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Editorial and Advertising Offices:
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too many choices

it's your job to guide clients through their fear of the wrong decision.

by s. claire conroy

What was so good about the good old days? Maybe it was the simplicity that comes of having limited choices. You could buy a Ford Model T in just one color: black. Easy. Simple. Today we're overwhelmed by choices. We can have it our way, but we have to figure out what that means. And for every choice we make, there's the possibility of regret over what we did not choose.

I live in a converted garage, more politely known as a "carriage house" (even though carriages were long gone when it was built in the 1940s.) I live there because I can't decide what style of house or even type of housing I really want. I'd like a Modern house, a Craftsman bungalow, and an urban loft. I don't want to confine myself to any one choice. And, please, don't even get me started on what materials and products should go into those dwellings.

I bought a new car several months ago, but now I'm regretting all the options I didn't choose and all the other types of vehicles I didn't select. Should I have gotten the "sport package"? Why didn't I go ahead and buy the convertible? The SUV? I have the luxury of choice and the curse of too many choices. So do you and so do your clients.

simplify, simplify

Limiting, categorizing, and mass producing choices is what luxury production builders do best. They make home buyers feel as if they can have it their way, but they orchestrate it carefully so buyers aren't staggered by the process. In the end, many of those buyers think they've bought a "custom home." Certainly, this misguided notion makes us cringe. They do not have a custom home just because they picked the carpet and decided how to finish off the bonus room.

But that misperception means significant competition for your firm. If your potential high-end clients think they can have a custom home just because they picked the carpet and decided how to finish off the bonus room. But that misperception means significant competition for your firm. If your potential high-end clients think they can have a custom home just because they picked the carpet and decided how to finish off the bonus room.

You already have a market among design-savvy custom-home clients, but they are a limited breed. They're gutsy, have loads of imagination, and are not intimidated by a blank sheet of possibilities. Your biggest opportunity for expanding your market is among wealthy buyers of luxury production homes. These are the people who can afford your services, but they are led down the path of least resistance by production builders. By streamlining the intimidating number of choices they face, you can make custom design a much less fearsome prospect.

I'm not suggesting that you hand your clients a menu of options and call it a day. Instead, I want you to put on your empathy hat, honor their fear, get past your own passion for the blank sheet of paper, and give them a stronger foundation for imagination.

There is such a thing as too many choices, and it can paralyze even the most opinionated potential clients. Help them and you help yourself.

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: econroy@hanley-wood.com.
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flatlanders

read with great interest the “Masters of the Suburbs” cover story in your January/February issue (page 46).

I have been close to that story from the beginning, first as staff architect with Laguna Niguel Corp. in the development of Laguna Niguel, the first large planned community in Orange County, from 1960 to 1970, and later as a practicing architect designing and building mostly custom residential work. (During one slow period in the early ’80s I worked with my late dear friend Kermit Darius, designing an award-winning project for the Irvine Company, Vista Filare.)

And, in recent years, I was involved as a City of San Clemente planning commissioner in the approval of projects in southern Orange County—the last frontier in the approaching conclusion of the story.

Overall, I would say that it has been a remarkable story that, as your article points out, has resulted in some world-class residential development—but also, in my estimation, some sad failures.

Foremost, I think, has been the failure of most of the people involved to respect the natural topography of the land. The home builders who came to Orange County were flatland builders from other parts and the initial development was in the easily developable flat areas of the county. When they got to the beautiful undulating terrain, all they could think of was how to flatten it, at great expense, so they could go to the architects and have them design the usual four floor plans with three elevations each—which the architects dutifully did, without questions.

And they got better and better at it, but it was all clever floor plans and stylish elevations, which is fine for isolated buildings, but not when the canvas is hundreds of acres of rolling hills with extremely varied topography. Integration of site and structure, essential to good architecture, is a foreign concept to these “masters of the suburbs” and to their masters, the home builders. Of the other players, the developers are almost clueless in this regard because they are mostly concerned with getting the land entitled and on the market to home builders. Cities and the county are only concerned with adherence to grading ordinances.

Even the Irvine Company, in its development of the coast, is at this time mass grading some of the most beautiful hills along the Pacific Ocean to create flat pads for builders of multimillion-dollar homes. The hillside towns of the Tuscan region of Italy were the purported model for that development, but only the colors and some architectural details made the journey. The soul of the hillside town—the integration of site and structure—remains back in Tuscany.

So the innovations of land planning by the “masters of the suburbs” have been largely directed toward increasing yield of dwelling units per acre on flatland or on flat pads carved out of mass graded hillsides laid out by civil engineers.

The other great failure—which your story points out—is the building of mostly detached single-family houses. This has made Orange County one of the least affordable housing markets in the nation and, when it comes to types of housing, one of the least diversified. That, in turn, translates into a diminished concept of community. Gated enclaves, too, diminish the idea of community.

How responsible are the “masters of the suburbs” for these failures?

Well, at least as responsible as they are for the impressive successes, but maybe even more so because as architects they should understand better than the rest of the players that design decisions continued on page 18
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have ethical consequences.

The "masters of the suburbs" are bucking formidable forces, not the least of which are imperious rearview-mirror-vision patrons, but had they been more effective advocates of their principles, they might have been able to persuade their clients that ethics, like aesthetics, has economic benefits.

Ricardo A. Nicol, AIA, Architect Dana Point, Calif.

Florida revival

Thank you for your January/February issue, "Masters of the Suburbs." Having started my first 10 years in the "traditional" realm of architecture, interning in master planning for Battery Park City in New York City, and then working on university buildings at Cesar Pelli & Associates, I have happily discovered the niche rarely thought praiseworthy in my education: the suburbs. We're a firm in Boca Raton, Fla., dealing with issues similar to those facing our California contemporaries.

We strive regularly to educate our client base about the advantages of "traditional neighborhood design." Fortunately, some of our clients are realizing that this approach is advantageous socioeconomically and in terms of their bottom line.

One of our projects mixes many of the TND elements all into one small urban complex—Lighthouse Point Marina, a mixed-used project on what had been a "tired" 1960s marina facility in Lighthouse Point, Fla. This project includes approximately 30 town houses, common facilities, and retail, office, marina, and restaurant spaces. It is nearly completed and fully occupied.

The commercial success of the project is evidence that the South Florida community is yearning for this. We've been able to place a town center into what had been a mediocre suburban neighborhood.

Benjamin Schreier, AIA
Affiniti Architects
Boca Raton, Fla.

A beholder's eye

I wanted to write and say how much I liked the early issues of residential architect. However, I have been very disappointed with two recent issues—the one on home theaters (November/December) and January/February's on suburban architects.

While I appreciate the intent of both issues, the quality of the work shown was not very impressive, especially in the "Masters of the Suburbs" article. While the article does discuss the issues that these kinds of developments involve, the work shown in the article does not set itself apart from the typical development work that I see everywhere. I saw no new or innovative solutions to the problem of what these developments look like.

It was also interesting to me that in that same issue there was an excellent article on selling stock plans that mentioned Sarah Susanka quite often ("Playing the Stock-Plans Market," page 32). It seems a shame that some of her ideas weren't addressed as a counterpoint to what the supposed "masters" are creating.

The home-theater issue was ... well, it was interesting in that it brought out a growing niche that architects need to become more knowledgeable about. But again, the product was uninspiring. That may be because there is only so much you can do with home theaters, but it would have been more useful to have shown some approaches that weren't of the safe, somewhat traditional variety.

Douglas O. McClure Jr.
James D'Auria Associates
New York

A taxing matter

I just finished reading the editorial in the March issue ("The Not So Ugly House," page 13). And while I agree completely with the concept of quality of space over quantity of space, I believe that the small (big?) matter of taxes is also at play in some homeowners' decision to move to "McMansions."

As people's incomes rise and their mortgage interest paid decreases each year, the amount of taxable income obviously rises. Dual-income couples and empty nesters have less and less deductible interest each year. And since larger homes tend to appreciate faster than smaller homes, at some point it makes sense financially to buy something larger.

Builders won't build small and homeowners won't live small until there is a financial incentive for them to do so.

Doug Fullick, AIA
A. Epstein & Sons International
Chicago

Got something to say? We'd like to hear from you. E-mail editor S. Claire Conroy at cconroy@hanley-wood.com, or write to her at residential architect, One Thomas Circle, N.W., Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20005.
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Circle no. 99
it takes a village

david Salmela, AIA, considers himself a modernist whose work is a blend of “equally important references to the past.” So it’s fitting that the Duluth, Minn., architect is designing the homes in Jackson Meadow, a progressive suburb of Marine on St. Croix, the second oldest settlement in Minnesota.

Located 22 miles from downtown St. Paul, the Jackson Meadow master plan includes 64 single-family homes clustered on less than 30 percent of its 145-acre site. “The key words for us were preservation and community/neighborhood,” says developer Harold Teasdale. “High points with great views were protected as community assets. And the type of architecture we have is an outgrowth of how to create the community we wanted.”

The houses are placed close enough that people interact by accident on a daily basis. And easing traditional suburban setbacks allows for outbuildings. Consequently, the buildings are tidier and smaller within each lot, creating a sense of space between the structures that evokes a close-knit farming village.

Instead of suburban streets, each neighborhood block shares a walkway located between the fronts of houses. Roads that do exist are narrow, like the ones in the original part of Marine on St. Croix. “We rewrote the rules for this project,” Teasdale says. “It was a tedious two-year process to dismantle all that stuff.”

The plain, geometric houses with steep roofs are based on the proportions of historical colonial and Scandinavian architecture found in the old town. Design guidelines stipulate all-white exteriors; public buildings are black. Salmela’s pattern book also calls for classic metal roofs with a 12:12 pitch, cedar...
cladding, and a maximum width of 24 feet for all structures.

“Our rules are very different from those of the New Urbanists,” notes Salmela, who will design every house. “We are not trying to control style, but scale and form. The houses are simple and colors show a conservative consistency, so the differences between the structures are more noticeable.”—cheryl weber

home makers

In 1989, photographer Margaret Morton discovered an encampment of makeshift structures built by homeless people in Tompkins Park, near her residence in Manhattan. What might have struck some as a scene of desolation impressed Morton as an exhibition of remarkable ingenuity. Inspired, she spent the next decade photographing these forgotten New Yorkers and their homes. The resulting images were published last fall by Aperture in Fragile Dwelling, Morton’s third book.

“At first I called this project ‘the architecture of despair,’” Morton explained recently, “but I soon realized that it was my despair I was feeling. The people themselves had incredible strength and resiliency, and by building their own homes they felt they were empowering themselves and moving towards getting back on their feet.”

