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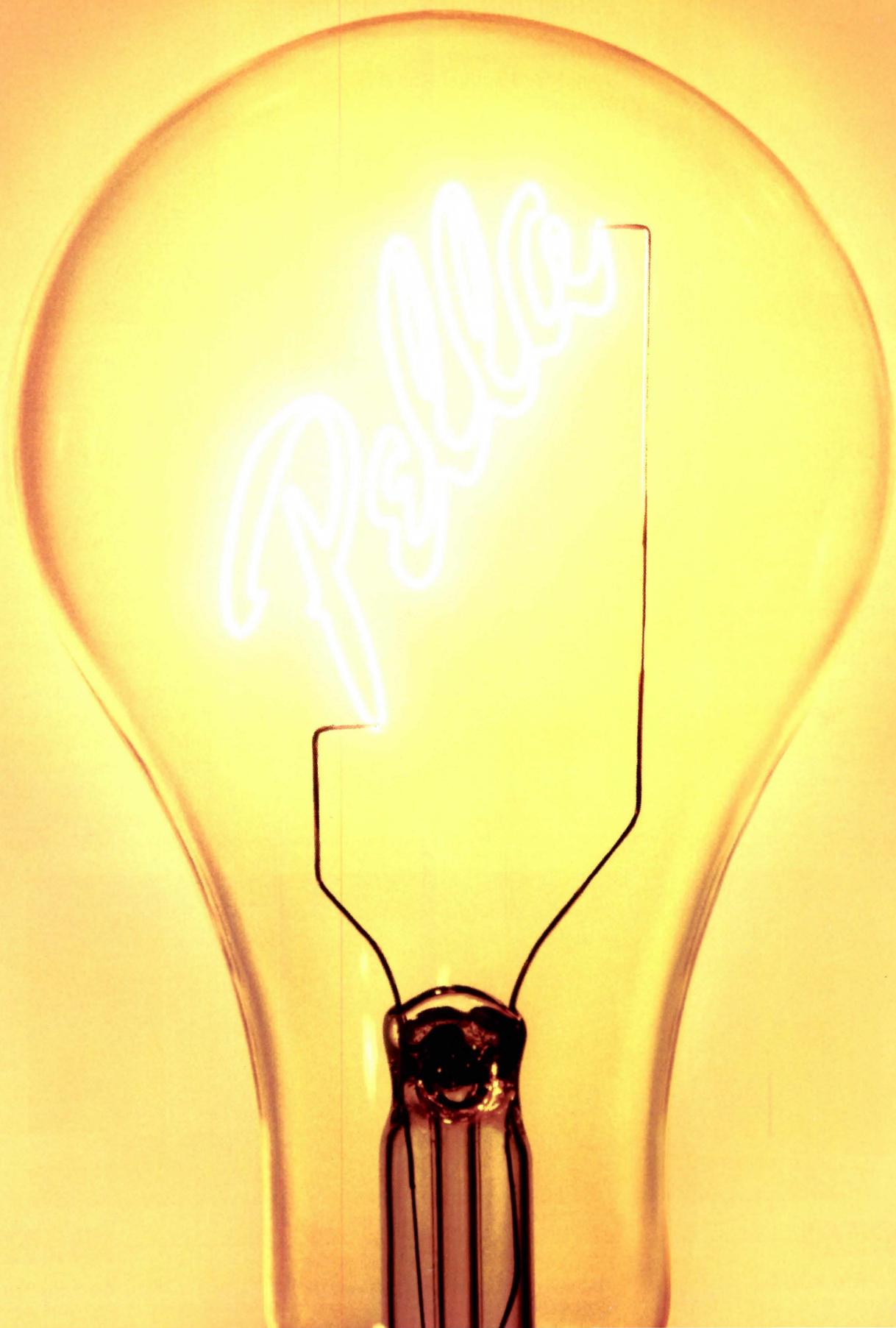


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residential architect
design awards

call for entries

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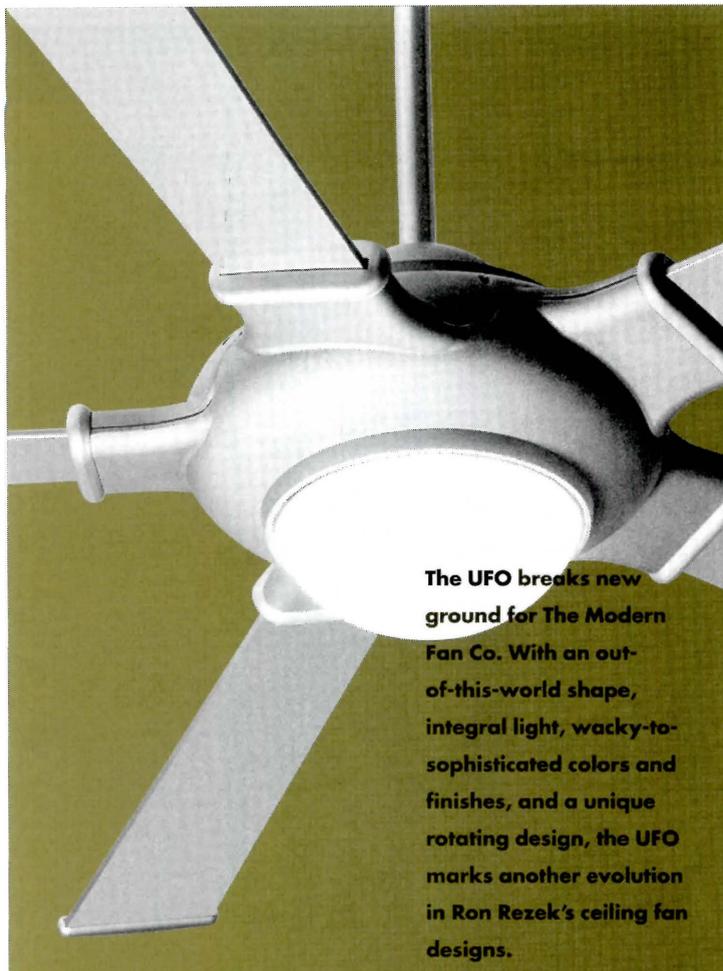
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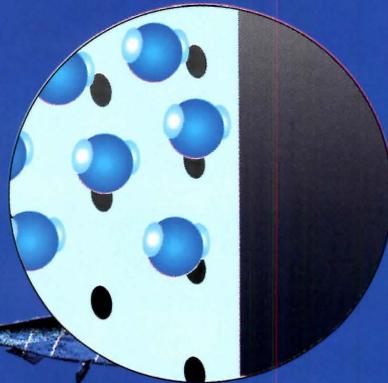
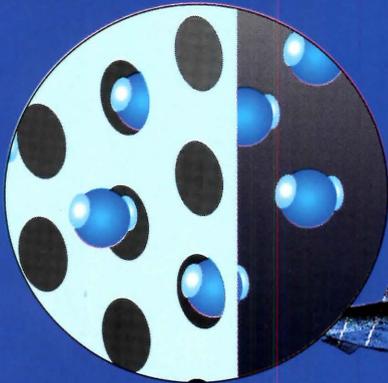
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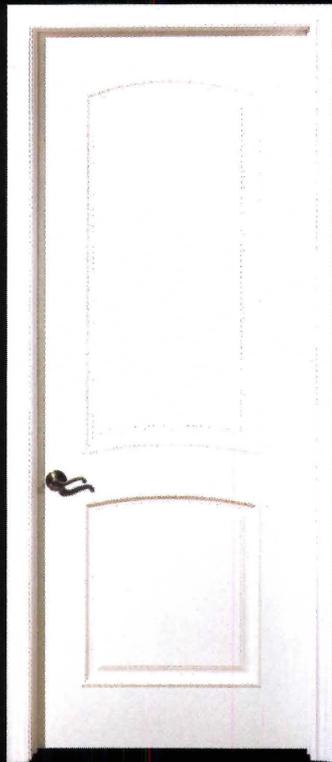
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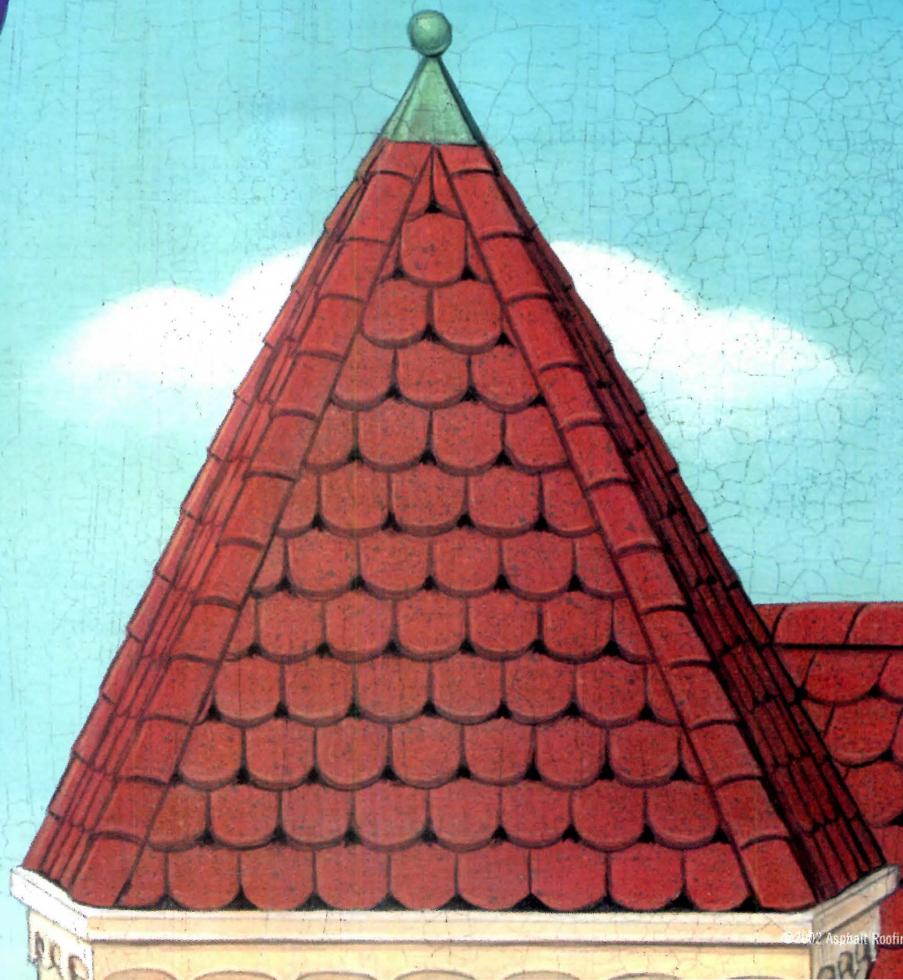
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staying interested

you're talented, you're successful, and you're a little bit bored.

by s. claire conroy

What do you do to stay interested in your chosen profession? I'm thinking about anyone who's had the same job or type of work for 10 years or more. Even if you love what you're doing, it's almost inevitable that at some point you'll feel a little stale. Those of us in the creative professions are especially vulnerable, because we're required to make our work both useful and beautiful.

Creative people have an internal commitment not only to meet their level of previous achievements but to exceed it. But when you're languishing in a slump, it's more difficult to go that extra mile. We all get tempted, and sometimes succumb, to simply "phoning it in," doing just what's necessary—a good job rather than a great one. Perhaps we convince ourselves for a while that our average-quality work is better than many people's best work. Maybe so, but somehow that doesn't make you feel any better if you know you haven't done your best, or you wasted an opportunity you might have once used to artful advantage.

It's particularly easy to

fall into this trap after your success has promoted you out of the day-to-day design trenches. Perhaps you have some very talented associate architects working for you and you're freed from the small-picture decisions. Instead, you're busy with the big-picture critiques and the all-consuming tasks of client schmoozing and client wooing. You are the face of the firm, the name on the door, but you no longer draw—except the occasional napkin sketch for a potential client.

How do you jump start your muse after the juice has drained from the battery? One architect I know grew bored with designing traditional houses. His 10-person firm is very good at them, the business is lucrative, and the market he serves demands them, but they don't excite him anymore. He can't say no to the work and still support his longtime employees. Instead, he promoted an associate architect who loves the traditional styles to firm partner, and put him in charge of those projects. The profits from those commissions let him take the smaller, stylistically carte-blanche projects he enjoys. His recent work has



Mark Robert Halper

more energy and creativity, and those smaller projects are getting bigger and bolder as he develops a following for his new portfolio.

After more than 20 years in the business, our cover architect, Jeremiah Eck, just thought he needed a bit of a break. So he dusted off an old hobby: landscape painting. He'd taken classes in school but had difficulty making time to paint while running a busy, successful practice. To get that time, he negotiated with his junior partners a cut in pay in exchange for Fridays off. "Paintings are about light and space, just like architecture," he says. But instead of sapping the same energy, painting revitalizes him. "I make judgments faster, and

in a larger firm you're asked to make big-picture decisions quickly. It's kept me from atrophying into a management role."

In some cases, you can reawaken your creative side within the office walls, but sometimes you need to step outside for a fresh look from a different angle. The most important thing is to acknowledge to yourself that you're coasting and it doesn't feel good. Then do something about it. **ra**

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

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serve and educate

■ enjoyed your excellent editorial (“Art or Service?” June 2003, page 11). I believe much of the negative attitude toward some architects by residential builders stems from the penchant of elitist architects for looking at houses as art as opposed to homes that actually have to be built and lived in. The country would look 1,000 percent better if all homes were designed by architects, but in the end we have to find a way to craft our clients’ dreams into an artful solution.

Many clients come with their own plans they have worked on for years, all of which have major problems. It inevitably involves considerable tact on our part to let them know that we provide a value-added service no matter what the project. I’ve found that by working with a reputable and reasonable (they very often go together) contractor who’s on board early on, it’s possible to deliver a

well-designed project for about the same dollars as one by a contractor who offers the client a down-and-dirty design rife with livability and design issues. We must serve but also educate our clients, so that they get everything from us they’re paying for.

*John A. Teets, ARA
Horsham, Pa.*

art history

■ enjoyed your editor’s comments in June’s *residential architect* (“Art or Service?”). I’ve been practicing now for 40-plus years, mostly as support to firms and not in my own practice. This probably has allowed me to remain somewhat naive and enthusiastic toward the profession, not being on the front line with the business (money) end of the practice—at least not on a day-to-day basis. I’ve been fortunate to work at Minoru Yamasaki’s office for nearly 24 years now, and also with William Kessler for five years. I’ve tried to work

with the best and have advised young architects to do the same.

Over the years, I’ve seen this profession of ours change to a very business-oriented mentality, with bottom lines seeming to be the driving force. Yama had, in the early years, made a name for himself based on his sensitivity to design. Marketing was relatively nonexistent in those days, as his notoriety brought clients into the office. I do believe, though, that he was a master at developing relationships first, rather than going after jobs. He basically explained, “This is what we do,” when showing his wares, in the hope of fostering a relationship.

He’s no longer with us, and times have changed. Marketing has taken over big-time. It’s a shame, in a way, that the cart has gotten in front of the horse. The promises made in the marketing dating game very rarely materialize once the project comes on board. The commonality of the architect from firm to firm, as we all compete for the same work, is disturbing and has to be dissatisfying to society.

William Kessler has to be admired not as a businessman but as an architect who stayed the course and stayed true to his ideals of a

modern architect. It came at a cost, as his office constantly fluctuated in size through periods of want and plenty. But a training ground for young architects it was.

I’m pleased I’ve had a chance to know these men firsthand. They must have been viewed as self-serving from the outside, but in truth they had a steadfast, tenacious grip on what they believed should be brought to the profession. Many architects got a good start with them, a start one hopes has helped them endure the changes in the profession and allowed them to serve clients with education, compromise, faithfulness, and dependability.

Henny Youngman lived in New York much of his life. For years he frequented the same restaurant, and he always told the maître d’ the same thing when he entered: “I’d like a table, near a waiter.” Yes, he wanted service, it is assumed he liked the food, and probably he was able to get some dietary needs met over the years. Hopefully, though, it was the reputation of the restaurant that brought him there in the first place. We all need to work on that.

*David C. Paterson, AIA, CSI
Senior Associate
Yamasaki Associates
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“the commonality of the architect from firm to firm, as we all compete for the same work, is disturbing and has to be dissatisfying to society.”

—*David C. Paterson, AIA, CSI*

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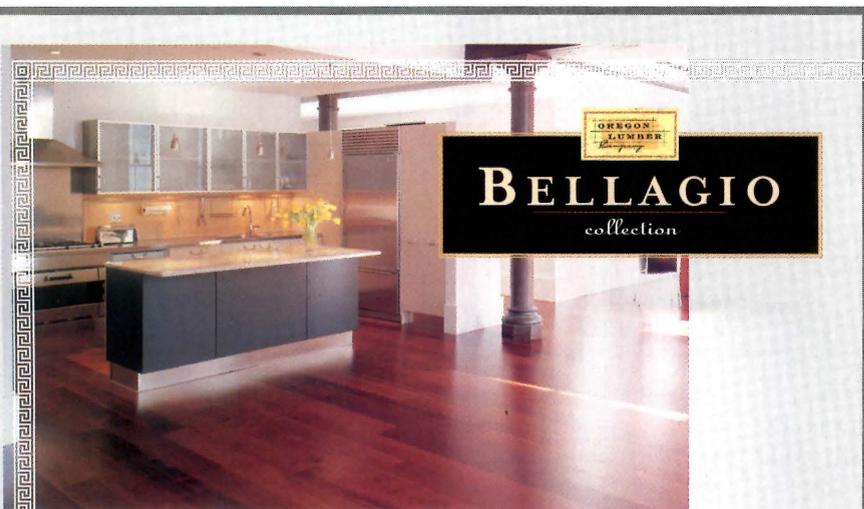


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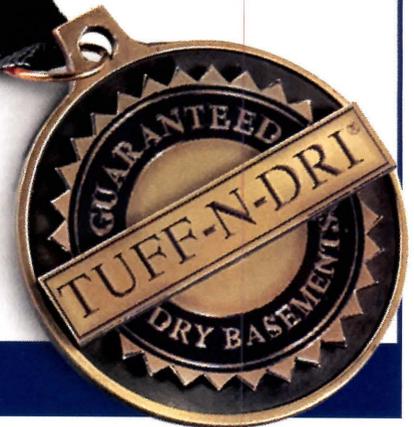
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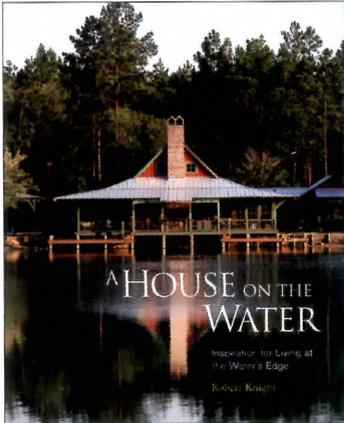
home front

tips and trends from the world of residential design

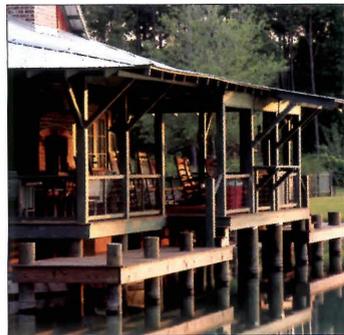
knight vision

For 25 years, Blue Hill, Maine, architect Robert Knight has designed homes on or near the water. His experiences have left him particularly attuned to the qualities of a successful waterfront house—and they've made him an ideal writer for The Taunton Press' new book *A House on the Water*. On sale in October, the book showcases 23 houses on lakes, bays, and oceans, by architects from all over North America.

Knight noticed more than a few similarities between writing a book and designing a house. "In both processes you're creating and editing, then going back and forth with the editor or client, who also has a vision," he says. The project took up the same amount of time as a substantially sized architectural commission would—Knight spent more than 1,000 hours researching and writing it. Those hours included trips to every one of the homes he covered, from the critic Witold Rybczynski's Vermont lakeside house for his parents to Cutler Anderson's sod-roofed resi-



Walter Voigt



The South Carolina lakefront residence on the book's cover (top; also shown above) embodies the ideals set forth by Knight. The house was designed by Historical Concepts of Peachtree City, Ga.



dence in the San Juan Islands near Seattle.

