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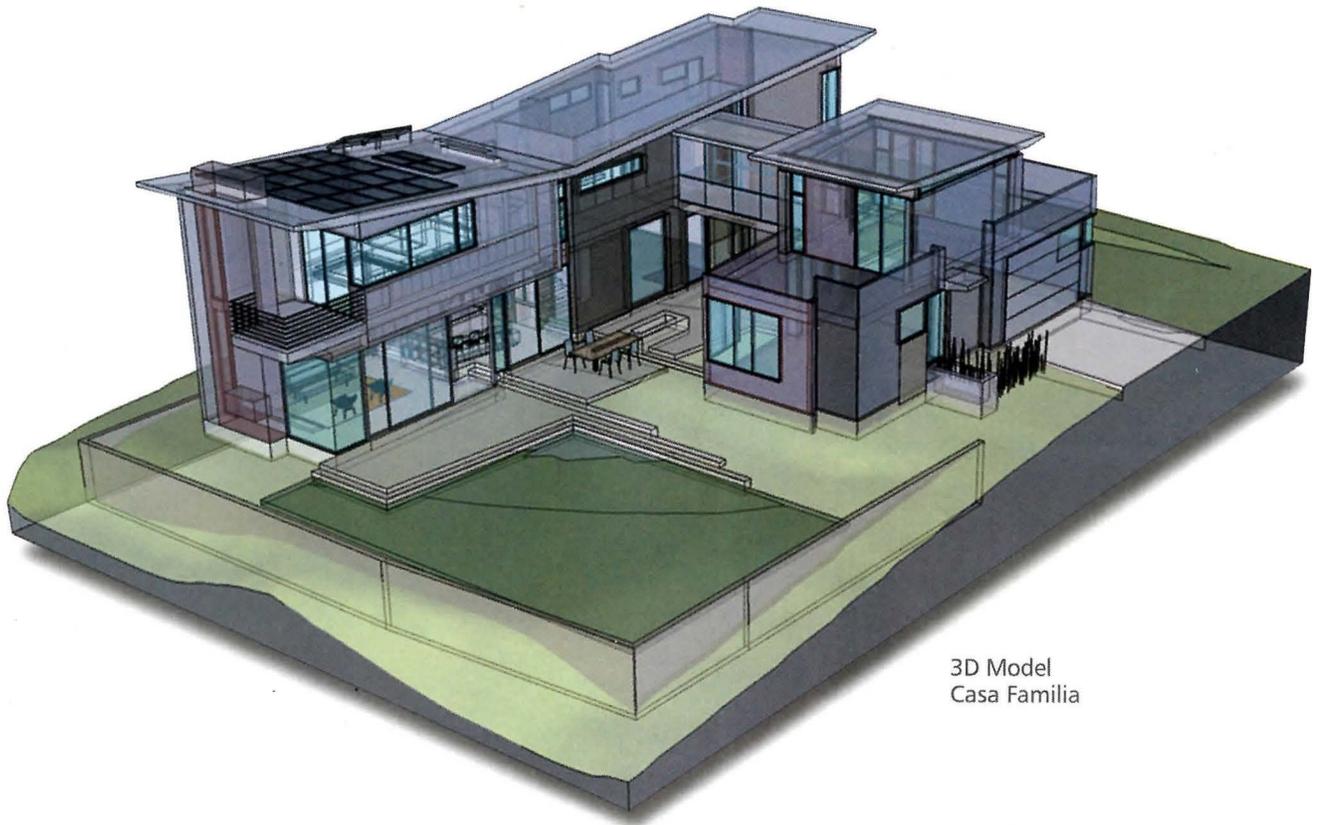
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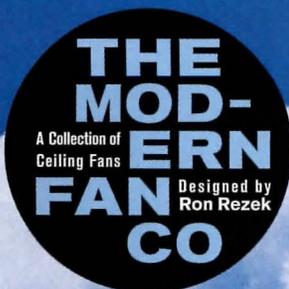


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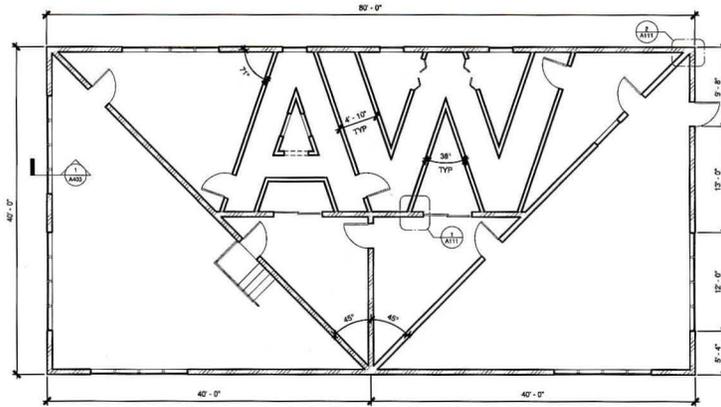
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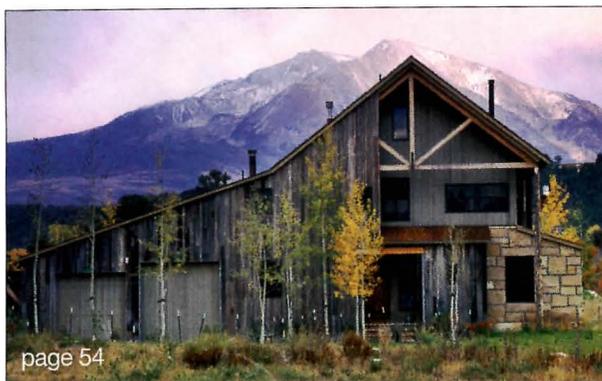


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from the editor

the unsustainable american dream

have we overbuilt even our most basic tract house?

by s. claire conroy

my mother wrote about housing from the early 1950s in Tennessee until the new millennium in Washington, D.C. She covered mid-century modern housing in its heyday, much of it done by local heroes—such as Bruce McCarty and Felder Weeks in Knoxville, and Charles Goodman and Don Lethbridge in D.C.

The most vivid period in my memory of her work was the 1970s. Then, she was writing about an amazing number of experiments in housing for *The Washington Post*—from foam homes and rammed earth to geodesics and yurts—and, of course, solar and other energy-savers. Back then, modern subdivision houses were actually designed, built, and bought.

All that bounty and buzz was happening within a relatively small envelope. In the '70s, the average American house topped out at 1,700 square feet. And, as architects who do remodeling work nowadays know, many of those houses were quite “lightly built”—to use the polite term.

Even great cars were lightly built back then,

with few required safety components. The famed BMW 2002 cost less than \$5,000 and weighed just 2,200 pounds. Its present-day successor, the 3 series sedan, is double the weight and a foot longer. It's laden with safety features—and runs upward of \$40,000 with just a few options.

Houses today are suffering similar bloat. Although our average family size dropped from 3.1 in 1970 to 2.6 in 2007, our houses expanded to more than 2,500 square feet and they're built on an average lot of more than 17,000 square feet, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Another study estimates that developed land for single-family homes nearly doubled in cost from 1985 to 2008 in 46 metropolitan areas. During the same stretch, construction costs per square foot rose 30 percent. It's true that today's houses are more feature-full—with more levels, fireplaces, bathrooms, and garage stalls as standard offerings. But pile on all the new codes and zoning requirements, and our housing is saddled with some staggering imbedded costs. Even without the insanity of financial bubbles.

Some of our current predicament stems from con-



Mark Robert Halper

sumer expectations. Why do all houses now have to have granite counters? And stainless steel appliances the size of small aircraft? And why are these worth more to home buyers than paying architects adequately for their services? They no longer have tolerance for the humble finishes we all lived with for years—laminated, linoleum, vinyl. Indeed, a frightening number of people would opt to live in a lackluster tract house, as long as inside it they could find the floor plan and finishes they crave. No wonder home equity is at its lowest level since 1985.

For the most part, we do build better, safer houses these days, but we've also

burdened them with unsustainable appurtenances and impossible densities. Based on predictions from Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies, we'll see an exponential increase in housing needs in the next 10 to 15 years, but we'll find them in the areas of affordable housing, single households, and accessible dwellings—areas we've sorely neglected while chasing the fertile, agile wealthy. Maybe we need to reacquaint ourselves with the '70s way of building. Once more with feeling—and a touch more durability, please.

Comments? E-mail cconroy@hanleywood.com.

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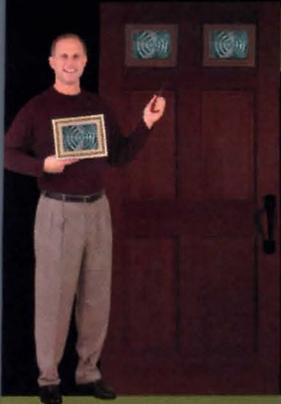


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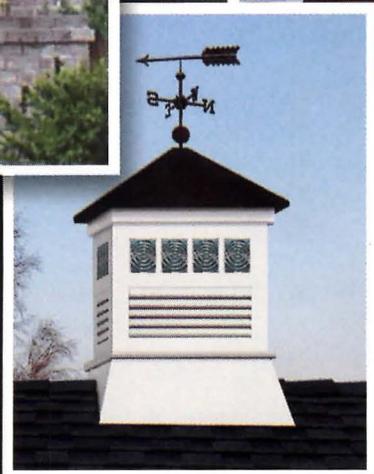
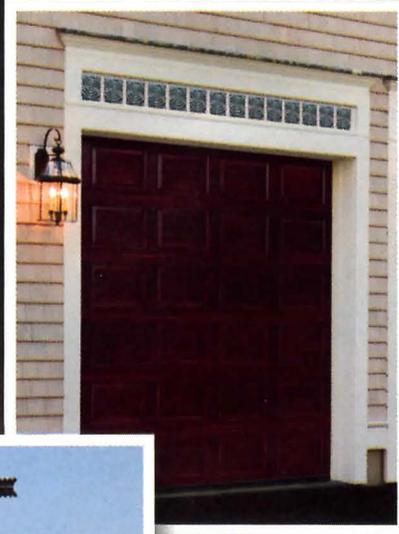
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home front

news from the leading edge of residential design.

making tracts

Like many architects, Bill Neburka and Carrie Strickland Schilling, AIA, dislike the notion that good design is an exclusive luxury. “We kind of bristle at the idea that architecture only exists at \$300 a square foot,” says Neburka, co-principal (with Schilling) of Portland, Ore.-based Works Partnership Architecture. So when local builder/developer Ryan Zygar of Tamarack Homes approached the pair about designing a modern, moderately priced spec house in a subdivision 25 miles outside Portland, they sprung into action.

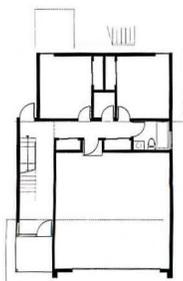
Zygar wanted to challenge himself and his staff to build a different kind of house for the same cost, in the same amount of time, and using the same materials and techniques as a standard production home. “I had always wondered, ‘Why can’t you capture modern

architecture at a price?’” he says. For their part, Neburka and Schilling were eager to see whether they could work within an existing system of building and budgeting and still achieve their desired design quality. Used to creating custom homes, they found they had to adjust their drawings to dovetail with typical production building methods. “It was a great education for us, understanding how these houses get built,” Neburka says. Adds Schilling, “It’s fast, inexpensive, and efficient.”

The final product took 70 days from start to finish, including design time. While that figure fell slightly above the target the participants had set, they feel confident that next time they’d be able to streamline the process using the knowledge they gained here. Completed in July, the 1,904-square-foot home



An angular dormer becomes the focal point of the project's front elevation. Works Partnership Architecture designed the Ridgefield, Wash., home with input from developer/builder Tamarack Homes.



first floor



second floor

features an upside-down floor plan, with the main living spaces and master suite above a garage, two bedrooms, and an entry hall. Neburka and Schilling pulled apart the second floor to create a private courtyard. “We wanted to turn the house inside out and see what was possible for making exterior space,” Neburka says. The courtyard also provides the interior rooms with extra opportunities for natural light and cross-ventilation.

The Ridgefield, Wash., house was featured in the local Parade of Homes and even won the program’s “Outstanding Architecture” award. It’s currently for sale, priced at \$327,000. Zygar, Neburka, and Schilling hope to work together on more iterations of their prototype as soon as the housing market improves. Visit tracthouse.tumblr.com for more information on the project.—*meghan drueding*



The architects placed the home’s public spaces on the second floor, to better take advantage of a 490-square-foot, upper-level courtyard. This arrangement allows sunlight and breezes deep into the interior spaces.



Photos: Chris Hodney

domestic agenda

Perhaps no other room in the house has been influenced quite so directly by the past century's social, economic, and political changes as the kitchen. *Counterspace: Design and the Modern Kitchen*, a new exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art

(MoMA), surveys key moments in the perpetual redesign of the kitchen since the early 1900s, in the context of evolving ideologies and technologies. Highlighting different perspectives on applying new innovations within

the domestic sphere, *Counterspace* examines the myriad ways kitchen design reflects—and sometimes shapes—social values and agendas, our relationships with technology and food, and our attitudes about family life and the domestic role of women.

Three sections focus on major design moments in the 20th century that influenced the kitchen's evolution, beginning with pre-war architects' concepts of the modern, rational kitchen; followed by the post-war emphasis on consumer choice and leisure; and ending with contemporary artistic critiques of modern kitchen design. A selection of kitchen objects and gadgets, along with photography, film, prints, drawings, and paintings, augment each section. MoMA's *Counterspace* runs through March 14, 2011.—stephani l. miller



Integral to *Counterspace*, German architect Margrete Schütte-Lihotzky's 1926-27 Frankfurt Kitchen (above) and Italian cabinetry manufacturer Snaidero's 1968 *Spazio Vivo* (Living Space) Mobile Kitchen Unit (left) are complemented by a variety of kitchenware, such as Tupper Corp.'s 1954 polyethylene tumblers (far left).

Photos: Courtesy the Museum of Modern Art

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As we emerge from the darkest days of the recession, most architects feel lucky to still have a firm to call their own. Whether you have clients in hand or continue to pursue prospects, it's essential that you understand how your practice can best deliver on its promise. There can be no one-size-fits-all approach these days. Each new client requires a different strategy to engage, service, and satisfy. And now more than ever, they all insist upon a higher level of attention and a stronger emphasis on value. Added to the mix is the silent partner everyone must address with every project: Mother Earth.

Is it still possible to answer clients' greater expectations while still creating work that challenges your mind, heart, and soul? The **seventh annual Reinvention Symposium** examines the broad range of contradictions and synergies in the architect/client/environment relationship.

symposium highlights

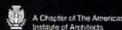
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The 2011 Solar Decathlon will reach beyond the National Mall in Washington, D.C., as students from Parsons the New School for Design, Milano the New School for Management, and Stevens Institute of Technology will develop not one, but two Passive House-certified homes next year: one that will be judged in the biennial competition, and one that will be constructed in the city's Deanwood neighborhood. "We wanted our project to show how our single-family house could be easily adapted in an urban context, which is a more sustainable framework for solar energy due to the density of inhabitants," says Laura Briggs, lead faculty on the Empowerhouse project and assistant professor and chairwoman of sustainable architecture at Parsons.

Deanwood residents, during

design charrettes with the students, requested workshops on energy issues that will start this fall. After the competition, the structures will be combined to create a semi-detached, two-family home for local residents, who will help with the construction. Consuming up to 90 percent less energy for heating and cooling, the project also will feature water conservation and stormwater management systems, daylighting, and a green roof and garden. Architects from Zavos Architecture+Design of Frederick, Md.—the architect of record—and members from D.C.'s Habitat for Humanity will take training courses in Passive House principles.

Construction for both houses will begin in the spring, with completion slated for the end of 2011. For more information, visit parsit.parsons.edu.—*jennifer lash*



An early design concept shows one possibility for the project's exterior, but the design is not yet final. The two houses ultimately will be joined at the Deanwood site (left) in Washington, D.C.

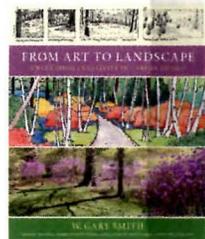
cultivating al fresco creativity

Landscape architects struggle with some of the same creative tensions as architects do: where to find design inspiration, how to get out of a compositional rut, how to cultivate sensitivity to a site's unique characteristics. W. Gary Smith's new book, *From Art to Landscape: Unleashing Creativity in Garden Design* (Timber Press, \$39.95), is a lively, colorful look at how he channels his inner artist.

Smith—known for his work on botanical and public gardens such as Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Pa., Winterthur in Delaware, and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center children's garden in Austin, Texas—devotes the first part of the book to developing the artist's eye. One fascinating chapter explains how he builds a visual vocabulary by abstracting the patterns in nature: radial, mosaic, serpentine, and so on. Part two explains how these ideas have shaped his practice. In one example, 325 bundled grasses, set upright in a naturalistic drift pattern, bring random order to a sprawling rock garden.

