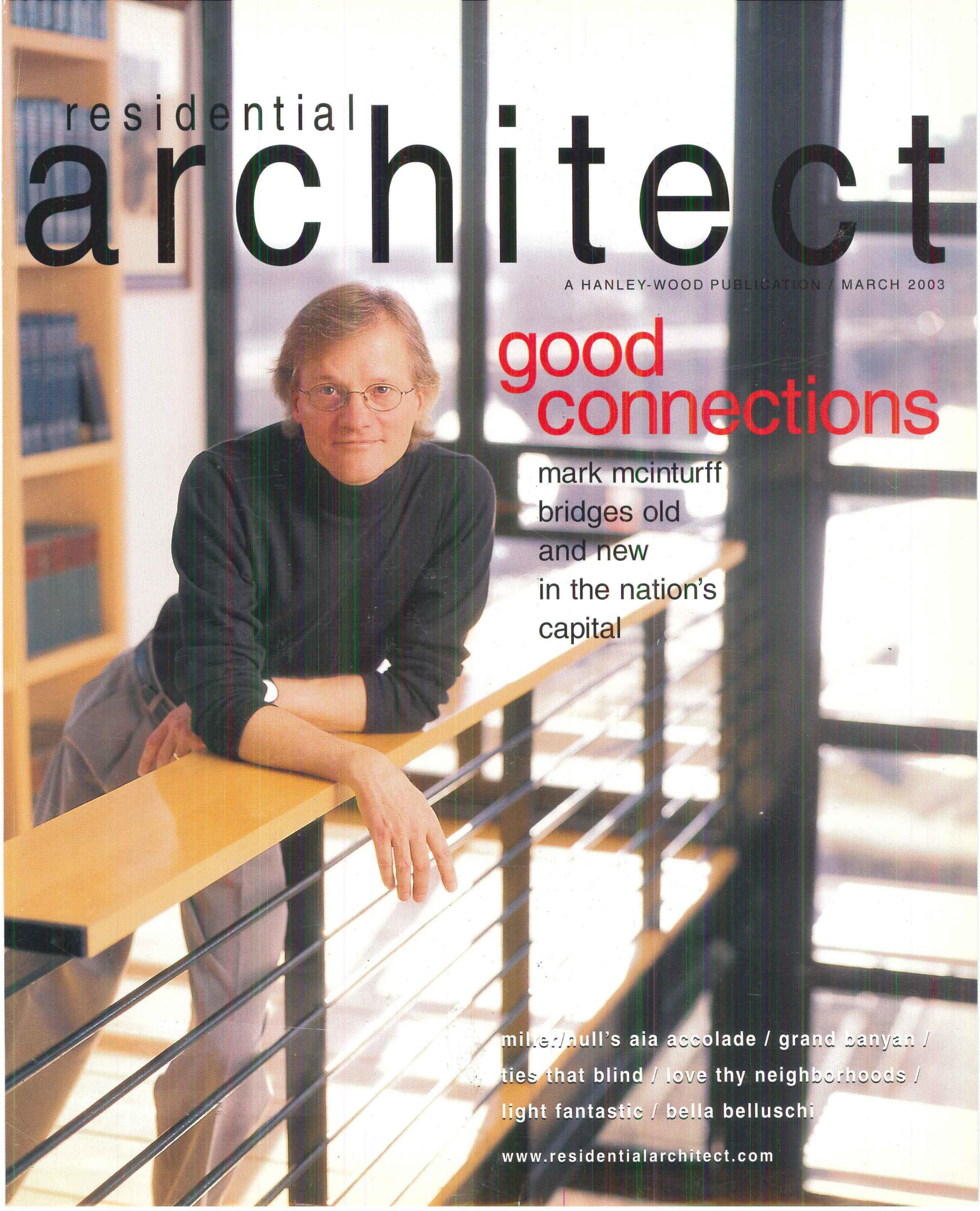

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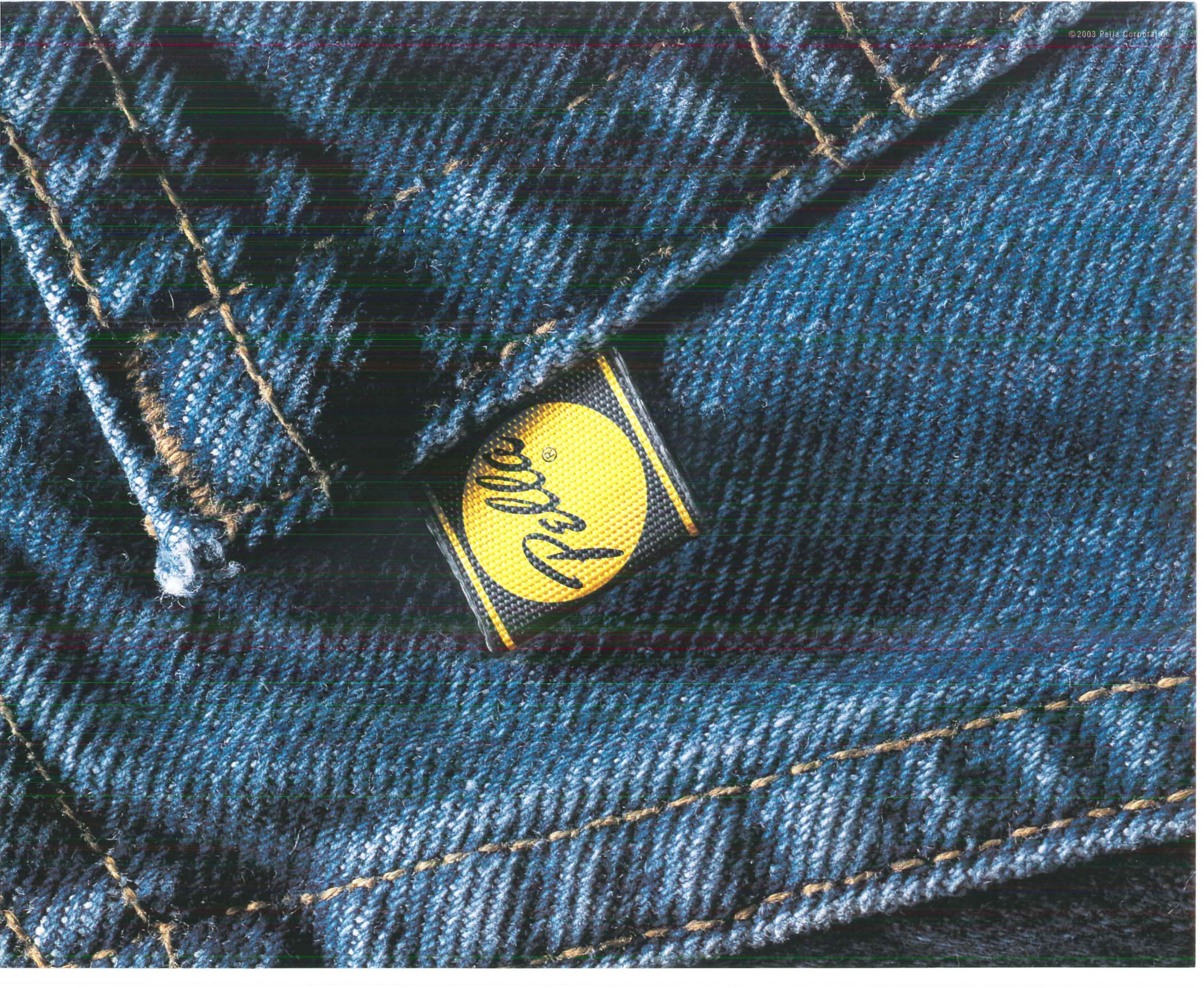
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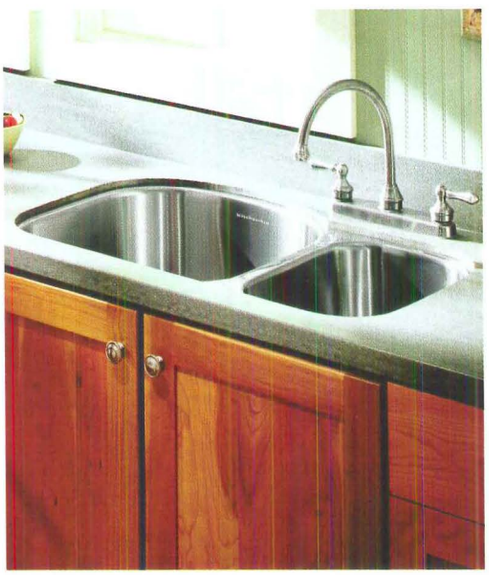

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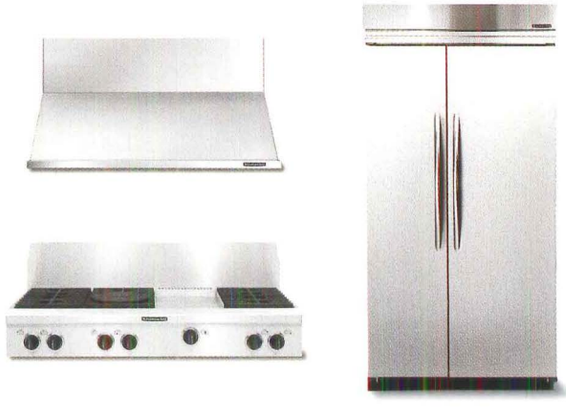

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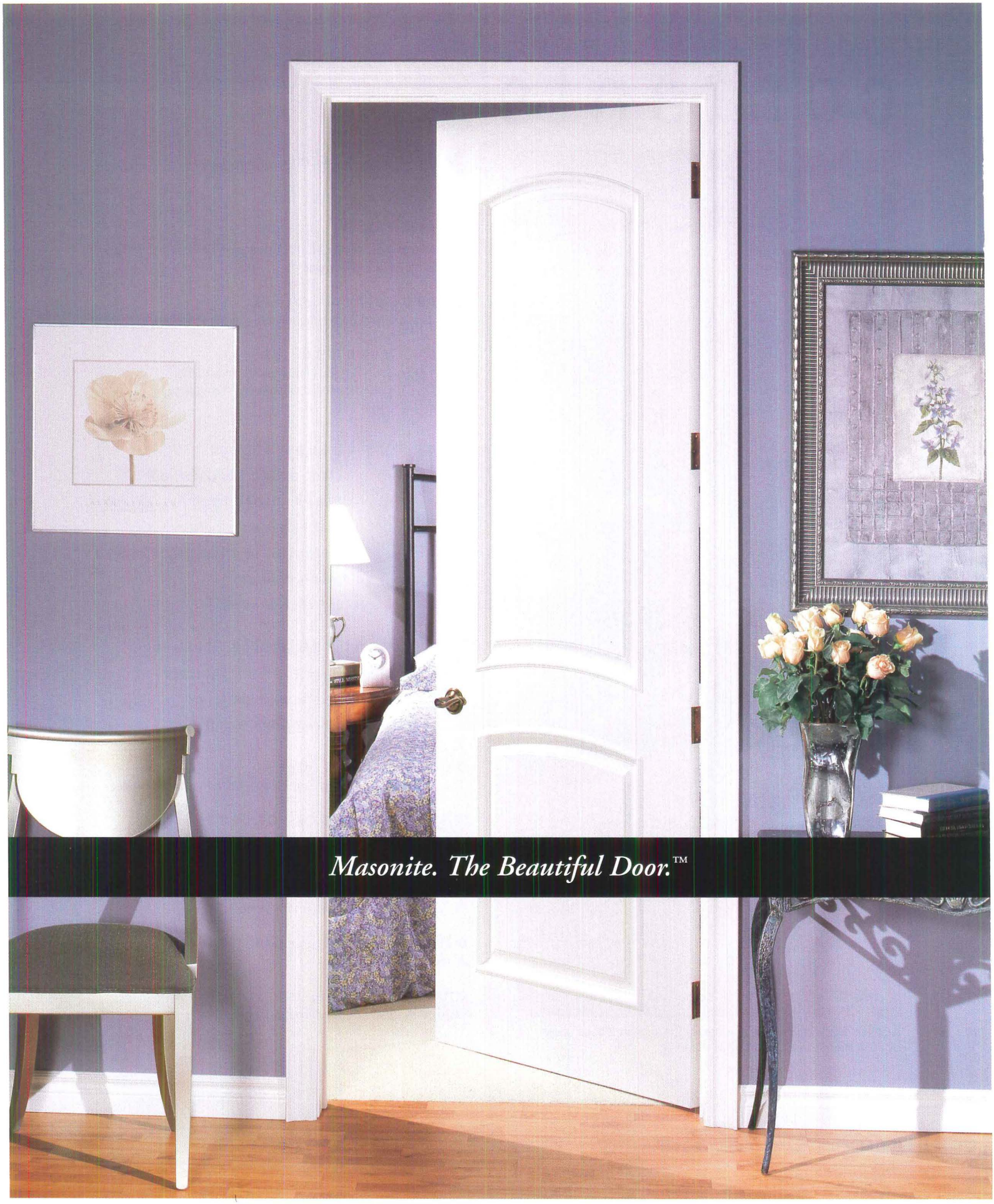
contents

Architect Mark McInturff is a wizard in the kitchen. Above photo by Julia Heine; cover photo by Bill Cramer.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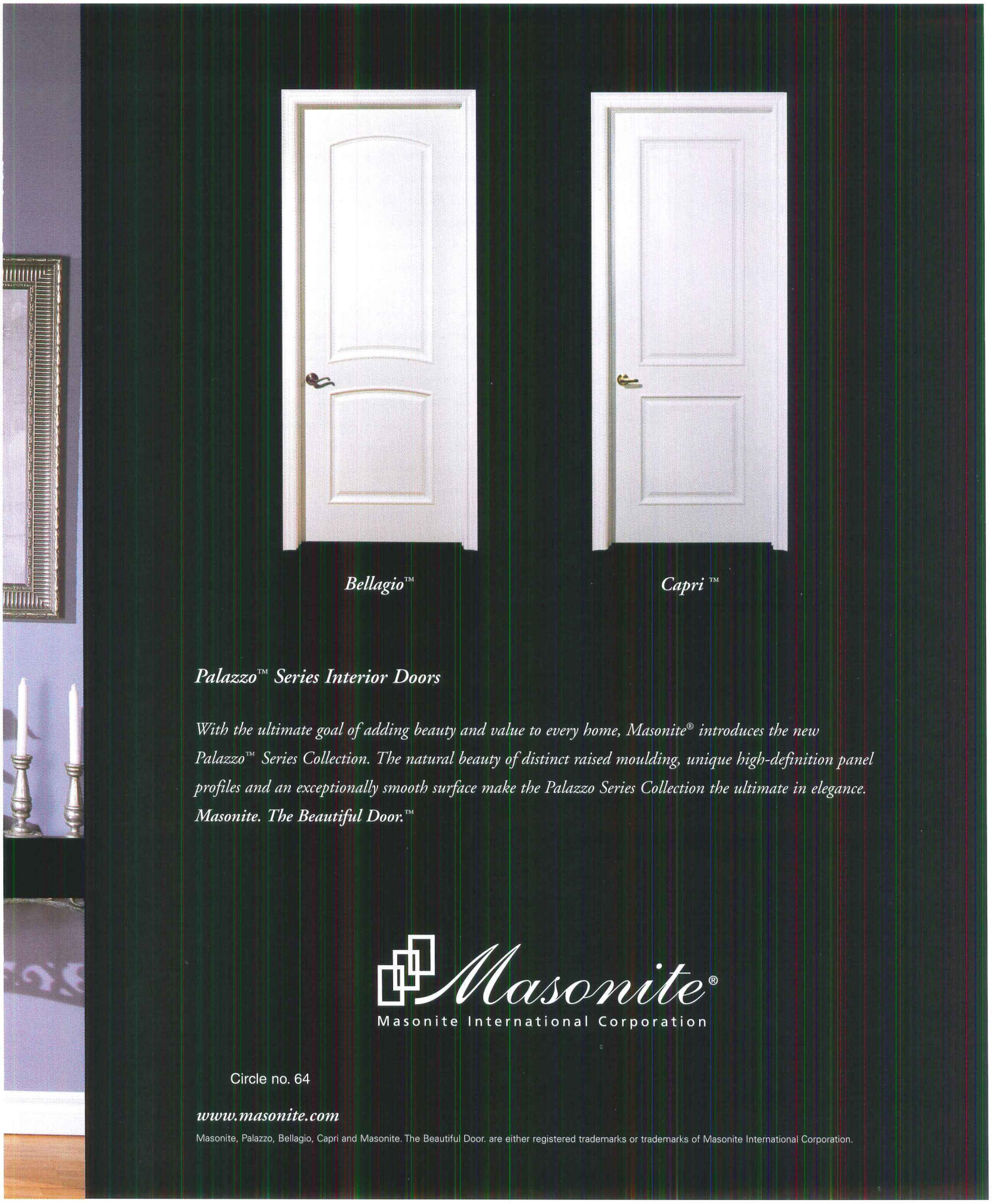

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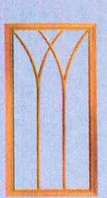

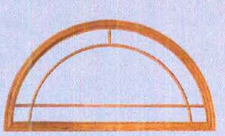

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crash test your floor plans

would an extraordinary circumstance expose flaws in your design?

Mark Robert Halper

by s. claire conroy

Automobile manufacturers do an admirable job of tailoring their vehicles to consumers' daily lives—their tastes, needs, and budget. Then they take their designs one step further and plan for the disaster everyone hopes will never happen: an accident. Your clients look to you to design a house that works for their daily lives, but the best architects also help clients plan for the unexpected ways they may need their house to work for them in the future.

How would your floor plans weather a snowstorm that trapped a family of four indoors for days? How would they assist or hinder someone with a broken leg? What if an adult son returned home to live with his parents for a while? A house that functions for its intended purpose is fine and dandy. It's definitely your first and foremost consideration. But nothing will expose basic flaws in a house faster than an unanticipated strain on its resources. I think this is one area where architects can prove their mettle against builder "designed" houses. You know how houses live, and you've designed them for clients of every different ilk. You can balance the multiple concerns of square footage, cost, aesthetics, and function—without making the devil-on-the-shoulder sacrifice.

I'm thinking about these things right now because I just got caught in my house after 2 feet of snow fell in the course of 24 hours. You're reading this in March; it happened in the Washington, D.C., area in mid-February. My partner and I had two friends visiting from a warmer climate. Four of us were stuck in the house for days. We're all still on friendly terms, but I learned a few things about my house. For the most part, it functions commendably. The guest room is on the first floor, near a full bathroom that doubles as the powder room. The master bedroom is upstairs at a nice acoustical remove from the guests. There are enough areas in the fairly open plan for people to gather to socialize or separate to do their own thing.

Taken as a whole, there are more strengths than flaws in the floor plan. However, one problem really vexes me: There's a pinch point between the kitchen and the breakfast nook. When one person stands in the space between my sink counter and the run of cabinets across from it, no one can pass through to the nook. It's a simple annoyance when just two people are in the room; it's a major pain when a quartet wants to hang out during meal prep. During the snowstorm sequestration, it drove me crazy. The architect who owned the house before me and designed the kitchen remodel may have thought the extra cabinet space was worth the periodic traffic constriction. I don't agree. Better to have left out that cabinet and allowed successive owners to add a freestanding unit if they wanted extra storage.

