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Outlook

A PASSION FOR DESIGN

Mark R. Johnson, FAIA, AIBD

One of the best kept secrets at Whirlpool and KitchenAid is their quiet transformation from a major appliance manufacturer into an innovation powerhouse and design leader. A few years ago CEO Dave Whitwam determined that design innovation would become a core competency for the company and Chuck Jones, formerly from Herman Miller, was drafted as VP of Global Consumer Design, and given the task. The design awards and recognition have been coming ever since. Currently, Whirlpool Corporation operates design studios in Mexico, Italy, India, Brazil and the United States. Jones reports, "Whirlpool Corporation's global presence has made it possible to deliver



innovative solutions to consumers around the world. We continue to build on the design and cultural expertise of our global colleagues to create industry-leading product designs that appeal to the specific needs and preferences of consumers in markets worldwide."

Just to mention a few recent awards, Whirlpool received the 2002



Shown with optional storage pedestals

National Design Award from the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt Museum, and in 2003, received one gold and two bronze IDEA Design Excellence awards from the Industrial Designers Society of America. Museums featuring Whirlpool designs include the Louvre, and most recently, the Chicago Athenaeum of Architecture and Design.

What drives the products leading to these awards? A passion for design and innovation. Jones explains it this way, "Our global design program is about using design as a vehicle to build equity

and relationships with those who choose our brands. It's not just about crafting strikingly original products; it's also about including features, feel and experience that meets the desires of our customers."

KitchenAid's newest offering, the Ensemble™ washer and dryer (pictured here), represents the high end of fabric care, with a stunning look, tremendous energy savings, and outstanding performance. You can see it along with other new-to-the-world products at the Kitchen & Bath Industry Show (KBIS) in April, and the AIA Convention in June, both in Chicago. If you're there, we'd like to share our passion for design with you, and hear about your work as well.

While enjoying my coffee, this quote from Howard Schultz, Starbucks' chairman, caught my eye: "Passion is 100 times more powerful than espresso." Apt observation...and Whirlpool has been operating on a "double shot" for some time, quietly earning recognition along the way.



Mark R. Johnson, FAIA, AIBD
Manager, Architectural and Design Marketing

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A steep site inspired this weekend getaway's unique geometries. Located in Washington's Cascade Mountains, the house was designed by the Seattle firm E. Cobb Architects. Above photo by Steve Keating; cover photo by Bill Cramer.

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The way Duo Dickinson sees it, time-tested building methods trump techno-wizardry year after year after year.



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The best houses are faithful to the geology and culture of their surroundings. But there is more than one philosophical approach to site-sensitive design.



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The internationally known, eco-minded firm William McDonough + Partners is changing residential design—one green home at a time.

by Meghan Drueding



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Inventive, individual, inspirational: Three character-rich houses that put the life back in lifestyle.

by Cheryl Weber, Nigel F. Maynard, and Shelley D. Hutchins

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Glenn Murcutt's Aussie idyll.

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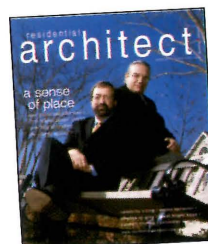
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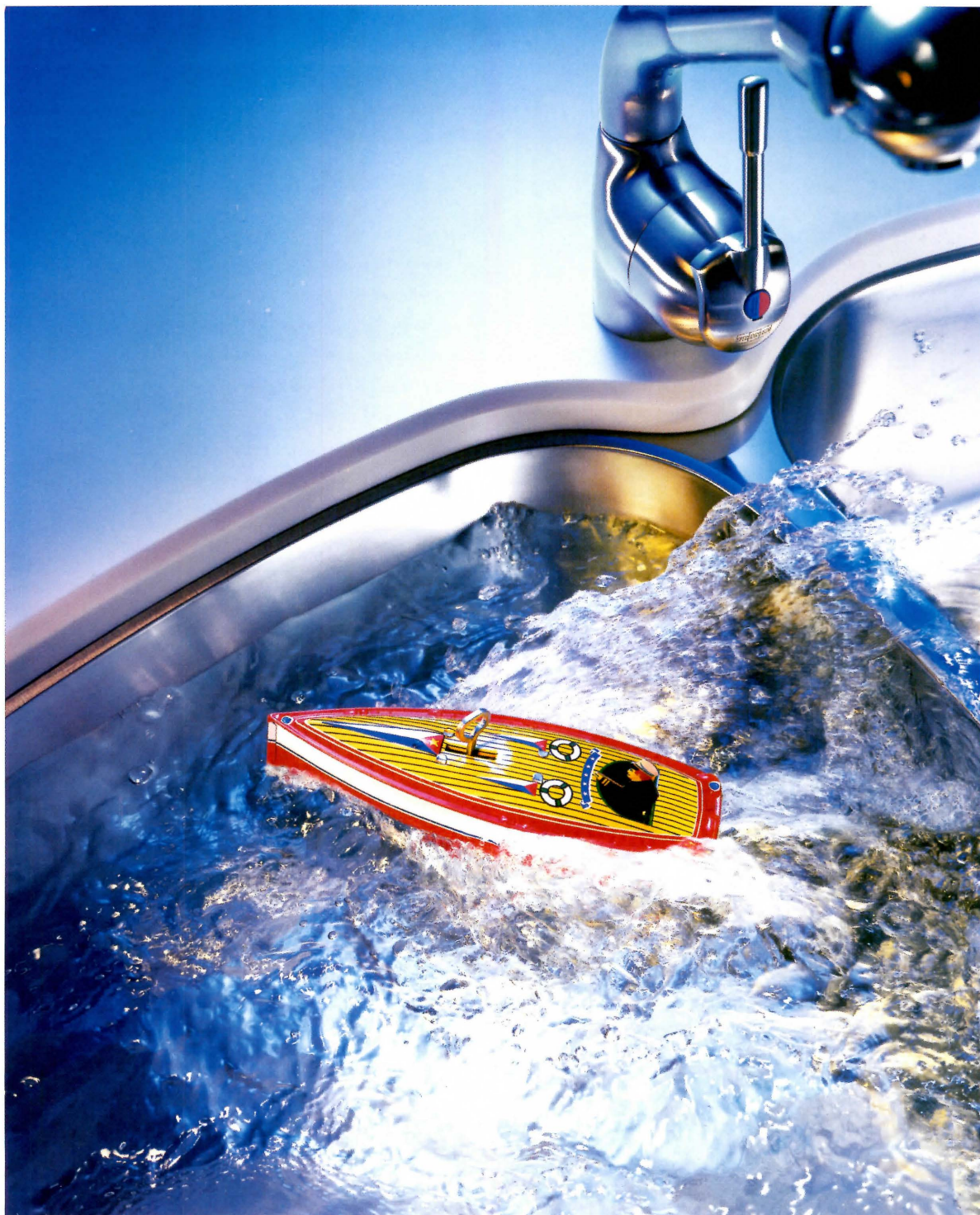
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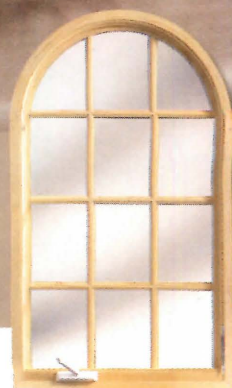
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from the editor

a glass half full

is the mainstream developing a taste for modernism all over again?

by s. claire conroy

One of my favorite Christmas gifts this year is a set of small wine tumblers. Etched across the midpoint of each glass is a white line with the words “ottimista” above and “pessimista” below. I’m a glass-half-full kind of person, so I spent the holidays chanting “ottimista” as I hoisted my share of Christmas cheer. Well, I’m delighted to report, upon my return from this year’s International Builders’ Show in Las Vegas and a side trip to Park City, Utah, that I’m even more ottimista than usual.

This is not my typical reaction to the National Association of Home Builders’ annual convention. It’s an overwhelming experience—a convention center crammed with mass-market building products and 100,000 dazed attendees milling the show floor. It’s like shopping in an airport-sized Home Depot Expo with your entire hometown.

Outside the convention center, in parking lots nearby and subdivisions beyond, were the “idea houses.” The forces that beget these projects are vast and varied, among them architects, builders, publications, associations, and manufacturers.

Because many must sell after the event to recoup their costs and because they’re aimed at mainstream builders, the houses and their ideas rarely surprise. Generally, the houses tweak the middle ground with some clever floor plan ideas and a few product innovations, all swathed in the Traditional style *du jour*. Perfectly pleasant, perfectly marketable, perfectly boring.

This year was different. There were no wondrous techno-marvels, no Solar Decathlon visions of the future, just several refreshingly well-designed, stylistically unshackled houses. The first came from the most surprising source, the NAHB itself, which is not known for its design risk-taking. (A disclosure: Our sister publication, *BUILDER* magazine, is media partner for this annual project, but it’s driven by the NAHB’s National Committee of the Housing Industry.) Designed by a Dutch firm, Food for Buildings, and architect of record Willem Kymmell, the single-family house takes its inspiration from the closet Modernism of multifamily loft buildings. It has a restrained, geometric elevation (although I wish they had avoided the



Mark Robert Halper

pitched roof), unfussy detailing, and an open, changeable floor plan (see the story at www.builderonline.com, under the January issue link).

Similarly, Andersen Windows’ “inHOME” idea house in Park City, Utah, departs from the usual builders’ pattern book of generic styles. Designed by Michael Plautz, AIA, of RSP Architects, Ltd. (see the story on page 22 of our January-February issue, and www.anderseninhome.com), the house is undeniably Modern, albeit a gentle version with warm woods, natural stone, and other familiar materials. Although it evokes Midwestern Prairie, Sarah Susanka’s “Home by Design” showhouse (www.homebydesignshowhouse.com) also

reveals a Modern sensibility, warmed with the woods, tiles, and other rich materials consumers associate with Traditional styles.

These houses do not represent what most builders have on their subdivision playlists. But they do signal some hope for the future. Idea houses don’t get built if the ideas seem too radical to the players involved. And thus, I believe they’re evidence of a growing mainstream acceptance for Modern design. Ottimista! **ra**

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

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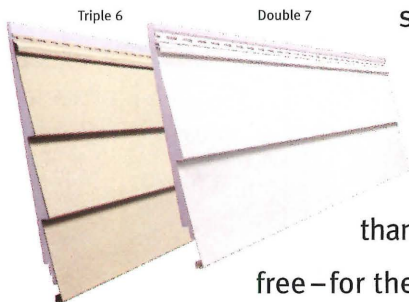
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—henrik bull, faia

ing today: the emerging return to more moderate-sized homes.

Driven by soaring land and construction costs, demographic trends that show 70 percent of new-home buyers are not “Mom and Dad and two kids” (the traditional family), and nudged on by such visionary architects as Sarah Susanka in her book *The Not So Big House*, the American public is turning toward homes that reflect their lifestyles. More practical, more modest, more sustainable, more functional, and often more fun, these homes are being created by architects with vision and innovation in their blood.

With few exceptions, banking institutions are dragging their feet as they do comparables on both custom and merchant-built homes that reflect these trends. The result is reluctance to fund innovative infill, small and clustered lot product, and full-time housing that is “outside the (safe) dots.” Two sets of books aren’t needed—just one, that recognizes shifting demographics, emerging lifestyles, and long-term value.

By the way, some banks

are offering lower rates to those buying near transit, on the theory that the money they save on automobile costs—variously estimated at upwards of \$5,000 per vehicle per year—can be applied to paying the mortgage. There is hope!

William H. Kreager, FAIA
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■ saw your article “Vacation in Place” in *residential architect* and I could not wait to e-mail you. I have a textbook situation right now with a client.

I sell real estate in the Greater Danbury area of Fairfield County in Connecticut.

We have found the ideal home. However, it measures out at 1,000 square feet. It has water views and has been redone inside and out at a quality that I don’t always see in million-dollar homes. But I think it is \$40,000 overpriced based on what has sold in the area, even with the upgrades.

What do I do as a Realtor? I work for my client and am obligated legally and morally to get him a

fair deal and I am not comfortable with the list price. (The owner won’t budge.)

How long will it take for the intelligence expressed in your article to be reflected in the buying public? What does the buyer who needs “heavy leverage and favorable interest rates” do?

The irony is that my client is a good friend and a contractor and he’s the one who handed me your article. He recognizes himself in the article but we feel trapped in a society that is forcing us to make a reasonable financial decision.

Thank you so much for succinctly defining our dilemma.

John Chopourian
Prudential Connecticut
Realty
Ridgefield, Conn.

you are very correct in your thinking in “Vacation in Place.”

Being bound by convention that’s aided and abetted by appraisers and banks is something the new homeowner should be freed from. It’s the cookie-cutter mentality for efficient loan processing of these two industries that has a stifling effect on doing something different.

The houses of today are big for bigness’ sake, a fine reason to waste resources during and after construction.