"My mission was to show people a wide range of houses that I thought worked," Knight says. "I wanted to avoid a cookbook sort of method where you say, 'Do this, do that, and you'll have a good house.' Designing a good house on the water is more of a right-brain, intuitive thing. But it is explainable. I tried to explain it in ways that don't turn off 'regular' people—those who aren't architects or builders."

Knight is candid about the time commitment his work on the book required. "It was brutal,"



House photos: Randy O'Rourke, from *A House on the Water*, by Robert Knight, The Taunton Press, 2003

In a Maine island residence designed by the author's firm, Knight Associates, private rooms like the master bath receive the choice harbor views.

he says. Luckily, business partner Peter

d'Entremont stepped in and kept Knight

Associates going. The author also found that

his work on *A House on the Water* reinforced

and strengthened his beliefs about design.

"The single most critical part of a home's

design is certainly the way it fits into its site

and context," he says. "That was the first

hurdle any of these houses had to jump to get

into the book."—*meghan drueding*

scape crusader

■ started painting seriously about 15 years ago," says San Francisco-based architect James Heron. "My wife and I traveled a lot and I'd take sketchbooks along. When we got back, I started creating imaginary cityscapes as small watercolor studies." Heron eventually turned those studies into large-scale canvases, which will be exhibited at the AIA Headquarters Gallery in Washington, D.C., from September 19 through January 9. "The paintings arise partly out of the frustration that I can't always create the forms that I want to in my architecture," laments Heron, who primarily designs multifamily projects, as well as some recent custom residences. "There's a long tradition of architects painting. The visual-art outlet allows us to explore architectural options and ideas that clients may not want," he says. "And maybe someday I'll meet a client who will like the colors, forms, and scales of my paintings and ask for a building like that." For exhibition hours, call 202.638.3221 or visit www.theoctagon.org.—*shelley d. hutchins*



Courtesy The Octagon



Hisao Suzuki

de blas in glass

echoing Philip Johnson before him, Spanish architect Alberto Campo Baeza designed De Blas House as a simple glass-and-steel structure that sits on a concrete slab. Located in mountains south of Madrid, Spain, the house features frameless laminated glass in a completely flush application. Glass, Baeza says, offers insulation, silence, and safety.

The project received an honorable mention in the 2003 DuPont Benedictus Awards, a program that recognizes innovative architectural design using laminated glass.—*nigel f. maynard*

calendar



Warren Jagger

residential architect design awards: call for entries

entry form and fee due: november 21, 2003
 completed binders due: january 5, 2004

Our annual *residential architect* Design Awards program honors outstanding architecture in the following categories: custom, renovation, multifamily, affordable, production, kitchens, baths, and design details. All winning projects will be published in the May 2004 issue of *residential architect*. Shown:

2003 grand-prize winner in a custom category, by Estes/Twombly Architects, Newport, R.I. For an entry form, call 202.736.3407, visit www.residentialarchitect.com, or go to page 121 in this magazine.

rome prize 2004

deadline: november 1

The American Academy in Rome hosts annual fellowships in the arts and humanities for winners of the Rome Prize. Fellows receive room and board, a studio, and a stipend. Categories include architecture, design, historic preservation, and landscape architecture. For guidelines, call 212.751.7220 or visit www.aarome.org.



Tile of Spain

2003 tile of spain architecture and interior design awards

deadline: november 15

This contest recognizes new or renovated residential and commercial architecture featuring ceramic tile from Spain. Projects

from around the world are eligible. Among last year's winners was the restoration of the 1904 Reception Pavilion in Park Güell (detail shown), Barcelona, Spain, by Ana Ribas i Seix and Carme Hosta. Cash prizes will be awarded. Call 305.444.5495 or go to www.ascer.es for details.



Whit Preston

frank o. gehry: work in progress

september 7–january 26
 museum of contemporary art, los angeles

Focusing on projects currently under construction, this exhibition examines Gehry Partners' work from concept to final structure. Models, sketches, photographs, sample materials, and computer renderings demonstrate the various phases of each design. Shown: the Marques de Riscal Winery and Hotel, El Ciego, Spain. To learn more, call 213.626.6222 or visit www.moca-la.org.



John Akehurst

lucy orta: nexus architecture + connector iv

september 27–january 18
 bellevue art museum, bellevue, wash.

Lucy Orta designs functional sculpture intended to be used as shelter by people in urgent or precarious situations. "I believe in art

as a mediator between the street and the people," she says. Shown: Refuge Wear Intervention. For museum hours, call 425.519.0770 or visit www.bellevueart.org.

magnifique

october 3–november 27
 architech gallery of architectural art, chicago

This pictorial showcase spotlights French architecture and decor, with design drawings, watercolors, photographs, and antique prints by such architects and artists as Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, Elizabeth Ockwell, and Mark Ballogg offered for sale. Shown: Ockwell's 1999 watercolor "Opera." For gallery hours, call 312.475.1290 or visit www.architechgallery.com.



Courtesy ArchiTech

continuing exhibits

Aesthetics of Hygiene: Modernist Kitchen and Bathroom Design in Southern California, 1928–1955, through November 2, University Art Museum, University of California at Santa Barbara, 805.893.2951; **Acconci Studio**, through November 8, Pratt Manhattan Gallery, New York, 212.647.7778.—*shelley d. hutchins*



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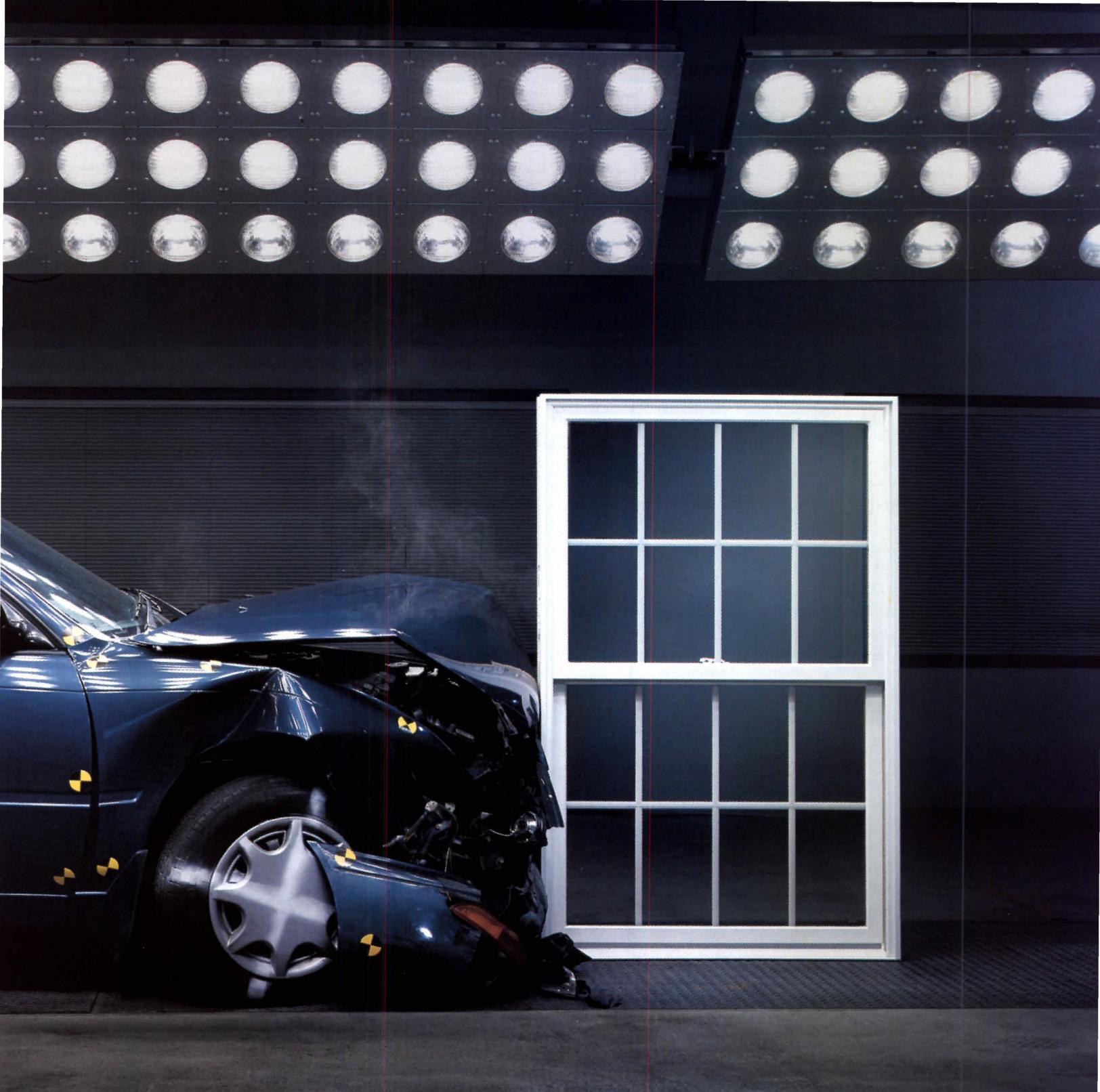
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context conscious

it takes an open mind to blend the new with the old.

by stephen muse, faia

Several months ago, I was invited by a local civic association to take part in a lecture series titled “Designing Within Historic Districts.” Because this is the sort of presentation I had made many times before, I assumed it would be simply a showing of my firm’s work. Several days before my talk, however, I was warned that I might be facing “an angry audience”—one divided into two factions regarding the issue of regulating new development.

I was told that the first faction strongly believed in developing legislation to require that all new architecture copy the existing historic context. Only by doing so, they argued, could a historic district maintain its overall integrity and seamlessly blend the old and the new.

In contrast, I was also warned that the second faction strongly believed in requiring all new buildings to be stylistically opposed to the existing context. Only by making a clear distinction between the old and the new, they argued, could the historic district turn to the future with a positive outlook.

In light of this warning, I



revised my talk. I attempted to explain the values that control our work at Muse Architects, and how these values lead us to believe that neither of the above extremes represents an acceptable position.

continued on page 28

For an award-winning addition to a Washington, D.C., home, Muse Architects found a balance between solving the original plan’s problems and deferring to the building’s past. The result enriches the entire composition.



Photos: (top) Robert Lautman; (above) courtesy Muse Architects

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imagination at work



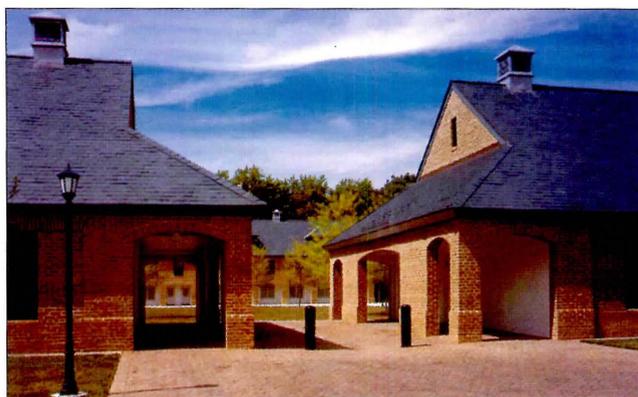
well defined

I am often asked to define the philosophy of our work. At one level, I appreciate the question, knowing that it reflects interest in what we do. At another level, though, I despise it, worrying that I am being asked to write the insert for a fortune cookie. In fact, our studio discussions at Muse Architects are never based on design *philosophy*. Instead, they are based on design *values*.

The process of defining our values began a long time ago, when I started to feel that architecture was one of the least interesting subjects I could possibly study. But soon after that, I also realized that it could be positively the most interesting. What allowed it to move from the former to the latter was a slow exploration of concepts that could be used to control the design of a building—in other words, a discovery of what our work should be about.

“every project we design, no matter the scale, begins with a study of the larger whole.”

My guess is that this turnaround began in graduate school. Studying with architectural critic Colin Rowe in the mid-1970s, I heard the term “contextualism” for the first time. No, this was not the contextual-



Alan Karchmer

Muse's values apply to large-scale projects as well as smaller ones. The site plan of this 47,000-square-foot student housing complex at St. Mary's College in southern Maryland smoothly integrates new buildings into the existing master plan.

ism we often hear about today—that of borrowing your neighbors' windows and matching their cornice line in an attempt to make everything OK. This was the contextualism of understanding the order of a site, and recognizing that any new building is part of a larger whole. In Rowe's studio, contextualism was discussed as an idea about plans—not facades. It was an argument about the “bigger picture.”



Courtesy Muse Architects

The values that date from my time with this remarkable teacher still control our work today. Every project we design, no matter the scale, begins with a study of the larger whole. Each one is designed to be an

addition to some sort of existing context. It may be an addition to a building, street, neighborhood, or campus. In every case, we consider our addition to be successful only if it greatly improves the bigger picture.

While we strongly believe in the collective quality of buildings, neighborhoods, and campuses, the process of designing these additions is not one of simply repeating what is there. This is a very naive definition of contextualism. True contextualism involves an act of judgment. And here is where we return to the argument about the two extremes.

value judgment

The first extreme—requiring all buildings to be copies of the historic context—is never good enough. Every historic property we have encountered, although it may possess many wonderful qualities, has had significant problems to

overcome. Its interior may be too dark, or its rooms too small, or the structure may not maximize the potential of its site. Whatever the issue, these are problems that should be addressed. By choosing to extend the entire existing context, one runs the risk of also extending these sorts of problems.

In opposing this extreme, however, we do not advocate the other. The second extreme—requiring all buildings to stylistically differentiate the old and the new—is not the answer either. We believe these historic properties have wonderful features that should be reinforced. By addressing the problems we find, distinction between the old and the new will occur naturally. In other words, this is distinction as a result of problem-solving as opposed to distinction for the sake of distinction.

I prefer discussions about the longer argument. But if I were forced to write that one-liner for the fortune cookie, I would state that our design values are based on extending what is best about the existing context while mitigating its problems. Should we fail to do both, we believe we have not reinforced the values of our work, and therefore have not been successful. ■

Stephen Muse, FAIA, is the founder and principal of Muse Architects in Washington, D.C.

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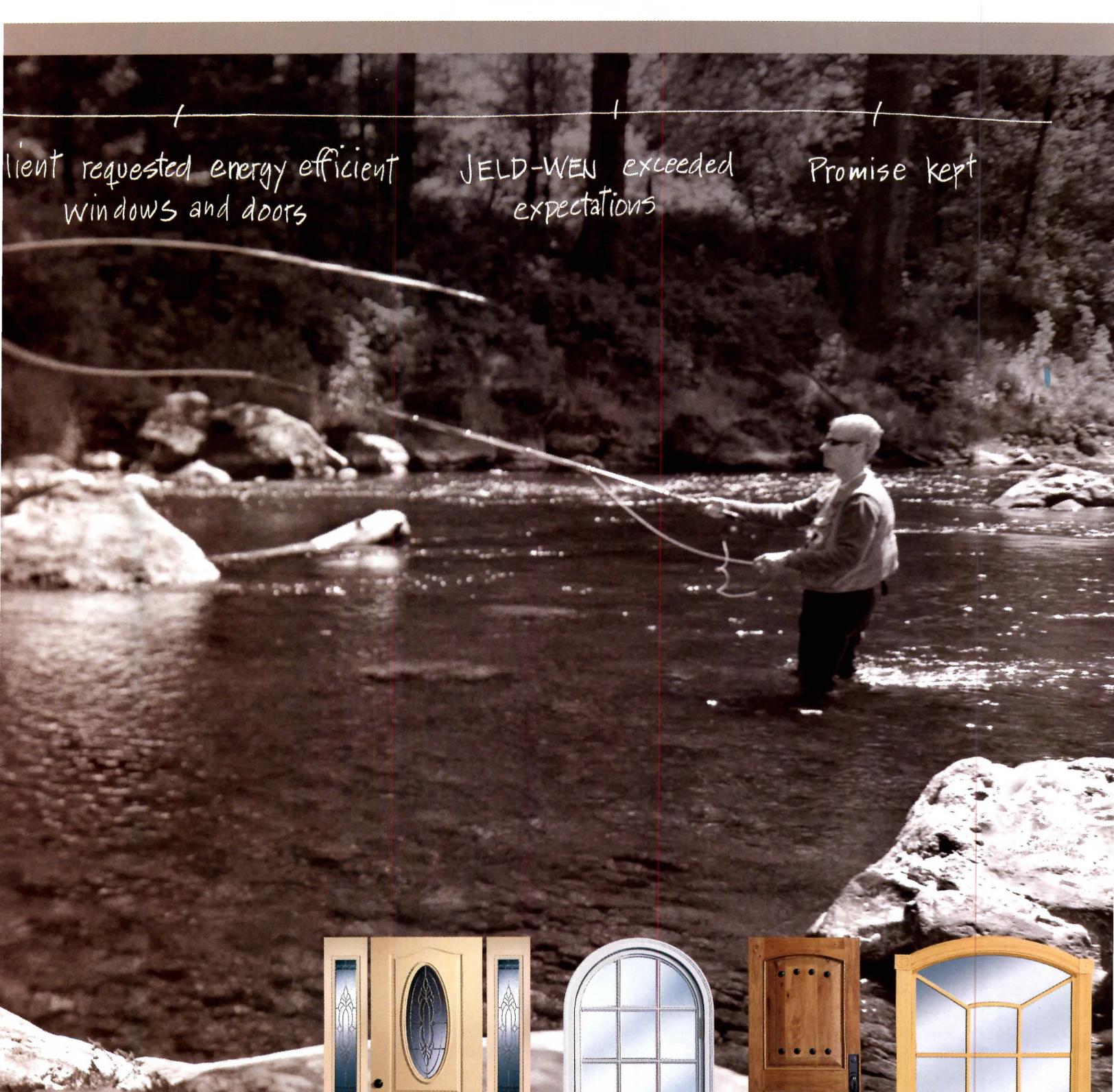


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dollars on the line

should you fund your own speculative architecture?

by cheryl weber

How many times have you heard architects described as risk-averse? We're all familiar with the conventional wisdom—that architects possess a design-studio mentality, preferring to delegate business matters to a manager and letting clients assume the liability of construction. But these days, with windfalls from wise real estate investments piling up like those from the dot-com era, architects are challenging that reputation. They are seizing the initiative, investigating speculative projects as a satisfying approach to their profession.

And why not? Who's in a better position than architects to profit from the strong housing market? After years of professional practice, you're armed with a huge number of connections. You have access to the plumber, the electrician, product sources, and city hall. Most important, you have the design expertise to create something that will sell quickly.

Most architects making forays into speculative real estate experienced their first successes designing for themselves. In 1999, Alexandria, Va., architect David



Jason Schneider

Jameson bought and renovated a home for himself in Chevy Chase, Md., an upscale Washington, D.C., suburb (the project won a *residential architect* Design Award in 2002). Two years later, the property had doubled in value, so he sold it and decided to repeat the process.

"The house was never

intended for speculation," Jameson says. "But I realized I could make more money buying and selling properties than working for clients."

Although he hasn't given up his traditional practice, Jameson got a good deal on another lot and now is building an 8,000-square-foot house on spec. "If I'm

lucky, I expect to get a 20- to 25-percent return," he says, compared with the firm's average 16-percent fee from clients.

Rather than flipping fixer-uppers, architect Chandler Pierce, Cecil Pierce and Associates, New York City, is investing for the long haul. He bought a *continued on page 35*



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four-story building in Little Italy, renovated it, and rents out commercial space on the first floor and one residential unit each on the second and third floors. He lives on the fourth floor and is expanding his quarters with a fifth story.

“In a great neighborhood like this that’s changing phenomenally, it’s sort of comical what you make on a building like this compared to what you make in private practice,” he says. “In 20 years, Little Italy has gone from virtually giving buildings away to getting \$3,000 per floor for a rental.”

setting a precedent

Twenty years leaves a lot of margin for error. While stories abound of lucrative deals resulting from fortuitous market timing, there’s another formula for success that’s easier to control, though it still carries some risk. And that is to convey a new idea or set an example. When Anthony Abbate, AIA, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., did his first spec project, it was to demonstrate a townhouse that was Modern in spirit but that fit the historical urban pattern of a prewar neighborhood with alleyways.

