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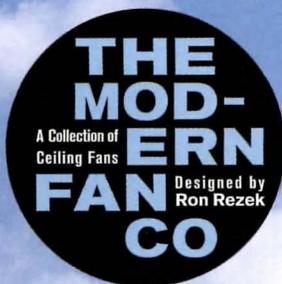
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Discover what your peers find most gratifying—and frustrating—about residential practice.

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While smaller jobs have been life-savers in the languishing economy, architects are struggling to deal with the increased workload to stay afloat.



ra50..page 23

Without further ado, we present a one-stop shop of 50 firms whose work we admire—and hope you do, too.

by Nigel F. Maynard, Cheryl Weber, LEED AP, Meghan Drueding, and Bruce D. Snider

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workspace..page 64

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from the editor

publish or perish

don't see your name on the ra50? find your own way to let the world know how great you are.

by s. claire conroy

Welcome to our first-ever ra50—the short list of architects whose work we admire. We know and appreciate a great number of other residential architects, but this collection comprises the ones whose names keep rising to the top—of our design awards programs, of our case studies waiting for a place in the magazine, and of our roster of cover profile subjects.

There are some practitioners here who've come to our attention through sheer talent and dedication alone—well, maybe just one: Glenn Murcutt. The rest have combined undeniable talent with hard work, and, yes, self-promotion. That self-promotion may only take the form of entering—and winning—design competitions, but that effort wins our attention.

Good marketing is an imperative these days. Architects can no longer get by with just a listing in the Yellow Pages, as one well-known practitioner once told me he did. Come to think of it, his practice has largely evaporated.

Very few architects have clients lined up at their doors anymore. But it's quite possible people are al-

ready Googling you as part of the screening process. When was the last time you updated your website? Is your most current work there—including your on-the-boards projects? Do the photos enlarge, or are they tiny thumbnails no one can see? Do you make your visitors chase phantom images before they can click on anything (i.e., have you abandoned Flash yet)? Is everything organized in a coherent, accessible way?

Your website is your gateway to new clients. As such, it should convey important clues about the personality of your firm, your aesthetic, and your values—not politics and religion, but mission and philosophy. And if your client base is largely first-timers, I'd also suggest a primer on process—the phases of design and how (if not how much) you are usually compensated.

I also like bios and photos of the principals and staff. Architecture is such an intimate business, you want to personalize the team behind the work. Especially with residential, I think it's appropriate to put forth a warm, casual image. So, go ahead and include the office cat or dog. This is your best way to self-publish, with full curatorial



Mark Robert Halper

control over the image you present to the public.

Another way to self-publish regularly is to start a blog with an online tool like WordPress. You can link to it from your website or incorporate the latest blog entries on your site using an RSS feed. Social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook are easy ways to publish as well. I like Facebook for its nimble handling of photography—a prompt, visual way to promote your work. With Twitter, you can establish a tone and buzz about your firm, and often get the attention of other media. Some firms have left these tasks to their young associates or interns. That's fine,

but you need to make sure they're representing the firm appropriately.

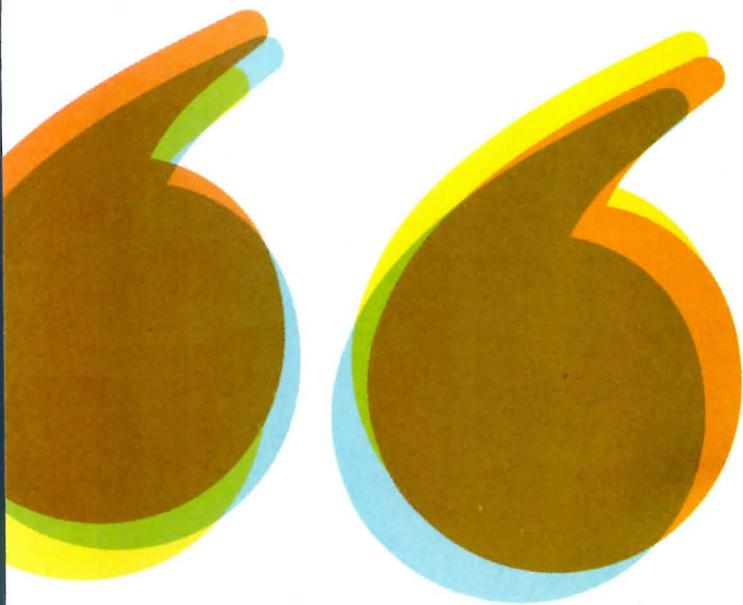
LinkedIn is a good way to get our attention as well. We have our own group for *residential architect* and, at the request of our members (more than 900 of them), we've limited it to actual practitioners so frank conversations can take place.

We all have to think beyond our comfort zones these days. We have skills and add value to whatever we take on—as long as we give it our best effort. But the first step is letting everyone know you are out there and what you can do. ra

Comments? E-mail: cconroy@hanleywood.com.

home front

news from the leading edge of residential design.



word for word

We asked our ra50 architects to name the biggest pluses and minuses of their chosen profession. Here is a sampling of their responses.

Additional answers to these and other questions can be found in our expanded ra50 coverage online at www.residentialarchitect.com.

what is the most gratifying aspect of residential practice?

“The collective gratification experienced when architects, clients, builders, and allied craftspeople are passionate about realizing a project.”—*David Jameson, FAIA, David Jameson Architect*

“The blank-canvas aspect each project offers. The inherent scale of residential work allows us to explore fundamental architectural issues and reshape the paradigm of housing.”—*Brian Johnsen, AIA, Johnsen Schmalig Architects*

“My favorite clients become my friends.”—*Craig Steely, Craig Steely Architecture*

“Having the opportunity to help individual people improve the quality of their domestic lives. There is an intimacy and directness with residential projects that is absent when the client is a corporation or business.”—*John Brown, RAIC, housebrand*

“Repairing damaged buildings and sites and collaborating with smart, passionate clients who want to rework their relationship to the built and natural environments.”—*Alan Organschi, AIA, Gray Organschi Architecture*

“Walking through a just-completed home with a satisfied client, discovering and enjoying the intricacies that were once just small drawings on a piece of paper.”—*Jim Strickland, Historical Concepts*

“The clients and the landscapes, whether urban, suburban, or rural. There are so many variations and idiosyncrasies.”—*Tom Kundig, FAIA, Olson Kundig*

“Residential scale is almost instant gratification in architectural time, the cast of clients keeps changing, and you’re never far from that material cultural tradition.”—*Brian MacKay-Lyons, FRAIA, Hon. FAIA, MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects*

what is the most frustrating aspect of residential practice?

“Being a marriage counselor on the side.”—*Craig A. Curtis, FAIA, LEED AP, The Miller Hull Partnership*

“The fact that there are so many products on the market to choose from. It’s difficult to get clients to focus and restrain themselves.”—*Zoltan E. Pali, FAIA, Studio Pali Fekete architects*

“Because each project becomes something personal, something that you put your heart into day after day, it is those few drawings that end up in a file, never built, that are the most disappointing.”—*Terry Pylant, Historical Concepts*

“In the entitlement process, trying to convince people that design innovation is an essential part of a city’s growth. It’s also a struggle to be considered in the same league as firms owned by men.”—*Anne Fougeron, FAIA, Fougeron Architecture*

“If you don’t hit it off well with a client in a residential project, it’s really painful because it is such an intimate relationship that it becomes much more emotional.”—*Taal Safdie, Safdie Rabines Architects*

“Design review boards sometimes restrict design freedom to the point of watering down ideas and forcing designs into the middle.”—*Leo Marmol, FAIA, and Ron Radziner, FAIA, Marmol Radziner*

“Aside from getting permits and entitlements, one of the most frustrating aspects is often trying to incorporate new design ideas, materials and technologies that then get priced out of the project.”—*Mary Griffin, FAIA, Eric Haesloop, FAIA, LEED AP, and Stefan Hastrup, AIA, LEED AP, Turnbull Griffin Haesloop*

“There is never enough time.”—*Paul Masi, AIA, Bates Masi + Architects*

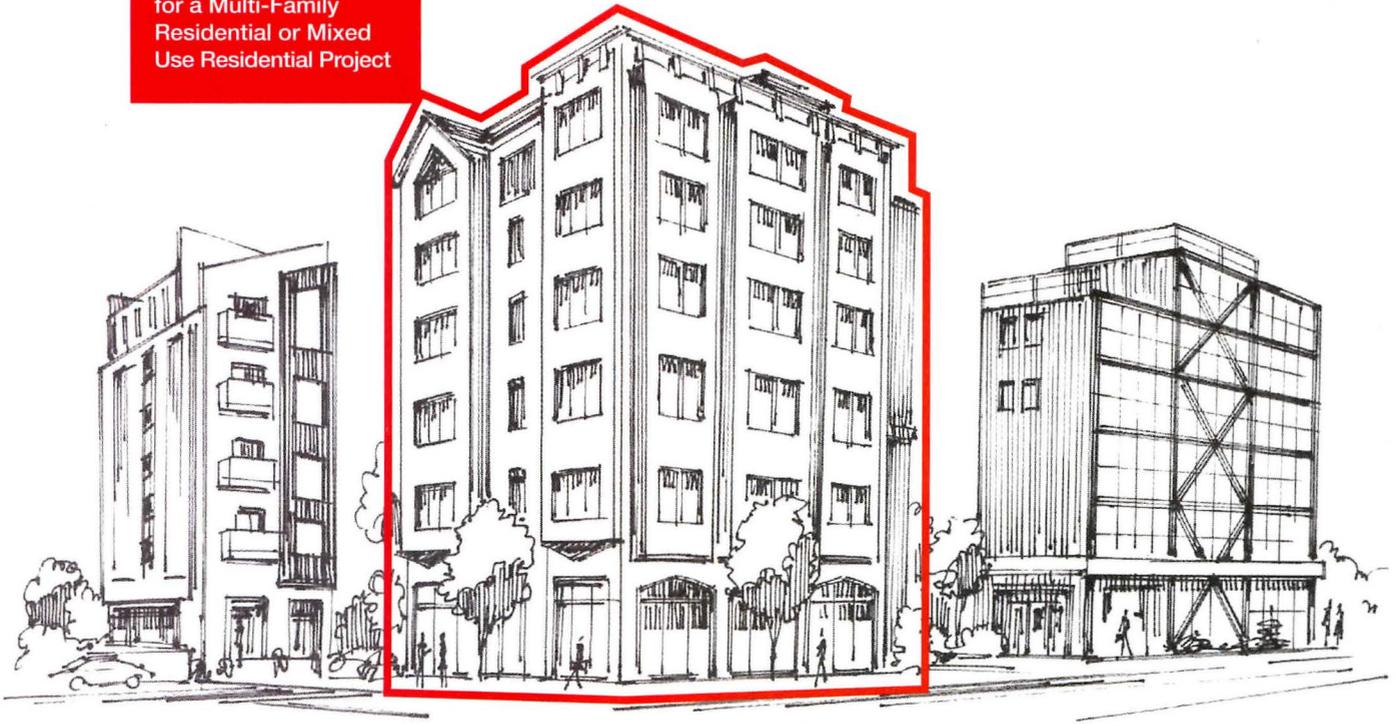
“Approvals become increasingly difficult and time-consuming and codes become increasingly restrictive.”—*James Estes, FAIA, Estes/Twombly Architects*

“I want every project to take less time and cost less than they do. We are certainly helping to reduce those items, but there is still a ways to go to achieve the mission.”—*Michelle Kaufmann, AIA, LEED AP, Michelle Kaufmann Studio*



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the sliding scale

a shrunken economy leaves architects struggling to juggle more small jobs.

by cheryl weber, leed ap

When Mark McInturff's clients began canceling large projects in 2008, the Bethesda, Md., architect remembers thinking he could hang on for a year. As the economic drought enters year three, McInturff has held together his band of employees by taking on a flurry of small jobs—a tiny gallery addition to an artist's house here, a front porch there. Those small projects have been life-savers by keeping revenue flowing between new-home commissions, whose budgets have deflated by about half. "After the big jobs stopped coming in, I didn't realize how many small things would continue to come in from former clients," says McInturff, FAIA. "That's been gratifying."

Gratifying, yes, but the languishing economy means architects are struggling to cope with the increased volume of smaller jobs they must take on to stay in business. They're looking harder at smaller projects instead of releasing them to younger colleagues who've gone out on their own, and holding tightly to whatever comes in the door. The remix

brings new challenges. Smaller projects mean more client interviews, thinner profit margins, and more jobs stopping and starting. A more existential dilemma is that architects, used to pinning their reputation on stellar service, aren't sure how to finesse a lower fee.

"Our motto is: 'We're here all day, every day,'" McInturff says. "I have to

make sure we're generating enough work for six people, but managing it is more of a problem." He's currently overseeing 25 projects in various stages—40 percent more than in pre-recession times. "In remodeling, as the job drops in size it's almost as much work as a larger one, but the fee is lower. I'm personally scrambling more, and get-

ting to design a little less."

run for the money

That scenario is playing out across the country, especially at boutique firms, where the mantra is maximum service for a minimum number of clients. Between managing the daily practice and courting new clients,

David E. Neumann, AIA,
continued on page 15



James Kaczman

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practice

founding partner at Neumann Lewis Buchanan Architects, typically could maintain a comfortable work and cash flow with three or four major clients at a time. Now, with three principals and seven architects juggling at least twice as many short-term jobs, it's harder to stay in the loop. "People expect their project to be the responsibility of one of the architects whose name is on the door," says Neumann, who oversees

smaller projects mean more client interviews, thinner profit margins, and more jobs stopping and starting.

offices in Washington, D.C., and Middleburg, Va. In better times, "you could guide every project through design and stay familiar with the details, so that when the clients spoke with you, they knew that you knew what was going on."

Large projects, he also notes, hit a sweet spot after design development, when they spend several months on one production desk. But a glut of small jobs in various phases means constantly rebalancing the office workload. Neumann is putting in longer hours, while also grappling with how to accommodate client requests for abbreviated services. "How can we convey the services they find most essential, while not detailing to a fare-thee-well?" he asks. "Our interest has always been to keep

refining what we do. But some of our staff people have been here 13 years on average. I'll do anything not to let them go."

The relative scarcity of substantive commissions leaves established firms wondering where to draw the line on skeleton services. With pinched budgets—theirs and their clients'—how far will they go to maintain cash flow? "You're weighing: Is the product going to be

representative of the firm? It's a question every person in business has to ask," says Chicago-area architect Julie Hacker, AIA, partner at Stuart Cohen & Julie Hacker Architects. For example, she says she wouldn't design an addition without detailing the interior. But in desperate times, "You also have to ask, 'Why are we doing this project?'" Maybe, she allows, it's to avoid the devastating loss of people they've trained.

Another downside to the small-jobs phenomenon is that firms are less able to build cash reserves. In normal times, big projects offset the thin profit margins of smaller ones. To keep revenues flowing on kitchen and bath remodels, Hacker has added a contract clause requesting payment within seven days of billing. "We

have figured out how to manage month to month and keep staff and pay insurance," says Hacker, whose employees work four days a week. "We're not taking home any money, but we're doing what we do. People adapt in different ways."

Some firms embrace the idiosyncrasies of small jobs. San Diego architect Kevin deFreitas, AIA, who works by himself, says his commissions are one-quarter the usual size and three-quarters the effort, but it's the most interesting work collection he's ever had. One is a public restroom on Ocean Beach that includes a water harvesting system and LED lights—a \$500,000 budget with a \$25,000 architect's fee. "It's probably the most used bathroom I've ever done," he jokes. Other eclectic projects include an art building addition for a local college and two tiny rammed earth houses on an Indian reservation.

