

residential architect

A HANLEY-WOOD, INC., PUBLICATION / NOVEMBER • DECEMBER 1998

lake / flato and the new texas regionalism

clients from hell / bath design /
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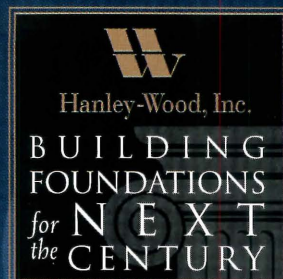
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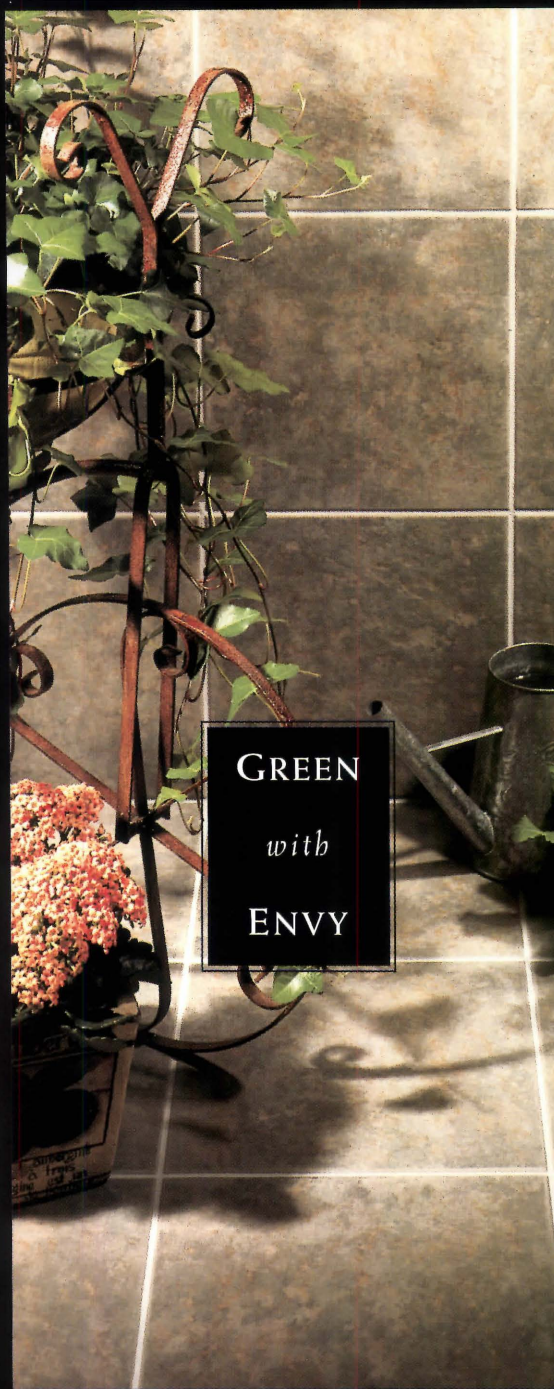
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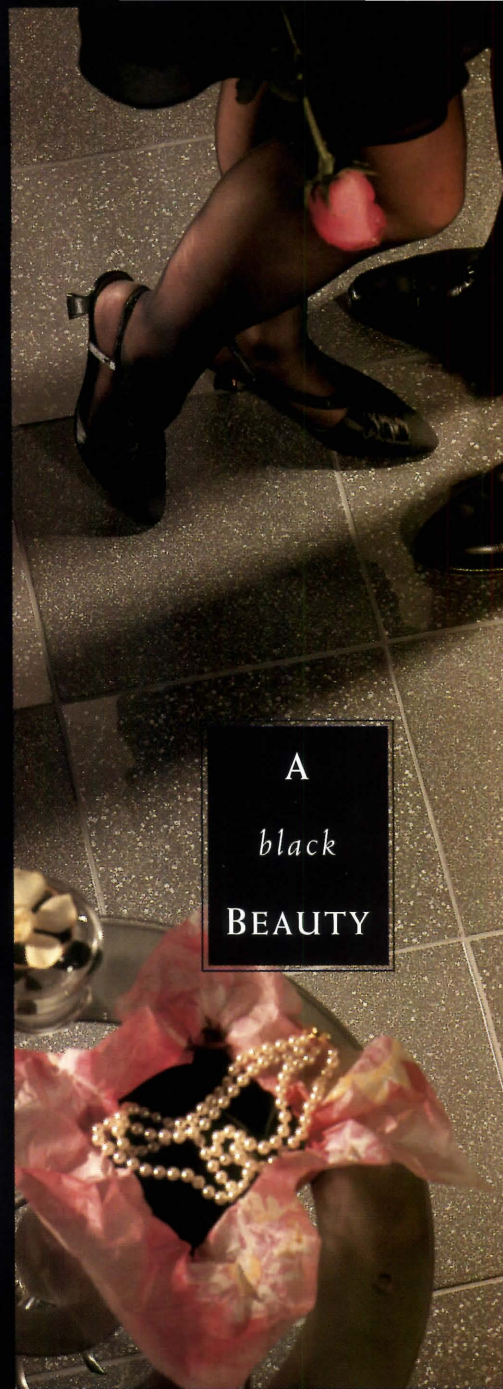
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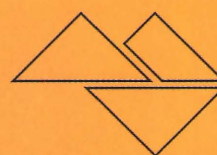


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1 - 9 3 1 - 4 8 4 - 2 1 1

contents



Cover photo: James McGoon

from the editor...page 11

letters...page 14

home front...page 22

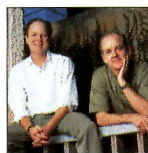
Vermont writer's retreat / Greene and Greene pages /
residential architect 1999 Business Leadership Awards /
Husband-and-wife partnerships / Postcard from California

perspective...page 34

Connecticut architect Duo Dickinson is an anti-elitist.

practice...page 38

Negotiated contracts or bids? We evaluate the pros and cons.



cover story:

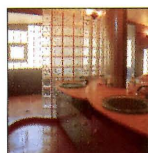
the new texas regionalism...page 46

A look at the work of Lake/Flato Architects and three rising Texas
firms headed by Natalye Appel, Gary Cunningham, and Paul Lamb.



clients from hell...page 58

Every firm has them. They're the clients who look over your
shoulder and make you crazy. Sometimes, they make you do
your best work, too.



bath class...page 64

The bath, that most personal of spaces, demands innovation
and high style. Our bath portfolio is awash with smart materials,
skillful storage, and a host of clever details.



on the waterfront...page 74

On the outside, it's a 1990s interpretation of a Shingle Style house
with magnificent views of Long Island Sound. Underneath it all is
a 1970s kit house—right down to the original floor plan.

tech lines...page 80

Office equipment: what to buy, and for how much.

doctor spec...page 86

Why some residential architects are steel crazy after all these years.

hands on...page 90

Two roof edge treatments offer high-design alternatives to gutters.

product information...page 96

special places...page 104

Stephen Muse, FAIA, is a frequent visitor to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello.

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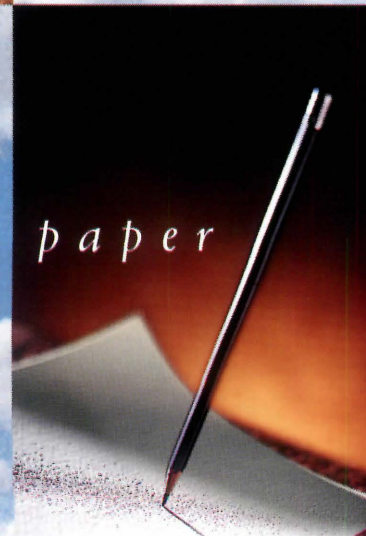
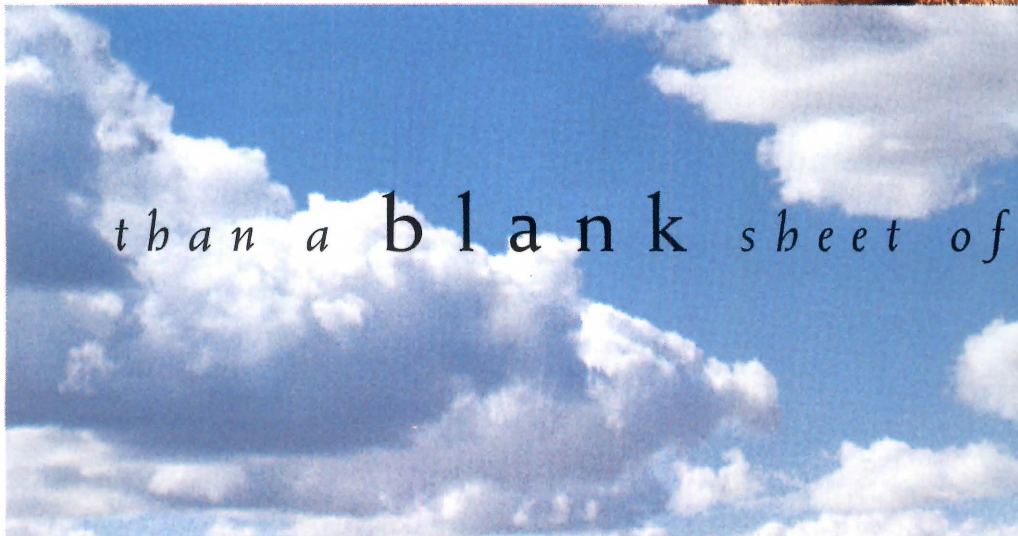
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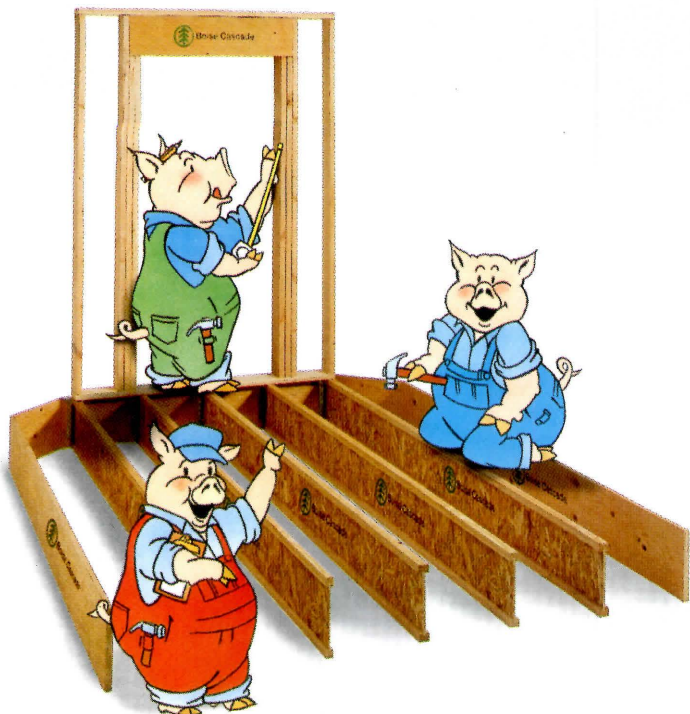
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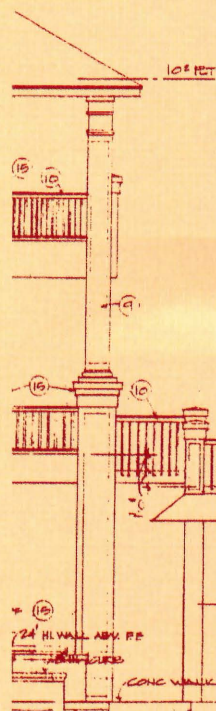
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from the editor

regionalism: dead or alive?

in this global age, what do we gain—and lose—as we look beyond our homegrown architectural heritage?

by susan bradford barror

Ours is a world of instant visual communication. Via the Internet, a schoolgirl in Seoul, South Korea, can study the Mayan ruins at Chichén Itzá on Mexico's Yucatán peninsula. CNN beams earthquake disasters in Afghanistan to television screens in Sydney, Australia. This new electronic globalism blurs the old geographic boundaries formed by mountains and rivers, forests and oceans.

The effect on residential design is inevitable. In the United Arab Emirates, a wealthy family builds itself

scene in Orange County, Calif. Orange County's housing stock at the time was dominated by quasi-Mediterranean stucco houses (still is, some would argue). These New England-style clapboard cottages took the county by storm. Though they bastardized the true Cape Cod vernacular, Southern Californians loved them for their quaint association with another time and place.

Since that time, Orange County has witnessed wave upon wave of other architectural influences having nothing whatever to do with the region's Indian and Spanish heritage. This

to the readers of *residential architect*,

i pose the following question:

is regionalism dead or alive?

a replica of the U.S. Capitol to live in. Developers in Japan hire California architects to design entire subdivisions of American-style houses, while American architects adopt the simplicity and spirituality of Japanese residential architecture.

In 1994, a new housing development called the Cape Series came on the

antivernacular movement is hardly limited to Southern California. Think of Disney's Celebration, where new-home buyers can choose among six elevation styles ranging from Colonial Revival to Mediterranean to French—none of them truly "Floridian" in origin.

Which leads to the question, Is regionalism dead?



Katherine Lambert

A McDonald's in Tampa, Fla., after all, looks just like a McDonald's in Nashua, N.H., or Salem, Ore. Tucson's Speedway Boulevard could be mistaken for Rockville Pike in suburban Washington, D.C., or any other shopping center smorgasbord in the land.

And yet, given the choice, Washington, D.C.'s new-home buyers prefer brick colonials that recall the region's Georgian heritage, while Philadelphians a hundred miles away choose stone-front houses inspired by the local farmhouses of their own rural past.

In this issue, Vernon Mays examines the health

and breadth of regionalism in Texas, seen through the lenses of four leading residential design firms headed by David Lake and Ted Flato, Natalie Appel, Gary Cunningham, and Paul Lamb. These firms (and their peers from coast to coast) are grappling with the question of how to update local idioms with design progress—with compelling results, as you'll see on page 46.

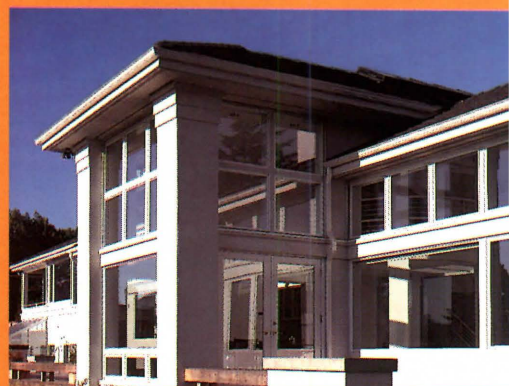
To the readers of *residential architect*, I pose the following question: Is regionalism dead or alive? E-mail me your thoughts (sbarror@hanley-wood.com), or jot them down and fax them to me at 202.833.9278. **ra**

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letters

keep those cards, letters, and e-mails coming, folks.

pcs live on

Regarding "Make Mine a Mac" (July/August, page 90), I congratulate David Arends on the founding of his new firm, but I question his commitment to the Mac. How does he figure the Mac has 50 percent of A/E market share? Here in Orange County, where it sometimes seems every other resident is in the design business, only a handful of firms is using the Mac. When it comes to A/E business, California is AutoCAD country.

Taking a look at the marketing materials for Autodesk shows ACAD has deeply penetrated the architecture market. Even *Cadalyst* magazine, a professional journal devoted to ACAD users, seems to divide its editorial content evenly between architecture and mechanical engineering, further corroborating the prevalence of the PC in our industry. With each new release, ACAD becomes more user-friendly, with new features and commands that are easy to learn.

And Wintel's machines grow ever less expensive

than Macs. Witness the new iMac: \$1,200 for a computer that can't be expanded and has no floppy drive. You can't even attach a decent monitor to it. And this from a company that is on the ropes largely because of its ill-advised policy of closed architecture and proprietary design.

As for software, if you specialize in residential design, there are a number of inexpensive drafting/3-D programs written for Wintels, including DataCAD. DataCAD is very intuitive, costs a few hun-

dred dollars, and has some useful, economical add-ons. I'm sure there are other fine programs as well. *residential architect* should do a comprehensive review of all the options available to practitioners.

Finally, I'm not convinced the supposedly shorter training interval for Macs that Mr. Arends alludes to is enough to offset the additional expense of the hardware and the paucity of software.

I'm not a computer expert, but in my last position, I set up a network, designed CAD standards,

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trained a staff of CAD users and non-CAD users, managed projects, and interfaced with consultants. And I never suffered excessive downtime. We never even considered the Mac.

*Kurt Mueller, principal architect
Holmes & Narver
Orange, Calif.*

traditional values

I have enjoyed your magazine from the first issue.

As an architect in the traditional manner, I have grown increasingly impatient with the confusion and quirkiness featured in the other architectural journals. Yours is full of useful discussions and interesting

design. Congratulations on filling the journalistic gap left by *PA*, *Forum*, *Record*, and the rest.

My particular interest is in the ongoing popularity of traditional residential design where Modernism has never really had much of an impact. I'd be interested in seeing some discussion of this curious (but wholesome) stylistic phenomenon.

Alvin Holm, AIA

*Alvin Holm A.I.A. Architects
Philadelphia*

aibd clarification

Thank you for showing Eric Brown's award-winning home (September/October, page 28), and for

mentioning the American Institute of Building Design (AIBD). I'd like to clarify the requirements for the National Council of Building Designer Certification (NCBDC) program and AIBD membership.

The article stated that five years of education and professional design experience are required for the NCBDC program. This is one of three requirements to sit for the NCBDC exam. Participants must also submit three sets of working drawings for review and three letters of recommendation from within the building industry.

One cannot become certified through the NCBDC

until he or she passes a two-day exam with nine sections on ethics, building materials, history of architecture, structural design, administrative procedures, specifications, building systems, electrical systems, and mechanical systems, plus two design sections. The requirements for sitting for the exam are the same as those for professional membership in AIBD.

For more information, call AIBD at 800.366.2423 or NCBDC at 888.726.7659, or visit www.aibd.org. **ra**

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

Vinyl Windows

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Vinyl is a good insulator and a very durable material. Because it resists water, corrosion and mold, homeowners will avoid problems with their vinyl windows down the road. Look for vinyl windows which are fusion welded, with no glue or screws holding the corners together. This fusion process ensures the integrity of the window and eliminates water or air infiltration at the weld. Vinyl windows certified by AAMA, the National Fenestration Rating Council (NFRC) or the EnergyStar™ program are particularly reliable, suitable for their application and guaranteed by the manufacturer.

These important features are just the beginning of vinyl's benefits. Besides being virtually maintenance-free, vinyl is inherently flexible and can be cut and assembled into many different shapes and sizes, from standard windows and patio doors to garden and bay windows. For homes with double-hung vinyl windows, the sashes are generally easily removed for cleaning.

Vinyl windows are classically proportioned for an attractive look. With the option of muntins sandwiched between the glass, vinyl offers a look which is ideal for traditional building projects. Without muntins, the high-tech appearance of vinyl and uninterrupted expanses of glass complement modern architectural designs. Most vinyl windows are colored as they are extruded, causing the color to become a permanent part of the window that never fades or needs to be painted.

