

residential architect

A HANLEY-WOOD PUBLICATION / NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2001

after the macarthur

samuel mockbee
builds his own "bilbao"

bell's epoch / lawful access /
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{Hank Williams' boyhood home ~ Georgiana, Alabama}

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People say the kitchen is the heart of the home. Once upon a time, the tongue-and-groove front porch was its soul.



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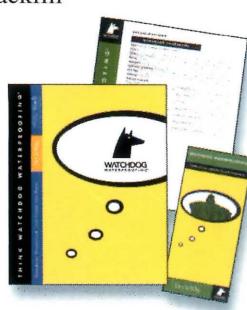
Think this is the best way to avoid basement callbacks?



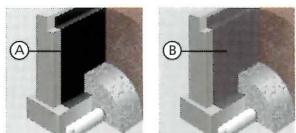
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2002
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Carmel Valley Ranch
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BUILDER Technology Conference

June 10-12, 2002

Ronald Reagan International
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media savvy

are you ready for a journalist's call?

by s. claire conroy

I'll tell you a little secret: Most journalists hate to be interviewed by other journalists. We prefer the pen-holding side of the notepad. The idea that whatever you say off the top of your head may appear in print is enough to make anyone bite his tongue repeatedly. So, I understand your fear when a writer calls, asking for an interview. But for business people (i.e., architects), the advantages of reaching a wider audience outweigh the risk of embarrassment.

In the May issue, I wrote about what you should do to get the attention of an architecture writer. Now I want to help prepare you for what comes after that.

I won't give all my secret wiles away, but I can help make the experience less torturous for you and more enjoyable and fruitful for the reporter you talk to.

In some ways, it should be a dream come true. You worked hard all these years to accomplish something in your profession and now someone is paying attention. This someone is more valuable than a full-page ad in your local newspaper because she or he is

an impartial observer. You don't want to blow this chance to make a favorable impression.

First, you need to do a little homework—as if you were preparing for a job interview. In fact, you may encounter some of the same questions you would apply for a job: What are your greatest accomplishments/failures, where do you want to be in five years? You might try a kind of mock trial with friends or colleagues. Have them ask you probing questions and tell you honestly how you come across. Are you too cocky? Too self-effacing?

Whatever you do, make sure you're clear in your own mind about your strengths, your value to your clients, your community. Don't just bolster yourself up with puffery about your talent; chances are the writer will already have a sense for where you fall on the great-architects scale. What he or she can learn is your commitment to your architectural principles, your construction methods and materials, and the way you work with your clients, colleagues, and partners in the project.

Even if the reporter is knowledgeable about archi-



Photo: Katherine Lambert

ecture, speak in plain English, not jargon. You may have high-minded notions about your profession, but you still need to make them understandable to everyone who might read about you. Abandoning esoteric language is also the best way to bulletproof your ideas—stripping them of their academic trappings separates the weak from the strong.

For each project you're planning to discuss, it's a good idea to familiarize yourself with the particulars. Have the project architect debrief you beforehand if you didn't handle every detail. Take a look at any photos and floor plans again. Identify, and be prepared to articulate, why the

house is significant to your portfolio. It's a great opportunity for you to take stock of your work so far and to evaluate where you want to go next.

And remember you're talking to a journalist, not your best friend. Do bite your tongue unless you want it "on the record." In your heart, you know the drill. It's like defending your work in architecture school, only without the bloodshed. **ra**

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

letters

keep those cards, letters, and e-mails coming, folks.

I public education thought your editorial in the June *residential architect* ("Today Show Ignores an Architect," page 13) really showcased one of the major problems with most of the housing being built in this country. Specifically, the public's access to good design is being overshadowed by the builders' big-box multiple-choice feel-good options. The architectural profession can blame itself for the public's lack of awareness of the quality-of-life benefits architects can impart to a home. The architectural profession views housing as a third-rate class of project.

There are many ways architects can affect the public's preconceptions about housing. Start with taking on a larger percentage of housing projects. Create owner/advocates, who understand and believe in the process, appreciate the results, and spread the benefits of good design. Build your own speculative housing. Plan and build user-friendly, eco-friendly, and otherwise enlightened communities where design is not reduced to the lowest common denominator.

And, finally, bring your concerns to the American Institute of Architects

so that they can devote more attention to this professional shortcoming.

*John W. Allegretti, AIA
Allegretti Architects
St. Joseph, Mich.*

design cycles

The problem you point out in the June editorial is probably caused by the premise of the article a few pages later, where architects (stars?) eschew clients and relish in it ("Stars on Spec," June, page 20).

You are at the edge of the problem: Is this an insurmountable nadir or is it an abysmal apex for architects in the residential market? What are architects? Master builders, exterior decorators, designers, blueprint makers, drafters? What in the residential building process is their tangible, irrevocable, concrete product? What tangible financial benefits do the clients receive from having an architect design their residence?

The historical cycle of residential design can be summarized thus: 1.) A wealthy patron needs a residence. 2.) He retains a master builder (architect). 3.) The master builder displays his skills in response to the patron's aesthetic and financial needs. 4.) Lesser wealthy patrons emulate

these steps in ever-diminishing originality until that era is awash in that style. 5.) Then a new powerful patron arrives, restarting the cycle.

Today's residential clients are enmeshed in this cycle of styles. Their choices are expanding, with the occasional rationalized resurgence of previous cycles.

*William J. Mello Jr., AIA
Bedford, Mass.*

beyond architects

The letter from Sig Bjornson in the June issue insinuates that all homes should be designed by registered architects (Letters, page 16). He seems to assume that a license in architecture automatically gives one the technical knowledge, if not the talent, to design residences.

Most good, competent architects who don't suffer from denial will admit their expertise is in a specific area of the profession, often commercial or public design. This is not to say there aren't gifted and talented architects who practice solely or mostly residential design. But to pursue even more restrictive state licensing laws seems to be the only solution someone like Bjornson has. To make it illegal for anyone other than a registered

architect to practice residential design, regardless of ability and experience, is completely self-serving and will do nothing to increase the quality or safety of America's housing stock.

A state-mandated license in architecture is neither a guarantee of proficiency in residential design nor an indicator of basic competency to address the needs of the residential client.

Bjornson also assumes that there are only two players—architects and drafters—making revisions to architects' works. Also false. An overwhelming majority of home designs are produced by professional building designers who may or may not be registered architects. This is not new; residential work has always been successfully designed, built, and managed by nonarchitects. These design professionals are concerned with the aesthetics of the home and are generally very in tune with their clients' personal taste and needs, something many architects overlook. Even worse, many architects are just too arrogant to care.

Good home design should be attributed not only to architects, but to the entire building design profession.

*Donald M. Gore, FAIBD
Don Gore Design Studio
Hammond, La.*

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home front

tips and trends from the world of residential design

corps values

architect Bryan Bell gets calls from business people all over the country seeking his design services—a wine maker in California, a greenhouse entrepreneur in South Carolina, a large-scale organic farmer in Virginia. But those people aren't his real clients. Good architecture lifts the spirit. And Bell has pledged himself to designing homes for those who need a lift the most—migrant workers. "I tell the growers I'm not their architect, but we have a shared mission of providing great housing," Bell says. "That's our pleasure."

What is the value of architecture? And how can those without wealth or power benefit from good design in their daily lives? Ten years ago, those questions led Bell to quit his job

with Steven Holl Architects, where he worked after graduating with architecture degrees from Princeton and Yale. Bell founded Design Corps, a nonprofit group based in Raleigh, N.C., whose goals include creating not just attractive, affordable housing for farm workers, but a national housing program that links growers to government funding.

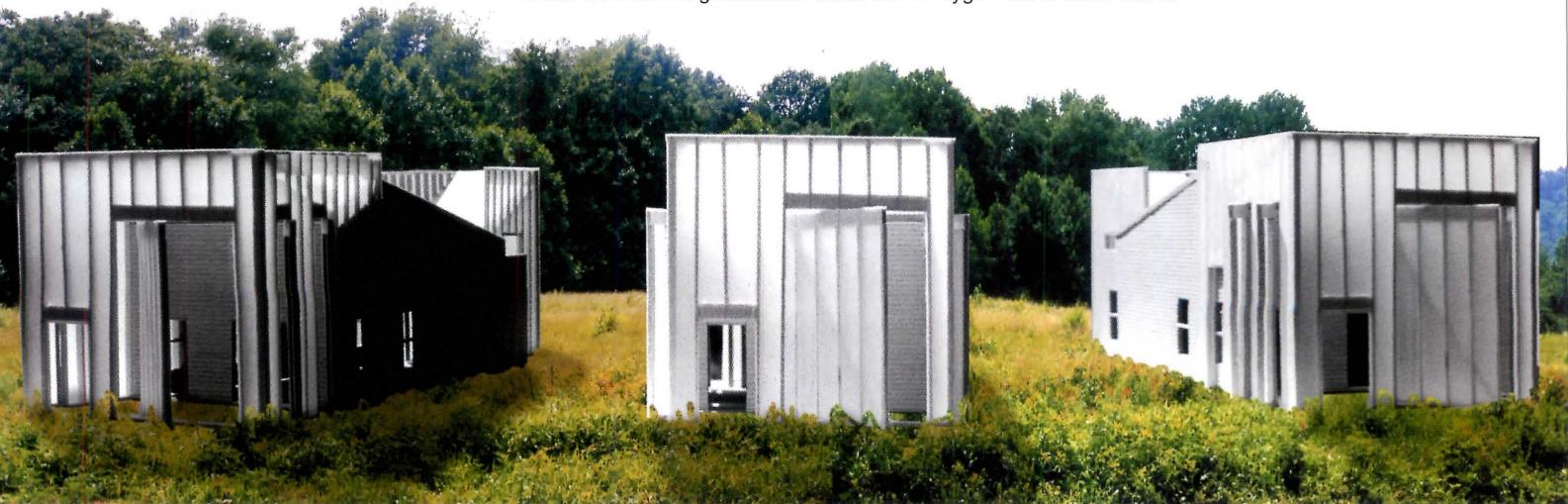
Bell's first project included 10 prefab units on fruit farms near Gettysburg, Pa.—pristine, white-painted metal cottages with columns, a front porch, and windows aligned to capture cross breezes. It's a far cry from the clot of misery found in most migrant camps, where anything



Alan Karchmer

from a run-down trailer to a converted chicken coop qualifies for housing. The farmers pay 30 percent of the construction costs; Design Corps obtains grants for the rest. "We can get grants

Design Corps' model for funding migrant housing is transferrable from farm to farm, but its designs are not. Architect Bryan Bell, above, gets input from the grower, legal services, and, most important, the workers who will use the houses. In this schematic for an organic farm in Virginia, gray water from each residence feeds an attached greenhouse made from Polygal over a wood frame.



Seth Peterson



Seth Peterson



Kindra Welch

Top: This project in South Carolina is being designed for a mixed-gender labor force. Each house has two bedrooms for couples and two for three singles. Two cooktops on the island can be accessed from all sides. Above: The design of homes on a Pennsylvania farm expresses mobility for the men who come to pick apples. Each one-bedroom house, clad in galvanized aluminum and cement board, accommodates four guests.

to build higher-quality housing for less than the farmers can build minimum-standard housing," Bell says.

Demand for Design Corps' services is outpacing supply. Christine Johnson, an MBA from Stanford, spent last summer helping the group develop a strategic plan to grow. Next year they'll partner with growers in five states. And migrant-worker housing is just one way Design Corps is exploring how design can serve the greater public. It also hosts annual conferences that allow architects, community groups, and funding institutions to compare notes on how to get things done (see www.designcorps.org). "I can provide a very valuable service to a family who has \$85,000 to spend on a house," Bell says. "But it took 10 years to figure out how to do that. We need good architectural criticism, not pats on the back."—cheryl weber

picture these

Two new titles from Taunton Press merit a lingering glance from residential architects. One is about garages, the other about cabins; both feature lots of good color photography. Though both books cater to a general consumer audience, they may be useful as idea books that architects and their clients can browse together.

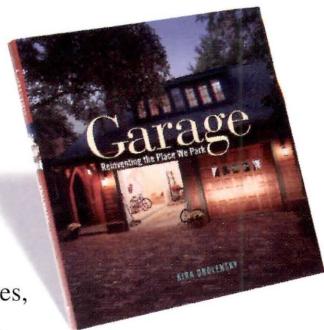
In *Garage: Reinventing the Place We Park*, author Kira Obolensky explores alternative uses for a most mundane space. The book opens with a chapter on the evolution of the garage from converted stables and coal sheds to today's four-car-plus behemoths. Brief case studies illustrate garage-as-office, garage-as-dwelling, garage-as-fruit stand, even garage-as-restaurant—to name a few. Some of Obolensky's examples accommodate both automobiles and people, but most document conversions to noncar use.

As with most adaptive reuse projects, these are idiosyncratic, tailored to the needs, budgets, and existing structures of individual clients. The personal stories told in each case study limit the book's overall relevance to a professional audience.

Ditto *The Cabin: Inspiration for the Classic American Getaway*. Though one of its authors is respected Minnesota architect Dale Mulfinger, *The Cabin* targets a popular audience in much the same way as *Garage*. Mulfinger and co-author Susan Davis seek to present "a sampling of the most intriguing cabins in North America." None is more than 1,200 square feet. Some are new, but many are venerable old places that have stayed in the same family for generations.

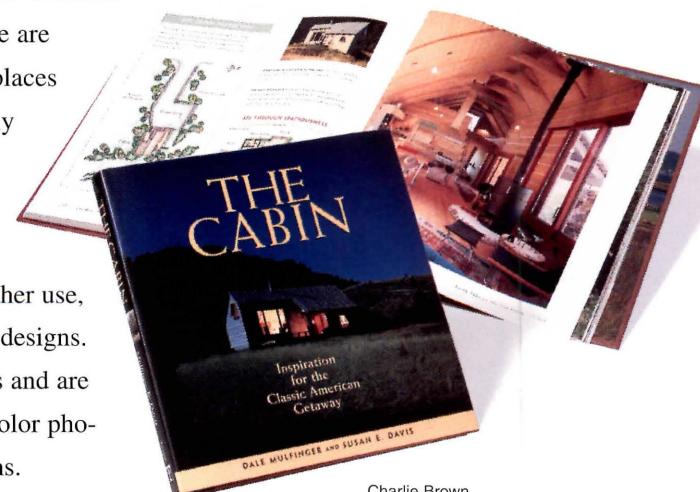
Mulfinger and Davis group the 37 profiles by cabin type: the truly rustic, conversions from another use, traditional structures, and modern designs. The case studies average six pages and are generously illustrated with good color photography, floor plans, and site plans.

As with *Garage*, owners' personal stories infuse the cabin profiles. This makes for an often touching read, but may leave design professionals hungry for the nuts and bolts.—susan bradford barror



Garage. *Kira Obolensky*. 200 pp. Newtown, Conn.: Taunton Press. 2001. \$32 (hardcover). 800.888.8286.