Abbate bought the duplex

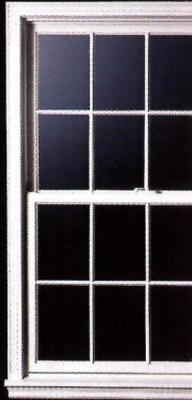
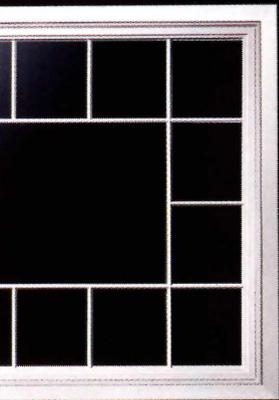
“i’ve come to understand the pioneering aspect of development. sometimes you have a small profit margin, sometimes none at all, but you pave the way.”—anthony abbate, aia

intending to live on one side and sell the other. As an antidote to the suburban model of big garages facing the street, Abbate designed mirror-image townhouses with a gated garden in front, an attached garage in the rear, and glassy walls that bring the outdoors in. He used traditional South Florida materials such as con-

crete block and stucco, but the floor and roof systems are 6-inch-thick hollow-core concrete planks, which allowed him to raise the ceilings as high as 9½ feet without violating the building’s height restrictions.

The biggest obstacles he faced were finding a lender to support the project and

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a Realtor who believed it would sell. "It was a little frightening. Realtors would ask, 'Only a one-car garage? You're not going to put Spanish tile on it, or arches?' They started to make me feel a little nervous," he says. Nevertheless, the unit sold for \$310,000 before it was finished and yielded a \$50,000 profit, which allowed Abbate to pay down the mortgage on his side of the duplex.

If you count the unpaid hours he spent supervising construction, Abbate says he probably broke even but that the project gave him confidence to follow his

instincts. And it inspired other local developers and architects to break out of banal stereotypes. "I've come to understand the pioneering aspect of development. Sometimes you have a small profit margin, sometimes none at all, but you pave the way," he says. And sometimes the payoff comes later: The townhouses caught the eye of a developer who has since commissioned Abbate to design similar projects.

Jameson's spec house is allowing him to explore his interest in environmental design. To eliminate waste, he dimensioned the house to

"to me, the risk is great when you are investing in someone else's idea. if you're investing in your own idea, it's not risky."—david furman

accept stock framing pieces and chose materials such as sustainably harvested mahogany for the siding, synthetic-slate roofs recycled from tires, and real stucco. He took down very few trees during construction and is applying for habitat-friendly landscape certification from the National Wildlife Federa-

tion. Jameson, who is working with a real estate agent to create a marketing brochure about the house, figures such moves will raise the project's costs by 10 percent. "I can't put the house on the market for more money [to make up for] that," he says, "but it might push a button for someone

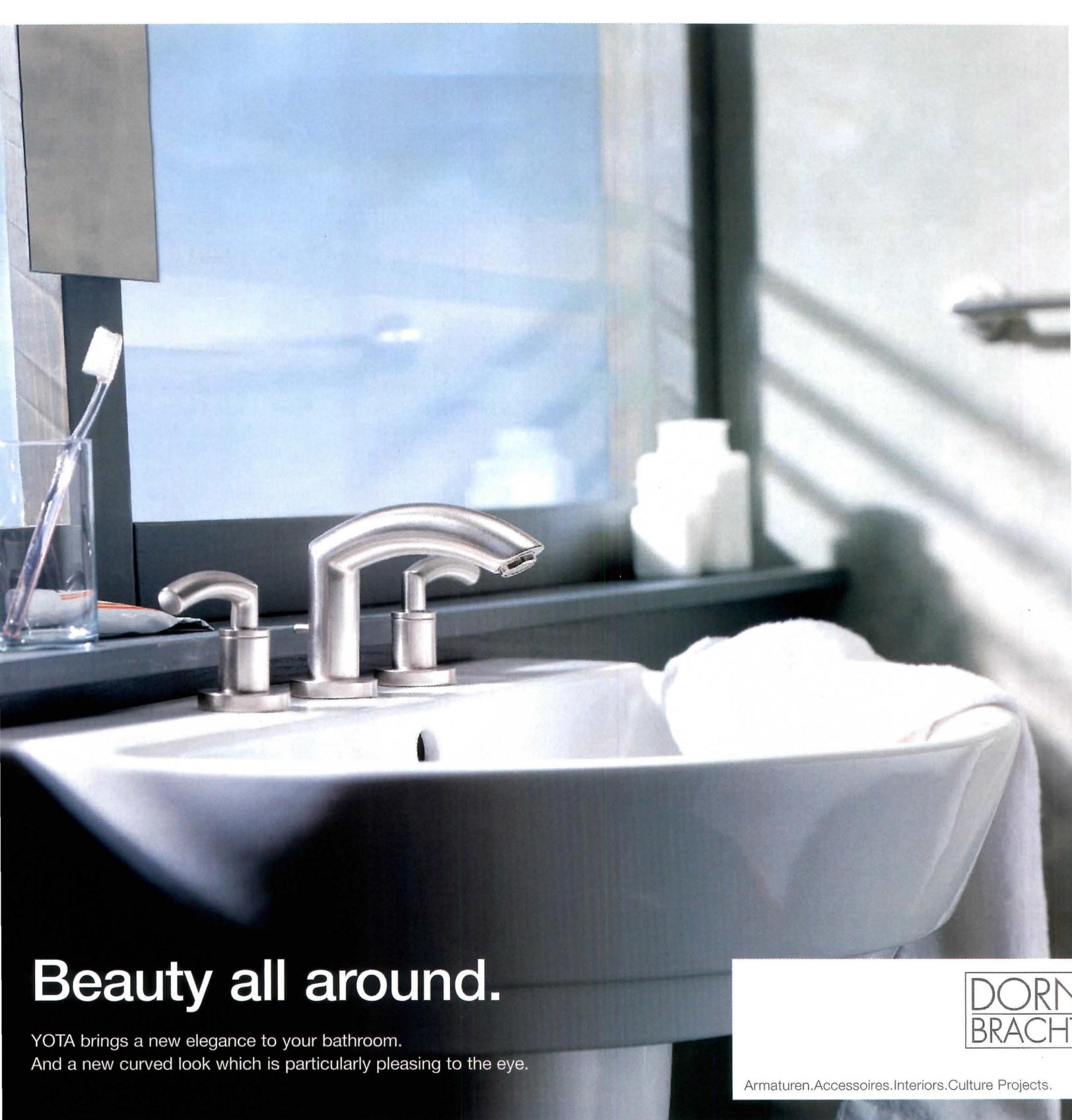
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and sell faster. The length of time I carry the costs is part of the equation.”

playing the market

In designing a spec project, how do you balance market research against your own sense of what’s needed? Veteran architect-developer David Furman, of Boulevard Centro, Charlotte, N.C., weighs those priorities daily. “I think you can make decisions on projects that may not bring maximum profit today, but will enhance your reputation moving forward and bring you profit later,” he says.

“You have to focus on not losing money, and you can decide how much you want to try to make—whether to maximize it or just do OK.”

Furman is a pioneer who creates projects based on his own interests, hoping that some percentage of the population wants the same thing. “I’m not a big believer in market studies and appraisals,” he says. “I feel they’re generally a rearview mirror. They tell you what’s been done, not what a new segment of the market might be.”

Even when his instincts mislead him, Furman presses on. Five years ago when he

“i’m looking at it from the perspective that i’m not necessarily into it for only the dollar value, but also for reputation and portfolio photos.”—david jameson

founded Centro, he believed Americans were divided into two groups: “those who wanted to live in the city, and those who wanted to but just didn’t know it yet,” he says. “I’ve come to realize mainstream America wants to live in the suburbs.” The population of would-be urban dwellers is “not this monster wave I thought it

was. But I decided it’s the only piece of the market I want to deal with, because it’s what I find fascinating. If that percentage is 1 percent, that will be the 1 percent of the market I’ll focus on. I don’t have a board of directors to answer to or stockholders to worry about.”

continued on page 41



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Currently, Furman is creating entry-level loft housing in downtown Charlotte. At 500 square feet, the units are small enough to be affordable but are architecturally adventurous. He believes a certain group of people will trade square footage for location, price being equal, if it's infused with something unique.

In addition to creating airy spaces and flowing floor plans, the company uses half a dozen signature products that make the apartments pop, even if it's just a \$17 showerhead from Target. "It has a chrome arm that projects out from the

wall 18 inches and has a mini-rainmaker," Furman explains. "It just looks different and cooler." And Furman gives tiny kitchens cachet with sleek, two-burner cooktops and 18-inch dishwashers, which, he points out, are more expensive than conventional appliances.

An urban infill lot is a blank canvas just waiting for his bold strokes. "Breaking down conventional thinking of what a residence is—as architects, that's fun; as a developer, it may seem perilous," says Furman. "To me, the risk is great when you are investing

in someone else's idea. If you're investing in your own idea, it's not risky."

interior monologue

Indeed, spec projects also eliminate the step of second-guessing clients. When Steven and Cathi House, House + House Architects, San Francisco, built a rental house in Mexico, they designed the kind of home they'd enjoy being in themselves, rather than trying to tweak it toward a certain type of tenant.

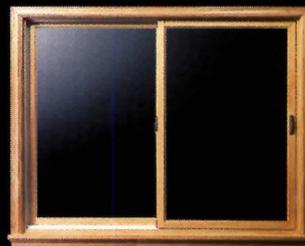
"The more you customize the house, the better," says Steven House,

AIA. "It's nice to go ahead and create a personality." The architects used their trademark bold colors and contrasting natural materials such as river rock and slate, created playful nooks and crannies, and purchased authentic Mexican furniture and artwork.

John Allegretti, AIA, St. Joseph, Mich., whose investment projects range from single-family homes to commercial buildings, likes delving into aesthetic issues that are often skirted by clients. "It's like writing an opera, putting something together out of your own

continued on page 43

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mind, not someone telling you that in the third act such and such an actor is going to wear the peacock plume," he says. On the other hand, an inability to stop playing with the design can lead to surfaces that are overly complicated. Allegretti says he pays attention to how materials are layered and how joints intersect to get the maximum results from the simplest moves.

In the Little Italy apartments, Pierce mixed straightforward materials and products with perks such as a stainless-steel counter and integral sink, and interesting tile work. "I

was extremely pragmatic and said, 'What will I do here that will maximize the rent so I can pay the bills on the building and get our duplex apartment on top?'"

Jameson's project is ready for drywall. He says if he had to guess, he probably spent too much money on things people won't find value in, like the number and quality of light fixtures, the lighting control system, custom zebra wood cabinets, and Viking appliances, which were chosen for their brand-name recognition. "I could have conserved a lot of money with stock maple cabinets, but that's not how

we think about things," he rationalizes. "I'm looking at it from the perspective that I'm not necessarily into it for only the dollar value, but also for reputation and portfolio photos."

It's different when speculative development is your bread and butter. On the first Centro projects, Furman immersed himself in every detail, choosing towel bars, floor finishes, and cabinets that suited his personal taste. Although he was working within a budget, he later realized that Centro was spending several thousand dollars more per unit than its competition was. "I was the only

person in the world thinking those items were bringing additional value to the project," says Furman. "We've since prioritized more."

working the system

Although working solo streamlines design time, architects investing in real estate rarely succeed without a network of trusted experts who can guide them through the headaches of finance and construction. Jameson bought his lot from a builder he knew who wanted to unload the property. The builder happened to be on

continued on page 45

TALK OR WALK?

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sabbatical constructing his own house, so Jameson hired him to supervise the spec project part-time.

The former owner of Pierce's building was a friend. Pierce hired an expediter he'd worked with for 17 years to help him negotiate with the building department to max out square footage. "I didn't know how you go about doing this," he says, "but my attorneys, accountants, and structural engineers make my life easier and make sure I don't do something foolish. It's the same team I use on all jobs."

Getting started is the toughest part. Abbate held on to the lot for 12 years before building the townhouse. He wanted to start sooner but had trouble meeting the zoning requirements and obtaining financing. Abbate says what helped him most was sitting down with his accountant to do a pro forma study of the numbers and the costs of carrying a loan. And after winning design awards and becoming known locally for his talent, it was easier to find a mortgage broker who believed in the project.

Abbate is partnering with an architect and an engineer on a townhouse project with 12 live/work spaces—the first of its kind in Fort Lauderdale—and hoping to break ground in January. Still, he says designing for clients is his first love: "If people pay me to design, it's better than taking the risk. I like speculative work a little, but not

enough to do it full-time."

Furman sees it differently. "From a personal perspective, it's the ultimate way to make a living," he

says, "generating architecture that is a commodity, that is marketable, and that you can put your personal energy into. Seeing others

get excited about it is immensely gratifying." **ra**

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

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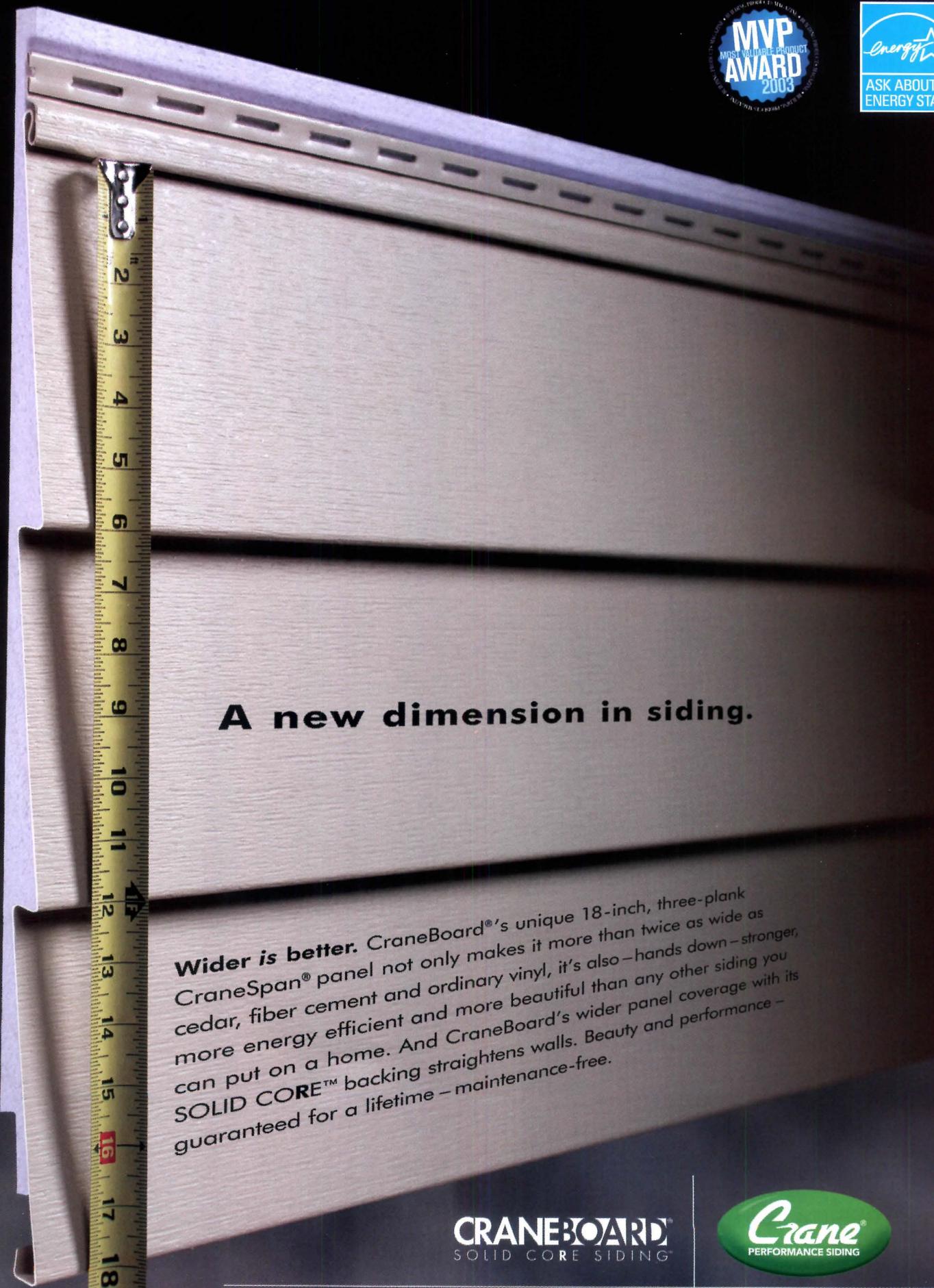
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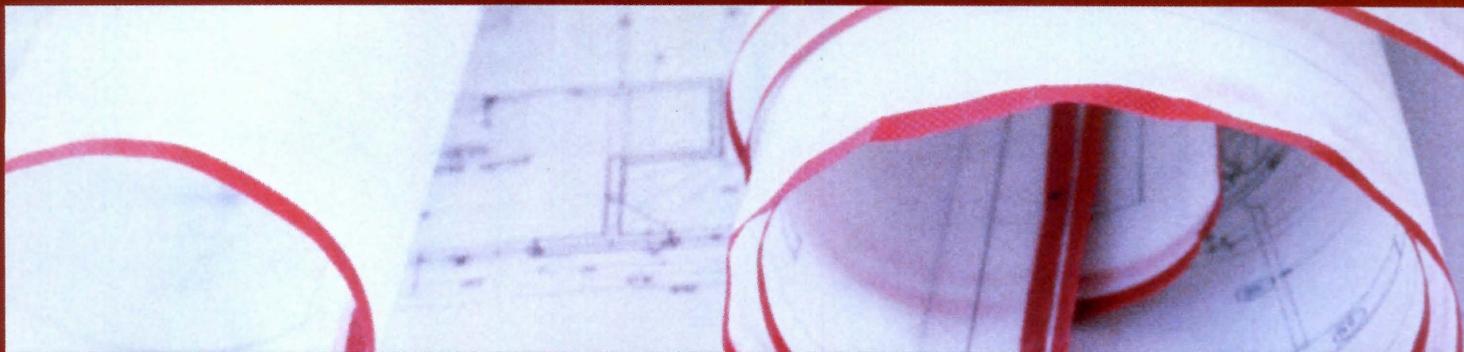
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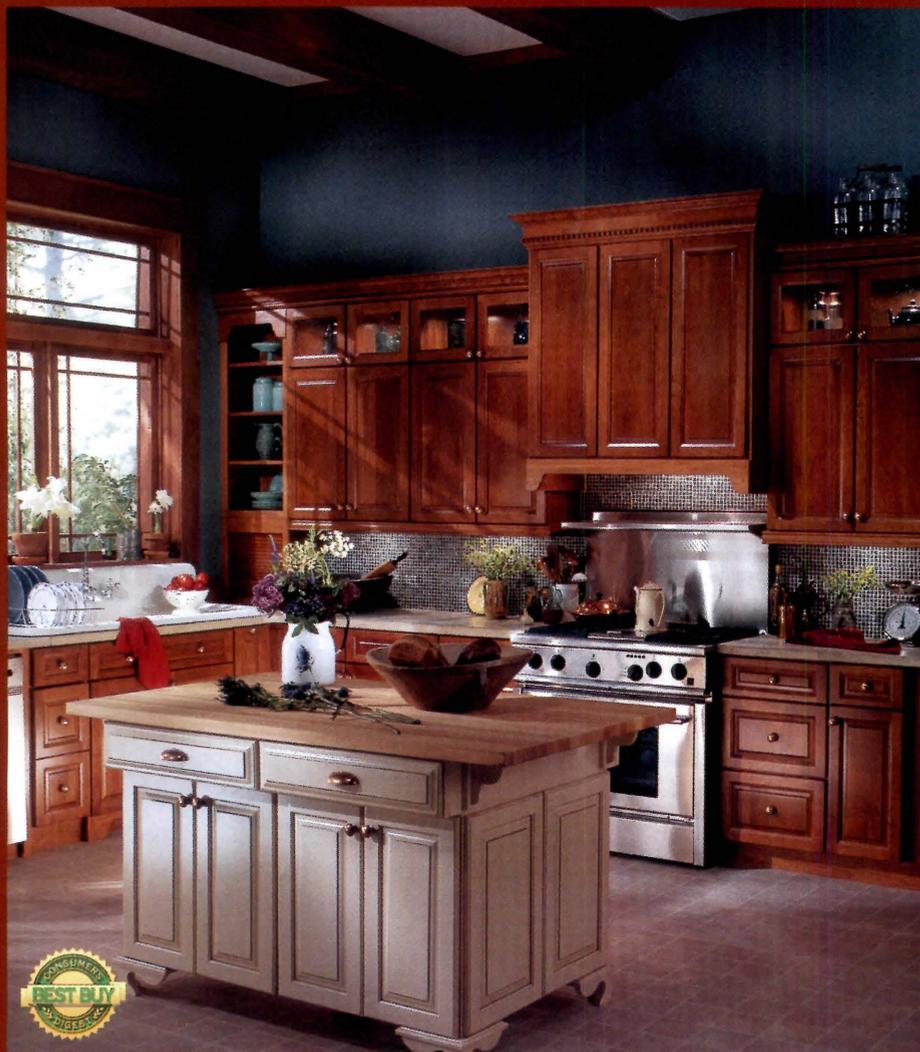


