

# residential architect

A HANLEY-WOOD PUBLICATION / JANUARY 2000

## full circle

barry berkus returns  
to his first love:  
design for design's sake

improving production design / from house  
to housing / cutting-edge communities /  
builder houses go local / are EIFS so bad?

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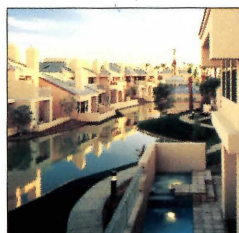
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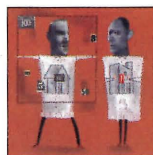


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Architect Barry Berkus once helmed the largest production housing firm in the country, but now he's turning back to his first love: design for design's sake.

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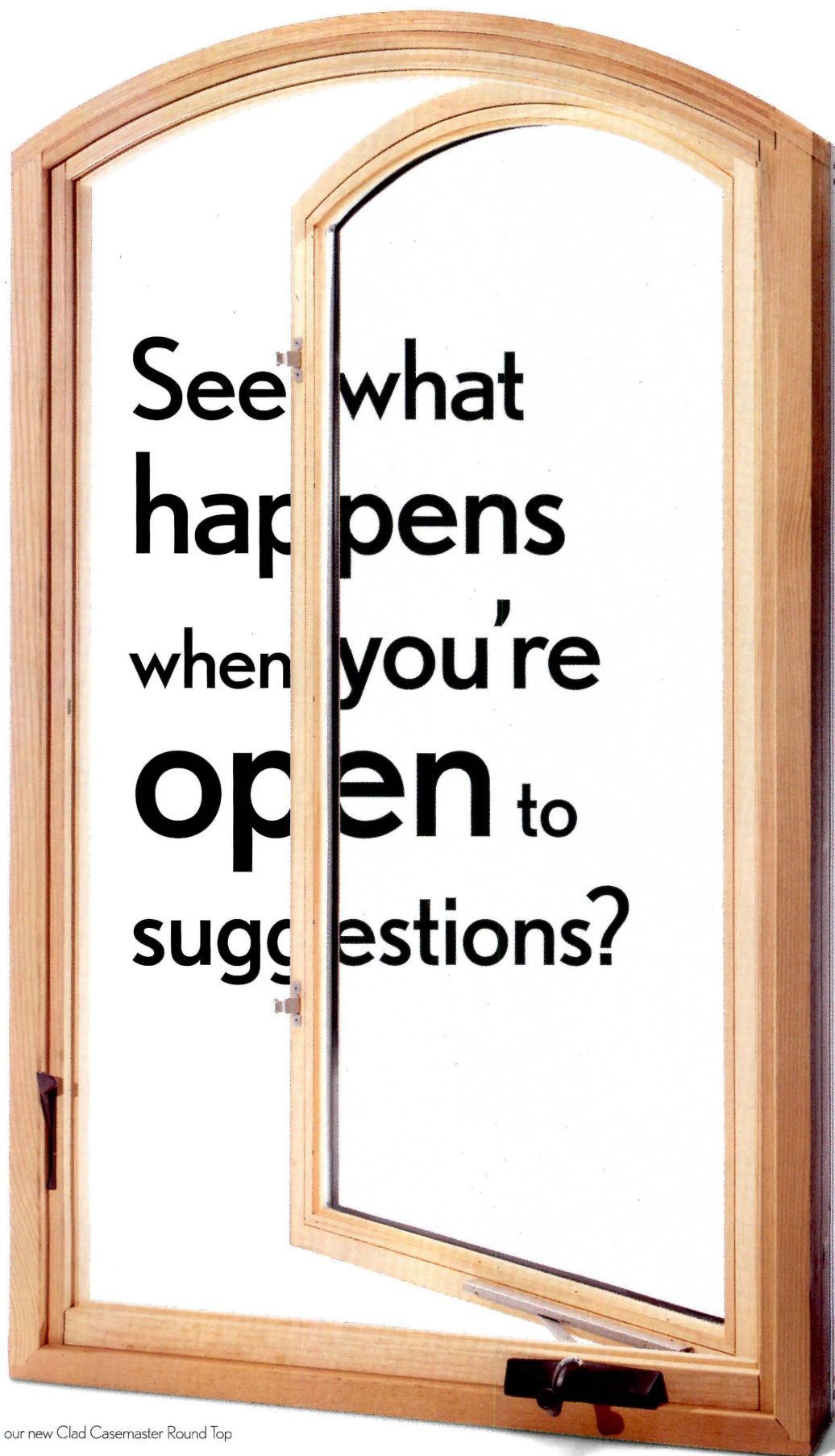
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**On the cover:** Barry A. Berkus, AIA, photographed by Mark Robert Halper

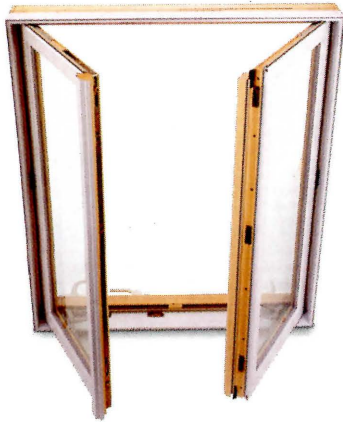


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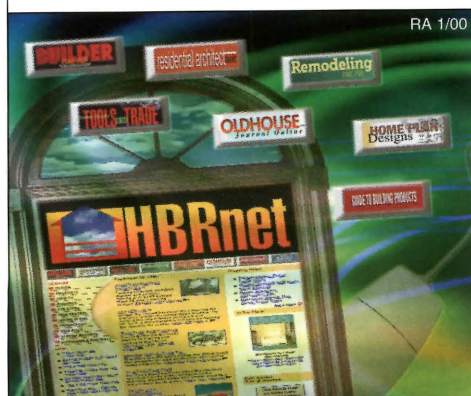
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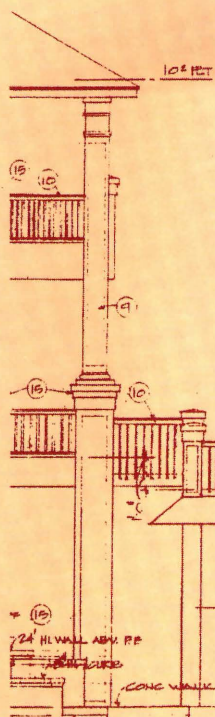


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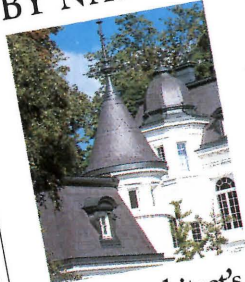
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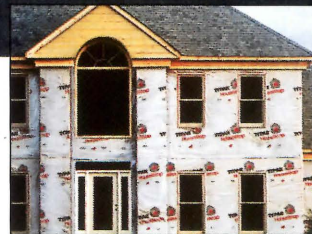
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from the editor

# good neighborhood policy

why do so many residential architects ignore production housing?

by s. claire conroy

**d**o you drive by the latest suburban housing development near your town and wonder who's responsible for this pox on the land? You probably think you could design something better with your good hand tied behind your back. Well, why don't you?

For so long, talented residential architects have shunned builder housing in favor of custom home commissions. Why do you suppose that is? Some claim the seeds of that choice take root in architecture school, where an insidious hierarchy of architectural specialties emerges. Commercial and institutional work carry the most prestige. If you simply must practice residential architecture, then high-end private homes are the only acceptable expression of your talent. But what is the rest of the world to live in? A builder box with a Palladian window?

## out in the cold

When our cover architect, Barry A. Berkus, AIA, began designing production housing in the late 1950s, he felt a little lonely and, frankly, a tad ostracized by his peers.

"When we started, housing was looked down upon," he recalls. "I lead a design panel

at the National Association of Home Builders, but I couldn't do one at the American Institute of Architects."

Builders clamored for his services, discovering their houses sold faster and for more money when they came off his boards. He and a handful of other forward-thinking architects brought "big lifestyle" to production homes. They opened up floor plans, enlarged master bedrooms, and added luxurious touches found only in the custom realm.

For Berkus, residential design has always started with people. "Houses are not just shelter, they're stages for people to grow from, to interact with family and friends," he says. "I like doing commercial architecture, but you don't get to know anyone. With houses, life is woven into the building."

Berkus, who wove cutting-edge ideas about how people live into in his houses, became an icon among builders. And yet architects barely knew his name. "Not until Sea Ranch, Reston, Columbia, Irvine, Hilton Head did people become interested in housing," he says. "They became interested in making a place."

## your place or theirs?

At the turn of the century,



Photo: Katherine Lambert

we've come to a critical juncture. Fueled by a booming economy, we're "making places" all over the place. Without talented architects skilled in design and land planning involved in builder housing, we'll have a huge fabric of mediocre housing to unweave in the next century.

Michael Medick, Looney Ricks Kiss Architects' director of town planning and the AIA's housing committee chair, writes about this issue in the Perspective column on page 32: "It's unfortunate the architectural profession has missed out on the opportunity to define good neighborhoods and places to live. Architects have ignored the merchant-built housing market. It's time

we as residential architects and planners work with home builders and developers to take a hard look at the places that have been created. We should be determined to do better than propagate sprawl."

Who doesn't love a beautifully designed custom home? We'd all choose to live in one if we could. But most people need the economy and convenience of a production house. Don't they deserve good design, too? **ra**

Any questions or comments? Feel free to call me: 202.736.3312; write me: S. Claire Conroy, *residential architect*, One Thomas Circle, Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20005; or e-mail me: [cconroy@hanley-wood.com](mailto:cconroy@hanley-wood.com).



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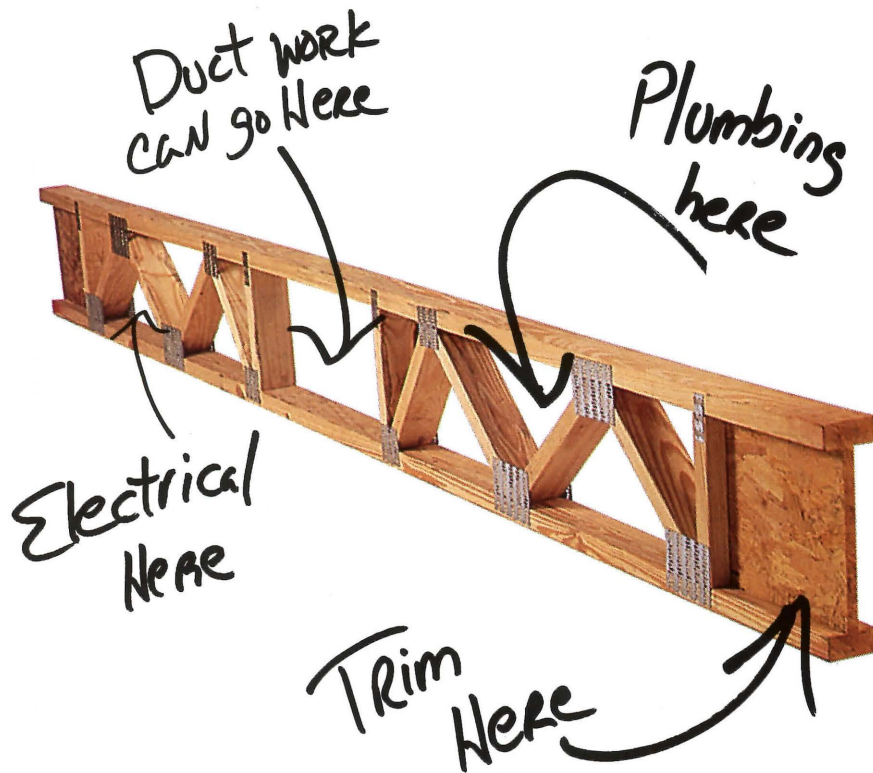
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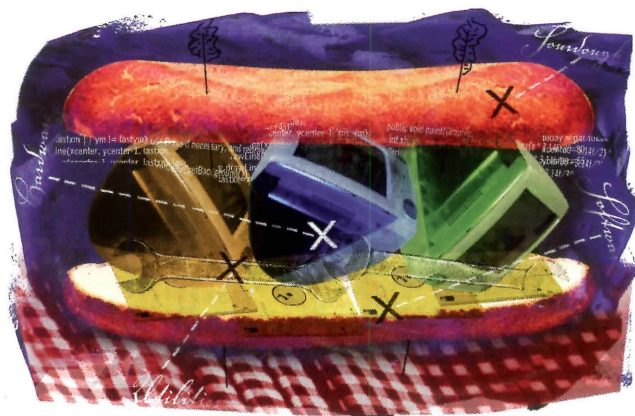


# letters

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

## good buy

In response to John Butterfield's article "A Mac, With Everything" (September/October 1999, page 96), I must disagree with him about the full package of Aladdin StuffIt Deluxe. He calls it superfluous; I have found it to be an excellent buy based on a special offer I received at the time. A new version has been released, and now I cannot find a similar special offer. In time, though, there will probably be another one.



Stuart Bradford

I purchased, for use at home, a special mail-order offer that included StuffIt Deluxe and Retrospect Express, an excellent back-

up utility (something everyone needs, although few people realize it until after they need it), for \$49.90. DropStuff share-

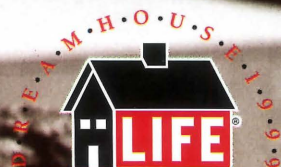
ware, which is \$30 by itself, is included in the StuffIt Deluxe package.

The biggest problem with the *free* version of StuffIt Expander is that it makes you sit through an advertisement for the full version every time you expand a file.

Gary Polak  
The Architectural Group  
Grandville, Mich.

## making partner

Although a few months late, I am writing to



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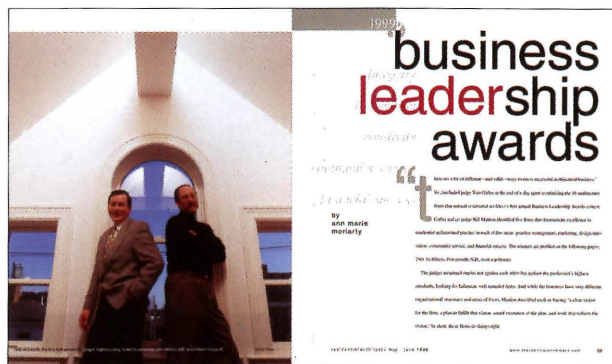
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express our appreciation for being selected to receive one of *residential architect's* 1999 Business Leadership Awards (May/June 1999, page 58).

Since receiving this award, we have elevated Jimmy Walker to the position of principal and stockholder in the firm. Jimmy has been with us for over seven years and has made enormous contributions to many of our better projects. You will be seeing more of Jimmy's work in years to come.

Our firm is enjoying *residential architect*. It seems to have hit the mark



for small firms such as ours that depend on residential work for much of their income.

*R. Christian Schmitt, FAIA  
Schmitt Sampson Walker  
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keep it alive

I personally am very pleased that there is a residential architecture magazine, because residential work is all we do and we are very proud of it. All of the old residential architects like McKim Mead & White and Peabody &

Stearns are long gone and now it is our turn to keep this profession alive.

Keep up the tremendous work. I am behind you 100 percent.

*Ronald F. DiMauro  
Ronald F. DiMauro Architects  
Newport, R.I.*

redlines

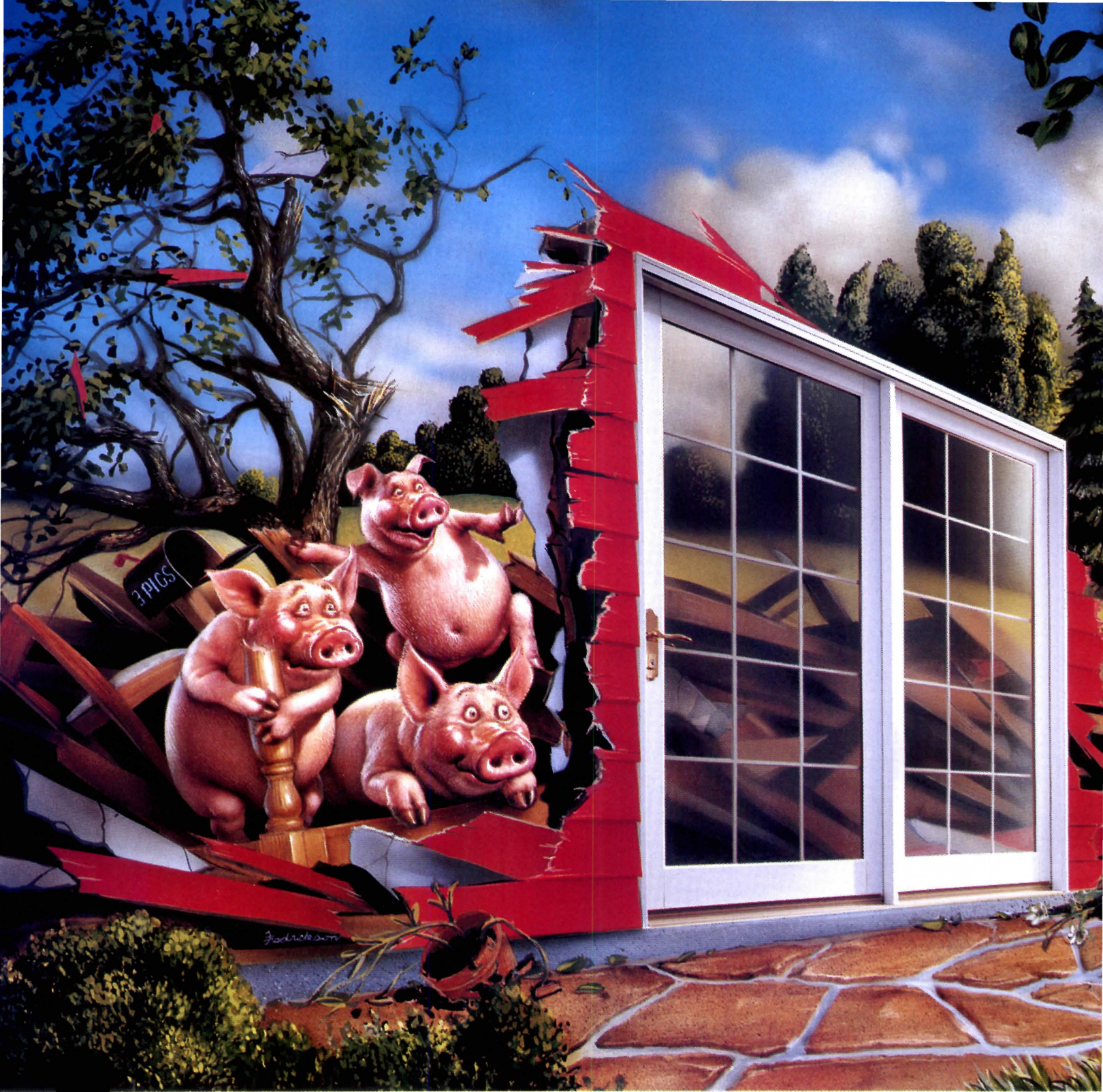
In the article "Five Easy Kitchens" (September/October 1999), the photographs on pages 72 and 73 were credited incorrectly. The photographer was Andrea Rugg. We regret the error.

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# home . ront

tips and trends from the world of residential design

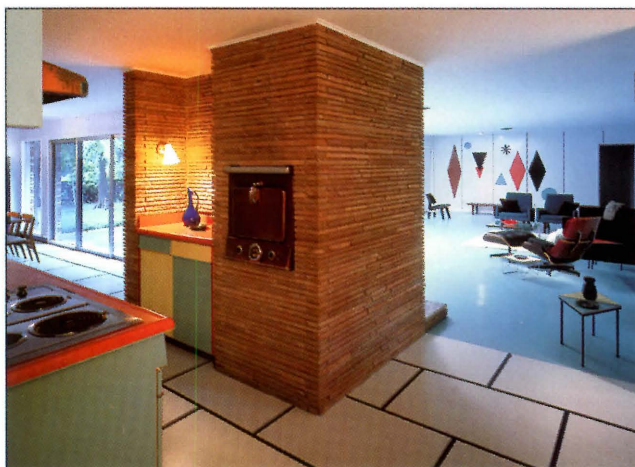
## lamine object

**t**he Wilson House Museum, in Temple, Texas, has had a versatile past. It's served as a home for Wilsonart International founder Ralph Wilson and his family, as a testing ground for the design and endurance capabilities of laminate surfaces, and as a company landmark for Wilsonart. Now, it's a model of historic preservation. In October 1999, the National Trust for Historic Preservation presented Wilsonart with a Preservation Honor Award for its efforts in restoring the 1950s building.



Leading the charge to save the Wilson House from its impending demolition in 1996 was Grace Jeffers, a Manhattan art historian. Since then, national and international visitors have traveled to Temple to see the simple ranch house's eye-popping, laminate-covered interior. And it's been listed on the National Register of

Historic Places. With a little luck, the recognition that this award brings won't just benefit the Wilson House. It'll bring to the attention of the preservation community all of the modern landmarks facing the threats of destruction and decay.—*meghan drueding*



Brightly colored laminate covers the walls, floors, counter-tops, and cabinetry of the Wilson House Museum.







