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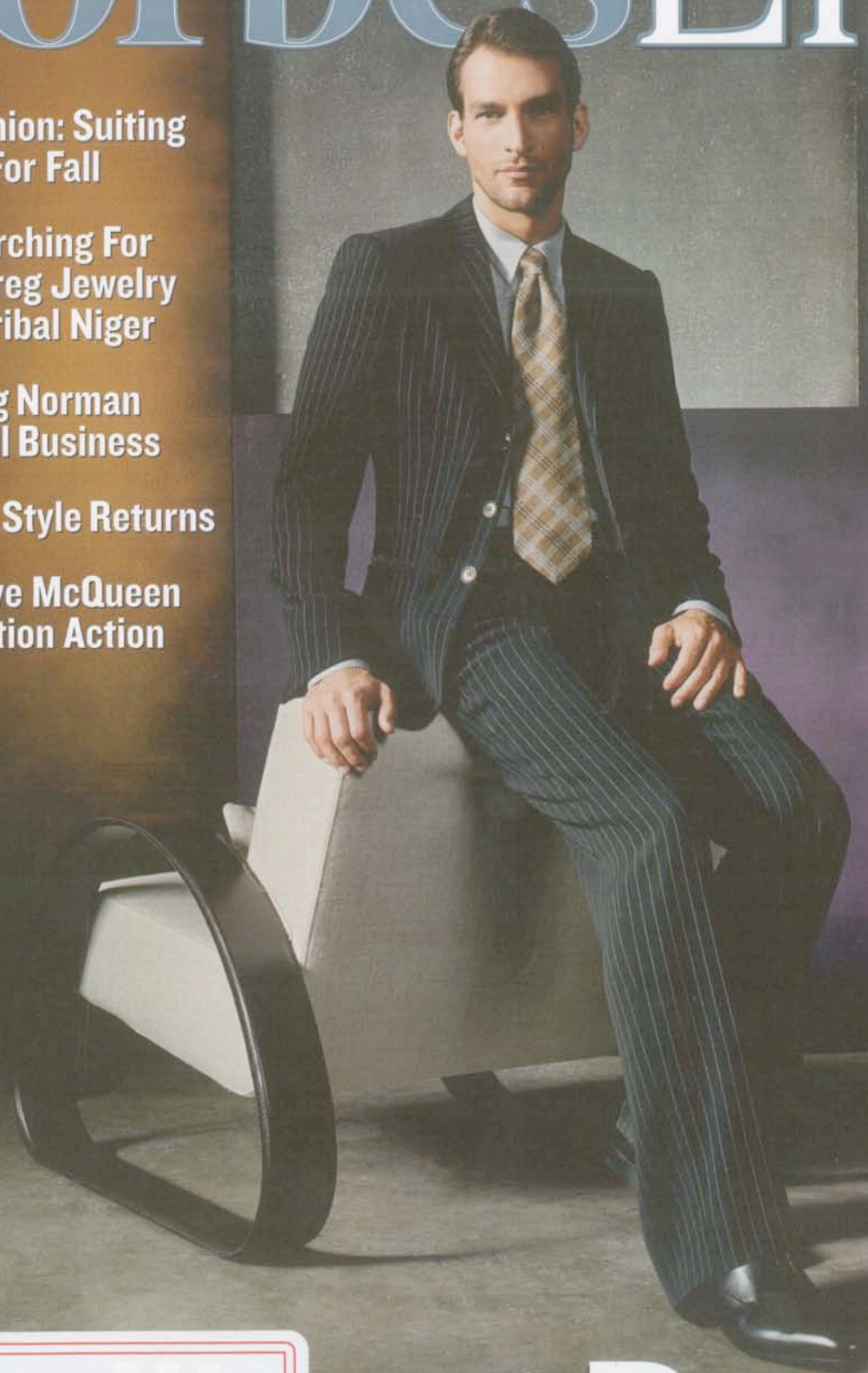
**Fashion: Suiting
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A FIRST BOUND COPY

Intelligent Design

Factory Fresh

A new breed of
Green-modernist-modular
homes takes root in
Southern California.