Jim Shaddox
by e-mail

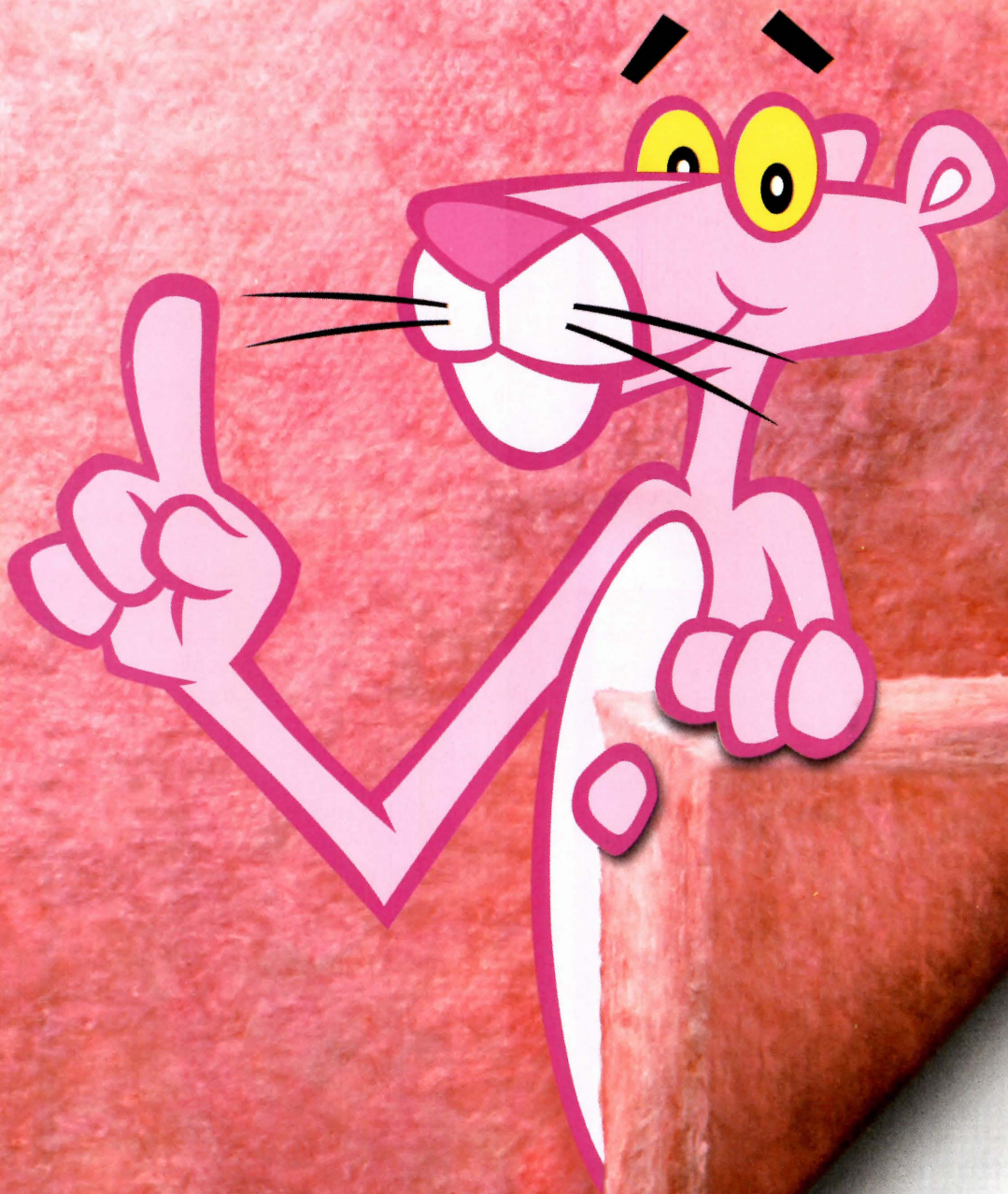
style wise

■ n my opinion your magazine stands out among architectural journals in emphasizing quality

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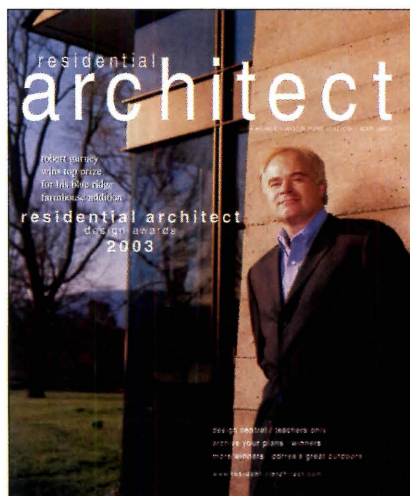
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rather than fashion. The projects you publish represent a broad spectrum of “styles,” but you are selective in choosing the best examples within different categories.

I look forward to your beautifully written editorials. You seem to understand what architects are trying to accomplish, as well as knowing the feelings and needs of our clients. Featuring the timeless work of the Turnbull Griffin Haesloop firm (“Light on the Land,” July 2003, page 56) demonstrates that simple, sensible, and honest architecture does not go out of fashion.

Henrik Bull, FAIA
by e-mail

moving pictures

bravo! After reading “The Dangers of Digital Cameras” (May 2003, page 15), about digital photography in the field of architecture, I couldn’t agree more. The quality a professionally trained photographer brings to his clients goes beyond the picture. He’s really bringing the architecture to life. When I am shooting an assignment for an architect,

builder, contractor, or publisher, I want to put myself in the eyes of the beholder. I feel the design, mood, and texture, and focus on the beauty of the architecture as it relates to the senses. Too often people take architecture for granted. They don’t take the time to feel their surroundings, or appreciate what architecture brings to our personal lives.

As an architectural photographer I also believe that the architecture breathes, and lives within us. I attempt to bring a sense of believability and beauty to all my projects.

Keep up the great work in *residential architect*. I enjoy your features and articles very much.

David Kessler
AK ideas inc.
Studio City, Calif.

thanks very much for writing the piece about do-it-yourself digital photography by archi-

“it’s great that you, an editor, are reminding architects not to flunk their presentations!”

—walter dufresne

tects. It’s great that you, an editor, are reminding architects not to flunk their presentations! All those years getting graded on my texts, my pictures, my lectures, makes me perplexed when architects fail to speak, write, or photograph clearly.

Walter Dufresne
art history student
City University of New York
by e-mail

I wanted to thank you for “The Dangers of Digital Cameras.” Like most readers, I tend to zip through most of the articles, reading only those that catch my eye. This article caught my eye not because of the title or its primary subject matter, but because of one statement you made that captures the spirit of the speculative housing market in my local area: “Think how cranky you get when builders believe they can design something just because they’re familiar with the elements.”

Oh, how true this statement is! The area in which I live is scattered with con-

tractor interpretations of Tuscan, Las Vegas wow, French Country, and my favorite—Taco Bell Spanish Revival. I don’t quite know when it happened but somewhere along the way the architect was written out of the script. Speculative contractors consider us a burden and an unnecessary expense. My wife (who is a real estate agent and an architect) and I have walked no more than 20 to 30 spec customs in the past two years and continue to amass a list of “what-not-to-dos.” In some ways it is such a shame that these homes will be sold to an unsuspecting public at \$1 million to \$2 million a pop. Such is life, I guess.

Tim Watkins
Tim Watkins, Architect
Roseville, Calif.

balancing act

thank you for your balance and clarity in assessing the issues of charging for what we love to do (“Caught in the Middle Class,” November/December 2002, page 13). I have not yet seen any
continued on page 24

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INNOVATIONS FOR LIVING™

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*“this is an issue that concerns all artists:
finding a balance between creativity
and the reality of career.”*

—geoffrey cantor

deep thinking in the area of client/human perception of value vis-à-vis working with a design professional.

I think that it is well worth the hard work of identifying the many elements leading to just how the world perceives us. It must include how schools train many architects to think of themselves as above the client and builder. It must also include a focused and clear analysis of the psychology of “teaching” a client or prospective client the tools necessary for full appreciation.

Where design ultimately delivers is in the realm of the felt; it deeply affects how we feel and behave and so one can say that what we are really offering is not seen. Just as a doctor might offer pills to a patient, we offer buildings. And, just as the pills are not the healing, neither is the building: It’s a pathway for more wholeness and comfort.

We need to more clearly understand what is going on in the minds and hearts of those we seek as clients so that we as a profession can speak truthfully, clearly, and to the points that are of

most interest to those not steeped in design. Thus begins an educational campaign that assists the non-design population in understanding what is available to them through the design professions.

I also see that many of us do not appreciate the building arts adequately, which leads to poor communication and adversarial relationships on job sites, and more “bad press.”

Andrew Eisen
Eisen Studios
by e-mail

this is an issue that concerns all artists: finding a balance between creativity and the reality of career. The second of these two is not entirely financial. The complications of the “business of art” to which one must attend increase as the perceived value of the work increases.

Perception of others, subjective and mercurial, distorts one’s own sense of his or her work. If this “perception” has financial resonance, it is generally given greater weight than one without. Furthermore,

if one party with a specific reputation in a field is a champion of an artist, others will be more willing to take a risk on that artist, and will (to use a banking term) make a market.

There are a few ways of tending to this dilemma. First, I think that if one finds joy in the creation, there can be less focus on the outcome. Value of process over product is vital to maintaining integrity of work.

Second, one must be honest. If one knows that an effort was subpar in the creation of a work, even if that work is met with adulation and public praise, the artist should not settle.

Third, one must try to find an intermediary to address some of the business elements. This person must be a real partner, one who understands the artist’s work and can help him or her find a way through the labyrinth that is the business world of art. If one has someone else to make the calls, organize the sales, and be the “bad guy” in negotiations, it keeps a certain innocence available to the artist (which I suppose I find

necessary in order to be truly creative).

Fourth, one must be willing to forgive oneself for mistakes, and embrace returning to the “drawing board” (literally and figuratively).

Fifth, one must be willing to earn money. Even if something is less than your best work, if someone will pay you for it, then allow yourself to take the money to support better work next time.

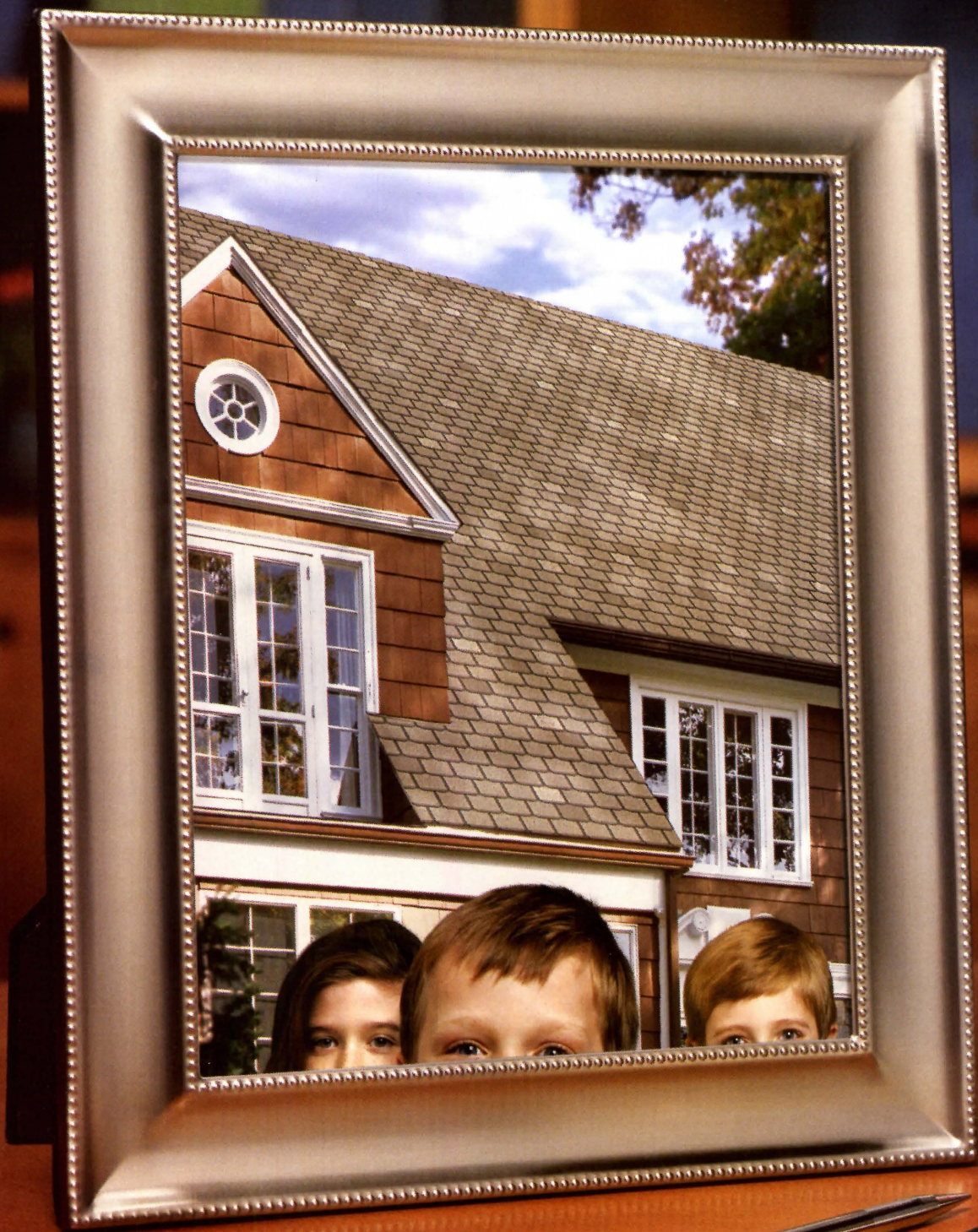
Sixth, allow yourself to find art in things that may seem pedestrian. Within any project, there are parameters based upon any number of variables, whether practical or otherwise. But within any set of parameters, there are limitless options and choices.

I could elaborate further, but as an actor who does commercials, sketches, TV, theater—Shakespeare to Simon, sausage to credit cards—these are things I feel I know about art and business.

Geoffrey Cantor
by e-mail

continued on page 26

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PLASTICS

INSULATION

MANUFACTURED STONE VENEER

ROOFING



SIDING

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content as yours.”*

—kerry blasdel

good sense

I always read your editorial in *residential architect*. You consistently write about current topics with intelligence and relevance to the profession. And you make so much sense! I appreciate your candor and honesty.

I read many trade magazines each month, but no other editorial page has as much good, important, and readable content as yours. I can tell that you put much thought and effort into your piece—and into the rest of the magazine as well.

Thank you for a consistently good job.

Kerry Blasdel, *Architect*
by e-mail

outside connections

I have been carrying around a copy of “The Outsiders” from your November/December 2002 issue (page 32) because I wanted to applaud you for the article. It was absolutely on target!

I am an architect and have recently begun my own practice, concentrating in residential architecture. I have spent more than 12

years in architectural practice, and have seen great collaborations between architects and landscape architects—where the result is indeed more than the sum of the parts. However, more often than not, the architect’s ego is unwilling to relinquish design control, and the landscape architect is relegated to planting design only. This often results in the creation of odd exterior spaces that do seem disconnected from the landscape.

Thanks again for a great article that clearly addressed the important issues underlying the need for collaboration between the architect and the landscape architect.

Lisa Kyle
Lisa Kyle, *Architecture*
Baltimore

a dull blade

I would like to express my disappointment in James Horner’s letter to the editor titled “An Edge to Grind” (August 2003, page 15).

Mr. Horner’s piercing comments demonstrate a blatantly subjective opinion (with many seemingly obvious misinterpretations) denouncing the recognition given to Frederick Phillips’



William Kildow

Tower House in Chicago, which won a *residential architect* Design Award (May 2003, page 48).

First, let us (re-)establish that this is an urban 1,152-square-foot house for the designer. The ground floor is covered outdoor parking. The second floor is the sleeping area. The third floor is the open living area (including a small kitchen) with views to the Chicago skyline. The roof is an outdoor deck with similar, but improved, views.

As the jury did, I applaud the designer for putting the (indoor and outdoor) living spaces on the top. As the published photo shows, these spaces therefore provide dynamic 360-degree views to the city and are further privatized from the street. As far as Mr. Horner’s criticism of it for requiring additional stair travel, I think minimal research will

prove to him that walking up stairs is both very common (look at the vast number of walk-ups throughout the world) and quite healthy.

Unlike Mr.

