

The background of the cover is a photograph of two men standing in front of a modern house with red vertical siding and a dark roofline. The man on the left is wearing a dark sweater and glasses, and the man on the right is wearing a light blue shirt. Both are smiling and have their arms crossed. The title 'residential architect' is overlaid on the top half of the image.

# residential architect

A HANLEY-WOOD, INC., PUBLICATION / SEPTEMBER · OCTOBER 1999

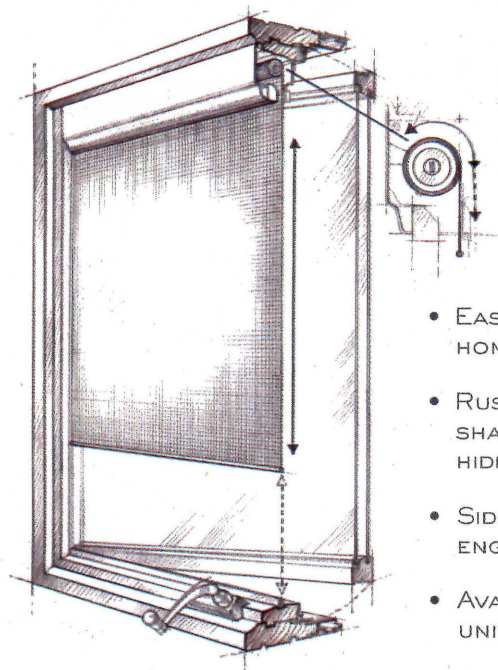
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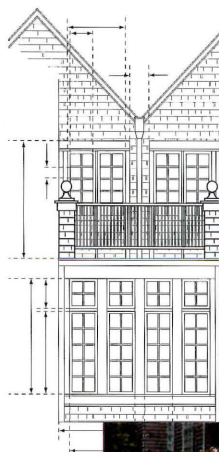




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# contents



## cover story:

### northwest passion...page 52

In the Pacific Northwest, practitioners of a no-nonsense regionalism embrace simple plans and sensible materials. A look at the work of David Miller (left) and Robert Hull, as well as that of three other area architects.

Cover photo: Danny Turner

## from the editor...page 13

## letters...page 18

## home front...page 24

Victorian townhomes / MacArthur Fellows / Floating city / Consumer survey: Bigger is still better / Snaidero showroom / Book report / CUSTOM HOME design awards / Making waves

## perspective...page 38

Pittsburgh architect Charles DeLisio designs houses that work with—not against—nature.

## practice...page 44

How to fire a problem employee without causing problems for yourself.



## five easy kitchens...page 66

Five clever architects concoct handsome, hard-working kitchens that make cooking, entertaining, and cleanup a piece of cake.



## a new leaf...page 80

As consumer interest in landscaping flourishes, your projects are more and more likely to involve landscape architects or designers. Here's some advice on cultivating a successful collaboration.

## off the shelf...page 90

User-friendly products for the kitchen.

## tech lines...page 96

Four must-have utilities for Macs that make a good thing even better.

## doctor spec...page 100

Walls of glass provide plenty of drama, but is there an energy trade-off?

## hands on...page 106

Clever ceiling details organize a cluttered basement.

## special places...page 128

Eric Haesloop encounters the brilliant geometry of an Italian piazza.



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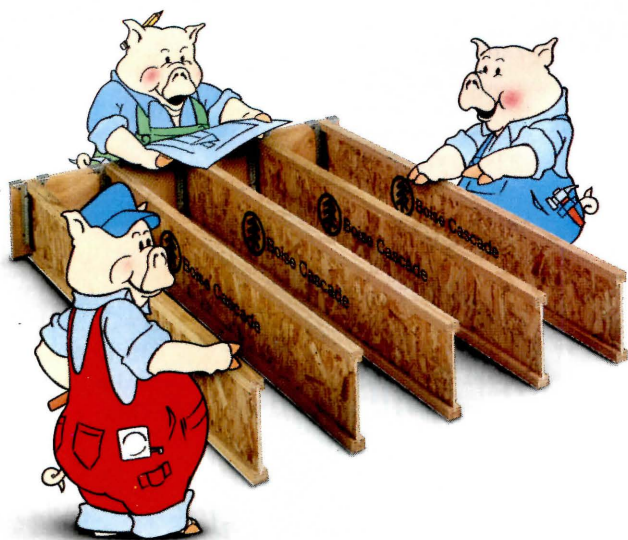
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S. Claire Conroy / Editor / 202.736.3312 / [cconroy@hanley-wood.com](mailto:cconroy@hanley-wood.com)

Judy H. Neighbor / Art Director / 202.736.3331 / [jneighbor@hanley-wood.com](mailto:jneighbor@hanley-wood.com)

Amy Doherty / Managing Editor / 202.736.3442 / [adoherty@hanley-wood.com](mailto:adoherty@hanley-wood.com)

Meghan Drueding / Associate Editor / 202.736.3344 / [mdruedin@hanley-wood.com](mailto:mdruedin@hanley-wood.com)

Deena Shehata / Assistant Editor / 202.736.3407 / [dshehata@hanley-wood.com](mailto:dshehata@hanley-wood.com)

Kristina K. Goings / Graphic Designer

Juliana Davis / Senior Production Manager

Sarah A. O'Keefe / Assistant Production Manager

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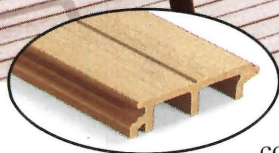
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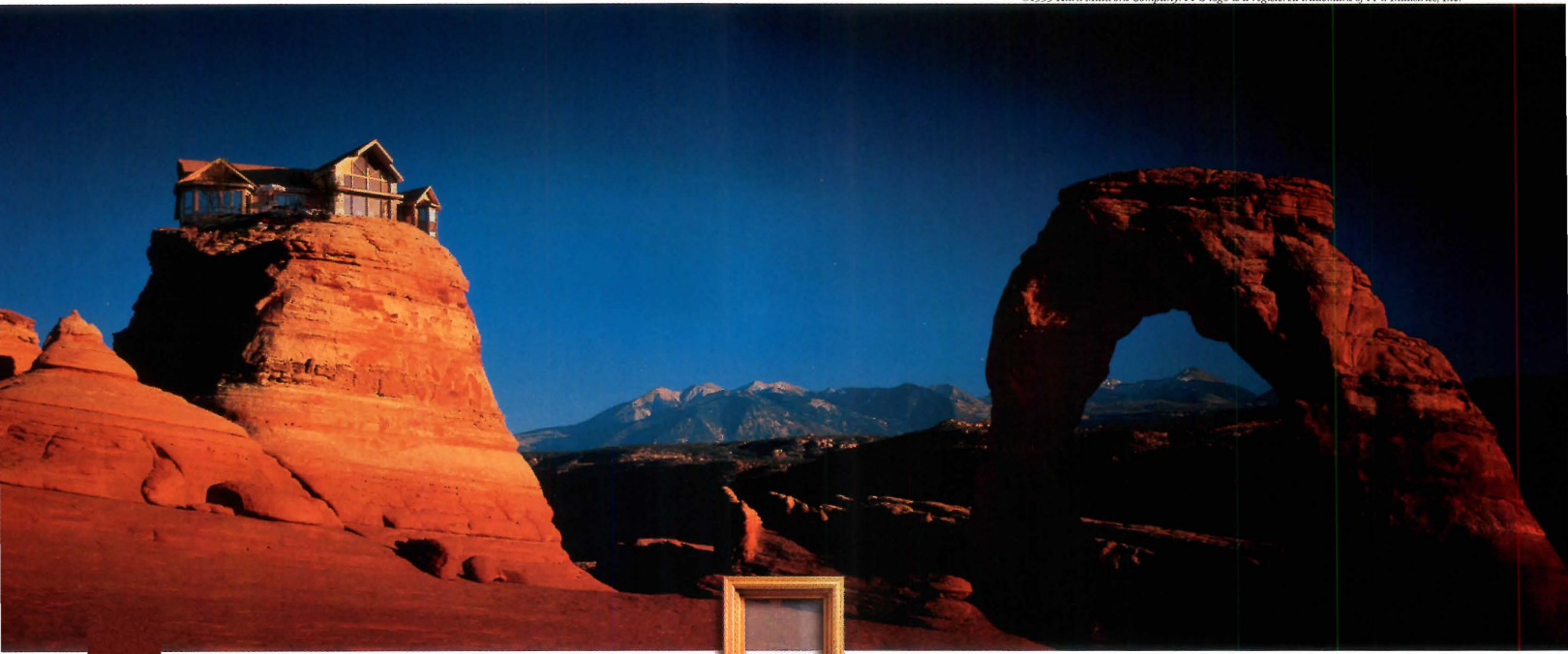
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from the editor

# modern times

the way we live is changing, but maybe not as radically as the avant-garde imagines.

by s. claire conroy

**f**orty-five years ago, my parents designed their dream house. My father, who fancied being an architect until he learned about the math requirement, did a rendering of it in oil paint that hangs in their hallway to this day. Not until I took my first architecture course in college did I recognize their dream house was a knockoff of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's and Philip Johnson's glass houses.

Although they never built their much-loved Modern house, my parents did install sliding glass entry doors in their pseudo Tudor—to the horror of their architect friends. If they couldn't have a glass house, at least they could have a glass front door. It was their gesture to Modernism, and to a concept The Museum of Modern Art has dubbed, in its first major exhibition on residential architecture in three decades, "The Unprivate House."

## who's there?

On view through October 5, MoMA's show addresses the vanguard of house design. At a time when most home buyers are still "cocooning," these houses explore the idea of interconnectivity—

between the inhabitants and the outside world; between one inhabitant and another. Many of the projects experiment with audio-video technologies and high-tech materials. Still, most of them also owe a debt to Mies and Johnson. The amount of glass in their houses—some built; some not—should delight window makers. But it takes a remarkable client to tolerate the level of exposure these architects propose. Even my parents, who watch too much frightening news on TV, have added a second set of solid doors behind their glass ones.

## easy-does-it modernism

Our cover story surveys a kinder, gentler Modernism flourishing in the lushly beautiful Pacific Northwest. At the forefront of this site- and climate-specific regional style are David Miller and Robert Hull, of Seattle-based Miller/Hull. They and the other talented architects featured in "Northwest Passion" (page 52) combine architecture, plan, and materials in a way that respects their clients and the environment.

Although they probably don't want a glass house, most clients are asking for a stronger connection between



Katherine Lambert

the indoors and outdoors in their new houses. Consequently, you may find yourself working more often with landscape professionals. "A New Leaf," on page 80, explains how you can make the most of that collaboration.

Perhaps the biggest change from private to un-private has occurred in the kitchen. The walls have tumbled down, and it's now the most open room in the house. Our design portfolio on page 66, "Five Easy Kitchens," looks at a few fine examples.

## house proud

Not everyone has the good fortune to choose how they live. Last year, *residential architect* teamed with Habitat for Humanity and

the APA (the Engineered Wood Association) to help improve the quality of affordable house design. The Homes for Habitat Design Awards, now an annual contest featured in our magazine, recently won a William D. Littleford Award. Sponsored by the American Business Press, the awards recognize corporate charitable efforts and the publications that report on them. Congratulations to our partners in the program and co-sponsors Premier Building Systems and Klima-Tite. Congratulations also to the *residential architect* staff and particularly to former editor Susan Bradford Barror, who's moved on to an exciting new project: son William Bradford Barror. **ra**



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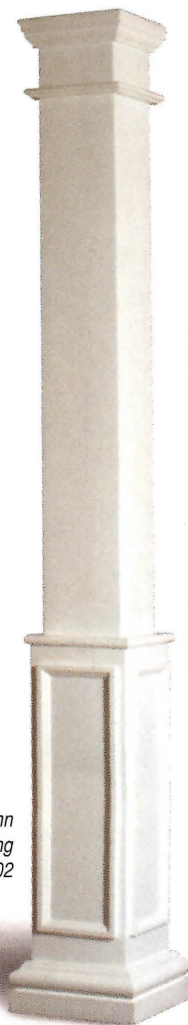
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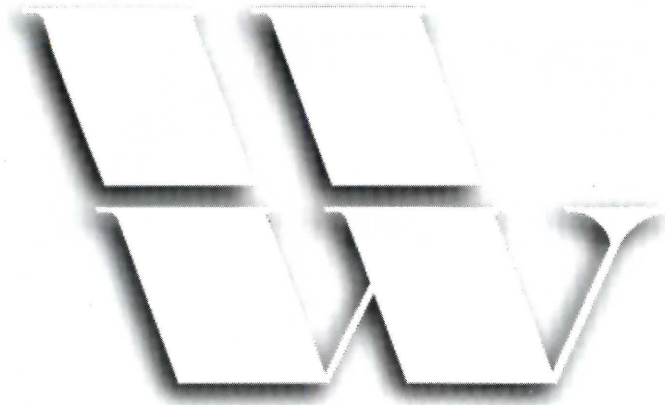


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# letters

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

## good ideas

**R**esidential architect is not a throw-away magazine. The quality of its photography and graphic presentation is high. And there are not excessive ads, which is refreshing.

I do have some suggestions, however, for story ideas. Following are some topics that I think residential architects would like to read about:

1. A study of homeowners/tenants who have lived in "new urbanism projects." Once the initial

excitement has receded, what's the consensus? Are these projects working?

2. More information on the single-home rental market. Is it viable?

3. Input from builders on what they are looking for from architects. What works and what causes major headaches for them?

4. An article in which we hear from homeowners who actually live in one of your previously published homes. What factors are of benefit or concern to them?

5. More articles on multifamily projects, especially

high-density projects.

6. Articles on how landscaping and architecture complement each other, especially in site planning.

7. Adaptive re-use projects: the challenges and opportunities.

8. An issue devoted to new product ideas from manufacturers.

9. Kitchen cabinets: how to recognize quality features and construction, and a discussion of detailing and layout issues.

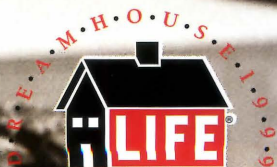
Finally, I would suggest that your mailing list be expanded to include devel-

opers of larger-scale residential projects. Our developer clients would benefit from exposure to a better quality residential magazine such as yours.

Keep up the good work.

*Ronald E. Harwick, AIA  
Vice president  
James, Harwick + Partners  
Dallas*

*The editor replies:* Thank you for your suggestions. Several of them are already in the works for upcoming issues. In fact, in this issue, we look at how architects and landscape architects



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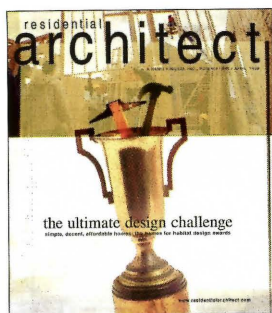
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can improve their working relationship. And, we devote our December issue to products. We're always looking for good ideas from our readers. Please e-mail them to [cconroy@hanley-wood.com](mailto:cconroy@hanley-wood.com) or call me at 202.736.3312.  
—*S. Claire Conroy*

#### habitat for humanity

**m**y company has built two homes for Homes for Habitat here in Kansas City. It's a constant struggle to make the homes both affordable and attractive. I was quite impressed with the results of your design competition ("The



Ultimate Design Challenge," April 1999), as the charming designs were some of the best I have seen in the 15 years I've been in the business. I hope our local Habitat can incorporate some of your designs in future building seasons. Our affiliate was founded 20 years ago as the seventh Habitat in the nation and we are closing in on finishing our 150th home. We hope to be able to increase our production and so it is crucial that we deal effectively with the challenges of

building attractive and affordable homes.

Thank you for your support of Habitat for Humanity.

*Eric Bushner  
Assistant vice president  
James B. Nutter & Co.  
Kansas City, Mo.*

#### compliments of our readers

**S**oon after the arrival of the May/June issue, I began hearing from people who commented on the publication of my house ("Architects' Houses," page 72.) I compliment you for all the good articles and exposure you are giving to residential design. It should

help improve the industry and the desire for higher quality design.

Good job!

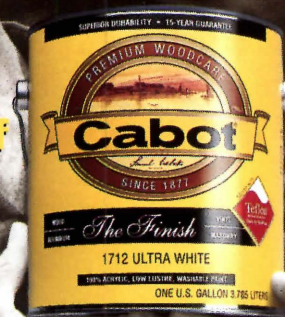
*Kirk Gastinger, FAIA  
Gastinger Walker Harden  
Architects  
Kansas City, Mo.*

**e**veryone at our office enjoys and appreciates the role that your magazine plays in our segment of the architectural community. It's well pulled-together and well-presented. Thanks for the resource.

*Will Winkelman  
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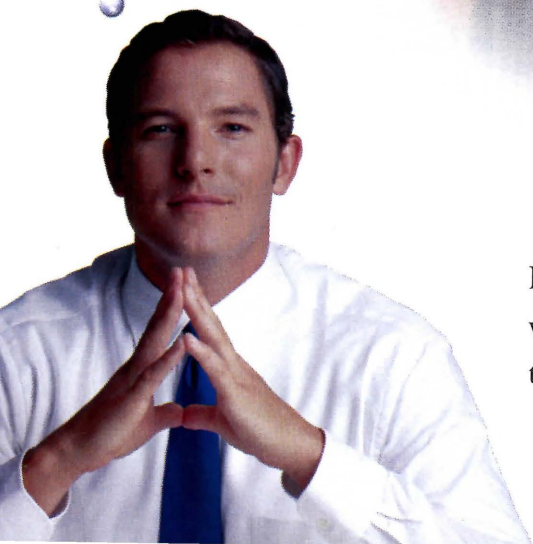
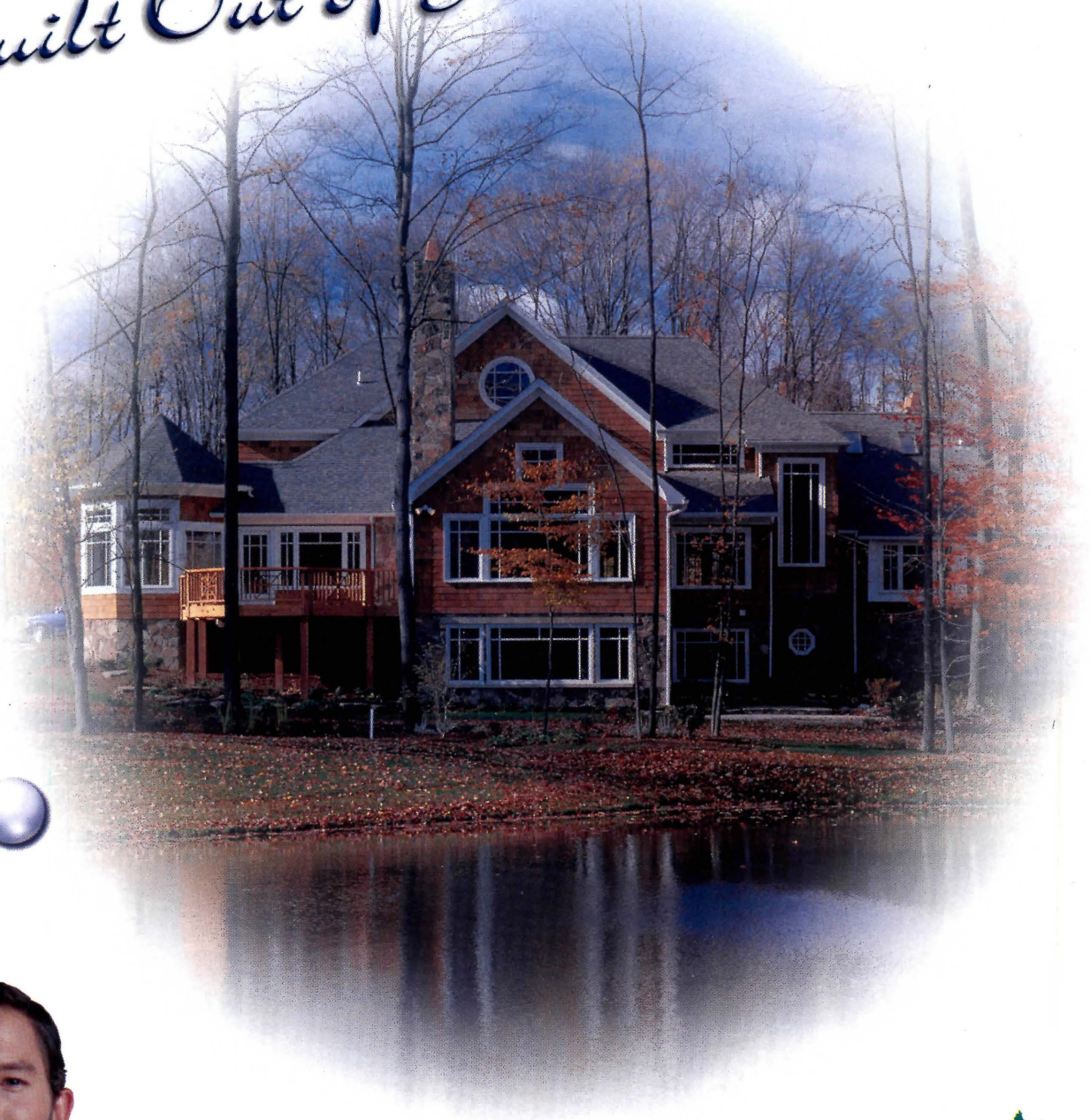
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# home . front

tips and trends from the world of residential design

## victorian era

**C**omplimentary phone calls from the neighbors are a pretty good indication that an architect's work has been well-received. A 1999 Gold Nugget award from BUILDER magazine doesn't hurt, either. Mithun Partners in Seattle can claim both distinctions for its recently completed Victorian Townhomes in the Queen Anne Hill section of the city.