Photos: Wilsonart/Paul Bardagly

## mobile mart

Perhaps the folks at Häfele America were in the mood for a road trip. Or perhaps they realized that making their upscale hardware and design systems more accessible to architects and designers all over the country would help both their company and their clients. Whatever the thinking behind its creation, the manufacturer's new Mobile Design Center is sure to grab the attention of professionals and consumers alike.

It's hard to miss: a 40-foot-



Courtesy Häfele America

long, custom-designed Mercedes-Benz coach. And it's hard to resist: Customers are free to handle to their hearts' content the 1,000-plus products the vehicle contains.

The Mobile Design Center began its U.S.-Canada tour this past fall; for more information or to schedule a visit when the center is in your city, call 800.423.3531.—*m.d.*

## in the money

A 1999 survey released by the AIA, "Compensation at U.S. Architecture Firms," reports substantial growth in architects' average salaries over the past three

years. Increases were greatest

for interns and for less

experienced architects,

but senior associates

and principals

also made sig-

nificant gains. Architects' average compensation climbed 25 percent since 1996; as a rule, increases were greater at larger firms than at smaller ones. According to the survey, the rise in architects' compensation generally exceeded gains made in other major professional categories. To order the complete report from the AIA/Rizzoli Bookstore, call 888.272.4115. The report costs \$22 for AIA members, \$31 for nonmembers.

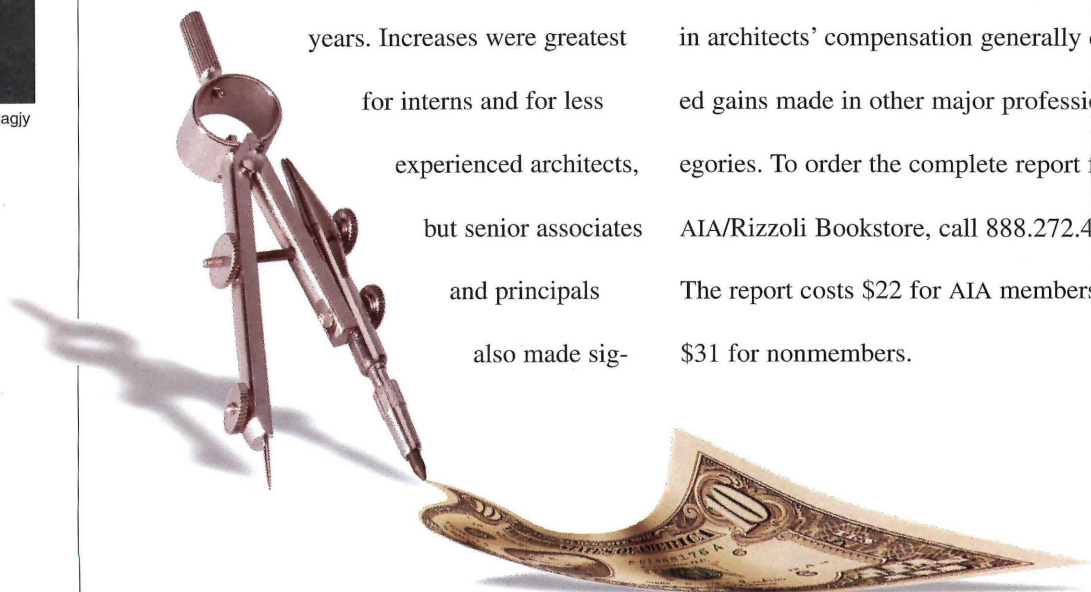


Photo illustration: Kristina Goings



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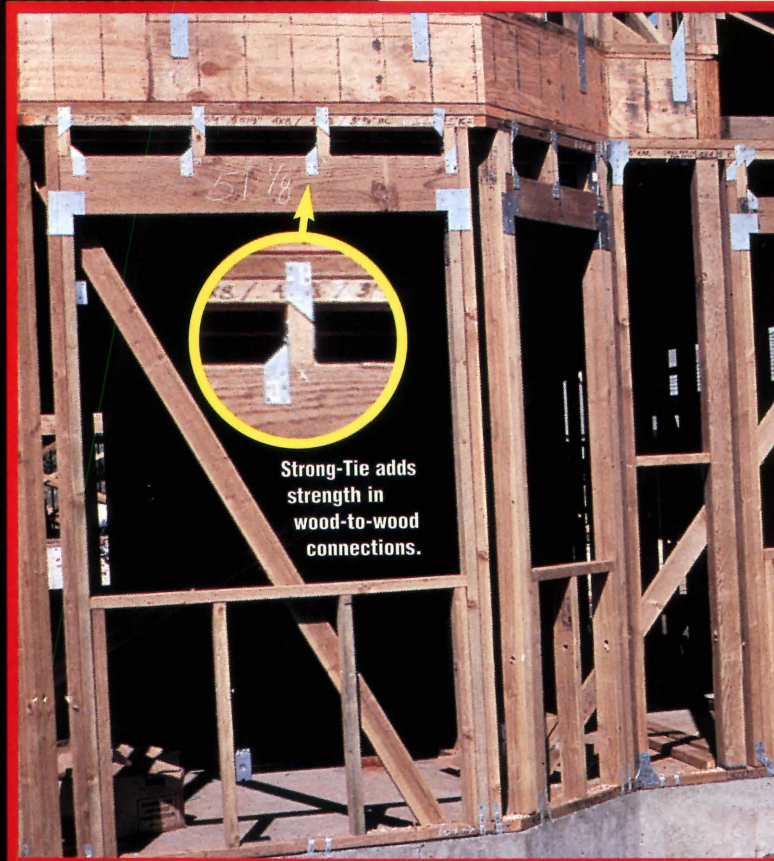
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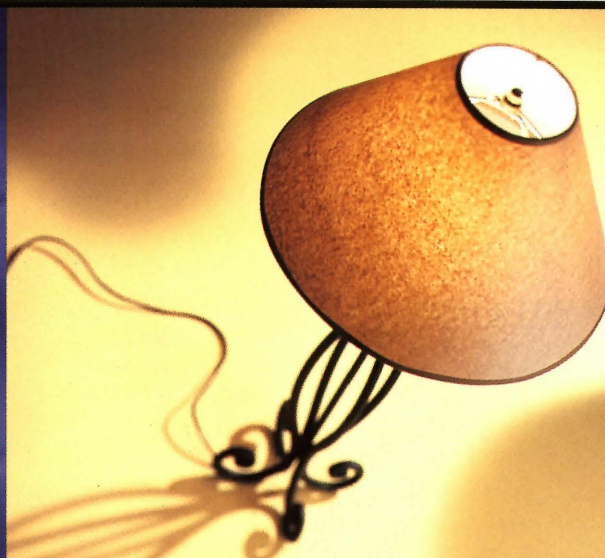


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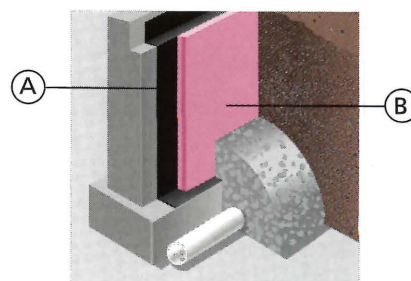
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## calendar

### edge of a city: work by steven holl

through february 20, 2000

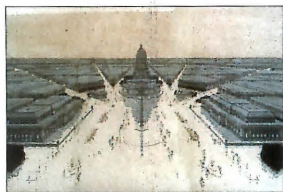
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A display of the critically acclaimed architect's ideas for countering the effects of urban sprawl. Call 415.397.4000 for details, or go to [www.sfmoma.org](http://www.sfmoma.org).



Silver Hut: courtesy Toyo Ito & Associates; Chicago rendering: Jules Guerin

Toyo Ito's 1984 Silver Hut, Tokyo, and Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett's 1909 plan of Chicago.

### at the end of the century: 100 years of architecture

through march 12, 2000  
museum of contemporary art, chicago

Organized by the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, this wide-ranging exhibit presents architectural works from the 20th century. Selections are grouped into categories like "Modern Learning and Living at the Bauhaus" and "The House as an Aesthetic Laboratory." For more information, call 312.280.2660 or go to [www.mcachicago.org](http://www.mcachicago.org).



© 1999 Mariusz Mizera Photography

Chicago architects Krueck and Sexton's Transparent House.

### material evidence: chicago architecture at 2000

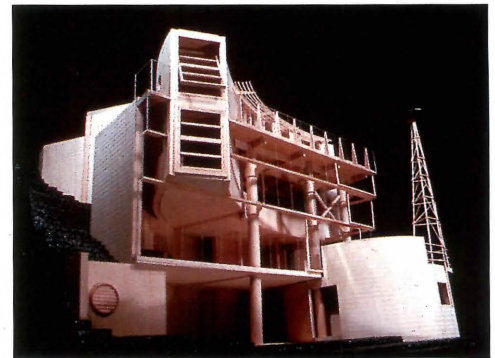
through march 5, 2000  
museum of contemporary art, chicago

Using commissioned installation, three-dimensional models, material samples, and architectural drawings of current Chicago projects, this exhibition explores the use of materials in contemporary architecture. For more information, call 312.280.2660 or check out [www.mcachicago.org](http://www.mcachicago.org).

### equal partners: men and women in contemporary architectural practice

through march 19, 2000  
berkeley art museum and pacific film archive, berkeley, calif.

This exhibit highlights the work of such male-female architectural partnerships as Craig Hodgetts and Hsin-Ming Fung, of Santa Monica, Calif. For more information, call 510.642.0808.



© 1998 Hodgetts + Fung

Thames House, by Hodgetts + Fung.

### national design triennial

march 7–august 6, 2000  
cooper-hewitt national design museum, new york city

A comprehensive look at American architecture, product design, and graphic design. Call 212.849.8300 for details, or go to [www.si.edu/organiza/museums/design/ndm.htm](http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/design/ndm.htm).



"Strap Furniture," 1999, by Constantine Boym and Laurene Leon Boym.

Courtesy Boym Studio

### custom home 2000

march 17–18, 2000  
georgia world congress center, atlanta

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## who's buying what in the new millennium?

Check the pulse of housing industry observers and you'll find them positively giddy about the prospects for new-home construction at the dawn of the 21st century. Growth in the U.S. population, along with shifts in where that growth is coming from, will be the major factor in keeping demand for new housing brisk.

During the first two decades of the next century, the U.S. population is projected to grow by an average of 2.4 million people per year. That translates into 1.1 million to 1.2 million new households annually, according to a National Association of Realtors study titled "Housing in the New Millennium." Some of those new homeowners will buy existing housing stock, but many will be in the market for new houses.

Industry watchers continue to credit the baby boomers with inspiring new and different types of housing as they age and their lifestyles change. Consider that as of this year, more than 30 million boomers will have reached their 50s. By 2010, that number will

ties for work seem almost boundless. One example: Second-home construction alone should boost housing starts by 100,000 to 150,000 units each year through 2020, says NAR spokesman Walter Molony.

Immigration will fuel about 25 percent of the growth in household numbers in the next decade, according to Harvard University's 1999 report "The State of the Nation's Housing." But a much greater portion—65 percent—will come from young Americans maturing into heads of households.

Echo boomers—composed primarily of the 84 million U.S.-born children of the baby boomers—are already beginning to reverse the recent decline in the young-adult population, adding an average of 20,000 each year to the ranks of 18- to 24-year-olds. By 2010, they'll account for more than one in 10 homeowners and four in 10 renters.

And the oft-forgotten parents of baby boomers, many of whom are now in their late 70s, 80s, and 90s, will make waves of their own. Because most of these seniors live in conven-

*industry watchers credit the baby boomers with inspiring new and different types of housing as they age.*

surpass 40 million.

The good news for residential architects is that this age group also happens to span the peak custom-home-buying cohort of 45 to 64, as defined by the National Association of Home Builders. The possibili-

tional housing and prefer to stay put, they will create a great demand for housing modifications to help them deal with the infirmities of aging, says the Harvard report.

While the number of American households continues to

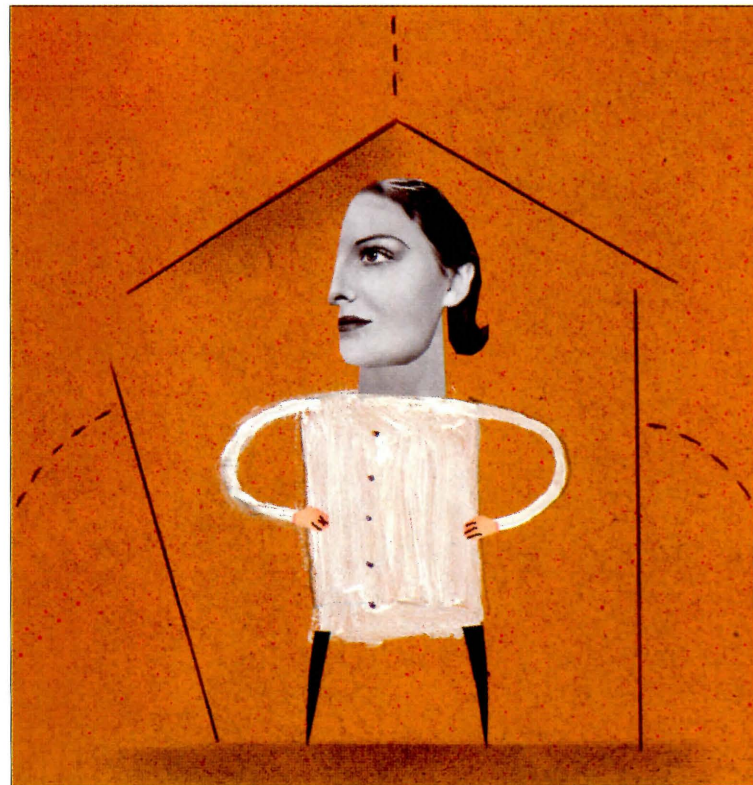


Illustration: David Plunkert

increase, the average size of families in the United States has diminished by 20 percent in the three decades since 1970, says Gopal Ahluwalia, NAHB's director of research. What's important for architects to know, however, is that this downsized family is demanding larger homes: Over the same three decades, the size of the average American home has increased in square footage by a whopping 49 percent—up from 1,500 square feet in 1970 to 2,230 square feet by mid-1999, says Ahluwalia.

Several characteristics of the American home are changing along with size, Ahluwalia notes. For instance, while the open kitchen/family room configuration remains very popu-

lar, "the living room is a vanishing breed," Ahluwalia says. "In the next 10 years, the living room will disappear, because the family room is becoming larger and more prominent."

Likewise, the ubiquitous television has left the living room and moved to the media room. Four bedrooms and two-car garages—once the domain of homes belonging to business owners, professionals, and corporate managers—are now standard fare for American homeowners across the board, says Ahluwalia. "The next wave is technology—multiple telephone lines, whole-house wiring, central music systems, and lighting controls. These are the things that are going to come next."—*vernion mays*



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### Did you know...

Vincent Scully received the first Scully Prize from the National Building Museum in November. A brilliant and compelling author, historian and critic, Mr. Scully spearheaded the debate about the future of America's cities and towns, altering the course of development in many communities. A powerful advocate for the preservation of civic spaces, Mr. Scully has argued persuasively for contextual and complementary new construction in traditional and historic neighborhoods, calling for a more humane architecture that respects the past while embracing new technology and design. Contact the National Building Museum at [www.nbm.org](http://www.nbm.org) for more information.

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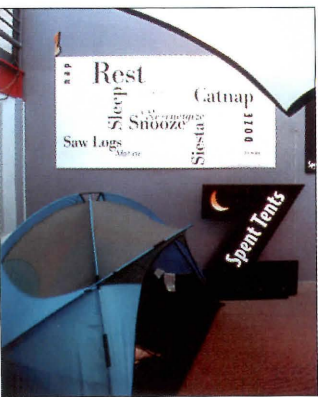
## CONTINUING EDUCATION EVENTS

WHEN	THE EVENT	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
FEB 11	Roofing 101: An Overview of Roofing Systems	Dallas, Texas	Roofing 101 is a conference primarily for designers, building owners, facility managers and others who need a basic understanding of roof systems. <b>Contact Amy Staska, National Roofing Contractors Association, at <a href="mailto:astaska@nrca.net">astaska@nrca.net</a>.</b>
FEB 19	Designing With Natural Light	Charlottesville, Virginia	Natural Light is the true light of architecture, a daily presence that renders spaces dynamic in all quantitative and qualitative ranges. Six-hour workshop. <b>Contact Roseann Parks, University of Virginia School of Architecture at <a href="mailto:parks@virginia.edu">parks@virginia.edu</a>.</b>
MARCH 9-11	California AIBD Convention	Monterey, California	The 40th Annual AIBD California Society Conference will feature seminars on architectural photography and interior design, architectural tours, wine tasting and design awards over a weekend on the beautiful Monterey Peninsula. <b>Contact Catherine Mulcahy at <a href="mailto:aibdc@aol.com">aibdc@aol.com</a>.</b>
MARCH 23-25	Excellence In Design/Build and the Borderless Market	Toronto, Canada	This conference will bring together architects, engineers, designers, constructors and owners to study issues relating to the design/build delivery system, emerging trends, and specific building types. <b>Contact <a href="http://www.e-architect.com">www.e-architect.com</a>.</b>
MARCH 25	Missouri/Kansas AIBD Meeting	Wichita, Kansas	"Where We Are Now & Plans for the Future": The State of Registration for National Council of Building Designer Certification (NCBDC). This seminar will provide an overview of the organization and the Certified Professional Building Designer (CPBD) designation. <b>Contact <a href="http://www.ncbdc.com">www.ncbdc.com</a>.</b>



## time out

As the number of hours in the American workweek continues to grow, corporate nap rooms are becoming more and more common. One architecture firm that's picked up on the trend is Gould Evans Goodman. The firm's Kansas City, Mo., headquarters features a nap room (below) containing three two-person camping tents, each equipped with an alarm clock, a sleeping mat, and a Walkman with a selection of relaxation music. The "spent tents," as



Courtesy Gould Evans Goodman Associates

they're affectionately known, are slept in two to three times per week. "When our architects are on a deadline, they may be working around the clock," says Gould Evans Goodman's Bradley Debrick. "The spent tents really help us keep our productivity level consistent." Plus, the brightly colored tents put a positive spin on the idea of sleeping on the job.—*m.d.*

## the great outdoors

Over the past several years, contextuality has become a hot topic with the architectural press and the academic community. But the subject's very popularity puts it in danger of becoming devalued. That's why these two books are highly useful, from both a theoretical and a practical standpoint. Each book uses top-quality photography and informative project descriptions to push past the obvious and come up with new ideas about the relationship between architecture and its surroundings.

*Inside Outside: Between Architecture and Landscape* is divided into five sections, which authors Anita Berrizbeitia and Linda Pollak refer to as "operations between architecture and landscape." According to Berrizbeitia and Pollak, each operation "challenges disciplinary precepts that have served to maintain a rigid dichotomy between architecture and landscape architecture." Each section uses four or five projects (several of

which, including Rem Koolhaas' Villa Dall'Ava, in St. Cloud, France, and Herzog and De Meuron's Stone House, in Tavole, Italy, are residential) to explore the nuances of a particular operation. *Inside Outside's* themes are challenging and refreshing, and are sure to be of great help to architects trying to understand exactly what does lie in the nebulous world between architecture and landscape.

*Outside Architecture: Outdoor Rooms Designed by Architects*, by Susan Zevon, is a more accessible but no less relevant tome featuring outdoor rooms, all residential and all designed by architects. The projects shown range from the modest and lovely California residence of the late William Turnbull to the spectacular pool "rooms" of Ricardo Legorreta. The text places heavy emphasis on siting, the use of vernacular elements, and manipulating space and light to enhance the effects of nature.

The common bond between *Inside Outside* and *Outside Architecture*: Both assert that identifying and articulating the connection between architecture and the outdoors is more than an aesthetic necessity; it's essential to the well-being of the human spirit.—*m.d.*



*Inside Outside.* Anita Berrizbeitia, Linda Pollak. 191 pp. Gloucester, Mass.: Rockport Publishers. 1999. \$50 (hardcover). 800.289.0963.

*Outside Architecture.* Susan Zevon. 191 pp. Gloucester, Mass.: Rockport Publishers. 1999. \$50 (hardcover). 800.289.0963.



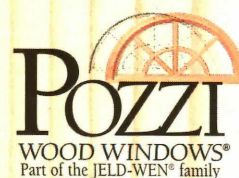
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# production house proud

the aia's housing committee chair wants you to take production housing seriously.

by michael k. medick, aia

**t**he role of chairperson of the AIA Housing Committee has allowed me to meet and speak with residential architects from across the country about housing design and community-related issues. While I have seen some of the nation's best new communities, I have also been struck by the great schism that divides residential architects from the built environment. I contend that there is a better way for architects, planners, engineers, builders, developers, and consumers to collaborate in order to make better places—places that provide a richer quality of life yet maintain pro forma standards that make them viable to build.