Morton says she was especially struck by people’s need for a truly personal space. “The tiny places that these people designed and built meant much more to them than just shelter,” she says. “I think this really hit me in Bushville [in lower Manhattan], where they re-created the rural architecture of Puerto Rico and worked hard to incorporate marquesinas [porches], elaborate doors, and gardens—things that fulfilled the need for a sense of home and community.”

When asked what message her book might contain for architects, Morton emphasized the importance of designing affordable housing with character. “The fact that the builders of these homes made gardens and ornamentation and collected things really breaks down barriers,” she says. “People look at my photographs and realize that we aren’t all so different from each other after all.”—shelley d. hutchins
calendar

**good design 2001**

Submission deadline: July 30

The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design invites entries of any product designed from 2000 to the present, including furniture, housewares, lighting fixtures, appliances, textiles, and more. All submitted products must have been produced by a manufacturer or be scheduled for manufacturing. Shown: One of last year’s winners, the Faraone teapot by Lella and Massimo Vignelli. Questions? Call 847.895.3950 or visit www.chi-athenaeum.org.

**rooms with a view: landscape and wallpaper**

Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York
April 24–October 14

Intricately patterned wallpaper and landscape painting became extraordinarily popular elements of interior design in the 19th century. This exhibition explores the relationship between the two art forms and the social significance of their sudden rise in popularity. Shown below: Landscape frieze, U.S., circa 1900. For museum hours, please call 212.849.8400.

**light screens: the leaded glass of frank lloyd wright**

American Craft Museum, New York
May 10–September 2

Frank Lloyd Wright often complained that he had to “cut holes” in his “beautiful buildings,” so he transformed the prosaic window into a defining architectural element. Wright’s exploration of light and color in patterned windows is documented in this exhibition, which includes a number of his most important windows, along with prints and original photographs. Shown: Prototype window from the Susan Lawrence Dana House in Springfield, Ill. (1902–4). Call 212.956.3535 for additional information.

**lightfair international**

Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas
May 29–June 1

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Oakland, Calif., Mayor Jerry Brown wants to see 10,000 new housing units in his city by the bay. Architecture International’s 270-unit luxury apartment complex takes a good bite out that goal. The Essex at Lake Merritt, developed by Essex Property Trust, will occupy a now-vacant lot at Lakeside Drive and 17th Street in the Gold Coast section, an area rich in architectural history.

The Essex will consist of two structures: a nine-story low-rise building that maintains the residential scale of 17th Street, and a 20-story bow-shaped tower overlooking the lake. The tower’s cast-stone base and colonnade help it mediate the neighborhood’s small-scale residential buildings and historic structures and its smorgasbord of styles, including Tudor, Art Deco, and Modern.

Sherry Caplan, AIA, a principal of the Mill Valley, Calif.-based firm, says the project’s proximity to the city’s financial district and transit system will supply residents with all the “amenities” of urban living. Residents will also enjoy access to more exclusive luxuries like a fitness center, private pool, and clubhouse.

For the interiors, the architects designed with an eye to exploiting panoramic vistas. “Because the views are so spectacular, we wanted direct sight lines to the exterior,” says principal William J. Higgins, AIA. The units’ open plans, sliding glass doors, and balconies with glass railings eliminate impediments to those views. Completion of the Essex is scheduled for March 2002.—nigel f. maynard
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by duo dickinson

About six years ago, I was contacted by Nancy and Mike Johnston, who faced a classic dilemma: how to maximize their “bang for the buck” on a site with mixed blessings.

They lived in a home in Niantic, Conn., that they had inherited and that had two significant amenities and one large drawback. The amenities were plain to see: The house faced a community green (the site was originally a “spiritualistic compound” formed almost 100 years ago) and its back side had a wonderful panoramic view through mature maple trees of the Niantic River. The one clear downside was the site’s microscopic size—approximately ⅛ acre.

It has now become a classic paradigm of residential construction on coastal/water-feature sites that nearly all of the homes that pre-date zoning are “pre-existing/nonconforming.” In other words, what is in place now could not have been built new.

Price controls

Beyond these positive and challenging aspects, the project was fraught with financial concerns for the Johnston—-as such projects so often are for two-income families seeking to control their domestic environment. Essentially, the couple had a budget of approximately $160,000 in 1995. The house that could conceptually be built on this site was somewhere between 1,500 square feet and 2,000 square feet, given the absolute limitation of the home to the pre-existing footprint. At that time (absent our present glut of construction), this was bordering on possible.

As the project progressed with sporadic bursts of design activity, regulatory approvals, bidding, and so on, we entered into a three-and-a-half-year process of pre-construction design and permitting and, of course, the concomitant unavoidable increase in construction.

continued on page 32
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tion cost. Throughout all the ups and downs of the dollars and the building officials' evolving criteria, the owners were steadfast in their determination that they would build this house. We ended up with a $200,000 price tag on an 1,800-square-foot building that had two-and-a-half bedrooms and one-and-three-quarters baths.

What made containing the budgetary creep even more challenging (and inspirational for me as the architect) was the homeowners' dedication to providing for high-quality, high-durability, aesthetically genuine components—wood siding (not vinyl), wood flooring (not carpet), a wood-burning fireplace, and expressive window-scaping with good quality windows (in this case, Andersen).

within limits
The final product exemplifies an invigorated design sensibility expressed within extraordinary limits. The limits were not just financial, but also dimensional and sequential—we had to maintain a vestigial portion of the original house as we went through construction on this tiny lot. Despite these restrictions, for about $110 per square foot (including a full basement and the amenities listed above), we were able to create something that is a beacon of hope for average citizens—who thought they "just couldn't afford" a custom home.

Knowing the limits that were present, I worked on an hourly basis, utilizing some of my lowest-billing dollar-per-hour employees and engineer Ed Stanley of Guilford, Conn., to keep our fees down to about 5 percent of the construction cost. We did very limited site inspections, no shop drawings, very basic detailing, and a great deal of specification writing and over-the-phone/e-mail consultation.

This project represents one area where the Internet has truly helped our office. For the hot and heavy period of construction (lasting about four or five months during foundation, framing, and mechanical roughing), I received weekly or sometimes daily e-mails from my clients of images from the site and queries as to the appropriateness or potentialities present in the built product.

The project was blessed with builders, Sutherland continued on page 33

"the abundance of limits was overcome by the dedication of all parties concerned to building well on a budget."

thrifty design tips
1. Rectilinear always saves over polygonal or curvilinear.
2. Stock/standard materials are always easier to price and obtain, and minimize mistakes and delays.
3. A house that can shrink to fit a client always saves money.
4. Symmetrical gable framing is always cheaper than ridge beams, multiple pitch trusses, and the like.
5. Flat stock trim is very forgiving.
6. The higher up you get, the cheaper materials you can use. (We used T1-11 siding for the chimney mass, simple asphalt shingling for the roof.)
7. Minimize valleys and hips. Not only do they involve extra framing, they involve flashing, shingle lapping/weaving, and so on.
8. Minimize bearing conditions; one central bearing condition or one-way framing is always cheaper and easier than more.
9. Simple straight-run stairs are always cheaper, and closed-stringer stairs are cheaper than open.
10. Simple right-angle eave fascias minimize trim detailing freak-outs.
11. Try to avoid gutters. Not only do they add cost, they also create a lot of maintenance. With careful planning, the roofscaping can usually direct water away from where people enter and groundwater can most often be collected by at-surface/below-surface water-collection/detention systems.
12. Stack "wet" spaces over first-floor spaces that have plumbing. (But don't worry too much about having the kitchen or laundry be off on their own on the first floor, as that involves a relatively minor additional cost compared with having the vent stacks double up.)
13. Put mechanical equipment in a simple, rational place for easy venting and distribution, especially if you have a ducted heating system.—d.d.
and Krause of East Lyme, Conn., who have a wealth of common sense and who exhibited hard-edged integrity and commitment in a situation with little or no budgetary leeway.

The reason that residential architecture is sustaining to those who devote their lives to designing and building homes is that no two scenarios are ever alike and, in this case, the abundance of limits was overcome by the dedication of all parties concerned to building well on a budget. \( \text{Ra} \)

Duo Dickinson is an architect in Madison, Conn., and the author of several books on residential design.

cheap beauty tricks

1. Inexpensive oak flooring, although more expensive than vinyl or carpet, is more durable and conveys a sense of quality unmatched by any other “cheap” material.

2. Nine-foot or 10-foot ceilings in the common areas, when supplemented by enough large-scale windowscaping, can make spaces seem far larger in volume than they actually are in plan.

3. Creating front-to-back and side-to-side cross-referencing axes (front door to back door, kitchen or dining to fireplace, master bedroom to big-view windows) allows visual connection to defeat the sense of being small.

4. A stock prefab fireplace with a straight-run flue transforms the ambience of a house for relatively little cost.

5. Pattern windows to make them into large-scale elements via the use of absolutely consistent trim.

6. Custom elements can make a huge difference in a simple context, such as the granite countertop seen in this project’s kitchen (a kitchen that is built from stock parts), or the customized eave detailing up around the second-floor walkout.

7. “Real” materials always read better than synthetic ones. In this house, painted wood trim and siding have a crisper look than their synthetic counterparts.—\( \text{D.D.} \)
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by cheryl weber

hat magic ingredient turns an architect into a success? The answer is talent, certainly, but also the ability to keep up with the ever-evolving world of products and materials, and to use familiar ones inventively. Whether it's a new kind of cast glass, a lightweight but durable wall panel, or a window whose aesthetics matches its energy performance, the pursuit of an architectural palette continues apace. And attaining a firsthand knowledge of those things is a visceral process as well as an intellectual one. As Manhattan architect Deborah Berke, AIA, puts it, "You can't be particularly creative with a material until you touch it, smell it, and knock on it with your knuckles."

Architects tune into the material world wherever they find it—in design magazines, on the Internet, in catalogs, through subcontractors, or while driving by a local construction site. "We benefit enormously from being in New York and being connected to the art world, in terms of our clients, going to art museums, and my teaching at Yale," Berke says. Los Angeles architect Brian Murphy, AIA, BAM Construction and Design, finds information and inspiration on the road. "I'm a materials junkie," he says. "As I rattle around town I'm engaged in how people are building things, be it a skateboard ramp or a train trestle."

supplier demand

When it comes to tracking mainstream products and materials for the residential market, of course, most architects go to the source for regular infusions of information. Because the window and door companies are particularly competitive, their sales reps are tireless about pitching their products to architectural firms, notes Stephen Tilly, AIA, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. "They'll come in, bring lunch, do an education session, and update our binders. They know that if we have the latest information, we're more likely to spec their products."

