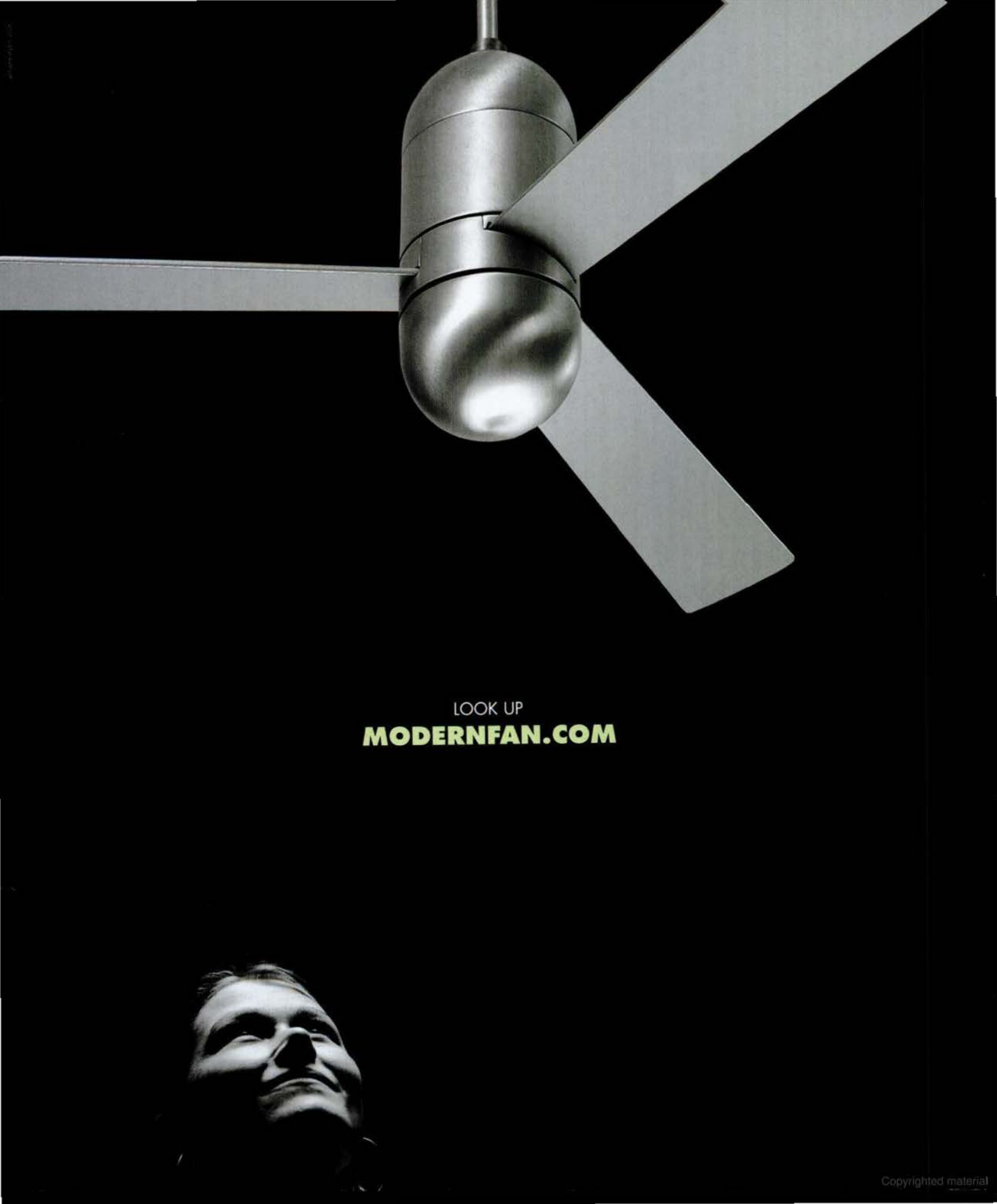

Story by Shonquis Moreno

Photo by Adam Friedberg

Public Defender

"Design is such an enormous topic that it takes multiple voices to address it," Zoe Ryan says. "You never know what ideas you'll ignite by creating a safe place for people to come and talk and ask questions that seem simple but which open up huge areas of discussion. So I see myself as the facilitator."

Asked her age recently, curator and author Zoe Ryan admitted to 30; she was actually only 29. Since graduating from the University of Sussex in England, Ryan has written art and design articles and books, helped curate shows at the MoMA and the Victoria and Albert Museum, and, most spectacularly, brought new life to the Van Alen Institute, New York's now-prolific nonprofit promoting public architecture. Ryan has been the VAI's senior curator and editor of the *Van Alen Report*, a small quarterly with big ideas about improving public space. She took on its 2001 redesign, and has directed all aspects of the institute's exhibition development and production; acted as VAI's fundraiser, registrar, and primary publicity person; and organized and managed workshops, symposia, lectures, and panel discussions that draw designers and students of design as well as schoolchildren and the public at large. And this is a partial list. In short, for six years, Ryan has helped to make this jargon-locked, hermetically trade-oriented nonprofit more accessible while simultaneously developing it as a think tank doing in-depth research.

In a field that is often dry, earnest, and grim, Ryan has been playful. With her first solo curatorial project last fall, "The Good Life: Design for All," Ryan explored how public spaces are being designed to fit today's recreational and leisure needs. For this show, Ryan finagled use of the vast, industrial Pier 40 space and had a series of accompanying events—during one of which people used cell phones to play an interactive game on the streets of Greenwich Village. Visitors were able to skate into the show on rollerblades, enjoy a river view and contemplate the multimedia show, or chat with friends.

"I think, with all the security concerns, that it's a difficult time for public space," says Ryan, "but I'm optimistic. People want to reclaim it and there are so many opportunities to make an impact." Ryan started in her new position as curator at the Art Institute of Chicago in November, a post created for her within the department of architecture and design to build the museum's holdings of contemporary design and introduce contemporary design exhibits. By the time she started the new position, Ryan was, at last, 30 years old. ■

HELSINKI

There's much more to Finnish culture than saunas and cell phones. Our recent visit to the Helsinki Design Week revealed that the Finns are engaged in a passionate tryst with fashion, food, architecture, and industrial design. The action-packed second-annual event featured exhibitions, walking tours, and presentations by some of the rising stars of this burgeoning scene.

Morris table / www.habitek.fi
These tables by design studio Habitek exemplify the direction being taken by Finland's fresh new talent. Partners Kirsi Gullichsen and Sakari Paananen combine the materials and methods of traditional woodworking with current factory technologies to create an adaptable family of products. ►

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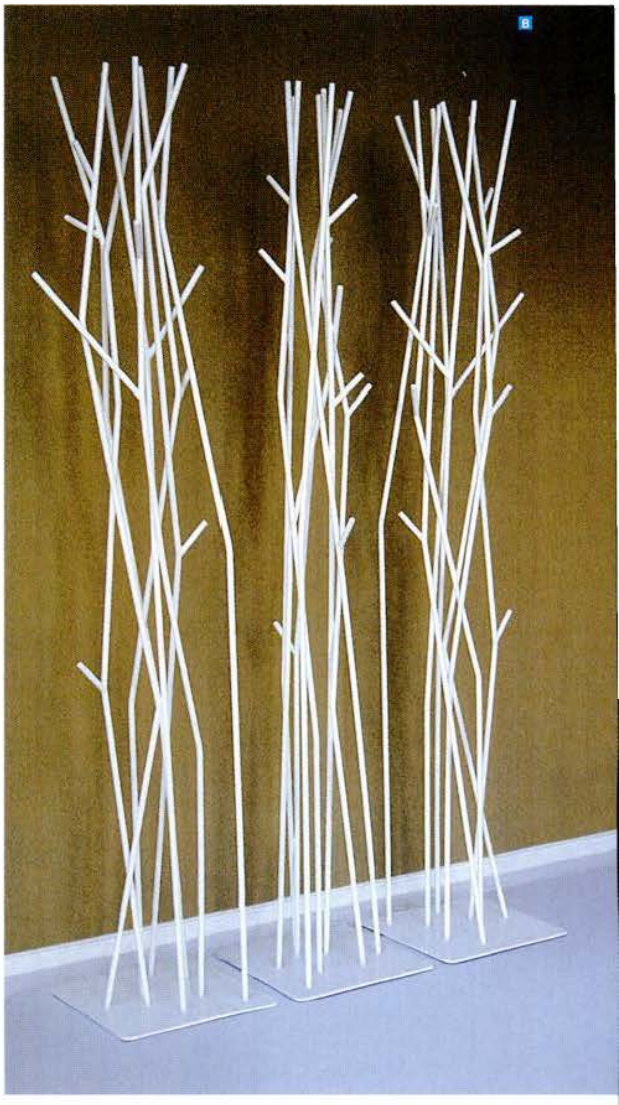
A Pecha Kucha / www.pecha-kucha.org
Pecha Kucha night, created by the Tokyo-based architecture firm Klein Dytham, came to Helsinki this year. The short-format presentation series, which gives speakers six minutes to wow the audience with whatever design topic they deem interesting, is rapidly spreading through international locales, no doubt due to the quick turnover, eclectic mix of participants, and availability of cocktails.

B Latva coat rack by Mikko Laakkonen for Covo / www.mikkolaakkonen.com
Mirroring the Finns' infatuation with the outdoors, the Latva coat rack is a little piece of nature you can keep indoors. The branchlike structure is an efficient network of stark white limbs that decorate your entryway, as well as providing a place to hang your hat.

C Tikkurila / www.tikkurila.com
Tikkurila's exhibition, "Touching," encouraged the public to interact with cute barnyard animals. The resin sculptures of calves, pigs, and horses were coated with surfaces like chalkboard paint, creating an interesting juxtaposition with the hyper-realistic forms. Their ploy was successful—touching was easy, leaving without our own little piglet was not.

D Walking tour / www.helsinkidesignweek.fi
The city walking tour showcased a number of student projects from a competition titled "Pimp My City," aimed at beautifying the numerous construction projects popping up around Helsinki. Facts about Finland were posted on temporary barriers to provide entertainment, color, and typography to passersby, while these snowflakelike scaffolding decorations, called Camouflage, were designed by Markus Wikar and Iikka Airas to provide an alternative to the antiseptic orange webbing usually found at building sites. ■



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Story by Michelle Hoffman

Designing with Designers

Giulio Cappellini, still in love with design after 25 years, gets passionate about the difference one millimeter makes in a chair. He praises the poetry of a lamp. He verges on emotional meltdown describing the slight variation in light between Sydney and Melbourne, and confesses to a hankering for a lacquer finish that will capture the color of the Marrakech sky at 6 p.m. The legendary figurehead and namesake of Italy's avant-garde furniture maker bubbles over in a fountain of words as he discusses an industry that he argues speaks for itself.

Cappellini is a charismatic talker, and he has taken his conversation on the road since his company was sold, in the spring of 2004, to Poltrona Frau. When Frau, Italian specialists in high-end leather furniture, snatched up his famed house, the design world held its breath. Cappellini had taken an 11-man business started by his father and made it the standard-bearer of avant-garde design. Rumors now flew of radical changes to the 120-strong company, and threats to the whole Italian furniture industry. That wondrously anachronistic world—a perplexity in an age of economic uber-efficiency and cheap Asian labor—seemed to have finally succumbed to trends too powerful for its Milanese mettle.

But two years into the tie-up, Cappellini—both the man and the company—shows no signs of stopping. The Frau Group has even ramped up its commercial presence in the past 18 months, with the opening of Cappellini boutiques in Rome, Singapore, Antwerp, and New York, and new ones expected this year in Tokyo and Sydney. Cappellini is now creative director of the brand and removed from day-to-day business duties. He remains focused on scouting and nourishing design talent, as he has done for decades, producing such stars as Jasper Morrison, Tom Dixon, and Marcel Wanders. Now 52 and in full swing, the man has enough projects backlogged to last a few lifetimes. After reincarnation, he says, he'll stick to all-image books, where—really, this time—no words are needed to get the picture. ▸

As eponymous director of his furniture company, Giulio Cappellini (above) has shepherded the production of design standouts like the vividly hued Mr. Bugatti range of chairs by François Azambourg (below).

PHOTOS BY ALESSANDRO ALBERT / GRAZIA NERI (PORTRAIT) AND COURTESY POLTRONA FRAU (CHAIRS)

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"When you look at his products, they are really very, very sophisticated, very, very elegant, and very, very snobbish," Cappellini says of Jasper Morrison, whose Tate chair is shown (top). Another pair of star designers, the Bouroullecs, created the Cloud shelving modules (bottom).

People see you as the world's best design talent scout. How does this work?
When I want something, I really want it. That's the story. In the beginning, it was with Jasper Morrison and Marc Newson and Tom Dixon and all the others, but it's definitely also right now. The DNA of the company is the story of encounters and friendships. The first object of Marc's that I saw was a very, very small glass, and I saw it in a really small picture in an Australian magazine. At that time, there was no email, no fax. So I called him in Australia and told him I would send him a ticket to come to Milan. He came and stayed for a week as a guest in my home, we started to speak, and we started to work together. Now there are the Bouroullec brothers and others, like François Azambourg.

We have a big responsibility because we have to create products, but we also have to make people dream. And really, you can do this only if you have a strong relationship with the designers and you strongly believe in what you are doing.

How closely do you work with Jasper Morrison?
Two days ago, I was with Jasper for an eight-hour meeting. For me, Morrison is maybe the most important designer in the company. For hours we discussed small details, tiny changes to a chair he's been working on for two years. We were exhausted, but in the end that's what makes the difference between a big designer like Jasper and just someone with some products. He does only a few things, but they are always beautiful, fantastic things, very subtle. You have to suffer to make great products!

Morrison likes to say that he's doing normal products, what we can call "new simple products." But he is one of the most sophisticated people and most snobbish people, meaning: It's not the concept or the looks that count. The main process for Jasper is getting there.

And your latest "find," Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec?
When I first met the Bouroullec brothers, they were totally unknown. Now they are stars of international design. The media, it's true, is creating a phenomenon around them, but they are not only a media creation. The incredible thing with them is that they are very young and already so professional. When they started, Erwan was only 20 years old. To work with Jasper is difficult, to work with the Bouroullecs is twice as difficult because they are always fighting with one another! Ronan is a more artistic spirit; Erwan is a more technical spirit.

Contemporary design is more popular today. Is it becoming more populist?
The end consumer today is more clever, more multicultural; he speaks more than one design language and is more open. It's becoming a social and cultural phenomenon—with all the exhibits and Design Week in Milan, which attracts lots of young families. I think that it should not just be a niche market; people shouldn't be afraid of design. Design can be a Cappellini or a Poltrona Frau or a Cassina product or an IKEA product. Why not?

In the past a design house was like a museum. Now the challenge for the design house is to be warm, a beautiful place where you can relax. The same should be true for hotels. But I have to say, I'm very happy when I see our products entering the permanent collection of museums! And it's not true that icons are only good for museums. Cappellini sells the icons. An S chair by Dixon can be an icon, like the Tate chair by Morrison. The most important thing is to try to build an extraordinary, long-selling product, a very honest product.

How is furniture design adapting to the evolving use of the home?
We're seeing what they now call the new domestic nomadism. In the kitchen you work on your computer, maybe you invite your friends in. The bathroom now is the "wellness room." If you have a small balcony, it's like a huge garden because you put all the green out there that you can. The living room is a sort of agora, the center of the house, with very deep sofas where you can stay with your families just to watch television or invite your friends in a less formal way. The bedroom is where you can sleep or work. The kitchen is becoming very noble. The ▸

PHOTOS COURTESY CAPPELLINI

Despite the diverse personalities of the designers who create each Cappellini piece, the products are unified in their attention to detail and precision of form. Shown below, from top: Marc Newson's Wooden chair, the Org table by Fabio Novembre, and the Hula table by Barber Osgerby.

role of the dining room is declining. Nobody wants to use it—just for a Christmas dinner. Sometimes the most successful products are those you can use in different rooms.

Where is technology taking furniture design?

To invent a new shape is really very difficult. All the most beautiful shapes were done in the '50s, '60s, and '70s. With technology we can give a new image to the products. On the one hand, we can work with elements of industrial production; on the other hand we can give a new feeling to the product. The thing is to use technology from other businesses. For example, for Morrison's new chair we are working with the technology of sneakers—the concept that you can fix rubber with leather or other materials.

I like to use discreet technology—that which you don't see. You only see, at the end, a beautiful product, a poetic object. We're in new cooperation with Sharp to work on integration, and are looking at the "miniaturization of technology." The concept of technology becoming smaller and smaller really helps design.

How far can we stretch the comparison between fashion and design? Poltrona Frau Group seems a natural to explore the question since, with backing from the Charme investment group, it has built up a concentration of top-end brands including Cappellini and Cassina. Is the idea to become like LVMH, which owns luxury labels Louis Vuitton, Fendi, Celine, and so forth?

Fashion and design can be very close because both produce products for the end consumer, but I really think the attitude is absolutely different. In fashion I buy things I don't need. When I buy six chairs, or a new cabinet, a new table, it's because I really need it, no? Sometimes we try to push this idea that these things, this cabinet, is so beautiful you can't do without it. But I think that really the attitude is very different.

When you have a very good design product, it's good today, it's good for the next ten years. The interesting thing is that we sell more products today that Jasper designed for Cappellini 15 years ago than we did 15 years ago. That's why it's very important for me to work not on best-sellers, but on long-sellers.

It's very good to work on avant-garde, in innovation. But it's good not to be too fashionable. That's what's different in the Charme group [from LVMH]. We like to speak about quality; we don't like to speak about "luxe." With a serial production you really cannot speak about luxe, because luxe is a unique piece. Cartier was a luxury brand when it was doing jewels for the kings and queens. Today you can find Cartier in the duty-free shops worldwide. Is it still luxe?

Have you been able to protect the creative dynamics of Cappellini in your new role since the sale to Poltrona Frau?

For me Cappellini is exactly the same as in the past. I always say, I don't work with designers; I like to design with my designers. We talk about color, about minute details, like maybe one millimeter in this thickness here. This, I like a lot. And so for Cappellini, absolutely, nothing changed.

But I also find I like working in a team, and for the group the most important thing is to work in a strategic way. As a group we don't want to be the supermarket of design. More and more, we have to push the different languages of design. Cappellini has to be more and more Cappellini; Cassina has to be more and more Cassina; and so forth. The biggest mistake we can make is if someone sees a product and says, "But is this table Cappellini or Cassina?" Cappellini has to do what they call the contemporary classics. Cassina has to do the modern classics. Poltrona Frau has to do the bourgeois classics. And Alias has to do the technical classics. These are the four different strategies for the main brands.

What's the pressure like to become more commercially aggressive and fixated on the bottom line?

I think that more and more we have an inclination in the market to push the brand. Now we're asked to do Cappellini restaurants, the Cappellini hotel. But I think we have to be very, very careful about stretching the logo. I can do something only if I'm 500-percent convinced. We always have to think that it has to be a model of innovation. If we lose the spirit of the company, we kill the company. ■

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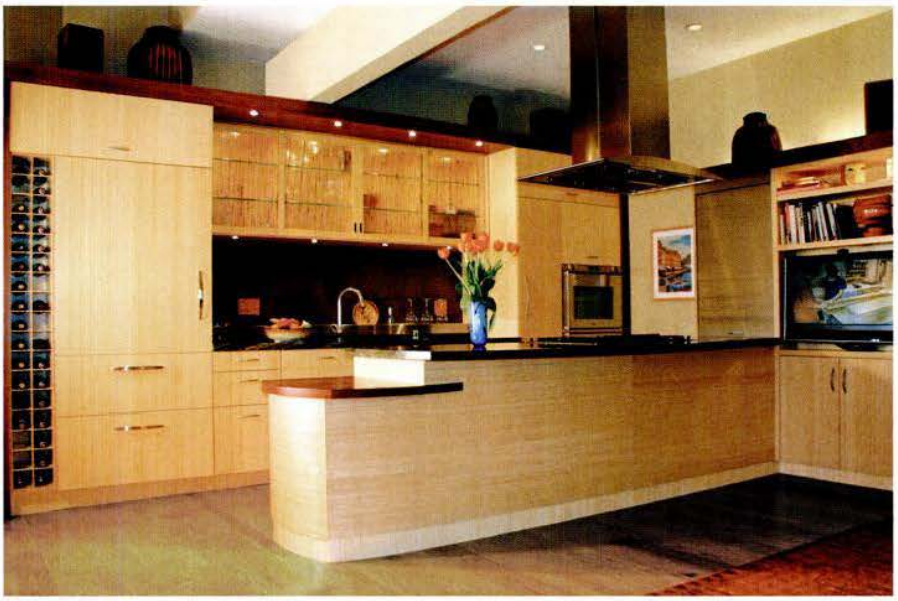

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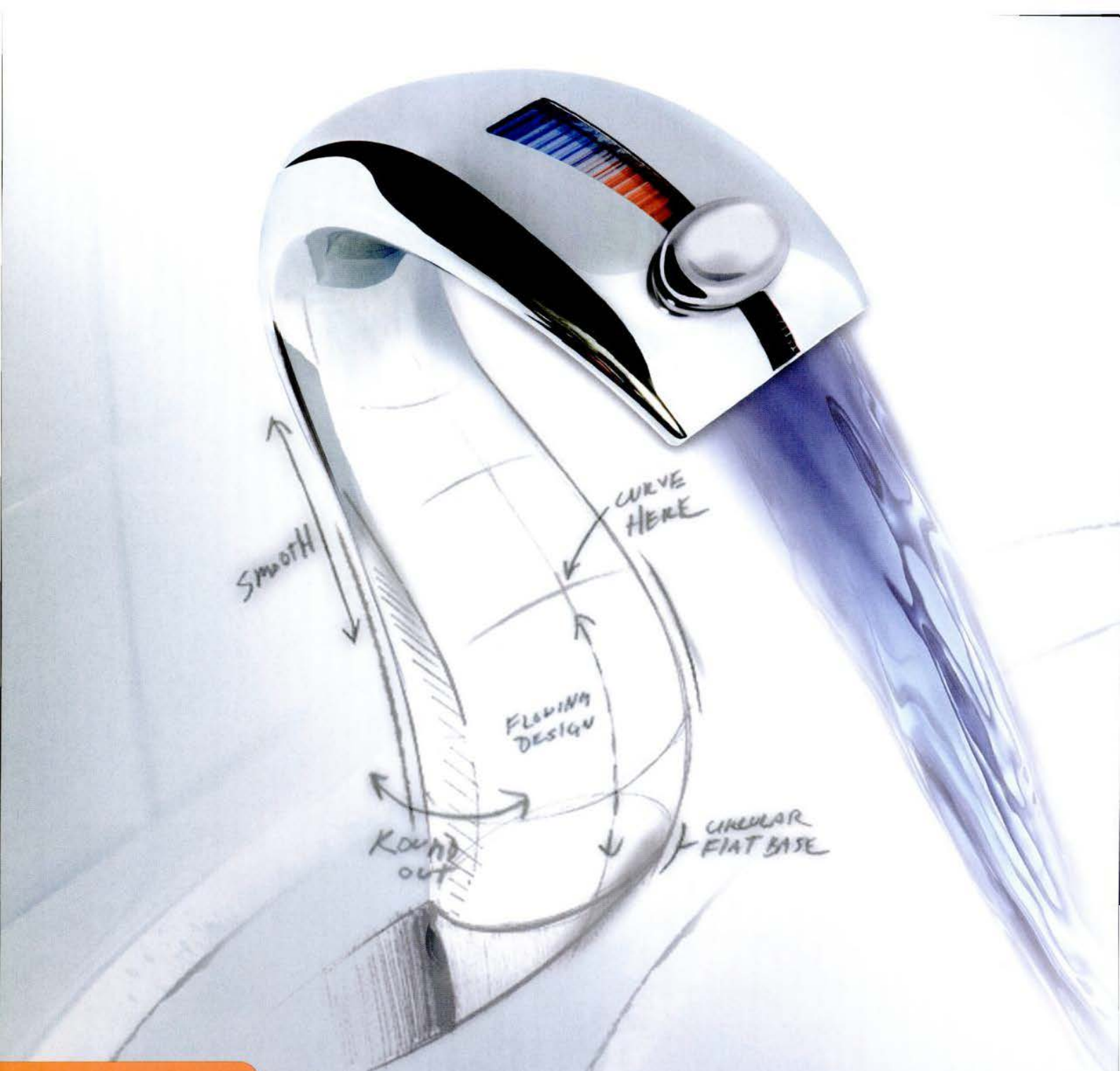

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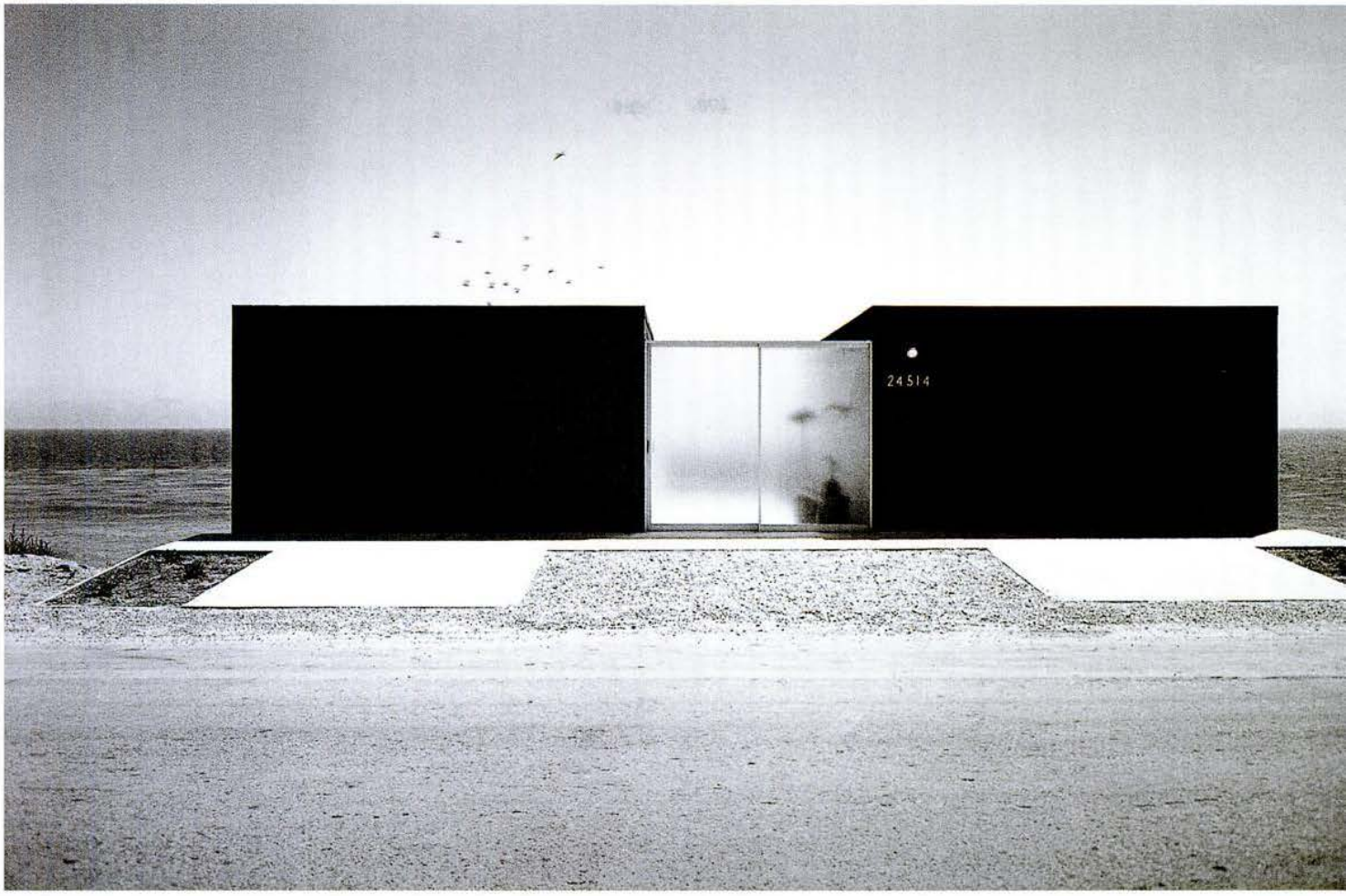

PHOTO BY MARVIN RAND

Under Studied

The 1955 Hunt House in Malibu, California, was previously attributed solely to Craig Ellwood. It was in fact largely designed by Jerry Lomax—an employee of Ellwood's office.