Yet a recent remodeling fiasco reflects the pressure architects feel to land work these days. When a neighborhood friend asked deFreitas to draw and permit a 200-square-foot master bedroom addition and kitchen redo at a bargain-basement price, deFreitas agreed. The project soured, though, when the client kept changing the design, a sub framed it incorrectly, and the inspector wouldn't sign off. That meant re-drawing the roof line and re-permitting the plans for

continued on page 17

2010 winners



Announcing the 2010 myMarvin Architect Challenge winners.

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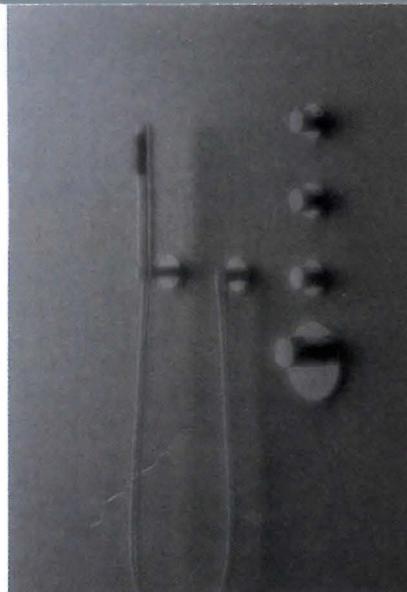
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free. The client also chose a contractor who bid the job at \$65,000. When costs swelled to \$90,000—the price deFreitas had estimated—the clients were miffed. “They didn’t get much care from me and got screwed by the contractor,” he says. “It goes against my marketing ethic, which is to service the heck out of all my projects. There are bread-and-butter projects you take to keep going, but when the client is unhappy, it goes against what you’re trying to create as a brand.”

DeFreitas also laments the loss of time to reflect that larger fees offer. “I feel off-balance, because these tiny projects take my mind in different directions, and they all need love and attention,” he says. “Because budgets are modest, there’s room for only one big move, and the rest is the technical aspects of pulling it together. Although I’m extraordinarily busy, I wish I had bigger projects to sink my teeth into.”

Mark Larsen, AIA, knows the feeling. Rehkamp Larsen Architects in Minneapolis has always been comfortable sliding up and down the project scale, he says. But now the architects are working faster at the lower end, and the fee goes quickly.

“There’s a speed to the work that I’m getting used to,” he says. “I sometimes worry about it a bit; we can be efficient but maybe there’s less invention. The contemplative process is not happening as much now.”

But one benefit of small

small mindset

Large projects loom over the office in a fairly predictable way, at least for those accustomed to executing them. But when jobs downsize, so must their delivery, says Michael Strogoff, FAIA, president of Strogoff Consulting in Mill Valley, Calif. The approach to recording meetings, interacting with clients and consultants, presenting design ideas, and documenting drawings is very different on lower-fee work. “Firms used to doing larger projects often have a very difficult time transitioning into managing small projects,” he says. “You have to be much more nimble.”

To be profitable, modest projects require small, tight teams and fewer specialists, Strogoff says. He suggests assigning people with a wide variety of design and technical skills to work on large portions of the project. “You’re not having people specializing in one aspect, such as window detailing,” he says. “That’s a key way to save time.”

Another time-saver is to streamline paperwork, while weighing the risks of a reduced paper trail. In most cases, meeting minutes can be e-mailed, fewer design alternatives are explored, and client presentations are less formal. Drawings can be lifted right off the board for presentations, rather than spending scarce resources on elaborate renderings.

In some cases, construction documents may contain less information, too. “Architects who do larger projects understand the liability issues of not providing comprehensive construction documents,” Strogoff says. “But on small jobs, contractors differ on what they’re looking for. If it’s a negotiated bid and the environment isn’t litigious, some of the things architects do to protect themselves might not apply.”

What should not change: design quality and service. “When clients want less service, architects have to convince them that they don’t want contractors making design decisions,” Strogoff says. “Contractors are in the same situation these days, and are trying to do things for less money to be competitive.” All the more reason for an architect to stay involved. —c.w.

jobs, Larsen says, is that they’re a nice size for the office’s younger architects, whose growing experience results in a more nimble team. He also welcomes the opportunity to shake up the

firm’s portfolio, including pro bono work for a restaurant startup currently on the boards. “I’m not one to say, ‘Oh, this isn’t the way it used to be,’” Larsen says.

continued on page 19

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practice

“We’re excited about trying to figure out what the opportunities are, to do design where it’s needed.”

into the melting pot

In a clammy economy, firms are going a little farther down the road to stay busy. They’re inventing ways to stretch their skills and the project scope. To wring more fees from modest jobs, San Antonio-based Poteet Architects often negotiates design/build contracts. Several employees have construction and welding skills, experience that came in handy recently when the firm retrofitted a 320-square-foot shipping container for use as a guest house. (For more on this project, see Shelter Lab, page 81, in *residential architect*’s September/October 2010 issue.)

“We usually contribute something to whatever we design, such as a custom door handle that’s hard to source, so it’s not that

Poteet scrutinizes small jobs to determine their value beyond the bottom line. Is it a good starter project, free of pitfalls so younger staff can get experience? Is it an intriguing puzzle? On a recent job, for example, Poteet had fun experimenting with the details of a new connector between a historic house and an adjacent modern house. One way to protect profits on low-fee jobs, he says, is to choose sophisticated clients who need less management, if possible, which often means avoiding those hiring an architect for the first time.

While some firms view withered budgets as a step back, Poteet reframes it as a founding value. “We want to base our marketing on providing really good service,” he says. “In some cases that means well-designed but not flashy, when the house itself is a star and the family just needs additional kitchen or closet space. I trace that back to

quickly; there’s satisfaction in the closure you get when it’s finished.”

Of course, small is relative. To E.J. Meade, AIA, principal at Arch11 in Boulder, Colo., a small house is 2,500 square feet, downsized from the 7,500-square-foot residence he’d been designing. Meade says that although his clients aren’t spending less per square foot, they want less square footage, carefully put together.

“Designing a large house is like trying to carry a big water balloon,” Meade says. “There’s always some part of it falling out of your arms. Smaller plans are more architecturally precise, concept-driven, and clear throughout—that’s the upside.”

“Everyone has a different definition of a small project,” agrees Dallas architect Dan Shipley, FAIA, citing as evidence the architects of 150,000-square-foot schools who are now standing in line for 15,000-square-foot schools (a Shipley Architects sub-specialty). But he knows small, whether it’s a closet remodel for the daughter of a former client, or the staircase remodel currently on the boards.

When low-fee fatigue sets in, Shipley reminds himself that the closet design, done 15 years ago, led to several additions to the clients’ primary home, plus award-winning work on their country house, some of which was published.

“There were other projects
continued on page 20

in a clammy economy, firms are inventing ways to stretch their skills and the project scope.

unusual to expand that,” says principal Jim Poteet, AIA. “We’re very selective about design/build projects. Usually they’re done with repeat clients who know how we work. We’re stretching ourselves, but doing it in areas where we feel very comfortable.”

Design/build or not,

my internship at Kieran-Timberlake, where it was always about a smart solution to a problem, not necessarily the showiest solution. We don’t mind being invisible sometimes, as long as the client is supremely satisfied.” And, he adds, “One of the nice things about small projects is that they move

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practice

like that, too," he says. "You sign on for modest things because you sense they're a good client who will be around for awhile."

The firm's construction arm also sustains it these days. Shipley just finished building a \$100,000 front façade on a house for which he'd previously designed other additions. Combining the design and management fees can save clients money, too. "An old saying goes that when things are slow, you spend time sharpening your tools. An architect's primary tool is his brain, and small projects give us an opportunity to be lean and efficient," he says. "When the next house commission comes along, we think we'll

be better than ever."

For many veteran architects, today's commissions carry a distinct sense of déjà vu. Joseph Tanney, AIA, built his New York City-based practice on projects such as cabinetry, kitchens, and baths, and says they're still in his blood. So while his firm, Resolution: 4 Architecture (Res: 4), continues to design some big-ticket items such as modular homes and commercial space, it hit the ground running when the market tanked. Tanney says the office has returned to an earlier way of working, in which one person manages all phases of multiple smaller projects.

"Each person here is

pretty agile and multidimensional," he says of the seven-member firm, including himself and partner Robert Luntz, AIA. They've parlayed that collective creativity into web design, signage, and curating art for the 100,000-square-foot San Francisco office building Res: 4 is now finishing. "We reframed some of their art pieces and decided where they should go, and created a website for the company's in-house use," Tanney says. "We suggested it would be a good idea to create an interactive website with floor plans you can mouse-over, so employees could become familiar with their new space prior to moving."

The broader their skills, the more quickly firms are able to adapt in a crisis, Tanney points out. "I recommend that all young architects develop a wide range of skills, so that when times get tough, they can go from working drawings and putting together a building permit set, to 3D modeling, photography, branding, website development, and organizing samples," he says. "It allows people to retain value."

That's not to say Res: 4 isn't hoping for a return to its familiar rhythms. "Things are slow, and we've restructured to operate accordingly," Tanney says. "We are still eternally optimistic." **ra**

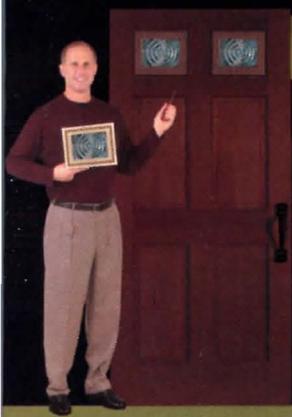
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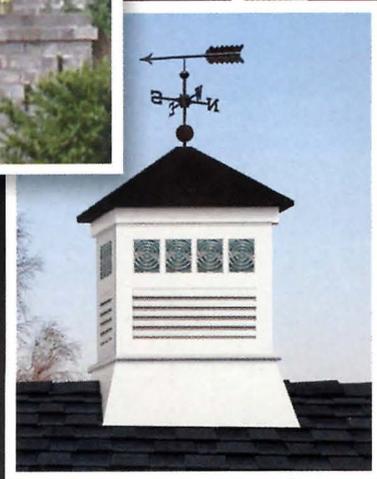
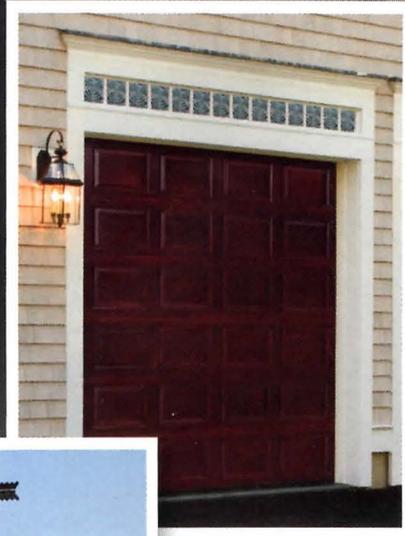
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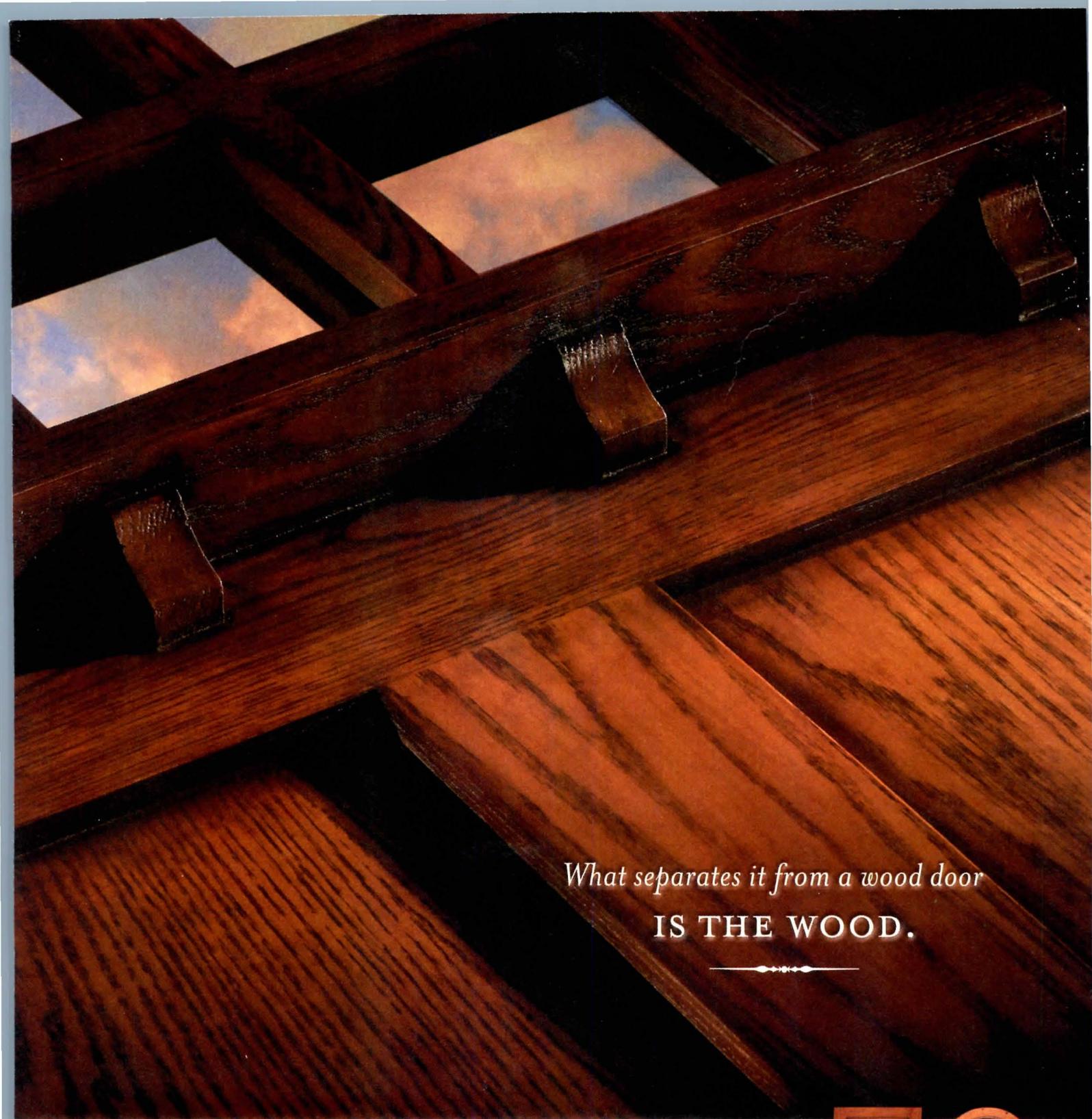
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the short list

playing favorites is a dangerous game. It's one we've more or less avoided for more than a dozen years. And yet, "The List" is a tried-and-true formula for magazines, one that always stirs interest inside and outside of the enterprise. So why did we finally succumb to doing our own "best of" compendium?

Maybe because, after all this time, we feel sufficiently oriented on the residential architecture discipline to do so. But mostly, we think it's a service to the profession as a whole. Our list contains some stars, but overall it's a broad collection of people who simply—day in and day out—do very good, interesting work.

Ultimately, we didn't do all the parsing ourselves. We relied heavily on our design award winners, who are chosen by a jury of peers—other architects with an affinity for housing.

So, this isn't merely our list—it's yours, too. And it also belongs to all the potential clients who've called us over the years asking who we'd recommend to do their houses for them. We get plenty of these calls from colleagues as well—on behalf of themselves or their friends. We put this short list together as an end-of-year tribute to this admirable profession. And, through our redesigned website, we'll use this roster to augment our already extensive list of firms we've profiled in the past

or whose projects we've "visited" in case study form.

It pains us to leave some excellent architects off this list. But rest assured, if you've appeared in the magazine, we love you, too. And if we haven't met you yet, we look forward to a beautiful courtship in the near future.

