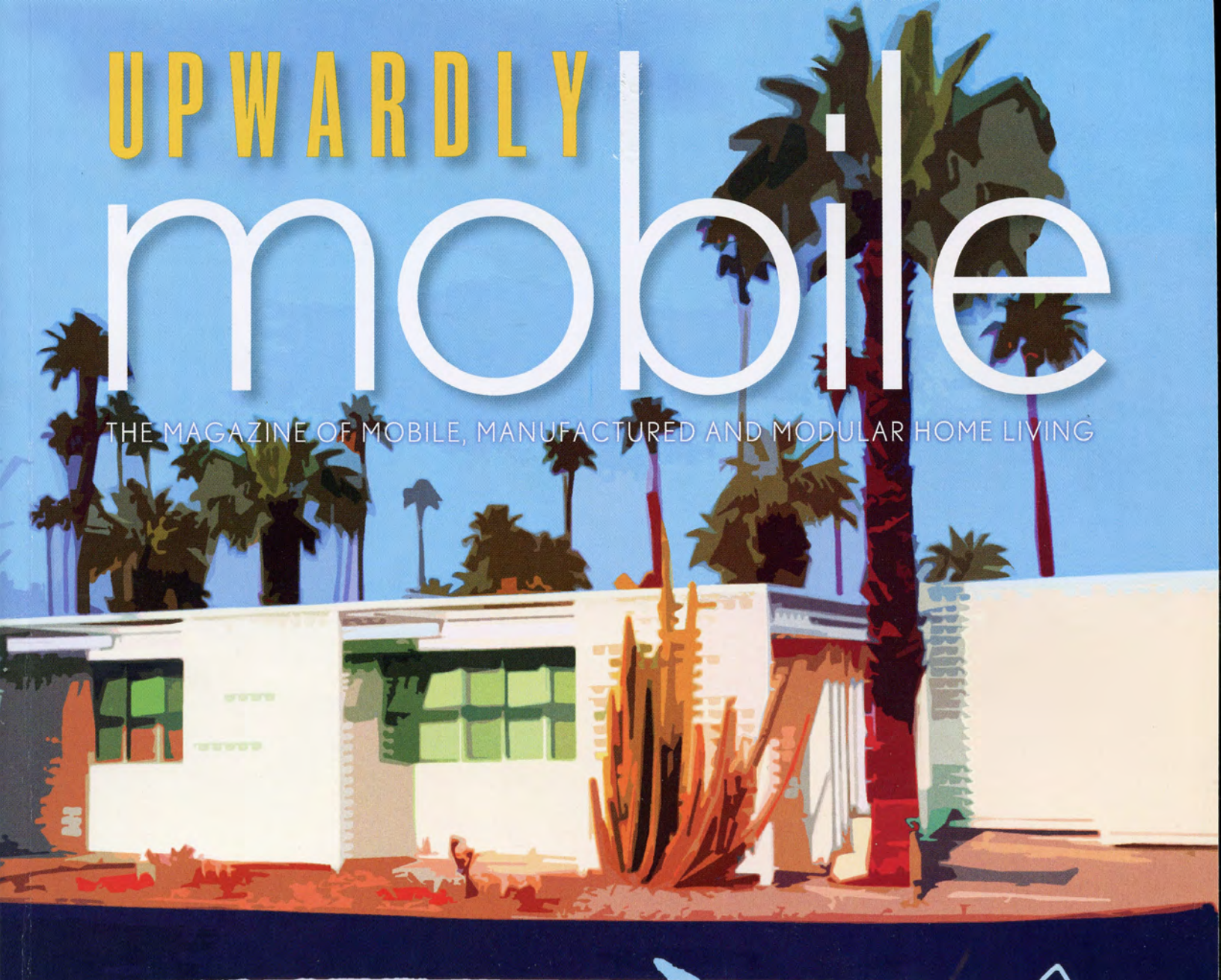


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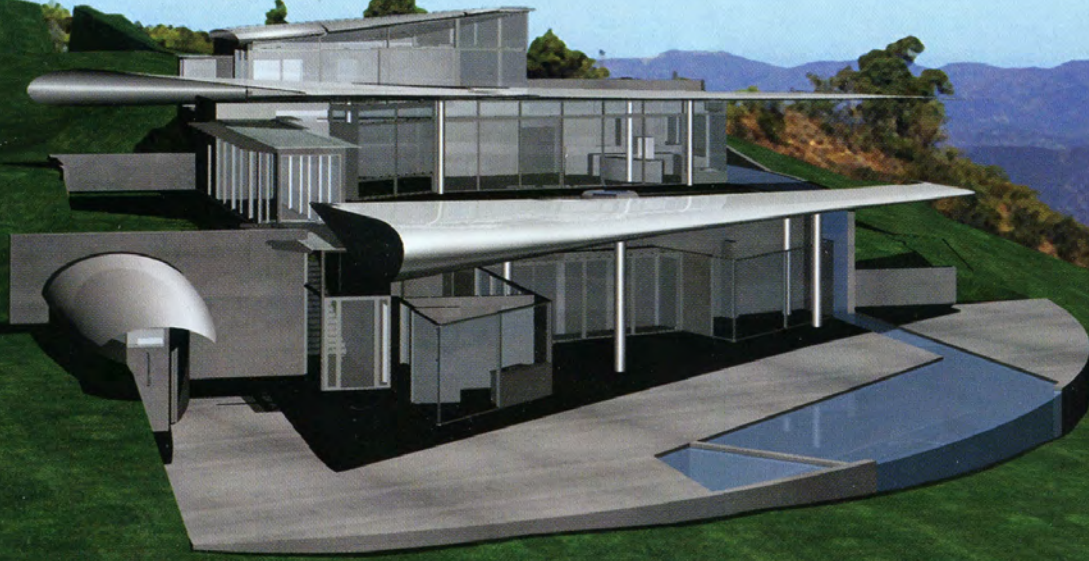