In the encyclopedia of modernist architecture, Jerrold "Jerry" E. Lomax's entry keeps getting longer. This is partly because, at 79, Lomax is still actively practicing, and also because scrutiny has recovered some of his early work from the clutches of his glitzy former employer. As an associate in Craig Ellwood's office during the publicity-intensive period of the mid- to late 1950s, Lomax was responsible for upwards of 20 building designs that had long been credited solely to Ellwood. Ellwood's now-renowned Hollywood hopeful story—image-conscious and self-promotion-oriented, constantly seeking to burnish his reputation though he never had formal training or a license—meant that talented young designers like Lomax could execute and experiment behind the scenes.

Impressed by projects of Ellwood's that appeared in *Arts & Architecture* while he was in college, Lomax decided to move to Los Angeles in 1953. His design career at Craig Ellwood Associates started auspiciously. "On the first house I worked on, the Pierson House in Malibu, [Ellwood] had done some sketch of a floor plan that looked like a tract house on pilings," Lomax explains. "So I asked if I could try and he said, 'Sure.' I ended up designing the house—and I had only been there a few weeks." Frustration with Ellwood's inattention to structural common sense in favor of detailing and client schmoozing permeates Lomax's recollections. "He was intrigued with good design visually, not necessarily three-dimensionally."

Lomax realized that his lack of public credit was not just unfair, but bad for his career. He asked for equal billing and Ellwood declined. "When I left, it was based on wanting to be a partner, because he was adding on quite a bit [of work]. He said, 'No.'" After eight and a half years with Ellwood, having moved the practice into a more sophisticated design direction but generally feeling dissatisfied, Lomax parted ways, and was soon joined by another former Ellwood employee, Philo Jacobson.

But business wasn't brisk. This was due in part to the '60s slowdown in construction, but also because Lomax avoided the one thing that he admits Ellwood did so well: self-promotion. "He created the mold we all fell into eventually. I should have done it sooner." In retrospect ▸

An interior view of the Hunt House (above left). After leaving Ellwood's firm, Lomax designed the 50,000-square-foot Miller Desk headquarters in 1965, including their expansive showroom (above right).

he holds no bitterness toward his former employer, and still respects the designs Ellwood executed that first lured him back to Los Angeles. He recognizes that the association will forever shadow his career: "I tried to escape the connection, as I wanted [to earn my reputation] myself. Then I found that there was no escape and rolled with it."

It was sweet vindication that by 1976, a traveling exhibition heralded the "Los Angeles 12," a group of disparate architects, two of whom were Craig Ellwood and Jerry Lomax (as well as John Lautner, Cesar Pelli, and Frank Gehry). In those days, before historians started questioning the provenance of Ellwood's designs, the story read as disciple-achieves-mentor's-status.

Lomax's reputation won him numerous commercial and industrial commissions in the southland throughout the 1960s and '80s—including showrooms and tilt-up warehouses. It was, however, the individual residences that highlighted his modernist ideals. Many of the homes—sea-view properties in Malibu, Pacific Palisades, and other tony California coastal regions—follow the tenets of California postwar modernism while exploring different material palettes. In these works Lomax's expression of volume becomes his signature.

Lomax's houses assert themselves authoritatively while falling short of brutalism. For example, the house Lomax built for himself in 1970 plants a steadfast movie-screen façade on a pedestal-like foundation, with just the entrance and one window interrupting.

Lomax's longevity has even allowed an opportunity to take several swipes at the same project. His current workload includes a house on a sloping site in Brentwood that he originally designed for an acquaintance 35 years ago. Remarkably, its new owner wants him to design an addition. "Last year when I went to look at it I thought, What was I thinking when I did this? It was nicely detailed and everything, but it just seemed outdated." In particular Lomax regretted the home's wood structure—a decision made at the time for budgetary reasons. He talked the new client into a steel frame and sod roof.

In the mid-'90s Lomax moved his practice up the coast to Sand City, near Monterey. After arriving he was surprised by the lack of interest in local modernist history or contemporary practice. "I wanted my house done in steel studs. Nobody knew how to do it here."

Lomax became involved in local historical record keeping. "When I first moved here, I asked the AIA if they had a list of modern buildings in the vicinity from the past 40 years or so. They said they didn't. I couldn't believe it—so I didn't join the local chapter." Instead, he teamed up with two area professors and architectural historians, Rick Janick and Kent Seavey, who had been compiling their own records, calling attention to houses by Richard Neutra, Frank Lloyd Wright, William Wurster, and Charles Moore. This research culminated in a 2003 exhibition at the Monterey Museum of Art, "The History of Modern Architecture in the Peninsula," which the trio curated.

The historical record corrected and illuminated, Lomax continues to extend his legacy through new work (he did finally join the local chapter of the AIA), as well as educational programs and tours related to the relatively undocumented local central coast modernism.

As for looking back, he quips, "Just knowing I had an influence is the exciting thing." ▸

PHOTOS BY MARVIN RAND (SUNDECK), BERT KALTMAN (OFFICE)

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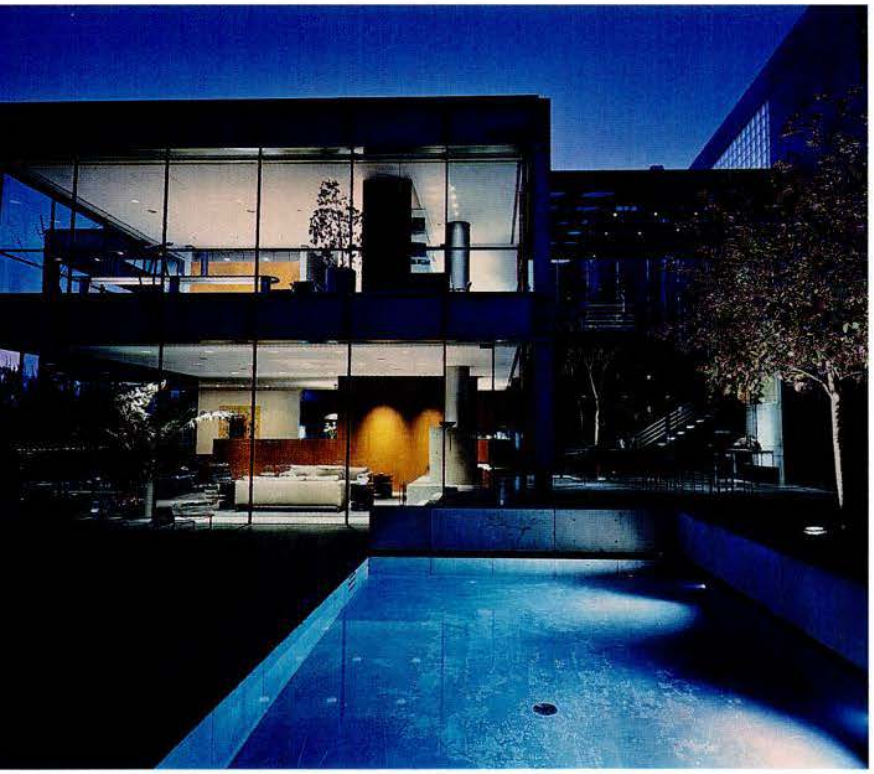

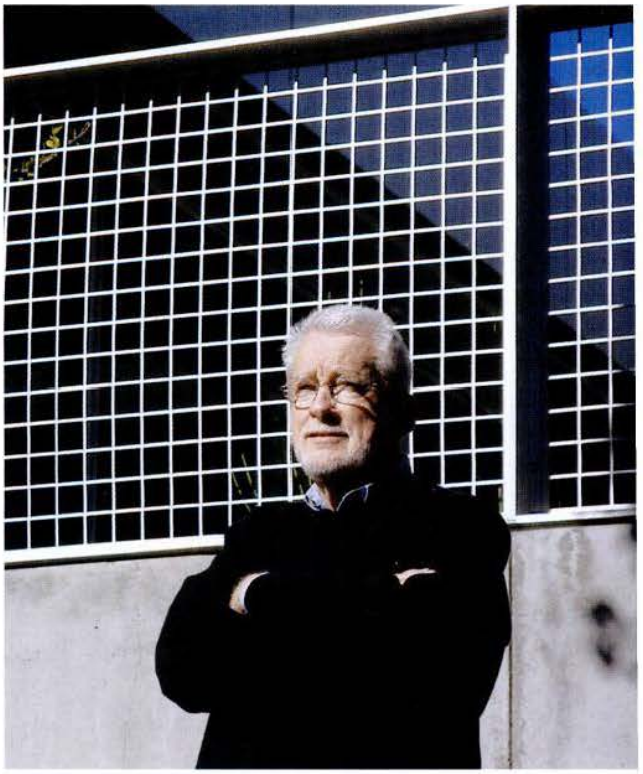

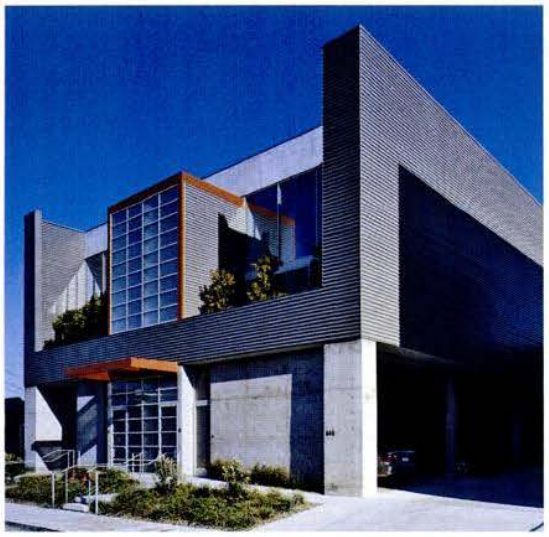

Now working largely with steel, Lomax's modernist tendencies haven't wavered over time. The 1992 Rice Residence (top left) is proof of Lomax's devotion to clean lines, an honest use of materials, and large expanses of glass. At 79, Lomax (top right) is still practicing. His home and studio (above left) is one of six units in a mixed-use building. Lomax's partners on the Sand City project included artist Gregory Hawthorne and Bill McLeod, who constructed the Post Ranch Inn in Big Sur, California.

Ten Things You Should Know About Jerry Lomax

1 / Lomax was born in Los Angeles, California, on April 10, 1927.

2 / Lomax wanted to enlist in the U.S. Army Air Corps, but couldn't pass the color perception tests. Years later, coincidentally, aviation manufacturer Northrop hired him to redesign buildings, and made him the color consultant.

3 / The architecture school at the University of Houston was new when Lomax attended in the early '50s. His early outlook was a synthesis of the three major influences taught at the time: Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and Eero Saarinen.

4 / Lomax was the principal designer on numerous projects long credited solely to Craig Ellwood, including the Pierson House, the Hunt House, the Daphne House, and the Korsen House.

5 / Lomax claims to have had a major role in Case Study Houses #17 and #18, decrying #17, which was compromised by John Entenza's publishing schedule and deference to the house's client. Lomax's sketch of the house graces the cover of Taschen's *Case Study Houses*.

6 / Lomax partnered with Philo Jacobson, as well as Donald Mills (1974–1979) and John Rock (1982–1994).

7 / Lomax spent much of the '70s and '80s working on large commercial and industrial commissions, including the Miller Desk headquarters, the Beverly Connection shopping center, and the Trailer Life Publishing Company headquarters.

8 / Between dinner courses, a client of Lomax's was talking to a waitress about a recently completed project. It turned out the waitress was in fact Lomax's niece. The two pursued a relationship, and the client is now Lomax's nephew-in-law.

9 / Lomax's wife of 30 years, Sandra Miles, a furniture dealer who represents Knoll, occasionally collaborates with him on the design and furnishings of his projects.

10 / Lomax and Miles have built four residences together, in Westwood, Pacific Palisades, Carmel Valley, and most recently, Sand City (where he didn't customize the space beyond the plan). His mixed-use condo sits near a big-box strip mall and is visible from Highway 1. ■

PHOTOS BY STEVEN A. GUNTHER (NIGHT), SHARON ASHTON (PORTRAIT), JOHN EDWARD LINDEN/ARCAID.CO.UK (DAY)

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Dear Dwell,
We'd like to get a modern-looking birdhouse. Which ones will look best in our backyard?

—**Erik Edwards,** St. Louis, Missouri

Rest assured, there are a number of attractive abodes for your chirpy friends. Take a look at this roundup of small-scale architecture, from handcrafted ceramics to wooden case studies—there's something for every sparrow and martin.

Going Cheep by Luke Morgan / $65 / www.herhouse.uk.com
This bird box, as the English call it, is a playful combination of carefully considered design and humor. The cantilevered roof, bold '70s-style infographics, and plywood construction lend a bit of flair to the modern aesthetic. Straight out of a high-rollin' rap video, the encircled "B" helipad provides the perfect bull's-eye for birds to land. (Hand-sprayed Camouflage version by designer Luke Morgan also available for $85.)

Acorn Bird Apartment / $64 / www.sprouthome.com
This photosynthetic green ceramic orb should be inviting to tree-dwelling birds, but the acorn shape is the real hook. For the typical American it's like coming home to a giant cheeseburger, or tofu salad as the case may be. (Dot and Gourd bird apartments are also available.)

21L Bird Shelter by Architectural Pottery / $175 / www.architecturalpottery.com
Perfect for mod feathered friends who plan to house their Arne Jacobsen Egg chair inside, this bird shelter is sleek and organic. The unglazed bisque finish and subtle wood perch balance the design, and the oblong opening offers an ideal spot from which to peer surreptitiously.

Droog birdhouse by Marcel Wanders / $70 / www.fitzsu.com
As you'd expect from Wanders, this heavy-concept house is simply executed. The curatorial wit doesn't detract from the form, though; its unique color and the unfettered openness of the roof design are inviting to both birds and people alike. ►

Nest by Gary Cruce for Arcamita / $76 / www.velocityartanddesign.com
This all-natural birch laminate house aesthetically leans toward the traditional side of modern and comes equipped with a removable back panel for easy cleaning. Just don't put it near your front door; this receptacle is for birds, not mail.

Sgraffitto by Jonathan Adler / $150 / www.unicahome.com
While their name might not roll off the tongue, these stoneware vessels are easy on the eyes. Each hand-thrown piece is individually painted, so your avian visitors are sure to get a unique design.

Singing Birds by Tsutomu Suzuki / $18 / www.dwr.com
These motion-activated sopranos, inspired by Suzuki's sculptures, have embedded microchips that produce realistic songs based on recordings from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You choose the melody: Northern Cardinal, Eastern Bluebird, American Goldfinch, Kingfisher, or Great Tit. ■

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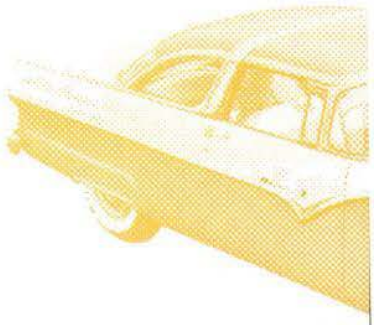
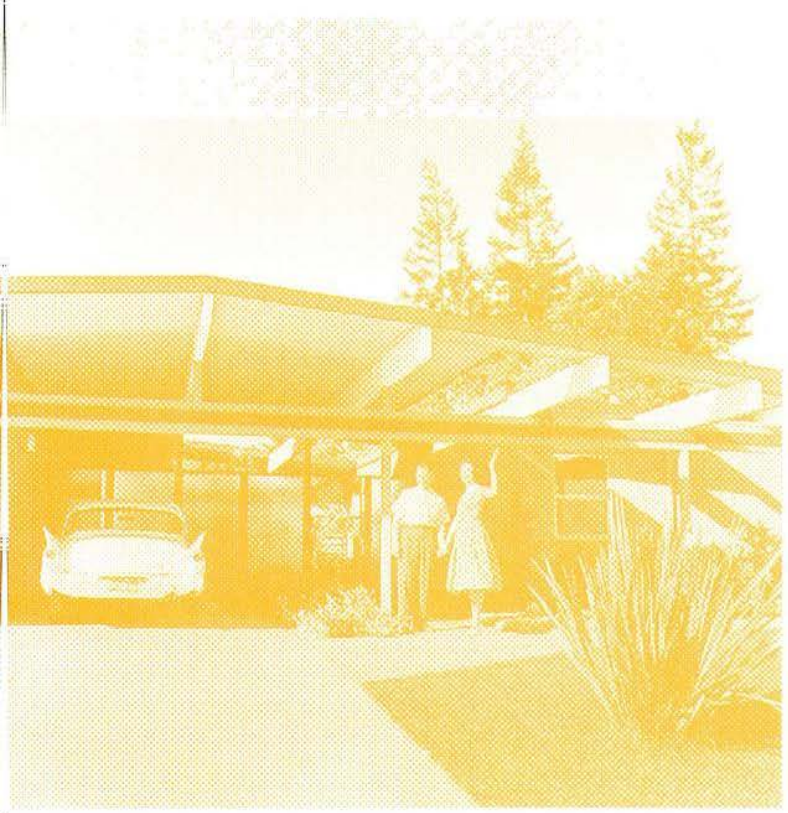
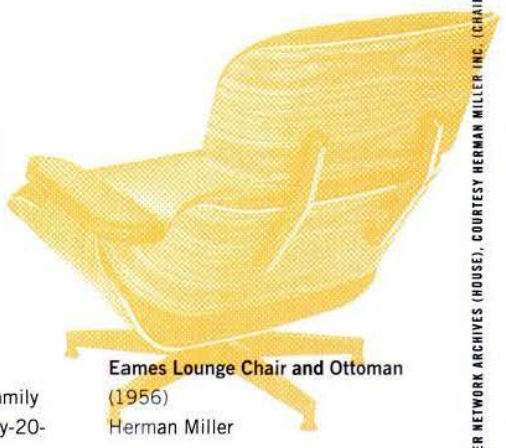
Story by Barry Katz

Modern Appreciation



Modernism promised to bring good design to the masses, but just how affordable was it? To find out, we selected a cross section of design classics to see how they stack up by today's standards.





PHOTOS BY ERNIE BRAUN / COURTESY EICHLER NETWORK ARCHIVES (HOUSE), COURTESY HERMAN MILLER INC. (CHAIR), CORBIS (CAR)

Eichler House (1957)
4 bedrooms, 2 baths, with family room, dining room, and 12-by-20-foot living room

The Eichler home, with its post-and-beam construction, open floor plan, and signature indoor/outdoor feel, became the residential emblem of the postwar flight to the suburbs. Today, remarkably, we are seeing a return to the city, so we paired it with an urban loft in Chicago.

Eames Lounge Chair and Ottoman (1956)
Herman Miller

The Eames Lounge Chair and Ottoman are the most recognizable products of America's most celebrated design partnership, and the culmination of the couple's experiments with plywood-shell chairs. Innovative, organic, and expensive, today the set remains as popular (and as comfortable) as ever.

original price	**$24,950**	**$578** (set)
original price adjusted for inflation	**$180,155**	**$4,174** (set)
current price of reissue	**n.a.**	**$3,125** (set)
price of original today	**$1,125,000** (Palo Alto, CA)	**$3,250** (set) (eBay)
modern-day equivalent	**Two-bedroom loft** North Center, Chicago	**Slow chair** by the Bouroullec brothers for Vitra
price of equivalent	**$499,900**	**$2,500** (estimated)

Despite its association with clean lines and flat surfaces, "modern" was never supposed to be just a style. It was, from the beginning, a social movement that aspired to bring durable, functional, and attractive products within reach of the widest population. That this mission so often expressed itself in clean lines and flat surfaces was always more of an economic consequence than an aesthetic choice.

Almost immediately, however, the ironies became apparent: Le Corbusier needed a coterie of wealthy patrons—the Steins, the Savoyes—to realize his populist vision of the house as "a machine for living." Mies and Gropius may have dreamed of a factory-made house, but their Bauhaus modernism was shunned by actual factory workers and quickly became the signature style of corporate America. Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian house made a cameo appearance in *Blade Runner* but almost nowhere else, and Bucky Fuller's geodesic domes can be found on NATO bases in Greenland but not in the suburbs of Baltimore, Seattle, or Atlanta.

This paradox prompted us to look a bit more closely at the cost of modern living over the last 50 years. Taking 1957 as a base ($100 in 1957 = $722.06 today), we looked at the relative cost of some of the most recognizable accoutrements of modern living. To put yourself in the right frame of mind, think about a minimum wage of $1 an hour, gasoline at 31 cents per gallon, a 3-cent postage stamp, and the stock market at a bullish 436.

PHOTOS COURTESY KNOLL (TABLE + CHAIRS), THE METROLITIAN MUSEUM OF ART (DINNERWARE), MZTV MUSEUM OF TELEVISION (TV)

Ford Fairlane 500 (1957)
Skyliner with retractable hardtop

The Fairlane 500 was the quintessential family car of the '50s. You can almost hear the retractable top going up as Ward Cleaver pulls into his driveway with a hearty, "June, I'm home." In 2005 Ford introduced a Fairlane concept SUV—complete with a refrigerator built into the tailgate—but we thought the VW Passat was a better match to the original.

Tulip chairs and Pedestal dining table by Eero Saarinen (1957–59)
Knoll

Feeling that the underside of most furniture reflects a world in disarray, Saarinen created the Tulip base to clear up "the slum of legs." The purity of its lines belies the complexity of its manufacture, which took the engineers at Knoll years to resolve. "I wanted to make the chair all one thing again."

American Modern earthenware glaze by Russel Wright (1939–1959)
Steubenville Pottery

Russel Wright's life work was built around the idea that "good informal living...doesn't need wealth." His American Modern tableware was available as an inexpensive starter set to which people could add as their families and fortunes grew. We paired it with Alfredo Häberli's Origo set for iittala.

Philco Predicta (1958)

The Philco Pedestal Predicta was designed by Severin Jonassen and Catherine Winkler before the industry had decided what televisions were "supposed" to look like. The most iconic of Philco's space-age TVs, its popularity long outlived the ill-fated company, which was acquired by Ford in 1961 and disappeared into obscurity. Only the top-of-the-line flat-panel Sony even comes close.

$2,942	**$784** (set)	**$30** (33-piece starter set)	**$460**
$21,243	**$5,661** (set)	**$212**	**$3,321**
$54,490 (Fairlane Ghia)	**$5,371** (set)	**$110** (Oneida at Bed Bath & Beyond)	**$2,349** (Telstar Electronics)
$33,900 (fully restored)	**$3,500** (set) (RetroDaze)	**$1,010** (setting plus 5 serving pieces)	**$1,350** (eBay)
VW Passat 2.0T, 2007	**Urban chairs, Docksta table** for IKEA	**Origo by Alfredo Häberli** for iittala	**Sony Bravia** XBR 32" LCD
$25,665	**$309** (set)	**$655** (setting plus 5 serving pieces)	**$1,799**

Story by Hillary Geronemus | Photos by Adam Friedberg

A view of Small from the front (right) which connects to Medium (left) by way of a translucent Polygal corridor. Schenk, Kim, and Peeradorn Kaewlai (their friend and tenant) outside X-Small (opposite), the final piece of Schenk and Kim's design puzzle, and hopefully their new home. Windows are strategically placed to maximize light and privacy.

When we first visited Beat Schenk and Chaewon Kim two years ago, they were in the process of building the second house on what has turned into a Cambridge compound. Four houses later, we find that while much has changed, Schenk and Kim's expansive will has not.

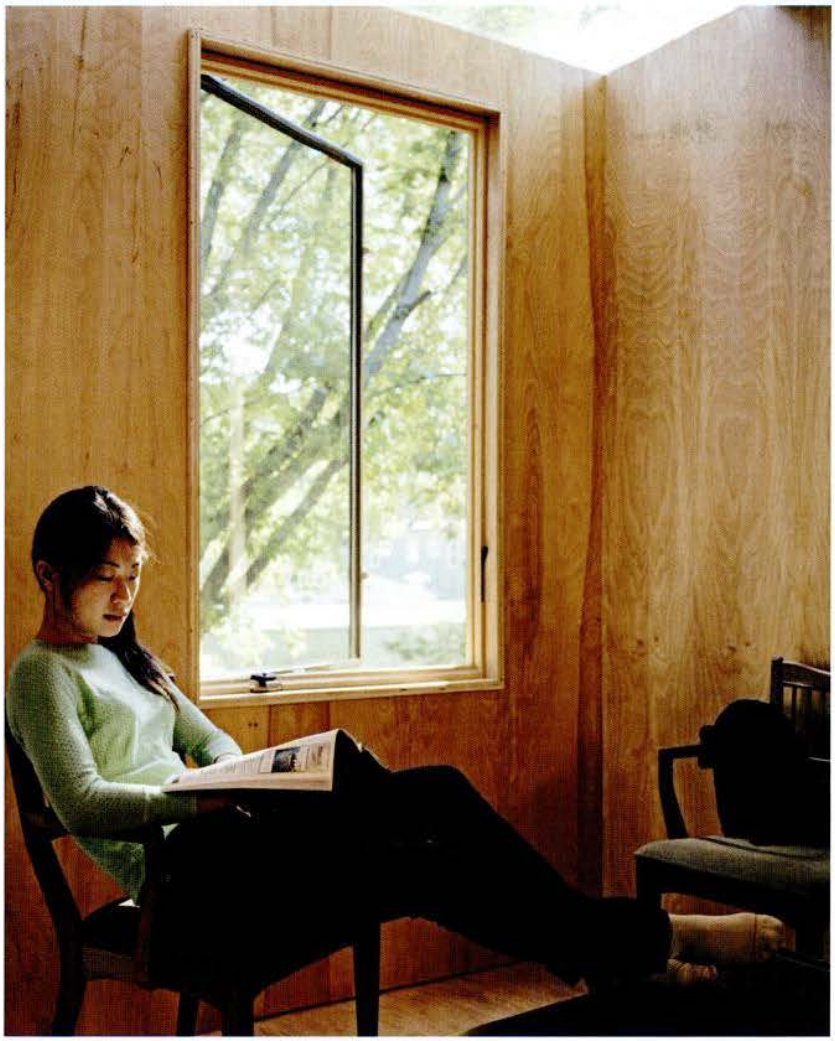
Four Houses and a Future

The two hardest-working architects in America aren't licensed architects—or American-born for that matter. Beat Schenk and Chaewon Kim first gained recognition in 2004 when, in the shadow of the Harvard Design School (Kim's alma mater), they took a traditional New England worker's cottage, weather-washed shingles and all, and transformed it into a two-story Cor-Ten steel–and–polycarbonate A-frame (see "New Beginnings," March 2005). The controversy that ensued only fueled their desire to keep building, and before the rust could set, the young married couple, who met as students at SCI-Arc, decided to expand—not because they wanted to, but because, in their minds, they had to.