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With more than fifteen plants across the United States, Summit and Wenco ensure that builders get the windows and patio doors they need in whatever region of the country they happen to be working.

For more information about the vinyl windows available from Summit® and Wenco®, see page 27. We've also included two detachable *Quick Tips* cards—one for you about installing vinyl windows and another for your customer that provides important information about the features to look for in high-quality vinyl windows. ■

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Industry Insights

fig. 1: Nord Door No. 9141 (Oak)



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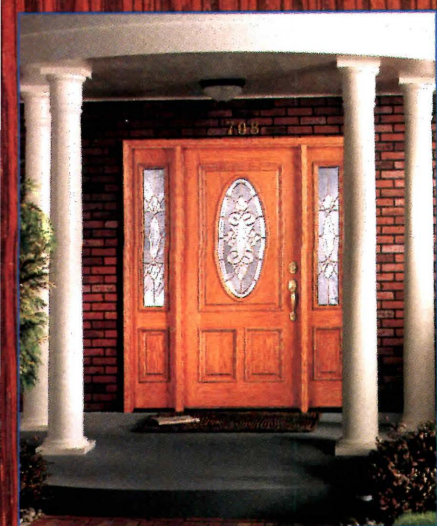


fig. 2: Nord Door No. 4670
Sidelight No. 4676 (Oak)



fig. 5: Nord Door No. 4681
Transom No. 7681 (Hemlock)



fig. 4: Nord Door No. 4624
Sidelight No. 4627 (Oak)

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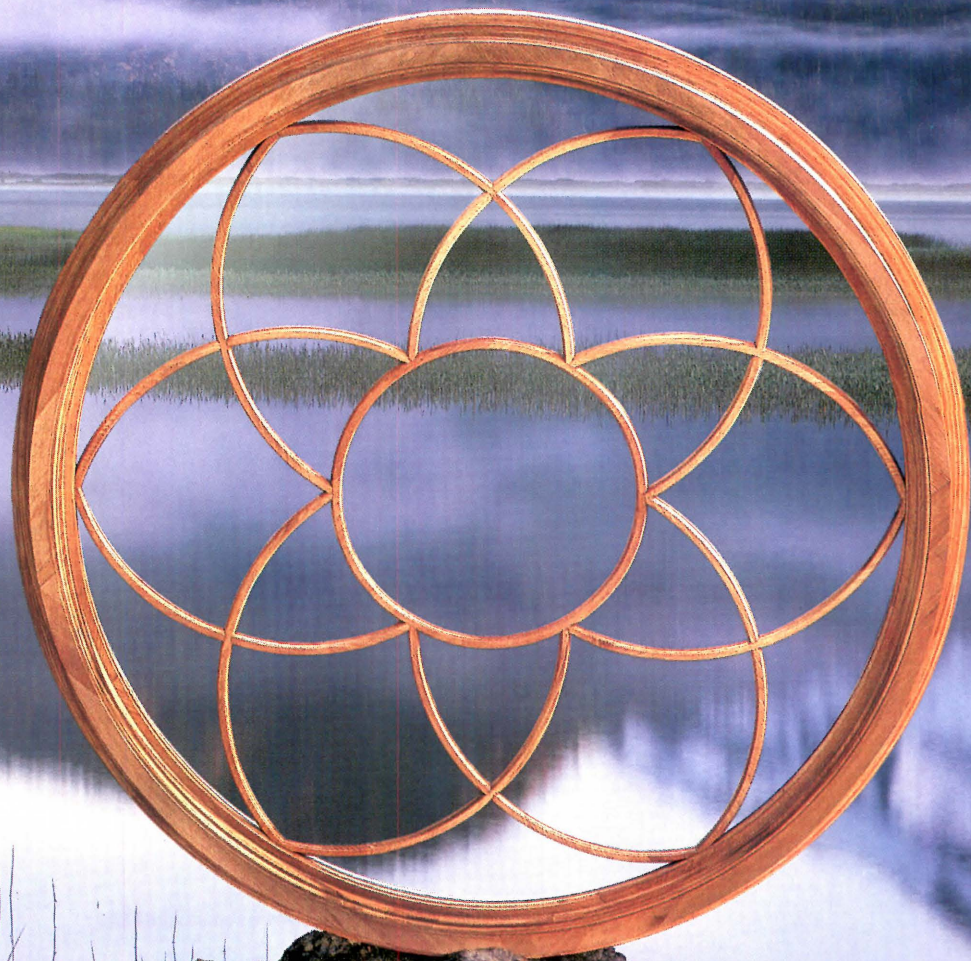
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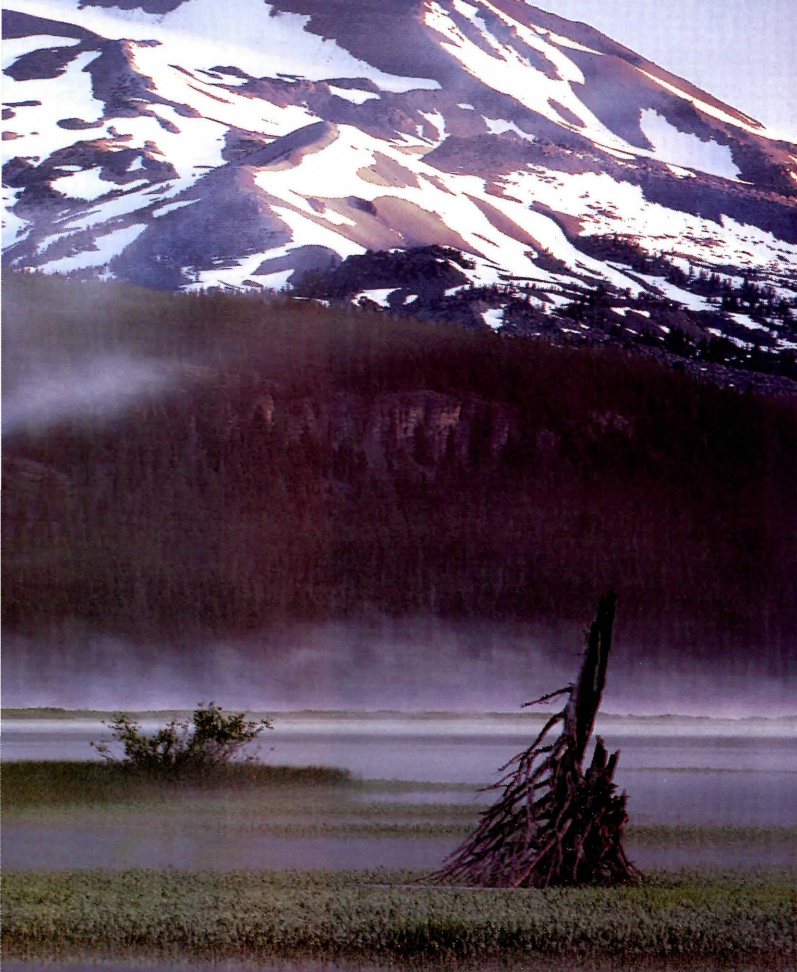
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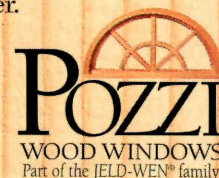
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home from.

tips and trends from the world of residential design

a room of her own

the Vermont-based writer for whom Truex Cullins & Partners designed this working studio “envisioned a ‘magical retreat’ with lots of places to relax, read—and write,” says project architect Tom Cullins. His Burlington, Vt., firm designed a simple 829-square-foot space with an outdoor latticework pavilion of painted pine. When she’s not relaxing, reading, or writing, the owner can prepare tea and small meals in a utilitarian kitchen space. The retreat is also equipped with a lavatory. Natural materials—fir floorboards, a stone terrace and foundation, and a zinc roof—reflect the studio’s northwestern Vermont location.—**Meghan Drueding**



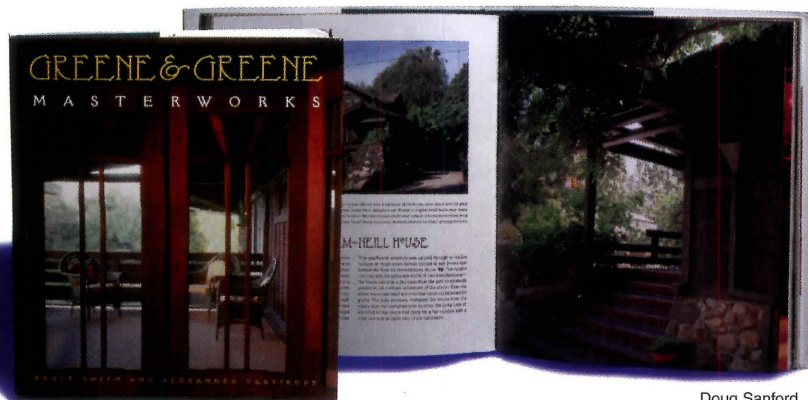
greene houses

greene and Greene’s unique fusion of Arts and Crafts, Japanese, and American bungalow styles has influenced thousands of resi-

dential architects. So it’s only appropriate that *Greene & Greene—Masterworks* contains not only lavish photo spreads and appealing Arts and Crafts typography, but also informa-

tion of particular interest to design professionals. Details like the methodical Henry Greene’s office furnishings—“drawing boards, filing cabinets, and shelves that hold product catalogues”—versus those of his flamboyant brother Charles, who tended toward exotic art and Oriental rugs. Or the Greenes’ fury when a later owner of their self-proclaimed masterpiece, Blacker House, painted over a painstakingly crafted gold leaf bas-relief ceiling.

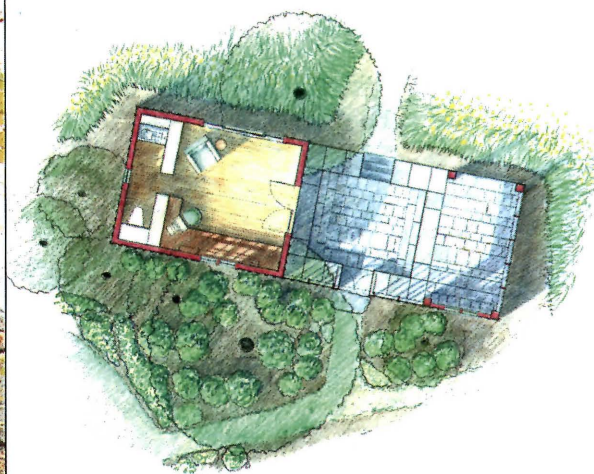
The brothers, who practiced together from 1894 to 1922 and then separately until their deaths in the mid-1950s, focused their energies almost entirely on residential design. The result: the ethereal, extraordi-



Doug Sanford



Tom Cullins



Truex Cullins & Partners tucked this writer's studio away into the woods of Vermont. Though the space is completely secluded, it lies within glimpsing distance of the owner's home.

ily livable dwellings highlighted in this book, among them Blacker House (Pasadena, 1907); James House (1918), built into the side of a cliff in Carmel Highlands; and Charles Greene's own studio (Carmel, 1923).

Each house is documented in a two- to 16-page profile featuring the thoughtful, custom details that characterize the firm's work. Together with photographer Alexander Vertikoff, author Bruce Smith addresses the Greens' skilled method of juxtaposing natural materials

such as clinker brick, local arroyo stones, and redwood.

Smith treats with sensitivity the working relationship and personality differences between the brothers, giving credit to the more industrious Henry without diminishing the legend of Charles' reputed charm and artistic genius. The brothers' story, and text that emphasizes the exquisite detailing in their houses, makes *Greene & Greene—Masterworks* a pleasurable and educational read for any student of American residential architecture.—M.D.

Greene & Greene—Masterworks. Bruce Smith and Alexander Vertikoff. 239 pp. Illustrated. San Francisco: Chronicle Books/Archetype Press. 1998. \$40 (hardcover). 415.537.3730.

corner cupboard

Robert's F Series Corner Cabinet turns overlooked corners into stylish display space. Anodized aluminum-framed doors come in seven colors—cobalt, ebony, silver, turquoise, verdigris, red, and gold. Adjustable glass shelves and mirrored back panels are standard; prices start at \$725.

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Susan Bradford Barror



Courtesy Robert

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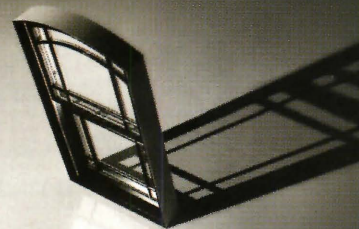
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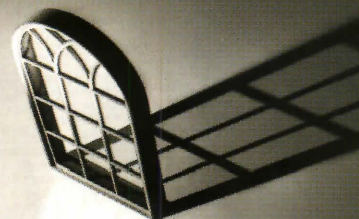
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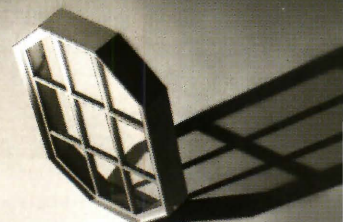
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Erhard Pfeiffer

A house by husband and wife Mark Cigolle and Kim Coleman of Cigolle X Coleman, Architects, in Santa Monica, Calif., is among the residential projects featured in the "Equal Partners" exhibit at Smith College.

partners on display

"Equal Partners," an exhibition at the Smith College Museum of Art in Northampton, Mass., highlights the work of 15 American architectural firms founded and directed by female/male partners, many of them husband-and-wife teams. The exhibit features a broad spectrum of projects from the United States, China, France, Denmark, and Great Britain. Featured works include houses, government buildings, airports, ferry terminals, and museums. Projects are documented through photographs, architectural drawings, and models; visitors also can experience virtual walk-throughs on video and CD-ROM.

"Equal Partners" will remain at Smith until December 13, 1998, and will travel during 1999. For information on future exhibit locations, call 413.585.2760.—Deena Shehata

going for the green

When it comes to salaries, landscape architects go for the green—and those in the architecture profession may be turning green with envy.

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) compared average incomes from its 1998 Salary Survey with comparable AIA salary data. The results show that landscape architects earn



Mara Kurtz

an average of \$52,886 per year—about \$6,000 more than architects, adjusting for the 10 months between the ASLA and AIA surveys.—S.B.B.

cadd site

Visit www.architecturalcadd.com for the latest CADD news, ratings, and reviews. The Web site is the brainchild of CADD guru Geoffrey Moore Langdon, AIA. Langdon is a Boston-based architect who organizes the annual CAD Shoot-Out, a live competition between leading CADD vendors (the next CAD Shoot-Out takes place at A/E/C Systems '99 in Los Angeles, May 24–27, 1999. Call 1.800.451.1196 for details).—S.B.B.

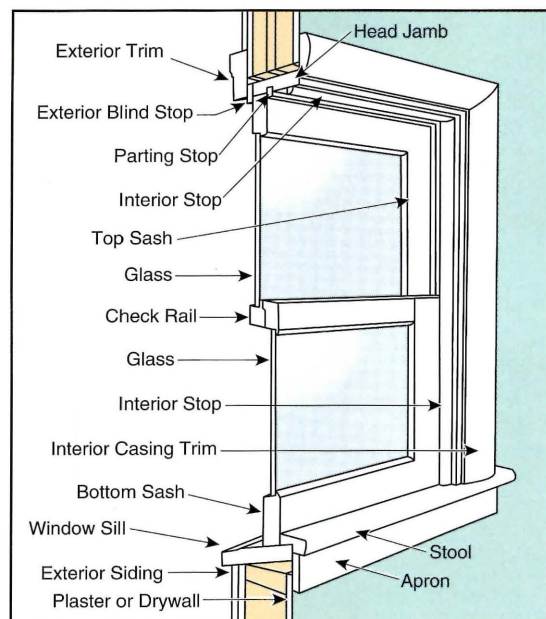


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Check Rail: On a double-hung window, the bottom rail of the upper sash and the upper rail of the lower sash, where the lock is mounted.

Double-hung window: A window unit with two operable sashes which move vertically within the frame.

Frame: An enclosure in which the window sash is mounted.

Glazing: Refers to both the glass itself and the act or process of fitting with the glass.

Glazing stop: The part of the window sash that holds the glass in place.

Grille: Windowpane dividers or muntins that can be detached for easy cleaning.

Head: The main horizontal portion forming the top of the window.

Jamb: The main vertical portions that form the sides of the window.

Jamb liner: The track installed in a modern double-hung window which is installed inside the jambs on which the sashes slide.

Stop: A molding set in place to hold, position, or separate window parts.

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conferences and competitions

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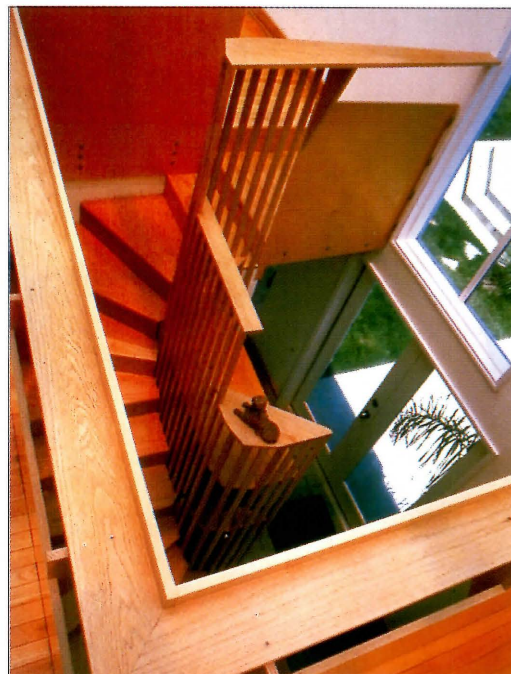
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Courtesy J.T.D. Architects

l.a. stair

a spiral staircase by J.T.D. Architects is a winner in the Interior Architecture & Design Awards

Program sponsored by AIA Los Angeles. The stair forms the compositional center of a house renovation in west Los Angeles.

The original house, dating from 1914, exhibits the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie Style. Noted the awards jury, "The clients asked for a reinterpretation of classic Craftsman detailing, and that's exactly what they got" in J.T.D.'s staircase design. Its slender oak balusters frame built-in shelving. Plywood stair walls "celebrate the emergence of plywood as a new structural material in Los Angeles," the jury said.—S.B.B.



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William Hezmalhalch Architects designed a Spanish Colonial elevation (left) for Taylor Woodrow Homes, one of Hamilton's builders. Red tiled roofs and arched doorways echo those of the old Hamilton Air Force Base Theatre (below).

postcard from california

The term "home base" has a whole new meaning for residents in the new community of Hamilton, Calif. The city of Novato, Calif., has been working with local architects, builders, planners, and developers to transform the former Hamilton Army Air Field into a town complete with a village green, a recreation center, an amphitheater, a café, and tennis courts. A grocery plaza, a bank, shops, and a hotel are also in the works. Plans for Hamilton keep intact the Spanish Colonial Revival and Art Moderne styles of the original base residences. Some 700 of these homes, all built in the 1930s, will be rehabilitated by the developer, New Hamilton Partnership, and the city of Novato. These rehabs will be sold and leased at below-market rates to city and county employees, who often can't afford to live in the



© 1997 Kurt Andersen

expensive areas they serve.

