

# residential architect

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## the young classicists

for the partners at FS&R,  
formality follows function

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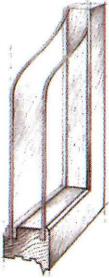


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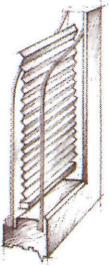
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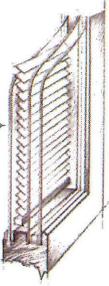
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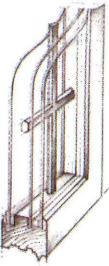
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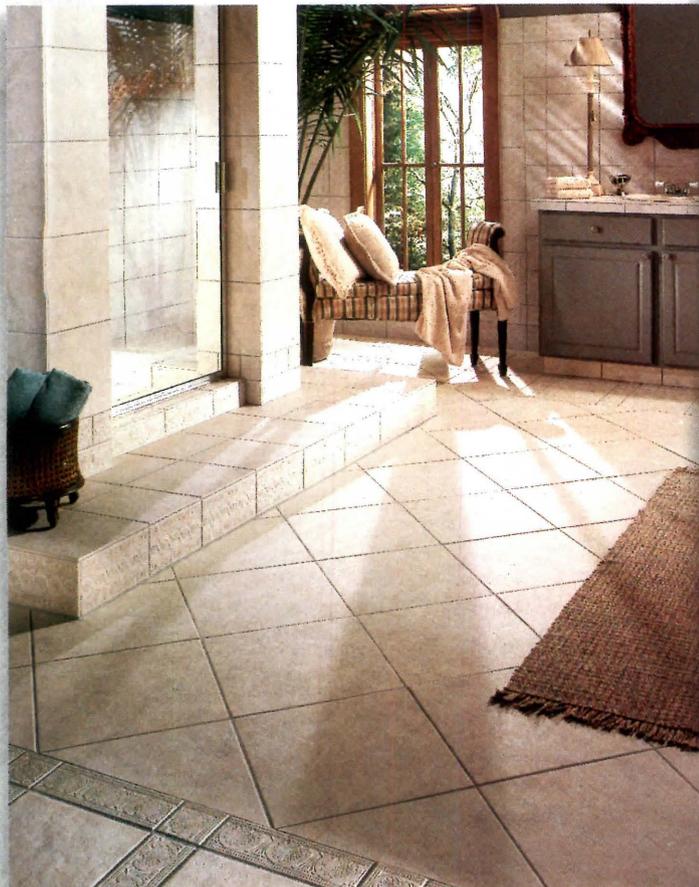
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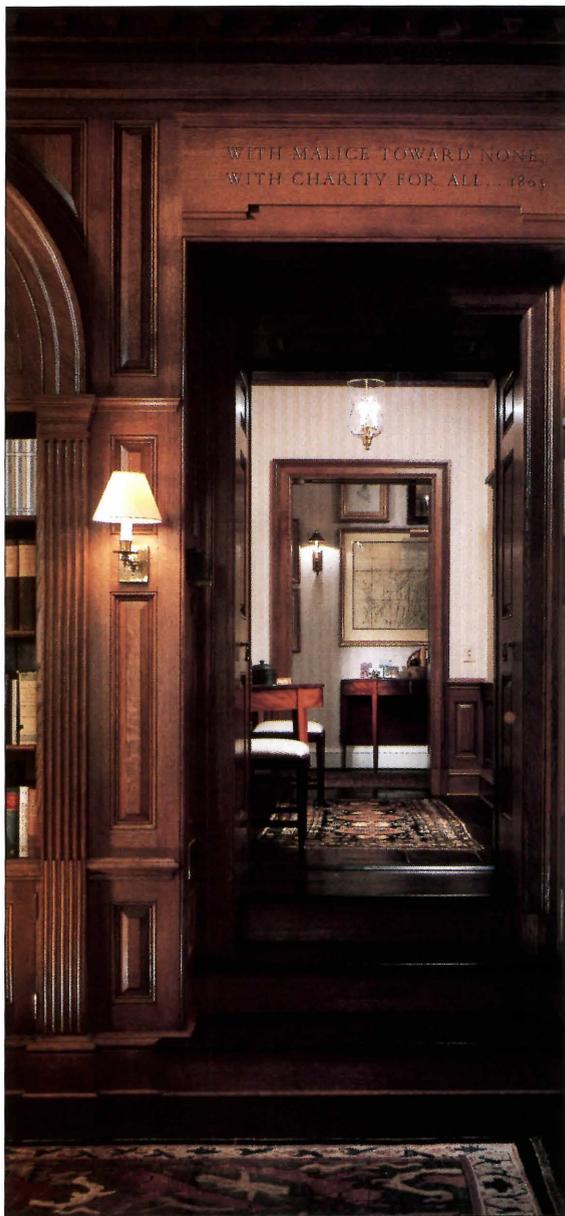
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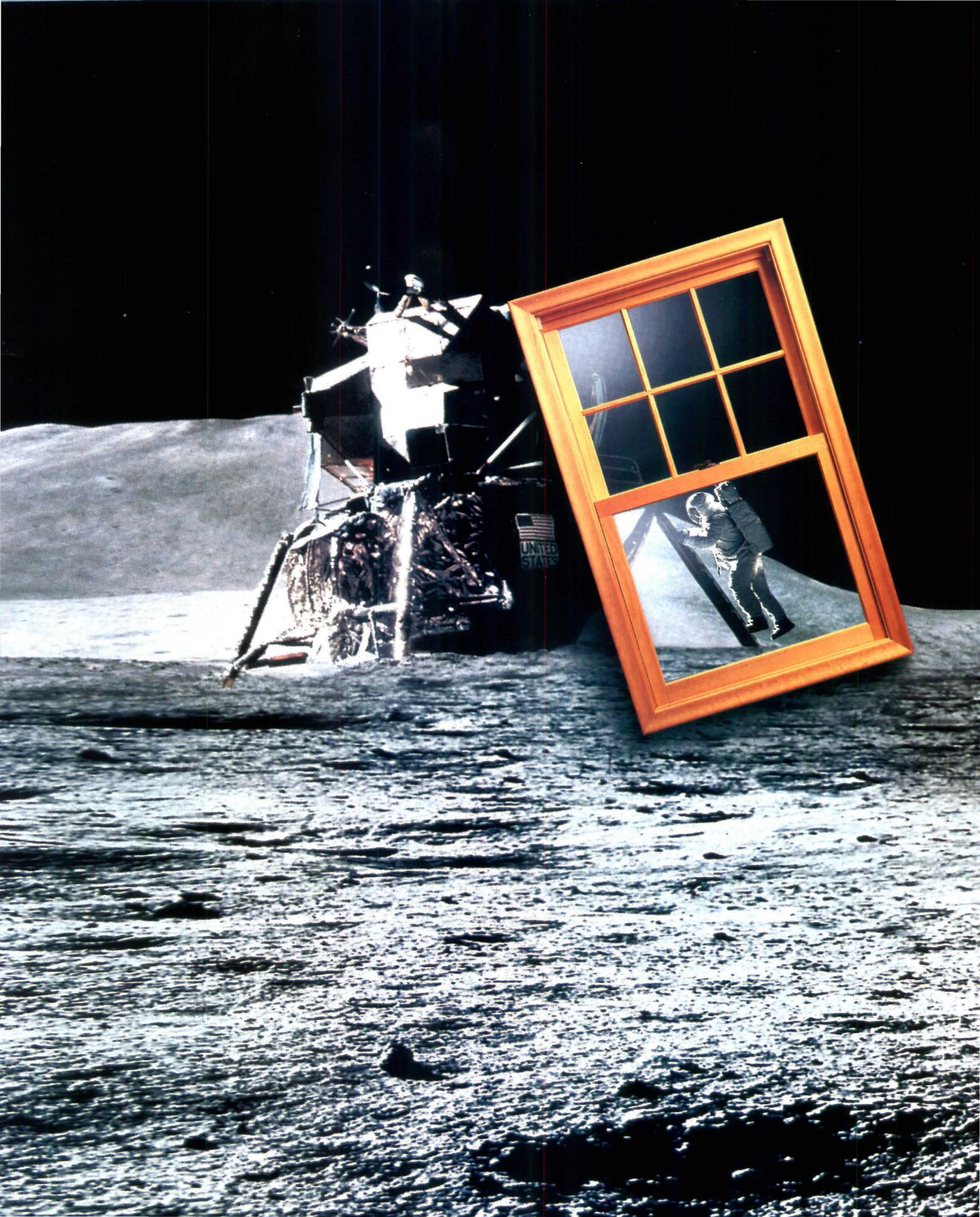
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**residential architect**  
design awards **2000**

Turn to page 38 for information on how to enter *residential architect's* first annual Design Awards.





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# beauty or the beast

whose taste should prevail, the critics', the clients', or yours?

by s. claire conroy

**m**ost of us think we have really great taste.

We have a discerning eye, a sophisticated sensibility, a keen sense of style and proportion. Unfortunately, some people—other people, that is—have very bad taste. It bewilders us, it offends us; sometimes it even angers us. Good taste is right; bad taste is deeply wrong. But, whose opinion should rule? The problem is, one person's beauty is another person's beast.

## classicism dismissed

Our cover story looks at the work of three partners in crime, New York City-based architects Mark Ferguson, Oscar Shamamian, and Don Rattner. Their offense, in some architects' eyes, is the practice of Classical architecture. Traditional styles are not the current taste among the architectural cognoscenti. They believe nothing but Modernism and its iterations are appropriate for the modern world we live in.

Architecture magazines tend to reinforce the party line. We love Modernism, too. With its clean lines and Spartan interiors, the style

is tremendously photogenic: Its rectilinear geometry looks great on our rectangular pages. And it makes us feel hip to publish cutting-edge design. The trouble is, most residential clients' tastes run to rich, evocative, densely designed styles of the past.

Georgian, Colonial, Shingle, Classical. Clients want these familiar styles so badly, they'll take them any way they can get them. If architects turn up their noses at them, they'll buy them from builders. "Clients can't get enough of what we do," says Mark Ferguson. "The hardest sell is the architects."

## the anti-client

Builders are more than happy to give home buyers what they want, regardless of what design experts think they should have. The contempt for clients begins in architecture school, says Don Rattner: "The ideal is of what architecture would be like with no client to answer to." The presumption is that all architecture would be in good taste if you didn't have to satisfy the client's bad taste.

"But the client is the person making it happen—allowing our firm to exist," says Ferguson. "They have the idea and the resources



Katherine Lambert

and are looking for the expertise to make it happen. We might think of ourselves as artists, but we're service people."

When architects try to win the taste war with their clients, they harm the clients and themselves. Says Ferguson, "Architects are known for this: They have an ego and a vision and they're unstoppable. And they can't embrace the client's ego and vision, too. We don't have a monopoly on all the good ideas."

## taste test

You can show us the good taste you and your clients have achieved by entering our first annual residential design contest. From the winners in our eight categories of housing design,

the independent panel of judges will select a Best Residential Project of the Year. See page 38 for more information.

## what's the frequency?

Depending on your eye for detail, you may have noticed that *residential architect's* publisher, Hanley-Wood, Inc., has changed its name to Hanley-Wood, LLC. VS&A Communications Partners III, LP, a private equity fund operated by Veronis, Suhler & Associates, purchased the company in September. The only other change you'll see is the magazine's increased frequency next year. We'll turn up in your mailbox 10 times in 2000. **ra**

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# home from.

tips and trends from the world of residential design

## target market

**W**hat kind of dwelling could do justice to Michael Graves' new housewares line for Target stores? One designed by the architect himself, of course. Commissioned by Target for the Twin Cities' Spring Parade of Homes program, the house showcased recent creations by the inventive Mr. Graves.

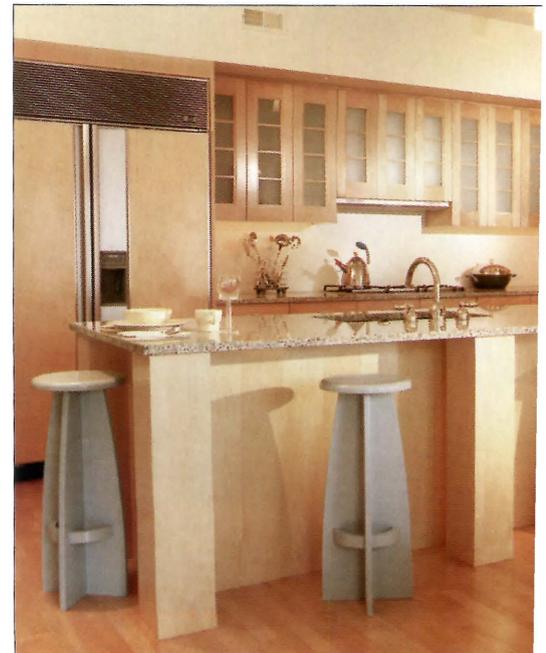
Located in Minnetonka, Minn., the 4,300-square-foot house combines the iconic symbol of home, a gable roof elevation, with the suburbs' de rigueur four-bedroom



floor plan. However, it's no typical house next door: The gable roof is a triple-decker and the two-story great room is paneled in maple. Graves designed virtually every item inside the house

—known as “Cedar Gables”—including the master bathroom sink. Target gave him carte blanche to use products he markets through other venues and prototypes he's still considering. Thus, the light fixtures, carpeting, and indoor and outdoor furniture are all his, too, along with the requisite Target tchotchkes.

Built by design/build firm Streeter & Associates of Wayzata, Minn., Cedar Gables was the hit of the parade. It sold—lock, stock, and tea-kettle—to a private buyer for \$1.2 million.—*deena shehata*





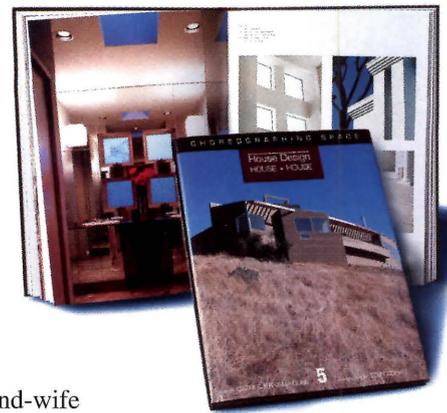
Photos: Susan Gilmore

## house work

Architects Steven and Cathi House have spent 17 years perfecting their firm's offering of highly personalized services and exquisitely detailed designs. Clients hire them over and over again, and magazines and newspapers scramble to be the first to publish their projects. When it comes to creating a distinctive, successful residential practice, this husband-wife team wrote the book. Literally.