Horner, I see nothing particularly “equivocal” about the facade of this house; if the open kitchen and living space were not to be separated in plan or use, why should they be in elevation? Furthermore, the articulation of the third floor and the second floor facades (spaces that *are* intended to be different) do vary comfortably.

In the end, however, I truly feel sorry for Mr. Horner’s inability to appreciate that this is an elegantly designed, yet playful, house. It was never intended to be on the cover of an ADA booklet, nor the house of a family of five. Remarkably, his criticisms are at once too pragmatic and too frivolous for the goals that were set, and achieved, in the design.

Bryan Schabel
Chicago
by e-mail

The background of the advertisement features a central photograph of a stone house with a multi-paned arched window. The house is constructed from Old Country Fieldstone. On either side of the central image are vertical strips showing close-up details of different stone textures: a mix of brown and tan stones on the left, and larger, more uniform tan stones on the right.

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MANUFACTURED STONE VENEER



ROOFING

SIDING

A high-angle, symmetrical photograph of a wooden canoe floating on a lake. The canoe is pointed towards the viewer, with its bow at the bottom of the frame. Inside the canoe, two wooden paddles with light-colored blades and dark shafts are crossed. The interior of the canoe shows wooden planking and two woven mesh footrests. The water is dark with gentle ripples, and the entire scene is bathed in the warm, orange-red light of a sunset or sunrise. The reflection of the canoe is visible in the water below.

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home front

tips and trends from the world of residential design

texas triumph

ask David Lake, FAIA, and Ted Flato, FAIA, about their current work, and a torrent of excitement gushes from the San Antonio-based pair. The two founders of Lake/Flato Architects, a 48-person firm, breathlessly interrupt each other, veering from a house in Montana to guidelines for a new community on Florida's Gulf Coast to a school in Los Angeles. Their enthusiasm has proved contagious, energizing their co-workers and employees, their colleagues around the country, and now the AIA, which awarded the firm



Scott Frances

its coveted Firm of the Year award for 2004.

The principals, it goes without saying, are thrilled. "It hasn't quite sunk in," says Lake. "We've obviously worked really hard. It's such a great honor for us and for everybody who's worked here for

the past 19 years."

The firm is the latest small-to-medium-sized regional practitioner to win a prestigious architecture prize.

Others include The Miller/Hull Partnership, winner of last year's Firm of the Year award; Glenn Murcutt, winner of the 2002 Pritzker Prize; and the late Samuel Mockbee, FAIA, who won the 2004 AIA Gold Medal.

"Certain values are being talked about more and more by the AIA," says Betty Sue Flowers, senior public director on the AIA board of directors, who nominated Lake/Flato for the award. "The relationship to the site, care for the environment, respect for the land, involvement with the community: All those values are well-represented by Lake/Flato."



Courtesy Lake/Flato Architects

David Lake (left) and Ted Flato blend industrial influences with a region's native building vocabulary.



Paul Hester



Lake/Flato's extraordinary ability to create a sense of place helps define such diverse homes as Hill Country Jacal (below), the Carraro Residence (below left), El Tule Ranch (far left), and the Residence for Art (this photo).

Paul Hester



Leigh Christian

Flato thinks the process of applying for the award had a positive effect on the firm's collective psyche. "Being forced to put down on paper our true philosophy and goals was a healthy process," he says. In addition to its body of work, the firm has participated in efforts to sustain downtown San Antonio and conserve rural lands. And it recently started the Lake/Flato Regional Design Studio at the University of Texas, a semester-long program inspired by Mockbee's famed Rural Studio. The 2003 president of AIA San Antonio, Robert A. Lopez, AIA, attests to the firm's strong local ties. "When we heard the news, we felt here in San Antonio that we all had won the award," he says.—*meghan drueding*

financing farnsworth

another icon of residential architecture has been saved. Thanks to more than 300 donors who ponied up \$4 million just hours before the Sotheby's auction began, the National Trust for Historic Preservation acquired Mies van der Rohe's 1951 Farnsworth House for \$7.5 million (including auction fees of about \$800,000). The National Trust partnered with the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois to rescue the house—which overlooks the Fox River, about 60 miles southwest of Chicago—from an unknown fate. "We must preserve the house and its setting so that the design's integrity is protected," says Richard Moe, president of the National Trust. "An easement will be put on the site to prevent altering or moving of the house."

The Farnsworth House will reopen to the public this spring, and is currently available for academic research by architects and other design professionals. For information, call 312.658.0445 or go to www.farnsworthhousefriends.org.—*shelley d. hutchins*



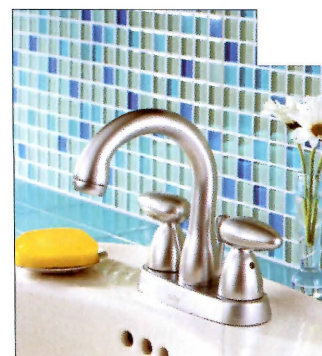
John Miller, Hedrich Blessing

Built as a weekend retreat for the late Dr. Edith Farnsworth, this diaphanous abode is one of three residences Mies van der Rohe designed in the U.S.

mass appeal

Michael Graves believes in bringing good design to the general public. His new line of faucets, lighting, and accessories is another feather in that philosophical cap. The Michael Graves Collection, a partnership with Delta Faucet Company, includes kitchen, lavatory, and shower faucets, as well as such appurtenances as towel bars, tissue holders, and wall sconces.

The faucet finishes are chrome, matte chrome, and brilliant stainless steel; glass handles are optional.—*nigel f. maynard*



calendar

custom home design awards 2004

entry deadline: april 5
binder deadline: may 3



Warren Jagger Photography

Houses designed for a specific client and site may be submitted by architects, designers, builders, or other industry professionals. Categories include custom home (grouped by square footage), custom kitchen, custom bath, renovation, accessory building, and custom detail. Winners will

be featured in the September 2004 issue of *CUSTOM HOME* magazine. Shown: 2003 best-overall custom home of the year, by Lerner/Ladds + Bartels, Providence, R.I. Call 202.736.3407 for information.

design excellence in housing

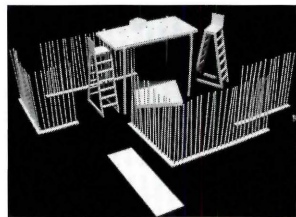
deadline: april 16

Sponsored by the Boston Society of Architects and the New York AIA, this competition is open to any type of housing project anywhere in the world designed by an architect or firm in New England or New York; or any architect anywhere in the world may submit projects located in New England or New York. Winners will be published in the BSA journal and honored at Build Boston on November 18. Call 617.951.1433 or visit www.architects.org for entry requirements.

hopping fences: influences in modern living

through may 2
philadelphia art alliance

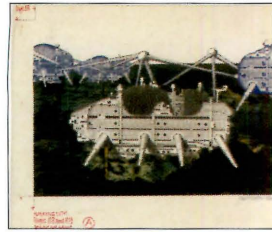
Co-curated by The Design Center at Philadelphia University, this interactive exhibit examines cross-fertilization within the design industry. The event showcases five site-specific installations produced by local design/build firms whose work blurs traditional boundaries, blending architecture, interior and furniture design, and engineering. Shown: a working model for "A Proposal for Adam's House," by Qb3. For gallery hours, call 215.545.4302 or go to www.philartalliance.org.



Qb3

envisioning architecture: drawings from the museum of modern art

march 20–june 27
national building museum, washington, d.c.



Jon Cross and Erica Staton, Design Collection Project, Luna Ima

View nearly 200 drawings from more than 60 architects, including Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and Louis Kahn. The works range from quick sketches to computer-generated prints. Shown: Ron Herron's multimedia "Walking City on the Ocean," 1966. Call 202.272.2448 for further information, or visit www.nbm.org.

daylighting institute

march 29–30
las vegas convention center

LIGHTFAIR 20
INTERNATIONAL 04

Part of Lightfair International's 2004 conference, the institute offers intensive two-day classes covering daylighting techniques in sustainable design. For course information, call 404.220.2205 or go to www.lightfair.com.

kitchen & bath industry show

april 1–4
mccormick place, chicago

Attend educational seminars and view the wares of more than 40,000 dealers, designers, and distributors from around the world at this mammoth trade event. To register, call 800.933.8735 or visit www.kbis.com.

brooklyn designs 2004

april 30–may 2
st. anne's warehouse, brooklyn, n.y.

Designers and manufacturers of contemporary furnishings display indoor and outdoor furniture, rugs, lighting, and accessories. Exhibitors were selected by a jury of design professionals. Call 718.875.1000 or go to www.brooklyn designs.net to find out more.

continuing exhibits

From Modest to Mansion: Frank Lloyd Wright in Detroit, through April 4, Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Mich., 248.645.3323; **Doodles, Drafts, and Designs: Industrial Drawings from the Smithsonian Collection**, through April 11, Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, 206.324.1126.
—shelley d. hutchins



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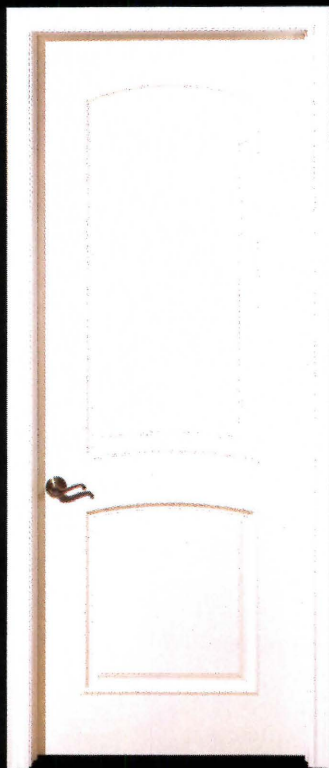
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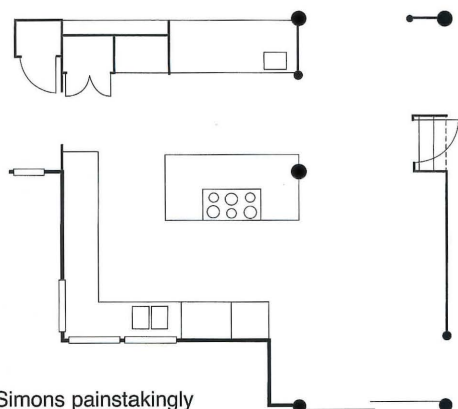
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k + b studio

kitchen: cooking light

The recipe for this Scarborough, Maine, kitchen combines a multitude of healthy-house ingredients: zero-VOC finishes, recycled rugs, long-lasting materials, natural cooling, radiant heating. To that eco-friendly mix, architect Scott Simons brought his knack for creating spaces intimately tailored to his clients' needs. Because the owner of the home lives alone but enjoys frequent visits from extended family, Simons developed a "binuclear layout. It acts as an efficient compact work area when she is there by herself, and then expands into a larger space and eating area, so they can all be in the kitchen."



Simons painstakingly mapped out air-circulation routes throughout the kitchen.

When the doors facing the ocean (bottom of plan) are open, the entire house benefits from the salty breezes.

The open kitchen is the geographical as well as philosophical hub of the house. A wet bar topped by transparent cabinets enables the kitchen to function as part of the family room. The family room, in turn, becomes part of the ocean terrace by means of movable glass walls. The adjacent dining room has floor-to-ceiling shoji screens that diffuse afternoon light and slide apart to reveal a private Japanese garden. "I think the Japanese are the masters of detail—they pay incredible attention to connections," says Simons. Inspired by Japanese teahouses and Maine's boat-building traditions, Simons incorporated many wood elements, including structural and decorative mahogany columns.

This kitchen—as in most of Simons' floor plans—is on the east side of the house to capture morning light. Glass extends to the floor in several areas to draw in the late-day and low winter sun; the fluid floor plan allows ocean breezes to cool every space. "When it comes to responsible architecture," says Simons, "the first thing we do is take advantage of the things that are free, like making sure the house is tuned to prevailing wind patterns and using the sun to warm and light spaces in the best way."—*shelley d. hutchins*



architect: Scott Simons Architects, Portland, Maine; Jesse Thompson, project architect

general contractor: Rousseau Builders, Pownal, Maine; **structural engineer:** Becker Structural Engineers, Portland

resources: cabinets: North Yarmouth Woodworks; cooktop: Miele; countertops: Midcoast Stone; dishwasher, ovens, and refrigerator: KitchenAid; light fixtures: Tech Lighting



Photos: Brian Vanden Brink

"We used carefully tailored and beautiful wood detailing," says Simons. The woods—maple, mahogany, and Douglas fir—are protected with a natural finish to show off variations in grains and hues.



k + b studio

bath: catching waves

The Japanese, says architect Whitney Sander, approach bathing as a ritual, not a chore. The attitude underlies his design for the master bath in his own Venice, Calif., home. "The beginning and end of each day take place in the bath, so this space is a terminus and a beginning," he says.

The tub takes center stage in the 7-foot-by-13-foot space. It's open on three sides—

to emphasize the ceremony of cleansing body and soul, says Sander. Radiant heat, produced by a 92-percent energy-efficient boiler, keeps other soles warm. Glass tiles and twin lavs, designed by Sander and fabricated in a deep amber resin, glow in the copious natural light. "It's rejuvenating to prepare for the day in sunlight," he says.

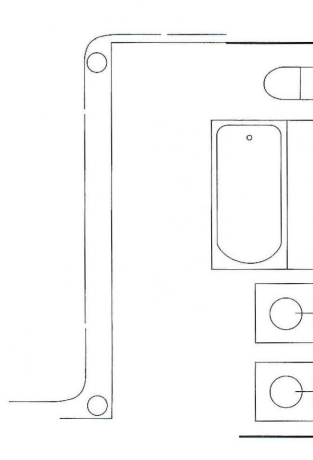
Sandblasted acrylic strips, in 2-foot-wide sections, form curvilinear walls in the bath, and then morph into other patterns through the rest of the house. "These ribbons wrap around the space and under themselves, like a Mobius

strip," Sander notes. "I like the ambiguity of it—one thing becoming another and then another." Diffused light penetrates the acrylic panels, and direct sun streams through gaps in the steel-framed wall. These crevices permit ample natural ventilation—the home's only cooling system.