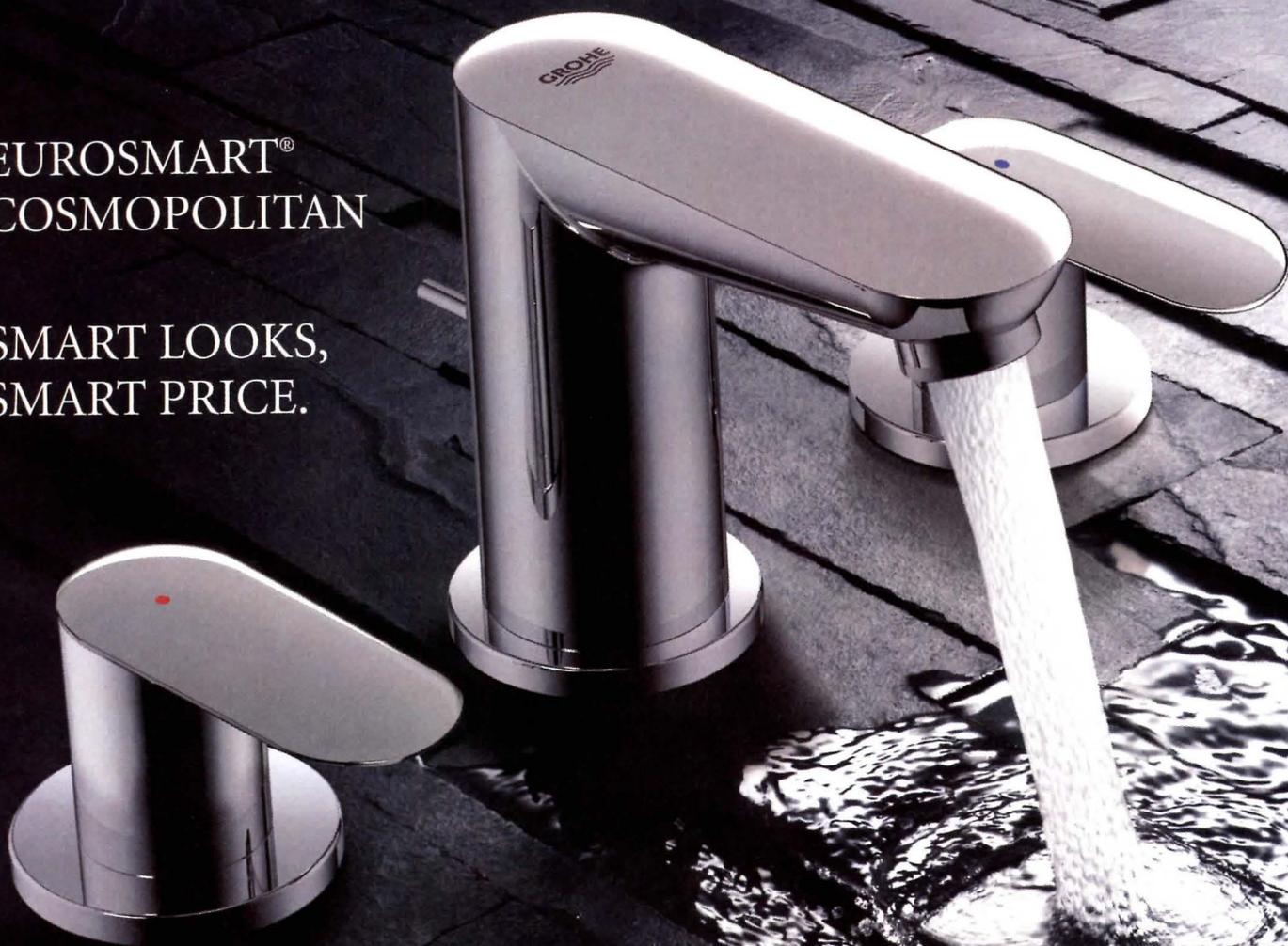
"I want to be in a garden where I stop and say, 'Wow, what made them do that? What made them put those things together?'" he writes. "If I'm having that kind of response, I know I'm in a garden where my own creative spirit has been engaged."

With this latest release, architects can compare notes, perhaps find new ways to loosen the muse, or just enjoy the abstract artistry of Smith's lyrical gardens, sketches, plans, and paintings.—*cheryl weber, lead ap*



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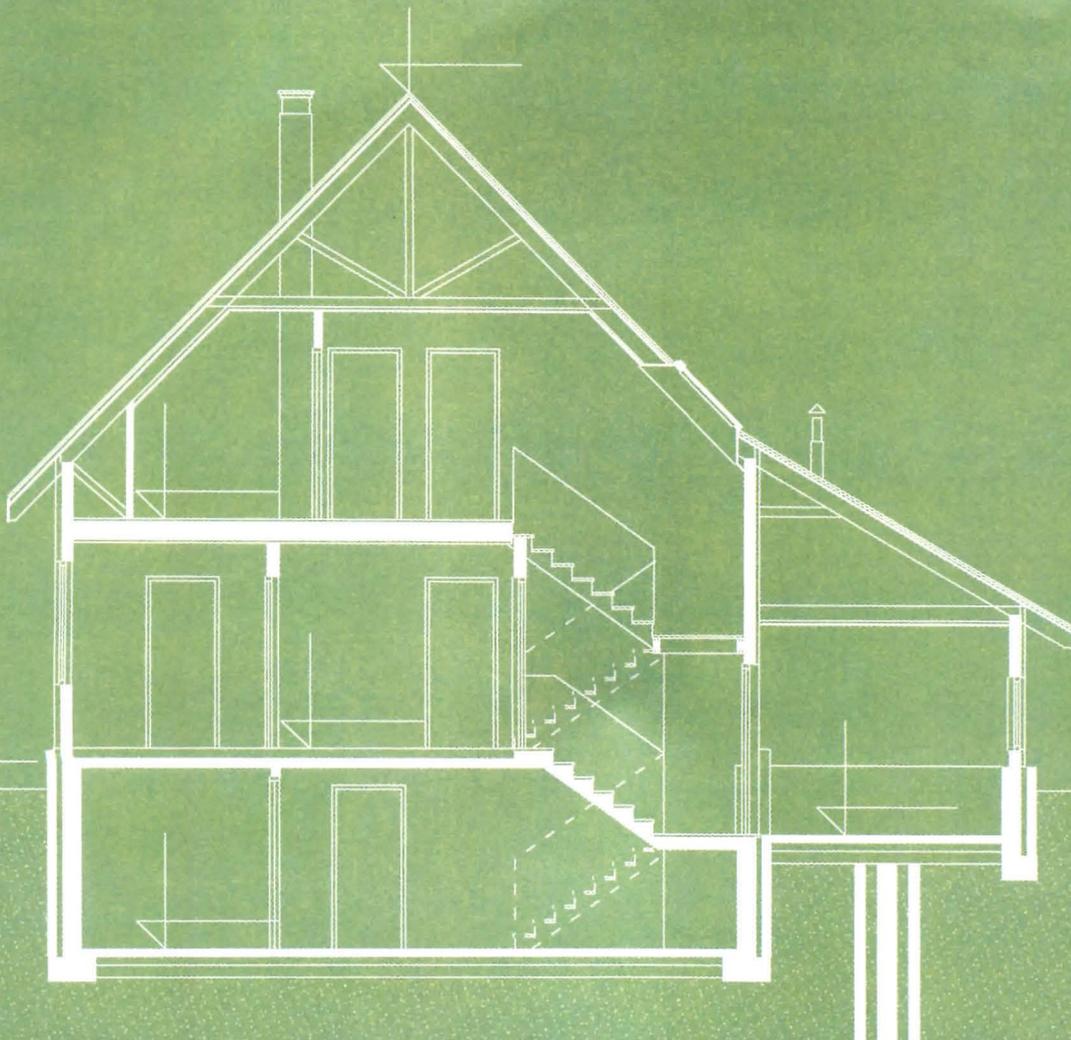
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HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL

dennis wedlick, aia, designs a passive house in new york's scenic river valley.

While most architects have heard the term “passive house” over the past few years, many still aren't sure exactly what it means. New York-based Dennis Wedlick, AIA, wants to change that. The architect and his team at Dennis Wedlick Architect

passive solar design, superinsulation, high-performance windows, and carefully calculated thermal bridging. “It's just keeping the house thermally isolated from the swings of temperature, minimizing infiltration, and maximizing insulation,” Wedlick says. Working with developer Frank Sciamè, builder Bill Stratton, building science consultant the Levy Partnership, and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), DWA has designed a house that meets both passive house requirements and its own high standards for beauty and livability. In a nod to the rural setting, the 1,650-square-foot residence features a timber-frame structure and local stone cladding. SIPs walls and ceilings and triple-paned glass windows ensure an airtight building envelope.

The house is slated for completion in October, when it will be open for tours. Hard costs are running about \$200 to \$250 per square foot; the sale price of \$595,000 includes the 7-acre lot. Funding was a collaborative effort. DWA and NYSERDA paid for the research and design process, while Stratton backed the construction

(DWA) are finishing up the Hudson Passive Project, a spec home in New York's Hudson Valley that they hope will create a wider understanding of passive house design. “For me, it's been a revelation,” Wedlick says. “This is really quite simple and fundamental and obvious.”

The passive house concept, which originated in Germany, entails lowering heating costs by up to 90 percent through a rigorous set of steps that includes



Renderings: Courtesy Dennis Wedlick Architect

and Sciamè provided a discount on the land. “The point of the Hudson passive house project is to raise awareness of the passive house model for architects, builders, and developers,” says Wedlick, who is studying to become a certified passive house consultant. “It's meant to be a kind of industry-wide knowledge effort.”—*meghan drueding*

The Hudson Passive Project's insulated foundation, passive solar design, and tight building envelope will combine to keep it at a comfortable temperature year-round. Wedlick and his staff drew its overall form and massing from barns and other rural buildings near its site in Claverack, N.Y.

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Sending waste to the landfill is, well, a waste, so the manufacturer uses locally sourced recycled materials to produce its Debris series of tiles. The products are made using baghouse dust collected from local glass recyclers, granite dust from a quarry, and the spent abrasives from water pipe cleaning. Tiles contain more than 62 percent recycled content and come in 112 colors. Fireclay Tile, 408.275.1182; www.fireclaytile.com.



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Consisting of modular planted panels, the EasyGreen Living Wall System can expeditiously create a green wall inside or outside the home. The recyclable panels, which can be planted and replanted if necessary, feature angled cells that hold soil and plants in place while creating maximum green surface area. The 4-inch-deep panels are mountable on a stand-alone frame or directly to the wall surface, and they are easily removed and reinstalled as needed.

ELT, 866.306.7773; www.eltlivingwalls.com.

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Voltex is a hybrid electric water heater that integrates heat pump technology to make it more than twice as efficient as a standard tank. The unit operates like an air conditioner in reverse, pulling heat from the surrounding air and transferring it to the tank. It costs about \$200 per year to operate, the company says. A.O. Smith, 414.359.4000; www.aosmith.com.



continued on page 24

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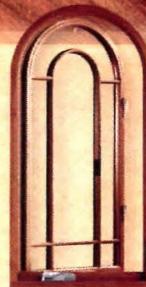
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green pieces

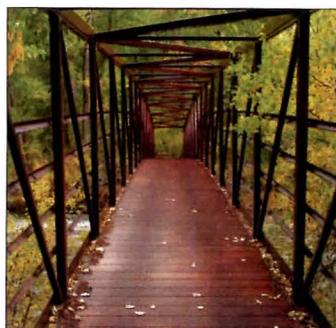


smart move

GE's new Energy Smart 9-watt LED bulb looks almost like an incandescent replacement product, but it has heat-reducing fins that distribute light like a traditional 40-watt product. The bulb has a life span of more than 25,000 hours (or 17 years based on four hours of daily use), which is 25 times longer than a 40-watt incandescent or halogen bulb and more than three times longer than a standard compact fluorescent, the company says. It costs \$40 to \$50. GE Appliances & Lighting, 800.435.4448; www.ge.com.

hidden assets

The manufacturer known for bringing us the dual-flush toilet now adds a European sensibility to its lineup with the Invisi Series II. Available as a wall-hung or wall-faced unit, the product employs tank and flushing mechanisms hidden inside the walls between the studs, which frees up floor space in small bathrooms. Both options flush with 0.8 gallons or 1.28 gallons of water. Caroma USA, 800.605.4218; www.caromausa.com.



groove thing

In addition to interior flooring, bamboo apparently is good for outdoors, too. BamDeck is an 8-foot-long bamboo deck board that its manufacturer says is comparable to ipe. Dense, strong, and durable, it's also rapidly renewable, the company adds. Free of urea-formaldehyde glues, the boards assemble with a groove-and-groove hidden fastening system. Cali Bamboo, 888.788.2254; www.calibamboo.com.

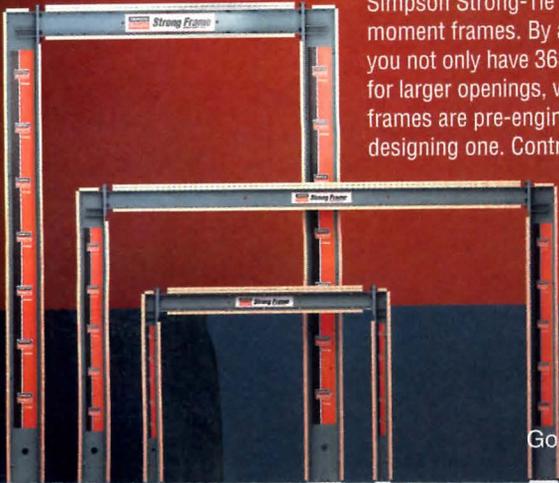
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all cooped up

the latest design opportunity for architects? shelter for the feathered ones.

by cheryl weber, leed ap

When architect Michael Viveiros, AIA, built a house for his family 10 years ago, he added a second house, next to the garden, for his Rhode Island Reds. The chickens probably were the first ever to live in a house recognized by the American Institute of Architects (AIA), as it won a People's Choice Award from AIA Rhode Island. The property has since sold, and Viveiros is designing another coop to complement his new house. This one will be two stories tall and built into a hillside, with a garden shed upstairs.

"I like playing with forms typical of farm buildings, and things that are simple and handmade," says Viveiros, a principal at Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects in Providence, R.I. "We deal so much with technology that when it comes to relaxing, I like things at the opposite end of that spectrum."

The appeal of handwork, and a push-back from the chain-store lifestyle, may help explain the current surge in backyard agriculture. Over the past few years, homeowners of

all stripes—rural, urban, suburban—have begun raising chickens, growing blueberries, and keeping bees for honey. Many are inspired by Michael Pollan's book, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, an exposé of the commercial food chain, and by Barbara Kingsolver, whose best-selling memoir, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, chronicled her family's yearlong effort to live off the food they raised in their backyard. New Urbanist Andrés Duany, FAIA, has been pushing hard in this direction, too, advocating lifestyle communities with an agrarian ethic and declaring agriculture "the new golf."

the cultivated coop

Long before the locavore movement took root, of course, there was Martha Stewart, crowing about her Araucana chickens and their decorator-ready, bluish-green eggs. A recent Martha Stewart Show segment featured a tour of the tidy coops—designed by Stewart herself—on her New York estate.

As livestock go, chickens have become the local-food symbol, since they're legal in an increasing number of U.S. cities. And for most urbanites, a standard shack won't do.



Matt Deschler

After moving into their new Seattle home, clients of architect Allan Farkas, AIA, requested a coop to go with it. It's set under an overhang on the terrace outside a guest room, so they can see the birds up close. The 6-foot-tall cage's fine stainless steel grating

continued on page 30

The nest box of this Seattle coop, designed by Allan Farkas, offers room for three chickens to lay eggs. A small entryway leads to the roost box, which has adjustable rods, a heater, and a hinged panel so waste can be cleaned from the outside. The bar grate lid keeps out birds of prey, and chicken wire extends beneath the cage to deter raccoons.

green outdoors

matches the grating on the main house's entry bridge. The roost box is cement board, painted green like the residence's stucco, and stained cedar nesting boxes echo the home's rainscreen. The client, a landscape designer, "has vegetables and wanted to add chickens to the mix," says Farkas, a partner at Eggleston | Farkas Architects. "She would have been embarrassed to have something that didn't go with the house."

Rhode Island architect James Estes, AIA, placed his hand-built coop next to the vegetable garden, so he can scoop the bird droppings directly into compost bins. "We put the chickens as far from the house as we could so we wouldn't hear them in the morning," he says. "We let them run around in the yard all day and coop them up at night." The coop's shed roof faces south for solar gain in winter, and the rough-sawn eastern white pine and rafter tail details tie in with the house. He also elevated the coop, making it easier to reach in and clean.