FALL 2009 \$4.95

WINGS ABOVE MALIBU • MODULAR IN THE MEADOW
ARROYO LIVING • PROGRESSIVE PARTIES • GARDENING & MORE



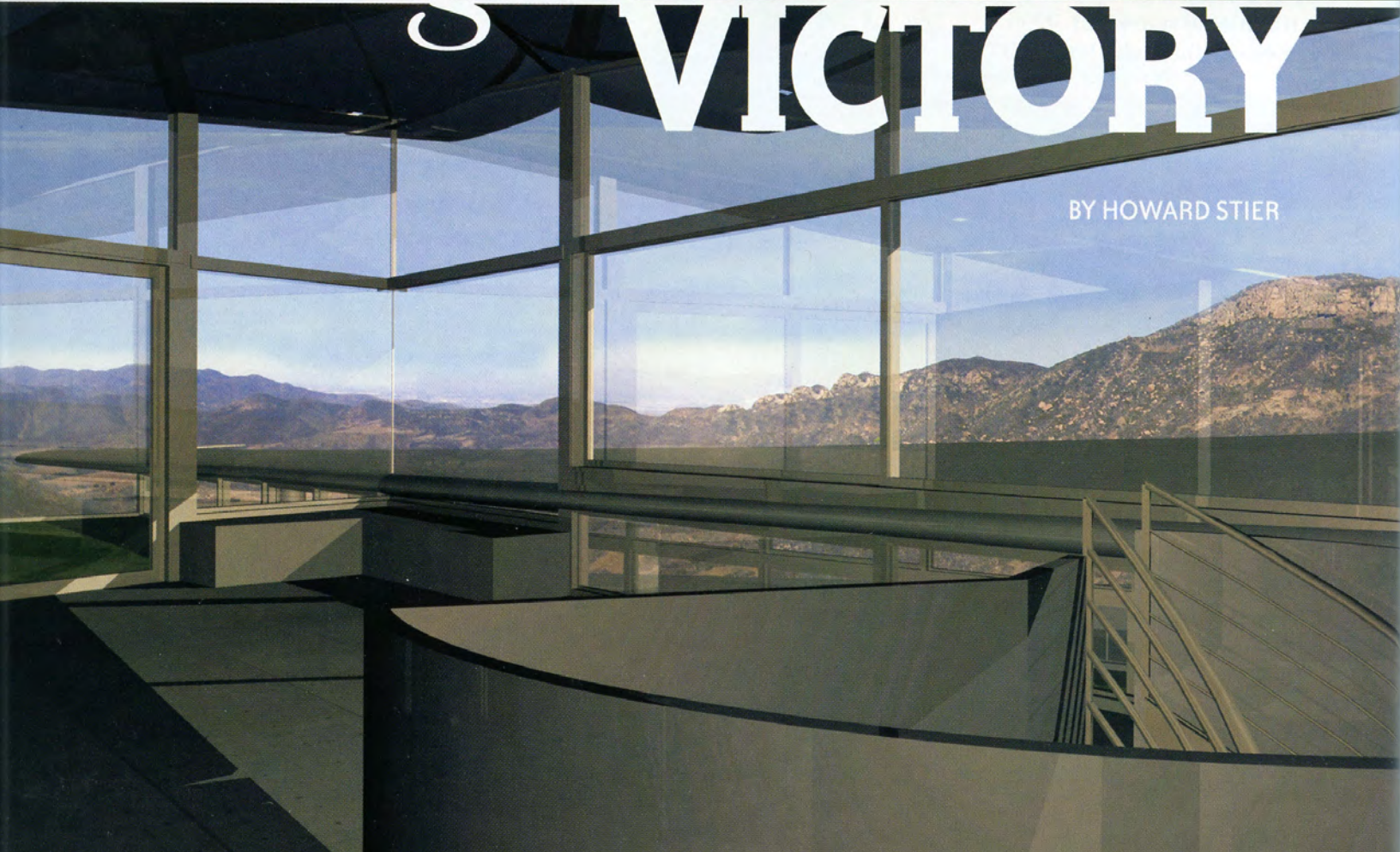
INNOVATIONS



Winged

VICTORY

BY HOWARD STIER



A re-purposed Boeing 747 melds with the Malibu Hills

The twisting roadway climbs steeply up from the Pacific Ocean. Down the center line a coyote pack saunters, out on an early afternoon foray. Unimpressed by vehicles, the beasts glare at a driver before bounding into the tree line. This is, after