## rootless environments

Many new developments seem to be composed of a collection of housing “product” that has been haphaz-

it's unfortunate the architectural profession has missed out on the opportunity to define good places to live.



© Everett & Soule

Veranda Place, in Celebration, Fla., strikes an appealing balance between public green space and residential neighborhood. Medick's firm, Looney Ricks Kiss, designed a number of house plans for the Neo-Traditional town.

ardly strewn across a barren landscape. Other developments are more orderly, but are composed of cookie-cutter houses marching endlessly along unarticulated streets. These places depress me. They are rootless environments that reflect nothing of their history or location. They could be anywhere! There's no evidence of the integration of sound planning principles or responsive architecture. There's not even a notion that any thought was given to the lives of the people who live there.

It's unfortunate the architectural profession has missed out on the opportunity to define good neighborhoods and places to live. Architects have ignored the merchant-built housing market. It's time we as residential architects and planners work with home builders and developers to take a hard look at the places that have been created. We should be determined to do better than propagate sprawl.

## better service

There is a public perception that architects serve

the elite, designing only extravagant custom homes for those who can afford them. Indeed, a large portion of the home buying public goes largely unserved by architects.

These consumers must simply accept what's built for them. They select their houses by comparing what they cost per square foot, because “all new houses are pretty much the same.” They regard architects' services as a luxury. But it doesn't have to be so. With proper experience, talent,  
*continued on page 34*



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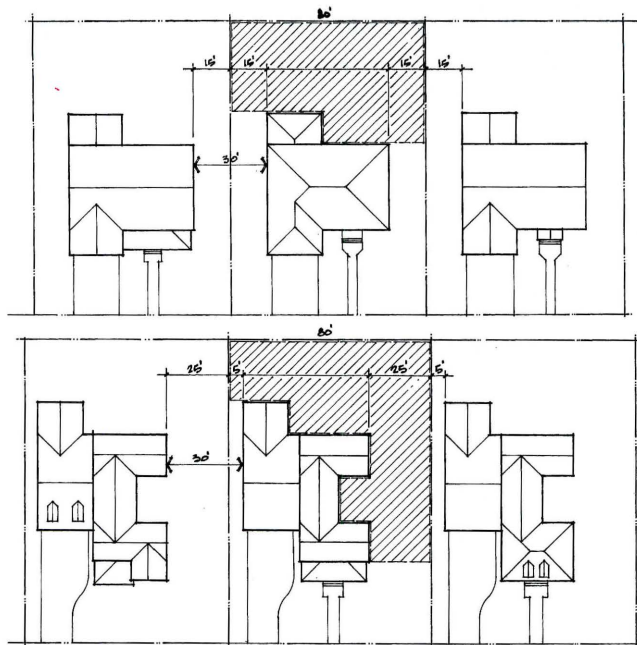
and knowledge of the housing market, architects can create greater value through quality design. Those of us involved in the implementation of new communities that are successful functionally, aesthetically, and economically know that the home buying public can be better served.

It's not an easy task we've been given: Design functional houses that are efficient to build in the middle of a former cow pasture for unknown residents! Where does one begin to create community with those conditions?

I believe the process begins with knowledge, exploration, anticipation, and a willingness to challenge the status quo. It

we cannot design homes  
or create land plans in a  
vacuum. all of the compo-  
nents must work together.

takes an understanding of what has gone before; the observance of what works and what doesn't (and why); a blending of technology and practical building solutions; and a deep desire to improve the quality of life for the families that will live in these new communities. From the initial conceptualization, the



Of what use is a 15-foot side yard? Note how, in the bottom plan, the placement of the house on the lot maximizes usable yard space.

complete and total integration of planning, architecture, building technology, infrastructure, services, and utilities needs to be considered. We cannot design



homes or create land plans in a vacuum. All of the components must work together.

How can an architect who claims he "does residential work" say in the next breath, "but I don't do planning"? The two work hand in hand. A land planner, engineer, or architect who does not understand

the nuances of merchant-built houses should not be planning new towns or communities. I've never designed a hospital, and if asked, I would recommend the project to other architects, or at least collaborate in an effort to best serve the client and end user. Without collaboration or teaming, I would not know what I was doing. Sure, I could read a few books and visit several hospitals, but that would not make me an expert. The doctors and patients in "my hospital" would surely suffer from my lack of experience and knowledge.

**fitting the pieces**  
Planners, architects, builders, and developers need to be well-versed in the subtleties and details of how all the pieces fit together. As an example, consider this scenario: You have an 80-foot lot width, requiring

15-foot side-yard setbacks. That means there will be 30 feet between houses. Now, what does a homeowner do with 15 feet of side yard, besides just cut the grass and pull his shades for privacy? What if the spacing between homes remained 30 feet, but the side-yard setback on Lot A was 5 feet and on Lot B it was 25 feet? This common-sense solution gives you something to work with. (See plan diagram, left.) Instead of two useless 15-foot side yards, you gain a usable dimension for a side patio or garden with privacy. The homes can be designed to maximize this "found" space and ultimately create value for the home buyer—and the builder.

Ultimately, the long-range success and value of a community depends on the information and research upon which the project is based; a vision that is consistent in its intent; and the tools to properly implement that vision. A good land plan does not create a wonderful neighborhood if the design of the homes, services, utilities, and other related buildings does not reflect the intent of the plan. Good architecture does not save a bad land plan, and a good land plan does not guarantee quality architecture.

**variety, please**

As architects, we have been  
*continued on page 36*



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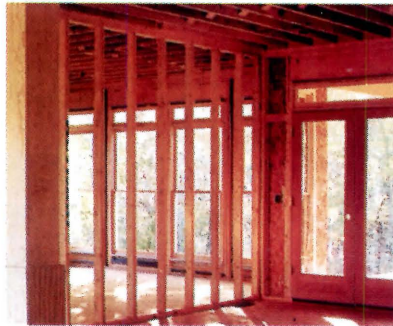
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trained to look at situations not as problems, but rather as opportunities for creative solutions. Unfortunately, that architectural training has tended to concentrate on housing solutions that are "one of a kind." This nation's housing market demands many more variations. Architects can use their creative talent and special problem-solving skills to devise practical, marketable, and aesthetically pleasing solutions to this dilemma.

Architects, together with builders and developers, can learn from each other to create better communities. This is not an either/or proposition. We need all parties involved in the home building and design

we need all parties  
involved in the home  
building and design industry  
to work toward  
commonsense solutions.

industry to work toward commonsense solutions. Jointly, we can do better, but architects can no longer ignore this segment of the built environment. **ra**

*Michael K. Medick, AIA, is director of town and community planning for Looney Ricks Kiss Architects and chair of the AIA Housing Committee.*



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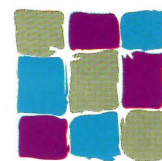
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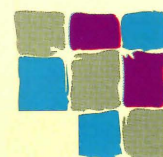


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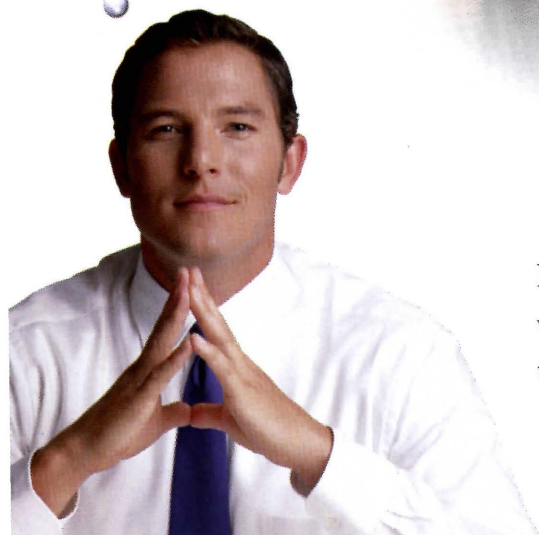
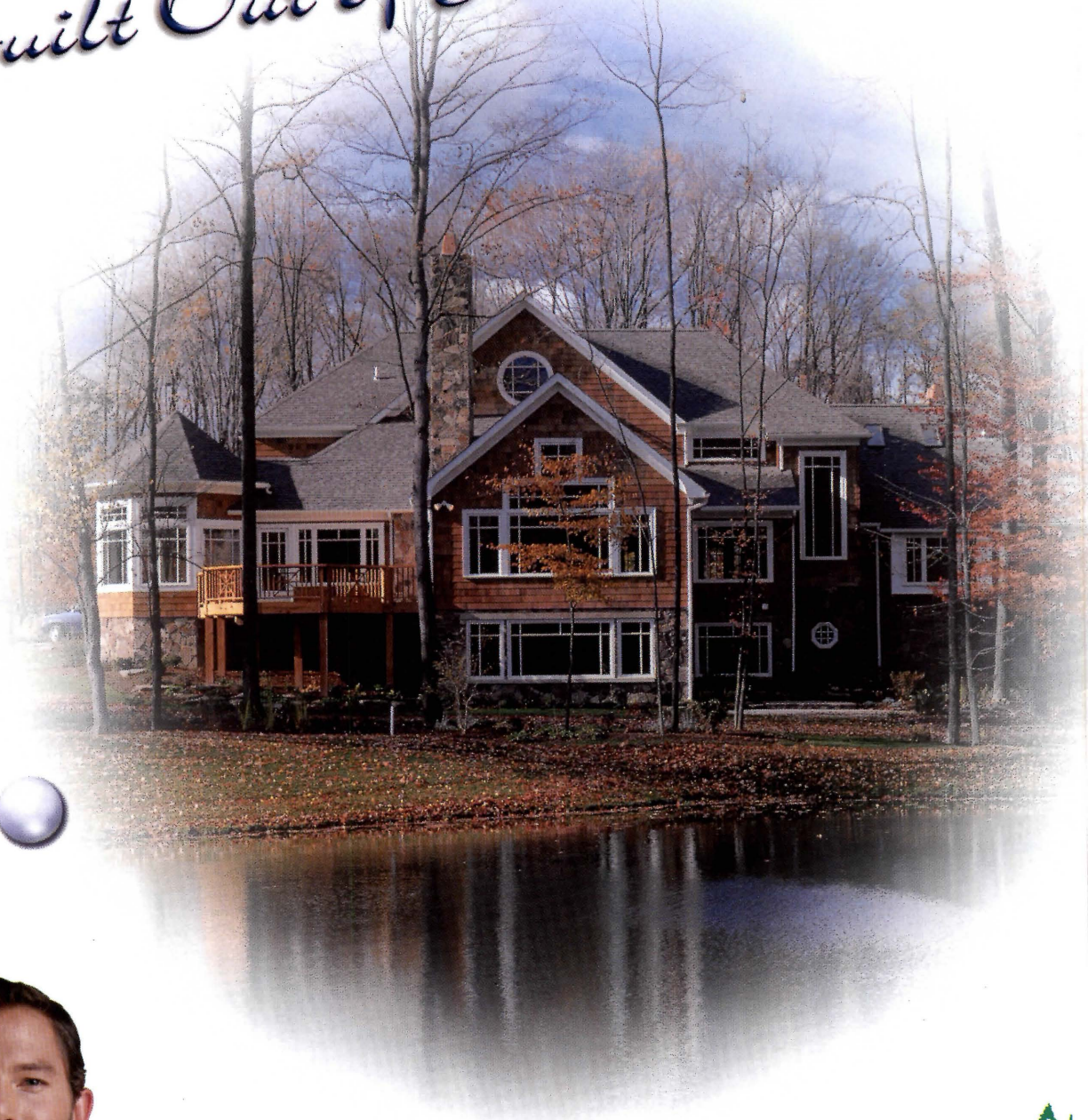
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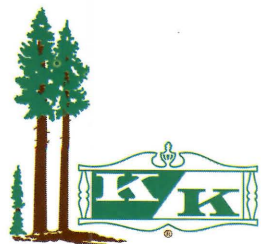
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# going local

tough competition among builders and a hot housing market  
are driving a boom in region-specific design services.

by s. claire conroy

**f**or big builders, the party is over. The days when they could churn out the same five plans from the home office and sprawl them across the country are on the wane. Dwindling lots, more sophisticated and diverse buyers, burdensome regulations, and tougher competition mean they have to pay more attention to architecture and land planning than ever before.

Most big builders have realized that good design is no longer a high-end custom option but a basic necessity in the battle for move-up, luxury, niche, and even entry-level buyers. And with more builders crowding the hot markets, they're learning it's their best bet for beating the competition.

In response to those trends and the consolidation fever that's made the biggest builders even bigger, many companies have decentralized their design departments. The new wisdom believes these entrepreneurial divisions can respond more quickly and more specifically to a piece of land or a market trend, either with their own in-house talent or, increasingly, with the help of outside

architecture firms. For architects, that means the party is just beginning.

## local wisdom

Almost everyone is convinced that the old trickle-down approach to design just doesn't work anymore. You've got to dig deep into the local market to determine what it needs, what it wants, and what it'll buy.

"You don't want to answer a question that nobody asked," says Bud McIntire, vice president of architecture for Atlanta-based John Wieland Homes and Neighborhoods. "The

most important thing is to get a real good idea of who the buyer is—their preferences, their budget, their psychographics. You don't want to come in and design a beautiful house that nobody wants."

McIntire oversees a large, busy staff of 19. "We tailor our elevations to specific neighborhoods and we have strict rules about variation in elevation and color," he explains. "We have design review meetings every week, continuity in the team, and consistent judgment about what our customers are

looking for in a house."

For Wieland Homes, the centralized design shop works very well. But that's because it's one of the smaller big builders, it's deep into a limited geographical region its people know intimately, and it builds primarily for a narrow demographic of wealthy buyers.

Wieland's operation has turned into a kind of farm team for the majors. Both The Ryland Group and Centex Corp. have regional design directors who trained under McIntire.

*continued on page 42*

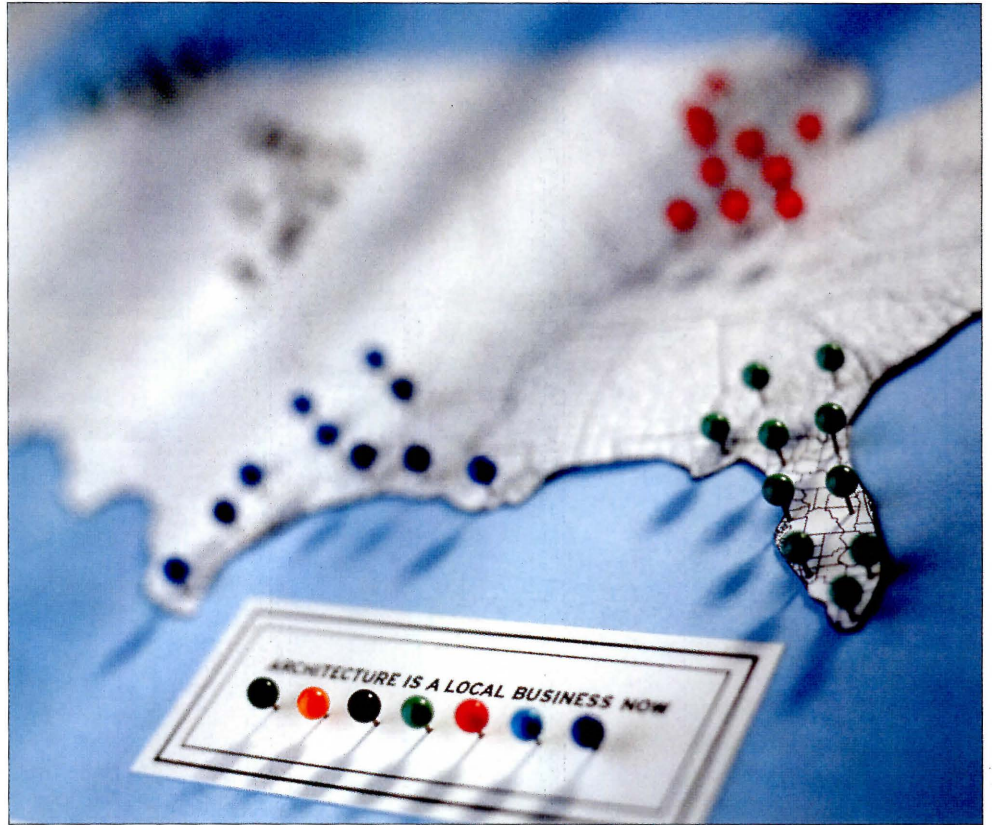


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They, too, tout the importance of local market needs and tastes. They believe design should trickle up from the regional offices. "We just started regionalizing architects two years ago," says Joe Stein, who runs the architecture department at Centex's Raleigh, N.C., regional office. "All architects were

South and another Wieland Homes graduate. "In the old days, the division presidents didn't deal with product, they were just given it. But nowadays, you have to be responsive to the marketplace. Our driving force is not to use something just because we have it. It must be market driven. Those are our marching orders.

hiring outside architecture firms can be the fast track to mastering a regional look, exploring a new market niche, building a specialized community, or freshening an existing product line.

out of headquarters in Dallas, and every week we would go out to different regions. No one architect would specialize in a region. It had its price. The architects never had time to get anything but superficial. Everything looked like it came out of California. I had that beaten out of me at John Wieland."

The Ryland Group, headquartered in Columbia, Md., came to the same conclusion about six years ago, when new head honcho R. Chad Dreier breezed in from design-forward California. "When Chad came in 1993, the second thing he did was to decentralize," says Thomas Devine, Ryland's regional architecture director for the

Chad's gotten the regions and divisions to be more entrepreneurial."

### hired guns

With their states' rights firmly in hand, many regional and divisional offices are going out of house for design. In part, it's because the building boom has spawned more work than any in-house team can handle, but it's also because outside architecture firms provide advantages inside guys may lack.

Hiring outside architecture firms can be the fast track to mastering a regional look, exploring a new market niche, building a specialized community, or freshening an existing prod-

uct line. Even staff-heavy Wieland Homes goes outside from time to time. "We'll go out of house when we're in a niche we're not familiar with," says McIntire. "For instance, we used Looney Ricks Kiss for a Neo-Traditional project."

Centex hired out to add a multifamily project to its mix. "We wanted to build some four-story condos in Myrtle Beach," Stein recalls. "Instead of developing it from scratch, we went to The Martin Organization, which had already developed a similar product for the Washington, D.C.-area market."

Some big builders prefer to farm out most of their design work. Houston-based U.S. Home Corp. relies almost exclusively on outside firms for its architecture. The company believes that approach keeps its designs fresh and gives it an edge with Byzantine government authorities. "It's more of a competitive issue for us," says Chris Rediger, president of operations for U.S. Home. "Local firms often have credibility with local governments."

If a builder is new to an area, an architecture firm with a sterling reputation can smooth the way not only with local governments but also with all-powerful citizens' groups. When Taylor Woodrow Homes decided to take its high-end show from South-

ern California upstate to exclusive Marin County, across the bridge from San Francisco, the no-growth residents started snarling. But to design its new development, Traditions, the company called in William Hezmalhalch Architects, which has a Bay Area office and strong local relationships. "It definitely gave them a leg up," says Hezmalhalch. "There's a big learning curve for builders new to the Bay Area. And Marin County is especially anti-growth and anti-production builders. Some of the projects we take on have tried for approval 10 times before we get them through."

Hiring an outside architecture firm can also enable companies to respond more quickly to a market opportunity. The venerable production-housing design firm Bloodgood Sharp Buster Architects and Planners are lords of this dance. One of their most sought-after services is a four-day charrette. Armed with lots of advance research from a builder's division office, Bloodgood swoops in with a flock of architects and brainstorms new designs with the builder's key people. A kind of architecture SWAT team, they leave the builder at the

*continued on page 44*



# New England Classic.



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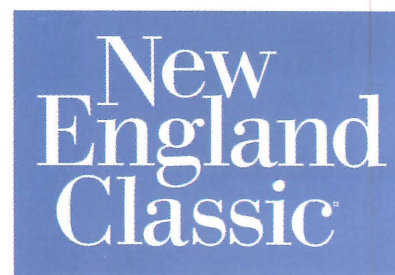
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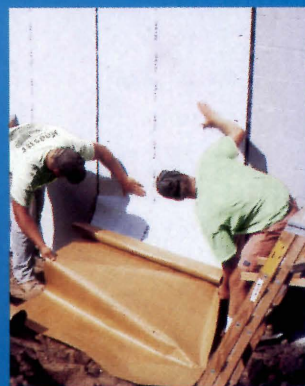


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## practice

end of the week with good-to-go schematics that would have taken an in-house shop months to develop. The builder's CAD guy takes them the rest of the way. "Our Dallas office does about two of these a month," says Dan Swift, partner-in-charge of Bloodgood's Southwest regional office in Dallas. "Once a client sees how fast they can react to a piece of dirt, they realize there's no better way."

### quality control

So, what could be wrong with the fast-acting, market-savvy, regional approach to architectural design? The major issue right now for in-house and freelance architects is quality control.

