

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

09 2002

\$7.00 A PUBLICATION OF THE MCGRAW-HILL COMPANIES

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INTERIORS

Reflections
of Inner Realms

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Record Interiors

2002

Interior design at its best can offer mind-altering—or at least *perception*-altering—experiences. Approaching existing conditions, an architect may selectively reveal what's already there, plumbing its spatial, metaphoric, or experiential potential. Intrinsic features—such as views, structure, or overall proportions—may appear transformed through their interplay with new elements. Balancing, masking, celebrating, or transcending the so-called flaws or limitations of a place, an interior design may lead you to perceive a space in entirely unexpected ways.

Throughout *Record Interiors 2002*, the featured projects all began with existing spaces, where such scenarios played out successfully, but with markedly different results. In two of the interiors, wave forms became essential in redefining the spatial character. At Marmol Radziner's TBWA\Chiat\Day offices, for instance, a veritable two-story tsunami, crafted in wood, surges up in the lobby, channeling views upward within a timber-frame warehouse. The immediate effect is powerful, giving the space clear vertical thrust or focus.

At Klein Dytham's Beacon offices in Tokyo, waves are also present, but in a lower, more attenuated flow. Shaped partly by train tracks beneath the building, the space has long, narrow proportions, which Klein Dytham accentuated with a whimsically undulant and colorful wave, or "ribbon," of functions that traverses the project, giving the entire space a distinct rhythm.

In some of the other projects, reflectivity, rather than wave action, greatly influences the spatial impact. At ImageNet, for example, architect Rand Elliott suspended 18 sheets of clear acrylic, printed with text, between two mirrored walls. With mind-boggling effect, multiple reflections of the viewer and the texts appear to telescope into infinity. Through this optical sleight of hand, the visitor occupies a

place conceptually inside the copying process, as the basic principals of photocopying—reflection, repetition, reproduction—are revealed, and ordinary spatial relationships seem momentarily upended.

In Joel Sanders's Lee Residence, hinged mirrors, moving wood panels, and glossy epoxy surfaces play against the shadowy, veil-and-reveal qualities of backlit, sandblasted glass and sheer window shades. Sanders gutted an ordinary city flat, replacing its cramped network of rooms with open space around a single core. The plan yields wide interior panoramic views with dual vanishing points, emphasizing the apartment's now-expansive horizontality. Within this spatial flow, the contrasting surfaces and kinetic panels and mirrors produce a compelling collage effect.

In a SoHo loft, Dean/Wolf Architects responded to remarkable—in places, iconic—urban views by creating a sequence of panels and screening elements that establish an ongoing dialogue with the scene outside, exposing, reflecting, or denying it to the viewer. The cityscape resonates in changing ways throughout the space, not only through images—virtual views—caught in glassy surfaces, but also through material choices that echo the colors, textures, and quality of light outdoors.

And at the Cruise bar and restaurant, Landini Associates places a light sculpture in dynamic counterpoint to a spectacular view, using reflective surfaces to amplify the visual impact.

In the W Hotel, Yabu Pushelberg turned the major flaw of an existing hotel building into a virtue (in this case, using neither waves nor reflections). Here, a once-awkward collection of detached spaces is no longer perceived as such. Instead, the configuration becomes a bento-boxlike array of compartmentalized offerings, contrasting in scale, hue, texture, and function, yet together forming a balanced whole.

The way we experience anything is, of course, related to who we are and what we bring to it. But clearly architects and designers can also play significant roles in uncovering, paradoxically, vast possibilities in finite places. ■

1. Joel Sanders
2. Marmol Radziner
3. Elliott + Associates
4. Klein Dytham
5. Dean/Wolf
6. Yabu Pushelberg
7. Landini Associates





Within a play of mirrors and hinged planes, a fold-out guest bed is partially revealed (this page). From the entrance, a closet's contents and the activity in a shower stall—conventionally hidden realms—may appear through veils of translucent glass (opposite).