all, their territory, Nature's realm. And constructing a home that embraces these wild hills above Malibu is a design challenge that one architect has taken on with innovative flair.

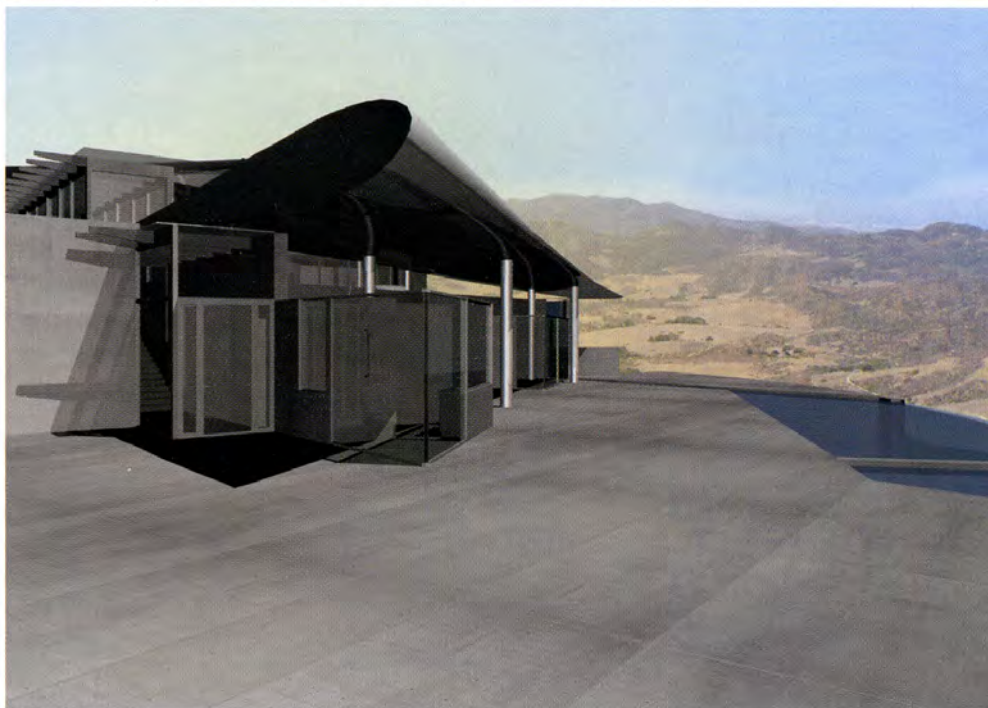
Standing atop the starboard wing of what had been a Tower Air Boeing 747 model 200 Jumbo Jet, Santa Monica based David Herz is surprisingly soft spoken as he explains he has taken a jetliner, cut it into pieces and built structural elements from the aircraft's aluminum parts.