"All we could do is build," says the soft-spoken Kim, 31, a breast-cancer survivor from Korea who has been waiting for a green card for the last five years. "Since legally we cannot take on a commission, we became our own clients, developer, contractor, architect, homeowner, and broker."

For Schenk, bringing their vision to life was especially significant. "This is my outlet for creativity, for putting out ideas and taking risks," says the Switzerland native, who spends his days designing hospitals and dormitories for Boston-based Cannon Design. "More importantly, we wanted to show other young architects that, even though the U.S. market is driven by corporations, there is still hope to do something on your own." So with not a cent to spare, Kim and Schenk went back to the drawing board and began to design what has come to be known as Medium, or the Black Box, a 29-foot-high extension connected to the original Small property (a.k.a. Metal Storage) by a ten-foot-long translucent Polygal ▸

Schenk discovered native flagstone in the basement of Large (left) when they tore away the old wood wall lining, and fell in love with its rough and cool exterior. A translucent Polygal corridor (right) separates Small and Medium. The wooden stairwell in the center of X-Small (below) provides a pivot point from which the rest of the house rotates. The floor is Carrera marble bought from Olympia Marble and Home Depot. p.194



corridor. The glue on the model was barely dry when they realized that in order to have two properties on one lot, Cambridge zoning laws required an additional 200 square feet of land.

The logical next step for two broke designers (one employed, the other not) with a dream and a design? Buy the house next door (now dubbed Large, or Grandma's Shed), which they could only afford by taking out a $560,000 mortgage on Small. "The first banker said, 'No way you can buy this house with your income,'" says Schenk. "So we found another broker who was, you know...flexible," Kim continues.

With spending cash at a minimum, the duo made use of their most valuable resource: themselves. "We asked ourselves how we could build with the least amount of capital," Schenk recalls. They bought every DIY book Home Depot sold, spent hours on the Internet researching cheap materials (cork flooring, Polygal, plywood, leftover marble), and spent weekends and nights doing most of the work themselves. "About 50 percent of the cost is labor," Schenk says. "So if you can't install it yourself, you won't save much." Money wasn't the only reason for taking such a hands-on approach. "In the beginning, we didn't think we would be doing much of the interior finishing work, but I was worried about the quality," he says. "Unless you pay someone a really large amount of money, if you want it done right, you have to do it yourself." "And then he winds up in the emergency room," Kim teases, recalling an incident when Schenk, exhausted from working essentially two jobs, dropped a kitchen knife on his foot. The other two injuries, a swollen ankle and a smashed pinkie toe, were less serious. ►

A resident sits in a corner of X-Small (above left), which looks out at nothing but nature—even though the neighboring house is only several feet away. Triangular skylights made from 3/4"-thick tempered glass appear on the corner of each floor of X-Small; they were custom-made at Hub Glass Services in Somerville, Massachusetts. Medium's master bedroom is outfitted with a claw-foot tub (top right); the bathroom features a rain showerhead (above right) available at Home Depot Expo. p.194

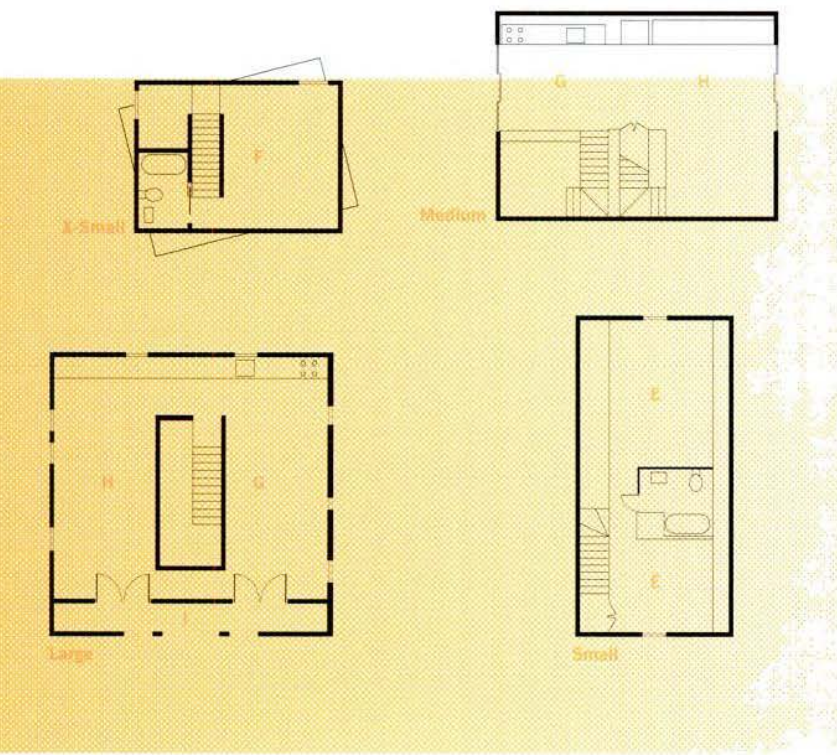
Schenk, Kim, and Kaewlai chat outside of X-Small, standing on the reclaimed wood used to build the boardwalks that connect all four properties. The translucent corridor connecting Small and Medium illuminates the common space throughout the evening.

First-Floor Plan

15–19 Clifton Street
Floor Plans

A Living / Dining Room
B Deck
C Office
D Entry to Medium House
E Bedroom
F Study
G Dining Room
H Living Room
I Terrace

Second-Floor Plan



The battle scars were worth it. They finished Medium at minimal cost (for the exterior they used inexpensive red cedar tongue-and-groove and stained it black to hide the blemishes) and quickly sold it for $609,000 to Sean and Lynne O'Brien, two health-care professionals who read about the project in the *Boston Globe*. "We had just moved into the back of an old Victorian in Harvard Square that my wife loved," says Sean, who convinced Lynne to go to the open house just to take a look. "We went upstairs and saw the bathtub in the middle of the master bedroom. I climbed in, tested it out, and said, 'Honey, I think we need to buy this house.' There's just something about sitting in the tub surrounded by nature in the middle of the city."

The O'Briens began packing (again) and moved in September 2005. Since then, they have made few modifications, with the exception of the basement, which they finished themselves. "It's so modern and minimal, we wanted to stay true to their vision,"says Sean. The walls remain white, furniture is sparse, and the cut-away floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors are unshaded. "At first we were a little scared about buying a place that is so white and light," Sean says. "But we just learned to become more careful when it comes to our privacy."

Schenk and Kim kept this in mind when they embarked upon phases three and four of the project. With Medium sold, they were able to take out a second mortgage on Small, allowing them to begin the renovation of Large. "We promised the woman who lived here before that we would give her home a second chance," Schenk says. "It was a hundred-year-old two-family house stuck in the '60s and we had to completely start from scratch because nothing was up to code." ►

Clockwise from top left: The overgrown boardwalk leading up to Medium's entrance feels more Martha's Vineyard than North Cambridge; the roof over the balcony of Large is conspicuously missing, a trick employed to take away some of the total floor-area ratio, but makes for a nice place to hang out on a starry night; managing all the credit-card bills is almost a full-time job for Kim.

While the first two houses were created with a more conventional setup, for Large the couple decided to flip the program, placing the four bedrooms on the first floor, saving the second story for the kitchen, family, and living room. "The transformation of this house is incredible," says Peeradorn Kaewlai, a friend of Schenk and Kim's and Large's first resident, albeit temporarily. Someone did offer to buy Large, but the designers rejected the offer when the prospective buyers requested too many modifications. "To take a traditional New England home and turn it upside down—well, it will be interesting to observe how the future family who lives here will react."

The renovations also called for eliminating the attic and knocking down the interior walls, thereby creating a more light-filled and flexible space. To keep on budget, the duo used recycled wood from Small to build the closets and old joists found in the basement to construct the stairs. When it came to painting the exterior, though, they sought outside help. "If you have two things that need to be done, and one is painting the house, the other putting up the plywood, you do the installing because it is the more expensive labor," Schenk says. "Besides, you can't really mess up painting a house."

It's not the paint job, though, that stops passersby in their tracks, but a sliver of roof that's missing over the balcony in the front of the house. That too was a victim of circumstance. In order to acquire enough land to build X-Small (yes, there is a fourth house), they had to find yet another tricky solution to Cambridge zoning laws. "If a roof is over a balcony, it counts to the total floor-area ratio," Schenk says. "So we just took the roof off."

That done, the couple could focus their attention on

Schenk and Kaewlai on the second floor of Large, where Schenk eliminated the attic and several walls to create a more fluid and open space.

the final piece to the design puzzle, X-Small, or What the Hell Is This, three pivoting 16-by-22-foot marine-plywood boxes. "This was the last element coming together in the entire complex, and we didn't want it to block the views from the other houses, but at the same time we wanted to draw in as much light as possible," Schenk explains.

Each floor of X-Small has a different look and feel (marble on one floor, oak plywood on the next), but all are connected by the custom-made skylights on the four corners (you can't be cheap on everything, Kim notes). Keeping the windows to a minimum maximizes the privacy, something that's all too important when there are four houses on just two lots, especially when the designs draw as much attention as they do.

"One night, I was walking around [Small] in my underwear and I saw someone go by the side of the house," Kim says. "I almost called the police, but it turned out to be a professor from Harvard checking it out. That's just one reason I want us to move to X-Small when it's done." (The other is to keep their work life separate from their personal life, if that's at all possible.)

Four years, four mortgages, 16 credit cards, and about $100,000 of debt later, Schenk and Kim are putting the finishing touches on the final phase of their makeshift North Cambridge complex. Most people would relish in the completion and look forward to a little R&R. Not this couple. "We could take a vacation. We haven't been on one in ten years and we still need to go on a honeymoon," Schenk says. But they won't. Instead, they're in the thick of designing a library for a Swedish competition and looking for another lot to buy. Looking at Kim, Schenk adds, "This is just the beginning." ■

Story by Donovan Finn | Photos by Roy Zipstein

Multishaped windows glow brightly against the Bairds' ivy-covered home, creating a markedly idyllic contrast to the home's unlikely site, which abuts Interstate 10. The architect and his family chose not to shy away from their community (even if it passes, by the thousands, at breakneck speeds).

On a lot nobody, particularly the city of Baton Rouge, could love, architect David Baird created an oasis for his family and his community—both interstate-side and street-side.

Roadside Attraction

In the early 1960s, the planning misstep known as urban renewal swept across the United States. As in many other places, downtown Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was harshly reconfigured, while new interstate highways fractured thriving working-class and ethnic neighborhoods. Forty years later, on a small, oddly shaped site literally steps from the pylons and semitrailer traffic of Interstate 10, architect and Louisiana State professor David Baird and his family have carved out a surprisingly placid, versatile life in a house that connects them with their diverse, resilient neighborhood.

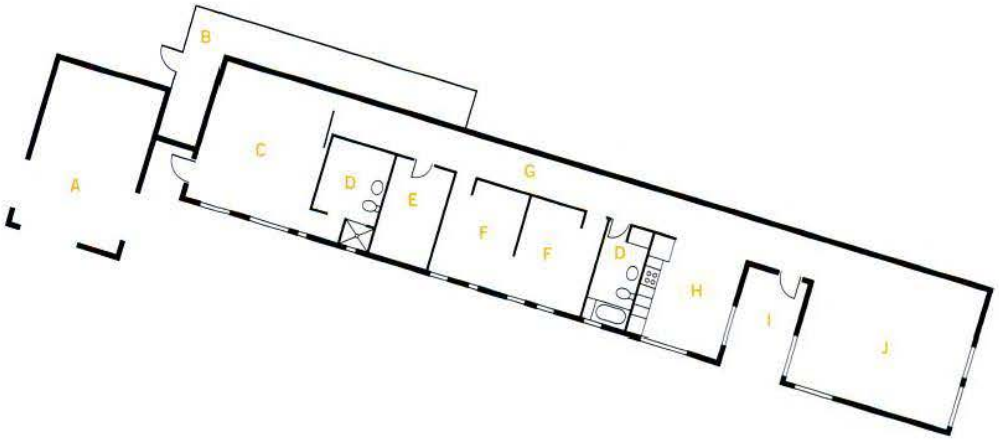
"Most homes take the idea of the fortress to protect the inhabitants from the uncertainties of the outside world," explains the Nebraska-born, Iowa-raised architect from his cheerful and bucolic living room, while just steps away 150,000 cars per day zoom past at 70 mph. "But what we really wanted to do was create a building that would engage the neighborhood and the community." Baird met those goals by bringing nature, and his neighbors, into the living space while simultaneously protecting the house, its inhabitants, and the rest of the neighborhood from the sensory pollution of the interstate. The 2,000-square-foot, bar-shaped structure is oriented to block the view and noise of the highway from the street, creating an island of calm where, one suspects, it did not exist before.

Built on a lot that didn't even appear on the city's zoning maps, the house exploits the site's corner location and narrow shape to the fullest extent. "We knew this was the area that we wanted to live in," says Baird, citing proximity to one of Baton Rouge's only mixed-use commercial centers, where locally owned restaurants and nightspots coexist with bookstores, boutiques, antique shops, and the venerable Perkins Road Hardware. ▸

Looking out from the front of the house, the once noise-flooded neighborhood (left) is now protected by the buffer of the Bairds' home (right). The family takes full advantage of their sylvan yard, Sarah Baird and her children Bo and Sky read a book out on the picnic table (below). David Baird designed the custom sliding doors (opposite) with materials and hardware from Home Depot. The doors also act as a makeshift critique wall for Bo and Sky's artwork.

Baird Residence
Floor Plan

A Garage
B Dog Run
C Medium Room / Office
D Bathroom
E Laundry / Storage
F Small Room / Bedroom
G Long Room
H Kitchen
I Entry
J Big / Family Room



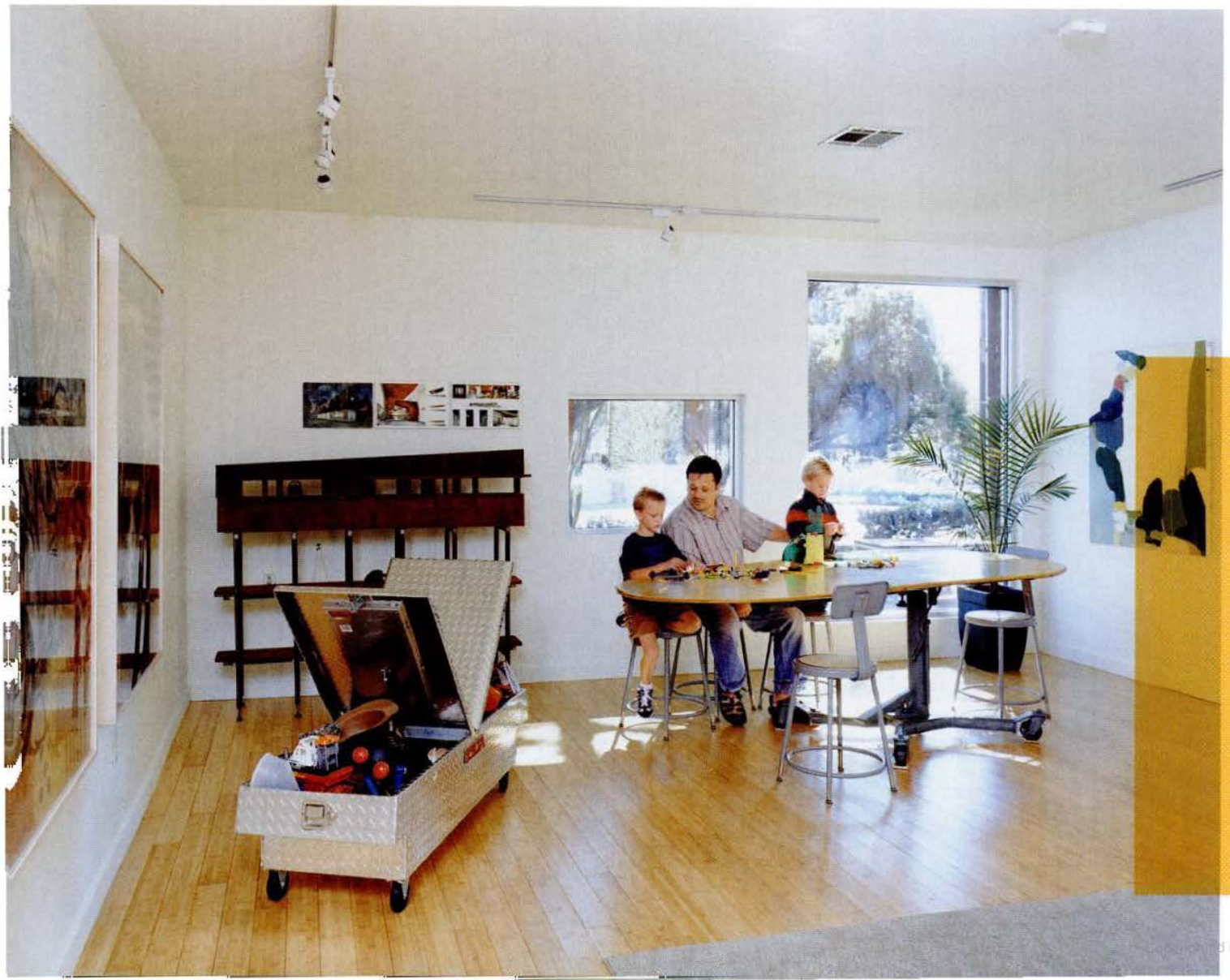
Baird adds, "I was confident that we could make the appropriate choices, reclaim this piece of land, and live here with dignity."

After a nine-month title search owing to the complexities of Louisiana's Napoleonic law, David Baird, his wife, Sarah, and his son Bo (now joined by younger brother Sky) created a home on the once-garbage-strewn but very affordable corner site. "We really lucked out on the lot. I think that most people just passed by it and didn't see the potential in it," Baird notes. "You couldn't have put a standard house here and done well with it, because it was a little bit of an unusual site, backing up to the interstate and on the hinge between a commercial area and a residential area. That's one of the benefits I see in modern architecture, its ability to adapt to certain site conditions in an elegant way."

A screen of ivy softens the hard edges of the cinder-block structure, as do the exterior's three large, spotlit billboards. Baird, who wrote his graduate thesis about billboards, designed custom frames to display vinyl banners that can be printed with any image at a cost of about $700 for the three. Echoing the vernacular landscape of the neighboring interstate, the concept also has a more humanistic goal, engaging both private and public space. "I think of the billboards like clothing for the house," Baird says with a laugh. "And you can change the outfits without having to repaint the entire structure or go through some huge expense."

With construction costs of only $55 per square foot, the house is also a study in frugality (not to mention versatility and appropriateness). Exterior landscaping is dramatic yet welcoming, ushering visitors into a ►

Baird relaxes in the bright living room (left), which is decorated spartanly with the architect's own artwork, a couch, and a coffee table by IKEA. The kitchen island (right) is fashioned from the Waterloo Shop Series tool chests from The Home Depot. Bo and Sky get a building lesson from dad on a custom table designed by Baird and his studio (below). p.194



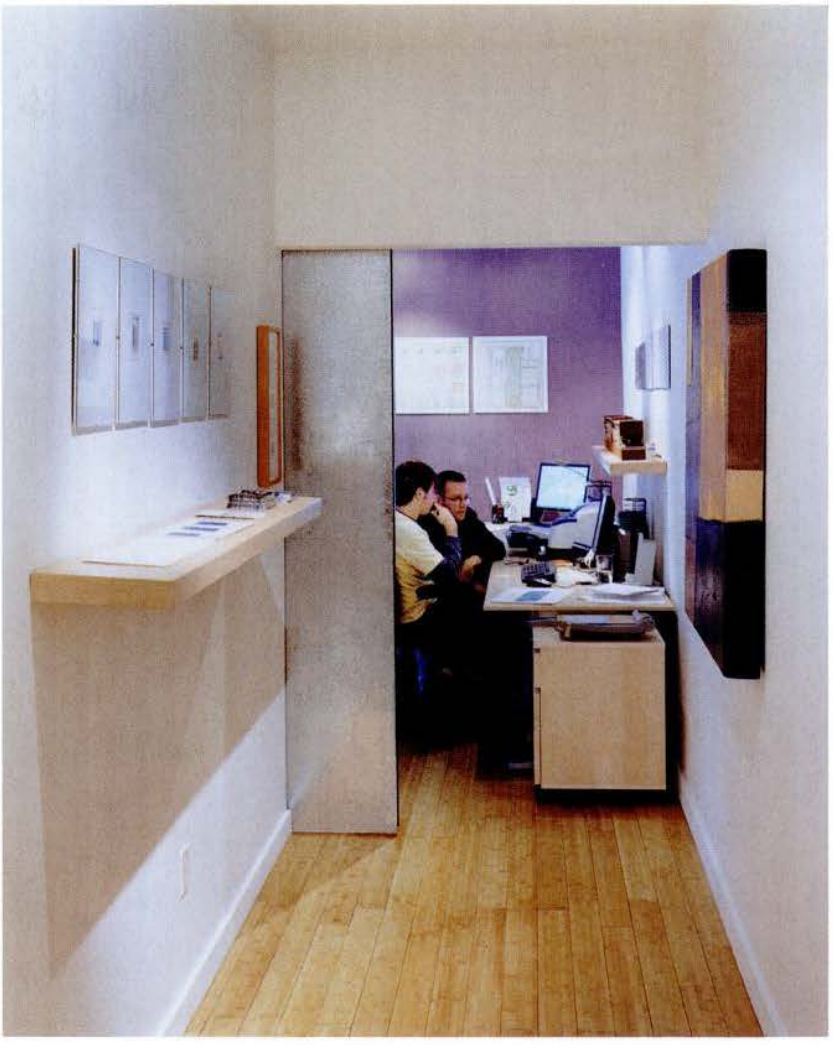
The family opted for modest—and cheap—design choices in the kitchen and bathroom (above), which are commonly the most money-sucking rooms in a home. The boys' bedroom (left) is outfitted with custom beds designed by Baird's studio.

comforting, semiprivate entry space before they even enter the house. Despite the iconic nature of the southern front porch, hot Baton Rouge summers and proximity to the interstate made that feature impractical. Instead, large, uncurtained glass expanses in the front rooms create a porchlike feel, with tree-filtered light flooding in during the day. The inoperable but energy-efficient commercial-style windows and concrete shell also block out ambient highway noise and moderate the heating and cooling loads.

The open, modular floor plan balanced cost and utility, minimized construction, and reduced the number of doors and accompanying hardware. Baird says the house is devoid of "heroic" materials, explaining, "We didn't want to spend a ton of money on the kitchen and the bathrooms, and I think that's where most expenses occur in a home. Instead, we made a conscious choice to make those moves very modest in favor of creating fewer, larger rooms." Classic, workmanlike design with a few well-chosen flourishes creates a space that is at once dramatic, livable, and affordable. Off-the-shelf fixtures are balanced by creative, eye-catching solutions, such as a kitchen island built from mechanics' tool chests and a plywood top.

Given the site's proximity to a growing commercial district, overall flexibility was another goal. The spaces are designed to be quickly and cheaply adapted should economics or future development make it desirable to convert the house to commercial use. Built-in closets, for instance, are eschewed in favor of freestanding metal cabinets that, like most of the furniture in the house, are on casters.

In fact, the house already performs many of those dual roles. The original master bedroom in the rear ▸



Baird operates his design-build firm, PLUSone Design + Construction, out of the original master bedroom (top left and right); the office fits three comfortably with room to spare. The home also acts as an occasional art gallery, comfortably accommodating Baton Rouge's art scene at one of the Bairds' many parties (above and opposite). The custom billboards (opposite), illuminated by spotlights, can be changed regularly and can be printed by any local sign printer (in this case, by Lamar Advertising).

of the house is currently home to PLUSone Design + Construction, the burgeoning practice Baird operates with partner Fritz Embaugh and staff designer Greg Gauthreaux. As if that weren't enough multitasking, Baird is also a prolific sculptor and painter, and the family is an integral part of the Baton Rouge art scene, regularly hosting openings and performances in their multipurpose home. "We really wanted a house that would facilitate and encourage an appetite for art in the community," Baird notes, boasting that the house offers more track-lit wall space than any commercial gallery in Baton Rouge.

The synergy of form and function also facilitates Baird's vision of the higher purposes that architecture can perform, creating an open and welcoming community space. Local residents regularly wander in during the family's art events, and some have walked out with a purchase made directly from the artist. Baird finds this immensely gratifying and is happy to help foster the local arts and culture scene, which comes out in droves to the events held at his house.

An unabashed booster of his adopted hometown, Baird often recalls the unbridled populism of another of the city's great promoters, former Louisiana governor and Baton Rouge scion Huey Long. Instead of politics, Baird works in subtler ways, starting with this modest, infinitely adaptable cinderblock building next to a highway underpass. Inhabiting the many roles of architect, teacher, artist, and parent with equal passion and conviction, Baird's life seems as holistic as his designs. "I think in our contemporary society we tend to chop things up into little boxes and try to categorize parts of our life, and when we do that we cut opportunities to create synergy between those things," he says with just a hint of disdain in his voice. "I know that for me personally, all those things feed off and inspire one another." ■

Story by Lee Bey

Photos by Dan Monick

The Weber house (opposite) overlooks a tranquil valley of farms in Black Earth, Wisconsin. Bill Weber and sons Nick and Wyatt (left) relax on the home's deck. The rear of the house (right)—modern and right-angled—both contrasts and complements the surrounding vernacular architecture.

Designed by his son and daughter-in-law, and largely built by his family and a host of neighborly helpers, Bill Weber's new home is all about strengthening the ties that bind.

Labor of Loved Ones

About 200 miles northwest of Chicago, the quiet farming village of Black Earth, Wisconsin, is a picturesque patchwork of rolling hills and dairy farms—and an unlikely place to find a modernist residence.

Yet in a beautiful valley, tucked against a small wooded hill, a strikingly contemporary home leaps from the countryside like a loose steer. Bright and angular, the home is a visual jolt from the heartland's architectural vernacular of farmhouses, sheds, and silos.

And the house holds another surprise. The 1,200-square-foot home with its soaring interior space and finely turned materials was built for $180,000—about the price of a typical vinyl-sided single-family home in nearby Madison (and, seemingly, everywhere else in the United States).

