NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM PRESENTS A BLUEPRINT FOR THE NEW, AFFORDABLE—AND GREEN—AMERICAN DREAM HOUSE

Visitors to Galleries in Nation’s Capital Can Tour An Actual Model Home Designed by One of the Nation’s Most Influential Young Architects

ON VIEW: MAY 20, 2006 THROUGH JUNE 3, 2007

WASHINGTON, D.C. — If Mr. Blandings were building his dream house today, it would be green — in the environmental sense that is. While most Americans regard home ownership as nothing short of a birthright, rapidly escalating costs of land, energy, and materials are fueling a growing interest in sustainability in home design and construction.

The growing mandate for green design in home building is explored comprehensively for the first time by the National Building Museum in The Green House: New Directions in Sustainable Architecture and Design. The milestone exhibition will remain on view for an entire year and will be supported by a fully-illustrated catalog of the same name, co-published by the Museum and Princeton Architectural Press; a major scholarly symposium; a wide array of tours, talks, workshops and special family programming; and a website focusing on the marketplace, methods, principles, and history of sustainable design.

*The Green House: New Directions in Sustainable Architecture and Design* is sponsored by lead sponsors the ASID Foundation of the American Society of Interior Designers and Bosch home appliances, plus other generous contributors.

“This show illustrates that environmental priorities and the highest aesthetic standards are fully complementary,” says Donald Albrecht, the exhibition’s lead curator. “Today we are seeing architects and interior designers combining new, high-tech materials and old-fashioned architectural wisdom to create houses that are glamorous, comfortable, and that sit lightly on the land.”

Chase Rynd, executive director of the Museum, says, “The National Building Museum is uniquely suited to the task of bringing the nuts and bolts, as well as the theory, of sustainable...
home design to the attention of Americans. This is the only museum in the country dedicated to all aspects of architecture, design, engineering, construction, and urban planning.”

“And, as such, we consider it our responsibility to advocate a future in which it is taken for granted that environmental sensitivity is essential to building,” he concludes.

*The Green House* is the second in a series of major exhibitions organized by the National Building Museum about sustainable design, the first being *Big & Green: Toward Sustainable Architecture in the 21st Century* (2003).

“The potential ecological benefits that are possible through the advances in sustainability tracked in *The Green House* are significant in a land like ours, where more than a million single-family homes may go up in any given year, and the typical size of a new suburban home far exceeds that of previous generations,” says Albrecht.

### 21 Striking Homes, and How—and Why—to Build Them

Of the many thousands of houses constructed according to green design principles within the last five years, *The Green House* highlights 21 homes considered by the curators to be especially interesting and beautiful. These examples are drawn from around the world and are designed by such noteworthy architects as Rick Joy, Cook + Fox, and Will Bruder (U.S.); Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten (The Netherlands), and Kengo Kumo & Associates (China), among others.

The National Building Museum has even brought one of these houses lock, stock, and barrel into the exhibition gallery. Visitors to *The Green House* will be greeted by a full-size recreation of the California-based architect Michelle Kaufmann’s Glidehouse™, a modernist home graced with glass curtain walls and sliding panels of richly hued, louvered wood.

Upon entering the single-story prefabricated house, visitors can stroll through its great room and kitchen space, laid out to maximize breezes and minimize the need for artificial lighting. They can peek into built-in cabinets; inspect flooring fabricated of rapidly renewable bamboo and carpet tiles of recycled materials; examine countertops made from recycled paper; touch furniture upholstered in organic textiles and crafted of sustainably-harvested/reclaimed wood; and, through cut-aways in walls and windows, glimpse the structure of the house’s roof and walls. Energy-smart appliances by Bosch and cabinets of sustainably-harvested hardwood enhance the kitchen; water-saving fixtures and a tankless water heater outfit the bathroom; and the walls are finished in environmentally-friendly (or low-VOC) paint by Benjamin Moore.
This international survey emphasizes the impact of particular regions and climate systems on the design of dwellings, whether it be desert, waterside, forest/mountain, the tropics, the suburb, or the city. Every house featured in The Green House tells a different story, whether it be the low-slung, wooden and stone residence the American architect William McDonough set into a leafy enclave in Charlotte, North Carolina; the flamboyant town house built in Melbourne by the Australian Peter Carmichael; or the glass box dramatically suspended on a steep hill outside Stuttgart by the German architect Werner Sobek. Sample wall sections made from materials like straw bales and rammed earth will be placed near models and photographs of these and other houses with like structural systems.

