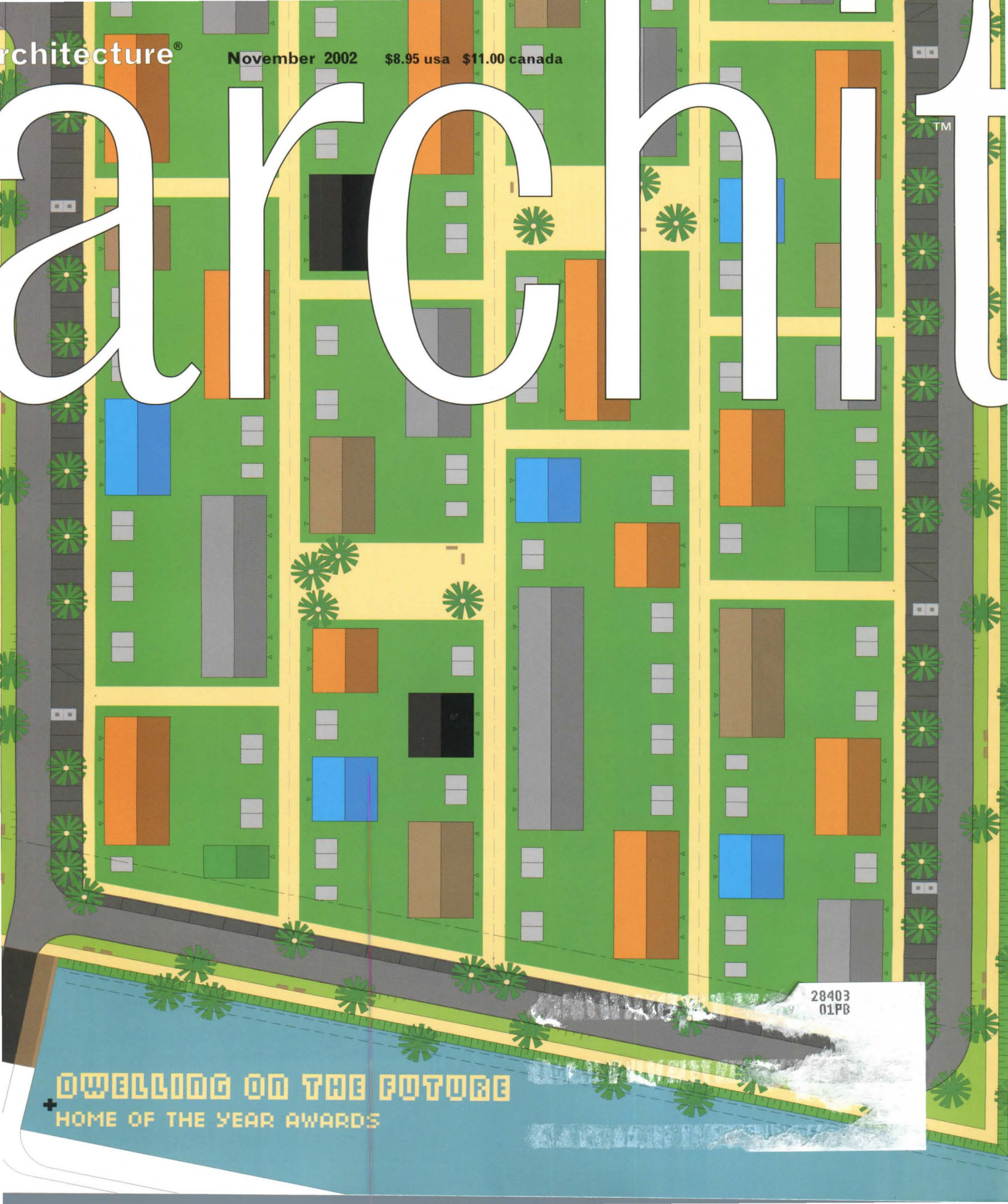


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HOME OF THE YEAR AWARDS



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## HOUSE PROUD

BY C.C. SULLIVAN

Welcome to a special issue of *Architecture*, featuring our first annual Home of the Year awards. Working with *Metropolitan Home* magazine and a jury of five brilliant minds, we've isolated the essence of today's best dwellings. The four winning projects (starting on page 49) not only suggest ways to organize and express shelter, but also ideas about domestic life at the turn of the millennium. (If you missed the opportunity to submit a house, look for our 2003 program; the deadline is next July 15.)

As with every juried exercise, there was much to learn. Our jurors remarked on the amount of derivative modernist works, which only occasionally rose above their putative reference points. Regional riffs on modernist themes were less common, but their vernacular underpinnings seemed to give the resulting houses a firmer sense of place. Last, our panel noted that much of our homebuilding industry is still mired in watered-down historical formula, most of which does not work at all.

If anything can be observed of today's houses, however, we can confidently say that they're *big*. U.S. consumers of housing, from Joe Six-pack to the connoisseur, are asking for more square feet and more headroom. This is nothing new, of course; homebuilder data show that floor plans have been growing steadily for three decades (see our September issue, page 22). Americans, it seems, are desperate to purchase more than they need.

This unique compulsion is a central tenet of the luxury home market, says Pam Danziger, author of the aptly titled book *Why People Buy Things They Don't Need* (Paramount, 2002). "Yesterday's luxuries become tomorrow's necessities," she explains. "As a result, luxury marketers must continually reinvent themselves, giving consumers more quality, exclusivity, and specialness." Yet, as Lawrence W. Cheek points out in this issue (Protest, page 33), buyers of luxury tract housing pay a pretty penny for surprisingly banal homes. In our middle-class suburbs, we have a heavenward spiral of sheer size, but little in the way of spatial inventiveness or visual delight.

To house a space-hungry society winding blissfully out of control, the wise architect must intervene—not to dose out the meds, but to point us in a workable direction. Many Home of the Year entries showed how their designers—for reasons ranging from budget to environmental concerns (and in some cases, we presume, to avoid personal embarrassment)—encouraged their patrons to build houses far humbler than originally envisaged. One of our jurors related a similar tale: "The client wanted an 11,000-square-foot monster that would have destroyed the character of the neighborhood. We showed them how to get every bit as much house with 7,500 square feet."

While this sort of activism is powerful, it reaches a limited audience. To focus on global impact, we've paired our coverage of the year's best houses with other ideas along the residential continuum. In

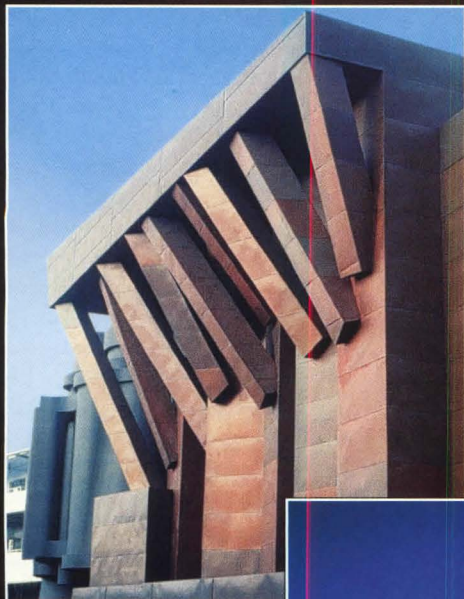
the Netherlands, for example, new ideas in high-density multifamily housing treat each household uniquely, serving the developers' needs for differentiation in a market largely controlled by the government ("Double Dutch," page 70). On a much larger scale, millions of refugees and displaced persons around the world may benefit from new designs that can be literally lifesaving, as Cathy Lang Ho's report on emergency shelter demonstrates ("Safe Haven," page 80).

Architects are also refining what sustainability means for residences. In Finland, for example, a traditional homebuilder now offers a prefab dwelling that has high-impact style and low-impact environmental effect ("Light Touch," page 76). On the near horizon are more exotic approaches that make economic sense, including houses that "harvest" rainwater or, as shown in Bradford McKee's report ("Science Fair," page 35), working prototypes that cheaply generate electricity.

"Universal design" is yet another concept that matches moral imperative with marketability. Houses and apartments devised with accessibility for disabled occupants are more valuable over time: We can grow old in our own home, more people can comfortably visit, and we can sell or rent to a broader population. And with plans unveiled in Chicago for new universal public housing units costing less than \$120 per square foot ("Houses within Reach," page 18), it's hard to argue that these don't make social and economic sense for the affordable housing market. It's just another example of why well-designed shelter is the most humane and uplifting shelter. ■



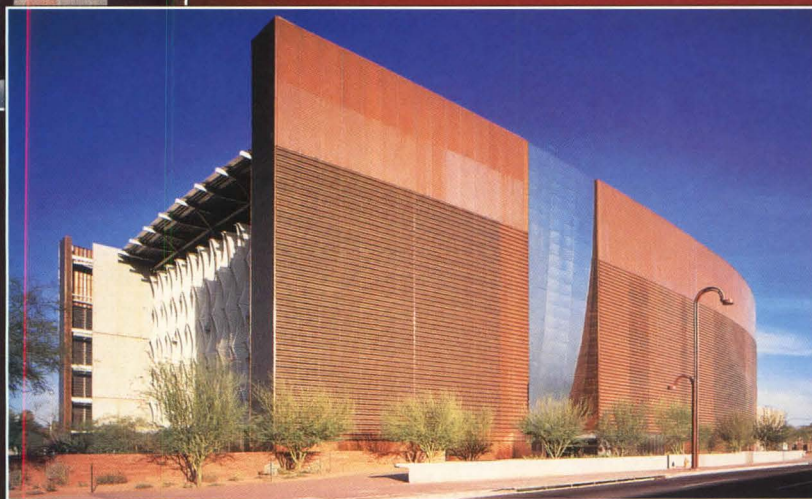
# Designing with copper?



Omnicom Group, Venice, Calif.  
Frank O. Gehry & Associates



Ceridian Corporation, Bloomington, Minn.  
Hammel Green and Abrahamson, Inc.



Phoenix Central Library, Phoenix, Ariz.  
bruderDVLarchitects

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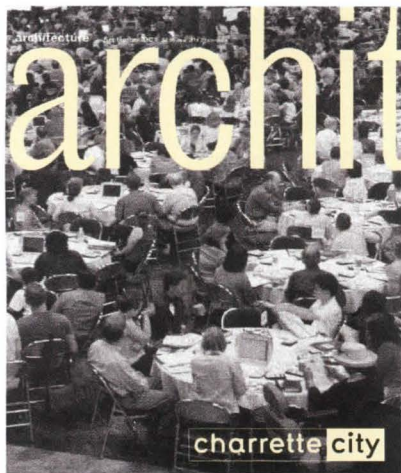
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## AFRICAN-AMERICAN IDEAL

Regarding the editorial "An African-American Legacy" (September 2002, page 15), you got it right: What's really needed is depth of connection with the black experience. But it must come from 400 years of an entire culture's records, not from an individual prejudged to have special insight or needing a symbolic big break. Black architects that I know would reject the idea that the quality of their work is a product of their skin.

Raymond Heinrich  
Madison, New Jersey

Allowing only African-American architects to participate in a design competition for a national museum of African-American history would do little to promote excellence in design, and much to perpetuate the us-and-them approach to race relations that has plagued American society. A more productive arrangement would be to open the competition to all, and let the African-American community select the jury.

Matt Cohen  
Vancouver, British Columbia

## MEMORIALIZING WAR?

I don't think the Gigon/Guyot project (September 2002, page 78) represents or respects anything remotely close to the concept of war or a 9 A.D. Teutonic/Roman

battlefield. The entire project had as much substance as standing in a cornfield and pondering the meaning of dirt.

Robert A. Berquist  
Duluth, Minnesota

## WASTED MATERIALS

Your article on Carol Ross Barney (September 2002, page 87) showed residual postmodern "waste-of-materials" buildings; a comparison with the others in the issue showed how malnourished her work is. Although the article speaks to her sensitivity to clients, she is par for the course.

Kevin Hong  
Chicago

## GEHRY AND JOHNSON, SAFE

There's no threat to Frank Gehry's Winton guesthouse or Philip Johnson's Davis house (September 2002, page 24). I live in the Gehry house, where I manage the restoration of the Johnson house for my clients. The owner of the compound intends to make the Gehry house part of a living/study retreat for young architects.

Suzanne Ritus  
Orono, Minnesota

## FAITH RESTORED

How refreshing to read about a major restoration project (August 2002, page 50) unencumbered by the destructive effects brought on by required structural solutions to earthquake resistance. Alas, if only our preservation projects on the West Coast could soar in the delight of revealing unreinforced masonry vaults.

Peter R. Meijer  
SERA Architects  
Portland, Oregon

## CORRECTION

Credit for the master plan and interior architecture for Sun Microsystems' Newark Campus (August 2002, page 37) should have gone to Bottom Duvivier, Redwood City, California. The editors regret the omission.

# Art for Life

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Serie P Novantotto, design Piano Design Workshop



Serie K2, design Antonio Citterio



Serie RA Duemila, design Ron Arad



Serie NF Novantacinque, design Foster and Partners



Serie RM Novantotto, design Richard Meier



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Architects William Morrish, Rafael Viñoly, and Frederic Schwartz (left, second from left and far right) of the Think group, overlook Ground Zero with LMDC vice president of planning, design, and development Alexander Garvin.

## New Teams to Develop Ground Zero

► **REBUILDING** On September 26, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) announced that six architectural teams, representing a diverse range of practices here and abroad, had been selected to develop plans for the World Trade Center site. Long-established firms include Studio Daniel Libeskind of Berlin, Foster and Partners of London, and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill of New York. Two freshly formed teams, United Architects and Think, each include some of the younger talents in the field, and in a quasi-reunion of the New York Five, Peter Eisenman, Richard Meier, and Charles Gwathmey have partnered with Steven Holl. Each of the six

teams will receive a \$40,000 fee for a six-week design charrette, to be completed by late this month; the teams will incorporate stores, a memorial, and transportation, along with 7 million to 11 million square feet of office space, in multiple submissions. The LMDC, a state agency, will cull ideas from any or all of the schemes in an effort to synthesize three final designs by year's end.

The six teams, which represent a total of 27 architecture and design firms, were chosen from 407 applicants by a panel of judges including: Harvard architecture chair, Toshiko Mori; MoMA architecture curator, Terence Riley; landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh; Richard N. Swett, an architect turned congressman; Kinshasha Holman Conwill, director of the Studio Museum of Harlem; and Eugenie L. Birch, chair of the department of planning at the University of Pennsylvania.

The request for entries was issued by the LMDC several weeks after initially proposed plans for the

site were rejected by 5,000 citizens in a town-hall meeting. Presented in early July, four schemes had been developed by the New York firm Beyer Blinder Belle and two by Peterson Littenberg, also of New York, for the site's owner, the Port Authority, working in association with the LMDC. Beyer Blinder Belle continues work as the official architect of the project, and Peterson Littenberg continues to advise the LMDC and will contribute to the design study.

The LMDC's recent initiative represents a corrective measure for what has been widely viewed as a limited and flawed process for selecting architects to redesign the site. The Port Authority had originally advertised very briefly for applicants, and set a restrictively tight application period in a process that implicitly favored large firms practicing locally. In the new round, the LMDC opened the search process internationally and over a longer period. **JOSEPH GIOVANNINI**

### SIX TEAMS FOR LOWER MANHATTAN:

#### 1 STUDIO DANIEL LIBESKIND

(BERLIN)

#### 2 FOSTER AND PARTNERS (LONDON)

#### 3 RICHARD MEIER, PETER EISENMAN, CHARLES GWATHMEY, AND STEVEN HOLL (NEW YORK CITY)

#### 4 UNITED ARCHITECTS: Reiser Umemoto (New York City), Foreign Office Architects (London), Greg Lynn FORM (Los Angeles), Imaginary

Forces (New York City, Los Angeles), Kevin Kenon Architect (New York City), UN Studio (Amsterdam)

#### 5 SKIDMORE, OWINGS & MERRILL

(NEW YORK CITY) with: Field Operations (Philadelphia and New York City), Tom Leader (Berkeley), Michael Maltzan (Los Angeles), Neutelings Riedijk (Rotterdam, the Netherlands), and SANAA (Tokyo), together with artists Inigo Mangano-Ovalle, Rita McBride, Jessica

Stockholder and Elyn Zimmerman

#### 6 THINK: Shigeru Ban (Tokyo), Frederic Schwartz (New York City), Ken Smith (New York City), Rafael Viñoly (New York City), with: Arup (New York City), Buro Happold Engineers (Bath, England), Jorg Schlaich (Stuttgart, Germany), William Morrish (Charlottesville, Virginia), David Rockwell (New York City), Janet Marie Smith (Baltimore)



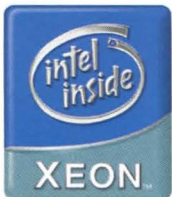


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## Meier in Rome

> **CONTROVERSY** It took Julius Caesar four years from the time he crossed the Rubicon River to conquer Rome. It may take American architect Richard Meier at least as long. Two and a half years ago Meier was commissioned to design a new home for the Ara Pacis, a first-century marble monument celebrating the reign of the Emperor Augustus. The existing museum, a gleaming monument to fascism

designed by Vittorio Morpugo in 1938, was deemed to be both physically inadequate to protect the monument and symbolic of a shameful part of Italy's past.

Meier's proposal called for a light, airy, all-white building defined by a long wall that would reflect the geometry of the river and close off the piazza around the monument. Demolition of the Morpugo building was nearly complete in fall 2001 and construction on Meier's building looked ready to go, when the undersecretary for culture, a traditionalist art critic named Vittorio Sgarbi, declared war on Meier's design, calling it "repellent." Construction was halted.

During the ensuing debates, the barrier walls of the abandoned site have become a palimpsest of vitriolic graffiti, much of it written by architecture students claiming that

Meier's proposal doesn't relate to the surrounding areas and that he received the commission unfairly. (There was no competition.)

The project remained in limbo until this summer, when Sgarbi was forced to resign from his post. Meier's office, meanwhile, claims that the real delay in the project resulted from a last-minute decision to excavate the site for archeological purposes.

According to the office of the superintendent for the Comune di Roma (the department overseeing the archeological excavations), now that the "political talk" is finished, construction of Meier's building will finally begin. But, according to Lisetta Koe, Meier's press officer, based on their experience thus far with Italian bureaucracy, they're not holding their breath. **PAUL BENNETT**

## Rooms at the Wright Price

> **LANDMARK** Frank Lloyd Wright's Price Tower in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, will soon boast a hotel and a Zaha Hadid-designed neighbor. Price Tower, originally intended as the living and working quarters for the Price oilfield supply company's executive staff, is currently home to Price Tower Arts Center. The Center houses works by Wright and architect Bruce Goff (who once had a studio in the building), as well as sculptures by American artist Frederic Remington and a growing contemporary art collection.

"The hotel was originally conceived in trying to figure out how we were going to make Price Tower a living museum," says Price Tower Arts Center marketing and development director, Michael Christopher. Wright's vision for the building, he explains, was an "urban microcosm concept, where

you would live, work, eat, and shop all in the same space."

The 21-room hotel, scheduled to open in January, was designed by New York architect Wendy Evans Joseph. "We were able to keep the building completely intact," states Christopher, explaining that all changes to room configurations and furnishings will be reversible.

Most of the museum collection will be moved to a future adjacent building, to be designed by Zaha Hadid. Hadid received the commission, her second in North America, on September 25. The building is projected for completion in 2005, at the earliest.

"What we're trying to do," says Christopher, "is build sort of an architectural campus here that will be both a tourism destination and a place for the study of architecture and fine art." The "campus" will also

relate to the neighboring Bartlesville Community Center by architect William Wesley Peters (a former student of Wright's), as well as the city's collection of other important buildings by Wright, Goff, and Louis Sullivan. **ANNA HOLTZMAN**



## BUZZ

Six finalists have been announced for the design of the **Pentagon memorial** to victims of September 11: **Shane Williamson** (Toronto), **Julie Beckman** (New York City), **Jean Koeppel** (New York City), **Mason Wickham** (New York City), **Jacky Bowring** (Canterbury, New Zealand), and **Michael Meredith** (Clifton Park, New York).

British-born architect **Paul C. Holt** passed away in July at age 50. Holt was a co-founder, with Marc Hinshaw, of **Holt Hinshaw Architects**.

Five architecture firms will submit proposals for the redesign of Lincoln Center's 6.3 acres of New York City public space: **Santiago Calatrava**; **Cooper, Robertson & Partners**; **Diller + Scofidio**; **Foster and Partners**; and **Richard Meier & Partners**. The selection will be announced in December.

**Cornell University**, which scrapped **Steven Holt's** competition-winning design for its new architecture building, has announced five new candidates: **Tod Williams Billie Tsien**; **Morphosis**; **Smith-Miller + Hawkinson**; **Allied Works Architecture**; and **Barkow Leibinger**.

The caretakers of **Frank Lloyd Wright's** landmark Martin House in Buffalo, New York, have selected **Toshiko Mori** to design its new visitor center.

Photographer **Camilo José Vergara**, whose work documents urban decay through the use of time-lapse photography, was among the 24 **MacArthur Fellows** named this year.