Architects on board include The KTG Group, Seidel/Holzman, and William Hezmalhalch Architects.

Hamilton's first new residents moved in in August. At build-out, the 1,500-acre project will contain 950 new dwellings.—M.D.

millennium preview

To usher in the new millennium, Hanley-Wood, Inc. (publisher of *residential architect*) asked building product manufacturers to vote for the 20th century's most influential figures in housing. The winner: Frank Lloyd Wright (Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Levittown developer William Levitt were

the runners-up).

Here at *residential architect*, we're celebrating the new millennium with an exclusive reader opinion survey. We asked you to name the 20th century's greatest residential architects (and the 21st century's rising stars). Look for the results in our next issue.—S.B.B.



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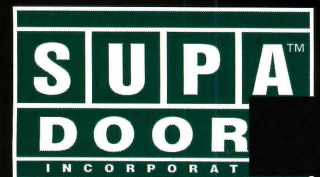
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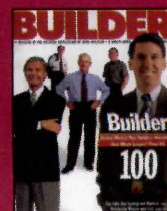
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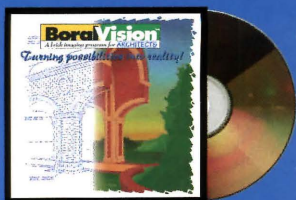
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living with ourselves

elitism in our profession could lead to our demise.

by duo dickinson

“Residential projects are good fill-in work until real projects come along.” So stated an unnamed architect in a letter to the editor of the Connecticut Society of Architects newsletter during the last recession. That quote captures most architects’ attitudes toward doing residential design.

universal language

Unlike prisons, hospitals, or laboratories, houses are the one universally understood building type. Each of us has our own absolute druthers about what our houses should be. But for those who think conceptual accessibility demeans residential work—and devalues our services—a reality check is in order. I’ve heard statistics indicating that 98 percent of new homes are being built without our services, so clearly we are not *needed*. But, like clerics and psychotherapists, being *wanted* ensures our professional utility.

dreams and reality

To actually be wanted, however, residential architects must be relevant to those
continued on page 36

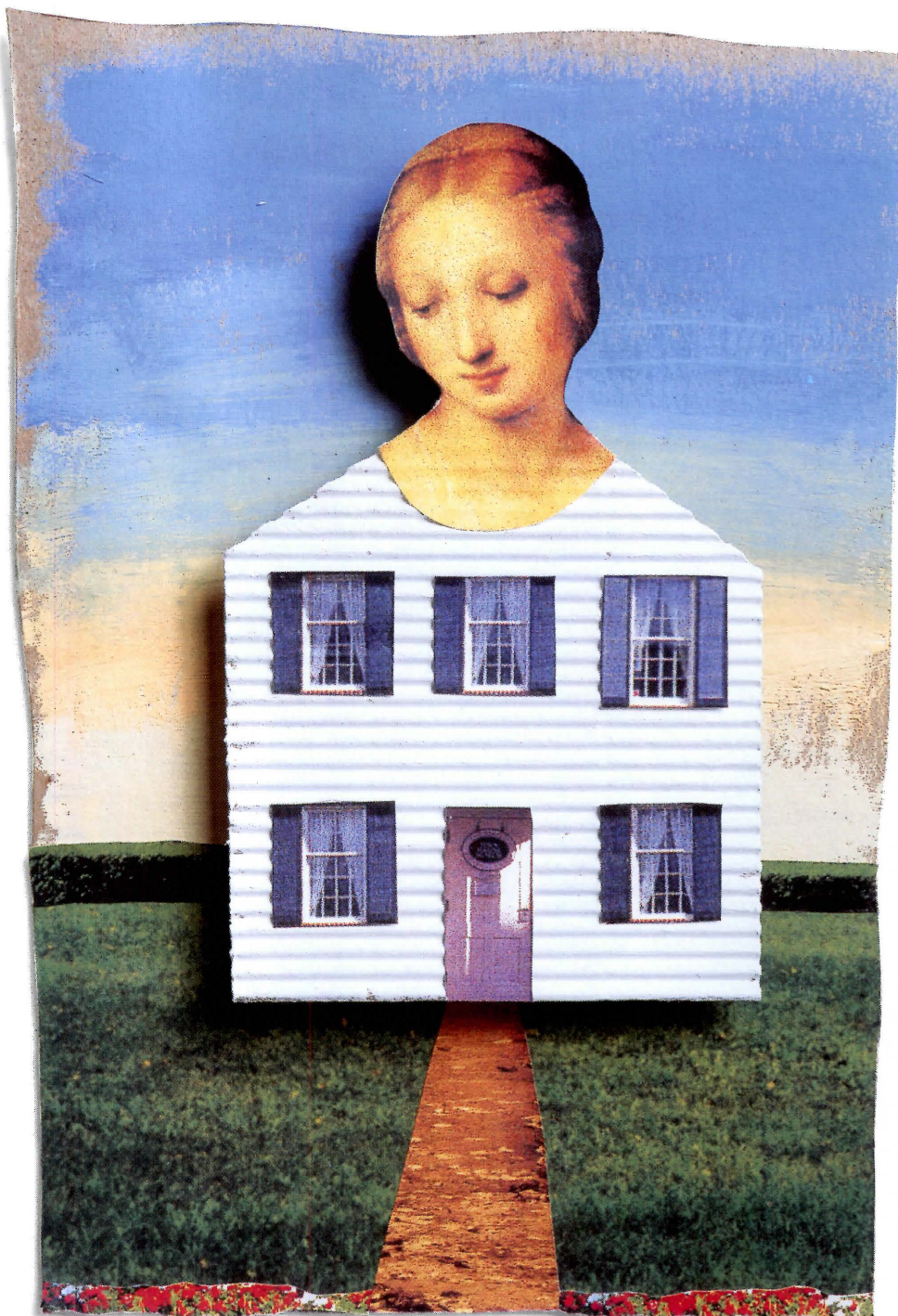
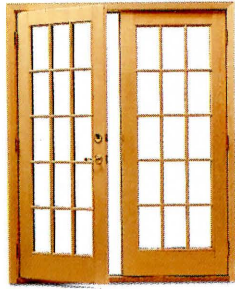


Illustration: Ellen Weinstein

*"I'd like all wood,
inside and out."*



"OK."

*"Oh, and I want it to
be really secure."*



"OK."

*"Maybe some
sidelights."*



"OK."

*"You know,
a different
design for the
panes might
be better."*



"OK."

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who may hire them. Obviously, patrons in search of an art object will always find elite practitioners who can fulfill their fantasies and give them a sculpture in which to live. But the domestic dreams of most housing consumers are seldom sculptural in nature, having more to do with affordability, usefulness, and a glimmer of heartfelt desire.

In order to capture that glimmer, architects must be open to it. They must learn

“my own practice has aggressively eschewed any sense of elitism in its outlook.”

—duo dickinson

to listen and to see the world through their clients' eyes. Some of my peers view this as a compromised mind-set. But when taken to its logical extreme, this attitude gives architects who make houses for any and all comers a “mission statement” that imbues clients with a deep sense of trust.

If it is clear that your wish is simply to “do good”—in practical as well as aesthetic terms—then clients will see you not as a purveyor of preconceived notions, but as somebody

who is working *with* them to create something they will live in for many years to come.

the dickinson model

This is a roundabout way of stating that my own practice has aggressively eschewed any sense of elitism in its outlook. I attend no social functions where architects are the dominant social group, nor do I network to get work. Clearly, the AIA and I are a mis-



match, so I don't belong. I don't lobby for jobs, but simply work long and hard at creating good work.

The last step of my own anti-elitist approach is one I don't expect most architects to embrace, as it has potentially severe economic consequences. It is this: For the last dozen or so years that I've practiced architecture on my own, anywhere from 10 to 40 percent of my firm's work has been for not-for-profit groups—typically on an at-cost or pro bono basis. This work is an extension of my

outlook that what I do is not “too good” for anyone.

If we simply try to sell our services as a fine arts product, we limit ourselves to a tiny percentage of 1 percent of the population who can afford that kind of work. I'm fortunate that approximately 5 to 10 percent of the work I do has essentially no budget. An equivalent percentage (and sometimes upward of 20 percent) has the starkest and most intense budgetary limitations imaginable (that being government-funded housing), as well as the most stringent and at times absurd governmental overview of the work we're performing.

robin hood

I view this balance as a Robin Hood paradigm. We work for just enough people who can afford to pay full freight for fees. This averages more than 15 percent of construction costs on a percentage-of-construction-costs basis, and approximately 10 to 12 percent on an hourly basis for projects of lesser complexity or higher owner input. We delete the “cream” from my own personal income that would be derived from working solely for those of substantial means. And we're able to keep one to three people on our staff of nine to work on projects that have little or no initial funding and high-

ly limited fees for architectural services once government funding is in hand. Unlike the unnamed architect who saw residential work as a stopgap during hard times, we've never laid anyone off or missed paying our bills.

This means my firm's profitability is relatively low—perhaps 10 to 20 percent left over for me in a given year, versus the 30 to 40 percent most of my compatriots tell me in private is a reasonable expectation for a firm of my size, with billings under \$500,000.

doing the right thing

The seminal reality is we may *not* be needed now or in the future. Nor should we be mandated by some statutory obligation. But living our professional lives in a way that makes us *wanted* will ultimately blunt the worst aspect of our profession (self-serving elitism) and uplift those elements that have always been the best parts of what architects do. It is a way by which we can live with ourselves. **ra**

Duo Dickinson has his own practice in residential and light commercial design in Madison, Conn. He has written five books on residential architecture, including Expressive Details: Materials, Selection, Use (see June 1997, page 19).

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contracts vs. bids

negotiation can take the headaches out of finding the right builder.

by rich binsacca

about six years ago, custom architect Steven House, AIA, took a risk. Instead of sending plans out to bid among three or four contractors on his "A" list, he decided to recommend one—just one—to his client and negotiate a contract for the work.

"I had a handful of builders whom I'd worked with on totally successful projects," House says. "I knew this builder was a perfect match for the job."

Today, House negotiates contracts for about 80 percent of the work that comes through his firm, House + House Architects in San Francisco. It's a complete reversal from the competitive bidding he relied on during his first eight years in practice. He's hardly alone. Across the country, architects are eschewing the three-bid rule in favor of matching a builder to the client and project.

adieu to bids

"We came to the realization that bidding is not a productive exercise," says Chris Schmitt, AIA, of Schmitt Sampson Architects in Charleston, S.C. "The



Illustration: Stuart Bradford

client wasn't getting a better price or a better project. In fact, the opposite was sometimes true."

For Schmitt, who designs in the hot coastal custom and second-home market, it has become difficult to motivate the best builders to even pick up a bid package and compete for work—while less-qualified contractors typically aren't up to the task. For

other architects, the risk of taking the low bidder is just too high. "If the contractor is bad, we spend more time trying to work out problems," says Anne Lewis, FAIA, of McCartney Lewis Architects in Washington, D.C. "But we're also limited in what we can do at that point. We can't build the house ourselves."

Architects who have gone the negotiation route

cite several advantages to the "one-bid rule," among them better budget control, higher client satisfaction, time-savings, and a genuinely friendly and lasting relationship with contractors. "I have one builder who's my hero for what he did on a project," says Lane Williams, AIA, of Lane Williams Architects in Seattle. "I guaran-

continued on page 40

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tee he'll get more work from us."

the "a" list

The negotiation process starts with a reliable pool of qualified builders whom you can count on to provide preliminary estimates and follow through on details. "Every contractor we've worked with in the last 15 years has done a good job," Williams says. "But a few have been exceptional. Those are the ones you keep going back to."

Negotiation starts with an interview between the

builder," Schmitt says.

builder input

That decision happens much earlier in the design process than in a typical bid job. Negotiating with one contractor often means bringing in the builder during schematics. By contrast, competitive bidding requires detailed and complete sets of plans, specifications, and a scope of work if there's any hope of an apples-to-apples comparison of candidates. "The biggest and most expensive projects are more complex, so we want the contractor's

can spend less time on the drawings, because we know how the builder works from our past experiences with him," House notes.

saving time

A competitive process may chew up several weeks from the time bids are sent out to the date when a contract is finally signed. Negotiated contracts are more predictable. "It's a three-week process, start to finish, when we negotiate with a builder," Lewis says. She submits for permits at the same time, so all ducks are aligned when it's time to break ground. But whether she's bidding or negotiating, Lewis still puts in the time to provide a complete set of construction documents. "It's not a matter of if they'll be needed—just when," she says.

Selecting a builder early in the process does not necessarily mean a contract right away, however. Many architects require selected contractors to sit in on client meetings, review plans, and suggest cost-cutting alterations, but few actually pay for that time. "Some contractors ask the client for a retainer or preconstruction agreement," says Williams, who's quick to say he's never signed off on such a deal. "I leverage the fact that 90 percent of the time, they'll get the contract. I expect a builder to take that risk."

cost estimates

Which is to say there's still a chance the builder will lose the job. It's an unlikely outcome, but one that architects use to demand a detailed cost estimate to ensure a competitive price during the negotiation. "For the most part, you've worked out costs during the design, and you end up where you'd be in a competitive bid," says Lewis. The "bid," then, is more a formality than an anxious moment for the client; it simply nails down the final, agreed-to cost, including the builder's fee and profit.

Because a so-called negotiated bid is noncompetitive, Williams requires the selected builder to submit his or her estimate in much greater detail than what's commonplace in a competitive situation. "We show the builder the level of detail we expect and need from the estimate," Williams says. The resulting document may run 30 to 40 pages long, outlining every possible cost, including labor and materials, allowances, change-order fees, and other expenses. Williams also may ask for competitive bids from subcontractors, a practice he says keeps everyone honest, especially in a busy market where specialty trades can push margin and markup limits.

Negotiation brings to a project practical insight, *continued on page 43*

"the builder acts as a sounding board to modify the design and details along the way."

—steven house, aia

clients and recommended builders. "It's amazing how those meetings give clients a good sense of who they'll be dealing with," says Schmitt. He limits dog-and-pony shows to 45 minutes per builder, then asks the clients to spend more time with their top one or two choices, touring works in progress or checking references. "It gives clients a sense of what's out there so that we can make a decision based on their priorities and chemistry with the

input as early as possible," says Lewis.

For Lewis and others, a builder's insight goes right to the bottom line in terms of direct cost-savings and time off the schedule. "The builder acts as a sounding board to modify the design and details along the way, which helps us to stay within the budget," says House. He finds that negotiating also saves on administrative costs and the expense of multiple sets of plans and specs. "And we



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value engineering, and a better sense of the budget. But the greatest advantage comes after the project starts. "The trust that develops [between builder and client] is invaluable once construction begins," says Schmitt. "There's a history of frank, open discussion" that can't develop in a competitive bid scenario.

when bids work

So, is the three-bid rule dead? Hardly. It comes in handy when the project is located in an unfamiliar market, or when clients bring along a builder they'd like to use. "The ideal situation is to have two of our builders and one new one from the client," Lewis says. New blood might make the other two builders sharpen their pencils, she says, though her candidates often are better prepared to meet her expectations than a newcomer would be. "They know how to bid for us, so the new guy isn't always the low bidder."

Should the unknown builder measure up in terms of experience and reputation, he or she might make Lewis' "A" list after a few turns at bidding the firm's work. "It's in everyone's best interest to cultivate new builders," Lewis says. But she tries to avoid clients who push a particular contractor, especially one Lewis deems unworthy and likely to severely

underbid the others. "The only time I have the client's ear is before bidding starts. Once a low bid is on the table, forget it."

Despite Steven House's enthusiasm for negotiated contracts, he still sees benefits in bidding. "I'm reluctant to negotiate with builders we've never worked with," he says, preferring at least three or four successful jobs to assure himself of a builder's qualifications. His list includes about a dozen builders throughout the Bay Area, and he constantly gets calls from others interested in making his list. "Bidding allows us to test new builders and see how they work," House says.

advise and consent

Most clients expect their architect to help steer them toward the right contractor, whether through contract or bid. "It's the first question clients ask us," says Lewis. "They get this stricken look on their faces and say, 'How are we going to find a contractor to do this?' They want to know if we have a good group of qualified builders. It's one of the most important decisions they'll make, so we're very active in guiding them through it." *ra*

Rich Binsacca is a freelance writer in Boise, Idaho.

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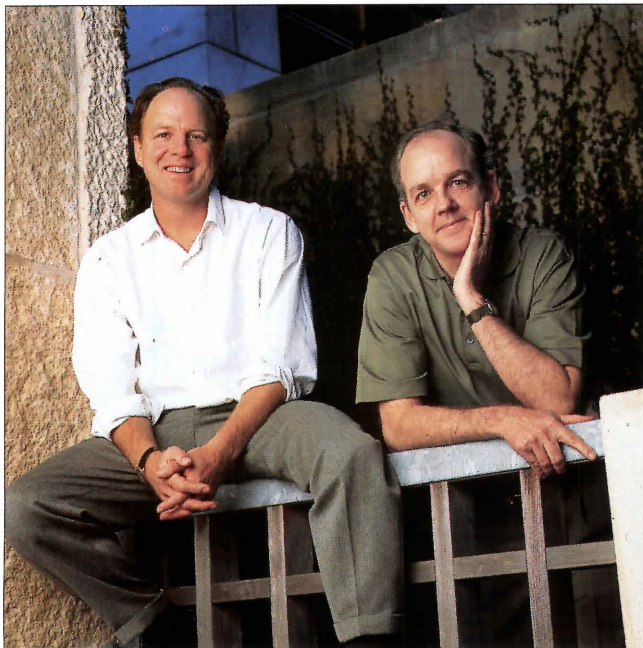
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the new texas

david lake and ted flato
lead the trend toward
regionalism in residential
design, texas-style.

regionalism

by vernon mays



James McGoon

The spacious screened room of Lake/Flato's Carraro residence (left) is sheltered from cold winter winds by the mass of the limestone living room and metal-clad guest room above. The industrial steel structure and roof were salvaged from an abandoned cement plant. Above: Architects Ted Flato and David Lake.

Wind and sun.
torrential rain.
blistering heat.

These elements have shaped the Texas landscape for centuries. At nature's steady pace, the same forces have produced a distinctive way of building that reflects the uniqueness of the Lone Star state. Texas Regionalism, some call it, a hybrid architectural form that draws its inspiration from a mix of ethnic building traditions, a simple range of materials, deep respect for the often-harsh climate, and a penchant for no-nonsense construction methods.

the lake/flato effect

Just who practices their craft in this manner depends on how narrowly "regionalism" is defined. Some architects fall into the category more readily, with houses varying from simple A-frame structures with wide porches to severe Modern boxes that strive to corral light, deflect heat, and exploit the slightest breeze.

