

The background of the cover is a photograph of two men, Theo Kalomirakis and Michael Dalton, sitting in a plush, red velvet home theater. They are both wearing light blue button-down shirts. The man in the foreground is looking directly at the camera, while the man behind him is looking slightly to the side. The theater has ornate gold-colored trim on the walls and ceiling.

residential architect

A HANLEY-WOOD PUBLICATION / NOVEMBER · DECEMBER 2000

theo kalomirakis
and michael dalton
are coming to a
home theater
near you

movie moguls

high style high tech / electric avenues /
susanka's small crusade / healy's roots

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Theo Kalomirakis (left) and Michael Dalton, AIA, bring the great motion-picture palaces home. Cover and photo above by Steven Freeman.

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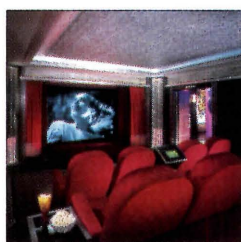
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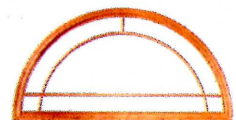
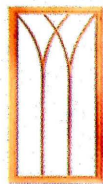
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residential architect
design awards **2001**

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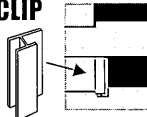
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plugging away

if you don't make peace with home electronics, more of your business may get zapped.

by s. claire conroy

There's no escaping it: People love TV. Some of us have a set in nearly every room of the house. We also have stereos and a PC or two, and we're not about to part with them, either. Only the Unabomber wishes home electronics would disappear forever.

Well, maybe you've wished that, too. Many residential architects feel throttled by all the plug-ins they have to design around. But they're here, they're nothing to fear, and we simply have to get used to them. In fact, if you can learn to love them and handle them well, you can add an important skill to your portfolio.

The reverse is also true: If you don't learn to juggle all this high-tech gadgetry, you'll have to cede the job and the profits to the growing number of subcontractors eager for the work. More and more audio/video installers are calling themselves "designers" and peddling their home-entertainment rooms to custom-home clients. They're nipping at your heels. If you're lucky, their work won't detract from your overall design of the house or

there will be a nice, big door to close between your rooms and theirs. But why not keep control of the whole job? You'll be doing your project, your client, and your bottom line a big favor.

You can see what a lucrative niche full-blown home theaters are in our cover profile on TK Theaters entrepreneur Theo Kalomirakis (page 42). He and his team of architects began designing ultra-high-end theaters about 10 years ago. Now they handle about 100 projects a year with a median price of half a million. Their budget custom projects begin at \$250,000. Are you busy calculating your percentage?

Chances are, you're already dealing with the kinds of clients Kalomirakis is nabbing: wealthy professionals with more money than time. Whether they're so famous they're driven to reclusive pursuits or they're simply too busy to seek entertainment outside the house, these clients are looking for someone to create a refuge from hectic lives. And because they're used to the finer things in life, they'll want that refuge to feel as plush as the best theater in town—or in



Photo: Katherine Lambert

New York, London, and Paris. And here's the key to TK's success: They understand that designing home theaters requires a somewhat heavy hand.

"The theater is like the house, but the volume goes up a bit," Kalomirakis says. "It's not plopped down like an alien object. We've developed the architectural expertise of the theater, but understand and respect the integrity of the other spaces."

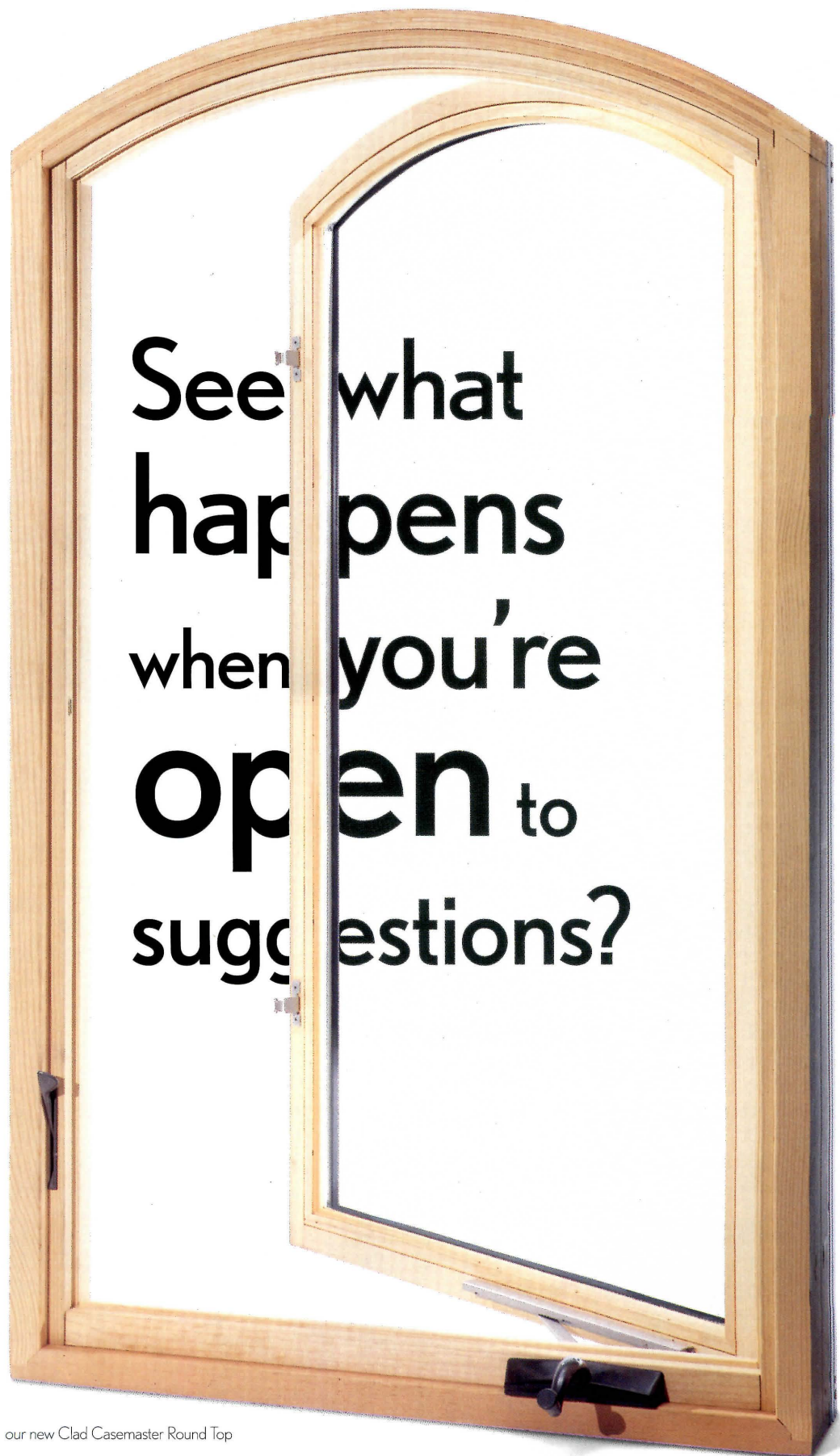
Still, it's show business. And unless you appeal to your clients' fantasies, you'll never get the backing for a \$500,000 run.

How do you break into this niche? Subscribe to every audio/video magazine, attend the home-

automation and consumer-electronics trade shows and conferences. You won't be installing the stuff yourself, but you have to know enough to impress your clients and police the subs.

Then, study the grand movie-house designs; learn the tricks behind the spells they cast. With all that under your belt, make the skill your own—apply your expertise, your sensibility, your movie magic. Now, get on with the show. **ra**

Questions or comments? Call me: 202.736.3312; write me: S. Claire Conroy, *residential architect*, One Thomas Circle, N.W., Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20005; or e-mail me: cconroy@hanleywood.com.



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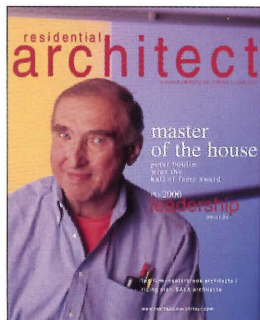
keep those cards, letters, and e-mails coming, folks.

business to business

Residential architect always has “meaty” content, but I especially loved the June issue.

Your stories on architects and architecture firms are applicable to many types of business, including PR. I have my own PR firm (very small) but we’re always looking for ways to improve how we do business.

Your features on SALA



Architects and Peter Bohlin, in particular, went right into my clip files. The quote on page 45 went right onto my wall: “To do well in this profession you have to be able to schmooze people, be passionate, count

numbers, and make budgets. Peter has all those traits.”

Really now, to what small (or large) business owner would those qualities not apply?

Thanks for making the reading as valuable for my business as it is for my clients’.

*Margie Simon, principal
Simon & Associates
Public Relations
Minneapolis*

case study

First, let me commend you for your fine magazine. I believe it fills an important niche market, providing excellent coverage of worthy projects that otherwise go under-reported.

Second, I would like to gently, tactfully offer a suggestion regarding an annoying habit that started with your first issue and still continues—one that I had assumed you would outgrow. I refer to the habit



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of using lower-case letters where capital letters are required.

Often this technique seems to be employed as a rebellion against conventional practices, to assert one's disregard for the rules of society. Usually the people involved outgrow this compulsion to show disrespect for the rules. I hope you will soon.

It is not merely an issue of convention. It is an issue of readability. For one to be able to quickly read and grasp written ideas, it is necessary to avoid the roadblocks that slow readers down, to reduce unnecessary friction that gets in the way

of expressing ideas clearly.

Please give this issue some serious thought. I realize you have already invested significantly in this personality quirk to give your magazine a sense of individuality, but the governing principle of your staff should be to make it easy for busy people to quickly grasp the ideas presented. Your magazine has a duty to express itself clearly. That means using the conventional symbols that give meaning to words.

Give your readers a break. Please drop the affectation.

*Vernon Reed, FAIA
Reed Architects
Liberty, Mo.*

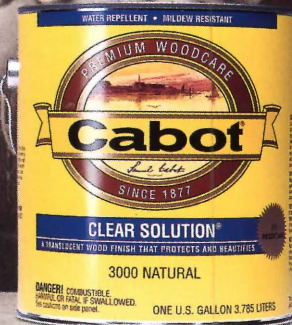
redlines

An incorrect photo appeared in the July/August feature "Home Rules," on page 63. The correct image of the Windsor, Fla., house's exterior elevation is shown below. We regret the error.



Raymond Martinot

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*John Sava, AIA.
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What goes around, comes around.

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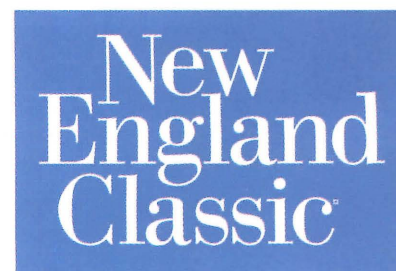
Veneers include oak, maple and cherry as well as paint-grade finish. And here is the best part.

New England Classic raised wood panels will cost about one-third as

much as a comparable custom installation and can be quickly installed by a carpenter with a chop saw and a power nailer.

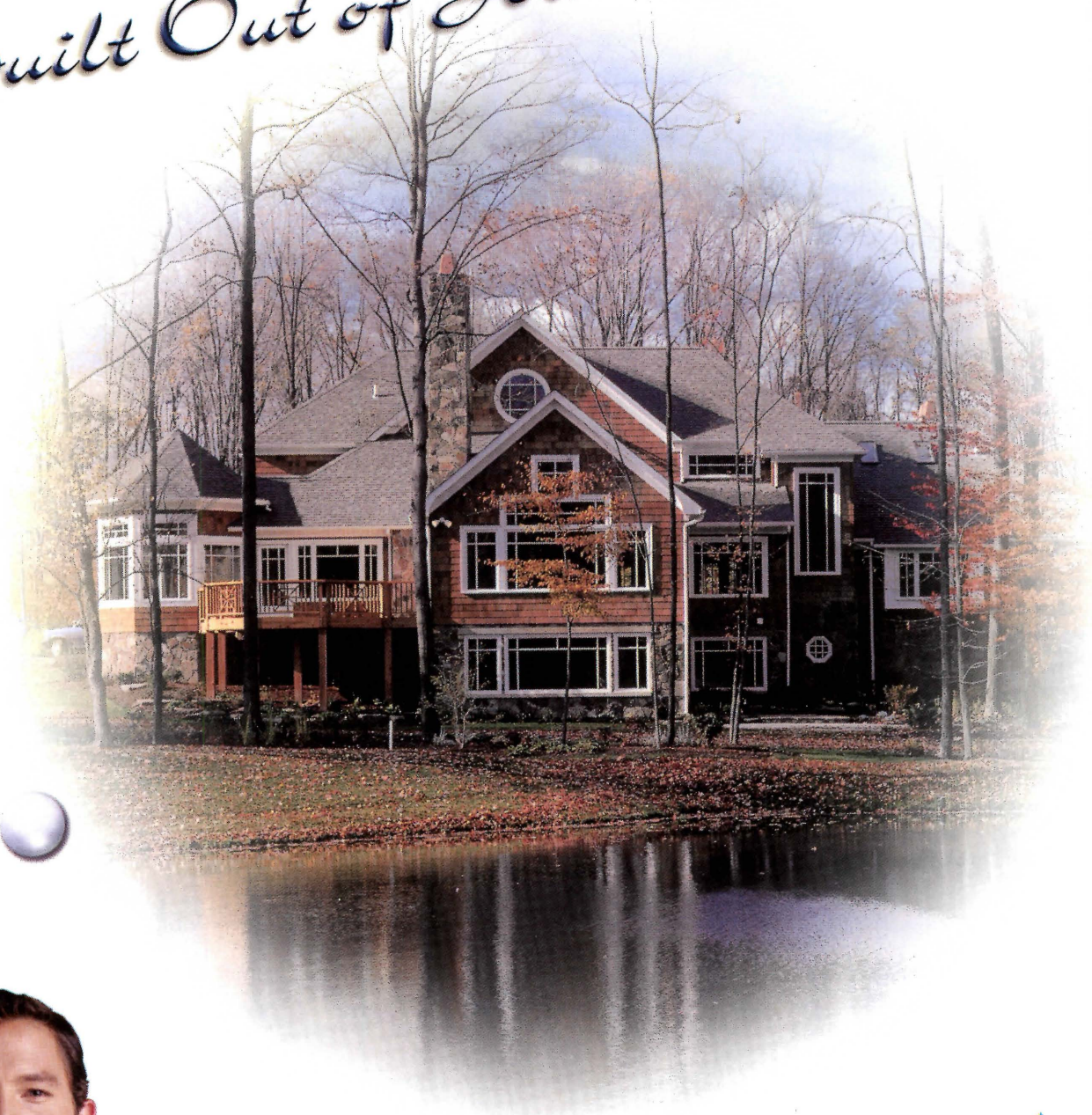
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home front