BUZZ

Spanish architect **José Rafael Moneo**'s Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral in Los Angeles opened in early September to crowds of protesters condemning the building's \$195 million price at a time when the Catholic church is mired in controversy.

**Susan Henshaw Jones**, former president of the **National Building Museum** in Washington, D.C., will replace Robert R. Macdonald as director of the **Museum of the City of New York**.

A joint venture between **Rogers Marvel Architects** and **Ken Smith Landscape Architect** has won the competition to design an elevated public plaza at 55 Water Street in lower Manhattan.

The **Skyscraper Museum**, founded in 1996 by art historian **Carol Willis**, is moving to permanent quarters. Developer Millennium Partners is providing rent-free space to the museum at the southern tip of Manhattan.

A group of **UCLA** architecture students have established a website ([www.uclaaud.org](http://www.uclaaud.org)) to discuss questionable disciplinary and favoritism practices of department chair **Sylvia Lavin** that have resulted in "a pervasive sense of fear among students."

**Rodolphe El-Khoury** has been appointed the new chair of the architecture program at the **California College of Arts and Crafts** in San Francisco. El-Khoury was formerly the **University of Toronto**'s director of the Masters of Urban Design and Bachelors of Architecture programs.

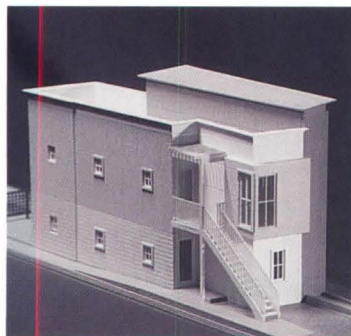
# Chrysler Awards Six Design Champions

> **LAURELS** The 10th annual Chrysler design awards, honoring six "design champions," were announced on September 12. This tribute to the people who make good design happen marks a new direction for the awards program, which traditionally honors only designers. This year's winners are former New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, noted preservationist and advocate for relocating Pennsylvania Station; Phyllis Lambert, patron of modernism and

founder of the Canadian Centre for Architecture; Mildred Friedman, curator of the Walker Art Center and of *Frank Gehry Architect* at the Guggenheim Museum; Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Computers; Murray Moss, owner of the New York design boutique that bears his name; and Red Burns, founder of the Interactive Telecommunications Programs at New York University. "We are publicly stating that these are role models," says Chee Pearlman, awards cochair with architect Leslie Gill. "On the

tenth anniversary of the awards program it was an opportunity to thank these very persuasive advocates." In future years the award may include champions of design alongside influential designers. "Our job as [design champions] is becoming easier and more exciting," says Friedman. "People are becoming more sophisticated and interested in innovation." Winners will be honored on November 12 at Lambert's Seagram building.

**ALAN G. BRAKE**



## Houses within Reach

> **COMPETITIONS** How does a mayor convince local developers that housing for people with disabilities can actually make them money? In the case of Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, you host a design competition.

The "Universal Access" competition identified four viable schemes for affordable infill dwellings that would be "usable by people of all ages and abilities without the need for adaptation or specialized

design." Sponsored by the city's Department of Housing, the program will implement the winning concept by young local firm 3D Design Studio. At least 20 units are planned for blighted areas of the West Side neighborhood, North Lawndale.

"Chicago has built quite a bit of housing over the last few years, but there hasn't been any developed from the standpoint of universal design," says Darryl G. Crosby, principal of 3D Design Studio. The firm's scheme translates ADA rules into elegant architecture. The plan features two modules, one orthogonal to the street and one rotated by 4.8 degrees—the angle of a typical one-to-twelve ramp slope—to help accommodate the turning radius of a wheelchair in the narrow 25-foot-wide lots.

All of the four finalist plans for single- and two-family structures shared a key trait: their construction budgets come in at less than \$120 per square foot. "The results give the city absolute leverage over developers who say it's too expensive to do," notes Chad Harrell, principal of Chicago's Griskelis Young Harrell, a finalist. **C.C. SULLIVAN**



## Head Room

> **PLACES** A giant *tête carrée*, or "square head," marks the Louis Nucera central library, opened this summer in Nice, France. Designed by sculptor Sacha Sosno and realized by Nice architects Yves Bayard and Francis Chapus, the "head" contains the new library's technical and administrative facilities, while the rest of the library is underground. Prior to its current incarnation, Sosno's design was proposed for a hotel in Houston, Texas, and a retail store in Tokyo, and won first prize in a UNESCO competition for an environmental center in Helsinki. **AH**



# Seeing and Believing

> EXHIBITION

"SANCTUARIES: THE LAST WORKS OF JOHN HEJDUK" / WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART / NEW YORK CITY / THROUGH JANUARY 5

John Hejduk's death in 2000 was deeply mourned within the architectural community, particularly among his former students. For those who didn't have the privilege of studying with him, *Sanctuaries: The Last Works of John Hejduk* offers a window into his way of seeing. Comprised of drawings (both architectural and figurative), models, and two small built follies in the courtyard, the show documents his uniquely humanistic, spiritual approach to architecture, which was challenging and whimsical without succumbing to irony. The small show is divided into four parts—"masques," walls, still lifes, and sanctuaries—that prepare the viewer for the follies, titled "House of the Suicide" and "House of the Mother of Suicide," after a poem called "The Funeral of Jan Palach" by David Shapiro. The Suicide (right) is a gray sealed cube topped with a splayed crown of spikes. The Mother (far right) is black, with a knee-high sliding door in the belly of the cube, topped with an upright crown of spikes, the tips of which are sheared off allowing points of light into the interior. "He was very generous with his students and colleagues, and he inspired us all," says Toshiko Mori, a former student and an academic colleague. "His emotive power is tangible in this body of work." **ALAN G. BRAKE**



# Earth Works

> BOOK

"LANDSCRAPERS: BUILDING WITH THE LAND" / BY AARON BETSKY THAMES & HUDSON

Aaron Betsky, an *Architecture* editor-at-large, takes no prisoners when he writes in his new book: "Buildings replace the land. That is architecture's original sin." He follows up with an introductory historical survey on the many and creative ways humans have fought for and against the earth beneath our feet. He argues that "landscrapers"—buildings that engineer, burrow, open up, or merge with the land—remind us of "who we are by where we are on the land." His is not exactly a

manifesto for green architecture, but an investigation of architectural form-making that "unfolds the land." Following on the heels of the 1990s' dreary preoccupation with poststructuralist paper architecture, Betsky's collection of works reveals an architecture that reads the text and texture of the land in three dimensions, from the earth-hugging house in Wales by Future Systems (above) to the multiple grass roofs of Gustav Peichl's satellite tracking station in Austria. **ABBY BUSSEL**

# Downtown Angels

> EXHIBITION

"L.A. NOW: SHAPING A NEW VISION FOR DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES," ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN MUSEUM / LOS ANGELES / THROUGH NOVEMBER 30

Downtown Los Angeles will have two new architectural masterpieces within less than one year: Rafael Moneo's Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels and Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall. What is next for downtown? The organizers of *L.A. Now*, on view at the City of Angels' new Architecture and Design Museum, have a few ideas.

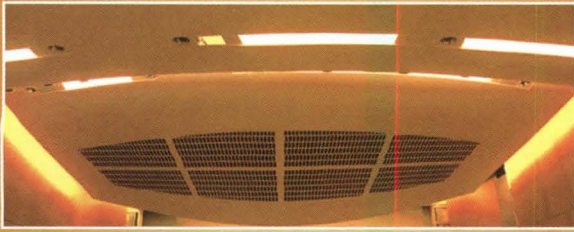
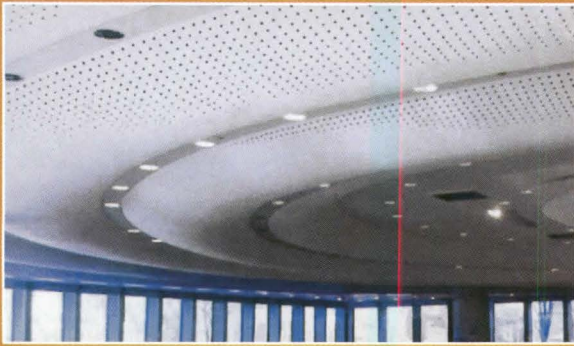
Los Angeles continues to experience unprecedented human and built growth. *L.A. Now* began as an urban analysis by Art Center College of Design, which explored the potential of the central city using existing infrastructure, and evolved into an architectural studio led by Thom Mayne of Morphosis. Seven teams of UCLA students then came up with design solutions for

the city's historic urban center, ranging from a satellite LAX terminal to a development of parklands, basins, and research facilities located along 51 miles of the Los Angeles River.

The venue for the exhibition bears comment: It is a small space in the historic Bradbury Building located in the same flailing downtown that these young designers seek to revive. Even for cynics, the wealth of information in the show makes the trek worthwhile. **BAY BROWN**



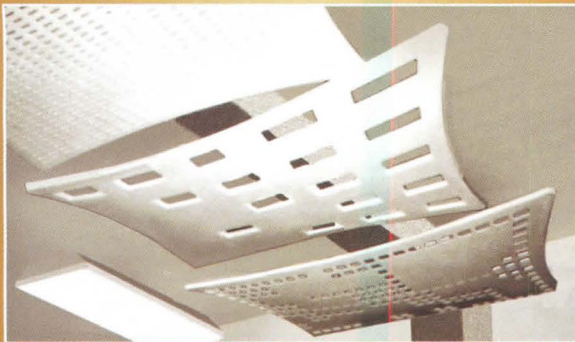
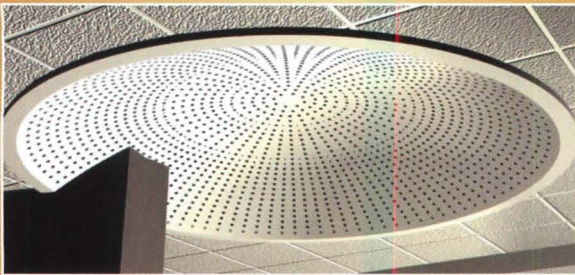




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## >agenda

### A Touch of Glass

> BOOK

"THE GLASS STATE" / BY ANNETTE FIERRO / MIT PRESS

Undeniably the most seductive building material of the modern age, glass is not a new subject in contemporary architectural theory. In her first book, *The Glass State*, Annette Fierro approaches the subject of transparent architecture with a ferocious obsession. She explores the psychological, social, and political implications of glass through a "discourse of details," examining the minutiae of a building's structure and culling meaning from them. Fierro's study is based on a test sample of buildings comprising several of Paris's *Grands Projets*, projects commissioned in the 1980s and 1990s by former French president François Mitterand, in addition to a few precedent buildings. "The dominant idealism of many of the *Grands Projets*," Fierro writes, "was based in a principle of accessibility, an opening of a previously closed and therefore elitist French culture to the general public." She links the use of glass in these projects to the supposed transparency of the political regime that fostered them. The book becomes tedious where it falls into the trap of so much academic writing: the style is dense and wordy, and references to outside textual sources (Benjamin, Lacan, Saussure) abound in such proliferation that, unlike the transparent structures it describes, the book may be accessible to the architectural cognoscenti only. Then again, if that is its intention, its rigor and integrity should be a delight to those who similarly fetishize glass construction or the architecture of late twentieth-century Paris. **ANNA HOLTZMAN**





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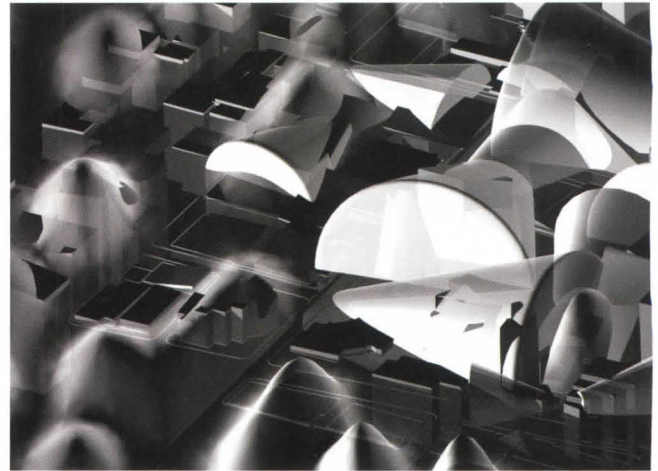
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## >agenda



## Model Data

> TECHNOLOGY

3D STUDIO MAX / 3DMAX / [WWW.3DMAX.COM](http://WWW.3DMAX.COM)

Modeling data in three dimensions has deep roots. In the early 1980s, for example, researchers began using credit-card and phone-call records to track consumer behavior with a technique known as block-modeling. The approach now underpins much of the ubiquitous, home-invasive telemarketing campaigns that we love to complain about.

Applying database modeling to architecture and urban planning has had less economic impact and fewer social side effects, but its use in understanding and shaping our cities has been hard to miss. The latest method, developed by Nadia Amoroso of the University of Oklahoma's College of Architecture, is both quantitatively groundbreaking and visually stunning, and it suggests a new approach to urban form-making.

Taking data from the "invisible forces" that shape our cities—air-quality stats, video-

camera surveillance spaces, crime rates, real estate costs, surface densities—Amoroso used a customized chart system in 3d Max (as well as VectorWorks and AutoCAD) to extrude multidimensional snapshots of downtown Toronto. Enhanced with PhotoShop, the images create convincing and beautiful cartographic projections that suggest the building edges and skylines of a theoretical cityscape.

While Amoroso owes a debt of gratitude to the classic charcoal zoning studies by Hugh Ferriss and more recent work by MVRDV, her images are fresh and invigorating. The eye-pleasing results have found their place at art exhibitions recently, but their most profound impact is in offering surprising new ideas that could help shape urban planning in Toronto and elsewhere. Can one extrude legitimate architectural ideas from raw numerical data? Amoroso thinks so.

**C.C. SULLIVAN**



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## EXHIBITIONS

### CHICAGO

**Archigram: Experimental Architecture 1961-1974** featuring drawings, models, and sketches from the famed U.K. pop architects, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, through January 19 (312) 280-2660

### COLUMBUS, OHIO

**From Pop to Now** more than 70 works by twentieth-century masters such as Andy Warhol, Bruce Nauman, and Jeff Koons, at the Wexner Center for the Arts, through February 2 (614) 292-0330

### DALLAS

**Boomerangs and Baby Boomers: Design 1945-2000** including objects by designers from the Eameses to Richard Meier, at the Dallas Museum of Art, through March 16 (214) 922-1200

### LOS ANGELES

**Thomas Struth** over 80 photographs by the German master, at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, through January 5 (213) 626-6222



### MONTREAL

**Herzog and De Meuron** a visual biography of the architects known for their complex and seductive building envelopes, now at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, through April 6 (514) 939-7026

### NEW YORK CITY

**Charles Hollis Jones: Seeing Clearly** lucite furniture by this designer best known in the 1970s, with exhibition design by architects Tsao & McKown, at R Gallery, through December 31 (212) 343-7373

### Diana Thater: Knots + Surfaces

multiple large-scale video projections interact with the architecture of the gallery space, at the Dia Center for the Arts, through January (212) 989-5566



### Le Corbusier before Le Corbusier

an exhibition of the architect's earliest works as a young artist in Switzerland and Paris, at the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, opens November 22 (212) 501-3000

### Roger Ferri: Architectural

**Visionary** at the Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, through December 21 (212) 854-7288



### The Twentieth-Century Borough:

**One Hundred Years of Modern Architecture in Queens** at the Queens Historical Society, through March 2003 (718) 939-0647

### NOTRE DAME, INDIANA

**From Alvar Aalto to Demetri Porphyrios: An Architect's Work Through Time and Place** at Bond Hall, University of Notre Dame, through December 6 (574) 631-6137

### PITTSBURGH

**Panopticon** paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, prints, drawings, and photographs from Pittsburgh, the United States, and around the world at the Carnegie Museum of Art, through August (416) 622-3112

### ROTTERDAM

**Gio Ponti: A World of Design** a major retrospective of the famed Italian architect, designer, and founder of *Domus*, at the Netherlands Architecture Institute, through January 15 (31) 10-4401200

### SAN DIEGO

**Vital Forms: American Art and Design in the Atomic Age 1940-1960** showing at the San Diego Museum of Art, now through January 26 (619) 231-1996



### WASHINGTON, D.C.

**Do It Yourself: Home Improvement in Twentieth-Century America** looks at the unofficial national pastime. At the National Building Museum, through August (202) 272-2448



## CONFERENCES

**Build Boston**, the largest building and design convention in the Northeast, features workshops demonstrations, and new products. Continuing education credits for AIA, ASID, and IIDA are available as well, at the World Trade Center Boston, November 12-14 [www.buildboston.com](http://www.buildboston.com)

**Construct Canada** focuses on new and sustainable products and over 300 speakers, at the Metro Toronto Convention Center, December 4-6 [www.constructcanada.com](http://www.constructcanada.com)

## COMPETITIONS

**The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence** is given annually to urban places that demonstrate a successful integration of social, economic, and contextual values with good design. The winner and runners-up will share \$90,000 in prizes. Deadline December 16 [www.brunerfoundation.org](http://www.brunerfoundation.org)

**Dead Malls** seeks to envision the future of decaying shopping centers, sponsored by the Los Angeles Forum for Architecture and Urban Design. Deadline November 18 [www.laforum.org](http://www.laforum.org)

**Home** is a new ideas competition, sponsored by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art and *Dwell*, for innovative residential designs using the existing three- and four-bedroom floor plans developed by Habitat For Humanity. Registration deadline for entries is February 1 [www.secca.org](http://www.secca.org)

**San Jose State University Museum of Art and Design Competition** a two-stage competition, the first of which will determine five finalists who will receive \$15,000 stipends to design a new museum near downtown. Deadline late January [www.sjsu.edu](http://www.sjsu.edu)



> **MASSIMILIANO FUKSAS ARCHITETTO**  
**PALAZZO CONGRESSI / ROME**

A few miles south of Rome on the flat, wooded plain that descends to the Mediterranean lies the fascist architectural experiment, EUR. Originally intended as a model city to host the Esposizione Universale di Roma in 1942, the plan was envisioned by Mussolini as a showcase of Italian rationalist architecture. Today, EUR is still a work in progress—a palimpsest of twentieth-century architecture, both stunning and stupefying—and the latest addition, which fills an unsightly hole in the plan, is a new convention center by Massimiliano Fuksas.

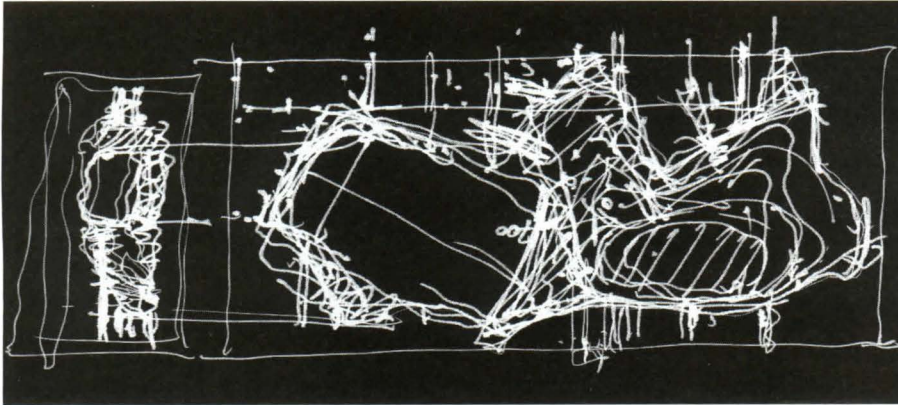
Fuksas's Palazzo Congressi calls for a negative-edged glass rectangle, opening onto piazzas on each end, which in turn feed into the main triumphal thoroughfare and the city's glistening travertine landscape. The ground floor is left open as a large indoor courtyard, while subterranean floors, accessible by ramps, are given over to meeting rooms. Using the austerity of the box and its orientation to the monumental fascist plan, Fuksas responds to and reflects the architectural context. Across the street sits the original Palazzo Congressi, a stone temple of Italian modernism designed by Adalberto Libera in 1938.

Having nodded to the past, Fuksas departs from history, fascist and otherwise: inside the box, an amorphous blob hovers in mid-air, seemingly unsupported. Inspired by a dream about a storm on the Mediterranean, says Fuksas, the cloudlike form shrouds the 2,000-seat main hall in a steel frame wrapped in Gore-Tex, supported by steel girders from the roof and three large pilings containing utilities and stairwells. The great sculptural mobile provides a focal point and creates oddly shaped open volumes at its edges that could be the most interesting spaces in the building.