Sander admits his bachelor's pad doesn't provide much privacy. "I'm not a big fan of barriers. It's about being honest with yourself. That's what the best architecture should do—reinforce the things that help clarify who your clients are and the ways they like to relax."—*shelley d. hutchins*



Photos: Sharon Risedorph Photography



architect: Sander Architects, Venice, Calif.

general contractor: Ruiz Brothers Construction, City of Industry, Calif.;

structural engineer: Oxford Engineering, Woodland Hills, Calif.;

plastic fabricator: J.F. Novel, Santa Fe Springs, Calif.

resources: custom sinks: Sander Architects; plumbing fittings: Duravit and Kohler; plumbing fixtures: Dornbracht and Newport Brass



"One of my idols is Rem Koolhaas and his concept of continuous flow of spaces," says Sander. He put that ideology to work in his own house, allowing the master bath to flow directly into the bedroom.



not all canvases are flat

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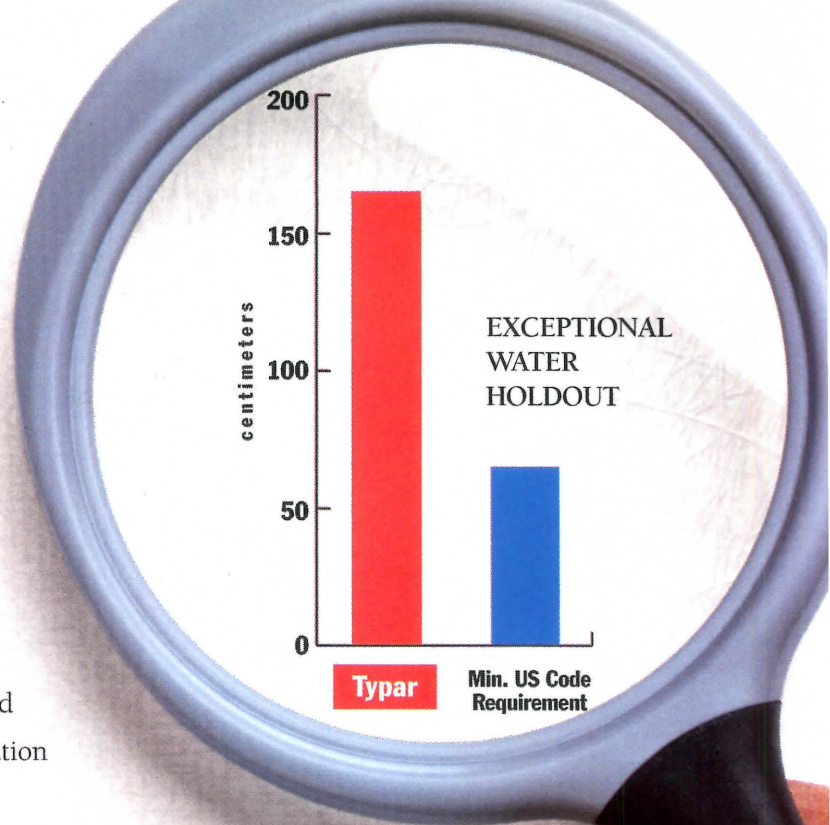
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techno-wizardry's got nothing on time-tested building methods.

by duo dickinson

most architects think traditional design and detailing techniques are a boring cop-out. Similarly, many academics find blunt prose simplistic. Plain language is indeed comparable to accepted building techniques—direct and to the point, with acknowledged meanings and proven results. Just like florid prose from the mouth of a professor, experimental building techniques and products that are designed to impress often reflect an architect's need for self-justification.

In propping up their professional personas, many architects end up trusting products that rely on technology to overcome the basic laws of physics. The greatest example of this mindset is the flat roof. Water flows downhill.

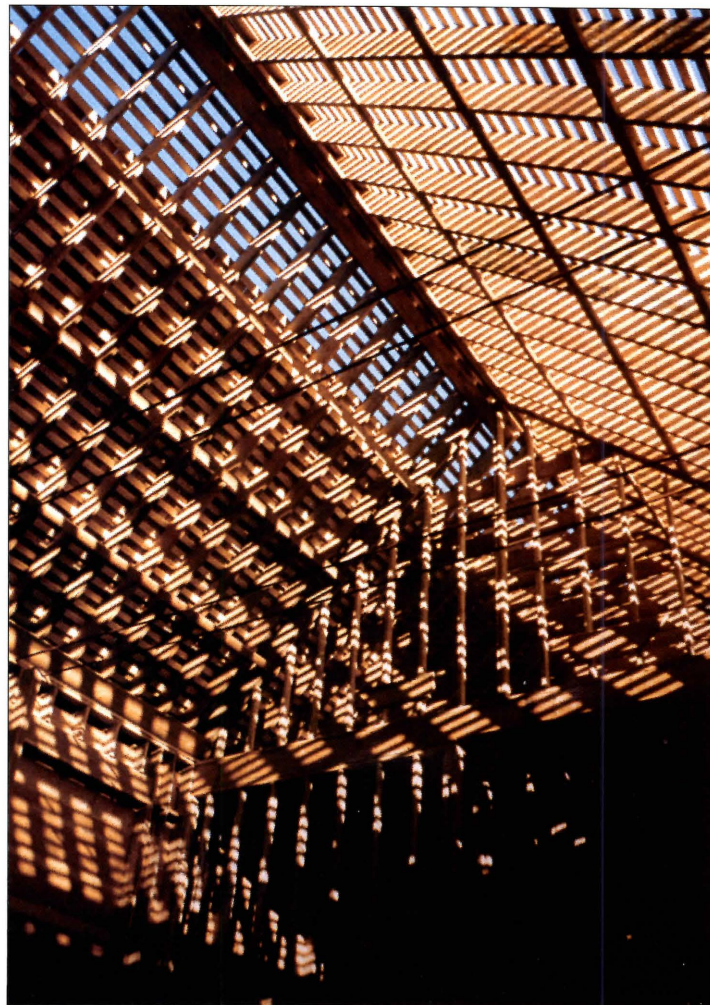
Although many manufacturers tout the multi-decade durability of their roofs, virtually every flat roof I've come in contact with has less durability, year over year, than any pitched one I have seen. Obviously, some pitched roofs leak like a sieve and some flat roofs are as tight as a drum—but year after year, storm after storm, I trust gravity (and

thus roofs with a pitch greater than 4 in 12) over a building product's ability to be a monolithic barrier against water.

Lately, architects of high-art buildings have been fascinated by plywood products for exterior surfaces. Once again, I trust the solid materials over those that rely on glue for stability. There are many undesigned buildings where plywood exterior siding has been used for decades (sheds, garages, and commercial buildings) and the results aren't pretty after a few years. A similar faith in technology over simplicity can be seen in the recent failures of so many synthetic stucco products. The products that on paper seemed to be bombproof and virtually inert turned out to be part of a system that propagates mold, mildew, and rot.

guilty parties

It is true that architects are often the culprit when it comes to things like removing eaves from houses so they become more "sculptural" (and thus sentencing doors, windows, and the joint between dirt and wall to a lifetime of never-ending maintenance and water intrusion). But



Duo Dickinson

Dickinson finds beauty in the mundane—such as a tried-and-true pitched roof framed in good old-fashioned dimensional lumber.

the motivation for the vast majority of wrongheaded decisions to trust new technology is in fact cost. Flat roofs are cheaper than pitched roofs. Synthetic stucco is cheaper than real stucco.

Still, the history of architecture is replete with

examples of noble failure in the search for new construction techniques. Frank Lloyd Wright's many gifts of artistic expression and technological advancement are undeniable. However, the same vision that allowed him to see past

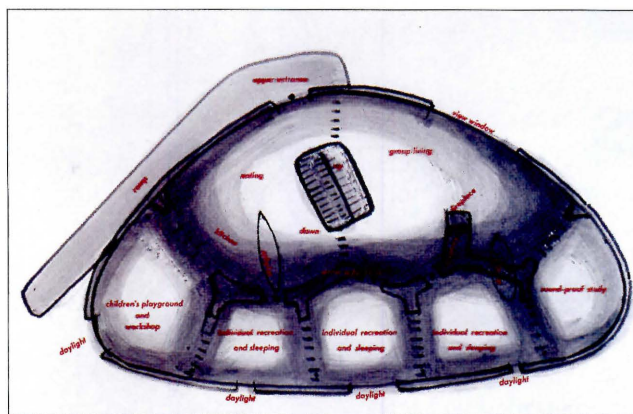
continued on page 42

affected historicism caused him to overreach into revisionism of a few hundred years of building technology. In attempting to build many of his Usonian houses using roughly 2x4-sized pieces of wood, Mr. Wright showed that there are limits to how cheap cheap lumber can be. Little wood boards that are cantilevered, double cantilevered, and cantilevered again, lapped and butted, woven and clad, typically have a lot of joints that can fail. Rot can simply consume the guts of the house. In this non-Depression era, when labor claims a far greater percentage of building cost than when these homes were designed, the budgets for saving Usonian houses often eclipse anything that might be called “affordable.”

The Austrian-born architect Frederick Kiesler sought to reinvent architecture by creating a proto-

“the trick ultimately is not to reject innovation, but to be clearheaded in its application.”

type house out of concrete, dubbed the “Endless House,” which remained an exhibition piece until his death in 1965. Kiesler wanted to shatter any connection with the past and reinvent our sense of how a building should inspire our



© The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, N.Y.

Kiesler's innovative concrete Endless House may have captured the imagination of the cognoscenti, but it was never built.

day-to-day lives. The house was formed of lumped-together bags of space and their “feet,” all made from thin-skinned concrete.

Like many of his less famous compatriots, Kiesler showed why conceptual art often remains just that—conceptual. Many potential patrons tantalized him with thoughts of building whole communities of his magical design, only to have the reality sink in that they would be exquisitely expensive and simply unappealing to the vast majority of those who purchase homes.



Courtesy Duo Dickinson

solar eclipsed

It is not just an architect's ego that creates flights of technological fervor. During the energy crisis of the 1970s, a whole subtext of architecture—“active solar”—was glamorized in the press and heralded as a new

era. New technologies were literally pasted onto building envelopes, creating any number of opportunities for leaks, rot, and endless repair. Almost all of this well-intentioned technocladding—best symbolized today by the occasional outsized, perfectly angled south-facing roof where solar collectors once lived—is gone. The death knell for the movement, of course, was the loss of federal tax credits for such work, but the continuing celebration of style over substance means few lessons have been learned from these experiments.

The high point of silliness came in the 1980s in *The New York Times'* home section. A front-page article written by a noted architecture critic presented about eight projects as “solar.” While all the homes shown had the iconic solar panels, only one project was a design based on passive solar principles.

This world of “solar” design has had an ongoing conversion into “green” building, and although the same sense of reinvention is

present, the “green” movement has at its roots a sense of technological mesh as opposed to tacked-on technology.

The bottom line is that our “default” mode of building homes—the 2-by-4 dimensional lumber and 4-foot-by-8-foot panel set to 16-inch and 24-inch modules—is an amazingly efficient and flexible system. According to the NAHB, we build about a million-and-a-half houses a year in the U.S. and more than two-thirds of us own our own homes. The level of personal expression such a generic technology affords is astonishing when contrasted with other First World housing. It's not broken (yet) and any “fixes” will probably cause more problems than they solve.

Given all the undeniable failures of this overreaching faith in technology, the trick ultimately is not to reject innovation, but to be clearheaded in its application. Embracing existing technologies with an open mind often produces the biggest bang for the buck. The goal is to combine all of the zesty creativity of the best fashion designers with the utility of the Gap. Can we do it? Time will tell. **ra**

Duo Dickinson is an architect in Madison, Conn., and the author of five books on residential design. His next book, The House You Build, will be published by The Taunton Press in 2004.

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the best houses are faithful to the geology
and culture of their surroundings.

by cheryl weber

James Cutler, FAIA, recalls a well-known client who wanted to build a Spanish-style house in the woods overlooking Puget Sound. As they walked the property, Cutler asked the client why he felt Spanish architecture would be appropriate. The man replied that he simply liked the look, and that the way to do it right would be to clear the vegetation, because he didn't like trees. "His needs and tastes were totally inconsistent with the land," says Cutler, Cutler Anderson Architects, Bainbridge Island, Wash. "I advised him to move to Arizona."

The tunnel vision of such clients is at odds with the highest artistic goals of an increasing number of architects. Certainly there is a moral mandate to build in an environmentally sensitive vein. But using the land to its greatest advantage, when there are easier ways of doing architecture, also conveys an intellectual rigor. Throughout history, the best buildings have demonstrated not dominance, but a harmony with their surroundings. Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater comes to mind, as does Pritzker-winning Australian architect Glenn Murcutt's work, which has been



Clifford Alejandro

described as complex, yet as practical as a bushman's hut. For many architects, a close reading of the land is essential to creating something authentic, a house that seems to fit perfectly in its place.

Cutler's client may be an anomaly, at least among architects known for eclectic, landscape-specific design. Because to begin to

understand the character of a place, many architects logically start with the owners, who usually have a strong feel for their land. If the man had taken Cutler's advice, he may well have run into Phoenix-based architect Will Bruder. "One of the first questions an architect should ask is what's important to the client about a site," says

Bruder, AIA.

Take the Byrne residence in north Scottsdale, Ariz. While the desert can seem featureless to some, owners Bill and Carol Byrne had already identified the best views for their future home. The concept of their house as part of a metaphorical canyon also caught their fancy. "The

continued on page 48

property was at the top of a gentle wash, and you could see a canyon in the distance,” Bruder explains. “The idea was that the topological contour of the land, sun, views, and sharp summits of the distant horizon were something you could build architecture around, a positive energy.” Rather than flattening the site, as some other architects had proposed, Bruder created canyonlike walls out of sandblasted concrete masonry that angle in and out with the shifting terrain, and a roof that follows the grade of the hill.

Cutler and Peter Bohlin, FAIA, of Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., are two other architects who gauge the owners’ loyalty to their land early on. “Initial understandings are very important,” Bohlin says. “We try to document the site with the clients. They have their own strong views that may not be well founded, but often are.” Adds Cutler: “The owners pick some place they think is perfect. Sixty percent of the time, they’re right about where to place the building in the landscape and, more importantly, how to connect to the land in an emotional way.”

character studies

Architects describe the process of gleaning design ideas from a particular setting as a combination of intuition and the gathering of layer upon layer of cold hard data. Rather than hiring a surveyor to develop the topographical map, Cutler

x-ray vision

To the untrained eye, nature looks random and chaotic. But as landscape architect Gary Hilderbrand, FASLA, will tell you, there’s a method to the madness, and it’s his job to catalog the land for architects and owners. Using surface geology maps that include the subregion, Hilderbrand, a principal of Reed Hilderbrand Associates, Watertown, Mass., studies the underlying materials that have shaped a site. Other tools include aerial photography, topological surveys in one-foot contours, maps showing a site’s vegetative structure, and research into the past history of land uses.

A north-facing wooded slope in the Northeast, for example, will have a vegetative profile that offers clues to frost and drainage conditions and soil depth. Drainage patterns are critical. Does a site lie over bedrock or an aquifer? Is there underlying gravel or till? The materials beneath the surface help determine whether to move rock when it’s cut, or whether fills will be stable.