Flexibility is the key to an enduring floor plan. Sometimes the best decision is to allow for other decisions down the road. Create a long list of "what-ifs" with your clients—determine what their priorities are now, but explore also how they might change over time and circumstance. Make sure your plan is one that can weather the occasional storm. ra

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

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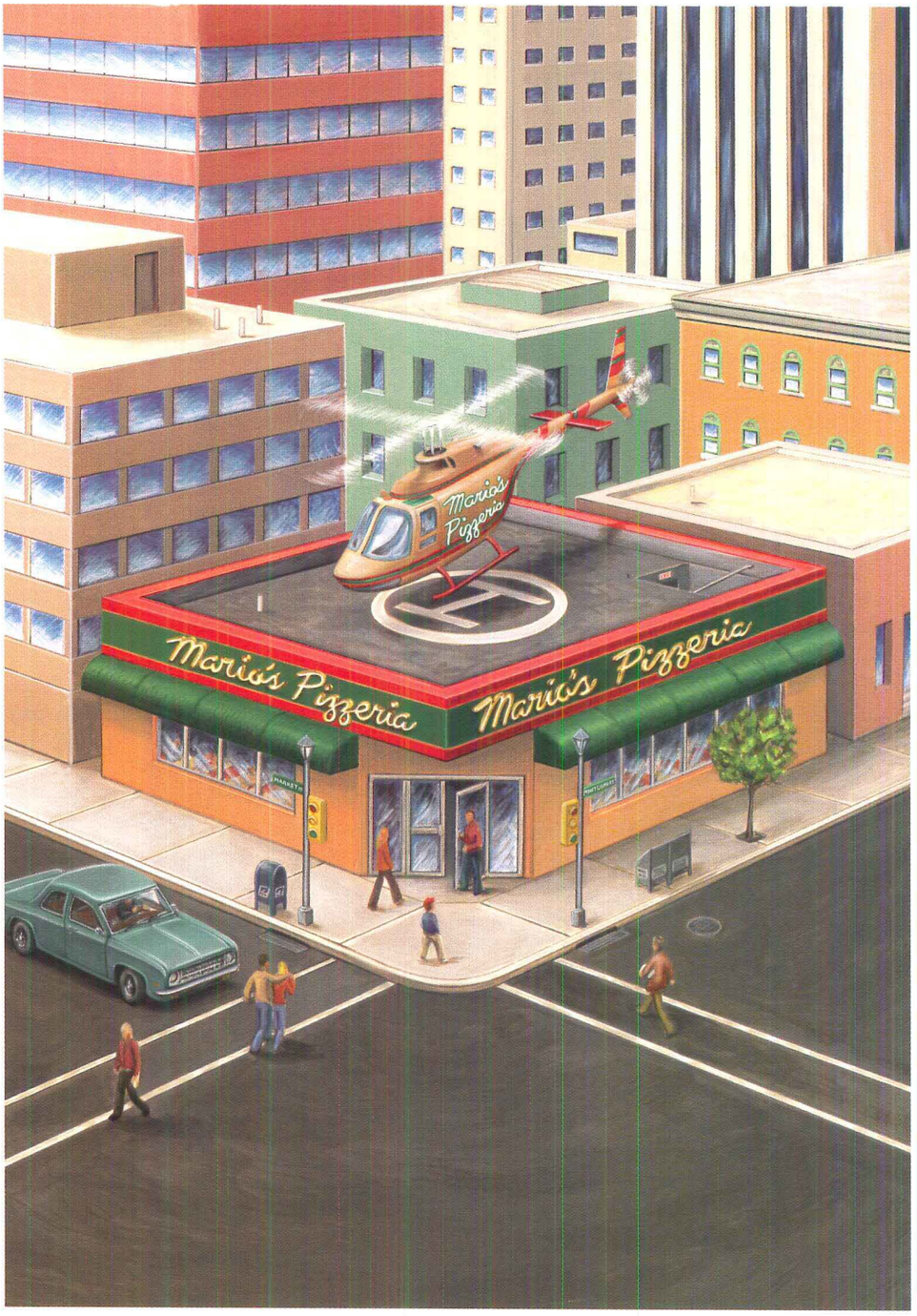

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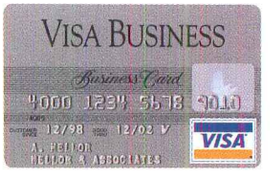

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letters

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quantify, quantify

Even after 14 years in the residential architectural design business, I am surprised when the subject of architectural fees comes up. It is an ancient discussion, and one that never seems to reach any sort of resolution. Like Mr. Fania ("Letters," November–December 2002), I agree that our fee structure could stand a kick in the pants. But I also think that such a move might not achieve the desired result.

The fact is that those of us who value architectural design are clamoring for the same clients—the few who value what we do. When we're able to land those jobs, it's a great opportunity for us. It's a chance to use all of our skills and talent, and hopefully to be properly compensated for our time, experience, and knowledge.

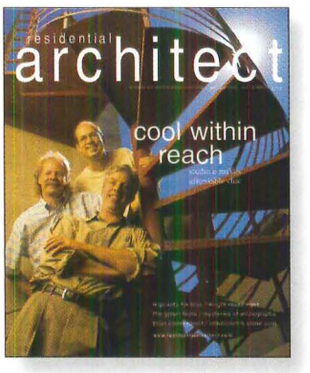
But it is also a fact that the architectural profession abandoned long ago the arena of single-family home design for the middle class. That happened in part because the middle class has always been more interested in creating a nice place to live on their terms while we insisted on jamming "architecture" down their throats on ours.

That the void thus created was filled by builders is not a surprise—nor is the fact that homes built for the middle class often exhibit less "architecture" than we would like.

It is a simple matter of economics: What do architects bring to single-family design for the middle class that is of significant value to them? Until we can answer that question in a way that captures the imagination of the middle class *and* demonstrates the value of our input, most homeowners will continue to start the design process with the builder, and we will continue to find ourselves competing on the basis of fee more often than we would like.

"what do architects bring to single-family design for the middle class that is of significant value to them?"

—richard taylor, aia



Mr. Fania's admonishment is well-placed but unrealistic. If the cost of design services on the typical single-family home were to be raised to where we'd all like it to be, we'd simply be making it easier for many potential clients to decide *not* to use architects. Higher fees will not enlighten the public.

The most productive route to achieving a significant across-the-board raise for architects is for us to get involved in the process of developing and building. Architects must be the ones taking the financial risk, putting something new out there in the cornfields, rather than asking developers and builders to risk their businesses on our personal visions of what kind of housing the public should have access to. If we can prove with our own resources that better design sells, the parade of willing clients will form right behind us.

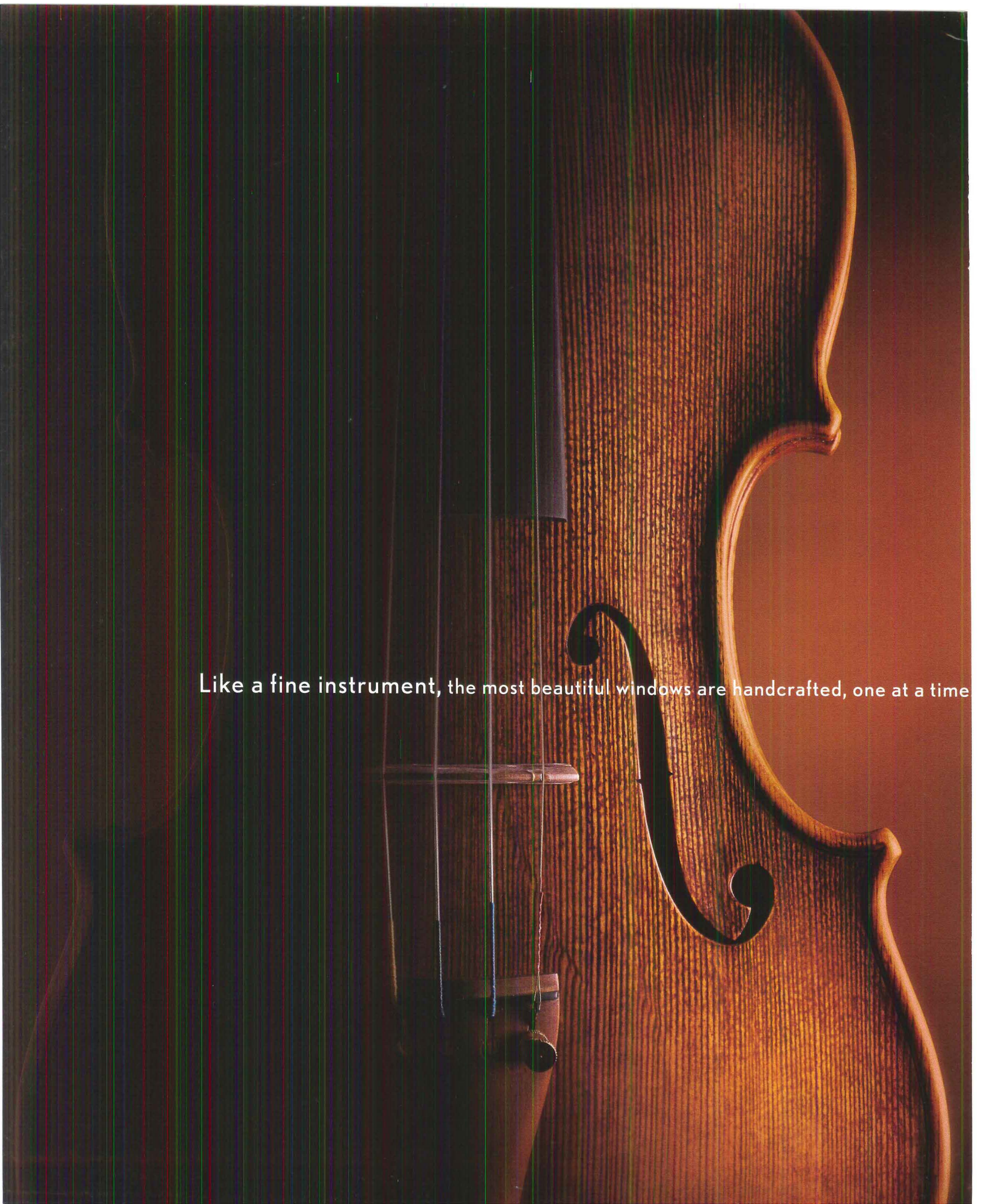
In the meantime, offering any form of better design in the existing delivery systems of the single-family home market is a step in the right direction. Residential architects may someday regard Don Gardner and Sarah Susanka as the pioneers who opened the door for the rest of us.

Richard Taylor, AIA
Richard Taylor Architects
Dublin, Ohio

what in an acronym?

Did I miss something? I have noticed people adding letters of all kinds after their names, and I am curious as to when some of these became recognized as an official part on one's title. As far as I know, only such initials as M.D., Ph.D., P.E., AIA, etc., are acceptable to add to one's name. When I see a Suzy Schmoozey C.L.U.A.B.C.D. or R.A. or AIBD, I wonder where these people got the notion that any of these letters represent a recognized professional title.

Rob Thacker
by e-mail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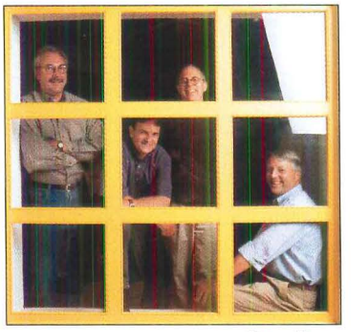
home front

tips and trends from the world of residential design

sustainable success

Miller/Hull Partnership's Modern, site-sensitive houses have been cleaning up at design awards competitions for years. Now the firm itself has been honored—with The American Institute of Architects' 2003 Architecture Firm Award. The 45-person, Seattle-based firm joins an illustrious collection of previous winners, many of them much larger practices—such as international giants Gensler and Skidmore Owings & Merrill. "Even though Miller/Hull is small, its national and global impact has been significant," says Bruce Blackmer, AIA, a member of the AIA's board of directors, which selected the firm.



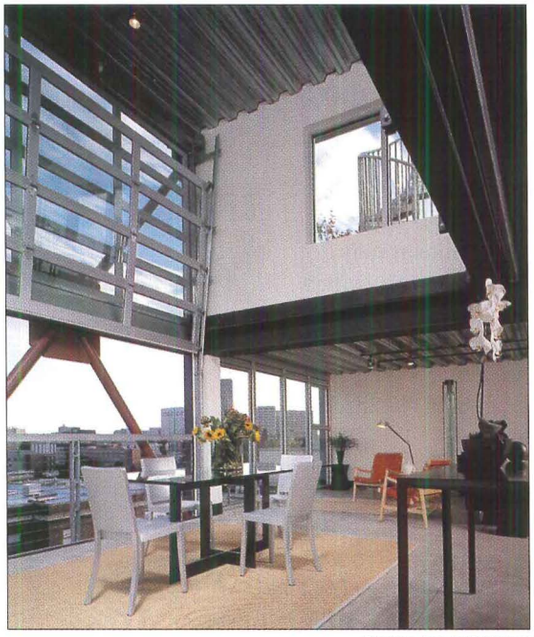
Danny Turner

The board admired Miller/Hull's commitment to regionally appropriate design. "Their architecture is such a contrast to so many other buildings we see that could be built anywhere in the world," says Blackmer. Sustainability became part of the 25-year-old firm's vocabulary long before it was fashionable; that, too, helped win over the board. "Our interest in sustainability started with our early residential work," says principal and founding partner Bob Hull, FAIA. Miller/Hull's collaborative approach to design, unusual in the age of star architects, also impressed judges.

1310 East Union's metal detailing, exposed concrete floors, and lofty ceiling heights drive home the Modern aesthetic of Miller/Hull partners (left, from left) Norm Strong, AIA; Craig Curtis, AIA; Dave Miller, FAIA; and Bob Hull, FAIA.

Hull views the award as a new challenge for himself, his partners, and his staff. "Every project we do now needs to be really, really good," he says. "We need to keep on proving ourselves."—*meghan drueding*

Miller/Hull showed its multifamily mettle with 1310 East Union, a condominium project in Seattle. Rooftop terraces (above), balconies (left), and double-height glass doors (below) make the most of sunny days.



Photos: James F. Housel

"even thought miller/hull is small, its national and global impact has been significant."

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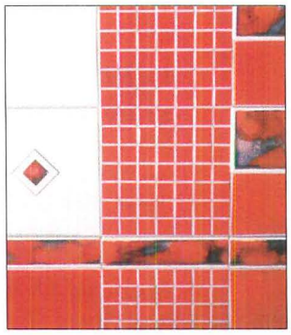
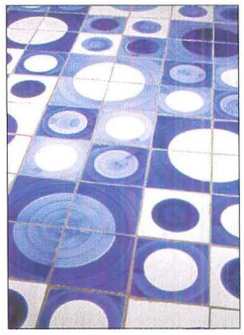
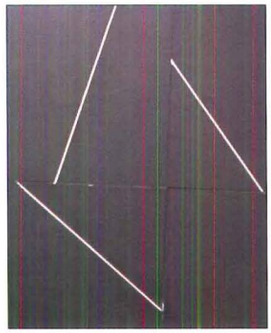
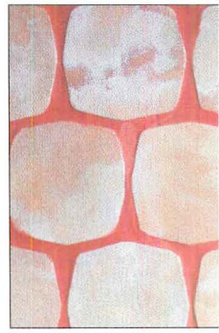








tile, italian style

It's no secret Italians are on the cutting edge of design—their cars, clothes, and casas are cases in point. So it's no surprise the country hosts the world's leading tile design show. Cersaie, as it's called, is the industry's Fashion Week. Held each fall in Bologna, Italy, the show provides more than 100,000 architects, designers, distributors, and journalists with a sneak peek at the next new tile trends. The following year, we watch them filter across the Atlantic to U.S. shores.

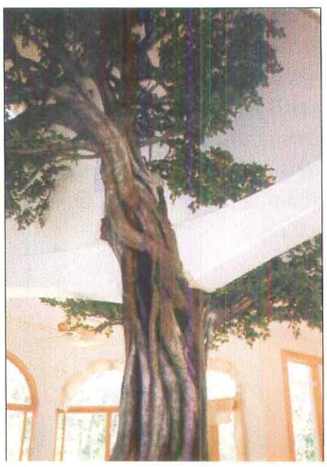
"The Italians approach tile production as an artist does a canvas," says Christine Abbate, a Brooklyn, N.Y.-based representative for the Italian Tile Board. Indeed, artistry and innovation go hand-in-hand. Among the trendsetters for this year: soft cements—for a user-friendly industrial aesthetic; big, bold colors; stone looks done in ceramic; metal inlays of copper and stainless steel; wood inlays; and sinuous textures that invite touch. Pop Art pieces, ethnic prints, and a plethora of racy rectangles are styles to watch for as well.

For availability in the United States, call the Italian Trade Commission at 212.980.1500 or do a tile search at www.italytiles.com.—*nigel f. maynard*

grand banyan

The 25-foot-tall banyan tree in this great room of a Potomac, Md., home needs no watering. Or pruning. Or sunlight for that matter. Because it's a big faker—a *really* big faker, with cantilevered limbs spanning 30 feet across the two-story room and into adjacent entry, kitchen, and breakfast areas. Made by San Diego, Calif-based Naturemaker Monumental Trees, the banyan is not just a pretty plant pretender. It serves a real function: The steel frame, covered with composite bark and silk leaves, conceals one of the home's structural columns.

"Most of our residential clients use our trees as indoor sculpture," says Naturemaker's co-owner Gary Hanick. Other residential applications include stumps for seating and leafy additions to children's rooms. Founded 20 years ago by Hanick and designer Bennett Abrams, who developed a method for mummifying plant life through a wax displacement process, the company now employs 50 full-time staff—including drafters, engineers, welders, sculptors, and painters—to fashion its foliage. Prices range from $25,000 to $250,000. —*shelley d. hutchins*



Each tree is handcrafted in Naturemaker's 60,000-square-foot studio in San Diego, Calif., and then shipped in pieces to the site. Once there, an artist directs installation and adds final flourishes.

Courtesy Naturemaker Monumental Trees

calendar


Michael Mathers

custom home design awards 2003

entry deadline: march 21
binder deadline: april 4

Houses designed for a specific client and site may be submitted by builders, architects, remodelers, designers, or other industry professionals. Winners will be featured in the September 2003 issue of *Custom Home* magazine. Shown is the merit winner for custom home under 3,000 square feet by Estes/Twombly Architects, Newport, R.I. Call 202.736.3407 for information.

sustainable design

deadline: april 4

Cosponsored by the Boston Society of Architects and the New York AIA, this competition is open to any built project in the world designed by any design professional. Winners will be showcased at the BSA/Build Boston Design Celebration. Call 617.951.1433 or visit www.architects.org for requirements.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denver art museum
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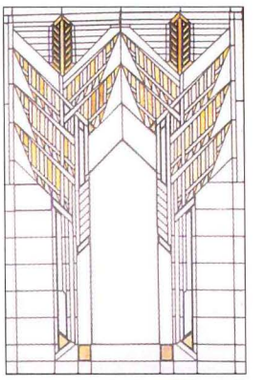
Pierre Bonnard was a colorist known for domestic interiors and Parisian street scenes. The artist, whose work spanned many important periods in French art history, died in 1947 at 79. This exhibition comprises about 100 oil paintings, drawings, photographs, prints, and sculpture. Visit www.denverartmuseum.org or call 720.865.5000 for museum hours.

fantastic

massachusetts museum of contemporary art
north adams, mass.
march 8–spring 2004

Utopian ideologies mix with paranormal postulations in this exhibition encompassing photography, large-scale installations, architecture, print, and inventions. Five contemporary artists from around the world, including British-born architect Nils Norman, will showcase their visions of suburban bliss meets alien invasion. For additional details, call 413.664.4481 or visit www.massmoca.org.


Courtesy Richard W. Bock Sculpture Collection, Greenville College, Greenville, Ill.

light screens: the leaded glass of frank lloyd wright

smithsonian american art museum,
renwick gallery, washington, d.c.
march 14–july 20

From 1886 to 1923, Wright designed more than 4,500 windows for 160 buildings. About 50 of his glazed opus are included in the exhibition. Shown is a sample window from the Susan Lawrence Dana house in Springfield, Ill., built in 1902. Visit www.americanart.si.edu or call 202.275.1693 for more information.

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"Design Matters! Poetry + Proof," is this year's convention theme. Architects may choose from some 130 seminars to maintain state licensure and to fulfill the AIA's continuing education requirements. More than 600 exhibitors will display their wares on the show floor. For details, call 800.242.3837 or visit www.aiaconvention.com.

continuing exhibits

Architecture + Water, through March 23, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 415.357.4000; **Tadao Ando: Architect**, through April 27, Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass., 413.458.2303; **Tobacco: Architectural Photographs by Maxwell MacKenzie**, through May 2, The Octagon, Washington, D.C.; 202.638.3221; **David Adler, Architect: Elements of Style**, through May 18, The Art Institute of Chicago, 312.443.3600; **Big & Green: Toward Sustainable Architecture in the 21st Century**, through June 22, National Building Museum, Washington, D.C., 202.272.2448.

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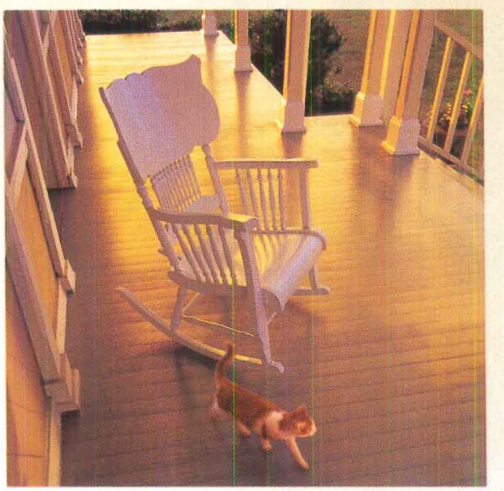

{Tennessee Williams' home ~ Columbus, Mississippi}

When the great playwright Tennessee Williams wrote *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, he created formidable, enduring roles. But, when the Columbus, Mississippi, Chamber of Commerce decided to restore his birth home, one thing was clear – Williams' front porch hadn't been built of the same stuff as his characters. Restorers looked into possible materials. Most would require aggressive maintenance, something the Columbus Chamber of Commerce really wanted to avoid. Enter Tendura®.