tips and trends from the world of residential design

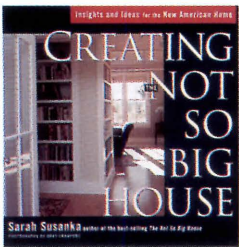
small talk

For years, small houses have been the subject of glossy picture books. But none of them have come close to the sensation created by Sarah Susanka's 1998 book, *The Not So Big House*, which has sold more than 200,000 copies. Last month, Taunton Press released a sequel, *Creating the Not So Big House*.

While the first book introduced Susanka's argument



Warrick Green



that people really want houses with less square footage but more heart and soul, the second explains how to actually get one. Using 25 projects as examples—some designed by her former Minnesota firm, now called SALA Architects, and some by other architects—Susanka discusses in plain language how spatial concepts such as varying ceiling heights, visual layering, and framed openings affect our experience of being in a

place. Detailed plans for 20 of the houses are for sale.

"The book is about how three dimensions are important to our bodies," Susanka says. "These are tools architects use but haven't always named. It gives clients simple words to say, 'I want this,' and allow a conversation to begin."

Susanka says that she tries in her books to combat the



Inside a small suburban kitchen, a clever trick saves precious space. Architect Jim Garramone designed an elegant wardrobe to camouflage the back of the refrigerator, which juts into a living room/entryway.

public perception that architects aren't interested in the middle-class market—and, conversely, to counter architects' belief that the average homeowner doesn't want what they do. So far, she's succeeding. "Architects are telling me they're getting projects they didn't believe existed," she says.

In fact, Susanka's new fame has enabled her to fulfill a long-held vision of being a writer and speaker in the morning, and an architect in the afternoon. She's traded work at the firm



Project photos by Grey Crawford, from *Creating the Not So Big House*, by permission of the publisher, Taunton Press

she co-founded in 1983 for the lecture circuit, taking on a single design commission at a time. Now the maven on modest homes is writing a third book that builds on the ideas introduced in the second.

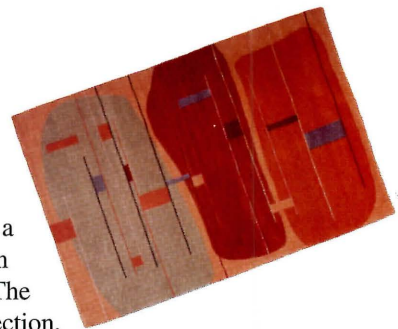
"I find it exhilarating to be able to explain something to a person who doesn't have the knowledge base of our profession," she says, "and see the light bulb go on."—*cheryl weber*

hello dalai

How would you represent Tibetan culture in the design of a rug? That's the challenge Elson & Co., a custom rug design firm in San Francisco, posed to a group of American architects, including Steven Holl, Doug Garofalo, and Michael McInturf. The result is *Tibetan Modern: The Architects Collection*, a dynamic blending of the endangered art of traditional Tibetan weaving with the sophistication of modern design.

"Dalai Time," shown here, was created by Henrike Aengenendt and David Yama of Yama Design in San Francisco. The design's "bar code" figures reflect the individual life spans of the 14 Dalai Lamas, from 1391 to 1999.

Tibetan and Nepalese weavers, masters of traditional weaving techniques, handcraft all of the rugs in Kathmandu using pure Tibetan highland sheep's wool. For more information, call 800.944.2858.—*katy tomasulo*



design duel

In an ongoing conflict with interior designers over design rights, architects have scored a minor victory. And in this latest skirmish, the architects appear to have the Justice Department on their side.

Late this summer, the Justice Department's antitrust division decided that the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards did not violate antitrust laws when delegates approved a

resolution to oppose any state law that would allow interior designers to prepare, stamp, and submit drawings to local building departments.

The Justice Department joined the brouhaha in June when the National Council for Interior Design Qualification filed a petition with the antitrust division in anticipation of the NCARB vote. The petition asked officials to review that vote as well as a failed NCARB attempt to retain a narrow definition of "registered design professional" in the International Building Codes, the petition states. NCARB's preferred definition limited "registered design professional" to architects and engineers, but the adopted definition "comports with applicable state law," NCIDQ's petition says.

The latest salvo is simply another chapter in a now-familiar saga. The two sides have differed on what interior designers can and cannot do since the 1970s. According to NCARB's executive vice president, Lenore M. Lucey, FAIA, the primary issue is and always has been one of public safety. Granting interior designers the same design rights as architects, she says, is a dangerous proposition. "Interior designers do not have the same education level, examination, or skill level to do what architects do," she says.

Not surprisingly, most interior designers disagree. NCIDQ president Lisa M. Whited says NCARB's concerns about safety are unfounded and that its real goal is to eliminate interior designers as viable competitors for a variety of design jobs.—*nigel f. maynard*



Greg Clarke

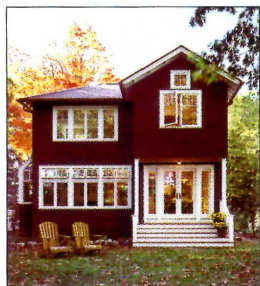
calendar

residential architect design awards: call for entries

deadline for requesting a binder: december 1

entry deadline: january 10

Our annual *residential architect* Design Awards program honors outstanding architecture in the following



Warren Jagger Photography

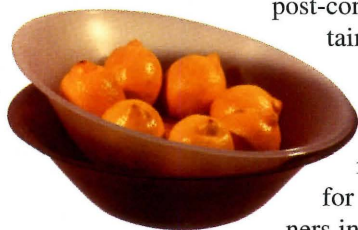
categories: custom, renovation, multi-family, affordable, production, and on the boards. A project of the year is chosen from among the winning built projects. Winning projects will be published in the May 2001 issue of *residential architect*. (The remodeled house at left by Hecht Scherding Architects of Belmont, Mass., won a merit award in last year's competition.) See page 22 for more details.

design with memory fifth international design resource awards

registration and submission deadline: february 1

entry fee: \$75 (includes recycled content materials kit)

This annual design competition encourages the use of post-consumer recycled, reprocessed, and sustainably harvested materials for use in new product and building designs.



Winning entries will be exhibited in Seattle during Earth Day 2001 and reviewed by Norm Thompson, Inc., for possible production. Last year's winners included the bowls made of recycled records shown at left, designed by Studio De Denktank in Rotterdam, Holland. For contest rules, visit www.designresource.org.

hiroshi sugimoto: the architecture series

san francisco museum of modern art
november 10–march 4

Photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto has recorded key examples of Modern architecture from around the world in his ethereal style. From the Chrysler Building shown here to R.M. Schindler's home, these long-exposure photographs capture the enduring diversity of architecture. Call 415.357.4000 for museum hours.



restoration & renovation

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january 15–17

Sponsored by *residential architect's* sister publication OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL, this conference and trade show combines dozens of educational seminars and hundreds of exhibitors focused on architectural rehabilitation, landscape preservation, and historically inspired construction. To register, visit www.egiexhib.com.



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museum of contemporary art at california plaza, los angeles
february 18–june 3

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continuing exhibits

How Do We Know? Re-Creating Domestic Interiors, through December 31, The Octagon, Washington, D.C., 202.638.3221; **Masterpieces from the Vitra Design Museum**, through February 4, Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York, 212.849.8400; **The Opulent Eye of Alexander Girard**, through March 18, Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York, 212.849.8400.



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call for entries

residential architect design awards

the second annual

residential architect Design Awards, sponsored by *residential architect* magazine, honor the best in American housing. Awards will be given in eight categories, encompassing custom home design, renovation, multifamily housing, single-family production housing, affordable housing, and work on the boards.

From the winners, the judges will choose a Best Residential Project of the Year.

who's eligible?

Architects and designers.

Other building industry professional may submit projects on behalf of an architect or designer.

Hanley-Wood employees, their relatives, and regular contributors to the magazine are not eligible.

what's eligible?

Any home or project completed after January 1, 1998. For On the Boards submissions, an design completed after January 1, 1998.

when's the deadline?

Entry forms and fees are due no later than December 1, 2000. Completed binders are due January 10, 2001.

where will winning projects appear?

Winning projects will be published in the May 2001 issue of *residential architect* magazine.

how will projects be judged?

A panel of respected architects and design professionals will independently select winners based on design excellence. They may withhold awards in any category at their discretion.

entry form

To register, you may do any of the following:

call Shelley Hutchins at *residential architect*, 202.736.3407

mail this form to Shelley Hutchins, *residential architect* Design Awards 2001, One Thomas Circle, N.W., Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20005

fax this form to Shelley Hutchins at 202.785.1974.

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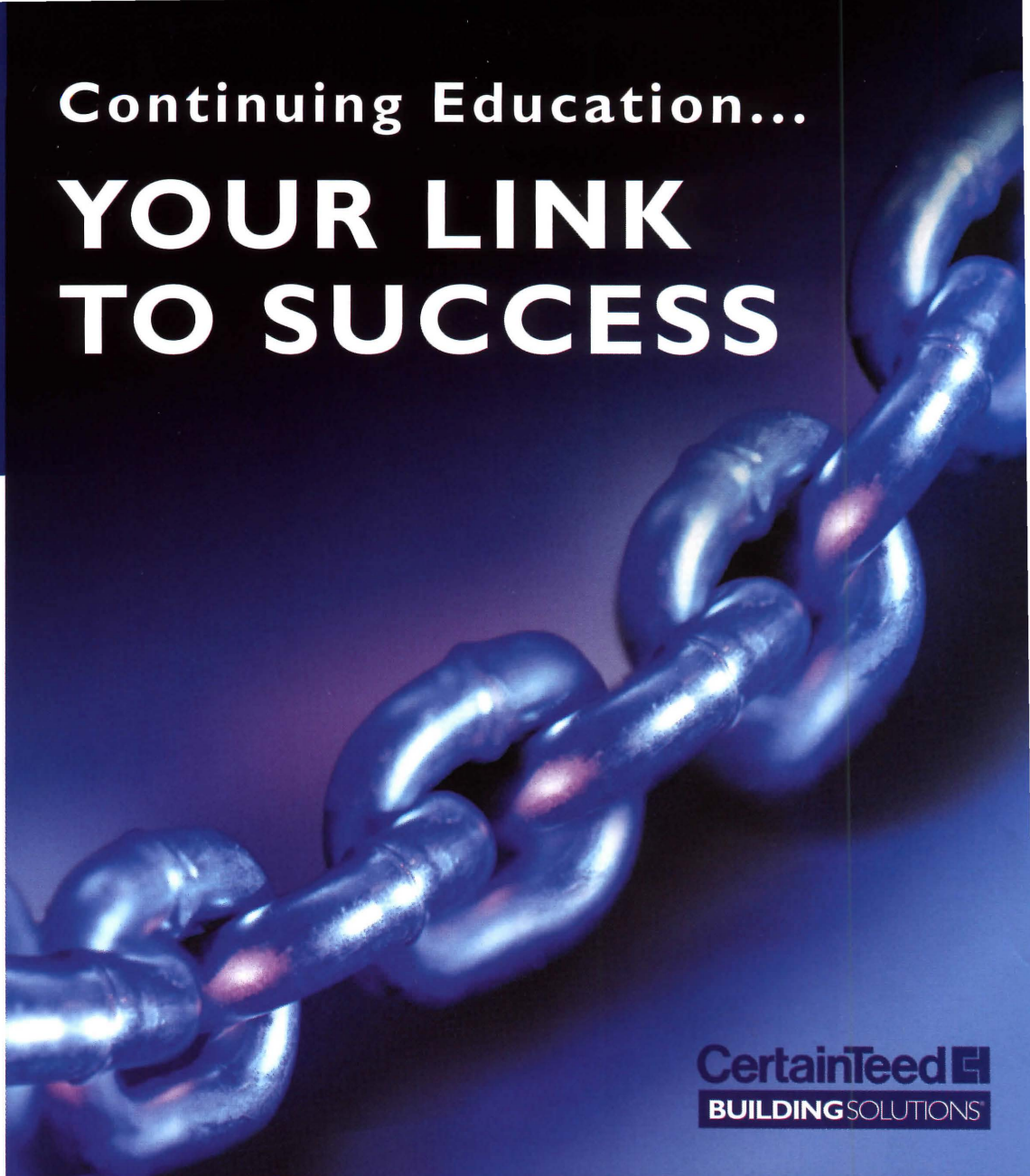
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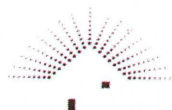
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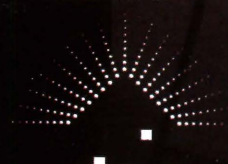


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And by the fear that defeats and dreams are one.
The whole race is a poet that writes down
The eccentric propositions of its fate.*

Wallace Stevens

by brian healy

My family's home was the first of many neo-colonial wooden houses built four decades ago in a field on Greene's Farm in Bucks County, Pa. For years, the house remained isolated, adrift in the field. It had no significant mooring to the land, nor did it contribute

to a definition of the place the land was to become.