The project features a subterranean parking garage beneath the townhomes, and contextual details like sharply sloped roofs and gated entry courtyards. "Queen Anne Hill is an affluent, very design-conscious area, with a lot of older, single-family houses," says principal-in-charge and chief designer Jim Bodoia, AIA. "We wanted Victorian Townhomes to enrich the neighborhood, not be something people would roll their eyes at." He needn't worry: The only ones rolling their eyes now are members of the sold-out project's market competition.—*meghan drueding*



Subtle exterior colors and brick and stone detailing draw from the area's Victorian heritage. The three-story units are designed to appeal to urban professionals and empty-nester buyers.

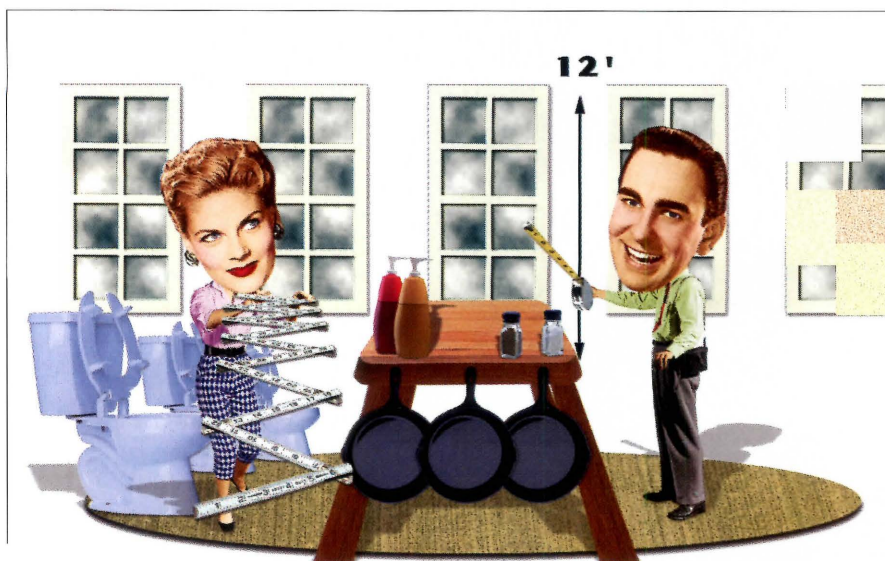
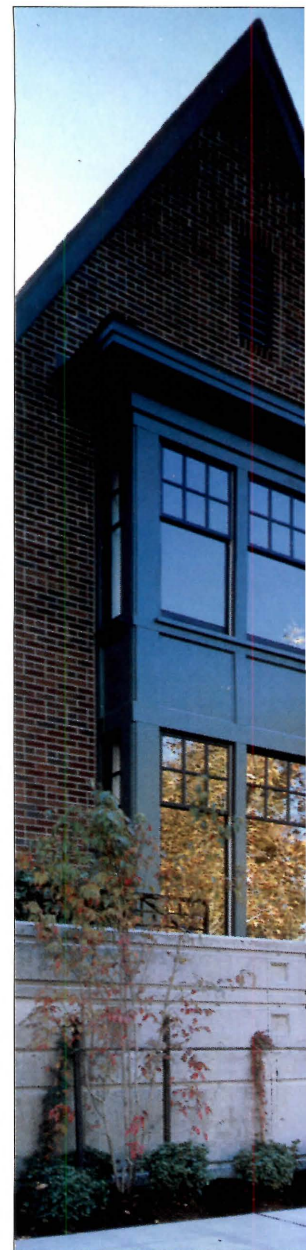


Illustration: Francisco Caceres





Photos: © Robert Pisano

## survey says ...

**a**merican new-home buyers still believe bigger is better. The proof is in the results of the NAHB's "American Dream" survey. Thirty-seven percent of the Web-based survey's 2,000 respondents said they would accept no fewer than four bedrooms in a newly constructed house; 51 percent want no fewer than two-and-a-half baths. Kitchen islands were the top choice of amenity for 76 percent of those polled; walk-in pantries and 9-foot first-floor ceilings were among the other must-haves. The majority of the respondents—approximately three-quarters—had a household income of \$50,000 or more and were between the ages of 25 and 44.

## macarthur fellows

**S**everal months before the 1999 MacArthur Fellows were announced, Richard

Scofidio heard a rumor that an architect

was under consideration for the

coveted prize. He had no idea,

however, that the architect in

question was himself—along

with his partner, Elizabeth Diller. "We were completely

surprised," he says. "We've been so busy that we haven't had time

to decide exactly what to do with the prize."

Intended to free talented people to pursue their interests, the MacArthur Fellowship is awarded each year to a varying number of individuals in many different fields. The five-year program offers grants ranging from \$30,000 to \$75,000 annually. Potential honorees are identified by anonymous "talent scouts" who make recommendations to a selection committee; winners may spend the money any way they wish. The program allows self-motivated achievers to use their creativity, talent, and dedication to make a significant contribution to society.

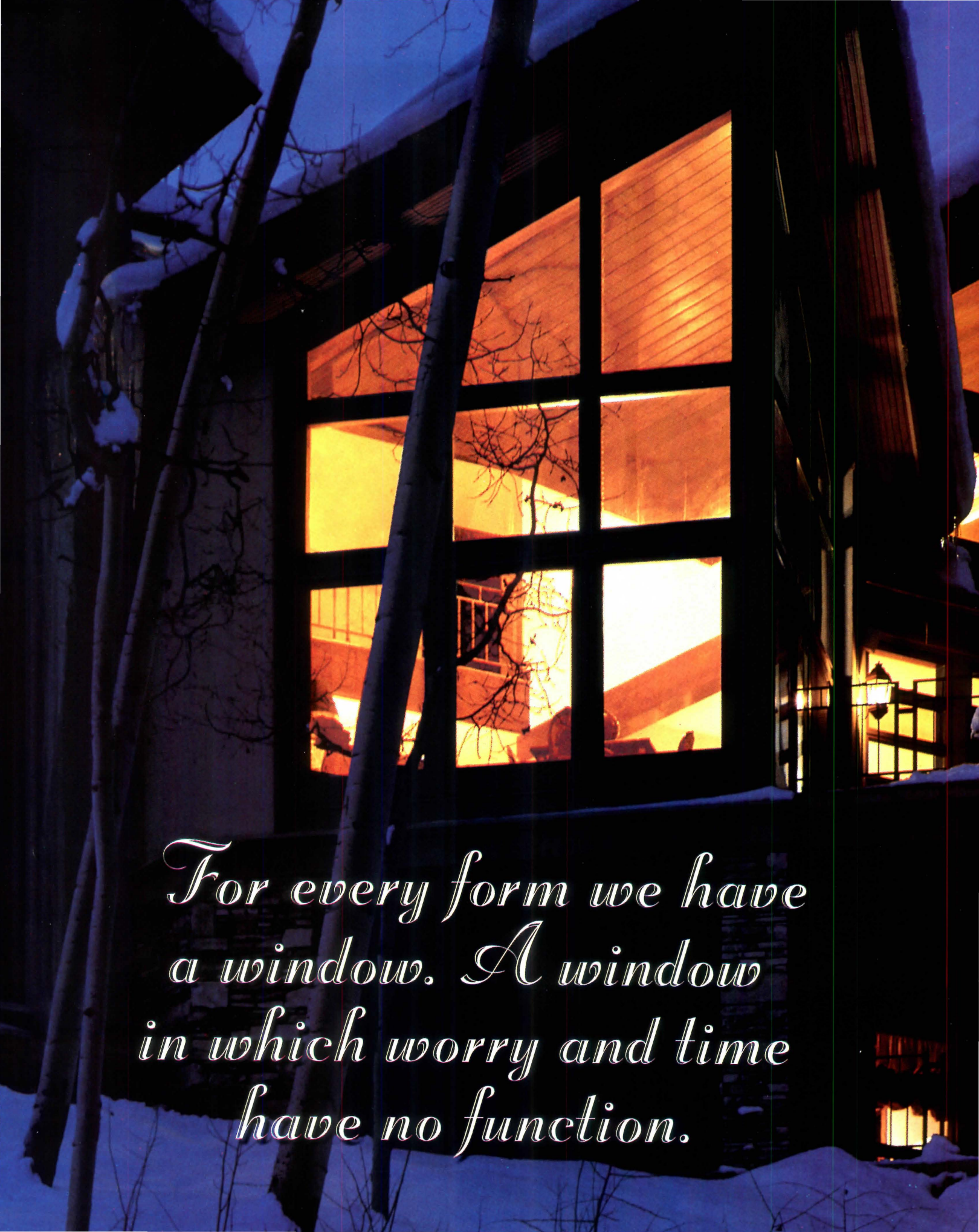
Those qualifications most certainly apply to Diller and Scofidio.

Besides teaching (he at the Cooper Union School of Architecture, she at the Princeton School of Architecture), the pair have built a progressive, multidisciplinary practice. They've designed critically acclaimed homes and have intertwined their architectural work with projects in the fields of multimedia, theater, dance, and the visual arts. With a couple of MacArthurs in their pockets, these forward-thinking architects can pursue even more avenues of ingenuity.—*m.d.*



Diller and Scofidio's Slow House is part of the Museum of Modern Art's current exhibit "The Un-Private House."





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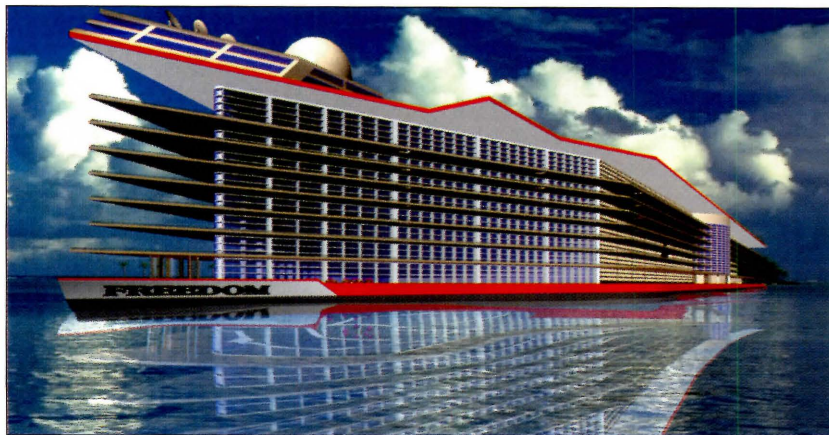
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## the shipping news

It sounds like a plot from a futuristic science-fiction movie. An idealistic Florida engineer decides to build a floating city that will continuously circumnavigate the world—a place where 50,000 people will permanently live and work.

But it's not science fiction. Engineer Norman Nixon of Sarasota, Fla., is in the process of developing this seafaring city, to be called "Freedom Ship." At 750 feet wide, nearly a mile long, and 25 stories high, the commu-



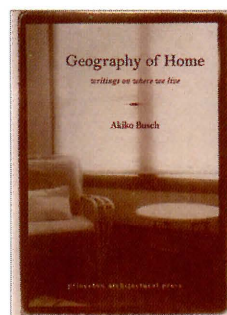
nity will be the biggest sea vessel ever constructed. Once Freedom Ship's financing is in place (which Nixon predicts will happen this fall) he'll start construction, using architects to design the project's interiors. So far, all signs point to "go" for the massive ship, which is projected to

cost \$6 billion. "We've sold 2,700 units, about 80 percent of which are residential," says Nixon. "So, we definitely know there's a market out there for us." The location of Freedom Ship's building site has not yet been determined; for more information, go to [www.freedomship.com](http://www.freedomship.com).—m.d.

## book reports

Getting tired of the small, inevitable headaches that come with designing houses? Seduced by the higher profit margins and increased publicity commercial and institutional work often bring? Pick up a copy of Akiko Busch's *Geography of Home: Writings on Where We Live*, a collection of essays that first appeared as a series in *Metropolis* magazine. This small, richly written tome evokes all the pathos and pleasure of designing and living in a house—and it does so in a highly enjoyable, almost novelistic style.

"What this book sets out to do," Busch writes in her introduction, "is look at some of the different ways we find to make things fit. Design, most of all, may be about finding this sense of fit between people, places, and things." She goes on to explore that fit by examining the many pieces that make up a home. Each chapter is devoted to a particular room of the house, and each is full of amusing anecdotes and shrewd observations about the room's past, present, and future. Busch, who has spent the past 20 years writing about design, squeezes relevant information and nuance out of the smallest personal experiences.



*Geography of Home.*  
Akiko Busch. 163 pp. New York:  
Princeton Architectural Press.  
1999. \$19.95 (hardcover).  
212.995.9620.

What make this book more than just a charming memoir, though, are the stimulating questions she poses, and the thoughtful conclusions she draws in each chapter. "Small wonder that the dining room has remained such a prominent feature on the domestic landscape," she notes, for example. "We do everything we can to edge ritual out of our lives, then rediscover its pleasures." *Geography of Home* is both elegant and funny, philosophical and thoroughly absorbing. Busch coaxes meaning and intrigue out of the front door, laundry room, and other humble elements of a house. She makes us realize afresh the fascinating and complex lessons contained in a home.—m.d.



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## calendar

### young architects award/ whitney m. young award

entry deadline: october 1, 1999

These two AIA awards programs are open to, respectively, individuals who have been licensed to practice architecture for less than 10 years, and architects who have made significant contributions to society through their work. For more information, call 202.626.7586 or go to [www.aiaonline.com](http://www.aiaonline.com).



Warren Jagger Photography

### custom home design awards

deadline for requesting  
a binder:

november 12, 1999

entry deadline:

november 26, 1999

Call Deena Shehata at  
202.736.3407 or e-mail

[dshehata@hanley-wood.com](mailto:dshehata@hanley-wood.com) to request a binder for the 23rd annual CUSTOM HOME Design Awards, sponsored by CUSTOM HOME magazine. The Warwick, R.I., residence shown above won a Merit Award in last year's contest.

### 1998-99 sub-zero kitchen design contest

deadline: december 31, 1999

Open to the trade only. Call Sub-Zero at 608.271.2233 for entry forms and rules, or e-mail [szmktg@subzero.com](mailto:szmktg@subzero.com). Interior designer Sharon Tjader's entry, right, took third place in the 1996-1997 competition.



Courtesy Sub-Zero

### asap conference and competition

october 15-19, 1999

san francisco

architecture in perspective competition deadline:

early december

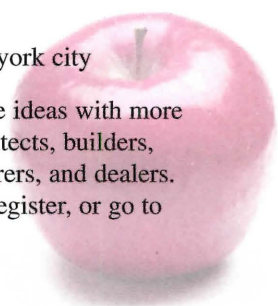
For more information about the American Society of Architectural Perspectivists' annual conference and its competition for architectural illustrators, visit ASAP's Web site at [www.asap.org](http://www.asap.org) or call 202.737.4401.

### design.y.c.

october 27-29, 1999

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### 1999 remodelers' show

november 5-7, 1999

pennsylvania convention center, philadelphia

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### build boston

november 16-18, 1999

world trade center, boston

The Boston Society of Architects' annual trade show and conference features a comprehensive exhibit floor and highly regarded educational seminars. To register, call 617.951.1433 or go to [www.architects.org](http://www.architects.org).

## manhattan project

**a**rchitects, designers, and homeowners in Manhattan now have a new resource for sophisticated kitchen products and home furnishings. The U.S. division of the Italian company Snaidero Kitchens and Design plans to open its first Manhattan showroom on October 7. The studio will contain several model kitchens as well as furniture from Snaidero's Doma Home Design Collection.



Snaidero





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## learning curves / sometimes, it pays to bend the rules a little.

**t**he Los Angeles home containing this massive stairwell spins with curves. "The clients asked us to take a soft, welcoming approach to the design," says Marshall Lewis, AIA, who's based in Cambria, Calif. "The curves are meant to make them feel enveloped, almost embraced inside the house." Steel railings and a red painted-steel column lend definition to the space; redwood siding on the upper part of the stairwell adds warmth to the home's prim white walls.



© J. Scott Smith



© Bailey Edwards Design

**t**he wave-like forms of these custom kitchen cabinet doors take their inspiration from the house's location on the Des Plaines River near Chicago. Bailey Edwards Design of Chicago created the anigre veneer doors; the home's owner found the equally offbeat painted metal handles at a retail store.



Vinesh Ghandi

**t**hadani Hetzel Partnership of Washington, D.C., designed a curved dining room wall unit for this apartment in Bombay, India. The unit's shape allows for greater storage capacity at its center. Burma teak and glass shelves provide ample display space for the owner's collection of plates and cut glass. And a hefty green marble countertop supported by teak base cabinets lends the entire piece a sense of solidity.—*m.d.*





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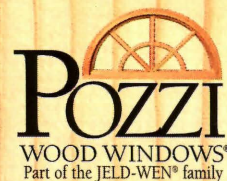


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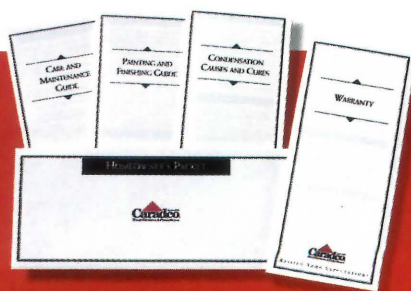
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# nature's way

architect charles delisio unplugs the machine for living.

by charles delisio, aia

**S**ustainable design may seem like just the latest trend, but we believe it's really a very traditional approach to architecture. We explain to clients that our design ideas are based in the practical traditions of architecture, using the material influences of climate, region, and place to create rich and lasting work. We show them houses that are simple and direct; we talk about daylight, fresh air, and natural materials. Our sustainable architecture doesn't rely on cutting-edge "green" materials or high-tech systems and equipment, it's about sensitive and creative building—sensitivity to the natural environment and to creating a rich way of living.

The sustainable design we practice has its origins in a time when materials were limited and technology rudimentary, when it was absolutely necessary to work with the local environment. We see this dedication to indigenous materials, vernacular roots, and natural conditions in the work of architects Greene and Greene, Fay Jones, and Luis Barragán. We see it manifested in such effective, site-



Harvey Butts



Deborah Elliott

Taking our cue from traditional, site-driven structures like this old barn in rural Pennsylvania (left), we design houses that work with—not against—nature (above). In part, that means using indigenous natural materials and appropriate technology rather than high-tech products.

driven structures as Pennsylvania farmhouses, Charleston Single Houses, and Nebraska straw-bale houses. Most Italian villages are richer and more interesting than many of

the "New Urban" towns recently built in the United States. And a simple barn built years ago in rural Pennsylvania is as beautiful as most current award-winning architecture.