Ryland's Tom Devine finds it difficult to keep his plans clean in these decentralized days. "I could maintain my standards more meticulously before," he says. "Now, if I share product between divisions, each modifies the plans with AutoCAD for local vendors and codes." Each time someone alters a plan—and computers make that so much easier—another avenue opens up for errors and omissions.

Take those shaky plans to the field, where there's an acute shortage of expert subcontractors, and you've got another big problem. "With the declining skill level in the trades, plans

have to be more comprehensive to maintain quality," says Centex's Stein. "You can't put out a very basic set of plans anymore and be sure it'll get built well."

Still, he's sure that the decentralized approach is best—there just aren't enough hours in the day to perfect it. "The biggest challenge is to get to the next level. I travel so much and work on so many new plans, it's hard to get past the schematics to design development. I do anywhere from 150 to 200 plans a year. In private practice, we'd do 30 to 40 in a pretty full year," he explains. "We're trying to train division presidents to follow through on the designs. We want to get better at maintaining design integrity so that quality doesn't drift so far. Now, I do a sketch, leave it with them, and then they forget the intention and hand it off to a CAD operator. All along the way people come in and change things. Six months later, I come back to walk the prototype and it doesn't look anything like the concept I left with them."

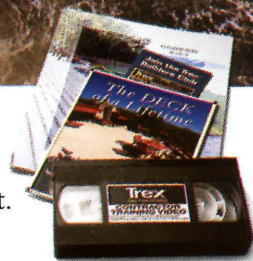
Nobody wants to put the genie back in the bottle. And probably no one can. "Buyers are more educated and the competition is tougher," says Devine. "Architecture is a local business now." For architects everywhere, that's cause for celebration. **ra**





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architect barry berkus once helmed the largest production

housing firm in the country, but now he's turning back

to his first love: design for design's sake.

# full circle

by s. claire conroy

*in designing buildings, i often return to the circle for the sense of stability, security, and closure it provides.*

—barry a. berkus, aia,  
from *architecture/art, parallels/connections*

**W**hen a publisher approached Barry Berkus several years ago with the opportunity to immortalize his 40 years of architectural achievement in a book, he could barely suppress a yawn. Sure, he's duly proud of his accomplishments and he certainly has a healthy appetite for recognition. But for someone who thrives on new challenges, a passive portfolio of greatest hits just didn't move his muse. So, Berkus, who knows how to woo a client to his way of thinking, countered with another, more ambitious idea: What about a meditation on the nature of creativity?

*Architecture/Art, Parallels/Connections*, published by Images House, comes to bookstores and Internet sites in March. For Berkus, a dominant force in production housing and a leading collector of contemporary art, it's an intellectual autobiography of sorts, tracing the ways in which each experience has informed another in his career. What he doesn't address in the book is how each has accounted for some of his greatest gains and most devastating losses, both professionally and personally.



1990

Alexander Vertikoff/Courtesy Barry A. Berkus, AIA

In his design for the Rokko House in Kōbe, Japan, Berkus exported his signature soaring stair and the American home office.









full circle

1990

Berkus, who maintained an office in Japan, designed the Rokko demonstration house for the first Kōbe International Home Fair. Built by the Daihlo Corp., it showcased American products and Western design.

Alexander Vertikoff/Courtesy Barry A. Berkus, AIA



“ ... what I hoped to do as an architect:

define and sculpt space with a fresh viewpoint

and a very human attitude.”—from *architecture/art*

Although he acknowledges the past, he doesn't care to linger there. He'd much rather set his sights on the road ahead.

### the wizard of ideas

Not everyone loves Berkus' architecture. It's not for the faint of heart. There's nothing dainty or reticent about it. It's chunky and muscular—plunked into place with bold strokes of hubris tempered by humor. It takes risks; it makes guesses about the future and how our lifestyles might change. It experiments with materials and forms. It reinvents the wheel at every turn. Even if you don't admire the outcome, you can't deny the vigorous life force it projects.

This combination of verve and nerve accounts for why many who know the man and his work consider Berkus a genius. He's the one magazines, manufacturers, and builders call when they want to tackle something in housing that's never been done. His ability not only to make connections between art and architecture, but to synthesize all he's absorbed from his extensive travels, the

books, newspapers, and magazines he reads, the talented people he knows, into original and often important ideas about housing is largely responsible for his acclaim. Those ideas have resulted in many notable accomplishments for him and others, but they've also inspired Berkus to reach for a few stars just beyond his grasp.

He claims a number of impressive firsts for his résumé: the first national architecture firm specializing in housing, the first international housing firm, and the first housing firm to go public. It's a tremendous trio of successes.

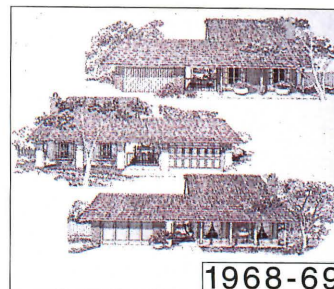
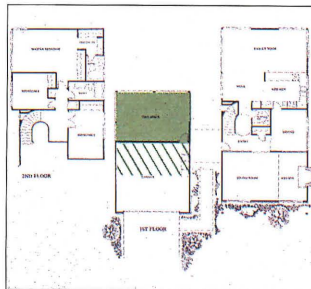
Unfortunately, something else has come to Berkus in threes: bankruptcy. The disappointments might have caused lesser spirits to give up the ghost, but that indomitable life force just assimilates the lessons learned and comes up with a new trajectory for the future, a new star to steer by. Indeed, his latest path may be the best. Pared down to the essentials, a design practice that takes plans only through the conceptual stage, he's come full circle to what he cares about most: the art of ideas.



1964

Peter Malinowski/Courtesy Barry A. Berkus

Woodleigh, the house Berkus designed for his family in La Canada, Calif., has just been restored by its current owners.



1968-69

Courtesy Barry A. Berkus, AIA

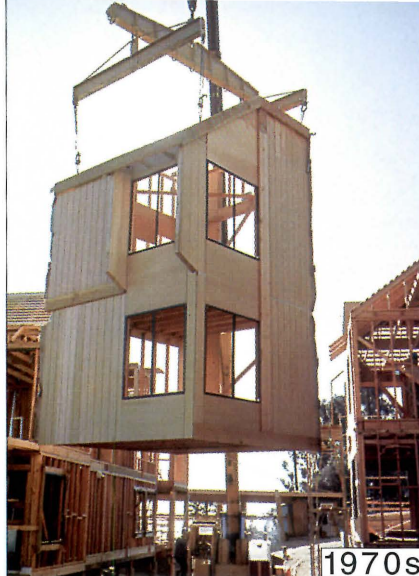
Harbor View, in Newport Beach, Calif., was an early foray into zoned living plans. The houses, commissioned by The Bren Co., sold for around \$29,000 then; some now top \$1 million.





Courtesy Barry A. Berkus

Berkus' demonstration house HMX-1, designed for builder Roger Halloway and built on the NAHB floor, experimented with the idea of "tandem" ownership. To accommodate two unrelated people living in one house, the plan had two master suites.



Courtesy Barry A. Berkus

Along with his production work for builders and his custom designs, Berkus has always tinkered with new ways of building affordable housing. He believes modular housing offers the best opportunities for innovation.



Robb Miller/Courtesy Barry A. Berkus, AIA

Another demonstration house, designed for the Asphalt Association, also explored dual ownership. Here, a loft within the public room creates a zone of privacy.

## a quick draw

The child of a mother he describes as "brilliant and creative" and a father who was "critical and conservative," Berkus encountered professional success almost from the moment he put pencil to paper. Born in 1935 and raised in Pasadena, Calif., he grew up admiring firsthand the Southern California work of Greene and Greene, Frank Lloyd Wright, and the Case Study Modernists. However, when he first began college at the University of Southern California, Santa Barbara, his father's practi-

cal side ruled his course of study: He majored in economics. Somewhere along the way, Berkus took a hard, right-brain turn into design and transferred to the architecture school at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. "Architecture was a snap decision," he says, "but one I've never once regretted."

Working part-time in the offices of the housing firm L.C. Major while finishing school ignited his passion for residential architecture and honed a skill that contributed greatly to his prosperity. "I learned how to

draw quickly," he explains. "I drew houses in 40 hours." Berkus' speed and talent so impressed Major he offered him the Southern California office when he was just 21. Berkus started his own firm instead, with partner Donald Haskin. A year later he was flying solo.

Also at 21, he married Gail Hanks, whom he had met in high school. By 25, he had three children, Jeffrey, Carey, and Steven, and his own design firm, specializing in production housing. It was exactly what he wanted to do, but he knew he was jeopardizing his reputation among his peers.

"When we started, housing was looked down upon," he recalls. "I lead a design panel at the National Association of Home Builders, but I couldn't do one at the American Institute of Architects. Not until Sea Ranch, Reston, Columbia, West Lake, Irvine, Hilton Head did people

become interested in housing. They became interested in making a place."

Not only did many architects consider housing beneath them, they were also convinced they couldn't make a living at it. But Berkus' prodigious ability to produce plans turned the odds in his favor. "Housing as a product has to move on and off the boards quickly because it doesn't pay very well," he says.

The boards at Barry A. Berkus, AIA, were smoking by the late 1960s and production housing felt the heat. Walls came tumbling down between public rooms, entry halls began to soar, and master bedrooms swelled into suites. "We made a conscious decision to bring volume and spaciousness to builder houses," he says. "Floor plans of the 1950s were so rigid."

He pushed for more open and flexible floor plans, reflecting the ways in which families and

"one of my deepest motivations is  
to extend what I have learned in ...  
custom residences toward improving ...  
production-built housing."—from *architecture/art*





1979

Conran Gohlinghorst/Courtesy Barry A. Berkus, AIA

The Suntronic House, built by the Copper Development Association, introduced one of the earliest spa bathrooms, with a fireplace and a large jetted tub. Berkus pioneered "big lifestyle" in master suites, an idea that trickled down from his work in custom design.



1979

Conran Gohlinghorst/Courtesy Barry A. Berkus, AIA

In addition to a copper roof and copper pipes, the Suntronic House also employed a number of cutting-edge technologies of the day, including solar power. Berkus integrated 13 or so active and passive solar systems into his design.

lifestyles were changing. His design for the 1968 development of Harbor View, in Newport Beach, Calif., was a big hit. "The houses had a room in back of the garage that could be a playroom, office, or in-law suite. And it was all built on 60-foot lots—a breakthrough at the time," he says. "Those houses sold for \$29,000; today, they go for \$750,000 to \$1 million." The "bonus room" is now a fixture of builder houses everywhere.

On the strength of projects like Harbor View, Berkus' renown, and consequently his business, grew beyond even his seemingly boundless imagination. At its height, his firm had more than 200 architects, and satellite offices in San Francisco, New York, Chicago, Washington, Atlanta, Miami, Tokyo, and Kuala Lumpur. Berkus was planning houses, communities, and towns across the country; he was designing high-end,

one-of-a-kind custom homes for big-name clients; he was teaching the Japanese how to design and build quick, efficient production housing; and he was working with UCLA's School of Planning on an affordable, modular housing project. He was invited to speak at housing events everywhere, and each time he did, he picked up another job.

Meanwhile, he had moved his family from smog-choked Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, purchased 22 acres of cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, and built his own Shangri-la—a dream house, art gallery, and equestrian compound in a development called Hope Ranch. He thought he was in heaven.

### paradise lost

The bigger they are, the harder they fall. With his now public firm deep into so many markets and his entrepreneurial deals struck on the risky side, Berkus

was particularly vulnerable to an economic lurch. "The Oil Crisis took me out," he says, succinctly. "All our clients went broke."

He sold the firm and, with it, the ability to practice under his own name. After eight years at idyllic Hope Ranch, he was forced to sell the home he and his family loved so dearly. With the proceeds, he purchased the right to use his name for business purposes again. "Shangri-la for my name—not a bad deal," he says.

He recouped and went on to design some of his best work in both production and custom housing, and he accumulated a long résumé of "idea houses" for magazines and building material manufacturers. His builder houses brought high living and wide choices to middle-income buyers. "A lot of the forms and ideas I had doing custom homes made their way back to the production house," he says. In his production work,

Berkus pioneered sitting rooms in master bedrooms and fireplaces in master baths, double master suites, loft spaces, and home offices. And he continued to draw more adaptable floor plans, like the flexible modules in the high-density townhouses at Tanglewood, in Cerritos, Calif., in 1979—no lot was locked into any one plan.

In other projects, his zoned floor plans gave one side of the house to parents and the other to children, with a wide open middle in which to reunite. "We thought the way to bring the family together was to remove walls." Today, nearly every new house has a "family room."

The sheer ubiquity of his name on plans across the country caused his next business failure. "In 1972, Ralph Nader began talking about how people should be guaranteed defect-free housing. So, attorneys began going to homeown-



# full circle

"the structures that we live in have a great influence over our lives—they construct the patterns through which we see the world."—from *architecture/art*



1979

Robb Miller/Courtesy Barry A. Berkus, AIA

Berkus played an instrumental role in the development of Irvine, Calif., an early planned community. Turtle Rock Highlands, in Irvine, designed on cul de sacs around a greenbelt, is "still one of the best plans in the country," says the architect.



1989

Robb Miller/Courtesy Barry A. Berkus, AIA

In his custom work, Berkus wants his houses to "tell a story." Villa Lucia, in the Santa Barbara hills, suggests an Italian homestead that grew over time to match the family's increasing prosperity.



on the boards

Courtesy Berkus Design Studio

The Chapala Lofts proposal hopes to bring more life to downtown Santa Barbara. Berkus believes infill projects represent some of the best opportunities for architects in the coming years.

ers' associations and encouraging litigation. That litigation grew through the '80s," he explains. "We had done more housing than anyone in the country. We ended up spending \$50,000 to \$70,000 a month defending ourselves, on top of \$20,000 a month in insurance, and a \$100,000 deductible."

On the heels of that hit came yet another. The savings-and-loan crisis caused a tax-law change, and several loans Berkus had cosigned for family members were suddenly called in. He lost some of his favorite works of art in the aftermath.

## back to basics

His twin companies, B3 and Berkus Design Studio, now number 32 architects. He occupies office space on an old college campus on a hillside overlooking the city of Santa Barbara and the ocean beyond. And there's plenty of impressive work on the boards.

B3, which Berkus holds in partnership with David Van Hoy, Tom Greer, Arthur Sturz, and Thom McMahon, is blasting through a wide range of plans, from a mixed-use residential project in Los Angeles' Playa Vista development to a town







**1985**

Berkus considers The Pavilions in Scottsdale, Ariz., one of his most successful projects of the 1980s. Built by Felker Development, the *medium-density* plan organizes duplex and triplex units along a picturesque waterway.

Robb Miller/Courtesy Barry A. Berkus, AIA



# full circle



1997

Berkus' addition to a Case Study house by Charles and Ray Eames bows to the original without kowtowing to it. Although he works in many styles, including Santa Barbara's mandated Spanish Colonial, Berkus thinks of himself as a Modernist.

Courtesy B3 Architects



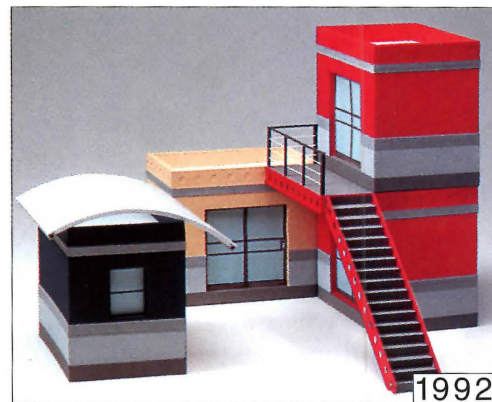


“connecting the human experience  
to a structure is a marriage of  
art and science.”—from *architecture/art*

plan for Newtown, Conn. Berkus Design Studio handles his custom home and pro bono projects, including a house in Big Horn, Calif., he thinks will be his best custom work yet and a new complex for the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden that's very close to his heart.

Unlike Frank Lloyd Wright, known for a few business setbacks of his own, Berkus has never had much problem generating clients. His gregarious nature and compelling visions make him a rain-maker of the first order. And so, tentatively but optimistically, he believes he's back on track. He's hired an in-house lawyer to sweep up the last of the lawsuits, reducing his monthly insurance premiums from \$20,000 to less than \$5,000. And to limit his liability for the future, he doesn't do working drawings on anything but the custom homes.

He feels he's learned some important lessons, and yet, to a certain extent, he's really just a casualty of his own success. “You know, the signature architects don't do that many buildings. The risk they're taking isn't going to be repeated,” he explains. “Housing archi-



Courtesy Berkus Design Studio

His so-called “Mod Pods” are the latest iteration of Berkus' modular affordable housing designs. Here, owners can add rooms as their needs require and their finances allow. The units can also serve as emergency disaster housing.

tects are creating a much bigger fabric and taking a much bigger risk.”

Of course, life without at least some risk doesn't appeal to Berkus. He still mountain bikes an hour and a half up the steep hills around Santa Barbara each weekend, just for the 12-minute downhill fly. But the professional risks he seeks now are creative ones. In his custom homes, he aspires to come as close to fine art as he can, like those signature architects. (He especially admires Frank Gehry.) And in his production homes, he's pushing to give owners even more freedom and flexibility. In his design for 1997's Home of the Future, cosponsored by our





Courtesy Berkus Design Studio

His design for a custom home in Big Horn, Calif., plays with concealment and exposure of form (above). On site at a custom home near Santa Barbara, Berkus (below) says, "I think you get better as you get older. Your vision gets clearer and you build on your mistakes."



Mark Robert Halper

"truly original work involves  
a rethinking of familiar  
traditions in a way that is  
meaningful to people  
in the present."—from *architecture/art*

sister publication, *BUILDER* magazine, he developed his most adaptable floor plan to date. In it, movable interior walls allow homeowners to change the layout of rooms at will, and mobile modules enable them to add new rooms when needed.

As always, the ideas just keep coming. He's very interested in bringing housing back into the city. He has several in-city loft and mixed-use projects on the boards right now, and he intends to walk the walk himself: He's purchased a tear-down lot in downtown Santa Barbara where he plans to design an infill home for himself and his wife. He's looking for a sense of community, but he wants the real thing.

And so, to anyone who'll listen, he's also speaking out against what he calls the cult of New Urbanism. He believes the

past can serve as a useful springboard to new ideas but not a viable town plan. "New Urbanism doesn't respond to today's needs. Porches were great when people had to sit outside for breezes before we had air-conditioning, but no one is sitting out on those porches now," he says. "It's a great wake-up call, but it has nothing to do with the way we live today. There's a lot more to thinking about how we live than the geometry of street and house."

For Berkus, thinking outside the grid comes naturally. And so does the task of reinvention: "Everything has to fall apart so you can come up for air."