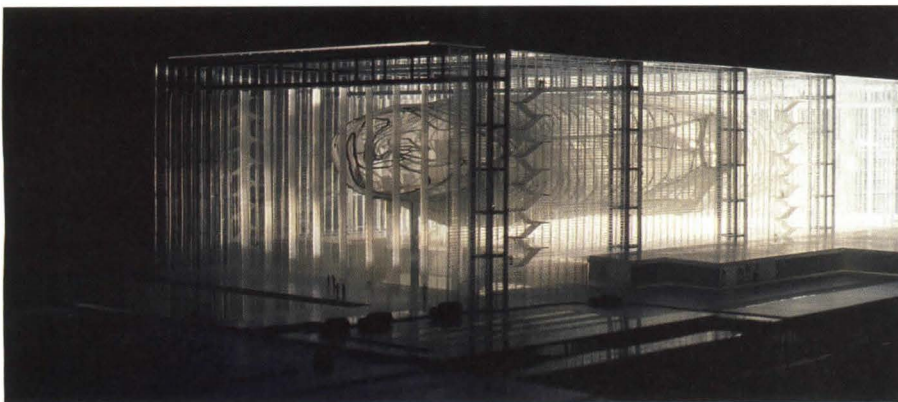
In addition to becoming the largest meeting space in Rome, Palazzo Congressi "represents a synthesis of my ideas about architecture, of my concern for both rationalism and 'un-rationalism,' for both the heart and the mind," says Fuksas. The cloud expresses this synthesis, importing a striking contemporary form into a snapshot of 1930s architectural (and political) philosophy. If it succeeds, it will offer a clear view of how architecture—and society's values—have changed over 70 years.

"We don't want minimalism today," Fuksas believes, explaining one of his rationales for the design. "We want expression and surprise. Quotidian life is hard, and people want to see something different."

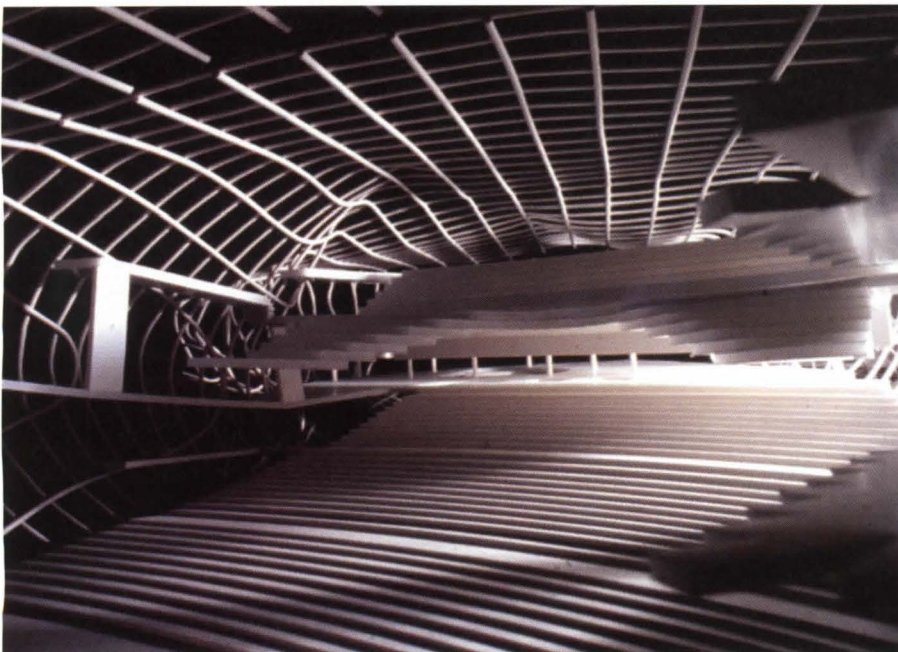
Might this approach give rise to an architecture of spectacle and caprice? Fuksas's answer could have formed the basis for an architectural manifesto at another point in Italian history: "I am not worried about frivolity," he says. "I am worried about banality." **PAUL BENNETT**



Concept plan



View from plaza



View inside main hall



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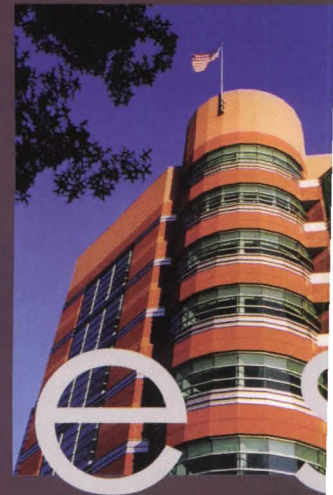
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S I Z E S & S H A P E S



# On the Wrong Tract

BY LAWRENCE W. CHEEK

I asked a builder of \$500,000-plus tract houses—spec mansions, really—why a family with readily available funds would buy a generic house instead of hiring an architect and designing a home that would express the family's individuality and needs. "Time," shrugged the builder. "They're working 80 hours a week to earn that kind of money, and they don't have the time for planning and building. This way they can move in right now."

Despite the recession, we are in the flower of a second Victorian age—or *Gilded Age*, as Mark Twain termed what he saw as vapid ostentation—though with a difference evident in any high-end suburban neighborhood: While the unabashed display of extravagance is there, architectural imagination is not.

I live in a burgeoning suburb of Seattle, where my 2,200-square-foot house is dwarfed by clusters of 3,000- to 4,500-square-foot behemoths shoehorned onto tight lots and dressed in watered-down recollections of historical styles. Buyers can choose among vanilla Victorian, pseudo Chateau, and halfhearted Craftsman Revival. These houses have much in common: thoughtless siting, inefficient and often illogical space allocations, bland finishes, and anonymous character. In every model, the most preposterous space is the one in which residents will spend the least amount of time: the foyer, a vast two-story expanse with a lavish clerestory and a massive chandelier. One builder admitted that he spends liberally on foyers because they trigger delirious first impressions.



In every model, the most preposterous space is the one in which residents will spend the least amount of time: the foyer, a vast two-story expanse with a lavish clerestory and a massive chandelier.

It's easy to blame the builders, but their rote defense—we're building what buyers want, and buyers are shopping square footage and features—is hard to refute. In a long Sunday of touring model spec mansions priced at up to \$900,000, I heard shoppers gush over such features as children's play nooks and master-suite fireplaces. No one questioned why floor plans retain a vestigial formal living room and formal dining room, which are seldom, if ever, used. "It's true, nobody lives that way any more," one on-site bro-

ker told me. "I guess that's why builders are making them smaller now."

So okay, blame the buyer. We demand imposing façades to express our success, and we dress them in century-old costumes in subliminal yearning for the values of generations past. We've become so conditioned to shop for features rather than intrinsic quality in everything we buy—cell phones, rain jackets, outdoor grills—that we transfer this undiscerning mindset to home buying.

But a paradigm shift may be in the wind. I interviewed Sarah Susanka shortly after the first of the architect's book series, *The Not So Big House* (Taunton Press), now with 500,000 copies in print, appeared in 1998. The acclaim for it astonished her. At every speaking engagement, she said, people would thank her for articulating what they had been feeling: that by grasping for quantity of space in their living environments, they were missing more important

qualities, such as well-executed detailing and individual formal expression.

Builders move in herds, so architects will have to lead by writing, lecturing, and teaming with those rare developers who believe in the proposition that less may indeed be more. That concept has always been a tough sell to Americans, but we could try out a line from William Morris, the nineteenth-century English designer and philosopher who pointed the way out of the bloat and clutter of Victorian design: "Have nothing in your houses," Morris suggested, "that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful."

With books on small-house design having a stronger presence on store shelves, the extraordinary success of the Home & Garden cable television channel, and the modesty-rules attitude of magazines like *Dwell*, homebuyers cooing over grandiose foyers may begin to change their tune, demanding better, not bigger. ■



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# Science Fair

Architecture and engineering students push the envelope of solar design under the nose of an oil-friendly administration.

BY BRADFORD MCKEE

**>GREEN** Fourteen teams of architecture and engineering students gathered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in late September for the first-ever Solar Decathlon, a 10-day competitive exposition of solar-energy technologies applied to homebuilding. The student teams had worked for about 15 months researching, fundraising, and designing their houses, which were laid out along a makeshift street between the Washington Monument and the U.S. Capitol. They had dealt with broken pumps and leaking pipes—not to mention the permits involved in hauling 20-ton houses from as far away as Colorado, Texas, and Puerto Rico. But the real test came the day the demonstration village opened: It poured.

By that time, the students had

long since figured out how to overbuild their solar-energy storage capacity to save what they generated for a rainy day—literally. The contest, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and cosponsored by, among others, BP Solar, Home Depot, and the AIA, began in earnest in April 2001, when a committee based at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, Colorado, selected the contestant teams from dozens of applicants. The students, who drew lots for their site assignments along the east-west stretch of the expo, could make their houses no larger than 500 square feet.

Required to supply all the energy needed for an average household, the teams competed for the highest scores in 10 cate-

gories, each worth 100 points (except for one category that combined *design and livability*, and was worth 200 points), for a total of 1,100 points. The judges—including architects Glenn Murcutt of Australia, Edward Mazria of Mazria Riskin Odems in Santa Fe, and Steve Badanes of Jersey Devil Design/Build based in Seattle—also scored the teams for how well they managed interior-air comfort, refrigeration (using, for the most part, commercially available appliances), hot-water supply, and lighting quality. Judges also graded the extent to which the houses relied exclusively on solar energy (plus points for graphics, presentation, and whether the house could support a home-based business).

## SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Top honors went to the team from the University of Colorado at Boulder, which earned 875 points. Colorado took the top score for its graphics, interior comfort, and reliance only on solar energy. The Colorado house, built of insulated structural panels and hauled across the country in seven





The University of Colorado at Boulder won the DOE's Solar Decathlon, with a house built of insulated structural panels and industrial-strength solar collectors (1). Runners-up included a copper and wood house by second-place University of Virginia (2) and a modified dogtrot design by third-place Auburn University (3).

pieces, had as its main solar-collection device a system of evacuated-tube collectors, a high-temperature commercial system that turns light energy into heat. The house incorporated materials such as engineered wood, insulated structural panels, a composite partition material (comprising 85 percent wood and 15 percent Portland cement fly ash), and gypsum board to increase heat-holding capabilities. "We are not sacrificing aesthetic appeal and livability to maximize [the use of solar energy]," said Colorado senior Matthew Henry. Despite Henry's confidence, Colorado placed fifth in the design and livability category.

Taking first place in design and second place in the entire competition was the University of Virginia entry, an intriguing modernist structure the size of a large mobile home framed in engineered wood and clad in reclaimed copper roofing. A distinctive system of louvers faced south to alternately deflect sunlight away from or reflect it into living areas. Radiant-heat floors and valance cooling eliminated the need for forced-air-handling systems. The temperature and power controls of the house were graphically displayed on a "smart wall," a touch-screen computer for manipulating interior comfort levels, just inside the front door: A self-illumi-

nated display furnished instant visual access to the status of the house's services. Like its Colorado counterpart, Virginia's team took 100 points for solar reliance, earning an overall score of 848 points.

The team from Auburn University also earned the top score for exploiting solar energy, and came in third place overall with 840 points. Auburn, home to the late vernacular design-build genius Samuel Mockbee, erected a modified dogtrot house in keeping with regional tradition, except for its solar features: "Solar megaphones"—skylights embedded with prisms—refract and amplify available sunlight and present a hallucinatory pattern when viewed from below. Passive solar "water columns" standing 4 feet high in the central living space modulate swings in outdoor temperature by emitting heat when it's cool and absorbing interior heat when it's hot. Auburn's team placed third in the interior comfort category, but only sixth in design.

There seemed to be a roughly even split between teams pushing the design envelope and teams content to build ordinary structures. Second place in design went to the University of Puerto Rico for its louvered, sea-green shed, which survived a trip across the Caribbean and the Atlantic to

Philadelphia's port. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte earned the only negative score for design (-48 points), with a house built mainly of plastic translucent panels.

Competition at the Solar Decathlon was not just among teams, but also across disciplines. "It's not just an architecture competition," said Alex Yasbek, a mechanical engineering senior on the University of Maryland team, who stood on the porch of his team's modest clapboard-clad house. Yasbek looked askance at Carnegie Mellon University's high-tech exterior of metallic grids. "I would have preferred to do something architecturally mind-blowing, but then you lose the mass appeal. This is a place people would be very happy living," he adds, sounding more like a real estate developer than an engineer. Indeed, Maryland's team hoped to sell its house at market rate to recoup costs. (Many of the other teams planned to relocate their houses back to their respective campuses. Auburn's house will reside on that school's agriculture campus, and Virginia's will sit outside its architecture school as lodging for visiting faculty.)

Students involved in the decathlon cited the lessons they learned about teamwork and the

realities of designing and building with nonstandard technologies. But the tone of the event had a distinct geopolitical subtext.

## ENERGY MATTERS

The competition occurred at a propitious time, drawing, according to organizers, approximately 100,000 visitors (many of voting age), who seemed especially interested in the potential of solar energy as the Bush administration is considering an assault on Iraq and as energy prices are creeping upward. For many strolling from house to house, it came as a revelation that solar technologies have evolved so significantly beyond their specious promises of the 1970s.

In his remarks at the closing ceremony on October 5, Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham noted that the Solar Decathlon "proves that solar energy is practical today," and that investment in renewable and energy-efficient technologies "can contribute to the nation's energy security." With a confirmed oilman or two in the White House, Secretary Abraham may be the executive branch's only true believer. The DOE and its cosponsors, on the other hand, seem far more attuned to the country's interests in cheaper, cleaner sources of energy. ■



# Docomomo Goes to Paris

## When is modern really Modern?

BY LIANE LEFAIVRE

**> PRESERVATION** Twentieth-century modern architecture is, on the whole, a blight on the face of the earth. We have produced more inhumane, unsustainable, ugly buildings and cities than architects have during any other century.

Docomomo, an international preservation group focused on buildings, sites, and neighborhoods of the modern movement, believes that modern masterworks, from which much of the blight is derived, need to be protected from the wrecking ball.

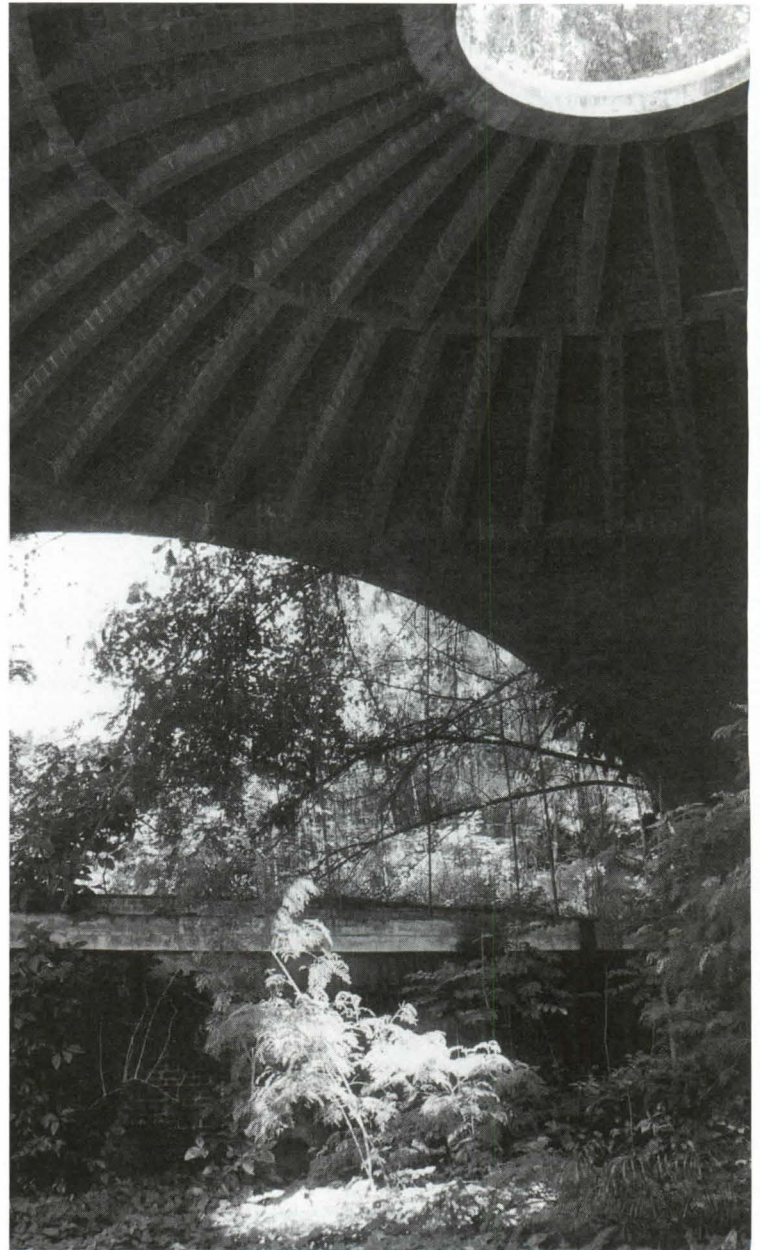
This fall, Docomomo convened for its seventh biennial conference in Paris at the UNESCO headquarters, a 1958 building designed by Marcel Breuer, Pier Luigi Nervi, and Bernard Zehruss. Founded in 1988 by the unassuming but obstinate Dutch architect Hubert-Jan Henket, Docomomo's mission is so simple it's brilliant: It is not only for the conservation of the great buildings of the modern movement, but also their documentation and, more importantly, the celebration of these icons.

With chapters in 40 countries, Docomomo combines pressure-group activism with wide-ranging scholarship. This means that it is devoted not just to saving modern buildings but to broadening the discussion of what modern is, bridging the world of the ivory tower with that of the hands-on, can-do, watchdog advocacy people, and ultimately, the general public. Because it operates with so many different objectives at the

same time, Henket's Docomomo has become what is probably the single most effective organization in safeguarding the great works of the modern movement. Among its most celebrated preservationist interventions was the recent rescue of Eero Saarinen's 1962 TWA Terminal at New York City's John F. Kennedy International Airport, which would have had its wings clipped so drastically as to make it unrecognizable.

In many ways, the conference was a historical event. For one thing, it marked the passing of the baton from founder Henket, who wishes to devote more time to his private practice, to the seasoned, internationally recognized architectural historian Maristella Casciato. For another, Docomomo headquarters are being transplanted from the Technical University of Delft, where Henket is a professor, to the Institut Français d'Architecture in Paris, which is headed by the ubiquitous architectural historian Jean-Louis Cohen.

Moreover, this meeting saw the admittance of two new countries into the Docomomo fold: Turkey and Cuba. Cuba's modernist heritage in particular is under great potential threat. As chronicled in John A. Loomis's book, *Revolution of Forms* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), Vittorio Garatti's masterful School of Ballet of 1965 is just one of many buildings at risk. Historian Eduardo-Luis Rodríguez and architect José Antonio Choy, both present at the Paris meeting,



One of a number of arts schools built by the Cuban government in the mid-1960s, the School of Ballet is one building that a new Docomomo chapter in Cuba hopes to save.



# >practice

plan to return to Havana to begin organizing the new Docomomo chapter.

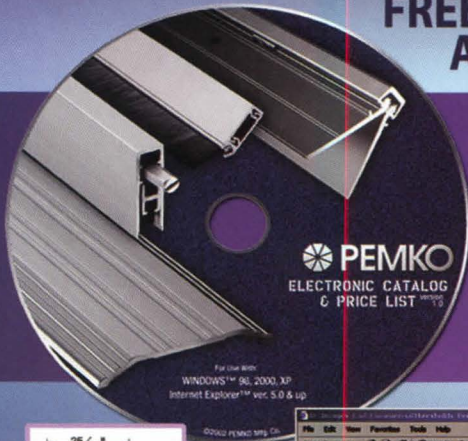
"Image, Use and Heritage: The Reception of Architecture of the Modern Movement" was the theme for the conference. Historian H el ene R. Lipstadt argued for the importance of looking beyond the canon of officially sanctioned "distinguished" buildings for those that have popular acceptance, like Saarinen's Jefferson Arch (1966) in St. Louis. Architect Louise Noble showed how the waterfront of contemporary Brisbane, Australia, had an uncanny likeness to Archigram's "Instant City," Peter Cook's utopian vision for modular cities.

The two real highlights of the meeting dealt with 1930s Tel Aviv. Perhaps this is because they were the only papers that paired historical documentation with a passionate plea for a place on the World Heritage list, UNESCO's register of the world's most important natural and cultural sites. While the status offers legal protection, individual



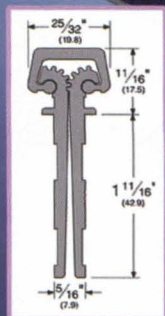
Zina Dizengoff Square, at the heart of Tel Aviv, is one of many modernist neighborhoods threatened by new development.