*House + House: Choreographing Space*, part of The Images Publishing Group's "House Design" series, showcases 12 residences crafted by the San Francisco-based firm. The assortment includes a tiny renovation in San Francisco's Telegraph Hill neighborhood, several homes built in the aftermath of 1991's devastating fire in the Oakland Hills, and the couple's own vacation home in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. An introduction by their friend Tony Cohan, an art and design writer, sets the stage for an essay written by the Houses explaining their emotional, instinctive approach to design. "We look for moments of pause in the homes we create," they say. "Those spaces that are not programmed—the surprises. And in each home they are different."

Clearly written text by the architects accompanies full-color photos of each project. The book concludes with thumbnail sketches of other selected homes and with a firm profile. *House + House* leaves the reader feeling like a museum visitor departing a particularly stimulating exhibit—happily saturated, and newly impressed with the scope and talent of the artists.—*meghan drueding*

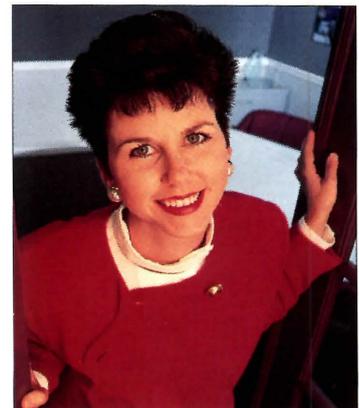


Doug Sanford

**House + House: Choreographing Space.** *Steven and Cathi House.* 112 pp. Illustrated. Mulgrave, Australia: The Images Publishing Group. 1999. \$29.95 (hardcover). 914.297.0003.

## growth spurt

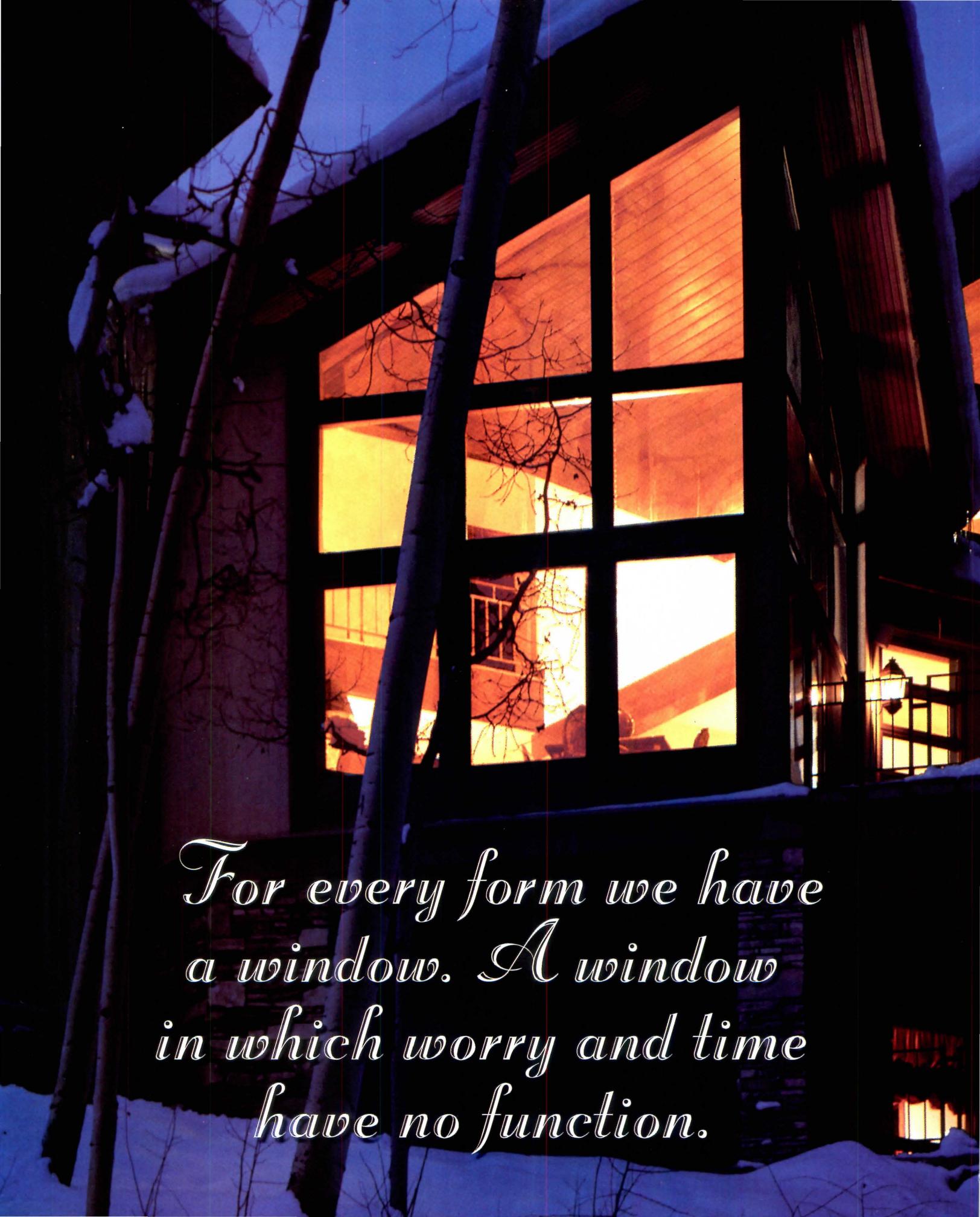
One of the country's largest residential firms has just gotten larger. Bloodgood Sharp Buster Architects & Planners, a 135-person company with offices in Des Moines, Iowa, Tampa, Fla., Sacramento, Calif., Chicago, Dallas, and Phoenix, recently opened branches in Jacksonville, Fla., and Irvine, Calif. Heading up the Jacksonville office is Deryl Patterson, AIA,



Mark Robert Halper

(above) whose self-titled firm was acquired by BSB. Western region vice president Jeffrey deMure is heading up the Irvine branch.

Cedar Gables, designed by Michael Graves Associates of Princeton, N.J., was a popular stop on the Twin Cities' Spring 1999 Parade of Homes tour. The home's exterior features an oversized, three-gabled roof; inside, Graves created furniture, draperies, hardware, and rugs to suit casual yet sophisticated tastes.

A photograph of a modern building at night. The building features large, multi-paned windows that are brightly lit from within, casting a warm orange glow. The building's exterior is dark, possibly wood or stone, and is partially covered in snow. Bare tree branches are visible in the foreground, some of which are also covered in snow. The sky is a deep, dark blue. The overall mood is serene and cozy.

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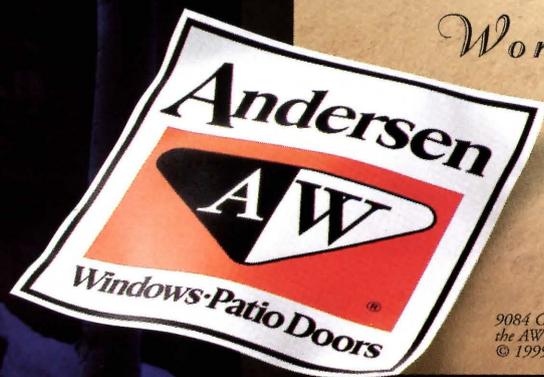
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## calendar

### **residential architect design awards: call for entries**

deadline for requesting a binder: december 22, 1999  
entry deadline: january 10, 2000

Our first annual *residential architect* Design Awards program will honor outstanding architecture in the following categories: Custom Home, 3,500 square feet or less; Custom Home, more than 3,500 square feet; Renovation; Multifamily Housing; Single-Family Production Housing, detached; Single-Family Production Housing, attached; Affordable Housing; and On the Boards. A Best Residential Project of the Year will be chosen from among the winning built projects. Winning projects will be published in the May 2000 issue of *residential architect* magazine. See page 38 for more information.

### **the work of charles and ray eames: a legacy of invention**

october 12, 1999–january 9, 2000  
cooper-hewitt national design museum, new york city

Charles and Ray Eames in 1948.



This comprehensive exhibition, put together by the Library of Congress, features the legendary couple's furniture designs and architectural models. Call 212.849.8400 for details.

Courtesy Library of Congress

### **chicago architecture: the art of the long view**

december 10, 1999–february 29, 2000  
chicago architecture foundation, chicago

AIA Chicago will sponsor this showing of such contemporary Chicago-area architecture projects as this private residence (below) by Kuklinski + Rappe. For information, call 312.670.7770.

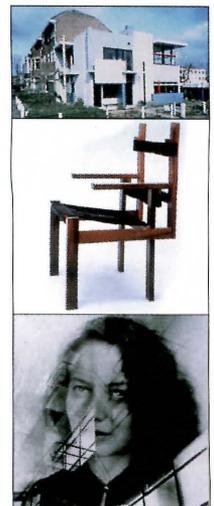


Doug Snower

### **at the end of the century: one hundred years of architecture**

december 19, 1999–march 12, 2000  
museum of contemporary art, chicago

Organized by the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, this exhibition seeks to pinpoint the most significant developments in architecture over the past 100 years. The show is divided into sections bearing such provocative names as "The House as an Aesthetic Laboratory" and "Politics of Monumentality in 1930s Architecture." For hours and directions, call 312.280.2660.



Courtesy L.A. Museum of Contemporary Art

From top: Rietveld Schröder House (1924), Utrecht, The Netherlands; wood-slat chair by Marcel Breuer (1923); and Lotte Beese's portrait of Otti Berger and studio house (1930).

### **international builders' show**

january 14–17, 2000  
dallas convention center, dallas

More than 70,000 home builders, architects, and engineers attend this NAHB-sponsored show each year for its vast array of product exhibitors and lectures. To reach NAHB's conventions and expos department, call 1.800.368.5242 or go to [www.nahbexpos.com](http://www.nahbexpos.com).

### **international furniture fair**

january 17–23, 2000  
cologne, germany

Attended by more than 123,000 designers, manufacturers, suppliers, and consumers last year, this 50-plus-year-old trade show will feature a separate center for kitchen and bath furnishings in 2000. Visit [www.koelnmesse.de/imm](http://www.koelnmesse.de/imm) for details or call 212.974.8837.



### **greenprints 2000: sustainable communities by design**

february 6–8, 2000  
renaissance atlanta hotel, atlanta

The Southface Energy Institute and the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority present their third annual conference and trade show promoting sustainable design, development, and construction. Contact 404.653.0606 for more information, or visit [www.southface.org](http://www.southface.org).

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## ladies first

**R**osalynn Carter isn't the only first lady to don a hard hat in the name of Habitat for Humanity. In April, the organization's Women Build department launched "First Ladies Build," a program that recruits current and former first ladies and women governors to participate in builds in or around all 50 state capitals. Women Build director Fiona



Two first ladies, Janet Huckabee of Arkansas and Cathy Keating of Oklahoma, help construct a Habitat house in Arkansas.

Eastwood hopes the program will increase her department's visibility, enabling Habitat to recruit more women volunteers. "When women are by themselves on a job site, they're much more aggressive and into the

building process than when men are present," she says. "By bringing all-women builds into the spotlight, First Ladies Build will ultimately help Habitat build more houses. We're delving into an untapped volunteer resource." Eastwood adds that First Ladies Build homes have been built in 20 states; as of September 1, first ladies or governors in 20 other states had committed to the project. —*m.d.*



Photo: Sara Fisher

Sotterley Plantation's 1710 manor house in St. Mary's County, Md., remains a prime example of Colonial-era earth-fast construction.

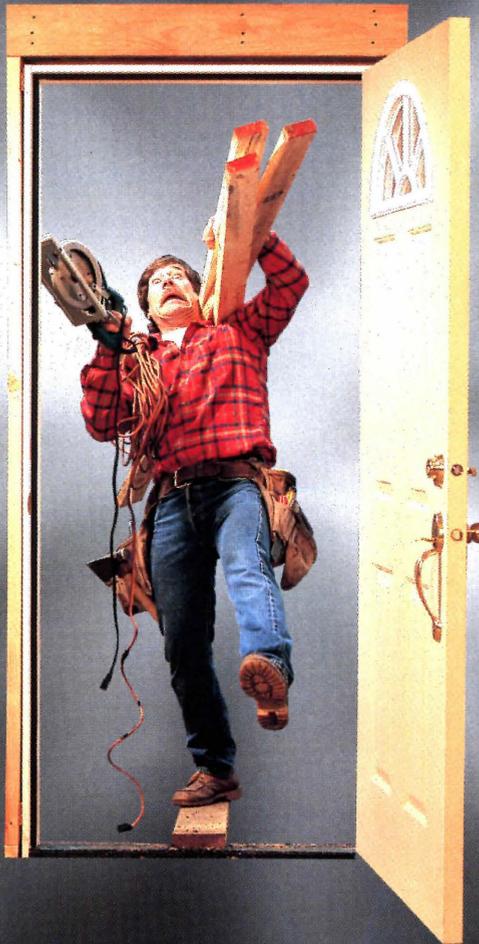
## plantation rejuvenation

**S**otterley Plantation is gearing up to celebrate its 300th birthday in style. The St. Mary's County, Md., historic site, comprising a manor house plus nearly 20 outbuildings and extensive landscaping, is set to undergo a \$2.2 million renovation and restoration late this year.

The project team, led by the Boston firm of Ann Beha & Associates, will attempt to improve visitors' overall experience at the plantation. But historic preservationists need not fear—principal-in-charge Pamela Hawkes, AIA, intends to avoid the theme-park overtones that detract from so many restored historic sites. "We're exploring additional functions for Sotterley, such as using it as a location for educational programs and receptions," she says. "At the same time, we plan to preserve its historical core to the greatest possible extent."