"Residential architecture is about romance, learning, fulfillment of a journey," he says. "It should never be below you to do housing." **ra**



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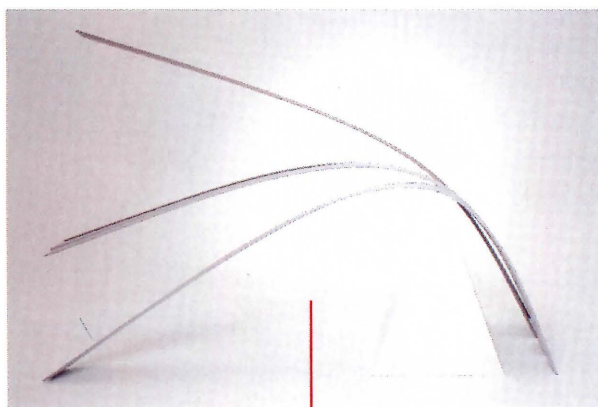
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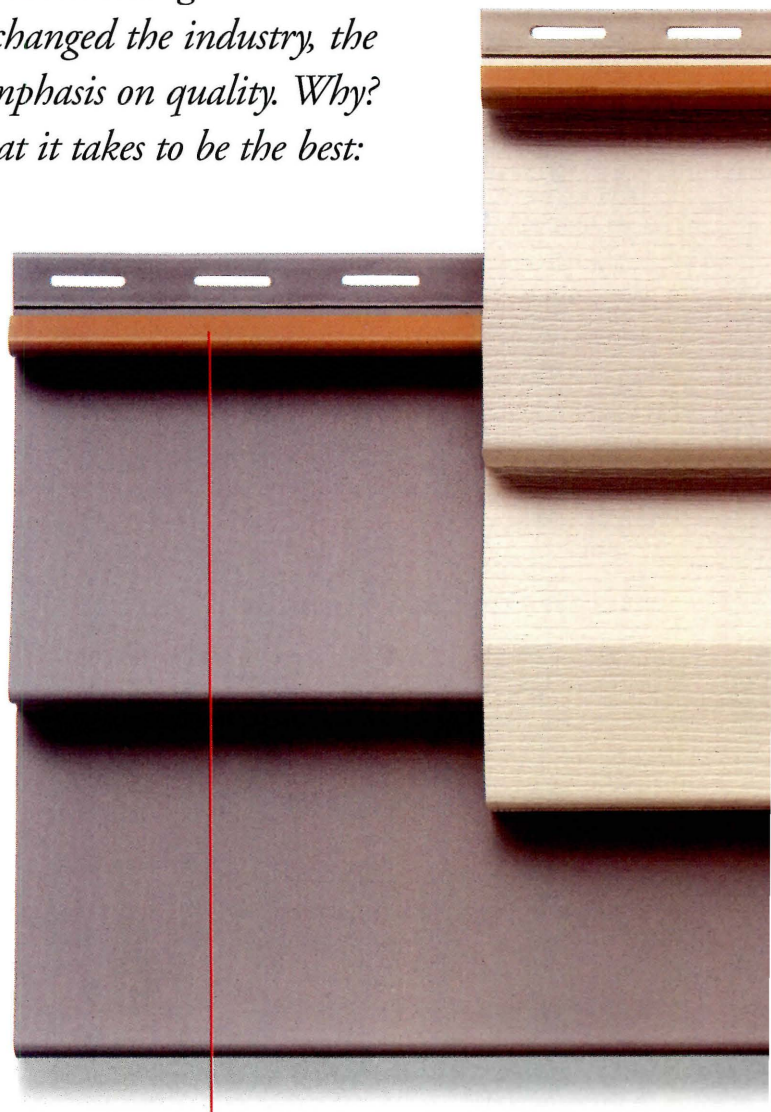
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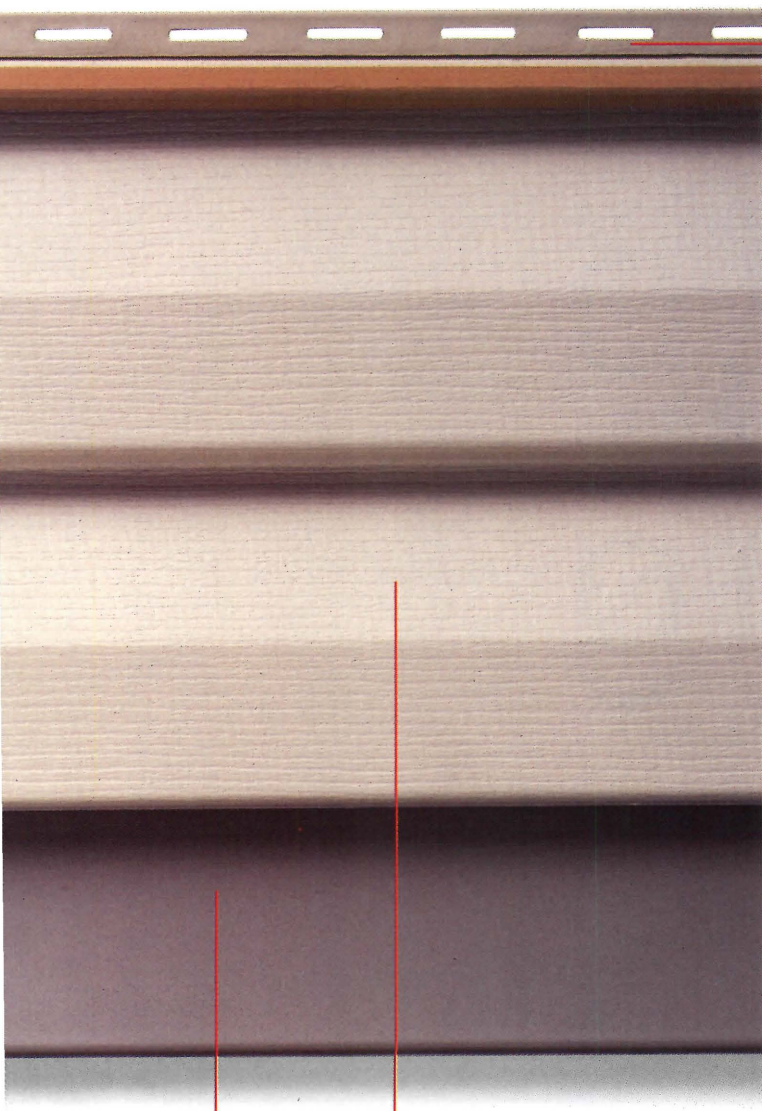
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# from house to housing

*is the divide between*

*custom homes and*

*production housing*

*as great as*

*everyone believes?*

*Or are there*

*important lessons*

*specialists of each can*

*learn from the other?*

by vernon mays  
illustrations by david plunkert





■ In the universe of residential design, architects who craft one-off custom homes for individual clients like to think they're worlds apart from their counterparts who create plans for builders to mass-produce in America's burgeoning subdivisions. If ever two seg-

ments of the same profession were like oil and water, so the thinking goes, these two would be them.

"The mind-set is very different for each," says Don Jacobs, AIA, who spent the first 16 years of his career designing custom homes and most of the past 13 doing production hous-

ing. But Jacobs and others like him who have been designing houses for the past 20 to 30 years acknowledge that the two seemingly opposite realms of residential design offer lessons that can greatly benefit each other. Like the two sides of a coin, custom and production housing are

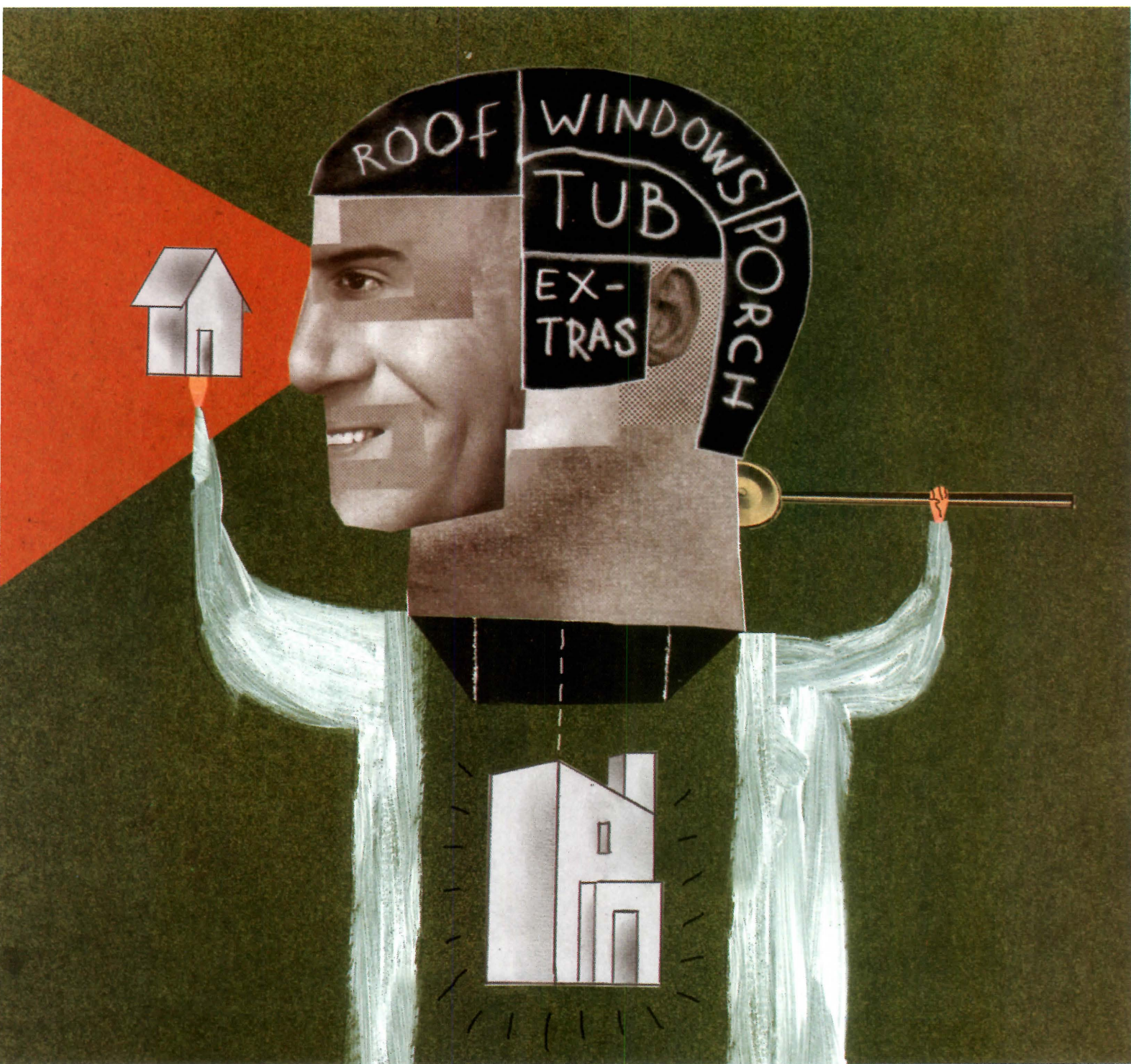
inextricably linked in fundamental ways. The ultimate goal of each, after all, is to create homes where people can live comfortably, efficiently, even affordably.

### synergy flow

Striving toward that ultimate common goal naturally fosters the exchange of



# from house to housing



*“the synergy created by doing both types of work is very worthwhile.”—don jacobs, aia*



ideas. "The synergy created by doing both types of work is very worthwhile," says Jacobs, principal of JBZ Architecture and Planning, in Newport Beach, Calif. "You get to explore things in custom homes that you can't in builder homes—like trying to design for different lifestyles—because you know who your end user is going to be." But, over time, the innovations germinated on the custom side of the equation begin to find their way bit by bit into the builder product, Jacobs adds.

For instance, something that once distinguished custom homes from builder homes, particularly in Southern California, were exterior courtyards, Jacobs says. "We are now doing courtyards in builder homes. We recognized the viability of it and the overwhelming market acceptance of it."

Although it seems to occur with less frequency, knowledge also flows in the other direction, starting in the builder realm and moving into custom homes. J. Carson Looney, FAIA, of Looney Ricks Kiss, in Memphis, Tenn., notes how a production mentality and methods, combined with an economy of materials and labor, can be applied to custom homes to make a better house. When working with builders on spec houses, for example, Looney uses nominal 2-foot dimensions in the design.

"If you take that approach and apply it to a custom house, it can save thousands of dollars," he says. "You can still achieve the best scale and proportion, but if you use the economies of builder methods, those dollars fall back into the quality of the home. Maybe the person can afford a better roof or something."

More often than not, Looney Ricks Kiss uses innovations in its custom work as a springboard to ideas for production homes. The outcome might be something as simple as an alcove beside a bedroom that becomes a work area for a computer. Or it could be the way the floor plan is organized so that the kitchen flows easily into the family room. It could even be a "friends entry"—not the formal front door, but the door through which everyone comes and goes. "The friends entry is not given as much space or elaborate detail as a main door, but it leads right into the kitchen/eating area," Looney says. "When we worked it into our spec homes, people just ate it up."

One of the most popular lifestyle amenities is what Looney calls "the liver," a combination mud room/laundry room that he has incorporated into idea houses for *Southern Living*. Outfitted with coat hooks, built-in nooks and drawers, perhaps a built-in seat that

*like the two  
sides of a coin,  
custom and  
production housing  
are inextricably  
linked in  
fundamental ways.*

also provides a place to store sports equipment, "it's a place where you direct the dirty traffic into the house," Looney says. Such a space makes sense in communities with lakes or outdoor spaces that can leave kids wet or muddy.

"Custom clients are taking this space to a high degree of finish," says Looney. But even in 1,200-square-foot production houses, his firm is reinterpreting the idea in the form of a modest 3-foot alcove with a 30-inch cabinet and a place to drop the car keys. "It might be that little thing that sets you apart

from another product."

In her work on last year's *Life* magazine Dream House, Michaela Mahady, of SALA Architects, in Minneapolis and Stillwater, Minn., found a ripe opportunity to translate her custom home experience into the design of a house with the potential for mass production. "We learned a lot about how to include some of the spatial effects from our custom work—the careful attention to detail and to scale, in particular," Mahady says.

SALA (which recently changed its name from Mulfingher Susanka Mahady & Partners when partner Sarah Susanka left the firm) repeated a trademark move by placing the bedrooms inside the roof volume. "That creates a certain intimacy in the rooms, because they have low side walls and angled ceilings. The same technique brings the eaves down on the outside of the house, so it doesn't appear to be so tall," Mahady says.

The architects varied the ceiling heights inside the Dream House to create different experiences. Children's bedrooms in one version of the house were designed with relatively small dimensions but included high loft ceilings. "I think that kind of idea would be transferable to production housing, if you didn't go to quite the same extent we



# from house to housing

*over time,*

*the innovations*

*germinated on the*

*custom side of the*

*equation find their*

*way bit by bit*

*into builder*

*projects.*

did,” says Mahady. “I also like the idea of thinking about the activity that occurs within spaces, rather than creating a separate room for each activity.”

After the Dream House was published, a Canadian builder contacted Mahady’s firm and asked it to develop a series of plans. Tim Fuller, AIA, a partner at SALA, says his remodeling experience is paying dividends in the design of the builder houses. “We often are encouraged to add what is akin to a family room that is missing from older homes,” says Fuller. “So I am trying to bring that sense of connectedness and openness to these new builder houses. I’m also working with the builder to remove the vestiges of formal living—the formal dining room and living room. That’s where I begin to challenge their sense of what is marketable.”

Such “flex space” is becoming a key element in the design of production multifamily housing by the Chicago-based firm Pappageorge/Haymes Ltd. “The work-at-home thing is becoming a driving force in design,” says George Pappageorge, AIA, a partner with the firm.

Pappageorge’s latest project is a series of Victorian townhomes in which the space beside the staircase on a bedroom level has been conceived as a small office area. “Often people

prefer to have that space in a place that doesn’t lock them into a separate room,” he says. “They want it to be in the flow of family life.”

Pappageorge also finds ways to apply his production experience to custom projects. Savvy production builders find resources that are well priced and of good quality, he says. “So I may learn about sources from that side that apply to the custom side, such as different product brands that I didn’t know about. Products can be cross-refer-

enced. If you’re working in the housing arena, the more areas you work in, the more options you have.”

**efficiencies,  
efficiencies**

Through his production housing contacts, Pappageorge also discovers subcontractors who can sometimes help him pull in the reins on a custom home’s budget. “On high-end homes, I think a lot of small subcontractors believe they need to inflate their price. There’s an expectation that the clients will be more demanding, thus it will take more time to complete the job.”

In his relations with custom clients, Roger Guernsey, AIA, principal of Guernsey/Tingle Architects, in Williamsburg, Va., adopts a production-oriented attitude toward time efficiency. Astounded by stories he reads of clients who sound like they practically live with their architect for years, Guernsey says it is impossible to do quality architecture and remain in business if you haven’t learned to deliver services efficiently.

Early in his practice, he developed a rigid format for which services he includes in the schematic, design development, and contract documents phases. “At an early meeting with the client, we show them what will happen at each of these phases,” Guernsey says. “We show examples

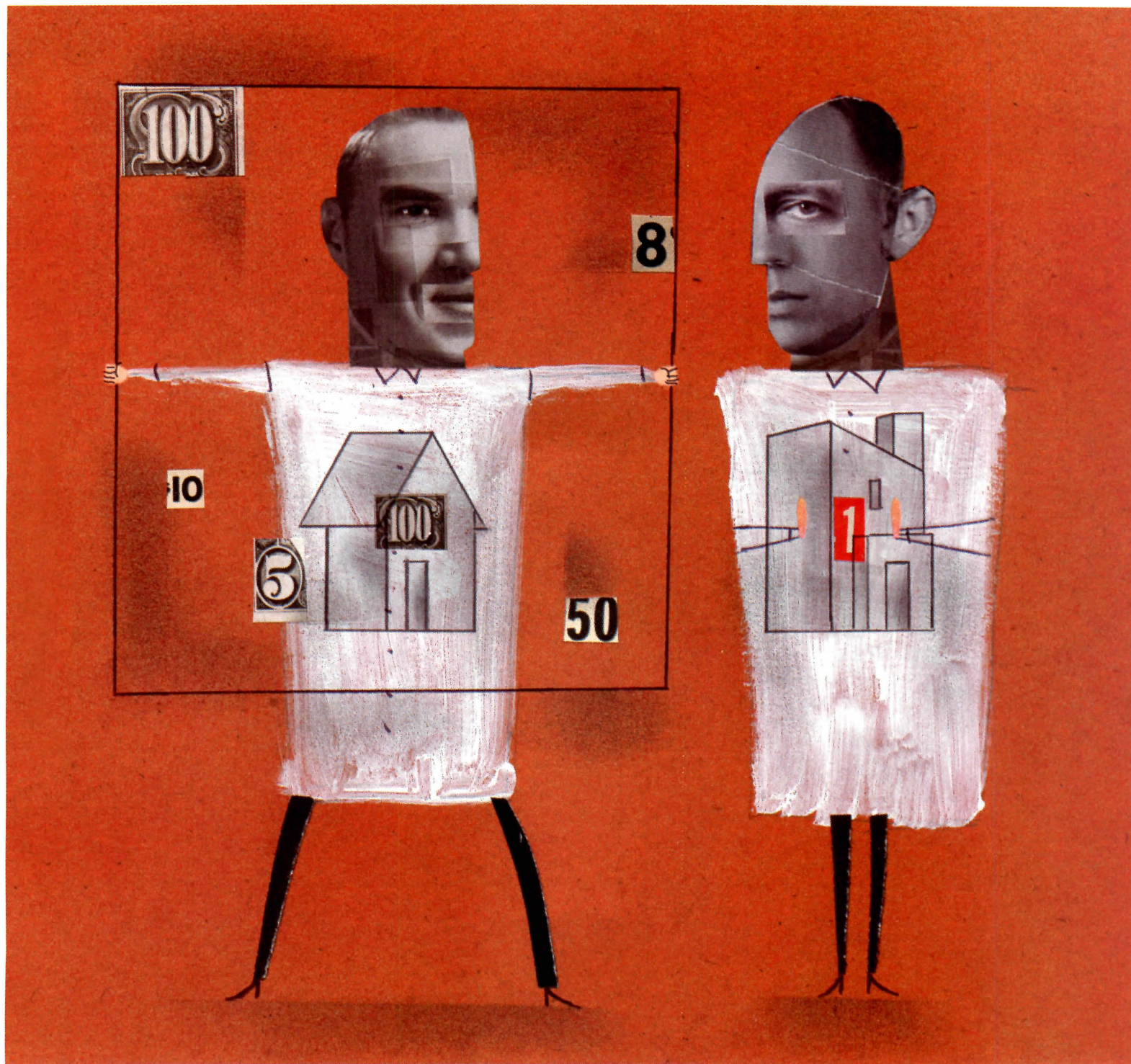
of the materials they will look at—a program, cost estimates, and drawings from site plans to perspectives. We do our clients a service when we can get them from the initial meetings to working drawings without a lot of detours.”

From the day he begins work on a custom home, Guernsey is just as budget conscious as if he were working on a production house. A written program, budget of space appropriations, and cost estimate are completed before the first sketch is made. “And if we don’t have a match at that point, we meet with the client before we do anything else,” says Guernsey. “We’ll say, ‘You have described a \$400,000 house and you’ve told me your budget is \$300,000. So we have to make some adjustments.’ That helps us maintain those efficiencies.”

As he designs, Guernsey is so aware of the size of the house that, even when starting loose schematics, he’s thinking in dimensional terms. “It gives me an idea of the overall footprint, and if I get beyond that, I know the house will be too costly.”

Staying true to a finite envelope is common thinking to both custom and production housing, in Guernsey’s experience. “Keeping spans in mind, keeping structure simple—the discipline we have to adopt in production housing feeds





*“the discipline we have to adopt in production housing feeds our custom work, too.”—roger guernsey, aia*



# from house to housing

*the ultimate goal*

*for all architects,*

*after all, is to*

*create homes*

*where people can*

*live comfortably,*

*efficiently, even*

*affordably.*

our custom work, too.”

On the opposite coast, amenities in some of the custom homes designed by Mithun Partners in Seattle are driven by the firm’s experience doing compact production housing in Asia, says principal Roger Williams, FAIA. “The cross-pollination, from my point of view, is the work we do overseas influencing the scale, size, and planning that we bring back to the U.S.”

Soaking tubs and hand-held showers that are the rage in Japan, for example, have begun making their way into American custom homes, including a 10,000-square-foot home Williams just completed in Anacortes, Wash. “The whole hot tub/soaking tub notion found its roots in Japanese bathing,” he says. Its impact on the American bathroom is the addition of a 5-by-5-foot room with the shower to one side and the tub beside it.

A heightened awareness of space efficiency has given Mithun’s architects new strategies to add to their bag of tricks when designing both production and custom homes in America. The prevalence of steep and narrow stairs in Japanese interiors is just one example. “We are taking that notion of compactness and applying it here by manipulating the rise and run, making them a little steeper and using winders instead of landings.

