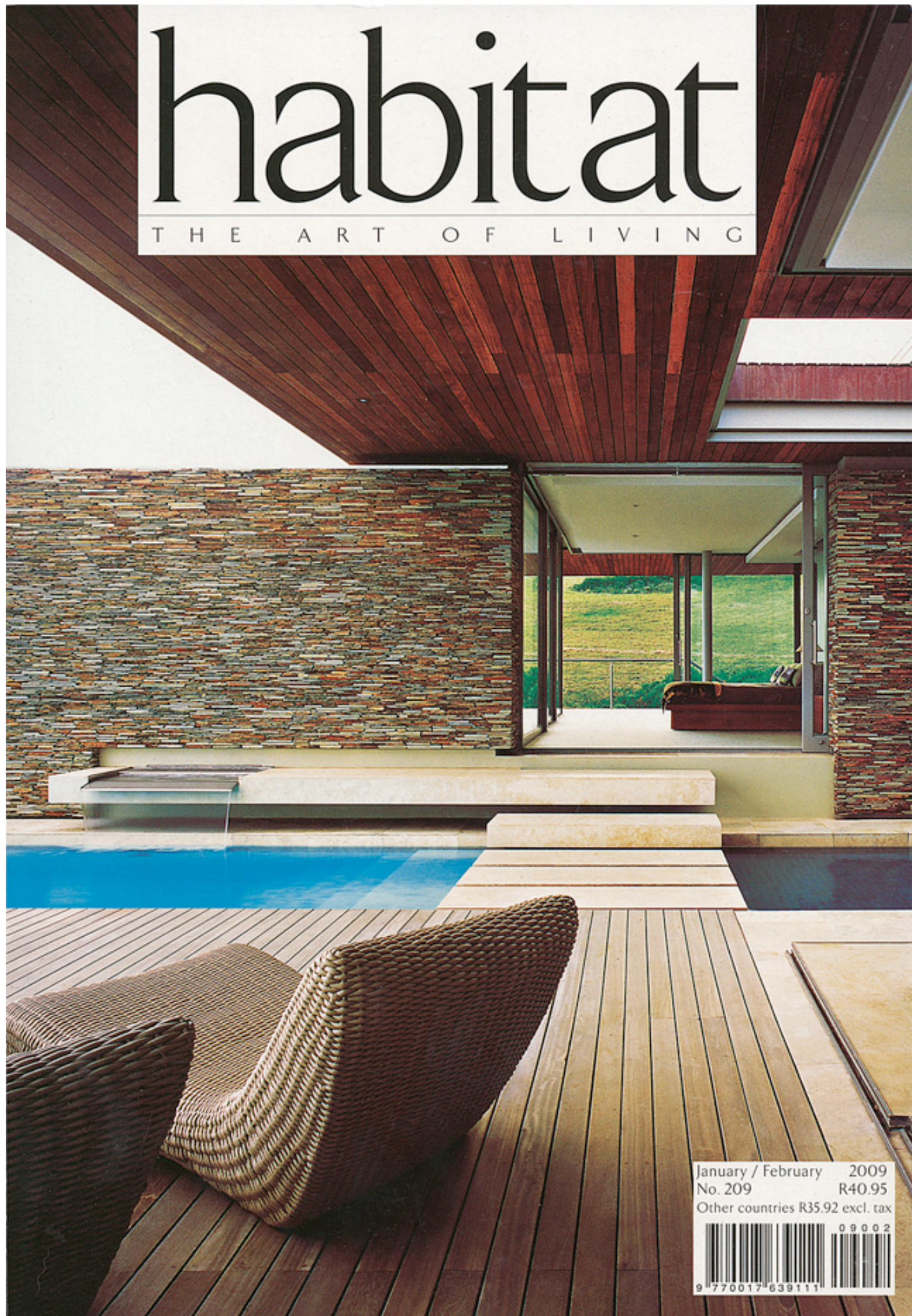


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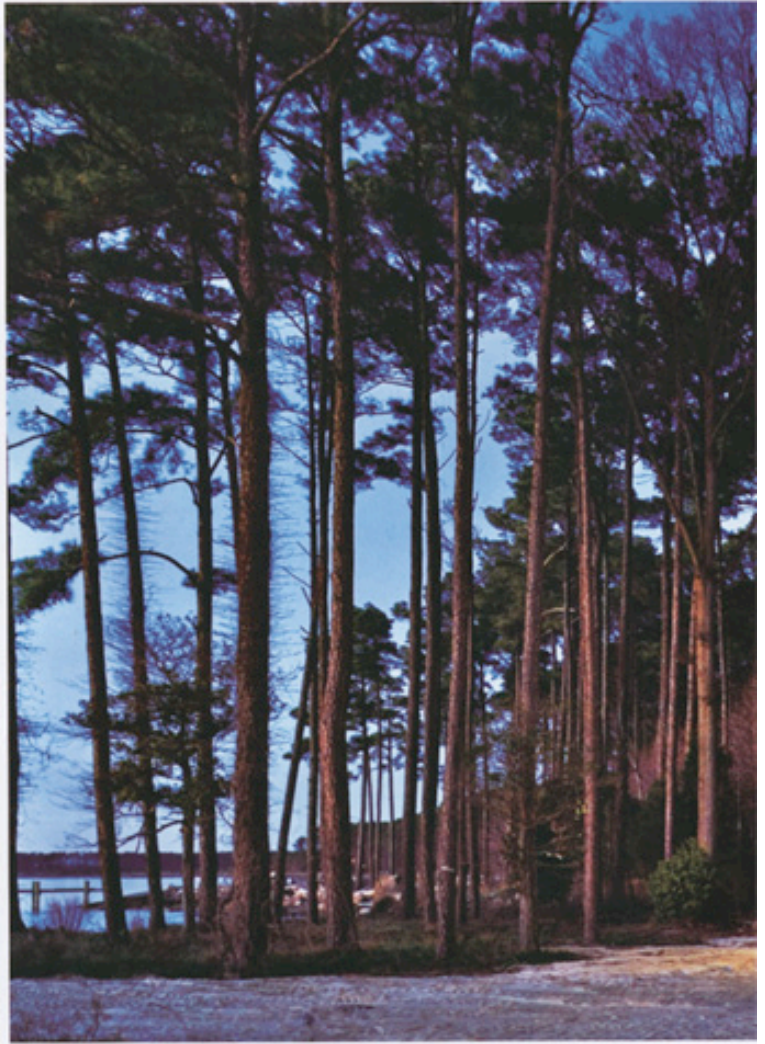


Design for Disassembly

report by Sarah Gallop & Kieran Timberlake
location: Maryland, USA
architecture: KieranTimberlake Associates
interior design: Marguerite Rodgers Ltd
photography: © Peter Aaron / Esto



TUCKED BEHIND 100-FOOT PINES LINING MARYLAND'S PICTURESQUE CHESAPEAKE BAY SITS AN EYE-CATCHING HOME THAT SEAMLESSLY ADAPTS TO ITS SURROUNDINGS. THE AIM BEING TO LEAVE AN ENVIRONMENTALLY ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT, WHILE STRESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF AFFORDABILITY AND QUALITY. ►



The home – known as the Loblolly House – is appropriately named after the tall pines native to this area and, being mindful of its natural surroundings, it was fabricated in sections and modules at an offsite location, then assembled as a complete structure onsite. This process, not only minimised construction waste onsite, but was also to provide for disassembly, while making full use of materials.

'Disassembly is a huge part of our environmental agenda,' says Stephen Kieran, one of the project architects. Kieran's main concern was to preserve the longevity of the home's building materials.



previous page & these pages:

Positioned between a dense grove of loblolly pines and a lush foreground of saltmeadow cordgrass, and the bay, Loblolly House seeks to deeply fuse the natural elements of this barrier island to architectural form. The timber foundations are at once pragmatic because they minimise the disruption to the ground, and poetic because the dwelling is literally founded on the tree. At the same time, the north, south and east elevations are of the forest. The design of the staggered vertical rain screen was literally composed over a site photograph to evoke the abstraction of solids and voids of the forest wall.