“Those things often guide us because we are careful about what we call the character of a landscape,” he says. “A site may have multiple characteristics. We don’t shy away from transforming the character of a site. We just want to be secure that the intervention is rooted in a condition already there.”

Although a one-acre site might not warrant this kind of research, Hilderbrand says such knowledge drives the owners’ stake in their land a little deeper. The firm produces a thick description of how a site is formed and how it might be transformed over time. “We often will be able to present a way of thinking about the site that is unfamiliar to the owners,” Hilderbrand says. “While much of design work is subjective, we feel we’re able to give the client a great enfranchisement in their land, especially with larger land holdings.”—C.W.

and a member of his staff scramble over the land with a transit level to spot trees and shoot grade—what he calls apprenticing the landscape. On a two-acre project halfway up the rim of the Columbia Gorge near Portland, Ore., for example, Cutler recently spent three hours documenting the character of each contour line, writing down tree types, and taking 58 photographs that record the view from each measured elevation. “When you physically engage in tripping over trees, climbing over things with transits and rods, you find the exact angle of a view, an interesting tree, a particular angle that makes the whole piece of land look more dramatic,”

he says. “The land is telling you stuff, but not in a mystical way. You learn things by physically engaging.”

Doing site-sensitive architecture is like choreographing a dance, making the landscape a part of the visual experience of moving through a house. And while some parcels of land are rather simple to understand, others are complex and more subtle. “Often what you find is that looking at the site, you have a strong impression, but then you will begin to understand there are interesting questions,” says Bohlin. “Often the best views are away from the sun, and depending where you are in the U.S. or overseas, the sun can be a

great ally. If you’re simplistic about that, you may not do the right thing.”

The renovation of his own house presented that sort of conflict. Wilkes-Barre’s chilly winters dictated a south-facing orientation for warmth and energy efficiency, but Bohlin’s master bedroom looks north. “In the morning, light comes across the field one way; in the evening, another,” he says. “Facing south, you’re often looking at a silhouetted landscape; facing north, you’re looking at a lit landscape. You try to have your cake and eat it, too—often in the same space.”

Of course, it’s rarely just the clients’ property

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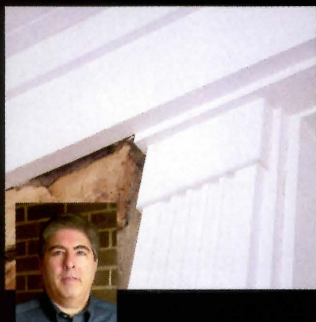
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practice

*"one of the first questions an architect should ask
is what's important to the client about a site."*—will bruder, aia

and program that suggests what's to be done with a house. The neighbors, and sometimes the local wildlife, have a say as well. On the coast of northern California, at a spot where whales swim close to shore, Albuquerque, N.M., architect Bart Prince satisfied the coastal commission's concerns by specifying a dark, absorbent glass for the house, tilting it back slightly so that light wouldn't shine into the whales' eyes as they swam by. On occasion he has visited the human neighbors, too, eyeing the site to see what they see. One close-in neighbor, for example, liked to look at a rocky outcrop in the ocean from her bedroom window. "When I found out, I designed the house so she retained that view," Prince says. "I don't know that I mentioned it to the client."

Such foresight protects his clients' peace of mind. But Prince is also thorough about protecting their investment, by finding out whether there's any possibility an adjacent building will go up a story or be torn down. "Siting a house is an elaborate process that becomes automatic after a while," he says. "I like to start fresh, as though I've never done it before, but use the same process to find out anything I can about the land, above and below it."

nature vs. nurture

Though their work may have similar outcomes, not all environmentally minded architects share the same philosophical approach. Let the word "site" slip out in conversation, and Cutler's response borders on reproach. To him, the word suggests something blank that people believe they can manipulate at will. Land is a better term, he insists, because it suggests respect for a sacred, living thing.

"The land is the way God gave it to us; it's taken billions of years to evolve to its level of perfection," he says. "Architecture never makes the land better, ever. When you're in the process of killing part of the land to put the building in, you can honor the rest of the land by making the experience dramatic and powerful for the people entering."

Having grown up in Canada, a landmass the size of Russia—and much of it equally inhospitable—architect Brian MacKay-Lyons, FRAIC, FAIA, takes a slightly different view. There, nature is considered big and scary, so the emphasis is on houses that make protective gestures. Thus, Lyons believes making a building is an act of cultivating the landscape rather than consuming it. Just as a farmer talks of improving the land, MacKay-Lyons speaks of improving the landscape

through the creation of buildings as locally appropriate cultural artifacts.

"I treat all of the projects as one continuous line of research into landscaping, and particularly the cultural landscape as opposed to Mother Nature," says MacKay-Lyons, whose firm, Brian MacKay-Lyons Architect, is based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. "Most discussion about the environment in architecture revolves around the natural landscape, which is a slippery thing because most of what we regard as natural isn't, anyway. We may as well acknowledge that the landscape includes us as humans. In architecture we're in the culture business; it's an art form."

As such, MacKay-Lyons is an avid collector of ideas that spring from the landscape, natural or man-made. "It's what I think about all the time, even in the shower and in bed," he says. "When I get a chance to start a project, it's like I've been working on it for 25 years already. You're recognizing patterns you've trained yourself to see. And that method is transferable to any place."

That method, with a good dose of imagination thrown in, involves looking at the layers from the bottom up. MacKay-Lyons develops what he calls cog-

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nitive maps recording the natural history of geology, soils, and vegetation. Next he looks for agrarian clues, such as hedgerows and stone walls, that tell how the land has been cultivated. Then he takes stock of the movement of the sun and wind. Finally he turns to the architectural context—other buildings that affect the site or offer models of what the new project could be. And whether the house will stand in a meadow or in the middle of a city block, it's usually the cultural clues that his buildings obey.

"You'd never see me put a building on a diagonal

"when you physically engage in tripping over trees, climbing over things with transits and rods, you find the exact angle of a view, an interesting tree, a particular angle that makes the whole piece of land look more dramatic."—jim cutler, faia

in the middle of a field," MacKay-Lyons says. "I'd look for a stone wall on the edge of the field and build something parallel to it, so the landscape is doing a lot of the work for you. If the landscape is giving you cultural patterns, they're amplifying your project, so you don't have to make such a loud project.

Its power comes from harnessing energy and forms already there."

telling stories

All these ideas make new and varied demands on buildings, inviting architects not only to interpret the life of the house's inhabitants, but also its surroundings. Before designing

a Modernist, flat-roofed house in the mountains of north Georgia, Merrill Elam, of Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects, Atlanta, spent a year studying the 22-acre property in different seasons. A jumble of vegetation in summer, the site became more transparent in fall and winter.

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"We began to understand how the land had been used before, terraced and farmed, accessed by a farm road, and where the flattest part of the site was, deep into the heart of the property," says Elam. "What we came to love and understand was that you can appreciate the mountains and the power of those forms not by trying to emulate them, but by striking some horizontal line, which you can then read these rounded, rolling mountain forms against."

Almost all of MacKay-Lyons' built projects are similar essays that attempt to make the structure of the

"we may as well acknowledge that the landscape includes us as humans. in architecture we're in the culture business; it's an art form."—brian mackay-lyons, fraic, faia

land clearer to people, often in very expressive ways. A house on the Nova Scotia coast, for example, has been pulled apart on two hilltops to make bookends set 500 feet apart. The structures—main house and a guest house—are perfectly aligned in plan and section and bracket a wetland that's been cultivated as a wildlife corridor. The result,

MacKay-Lyons says, is like looking in a mirror and seeing deer running through the house.

Materials provide other ways to express elements of nature, or to withstand them, as the case may be. Whereas the structure of a house is part of the formal landscape, MacKay-Lyons sees its skin as loose clothing that can be stretched or

shifted around to respond to the sun and wind. He tries to spec sustainable, indigenous materials that are durable and that local tradesmen know how to use—an approach that gives clients a lot of house for their money.

Designing in the semi-arid climate of Colorado Springs, Colo., Elizabeth

continued on page 56



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Wright Ingraham, FAIA, also looks for tough, low-maintenance, and energy-saving materials that are made locally. "Concrete out here is marvelous, and there are so many new types of glass that make it very attractive," she says. "It might be the material of the future. It just takes sand to make it, and we have plenty of that."

Sometimes, matching materials to site is important to a project's success. Colored concrete walls helped convey the idea underlying the Byrne residence in Scottsdale—that the house was part of a mythical canyon, with its

"you can appreciate the mountains and the power of those forms not by trying to emulate them, but by striking some horizontal line, which you can then read these rounded, rolling mountain forms against."—merrill elam

walls magically pulled from the earth. Bruder scooped up dirt from the site and took it to the block yard, where it was matched tone for tone with samples of block. The exterior walls were aged with copper sprayed with ammonium sulfate, to match the color of the mountains.

While Thoreau might be

a worthy guide, MacKay-Lyons suggests that one of the reasons architecture hasn't yet found its environmental voice is because architects tend to focus too narrowly on nature. No doubt Bohlin would agree. "You have to be alive to almost anything and begin to understand what might be important," he says.

"In the end, one of the great pleasures of doing houses, and in particular doing them in a touching place, is to do something that is empathetic. It's one of our great motivations in continuing to want to do houses." **ra**

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



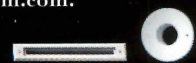
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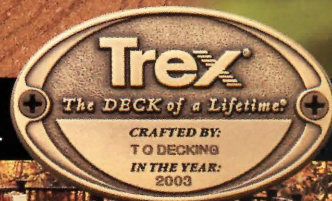
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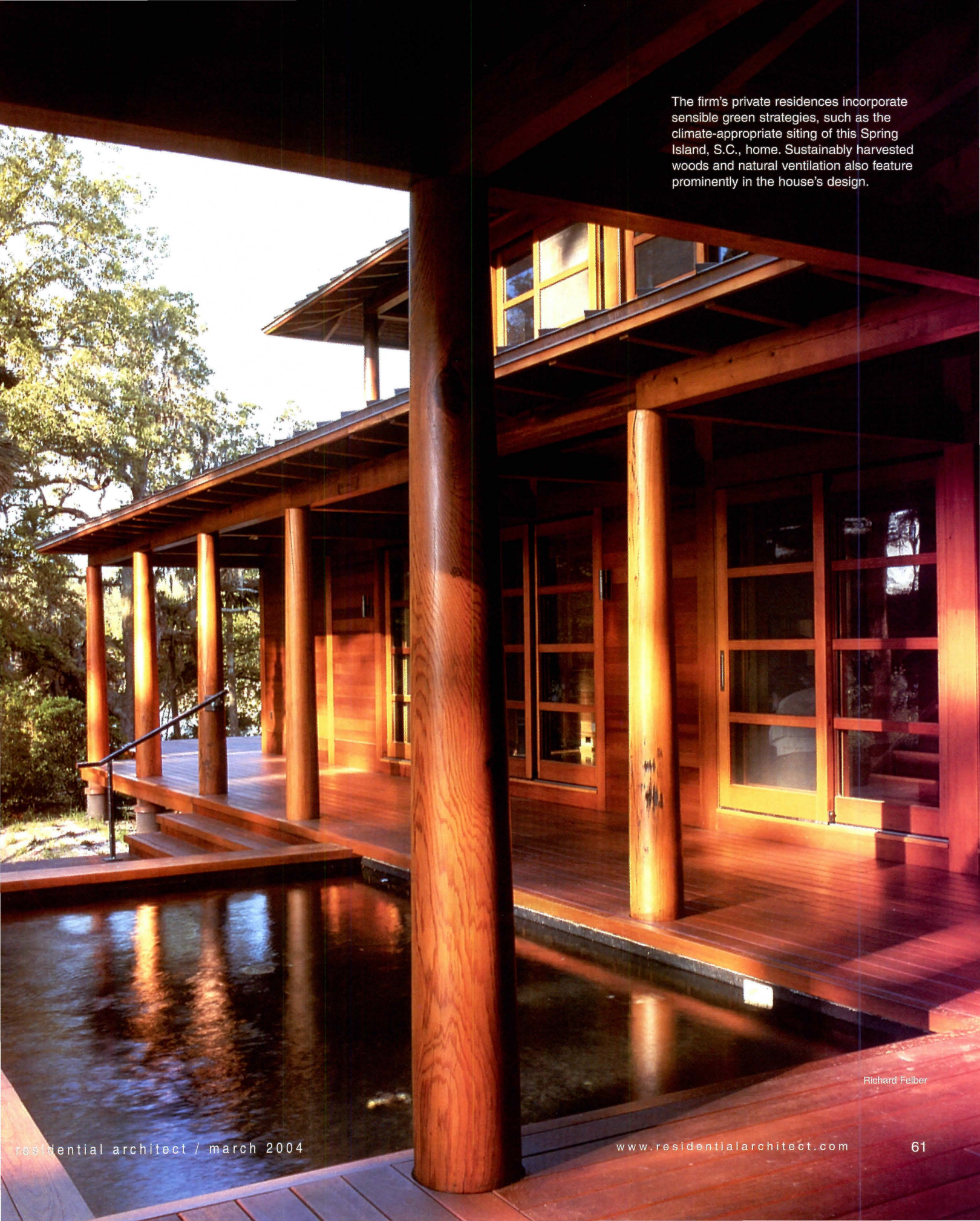
Founding partner William McDonough, FAIA, has strong roots in residential design and building. Design partner Allison Ewing, AIA, oversees much of the firm's housing work, which ranges from handcrafted custom homes to multifamily buildings.

The bucolic burg of Charlottesville, Va., isn't the first place you'd look for an internationally known architecture practice like William McDonough + Partners. But then, the eco-minded firm has never been one to play by the rules. The unconventional philosophies of its founding partner, Bill McDonough, FAIA, have redefined both green building design and the greater environmental movement. The firm has turned commissions from mainstream corporations like Ford Motor Company and Gap Inc. into leading-edge green buildings, garnering glowing press for both itself and its clients. "By creating structures that make oxygen, store carbon, harness energy as fuel, and provide habitat for hundreds of species, William McDonough + Partners is slowly but surely transforming the once lifeless and inefficient buildings that house corporate America," reads a typically fervent accolade, this one from *Outside* magazine in 2001.