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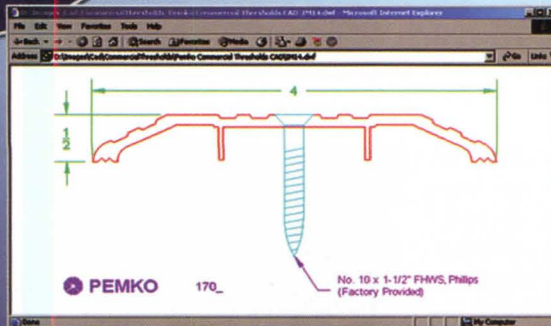


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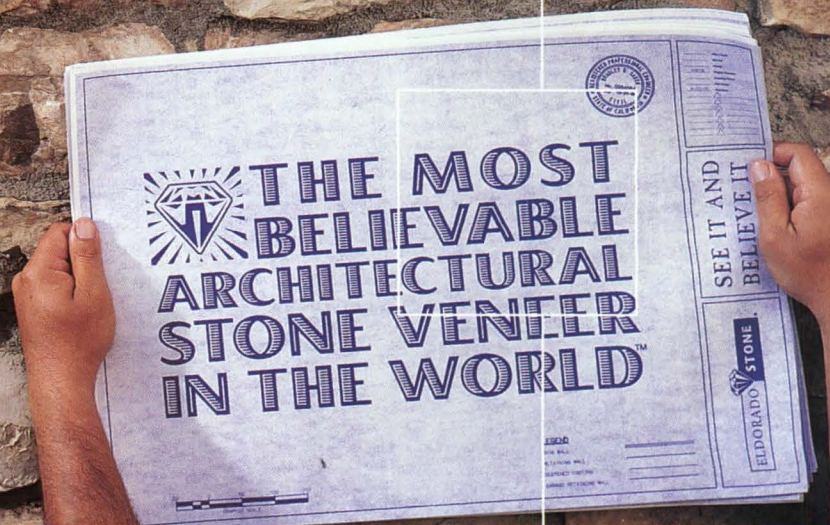
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## >practice

governments have to give special consideration for preserving them. Architects Raquel Rapaport, Horacio Schwartz, and Arie Sivan highlighted the work of a virtually unknown woman architect, Genia Averbuch, the designer of Zina Dizengoff Square, the main square of modern Tel Aviv. The best presentation was by artist Dani Karavan. Never one to mince words, he compared the current destruction of 1930s buildings to that of the Buddhas in Bamiyan, Afghanistan—but instead of bombs, the weapon is real estate speculation.

Which brings us to an amazing fact unveiled at the final roundtable: Of the 730 sites on UNESCO's World Heritage list, there are no more than 12 buildings from the entire twentieth century and they are almost all from Western Europe. These are: the Parc Güell, Barcelona, Spain; Brasilia, Brazil; the palaces and parks of Potsdam, Germany; Skogskyrkogarden, Stockholm, Sweden; the Bauhaus buildings in Weimar and Dessau, Germany; Palau de Musica Catalana, Barcelona, Spain; Hospicio Cabanas, Guadalajara, Mexico; Museum Insel, Berlin; the Rietveld Schroeder house, Utrecht, Netherlands; Ciudad universitaria de Caracas, Venezuela; Víctor Horta's major houses, Brussels, Belgium; Villa Tugendhat, Brno, Czech Republic. No Corbusier. No Wright. No Neutra. No Kahn. No Aalto. No one was able to explain this mystery, which goes to show the distance modern architecture must travel to gain the hearts and minds of the general public.

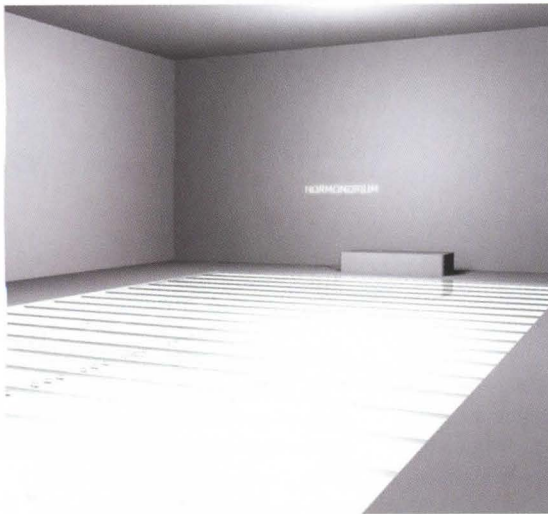
True to its old activist self, the new Docomomo is taking the bull by the horns. It passed a resolution to draw up a list of 50 modern buildings to be presented to the World Heritage Committee. The hopeful symbolism inherent in the fact that this Docomomo meeting was held at the UNESCO headquarters—itself in a quasi-decrepit state—was hard to ignore.

The next Docomomo conference will be held at Columbia University in fall 2004. The main theme will be defining Docomomo's approach to postwar modern architecture, organized by Hélène Lipstadt. In the interim, let's hope that Docomomo can keep the bulldozers at bay. ■



The nearly 50-year-old UNESCO building—where the conference was held—is itself in need of preservation.





Clockwise from top left: Joel Meyerowitz photo of Ground Zero; a favela replica at the Brazil pavilion; rendering of Foreign Office's Yokohama Port Terminal for the British pavilion; the Swiss pavilion's altitude simulation chamber. Following page: René van Zuuk's center for the arts in the Netherlands, shown at the Dutch pavilion.

tions, and pavilions all feverishly competing for attention, some things stood out. The contorted, rusting fragment of the World Trade Center outside the American Pavilion struck a particularly raw chord. Bent and buckled like a pipecleaner, it plummeted from the 80th floor of one of the towers during the September 11 cataclysm. Through the auspices of the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (responsible for organizing the American Biennale contribution), it came to its improbable rest in Venice. One could examine the rips and tears where bolts had been wrenched out of their sockets and marvel grimly at how something so substantial could be reduced to a twisted hunk of debris in a nanosecond.

Inside the pavilion, a trio of different but complementary exhibitions reflected on the transformational events of last September. Joel Meyerowitz's photographs of Ground Zero, a handful of some 7,000 images taken over the last year, painfully documented the aftermath, the rescuers, and the tangled tons of wreckage. Models and drawings of Yamasaki's original proposals for the Twin Towers represented a halcyon era of technological optimism when architecture was literally reaching for the sky. *Looking to the Future*, the exhibition held at the Max Protetch Gallery in New York City last year, received its first European viewing. For the exhibition, some 60 architects were commissioned to produce provocative speculations on

# Architecture's Carnivale

Views from NEXT, the Venice Biennale's Eighth International Architecture Exhibition

BY CATHERINE SLESSOR

> **CULTURE** It seems appropriate that the Venice Biennale takes place in a city whose architecture is largely concerned with the creation of effect. "Venice is not meant to be

seen in the round," Mary McCarthy once remarked; even the most glittering palazzo boasts a slummy rear view. The Biennale is an equally artificial and superficial

creation spread over the Castello Gardens (site of 27 permanent national pavilions) and the huge ropemaking sheds of the former naval dockyards in the Arsenale. Ringmaster of this year's architectural circus, which ran from September through early November, was Deyan Sudjic, editor of *Domus*. His simple strategy of trying to track the general direction of architecture over the first decade of the new century resulted in an impressive coherence and accessibility.

In such a hothouse atmosphere, with models, drawings, installa-





what might come after, a kind of design catharsis for the site. "New York has been far too accepting of the architecture of the ordinary," writes Protetch in the NEXT exhibition catalog. This point was underscored in the Biennale-sponsored symposium, "What Next for Lower Manhattan?" which attempted to give some measure of the political, economic, and planning issues surrounding Ground Zero's redevelopment. Among the symposium's participants were Roger Duffy of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (master-planner for the site), Charles Jencks, Daniel Libeskind, and *New York Times* architecture critic Herbert Muschamp, who continues to argue con brio against official proposals in favor of a more radical and visionary approach. "It is time to stop eliminating and marginalizing

architecture," he declared at the symposium. But as the Arsenale exhibition demonstrated with its phallic array of towers, including Norman Foster's Hearst headquarters and Renzo Piano's *New York Times* building, both destined for the Manhattan skyline, there is still apparent enthusiasm for and faith in the skyscraper as a formal and architectural statement.

Predictably, much of the work on view in Venice had a glossy, glamorous edge, leading some critics to condemn the Biennale's perceived lack of social and ecological responsiveness. One British journalist described it as "cocksure architecture ... in danger of creating a couture hell on earth," but certain countries attempted to prove otherwise. In the Finnish pavilion (originally designed by

Alvar Aalto), community projects by young Finns working in Senegal and Guinea showed architects successfully juggling with minimum resources; meanwhile Brazil concentrated on ways of improving the fortunes of its thousands of marginalized *favela* inhabitants, with a show of modest infrastructure projects and photographic essays on improvised dwellings. Real architecture is out there somewhere.

The Golden Lion award for best national pavilion went to the Netherlands for its lucid presentation of schemes by young architects shortlisted for a new award organized by the Netherlands Institute of Architecture. The Dutch held off a strong challenge by the British, with their groovy multimedia show of the new Port Terminal in Yokohama designed by Foreign Office

Architects, a precocious rising star in the U.K. architectural firmament. Japanese architect Toyo Ito won the Golden Lion for lifetime achievement. Director Sudjic extolled Ito's "enthusiasm for impermanence and ambiguity" in buildings that "are beautifully made, but which rely as much on the quality of the ideas that underlie them."

Despite the Biennale's generally pleasurable assault on the senses—from Spain's Hieronymus Bosch floor to Switzerland's sealed chamber that reproduces the sensation of being on an Alpine peak—one has to wonder who will come to see all this. After the scrum of the press viewing days, the flow of visitors is reportedly more sedate. For all its inventive posturing, it seems that contemporary architecture is still only a faint blip on the public's radar. ■



## home of the year

Last year, *Architecture* and *Metropolitan Home* magazines joined forces to launch Home of the Year, a new awards program aimed at uncovering design excellence in residential works. The first annual contest drew hundreds of entries from throughout North America, and presented a formidable challenge in identifying the best submissions. Through the dedicated effort of a distinguished jury, we unveil three prize-winning projects and an honorable mention. Congratulations to the architects that designed the cited projects; their work helps set the bar for residential design today while challenging our conceptions of contemporary domestic life.

## the jury



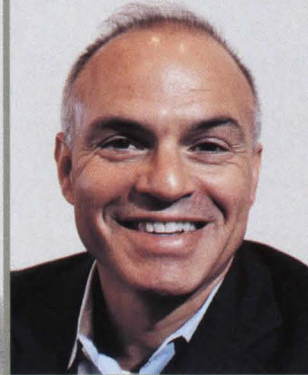
**WINKA  
DUBBELDAM**

Principal of New York City-based Archi-Tectonics, Dubbeldam also teaches at Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania. Her theoretical and built work has been published and exhibited widely, including participation in "The Un-Private House" in 1999 at New York City's Museum of Modern Art. Residential projects include lofts, houses, guesthouses, and multifamily towers; currently Archi-Tectonics is working on a house and an eleven-story mixed-use building in New York, and three residential towers in the Netherlands. Previously, Dubbeldam has worked with Bernard Tschumi and Peter Eisenman.



**MARGARET I.  
MCCURRY**

McCurry's career has led to numerous honors, including three national AIA Honor Awards for her residential designs and induction into the Interior Design Hall of Fame. A principal of the Chicago-based Tigerman McCurry, she is also a board member of the Chicago Architecture Foundation and one of ten Chicago architects invited to a major Art Institute of Chicago exhibition in 2004. Her widely published work underscores McCurry's belief that "harmonious, well-proportioned environments directly affect the quality of one's life and thereby one's ability to function effectively as a social animal."



**MARK  
ROBBINS**

Currently a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard, Robbins was director of design at the National Endowment for the Arts from 1999 to 2002, where he aggressively expanded the program. Robbins's architectural work has been exhibited at such venues as the Adelaide Festival in Australia and the Museum of Modern Art in Saitama, Japan. Previously, Robbins was architecture curator for the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio; exhibits there included "House Rules," which paired theorists and architects to explore the mythology and form of the single-family home.



**WILLIAM P.  
BRUDER**

A self-taught architect, Bruder opened his own studio in the desert outside Phoenix in 1974. There he designed more than 400 projects, including many residences, according to a philosophy that views architecture as a "functional fine art based on site and user needs." Employing natural materials and solar orientation as guiding principles, his work unites the language of Frank Lloyd Wright, Bruce Goff, and European modernism; the results have earned him more than 50 awards. Before starting his practice, Bruder studied sculpture and worked under the tutelage of Paolo Soleri and Gunnar Birkerts.



**MICHAEL  
ROTONDI**

Principal and founding partner of RoTo Architects in Los Angeles, Rotondi also teaches at SCI-Arc and Arizona State University. A founder and director of SCI-Arc, Rotondi's primary interest is in exploring how the concepts and methods of educational and professional practice can find common ground within the discipline of architecture, through mentoring and structured institutional experiences. Many RoTo Architects projects have been published; their current work includes an experimental theater complex, a school of architecture, a large regional park, and numerous houses.



# < EASY LIVING >

a couple of architects kick back in hollywood.

With its “cocktail pool,” bar-cum-kitchen, and Japanesque garden, this house at the busy Los Angeles intersection of South Highland and Olympic avenues has the calm and cool of a Palm Springs resort.

In some residential communities, corner lots are coveted, but not at this Hollywood crossroads. Yet, architects Linda Pollari and Robert Somol saw this vacant lot as an opportunity to design an urban oasis that embraces the cacophony of L.A. traffic at its doorstep. Eschewing references to the static 1920s homes nearby, they created a house that is literally a contextual response to the street.

When first looking for a home, Pollari and Somol had considered existing houses, but frustrated by the mediocrity of what was available at their price level, they decided to design their own place. They didn't splurge on materials and got a good deal on the lot. At \$178 per square foot, their house had a modest budget compared to most of the residential commissions they have received.

Though practicing architects, both Pollari and Somol consider themselves educators foremost: Pollari teaches at Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, while Somol teaches at the UCLA School of Architecture. As academics, Pollari and Somol engage in architectural theory to pay the bills. This is not to say they don't sometimes bridle against it.

“Architects have made a fetish of difficulty: the ironic layers of PoMo, the heroic expression of Hi-Tech, the tortured criticality of Deco, the geometric intricacy of digital organicism,” wrote Pollari X Somol, or PXS, as their firm is called, in a project brief. Off-Use, their name for the house, “gets the job done without breaking a sweat,” they wrote. “Architecture today may become more effective by taking it easy.”

PXS took advantage of the almost 8,000-square-foot corner lot—not by setting the house back as an object on the lawn, but by building as close as they could to the lot line on the south side, along Olympic. Largely clad in galvanized steel, the house has three main spaces lined up from east to west: an architects' office, a kitchen/dining/living area, and a bedroom. PXS describes it alternately as a “ranch-loft” or a “one-room motel.”

With a slightly irregular site, the house and carport together have an obliquely set, L-shaped footprint. PXS describe the house and its landscape as a series of intertwined swooshes, taking their initial cue from the Nike-logo shape of the house's plan. Somol concedes that the Nike branding was an afterthought, simply a graphic likeness.

The South Highland façade, a mustard-colored stucco, melds with its Spanish Colonial bungalow neighbors, but it is the side of the house along Olympic that transcends its own genus by referencing the buses that stop there. This façade, an elongated, corrugated metal wall, echoes the horizontality of the city bus. Extending from the office into the living area, the ribbon windows hit just at the level of passing bus windows, suggesting the house will morph into an Air Stream and head down Olympic to make the green light.

Through the carport on South Highland, the main entrance opens into the architects' office, where the ribbon windows hits at eye level when seated; on the other side of the room, standing visitors and clients can watch the traffic whir past the bookcases above and below

the windows. The bookcases in this space have been given a double mission. “One noise masks another,” say the designers, referring to the visual noise of the book bindings turned out to the room, while the mass of the books act as a noise absorber blocking the outside din. (The couple even went to the Salvation Army to beef up their library and increase insulation.) As the books absorb sound, so the house buffers the lawn from sound.

Like the ribbon windows, which are metaphorically elevated to the role of a racing stripe on the exterior, the adjacent guest bathroom also pays homage to speed, copying the proportions of the ribbon windows both for the bathroom mirror and the decorative tile in the shower. The kitchen is as unobtrusive an interjection into the main living space as it could be. A stainless-steel fridge, stove, and sink procured from a restaurant supply store sit against the interior wall that separates the studio and living spaces, while laminate cabinets and countertop emerge from the concrete floor to create an island. Though minimalist, there is a variety of texture throughout the house which PXS dubs “material sampling.”

The landscaping, when fully grown, will squelch sound as well. Pampas and fountain grass ring the periphery of the house; Tangerine Beauty sets its tentacles into the chain-link fence that separates the carport from the entrance to the property. And as the chain-link forms a physical barrier, the razor-sharp leaves of the fluffy pampas will also create a barbed-wire effect.

By far the most compelling aspect of the design, however, is the indoor/outdoor room created when a series of glass doors running the length of the living area are slid all the way open. The interior concrete floors extend outside; both the interior and exterior peripheries of the house are set with the same in-ground lighting. The lawn furniture, too, straddles the categories of indoor and outdoor, and literally sits on the division between inside and out. The dexterity of this edge is further marked by the oval paving—made of eye-catching blue stones—that extend outdoors.

In contrast to the Nike swoosh, the architects superimposed oval motifs throughout the property: Visitors park their cars over an oval patch of turf set in the concrete of the driveway, they step under an oval skylight as they enter the carport; and they pass through the entrance into the office with its commanding orange oval conference table.

Stepping out into the lawn, the oval motif evolves into swirls and swooshes. Another oval—this time of blue egg-shaped stones—defines a miniature Japanesque garden among the cacti. A cocktail pool will eventually grace the amoeba-shaped lawn, giving the backyard a retro feel. While it may not have been the intent, the reality is that PXS has created an urban oasis conducive to hours of poolside architectural theorizing.

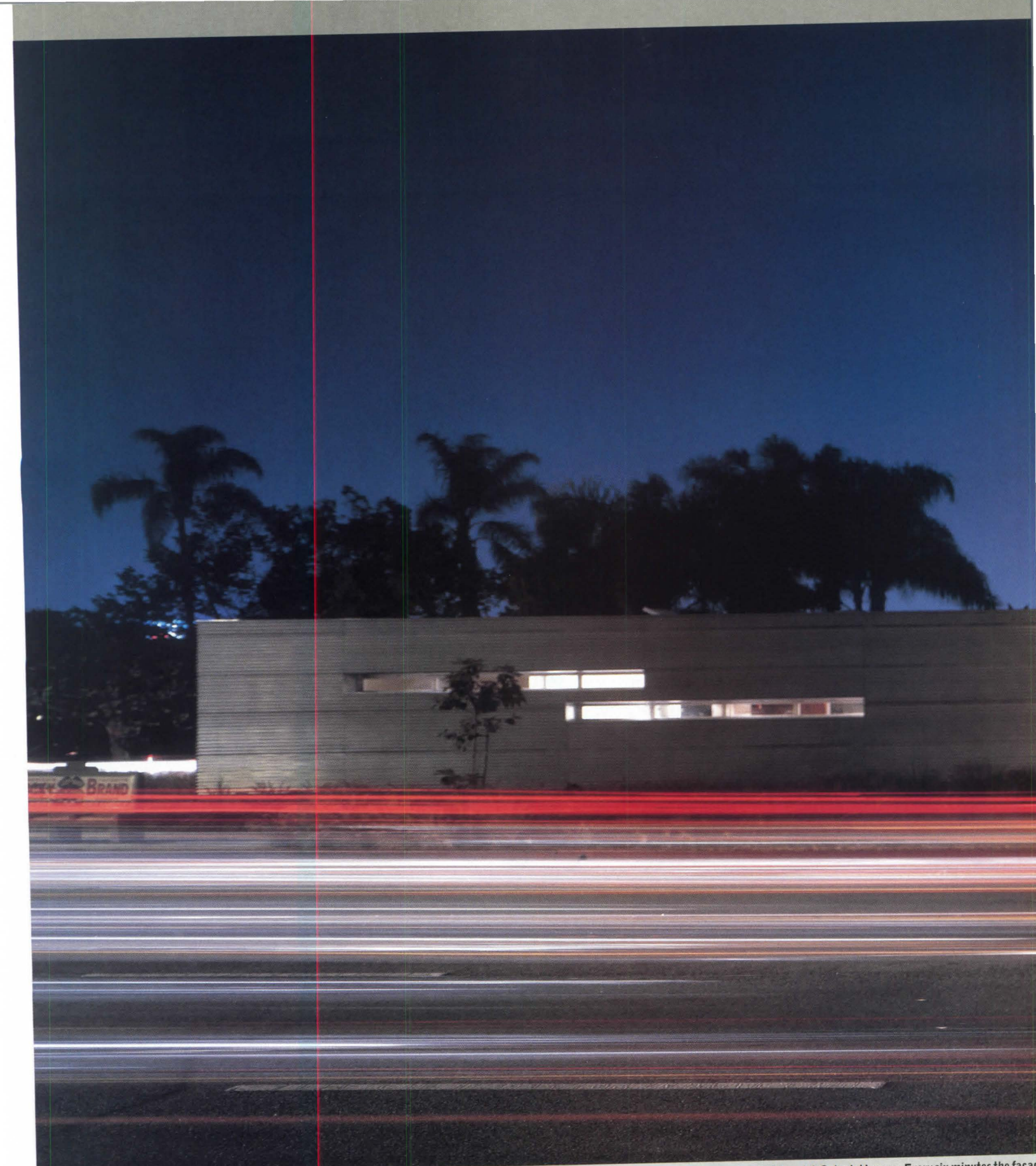
Says PXS of Off-Use, “Its ambition is to encourage the pleasures of diverse lifestyles by amplifying the cool discipline of modernism with the relaxed excesses of mass culture. *Beinahe nichts* meets *la dolce vita*.” But regardless of how it fits into architectural history, the house works with or without a verbal explanation—it doesn't need instructions. **BAY BROWN**