Bill Weber, the 56-year-old proprietor of a furniture manufacturing and upholstering business in nearby Fitchburg, had always wanted to build his own house. Making his dream come true was a family affair. Bill acted as his own general contractor. His son and daughter-in-law, Jonas and Danika Weber—both young architectural designers—designed the home for free. "I was along for the ride," claims Bill's son Nick, a medical student in Chicago. Bill's youngest son, Wyatt, a University of Minnesota student, pitched in as well. Family members, friends, neighbors and Bill himself put in untold hours of labor to complete the project, doing everything from hoisting timber beams to tiling the home's floors.

"You find ways to save," says Bill.

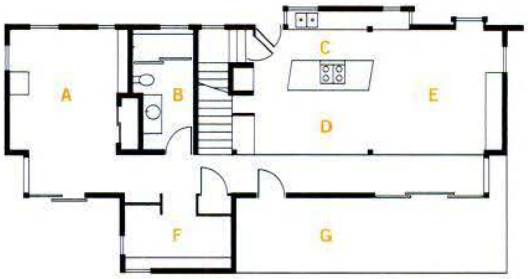
Having the design fees and a part-time construction crew donated was a huge break. Still, the Weber house underscores the fact that great design can be made affordable with planning, sacrifice, and some sweat equity. ▸

The Weber residence sits comfortably in the rich, green Wisconsin valley (left). The home's windows perfectly frame views of the neighboring sights (right). Structural timbers were salvaged from a local industrial building and demarcate the change in flooring surfaces (below). Bill Weber (opposite) built his home while serving as his own general contractor.

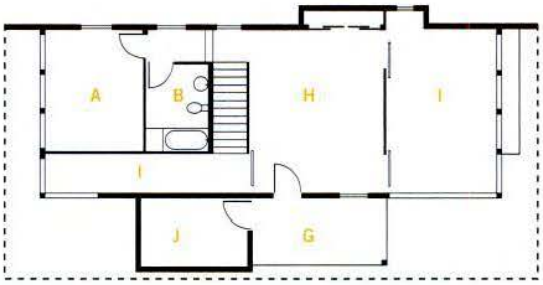
Weber Residence
Floor Plans

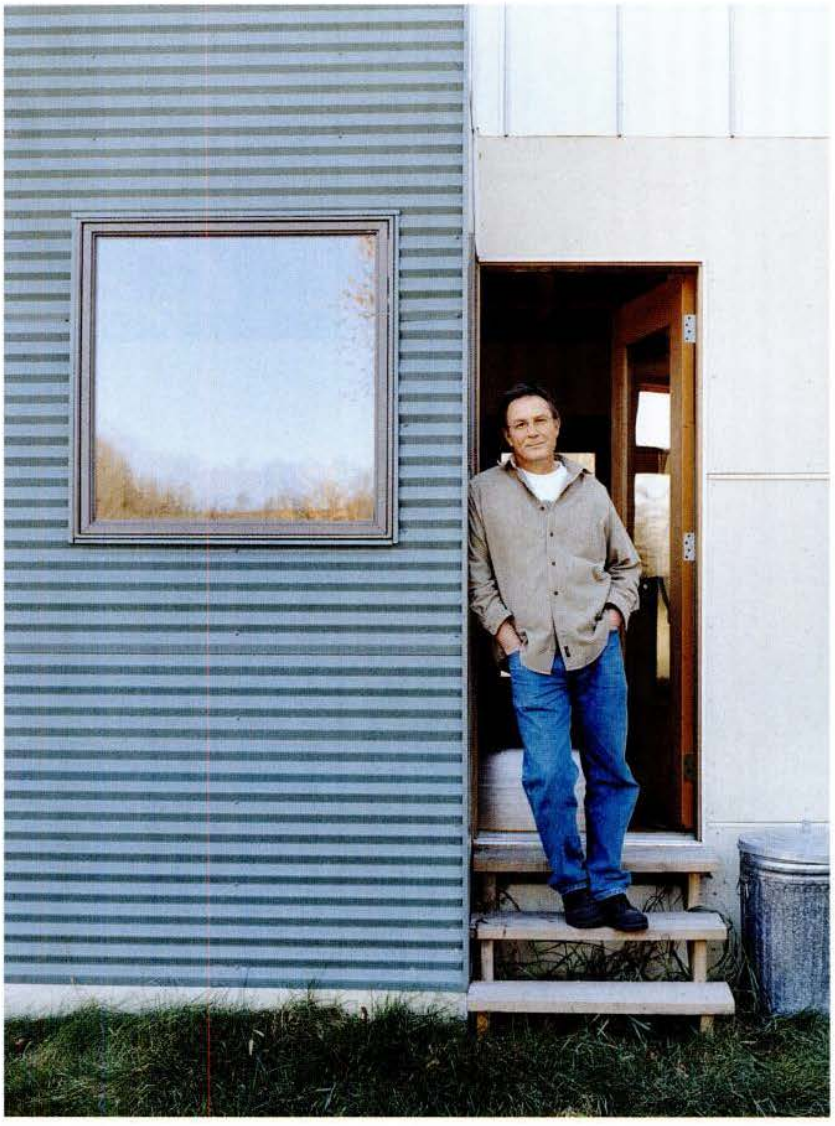
A Bedroom
B Bathroom
C Kitchen
D Dining Area
E Living Area
F Library
G Deck
H Loft
I Open to Below
J Storage

First Floor



Second Floor





The idea of building the house had been hanging around the Weber family since Jonas was an architecture student back in the 1990s. The discussion became more serious after Jonas and Danika married in 2003 and soon became collaborators on the project. "It was kind of a step into the unknown," Jonas recalls.

Jonas handled most of the design duties, but consulted with Danika, who had more residential design experience. "She was my sounding board on design," he says. "She would help me to see what decisions were good and what decisions needed to be left out."

The pair originally budgeted the house at $130,000, but the bottom line crept up on them. "This tends to happen with all single-family home [construction]," Jonas admits. "The budget grows from what was imagined."

But the project was able to benefit from two important savings: Bill already owned the site, having lived there for years in a mobile home, and he decided to act as his own general contractor, which included hiring the subcontractors and working with Jonas and Danika on creating an appropriate timetable for the work. To keep costs down even more, the Webers also calculated donated and bartered labor into the equation.

Construction began auspiciously in spring 2004, with the erection of a stone retaining wall against the hillside next to the house. But the southern Wisconsin area received major rainfall that season that fed several natural water springs inside the hill.

"These ephemeral springs were spouting out through the retaining wall," Bill recalls. Jonas and Danika had flown in from San Francisco to kick off the project and help with construction, but there was little to do for two weeks other than shovel out mud and muck in the rain.

Once the rain showers stopped, a geotechnical ▸

Light pours into the combined living, dining, and kitchen space at the front of the house. Antique furnishings are offset by the striking Pendant 169 lamp by Danish architect Poul Christiansen for Le Klint.
p.194

engineer was called in to assess the ground conditions and to help figure out construction methods that would keep the house safe and dry. "We eventually got the encouragement we needed," says Jonas.

The project hit another setback months later when the furniture company that had employed Bill for 27 years went out of business right in the middle of construction. Bill, along with some of the company's other employees, ended up buying the business and saving it. "Now I needed the business to succeed in order to keep the house," says Bill. "That meant some weeks I was working 60 hours."

Still, people rallied around the project. "This house was somewhat of a positive catalyst in Bill's life," Danika says. A neighbor, LaVerne Holler, who is a master carpenter, pitched in to help solve construction problems and take up a share of the backbreaking work. Danika calls Holler "a driving force" in the creation of the house. Bill reports that Holler helped erect—by hand—the massive timbers that frame the house, using a ladder to hoist them in place. "He thinks well, he solves problems fast, and he's strong," Bill says of his gracious neighbor. Then, pointing to the uppermost framing timber visible at the top of the two-story living room, he adds, "That one is 375 pounds."

The result of all the hard work is a house perched comfortably in its location, as willing to embrace its environment as is its nature-loving owner. The home sits on a little more than an acre, but is surrounded by more than 300 acres belonging to neighbors. Warm weather brings sandhill cranes, herons, red-winged blackbirds, and other wildlife. Cornfields, traditionally painted red

A view from above. A loft floor upstairs overlooks the spacious living area where Bill and his sons relax (left). Clear, minimal lines define the residence's cabinetry and furnishings (right). Furnishings include the Nelson Platform bench by Herman Miller.
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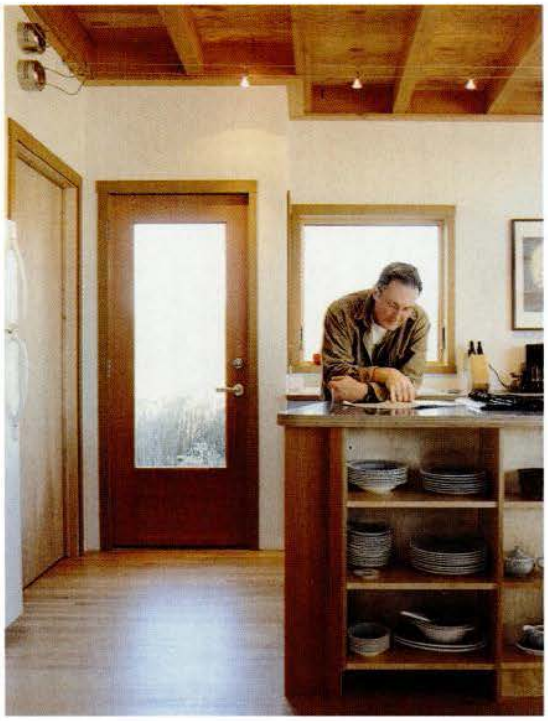
barns, and of course cows are not far away.

The home's color palette ranges from metallic silver to green and tan; exterior materials include a standing-seam shed roof and galvanized corrugated metal. A narrow paved road that runs along the house is a favorite of long-distance bicycle riders, whose ride-by critiques are often overheard by Bill. "Some will say, 'This is my favorite house on the road,'" he chuckles. "Another might say, 'God, is that ugly.'"

Closer inspection reveals a house not entirely alien to these pastoral lands. The design employs the same building materials as the neighboring farms, but remixed with a modern hand. "The decision to use those materials was made to somehow relate to the setting, to the vernacular of the area," says Danika. "It's an interesting correlation to what's historically been on the site: Those old dairy farms." The designers' security in their vision results in a home that references the site's agrarian surroundings without explicitly pandering to the vernacular.

The interior of the three-bedroom, two-bathroom house is also inspired, particularly when the project's modest cost is considered. The kitchen, living area, and dining area are combined into a generous, functional, and public space at the front of the house. The living room exudes openness, its two-story space topped by clerestory windows that pull in copious amounts of natural light. Elsewhere throughout the house, windows frame views of the surrounding pastoral landscape. "I'm completely delighted with the quality of work and the look," Bill reports. "I like the dense, heavy firs used, too." Exposed structural timbers that were salvaged from an old Wisconsin mill building frame the interior. ▸



The residence features quiet, poetic spaces, such as the kitchen (above left). A hallway lined with windows provides a distinctive gateway to the bedroom (above right). The rear of the house (opposite), which could have been treated as an afterthought given the project's minimal budget, is instead a lively essay in form and color.

"The layout is very farmhouselike," Jonas says. "It has an informal entry, and all of the spaces are as open and interconnected as possible."

The public portions of the home face the valley below. The open living area is a nicely furnished and comfortably appointed space where Bill relaxes and listens to a music collection that hopscotches from Bach to Martha and the Vandellas to REM. Two loftlike second-floor bedrooms hover above. Bill wanted the extra space to accommodate his three sons and family members when they visit.

Toward the rear of the home—closest to the hill behind the house—the spaces grow smaller and more private. A first-floor bedroom overlooks the wooded hill and an adjacent library gives Bill, an avid reader and poet, a quiet place to relax away from the sounds of furniture making and upholstering.

Save for a few minor items on a seemingly never-ending to-do list, the home is almost complete. The experience has prompted Jonas and Danika, who work for separate residential architecture firms in San Francisco, to weigh the idea of going into business together full time. The two LEED-certified designers have started a firm, Nest Designs, but haven't made the plunge into self-employment quite yet. "We talk about it all the time," Jonas says of the venture. "It's kind of a big step—getting clients and all that."

Bill claims the project's ultimate success left him with an appreciation for home building—particularly the way it was done back when farmers first settled in this fertile Wisconsin valley. He even considered changing professions. "When I was finishing up the house, I started to think, I could do this." But seated comfortably in his home, he vows to stick to furniture. ■

Story by Marc Kristal

Photos by Dean Kaufman

The Glass House Menagerie

As the old saying goes: People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. But what about people who design them? Philip Johnson made a name for himself with his iconic, bare-faced structure, and, in turn, was judged as being an architect of both pure genius and pure artifice. Now part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Johnson's 47-acre estate will again be open to the public, and public scrutiny.

"We used to talk about the hedgehog and the fox," recalls the writer Hilary Lewis of her favorite subject, Philip Johnson. She's referring to the poet Archilochus's observation, "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing," which is typically applied to opposing artistic temperaments—the former pursuing multiple objectives, the latter governed by an overarching vision. Johnson, who upon his death at 98 in 2005 was remembered, in Paul Goldberger's *New York Times* obituary, as a "combination godfather, gadfly, scholar, patron, critic, curator, and cheerleader," readily acknowledged his uber-foxiness. But he also knew one big thing, and there's no better place to experience it than at his New Canaan, Connecticut, residence, the Glass House.

That was Johnson's name, not only for his 1949 modernist landmark, but the entire estate, which he gradually expanded from 5 to 47 acres and adorned with ten provocative constructions. And it will all be on public display beginning in April, when the National Trust for Historic Preservation, to which he donated the property in 1986, opens what will officially be called Philip Johnson's Glass House.

The Glass House's executive director, Christy MacLear, explains that by offering tours and seminars, the trust's mission is "to make the estate a center point of preservation of modern architecture, and maintain the spirit of inspiration Johnson brought to the site by creating residential fellowships for young talent. Our goal is to make sure the house isn't stuck in time"—a sentiment that would have pleased the forward-moving architect.

For many, the biggest revelation may be not the house but the estate's lesser-known attractions, each of which ▸

"Effect before everything," said Philip Johnson, who purchased the property next door to his original five acres and moved his driveway so that the Glass House could be approached from an oblique angle, a strategy he continued in the carefully incised path leading to the front door. Within, Johnson judiciously positioned every object, which included Mies van der Rohe-designed furnishings and a painting attributed to Poussin, and never moved them again.

A passionate art collector, Johnson completely submerged his 1965 painting gallery—nicknamed the Kunstbunker—in an earthen berm partly to protect its contents from natural light. While the monumental entry was based on a 13th-century B.C. Mycenaean tomb, the Treasury of Atreus, the interior (with its revolving display panels) is strictly 20th-century A.D. Corporate America.

represents "a response to a different type of architectural problem," Lewis says. Principal among these are the lake pavilion (1962), a small-scale folly—composed of four arched structures pinwheeling around a water-filled center—that enabled Johnson to experiment with precast concrete and the challenge of joining arches at corners; the painting gallery (1965), a grouping of cylinders—completely submerged in an earthen mound—in which Johnson suspended giant, art-covered movable panels; and the 1970 sculpture gallery, a five-level Mediterranean village in miniature that spirals downward past a series of asymmetrical galleries to create dynamic, constantly shifting perspectives—"a spectacular enactment," observed Johnson biographer Franz Schulze, "of his belief in architecture as procession."

Johnson's other additions are no less lively: The library (1980), a spartan workplace notable for its conical skylight; the "postmodern medieval" entry gate (1977); the ghost house (1984), a barn-shaped homage to Frank Gehry in chain link; the tower (1985) dedicated to Johnson's friend Lincoln Kirstein, a concrete-block stairway to nowhere, which he designed using dominoes; and what Johnson called da Monsta (1995), a pavilion representative of his late-career enthusiasm for biomorphic forms.

But it's the Glass House, both manifest and mythically speaking, that's the draw. In 1945, Johnson, whose practice and curatorial duties at the Museum of Modern Art based him in New York, decided to find a country place, and gravitated to New Canaan, a well-heeled community that was home to fellow architects Marcel Breuer and Eliot Noyes. Johnson came upon five overgrown acres

on Ponus Ridge Road that sloped down to a promontory with superlative views.

Though he quickly selected the promontory as his site, neither the house's form nor, surprisingly, its material were givens. Over two years, Johnson explored 27 separate schemes and a range of building types, some of which incorporated masonry walls and distinctly unmodern Syrian arches. The architect ultimately decided to set a glass pavilion on the overlook and a guest house, identical in form but composed of brick, at a remove behind it—thereby looking outward to the view and inward to an entry court. "When I came to an isolated box," he recalled, "it was quite a break."

Johnson had Mies van der Rohe to thank. In 1946, while preparing a MoMA retrospective of Mies's work, Johnson reviewed sketches for what would become the Farnsworth House, a residence with entirely glass walls. Inspired, Johnson finalized his own design in 1947, and spent his first night on the property (sleeping in the guest house) on New Year's Eve, 1949—beating his hero to the finish line by two years.

Though Johnson has been accused of ripping off Mies's masterpiece, there are significant differences between the projects. Farnsworth—bone white, elevated on piers, its steel columns sited outside the glazing—is grandly classical and structurally expressive. Johnson's house—black-painted, its columns suppressed beneath glass walls, the whole nearly flush with the ground—is a discreet rectangular object. The buildings also differ within: Mies inserted a substantial core that delineates living spaces, whereas the Glass House's 56-by-32-foot interior is broken only by a low kitchenette counter, a ▸

A concrete sculpture by Donald Judd, which the artist created on site, enlivens the landscape, to which Johnson paid as much attention as he did to his architectural projects. "When I first saw the house, I was a little overcome by the dramatic nature of how you're really living with all these trees and great vistas," says executive director Christy MacLear.

Johnson dedicated the 1985 tower to his friend Lincoln Kirstein, founder of the New York City Ballet, and its Mondrianesque design is strongly evocative of a dance. Constructed of eight-inch-square concrete blocks, the tower can in fact be climbed, though the ascent is made perilous by the narrowness of the steps and the absence of a handrail (an inscription awaits the intrepid at the top).

taller cabinet that separates sleeping and public areas, and a large brick cylinder containing the bathroom and fireplace.

In short, whereas Mies designed a home (however iconoclastic), Johnson's box makes few domestic concessions—and therein, believes the architectural historian Vincent Scully, lies its importance. "The objective of modern art was to liberate the individual from the past and from all traditional constraints, and the Glass House is the ultimate expression of that in architecture," he says. "Johnson gets rid of the porch, the stairs—everything that suggests tradition—so there's nothing iconographic between the individual and nature."

That last is key: As the house's jaw-dropping views attest, the architect cared less about the structure than what was outside it. A gifted garden designer, Johnson spent decades ruthlessly tearing out trees (despite complaints from the neighbors) until he'd achieved a sublime interplay of clearings and woods that suggests an 18th-century English landscape filtered through a modern sensibility. Amidst all this, the house was, to Johnson, "a viewing platform or a bandstand in the park," Lewis says. The architect put it best: "The Glass House is a permanent camping trip protected from weather."

It is, of course, much more. By the 1940s, Johnson was strongly associated with the International Style, which he helped popularize as founding chairman of MoMA's architecture department. Yet he'd also become a devotee of architectural history, and subsequently cited Claude Nicolas Ledoux and Karl Friedrich Schinkel (among others) as having influenced his house's design. As such, despite its apparent modernity, Johnson's creation is

predictive of his later style, the historical eclecticism for which he remains best known—indeed, according to Lewis, Johnson saw the house as "an ode to 1920s modernism." The latter contains a measure of mischief, but that was part of Johnson's personality, too, and partly accounts for his attraction to Mannerism, the 16th-century antecedent to postmodernism. Johnson "was always a Mannerist," says Lewis. "Everything has a little twist," as is evident in the outsized brick cylinder rising from his urbane, elegant box. The effect is amusing but also mysterious, a mystery heightened by the seemingly windowless guest house that stands at a remove, a composition suggestive of a thing and its shadow, an apparent fact and a secret truth, a narrative that renders the house—for all of its transparency—strangely opaque.

If the Glass House shows the fox's kaleidoscopic intelligence, it's this tension between the hidden and the seen that reveals the hedgehog's big idea. In many ways, Philip Johnson was one man within another—a Mannerist within a modernist, a homosexual operating in a closeted society, an elitist promoting an egalitarian style—and his contradictions are amply expressed at his estate, nowhere more so than in the architect's 1953 renovation of the guest house. Here Johnson created a master suite into which he inserted decorative vaults, sliding panels covered in Fortuny silk, and sensual indirect lighting, producing an environment MacLear describes as "Tangier in Fairfield County"—all of which he concealed in a brick box.

Similarly, within Johnson's pursuit of excellence lay a ravening lust for fame. Toward this end, the Glass House was his greatest weapon. In 1949, Johnson was six years ▸

In 1953, Johnson created a master suite in the guest house by combining two rooms into one and inserting what he described as slightly flattened elliptical arches copied from the early 19th-century Neoclassicist Sir John Soane's London breakfast room. The suite's circular windows can be completely obscured by sliding panels covered in Fortuny silk. "This was Andy Warhol's favorite room," says MacLear.

"Architecture is surely *not* the design of space, certainly not the massing or organizing of volumes," Johnson wrote. "These are auxiliary to the main point, which is the organization of procession. Architecture exists only in *time*." One of Johnson's most effective expressions of this idea is his 1970 sculpture gallery, through which visitors wind downward, he said, like a dog settling into its bed. Indeed, so pleased was the architect with the space that he briefly considered living in it.

out of architecture school and had yet to make a definitive splash. Though he worked hard at its design—though he cared—it seems inconceivable that the house was not meant to, as Schulze wrote, "persuade the American profession that he was a figure of consequence as an architect." Indeed, Johnson publicized it himself, in a 1950 article citing his influences, and it became a sensation—"a calling card," as Lewis puts it, where he engaged two generations of architects, artists, and students with his protean charm and intellect.

Career strategizing is hardly objectionable. Except that, pursuing power by paying court to it, the thoughtful neo-Mannerist sometimes crossed into what critic Robin Middleton referred to as "style-mongering," creating cold, impenetrable objects that oppress skylines—and citizens—with historicist clichés. In 1978, another critic, Robert Hughes, interviewed Albert Speer, Hitler's architect, and asked who he'd nominate for the post should another Führer appear. "I hope Philip Johnson will not mind if I mention his name," Speer replied. "Johnson understands what the small man thinks of as grandeur."

There is unhappy history embedded in Speer's remark. In 1932, Johnson attended a Nazi rally in Potsdam and became transfixed, not only by its aesthetic impact, but the titanic charisma of Hitler. The experience unleashed something: Two years later, he resigned from MoMA and spent the 1930s trying to become a player in populist and fascist politics, pursuing first the Louisiana demagogue Huey Long, then the reactionary radio priest Charles Coughlin. It was as a correspondent for Coughlin's anti-Semitic magazine *Social Justice* that Johnson found himself in Europe, accompanying the Wehrmacht on

their 1939 rampage through Poland. There he found the inspiration for the Glass House's transparent profile, recalled in his 1950 article: "a burnt wooden village I saw once where nothing was left but foundations and chimneys of brick."

Johnson eventually expressed regret for what he characterized as youthful foolishness. Yet he retained a lifelong attraction to the concept of the "great man" whose pursuit of an ideal elevated him above reality, the sort who could be moved, amidst the apocalypse, by the beauty of a ruin. And given the life that followed—his return to MoMA and architecture school, the long rise to international renown—one sees that, from his misadventures, Johnson received a revelation: His understanding of the relationship between image and power, and his ability to unite them architecturally and personally, might make him, within his field, a "great man."

Thus can the Glass House be understood two ways: as a home and an experiment, an ode to the fox whose spirit embraced, in Lewis's words, "the whole wide world of the built environment," and as the crafted public façade of the hedgehog—enshrined now by the National Trust.