Ned Stoll of Partners: Stoll & Stoll Architects, of New Rochelle, N.Y., agrees. "Those manufacturers, along with the finishes people, are among the most organized," he says. "It's the lighting and mechanical systems companies that we have to chase down."

Tuck Hinton Architects, Nashville, Tenn., welcomes some kind of supplier nearly every week. "It's a win-win situation," says Kem Hinton, FAIA. "As with clothing, you get certain companies you know pro-

continued on page 38
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—debora berke, sia

The quest for speed and precision is driving a lot of architects to the Internet for product and materials research.

In particular, firms whose design ethic involves a specific vocabulary turn to the Internet as an expeditious alternative to paging through a Sweet’s catalog.

“A lot of times we have to match new products with Michael Graves’ language, which is always expanding,” says architect Bob Miller, of Michael Graves & Associates’ Manhattan office. “It’s a matter of taking something we have and adapting it with a new product. We get a lot of requests from clients for unique products, such as a concrete countertop embedded with glass. You can type in different buzzwords, like custom decorative countertops, and the search engine will suddenly give you a list of different companies that can fabricate them.”

On the other side of the coin, George Beylerian established Material ConneXion (www.materialconnexion.com) four years ago in anticipation of designers’ demand for unique materials. It’s a Web-based resource center that links architects and designers with manufacturers of new materials around the world.

“The key word is innovation,” says Carina Beylerian, director of communication and exhibitions for the New York City firm. The constantly growing library includes samples that are judged monthly by a rotating jury of a dozen architects and designers. The criteria varies, but usually includes some note-

continue on page 40
Millennium siding has no equal. We're not kidding. Specify Wolverine Millennium siding with the patented SmartWall™ System that incorporates the NailTight™ Flexible Hem and PermaFlex™ Suspension Cables. These allow the panel to adjust as homes expand and contract with changes in seasons and temperatures. Or specify the only siding with the "Blow-Off Warranty." Either way, there is no equal. We call this concept SpecLock™.

worthy technological or environmental aspect—
“that it’s 100 percent recyclable, changes color, or
makes a certain kind of sound,” Beylerian says.
Once the material is accepted, the information
—which includes an image of the material, technical
data, and contact information—is logged into a vir-
tual library. Web membership is purchased on a per-
hour basis. “We’re simply making the connections
between the manufacturers of the materials and the
end users,” she says.
Meanwhile, to gain the competitive edge, name-
brand manufacturers are marketing Web-based serv-
dices directly to architects. Two years ago Andersen
Windows developed Window Studio, free software
that allows architects to create combinations of
window units for use in construction drawings. The
package can be down-
loaded from the Web site
or ordered on CD-ROM.
There’s also Window Sym-
 bols, containing individual
details architects can down-
load in seconds.
Will the company’s
Web-based enterprises
make its print media less
of a priority? Not exactly,
according to Andersen’s
Rod Radosevich. “Just as
radio didn’t die when tele-
vision became available to
the general public in the
late 1950s, information
just takes a new form on
the Web,” he says. “Our
intent in offering all of
these tools is to make our
products accessible to the
architects in whatever form
they prefer.”

offbeat generation
Much as building icons can
be transferred directly to
architects’ drawings from
manufacturer software,
Brian Murphy likes to cut
d and paste from across
industries and disciplines.
For example, he’s used
automotive hardware for
plumbing. “There’s an aes-
thetic dimension to the
beautiful stainless-steel
piping used for gas lines,
and it’s really practical,”
Murphy says. “And marine
hardware will do a myriad
of things, because it
morphs easily.”
Recently Murphy de-
signed a reception desk
for an advertising agency out
of square-shaped water
bottles. “When the natural
light hits a bottle full of
water, the effect is similar
to fiber optics in the way it
telegraphs light,” he says.
“And you’ve got a back
storage of water when
there’s a big earthquake.”
Another favorite treasure
trove is his local aerospace
continued on page 41
junkyards, which yield pieces of 30-gauge aluminum; the materials are recycled in Mexico and brought back to Southern California to sell.

Murphy observes that people with little money often show the most invention in solving building problems. "Those people have much more dynamic solutions because they're less stifled by convention and the fashion dimension," he says. "From an afternoon's scouring, they've built a fence." Not all resources need to come from the dump, but recycling has become fashionable. "Everyone in Mission Viejo has a ranchburger mini-estate, and you're sitting there in a glorified chicken coop," Murphy says. "It shakes up the status quo."

Architects agree, however, that it's not a good idea to use new materials or products just for the sake of being different. As Berke comments, "I'm more interested in taking generic stuff—even if what is generic is continually changing—and applying it in unexpected ways, than I am in taking materials and testing their physical limits as feats of engineering in my work."

Murphy concurs, adding: "If a product or material advances the craft of shelter-building, that gives it a lot more credibility."

trading places
No one knows the building craft better than tradespeople and subcontractors. That's why Jarvis Architects, Oakland, Calif., occasionally sends a staff member to a seminar given by a roofing or HVAC association, and the emissary reports back to the office.

continued on page 42

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Yet while the best manufacturers provide expert tech help to architects who use their products, on the most complex projects, technical manuals aren’t enough. Faced with the design and construction of a 14,000-square-foot house with a tricky roof system of copper-clad intersecting domes and barrel vaults, Jarvis Architects turned to Dallas Mitchell, a 30-year veteran of metal roof installation.

“You put as many standard details as you can on paper, but the best thing is to go talk to someone who does the installations,” says project architect Jason Kaldis, AIA. “Dallas worked out the details of when we would rely on folding, interlocking, sealants, or mechanical attachments and soldering. Those things had to be taken up in the field; you couldn’t preview all those complex conditions on paper or even a computer model.”

As the only licensed architect in her firm, Georgie Kajer, AIA, Kajer Architects, Pasadena, Calif., relies a lot on her general contractors for up-to-the-minute information on products and materials. “Fortunately I’m in the position of working with the same contractors over and over again,” she says. “There’s an eagerness to share nifty things that become available to keep clients happy, such as a different kind of ventilation system for a bath, or a special hinge for a cabinet.”

In fact, the expertise and availability of trusted tradespeople is a significant factor in the products an architect ultimately chooses. Although they enjoy reading the European design journals, most architects say they stick to imported products that have a domestic presence. “The time line for getting parts and materials from overseas tends to be longer than our schedules allow,” Kaldis says. “And the familiarity of the trades with those products isn’t quite as good.”

Like creativity itself, the pursuit of products and materials is a lifelong endeavor. And in the end, some of the credit for an architect’s inventiveness goes to a third party—the client. “We learn how to use products from one job to the next and try to work with the best people,” Kaldis says. “But the will and financial means of the client makes a lot of that learning possible.”

Cheryl Weber is a contributing writer in Severna Park, Md.
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For residential clients, life is like a box of chocolates. So many beautiful products and materials to choose from; so many repercussions with each selection. Because it’s your job to guide these wide-eyed creatures through the candy store, we thought we’d try to help you narrow the field. Here’s a collection of products other residential architects have already determined stand the test of time and client approval.
great panes
Thanks to a fully reversible, projecting hinge, H Windows can rotate 180 degrees so they can be cleaned without interfering with interior window treatments. But that's only part of the reason Toma likes them. “These windows are well-crafted, with remarkable hardware,” he says. The units feature an extruded aluminum exterior, wood interior, insulated glass, multiple ventilating positions, and one-motion, push-bar operating hardware. Each window is custom-made in any size or configuration; Toma used 4-by-4-foot units in the project shown at right. H Windows, 800.843.4929; www.hwindow.com.

well cast
Concreteworks Studio designs and fabricates custom precast concrete products. “Their colors have great depth, variation, and warmth,” raves Toma. Using a lightweight cement-based composite, the company forms, casts, and finishes each piece by hand to create countertops, tabletops, sinks, tile, fireplaces, fountains, and objects of interest for both residential and commercial use. Concreteworks designer Mark Rogero created the double vanity shown above. Concreteworks Studio, 510.835.9034; www.concreteworks.com.
starck reality
Hansgrohe’s shower controls are part of the Axor line by designer Philippe Starck. The ecosat mixer (No. 10375), shown at right, measures 8½ inches wide and 6 inches high; it has a flow rate of 13.2 gallons per minute and a 100-degree safety stop. The volume control (No. 10976) has raised finger grips. Both products come in chrome. Hansgrohe, 770.360.9880; www.hansgrohe.com.

warming trend
Myson’s Classic Electric wall-mounted towel warmer is made from de-zinc brass and 1½-inch-diameter sealed tubing filled with oil. An electric element heats the oil. “It heats up quickly, warms towels nicely, and gives some warmth to the bathroom, too,” says Demsky. The warmer measures 22.3 inches wide and 29.9 inches high, and has a back-lit on/off switch. It’s available in plated metal finishes and more than 1,200 custom colors. Myson, 800.698.9690; www.mysoninc.com.

“this is serious luxury. the design combines square and round tubing in a very architectural, graphic way.”
architects' choice

hayes architecture/interiors

Phoenix

Catherine Hayes, AIA

great grout
Hayes praises MAPEI’s Kerapoxy, a stain-free grout, for its quality performance in extreme settings like hot fireplaces and wet shower floors. (Hayes used the product for the fireplace shown at right.) A 100-percent-solids epoxy mortar, Kerapoxy can be cleaned easily with water, the company says. MAPEI offers a variety of mortars, mastics, grouts, and finishing care products for tile, stone, floor coverings, and concrete repair systems. MAPEI, 800.992.6273; www.mapei.com.

healthy hues
Since 1925, Dunn-Edwards Paints has covered the Southwest with more than 70 company stores. Hayes commends the company’s “rich luscious colors” and finishes. The extensive line of products includes the Sierra line of low odor/no-VOC (volatile organic compounds) interior paints for healthier environments. Dunn-Edwards, 888.DE-PAINT; www.dunn-edwards.com.

door lore
Rustica Arts doors boast Old World styling and durability. Made to order and hand-finished, each model showcases a historically researched motif. Hand-forged iron hardware can be included. Rustica’s staff is trained to assist architects with the integration of doors into projects; for the Rustica door in Hayes’ project at left, she designed—and Rustica built—a glass and iron surround. Rustica Arts, 805.692.8865.

