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Modular Homes: Hot on the Green Scene

Serenbe, a National Model for Building an Environmentally-Responsible Community, Introduces Haven Custom Modular to its Architectural Mix

Built to the highest of standards, a Haven Custom Home not only saves you money on energy costs, it can save your family some worries as well.

- *State-of-the-art, indoor manufacturing facilities building protects materials from moisture that could lead to increased chance of mold.*
 - *Homes are built tightly, thereby preventing warping and ensuring better air quality.*
 - *Haven is an ENERGY STAR partner, so homebuyers are assured of an energy-efficient home.*
 - *In addition, Haven is also aggressively pursuing innovative ways to preserve the environment, and was the first modular builder to earn EarthCraft House certification for its homes*
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Modular construction is now in its fifth decade. In its formative years, the reality was that modular construction produced a less than desirable outcome for the discerning buyer. However, today's technology and forward-thinking companies like Haven Custom Homes have unleashed the design constraints of the past, and can reproduce any architectural design required by today's astute customer. More and more people are noticing the beauty, quality and green advantage of a modular home (read below a recent story in *The New York Times* about modular construction and a current exhibition on the product at the Museum of Modern Art).

Now, modular homes can be included in this list of EarthCraft House and ENERGY STAR homes, thanks to the leadership of Haven Custom Homes. All EarthCraft House and ENERGY STAR homes include a number of important features that are directly beneficial to homeowners, including effective insulation, high-performance windows, tight construction and ducts, efficient heating and cooling equipment, lighting and appliances, and third-party verification.

"It is, and always has been, the goal at Haven Custom Homes to create eco-friendly, energy efficient homes that reduce energy costs and provide a better living environment for homeowners," said John Ragland, executive vice president of land acquisitions and marketing for Haven Custom Homes.

Haven Custom Homes creates its product in its facility with an experienced, well-trained workforce using precision tooling to create consistently straight walls, square corners, fitted windows and flat ceilings. The controlled environment protects the homes from weather preventing warping and moisture damage. Haven Custom Homes' tested methods result in the homes being delivered to their permanent location three times faster than conventional construction methods.

Haven Custom Homes was the recipient of the coveted Best In American Living Award (BALA) for 2007 Home of the Year, sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders. The surprise winner (at least to stick builders) is a modular cottage that was substantially complete upon arrival to the site and assembled on the foundation in a matter of days. This 3,500 square foot empty-nester vacation home in WaterSound on the Florida panhandle, is also a 2007 Southern Living Idea House. Excerpted from a builder press release: "This partnership was born out of the success of our 2007 Southern Living Idea House in WaterSound [Fla.]," said Bill McDougald, vice president and executive director of the Southern Progress Homes Group. "The house totally belies the common perception of modular and was put together in a matter of weeks – not months. We believe this could quite possibly be the future of home construction and development, and we want to explore it further."

About Haven Custom Homes:

For more than 30 years, Haven Custom Homes has been a leader in the construction of custom modular homes. Haven Custom Homes currently works with builders throughout the East Coast in some of the most

discriminating neighborhoods, including Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, the Hamptons, Hilton Head and Charleston, S.C., Savannah, Ga., and WaterSound, Fla. Haven Custom Homes is headquartered outside Baltimore, Md., and currently operates three climate-controlled production facilities, two in Pennsylvania and one in South Carolina. Haven Custom Homes' commitment to quality design, innovation and superior craftsmanship is its trademark.

Haven Custom Homes was the recipient of the Best In American Living Award (BALA) for 2007 Home of the Year sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders and was privileged to partner in the building of the Southern Living Idea House in Florida and the Cottage Living Idea Home in New Orleans during 2007.

For more information about Haven Custom Homes, visit www.HavenHomes.com

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**DESIGN REVIEW | 'HOME DELIVERY'
Instant Houses, Then and Now**

By NICOLAI OUROUSSOFF

The idea of a well-oiled assembly line churning out gleaming and affordable new houses, flooded with light and as compact as a ship's cabin, is a well-worn Modernist fable.

For the average middle-class American, however, prefabricated housing has always lacked sex appeal. The masses tended to prefer a traditional style, no matter how shabbily designed, and never really bought into it. Nor did most of the industrialist tycoons with the money to make the dream real.

So "Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling," which opens on Sunday at the Museum of Modern Art, is a delightful surprise. Organized by Barry Bergdoll, MoMA's chief curator of architecture and design, it presents more than 80 projects, from humble experiments in suburban living to stunning works of creative imagination. In a tour de force Mr. Bergdoll was able to build five full-scale model houses for the show in a lot just west of the museum. The effect is startling: expressions of a suburban utopian world surrounded by Midtown's looming skyscrapers.

But like all great exhibitions "Home Delivery" is not simply a crowd pleaser. It's the kind of loving, scholarly achievement that is rare in today's architectural climate, which so often favors cheap spectacle over probing intellect. Mr. Bergdoll has not only managed to track down some unexpected gems, he has also arranged them in a way that allows us to see them with fresh eyes. He makes a convincing case that prefabricated housing was both a central theme of Modernist history and a dream that remains very much alive today.

To experience the show at full throttle, resist the temptation to go straight to the model houses and start with the main exhibition in the museum's sixth-floor galleries. It opens with a vision from the mass-produced utopia of tomorrow: two gorgeous wall fragments — one by Ali Rahim and Hina Jamelle, the other by Jesse Reiser and Nanako Umemoto — that push the limits of customized computer technologies. Their voluptuous surfaces suggest a hybrid of industrial materials and free-form organic design.

Just above to the right is a projection of a 1920 Buster Keaton film in which fumbling young newlyweds try to assemble a prefabricated house. Dropped off the back of a truck, the house's various parts were mislabeled by the woman's jilted former suitor. The result, once it is assembled, is a chaotic jumble of tilting walls, irregular windows and doors that open to nowhere.