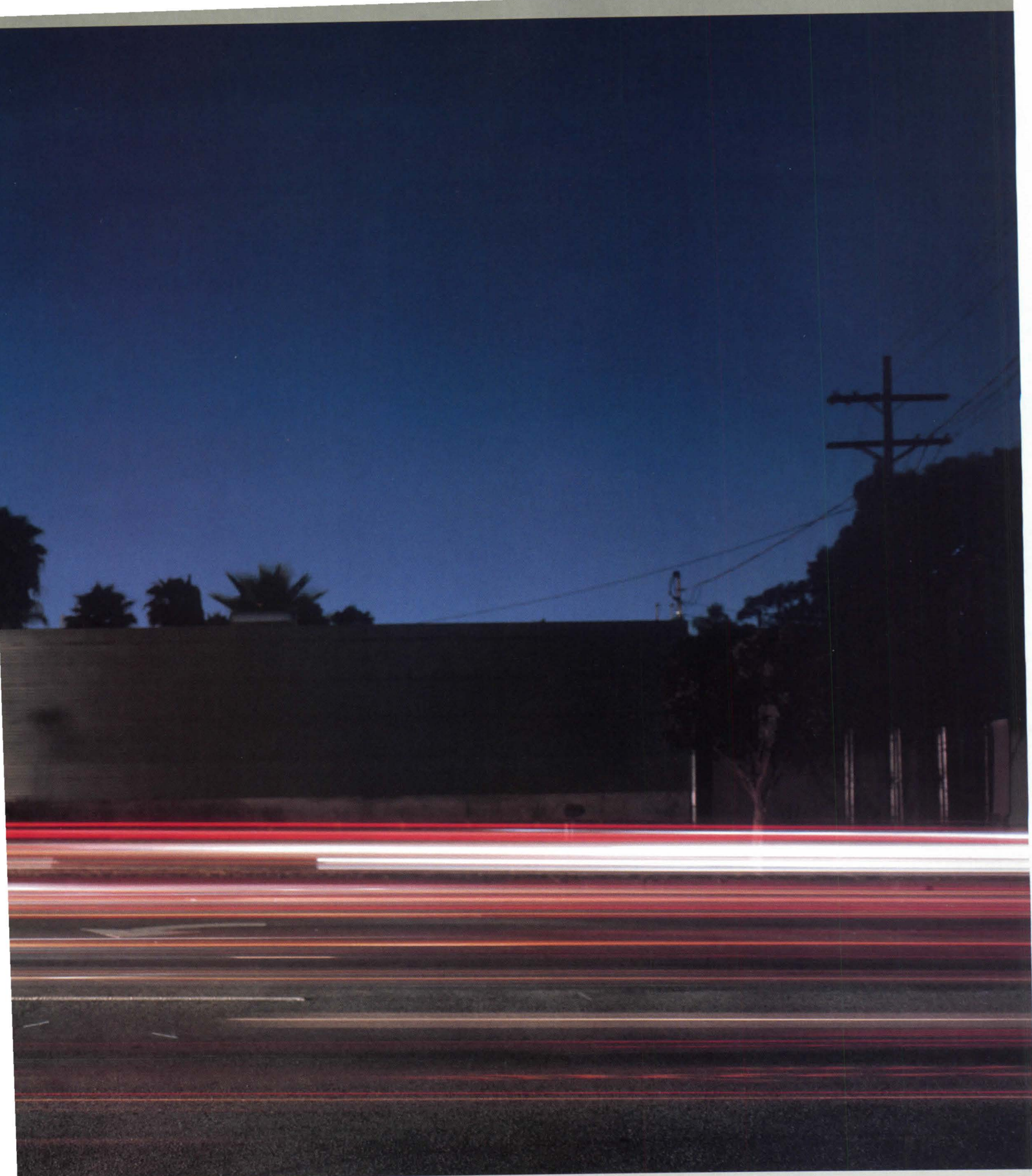
To allow the bookshelves and ribbon windows to be flush on the interior required the construction of two walls.





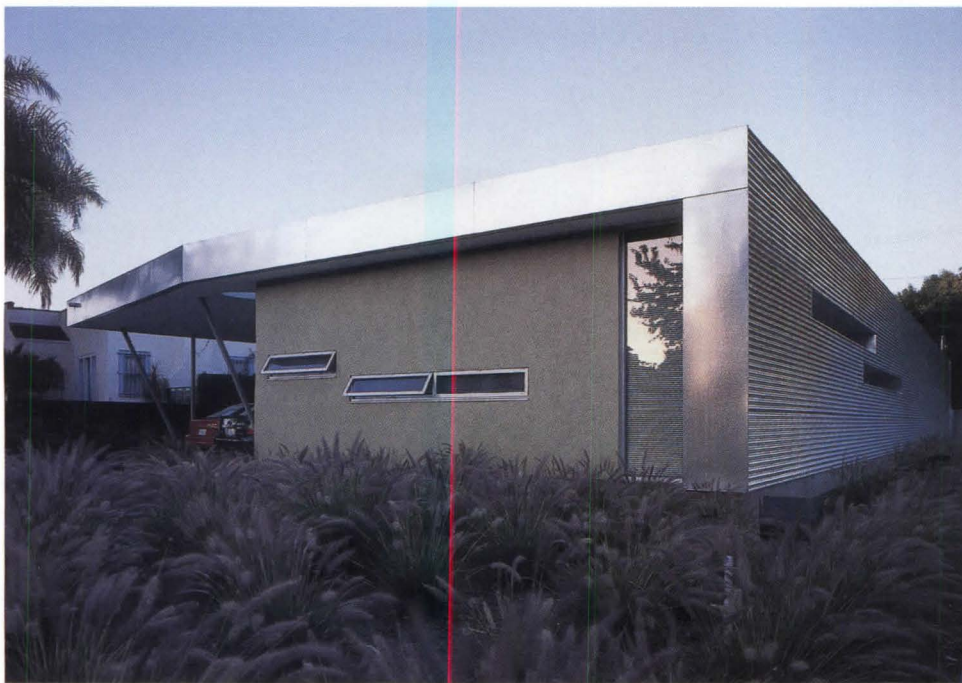
For passersby at South Highland and Olympic Avenues, the house has already taken on an iconic status for its foreign presence in a neighborhood of Spanish Colonial homes. Every six minutes the façade





ked when the local bus stops to pick up passengers and the windows of bus and house overlap.





Staggered windows and streamlined planes give the house a compelling compositional texture.



The architects superimposed oval motifs throughout the site.

**OFF-USE HOUSE, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

**CLIENT:** Linda Pollari and Robert Somol **ARCHITECT:** Pollari X Somol **ARCHITECTURAL PROJECT TEAM:** Linda Pollari and Robert Somol **ENGINEERS:** Efficient Consulting Engineers (structural); Rusher Air Conditioning (M/E/P) **CONSULTANTS:** John Brubaker (lighting) **GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** Roman Janczak Construction **SUBCONTRACTORS:** Bryan Griffin Construction (wood framing); Joe Ziola (structural steel); Custom Metal Specialities (sheet metal); Octagon Roofing; James Noland Plastering (stucco); Mitch Griffin (electrical), Ron Vogel (ceramic tile); BuiltRite Fence **CONSTRUCTION MANAGER:** Michael Cormier (job superintendent) **AREA:** 1,860 square feet **BUILDING COST:** \$331,000

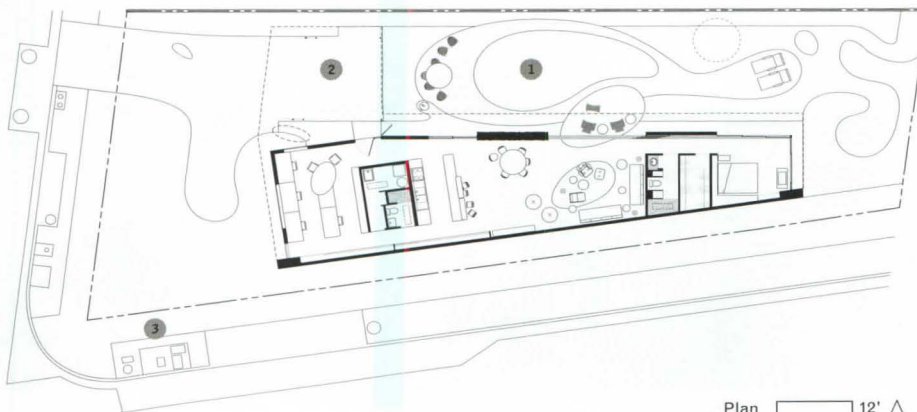
**PHOTOGRAPHY: DEBORAH BIRD**

**SPECIFICATIONS**

**EXTERIOR CLADDING:** McElroy Metal (corrugated galvanized sheet metal); Highland Stucco **AWNING WINDOWS:** Metal Window Corporation **SKYLIGHTS:** Lane-Aire **HOLLOW METAL DOOR:** J.W. Door **ALUMINUM SLIDING DOORS:** Fleetwood Aluminum Products **HARDWARE:** Schlage (locksets); Hafele (cabinet hardware) **CABINET AND CUSTOM WOODWORK:** Systems 32 **PAIN AND STAINS:** Cabot Stains, Benjamin Moore (paint); Besson Auto Body (custom automotive paint) **WALLCOVERINGS:** Daltile **LIGHTING:** Designplan (uplights); RSA Lighting (downlights); Designplan, Lumiere (exterior); Nelson ("bubble lamps") **CURTAIN TRACK SYSTEM:** Brooklyn Iron Works **PLUMBING FIXTURES:** Kohler (lavatories, water closets); Dornbracht (faucets); Chicago Faucets (faucets); Paramount (commercial stainless-steel sinks)



An almost diaphanous vinyl curtain is at once indoors and outdoors.



- ① pool
- ② carport
- ③ bus stop





With the sliding glass doors open, inside and outside become one room. When complete, the cocktail pool will be just feet from the kitchen-counter-cum-bar.



# <WAYS AND MEANS>

on a quiet toronto alley, a new house inspires a new life.



Claire Ironside is a pragmatist. But that doesn't mean she expects little from herself or life. "It's about having a sense of how you want to live, and not having a lot of money and having ideas," she says. "I come from an ethic where you can live well off the remnants, whether it's secondhand clothing or a piece of land people see as valueless—it all comes from the same place. Cities are great for that. They're constantly churning things over." Ironside built this ethic into her life when she decided to construct a smart modern house on a Toronto alley—or "lane way," as local residents call them—for a mere \$120,000 (Canadian).

Ironside was working as an urban designer for the Toronto Planning Department, administering its public art program, when she acquired a 1,500-square-foot lot with an abandoned cottage, existing utilities, and residential zoning. With a long history of mixed incomes and uses in the extensive residential areas in its urban core, Toronto is rich in modest nineteenth-century cottages and workshop buildings. As the central city has become increasingly desirable, so have lane-way lots. "I began thinking about lane ways long before acquiring this lot," Ironside says.

Ironside wanted to update this urban model to suit the life of a professional, single (at the time) woman, so she turned to Donald Schmitt, principal of Diamond and Schmitt Architects, her friend for almost 20 years. Initially, Schmitt proposed a three-story tower in the rear corner of the lot, to preserve open space, with a small wrap-around front yard. The height met resistance both from the city and the neighbors, so architect and client went back to the drawing board.

The design that was eventually built is a simple, L-shaped house that abuts the quiet lane, with an enclosed garden in the back, and a single parking space concealed behind an elegant wood-slatted sliding gate. A staircase bisects the flat-roofed house, splitting the legs of the L into two distinct zones. On the first floor, the stairs separate the generous living room from the galley kitchen and large dining room. The north-facing living and dining rooms both open onto the

small garden (which Ironside designed) through large windows. A half bath is tucked underneath the stairs.

On the second floor, the rooms are again separated by the stairs, which this time occupy an exterior channel leading to the roof and dramatic views of the Toronto skyline. The master bedroom takes the place of the living room. A large studio (that Ironside eventually plans to convert into two bedrooms) takes the place of the kitchen and dining room.

In keeping with Ironside's ethic, Schmitt integrated doors from Toronto's now-demolished Salvation Army building designed by John B. Parkin in the 1950s. Wrightian-style benches, which she salvaged from the building's chapel, serve as seating in the dining room. Custom cabinets of medium-density fiberboard were designed by a local cabinetmaker who has long worked with Schmitt. These substantial pieces add texture to the interior, which otherwise is fitted with simple finishes and off-the-shelf fixtures.

The street side of the house is clad in rugged concrete panels, punctured by small windows above the sight lines of pedestrians. "It's like an oyster with a tough shell," Ironside laughs. "You have to get inside to get the pearl." The interior of the house, which now includes a husband and son, will continue to evolve within the framework Schmitt established. Future plans include subdividing the studio, adding a deck on the roof and a small pond in the garden, and finishing a portion of the basement that was purposely designed with high ceilings.

Ironside will likely oversee these modifications herself. Shortly after the house was built, she called Schmitt to ask for a recommendation—for architecture school. She is now completing an advanced design degree at the University of Toronto.

But completing the house with the means available to her has proven the most satisfying outcome. "It's absolutely surreal," she says, "when we sit out in the garden at night, and we look up at our little piece of sky." **ALAN G. BRAKE**





The tough façade of One Ways Lane includes a sliding gate that conceals a single parking space. The house is a mere 18 inches from the street.





A stairway divides the living room from the kitchen and dining room.



The spare garden was designed by the client.

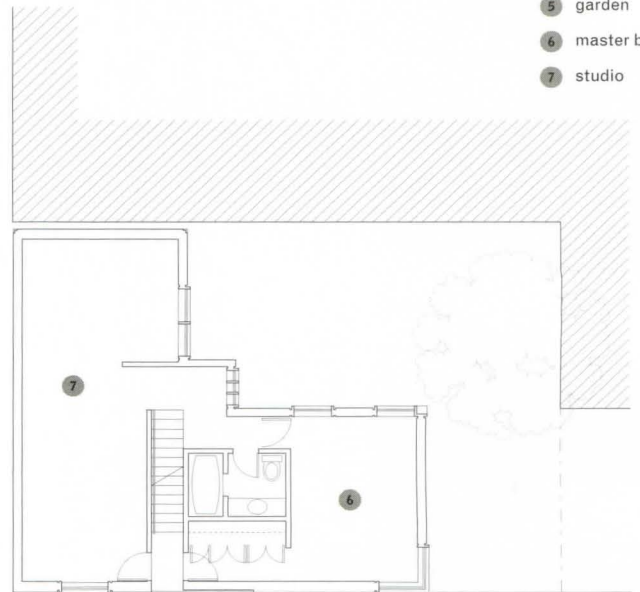
ONE WAYS LANE, TORONTO, CANADA  
 CLIENT: Claire Ironside ARCHITECT: Diamond and Schmitt Architects, Toronto—Donald Schmitt (principal), Courtney Henry LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Claire Ironside GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Ed Gaigalas AREA: 1,500 square feet COST: \$120,000 (Canadian)

PHOTOGRAPHER: STEVEN EVANS

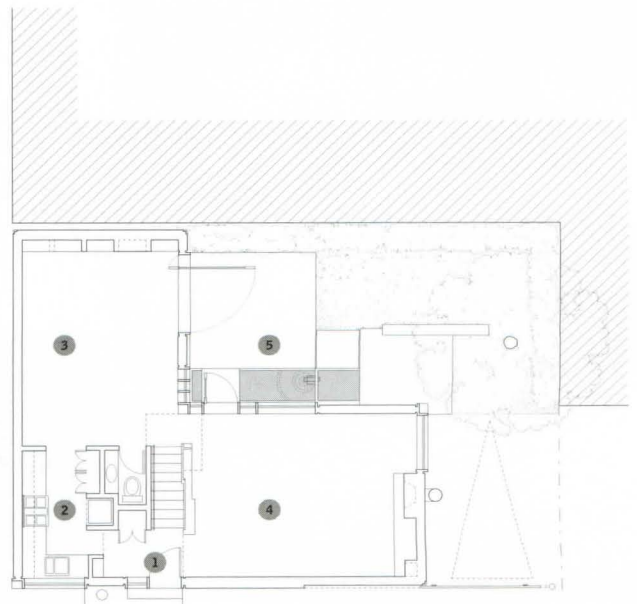
SPECIFICATIONS

CABINETS: Radiant City Millwork EXTERIOR CLADDING: Cemfort LIGHTING: Lutron PLUMBING FIXTURES: American Standard

- 1 entrance
- 2 kitchen
- 3 dining room
- 4 living room
- 5 garden
- 6 master bedroom
- 7 studio



Second-floor plan



Ground-floor plan 17' Δ



## <UNBUILDING>

demolition reconsidered

Before the new house was built at One Ways Lane, there was an "unbuilding." Architect/artists Paul Raff and David Warne had been looking for an abandoned building on which they could perform a burial or "ritual demolition." When they heard about Claire Ironside's plans for One Ways Lane, they knew they had the perfect site. The tiny Victorian cottage, which had been abandoned for many years, contained artifacts from its original owners—a family that had occupied the house since it was built 100 years ago. Before beginning their demolition, Raff and Warne carefully removed all artifacts, like old photographs and newspapers, along with the windows of the house, and reconstructed them as exactly as possible in a nearby gallery. The goal was to recreate a final view of the inside of the house, including the views outside. Raff and Warne then cut the house in half along its roofline and excavated underneath the front (below). Slowly, they elevated one side of the front half of the cottage, so that by the end of the eight-month project it stood at a roughly 45-degree angle to the other half. The tilted side was largely submerged in the ground, as if laid to rest. "This single house was," says Raff, "in its own way, a single life." ALAN G. BRAKE



The back of One Ways Lane is more transparent than the tough street side, offering generous light and garden views.



# <ART HOUSE>

two graphic designers and their family feel right at home in western new england, where the creative life is a tradition.



Northwestern Connecticut, like the Berkshire Mountains in Massachusetts just to the north, has long appealed to the creative class, those artists and authors seeking big skies, limitless space, and the natural beauty of the land. The Berkshires are a well-known retreat for luminaries present and past, from writer Edith Wharton and Lincoln Memorial sculptor Daniel Chester French to dancer Ted Shawn and film critic Pauline Kael. The towns and villages of the Berkshire foothills in Connecticut are less familiar but still rich in cultural characters, from the chamber musicians who have presented summer concerts at Music Mountain for nearly three-quarters of a century to muralist Ezra Winter.

Although his name is obscured by history, Winter's legacy is getting a quiet revival, thanks to the efforts of graphic designers Jessica Helfand and William Drenttel, who took ownership of the artist's 1931 house and studio three years ago and are writing his biography. The designers' presence is part of an arts continuum not only in the region, but also in the very building where Winter (1886-1949) created some of his major commissions, including a 1932 mural for the lobby of Radio City Music Hall. Winter's 150-acre, heavily wooded compound, revitalized by Michael Morris and Yoshiko Sato of Morris Sato Studio in Manhattan, is once again at work: The new owners operate their own businesses—Winterhouse Editions, a publishing house (see View, page 104), and Winterhouse Studio, a graphic design firm—and live there year-round.

This part of New England is stocked with clapboard-sided farmhouses and Colonial-style homesteads; the Winter property stands out as one of the few proto-modern residences in the Berkshire region. (Only one other design comes to mind: the 1930s Frelinghuysen-Morris estate in Lenox, Massachusetts. Built by abstract artists, the main house was Bauhaus-inspired, while the attached studio was influenced by Le Corbusier's Ozenfant Studio in Paris.) Winter is believed to have designed his live-work building, although no documentation is known to exist. The no-nonsense design has, despite modifications by subsequent owners and years of neglect, retained its original clarity. With Loosian massing and unadorned stucco-clad exterior walls punctuated by little more than gridded windows, the building comprises a low-slung rectilinear residential wing to the west and a massive, upright box of a studio—

with a triple-height ceiling—to the east. Morris Sato had a clear, if challenging, road map on its hands.

"We wanted to connect people through time," say the architects. The renovation of the 7,000-square-foot live-work space, named Winterhouse by the new owners, required that the necessities of modern living be introduced in harmony with the building's original design and function. Mechanical, plumbing, and septic system upgrades were instituted. Fiberglass awnings were added to the studio entrance. The roofing and stucco cladding were replaced, and an exterior wall of asbestos shingles was stripped and reclad. Windows were replaced. Narrow horizontal and vertical openings were punched through the south façade and glazed to resolve the illogical placement of fenestration added during a modernization project by the property's second owners (the Lathrop sisters, a sculptor and a children's book author).

While the architects also refurbished the wood-paneled rooms of Winterhouse's living quarters, making few visible modifications, their main task lay in the rehabilitation of the studio and the definition of the threshold between living and work spaces. The studio's original open-plan footprint was partially co-opted to expand the residential wing made after Winter's death. Still expansive, the room was in bad shape when the owners and their architects arrived on the scene. Its exposed terra-cotta-block walls needed significant repair and concrete-block reinforcement before gypsum board could be applied. The 32-foot-high ceiling, its rafters cleaned and repaired, was left exposed, a reminder of the original design. Long, artificially lit vertical channels were added to the corners of the studio to relieve the darkness created by the great height of the room. Once warmed by fireplace alone, the house received unobtrusive radiant-heat flooring. Cables for the studio's digital hub were also run through the concrete floor slab to accommodate the clients' directive to hide all wiring. This made the studio more about the hand than the computer, say the architects—a nod to the work of the original resident.

