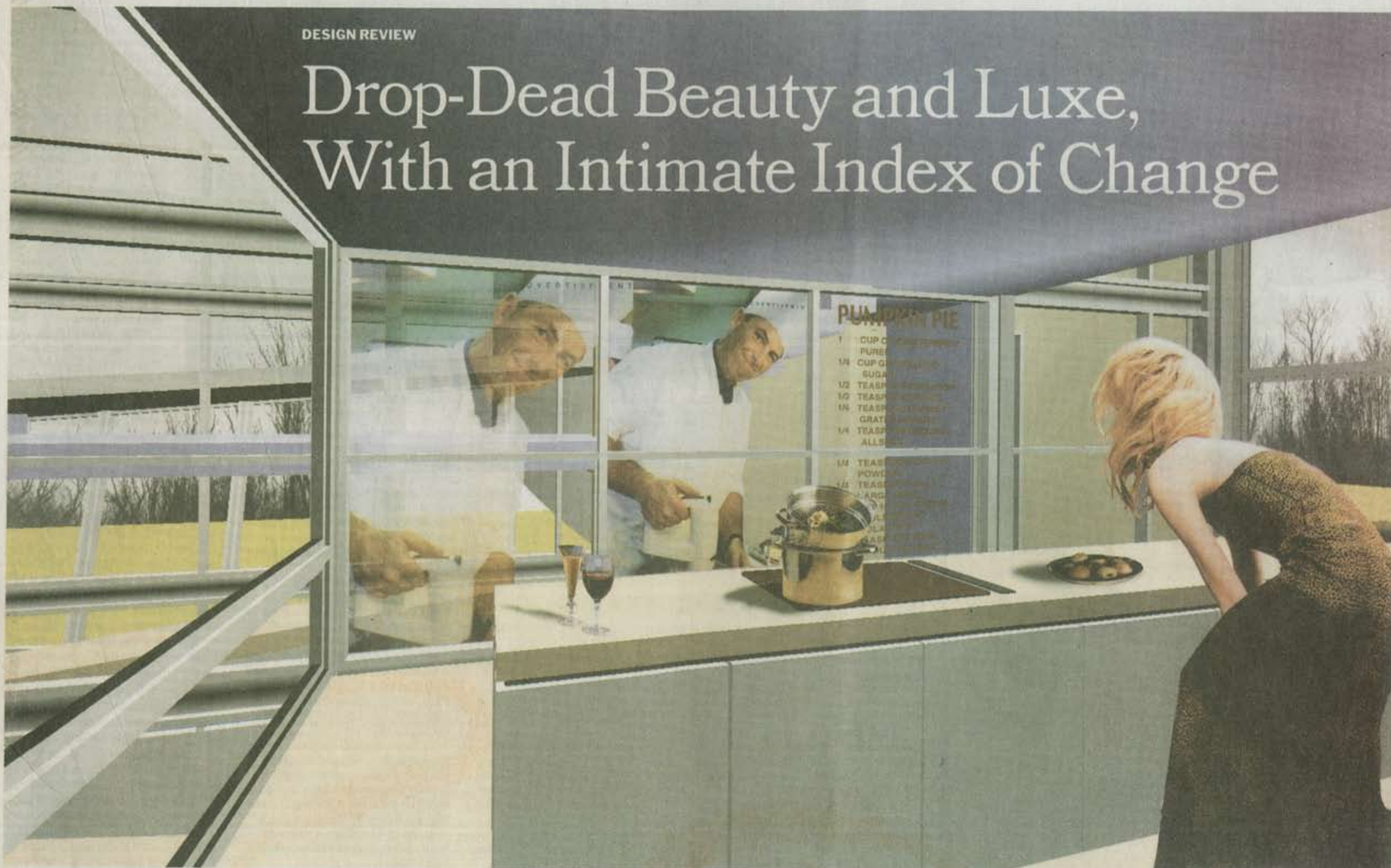


The New York Times

DESIGN REVIEW

Drop-Dead Beauty and Luxe, With an Intimate Index of Change



Hariri & Hariri Architects

By ROBERTA SMITH

When it comes to architecture exhibitions, nothing

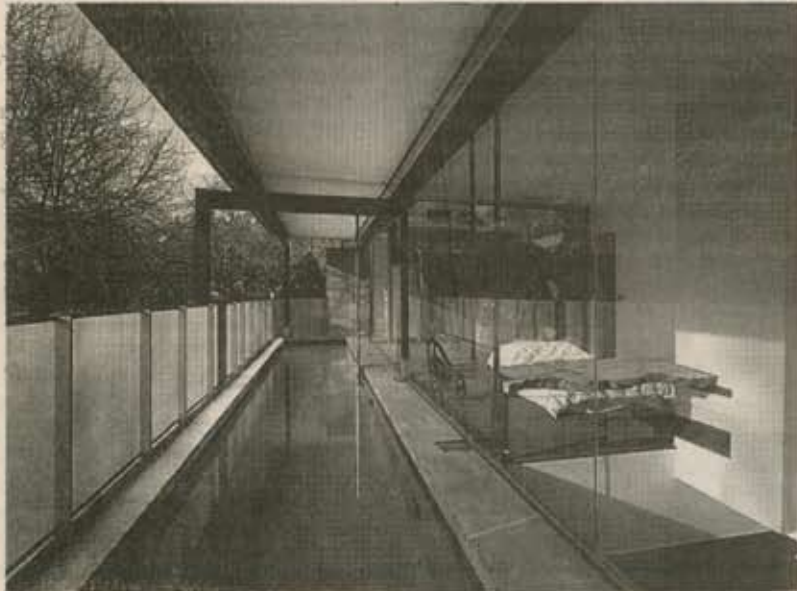
Art's swank, thought-provoking exhibition of 26 houses designed in the last decade, is almost guaranteed to attract a large interested audience inclined to think for itself. Happily, it will reward this audience in ways that

After clothing design, there is probably no more accurate physical measure of changes in a culture's mores, customs, demographics and taste than the design of its domestic dwellings. When it explores the

really over. Computer technology is changing everything. The nuclear family is not what it used to be. Ditto for domesticity.

At other points the show simply seems to provide

Drop-Dead Beauty, With an Intimate Index of Change



Museum of Modern Art

"64 Wakefield, Atlanta. View of Lap Pool," at the Modern.

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a hydraulic lift, that moves up and down to three floors.

Geared to needs we don't have quite yet is the Digital House designed by Hariri & Hariri on a commission from House Beautiful, to be built with liquid-crystal-display blocks (just like a laptop computer screen). Inhabitants would be able to simply log on and call up famous chefs for cooking tips on the kitchen wall, replace the house's surroundings with views of their own choice, or see their dearest fantasies played out larger than life in the bedroom.

"The Un-Private House" has been organized by Terence Riley, chief curator of the Modern's department of architecture and design, and it is the museum's first exhibition in 30 years devoted exclusively to domestic architecture.

Mr. Riley's first premise is that the best, most adventurous architecture of the last decade has been domestic. (Given the state of recent commercial and public architecture, the opinion seems irrefutable.) His second is that this vitality stems from the way the house is being reshaped on every side, rendered porous and permeable — "un-private" — in many ways.

