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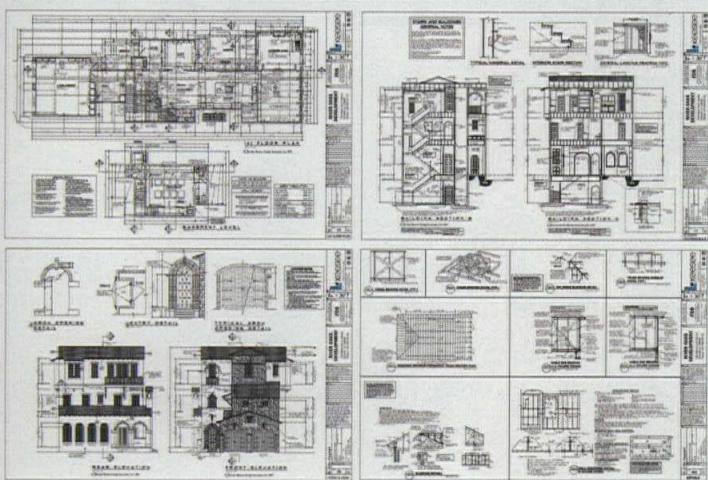




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Volume 15, number 6. *residential architect* (ISSN 1093-359X; USPS 016-871) is published bimonthly (January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, November/December) by Hanley Wood, LLC, One Thomas Circle NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20005. Copyright 2011 by Hanley Wood, LLC. Opinions expressed are those of the authors or persons quoted and not necessarily those of Hanley Wood. Reproductions in whole or in part prohibited without prior written authorization.

*residential architect* is sent free of charge to qualified readers involved in the residential home design market. The publisher reserves the right to determine qualification criteria. Out-of-field subscription rates are: U.S., \$39.95; U.S. students, \$19.99; Canada and all other countries, U.S. \$49.95; airmail is additional. Single-copy price is \$10.00. For subscription information write to: *residential architect*, P.O. Box 3494, Northbrook, IL 60065-9831. **Subscription inquiries and back issue orders:** 888.269.8410 / Fax: 847.291.4816. **Reprints:** YGS Group 717-505-9701 ext. 128. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to: *residential architect*, P.O. Box 3494, Northbrook, IL 60065-9831. This issue is mailed in regional editions. Canada Post Registration #40612608/G.S.T. number: R-120931738. Canadian return address: Pitney Bowes Inc., PO Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2.

*residential architect* will occasionally write about companies in which its parent organization, Hanley Wood, LLC, has an investment interest. When it does, the magazine will fully disclose that relationship.

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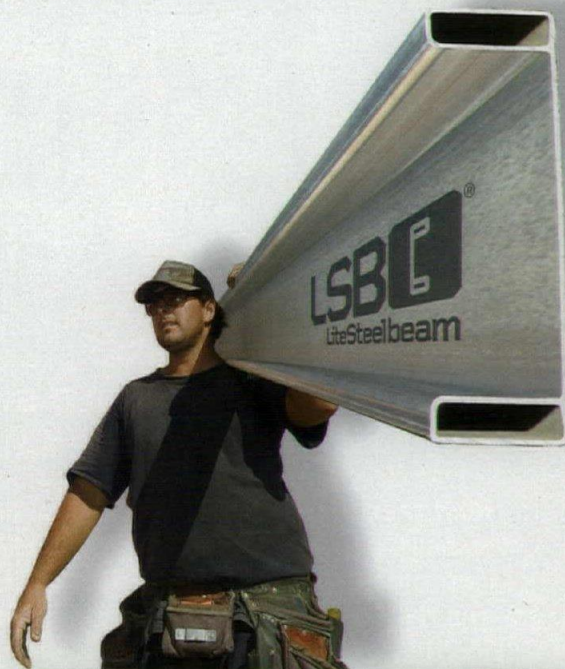
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from the editor

# no compromises

sticking to your guns in tough times is tremendously difficult, but the alternative may be worse.

by s. claire conroy

Congratulations. We've made it to December. And we renew hopes that next year will indeed mark the turning point in this interminable recession. Technically speaking, the recession ended some time ago, but very few businesses felt that imperceptible transition. Instead, some firms didn't make it and others are still struggling on the brink of failure. But there are a fortunate few who see a pick up in work. They're almost afraid to use the B word: busy.

We recently asked our LinkedIn group of nearly 3,000 architects and designers to let us know how they're doing. Judging from the responses, it's a very mixed bag of experiences. There are a handful of firms that are working on entirely new custom homes, but most practitioners are still making do with small remodels and odds and ends jobs. Everyone is bemoaning the downward pressure on fees, and the blame falls equally on hard-nosed clients and hungry competitors.

It's not quite the Civil War. It's not brother against brother. But yes, times are still very hard. Paraphrasing from an even earlier war,

these are the times that try men's—and women's—souls. Everyone is asking the toughest questions. What would I do to stay in business? What non-negotiable would I concede this time—thinking next time, when things are better, I won't give in so much. I won't lower my fees to this extent again. I won't throw in as many free hours of design thinking again, just to get a good project done. I won't design something the client wants that I know is ridiculous. But once you set the bar lower, how hard is it to raise it again?

Fees are the great verboten topic of architectural practice. We're not allowed to address them, no matter how well our brethren in the real estate business tow the line on an industry standard. (They, too, are starting to pay a penalty over their control of the MLS.) So we talk about fee structures, or have a hair-down, late-night conversation at a bar that roams closer to the mark. The result of all of this legal obfuscation is complete confusion in the minds of the potential client. This has always been so, even before the economy fell apart.

And this confusion about what services should cost fuels the horrendous hag-



Mark Robert Halper

gling of an open-air bazaar. Clients with a job have the power—and they know it. They expect to see the deal of a lifetime even from top-line firms. They feel taken advantage of if they pay full price with such leverage at their disposal. Small wonder. Our cyber, Amazon-trained cerebrums live in mortal fear of missing the "Gold Box" special.

But I recently heard an encouraging story from a well-respected architect. He had a potential client—a high-flying Wall Street guy looking to build a second home—try to browbeat him on fees. The architect took a breath and replied that he has employees to feed, and that sticking to his guns on

price meant he had been able to keep everyone employed through the recession. The client asked the architect to reconsider; they went their separate ways. The architect headed home and pored over ways to lower the bill.

It turns out that was unnecessary. The client called the next day and gave him the job, saying, "You're right. And I appreciate your devotion to your employees." The client had laid off hundreds in his job and it had troubled him deeply. He saw authenticity and integrity in the architect and knew that's who he wanted to build his house. *ra*

Comments? E-mail: [cconroy@hanleywood.com](mailto:cconroy@hanleywood.com).



# home front

news from the leading edge of residential design.

## for the birds

Architects Keith Moskow, FAIA, and Robert Linn believe that hands-on building skills are an important part of an architectural education. “For us and for many people, there can be a disconnect between drawing something and getting out there and building it,” says Moskow, who along with Linn is a principal at Moskow Linn Architects in Boston. So last sum-

mer, he and Linn organized a weeklong design/build program for college and graduate students called Studio North. Held on Moskow’s property in Norwich, Vt., the studio had to follow local regulations by building a structure that had an agricultural or forestry use. The group settled on designing a chicken coop to end all chicken coops.

The five selected students gathered at Moskow Linn’s office in June for a design charrette. They reunited a week later in Norwich, ready to build. “We made many decisions on site with the students,” Moskow says. “The design definitely improved.”

The final product is an 8-foot-by-12-foot, wood-and-translucent-plastic building with a pitched, slatted roof. Siding made of site-harvested saplings gives a vaguely wattle-and-daub effect that seems entirely appropriate for the rural setting. And inside the chicken coop, a large oval-shaped box provides

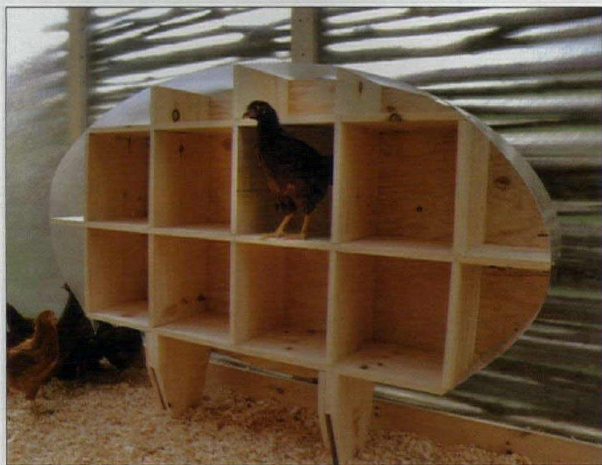


Photos: Courtesy Moskow Linn Architects

Keith Moskow and Robert Linn’s student design/build program, Studio North, created this sprightly chicken coop, which the group refers to as a “chicken chapel.”







The chicken coop's pitched roof echoes that of the existing barn behind it. Inside, shadows and natural light fall onto an egg-shaped nesting box.

individual cubbies where Moskow's nine Rhode Island Reds can nest in comfort.

Plans for next summer's 10-student Studio North currently are under way; for more information, visit [moskowlinn.wordpress.com](http://moskowlinn.wordpress.com).—*meghan drueding*



Rendering courtesy SpruceBox

## out of the box

**t**he race to try to bring good design to the masses has a worthy new entrant: SpruceBox. This Web-based visualization tool from workshop/apd's Matthew D. Berman, Assoc.

AIA, and Andrew D. Kotchen, Assoc.

AIA, allows consumers to envision what a kitchen or bath would look like with various product, color, and finish combinations. SpruceBox, which evolved from an earlier effort called RightFrame (see *residential architect*, January/February 2011), is available for kitchen and bath showrooms to install on their websites. So far 87 showrooms, mostly in the New York metropolitan area, have signed up.

According to Berman, who co-founded SpruceBox along with Kotchen and software engineer Jay Orfield, the company's goal is simple. "It's about getting better design out to more people," he says. "Most people appreciate design. Most people can't afford to have somebody else do it for them." SpruceBox also includes partnerships with manufacturers, who provide information on their products as content for the site.

Berman, Kotchen, Orfield, and their team have invested many hours of work into making SpruceBox's visuals beautiful, realistic, and user-friendly. The beta version is live at [www.sprucebox.com](http://www.sprucebox.com); give it a try yourself and see what you think.—*m.d.*



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—Barbara and Ralph D. Rocky River, OH

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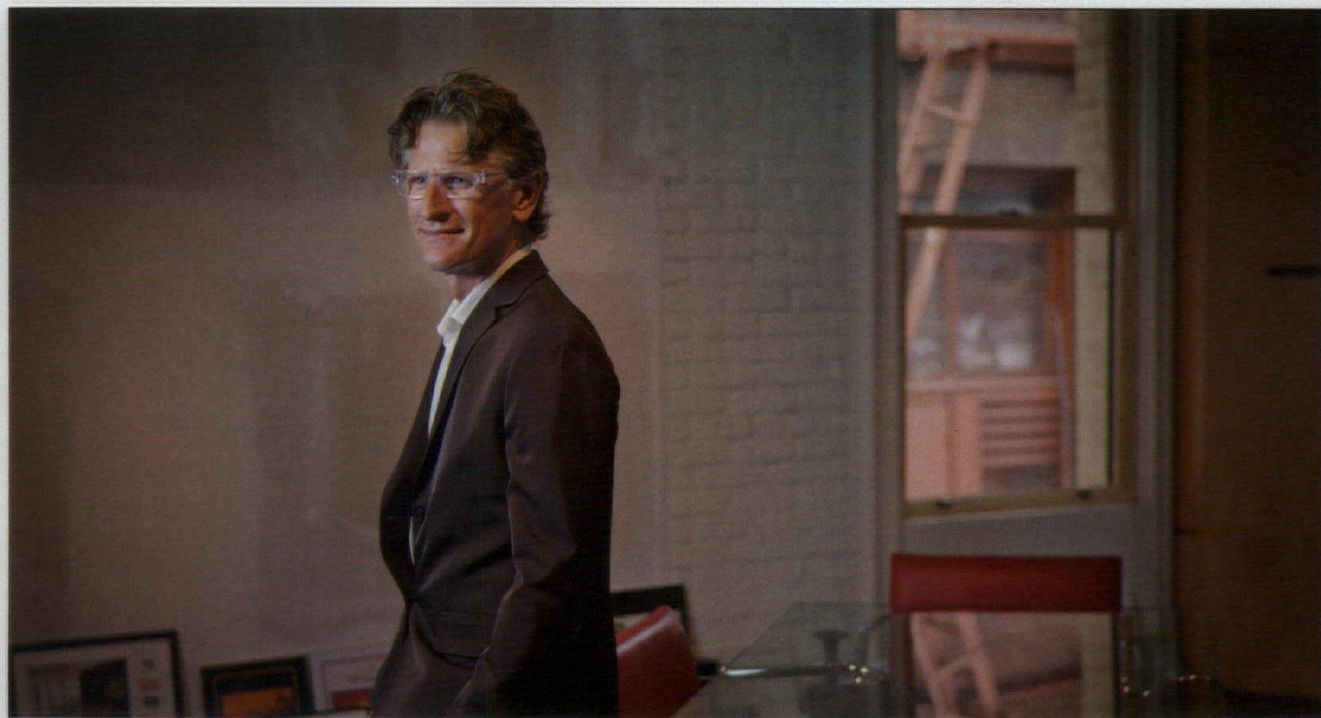


PHOTO: GREGORY COWLEY

## AIAVOICES

SOCIAL MEDIUM | ARCHITECTS NEED TO KEEP THE CONVERSATION OPEN

Mark English, AIA, principal of San Francisco-based Mark English Architects, is part of the vanguard of architects using social media to engage clients and each other. Through his work as an AIA San Francisco board member, English helped create digital forums to advance best practices, business strategy, and public policy. He also blogs about green energy, professional challenges, and good design as a way to engage members of the design community in a dialogue, as well as to underscore the design values that Mark English Architects represents.