One section of the exhibition is devoted to ‘five green principles:’ wisely using the land; working with the sun; creating high-performance and energy-efficient houses; improving indoor air quality; and wisely using the earth’s material resources. Visitors will be encouraged to experiment with a device called a heliodon, a machine that simulates the movement of the sun, in order to visualize how they might orient their own house to make best use of solar power. Graphic panels illustrating the principles help lead to broad topics, such as how urban planning strategies, like building near mass transit, can cut dependence on fossil fuel, as well as to specific recommendations about how to choose ventilation and cooling/heating systems; select materials with minimal toxic properties; and eliminate fumes.

For the average home owner, the most popular part of the exhibition may well be the Materials Resource Room. To de-mystify the selection of environmentally-friendly materials and structural systems, this gallery presents 60 different green materials, from carpets to countertops, from concrete to metal, and from wood to paint. These include recycled glass tiles by Country Floors, textiles by Maharam, American Clay Plaster, Mioculture three-dimensional recycled wallpaper, Durapalm® coconut palm flooring by Smith & Fong Plyboo®, Marmoleum® flooring by Forbo Dual, EnviroGLAS® Terrazzo, recycled rubber flooring by Ecopave, and IceStone® recycled glass and cement countertop. Touching will be encouraged. Given these resources and practical tips, and the fact that the Glidehouse, with all its architectural quality and attention to detail, comes in at roughly $120 per square foot, the National Building Museum hopes to convince the American public that green is not only a socially conscious choice, but a relatively affordable one as well.
**Book & Accompanying Publications**

*The Green House: New Directions in Sustainable Architecture* is a definitive reference for sustainable design today. More than 35 residences in 15 countries—and in nearly every conceivable natural environment—are featured, with designers ranging from star architects to little-known practitioners. *The Green House* has been co-authored by the exhibition’s consulting curators, Alanna Stang and Christopher Hawthorne, and co-published by the National Building Museum and Princeton Architectural Press. Christopher Hawthorne is the architecture critic for *The Los Angeles Times* and Alanna Stang, the managing editor of *Cookie* magazine. Hawthorne was formerly the architecture critic for *Slate* and a contributing editor for *Metropolis*, and Stang, the executive editor of *I.D.* magazine. ($45; available bookstores nationwide)

Visitors to the exhibition will receive a free resource newsletter that includes a glossary of green terms; directories of leading architects, interior designers, builders, advocacy groups, and others; and listings of ways to get additional information on green building and design. This and other take-aways are designed by Celery Design, Berkeley, California, and Ark Design, Brooklyn, New York.

**Exhibition Design**

The design and installation of this 7,000-square-foot exhibition, by the award-winning architectural firm of Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis (LTL), embodies and illustrates green principles. From its base in New York, LTL has designed exhibitions for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Van Alen Institute in New York, among other institutions. Exhibition graphics and catalog design are by Pure+Applied, New York.

**Organizers**

*The Green House* has been organized by Donald Albrecht, the exhibition director and catalog editor of *The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention*, a traveling exhibition organized by the United States Library of Congress and the Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany (1997-2005). He has organized such major international exhibitions as *On the Job: Design and the American Office* (2000) at the National Building Museum; and the National Design Triennials (2000 and 2003) and *Russel Wright: Creating American Lifestyle* (2001) for the Smithsonian Institution’s National Design Museum, Cooper-Hewitt, in New York. He has also written widely on design and architecture. Consulting curators are
Christopher Hawthorne and Alanna Stang. (See above.) *The Green House* has been implemented at the National Building Museum by Curatorial Associate Reed Haslach.

**Activities for Learning More**

During the exhibition period, the Museum will present lectures, construction watch tours, films, and a major scholarly symposium in fall 2006 on the design and construction of green houses. There are interactive components and touchable materials designed to appeal to young visitors, including a free family activity guide. Families may also join in such programs as “Was Kermit Wrong: Is It Easy to Be Green?” (Sunday, May 21, 2006). All of the Museum’s school programs during the 2006-2007 semesters will focus on sustainable principles, as well as the Museum’s annual Festival of the Building Arts on October 7, 2006.


**Nationwide Tour**

After its showing at the National Building Museum, *The Green House* will travel nationwide. Potential venues include museums in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York.

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The National Building Museum is America’s premier cultural institution dedicated to exploring and celebrating architecture, design, engineering, construction, and urban planning. The Museum is located at 401 F Street NW, Washington, D.C. Museum hours are Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm and Sunday from 11 am to 5 pm. Admission is free. Museum Shop. Café. Public inquiries: 202.272.2448 or visit www.nbm.org.

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