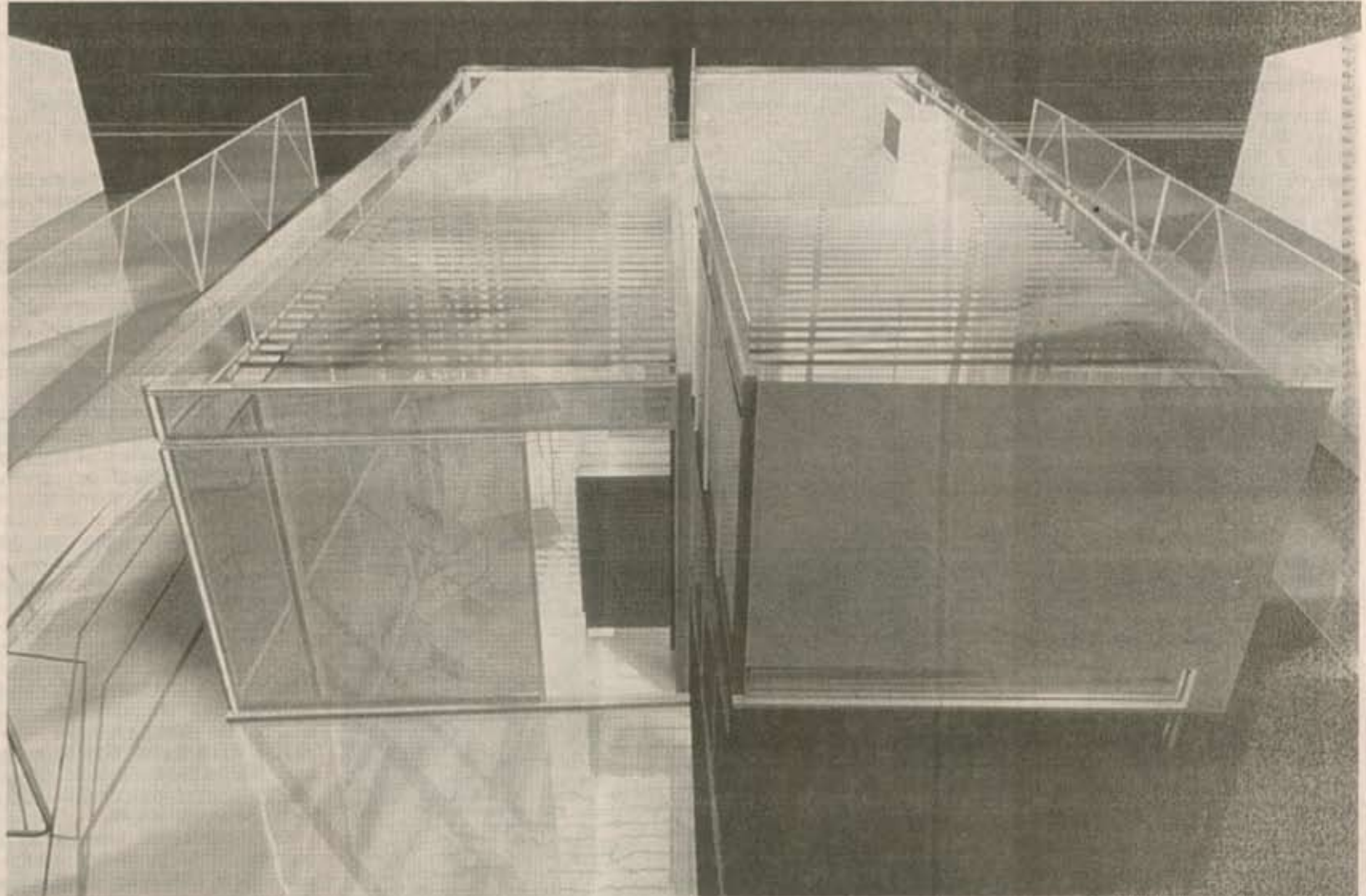
One way is by new definitions of public and private space: many of the houses here have enlarged and opened bathrooms or movable walls; others make extensive use of new transparent or translucent materials like polycarbonate panels. An

Koolhaas, Bernard Tschumi, Steven Holl and the Swiss firm of Herzog & de Meuron, are well known, if not world famous. Others, like Diller & Scofidio, Neil M. Denari and Kazuyo Sejima have growing reputations. But most are unknown outside architectural circles.

They work in styles ranging from the circling, destabilized intersecting forms of the "Möbius House," designed by UN Studio/Van Berkel & Bos in the Netherlands, and the undulating, organic lines, a mixture of Gaudi, Goff and Gehry, of Preston Scott Cohen's "Torus House" under construction in Old Chatham, N.Y., to the solid rectilinear volumes of François de Menil's "Shorthand House" in Houston to the shimmering, translucent ones of Scogin Elam and Bray Architects' "64 Wakefield" in Atlanta.