The manor house stands as a significant example of an early wood-frame building, according to Hawkes. Its second floor, roof, and main wall framing, built in 1710, are all original. The house is also earth-fast, which means that it was built without a foundation. That's pretty impressive for a 300-year-old house—a house that, post-renovation, more visitors will be able to discover and appreciate. —*m.d.*

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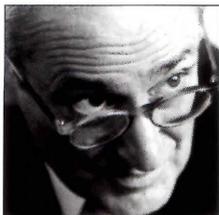


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## millennium minded



Librado Romero/New York Times Pictures



© James McHugh



Paul Elledge

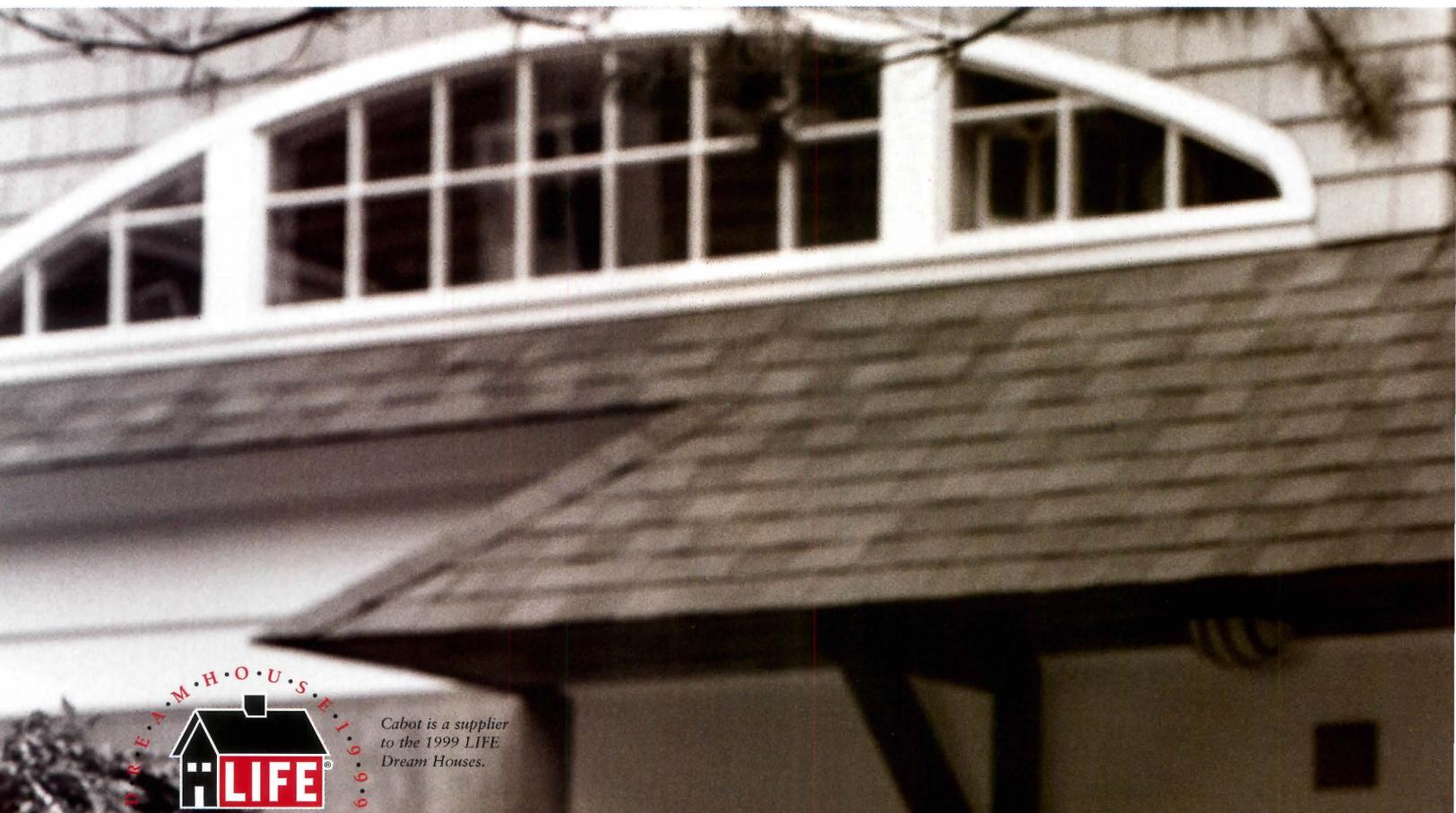
Over 500 architects and design buffs turned out for the National Building Museum's "Modernism at the Millennium" symposium in Washington, D.C., which featured speakers (left, from top) Robert A.M. Stern, Hugh Newell Jacobsen, and Stanley Tigerman. While the star architects' design styles differ wildly, the messages underlying their speeches were remarkably similar.

Stern warned the audience of the danger inherent in concentrating solely on the stark white boxes of Modernism. "To be Modern, you do not have to be against the past," he said. "I

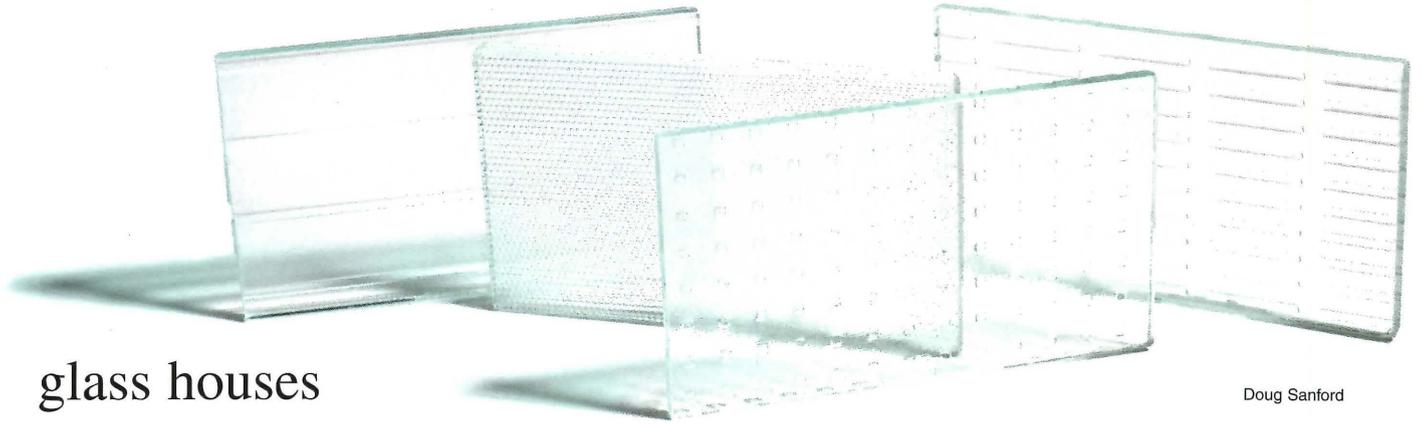
do not turn my back on Modern style, but view it as one of many."

Tigerman concurred. "I have always felt free to be myself," he said. "I'm not bound to any overlapping ideology." The Chicago-based principal of Tigerman McCurry Architects also expressed his vision of architecture as a form of social responsibility.

During his turn at the microphone, Jacobsen eloquently agreed. "It is our duty to improve mankind and the lot of life through architecture."—*m.d.*



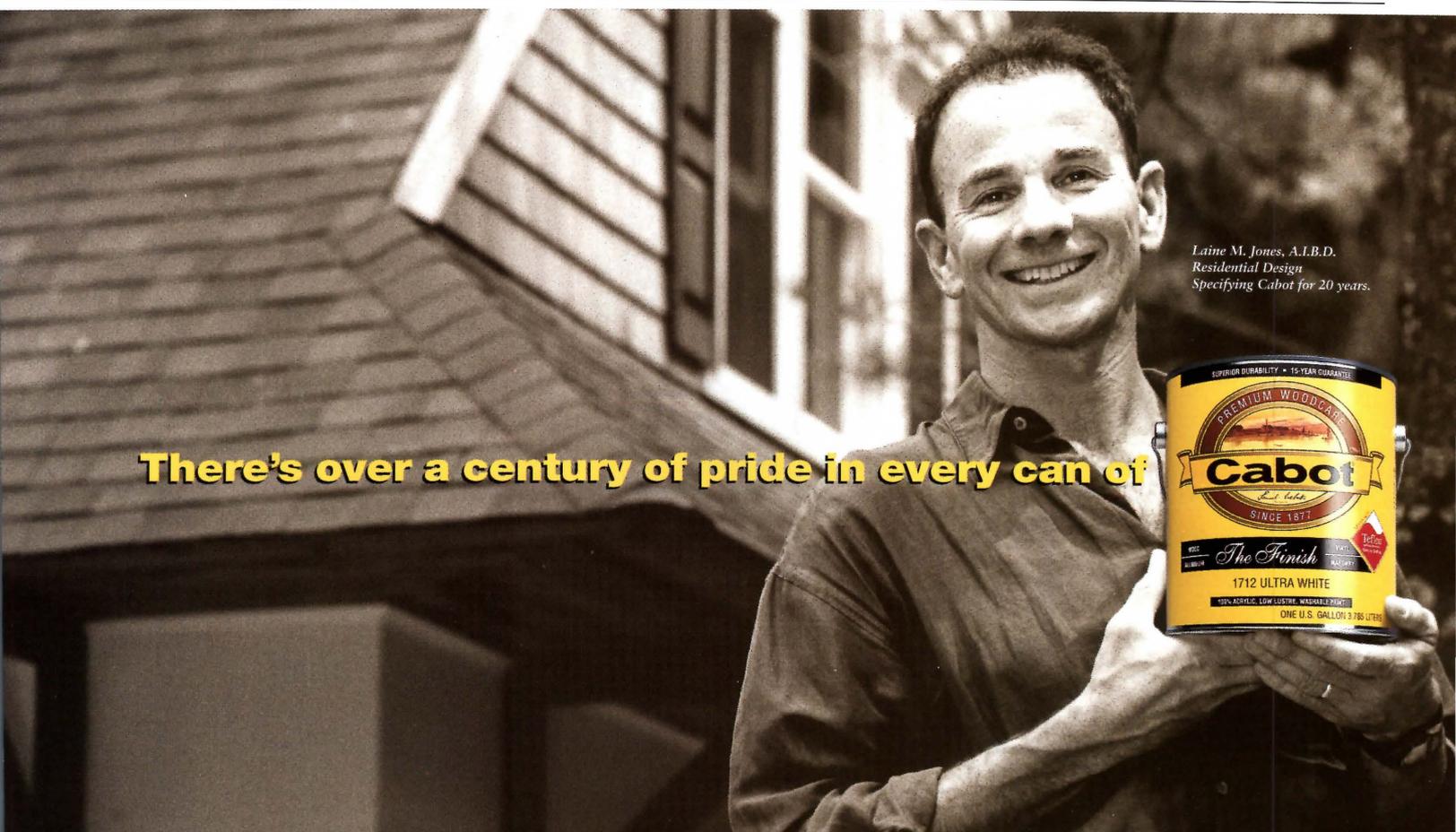
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Doug Sanford

## glass houses

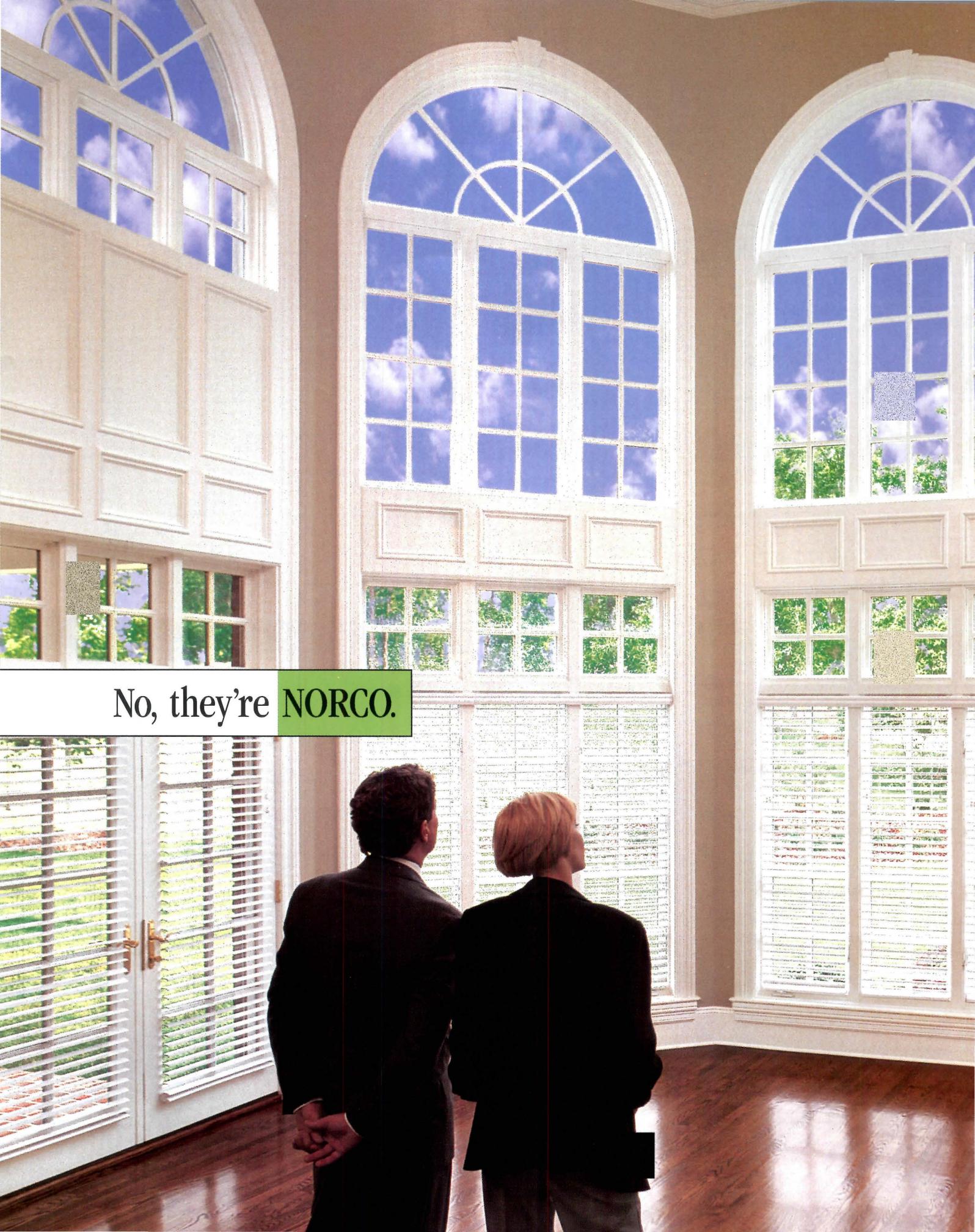
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# loved labors lost

what happens when your best work is altered beyond recognition?  
dallas architect frank welch has been there—twice.

by frank welch, faia

**t**here is little protection in the United States for a distinguished private dwelling. Unless it is a monument of history (Mount Vernon, Monticello, The Hermitage), the home of an important figure (Samuel Clemens, William Randolph Hearst, Dominique and John de Menil) or a testament to a design movement (Gamble House, Fallingwater, Philip Johnson's Glass House), no private residence is safe from the wrecking ball. A house's life can be a fleeting thing, and residential architects must be prepared for the possible destruction or mutilation of their best efforts.