No matter whom you talk to, however, any con-



the new texas regionalism

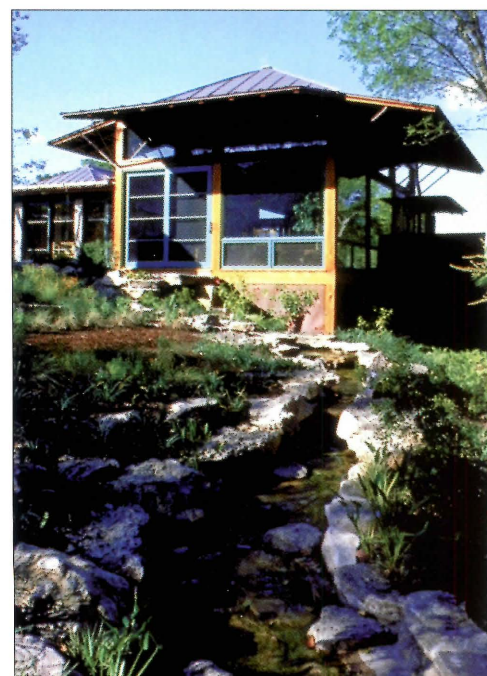


Solid limestone walls flank the Lasater entrance walk, creating a feeling of enclosure while lending privacy to occupants of the adjacent bedroom wing.

Although they live within the city of Fort Worth, the clients for the Lasater residence wanted a strong connection between their house and the outdoors. Ted Flato accompanied them on a trip to Japan for inspiration, and returned to design a pavilion house woven among delicate gardens and courtyards.



Photos: Michael Lyon





“the better the house, the more it was an outdoor house.”—ted flato

versation about Texas Regionalism quickly turns to David Lake, FAIA, and Ted Flato, FAIA, the dynamic San Antonio architects whose inventive houses engage the landscape, embrace the forces of nature, and breathe life into inert materials.

Success came quickly for the two Texans. Seven years after founding their firm in 1984, Lake and Flato completed the house that would fix them on the architectural map: the Carraro residence (page 46), an abandoned cement plant they reassembled as a Texas-sized screened porch hovering above a stone box of finished living space. The design won them the first of two national AIA honor awards. Last year, they won a second honor award for the Lasater residence (photos this spread), whose creamy limestone walls seem to rise natural-

ly from the earth to cradle intimate spaces. All told, Lake and Flato have received more than 50 regional and national awards, more than half of them for houses. Their residences are modest in appearance and intelligent in plan, revealing a strong sense of the local landscape and a mature aesthetic vision.

the ford years

Lake and Flato's educational backgrounds differ, but the separate paths of their development as architects soon merged into a common road that led to O'Neil Ford (1905–82). Underappreciated nationally, Ford was—and still is—revered in his home state. And he is acknowledged by critics as the forefather of modern-day Texas regionalists.

Main living areas occupy open, airy pavilions detailed with fine paneling and white oak beams and columns that contrast with the rustic stone walls. Shaded clerestory windows fill the rooms with light; wide doors promote air circulation.



the new texas regionalism



© Leigh McLeod Photography

Casey Camp is a self-sustaining weekend retreat with photovoltaic lighting and a propane-powered stove and refrigerator. It consists of a single screen-enclosed room backed against a curved limestone wall. Ventilation flaps above the wall open to encourage air circulation in the summer, and close to block north winter winds.



© Leigh McLeod Photography

Deep roof overhangs provide ample shade to Casey Camp's living area, which includes a shallow Rumford-style fireplace, sleeping and cooking alcoves carved from the stone wall, a bathroom, and storage.

Ford's houses were legendary for their deep porches, shed roofs, and sturdy masonry walls. He once described them as "real, straight to the point, not copied from anything, and romantic as hell."

Blunt, opinionated, a craftsman as well as a designer, Ford served as role model and mentor for generations of Texas architects. Toward the end of his career, he nurtured two upstarts in his firm and flung the two of them together to watch the sparks fly. Their names: David Lake and Ted Flato.

Lake, a native of Austin, came first to work for Ford. After graduating from the University of Texas at Austin in 1976, he tried working for large firms in San Antonio. "But I've always been a bit of a renegade," says Lake. His admiration for the sustainable designs of professor Pliny Fisk



Hester & Hardaway

“i’ve always been a bit of a renegade.”—david lake

prompted him to part ways with corporate culture and move to the Texas panhandle, where he built sod-roofed houses for farmers. Tiring of that, Lake remembered the impression the charismatic Ford had made on him in college.

“At that time, Postmodernism was starting to emerge,” he recalls. “It seemed arbitrary and dogmatic. It really had nothing to do with where the buildings were—with place. But O’Neil’s work talked about environmentalism and regionalism at the same time.” Lake arranged an interview and soon was on staff at Ford, Powell & Carson, the San Antonio firm where O’Neil Ford was a partner.

Flato, who grew up in Corpus Christi, was still in California studying architecture at Stanford University under the tutelage of William Turnbull.

“There was a great deal of theory—naturally,” he says of his school experience. “But then I came back to Texas and ran into O’Neil. Suddenly, architecture was about the little parts and how they all tasted good together. How brick and stone meet. How the edge of a roof should be thin and not thick. It was perfect for me.”

Flato arrived at Ford’s firm “with a total attitude,” he admits with a grin. Ford noticed right away. He sat Flato beside Lake and assigned the pair to work together on a small bank. “He whispered to David, ‘See what you can do with him,’” remembers Flato.

The two were immediately at loggerheads—Lake, the pragmatist who works tenaciously to satisfy the fine points of a building program, and

The imagery of light-gauge steel roofs with cupolas has become something of a signature for Lake/Flato, as seen in the Pace residence, a refined San Antonio home for a collector of contemporary art.



the new texas regionalism

Flato, the self-described “simplifier” who would rather distill a design concept first and revisit the particulars of program later. “He played us off of each other constantly,” Flato says. “He set up a dynamic relationship between David and me—which is probably his biggest gift to us.”

Ford also stressed the importance of climate—designing buildings with flow-through ventilation and wide overhangs that respond intelligently to the environment. “O’Neil’s principles stemmed largely from his observations of older buildings,” says Lake. “He appreciated vernacular architecture and how smart and practical it was.”

a partnership is born

Ford’s death in 1982 set the stage for Lake and Flato to strike out on their own. At first, it was just the two of them. Later, they collected some people from Ford, Powell & Carson whom they knew. “It worked immediately,” enthuses Flato.

Nearly 15 years later, the two say they’re lucky to have launched their practice with a few rural projects. “These houses were all about trying to make a connection, to move people from indoors to outdoors, trying to evaporate that line,” Flato says. “The better the house, the more it was an outdoor house.”

Those early efforts focused strongly on the relationship between house and site. But there are other reasons Lake/Flato’s buildings are so readily identified with Texas. Among the most important: They’ve chosen to practice in a city rich in building traditions.

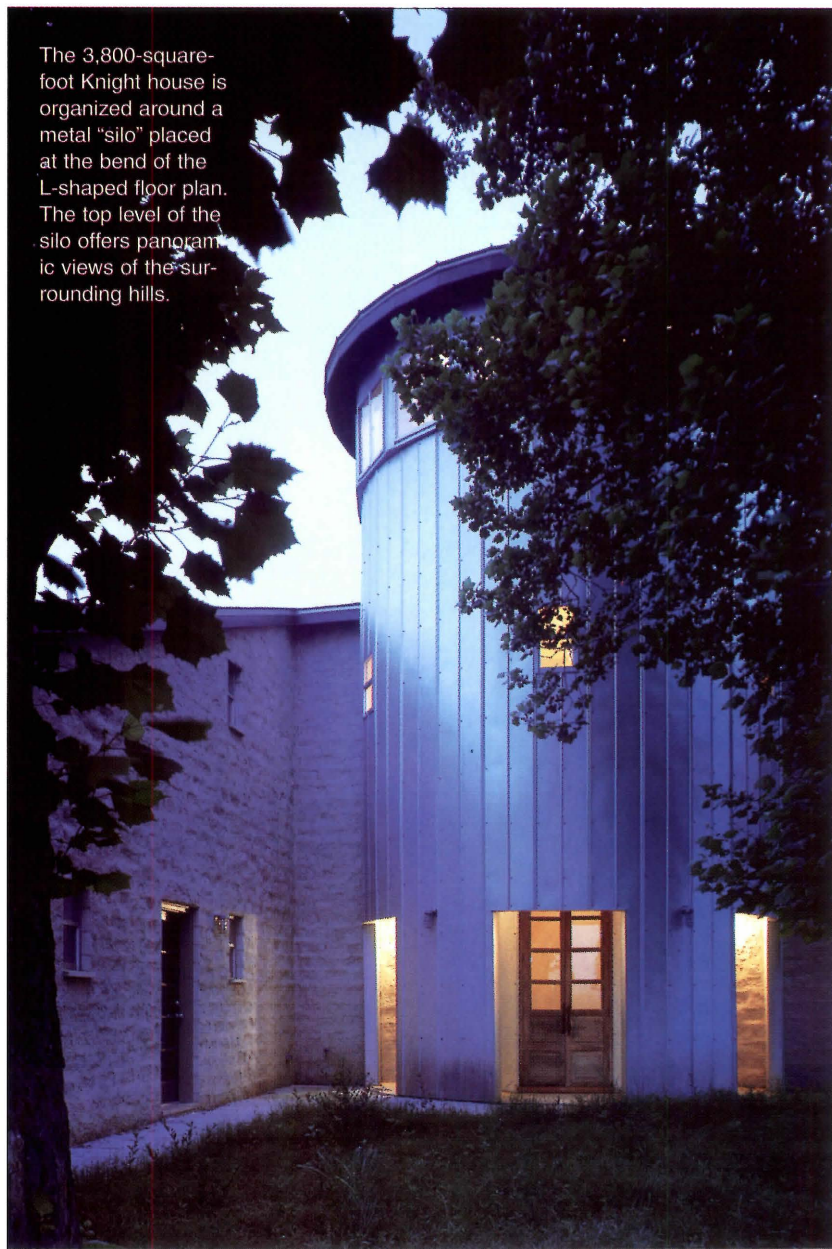
roots

First settled by the Spanish, the region around San Antonio was quick to prosper. The French were early settlers as well. And in the nearby Hill Country, German immigrants built the town of Fredericksburg. “All these cultures brought their vernacular craft and applied it,” says Lake. “So you end up with a very fertile attitude toward construction and craft. The beauty of San Antonio, unlike most other cities, is our fourth- and fifth-generation plasterers, masons, and millworkers.”

Craft is only part of what enriches Lake/Flato’s work. They find inspiration in the agricultural and industrial structures scattered about the Texas landscape, from sheet-metal cow-shedders to a wide assortment of silos. “Silos in the Texas landscape are



natalye appel
architects,
houston



Photos: (portrait) Compoa; (house, above and right) Hester & Hardaway

“our goal is to have projects that use simple materials well and creatively.”—natalye appel

Regional architecture may be an oxymoron in Houston, but Natalye Appel, AIA, does what she can to create buildings that speak to their location. “We are very much regionalists, but Houston is such a mixed place,” she observes. “We sometimes build within a context of bad developer houses. How do you relate to that?”

Early in her practice, Appel learned the hard way that overhanging roofs are a Texas tradition for good reason. “Rain is a huge factor here, and humidity is another,” she observes, noting how vital it is to protect walls from the rain through proper detailing. She also takes heed when using wood on a building exterior. Local contractors have warned her that, when it comes to moisture protection, a good coat of paint is preferable to stains.

Appel attended architecture school at Rice University and earned her master’s at the University of Pennsylvania. After graduation, she returned to Texas and tried to juggle practice and teaching positions at the University of Houston, Texas A&M, Rice, and the University of Texas at Austin. “When I had my first daughter, I decided that commuting to Austin was too much to handle. At that point, I started practicing full-time,” she says.

Today, her firm is six people strong, with about a dozen projects going at any time. The mix of work used to be 80 to 90 percent residential, but recently has shifted to about 60 percent as she has sought more commercial jobs.

Appel’s buildings have a spare sensibility to them, combining Modern planning principles learned at Rice with an appreciation for Louis Kahn’s use of structure and



materials she picked up at Penn. She admires the residences of O’Neil Ford, but acknowledges as well a debt to John Staub, who designed houses in Houston that were sometimes traditional and sometimes Modern. She also is quick to credit the influence of the people who work for her, several of whom are her former students.

The firm’s work is driven by a straightforward combination of client and site considerations. “Our goal is to have projects that use simple materials well and creatively, looking always for new ways to use them,” says Appel. “We started experimenting with cheap materials, because all the early jobs I got were low-budget. Now, even though the budgets are higher, we have the attitude of using materials that are

appropriate for the client.”

In brutally hot and humid Houston, many clients are frankly more interested in cool air than fresh air, so they keep their air-conditioned houses closed up. Nonetheless, Appel plans every house to control sunlight and harness the occasional breeze. Slim houses, like the L-shaped Knight house shown above and left, lend themselves to such low-tech climate-control techniques. “The thing about ventilation is that when you build a narrow building, you have greater views on both sides, so the houses are not so internally focused,” she observes.

Those small lessons, applied time and again, may someday produce that body of work that will be identified as Houston Regionalism—an oxymoron no more.

Located at the crest of a 100-acre site, the Knight house draws its inspiration from local ranches around Cat Spring, Texas. Designed by Natalye Appel Architects, of Houston, the house is clad in split-face concrete block detailed in the manner of limestone.



the new texas regionalism

a very powerful element for us—the sense of volume, and how the volume repeats itself,” Lake says.

Sometimes, as in the case of the Carraro residence, the house is a direct appropriation of an industrial building. In other work, such as the Pace residence (page 51), the references to an agricultural tradition are more subtle. But in either case, there is a sensitivity to regional climate—particularly the prevailing breezes—that shapes the buildings Lake/Flato designs.

materialism

Materials, however, are the tie that binds Lake/Flato’s residences into a cohesive body of work. “It’s automatic, almost, that the roof is going to be made out of some kind of metal,” says Flato. “It’s thin, it doesn’t absorb too much heat, you’ve got great tradesmen here, the material is relatively inexpensive, it lasts forever—and it’s light, which is what a roof ought to be.”

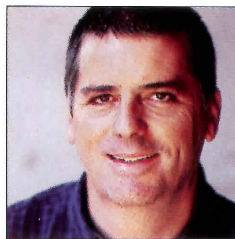
When brainstorming about the building shell, Flato and Lake usually consider local limestone first because of its wide availability and economy of construction in San Antonio. Inexpensive Mexican brick is another pragmatic choice in their home base, which has no severe freeze/thaw cycles, says Flato. Corrugated or flat sheet metal is another oft-used option for their house exteriors.

the practice today

Although the firm was launched with a project list that was exclusively residential, houses now make up less than 40 percent of Lake/Flato’s workload. Larger projects such as office buildings, churches, a synagogue, and a new science museum support a staff of 24. “We have an inverted pyramid in our office—heavy with people of our generation,” says Flato, who notes there are five partners besides him and Lake, two of whom preceded them at Ford, Powell & Carson.

Design at Lake/Flato is a collaborative process, although every project has key involvement from either Flato or Lake—and often both. Their powerful chemistry lies in their complementary styles and mutual respect. “The best of our designs come when we are both banging on it together,” Flato asserts.

Clients play an equally important role. “We definitely have an attitude about what we are trying to achieve,” says Lake. “But part of the process is hear-



cunningham
architects,
dallas



A pair of discrete volumes connected by a glazed bridge forms the basis of the Latorre house in Dallas by Cunningham Architects.

Photos: (portrait) Compoa; (house, above and right) James F. Wilson

“we like meddling with craft, and we know how to do it.”—gary cunningham

gary Cunningham, FAIA, operates on the edge between architecture and craft. When the need arises, he sometimes steps over the edge.

“We like meddling with craft, and we know how to do it,” he says. “We cast bronze, we cast aluminum, we fabricate wood and steel. The house I’m building for myself is tilt-wall concrete, and we’re doing all the work ourselves—pulling the wires, doing the plumbing. So, we have a good feel for construction. It also makes us smarter.”

That hands-on attitude is typical of Cunningham, who takes pride in the fact that his take on architectural practice is anything but rote. “This probably makes us weird, but each job has a very distinct process,” he says. Sometimes they start with design. Sometimes they perform demolition. And if the situation demands, Cunningham or his staff will roll up their sleeves and do construction.

Cunningham graduated from the University of Texas at Austin, then worked at HOK in Dallas for six years. “It was a good experience, but I was getting pigeonholed into the project designer role. I also like to do construction documents and administration—the whole bit.”

So he did what one might expect of a brash 27-year-old: With a pregnant wife and no news about his performance on the licensing exam, he quit his job and started his own firm.

Practice quickly became “the classic struggle,” says Cunningham. To this day, he prefers to accept only a few projects at a time and do them well. He also tries to keep the office small—currently eight people.



Working in close collaboration with longtime associate Sharon Odum, Cunningham produces buildings of often muscular quality, although his work can be serene as well. The firm has no fear of exposing steel beams or letting other hard materials speak for themselves. Often constrained by budgets of \$90 to \$200 per square foot, his charges enjoy pushing the limits of structure and flaunting it when the time is right. “You could almost say we hot-wire stuff,” says Cunningham. “We try to use materials to their maximum potential.”

Their interest in the logic of construction leads them naturally toward being regionalists, although Cunningham bristles at being labeled that way. “Everything we

do is regional because we are here,” he allows. “But I think any good work has to relate to the region it’s in, primarily because of climate and the realities of building. You’re using systems and materials and crafts of the people who live in that place.”

Call it what you will; it’s hard to deny that Cunningham’s houses—which exploit proper solar orientation and cross-ventilation—respond directly to their place. “A porch is very important in Texas for shade, and you also see a lot of outdoor gardens and courtyards in our projects,” he says. “But it’s all hard-ass Modern. It’s what we do. We build buildings now using today’s technology. Everything is pretty honest and real.”

Glue-laminated beams, the underside of exposed mahogany-skinned plywood floor decking, and a custom-made light enrich the dining room interior with a diversity of colors and textures. The galley kitchen is screened by a steel-and-glass divider fabricated by the architects.



the new texas regionalism

ing what the clients want, understanding the program they desire, and then creating a design that exceeds their expectations and typically pushes them into a more Modern or, from our perspective, exciting place than where they began.”

The firm uses study models to refine designs and communicate them to clients. The models can be cut up and rearranged at the client’s whim. “It’s very hands-on,” says Lake, who insists that models are the only way for everyone to understand the site, the structure, the form, and the relationships of rooms.

O’Neil Ford’s most visible legacy in the firm is drawing. Says Lake, “O’Neil would get out his big, thick pencil and draw and say, ‘Here’s a brick, dammit. Show the brick. Show the mortar joint. Show the putty up against the window frame.’ It was all about constructability. It’s really just the craft of building.”