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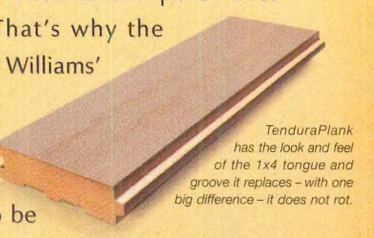

TenduraPlank has the look and feel of the 1x4 tongue and groove it replaces – with one big difference – it does not rot.

People say the kitchen is the heart of the home. Used to be the tongue-and-groove front porch was its soul. It was where we thought, planned, and dreamed. Where the drama that is our lives took place. With TenduraPlank, the traditional wood front porch is back. With the warmth and tradition of simpler days, but the timelessness of great theatre.

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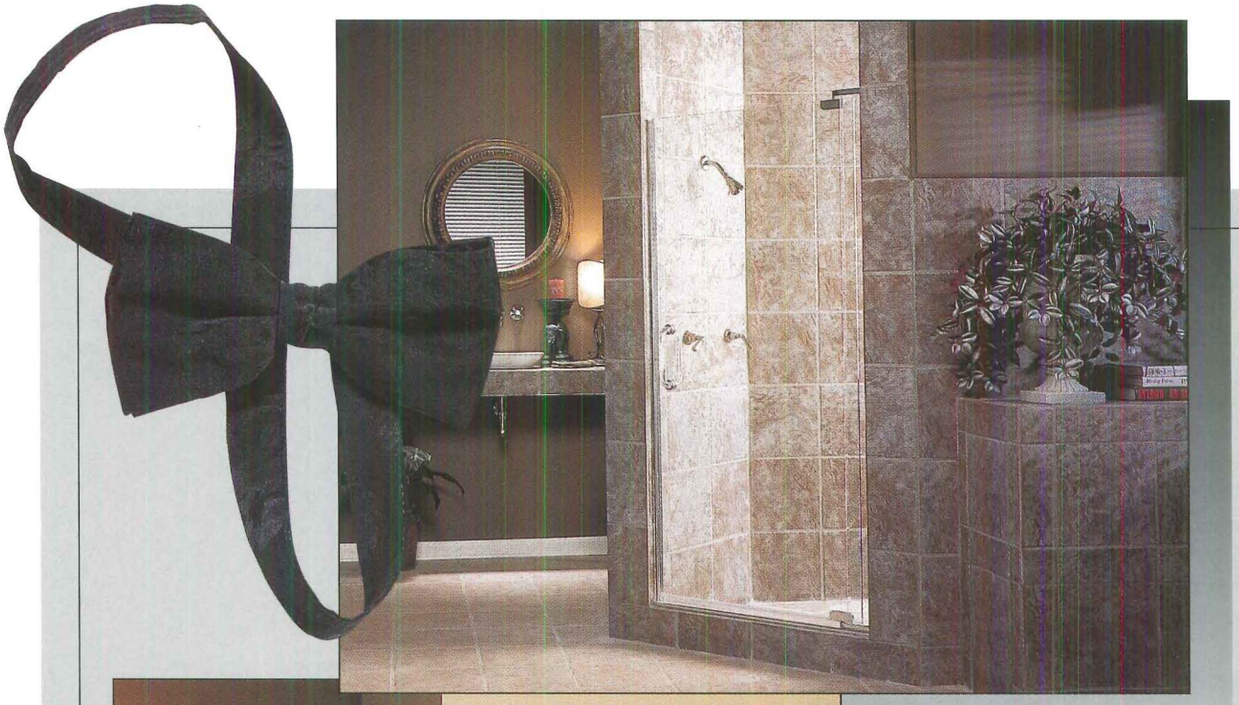

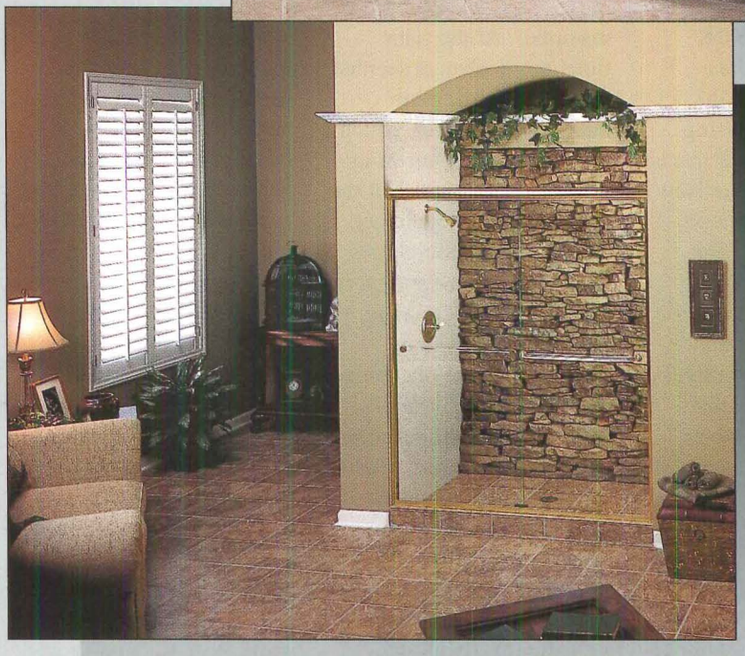

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perspective

here comes the neighborhood

why urban mixed-use development works.

by julie eizenberg

Koning Eizenberg envisioned a new neighborhood anchor as their contribution to *The New York Times Magazine*'s piece on rebuilding Lower Manhattan. Their mixed-use project combined seniors housing and centers for seniors and teens.

Courtesy Koning Eizenberg Architecture

Our 20th century cities were shaped with the best of intentions. The idea, I guess, was that by isolating the components of the city and approaching each in terms of streamlined processes and functional determinants, you would make cities more pleasant places to live and work. Sure, and TV dinners were supposed to make home life more enjoyable. Both notions were based on an abstracted and narrow view of daily life.

City planners focused on developing separate, specialized areas for working, living, and shopping, while also moving traffic more efficiently among those areas. The connection and the orientation was vehicular time and space. Architects were (and often still are) expected to stick to one of those specialties.

You know the story: "So, Julie, what building type do you work in? ... Oh, I'm sorry, we're looking for a firm that specializes in office buildings." Compartmentalizing architects' work continues to inhibit change by discouraging the questioning of norms and favoring conventional thinking.

city comeback

As early as 1961, Jane Jacobs talked about the value of mixing housing with retail and office space, as was the case in her New York City neighborhood, Greenwich Village. She spoke of the pleasure of daily living in this context, of the constant interaction and sense of community. I would love to think that she alone inspired the re-evaluation of this country's many abandoned city cores, but I doubt it. I think the initial revitalization also was motivated by efficiency and utility. Many looked at the empty buildings in inner cities and saw a waste of space and resources. At the same time, urban change seemed to be accelerating too rapidly for comfort, which precipitated an interest in preserving the past. But the psychological, regulatory, and economic boundaries that inhibited investment in revitalization were huge, and change was slow.

The artist loft phenomenon in the early '80s helped build confidence in city redevelopment. Artists acted as urban pioneers, willing to take a risk to achieve the lifestyle they sought. In turn, cities eased building code requirements for habitable dwellings directed at artists, and this encouraged loft conversions. In many cities, housing took over abandoned warehouse space, and retail and offices followed. It became clear that many people wanted urban neighborhood lifestyles and that money could be made in addressing this trend.

Around the same time, another wave of change happened. To help alleviate housing shortages, many cities updated zoning codes to allow housing over commercial space in commercial zones. However, in some cities, such as Los Angeles, loans for such projects were not straightforward. Because lenders were fragmented by building type,

continued on page 28

Napa Vineyards, 1932 Citroën, Mountain Hacienda.

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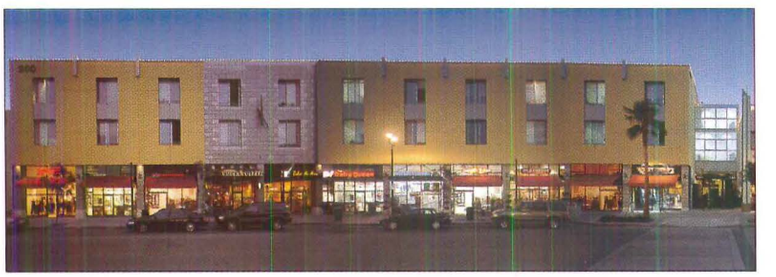
putting together a comprehensive loan for a mixed-use project was difficult.

Meanwhile, the exponential growth in personal computer ownership and Internet access removed the last argument for designing cities according to segregated building uses and "functional efficiency." People could now live and work from anywhere.

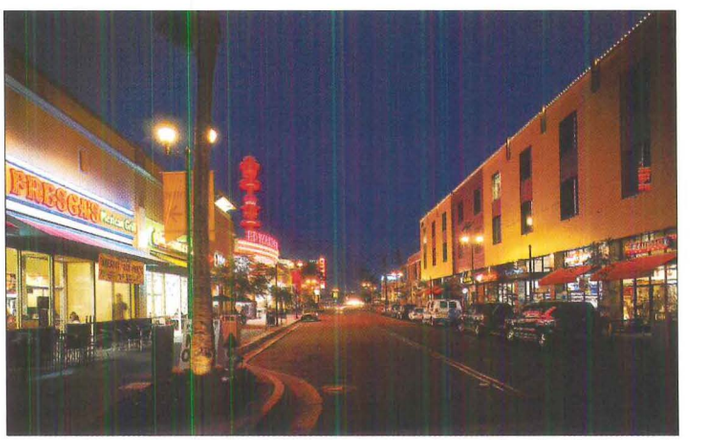
sense of place

So finally we arrived at the real, key question that should inform how cities develop: How do we want to live? Well, Starbucks settled that question. Judging from its popularity, a whole lot of people clearly like the quality of daily life Jacobs wrote about. Starbucks markets itself as a "third place," the term coined by the sociologist Ray Oldenburg. Where the first place is a home and the second place is a workspace, the third place is a community living room where one can do homework, hang out, or have a business meeting. Old city centers with good walking streets have the infrastructure to support a mix of all three "places."

This urban paradigm is beginning to transcend its roots, as cities build people-friendly, mixed-use neighborhoods from scratch. Brea, Calif., deep in suburban Orange County, had no old downtown to revitalize. The city brought in developers to build a new, mixed-use one that included movie theaters, retail, and parking adjacent to medium-density housing.



The firm's loft apartments over retail, part of a new mixed-use downtown for Brea, Calif., cost just $65 a square foot to build. Almost all leased in a single afternoon.



Greg Epstein Photography

Our project there consisted of 32 relatively affordable, loft-style apartments above 12,300 square feet of community retail space, with parking relegated to an adjacent public parking structure. Before construction was even finished, the apartments went on the rental market one Saturday in the summer of 1999. All but two leased that afternoon.

new york story

In Lower Manhattan, the spatial infrastructure of pedestrian-oriented streets and mixed-use buildings had been weakened by insular, mono-culture developments such as the World Trade Center and the West Street auto artery. With the Trade Center gone and redevelopment proposals on the table, *The New York Times Magazine* asked a group of architects—including my partner, Hank Koning, and myself—to devise plans for a more neighborhood-friendly development. Hank and I were asked to contribute a vision for a community center at the north end of the downtown site.

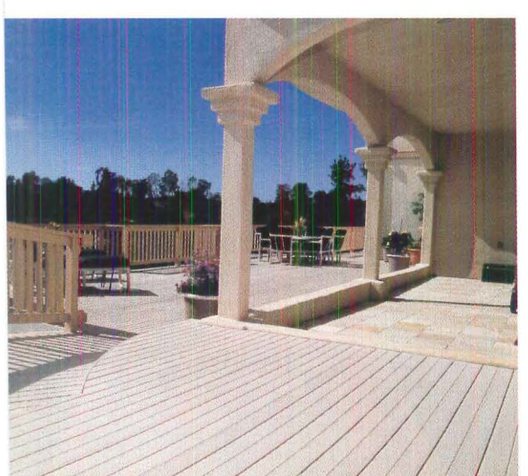
Talks at community meetings revealed that residents desired more access to commercial enterprises. So we designed a mixed-use building, with upper floors containing seniors housing, centers for seniors and teens, community service and conference spaces, public gyms, and a pool. The ground floor holds a bookstore, childcare center, and café. A big atrium links all of these amenities, facilitating social interactions. Shapes, forms, sequence, and texture create a feeling of well-being, not just of institutional services. These things count.

Downtown revitalization imposes a new obligation on cities to consider the caliber of the environments they build. I believe, like many others, that an individual's self-image is based on the quality of his or her daily life. The design of that quotidian environment is not just about meeting functional needs. It's also about achieving the social and spatial connections that architecture can provide. ra

"an individual's self-image is based on the quality of his or her daily life."

Courtesy Koning Eizenberg Architecture

Julie Eizenberg is a principal at Koning Eizenberg Architecture in Santa Monica, Calif.



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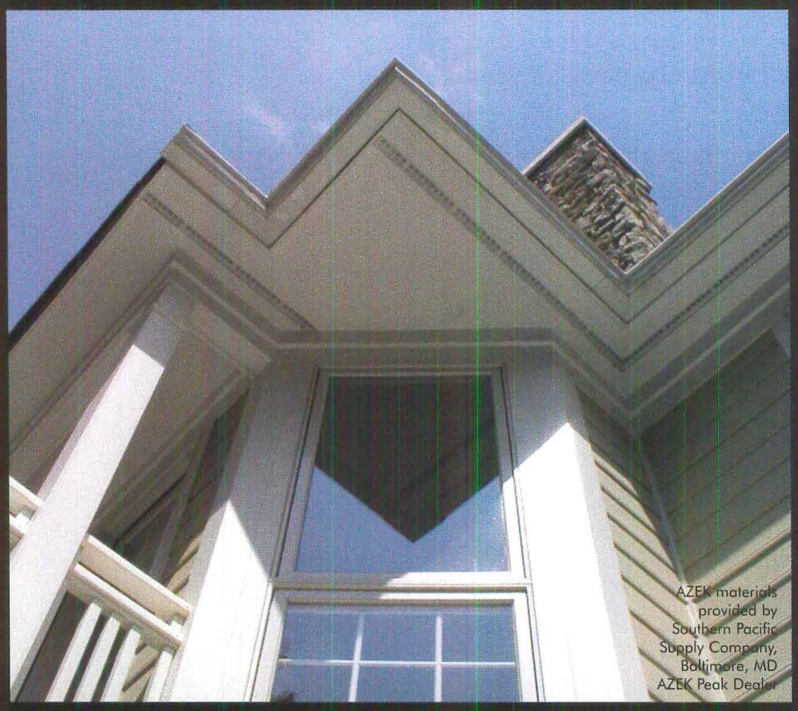

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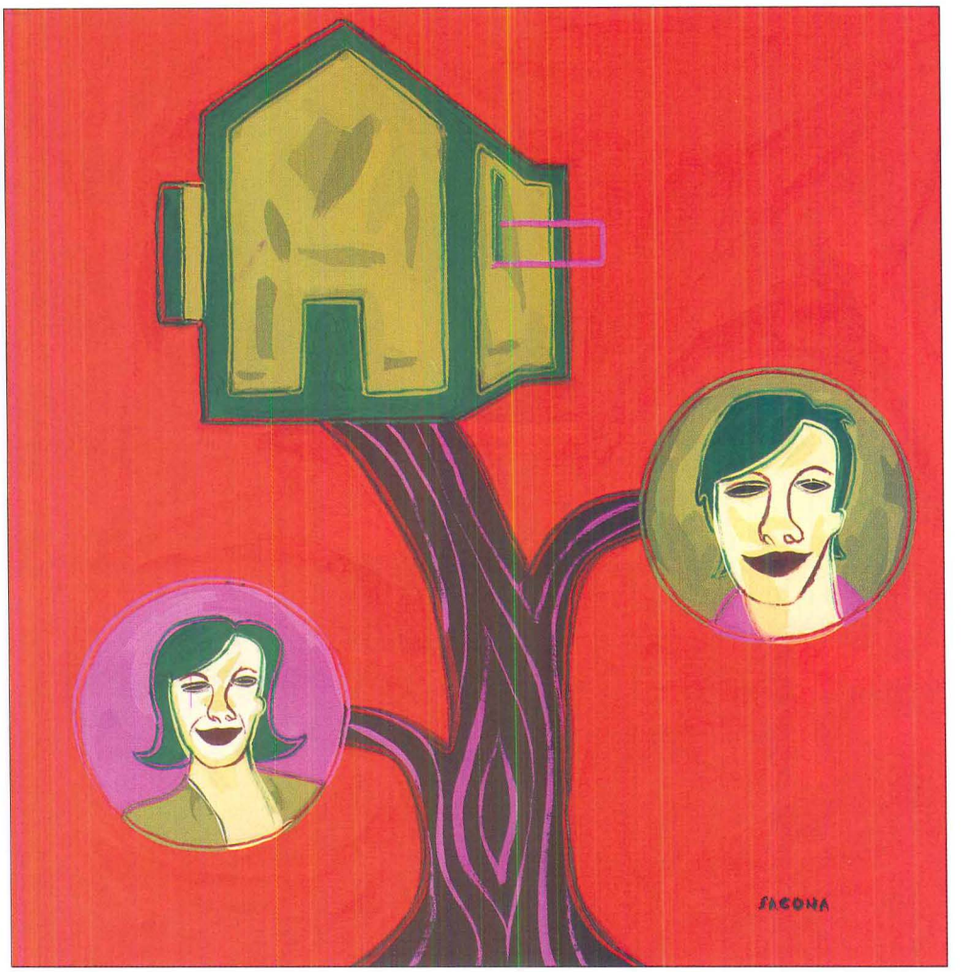

Marina Sagona

by cheryl weber

As clients go, architect Mark Simon's mother was one of his most aesthetically adventurous. In 1973, fresh out of Yale Architecture School, he designed an underground house for her in Vermont. "She claims she asked for a tower," says Simon, FAIA, of Centerbrook Architects in Essex, Conn. So 12 years later, he designed another house for her on Long Island, N.Y., with a prominent octagonal tower. "I have found my family and friends to be in the upper echelon of clients, in their attitude toward me, in their equanimity, in their politeness," he says. "Maybe because they know me and trust me a little more."

After a year or more of shepherding custom-home clients through design and construction, you might start thinking of them as friends, or even family. Maybe you've had dinner together, shared theater tickets, or had a passionate discussion about why a material they wanted didn't work with your design ideas. Although architects sometimes develop relationships with clients that go on for the rest of their lives, chances are even your most faithful clients have never seen you in braces or dressed for the senior prom, taken a vacation with you, or attended your wedding.

The potential risks, and rewards, rise when you're working for someone with whom you have very close emotional or social ties. Parents remain parents forever, but the balance of authority and power tips when their house is in your hands. You know your brothers and sisters so well, yet perhaps not as well as you thought. And so many things complicate working for friends. There's the risk that you'll disagree or that if something goes wrong you'll never be friends again. Another worry is how much to charge, offering them a good deal while still giving them the value they deserve. "It's a tricky proposition," Simon says. "If you don't handle it just right and set up expectations just right, you could ruin the friendship."

matchmaking

If love is blind, friendship also has a way of blurring issues architects wouldn't think of leaving unresolved with a professional client.

continued on page 34

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Normally, someone wanting to hire an architect would interview three or four people and base their choice on who best meets their needs for design and cost. But a friend or family member skips that step.

"We specialize in a pretty contemporary approach to architecture, says David Hacin, AIA, Hacin and Associates, Boston. "Sometimes we'll have to say to a friend who wants a traditional house, 'I really appreciate your coming to us, but we're not the right choice. If you want to work with us, please buy into our approach as well.' That conversation has to happen because they haven't gone through the weeding-out process where they're picking someone for specifically the right fit."