I have practiced architecture for 40 years, beginning in West Texas and later returning to Dallas. The practice, identified with residential design, ranged over the state to Houston, San Antonio, and Austin as well as Dallas. Two of my favorite designs, both Texas Society of Architects design award winners, have recently been destroyed or totally transformed.

## swallowed whole

The latter case, a TSA 25-Year Award winner in 1997 (along with Louis Kahn's Kimbell Museum in Fort



Ezra Stoller © Esto

The Birthday, a simple structure of native materials, disappeared inside a new building after it was sold.

Worth) was built in 1964 as a weekend shelter for a rancher client from Midland, Texas. The simple little structure of native materials, known as The Birthday, perched on a caliche bluff with a view of West Texas' vastness. It has achieved an almost mythic status over the years, and has often been a subject in architecture classes. Its remoteness seemed to assure its permanence.

My client and good friend sold the ranch five years ago. When he phoned to tell me, he sounded sub-

dued, almost mournful; it was a call he clearly didn't want to make. The new owner had decided that he wanted to build his home on the site, thus absorbing the solitary, proud little building. Despite my pleas that he preserve The Birthday, the new home was built. That work is complete; reportedly only vestiges of the original structure peek through the new residence.

## crime scene

My other prized building was a 6,000-square-foot, two-story residence on a

park-like site in Houston's River Oaks neighborhood. My clients were cultivated leaders in the city's world of art, opera, and ballet, and asked for a modern design suitable for both their young family and for their blue-chip collection of art and antiques. Their home became the setting for many memorable gatherings focused on Houston's cultural life.

After the couple's divorce, the wife sold the house to clients who ultimately enlisted the counsel of a feng shui

*continued on page 30*



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## perspective

specialist. One of the expert's recommendations was that they live in a more traditional setting. When a relative of theirs called me to ask for the mechanical plans pursuant to making alterations, I was aghast. "They're keeping the windows!" she responded, amused at my appalled reaction.

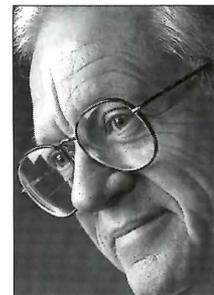
Maybe a year passed before I settled down enough to go see what had been done to my favorite house. From the street I slowly walked up the drive-

the result had they gone ahead with the remodeling plans, I had been spared. An aching load lifted off my heart. As I returned down the hill to my car, it was with a lighter step. This prize effort of mine would live on in photographs and memories. And so would The Birthday.

## carpe diem

I've learned that houses, with few exceptions, are fragile, mortal objects. In the mid-19th century, the

enjoy and protect and document your best works. their lives may be shorter than you'd hoped.



Danny Turner

way, which winds from a stone bridge through evergreen oaks and magnolias screening the house. As I turned past the last magnolia and lifted my head, the shock was surreal: The house, pool house, and pool had been completely and cleanly scraped away. *Poof.* Yellow security tape marked the footprints of the vaporized structures. Was this a quarantine, or the scene of a crime?

After the initial shock, a feeling of relief flowed through me. Rather than witness the despoiled offspring that would have been

French poet Baudelaire defined modernity as "the ephemeral, the fugitive, and the contingent," terms that also apply to the life of houses. So, attention architects of houses: Enjoy and protect and document your best works. Their lives, like those of The Birthday and the Houston home, may be shorter than you'd hoped. But the art you've created will endure. **ra**

Frank Welch, FAIA, is the principal of Frank Welch & Associates in Dallas. He is a contributing editor of Texas Architect.



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# the out-of-towners

even with high-tech help, long-distance clients still require the personal touch.

by sharon o'malley

**C**harleston, S.C., architect Chris Schmitt, FAIA, had no choice but to fax the floor plans and elevations for a local resort home to his clients if he was going to keep the project on schedule. The couple was vacationing at a fishing lodge in Iceland and could not predict when they would be in Charleston next. So he cut the plans into 11-inch strips and ran them through the fax machine he bought a decade ago to help him keep in touch with long-distance clients.

When the clients called him the next day, they quelled the architect's jitters about the less-than-ideal communication. "As they described it, they spent a delightful evening with a bottle of wine on the floor taping all these pieces of paper back together to find floor plans and elevations for their house," says Schmitt.

## local talent

Many of the clients who build homes along the South Carolina coast are

out-of-towners who fall in love with the southern resorts while vacationing there. After their holidays end, they enlist the expertise of local architects like Schmitt to design high-end beach houses and oversee their construction.

Making smooth work out of designing for absentee clients is getting easier as architects and home buyers become more comfortable using such technology as the Internet, e-mail, faxes, and voice mail.

"That sort of instantaneous communication has been increased a thousand-fold as our office has become automated with computers and e-mail and the ability to fax things directly from the computers," says Schmitt.



## net interest

In fact, notes Orlando, Fla., marketing consultant Melinda Brody, the Internet should be the communications tool of choice for architects who work with out-of-town clients. "It's a no-brainer" and also relatively cheap to create a Web site for the firm and to devote a page on it to each long-distance client, she says. Clients' pages, she advises, should include pictures of the work in progress during the planning and building stages.

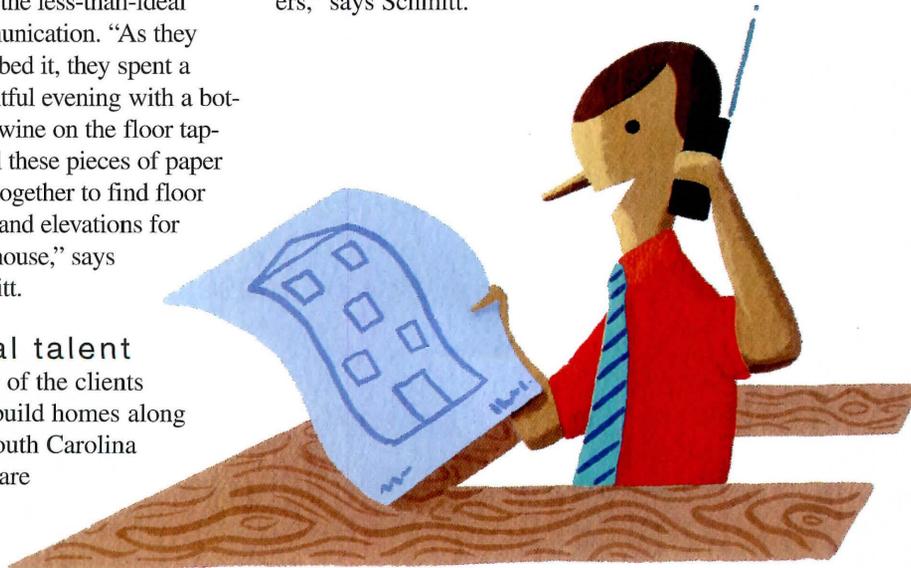
"No news is scary news because they think it means

there's a delay or a problem," says Brody. Keeping a Web page updated with design and construction progress reports eases those fears and serves as a point of contact.

Using the Web to update clients has meant fewer panicky phone calls to Schmitt, who assigns passwords to his Internet-savvy clients so they can log onto the firm's online site and see their homes in progress. "There are a lot of phone calls that normally result from the [out-of-town] client being somewhat out of the loop," he says. "This gives the client a way of having real hands-on contact with all of the paperwork and the whole process."

Likewise, e-mail allows architects to contact clients at any time, even if each lives in different time zones. Remember, though, that not everyone is technologically capable or even willing to learn how to use e-mail or visit an architect's Web site. Michael Ryan, who designs resort homes on New Jersey's Long Beach Island, estimates that

*continued on page 36*



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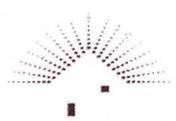
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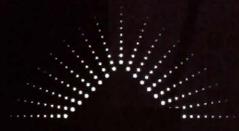


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20 percent to 30 percent of his clients are using e-mail—and most of them signed on for the first time less than a year ago. “E-mail makes some things easier, like clipping pictures and sending them,” he says, “but only if [the clients] can figure out how to open them on their desktop. Sometimes, using e-mail is

“the biggest challenge is getting the clients’ attention when you need it—these are very busy people.”

chris schmitt, faia

no more practical than a phone call.”

Indeed, in some cases the telephone may be the best means of communicating with far-away customers. E-mail, suggests Brody, can supplement the telephone by offering a quick and easy way to make appointments for the calls.

### face time

Still, cautions Washington, D.C., business consultant Stuart W. Rose, there is no substitute for face-to-face meetings when it comes to building a successful relationship with a client.

He points out that buyers wishing to build homes in resort areas are doing so because they favor the area, so they probably won’t mind visiting there to meet with their architect. And

Nantucket, Mass., architect David Bentley adds that far-away clients generally are motivated to keep in touch with their distant architects because they are, after all, spending huge sums on custom homes.

Rose urges the architect to make the first meeting with the client—which may be the only time the pair spends together in person—count. They should visit the site together, and the architect should use the time not only to hear what the client wants, but to learn how the customer wants to communicate. “Some clients are really busy and they don’t want a lot of personal involvement,” he says.

After that, the architect should make sure both the firm and the client are equipped with cell phones, fax machines, e-mail addresses, and Internet access so the relationship can continue to develop, albeit from a distance.

Schmitt agrees. “The biggest challenge is getting the clients’ attention when you need it—to look at something you’re designing or to make decisions. In many cases, it’s not so much a function of the distance, it’s a function of the fact that these are very busy people or people who travel a great deal,” he says.

Newport, R.I., architect Jim Estes says he pays close attention to the early choices his clients make so he can save them time later

by anticipating their needs. “By the time we get to doorknobs and hinges, the decisions are more narrow,” says Estes. “We show them three or four choices; because we know which way it’s going, we don’t have to show them 30. We don’t have to throw the book at them every time.”

### extra effort

Ryan, whose office includes an interior design staff, maintains a makeshift showroom in which out-of-town clients can select everything from tile to cabinets during their rare personal visits. “The clients like it because they don’t have to go to showrooms; they don’t have to schlep all around to choose their stuff.” Schmitt says one of his busy clients already owns homes in Tokyo, Canada, and New York, and also travels for his job as an international investment banker. The man has his secretary fax Schmitt a weekly itinerary, complete with fax numbers for homes and hotels.

That’s not to say that Schmitt is never the one to hop a plane for a client meet-

ing. In fact, Rose says high-end clients often prefer to spring for the architect’s plane ticket than spend their own time traveling to a meeting. If the project and the price are right, most architects don’t mind the extra effort.

“It’s much much easier to have a distant client and a local project than a local client and a distant project,” says Estes, who works with both.

Wherever the client is, adds Schmitt, the custom architect needs to hone relationship skills. And if that client is far away, those skills are even more critical. “The communications with the house client have to be very personal communications,” Schmitt says. “Those people have to become your friends and be able to talk to you as openly as they would with a friend if you’re going to get the kind of input you need from them.” *ra*

*Sharon O’Malley is a freelance writer in College Park, Md.*



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\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Single-Family Production Housing, attached

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ALTHOUGH HE HOLDS HIS  
BRUSH AND PALETTE IN HIS  
HANDS, I KNOW HIS HEART  
IS ALWAYS WITH ME!



# the young classicists

the partners at ferguson shamamian & rattner  
spin tried-and-true into perennially new.

by s. claire conroy

It's no accident that Ferguson Shamamian & Rattner Architects, LLP, serve their visitors Classic Coke in those retro little bottles. At first take, it's a cute joke: The 10-year-old, New York City-based firm specializes in Classicism. But the gimmick also has a more subtle, serious message to convey. The 6 1/2-ounce, ridged-glass Coke bottle is an icon of industrial design—the Doric column of pop culture. It's at once globally recognizable and uniquely American; admirably utilitarian and enduringly beautiful. These are exactly the qualities the partners at FS&R hope to bring to the houses they design.

Mark Ferguson, AIA, Oscar Shamamian, AIA, and Don Rattner practice a kind of architecture revered by most Americans and reviled by most schools of architecture: Traditionalism. Their clients call the aesthetic warm and familiar; some of their peers call it derivative and anachronistic. In a profession that exalts originality and invention, they dare to be square.

And yet, they may have the last laugh. While many Modernist residential architects are struggling for commissions, FS&R is designing the largest new house in America: industrialist Ira Rennert's purportedly 66,000-square-foot mansion in Sagaponack, N.Y.

So notorious it's already been fictionalized in James Brady's novel "The House That Ate the Hamptons," the project is controversial



Steven Freeman

because of its size—which may top 90,000 square feet with out-buildings—and the secretiveness of its reclusive owner. The partners at FS&R are accustomed to a little controversy, however—they've been defending their architecture since their schoolboy days.

## school of hard knocks

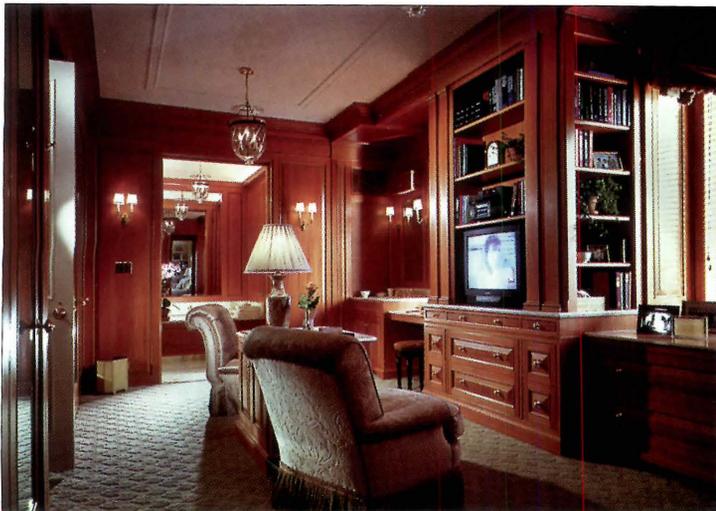
In many walks of life, choosing the conservative route is a safe decision—the path of least resistance. Not so in architecture school. For more than half a century, the Modernists, Postmodernists, and now the Deconstructivists have owned the road. "When I was in grad school in the '80s, the Modernists prevailed," says Oscar Shamamian, who went to Columbia University for a B.A. in art history and a master's in architecture. "I once had a review where the professor screamed at me, 'How can you put a gable window there!'"