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Jeremiah Eck

painting on fridays

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an architect's passion
for the artfully
sited house.

by s. claire conroy

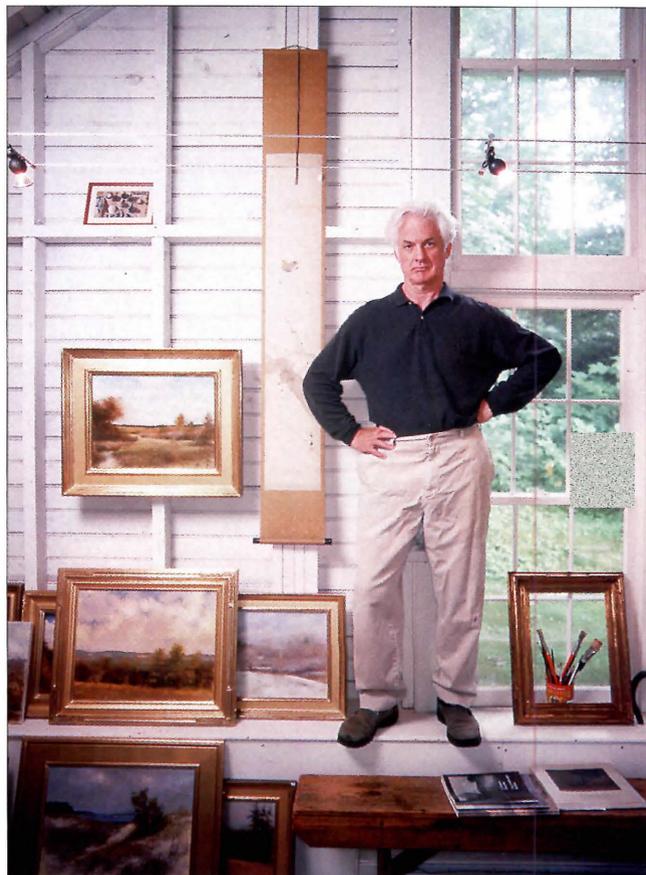
Jeremiah Eck started his residential practice in Boston with \$30 in his pocket and little more than a pencil to draw with. Twenty-eight years later, the firm is thriving and Eck, FAIA, has taken up a paintbrush, retreating to his backyard studio each Friday to work on his landscape canvases. It's site work of a different nature, liberated from the concerns of clients, contractors, deadlines, and the limitations of budgets, materials, and building codes. Eck has been approached by patrons wishing to commission paintings, but he resists. "I don't want to make it a job," he says.

Possibly, it's the perfect balance: pure art done for love and straightforward architecture done for a living. Of course, life is never that tidy and clear-cut. Eck has recently given in to a good friend's request for a commissioned painting, and he brings a great deal of art to his design of houses. His Web site, www.jearch.com, underlines his views up front on the home page: "We believe that architecture is an art and a service and, most importantly, that good clients make good architecture."



Jeremiah Eck

Stepping into its site, the Waxman house (opposite and above) secures a variety of views at different levels. The artist in his studio (right).



Bill Cramer

painting on fridays

Good architecture and, specifically, good houses are very important to Eck, who's seen too few of the good, too many of the bad, and a recent proliferation of the abysmal during his career. "One-half of all single-family houses in American were built since I went into practice in the '70s," he says. "I remain interested in the million houses built each year without an architect. How do you touch the million people who are buying those houses? The sheer volume of the problem is staggering."

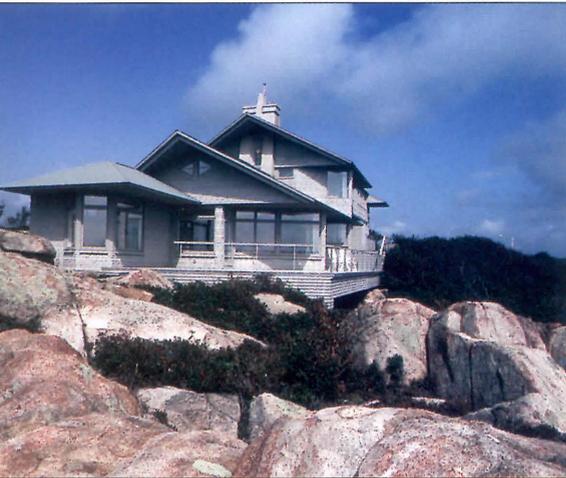
Eck understands that just one approach to solving the problem won't do much good. In practicing the best housing design he can, he's determined not to contribute to the disgrace. But he's also committed to playing a part in the solution. To that end, he's chosen a bilateral strategy—working with other architects to improve the quality of work they do and teaching the lay public about

what constitutes good house design. Each year, he organizes a summer conference for residential architects at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. And he's just written a book, published by The Taunton Press, exploring and explaining the characteristics of *The Distinctive Home*. The book debuted the AIA/Taunton Press imprint, which seeks, through a series of books aimed at the general public, to build an understanding of and appreciation for the value of good design. In doing so, the AIA hopes this appreciation will trickle down to architects, strengthening the market for their professional services. Eck says the book has already brought jobs to his firm.

beyond monograph

The Distinctive Home: A Vision of Timeless Design organizes and synthesizes Eck's three decades of thinking and practicing custom home design. It pieces together the thousands of lessons he's taught his clients about houses, and the hundreds he's shared with would-be architects as an adjunct professor at Harvard. "After more than 20 years of practicing and teaching, it's not like I don't know this stuff," he says. "But it was the first time I put it down into words."

Like a custom home, the book took two and a half years from concept to construction to pull together. And during that process, it became clear to Eck that he wished to publish more than just a monograph on the firm. "What was the point of doing a book if I was just going to talk about my work? I wanted people to focus not on the personality of the architect but on the ideas themselves," he explains. There are plenty of houses by Jeremiah Eck Architects throughout its pages, but they're identified only in credits at the back. The same is true of other architects' work featured in the book. And, in the greatest gesture of ego control, the cover is a house by another firm, Elliott Elliott Norelius Architecture of Blue Hill, Maine.



Anton Grassl



Roof forms and rocky ledge harmonize in the Rosa house (top), while rolling hills and treetops segue into pitched roof and sturdy chimney on the Neely house.

Anton Grassl



Jeremiah Eck



"Winter Still," by Jeremiah Eck

*"paintings are about
light and space,
just like architecture."*

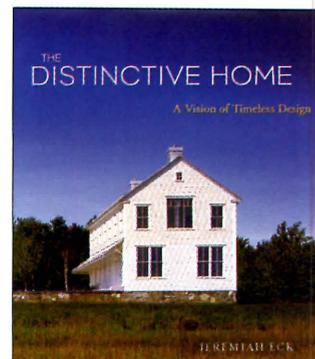
The projects Eck chose for the book are not ultramodern or hypertraditional in style. Instead, they occupy the vast middle ground between the two. Their common bond is that their architecture derives from the constraints and opportunities of their sites. Eck is adamant that residential architects must abandon the great debate between "modern" and "traditional," which he thinks is alienating the general public. Style begins with the land, not some abstract philosophy or architectural doctrine, he insists. The best houses result from a keen observation of and integration with the site's topography, the track of the sun, the climate, the views.

That's one reason he believes simply



Greg Premru

(Clockwise from top) Eck placed his first house at the front lot line, for open land behind. "Winter Still" depicts his home of Newton, Mass. His book details the art in what architects do. His Newton house is a remodeled bungalow tucked into a hilly, wooded site, high above the Boston skyline.



AIA/Taunton Press; cover photo by Brian Vanden Brink

painting on fridays



Jeremiah Eck

improving the quality of stock house plans isn't the panacea for our suburban design crisis. The trouble lies both in bad design and in bad siting—they are enmeshed. You can't untangle one without pulling at the other. He found that out the hard way. He's sold house plans before—through *Better Homes and Gardens'* plan books and through Sarah Susanka's *Not So Big House* Web site—and the result was less than satisfying.

He sympathizes with many consumers' need to reduce the overall cost of the house, and using a stock plan is one way to limit expenses, but he doesn't think it can be done properly without adapting the plan specifically to the site. So now when he gets a call asking to buy his plans, he says sure—as long as you pay for its adaptation and six site visits through construction. So far, he's had no takers. "The world

might be better if we all sold some plans," he says. He just hasn't figured out how to make it work yet.

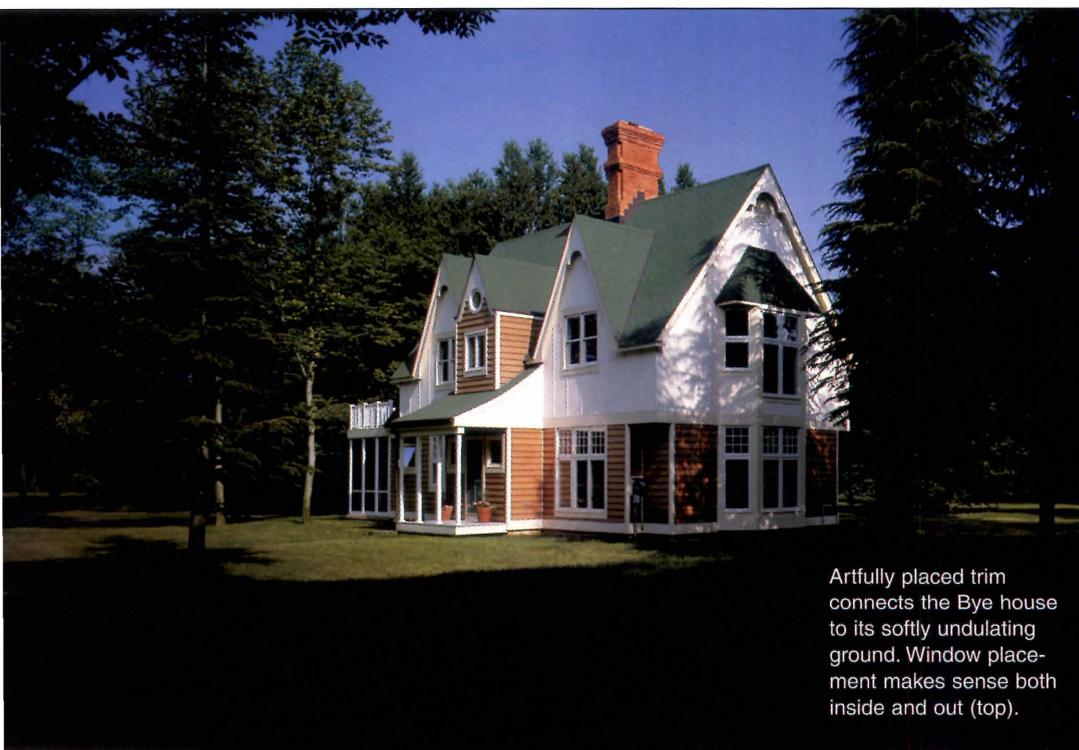
art or science?

And thus, the cost-driven end of the home-buying market is fed largely by builders. Meanwhile, Eck struggles to widen the cost-conscious but enlightened segment that he's plumbed over the years. "Our clients are not old money. They're professionals who earn a nice living, but who don't have a bundle to spend," he says. "They come to us with the largest amount of money they'll spend in a lifetime. They throw it on the table and ask us to protect it. It can be a very fearful process for them. That's why building trust is so important."

Still, trust only goes so far. About as far as the contractor's bid, which may not support the architect's project estimate. After all of Eck's years in the business, it's the most galling part of the job. "It never ceases to amaze me how divergent prices can be," he says. "We have the best intentions in the world to protect clients but it's so hard to control. I've struggled with guilt over my inability to predict in a scientific way what something is going to cost."

What Eck can control is his fee. And he's experimented with almost every different way of charging for his services. "I've tried hourly, by square footage, and by percentage of construction. And I've concluded that the fairest way is a percentage of construction. It's the most accurate reflection of the work we put in and it accommodates the additional time and cost of changes to the design."

Eck is devoting a little less time to the business these days, and it's costing him. To get those Fridays off, he took a cut in pay. Several years ago, he made his two longest-tenured associate architects partners in the firm. He gave them each a number of shares in the business and offered subsequent opportunities for them to buy shares.

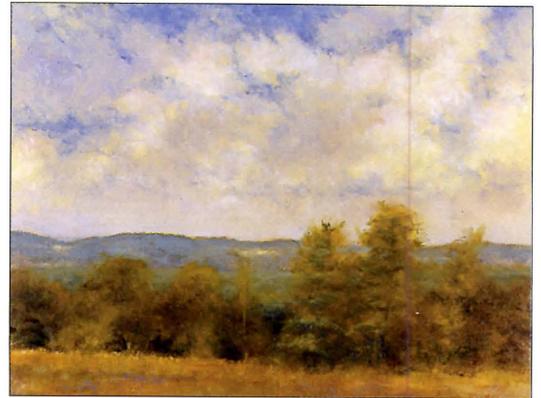


Artfully placed trim connects the Bye house to its softly undulating ground. Window placement makes sense both inside and out (top).

Jeremiah Eck



Anton Grassl



"View from Dingleton Hill," by Jeremiah Eck

*"the intimate knowledge
i gain from painting . . .
is an intimate knowledge
about the site."*

Currently, Paul MacNeely, AIA, and Stephen Mielke, AIA, own 32 percent each of Jeremiah Eck Architects, and Eck owns 36 percent. Not only does he still hold the controlling interest, he remains the chief rainmaker and therefore retains the eponymous firm name. The 13-person practice has about 15 projects on the boards at any given time, and averages about 70 percent new houses and 30 percent remodels. It also does one large institutional project a year. "It evens out the cash flow," he says. "With our educational projects, the clients tend to be the same. There's a lot of overlap between the private-house world and the private-school world."



Anton Grassl

Eck used a "drink umbrella on a corkboard" to site the Berg house (top and above). Spinning rooms around its central chimney provides 270 degrees of view. Eck's "View from Dingleton Hill" (above right) is set in Cornish, N.H.

painting on fridays

visual education

Schools are on Eck's mind of late. He designs them, he teaches in them, and he has a bright, inquisitive, 3-year-old daughter who'll attend one in the not-so-distant future. They are, he believes, both the problem and the potential solution to bad house design. The difficulty is that our education system neglects the left brain, which is a primary reason the general public has little understanding of or admiration for what architects do, he says. "Things would be different if our culture thought of us as a necessity. But the only way we're going to change the culture is to educate children visually. There are two sides to the brain—this is not news—but if we train just the scientific side, no one can make the leap into three dimensions."

That's what makes architects' jobs so difficult. Not only do they have to design beau-

tiful houses, they have to teach their clients how and why they're beautiful. Then they have to convince them to pay for them. "I've had bank presidents as clients who can't visualize how something will look," he says. "Contractors are viewed as the experts who can put everything together. Our culture values those who can build things, but not those who can design them. We don't see architects as adding value to the process like a custom suit or a beautiful car."

By painting, Eck sought to reawaken and expand the left side of his brain. After so many years in practice, it's easy to delegate many of the creative tasks and shift into more of a management position. "I thought I was just looking for a rest," he recalls. "I felt I was losing touch with the intuitive parts of the business. But by painting on Fridays, I made myself a better architect and it helped my business. I make intuitive judgments faster now, and in a larger firm you're asked to make big-picture decisions quickly. It kept me from atrophying into a management role."

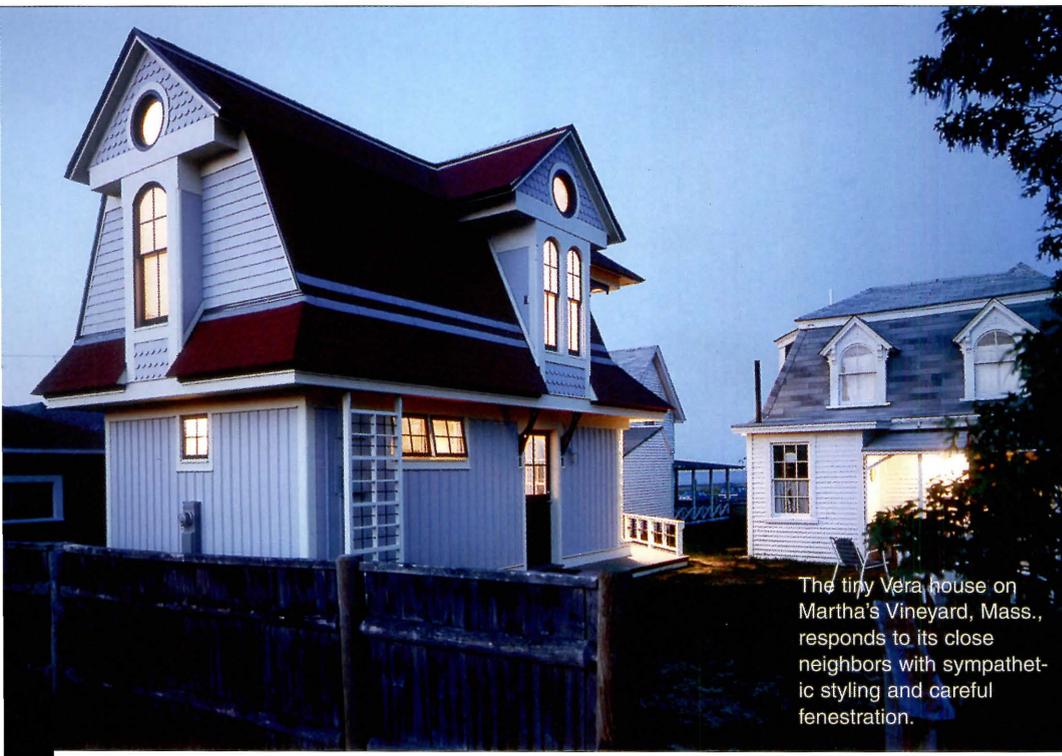
Almost exclusively, he paints landscapes. "I try not to do houses," he says. "I tried one summer, but I didn't capture the spirit of the building. But paintings are about light and space, just like architecture." His favorite painters are the Tonalists, landscape painters whose work was once well known but is now eclipsed by the Hudson River painters, the Impressionists, and others. George Inness was perhaps the most famous Tonalist, but Eck is partial to the work of a fellow Ohio native, Alexander Helwig Wyant, who painted during the last half of the 19th century. "The Tonalists reacted against the industrialization of their age. They had a heartfelt sympathy with nature," he says. Their style wasn't about copying the scene with scientific accuracy or technical flourish; it was about getting at the emotion and spirit of a place.

Eck hopes to achieve the same goal with



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The front elevation of the Pelletreau house reveals and conceals its water view.



The tiny Vera house on Martha's Vineyard, Mass., responds to its close neighbors with sympathetic styling and careful fenestration.

Anton Grassl



Brian Vanden Brink



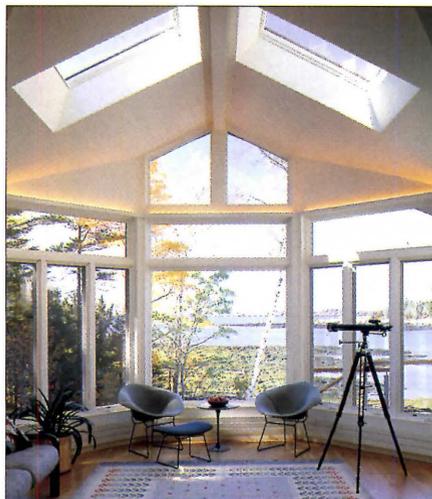
"Strawberry Point," by Jeremiah Eck

*"i say to people,
in the end it's about
comfort and
feeling peace."*

his houses. "The intimate knowledge I gain from painting landscapes is, most of all, an intimate knowledge about the site I paint. That awareness can't help but inform how I site our houses. How else could it be?" he explains. "If you have to understand and express what it feels like in the shadow of a tree, the slope of the hill, or at the edge of a meadow, you learn at the same time much about how the potential house will feel in the same position."