Natalye Appel, FAIA, Natalye Appel Architects, Houston, agrees. "There has to be a basis for working together, other than being close friends," she says. "You have to have a heart-to-heart talk to make sure you know what their expectations are in every way, from design sensibility to budget to time frame. It's not like we have trepidation once we think it through."

money talking

The responsibilities you have to clients are somehow heightened when it's your best friend across the table. And money can be one of the most stressful parts of the relationship. Lars Peterssen, Domain Architecture and Design, Minneapolis, has done several projects for long-time friends, in some cases working long hours he never charged for so they could avoid sticker shock. "You feel extra conscious of every minute you spend on their project," Peterssen says. "But you don't want it to be a gift, either."

The problem is that perceptions about cost and value are relative. And once an architecture practice is established, attempts to do work for special people on the side often result in a half-baked effort. Randy Brown, AIA, Randy Brown Architects, Omaha, Neb., says that when he bills his family at cost, they still think it's way too much. "If they're not paying for it, they don't see any value in an architect's services," he says. "If we do all this work for way below market value, then they don't have the education to know what real costs are. They still think, 'Wow, we spent so much money.' It's a danger that's hard to resolve."

By contrast, architects who draw a professional line find that it puts the architect-client relationship on equal footing. Randy Mars, AIA, Randall Mars Architect, McLean, Va., currently is designing a

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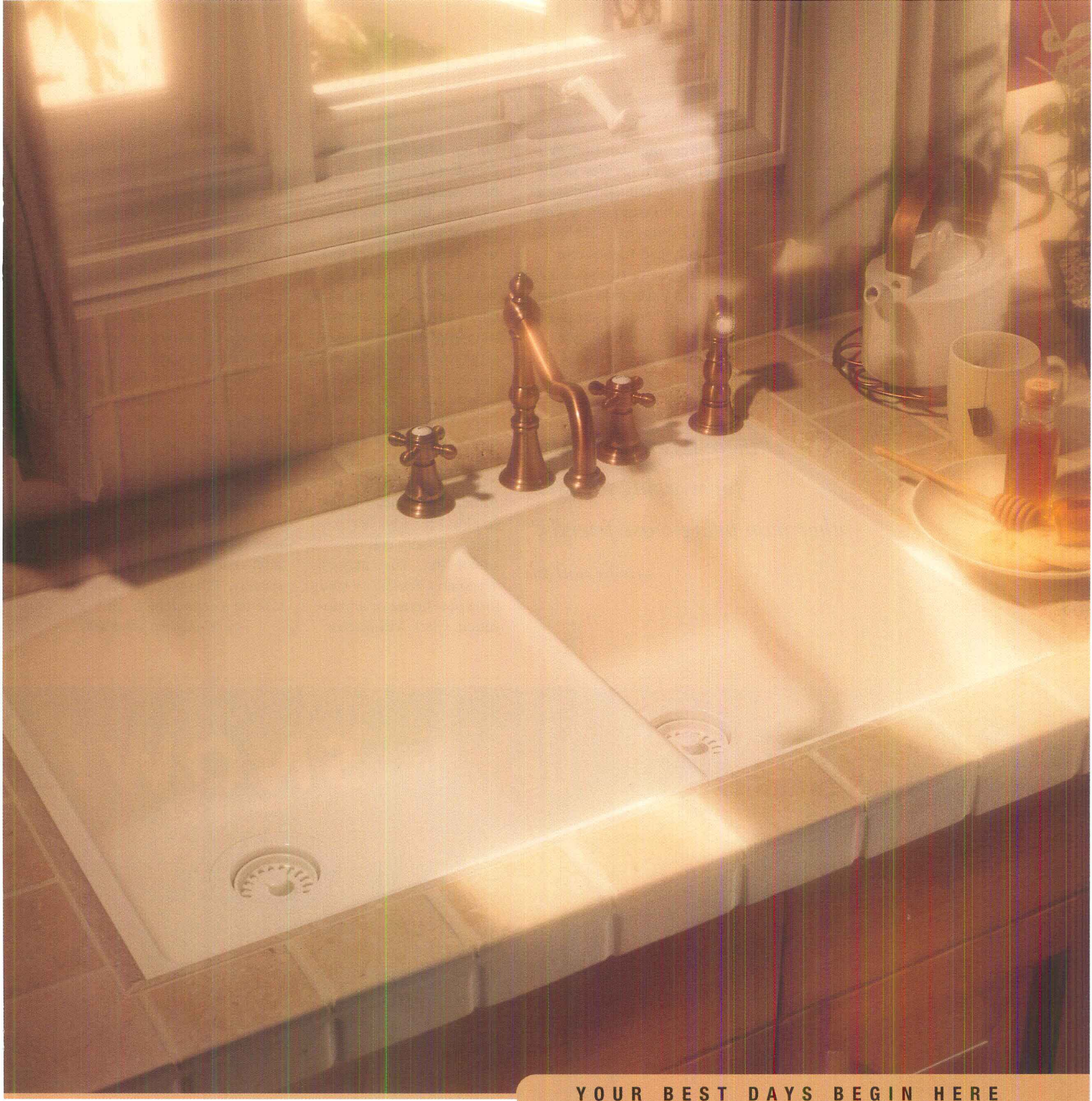

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house for his family in Charlottesville, Va. "My brother-in-law says he wants to pay full fees so he will feel comfortable being critical," Mars says, though he admits to twinges of guilt for charging regular fees to family.

Hacin thinks that's the right idea. "That's really the trick," he says, "making your friend or family member comfortable enough to tell you things they would typically tell a professional to whom they were paying significant fees." He has a family-and-friends rate that's one or two percentage points lower than his usual fee, but he evaluates those rates on a case-by-case basis. "The financial issue is less for some clients that I have as friends," he says.

"there has to be a basis for working together, other than being close friends."

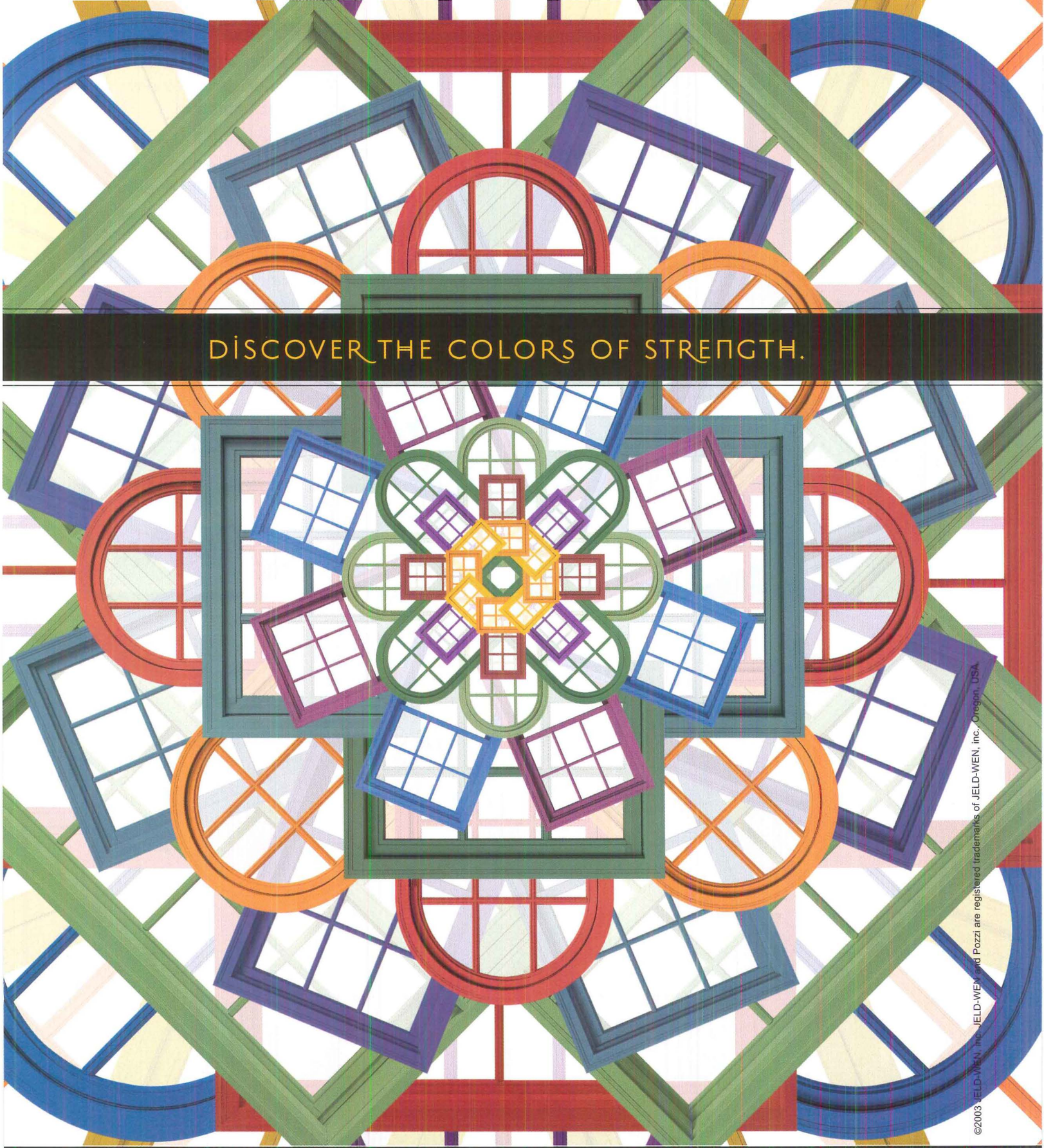
—natalye appel, faia

On the other hand, "when friends and family are making a stretch to hire an architect, they're spending more than they normally would on this kind of service not only because they want the benefit of my skill, but because they want to support me. In those cases, some reciprocity is in order."

The nature of friendship is such that house commissions often happen casually, in fits and starts over time. And in the process, fee issues sort themselves out. Andrea Clark Brown, AIA, Naples, Fla., says her friends usually call for advice first. They may ask her to do a feasibility study for a new house or a renovation. Clark will discuss program and site issues, without doing much drawing, to help them understand that what they're describing is, say, a $300,000 home, and why.

"Sometimes I will charge at cost an hourly time based on no profit, especially if it involves my assigning work to someone at the office or my spending a few hours in the evening," she says. "It depends on the scope and how close the friend is." And when the project grows to a level at which liability kicks in—where her advice might affect their finances, health, or safet—she charges appropriately. "The moment we take on a consultant team,

continued on page 40



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we explain to friends that we have to go to traditional fees," she says. "I'll offer to give them a payment schedule of their choice rather than one lump sum every month. It's a courtesy we extend to every client if we think they may have trouble paying the bill. We try to be user-friendly."

pain and gain

Once expectations are crystal clear, architects say the design process spins along at a faster clip than it does with a conventional client. They can cut to the chase because the trust and respect is instantaneous. "Starting the whole process is much easier," says Steven House, AIA, House + House Architects, San Francisco. "Most projects require a tremendous amount of faith in the architects because clients are making an incredible financial commitment to something that hasn't been designed yet. Working with friends eliminates that somewhat uncomfortable first few months."

"sometimes family closeness makes it harder to be flexible, from both perspectives."

—randy brown, aia

Recently, the firm designed a vacation house for friends at Lake Tahoe. Its location being four hours away meant finding a Bay-Area builder willing to set up an office there and hire local subs, presenting more than the usual possibilities for things to go awry. Still, the project was a triumph. "One of the things we told them was, 'We don't want you to be polite and hold back if anything is bothering you.' We emphasized the importance of extremely clear communication. We talked about the cost of construction constantly, especially as we were finishing up final drawings. We had been warning our friends that the house would cost more than they thought, so when the pricing came in, they said, 'Okay, you've told us.' "

But when there's trouble, there's more sleep to be lost. "It makes me feel bad if bids come in too high or there are delays in construction because I value my friendship more than my business," Simon says. In the course of a renovation he was designing for dear friends, they discovered that more and more of the house foundation was rotten,

continued on page 42

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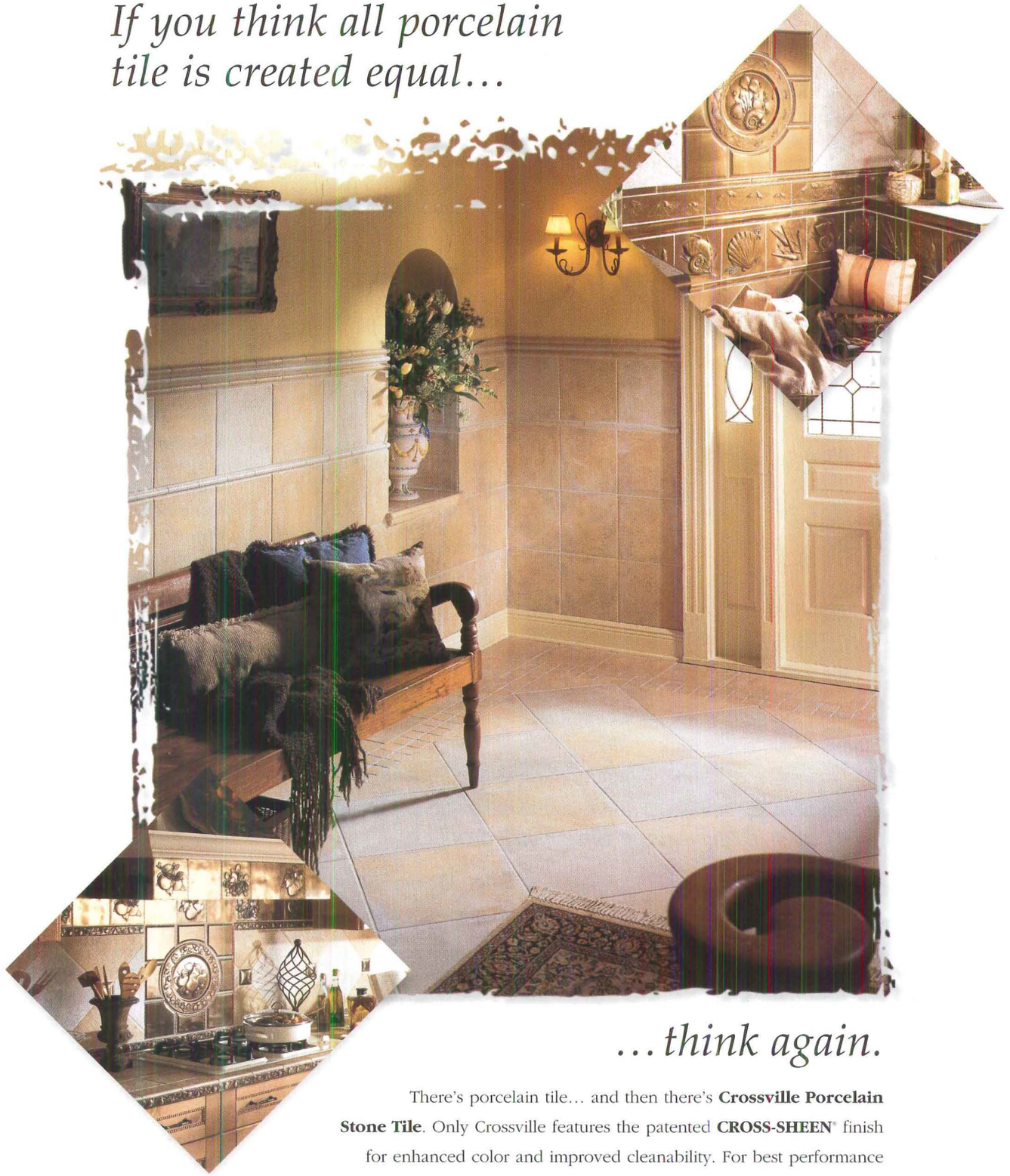

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which slowed down the project and made it more expensive. "I felt their pain a little more, without their telling me," he says. "When someone gets angry at you, human nature is to defend yourself and get protective. But when you're close to someone, you can feel more pain than your clients are feeling."

family affair

And when it's your family, the issues are more fraught, and the emotions more complex. Ten years ago, Appel designed a house for her parents—the first free-standing house of her practice. In the middle of the job, the contractor went bankrupt, creating a domino effect they hadn't bargained for. "There were moments when it was very tense," Appel says. "It meant that you had to have a lot of unpleasant discussions, even if it wasn't a problem with me. When your parents are experiencing problems with construction, it's a lot more emotional."

Deep politics are stirred when parents or siblings become clients. In Randy Brown's experience, "friends are much more open-minded than family about listening to an architect's perspective. When you have similar personality types, it's more of a debate to get the point across. They make you work harder and explain your ideas more thoroughly." When Brown's father's law office was under construction, the elder Brown was adamant that the conference room was too narrow. "I showed him on the plans that there was enough room and kept reassuring him it would work," Brown says. "Now that it's built, there's plenty of clearance. Sometimes family sees the negative things. We're all hypercritical of our families."

Brown's parents also championed his career by asking him to design their own house renovation. In the process, he learned a lot about family dynamics, issues of control, and roles

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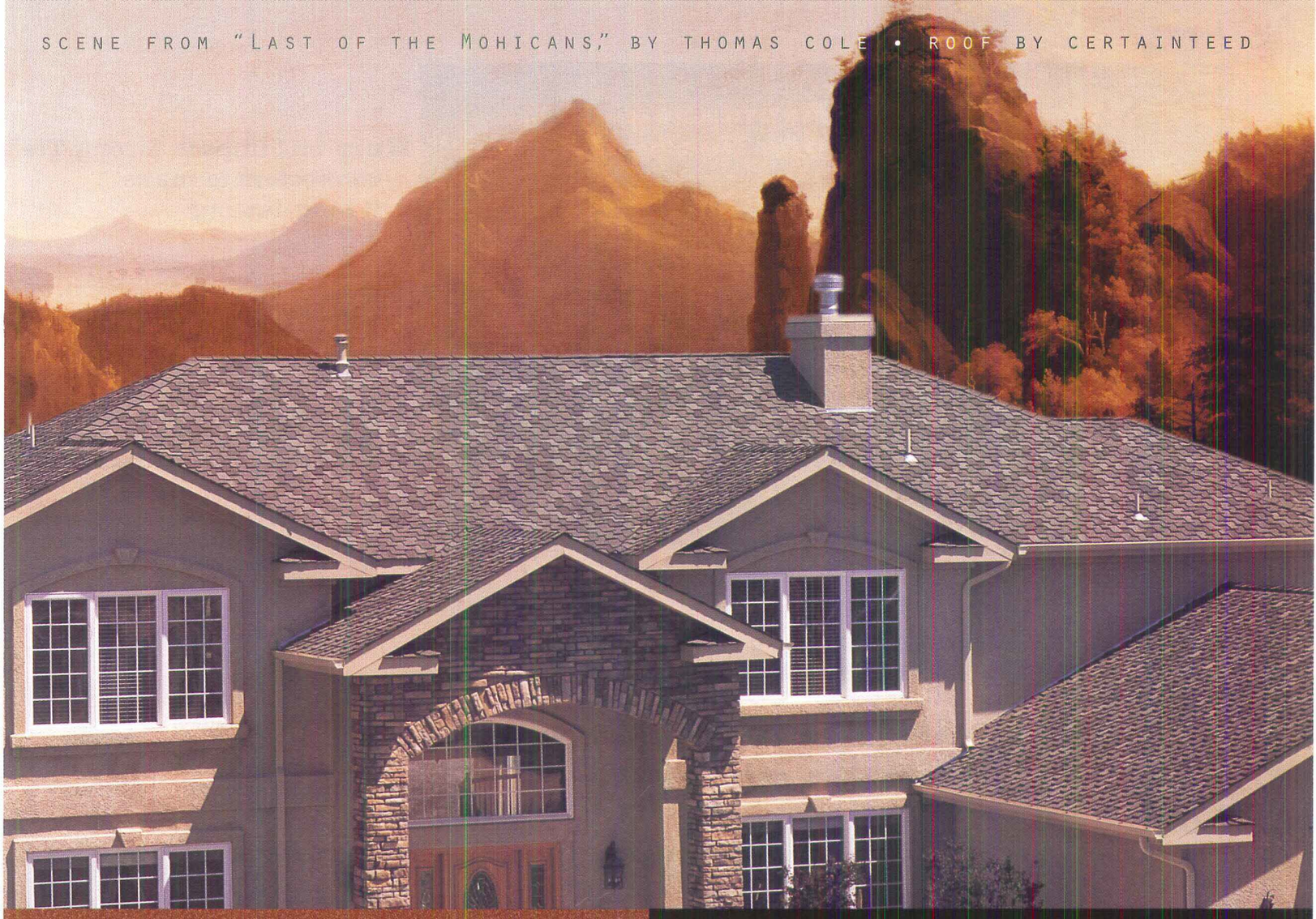

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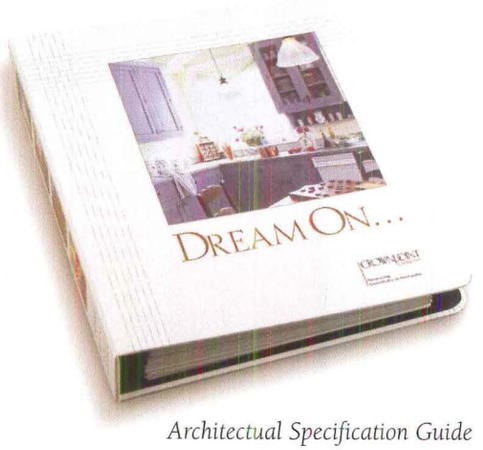

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we never grow out of. "When my friends want to use a material that doesn't work, I explain what I'm against, and they understand it," Brown says.