The field was adjacent to Pebble Hill Road, a rural route that connected us to

town and to other fields. Some of those fields were still being tended, while others gave way to streets, driveways, and more houses. Pebble Hill Road was lined with barns and fences, punctuated by bridges and overpasses, and laced with billboards and power lines. It provid-

ed fleeting views of ponds and dams, farmhouses and abandoned buildings. Unlike the neo-colonials, the road and the simple structures alongside it helped me understand that this was a landscape in transition, from things familiar to those imagined.

I am still drawn to the beauty of these anonymous American structures, built in both fields and cities and dependent on roads, sidewalks, and streets. Their beauty is wed to the realities of utility and experience rather than to symbolism or intention. The well-worn, the vernacular, and the commonplace represent a grounding, a forthright stance in the evolution of a place. In these buildings, we sense things as they are, even as they slip away and we are forced to imagine what they might become.

Of course, my formal architectural education was often in conflict with these intuitive observa-



Paul Warchol

The author (left) strives to connect buildings to their constantly evolving environment. He designed this diaphanous beach house in Loveladies, N.J., in collaboration with local firm Michael Ryan Architects.

tions. As dutiful progeny of Duchamp, we were encouraged to overlook, and thus diminish, the essential retinal resonance of our work. Evoking a sensual response was not a primary concern. The idea behind the work was most important, and thus we were encouraged to elevate the power of the intellect over intuition when engaged in the act of creation. We rarely talked about beauty or its resonating presence; when we did,

it was when safely sequestered in dark, smoky bars, drinking late into the night.

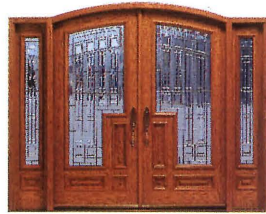
Frank Lloyd Wright once observed that people derive both countenance and sustenance from the atmosphere of their habitations, that people are rooted in their houses just as a plant is rooted in the soil. I still believe this observation to be true, although it's an increasingly complex truth. The legacy of restlessness is deeply embed-

continued on page 28



Kimberly Holcombe

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ded in American culture. Our desire to establish roots is tempered by our frequent personal migrations—which, in turn, continually transform the landscape. For Wright, the landscape was absolute and unchanging and only needed to be revealed. For us, it is continually changing and inchoate. Its potential can only be suggested.

Architecture is made not of intentions but of works. In its very essence, it involves a renunciation of words and an engagement with the physical. It must move beyond the realm of ideas and become experiential. This begins with a desire to locate our place in the world and it leads to

an involvement with mystery, aspirations, self-identity, containment, shelter, even betrayal. It makes concrete our most subtle emotions. As with all construction, the projects bear the marks of many fingerprints. Inevitably, the endeavor is a matter not of individual inspiration but of honest acknowledgment that things could be done differently and that a different proposition could always be made.

Even though most of my projects are residential in nature, my primary focus is on a building's connection to these landscapes in transition. I engage what is already there, in an attempt to be



Courtesy Brian Healy Architects

For Healy, the beauty of such simple, anonymous structures as this Northern California barn emanates from their utility and experience.

a part of that place and a part of what that place is becoming. The connection is dependent on the relationship of the building to the street, the articulation of building components, and the use of color with its temporal effects and natural sympathies to the existing palette of the site.

From the rural to the urban, the roads and paths that lead us elsewhere complement the structures that

root us to a place. They lead us to something new without denying the past. As with Pebble Hill Road and the simple utilitarian structures of Bucks County, they are capable of evoking the eccentric propositions of what could be. *ra*

Brian Healy is the principal of Brian Healy Architects in Boston. This article is excerpted from the introduction to a book that will be published next year.



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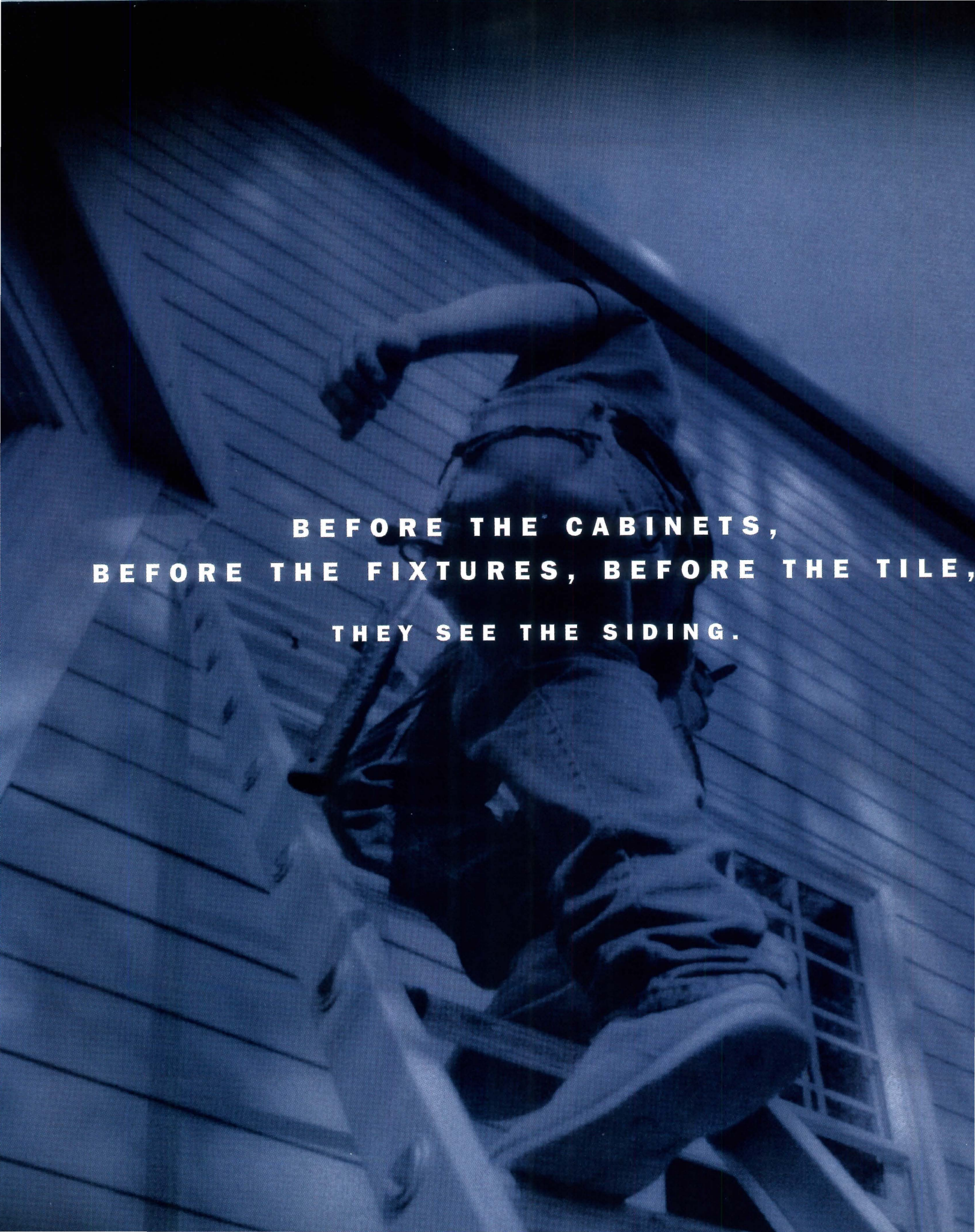
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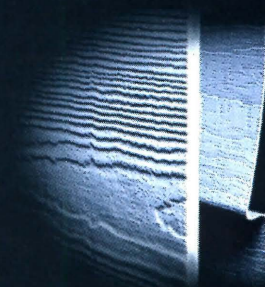
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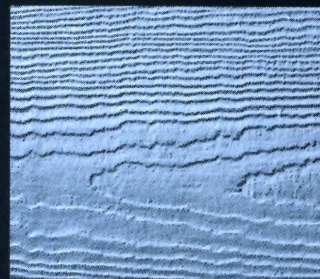
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electric avenues

with home automation booming, architects must guide clients through a maze of high-tech decisions.

by cheryl weber

by telephoning the control “brain” from his car, architect Brad Hollenbeck’s client can regulate the thermostat in his house, set the mood with music, and illuminate a pathway from the front door to the kitchen of his expansive Houston home. In Palo Alto, Calif., a client of architect Steve Borlik’s shares video, graphics, and voice files between several residences in different parts of the world that are networked together.

The future has arrived, and with it, the electronic high life. If the 1990s brought widespread consumer acceptance of wireless communications, home PCs, and high-speed Internet access, the new decade makes possible more complex technologies, including the integration of everything in the house. “We’re seeing information systems in private residences that we wouldn’t have seen in an office setting 10 years ago,” says Jon Jackson, AIA, of Bohlin Cywinski Jackson’s Pittsburgh office.

Some 7.5 million American homes—about 7 percent—are equipped with a degree of computer net-

working that automates security, entertainment, lighting, mechanical systems, and climate control, according to the Consumer Electronics Association, Arlington, Va. Since 1995, the number has nearly quadrupled.

The future may have arrived, but have we? Architects of high-end homes find themselves playing continuous catch-up on systems that are con-

stantly being updated. They’re dealing with a new subset of vendors such as lighting and audio/video designers, many of which are riding the learning curve themselves. And where once clients were focused on aesthetic issues, now they may be obsessed with optimizing the performance of surround-sound speakers in a major living space. What’s more, today’s well-funded clients

can “out-buy” their ability to deploy the devices; many need to be educated about the implications of smart technology, so they can make choices that are easy to live with.

sounding board

“A big role the architect has in all this is to listen to what people say they want to do, translate the implications, and slice it up so you

continued on page 34



David Plunkert



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can bring in the specialists," Jackson says.

Indeed, every client's comfort level is different. Those who work in high-tech professions may want a system that gives them a lot of control. Others just want to come home and push a button. But it's never that simple, either. Tom Kundig, AIA, of Olson/Sundberg/Kundig/Allen Architects, Seattle, recalls a former

thing, but he's gone all the time. I'm just going to go into a room with my kerosene lamp and forget about it," Duxbury says.

Rather than spearheading the technology discussion themselves, many architects bring in an "umbrella" specialist to design a system that incorporates all the components on a client's wish list. The professional becomes

insist on thoroughly exploring with clients their precise needs and comfort levels. "It scares me to death to have a client say, 'Here's my budget, just make it happen. I don't have time to understand it,'" says Stan Saunders, Audio Video Design, Wellesley, Mass. "We'll back away from that client. They need to understand what it is they're getting, so their

high tech, high cost

The budget is another aspect of a smart house that can zoom out of control. Components for houses that are 100 percent smart run from \$50,000 and up into the millions.

Joseph Luna, AIA, Luna Design Group, Lynnfield, Mass., urges clients to start with a modest package and update or expand it later. "People go to showrooms and see all these wonderful things," he says. "The problem is, although it's more commonplace now, it's still upper-end technology. We have to get a reality check as far as affordability."

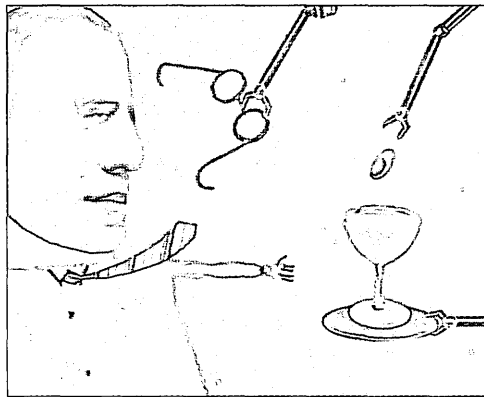
Houston's Hollenbeck, AIA, Ligon/Hollenbeck Architects, does as much legwork as possible early on. After determining what the clients want in terms of technology, he gets an estimate from the consultants and enters it as an allowance. Then, the figure becomes part of the discussion of whether the clients can afford to use tile on the roof or to build the pool house, and still get the electronics they want.