"This was the inspiration" said Herz, jabbing a finger across a valley to a muscular ridge of Santa Monica mountains. Along the horizon, a silver swath of ocean glistens.

"I started making drawings for a roof, and taking in the clients considerations (unobstructed views, feminine lines) it started to look like a wing, but it would be expensive. Then I remembered the salvage site" said Herz, referring to an aircraft boneyard in the Mojave Desert north of Los Angeles where entire jet fleets of bankrupt airlines languish. Not for novelty sake as some neighbors among the ostrich ranches and summer camps here believe, which would befit a tradition of eccentric architecture in Malibu, but rather in all seriousness, the architect has embraced the "above ground mining" designer Bucky Fuller anticipated to sustain our planet into the 21st century.

"It's re-purposing of existing metal artifacts to build new forms."

The wings, as well as the horizontal stabilizers from the tail section, now function as prefabricated lightweight roofing for his 4600-square-foot two-bedroom Wing House. The roof structures do seem to float, supported on columns and custom steel joints bolted into four points where the engine nacelles were mounted. The project, actually two separate structures, consists of a main residence and a guest house, each roofed by a wing. Herz worked out the relationship of the disparate wings using Google Earth.



"The Wing House" combines unobstructed views and feminine lines to marry the wilds of the hillside with a recycling ethic (opposite). Glass and light figure prominently in the design of the kitchen area (this page, top), while perspective, angles and curves draw the eye to the immaculate scenery (above).

continued

Renderings courtesy David Hertz Architects, Inc. and the Studio of Environmental Architecture (SEA)



Site construction continues as framing joins many of the components for the final tour de force design.

A previous residence on the site burned in a wild fire and Herz has incorporated the existing concrete foundation and retaining walls. Glass walls—a Modernist convention exemplified in Phillip Johnson’s Glass House in Canaan, Connecticut—will complete the home.

Herz has been building modular homes for over a decade, but he’s never before made anything out of an aircraft. While in college, laboring at a construction site in the Sierra Mountains, his commute took him past mothballed jets. A testament to the adage that all experience offers some payoff, the image of the abandoned planes remained with him all these years. It is curious what appeals to some people: the client, Francine Rehwald, went for both the design solution and the cost savings of using manufactured elements.

The wings will have solar collectors embedded into the roofing material—a Carlisle single-ply membrane—powering the homes electric and heating needs. The array of Landing lights on the wings’ leading edges will be functional, lighting up the exterior and pool area. Herz can’t comment on construction costs and the client isn’t talking numbers either. But the Associated Press video report on the project cited a figure of 2 million.

“At one point it was getting too expensive and I said the hell with the wing,” says Rehwald, a sprightly retiree whose successful luxury car

dealership allowed her to patronize this “re-purposing.” On a recent day at the site, she is bounding around, talking of faucets, a team of Italian cabinet suppliers in tow. At first she wasn’t committed; she didn’t want to be known as the woman who lives in a plane. And as with any innovation, there were setbacks. The moveable control surfaces of the trailing edge couldn’t be stabilized. The material, not aluminum but rather composite, was removed. Currently, carpenters are replacing the sections with wooden trusses.

When the wings couldn’t be trucked up the narrow winding road, they were hauled by a twin-rotored helicopter at a cost of \$8000 an hour. Then there was the paperwork for 17 government agencies to sign off on. Herz had to explain that his wing can withstand loads beyond what it would be required to in its static state, and in the end there were no objections. But that took a year and a half.

It was after pricing a contemporary-styled roof that interested her in Malibu (a wave shaped roof of architect Jay Vanos—at \$600,000) that Rehwald was sold on the wing. “I paid less than \$50,000 for the plane. Even with the costs of transport, I got a real steal.”

Standing beneath the wing of the home which should be completed within the next two years, Rehwald is convinced of her choice. “When David suggested it and I agreed, that was a moment I was foolishly fearless,” gushing “this is just fantastic.”

Yeah, some might say the Wing House evokes a plane wreck (it has been registered with the Federal Aviation Authority so that pilots do not mistake it for a crash) but taking in the spectacle, one can only be impressed. There’s one less aircraft rotting in the desert, fewer workers driving into the hills, and even though the coyotes will remain unimpressed, the community will be pleased.

HOWARD STIER *has reported for* The New York Times, *New York Magazine*, The Denver Post, The National Inquirer, and In Touch Weekly.