It conserves space,” says Williams. On the custom side of the equation, he might use the same technique in an American vacation home or a small-lot house where space is limited.

## the custom touch

With experience doing everything from 1,000-square-foot production units to 13,000-square-foot custom residences, Ed Binkley, AIA, has been involved in residential architecture for 20 years.

Binkley, director of design for the southern regional office of Bloodgood Sharp Buster Architects and Planners near Orlando, sees many aspects of custom houses trickling down to builder designs.

The butler’s pantry, for one, is making a comeback. “With custom houses, it may even be a separate room with an ice maker, dishwasher, china cabinet with glass doors, wine racks, and bread warmer. It’s become a special place between the kitchen and dining room—a good place to put the dirty dishes to get them out of sight,” Binkley says. In production housing, the same idea is being used in a more modest form. “It may not be a separate room but a hallway that has a smaller cabinet where you could store dishes. And maybe that’s where you get an upgraded countertop, a more showy piece of cabinetry. It’s taking a large idea and turning it into something that is cost effective.”

Modern life seems to generate more clutter—or just more stuff, as buying in bulk at places like Sam’s Club becomes more popular—so custom-home clients are demanding more storage space. What manifests itself as the “clutter room” in a custom home may emerge in a production home as a pantrylike space between the garage and kitchen. “It’s where

you keep the cases of Cokes,” Binkley remarks.

But Binkley says one of the most interesting trends he sees today is people wanting a production house of 2,000 to 3,000 square feet replete with high-end custom materials. “People may want a smaller, more manageable home, but they also want the amenities—the marble and granite floors, the upgraded windows, the kitchen equipment and countertops they’re used to in a larger home. It’s one of the areas where I’m seeing the size of production but the amenities of a custom home. For an architect, that’s a nice challenge.”

Another optimistic sign for architects is that home buyers of all types are demanding that their houses be clearly distinguishable from their neighbors, says JBZ’s Don Jacobs. “That’s what customization is all about,” he says. “And it’s happening more in builder homes. We are creating different styles of elevations, so that when you drive down the street it will be impossible to tell that two houses have the same floor plan. It’s about time—and I think the blandness that once characterized builder housing is a thing of the past.” **ra**

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



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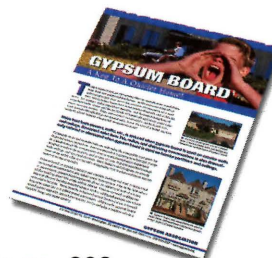
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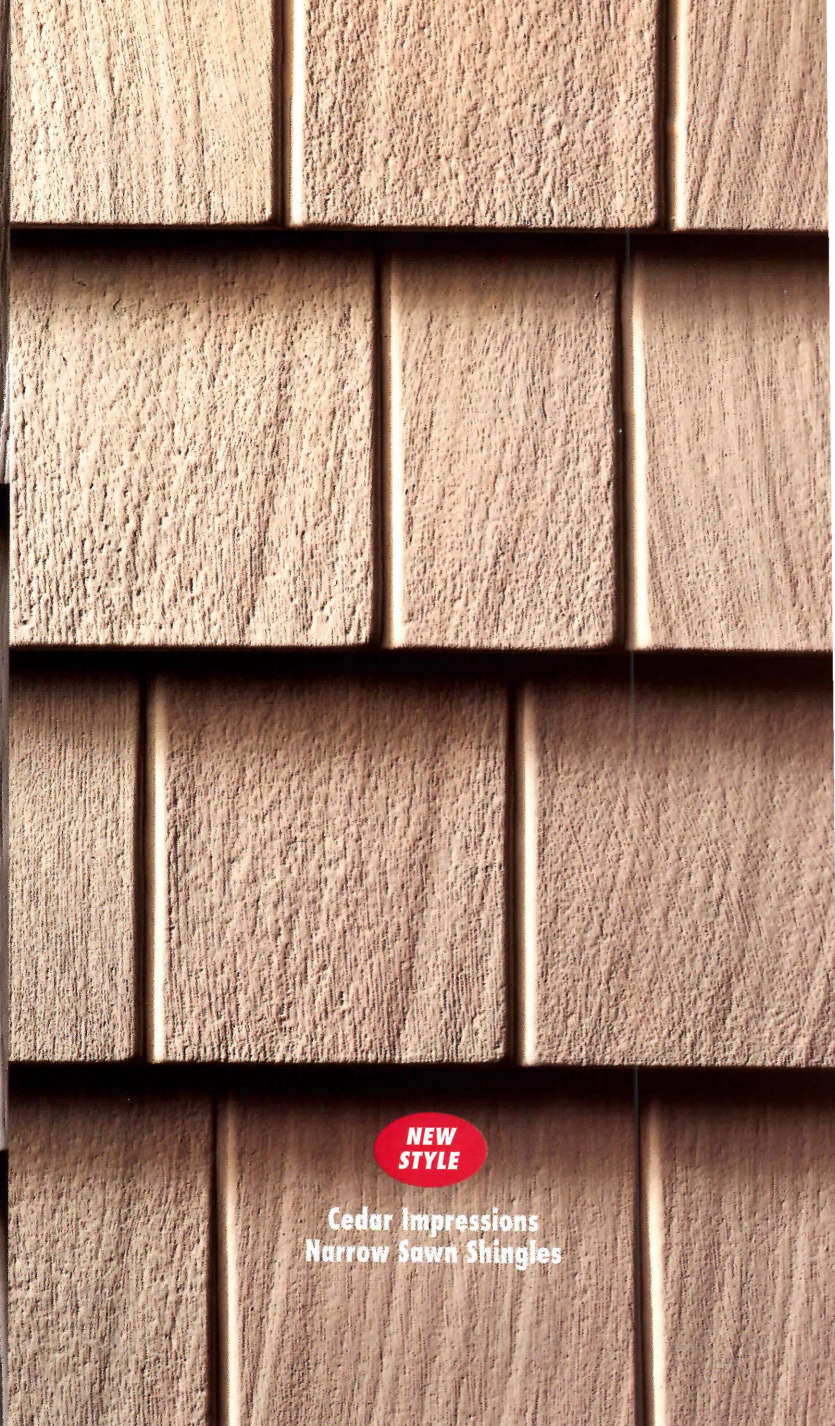
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# cutting-edge communities

architects in atlanta; tucson, ariz.; chicago; and bellevue, wash., take community design and planning in innovative directions.

by megan drueding

## atlanta: the lofts at muse's

**architect:**

Surber Barber Choate & Hertlein, Atlanta

**contractor:**

Winter Construction, Atlanta

**size:**

96 units; 700 to 1,200 square feet

When Atlanta developer Winter Properties bought a dowdy block of downtown retail stores with the intent to convert most of it into residential units, the company knew just whom to call—Surber Barber Choate & Hertlein. The local firm is known for its work in historic preservation, restoration, urban infill, and adaptive reuse projects. It would need to put all of these skills into play to transform the block, listed on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Register of Historic Places, into a thriving, mixed-use community.

The block is anchored by the former home of Muse's, a well-known, Atlanta-based men's clothing store. Project architect and principal-in-charge Dennis Hertlein, AIA, decided to leave the distinctive Muse's sign in place as a nod to the building's past. The easily recognizable sign carried built-in credibility—a factor that would contribute to the for-rent loft apartments' and retail spaces' popularity later on.

While the four-story Muse's building façade received cosmetic touch-ups, the six two- and three-story buildings next door needed more drastic measures to restore their original, 1880s character. Hertlein removed layers of paint and stucco to reveal beautiful old brick storefronts. Armed with historical data, he developed an appropriate palette of colors and materials. "We tried to get as close as we could to what we imagined the block looked like when it was first built," he says.

Architects Surber Barber Choate & Hertlein have won awards from the Georgia Trust for Preservation, the AIA, and the city of Atlanta for their conversion of a dilapidated retail block into the Lofts at Muse's (opposite), a sparkling mixed-use community in the heart of Atlanta.



Photos: © Gabriel Benzur

Arched windows and exposed overhead pipes reference the block's industrial history.

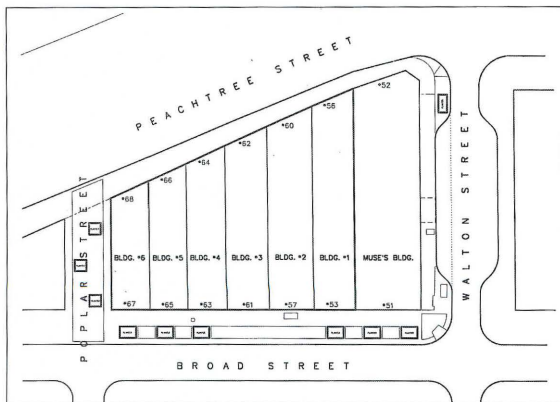


# preservation mixed use



Photos: © Gabriel Benzur

In order to obtain the 20 percent tax credit the National Park Service provides to developers restoring properties listed on the National Register, Hertlein kept each building's original height. Some of the two- and three-story buildings have rooftop terraces, as does the Muse's tower, but the decks are set back, so as not to disturb the pleasant rhythm of the varied elevations.



Chances are that its tenants back then didn't include Kentucky Fried Chicken, Atlanta Bread Company, or General Nutrition Center—some of the retail stores to which Winter Properties quickly leased the block's first story. While there's no doubt these retailers were attracted to the fact that they'd have dozens of built-in customers just above their shops, SBCH devised an additional strategy to lure retail tenants. They created a single entrance, located in the Muse's building, for residents of all 96 units. "Having a common entry lobby kept us from having to cut up the retail spaces with individual residential entrances," Hertlein says. "It also gives the residents better security and an increased sense of community." A common corridor connects the Muse's tower to the adjacent second- and third-story apartments. Four different floor plans are available within the Muse's tower; because of the block's triangular shape, no two plans among the above-store residences are alike. Apartment sizes range from 700 to 1,200 square feet; rents average \$1.10 per square foot. Residents park their cars in a garage just down the street. They socialize and walk their dogs in recently restored Woodruff Park, right across the way.

Renters living at the Muse's lofts tend to be young, professional singles and couples. But there's also a sizable percentage of empty-nesters who've raised their kids in the suburbs and want to be close to Atlanta's booming businesses and nightlife. The trend of moving back into the city is catching on in this formerly non-residential neighborhood, known as Fairlie Poplar; the white office building in the background of these photographs has recently been purchased for conversion into condominiums.

"We were very lucky to have been involved in this project," Hertlein confides. "It's not often that you get the chance to restore a historic part of downtown Atlanta." It's not often that the restoration turns out so well, either. That part of the story has less to do with luck than with the skill and commitment of his multi-talented firm.

The dramatically lit common corridor connecting the block's residential units features original exposed-brick and concrete columns.



*restoration*

*urbanism*





## tucson, ariz.: civano

**architects:**

Moule + Polyzoides, Los Angeles;  
Paul Weiner, Design and Building  
Consultants, Tucson, Ariz.; Gail  
Marsland, Tucson

**builders:**

First Homes, Tucson; KE&G Homes,  
Tucson; RGC Tucson, Tucson;  
SolarBuilt, Tucson; T.J. Bednar Homes,  
Tucson

**land planners:**

Moule + Polyzoides; Community  
Design Associates, Tucson; Duany  
Plater-Zyberk & Co. Architects and  
Town Planners, Miami

**size:**

2,600 homes; 1,144 to 2,501 square feet



Photos: Courtesy the Community of Civano

Plants and grasses native to the Sonoran Desert dot Civano's lawns and open spaces. The project gets its name from an ancient tribe, the Sivan, known for having lived in harmony with nature.

Since the days of cowboys, gold miners, and saloon showdowns, the West has been the place Americans go to seek a fresh start. In Tucson, Ariz., a group of some of the best-known architects and planners in the country have done the same. Through their designs for Civano, which they claim is the largest sustainable community in the United States, they've ushered in new ways of thinking about lifestyles, energy use, and natural resources—and have begun to implement them on a scale larger than most would dare imagine.

Among the firms participating in the project's initial design charrettes in 1996 were New Urbanists Duany Plater-Zyberk, of Miami, and Moule + Polyzoides, of Los Angeles. Tucson planner Wayne Moody, of Community Design Associates, lent his expertise in the area's climate and wildlife. The charrettes yielded an ambitious plan that incorporated New Urbanism principles, alternative construction methods, energy- and water-saving techniques like xeriscaping and photovoltaics, and an emphasis on regional architecture. What's more, the developer and planners agreed that the cost of homes at Civano must be kept in the middle range of home prices in Tucson.

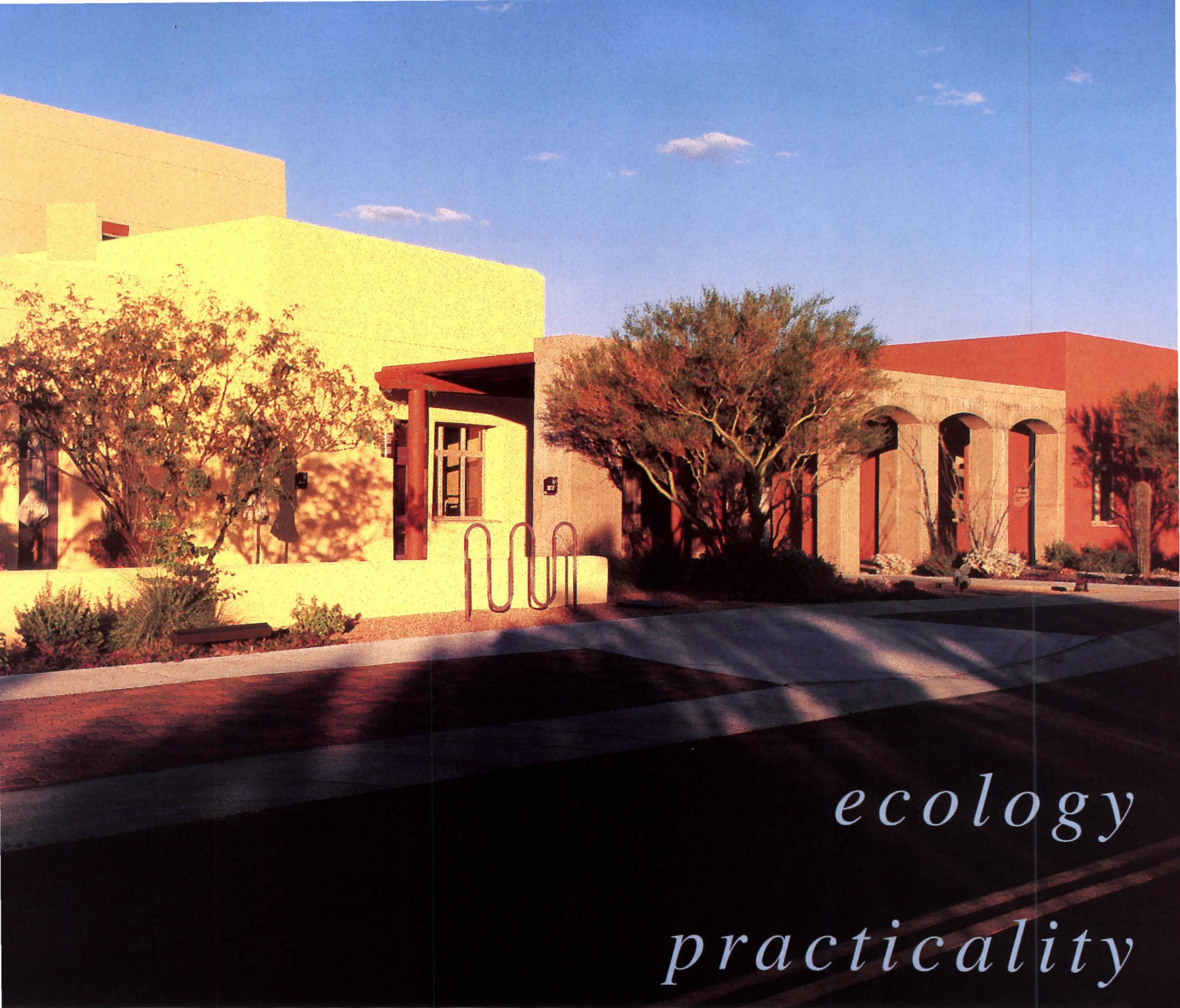
Somehow, they did it. The first neighborhood in Civano contains 600 homes, all of which are within walking distance of an 18,000-square-foot neighborhood center filled with retail shops and offices. Narrow streets keep drivers from speeding, and alleys leading to rear driveways lessen the impact of the car on the community's streetscape. Builders T.J. Bednar Homes, KE&G Homes, SolarBuilt, First Homes, and RGC Tucson used such environmentally friendly building materials as straw bale, RASTRA (recycled polystyrene filled with poured concrete), and SIPs (structural insulated panels). Passive and active solar techniques, water harvesting, and thermal massing are intended to cut home energy use in half compared with Tucson standards, and to reduce potable water consumption by 65 percent. Plants and grasses native to the Sonoran Desert dot Civano's lawns and open spaces. The community even has its own nursery, where botanists salvage uprooted trees and plants.

Architect Stefanos Polyzoides, whose firm designed the project's neighborhood center and the majority of its homes, says the community's planners embraced vernacular styles for both their beauty and their practical benefits. "The way buildings appear in the desert—or anywhere, for that matter—is a response to their environment," he says. "Taking what the peo-



Moule + Polyzoides used a varied palette of building materials—adobe, RASTRA block, wood frame, and straw bale—to construct Civano's neighborhood center. "The different materials provide a clear menu of possibilities for building in a desert climate," Polyzoides says.





*ecology*  
*practicality*



Local firm Paul Weiner, Design and Building Consultants, positioned First Homes' attached residences (left) to shade one another from the hot Tucson sun. The 2,000- to 2,300-square-foot plans especially appeal to buyers who work at home, since they're wired for top-speed networking and zoned for mixed use.

*harmony*  
*efficiency*

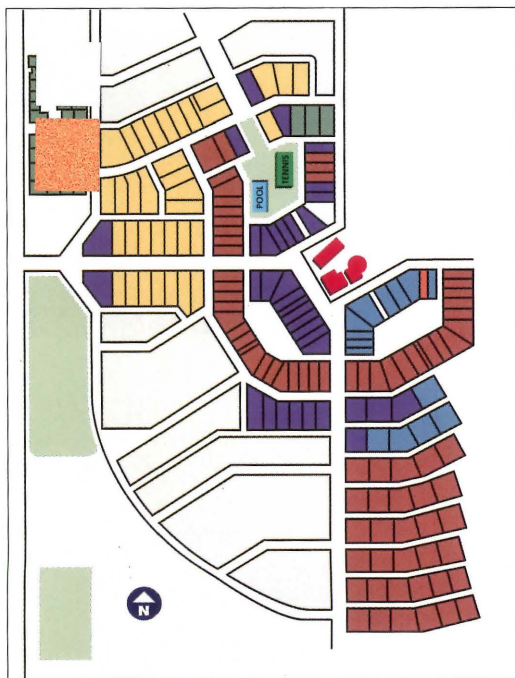


## ecology practicality



Photos: Courtesy the Community of Civano

Civano's streetscape features a wide variety of elevations, in accordance with New Urbanist thinking.



ple who were here hundreds of years before us built and adapting that to our needs prevents us from having to reinvent the wheel." And it so happens that many of the design elements particular to the area—brightly colored exteriors, bold geometric forms, trellises and latticework—can be included without driving up the homes' prices.

Those prices, which currently range from \$85,000 to \$200,000, are a big part of what separates Civano from other communities committed to sustainability and urbanism. Substantial financial backing from Fannie Mae and several other corporate partners certainly helps, but design also plays a hefty role in keeping the project's home prices down. "There is no wasted square footage in our houses," says Lee Rayburn, Civano's in-house director of planning and development. "The architects worked hard to make sure that every floor plan is incredibly efficient, so we didn't have to make the homes any larger than they needed to be." The modestly sized plans range from 1,144 to 2,501 square feet.

The houses' affordability translates into potent sales figures, proving dead wrong those who doubt the moneymaking potential of sustainable communities. Rayburn reports that 108 of 170 first-phase lots have sold since April 1999; that's a rate of more than 15 sales per month. At build-out, Civano will contain 2,600 homes on its 1,100 acres; one-third of its total acreage will be preserved for open space. "I like to compare Civano to a stack of CDs," Rayburn observes. "Each disc is a separate issue—resource management, ecological concerns, New Urbanism. The trick is getting them to play in sync with one another. Other communities may be accomplishing just one of these things, and that's commendable. But we're the only ones who are doing them all at once."

The design of RGC's Courtyard Homes follows that of ancient pueblo dwellings in the Sonoran Desert. Moule + Polyzoides worked with RGC to create homes that can cool themselves effectively, hence the latticed porch covers and arcade entryways.



*harmony efficiency*





## chicago: 5350 south shore drive

**architect:**

Nicholas Clark Architects, Chicago

**contractor:**

BABCO, Evanston, Ill.