The Cabin. *Dale Mulfinger and Susan E. Davis*. 250 pp. Newtown, Conn.: Taunton Press. 2001. \$35 (hardcover). 800.888.8286.

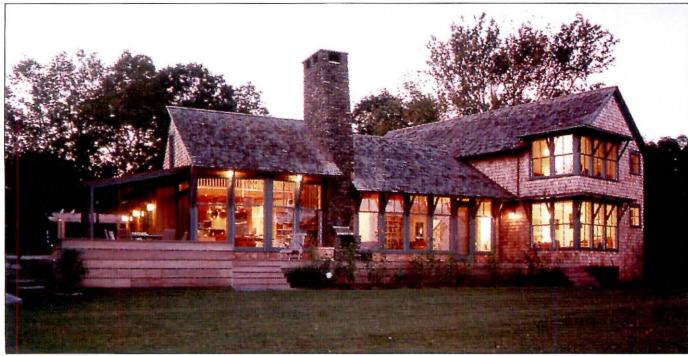


Charlie Brown

calendar

residential architect design awards: call for entries

deadline for requesting a binder: December 3, 2001
entry deadline: January 7, 2002



Michael Matthes

Our annual *residential architect* Design Awards program honors outstanding architecture in the following categories: custom, renovation, multifamily, affordable, production, and on the boards. A project of the year is selected from the winning built entries and all of the winning projects will be published in the May 2002 issue of *residential architect*. Shown: a 2001 custom-home merit-prize winner by Estes/Twombly Architects. See page 61 for more information.

dream bathroom designer contest

entry deadline: December 31

American Standard's bathroom design competition is open to all U.S. architects and designers. Entries must use American Standard or Porcher plumbing products. Winner will receive a cash prize of \$5,000. For rules, visit www.americanstandard.com or call 732.980.3000.

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This exhibition spotlights winners of SFMOMA's inaugural Experimental Design Awards, which honor up-and-coming Bay Area designers and architects. Works displayed include real and theoretical buildings, furniture, and Web sites. Shown: Thom Faulders' 1999 Pixel House. For exhibition information, call 415.357.4000 or visit www.sfmoma.org.



Courtesy Beige Design

windshield: richard neutra's house for john nicholas brown

November 10–January 27
harvard university art museums,
cambridge, mass.



Courtesy of the Museum of Art,
Rhode Island School of Design

An examination of the design and construction of Neutra's first building on the East Coast, this exhibition features original renderings, sketches, working drawings, models, and blueprints, as well as correspondence between Neutra and the Browns and photographs and movies of the project. For more information, visit www.artmuseums.harvard.edu or call 617.495.9400.

art deco and streamlined modern: design 1920–1940

November 18–February 17
dallas museum of art

The second of a three-part series of exhibits featuring 20th-century design objects is devoted to Art Deco light fixtures, furniture, and other household items, such as this skyscraper bathroom scale designed in 1927 by Joseph Sinel. For museum hours, visit www.dallasmuseumofart.org or call 214.922.1200s.



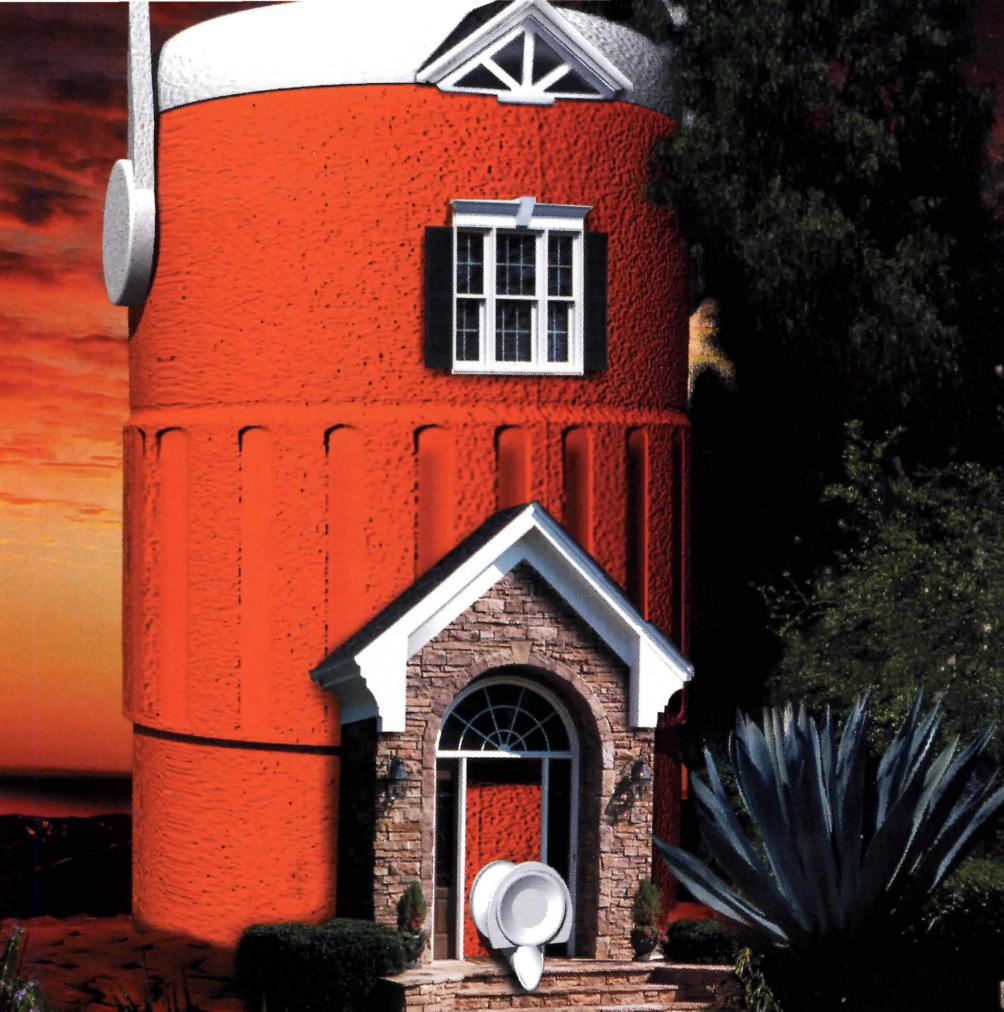
world of concrete/world of masonry

January 9–12
morial convention center, new orleans

Hanley-Wood Exhibitions presents these side-by-side international expositions and conferences for architects, contractors, developers, manufacturers, and engineers. In addition to nearly 750,000 square feet of exhibits, more than 100 seminars will be offered. Call 800.837.0870 or visit www.worldofconcrete.com for additional information.

continuing exhibits

A Century of Design, Part IV: 1975–2000 and **Candace Wheeler: The Art and Enterprise of American Design 1875–1900**, January 6, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 212.535.7710; **William Price: From Arts and Crafts to Modern Design**, through January 12, National Building Museum, Washington, D.C., 202.272.2448; **Mies in America**, through January 20, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, 514.939.7026.



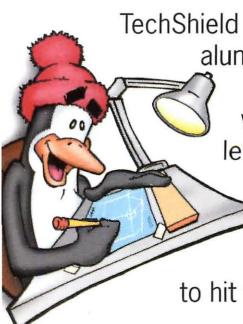
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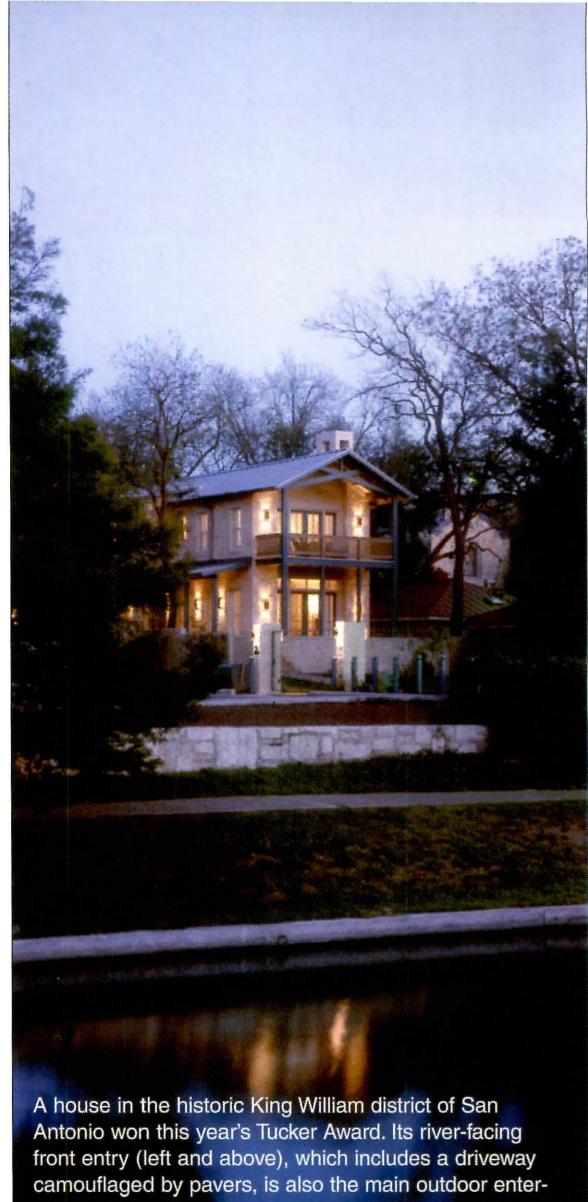
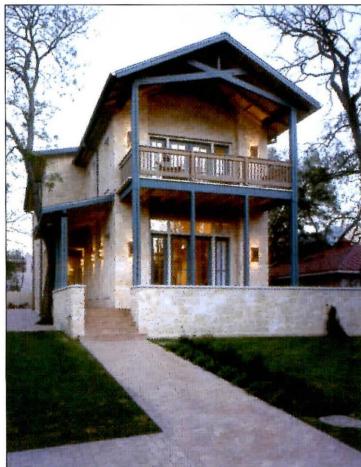
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san antonio gem

faced with a narrow lot in a historic district, architect Heather McKinney, AIA, Austin, Texas, gave her clients an urbane home that blends beautifully with the neighborhood. Its skillful design and the use of local stone helped the project win a Tucker Award from the Building Stone Institute.

Situated just steps from San Antonio's downtown Riverwalk area, the house's large two-story porches and yellow Texas limestone take their cues from a neighborhood full of old houses, built by the Germans who settled there. "The house next door is remarkable for its hand-chiseled masonry," McKinney says. "We looked at it for the size, style, and coloration of stone."

Long and slim like its 50-by-191-foot lot, the house faces the river across a lawn. McKinney sited a detached garage at the back to preserve the views, using Grasscrete on the front part of the driveway to render it invisible until it passes alongside the house. There, stone pavers tie the property to the house, and the driveway doubles as an entertaining area. That bit of subterfuge tricks the eye into seeing a green forecourt and intimate side terrace. "You're not seeing the car as part of it," McKinney says. In back, the auto court serves as a tricycle race-track, and a string of tiny gardens along the other side of the house anchors it to its site.—c.w.



A house in the historic King William district of San Antonio won this year's Tucker Award. Its river-facing front entry (left and above), which includes a driveway camouflaged by pavers, is also the main outdoor entertaining space. The stone masonry, double-hung windows, and metal roof take their cues from neighboring houses.

Paul Bardagjy

pvc-free

It's now a tad easier being green, thanks to a new initiative from earth-minded Greenpeace. Earlier this year, the environmental group developed a database that allows architects and design professionals to choose construction products that do not contain polyvinyl chloride. PVC, Greenpeace says, emits toxic compounds at every stage of its existence, from its manufacture to its final disposal. The database contains alternative materials that are less harmful for the environment and for the people that use them.

"The products on the list have a lighter environmental footprint than PVC," says Rick Hind, of Greenpeace's Washington, D.C., office. "Some are better than others, but we do not endorse any product or company." The database contains more than 200 products—from wiring and flooring to windows and doors—available in this country or abroad. Product listings will be updated regularly, says Hind.

The PVC Alternatives Database is located at www.greenpeace.org.au/pvc/.—nigel f. maynard

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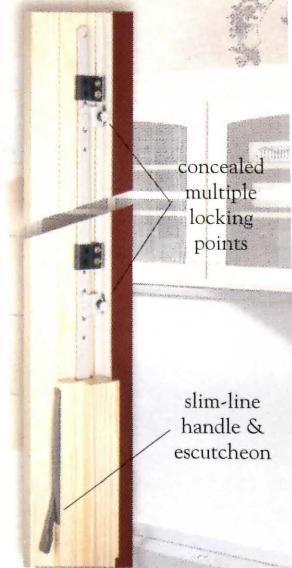


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access for all

what architects need to know
about government requirements for accessible housing.

by alexander grinnell
and peter a. stratton

In several years of writing books and other publications about handicapped-accessible housing, we've noticed that architects designing multifamily or federally funded housing often violate federal mandates for accessibility. This happens partly because architects are familiar with local building codes, rather than federal regulations. And the government has traditionally lagged in its enforcement of these laws. Architects should know, however, that this situation is changing. Claims are increasingly being brought against both architects and contractors whose designs and construction are found in violation of these regulations. The penalties can be significant.

Architects who design these types of projects must become familiar with their legal responsibilities. In some instances, a project may be covered by more than one federal accessibility law. If so, the project must comply with each law. In addition to these federal requirements, and depending on which state or local jurisdiction the housing is constructed in, there may also



Federal laws regarding multi-family housing mandate accessible routes to common-use areas like mailboxes and picnic tables. They also stipulate kitchens wide enough for a wheelchair to make a front approach to the dishwasher.



be state and local laws governing accessible housing.

multifamily rules

The Fair Housing Act Amendments of 1988 (FHA) make it unlawful to discriminate against people in housing and housing-related transactions based on familial status, disability, race, color, religion, national origin, and sex. The FHA requires that any newly constructed multifamily housing, whether publicly or privately funded, consisting of at least four units and built for first occupancy after March 13, 1991, comply with the following



Photos courtesy Steven Winter Associates

seven design and construction requirements for accessibility:

- Accessible building entrance on an accessible route
- Accessible public and common-use areas
- Usable doors
- Accessible route into and through the dwelling unit
- Light switches, outlets, thermostats, and other environmental controls in accessible locations
- Reinforced walls for grab bars
- Usable kitchens and bathrooms

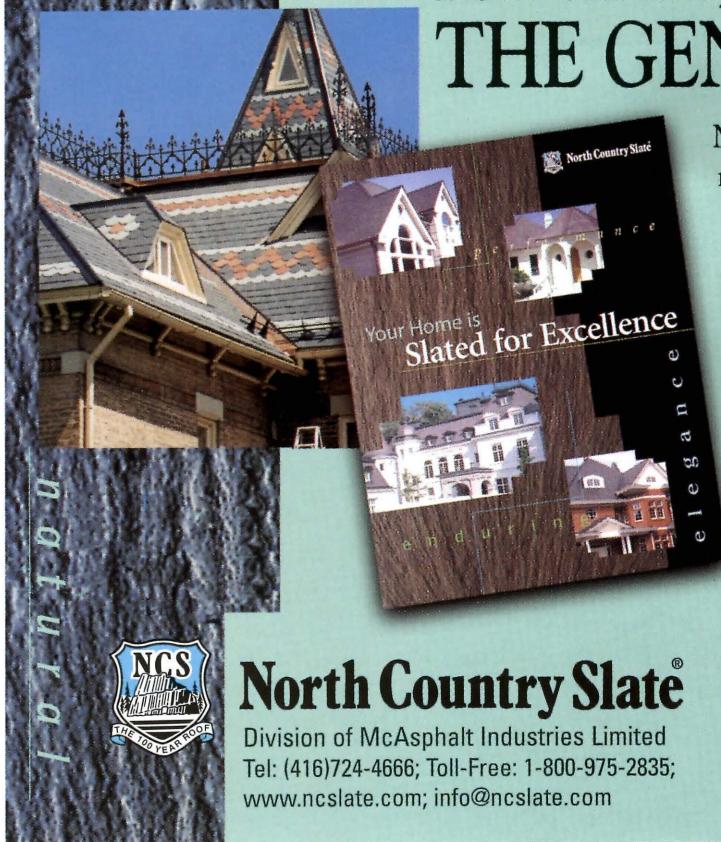
The act covers all units in elevator buildings and

ground-floor units only in buildings without elevators.