**DURING MY YEARS OF PRACTICE-BUILDING, I FOCUSED ON THE** task at hand, but the Great Recession opened new horizons. Within the past three or four years, I've found that I've been able to gain a bit of perspective. I've developed ways to pursue other interests within the world of design. I developed the blog *The Architect's Take* to share information about other architects whose work I enjoy, as well as any subject I might be interested in. To that end, we have interviewed small design firms we respect—like an architect who won on a game show and an architect who lost his sight. The idea is to reach colleagues in firms of all sizes interested in design, but as it turns out, we know from the blog comments that many readers are nonprofessionals who are interested in architecture.

I've been interested in real, measurable ways of creating efficient buildings, as well. I've always done Title 24 [California's Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings] calculations for my own projects and, for the past 15 years, for some of my colleagues. In the past three years, I

decided to make this service a part of my practice, which allows me to collaborate with other architects through our *Green Compliance Plus* blog.

Social media are virtually free and unencumbered by advertisers or editorial constraints. I've given presentations and had many visits where I'll sit down with colleagues to show them the mechanics of blogging and tweeting. I also serve on the AIA San Francisco Board, focusing on policy issues and the challenges small practices face, and helping create programs that put my colleagues in the public eye. One of the things we do is produce monthly presentations by architects around a design theme, to which the public is invited. The committee also started the *Small Firms Great Projects* semiannual publication, which contains the work of local architects and is distributed free to the community.

One of the great strengths of the architectural profession is the "generalist" nature of the architect—the breadth of knowledge required for us to do our jobs and the tendency for architects to be people who are forever curious. But there has been a fundamental shift in the way the world works, and the profession has to survive by being relevant to the world at large. We increasingly risk irrelevance if we don't cooperate with each other and reach out to the larger culture. Power comes from sharing, not hoarding, knowledge. —As told to Kim A. O'Connell.

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# AI AKNOWLEDGE

THE "R" WORD



ILLUSTRATION: BILL CIGLIANO

## Looks like you might survive the recession. Now what?

BY GUY HORTON

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND WHAT ECONOMIST ROBERT REICH CALLS "the end of the Great Prosperity" and how it has impacted the architecture, engineering, and construction industries, it helps to have a broad perspective.

Easier said than done, especially when you're trying to make payroll for next month and beating the bushes for work.

But for three people, at least, thinking broadly means thinking clearly about economic cycles. For the past 18 years, Nancy Egan, Marjanne Pearson, and Paul Nakazawa have been focused on new ways of thinking about what they call the "ecology of practice," including evolutionary growth and long-term strategies for practice management. They have incorporated their ideas about what's next for professional design firms into a series of courses developed for the Executive Education program of Harvard University's Graduate School of Design (GSD). This year their course, "The Strategic Agenda," reframed critical elements of professional practice. They argued that, by acknowledging that recessions are symptoms of long-term

economic, political, societal, cultural, and other factors, firm principals can begin to create opportunities to spread their risk over time.

Over the past 60 years, many architects have transcended their conventional roles as "craftspeople" to become knowledge experts. The shift from a predominantly craft-driven profession to special expertise and now, increasingly, to issues-driven strategies is transforming the profession. Design thinking has become more systems-based, providing architects the ability to incorporate a diverse range of ideas relevant to society.

For the trio, succeeding in a global—and volatile—economy requires examining historical shifts. "The 'issues' that we refer to are the drivers of decision-making in the new business, social, and political environments for practice," says Nakazawa. "Firms that directly address the sets of issues that drive client decisions organize themselves to solve specific problems."

Sure, some architects lovingly design beautiful objects and rely on consultants to implement their forms, but that's not a competitive business strategy for most working architects. Cultivating the ability to identify the critical issues that drive client decisions increases the architect's potential to address a broader set of contingencies, shifting ideas about program and typology as well as sustainable strategies.

Any number of successful architecture practices incorporates broader societal and cultural issues into their business



strategies, along with market share, clients, architecture-based technologies, and general economic considerations. The most successful ones, however, according to Egan, Nakazawa, and Pearson, are the ones who can articulate what makes their ideas unique in the marketplace.

This might seem obvious, but maintaining clarity of purpose is one thing that often gets overlooked in the rush to land projects and meet deadlines. Continually defining and redefining their firm's goals and core principles allows firm leaders to stay focused on what it takes "to do their best work for the firm's best clients," according to Pearson.

Pearson identifies a spectrum within which firms, people, and clients fall, with ideas and intellectual capital at one end, and capabilities and implementation capital at the other. In the middle are the practice strategies that can allow firm principals to set the tone of their studios and create successful businesses. Are you a theoretically based ideas firm focused on the hypothetical questions? Or are you a practical, skill-driven firm building resources and expertise to provide services that you can deliver on time and on budget? If you think about where your employees fit into that spectrum, you're probably a mixture of both. So how can you understand how to best use the talent of your individual employees? And who do you need in your leadership pipeline to build a sustainable firm?

Self-evaluation is the first step. The second is what media columnist Bob Garfield calls "Listenomics," or open-source communication: creating platforms for clients and potential clients to define what success looks like in order to be part of a feedback loop. Pearson points to the approach taken in information technology and social business design in which knowledge and skill sets are freely shared with all who are interested. She suggests that architecture firms must take an active role in sharing knowledge and skills in order to create dynamic cross-collaboration opportunities throughout an entire practice ecosystem.

Another key to success in the architecture profession is translating larger social, economic, and political forces into meaningful strategies. The "societal narratives" of climate change, resource flows, development patterns, global conflicts, and economic fluctuation, according to Nakazawa, impact everyone all over the world, but in uneven and specific ways. The more powerfully your practice responds to the demands generated by the issues, the more your messages will resonate in the market.

Every firm has the opportunity to connect its story to these larger narratives, says the trio. The point is to be honest about your own identity and the concerns that shape your practice, and to build your network of colleagues, collaborators, and clients with those individuals who share your values and goals. It's translating cultural capital into relationship capital.

The most urgent narrative these days is the recession, and one of the reasons it had such a devastating impact is the absence of self-regulation; far too many firms got too big and stayed big for way too long, and the recession forced them to employ drastic measures, like rapidly downscaling through layoffs, to survive. A lot of talent got set adrift that way.

"If we really think about the practice as an ecology, it implies cycles of growth, decay, and rejuvenation," says Egan. "When we forget, assuming the future is always going to bring more opportunity, we become lax, we don't stay sharp, and when the metaphorical lightning strikes, it's a firestorm. Better to do some 'controlled burn' in the form of continual re-evaluation and renewal beforehand." **ALA**

# AIAPERSPECTIVE

LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT

PHOTO: WILLIAM STEWART



**A WRITER FRIEND (OF A CERTAIN AGE) WAS WAXING NOSTALGIC** about the good old days before e-mail. She'd work on an assignment, finish by Friday, slip the copy into a FedEx folder, and ship it to her editor. Maybe she'd catch the latest movie with a friend, or just loaf, because the weekend was hers. But once the Internet was up and running, her editors began to require attached files, which they could turn around in a day or two. Slowly at first, her free time began to erode. Now she's working pretty much 24/7.

I can feel her pain. When I began practice, negotiations with clients and the building team were either face-to-face or by phone and fax. Today, BlackBerrys, iPhones, and Twitter keep me permanently attached. Thanks to a profession that's gone global, we can be reached at any hour of the night, and the person on the other end wants an answer right then.

Don't get me wrong: I'm not a Luddite longing for the old days of snail mail. Social media have allowed our profession to proliferate, which is no small benefit at a time when we're all chasing work. It allows us to produce better and faster. But being on call any hour of the day is taking a toll on a lot of us. You're at a restaurant with your family; it's a quiet night out with the kids. Suddenly your BlackBerry vibrates. Who do you put on hold?

How many of us dare to get off the grid for just a weekend hiking trip with friends, or to simply chill with a book? Won't the colleague or client who fails to reach us think we're "less serious" than other members of the design team who have allowed themselves to be available even if their kids are performing in a school play?

For our own sake—and for the sake of our family and friends and those on the job with whom we interact—we have to carve hours out of the workweek for life. It's not time wasted; time out promotes our physical health and the health of our relationships with family and friends. In fact, being untethered from work can lead to greater breakthroughs and, yes, enjoyment when we settle back into the office.

The author of the Declaration of Independence—an architect—wrote about the pursuit of happiness. By "happiness" he had something greater in mind than feel-good pleasure. He had a profound grasp of why it's important to give ourselves the time to understand what it means to be alive. It's an understanding that doesn't come from work alone. **ALA**

Clark D. Manus, FAIA, 2011 President



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# green fields

a virginia home is built with leed principles and salvaged materials.

as it is for many firms, sustainable design has become an important part of Brookeville, Md.-based Miche Booz Architect's residential work. Fortunately, the issue now resonates with clients as well. "It seems to be on the minds of the people who are coming to us," says Miche Booz, AIA, LEED AP. Case in point is the couple who asked the firm to design a vernacular-style weekend cottage on their property in Woodville, Va.

The clients had owned a small cabin on the 17-acre site for a number of years, but they wanted an updated structure that was sustainable, energy efficient, and relatively compact. "The clients were knowledgeable," says project architect Joe Harris. "They wanted to try a lot of new ideas, but they also had a limited budget."

Located about 82 miles west of Washington, the



Photos: Miche Booz

sloping site had views to a pond and the Blue Ridge Mountains, so Harris and Booz sited the 2,700-square-foot home to take advantage of both. Adhering to LEED design principles, they repurposed the existing cabin as a studio and added a new high-performance building that consists of 2x6 framing with open-cell foam insulation and a SIPs roof.

"The SIPs allowed us to expose the framing members inside," Booz explains.

The designers chose an equally high-performance 20-SEER geothermal heating and cooling system that was dropped into the pond. "We figured we already had the body of water to use," Booz says. In addition to the geothermal, the house has in-floor radiant heating (on the basement and first floor), a graywater system for irrigation, a tankless water heater, and dual-flush toilets.

Booz and Harris applied an equal amount of attentiveness to the interior finishes. The home, for example, is devoid of gypsum and features locally sourced poplar ship-lapped walls. The firm also seamlessly integrated pieces of a reclaimed log cabin it

Miche Booz Architect used a combination of thrift, technology, and LEED principles to design this weekend cottage. In lieu of gypsum, the architects salvaged a log cabin from West Virginia and used the pieces throughout the home.

salvaged into various areas of the project.

When seen from a distance, the home has the appearance of an agrarian compound with an assemblage of buildings that grew organically. The tableau was deliberate. "The intention was to make it seem like you've taken some utilitarian buildings and put them together to make a house," Booz says. The only difference is that this home is an energy-efficient building that responds to the way people live.—*nigel f. maynard*





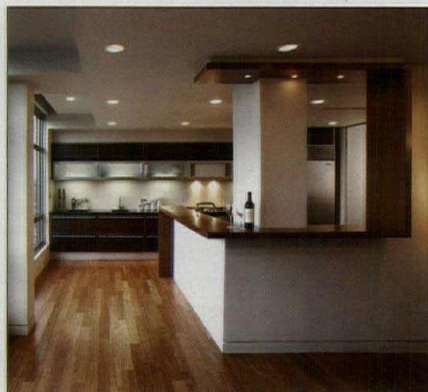
# k + b studio

## kitchen: lightened aerie

A new residence on the top floor of a cold-storage facility converted to living units, Blur Loft is named for the translucent panels that diffuse daylight through its interior. But the “living hall,” the Milwaukee apartment’s combined cooking/dining/living space, gets its light and views unfiltered. Stretching along the building’s broad eastern exposure, the room enjoys “absolutely amazing views to downtown and across to the lake,” says architect Brian Johnsen. Because the kitchen

is partly open to the dining/living areas, Johnsen and partner Sebastian Schmalting gave it a crisp, tightly organized appearance. “We wanted to make it as understated and simple as possible,” Johnsen explains, “but very highly functional for cooking.”