Despite its enviable success with large-scale work, there's always been a place at McDonough + Partners for custom houses. "There's something about working directly with someone on their home," says McDonough. "You get to the level of the visceral experience of living there—the color of light on the walls, the sound of feet on the floor. It's an intense personal connection." Lately the firm has also turned its attention to single-family and multifamily developments, designing housing in Canada, Spain, and China, among other far-flung places. As usual, it's going about the process in its own distinctive way. "Unlike many out there, they have an established framework of thinking," says Pliny Fisk, a well-known green architect based in Austin, Texas. "It's all very clear and logical."

no limits

Much of this clear and logical thinking takes place inside an unas-



The firm's private residences incorporate sensible green strategies, such as the climate-appropriate siting of this Spring Island, S.C., home. Sustainably harvested woods and natural ventilation also feature prominently in the house's design.

Richard Felber

inside *the* revolution



Fueled by images of Japanese and South Carolina Low Country architecture, the firm designed the Spring Island house to skim lightly across its site. Breaking the project into linked pavilions gave every room multiple views.



Photos, this page: Richard Felber

suming red brick building in downtown Charlottesville. McDonough + Partners moved into the space, which formerly served as the U.S. Army's National Ground Intelligence Center, in September 2003. The new digs boast a more efficient configuration than the old office, a former warehouse across town, and the open floor plan suits the firm's interdisciplinary nature. Many of its 30 employees have backgrounds in urban or landscape design as well as architecture, and they float among four studios—residential, community design, commercial, and industrial—rather than specializing in one project type.

Take design partner Allison Ewing, AIA. Of the firm's five current partners, Ewing is the one most associated with the residential studio. But she's also played a key design role in commercial and institutional projects like Gap Inc.'s grass-roofed corporate campus and an unbuilt education center and panda habitat for the National Zoo. Diane Dale, another partner and the firm's director of community design, holds degrees in landscape architecture and law rather than architecture. Her studio handles jobs as varied as a master plan for housing at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif.; a framework for brownfield regeneration at Ford's Rouge Center assembly plant in Dearborn, Mich.; and a set of sustainable design principles for the city of Chicago.

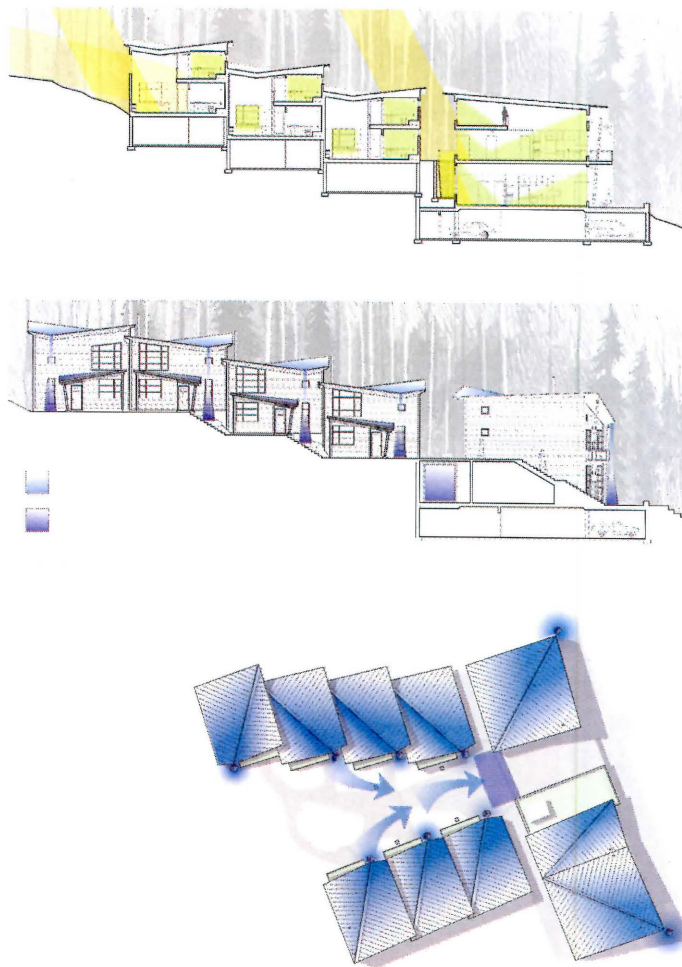
The firm's willingness to reach across disciplines has enhanced its relationships with collaborators like Pete O'Shea, director of the landscape studio at VMDO, an architecture firm in Charlottesville. "They recognize when they need outside expertise, but at the same time they don't compartmentalize," says O'Shea. "There aren't a lot of

boundaries. If I have something to say about the architecture, I'll say it and they'll listen." Such flexibility has helped McDonough + Partners win commissions for project types it hasn't done before, all the while strengthening the versatility of its individual designers.

hands on

The staff's freedom to work on different project types comes straight from the top, since McDonough likes to have a hand in every job the office takes on. He teams with the other partners, associate partners, and associates to come up with overall concepts, and reviews jobs periodically throughout the design process. "It's like writing a piece of music," he says. "The composer decides it's a concerto, and in what key." Having built a couple of houses himself while still in architecture school at Yale, McDonough takes a particular interest in the high-end private residences the firm designs. Before he had his own family, he'd arrange to spend a week or so living in each one before the owners moved in, just to make sure everything was perfect. "It was like tuning the house," he says, continuing the music metaphor. "I could do things like make sure the doors closed beautifully. I still like to do it, but I can't so much anymore."

Now McDonough is a giant in the field of environmental design. He helped found the U.S. Green Building Council and the AIA Committee on the Environment, and trots the globe giving speeches about sustainability. The firm's 1994 move to Charlottesville from New York City, where he started it in 1981, was precipitated by his selection as dean of the University of Virginia's School of Architecture, a position he held until 1999.



Renderings: Pete O'Shea, courtesy William McDonough + Partners

McDonough + Partners intensely studies each site before starting design. Its plan for Cave Avenue, housing in Banff, Alberta, Canada, responds to existing solar (top) and water conditions.

inside *the* revolution



Renderings this page and opposite:
Courtesy William McDonough + Partners

Vegetated and photovoltaic roofs adorn a mixed-use project in Barcelona, Spain, where McDonough + Partners master-planned a city block. The firm designed two office buildings within the block (top image and bottom foreground) and an extended-stay hotel (bottom, back building).

He leaves listeners bowled over by his vision of a world where all manufacturing processes and products—not only buildings but also shoes, cars, books, and virtually everything else—replenish the environment rather than poisoning it. In fact, most of the firm's clients first took note of McDonough + Partners after hearing McDonough lecture. "Bill is not only a visionary architect but a great communicator," says Alex Wilson, founder and executive editor of *Environmental Building News*. "He's inspired a whole legion of architects, and his communication skills can be understood by a lay public."

green goals

While McDonough brings in the clients and provides big-picture design input, his staff makes sure the essence of his teachings permeates every pore of the projects they design. They're not simply carrying out assignments; they believe in their mission as much as he does. "Bill's philosophy is all about abundance," says Ewing. Thus, instead of trying to talk clients into designing a smaller house, as many green architects do, she'll focus on making it as sustainable as possible, no matter what the size. If a home's water is heated with a renewable low-emission source like solar energy, goes the thinking, then why should its owner feel guilty about enjoying a long, hot shower? "The idea is 'Do more good, not less bad,'" says associate partner Mark Rylander, AIA, invoking a phrase McDonough often uses. "With his vision of 100 percent sustainability, Bill keeps us from resting on our laurels."

Of course, the technology isn't there yet for a home to realistically achieve pure sustainability. So McDonough + Partners practices

anticipatory technology, building in options for systems to be put in place when they become available. "At a house we designed in Virginia Beach, the curve of the roofs is south-facing," says Ewing. "When the technology is more affordable, they'll be able to hold photovoltaic panels." At Courtyard on Bear, a mixed-use project under construction in Banff, Alberta, Canada, the costs of running the building entirely on wind power were prohibitively high. So it will function on a hybrid of gas and wind, with the gas systems convertible to wind in the future.

Courtyard on Bear and its all-residential sister project, Cave Avenue, represent the three components of McDonough's holistic environmental strategy: ecology, equity, and economy. The firm's constant goal is to satisfy all three concerns while creating beautiful buildings. The ecology side of the triangle has its roots in what McDonough + Partners calls an "essay of clues": a thorough examination of each site's topography, geology, wildlife, historical and built context, and water systems. "The essay of clues is a way of imbibing the site so we can make decisions intuitively," says Ewing. "Out of this, the design develops." At Bear and Cave, for example, the flow of harvested rainwater from rooftops down to courtyards and basement cisterns reflects the natural hydrology of the surrounding mountains and valley.

The social value of the Banff projects—the "equity" part of the firm's goal—lies in the fact that they provide housing priced within the range of the resort town's many retail and hospitality industry workers. At the same time, Ewing maximized Courtyard on Bear's floor-area ratio, allowing the



Sensitive siting marks the firm's approach. With the help of landscape architect Nelson-Byrd of Charlottesville, it created a wetland pond for swimming at this Virginia Beach, Va., home. A one-story kitchen (below) separates the house's public and private sections.



Photos, this page: Prakash Patel



Prakash Patel

At the Virginia Beach house, a grassy roof terrace crowns the one-story kitchen, which opens onto a patio and hot tub. The other, curved roofs call up images of sailboats on the nearby Chesapeake Bay.

developers as much leasable space as possible. "The project needed to be economically replicable because the client wanted to influence other developers," she says.

making waves

The question of McDonough + Partners' influence on housing outside its own projects is an interesting one. McDonough himself has undoubtedly affected the way people design, as has the firm's high-profile corporate work. But what about its residential architecture?

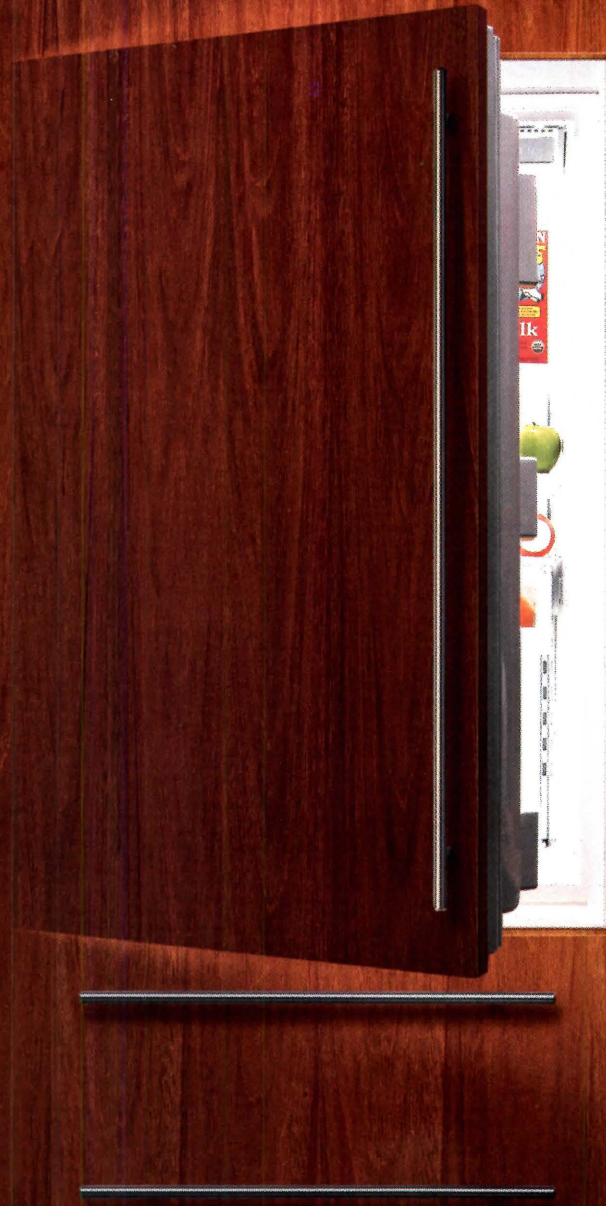
Environmental Building News' Wilson, for one, thinks the custom homes pack a more powerful punch than many might guess, with their use of low-VOC materials, sustainably harvested woods, and other green elements such as geothermal heat pumps and sod roofs. "The houses McDonough and other green architects are doing provide an opportunity to try new systems on people who can afford to try them," he says. "They're also creating a market for green products. A few orders for a 6,000- to 10,000-square-foot house can make a difference as to whether the businesses that make these products get to the next level."

From a planning standpoint, the 1998 master plan the firm designed for the New Urbanist development Coffee Creek Center in Chesterton, Ind., has altered conventional wisdom on larger-scale sustainability. It features natural storm drainage and wastewater treatment systems, a material selection guide that optimizes indoor air quality, and buildings sited to facilitate collection of solar and wind energy. "Coffee Creek Center showed that a green community infrastructure works, is practical, and doesn't cost that much more," says Patrick Condon, professor of landscape architecture

at the University of British Columbia and an expert in sustainable communities. "It's had a great impact on adding environmental sustainability to advances in New Urbanist design."

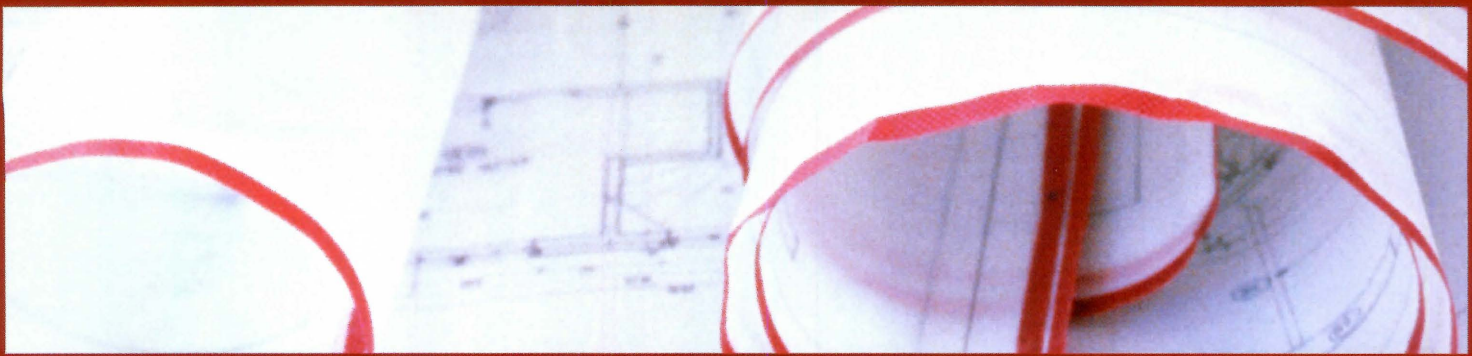
The biggest measure of McDonough + Partners' effect on housing, though, is probably yet to come. Acting on its growing interest in blending community design with architecture, the firm is working on several projects that synthesize the two. In Barcelona, Spain, it's designing a mixed-use complex that includes two office buildings and an extended-stay hotel. In Benxi, China, the firm is planning an eco-village and designing prototypes for model homes. Among its other housing-related commissions are a master plan for a new town in England and a recently completed study for residential building strategies at the University of California, Davis. And several of its completed office buildings may someday be transformed into housing: The firm has designed them with operable windows and proportioning that allows eventual conversion to residential use.