"With family it's not so rational: 'I just like this, so I want to use it somewhere.' Sometimes family closeness makes it harder to be flexible, from both perspectives." Although the architect's parents let him design some of the furniture and choose art, his vision only ruled for so long. "When I go to my parents' house I'm always moving furniture a little bit," Brown says. "I leave, and it moves another way. I come back and move it back. Definitely, there's a vision there, and when I see things out of place, it bothers me."

Brown expresses ambivalence about the relationship, but also a healthy sense of humor. "If I'm willing to take all that goes with it, I can get incredible results," he says. "Those projects I've done with my family have been award-winning because you fight for more freedom and also agonize over the details. From an architectural perspective, you get a higher-quality project. If my parents were only architects, they'd see the beauty of it, too."

ties that bind

With a little luck, family projects are an opportunity for both sides to give a little. Because you know them so well, you feel more comfortable asking them to take risks with design. And they're more willing to go out on a limb for you. Bob Luchetti, Robert Luchetti Associates, Boston, says the two projects he's done for family are his favorites, in terms of quality and detail. His mother, a painter, had an artistic sensibility. "There is a compulsivity inherent in my family and a willingness to stick to ideas to make them happen," Luchetti says. "My parents were very sympathetic to my need to

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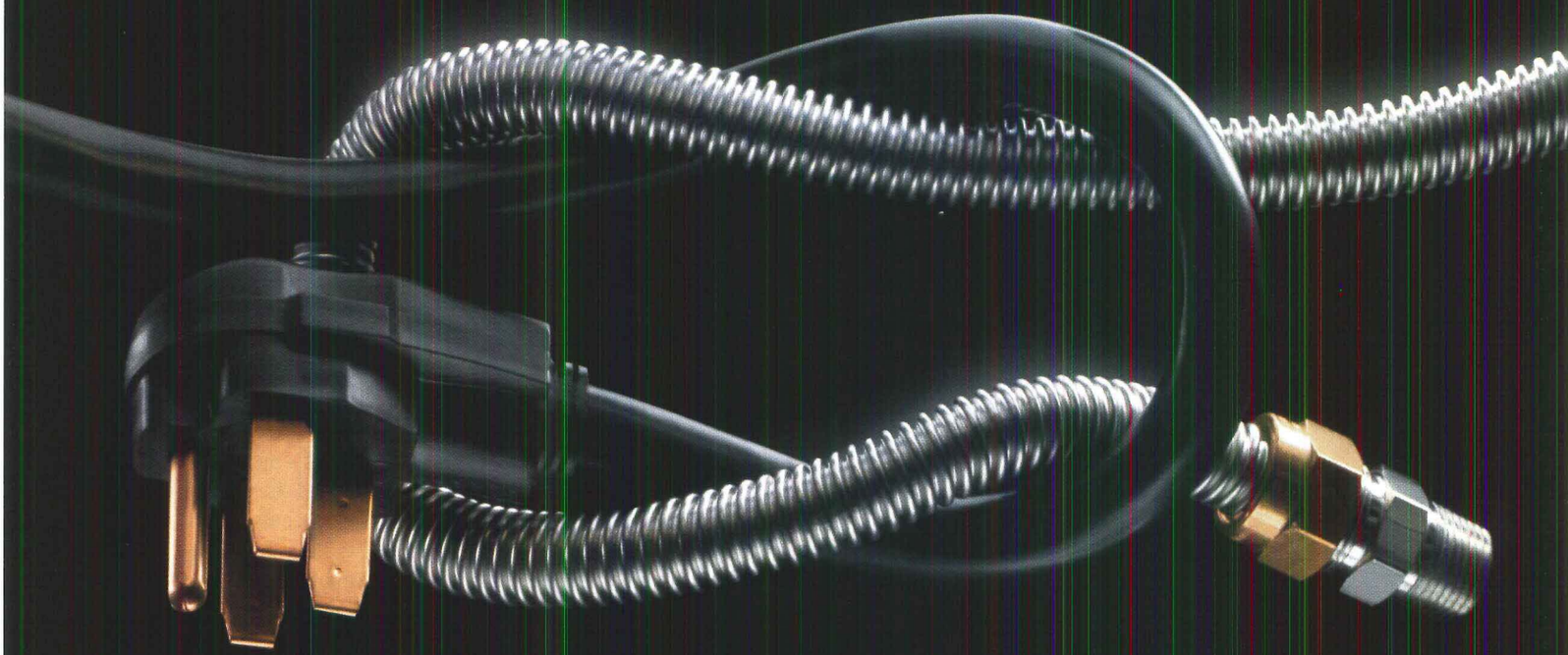

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pay attention to detail."

Appel feels the same way about designing the seaside house for her parents on Galveston Island, Texas, and believes it was responsible for starting the publicity her firm continues to receive. The house's street facade is part of a concept that was unusual in its surroundings—an austere and eccentric take on the beach shack. "It evolved from a series of studies of vernacular industrial building types on Galveston Island," Appel says. "It turned out to be a combination of different things that were very experimental for me, and I'm really appreciative that my parents had total faith in me."

Luchetti's brother and sister-in-law—a banker and a chef who were not visually-oriented people—told him they were surprised by how much the design of their house enhanced their lives. And he was gratified when both houses he designed for family appreciated significantly in value because of their design. Other outcomes are priceless. Like Appel, Brown's career was launched with the design of her parents' house in Naples. The project's meaning went well beyond the accomplishment her parents felt in building their first house from scratch. "Knowing the career of their daughter followed afterward and evolved in the area was a source of great pride for them, and a delight for me," Brown says.

When architects design for family and friends, an incidental reward is the chance to experience the house up close, through the years. "You get to see the place in use over time," Simon says. "You learn an awful lot of functional lessons, and also aesthetic lessons. You see it at different times of the year and in different light. You can see whether your intuition works or doesn't, and that's a real treat." ra

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

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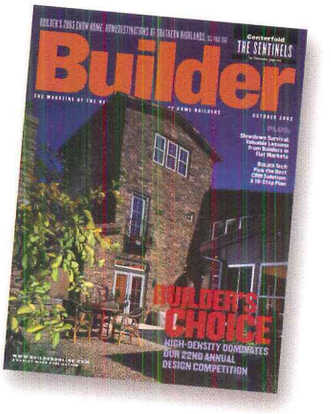

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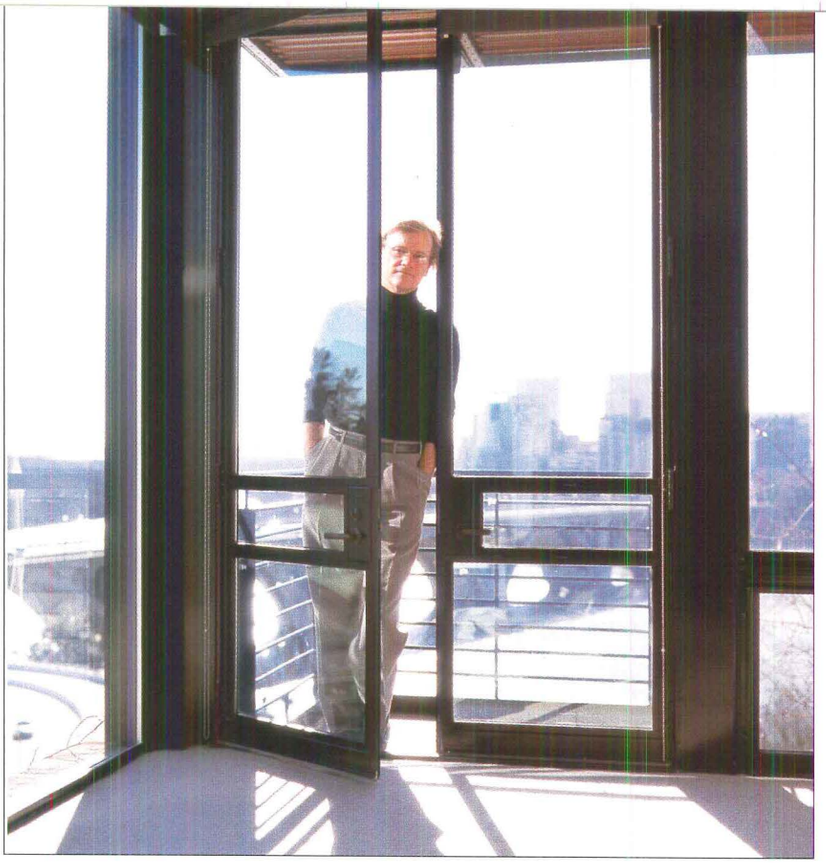


Bill Cramer

the educations of mark mcinturff

a quartet of influences drives a washington, d.c., architect to abstraction.

by meghan drueding

Mark McInturff, FAIA, talks like a historicist. He dislikes most Western American cities because they don't have enough old buildings. He uses details from Thomas Jefferson's Monticello to help explain design concepts to clients. And he rhapsodizes about the past lives of the homes he remodels in and around Washington, D.C., a tradition-lover's paradise.

But his buildings tell a different story. Modern and minimalist, filled with light, color, and unexpected materials, they're elegantly composed sushi next to the heavy Thanksgiving dinner of a period home. He's gained a reputation as one of the premier Modernist architects in the Washington, D.C., area, with more than 180 local, state, and national design awards to his credit—almost all of them for residential projects. In

Natural light is a major presence in McInturff's work. The Cozzens residence in Washington, D.C. (2000; far left), and a Potomac, Md., residence (2000; left and below) benefit from its deft conveyance.

Photos: Julia Heine

"architecture is evolutionary.
why should we stop evolving now?"

Photos: Julia Heine

McInturff Architects isn't constrained by conventional ideas about floorplans. The open layout of the kitchen in a King George, Va., remodel (2002; above) makes it hard to distinguish from the living room. The eating area adjoining another recent rural Virginia kitchen (above left) doubles as the home's formal dining room. And at a house in Chevy Chase, Md., (2000) the firm converted a separate studio into an attached family room and porch (left).

Local farm buildings inspired the playful forms of this Laurel Mills, Va., house (2002).

2002 McInturff Architects garnered another plum, a National AIA Honor Award for a sleek addition and remodel to a Chevy Chase, Md., house.

past forward

One might wonder how McInturff reconciles his respect for historic architecture with the Modern aesthetic he's honed during 28 years of practice. According to him, he doesn't have to—they're both part of the same mentality. "I don't draw a line between old architecture and new architecture," he says. "I think it's a continuum. But I think going backwards on that continuum is weird. The history of architecture is evolutionary. Why should we stop evolving now?"

McInturff has the confidence to see his six-person firm as part of that continuum. He's willing to take what history can give him, and then use those lessons to develop new ideas. In the course of a single conversation, he'll mention several disparate influences—say, Le Corbusier's color theories, Sir Norman Foster's studio space, and his former teacher Charles Moore's life philosophy. Since 1981 McInturff has taught at his alma mater, the University of Maryland, and other architecture schools, and he's never really stopped being a student himself. He chaperones a class trip to Europe every year, always to a city that contains a blend of historic and Modern buildings. In 2002, he chose London as the destination for the historic preservation class he's co-teaching at Catholic University. "London has the most interesting recent architecture in the world," he says. "It's got good new buildings that mix in well with the old." The globetrotting he's done and will do makes up such an indispensable part of McInturff's identity as an architect that he refers to it as the third of his four "educations."

field work

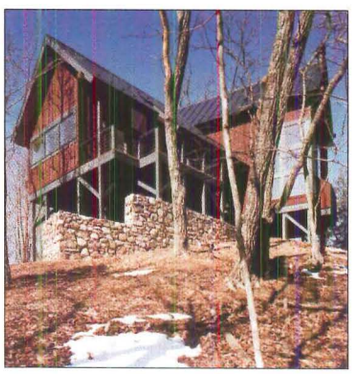
The first of these, he says, was his formal training at Maryland. (He knew in the eighth grade he wanted to be an architect; as a child, he and his family lived in a suburban Washington, D.C., house designed by local Modernist Charles Goodman.) While in college, he spent a summer building at Cosanti, Italian architect Paolo Soleri's experimental complex in Scottsdale, Ariz. And a semester under the tutelage of visiting professor Moore, which included a five-week tour of Europe and Northern Africa, cemented his craving for travel. "What I really learned from Charles Moore was the living nature of architecture, the fact that places are meant to be used and experienced," he says. "Architecture was sensual for him."

Spurred by his time at Cosanti, McInturff worked as a carpenter for two years after graduating from Maryland—it was his "second education." Like most architects who have actually built houses, he can't imagine designing the way he does now without the practical knowledge he gained on construction sites. "Construction is really important to us," he says. "We design a lot of stuff as it's going up. I know it's hard on the builder, but I do think the act of building is an important part of the design process."

Combine that hands-on knowledge of construction with an architect's natural bent toward perfection, and you get a firm that labors over tiny details. Builders seem to appreciate it—the good ones, anyway. "I love to build 'em," says Paul Jeffs, a contractor who's built or remodeled about 35 McInturff houses. "It's more fun than doing the same thing over and over." Washington lawyer Lane Heard, whose Chevy Chase, Md., house McInturff remodeled in a series of small jobs, remembers a certain metal railing along the back of his house. "At the very end of the project, Mark thought the railing looked wrong," Heard says. "He paid to replace it because he wanted it to be right. That's the extraordinary level of commitment we got from him."

Working as a carpenter also may have given McInturff a taste for seeing his buildings in three dimensions almost as soon as they're down on paper. He employs a full-time modelmaker, an

Progressive variations on the cottage idiom include the Knight Weekend House (1989; bottom) in Front Royal, Va.; Couch Weekend House (1995; below) in Hampshire County, W. Va.; and Withers House (1998; below center and right) in Accokeek, Md.



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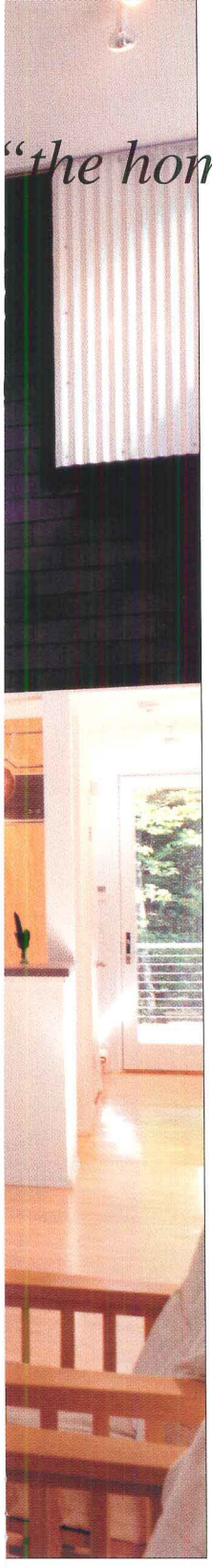


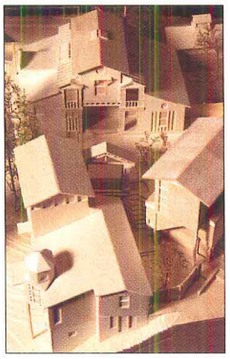
"the home/office-compound idea is very important to me."

almost unheard of luxury for such a small studio. From start to finish, a more complicated residential project might generate seven or eight models: a couple of alternatives at the conceptual stage, more models as the design is refined, and even large-scale ones isolating a single room or detail.

life's work

McInturff considers his 17-year-old practice his ongoing "fourth education." Since he left a 10-year, post-carpentry partnership with Washington, D.C., architect John Wiebensen in 1985, he's run his firm out of a small compound just outside the city in Bethesda, Md. Three run-down cottages originally occupied the property, and he joined two of them to serve as a residence for himself and his family. The third structure, a few yards away from the house, evolved into the office of McInturff Architects. And last year the firm completed work on a second-story, office and library addition to an existing garage. Organic-looking stone terraces and steps interconnect the entire Craftsman-style-meets-Modern project, whose steep site measures just one acre. "The home/office-compound idea is very important to me because I work seven days a week," he says. "I like having to go outside to get to the office. It puts me in a different frame of mind, in a way that having the office inside the home wouldn't."

The office's bucolic setting overlooking a bamboo-covered ravine likely contributes to the firm's remarkably low turnover. Architects Steven Lawlor, AIA, and Julia Heine have worked with McInturff for 17 years, and Peter Noonan, AIA, is a 12-year veteran. They and most of the other employees started out as McInturff's students, another key to their loyalty and the collegial informality of the office. And then there's the opportunity for truly substantive work an intentionally small firm offers.

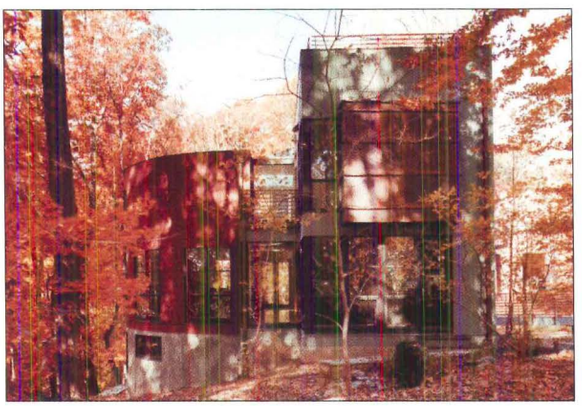


Elaborate models play an integral role in the firm's design process. This one shows McInturff's home/office compound.

modern mentality

Finding a design challenge has never been much of a problem for McInturff—anyone doing Modern houses in a historically minded town like Washington is already swimming against the current. Even so, he may be enjoying his most satisfying work to date. Residential commissions,

Remodeling rowhouses has made McInturff an expert in dealing with small spaces. In 1991 he turned a Washington, D.C., basement into a kitchen and dining room.



McInturff and his staff use color to define interior spaces and relate exteriors to the site. At the Armstrong house in Potomac, Md. (1999; left), the aqua tint of a glass counter separates the kitchen and living room. The siding's hues are drawn from the surrounding trees. Colored venetian plaster wraps kitchens in Alexandria, Va. (1999; above), and Washington, D.C. (2000; opposite).

"it's very possible to make a kitchen too big."

Photos: Julia Heine

ranging from tight, in-town remodels to beach houses in Delaware to weekend homes in Virginia horse country, still make up his core business. Many of his clients are repeat customers. He's learned to manipulate difficult sites or programs by either breaking up a house into pieces or uniting two structures, as he did with his own house. His preference for Modernism hasn't stopped him from considering context; his renovation of a glass box in Washington's Georgetown section pays attention to its site and neighbors in the same way his own shingled, peaked-roof compound does.