For more about the ra50 architects, visit www.residentialarchitect.com and read expanded versions of each profile, as well as behind-the-scenes Q&As with firm leaders about the residential design profession. We asked them a number of entertaining questions, including who'd they'd hire to design their own house—the short list continues!

by nigel f. maynard, cheryl weber, leed ap,
meghan drueding, and bruce d. snider



Vader House

andrew maynard architects

melbourne, australia

www.maynardarchitects.com

We assume Andrew Maynard (no relation to this writer) sleeps, but you wouldn't know it from the body of work the young architect and his staff have produced in the past eight years.

Andrew Maynard Architects, which designs some of the coolest houses in the land down under, approaches design "with great difficulty, but much enthusiasm," Maynard says. "I don't think non-designers realize how hard it is to design a building. We grind and perse-



Andrew Maynard (center) and staff

vere to create the work. The real art is trying to make it all look easy."

Although he's a world away, Maynard says he's inspired by U.S. architectural icons such as Rick Joy, Louis

Kahn, and the case study houses.

The small firm's work is diverse and environmentally conscious—always sensitive to climate, passive solar, and through breezes. Maynard describes the work as eclectic, but his buildings are always architecturally inspiring, infused with whimsy and humor.—*n.f.m.*

years in practice: 8 / **projects completed in 2010:** 4 / **firm size:** 6 / **areas of interest:** houses, concepts, polemics, sustainable design, prefab, affordable / **photography:** Peter Bennetts (project); Courtesy Andrew Maynard Architects (portrait)

bates masi + architects

sag harbor, n.y.

www.batesmasi.com



Paul Masi and Harry Bates

To Harry Bates and Paul Masi, AIA, modernism is not primarily an aesthetic principle. It's a commitment to redefining what materials can do, and to providing the minimum of what's needed to create the overall home experience. "We're continually researching each project, trying to learn something new," says Masi, whose client base circulates the

Hamptons and surrounding islands.

Whether it's designing a hemp rope ceiling—how much does it stretch, will it shrink if it gets wet—or inventing a new way to hang siding, the firm often ventures into uncharted waters. And clients seem happy to go along for the ride. But the partners also return to territory they know well. With a 45-year history—Bates has been practicing since the 1960s; Masi joined him in the late-1990s—the

years in practice: 45 / **projects completed in 2010:** 3 to 5 / **firm size:** 10 / **area of interest:** single-family residential / **photography:** Courtesy Bates Masi + Architects (project); Bill Cramer (portrait)



Pryor Residence

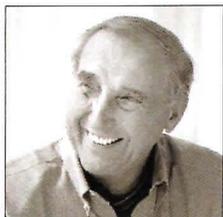
firm occasionally is asked to sensitively update or add onto the spare, classic homes Bates designed decades earlier.

This year Bates Masi received two American Institute of Architects New York State Design Awards, adding to the 20-some accolades collected in the past seven years. "An iconic structure we still love 50 years from now," Masi says. "That's what we're hoping to achieve."—*c.w.*

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Peter Q. Bohlin

There's scarcely a project type Bohlin Cywinski Jackson (BCJ) hasn't done. The firm, with five offices nationwide, has a history of award-winning, high-profile buildings—Apple stores, Pixar Studios, the Barn at Fallingwater—and many others. Yet the architects remain enthusiastic about houses. People-scaled

design taps into their core strength, which is to ferret out and reflect the intimate particularities of each place. Whether it's a cottage in the woods, a suburban ranch redo, or a bucolic coastal farm compound, BCJ's dwellings commune with the land, careful about their intrusion on nature.

Founding principal Peter Q. Bohlin, FAIA, recipient of the American Institute of Architects' 2010 AIA Gold Medal, defines BCJ's work as soft modernism. "We're very much interested in nuance," he says. "The nature of the place, the people, how we make things, and how all those things come together." To him, the relationship between a good building and its site is "touching," a reminder that emotion is as important as pragmatics and camera-ready composition.—*c.w.*

years in practice: 45 / **projects completed in 2010:** 17 / **firm size:** 175 / **areas of interest:** academic, corporate, cultural, public, residential, institutional, renovation and adaptive reuse, restaurants, retail, sustainable design / **photography:** Nic Lehoux



Creekside Residence



Cherokee Lofts

brooks + scarpa architects

santa monica, calif.

www.brooksscarpa.com

Brooks + Scarpa (formerly Pugh + Scarpa) first came to national prominence in 2002 with an affordable housing project called Colorado Court. The solar panel-powered Santa Monica, Calif., building represents an open-mindedness and a willingness to experiment, two qualities that characterize every Brooks + Scarpa project—from the house principals Angela Brooks, AIA, LEED AP, and Lawrence Scarpa, FAIA, designed for themselves in Venice, Calif., to the Contemporary Art Museum the firm currently is working on in Raleigh, N.C.

This ability to view a design problem in new ways has earned the firm plenty of distinctions within the profession.

In 2010 alone, it won both the American Institute of Architects' (AIA) Architecture Firm Award and Firm of the Year designation from the AIA California Council.

Although firm co-founder Gwynne Pugh, FAIA, LEED AP, left last year to start his own company, Brooks and Scarpa are continuing the work of finding sustainable, beautiful solutions to complex challenges. The firm remains committed to affordable housing, as well as mixed-use, custom residential, and institutional buildings.—*m.d.*

years in practice: 20 / **projects completed in 2010:** 2 / **firm size:** 15 / **areas of interest:** multifamily, affordable, sustainable design, custom homes, institutional, commercial, mixed-use / **photography:** John Edward Linden (project); Lawrence Scarpa (Brooks portrait); Luke Wooden (Scarpa portrait)



Angela Brooks



Lawrence Scarpa

craig steely architecture

san francisco

www.craigsteely.com

It's hard to stand out from the collection of exceptional firms practicing in California, but Craig Steely has made a name for himself with finely detailed custom homes and apartment renovations recognized for their architectural rigor. "We're focused on design," Steely says. "And we like working with people who think less is more."

Indeed, the firm is known for crisp, clean lines and for work with "formal elegance in the classic modernist tradition." But it's not all about design. Along the way, Steely has built a reputation as a problem solver—handy for his efforts in both San Francisco and Hawaii. "We've somehow developed a reputation as the one to call if you have a difficult lot but you want something special that fits," he says.—*n.f.m.*

years in practice: 12 / **projects completed in 2010:** 2 / **firm size:** 3 / **areas of interest:** modern architecture, custom residential, urban, interiors, commercial, cultural, vacation homes / **photography:** JD Peterson (project); Courtesy Craig Steely Architecture (portrait)



Lavaflow 2

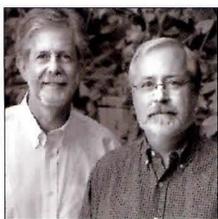


Craig Steely

cutler anderson architects

bainbridge island, wash.

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James L. Cutler and Bruce E. Anderson

If you were to examine Cutler Anderson Architects' Strickland Residence, it's hard to tell if the house dates from 2006 (no) or 1986 (yes). That's because this Pacific Northwest firm has mastered the art of timeless design.

Starting life as James Cutler Architects in 1977, the firm underwent a name change in 2001 when James L. Cutler, FAIA, made Bruce E. Anderson, AIA, a partner. "I was a summer intern who never left," Anderson jokes. Says Cutler, "He was the best student I had at the University of Washington, so I hired him to do some brochures for us." Today, Cutler Anderson is more or less the same firm from those early years and has a similar philosophy. We are "deeply interested in how beautiful the world is and how we can reveal it," Cutler declares.—*n.f.m.*



Bodega Residence

years in practice: 33 / **projects completed in 2010:** 1 / **firm size:** 15 / **areas of interest:** custom residential, mixed-use, commercial, sustainable design / **photography:** Art Grice (project); Courtesy Cutler Anderson Architects (portrait)



Kevin Wilcock, David Baker, and Peter MacKenzie

david baker + partners architects

san francisco

www.dbarchitect.com

Many firms design sustainable projects, but David Baker + Partners' environmental commitment goes deeper. Partners David Baker, FAIA, LEED AP, Kevin Wilcock, AIA, LEED AP, and Peter MacKenzie, AIA, offer staff incentives to walk, bike, or take public transportation to work. Along with a comprehensive office recycling program, the company provides a compost pile for food waste.

As for the firm's work (multifamily, affordable, and mixed-use, among other project types), it emphasizes density, walkability, and daily quality of life. Writes the *San Francisco Chronicle's* John King: "No local firm has a better track record at mending the urban fabric."—*m.d.*

years in practice: 29 / **projects completed in 2010:** 5 / **firm size:** 14 / **areas of interest:** mixed-use, affordable, multifamily, sustainable design, custom homes / **photography:** Brandon Loper / **rendering:** David Baker + Partners Architects



Drs. Julian and Raye Richardson Apartments

david jameson architect

alexandria, va.

www.davidjamesonarchitect.com

In the architecturally staid environs of Washington, D.C., and its inner suburbs, David Jameson, FAIA, has produced a long string of buildings animated by the power of ideas. The row house addition as high-rise tower in miniature, the teahouse as hanging glass lantern, the remodels and infill projects that gently undermine our schema of the suburban residence—and those that boldly subvert it

altogether; each pursues its founding premise with clarity and resolve.

Reflecting this singleness



Woodside Residence

of focus, Jameson's projects tend to acquire names. Jigsaw House replaces the wall-and-window convention with interlocking solids and glazed voids. Black White Residence tops white masonry boxes with black-framed glass boxes in a composition of almost schematic purity.

"The grounding of the firm is this notion of distillation," Jameson says.

"We're trying to do the optimum rather than the maximum." Always, however, in service of the living experience rather than simply for sculptural effect. Heading a relatively young firm, Jameson is deservedly well-established among the architects who are quietly making the Washington, D.C., area a showplace of residential modernism.—*b.d.s.*

years in practice: 11 / **projects completed in 2010:** 5 / **firm size:** 5 / **areas of interest:** single-family, commercial / **photography:** Courtesy David Jameson Architect / **rendering:** Courtesy David Jameson Architect



David Jameson

dennis wedlick architect

new york

www.denniswedlick.com



Dennis Wedlick

Serving their clients is the top priority for the team at Dennis Wedlick Architect (DWA). Principals Dennis Wedlick, AIA, Alan Barlis, AIA, LEED AP, and their staff have amassed a portfolio of beautifully detailed projects that put a witty, romantic spin on traditional house forms and styles. "We don't compromise on services," says Wedlick, who spent 12 years working for Philip Johnson before starting DWA. "We're old, old, old-fashioned that way."

The firm also promotes good house design in a more general sense. Along with authoring four design books, Wedlick co-founded the Congress of Residential Architecture (CORA), a group whose mission is to improve the quality of residential architecture by encouraging better communication among homeowners, builders, and designers. Additionally, DWA recently devoted a chunk of time and resources to creating a for-sale Passive House in Hudson, N.Y., which it hopes will inspire others to learn more about this highly energy-efficient way of building.

To further that goal, the firm produced and distributed an informational packet on the Passive House concept, known as the *Greater Good Home Newspaper* (shown at right).—*m.d.*

years in practice: 19 / **projects completed in 2010:** 10 / **firm size:** 18 / **areas of interest:** custom homes, sustainable design, master planning, institutional, commercial / **photography:** Reto Guntli (project); Andrew Lindy (portrait)



Spencertown Cottage



ehrllich architects

culver city, calif.

www.ehrllicharchitects.com

Since it began seeking out commercial and institutional projects 15 years ago, Ehrlich Architects has maintained a remarkably high design level across all its work. Founder Steven Ehrlich, FAIA, got his start doing houses, and continues to participate in the design of his firm's custom homes and multifamily projects. He does so in collaboration with managing principal

Takashi Yanai, AIA, head of the company's residential studio. Two more managing principals, Charles "Duke" Oakley, FAIA, and



Steven Ehrlich



McElroy Residence

Thomas E. Zahlten, AIA, oversee the firm's campus, government, mixed-use, and commercial projects. Ehrlich Architects also has ventured into design/build on some of its larger jobs, giving it yet another area of expertise.

Its standout residential portfolio contains many private houses, such as Ehrlich's own 700 Palms Residence. Multifamily work includes the Nankang Towers in Taipei, Taiwan. "Bigger projects are engaged with the fabric of

a neighborhood, community, or city," Ehrlich says. "And that's exciting."

The firm has won many honors—including the American Institute of Architects California Council's 2003 Firm Award—and consistently pursues innovative, sustainable design strategies. Notes Ehrlich: "The culture of our practice is really strong. We have so many solid, terrific people who really have a voice in the collaborative process."—*m.d.*

years in practice: 32 / **projects completed in 2010:** 4 / **firm size:** 32 / **areas of interest:** custom homes, design/build, mixed-use, multifamily, institutional, commercial, sustainable design / **photography:** Courtesy Ehrlich Architects / **rendering:** Ehrlich Architects



Tyler Residence



From left: Dan Maginn, Josh Shelton, Douglas Stockman, and David Dowell

el dorado

kansas city, mo.

www.eldo.us

David Dowell, AIA, graciously cites el dorado's home base of Kansas City, Mo., as a major factor in the firm's success. "It's been a very stable, supportive market," he says, noting that the area's variable weather and relatively modest budgets have taught him and co-principals Dan Maginn, AIA, Josh Shelton, AIA, and Douglas Stockman much about cost-effective, climate-appropriate design.

Those skills have helped them gain commissions for custom homes, adaptive reuse buildings, and assorted other project types. The firm also has delved into affordable housing, which dovetails nicely with its background in market-rate multifamily. Known for fabricating architectural details in its own metal shop, el dorado has started to take on design/build projects. The Architectural League of New York chose the firm as one of its "Emerging Voices" for 2008—the same year the American Institute of Architects' Kansas City chapter named it Firm of the Year. But the principals aren't letting the attention go to their heads; they still treat each job with intensity and good humor. "Regardless of the scale or type of housing, I think we approach the project with the same level of enthusiasm," Stockman says.—*m.d.*

years in practice: 15 / **projects completed in 2010:** 15 / **firm size:** 14 / **areas of interest:** multifamily, single-family, affordable, sustainable design, custom, remodeling, adaptive reuse, commercial, institutional, design/build / **photography:** Mike Sinclair

estes/twombly architects

newport, r.i.

www.estestwombly.com



James Estes and Peter Twombly

James Estes, FAIA, and Peter Twombly, AIA, describe their firm's work as "quiet modernism, rooted in New England tradition." The partners have built their practice

on finding common ground between a spare rural vernacular and the academic language of modernism. Mining their region's archetypal materials and imagery, they assemble buildings that combine modesty with both warmth and a sharp, mineral clarity.

The firm's signature houses, often composed of separate, connected structures, are elegantly efficient in the use of space and materials. Its larger projects, too, reflect a restraint that is rare in the client demographic the firm serves, but also essential to the quality of experience its work delivers.—*b.d.s.*

years in practice: 21 / **projects completed in 2010:** 9 / **firm size:** 5 / **areas of interest:** single-family, commercial / **photography:** Warren Jagger Photography (project)



Stonington House

fernau & hartman architects

berkeley, calif.

www.fernauhartman.com

"You can make architecture out of the complications of whatever job you're given," says Richard Fernau, FAIA. "You don't have to generate them. Life is complicated enough." No doubt it's that philosophy that makes buildings by Fernau and partner Laura Hartman, AIA, seem joyful and effortless.