“these are thick exterior doors with wonderful large iron hinges and hardware.”
"adding a little color to any concrete pour can greatly enhance the cohesiveness of the architecture for very little cost."

concrete rainbow
Davis Colors’ integral concrete dyes can be used in concrete block, pavers, roof tile, mortar, and ready-mix concrete. The product is lightfast, limeproof, and weather-resistant. It comes in powder, liquid, and granule forms. Davis, 800.356.4848; www.daviscolors.com.

taking control
Lutron Electronics’ Homeworks Interactive Lighting Control Systems use independent keypads to set lighting scenes in a room. “It’s a simple installation that doesn’t cost a fortune,” says Hayes. The keypads can be operated locally or remotely. Lutron, 800.523.9466; www.lutron.com.

keeper of the flame
Graham’s Lighting Fixtures sells its own handcrafted lanterns and chandeliers as well as antique fixtures gathered from all over the globe. All fixtures are made from solid copper or brass. “These are decent prices for gorgeous exterior carriage fixtures,” says Fendler. “Some can even be adapted to natural gas for the authentic flame look.” The Country French Wall Lantern is shown at right. Graham’s Lighting Fixtures, 800.362.8099; www.grahamslighting.com.

dramatic entrance
Fendler lauds the custom work by La Puerta Architectural Antiques: “They’ll take a number of different pieces and put them together to create something distinctive.” La Puerta, founded by architect Scott Coleman, adapts antique doors for modern use and carries a collection of re-created antique designs made from recycled aged woods. La Puerta Architectural Antiques, 800.984.8164; www.lapuertainc.com.

"with just a couple of multiple-scene-setting locations, you can conveniently control lighting throughout the house."
Gary Earl Parsons
architects

Berkeley, Calif.

Stove stack
Rais & Wittus' No. 106 stove has a wood storage area at the bottom, a fireplace in the middle, and a soapstone-lined baking compartment on top. The stove is made of 1/4-inch-thick steel; the firebrick-lined firebox has steel or ceramic tempered glass doors. Measuring 25 inches wide and 42 inches high, the unit is fitted with an ash drawer and a cast-iron grate. Rais & Wittus, 914.764.5679; www.raiswittus.com.

"This rolling ladder was designed a million years ago, but it has not changed a bit. It's basic, it's crude, but it's honest."

On a roll
The No. 1 rolling ladder from Putnam Rolling Ladder Co. is made of varnished red oak, with steps that are screwed to rails and reinforced with rods. Available in various finishes, the ladder rolls on bottom fixtures that are also available in an old-style antique look. "Most of the metal fittings are cast iron, and they come in different styles and finishes, including black," says Parsons. "It's appropriate in a Modern house or a traditional setting." The ladder can be custom ordered in any size and any hardwood. Putnam Rolling Ladder Co., 212.226.5147; www.putnamrollingladder.com.

Copper creations
This lantern from Verdigris Copper Works measures 10 inches long with a 7-inch top. The company's fixtures are made from 100 percent copper and glass or mica detailing, depending on the style. Prototypes exist, but custom sizes and styles are available, and all fixtures have a raw satin finish. Verdigris Copper Works, 877.838.8963.

"Verdigris copper works is small so the fixtures receive a lot of attention. Each piece is crisp but with a handmade quality."
Cultured Stone Corp., a division of Owens Corning, offers hundreds of manufactured stone veneers and trim products that mimic the textures, sizes, shapes, and colors of natural stone. "A lot of foundations in remodeling projects can’t handle real stone, so this is a cost-effective alternative," says Bjella. "The technology is becoming so good you can’t tell the difference." On the house shown here, Bjella used Drystack Ledgestone. Cultured Stone Corp., 800.255.1727; www.culturedstone.com.

Real-Fyre Gas Logs from the Robert H. Peterson Co. look just like the real thing. Honest. “We use these exclusively,” says Bjella. “We like to put a gas-log set into our wood-burning fireplaces so clients have the option of either usage. These logs glow and fire comes up in between them and they turn gray where they have burned.” The kiln-fired ceramic logs duplicate the appearance of wood right down to the knot holes, peeled bark, and forked branches. Bjella likes the Charred Oak model best. Robert H. Peterson Co., 800.332.0240; www.rhpeter son.com.

Retractable Phantom Screens provide the same protection as traditional screen doors but slide out of sight when they’re unneeded. “We have a lot of exterior glass doors that are virtually impossible to screen,” says Bjella. “This product has a metal casing where the screen rolls up and goes away and you can hide the casing in the construction.” Screens for both windows and doors are made of extruded aluminum with a baked enamel finish. Phantom Screens, 888.742.6866; www.phantomscreens.com.

“with these screens, we can do french and sliding doors we never could before. plus you can walk into them and they’ll slide right back into their track.”
easy flow
The Madison Flair lav faucet from Dornbracht features high-flow deck valves with ceramic disc cartridges and lever handles that are available in a variety of finishes. Projecting 5 1/4 inches, the faucet body is available in chrome, brass, platinum, platinum matte, and polished gold. Dornbracht, 800.774.1181; www.dornbracht.com.

flair without glare

hang time
Knape & Vogt’s telescoping hang rod features a steel shaft that can be pulled out to provide 7 3/4 inches of hanging space. The hang rod features brass knobs and an anochrome finish, and it extends from 3/8 inch to a total of 8 1/4 inches. Knape & Vogt, 800.253.1561; www.kv.com.
In his projects, Neeley likes to mix and match Pittsburgh Corning’s various loose glass blocks. For the house shown, he used two of the company’s 20 glass-block patterns: the Decora for privacy and the Vue for undistorted visibility and light. “The quality of light through the wavy Decora is wonderful,” he says.


Neeley favors Daltile’s opalized-glass Venetian mosaics because of their color and quality of light. Evenly molded and machine-cut, these 2-by-2-inch weatherproof tiles create smooth surfaces on interior or exterior floors and walls. Daltile also makes a hand-cut version called Byzantine; both styles come in numerous colors and are made from Silica sand and mineral colorants melted and blended at 2400 degrees Fahrenheit. Daltile, 800.933.TILE; www.daltile.com.

“their machine-made pieces are really nice and not as expensive as hand-cut glass tile.”

Halo rectangular closet lights, made by Cooper Lighting, are ready to come out of the closet, says Neeley. “I spec them in the wall, close to the floor,” he says. “With the dimmer switch it puts a really nice wash across a room or hallway.” The 60-watt light comes in white with a diffuser lens and measures 9 3/8 inches long by 5 7/8 inches high. Cooper Lighting, 847.956.8400; www.cooperlighting.com.
winning bidet
Toto’s Zoe toilet seat incorporates a bidet-like washlet, a seat warmer, and an odor-absorbing fan system. Easily removable for cleaning, the seat fits most standard round and elongated toilets and is powered by 110-volt current. “The seat adds about $500 to the cost of a standard toilet, but if you were to use a separate bidet it would cost about $1,000 more and you would need more space to install it,” says Ames. Toto, 800.350.8686; www.totousa.com.

love me knot
All door hardware by Bouvet is either hard-forged solid iron or solid brass, and all steel products go through a rust-resistant treatment process, the French company says. Solid brass products are available in polished or satin antique brass, and solid steel products are available in satin black or European pewter. All products have been adapted to meet American standards. Bouvet, 415.864.0273; www.bouvet.com.

tub for two
The Ciprea from Jacuzzi is a deck-mounted whirlpool tub that cantilevers in the front like a clamshell to accommodate two-person bathing. Made from acrylic and reinforced with fiberglass, the tub measures 72 inches long, 48 inches wide, and 21 inches high and is equipped with four adjustable jets. Jacuzzi, 209.669.5290; www.jacuzzi.com.

tidy tap
Kohler’s Alterna Flume “has been around for about 10 years,” says Ames, “but it is still very handsome.” When the tap is on, users can see the water flow along the spout’s broad channel and spill over the edge. What’s more, says the manufacturer, the faucet’s design eliminates splashing. Kohler, 920.457.4441; www.kohlerco.com.
the wall
When Baushke’s designs call for deep, substantial walls like the one shown here, he turns to Rammed Earth Works. The company’s building-code-compliant PISE (Pneumatically Impacted Stabilized Earth) walls are 18 inches thick. “In addition to keeping interior temperature constant, you get a beautiful, thick wall where you can craft deep windows or shaped doorways,” Baushke says. Rammed Earth Works, 707.224.2532; www.rammedearthworks.com.

landscape luminaires
BK Lighting’s Delta Star was designed for landscape lighting, but Baushke likes to use the fixture indoors, in place of recessed lighting. The product features a completely sealed optical compartment, a clear tempered glass lens, an enclosed wireway mounting knuckle, machined aluminum construction with stainless hardware, and a 50-watt MR16 lamp. BK Lighting, 559.438.5800; www.bklighting.com.

“i use it often instead of recessed can fixtures because it’s versatile and low-voltage.”

rolling rock
Sonoma Cast Stone designs and builds cast concrete products—like this groovy wave sink. Architects can choose from a hand-cast line of vessel sinks, tiles, and pavers, or request custom work, including countertops, fireplace surrounds, and integral sinks. The company has more than 25 showrooms nationwide. Sonoma Cast Stone, 877.939.9929; www.sonomastone.com.
character molding
Fry Reglet drywall moldings define corners and transitions between differing materials or planes. The extruded aluminum outlines form crisp, sharp angles—perfect for framing architectural details. The Houses use the molding for interiors and—as in the house they designed shown at right—for exteriors. The product is lightweight and easy to handle, says the maker. Fry Reglet’s moldings are protected by environmentally resistant anodized or paint finishes that won’t rust. Fry Reglet, 800.237.9773; www.fryreglet.com.

go with the grain
The Oregon Lumber Company’s Saima flooring grabs Steven House’s attention because it is “rich and beautiful and inexpensive and durable.” It comes in 15 strip patterns—including long-strip (shown in the Houses’ project above), herringbone, Dutch, and edge-grain birch—and is prefinished with five coats of a clear, UV-cured semi-gloss. The Oregon Lumber Company, 800.824.5671.

cool shade

“it’s large and bold and has a very contemporary high-tech feel to it, but it’s also very soft.”

“the warm, rich color matches the golden-brown of winter grasses.”

photos: (portrait) William Helsel; (exterior) Christopher Irion, courtesy House Beautiful; (interior) Claudio Santini
Window Shopping
Kawneer's 451 store-front framing system is typically used in commercial projects for curtain walls. Anderson, though, uses the product in his custom homes (one of which is shown at right) because it can withstand New Mexico's severe climate. "It's less expensive than windows and it's very strong and slick," he says. System components are made of extruded aluminum and can be anodized or painted; structural steel inserts can be added to accommodate tall openings and large spans. Kawneer, 877.767.9107; www.kawneer.com.

"Kawneer's store-front framing system is a well-designed, efficient product for large fixed-glass areas."