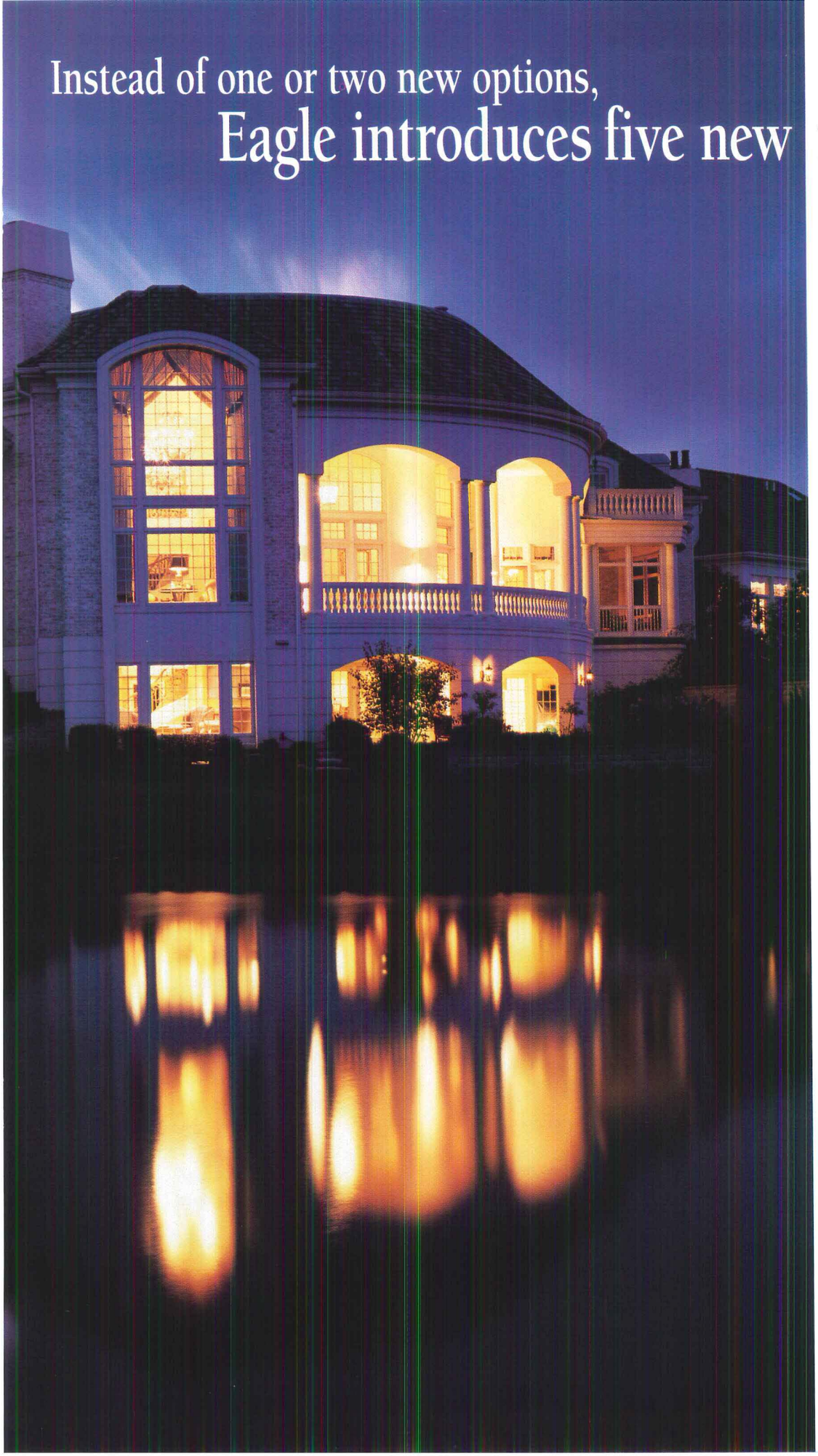
Like most of their peers, McInturff and his staff have always jumped at the chance to specify furniture and finishes that support their architecture. In 2002 they officially opened an interiors division, spearheaded by Heine. Depending on the client's budget and tastes, they'll furnish projects with pricey B&B Italia or bargain-basement Ikea. Making the money work is a paramount concern. One of their most widely published projects (and winner of *residential architect*'s Project of the Year in 2000), a house for an art history professor in Accokeek, Md., covered interior walls with asphalt shingles—to great fiscal and creative effect.

Because McInturff's clients tend to be busy professionals with little free time, he designs kitchens that enable occupants to socialize while preparing meals or cleaning. More often than not, kitchens open into family and dining rooms. "I like to put all the large appliances into one wall," McInturff says. "And we'll use big islands that can also function as social spaces." But vast, cafeteria-size kitchens aren't for him. "It's very possible to make a kitchen too big." Even the single commercial kitchen on his resume, a display kitchen at the Majestic Café in Alexandria, Va., can be navigated within a few steps. Baths, too, seldom receive palatial portions of square footage. They don finishes and materials consistent with the rest of the house and contain one focal point such as a beautiful sink or a luxurious tub.

Kitchens by McInturff Architects facilitate entertaining. This one in Washington, D.C. (2000), steps down into an elegant dining room.

In addition to the Majestic Café, the firm's other major commercial project is a 250-seat performance space on the boards for Washington's innovative Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. It's a major coup for a practice with no experience in theater design. "I actually think that our small size helped us get the job," says Heine. "They knew they'd get a lot of personal attention from us." And the firm's knowledge of residential design provides an interesting lens through which to view the intimate theater space. "If I'm looking at the Woolly Mammoth plan and can't visualize something, I'll think, okay, it's the size of two rowhouses. Then I've got it," McInturff says. Another project type he'd like to tackle someday is a small residential development, which would let him design the spaces in between houses as well as the houses themselves.

Being a Modernist in Washington can be frustrating. "Only a few brave souls are willing to do it," says Frank Schlesinger, FAIA, a friend of McInturff's and another courageous Modernist in D.C. "Most others in town just throw up their hands." But the very constraints the area imposes—stringent design review boards, limited market demand, and hog-tying historical context—may have helped propel McInturff to success. He's had no choice but to make his projects work within this traditional setting—otherwise, they'd never get built. And he's had no choice but to treat his clients like gold, because local patrons of Modernism are few and far between. He produces Modern architecture because that's what he believes in. "History is wonderful," he says. "But the contemporary life we live works with contemporary architecture." ra



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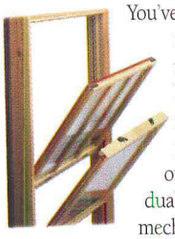

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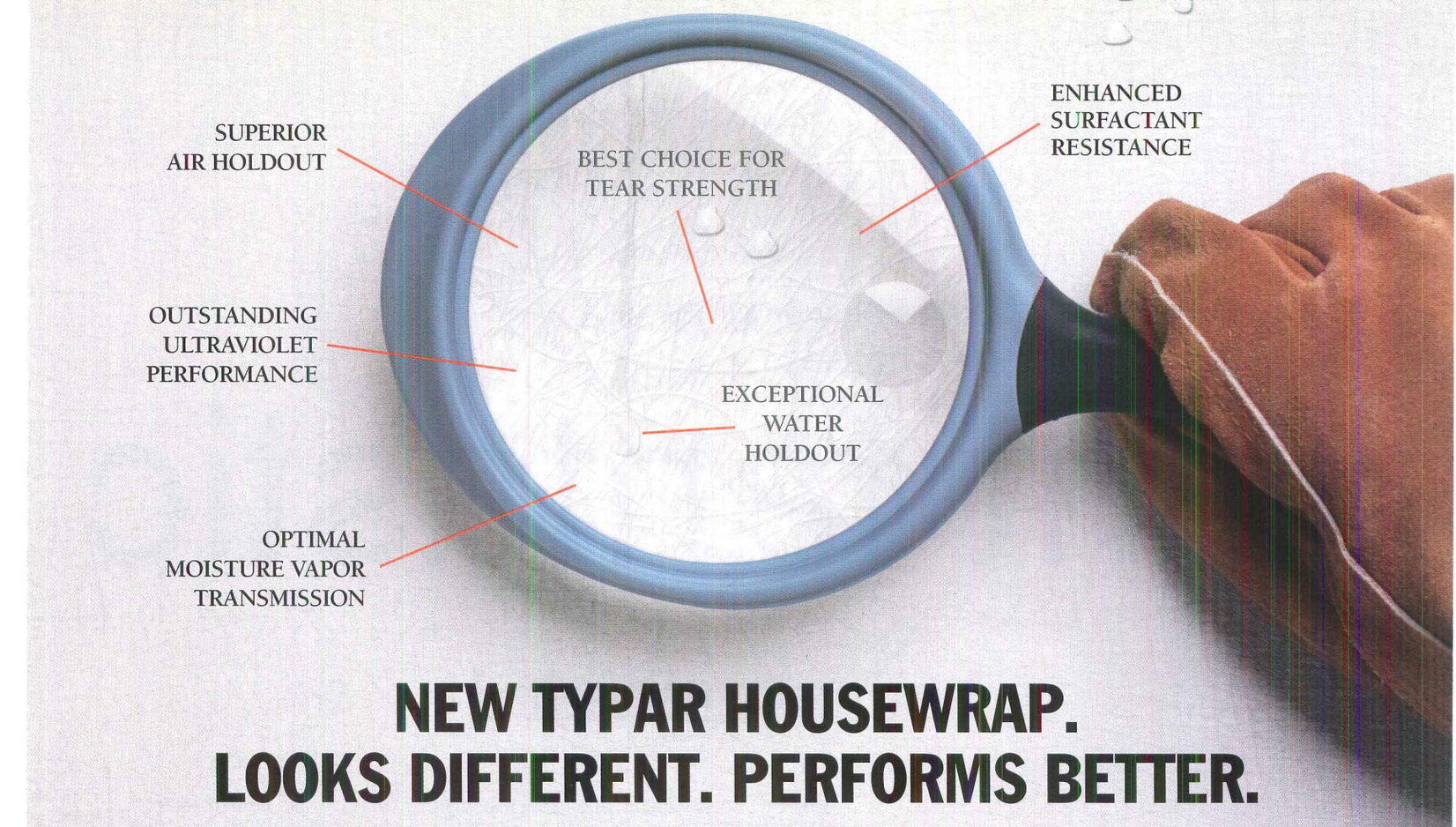

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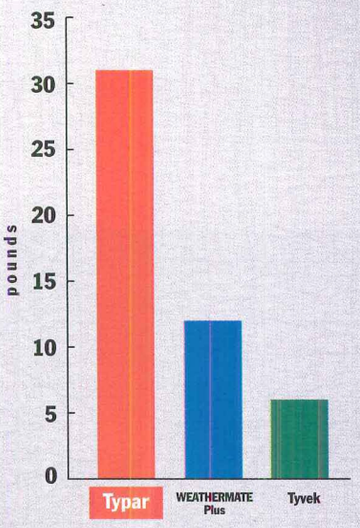

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a house undivided

To celebrate a 220-year-old barn frame, architects Tom Hut and Jane Sachs built a 2x6 wood-frame house around the antique structure.

Jay Chiat was a client who knew just what he wanted—and how to get it. After all, he was the legendary advertising genius who brought America the Energizer Bunny and launched the annual Super Bowl ad frenzy with the "1984" Apple computer commercial. In the case of his new custom home on the east end of Long Island, he wanted a barn-like structure sheltering wide-open spaces.

Just two years before his death in April 2002, Chiat commissioned architects Hut Sachs Studio of New York City to make it happen on 1.5 acres of Atlantic beachfront. He turned to the firm because of its success planning the 25,000-square-foot, open-plan offices of his Internet ad agency, ScreamingMedia.

Recalls architect Tom Hut, FAIA: "He said, 'I just want a simple house. Find a barn and build around it.' " And so, Hut found Chiat his barn: a 220-year-old salvaged frame from Vermont. The Cornwall-style structure is composed of 10-by-10-foot king posts holding up the ridge beam, which is an impressive 45-foot-long tree trunk. The frame's rafters are trees as well, flattened on top to receive the roof sheathing. The skeleton was shipped dismantled (each timber restored, cleaned, and numbered) and reassembled and erected on site.

"A lot of these barns transform themselves into suburban housing," Hut explains. "Instead, we tried to emphasize the barn-like nature of the frame." To do that, he and partner Jane Sachs, FAIA, built a 2x6 wood-frame house around the barn, with 2x10 rafters and wood joist floors to insulate it from the elements. The windows, building insulation, and cedar siding are all part of the outer shell, leaving the barn exposed on the interior. The result is an open, loft-like space that contains the living room, dining room, and kitchen.

The architects added straightforward interior finishes—American cherry floors, maple paneling, and aluminum window frames—to a muted color scheme to create a subtle backdrop for the client's eclectic collection of art and furniture. Glazed, industrial 10x10 roll-up garage doors on either side of the house connect indoors and outdoors, allowing light, air, and party guests to

Exposed 10-by-10-foot interior posts accentuate the rustic origins of the salvaged frame. Roll-up garage doors and an open floor plan allow light, air, and party guests to flow throughout the kitchen, living room, and outdoors.

Photos: John Umberger/Trends Publishing International

light fantastic

Photos: John Umberger/Trends Publishing International

Stainless steel appliances, Carrara marble countertops and striated silver laminate cabinets give the kitchen a vibrant, active feel. The frame dictated windows openings and cabinet heights.

flow effortlessly between the two.

The kitchen occupies the east side of the house, where a curtain wall ushers in morning light. Stainless steel appliances, Carrara marble countertops, and striated silver laminate cabinets give the space a vibrant, active feel. As with the overall design of the house, details take their cues from the barn. Hut and Sachs scaled counters and cabinets to the recycled frame, which dictated both heights and lengths. The timbers also determined the locations and sizes of window openings.

The barn's high ceiling and exposed structure complicated the kitchen's lighting plan. To avoid the dangling pendulum effect, the architects speced track mounted on lower beams for overall illumination and used desk lamps for task lighting. "In a way, that was an ad hoc solution, but it gave a great feel to the kitchen," Hut explains. "It was unlike anything I've ever done. It gave a nice scale to a big space, bringing it down to the right place."

A skyscraping vent hood didn't fit the aesthetic either. Hut and Sachs didn't want to disrupt the openness of the kitchen, and height was an issue for proper drafting. Instead, they ran a downdraft through the basement. More serious grilling is done outside. "There really was no challenge to overcome with this project," Hut insists. "The client wanted it all open. He wanted to live with the clatter of dishes when entertaining. We didn't have to deal with where to place the caterers because he didn't care."

"the frame allowed us to be even more contemporary and interpretive with what we added because it had such a strong character by itself."

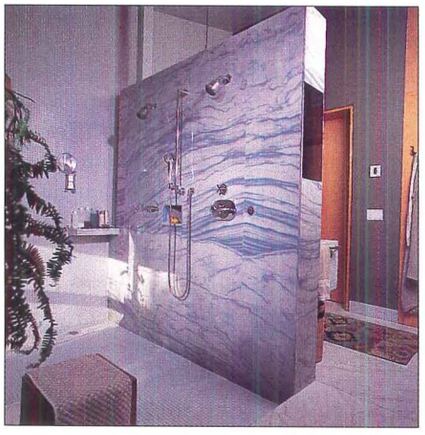
—tom hut, faia

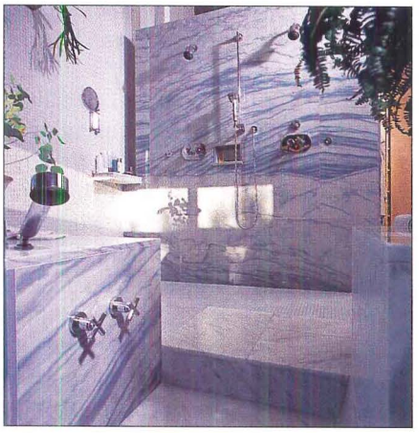
The master suite and guest quarters are contained in a wing grafted onto the barn volume. The architects angled the two-story building for ocean views and privacy from neighbors. Guests are on the first level; the master suite grabs the second story, a roof deck, and, of course, the best views. In keeping with the open-plan edict, the master bedroom and bath are only minimally separated from each other. A combination headboard and storage cabinet traces the division while allowing natural light to channel through.

In the bathroom, walls clad in ocean-hued granite, counters topped by the same Carrara marble used in the kitchen, and teak millwork make the room seem lush and expansive. Instead of double vanities and a separate shower, the sink is one long trough and the shower is exposed. And the two share a bar of soap through a peephole in their common wall. "The client didn't need an enclosed shower, so we chose to use that to our advantage," says Hut. "Even in the bath, it was all about the open landscape."

The house's transparency makes the design work, according to Hut. "It doesn't feel like you're in a barn, but you get a sense of its style," he explains. "The frame allowed us to be even more contemporary and interpretive with what we added because it had such a strong character by itself."—*melissa worden*

Carrara marble covers the counters and walls of the master bath. A long trough sink backs to the shower, and the two share a soap dish through a peep hole.





The bath, like the rest of the house, has an open plan with no doors. An exposed shower becomes the centerpiece of the room.

project:
Chiat residence, Long Island, N.Y.
architect:
Hut Sachs Studio, New York City
structural engineer:
Gilsanz Murray Steficek, New York City
contractor:
C.S. Hildreth, Inc., Bridgehampton, N.Y.
project size:
4,500 square feet
cost:
Withheld

breathing lessons

Row houses everywhere have the same dreary problems: narrow, boxy volumes stacked three stories high and little light to speak of. And when they're located in a historic part of town, strict regulations make it harder for a redesign to overcome those conditions. No doubt that's why the owner of this Georgetown dwelling, built in 1910, called Robert Gurney, FAIA, to the rescue. Gurney, who's renovated a fair share of such houses, knows how to use cuts, slashes, skylights, perforations, pass-throughs, and sculptural walls—whatever it takes to help a row house breathe.

Gurney often lights his houses with exterior walls of gridded glass and polycarbonate, and he might have gone that route here. But local regulations dictated that the street facade remain intact and allowed only minor changes to the rear. He did what he could, raising the height of two door openings on the first floor and increasing the height and width of a second-story window. Inside, the structure was gutted and rebuilt.

The client, a single woman who lives informally, wanted her kitchen to be in the center of things. She cooks a lot, so she needed a good working kitchen. And when she cooks, she likes to interact with guests. Gurney moved the kitchen out of a dogleg at the back of the house and into the middle of the first floor, and he relocated the front stairwell into the dogleg. That simple shift improved the proportions of the other rooms, with the living room—formerly squeezed against the stairwell at the front of the house—now occupying a larger space in the back, away from the busy street. The dining room fits into the smaller area opposite the entry hall.

(Above) Architect Robert Gurney designed a sliding mahogany-and-glass screen that conceals kitchen clutter but allows light through. (Right) The perforated metal bridge in the entry corridor ceiling is another light trick. On the second story, the bridge spans a hallway lit directly with a skylight.

In a very small house, there's little opportunity to isolate different living functions. So rather than a room sandwiched between two spaces, Gurney conceived the U-shaped kitchen as a piece of furniture in a larger scheme. Facing the living room, ash cabinets float free of the ceiling and allow light to penetrate the workspace. They're supported by a mahogany refrigerator wall and an aluminum cabinet, which opens from the living-room side for storage. "If it opened on the kitchen side, the countertop wouldn't have been useful," Gurney notes. Inside the aluminum piece, floor-to-ceiling shelves store items that aren't used every day.

The kitchen can be partially opened and closed to the dining room with a sliding screen of mahogany and sandblasted glass framed in steel. "If she's working

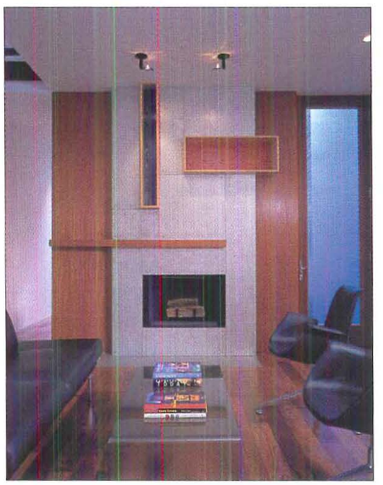
Photos: Hoachlander Davis Photography

Because of the house's narrow footprint, the kitchen was treated as a piece of furniture in a larger scheme. A mahogany fin wall delineates the circulation spine.

"in addition to being a huge source of light for the living room, the metal bridge ... makes the upstairs hallway a lot more interesting." —robert m. gurney, faia

project:
Georgetown residence, Washington, D.C.
architect:
Robert M. Gurney, FAIA
general contractor:
M. T. Puskar, Mike Puskar, Alexandria, Va.
project size:
2,250 square feet
construction cost:
$107 per square foot

light fantastic



(Above) In the master bath, mahogany cabinets and pietra verde limestone floor and countertop echo the rich materials used throughout the house. (Right) A fireplace wall abstracts the kitchen's mahogany, aluminum, and ash.

at the sink preparing dinner, she can have a conversation with the people in the dining room," Gurney says. "After dinner, loading the dishwasher, she can slide the screen over the sink so guests don't see the dishes." He pinched this side of the peninsula to 28 inches deep to save floor space. It's bisected by a mahogany fin wall that extends into the dining area, separating it from the circulation corridor.

There's a consistency of materials and proportions in this project that make it seem more spacious than the dimensions suggest. The kitchen's mahogany, ash, and aluminum are carried into the living room, where they're composed as a painterly fireplace wall. "There was an opportunity to create something rich from natural materials," Gurney says. "We made the fireplace itself an art piece, not one you'd hang art on." Another of the architect's trademarks is the use of doors that stretch from floor to ceiling in the living room and at the entrance to the bedroom.