Their improvisational vision adapts to the world as they find it. Rugged, basic materials reflect vernacular building traditions, and soft color palettes enhance nature's hues. "It's fascinating when you see the richness and complexity in a situation, and almost the impossibility of doing anything," Fernau says, "and then find there is a way."—*c.w.*

years in practice: 30 / **projects completed in 2010:** 3 / **firm size:** 7 / **areas of interest:** residential, commercial, institutional, adaptation, planning, sustainable design / **photography:** Peter Vanderwarker (project)



Richard Fernau



Laura Hartman



Nonquitt Garage House

fougeron architecture

san francisco

www.fougeron.com

High-end, low-end, private, public, and everything in between, Anne Fougeron's varied buildings are interesting to look at, modern, and sensual. Her own memorable kitchen, in an 1895 Victorian, has a cerulean blue ceiling, clear and sandblasted glass walls, and a soft green nighttime glow emanating from gelled fluorescent strips in the adjacent bath. It's not just look-good architecture, it also satisfies her curiosity about how layers of translucent materials interact with the changing light.

"We're interested in creating enlivened spaces that are about light, the expression of transparencies, and how well-crafted materials come together to reinforce those ideas," says Fougeron, AIA. She's currently working on a cliffside house in Big Sur, and her first monograph, to be published in 2011.—*c.w.*

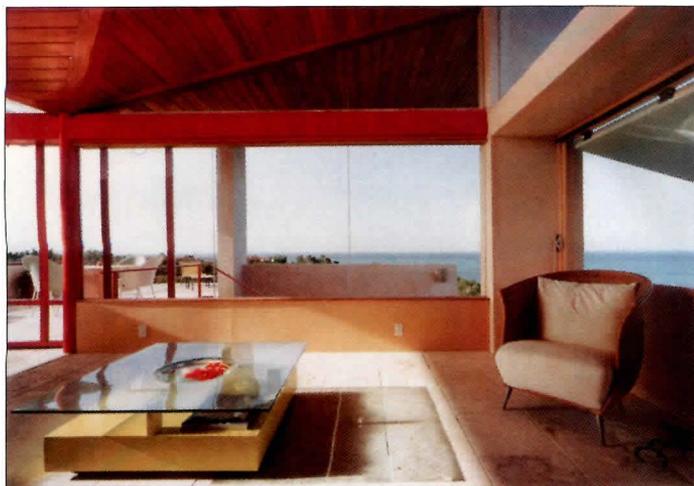
years in practice: 25 / **projects completed in 2010:** 6 / **firm size:** 6 / **areas of interest:** residential, commercial, civic, health care, mixed-use / **photography:** Richard Barnes (project)



Tehama Grasshopper



Anne Fougeron



Taylor Residence

frank harmon architect

raleigh, n.c.

www.frankharmon.com



Frank Harmon

When Frank Harmon, FAIA, talks about his completed projects, the first two things he mentions are the site and the client—not the architecture. “Everything we do is appropriate to the place where it’s built and the needs of our client,” he says. This open-minded, sensitive approach has helped establish his Raleigh,

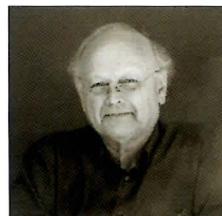
N.C.–based company, Frank Harmon Architect, as one of the most respected firms in the southeastern U.S. It’s won dozens of design awards, and is currently working on the American Institute of Architects’ North Carolina Center for Architecture and Design in downtown Raleigh, among other projects.

Trained at the Architectural Association, Harmon has taught in the School of Design at North Carolina State University since 1981. An engaging writer and speaker, he often publishes articles or gives lectures on topics such as sustainable design and vernacular architecture. Common threads weaving through his work include an emphasis on sustainable design; the use of local, natural materials; a skillful deployment of color; and a strong indoor-outdoor relationship.—*m.d.*

years in practice: 32 / **projects completed in 2010:** 6 / **firm size:** 5 / **areas of interest:** custom homes, institutional, sustainable design, commercial / **photography:** James West/JWest Productions (project); f8 Photo Studios (portrait)

glenn murcutt

sydney



Glenn Murcutt

Two things are remarkable about the influence of Australian architect Glenn Murcutt, Hon. FAIA, the 2002 Pritzker Architecture Prize laureate. One is that he’s attracted an international following working by himself, exclusively in his own country, and without a publicity-making machine—not even a website or secretary. The other is that he’s done it by focusing on residential work.

Growing up in a remote part of New Guinea, Murcutt developed a keen sense of climate and place that guided him toward simple, direct architecture. And his early passions for aviation and sailing taught him how to fine-tune the use of cooling winds. “You work most of my buildings like you sail a yacht,” Murcutt noted in a CNN interview.

Inspired by the modernist traditions of Alvar Aalto and Mies van der Rohe, and the Australian wool shed, Murcutt—who received the 2009 American Institute of Architects Gold Medal—now stirs the imagination of the next generation. He told a recent Architecture Foundation Australia Master Class: “We look at the way the wind acts on the landscape, to see how nature is working. We look at the translucency of the light and shadow patterns. It’s a question of responsibility and aspiration, yet a solution that meets the beauty of order, of placement, of all the factors that make architecture.”—*c.w.*

years in practice: 41 / **projects completed in 2010:** 0 / **firm size:** 1 / **areas of interest:** residential, civic / **photography:** Anthony Browell, Courtesy the Architecture Foundation Australia



Simpson-Lee House

gray organschi architecture

new haven, conn.

www.grayorganschi.com



Alan Organschi and Elizabeth P. Gray

When Elizabeth P. Gray and Alan Organschi, AIA, met at Yale University, they hit it off personally. The now-married couple also discovered that they share a passion for design,

which has resulted in a collaboration that produces inspired architecture.

Houses are in Gray Organschi Architecture's DNA, partly because of the early interests of both partners. After graduate school, Gray spent time in Indonesia studying indigenous housing, while Organschi is a trained cabinet-maker and builder. "The work has been informed by small-scale projects," Organschi says, adding that doing houses

is how small firms start.

Today, the breadth of the 15-year-old firm is vast. One minute it's designing a custom home for university professors, the next minute it's designing—and winning awards for—a 20,000-square-foot residence and apostolic center for the Jesuits at Fairfield University in Connecticut.

Gray Organschi has incorporated a workshop/laboratory where it researches products and materials and resolves construction assemblies. Organschi says the ability to mock-up details makes life easier for contractors and ensures good execution.

"We have certainly changed over the years," Organschi says. "We have learned to be good professionals. We are smarter."—*n.f.m.*



The Cottage

years in practice: 15 / **projects completed in 2010:** 4 / **firm size:** 9 / **areas of interest:** urban repair, adaptive reuse, ecological design, fabrication and assembly, houses, institutions, small infrastructure, construction management / **photography:** Bo Crockett

historical concepts

peachtree city, ga.

www.historicalconcepts.com

Historical Concepts started as a modest design/build firm that produced more than 200 homes in the metro-Atlanta region. Even then, its goal was a simple one: "To do houses that look as good as those done 200 years ago," says firm founder Jim Strickland. Mission accomplished.

The firm soon morphed into an exclusively design-focused architectural practice. Today, it does large-scale town planning and traditional placemaking, but its bailiwick is superbly designed custom homes of the highest order. And it's still unapologetically devoted to the principles of traditional architecture and planning.

"There is a reason everyone admires places like Annapolis, Savannah, Charleston, and New Orleans," says Strickland, referring to these historic



Jim Strickland

years in practice: 29 / **projects completed in 2010:** 25 / **firm size:** 26 / **areas of interest:** developer service, civic, custom residential, land planning, placemaking, renovation, vacation homes / **photography:** Richard Leo Johnson/Atlantic Archives (project); Courtesy Historical Concepts (portrait)



Azar Residence

traditional cities. Strickland, who received his master's in architecture from Yale in 1972, says these places are compelling because the architecture is human scale and feel-good.

Strickland attributes the firm's success to the leadership and skills of its partners Terry Pylant, Aaron Daily, AIA, Andrew Cogar, AIA, Kevin Clark, AIA, LEED AP, and Todd Strickland.—*n.f.m.*



South Calgary Duplex

housebrand

calgary, alberta, canada
www.housebrand.ca

Housebrand is no ordinary architecture firm. Yes, it's in business to make money, but the firm believes everyone should have access to a well-designed home and wants to help.

"Our goal is to help as many people as we can create a great place in which to live," says founding principal John Brown, RAIC.

Run by Brown, his wife, Carina van Olm, and designer Matthew North, housebrand is a real estate agency

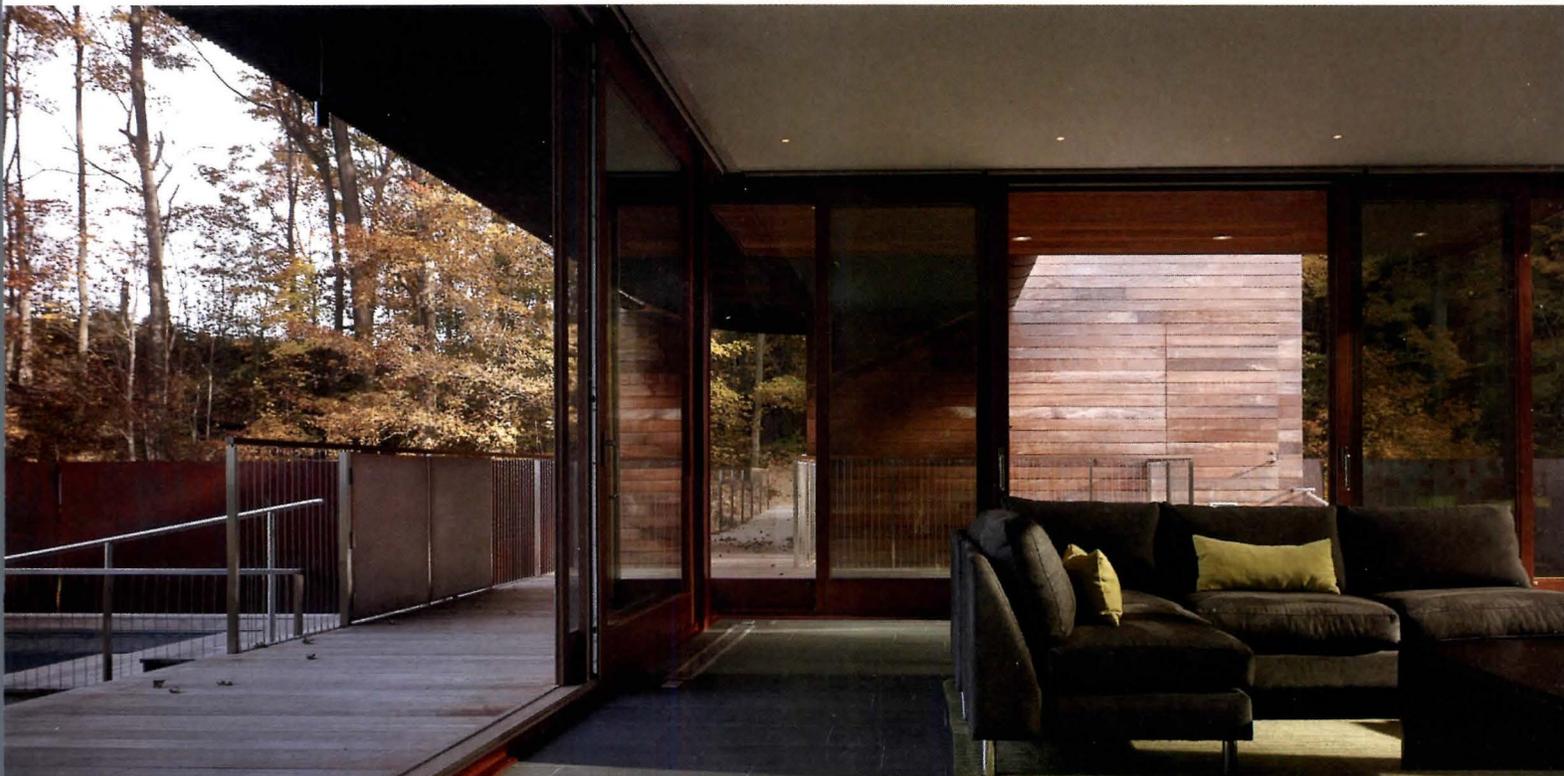


Matthew North, Carina van Olm, and John Brown

(Brown is a licensed Realtor), an architecture firm, general contractor, interior designer, and furniture store. It helps middle-class consumers find houses and then tailors those houses to the way the clients live.

Housebrand specializes in approachable, practical, modern architecture that is light-filled and well-executed. And although it does houses from the ground up, its passion is updating existing homes in a way that's thoughtful and client-specific.—*n.f.m.*

years in practice: 10 / projects completed in 2010: 15 / firm size: 15 / areas of interest: multifamily, prefab, affordable, renovation / photography: Del Rio Photography (project); Courtesy housebrand (portrait)

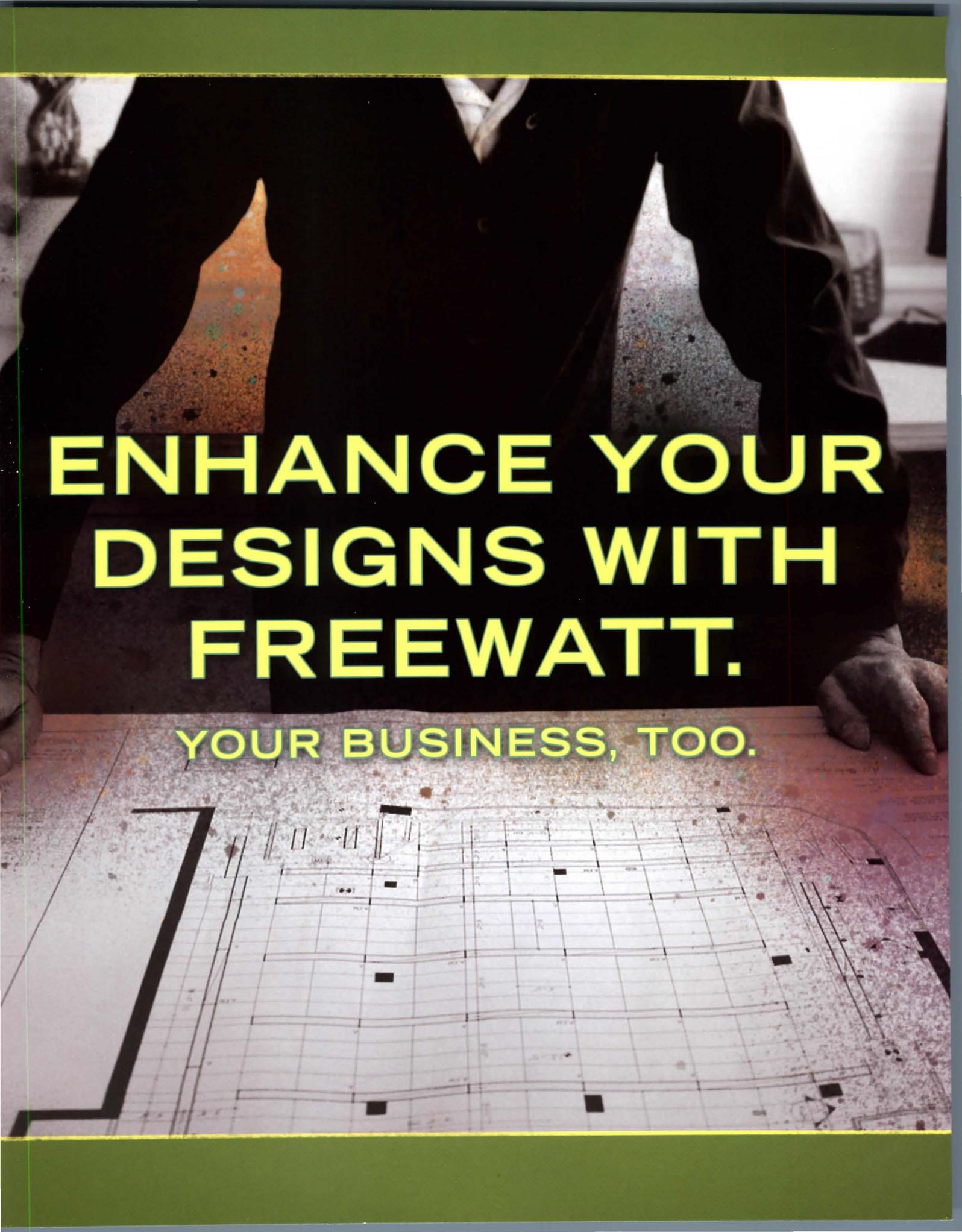


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Builder Concept Home 2011

hutker architects

vineyard haven, falmouth, and nantucket, mass.
www.hutkerarchitects.com

Hutker Architects has demonstrated in its 25 years of practice an unerring feel for the architecture of coastal New England, from the vernacular of fishing shacks and agricultural buildings to the formal language of the Shingle Style. The firm's extensive portfolio of work on existing buildings, and on new buildings in traditional styles, manages the difficult task of balancing authenticity with originality. But its signature projects are those that approach the same problem from the opposite direction, employing traditional forms and materials in the service of modernist aims.—*b.d.s.*

years in practice: 25 / **projects completed in 2010:** 12 / **firm size:** 16 / **areas of interest:** single-family residential, community architecture, property planning, interior design / **photography:** Brian Vanden Brink (project); Nikki Mark (portrait)



Mark A. Hutker, Charles e. Orr, and Philip Regan



Kuppi Egon Residence

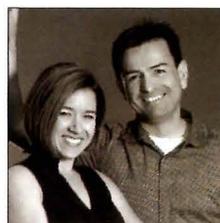
ibarra rosano design architects

tucson, ariz.
www.ibarrarosano.com

Luis Ibarra refers to the work of Ibarra Rosano Design Architects as “desert modern,” which is not a stylistic stance as much as a reflection of its site-specific approach to design. “The desert is where most of our projects have been,” he says. “But if we work somewhere else, the work takes cues from the site. It’s land-based architecture.”