**size:**

44 units; 1,800 to 3,400 square feet

The 5350 South Shore Drive Townhouses aren't your ordinary urban townhome community. They're blessed with an exceptional lakefront location in Chicago's architecturally rich Hyde Park neighborhood. The land they're built on has an interesting history as the former site of a synagogue, and in accordance with Jewish tradition was deconsecrated after the old building's razing. And the project's innovative, three-pronged site plan, designed by Peter Nicholas, AIA, of Nicholas Clark Architects, in Chicago, has won citywide admiration.

Hyde Park, on the city's South Side, has had its share of problems. Although it boasts proximity to the University of Chicago and the Museum of Science and Industry, its crime rate exceeds that of many North Side neighborhoods. But available land on the city's lakefront is rare, and the site was too good to pass up. "We were concerned about security," says Nicholas. "But we didn't want to be making some kind of fortress."

So he designed an unobtrusively gated entrance for 5350—two, in fact. One of the brushed-aluminum-covered entries is for pedestrians only; the other is strictly for cars. The pedestrian entry leads to a community courtyard, which Nicholas sandwiched between the two interior rows of townhouses. The rear of each of these units looks out into a courtyard with benches, lush landscaping, and a gently curving path. "The units directly on South Shore Drive all have bay windows and rooftop decks with views of the lake," says Nicholas. "We wanted the interior units to have an attractive view too. Plus, the courtyard forms a sort of outdoor hallway that fosters interaction between neighbors."

All but 10 of the project's 44 units come with a two-car garage; the garages are entered either from the auto court or, for the western row of homes, from an alley running parallel to the auto court and community garden. Nicholas wasted virtually no space within the community; he used an extra bit of land at the end of the courtyard for the construction of three greenhouses, each of which has since been purchased by a 5350 resident. The townhomes range in price from \$270,000 to \$600,000; the smallest unit is 1,800 square feet, and the largest standard plan measures 3,400 square feet.

The community's handsome appearance and diverse buyer profile deserve partial credit for the area's recent rise in popularity. (*Chicago* magazine named Hyde Park a "Hot 'Hood" in its October 1999 survey of standout neighborhoods.) And its rapid sellout has shown that building high-end residential communities in this section of Chicago can be lucrative.



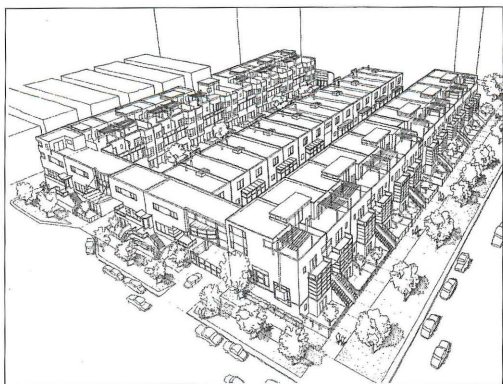
Photos: Linda Oyama Bryan

A curved shape over the pedestrian entrance differentiates it from the rectangular auto court entry. The modular stone covering the townhomes' exteriors references the limestone buildings at the nearby University of Chicago.



Architect Peter Nicholas used more casual materials to cover the walls within 5350's pedestrian court—brick, cement board panels, and limestone. "The residents of the courtyard units had to be willing to compromise a bit on their privacy," he says. "But they each have a private deck and small garden. And they're able to stroll and socialize within a few steps of their homes."





Chicago's traditional walk-up row houses served as models for the community's lakeside elevation. Expansive bay windows (left) bring extra light inside and provide a floor for second-story balconies.

*ic security diversity*

residential architect / january 2000

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## bellevue, wash.: mondrian condominiums

**architect:**

Baylis Architects, Bellevue, Wash.

**contractor:**

W.G. Clark Construction Co., Seattle

**size:**

19 units; 1,400 to 2,000 square feet

It's hard not to be envious of Baylis Architects' park-side site for Mondrian Condominiums in downtown Bellevue, Wash. But the project's smashing scenery disguised some hidden challenges. For one thing, the site is bordered on the opposite side by a major commercial area. For another, the park itself is slated to undergo major changes over the next few years, including a possible new entrance close to the condominiums' rear. So principal-in-charge Tom Frye, AIA, had to deal with both a schizophrenic context and a subject-to-change neighbor.

Frye didn't let these difficulties overwhelm him. Instead, he took a number of subtle steps that combine to make Mondrian an artful bridge between the park's natural environment and the street's commercial one—not to mention a great place to live.

The four-story building contains 19 units, priced from \$175,000 to more than \$700,000. Each apartment extends from the street side to the park side. On the street side, stepped planters act as a buffer between the sidewalk and the building. Solid decks and limited glazing provide privacy and acoustical separation from street noise. Inexpensive split-face, scored-joint concrete blocks clad the parking garage surround and ground-floor base, and serve as a textural contrast to the smooth stucco walls. To set the angular structure apart from the rest of the commercial streetscape, Frye was careful to include residential elements like sloped, standing-seam metal roofs and wooden trellises.

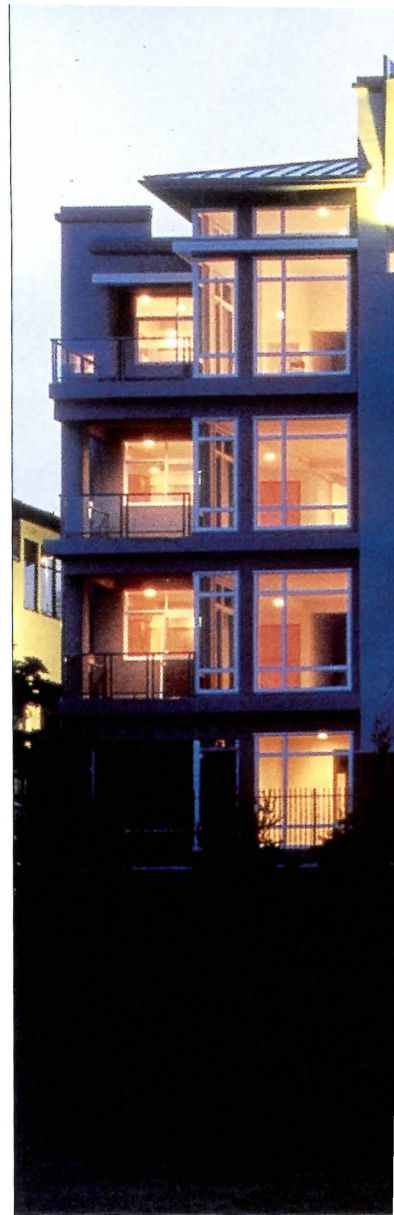
The park side of the complex is a different story. It's set far enough back from the park's public spaces that Frye was able to lavish it with floor-to-ceiling windows. The building gets its name from those windows, whose mullioned pattern is reminiscent of the work of Dutch painter Piet Mondrian. Frye says the toughest part about designing this side of the complex was maintaining a sense of give-and-take with its very public neighbor. "We wanted to transmit to the residents the feeling of openness the park view lends," he says. "But we also had to respect the fact that this is a residential property."

Frank Lloyd Wright's writings on the dual nature of prospect and sanctuary helped Frye find a happy medium—for some buyer types, anyway. "This project attracts extroverts," he admits. "When residents are out on their decks, people in the park will be able to see them—and vice versa." Landscaping and mature trees shield Mondrian's residents—most of whom are upscale empty-nesters—from future park expansion. And an as-of-yet unoccupied retail space on the ground floor may someday house a café, convenience store, or small business.



Photos: © Ed Sozinho

"In order to feel more like a house, a condo needs to have light coming in from a lot of different sources," says architect Tom Frye. So he designed an undulating façade with windows at various depths and levels.

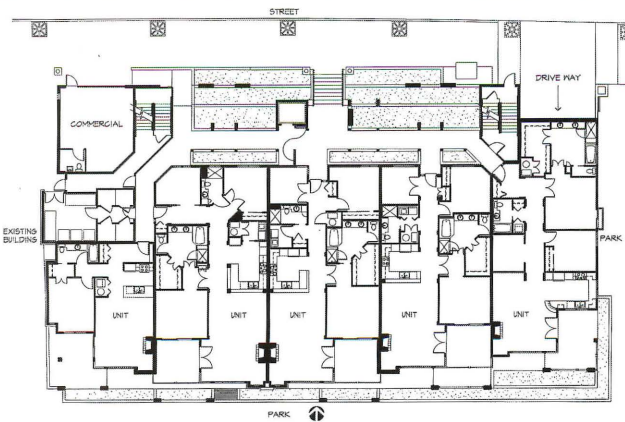


The chimneys along the condominiums' park side add a vertical organizational element that strengthens the composition. Vinyl windows and cost-effective, durable stucco helped keep overall construction costs under control.

*convenience*

*sanctuary*





The rosy shade of the concrete blocks covering Mondrian's base recalls the similarly colored stone used for monuments and statues in the park next door. And the pale green paint on the rest of the building combines with white trim to produce a subtle, sophisticated effect.

# *textural contrast*





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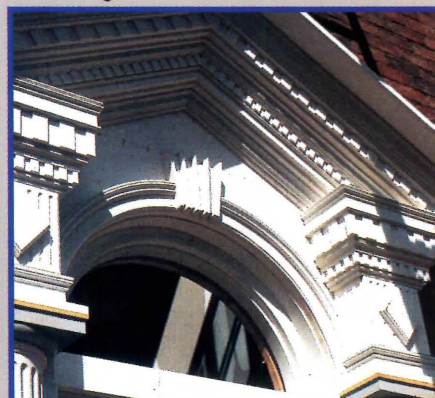


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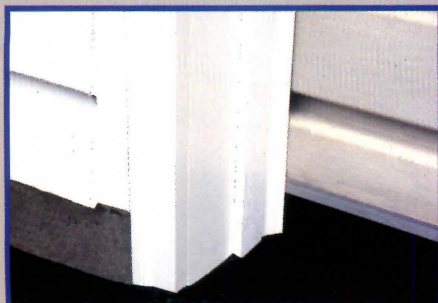
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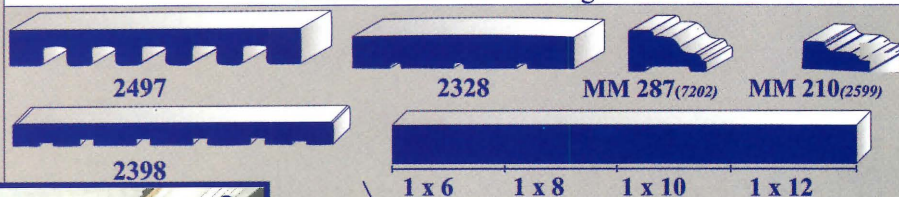
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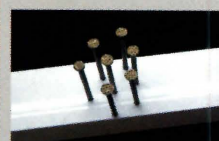
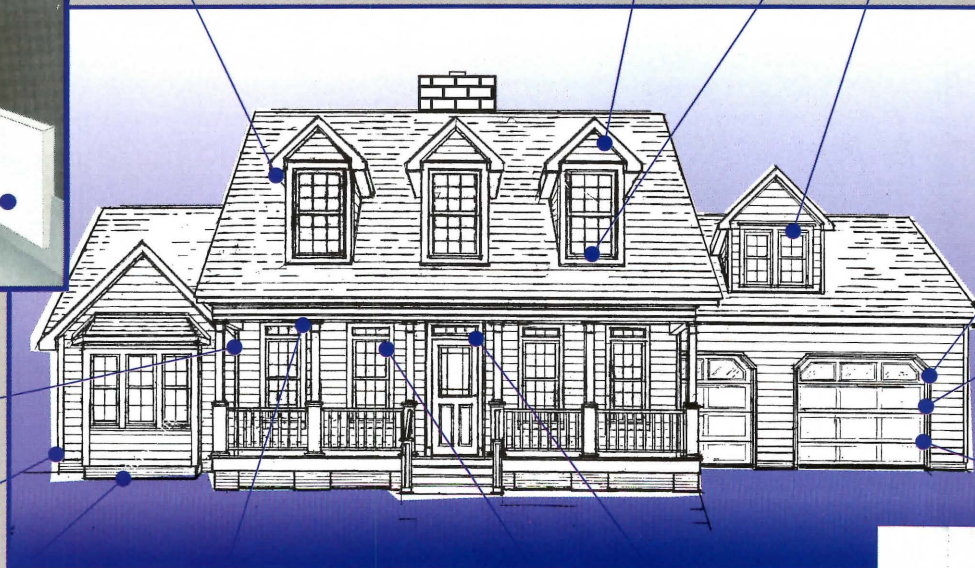
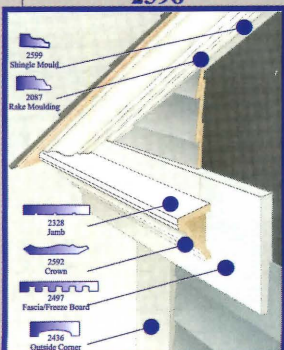
## Exterior Marley Cellular Vinyl Millwork



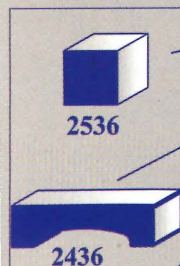
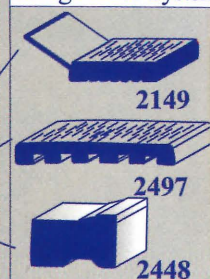
## Facias/Frieze Boards/Shingles



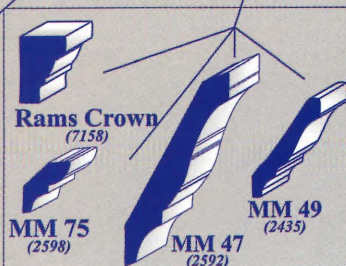
## Windows



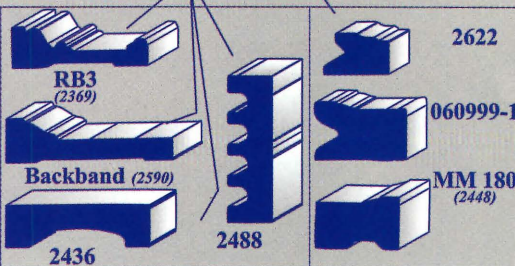
## Garage Door System



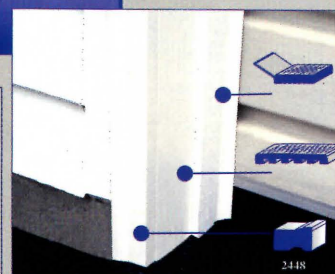
## Siding Accessories



**Cornice/Crowns**



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## Facias/Frieze Boards/Shingles

2497-Exterior Jamb	5/8" x 5-5/8"
2328-Exterior Jamb	5/8" x 4-9/16"
7202-Rake Moulding (MM 287)	1" x 2"
2599-Shingle Mould (MM 210)	11/16" x 1-5/8"
2398-Exterior Jamb	5/8" x 6-13/16"
1 x 6-Board	1" x 6"
1 x 8-Board	1" x 8"
1 x 10-Board	1" x 10"
1 x 12-Board	1" x 12"

## Cornice/Crowns

7158-Rams Crown	1-13/32" x 2-1/16"
2598-Bed (MM 75)	9/16" x 1-5/8"
2592-Crown (MM 47)	11/16" x 4-5/8"
2435-Crown (MM 49)	9/16" x 3-5/8"

## Windows/Doors

2590-Casing (Backband)	1-3/16" x 4-1/3"
2369-Casing (RB3)	1-1/16" x 3-1/2"
2488-Casing	1" x 3-1/2"
2448-Brick Moulding (MM 180)	1-1/4" x 2"
2436-Casing	1" x 4"
2622-Brick Moulding	13/16" x 1-5/16"
060999-1-Brick Moulding	1-1/4" x 2"

## Garage Door System

2149-Thermo*Stop® II	7/16" x 2"
2497-Jamb	5/8" x 5-5/8"
2448-Brick Moulding	1-1/4" x 2"

## Windows

7117-Sill	1-1/4" x 5-1/4"
7118-Sill Nosing	1-5/16" x 1-3/8"
2449-Drip Cap (MM 197)	11/16" x 1-5/8"



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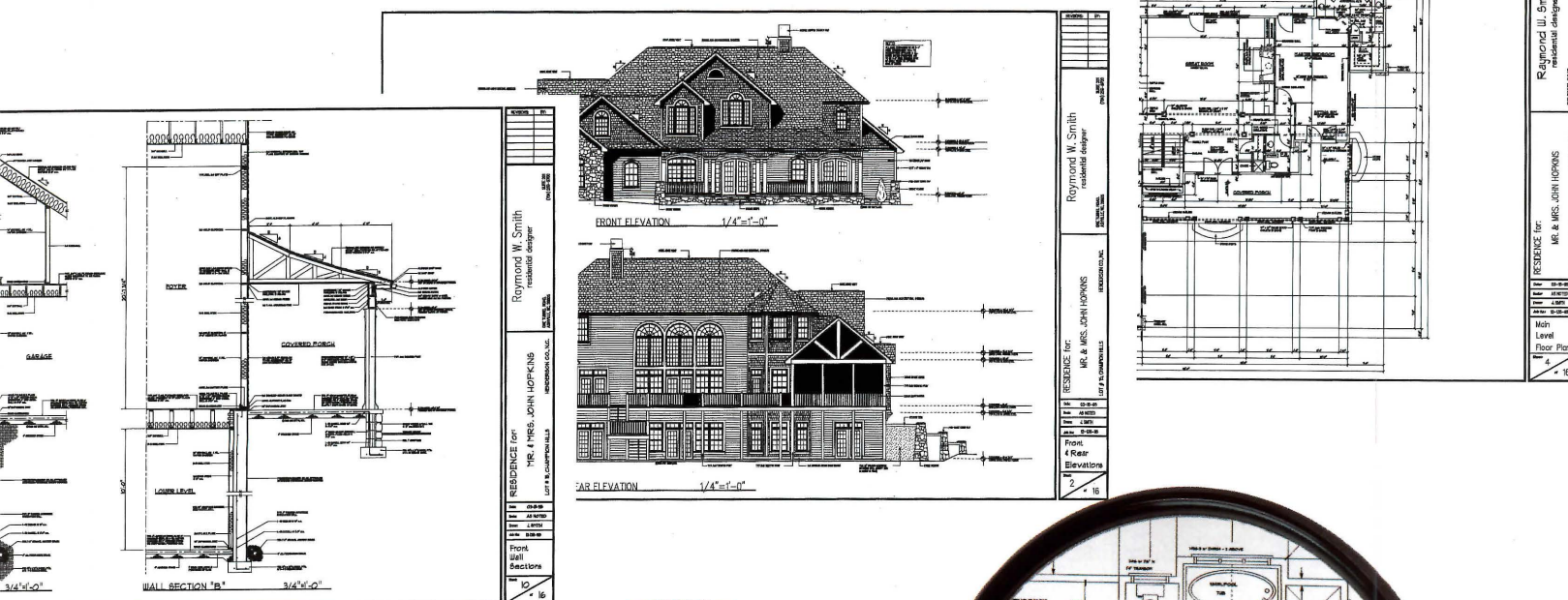
Papyrus, shown here, was originally drawn on Japanese papyrus paper and evokes the bark of a birch tree.

Perstorp Flooring, 919.773.6000.

*continued on page 88*



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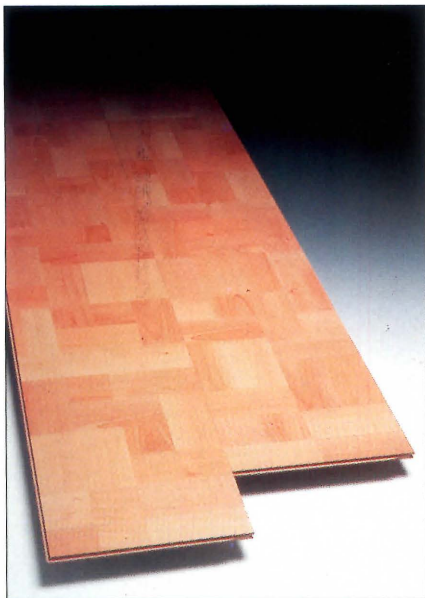
Material-Take-Offs





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The seven distinct plank patterns in Formica Flooring's new Woodgrain Designs include Toffee Block Maple, shown below, a nonmatching parquet that mimics hard maple. Formica Corp., 513.786.3400.



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Traffic Zone high-performance flooring from Bruce Laminate Floors features a wide-plank design, reddish-brown wood tones, and distinctive wood markings. Available wood patterns include two different pine options (including Heirloom Pine, shown here), chestnut, and amber- and sable-colored oak. Bruce Laminate Floors, 972.506.0480.

—hillary jaffe



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# the trouble with EIFS

is it a problem product or just misunderstood?

by rich binsacca

**f**or the first 15 years that they were used as residential cladding, exterior insulation and finish systems, or EIFS, were regarded as an affordable, attractive, and easy-to-apply exterior finish. In the Southwest and on the Gulf Coast, especially, EIFS—also known as synthetic stucco—appealed to builders and architects as a reliable alternative to true stucco.