"Getting rid of a 7-foot datum line makes the ceiling seem higher," he says. Much of the design investment in this classic narrow house is in lighting. With only two exposures at the east and west ends of the house, a vertically layered lighting scheme opens up the middle section. Light sifts downward through a top-floor skylight in the hallway, 12 inches deep by 15 inches long. Gurney got a lot of mileage out of that slot of glass. On the left wall of the upstairs corridor, a series of mahogany boxes with sandblasted glass punches the light into a middle bedroom, while a perforated metal bridge on the corridor beneath the skylight sieves light into the living room below. "In addition to it being a huge source of light for the living room, the metal bridge makes the hallway a lot more interesting," Gurney says. "It has a nice psychological feel to it, like you're walking on a bridge."

Upstairs, the master bathroom was reworked around an existing skylight, which now illuminates the shower. For the most dramatic effect, Gurney enclosed the shower with a full-height glass door. The bath's simple, clean lines and rich materials echo those in the rest of the house: floating mahogany cabinets and pietra verde limestone on the floor and countertop. With its simplified floor plan and its new play of light and space, the once dark and narrow row home is still narrow, but it lives large and comfortably.—*cheryl weber*

Gurney borrowed floor space in the kitchen by nipping the dining-room side of the peninsula to 28 inches deep.

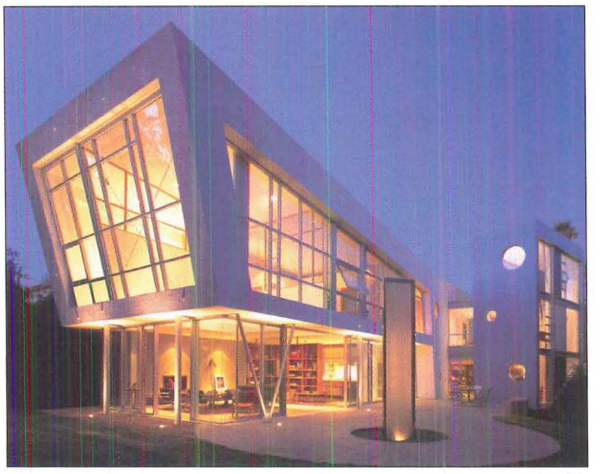
Photos: Hoachlander Davis Photography

guiding light

With its long bar shape hugging the north side of the lot, glass walls that double as doors, and a serene stair tower that climbs to a view of the ocean, this house in the Pacific Palisades is an ode to the sweet life of coastal California. Cross-ventilated breezes drift through the house, and a large circular window in the master bath gazes up to the sky and stars.

Home to architect Stephen Kanner, FAIA, it shares the neighborhood with several Case Study houses by Charles Eames and Richard Neutra. Although they were an inspiration, this house was Kanner's opportunity to express his own ideas about design and to experiment with materials. The butterfly-shaped second story is covered in scratch-coat plaster and sprinkled with raised squares, which are concrete rebar spacers wired to the lath and then plastered over. Kanner clad the stair tower, a textural counterpoint, in liquid planes of ice-blue glass mosaic tiles. "The plaster represents the roughness of the hills that are close by," he says, while the shimmering tiles suggest the sea.

John Ellis



John Ellis

Architect Stephen Kanner adapted his house's forms to the lot's 8-foot slope. Garage, laundry, and bedrooms are at street level. Living areas and a guest room occupy the ground floor, harmonious with outside.

Kanner and his wife and two daughters had lived in the neighborhood for six years before their best friends down the street sold them the property. They tore down an existing house and quickly began plotting the new one. Kanner's top priority was to site the house to take advantage of natural light and cross-ventilation. He also was interested in blurring indoor-outdoor boundaries, so he pushed the house to the north side of the east-west-facing lot. The result is that the 60-foot-by-120-foot property feels much larger from inside the house. "In a conventional house with rooms cut off from view of each other, you don't sense the size of the property," Kanner says. "But if the house has a lot of glass and you set it to one side, you're looking all the way across the property and sense its entire width. People are surprised the site is as small as it is."

The house's playful colors, materials, and shapes are anchored in a rigorous floor plan. Built into a slope that drops 8 feet from the street to the backyard, the house's second story is at street level. Kanner divided his home into three discrete parts. The long body—the width of a two-car garage and laundry room—holds the garage and three bedrooms on the second story, and a guestroom and kitchen, dining room, and living room on the ground level. A glassy entryway, centered on the view of a backyard pine, links the house with a canted stair tower that rises to a home office and descends to a sinuous patio.

Despite the abundance of steel and glass, Kanner has yet to use his air-conditioning, thanks to the building's design and orientation. The lower floor is tucked under the second-story overhang, so the family lives in sheltered, yet intimate, contact with the elements. And to make the most of the see-through walls, the floor plan is open, with only a floating bookshelf separating the dining room and living room. Likewise, the kitchen's boundaries are delineated by a commodious marble countertop and upper cabinets, attached to airy, 9½-foot ceilings. "As a family, we spend a lot of time together there," Kanner says. "If we're entertaining, the dining room table is just beyond, so there's a dialogue between us cooking and the guests at the table." Dirty pots and plates can be banished from view, however, with a PVC mesh scrim installed in the upper cabinetry that descends with the touch of a button.

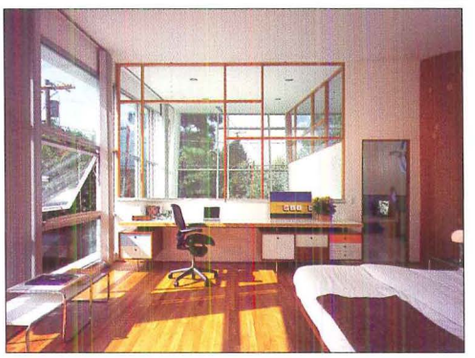
High-style means low-tech in the master bath, where glass tiles and marble coexist with a Formica countertop and a plywood-and-fiberglass vanity.

John Linden

light fantastic

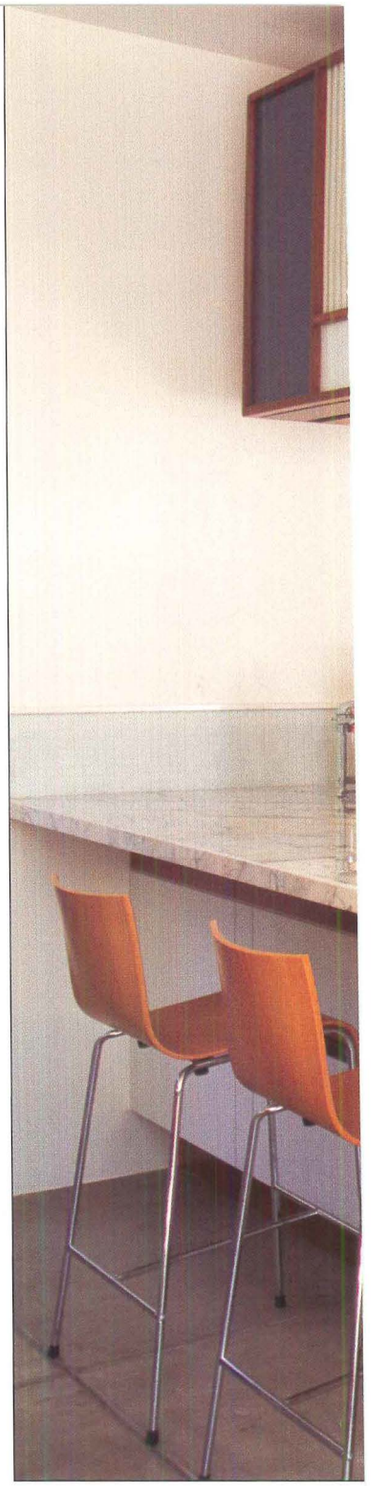
John Linden

John Ellis



John Linden

An open floor plan makes the most of see-through walls. The floating bookshelf divides the living and dining areas.



Kanner continued his light studies upstairs, where the bedroom closets stop 18 inches short of the ceiling. Clerestory windows above the closets transfer light from the exterior, through the hallway, and into the bedroom. "The rooms feel bigger because the ceilings continue," Kanner says. A large window overlooks the two-story living room. "We have it for acoustical control," he says, "but it creates a glass cube from the perspective of the master bedroom." The thoroughly modern spaces are assembled with sensuous materials. Deep blue terrazzo on the entryway floor, glass mosaic tiles on the fireplace wall and on the wainscoting in the bathrooms, and marble in the kitchen and master bath add touches of glamour. Elsewhere, Kanner relied on inexpensive materials to offset the house's structural costs. The living room and dining room floors are the basic concrete structural slab, polished and left alone. "It made sense because we poured a slab on the terrace, so it became a continuous material," Kanner says.

And the cabinets in the kitchen and bathrooms prove that design can be distinctive without breaking the budget. They're made of MDF plywood. The doors are cut from 4-foot-by-8-foot sheets of corrugated fiberglass and mounted on tracks and glides. "It's really low-tech," Kanner says. "All it took was finishing the material with a clear lacquer or a combination of different colors of lacquer—a lot cheaper than veneering with oak or cherry or maple." Drilling holes and inserting rings for finger-pulls did away with the need for expensive hardware.

Themes of space, sunlight, and watery weightlessness permeate the house. In the bathrooms, Formica tops with apple plywood edges float above base cabinets, conveying the shape of the bowl. In the master bath, a wall composition of overlapping circular mirrors blends with the round windows. A small porthole above the tub provides a leafy view, while a larger window opens for ventilation. The portholes bubble up elsewhere: In the stair tower, one frames the patio's water sculpture; another one on the landing orients visitors to the street. "The irony is that we won't be doing any more circular windows in our office," Kanner says. "We've been stereotyped for doing that." But that's the beauty of an architect's own project. It offers a chance to play with new ideas, and put others to rest.—*cheryl weber*

John Ellis

In outfitting the kitchen, Kanner chose statuary marble for countertops. Cabinets, like those in the bathrooms, are fashioned from MDF plywood and lacquered sheets of corrugated fiberglass.

"we spend a lot of time in the kitchen . . . if we're entertaining, there's a dialogue between us cooking and the guests at the dining room table." —Stephen Kanner, faia

project:
511 House, Pacific Palisades, Calif.
architect:
Kanner Architects, Los Angeles
general contractor:
Withheld
project size:
3,200 square feet
construction cost:
$200 per square foot

gray matters

the latest decorative concretes are more than a chip off the old block.

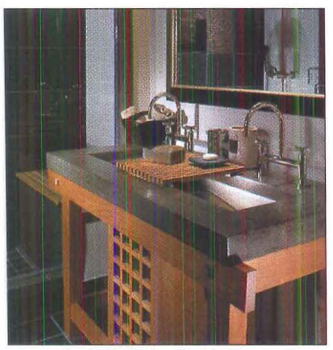
by nigel f. maynard

Concrete countertops, such as this one by architect Ken Ruppel and Buddy Rhodes Studio, offer colors no natural stone can match.

SharonRisedorph/Buddy Rhodes Studio

Once upon a time, concrete was like your unkempt childhood neighbor who had braces, a buzz cut, and thick glasses. But like your friend, who now flashes a winning smile and wears Brioni suits, concrete has blossomed into a snazzy trendsetter, a sophisticated spec for almost any project.

A mainstay of building construction for eons, until recent years the product's drab gray mien was considered too cold for all but the most esoteric decorative purposes. But as with industrial-looking stainless steel appliances, now widely accepted by the mainstream and newly tailored for residential use, concrete has been reinvented and re-engineered for the home. Some of its deficiencies have been tamed, and a great deal more art has developed within the craft.



David O. Marlow/Buddy Rhodes Studio

A waterproof product, concrete is equally at home in this bath by Michael Fuller Architects.

Concrete floors—colored and stained, scored and inlaid—were the first decorative use to catch on. Pacific Coast architects led the way, employing concrete floors both inside and immediately outside the house to reinforce a connection between interior and exterior space. Now, other temperate areas of the country rely on the same visual trick. In fashion-forward jobs, concrete moves off the floor to fireplace surrounds and even cast-in-place interior walls.

kitchen chameleon

Still, the most frequent interior spec for decorative concrete is in the kitchen and bath. Colored with a wide variety of pigments, concrete offers a vast palette and an inspiringly blank slate. That's why architect Michael Baushke uses it in so many of his projects. A principal at Apparatus Architecture in San Francisco, Baushke and his partner Stuart Hills spec it for countertops, sinks, drain boards, islands, bars, and many other applications.

"Stone is one of the best products to use in a kitchen," Baushke admits. "But finished concrete goes one step further. You can play with thickness and edges because it's more versatile. It has the same characteristics as stone, but you get more options."

Architect Marc Toma first happened upon concrete many years ago when an intrepid client brought the material to him. "The client had an affinity for new materials and was very much interested in it," says Toma, a principal of Burks Toma Architects in Berkeley, Calif. "We investigated its benefits and found great things." Toma has since been bowled over by the material's intensity, the way it absorbs colors and reflects light. "It is very luminescent," he says. "It ages well, and it has a hefty look that says quality."

Architect Dick Clark is another concrete fan. "It's easy to clean, long lasting, and as durable as granite," says the principal of Dick Clark Architecture in Austin, Texas. And when he specs the material for countertops, he sees fresh canvas for creativity: "We put in granite dust to give the surface a nice sparkle," he explains. "We also put in broken bottles. I like things that I can grind down."

casting call

Starting at about $100 per square foot, concrete can either be cast in place or pre-

continued on page 76

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Fabricators such as Cheng Design and Soupcan can add drainboards, glass inserts, or broken bottles to create a one-of-a-kind look.

Courtesy Cheng Design

Courtesy Soupcan

cast at the fabricator's workshop. Because a good finish requires many hours of grinding, sanding, polishing, and sealing, most experts say precast is the way to go.

"The problem with cast in place is that you need the workers in your kitchen for days," says Susan Andrews, marketing manager for San Francisco-based Buddy Rhodes Studio, a leading practitioner of the concrete craft. Not only can on-site fabricators cause a traffic jam with other installers (and clients if it's a renovation), site work is almost always more expensive.

"Cast in place is also a messy procedure," says Ryan M. Martin, new projects manager at Oakland, Calif.-based Concreteworks Studio. "What you see is what you get, and you often get a sidewalk look." Andrews concurs, "It really makes sense to do it in the studio."

counter intelligence

As with any artisan, finding and selecting a concrete fabricator is tough, but there are some solid track records within the young medium. The aforementioned Buddy Rhodes Studio is known for producing meticulous indoor and outdoor concrete tiles, precast counters, sinks, tubs, surrounds, and many other architectural elements. Their product line is entirely handmade and colored, and Andrews says the studio is always working on new colors to keep the palette fresh.

Mark Rogero, who was trained as an architect, founded Concreteworks Studio in 1991 and is the primary developer of all its products. Using a lightweight cement-based composite, the firm designs, fabricates, and hand finishes tiles, stair treads, whirlpools, furniture, fireplaces, and more. But countertops still account for about 85 percent of his business, Martin says.

Chicago-based Soupcan used to make all types of countertops, but concrete counters now account for about 75 percent of its work, says president Jerry Santora. The company's line includes precast countertops in 16 natural, unpigmented base tones and 11 pigmented colors, but numerous custom color combinations are available.

Another top fabricator is Cheng Design in Berkeley, Calif. The firm, led by renowned kitchen and interior designer Fu Tung Cheng, has developed a concrete product called Geocrete. The material has a honed-looking surface that, unlike other concrete products, is not achieved through polishing or buffing. The countertops very nearly come out of the mold looking the way they do, the company says. Eight standard colors are available.

higher education

Concrete has come a long way since it was first speced in cutting-edge houses about a decade ago (early applications in Eichler and Wright houses notwithstanding). Its second act has raised it to a whole new level of craftsmanship and beauty. Yet it retains some of its original flaws, or characteristics—depending on how you and your clients look at it. Hairline cracks still can develop, despite what some fabricators claim. It also can be scratched, and hot pans will scorch the surface. But for architects such as Dick Clark, these imperfections factor in the appeal and charm of concrete. "The cracks are part of the beauty of the product," he says.

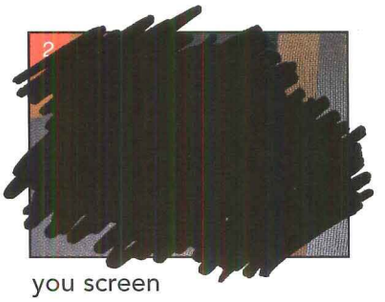
Because it's somewhat porous, the material is vulnerable to staining. All fabricators initially apply an FDA-approved penetrating wax, but periodic resealing is required to maintain general stain resistance. However, even when properly sealed, the surface remains susceptible to highly acidic liquids such as red wine, lemon juice, and vinegar.

Soupcan's Jerry Santora claims his company has made some progress in addressing concrete's deficiencies with a number of specialized surfaces. "We offer a range of finishes, from a low-sheen high-heat resistant surface to a surface that resists scratching."

Another consideration when choosing concrete is its heft. Most high quality base cabinets should carry the load adequately, but be cautious of cantilevering and other less supportive installations, Clark advises. You'll likely see severe cracking if the support is inadequate. Like any other custom product, concrete's quality is entirely dependent on the skills of the craftsperson. Experience is key here. Ask for references, request samples of work, and check to see that the company has a long list of successful projects.

Concrete might not be for everyone, but its looks, versatility, and durability make it a solid spec. "Its color and texture are different from stone and tile," says Marc Toma. " With a little planning, it will seamlessly adapt to its surrounding and will match any client." ra

To help



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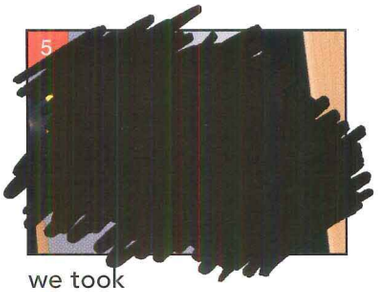

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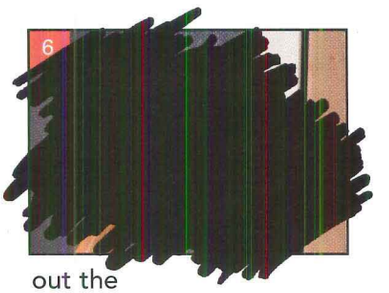

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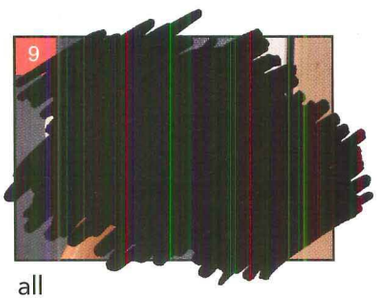

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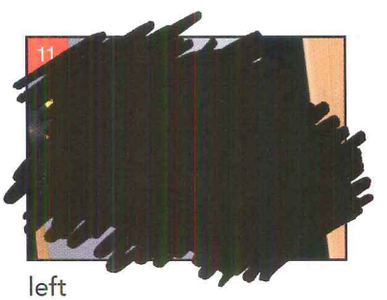

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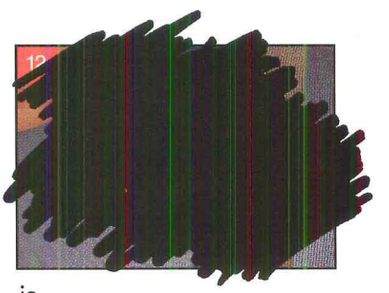

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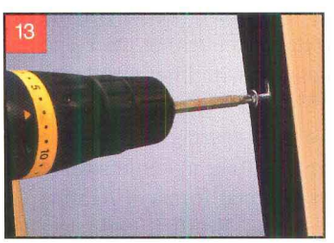

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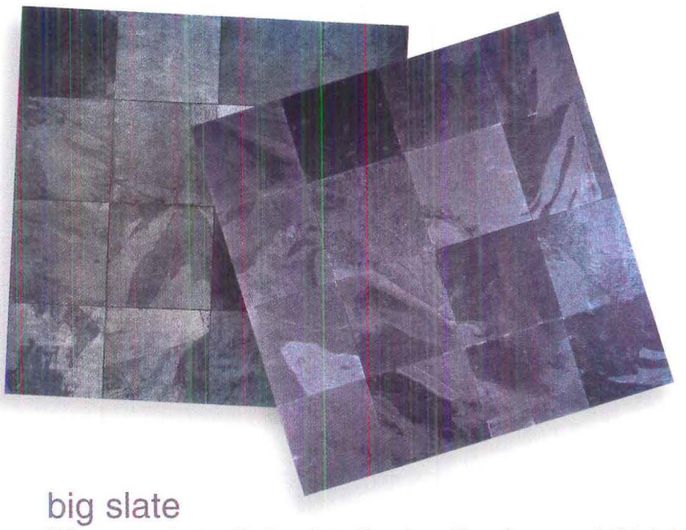

big slate

When a project calls for slate flooring, Trogdon uses Midnight Black and Silvergrey products from American Slate Co. Fabricated in sizable 24-inch-square tiles and 3-by-6 1/2-foot slabs, the products allow the architect to work on a grand scale. "The material is a good value," he explains. "Costs per square foot for other natural stone products are higher." Best of all, he adds, the company always has the material he's looking for in stock. American Slate Co., 800.553.5611; www.americanslate.com.

bruck stops here

Trogdon is a fan of Bruck Lighting because "it has advanced the idea of traditional 'track' lighting and taken it to a very delicate and beautiful sculptural expression." The company manufactures lighting systems (with an emphasis on low-voltage sources) in track and cable versions and with interchangeable fixtures. Though a bit pricey, the products "can be used sparingly to produce dramatic lighting in conjunction with more traditional forms of lighting," Trogdon says. Bruck Lighting Systems, 714.424.0500; www.brucklighting.com.

pleasantly stout

When Trogdon needs high quality windows and doors, he specs them from Quantum. "The detail of design is very simple and yet technically resolved at the same time," he says. "The window members are stout and fabricated to withstand the test of time." All products are custom made from clear, vertical grain Douglas fir and insulating glass. Windows are available with true divided lights and various glazing options; doors come in a variety of styles and sizes. Quantum Windows & Doors, 800.287.6650; www.quantumwindows.com.