Stain Alive
Scofield's Lithochrome Chemstain is an easy and economical way to add color to concrete floors. Available in various hues, it can be mopped or rolled onto the floor by either the contractor or the homeowner at the end of construction. "The product is very forgiving and produces a desirable appearance," says Anderson. L.M. Scofield Co., 800.800.9900.

"Lithochrome is an easy way to color exposed concrete. The material cost for the system can be as low 30 cents per square foot, so it is very economical."

Tile in Style
You could probably find American Olean's 2-by-2-inch porcelain ceramic tile in every locker room across the country, but Anderson likes using it in residential projects—as in the bath he did shown above. The unglazed, slip-resistant tiles have less than 0.5 percent moisture absorption and are stain- and frost-proof, says the maker. They're offered in a wide selection of colors. American Olean, 214.398.1411; www.americanolean.com.
architects' choice

treacy & eagleburger architects

Washington, D.C.

“this low-voltage lighting fixture has an aluminum finish and is reasonably priced considering the quality of the product.”

cable lines

Translite’s low-voltage cable lighting system consists of plated or unplated copper strands wrapped around a Kevlar core. The system is shown here (in a project by Treacy & Eagleburger) with the manufacturer’s 4-inch Sing pendant, available in lengths of 4 to 72 inches. It comes with a sand-blasted glass diffuser and in natural aluminum, bright nickel, polished brass, or bright copper finishes. Translite Sonoma, 707.996.6906; www.translitesonoma.com.

mo' better blues

Hascolac brilliant gloss paint by Schreuder Paints is a marine-quality, fade-resistant enamel with high concentrations of colorfast pigments. The product’s self-leveling properties produce a durable, porcelain-like surface. “It is a lacquer-type paint that is made for the exterior, but can be used on the interior,” says Eagleburger, whose favorite spec is Delft Blue. “It’s a riveting color.” Hascolac comes in a range of stock colors and 940 fan-deck colors or it can be custom tinted to any shade. Schreuder Paints is distributed by Fine Paints of Europe, 800.332.1556; www.finepaints.com.

“schreuder’s delft blue is a deep, brilliant blue paint that is great for vivid accent work.”

syndecrete

Syndecrete is a precast concrete composite, developed by Hertz’s firm after some unhappy encounters with other countertop materials. “Syndecrete comes in 600 colors, and many types of objects can be embedded in the surface for mass customization,” says Hertz. The material is more refined and stain-resistant than concrete, but still needs rescaling once a year with a water-based sealer. Syndecrete, 310.829.9932; www.synedsec.com.
saving glaze

Polygal’s translucent panels are insulating glazing sheets extruded from high-performance polycarbonate. The product is energy-efficient, flame-retardant, and lightweight, making it an attractive, budget-minded alternative for a wide variety of glazing applications. Polygal’s impact strength tests at 200 times that of glass, according to the maker. The panels—shown in Hertz’s work at right—come in a range of thicknesses, styles, sizes, and colors. Polygal USA, 800.537.0095; www.polygalusa.com.

“polygal’s translucent polycarbonate panels are virtually indestructible and have good light-transmitting qualities. they can be used for windows, screens, and partitions in indoor or outdoor applications.”

bamboo groove

Timbergrass says its bamboo flooring is more dimensionally stable than commonly used wood floorings like oak and maple. Available in 74-inch lengths and roughly 4-inch widths, the product installs like any other tongue-and-groove wood flooring and accepts stains, urethane, oils, paints, and water-based finishes. “Bamboo is comparable in cost to maple, but the advantage is that it is more stable so it can be used in high-humidity areas,” says Hertz, who specified the material in the residence above. Timbergrass, 800.929.6333; www.timbergrass.com.

“timbergrass bamboo flooring is thicker than most other brands and has a nicer color and grain pattern.”
concrete evidence
Buddy Rhodes Studio crafts custom concrete pieces for any part of the house, from sinks to tables to tiles. In addition to offering 12 standard colors, the studio can generate almost any custom pigment. Three surface finishes are available: veined, Rhodes' signature surface; steel trowel, a smooth, mostly monochromatic surface notable for its obvious trowel marks; and terrazzo, which features embedded glass or marble chips but maintains a smooth surface. Buddy Rhodes Studio, 877.706.5303; www.buddyrhodes.com.

pattern language
Jurs Architectural Glass designs and manufactures doors, sidelights, transoms, domes, skylights, and window walls. An architectural stained-glass artist, Shelley Jurs designs custom pieces (such as the Wiley, shown at left) as well as a line of ready-made doors called the Contemporary Collection. Jurs Architectural Glass, 800.679.9772; www.art-glass-doors.com.

"shelley jurs uses very little color, preferring cut, sanded, jeweled, or prism pieces to produce varying degrees of light and obscurity."
hot topic
Miller likes Dacor’s Epicure line of commercial-style cooktops and ranges because “they cook evenly and fast, plus they have a great range of heat and they’re easy to clean.” The Epicure Proformer (shown) is a stainless-steel, six-burner gas cooktop with a griddle, simmer plate, and wok ring. It comes in two sizes—36 and 48 inches—and boasts a 20,000-BTU patented gas-flame broiler in an electric, self-cleaning convection oven. Dacor, 800.793.0093; www.dacorappl.com.

“instead of having different product lines of varying qualities, they’re all good.”

on a roll
Environmentally Safe Products says its Low-E reflective insulation stops 97 percent of radiant heat from entering or leaving a home. The waterproof product consists of double-sided aluminum with a partially recycled polyethylene core. Miller likes specing Low-E because, at 3/8 inch thick, it can be layered to increase its R-value. “In areas with cramped space, large southern exposures, or older homes, you can easily meet code requirements and get a lot more bang for your buck,” he says. One layer of Low-E has an R-value of 11. Environmentally Safe Products, 800.289.5693; www.low-e.com.

“you can put food all across the oven and everything cooks without mingling flavors or scents.”

hardware
Miller uses Baldwin hardware because “it keeps its looks, and the finishes and locking mechanisms are more durable.” Baldwin reinforces its hardware with a double-finishing technique called “Lifetime Finish” and guarantees that exterior finishes will remain fully weatherproof and free of pitting and corrosion for the life of the product. A variety of finishes, including designer colors, is available. Baldwin, 800.566.1986; www.baldwinbrass.com.
swinging shingles
ATAS International’s standing-seam roofing shingles are a snap to assemble—literally. Thanks to a weather-tight, four-way locking system, the lightweight, galvanized-steel panels simply snap into place. Estes specs them on Estes/Twombly projects like the one shown at right because they’re “very easy to install and relatively cheap. Plus they come in a range of colors.” The shingles are suitable for both regular and accent roofing. They measure 16 inches wide and 36 or 60 inches long. ATAS International, 800.468.1441; www.atas.com.

simple illumination
Estes admires the understated beauty of Leucos’ light fixtures. Designed by such noted European luminaries as Roberto Pamio, Renato Toso, and Noti Massari, the handcrafted lights feature Murano glass rendered into artfully simple shapes. Shown here is the Selis pendant. Leucos, 732.225.0010; www.leucos.com.

“these are beautifully made, simple, and inconspicuous lights.”

tough lock
When designing seaside houses and rural homes, Estes relies on Stanley for what he calls their “sturdy barnyard hardware”—pulls, hinges, and locks that stand up to a harsh environment. Many products are guaranteed for the life of the building. Stanley, 800.STANLEY; www.stanleyworks.com.
in stitches
Italian manufacturer Valli & Valli’s line of cabinet hardware designed by architect and theorist Andrea Branzi marries stitched leather and polished brass for a strikingly unique look. “Valli & Valli’s door hardware is never overdesigned,” observes Estes. “They offer simple and direct designs with excellent craftsmanship and materials.” The handles are also available in satin nickel and clear finishes. Valli & Valli, 877.326.2565; www.vallievalli.com.

prairie glass
Mammen Glass & Mirror offers a comprehensive line of glass products, including windows, doors, mirrors, cut-to-order items, and custom leaded-glass creations and repairs. Harwick applauds the company’s eclectic range of styles, from classic to contemporary. In the project by JH&P shown here, Mammen’s art glass department created a series of leaded-glass panels in Southwest Prairie style, with lead came construction and beveled individual tiles. Mammen Glass & Mirror, 800.327.8076; www.mammen.com.

full slate
Ann Sacks’ Medici Rose slate is a natural material with a high degree of color variation, from charcoal to rose to olive. “It’s a very warm material for a hard surface,” says Harwick. The slate can be cut into tiles of any size for floors or countertops. In addition to a wide selection of slate and limestone products, Ann Sacks’ 10 showrooms and 30-plus dealers offer mosaics, terra cotta, art tile, antique stone, glass and metal tile, glazed tile, and more. Ann Sacks, 800.278.8453; www.annsacks.com.

“their quality of workmanship was one of the finest i’ve seen and the replication of style was exact.”

“it’s very practical and cost-effective compared with other hard surfaces.”
architects' choice

brawer & hauptman architects

Philadelphia

Michael Hauptman, AIA

real joinery
The Kennebec Company makes custom cabinetry in quarter-sawn and rift-sawn oak, maple, cherry, pine, and Douglas fir, but other species may be requested. The company's products—shown here in one of Brawer & Hauptman's projects—feature stained, dyed, varnished, and painted finishes, and period handmade hardware in wood, brass, or wrought iron. Kennebec uses mortise-and-tenon joinery on face frames and biscuit joinery on cabinet boxes. The Kennebec Company, 207.443.2131.

curb appeal
Grand Manor shingle from CertainTeed features two full-size, one-piece base shingles with an 8-inch exposure. The construction results in five layers of coverage when applied, the maker says. Made from algae-resistant fiberglass, the shingles come in red, green, and several shades of gray. “The product has a 40-year warranty so it will last almost the life of the house,” Hauptman says. CertainTeed, 610.341.7000; www.certainteed.com.

double pleasure
Marvin offers its double-hung window in more than 126 standard sizes and an unlimited number of custom sizes. The product has a paintable wood interior and an extruded aluminum cladding available in various colors. It comes standard in double-pane glass, but low-E, low-E II with argon, single-pane, and removable energy panels are also available. “The energy panel gives the right mullion proportions for historical accuracy, but also adds insulation,” says Hauptman. Marvin Windows, 800.328.0268; www.marvin.com.

Photos: (portrait and interior) Barry Halkin
Ace Architects

Oakland, Calif.

"blomberg is technologically innovative and adaptable to special situations. they are the reason we are happy to specify aluminum doors and windows."