Don Rattner, who was at Princeton University during the Postmodern regime, had a similar experience. "By my time, it was okay to look at history and to familiarize yourself with it. But there was a stopping point—a line in the sand," he recalls. "I know students who had drawings ripped off the walls. There was some incredibly suppressive behavior on the part of professors. Isn't school where you're supposed to open minds? But it's run like a training camp

*"the craft.  
that's what  
gets us  
out of bed  
in the  
morning."*

This 6,000-square-foot apartment remodel carved a breakfast area within a formal dining room. Ornate plasterwork conceals new low-voltage lighting and HVAC (opposite). Partners Oscar Shamamian, Mark Ferguson, and Don Rattner (this page, from left to right).

# the young classicists



"Apartments get designed like jewel boxes," says Rattner. Such was the case in this mahogany-paneled dressing room.

*"it's the play  
of freedom  
and rule  
that makes  
for artistic  
production."*

for the Khmer Rouge. It's exactly the opposite of what it should be."

Like Shamamian, he earned a degree in art history from Columbia, and then turned to the Princeton library for his autodidactic studies in Classical architecture. "I was pulling out dusty volumes no one had checked out in 40 years."

Meanwhile, Mark Ferguson, who is the lead architect on the Rennert project, encountered a different frustration in Carnegie Mellon's undergraduate architecture department. "I became an architect because I was interested in drawing and making things—the practical dimension," he explains. "But in undergrad, the design teachers weren't teaching form, it was all theory. They were teaching Christopher Alexander." He knew he was drawn to the richness of traditional styles, but he discovered the same vacuum of information his colleagues did. He, too, received his M.Arch. from Princeton.

All three partners were discouraged by an education system that pushed the cult of genius and the "perpetual search for what's novel," as Rattner puts it. "The ideal in their minds is of what architecture would be like with no client to answer to."

"There are two kinds of architects: visionaries and everyone else. And there are very few visionaries," says Ferguson. "When you go to architecture school, they prepare you to be a visionary."

It's a serious mistake, they point out, to think of clients as an unpleasant means to an end. Satisfying them must be the first priority, they insist. "You can't say, 'I'm going to make a house for you that looks like a fish, and

you're going to like it," says Shamamian.

"Not every building is going to be a masterpiece. It's better to strive for good," Ferguson concludes. "We're a service business. At the end of the day, clients have to receive what they were expecting."

## design for living

After graduate school, each architect took a different turn. Shamamian went to work for Robert A.M. Stern; Rattner got a job with Traditionalist Allan Greenberg's practice in New Haven, Conn.; and Ferguson, surprisingly, ended up in the offices of avant-garde architects Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio in New York.

"I worked for them for a year," he says.

"But I looked at details as symbolic of what they represent, and that was something they didn't agree with, so I left. I was interested in quality that is as rich as you can make it without it becoming a sculptural enterprise."

He found a more sympathetic group at another unlikely place: the old-line New York decorating firm Parish-Hadley. "It wasn't until Parish-Hadley that I found a world I felt comfortable in," he says. "Every possible detail is considered there—from doorknobs to bookcases. All those things get designed and can be beautiful."

Interior design in New York is, of course, a breed all its own. Within the shell of apartment buildings and brownstones, "decorating jobs" are often wall-moving, top-to-bottom remodels. And Parish-Hadley handles the crème de la crème commissions—ones as complex and expensive as any new custom home. Ferguson's four-and-a-half years there amounted to intensive post-doctoral work in Traditional architecture. "Of every design,

A seamless addition in Pennsylvania improves on the original without upstaging it (below). The home's new library showcases the firm's attention to detail (opposite).



Photos: H. Durston Saylo

WITH MALICE TOWARD NONE;  
WITH CHARITY FOR ALL... 1865



the young classicists



they asked, 'Is it beautiful? Is it appropriate?' It was almost the antithesis of what happened in architecture school," he says.

His wife, Natalie, helped lure Oscar Shamamian to Parish-Hadley. Natalie, also an architect, worked with Shamamian at Stern's firm. Several years later, Ferguson, Shamamian, and another colleague, architect John Murray, left to start their own firm. "We did it to support Parish-Hadley," Shamamian says. "Even though they had a bona fide architecture department, they still had to turn plans over to an architect of record."

### deluxe apartments

The young Classicists headed downtown to hip, happening, anything-but-conservative SoHo and opened an office. They quickly became the darlings of the star interior designers, who ruled most of the big-ticket residential work in Manhattan and its suburbs.

"When we started, there were only four



Phillip Ennis

or five other firms who did what we did," says Shamamian. "There was a high level of respect for what we do among interior designers because of our Parish-Hadley experience. We understood about creating ambience."

Within the city's best addresses, they employed the most gifted craftspeople and artisans—a pool of talent they still draw from today. "A lot of what we do is patch and match; extend and mend," says Rattner, who was the firm's second hire. "You know, architecture school encourages the cult of personality. But our work is often about self-effacement—seamless additions."

"With Traditional design, the devil is in the details," says Ferguson. "When you open 2,000 years of architecture as your palette, it's a tremendous amount to learn. But the metal makers, the mosaic designers, the masons—the craft. That's what gets us out of bed in the morning."

Although their clients vary greatly, they tend to be a little older and their wealth is often "self-made," says Ferguson. They like the instant familiarity and comfort of traditional architecture styles. And they want a formal organization of public rooms and a more open plan for their private spaces. "We can create the figure of a room but with an open flow," says Rattner. "We're modern architects. We don't live in the past."

He believes traditional forms and conventions provide a vast territory for invention and creativity. "There are 26 letters in the alphabet, and you can make thousands of words from them," he says. "It's the play of freedom and rule that makes for artistic production."

Rattner is the firm's most vocal spokesperson and standard-bearer. Nine years ago, he founded the Institute for the Study of Classical Architecture to help fill the educational void he and his partners suffered in

The front elevation strikes a formal pose, but rough-hewn fieldstone and painted wood detailing help relax its posture.

*"classicism  
is our focus  
because it's  
the most  
applicable  
system."*

A Connecticut country house's rear elevation uses wood to mimic limestone veneer (opposite). With interior designer Bunny Williams, FS&R sped faux finished flooring and walls in the entry hall (below).



Phillip Ennis

## the young classicists



Phillip Ennis

Beautiful kitchens were once bread-and-butter work for FS&R, which built its reputation on high-end remodeling.

*“traditional forms and conventions provide a vast territory for invention and creativity.”*

school. Because of the firm’s growth—they now number 45 employees—and his recent promotion to partner after the departure of Murray, he’s resigned from the school. But his professorial precision still shows as he puts a fine point on what FS&R is all about: “Classicism is our focus because it’s the most applicable system. But if broad Traditionalism is needed, we’re comfortable with that, too.”

### bright lights, big houses

Everything old is, well, really hot right now.

The partners have as much business as they can handle. And much of the recent work is in custom homes and estates. That’s just fine by them, because they especially like applying their aesthetic to the range of buildings, grounds, and hardscapes comprised in a large estate.

Slowly but surely, those projects have gotten bigger and bigger, until the biggest one of all came along. Because of Ira Rennert’s reclusiveness and some pending litigation, Ferguson can’t say much about the most important commission he’s ever had. But it’s clearly a turning point for both him and his firm.

“Our ambitions were modest in the beginning,” he recalls. “We were three guys and an assistant with some ideas of how things should be. Our vision of what we can be has grown with us.” He’s still in the thick of the project, which has, he says, more than 500 pages of drawings to date. “It’s being designed and built concurrently.”

According to press descriptions, the Italianate main house will occupy 66,000 square feet

and contain 29 bedrooms, 30 bathrooms, and a 165-seat movie theater. Together with a number of other structures (including a 10,000-square-foot recreational building and a 17,000-square-foot garage), the project will consume almost 90,000 square feet, or 2.7 acres of the 65-acre seaside parcel. The *New York Times* calls the \$100 million house, named Fair Field, “the largest American house to be built during the second half of the century.” To put it in perspective, Biltmore mansion in Asheville, N.C., is still the largest house in America at 175,000 square feet.

Rennert’s house is taking a small army and a commercial builder to design and build. “We have a designer for the shell, one for the interior, a project architect on the working drawings, two on administration, four job captains, and four staff on this project,” says Ferguson.

Some of the townsfolk are up in arms about the size of the project, but Ferguson points out that the lot was zoned for subdivision before Rennert purchased it from the developer. “The developer could have built 15 McMansions on the property,” he says. “Having someone build one big house on 60 acres is an enhancement. We’re creating a family homestead—one that’s comfortable for his children and his children’s children. He wanted to create a place that’s a real destination for the family.”

### new horizons

Where do you go after you’ve designed the biggest house of the second half of the century? The partners think they might like some institutional projects. After all, they say, a 65-acre, multibuilding residential compound is not unlike a small university campus. “Where we’d like to go is to projects that require that scope of production and management and combine it with the level of detail and quality we’re known for,” says Ferguson. “But in a way, we’re spoiled. We’ve been doing architecture with a capital A. In residential work, there’s a tremendous amount of design per square inch.”

For now, he and the firm have their hands full with country houses and Park Avenue apartments. “You know, clients can’t get enough of what we do,” he says. “The hardest sell is the architects. They accuse us of being replicative because we work in traditional styles. But we’re creative, innovative architects. We treat each problem with a new solution.” **ra**

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by meghan drueding

## door prize

*Proof that the less architects have to work with, the more creative they get: this tiny powder room in suburban Chicago. Its custom, puzzle-piece-like doors slide together on tracks to interlock at the room's corner. The apple-green doors give residents the same amount of privacy as a standard door, but they pack a fun visual punch. "The client wanted people to rethink traditional ways of living," says architect Ellen Bailey Dickson, AIA, of Bailey Edward Design in Chicago. A bowl sink and toilet (not visible in photo) inside take care of the room's more utilitarian requirements; an off-white square set into the purple vinyl floor defines it as a separate entity from the hall and kitchen.*



*"the client wanted people to rethink traditional ways of living."*

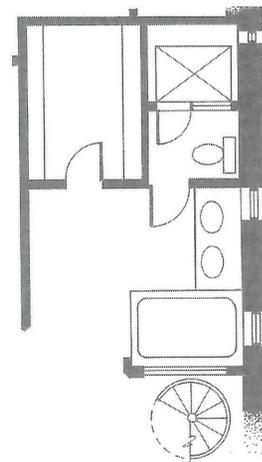
**architect:**  
Bailey Edward Design, Chicago  
**builder/contractor:**  
John Borkovec, Chicago  
**project size:**  
25 square feet  
**construction cost:**  
\$200 a square foot

## shared pane

*Situated on the third floor of a four-story Manhattan townhome, this master bath has just one tiny window of its own. Rather than compromise and use purely artificial light to illuminate the room, the San Diego-based firm Safdie Rabines did a little “borrowing.” “We placed a translucent glass window over the tub, which runs parallel to the master bedroom’s north-facing window,” says Taal Safdie. “That way, the natural light coming into the bedroom doesn’t stop there; it just flows right into the bath.”*

Blond wood cabinetry and maple floors keep the mood bright. And a cladding of one-inch-square Italian glass tiles helps make the concrete sinks, countertop, steps, and tub surround easier on tender skin. A convenient open cubby for holding toiletries and decorative items extends the length of the double-lav counter, as does a space-enlarging, flush-to-ceiling mirror. Here, Safdie and Rabines have

solved the most common design problems plaguing urban bathrooms—lack of natural light, lack of privacy, and lack of space—and they’ve done it with uncommon flair and resourcefulness.



**architect:**

Safdie Rabines, San Diego

**builder/contractor:**

Peter Murphy, New York City

**project size:**

216 square feet

**construction cost:**

\$200 a square foot

Photos: © Dub Rogers

*purely artificial light to illuminate the room, safdie rabines did a little "borrowing."*



## long shot

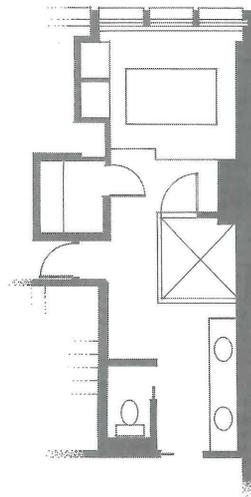
*This Philadelphia bath remodel could have been a disaster.*

The client's lengthy wish list included a sauna, a large tub, two sinks, a double shower, and a toilet. Yet the original bath—located in an I.M. Pei-designed townhouse—ran low on both space and natural light.

Steve Kieran, FAIA, of Philadelphia's Kieran Timberlake & Harris, didn't flinch. He incorporated a former guest bedroom into the new bath, which gave him the square footage he needed to accommodate the client's desires. A skylight above the shower and an uplit stretch of ceiling brighten the bath. Highly reflective white marble covers the floor, tub surround, and counter. And the mirrors topping the double lavs are interspersed with back-painted glass panels in white, gray, and black. "The back-painted glass and mirrors create a tremendous amount of reflected light," Kieran says. "They magnify the room's width and brightness

*"the back-painted glass and mirrors create a tremendous amount of reflected light. they magnify the room's width and brightness many, many times."*

many, many times." Minimalist detailing—handle-free cabinets, stainless steel trim, a glass shower enclosure—helps clear the way for that reflected light to reach every corner.



**architect:**

Kieran Timberlake & Harris,  
Philadelphia

**builder/contractor:**

Alan Powell Cabinetmaker,  
Philadelphia

**project size:**

250 square feet

**construction cost:**

Withheld

Barry Halkin

*"the client said her bath should be a complete escape from the outside world, in an almost fairy-tale-like way."*



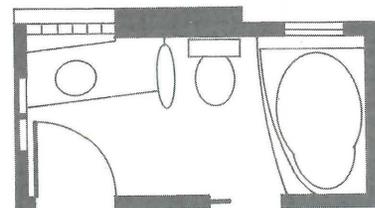
**architect:**  
House + House, San Francisco  
**builder/contractor:**  
Paul Whyte, San Francisco  
**project size:**  
72 square feet  
**construction cost:**  
\$138 a square foot

Steven House

## california dream

*House + House's* client for this San Francisco bath was enviably specific about what she wanted from the project. "She said her bath should be a complete escape from the outside world, in an almost fairy-tale-like way," says project designer Sonya Sottinsky. The San Francisco-based firm complied, and managed to sneak in a healthy dose of real-life functionality.

The half-glass block, half-mosaic tile insert behind the sink provides an appropriately ethereal backdrop for a floating counter and mirror. But it also ushers in natural light from the neighboring kitchen—light that, along with two fluorescent tubes tucked between the mirror and wall, turns the bath into a glowing sanctuary. A half wall separating the sink and toilet helps support the curved, sandblasted glass vanity counter; the wall's oval form, mosaic tile coating, and sandblasted glass top add another element of softness to the room. Brushed brass trim and a green slate floor round out the room's luxurious touches. And as a final, fantasy-inspired flourish, House + House covered a medicine cabinet (not visible in photo) with gold leaf.