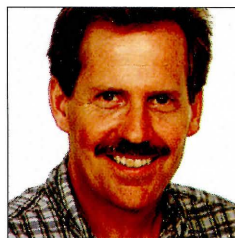
Today, Lake and Flato are avid freehand drawers, persisting in the belief that “you don’t really know that detail until you draw it,” says Flato. It’s no surprise, then, that they maintain a healthy skepticism toward computers as a design tool.

Such fundamental values are what have kept the firm on course since it began. Lake has clung dearly to the ideal, spawned in college, that architecture can connect people with the environment. “I believed that somehow architects could make environmentalists of everyone. For me, even today, a successful building is one that makes a person appreciate what is outside the building as well as the building itself. The building and the environment are so well connected that there’s a magic to it.”

Flato echoes the sentiment, noting that the firm’s best work occurs when the scale is just right. For him, that means how buildings connect to the land and how the house feels in its particular place.

“It’s critical to us that buildings fit,” concludes Lake, with a nod to his mentor. “O’Neil would always say, ‘Just think of this as a ruin.’ It was his way of saying don’t try to be timely and cute and clever. Don’t try to be a trendsetter. He would think about how much he loved going to ruins and their sense of connectedness to a place. That’s really what you should be inspired by.” **ra**

Vernon Mays is editor of Inform, the architecture and design magazine of the Virginia Society AIA.



paul lamb architects, austin

“If I could do just a couple of houses every year for the rest of my life, I’d be happy,” says Paul Lamb, AIA, whose six-person firm works in tight quarters in a quirky old Masonic lodge.

It appears Lamb is close to realizing his dream. He not only works exclusively on residential projects, but has mustered the discipline to decline work from clients who would sacrifice quality in favor of speed. “Our joke in the office is, ‘We’re not very smart, but we’re slow,’” says Lamb. “What I mean is that if I can slow the process and give myself time to contemplate and craft the work, I think it gets better.”

Lamb’s interest in architecture was sparked while attending Trinity University in San Antonio, a campus full of buildings by O’Neil Ford. He transferred to the University of Texas at Austin in the mid-1970s, then went to graduate school at the University of California at Berkeley, where he studied with Donlyn Lyndon and had Charles Moore as an advisor. In 1979, Lamb returned to Austin to work and soon was invited to teach at UT.

Lamb taught in the studio for five years while running a small office, but as he got better commissions he discovered he preferred practice to teaching. “I couldn’t split myself and do a good job at both,” he says.

Part of Lamb’s strong attraction to designing houses stems from the

relationships he develops with clients along the way. And he is willing to take the clients’ lead, rather than forcing them to accept a particular aesthetic vision. “I like to listen to what they’re imagining the house to be. I stay on that as long as we can without jumping to any conclusions. Then I come back to them with a really quick sketch and try to push them a little bit from their expectations. I’ve been lucky so far,” he says.

Lamb has mastered the art of site design, as evidenced by the Tilton residence (right). In a new subdivision near Austin crowded with bombastic houses that overwhelm the street, the Tilton house nestles into the native landscape. “It’s a big dilemma in Austin,” he says. “It’s a fragile landscape. People buy these hillside lots with beautiful views, but by the time they get finished putting in houses that belong on flat lots, lawns, and lots of landscaping, there is nothing left of the native setting.”

Respecting his region and using it as a springboard for design gives him an easy repertoire of forms and materials, says Lamb. “But I’m not discounting invention either. It doesn’t mean you have to do stone buildings with metal roofs, because there can be other factors that lead to invention—the owners’ lifestyle, or the specifics of the site. But, by and large, the materials we can get locally seem to fit on a site so well. It’s limiting in a good way.”

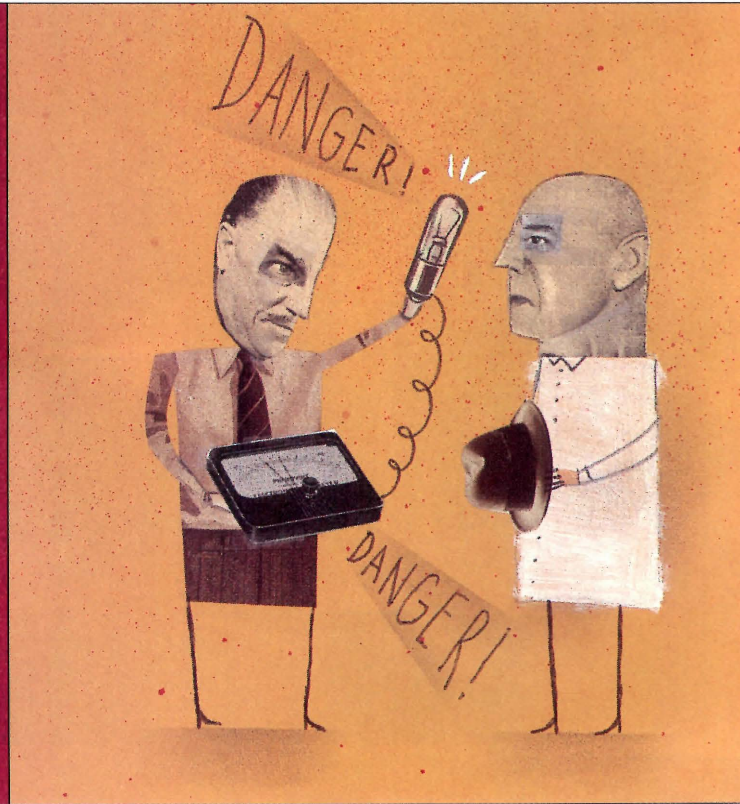
“by and large, the materials we can get locally seem to fit on a site so well.”—paul lamb



The Tilton house by Paul Lamb Architects steps down a steep hillside overlooking Lake Austin. The exterior is a combination of veneer and load-bearing Texas limestone walls, detailed with smeared mortar joints in the German tradition. It is sited to preserve native plant materials.

Photos: (portrait) Compoa; (house) Peter Tata—Architectural Photography

clients from hell



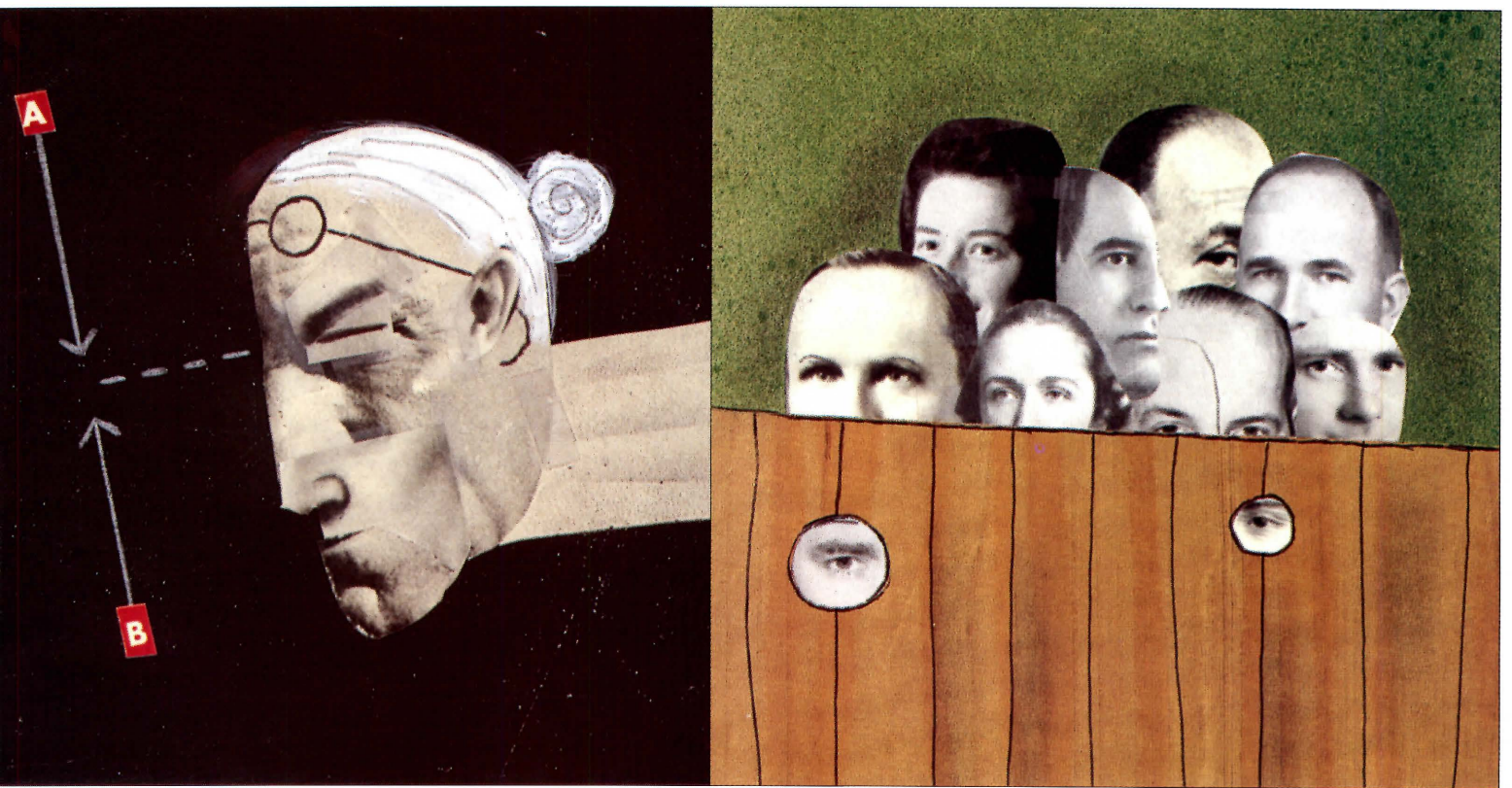
how to work with difficult clients and keep your sanity.

you know the type. They're an enthusiastic retired couple—so enthusiastic that they stop by the site three times a day to “check in” with the subcontractors. Or they're a builder/developer team with an idealistic vision—and a shaky financial background. Or they're a happily married couple—or so you think, until you accidentally find divorce papers mixed in with blueprints.

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by meghan drueding

illustrations by david plunkert



clients from hell

the good

"Some difficult clients you never get anywhere with," says Philip Hove, AIA, of Hove Design Alliance in Newport Beach, Calif. "Then, there are those who are a challenge, but with whom you get great results." These "good" clients from hell are usually highly interested in the design aspects of the project. They have a healthy amount of free time, and want to be informed every step of the way. A classic example: the Concerned Retiree (or CR, for short).

"A lot of my retired clients show up on the job site at 9:00 every day," reports Tom Devine, AIA, head architect at Ryland Homes' South Regional Office in Clearwater, Fla. "They have input on every last light socket, and, true, it's not that convenient for the subcontractors. But how can you complain about a client who cares about the way their house turns out?"

Devine tries to accommodate the CRs as best he can without alienating his sub-

contractors. He schedules a series of formalized walk-throughs, at times when they won't interfere with the subs. But he's careful not to let the hand-holding get to the point where it holds up the design or construction process.

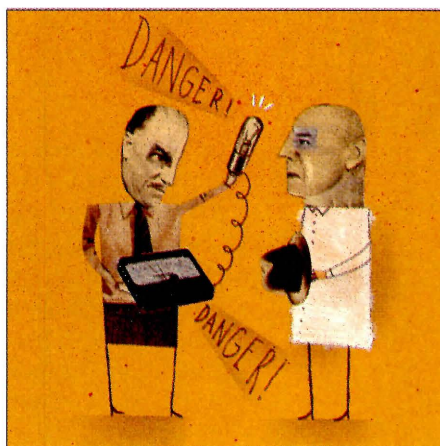
One of Kevin Akey's most time-consuming projects was instrumental in shaping the way the Birmingham, Mich.-based custom architect runs his firm, AZD Architects, today. "Five or six years ago, I had a client who sat in her car and watched the job site every single day, all day. If she found a problem with the wiring, she'd expect the painters to take care of it. One day, she sat there and counted the 280 dump trucks carrying dirt off the site to make sure she was being charged accurately. And she didn't like the way the toilets flushed in the finished house—they were too loud."

Rather than write the project off as a beginner's mistake, Akey rewrote his standard contract to make sure he had more control the next time around. He's proud



"i had a client who ... didn't like the
way the toilets flushed in the finished
house—they were too loud."

kevin akey



of the finished product, and remains friendly with the client. "I sure learned a lot about site administration," he says of the experience.

the bad

With other types of clients from hell, it's harder to find a positive spin. "I've felt like a marriage counselor a couple of times," admits a Florida custom architect. He once built a home for a married couple who divorced as soon as the project was complete. "Designing a house for someone is such a personal experience," he says. "You can't help but pick up on the dynamics of a marriage or a family."

That's an important thing to remember before getting involved with a client, especially a custom client. If the person for whom you're designing is having personal difficulties, it may not be the best time for him or her to take on a remodel or a custom home. Architects need to know what their clients want. If the clients themselves are too distracted to know what that is, the end result won't satisfy either party. And though this logic should be a matter of common sense, it often falls to the architect to break such discouraging news to a potential client.

Adele Chang, AIA, of Lim Chang & Associates in Pasadena, Calif., recalls a situation in which it wasn't the clients who were difficult—it was their neighbors. "The clients in this case were an Asian couple," she recounts. "The neighbors were sure they were planning to move five families into one house. They also strongly opposed the construction of a pool house in the backyard, which they thought—without having seen the working drawings—would resemble a pagoda."

Chang didn't let the neighbors' negative attitude faze her. Both she and her clients take great pride in the finished home—which houses just one family and includes an Italianate pool house.

Chang also has as clients several production builders, and says that for the most part they've been ideal clients. "The larger builders are very professional," she says. "Working with them often means less stress on the architect's part."

But do big builder clients used to getting their own way ever try to take over the reins during the design process? Sure, says Doug Sharp, AIA, of Bloodgood Sharp Buster Architects & Planners, who's worked with dozens of national builders during the past two decades. "It doesn't

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doug sharp, aia

clients from hell

do any good for us to try and ram a design down someone's throat," says Sharp. "Our job is to present options that fit the client's concept. If our favorite option doesn't please the client, we give them another one." The firm often holds an informal charrette with a builder client before drawing up preliminary plans, a strategy that helps avoid miscommunication from the get-go.

the ugly

Sometimes the most difficult clients are simply the bizarre ones. A custom architect in the Washington, D.C., area reports designing a house for a government-employed couple who had spent most of their married life in military compounds. The clients worried about safety and security in the civilian world—so much so that they wanted no windows on the home's facade. The architect eventually managed to persuade his customers that front windows were indeed a necessity.

Vienna, Va.-based Chris Lessard, AIA,

once had a builder client who insisted on designing a master bathroom right in the middle of a model home's master bedroom. From both a sales and a design standpoint, the project was a flop. "Hey," Lessard says, "I got paid. I told him I thought it was a bad idea. It was his money that went down the drain."

Dominick Tringali, AIA, encountered a similar customer error when the suburban Detroit architect designed a home gym for two custom clients. The snag? The couple neglected to mention they needed a 25-foot wall of mirrors for their workouts until after the gym had been constructed ... with not a mirrored wall in sight.

coping

Architects' strategies for coping with clients from hell vary as much as client types do. Lessard, for one, moves on when he senses a poor fit. "Have the strength to walk away from a project that's not working for you," he advises. "It makes [the clients] respect you—maybe



“if you’re skilled enough, you can work
according to your design ethic and still
give the clients what they want.”

robert orr, aia



they'll ask to have you back, and they'll listen to you this time."

According to Devine, communicating extensively with clients at all times works to diffuse potentially explosive situations. And Robert Orr, AIA, of New Haven, Conn., recommends choosing your battles carefully. "It's their house," he says. "If you're skilled enough, you can work according to your design ethic and still give the clients what they want."

weed, weed, weed

There's always the old "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" approach. Wayne Good, AIA, of Good Architecture in Annapolis, Md., calls it "rat radar"—the ability to sniff out potential clients from hell and say no to taking them on.

The warning signs? If the client has unrealistic cost expectations or financial difficulties, beware. Other danger signals include a complete lack of interest in the design process, an obvious drinking or drug problem, an overbearing personality, or just a general sixth sense on your part. "We go with our gut and filter out most of the bad ones," says Good. "Often I end up referring them to one of my competitors."

Mark Humphreys, AIA, of Humphreys & Partners in Houston concurs. "No architects are lacking for work, with the economy the way it is right now," he says. "Don't work with a client you're not sure about." In order to stave off clients with unstable finances, Humphreys, most of whose clients are production builders, usually charges a hefty retainer up front.

healthy antagonism

"Some disagreement can actually be good for the design process," says John Allegretti, AIA, of St. Joseph, Mich. He's absolutely right. While architecture is a business and a science, it's also an artistic process. And the best art doesn't happen without at least a small amount of conflict during its conception.

As with any interpersonal relationship, the idea of 100 percent accord sounds appealing. But in reality, it's not particularly challenging or fulfilling. If this reasoning doesn't comfort you when you're working with your next client from hell, take a deep breath. Think of the large commission you'll receive when it's all over—and of the amusing cocktail anecdotes you'll have in stock. Then, jump back into the inferno. *ra*

"some
disagreement
can actually be
good for the
design process."

john allegretti, aia



smart ideas
for maximizing storage,
privacy, views,
and natural light
in the bath.

bath class

by meghan drueding

Rebecca Swanston, AIA, needed to borrow as much natural light as possible for this third-floor bathroom renovation in a dark, narrow row house in Baltimore's historic Federal Hill district. So she knocked down the solid wall that had previously separated the bath from the main staircase, and replaced it with glass block. The only direct natural light in the bath comes from shower windows inset at eye level for privacy. By suspending round mirrors from thin cables, leaving under-sink plumbing exposed, and eliminating shower and entrance doors, Swanston achieved an open, "floating" effect throughout the 90-square-foot room. A length of unadorned pipe serves as a towel bar.



Photos: © Ron Solomon

Swanston's bath design incorporates an element of fantasy with its floating-in-space mirrors and vanity. But its formidable array of storage space is rooted in practicality. A built-in high-boy with 3-foot-wide, double-width drawers holds towels and other bath items while supplying extra counter space. The high-boy is flanked with floor-to-ceiling medicine cabinets clad in plastic laminate.



Steven House

House + House Architects wanted to create an extraordinary experience in the owners' bath of a house in Oakland, Calif. To accomplish their mission, they used bold pastels, textured materials such as French limestone counters and floors, and curvy forms throughout. A glass-block wall and a raised step separate the shower area from the rest of the room; another glass-block wall (not visible in photo) defines the tub area. An operable window set into the outside shower wall admits natural light and views of northern California hills.

House + House set green-glass sink bowls into floating counters, capturing natural light from windows above the shower and tub. The maple vanity and medicine cabinets are stained with aniline dyes. Wavy frosted-glass sconces and contoured mirrors add a playful note to the serene space.