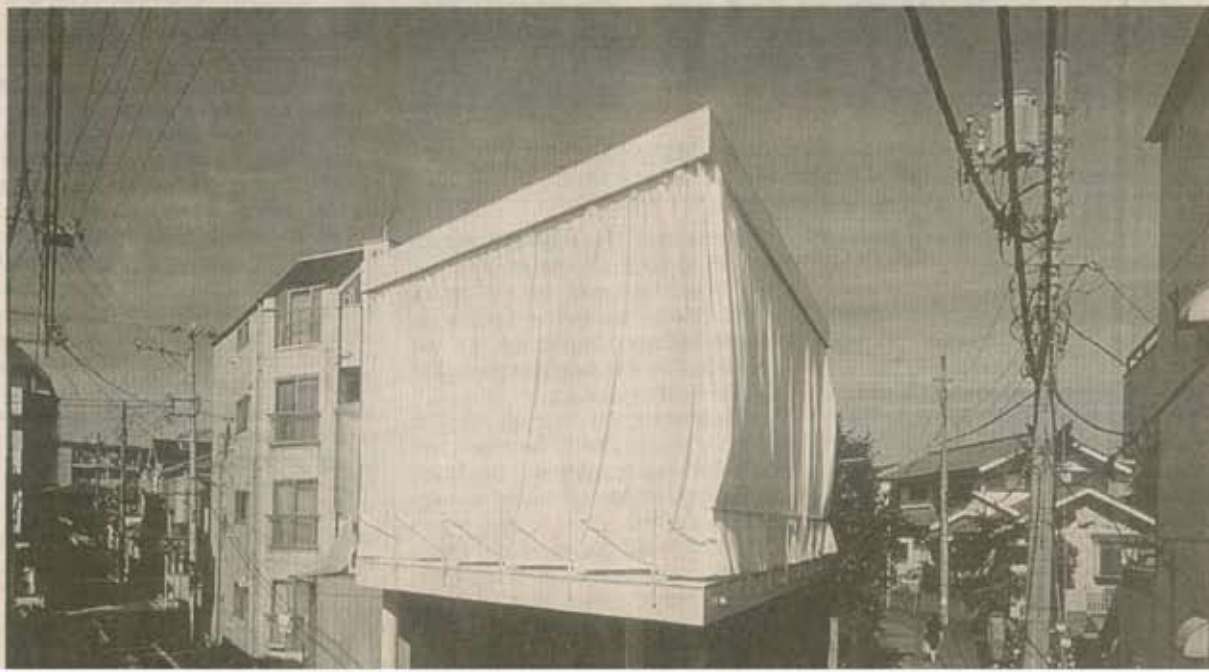
There are several show-stoppers: Shigeru Ban's "Curtain Wall House" in downtown Tokyo, whose floors can be as open to the street as a couple of shelves or cloaked in fabric like a Christo; the T-House in Wilton, N.Y., by Simon Ungers with Thomas Kinslow, which includes that 10,000-book library. Symmetrical as an altar, clad entirely in Cor-Ten steel, the T-House suggests what Richard Serra might do if he suddenly became obsessed with Stonehenge.

And yet an odd kind of coherence prevails. Overall, the designs suggest that the houses of the late 20th century may be closer in spirit to the modernist houses of the early part of the century than has been the case in several decades. Flat of roof, ex-



Photographs from the Museum of Modern Art

A computer rendering of Michael Bell's "Glass House @ 2°," above, and Shigeru Ban's Curtain Wall House in Tokyo, from "The Un-Private House" at the Modern.



perience firsthand the increasingly interactive nature of the contemporary house and of the computer's growing invisibility — its absorption into walls and familiar objects. The show's interactive component, thanks to a system designed by the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is embedded in a big round dining room table (seating for eight) with a Lazy Susan. From this revolving surface, a visitor chooses one of 26 coaster-size disks and places it on a circle in front of her (roughly where a glass of water would be); a programmed screen displaying the floor plan of one of the houses instantly pops into view, like a digital place mat, ready