## reflected glory

*A few subtle moves by architect Keith Peoples of Washington, D.C.-based Robert Schwartz Associates elevated this D.C. master bath remodel to a new level of sophistication. "The client asked for a bigger bath, one that felt more like a retreat," Peoples says. "Zoning laws prohibited us from extending the second floor out any further, so we expanded into a closet and some unused attic space." A variety of translucent and reflective surfaces (a glass-block wall, multiple mirrors, and glass shelving) lend the south-facing room modern sparkle without blocking any of its abundant natural light.*

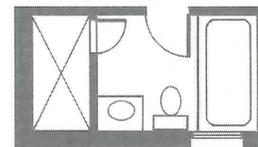
The extra-long transom window above the bath's entrance allows that light to filter into the master bedroom; by placing a mirrored medicine cabinet and glass shelves underneath it on either side of the door, Peoples made sense of what could have been an awkward clash of proportions. And he permitted a whimsical strip of blue-green tile to continue straight on through the mirror above the tub, breaking

up the mirror's mass and adding a bright spot of color. For all its careful planning, the room reads as though it came together by fortunate happenstance.



Andrew Lautman

*a variety of translucent and reflective surfaces lend the room modern sparkle without blocking any of its abundant natural light.*



**architect:**

Robert Schwartz Associates,  
Washington, D.C.

**builder/contractor:**

Guest and Co., Chevy Chase, Md.

**project size:**

66 square feet

**construction cost:**

Withheld

*this master bath and dressing room takes the term "double duty" seriously.*



**architect:**

Jacobson Silverstein Winslow, Berkeley, Calif.

**builder/contractor:**

Winans Construction, Oakland, Calif.

**project size:**

320 square feet

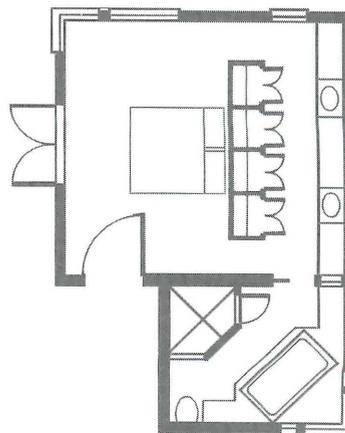
**construction cost:**

Withheld

Andrew McKinney

## crowd control

*This master bath and dressing room for a Berkeley, Calif., couple, designed by Murray Silverstein of Berkeley's Jacobson Silverstein Winslow, takes the term "double duty" seriously. The flip side of its floor-to-ceiling cedar storage unit serves as the headboard of the bed in the master suite. The raised platform sandwiched between twin lavs contains more storage space, and its top can be used as a shelf for holding shoes, toiletries, and other paraphernalia. Both marble counters are generously sized and well lit by a pair of conical fixtures. The tub and toilet (not visible in photo) can be closed off from the dressing area to ensure personal privacy during even the most hectic mornings.*

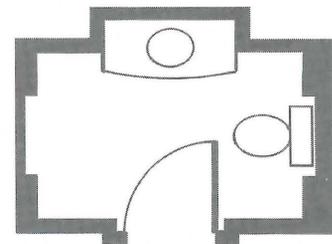


## super bowl

*Steve Kleineman, AIA, is no stranger to ingenuity. While on a recent vacation, the Minneapolis architect found a glass bowl he liked in a home furnishings store. He bought it, drilled a drainage hole in it, and installed it as a basin in this Wayzata, Minn., powder room.*

The impromptu sink sets the tone for a room that combines common sense and witty creativity. The walls are covered in textured paper that gives them the look of scored concrete without the expense and commitment. A softly curved mahogany vanity is topped with a floating counter of cast glass;

above it, a circular inset lends the mirror a three-dimensional appearance. Smooth pearwood pillars are uplit for a theatrical effect; a “flying saucer” light fixture floats overhead. And the stainless steel squares that punctuate the Mexican limestone floor echo the vanity’s steel trim. “It’s a small space,” says Kleineman, whose firm, SKD Architects, worked with local interior design firm Ramsey Engler Ltd. on this project. “We wanted to make it a little more interesting.”



**architect:**

SKD Architects, Minneapolis

**builder/contractor:**

Paragon Constructors, Minneapolis

**project size:**

38.5 square feet

**construction cost:**

Withheld

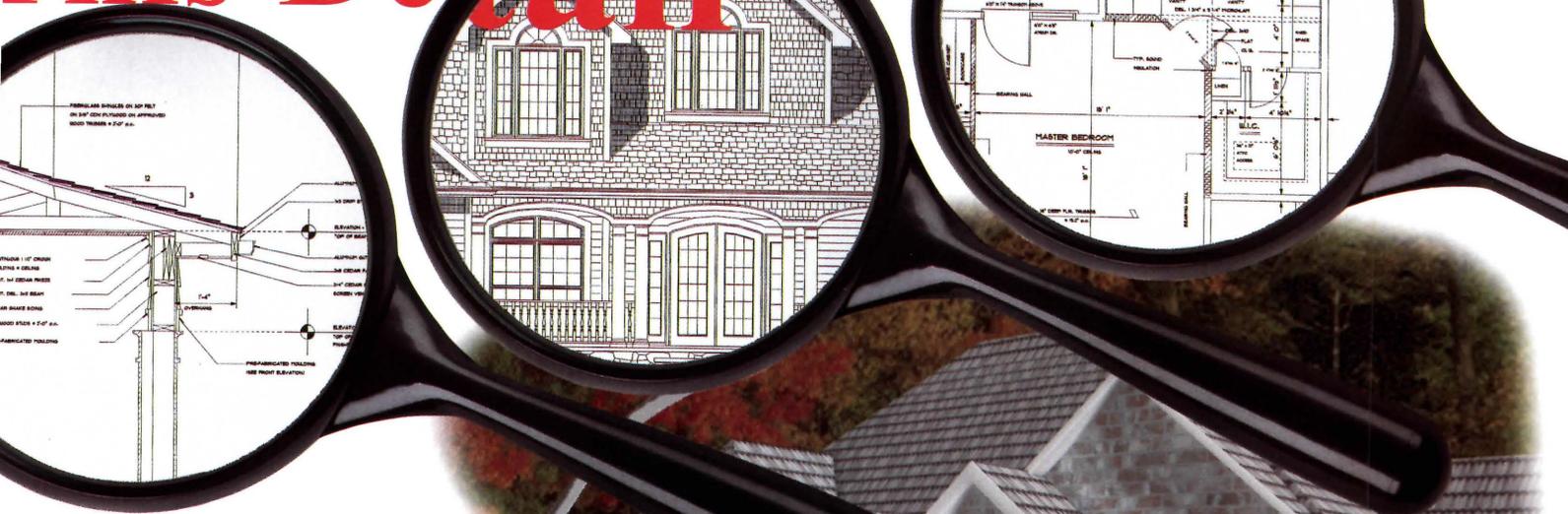
*“it’s a small space. we wanted to make it a little more interesting.”*

Karen Melvin

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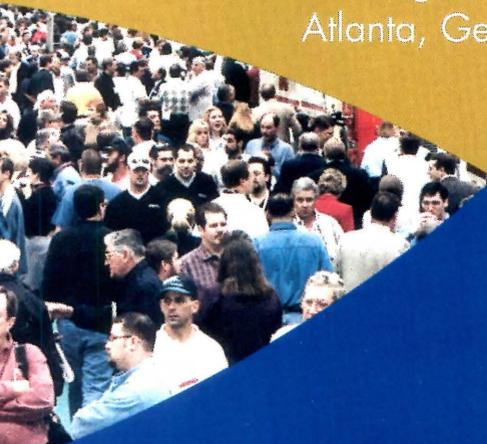
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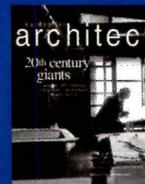
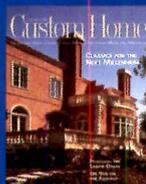
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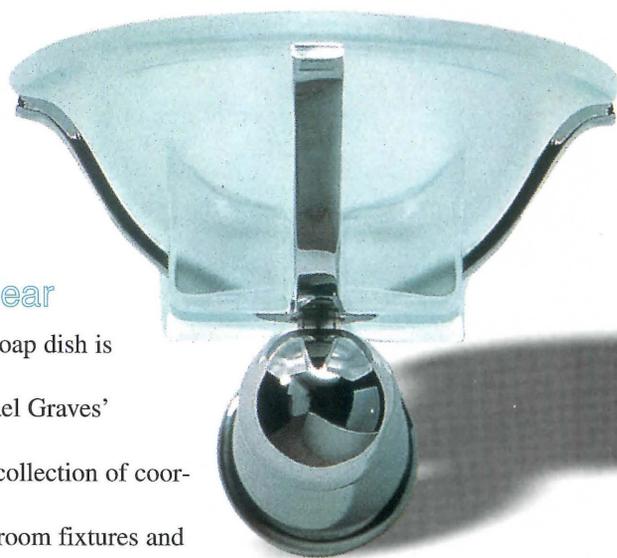
# bath time

fine fixtures and fittings for the loo.



## crystal clear

This crystal soap dish is part of Michael Graves' Dreamscape collection of coordinating bathroom fixtures and fittings. Chrome-plated brass bracket attaches to wall. Duravit USA, 1.888.387.2848.

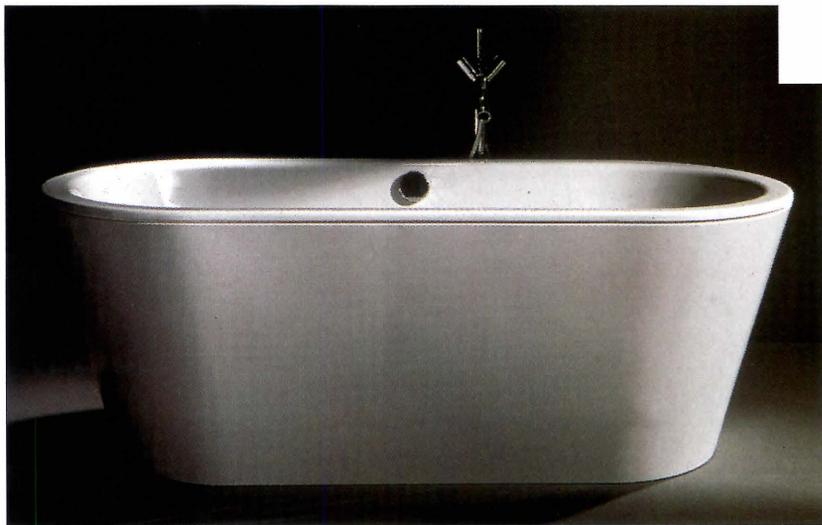


## mix-'n-match

Robern's Suspended Vanity System features wall-mounted glass counters and basins built to the clients' exact specifications. Countertops, basins, valences, faucets, and towel bars can be customized. The vanity can be mounted alone, or with complementary mirrored cabinets or wall mirrors. Valence options include four wood veneers, clear or frosted glass, and brushed stainless steel. Robern, 215.826.9800.

## starck realities

Philippe Starck's freestanding white acrylic tub combines austere elegance and sturdy construction. Part of the Stark Edition 2 series of bathroom fixtures, it measures 69 inches long, 31½ inches wide, and 23½ inches high. Floor-mounted faucet can be purchased separately or with the tub. Duravit USA, 1.888.387.2848.



*continued on page 66*

# New England Classic.



## What goes around, comes around.

For generations of Americans, the luxury of raised wood panels gracing the walls of fine homes was virtually taken for granted.



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### good morning

American Standard's above-counter Morning lav features a classic round bowl and an integral faucet deck. The bowl measures 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches around the rim and extends 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches above the counter. American Standard,

1.800.524.9797, extension 199; [www.americanstandard-us.com](http://www.americanstandard-us.com).



### healthy flush

The Gabrielle, a one-piece, low-flow toilet by Kohler Co., boasts an elongated bowl and a vigorous flush. Its rim height is 16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches, consistent with the standard height of a chair. Offered in a wide array of colors, including a new shade, Sunlight. Kohler Co., 920.457.4441.

—Deena Shehata



### splashy colors

Ugenex PushButton showerheads from Regent International come in a rainbow of translucent colors—rose, aqua, plum, and clear—to coordinate with even the most unique bath decor. Users can adjust spray with a simple push of a button. Regent International, 1.800.210.7054.



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# going solar

can we learn to love photovoltaics again?

by rich binsacca

**T**hink solar energy and you might experience a '70s flashback to huge, shimmering black roof panels mounted on aluminum racks. Back then, capturing enough solar energy for a home's basic electrical needs required a homely array of photovoltaic (PV) modules on its south-facing roof. Curb appeal took a big hit.

For more than two decades, the size and look of PV roof panels didn't change much. They became a little slimmer, maybe, but they remained a design challenge when applied to the average single-family house. Despite the real (and increasing) environmental and energy benefits of PV panels, their hard-to-love looks hindered widespread use of the technology. "We can discuss other issues, but aesthetics still drive this market," says Terence Parker, manager of sales engineering for United Solar Systems Corp., in Troy, Mich., one of several PV suppliers.

## breakthrough

The good news is that recently developed technology has reduced that roadblock. With a proprietary layering process and the use of more flexible and durable



Courtesy United Solar Systems

Thanks to new technology, today's photovoltaic panels blend better with conventional roofing materials, including metal.

thin-film solar cells, United Solar can arrange PV modules to mimic standing-seam metal roof panels and asphalt shingles. The finished products also fasten directly to the roof deck and sit flush with conventional roofing. "Once we were able to cut and layer the cells [manufactured in rolled sheets] into different shapes, we could think about how real roofing looks," Parker says.

The company also had to design the shingles as a weathertight barrier, a separate and wholly new objective for roof-mounted solar cells; a stainless-steel substrate and various laminated

polymers encase the layered cells. The result is a 140-pound-per-square shingle panel that delivers from 1 to 4 kilowatts (kW) and comes with a 20-year warranty. A pair of wires extend from each 12-tab shingle panel through the deck to a battery or an inverter that converts direct-current (DC) electricity into an alternating current (AC) for most household appliances. The AC can be run directly to the appliances or through the main electrical service panel. The latter arrangement, which is called "net metering," helps reduce a home's net usage of utility-supplied power.

While metal roofing is a small fraction of the overall housing market, it is a popular finish on rural and remote homes—which are often off the utility power grid—where solar makes the most economic sense. Metal panels are also used on high-pitched roofs in snow regions; a steeper slope affords better sun exposure than flatter roof profiles.