Steven House



© Matthew Millman

An East-Coast-style owners' bath takes advantage of its scenic West Coast setting in Marin County, Calif. Architect Brooks Walker placed windows instead of mirrors above the twin vanities to capitalize on views of Bald Hill, a well-known local landmark. "I would rather look at Bald Hill than at myself brushing my teeth," reasons Walker. Beadboard wainscoting, polished-chrome trimmings, and a painted wood floor fit the home's Hamptons look. Expansive built-ins underneath the vanities provide ample storage space.

storage, privacy,



© 1996 Dan Forer

The owners of this Florida custom home asked Tony Abbate, AIA, to make their bath addition feel like a tropical garden. He obliged, designing a glass-topped shower and tub area to let in sunlight during the day and moonlight at night. Glass shower doors and wide expanses of white ceramic tile lend a cool, spa-like feel. The shower roof is specially treated glass for heat resistance.

and natural light

Machado/Blake Design of Somerville, Mass., used the vanity as a room divider in this 14-foot-by-11-foot renovation of an owners' bath upstate in Andover. Behind it are the toilet and shower compartments; in front are the tub and sitting area. The vanity contains a marble-slab countertop whose coolness contrasts with warm maple cabinets. Stainless-steel towel bars double as drawer pulls; open compartments next to the tub hold additional towels and linens.



Greg Premru



© 1998 Bill Sanders

Problem: No windows in the owners' bath of this Coconut Grove, Fla., condominium. **Solution:** Place the mirror over the vanity at an angle that reflects borrowed light from the neighboring bedroom. A hand-plastered ceiling and gleaming granite walls work as a backdrop for soft white light from recessed fixtures and angular sconces. The granite creates a visual surprise by extending down

to outline the saturnia marble floor.

"We treated the bath as a series of planes that operate independently of the walls," says architect Tony Abbate. Thus, the stepped-up shower is surrounded by sheetlike glass panels that hang from a brushed-steel bar. And the table between two conical pearwood vanities is actually a movable storage cabinet on wheels.



Gary Tarleton

Daniel Milton Hill, AIA, deftly mixes materials in this Eugene, Ore., guest bath. A hanging glass shelf—purchased in a popular home furnishings store—overlooks a limestone countertop and fired-clay sink; cabinet woods alternate between mahogany and maple. “We pushed the vanity out a few inches to define the sink area,” says Hill.

The 6-foot-8-inch-by-11-foot-7-inch measurements of this Brooklyn guest bath are generous by New York standards. But Madeleine Sanchez, AIA, still used a few simple techniques to enlarge the space visually. She butted glass shelves up against the vanity mirror and lined the walls with a band of deep-blue tile, both of which make the room seem bigger. The glass countertop is wide enough to hold a guest’s grooming paraphernalia. Exposed stainless-steel trimmings provide a bright counterpart to neutral walls. In lieu of a shower door, a stationary glass half-wall stretches from tub to ceiling.



© 1997 Judith Watts



Bloodgood Sharp Buster Architects & Planners and Westfield Homes modeled the elevations of Traditions at Villarosa in Tampa, Fla., after 1940s bungalows. They brought the vintage look inside, too, loading the owners' bath with old-fashioned options. Pedestal sinks, black-and-white-tiled floors, plantation shutters, and antique-style sconces are among the more popular upgrades in this community of entry-level production homes. Crystal doorknobs (not visible in photo) and a claw-foot tub give the Baldwin model movie-set glamour.

© Eckel Advertising

bath class



© Beth Singer

"The client wanted large windows to bring in as much light as possible," says Bill Finnicum, AIA, of the remodeled owners' bath in this Birmingham, Mich., townhome. Extra-long custom drawers beneath street-facing windows provide efficient, easy-to-reach storage. Finnicum extended the mirror atop the windows to continue the clean lines and smooth planes evident elsewhere in the 14-foot-by-14-foot room. Marble tile covers the floor and tub surround; simple miniblinds afford bathers complete privacy.

finishing touches



Courtesy Hansgrohe/Axor

French designer/architect Philippe Starck's minimalist aesthetic works especially well in a small, streamlined bathroom. His line for Hansgrohe includes the Axor Tall Starck Faucet, shown here in conjunction with a Duravit wash table and vessel sink. Starck merges slim pipes of modern chrome with an old-fashioned pump-style handle. Suggested retail price for the faucet is \$595. For more information, call Hansgrohe at 1.800.719.1000, or visit www.hansgrohe.com.



Courtesy Solatube

The soft natural light from Solatube's 10-inch-diameter tubular skylight provides ideal task lighting, because overhead light generally provides shadow-free reflection. The skylight comes with two options: night-time lighting and a concealed ventilation fan (particularly useful in windowless baths). Prices for the skylight start at around \$300. For more information, call 1.800.966.7652, or visit www.solatube.com.



Courtesy Kallista

Bath accessories are an efficient way to upscale any powder room, guest bath, or owners' bath. This brushed-nickel towel bar (\$235) and toilet-tissue holder (\$345) are part of Kallista's Barbara Barry collection. For more information, call Kallista at 1.888.4KALLISTA, or visit www.kallistainc.com.

resources

National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA)

Telephone: 908.852.0033

Web site: www.nkba.org

Contact NKBA for the names of certified bath designers (CBDs) and bathroom-product dealers. See award-winning baths on its Web site for dozens of design ideas.

Bathroom Styles

Alison Murray Morris and Ellen Frankel. 192 pages. Illustrated. Lincolnwood, Ill.: Publications International Limited. 1997.

\$14.95. Hardcover.

Telephone: 1.800.745.9299

A stylish, design-oriented look at bathrooms designed by architects and interior designers from all over the country.

The Builder's Bathroom Book

Andrew Wormer. 224 pages.

Illustrated. Newtown, Conn.:

The Taunton Press. 1998.

\$29.95. Hardcover.

Telephone: 1.800.283.7252

Comprehensive construction drawings and attractive photography plus text by an experienced remodeler make this book a worthy addition to a residential architect's bookshelf.

Kitchen & Bath Source Book, 1997-1998

Sweet's Group. 680 pages. New York: McGraw-Hill. 1998.

\$29.95. Hardcover.

Telephone: 1.800.442.2258

Provides architects with an easy-to-follow listing of the most up-to-date bath products available. It also includes descriptions of NKBA's officially approved bathroom plans and acceptable-dimension information.

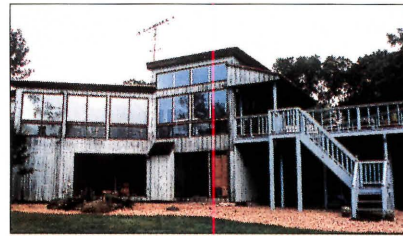


on the

With its Shingle Style details and massing, the Lawrence house has been completely transformed from its 1970s kit house origins.



Connecticut architect
Duo Dickinson transforms a
house on Long Island Sound
by focusing on massing
and views.



by paul j. donio

Compare this waterfront house in Westport, Conn., to what it was before and it looks like a raze-and-rebuild job—the kind of project where owner and architect begin with a blank slate and take full advantage of the design freedom that comes with it. Compare the floor plans, however, and it's clear the slate was never even close to blank. Though architect Duo Dickinson added some space, every room that was there before is still there—in the same place.

waterfront

wish list

Owner Gail Lawrence wanted to transform her awkward 1970s kit house into something exciting, graceful, and bright. The problematic electric heat, drafty sliding windows, flat rubber roof, and uninsulated walls were to be replaced. She asked for a new powder room, guest bedroom, and baths, and a reworked family room and bedrooms downstairs for her kids. And, most important, she wanted to bring in dramatic views of Long Island Sound.

design process

Dickinson faced one major restriction in fulfilling Lawrence's wish list, and it was regulatory: The lot coverage on this three-quarter-acre parcel of mostly

filled wetlands could only increase by 20 percent.

They could have torn the house down and built from scratch. But the plan worked well on a conceptual level. Main living spaces were upstairs on the water side to catch views, with an owners' suite on the quiet, private side of the house. And the plan provided a lower-level suite for three older teenagers.

So, from the beginning of the yearlong design phase, Dickinson focused on volumes and massing, presenting Lawrence with countless alternatives—his standard mode. After he and the client have gone through piles of softlines, he issues a set of 1/8-inch-scale drawings for preliminary bids, attaching numerous line items and alternatives. "That way, the client has spent only 30 to 40 percent of the design fee before getting solid numbers," Dickinson says. "It's a lot easier for the client to judge what's worthwhile once you know the cost."

owner's role

In this case, Dickinson was charging by the hour because Lawrence was taking on much of the responsibility for specs and project administration. Lawrence is one of those owners who make many architects wary. She has her own practice as an interior designer and construction manager. Not surprisingly, she felt comfortable taking design initiatives in working with Dickinson on her own home.

Lawrence speaks in terms of collaboration when she describes her relationship with Dickinson, the contractor, the interior designer, and the landscape architect. She and Dickinson agree that the project was the better for all this back-and-forthing.

"If you reject the client's ideas out of hand, then it becomes a power play," Dickinson says. "The benefit of listening to clients is to see where their values are and thereby see where you're going. Gail knows exactly what she wants, yet she remains open to how things are done. The result is a better building."

points of view

Though tearing down the whole house was out—the footprint couldn't change much, anyway—Dickinson and Lawrence opted to tear down virtually all its walls. The redesign produced asymmetrical massing: On one side, great volume in the living room spills into the open dining area and kitchen; on the other side sits a quiet, cozy, low-ceilinged owners' suite.

Beyond its original awkward appearance, the home's bigger design flaw was that it failed to take full advantage of bright, open views of the yacht basin in Duck Pond, a sheltered tributary of Long



"the benefit of listening to clients is to see where their values are and thereby see where you're going." —duo dickinson





Architect and owner agreed on white cedar shingles for wall cladding, with Honduras mahogany trim. A new front porch announces the home's entry, from which guests climb a curved stair to the living room, with views of the yacht basin beyond.

project:

Lawrence house, Westport, Conn.

architect:

Duo Dickinson Architect, Madison, Conn.

general contractors:

Stephen Wells Building and Remodeling, Naugatuck, Conn.; Gail Lawrence (owner)

interior designers:

Gail Lawrence (owner); Joel Mizerik, New York City

Island Sound. The house was sited parallel to the street. The best views were on a diagonal that was a real neck-stretcher despite all the old sliding windows and acute angles. Since the house was already built, Dickinson couldn't rotate it on its site. But he was able to rearrange windows to wrap around corners.

The wide view is all the more dramatic because it comes as a surprise. Approached from the driveway, the house offers a welcoming face but blocks most of the water views. A porch anchors the redesigned front elevation. After passing through it, one comes to the high entry hall lit by clerestory windows. From the foyer rises a wide stair with a chunky newel post that expresses Dickinson's love for craft and detail.

Climbing the stair to the living room, visitors

notice the refinement of the stair curve without appreciating its purpose—until they reach the top step and find themselves pointed in precisely the right direction to gaze upon wide-open views of water, trees, boats, and a flood of daylight.

Dickinson balanced the big picture with softer views of trees. "If you have big views in big spaces, the glare and heat are overwhelming unless you backlight and vent the space," he says. Living room and stair hall windows balance the brightness of the main water views, providing a secondary focal point.

shingle style

The Shingle Style vocabulary was the owner's choice, and Dickinson was happy to work with it. "It's comfortable and uses domestic materials, yet it's expressive in a way that other traditional styles are not," he says. But he cautions that many examples of the style, especially bigger, newer interpretations, can get out of control—"even cacophonous."

Dickinson achieved expressive appeal without excess by giving the house a composed asymmetry. Its steep-pitched roofs; curving forms at dining room, deck roof, and chimney taper; and varied fenestration reflect Shingle Style trademarks of massing and detail. Dickinson explored the curved motif further in the stair, at the high windows, on the owners' suite deck, and in the wavy shingles on the gable ends (a design detail proposed by Lawrence).

The Shingle Style proved perfect for the plan of this house, as it accommodates rooms of different sizes and functions jutting out for views. As Dickinson points out, it "allows for interior spaces that respond to how people use their houses. And it works on the restrictive sites available today."

the five-year test

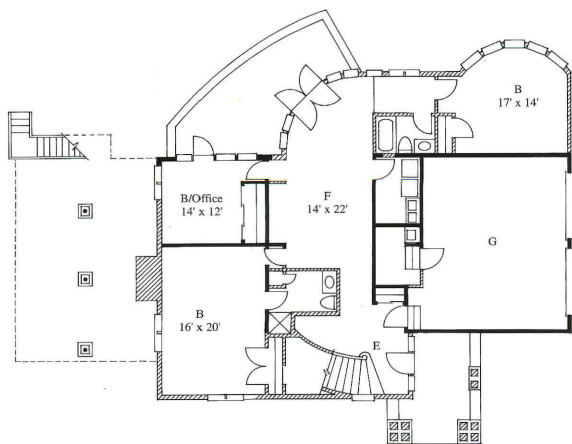
From the smallest details to the massing and views, this is a pleasing house. But after a year of design, a year of construction, and three years of use, what's more telling is how well the rooms work. Lawrence says the living room gets the most use, though she also likes to relax in the kitchen and the owners' suite. The downstairs is still mostly for the kids, now grown. But the guest room is Lawrence's surprising favorite. "It's such a quiet, private retreat—it's like going away to a bed-and-breakfast," she says.

"I wanted a house where you use every space and every space relates to the others around it." Judged on that basis, the project is a runaway success. **ra**

Paul J. Donio is a freelance writer in New York City.

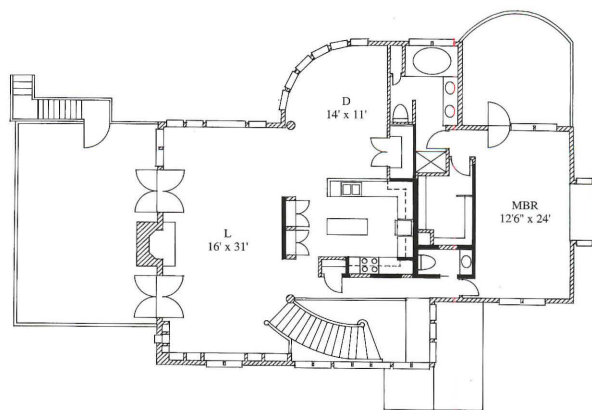


"it's comfortable and uses domestic materials, yet it's expressive in a way that other traditional styles are not."—duo dickinson



first floor

key: - - - - - new wall
 ——— existing wall



second floor

Duo Dickinson balanced the brightness of the living room's view wall with filtered light through windows to the front and side of the house. Hand-pegged, chamfered Honduras mahogany collar ties frame the living room; floors are cherry.

buying office equipment

overwhelmed by the big-ticket items your office needs? here's a shopper's guide.

by sara o'neil-manion, aia

You've rented office space and bought your computers. Your workstations are all set up. Now you have to shop for the other major pieces of equipment that will make your office hum. What are the must-haves? What should you buy, and how much should you spend? Following are my recommendations, from 20-plus years of decision making based on efficiency and economy.

communication equipment conventional telephones

When we purchased our telephone system, we decided these features were essential: voice mail, conferencing, headset capability, intercoms, long-distance accounting, and speaker conferencing.

You may also want to consider these options, bearing in mind that each adds to your costs: speed dial, call waiting, memory, desktop interface, varied messages for time of day, digital, hands-free operation, background music, and simultaneous voice/data.

Those with tight budgets can consider business-quality telephones from

office supply stores with two-line capability and features such as speakers and conferencing. These run \$80 to \$90 per set.

All telephone systems should include dedicated lines for Internet and facsimile connection. Check several types. Get pricing, availability, warranty, and maintenance information. Hold the phone—literally—to assess ergonomics. Consider headsets for added hands-free productivity. Electronic mail is rapidly replacing the telephone call—a development you'll want to factor into your equipment-buying decisions.

cell telephones

These have become commonplace as a way to stay in touch with clients and staff. Base decisions on airtime and set cost, size, and features such as voice mail, redial, memory, digital versus analog (go digital), headsets, and hands-free operation. Don't automatically choose the lowest monthly costs—you get what you pay for in the range of cell coverage. Hardware is not costly and will likely be outdated in the next six months. The oldest cell phones in our firm are hands-free, hard-mounted automobile sets.



Illustration: Peter Means

They cost thousands back in the mid-1980s and were the best available at the time. We're still using them today.

paggers

Pagers are another—though optional—means of staying in touch with employees and partners. They're available with such features as voice mail, number display, and vibration notification to eliminate the distraction of a beeper or a ring.

facsimile machines

As with telephones, you'll face numerous options in choosing fax equipment. Fax machines can serve as backup copiers and, with network interfacing, scanners. Most machines have automatic logging, which assists in auditing faxes for billing. Base your purchase decision on these factors:

- Pages-per-minute rate for incoming and outgoing

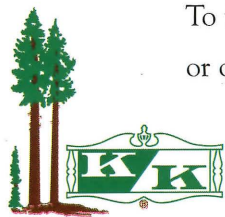
continued on page 82

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pages.

- Memory.
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- Automatic redial.
- Network connection.

production/ reproduction equipment photocopiers

Architects run tens of thousands of copies per year, so reliable copying equipment is essential. Assess what features you'll need, from the basic (automatic data feed, multiple sheet collation, enlargements and reductions) to the fancy (color, automatic binding, network connection with desktop fax capability). The more features you want, the larger and more costly the

tion range—ours is 1 percent to 200 percent.

- Processor and memory capacity for job storage.
- Automatic document feeder and two-sided copying—both indispensable when copying lengthy proposals and reports.
- Collator—look for 15 to 20 trays.
- Automatic auditing to facilitate customer tracking and billing.
- Multiple paper sizes and trays.
- Ease of use.

printers

Firms can choose between monochromatic (black, white, and gray-scale) and color printers. Monochromatic choices include laser, solid ink, ink-jet (small and large format), thermal, or

ers, seven pages per minute is fast.

- Resolution, expressed in dots per inch (dpi)—600 dpi to 1,200 dpi printers produce black-and-white prints with acceptable to camera-ready resolution. Resolution for color ranges from 720 dpi to 1,200 dpi. Gray-scale resolution is also available.
- Processor and memory—for graphics, you'll want as much RAM (capacity) as you can get with the highest megahertz (speed) you can afford.
- Print server—use Ethernet and/or LocalTalk.
- Multiple paper sizes and trays (note that thermal and dye sublimation printers require special paper).
- Cost—the more features, the higher the cost. But the up-front investment may be worth it. Our laser printers are extremely reliable pieces of equipment that have more than justified their high purchase price. We have separate color and black-and-white laser printers, because running color copies is a slow process that can tie up a printer for hours.

equipment priced from \$25,000 to \$45,000. LED plotters provide very high-speed plots (monochrome only) with excellent line quality and ease of use. Electrostatic plotters produce color prints at high speed, but at high cost (including special paper). Thermal plotters generate monochrome prints at very high speed and with adequate line quality.