As a firm, Ibarra and his wife, Teresa Rosano, AIA, LEED AP, excel at creating livable homes that are enjoyable for their inhabitants but always embrace their location and spaces beyond the walls. The firm’s unpretentious houses are highly resolved and rigorously designed, employing ordinary materials such as galvanized steel, plywood, and concrete used in unexpected, sophisticated ways.—*n.f.m.*

years in practice: 11 / **projects completed in 2010:** 3 / **firm size:** 4 / **areas of interest:** modern, sustainable design, desert, green, urban / **photography:** Bill Timmerman (project); Courtesy Ibarra Rosano Design Architects (portrait)



Teresa Rosano and Luis Ibarra



Winter Residence

jacobsen architecture

washington, d.c.
www.hughjacobsen.com

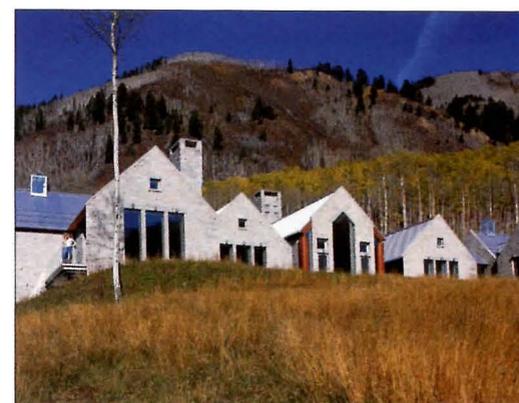
When this magazine honored Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA, with a *residential architect* Hall of Fame Leadership Award in 2002, it was only ratifying the verdict of the architecture world. And everything we said about him then remains true today. His new work continues to challenge, and his firm’s knack for flawless execution is undiminished. Most significantly, the contextual modernism he pioneered has proved a durable and vibrant response to the problem of residential architecture.

His trademark pavilion massing creates dramatic indoor spaces and a deep interlock of site and structure. Borrowing essential elements from local vernaculars adds depth to the modernist palette. Under his leadership—and that of his son and partner, Simon Jacobsen—the firm’s work is, as always, fully resolved, utterly urbane, and completely effortless.—*b.d.s.*

years in practice: 51 / **projects completed in 2010:** 11 / **firm size:** 10 / **areas of interest:** commercial, single-family residential, interior design, institutional, furniture / **photography:** Robert C. Lautman (project); Nathan Schuh (portrait)



Simon Jacobsen and Hugh Newell Jacobsen



Rivers Residence

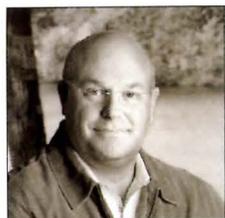


Spiral House

joeb moore + partners, architects

greenwich, conn.

www.joebmoore.com



Joeb Moore

Joeb Moore, AIA, combines a deep respect for the past with an avid interest in the present and future. Though the Greenwich, Conn., architect once worked for traditional house specialists Shope Reno Wharton, his work has leaned more toward the contemporary in

recent years. Rich with thoughtful details and well-developed ideas, Moore's houses please the eye and stimulate the mind. He's restored a Richard Neutra residence and reimagined a home by Eliot Noyes, as well as created new houses, additions, remodels, and interiors all over Connecticut and New York City. A natural and generous sharer of ideas, Moore also teaches architecture at Yale and Columbia.

Moore's interiors projects have led him to start designing hardware and home furnishings, areas that make sense given the firm's intense attention to detail. Design/build is another exciting new direction for Joeb Moore + Partners, Architects; the firm has built a handful of its own projects over the past couple of years. But nothing can distract it from the core goal described on its website: "Great architecture should, on some level, be a provocation, one that deepens human experience, engages our prosaic rituals, while also elevating our awareness of a larger, changing world."—*m.d.*

years in practice: 18 / **projects completed in 2010:** 6 / **firm size:** 10 / **areas of interest:** custom homes, interiors, design/build, renovations, additions / **photography:** Jeff Goldberg/Esto (project); Tracey Kroll (portrait)

johnsen schmaling architects

milwaukee

www.johnsens Schmaling.com



Brian Johnsen and Sebastian Schmaling

Architecture school encourages students to design buildings with strong organizing concepts that take novel, and sometimes whimsical, approaches to solving familiar problems. All of that changes, of course, when graduate architects face the reality of clients, budgets, and building codes.

So why didn't Brian Johnsen, AIA, and Sebastian Schmaling, AIA, get the memo? Their young firm, Johnsen Schmaling Architects, has managed not only to maintain the creative energy of a design studio, but also to realize their engaging, stimulating solutions in buildings that get built—and perform—in the real world.

The partners enjoy "pushing ourselves into new conceptual territory," Johnsen explains, "in scale, materiality, fenestration. We are very concerned about not resting on our previous thoughts." A glance at the firm's recently completed projects and those still on the boards should allay any fear in that regard. The work percolates with ideas that are at once playful, coherent, and practical.—*b.d.s.*

years in practice: 8 / **projects completed in 2010:** 4 / **firm size:** 4 / **areas of interest:** single-family, multifamily, commercial, affordable / **photography:** John J. Macaulay



OS House

jonathan segal, faia

san diego

www.jonathansegalarchitect.com



Jonathan Segal

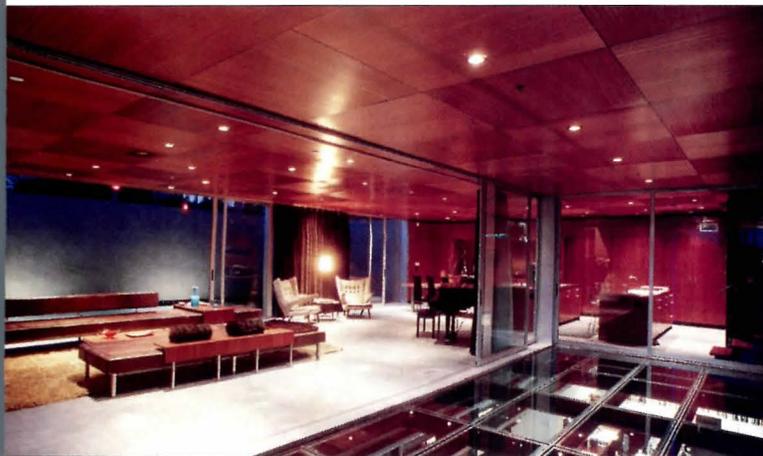
To call Jonathan Segal, FAIA, a do-it-yourselfer would be an understatement. He's a developer, builder, interior designer, landscape designer, and property manager. When he didn't see stylish rental housing in San Diego, he designed, built, and managed projects that played a major role in the city's rebirth.

Segal operates on simple ideas: He develops only rental projects, and he believes in straightforward design. He serves as general contractor on all buildings, and his wife (and business partner), Wendy, manages the properties. Recently, his son, Matthew, joined the firm and is involved in all aspects of the business.

Although the economy has put a damper on business at most firms, Segal remains busy. "This is an incredible opportunity to build stuff," he says. "Land is cheap, money is cheap, construction is cheap, and rents remain high."

Segal is putting the finishing touches on The Q—a seven-story building that will include retail and office space, as well as his own residence; a 21-unit apartment building, The Charmer, just broke ground; and his vacation home in Idaho is just about done.—*n.f.m.*

years in practice: 20 / **projects completed in 2010:** 1 / **firm size:** 3 / **areas of interest:** urban development, medium- to high-density urban housing, sustainable design, multifamily / **photography:** Courtesy Jonathan Segal, FAIA



The Prospect



Hancock Lofts

koning eizenberg architecture

santa monica, calif.

www.kearch.com



Julie Eizenberg and Hank Koning

Tight budgets, outmoded planning codes, and an entrenched status quo are just a few of the obstacles that Koning Eizenberg Architecture (KEA) encounters daily, even as it continues to rack up awards—more than

60, including the American Institute of Architects' California Council 2009 Firm Award. While project types range across the board, the architects are best known for complex commissions that mend the social fabric of neighborhoods, such as affordable housing and community support services.

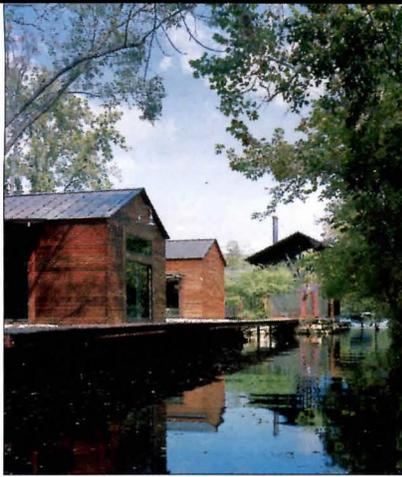
These artful, upbeat buildings belie the social and economic forces often stacked against them. Yet KEA's relentless reinventions—of materials, forms, assemblies, and business partnerships—are paying off. Whether it's cross-breezes, colorful window graphics, or the inclusion of hands-on gardens that foster social trust, KEA's buildings have the power to change everyday lives. The prospect clearly energizes co-founding principal Julie Eizenberg, AIA. "Multifamily and mixed-use housing represents a stimulating set of ideas," she says. "The people running these organizations believe architecture is the key to social change. There is a lot afoot."—*c.w.*

years in practice: 29 / **projects completed in 2010:** 5 / **firm size:** 20 / **areas of interest:** custom and multifamily/mixed-use, affordable, and supportive housing, community/institutional, commercial/retail interiors / **photography:** Eric Staudenmaier (project); Benny Chan/Fotoworks (portrait)

lake|flato architects

san antonio

www.lakeflato.com



Lake Austin Residence



David Lake



Ted Flato

When the subject of region-specific, sustainable design comes up, Lake|Flato inevitably leaps to mind. The San Antonio firm has built a worldwide reputation for creating and exploring an intense relationship between architecture and landscape. “The mission of the work is to connect to the environment, to leverage the outdoors,” says Ted Flato, FAIA, who co-founded the firm with David Lake, FAIA.

Lake|Flato has done just that on inventive, user-friendly projects both in Texas and all across the United States. Among its many honors are the 2004 American Institute of Architects Firm of the Year award and a 2009 Texas Medal of Arts. The firm recently formalized its eco-friendly approach by committing to adopt the carbon-neutral aims of the 2030 Challenge.—*m.d.*

years in practice: 27 / **projects completed in 2010:** 11 / **firm size:** 50 / **areas of interest:** custom homes, adaptive reuse, commercial, institutional, prefab, sustainable design / **photography:** Hester + Hardaway (project)

looney ricks kiss

memphis, tenn. / princeton, n.j. / celebration, fla. / baton rouge, la.

www.lrk.com

Some firms excel at custom homes for wealthy clients; others are skilled at mass-market housing with architectural integrity. Looney Ricks Kiss (LRK) does both equally well. “Our goal from day one was diversity in project types,” says J. Carson Looney, FAIA, a founding principal of the firm.

LRK does it all, but houses are paramount to the practice, especially to Looney, who relishes the creativity, the “relationships, and the one-on-one with clients,” he says. Making houses that feel good is what LRK is about, whether it’s a million-dollar custom home for a client or a pattern book for a large builder. “We approach both types of projects the same way—through process,” Looney says.—*n.f.m.*

years in practice: 27 / **projects completed in 2010:** approximately 125 / **firm size:** 48 / **areas of interest:** multifamily, urban, housing, planning, development services, research, commercial, interiors / **photography:** Sweeney South Photography (project); Courtesy Looney Ricks Kiss (portrait)



J. Carson Looney



River House

lorcan o’herlihy architects

los angeles

www.loharchitects.com



Lorcan O’Herlihy

It’s hard to stand out in Los Angeles, a city teeming with terrific residential architects. But Lorcan O’Herlihy Architects (LOHA) manages to do so.

Founded by Lorcan O’Herlihy, FAIA, the company was named 2010 Firm of the Year by the American Institute of Architects’ L.A. chapter. O’Herlihy has long been known for his innovative custom homes, especially his own residence in Venice, Calif. But LOHA also has gained attention for its groundbreaking multifamily work, which challenges traditional divisions between public and private space.

“We’re very excited about the idea of change,” says O’Herlihy, who teaches at the University of Southern California. “We’re a design-driven firm that strives for social relevance.”—*m.d.*

years in practice: 21 / **projects completed in 2010:** 3 / **firm size:** 12 / **areas of interest:** custom homes, multifamily, commercial, institutional, sustainable design / **photography:** Lawrence Anderson (project); Undine Pröhl (portrait)



7917 Willoughby

mackay-lyons sweetapple architects

halifax, nova scotia

www.mlsarchitects.ca



Brian MacKay-Lyons

Of all the architects doing award-winning work, Brian MacKay-Lyons' may be among the most frugal. Long before the recession forced that shift, he strove for a minimalist approach that was not about luxury living. Plain modern, it's been dubbed, downscaling highbrow modernism into a beautifully rendered philosophical principle.

His deeply held beliefs are more relevant than ever now, when environmental and economic sustainability are practically givens. One is his commitment to the "good generic"—buildings that are good urban or rural citizens in the way they relate to the landscape, climate, and culture. Another is his interest in developing a universal design grammar. Because we're all wired the same way, there's an archetypal quality of buildings that's transferable from place to place, he believes. What changes is their materials

years in practice: 25 / **projects completed in 2010:** 10 / **firm size:** 12 / **areas of interest:** single-family, multifamily, recreational, urban, institutional, commercial, educational / **photography:** Greg Richardson (project)



Sliding House

and how they're made. In short, it's the design grammar, not the construction, that's modular and travels light.