The cabinet layout accentuates the horizontality of the larger space, with wide, deep wenge-faced drawers handling most of the undercounter storage. “They aren’t interrupted by numerous verticals or changes of cabinet door direction,” Johnsen notes. The wall cabi-



Photos: Doug Edmunds

A bamboo counter winds from floor to ceiling, creating a distinctive boundary between the kitchen and the adjacent dining area.

nets’ uplift doors form horizontal bands of wenge and etched glass, the latter lit from behind with low-voltage fixtures. When evening activity shifts from the kitchen to the adjacent dining area, he says, “It becomes this very ethereal lighting characteristic, transmitting a lot of moodiness.”

The ceiling, which drops over the kitchen to conceal structural elements and mechanical runs, jumps up near the outside wall to emphasize the height of the city-view windows. Taking advantage of an awkwardly located structural column, Johnsen and Schmalting framed the vertical element with a serpentine counter of carbonized bamboo. “The bamboo band intervenes between floor, counter, walls, and ceiling,” Johnsen says, its relatively uniform color picking up the darker shades of the more variegated bamboo flooring. Folding the prosaic function of a countertop into a sculptural form, he says, “it defines the interaction between the kitchen, a small eating area, and the dining room.”—*bruce d. snider*



Long, horizontal bands of cabinetry direct attention toward views of downtown Milwaukee and Lake Michigan.

*project continued on page 20*





**project:**

Blur Loft, Milwaukee

**architect:**

Johnsen Schmalting  
Architects, Milwaukee

**builder:** KBS Construction,  
Milwaukee

**resources:**

cooktop: Wolf; dishwasher:  
Miele; lighting fixtures:  
Eureka, Halo; oven: Wolf;  
paints: Benjamin Moore;  
plumbing fittings: Hansgrohe;  
plumbing fixtures: Blanco;  
refrigerator: Sub-Zero

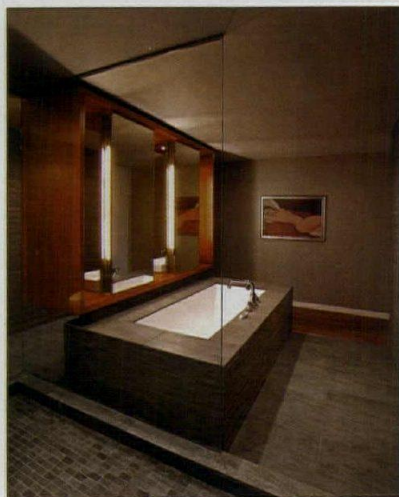


# k + b studio

## bath: virtue of necessity

In contrast to its kitchen, Blur Loft's master bath occupies a position far from the window wall. Architects Brian Johnsen and Sebastian Schmaling answered that familiar apartment-design challenge with a scheme that both ameliorates and celebrates the room's landlocked location. Rather than a door of any kind, a long hallway provides privacy from the master bedroom while channeling daylight from that room's ceiling-height window. But the bathroom also embraces the metaphor of a cave, with primary surfaces clad in a stonelike tile that gives the space the appearance of having been hewn from solid rock.

The bathroom centers on two visually striking elements: a tiled tub surround that rises from the floor like a slab of sedimentary rock and an open bamboo frame—suspended between the tub deck and the ceiling—that comprises the vanity counter. Open spaces flank the mirrors mounted within the frame, allowing a view to the tub area. A floor-to-ceiling glass shower wall is the only additional partitioning device. "It's not compartmentalized," Johnsen explains. "We were trying to break down the elements that would inhibit light penetrating." While the room's geological character conveys a sense of quiet and solidity, he notes, "It's a nice open, inviting space, given its geographic location within the unit."—*b.d.s.*



**resources:** ceramic tile: Caesar; paints: Benjamin Moore; plumbing fittings: GROHE, Kohler; plumbing fixtures: Bain Ultra, Duravit, TOTO USA



Photos: Doug Edmunds

The bath's open plan and glass partitions make the most of light borrowed from a distant bedroom window (above). Narrow, irregular tile courses suggest a room carved from sedimentary rock (left).





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# k+b studio

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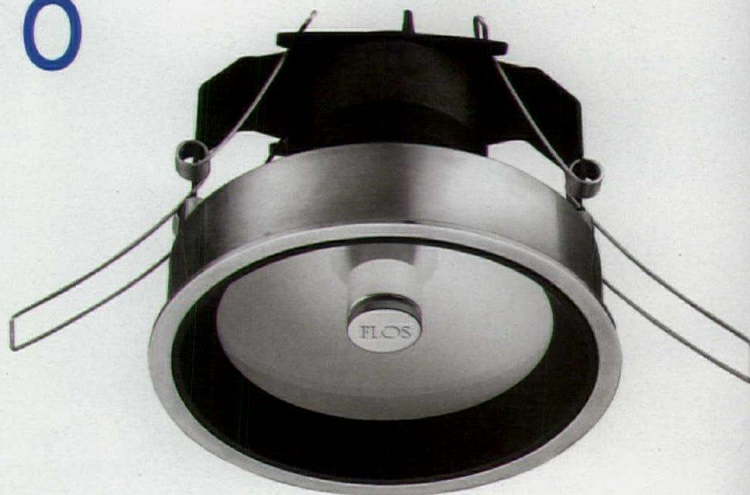
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Wan, an aluminum spotlight, directs light through a glass diffuser and a low-glare shield. The fixture measures 10 centimeters in diameter and also is available as a suspension lamp or recessed spotlight, with or without trim. Choose from a variety of finishes including chrome, shiny black, shiny white, and green. Flos, 631.549.2745; [www.flos.com](http://www.flos.com).

—by evelyn rabil



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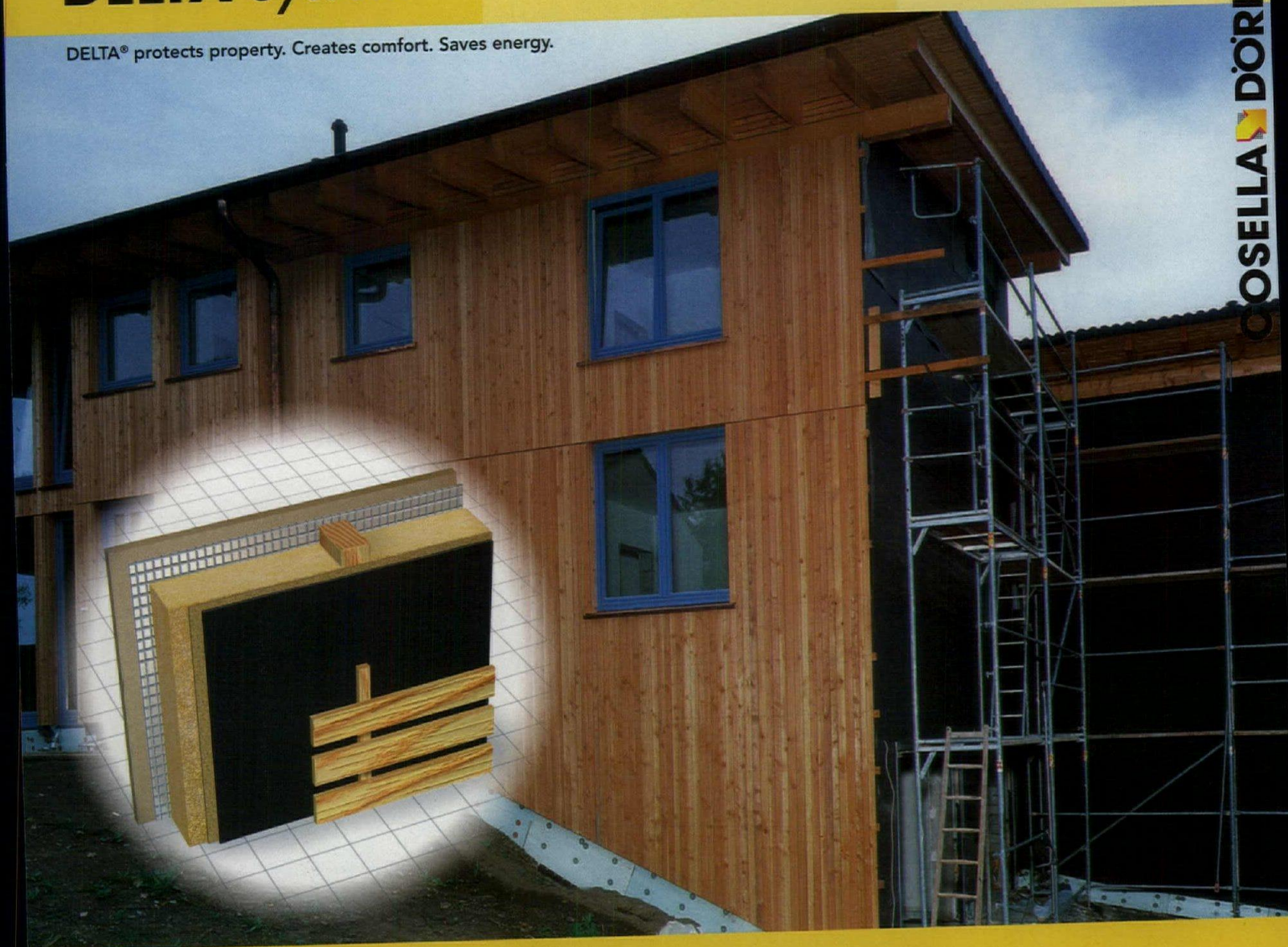
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# the indispensable architect

adapting to an unpredictable economy means finding your inner entrepreneur.

by cheryl weber, leed ap

“a rchitects don’t manufacture nails, assemble windows, or chop down trees,” wrote marketing guru Seth Godin in a recent blog post. “Instead, they take existing components and assemble them in interesting and important ways.” He went on to compare such skills to those of “organizational architects,” business-savvy people who know how to find suppliers, tie together disparate resources, and weave them into a venture that scales. “You either need to become one or hire one,” he wrote.

It’s an intriguing analogy. If entrepreneurs think like architects, why don’t more architects think like entrepreneurs? Probably because running a business is primarily a left-brain function. It’s one thing to use design tools to solve programming and aesthetic challenges, and another to dream up an innovative business model and make it fly.

Nonetheless, it seems everyone must be an entrepreneur nowadays as traditional paths of doing business disintegrate across professions. The challenges of the past five



James Yang

years have been especially daunting for architects, from new technologies and processes to a basic shift in client attitudes. More firms are stepping out of their comfort zone to reconsider how they run their business, how projects are delivered, and who they might collaborate with to

land new work.

James P. Cramer, Hon. AIA, and Scott Simpson, FAIA, LEED AP, foresaw this sea change in *The Next Architect: A New Twist on the Future of Design* (Greenway Communications, 2007). They point out that architecture is focused on aesthetics, as it should

be. But the truth is a great-looking building is only one measure of an architect’s worth. The rest is about creating value in other ways. When competition is fierce, how well architects define and communicate the full spectrum of that value can mean the difference be-

*continued on page 26*



## practice

tween a business that thrives and one that struggles.

"Clients care about a great many things in addition to appearance: capital cost, speed, efficiency, productivity, operating cost, maintenance cost, the approvals process, and so forth," the authors write. "All of them can be expressed as value propositions by using the proper metrics. If you want to know what's really important to your client, all you have to do is ask. Only then will you—and they—know how valuable great design can be."

### building teams

Architects tend to live in an insular world, and clients

may be looking for different things from what architects are programmed to provide, agrees Raymond F. Kogan, AIA, principal of Kogan & Co., a consultancy for architecture and engineering firms in Arlington, Va. "The biggest challenge for architects is to resist the temptation to be everything to everyone," he says. "Clients want to hire architects with very focused areas of expertise who can help them in specific ways."

For example, builders usually are looking for smart housing solutions that appeal to a narrow demographic group. Whether it's empty-nesters moving back to the city or parents raising

## blog spot:

A conversation with BUILD partner Andrew van Leeuwen, who authors the firm's blog at [blog.buildllc.com](http://blog.buildllc.com).

### *What is the guiding principle behind your blog?*

It started four years ago after a conversation with an architect friend. We were working on our first rainscreen system and wanted to know the name of the waterproof membrane he'd used, but he wouldn't give it to us. We decided we'd do everything we could to be the kind of architects who share information. We put up a lot of technical posts—details we've drawn, links to companies that helped put them together. We got tired of architecture being this mysterious black box.

