

VOGUE MEN'S

NOV/DEC 2006

AT THE HELM HUGH JACKMAN

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MOVABLE WALLS

The Living Homes design allows for maximum flexibility, creating vast open interiors and adapting to multiple climates.



COUNTER CULTURE

The kitchen features top-end appliances, recycled materials, and floors warmed by radiant heat.



GREEN ROOFTOP

Up above, photovoltaic cells catch the sun's rays, a garden grows tomatoes, and a built-in gas fire pit grills steaks.



Designed by a legend and ready for shipping, it's also the greenest house in America.

clean living

ALL MOD CONS

As futuristic as it is cozy: the first Living Home, near the beach in Santa Monica, California.

It's no secret that hipsters and burghers alike have fallen hard for the once-maligned prefab house: These days, well-publicized prefabs—from Marmol Radziner's factory-made boxes to Jennifer Siegal's Take Home series—tend to be sharp, stylish, and at least moderately green.

Enter Steve Glenn, a Brown-educated, Belle and Sebastian-loving, Prius-driving entrepreneur built like a jockey, who wants to offer his own take on cool, modular, environmentally sensitive prefabs. Unlike

most of the competition, he's aiming to do it with brand-name architects, starting with the Los Angeles-based post-and-beam pioneer Ray Kappe, a true, if undersung, legend of modernism. For house hunters, it's the architectural equivalent of finding an exquisite limited-edition print by an artist whose work they might not otherwise be able to afford.

"I went to my favorite living architect," says Glenn, who manages to be intense and low-key at the same time. "He's one of the few architects who practices a warm modernism. Person-

ally, I'm not into the cold stuff. Especially for a house—this is not an art gallery."

The first thing that strikes you when you walk into the **Living Homes** prototype, a handsome glass, cedar, and steel two-story on a quiet street not far from the beach in Santa Monica, is how expansive it feels for its refreshingly modest 2,500 square feet: Because many of its exterior walls are glass, the sight lines make the house feel much larger than it is. Like a Neutra or Lautner house, *a&d* >159

those eternal benchmarks of L.A. style, a Living Home seems to bring the surrounding foliage—native plants like California live oak and Pacific iris—inside. And because of Kappe's futuristically earthy touch, it manages to evoke both the Joseph Eichler-inspired family home in *The Incredibles* and, in streamlined form, the vintage Craftsman bungalows that surround it.

Perhaps the real genius of the place is in the design details—solar panels, rain cistern, recycled insulation and tiles—that make it almost entirely sustainable: that is, a house that requires virtually no water, energy, or emissions to make it run. With

Living Homes, Glenn recently received the U.S. Green Building Council's first-ever Platinum rating—the highest level of certified sustainability—for a non-commercial structure. Even the glass is the type (SolarBan 60) that keeps the place from heating up, which will come in handy for the Living Homes colony that Glenn is planning

to build next year in the desert near Joshua Tree, California.

Living Homes' flexibility means that slightly different versions can be used in, say, windswept Montana or the coast of Maine. Houses like the prototype will cost \$250 per square foot plus transportation, land, and a foundation, meaning that what might run you about \$800,000 in Los Angeles would likely be much cheaper elsewhere.

Glenn grew up in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and in L.A. reading about Frank Lloyd Wright and playing intensely with Legos. He always wanted to design houses. Until, that is, he got a real taste for it at a Harvard summer program. "I learned," he admits, "I had neither the talent nor the temperament to be an architect." But while studying the career of the developer James Rouse, who built Baltimore's Harborplace and Boston's Faneuil Hall, he realized that he could make a civic impact in another way: "Rouse taught me you could wed profit and purpose, where there's no compromise on the agenda. He helped me realize that if you care about the

built environment, developers are more important than architects."

Still, he's making sure to select architects with distinctive styles and impeccable reputations, starting with Kappe. "I feel giddy in his spaces," Glenn says. "I love the light, I love the way he breaks up

spaces, making some more open, some more intimate. There's more visual jazz happening."

Kappe, now 79, has been designing houses since the early fifties, including several stunners in the coastal hills of Pacific Palisades, and founded the Southern California Institute of Architecture along the way. He has designed five models for Glenn, each of which will have the built-in provenance of an instant classic, before passing the torch to sustainability star David Hertz.

As for Glenn, after almost two decades as a tech entrepreneur and architectural daydreamer, he's about to put his vision to the test. He'll not only be selling Living Homes, the first modern prefabs with a serious pedigree, he's now parking his Prius outside the very first one.

—SCOTT TIMBERG *a&d* >160

A house that requires virtually no water, energy, or emissions to make it run.