While they routinely jet to the West Coast, Europe, and Asia on a few days' notice, the architects at McDonough + Partners always come back to Charlottesville. "I had all my people here," says McDonough, explaining why he kept the firm there after stepping down as U.Va. dean. "A lot of families were connected with the company. My children were born here, and it's a delightful place to live." Also, the city's rich history dovetails with his desire to change the face of design. "There's a tradition of revolution in Charlottesville," he says. "It's appropriate, since we're trying to start a revolution, too." **ra**



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The house's cladding varies with its massing. One-by-6 clear cedar channel, stained gray, covers the base of the house (this photo) and the garage (above right). Cobb used a more abstract 1-by-4 tongue-and-groove cedar on the rotated living spaces.

All photos by Steve Keating



double play

Secret passages, hidden doors, a climbing wall—things that make a house a child's paradise—are a playful part of this weekend getaway in Washington's Cascade Mountains. They were inspired by the unique geometries of a home that lights like a rare bird on the contours of its extremely steep site. For the adults, there are clean, modern spaces and walls of glass high in the treetops that, in winter, overlook a white wonderland of firs and cedars.

The property, which drops 54 feet over a distance of 126 feet, is part of a lake shoreline that was so daunting it had never been developed. But it seemed right for the owners, an athletic, outdoorsy couple with three young daughters who wanted a house that was fun and youthful, yet sophisticated. "There was a kind of Hardy Boys sensibility in the direction we were granted," says Eric Cobb, AIA.

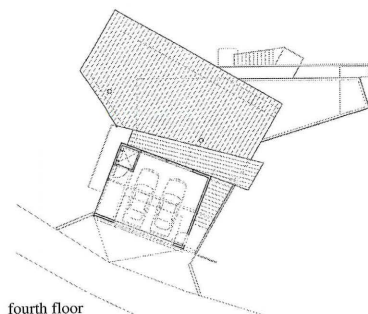
He created a long, narrow house with three parts stacked parallel to the slope—a garage and mudroom box on top, a narrow, two-story slab on the bottom holding four bedrooms, and,

drawn
to the
edge

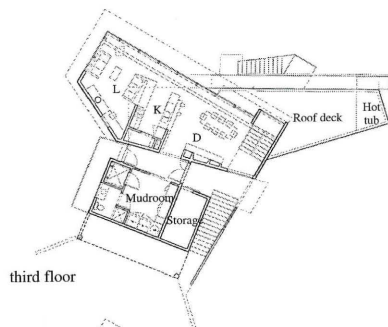


Only one significant tree was sacrificed to build the house. Canted off the bedroom base, the living area sits 35 feet off the ground among tree branches. The kitchen cabinetry anchors built-ins such as a bookcase, storage space, and a pull-out sofa in the sitting area beyond. A tier of shelves (right) serves both a bedroom and a closeted bunk room; each bunk has a secret door leading to separate stair landings.

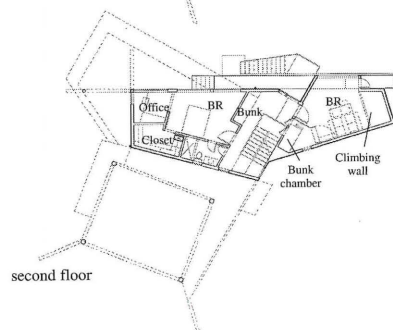




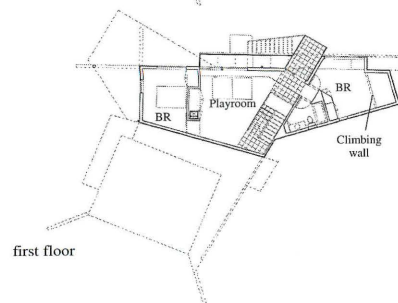
fourth floor



third floor



second floor



first floor



A climbing wall (top) with futon crash pads connects two stacked bedrooms on the base's 9-foot-wide east edge. Cobb's use of every inch of odd space resulted in such witty touches as a parallellogram drawer (above). A thin bar containing two floors of bedrooms (see floor plans, left) minimized excavation for the foundation, while the expansive upper level angles toward lake views. The two-car garage box on top includes an elevator, mudroom, and storage; an exterior stair also leads down to the entry corridor.

between the two, a cantilevered shelf for living spaces. That configuration allowed for a very narrow heel cut, but one that stretches 57 feet along the hillside to make the most of the lake views. The lower two floors are just 9 feet deep on the east side, widening to 20 feet in the middle, and tapering back to 13 feet on the west.

By contrast, the third floor is rotated off the sleeping quarters toward the best views, a move that allowed for a deck atop part of the bedroom slab. The glassy living area holds a compact galley kitchen and great room with built-ins that fold out for overnight guests. Though the architectural gestures are dramatic, they do little damage to the site. "Once we are two stories out of the ground on this steep slope, we are no longer restrained by the topographical contours and have different setback restrictions," Cobb explains. "Then the language and orientation of the structure is completely free; it's just framing."

Thanks to its clever economy, this house welcomes guests, many of them children, without adding bedrooms. A climbing wall with futons as crash pads connects an upper and lower bedroom; a bunk chamber is disguised as a closet, and each bunk has a secret door that opens onto a different stair landing. A tiny corner bath contains a drawer shaped like a parallellogram. "We didn't try to fight the unusual geometries that came of working with the hill's contours," Cobb says, "but we engaged them in the house."—c.w.

project:

Cascades Lake House, near Leavenworth, Wash.

architect:

E. Cobb Architects, Seattle

general contractor:

Timberwood Construction, Leavenworth

project size:

3,100 square feet

site size:

0.25 acre

construction cost:

Withheld

"we didn't try to fight the unusual geometries that came of working with the hill's contours, but we engaged them in the house."—eric cobb, aia

drawn
to the
edge



Bare walls, exposed pipes, and concrete floors help the refined Berloni Italian kitchen harmonize with the rest of the house. The high-end space—which contains 2-inch limestone counters and stainless appliances—was the clients' must-have item.



The architects punctuated the house's recycled-brick street elevation with a variety of glazing: aluminum storefronts, case-ments, and hopper windows. A sandblasted glass sidelight at the entry provides both light and privacy.



All photos by Jean-Francois Jaussaud

greene pastures

The Fort Greene section of Brooklyn, N.Y., is a tale of two neighborhoods. One boasts blocks of well-preserved brownstones; the other is besieged by trash-strewn, gap-tooth lots. That's why this 4,200-square-foot row house by New York City-based Christoff: Finio Architecture is both a vital and a revitalizing new neighbor.

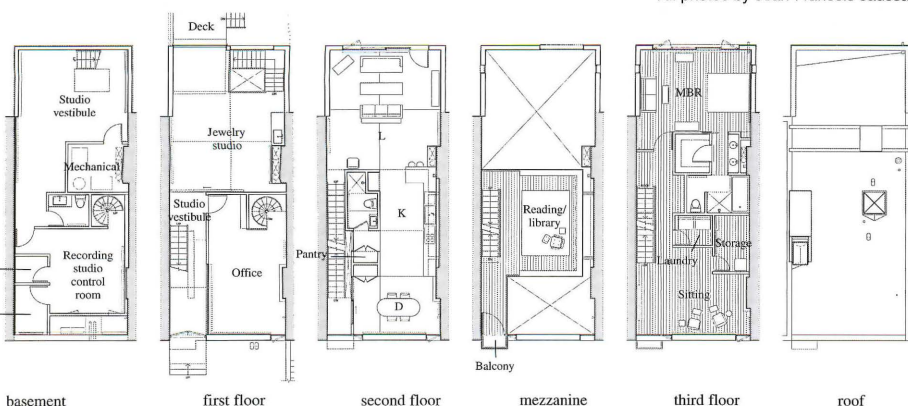
The clients, a jewelry designer and her hip-hop-record producer husband, had originally set out on a more mundane mission: to find an apartment. But when they discovered a vacant lot, they envisioned a more exciting possibility—a new urban home with enough space for their own separate studios, says architect Martin D. Finio.

Naïve about the expense and bureaucracies of building in the city, the firm was unabashedly enthusiastic. "Having the chance to add to the urban fabric in the form of a new building is especially rare in New York," says project designer Jeff Hong. "This opportunity—with clients who were willing and in an area of the city that is developing and receptive—was invigorating."

But the firm quickly realized that the conservative budget would have to stretch even further than imagined. The challenge lay in doing the project resourcefully and responsibly. "The first thing we all recognized was that we had to be as unapologetic as possible about the construction and use as much as we had in place already to establish our interior space," Finio says.

Because the house shares the side walls of two adjacent buildings, the architects saved money by using the exposed surfaces as the new interior walls. They also balanced the budget with exposed timber framing, sealed 1-by-6 tongue-and-groove flooring, and recycled brick. "Even though we had to do this with very little means, we still felt a strong responsibility to the city," Finio says. Honoring the best of the existing context was high on their list.

A good fit within its row, the house feels deceptively spacious, thanks to glass openings on the front elevation and glass doors on the interior. Similarly, the ground-floor studio has



drawn
to the
edge



The interior lives larger than its narrow footprint might suggest, thanks in part to a double-height living room and artfully placed glass openings that scoop in lots of light.



Raw building materials—brick, steel pipe, exposed trusses and electrical conduit—lend the house a gritty chic while keeping costs down.

"there was a whole network of people involved, all like-minded, resourceful, and eager to make something happen."—martin d. finio



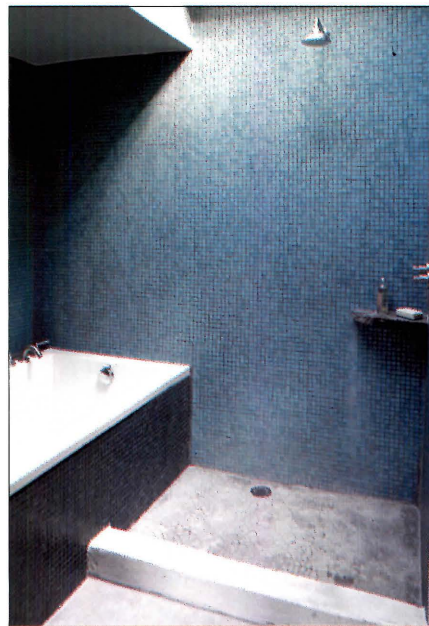
a garage door that opens for maximum air and light circulation.

Budget notwithstanding, a high-end kitchen was the clients' must-have item. The Italian-made system is outfitted with simple cabinets and limestone countertops, and the commercial-grade appliances are stainless steel. "There is nothing terribly over-the-top about it, but it was one place she wanted to have as she imagined," Finio says of his client.

Despite its ultimate success, the project had to overcome unreliable contractors and disappearing subs. The energetic and inventive clients filled in the gaps. The jewelry designer fashioned a copper sink, some light fixtures, and drawer pulls, and she tiled one of the baths. The result is a testament to the trust and patience among the participants, Finio says. "There was a whole network of people involved, all like-minded, resourceful, and eager to make something happen."—*n.f.m.*



In the master bath, a double vanity top fabricated from a single slab of burlled-maple tree trunk blends with simple wood cabinets and sealed tongue-and-groove pine subflooring.



Filling in for delinquent contractors, the homeowner installed the glass mosaic in the master bath, and made her own light fixtures and cabinet pulls.

project:

Fort Greene House, Brooklyn, N.Y.

architect:

Christoff:Finio Architecture, New York City;

Jeff Hong, project designer

general contractor:

Construction Contractors, Edgewater, N.J.

project size:

4,200 square feet

site size:

0.04 acre

construction cost:

\$71 per square foot

drawn
to the
edge

Siegel wanted an "anti-Tuscan" color scheme, but the area planning department required earth tones. The compromise palette consists of monochromatic grays accented with red mahogany windows and doors. All of the wood used in the house is certified as sustainably harvested.

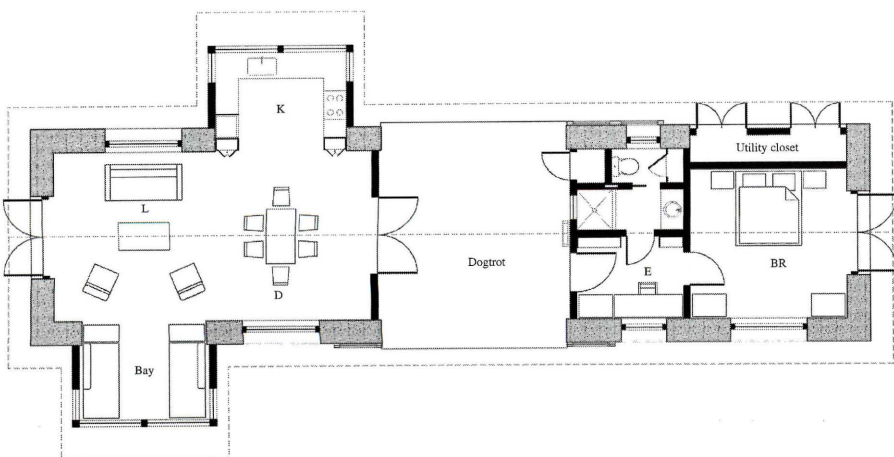
J.D. Peterson

"part of what we try to teach our students and clients is that most of being green is about good design."—henry siegel, aia



Photos, this page: Claudio Santini

The one-room-wide floor plan splits in the middle to create a sheltered dogtrot (left) for outdoor living. The dogtrot also helps breezes penetrate the interior. Two reverse shed bays expose the long, narrow gable to views and light. The metal roof is nontoxic and can be used for collecting rainwater.



beauty and the bale

Clients seek out Henry Siegel's firm, Emeryville, Calif.-based Siegel & Strain Architects, because of its environmentally conscientious reputation. So when Siegel, AIA, designed a weekend retreat for his family, he resolved to make it "as green as could be."

For any design, Siegel says, the most important decisions involve "orienting the building and shaping it so it takes advantage of the landscape and local climate." In this case, the house sits at the edge of a meadow, backed by a heavily forested hill. The dense trees preclude any passive solar heating options, but the shade helps the straw-bale house keep its cool on hot, dry summer days. The sheltered location also allows the house to blend with—rather than dominate—its Sonoma County site. Recycled materials, low-VOC finishes, and highly efficient appliances add to the home's environmental friendliness.