### *Are there any rules?*

The content has to be useful, and we do not accept advertising. We are approached weekly by manufacturers who want to advertise on our blog. We don't want to make money off the blog, but it pays indirectly by leading to clients or networking opportunities. And we post often enough—Tuesdays and Fridays—to keep it fresh but avoid bugging people.

*continued on next page*



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*What's this about a senior field correspondent?*

We use the term jokingly, but Josiah Johnson is a friend who's addicted to good design. He has a habit of emailing us cool projects and products. We finally realized that this information was so valuable we should turn it into a blog post, so he contributes every other month.

*Have you tracked leads from the blog?*

When we ask new clients how they heard about us, their answer is usually blog-related. The clients we attract are digitally savvy, often working for software companies in Seattle, and the Internet is their main channel for exploring who's out there. One of our clients started a blog to document their house's construction, which became very popular.

*What have you learned?*

The blog is constantly telling us what it wants to be. It's fun to blow off steam once in a while or put up a humorous post, but we find that people like us to remain serious, sticking to the details of architecture. And the audience out there is great. We try to invite differing opinions and more information about an idea or product, and we learn a great deal from the comments section. —c.w.

*"clients care about a great many things in addition to appearance. if you want to know what's really important to a client, all you have to do is ask."*

—the next architect: a new twist on the future of design;  
by james p. cramer, hon. aia, and scott simpson, faia, leed ap

small children, architects need to know more about that market than their builder clients. "Wouldn't it be great if your architect came to you with something you didn't know? 'Here's a concept of a way to serve your market. We can help because we understand it so well,'" Kogan says.

Entrepreneurs know how to recognize and

exploit opportunities, but they also have strong team-building skills. In 2006, Jared Della Valle, AIA, president of Alloy Development in Brooklyn, N.Y., parlayed his working relationship with a client into a partnership that today finances the firm's development projects.

"The CEO of our company  
*continued on page 28*

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## practice

does more than \$1 billion a year in business," Della Valle says. "We use her financial strength to support our company."

Patient relationship-building is at the heart of its project acquisitions, too. One building recently landed in Alloy's lap four years after the firm lost a bid to buy it. Della Valle befriended the buyer of a 100-year-old landmarked warehouse at 192 Water Street, Brooklyn. When the developer ran into financial trouble on the project, Alloy offered to be a surrogate, raising new equity while taking on the existing debt. Title on the building, which now contains nine condo units, was subsequently transferred to Alloy.

"You try to make acquisitions through business relationships, where people have made offers on things and couldn't solve the problem," he says. "That's our core skill, and when we design for ourselves it's very profitable. The process is faster, we don't have to make presentations, and we're determining the value."

Della Valle, who has master's degrees in architecture and construction management, says Alloy held its own during the recession because its business model is based on seeking large returns over a long period, not waiting for clients or making monthly overhead. Tellingly, traditional skills such as designing and documenting represent only one-fifth of his time. The

rest is spent creating pro formas to analyze projects' financial strength and convincing contractors, buyers, and investors to participate in the process.

It's not for everyone. "A lot can happen between the start of a project and the end more than three years later," he says. "You're forced into difficult decisions and have to keep your promises. I'm at risk for more than I'm worth, and every day, dollar, and decision matters. You either thrive on that level of stress, or not."

Nevertheless, Della Valle doesn't buy into the myth that business and creative mindsets don't mix. He and the firm's two other architects are all "rain-makers" who have a spirit of achievement, he says. "They aggressively pursue a task and get it done. That's the personality trait we're interested in, and is a skill set in itself."

Another critical test of the next architect, according to Cramer and Simpson, is the ability to streamline design and construction. Excess is out as clients are increasingly focused on budgets, sustainability, and speed. They want architects who have vision, but also take responsibility. That means inviting contractors to the table before budgets are set to advise on how design decisions affect the schedule, logistics, and cost. It also presents the opportunity for leadership, as architects have "the most influence over the size,



shape, appearance, function, cost, and ultimate value of a project," the authors write. They should be the ones organizing and managing the team.

Chicago architect Randy Deutsch, AIA, LEED AP, thinks so, too. "There will always be a need for designers, whether boutique firms or not, but design will represent a smaller portion of what's looked for," says Deutsch, the author of *BIM and Integrated Design: Strategies for Architectural Practice* (Wiley, 2011).

delivery methodologies are headed. And while there is disagreement over its current practicality on residential-scale work, the technology, however it evolves, bridges the gap between digital experimentation and real-world architecture. As such, it offers architects the potential for moving beyond a one-liner role.

"Certainly contractors are using BIM to cement relationships with clients and deliver more services during and post construction," says IT consultant

*"contractors are looking at bim to improve prestige and establish long-lasting relationships. i don't see architects doing this as aggressively."*

—kristine fallon, faia

Deutsch is so convinced that intensive collaboration is the way of the future that he's planning the 2014 launch of the Integrated School of Building, an academic degree program featuring a multidisciplinary curriculum that brings together architects, engineers, and contractors. "I think the profession's forward momentum will not be linear, but will require involvement from many people simultaneously," he says.

The subject of building information modeling (BIM) invariably comes up in discussions about where

Kristine Fallon, FAIA, president of Chicago-based Kristine Fallon Associates. "They're looking at it as a tremendous leveler to improve prestige and establish long-lasting relationships. I don't see architects doing this as aggressively."

Even if a contractor is not working in BIM, architects using it are forced to meet early and often with the contractor to get information for the model, thus reducing the uncertainties of costs and schedule, Deutsch says. It also encourages mentoring up and down

*continued on page 30*



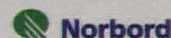
Norbord asked the NAHB Research Center to compare air leakage between horizontal panels and vertical TallWall. With up to a 60% reduction in air infiltration, there was no comparison – TallWall won hands down. TallWall stretches from floor framing to top plate, making it up to 38% stronger and mid-wall horizontal joints a thing of the past.

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## practice

the in-house hierarchy: Senior staff with building knowledge can learn from digitally savvy younger talent, and vice versa.

"Something else will supplant BIM, and more quickly than we might imagine," Deutsch says. "The point is, architects need to swing from design towards construction, and we're in a position to make the first move." Something architects can do now, he adds, is to treat emerging ideas as a learning opportunity and acquire the technology needed to face new challenges while coping with its limits.

A good example of this get-it-done attitude is Boiled Architecture, a start-up based in San Francisco that operates as a virtual office. Oscia Wilson, AIA, LEED AP, launched the firm this past July with three partners in Oakland, Hercules, and San Leandro, Calif. "When you're setting up a new firm from scratch, you can figure out what really is the most logical way to operate," she says, "because you aren't burdened by the legacy of 'we bought this so we have to keep using it.'"

Wilson is tapping the latest technologies to run a lean, nimble operation. The

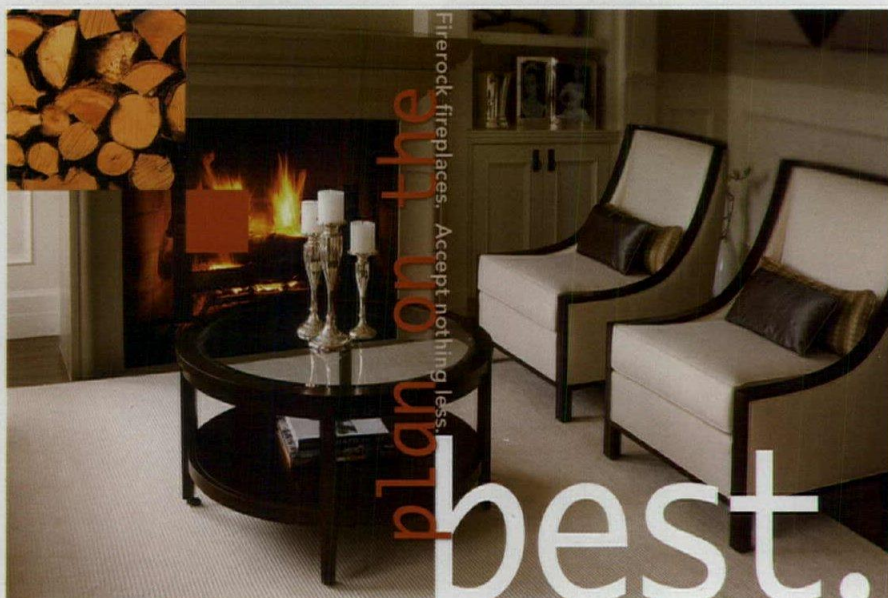
*"clients are less dreamy than before. they're interested in how much it costs and when it will be done, but still within the brackets of capital a architecture."*

—andrew van leeuwen

partners meet in person on Fridays, but in between they text, Skype, and Google Chat. OpeningDesign, a free Internet-based design tool, lets them talk and sketch together in real time. And the web application Podio gives everyone access to contacts,

calendars, financials, and marketing materials. "It has a Twitter-style feed, so whenever I enter new information, the others know," Wilson says. But how will clients perceive a virtual office? So far the architects are meeting clients at their own offices or at jobsites, though the firm also will use an office co-op close to public transit—space it could never afford to rent outright.

With a decentralized business, Wilson is researching cloud servers so builders can access BIM and AutoCAD files. That's necessary because Boiled Architecture uses an integrated project delivery contract in which the architect and general contractor are equal parties on the commercial tenant improvement and small health care projects it targets. The working relationship is reinforced when the architect and builder are on the same contract, Wilson says. "It's the fastest way to get contractors' feedback. They're thrilled to have documents that aren't riddled with errors, and they're not fighting with the owner to get paid for the extra work that entails."



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Some firms never lose the ethic of the small, scrappy startup. In 1999, BUILD principals Kevin Eckert and Andrew van Leeuwen founded their Seattle firm on the owner-builder concept, which means clients hire them to manage design and construction on projects ranging from single-family homes to mixed use. They have four employees, including one who runs a cabinetry shop. The partners “got tired of how expensive modern cabinetry is and saw an opportunity for doing it better and less expensively.

“Clients are less dreamy” than they were a couple of years ago, van Leeuwen says. “They’re interested in how much it costs and when it will be done, but still within the brackets of capital A architecture. We can charge less for design because we wear a lot of hats. We take care of everything from pricing to scheduling and finished photography”—and write a popular blog, too.

## starting a conversation

While technological innovations are changing the nature of work, they’re also quietly tweaking the image of the ivory-tower architect unilaterally handing down design edicts. The increased emphasis on online and interactive media, for exam-

ple, forces firms to define their identity in a language lay people can understand. Boston architect Katy Flammia, AIA, LEED AP, principal of THEREdesign, realized this recently when she rebranded her 15-year-old business.

“Quite a few firms here are started by academic types whose websites are so complicated you can’t get to what you want. You

*“when the architect and builder are on the same contract, it’s the fastest way to get contractors’ feedback.”*

—oscia wilson, aia, leed ap

start to think maybe this is what it’s like to work with them, too,” she says. “We wanted ours to show that we’re easy to talk to and not full of hype.”

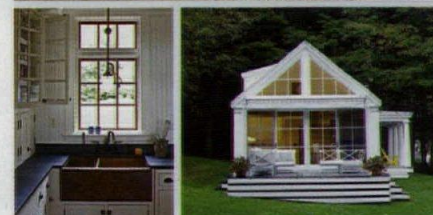
Instead of focusing on a public message, Flammia and her staff asked themselves a question they often pose to clients, and one every entrepreneur must inevitably answer: What do we care about? “The bell for me is that I’m able to affect a life, culture, or company in some way that improves the client’s

situation,” she says. “This approach helps us make sure the project has real significance and is not just the trendy thing this year.”

Throughout history, architects have adapted to change by acquiring new skills and attitudes, and this is one of those times. Several years ago, Fivecat Studio principal Mark R. LePage, AIA, LEED AP, took a 15-week Academy for Entrepreneurial Excellence course at Westchester Community College near his home in Westchester, N.Y. There he learned a system for closing sales.

LePage, who started the Entrepreneur Architect group on LinkedIn, also is a prolific social networker. In addition to Facebook and Twitter accounts, he writes two blogs: Living Well in Westchester targets potential clients; the other, Entrepreneur Architect, is a networking forum for architects. “People who weren’t really looking at branding and business solutions are becoming more interested now,” he says. “I think that’s why the LinkedIn group is so active.”

Job creators are needed in this economy: problem solvers who inspire while keeping a watchful eye on the bottom line, theirs and their clients’. “We’ve always been nuts and bolts kind of guys,” van Leeuwen says. “We wake up and put both feet on the ground, and we think that’s become more desirable to clients.” ra



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# *within the walls*

much of the new work these days lies within  
the well-worn envelopes of existing buildings.