Ace of Stairs

The Ace Stair, designed by Ace Architects and manufactured by Equus Metals, is a circular stair that is more comfortable, more attractive, and safer than a spiral stair, says Howard. Measuring about 9 feet in diameter, the stair meets code requirements for a primary exit in a house. Because of the way it is made, it is cheaper than most other circular stairs. It can be finished in stainless steel, glass, or wood veneer—or gold leaf, like the one shown here in an Ace Architects project. Equus Metals, 918.834.9872.

Fab Fenestration

Blomberg's 2400 Series window wall features 1\(^{\frac{1}{6}}\)-inch by 4-inch tubular aluminum with glazing on the interior or exterior. The system, shown above in an Ace Architects-designed house, can adapt to all venting options, such as horizontal sliding, casements, and single-hung, and is available in 15 standard colors. Custom sizes, profiles, and colors are available; so is a matching door system. Blomberg Window Systems, 916.428.8060.

Versatile Tile

McIntyre Tile Co. offers a wide range of handmade ceramic wall and floor tile. The company specializes in custom-glaze color matching, custom extrusions, carved and hand-painted decorative tiles, and murals. "McIntyre has its line of colors but they'll do any color, which is good for us when we're working with picky clients," says Howard, whose firm spec'd the tiles on this fireplace. McIntyre Tile, 707.433.8866; www.mcintyre-tile.com.

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by meghan drueding

old mill dream
robert luchetti associates
.cambridge, mass.

Sophisticated, comprehensive office designs are Robert Luchetti Architects’ specialty. The 10-person firm, based in Cambridge, Mass., also designs about six houses a year. Principal Bob Luchetti, AIA, drew from both experiences to create a whimsical workplace in an old brick-and-beam mill building near Harvard University.

When Luchetti decided to move his company into its present offices, he opted to do so without radically changing the space. He painted the main structural beam silver to reflect natural and artificial light. The existing, conventional stair railings gave way to light, nimble, metal-and-wire ones. A new, lipstick-red-painted metal stair with warm wood steps spirals up through the office, and collector’s chairs by designers like Mario Botta and Charles and Ray Eames make appearances throughout the space. Some of the chairs are for everyday use; others hang unexpectedly from the loft-like ceiling or perch along the tops of the walls. “We had all these extra chairs and wanted to see them,” says Luchetti, who prefers the firm’s current size to its roster of 25 employees five years ago. “Some of the ones that are hanging are uncomfortable, honestly. You wouldn’t want to sit in them.”

To squeeze more work area out of the office, Luchetti designed a new mezzanine level across from an existing mezzanine between the first and second floors. The firm operates in a studio-style manner, with open desks and workstations. An employee who needs privacy to work out a design problem or to meet a deadline can retreat to the third-floor materials library, or to one of seven conference/meeting rooms. Unlike the workstations, though, those areas don’t have computers. Luchetti’s working on that. “We do still sketch by hand and build models, but the vast majority of our work is done digitally,” he says. “Getting computers for those rooms is on my list.”

For now, he’ll have to settle for an office whose stripped-down sensibilities encapsulate his firm’s wide range of project types and styles. Homes by Robert Luchetti Associates vary from Modern, industrial-style residences to historic renovations.

builder: Robert Luchetti Associates,
Cambridge, Mass.
size: 3,500 square feet
cost: $36 per square foot
By soft-pedaling the design statement but paying close attention to detail, Luchetti created a space that eloquently conveys his firm's trademark versatility.
Alexander Design Studio's original, pressed-tin ceiling contrasts with its new, wood-and-metal interior walls. This juxtaposition of past and present epitomizes much of the firm's work.
casual days
alexander design studio
ellicott city, md.

That sharp cracking noise emanating every so often from the main work space at Alexander Design Studio is no cause for alarm. It's the sound of employees shooting pool. "The pool table allows for the kind of social interaction you'd like to have in an office," says the Ellicott City, Md., firm's principal, Charles Alexander, AIA. "It helps you clear your thoughts when you're stymied by a design problem."

Providing such workplace diversions as pool, Ping-Pong, and video games to release tension and stimulate creativity among the staff is nothing new—dot-coms and advertising agencies have been doing it for years. But it's not so common in the more conservative world inhabited by most architects who aren’t named Gehry. That's exactly what Alexander wants potential clients to notice about his eight-person business the minute they set foot in his studio—that it's completely different from any other firm they're thinking about hiring.

"Our conference room has no conference table," he notes. "Instead it has a sofa, some chairs, and a pinup wall for drawings. The whole office is reflective of a more casual attitude."

The two-story space also captures the firm's design ethos. It's located in a century-old former Masonic lodge in historic Ellicott City, just outside Baltimore. Alexander bought the building in 1997, and he and his crew renovated the upper floors themselves. (A retail store occupies the first floor.) In making the second floor into a reception and conference area and the top floor into a design studio, they left the perimeter walls intact. They then erected a new structure several feet inside the old shell using columns, partial walls, and metal framework. "The concept is that of an inner box within an outer box," Alexander says. "We wanted to create a visual separation between what we had done and what was already here."

This interest in the relationship between old and new informs all of his residential work, from modern additions onto traditional houses, to contemporary homes in established neighborhoods. The same theme applies to the firm's other projects, like churches, schools, and offices. "We're not afraid of the vernacular," says Alexander. "But we're unabashedly Modernist in terms of how we make space."

Letters spelling "ARCHITECTURE," carved into acid-etched metal panels, grace the office's street-front windows. Besides letting passersby know what Alexander Design Studio is all about, they channel the sun's light into letter-shaped patterns whose positions on the interior walls change throughout the day.

builder: Tonka Construction, Baltimore
size: 5,000 square feet
cost: $10 per square foot

The letters on the studio's windows leave passersby with little doubt about what goes on inside. Homey perks like a rose-walled kitchen for employees help attract talent to the small, out-of-the-way practice.
Jonathan Wagner and Bruce Beinfeld work in southern Connecticut, an area where architectural tastes tend to run to the traditional. Their seven-person firm has designed many a Shingle-style or Colonial abode, but that’s not all they can do. When the pair bought and renovated an old brick warehouse building in South Norwalk, Conn., seven years ago, they decided to use their new office space to showcase the wide scope of their skills.

They claimed a spot on the second floor, eventually renting out the rest of the building to other small businesses: marketing firms, a restaurant, craftspeople, an antique store. Then they used cost-effective, industrial materials in their own office to make sure visitors would sit up and take notice. “We feel we’re a bit outside the mainstream,” Wagner says. “We’re a progressive firm in a traditional area. Right off the bat, our office shows people we’re a little different.” Textured plaster walls and a steel stair greet visitors as they step into the building. They’re welcomed into a serene entry gallery featuring warm white walls, a barrel-vault ceiling of corrugated metal, and photos of the firm’s Modern and traditional work—mostly houses and light-commercial projects.

A slightly skewed, nonstructural wall of Portland cement runs through the entry gallery, an open studio space, a library, and a private conference room. In addition to organizing these disparate spaces, the wall also provides an element of the unexpected. “That wall is an aggressive piece of architecture,” Wagner says. “It really asserts itself, the way it noses into the entry gallery. If it weren’t there, the office wouldn’t be as interesting.”

A spirit of improvisation also pervades the space. Beinfeld and Wagner designed and built the plywood-and-black-laminate conference-room table, and fashioned the studio desktops out of hollow-core doors. They bought the conference-room chairs at Ikea. All of the architects employed by the firm, including the two principals, sit in the open studio area. “We could never work in private offices where you close the door and don’t see anyone,” says Wagner. “I think architects in general really need feedback from one another.”

Their efforts to create a space that communicates endless possibilities has paid off in tangible as well as intangible ways—positive word of mouth about the firm’s offices has helped them land jobs designing restaurants and other commercial interiors.

**Builder:** Atlas Construction, Stamford, Conn.  
**Size:** 2,000 square feet  
**Cost:** $30 per square foot
Beinfield Wagner planned the interior of its building as a departure from the traditional exterior (left, top). The dichotomy demonstrates the firm’s willingness to depart from convention.
An ambitious steel and glass bridge makes a dramatic design statement for Fidabird & Root, as well as giving employees a shorter walk between different parts of the office.
new connection
holabird & root
chicago

When Holabird & Root moved its operations from the tenth to the seventh floor of a downtown Chicago office building, the 120-year-old firm saw a chance to highlight its triple-fold capacity for architecture, engineering, and interior design. Employees from all three disciplines participated in the process, creating an elegant, streamlined space that ably demonstrates the firm's abilities.

The star of their complete overhaul is a glass-and-steel bridge that spans the building's central courtyard. The bridge connects the reception area with the work studio, and it makes for a quick commute from one side of the office to the other.

"Since the building itself was not designed by Holabird & Root, we wanted to do something with the office that would make a statement about us," says Frank Castelli, AIA, who handled the project along with former partner Jerry Horn, FAIA. "The bridge adds a little pizzazz."

The 60-plus architects, engineers, and interior designers who make up the majority of the 86-person office have the best seats in the house. The firm opted to place the open studio space on the north and east sides of the building—the two sides of the office that receive direct sunlight. Exposed pipes and ductwork allow the ceiling to rise to its full 11-foot height, and wood cubicle paneling adds warmth to the space.

Holabird & Root's public areas sport a more polished look. Curved, perforated metal panels separate the reception area from the administrative offices and provide display space for newspaper and magazine articles about the firm's work. Understated gray tiles line the hallway and conference-room floors. A steel-cased sliding door on oversized wheels marks the conference room. Overall, the office reflects Castelli's simple synopsis of the firm's philosophy. "We pride ourselves on doing good design," he says. "Not 'fad' design."

**builder:** Turner Construction SPD, Chicago  
**size:** 23,766 square feet  
**cost:** $52 per square foot

The office's open design studio facilitates communication among the architecture, interior design, and engineering departments. The studio receives plenty of natural light from its two window-lined walls.

The corporate-industrial look of Holabird & Root's public spaces befits its reputation as an august, richly experienced practice. Its diverse workload includes office, college and university, municipal, health-care, and residential design.
OZ Architecture has made a name for itself designing adaptive-reuse and infill projects in urban areas. So it's only fitting that this Colorado firm's Boulder office has occupied a converted Harley-Davidson motorcycle shop in the city's downtown since 1999. The 48-person firm—which also has branches in Denver and Summit County, Colo.—had been fast outgrowing its old offices in another adaptive-reuse building in Boulder. When the Harley-Davidson space came up for sale three years ago, they pounced on it. "We saw an opportunity to take a building no one would give a second look to and show people what we can do with it," says Kelly Davis, AIA, the project architect and associate principal at OZ. "It was a 'silk purse out of a sow's ear' kind of thing."

