VOGUE

JULY

the return of the *sexy* model

Weekend Getaway Fashion

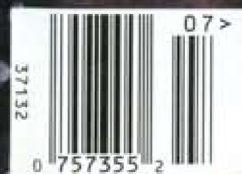
All The Right Accessories

FROM GARBO TO GWYNETH

The Changing Face of Fame

OBSESSED WITH HIS EX

One Woman's Confession



U.S.A. $3.00
CANADA $4.00
FOREIGN $4.00

the fall fashion news

open house

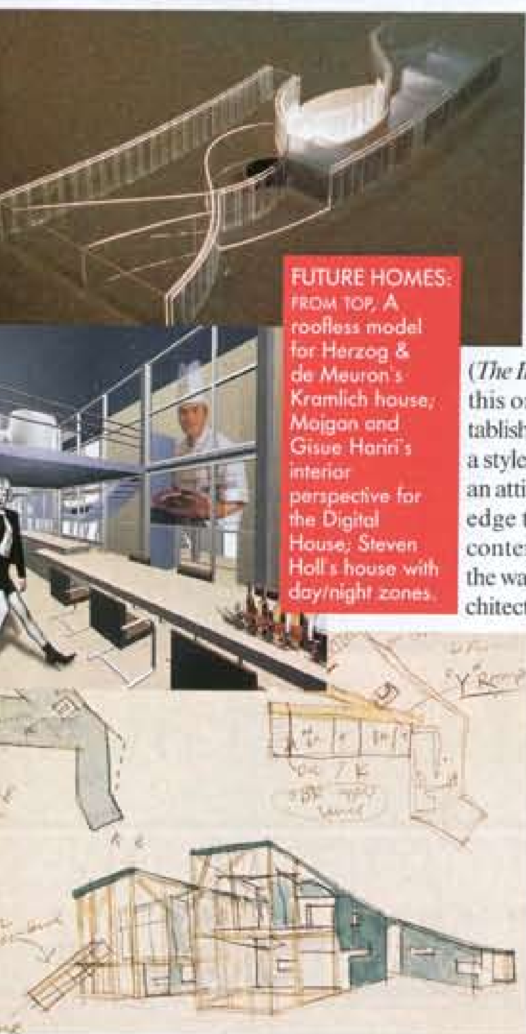
According to a new exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, one day there may be no such thing as a truly private life. Charles Gandee studies the blueprints for the future.

T FOR ONE: THIS PAGE, the 10,000-volume library in Ungers and Kinslow's T-House. OPPOSITE: The monolithic steel structure in the landscape.

T-House Photographer: Thibault Jeanson
Sittings Editor: Hamish Bowles

If throughout the nineties we have been repeatedly reprimanded, like so many obstinate schoolchildren, to put away our shingles and dormers, our gables and porches, our cloying Norman Rockwell–style sentimentality, and move on, the 26 houses and apartments included in "The Un-Private House" at New York's Museum of Modern Art take it for granted that we now have. Though many museumgoers may still feel as if they've stumbled onto the set of Jacques Tati's 1958 classic, *Mon Oncle*, the Oscar-winning tale of a Buster Keaton–like innocent who spends a few slapstick days visiting his sister in her gizmo-riddled, *Jetsons*-style house, the exhibition is intended to make an impact. Not only in terms of the critical ruckus it raises—which architects have been included, which excluded, and why—but in terms of how well it succeeds in prodding the cognoscenti and innocent bystanders alike into rethinking their position on what a house should be as one century careers to its close and another begins.

Though these fifteen built and eleven not-yet-built residential projects, hand-selected by a committee of one (Terence Riley, MoMA's ambitious curator of architecture and design), will undoubtedly be deemed modern—as any house that doesn't look like some variation on Grandma's house inevitably is—it's an altogether different kind of modern from the one the museum presented in 1932, when Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock cocurated "Modern Architecture: International Exhibition," the landmark exhibition that brought such iconic masterpieces as Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye and Mies van der Rohe's Tugendhat House to this side of the Atlantic. If "Modern Architecture"—which also included the work of Gropius, Neutra, and Oud, among others—documented a particular, post-Bauhaus movement, which it then endeavored to popularize through an influential and still-in-print book (*The International Style*), this one is meant to establish or popularize not a style but an approach, an attitude—to acknowledge the exigencies of contemporary life and the ways avant-garde architects are responding.



FUTURE HOMES: FROM TOP, A roofless model for Herzog & de Meuron's Kramlich house; Mojgan and Gisue Hariri's interior perspective for the Digital House; Steven Holl's house with day/night zones.