Light washes into the apartment's center through an existing skylight and a sculptural stair opening to the second-floor roof deck.

## harlem hideaway

One of the satisfactions of architectural intervention is bringing new vibrancy to vestiges of the past. Not that there was much former glory inside this Dutch Revival townhouse in a landmarked area of Harlem. It had been turned into three apartments in the 1980s, part of a HUD program to encourage home ownership in that part of the city. When architect Sunil Bald first encountered the two-floor unit his client had purchased, the assets it did have were humble, and virtually hidden.

Even after a gut remodel eliminated some of the apartment's walls, the long, narrow floor plan posed a challenge: how to create flowing living spaces measuring just 14 and a half feet wide? Fortunately, neither separation nor privacy was important to the owner, a bachelor who'd come straight from a small English town. "He just liked the neighborhood but wanted a more downtown style of living," Bald says.

The redesign neatly addresses spatial and acoustical concerns. Built-in storage consoles line the party walls on each floor, making a clean sweep of clutter. Downstairs, sleek white kitchen cabinetry extends into the living area, where it drops to a low seating shelf with hidden drawers. The shelf is topped with white back-painted glass that folds vertically to cover the kitchen counter.

*continued on page 36*



The kitchen's glass countertop folds onto a low seating shelf. A drop-down movie screen disappears into the ceiling slot.



**project:** Harlem Duplex, New York City  
**architect:** studio SUMO, Long Island City, N.Y.

**general contractor:** Classic Restoration Corp., Yonkers, N.Y.

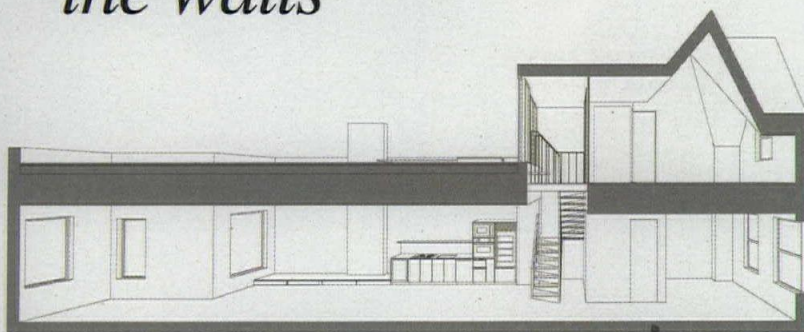
**project size:** 1,300 square feet plus a 600-square-foot roof deck

**construction cost:** \$250 per square foot

**photography:** Frank Oudeman



# within the walls



Light and views pass through the bedroom's transparent shower (above).

Bald knew that natural light would make a big difference to the interior quality. He swapped out the dining nook's two double-hung windows with clean-lined casements and customized another opening that frames a tree limb. The most dramatic gesture, though, is a white steel staircase replacing the old one in the apartment's center. The floating stair allows sunlight to wash down over both walls through cantilevered, wenge-topped treads and thin vertical railings. "We thought of it like a harp, where the stair stringers switch back on the same plane," Bald says.

Most of the light reaching the main floor comes through a new window wall leading out from the second floor onto the roof deck. At the top of the stairs is an open bridge between the bedroom loft and the "junky New York rooftop," now covered in 4-foot-by-4-foot ipe pallets and outfitted with a conversation pit and built-in bench. Across the way, the bedroom reads as a minimalist temple, albeit one in which 54 metal racks hold the owner's shoe collection.

Bald says the redesign grants his client's wish for a dwelling where even the private zones could be on public display. "The more everyday aspects of life were relegated to those linear consoles. The idea was, on one hand, to create an open environment with varied spaces he could experience by himself, and on another, to create something staged that visitors could enjoy."—c.w.

Ipe pallets, cut around skylights, create conversation space on the roof. The apartment occupies the building's top one-and-a-half stories.





Removing a dropped ceiling revealed the underside of the steeply pitched roofline, and near its peak, a skylight. The left storage bank holds a colorful sneaker collection.





*within  
the walls*



3six0 Architecture removed layers of carpet and acoustical ceiling tiles to convert this factory building into a loft with two separate living areas. The husband's space is highlighted by angular details that include wood, MDF, and steel.

## separate but equal

**t**he benefit of old buildings is they're often blessed with desirable characteristics and good architectural bones that make them ideal for open-plan living. Perhaps that's why an artist who specializes in ceramics and light-reflective installations and her husband bought this loft space in a 1900s factory building located in Providence, R.I.'s jewelry district. They asked local firm 3six0 Architecture to tailor the loft into two distinct spaces.

"We were asked to convert half of the loft into her live/work space," says project architect Olga Mesa, LEED AP. The husband was slated to remodel the other half of the loft to his liking, Mesa says, but in the end the couple decided to have the firm execute the build-out.

Measuring 4,000 square feet, the space had an odd trapezoidal shape with awkwardly located columns that thwarted straightforward divisions of the space. Because the wife likes light-filled, serene environments and the husband likes raw materials, the design team developed two architectural characters: "cloud," which has soft rounded corners and appears seamless, white or translucent; and "stack," which has a more constructed look with wood or MDF with steel details.

"We organized the two loft spaces by mingling cloud and stack into walls and storage spaces," Mesa says. "Each character is grounded accordingly, stack on his side and cloud on hers, but one is never in isolation from the other."

Casework and detailing continued the conversation between the two spaces, Mesa says. The architects conceived the husband's area as "stacked volumes slowly spreading and trans-

*continued on page 40*





**project:** Double Loft, Providence, R.I.  
**architect:** 3six0 Architecture, Providence  
**general contractor:** Case Construction Co., East Providence, R.I.  
**project size:** 4,000 square feet  
**construction cost:** \$125 per square foot  
**photography:** John Horner Photography

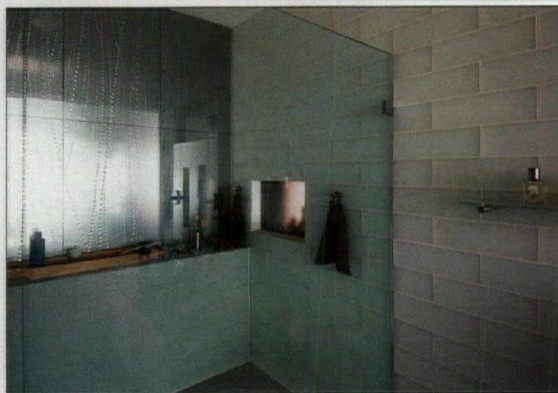
The husband's bathroom continues the angular lines as the space features a honed granite vanity and tub surround, dark gray slate floors, and frosted glass wall tiles.







The wife's live/work space is more light-filled and airy, marked by soft, rounded corners, translucent panels, frosted glass tiles, and soapstone. Blending old with new, the architects salvaged the loft's old flooring.



forming from closed cabinets to open shelves," while on the wife's side casework continues with glass doors and a more monolithic expression.

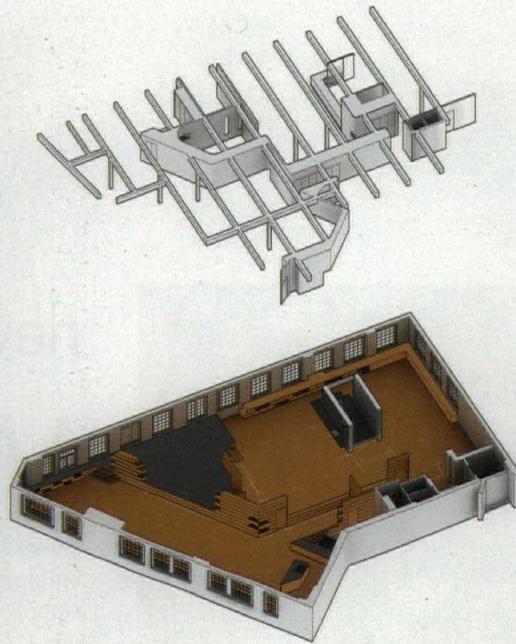
The design team retained whatever valuable materials it could, restoring the wood floors and cleaning the 11-foot-tall load-bearing brick walls. It also kept the layout for the plumbing and mechanical chases but updated the systems with energy-efficient replacements.

"We applied energy-efficient window treatments to the large original windows and salvaged the few wood floor boards that had to be replaced, from which furniture commissioned by the clients was built," Mesa explains.

Materials play a key role in open loft spaces, and this project was no exception. Used to reinforce the spatial strategy, materials include MDF panels, blackened steel, dark gray slate tiles, and honed black granite in the husband's space, while on the wife's side the designers used gypsum board, Lumasite resin panels, frosted glass, white tiles, Douglas fir, basaltina stone, and soapstone. Yin and yang, blending effortlessly together.—*n.f.m.*



## *within the walls*

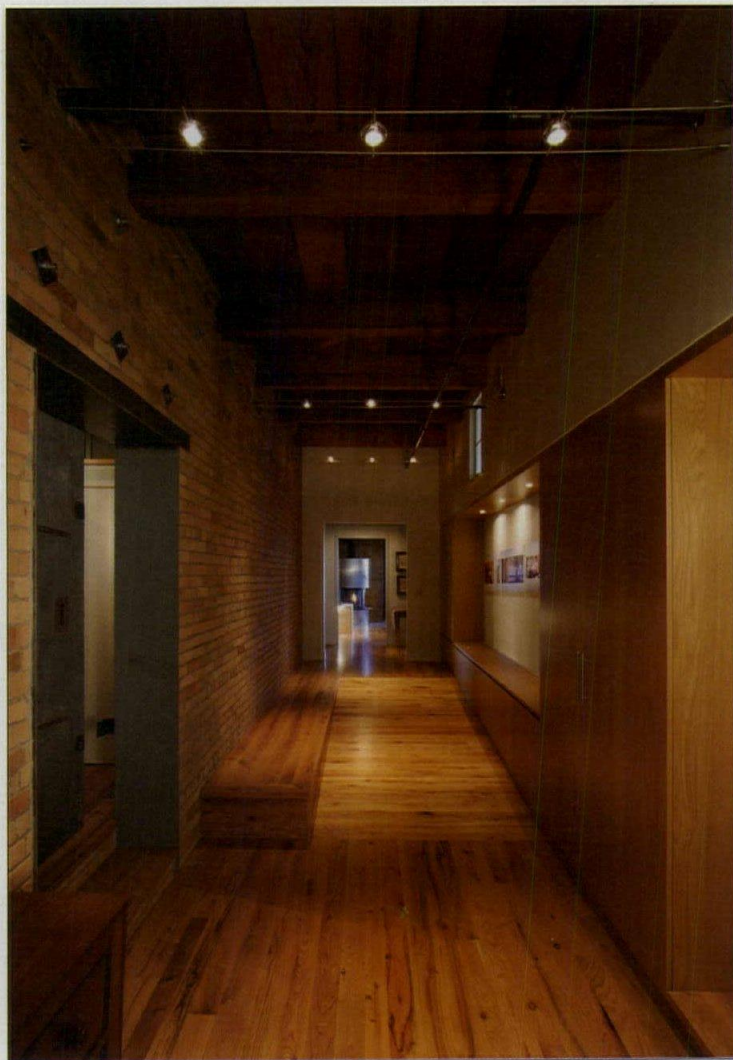


The raw loft space was marked by odd angles and columns, which made uninterrupted straight lines nearly impossible. The firm found a workaround with custom built-in millwork and storage units.

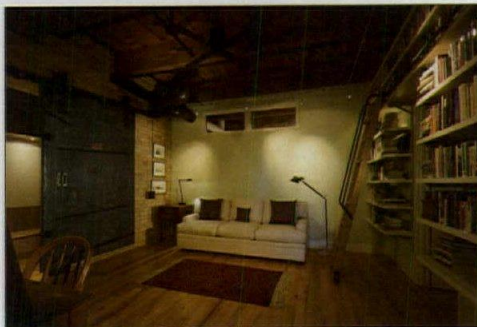




# within the walls



A ramped entry hall reconciles this apartment's raised floor with the floor elevation at the building's public areas. The study's high windows borrow light from an atrium outside the unit (right).