While hens are a hardy bunch, they're easily stressed, so practicality is as critical as appearance. Falaah Jones, an environmental educator at Seattle Tilth, says each bird needs 6 square feet of vertical or horizontal space and a snug, draft-free home. Also required: a protected outdoor run, with wire

covering the top and dug 6 inches into the ground in an L shape to discourage digging predators.

Nesting boxes should be tucked away from the commotion and allow access from the outside for gathering eggs. You also need a door big enough to maneuver in to clean the pen. "In my coop I included a slide-out board beneath the roosting bars that you can scrape off every morning," says Jones, who has four hens, one

more than Seattle allows. "The roosting bars should be higher than the nesting boxes, because they'll try to go to the highest spot." Estes' roosting rods are all on the same level to keep the birds from fighting for the highest perch.

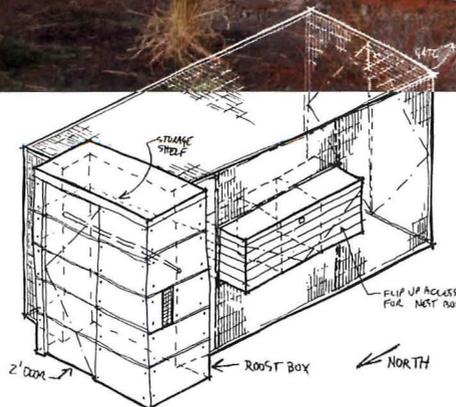
Viveiros' barn-red coop, like the house's trim, was designed to be seen from across the garden, behind a low stone wall. "Older outbuildings had good proportions," he says. "So much

A hinged panel opens from the outside for easy egg collection. The coop's green cement board, bar grating, and stained cedar echo the house's colors and materials (bottom right). A drawing by architect Allan Farkas shows the plan for his Seattle clients' coop.

continued on page 32



Photos: Matt Deschler (above); Jim Van Gundy (below)



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town and country

New York City architect Dennis Wedlick, AIA, who maintains a rural satellite in upstate New York, notes that on a country property, where there are open views, an accessory building can look quite different from the house. But in a suburban or urban setting, it should blend with the neighborhood’s scale and aesthetics. Otherwise, tiny, closely spaced buildings can look like a Disney farm. “Farm aesthetics generally went with larger properties; if you try to downsize that it can feel contrived,” Wedlick says.

Where space allows, “it’s a missed opportunity not to include outbuildings because they’re so utilitarian and inexpensive to build. They create a sense of place better than one building,”



Photos: Glenn Turner Photo

in a suburban or urban setting, an accessory building should blend with the neighborhood’s scale and aesthetics.

he says. He often pencils future dependencies into the master plan so that functional issues—vehicular access, power sources, septic fields—are ironed out in advance. Utilitarian buildings can double as party rooms, he says, and since they’re a potential source of alterna-

tive energy for a property, they should be positioned for optimal solar exposure.

As a farm boy growing up, Duluth, Minn.–based architect David Salmela, FAIA, says livestock build-

ings were placed to the south so prevailing winds carried odors away from the house. “Our own chicken coop had a sloped roof that faced south, with a row of windows high up so that it was always warm, dry, and bright,” he says. Whatever the outbuilding’s use,

Salmela chooses integrally colored materials that age well, such as black or natural sheet metal. “I lean away from colored metal because it’s too sharp, too bright,” he notes, adding that dark green metal, which tries to imitate nature, is usually harsh and overly noticeable.

With large family farms becoming a thing of the past, backyard agriculture offers the chance, for those so inclined, to reclaim a sense of self-sufficiency. It’s satisfying on many levels—emotional, environmental, economic. And when food production is thoughtfully designed, the eye is as pleased as the palette.

A version of this article first appeared in CUSTOM HOME magazine.



Michael Viveiros’ coop is big enough for six hens. Its jaunty roofline is a play on the gambrel form, and the barn-red board-and-batten siding matches the house’s trim.



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k + b studio

kitchen: just enough

Whether by principle, preference, or economic necessity, architects seem drawn to live in compact quarters. Christine Albertsson and Todd Hansen—partners at home and in professional practice—lived for years in a charming saltbox cottage with no dining room, no shower, and almost no storage space. But an expanding family can persuade even committed minimalists to say “enough.” Or, rather, “not enough.” Part of Albertsson and Hansen’s solution was a flexible, multipurpose kitchen that is compact enough to satisfy their taste for efficiency, yet large enough to get the job done comfortably.

Perched at the high end of a sloping site, the room overlooks the tree-lined corridor of Minnehaha Creek. The east wall angles in for a better view and a bit more elbow room at the adjacent outdoor deck, its wide, beaded paneling making a graceful transition from the 1920s-vintage plaster and trim of the original house. Flush white oak cabinets line the west wall, with etched glass doors where they enclose a trio of exterior windows. “We wanted to get afternoon light, but we didn’t want to look at our neighbor’s deck,” Albertsson explains. “Because we keep our nice glassware there, the cabinet becomes sort of a shop window.”



Photos: Peter Bastianelli-Kerze

The marble-topped island counter tapers, following the angle of the outside wall.

The cooking area’s businesslike layout, with open stainless steel shelves mounted on a white subway tile backsplash, reflects Hansen’s experience working in a commercial kitchen. High-grade stainless hardware and marble counters dress up the inexpensive stock cabinets. If you’re going to save money on the casework, Albertsson reasons, “you might as well have something really nice that you’re going to touch.” The island countertop follows the angle of the outside wall, opening space for a much-used sofa. Its overhang, which tapers from 13 inches to 3 inches, allows for an ongoing inquiry into how much knee space is just enough for casual dining. While their home is significantly enlarged, Albertsson notes, “It’s still an architects’ experiment house.”—*bruce d. snider*





project: Minnehaha Creek Addition, Minneapolis

architect: Albertsson Hansen Architecture, Minneapolis

builder: Choice Wood Co., St. Louis Park, Minn.

resources: dishwasher: Bosch; flooring: Schafer Hard-wood Flooring; hardware: Becker-Beschlaege; cabinets: Ikea; ceramic tile: Royal Mosa; lighting fixtures: Louis Poulsen; oven: Viking; paint: Benjamin Moore; plumbing fittings: Grohe; plumbing fixtures: Elkay; windows: Marvin

Glass doors enclose both shelving and a trio of exterior windows, transmitting filtered daylight and treating neighbors to a “shop window” display.

k + b studio

bath: tall order

Unlike architects, clients seldom care to explore how little space will comfortably serve their needs. If anything, they generally like to have a bit extra. That was especially true for the owner of this lakeside retreat/retirement residence on Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and with good reason. "He's 6 feet 7 inches or 6 feet 8 inches tall," explains architect Christine Albertsson. "He wanted

the house to be designed around his comfort as a super-tall person." The master bathroom, with its generous scale, reflects that requirement as much as any other room in the house.

Albertsson and partner Todd Hansen gave the bath a simple layout with a large central circulation space. An oversize tub lies along the north wall, its deck extending into a glass-enclosed shower as a seat. The opposite wall presents a substantial, 38-inch-high sink counter flanked by twin linen cabinets. The counter, cabinets, and water closet are recessed into a thickened wall, minimizing their intrusion into the room.

Exposed Douglas fir rafters and board-paneled walls acknowledge the house's cabinlike character. But they are joined here by more refined materials—Carrara marble at the counter, tub deck and baseboards; white ceramic subway tile at the wainscot and shower wall; and glass tile in the shelf recesses—yielding an effect that Albertsson sums up as "Elegance—in the middle of the woods."—*b.d.s.*



Recessed linen cabinets flank an extra-tall vanity (above). Daylight, bright surfaces, and a clean layout make a generously scaled room seem even larger (right).



Photos: Karen Melvin

project: Upper Peninsula Residence, Iron River, Mich.

architect: Albertsson Hansen Architecture, Minneapolis

builder: Daniel Benson Builders, Land O' Lakes, Wis.

resources: plumbing fixtures: Kohler; plumbing fittings: Grohe, Kallista; hardware: Emtek, Hettich; interior doors: Marvin; lighting fixtures: Ginger, Juno; paints/stains: Benjamin Moore; windows: Marvin



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when firm revenues erode, employee benefits often follow.

by cheryl weber, lead ap

boston architect Maryann Thompson, FAIA, does something that fewer and fewer small firms do in this economy: She offers to pay 100 percent of the health care premiums for her 10 employees, plus their families if they choose. Thompson shells out \$5,500 a month for staff coverage in a \$500 deductible HMO plan. On the flip side, there is no retirement-fund matching. And since the recession she's suspended perks such as education reimbursement and travel.

Thompson is among a large and growing number of firms snipping employee benefits to offset falling revenues and rising health insurance premiums, which have ticked up 13 percent a year on average since 1999. (In recent years, though, the increase has been more moderate—5 percent in 2009, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.) As they near the end of another financially challenging year, many architects are reigning in the perks and benefits they handed out in happier times. Cost-of-living salary increases, bonuses, 401(k) contributions, and tuition



Dan Page

reimbursement are all on the chopping block.

In boom times, architects could raise their fees to help counteract cost creep. But the effect of Wall Street's crash on employee benefits was immediate and deep. John Carney, FAIA, was in Europe when Lehman Brothers went down in 2008. When he returned to the office in Jackson, Wyo.,

his partners at Carney Logan Burke Architects already had come up with a list of belt-tightening moves—including a four-day work week, which was in effect for most of 2009, and a 20 percent pay cut for the partners.

What wasn't touched: full coverage of health care premiums for 17 employees, and a retirement plan

that matches 3 percent of their salary. He was determined to hang onto the benefits he's offered since startup in 1992. "We felt we needed to keep our brain trust of talent," Carney says, "and keeping those benefits was key."

benefits jujitsu

As they wait for rev-
continued on page 41

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practice

venues to recover, architects are squeezed between trying to hold down labor costs and keeping valued employees happy and productive. Health insurance, of course, is the holy

order to keep footing the bill, while also paying for dental, long-term disability, and life insurance. Last year its health insurance costs crept up another 10 percent, just as revenues swooned.

benefit we're no longer offering is 401(k) profit-sharing, and we want to," Millican says. "Rewarding people with money and bonuses is a big part of our culture. If we make money, we want to give it back."

"it was a big struggle to make all the ends meet, but we were reluctant to mess with benefits. i hope the economy is turning around and we won't have to worry about it anymore."

—jane rath, aia

grail of a compensation package. Employee wellness is critical to a firm's operating success, and a generous policy helps it attract and retain the best talent. That has principals holding their breath when renewal time rolls around. "We always wonder, when it comes time to meet the Blue Cross guy, how much our rates will go up," Carney says.

Faced with health insurance rate hikes of 20 percent or more, architects have several choices: shop around for more favorable rates, downgrade coverage, or ask employees to kick in a larger share of the premiums. A few years ago, TruexCullins of Burlington, Vt., switched to a high-deductible plan with a new insurer in

Billings are down about 50 percent from \$8.5 million, and the staff roster shrank to 17 from 40.

Managing partner Robert Millican, AIA, is eager to find out whether the health care overhaul that became law in March will control costs, but he's skeptical. "I favor the fact that it's universal and can't exclude existing conditions, but I wonder whether premiums will level off or keep on going up," he says.

Although TruexCullins absorbed this year's increase, the sour economy forced other cutbacks, including reductions in pay and professional development reimbursement. Reluctantly, retirement compensation also got the ax. "The only major

To deflect rising health care costs and protect take-home pay, architects are tweaking their policy terms based on services employees value the most. Upon learning that its HMO premiums would jump 15 percent this past year, the principals at Philadelphia-based SMP Architects chose an option that included a slightly higher co-pay for doctor visits, and the firm continues to fund about 90 percent of the premiums for its 15 employees. By purchasing different options, "no more money was taken out of their paychecks under the new plan, and we absorbed a roughly 5 percent increase," says principal Jane Rath, AIA. "We stuck with our health care provider because we knew changing it would be a problem for some in the office. One has a sick child. I think bobbing around and having to find new doctors is stressful to the staff."

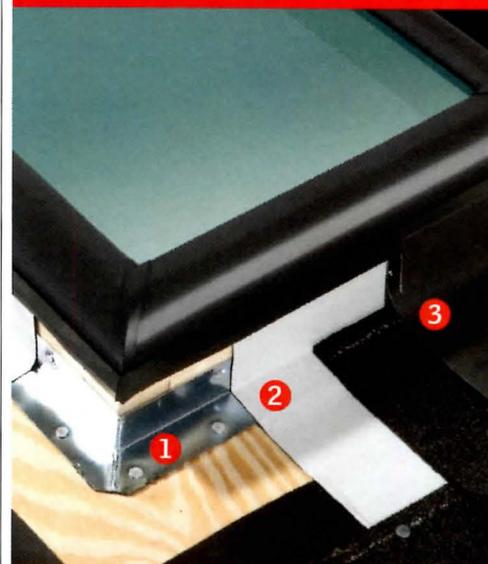
During the worst of the slump, SMP also devised a creative way to shrink labor costs by "loaning" three em-

continued on page 43

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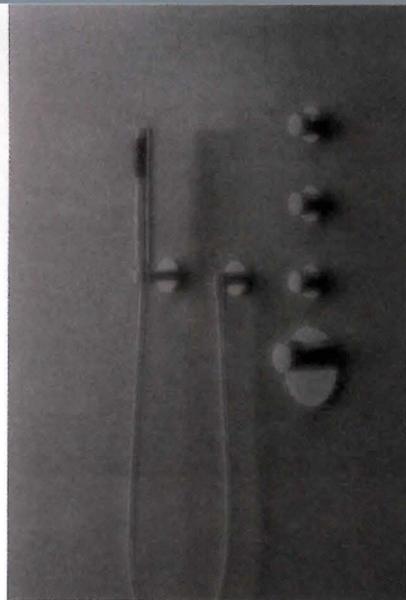
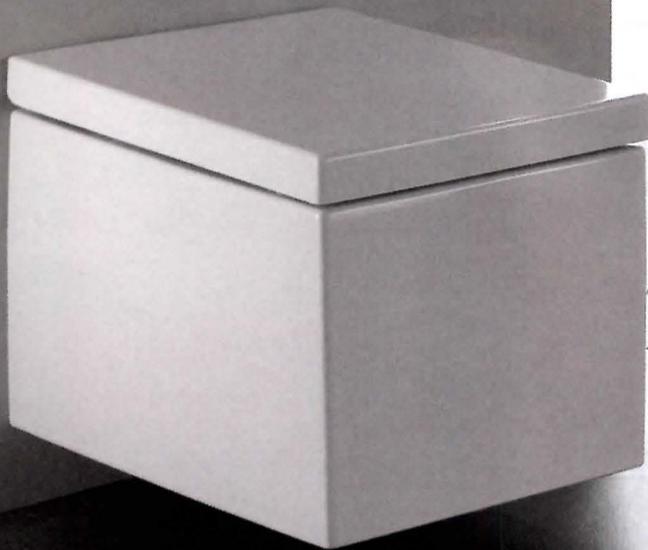
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practice

ployees to a large office nearby for a short-term project. The employees remained on SMP's payroll, and last summer they returned to the fold when the job ended and SMP's worked picked up again. "It was a big struggle to make all the ends meet, but we've been really reluctant to mess with benefits," Rath says. "I hope the economy is turning around and we won't have to think about it anymore."

SMP has plenty of company, though. A February 2009 AIA Architecture Billings Index survey showed that sal-

to medical and dental insurance. That said, these money-saving tactics occurred much more frequently at smaller firms—those with average annual billings of less than \$250,000—than at larger ones.

With fundamental benefits eroding, other perks can boost morale without breaking the bank, and they send a much-needed message that employers appreciate the sacrifices being made. One example is Carney Logan Burke, where the staff shares a weekend ski pass good for any of three resorts

stool, Kerwin, & Lynch get free parking—an urban luxury—and fitness center privileges in their downtown Chicago building. Earlier this year, the former Brininstool & Lynch formed an LLC with the Magellon Development Group, one of Chicago's largest real estate firms, and the architects rent space in the Magellon-backed Aqua skyscraper. "As part of our arrangement with Magellon, use of the fitness center is provided free of charge to the staff," says partner Thomas Kerwin, FAIA, LEED AP. The new entity is still working on a benefits package. But now, "since we're affiliated with a larger firm, we're able to leverage the health care benefits across a larger body of people," he says.

large vs. small

Not only do larger firms get lower insurance rates—about 18 percent lower for the same coverage, according to the Small Business Administration—but they've fared better than small ones in this downturn. Its effect on Perkins+Will, for example, was moderate: the company employs approximately 1,500 staff (down from 1,700), has not cut any benefits, and has begun hiring again, thanks to its projects in the health

continued on page 45

"i try to keep benefits competitive with commercial firms because residential practices can't always keep up with them on salaries. if you want to get the best people, you have to step up."