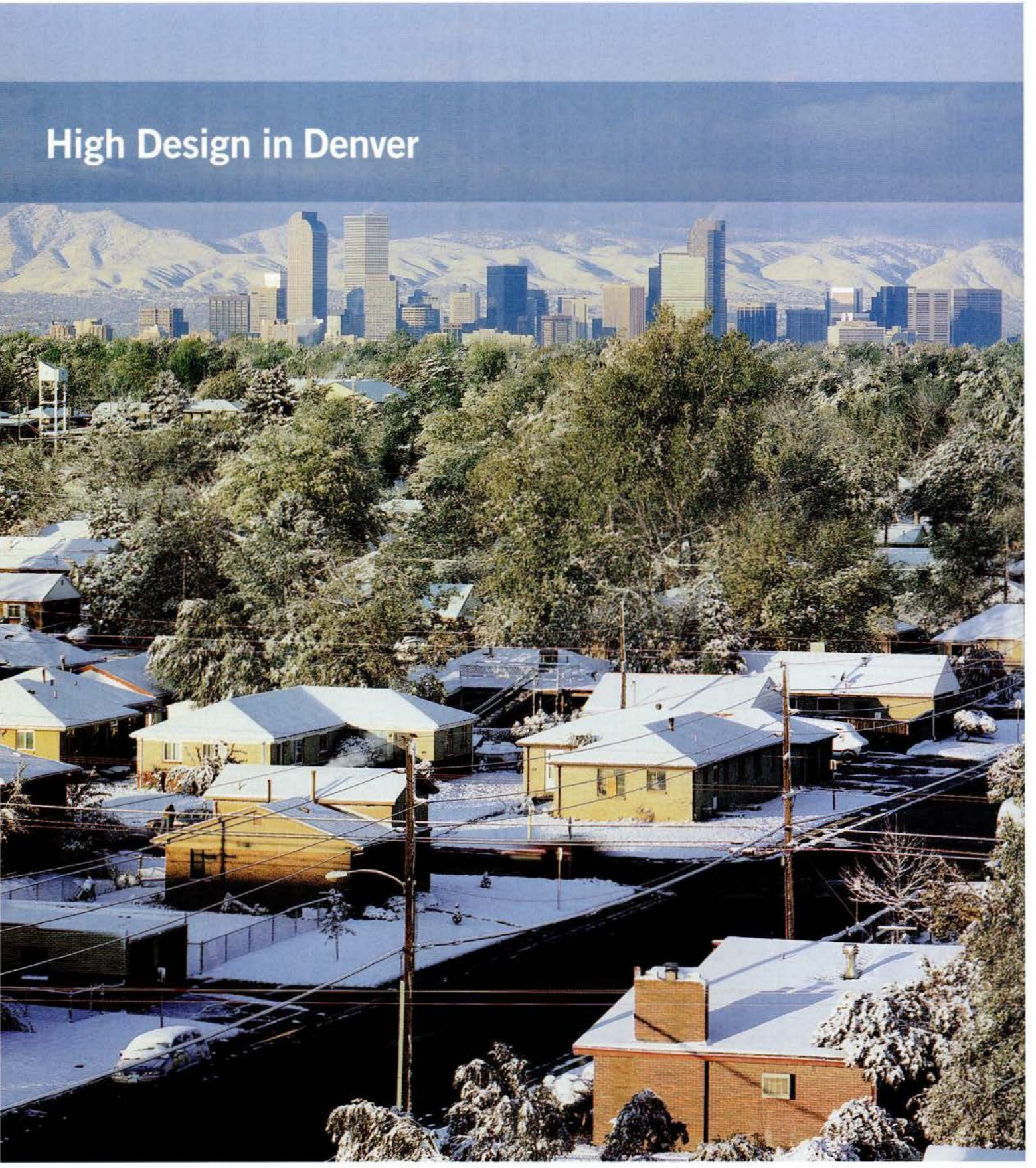
Which reminds us that God and the devil make excellent creative bedfellows. "By the following spring [after Johnson moved in], every architecture editor in New York had been brought out to visit," wrote Johnson's partner Landis Gores. "Sunday traffic [led to] parking jams up Ponus Ridge Road...Philip was a public figure as never before." That's not quite the sweaty populism of Long's Louisiana, or the white night of Potsdam. But Johnson's historical eclecticism had served him very well. ■

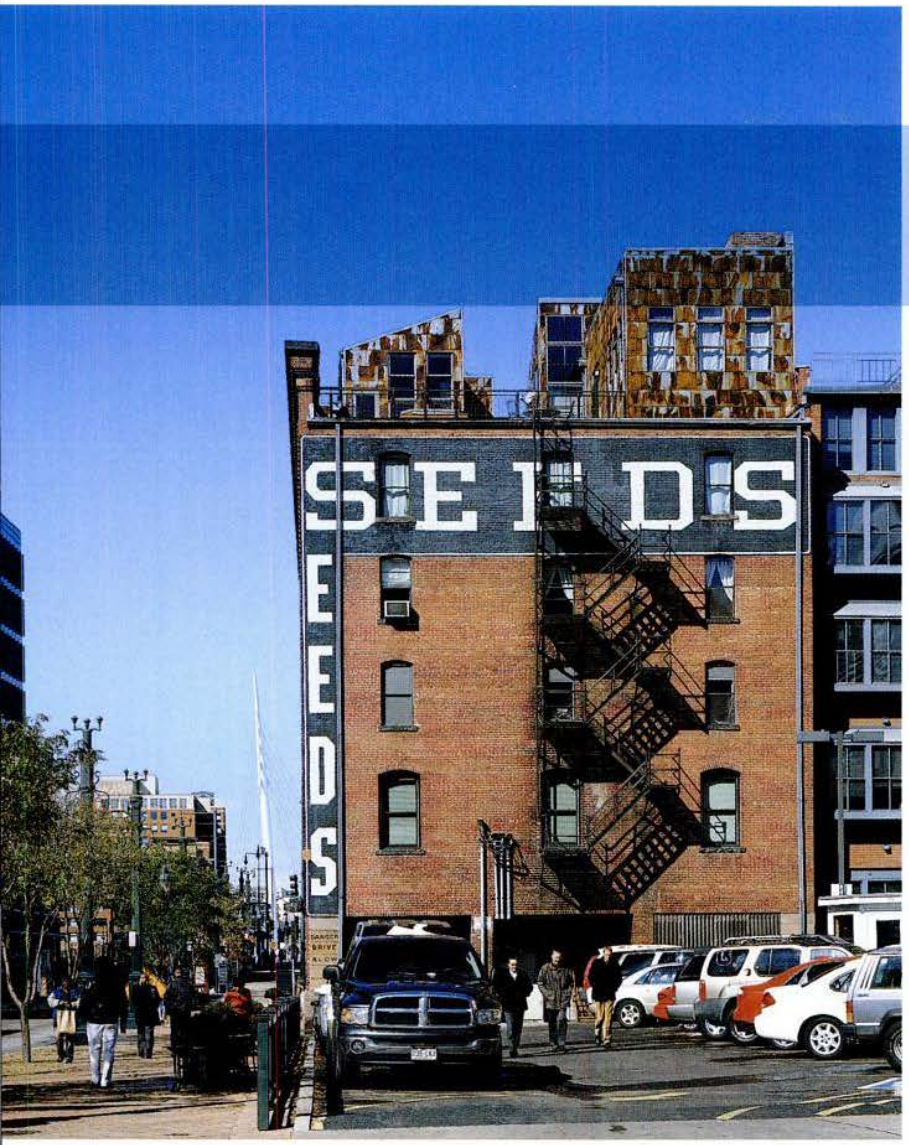
"He could do whatever he wanted," MacLear says of such experiments as Johnson's 1962 small-scale, precast concrete lake pavilion. "There were no clients, no functional requirements, and no budgetary restraints." Said Johnson: "There are so many elements that come into that pavilion: the change of scale, the experiment with materials, the planning of the rooms." The structure can only be reached via an energetic leap from shore, a playful expression of the architect's penchant for what Lewis calls "safe danger."

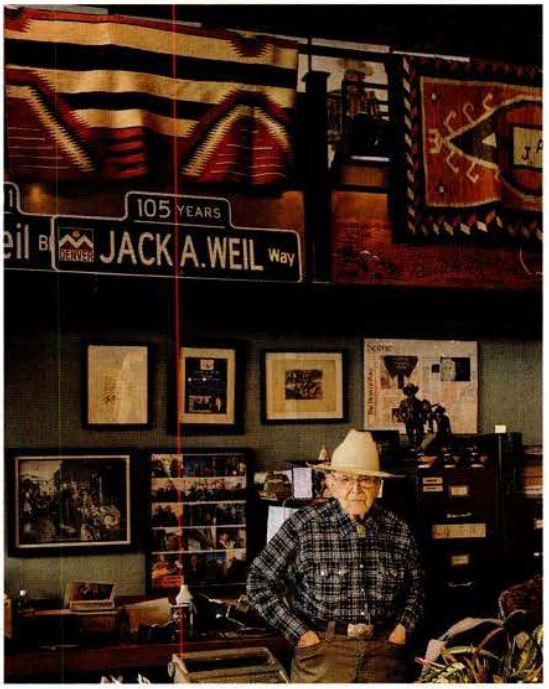
Story by Sarah Rich

Photos by Cameron Wittig

High Design in Denver







If you looked at a cutaway view of the American West, Denver would be one final hiccup at the end of a persistently flat horizon, where the foothills of the Rockies rise. While the compact downtown skyline forms a mere blip on the landscape, concentric rings of development have turned the mile-high desert into a prolific city.

Denver has been a destination since the gold rush, and modern prospectors continue to arrive seeking the good life. As a candidate for inclusion among the world's great cities, Denver's résumé shines, with a thriving art and music scene, new infill enlivening the urban core, and a Rocky Mountain backdrop. Perhaps the only missing credential is a sophisticated architectural portfolio.

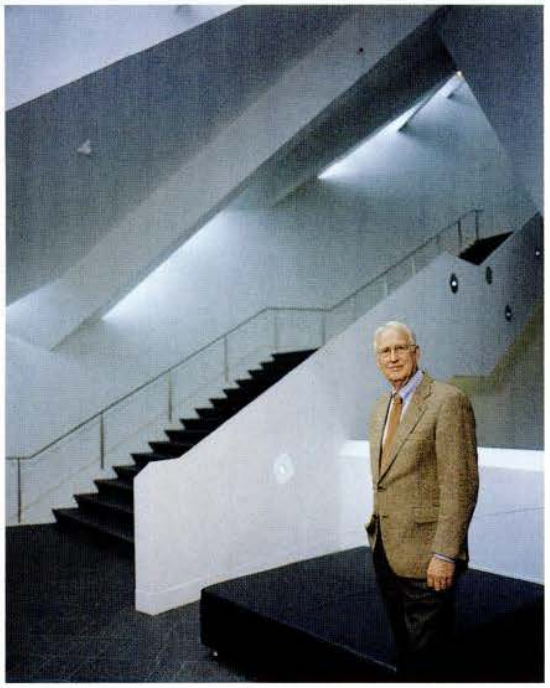
But change is afoot in Denver. A number of buildings are now being reconsidered by world-class architects. This past fall, the Denver Art Museum's tremendous new extension opened as the first of Daniel Libeskind's United States projects to reach completion. Soon to follow will be a new Museum of Contemporary Art, designed by David Adjaye; the Clyfford Still Museum; a new Justice Center Courthouse; and a reinvigorated Civic Center Park, also by Libeskind, which forms a green hub at the center of these buildings.

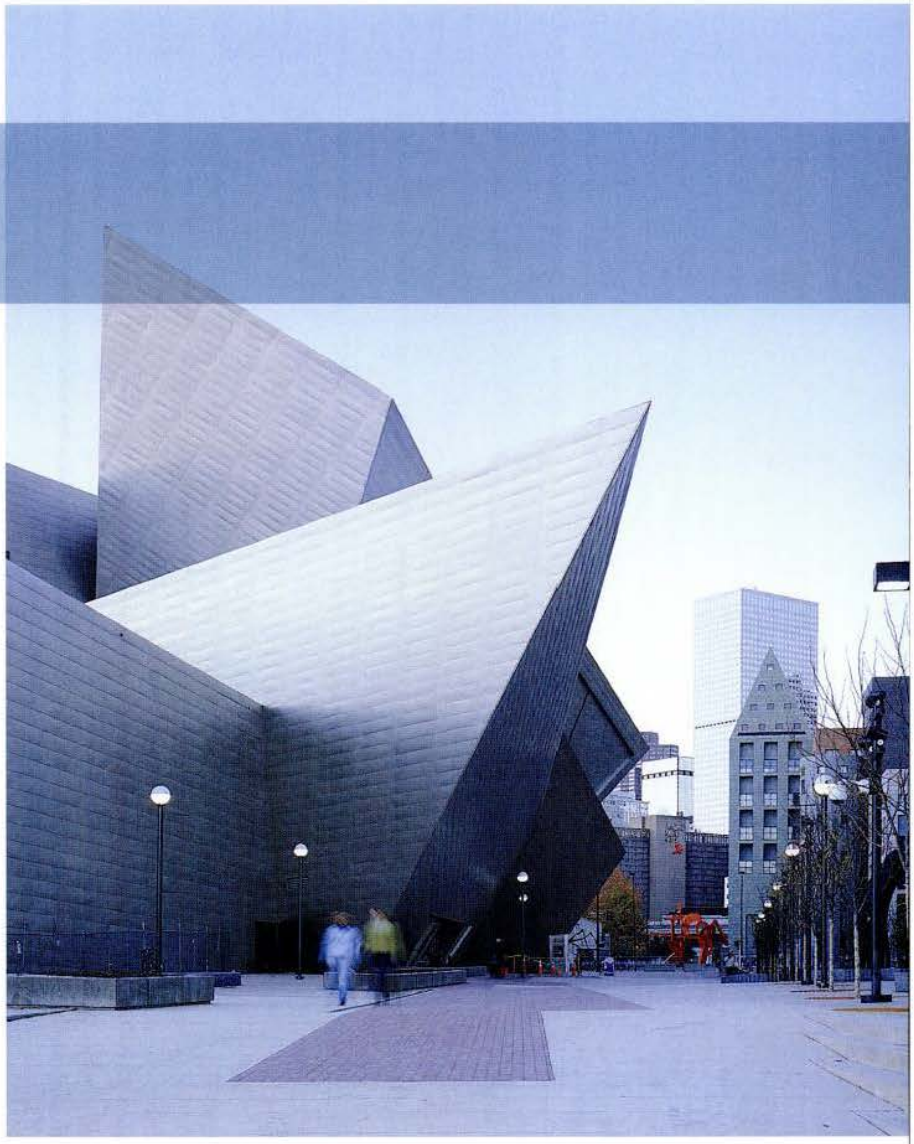
But not all of Denver's architectural gems lie in CAD drawings and blueprints. In one of the older suburbs, a treasure sits amongst the tract homes and McMansions: about 50 Frank Lloyd Wright–style Usonian houses populate Arapahoe Acres, a neighborhood so unadulterated by modification and new development that a visit feels like time travel to the 1950s.

One of these mid-century-modern bungalows belongs to our tour guide, Lewis Sharp, the director of the Denver Art Museum. Sharp recently shared his thoughts about Denver's architectural metamorphosis, his light-rail commute, and how to preserve the history of this forward-looking city. ▸

A view of Denver's downtown cityscape (opposite) from the surrounding central area. Remnants of the past mingle with more recent developments, exemplified by these modern structures sitting atop an old brick warehouse (left). Jack A. Weil (right), who, at 105 years old, has manned the counter at Rockmount Ranch Wear since opening the business in 1946.

Denver, Colorado





Denver Art Museum director Lewis Sharp (left) takes in the interior of the new Libeskind-designed building. It's not just visitors who like the design—artists like Betty Woodman and Tatsuo Miyajima enjoyed installing their work in the new structure as well, whose titanium-clad exterior (right) shimmers in the afternoon sun.

When most people think of Colorado, they think of ski country. It seems like the art museum extension might finally put Denver on the world's cultural map.
When we were selecting Libeskind, I would often say that we would like to engage an architect who would do a building that would be as strong—and as much of a signature work for the city and the Rocky Mountain region—as the Sydney Opera House.

The building is already having a real impact on the Civic Center area. What does Denver think of its new monument?
This has been a process that engaged a lot of public opinion from the start. Libeskind participated in numerous public forums over [a period of] three years, so everyone in the community has been aware of our plans. The process has really raised interest in architecture and its impact on community and the urban landscape.

Some critics say it's crazy for a city like Denver to introduce this kind of architecture.
I think the issue for most of the critics has not been as much about the building's exterior as the belief that such strong architecture may compromise the programs within it. But we have watched every skeptic emerge from a tour of the building feeling very positive about how the space complements the art. And all of the artists that have come in to do installations love working here. ►

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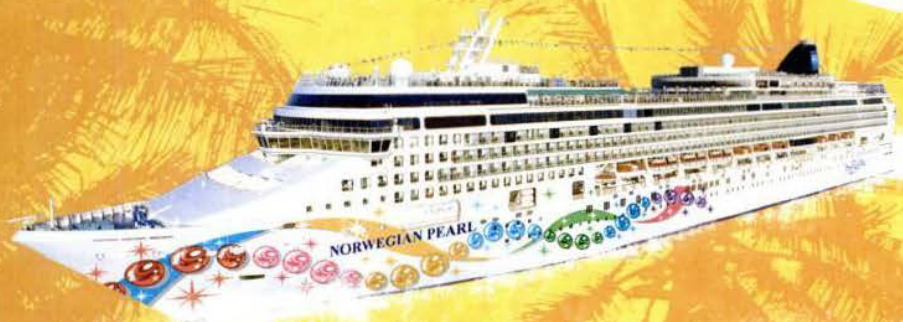

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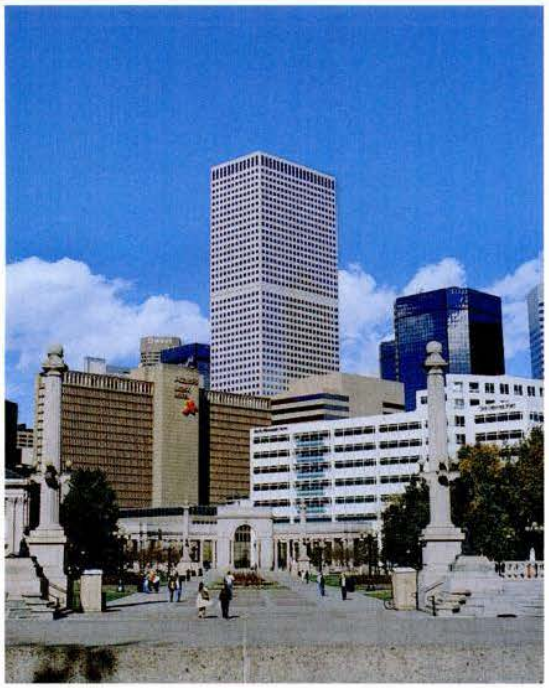

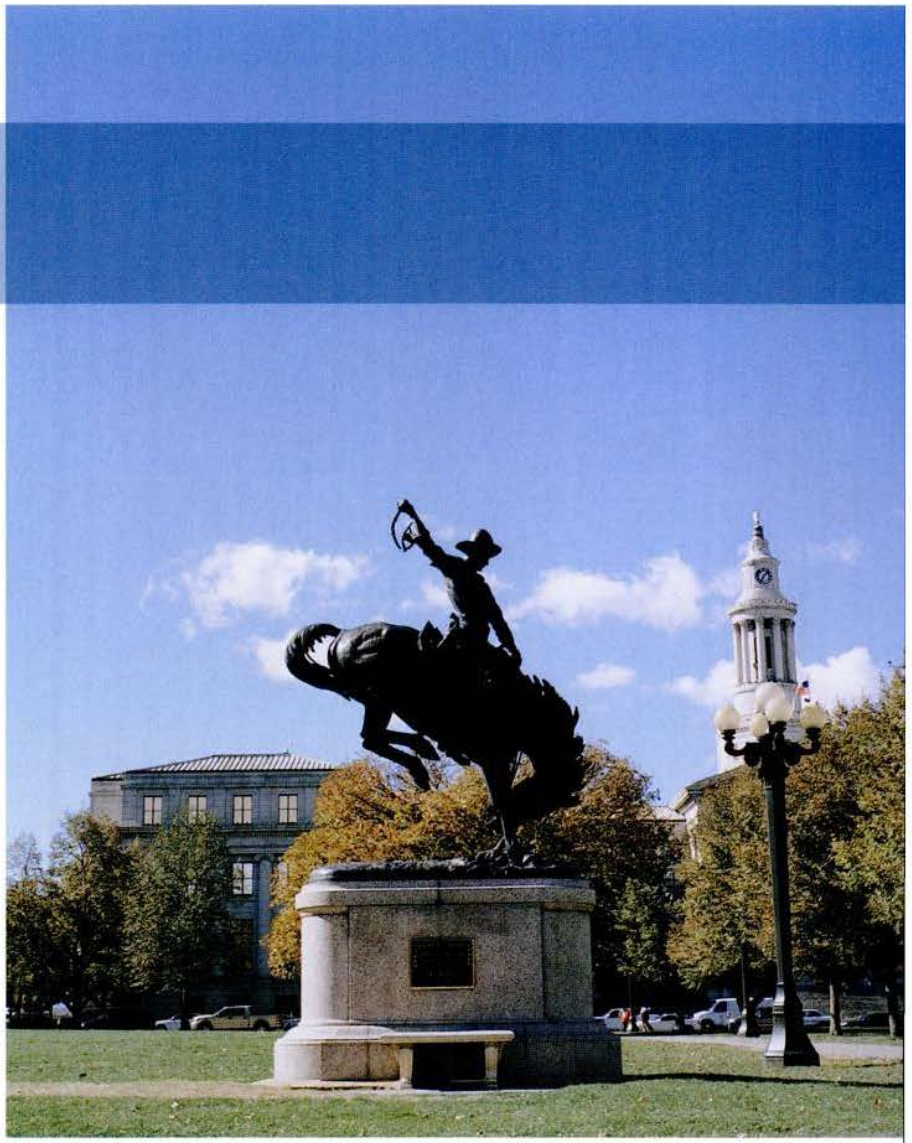

Denver's ever-changing skyline (left) showcases an eclectic mix of architectural styles. Plans are being made to revamp Civic Center Park (right), in hopes of injecting new life into the downtown area.

The Clyfford Still Museum will sit next to the Libeskind extension. They just announced the finalists for that building—what do you think of the choices?

I'm on the board of the Still Museum as well as on its architectural selection committee. It's an impressive shortlist, [including] David Chipperfield, the very notable London-based architect, and Brad Cloepfil of Allied Works in Portland [Oregon], one of the more dynamic young firms in the country. I see this as another opportunity for Denver to bring a significant piece of architecture into the landscape.

The Still Museum is meant to be quite different architecturally from the Libeskind. I think it needs to be simple, refined, and elegant, and allow the art to be the dominant element. But it still needs to be something that is beautifully crafted and designed, and stands in bold contrast to the baroque quality of Libeskind's building.

And right across the street is Civic Center Park, a rather neglected place for as long as I can remember. What's happening there?

Civic Center Park is such an important historic site, but it's been turned into an island by the busy thoroughfares that surround it, and taken over by the homeless. It lacks the type of urban activity that makes a public park dynamic.

Libeskind is working on a new plan for the park, which will be presented for public ▸

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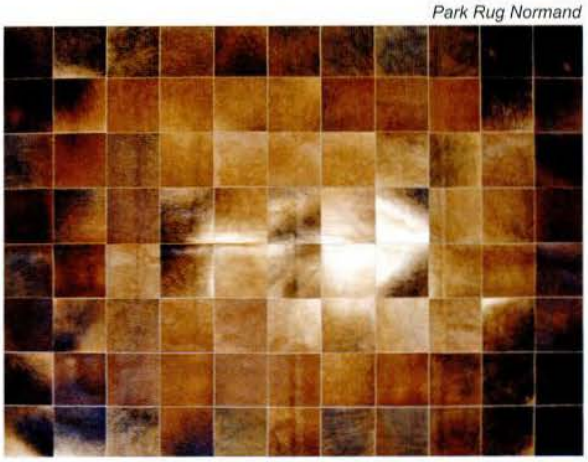

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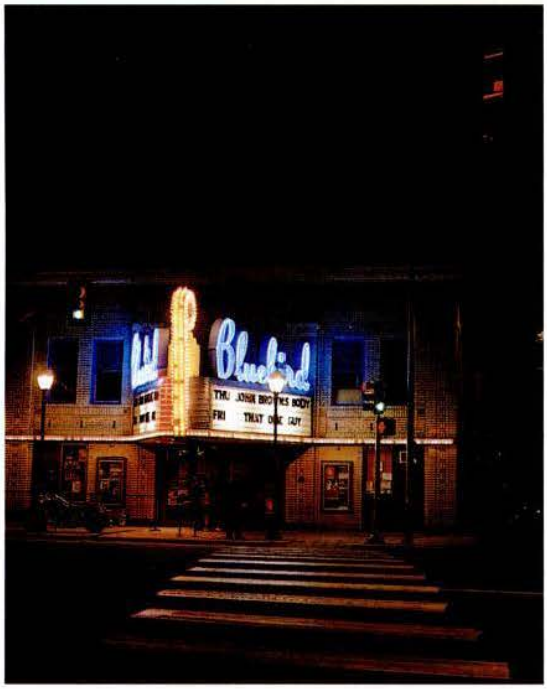
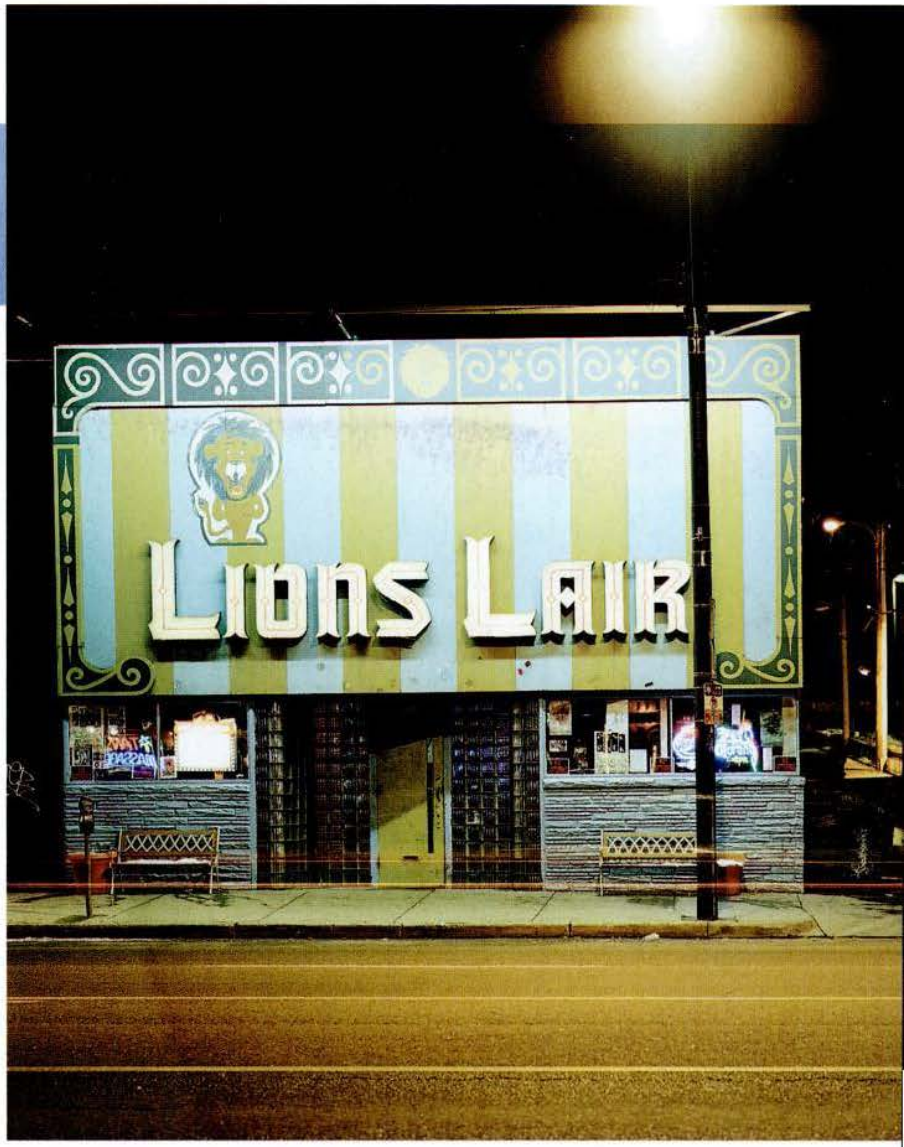




Don't be fooled by Denver's Western roots and cosmopolitan aspirations. You can still catch an alt-country or indie show at one of its thriving music venues like the Bluebird theater (left) or the Lion's Lair (right).

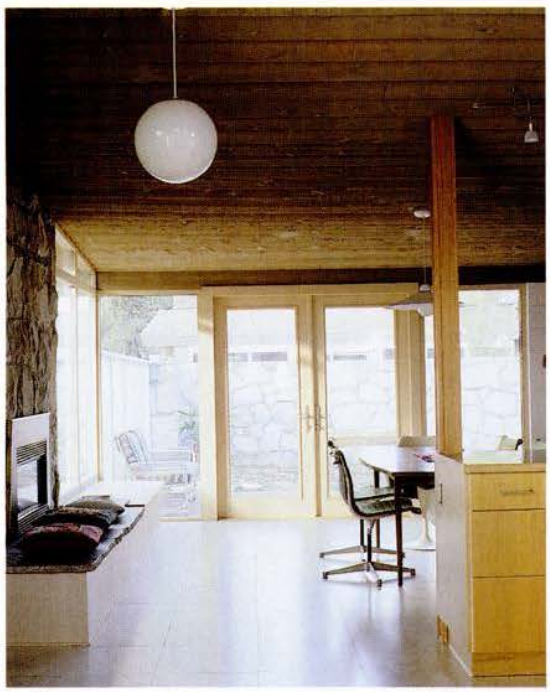
comment. It's a major project that really would redefine downtown Denver. [Mayor] John Hickenlooper is motivated a bit by what Chicago did with Millennium Park. He hopes to find ways for people to enter the park more gracefully, to engage a lot of different activities there, and really bring it back to life.