Blurring boundaries between hidden and revealed, work and play, Joel Sanders fashions the highly flexible LEE RESIDENCE

By Raul A. Barreneche

New York architect Joel Sanders denounces many of the accepted norms of domesticity. He is right to try to shake off now-outdated notions of the home—modern life is increasingly fluid, flexible, and full of contradictions and blurry distinctions between work and play, entertainment and recreation. In 1999, the Museum of Modern Art made that case in the successful and provocative exhibition, *The Un-Private House*. The show posited that changes in domestic life and technology are liberating architects and their clients from outdated, centuries-old typologies of rigidly programmed cellular rooms and inherently private dwellings. One of the 26 house designs featured in the exhibition was Sanders's transformation of a hermetic 1950s suburban ranch into an open, voyeuristic bachelor pad centered on a sunken gym instead of a Lucy-and-Ethel-era kitchen.

That bachelor pad was never built, but Sanders's design for a recently completed Manhattan pied-à-terre puts many of his hypotheses about the modern home into practice. His clients, a Midwestern couple, called the architect after seeing the neatly tailored loft Sanders had created for their son in New York City. Although they had purchased a formal two-bedroom flat in a 1996, 32-story condominium tower, they wanted Sanders to completely transform the 1,850-square-foot apartment with a flexible, unorthodox program that included a dance-practice area for the wife, two convertible sleeping spaces for overnight guests, and a study. Sanders stripped the place—which he found to be a rabbit warren of small, awkwardly laid out rooms—down to its concrete shell. His transformation starts with the unexpected exposure of traditionally private areas and concealed infrastructure. The front door now opens onto a tiny vestibule defined by a closet to one side and, surprisingly, the acid-etched glass curve of the master shower on the other. The entry fronts another translucent glass wall thinly veiling the contents of the master closet. This glazed wall extends deeper into the apartment, enclosing a utility closet and a guest shower and offering more provocative peeks at domestic functions.

The translucent wall forms the back edge of the master suite, a self-contained zone—conceived as a glass box or a crystalline tea house—that Sanders inscribed into an otherwise open, loftlike space. The boundaries of the box are delineated by its surfaces: the glass wall on two sides of its exterior and a seamless continuum of slick epoxy floors, walls,

Raul A. Barreneche is a New York-based contributing editor for *RECORD*.



Project: Lee Residence

Architect: Joel Sanders Architect—Joel Sanders, principal; Brian Kimura, project architect; Adam Dayem, Christophe Mueller-Rosellius, Charles Stone, project team