—john c. senhauser, faia

ary freezes and cuts were the most frequently cited changes to employee compensation packages. Fifty-four percent of the firms polled said they'd frozen salaries for all staff, while 19 percent cut salaries across the board. Twenty-nine percent reduced or eliminated the retirement contribution, and 11 percent reduced or eliminated contributions

in the area. Thompson offers comp time on an honor system at her firm. "They think of it as a benefit, and it's not an economic hardship on us," she explains. SMP provides a flexible spending account that covers day care, plus a transit benefit that lets staff members buy public transportation passes with pretax dollars.

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care, science, and technology sectors. It offers a choice of three health insurance options—a high-deductible health savings account, an in-network plan, and an out-of-network plan. The employees do share the premium costs, which are not quite 50 percent, depending on the plan

they choose.

“We’re not immune to layoffs, but right off the bat we decided there were two areas we absolutely would not touch—benefits and professional development,” says CEO of human resources Meg Brown, who works in the firm’s Manhattan office. But to hedge

against rising health care costs, Perkins+Will is aggressively pushing wellness programs for its staff. Services such as colorectal and cholesterol screening and well woman visits are free, and a \$240 subsidy per employee—which dependents may

continued on page 46

reform school

Starting this year, small businesses will get a tax credit to help them cover health insurance costs for employees. (But they won’t be fined for not offering it.) The credit is worth up to 35 percent of the premiums the company pays to cover its workers. In 2014, the rate increases to 50 percent. There are strings attached, though. To qualify, firms must employ fewer than 25 full-time workers (or the part-time equivalent), pay average annual salaries of less than \$50,000 per employee, and fund at least 50 percent of the premiums for their staff members.

But the credit’s structure may limit its use for architecture firms, at least for the next few years. The full 35 percent goes to businesses with 10 or fewer workers and average salaries under \$25,000. Above those thresholds, the credit gradually decreases until it’s phased out for companies with more than 25 full-time workers and average wages of \$50,000 or more. Employers may claim the credit on their 2010 income tax return.

That’s the plan until 2014, when the credit will be available only to small businesses that buy insurance through state insurance exchanges, and only for two years, since the new open-market programs are supposed to make insurance less expensive by then.

Starting in 2014, large businesses—50 or more employees—will be penalized

if they don’t offer health insurance. The first 30 employees are exempt, though, and the penalty maxes out at \$2,000 per employee per year. “I think small businesses will try to take advantage of the tax credit,” says CPA Scott Heintzelman, a partner at the accounting firm McKonly & Asbury in Camp Hill, Pa. (He blogs at www.exuberantaccountant.com.) “But the penalty is so small for larger companies that I think over time, as it becomes more difficult to pay for health insurance, they will opt out and simply pay the fine.”

The reform bill “is not a panacea, but it cuts a pretty wide swath,” says John R. Arensmeyer, founder and CEO of the Small Business Majority, a group that supports the new legislation. He notes that 84 percent of small businesses are eligible for some part of the tax credit. At the other end of the spectrum, only 4 percent of businesses have more than 50 employees, and of those, only 4 percent don’t offer health insurance, so just a sliver of large businesses will be affected.

“We’re hoping the rate of cost increases will slow down closer to that of inflation as health care changes start to kick in, because there will be more competition among the state exchanges,” Arensmeyer says. “But it won’t happen overnight.” For more on the proposed state exchanges and to calculate how much of the tax credit your firm is eligible for, visit www.smallbusinessmajority.org. —c.w.



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practice

use—helps pay for gym memberships, bicycle purchases, yoga, weight management, and Wii fitness programs.

"It's a little too early to track how that's working in terms of keeping claims low," Brown says. "But we're very transparent with our employees; we let them know when we've had high claims activity and encourage people to see in-network doctors."

The MillerHull Partnership in Seattle is thriving, too, despite the dragging economy. Still, the 70-member firm has had to whittle away at its health care provisions in the past five years to keep paying the lion's share of premiums. Every year it's a painful decision, says partner Sian Roberts, AIA, LEED AP. "We've been faced with 20 percent annual increases and have looked at other companies and plans to keep cost increases in the 5 percent to 10 percent range." MillerHull currently pays 100 percent of the premiums in a \$500 deductible health care plan. Last year that amounted to \$161,000, about 2.8 percent of revenues.

By comparison, very small offices face a more serious dilemma. With no leverage and a smaller risk pool, they're vulnerable to unpredictable changes in health care costs, and often are forced to choose between covering employees and staying in business.

No surprise, then, that fewer than half of companies with three to nine workers offered health benefits in 2009, according to the Employer Health Benefits survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research & Educational Trust.

Geoffrey Warner, AIA, who employs three people

"we're not immune to layoffs, but right off the bat we decided there were two areas we absolutely would not touch—benefits and professional development."

—meg brown

at Alchemy Architects, St. Paul, Minn., fits that snapshot. He used to be covered through his wife's employer, but now that she works for the firm, they buy health insurance for themselves. "I'm looking forward to some health care changes that are meaningful, and hope to see some benefits from the new national policy in the next few years," he says.

Bruce Norelius, AIA, buys health care benefits through his life partner's plan. Norelius, a former partner at Elliot Elliot Norelius Architects, Blue Hill, Maine, moved to Los Angeles in 2008 and works by himself for now. "My partner works at a school and they have generous

benefits," he says. "I'm enjoying having dental insurance for the first time."

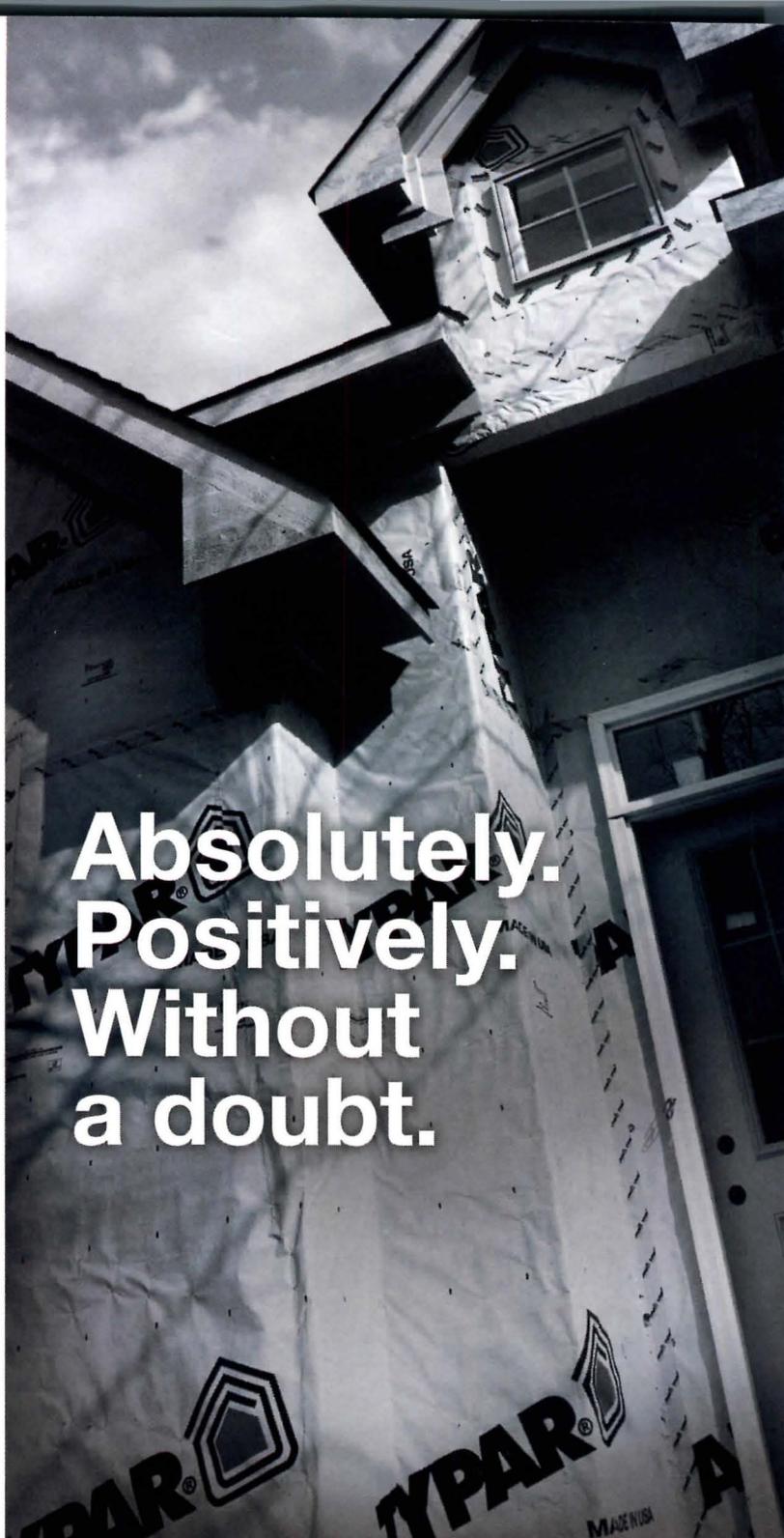
In a downsized economy, small firms lose not just gifted staff but, in some states, the critical mass to qualify for group plans. Case in point is John C. Senhauser, Architect in Cincinnati, which shrank to two employees

from six a few years ago. When no one would underwrite the firm, the two women joined their spouse's plans, and principal John C. Senhauser, FAIA, reimburses their premiums. He pays \$170 a month—a bargain—for his own coverage in a plan through his wife, who's retired from Procter & Gamble, and also shells out for employee dental insurance, short-term disability, and a retirement plan that contributes up to 3 percent of their salary.

"If I had a group plan again, I'd probably ask for a percentage of employee buy-in because it's just too expensive," Senhauser says. "When you contrib-

continued on page 48

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ute to something, you're a little more conscious of what things cost." Even so, he adds: "I try to keep benefits competitive with commercial firms because residential practices can't always keep up with them on salaries. And if you want to get the best people, you have to step up."

California architect Georgia Kajer agrees. This year she moved home from the Pasadena office she occupied for 20 years, bringing along a remnant employee. A high-deductible Blue Shield policy for the two of them costs about \$13,000 a year. In addition, she often pays cash for some of the employee's

"i'm looking forward to some health care changes that are meaningful, and hope to see some benefits from the new national policy in the next few years."

—geoffrey warner, aia

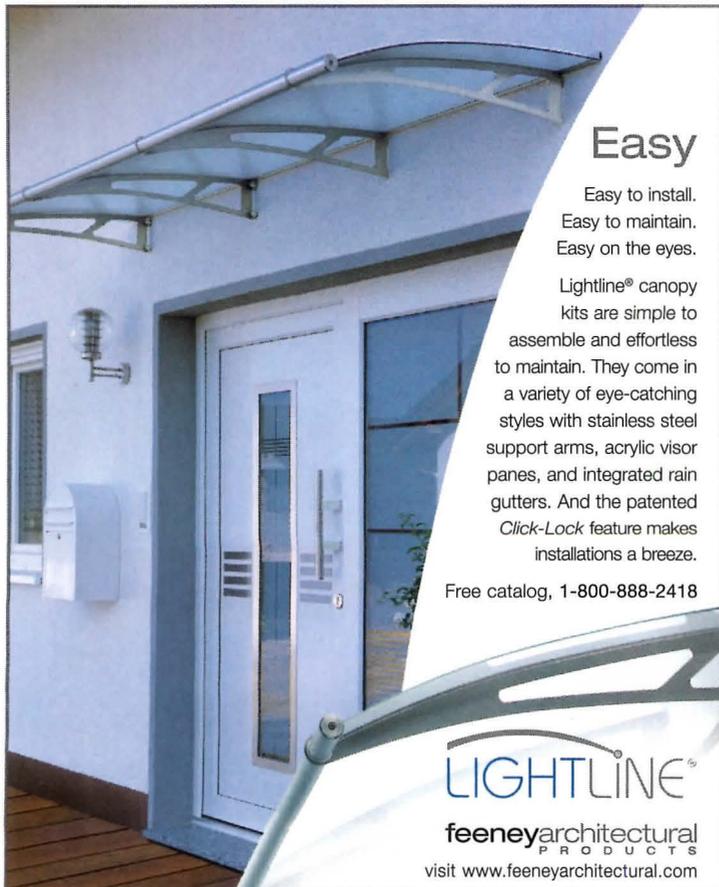
out-of-pocket medical, dental, and vision expenses. "If it's a hurdle, I'll pay because I'm able to do that," Kajer says. "He's a single man. I have a bit more of a safety net than he does because I'm married."

Many firm owners interviewed for this story were reluctant to discuss

their benefit cuts, partly out of respect for staff. But they're also grateful that, rather than being bitter, their employees are pulling together. Brian Lane, AIA, LEED AP, managing principal at Koning Eizenberg Architecture, says that "in a downturn it seems like the team spirit increases.

They understand their work contributes significantly to our cash flow and are hanging in there and doing a good job." One bright spot, he adds, is that the Santa Monica, Calif.-based firm's decision not to stint on marketing is now beginning to pay off.

As more firms move out of crisis mode, will employee benefits be restored? Most architects say yes, though health insurance is the wild card. No one knows precisely what effect health care reform will have on businesses over the next five to 10 years. But for now, at least, employees should get used to picking up more of the tab. **ra**