Pinning down price on a complex automated system isn't always possible, however. Kundig warns clients that it's hard to evaluate what the costs will be before the house is finished. "There are hidden costs that are never readily apparent," he says. "I just tell clients that you can go to the moon with

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"a big role the architect has in all this is to listen to what people say they want to do, translate the implications, and slice it up so you can bring in the specialists."

—jon jackson, bohlin cywinski jackson



client, "a very sharp mathematician and software designer," whose automation system was 100 percent smart. But he was so frustrated with its logic that he considered taking it all out.

"A lot of this is just plain fun, like a top-of-the-line Ferrari," says Peter Duxbury, AIA, Duxbury Architects, Los Altos, Calif. "But it's hard to choose the right level to go in at. We spend a lot of time with that." And, as with a project's architectural design program, the smart-house discussion must involve both partners. "How often have I heard: 'This is my husband's

another member of the design team. Palo Alto's Borlik, of Young and Borlik Architects, says most of his clients work directly with the electronics coordinator. "We're not trying to translate the tech information," he says. "But we will listen to different options and help evaluate the advantages and disadvantages.

"It ends up being an exploration every time you get into it," he adds. "I don't depend on keeping up with the technology. It's more common that I'm being led into new territory by the client."

Like architects, a good tech specialist will also

expectation levels are set."

Another designer of audio/video and lighting systems, Elliot Fishkin, Innovative Audio Video Showrooms, Manhattan and Brooklyn, N.Y., asks the same kinds of questions architects ask when they're designing a house: How do you anticipate living in this room? Do you more often watch movies or listen to music? What kind of music do you listen to? "I find out what's important to people," Fishkin says. "My best expertise is to be a catalyst for someone's self-discovery, rather than prejudging whether they're a candidate for a certain system or not."

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smart-house automation.”

Those elusive costs are linked to the fact that this is an emerging industry, and marketers haven’t yet figured out how to offer a turnkey package. “It takes a lot of coordination on all sides,” Kundig says. “How does the audiovisual component really work with the lighting system? How does the wiring get routed?” Such issues as where the regular electrician’s work ends and a specialist’s structured, or low-voltage, wiring job begins aren’t always well articulated.

Like anything else, the decision to include sophisticated technology after the construction drawings are done will certainly send the budget skyward. For one thing, prior thought must be given as to where the infrastructure, or “nerve center,” will be housed.

Carl Brosius, Future Planning, San Francisco, says a typical home-automation network requires a special, moisture-proof room at least the size of an 8-foot-by-8-foot walk-in closet. “Unfortunately, we’re still at the point where often the house is being built and the client comes to us, and then the budget starts to grow,” Saunders says, adding, “but we haven’t had any budget wars with architects so far.”

looking good

Late introductions create a ripple effect for everybody—architects, interior

designers, cabinetmakers, and electricians. But when a plan is presented early—ideally, during design development—architectural and aesthetic issues are fairly easily dealt with.

George Ide, Smart House Digital Interiors, Atlanta, wants to be involved when architects are drawing up electrical and lighting documents. Furniture plans, ceiling plans, and the location of lights are important pieces

of the puzzle. Ide notes that in his market there are about 40,000 home starts each year, and 4,000 to 6,000 of those include a structured wiring package.

For audiophiles and architects, the goal is to design a system that delivers optimal performance without interfering with the rest of the room. Bob Kranston, Axiom Design, San Francisco, calls it architectural electronics. And it always involves compro-

mise. “In a perfect world, you’d place the speakers at a very specific height and orientation to the listener,” he says. “But often they’ll have to be placed in the wall instead of freestanding, and at a height that is out of your direct line of sight so they don’t interfere with the aesthetics.”

Luna asks the tech experts for a laundry list of the components that will be included, along with notes

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glossary of terms

cat 5: Short for “category 5,” a rating system that refers to the number of twisted wires in a telephone cable. The more twists, the greater the bandwidth and speed and the less the interference in the transmission of voice and computer data.

coaxial cable: Low-voltage electrical cable typically used to carry signals for satellite dishes, cable TV, and computer modems.

composite cable: A single sheath containing different kinds of wires such as coaxial and cat 5 cable. It speeds the process of upgrading a house with new technology. Fiber-optic cables, which are glass, are usually run separately because they are less flexible than other wiring.

DSL: Short for “digital subscriber line,” one of several methods for delivering high-speed access to the Internet. It also lets users make and receive phone calls while surfing the Net.

LAN: Abbreviation for “local area network,” a group of personal computers configured to share information, usually within one building.

macro: A series of preprogrammed instructions that enable multiple tasks with a single command, so that, for example, one button can dim the lights, close the draperies, and start a movie.

PIP: Short for “picture-in-picture,” a feature of many television sets that allows them to display an image from a second video source along with the primary picture.

rf technology: Stands for radio-frequency technology. Unlike most remote controls that use infrared technology, it doesn’t have to be pointed at an object and its signals can penetrate walls. It works within a range of 150 to 500 feet.

structured wiring: A system of low-voltage wires designed to carry electronic signals through a home.



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describing their ideal placement. For him, the art of subterfuge may include covering the built-in subwoofer speakers, which usually go in the lower part of a room, with grilles to make them disappear. "Although," he notes, "the tech people don't like it, because grilles can distort the sound and rattle over time."

Fortunately, electronics are getting more compact; speakers are smaller, and light control panels are becoming virtually invisible on walls. "Some clients like celebrating the technology a little bit," Kundig says. "Others want keypads to be very discreet." But

in addition to a superb appearance, clients want a design that allows components to be easily plugged in and out as the technology advances—sometimes as soon as six months after a system is installed.

wiring for the future

A homeowner may want to upgrade, either with the latest electronics or by expanding the scope of an existing system—say, by carrying music to more rooms in the house. In either case, a smart wiring system will prevent retrofit headaches.

Brosius' biggest com-

plaint is that the standard for residential wiring lags far behind that of commercial buildings. "One of the worst wiring design features I've seen in the residential environment is that the wiring has been stapled to the joists and studs, so there's no choice but to remove walls," he says.

"There needs to be a methodology for having a retrofittable wireway to get to each of the room locations." Flexible tubing that goes to each wall plate from the control center, for example, allows subcontractors to pull wires through easily.

Wiring for the future

also means including enough kinds of low-voltage wire and enough outlets to anticipate changes. Ide uses both composite cable (a flexible sheath that holds multiple kinds of wire) and single cable, a combination that provides more conductors and more types of wire to each location. "Running two coaxial and two cat 5 cables to each location should meet any need," he says. His smart wire package also includes a conduit that's run from a distribution center in the house to such strategic locations as the home office and the family room.

Fishkin also runs more

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strands of wire than a current system needs, in a flexible metal conduit. He recalls how, recently, the practice paid off. Five years ago, he installed an audio system in a home. Though at the time the client didn't want music throughout the house, he nevertheless consented to more extensive wiring that could someday accommodate, say, a computer network. Years later, the client purchased a Crestron wireless home-control system, which works by radio-frequency touch panels. "I had put enough cat 5 wires in the right places that we didn't have to do any

deconstruction," Fishkin says. "I call it 'wiring for the future' on my proposals, and only about one in 100 customers rejects it."

Brosius predicts that in the future, most of the smart-house market will be in retrofit wireless work. "I'm a fan of composite solutions," he says, "providing for high-speed cable lines at a minimum of one location in a room, and doing the subsidiary controls—for lights, thermostat, and low-speed data access—in wireless technology."

settling in

Architects looking for a reliable home-automation

expert to work with should judge candidates based on such forward-thinking practices. "As with any immature industry, the people who do smart houses are also in a learning curve," Kundig says.

"There's a lot of movement and shaking around of people, so ask for referrals."

David Humphries, of Lutron, recommends asking how long a specialist has been in business and what kind of equipment the firm installs. "Go with companies offering well-known brands," he says.

We may not be there yet when it comes to seamlessly designing a house

that's as smart as it is beautiful. But meanwhile, architects must help clients figure out what works for them, and leave the rest in the showroom. A trace of backlash is already starting to appear. "There's an interesting skepticism that's emerging about the automation being done," Kundig says. "It's complex and expensive, and some people are not interested in it as they look deeper. But on the whole, smart houses are the wave of the future. It's just a matter of time." **ra**

Cheryl Weber is a freelance writer in Severna Park, Md.



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material list &

Material List & Cost Estimate

Material	Description	Qty	Units	Cost	Subst	Subst	Total
INSULATION							
R-20 Wall Insulation		1813	sqft	0.35	10.00	5.10	764.14
Vapor Barrier (Wall)		2160	sqft	0.03	10.00	5.08	247.80
Attic Insulation		2058	sqft	0.15	10.00	5.02	415.47
Subtotal							1391.41
EXTERIOR FINISH							
Brick	Hardie Red	81	sqft	3.70	15.00	10.00	239.81
Siding	White Vinyl	1577	sqft	1.85	15.00	10.00	2577.00
Gable Siding	White Vinyl	1004	sqft	1.85	15.00	10.00	2461.40
Brick Header	3 1/2"x8 1/2"	1	each	14.50	10.00	1.00	16.00
Brick Tiles		1	sqm	2.70	10.00	1.00	14.52
Brick Mortar		18	cuft	2.80	10.00	1.00	22.74
Brick Scaffolding		18	cuft	0.25	10.00	1.00	7.26
Siding Starter		232	feet	0.16	10.00	5.00	59.17
Siding Scaffolding		207	feet	0.16	10.00	5.00	45.78
Siding Fridge		97	feet	1.08	10.00	5.00	64.80
Outside Siding Corner		23	feet	1.00	10.00	1.00	48.30
Inside Siding Corner		80	feet	1.20	15.00	10.00	118.40
Window Trim	6"	287	feet	1.20	15.00	10.00	395.16
Door Trim	6"	128	feet	0.45	10.00	1.00	178.74
Subtotal							7026.16
TOTAL PROJECT COST							\$8417.57

cost estimate

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**November 3,
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**Completed
entry binders
are due**

**November 17,
2000**



movie

theo kalomirakis
and his architects
make in-home theaters
a hot ticket.

moguls

by cheryl weber

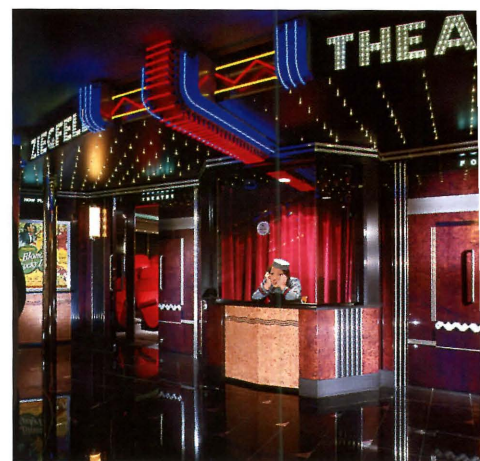
Stopping by the concession stand, the moviegoers pick up a bag of fresh popcorn, jujubes, and bottled water. They head down a thickly carpeted hallway and into the hushed theater, which glows under soft, twinkling lights. Plush armchairs beckon, a voluptuous velvet curtain parts, and music swells from all sides. Just in time for the latest flick at the local multiplex cinema? Hardly.

In an era of movie-house chains, with their sterile auditoriums and tiny, curtainless screens, it's a scene Theodore Kalomirakis and his team of architects are staging for more and more clients, right in their own homes. Call it the ultimate in home entertainment, and one that, if the Greek-born entrepreneur has his way, may redefine the media room as we know it.

Each year, Theo Kalomirakis Theaters (TK Theaters), New York, creates about 100 private movie palaces for the ultra-wealthy. But this year, it launched an idea that appeals, price-wise, to a much broader market. Clients get to choose from three predesigned home theaters, custom-tailored to their house and taste. "Traditional architecture is a service business, not about selling a product," Kalomirakis says. "But I knew if I didn't do something product related, someone else would."

cinema mania

Amiable, intense, and impeccably dressed, Kalomirakis is at the helm of a staff of four architects and six designers trained in interior and industrial design. Last year, he hired a chief operating



Custom home theaters by Theo Kalomirakis (opposite, left) often include a marquee, lobby, and mannequin ticket-taker. Architect and chief operating officer Michael Dalton (opposite, right) heads up the firm's new line of standardized home theaters.

movie moguls



"i wanted to understand what works
in great theaters and reduce the scale
without making them look like a miniature set."

—theo kalomirakis





Inspired by Radio City Music Hall, the Ziegfeld's 40-foot lobby features three original movie posters; bird's-eye maple, stainless steel, and ebony doors; and a Lalique chandelier circa 1928 (far right). In the inner sanctum, moviegoers are greeted with silk-covered seats, black Ultrasuede walls, a silver-leaf ceiling, and fiber-optic lights that change colors.

officer, architect Michael Dalton, AIA, who also has an MBA from Columbia University, to develop the company's line of standardized theaters. Kalomirakis has become a power player in the luxury market, helping to define the latest must-have goods for upper-crust clients who insist on state-of-the-art everything. But what has turned into a lucrative niche in a sizzling economy started simply as a personal passion.