HUD issued the Fair Housing Act Accessibility Guidelines to serve as a "safe harbor" for compliance with the accessibility requirements of the FHA. The guidelines contain both "scoping" criteria (such as where accessibility must be provided) and "technical" criteria (such as how to make a space or feature accessible). Where the guidelines do not contain technical criteria, compliance with the applicable technical criteria contained in the 1986, 1992, and 1998

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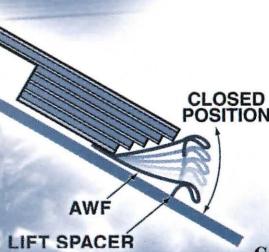
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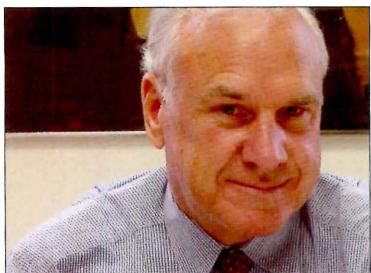
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editions of the American National Standards Institute's A117.1 Standard for Usable Buildings and Facilities will satisfy the technical requirements of the FHA.

Chapter 11 of the most recent editions of the model building codes, including the International Building Code 2000, contains



"architects who design these projects must become familiar with their legal responsibilities."

requirements for accessible multifamily housing, many of which are intended to be consistent with the requirements of the FHA. However, following the accessibility requirements of the building code alone will not satisfy the accessibility requirements of the FHA. Building officials approve plans for compliance with

building codes and not with the requirements of federal law. Architects cannot assume that plans found in compliance with applicable building codes are also in compliance with federal design and construction requirements. It is the architect's responsibility to design FHA-covered multi-family buildings in compliance with the law.

In 2000, HUD recommended to the major model code organizations ways in which code provisions that do not meet the requirements of the FHA may be modified to mimic the legal requirements. The International Code Council (ICC), producer of the International Building Code series, responded by publishing a stand-alone document called the Code Requirements for Housing Accessibility (CRHA), which has been approved by HUD as an additional "safe harbor" for compliance with the FHA.

federal cases

Then there are the rules for housing built with public monies. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is intended to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities in any program funded "in whole or in part" with federal money. The Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS) are the enforceable technical standards for Section 504, although other standards that provide equivalent or greater access may also be used. For a

federally assisted new construction, Section 504 requires 5 percent of the dwelling units, or at least one unit, whichever is greater, to meet UFAS criteria. An additional 2 percent of the units, or at least one unit, whichever is greater, must be accessible for persons with hearing or visual disabilities.

In most instances, the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) does not apply to residential construction. Title II of the ADA protects people with disabilities from discrimination in housing built by any state or local government (such as state university campus housing), and Title III protects people with disabilities from discrimination in places of public accommodation and commercial facilities.

Title II coverage applies to most public housing authorities and to housing operated by states or local governments. Title III requirements apply to housing if it includes a place of public accommodation such as a rental or sales office, in which case only the place of public accommodation —i.e., the rental office—is subject to Title III accessibility requirements. The enforceable technical criteria for Title II housing are The Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) or UFAS. The enforceable technical standard for Title III is ADAAG.

The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA)

requires that certain buildings financed in whole or in part with federal funds must be designed, constructed, or altered to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. The UFAS standards are the enforceable technical criteria for compliance with the ABA. The ABA applies to public housing and to buildings constructed with Community Development Block Grant funds. In many instances, housing constructed with federal money triggers the requirements of both Section 504 and the ABA. However, housing designed and constructed in compliance with Section 504 and Title II of the ADA will comply with the requirements of the ABA.

Accessible housing makes sense on many levels. It reflects the needs of our graying population, represents the fundamentals of good design, and is relatively easy to achieve. It also adds just one-half of one percent to the cost of a residential project, on average. But if architects continue to remain confused about accessibility requirements, they increase their risk of being held liable for noncompliance. **ra**

Alexander Grinnell (left, top) is a principal and Peter Stratton (left, bottom) an associate at Steven Winter Associates, an architectural research and consulting firm with offices in Norwalk, Conn., and Washington, D.C. You can find out more about their books and work at www.swinter.com.

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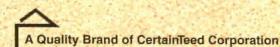


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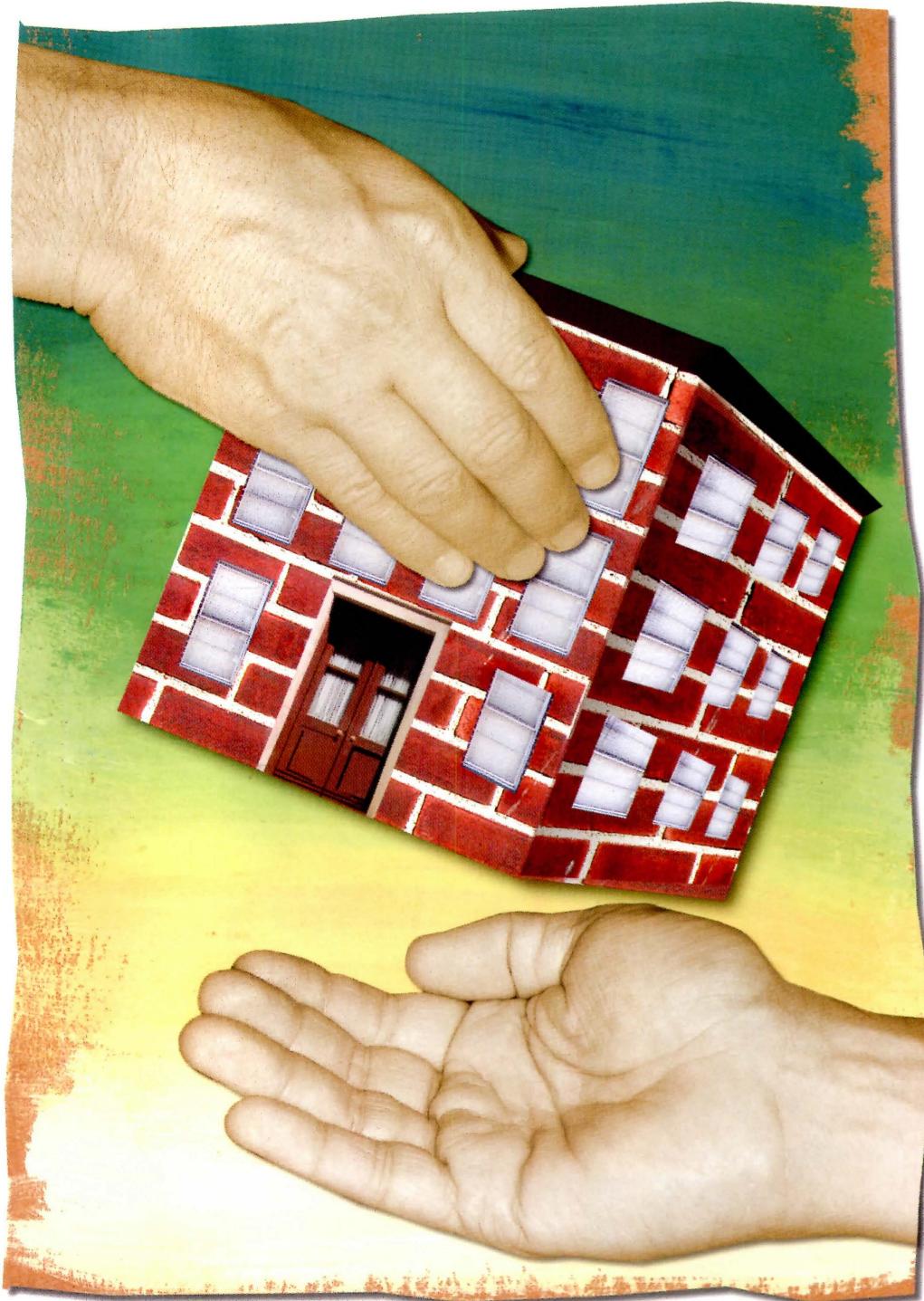
how to make good works work for your firm.

by cheryl weber

Six months before Nicole Simpson was murdered, HomeAid, the nonprofit arm of California's Building Industry Association, asked KTGY Group in Irvine, Calif., to design a full-service shelter for battered women. The architects agreed to donate the design and construction drawings for the 33,000-square-foot facility—a value of about \$75,000. Later, when O.J. Simpson was accused of killing his ex-wife, community support for the project skyrocketed. All of a sudden, media attention was focused on the problem of abused women, allowing HomeAid to raise more than \$4.2 million to build and equip the Safe House for Kids and Moms.

Although the firm wouldn't have wished for the heightened publicity to be spurred by such a tragedy, KTGY's Stan Braden, AIA, says, "It was the right time and the right cause." He views the firm's pro bono work as "just good public relations. You make a decision you're going to do it because you agree with the cause and you want to make the time to give back."

continued on page 30



Ellen Weinstein



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Such acts of generosity are priceless. But there is a broader, if less noble, reason architects should donate their time and expertise to worthy causes. In a world of tin-soldier town houses and fields of houses sprouting from stock plans, it's also a way to invest in the community while giving more credence to the architectural process. Until banks find a way to give credit for thoughtful design, it's the perfect opportunity for architects to demonstrate how top-quality, cost-conscious design affects the bottom line of housing construction.

In KTGY's case, the land designated for the shelter was on a street corner across from a commercial strip—exactly the wrong kind of site for women and children in hiding. The firm designed the shelter as a piece of camouflage, using massing, form, color, and materials that make it look like an extension of the apartment building next door. Parking areas are invisible from the street, and a secluded courtyard and playground allow residents to enjoy the fresh air without risking their safety. The project was so top-secret construction crews weren't told precisely what they were working on. Not even the local press was privy to the shelter's location.

The Safe House did attract attention, though, from KTGY's clients and colleagues. "The people in the industry—our clients

16 houses in houston

Morris Gutierrez Architects, Houston, has long been interested in exploring "the most economical essence of space," says architect Deborah Morris. So she jumped at an invitation from Houston's Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation to be one of 16 firms across the country taking part in an exercise to make affordable housing a bright spot in the lowest-median-income neighborhood in the city. "Our goal here is not to create a ghetto by just doing the same old affordable housing," says CRC project manager Anna Mod. "We want to diversify this predominantly African-American neighborhood ethnically and economically, but do it delicately to avoid gentrification."

At the 16 Houses Exhibition, which opened at the DiverseWorks gallery in November 1998, visitors voted on their favorite houses. Then a jury made up of residents, community leaders, and arts and architecture academics and professionals selected seven of the designs for construction, including the Morris Gutierrez entry.

Priced at about \$100,000, the "garden house" is a hybrid of vernacular styles: Texas dogtrot, ranch, shotgun, and bungalow. The staff of five, which "worked tirelessly for pizza and beer," designed in features that take little money but provide



Ben Thorne

beauty and comfort. They wrapped the house around a south-facing garden and added porches. With an eye toward an environmental return, the architects raised it on a pier-and-beam foundation to protect against flooding. Its east-west orientation and deep overhangs shield the little house from the harsh sun.

Morris thinks the house was popular because it's so understandable. "People without a lot of means just want what everybody else wants," she says, "a safe, sanitary, comfortable, and beautiful place to live." She adds, "People who have a huge budget don't always know what they want. Very little around us has anything to do with quality or responding to the Houston climate. Hopefully, people could see that you don't have to spend a lot of money on something that can work very well for them. It puts architects like us back on the playing field." —c.w.

and potential clients such as merchant builders—are a close-knit group who appreciate anyone who gets involved in supporting something like that," Braden says. What's more, the project won an award from the Urban Land Institute—not a pat on the back for a good deed, but recognition of good design.

give and take
In other scenarios, pro bono work is a more direct means of marketing. At Pyatok Associates, Oakland, Calif., 80 percent of the firm's paid work is for nonprofits, but invariably part of the job is given away. "The amount of work it takes to accomplish the job right is 10 to 30 percent

more than the fee can support," says Michael Pyatok, FAIA. "There might be a fair amount of nimbyism to deal with. And it takes more time to make a less expensive project—more value engineering has to go on." For the firm to survive that amount of volunteer work, Pyatok takes only a third of

continued on page 32

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his salary from the practice. The rest comes from his teaching position at the University of Washington in Seattle. Currently, he's on leave from there, teaching a course at Harvard University.

The firm also volunteers its time on feasibility studies for nonprofit developers. Pyatok usually does that work himself, spending 10 to 40 hours on the exercise in advance of the project going forward. He might also personally put in two-thirds of the time required to help nonprofits win

nantly public work. Shamble got involved when the high school was the Philadelphia AIA chapter's Legacy Project during the 2000 AIA Convention. The 20,000-square-foot building was only partly finished when the school moved in, and the fee negotiated with the previous firm had been used up. Working evenings, Shamble created a phase-two plan that responded to the school's evolving program, which included relocating the cafeteria and adding art studios. "It's

Dan Rockhill does for free (see *ra* Q+A, page 72). "Many times these different needs will have local interest behind them—a grassroots effort to save some building, but no money to speak of," he says. It counters the firm's edgier work and taps into Rockhill's experience doing preservation 20 years ago in the East.

"We do it because it's an interest I've always had, and because the autopsies we do on these old buildings are very informative for our work," Rockhill says. The firm is unusual in that he and his staff—many of them interns from the University of Kansas, where he teaches design studio—treat architecture as an art and a craft, literally hammering out their own designs. "I do the plaster, personally," Rockhill says. Through the pro bono work, the staff gets exposed to historic patterns of building, materials, and construction techniques—the way in which traditional three-coat plaster is applied or the way split lath was hung. "It's a nice balance between a very contemporary interest and historic preservation," Rockhill says. Somewhere in his future portfolio is a house with walnut siding, an idea that took root while renovating one years ago.