Interior designer: Andy Goldsborough

Engineer: Jack Green Associates

Lighting: Lighting Collaborative—Lewis Herman

General contractor: Foundations—Saif Sumaida

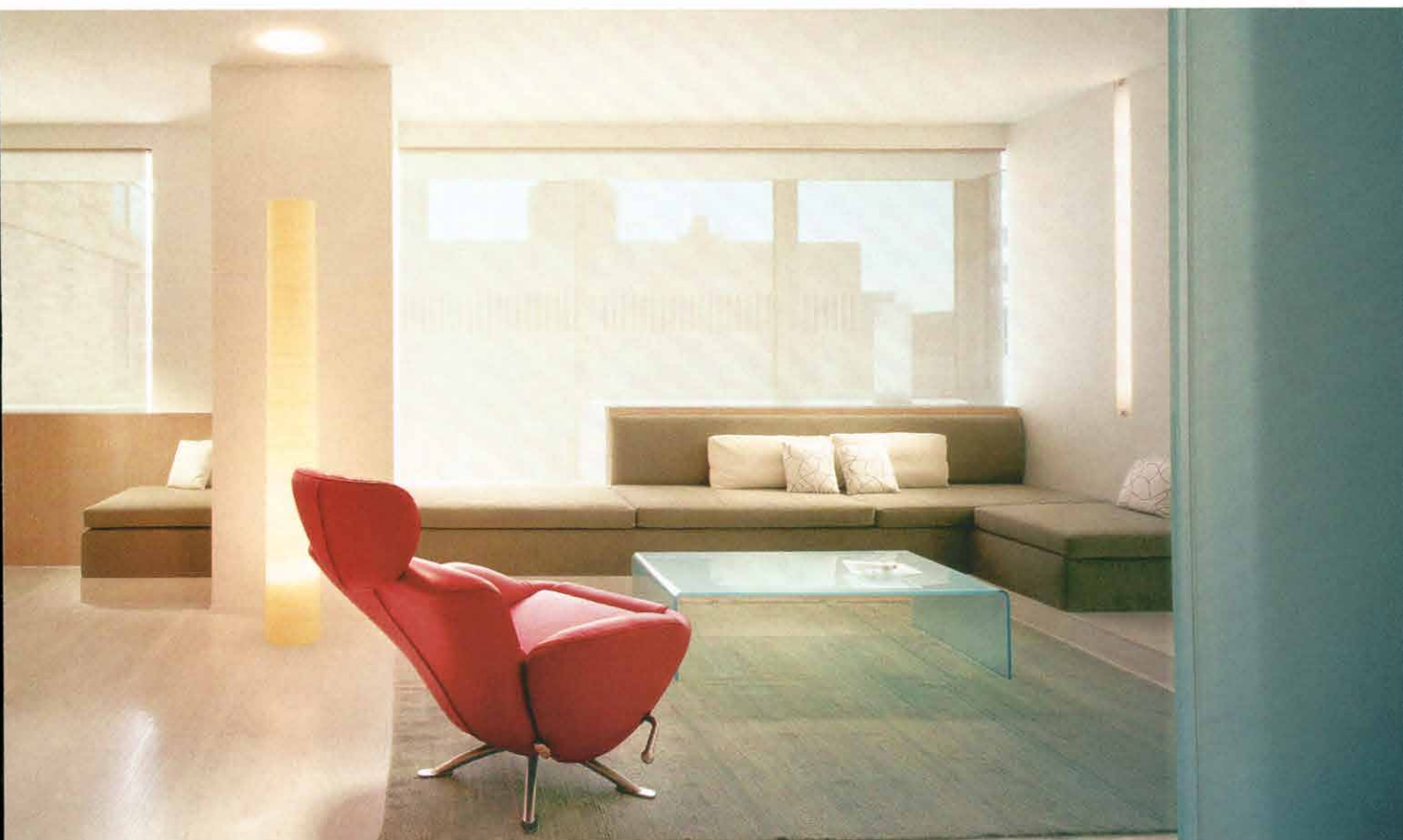


A ballet barre backed with mirrors forms an end wall for the living room (top). Like a luminous sculpture, glass-fronted cabinets

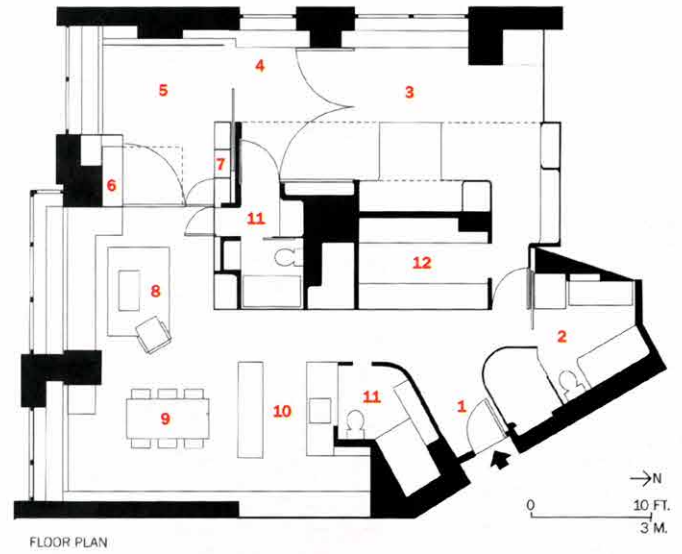
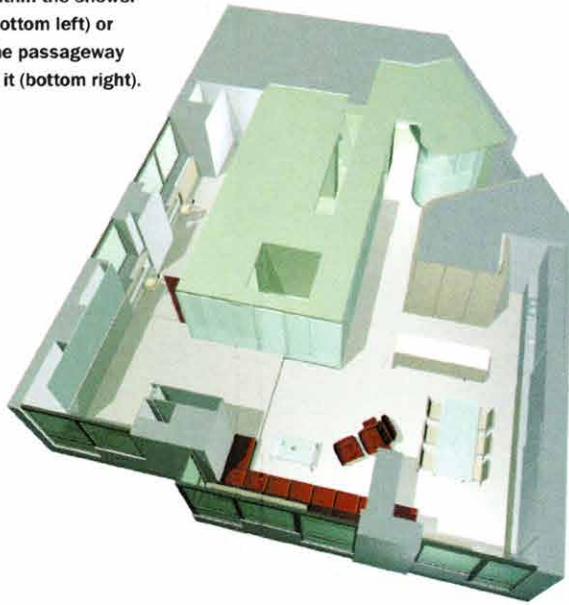
glow with vertical fluorescent bulbs (right and top). Epoxy seamlessly lines the master bathroom and its curvy molded tub (above).