—nigel f. maynard

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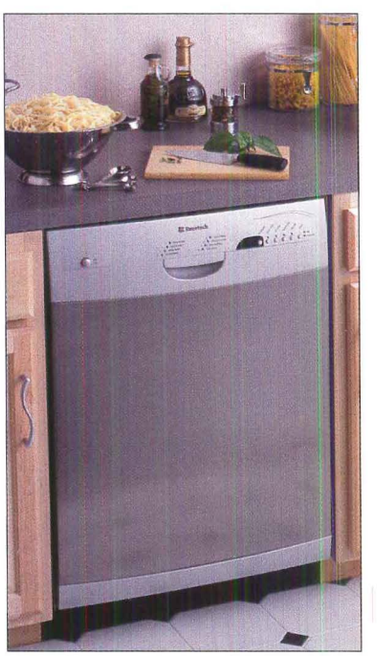
The handmade Magic Square comes in either granite or travertine marble with a stainless steel bottom pan. A mosaic tray fits atop the stainless pan to conceal the drain mechanism. The 18-inch-square sink measures 6 inches deep; the trays are stocked in two types of tumbled marble and two Venetian glass mosaic patterns. Custom tray configurations also are available. Linkasink, 866.395.8377; www.linkasink.com.

art house

Offered by the Italian manufacturer Mill-Due, the Clio collection of bathroom furnishings is part of a puzzle of high-style products that can be assembled to create or enhance modern spaces. The line includes: Ekotek sinks and vanity surfaces made from resin and aluminum; shelving with built-in lighting; movable mirrors; hide-away towel racks; and countertops in marble, slate, or 23 glass colors. The line is imported by DOMA Interiors + Design in West Hollywood, Calif. Mill-Due, 310.360.9858; www.doma-usa.com.



clean machine

This Eurotech dishwasher offers a wealth of options, but at $749, the manufacturer says it costs less than other products with similar features. Available in the United States for the first time through AM Appliance Group in Richardson, Texas, the Italian dishwasher has seven wash programs and dries by pulling moist air out of the stainless steel tub. Top and bottom rack loads can be washed separately, and a one- to 16-hour delayed-start function allows homeowners to run the machine whenever they want. It's available in white, black, and graphite. Eurotech, 972.644.8595; www.eurotechappliances.com.

—nigel f. maynard

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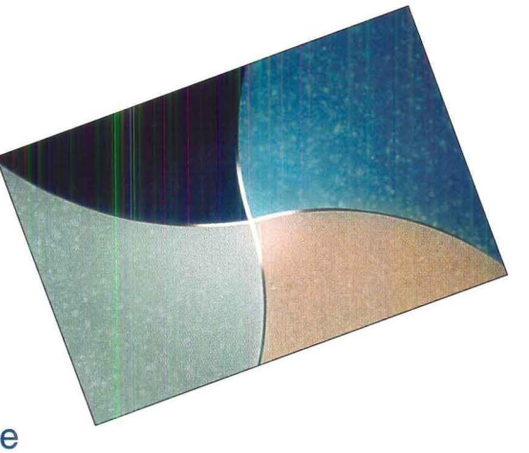
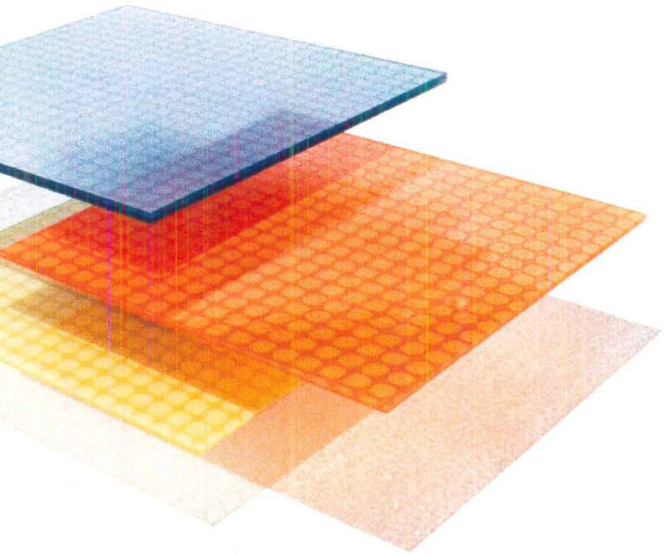


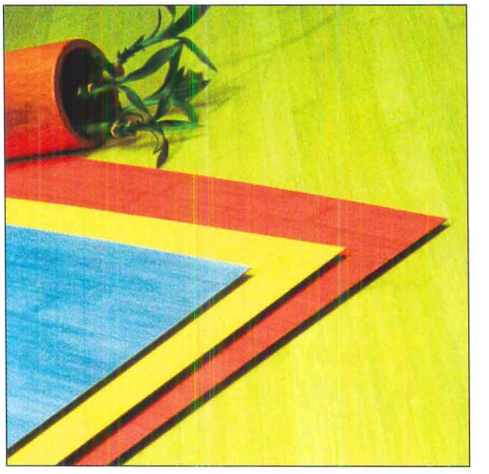
clear choice

The Glass Series brings translucence to Avonite's group of solid surfaces, with opalescent tints such as cobalt, sky, antique, and frosted glass. Backlighting countertops or backsplashes make the material glow. The nonporous surface resists staining and is easily fabricated into different shapes or treatments, says the company. This series, like other Avonite products, comes with a 10-year warranty. Avonite, 800.428.6648; www.avonite.com.



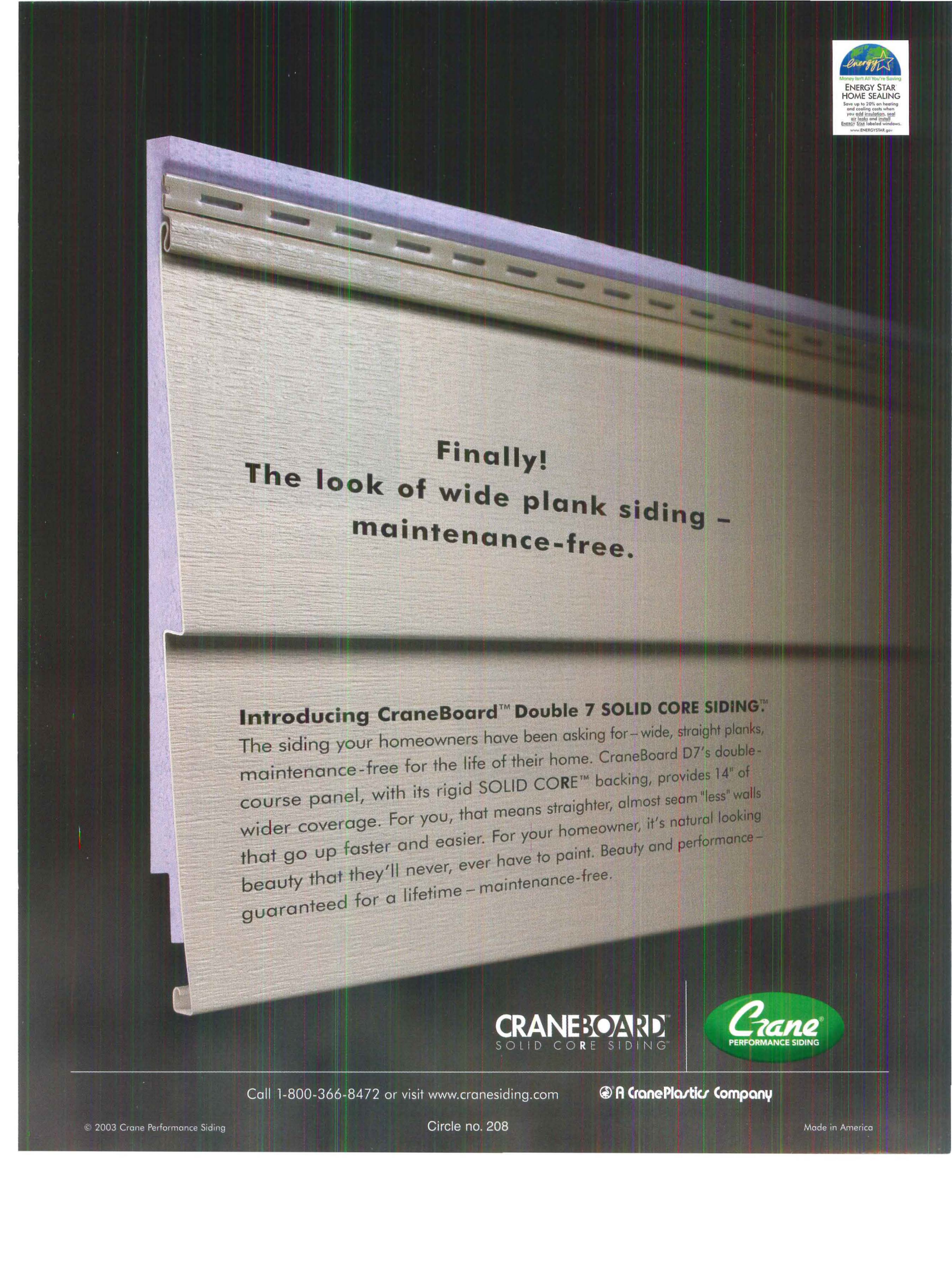
material goods

The patented process for creating Imago encapsulates fabrics in a high-performance resin, resulting in the look of patterned glass. The scratch- and fingerprint-resistant resin is lighter than glass, however, and can be custom installed using woodworking tools. The surface also can be bent and formed under moderate heat. Different fabrics are available in numerous effects, including metallics, pastels, and bold geometrics. KnollTextiles, 800.343.5665; www.knoll.com.



pandamonium

Four radical shades usher the Bamboo high-pressure laminate collection into the 21st century. Extreme green, red dragon, electric yellow, and Xanadu blue morph the natural grain of bamboo into vibrant waves of color. The patented "Armored Protection Surface" comes standard on the Bamboo collection and, says the company, provides a lasting gloss finish that resists scuffing and abrasions. Nevamar, 800.638.4380; www.nevamar.com.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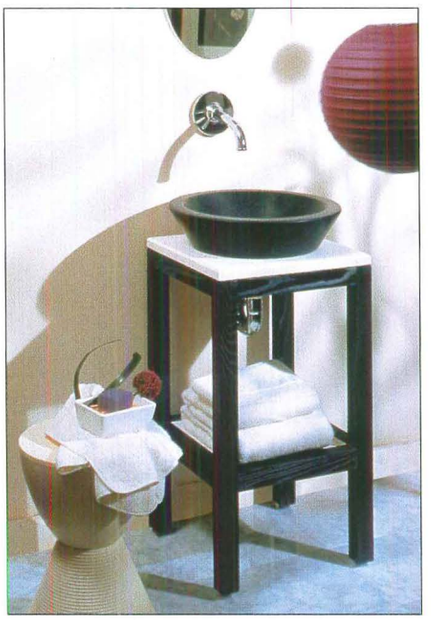
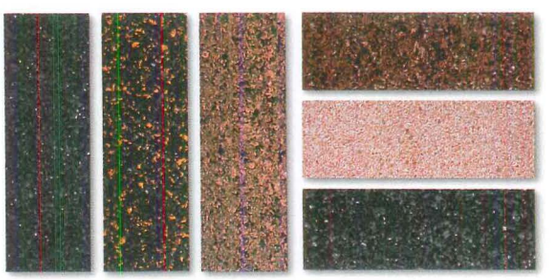
furniture fetish

The Metals collection comprises five pieces of bath furniture produced from solid surfacing and combined with metals or woods. The Java vanity shown here comes in two wood finishes, and its polyester-acrylic shelves are available in more than 30 solid, matrix, or granite colors. The Vascello Collection vessel lav completes the dramatic look. All Transolid sinks and vanity tops are warrantied for life. Transolid, 800.766.2452; www.transolid.com.



natural selection

Corian has added six solid surface colors to their palette with the 2003 product line, each derived from tints found in the natural landscape. The new series of acorn, blue pebble, delta sand, doeskin, graphic blue, and willow brings the company's total offerings to more than 110 variations. The surface material is a blend of natural materials and acrylic polymer. Corian, 800.4.CORIAN; www.corian.com.



hard core

Seven new colors boost Silestone's array to more than 35 options. Hues range from neutral beiges and browns to deep greens, metallic navy, and black-gray. Silestone is 93 percent quartz, and its low-maintenance, nonporous polished surface doesn't require sealing, the company says. The maker also maintains the product is stain- and scratch-resistant and is less prone to chipping and cracking than other natural stones. Silestone, 800.291.1311; www.silestoneusa.com.

—shelley d. hutchins

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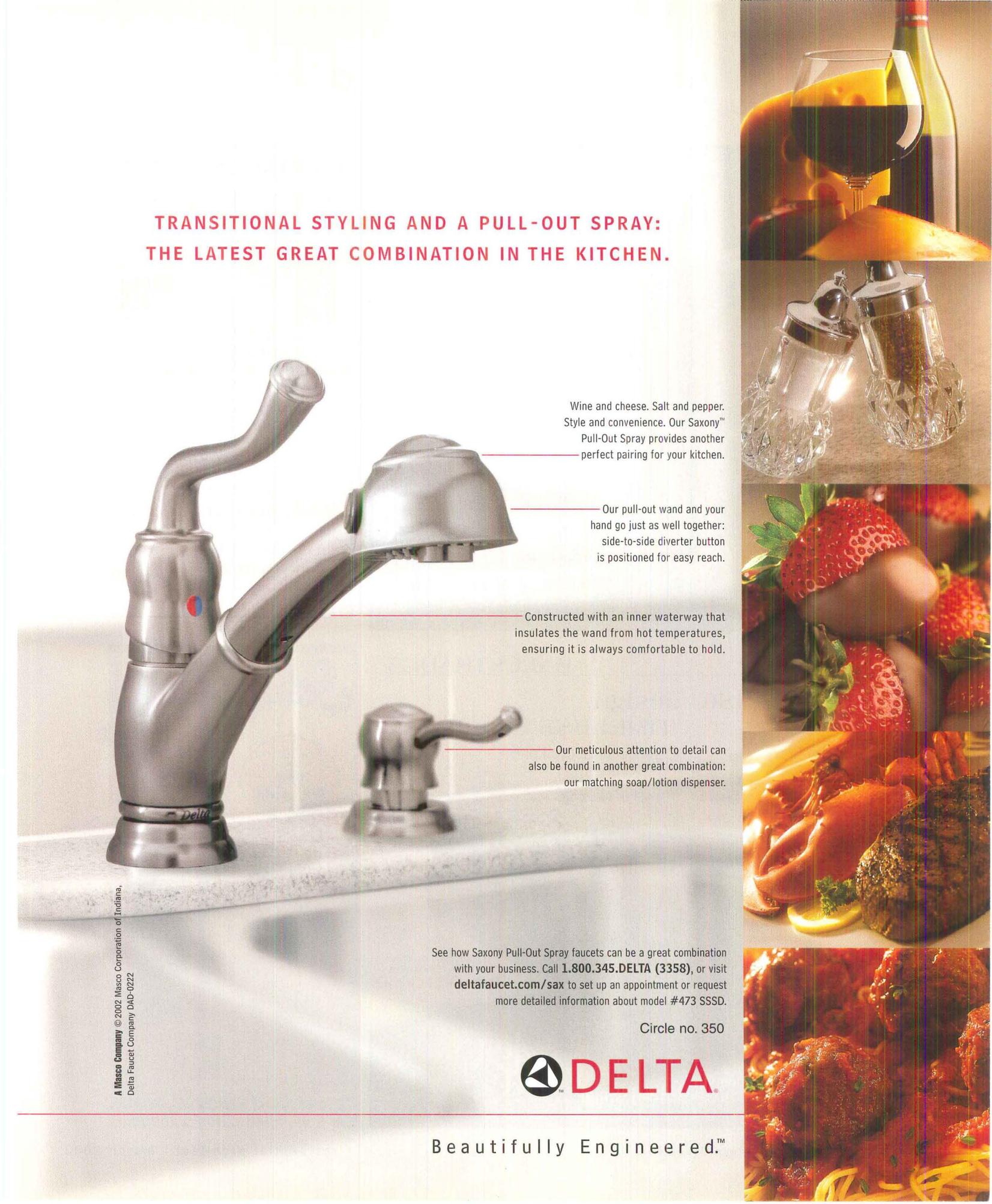

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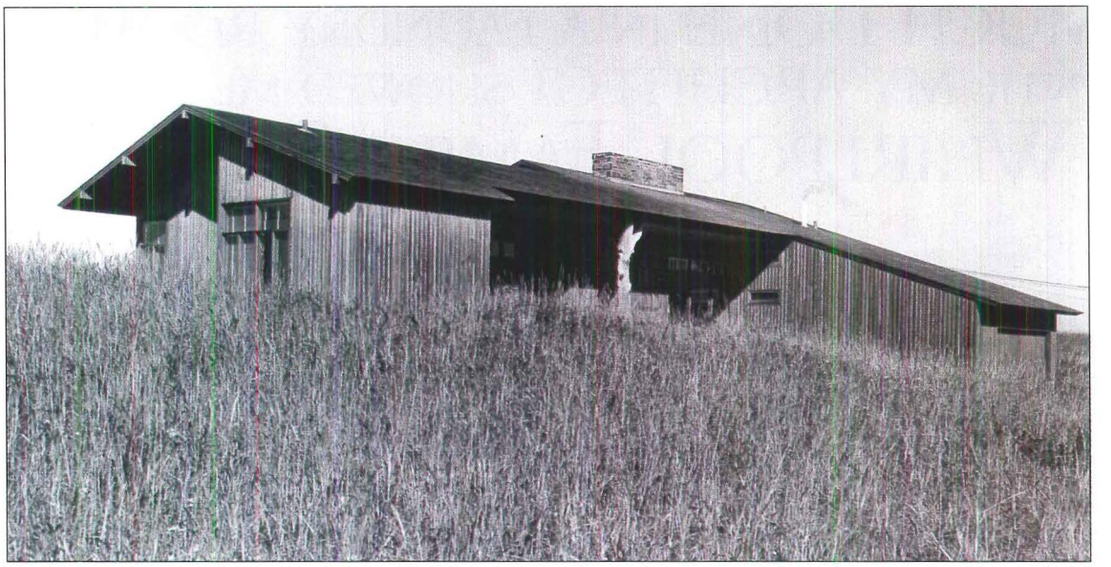

Courtesy Oregon Historical Society, OrHi 45430

Ten years before he became dean of MIT's School of Architecture and Planning, Italian-born architect Pietro Belluschi designed a simple beach house on the Oregon coast. The house's low roof pitch and deep overhangs shield it from the fierce elements of salt, rain, and wind. And its muted street facade protects the privacy of its residents from the eyes of curious passers-by.

Belluschi wanted to create a low-maintenance house that would age in marriage with the landscape. So he clad the building in vertical spruce boards, adding an unfinished tree trunk to support the front porch's roof. In addition to weathering gracefully, the spruce siding mimics the upright appearance of the site's wild grasses. A narrow floorplan provides ocean views for almost every room in the house.

The ideas of disciplined, environmentally influenced design presented in the Peter Kerr House served as a forerunner to the widely admired regionalism of the Pacific Northwest.—*meghan drueding*

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