

SPECIAL ISSUE: Decorating, Architecture, Furniture & More

Metropolitan Home

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Homes in
America**

**+ Our Favorite People,
Places & Things**

Design 100

*Elegance and
serenity by
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In upstate New York, a house that appears to be diminutive from one side boasts a 130-foot-long, 16-foot-high wall of windows on the other. The building's roof and side walls, both made of galvanized metal, recall the region's farmhouses and silos. The sliding doors and windows are from Loewen, a Canadian company known for its energy-conserving products.





In the rolling hills of *upstate New York* architect Adam Rolston created this modern View-Master of a house with dramatically simple lines and an agenda as green as the surrounding landscape.

Green and Simple



James Lerner, a New York City attorney, was determined to build a weekend house that reflected his appreciation of contemporary architecture. "I didn't want something you could find in a typical suburban subdivision," he says. But he had chosen a site in Columbia County, a rural area lying between the Hudson River and the Berkshire Mountains, which is dotted with modest farm buildings. Lerner wanted to respect local traditions.

Lerner's architect, Adam Rolston (a partner with Drew Stuart and Gabriel Benroth in Incorporated Architecture and Design), took both goals to heart, creating a house that is as neighborly as it is bold. From the road, with its facade of wooden louvers, it appears to be a single-story building. But its roofline angles upward to a rear facade that is 16 feet high, 130 feet long and made almost entirely of glass. More than a dozen sliding doors (their wooden frames covered in aluminum on the outside) open onto a deck shielded by a ten-foot overhanging eave. The sheltered space impresses with its careful detailing and strong proportions.

Inside, where every room takes advantage of the angled ceiling, the house has the feeling of a loft. (Rolston used wood trusses to create a space free of columns and bearing walls.) Within the loft, Rolston placed bedrooms at opposite ends, for privacy, and reserved the rest of the space for a great room, bracketed by the kitchen on one side and a fireplace on the other.

Above: The homeowner chose a Matthew Hilton *Light* table for his dining area. A single light fixture was used throughout the house, Cecile Manz's *Caravaggio*, from *Light Years*. Right: In the living room, a *Domino* sectional sofa from Natuzzi (with a backless corner) wraps around a group of *Hex* tables designed by the home's architect, Adam Rolston. They're magnetized, "so you can make any shape you want," Rolston says. Rugs are wool-silk blends from Odegaard.

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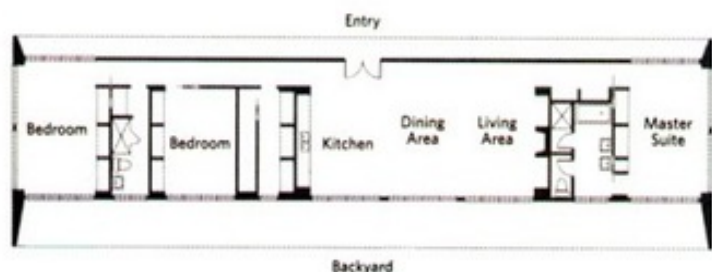
ou can't see the refrigerator, and that's the whole idea," says Lerner of his modest kitchen. To achieve the minimalist look, he ordered stainless steel cabinets and appliance fronts from Varenna, a division of Italy's Poliform. The glossy countertop and backsplash, of Calacutta gold marble, were also made in Italy (Varenna's way of assuring that everything fits). Though it's almost self-effacing, the kitchen makes a strong impression. Its symmetry, Rolston says, helps create order within a sprawling space, imposing a measure of formality on an otherwise casual setting.

The master bathroom is less formal but no less carefully thought out. Rolston covered both the floors and walls in tiles of Vermont blue slate, arranging them in a brick pattern that gives the look of heavy masonry. And he carefully detailed the room to avoid exposing the thinness of the stone: Although the tile does not continue all the way up to the ceiling, a second layer of wallboard was

added where the tile stops, resulting in a flush vertical surface.

Rolston took the opportunity—not an option in most homes—to sink the Kohler *Tea-for-Two* tub into the floor, which contributes to a spa-like feeling. Also adding to the spa ambiance: a 15-foot wall of etched glass, which encloses the shower and toilet compartments. Instead of installing typical bathroom sconces, Rolston chose Bega's dimmable halogen lights, which are actually outdoor fixtures intended to be used for patios and walkways; they're waterproof and sleek, and they give off a light that makes everyone look good, Rolston says.

This page: Stainless steel kitchen cabinets by Varenna reflect the richness of the Brazilian walnut floors; the marble island counter holds a Gaggenau cooktop. Opposite: In the master bathroom, Duravit Vero sinks are fitted with classic Vola hardware by Arne Jacobsen. (The Vola line includes the traps and valves below the sinks, so attractive that you wouldn't want to hide them in a vanity.) Using larger tiles on the floor than on the walls creates a solid feeling underfoot.



What the Pros Know

The front of the house, architect Adam Rolston says, was inspired by *minka*, traditional Japanese country houses whose sliding panels offer varying degrees of privacy. Rolston chose eight-inch louvers, which allow Lerner to see out, but prevent passersby from seeing in. He set them in sliding frames (with conventional glass doors behind them). To ensure that the frames—which are 12 feet wide and 8 feet high—won't warp,

Rolston's contractor used 1-by-4-inch steel tubing, encased in cedar (the same wood as the louvers themselves). The frames are hung from a heavy-duty residential track, flush-mounted into the outside soffit. "There's a little guide at the bottom that keeps the doors from wobbling around," says Rolston. Like the rest of the house, the louvers are covered in Cabot stain (in teak), which Rolston recommends reapplying every three years.



architect Adam Rolston put a lot of thought into making the house both comfortable and energy-efficient. For the exterior, he chose Zalmag, a material that consists of galvanized metal on a steel base. The components are largely recycled and 100 percent recyclable. Zalmag, which starts out silvery, weathers to a bluish gray.

Perhaps the biggest challenge was finding the right windows (a major investment for Lerner, given that he needed 68 of them). But the window wall, which faces southwest, does more than simply admit light. In winter, it allows the sun to warm the building, reducing energy costs. In summer, when the sun is high in the sky, the ten-foot overhang keeps the windows in the shade. (The trees around the house—most of them deciduous—provide additional climate control.)

Rolston chose windows by Loewen, a Canadian company with a strong environmental ethos. Not only are the windows energy-efficient, but their frames are made of Douglas fir derived from Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certified timber. Waste sawdust is used to heat the Loewen factory (with excess sold as farm animal "bedding"). The windows themselves are designed to be repairable (or even to be removed and reinstalled without damage to their housings), so that they don't end up in landfills prematurely. And, as Rolston says, given the windows' high R-values (which measure the level of insulation), "they would qualify for the Barack Obama national stimulus package rebate." ■

See Resources, last pages.

This page (clockwise from top left): The view of the house from the road; homeowner James Lerner (right) and architect Adam Rolston; one of the slatted panels, seen from inside the house. Right: The master bedroom features a bed from Cappellini's Mondo collection, an antique wheelchair (one of several pieces in the house from Historical Materialism, a shop in Hudson, New York) and soaring windows that look out into the woods.