Using sustainable techniques and materials doesn't mean that finely tuned architecture plays second fiddle. "Green design has this reputation of being odd, and part of what we try to teach our students and clients is that most of being green is about good design," says Siegel. There's certainly nothing odd about his simple structure, with its clean lines and elegant agrarian forms. "We try to make decisions that aren't just green and aren't just aesthetic, but both."—s.d.h.

project:

Wine Creek Road Residence, Healdsburg, Calif.

architect:

Siegel & Strain Architects, Emeryville, Calif.

general contractor:

Talia Developments, Sebastopol, Calif.

landscape architect:

Rebecca Coffman Landscape Architecture, Berkeley, Calif.

structural engineer:

Bruce King, Sausalito, Calif.

energy consultant:

High Sun Engineering, Oakland, Calif.

project size:

1,200 square feet

site size:

2.5 acres

construction cost:

\$250 per square foot



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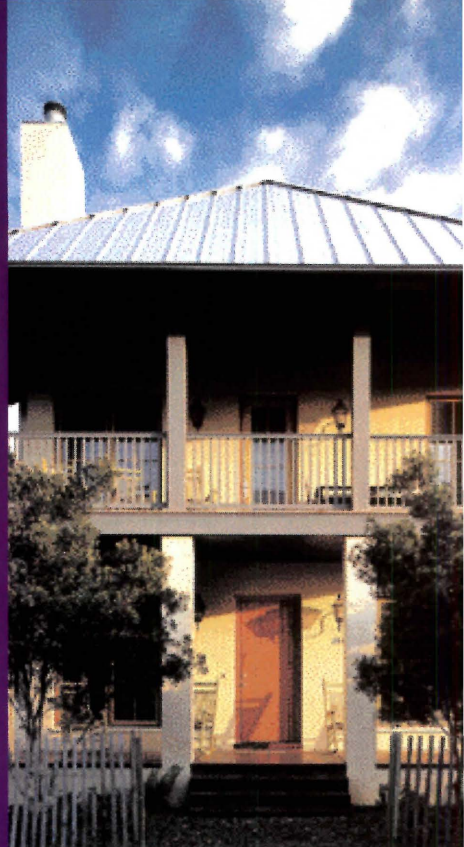
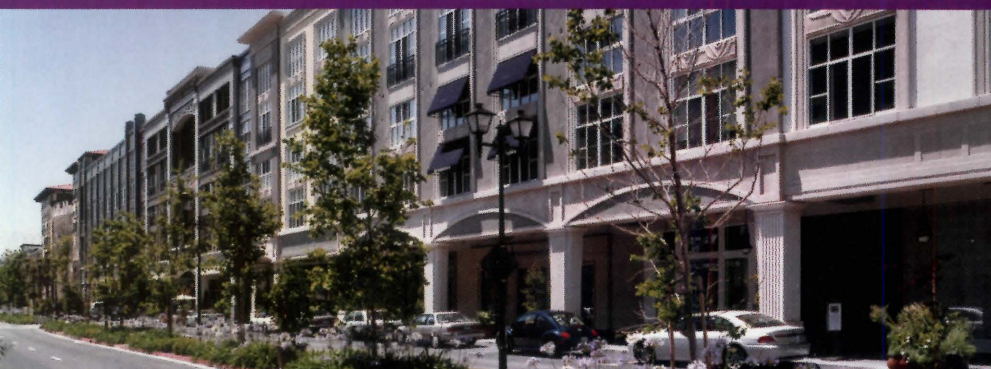
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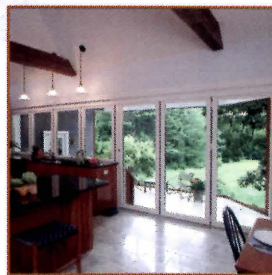
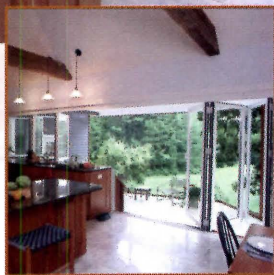
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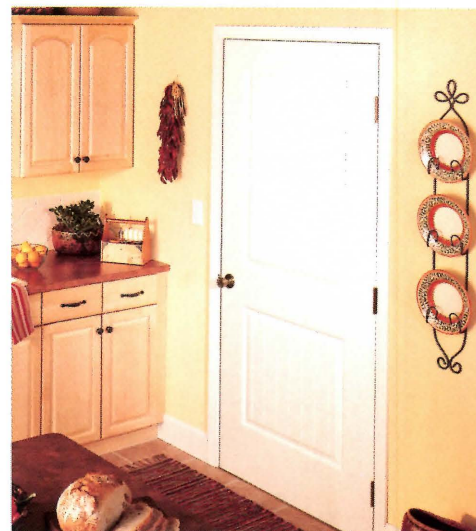
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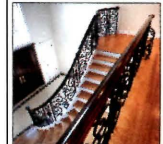
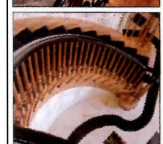

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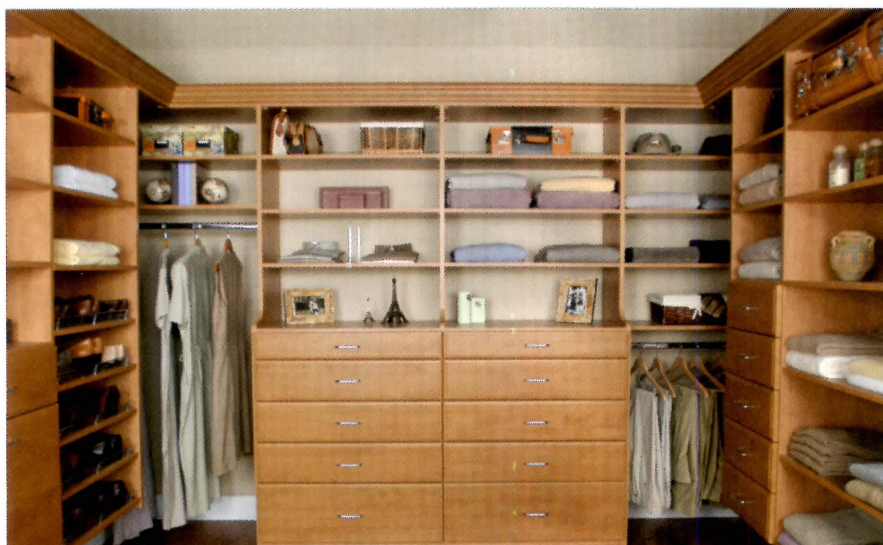
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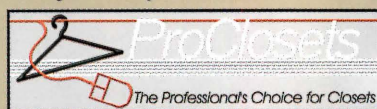


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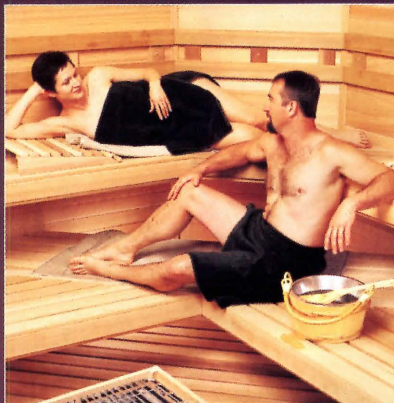
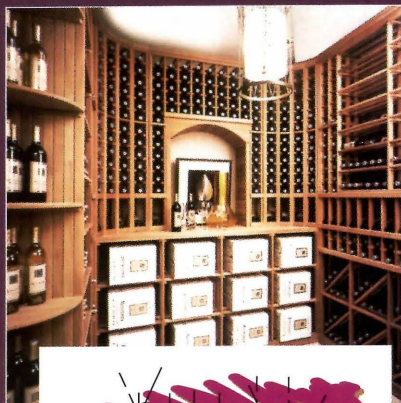
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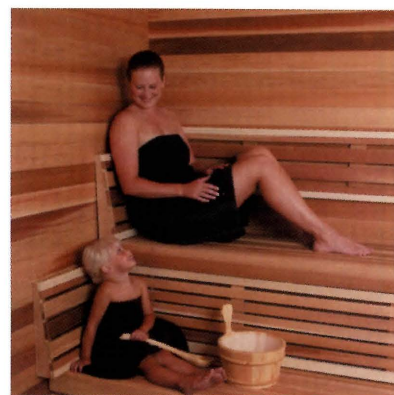
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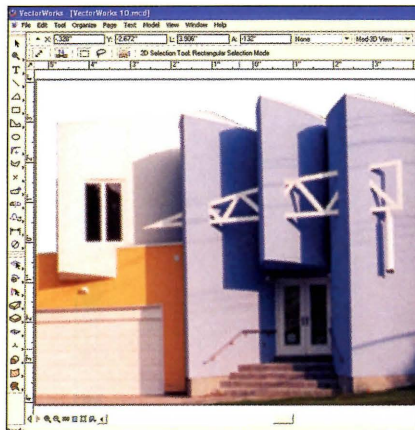
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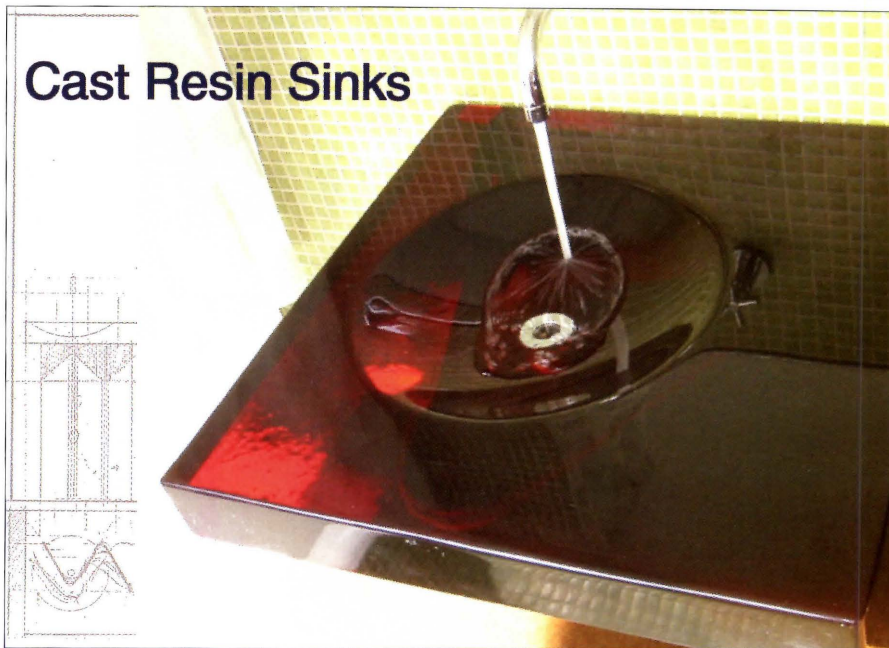
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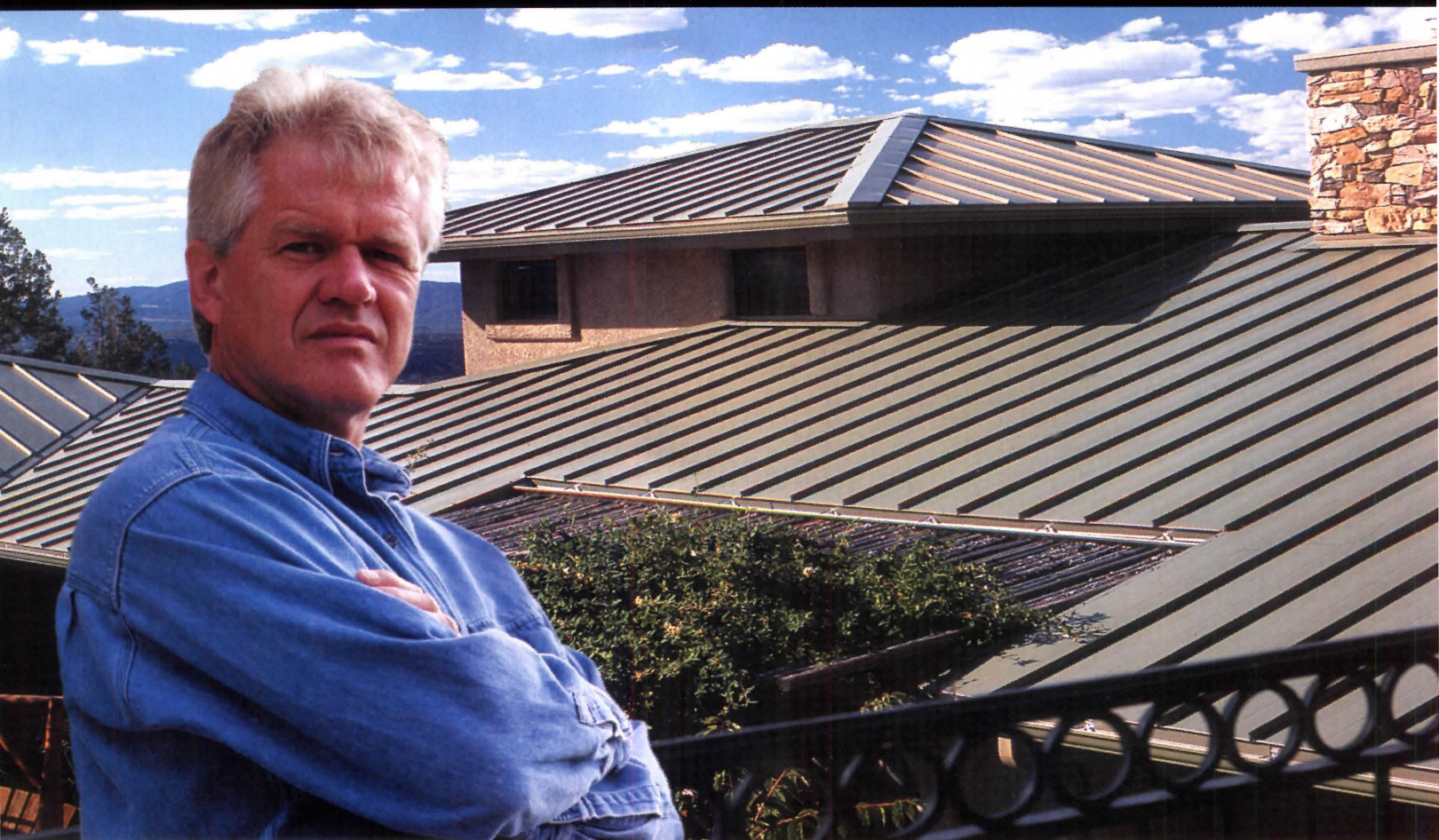
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Anthony Browne

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