## new heights

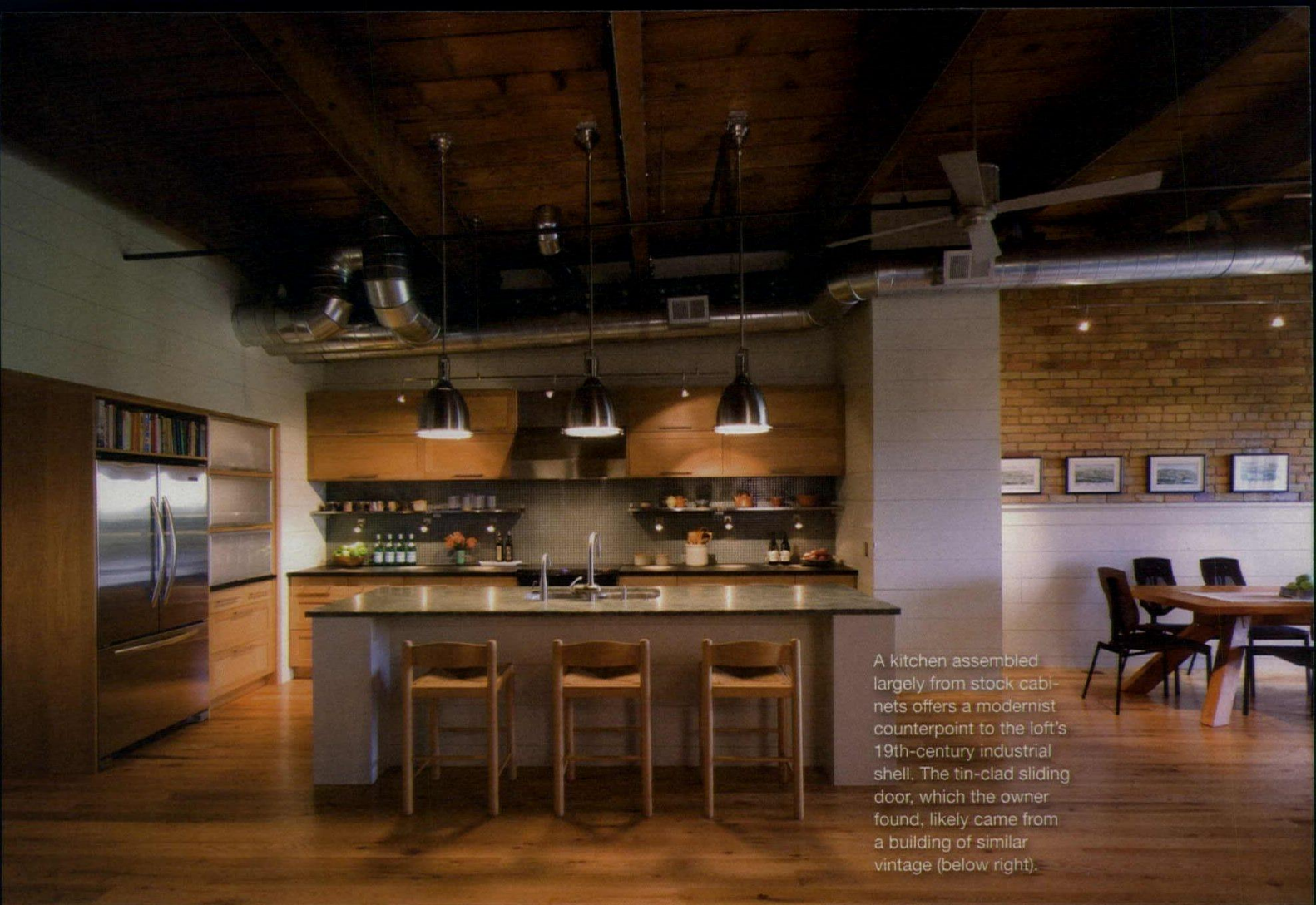
While only recently completed, this loft residence in Minneapolis' historic Warehouse District was a long time in the making. It occupies the top floor of a 19th-century industrial building that stands within view of the Mississippi River. "Originally," notes architect Christine L. Albertsson, AIA, "the building probably got its power from the river." Albertsson's client first bought a unit here in the mid-1980s, later purchasing one next door as a rental property. "It was one of the first buildings in Minneapolis to be converted to lofts," Albertsson says, "so she was kind of a pioneer." Nearing retirement, she hired Albertsson's firm to combine the two units and add a rooftop sunroom.

"She said, 'OK, you're hired. Just do your thing,'" Albertsson remembers. But one seemingly straightforward request—for hardwood floors throughout—gave the architect a moment's pause. "That's challenging in a condo situation," she notes. "There have been lawsuits over noise." Albertsson's solution—raising the finish floor by about a foot—not only answered that concern but also reduced the stair run to the new upper level and, by creating a continuous utility chase, freed her to relocate the kitchen and bathrooms. A ramp at the entry hall reconciles the new floor elevation and that of the hallway outside the unit's front door.

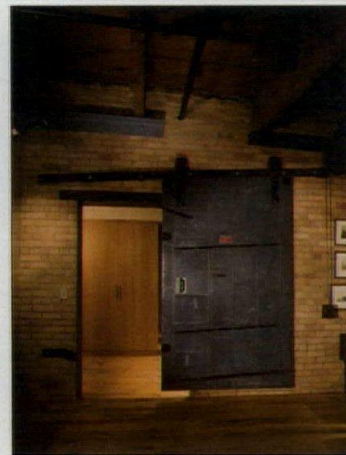
Inside, the loft highlights the industrial character of the original building. "It's built out of this beautiful light yellow brick," says Albertsson, who exposed both the brick walls and the Douglas fir-timber roof structure. Black steel plates frame new doorways in the former party wall and reinforce the beams that support the rooftop pavilion; an old tin-clad fire door fills the opening between the entry and the study/guest room. Factory-style stainless steel light-

*continued on page 44*





A kitchen assembled largely from stock cabinets offers a modernist counterpoint to the loft's 19th-century industrial shell. The tin-clad sliding door, which the owner found, likely came from a building of similar vintage (below right).



**project:** Minneapolis Loft, Minneapolis  
**architect:** Albertsson Hansen Architecture, Minneapolis  
**general contractor:** Choice Wood Co., St. Louis Park, Minn.  
**project size:** 2,255 square feet  
**construction cost:** Withheld  
**photography:** Dana Wheelock





The headboard in the master bedroom conceals a desk. The sunroom's glazed overhead door opens onto a private rooftop deck (above).

ing fixtures pick up the industrial-chic theme of the exposed metal ductwork and chimney flues. Modernist interventions—including the kitchen, a wall of white oak millwork in the entry hall, and panels of horizontal-board wainscot at the living room walls—leave no confusion about where the old ends and the new begins.

The sunroom, in contrast, is all new. A southwest-facing clerestory lights the private retreat and generates a chimney effect that drives passive cooling for the entire loft (an electric dumbwaiter makes serving and clearing rooftop meals a relatively passive process as well). A glass-paned overhead door with an exterior rolling screen opens onto the roof deck, where a steel-framed, polycarbonate-topped butterfly roof creates a sheltered seating area. Toward the northeast, the deck steps up to offer a view over the parapet wall to the river.—*b.d.s.*



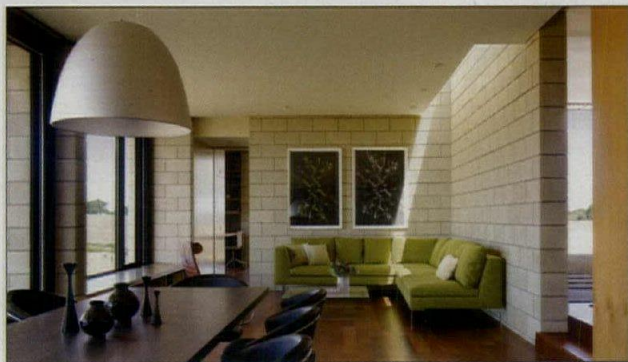
## *within the walls*



The sunroom and roof deck—the only new square footage in the project—enjoy views of the nearby Mississippi River. The master bath stresses simplicity, with a continuous marble sink counter/tub deck and subway tile for the wainscot and shower (below).







Photos: Matthew Millman

Aidlin Darling's work consistently integrates an environmental approach. At the Paso Robles Residence, deep overhangs, outdoor rooms, strategically placed windows, and thick masonry walls provide natural temperature control. Photovoltaics and a solar hot-water system also help save energy and make the most of the home's location in the arid Central Coast wine region of California.





# senses & sensibility

work by aidlin darling design appeals to both the eye and the soul.

by meghan drueding

In 1996, Joshua Aidlin inherited a set of woodworking tools and machinery from his father, sculptor Jerome Aidlin. As a young San Francisco-based architect, Joshua would spend his evenings and weekends using the tools to craft furniture, often accompanied by his friend and fellow architect David Darling. "We'd make furniture in the shop and really get our hands dirty," recalls Darling, AIA. In the process, they learned to think about design as a sensory art, one in which the way something feels, smells, and sounds means just as much as its visual impact.

At the time the two architects, who were born six days apart and met at the University of Cincinnati, both held day jobs at local firms. When they decided to start Aidlin Darling Design in San Francisco at the tender age of 32, their furniture pieces helped them win architectural commissions, as well as at least one employee. "One of the things that drew me here initially was that those early pieces showed the craft of making, and an exquisite materiality and atten-

tion to detail," says Peter Larsen, now a principal at the firm. "It showed a level of design rigor that was really valuable."

Aidlin, AIA, and Darling don't typically fabricate furniture or details themselves anymore; instead, they devote their time to designing. Their 16-person office does have a wood shop, mostly for models and mock-ups. "We have great relationships with fabricators who can make things faster and better than we could," Aidlin says. "There's a happy creative divide between maker and designer. Everyone's pushing each other, and it ends up being really exciting."

## practical poetry

Houses have long made up the backbone of Aidlin Darling's portfolio, and over the past few years the firm also has designed award-winning restaurants and other public projects. It's currently working on two wineries, a bookstore, an adaptive reuse arts center, and a Stanford University chapel and meditation space centered on the work of the late

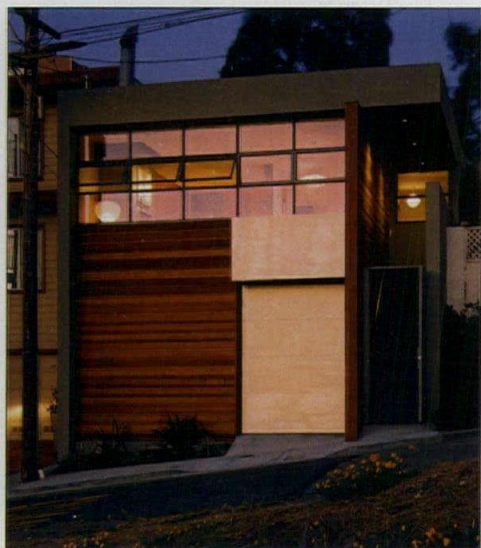
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John Lee Pictures

The brain trust behind the San Francisco firm Aidlin Darling Design (from left): partner Joshua Aidlin, AIA, partner David Darling, AIA, and principal Peter Larsen.





Photos: John Sutton

Along with rural and suburban houses, the firm's portfolio includes urban projects like the Potrero Hill Residence, Joshua Aidlin's own house in San Francisco. The 1,650-square-foot remodel opens up the original 1950s developer box with a mix of glass and wood.

painter Nathan Oliveira—along with a handful of custom homes.

No matter what the project type, involving the contractor, subs, and fabricators in the design process is a crucial Aidlin Darling maneuver. Dan Pelsinger of Matarozzi Pelsinger Builders, a frequent collaborator, remembers being surprised by the firm's willingness to solicit feedback from him the first time they worked together on a house. "They asked us what we thought of the details," he remembers. He pointed out some unnecessary flashing, and it was removed from the plans. "I didn't think guys who were so design-oriented would welcome that kind of input from a builder."

Certainly Aidlin, Darling, Larsen, and their staff are obsessed with design. But they've also got a practical streak that keeps them grounded. They're constantly searching for solutions that serve multiple purposes. For example, take the perforated zinc façade of 355 11th Street, a LEED-

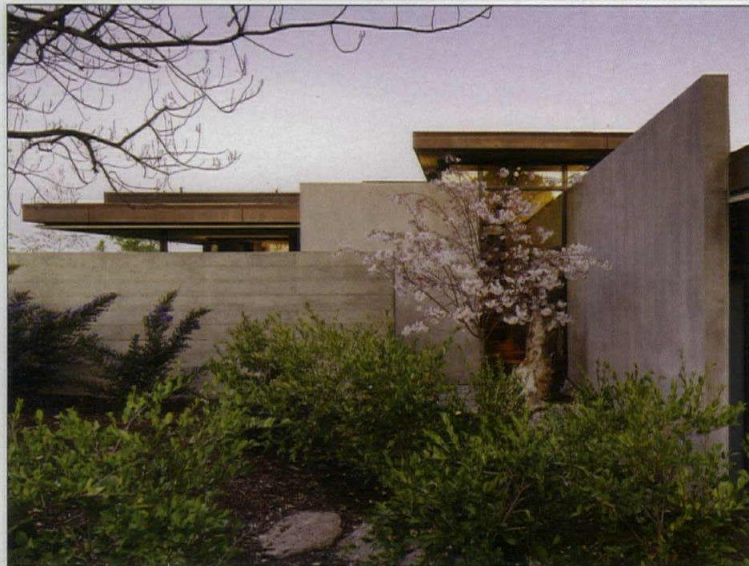
Gold remodel containing Matarozzi Pelsinger's office, another architect's studio, and the restaurant Bar Agricole. "It's not just whimsical," Aidlin says, and he's right: the façade serves as a conductor of light and fresh air, a shading and passive cooling device, a reference to the original metal cladding, and a stylish cover for inexpensive aluminum windows.