You will want to weigh these factors in purchasing a plotter:

- Speed, measured in sheets per day or inches per minute.
- Resolution—600 dpi for ink-jets; 400 dpi for thermal and laser plotters.
- Processor and memory—buy as much memory as you can get with the highest speed available.
- Paper size—choose multiple roll sizes.
- Cost—again, extra features add to the up-front cost, but reliability and longevity may justify the price. The ink-jet plotter in our office is a war hero eligible for a pedestal and bronzing when (if) we ever retire it.

plotters

Ink-jet black-and-white or color plotters are the industry standard. They're relatively high-speed and low-cost (\$2,000 to \$7,000) compared with outdated pen plotters.

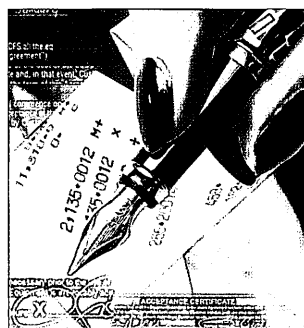
For heavy-volume plot needs, you'll want to consider more sophisticated

Used pen-type plotters and related supplies may be available, but this outdated, inexpensive technology reproduces at very slow speeds. Also, keep in mind that newer computers may not be able to interface with older printers and plotters.

continued on page 84

“the more features,
the higher the cost. but
the up-front investment
may be worth it.”

—sara o'neil-manion, aia



machine. Consider these factors:

- Speed—30 to 35 copies per minute is good for black and white; color copiers are slower.
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- Enlargement and reduc-

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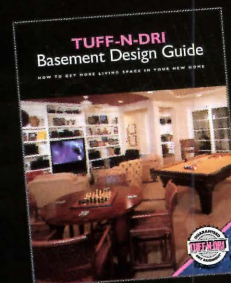
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large-image copiers

Choices include sheet- and roll-feed xerographic (\$6,000 to \$115,000) and diazo (\$800 to \$3,000) copiers. The high-end xerographic machines are used mostly by architectural firms that offer print services. Diazo copiers use light-sensitive paper and ammonia developer, which can affect indoor air quality in a small office. Used machines of both types are available at lower prices. (Note: Offices with in-house plotters may not need a large-format copier. We use outside print services for multiple copies of documents going out for bid or construction.)

scanners

Decisions should be based on speed (pages per minute), resolution quality, size of input and output print (11-by-17-inch paper is desirable for architects), and cost.

Check actual output and ease of operation. Ask about the service record of brands that interest you, and choose a model that is compatible with your computers. Note that large-format scanners can store hard-copy information electronically, but they have high initial costs. *ra*

Sara O'Neil-Manion, AIA, is a founder of O'Neil and Manion Architects in Bethesda, Md.



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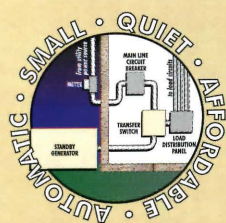
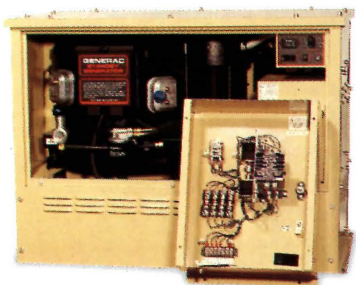
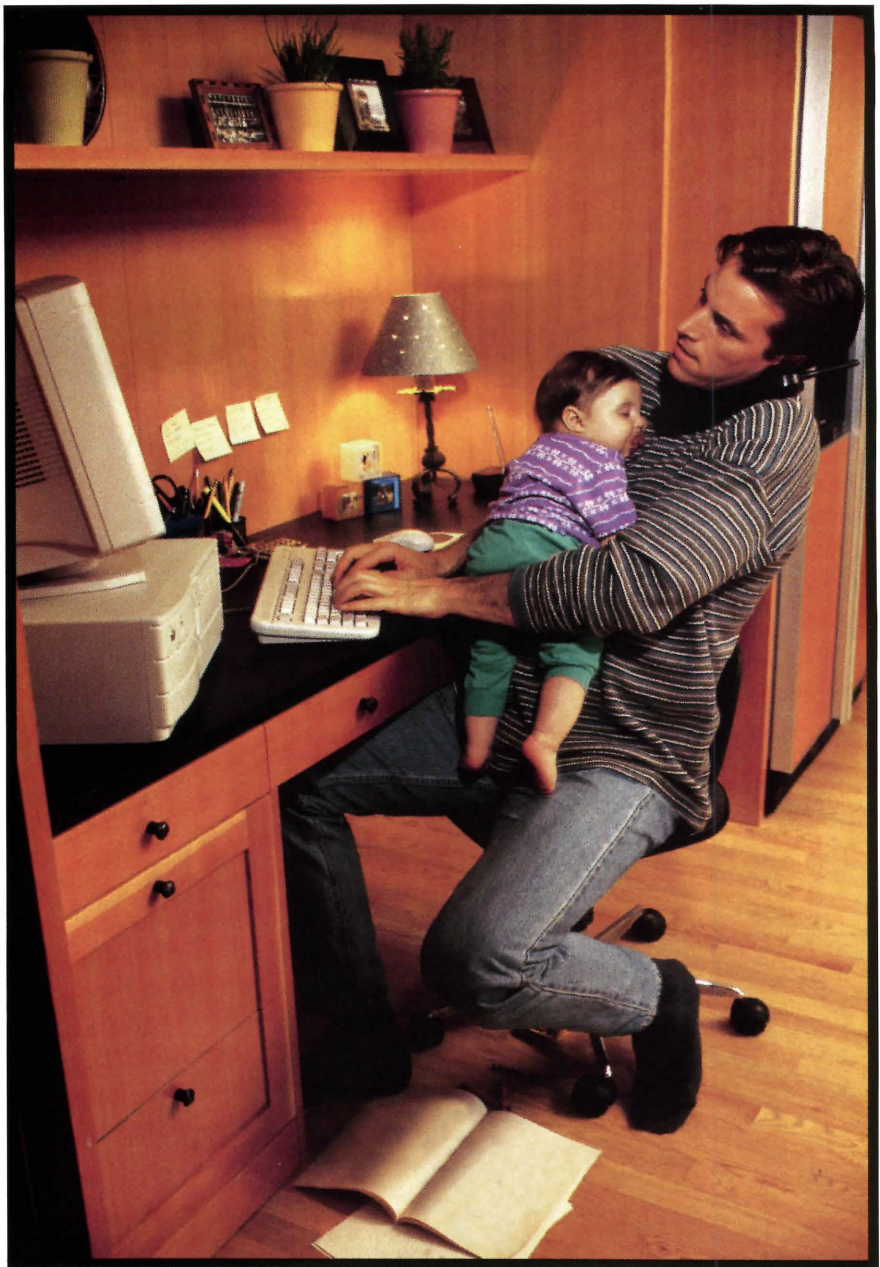
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the steel debate

in the great framing debate, three residential architects make the case for steel.

by rich binsacca

the first time San Diego architect Ian MacKenzie, AIA, designed a steel-framed house for a client, he couldn't find a local engineer to run the structural calculations and stamp the plans. And if he had found an engineer, there would have been no one at the permit desk to check and approve the documents. MacKenzie switched to wood.

Four years later, things are looking up—a little. MacKenzie now knows of at least three structural engineers who can calculate loads and spans for a residential steel frame (one of them is the plan checker on steel projects for San Diego and several surrounding communities). Locally, MacKenzie is on his fourth steel-framed house; he and his partners have also shipped hundreds of factory-built metal panels for housing projects in Japan, Sweden, Mexico, and Poland. "Everywhere except the U.S. demands steel and won't accept anything else," he says.

wood vs. steel

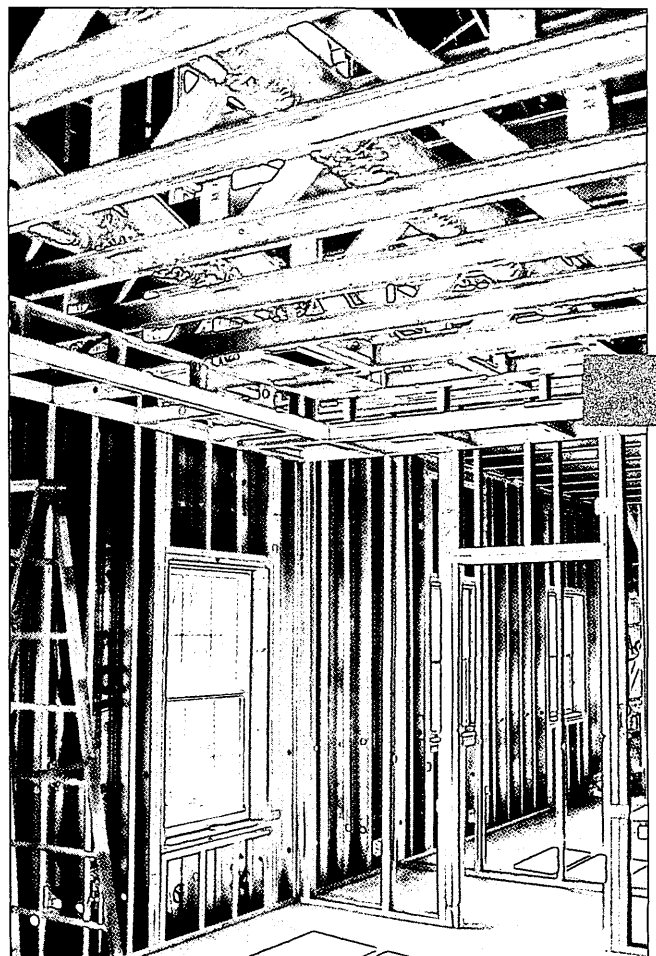
Is designing a steel house that much more complicated than framing with wood?

For architects with a few commercial projects under their belts, probably not. But for building departments and tradespeople entrenched in wood framing, who still are waiting for codes and consumer demand to catch up to the rest of the world, there's no incentive to get educated about residential steel framing.

"The codes still allow wood framing up to four stories, which is the bulk of [residential] construction," MacKenzie says. So steel remains a mystery to many outside the architectural profession. Their ignorance can pose a significant design hurdle.

why steel?

Even with lagging codes and minimal market share, MacKenzie and others have launched themselves into steel-framed housing with agendas ranging from economic to environmental and aesthetic. "It's a matter of staying current," says Boulder, Colo., architect Walter Kaesler, AIA. "I wanted to see how my commercial experience with steel translated to residential." For him, the conversion was easy. But he's also noticing more clients asking for steel-framed houses and local builders getting up to speed.



Robert Morris

Robert Morris used steel for a custom house in Bellaire, Texas, with a budget of \$50 to \$60 per square foot. Columns, beams, and rafters are heavy-gauge cold-formed cees. Morris used 8-inch light-gauge cold-formed cee studs for infill framing.

For MacKenzie, the impetus was economic. On a recent project, bids for stick-framing with lumber came in \$53 per foot higher than panelizing the same structure in steel for erection on site. That's as much a testament to factory efficiency as to San Diego's hot housing market, where trades can afford to boost their bids.

MacKenzie has also seen demand for steel in coastal locations, where climate and termites eat at wood's integrity, as well as in government housing projects where low maintenance and quick construction are priorities. "They don't care what it costs. It has to be steel," he says of one recent client, the U.S. Navy.

continued on page 88

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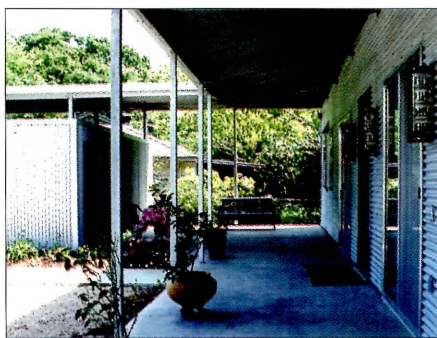
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In Houston, architect Robert Morris, AIA, sees metal as an opportunity to break out of housing's conventional design molds. He's on his fourth steel-framed house and his third metal framing system, a so-called "wide-flange" structural method that will create a vented exterior shell to mitigate heat and humidity



Robert Morris

Morris clad the Bellaire house with corrugated steel. The overhang has a prefabricated standing-seam metal roof.

in the envelope. Depending on the season, a continuous ridge vent will allow pressurization either to vent heat and moisture or keep warm air from escaping so that it can radiate through the house. Morris had previously designed two houses using stick-framed light-gauge-steel members (typical for single-family housing) and another using a structural system akin to heavy timber framing.

A modernist, Morris likes the spaciousness he can achieve with steel. "With metal, very few walls are structural, which allows

you to open up the house," he says. And unlike with wood, where dimensions dictate spans and loads, architects can achieve longer and stronger spans with the same-size steel joist or beam, simply by beefing up the gauge.

"You just have to get used to what the material is capable of as you design with it," Morris says. He estimates a two-house learning curve for novice architects, which includes getting used to screws and clips instead of nails, and diagonal bracing in place of plywood sheathing.

Steel's light weight also can influence design. Morris was able to reduce a grade beam by a full foot because the steel frame he designed put less stress on the foundation. Likewise, MacKenzie can panelize a house that's easily tilted into place, often without the need of a crane.

All three architects are attracted to the ecological aspects of light-gauge steel, which typically is two-thirds recycled material. And it can be used again. "I like the fact that you can dismantle a steel structure and rebuild it somewhere else," says Morris. Steel's superior strength over wood allows wider on-center spacing of joists and studs, reducing the amount of material needed. Its structural reliability also reduces callbacks.

downsides

If there's a downside to residential steel, it's that everyone else is lagging—including the steel industry. "Most stud manufacturers aren't interested in supplying product for just one or two houses," says Morris, who went to a small local fabricator for his latest project. "Unless it's off their shelf, you have to pay extra for what you want."

Metal's conductivity also comes into question, but savvy architects have solved the thermal-bridge issue. Climate dictates the system they use. In Houston, Morris uses factory-supplied isolator clips to create a thermal break, and a reinforced radiant vapor barrier to block moisture from the cavity insulation. In Boulder, Kaesler specs a 1-inch-thick insulation board between the structure and the exterior finish. He also specs wood furring strips along sill plates and openings to ease trim and baseboard installation with conventional finish nails.

steel ahead

The good news is that prescriptive standards specifically for steel-framed houses are making their way into the code books. The 1997 *CABO One and Two Family Dwelling Code*, for instance, has guidelines that standardize basic members and provide span and load tables for all components.

resources

Residential Steel Partnership/American Iron and Steel Institute (AISI)

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Says Morris, "Wood framing is a Civil War technology. There's got to be a better way to build." **ra**

Rich Binsacca is a freelance writer in Boise, Idaho.

A man with dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, is leaning over a wooden surface. He is holding a square, light-colored tool (possibly a square or a small block) against the wood. He is looking intently at the tool. The background is slightly blurred, showing some papers and a wicker chair.

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gutter alternatives

two roof edge treatments do a creative take on that old workhorse, the gutter.

by rick vitullo, aia

Snow and ice buildup on roof edges can pose serious problems for houses in northern climates. As ice thaws and refreezes, water backs up under shingles and roofing felt and can seep into the interior. Here are two gutter alternatives that effectively remove water, snow, and ice from roofs while enhancing the strength of the overall design.

Machado and Silvetti Associates of Boston had a moderate per-square-foot budget to work with for a family house in Concord, Mass. The clients requested a simple palette of materials: cedar siding, slate, a black asphalt shingle roof, and copper for exposed metal details. While copper downspouts fit within the budget, the house required extensive gutters that would have been prohibitively expensive if executed in copper. So the architects altered their design to conceal the gutter in the roof edge, where a less expensive material could be used. This change not only hid the gutter but also helped to articulate the top of the wall.

continued on page 92

Machado and Silvetti used black PVC membrane as the gutter and roof edge material. They placed heat tape under this layer to keep snow and ice from forming.