They didn't just obliterate the original "sow's ear" elements. Rather, OZ placed a great deal of importance on recognizing the relationship between what the building had been before and what it would be for them. "It's still a workshop," says Davis. "Only it's a workshop for architecture instead of motorcycles." The architects sand-blasted and sealed the unintentionally chic concrete floors, and recycled old steel workbenches as countertops. They also left exposed some of the existing joists and columns.

However, there's no danger of anyone confusing OZ with a motorcycle workshop. The company overhauled the space to dovetail with its philosophy of open communication, and the results are unlikely to be mistaken for anything but an architecture office. "There's a lot of cross-pollination of ideas going on in here," says Davis. "We designed the office so that you can see and hear what other people are working on." That means lots of half-walls and open meeting areas, as well as plenty of sight lines between different parts of the building. A central mezzanine level looks out over both studios. Employees in the main building even have a clear view of the interiors division, which is housed in an outbuilding, and vice versa.

Considering the firm's location in eco-conscious Boulder, it comes as no surprise that "green" materials dominate the office. In addition to reusing items already present in the 8,000-square-foot building, OZ specified tree-saving engineered lumber throughout the project. The panels to which employees pin sketches and floor plans are made of recycled newsprint. And the building's many operable windows allow natural ventilation during much of the year.

**builder:** Deneuve Construction Services, Boulder  
**size:** 12,500 square feet  
**cost:** $56 per square foot

The large service openings on the sides of the former motorcycle workshop live on, acting as fresh-air conduits during the spring and summer months. Two shaded terraces supply outdoor eating and working space.

Environmental responsibility and idea sharing are both emphasized at OZ. In one of two design studios, ribbed plastic partitions form see-through walls, and overhead light reflectors magnify bulb output to reduce energy consumption.
OZ contains no closed offices—everyone from intern to principal works in the open cubicles of the design studios. Prime corner spots are reserved for semi-public lounges that double as conference rooms.

Photos: Thorney Lieberman
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You're the architect. You design the project—but everybody has some input. The builder likes time-saving products that feature easy installation and high-performance products that reduce callbacks by homeowners. The local dealers have an interest in pushing their product lines. Your clients certainly have some very specific opinions about a few important components of their home. But it really comes down to you—because you're the one who has to meet everyone's needs while making sure all the little pieces maintain the integrity of the design you've created. The products you specify matter.

residential architect surveyed its readership in the 2000 Brand Specification and Perception Study to find out what products you've had success with—in other words, which products you specify most. Through trial and error you've developed a set of gold standard products that meet your high design expectations and make the houses built from your designs high-quality examples of the American Dream. The following advertising section features a sampling of the products that work best for you.
Top Choice of Architects, TUFF-N-DRI® Provides a Dry, Healthier Home

Chosen by respondents in *residential architect*'s 2000 Brand Specification Study as the top choice for waterproofing solutions, TUFF-N-DRI® Basement Waterproofing System (TUFF-N-DRI) from Koch Waterproofing Solutions, Inc. continues to offer new innovations to help architects create spectacular homes.

With more people than ever working from home, architects are being asked to design home offices in the basements of new homes. A far cry from the dark, damp spaces of 20 years ago, these basement offices are luxury spaces, far from the center of activity in the house, with high ceilings, windows and lots of high-tech equipment. These spaces need to stay dry.

In addition, with the advent of "sealed," energy-efficient homes in the 1970s—and the skyrocketing increase in reported cases of respiratory and eye, ear, nose and throat conditions—indoor air quality has become the focus for widespread concern. Recent studies show, because of allergies to mold, damp housing conditions are associated with increased prevalence of respiratory symptoms and asthma. Keeping the basement free of moisture helps keep mold out of the home.

Unless properly built, protected and maintained, basements are particularly susceptible to three primary sources of dampness: leaks, seepage and condensation. TUFF-N-DRI is a single product offering that protects against all three sources of basement moisture. TUFF-N-DRI will protect your home office and give you a healthy house.

TUFF-N-DRI features a two-part system that includes a polymer-enhanced asphalt membrane that's spray applied to allow a consistent and seamless membrane. The second component is WARM-N-DRI® insulation board, which eliminates the need for an interior moisture barrier.

Koch Waterproofing Solutions recently introduced DrainStar™ stripdrain product (DrainStar) which eliminates the need for traditional foundation drain tile and gravel as part of a complete waterproofing system. By combining DrainStar (A) with at least 24 inches of a quality foundation drainage board such as Koch's WARM-N-DRI® (B), you'll match the water collection area of a drain tile and gravel system. Depending on your application needs, DrainStar may be installed in a vertical (shown in photo to the left) or L-shaped design.

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Choices, Choices, Choices. What direction will you go?
KraftMaid's product line is all about choices. With more than 100 door styles in seven wood species and a variety of laminates, 21 furniture quality finishes and glazes, more than 150 space-saving storage features and endless molding styles and decorative enhancements, KraftMaid has a look that is perfect for any home style. Enhance kitchens with stacked moldings, decorative onlays and corbels, spindles, combination finishes and glazes, decorative open cabinets, leaded and glass doors...the list is endless.

And KraftMaid's broad product line extends beyond the kitchen to help personalize any room. From the bathroom to the laundry room, the home office to the bedroom, a built-in media center or a dining room hutch, a wet bar or a window seat, KraftMaid cabinetry is decorative furniture, not just customized, functional storage.

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KraftMaid's Passport Series is the best choice for a Universal Design kitchen that will meet your customers needs for a lifetime. The most comprehensive line of accessible cabinetry on the market incorporates beautiful cabinetry with smart design elements to create living environments with improved usability and convenience, simplifying life for everyone in the household, regardless of their ability level.

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total fenestration provider, Pella Corporation recently added a full line of entry doors to its total product offering.

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Carbonite is an advanced composite material with carbon technology. Pella's Carbonite doors feature a thicker skin material that reduces deflection and warping and resists dents and corrosion. These doors also offer the look of a fine wood door, featuring deeply grained panels with authentic wood-grain patterns like oak or walnut.

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Matching a variety of transoms, sidelights and glass options, each door's glass insert is hand-tooled to deliver elegance as well as energy efficiency and is carefully sealed between two panes of standard glass to prevent damage and ensure superior insulation.

All three lines of Pella entry door systems are built with the same quality standards, precision engineering and attention to detail as Pella® windows and patio doors. Whether a homeowner chooses the double door system, an individual door or a complete entry system with sidelights and a transom, it comes fully assembled and tested from the factory.
Sub-Zero Freezer Company, the industry leader in premium built-in home refrigeration and wine storage equipment, is ranked as the top brand specified by architects for home refrigeration, according to the *residential architect* 2000 Brand Specification Study. Sub-Zero's classic built-in 600 Series has always had a reputation for hard-working products. But recent innovations by Sub-Zero have changed the face of kitchen design and made refrigeration products the most versatile element of the kitchen.

The Integrated 700 Series is a system of cabinets and drawer offerings for refrigeration for virtually any room of the house. The integrated product line consists of two basic forms—a tall unit and a base unit. Each are a space-saving 27 inches wide, and are available in an all-refrigerator, all-freezer, or a combination of the two.

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Integrated drawer units offer flexibility in home design as they enable homeowners to have refrigeration at their fingertips—in the master bedroom, the hearth room, next to the entertainment center, or by the kitchen sink.

Another key element to modern kitchen design is a wine storage solution. Sub-Zero's 400 Series offers four beautifully elegant and unique wine storage models designed to both keep wine in its optimum condition and showcase wine collections. Unique to Sub-Zero, each 400 Series unit includes two separate refrigeration compartments with independent temperature zones which can keep wines at their ideal serving or storage temperatures.

Sub-Zero offers the ultimate in high-quality products with a myriad of functional design options. With all the combinations Sub-Zero provides, it's no wonder they're the brand most specified by architects.

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Once considered a luxury item, food waste disposers are now one of homeowners' most-wanted appliances and are found in more than 80 percent of new home construction in the U.S. Disposers have long been recognized as a sanitary, safe and environmentally sound way of eliminating biodegradable food waste. As the world's largest manufacturer of food waste disposers, In-Sink-Erator® is the preferred brand among homeowners, plumbers and architects.

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Simpson is Crafting More Ways to Stay #1

Simpson Door Company's interior and exterior wood doors have long been favorites of home owners, builders and architects. And with multiple new door lines being introduced in 2001, there are even more ways to enjoy the classic styles that have become synonymous with the Simpson name. Each Simpson door is handcrafted to exacting specifications, resulting in a door of impeccable quality. With a wide variety of species and designs available, Simpson offers something for nearly every architectural style. Call today for a free catalog, or visit the Simpson Web site at www.simpsondoor.com.
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**chlage Introduces the *Broadway Collection***

A unique collection of matching door hardware, plumbing hardware and decorative trim

**The Broadway Collection by Schlage offers more than 9,000 design combinations as unique as the spaces they occupy**

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CIRCLE NO. 368
# The Brands Architects Specify the Most

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- Disposers: In-Sink-Erator
- Hot Water Dispensers (Kitchen): Elkay
- Range Hoods: Broan
- Ranges/Cooktops: GE Appliances
- Refrigerators: Sub-Zero
- Water Heaters: A.O. Smith

## Cabinets
- Cabinetry (Semi-Custom and Custom): KraftMaid
- Cabinets (Stock): Merillat

## Doors
- Entry Doors: Pella
- Garage Doors: Overhead Door
- Interior Passage Doors: Simpson
- Patio Doors: Andersen

## Exteriors
- Exterior Siding: CertainTeed
- Exterior Wall Sheathing: U.S. Gypsum
- Housewrap: DuPont Tyvek®
- Insulation: Owens-Corning
- EIFS/Stucco Siding: Dryvit

## Fixtures
- Bath Fixtures: Kohler
- Faucets: Kohler
- Kitchen Sinks: Kohler
- Shower Doors: Kohler
- Whirlpool Baths: Jacuzzi

## Flooring
- Laminate Flooring: Pergo
- Vinyl Flooring: Armstrong
- Wood Flooring: Bruce

## Heating/AC
- Fireplaces/Wood Stoves: Heatilator
- HVAC: Trane

## Lighting
- Lighting: Lightolier
- Lighting Controls, Switches: Leviton

## Paints/Stains/Sealants
- Caulks and Sealants: Dow Corning
- Paints: Benjamin Moore
- Stains and Varnishes: Cabot Stains/Samuel Cabot

## Roofing
- Asphalt/Fiberglass Roof Shingles: CertainTeed
- Clay/Concrete/Synthetic Roof Tiles: Monier/Lifetile
- Metal Roofing: Alcoa
- Ridge Vent Systems: Cor-A-Vent

## Surfacing
- Ceramic Tile: American Olean
- Surfacing—Laminate: Formica
- Surfacing—Solid Surface: DuPont Corian®

## Windows
- Metal Windows: Alenco
- Skylights/Roof Windows: Velux
- Vinyl Windows: Milgard
- Wood and Clad-Wood Windows: Andersen

## Other
- Closet Systems: Clairson/Closet Maid
- Decorative Mouldings/Trim/Columns: Fypon
- Foundation Waterproofing: TUFF-N-DRI®
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by nigel f. maynard

Inside every architect beats the heart of an industrial designer. After all, you use the same design approach whether a project is large or small, says architect Laurinda Spear, co-founder and principal of Miami-based Arquitectonica, and designer extraordinaire.