Rockhill and Associates is nimble enough to take on these projects as the spirit moves, without having to account for why they're doing it. But, he says, many

firms are too big in size and structure to justify why someone should be off doing a project that's not producing revenues. Slater-paull Associates manages to be large and philanthropic at the same time. A 50-member firm with offices in Denver and Atlanta, this year it won a BIA Community Spirit Award for its residential units at the Mount Saint Vincent Home for children in Denver. The firm got paid a small stipend—\$25,000 for a \$1.5 million project.

Most of its pro bono work is remodeling existing facilities for families. "There's a social need to get it accomplished," says architect James Paull, AIA, "and the dollars to these charitable organizations are so valuable. I have people calling me fairly regularly. If we can afford the time, we'll make it available." When a request rolls in, the partners will meet to discuss the magnitude of involvement and decide whether it can be managed on office time. "We rarely ask employees to donate their own time," Paull says.

While he hasn't noticed any marketing benefit from doing charity work, Paull says it has broadened employee knowledge of social issues. And the jobs themselves have been a source of accelerated learning for office interns. Because these projects often track more slowly than others, novices are handed a

continued on page 34



"you do it because you agree with the cause and want to give back."

—stan braden, aia

request-for-proposal competitions from cities to become the developer for a parcel of land. His staff of 24 absorbs the other one-third. It's a strategy that pays off—the firm has won almost every competition it's entered, along with the commission to build the project.

A former Peace Corps volunteer, Robert Shamble, AIA, Kelly/Maiello Architects, Philadelphia, says doing volunteer work is just part of who he is. But his latest personal project, the Architecture and Design Charter High School of Philadelphia, also dovetails with his firm's predomi-

hard to say whether this will bring in other work," Shamble says. "But I think it's good for the firm to have this connection. There are more charter schools being formed all the time; you never know what's going to come out of it."

For some, pro bono projects are more like a serious hobby, a chance to fulfill a passion that's not met by the bread-and-butter work. Rockhill and Associates in Lecompton, Kan., is known for residential architecture that's experimental, and often controversial. Nonetheless, historic preservation is a common thread running through the work

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more important role than they might ordinarily have. "We have a greater opportunity to make sure we're not making mistakes by using inexperienced people," Paull explains. "I have an employee who's been out of school two years working as project manager on a \$2.5-million school project for the Mount Saint Vincent Home. We detect abilities in our staff we want to expand, and they become more valuable to the firm."

In Houston, the 16 Houses Exhibition gave Natalye Appel, FAIA, a chance to experiment with inexpensive solutions to

housing. Her firm was one of 16 invited by the Community Redevelopment Corporation to submit a cost-conscious design for a house in the ramshackle Fifth Ward, where 62 percent of the residents live below poverty level (see sidebar, page 30). Instead of just one design, the firm submitted six variations on a theme, demonstrating how the house could be adapted to different clients and sites.

"We usually work as a team," Appel says, "but this project gave everyone a chance to go off and work with some of their own ideas. We'd sit down and

critique each other's designs." It was an opportunity to play with a kit of parts, including prefab wood trusses and a simple framing system based on exposing those trusses inside. Notes Appel, "We're always looking at how to use repetitive techniques, like 8-foot bay systems that can be slightly modified and repeated throughout the house to save on labor and materials."

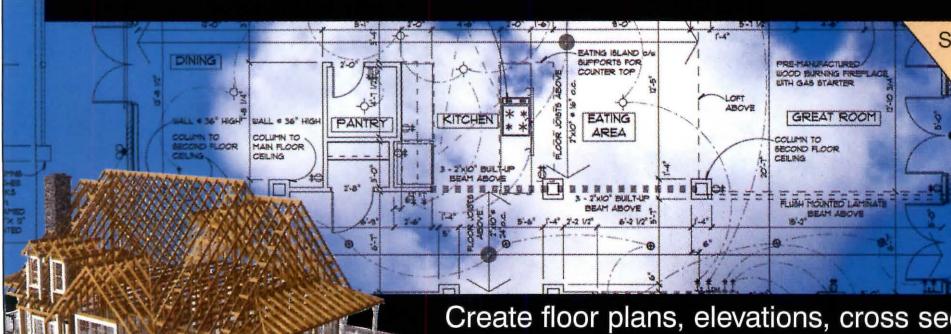
reality check

How much free work can one firm—or one architect—absorb? Firms that have said yes to charities in the past tend to get repeated

pleas for their time. And sometimes, the tidy parameters of a project expand over the course of a few months. "There's a double-edged sword to charity work," says Frank Pollacia, AIA, of Architettura in Plano, Texas. "Sure you want to help. But even if you're giving the work away, these people need a project delivered on a time line so they can get funding. As a project gets larger you have to evaluate—is it fair to do a project this large on a charity level and do it all on weekends, or take away from billable

continued on page 36

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hours during the week?"

As the owner of a small firm, it's a question Pollacia is wrestling with now. A low-income housing project he agreed to see through changed program in mid-stream, mushrooming to a 26,000-square-foot facility with bedroom pods, counseling offices, a kitchen, dining room, gym, nursery, and administrative offices. "A 5,000-square-foot project would be much more manageable for us," he says. "And the number of functions the project would have needs to be more limited."

Some of his other principles are easier to uphold,

such as his use of a waiver of liability. He asks non-profit organizations to sign a form provided by his insurer. And he requires the charity to list him as an additional insuree on their liability policy. "Free is free," Pollacia says. "Fees are assigned partly to cover the risk, so you have to balance it out." He also asks the agency to sign a statement agreeing to provide legal representation for any third-party disputes that may occur.

Pollacia has observed another pitfall of pro bono work: the temptation to let professional ethics slide

for the good of the cause. "A charity with a limited budget comes up with a structural foundation drawing and asks you to sign it," Pollacia explains. "You can't plan stamp. Just because it's a charity doesn't mean it's treated as a secondary sideline. It's a professional project that needs to be done responsibly, but also with heart and character."

Those qualities figure into Dan Rockhill's pro bono work, whether it's saving an old house or designing dwellings for the disadvantaged that are high on aesthetics and low in cost. "As our society

increasingly looks toward regulations of all sorts, the need for professional services to assist the disadvantaged in navigating their way is high, and it's incumbent on architects to try and find ways to help," Rockhill says. "I do it because I have a social conscience, but also because what goes around comes around. We've ended up with some pretty interesting projects when no one else wanted to—or could—be involved." **ra**

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

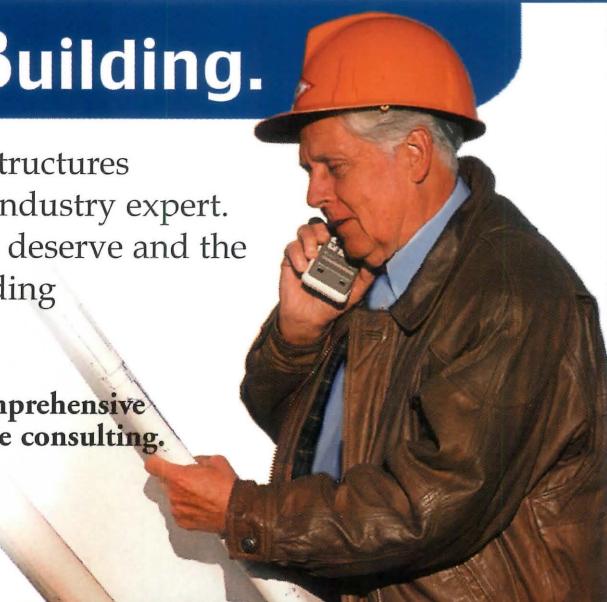
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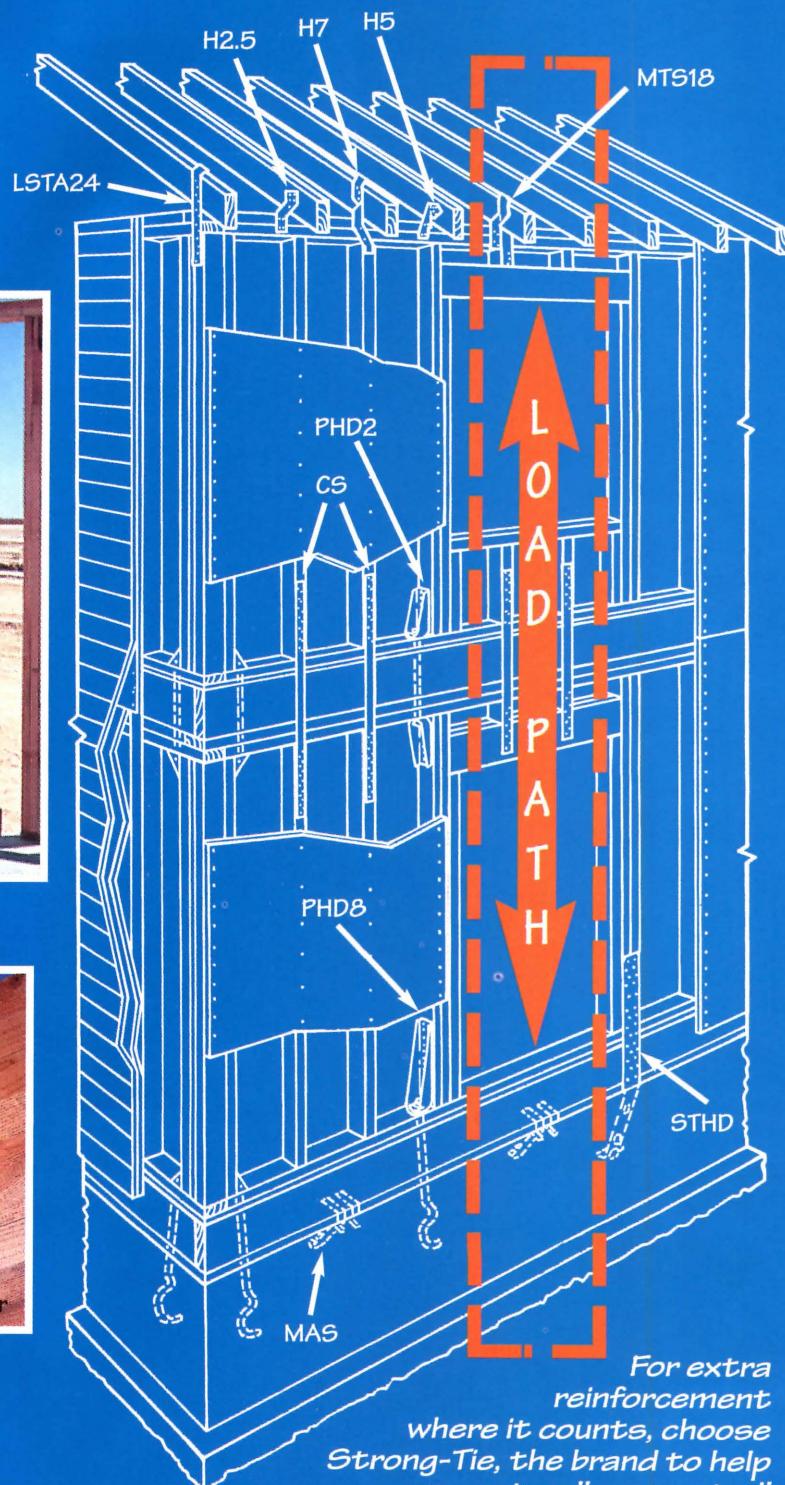
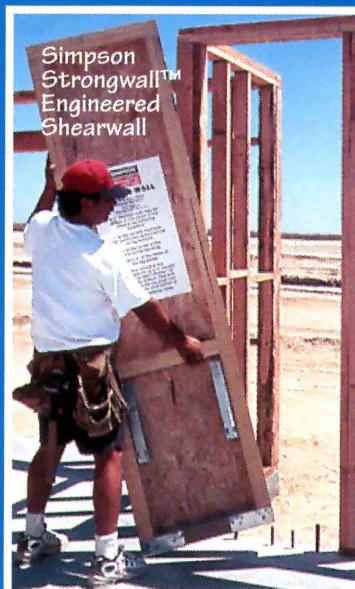
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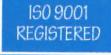


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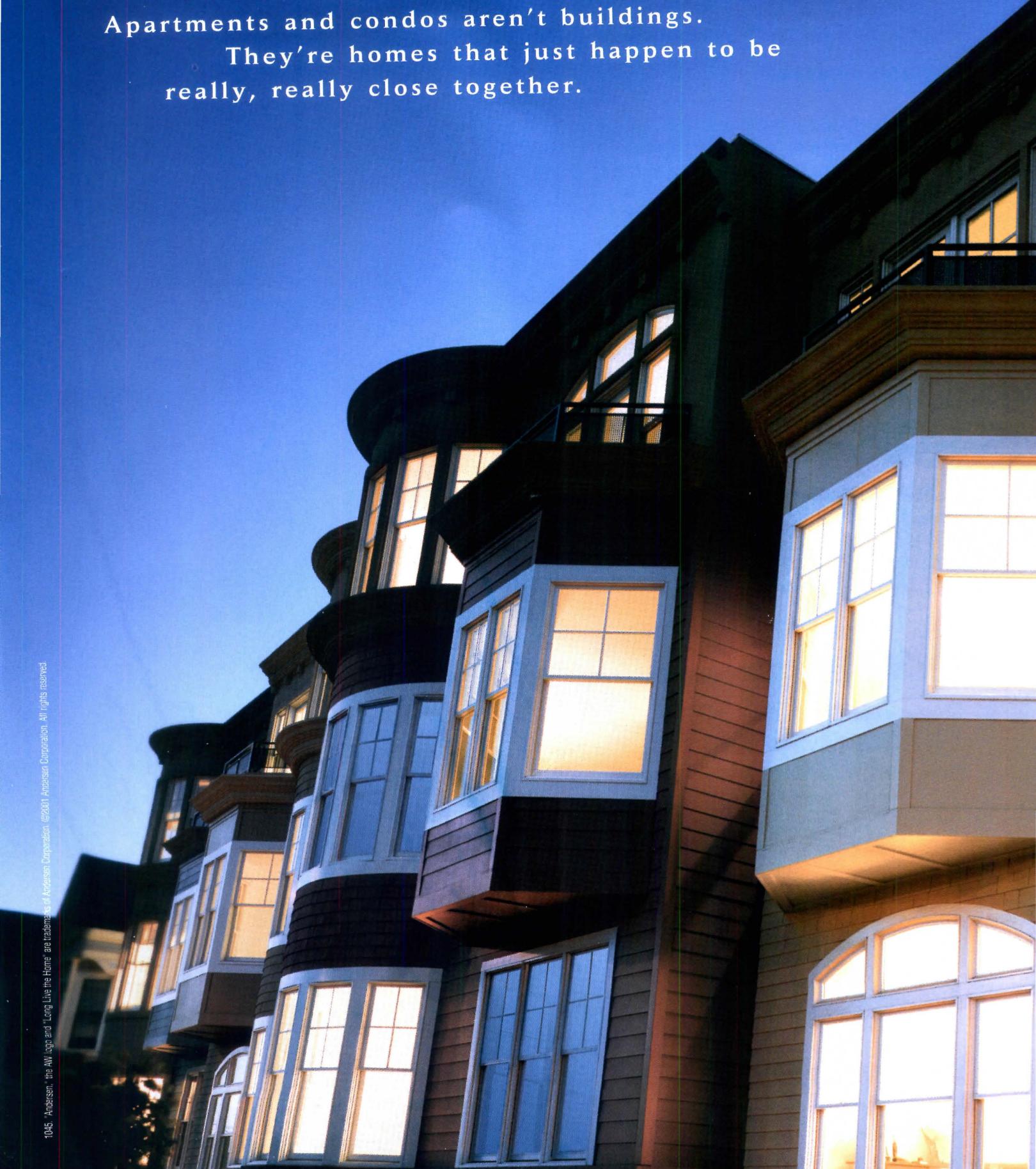
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after the macarthur, **samuel mockbee**
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Like any good storyteller raised in the South, Samuel Mockbee has a ready arsenal of colorful ways to talk about the everyday aspects of his life. For Mockbee, a burly Mississippi man who has crafted a signature aesthetic for the houses he builds for both the adventurous well-to-do and the hopelessly destitute, the future is something akin to a vast unexplored darkness. The next move in his fast-evolving career, he says unabashedly, is simply “a jump in the dark.”