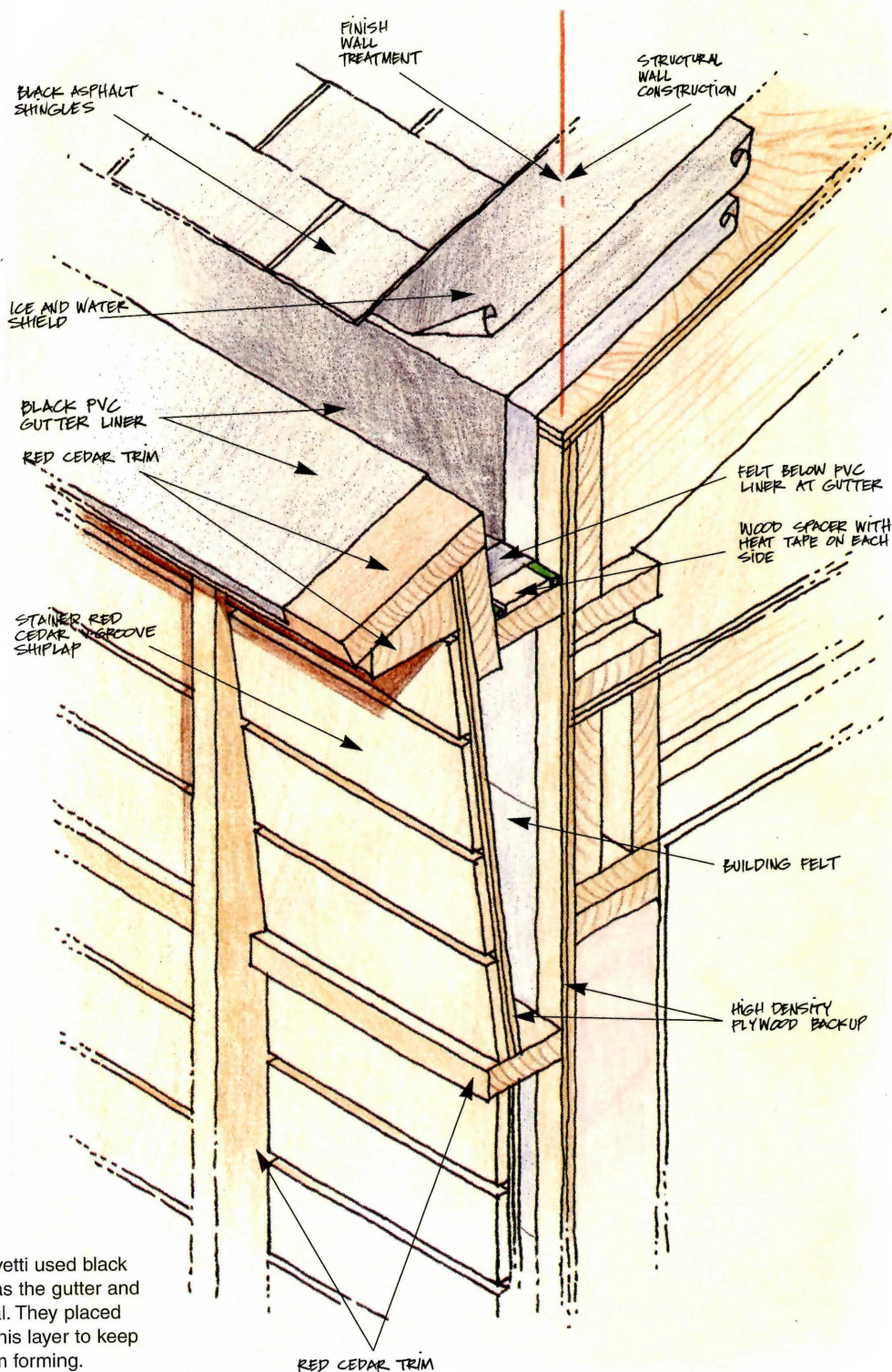


Illustration: Rick Vitullo



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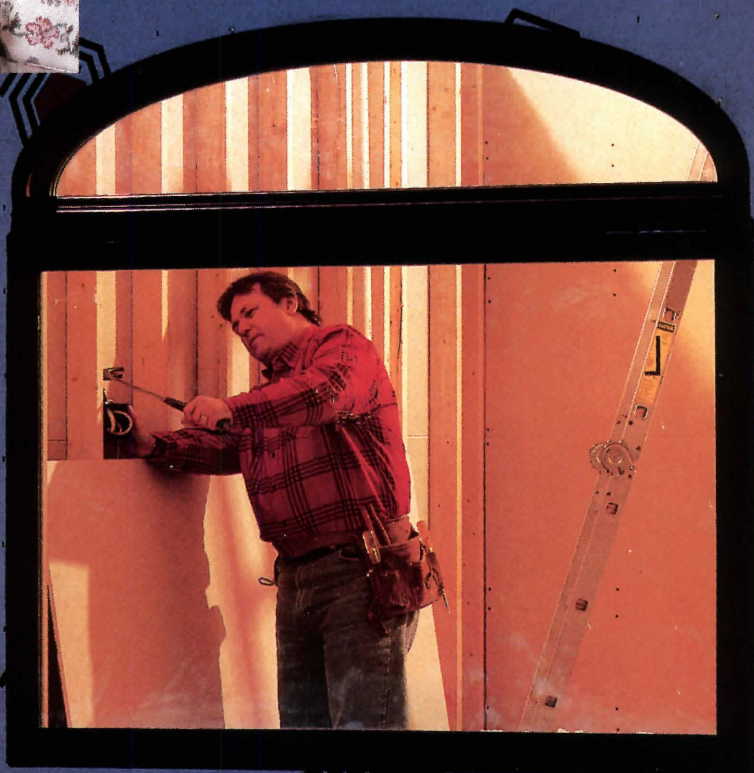
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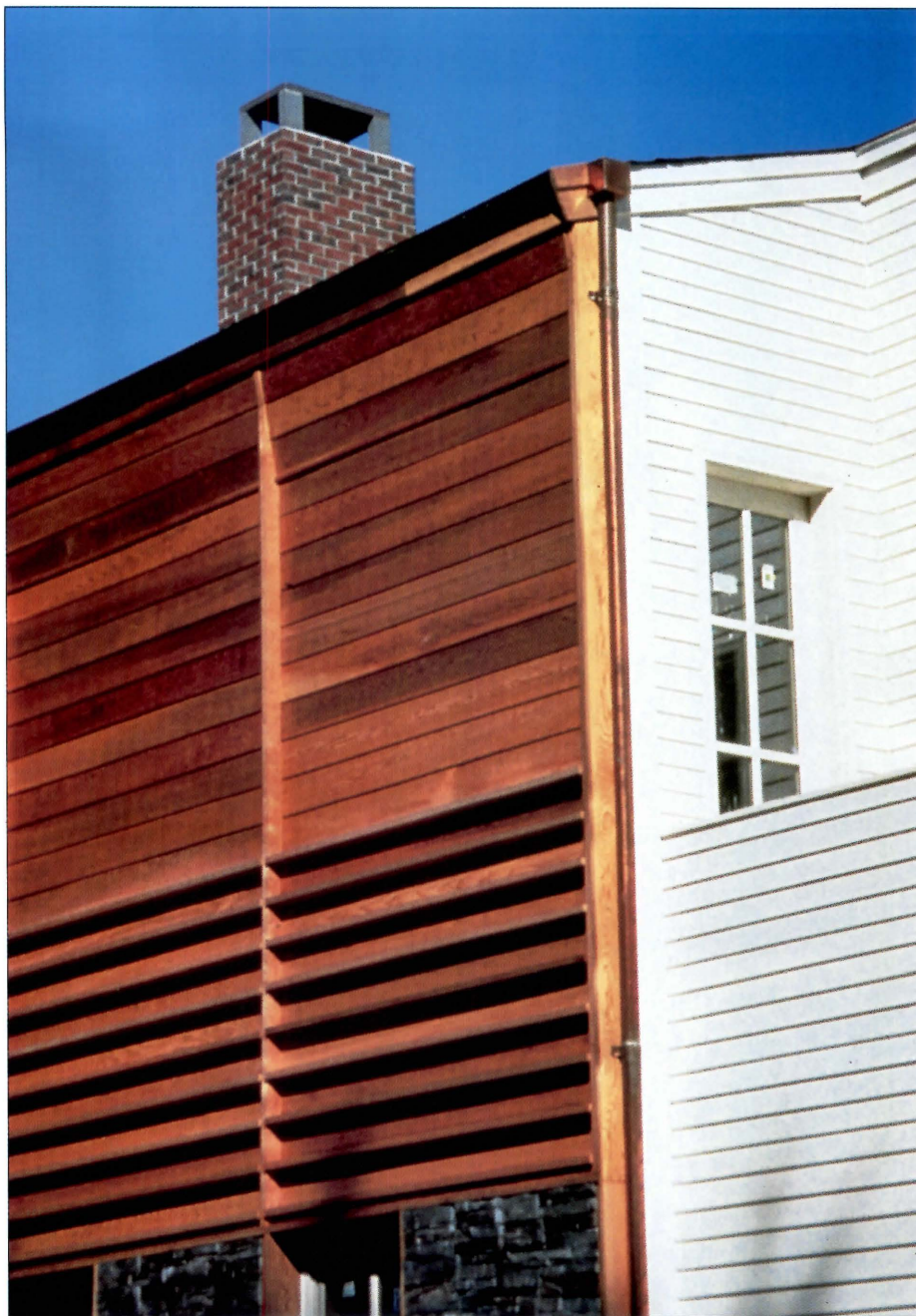
To the structural wood-framed inner wall, the architects attached an outer finish layer of slate veneer and finely detailed wood finish treatments. They crowned the outer wall with a pitched top that contains the gutter. This solution places the gutter outside the structural wall envelope, avoiding water seepage into the building even if a leak were to occur.

Brenner Harr P.C. ARCHITECTURE of Glenwood Springs, Colo., faced much more severe winter conditions in a design for a house 5,800 feet above sea level in Aspen Glen, Colo. (see page 94). The challenge was to handle snow and ice shedding in an aesthetically pleasing way.

Brenner Harr's design features a standing-seam copper roof with heavy timber-framed walls below, interrupted by a stone-and-synthetic-stucco chimney. While the chimney helped break up the elevation into a series of strong, separate forms, the interruption impeded the flow of snow and ice from the roof.

The architects' solution was to increase the roof pitch behind and to the sides of the chimney, and to use copper sheet roofing and flashing to

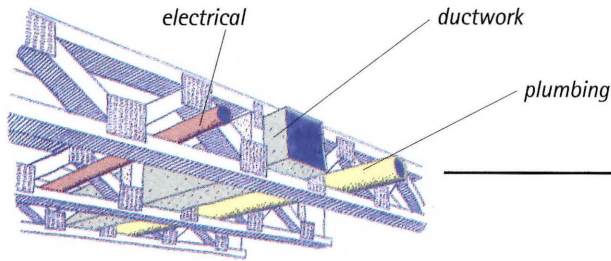
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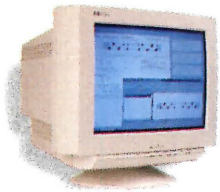
Courtesy Machado and Silvetti Associates

Machado and Silvetti's design features copper downspouts at each end of the roof. The downspouts carry water to the ground from gutters concealed inside the pitched wall top.

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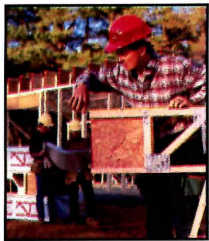
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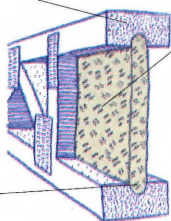
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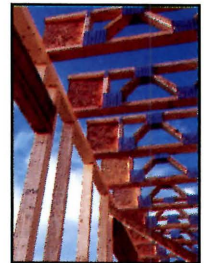


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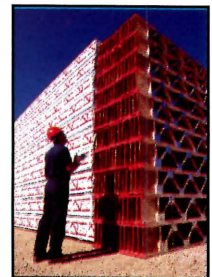
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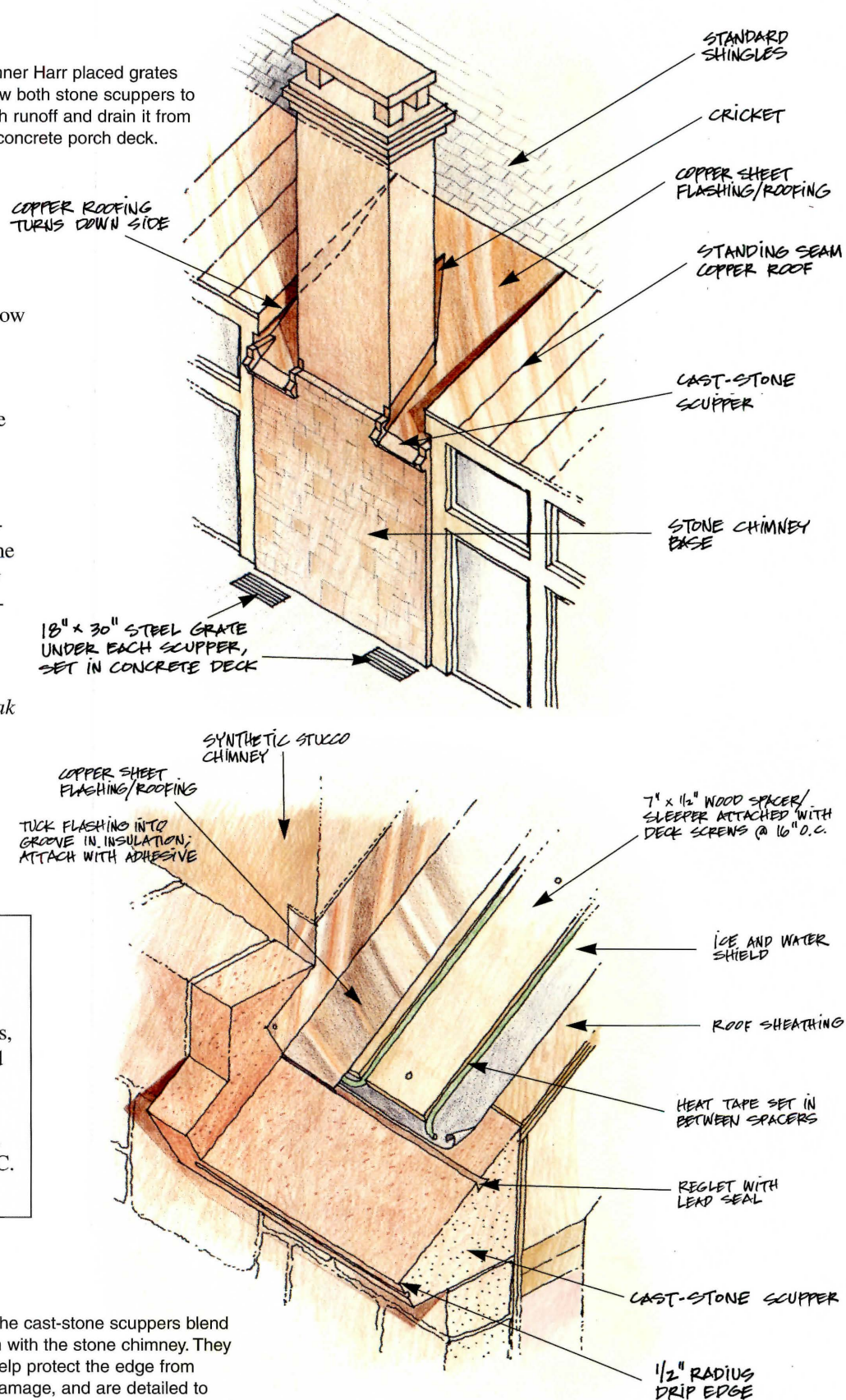
speed the removal of any snow or ice that attempts to settle around the chimney. The architects placed cast-stone scuppers at the points where this steeper roof meets the roof edge and the chimney. The scuppers provide an attractive yet durable transition between the roof and the stone chimney base, as they channel runoff into two cascading streams. *ra*

Rick Vitullo, AIA, is founder and principal of Oak Leaf Studio Architects, Crownsville, Md.

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product information

bath class

page 64

Faucets/fittings—Kohler; sink/lav—Elkay; toilet—Porcher.

page 66

Sink/lav—Cherry Creek; shower enclosure—Pittsburgh Corning Glass Block, Ann Sacks Tile & Stone; lighting—Murano glass sconces; paint—Benjamin Moore.

page 67

Bathtub—Waterworks, Classic I #ARCL7236T; cabinetry—Solid Wood Custom Cabinets; sink faucet—Waterworks, Highgate lavatory faucet #RULS59; bathtub faucet—Waterworks, Highgate exposed bath/shower mixer with hand shower #RUTU48; sink—Kohler, Farmington; lighting—Brass Light Gallery, Continental Collection.

page 68

Bathtub—American Standard, Impromptu; cabinetry—Kitchen & Bath Studios; countertops—Triple-D Marble & Granite; faucets/fittings—American Standard, Ceramix; flooring—Florida Tile ceramic tile; sink/lavatory—Flora/Semi-Encasso by Hastings; shower enclosure—Crawford Tracey Corp.; roof glazing/structural glazing—Crawford Tracey Corp.; showerhead—Speakman; luminaires—Bega.

page 69

Bathtub—Kohler Trocadero whirlpool bath; faucets/fittings—Philippe Starck Design for Hansgrohe; flooring—Absolute Black Granite; sink/lav—Philippe Starck Design for Duravit and Hoech; shower enclosure—Crawford Tracey Corp.; recessed luminaires—Bega; surface luminaires—Flos.

page 69

Bathtub—Ultra Bath, Air Jet Tub; cabinetry—Nine Points maple cabinetry; vanity—Botticino; countertop/shower enclosure/wainscoting—Designer Stone, Botticino marble; faucets/fittings—Dornbracht, Tara; sink/lav—Kohler Conical Bell; toilet—Kohler Couture Lite; lighting—Artemide, Robbia half.

page 70

Bathtub/shower—FiberFab, #104, almond; cabinets—Front Door Woodworking; countertop—Bennett Marble and Granite, L233, limestone; sink—Kohler, Vessels, Conical Bell K-2200, color C9; faucet—Kohler, Falling Water, Wallmount K-197, 10-inch spout, chrome; bathtub/shower faucet—Kohler, Paladar K-T14540-4, polished chrome; toilet—Kohler, Wellworth K-3420 with K-4652 seat, almond; flooring—Pergo, P 210, maple, blocked.

page 70

Bathtub—Americh; faucets—Kroin; flooring—custom tile by Stone Source; sink—Raspel Spa Miro; toilet—American Standard; medicine cabinet—Vasco; light fixture—Belfer halogen strips (beneath custom fixture).

page 71

Bathtub—St. Thomas, claw-foot 8028; faucets—St. Thomas, lav fixture 5405; flooring—1-inch hexagon Dal-Tile; sink—St. Thomas, pedestal 5110; toilet—St. Thomas, Windsor commode 6028.

page 72

Bathtub—Pearl; cabinetry—Sarnia; faucets/fittings—Grohe; flooring—Kohler; shower enclosure—Birmingham Glass; toilet—Kohler; windows—Marvin.



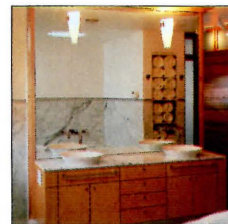
page 65



page 67



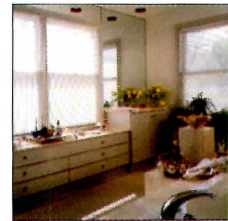
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page 71



page 72

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(signed) Tim Ahlering
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november·december 1998 / residential architect

ad index

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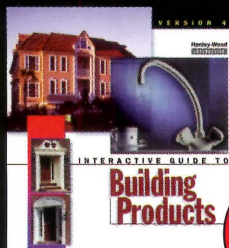
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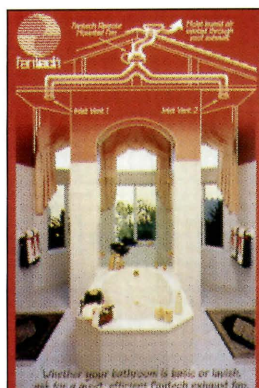


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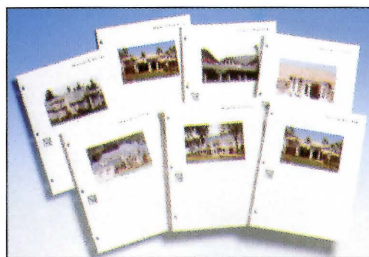
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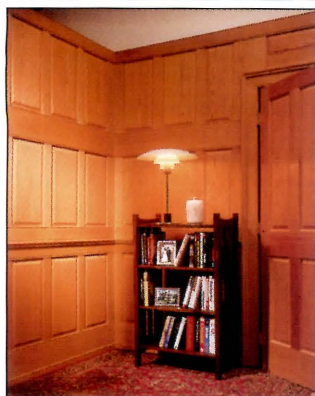


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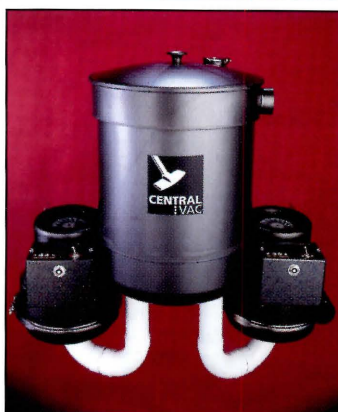
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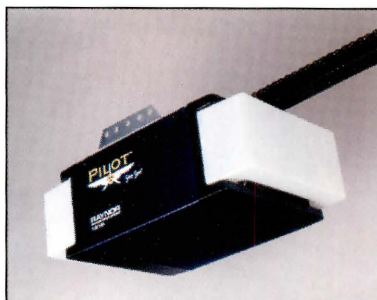


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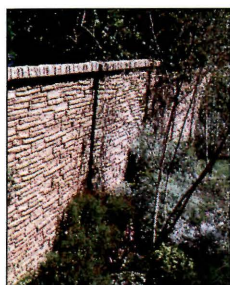
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