Of course, asphalt composition shingles remain the prevailing residential roofing choice, because of their low cost and variety of available colors. Unfortunately, the solar versions,

*continued on page 70*



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which come only in black, offer neither of those advantages. "The color of the solar shingles drove the overall roof color," recalls Jeff Berkus, AIA, about the Home of the Future, a 1998 idea house in Dallas that featured United Solar's textured, 5 1/8-inch-exposure, 12-tab shingles on the backside of the garage, providing backup electricity for various systems. "The shingles integrated well [with their comp counterparts], but normally you don't see a black roof in Texas."

### other options

Despite their more integrated look, PV shingles are still noticeable on a roof, especially if they must power a whole house full of electrical gizmos. A typical home, depending on location, may require six to 16 75-watt modules to accommodate a standard electrical load, not counting energy-hogging systems like air conditioning that must be alternatively powered or eliminated.

A new, smaller-scale option is the PV-equipped sunroom, designed to address concentrated electrical needs and remove PV panels from the roof altogether. Four Seasons Sunrooms of Holbrook, N.Y., recently partnered with PV supplier Siemens Solar Industries, Camarillo, Calif., to offer a pattern of photovoltaic cells on the upper-

## resources

### solar/pv trade associations and government agencies

#### Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Network

www.eren.doe.gov

*The Department of Energy's premier resource for information about renewable energy and energy-efficiency technologies, including solar radiation and photovoltaic data.*

#### Florida Solar Energy Center

Cocoa, Fla.  
407.638.1000

*FSEC's Photovoltaic System Design Assistance and Training Center offers workshops on topics related to PV system design and use.*

#### Institute of International Education

Washington, D.C.  
800.242.1612

www.iie.org

*Offers a variety of training programs, including sessions on solar energy.*

#### National Renewable Energy Laboratory

www.nrel.gov

*One of the Department of Energy's national laboratories; develops renewable energy technologies.*

#### North Carolina Solar Center at North Carolina State University

Raleigh, N.C.  
800.336.2787

www.ncsc.ncsu.edu

*Offers programs and resources pertaining to solar energy, including technical and design assistance, free publications, and training sessions.*

#### Solar Energy Intl.

Carbondale, Colo.  
970.963.8855

*Offers training programs on PV system design and installation, as well as on wind energy, mini-hydro systems, and solar home design.*

most sections of its sunrooms, devising a solar collector that promises to be more marketable than roof-mounted panels.

The Four Seasons product, launched this summer

in selected markets, permits net metering and stores backup power for sensitive equipment during an outage. It can also be used to run the water heater. In that same vein,

### pv suppliers

#### American Photovoltaics & Homes

Riverdale, N.Y.

718.548.0428

http://members.aol.com/SunsEnergy

#### Applied Power

Willits, Calif.

707.459.9496

www.solarelectric.com

#### Four Seasons Sunrooms

Holbrook, N.Y.

800.368-7732

www.four-seasons-sunrooms.com

#### Northern Arizona Wind & Sun

Flagstaff, Ariz.

800.383.0195

www.windsun.com

#### Siemens Solar Industries

Camarillo, Calif.

805.388.6561

*Offers a one-week training program on PV technology and system design.*

#### Solar-Tec Systems

Dana Point, Calif.

949.248.9728

www.solar-tec.com

#### Solar Utility (distributor for United Solar)

Culver City, Calif.

888.300.2600

www.solarutility.com

#### Solar Webb

Arcadia, Calif.

888.786.9322

www.solarwebb.com

#### United Solar Systems Corp.

Troy, Mich.

248.362.4170

www.ovonic.com/unisolar.html

other PV suppliers are focusing their cells on specific electric products. Solar Webb of Arcadia, Calif., for instance, makes modules that directly

*continued on page 72*

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**considerations**

Whether shingles or sun-rooms, PV systems require design and planning beyond matching colors and architectural styles. For any PV system, orientation to the sun is paramount; anything but a direct south exposure (within 15 degrees latitude) reduces production significantly. The slope of the roof is also important, as most PV suppliers recommend a minimum 3:12 pitch to collect adequate solar energy during daylight hours.

Proper sizing of the system requires calculating the home's electrical loads and estimating sun-hours, the daily amount of full sun available throughout the year in a given location. Possible future obstructions need to be considered, too, such as adjacent buildings or maturing trees. In addition, expect to educate code officials, lenders, insurance providers, and design-review boards to get a PV system through approvals.

Finally, cost is a factor. The PV modules (panels or shingles) and the components that capture, convert, and store electricity (called the balance of system, or BOS), are two separate purchases. A complete PV system, therefore, can cost about \$8 to \$10 per "peak

watt" (a cell running at full power); on average, that means \$20,000 a house. And that price does not include maintenance.

With that price tag, and with electric utility rates at 8 cents for the same amount of power, payback can be a long road. Even with state and federal tax credits and an increasing number of utility-sponsored rebates and net-metering programs, a minimum 15-year return (and probably longer) is a stretch. "You have to get down to \$1 per peak watt to generate any real interest," says Gordon Tully, a solar industry veteran and now senior architect with Steven Winter Associates in Norwalk, Conn. "A roof-mounted solar panel is not the ultimate solution, but if more people do it, it'll help develop the industry and lower costs in the future." ra

*Rich Binsacca is a freelance writer in Boise, Idaho.*

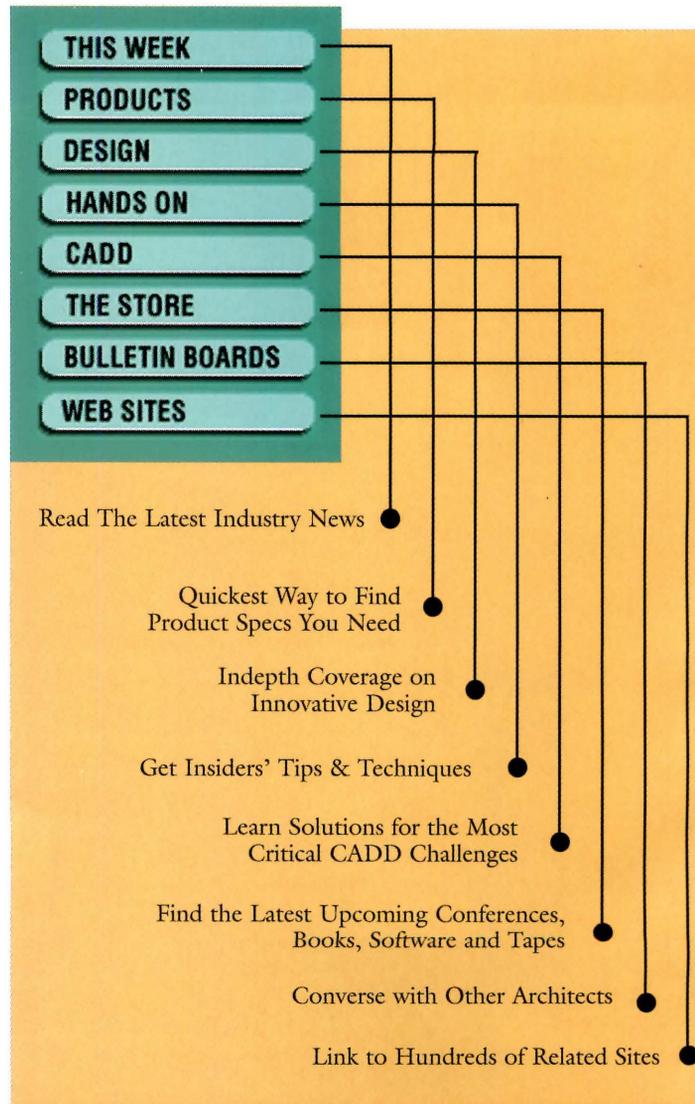
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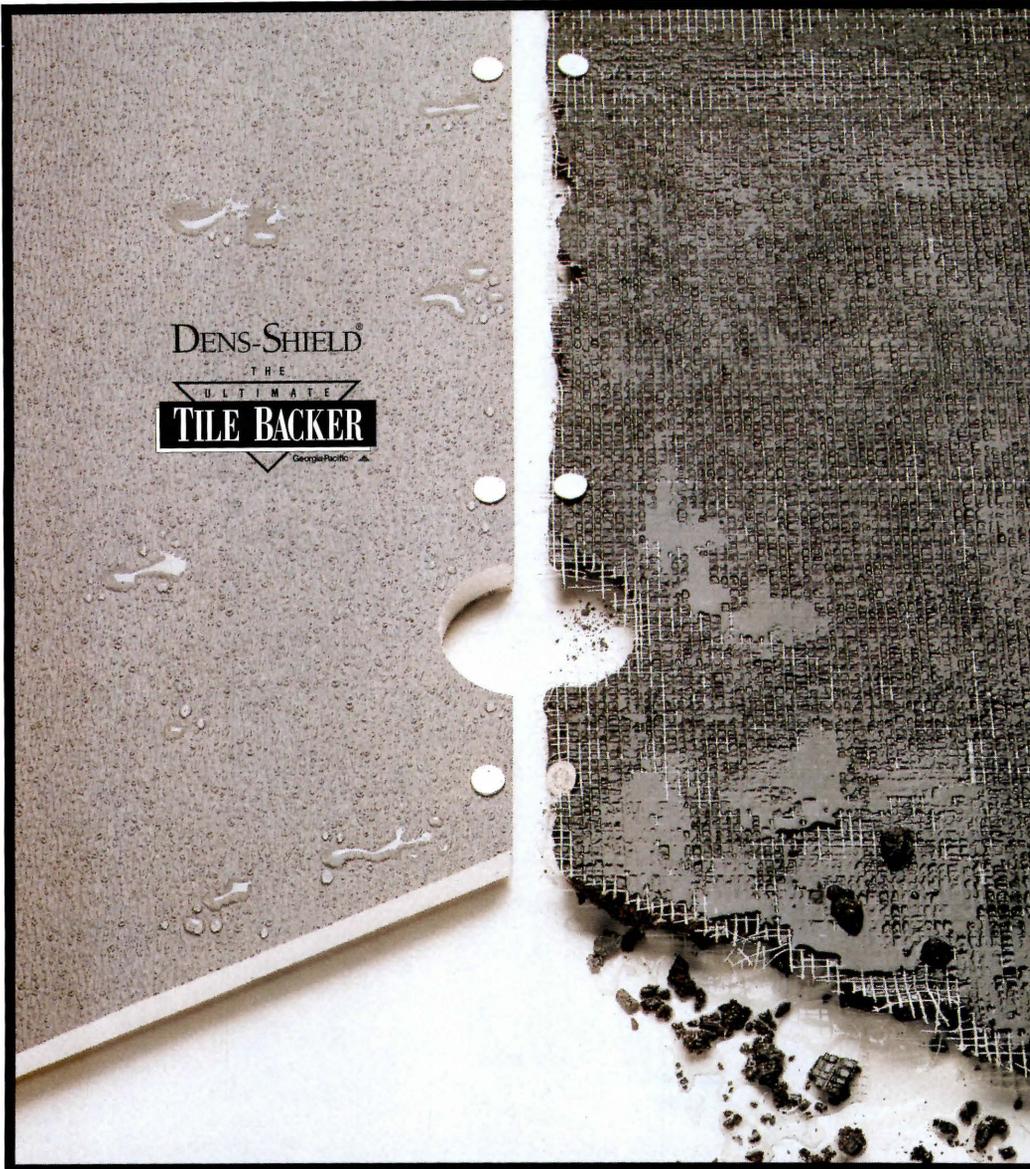
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# top grade

clever drainage and classy detailing elevate the common roof deck.

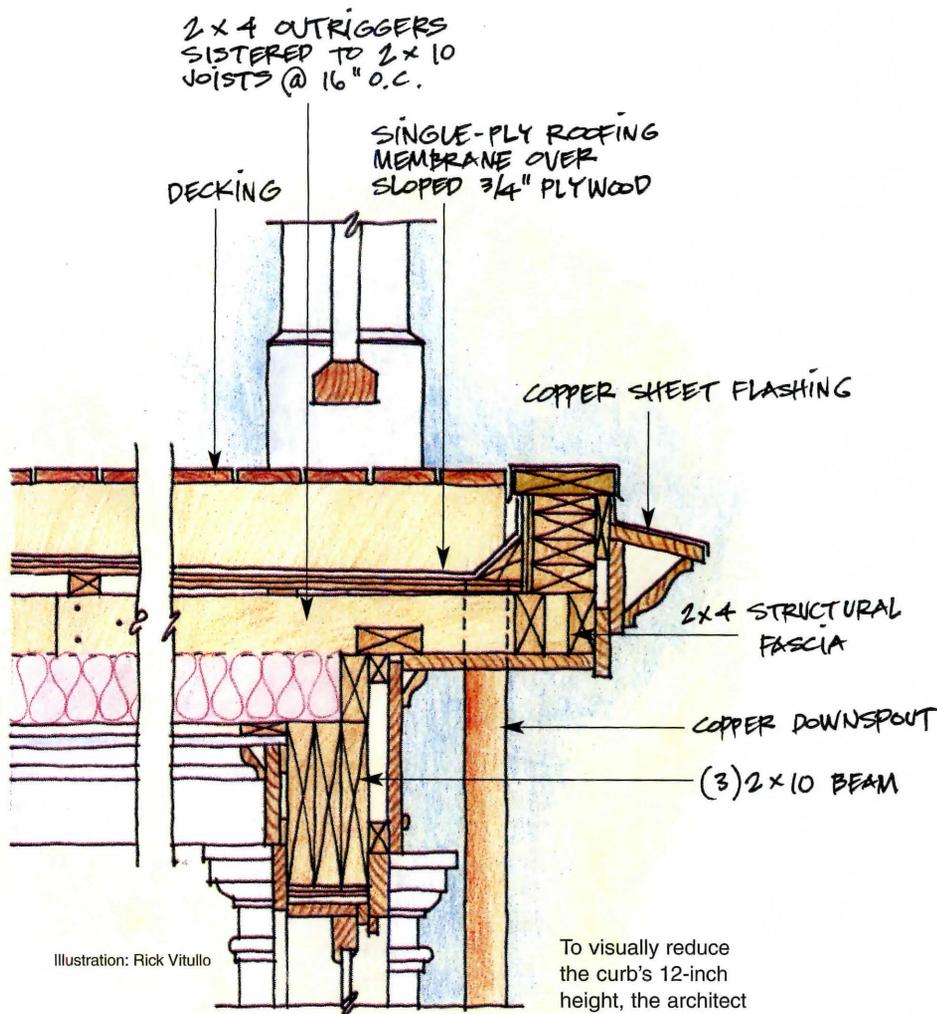
by rick vitullo, aia

designing roof decks over finished spaces can be tricky. You need to accommodate such drainage requirements as gutters and downspouts, provide a railing that satisfies code requirements, and make the deck itself a sturdy structure—all without cluttering the house's appearance.