## minding matter

Architects used to design buildings to work with the site and climate. Today, it's common practice to use earth-moving machinery

*continued on page 40*





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and technology to radically alter the site and climate to fit the house. Man-made materials and technology make it very easy to ignore climate, at the cost of wasted energy and damaging pollution. International styles and generic house plans obscure regional differences, leading to houses that just don't belong where they are built. New building products are intro-

ing with another couple to add a rooftop tower to their existing home, from which they can view the expansive landscape and horizons beyond and gaze at stars and thunderstorms. We will also use this structure to promote natural ventilation, to collect rain water, and to enrich the existing interior spaces.

Not all of our clients are as appreciative of their sur-

people want it anyway, if not for comfort, then for "resale" value. We've pressed this issue a number of times and have won a few victories. We believe natural ventilation is better—that a house should be open to the environment. What's more, refrigerants used to keep our houses cool (most often too cool and not very comfortable) are likely helping to destroy the earth's ozone layer, making every place hotter. A perfect irony, isn't it?

## substance and sustainability

We talk with our clients about the future and what their house will be like in 60 or 100 years. That helps them make sustainable, responsible choices about what goes into their home. Brick, stone, wood, and copper are traditional materials, and still some of the best. We build with strong and beautiful materials, we use appropriate technology, and we employ construction methods proven over time. This requires a big part of any construction budget, so we avoid the 'high-tech' gadgets and other expensive stuff.

Loading a house with pricey gimmickry won't make it rich, but connecting it intimately to the environment will. Think of a beach house. Just say the words "beach house" and a wonderful image comes to mind: lots of sunlight and

fresh air, honey-colored wood floors, a big kitchen full of family, the smell of fresh coffee and bread, a cat sitting on a white window sill, screen doors, and a porch—you must have the porch—a place to sit and watch a thunderstorm over the ocean. The sight of dark clouds and lightning, the roar of thunder, and the feel of a strong, cool breeze—all of these sensations create a rich way of living in the world.

This is the kind of design that is sustainable. It's one that works with nature and not against it, that saves precious resources, and that reconnects us to the world. So when we protect the environment for its sake, we do so for our own sake, too—for our spiritual well-being, our delight, our challenge, and our future generations.

A glass-enclosed, air-conditioned, excessively comfortable, gadget-filled house is fine for "The Jetsons," but they're just cartoon characters. Even if that kind of world were sustainable—and it never can be—we'd rather build the beach house! **ra**

*Charles DeLisio, AIA, and partner Deborah Elliott design residences, interiors, and lighting projects. Their firm, STUDIO DeLisio Architecture & Design, is based in Pittsburgh.*

loading a house with pricey gimmickry won't make it rich, but connecting it intimately to the site will.



duced every day, but not all will stand the test of time. Our clients face strong pressures to purchase the latest stuff, to be as pampered as possible, to have everything 'new.' In a culture of commercialism and consumerism, it is hard to resist the constant sales pitch.

But many clients do welcome ideas that are sensitive to the environment. Indeed, some contribute ideas of their own. Current clients of ours, a young couple, have just purchased 1,000 board feet of heart pine salvaged by a local farmer to use as flooring in their new addition. It will make a unique and beautiful floor! And we're work-

roundings, and we've sometimes found ourselves in disagreements with them over environmental concerns. We argued with two clients for months, trying to prevent them from cutting down a unique stand of tall silver maples. We were fired by another client for refusing to level and clear-cut a site. Although we lost both arguments, we feel it is our clients—and their neighbors—who really lost something valuable.

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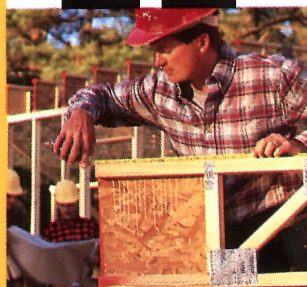
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Circle no. 22



# ready, aim, fired

how to get rid of that problem employee, without causing problems for yourself.

by sharon o'malley

**T** rue, in this labor-pinched boom time, most architects are scrambling to hire as many warm bodies as they can. The last thing on many minds is what to do if those fast hires fizzle. But with these growth spurts comes an even greater likelihood that someone you chose in haste may not work out. Are you prepared to fire the bad seed and make sure it doesn't come back to haunt you? Boom times or no, the art of firing well is one you need to master.

The first time Philadelphia-based architect Mike Hauptman, AIA, fired someone, he was amazed by what he calls "the cluelessness" of his soon-to-be-former employee, a designer he had warned many times about missing deadlines. When he missed one last, crucial deadline, he seemed genuinely surprised to be fired for the offense. He even had a prospective new boss call three weeks later for a reference. "He didn't understand why he was fired at all," recalls Hauptman, of Brawer & Hauptman Architects. Fortunately, he finally got the message and Hauptman didn't hear from him again.

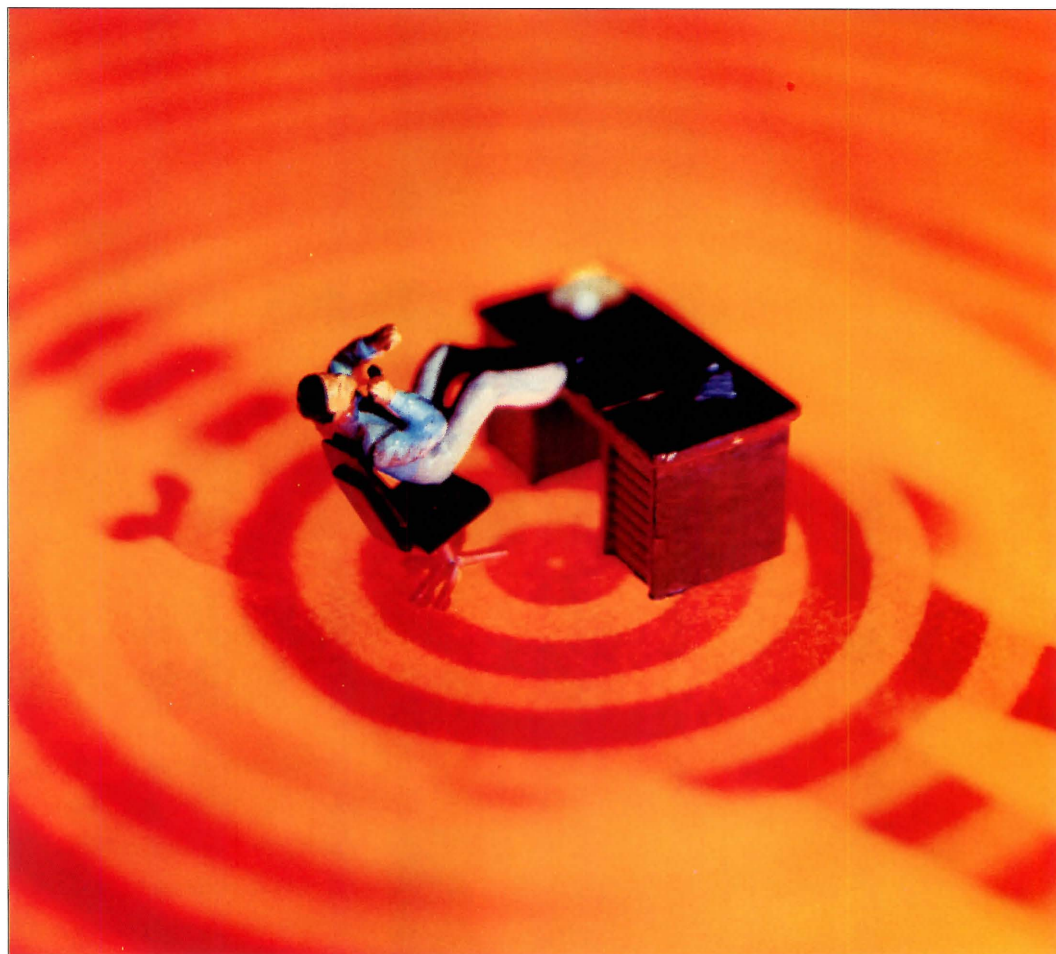


Illustration: Stephen Webster

Hauptman should consider himself lucky, says Portland, Ore., lawyer Emi Murphy. Employees who do not take responsibility for causing their own dismissal, she says, are the ones who typically drag their former bosses into court.

"The ones who don't get it, those are the ones you fire," says Murphy, of Tarlow Jordan & Schrader, a firm that represents architectural, real estate, and

construction professionals. "They have a difference of opinion with the employer; they dispute that they're underperforming. So when they get fired, they can't believe it had anything to do with their performance." Thus they haul their employers to court, claiming they were dismissed because of gender, age, race, or another legal violation rather than for doing a poor job or behaving badly at work.

## get a clue

The prevention, suggests Murphy, is to give problem employees a clue—many clues, in fact—before handing out the walking papers. "The one word I say to [employers] is 'fairness,'" she says. "The first thing juries look at when it comes to fairness is warnings."

Human resources expert Harriet Rifkin agrees that employees should have plenty of opportunities to

*continued on page 46*



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correct the offensive behavior before getting the boot. "How do you expect someone to change if you don't specifically tell them what they need to change?" she asks.

Yet, most architects keep their criticism to themselves, she says, even during performance reviews, which are the perfect time to discuss and document areas in which an employee needs to improve. "Many [employers] do not have that discussion," she says. "They're afraid of hurting somebody's feelings. They don't see the illogic in that, because you are really hurting someone's feelings—and their income—when you fire them."

being fired should  
never catch an employee  
off guard. if it does,  
you haven't been doing  
your job.

She suggests that architectural firms—even the smallest ones—adopt policies that spell out the procedure for letting an employee go. Often referred to as progressive disciplinary policies, they might allow for two to three warnings, probation or suspension, and, finally, termination if an employee does not shape up in a given time frame. However,

make sure to follow the policy equally for all employees or risk having it used against you in court.

Such a framework, says Rifkin, a human resources expert and owner of HR Consulting in Albany, N.Y., both forces the employer to give the worker a chance to make things right before facing dismissal and lets the employee know something is wrong and there could be devastating consequences.

## no surprises

Being fired should never catch an employee off guard, notes Theresa Mitchell, a compensation consultant with Watson Wyatt Worldwide, a management consulting firm in



Washington, D.C. "If it's a surprise," she says, "then you haven't done your job up to that point."

Indeed, advises Murphy, an employer should document each reprimand or warning, even if it's just a note scribbled on a day planner. "Often, the most critical evidence is people's hand-written notes," she says. "Anything done at the

*continued on page 48*

## tips for the big day

Human resources consultant Harriet Rifkin advises architects to plan ahead and stay calm when it's time to discharge an employee:

- Gather documentation of the employee's poor performance and reprimands. If you don't have written evidence, call a labor relations attorney before firing anyone.
- Make sure there's no civil rights issue involved in the firing. It is illegal to fire someone based on gender, race, marital status, disability, and, in, some states, sexual orientation.
- Know the employee's benefits: When will the last paycheck be sent? Will there be any severance pay? How can the employee arrange to stay on the company's health plan? (Firms must offer that benefit to former employees for 18 months.)
- If the employee has access to proprietary information on the company computer, have the password changed.
- Enlist another manager to witness the meeting. There should always be at least three people in the room when an employee is fired.
- Choose a neutral location—not the employee's or the boss's office.
- Do it on a Monday or Tuesday. Leaving it until Friday means the employee cannot sign up for unemployment benefits or start looking for another job for three more days. And it gives the worker the weekend to stew.
- Collect the employee's company credit card, keys, pass card, and other business property. Tell the employee that the computer is off-limits.
- Make it clear that your decision is final. This is not the time for negotiations.
- Ask the fired worker when he or she would like to come back to collect personal belongings. Accommodate requests to visit the office after business hours.
- Ask the employee to leave that day, but do not escort the person out of the building (unless the worker has become violent). There's no reason to embarrass anyone.
- Wait until after the employee leaves to tell the staff what happened. Do not give the reason for the dismissal; tell co-workers that you are respecting the privacy of their fired colleague.
- Do not give referrals. Uniformly dispatch information to prospective new employers only about dates of service and job titles. Recommending some and not others can get your firm into trouble with employees who do not get jobs because of your statements.—s.o.





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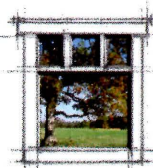


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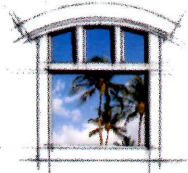
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## practice

time is valuable at trial because memories fade."

Roger Basinger, AIA, vice president of Case Group Architects in Solana Beach, Calif., agrees: "Leave a paper trail of incidents where they have not performed to their ability. Make notes and a time line of those issues, whether it be client relations or missed deadlines or errors in the drawings."

Having such evidence proves that the employee had ample chance to satisfy the employer's expectations and save his or her job. But an employer who does not speak directly to employees about their problems has no opportunity to collect such evidence, notes Rifkin, who suggests being as specific as possible about the problem and a solution. "You need to say, 'There's a performance problem here, this is what it is. You have these problems with these clients, you missed these deadlines.' Name them. Give specific dates."

If, after you've given them a chance to shape up, they continue to fail, you are within your rights to ax them. Business owners may fire employees for any reason except discrimination. A boss can fire a worker for performing poorly, for displaying a lack of creativity, for not being a team player, or for having a bad attitude, among other offenses, Murphy says.

## jury prudence

Still, she warns, more employees than bosses sit on juries, and they're often biased in favor of the fired worker. So even if the dismissal was technically legal, the jury might award damages if it concludes that it wasn't fair.

You can strengthen your chances of winning that suit, or preventing it in the first place, if you manage the discharge process well. An employee who is treated with respect, especially during the actual dismissal interview, is less likely to feel wronged, says Rifkin, and less likely to retaliate. She advises bosses to plan ahead for the conversation, know what benefits, including final pay, the worker will get, and work out a comfortable way for the employee to leave the building before co-workers learn what has happened.

It's a tough job, but one nearly every business owner will face one day. "It's difficult—especially because it's so hard to find people," says Basinger. "It seems sometimes that it's better to have that warm body than not. But we feel that quality and service are key to our success. You have to do what you have to do to survive and to make your company continue." **ra**

*Sharon O'Malley is a freelance writer in College Park, Md.*



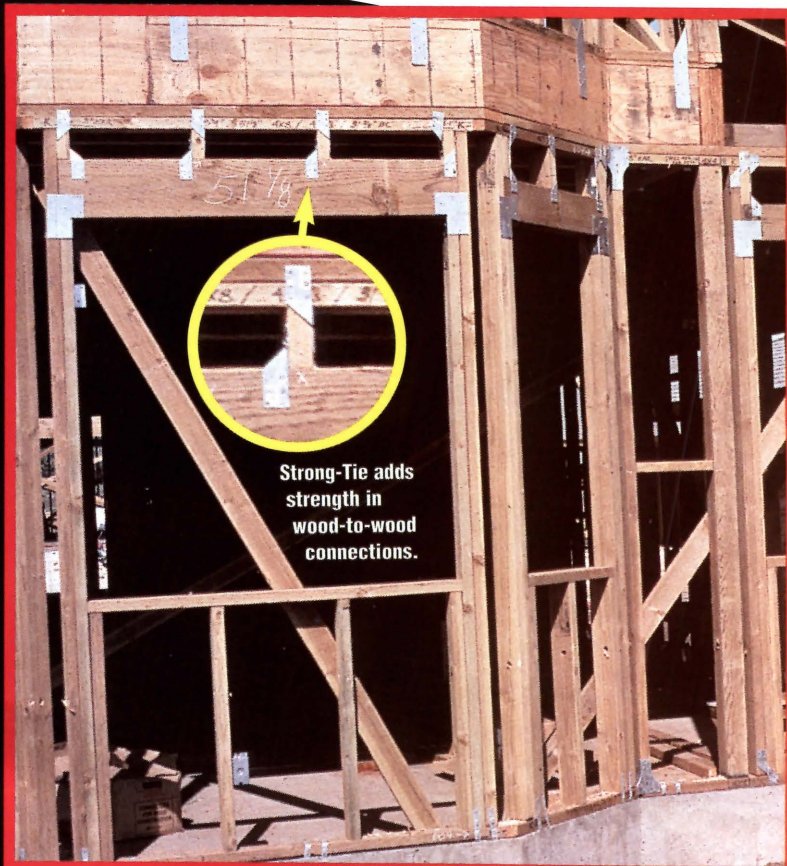
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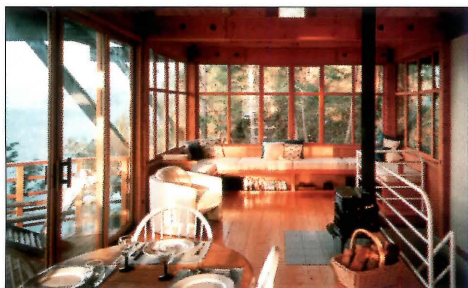
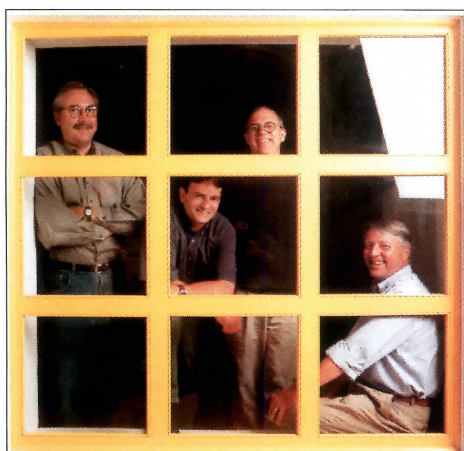


# northwest *passion*

david miller and robert hull

find the heart of a new regional style  
in the rugged landscape of the pacific coast.

by vernon mays



Partners Norm Strong, Craig Curtis, Dave Miller, and Bob Hull (top, from left) collectively run the firm. Like many of Miller/Hull's houses, the Novotny Cabin (above and right) is a simple volume with spare embellishment.

While their peers peddle brand-name residential designs, a handful of Pacific Northwest architects are getting back to basics. Richard Potestio, David Coleman, Rex Hohlbein, and the partners at Miller/Hull derive inspiration from their region's problem-solving utilitarian buildings. They answer questions of program, site, and climate with straight-forward plans and sensible materials. Modest, practical, enduring, their simple houses are simply beautiful.

## millier/hull time

David Miller and Robert Hull are Washingtonians through and through. Reared and schooled in the Pacific Northwest, they make no pretensions to being anything else. But creative vision evolves in funny ways. And to see their native region with fresh eyes, the two architects had to leave home and encounter the great wide world before they could discover the essence of what existed in their own backyard.

Although the two men, founding principals of The Miller/Hull Partnership in Seattle, kindled their partnership as college students, it was their lone experiences in distant corners of the world and in separate







Photos: (portrait, left) Danny Turner; (house, above and left): Michael Shopenn





## northwest *passion*

U.S. cities that eventually bound them together in ways mere friendship could not. Their common educational background, spiced with separate tours of duty in the Peace Corps in Brazil and Afghanistan and peppered with apprenticeships in prominent New York and Chicago architecture firms, yielded a richness of interests, purpose, and abilities that informs their thriving practice today.

"We learned something in that age when we were out of our norm—something about expediency and efficiency of materials and forms—that changed us," says Hull, FAIA. "If we had gone straight into architecture here in Washington, we would have been practicing architecture very differently."

What they have accomplished instead—through a number of modest-sized houses and a body of public and institutional work—is the invention of an aesthetic peculiar to their firm but clearly rooted in the place where they've chosen to practice. Their crafting of an authentic regionalism has been achieved by eschewing fashion in favor of direct solutions driven by site, climate, and a love of simple materials. They call it rational architecture.

### corps curriculum

Miller and Hull met and became fast friends at Washington State University, located far across the state from Seattle in tiny Pullman. When they graduated in 1968, the Vietnam War was raging full force. Faced with the dilemma of being drafted, finding alternative service, or fleeing to Canada, they both opted for the Peace Corps—Miller going to Brazil, Hull to Afghanistan.

