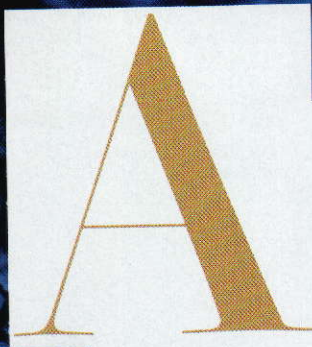


A design impresario decides that no one
can build his weekend dream house
but him. The result is a floating box of
glass and steel that evokes the modernist
legends of the twentieth century.

above it all

Photographed by Nikolas Koenig



At the top of a wooded cliff overlooking the northern edge of Shelter Island, a box of glass and steel rises like a thought bubble. That's fitting for a structure that no one but Stuart Parr would have dreamed up. Ten years ago, the part-time film producer and full-time furniture dealer hadn't built so much as a doghouse, and here he had turned a scrap-paper sketch into a 3,600-square-foot, three-bedroom retreat he now shares with his five-year-old daughter, Harper.

To be fair, Parr knows plenty about design. The 40-year-old California native has long collected and sold pieces by such visionaries as Jean-Michel Frank, and he conceived Clearhouse, as he calls it, as a place to put his furniture and art collections literally on a pedestal—a modernist vitrine flooded with natural light. While few people would dare to cantilever such a long structure on not one but both sides of a thin fulcrum, Parr had a simple rationale: He wanted to elevate Clearhouse above the trees instead of cutting them down. "I had the property for eight years before I finally built on it," he says, revving a four-wheel-drive Kawasaki Mule up the mossy hill, looking more the athlete than aesthete. "So I got to go there and watch the sun in respect to the seasons. I had a real handle on what I wanted—it was a meeting of the left and right side of the brain."

With the help of an architect, Parr began to scale the steep learning curve of drawing up a dream house, and over a three-month period, he delivered fourteen pages of hand-drawn, mad-genius specifications to his contractor, Rick Shumway. "It was like building a house of cards," Parr says of the ten-month-long construction process that had moments when it looked like the whole thing could collapse into a pile. And as futuristic as the house seems, the transport of its beams depended on the most timeless of elements—the tides, as some components had to wait for high water before they could be ferried over and craned into place. "This house is

SHADOW BOX

Design entrepreneur Stuart Parr's cantilevered retreat sits on a Shelter Island cliff, offering treetop views of the Peconic Bay.





BED AND BEYOND

A salvaged rosewood wall defines Parr's bedroom, LEFT, complete with Tod's driving shoes. Two Jean-Michel Frank-inspired chairs, RIGHT, face an acid-green, sound-bricked wall.



kind of everyone's dream," says Marc Newson, one of the contemporary industrial designers whom Parr manages. "Even just finding a property like that; I was astounded that he was able to pull this off."

But Parr's greatest coup may have been nabbing a construction permit before January 2003, when local officials—anticipating a biblical-grade storm in the coming years—updated the building code to require thicker, prohibitively expensive glass that would comply with a 120-mph-wind-impact missile test. Such timing allowed Parr to install an 84-foot-wide span of tempered glass panels, which present treetop vistas of sailboats drawing compass curves in the Peconic Bay.

Beginner's luck, you might say, but good instincts have driven Parr's career. The first film he coproduced was the 2002 Eminem quasi-biopic *8 Mile*—which earned \$240 million worldwide—and he has signed on to produce the rapper's next movie project, a big-screen adaptation of the TV series *Have Gun, Will Travel*. In another Midas-like move, Parr found a black aluminum-legged table by 1930s design-savant Warren MacArthur at a Manhattan flea market. He gradually cornered the market on MacArthur before values skyrocketed (even raiding the MacArthur-rich interiors of the Hershey Company's executive offices on "the day they were redecorating"), and now owns the worldwide trademark and reproduction rights.

Parr refined his eye at an early age, often taking cues from a friend of his father's who owned a Sacramento art gallery. "I didn't know who Le Corbusier was, but I was able to recognize


a Le Corbusier *chaise* when I was, like, eight," he recalls. Which isn't to say he didn't partake in the usual daredevil adolescent pastimes, including ski-boarding on plywood against the American River rapids by tying a 300-foot line to a tree. "People would get the rope caught around their leg and drown, so we always carried a knife," says Parr. These days, he's traded in the plywood for a pair of water skis, although he sometimes sheds them to cut boat wakes in bare feet.

Parr's sui generis sensibility, frank demeanor, and growing influence have drawn a motley circle of friends—from the actor Robert Downey Jr. to the real estate developer Aby Rosen—who like to seek sanctuary in Clearhouse's rarefied air. "I'm in St. Barts the year before last," recalls Downey Jr., "And I look over and I see this kind of familiar, athletic, earnest-looking, complex, eccentric weirdo. And he's just finished running these serious 75-degree inclines, St. Barts mountain foothills. You shouldn't even be driving up them, and he's just finished running them, and he's smoking a Marlboro Red." Adds Downey Jr.: "Life is messy. Can't our houses be simple, clean? There is something pure about the setting."

ARMCHAIR ARCHITECT

Parr, LEFT, outside the house that began with a scribble on a scrap of paper, and, RIGHT, the dining area, featuring an aluminum-legged Marc Newson table.





While there are precedents in the minimalism of Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House and the pedestal structure of Charles Deaton's Sculptured House, neither of their interiors offer Clearhouse's eclectic sampling of design history. Among the most notable of the three dozen or so pieces is a squat chair—broad black cushions on a springy metal stand—that Oscar Niemeyer designed for the Communist headquarters in Montreal. It greets visitors as they ascend the stairs through the central foundation. In one corner is a nickel prototype Bucky chair by Newson; on the wall hangs a small canvas with angry yellow and green brush strokes by painter Joan Mitchell; and rounding out the other end of the house—next to a white bull from the Parisian taxidermy shop Deyrolle—is the dining-room table: a Newson-designed 4-by-12-foot slab of Sapele, a rare African heartwood. "Wood is sold like tuna," says Parr, citing the many ways to find exotic source material, even pulling up some lumber from lake bottoms, centuries after it sunk.

Parr definitely has a sixth sense for salvage: In design circles, he's famous for recovering forgotten caches of Jean-Michel Frank furniture from the hotel Llao Llao in Bariloche, Argentina. (Ex-employees had dragged these treasures into their houses after World War II.) Even Parr's bedroom partition is made of swirling-grained, book-matched rosewood, purloined a few years ago from the former Bank of Brazil on Fifth Avenue before the building was remodeled.

Parr has retained a boyish lust for collecting toys, including a 38-foot, rigid-bottom inflatable, built on Lake Como by Fabio Buzzi; a MasterCraft skiboat; and a cobalt blue 1969 Iso Grifo, the fabled and nearly extinct Italian sports car with the lines of a Ferrari and the engine of a Corvette. Of all his conveyances, the inflatable might be Parr's best chance at salvation in the event of apocalyptic East End evacuation gridlock. "It will cruise at over 60 miles per hour in a four-foot chop all day long," says Parr. "It's the Ferrari of rigid bottoms." —**JEFFREY SLONIM**

TREE HOUSE

The sylvan approach to Clearhouse, Parr's weekend paradise. In this story: set design, Lewis Miller for LMD.

Sittings Editor: Carolina Irving.

For additional photos of Parr's Shelter Island house, log on to www.mensvogue.com/architecture

"Life is messy," says Parr's frequent guest Robert Downey Jr. "Can't our houses be simple, clean? There is something pure about the setting."