It’s a kind of passage that the 57-year-old architect is particularly sensitive to at this stage of his life. Having recently beaten a disease that nearly claimed his life and then won a coveted half-million-dollar grant to support his professional work, he must still be reeling from the emotional ride of the past three years. But Mockbee—the self-described teacher, practitioner, and artist—keeps pressing on.

Guided by a growing devotion to his calling as an educator and his sincere concern for the black underclass of the rural South, Mockbee has forged a new model for the architectural profession that blends design aspirations with a strong social consciousness. Because of his innovative ideas, he’s also become a hot ticket on the national lecture circuit. Audiences flock to hear him describe his work as co-founder of the Rural Studio, an Auburn University satellite program that builds modest houses and community structures in small towns and along the dirt roads of Hale County, Ala., deep in the heart of the poverty-stricken Black Belt region, with more than 1,400 substandard dwellings.

“He’s a good human being with a big heart,” says David Buege, an

by vernon mays

“it’s all part of the same creative act. the architecture, the teaching, and the painting are all interwoven into one fabric.”



Samuel Mockbee, pictured here with one of his "rural mythology" artworks, considers his art an integral part of a professional identity that also incorporates teaching and practice.

Portraits by Mark Robert Halperin,
project photos by Timothy Hursley



At the Rural Studio's base in Newbern, Ala., a series of small "pods" for student housing (above) were designed and built as thesis projects under Mockbee's tutelage. Somehow the experimental units retain a vernacular feel, just like the celebrated hay-bale and stucco house (bottom, right) for Alberta and Shepard Bryant that launched the studio's tradition of building with inexpensive materials or castoffs. The Bryants' smokehouse (top, right), which cost \$40 to build, was fashioned from concrete rubble and roofed with old road signs.



architecture professor at the University of Arkansas who spent part of a sabbatical year with Mockbee at the Rural Studio. "Sambo has shown you can do architecture in a way that has design merit and also provides a quality of life for a community. He's made architecture available to people who usually are not the beneficiaries of the best of what architects have to offer."

A kind of personal validation came to Mockbee in the summer of 2000 when he received sudden notification that he was one of 25 people chosen to receive the coveted MacArthur Fellowship, a \$500,000 cash award from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation that comes with no strings attached. "In one way, it gives me confidence in what I'm doing—that the direction I'm heading in is good," Mockbee said at the time. "To have that pat on the back from the MacArthur Foundation, to be

lifted to that status, is a compliment and a responsibility." Now, after having a year to recover from the headiness of the announcement, he is coming to terms with what that responsibility—or, rather, that burden—may portend for the remainder of his career.

southern roots

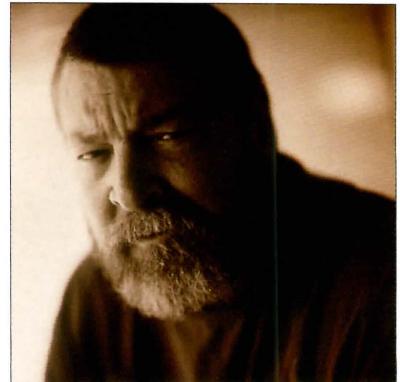
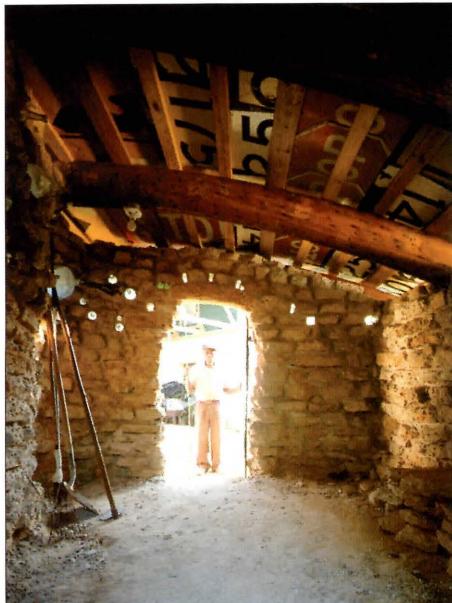
Born in 1944 in Meridian, Miss., Sam Mockbee was one of two children raised by Norman Mockbee, a salesman, and his wife, Margaret, an English teacher. It was his only sibling, Martha Anne, who branded him forever as Sambo.

Although his father, an alcoholic, had to quit working when he contracted tuberculosis, Mockbee remembers his childhood fondly.

"When I was 11," he says, "I got a pile of lumber for Christmas and I built a tree house, then tore it down to build a fort and then another tree house." Art was a favorite pastime of his, and when it came time to go to college he chose the architecture school at Auburn. But the Vietnam War took him on a detour, and in 1966 Mockbee was drafted into the Army and sent to Officers Candidate School.

While serving as an artillery instructor at Fort Benning, Ga., Mockbee began to question notions of race he had grown up with in the segregated South. "I learned to deal with my prejudices and jettisoned them, to the degree that one can," he says with typical candor. "Growing up in the '50s and '60s, I was just like everybody else in the Deep South—on the wrong side of the street and going the wrong way. But at some point I started to mature."

After his stint in the Army, Mockbee completed his degree at Auburn while working for an architect in Columbus, Ga. Along the way, he married Jackie Johnson, a former high-school homecoming queen whom he met on a blind date, and soon

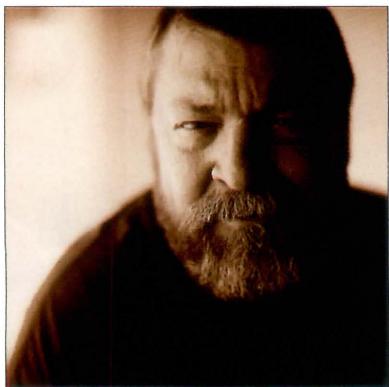


"the needs we're dealing with are the social injustices of families that have been left behind, left over, really, from the civil war."



they began their family. Today the Mockbees are a close-knit family that includes four children: Margaret, 25; Sarah Ann, 22; Carol, 20; and Julius, 16.

Gregarious and fun-loving, Mockbee always had a knack for getting publicity—even when he was pursuing a conventional practice in the early days of his career. People are naturally drawn to him and his antics. In Jackson, Miss., not far from his home in Canton, he made a name for himself when he was invited to oversee the judging of the St. Patrick's Day parade floats. Mockbee announced right away that, in the fine tradition of the judiciary, his crew of 12 judges would be corrupt. They were so open about their willingness to accept bribes that they strapped Kentucky Fried Chicken buckets on their heads and pranced along the parade route in long robes to solicit "gifts." Mockbee has since retired from his chief judge role, but the parade's Best in Show prize continues to be known as the Sam Mockbee/Buckethead Award.



"to have that pat on the back from the macarthur foundation is a compliment and a responsibility."

ple about the architect's power to lead communities while they also confront the pragmatics of building.

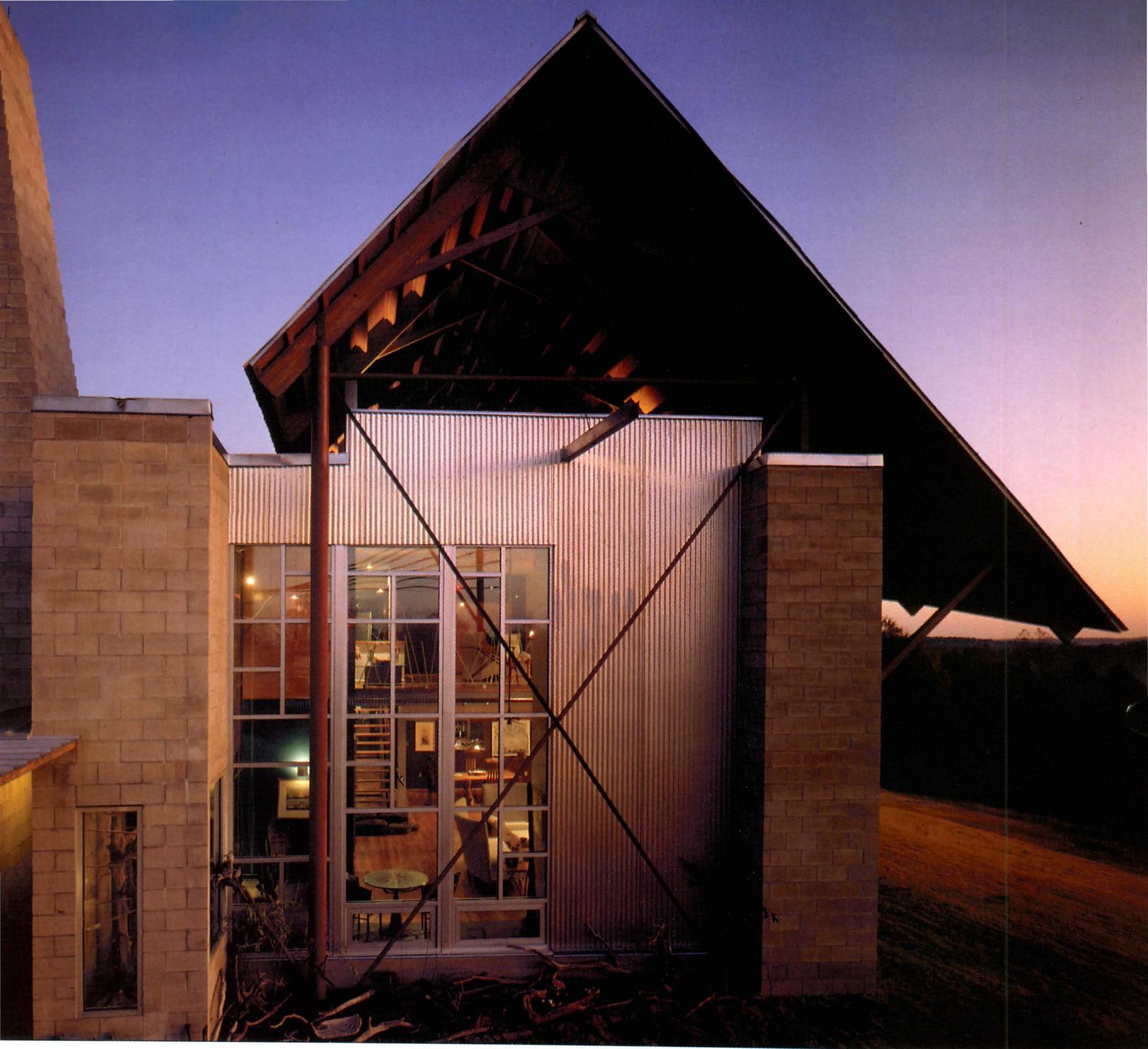
"Sambo is the spiritual guru," says Steve Hoffman, a graduate of the Rural Studio and now an instructor there. "But the brilliance about what he allows to happen out here is he lays a certain amount of groundwork, then says, OK, this is your opportunity. Of course, he also says make it great. That's his one requirement: Make it beautiful, make it great, and put your all into it. Students love that."

At the Rural Studio, Mockbee and his young charges design and build unassuming houses and community structures that are surprising, functional, and oddly attractive. The whole process hinges on the students' resourcefulness, for budgets are usually minuscule and the students often beg materials from suppliers or scavenge them from demolition sites. The buildings they produce—ranging from houses to chapels to community centers—incorporate old bottles in

spiritual guru

On the professional front, Mockbee joined forces with architects Coleman Coker and Thomas Howorth in 1986, and it was their firm that received a P/A Award in 1987 for three variations of what Mockbee calls "charity houses." Mockbee's interest in housing for the poor expanded after he started teaching in the School of Architecture at Auburn. He thought it wasteful that students built a wall each semester and then tore it down. So, in 1993, he and department head D.K. Ruth launched the Rural Studio as a laboratory where students learn by exam-





The concrete-block Cook residence, built in 1991, is an essay in the architecture of shelter, with a form that echoes the trailer houses found throughout the rural South. The main volume is topped by a floating metal roof, while lean-to additions constructed of cyclone fencing provide enclosures for a variety of animals. The main living area features a loft that hovers above the dining room (left).

the walls, siding made of surplus license plates, or walls insulated with hay bales. The end product is an unconventional architecture that pushes the envelope in terms of methods, materials, and form.