How his houses will feel to those who live in them is of paramount importance to Eck. In the slide presentation he gives to prospective clients, he includes many magazine-worthy, sweeping shots of exteriors and interiors. But he ends the show with a quiet little vignette of an easy chair, a cup of coffee, a book, and a pair of glasses. "I say to people, in the end it's about comfort and feeling peace. I want you to return from work, sit down, and feel at home."

It's a lovely picture only an artful architect can paint. **ra**



Brian Vanden Brink

Shoehorned between a rock ledge and a high cliff in Maine, the Levee house twists, turns, and soars toward water views (top and above). "Strawberry Point" in Vinalhaven, Maine, is Eck's summer-home topography.

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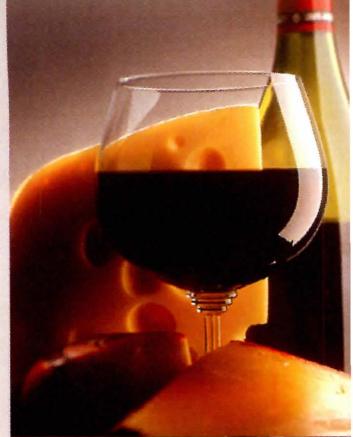
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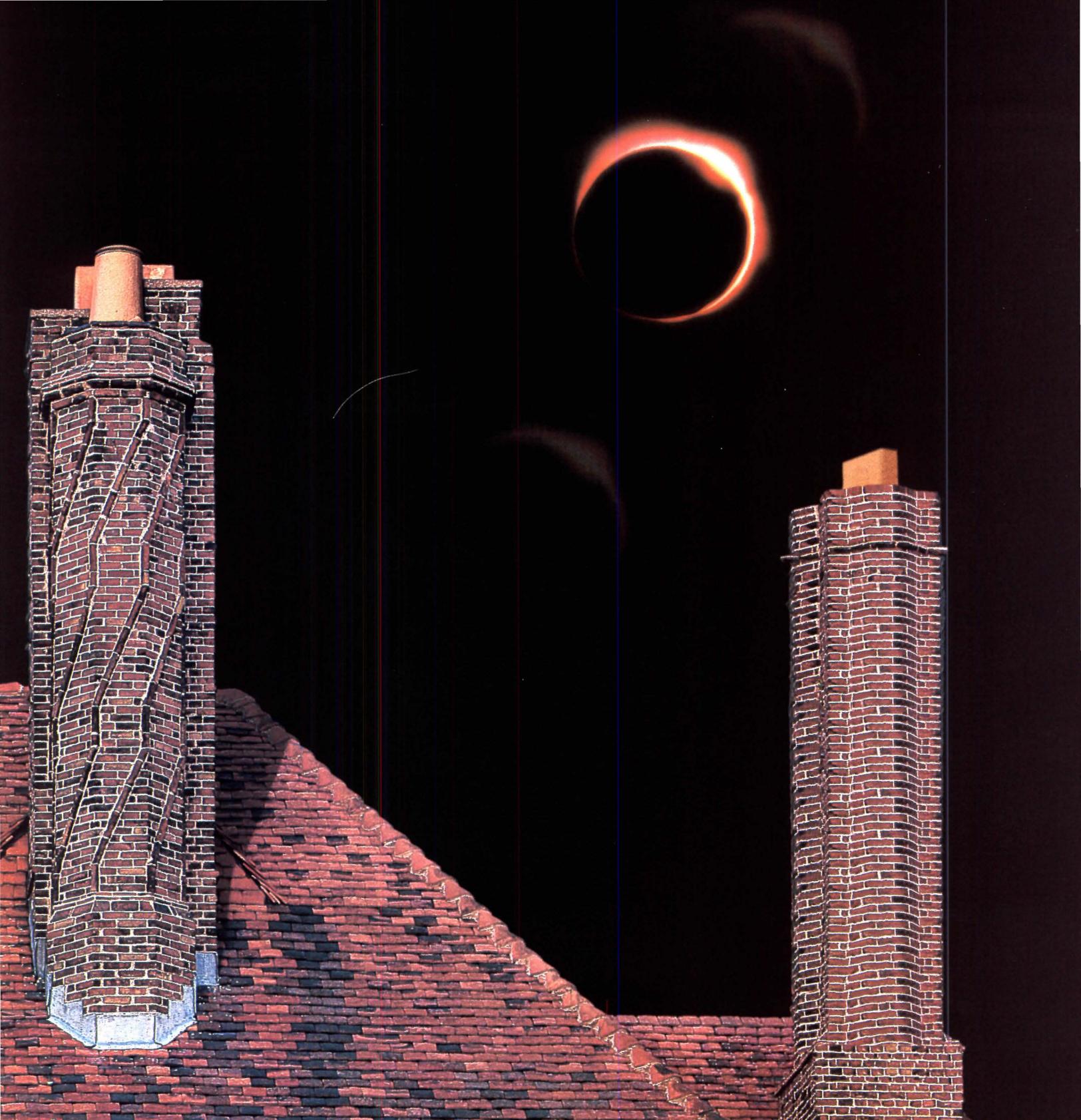
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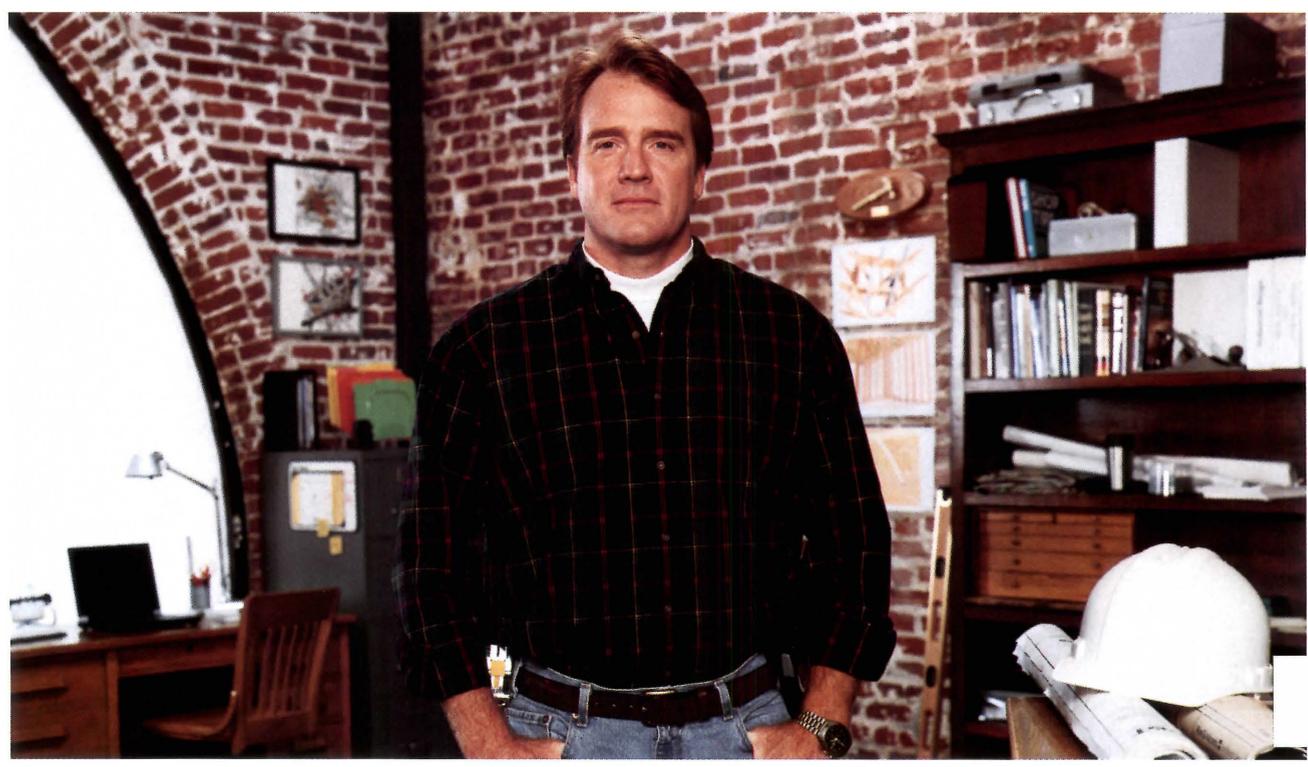
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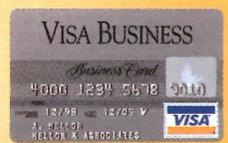
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big house *renovation*

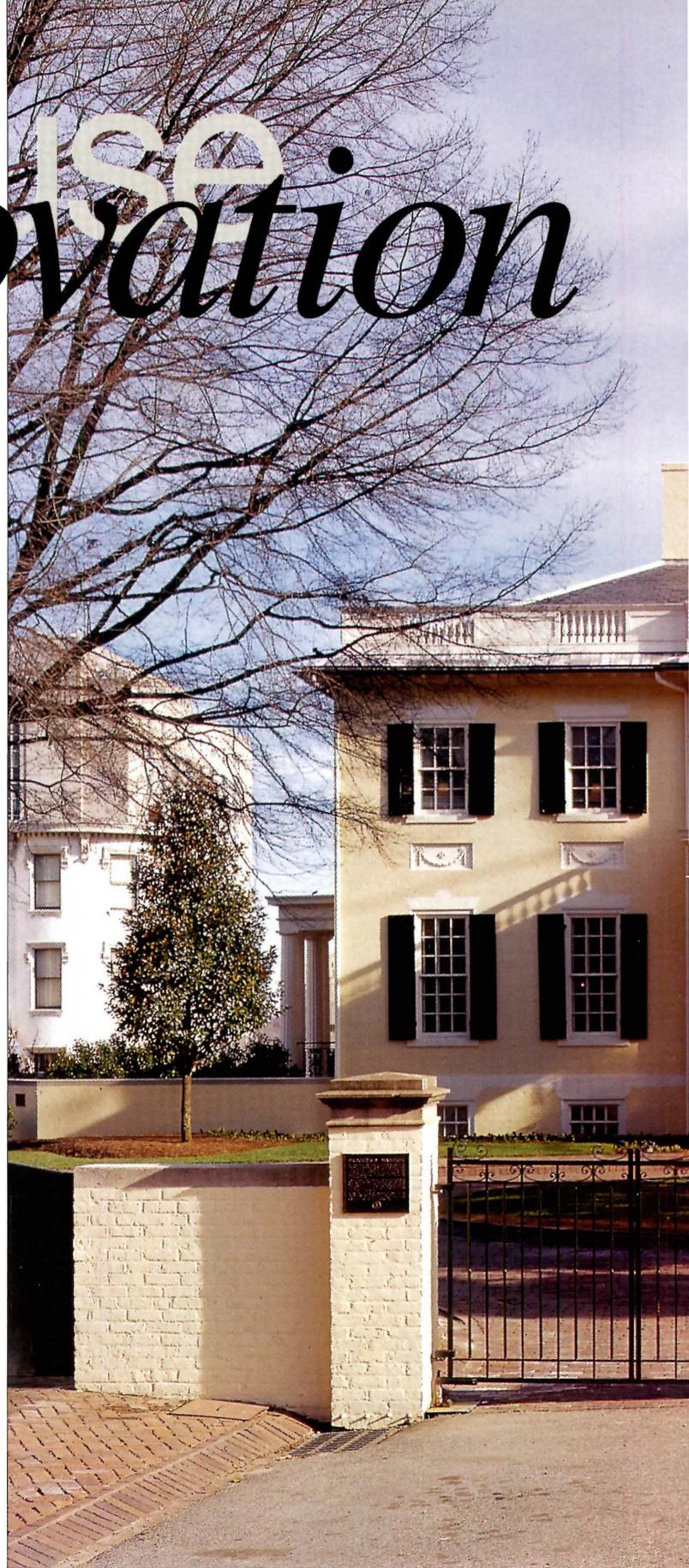
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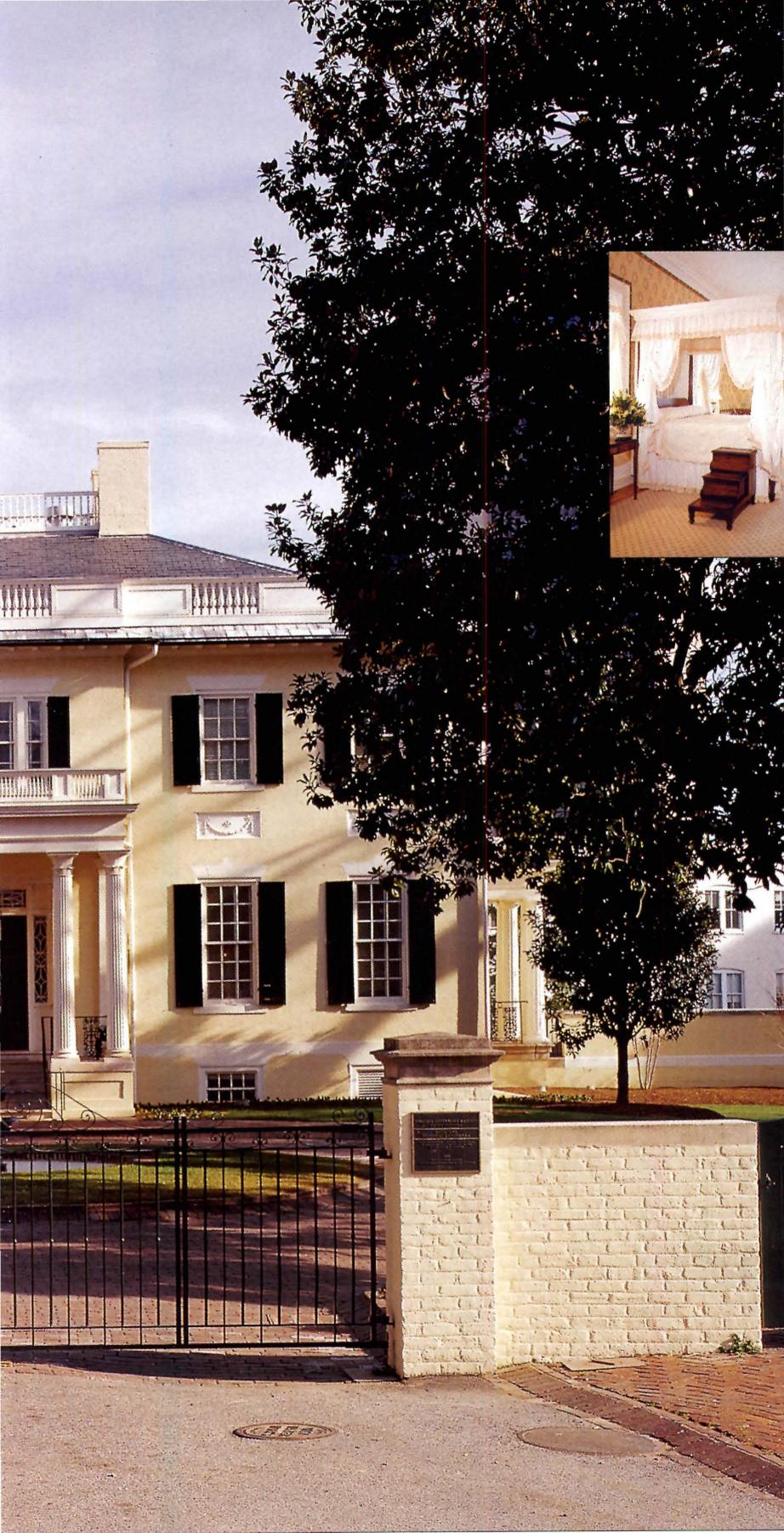
by meghan drueding, nigel f. maynard,
and shelley d. hutchins

preserve and correct

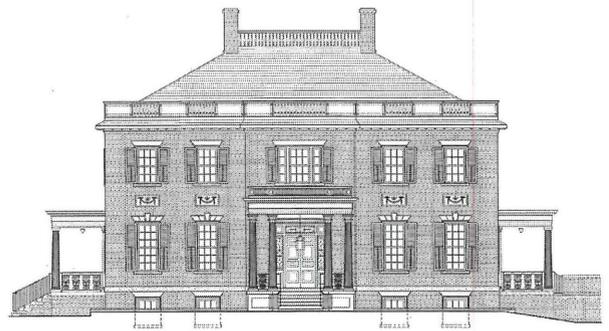
If you think single-family houses have complex programs, try incorporating one within a hard-working government building. That was the task the Commonwealth of Virginia handed John Paul C. Hanbury, FAIA, when it selected his firm, Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas, to restore and renovate the executive mansion in Richmond, Va. The Norfolk, Va.-based architect was charged with not only remodeling the 14,000-square-foot mansion's private quarters, but also rescuing its deteriorating reception and dining areas, reorganizing inefficient office space, and updating an antiquated service kitchen. He had to do all this while meeting stringent handicapped-accessible codes, providing for security needs, and assuring a design committee that he was spending taxpayer dollars wisely. Not exactly your everyday residential remodel.

Luckily, Hanbury had a clear plan of attack. "I was adamant, and the committee concurred, that the main floor should not change plan-wise, except to be handicapped-accessible," he says. The original house, designed by Boston architect Alexander Parris, dates from 1813. In 1906, Virginia architect Duncan Lee remodeled it to accommodate a ballroom and a formal dining room. Hanbury wanted to honor both phases, so the work he, project architect Gregory Rutledge, AIA, and staff interior designer Barbara Page did on the main level consists mostly of painstakingly researched restoration.





“you’ve got to have a clear understanding of the mission and purpose of the renovation.”



Renovation of the Virginia Governor's Mansion left the 1813 exterior virtually unchanged, except for a few touch-ups. The restored Lafayette Bedroom (inset) is swathed in period decor.

project:

Virginia Governor's Mansion, Richmond, Va.

architect:

Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas + Co., Norfolk, Va.

general contractor:

Daniel & Co., Richmond

structural engineer:

McPherson Broyles & Associates, Norfolk

mechanical/electrical engineer:

Cherwa Ewing Engineering,
Virginia Beach, Va.

civil engineer:

Austin Brockenbrough & Associates,
Chester, Va.

project size:

14,000 square feet before;

15,000 square feet after

site size:

1.44 acres

construction cost:

Withheld

All photos by John Wadsworth except where noted

big house *renovation*

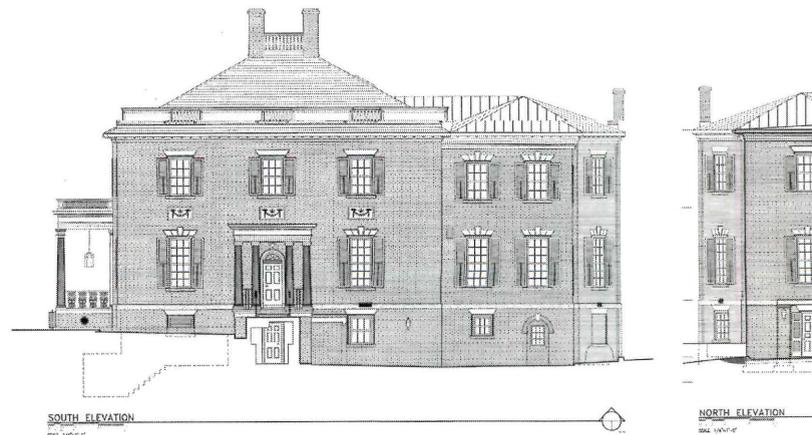
They did, however, add a small, two-story wing to the northeast corner of the building. On the main floor, the addition houses a powder room and a handicapped-accessible elevator. Hanbury didn't hesitate on this minor alteration to Parris' and Lee's plans—a 1950s addition to the southeast corner had left the rear facade asymmetrical, which was sorely out of keeping with the home's Federal roots. "The new wing was logical because it balanced out the southeast addition," he says.

selective intervention

The main level may have been off-limits to major changes, but the basement and second floor were fair game. "The old basement was a model of inefficiency," says Hanbury. "A rabbit warren." The office space devoted to the First Lady's two-person staff was much too large for their needs. So Hanbury relocated it to a separate carriage house, which HEWV also renovated.