Architects know that products complement architecture, so they are ever on the prowl for high-quality offerings with the perfect balance of form, function, and visual appeal. And if the perfect product doesn't exist, the architects may just design it themselves. Who better to design the item than the individual most likely to spec it?

Product guides
Manufacturers started asking themselves that very question in the '80s, a time when the pickings were particularly slim. "Products back then were dreadful," says architect Bruce Tomb of San Francisco. "Plumbing fixtures were primarily white and ceramic. Manufacturers had no client-mandated desire to produce anything else."

Dornbracht, the German faucet company, was among the first to recognize the void and recruit an architect to help fill it. Convinced that good design was an important mark of quality, the manufacturer enlisted the services of architect-industrial designer Dieter Sieger, who designed the Domani faucet.

"That was the introduction of the first truly high-design faucet," says Jon Spector, director of operations for Dornbracht USA in Duluth, Ga. "The response from consumers was great."

So great, in fact, that the company still uses top architects and designers to develop its products.

If the early '80s represented the low point for products, the ride has been dramatically uphill ever since. Manufacturers are churning out a dizzying array of stuff, in a range of styles and colors and price points. And as these companies wise up to the importance of good design, they are increasingly likely to rely on architects and designers for guidance, says Spector.

Name brands
Hoesch, Dornbracht, and Duravit—companies that offer the Dreamscape suite by architect Michael Graves, the doyen of product design—have now collaborated with Italian architect Massimo Iosa Ghini to introduce Giorno. The collection includes tubs, whirlpools, and shower trays for Hoesch; faucets and accessories for Dornbracht; and ceramics, furniture, and accessories for Duravit.

New York City-based Valli & Valli USA offers high-end door handles and decorative accessories designed by Graves, plus selections by Richard Meier, Mario Bellini, Norman Foster, Adam Tihany, and Renzo Mongiardino. The roster at Astoria, N.Y.—based Baldinger Architectural Lighting also boasts Graves and Meier, along with Robert A.M. Stern, the late Charles Pfister, and Kevin Walz, whose unique collection incorporates DuPont Corian.

Brooklyn, N.Y.—based FSB, the German handle manufacturer, uses the services of architects to bring some excitement to

continued on page 108
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Circle no. 323
the hardware market, says Patrick Coppee, export manager in Brakel, Germany. His company has tapped the talents of Richard Rogers, Nicholas Grimshaw, Hans Kollhoff, and Josef Paul Kleihues.

“It’s not about creating a new line of door handles that can be sold to the richest 100 people,” says Coppee. “We want broader appeal, so we try to stay popular with good design. And it has worked extremely well for us.”

Ron Rezek is hoping a similar collaboration will work for his company. Until recently, Rezek, an industrial designer and founder of the Ashland, Ore.-based Modern Fan Co., had designed all of his company’s products. No longer. Modern Fan now offers two new fans by Laurinda Spear.

Why the change? “Our products are applied architecturally,” Rezek says, “and the fans are often specified by the architect. I felt that it would be ideal to have Laurinda’s insights into the ceiling fan, which isn’t used in all parts of the country as heavily as it is in her neighborhood.” The company’s “unspoken” plan is to add a product every year using an outside designer, though it may not always be an architect.

Spear, who also designs for HBF, Formica, and Skyline Design, enjoys doing products and being able to “specify them in our own projects,” she says. “I wouldn’t necessarily say there is a lack of quality products, but it’s nice to have things that fit into our own design sensibilities.”

nothing like it From all accounts, many other architects share her feelings. Whether for purely practical reasons—the exact product they need doesn’t exist—or for the pure joy of meeting a new challenge, they are striking out on their own, designing and manufacturing products that fit their own work.

Bruce Tomb designed his Sacred Basin in 1984, both as a sculptural piece of art and because there was nothing like it at the time. “The product was first conceived as a piece of furniture, so it was very radical,” he says.

He went on to develop that piece of art into a sand-cast vessel basin with a rough-textured exterior and a satin-polished interior. Known as the IF Basin, it comes in white bronze, silicon bronze, brass, and aluminum. Tomb used to sell about six each year, primarily from a New York City showroom. Today, his company, Infinite Fittings, sells about 200 of the $2,000 basins a year, from showrooms across the country. Tomb attributes the remarkable increase to consumers, who he says are more discerning and educated than ever before and want sophisticated, well-designed products. Tomb is also working on other experimental products and will soon launch a new console for his basins, as well as a faucet set.

When architect John N. White Jr., AIA, and designer Cynthia R. Sours returned from practicing in Europe, where many standard products boast custom-level quality, they discovered a very different set of circumstances here. “When we came back to the States in ’94, we realized that if a product doesn’t come out of a suite or a graphic standard, it had to be custom,” says Sours.

“We had an application where we wanted to use some really cool sinks, but we couldn’t find something that we liked,” White says. “That was the starting point.” White and Sours, owners of INOX Design in Atlanta, designed and manufactured the Cu Collection, their own line of copper sinks and pedestals. The collection contains six sinks and one pedestal, all of which are handcrafted and top-coated with a clear gloss. Available in 16 showrooms across the country, the fixtures sell for $600 to $3,000.

great news Because of building codes and the rigorous UL approval process, it can be difficult for architects to design and manufacture some types of products, says Jack Moses, principal of Moses Architecture in Highland Park, Ill. But limited selection and cost make other categories ripe for customization, such as casings, baseboards, and fireplaces.

“Some products out there are cheap and the offerings are really bad,” Moses says. “Take garage and entry doors. We do a lot of projects where we can’t find the right size, shape, or specie.” His solution: Chicago-based Showcase Furniture, a company he launched to manufacture his original furniture designs and customizable garage and entry doors.

The good news is that there are now enough manufactured products to suit most project needs, because manufacturers are finally catching up with more sophisticated sensibilities, says Tomb. And the great news is that if you can’t find a suitable product, there’s an architect out there somewhere thinking about how to create it for you.
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Circle no. 71
In Maine, wood-burning stoves warm the heart of many a house. So Isaac Robbins, an associate with Elliott & Elliott Architects in Blue Hill, wasn’t surprised when he got a call about a project involving one. But this was no ordinary wood stove—it was a sleek contemporary unit designed by the Danish company RAIS. The clients, a Central European-born couple who love the Bauhaus Style, wanted Robbins to devise a stand for the stove. They envisioned a structure that would work functionally—raising the stove up off the floor and providing storage for wood—as well as aesthetically, melding with the house’s decidedly Modern decor and complementing its black-and-white palette and Le Corbusier chairs. (For photographs of the house, see residential architect’s March 2001 story about Elliott & Elliott. The stove appears on page 55.)

Other issues were important, too. Because the house’s concrete floors contain radiant-heat tubing, Robbins needed to come up with an alternative to the conventional method of securing the stand directly to the floor with fasteners.

The metal cabinet brackets the wood stove with an ample log bin and shelving for kindling and newspapers. Folded metal panels separate these storage units from the stove itself.

Illustrations: Rick Vitullo

continued on page 112
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hands on

Robbins' solution? A simple but elegant freestanding "cabinet," visually light but physically substantial enough to hold the stove firmly in place without fasteners. By using a double layer of perforated metal sheets across the back of the unit, Robbins created an air space that serves as a heat shield, preventing burns. Stock materials kept costs down: The structure consists of a 1-foot-8-inch by 1-foot-8-inch by 2-foot-3-inch grid of ³/₈-inch-square steel tubing lined with perforated metal panels. Metal spacers at the fastener connections keep the panels afloat, off the frame—an arrangement, says Robbins, that eliminated the need for perfect seams. For safety's sake, the panels' sharp edges are rolled.

The completed stand presents the stove's warm front to the living room; its back side serves as a stylish divider for the dining room. Thus it enhances both the stove it harbors and the space it occupies. RA

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

Architect Robbins left the ground-welded joints between tubing sections exposed and unpainted, setting up a distinct contrast between the tubing's natural black finish and the shiny raw weld; the clients have subsequently waxed the steel to hold that finish permanently.

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How has Aspen changed over the years?
Up to 1984, it was kind of dead. A 1985 tax-law change and construction of the gondola generated interest and brought a lot of people with money.

What is it like designing a house for a famous client?
Fortunately, most of the movie stars and high-profile people we have worked with are pretty down-to-earth. They are normal by Hollywood standards.

What do your Aspen clients typically ask for?
Most often a log home. In every case, we have been able to take them from a log home, which is fraught with problems, and show them an alternative that has the same mountain flair.

What is the smallest home you’ve designed for a famous person?
2,800 square feet.

What is the largest?
73,000 square feet.

Do you ever talk clients out of square footage?
Yes, all the time. We sometimes cut it in half.

Do you give clients what they want, even if you disagree?
I never say no, but I ask them why that feature is important. Invariably, we come up with something more appropriate.

How do you pick your clients?
I select on personality and taste as much as I do on the project. I turn down more work than I accept. It’s a matter of the quality of the client and the quality of the project.

Do you ski?
Yes.

Have you ever hit a tree?
I have never hurt myself—at least not yet.

Ever met a potential client on the slopes?
Yes. I’ve met clients on the slopes, in the hot tub, on airplanes. It’s amazing.

What else do you do in your spare time, besides ski?
Design, go on architectural study tours, read, play drums, play golf, and fly my plane.

What kind of plane do you have?
A 210 Turbo, which seats six passengers.

Do you live in a house that you designed?
No. An Aspenite named Jack Walls designed it when he was a student of Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin West. ra

Charles Cunniffe, AIA, is principal and CEO of Charles Cunniffe Architects in Aspen, Colo. The firm won a 2000 Gold Nugget Honor Award for the Fireside Townhomes in Aspen.