"The social conditions and structures that drove the development of the private house—privacy, the separation of living and work, the family, domesticity—have all changed drastically, perhaps more so in the last 50 years than in the preceding four centuries," writes Riley in the catalog essay that when not quoting Kant, Heidegger, Gide, Arendt, and Rybczynski provides a helpful overview of the exhibition, as well as an engaging history of the single-family house. Riley's right, of course, as few would question that the world is a radically different place since women joined the workforce, since weddings (not to mention children) have been postponed, since the divorce rate has escalated, since the definition of family has expanded, since the workplace has become more fluid than fixed. Yet the vast majority of houses built since World War II have not significantly changed. More than less still adhere to the "traditional" model, not unlike the one the Walt Disney Company used for the almost defiantly retrograde Celebration, its ye olde new town in central Florida.

Never mind that half of us are now married without children at home, that a quarter of us now live alone, that the days of a three-bedroom two-bath center-hall colonial with a clear hierarchy of rooms and lots of acoustic and visual privacy for the archetypal mom, dad, and 2.4 kids are gone. In fact, Mom, Dad, and the kids have slipped dramatically in the polls—from the majority to the minority.

As if to acknowledge such changes, six of the houses included in "The Un-Private House" were designed for people who live alone. One of the more spectacular is the T-House, fifteen minutes north of Saratoga, New York, for Lawrence Marcelle, a 35-year-old doctoral candidate in philosophy with a massive collection of books and a desire to, as he says, "retreat from society for a while, not to quite lead the life of a hermit but at least to approximate it." The Manhattan-based architects responsible for the borderline-monumental house, Simon Ungers and Thomas Kinslow, opted to celebrate their client's passion by making the library, which can accommodate10,000 books, the overwhelmingly dominant element—literally "elevating the knowledge, the books," according to Ungers, in a cruciform-shaped monolith that rises heroically above the mahogany-lined, shiplike living quarters below. Wrapped in a gutsy Cor-Ten steel skin, the T-House was also designed, adds Ungers, "in opposition, or as an antidote, to Deconstructivism"—the visually helter-skelter, as some see it, school of architecture practiced most conspicuously by such daredevil contemporary stars as Daniel Libeskind, Zaha Hadid, and Frank Gehry. "I wanted it to be holistic and homogenous," says Ungers. "Not fractured, not fragmented."

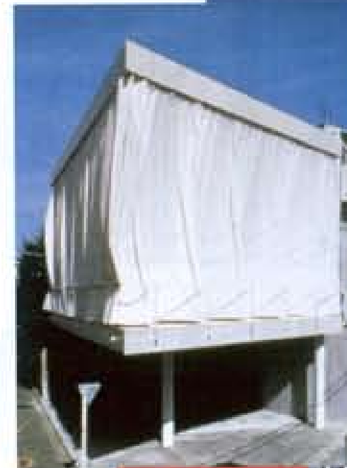
The other point that the T-House, along with many houses in "The Un-Private House," makes clear is that Ungers, Kinslow, and Marcelle did not much concern themselves with, to employ that phrase so beloved by realtors, "resale value." Obviously, like a bespoke suit or a couture dress, the more specific the house, the fewer people able to comfortably inhabit it.

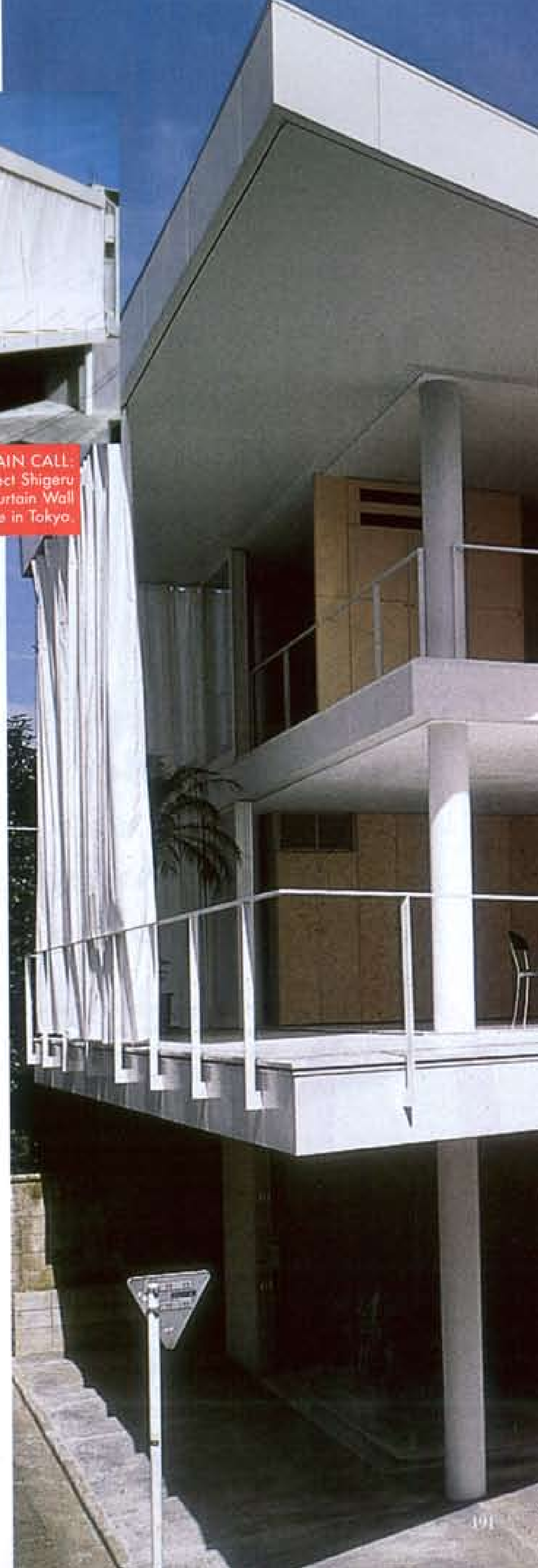
It's a point also registered in Rem Koolhaas's Maison à Bordeaux, the Dutch architect's much-praised—and even more published—house, designed for a man who uses a wheelchair, and his family. From the room-size, roll-in shower to the room-size, piston-driven platform that rises through the center of the house, Koolhaas's sensitive series of architectural solutions to his client's special set of problems would in another occupant's hands be nothing more than flashy toys, the architectural equivalent of a red Ferrari.