The kitchen was even worse. Despite the fact that the mansion frequently serves as a site for receptions and dinner parties of 100 or more, it had no gas range and no modern refrigerator or freezer. Hanbury replaced the room with a full, up-to-the-minute catering kitchen. "It was a challenge because of the kitchen's huge exhaust capabilities," he says. "Of course, the exhaust had to be concealed." He solved the problem by designing an underground tunnel that draws the exhaust out into a discreet brick enclosure.

Hanbury's work on the second floor entailed a mixture of restoration and remodeling. Two guest bedrooms had retained their original character, and he and the committee decided they should remain intact. HEWV undertook an intensive restoration endeavor, using antique wallpaper scraps found in the home's basement to come up with a historically accurate border and refurbishing the rooms with dimity, a fabric fashionable in the 19th century. But the rest of the second floor had little to preserve. "The balance of the second floor had evolved over a period of several administrations," says Hanbury. "There was little plan order."





*“the house
had lost
its interior
integrity.”*



project:
Private residence, Winnetka, Ill.
architect:
Wheeler Kearns Architects,
Chicago
general contractor:
Jim Spicak, Spicak Construction,
Lake Forest, Ill.
project size before and after:
14,000 square feet
construction cost:
Withheld

All photos by William Kildow

big house *renovation*

pects found on the third floor an old servants' quarter unaltered by previous "remuddlings." The bath had original sculptured Carrara marble, nickel-leg sinks, and some examples of the original moldings. "We took those and started with that kind of palette," Wheeler says.

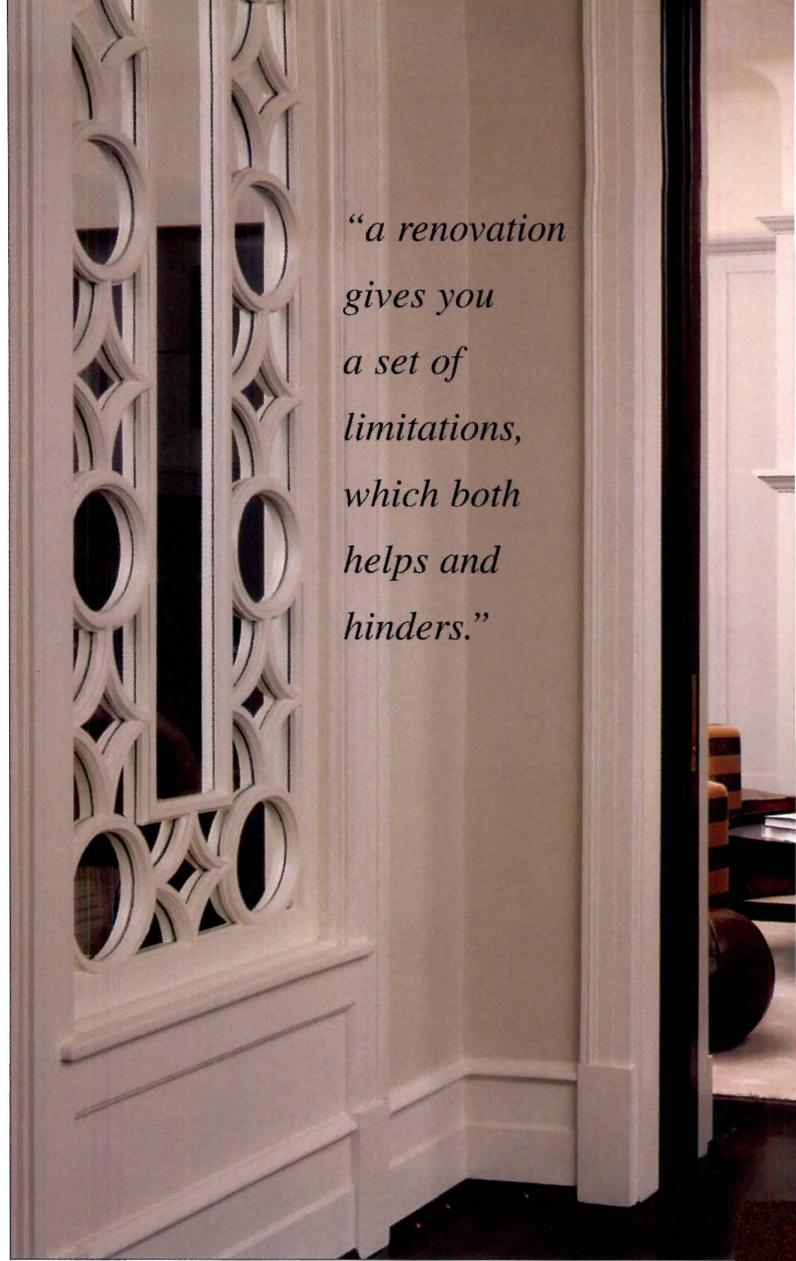
Then they addressed the floor plan. "We needed to transform it, but we also needed to restore it," Wheeler says. Thus, every room of the house was redone except for the kitchen. Starting from the top floor down, the architects moved walls to achieve better circulation and reworked all the bathrooms. Door frames were adjusted and floors were ripped out and restored. "Because we had so many rooms to work with, certain rooms were just given over to particular functions," Wheeler says.

The clients wanted to lighten the palette as well as bring in more daylight, so the architects added dormers, which also serve to break up the imposing roofline. Other windows were restored, and new wood shingles and a new smooth-faced cedar-shake roof round out the exterior improvements.

ambivalent limitations

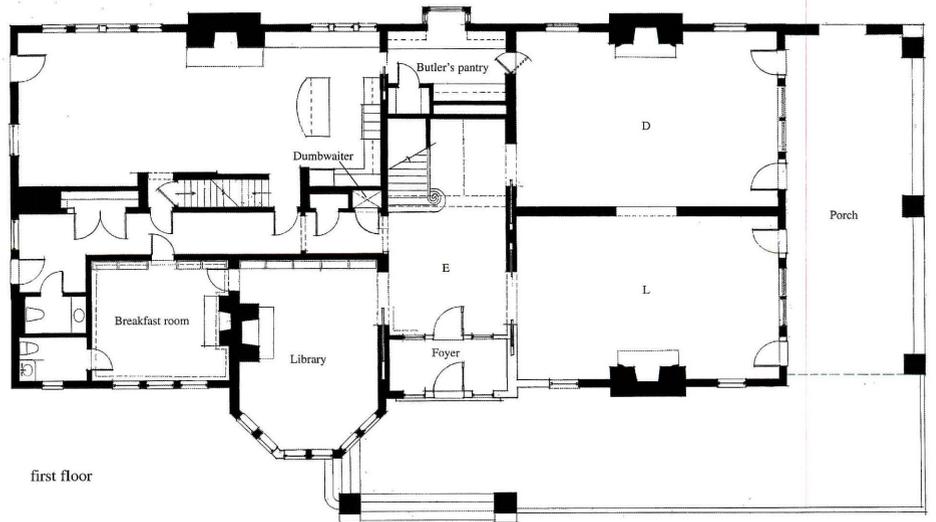
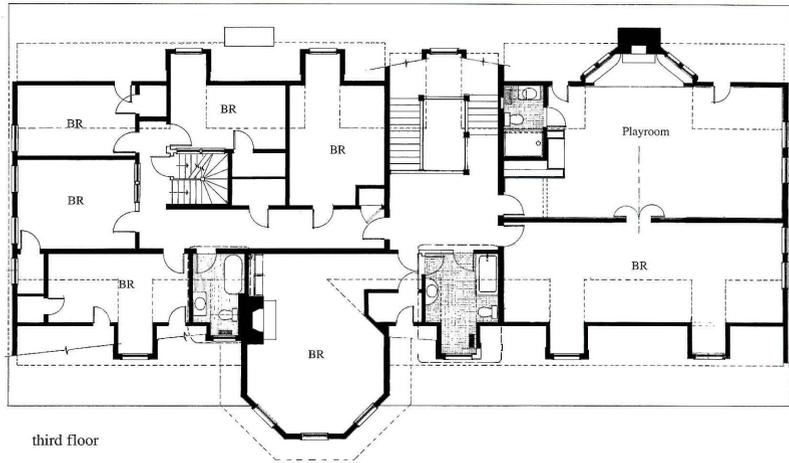
One of the project's biggest hurdles, Wheeler says, was working around clients who wished to remain in the house. The firm developed a

The architects built a new mantel and fireplace surround in the library (top) and used a wainscot "belt" around the perimeter. In the breakfast room (right), they restored the Dutch-tiled fireplace. A new loggia/pergola encloses the tennis courts (far right). The project involved a major reorganization of walls to improve circulation and consolidate many of the house's 40 rooms (see plans, opposite. Note: "Before" plans were unavailable).



"a renovation gives you a set of limitations, which both helps and hinders."





big house *renovation*

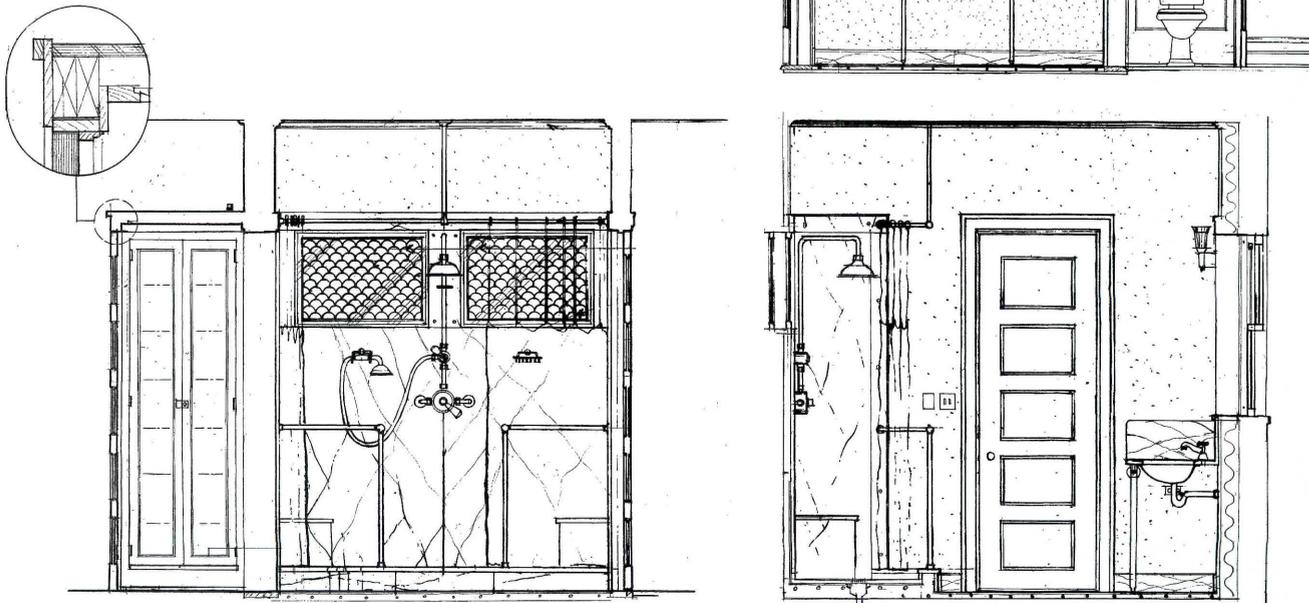
strategy for phasing the work in different parts of the home. “We learned things from the first phase that we corrected in the second phase or the third,” he recalls.

“A renovation gives you a set of limitations, which both helps and hinders,” he explains. “From a design standpoint, I would say it’s actually less demanding than new construction, in a way. There are clues to the answers, and a ‘language’ is often already there. You learn to speak that language.”

Nevertheless, a renovation is arduous to manage, especially one of this magnitude. The entire project was hand-drawn room by room. Despite the grueling and lengthy schedule (the work took almost three years), there were benefits: “Large houses are emotionally difficult because of the size,” says Wheeler. “But they have a rich programmatic element, and the rooms offer a rich layer of experience.”—*n.f.m.*



Outfitted with marble and nickel, the bathrooms needed the most renovation. For the highly custom fixtures and fittings, the architects did hand drawings instead of computer renderings.



“large houses are emotionally difficult . . . but they have a rich programmatic element, and the rooms offer a rich layer of experience.”

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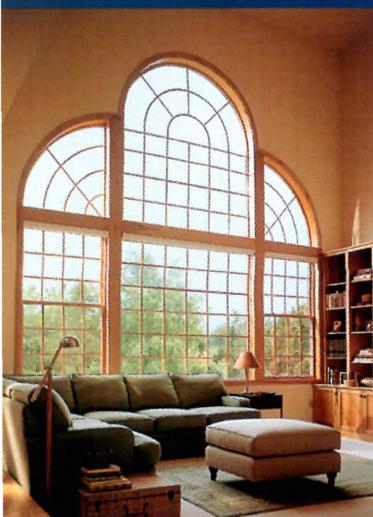
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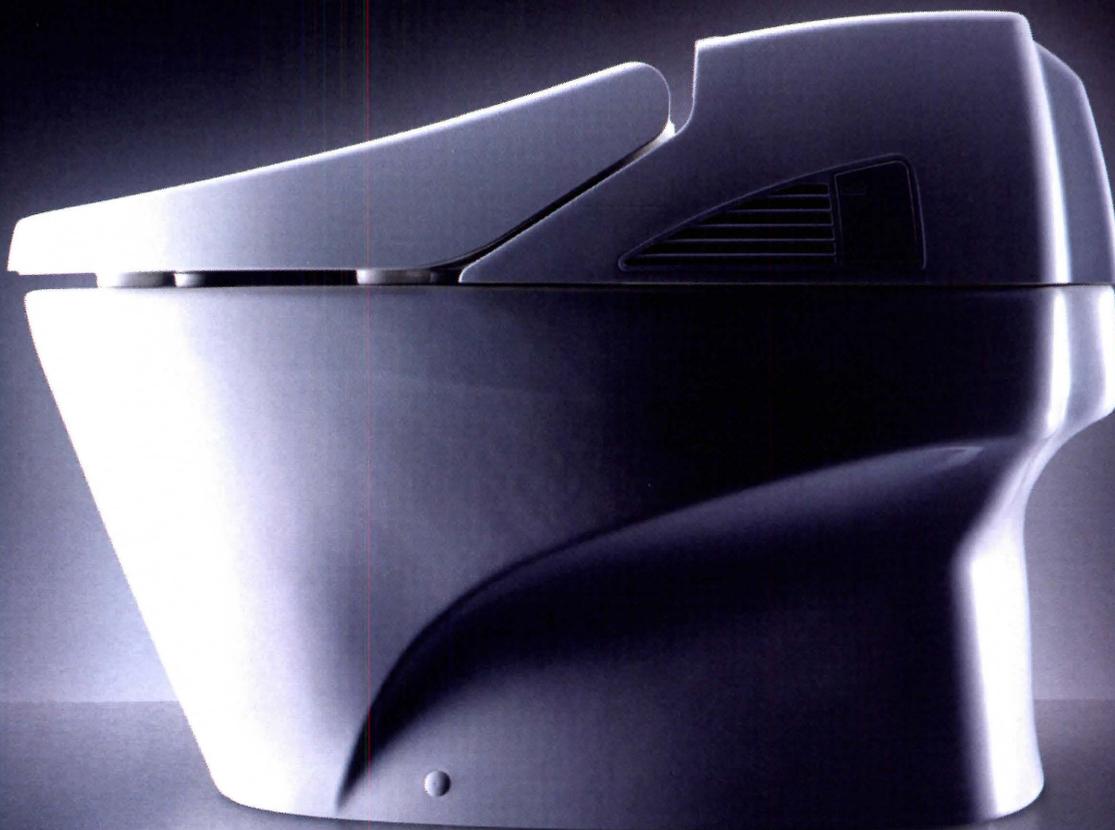
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the grain game

designers have a love-hate relationship with wood in the kitchen.

by nigel f. maynard

It's no accident that wood is one of our favorite products. Few other materials are as pleasing to the senses, or as durable and versatile. That's why luxury automakers lather on the hand-tooled leather and burl wood trim, leaving the lusterless synthetics to the budget-minded. Indeed, in the hands of a talented crafts-person, wood can bring a home design to life.

Despite its stellar past performance, wood's role in the kitchen has been decidedly secondary since Mid-Century Modernists spread the laminate gospel. Of course, wood cabinetry is still ubiquitous, but other, more imaginative applications of the material are approached with caution and sometimes dread by designers and consumers alike. Laminate and ther-



Philip Beaurline, courtesy Mountain Lumber

Architects say wood floors are fine in a kitchen, provided the type and finish are sturdy. Here, a floor by Mountain Lumber combines granary oak and distressed heart pine for a rustic look.

mofoil remain the favorite budget-conscious choices, while loftier jobs more commonly attract water-impermeable specs for horizontal surfaces. These are missed opportunities, proponents say.

Susan M. Regan, executive director of the American Hardwood Information Center, in Pittsburgh, considers the kitchen rife with possibilities for her material of choice. "On the floor, people are moving toward wood for comfort and warmth," she says. "And architects shouldn't be afraid to look at various species for countertops."

counter insurgency

Designer Ellen Cheever, no stranger to the ebb and flow of kitchen trends, says butcher block is one of the hottest specs she's seeing. "Wood on the countertop is a more recent and interesting trend," says the principal of Ellen Cheever & Associates in Wilmington, Del. "And not just in the typical maple. Species such as walnut, cherry, and mahogany have been trending upward as consumers and designers look for what's next."

Effingham, Ill.-based John Boos is a venerable purveyor of butcher-block countertops and has been for more than 100 years. The company offers wood tops in

various species, but hard rock maple and hard sugar maple are customer favorites. National sales manager Pam Beam says these species are the preferred choices because of their tight grains and durability.

While conventional wisdom says to avoid using wood around the sink, Suzy O'Neal, owner of Atlanta-based Craft-Art Wood Countertops, disagrees. "We can do any type of sink installation," she claims, including drop-in, farmhouse, and under-mount installations. Her company controls moisture infiltration by treating its products with a "Waterlox" sealer and finisher. Twenty spe-

continued on page 102



Courtesy Craft-Art

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cies are available, including American varieties and exotic types like zebrawood, padauk, and wenge. “We haven’t found a wood that hasn’t done well around water,” she says.



Photos: (left) Mike Teipen Photography, courtesy YesterTec Furniture; (right) courtesy Craft-Art

A YesterTec workstation kitchen hides appliances behind cherry cabinets (left). Built-in stainless-steel rods and a water-resistant sealer protect a Craft-Art teak counter (right).

tread ahead

Wood is also commanding the floor in many kitchen projects. Unlike stone or tile, the material is easy on the feet and back, and its muted warmth tames the modern kitchen’s metal sheen.

Architect Peter d’Entremont, a principal of Knight Associates in Blue Hill, Maine, is a fan of wood for his custom kitchen designs. “We spec wood floors without much reservation,” he says. “Though if you have a serious leak from an appliance, it could be a problem.”

Wood floors come pre-finished or unfinished, with advantages to each. “We find that prefinished floors hold up better at first,” says d’Entremont. “But if they get scratched, they can be a problem, because matching the finish gets difficult.”

Designer Beverly Ellsley is unequivocal in her preference for in situ finishing. “We prefer to finish our floors on site,” says the principal of Beverly Ellsley Design in Westport, Conn. “You need to be able to sand it later. We never spec prefinish, because you can only sand them twice.”

Another reason for spec-ing unfinished flooring, says architect Ross Chapin,

is for quality control over the final finish. Some species require careful application of finishes for durability and color matching. Finishing the floor on site gives you better control over both, the principal of Langley, Wash.-based Ross Chapin Architects says.

cabinet members

Of course, wood has long dominated the cabinetry trade. And most design pros agree that custom-built cabinets are the ultimate in high-quality kitchen appurtenances. They also represent a hefty portion of a kitchen’s budget.