The entire Loblolly structure is fashioned from renewable materials, such as recycled aluminum, timber, glass, and polycarbonate. This key material is used to filter sunrays during the humid summers, while preheating the air during brisk winters; it successfully eliminates the need for central heating and air conditioning units. The house is elevated on timber stilts above the earth so no damage occurs to the indigenous species growing below. Vertical staggered cedar slats line the exterior walls mimicking the growing forest that surrounds the structure.

Indoor / outdoor living, according to Kieran, was 'clearly a generator for the design and we took it on ►



every way we could, allowing the west water wall to open. It literally feels like you're outside in a tree house overlooking the water.'

Loblolly's outdoor environment is noticeably growing inside the home. Architects KieranTimberlake Associates called on interior design consultants, Marguerite Rodger Ltd, to introduce the notion of indoor / outdoor living to the Loblolly House, while preserving the concept of prefabrication, future disassembly, and to continue the theme of affordability.

'There was definitely a reciprocal presence of the outdoors resonating throughout the home's interior,' say the interior designers. 'It was definitely a focal point for each of the rooms and we had to design around the walls opening up to the outdoors.'

these pages:

Beyond the selection of finish materials and colours, the furnishings at Loblolly were not custom designed. Initially it was thought that the furnishings should extend the aesthetic of the house and therefore be made of wood and metal. With the intervention of Marguerite Rodgers Ltd. as interior design consultants, the notion of a fixed palette gradually gave way to a matrix based on four principles derived from the house's dominant architectural features. This involved fusing materials with elements of the site, such as the native cordgrass and pines; integrating prefabricated furnishings of an earlier generation of high modernists; selecting affordable low-modern furnishings from the 1960s onward; and celebrating the fine joinery of historic Asian furnishings while also considering design for disassembly.



these pages:

The idea of an elemental interior design and architecture extends to the method of assembly. The house is composed entirely of off-site fabricated elements and ready-made components, assembled from the platform up, in six weeks. The thousands of parts that make up even a small house have been collapsed into new elements of architecture: the scaffold, the cartridge, the block and equipment. The aluminum scaffold system provides both the structural frame and the means to connect the off-site fabricated elements to the frame with simple tools.





RECOVERING THE PAST

In the living room, woven carpets – resembling native cord grass – cover the green bamboo floors, and a sofa is upholstered in Donghia fabric featuring vertical strands of green, brown and yellow, so as to imitate the Loblolly's exterior of trees. The interior design team felt verticality was an important feature for the home's overall feel.

Throughout the house, prefabricated furnishings from iconic high-modernists were hand selected, not only because of their subtle profiles, but also for their historic relevance. Say the designers: 'These pieces, by famous architects like Le Corbusier, weren't initially designed to be expensive and iconic, they were designed for everyone.'

Le Corbusier, for instance, considered it an architect's obligation to provide quality housing at low cost. To acknowledge this maxim, the designers selected his LCI chair to be placed in one of the bedrooms. Since Charles

and Ray Eames were also advocates for quality prefabricated houses, two of their swivel Eames chairs flank the living room sofa.

To preserve the organic feeling of Loblolly's interiors, vintage furniture pieces were also selected in addition to the Bauhaus pieces. In the dining room, a John Witcomb table highlights custom detailing and wood joinery. Similar timber details can be found in Asian antiques, dispersed throughout, a common design trait for Marguerite Rodgers.

She comments: 'A lot of well-known modern architects during the early 20th century were very much inspired by Asian design. So I think that there is a natural pairing between the two styles.' Japanese mingei stools and Chinese wardrobes are positioned in rooms without closets to further reinforce the necessity of 'design for disassembly' in the Loblolly House. ■