Although Maison à Bordeaux is without question the prize float in MoMA's parade—or at least the prize *built* float—Riley was intent that "The Un-Private House" not be just another architectural beauty pageant. So in lieu of an all-star lineup, he opted to include houses by many architects few will have heard of. Which helps make the point that it's not only the avant-garde—represented by Koolhaas, Columbia University dean of architecture Bernard Tschumi, and New York favorite son Steven Holl, among a handful of others—who are grappling with the issues "The Un-Private House" raises.

From top: Herzog & de Meuron; Hariri & Hariri Architects; Steven Holl Architects; all courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

SHINKENCHIKU-SHA; inset: HIROYUKI HIRAI, courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.





CURTAIN CALL: Architect Shigeru Ban's Curtain Wall House in Tokyo.

Not least among those issues is the notion of technology as a means by which to invite the outside world in. For example, whereas an earlier generation barely cracked the window, by tuning in to, say, Orson Welles's 1938 *The War of the Worlds* on the radio, this generation is eagerly flinging open the front door and welcoming sights and sounds that in no way conjure hearth and home.

Even houses by such lesser-known architects as Joel Sanders of Minneapolis reflect the degree to which this important leitmotif of "The Un-Private House" has infiltrated our lives. And not just with the Dick Tracy telephone and don't-leave-home-without-it laptop. Sanders's House for a Bachelor includes a terrarium that could be realized only today (or, perhaps, tomorrow). "The glass surface of the terrarium is continuous with a projection TV screen," says Sanders, "creating a wraparound corner window that superimposes televised images and a scene of perpetual summer over the harsh Midwestern winter landscape." Nice. But technology is capable of doing exponentially more than chase away the winter blues. Anyone skeptical, for example, that, as reported, half of us are married without children at home may simply log on to http://www.census.gov/prod/3/98pubs/p20-515.pdf. So long, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Another example of the ways in which Riley's architects are embracing the age of technology is a Gordon Gekko–worthy loft in Manhattan by Frank Lupo and Daniel Rowan. Outfitted with nine telephones and twelve digital monitors, the loft enables Bill Lipschutz and Lynnelle Jones, who describe themselves as "financial people," to keep abreast of fluctuations in international currency markets while relaxing in their Jacuzzi, cooking, entertaining, and sleeping. "I often trade all night long," says Lipschutz, who has a degree in architecture from Cornell. "So this is the perfect place for me to operate in a kind of trading cocoon without being disturbed by another person. This is a home office taken to a level that it couldn't have been taken to ten years ago."

And then there's the Darth Vader–like Slow House, designed for a spot in the Hamptons by Ricardo Scofidio and Elizabeth Diller, that comes complete with video equipment that enables the owners to effectively co-opt nature. "The view may be recorded and deferred . . . day played back at night, fair weather played back in foul," report the architects. "The view is also portable; it can be transmitted to different locations in the house or back to the primary residence in the city."

But perhaps the most magical accommodation of contemporary technology and media wizardry is Richard and Pamela Kramlich's house in the Napa Valley, designed by Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, the Basel-based duo now at work on the $208 million Tate Gallery of Modern Art in London, the $130 million M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco, and the $35.5 million Jack S. Blanton Museum at the University of Texas at Austin. At first glance, the low-slung glass house recalls Mies's Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois, but like much of Herzog & de Meuron's work, this is not first- *(continued on page 217)*