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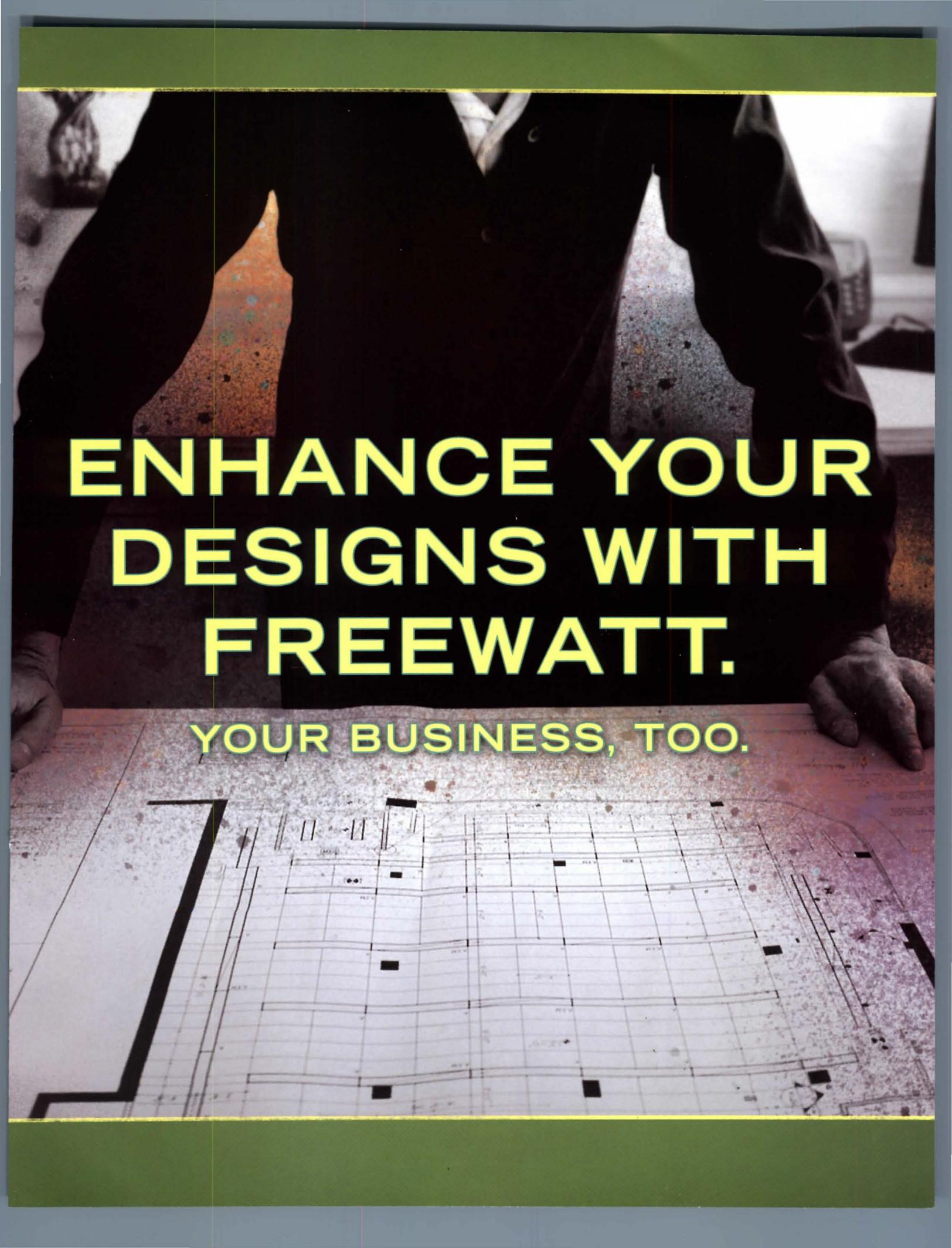
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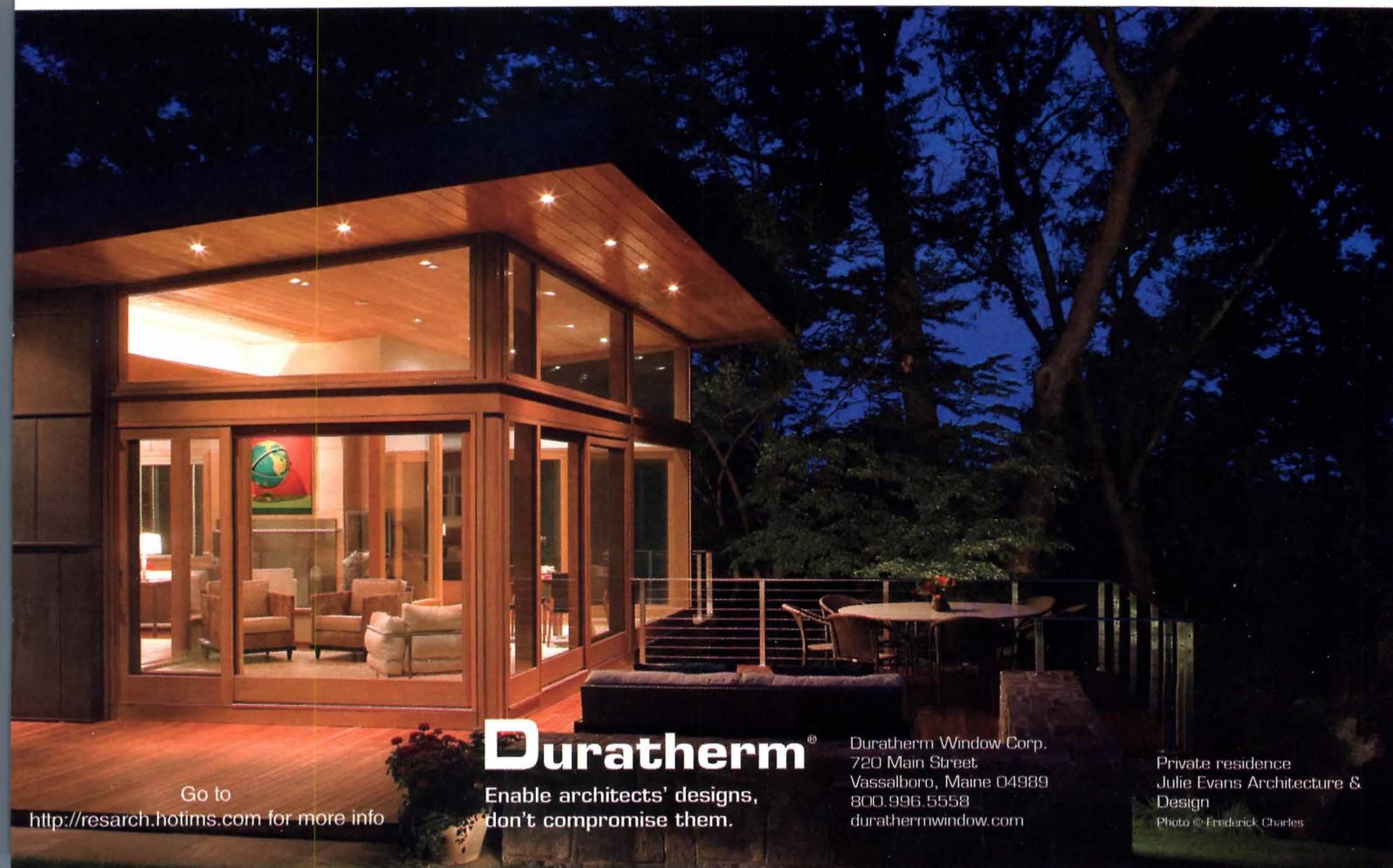


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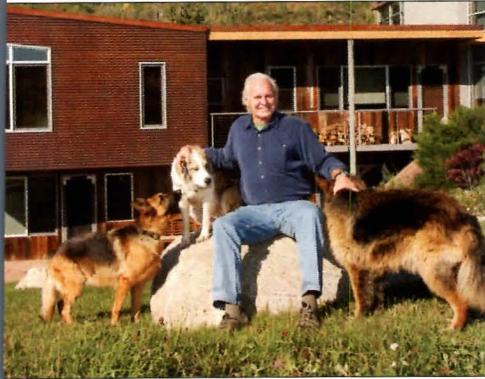
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We've been handing out our leadership awards for 12 years, and at no time has it been more difficult to achieve a leadership position in this profession than now. The architecture field is buffeted by challenges from all directions, so there's a certain poignancy and promise to our class of 2010. This year's winners are Hall of Fame: Harry Teague, AIA, Harry Teague Architects; Top Firm: Dan Shipley, FAIA, Shipley Architects; and Rising Star: Jeffrey L. Day, AIA, and E.B. Min, AIA, Min | Day. Their work differs, but they share a trait rare among architects—they know not only how to design things, but how to build them, too. Teague and Shipley have run design/build practices, bringing creativity and craft to their clients for years. And Day and Min are plumbing the astounding potential of new computer fabrication technology to transform custom-designed work. They understand how to value engineer each project while retaining what's truly valuable, and that's a skill everyone must master going forward in the new world order.

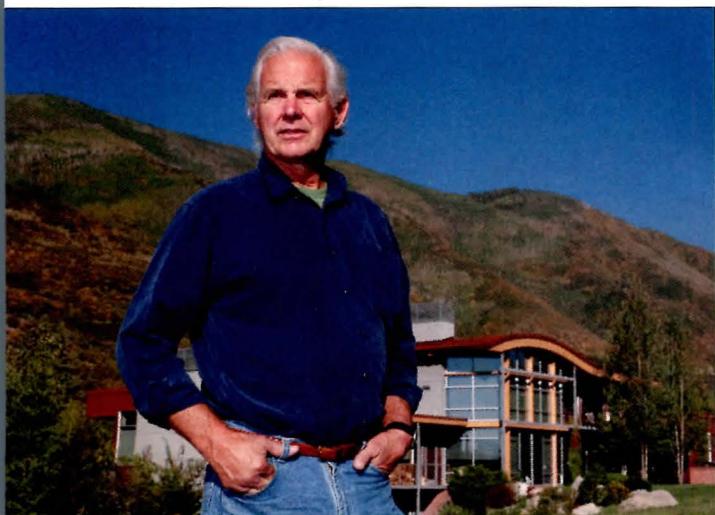
Photos (left to right): Peter McBride/Aurora Select;
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hall of fame: harry teague, aia

harry teague architects, basalt, colo.

harry teague's restlessly inventive mountain modernism
draws its power from the nature and culture of colorado.

by bruce d. snider



Peter McBride/Aurora Select

Harry Teague grew up in the East, but throughout his professional life the mountains of Colorado have been both home and the inspiration for his architecture.

Given Harry Teague's family background, it would be surprising if he hadn't become a designer of some kind. His grandfather, the pioneering industrial designer Walter Dorwin Teague, penned Art Deco cameras for Kodak in the 1920s and 1930s and served on the design board of the 1939 New York World's Fair. His father, Richard Teague, was a car designer whose credits include the AMC Javelin and Jeep Cherokee. Harry Teague, 66, remembers growing up "in an ambience where everything was judged: Every building, every product, everything." Amid this ongoing critique of the made world, he was exposed to some of the icons of 20th-century design. "When I was a baby, I was in a hammock on a Herreshoff S-Boat," he says. In the workshop of his family's northern New Jersey home, "we restored a Type 37 Grand Prix Bugatti." But, destined or not, Teague's career as an architect diverged from the beaten path of his forebears. The difference can be summed up in a single word: Colorado.

As a newly minted Dartmouth graduate in 1966, Teague spent a year working for Aspen, Colo.-based architect Fritz Benedict, a Frank Lloyd Wright disciple who designed the master plans for the Colorado ski towns of Vail, Snowmass, and Breckenridge. "He had



Cement Creek Residence, completed in 2007, employs both passive and active solar strategies in response to a site that delivers breathtaking views and extreme weather.



Photos: Wayne Thom



Photos: Paul Warchol



Border House was named for its function as a transitional element between woodland and open meadow. Completed in 2003, it reflects themes common in Teague's work: forms inspired by the landscape and a certain "assembled" quality.

a rich sense for the mountain landscape. I learned a ton from him," says Teague, who calls his internship "more like an initiation." In 1969, on summer break from architecture studies at Yale University, he returned with some fellow students to build sprayed-concrete domes. "The next summer we found a client and did a house," Teague says. He made the pilgrimage annually throughout his Yale years, producing experimental work for adventurous clients. "It was crazy," he says now, "but it didn't cost much."

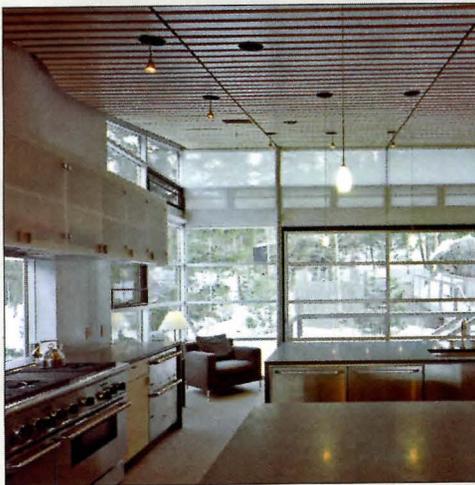
lighting out

Teague's Yale thesis project was an innovative design for the alternative Aspen Community School, and after graduation he and group of friends returned to the mountains to build it. "When we came out [of school], people went in some different directions, some to the bigger firms," he remembers. "And then there were those of us who were perfectly comfortable camping out in order to do what we wanted to do." Adopting the

moniker SLOW (for Society of Loosely Organized Workers), the group lived in camper trailers on the site, where, Teague recalls, the nearest neighbor was the famously erratic journalist Hunter S. Thompson. "He actually shot out the lantern of one of our campers."

Teague's approach to architecture reflected the openness of the times. Through his work at Yale, then under the deanship of Charles Moore, "I got a sense that architecture could work in a social context as well as a physical context." The school design grew out of extensive interviews with students, parents, and teachers. Based on an interactive model of education—Teague used garage doors to open classrooms to a central courtyard—and inspiration from Italian Renaissance architect Francesco di Giorgio, the building made novel use of log construction. It was an immediate success (and an enduring one; some 40 years later, it remains the home of a thriving community institution). Further educational projects were not forth-

Glacier Residence was designed around the remnants of its namesake, the glacier that scoured out the “hanging valley” it occupies. Under a long, rippling ceiling, interior spaces flow down the sloping grade, skirting—and sometimes incorporating—boulders deposited by the retreating ice sheet.



Photos: Thorney Lieberman

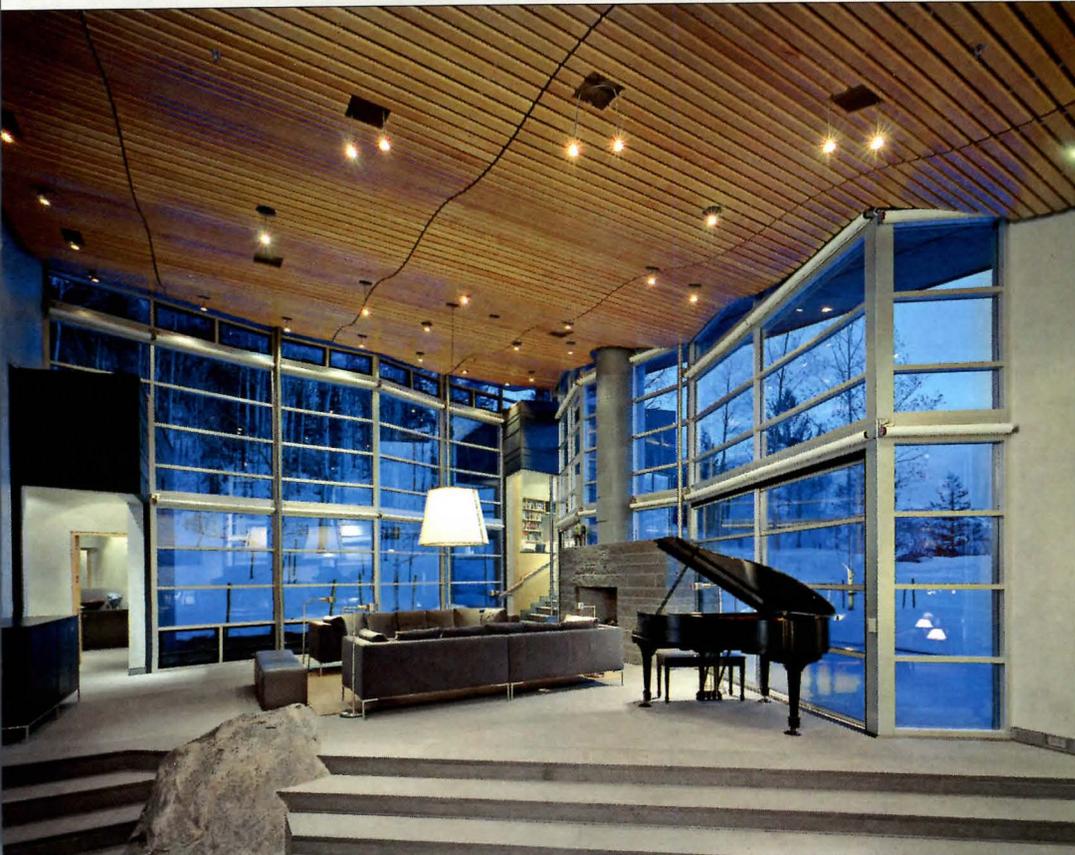
papa bear

Harry Teague speaks fondly of his early mentors: Fritz Benedict, who gave him his first job in Colorado, and Charles Moore, Moshe Safdie, and the other leading lights he studied under at Yale in the 1960s. And while he struck out on his own early in his career, Teague has long embraced mentorship from the other side of the drafting board as well.

Glenn Rappaport, principal at Black Shack Architects in Basalt, Colo., credits his erstwhile boss with clarifying “the relationship between regionalism and modernism. Harry was great about all that. He’d say, ‘Go up to Leadville and drive around the alleys.’ I saw through Harry how I was going to give language to some of the things I was very attached to in the region.”

Brad Zeigel, a partner at A4 Architects in Carbondale, Colo., is still sparked by Teague’s originality some 10 years after he and fellow alumni Michael Hassig and Olivia Emery left to found their own firm. “Harry’s inquisitive, unsatisfied with the last solution,” Zeigel says. “He’s a leader in the area, and people always wonder what he’s up to. People are always knocking on his door, and it’s always open. He’s a huge influence here, but it’s more than just architecture. It’s also the Aspen Community School and what that created. He’s affected a lot of people’s lives.”

Some former associates, no doubt, would have liked to make a career in the firm, but Teague deliberately has avoided taking a partner. As sole principal, he explains, “I’m intimately involved in all design decisions in the office. It’s why I do it; the point is to be able to do this part of the work, the design work.” Architecture is a collaborative art, he believes, but the purpose of his practice is not to build a dynasty. “It’s more to engage in these quests and discoveries. And if you get the message, there’s no other choice than to go off on your own.”—*b.d.s.*





Providing affordable housing in Aspen, Colo., Benedict Commons, completed in 1996, breaks up its massed units in street elevations that follow the pattern of the historic downtown (right). Units open onto a common interior courtyard, connecting via on-grade paths and elevated walkways (top and above).



Photos: Timothy Hursley

coming, Teague says, “but we did have wonderful [residential] clients who liked this crazy idea we had with logs—the economy, the exuberance.” While most of his colleagues drifted away after the project was finished, Teague stayed on, adopting the SLOW Construction name for his own design/build firm.