"We think the deep structure is transportable and the clothing changes," says MacKay-Lyons, FRAIA, Hon. FAIA. "The idea that you invent a different house every five minutes is a creative myth. That's not how people get good."

He should know. The firm, which includes partner Talbot Sweetapple, MRAIC, has won five Governor General's Medals and the American Institute of Architects' Honor Award.—c.w.



Porchdog House

marlon blackwell architect

fayetteville, ark.

www.marlonblackwell.com

When Marlon Blackwell, AIA, set up practice in Arkansas, he was determined to prove, like Fay Jones, that serious architecture can happen anywhere. Two decades later, a body of internationally recognized work aptly illustrates his point. During that time Blackwell also learned the importance of staying in one place, however ordinary, "to make observations that allow you to be more transformative rather than flying in and dropping something down," he says.

A recent example is the storm-proof Porchdog House in East Biloxi, Miss., which manages to preserve the area's porch culture even though it sits 11 feet above the ground. The house, which aggressively adapts the traditional shotgun plan to today's cultural and environmental conditions, is typical of the market-rate architecture—averaging \$150 per square foot—in which Blackwell delights.

"We pride ourselves in being champions of the dumb box," he says. "If you want to build cheap, build long and straight." The follow-through is meticulous. Blackwell is interested in the fine grain of a building—the details people brush up against, and its material logic—the relationship between form and materials and "how they're distributed in relationship to the body and the eye."—c.w.



Marlon Blackwell

years in practice: 19 / **projects completed in 2010:** 3 / **firm size:** 8 / **areas of interest:** educational, cultural, commercial, residential / **photography:** Timothy Hursley (project)

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THE NAHB-RC REPORT AT TALLWALLOSB.COM**



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Build energy efficiency into every house – watch the video at TallWallOSB.com to find out how.



marmol radziner

los angeles

www.marmol-radziner.com



Leo Marmol



Ron Radziner

Design/build firms have been around for centuries, but few today do it as well as Leo Marmol, FAIA, and Ron Radziner, FAIA. They're architects first, but the build component grows from their predilection for intense collaboration. It's not enough to imagine a brilliant idea;

they take advantage of every touch point to get it just right.

"We've noticed a return to a fundamental concern for the home, which makes the whole process more gratifying. We find great joy in getting to see the design all the way through and ensure that a home is well built," Radziner says, suggesting that the most sustainable house may be the one clients keep the longest.—*c.w.*

years in practice: 21 / **projects completed in 2010:** 20 / **firm size:** 87 / **areas of interest:** residential, restoration, community, commercial, furniture / **photography:** Benny Chan/Fotoworks (project); Jack Coyier (portrait)



Ward Residence

mcinturff architects

bethesda, md.

www.mcinturffarchitects.com

For all the globalizing changes wrought by communication technology, residential architecture remains overwhelmingly a local matter. And that suits Mark McInturff, FAIA, just fine. For nearly a quarter-century, McInturff Architects has been content to offer its neighbors in the Washington, D.C., area the opportunity to build or rebuild with access to the full range of modernist expression.

"I think Washington is one of the great urban designs in the world," McInturff says. "It's also largely based on a classical tradition. But it's been proven over and over that modernism can fit into both situations." Befitting a local practice, the firm's buildings share a native quality that derives from a subtle appropriation of regional materials and motifs. "Even though we're modernists," McInturff explains, "we have no interest in throwing out the past."—*b.d.s.*

years in practice: 24 / **projects completed in 2010:** 8 / **firm size:** 6 / **areas of interest:** single-family, commercial, institutional / **photography:** Julia Heine



Allee House



Mark McInturff

mckinney york architects

austin, texas

www.mckinneyyork.com



Heather McKinney

McKinney York Architects works hard to be transparent. "We're interested in our work being as unique to the client

as it can be, and less about making an architectural statement where someone walks through the door and says, "That's a McKinney York project," says Heather McKinney, FAIA, LEED AP. While many architects strive for

years in practice: 27 / **projects completed in 2010:** 10 / **firm size:** 15 / **areas of interest:** residential, institutional / **photography:** Thomas McConnell (project); Corey Howell (portrait)

that quality, McKinney York achieves it. The firm's houses are disciplined and geometrically precise, yet idiosyncratic—modern without fitting a mold.

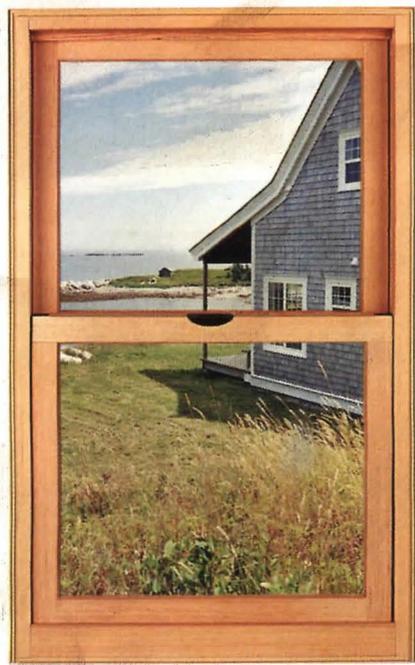
Its myriad awards keep McKinney York in competition with itself. "I'm hoping our notable accomplishments are ahead of us," McKinney says.—*c.w.*



Shavano Park House



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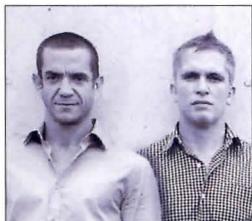


Ten Broeck Cottage

messana o'rorke

new york

www.messanaororke.com



Brian Messana and Toby O'Rorke

White space, according to Brian Messana, is calm and refreshing, like a breath of fresh air. “We love the way it is very honest,” says Messana, AIA, “and the way natural light changes it during the day.” He and firm partner Toby O’Rorke, RIBA, find richness in the subtle variations on white, like the Manhattan apartment whose

kitchen mixes monochromatic materials: white marble countertops, white lacquered cabinets, and etched glass. Clean and collected, their projects read as peaceful respites from the city’s visual clutter.

“Architecture involves so many moving components—clients, program, site, budget,” Messana says. “We put each issue through a sieve to end up with a clear, concise project.” How people move through space, how a wall meets the floor, where a thermostat is placed on a wall—the architects attend to every design layer to create spaces that are pure, surprising, and pleasant to be in. “Being a reductive architect is not only emotionally but also intellectually engaging,” Messana says. “You have to want to be free from all the possibilities.”—*c.w.*

years in practice: 14 / **projects completed in 2010:** 1 / **firm size:** 5 / **areas of interest:** residential, commercial, retail, interiors / **photography:** William Abranowicz (project); Paul Taggart/WPN (portrait)

michelle kaufmann studio

novato, calif.

www.michellekaufmann.com



Michelle Kaufmann

The career arc of Michelle Kaufmann, AIA, LEED AP, already has the makings of a potential Hollywood treatment—success, near ruin, and rebirth.

She launched her prefab company, Michelle Kaufmann Designs, less than 10 years ago and her career took off. She became the de facto face of the green design movement for the decade, extolling the virtues of well-designed sustainable homes and frequently appearing in multiple media outlets and contributing show houses to museum exhibits. Despite Kaufmann’s success, the economy tanked and she was forced to shutter her company.

Now Kaufmann is back with a new firm, but her message and her goals remain the same: “To make thoughtful, sustainable design accessible for everyone,” the architect says. “The ideas we had with Michelle Kaufmann Designs were definitely the right goals,” she told us earlier this year.

Kaufmann will continue to focus on crisp modern prefab projects that are specced with sustainable features such as recycled-content materials, water-efficient products, and renewable energy-producing elements. She may have lost one battle, but the war on wasteful housing wages on.—*n.f.m.*

years in practice: 2 / **projects completed in 2010:** 4 / **firm size:** 4

areas of interest: urban residential, sustainable design, affordable, smart technologies, single-family, multifamily / **photography:** Courtesy Michelle Kaufmann Studio



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Roundy Residence

From its founding more than 30 years ago, the Miller Hull Partnership has set the standard for regional modernism in the Pacific Northwest. Beginning with its earliest work, the firm has incorporated themes and materials native to the region with rigor, inventiveness, and a concern for the environment that anticipated by decades the profession's current interest in sustainability. Recipient of the American Institute of Architects' 2003 Architecture Firm Award, Miller Hull has grown significantly in size and reach over the years, but without diluting the essential character of its work. Rooted in the nature and culture of the Pacific Northwest, it retains the ability to surprise and delight.—*b.d.s.*



Robert Hull, David Miller, and Craig Curtis

years in practice: 33 / **projects completed in 2010:** 5 / **firm size:** 70 / **areas of interest:** single-family, multifamily, civic, commercial, educational, laboratory / **photography:** Chi Duong (project); Danny Turner (portrait)

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seattle and san francisco

www.mithun.com

There's a reason we chose Mithun as Top Firm in our 2001 Leadership Awards. A large company that still includes housing as part of its work, Mithun designs regionally appropriate architecture that is at once familiar and new.

"Residential work has always been a core part of our office, but it's now balanced with civic projects," managing principal David Goldberg, AIA, told us last year.

Mithun is serious about sustainability, too—it accepts only residential planning and design work with a density of 14 units per acre. "We need to get higher densities to stop sprawl," says principal Tammie Schacher, AIA, LEED AP.—*n.f.m.*

years in practice: 61 / **projects completed in 2010:** withheld / **firm size:** 99 / **areas of interest:** residential, student housing, multifamily, civic, affordable, commercial, mixed-use, urban, sustainable design / **photography:** Benjamin Benschneider (project); Courtesy Mithun (portrait)



Tammie Schacher



Mosler Lofts



Piedmont Farm

muse architects

washington, d.c.

www.musearchitects.com

Working out of his Washington, D.C., home, Stephen Muse, FAIA, found his first commissions virtually in his own backyard. In the years since, he has tended the fine, old residential communities of the city and its surrounding region like a garden, seamlessly extending the visual vocabulary of existing houses and neighborhoods to make statements of contemporary relevance. Context is the key element, Muse explains. And while his 15-person firm is a far cry from that original home-based practice, the aesthetic remains unchanged. "It's all about the same thing: the notion of context that we've been developing for 25 years."—*b.d.s.*

years in practice: 27 / **projects completed in 2010:** 12 / **firm size:** 15 / **areas of interest:** single-family, commercial, institutional, urban design / **photography:** Erik Kvalsvik (project); Joshua O. Hill (portraits)



Stephen Muse



William Kirwan

olson kundig architects
seattle

www.olsonkundigarchitects.com

Tom Kundig, FAIA, describes his firm as one that values modernism but allows its different interpretations to be tested. "We're an anomaly in that we continue to nurture this whole idea of strong voices that can emerge with their own DNA," he says. Olson Kundig's work ranges widely in style, scope, cost, and complexity, and so does its imagination.

A fascination with the elemental qualities of materials and sunlight infuses all of the firm's work, from the sparkling and sophisticated, like the downtown loft that celebrates Seattle's skyline, to the tough-as-nails, like the Idaho outpost. Among



Tye River Cabin

its latest accolades is the American Institute of Architects' 2009 Firm of the Year award.

"The most gratifying thing is when you show up as a guest in a home you've designed and see that they've taken ownership of it, adding things you hadn't necessarily imagined," says principal Kirsten R. Murray, AIA. "That it has a life of its own."—c.w.



From left: Alan Maskin, Jim Olson, Tom Kundig, and Kirsten R. Murray

years in practice: 44 / **projects completed in 2010:** 37 / **firm size:** 82 / **areas of interest:** residential, museum and exhibit design, commercial, institutional / **photography:** Tim Bies (project); Thomas M. Barwick (portrait)



Robert A.M. Stern

robert a.m. stern architects

new york

www.ramsa.com

As a practitioner, academic, and author, Robert A.M. Stern, FAIA, is one of the most highly accomplished architects of his generation. And his has been among the profession's strongest voices for an architecture that reflects its physical and historical context. Dean of the Yale School of Architecture since 1998, Stern has left his mark in buildings and master plans for colleges and universities around the country, high-profile urban office towers, and the redevelopment of New York's Times Square.

Yet his firm has always maintained a strong commitment to residential

work. "Residential architecture is the bedrock of our work," says Stern, who calls the design of a house "the perfect way for the architect to begin to balance his or her artistic needs ... with the needs of people." Placing historical continuity above individual artistic license, he counsels against architecture's tendency to become "abstract and unconnected with people." Since the early 20th century, architects often have sought to distinguish their work by breaking radically with the past. In contrast, Stern says, "I've tried to heal the breach."—b.d.s.



Residence, Kiawah Island, S.C.

years in practice: 41 / **projects completed in 2010:** 40 / **firm size:** 230 / **areas of interest:** single-family, multifamily, commercial, cultural, planning, public, academic / **photography:** Peter Aaron/Esto (project); Courtesy Robert A.M. Stern Architects (portrait)



Lujan House

robert m. gurney, faia
 washington, d.c.
www.robertgurneyarchitect.com



Robert M. Gurney

In 1990, when Robert M. Gurney, FAIA, established his firm, staking one's livelihood on modern architecture in the starchy Washington, D.C.,

market seemed a dicey proposition. But Gurney persisted in offering clients a vision of life outside the colonial box. "Now it's a different world," he says. "There are so many people who want to do modern houses."

Gurney deserves a fair share of the credit. His firm's work is characterized by expressive geometries, an assured handling of color and material, and commonsense practicality. Combining creativity and rigor with accessibility, its houses convey an excitement capable of converting even committed traditionalists.—*b.d.s.*

years in practice: 20 / **projects completed in 2010:** 5 / **firm size:** 6 / **areas of interest:** single-family, apartment remodeling, commercial / **photography:** Anice Hoachlander

rockhill and associates

lecompton, kan.
www.rockhillandassociates.com



Dan Rockhill

You wouldn't normally associate Kansas with modern architecture, but thanks to Rockhill and Associates (RA), the state has its fair share. The firm designs cutting-edge, award-winning residential buildings that wryly blend a modern industrial aesthetic with agrarian overtones.

Out of necessity, RA is a one-stop shop. Construction budgets are so tight that the firm designs and constructs most of its buildings. "I could put buildings together for less money than any contractor could," principal Dan Rockhill says. "This saves our clients about 20 percent."

Rockhill also is an architecture professor at the University of Kansas, where his Studio 804 has developed into a force. Under his watchful eyes, students design and build award-winning houses that are then sold to low-income individuals.—*n.f.m.*

years in practice: 30 / **projects completed in 2010:** 0 / **firm size:** 4 / **areas of interest:** multifamily, single-family, modular, affordable, light commercial, pre-fab / **photography:** Dan Rockhill (project); Courtesy Rockhill and Associates (portrait)



5.4.7 Art Center

safdie rabines architects

san diego
www.safdierabines.com

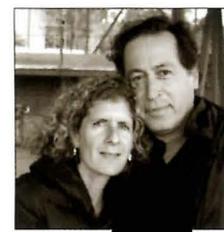
Not many small firms can claim at least seven bridge commissions as part of their portfolios, but Safdie Rabines Architects can, which speaks to the firm's broad architectural range.



Beach House

But even as the San Diego-based firm branches into public and commercial work, residential commissions remain a vital part of its repertoire. "We still love to do single-family houses and don't want to give that up," says Taal Safdie. "We want to do things that are very elegant and timeless," Ricardo Rabines told *residential architect* upon winning the magazine's 2006 Rising Star award. "In architecture—there are a lot of nice-looking things, but not a lot of elegance."—*n.f.m.*

years in practice: 17 / **projects completed in 2010:** 0 / **firm size:** 20 / **areas of interest:** urban design, sustainable design, institutional, civic, bridge, infrastructure, master planning, single-family and multifamily residential / **photography:** Undine Pröhl (project); Courtesy Safdie Rabines Architects (portrait)



Taal Safdie and Ricardo Rabines



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David Salmela

In a talk he gave at the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture several years ago, David Salmela, FAIA, was describing the tall outdoor chimneys that trademark some of his projects. They're poetic, he told his listeners. But they also create a great excuse to go outside and sit around the fire.