Then, in the mid-1990s, a class-action lawsuit in North Carolina brought public attention to problems with the product—mainly severe water intrusion and structural damage behind EIFS used on homes. The product's reputation took a nosedive. Virtually overnight, EIFS became the latest contractor scam on the nightly news.

Yet today, EIFS are still around. About 100 million square feet of EIFS went on new and remodeled homes last year, rivaling any other siding material. The product's continued popularity in light of ongoing litigation regarding EIFS-clad houses might seem puzzling, but many architects and builders who use EIFS claim that the water intrusion problems



© 1999 James F. Wilson

Components of drainable EIFS, from the sheathing out, include a textured or grooved weather barrier that sheds water and vents moisture vapor; a flexible reinforcing mesh; an insulating panel and compatible fasteners; and the base or scratch coat that goes on before the finish coat is applied.

associated with the product are not a flaw inherent to the system but the result of improper installation. According to fans of the product—and there are many of them—EIFS have endured because they continue to provide a viable, affordable cladding option.

## details, details

EIFS advocates insist that the cladding itself is stable. What's less reliable, they say, is how EIFS are detailed on the plans and applied in the field.

As evidence, they point to commercial work, where the material continues to enjoy an excellent reputation. "EIFS is a dumb material. It doesn't know what type

of building it's on," says Stephen Klamke, executive director of the EIFS Industry Members Association, in Morrow, Ga. "We don't see these problems in commercial buildings."

The reason for that, Klamke and others say, is that commercial prints are more extensive in their detailing of EIFS. "You could have as many EIFS details for a single-family house as for a 10-story building," says Ben Bresnahan, senior associate with Heitmann & Associates, an A/E/C consulting firm in Chesterfield, Mo. "The problem is that no one wants to pay to have them done in residential."

In addition to less inten-

sive detailing on the plans, the realities of residential work—tight design budgets, design-only service contracts, low-skill/low-bid installers, and cursory supervision on site—also can add up to improper installation of the product. "A wise architect will anticipate these realities and consider them as a design parameter," says Lee R. Connell Jr., AIA, a New Orleans architect who has written a book about construction defects.

In fact, Connell and Bresnahan both claim to have found similar damage with improperly applied brick, lap siding, and true stucco finishes. "It's a matter of a system, EIFS or

continued on page 92





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other, not getting put together properly," Connell says.

## help

The EIFS industry is making an effort to help home builders and architects with these issues. Many manufacturers and a few industry consultants offer a complete set of EIFS details and sections for critical areas, such

EIFS leaks are most commonly found at the points where the cladding interacts with the many other materials of a house.



© 1999 James F. Wilson

The roof/wall connection is one of the areas vulnerable to water intrusion. Seal all fasteners with a compatible mastic or sealant.

as at penetrations and where disparate materials intersect. These details are available in various printed and electronic formats and can be either pasted into a CAD program or simply output at the printer and clipped to the blueprints.

In addition, drainable EIFS—as opposed to barrier-type EIFS—are now available for residential use after years in the commercial realm. The drainable version includes a textured watershed medium behind the insulating foam layer.

## compatibility

One of the best ways to avoid the kinds of problems that have plagued EIFS in the past is to pay close attention to how the finish interacts with other materials on a house. Make sure you select materials that are compatible with EIFS. The NAHB Research Center (see "Resources," right) recommends following the manufacturer's requirements for suitable fasteners, vapor retarders, air barriers, flashing material, caulking and sealants, and sealant primers or tape. Identify these materials clearly on the plans and make them part of the installer's contract.

Even with compatible building materials, however, Connell and others maintain that the real key is in the flashing. "If you create a hole in the weather

## resources

### EIFS Industry Members Association

Morrow, Ga.

1.800.294.3462; [www.eifsfacts.com](http://www.eifsfacts.com)

*Represents EIFS manufacturers, but also welcomes associate members, including architects. Offers a variety of EIFS documents and is working on a residential version of its design and inspection guidelines.*

### NAHB

Washington, D.C.

1.800.368.5242; in metropolitan Washington, D.C., 202.822.0200; [www.nahb.com](http://www.nahb.com)

*Web site contains recent articles and reports on EIFS from various sources; use the "hot topics" link on the home page.*

### NAHB Research Center

Upper Marlboro, Md.

1.800.898.2842; [www.nahbrc.org](http://www.nahbrc.org)

*Offers EIFS documents and recent industry reports, as well as EIFS educational training courses. In particular, you can request or download "Water Intrusion and Remediation for Wood-Framed Homes with EIFS" and "The Quality Plan for Installation of EIFS."*

### CMD Associates

Seattle

206.285.6811; e-mail: [rthomas@eifs.com](mailto:rthomas@eifs.com)

*Industry consultant Robert Thomas offers two books, EIFS Design Handbook and EIFS New Construction Inspection Guide, both of which offer comprehensive details and specifying information on residential EIFS. Each sells for \$99.95, plus shipping and handling.*

barrier, you have to put it back together like a rain slicker, with the collar under the hood, and so on," Connell says. In other words, you need to provide extensive flashing at vulnerable areas—places where water has been found to get behind the stucco—to effectively bridge disparate materials and systems.

## trouble spots

EIFS leaks are most commonly found at the points where the cladding interacts with the many other materials and assemblies of a house—around windows, roof/wall intersections, kickouts, chimneys, and foundations. Windows are especially problematic.

Water can penetrate the sys-

*continued on page 94*



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tem both at the EIFS/window joint (usually at the head) and through cracks in the window unit itself, independent of the cladding.

With chimneys, improper saddles or crickets may fail to redirect water and also may not be properly flashed to the roof and chimney. "Instead of overlapping, the field uses caulking to connect abutting joints," says Connell. "That's how you get into trouble."

Even with adequate flashing, Connell says, "You have to assume water will get in some way, so use materials that won't allow extensive damage." While drainable EIFS help shed water away from the sidewall sheathing, Connell and others prefer plywood to swell-prone oriented-strand board and house-wrap to more absorbent building paper for the system's weather barrier. ra

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

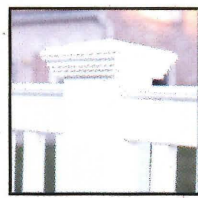
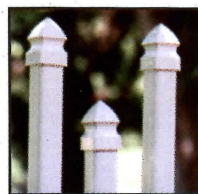
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hands on

# fun with stairs

a whimsical treatment steps up the drama.

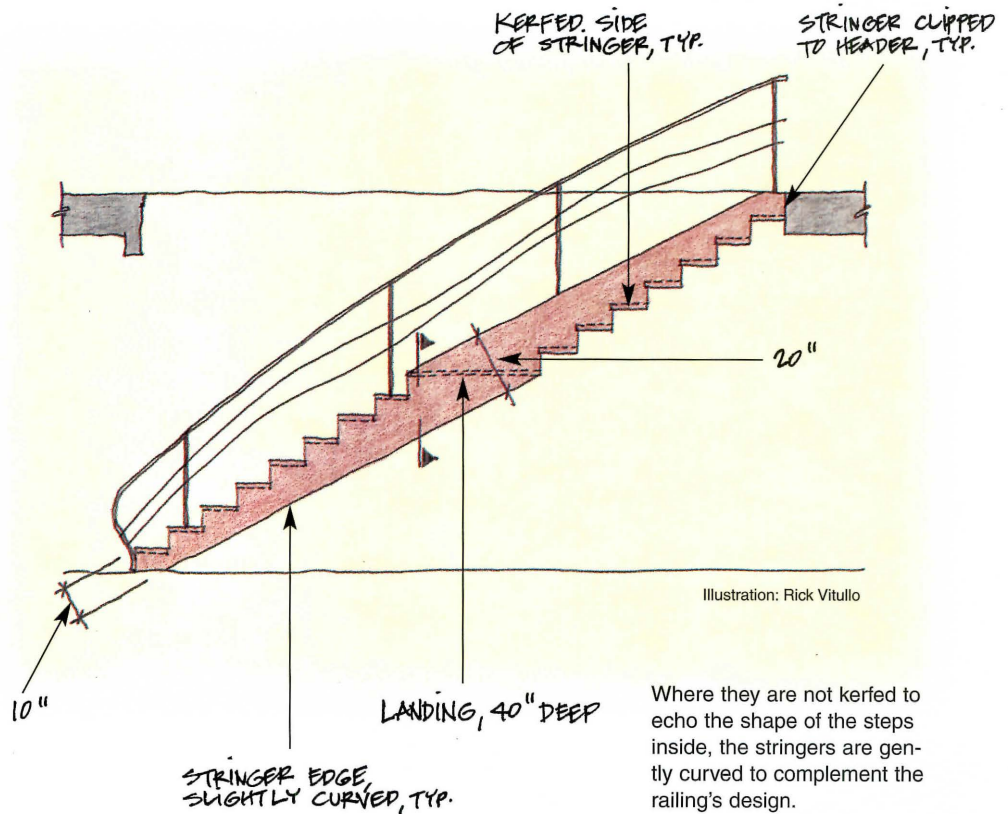
by rick vitullo, aia

**T**he wonderful thing about designing a stair is the opportunity it presents for playfulness. Unfortunately, this potential is rarely realized. Too often, code and budget restrictions, along with complicated structural considerations, take the fun out of the design.

That was not the case with this Fire Island, N.Y., project. When Jerry Caldari, of New York City-based Bromley Caldari Architects, PC, designed the summer house, he didn't skimp on space. The double-height living area boasts a soaring ceiling framed by steel trusses and a custom-built 20-foot folding door that opens to the sea. Such a dramatic room, Caldari decided, deserved a stair that could hold its own, both literally and visually.

Thus, he conceived a steel-framed, semidetached structure that swoops between floors on stringers made of welded steel plates sculpted into whimsical shapes. Most stairs made of steel are commercial stairways; the added dead load of concrete poured into the steel pans for treads makes them heavy, stodgy affairs. This stair, though, combines relatively lightweight oak treads with a beefier stringer design than is commonly found on the commercial versions; it is

*continued on page 98*



Where they are not kerfed to echo the shape of the steps inside, the stringers are gently curved to complement the railing's design.



Christopher Weil

A sweeping steel stair holds its own in a dramatically soaring space. A landing is required by New York state code if there is a run of more than 12 risers.





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both very light and very strong. Also, the inside stringer is bolted to a steel angle within the wall; the steel angle is bolted to the wall studs.

To incorporate the code-required intermediate landing, Caldari widened the stringers halfway up. And, in a bit of inspired whimsy, he kerfed the top of the stringer below the landing and the bottom of the stringer above the landing to represent the positions of the treads and risers. The railings are made of simple flat steel bars; the two undulating intermediate members and the curved handrail are welded to straight verticals. Master Rail, of East Quogue, N.Y., fabricated the ironwork.

Caldari's stair is sturdy, inventive, and code-approved. New York state has one of the least restrictive codes in the country in terms of stair construction, and Caldari's design reflects that. In many other areas of the country, though, the codes dictating spacing and height for balusters, risers, and railings are much more restrictive. In these regions—and in any household with children—an open, minimalist design like Caldari's would need to be modified to satisfy safety requirements. **ra**

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

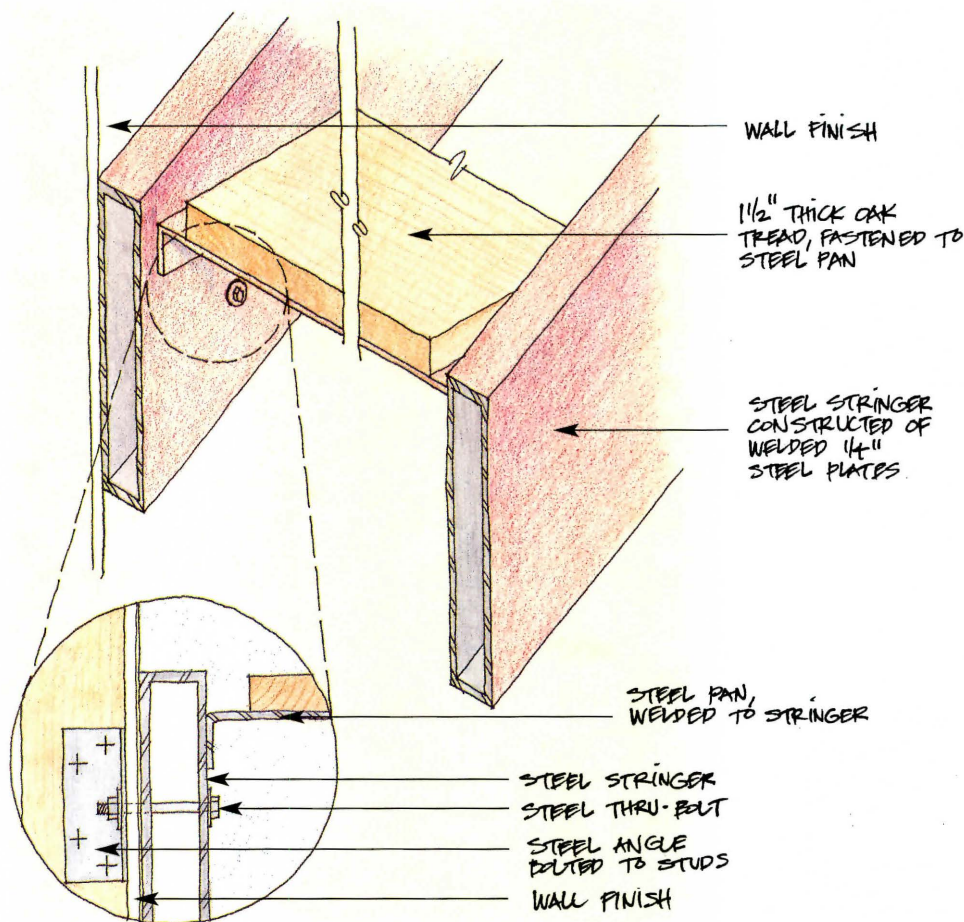


Illustration: Rick Vitullo

At their narrowest, the stringers measure 10 inches from bottom to top; they widen to 20 inches in the middle. They're constructed of 1/4-inch-thick welded steel plates.

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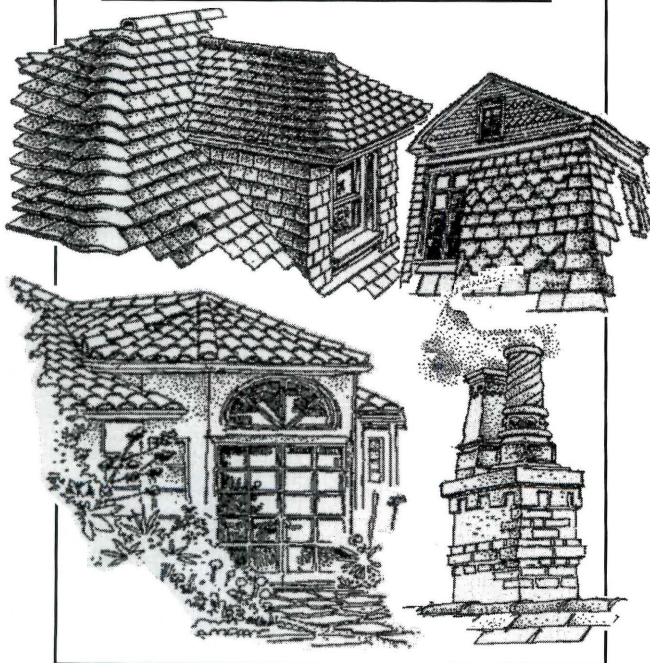
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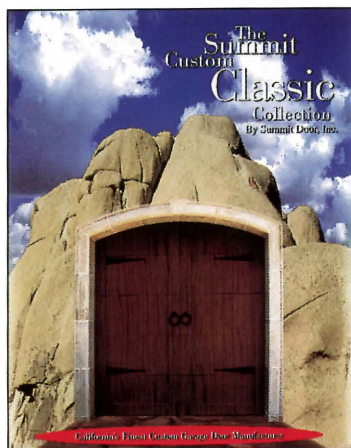
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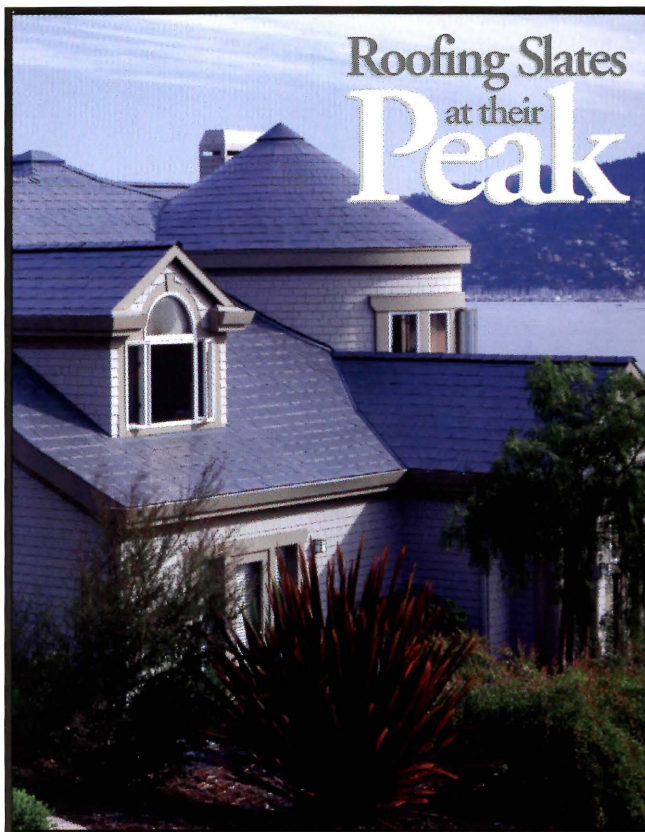
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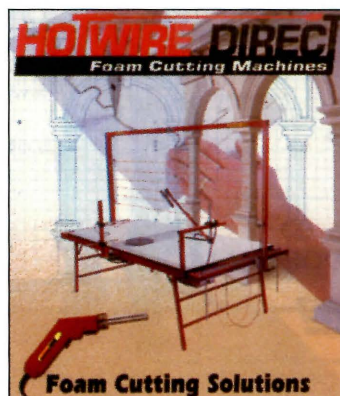
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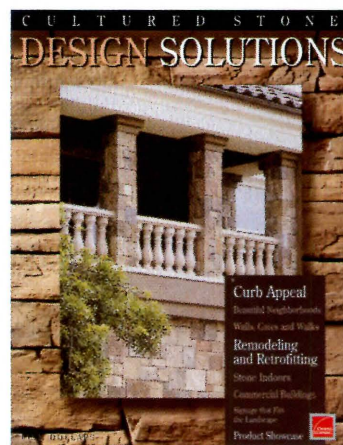


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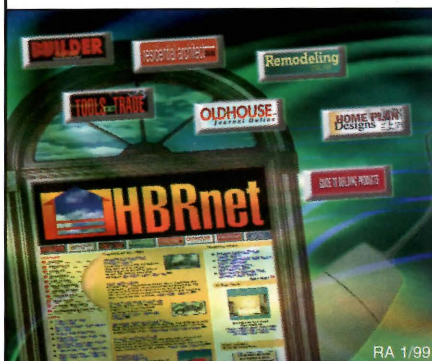
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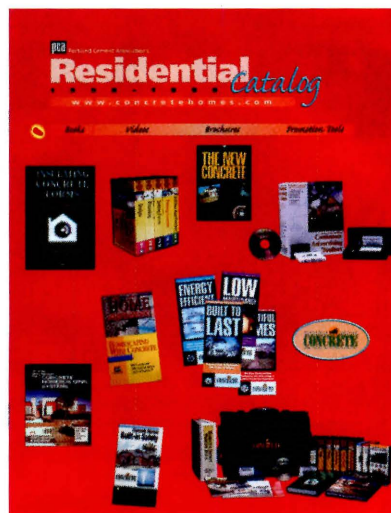
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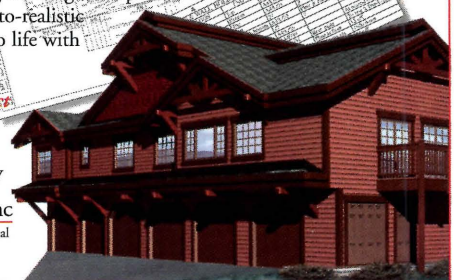
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Peter Kerze

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My mentor in this art is the late Minnesota architect Edwin Lundie. His consummate craft and his abiding passion for modest, well-detailed rooms shaped wonderfully intimate environments for his clients. Not known for his

bravado, he would probably blush at these words. But as with great lovers, the proof of prowess is in the physical experience and not the hyperbole—that's what sates the senses. Edwin Lundie's devotion to small gestures skillfully executed produced treasured results. His full-scale template drawings guided his craftsmen in the dance of mixing sensuous materials with intimate space. **ra**

*Dale Mulfinger, AIA, is a principal of SALA Architects, of Minneapolis and Stillwater, Minn.*