The mirrored ballet-practice area catches reflections of the master bed and the fold-out guest bed (right). Simple custom seating plays against veiled views of the cityscape (below). The study occupies a zone poised for transformation through movable panels (as captured in a time-lapse image, opposite, bottom).



Around the central core, the space remains open and fluid (below). In the guest bathroom, the shadow of a figure may appear from within the shower stall (bottom left) or from the passageway behind it (bottom right).



FLOOR PLAN

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Foyer | 7. Fluorescent-lit cabinets |
| 2. Master bath | 8. Living |
| 3. Master bedroom | 9. Dining |
| 4. Study | 10. Kitchen |
| 5. Ballet barre/mirror | 11. Bath |
| 6. Fold-out guest bed | 12. Closet/dressing |





and ceilings inside. Sanders's treatment of the core and its contents is a complete inversion of expectation: Prosaic objects, such as brooms and coat hangers (not to mention bathing bodies), are exposed. And unlike a traditionally opaque core, this translucent nucleus emanates light.

Crafting the epoxy bathrooms and getting floors, walls, and ceilings smooth and seamlessly joined proved to be one of the project's most difficult challenges. Part of the complexity resulted from the different surface compositions: The floors are poured epoxy, but the walls and ceilings are constructed of waterproof green board covered in plaster and finished with epoxy paint. To ensure accurate construction of curved connections, Sanders sent the contractor, Saif Sumaida, a series of section cuts taken from a computer model of the apartment. Sumaida used this detailed data to handcraft, in green board, curved joints between walls, floors, and ceilings, which he smoothed over with plaster and finished with epoxy paint to match the adjacent surfaces. In the master bath, the contractor also integrated a custom fiberglass tub into the fluid epoxy landscape.

Beyond the box, Sanders turned the once carved-up apartment into a continuous space that flows from open kitchen to dining room to living room. Up a short step, the sequence gives way to a mirrored area where the wife, a ballet enthusiast, can practice. (The added depth of a resilient, professional-grade wooden dance floor necessitated the level change.) Although Sanders didn't impede flexibility with functionally specific rooms, he did imply distinct uses through different materials in the otherwise neutral interior: Corian suggests wet (kitchen) functions, upholstered surfaces are for lounging, and so on. "Surfaces allow functions to take place," explains Sanders. "It's counter to the idea that anything can happen anywhere. Like clothing, surfaces create identity."

One of the apartment's most ingenious elements is the complex choreography of moving doors that can slyly turn Sanders's configuration for a one-bedroom flat into an impromptu three-bedroom unit. It's similar to Gerrit Rietveld's play of sliding panels and folding screens that delineate bedrooms within the open upstairs of his seminal Schroeder House of 1924. In the dance studio, a large door pivots open to reveal a Murphy bed and partially close off the space from the living area; a translucent glass closet door on the opposite wall completes the enclosure. A pocket door then slides shut to separate the newly created "guest room" from the master suite. If the owners have another overnight visitor, they can pivot the large closet door next to the master suite's built-in platform bed and open a second door, flush with the opposite wall, to complete the separation from the foreshortened master bedroom. This area also doubles as a private study. The only glitch is that guests must enter and exit the third bedroom through the guest bathroom.

These overlapping, mutable "rooms" are an ideal strategy for creating flexible and efficient interiors, especially in small spaces. Sanders's design is a thoughtful and subtle improvement on the unprogrammed loft. The mix of openness and flexibility is well-suited to its clients—and to the age of the multitask home. ■

Sources

Epoxy: Hoffman Floor Covering (poured floor; paint on core walls and ceilings)

Lighting: Wever & Ducre

Plumbing: Duravit (toilets); Corian (sinks); Dornbracht (faucets and showerheads)

Wood: Brushed powder-coated, quarter-sawn oak (cabinets and floor)

Wall covering: Gretchen Bellinger, Two Eyes Have Thorns Upholsterer, and K. Flam Associates (headboard collaborators)

www For more information on the people and products involved in this project, go to Projects at architecturalrecord.com.