Yale had emphasized hands-on construction experience, and running a design/build operation extended that practice. “I learned a ton and got very confident with materials,” Teague says. But after a time, “my learning curve flattened out. I would design for one month and build for 11. I was anxious to develop my design more.” A turning point came in a commission for another nascent institution, the Anderson Ranch Arts Center, where Teague converted an old barn to gallery space and offices. “That was probably the last job I pounded nails on,” he remembers, “and it was with some reluctance, because there’s something wonderful about going home at the end of the day and having produced some-

thing tangible.” But if he lost his calluses, Teague found his groove as a regional modernist. “I developed this vernacular of working with old buildings, and adding things to them that were new—and obviously so—but worked with the old things.” The project also introduced him to the clientele that has supported his residential practice ever since.

back to the ranch

In his houses, Teague applied what had become his customary tools: intensive client research, plans that foster interaction, and forms inspired by utilitarian structures. “The agricultural buildings that I admired were often sited in a very casual way that made you say, ‘Wow, that’s just perfect,’” he observes. Taking ranch and mining camp buildings as his raw material, “I would make them up out of a lot of parts,” sculpting dwellings into the landscape, both functionally and thematically. As a result, he notes, “They looked informal, and they looked natural.”

Teague put vernacular forms at the



Photos: Thorney Lieberman

service of an aesthetic that, while playful, was more modernist than postmodernist. And his experience as a builder gave him the confidence to employ familiar materials in novel ways. "I could just look at them and see what they could do," he explains. About the same time that Frank Gehry made chain link fence famous, Teague used corrugated aluminum as the siding and roofing of his Shiny Metal House, contrasting the industrial material with the building's neo-Palladian symmetry. "It's the first example I know of people using that as a glamorous material," Teague says.

He followed up, perhaps inevitably, with Rusty Metal House, whose untreated steel roof and siding oxidized to the same plum brown as the iron-rich rock of the nearby peaks. To sell the idea, he took his clients for a champagne picnic at the remote abandoned sheep ranch that inspired it. They agreed, Teague reports, but with conditions. "I actually had to put up a \$5,000 deposit and guarantee the roof for five years."

"Some very fine architects tend to be gardeners," observes architectural journalist Mildred Schmetz, FAIA, who first wrote about Teague's work in the early 1980s. "He's influenced by the wild places. That's a very key element in his life. He's a mountain man." A mountain man whose flatlander origins may actually strengthen his work. "I look at everything with fresh eyes," Teague explains. On the East Coast of his youth, "the landscape was relatively soft. In Colorado I was plunged into this place where no building is divorced from its backdrop. Mountains shoot up behind everything. Each project deals in one way or another with an issue that the huge landscape is presenting." Teague sought to make his buildings part of the heroic mountain landscape without making them disappear into it. Shiny Metal House "was in the bottom of a valley," he notes, "and it had to stand out to hold its own. Our building is 5 miles long, because it forms the end of this beautiful bowl-shaped valley that's 5 miles long.



Completed in 2000, the Burlingame affordable housing development comprises four housing clusters and a commons building, all opening onto a shared outdoor space. Prefabricating the units off-site reduced both costs and time under construction.

2010 leadership awards

In the Hacker Residence, completed in 1997, Teague returned to the imagery of the barn, a motif in his work since his earliest projects. He traces this affinity to a barn residence his grandfather created in the 1930s.



Photos: Robert Millman



Photos: Timothy Hursley

The home and studio for two artists, Shiny Metal House (1984) makes use of materials common in agricultural buildings and mobile homes. Teague chose them for the way their appearance changes along with lighting conditions (top). Translucent fiberglass panels diffuse the often brilliant, focused mountain sunlight.

You take advantage of the features to make the building stronger.”

lay of the land

But the human element figures equally in the equation. “He embraces his clients,” says Brad Zeigel, AIA, who worked with Teague from 1990 to 2000. “He gets them to ask themselves what living is all about.” With Teague, he adds, “You get more than a house.” Teague explains: “I get very interested in the social machinery of the entity I’m working for. What do they need to make this work? Is it privacy? Is it interaction? What do they want to discover on this land? Even if it’s been done thousands of times, we go back to the source with our clients. That’s key to our process.” And for newcomers to the mountains, Teague has wisdom to share. “Right now,” he tells them, “you’re just coming to this land. All you want to do is stare at it. In 20 years you’re going to have a whole different attitude about it.”

Teague’s commercial and public work—which includes an acclaimed

performance hall at the Breckenridge Riverwalk Center in Breckenridge, Colo., and an ongoing series of projects at the Anderson Ranch—is equally strong, varied, and inventive. But houses remain a mainstay of his practice, and an important incubator of ideas. “Residential projects are the chamber music of our work,” Teague says. “You have the ability to experiment with this relationship with the landscape.”

This is where Teague takes his own family tradition into new territory. While neither his grandfather nor his father was an architect, he says, “Both of them did buildings—and pretty nifty ones, too.” But, he notes, “They were involved with the machine-age stuff. They were buildings that promoted an anthropocentric view.” For more than 40 years, Teague has applied his formidable skill and energy in service of a very different ideal: aligning the potential of human invention with the power of the landscape. “That’s still my theme,” he says. “You can’t beat these mountains.” *ra*

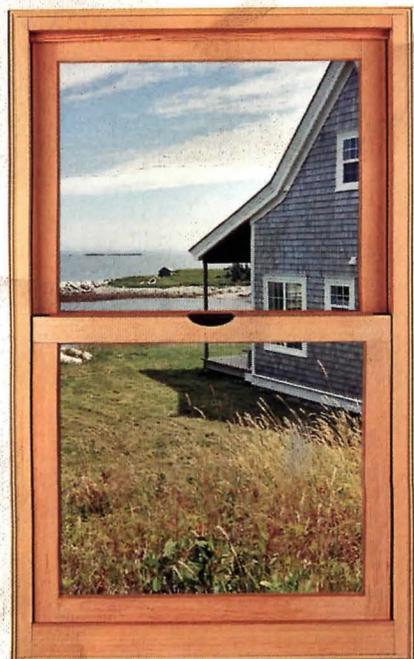


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top firm: shipley architects dallas

an inventive resourcefulness drives dan shipley on site and in the studio.

by meghan drueding



Photos: Danny Turner (above); Craig D. Blackmon, FAIA (opposite)

Dan Shipley values corrugated metal for its tough character and tactile look. He specified it for the cladding of his new office space on the southern edge of downtown Dallas.

When approached for career advice, Dan Shipley, FAIA, often gives future architects an unexpected suggestion. He tells them to work for a builder or subcontractor—anything that will gain them some hands-on construction experience. “The real world isn’t about paper,” says the Dallas-based architect, whose quirky, modern projects regularly bring home local and state design awards. “It’s about materials, grease, dirt, and all that kind of stuff.”

Shipley himself worked for a framing company back in 1976, during a self-enforced hiatus from architecture school at the University of Texas at Austin. “I didn’t know the slightest thing about building, but somehow had the sense that I wanted to know practical things,” he says. After a year or so framing houses, he moved on to a job as a draftsman for a small East Texas architecture firm. “That formed the whole backbone of my career,” he explains. “I learned so much about how to put buildings together, really.” He then went back to school and finished his degree, returning to the firm afterward for another year. A five-year stint with a Dallas firm, Thomas & Booziotis Architects (now Booziotis & Co. Architects), exposed him to additional projects and project types.

A photograph of a modern house with a mix of materials: dark grey shingles, red horizontal siding, and light-colored stone. The house is built on a grassy slope and is partially shaded by a large, leafy tree in the foreground. The sky is clear and blue.

Shipley named a 2009 house and art studio "Swordfish Trombone House" in tribute to an album by singer-songwriter Tom Waits. The Dallas project blends various materials to create a rich architectural texture.

2010 leadership awards



Often, Shipley makes relatively minor adjustments to an existing home that completely change the way his clients live. This 2004 renovation to the rear of a house in Dallas includes a new master suite, carport, and studio, which connect the building to its backyard.



Photos: Charles Davis Smith



Photos: Charles Davis Smith

At a guest house and “party barn” in Hico, Texas, industrial materials such as clear PVC and perforated aluminum complement earthier items like salvaged heart pine boards and indigenous stone.

Eventually Shipley went out on his own, intent on doing commercial work. But the economy of the late 1980s didn’t help, and he ended up taking on a few residential design/build projects just to keep going. One, a small addition to a 1920s Prairie-style house, led to an epiphany. “It was the first project where I really figured out how to design something,” he recalls. “I had gotten a taste of this joy of designing and building things. I found out how much I loved this way of thinking.” However, business proved so slow that he moved on to a position at a large firm, HKS Architects, for a couple of years—an experience that helped him hone his design and management abilities.

Then Shipley got what he calls his “second start”: an opportunity to independently design the conversion of an old masonry firehouse into a nonprofit arts center. The project enabled him to re-establish his own firm, this time for good. He still talks fondly about the job, which he also built. “With the builder hat, we could make adjustments on the spot,” he says. “That was fantastic.”

budget conscious

Naturally, Shipley faced a tight budget

on that first nonprofit project. But he made it stretch, a skill he’s been perfecting ever since. Other architects and design observers marvel at his gift for making the most out of limited resources. “He’s able to infuse an amazing spirit and intensity into projects,” says Dallas architect Max Levy, FAIA.

Part of this aspect of Shipley’s work comes from his personality—he’s naturally frugal, gravitates toward the humble and the unpretentious, and likes the challenge of sticking to a budget. And his construction background helps tremendously. Sometimes he builds his own projects, and sometimes he works with a general contractor. Either way, he’s out on the jobsite, deploying his intimate knowledge of the building process to invent unexpected uses for ordinary materials. For example, at a 1,490-square-foot house in the Urban Reserve development in Dallas (see page 68), he transformed industrial metal grating and off-the-shelf metal railings into an elegant exterior entry ramp. Without it, he explains, the sense of arrival would feel too abrupt, given the lack of space for an interior foyer. Instead, the graceful, inexpensive entry sequence makes the house seem larger inside.



Photos: James F. Wilson



Ford Trimotor House, a 1,900-square-foot residence in Dallas' Urban Reserve development, mixes warm wood detailing with metal and concrete. On the façade, slim, vertical metal bands humanize the scale of the corrugated metal walls.



Photos: Charles Davis Smith

In 2005, Shipley added a new master suite onto a house he designed in 1996. The Eu-logy, Texas, addition, known as the Freezer Panel Walkout, uses insulated freezer panels as its main structural component. Sheet metal and wood battens clad the exteriors, while cork and fiber-cement boards form the interior finish materials.

That particular job had a relatively modest budget, but Shipley's projects can dip much lower on the budgetary food chain. They also can climb significantly higher, when his clients have the means. What doesn't change from project to project is his commitment to not wasting money or resources. This quality has endeared him to many clients, no matter what their budget. "I've recommended him quite a few times and people always report back happy," says Diane Cheatham, the developer of Urban Reserve. "I tell him, 'You've got to start bragging about how much your clients like you.'" Notes two-time client Tom Perryman, "Dan is incredibly meticulous. Everything matters to him."

Shipley believes a good architect should be able to work with the materials at hand—in the spirit of the TV character MacGyver, whom he admires along with more typical figures such as Carlo Scarpa and O'Neil Ford. "I kind of have this attitude of wanting to do as much as I can with whatever's available," he says, matter-of-factly. He likes to experiment with materials, and has been known to use items such as decking boards and perforated

metal as exterior cladding. "Almost any material can be used and detailed in pretty sophisticated ways," he observes. Corrugated metal is a personal favorite of Shipley's. "It's a thin material given strength from the stresses put into it," he says. "What a beautiful idea. It's one of the best materials there is."

He also feels architecture should be democratic—that the smallest, most mundane addition or outbuilding deserves as much attention as a whole house or a major renovation. "I don't like the idea of the architect being above it all," Shipley explains. "Some of the projects we do are very modest and never get a whole lot of attention, but I know they were just as good as the ones that did. The point is that you solved a problem in an economic and beautiful way." He turns down few projects, even in times of plenty.

detail-oriented

Shipley admits that accepting so many small projects isn't always the best financial strategy. But he enjoys and craves the puzzles they pose, and has made smart business moves in other ways. After years of working alone, he

box office

Dan Shipley, FAIA, likes to call his studio's neighborhood an "urban territory." Just south of downtown Dallas, the area originally was developed with single-family houses, but in the 1950s a new interstate highway cut it off from the more populated parts of the city. "It's very urban because it's downtown, but it's also very open and kind of empty," Shipley explains.

He staked his claim to a 0.2-acre property there in 2008. Over the past two years, he's gradually designed and built a 24-foot-by-80-foot corrugated metal-clad box to serve as Shipley Architects' workspace and calling card. The building features a healthy modicum of flexibility; its 18-foot-high ceilings can accommodate an eventual mezzanine space, and Shipley structured and wired the project to support two rooftop apartments in the future. A pair of small restroom buildings, also metal-clad, lies separately from the main build-

ing—"so we don't encumber the big space with service-type space," Shipley notes. Tubing embedded in the concrete floors supplies radiant heat as well as radiant cooling.

True to local tradition, the project sits on a pier-and-beam foundation. Metal and wood screens shade its windows and provide a measure of security. Inside, a central core acts as the firm's library. When finished, the 8-foot-by-14-foot core's outer walls will double as display areas for a collection of materials, fasteners, structural members, and maybe even tools. "It'll be like a museum of materials lining the walls," says staffer Jay Smith, AIA, LEED AP.

By giving such prominence to the building blocks of its work, the firm makes a strong statement about its priorities. "That's what we do," Shipley says. "Materials and details are so important, we want to be able to lay our hands on them when we need them."—*m.d.*

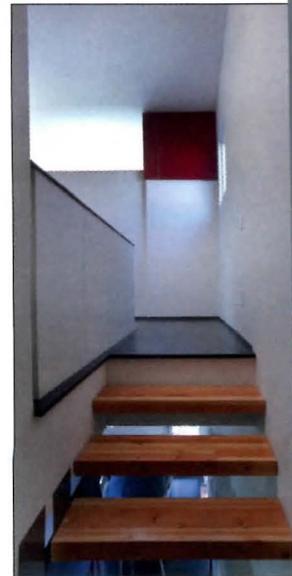
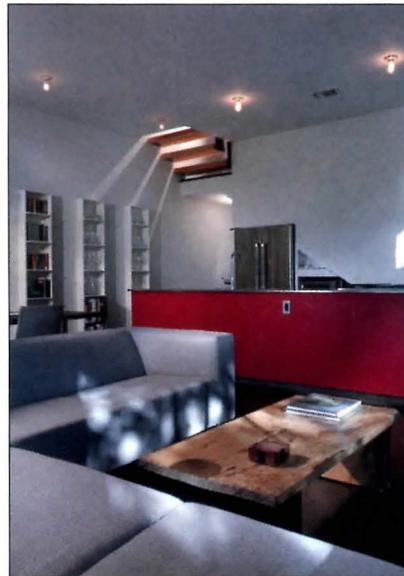


Photos: Charles Davis Smith



Photos: Hester + Hardaway; Robert Gries (center)

Custom metal detailing pulls together the Tailored House, a 2001 Shipley project in Highland Park, Texas. Big steel windows made in a local workshop bring in natural light. Shipley nestled the house among the existing trees and created a subdued exterior that defers to the surrounding older homes.



Photos: Charles Davis Smith

At a 1,490-square-foot project in Dallas' Urban Reserve development, Shipley employed metal grating to form a dramatic entry ramp. Unexpected interior sightlines, such as the view from the living room up through the second-floor staircase, enliven the space without breaking the budget.

expanded slowly and surely, reaching a full-time staff high of seven in 2008. He's also balanced his portfolio with some institutional work. That diversity has come in handy recently, with private-school and civic projects helping him counter a recession-induced slowdown in residential commissions. The sluggish Dallas housing market has forced him to cut back to two full-time staff members (himself and project architect Jay Smith, AIA, LEED AP.) They're forging ahead, stepping up the build side of the firm to supplement the design portion.

With the new economic austerity, Shipley's longtime interest in doing more with less has gained traction among many of his fellow architects. They'd do well to look at the way he handles details, from the most modest of projects up through his high-end work. "His details are personable," Levy says. "You reach for a door handle and look down and think, 'Oh, this is cool.' It's a friendly, warm architectural language." Austin, Texas-based Mell Lawrence, FAIA, views Shipley's details as part of a larger whole. "When you zoom in, you notice all the clever details," he says. "When you zoom out, you see a well-

composed thing that does a lot with light and shadow. He pays so much attention to the composition."

Sometimes Shipley designs a detail first, and then the project flows from there; in other cases he does the reverse. Either way, he remains in control of the design while still allowing himself leeway for improvisation. "Restraint is one of the salient features of Dan's work," says Stephen Sharpe, editor of *Texas Architect* magazine.