As a teenager in Athens, Kalomirakis was fascinated with film and loved to orchestrate the act of going to the movies. He bought his own projector, printed up programs, and started inviting friends over for movies at his parents' house. The images flickered on a screen hung in an open-air terrace. And in the background, the floodlit acropolis lent its own sense of drama.

Fast-forward 15 years to the United States, where after studying film at New York University, Kalomirakis became a magazine writer, then an art director. It was while working for Malcolm Forbes' *American Heritage* magazine in the mid-1980s that he decided to indulge his enthusiasm for film by creating a real theater in the basement of his Brooklyn brownstone. It had 10 red velvet seats and simple, contemporary decor with Deco accents. Kalomirakis named it the Roxy, after New York's legendary Roxy Theater, which was torn down in 1960.

As fate would have it, many of Kalomirakis' friends were editors and writers. They came over for marathon movie sessions, and soon his magical

little theater was being featured in *The New York Times* "Home" section. The article got syndicated, and requests for similar home theaters began to trickle in. "My first project was for Ron Lauder, Estée Lauder's son," the designer recalls. "He saw the article and said, 'Do the same thing for me.' I said, 'No, I'll do something different.'" Two weeks later, Kalomirakis accepted another commission. Then, with encouragement from Forbes, in 1989 he launched a full-time home-theater business.

re-creating the magic

A return to New York University to study interior design provided a theoretical framework for thinking about theaters. "The architectural integrity and definition of the movie room vanished in the middle of the night, around the 1950s or '60s," Kalomirakis says. "I wanted to understand what works in great theaters and reduce the scale without making them look like a miniature set."

The designer frequents used bookstores, searching out books showing old theaters with lavish details that have long since disappeared. And last summer, he acquired two original doors that once hung at the Paramount Theater in Times Square. Yet for all the retro glamour evident in the firm's work, the theaters aren't just about nostalgia. They explore what it means to create a playful fantasy with contemporary language using real materials and fine craftsmanship, artful lighting, and a focal point.

When space and budget allow, the



movie moguls

“the theater is like the house,
but the volume goes up a bit.”

—theo kalomirakis

Kalomirakis designed the contemporary Copper Beach theater to complement the client's collection of artwork by Picasso, Warhol, and Christo. Concentric arches funnel the eye toward the proscenium. The grilles provide ventilation and let light shine through.

firm likes to provide a tantalizing journey to the inner sanctum. About 75 percent of the projects include spaces outside the theater—a lobby, ticket booth, pizza parlor, espresso café, even a brick sidewalk. That aspect of the work is what attracted staff architect Richard Lanning to the firm. “The fact that we’re not just always doing one room makes the work engaging,” says Lanning, who formerly designed commercial theaters in Italy. “The projects have a concept beyond style and deal with the progression and interrelationships of spaces.”

A look at one complex on the boards finds a marquee with movie-star posters on either side, “to build excitement,” says the project’s architect, Aline Rizk,

AIA. Pairs of painted-wood columns flank a lobby with a sofa and two club chairs. Double sets of leather doors with portholes lead to the theater itself. Inside, seating for 12 descends to a 16-foot-wide by 9-foot-tall screen shrouded in tasseled curtains that are backlit with special lights—all of it an elaborate buildup for the main event.

Designer Michael Brothers, who oversees the firm’s custom division, describes the theater spaces as rooms on steroids. “The custom division is like the boutique section,” he says. “We have to exceed what’s going on in the house tenfold.”

Many clients want an Art Deco-style theater that evokes the glamour of the Hollywood era. Another asked the firm

to re-create a movie house from his hometown in Toledo, Ohio. Although those ideas spark the design discussion, the architects insist that the theater aesthetic tie in to the rest of the house. “The theater is like the house, but the volume goes up a bit,” Kalomirakis says. “It’s not plopped down like an alien object. We’ve developed the architectural expertise of the theater, but understand and respect the integrity of the other spaces.”

putting it together

To get a project built, TK Theaters becomes part of the consultant team headed by a client’s architect or—in the case of a simple retrofit—general contractor. The firm provides three-quarter-scale shop drawings, which the

house architect stamps. “The work is about the meeting of lighting, acoustics, and technology,” Kalomirakis says. “Length, width, and height must carry proportions that are so precise.”

The architects retain their own acoustical engineer, who fine-tunes the listening experience with custom wall, floor, and ceiling systems. Once the client chooses electronics components, a layout is created that takes into account the manufacturer’s specs for the size and ideal location of speakers. The hardware that drives all the amplification and video systems creates quite an air-conditioning load—as do the dozen or more bodies packed into one room. And because a duct running into the theater would carry sound to and from the house, the room requires a dedicated HVAC unit. So, the acoustician must also specify for the contractor’s HVAC sub the amount of air that needs to move through the duct, and at what speed, so as not to create a hum that interferes with the sound track.

The median price tag for a custom project? A cool million, though the entry-level price is closer to \$250,000. Clients shell out an average of \$50,000 for acoustical perfection, \$100,000 for audiovisual equipment, \$70,000 for smart wiring, and about \$300,000 for construction costs. Design fees are billed at \$80 a square foot.

trickle-down economics

So who are these folks spending cosmic sums to be entertained in privacy and sumptuous style? Although many of Kalomirakis’ clients are in the entertainment industry, including Roger Ebert, Eddie Murphy, and Dean Koontz, Dalton says the firm’s clientele is diverse. “The custom client is a rarefied global person with enormous wealth,” he says, noting projects completed in Greece, Germany, Great Britain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and the Ukraine. “They are very successful, entrepreneurial, not bashful about rewarding themselves—and they like movies.”

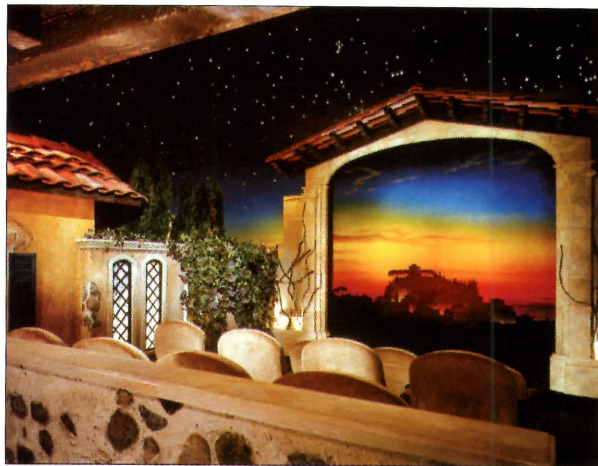
It’s a crème-de-la-crème clientele Rizk observed at her previous architectural firm. “My wealthy clients running around with bodyguards didn’t want to go out in the evenings,” the architect



says. “I realized how much media immersion they had.” She recalls a client who would repair to the Four Seasons Hotel when his satellite link was down.

For movie lovers who want a designer theater without the capital expenditure, last spring the company rolled out its Signature Collection of predesigned home theaters. Clients have a choice of Art Deco, traditional, and contemporary. The cost—from \$50,000 to \$100,000—includes everything except audiovisual equipment. As opposed to a custom solution, which is invasive for the client and can take more than a year from concept to completion, Signature is a turnkey package that is designed to a room’s specifications in about three months and takes company reps just five days to install.

Dalton describes the collection as “an edge-to-edge solution of standardized parts, tailored to a home.” That includes a floor-to-ceiling acoustical system by Owens Corning that can be



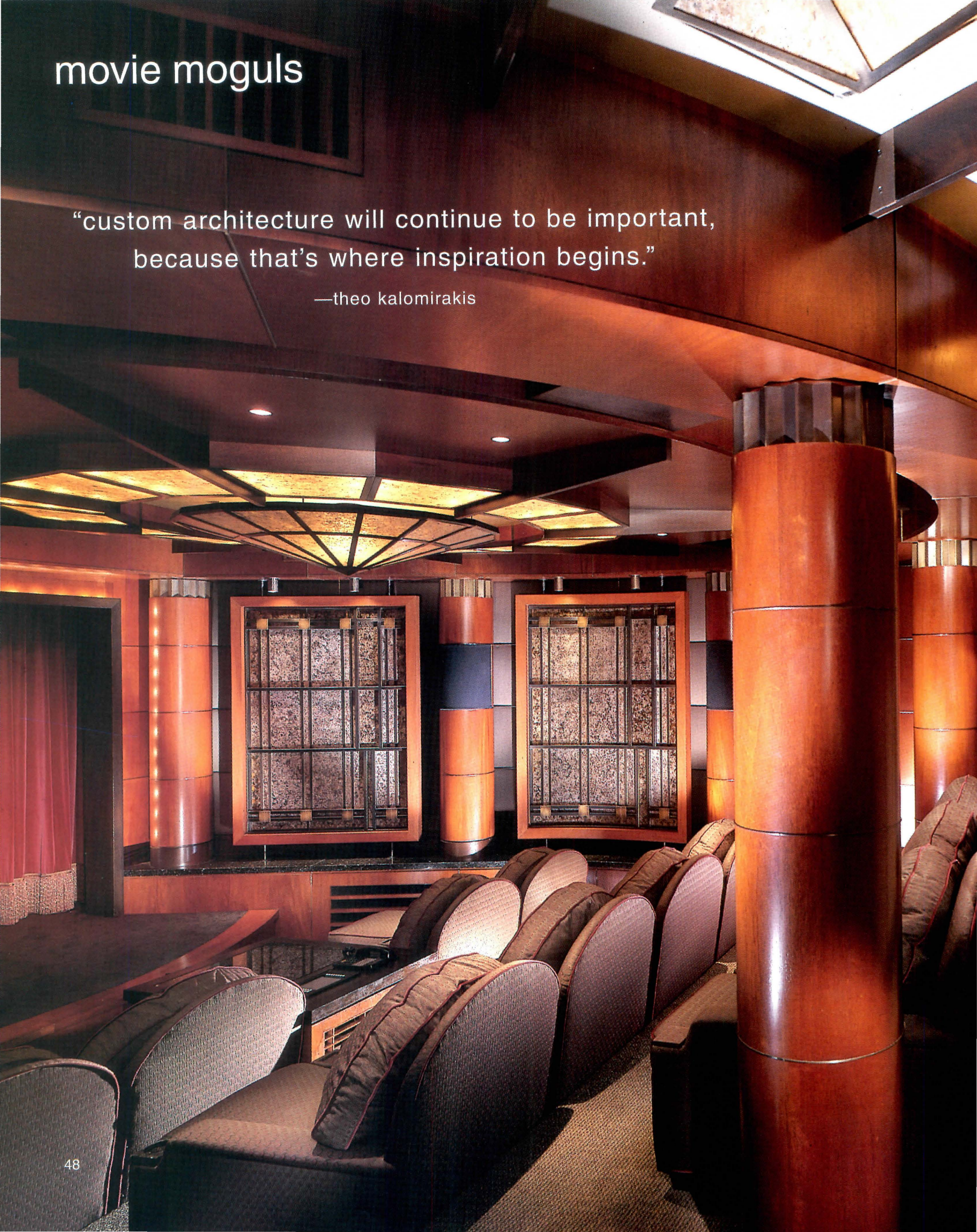
This theater was designed to match the house’s Mediterranean-style limestone floors and plaster walls. Acoustical considerations precluded hard materials, so an artist

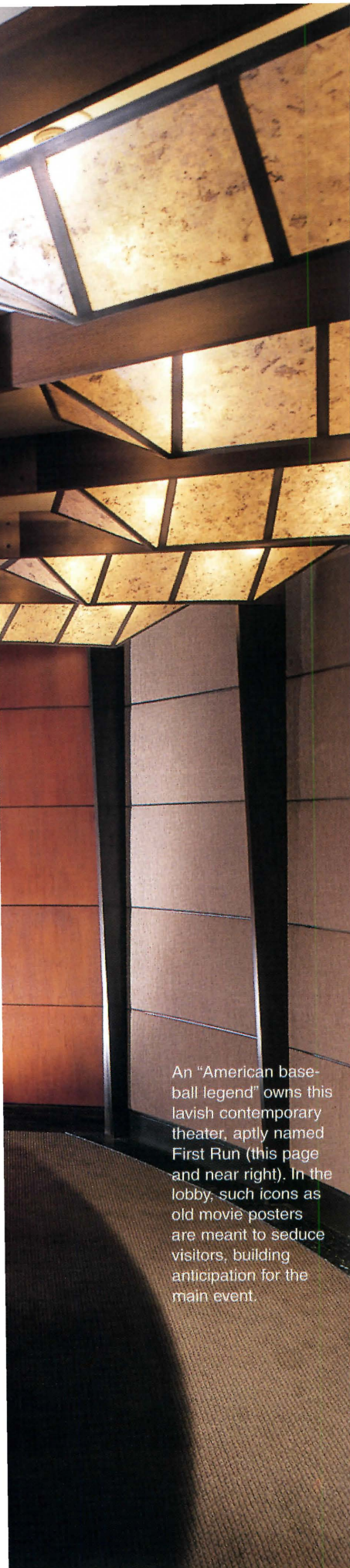
sculpted foam-board facades. The proscenium is made of wood with a stone-like finish. The ceiling is a transparent theater curtain with fiber-optic lights stitched in.

movie moguls

“custom architecture will continue to be important,
because that’s where inspiration begins.”