The film pokes fun at those who spend their lives chasing fantasies. But it also hints at the instability at the core of any creative venture, teasing out one of the exhibition's most haunting themes: the conflict inherent in the so-called American dream. In many ways the prefab house embodies the tension between a desire for stability and a quixotic faith in social mobility.

The history of prefabricated dwellings is one of false starts and foiled dreams. In 1833 a London carpenter identified as H. Manning created one of the first, the Manning Portable Cottage, for his son, who was sailing off to make his fortune in Australia. Made of pre-cut wood posts and panels, the house could be conveniently packed in a ship's hold and reassembled. A single man could carry most of its lightweight components, making it ideal for the untamed Australian wilderness. (The house, which Manning produced in a range of styles, became a mild commercial success.)

More inventive still was the 1931 Copper House, designed by the Modernist master Walter Gropius. It was conceived as a system of insulated copper wall panels that could be easily transported and assembled on site in 24 hours. Despite the house's relatively conventional layout and form, a solid box with punched-out windows and a pitched roof, the glistening copper exterior gave it a haunting appearance.

The house enjoyed moderate success in Germany. After the Nazis rose to power in 1933, it was marketed to Jews fleeing the country for Palestine. Several of these houses now stand in Haifa in northern Israel, their weather-beaten copper skins a poignant testament to a transplanted culture.

Like Henry Ford's cars, such houses were intended to be mass-produced objects, affordable machines for both the rising middle class and the working masses. In Le Corbusier's famous words they were "machines for living." But at their most idealistic, they also sought to express the freedom of a society constantly on the move. They were in a sense an effort to tear the house up from its foundations, to make it as mobile as the individuals these buildings were meant to serve.

That notion reaches full force in the decade immediately after the Second World War, when most architects believed that military industrial production would be retooled for the construction of a more egalitarian, peacetime society. That vision is underlined in the show by the rickety steel frame of Jean Prouvé's *Maison pour l'Institutrice*, a reworking of his 1948 *Maison Tropicale*, a masterpiece of prefabricated design that was conceived as a kit of standardized parts that could be transported by air to the French colonies and assembled on site. The lightweight frame of its vented roof, which has the airiness of airplane wings, sums up the aspirations of a generation of architects.

Just beyond it stands a full-scale version of the Lustron House, a suburban home that began production the same year. If the *Maison Tropicale* reflects a wholehearted embrace of the new, the Lustron House is its counterpoint: modern technology draped in nostalgia. A steel structure manufactured to look like a conventional suburban wood-frame house, it embodies the fear of the unknown that has historically pushed the most creative architecture to the periphery of the profession.

As we all know, the traditionalists won. And from here the show takes a noticeable turn into fantasy, as if the architects grew to accept the limits of their dream. The most playful example is Archigram's 1965 Living Pod, an amoeba-shaped capsule with mechanical systems plugged into the side. Supported on squat mechanical legs like an Apollo landing craft, the pod had inflatable floors and furniture so that it could be packed up and moved easily.

Similarly, Kisho Kurokawa's 1968-72 Nakagin Capsule Tower is conceived as a series of rectangular precast concrete pods that plug into a central mast. Each pod is designed as a minimal space with built-in furniture, a bachelor pad in a congested, hedonistic metropolis.

The descent from postwar optimism to outright nihilism ends with one of Wes Jones's militaristic Primitive Huts (1994-98). A rigid steel frame on which mechanical shutters are mounted, the hut is covered by a pitched roof made of uneven wood logs. The heavy shutters look like protective shields; it could be an ideal hideaway for a recluse, Unabomber style, suggesting American individualism taken to its darkest extreme.

If the narrative ended here, the show would be a total downer. But it doesn't. Just as you begin to lose hope, you encounter ingenious works by Greg Lynn and Teddy Cruz. From Mr. Lynn there is a blob-shaped "embryonic" house that can be reconfigured by a client using computer software; from Mr. Cruz, a photo montage of discarded materials like used tires and sheets of corrugated metal that are recycled to create low-cost dwellings in Tijuana.

The fragments of wall too, once so mysterious, are also fraught with new meanings once you've seen the show. No longer simply sleek aesthetic objects that would seem at home in a glossy magazine, they are serious investigations into how machines can be used to generate a better way of life. Customization and mass production have finally bonded.

This new optimism reaches its crescendo outdoors with the model homes. Of these the Burst*008 beach house, designed by Jeremy Edmiston and Douglas Gauthier, is the most formally innovative. Its fractured, overlapping planes, laid out by computer, were cut out of nearly 200 plywood sheets. Nearby is the Micro Compact Home by Horden Cherry Lee Architects and Haack & Höpfner Architects, a steel pod with a single mast rising from the roof and supporting a solar panel; it is conceived as a "minimal" house that can be lowered by crane onto a remote site. Its movable parts allow the inhabitant to reconfigure the interior according to his or her needs.

Yet the work that best embodies the show's spirit is Kieran Timberlake Associates' four-story Cellophane House. Supported on a lightweight steel frame that is bolted together so that it can be taken apart easily, it is as simple to assemble as a child's Erector Set. Photovoltaic cells are integrated into the structure's transparent cellophane skin, their copper filaments tracing a delicate pattern across the facade. The skin gives the house an ethereal, temporary quality, and it stands so gently on its site that it seems afraid of doing harm to its surroundings.

Environmentally sensitive and devoid of cynicism, it's a perfect end to the show. Hope rises again, more cautious and subdued — a sign that we're finally learning to navigate the line between *heroism and hubris*.

"Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling" continues through Oct. 20 at the Museum of Modern Art, (212)708-9400, moma.org.

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