### site reading

Along with engaging outside collaborators in the design process, Aidlin and Darling have made it a point to reach out within the firm and give their staff members significant amounts of responsibility. "I was blessed with great mentorship at the firms I worked for," says Darling, citing Richard Brayton, FAIA, and Stanley Saitowitz. "It made me want to pass that on." Project architects at Aidlin Darling are intimately involved in both the creative and technical sides of a job. "Working there was a pretty tremendous experience," says



The Courtyard Residence demonstrates the firm's focus on experiential richness. A series of pavilions enclose a walled courtyard, choreographing a diverse assortment of views both distant and immediate. The project deftly balances privacy and a firm sense of place.



Photos: Matthew Millman



Michael Hennessey, AIA, LEED AP, a former employee who now has his own firm. "They're just all-around really good architects, and they instill that culture in their office."

Aidlin Darling's culture also entails a rigorous effort to understand the site and the client, which typically translates into a sustainable approach. "We put a high value on site specificity, and sustainability is almost a natural outcome of that," Larsen says. On its more bucolic sites a project team will even camp out overnight, to gain a feeling for the property's levels of natural light, its temperature changes, and the sound of the wind or ocean at different times of day.

The firm always returns to the idea of generating a holistic sensory experience, in which aural, olfactory, tactile, and visual effects play equally important roles. "It's not an additive process, but an extractive one," Aidlin explains. "You're extracting the solution that's always been there." ra

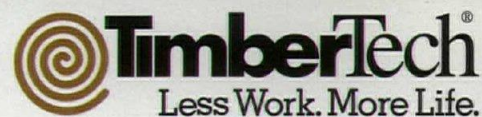


Photos: Matthew Millman

Commercial and institutional projects have become a mainstay of the firm's portfolio, along with residential work. The San Francisco restaurant Bar Agricole, part of the 355 11th Street mixed-use renovation, blends reclaimed oak with steel and concrete for a rustic modern effect.



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# wheelhouse

a green mixed-use building serves cycle commuters.

located on a major bicycle thoroughfare in Portland, Ore., the ecoFLATS project taps a rental market that was hiding in plain sight. "Three thousand bikes are going by every day," says Jean-Pierre Veillet, design principal at Portland-based Siteworks Design | Build, who aimed the project at bicycle commuters—the "20-to-40 demographic

of hip Portland people dedicated to a live-simple lifestyle." Working backward from market-rate rents, Veillet's firm produced what he refers to as "a resourceful building, a highly efficient infill building that's transportation oriented."

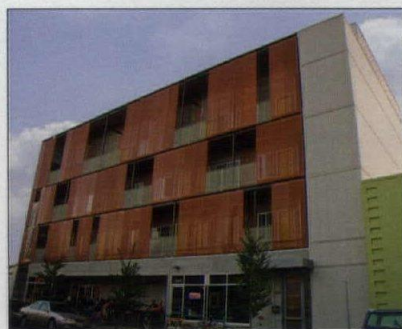
A cycling-oriented brew pub occupies one of two commercial spaces at street level, where the residents' entry vestibule provides secure bike storage. The building's 18 units open onto a three-story loggia, promoting natural ventilation and daylighting. Passive cooling freed budget dollars for roof-mounted photovoltaic and solar thermal panels, which, along with LED lighting, reflective roofing, and an efficient hydronic heating system, put net-zero energy use within reach. (A monitor in the vestibule delivers a real-time readout of how much energy each unit is consuming.) And while there's no off-street parking, Veillet points out that there are "two Zipcars out front for weekends or going to the mountains."

Good green vibes notwithstanding, securing bank financing also required solid income projections, Veillet explains.

"If we wanted to do a solar array, we had to save elsewhere. It had to make business sense; that's how we sold it to the bank." Selling the concept to the public, however, was easy. "Pro cyclists, bike builders, bike commuters—they just dove on it," Veillet notes. And with Nike and other outdoors-oriented employers located nearby, "the people are here," he says. "We could do this again and again and again."—*bruce d. snider*

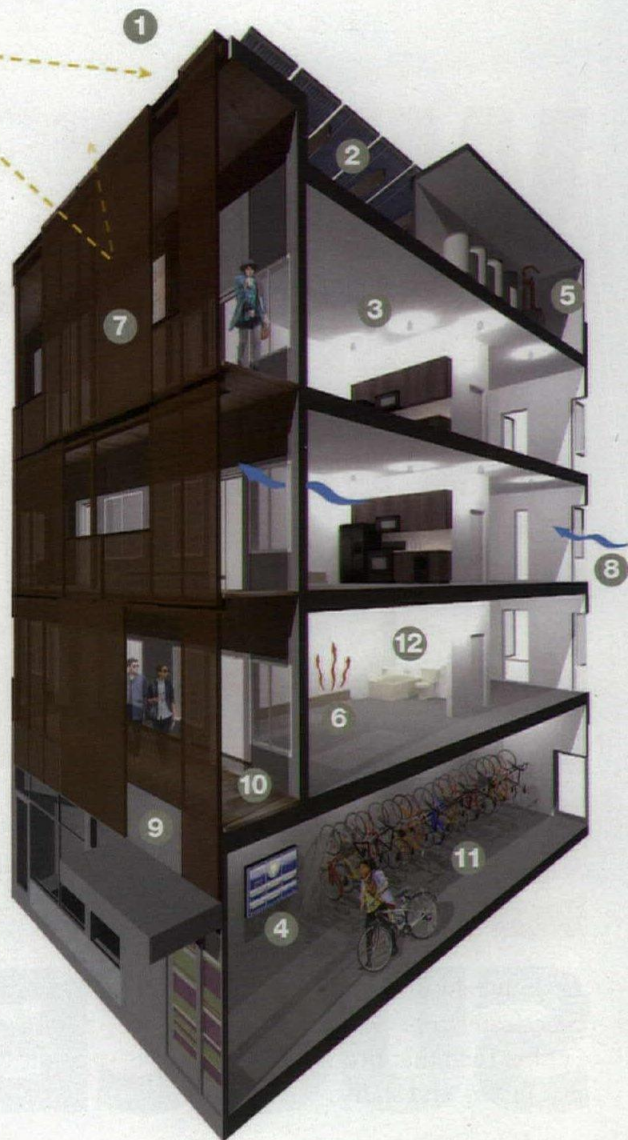
- 1 20 kW photovoltaic array
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- 12 Low-flow plumbing

Energy-efficient traction elevator (not shown)



Photos: Ben C. Grey; Rendering: Courtesy Siteworks

Inspired by Portland's large bicycle-commuting population, ecoFLATS offers a centralized location, convenient bike storage, a host of green amenities—and no car parking. After all, who needs it?





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# triple threat

highly insulating windows are effective, but are they worth the price?

by nigel f. maynard

**T**raditionally, windows have been the weakest energy efficiency link in a building envelope, and early single-pane openings were the most egregious offenders. According to [www.efficientwindows.org](http://www.efficientwindows.org), single-glazed windows with clear glass allow “the highest transfer of energy (i.e., heat loss or heat gain depending on local climate conditions) while permitting the highest daylight transmission.” No wonder such windows are practically extinct in residential architecture.

The standard today is a double-glazed low-E window with insulation between the panes. A vast improvement over a single pane, insulated windows are better at preventing heat loss and heat gain, keeping the internal temperature of a house relatively stable. Depending on your region of the country, such a window—if it’s Energy Star rated—has a U-factor (the rate of heat transfer and an indication of how well the window insulates) of 0.30 to 0.60 and a solar heat gain coefficient (which indicates how well the window blocks heat caused by sunlight) of 0.27 to 0.40. Still, the best double-pane

window is inadequate compared to the exterior wall.

In recent years, a new breed of windows—the so-called ultra high-efficiency products—has been gaining traction and things have gotten quite interesting. The windows are usually twice as efficient as double-pane units and some narrow the performance gap between the opening and the wall on which they’re installed.

Earlier this year, Ply Gem Windows in Cary, N.C., unveiled the R-5 Series, the company’s version of a high-efficiency window. “Windows with an R-value of 5 are some of the most energy-efficient windows commercially available in the U.S.,” the company said at the time of the launch. “As a comparison, Energy Star-rated windows typically hold an R-value of 3. By increasing the R-value from 3 to 5, average heat loss through the window is reduced by 30 percent to 40 percent.” Designed for new construction and replacement projects, the windows can achieve a U-factor as low as 0.15.

Ply Gem isn’t the only company producing ultra high-efficiency products. Other manufacturers include Bayport, Minn.-based Andersen Windows and Doors; Klamath Falls,

Ore.-based Jeld-Wen; Gorell Enterprises in Indiana, Pa.; MI Doors and Windows in Gratz, Pa.; Sunnyvale, Calif.-based Serious Energy; and Marvin Windows and Doors in Warroad, Minn., among many others.

## technology hurdles

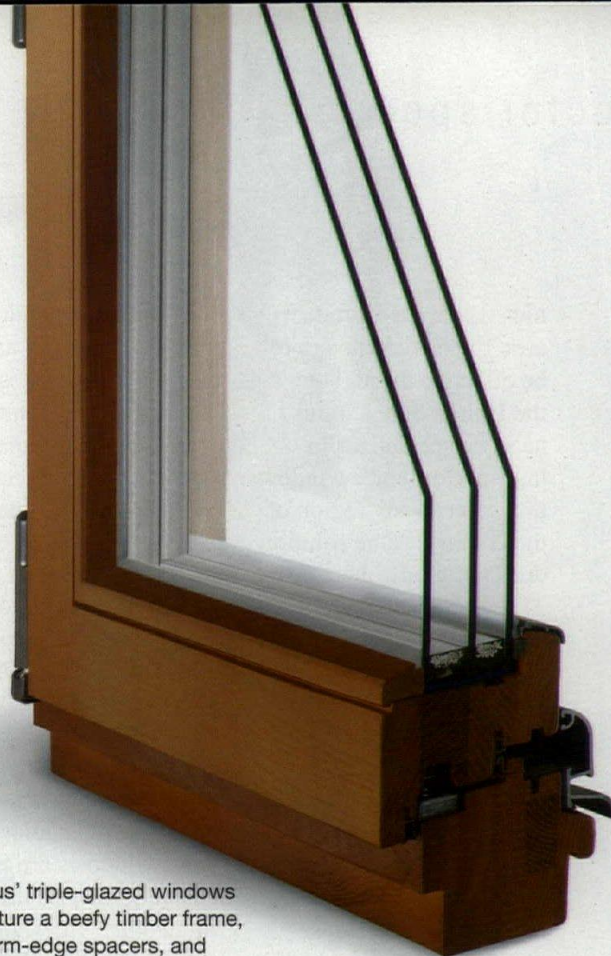
Some critics say R-5 windows are still behind the times, especially because the technology is available to produce a window with a much higher performance rating. Serious Energy, for example, has taken the industry to task for not making more far-reaching advancements in energy performance and for being content with traditional low-E products. “Dual-pane windows were invented

back in 1865. So in 1870, they were truly best of class,” Serious Energy’s president and CEO Kevin Surace has said publicly. “But I am thinking, 140 years later, and we call that energy efficient?”

Surace says all windows should perform no lower than R-5, but he believes R-7 should (and will) be the standard. The company, for its part, produces some of the highest-performing products on the market, including fiberglass and vinyl products that range anywhere from R-5.9 to R-11.1.

R-5 windows are the lowest-performing product that Intus Windows offers. Managing director Aurimas Sabulis says the problem with most window compa-

*continued on page 54*

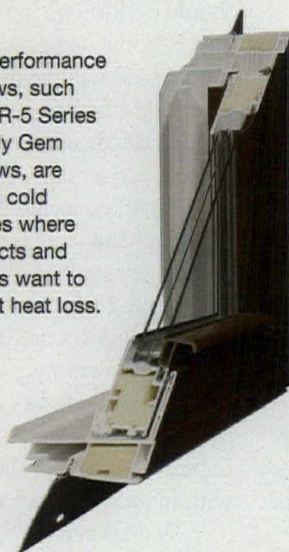




nies is that their products aren't versatile enough to be effective throughout the United States. Intus, he says, specializes in high-performance windows that cater to any region of the country. "One solution does not fit all," he notes. "The U.S. has seven different climate zones."