Sir Thomas More's 16th-century *Utopia* described an ideal society without drunkenness, private ownership or premarital sex. Happily, 500 years has seen revisions to the concept. Today we have a long menu of utopias, from Playboy Mansion parties for adolescent-minded males to Park Avenue co-ops for status-hungry plutocrats. Here's one more, for designophile, environmentally conscientious, moderately well-capitalized home buyers who love the desert: the LivingHomes community near Joshua Tree National Park, California.

This is a small development of prefabricated homes designed by architect Ray Kappe and offered by Santa Monica-based start-up LivingHomes. LivingHomes is one of the most recent providers of prefab, which has



Insta-house: The LivingHomes prefab is assembled on-site in a single day.

gone from design-world curiosity to a bona fide trend, embraced by architects such as Michelle Kaufmann, Marmol Radziner and now Kappe, to whom the 20th-century's long-frustrated dream of the well-designed, mass-produced home has egalitarian appeal. LivingHomes CEO and founder Steve Glenn commissioned Kappe to design five variations of prefab homes ranging from one to three stories and two to four bedrooms, costing between \$350,000 and \$650,000 (future LivingHomes will be designed by other architects), and then took on a developer's role, acquiring a small parcel of land five miles north of Joshua Tree. On it he'll offer four Kappe prefab LivingHomes, each with a five-acre plot, likely costing \$500,000 to \$600,000 apiece.



Constructed in a factory, his home arrived aboard six flatbed trucks in 11 pieces averaging 10,000 pounds, and with the use of a crane was assembled in eight hours. The airily geometric two-story has modular inner walls, a rooftop garden and a long list of eco-friendly features. All building materials are sustainably sourced or

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recycled, the lights are LED, the showers and taps low-flow. Photovoltaic cells on the roof provide most of the power for the house, and the rooftop garden and surrounding landscaping are irrigated through rainwater collection and a gray-water recycling system. The house has been assessed by the federal government's Green Building Council pilot LEED residential program and scored platinum, the highest rating possible.

Glenn is committed to making all LivingHomes ecologically sound. Combining green credentials, Kappe's modernist aesthetic and a price tag (which

"It reflects my values and the values of the people who work at the company," he says. "We think there are a chunk of people who care about this too." These people must be willing to make certain sacrifices, of course, like forgo Sub-Zero appliances, which are not, for Glenn, sufficiently energy-efficient ("We had to talk

one client out of Sub-Zero," he admits), the cozy glow of incandescent lightbulbs and comfy touches such as a conventional wood-burning fireplace (wood smoke is a pollutant). Also, LivingHomes must be manufactured in batches of at least five to reduce waste and cost, so customers may have to wait patiently for their flatbeds to arrive.

One suspects, though, that Glenn's clients won't be deterred. After all, the spirit of prefab (which, according to LivingHomes, produces only 2 percent landfill waste to build, compared to 40 percent for a "stick-built" house) is intrinsically conservationist. One suspects, indeed, that customers who consider a LivingHome may see a whole neighborhood of them as a kind of idealized community, a utopia of environmentally guilt-free living, blessed by stylishly modernist architecture, with an austerity to complement the natural desert landscape. (Prime hiking, rock-climbing and mountain biking won't hurt.) Glenn has taken a personal gamble here, fronting the money for the Joshua Tree development himself. "We want to create a community that reflects the values



Desert pad: the single-story Joshua Tree LivingHome, outside and in (top).

Of course, one doesn't have to live in the desert to move into a LivingHome. There are seven of them under contract as stand-alone properties, scheduled for assembly in Venice, Brentwood and Pacific Palisades, and Glenn himself has erected his own 2,500-square-foot, three-bedroom LivingHome in Santa Monica.

excludes foundation work, transport by flatbed truck and installation for non-Joshua Tree buyers) at the upper end of the prefab market, the homes are targeted toward what Glenn calls "conscientious capitalists," people like himself, a successful Silicon Valley entrepreneur who has long aimed to wed "profit with purpose."

in the homes themselves," he says, "minimizing the impact on air and soil and water and energy consumption, a community that will allow our homes to best express the inherent value they provide." •

For sales inquiries, contact LivingHomes, (310) 581-8500, www.livinghomes.us.