An underlying value system informs the work, because architecture in Mockbee's mind is a social art. "Great architects address cultural issues of their time and place," he says, "so I look for a moral sense, that's all I can call it. For me, the needs we're dealing with here are the social injustices of families that have been left behind, left over, really, from the Civil War, who never came out of Reconstruction. For generations, they continued to stay invisible and underserved and underprivileged. These are the poor blacks of the Deep South, right here in my neck of the woods. But the problems of poverty and homelessness are not specific to the South."

forms of art

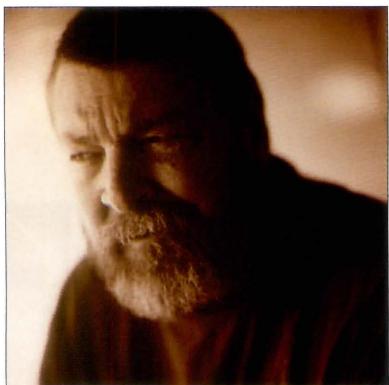
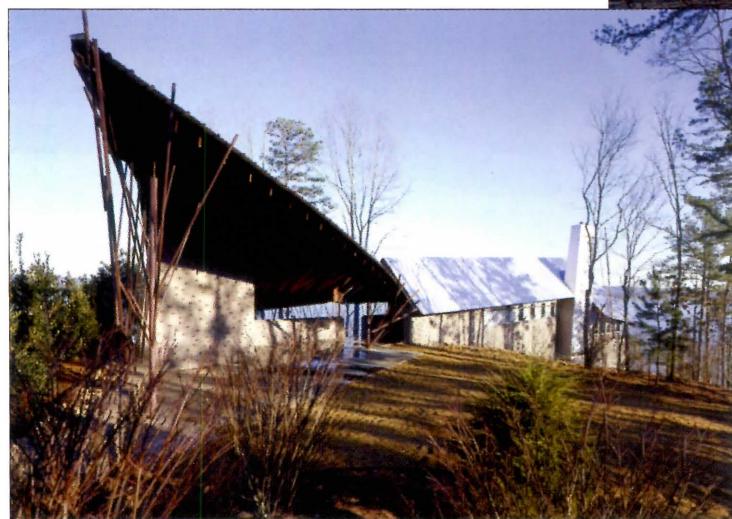
While Mockbee operates from a slight distance as mentor and advisor on the Rural Studio projects, he is completely hands-on in his design work for private clients. His residential design for Jackson attorney Ken Barton placed him firmly on the architectural map in 1991, if there was any question of his abilities before then. Loose in its initial concept but taut in execution, the 4,400-square-foot house demonstrates Mockbee/Coker's skill at elevating familiar vernacular forms to fine art through reinterpretation and recombination. The house's aluminized-steel cladding, concrete block walls,

"sustainability needs to be a main focus in the profession—an integral part of our palette."

and rhythmic string of structural steel supports evoke the agricultural buildings that surround Jackson, yet they read with a contemporary freshness.

Mockbee/Coker advanced its reputation with the Cook residence, which won an AIA Honor Award in 1994, and the firm's Shiloh Falls residence on the Tennessee River. But even architecture for prosperous clients goes beyond formal play for Mockbee. "What's become obvious to me in the last several years is the importance of environmental issues," he says. Warning that he's not about to become a one-note architect—one who focuses solely on sustainable or environmental issues to the exclusion of everything else—Mockbee strives to find the appropriate balance of social, environmental, aesthetic, and technical issues. "They are all generators of form and art and architecture. So I don't set out to deal just with the social issues, but I do work them."

Mockbee's present design work is centered on two



residential architect / november · december 2001



Anchored to a steeply sloping site east of Shiloh National Park, the Shiloh Falls house rises 120 feet above the Tennessee River. The form of the house follows the topography of the site, with a dramatic angled roof that shelters the garage on the uphill end of the house (left).



Mockbee's most refined custom house, the Barton residence, uses materials that evoke the agricultural buildings surrounding Jackson, Miss., while introducing a fresh interpretation with contemporary details. A fretwork of tubular steel struts establishes a steady rhythm along the house's bedroom wing (right); a narrow concrete stair leads up to the screened porch—which every proper Southern house should have.



seemingly unrelated houses—one for Amy Murphy, a private client in the university town of Oxford, Miss., who is financing her own 2,500-square-foot house; the other for Lucy Harris, a single mother in Mason's Bend, Ala., a poor community where the Rural Studio has built other projects. He calls the project his “sister houses” because they are being designed simultaneously and the ideas of each will fertilize the other.

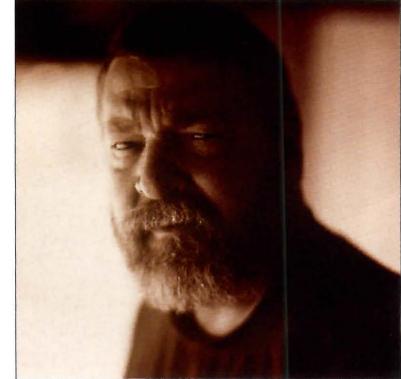
Mockbee is also using these houses to push technology: “By that I mean the methods and materials of construction for a house, to be innovative for economy’s sake—economy in a broader sense, not just dollars and cents, but economy of labor, the use of materials, and sustainable materials. That’s an area I think all architects need to learn and start developing. Sustainability needs to be matured and be a main focus in the profession—an integral part of our palette. It is imperative that we, as a profession, provide the leadership in our culture in dealing with that.”

A third—and vital—element of Mockbee’s architecture is his painting, which takes the form of a richly colorful and abstract series of canvases through which he attempts to capture “an emotion, not a concept.” Often populated with bizarre figures and sometimes offering only the mere suggestion of architectonic form, the paintings represent for Mockbee an evolving rural mythology. Since receiving a Graham Foundation grant in 1993 to do the first paintings, Mockbee says he has made the creation of these canvases, the largest of which is 16 feet tall and 20 feet long, an integral part of his practice and his Rural Studio work. “All of that feeds in through one another—it’s all part of the same creative act. The architecture, the teaching, and the painting are all interwoven into one fabric.”

deep impact

As the emphasis of Mockbee’s career has moved toward the mission of the Rural Studio, his private practice has gradually diminished in importance. “I was a full-time practitioner and an adjunct academician. Now I’m a full-time educator and an adjunct practitioner. I was a conventional practitioner; now I’m an unconventional practitioner. The work is infinitely more fulfilling now under these circumstances than it was before.”

The circumstances of his personal life may have contributed to that, for in 1998 Mockbee was diagnosed with



“great architects address cultural issues of their time and place. i look for a moral sense, that’s all i can call it.”



a type of leukemia that kills half of all patients within one year and all after three years—unless they receive a bone-marrow transplant. In Mockbee's case, his sister, Martha Anne, answered the call and provided the donation that would spare his life. After the operation, Mockbee lived in a bubble for weeks—and took most of a year before he could resume normal activities. In the meantime, Martha Anne developed cancer herself and died.

The harsh reminder of his own mortality seems to have added an urgency to Mockbee's timetable to fulfill his life's work—or, as he says, "before I leave here and have to go to the ethereal practice with Aldo Rossi and Charles Moore," two architectural icons who appear in the paintings he is doing for the "sister houses." Although the half-million-dollar MacArthur grant affords Mockbee the kind of financial security he has

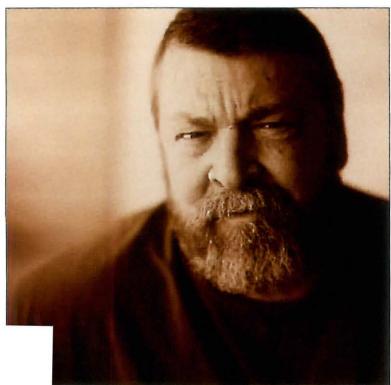
never known, he also notes that the opportunity it presents is a burden of sorts. So, using a portion of the grant as seed money, he plans to create a new intern development program that will give four young architecture grads the experience of building Lucy Harris' house.

"And, so, professionally, in the big picture of the Rural Studio and the practice and the paintings, the MacArthur Fellowship is about taking Lucy's project and Amy's project and using that as my great project as an architect," he explains. "That will be my Bilbao. I let it season almost a year, because I wanted to make sure to be really excited—to know that somehow it continued the jump in the dark, that I jump even higher and deeper out there. It has given me that kind of courage."

And consider that once the historians take stock of Sambo Mockbee, the buildings he completes may not constitute the core of his legacy. For, like so many who make their mark in education, Mockbee seems destined to have his greatest impact at some later time—perhaps decades from now—when the students he has nurtured begin to come into their own.

"It's true that he hasn't produced a lot of large public buildings," observes David Buege, the University of Arkansas professor. "He really hasn't had a practice that would impact large numbers of people. Most people will have experienced his buildings through publications and not through direct experience. But the students he has taught and influenced most directly will probably filter out in the world with a pretty significant impact. Their own contributions will in some way be multipliers of his own." **ra**

Vernon Mays is editor of Inform, the architecture and design magazine of the Virginia Society AIA.



"I want to make sure to be really excited ... to continue the jump in the dark, to jump even higher and deeper out there."





The Butterfly House, a Rural Studio project for Anderson and Ora Lee Harris, features a high-pitched tin roof that aids natural ventilation and channels rainwater into a cistern. The gray water is recycled for toilet-flushing and clothes-washing. Natural light fills the interior spaces, which are connected by wide doorways that allow Mrs. Harris to move about freely in her wheelchair. An exterior view (left) reveals the operable vents near the roofline that encourage air circulation in the warm months but can be closed during winter.

off the shelf

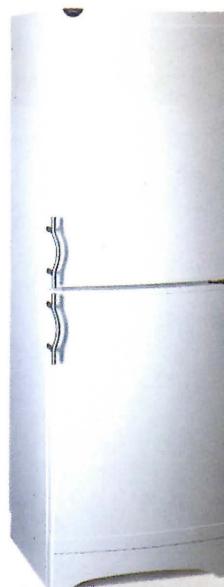
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continued on page 54



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The Sun Frost refrigerator can be powered with either solar-charged batteries or standard 120V electricity. Its energy consumption, says maker, is one-fifth that of typical refrigerators. A high-humidity interior prevents freezer burn and wilting. All models are designed to be mounted on 13- or 24-inch-high cabinets, placing food at a convenient height, and can be finished in more than 100 colors of high-pressure laminate or many natural woods. Sun Frost, 707.822.9095; www.sunfrost.com.



clean getaway

The fully integrated D1796FI dishwasher accepts custom cabinetry panels and conceals controls on top of the door. The appliance can also be outfitted with black, white, or stainless-steel one-piece doors with matching handles. According to the manufacturer, the dishwasher uses 4.6 gallons of water for a normal cycle, compared with the 7 to 10 gallons required by standard machines. Program choices—including two temperature settings and four wash options—help save energy and water. ASKO, 800.898.1879; www.askousa.com.



top it off

Ecosmart washing machines combine top-loading convenience with energy-efficient front-loading technology. The 3-cubic-foot tub saves 18 gallons per load compared with the average machine, says Fisher & Paykel. A computer customizes water level and agitator action for each load, thereby reducing unnecessary water usage and minimizing garment distress. Five wash cycles and three spin cycles accommodate delicate to heavy loads. Fisher & Paykel, 800.863.5394; www.fisherpaykel.com.

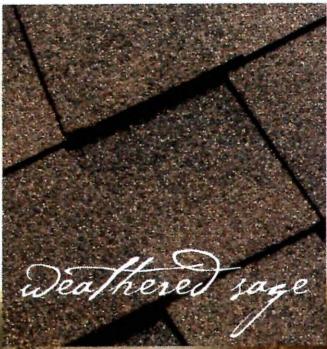
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saving graces

green products that will keep your affordable houses in the black.

by nigel f. maynard

for years, environmentally conscious architects have used passive and active solar heating, simple designs, and smaller footprints to save energy and money, but specing sustainable building products remained prohibitively expensive. Going completely green was a luxury only the rich could afford, which relegated the worthy endeavor to a tiny niche of home construction. Fortunately, a greater breadth and depth of green products exists today, and that means many more projects can watch the budget and Mother Nature at the same time.

"What has happened is that green products are becoming more affordable," says Rico Cedro, AIA, of Krueck & Sexton Architects in Chicago. "There is more mainstreaming of products, so the difference in cost is not as great as it once was."

low cost, high value

Green products may not be less expensive going in, but "almost every one will show a significant return within five years," says Dick Brown, co-owner of Addison, Texas-based Carl Franklin Homes, which builds energy-efficient, affordable



Bruce Hampton

Designed by Bruce Hampton, AIA, and the Green Village Company, the Erie-Ellington Homes in Dorchester, Mass., use 49 percent less energy and 41 percent less water than standard houses. They also cost 25 percent less to build than standard construction in the area.

homes for nonprofit housing groups. Houses in Carl Franklin's current project near Dallas are priced at about \$85,000—almost half the local average. Despite their low cost, the units are made from such cutting-edge green products as structural insulated roof and wall panels (SIPs), and feature geothermal heating and cooling, on-demand tankless water heaters, pigmented concrete floors, and fiber-cement siding. They're also outfitted with energy- and water-saving appliances, faucets, and toilets. Not only are they cheap to buy, but, most important for low-income owners, they're cheap to maintain.

SIPs—expanded poly-

styrene sandwiched between two sheets of oriented strand board—return the "lion's share of the savings," says Brown. A house goes up in two days and needs fewer trades since the insulation is attached to the boards. "From an environmental standpoint, the houses are much quieter because they are airtight and extremely energy-efficient," Brown says. "It's like living in a Styrofoam cooler."

Supplied by companies like Energy Solutions in Orinda, Calif., geothermal systems rely on ground-source thermal energy. The Geothermal Heat Pump Consortium in Washington, D.C., says a system can reduce energy consumption

by 25 percent to 50 percent compared with air-source heat pumps and by over 40 percent compared with electric resistance heating.

And tankless water heaters, such as the Seisco heaters manufactured by Houston-based Microtherm, turn on only when they detect water flow. Though the units are more expensive than a conventional gas heater, Microtherm CEO David Seitz says homeowners will see significant monthly energy savings over an electric heater—from 30 percent for a family to 50 percent or more for a couple or a single person.

Brown says fiber-cement siding is popular with his

continued on page 58



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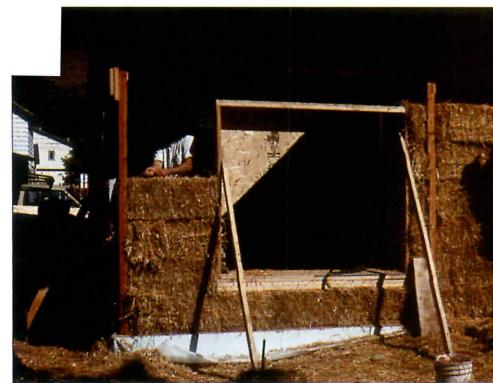
Circle no. 71

building company because it is eco-friendly, durable, and maintenance-free. The builder often installs it as-is, so it never needs painting.

green by design

Architect Douglas Ross believes that an affordable home is naturally sustainable because it's smaller and more compact. "There is inherently less material used," says the principal of Ross Architecture in Chicago. "That makes the houses greener before you even talk about specific products." But Ross—whose firm has won Green Homes for Chicago, a competition to identify affordable, environmentally friendly housing designs for the city—does have some favorite budget-minded green products.

Ross likes bamboo flooring because the wood can be harvested in just five years, and he uses the fiberglass-clad Integrity window from Warroad, Minn.-based Marvin. Fiberglass is stiffer than vinyl and better for the environment (vinyl production emits toxic compounds), plus it's 15 percent cheaper than the manufacturer's typical line. Ross specs Atmosphere recycled rubber floor tiles from To Market, a Washington, D.C.-based manufacturer of alternative, environmentally friendly products. And for interior applications and limited exterior cladding, he likes hardboard—compressed paper fiber panels made mostly from wood chips. "We like to use it on the upper third or quarter of a



Photos courtesy NCAT Center for Resourceful Building Technology

Recycled wood floors, recovered beams, and wood composites help keep a Missoula, Mont., house affordable (left), while straw-bale walls and fiber-cement siding promote sustainability in another home being built nearby (right). Both are demonstration projects by the NCAT Center for Resourceful Building Technology.

building under the eaves," Ross says. "We won't bring it down to the ground because it absorbs moisture if it gets wet, but it's really inexpensive and really green."