Half a world apart, the two countries shared one goal: improving the quality of buildings made with indigenous materials and methods, says Miller, FAIA, whose dark wire-rim glasses and thoughtful responses give him a studious air. Working in a village outside Brasilia, he helped create hand-made modular bricks that, when strengthened with cement, were structurally superior to the region's common masonry. He also mass-produced privies from simple walls and slabs, an element that would crop up years later as a concrete block cistern in Miller/Hull's Marquand Retreat in eastern Washington.

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, Hull was designing schools pieced together from mud bricks. Having studied Louis Kahn's work in college and visited Kahn's buildings in Bangladesh and India, Hull saw a



The Hansman Residence was broken into two parts to preserve the scale of an established Seattle neighborhood (top). In the slot between the two volumes, the vaulted dining area has a roll-up door that lifts to frame a harbor view (above). Minimal window details and reversed board-and-batten siding lend a Modern dimension to this house with traditional roots (facing page).







Photos: Ben Benschneider/Seattle Times

*"we learned something when we were out of our norm, something that changed us."*—robert hull, faia





## northwest *passion*

connection between the fundamental spirit of traditional Islamic architecture and Kahn's expressive use of masonry construction. By building in Afghanistan with simple arches and vaults, Hull felt he was practicing Modern architecture while "trying to infuse a sense of pride in indigenous forms."

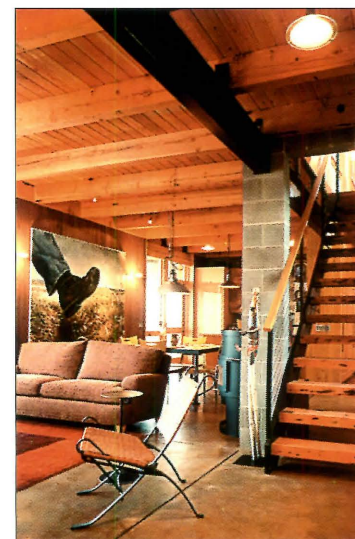
The gregarious and easygoing Hull warmed to the region's everyday use of passive solar technology, which he incorporated into his schools with courtyards to protect the children from bone-chilling winds. By chance, one of Hull's projects—a vaulted tourism building with a timelessness and structural rigor reminiscent of Kahn—was visited by Marcel Breuer. Hull parlayed the meeting into a job offer and, in 1974, he moved to New York to work for Breuer. Miller had returned from the Peace Corps by then and finished a master's degree at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He moved on to Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in Chicago.

All this time, Miller and Hull had stayed in contact, toying with the idea of starting a firm. They reunited in 1975, when Miller convinced Hull to join him at Rhone & Iredale, a Vancouver, British Columbia, firm where he had landed after moving back west. A year and a half later, ready to put their plan into action, Miller and Hull announced their intention to launch a practice in Seattle. Their employers countered by asking: How about starting an office there for us? And so they did. As luck would have it, Rhone & Iredale dissolved just over a year later and the firm's Seattle office soon became The Miller/Hull Partnership. With several public projects already in the works, the timing couldn't have been better.

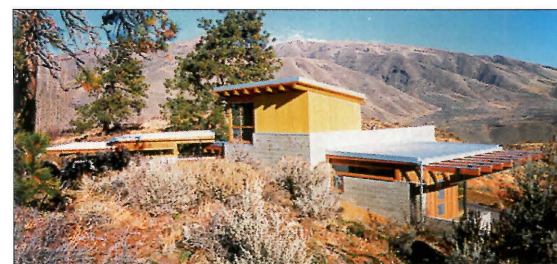
### on their own

They took the leap despite the conventional wisdom that friends should not be business partners. "But, in fact, it has really benefited our partnership, because we don't want to devalue the friendship for any reason," says Miller, whose family still vacations occasionally with Hull's. "We have always enjoyed the same kind of architecture, too—the industrial, honest stuff that is built simply and directly."

Founding the firm smack in the middle of an energy crisis was more good fortune, notes Hull. New support for solar technology gave the pair an excuse to move away from traditional residential designs, to use more glass in their projects, and to try new forms.



A camplike arrangement of buildings (right) at the Yakima Valley Orchard Residence forms a wind-sheltered outdoor space (top). The master bedroom overlooks the Cascades (above left). Recycled Douglas fir purlins and steel beams give the interior a rugged feel (above right).

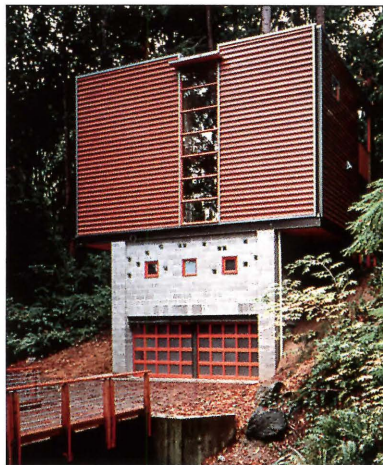
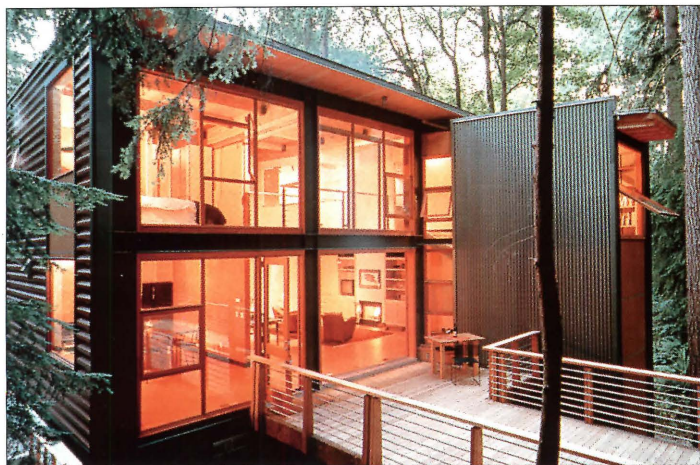


Photos, this page: (above) Ernie Duncan; (all others) Fred Houder





Photos, this page: Art Grice



The Michaels/Sisson Residence celebrates industrial materials. Pressed-fiber flooring panels, exposed decking, and glue-lam beams provide a feeling of warmth inside (above). On the back of the house, a vertical lift door opens to extend the living area onto the deck (far left). Miller/Hull cantilevered the upper stories off the concrete-block garage (left) to minimize the footprint and reduce damage to tree roots.

*“we have always enjoyed the same kind of architecture—the industrial, honest stuff.”*—david miller, faia





Miller/Hull's interest in energy-conscious design helped them establish a basic aesthetic they continue to refine today. An earth-sheltered house they designed near Moses Lake in 1980, for example, incorporated garage doors that made an enclosed space in winter and converted to an arbor-like porch in the summer. Likewise, a second house, the Kemmick Residence, was built around a south-facing greenhouse canted up a hillside with terraced rooms off to one side. "That work is important to us still," says Miller.

Indeed, the idea of operability motivates the firm two decades later. In temperate Seattle, buildings can open up for ventilation in the summertime. So in most of their houses, Miller/Hull experiments with different ways of removing the barrier between inside and out. Consequently, the firm's design approach is less preoccupied with form and more focused on climate, materials, and structure.

Miller and Hull's penchant for structural expressiveness grows from the era in which they came of age architecturally. Seattle's architecture was dominated in the 1960s by the "Northwest School." Local architects such as Paul Hayden Kirk, Ralph Anderson, and Fred Bassetti became known for pavilion-like post-and-beam houses adapted to the Pacific Northwest with floor plans organized around a courtyard. "We were influenced by that," says Miller, who is also a tenured professor of architecture at the University of Washington.

But the Northwest School architects were fond of broad overhangs and designed one-story buildings with many wings. By contrast, Miller/Hull's houses tend to read as a simple form or a collection of simple forms, often organized in response to a feature of the site.

## material change

The partnership's earliest stick-built cabins were characterized by exposed wood frames and warm wood surfaces with natural finishes or light-colored stains. Now, Hull says, they've grown wary of fir as a regional cliché: "That lodge look is something we are starting to reject." Instead of using beefy wood timbers or glue-lams, they currently strive to use wood in its most delicate form.

As a result, they're experimenting more with steel structural members and restricting the use of wood to shorter spans. "So you end up with this



potestio architect  
portland, ore.

Richard Potestio's search for a regional architecture in his hometown of Portland, Ore., has an uncommon point of departure: the traditions created 60 years ago by Pietro Belluschi and his contemporary John Yeon, two insightful outsiders who brought a fresh perspective to Pacific Northwest architecture. "They looked at simple farm buildings—the use of wood, how you frame it, and the rhythm and order of structure—that speak more to me than any historic styles," says Potestio, AIA, 43. "I'm not copying their buildings, but I am going back to their approach, which is to look at vernacular buildings and decide what is appropriate today."

Potestio grew up in Portland and attended the University of Oregon. In college he was awed by the buildings of Louis Kahn, and he studied the likes of Christopher Alexander, Bernard Maybeck, Joseph Esherick, and Rudolph Schindler. A different set of influences greeted him when he moved east in 1980. He worked for several Boston firms, where he was an unwilling slave to Postmodernism. Then he strayed to New York City before enrolling in Syracuse University's master's program in architecture in Florence, Italy.

After a summer spent bicycling from town to town in Italy, sketching villas, churches, and

urban spaces, he returned to Portland in 1989. Three years later, he started his own practice on the promise of two small beach house commissions and a spate of residential remodels. His highest-profile project to date is the Birch House (winner of a 1998 Honor Award from AIA Portland), which took its design cues from prosaic farm buildings and nearby aircraft sheds. "These old farm structures were usually made of old scraps," he observes. "They just slapped up the wood and, when they ran out of clapboard, they put up some tongue-and-groove. Over time, the buildings became collages of material that are extremely compelling."

Potestio's scheme for the Birch House combined three types of siding (concrete, clapboard, and stucco) with irregular penetrations and cutouts to elevate the simple shed to a work of architecture. For the interior, he tested 20 pigment blends to achieve a shade of white that was warm but virtually colorless. "You've got to balance a lot of light color conditions here, because we are at about the same latitude as Southern France. The sunlight can be quite brilliant. But with all the trees, the gray winter skies, and the blue river, you get a lot of blues reflected into the house."

As wood supplies diminish and costs increase, Potestio says, Northwest architects have to start



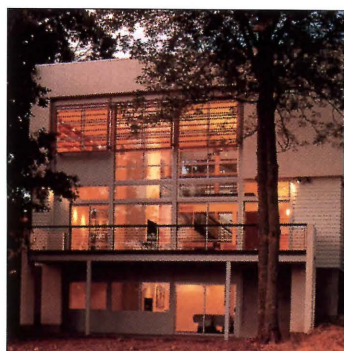
*"i reject the one-liner international style; it tends to eradicate the uniqueness of places."*—richard potestio, aia



Photos: (portrait, facing page) © Rizzo Studio; (house, this page) Sally Schoolmaster

thinking about other materials—aluminum, for instance, which he uses in combination with such light-colored woods as maple, poplar, and birch. But beyond questions of materials, Potestio maintains that architects have to labor to attain a genuine regional

aesthetic. "I reject the one-liner International Style, the notion of design that was appropriate to all places. I think that tends to eradicate the uniqueness of places, especially in the age of chain hotels and chain restaurants."—*v.m.*



For the Birch House, Potestio created a boxlike form and "imploded" the volume with cutouts and light wells (above left). Views are controlled by layers of frames, grids, and shoji screens (above). Seen from the nearby river, the house has a grand presence (left).





composite thing that really works well,” says Hull. They’re also incorporating concrete and concrete block more frequently to avoid overusing wood.

Increasingly, steel turns up on Miller/Hull buildings as cladding, often adding deep color and strong lines to the composition. And, when possible, the designers try to specify off-the-shelf components to avoid the high cost of customizing. “We’re not opposed to using a prefabricated metal building and playing with that system by putting unusual openings in it or giving it a different color,” Miller points out. “We appreciate the fact that this technology already exists.”

Although materials captivate them, the Pacific Northwest’s rugged topography is the partners’ strongest muse. “There’s usually something about the site that sets the conceptual direction,” says Miller. In the Decatur Island Cabin, for instance, they conceived of a path from the road to the water, and the path determined the house’s geometry. In the Ching Cabin, they formed a wall at the back of a meadow so the house would frame the meadow.

These excellent sites often enjoy spectacular views, as well. But Hull is quick to advise clients not to overlook secondary views in the process. “If a room has a north view into a good group of trees, it’s the most incredibly blue-green kind of aquarium window that one can get. It’s color saturated—extremely interesting. These short-range views end up doing a lot for the house.”

## firm goals

While houses helped build Miller/Hull’s national reputation, the sheer size of the 30-person firm now requires that they direct more effort to larger commissions. “Houses are challenging for us in a business sense,” says Craig Curtis, AIA, one of Miller/Hull’s lead designers and a partner since 1994. “But they are very fulfilling. We’ve decided we will never give them up, but we will limit the number we do and do them very well.” Houses make up about 20 percent of Miller/Hull’s workload and, Curtis says, are “a great ground for experimentation that can then be applied to other projects.”

Curtis, whom Hull compliments for his take-charge qualities, worked in San Diego before coming to Miller/Hull in 1987. Joining him in the partner ranks is Norm Strong, AIA, who became the firm’s third employee in 1979 and its third partner



david coleman / architecture  
seattle

David Coleman, AIA, is a relative newcomer to the Pacific Northwest—which may aid his quest to build houses with regional characteristics. Educated at the Rhode Island School of Design and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Coleman feels a strong affinity for Scandinavian design and is quick to see the parallels between the gray skies of Copenhagen and Seattle. “My goal is to create a Modernism that has a real warmth and, as the Danes would say, possesses a feeling of *hygeli*—an atmosphere of comfort and warmth,” he says.

Coleman worked in New York City and Princeton, N.J., before making his way to Burlington, Vt., where he set up an office in 1986. While building a practice that stretched from New England to Florida, Coleman was drawn to the West Coast by friends who had moved there. “I started feeling limited and restless in New England. I was interested in community planning and co-housing and felt there wasn’t much opportunity there in those areas.”

In 1993, he rented office space in Seattle with the intent of keeping a toehold in Vermont as well. But after three years of madness dashing from coast to coast, he forced himself to commit to a single locale. Seattle won out. Coleman’s first Northwest project was

his own home, a contemporary spin on the ubiquitous gable-form house. Influencing his design was the Nordic Classical style, which Coleman became interested in while studying in Denmark. “It represented a regional interpretation of Classical Revival, but it was a stripped-down style—really a precursor to Danish Modern. They used lots of color.”

Coleman doesn’t shy away from color, either. But he is a Modernist at heart, intent on developing an architecture that reinterprets local building traditions. “In looking at some of the historical precedents here—the Craftsman style, post-and-beam construction, the great lodges of the West—I know where I want to head,” he declares.

In his own residence in Seattle’s Queen Anne Hill neighborhood, Coleman parroted the use of wide-plank flooring with an up-to-date material: 12-inch-wide sections of tongue-and-groove medium-density fiberboard with a hand-rubbed Swedish finish. The core wall of the house incorporates flush paneling that conceals storage nooks, a Modern take on a Victorian theme. Another house now in design renders a post-and-beam aesthetic in steel.

Being attuned to daylighting, Coleman is meticulous about where he places glass in his houses. “Some of the surfaces in my house are designed so that the



*"my goal is to create a modernism that has a real warmth."*—david coleman, aia



Photos, this page: © Laurie Black

setting sun will enter a room, illuminate a wall plane, and reflect light back into the space. You get this beautiful glow when the sun is setting. That's because the glazing is handled in a rigorous way."

His respect for the environ-

ment carries through to his choice of materials (like the flooring in his house) and products. "It's the same with how a building uses energy," he adds. "In all of my projects I use European front-loading washers; it's a small thing, but it saves water."—v.m.



Coleman's own house nods to tradition with an A-frame roof that is part of a more complex composition (far left). The living room's wood-paneled wall incorporates such amenities as a fireplace (above) and mini-office (left).





in 1985. (Like Miller and Hull, Curtis and Strong are Washington State grads.) Although known inside the firm for his good common sense about construction, Strong's interest in the business side of the profession is one of the firm's vital strengths. "We'd be in bad shape if we didn't have him," Hull admits.

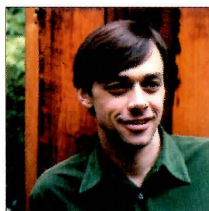
Because the firm is involved in so many different kinds of projects—including, for example, a 1999 AIA Honor Award-winning academic building at Olympic College in Shelton, Washington—every employee sooner or later gets to work on a house and a larger-scaled job. "We still think of ourselves as a studio—a big studio that breaks into different parts at different times," says Hull.

Miller/Hull attracts talented young architects who are interested in the firm's work and drawn to the energetic environment. "We want people who are good designers, but we really are looking for well-rounded people," says Curtis. One way the principals help the staff grow professionally is through the weekly design panel, a Thursday afternoon project pin-up session that combines cold beer with intense discussion. Everyone is invited to comment, "but we try to be clear about what's open to discussion when we put the drawings up," says Hull. Each project gets reviewed at several stages during design and eventually the entire staff makes a site visit together. Says Hull: "That's our method of keeping things alive."

Having built the firm on a solid foundation, Miller and Hull are also cultivating the next generation of leaders. Curtis and Strong are generally perceived as the heirs apparent of the practice. And Hull, who recalls the void left at Breuer's firm when he retired, believes there's a sound transition team in place at Miller/Hull.

Not that he and Miller are heading into the sunset anytime soon. They are actively seeking important commissions and continue to build the firm. But they're undoubtedly at a point where they can enjoy a measure of success. For their journey has come full circle: world travels behind them; youthful gambles complete. Great lessons in culture, construction, and life were learned those many years ago. But, as David Miller and Robert Hull have found out, home is where their art is. *ra*

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



rex hohlbein architects  
woodinville, wash.

Six years ago, Rex Hohlbein decided that, for the sake of his architecture, it was time to get out of the city. Wanting to get closer to the land and spend more time with his family, he moved his office from a downtown studio to his home in Woodinville, 25 miles outside Seattle.

Hohlbein converted the hayloft of an old horse barn into his studio and built a shop downstairs so he can test new details at full scale. His practice is solidly grounded in residential architecture, striking a balance between new construction and remodeling. "I'm feeling pretty fulfilled and challenged by that," he says.

Hohlbein, 41, graduated from Washington State University in 1982. During school he spent a semester studying in Copenhagen, then worked in a German factory for the summer. Living in Europe taught him a respect for the relationship between building and landscape and the importance of light in human spaces. "In Denmark, especially, I found there's a real concern with light, which is shared with the Pacific Northwest. They have limited light and want to maximize it."

After graduation, he moved to Seattle and, in 1987, launched Rex Hohlbein Architects, a three-person office that includes himself; his wife, Cindy Hohlbein, who manages the books; and proj-

ect architect Matthew Waddington.

Working in his home region, Hohlbein has come to terms with its unique climate. "We get a lot of drizzle, a lot of constant rain, and a lot of overcast days. That affects architects, because in every detail, every way you bring two materials together, the first thing you attack is how to keep the rain out. Coupled with that are the overcast days, which bring a soft light." Hohlbein says the two climatic factors are at odds with each other: Large overhangs keep the rain out, but they block the light you'd like to have inside on cloudy days. "This opposing condition creates a tension that makes a building exciting. It brings potential."

Hohlbein strives to select materials that will look better over time. Rather than use cedar and fir, which are so readily available in the Northwest, he juxtaposes wood with raw concrete. "Then if you throw in materials such as steel, you have a palette that looks like it belongs in this region."