Shipley has spent most of his life in Texas, and the agrarian buildings dotting the rural landscape there serve as some of his biggest influences. He's even devoted a section of his website to them, under the heading "Roadside Attractions." The idea of these utilitarian structures created by anonymous builders appeals to his sense that a good building needs a human touch. "A lot of people in the profession are so keen on perfection and precision," he says. "I see it as more about accuracy and ideas. I'm not interested in perfection—it seems sort of hollow to me." Instead, he designs each residential project toward a deeper, more complicated goal: to make a good place to live. *ra*

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Photos: John Lee/Aurora Select (above); Paul Crosby (opposite)

Most architects who open second offices do so a few years into their practice, once they've built a base from which to branch out. Fewer follow the path taken by E.B. Min, AIA, and Jeffrey L. Day, AIA, who in 2003 launched Min | Day in two cities—San Francisco and Omaha, Neb. The circumstances leading to that decision were mundane—Day followed his fiancée to Omaha while Min stayed in the Bay Area, where they had been working together on and off for a few years—yet their practice has become anything but.

The business partners, who met as graduate students at the University of California at Berkeley, are developing a unique voice in the creative junction between these two places, which are as different in sensibility as they are in topography. San Francisco shouts good design in daily life and clients usually know what they want. But the quieter Midwest city is a surprisingly agile testing ground for new visual ideas, in part because it has a less well-defined regional style.

“Clients in the Bay Area have more focused opinions about what they like or don't like, but they may be less willing to open up to new ideas” than clients in the conventionally bland Midwest, Day says. “Here in Omaha it's more like, ‘I don't want what I see around me.’ It



The Lake Okoboji house creates a set of blinds on a narrow lot in rural Iowa, screening close neighbors while gradually opening to lake views. Jeffrey L. Day and E.B. Min (opposite) pose on the Stones Table, which melds organic form with CNC precision. Together, the pieces form a rectangular table.



Photos: Paul Crosby

Min | Day's interiors subtly refer to their site. In this penthouse overlooking downtown Omaha, Neb., a blue-saturated stairwell heightens the experience of moving up toward the sky, and the CNC-cut railings and light filters suggest prairie grasses.

gives us room to experiment a bit.”

landscape inspirations

Those experiments often explore the fluid relationships between architecture, landscape, and technology. With art-related undergraduate degrees—Min studied art history and studio art at Brown University; Day focused on visual and environmental studies at Harvard College—the pair collaborates across disciplines, combining traditional building methods with digitally fabricated designs. Their enthusiasm for using sophisticated technology to tease out the specificity of the site shows up in projects like the Lake Okoboji house in Omaha. For the master bedroom facing the lake, they used animation software to create a rippling headboard, made from thin stacked sheets of birch plywood, that mimics the water's surface. They also cast the light-filtering screens of an Omaha condominium in a laser-cut pattern suggesting prairie grass.

That Min | Day's buildings reference their natural surroundings is no accident,

either. Day teaches landscape architecture classes at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Architecture, where he is an associate professor. Min's stint at San Francisco-based Andrea Cochran Landscape Architecture (then Delaney & Cochran) taught her that color and texture are as important as form. Both are fascinated by the interplay of painted finishes and the colors reflected in nature. “There's a portion of landscape design that is very graphic in nature,” Min says.

Those qualities are evident in the Omaha condo, where vivid blue walls defining the vertical circulation are paired with high windows that admit snapshots of sky and shifting light. Another is the bright orange boys' bath in the lake house. “Some people say they can't handle that much color in a room, but when you're in these spaces it's very different from what you see in photos,” Min says. “And if there aren't a lot of other views—just a bath with a little window—monolithic color makes it a more interesting environment. We work pretty hard on getting the right whites, too.”



Renderings: Courtesy Min | Day



The Wide Open House is a stock plan developed for Hometta.com, a website Min | Day helped found to sell affordable modern homes.



Photos: Larry Gawel

InfoShop, the new reception area for the Bemis Center in Omaha, Neb., provides a spontaneous place for dialogue and debate. The desk—laminated hardboard with exposed edges over a plywood and steel frame—doubles as a bar surface for gallery events. Behind it, CNC-milled MDF wall panels were cut from a pinwheel aperiodic tiling pattern.

experimental edge

Most of Min | Day's experiments with CNC digital fabrication are done in collaboration with FACT (Fabrication and Construction Team), an affiliated design lab Jeffrey L. Day, AIA, teaches at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. FACT takes on pro bono and very-low-fee work for nonprofit clients like the Bemis Center in Omaha, Neb., and Art Farm in Marquette, Neb., both artist residency programs. In these long-term projects, each successive class gets hands-on experience building small art installations. Day, firm partner E.B. Min, AIA, and their three employees design the projects while FACT develops them, conducts research, and oversees fabrication and construction.

Although FACT is never used for work on private commissions, its testing supports the firm's interest in creating unusual effects. "It's a way to make creative possibilities affordable," Day says. At the Bemis Center, for example, students developed a complex paneled wall system that cost \$5 per square foot because they wrote their own code and had it fabricated at a medium-security state prison. "The material itself was inexpensive, but it would have been a monumental task for craftspeople," Day says. "We're not that interested in precious materials, but in what you do with materials."—c.w.



Walnut-stained casework brings texture and spatial definition to a New York City loft. The main cube (above) hides a desk and bench; its opposite side holds a toy closet and kitchen pantry—the source of light through the reveal. Other cabinetry contains a media center and closets.



Photos: Michael Moran

the art of improv

Hesse McGraw, curator at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, an art residency program in Omaha, describes Min | Day's work as "an architecture that remembers it's meant to be lived in, and that reaches out to its occupants in a generous way."

Says McGraw, "When you look at the images you can tell there's a kind of joy or sense of celebration just by the colors and forms, but the way that happens when you occupy these spaces is palpable. There's a sense of discovery that unfolds over time."

Their ongoing work with the Bemis Center and other nonprofit artist organizations has inspired an improvisational paradigm that's quite different from their meticulously controlled projects, and one that would scare most architects. In this realm, too, Min | Day borrows from landscape architecture. "The way landscape architects think about the long-term has inspired us to think about how to do that architecturally," Day says. "When you can't depend on rigorous control from

start to finish, you seek ways of structuring the experiences to unify the work of others who succeed you."

It's an approach they've used on restricted-budget private commissions, too. With a portfolio ranging from a wheelchair-accessible suburban residence to urban adaptive reuse, straw bale houses, and repurposed art buildings on a working farm, their practice is hard to pin down. Recently they landed a new category: master planning for a 90-unit housing project in China.

The philosophy that informs all Min | Day's work, whether experimental or traditional, is that architecture isn't so much about the formal image as the way a building locks into its site. And that's something that has to be experienced.

"When the weather is cool here, the breeze comes from the north, and the building shields a beautiful patio," says client Paul Smith of his Lake Okoboji house. "In warm weather, the breeze comes out of the south. I often sit there with my coffee in the morning and watch the world wake up." **ra**



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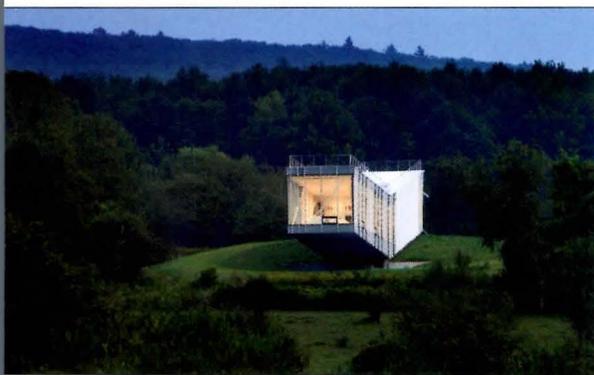
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case study

up, up, and away

a house in the berkshires soars above its sloped site.

by bruce d. snider



Long cantilevers often seek to impress by staunchly resisting gravity. This building, instead, seems simply to have slipped its earthly bonds and taken flight.

Architect Warren Schwartz, FAIA, credits a sunrise visit to the rim of the Grand Canyon—and a later dream about the experience—as the seed for the Berkshire mountains summer house he shares with his wife, violinist Sheila Fiekowsky. Schwartz, who is in the habit of doodling while his wife fiddles, worked out the basic concept during Boston Symphony Orchestra concerts. “I just drew the memory of this dream while I was at Symphony Hall,” he recalls. At one intermission, he ran into structural engineer Sarkis Zerounian and handed him a concert program covered with elevation sketches. At the end of the concert, Zerounian handed back a preliminary structural design.

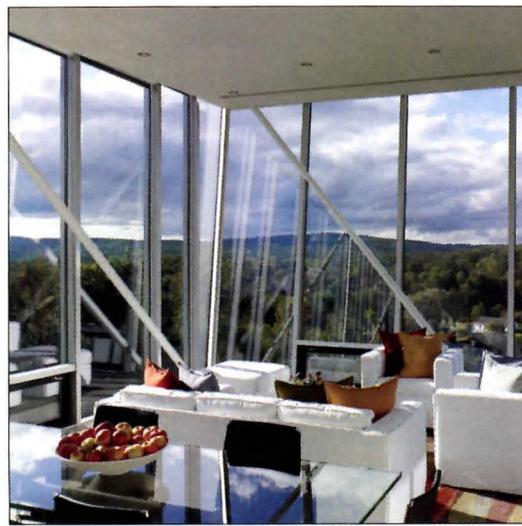
The result of this classically scored collaboration is a slender chevron, clad in glass and anodized aluminum, that follows the sloping grade for half of its length before leaping into a gravity-defying 45-foot cantilever. A massive concrete foundation under the earth-bound half anchors the cantilever, effectively acting as a bridge abutment. “But here,” Schwartz notes, “we have only half a bridge.” Steel-framed floor and roof decks and steel-tube

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A three-dimensional truss of thin, high-strength steel members supports a cantilever of 45 feet—approximately half of the building's length. A corridor descends from the entry to the main living space, which offers an aerial perspective on the Berkshires landscape.



architect: Schwartz/Silver Architects, Boston

builder: Chris May Builders, Richmond, Mass.

structural engineer: Sarkis Zerounian & Associates, Newton, Mass.

photography: Alan Karchmer / Sandra Benedum

resources: bathroom fittings/fixtures: Duravit; dishwasher: Bosch; entry door, patio doors, and windows: R&R Window Contractors; exterior siding: McNichols; hardware: Sargent Manufacturing; hvac equipment: Trane; kitchen cabinets: IKEA; kitchen plumbing fixtures: KWC America; oven: Dacor; range: Bosch; refrigerator: Liebherr; roofing: Sika Sarnafil

case study



The building's steel structural frame lies inboard of an aluminum-and-glass curtain wall (top). Etched glass "storefronts" allow the three bedrooms to borrow daylight from the corridor (above).

members form a three-dimensional truss, in which the floor actually hangs from the roof.

In plan, the building is surprisingly down-to-earth. "I always use the analogy of a Pullman car," Schwartz says. "The rooms are on the right, and the corridor is on the left." The corridor descends three sets of folded-steel stairs, passing three bedrooms and a separate staircase to the roof deck, each of which occupies its own concrete landing. The elevated entry provides a preview of the vista that wraps the airborne great room.

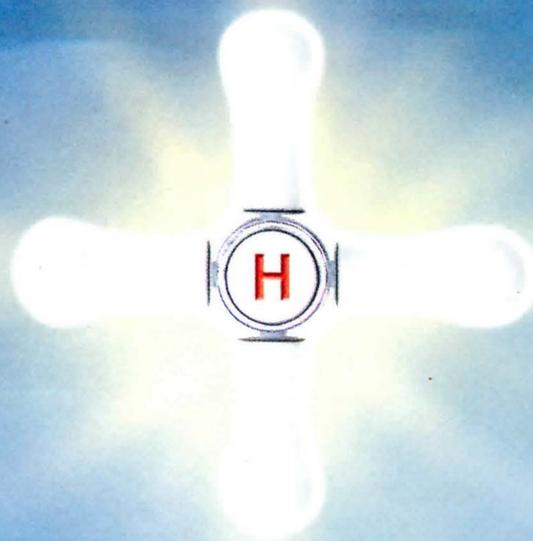
Builder Chris May's background in commercial construction prepared him well for the construction methods involved—with its steel frame, glass curtain walls, and concrete topping slabs, the building contains virtually no wood—but in the essential matter of how the building would hold itself up, he simply had to trust the engineer. And Zerounian delivered. "He told us how much out of level to hold

that cantilever up," May says, and when the crew removed the temporary screw jacks under it, the structure settled exactly as predicted. "I don't think the floor is more than 1/8-inch out of level in the 40 or 50 feet it cantilevers out there. It was like cooking a soufflé that comes out perfect: You don't know what you did, but it worked."

Schwartz and Fiekowski's commitment to the design also required a leap of faith. But the house, their home base during the BSO's summer seasons in Tanglewood, Mass., lives up to the dream that inspired it. Descending through the building, toward a mountain-and-valley view that stretches into New York state, one's elevation above grade actually rises. Visitors liken the sensation to a ride on a biplane or a magic carpet. "You feel like you're in a high-rise building," Schwartz says. "It's a horizontal building that feels vertical."

A version of this article first appeared in CUSTOM HOME magazine.

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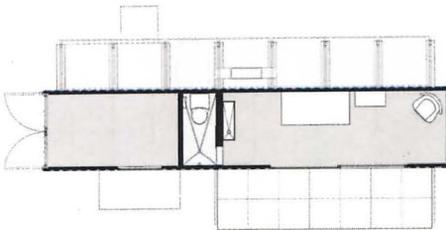
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ship shape

a shipping container morphs into a welcoming guest house.

San Antonio architect Jim Poteet, AIA, has long admired shipping-container architecture. But he had never worked with a container himself until a client approached him about transforming one into a guest house for her downtown property. His experience with industrial buildings (including a renovated warehouse where the client lives) gave him and his staff a certain comfort level with the idea. “The way we did the project sums up the way we approach existing buildings,” Poteet says. “We did things that change it in subtle ways and make it work, but didn’t change so much that it loses its identity. It’s still a shipping container.”



The client sourced the blue-painted, Cor-ten steel container herself, while Poteet Architects provided both design and build services. The firm replaced one end of the structure with glass, and carved a



Photos: Chris Cooper Photography

large opening for sliding doors into the container’s long side. At night, a deck made of HVAC condenser pads basks in the glow of outdoor light fixtures crafted from painted tractor blades.

For a cooling effect, 4-foot-by-4-foot planters sit a few inches above the container’s roof, with vegetation chosen by landscape architect Jon Ahrens. Icynene insulation also helps keep temperatures down inside the building. Out back, an in-ground tank harvests rainwater to reuse for irrigation. “This was an opportunity to experiment with some sustainable strategies,” Poteet says. —*meghan drueding*



Poteet Architects designed the guest house to double as a space for the owner to work on art projects with her children. Red sheet metal and bamboo plywood serve as low-maintenance interior surfaces, while sliding doors provide plenty of natural ventilation.

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solar flair

new roofing options help solar panels hide in plain sight.

by nigel f. maynard

When a couple in El Cerrito, Calif., wanted to give their 1960s ranch an update five years ago, they asked Ohashi Design Studio in Emeryville, Calif., to include high-performance energy upgrades that blend with the architecture. This task was made challenging when the couple also requested a photovoltaic system as part of its program. Architect Alan Ohashi, AIA, solved the problem with self-adhered thin-film photovoltaic strips that were applied between the ridges of the new standing seam metal roof.

At the time Ohashi had to approach two suppliers to get the solar roof he wanted, but today that would be unnecessary. As solar continues to grow in popularity, more roofing manufacturers are integrating cells with their product, creating one-stop shopping for design professionals.

The idea of integrating solar with building products is not exactly new, but its use had been limited until recently. So-called building-integrated photovoltaics (BIPV) are thin-film solar cells that have been applied to a material, such as glass.



Custom-Bilt Metals

Because of manufacturing advancements, roofing companies are integrating BIPV into their products and supplying them off-the-shelf. The technology is unobtrusive in appearance, and the materials are less expensive than traditional solar panels and offer flexible installation.

all systems go

At the International Builders' Show in January, Valley Forge, Pa.-based CertainTeed Corp. entered the solar roofing category with EnerGen, a system that integrates Uni-Solar thin-film laminates from Energy Conversion Devices

in Rochester Hills, Mich. The black solar shingles seamlessly merge with the manufacturer's asphalt, so once they're installed, they sit flush with the roof and differ only in color.

"CertainTeed is transforming a niche technology into a product that is more accessible to the building industry and, therefore, a broader range of homeowners," said Guillaume Texier, president of the company's roofing division, at the product's launch. "EnerGen is the first step in what will be a comprehensive portfolio of photovoltaic roofing products for residential and commercial applications."

Seen from the street, FusionSolar is physically unobtrusive, but color variations are still noticeable. The company says an installation can pay for itself in 10 years or less.

But CertainTeed is not the only the company taking this approach. Midland, Mich.-based Dow Chemical Co. also is throwing its hat in the ring with Powerhouse Solar Shingle, a thin-film PV system that, like EnerGen, is woven into standard asphalt.

