



style

INSPIRATION FOR THE WAY AHEAD

SUMMER
2008

car CATHEDRALS

UNPARALLELED PARKING

NEW TSX SIZZLES AFTER SUNDOWN » JAZZ UP
THE OFFICE » ART DOCTORS » RL UNDER WRAPS

 ACURA

LIVING LIGHTLY

MICHELLE KAUFMANN TAKES MODULAR PREFAB TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL WITH ECO-FRIENDLY, HIGH DESIGN

BY STEFANIA YARHI

18

modular marvel
the Breezhouse™:
beautifully balanced,
courtyard-centered

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF: (LEFT) THOMAS | STORY (RIGHT) JOHN SWAIN

Prefabricated housing still conjures the archaic notion of ugly trailer homes. Michelle Kaufmann, one of the leading lights of the new wave in modular housing, has obliterated this old prejudice with her trademark mix of sustainably-created components and cutting-edge high design. For Kaufmann, it's a very personal quest.

Simple living is the key. That's all about lessening your ecological footprint. Solar-paneled roofs, water-saving plumbing, grey water systems that recycle wastewater for septic use, and natural-airflow air conditioning are Kaufmann's answer to sustainable living. Her theory: "It is not necessary to build a big house, but rather to design one that feels spacious."

In 2001 she and her husband went in search of their very first home in Northern California. When they couldn't find an affordable, sustainable, well-designed home, Kaufmann decided to take matters into her own hands, and design-built one of her own, with her husband as general contractor. Impressed, friends came knocking for their own prefab homes—and Michelle Kaufmann Designs was born in 2002.

Modular doesn't simply mean *manufactured*. These houses are a tribute to refined design, with an abundance of structural and design options. From materials and finishes, to the layout, right down to the landscaping, all choices are made by the home owners. The affordable price tag aside—roughly \$250 per square foot—an MKD house appeals to the time-constrained, because nearly all the work is done for you once your design choices are made. It's no surprise that modular prefab homes now pepper the West Coast landscape.



outside in
clockwise from top:
the mkLotus™ with
living space that
opens completely
to the outside; the
green guru herself,
Michelle Kaufmann;
the Glidehouse™, with
thoughtful spaces
in harmony with the
surroundings

Kaufmann spent five years working in architectural legend Frank Gehry's design office; there she specialized in museum projects and display spaces. Her residential work naturally draws on her modern, high-design background; she has a passion for practical living-spaces. The use of windows and skylights for natural lighting, creating a spatial flow; the mix of industrial materials with traditional ones, and emphasis on ultra-clean lines—all this echoes Gehry's influence.

Kaufmann made it her mandate to conjure a spatial harmony that allows people to live with their surroundings instead of in them. "By opening a house to the outdoors, it feels much larger than it is, and 'borrows' the sense of space from the landscape," describes Kaufmann.

Rome wasn't built in a day; neither are Kaufmann's houses—but Kaufmann stresses that the construction time is halved because the on-site and modular construction are simultaneous. While a crew works on the landscape, the factory crew pre-fabs—and four to six months later, it's *your* new house on that flatbed rolling up the drive. Seems like Michelle's got the right idea. 🏡
www.mkd-arc.com



URBAN ELEMENTARY

MKD launched two new homes, already in production, ideal for downtown applications: The mkSolaire™ and the mkLoft™ were designed for simple city living. "This is a home that is low on environmental impact, low on carbon footprint, yet high on design," Kaufmann explains. MKD partnered with Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, where a working model of the mkSolaire™ was built on-site for its May 2008 exhibit opening.