How a house feels is just as important to him as how it looks. In some cases, he challenges his own design decisions by wondering: How would a farmer have built this? "When it's all said and done, you don't want the building to look like it's been designed. You want it to feel like that's the way the farmer did it."—*v.m.*



*“when it’s all said and done, you want the building to feel like that’s the way the farmer did it.”* —rex hohlbein



In the Quackenbush Residence, a summer home on Vashon Island, Hohlbein took creative liberties with traditional elements. Stained board-and-batten cedar siding contrasts with the concrete structural slab that shelters the fireplace (left). A bedroom dormer and a glazed wall face Puget Sound (below left). Inside, Hohlbein used Douglas fir plywood for ceilings and walls; floors are 1x4 clear Douglas fir (below right).



Photos, this page: © Michael Jensen









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This New York City loft kitchen (also shown on the following pages) helps make food preparation, cooking, and cleanup a painless experience.

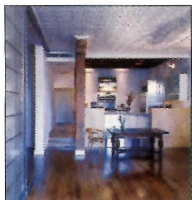


# five easy kitchens

by meghan drueding

Countless hours of thought, time,  
sweat, and possibly tears went  
into the five kitchens we show  
on the following pages. But their  
architects somehow managed  
to produce **high-efficiency** rooms  
that function **effortlessly**. They're  
**low-maintenance, user-friendly,**  
and cunningly conducive to cooking,  
eating, and social gathering. Read  
on for the **hard-working** stories  
of these five **easy** kitchens.





## city slicker

According to Chandler Pierce, AIA, of Cecil, Pierce & Associates, designing a loft kitchen holds some unusual challenges.

"The living spaces in a loft are long and narrow, and the kitchen is usually in the middle rather than on either end," says the New York City-based architect. "To get away from the 'bowling alley' effect, you've got to make sure the kitchen area is well-defined." The Generation-X owner of this 2,000-square-foot Manhattan loft, investment banker Yadey Yawand-Wossen, gave Pierce free rein to do all the "defining" he wanted.

Rather than interrupt the apartment's open flow by enclosing the kitchen, Pierce left it open on two sides, to the hallway and dining room. He used varied floor and ceiling heights to establish the room's independent identity. Terra-cotta floor tiles provide a nice texture and color change from the wide-board, white-oak floors elsewhere in the apartment, without being jarringly different. The pressed-tin ceiling—left over from the building's days as a rope warehouse—was

ripped out above the kitchen to expose wire-brushed, polyurethaned wooden beams. Pierce raised the kitchen floor 2 inches to allow room underneath it for plumbing pipes; the elevated floor also contributes to the sense of separation from other rooms.

While Yawand-Wossen doesn't cook on a daily basis, she does entertain frequently. "When I make a mess, I make a big mess," she says. So Pierce made sure she had a kitchen with low-maintenance surfaces and lots of counter space. Her verdict: Thumbs up. "The stainless steel counters are great—very easy to clean," she reports. "And all I have to do to clean the butcher block is wipe it down with linseed oil every once in a while."

Midway through the project, Pierce and Yawand-Wossen faced the familiar problem of a ballooning budget. To economize, they used custom-made, birch-veneered lower cabinets as originally planned, but saved on stock steel-and-glass overhead units from Ikea. The on-the-fly solution and eclectic material mix exemplify the casual, laid-back attitude that made lofts popular in the first place.



Pierce obtained the stainless steel, waxed concrete, butcher block, and marble countertops (above and right) from local suppliers. A second sink (above) facilitates food prep; sturdy bookshelves (right) separate the kitchen and hallway.

**architect/builder:**

Cecil, Pierce & Associates, Architects, New York

**project size:**

234 square feet

**construction cost:**

\$100 a square foot





Photos: © Eduard Hueber

*“the stainless steel counters are great—very easy to clean.  
and all I have to do to clean the butcher block is wipe it  
down with linseed oil every once in a while.”*

—yadey yawand-wossen, owner





# casual attire

The design world may be pushing the latest in high-tech chic for kitchens, but some homeowners, like architect Georgie Kajer's young clients on this Pasadena, Calif., remodel, aren't biting.

"They said they wanted it to be 'low-tech,'" recalls Kajer. "They didn't want complex lighting systems, futuristic appliances, or computerized anything." Instead, they asked her for a kitchen at ease with their home's period style and with their casual style of entertaining.

Kajer began the project by reorganizing the first floor of the original house, a 1915 combination of Arts and Crafts and Victorian. She fused a space formerly chopped into small kitchen, utility room, powder room, and bedroom into one large kitchen. The new kitchen opens to the living room and leads through French doors to the terrace and pool. A butler's pantry connects the kitchen to the dining room.

To preserve the home's time-tested appeal, Kajer spec'd period-appropriate materials. But everything—

down to the bronze Pottery Barn drawer pulls—is brand new. French limestone counters are durable and attractive, as is the island's butcher-block top. Custom cabinets and hand-hewn ceiling beams are vertical-grain Douglas fir. Other old-house touches include a porcelain farm sink and pendant light fixtures. Per the clients' wish, the pendants are the room's only electric light source. By moving overhead storage to the butler's pantry, though, Kajer opened window walls to Southern California's abundant natural light.

And nothing blocks that flow of light, not even the large kitchen island. Kajer designed it to match the home's crafts-heavy look, but lightened its bulk with furniture-style detailing. "The island is so big that leaving it a solid piece would have overwhelmed the room," she says. "We designed it to look like a table." Carved into its legs is a tulip motif, patterned after lanterns on the home's exterior. Equipped with a vegetable sink, the island gives the clients another place to eat and prepare food. Like the rest of the kitchen, its low-tech appearance masks a high-intensity level of performance.



Original beadboard paneling covers the walls in the butler's pantry (above). A stainless steel oven, refrigerator, and dishwasher blend unobtrusively into the Douglas fir cabinetry (right). An iron pot rack over the island and a steel utensil rack above the stove help reduce counter clutter. Two sets of French doors open the kitchen up to the dining room and to the outdoors (top left).

**architect:**

Kajer Architects, Pasadena, Calif.

**builder/contractor:**

Thomas Lake Builders, Pasadena

**project size:**

392 square feet

**construction cost:**

Withheld





Photos: © Eric Staudenmaier

*“they said they wanted it to be ‘low-tech.’*

*they didn’t want complex lighting systems, futuristic  
appliances, or computerized anything.”*

—georgie kajer, aia





# evolution theory

The Wayzata, Minn., house containing this remodeled kitchen gives a whole new meaning to the term “multigenerational.”

More than 30 years ago, a young couple hired Minneapolis architect Leisl Close to design a residence on the lakefront lot they’d just bought. There they raised a family, and eventually watched their children move out and into homes of their own.

When the two were alone in the house again, they decided to renovate it, piece by piece. That’s where the Minneapolis firm of Meyer Scherer & Rockcastle came in.

Architect Tom Meyer says the kitchen is the last installment of a seven-year remodeling program. The clients didn’t want to change the room’s minimalist nature; they simply wanted to adapt it to their changed needs, now that they had the resources and time to do so.

“We tried to keep the simple, linear detailing of the old kitchen,” Meyer explains. “They were looking to upgrade materialwise,

and to make it a more functional space.”

Now that her children were gone, the woman of the house wanted her office moved from a separate room into the new kitchen. So Meyer took down the wall between her small office and the old kitchen. He left the skylight and the old office’s corner window in place to bring in more light and views of the heavily wooded site.

Having gained some elbow room, Meyer reconfigured appliances to create a more efficient work triangle and increase counter space. He replaced the worn plastic laminate countertops with solid granite surfaces. Lacewood and mahogany cabinets provide storage, and easy-to-clean stainless steel covers the appliances. The finished kitchen marks the end of the house’s transformation from family quarters to a home tailor-made for two.

**architect:**

Meyer Scherer & Rockcastle,  
Minneapolis

**builder/contractor:**

Bill Zeigler, Corcoran, Minn.

**project size:**

352 square feet, including casual dining alcove

**construction cost:**

Withheld



A sensitively placed awning window above the desk (top left) provides the wife with lake views while she balances her checkbook or surfs the Internet. In deference to the couple’s habit of taking breakfast and lunch in the kitchen, Meyer designed an alcove for casual eating (above). Steel and granite shelves hold plants, pots, and dishes (right); the skylight and corner window help counteract dim Minnesota winters.



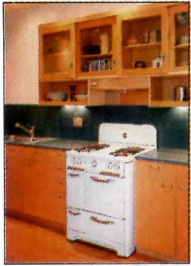


Photos: Lea Babcock

*“we tried to keep the simple, linear detailing of the  
old kitchen. they were looking to upgrade materialwise,  
and to make it a more functional space.”*

—tom meyer, aia





# artistic temperament

Craig Steely's hand-crafted kitchen in San Francisco could just as easily be part of a rustic country home or casual vacation cottage.

The architect and his wife achieved an exceptional level of livability through their inventive use of materials and space and their meticulous attention to detail.

When the couple moved into the circa-1910 Edwardian, the kitchen was half its current size. Steely refinished the back porch, incorporating it into the kitchen as a breakfast room. A corrugated steel roof and fir joists allude to the breakfast room's former life. Steely kept its divided-light windows and added tall new doors. "One of our goals was to preserve the home's Edwardian proportions," he says.

Most of the kitchen's furniture and maple cabinetry were designed and built by the architect himself. Steely salvaged the upper cabinets' sliding glass doors from a science lab. The built-in wine rack above them reduces clutter and draws the eye upward, expanding the impression of space. It's just one of the many practical little details that give this slender kitchen lots of appeal.

*continued on page 76*



Photos: J. D. Peterson

Steely found the boxy old stove (top left) in the home's garage. He cleaned it up and installed it, then found cabinet and drawer pulls to match. By lining the breakfast area (above) almost entirely with windows, Steely made it seem much larger than it really is. The strategy also brings light into the kitchen itself, which has only one window.

**architect/builder:**

Steely Architects, San Francisco

**builder/contractor:**

Craig Steely

**project size:**

300 square feet

**construction cost:**

Withheld

*"one of our goals was to preserve the home's edwardian proportions."*

—craig steely



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## down time

This Washington, D.C., rowhouse kitchen is a study in contrasts.

It's located in the house's English basement, yet it's filled with sunlight. Its vanilla-painted brick walls and limestone floor evoke a quaint historical dwelling, but stainless steel cabinets and appliances give it a futuristic edge. It's well-organized and designed for entertaining, and at the same time completely informal. The success of these juxtapositions is in large part due to the room's unusual placement, says architect Mark McInturff. "It's really the only place in the house where we had the freedom to expand beyond the materials and style of the upstairs rooms," he says. "We wanted it to feel cozy and earthy, like the lower floor of an Italian palazzo."

Rather than design a conventional kitchen that just happened to be in a basement, the Bethesda, Md.-based architect took advantage of the room's peculiarities. He actually lowered the flat ceiling, then vaulted it to create the illusion of greater



Photos: Andrew Lautman

height. Lowering the floor a few inches added extra headroom. Black metal sconces push light to the tops of the walls, enhancing the vault's "lift." In the room's center, a McInturff-designed light fixture echoes the vault's curve and doubles as a handy pot rack. "We were worried that the fixture wouldn't be strong enough to hold all of the clients' pots," he says. "Then the contractor started doing chin-ups on it, and we figured it was okay." *ra*

To keep the kitchen feeling relaxed and informal, McInturff designed open shelves rather than cabinets (above). Sharing the home's bottom floor with the kitchen is the dining room, which in turn leads to a back patio (top left). The setup facilitates outdoor dining and entertaining.

**architect:**

McInturff Architects, Bethesda, Md.

**builder/contractor:**

Rudolf Heirman, Silver Spring, Md.

**project size:**

300 square feet

**construction cost:**

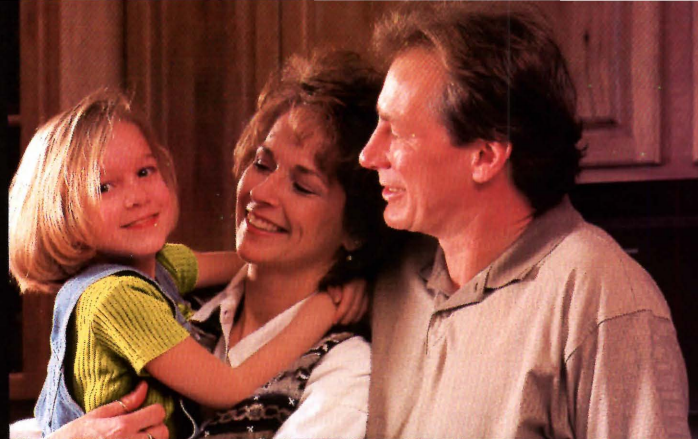
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*"we wanted it to feel cozy and earthy, like the lower floor of an italian palazzo."*

—mark mcinturff, aia



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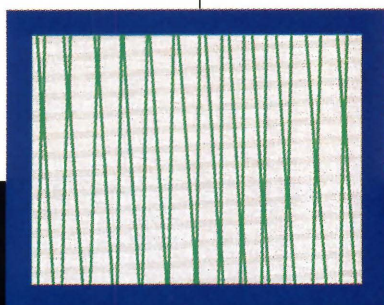


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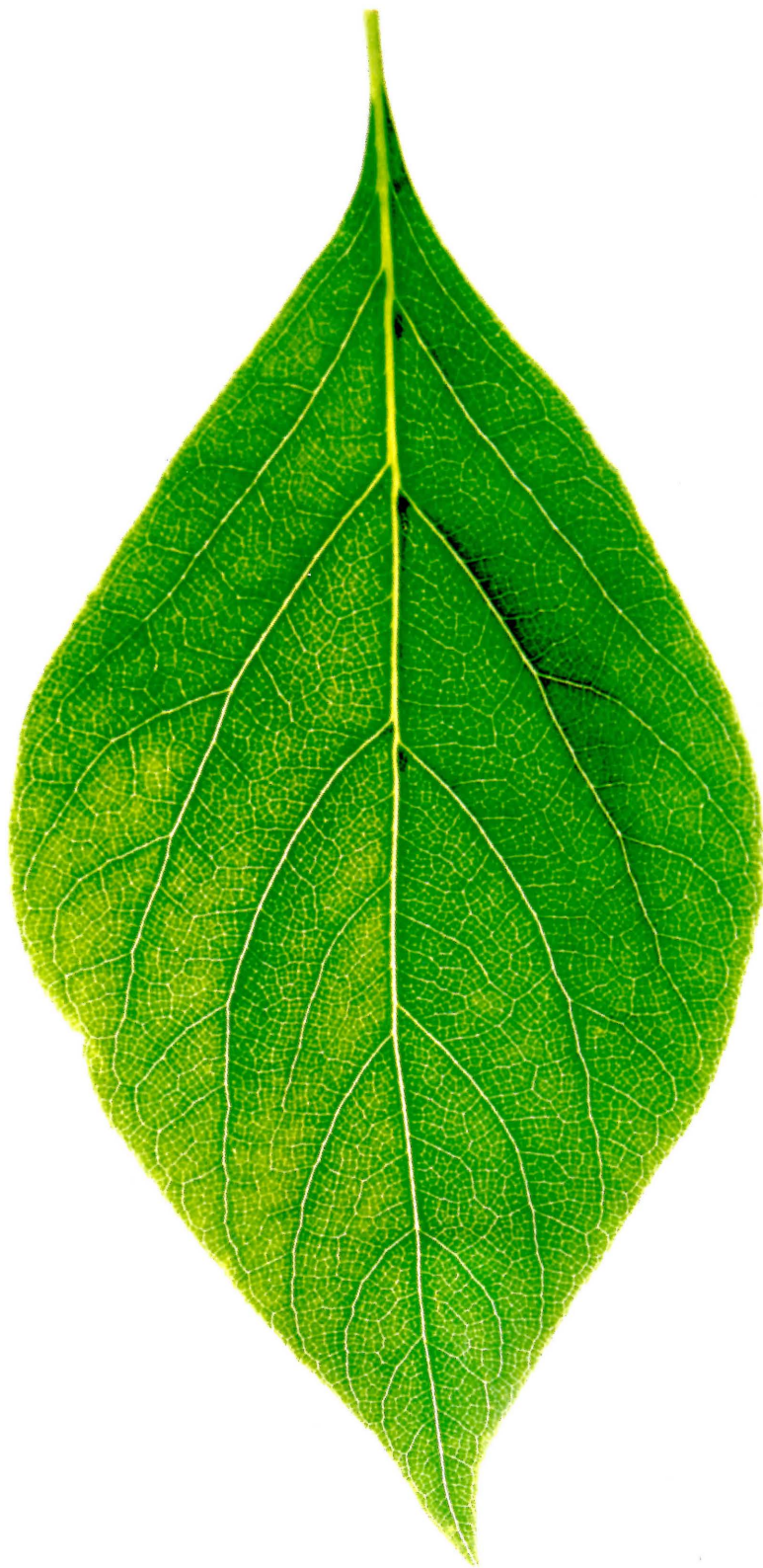
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# new leaf

Americans are cultivating their gardens again. They're backing up their SUVs to Smith & Hawken and dragging home teak benches, bird baths, and Felco pruners. Maybe we have Martha Stewart to thank—or to blame. Magazines, books, and television shows about houses and gardens are cropping up like dandelions, giving homeowners and new-home clients lots of ideas. The renewed passion for home design is obviously a great boon to residential architects, but what does this lust for landscaping mean for your business? Ready or not, it means more of your projects will include a landscape architect or designer on the team.

As with interior designers, landscape professionals are both your friends and your foes. They're your

by dirk sutro



Courtesy Pamela Burton & Co.

The outdoor spaces that landscape architect Pamela Burton designed for this Toluca Lake, Calif., house (also shown on the following page) reflect architect Thane Roberts' floor plan. Each garden area relates to an interior space.

oehardscape landscapeharc

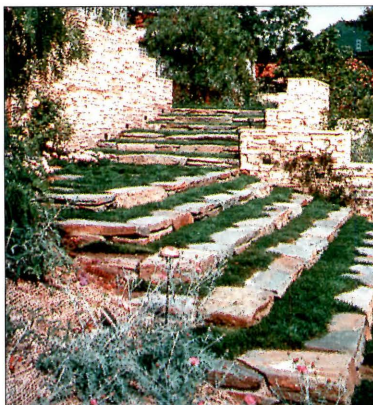




*“architecture and  
landscape are two  
modes of the same  
visual and spatial  
continuum.”*

*—pamela burton*

Burton blended such native plants as California sycamore and pepper trees with splashes of non-native color and texture in her landscape design for the Toluca Lake home. Outdoor elements include fences, steps, and garden walls.



Courtesy Pamela Burton & Co.

competitors for budget money, creative control, and client allegiance. And they're potentially among your best collaborators; the Ira Gershwin to your George, they can make your work sing. Yet harmonizing your interests and theirs while also satisfying the clients' goals is tricky business. For the good of the project, you must make them your allies. First, however, it helps to understand the slight chip they have on their shoulders.

### root of the problem

It seems some of them feel they don't have your highest regard. At times, they're belittled as mere “plant people,” brought in at the last minute to garnish a completed project. “Life is just too short to work with architects who don't respect what we're doing,” says Morgan Wheelock, FASLA, of Somerville, Mass., and Palm Beach, Fla. “What we're doing as landscape architects is just as intentional as anything they're doing with the building. We're not just getting a contractor to throw plants off a truck and plant them.”

Wheelock designs estate gardens

and works closely with residential architects, most of whom understand and appreciate his contribution to their projects. But sometimes it's an uphill battle to explain the value of that contribution. Everyone thinks plants, pavers, benches, trellises, and walls are pretty, but not everyone thinks they're important. They're not structure; they're not shelter. In some cases, they're functional, but only moderately so. There's nothing vital about landscape design. And yet, that's exactly what it is: vital. It's about living things and how they can come together with man and man-made objects in ways that enhance them all.

Connecting with nature is a profound sensory and emotional experience. Doing so within the safety and control of your own domain adds another level of delight. A well-designed house provides an escape from the world, while a successfully landscaped property allows you to reconnect with that world on your own terms.

Of course, when anyone starts talking about senses and feelings, everything gets fuzzy and subjective. And



it's the biggest obstacle those misunderstood landscape architects face, both with architects and with clients. "Architecture often is a systematic solving of functional problems in the most beautiful aesthetic way, whereas landscape can be like quicksilver," Wheelock explains. "There's no real answer—you can't hold it, you can't shape it very easily."

