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Moving Toward the Edge

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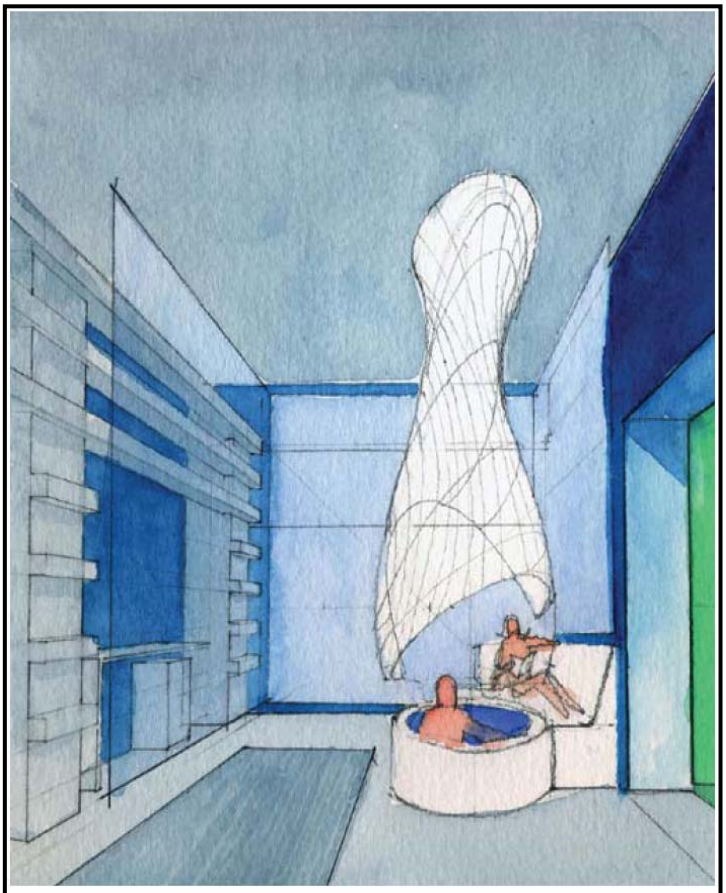
…Possibly the most ambitious idea ever launched by MMPI and supervised by LA Mart Director of Marketing Jeff Sampson is Fine Living: The Loft Life. Serving as co-producer for this "case study installation of the urban live/work lifestyle which demonstrates the merging of contract and residential design," is Balcony Press, publishers of LA Architect, the bible of design lore in Southern California and the newer LA Inside, which will unveil its second issue at the show.



Sketch of Joey Shimoda's loft space for Neocon West

Mr. Sampson says: "The concept was straightforward," and inspired by the development phenomenon and the outgrowth of the live/work, residential/contract, urban home. Chosen to design this 1200 sq.-ft. loft built-out located on the second floor of the LA Mart is Joey Shimoda, principal of Shimoda Design Group, who appropriately runs his boutique design firm out of a loft space in downtown LA. Among his recent design credits is the brand-new Steelcase showroom in Santa Monica that opened to much applause in November 2004. "Since most urban residential lofts are usually commercial property conversions, the challenge to maximize the experience of living in downtown in a commercial building, creating a condition where the physical and mental transformation of spaces reflects the mood and moment of the inhabitant, was appealing," says Shimoda. "The idea of a loft is really an attitude about how one desire to live. It becomes a choice. The line between activities blur and the flow of fine living reveals the essence of the loft life."

It is this blurring of activities that puts a new spin on this project. Millions of people today have a home office, whether they work in it full-time or not. The era of the computer with email, ipod, video and all the other bells and whistles has ushered in a new market for Aeron, Leap, Freedom, Think, Mirra ergonomic chairs and other "contract" products that now find their way to the home. A dozen marquee brand manufacturers representing state-of-the-art products and furnishings for today's home office are collaborating in the loft project. These include Armani Casa, Artemide, Brayton International, Interface, FLOR, Maharam, Nova Studio, Sharpe Interior Systems, Steelcase, Toto and Vetro Mosacio and Bulthaup Kitchen Architecture. From his early sketches of the space, Shimoda and the collaborating sponsors are pushing the design envelope, conforming to Burke's dictum of seeking new horizons for the future.

Editor of both LA Architect and LA Inside, Jesse Brink, will be moderating a panel session on the Urban Life that also speaks to a West Coast lifestyle change. "The new urban life is more than just parking yourself in an ultra-hip loft and walking to work. Our taste in fashion, furniture and food are influenced by factors such as a diverse population, a rapid pace and access to world-class culture. Urban trends are in turn absorbed into popular culture and reshaped for consumption by suburbanites every where," according to Brink, who lived in New York before moving to LA to take up his new responsibilities last year and obviously knows what he is talking about. Mr. Brink's invited panelists include two renowned chefs Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger, founders of two highly successful restaurants Ciudad and Border Grill, and TV food mavens.

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