—theo kalomirakis





An "American baseball legend" owns this lavish contemporary theater, aptly named First Run (this page and near right). In the lobby, such icons as old movie posters are meant to seduce visitors, building anticipation for the main event.

tuned to concert-hall quality. Patented last July, it uses thin, reversible wall panels made of fiberglass and chip-board that absorb and reflect sound.

Such a technologically complex room means thinking twice before taking too many liberties with proportions. And although the theaters' aesthetic look is set, a client's architect does have some say in the detailing. "It's a collegial discussion," says Brent Schulz, AIA, project manager for the Signature Collection. "If there's something the architect feels strongly about, we talk it over." For example, the company has incorporated light covers used in other rooms of the house, or raised a ceiling to create cove lighting. "And we've had a lot of interior designers who want to use their own furniture," Schulz says.

Clients can test-drive and purchase the theaters directly at the company's Manhattan showroom. But they're also sold wholesale to architects, interior designers, audiovisual dealers, and builders of posh communities. "Our message won't resonate with every architect," Dalton says. "But some will say, 'I have other projects to do and want to give my clients the best in the world.'"

Rod Lache, an auto-industry analyst for Deutsche Bank, built an addition at his New Jersey home just for a Signature theater. "Given my line of work, and with two small kids, I don't have time to go to the movies," he says. "This has a lot of the aesthetic features of a real movie theater, like columns, a coffered ceiling, and step lights. But the sound quality is better and the

chairs are more comfortable."

Like a savvy fashion designer, Kalomirakis' goal is to create a product line for virtually every pocketbook. Coming soon from TK Theaters is the Armani X of theater design—a 14-foot-by-19-foot theater that's priced around \$25,000, and simple enough for a homeowner to put together with a screwdriver. "At any point on the continuum, someone can get a piece of our world," Dalton says. "It depends on what level of uniqueness they desire."

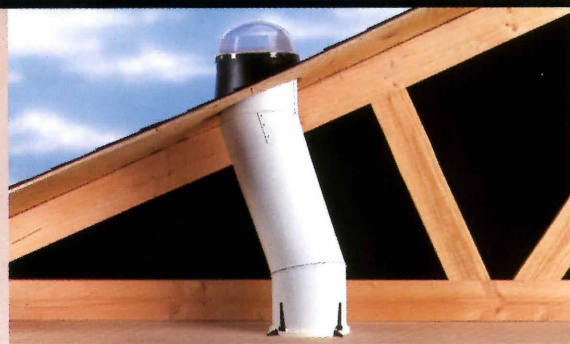
So is a product-oriented business the next wave for TK Theaters? Never, Kalomirakis says. "Custom architecture is our core business," he says. "It will continue to be more important, because that's where inspiration begins. If not, everyone can catch up with us." *ra*

Cheryl Weber is a freelance writer in Severna Park, Md.



The 1,000-square-foot Roxy (above), with its red velvet seats and Deco accents, was Kalomirakis' first private theater, built in the basement of his Brooklyn home. Serendipitously, demolition unearthed old programs from the original Roxy Theater in Manhattan, which was razed in 1960.

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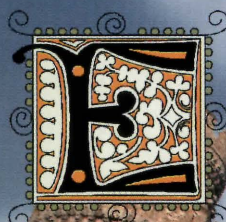
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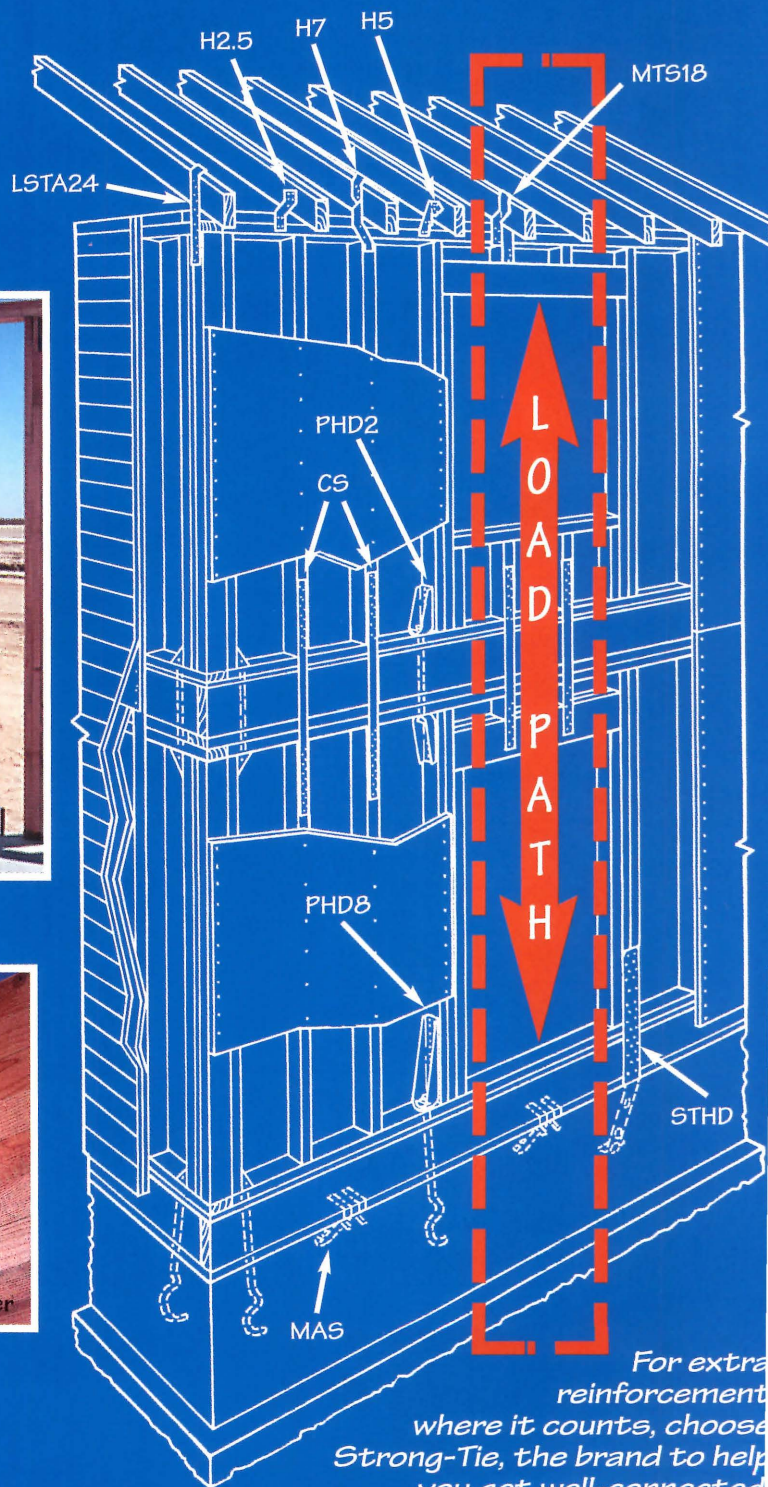
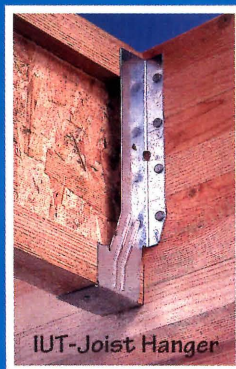
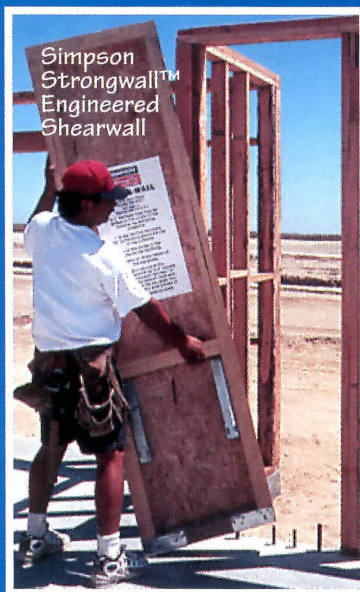
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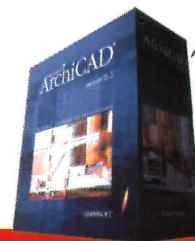
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picture

four custom theaters
mix high tech
with high *style*.

by nigel f. maynard
and meghan drueding

a new *slant*

Before these custom-home clients even dreamed about a theater, they had the forethought to request 8-foot ceilings in the lower level of their new home, a 12,000-square-foot Georgian in an Illinois suburb. They had a feeling they might want to do something interesting with all that space.

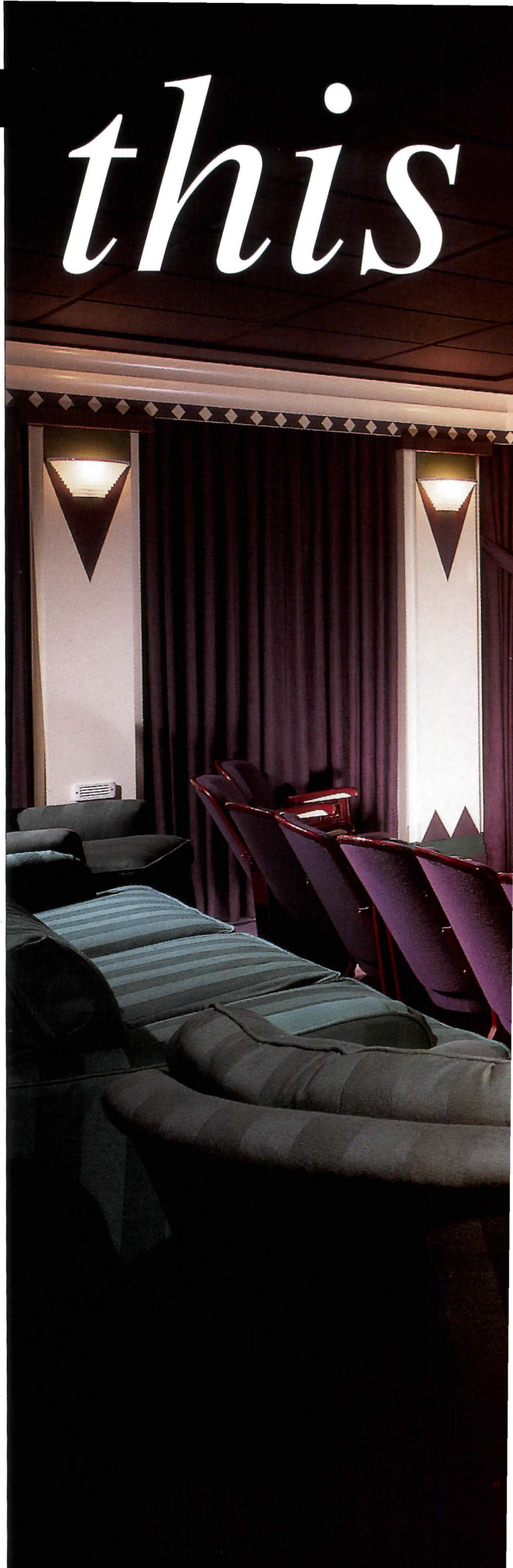
Devoted film buffs, it didn't take them long to decide to install a plush home theater, complete with tiered seating—just like the real thing. “The interior space did not have that, so the room had to be reconfigured,” says Chicago architect Allan J. Grant. He achieved the effect by elevating the two back rows of cushioned seats on platforms.

Dealing with acoustical issues was more complicated. The 22-by-26-foot theater is located in the basement, next to a recreation room and a video arcade. It also sits below the living room. Though it was unlikely that noise would be a problem, Grant took no chances in the high-end project. He insulated the walls and the ceiling with acoustical batts, and specified a 1/2-inch soundboard in the ceiling before the drywall was applied. “What I did was create an envelope around the room so that even if there was noise, it would not interfere with the space,” he says.

The homeowners discovered the Art Deco front-row seats in the recesses of a resale shop and took the design cue for the rest of the room from their style. Intended only as a decorative element, the seats are too close to the screen for an adult to watch a movie comfortably. However, they turned out to be just perfect for children.

“These types of spaces are fun,” says Grant. “You get to work with theatrical motif and with different decorative elements. It's a kind of fantasy—as the movies are.”—*n.f.m.*

this





architect:

Allan J. Grant and Associates, Chicago

contractor:

Harold O. Schulz, Evanston, Ill.

audio/video consultant:

Mills Custom Audio Video, Buffalo Grove, Ill.

project size:

572 square feet

cost per square foot:

Withheld

picture *this* out of *sight*

New York architects Mark Ferguson, AIA, and Don Rattner weren't about to let high-tech audiovisual equipment steal the show in this grandly detailed Connecticut family room. "When you're dealing with a traditionally designed home, you generally don't want the audiovisuals to be seen," says Rattner. "This project almost begs to be approached in that way, because the equipment is of an entirely different nature from the furnishings."