"They're a sculptural object with a comfortable use—to visit and talk and sing," he said.

That also sums up the allure of Salmela's houses. Inspired by the cold climate of Duluth, Minn., clear light, and the Scandinavian roots he shares with others in the region, Salmela's buildings have that rare quality of being modern yet emotionally familiar. He interprets the authenticity of place through modernist massing, richly



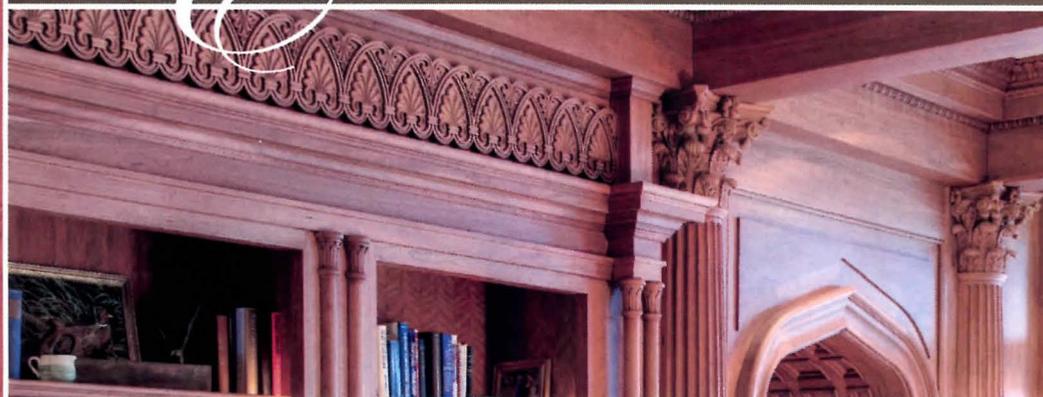
Yingst Retreat

crafted materials, and a deep understanding of the patterns of sunlight at this latitude.

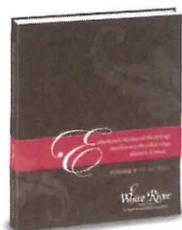
Down-to-earth and intent on doing good work, Salmela holds as his biggest accomplishment that his clients love their houses, not the number of awards he's won—though there are many, and the approval of critics is proof, even to himself, that architects can do important work with modest budgets and on the edge of the wilderness.—c.w.

years in practice: 19 / **projects completed in 2010:** 5 / **firm size:** 3 / **areas of interest:** single-family, small structures, studios, furniture, commercial, educational, sustainable design, urban design / **photography:** Undine Pröhl (project)

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Doing more with less is the new universal mantra. But to Dallas architect Dan Shipley, FAIA, it's nothing out of the ordinary. The *residential architect* 2010 Top Firm Leadership Award winner has always liked the challenge of designing on a budget. His meticulously detailed projects often contain unexpected (and cost-effective) industrial materials, and they tend to be energy-efficient to boot.



Reservoir Residence

Shipley sometimes builds his own projects, especially now that the housing market has slowed. His building experience helps him figure out how to construct unusual details. "We'd have more interesting buildings in the world if more architects would take it upon themselves to become the producer and take a bigger role in getting things built," he says. "You're kind of in the fray, but you get to make things."—*m.d.*



Dan Shipley

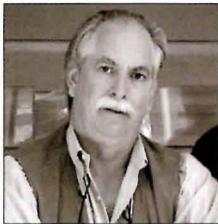
years in practice: 23 / **projects completed in 2010:** 5 / **firm size:** 2 / **areas of interest:** custom homes, renovations, additions, sustainable design, outbuildings, institutional / **photography:** Hester + Hardaway (project); Courtesy Shipley Architects (portrait)

shope reno wharton architecture

south norwalk, conn.

www.shoperenowharton.com

In a profession whose appetite for the new sometimes verges on attention deficit disorder, Shope Reno Wharton Architecture strikes an unusually conciliatory attitude toward the past. Rendered in the idioms of classically based 19th-century architecture—especially shingle style—but also finely attuned to the present, the firm's work presents an authentic alternative to the repli-kitsch traditionalism of plan books and speculative developments.



Bernard Wharton

The firm's handling of space planning, natural lighting, indoor-outdoor connections, and energy efficiency reflects the century that separates their work from its historical precedents. Founding partner Bernard Wharton explains the approach as a mirror of his own inclinations. "I'm a modernist at heart," he says, "but I'm clothed in a traditional skin."—*b.d.s.*



Black Watch

years in practice: 29 / **projects completed in 2010:** 10 / **firm size:** 16 / **areas of interest:** single-family, institutional, commercial / **photography:** Brian Vanden Brink (project); Patrick Lau (portrait)

stuart cohen & julie hacker architects

evanston, ill.

www.cohen-hacker.com

Over the past 34 years, Stuart Cohen, FAIA, and Julie Hacker, AIA, have produced a series of beautifully designed and crafted homes on Chicago's North Shore. Though



Stuart Cohen and Julie Hacker

traditional in style, their work exhibits a distinctly modern penchant for open floor plans, sight lines between rooms, and bountiful natural light.

Cohen, Hacker, and their talented staff provide clients with an exceptional level of service. The details in their homes are crucial to the overall design; frequently, custom trim controls the organization of spaces. "We believe that architecture is a communicative art, that it's about something," Cohen says. "Architecture has a story. It says things to people."—*m.d.*

years in practice: 34 / **projects completed in 2010:** 4 / **firm size:** 5 / **areas of interest:** custom homes, renovations, additions, sustainable design / **photography:** Jon Miller/Hedrich Blessing (project); Paul Elledge (portrait)



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Zoltan E. Pali



Judit Méda Fekete

To those of us not privileged to live in Southern California, viewing images of projects by SPF:architects is like gazing into another world. Perched in the hills above Los Angeles, the firm's houses link the current architectural moment with that of the Case Study houses, circa 1960. Principal Zoltan E. Pali, FAIA, points out, "This isn't about modernism for the masses." Yet Pali and partner Judit Méda Fekete, LEED AP, nevertheless produce work that is notable for both its evocative power and its restraint.

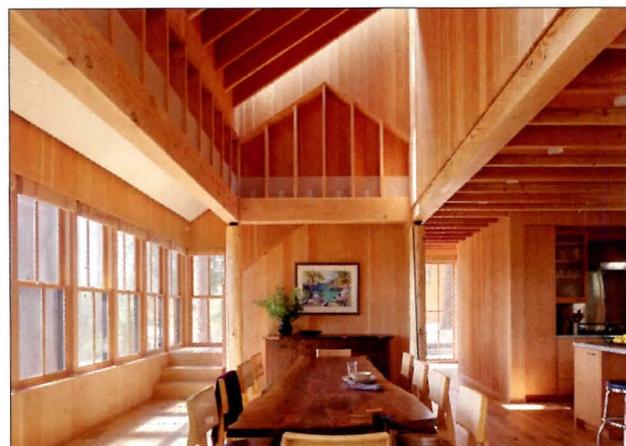
years in practice: 21 / **projects completed in 2010:** 6 / **firm size:** 22 / **areas of interest:** single-family, multifamily, commercial, institutional / **photography:** Russell Abraham (project); Courtesy SPF:architects (portraits)



Oberfeld Residence

"My mentor was Jerrold Lomax, who designed 12 of the Case Study houses," Pali says. "I come out of that thinking, that simplicity—the clean diagram, the clean plan." SPF:architects' houses make their plans the vehicle of a distinctly Californian mode of living, while also making the site a stage for their own

sculptural forms. The firm takes a similar approach to its multifamily, commercial, and institutional work. (The latter includes the Getty Villa Museum in Malibu, Calif.) And as if to prove the breadth of its range, it won a 2005 American Institute of Architects National Honor Award for, of all things, a hay barn.—*b.d.s.*



Lake Tahoe House

turnbull griffin haesloop architects

san francisco

www.tgharchitects.com

Turnbull Griffin Haesloop is all about the site. The San Francisco-based firm has gained global respect for its way of blending architecture with landscape, using one to enhance the other. "Some sites are so spectacular; with others, it's about coaxing out the essence of the site," says principal Eric Haesloop, FAIA, LEED AP, who runs the firm along with fellow principals Mary Griffin, FAIA, and Stefan Hastrup, AIA, LEED AP.

Along with its architectural services, the company also offers in-house interior design by Margaret Simon, ASID. Simon is the sister of firm founder William Turnbull Jr., who died in 1997. Turnbull Griffin Haesloop's work embraces the widely admired ideas of Turnbull (who also was Griffin's husband), but its portfolio stands strong on its own. The firm's thorough and thoughtful approach has earned it not only piles of design awards, but also a deep well of satisfied clients and collaborators.—*m.d.*

years in practice: 14 / **projects completed in 2010:** 6 / **firm size:** 10 / **areas of interest:** custom homes, renovation, sustainable design, institutional, interiors / **photography:** Joe Fletcher (project); Charlie Davis (portrait)



Stefan Hastrup, Mary Griffin, and Eric Haesloop



“Slim tile is a revolutionary concept: a tile that’s half the thickness, uses half the resources and takes half the time to install. Yet still maintains the mechanical requirements suitable for wall installations. I see the benefits of this technology contributing to several of our upcoming projects.”

– Jim Poteet, Poteet Architects

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Today, slim is in. And Tile of Spain branded manufacturers have embraced this newest technological focus to create an ideal building and remodeling solution: slim tile. At a quarter of an inch thick – conceptually, a solid surface ceramic laminate – it saves time, hassle, and represents a landmark in sustainable design.

over. No rubble to haul away. No cost for new substrate material. No hassle. No contest.

More recent demonstrations are propelling tile to new heights. Literally. The product’s light weight allows it to be used in acoustical ceiling applications. Suspended from an integrated track system and backed with an insulation mat, slim tiles

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It makes perfect sense. Reduce the thickness of the tile as much as possible while still maintaining the mechanical requirements suitable for wall installations. And, improve the ecological benefits to boot.

Fewer raw materials are used and maximum energy savings are realized during manufacturing. This reduces CO2 emissions and pollutant substances. Lighter weight also means less of an environmental footprint left in shipping. And since it can be installed directly over existing tile, there’s no need to landfill the old stuff.

The same advantages hold true when slim tile is used for floor renovations. Old ceramic tile serves as a solid substrate and slim tile is mortared directly

can offer thermal and sound-deadening properties normally unheard of when considering tile.

As if it couldn’t get any better, digital printing innovation allows manufacturers to replicate virtually any finish, texture or look yet retain the unparalleled functional advantages of ceramic tile. Imagine achieving the patina of weathered corten steel in a light, high-performance tile. Less weight for the building structure to support opens new avenues for design – inside and out.

Learn about how slim tile from Spain is helping people whittle down their environmental impact. Contact Tile of Spain, 2655 Le Jeune, Suite 1114, Coral Gables, FL 33134. Call 305-446-4387 or email miami@mcx.es.



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**THE "ENERGY PIE" AND HOW IT'S CHANGED
IN THE LAST 35 YEARS**

Over the past decade or so, it's become clear that while energy efficiency is important when it comes to space heating and cooling, realistically, how water is heated has much more of an impact on energy bills, the environment, and the comfort of homes. (Q: How often do you use hot water? A: Every day; Q: How many days do you heat or cool your home?

A: Not every day. Q: Are there climates where heating and cooling is very light? A: Yes. Q: Are there climates where hot-water heating is very light? A: No.) Thirty-five years ago, just after the first oil crisis, the single largest portion of the so-called energy pie was the energy needed to heat and cool homes. At that time, houses were relatively drafty, there was practically no thermal insulation, windows were single glazed, the efficiency of space heating was rather low, and, in most parts of the country, central air conditioning was considered a luxury.

In the years since, the focus has turned toward improving homes' thermal envelope and increasing the efficiency of devices that heat and cool them. Insulation was added

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EDUCATION**

Use the learning objectives to the right to focus your study as you read *Condensing Tankless Water Heaters: Using Propane for the Most Efficient Water Heaters on the Market*.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this article, you should be able to:

- Describe how a Condensing Tankless Water Heater works and outline the possible advantages for use in a residential setting, especially in retrofit situations.
- Describe how new Department of Energy standards and upgraded Energy Star ratings will change the landscape of residential water heaters.
- Explain why Energy Factors don't always reveal the best value.
- List at least three facts about propane related to its low environmental impact.

to walls, attics, and ducts; higher performance windows were installed; air leaks through the envelope were sealed more effectively; and the efficiency of heating and cooling equipment was upgraded. Building energy codes are now in effect that make these features the norm in most climate zones.

At that time, refrigeration was probably the second largest portion of the pie. California established a standard for refrigerators in the late 1970s that was followed by federal standards a few years later. Today, the same size refrigerator uses roughly one-third of the energy that a '70s model used; now, refrigeration is less than the third largest portion of the energy pie.

Thirty-five years ago, water heating made up the third largest portion of the energy pie. Gas-, oil- or propane-fired water heaters had thermal efficiencies of around 75 percent, but the standby losses were quite large due to minimal tank insulation. Electric water heaters had thermal efficiencies of approximately 98 percent, but, again, the tanks had minimal insulation and standby losses were large. There were few if any tankless water heaters around. Since then, improvement in efficiency has come from a number of areas including: reducing standby losses, better control of the combustion process, and moving away from standing pilot lights. (Source: "The Future of Space Heating Is a Very Efficient Water Heater," June 2010, Contractor Magazine)

Until recently, the most energy-efficient water heater was a gas Tankless Water Heater, which is typically rated as 97 percent efficient. A gas Condensing Tankless Water Heater has efficiencies that can be as high as 98 percent.

While higher efficiency standards proposed for residential water heaters developed by the Department of Energy (DOE) won't go into effect until 2015, this move by the federal government plus tougher standards for Energy Star appliances points to an inevitable outcome: Water heaters across the board will need to boost their efficiencies considerably. Why not start with the one type of water heater that's already ahead of the curve? That's a Condensing Tankless Water Heater.



Unlike a traditional storage water heater, a Condensing Tankless Water Heater can be mounted outside.

HOW A CONDENSING TANKLESS WATER HEATER WORKS

Condensing tankless water heaters have a burner operation, heat exchanger, and venting system that extract almost all the heat from the propane or natural gas being burned to heat the water. The vent gas that remains after burning the gas is so cool that the moisture tends to drop out or condense into a liquid that needs to be drained away from the vent. A condensing water heater that is 95-percent efficient means that 95 percent of the heat created by burning the gas actually heated the water while the remaining 5 percent went out the vent. Vent gases are cool enough to start condensing at about 86 percent to 88 percent efficiency. That's why standard storage water heaters and standard tankless water heaters are usually rated at 85 percent efficiency or less. If they were more efficient it would be necessary to deal with the condensing liquid, which would change the design of the heater.

The main difference between a standard Tankless Water Heater and a Condensing Tankless Water Heater can be found in the efficiency. Condensing Tankless Water Heaters include a second heat exchanger. The purpose of the second heat exchanger is to capture the residual heat from flue

gases to pre-heat incoming ground water, which then circulates to the primary heat exchanger. With the addition of a second heat exchanger, the thermal efficiency can be up to 97 percent. This equals less energy consumption and lower operating costs.