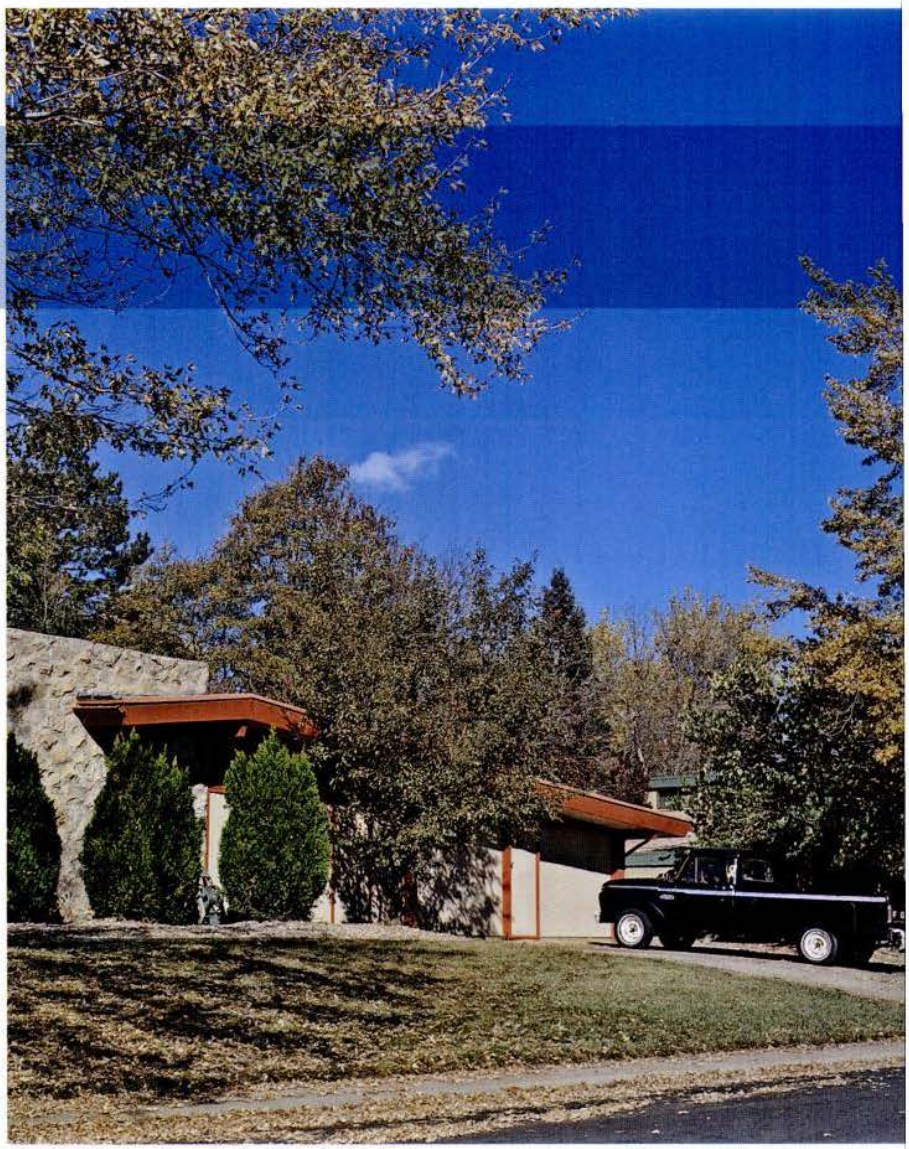
Denver has been trading a little of its Wild West identity for something more urban and cosmopolitan. What's pushing that shift?
Whenever you talk about Denver today, one of the things that's having an enormous impact is the light rail. It has opened up and connected so many neighborhoods. You can almost look at a map of the city and see pockets where the light rail stops that have gained new vitality. I take the light rail every day; I'm at the office in exactly 30 minutes.

Speaking of your commute, let's talk about the Usonian homes. How did you first come across them?
When our son, also Lewis, was moving back to Denver, he said to [my wife] Susie and me, "I can't afford a very expensive house, but I want to live in a place with some architectural integrity." So Susie and I began driving around town. And then one day about three years ago, there was an article in the *Denver Post* that talked about five or so mid-century neighborhoods in the Denver area.

I knew the Usonian homes and had always been interested in them, so we went looking. ▶

Denver, Colorado





Lewis Sharp's Usonian home (left) is just around the corner from where his children and grandchildren live. Low indoor-outdoor homes like this (right) lend themselves perfectly to Colorado living, where the sun shines 300 days a year.

When we got out to Arapahoe Acres, we liked it the best. The neighborhood was still very much intact—almost none of the homes' exteriors had been severely altered.

They all have a lot of work to be done on them, but the essential feeling is there—the way the house opens up to the outside, the quality of life that you are able to have. It's a design that takes advantage of the entire landscape. In Denver, during so much of the year, you really can enjoy breezeways and patios. We're just very comfortable here.

How has this neighborhood remained intact despite the rampant suburban development of Denver?

Everybody in this neighborhood loves the houses; and where they may not be very knowledgeable about Frank Lloyd Wright or the Usonian homes or California-style architecture, they nevertheless made very conscious decisions that these were the type of homes that they wanted to live in.

This little area is aggressively pushing for landmark status. The people are very committed to them, and I think that says a lot about the homes themselves.

And newer buyers are now willing to make greater investments in upgrading and restoring them. Each has been done with great respect for the design of the houses and the way they were meant to function. It's exciting to watch it happen. ■

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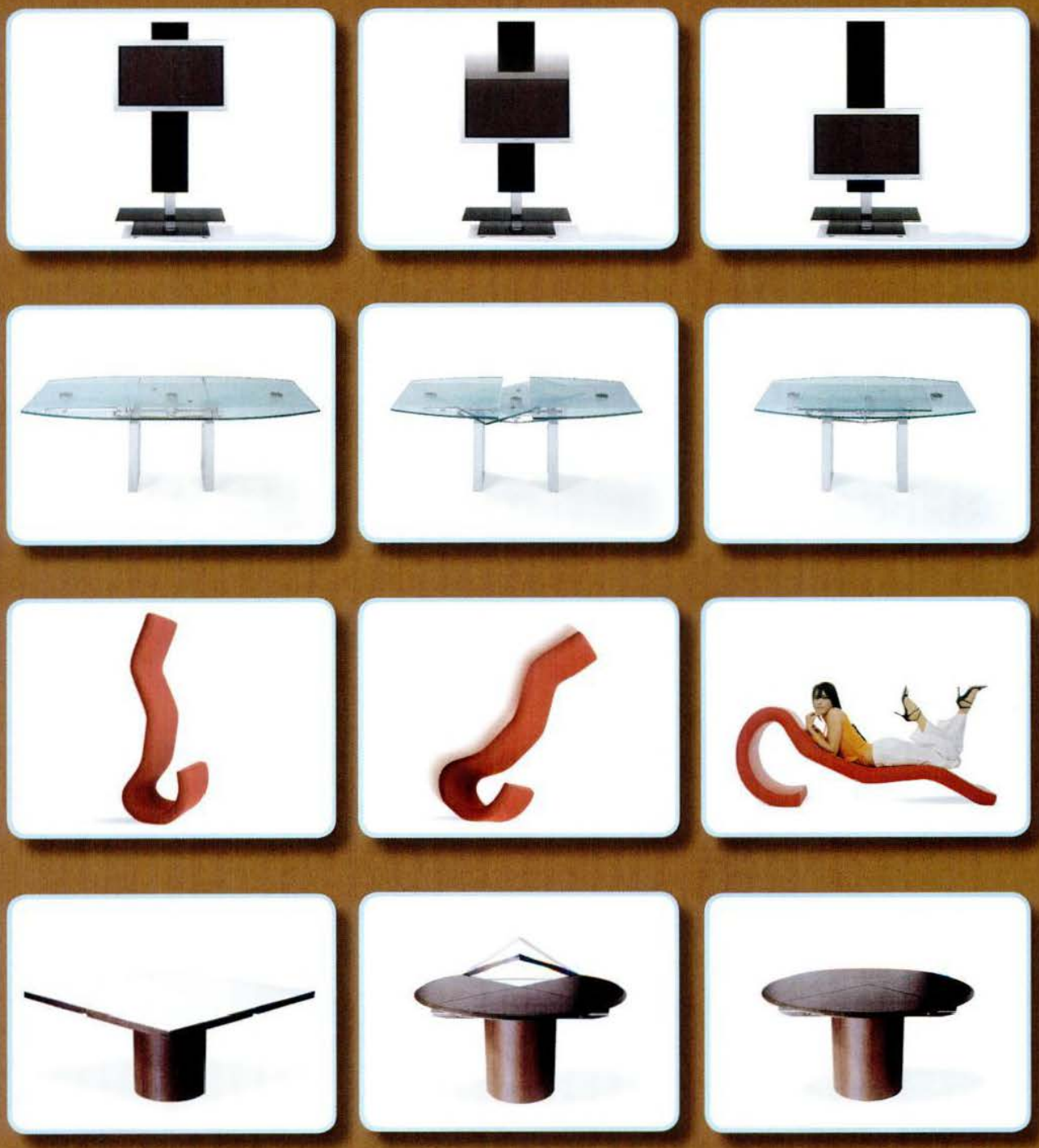

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Story by Jennifer Roberts

Illustrations by Mike Perry

My Place in the Sun

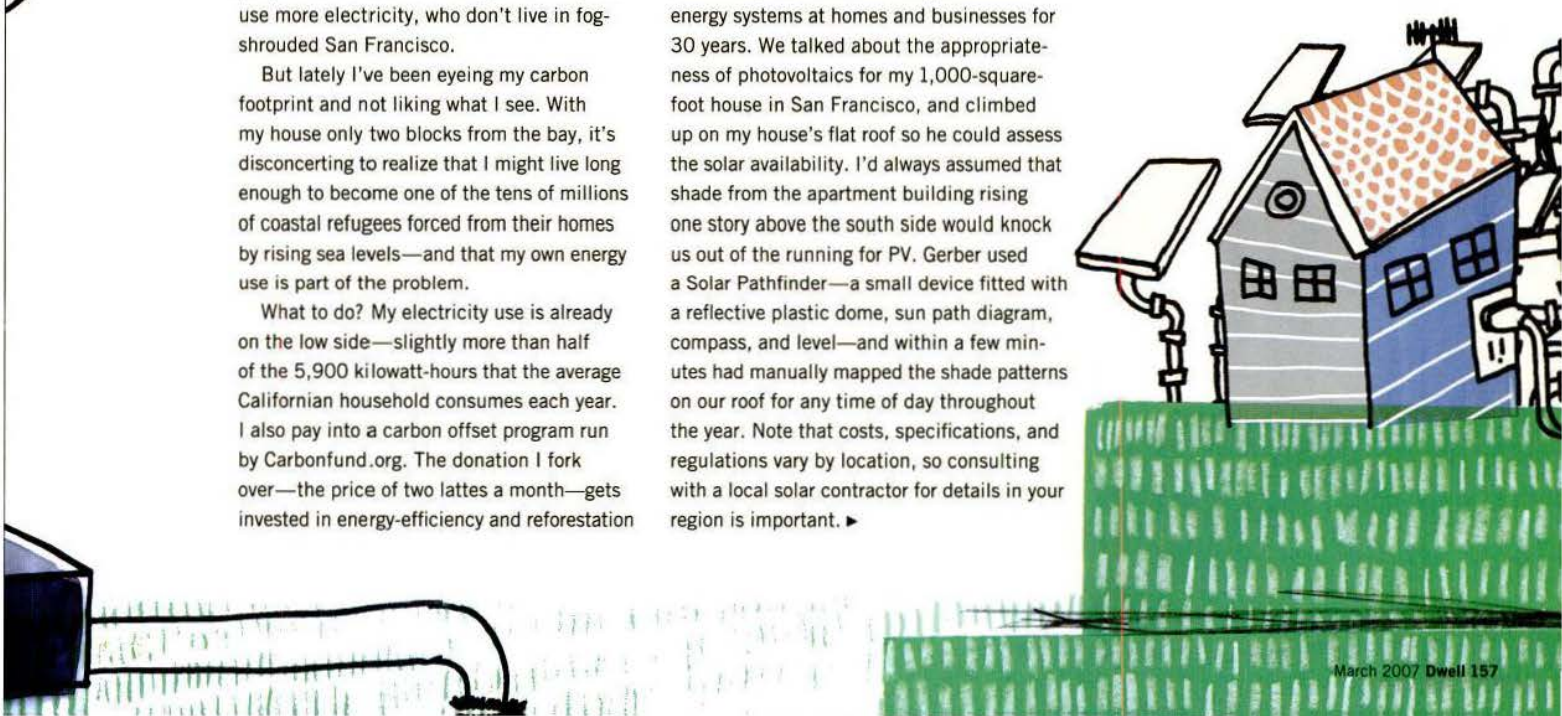
Envious of the energy savings accrued by neighbors with solar panels on their roofs, but unsure how to go about putting up your own panels? Jennifer Roberts writes about the how, where, and why of photovoltaics, using her own house as the test case.

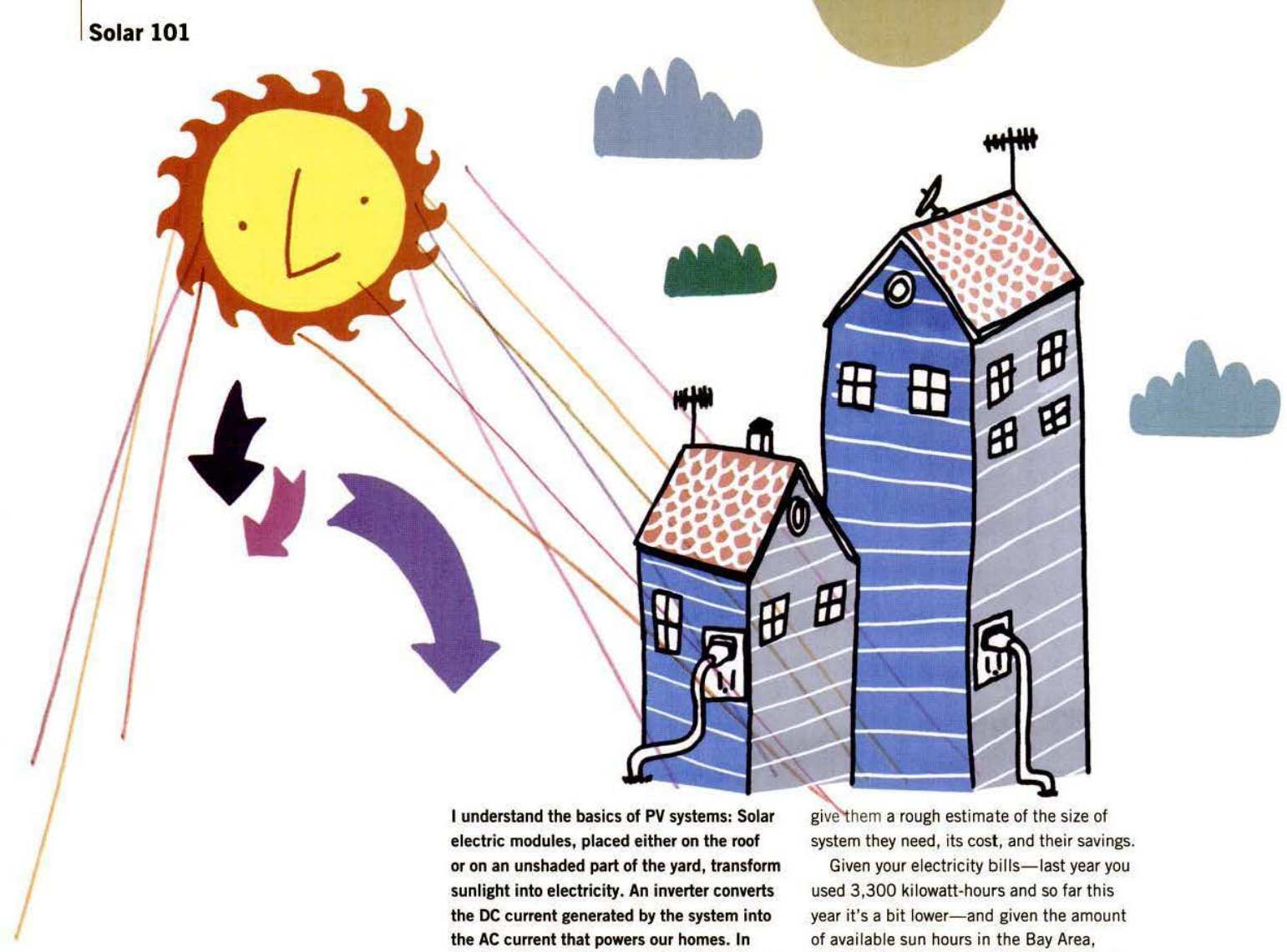
"Do as I say, not as I do" has always summed up my attitude toward photovoltaic systems. In my books and lectures about green building and green living, I'm all for PV. What's not to like about having your own mini power plant on the roof, transforming sunlight into pollution-free electricity? Privately, though, PV struck me as a fine idea for others—people who have more money than I do, who use more electricity, who don't live in fog-shrouded San Francisco.

But lately I've been eyeing my carbon footprint and not liking what I see. With my house only two blocks from the bay, it's disconcerting to realize that I might live long enough to become one of the tens of millions of coastal refugees forced from their homes by rising sea levels—and that my own energy use is part of the problem.

What to do? My electricity use is already on the low side—slightly more than half of the 5,900 kilowatt-hours that the average Californian household consumes each year. I also pay into a carbon offset program run by Carbonfund.org. The donation I fork over—the price of two lattes a month—gets invested in energy-efficiency and reforestation projects and theoretically offsets the carbon dioxide emissions my partner and I create with our home and vehicle energy use.

I have this nagging suspicion, though, that buying my way out of global warming accountability can't be painless, so I invited Gary Gerber to my house. Gerber, founder and president of Sun Light & Power in Berkeley, California, has been installing renewable-energy systems at homes and businesses for 30 years. We talked about the appropriateness of photovoltaics for my 1,000-square-foot house in San Francisco, and climbed up on my house's flat roof so he could assess the solar availability. I'd always assumed that shade from the apartment building rising one story above the south side would knock us out of the running for PV. Gerber used a Solar Pathfinder—a small device fitted with a reflective plastic dome, sun path diagram, compass, and level—and within a few minutes had manually mapped the shade patterns on our roof for any time of day throughout the year. Note that costs, specifications, and regulations vary by location, so consulting with a local solar contractor for details in your region is important. ►





I understand the basics of PV systems: Solar electric modules, placed either on the roof or on an unshaded part of the yard, transform sunlight into electricity. An inverter converts the DC current generated by the system into the AC current that powers our homes. In states such as California where there's a net metering law, the PV system is typically tied into the utility grid and homeowners receive credit on their utility bills for the electricity that their system feeds into the grid. It sounds straightforward, but how do I figure out whether it makes sense in my situation?
Typically, we wouldn't even need to come to your house to do an initial assessment. When a potential customer calls us and says, "We want solar," we prequalify them over the phone. The first thing we do is [call up a satellite image of their house using] Google Earth. Sometimes we can't even see their house because of all the trees, but if they have unshaded roof area, they're probably a candidate for PV.

In that case, we'll ask them to take out their electricity bills—the past 12 months if possible—and tell us what their electricity usage is in kilowatt-hours. With that, we can give them a rough estimate of the size of system they need, its cost, and their savings.

Given your electricity bills—last year you used 3,300 kilowatt-hours and so far this year it's a bit lower—and given the amount of available sun hours in the Bay Area, a 2-kilowatt system is in the right ballpark. That's about half the size of the average residential PV system in California, but it's not unexpected because this is a small house with no air-conditioning, and there are only two people in the family.

The ballpark cost of a system this size is $20,000. That's before California rebates and a $2,000 federal tax credit; combined, they would bring your cost down to $13,000 or $14,000.

That's more palatable than $20,000, but still makes me wince.
We do our financial analysis based on a 30-year life cycle, and we've found that a typical system pays for itself after about 15 years. We expect these systems to last 30 or 40 years, so one question is whether $13,000 or $14,000 is a reasonable price to pay to zero out your electric bill for the rest of your life. ▸

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Do people usually pay cash or do they finance the purchase?
Most people get a home equity loan. For you, the cost of doing nothing is $33 a month this year—that's what you're paying for electricity now. But next year it might be $36 a month, $40 a month the year after that, $44 a month the year after that. Add up the numbers over the years as electricity rates keep increasing, and compare that with a flat loan payment over 15 years. You're going to find out that you're spending probably three times as much by renting your power from the utility for the next 30 years as you would spend buying a system today and owning your power.

So buying a PV system takes away that fear factor about rising utility rates.
With a PV system, you know exactly what your electricity cost will be. You've already paid it. It gives you immunity from rising energy costs. But the focus on return on investment may be misplaced. When someone buys a Mercedes, are they focused on the return? For most homeowners, buying a PV system is a decision that they make for other reasons. People want to do something with their money that makes a positive difference rather than do something that continues to be part of the problem.

So what does the Solar Pathfinder say about my prospects?
At the center of your roof, you've got seven months of about 95 percent sun, and then it starts to degrade in the winter months. The good thing is, you've always got some sun during the best hours: Even in the middle of winter, you have five hours of sun starting at 11 a.m. If we walk over here to the east, where the neighbor's building is taller, it takes out the sun from 1 p.m. on in the winter, so that's not where we want to go. But if we move farther north on the roof, it gets much better.

Bottom line? There's a viable solar resource here.

There goes one of my biggest excuses.
The fossil-fuel age is ending. The question is, how do we make our homes and other buildings carbon neutral? I'm optimistic it can be done if we have the collective will. ▸

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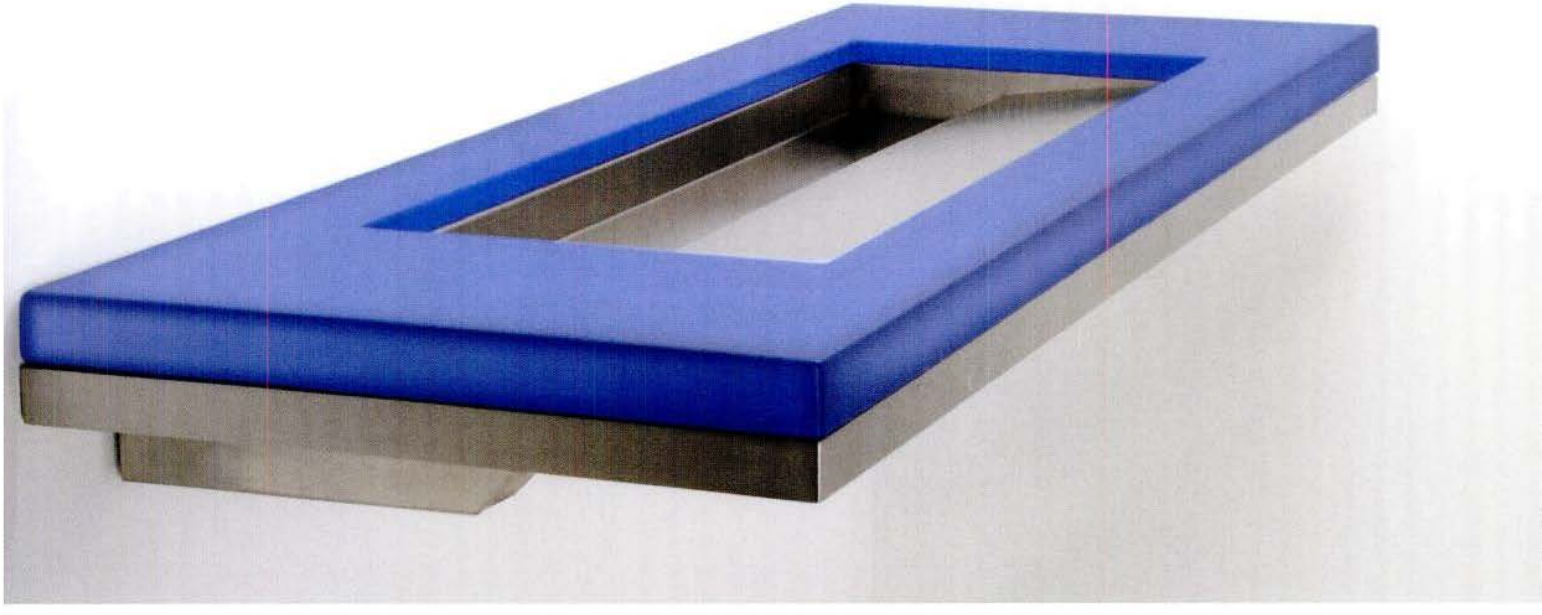

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Exploring the Solar Systems

For the past 30 years, we've been teased with the promise of plentiful solar energy. But for most of us, nerdy solar calculators and watches are as close as we get to realizing this promise. What happened to solar power for our cities, our cars, our homes? It's coming. The following three houses shed some light on various solar systems.