So, with the help of New York AV consultant Jack Borenstein, they designed an elaborate system of moving parts to disguise the modern intrusions. A video projector spends most of its time embedded behind the 14-foot-high, beaded-oak ceiling. At the touch of a remote-control keypad, the projector lowers on a mechanized, built-in platform. Likewise, a 5-foot-wide screen tucks up into the crown molding folds down through a slot above the fireplace, powered by hinging mechanisms within the molding's brackets. The speakers that relay the room's surround sound are barely noticeable, as they're tinted to match the ash-blond wood of the sloped ceiling sections that hold them. What makes Ferguson and Rattner's solution different from other "seamless integrations," then, is that it really *is* seamless. By making the room's ornate moldings work with the AV equipment, not against it, they eliminated the need to compromise either aesthetics or technological prowess.

The architects were equally careful in choosing the location of key components. They placed the screen above the fireplace, so that the two elements wouldn't compete for attention. "The fireplace is the focal point of the space, so naturally the furniture arrangement responds to that," says Rattner. "It made sense to put the screen above it so that the room's occupants can enjoy the fireplace and a movie or television at the same time." A tower containing master audio/video controls for the entire house is centrally located just off the house's main hallway, behind a mahogany panel.

Ferguson and Rattner also designed lighting controls and a whole-house sound system for the project. "The fact this was a new house, not a retrofit job, helped," Rattner points out. "We designed the AV system as we were designing the rest of the house, so we had the advantage of knowing the dimensions of the equipment we'd be using." But the process was a learning experience. "We had done components of stuff like this before," he says. "But never to this extent."—*m.d.*



architect:

Ferguson, Shamamian & Rattner, New York

contractor:

MJM Construction, Peekskill, N.Y.

audio/video consultant:

Ultimate Sound, Long Island City, N.Y.

interior designer:

Bunny Williams, New York

project size:

600 square feet

cost per square foot:

Withheld



Photos: Phillip H. Ennis Photography

picture *this*



Photos: Eric Figge Productions

catch the *wave*

Electronics aficionados. That's what architect James Hann, AIA, calls the clients for this high-wattage Palm Desert, Calif., residence. "The theater kept getting bigger each time we revised the plans—that was how the owners wanted it," he recalls. "They were very involved in the room's design." So were a lot of other people. When Hann drew up the initial plans for the house, he included a space for the theater. He then turned over the job of designing the room and selecting equipment to AudioVisions, an AV consultant based in Lake Forest, Calif. AudioVisions enlisted the help of highly regarded acoustic designer Keith Yates, and this serene, streamlined home theater was born.

The room's undulating ceiling is part of Yates' strategy to deliver the most perfect sound quality possible. Fortunately, it happens to echo the curved walls throughout the rest of the 5,000-square-foot house. It also provides an ideal hiding place for the video projector, which is nestled between the ceiling's two dips. But while the theater's curves and subdued colors link it visually to the other rooms in the house, it's clearly meant to be its own distinct realm. Neither the mahogany on the ceiling and cabinets nor the black granite of the countertop appears elsewhere in the home. And the absence of windows, which prevents natural light from interfering with picture quality, contributes a sense of detachment from the rest of the house.

Though the technology incorporated into the theater is complex and cutting-edge, little of it is readily visible. Cloth panels cover the speakers that flank the screen and the sub-woofer underneath it. "There's also a speaker behind the screen, which has tiny perforated holes in it so that dialogue

coming out of the speaker seems to travel right out of movie characters' mouths," says Paul Self of AudioVisions. "Just like at a commercial movie theater." Cabinets conceal all of the room's AV controls and equipment, including a DVD player, a VCR, and a turntable.

Flexibility was another key factor in the room's design. Thanks to a customized masking system, it's possible to watch television without the black lines that usually bookend a movie screen. "When you want to watch TV, two motorized masks will come down and transform the screen into a square," explains Self. The owners wanted to be able to receive HDTV (high-definition television) when it becomes available, so the projector is HDTV-compatible.

With its cast of thousands—architect, builder, theater designer, acoustic consultant, and clients—the creation of this theater could have become a serious melee. It didn't. "It was great to have Keith Yates involved, because he really expanded the scope of what we were able to do," says Self.

"It was just a very enjoyable project to work on," Hann concurs. "The client had a great sense of humor."—*m.d.*



architect:
James Hann AIA Design, Scottsdale, Ariz.
contractor:
Fedderly Co., Palm Desert, Calif.
audio/video consultant:
AudioVisions, Lake Forest, Calif.
acoustic designer:
Keith Yates Design Group, Auburn, Calif.
project size:
800 square feet
cost per square foot:
\$85

picture *this*



architect:

The Evans Group, Orlando, Fla.

contractor:

Borelli Construction, Naples, Fla.

audio/video consultant:

Designer Audio, Naples

project size:

288 square feet

cost per square foot:

Withheld

Laurence Taylor

sound decisions

The owners of this Naples, Fla., custom theater will tell you that change is a good thing. Take this room, for example. Originally, plans had called for a dual-purpose family and media area. The project's audiovisual consultants, however, suggested the space would be more dynamic as a single-function home theater. The clients adjusted their plans accordingly—with dramatic results.

But the new scheme brought challenges. Located on the second floor of a 7,800-square-foot Tuscan-style home, the theater sits next to the upstairs bedrooms and above the family room. Noise control was a major concern, so designer Jim LaPiana devised an acoustical system that would compensate for the configuration. "We had to do as much isolation as possible in the drywall upstairs and downstairs to make sure noise was not an issue," says LaPiana, director of design at The Evans Group in Orlando, Fla. So, he stuffed the theater's walls with regular fiberglass

batt insulation, which has sound insulation qualities. And, he spec'd open trusses in its floor rather than I-joists—which, he says, would have transferred sound between rooms. A resilient channel—a plastic membrane mounted perpendicular to the trusses—muffles noise further by dispersing it evenly.

The 16-by-18-foot room's decor discreetly incorporates other noise-control tricks. The three-dimensional banding around the ceiling absorbs sound. Ultra-suede-wrapped acoustical panels provide a rich topping for the ceiling and walls, while standard wall-to-wall carpeting covers the floor. LaPiana characterizes the theater as "a modern interpretation of Art Deco style." With its 7-foot movie screen and rows of built-in seats—not to mention a lobby and popcorn area—the space feels just like a real movie theater. Except it's more comfortable—and, when there's no movie playing, it's the quietest room in the house.—*n.f.m.*

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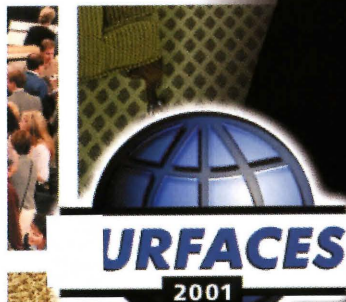
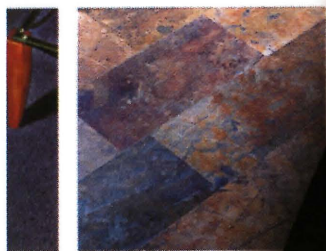
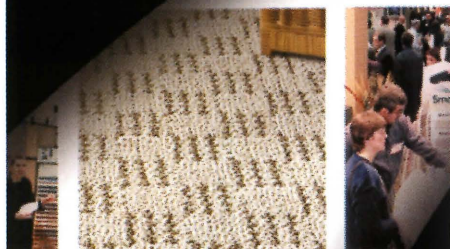
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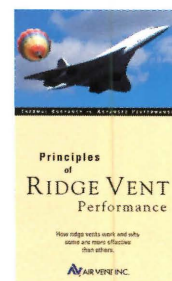
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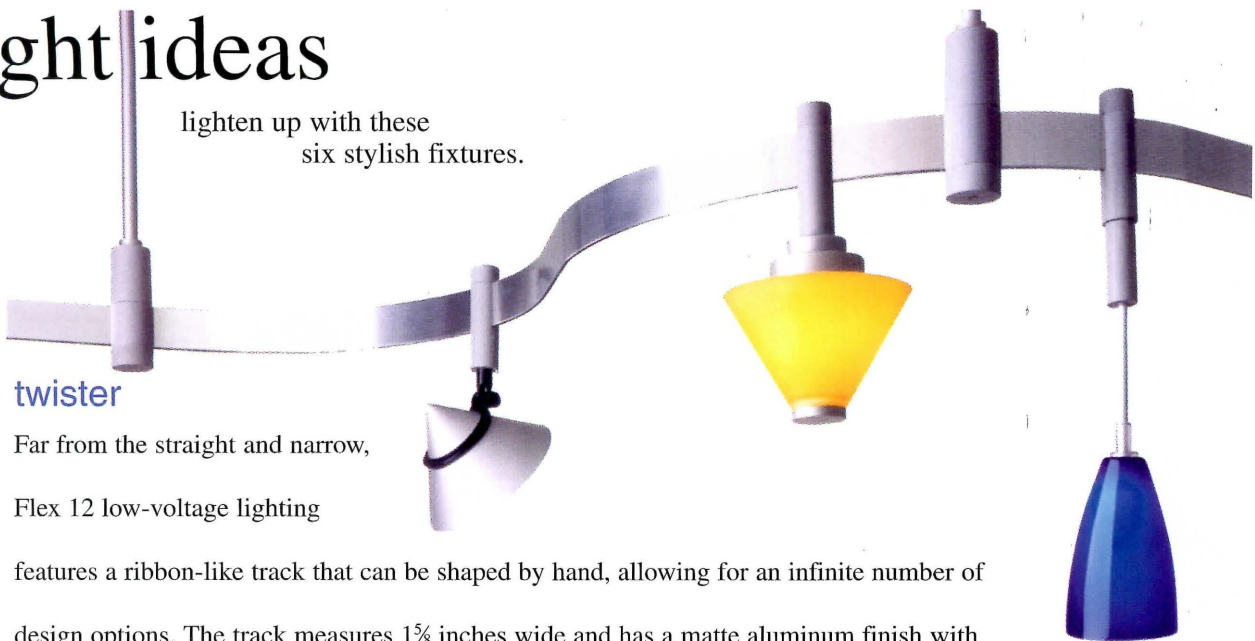
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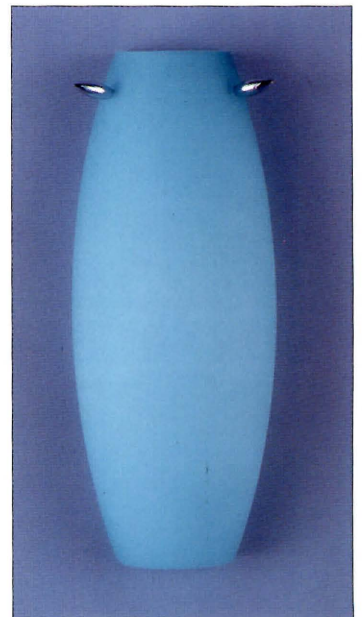


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continued on page 66



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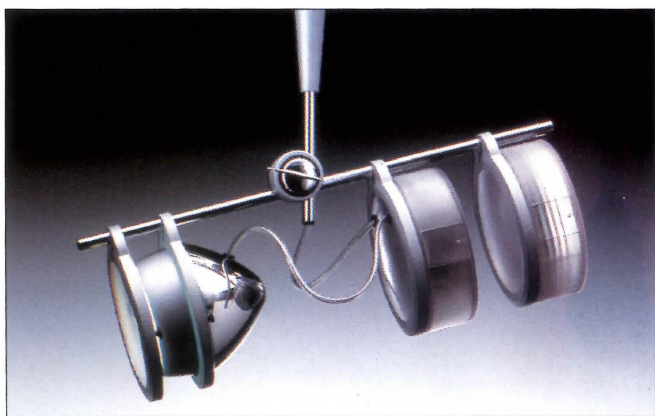
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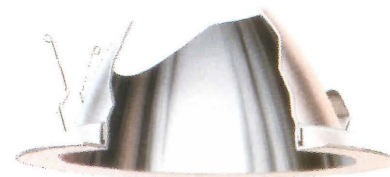


prizewinner

The Smarthead ceiling-suspended and track lighting system features an unusual integration of spotlights and projector lights with an extensive array of light sources and optical accessories. The fixture was a favorite among designers at this year's LightFair International trade show: It won the Best of Category award for Most Innovative Product. Targetti-Tivoli, 714.957.6101; www.targetti.com.