By adding a multilevel mezzanine, Morris Sato leveraged the full expanse of the studio space, establishing both distinct functional precincts and strong sight lines out to the surrounding landscape. Conceived as a folding plane pulled out from the west wall, the mezza-





The north façade is dominated by gridded, three-story windows (facing page, left, and above), while the south façade (facing page, right), which parallels the road, is predominantly opaque.

nine holds Drenttel's office at mid-level and up a second run of steps, Helfand's space: He works within arm's reach of the couple's vast book collection—800 linear feet worth, according to the architects' estimate; she gets a view outdoors that meets the rise of the hill on which the building sits. The ground plane of the studio is given over to a group work area, a conference table, the digital hub, and storage space. The wall of books—which required extra reinforcement to support the owners' hefty stock of printed matter—delineates the line between the public and pri-

vate wings of the house; the two spaces are connected only by a thick sliding door at the northwest corner of the studio.

The natural beauty of western New England has grown in popularity in recent years, drawing many to clear land for ego-sized homes. In contrast, Jessica Helfand and William Drenttel chose to revive an existing structure. Like the cultural figures *who found inspiration in the Berkshire* region before them, the tradition of the artist working alongside nature continues uninterrupted. **ABBY BUSSEL**





A "digital hub" and storage room sit below the mezzanine.



The studio has exposures to the north, south, and east.

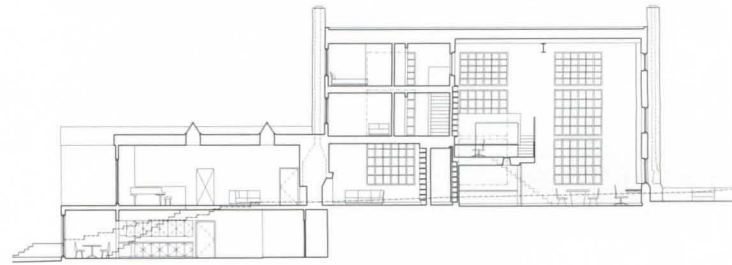
WINTERHOUSE, NORTHWESTERN CONNECTICUT

CLIENT: Jessica Helfand and William Drenttel ARCHITECT: Morris Sato Studio, New York City—Michael Morris, Yoshiko Sato (principals); Aaron Neubert (project architect); Seiee Kim, Gabriel Pons (assistants) STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Brian E. Neff GENERAL CONTRACTOR: John Atcheley and Peter Wolfe SUBCONTRACTORS/SUPPLIERS: American Fiberglass, Edeleman Metalworks AREA: 7,000 square feet

PHOTOGRAPHER: MICHAEL MORAN

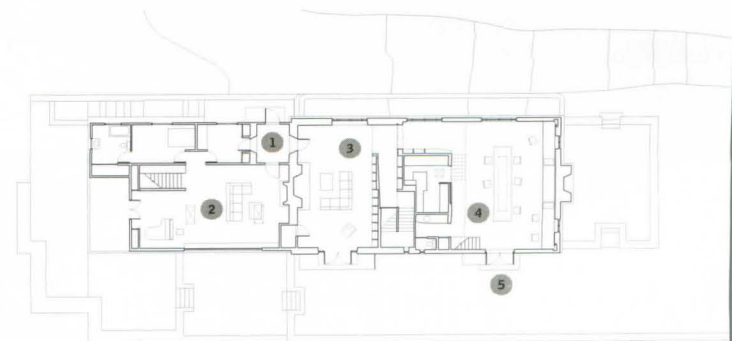
SPECIFICATIONS

CONCRETE: Cement stucco with Thorocoat sealant SKYLIGHTS AND METAL-DOOR GLAZING: EFCO LOCKSETS: Omnia HINGES: Rixon-Firemark, Colonial, SOSS SLIDING TRACKS: Haeffle, Grant CABINET HARDWARE: Blum PAINTS AND STAINS: Benjamin Moore, Cabot INTERIOR AMBIENT LIGHTING: Stonco DOWNLIGHTS: Lightolier, Tech Lighting TASK LIGHTING: Artemide, Leader UPLIGHTS AND SPECIALTY LIGHTING: Lithonia CEILING FANS: Emerson (studio), The Modern Fan Company (library) DIMMERS: Lutron PLUMBING FIXTURES: Kohler, Chicago Faucet



Section

- ① residential entrance
- ② family room
- ③ living room
- ④ studio
- ⑤ studio entrance



Plan



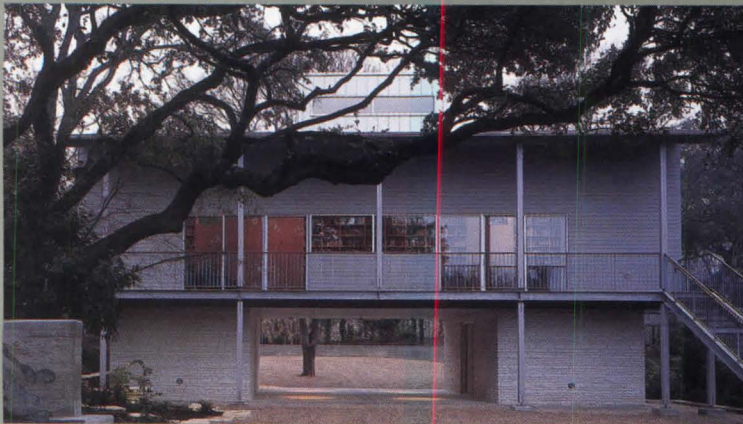


The division between the living and work wings of the house is marked by a sliding door and a change in flooring from wood to concrete.



# < ELEVATED STUDY >

a quiet home addition provides space for contemplation.



In a time when architects have become stars and their recognizable styles have become personal brands, it is refreshing to see a well-known and respected designer like Carlos Jimenez create a building that is informed more by its clients' needs and the context of its site than by a signature formal gesture. The private library and guest accommodation Jimenez has designed for Melba and Ted Whatley in Austin, Texas, is a material manifestation of its owners' values: Its architectural sophistication, elegance, and erudition express, in a poignant and poetic manner, the couple's longstanding commitment to the pursuit of learning. A simple, gracious home addition, the project embodies a striking symbiosis of architecture and life that is unusual in residential design today—especially in the rarefied world of high-design houses.

The Jimenez addition houses a 9,000-volume library that reflects the Whatleys' diverse areas of interest. Ted is a former headmaster of a private boys school and an outspoken voice for educational reform; Melba is a successful businesswoman, community activist, and an architectural patron and client for a museum and a landmark home in Dallas, both designed by Edward Larabee Barnes. The book collection they have amassed together spans fields ranging from literature and politics to education and architecture.

The programmatic challenge was not only to build a serene, contemplative place for books, conversation, and thought, but in so doing, to be considerate of an already impressive architectural context. The Whatleys' existing house, designed in 1983 by Hal Box (then dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin) is organized by a biaxial, Kahnian plan. Originally, a car court separated the building from a less formal pool and guest quarters. The compound, with buildings rendered in stone, was burrowed into a Texas hill-country thicket, invisible from the street and neighbors' houses. The site was compositionally complete just as it was.

Respectfully distancing himself from Box's original house, Jimenez floated the 2,400-square-foot library/guesthouse above the old car court, creating a direct link between the main house and its outbuildings. The open space beneath the library became an almost incidental carport, flanked by small stone-clad rooms (one a guest room and exercise space, the other a gardener's shed) that serve as piers to sup-

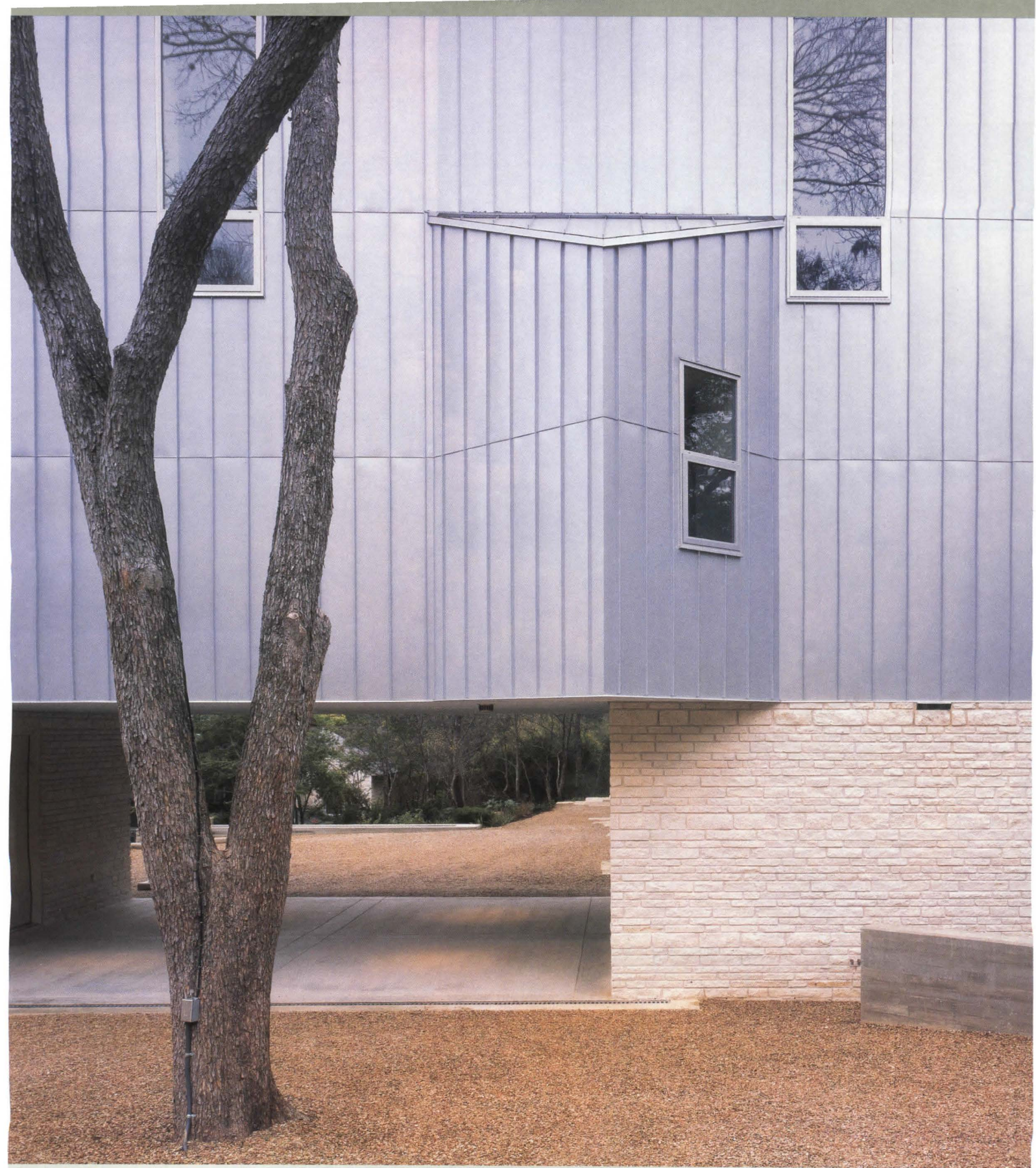
port the library's span. Very little new ground space was claimed by the addition, as the car court continued to play its original role. The sense of privacy and seclusion within the thicket was also retained, despite the presence of a strong and sizable new element.

In his treatment of materials, Jimenez took cues from the existing house, but also melded these with fresh, new directions. The stone piers roughly match the split-face local limestone used in the original house, but their surfaces are slightly crisper in execution, with deeply raked joints and meticulous coursing that reflect the tight precision in detail of the bridge above them. Standing-seam metal, a prominent feature in the pyramidal caps of the original house, is employed not only for the shallow monopitch roof of the library but also for its entire east façade. The angled top plane seems to fold down over the back face, creating a subtle interlocking of roof and wall. The other three exterior façades are tautly skinned in flat, lightly stained cypress siding. A composite wood and galvanized steel frame is exposed on the west-facing porch, executed with clean, careful detail. Stainless-steel acorn bolts, decking and handrails made of ipe (a rich South and Central American wood), and elegant proportions project a sense of care and refinement on the otherwise simple front.

But the project's real tour de force is the great open space of the library itself. Quiet and gracious, the room embodies timeless architectural values that transcend style or affectation. Proportions are studied and harmonious. Materials (knotty maple floor, clear maple shelves, white painted wallboard) are clean and simple. The light is generous and ethereal, drawn from clerestory windows incised into the taller eastern side of the roof pitch and projected from the lower western side. Inside, the staggered openings of the eastern and western windows arch toward one another across the gently curved ceiling, dropping a softened, diffused light into the room. There is a dignity and presence here that contrasts strikingly with many overwrought contemporary designer homes and the faux period mansions of the current conspicuous-consumption boom.

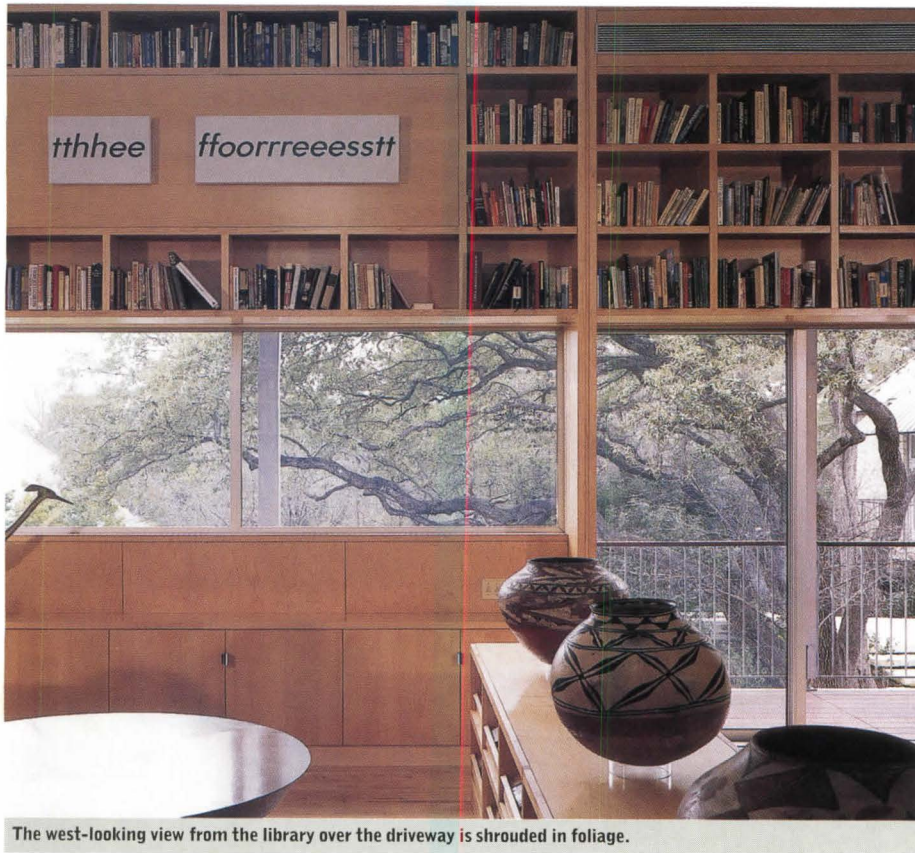
Jimenez and his clients have created an exemplary residential lesson in how to achieve quality without pretension. In the world of high-end residential building, this project is quietly rebellious in its modesty. **LAWRENCE W. SPECK**





The Whatleys' driveway approaches the western face of the library addition (facing page, left), pulling directly into a carport below. The library's north side and the guestroom below (facing page, right) face the main house. The library's bathroom (above) protrudes from its east façade, creating the sole interruption in an otherwise rectilinear building.





The west-looking view from the library over the driveway is shrouded in foliage.

WHATLEY HOUSE, AUSTIN, TEXAS

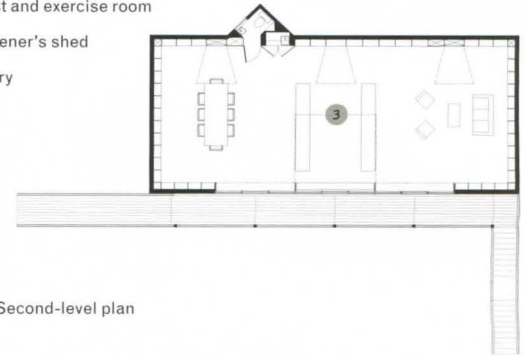
CLIENT: Melba and Ted Whatley ARCHITECT: Carlos Jimenez Studio, Houston, Texas—Carlos Jimenez (principal); Brian Kelly Burke, Alex O'Briant (project team) LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Gardens, Austin, Texas—James David (principal); William Bauer, Karen Retzler (project team) STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Jeffrey L. Smith, P.E. (principal); Melissa Lesh GENERAL CONTRACTOR: J. Pinnelli Company, Austin, Texas—J. Pinnelli (principal); Gary Buvenick (project manager) AREA: 2,400 square feet

PHOTOGRAPHER: PAUL HESTER

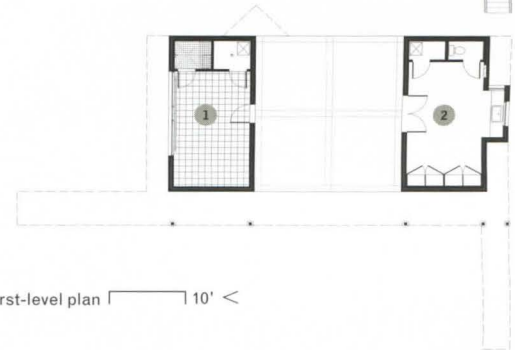
SPECIFICATIONS

EXTERIOR CLADDING: Berridge standing-seam Galvalume; sealed and stained cypress "lap-and-gap" siding; saw-cut limestone ROOFING: Berridge standing-seam Galvalume INSULATED GLAZING: Peerless LOCKSETS: Schlage CABINET HARDWARE: Colonial Bronze; Baldwin CUSTOM WOODWORK: Maple-veneer plywood GYPSUM-BOARD CEILING SYSTEM: Georgia Pacific PAINTS AND STAINS: Pratt & Lambert FLOORING: Tongue-and-groove maple SCREENS: Mecho Shade HVAC: MetalAire LIGHTING: Norbert Belfor (sconces); Lightolier (recessed track); Hubbell (exterior floodlights); Bega (recessed sconce path lighting) LIBRARY LADDER SYSTEM: Putnam Ladders PLUMBING FIXTURES: Kohler; American Standard; Elkay

- 1 guest and exercise room
- 2 gardener's shed
- 3 library



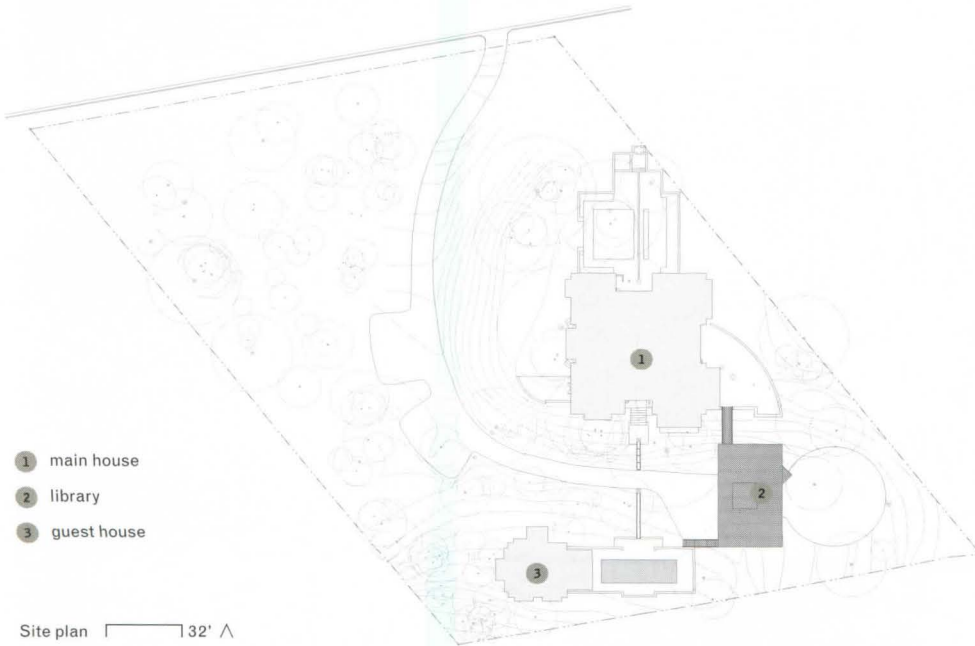
Second-level plan



First-level plan 10' <



North-south section 7'



- 1 main house
- 2 library
- 3 guest house

Site plan 32' ^





Clerestory windows function as skylights; the eastern openings are incised into the arched ceiling at a steeper angle than those on the western side.