Project: Woolen Mills House
Architect: Hays + Ewing Design Studio
Location: Charlottesville, Virginia

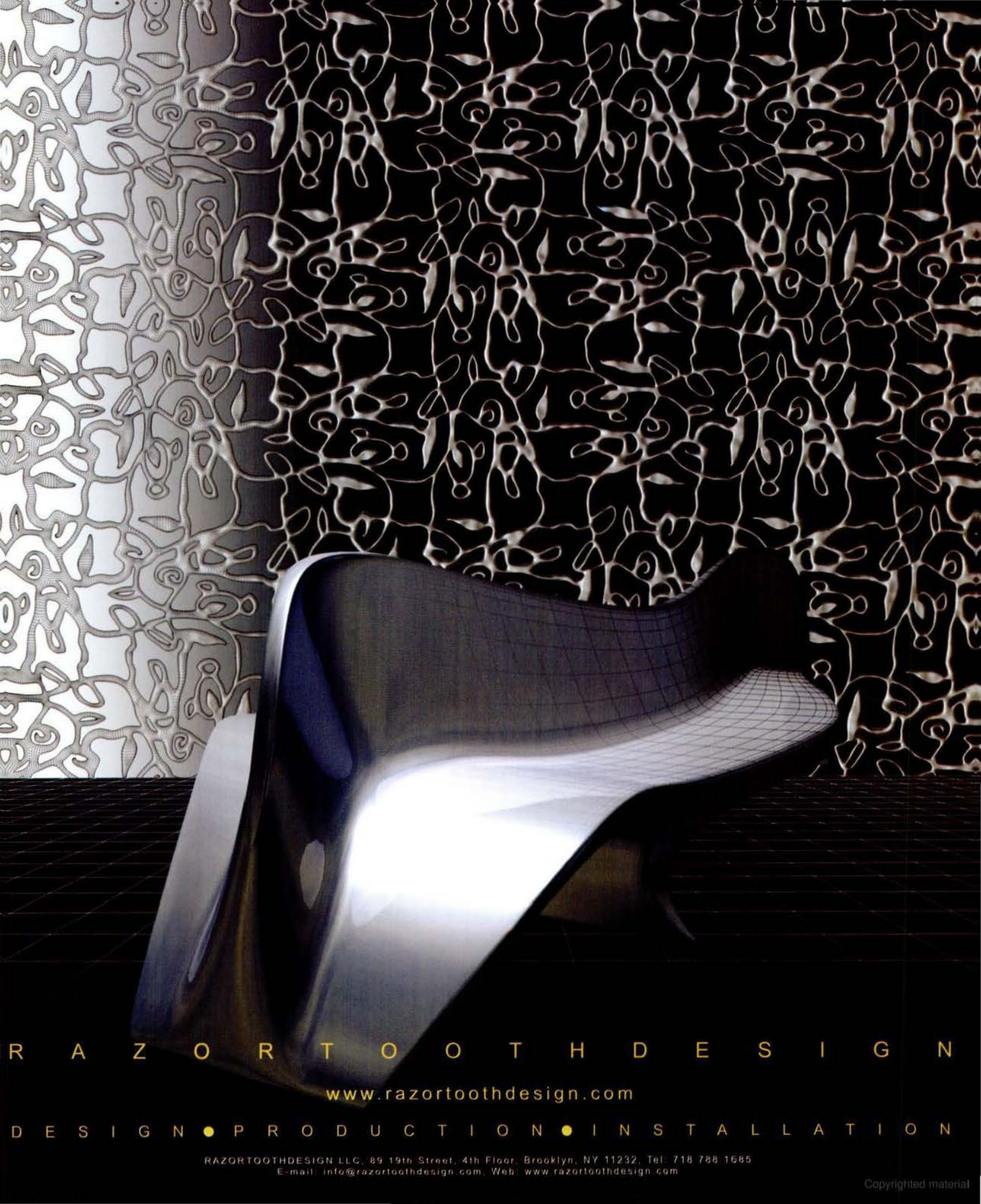
The first misconception about going solar is that it is expensive. The second is that it requires insanely complicated panels, transformers, and batteries. "We needed something simple, a way to use solar to cool the house more than anything," explains Christopher Hays, principal of Hays + Ewing Design Studio, which he runs with his wife, Allison Ewing. "That's how we were drawn to a passive solar setup."

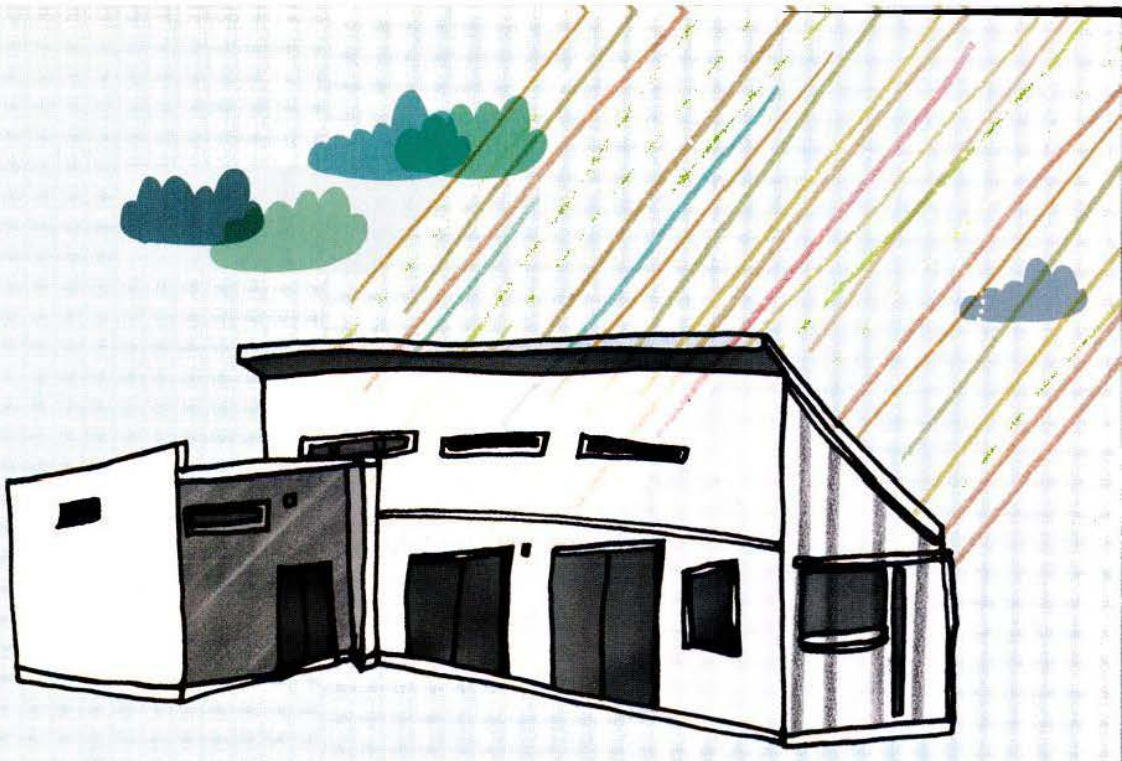
Passive solar systems use sunlight to warm or cool a house without the use of electrical or mechanical equipment, and are organized around the creative use and placement of materials such as heat-retaining concrete floors, sun-blocking louvers, and ventilation systems that naturally distribute air throughout a room or house. Because they use no additional energy beyond sunlight, passive solar systems have no operating costs or environmental impact and can cut energy costs for decades.

For their passive system, Hays and Ewing worked with a day-lighting consultant to study the trajectory of the sun throughout the year, plotting its penetration inside the house during each month. Fixed louvers were installed over windows to provide shade areas during summer. As the sun moves in winter, direct sunlight flows into south rooms, providing heat. For south-facing windows, Hays and Ewing installed three-foot overhangs and light-filtering trellises. High-density Plycem panels work like concrete to retain daylight heat and distribute it in the house throughout cool nights, keeping the architects warm inside the house.

Using natural convective currents, fresh air flows through the living areas downstairs and exhausts through the second-story windows. Windows upstairs at each end of the east-west-running hallways allow for cross ventilation.

"Since this is a passive system, it doesn't completely take care of the temperature in the house," explains Hays, "but it does protect a large degree—and that makes it totally worth it." ►





Project: Clifford Avenue homes
Architect: KRDB
Location: Austin, Texas

The cost for solar systems is not only related to how elaborate the system is—it also depends on where you live. "The City of Austin rebate program for solar cut the cost of our systems in half," explains Chris Krager, principal and owner of Krager & Associates Design-Build, who installed solar systems on three of his Clifford Avenue houses in downtown Austin in 2005.

Residents of all states are eligible for at least some financial incentives for solar, anywhere from a few percent to 50 percent off. To take advantage of this, most solarists opt to install active solar systems in their houses that don't merely save energy but produce it.

In a typical system, photovoltaic panels are sloped on a south-facing roof. As the sun hits the panels, they send energy to a transformer, which creates electricity that is sent throughout the house. Unused electricity is sent either to batteries for later use or, as in the case of Clifford Avenue, back into the grid where it accumulates credits that homeowners can later reclaim. Explains Krager, "This system allows the homeowners to use the grid as a storage system and save a lot of money."

But saving money can come at a price—at least at the outset. PV panels in active solar systems remain prohibitively expensive for many people, costing anywhere from $4 to $7.50 per watt needed. Luckily, prices for PVs have been dropping consistently about 2 to 5 percent every year, a trend that is expected to continue. Krager contends that even at this cost, his system can pay for itself in five to ten years.

Along with the active PV solar system, Krager designed the 1,600-square-foot Clifford Avenue houses with passive solar functions to conserve more energy. Galvanized metal roofs reflect the sun's rays in summertime, and are super-insulating in winter. Sturdy two-by-six construction and a concrete slab foundation boast high thermal mass that helps to moderate temperature without additional energy. The exteriors of the houses are clad in Hardie siding, a durable cementious paneling, and all the windows feature a low-emittance coating to shield interiors from the scorching sun.

To save money on the exorbitant startup costs of the active system, Krager worked with a local solar contractor to lease systems to each house for $60 a month. He predicts the total payment for the power each house uses will be about $75 a month, leaving the monthly payment to utility companies at about $15 for each house. "It's like free energy," he says. ▶

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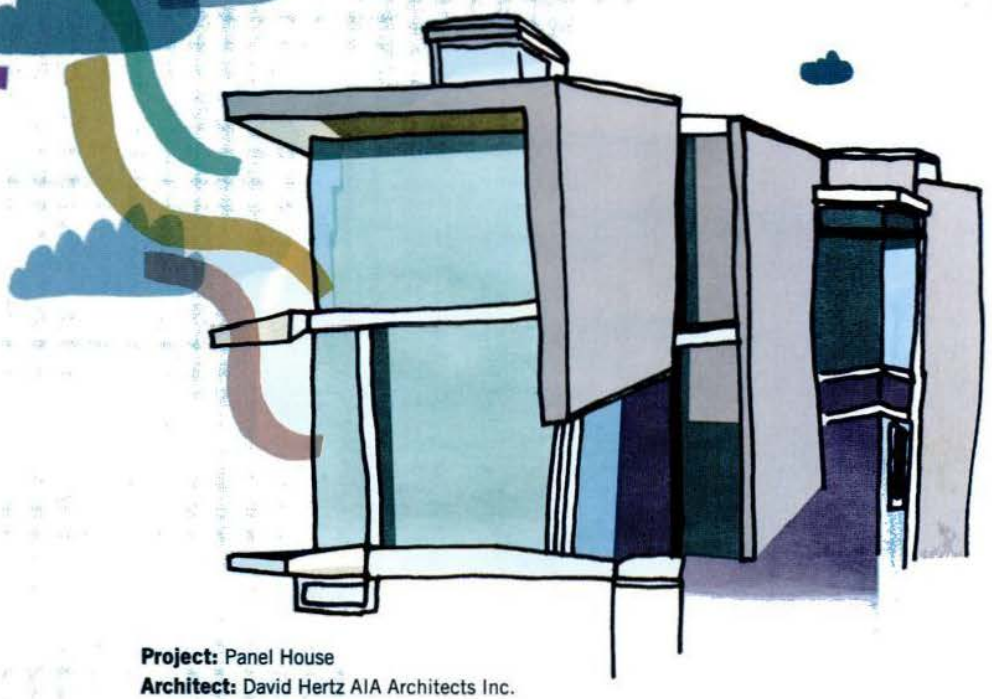

Project: Panel House
Architect: David Hertz AIA Architects Inc.
Syndesis, Inc.
Location: Venice, California

Taking advantage of Southern California's sunny skies, architect David Hertz ingrained passive solar features in almost every detail of the Panel House for client Thomas Ennis. Because the house is on a narrow 28-by-89-foot lot that sits right on Venice Beach, Hertz was able to construct an entirely clear-span structural system and supplant walls with broad spans of windows. This is most strikingly demonstrated by the enormous 9-by-15-foot window at the front of the house that lowers to the basement on a worm-drive gear system, offering an unobscured view of the beach. Smaller windows sit on manual pivots, allowing occupants to moderate temperature with cooling seaside air. A thermostat-controlled skylight automatically opens throughout the day to release hot air that accumulates in the stairwell.

To insulate the house, as well as dissuade nosy neighbors from looking in through glass walls, Hertz covered the east façade in 3-by-30-inch prefabricated foam panels normally used for ice storage in the desert. Coated with aluminum on both sides and painted silver, the blocks lightly reflect summer sun and capture the changing colors of the sky.

While passive solar features are integrated throughout the front and sides of the house, the active solar system is confined to the roof. There, sharing space with an infinity pool, 14 south-facing PV panels and an inverter produce 2.3 kilowatts of energy per day, sending free electricity throughout the house if needed, or back into the grid. A thermal solar system boosts the temperature for water before it is sent to the water heater, further saving energy and costs.

"Enough 'free' solar energy falls to earth each day in the form of sunshine to supply current world energy needs for five years," explains Hertz. "And the U.S. consumes a million dollars worth of energy every minute. We need to understand that conservation is the lowest-cost energy we have. Saving energy costs a lot less than finding it." ▶

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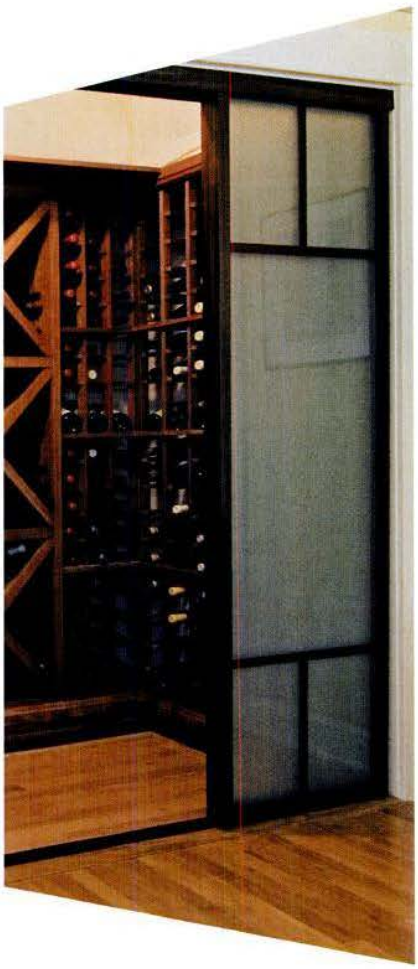

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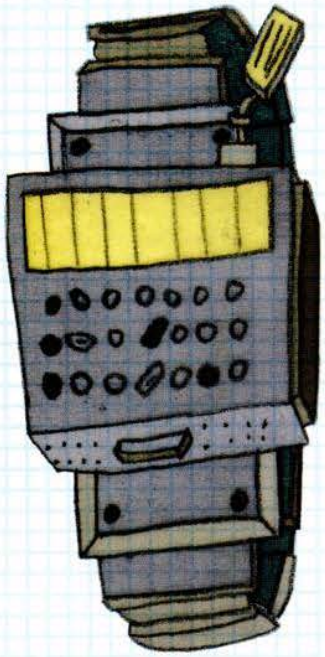


Solar Flair

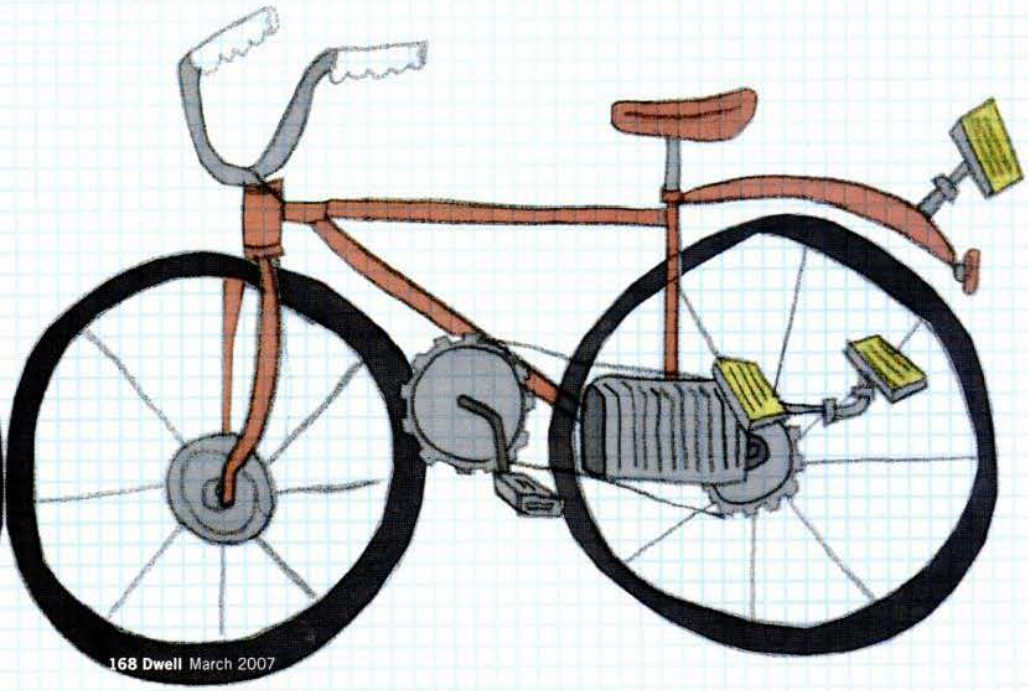
Interested in running more than just your home on the sun's rays? Here's a handy introduction to some of the most innovative solar goods available.

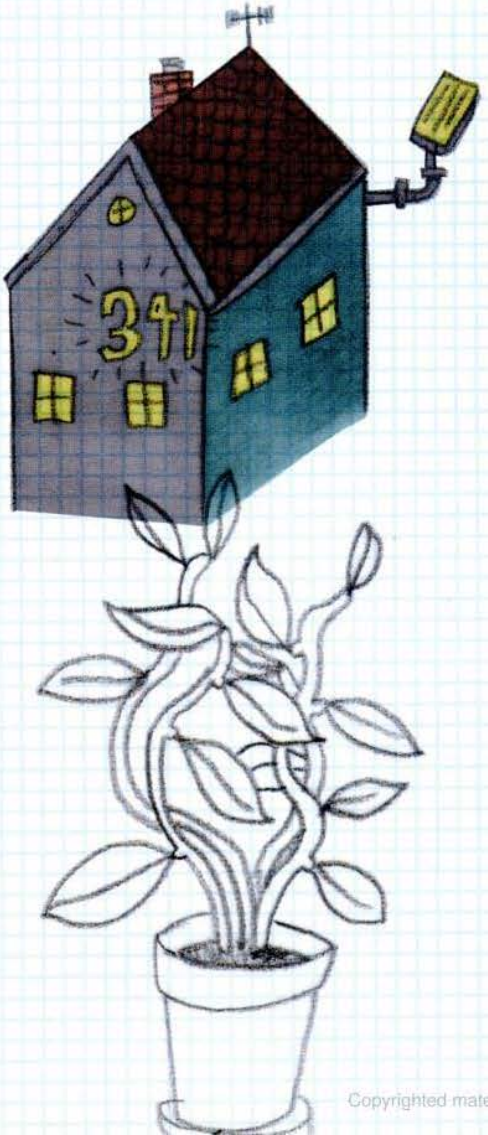
Braille wristwatch/bracelet
As if we needed another reason to banish the talking cell phone. Jeonjun Cho, a student at Korea's Kyungki University, has crafted two modish, high-tech timepieces for the visually impaired. Running on solar power—winding's out the window—these chic chronometers tell the hour in Braille. They're not yet on the market, but don't be surprised if Fossil dumps Gehry and Starck for Cho.

E-V Sunny bicycle by Thera-P-Products / $699–$1,139 / www.therapyproducts.com
Canada's Thera-P-Products has good news for those of us without Lance Armstrong–sized quads: They have just introduced the first all-solar electric bicycle. Photovoltaic cells in the wheels collect the sun's rays, and a motor mounted on the front fork converts them to 19-mph power. Hell, you don't need quads at all. Also available as a conversion kit to retrofit your passé pedal-powered contraption.

Sun-Mate solar address light / $49.99 / www.sun-mate.com
The days of your dinner guests driving up and down dark streets searching for your house are over. This handy address light glows all night long with just an hour and half's solar charge. Plus, this luminous bit of signage is visible from 500 feet away, and bright enough to automatically turn on at dusk and off at dawn. Motel 6 needn't be the only one to leave the light on for you.

Solar Plant by Takanori Hayakawa / $130 / www.plus-d.com
Solar Plant sounds a bit redundant to us—aren't all plants solar? Yet there's something decidedly winsome about this humble objet d'art. Like organic plants, Takanori Hayakawa's creation gets its nourishment from the sun, and come nighttime it emanates the stored energy in an elegant, ethereal glow. Each translucent color is as charming as the next. ►





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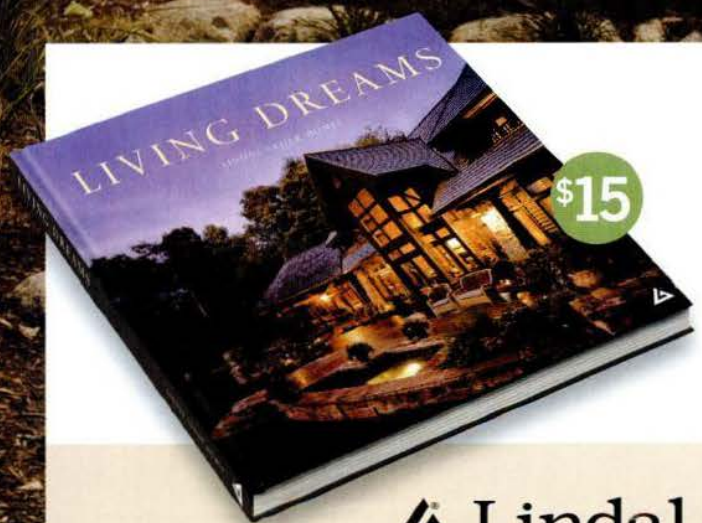

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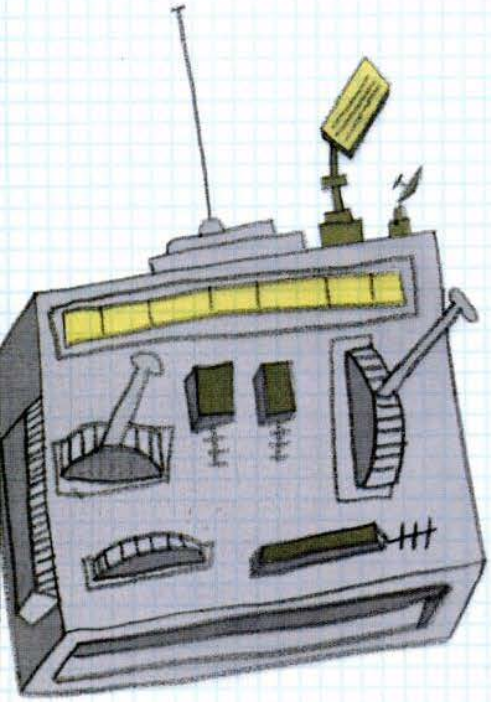
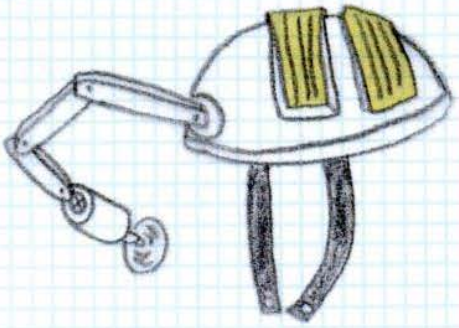
Solar-powered toy helicopter by Inpro Solar / $32 / Available at www.plasticashop.com
This whimsical whirlybird comes from the German company Inpro Solar, and is sure to delight any budding young aviator. The solar panel on the rotor generates enough energy to turn the blade, and while the odds of this chunky chopper actually taking off are slim, it could very well twirl its way into the heart of your little flyboy or girl.



Solar-powered cooling pith helmet / $29.99 / Available at laliquidators.net
The mail carrier's creed scoffs at rain, snow, and gloom of night, but for many intrepid postal workers, the only thing worse than dog bites and Publishers Clearing House is the heat. Put that pernicious sun to work with this natty straw pith helmet that boasts a cooling fan rigged straight to a solar panel on the crown. Dr. Livingstone, we presume, would approve.

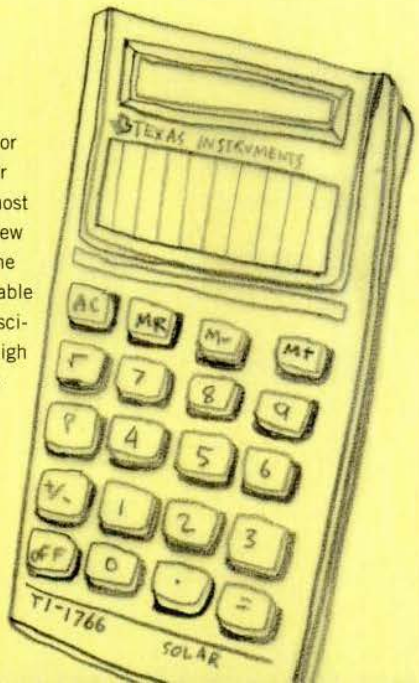
TEX-COTE CoolWall coating systems / $30–$35/gallon / www.texcote.com
A coat of this enamel, which is chockfull of reflective pigments, can actually cool the surface of a house by tens of degrees. The government uses the same type of pigments to cool ships and minimize the radar signature of the Stealth bomber. A long weekend with a brush and a roller and you'll be cruising under your energy company's radar.

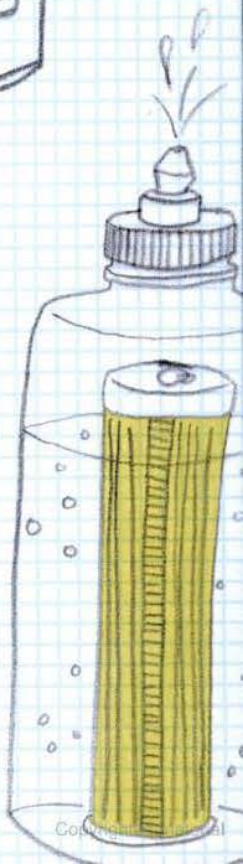
LightCap solar-powered water bottle/lantern by SolLight / $24.95 / www.sollight.com
SolLight's LightCap is a camper's dream come true: a sleek, one-liter water bottle that moonlights as a solar-powered lantern. A four-hour charge of sunlight keeps the thing running for hours, and a flip of a switch alternates between bright white light and a more intimate red glow. Things may continue to go bump in the night, but they don't have to be you. ►



TI-1766 Solar Calculator

Oh, to be a nerd in the early '80s. Each technological advancement was not just a tool but a fashion statement. When perched jauntily in your OP front-pocket polo, the TI-1766 said you meant business—the business of decimals. Released in 1981, the TI-1766 was one of the more popular solar-powered four-function calculators. It could rock percentages and square roots. With a sleek, futuristic design and lightweight construction, the TI-1766 had no need for bulky batteries due to its innovative solar cell power storage. As is the case with most new technologies, the Japanese were a few years ahead of Texas Instruments, but the TI-1766 held its own against the formidable Toshiba LC-847 to become a math and science staple that is still popular among high schoolers today. Sadly, the same cannot be said for OP. —H.W.