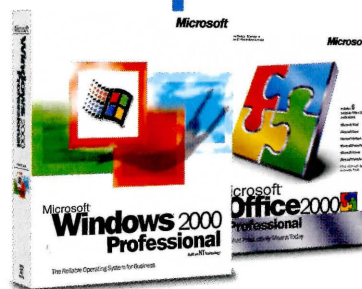
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—katy tomasulo

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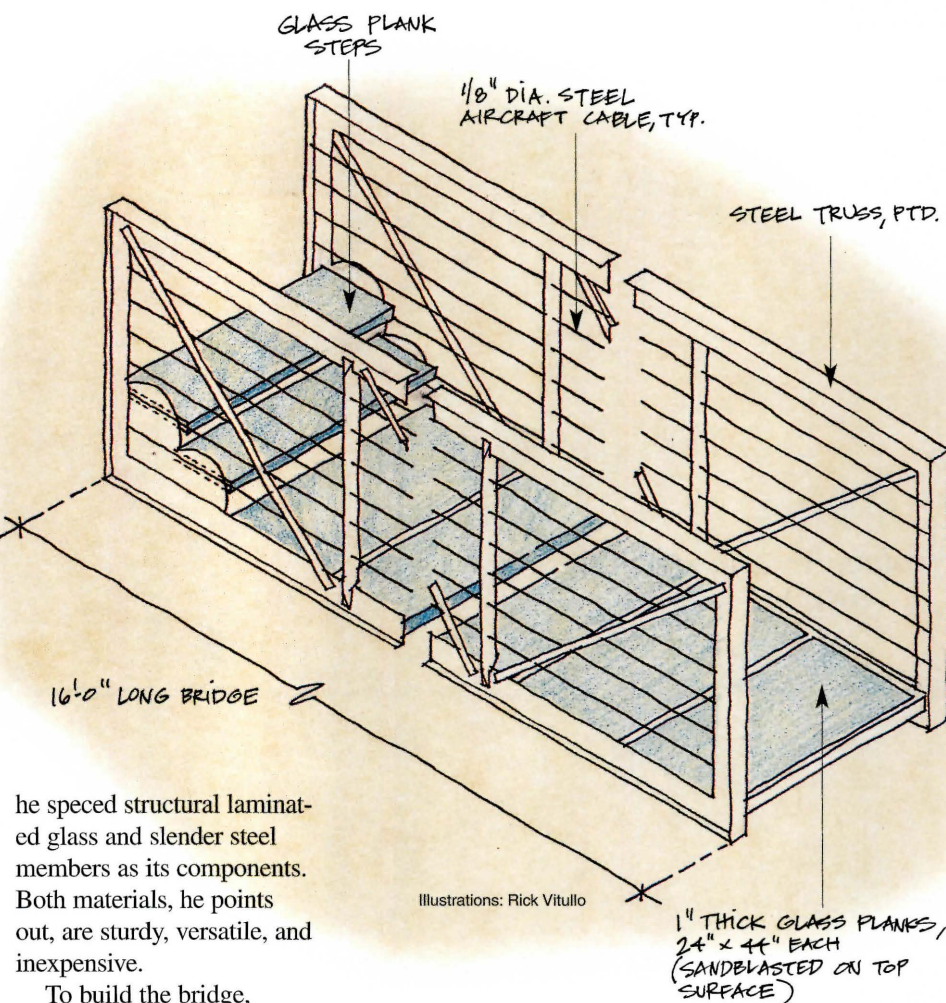
a transparent interior bridge links a home's two wings while maximizing natural light.

by rick vitullo, aia

When Kirk Gastinger, FAIA, of Gastinger

Walker Harden Architects in Kansas City, Mo., designed a home for himself and his wife, he took full advantage of the clients' absolute confidence in his abilities. His plan for a compact two-story home included unique architectural details that may well have disconcerted more conventional homeowners. In this case, however, inspiration blossomed freely, with such felicitous results as this ethereal glass-bottomed interior bridge.

The Kansas City house consists of three major parts: two private wings flanking a stunning double-volume living/dining area bathed in light from a window wall. "We wanted a theatrical but not too expensive feature in this public space, since the stairway—the usual place for a house's dramatic touch—is hidden behind a wall at the other end of the room," Gastinger says. Hence, he conceived an elegant second-story "skywalk," which traverses the house's public core, connecting the bedroom wings. So that the 4-foot-wide bridge would not block light from the window wall,



he speced structural laminated glass and slender steel members as its components. Both materials, he points out, are sturdy, versatile, and inexpensive.

To build the bridge, Gastinger concentrated first on its support system. He consulted with structural engineer Cheri Leigh, PE, to design the steel framework, which essentially consists of two parallel bottom-bearing trusses. He and Leigh planned the patterning of the stock steel members to ensure both a pleasing aesthetic and a sound structure.

Once the framework was assembled, Gastinger set

continued on page 72

At one end of the bridge, two glass-plank steps accommodate a 12-inch difference in elevation between the two second-floor wings. Their detailing resembles that of the rest of the bridge floor.

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the floor in place. This involved spanning the space between the trusses with 1-inch-thick glass planks, sandblasted for modesty. The 24-by-44-inch structural laminated planks had arrived from the supplier individually pre-mortared into lightweight steel frames, a nearly invisible detail that protected the glass edges during shipping and installation. As each plank was positioned—sandblasted side up, for a nonslip surface—its frame was welded to the trusses at either end.

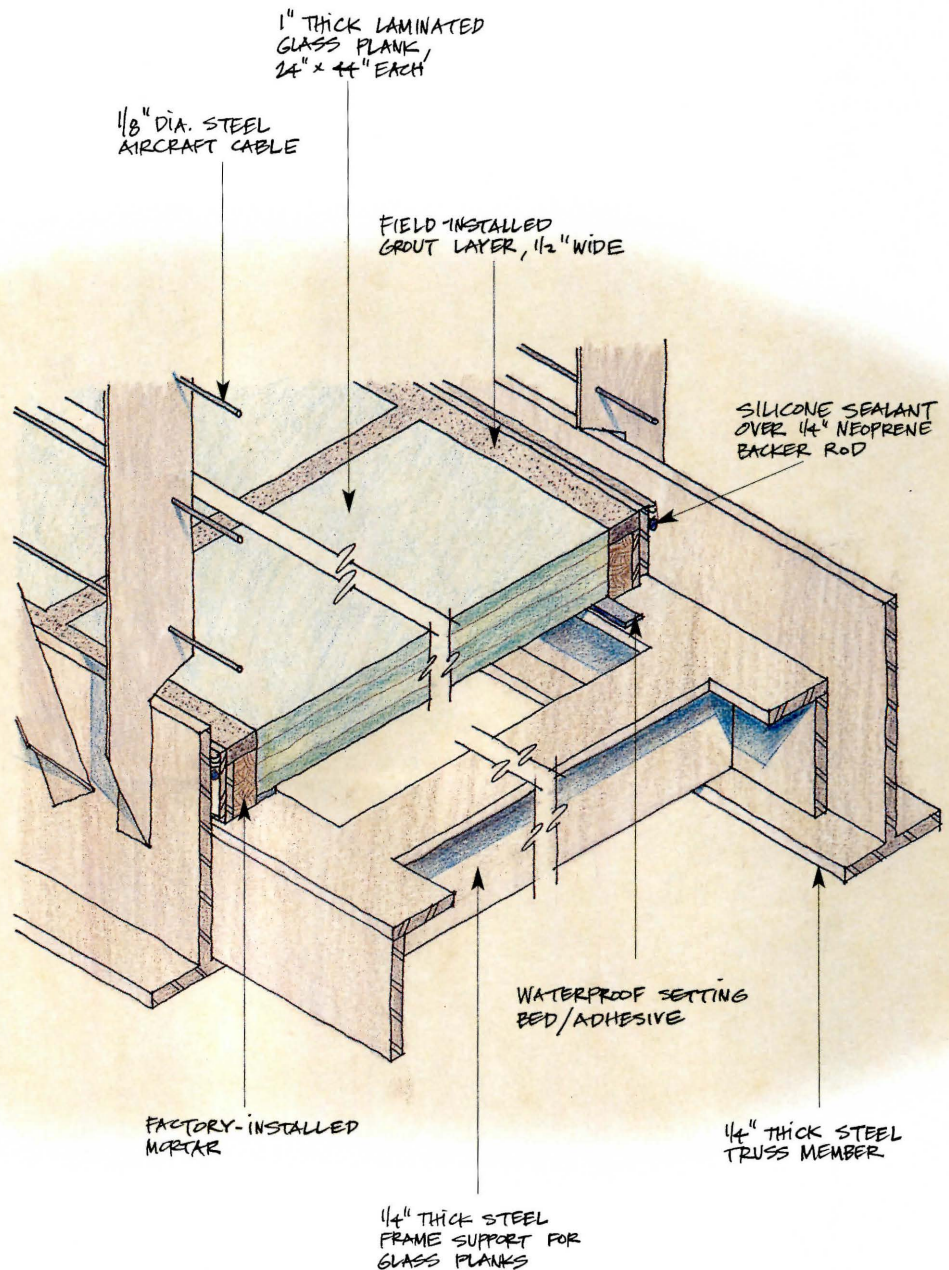
For the railing, Gastinger opted for a simple triangular pattern—also made of steel members—fortified with horizontal steel aircraft cables set 4 inches apart, as required by code.

Client feedback, according to the architect, has been remarkably positive. **ra**

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

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Decorative lighting is not a new concept. Think back to all those Tiffany lamps from years ago. But once again, its popularity is soaring. Manufacturers like **Sea Gull Lighting** are creating product lines rich in style and design. For example, the Saranac Lake line is inspired by the natural twists and curves of a vine with rustic charms and sophisticated curves.

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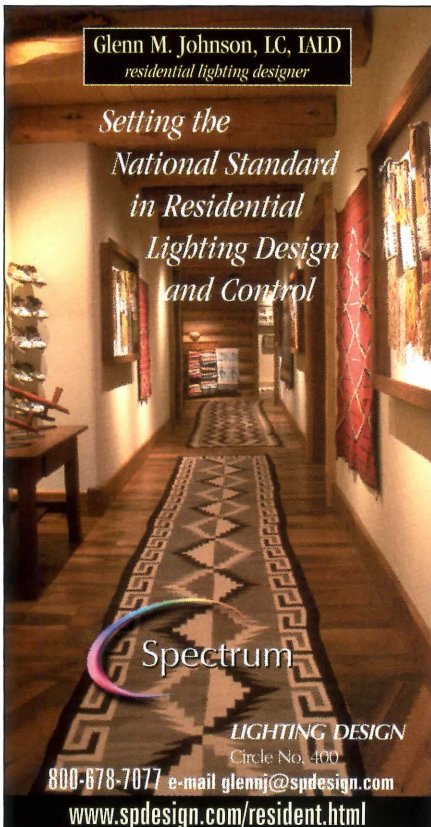
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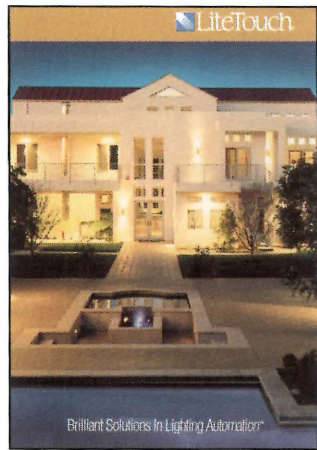
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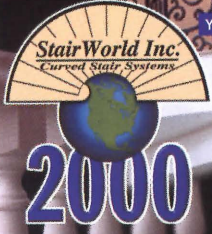
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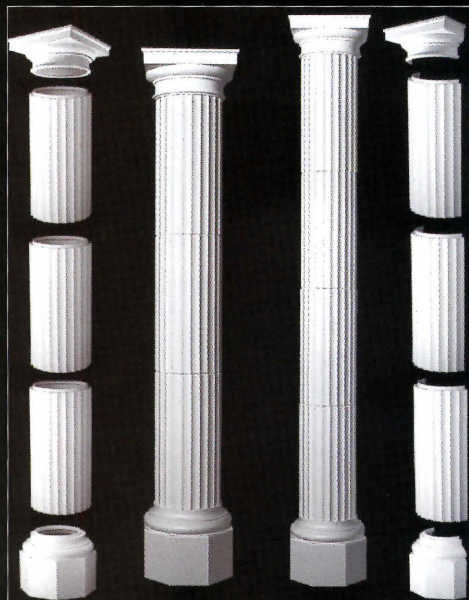
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(signed) S. Claire Conroy, Editor

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welcome home

what grandma's house taught michaela mahady about shelter.

In the late 1930s my grandmother built a house on a hillside meadow overlooking the Alpine village of Abtenau, Austria. Abtenau is a collection of stucco buildings gathered around a central *markplatz* (square), crowned by the spire of a small medieval church, where my parents were married in 1949.

Throughout my childhood and adult life I visited this house, which my grandmother ran as a “pension,” a small bed-and-breakfast. Each time I

arrived, a note, graced with an evergreen sprig, was affixed to the tall, heavy wooden door. In my grandmother's elegant, rather spidery script was written “*Herzlich Willkommen*”: a heartfelt welcome.

A similar message seemed to emanate from the house itself, which was a simple cubic form capped by a deep sheltering roof. The house was divided into four rooms on each level. In the kitchen and living room, substantial shutters opened to southern light, and revealed a view of carefully tended gardens below the house and of the village, church, and mountain valley beyond. The bedrooms on the second floor opened onto a com-



Courtesy Michaela Mahady

mon balcony that ran the length of the house. It was a perfect play spot, sunny and private, screened from view by the blossoms (usually red) spilling from boxes at the balcony railing.

The simple comfort and integrity of my grandmother's house, and particularly its strong, reassuring, inviting message of welcome, offers lessons for architects. If houses could speak, the best of them would say, “Come in. Be Safe. Be warm. Be alive. Welcome.” To design such houses is an exercise of the pencil and of the heart. **ra**

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