Economical and green are two goals of Steven Winter Associates, a Norwalk, Conn.-based consulting firm that works with the home-building industry to produce more energy-efficient and affordable homes (see Perspective, page 24). Bill Zoller, an architect with Steven Winter, says he and his colleagues like single-glazed hard-coat Low-E glass developed by Toledo, Ohio-based Pilkington, as well as geothermal heat pumps, fiber-cement siding, blown cellulose insulation, and tubular skylights.

Offered by companies like Applegate Insulation in Webberville, Mich., and Central Fiber Corporation in Wellsville, Kan., cellulose insulation is made from recycled newspapers. The product costs slightly more than fiberglass, but the Cellulose Insulation Manufacturers Association in Dayton, Ohio, claims that it pays for the extra cost in a few years with 20 percent to 30 percent lower

heating and cooling bills.

Other products that architects favor include oriented strand board for subflooring instead of plywood; medium-density fiberboard molding; paralam and microlam composite beams made from wood chips instead of solid lumber; 100-percent recycled gypsum board; and energy- and water-efficient appliances and fixtures.

simplify, simplify

But simply purchasing sustainable products as a way to connect the green dots with the affordable ones is about as effective as excavating a ditch with a spoon. You have to think about projects holistically to achieve maximum efficiency, says Stella Turney, an urban planner at the Hickory Consortium/Green Village Company, a Cambridge, Mass.-based collective dedicated to making houses more environmentally sustainable and economical. "If you design a house as a system, you not only can design a healthier house but you can also save a lot of energy and money," she says.

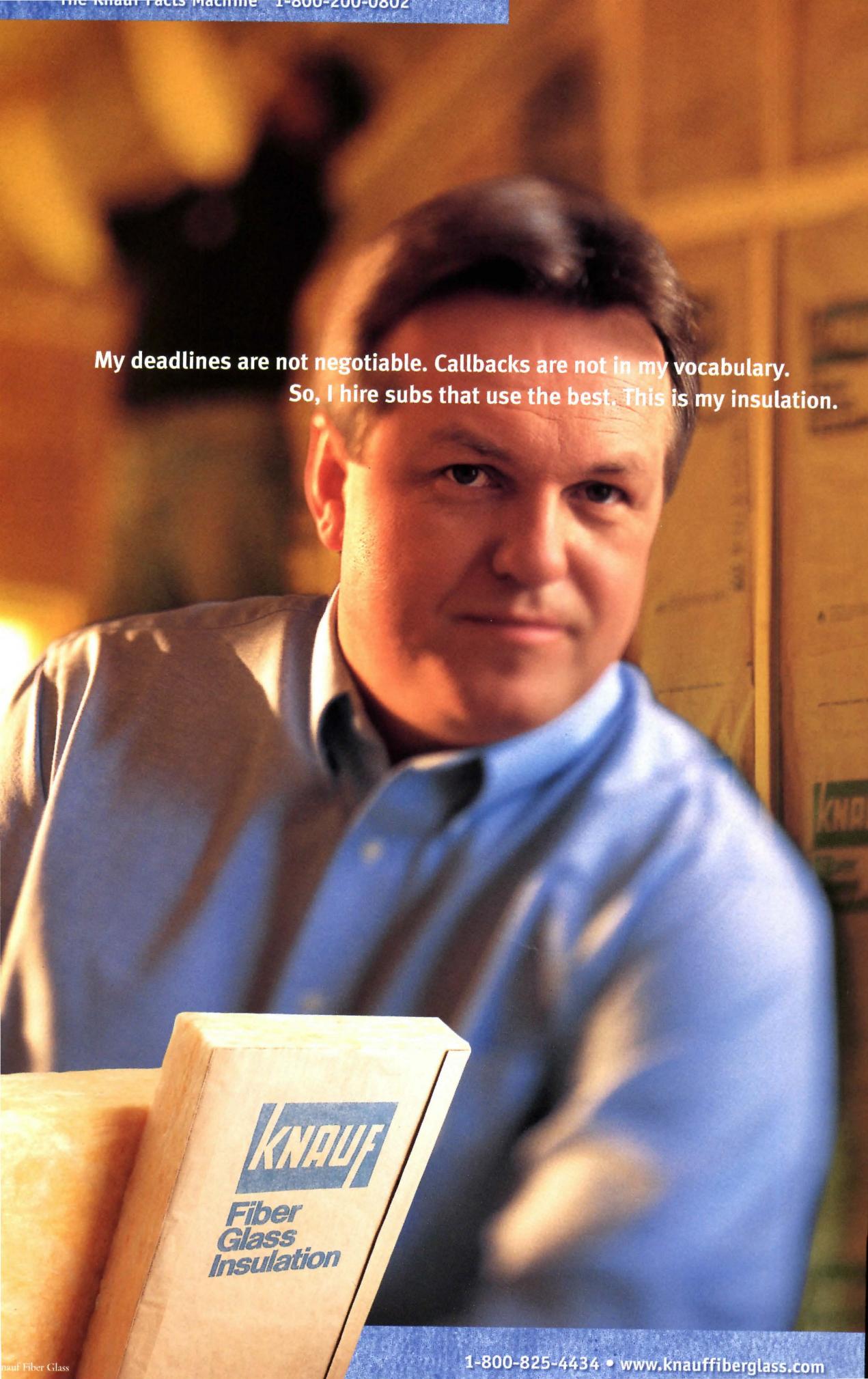
Architect Jason McLennan takes a similar approach. "We usually start by simplifying the design," says the

director of Elements, the sustainable consulting arm of Berkebile Nelson Immenschuh McDowell Architects in Kansas City, Mo. "We use exposed finishes, and we design for modularity. We do those things first before we spec green products. Then we think about lowering the energy consumption."

Architects should also reuse products as much as possible, says Tracy Mumma, program specialist with the NCAT Center for Resourceful Building Technology in Missoula, Mont. "If you can reuse products, you can often reduce cost," she says. The center advocates efficient building techniques to reduce waste, says Mumma; it also promotes the use of locally manufactured products, which saves energy and is often cheaper.

And, finally, weigh the cost vs. the benefits, says architect Bruce Hampton, AIA. "It's not always apples to apples," says the principal of Bruce Hampton Architects in Cambridge, Mass. Compromise where you can get the most savings, he says. "There is no magic bullet, but energy saving is the most sustainable thing you can do." **ra**

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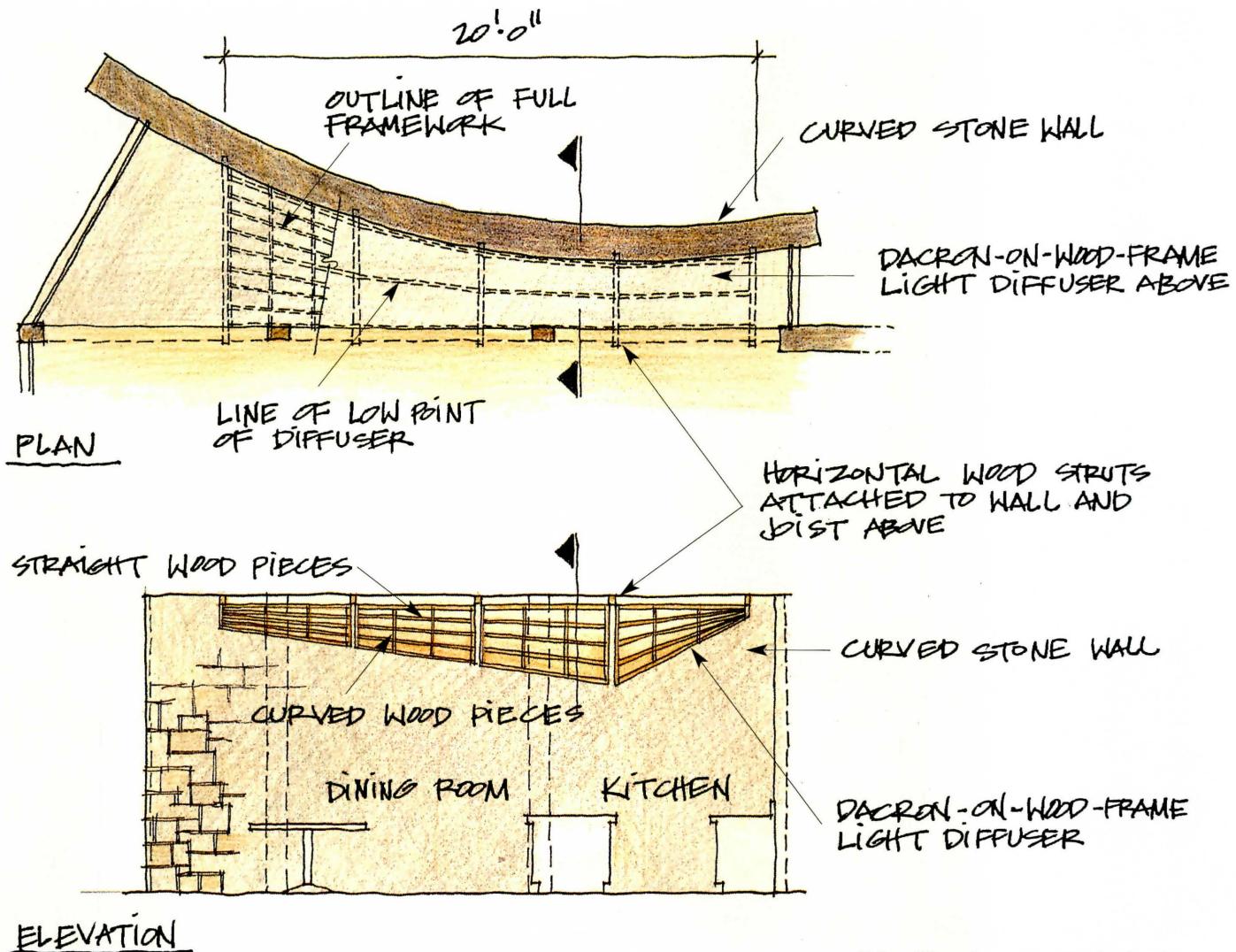
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by rick vitullo, aia

Sharon Odum, an architect at Cunningham Architects in Dallas, was commissioned to create a light fixture for the kitchen and dining room of a 1940s house in a Dallas suburb. The two rooms shared an exposed wood ceiling and, forming their northeast side, a curved, free-standing limestone wall. The fixture would spread across both

rooms—which are divided only by a counter—and straddle the asymmetrical space where wall and ceiling meet. Odum would design and detail the light; the firm's residential architect/artist, Bill Lutter, would fabricate it.

Given such a free hand, Odum decided to create a truly unique architectural "folly"—a whimsical,

continued on page 62

At the diffuser's narrowest point, its shape is tallest in height; at its widest point, it is most shallow in height.

Illustrations: Rick Vitullo

call for entries

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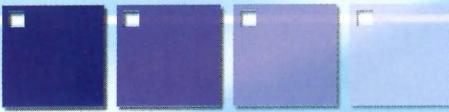
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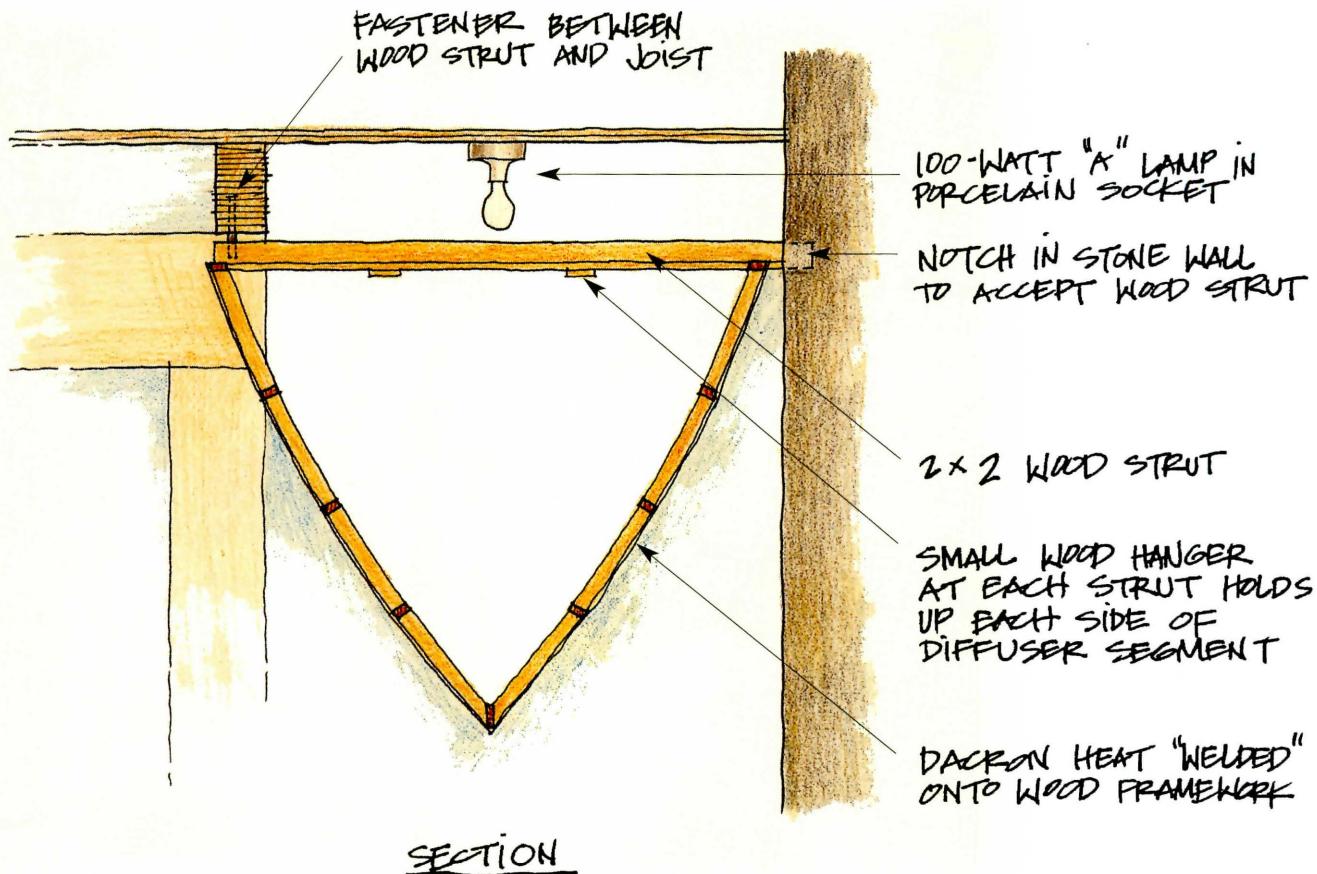


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lightweight fixture that would add character and interest to the house's interior. She settled on a vaguely nautical theme, conceiving of an airy framework covered with translucent Dacron, reminiscent of sail material stretched over the exposed structure of a boat. While the boat-hull-shaped pieces were made from curved wood, the horizontals consist of straight pieces of wood.