In addition to high-end kitchen planning, Beverly Ellsley Design offers its own line of handmade custom cabinetry. “We make our cabinets from all hardwood,” Ellsley says. “Even when we do painted cabinets, we use maple, because it provides a good surface and paint lasts longer.”

Architect Anni Tilt, principal of Arkin Tilt Architects in Berkeley, Calif., says cabinetry “is a fine use for wood—although getting anyone to use solid wood for anything but the door faces is a difficult and expensive proposition.” Cabinets with solid wood and dovetails are

beautiful, if pricey, and with a good clear seal, they’re just as cleanable as any synthetic, she says.

D’Entremont agrees that people just “love to see a dovetail joint. But if you want to just hold stuff, then a cabinet does not have to be solid wood.” Most custom-cabinetry makers use a plywood box, he explains. It’s standard in the industry and more stable over time.

wood wise

Although Chapin has used wood in kitchens and even in his own bath, he is very careful when specing the product for his clients. “I would recommend taking a close look at who the client is,” the architect advises. “Some people are attentive and neat and will clean up spills immediately. Some people are not and it will be an uphill battle to maintain it.”

“In general, it’s nice to use wood in the kitchen because it warms and gives texture to what otherwise can be a fairly aesthetically cold space,” says Tilt. Moisture issues, however, make her hesitant to side solidly with specing wood. “While we are wild about wood generally, we do not typically use it for countertops, especially anywhere near a sink.”

D’Entremont says it’s a good idea to look at installations that have been around for a few years and ask how the owners feel about the material. “I am also a big fan of architects experimenting on themselves,” he says. “Try it in your house and see how much you like it.”

Architects should also pay attention to certain guidelines about wood specs. As a general rule, avoid using wide-plank flooring in the kitchen. Large sizes expand and contract more, Chapin says. It’s also essential to spec the appropriate species for the task at hand, since some perform better than others. Varieties such as maple and tigerwood are hard and perfect for countertops, while species such as pine and cypress are softer and may not hold up as well.

Always make sure you choose the best finish possible for the job. Design pros who spec wood in the kitchen say its failure often results from fabrication and finish errors. What it boils down to is careful species selection, quality craftsmanship, and conscientious finishing techniques. All three will allow wood to weather even the hardest-working kitchen. **ra**

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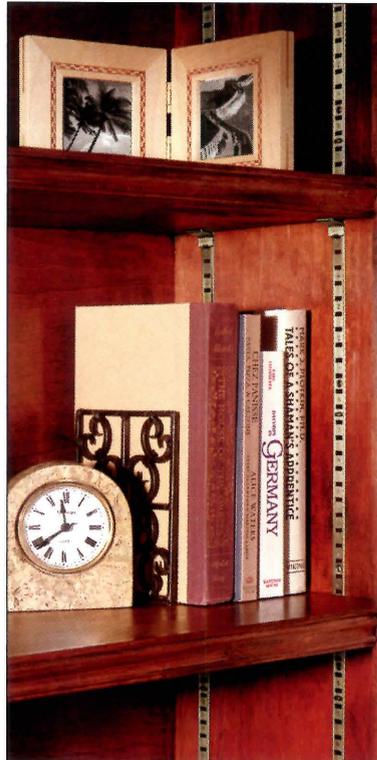
ross architecture



*doug ross
chicago*

shelf-absorbed

Knap & Vogt's adjustable shelving and hang rods are a favorite spec with Ross. He particularly likes combining the Series 255 pilasters with the 256 shelf supports, and the Series 660 or 750 rods with the 757 rod supports. "These items offer an extremely flexible, simple, and elegant solution to organizing closets at a very low cost," he says. Knap & Vogt, 800.253.1561; www.kv.com.



likely hood

For sucking up hot air, Ross says nothing beats the AH 900, a miniature integrated ventilator with a pullout visor. "The hood is extremely slimline yet functional and can be detailed into the kitchen design to be visually inconspicuous," he says. The unit is 1 1/8 inches thick, with a hardened-glass insert. The manufacturer says it offers whisper-quiet operation, three power levels, compact fluorescent strip lights, and a stainless-steel filter. Gaggenau USA, 800.828.9165; www.gaggenau.com.

remote control

Exhaust fans should be neither seen nor heard, so Ross uses NuTone's remote-mounted inline units. "By locating the exhaust fan in a remote location, there is virtually no sound when the fan is running," he says. "One unit, depending on its capacity, also can be ducted to vent several locations." Available in various duct sizes, the unit has a backward-inclined centrifugal fan that provides strong air movement with little noise, the company says. NuTone, 888.336.3948; www.nutone.com.



—nigel f. maynard



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high style

With high-arching spouts and clean lines, Franke's Atriflow line of faucets is equally at home in modern or traditional kitchens. The unit pictured features a side-lever control and a brass pullout spray; it's also available with twin handles and a widespread design. Made from cast brass with ceramic-disc valves, the faucet comes in polished chrome, polished nickel, and satin nickel. Franke, 800.626.5771; www.frankeksd.com.



feet treat

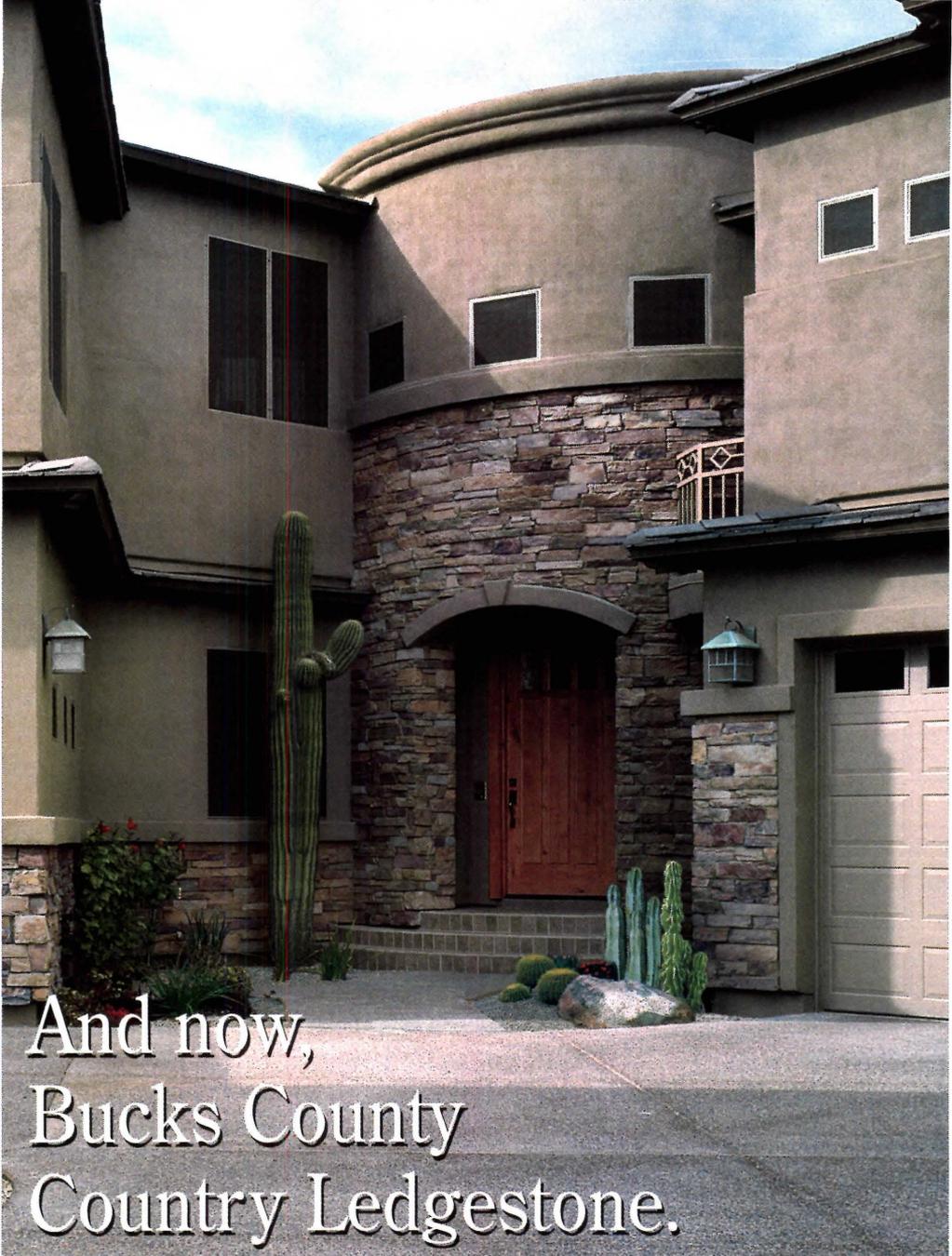
For a rustic look in the bath, International Slate makes a tumbled mosaic slate flooring. The pieces are $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick, with certain sizes designed and shaped to stimulate acupressure points on the feet. Available in Ebony, Antique Green, and Beige Marble, the flooring comes in 12-by-12-inch mats with 1- or 2-inch-square tiles. International Slate, 810.736.9333; www.internationalslate.com.



country time

Siematic's Cottage Modern cabinetry puts a contemporary spin on the traditional country kitchen. The SC 46 Series (shown in magnolia white) sports a lacquered finish and details such as traditional bead-board panels, decorative toekicks, and glass inset doors. Niche spaces and open shelves offer extra storage, while a butcher-block island adds warmth. Seven existing S-Series door styles are available to coordinate with the cabinetry, as are products from the company's Hudson Valley Collection. Siematic, 215.244.6803; www.siematic.com.

—nigel f. maynard



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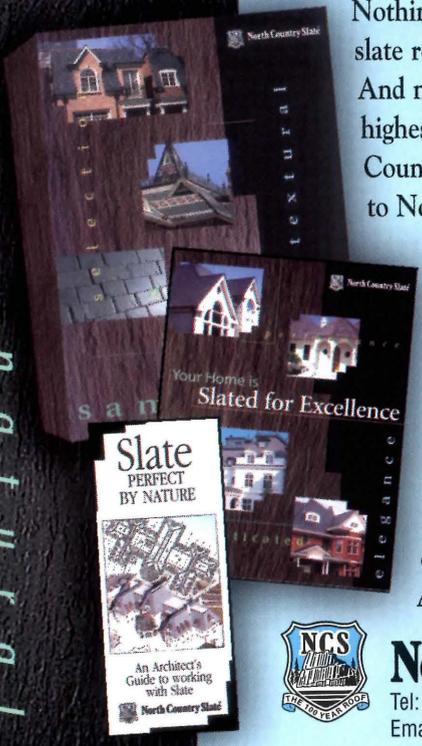
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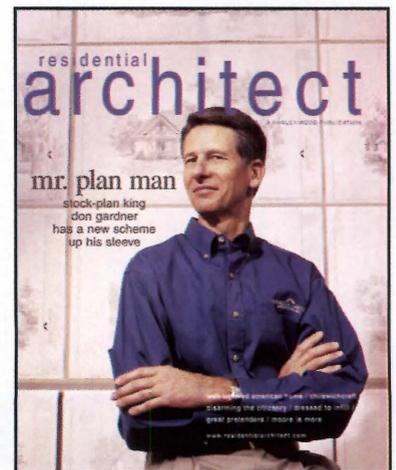
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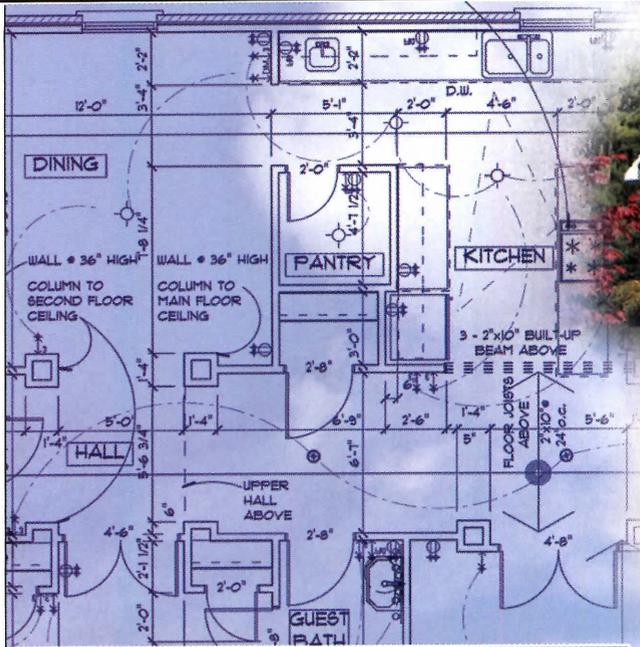
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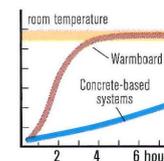
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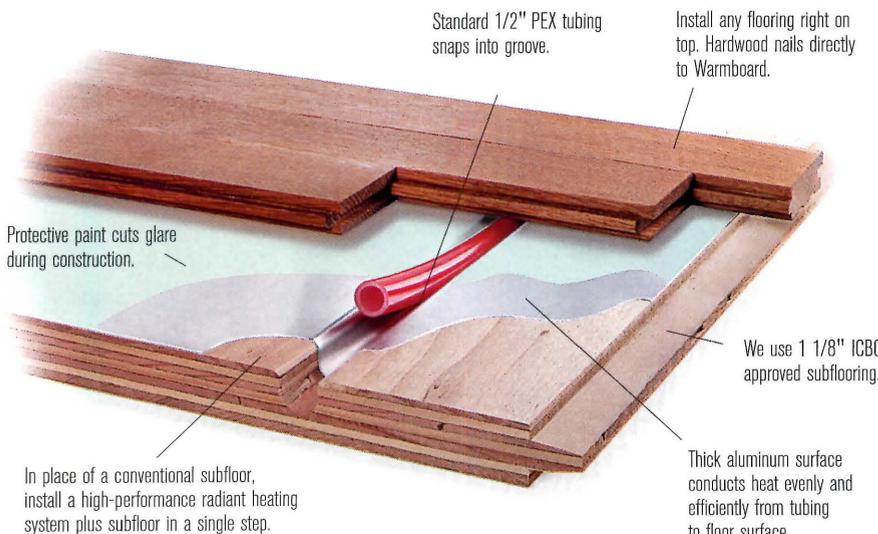
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door prize

The Brentwood fireplace's single, 36-inch-wide, ceramic glass door offers both an unobstructed view of the flames and optimal heat transfer, helping the wood-burning unit achieve a heating efficiency of 72 percent. Its airtight combustion chamber with a double air combustion control also boosts heat output and wood ignition. The product meets EPA emissions standards. Lennox Hearth Products, 800.9.LENNOX; www.lennoxhearthproducts.com.

rumford redux

Walter Moberg designed and patented the Modern Rumford wood-burning fireplace by combining 18th-century Rumford characteristics with today's larger hearth sizes and clean-air technology. The 21-inch-deep firebox boasts a 40-inch-tall opening that comes in standard widths of 36, 42, 48, and 54 inches; a steel smoke chamber helps ensure smoke-free rooms. Moberg Fireplaces, 503.227.0547; www.modernrumford.com.



contemporary flare

For homeowners who want a clean-lined, contemporary take on the wood-burning stove, Morsø offers the 4600 Series. The 35-inch-tall, stainless steel or painted steel units contain a cast iron firebox lined with firebrick for durability, and can heat areas of up to 800 square feet. An optional door is available for the log bin beneath the firebox. Morsø, 802.728.9342; www.morsousa.com.



continued on page 114



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great divide

Made from textured Kianta Blue soapstone, the Fiorina wood-burning fireplace can serve as a room divider or as the sculptural focal point of one large area.

The 15-by-15-inch firebox is visible through glass doors on either side. Improved combustion technology ensures a clean burn that exceeds EPA requirements, says the company. Tulikivi, 800.843.3473; www.tulikivi.com.



revolutionary concept

With the Pina wood stove from Rais, homeowners can gather round the fire—or the fire can swing round to them. The oblong unit rotates around its columnlike base and locks into place in any of three positions. Polished stainless steel inlays and a stay-cool stainless handle accent the gray or black brushed-metal stove.

Rais & Wittus, 914.764.5679; www.raiswittus.com.

—shelley d. hutchins

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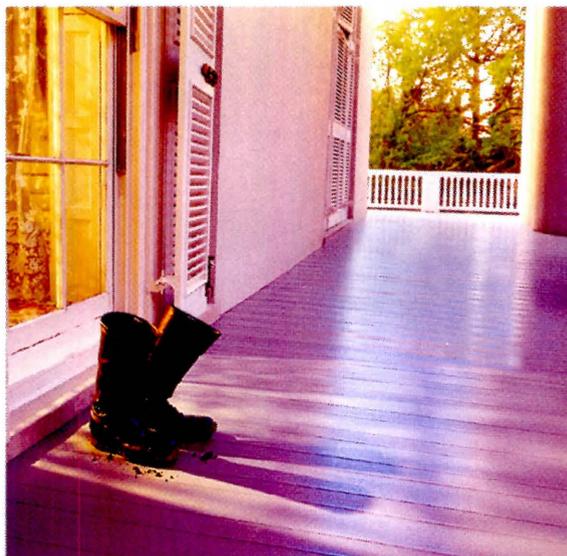
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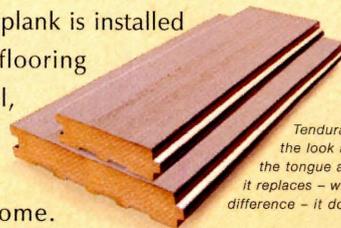
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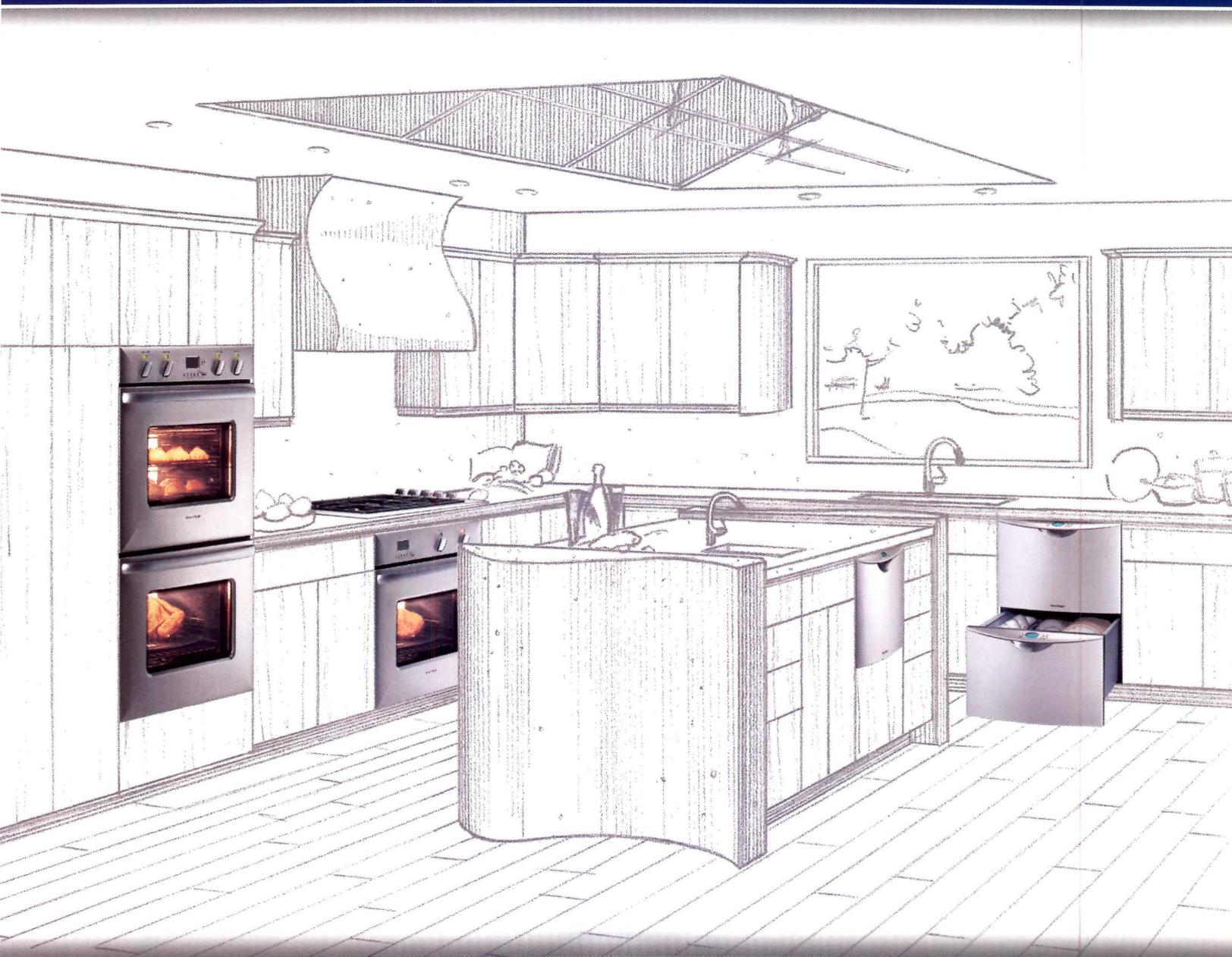
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residential architect design awards

the fifth annual

residential architect Design Awards, sponsored by *residential architect* magazine, honor the best in American housing. Awards will be given in ten categories, encompassing custom home design, renovation, kitchens, baths, design details, multifamily housing, single-family production housing, and affordable housing. From the winners, the judges will choose a Best Residential Project of the Year. Note: Entries in the kitchen, bath, and design detail categories are not eligible for Best Project.

who's eligible?