While asphalt is the recent comer, concrete tile manufacturers got into the solar act first. Eagle Roofing Products in Rialto, Calif., partnered with Suntech

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Power to produce the Eagle Solar Roof with SolarBlend, a system that maintains a similar design aesthetic as a tile roof. And Corona, Calif.-based US Tile, which has partnered with SRS Energy, claims that its Solé Power Tile system was “the first truly integrated solar solution in the nation.” Designed to seamlessly meld with the manufacturer’s Mission profile clay tiles, Solé installs like a standard piece of tile.

For architects who aren’t interested in asphalt, clay, or concrete but still want integrated solar, metal companies offer a solution as well. Last year, Custom-Bilt Metals in Chino, Calif., unveiled FusionSolar, a thin-film solar laminate integrated with standing-seam metal roofing. The system comes with all the necessary components, detailed schematics, and specifications for wiring and electrical components that an electrical subcontractor needs for installation. And back in 2007, EnergyPeak (a partnership between CENTRIA Services Group, and Uni-Solar) introduced a solar-integrated standing seam product.

growing pains

Even though the housing market is depressed and the economy is hobbling along, the timing is felicitous for these systems. Energy efficiency is front-of-mind for most consumers and solar is more popular than ever. (Even the Obama administration



Photos: US Tile (top); Dow Chemical Co. (above left); Eagle Roofing Products (above right)

is set to install solar panels on the roof of the White House.) According to the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) in Washington, D.C., solar experienced huge growth in 2009.

“A doubling in size of the residential PV market and three new CSP [concentrated solar power] plants helped lift the U.S. solar electric market 37 percent in annual installations over 2008 from 351 MW [megawatts] in 2008 to 481 MW in 2009,” states SEIA’s 2009 solar year in review.

Monique Hanis, the group’s director of communications, says more competition among manufacturers and a scaling up of

the industry have resulted in lower solar prices. Federal, state, and municipal incentives also have made it easier for consumers to say yes to solar.

As evidence of solar’s renaissance, Hanis points to a Duke University paper, “Solar and Nuclear Costs—The Historic Crossover,” which concluded that progressive price declines now make solar cheaper than nuclear energy. “Solar photovoltaics have joined the ranks of lower-cost alternatives to new nuclear plants,” John O. Blackburn and Sam Cunningham write in the July 2010 report. And the decline will only continue, the authors said. In fact, solar might soon

Integrated solar roofing products from manufacturers such as US Tile, Dow, and Eagle Roofing promise lower costs because the conventional roof and energy-generating shingles are installed simultaneously by roofing contractors.

be on par with electricity. “We estimate that we might see grid parity by 2016 or somewhere near that time,” Hanis says.

Manufacturers are feeding off this momentum and believe their seamless solar roofs will play a role in driving down costs further. Dow, for example, states that prices for its products will be cheaper “because the conventional roofing shingles and solar-generating shingles are installed

continued on page 86

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simultaneously by roofing contractors.” Custom-Bilt Metals makes a similar claim about its product.

“By focusing on two core principles, simplicity and a lower cost of installation, we’re delivering a better solar power system,” says Tony Chiovare, president of Custom-Bilt. “Additionally, we are providing builders, contractors, and their prospective customers with an ROI [return on investment] report to help them determine their payback period and

to understand how much of their total power consumption they stand to offset.”

take and give

The promise of lower cost is not the only benefit; aesthetics is another. CertainTeed says that the “aesthetically pleasing” installation of its product “overcomes the largest objection to the acceptance of solar panels.” The products are more flexible so homeowners can reduce or increase the installation size, and the lightweight



CertainTeed

EnerGen’s Uni-Solar thin-film laminates are woven into traditional asphalt shingles. The aesthetic improvement, says manufacturer CertainTeed, should overcome the biggest objection to solar installations.

design requires no rooftop penetrations, making it easier for contractors to install while maintaining the roof deck’s integrity.

But a seamless solar roof is not without flaws. Hanis says “thin-film products are lighter, less expensive, and are more flexible,” but there are trade-offs. “Thin-film solar has way lower efficiencies [than traditional silicon],” she explains, “so you would need to use more thin-film to get the same energy output as silicon.” Solarbuzz, a solar research and consulting company in San Francisco, agrees. “An average crystalline silicon cell solar module has an efficiency of 15 percent, [while] an average thin-film cell solar module has an efficiency of 6 percent,” the group says.

And while an integrated solar roof is much more attractive than a traditional roof-mounted installation, it doesn’t “disappear” as much as you think—or at least as much as you or the neighbors may wish. Depending on the roofing material and color—clay

tile, say—the solar cells are still visible from the curb, even though there is no perceptible physical difference from the roofing. In other words, the roofing and solar panels often are the same shape or lie flat on the deck, but the color difference is notable.

Regardless of style or performance, the decision to specify solar is money driven. Solar-integrated roofing is cheaper to install, but it’s still a big ticket item—with or without rebates.

“For me, it all comes down to budget and the inspiration for having solar,” says architect Ed Binkley, of Ed Binkley Design in Oviedo, Fla. “If it is to try to reach zero-energy, be off the grid, or the pure principle then I think it’s great. If payback and upfront costs are a concern, then probably no.” But even on a tight budget, solar could be viable, Binkley says. “The good news is the systems keep going down in price, and hopefully the incentives and rebates will kick back in to offset some of the costs.” ra

sun spots

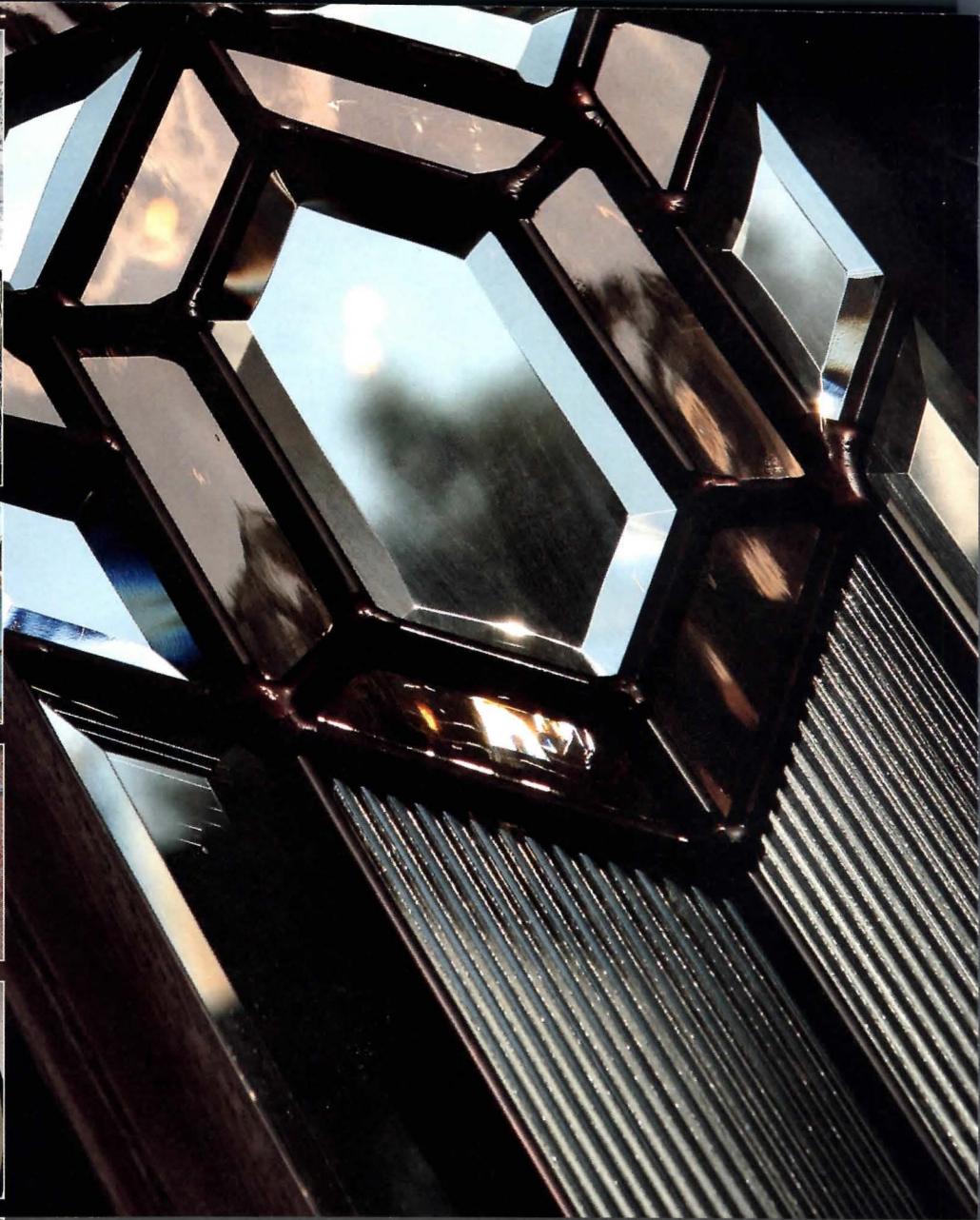
It’s well known that California leads the nation in environmental legislation. It’s not surprising that it also has the best solar incentives and the largest installed solar capacity.

Which other states offer great solar incentives? Unfortunately, there’s no such ranking. “There’s not really a single report that addresses this—at least not one that gives what I would consider a ‘good’ or ‘accurate’ answer,” says Amy Heinemann, a policy analyst at the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency, an ongoing project of the DOE-funded North Carolina Solar Center and the Interstate Renewable Energy Council.

Even so, certain data gives you a good idea. “By looking at installed capacity by state—either cumulative or for 2009—you can get a sense of where the best solar markets are in the U.S.,” Heinemann notes. The following list, compiled by the Interstate Renewable Energy Council, shows the top 10 states for grid-connected PV capacity installed in 2009, measured in megawatts.

1. California	212.1
2. New Jersey	57.3
3. Florida	35.7
4. Colorado	23.4
5. Arizona	21.1
6. Hawaii	12.7
7. New York	12.1
8. Massachusetts	9.5
9. Connecticut	8.7
10. North Carolina	7.8





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products new material

by nigel f. maynard

fork it over

The Italian lighting powerhouse Foscarini has unveiled its latest product, Fork—a suspension lamp inspired by the world of camping. Part of the Successful Living from Diesel with Foscarini collection, the fixture's shade is made from canvas with deliberately visible fabric overlay and denim stitching. The base is dark metal, and the diffuser is available in gray or ivory white. It uses a halogen bulb and comes in two sizes: 14.6 inches and 8.7 inches.

Foscarini, 39.041.595.3811; www.foscarini.com.



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skin tight

Exterior architectural panels are no longer just the forte of European companies. Laminate countertop giant Formica Corp. says it soon will become the first major branded North American supplier of solid phenolic exterior panels. Launching October 2010, VIVIX is a rigid panel designed for vertical application with a metal rainscreen attachment system. Panels will be available in a variety of designs, including wood grain patterns, and will have decorative surfaces on both sides. Formica Corp., 800.367.6422; www.formica.com.

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continued on page 90

products

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buon giorno

Add another Italian kitchen cabinet to your potential spec list. GD Cucine is opening a U.S. flagship store in New York and is introducing a new line to celebrate. Treviso, named after the company's Italian hometown, takes a more architectural approach to kitchen design, the manufacturer says. It allows the kitchen to flow into other living areas so countertops can run off cabinets to divide spaces. Available with graphite, oak, or teak doors, the line mixes open shelving with closed storage, and a steel work surface conceals the sink behind a sliding metal panel. GD Cucine, 646.786.0005; www.gdcucine.com.



store it

Washington, D.C.-based architect Thomas S. Shiner—designer of the popular Museum Stool—has unveiled his latest furniture piece: the WD/STL, a solid wood and steel modular storage and display system. The frame holds interchangeable components—wine racks, drawers, and shelving—while casters make the system mobile. The storage pieces have a perforated aluminum backing and are made from poplar with a lacquer coating. TSS Architect, 202.537.0098; www.tssarchitect.com.



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With the FS3 freestanding shower system, the Danish-manufactured Vola line suggests the clean minimalism that architect Arne Jacobsen first conceived in the 1960s. Distributed exclusively by Hastings Tile and Bath, the unit measures about 88 inches high, has a handheld shower attachment, and comes in chrome, brushed chrome, or stainless steel finishes. Hastings Tile and Bath, 800.351.0038; www.hastingstilebath.com.

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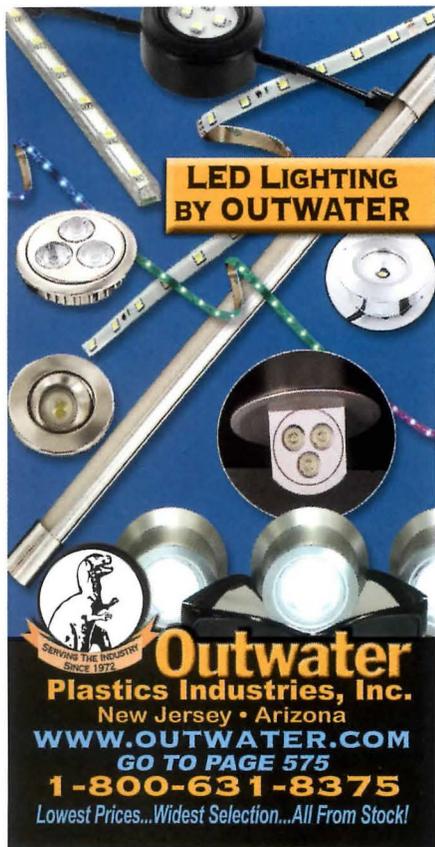
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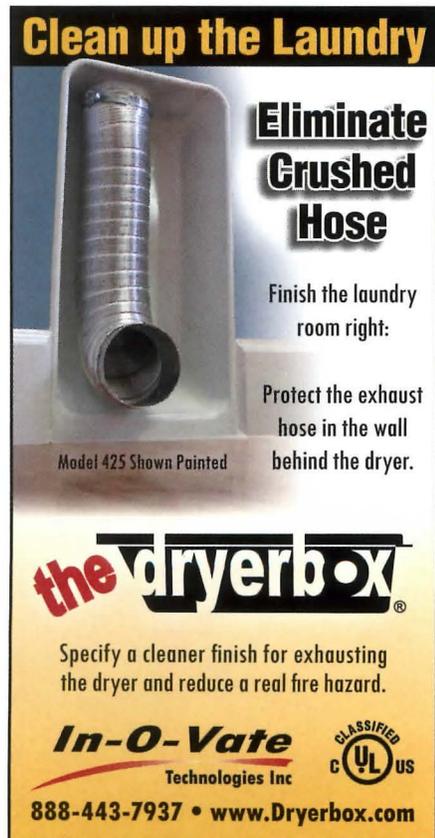


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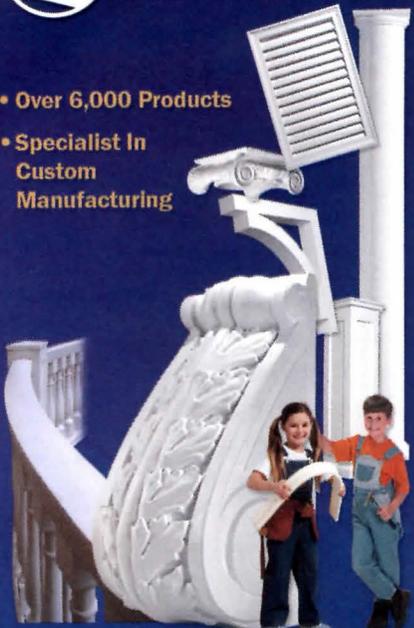
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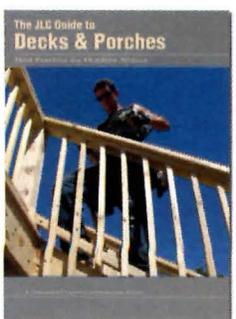
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(1) Outside County Paid/Requested Mail subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541.	20,064	20,056
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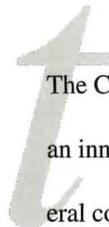
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The Calgary firm housebrand offers clients an innovative mix of architecture, general contracting, real estate services, and interior design. Naturally, its workspace, too, follows an unconventional path. The firm, led by architect John Brown, RAIC, has gradually expanded to occupy the

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Photos: Courtesy housebrand



In the studio section, employees sit together around a long conference table, rather than in individual cubicles. A glass wall separates them from the main retail area. "Working around a table like this turned out to be the most wonderful thing we could have done," Brown says.



"There are certain manners you have when you're in this situation. It's a really lovely way of working."

A newly added video production studio supports housebrand's Slow Home project, which educates consumers about design and housing choices. With enhanced video capabilities, the Slow Home can now provide micro-consulting services to clients around the world. For more information, visit www.theslowhome.com.—*meghan drueding*





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