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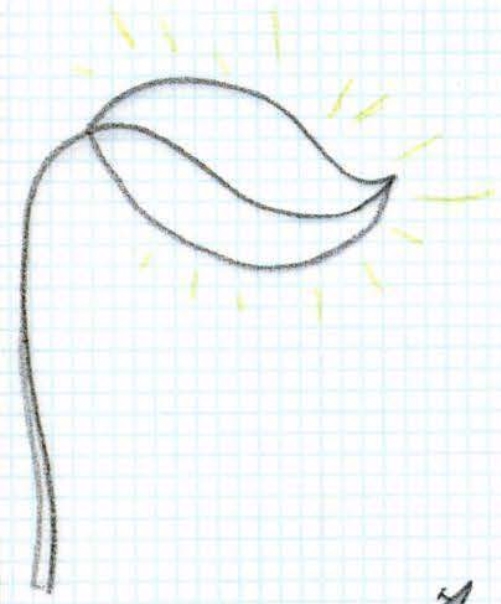
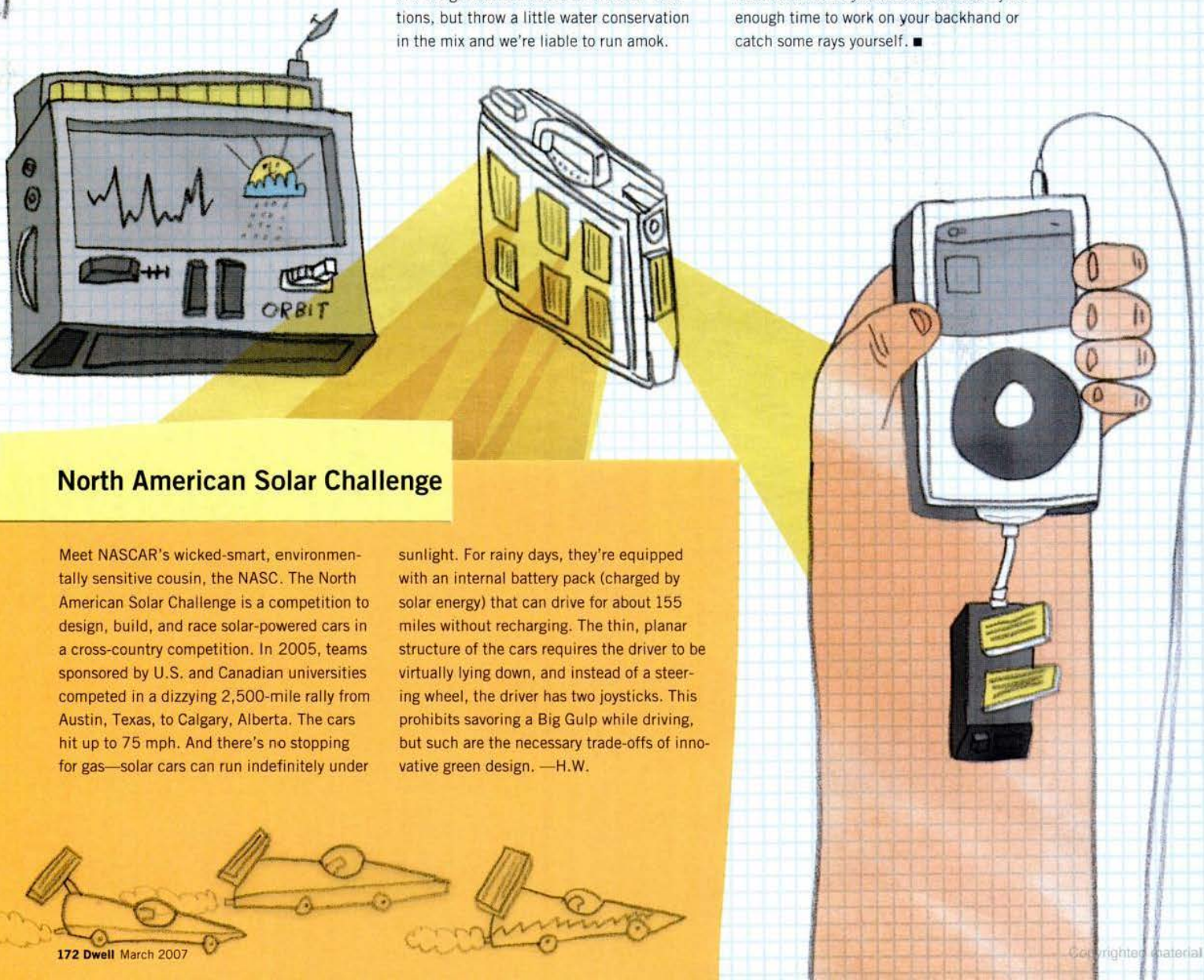


Solar Bud by Luceplan / $120 / www.luceplanusa.com
Ophelia accused her brother Laertes of treading the "primrose path of dalliance." But unlike those Shakespearean sibs, you'll desire to do just that along any path lit by designer Ross Lovegrove's Solar Buds. These 15-inch-tall blooms store the sun's emanations to light your way, be it Ophelia's "thorny way to heaven" or to wherever her brother wound up.

Solar-powered rain/freeze sensor by Orbit / $64.99 / www.orbitonline.com
This hard-working weather sensor gives new meaning to the term "sun showers." Running on solar power, this device detects rain or snowfall and then sends a wireless message to your sprinkler system, giving it the night off. We get excited about smart solar solutions, but throw a little water conservation in the mix and we're liable to run amok.

Sol8 solar briefcase by Velleman / $139 / www.vellemanusa.com
Toting this sleek briefcase, which houses a solar generator, you'll be anything but the man in a gray flannel suit. The Sol8 opens to reveal two 13-watt photovoltaic panels that will have your laptop, cell phone, digital camera, and power tools recharged in no time. And at a svelte 9.7 pounds, porting this plucky power source should be no sweat.

Soldius1 Universal Solar Charger / $109.99 / www.mysoldius.com
The forecast is decidedly sunny for MP3 players, cell phones, and PDAs. The Dutch firm Soldius offers a solar charger for modern necessities that's slim enough to fit into any clutch, and weighs a scant four ounces. Two to four hours of sunlight is all that's needed to revive your chosen device—just enough time to work on your backhand or catch some rays yourself. ■



North American Solar Challenge

Meet NASCAR's wicked-smart, environmentally sensitive cousin, the NASC. The North American Solar Challenge is a competition to design, build, and race solar-powered cars in a cross-country competition. In 2005, teams sponsored by U.S. and Canadian universities competed in a dizzying 2,500-mile rally from Austin, Texas, to Calgary, Alberta. The cars hit up to 75 mph. And there's no stopping for gas—solar cars can run indefinitely under sunlight. For rainy days, they're equipped with an internal battery pack (charged by solar energy) that can drive for about 155 miles without recharging. The thin, planar structure of the cars requires the driver to be virtually lying down, and instead of a steering wheel, the driver has two joysticks. This prohibits savoring a Big Gulp while driving, but such are the necessary trade-offs of innovative green design. —H.W.

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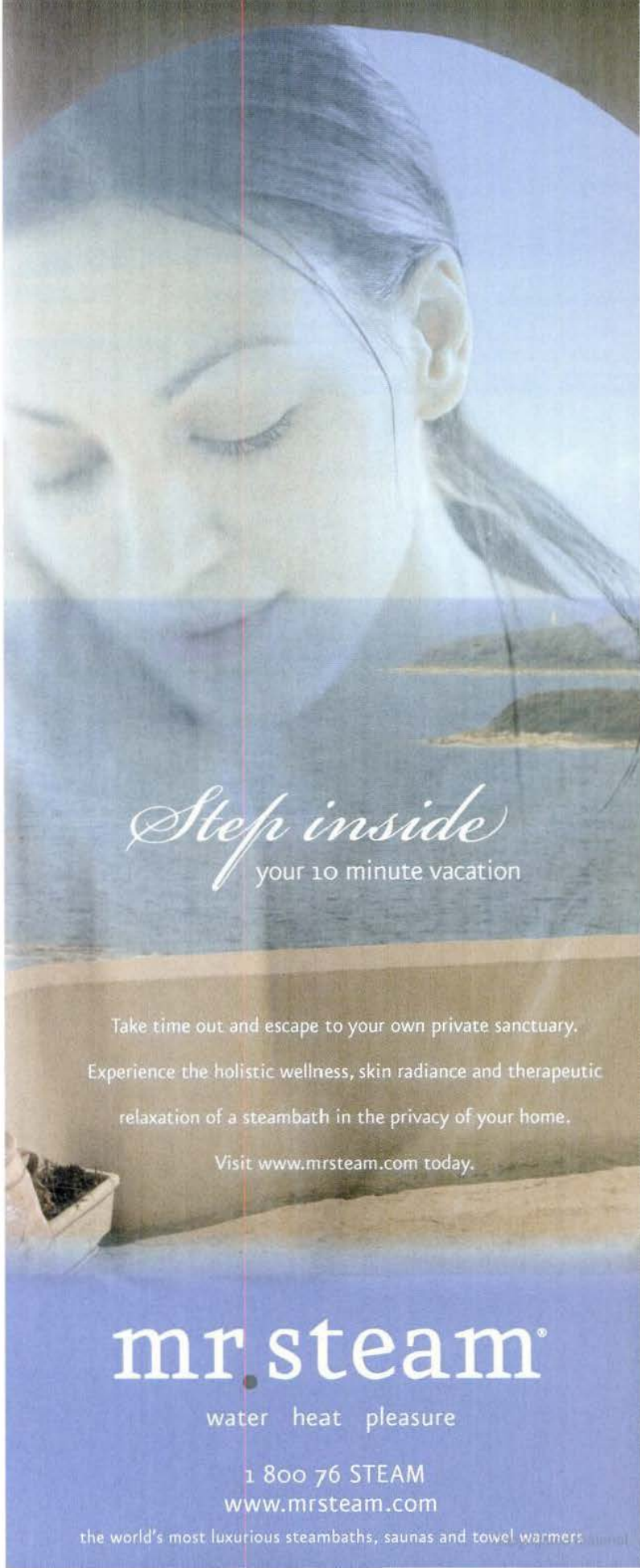

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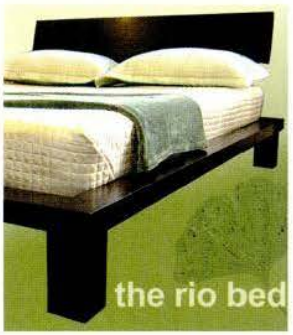

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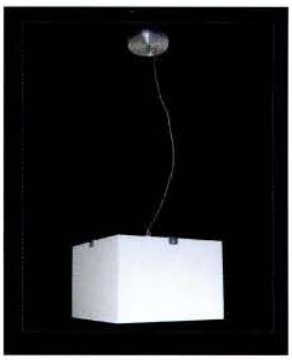

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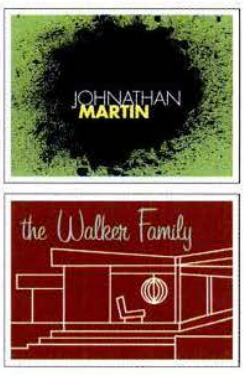

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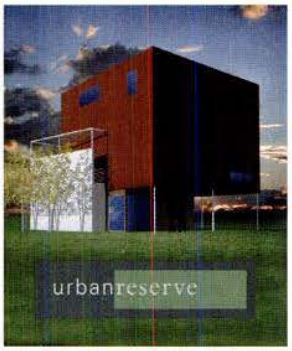

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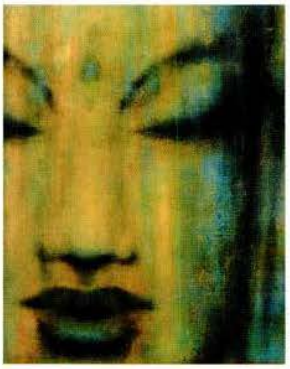

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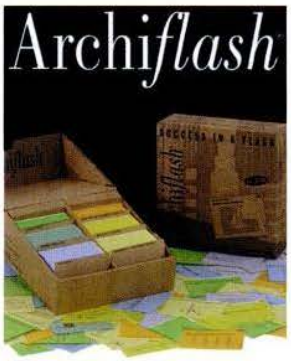

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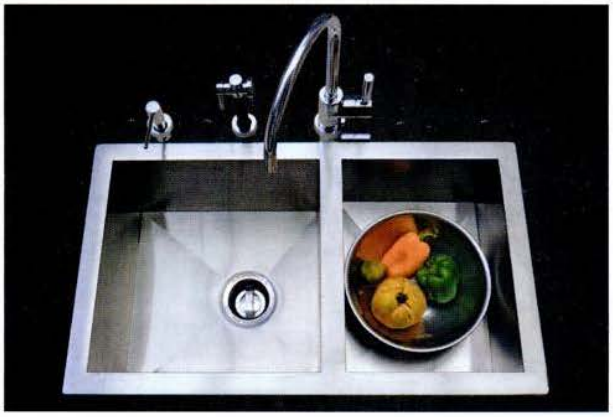

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Shown: Drum and Funnel pendants by Galbraith & Paul

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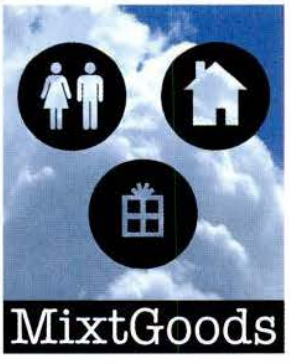

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Shown: Furniture by G. Romano

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Shown: Solara, 8-light, 36-arm pendant by ET2 (Available in white, red, and black.)

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Photo: Dennis Anderson

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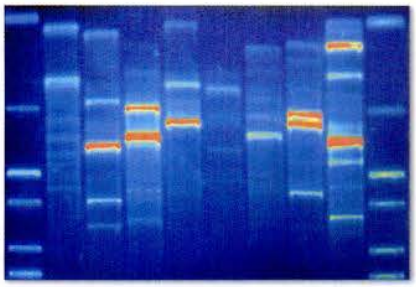

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Shown: Torrey Pines/Clifford Baker

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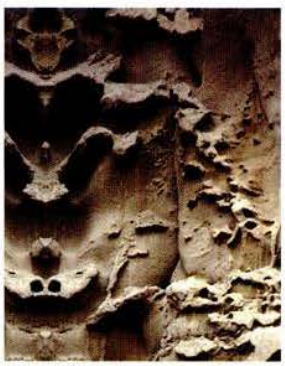

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Shown: Detail

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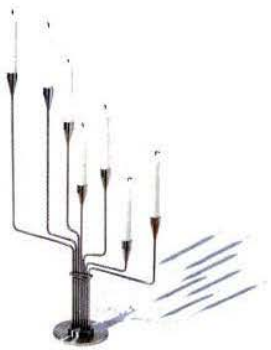

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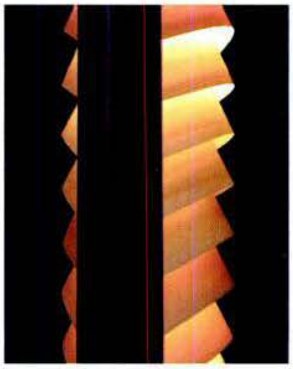

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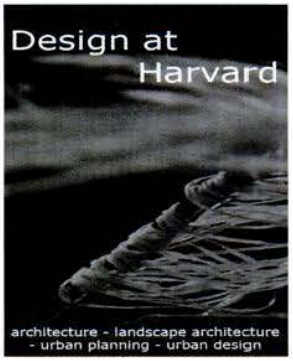

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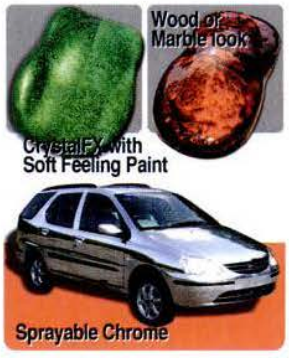

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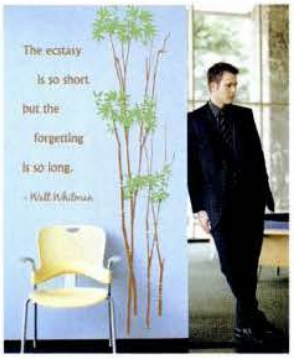

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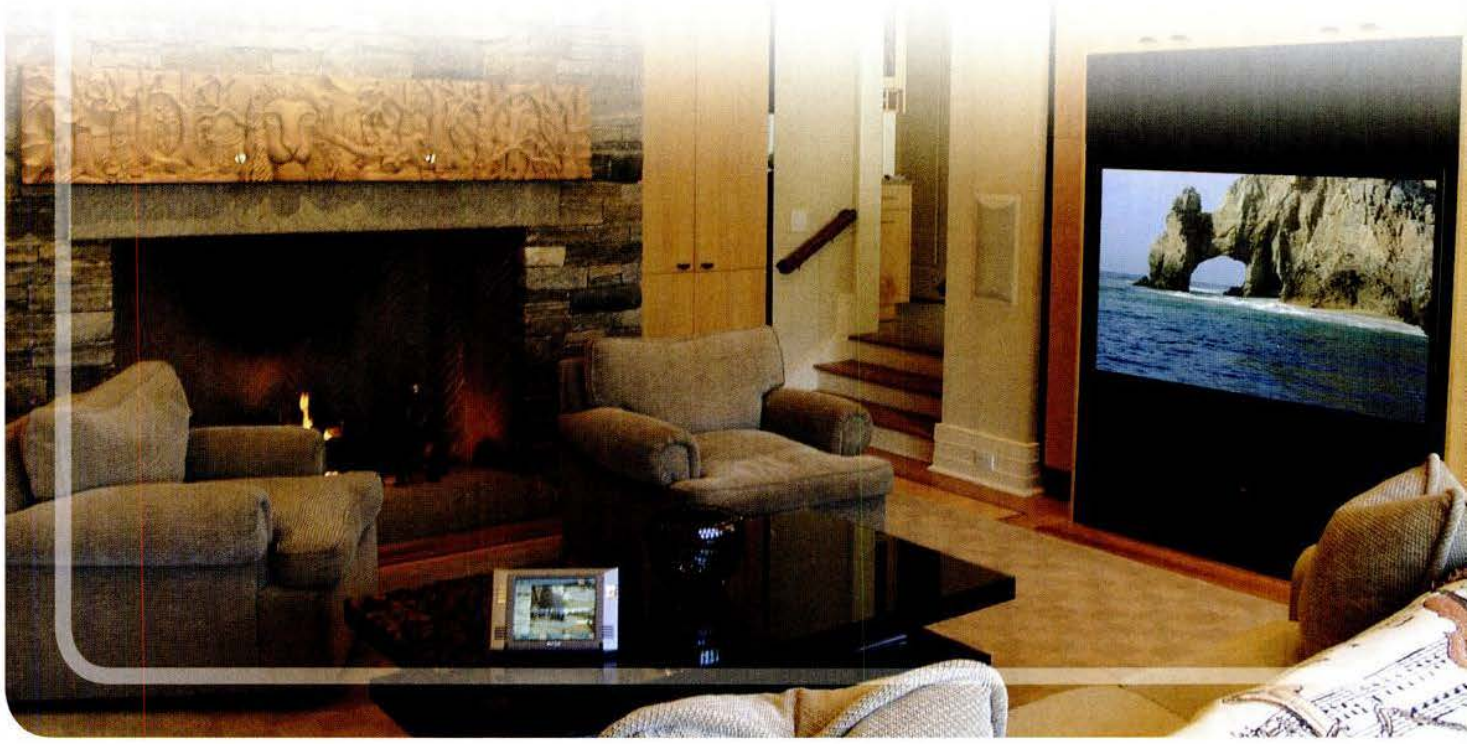

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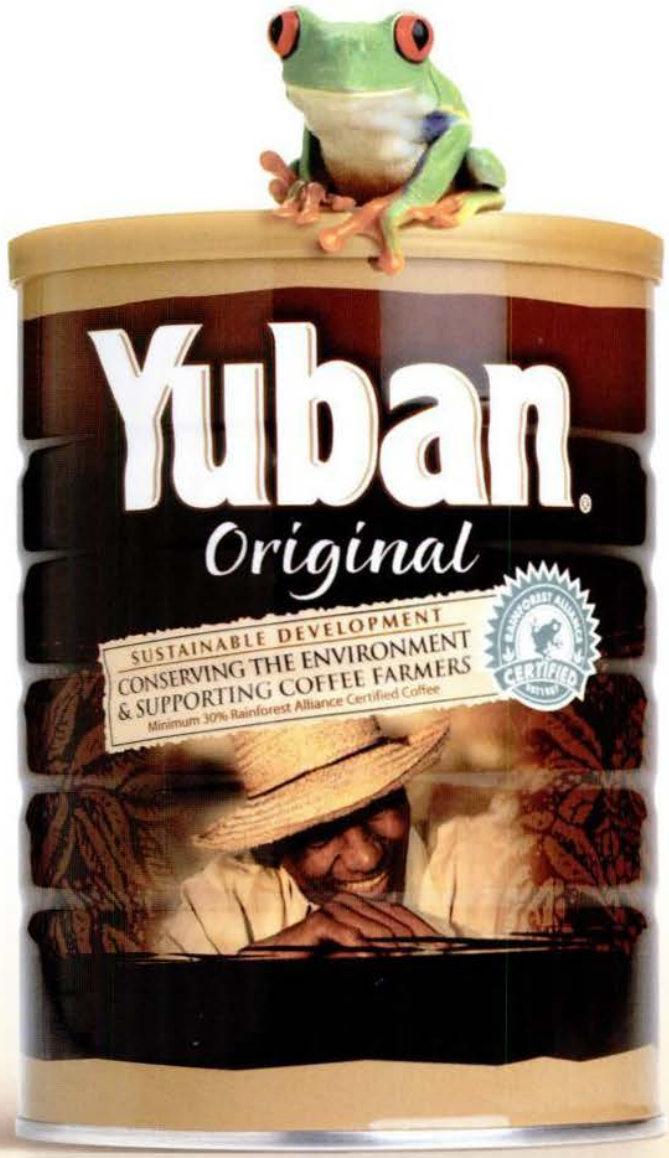
Story by Chelsea Holden Baker | Photo by Tim Griffith

Turning a Corner

The Plaza Apartments' energy-smart features include occupancy sensors and automated lighting controls, as well as a photovoltaic solar system on the roof, which provides 12 percent of the building's electricity. Recycled materials were used whenever possible—from fiberglass made of returned bottles to recycled rubber flooring in the bathrooms.

People who live in San Francisco's South of Market neighborhood used to refer to Sixth Street, one of the area's thoroughfares, as a "gauntlet"—a dirty, crime-riddled passage through which you grit your teeth, keep your head down, and hope for no unpleasant surprises. The neighborhood, largely built on landfill, suffered some of the heaviest damage in the 1989 earthquake. Since then, Sixth Street has been the focus of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency's earthquake recovery program. The agency has focused on replacing former single room occupancy hotels (SROs) with equally affordable housing that is more livable, less institutional, safer, and green. In 2002, the agency launched the nonprofit Public Initiatives Development Corporation (PIDC) to bolster redevelopment in San Francisco's neediest communities. The Plaza Apartments at Sixth and Howard streets—the belly of the beast—is the PIDC's first project.

Recognizing that the neighborhood suffered from neglect and blight even before the earthquake, Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects, in association with Paulett Taggart Architects, devised a building plan that affects community and economic vigor for long-term change. Having already won the American Institute of Architects' 2006 "Show You're Green" affordable green housing competition, the Plaza Apartments are also on track to receive a silver LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The 106 300-square-foot studios, laundry, retail space, planned credit union, black-box theater, support services, and outdoor spaces were designed with input from the former residents of the SRO-style Plaza Hotel, which used to stand on the spot. Many of them have returned to the new building, which enlivens Sixth Street during the day with its multicolored wood/resin panels, and is a beacon after dusk, when residents can be seen chatting in its bright, double-story entry. Neighbors walk by with their heads up—proving that designing with people in mind can be beautiful on many levels. ■



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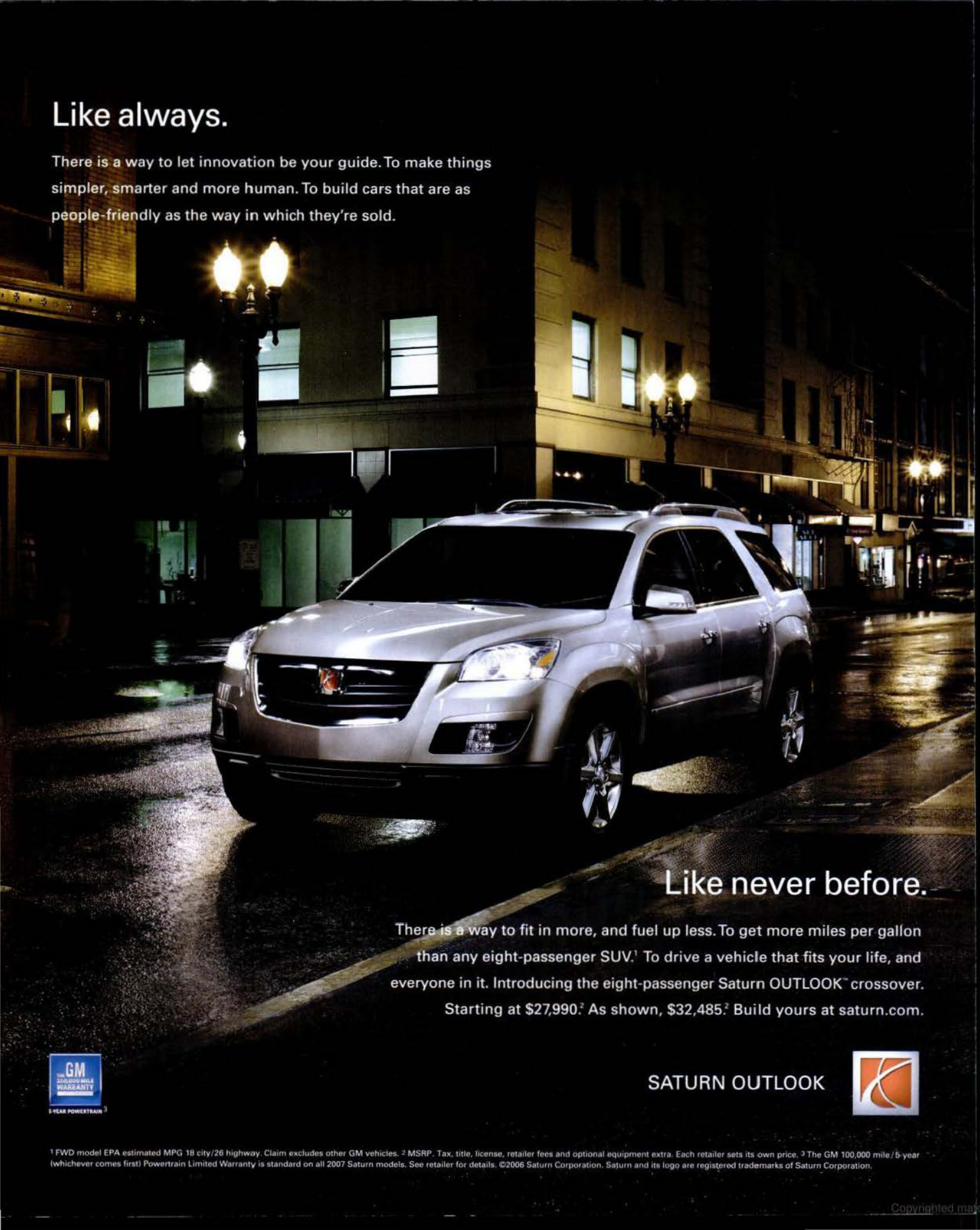

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