She and Lutter divided the nearly 20-foot-long structure into four segments separated by 3-inch air spaces, helping it to conform to the curved wall's irregular shape. The air spaces also provide access to the interior of the diffuser, so the 100-watt A lamps in exposed porcelain sockets can

be easily changed.

For further stability, the architects attached each of the four segments to a grid of struts affixed to the ceiling. The structure tapers in both height and depth, which means that every piece of wood involved in its construction is one-of-a-kind in dimension. Lutter actually ironed the heat-sensitive, waterproof Dacron covering onto the wood framework, making the structure strong and taut yet lightweight.

The finished product took over a month to fabricate and install, but both the architects and the owner are justly proud of the results. **ra**

Although the overall shape of the 20-foot-long diffuser is asymmetrical in plan and elevation, any cross section reveals a symmetrical shape (at the Y axis).

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

LIGHTING



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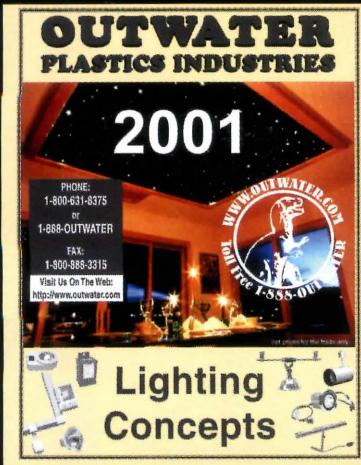
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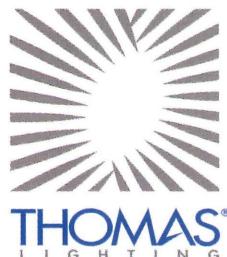
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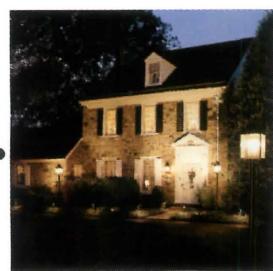


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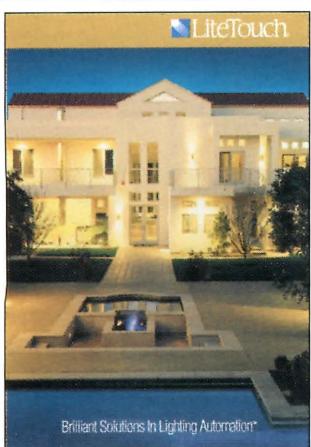
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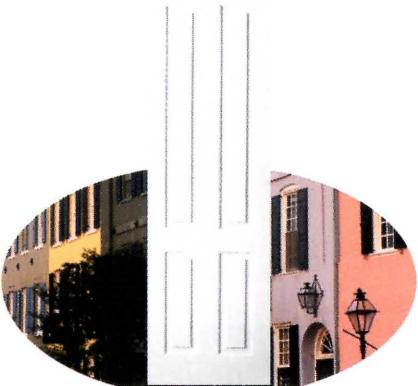


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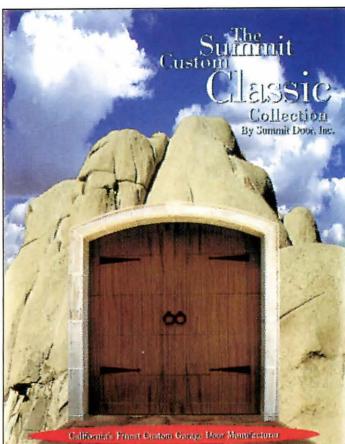
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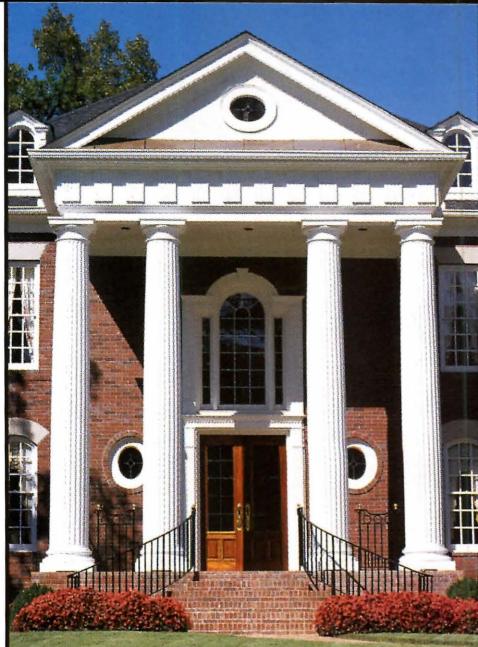
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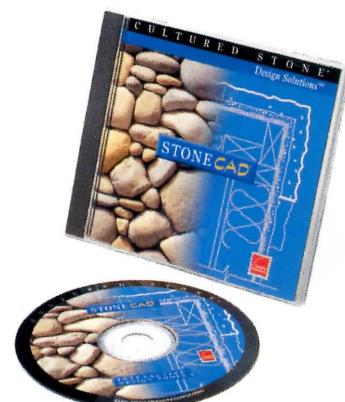
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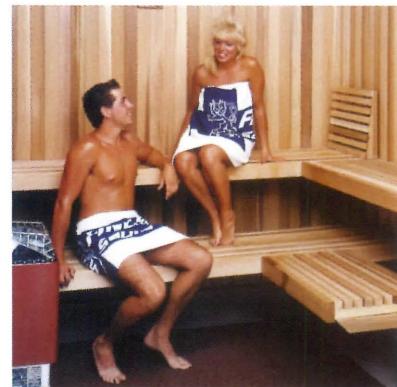


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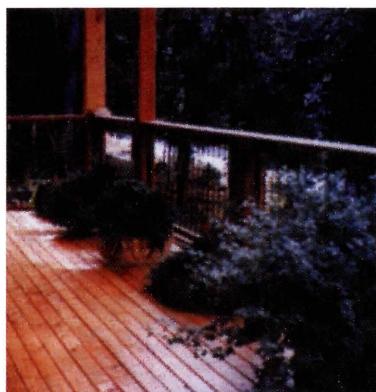
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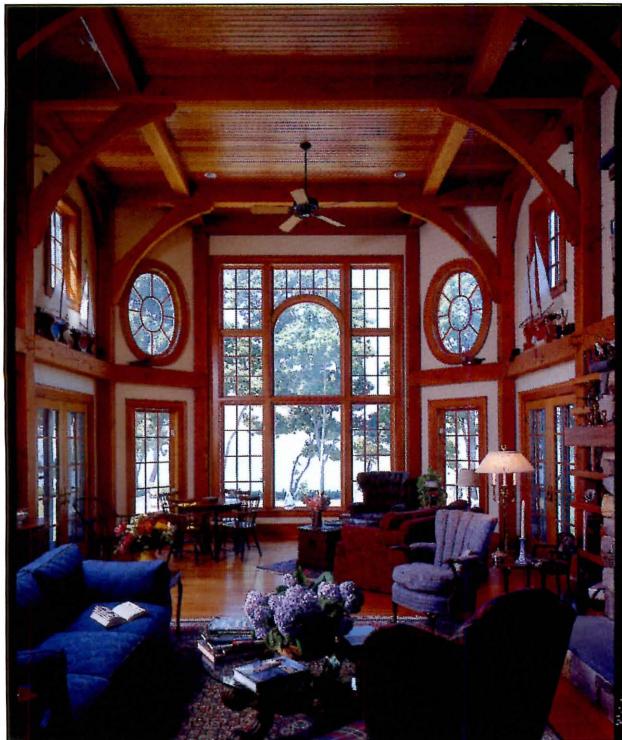
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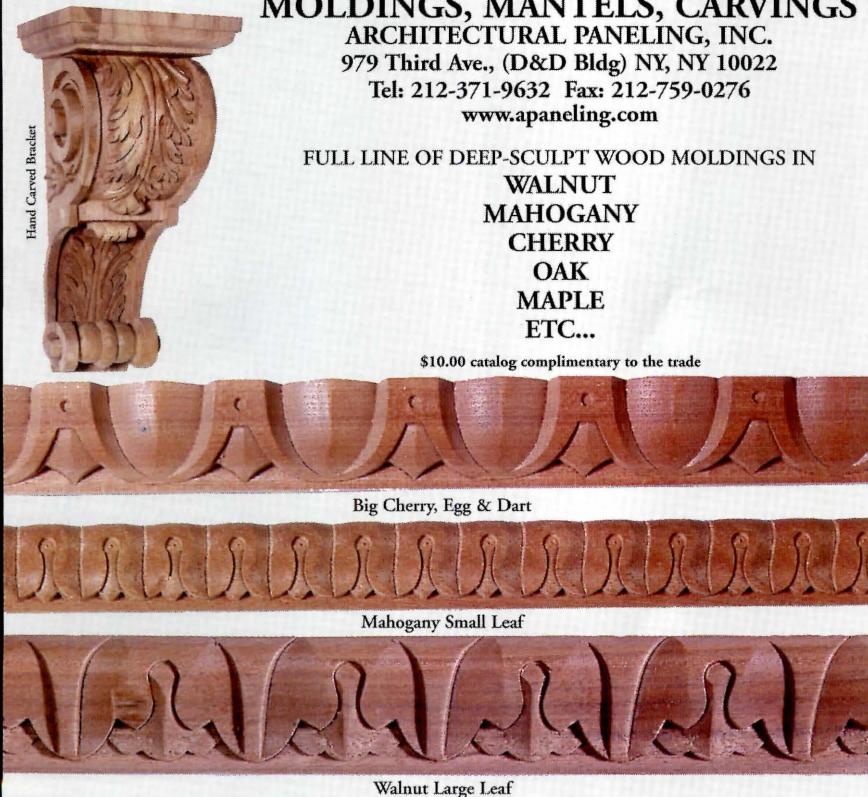
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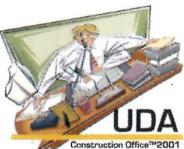
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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(signed) Michael Boyle, Publisher

dan rockhill

What is the best thing about being an architect?

The opportunity to create a built legacy for oneself.

What's the worst?

Long hours and low pay.

If you weren't an architect, what would you be?

I was going to be a mechanic before my mother told me I was going to college to study architecture.

What is your involvement in affordable housing?

I teach a graduate architectural design class called Studio 804. The students design and build affordable houses that are sold to qualified buyers who work through an organization named Tenants to Homeowners.

Is affordable housing your passion?

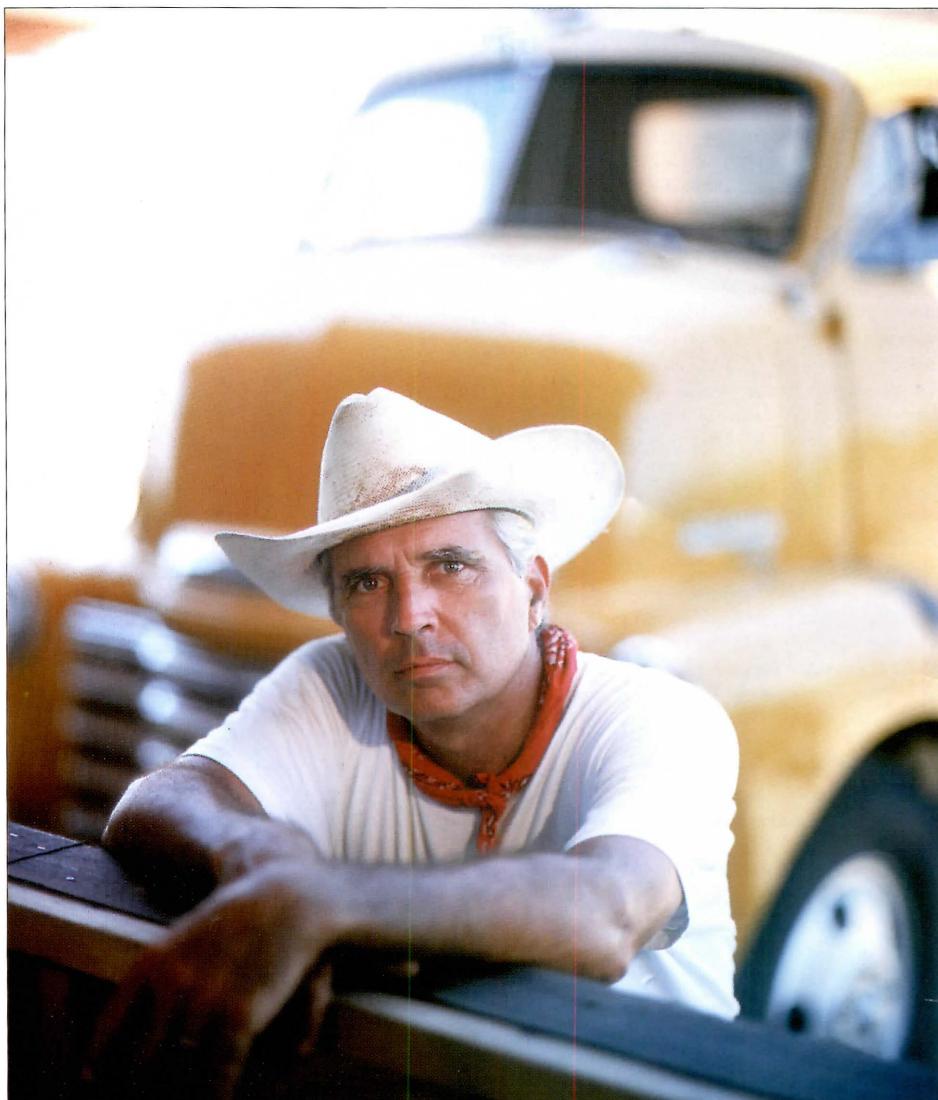
I like to imagine everyone can afford the services of an architect. Affordable housing is included in that, somewhat by default. I dislike architecture that's predominantly for rich people.

What have you learned about affordable housing that has shocked you?

What shocked me most is that in some areas—mainly in the administration of some of these programs—there was a feeling that these people didn't deserve any more than they were already getting.

What role do creative materials play in affordable housing?

A big one. I always tell my students that if we don't push the envelope, we can't expect others to do it.



Mark Robert Halper

Where do you live?

In a converted farmhouse I remodeled. Little of the original farmhouse is left.

Was it redesigned like a Studio 804 house?

It has the same spirit. There are a lot of recycled materials. We made our own doors, sinks, and cabinets, and the whole house is done in recycled marble that came out of a library.

What do you do in your spare time?

I have no spare time.

What is your greatest indulgence?

I have so many vehicles I can't count them all—antique bulldozers, antique

tractors, antique trucks. We use them in the business, and as a mechanic I am able to maintain them.

What kind of car do you drive and why?

A 2001 Audi. It has German engineering and wonderful proportions. It's sort of my wife's car, but occasionally she lets me drive it.

Dan Rockhill is principal of Rockhill and Associates in Lecompton, Kan., and an architecture professor at the University of Kansas. His graduate design class, Studio 804, has won two residential architect Design Awards. ra