Because its effects are so difficult to conceptualize, landscape design is often the first "extra" to fall victim to budget cuts. But a design tacked on later is seldom as powerful or effective as one that occurs when all the major decisions of the project are made. Custom clients don't always understand the interconnectedness of those decisions, thinking the process is a simple à la carte menu of choices.

Instead of removing landscape design entirely from the menu, you might suggest they trim the scope of the landscape architect's involvement in the project. "It's hard to skimp on the house. It's easier not to do the landscape immediately, but the hardest work is the design, and that's what you ought to do early on," says Boston-based architect Jeremiah Eck, FAIA. "Landscape architects tend to charge like architects, say 12 percent to 15 percent of construction. On a \$50,000 landscape, that's \$5,000. But it's probably only \$1,000 or so to get a conceptual plan, and that makes all the sense in the world."

### primed and ready

Generally, the earlier you link the two disciplines, the stronger their connec-

Sometimes a landscape professional helps an architect simplify the garden, as with this home in Holicong, Pa., designed by Jeremiah Eck. Landscape architect Arthur Edward Bye contoured the land around the home to achieve varying patterns of light and shadow and to help drainage.



Courtesy Jeremiah Eck Architects





## a new leaf



In San Diego, landscape architects Martin Poirier and Andrew Spurlock worked with architect Mark Steele to design patios, terraces, and courtyards that take their forms and proportions from the house. They preserved mature oak trees as focal elements in their plan and used continuous paving materials to connect indoor and outdoor spaces.



Photos: © David Hewitt/Anne Garrison

tion will be. And that's especially important in the gentler climates, where the outdoor living is easy. "Architecture and landscape are two modes of the same visual and spatial continuum," says Los Angeles-based landscape architect Pamela Burton, who has created new gardens for homes by such prominent Modern architects as Richard Neutra. Although she's worked on existing houses, she prefers to come in at the beginning of a project.

For Joe Desponzio, professor of landscape architecture at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, that ground-floor timing is crucial: "Landscape architects bring sensitivities an architect generally doesn't have: how the house sits on the ground, how to integrate the architecture into the landscape, what you do with the

land between your house and the horizon. That's the domain of landscape architecture."

Of course, most architects feel they do have those sensitivities. You're right at home making decisions about siting and even basic garden plans. At what point in the process you bring the landscape architect aboard is really a matter of personal working style, project size and complexity, and client preference. Still, you help yourself and the project if you're clear in your own mind about how you work best. Once you've established that, bring the landscape professionals on as early as you comfortably can.

"Typically, the way I deal with landscaping is I conceptualize it in the design process," says architect Rob Bramhall, AIA, of Andover, Mass. "I sort of lay out generic land-





*“life is just too  
short to work with  
architects who  
don’t respect  
what we’re doing.”  
—morgan wheelock, fasla*

scaping, and then clients will often get a landscape architect involved toward the end. I like to bring them in where the architecture is fairly established and let the landscape develop alongside it.”

Jeremiah Eck agrees. “For me the ideal time to bring them in is right after schematics. I know that some landscape architects feel they should be in from the beginning, but I believe you get a handle on the house first, and get your own intuitions straight, then bring in the landscape architect to confirm or deny those intuitions. I know they’d like to be in early on, but I resist that—only because I don’t feel comfortable dealing with the site completely until I have a firmer sense of the concept for the house. As an architect, I feel comfortable going to the site, figuring out where the house should be, looking at aspects of the site in ways similar to what a landscape architect would do.”

### **a good site better**

However, if you have a particularly difficult site, consulting a landscape architect early on may make your job con-



Courtesy Morgan Wheelock

A courtyard, a pool, and garden walls lend a sense of privacy to a house designed by Merrill and Pastor Architects on a tight infill site in Vero Beach, Fla. Landscape architect Morgan Wheelock used landscape elements to control views within and beyond the garden.

# scapehardscapelandscape



a new leaf



*"i've got to  
understand the  
building to as great a  
degree as anyone in  
the architect's office."*

*—martin poirier, asla*



Courtesy Spurlock Poirier

For a pair of homes in Coronado, Calif., designed by architects Ted Smith and Kathleen McCormick, Spurlock and Poirier developed strong patterns for plantscape and hardscape that echo the architecture's bold forms.

siderably easier. Morgan Wheelock works frequently with architect Scott Merrill, AIA, of Merrill and Pastor Architects in Vero Beach, Fla. Their collaboration on a tight Vero Beach site turned a troubled project into a wonderfully successful home. Located in a dense neighborhood laid out by neotraditionalist planner/architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, the site had Merrill scratching his head through several rounds of schematics.

"It was a truncated, pie-shaped lot," Wheelock recalls. "Scott did a bunch of sketches showing the house/terrace/pool/garden/guest house crammed into each other. But when we began looking at it, we realized the idea was not where we could fit everything, but where we could force perspective to imply 'borrowed' landscape beyond the garden walls, which are 11 feet high. That's where we could do the magic to make this seem much bigger than it is."

With the two of them working so closely together, they were able to make both the house and the garden greater than the sum of the parts. "We expressed the building as a sort of

donut: a courtyard house, one room deep, around the garden's perimeter," Wheelock says. "In a way, the house became the garden walls."

"Despite the proximity of other homes, there's incredible privacy lent to the interior of the property," Merrill says of Wheelock's landscape plan. "He picked up the odd geometry of the lot and the footprint of the house. Even the farthest part of his installation was not far from the house, so there was no letting down of the relationship between house and garden."

## terror flora

The best landscape architects don't want to turn your house into some kind of rococo madness. They want to help bring your vision to life. And they take their responsibility very seriously.

"The thing about collaborating as a landscape architect is that I've got to understand the building to as great a degree as anyone in the architect's office," says San Diego-based Martin Poirier, ASLA, of Spurlock Poirier. "I've got to know their intent with the architecture as they're developing it."

capelandscapehardscapela



Indeed, they're much more than "plant people," looking for ways to garnish your project and your wages. In some cases, they pay for their services simply by identifying improvements to a site that cost little or no money.

"Sometimes the most important things they do are subtractive," Eck says. "They analyze the long-term viability of existing plant materials. And the potential for eliminating plantings rather than adding can be just as intriguing."

Knowing precisely what to add, what to take away, and what to leave intact on the site are the greatest strengths of the landscape architect. If it hasn't occurred to your clients to hire one, you may want to suggest it for their sake and yours. They can help you avoid some "terrible mistakes," cautions Santa Barbara, Calif.-based landscape architect Isabel Greene, a descendant of famed architects Greene and Greene. "For example, preserving trees on a site can add tremendous value to a project, both aesthetically and financially."

The emotional effects of landscape architects' work may be like quicksilver, but many of their contributions are solid as a rock. Says Greene, "You have a lot to gain by including the landscape dimension in your project. It's going to look better in a magazine, it's going to feel better and function better for clients, and they're going to be more apt to call you back." **ra**

*Dirk Sutro is a freelance writer in Leucadia, Calif., and is on the faculty of the Newschool of Architecture in San Diego.*



© Ann Fuller



Courtesy Morgan Wheelock



© Ann Fuller

In his projects, Wheelock uses landscape and hardscape to create outdoor rooms that both supplement and complement interior living spaces. The three homes shown here are located in (clockwise from left) Cambridge, Mass.; Fisher's Island, N.Y.; and Boston.

scapehardscapelandscape





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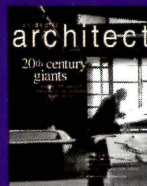
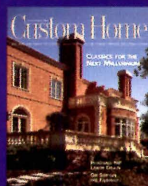
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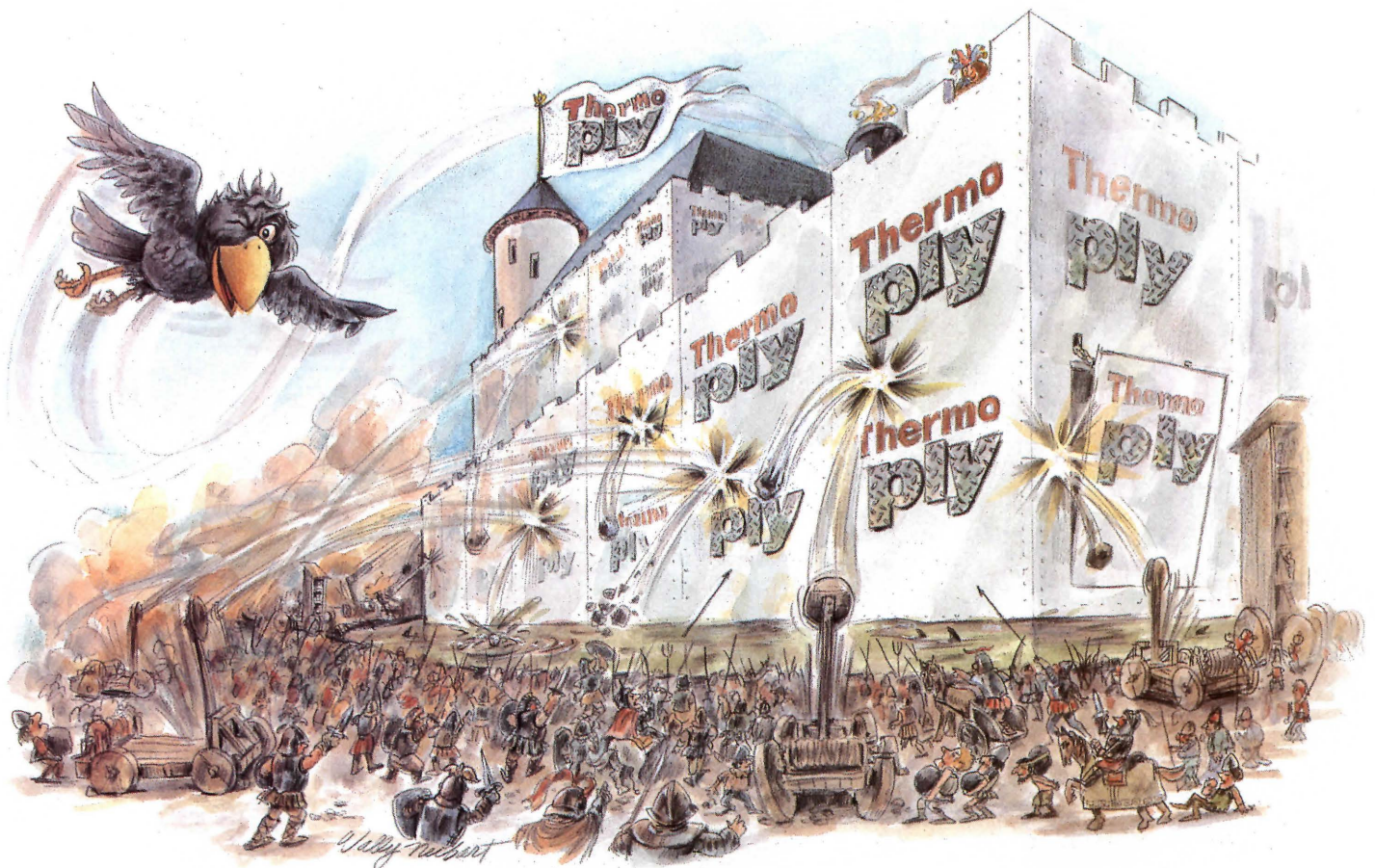
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off the shelf

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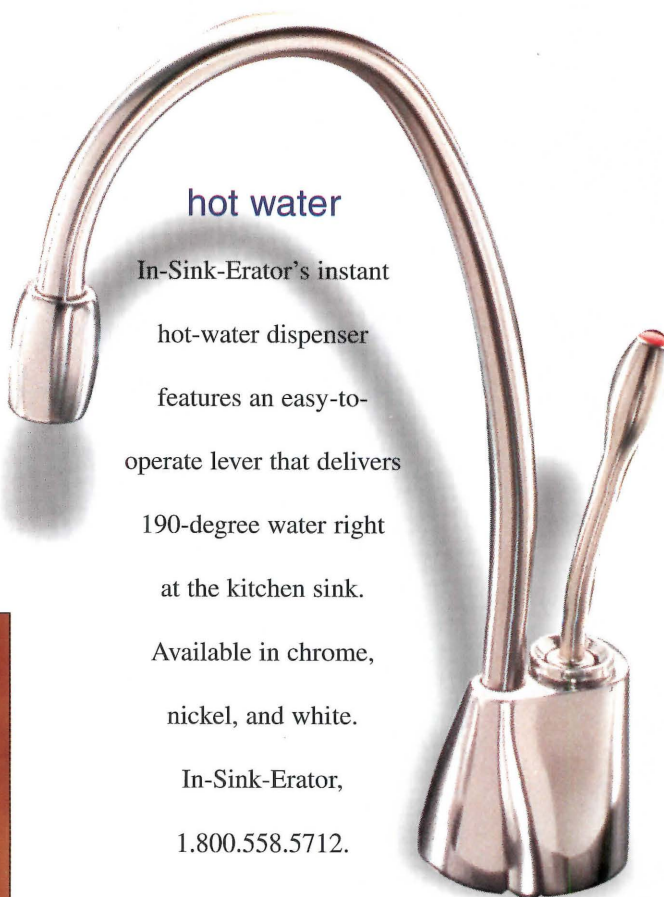
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Ann Sacks Tile & Stone now offers handcrafted metal countertops, cabinets, and hoods in addition to tile and stone products. Based in Portland, Ore., the company has 10 kitchen and bath showrooms around the country, which are open to the public and to the design trade. The cabinets, knobs, handles, backsplash, countertop, flooring, and hood shown here are featured in the Soho Kitchen line. Ann Sacks Tile & Stone, 1.800.278.8453; [www.annsacks.com](http://www.annsacks.com).

*continued on page 92*





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## coquillage

Six new kitchen hoods from Cheng Design boast 16-gauge nonmagnetic stainless steel construction, halogen lighting, and commercial stainless-steel baffled filters. CFM ratings range from 600 to 1400, depending on the model. The Coquille, shown here, has a hand-burnished, etched finish. Cheng Design, 510.549.2805.

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The latest addition to KWC Faucets' Semi-Professional series is a scaled-down version of the company's commercial Gastro faucet. Made specifically for residential use, the Domo Semi-Pro sports an easy-to-operate side lever and a long spout, as well as a pre-rinse spray for cleaning large pots and pans. KWC, 770.248.1600.

—deena shehata





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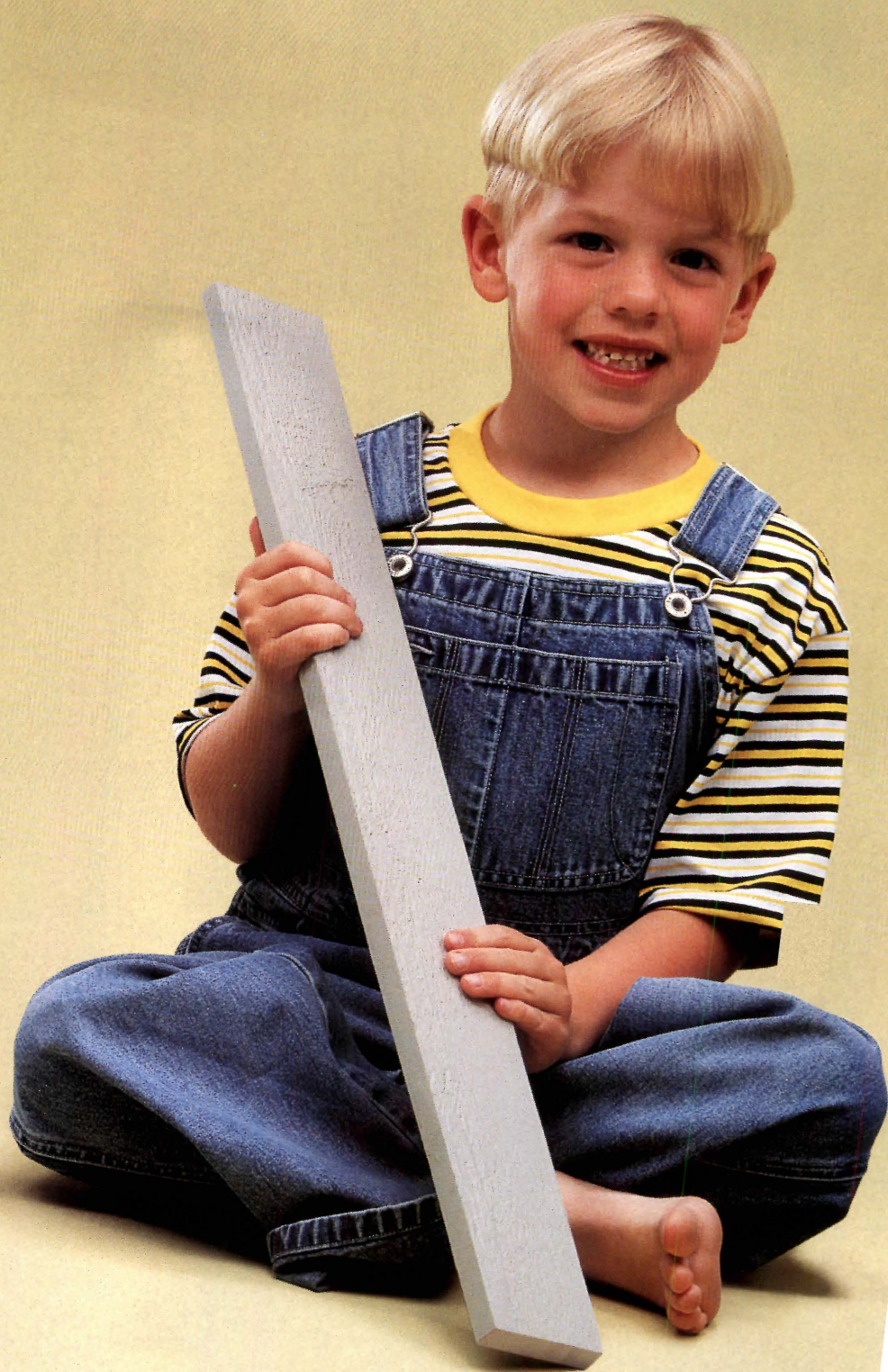
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# a mac, with everything

here's a menu of must-have utilities for your mac.

by john butterfield

**m**acintosh fans finally can draw a breath with-

out fear of their favorite computer platform vanishing before they exhale. The last time *residential architect* ran an article touting the Mac as the platform of choice, it drew impassioned letters from both sides of the computing religious wars. Appleholics swore to hold onto their beloved Macs in the face of seeming insolvency. PC mavens dismissed the Mac as a fancified toy due to join Amiga and Commodore on the ash heap of dead computing platforms.

Today, with Apple the toast of Wall Street, it looks like the Mac is back in the game for the long haul. So, let's get a few things out of the way before we begin, shall we?

■ Your computer is a tool—only a tool. A user's choice of computing platform is just that—a choice, not a religion. Use what works for you.

■ Choice is good. It keeps companies honest, and keeps the computing field from stagnating.

■ Oh, yes: And Macs fly on the wings of angels,

while PCs are the spawn of the devil.

## extras

With that out of the way, let's take a look at the changing face of the Mac. Since the release of Mac OS 8.0 (now updated to OS 8.6), Apple has addressed many of the shortcomings that drew justified howls of pain from its users. That, combined with the precipitous drop in the price of random-access memory (RAM) modules, has turned a few previously useful add-on utilities into also-rans.

Does anyone really need Connectix's RAM Doubler anymore, when they can pick up a 64-meg RAM

module for only a few bucks more than the software-based Doubler? Given the equally rapid drop in the cost of hard drives (and the increase in speed of Internet connections), does the full Aladdin StuffIt Deluxe package (used to save hard-drive space and compress files for e-mailing) make sense any longer? Not to me.