That was the challenge facing Dewing & Schmid Architects, of Cambridge, Mass., when they designed this breakfast-room addition with a roof deck. Much of their solution centers around a curb, or parapet, that wraps around the edge of the roof, hiding the structure's unsightly apparatus.

From the beginning, the firm's primary goal in designing the deck was to minimize anything that ran counter to a clean and elegant design. (The firm was helped in that regard by Andersen Contracting Services, of Manchester-by-the-Sea, Mass.) The curb detail they came up with, which runs around the entire perimeter of the deck, hides the deck's edge and eliminates the need for messy-looking metal gutters. The curb itself collects water from the sloped roof and channels it to the roof drains, which lead to downspouts. To permit

*continued on page 76*



To visually reduce the curb's 12-inch height, the architect added a built-up wood cornice at its midpoint. Copper flashing caps the cornice.



©1999 Nick Wheeler

The classically-detailed addition encompasses a breakfast room off the kitchen and a roof deck off the master bedroom.



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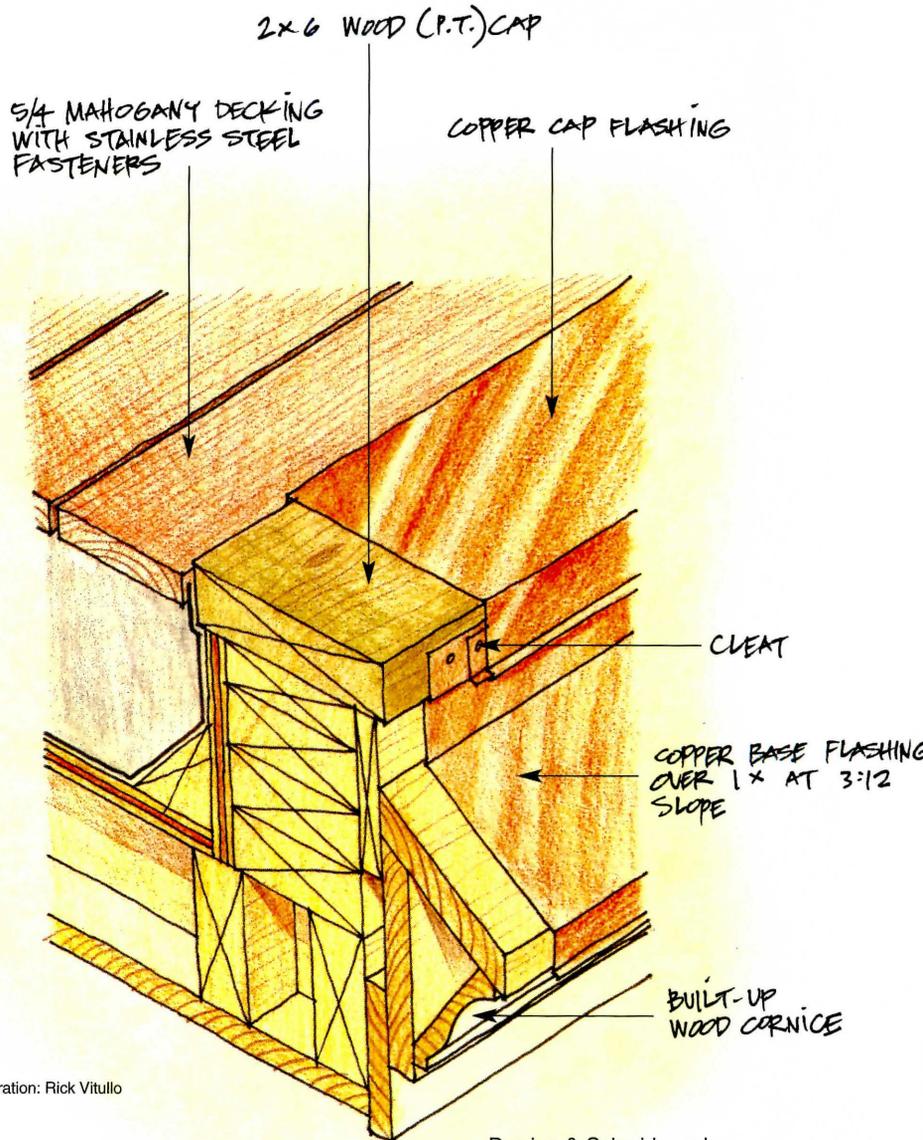
the downspouts to bypass the house's pilaster ornamentation without breaking their straight run to the ground, Dewing & Schmid extended the roof overhang. Sistering 2x4 outriggers to the roof joists pulled the roof edge 12 inches out from the wall.

The deck's walking surface is constructed of 5/4 x4 mahogany boards laid over 2x boards; the floor level of the deck aligns with the top edge of the curb for a neat appearance. Since the top of the curb is the same height as the walking surface of the deck, the 3-foot rail appears shorter (and thus less obtrusive) from the ground. Over the downspout locations, portions of the deck boards are removable, providing access to the roof drains below.

These details, along with the use of such high-quality materials as soldered copper flashing, transform a simple roof deck into a showpiece of elegant design—a structure that complements the house's overall design, rather than detracting from it. **ra**

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

Illustration: Rick Vitullo



Dewing & Schmid used the conventional flashing details typically applied to curbs on flat roofs. They flashed both sides of the curb and laid cap flashing over the top. The latter is held down by cleats on each side.

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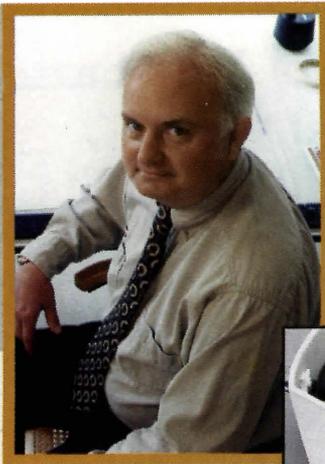
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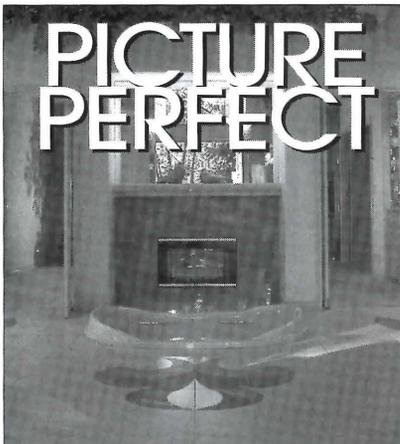
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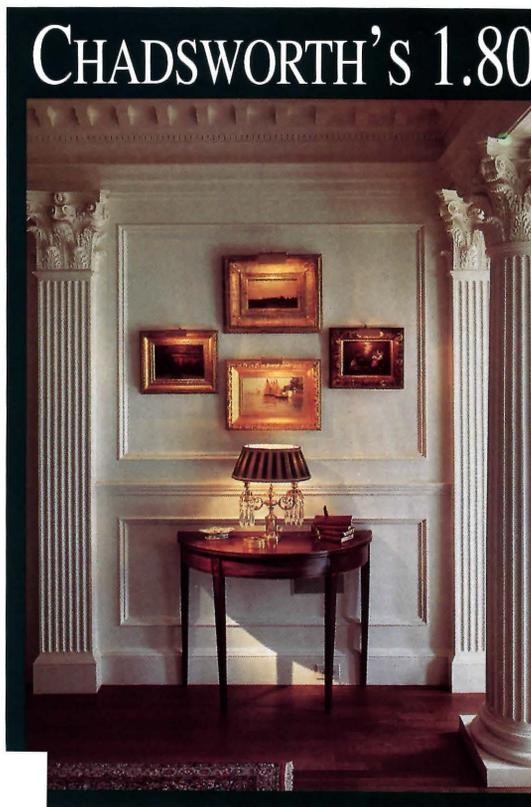
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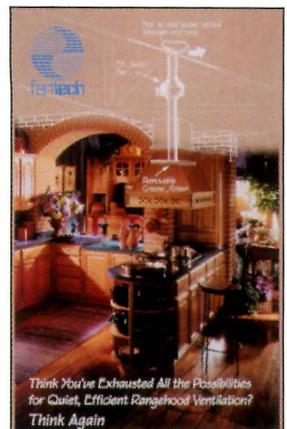


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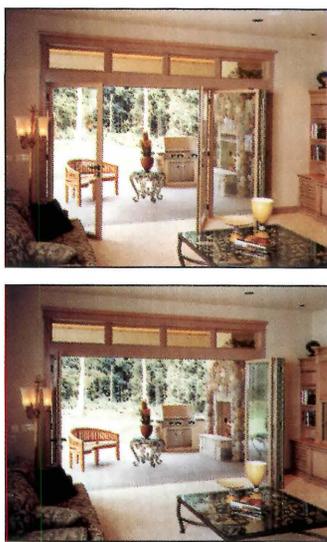
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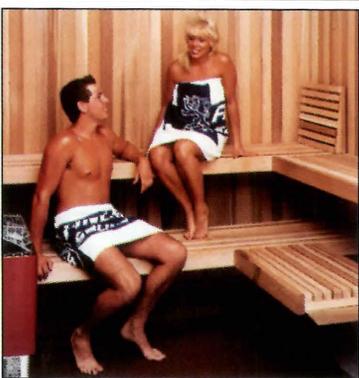
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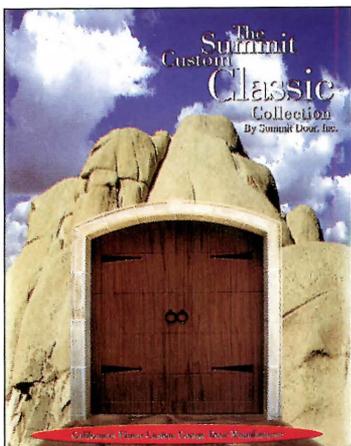


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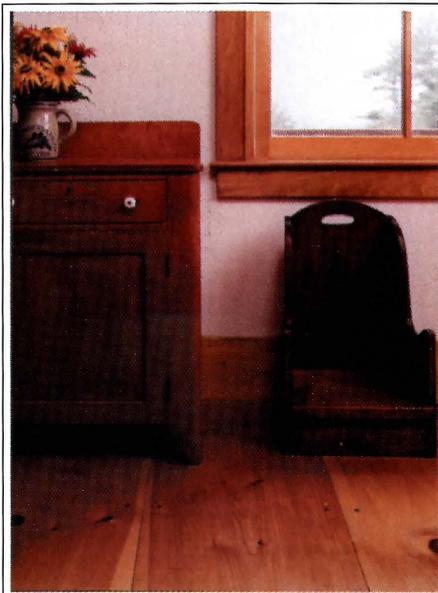


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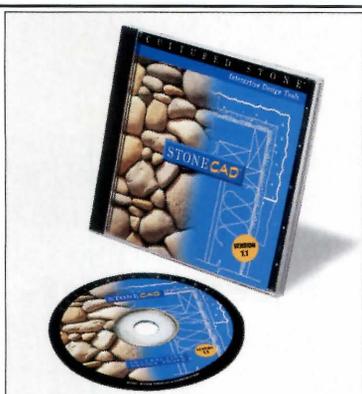
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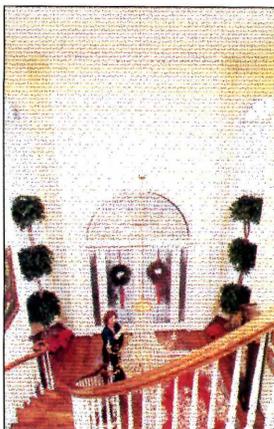


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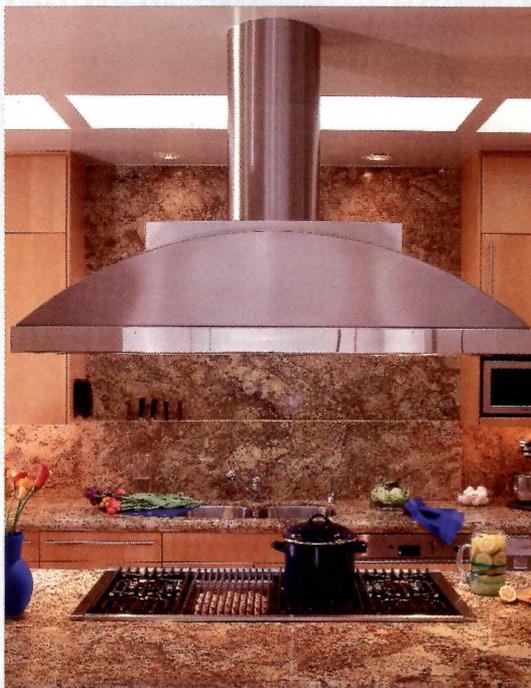


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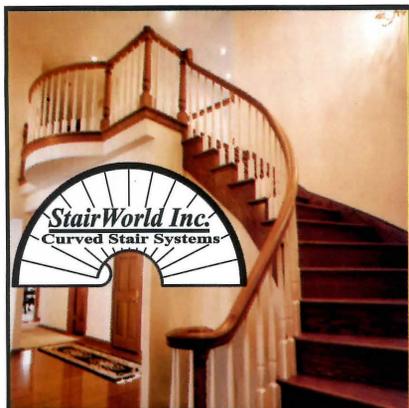
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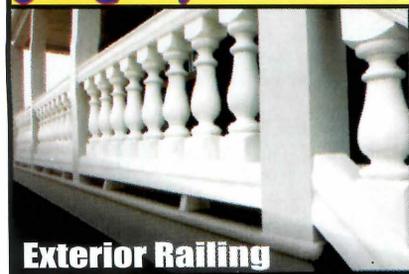


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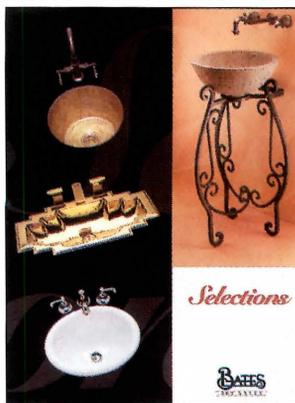
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*Graham Gund, FAIA, is principal of Graham Gund Architects in Cambridge, Mass.*