ADVANTAGES OF A PROPANE CONDENSING TANKLESS WATER HEATER OVER A STANDARD TANKLESS WATER HEATER

Comparing the advantage of a Condensing Tankless Water Heater over a standard Tankless Water Heater is much like comparing the benefits of cooking on a gas stove versus an electric cooktop. Both do the job quite well, but one—that would be the gas stove—has the edge. In this era of higher federal energy standards, the increasing cost of energy sources, and a growing desire by consumers to be environmentally conscious, a slight edge can mean a lot.

Gas Condensing Tankless Water Heaters and their predecessor, the Tankless Water Heater, both offer a number of almost identical benefits. Both can supply continuous, on-demand hot water. Both save space when compared to electric storage-tank heaters. Both can be installed indoors or out. Both are Energy

Star-approved. And both qualify for an Energy Star tax credit of up to 30 percent of the installation cost up to \$1,500 (through Dec. 31, 2010).

The difference comes down to efficiency. Condensing Tankless Water Heaters have efficiencies of 97 percent. Standard Tankless Water Heaters are, at best, 85 percent efficient.

STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Manufacturers aren't continually upgrading their water heaters just to capture new markets. They see what's on the horizon as far as federal mandates for increasingly more efficient appliances and systems. And water heaters are no exception.

In April 2010, the DOE amended the existing federal standards for residential water heaters. These new standards will introduce significant changes for several product classes. The updated standards will take effect starting April 16, 2015, for residential water heaters that are manufactured or imported into the United States.

The current standards, which have been in place since 2004, are shown in the table below. The minimum required Energy Factor—or EF—for various systems depends on the size of the storage tank. The Energy Factor is the ratio of useful energy output from the water heater to the total amount of energy delivered to the water heater; it is determined from a specific test procedure. (figure 1)

The amended standards, which will take effect in 2015, are shown in figure 2.

General implications of these changes to residential water heater standards include:

- Natural gas/propane-fired, oil-fired, and electric storage tank water heaters will all have to become more efficient.
- Larger electric storage tank water heaters (≥56 gallons) will be required to make a major jump in efficiency. In fact, the new efficiency level for such units essentially means that they'll have to be heat pump water heaters (HPWHs), as traditional storage tanks will not be able to meet the efficiency requirements. HPWHs exist in the U.S. market to a very limited extent currently, so this will be a major change with

FIG. 1: CURRENT ENERGY CONSERVATION STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL WATER HEATERS

PRODUCT CLASS	ENERGY FACTOR AS OF JANUARY 20, 2004
Gas-Fired Storage Water Heater	EF = 0.67—(0.0019 x Rated Storage Volume in gallons)
Oil-Fired Storage Water Heater	EF = 0.59—(0.0019 x Rated Storage Volume in gallons)
Electric Storage Water Heater	EF = 0.97—(0.00132 x Rated Storage Volume in gallons)
Tabletop Water Heater	EF = 0.93—(0.00132 x Rated Storage Volume in gallons)
Gas-Fired Instantaneous Water Heater	EF = 0.62—(0.0019 x Rated Storage Volume in gallons)
Instantaneous Electric Water Heater	EF = 0.93—(0.00132 x Rated Storage Volume in gallons)

FIG. 2: AMENDED ENERGY CONSERVATION STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL WATER HEATERS

PRODUCT CLASS	STANDARD LEVEL	
Residential Water Heaters		
Gas-Fired Storage	For tanks with a Rated Storage Volume at or below 55 gallons: EF = 0.675—(0.0015 x Rated Storage Volume in gallons).	For tanks with a Rated Storage Volume above 55 gallons: EF = 0.8012—(0.00078 x Rated Storage Volume in gallons).
Electric Storage	For tanks with a Rated Storage Volume at or below 55 gallons: EF = 0.96—(0.0003 x Rated Storage Volume in gallons).	For tanks with a Rated Storage Volume above 55 gallons: EF = 2.057—(0.00113 x Rated Storage Volume in gallons).
Oil-Fired Storage	EF = 0.68—(0.0019 x Rated Storage Volume in gallons)	
Gas-Fired Instantaneous	EF = 0.82—(0.0019 x Rated Storage Volume in gallons)	

FIG. 3: CHANGES FOR DIFFERENT PRODUCT CLASSES

PRODUCT CLASS	CURRENT MINIMUM ENERGY FACTOR	MINIMUM ENERGY FACTOR AS OF APRIL 2015
40-gallon propane-fired storage	0.59	0.62
50-gallon propane fired storage	0.58	0.60
50-gallon electric storage	0.90	0.95
66-gallon electric storage	0.88	1.98
Tankless, propane-fired	0.62	0.82
32-gallon fuel oil-fired storage	0.53	0.62

electric storage tanks have EF values of 0.90 or higher, while natural gas/propane storage tank (non-condensing) systems have EFs of around 0.60 to 0.67.

For example, an electric storage (tank) water heater with an EF of 0.90 seems like it would be a better option than a propane storage water heater with an EF of 0.59. But if you also consider the price of the energy source, the propane water heater in this example would cost roughly \$100 less per year to operate than the electric water heater, even though it has a higher EF. This comparison used a relatively inefficient propane water heater; for a more efficient Condensing Water Heater or a Condensing Tankless Water Heater, the annual savings over the electrical storage unit would be even greater.

Using EFs to choose a water heater is like shopping for cars and looking at both gasoline engines and diesels. A diesel model might look like it gets much better mileage in terms of miles per gallon (MPG) than a comparable car with a gasoline engine. But, if the cost of diesel fuel is much higher than gas, then just looking at the MPG won't help you select the best option.

ENERGY STAR NOW LABELS RESIDENTIAL WATER HEATERS

Until recently, water heating was the only major residential energy end use that the Energy Star program did not address. The DOE addressed this issue by developing, and then finalizing and issuing, Energy Star requirements for residential water heaters in early 2009. The Energy Star program covers the following product classes of water heaters:

- Storage units: natural gas/propane-fired (including condensing tanks), heat pump units, and tabletop units
- Tankless units: natural gas/propane-fired
- Solar with natural gas/propane or electric back-up

The DOE also considered the inclusion of traditional electric resistance storage tank units in the program, but concluded that "while there may be slight initial savings to be attained, there are few, if any, technology improvements

first cost implications (current HPWHs retail for approximately \$1,600).

- Natural gas and propane tankless water heaters will also experience a big jump in efficiency, from an EF of 0.62 to 0.82. However, roughly three-quarters of propane/natural gas-fired tankless units in the marketplace already meet or exceed this efficiency level, with some propane tankless units as high as EF 0.97. So while the minimum bar is being raised for this product class, most units would already comply.
- Larger natural gas/propane storage water heaters (≥ 56 gallons) will also be required to make a major jump in efficiency. Units in this size range will have required EFs of around 0.75, which will necessitate the use of condensing storage tank units. It should be noted that propane/natural gas tank water heaters of this size are used much less frequently than small units like 40- and 50-gallon tanks because these smaller units can typically serve the hot water needs of many homes.

Some examples of the changes for different product classes are shown in figure 3.

THE ENERGY FACTOR (EF) DOESN'T REVEAL THE BEST VALUE

Looking at the tables above, it can be tempting to assume that the systems and technologies with higher EFs are the best values. But the Energy Factor only measures how efficient a certain fuel source and technology is in heating water. It does not tell us anything about the cost of different energy sources, and a unit of electrical energy is often much more costly than a unit of natural gas or propane-based energy.

In fact, basic pricing formulas are available that easily estimate the cost of producing a set amount of hot water. In most cases, analyses of typical energy costs and technology types illustrate that propane- and natural gas-fired systems are far more cost effective than electric storage tanks. This is true even though

FIG. 4: ENERGY STAR CRITERIA FOR RESIDENTIAL WATER HEATERS

PRODUCT CLASS	ENERGY FACTOR (EF)	FIRST HOUR RATING OR GALLONS PER MINUTE (FOR TANKLESS SYSTEMS)	WARRANTY	SAFETY
Natural gas/propane-fired storage	≥ 0.62 (ending 8/31/2010)	≥ 67 gallons/hour	Warranty > 6 years on sealed system	ANSI Z21.10.1/CSA 4.1
	≥ 0.67 (starting 9/1/2010)	≥ 67 gallons/hour	Warranty > 6 years on sealed system	ANSI Z21.10.1/CSA 4.1
Natural gas/propane-fired tankless	≥ 0.82	GPM > 2.5 over a 77°F rise	Warranty > 10 years on heat exchanger and 5 years on parts	ANSI Z21.10.1/CSA 4.1 or ANSI Z21.10.3/CSA 4.3, depending on burner size
Natural gas/propane condensing	≥ 0.80	≥ 67 gallons/hour	Warranty > 8 years on sealed system	ANSI Z21.10.1/CSA 4.1
Heat Pump Water Heater	≥ 2.0	FHR > 50 gallons per hour	Warranty > 6 years on sealed system	UL 174 and UL 1995
Solar Water Heater	Solar Fraction ≥ 0.5		Warranty > 10 years on solar collector, 6 years on storage tank, 2 years on controls and 1 year for piping and parts.	OG-300 Certification from the SRCC

possible with this form of water heating to warrant the long-term qualification of electric resistance water heaters in the program."¹

The minimum Energy Star requirements for the covered product classes are shown in figure 4.

The key implications of Energy Star requirements include:

- Some of today's Energy Star minimum EF requirements are essentially on par with the federal standards that will go into effect in 2015. This is the case for natural gas/propane-fired storage units, natural gas/propane fired tankless units, and HPWHs (which will replace large electric resistance storage tanks).
- Electric resistance storage units—no matter what their EF—were not deemed suitable for inclusion in the program.
- Nearly all natural gas/propane-fired tankless units on the market meet Energy Star's EF requirement of 0.82.

- Natural gas/propane condensing tank water heaters are also recognized by Energy Star as a highly efficient form of storage tank water heating. This technology is still emerging in the residential marketplace.
- The Energy Star requirements for conventional natural gas/propane storage water heaters had an initial tier of 0.62 EF. This requirement expired on Aug. 31, 2010; after then the requirement will bump up to 0.67 for this product class.

Overall, the Energy Star and federal residential water heater requirements illustrate what's possible for different product classes. Conventional storage tank units—propane or natural gas—have shown improving efficiencies and are moving up toward the level of ER 0.67. Beyond this level, the technology turns to Condensing Water Heaters, which provide EFs of around 0.80. The highest performing propane/natural gas units are the tankless units, with

non-condensing (EFs of about 0.82) and Condensing Tankless Water Heaters as high as EF 0.97. HPWHs are just emerging in the marketplace at a high price point, and have EFs of around 2.0. (Source: Newport Partners)

¹Final Criteria Announcement from Richard Karney, Energy Star Program Manager. U.S. DOE, April 2008. Available: http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=new_specs.water_heaters

THE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF PROPANE

Propane is a well established, domestically available clean-burning fuel. It is an approved clean alternative fuel under the 1990 Clear Air Act and a qualifying alternative fuel eligible for various federal tax incentives and programs, including those established under the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Using propane in place of less environmentally friendly fossil fuels reduces acid rain, the

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greenhouse effect, urban smog, and the thinning of the ozone layer.

The most prevalent greenhouse gas—carbon dioxide—is a necessary by-product of fossil fuel combustion. The mass of carbon dioxide released per Btu of fuel—the carbon content, also called the carbon footprint—is a good first-order indicator of the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions comparison between fuels.

Natural gas (methane) generates slightly fewer CO₂ emissions per Btu than propane. At 52.7 (kg CO₂ per million Btu), propane's Greenhouse Gas (GHG) footprint is close in size to natural gas and relatively small compared to other fuels in terms of total emissions and emissions per unit of energy consumed. In comparison, ethanol measures 66.6, kerosene 70.7, diesel 72.5, and bituminous coal, used to generate most electricity, 92.1.

In addition to its environmental advantages, compared to electricity, propane gas appliances can cost about half as much to operate. For example, propane water heaters provide significant energy efficiency over electric water heaters. Over time, propane water heaters can cost one-third less to operate and recover hot water twice as fast as electric water heaters.

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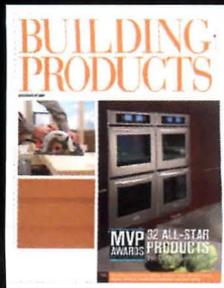
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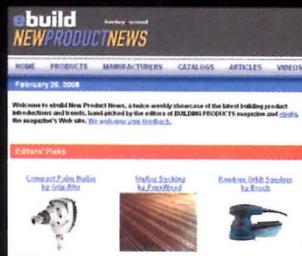


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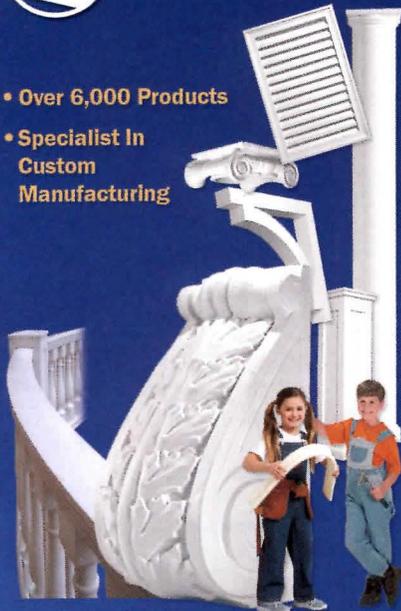
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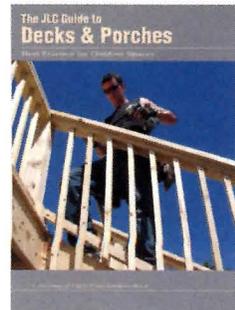
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When Russell Campaigne, AIA, and Mary Jo Kestner, AIA, bought an 1840s Federal-style house in Guilford, Conn., they also became the proprietors of its uninspiring detached garage. But the couple saw beyond the garage's drab appearance and transformed it into a charming, functional

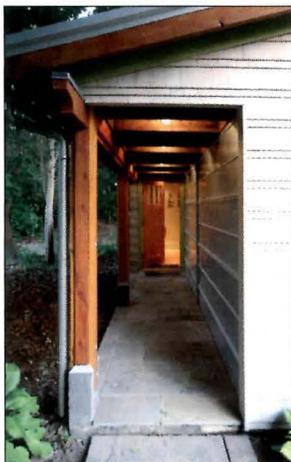
office for themselves and their three employees.

The husband-and-wife team had to work within the building's original footprint, but they did obtain a variance that allowed them an extra 5 vertical feet. So they raised part of the roof and added a couple of shed dormers, turning the second floor into a light-filled studio space. Campaigne and Kestner also remade

the first floor into a 450-square-foot workshop. "We do a lot of models and mock-ups and store a lot of samples," Campaigne says. On the entry side of the building, they left the original, low roofline in place, sheltering a newly added walkway that welcomes clients and collaborators to the office.—*meghan drueding*



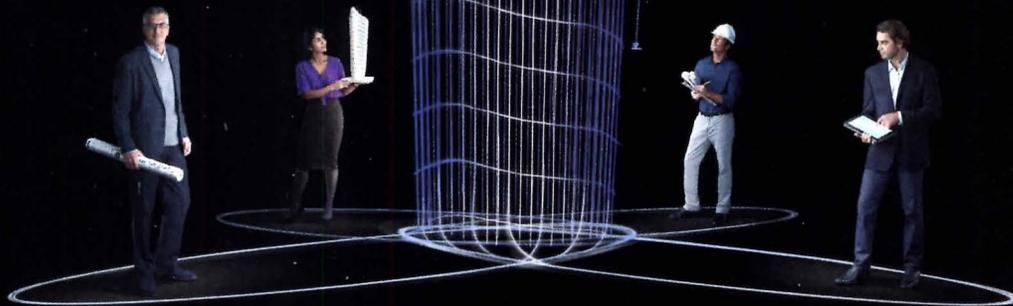
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