Architects and designers. Other building industry professionals may submit projects on behalf of an architect or designer. Hanley-Wood employees, their relatives, and regular contributors to the magazine are not eligible.

what's eligible?

Any home or project completed after January 1, 1999.

when's the deadline?

Entry forms and fees are due no later than November 21, 2003. Completed binders are due January 5, 2004.

where will winning projects appear?

Winning projects will be published in the May 2004 issue of *residential architect* magazine.

how will projects be judged?

A panel of respected architects and design professionals will independently select winners based on design excellence. They may withhold awards in any category at their discretion.

entry form

To register, you may do any of the following:

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mail this form to Shelley Hutchins, *residential architect* Design Awards 2004, One Thomas Circle, N.W., Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20005

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Please send entry binder(s) and instructions now (must be prepaid).

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number of entries categories

- _____ 1. Custom Home, 3,500 square feet or less
- _____ 2. Custom Home, more than 3,500 square feet
- _____ 3. Renovation (residential remodeling and additions)
- _____ 4. Multifamily Housing
- _____ 5. Single-Family Production Housing, detached
- _____ 6. Single-Family Production Housing, attached
- _____ 7. Affordable Housing (At least 20 percent of the units must be affordable to families earning 80 percent to 120 percent of the local Median Family Income. Consult your area HUD office or local government office for the MFI.)
- _____ 8. Kitchen (new or renovated)
- _____ 9. Bath (new or renovated)
- _____ 10. Architectural Design Detail

deadlines entry form and fee: november 21, 2003
completed binders: january 5, 2004

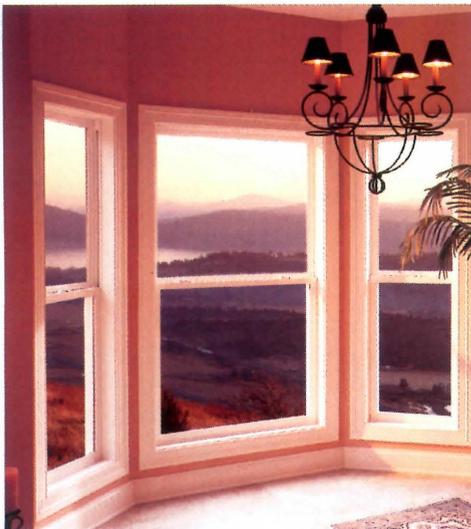
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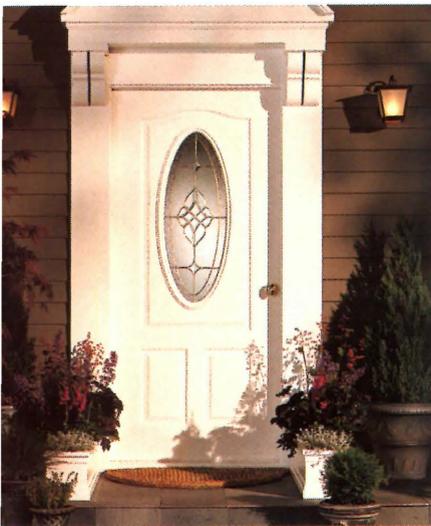
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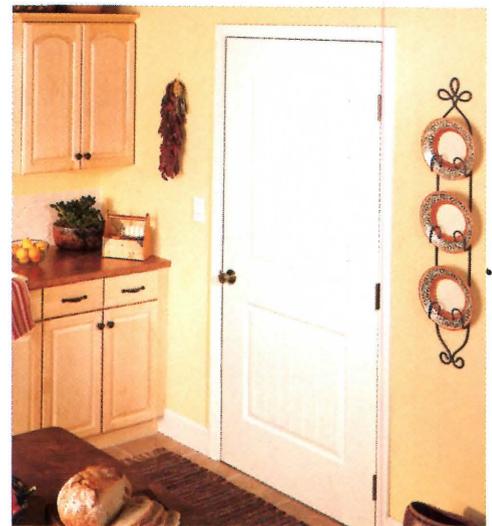
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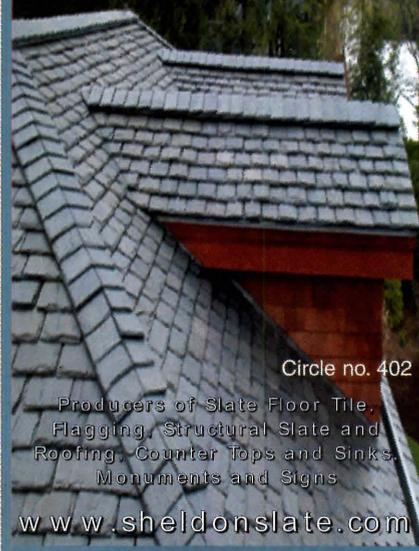
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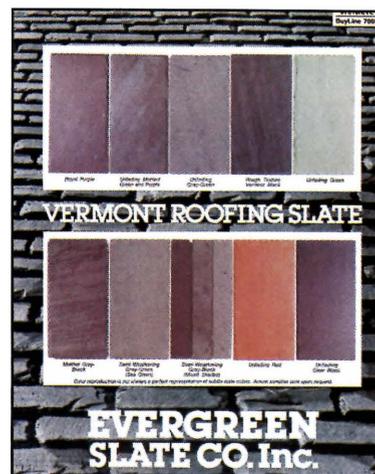
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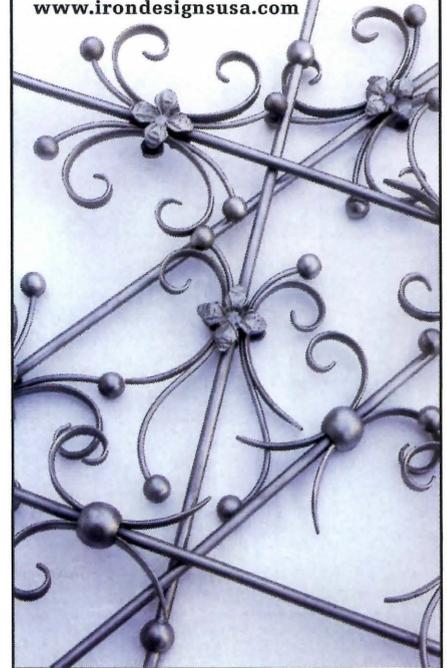
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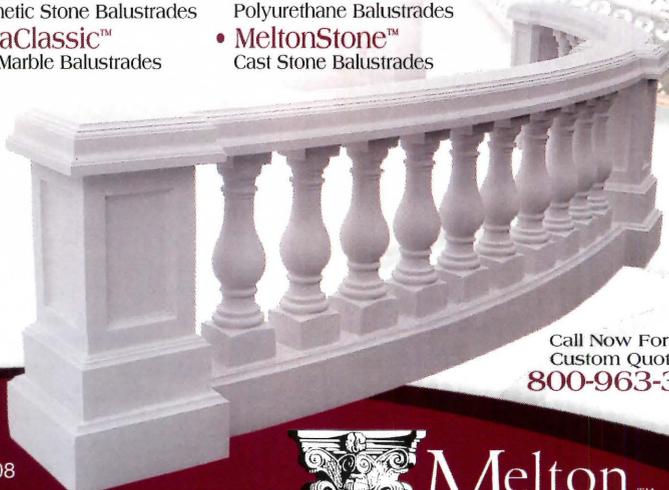


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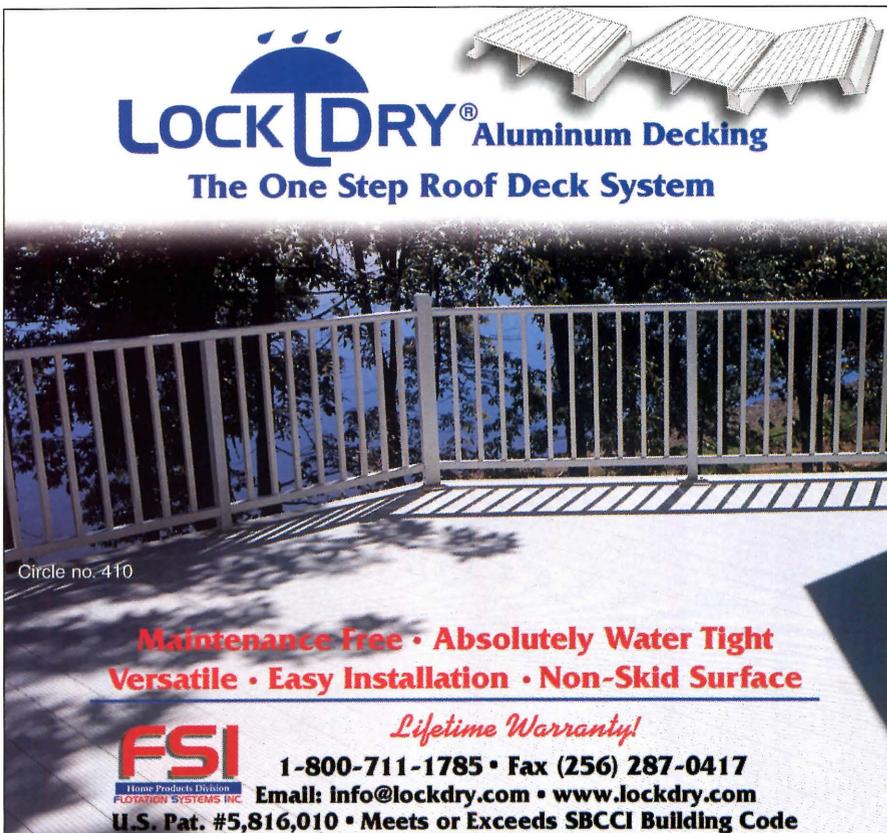
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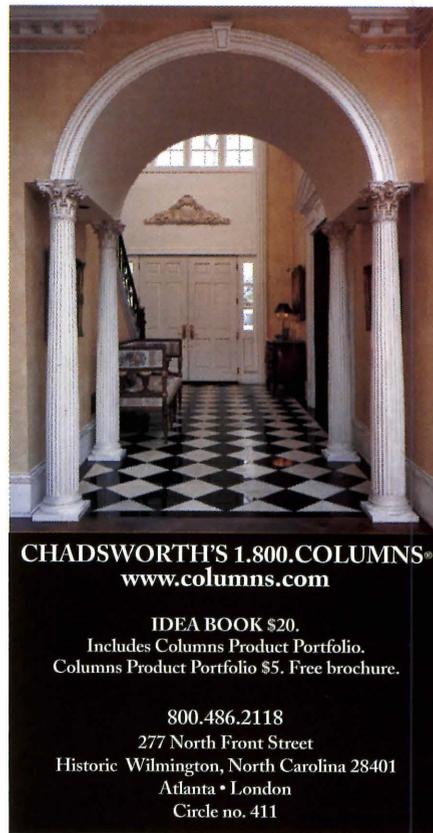


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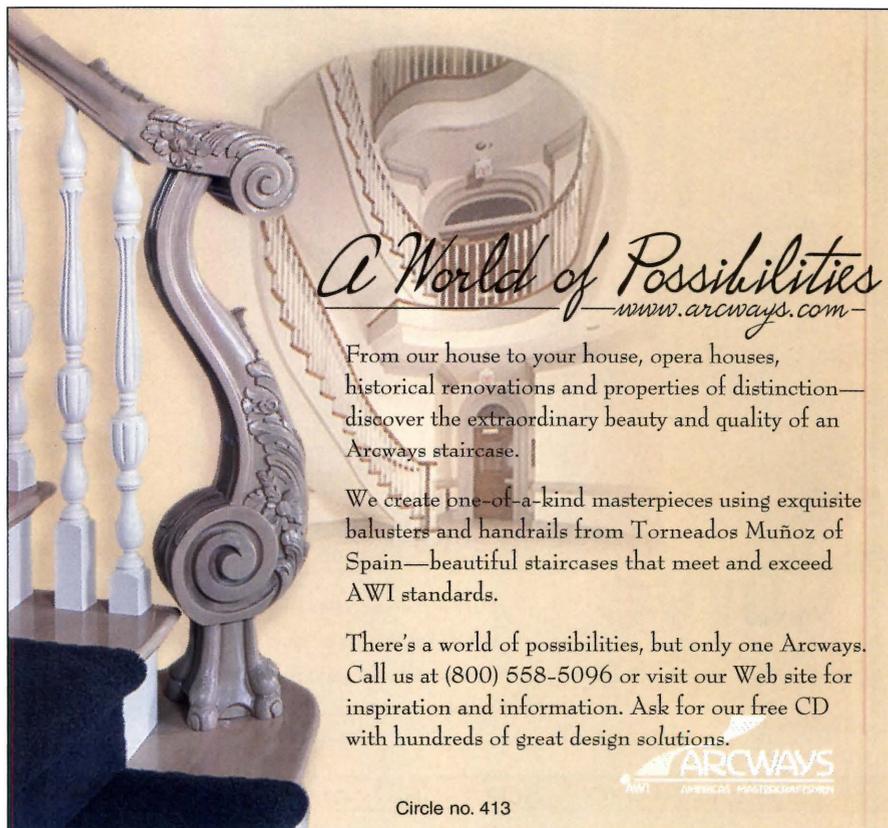
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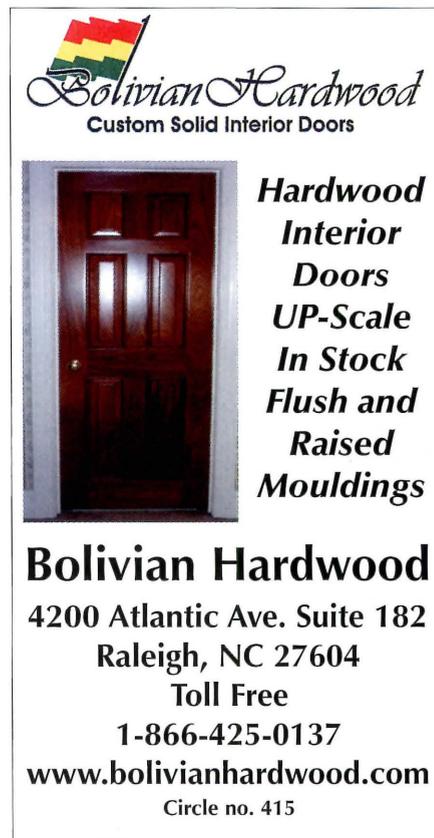
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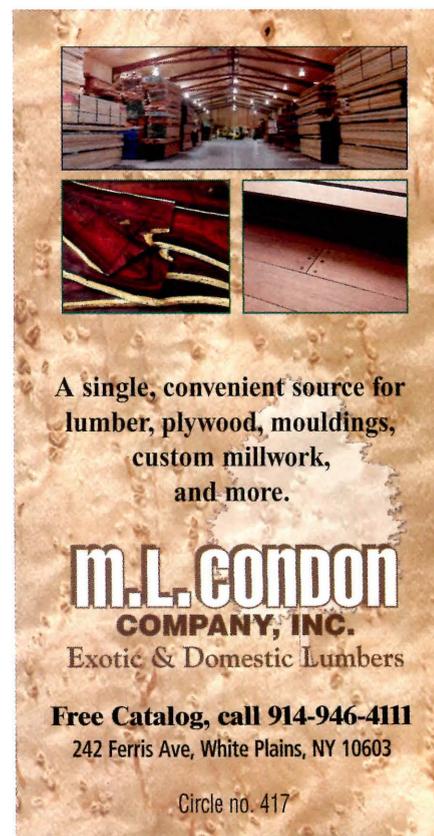
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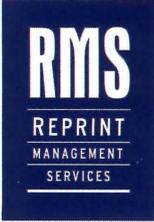
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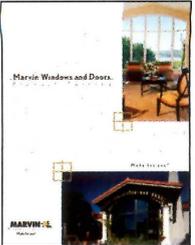
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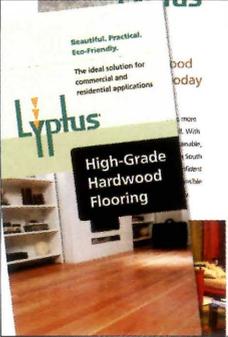
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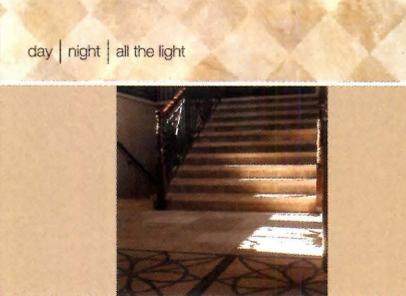


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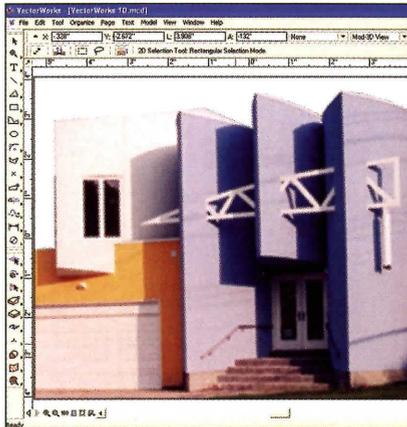
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residential architect Design Awards	121	—	202-785-1974	—
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Simpson Strong-Tie Company, Inc.	116	26	800-999-5099	www.simpsonstrongwall.com
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Whirlpool Corporation	2-3	348,361	800-253-1301, 800-253-3977	www.insideadvantage.com or www.KitchenAid.com
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Windsor Mill	91	285	—	—
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perfect cube

glass cube, amery, wis., 1974

ralph rapson, faia

“it’s an out-of-this-world kind of place, with nature surrounding you all the time in all its moods . . . i don’t know that i’d recommend it for everyone.”

—ralph rapson



Tony Soluri

Ralph Rapson’s Glass Cube vacation home near Amery, Wis., may not be for everyone, but it suits him and his family just fine. The Minneapolis-based architect and his wife bought the Cube’s pristine, 40-acre site during Rapson’s 30-year tenure as head of the University of Minnesota’s School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture. They spent a year and a half camping out in various spots to help determine where to place the house, finally settling on a hillside spot above the Apple River. Standard-sized windows and doors form the project’s exterior walls, which are supported by a wood exoskeleton. “Andersen Windows agreed to sell me the windows at cost if they could use photos of the house in their advertis-

ing,” recalls Rapson. “That helped with the budget.”

The home’s transparency lets the family connect with the natural world in a way few people can. “It’s fun at night to watch the fireflies and little animals, frequently deer, with their flashing eyes,” Rapson says. “I’ve always found it very exhilarating to be in the house in a lightning storm.” But the 25-foot-square cube also provides dependable shelter from extremes. The house retains so much of the sun’s heat that its sliding doors can be left open on a sunny winter day. And it still provides the seclusion Rapson craves: He bought an adjoining 40-acre plot several years ago to ensure the home’s privacy would never be compromised.—*meghan drueding*