## keepers

Still, there are a few additions that should be in any Mac user's toolbox. Plug these four widgets into your computing repertoire for painless additional functionality at a reasonable cost:

### Conflict Catcher 8

(Casady & Greene, \$49.95). Extension conflicts, the bane of any Mac user, occur when the dozens of extensions and control panels installed by various software packages bounce up against each other and interfere with system startup and/or smooth operation. Apple's much-improved Extension Manager, installed as part of OS 8.6, is better than ever, but pales in comparison with Conflict Catcher's industrial-strength approach to conflict management. If an extension conflict occurs, the user can invoke Conflict Catcher's

*continued on page 98*

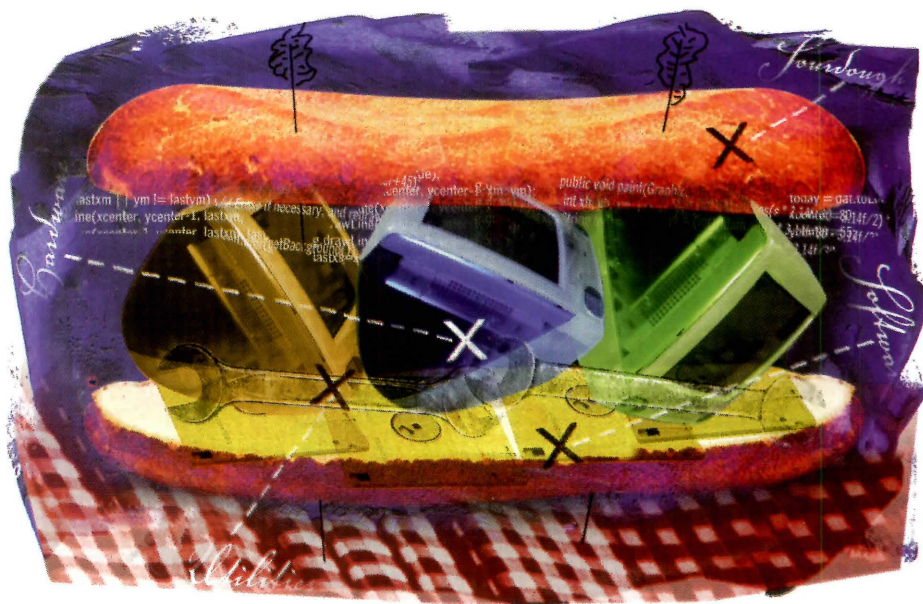


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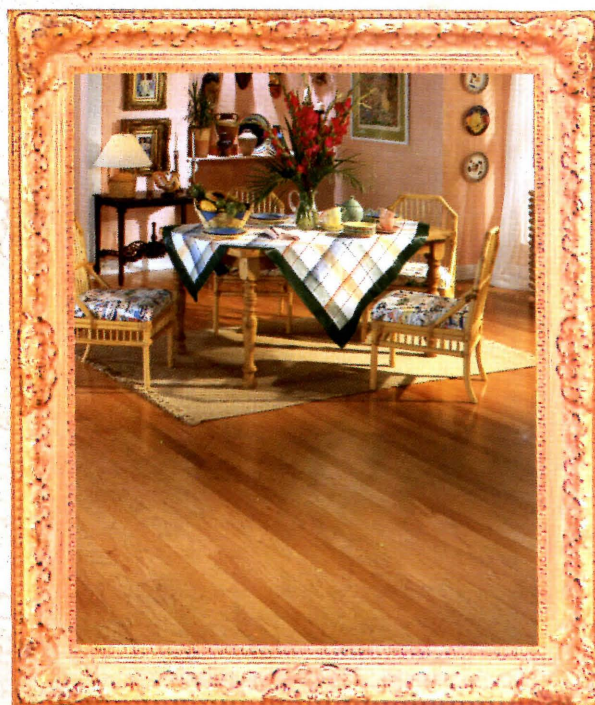
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automatic testing program, which isolates the offending extension through a relatively painless series of restarts. Once the misbehaving extension is identified, it can be turned off or reloaded in a different order to resolve the conflict.

Other major pluses: quick and easy setup of extension sets for specific applications; an extensive database that identifies just what those mystery extensions actually do; and the labor-saving option to retain and re-install existing extensions, control panels, and preference files during a “clean install” of the operating system. Installing Conflict Catcher is a no-brainer; just do it. (Information: <http://www.casadyg.com/products/listing.html>)

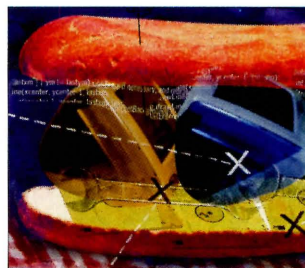
**Speed Doubler 8** (Connectix, \$54.95). In its first iteration, Speed Doubler promised to speed up copying of files and improve the operating speed of the Mac system, which was burdened by reams of old-style code that wasn’t native to Apple’s then-newfangled PowerPC computer chip. It worked—kind of—but proved buggy, and conflicted with a laundry list of other extensions.

Today, the Mac operating system has rewritten code for the PowerPC chip, which seemingly cuts the need for Speed Doubler. But the wizards at Connectix added features to the current version that make it

these widgets add to the Mac user experience—that is, they make a good thing even better.

a worthy entry in your system folder. You can schedule fast copies of files and folders, and set up automatic synchronization of changing folders. It still beats the Mac OS for copying files over a network. And, most importantly, users can assign “hot keys” to launch applications and procedures with quick key combinations—something that previously required such additional add-on programs as QuicKeys. While less vital than before, Speed Doubler is still a keeper. (Information: <http://www.connectix.com/html/speeddoubler.html>)

**Aladdin StuffIt Expander and DropStuff 5.1.2** (Expander is free-ware, DropStuff is share-ware, \$30). Aladdin’s compression format (indicated by the “.sit” tacked onto compressed file names) is the industry standard for Mac users, and has made inroads in the PC world as well. The many improvements in Aladdin’s junior-league stuffing and unstuffing programs have made its full-powered StuffIt Deluxe package superfluous for all but the most advanced users. Expander installs an



icon on the desktop that allows either automatic expansion of compressed files or simple drag-and-drop unstuffing. Adding DropStuff to the package permits easy drag-and-drop compression of files, either for archiving or sending via the Internet, which saves both hard-drive space and connection time while e-mailing files. The revved-up package also compresses and decodes BinHex, UU, MacBinary, Mime, Zip, Gzip, and a slew of additional file formats as well.

Be good and pay your shareware fee for DropStuff; the Expander/DropStuff package will do the job, smoothly, quickly, and without worry. And isn’t that what the Mac is all about? (Information: <http://www.aladdinsys.com/products/index.html>)

**Power On Action Files 1.2** (\$29.95). Power On is the new kid on the Mac utilities block. It’s made a name by rescuing and reviving orphaned Mac stalwarts such as Now Utilities, Now Contact, and the like. But its first offering is still its most compelling. Action Files enhances the

Mac’s antiquated “save” dialog box by adding a wide range of save options. You can jump to specific folders for saving without navigating up and down through the Finder, move items directly to the trash, create new folders, establish save folders for specific applications, and resize and move the dialog windows. It seems like a small thing—but multiply the few seconds saved each and every time you open a “save” window, and the time quickly adds up.

This add-on gives you more control. It works, flawlessly and transparently—just like a good Mac utility is supposed to. (Information: <http://www.actionutilities.com/site2/html/products.html>)

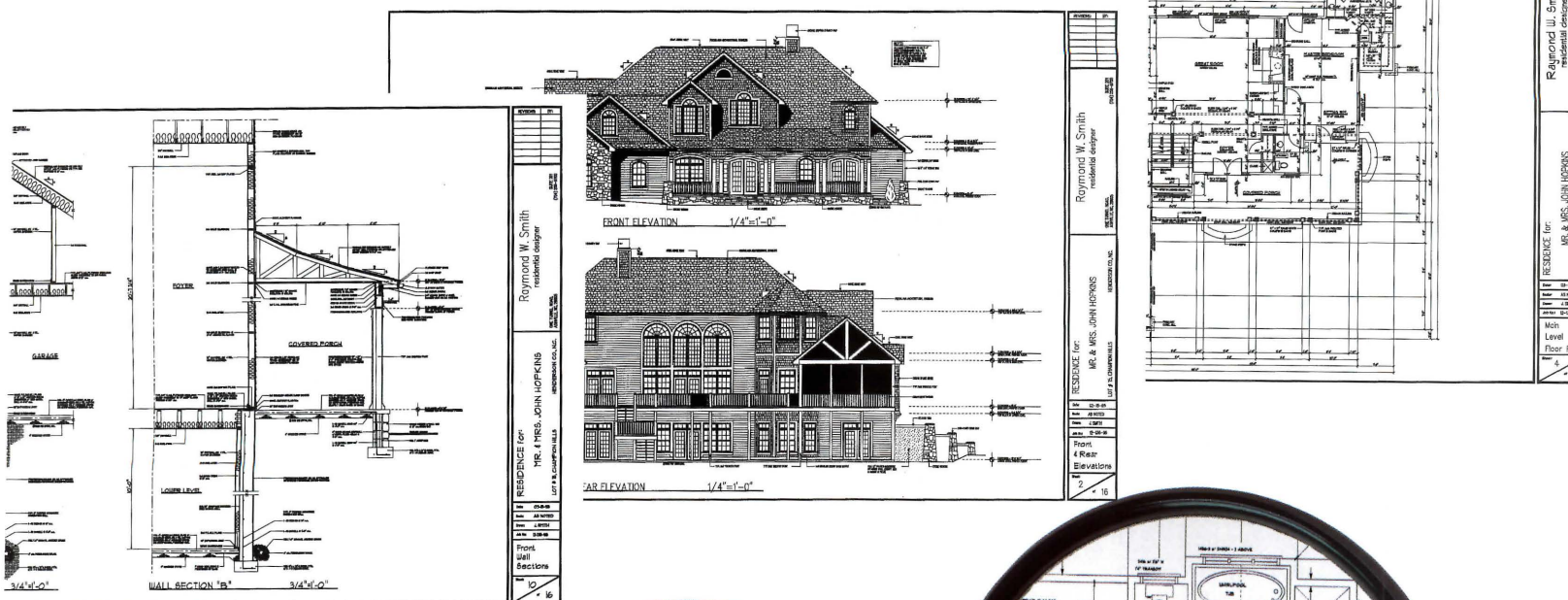
## your turn

If you’ve got a favorite, can’t-live-without add-on for your Mac, let me know at [johnbutter@builderonline.com](mailto:johnbutter@builderonline.com), and we’ll post the comments on *residential architect* Online. If not, give one of my four favorites a try. Each one will add to the overall Macintosh user experience—which is to say, they’ll make a good thing even better. **ra**

*John Butterfield, the new-media editor for Hanley-Wood, Inc., runs the company’s assorted Web sites. Find links to them all at [www.hbrnet.com](http://www.hbrnet.com).*



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# a view on windows

walls of glass provide plenty of drama, but is there an energy trade-off?

by rich binsacca

**O**f all the by-products of the energy crisis 25 years ago, arguably the greatest product advancement related to home design and construction is the window. In the past, despite its architectural value, a window's thermal benefit was just a notch up from a hole in the wall. Today, windows rival the performance of a framed wall and are a significant feature in modern residential design.

So much so, in fact, that window walls—large expanses of glass designed to capture views or fill a vaulted room—are increasingly the trademark of custom and luxury homes and have even crept into the mainstream of production housing.

Using all that glass, even with improved glazing technologies, can have an impact on a home's energy use. Architects who increase an interior space's exposure to the sun's elements and boost the risk of thermal transfer through a greater ratio of glass should be mindful of the energy trade-offs—and educated about their options. "For projects with a substantial amount of glass, you can't even consider anything less than dual-pane windows," says



With better window performance and a wider variety of shapes and sizes at their disposal, architects are making more liberal use of fenestration.

Courtesy Weather Shield

Dean Brenneman, AIA, of Brenneman & Pagenstecher Residential Architects & Builders in Chevy Chase, Md. "In fact, we usually start with low-e glass at a minimum."

## a new language

Low-e, argon, warm-edge spacers: It's the new language of advanced window technology, and with it has come such acronyms as VT

(visual transmission), SHGC (solar heat gain coefficient) and STC (sound transmission class), among others.

As with most new technology, architects at the head of the curve have learned the lingo quickly and incorporated it into their work; the majority have taken longer to catch on. "Most architects are aware of the terms, but not necessarily how they

apply," says Candy Zirnigle, architectural sales coordinator for Weather Shield Windows & Doors in Medford, Wis., who spends her day responding to architect queries. "They know 'low-e' [for low-emissivity, a microscopic coating on the inside pane of the glass that reduces heat transmission], but not 'low-e squared' [in which

*continued on page 102*





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both panes of glass have a low-e coating].” Most window makers, from big players such as Andersen and Caradco to smaller, regional manufacturers, provide technical support to architects via telephone, fax, and online—and with increasing sophistication, according to their customers.

Perhaps even more important than understanding the terms for these concepts, though, is realizing their value on a project. For Mike McCulloch, AIA, of WaterLeaf Architecture & Interiors in Portland, Ore., the advent of low-e glazing

6 percent on a single-pane window) compared with their clear-coat counterparts. A low-e coating on a dual-pane window, by comparison, can cut energy costs by up to 40 percent—and for only a 10 percent price premium over an uncoated unit.

The technology—especially low-e and argon, a clear gas between the panes that inhibits air movement—is so affordable that many big window makers offer the coating as standard. “We focus on the structural aspects of a window,” says Zirngible, such as adequate framing for larger units and window walls. “The energy factors are made up by the glass.”

### trade-offs

Even so, insulating glass is not a license to ignore a home’s energy consumption. State and national codes regarding residential energy use, most notably the Model Energy Code (MEC), dictate allowable ratios of glass to solid structure to mitigate heat gain and thermal transfer.

For Brenneman and others, the calculation to comply with the code is made easier by MEC-Check, a computer program available through the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development’s HUD User Library (see “Resources,” right). To use MEC-Check, Bren-

*continued on page 104*

even with improved glazing technologies, using a lot of glass has an impact on a home’s energy use.

provided a clear alternative to the bronze or mirrored tints he’d spec to reduce heat gain from windows designed to capture the brief periods of sunlight in the Pacific Northwest. “Tinted windows would cut the quantity of light at the wrong time,” he recalls. “With low-e, I can get clear visibility and full sunlight without heat gain.”

In fact, tinted windows, both single and dual-pane, have only a slight impact on energy efficiency (about



Courtesy Weather Shield

In multiple or ganged applications, even a large expanse of windows is kept to a human scale while still capturing desired views and sunlight. Insulated glazing technology, meanwhile, mitigates heat gain.

## resources

While window manufacturers offer solid design and specifying information about their brands, the following third-party resources provide a more objective perspective, especially with regard to testing standards and results, efficiency ratings, and generic recommendations for appropriate window use based on a unit’s energy features and performance.

### National Fenestration Rating Council

301.589.6372, [www.nfrc.org](http://www.nfrc.org)

*The NFRC sets the standards for window testing (specifically for U-value, solar heat-gain coefficient, and visual transmission) and provides ratings labels for windows that meet or exceed those standards.*

### The Efficient Windows Collaborative

[www.efficientwindows.org](http://www.efficientwindows.org)

*With support from the U.S. Department of Energy’s Windows and Glazings Program, this Web site provides information on the benefits of energy-efficient windows, descriptions of how they work, and recommendations for their selection and use.*

### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

800.245.2691, [www.huduser.org](http://www.huduser.org)

*The HUD-user library provides literature and materials on several topics related to housing design and construction, as well as the MEC-Check program (manual or computer software) for complying with the 1993 Model Energy Code.*

### The Alliance to Save Energy

202.857.0666, [www.ase.org](http://www.ase.org)

*This nonprofit coalition of business, government, environmental, and consumer leaders promotes the efficient and clean use of energy worldwide.*





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## doctor spec

neman simply plugs in such factors as the glass-to-outside wall ratio and the insulation values for the walls, floor, and roof, and the program calculates code compliance.

Typically, Brenneman keys in the insulation values before the glazing specification. "We put in the maximum amount of insulation without making structural changes," he says. "There's a big difference between an R-13 and R-15 [which fit in the same 2x4 cavity]. Boosting the insulating value lets us play with the windows more."

Even with upgraded insulation, Brenneman usually plugs low-e windows into the program. "It's a high-value spec, regardless of the code," he says. Low-e's value derives in part from features the codes don't necessarily address, such as better sound abatement and reduced water leakage and condensation. Such benefits pay off in terms of the home's comfort and maintenance. "And we're able to eliminate storm windows, thank God," Brenneman says.

### design flexibility

While better performance can lead to the use of larger windows, as evidenced by much of today's builder housing, architects like Brenneman and McCulloch lean toward ganging smaller units to create walls of glass.

For a vacation-home development on the Oregon coast, for instance, McCulloch simply wasn't able to use windows wider than 3 feet because of high wind and storm hazards. "Taller was okay, but any wider causes dangerous pressure differences when the wind blows," he says. Even if he could go bigger, he says, large sections of dual-pane glass tend to bend into each other, reducing their energy benefits.

To adequately capture views, therefore, McCulloch ganged tall, narrow windows, only a few of them operable, along the ocean-side elevations. "This application is at a more human scale, anyway," he says. "The owners feel more protected and safe when a storm's coming." And a lot less anxious about their energy bill. *ra*

*Rich Binsacca is a freelance writer in Boise, Idaho.*

### what's your spec?

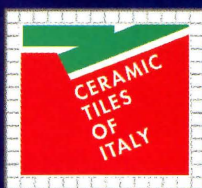
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# order from above

clever ceiling treatments help organize a formerly chaotic basement.

by rick vitullo, aia

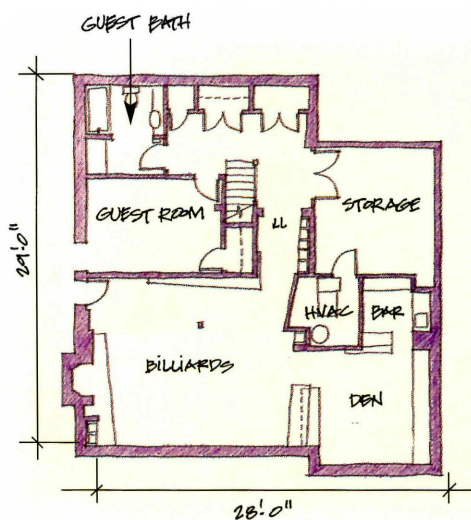
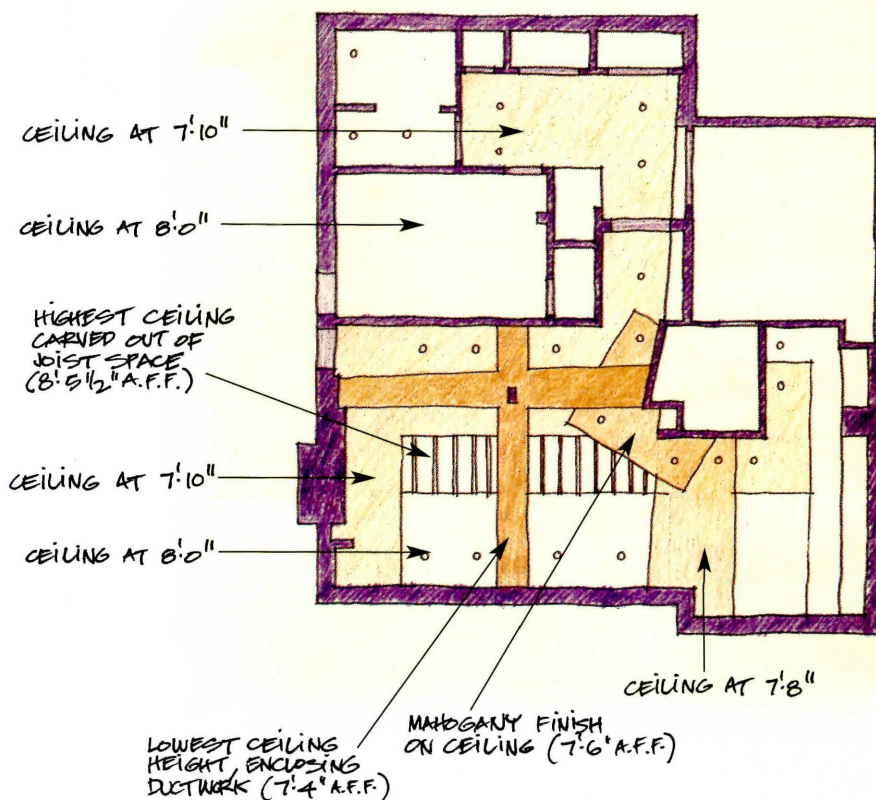
**b**asements are often dark and dreary places, especially in older homes. Wiring, ducts, and structure are placed for convenience and accessibility. To say that aesthetics takes a back seat is an understatement. Function rules.