Intus, a Lithuania-based manufacturer that recently set up a U.S. division in Washington, D.C., offers all-wood and aluminum-clad wood windows with R-values up to about 10. The company also manufactures Passive House-certified products, which is why students from Parsons The New School for Design; the Milano School of International Affairs, Management and Urban Policy at The New School; and the Stevens Institute of Technology selected the windows for their Empowerhouse project, an entry in the 2011 Solar Decathlon.

High-performance windows, such as the R-5 Series from Ply Gem Windows, are ideal in cold climates where architects and builders want to prevent heat loss.



"The Intus windows give us an overall annual energy gain," says Laura Briggs, faculty lead and chairwoman of sustainable architecture at Parsons. "Our team carefully analyzed the size and placement of the windows in order to take full advantage of solar gain and daylighting to improve comfort and meet Passive House standards." Briggs adds that the right sizing of the windows also was an economic choice. "The Intus windows are beautiful wood frames that are meticulously designed, specifically to reduce thermal bridging by having few conductive breaks in the frame," she explains. "They prevent air infiltration due to the fully gasketed sashes and the triple panel gives us the U-values we wanted to attain."

The DOE states that there is no specific definition for "highly insulating" windows, but the agency says the term usually refers to windows with a U-factor of around 0.2 or less for fixed units (venting units must meet 0.22). "Typically these are triple-pane windows with advanced features such as gas fills, suspended films, advanced spacers, and low-E coatings," according to the DOE. "A U-factor measures a window's insulating abilities; the lower the U-factor, the less heat loss through the window." The

windows' good U-value ratings make them ideal for cold climates when you want better insulation and resistance to heat flow, but some architects also use the products in warm climates.

Architect Eric Lewis, AIA, LEED AP, used the windows on a Baltimore row house when he wanted to maintain views with large glass openings and high performance. "Because of the orientation of [the north side of the home], we used triple-insulated windows so we would still get our R-value and plenty of views and openness," says Lewis, a senior associate at Alexander Design Studio in Ellicott City, Md.

### pricey endeavor

Despite the rave reviews from architects and recommendations from the DOE, ultra high-efficiency windows do have some drawbacks. Because many high-efficiency products use triple-pane construction, products can be thicker and heavier than traditional units so you'll have to resolve your window details carefully. But cost might be the most significant obstacle: products are more expensive to produce and, as a result, costly to buy. Intus Windows' Sabulis says his company, at least, has solved that problem.

"We have figured out how to do triple-pane windows for the lowest possible cost," he says.



Part of the DOE's High Performance Windows Volume Purchase Program, Andersen offers 400 Series tilt-wash double-hung units that meet the strict 0.22 U-factor requirements.

Without giving away any secrets, Intus claims it offers products at 20 percent to 30 percent less than other manufacturers, which means a typical 4-foot-by-2-foot window will cost roughly \$300 to \$400.

Still, high-efficiency windows are expensive—costing anywhere from \$70 per square foot and up to \$150 per square foot for some brands—which is the main reason the DOE launched the High Performance Windows Volume Purchase Program. "The goal of the program is to expand the market for highly insulating windows and low-E storm windows by reducing market barriers and offering windows products at attractive prices, thus making highly insulating windows more affordable," the agency says. ra





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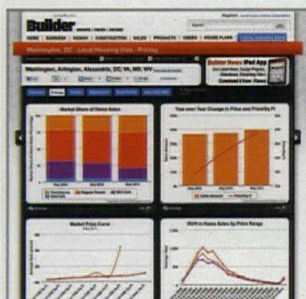


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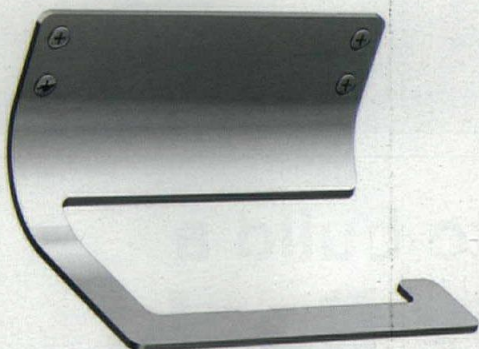
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by nigel f. maynard

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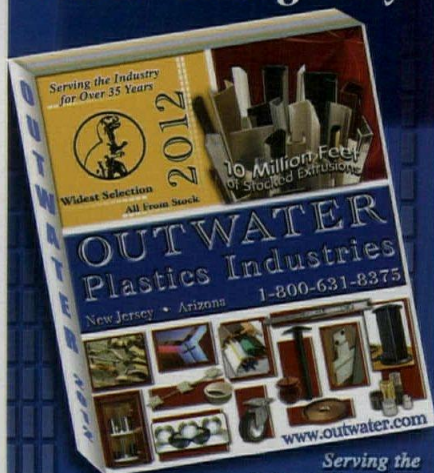
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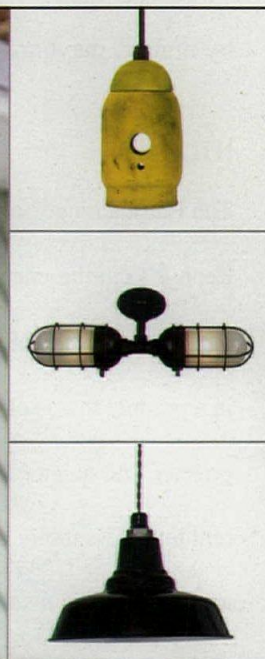
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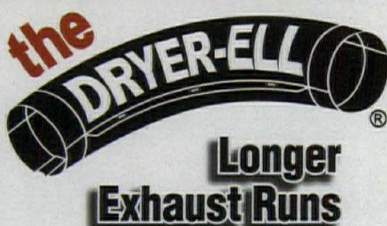
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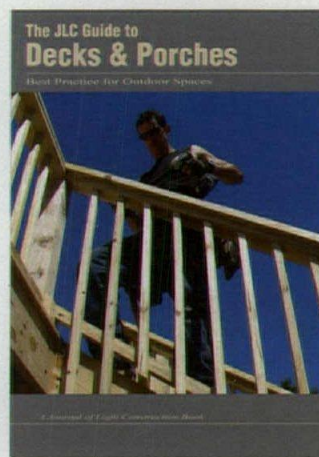


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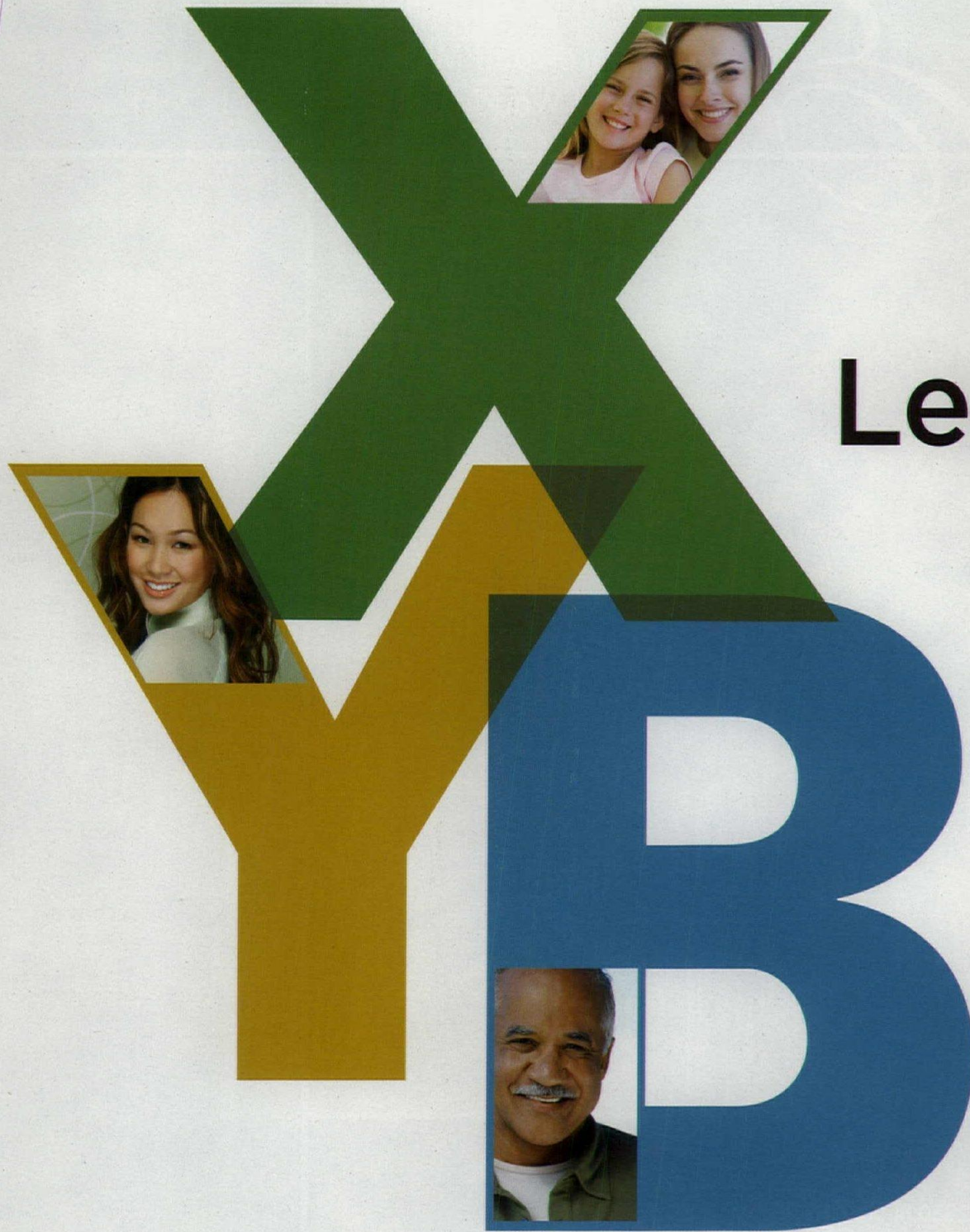
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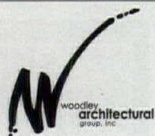




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When the leaders of the San Francisco firm BAR Architects went looking for a new office space, they couldn't believe their luck. They happened upon a two-story 1920s warehouse building with lots of light and character, and it had already gone through a core and shell renovation. "We fell in love with this space," says principal Paula Krugmeier, AIA, LEED AP.

BAR's 83 employees work in an open layout, with staffers divided up according to project teams. The 18- and 14-foot-tall ceilings allow for plenty of light and airflow, while the use of reclaimed materials such as Douglas fir ceiling timbers and walnut floors helped the project achieve LEED certification.



Photos: Doug Dun/BAR Architects



The building's location, in the city's bustling South of Market area and close to several train and bus stops, holds just as much importance for BAR as its physical attributes do. "The neighborhood was a key element in our search," Krugmeier says. "We wanted to be in a place where we had excellent access to public transportation."—*meghan drueding*



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*"Wolf ranked Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Ranges, Cooktops, and Ovens, Two Years in a Row, Tied in 2011."*



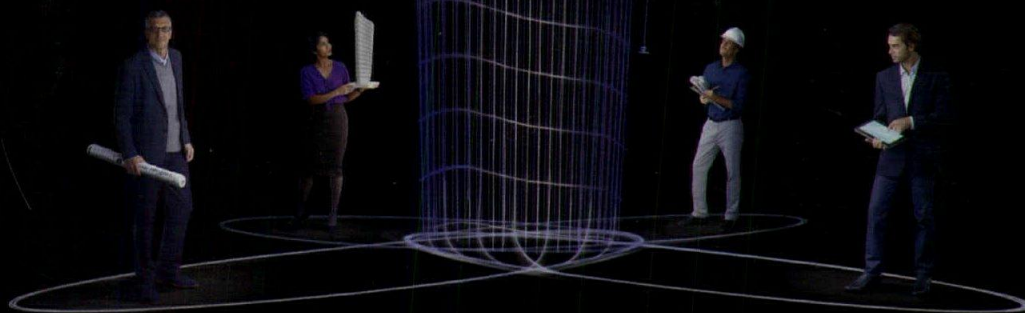
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Wolf received the highest numerical score for ranges, cooktops, and ovens in a tie, and Sub-Zero received the highest numerical score for refrigerators in the proprietary J.D. Power and Associates 2011 Kitchen Appliance Study<sup>SM</sup> Study based on 13,492 total responses, and measures opinions of consumers who purchased their appliance from a retail store or their new-home builder during the previous 24 months. Proprietary study results are based on experiences and perceptions of consumers surveyed in March-April 2011. Your experiences may vary. Visit [jdpower.com](http://jdpower.com).



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