# DOUBLE DUTCH

MVRDV SUBVERTS CONVENTIONAL HOUSING TYPOLOGIES WITH TWO PROJECTS IN THE NETHERLANDS.  
BY AARON BETSKY

The innovative Dutch firm with the unpronounceable name MVRDV got its start in 1991, when the three partners collaborated on the winning design for an apartment building in Berlin. They proposed a simple box crammed full of the maximum variety of apartment types they could think of, creating a three-dimensional maze of geometric puzzle pieces. Though the design was never built, MVRDV has since made a career of stuffing straightforward shapes with complex program elements to create labyrinthine interiors. Instead of “2-D planning,” they say, this gives them “3-D planning” that results in cheaply constructed but highly varied mixtures of types, spaces, and experiences. The buildings then become a reverse Pandora’s box, pouring all our dreams and fears into a simple shape and then proposing that we live there.

Two recent housing projects in the Netherlands illustrate the firm’s working method. While one—a solitary structure containing 157 apartments and work spaces in a tight rectilinear volume—is a pure illustration of the method they developed almost a decade ago, another extends the logic of their thinking to a suburban prototype of abstract “Monopoly houses.” In both cases, MVRDV seeks to replace what it notes as “fatigue with form” with a kind of pragmatic logic that produces surprisingly familiar, but startling structures.

## Big City Box: Silodam

Recently completed in downtown Amsterdam, Silodam looks like a traditional apartment building in its proportions, but the 10-story façade reflects the fact that it is a collection of four- to six-home “clusters,” each with its own size, arrangement, and façade. Fourteen of the units are subsidized rentals, while the others have been sold at market rate. The client, housing developer De Principaal, claims the design “balances the increased demand for individuality among urban dwellers” with “the need for community.” Certainly the interior spaces ranging from ground-level offices to three-story lofts that zigzag up through the block’s volume to single (and cramped) studios, offer young families, work-at-home professionals, and single yuppies (who immediately bought up all the units) a great deal of choice.

Yet, the interior spaces remain rather conventional. MVRDV worked with a variety of stairs and hallways to break up the monolithic public spaces that are the bane of many apartment buildings, but the results only succeed to a degree. What is most innovative about Silodam is its appearance.

Standing at the end of a quay on the IJ River, it is visible from almost



every angle, and the picture it presents is a collage of different cladding and window types. The composite façade brings to mind a host of different houses or apartment buildings one might have seen in Dutch cities. In this way, Silodam acts as a condenser of urban memories not only in its mixture of internal types, but also in the way outsiders see it.

## Small Suburban Boxes: Hagen Island

The competition-winning Hagen Island housing project, located on a former airfield at the eastern edge of The Hague, also calls up memories, but this time of pieces from the board game Monopoly or of children’s drawings of homes (minus the chimneys). The collection of 119 low-cost homes grouped into small blocks, each clad head-to-toe in a single material, is part of a community of 13,000 new homes built in the so-called “Vinex” model in the Netherlands. These new towns, most of them located on the edge of fast-growing cities, are part of a government initiative to encourage the construction of up to a million new homes by 2005, an effort to counter a housing shortage caused by increased immigration, family “thinning” (the effect of more people living independently, instead of in large families), and demands for more distinctive space.

Though they are popular with young families, many of these communities are soulless, isolated places. Frank van Beek, the partner in charge of Hagen Island for Aegon Property Development (now Amwest), “felt that in this area we needed to provide something new and unseen.” Such an attitude is surprisingly common among Dutch developers, who operate in a situation in which highly refined building methods and house prices set by the state provide limited ways to compete.

MVRDV’s experiment takes place in the lowest tier of the market: half of the houses are subsidized rentals, and the other half were sold at some of the lowest prices in the area. Built for about \$70,000 each, they were originally offered at around \$180,000. MVRDV decided to accept the standard Dutch way of building multiple dwelling units, in which parallel concrete walls define each house in a row; the structure is then filled in with standard window and wall systems and usually clad with brick. Imported from France in 1954 and since perfected, the system has been ubiquitous. The only internal move MVRDV made was to place the units symmetrically around their cores, so that the same plan could accommodate a market in which the two-parents/two-children model no longer rules.

At Hagen Island, MVRDV simply cut the row apart. Instead of one





MVRDV applies its singular vision in multifaceted ways: Walls and roofs are clad in monolithic materials at Hagen Island (1), one of ten neighborhoods in Ypenburg, a new suburb of The Hague. An industrial pier in Amsterdam is the site of Silodam (2), a live-work monolith dressed in a patchwork of materials and colors.



long line of houses (typical in neighboring developments), Hagen Island consists of a few units along the road, then a gap where one, two, or three units are pushed back into the middle of the block, and then a continuation of the row. This is done on the island's two long sides, thus filling in all the available space. Cars are kept to the block's perimeter.

The result is something that looks like an old-fashioned village, with each object sitting in space. A backyard can be next to a front yard, and there are paths and open spaces that unfold throughout the development. Standard garden sheds help anchor each individual plot.

The architects' next move was to deviate from standard brick cladding, but still give the houses a unified appearance. The materials include clay tiles, colored polyurethane, wood shingles, and zinc-aluminum panels. "We wanted to strengthen these simple, basic shapes that everybody knows," says MVRDV partner Winy Maas, "and give each a sculptural presence. The result looks a little like a Monopoly game, which is not so bad. They also give the little ornamental additions people make an almost theatrical quality, which we also like." Partner Jacob van Rijs adds, "We call it gutterless architecture,

because the gutter is now actually a strip of pebbles surrounding the house." For the occupants, the architects' desire to reduce the architecture to its most basic elements has the simple effect of making the houses both familiar and strange, and above all else, identifiable. "I live in the blue house," one renter proudly told me. Houses have resold at a 50 percent premium since they were first occupied in December 2001.

#### Community Building Blocks

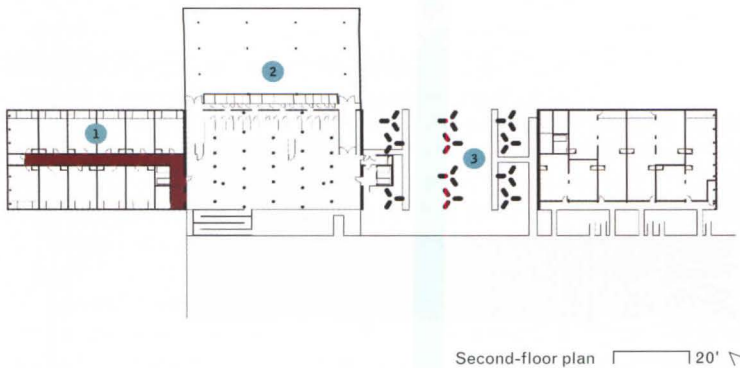
Taken together, Silodam and Hagen Island present two hopeful developments in Dutch housing. They both use standard building techniques to produce results that create variety within a communal and recognizable form. The projects show that cheap buildings do not have to be dull, and they make a case for the oft-derided modernist idea that people can form a community if you give them the simplest, most flexible, and most abstract building blocks.

With MVRDV poised to take on building projects outside the somewhat idiosyncratic Dutch housing market, one hopes their message will help invigorate the otherwise stagnant global pool of ideas about social and mass-produced housing. ■





Amsterdam's extensive waterfront acreage has been the object of rehabilitation since the 1980s, with many industrial piers given over to postindustrial functions. Silodam (7), built on an old downtown pier, provides occupants of its predominantly market-rate units with expansive views of the Ij River from roof decks (3), perimeter corridors (4), and individual living spaces (5). Like its multi-clad façades, the block's interior hallways have distinctive colors, including red (6), blue, and yellow.



Sixth-floor plan

- ① offices
- ② public terrace
- ③ dock
- ④ apartments



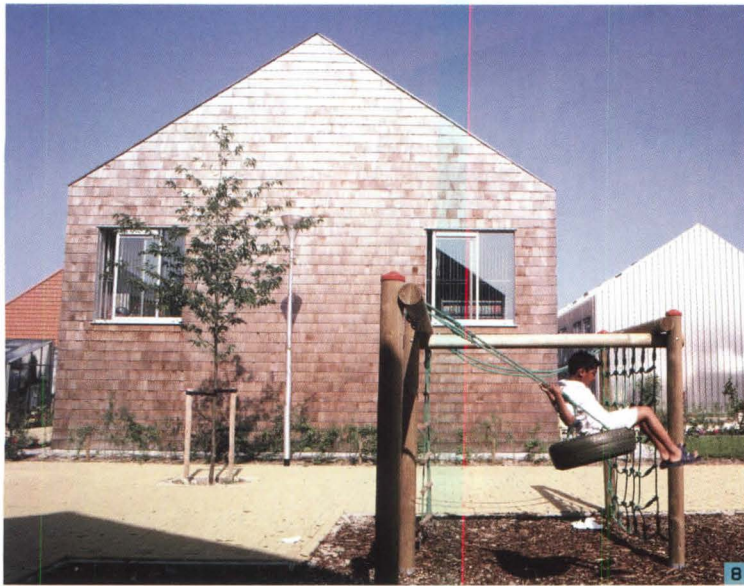


**SILODAM, AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS**

**CLIENT:** Rabo Vastgoed, Utrecht, De Principaal B.V., Amsterdam; Bouwcombinatie Graansilo's vof, Amsterdam **ARCHITECT:** MVRDV, Rotterdam—Winy Maas, Jacob van Rijs, and Nathalie de Vries with Tom Mossel, Joost Glissenaar, Alex Brouwer, Ruby van den Munckhof, Joost Kok (competition team); Winy Maas, Jacob van Rijs and Nathalie de Vries with Frans de Witte, Willem Timmer, Eline Strijkers, Duzan Doepel, Bernd Felsingier (design team) **EXECUTIVE ARCHITECT:** Office for Achitectoral Engineering, Bureau Bouwkunde **ENGINEER:** Pieters Bouwtechniek **SERVICES:** Cauberg Huygen

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** ROB D'HART

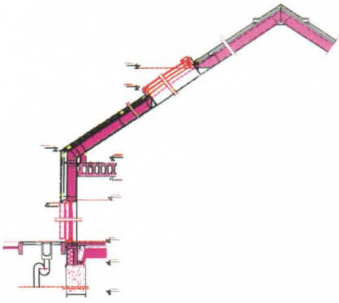




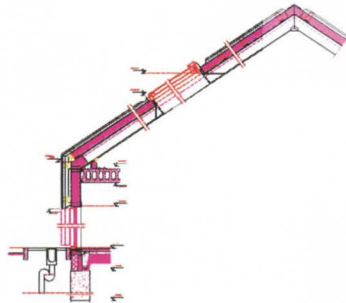
At Hagen Island, a 119-unit, moderate-income housing development built on former marshland, the architects make the generic unique with skins that start at the peak of the roof and end where the house meets ground (8). Though the details the firm developed to allow it to use roofing materials like clay tiles (10) as siding have performed well, there have been problems with water seepage around doorbells and windowsills. Hedges and fences (9) have been added in defiance of residency guidelines.



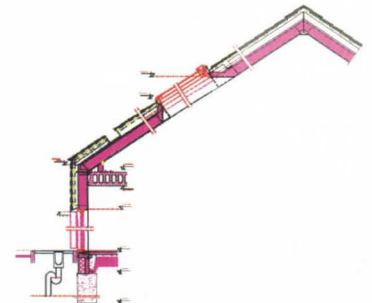




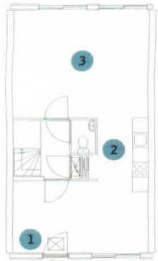
Roof/partial-wall section, polyurethane cladding



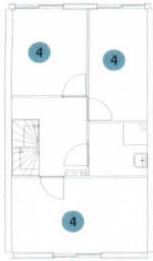
Roof/partial-wall section, aluminum cladding



Roof/partial-wall section, shingles



Typical first-floor plan



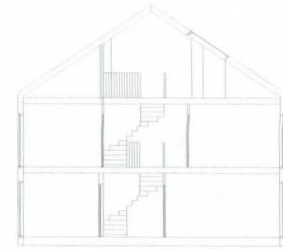
Second-floor plan



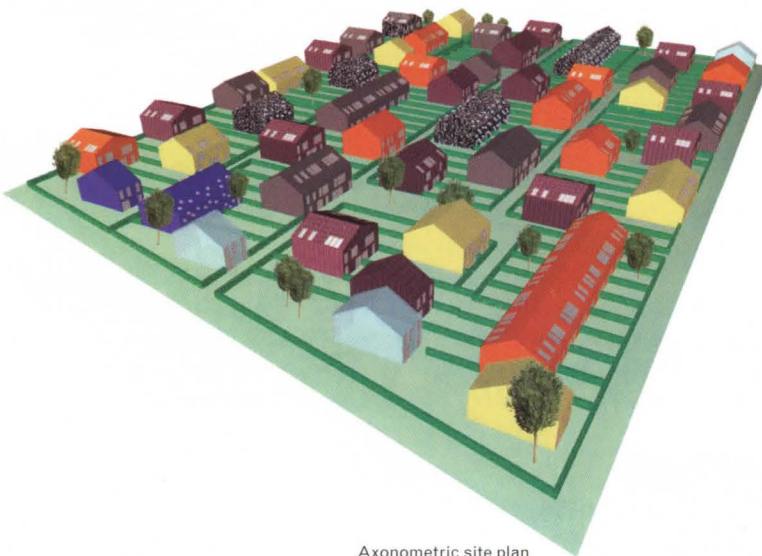
Third-floor plan

- 1 entrance
- 2 kitchen
- 3 living room
- 4 bedroom
- 5 multipurpose

10'



Section 10'



Axonometric site plan



Cladding variations





11



12

Each house has a translucent corrugated fiberglass garden/storage shed (11), which repeats the basic house shape at a smaller scale. "You can see exactly how messy or organized somebody is, which increases the sense of community," says MVRDV principal Winy Maas, only slightly in jest. Houses are organized around shared open spaces (12) and walkways, providing an informal layer of security, while individual lots get distinctive accoutrements installed by residents (13).

HAGEN ISLAND, YPENBURG, THE NETHERLANDS

CLIENT: Aegon Property Development (now Amwest) ARCHITECT: MVRDV, Rotterdam—Winy Maas, Jacob van Rijs and Nathalie de Vries with Tom Mossel, Carolien Ligtenberg and Christelle Gualdi (competition design); Winy Maas, Jacob van Rijs and Nathalie de Vries with Renske van der Stoep, Bart Spee, Tom Mossel and Frans de Witte (preliminary design) BUILDING ADVISORS: Bureau Bouwkunde STRUCTURE: ABT

PHOTOGRAPHER: ROB D'HART









# light touch

a prefabricated house in finland illuminates the need for urban solutions supporting diverse family configurations, community, and the environment.

by c.c. sullivan

Intended for urban settings, the prefabricated "Touch House" fits three bedrooms, three bathrooms, a garage, and through-story communal space into a compact, 1,500-square-foot envelope. Ample communication with the outdoors was achieved by means of a slatted frame, terraces, window-walls, and glass doors.

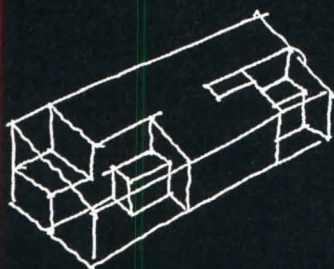
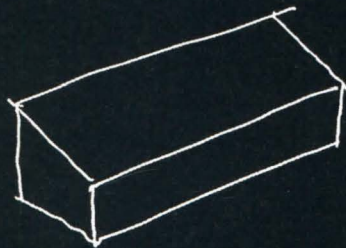
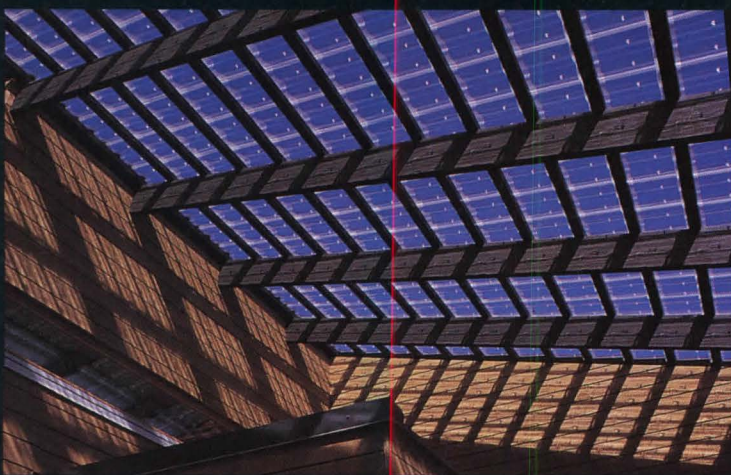




Inspired by a need for low-cost, well-designed urban housing in Finland, an established homebuilder, Kannustalo, commissioned a prototype for manufacture that seemed to veer away from the company's traditional roots. The thoroughly modern result is strikingly different from the historicist designs that the company has helped make popular throughout its homeland. The inviting shed concept elevates family and community in ways that Kannustalo's vernacular take-offs are hard-pressed to achieve. The new prefab unit, called "Touch House," takes on this lofty goal with both history and the future in mind. In designing the house, Heikkinen-Komonen Architects of Helsinki synthesized universal notions of hearth and home with uniquely Finnish riffs, such as saunas and farmhouses: *The result nods as much to the work of Alvar Aalto as to native woodworking and forms.*

Intended for a four-person family, the house sits on a 2,075-square-foot plot, 1,500 feet of which are contained within a clearly defined envelope of





#### SPECIFICATIONS

**STRUCTURE:** Timber and laminated wood on reinforced concrete slab  
**WOOD STAIRCASE:** Westwood (Finland) **CONCRETE/PLASTIC ROOF TILES:** Ormax/LaFarge (Finland) **WOOD EXTERIOR DOORS:** Viitapuu (Finland) **INTERIOR DOORS:** Matti-Ovi (Finland) **LOCKSETS:** Abloy **DOOR HARDWARE:** Abloy (locksets); Primo (handles) **INTERIOR FINISHES:** Painted plasterboard, wood battens, ceramic tile **PANELS/CABINETS:** Heat-treated aspen panels  
**FLOORING:** Maple industrial parquet **LIGHTING:** Bega **PLUMBING FIXTURES:** Vola

trellised walls and a sloped tile roof. The plan is centered on a twin hearth—the kitchen stove and a nearby furnace—within a one-and-a-half-story “stube,” or great room, comprising an eat-in kitchen and living area. An open stair connects ground-level family spaces with bedrooms above; an outdoor sauna and covered patios open up the first floor to the outdoors. In some ways, the plan is Finnish farmhouse; in others, it recollects the modest housing units of the 1950s built for Finland’s displaced war victims. (Alvar Aalto was engaged by the national housing bureau at the time.) The strongest influences, however, are Aalto’s 1952 Experimental House and Heikkinen-Komonen’s own low-cost housing and educational projects developed recently in Finland and Guinea, West Africa.

Yet, the rigor of Heikkinen-Komonen’s exercise derives not from postwar-era austerity or rural functionalism; instead, a humanistic view of domestic life within a livable city takes shape with a humble collage of materials, light, and space. The factory-assembled and prefinished wood-frame construction clearly serves Kannustalo’s need for manufacturing efficacy, yet the clarity and linearity of the slatted frame provides containment without suffocation. While clearly delineated, the shell belies the diversity of space within. The pitched roof changes from opaque concrete tiles to translucent glass tiles where it reaches over two covered patios, on which the rooms look out. Indoor areas are bathed in light and air; even the bedrooms, which bookend the plan on the second floor, have windows on three sides. An outdoor sauna extends from a patio, embracing a small courtyard and completing the extension of living space into the natural realm.

A highly flexible solution intended for contiguous urban plots, Touch House can easily be adapted to varied site conditions and planning requirements. In any setting, the design yields an uplifting family life without treading harshly on the earth: Energy and material requirements for the units are quite low compared to typical manufactured housing, and few synthetic components were specified. Kannustalo’s Touch House is about spareness and self-sufficiency, but also humility and respect for ecological fragility.