But when a family wants to gain more living space within an existing home, the basement becomes prime territory. Such was the case with this project. The clients asked architect Randall Mars, AIA, of McLean, Va., to transform an unfinished basement clogged with utilities into a functioning entertainment space complete with billiard room, den, and guest suite.

Mars began his design by carving out different levels in the ceiling. These changes in level serve two purposes: They camouflage the ductwork and they delineate the basement's different areas. In particular, Mars made the lowest and potentially most intrusive ceiling levels—which hide the bulkiest sections of ductwork and structure—into compelling visual elements that help organize traffic routes below.

A dropped, mahogany-covered ceiling (height: 7 feet, 6 inches) anchors the design. It marks the point where the billiard room, the den, the hall—

*continued on page 108*



The complex ceiling design imposes order over the chaos of ductwork, wiring, and structure while defining the spaces in interesting ways with different ceiling heights.

Illustrations: Rick Vitullo



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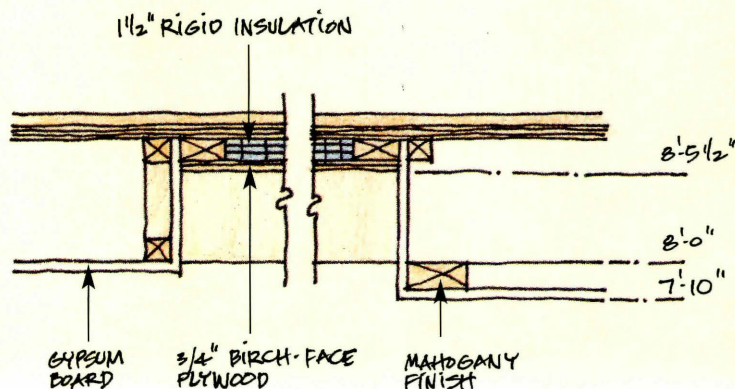
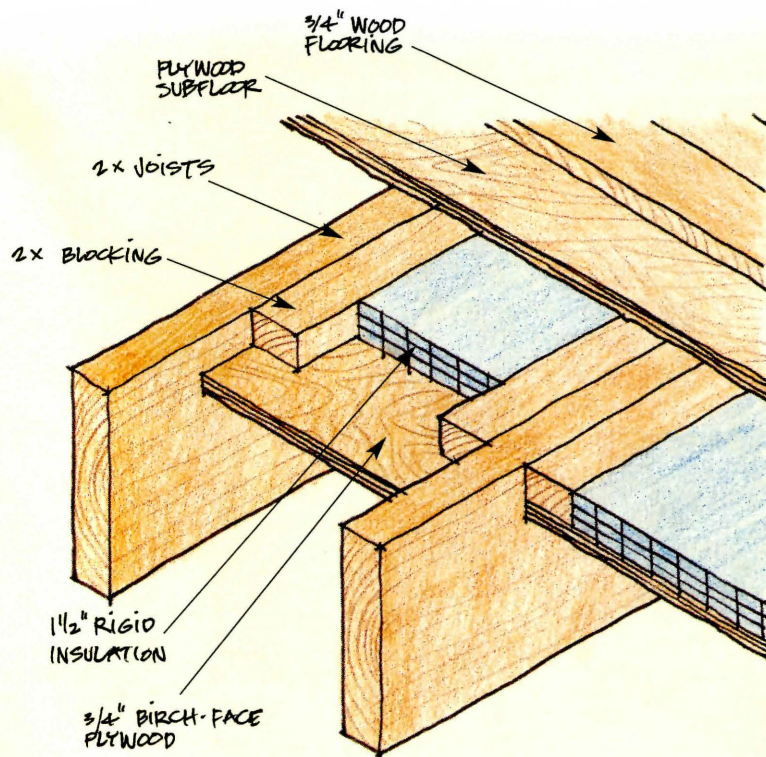
way to the guest suite, and the mechanical closet intersect. Skewed in relation to the rest of the floor plan, the dropped ceiling's three corners direct attention (and traffic) toward the basement's main living areas, and away from the closet.

Mars employed another ceiling detail to disguise the ductwork and structural beam that cross the billiard room ceiling. He hid them inside two gypsum-board bands (height from the floor: 7 feet, 4 inches) that radiate at right angles from an existing column. Like the mahogany ceiling, these bands help define circulation patterns below.

The basement's main gathering spaces and the guest bedroom benefit from higher ceilings. Mars gave the billiard room yet more height and an eye-catching focal point by slicing a 5½-inch-high section out from between the ceiling joists. He detailed this section with painted birch-face veneer plywood and specified 1½-inch rigid insulation board above it to muffle noise.

With careful planning, Mars created an orderly system of ceiling forms that respond to the utilities above and to the architectural spaces below. **ra**

*Rick Vitullo, AIA, is founder and principal of Vitullo Architecture Studio, Washington, D.C.*



### got an idea?

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Mars used ceiling levels and finish details to help define and differentiate spaces: lower ceilings (gypsum board and mahogany) over the circulation spaces and higher ceilings (gypsum board and birch-face plywood) over the gathering spaces. Rigid insulation inserted between the joists isolates the sound enough to allow the high ceiling detail.

Illustration: Rick Vitullo





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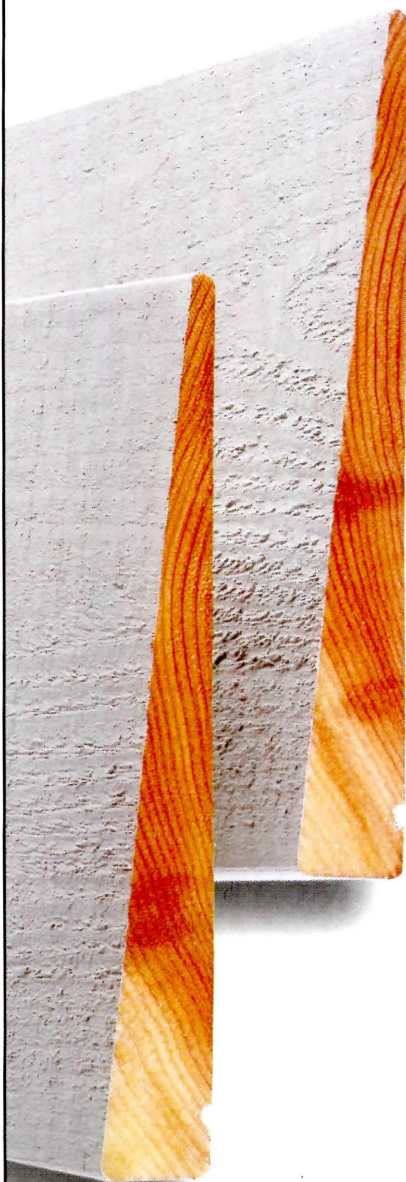




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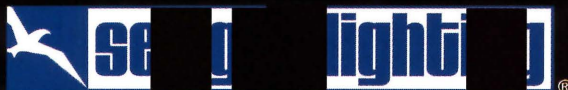
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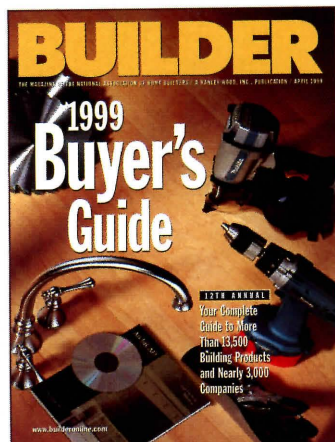
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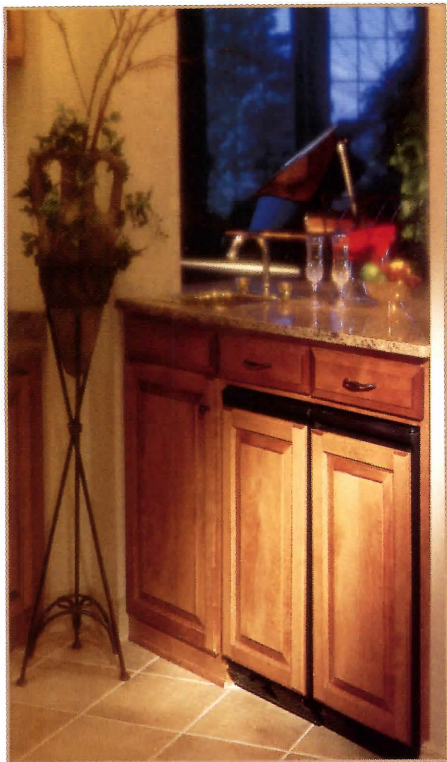
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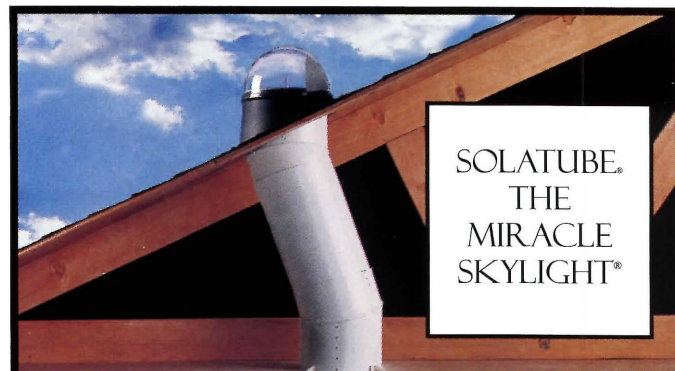
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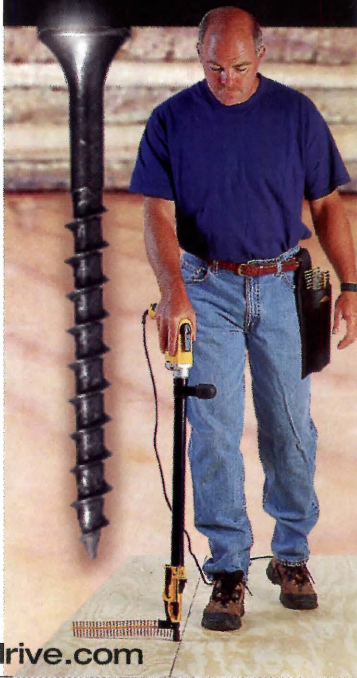
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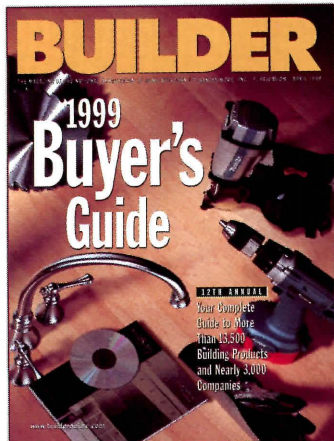
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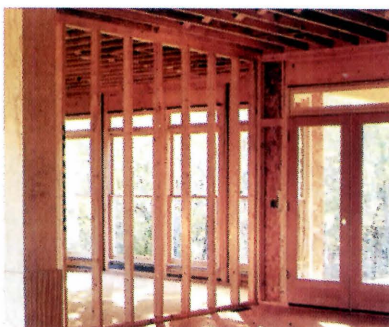
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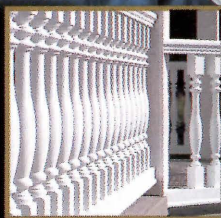
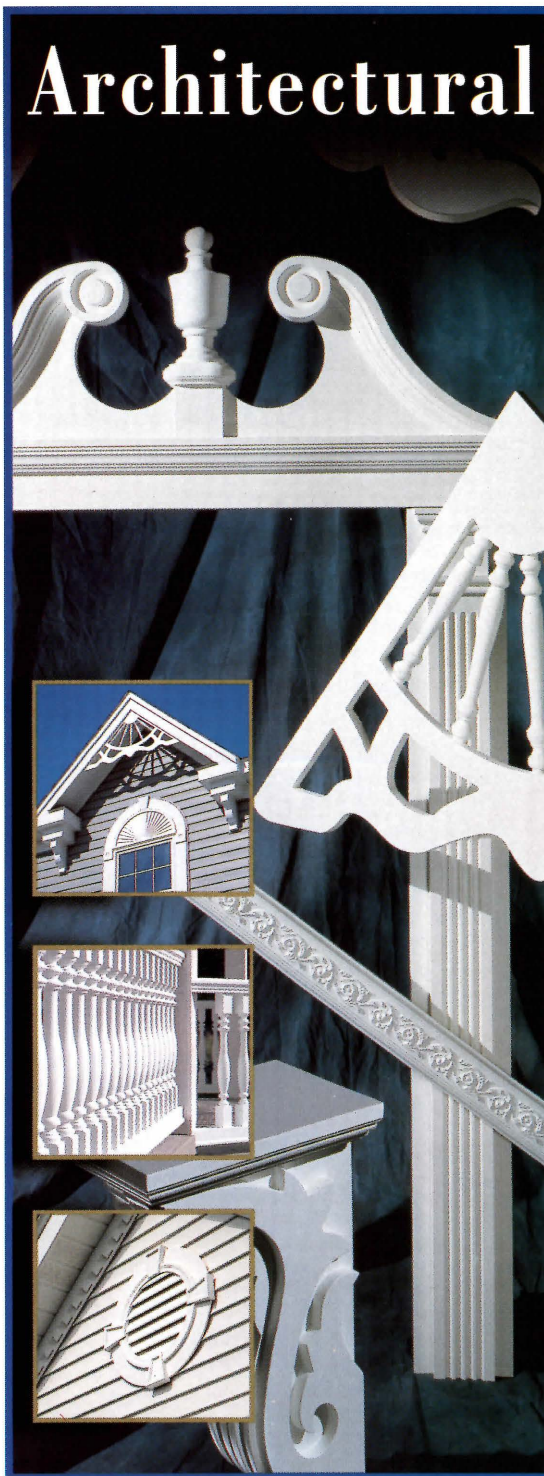
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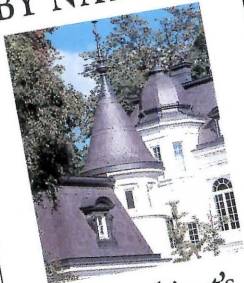
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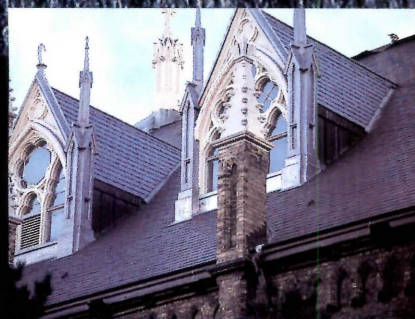
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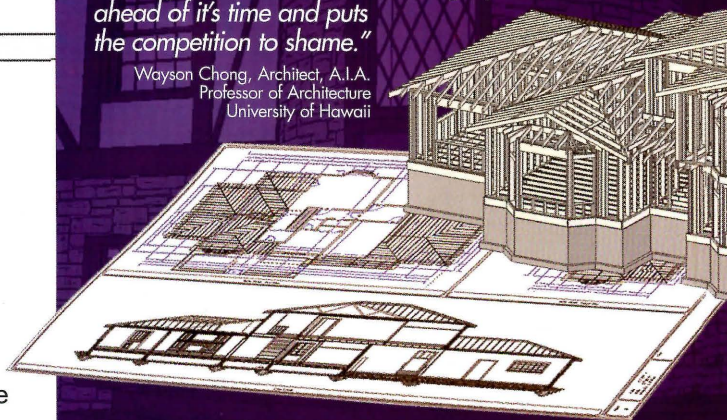
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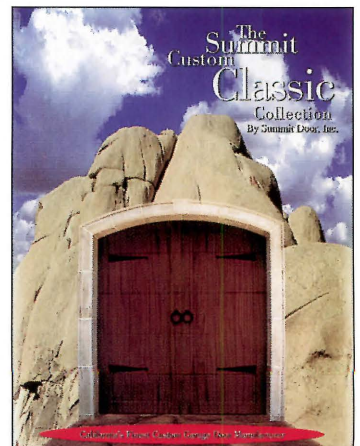
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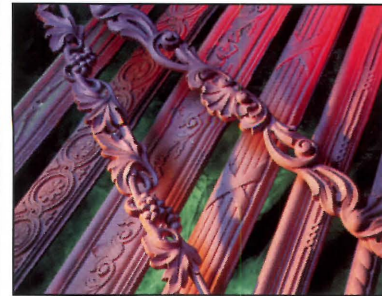
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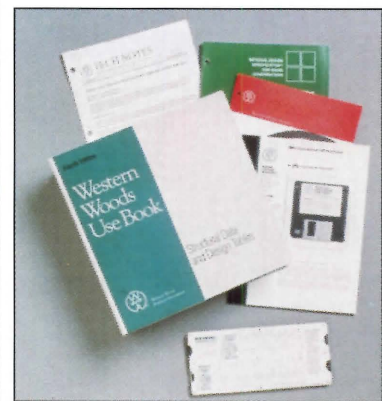
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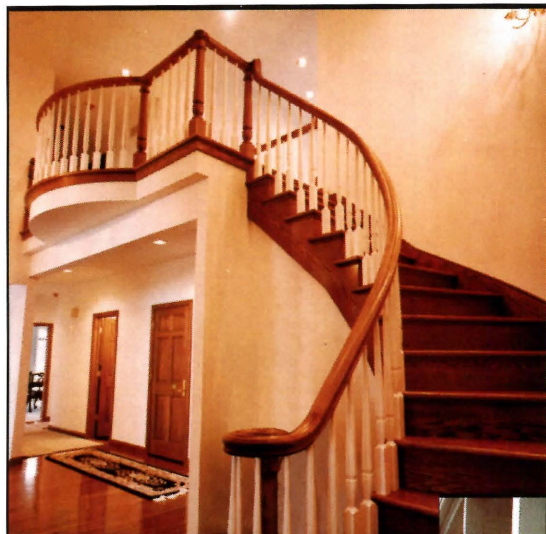
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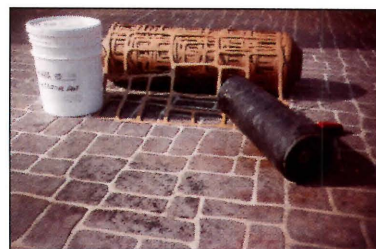
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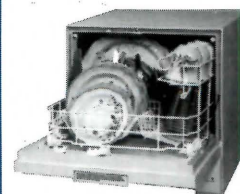
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# square deal

eric haesloop encounters the brilliant geometry of an italian piazza.



Photo: Eric Haesloop

I first saw the Piazza San Ignazio, a small baroque square in Rome, in a slide presentation in graduate school. I was intrigued by the way the Neapolitan architect Filippo Raguzzini had shaped modest residential buildings around the front façade of the church of San Ignazio to create an intimate set of spaces. I admired its ingenious plan organization based on three ellipses.

However, when I was able to visit the piazza in person, it was the gradual revelation and fine scale of the spaces, the unanticipated diagonal views, and the experience of discovery that truly amazed me. Outlined by the cornices

and curving facades, the smaller entry areas become outdoor anterooms for the larger open space, blurring the distinction between what is inside and outside. The buildings are a framework for the church and sky.

Though the buildings are simple, the diagram and resulting experience are anything but modest. Recalling the pleasure of discovering the piazza, first abstractly and then concretely, I am reminded of the experiential richness that can come from a clear and thoughtful framework. **ra**

*eric haesloop, aia, is a principal of the san francisco firm turnbull griffin & haesloop.*