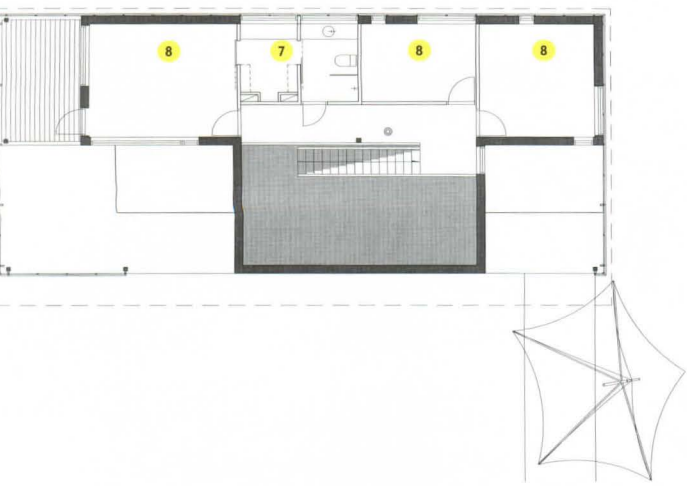
This double effect is, for firm principals Mikko Heikkinen and Markku Komonen, the crux of domestic design in our age. For a house they designed in Guinea, for example, a similar elegant simplicity was born of small rammed-earth huts protected by a single corrugated-steel shed roof, shaded on its southern façade by a bamboo screen. The ideas of privacy, solar control, and a connection with the outdoors—and even the appearance of the house itself—are remarkably close to those that inform Touch House. The architects would point out that these parallels speak to the universal nature of the human condition, and the straightforward solutions that can address our societal challenges. One solution, says Heikkinen, is about seeking efficiency through simplicity: “Making more with less,” he says. “I think this is a good recipe for architects.” ■

#### HOUSE KOSKETUS (TOUCH HOUSE), TUUSULA, FINLAND

**CLIENT:** Kannustalo Ltd.—Mika Uusimäki **ARCHITECT:** Heikkinen-Komonen Architects, Helsinki—Mikko Heikkinen, Markku Komonen (principals); Antti Könönen (project architect) **INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Kirsi Valanti **CONTRACTOR:** Kannustalo (prefabrication); Kare-Talot (site) **AREA:** 1,500 square feet **COST:** Withheld at owner’s request

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSSI TIAINEN AND MARKKU ALATALO (INTERIORS)**



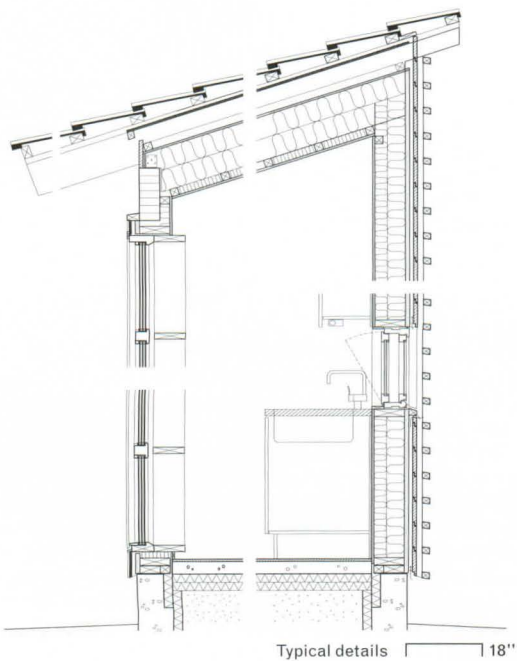


Second-floor plan



- 1 garage
- 2 kitchen / dining
- 3 service
- 4 sauna
- 5 entrance
- 6 living room
- 7 dressing room
- 8 bedroom

First-floor plan 8' ↙



Typical details 18''



sketch roughs out the house's concept (facing page). Skillfully deployed materials, such as glazing panels and factory-milled lumber, make for an uplifting domestic environment (acing page). The dining and living areas (top) and the kitchen (bottom) offer a modern riff on the Finnish farmhouse, which is typically centered on a hearth.



# SAFE HAVEN

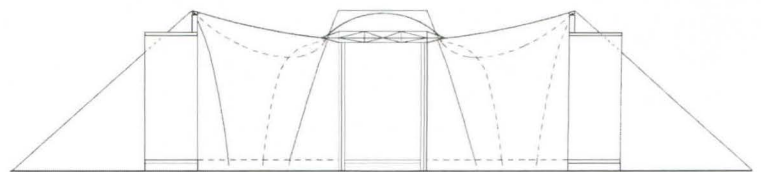


DISASTERS AND WAR HAVE LEFT MILLIONS HOMELESS AROUND THE WORLD. CAN ARCHITECTS HELP?  
BY CATHY LANG HO

Displaced by natural, economic, or political catastrophes, the number of people “of concern” to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is about 20 million—one in every 300 in the world. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans and Iraqis are now on the move, fleeing conflict. Floods in India and Senegal in the past year have left countless homeless. Bosnian refugees are still trying to return to their homes, despite the devastation. Millions more “internally displaced persons” in Colombia, Indonesia, and elsewhere have extended the conception of refugees beyond the expatriated to include those displaced within their own countries. In the wake of disasters both natural and man-made, the provision of emergency shelter, in addition to food and water, is the most pressing challenge for local governments, international agencies, and humanitarian aid organizations.

Temporary or transitional shelter is much-traveled territory in architecture, encompassing lively forays into prefab, mobile, portable, inflatable, tensile, low-income, infill, and other categories of design. Why then, despite a rich bank of applicable lessons—from Buckminster Fuller, Jean Prouvé, and Archigram to a new generation of thinkers—is the most visible symbol of disaster sites still the blue tarps (standard UNHCR issue) stretched over plywood into makeshift tents?

It’s not for lack of ideas, or passion. In 1999, Architecture for Humanity, a volunteer organization that seeks architecture and design solutions to humanitarian problems, launched a competition devoted to



#### TECHNOCRAFT (TOKYO):

#### RECOVERY ASSISTANCE CODE FOR TEMPORARY HOUSING

Last spring, Technocraft won a competition devoted to post-disaster shelter sponsored by Takiron, a Japanese plastics company, and judged by architect Shigeru Ban. A collective of architects and artists, Technocraft designed a structure made of discarded hemp bags, commonly used for grain storage in the Japanese countryside. Serving as the surface of the tentlike shelter (1), the bags (about 100 per structure) are kept in self-balance with eight tension wires, thanks to the hyperbolic paraboloid design. Ban praised the open, cross-shaped plan for addressing evolving needs. “Wings” can become kitchens, bathrooms, or private chambers, or if more space is needed, another unit can be joined to the first one. “In the first few weeks, victims need any kind of shelter, but months later they need more privacy and the ability to improve their quality of life,” says Technocraft’s Masaharu Suzuki.





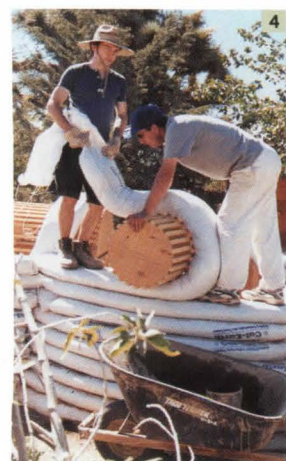
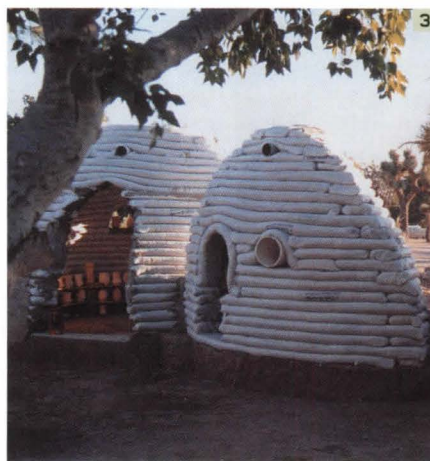
transitional shelter in Kosovo, where half the homes were reduced to rubble in the war-torn region. Though the winning schemes, chosen from among 300 entries from 30 countries, were never built (cosponsor War Child, a network of independent organizations that aids children affected by war, blames lack of funding), many of the entrants have continued to work in the field independently. This approach proved effective for Shigeru Ban, whose elegant paper log houses built for the victims of the 1995 Kobe earthquake are a credit to the Japanese architect's creativity as both a designer and a politician. Fueled by his commitment to developing the emergency building type (he first worked for the UN in Rwanda the year before), Ban recruited student workers and raised funds himself, even putting some of his own money behind the project—not a bad investment, given that this project jettisoned him to global fame.

As expected, some of the best concepts for emergency housing take advantage of cheap, easily transported, or local materials. In addition to his signature use of lightweight, recyclable paper logs, a key feature of Ban's Kobe houses was the use of plastic beer crates for the foundations. In Holland, Korteknie en Stuhlmacher have designed a laminated wood shelter that can attach to host buildings. One Kosovo finalist, the team of Mike Lawless of LA Architects of East Sussex, England, and Mark Whitby of Whitby Bird & Partners of London, called for a lightweight system of wire gabions that would be filled on site with rubble.

In a similar vein, Nader Khalili, an Iranian-born architect and long-time faculty member at SCI-Arc, has developed a technology he calls "superadobe," using on-site earth as its prime building material. Extra long sandbags, 14- to 18-inches in diameter, are filled with local dirt, sand, or clay and wound into spiraling forms. Barbed wire is placed between each layer, acting as mortar, and the result is a self-supporting,

**NADER KHALILI (HESPERIA, CALIFORNIA):  
SUPERADOBE EMERGENCY SHELTER**

Nader Khalili conceived of the "superadobe" as a system for the construction of lunar colonies for NASA in 1984. But the system was destined for more earthly pursuits. In 1991, Khalili's California Institute of Earth Art and Architecture tested the architect's dirt-dome prototypes and eventually passed seismic tests to meet California's stringent building codes. Cheap, sustainable, easy to build, and structurally sound, his domes (3) are constructed mainly of on-site materials: Standard polypropylene sandbags, 14 to 18 inches in diameter and up to a mile in length, are filled with dirt, sand, or clay, wound in circular or spiraling forms, and held in place with barbed wire between each layer (4). One house, up to 60 feet wide, can be built in a day by a family of four. It can last decades if cement is added to the soil mix or if the exterior is plastered, as is the case with a community in Southern Iran (2).







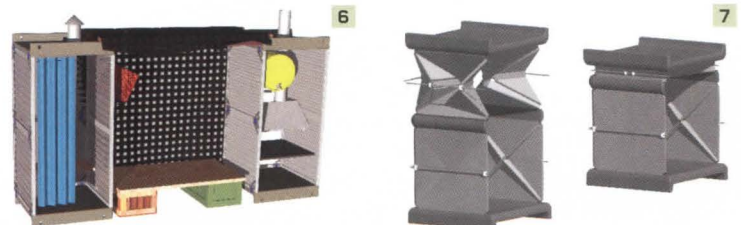
reinforced adobe system. Cement can be added to the dirt mix, or dome exteriors can be plastered for added longevity. “The structures make the materials of war—sandbags and barbed wire—into materials of peace,” notes Khalili, who founded the California Institute of Earth Art and Architecture (known as Cal-Earth) in 1991 to focus on housing for the world’s poor. Last year, Omar Bakhet and Lorenzo Jimenez de Luis, then both of the Emergency Response Division of the UN Development Program (UNDP), visited Cal-Earth and slept in the domes. Finding the shelter buildable, stable, and dignified, they recommended “superadobe” as a potential housing solution for Middle East refugees. On the request of the UNDP and UNHCR, Khalili taught his building method to a UN architect, who subsequently trained refugees in the region to build their own homes. To date, a dozen have been constructed in Southern Iran.

The use of local materials has added logic: Structures attuned to cultural context can help repair some of the psychological trauma of losing one’s home. “Even refugees want to live in something that is familiar to them as a house,” says Jimenez de Luis. “For example, Bosnians wouldn’t be very happy about living in an adobe dome.”

Increasingly, governments and relief agencies are acknowledging that emergency shelters must sometimes serve as the basis for long-term community building and economic development. Because emergency shelters are often used for several years, some architects are exploring how a transitional shelter can evolve into a permanent one, and how refugee camps can become the foundation for new towns or hamlets. New York architects Deborah Gans and Matthew Jelacic’s Extreme House project, also a finalist in the Kosovo competition, is an effort in this direction. A prefabricated system of panels that create small “closet” units containing a simple bathroom and kitchen act as bookends to a space, and can be roofed and walled with any available

#### GANS & JELACIC (NEW YORK CITY): EXTREME HOUSING

Finalists in the 1999 competition for transitional housing in Kosovo, Deborah Gans and Matthew Jelacic recently received a \$100,000 grant from the Keep Walking Fund, a foundation of whiskey maker Johnny Walker, to develop their winning concept for “Extreme Housing,” a kit of parts with steel-framed panels that form bathrooms and kitchens (6). Serving as bookendlike supports, the collapsible units (7) create a space in between for sleeping. Roofs and walls can be made of any readily available material. Shipped flat, the kit draws from the idea of scaffolding and can be attached to existing buildings or remnants of buildings (5). A full-scale model of the system will be built for an exhibition at the University of Pennsylvania in January 2003. The grant has funded Jelacic’s tours of Bosnian refugee camps and Gans’s participation in a seminar on refugee and humanitarian aid law at Oxford University.



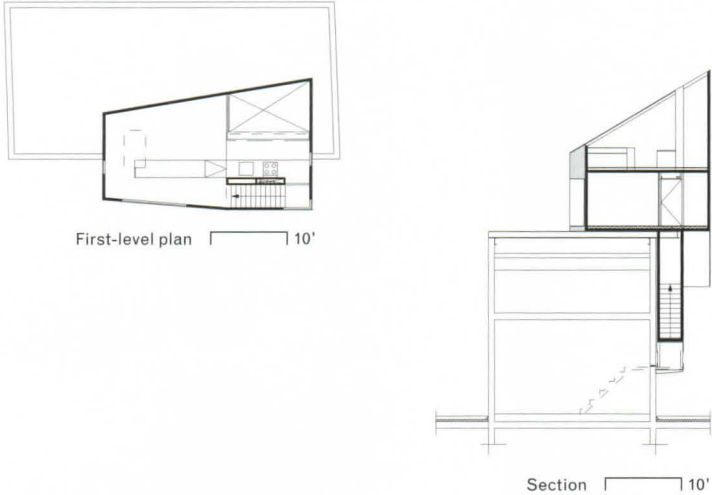
and appropriate material—cloth, wood, or plastic. Based on a scaffolding system, the units can be attached to existing buildings, or remnants of buildings, to help stabilize them and also to work toward permanent rebuilding. Extreme House was the only entry that included private bathroom and kitchen facilities. Twenty of the shelter units—steel-frames, fitted with fiberglass or steel panels—are sized to fit in a standard shipping container.

Lack of funds and bureaucratic inaction on the part of governments



**KORTEKNIE EN STUJLMACHER ARCHITECTEN (ROTTERDAM):  
PARASITE LAS PALMAS**

Constructed in May 2001, the “Parasite Architecture” project was developed for an exhibition devoted to new forms of urban housing in Holland. It deals with temporality, scarcity, and reuse: The temporary house (8) is attached to a host building; in this case, an old workshop for the maintenance of boats used for cross-Atlantic immigration (9). Massive sheets of laminated wood panels are easily disassembled and reused on other sites. The parasitic shelter taps into existing infrastructures, like water and electricity lines. Rien Korteknie, a principal of the firm that developed the concept, believes that the project is applicable to emergency shelter needs, because “it is meant to show that there are a lot of possibilities that exist within an urban fabric.”

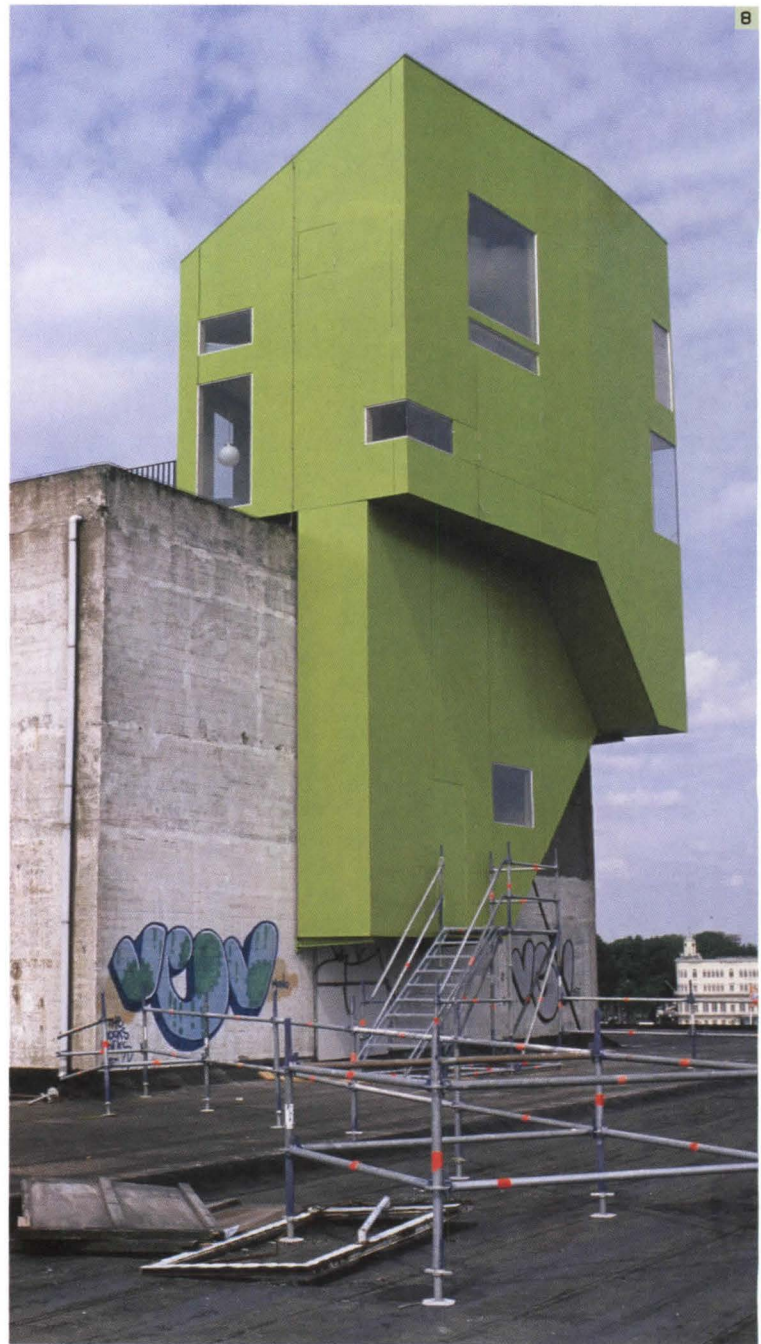


and some aid agencies, not to mention the as yet unparalleled speed with which it can be dispatched, remain the main reasons why the blue tarp has prevailed in Timor, Africa’s Great Lakes region, the Balkans, and other disaster-struck pockets of the world. Cameron Sinclair, founder and director of Architecture for Humanity, relates an anecdote: “After September 11, I got a call from someone at the UN who had heard of the Kosovo competition, saying, ‘We need you in Afghanistan.’ It was crazy. I’m one person, with a day job at an architecture firm. Even though I would have loved to have helped, I would have had to fund my own travel and work in Afghanistan.”

“The immediate response to disaster is to provide temporary shelter,” says Jimenez de Luis, newly named deputy representative of the UNDP in Honduras. “But the mandate of the UNDP is more oriented toward transition, which requires longer-term projects, and is harder to raise funds for.” Emergency money, however, is more readily available, so he encourages emergency responses that adopt an “integrated development model, with initial investments made in lasting houses and income-generating activities around these houses.”

In many ways, UN agencies and other relief nonprofits find their hands are tied, because local governments decide how and what kind of emergency shelter gets built. “We can carry out our own research, and make recommendations and introductions,” says Jimenez de Luis, “but we cannot go into a sovereign country and make local governments do anything.”

**CATHY LANG HO IS A NEW YORK-BASED ARCHITECTURE WRITER. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF HOUSE: AMERICAN HOUSES FOR THE NEXT CENTURY (UNIVERSE, 2001).**





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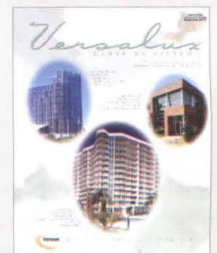
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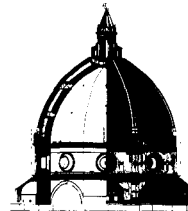
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REINVENTING THE WHEEL  
BY JESSICA HELFAND  
(PRINCETON ARCHITECTURAL PRESS, 2002)

## DIAL UP

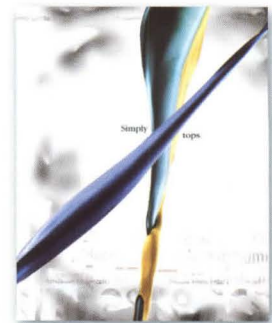
For centuries, people have spun data wheels, or volvelles, to figure out how planets were aligned or how numbers added up. But according to Jessica Helfand in her new book *Reinventing the Wheel*, these charming objects—most commonly concentric paper disks that rotate to display information through windows—are more than novelties. Functioning as calculators, product plugs, educational tools, or trivia games (sometimes all at once), volvelles are proto-computers that revolutionized the storage and retrieval of information, Helfand believes. “It’s point and click, but it’s cardboard,” she writes. “The only thing missing is the mouse.”

While volvelles are obviously more limited and rigid than computers, the wheels hint at greater depths through their architecture. They are circular, Helfand points out, a figure that connotes wholeness while paradoxically suggesting realms beyond realms: This is the shape of the cosmos viewed through a telescope, of fortune’s wheel, and of the life cycle. They frame information with a specificity and directness lacking in other analog media. They had windows long before Microsoft did. Turn the dial, and information is revealed to the exclusion of all other data, intimating a world of knowledge to be discovered. **JULIE LASKY**





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