

# Home Coming

HONESTY AND INNOVATION BOOKEND AN UPLIFTING CHAPTER IN AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE.

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Incorporating technology and innovation, Peter Pennoyer Architects uses virtual reality and full-house models (shown) created by an in-office 3D printer to give clients a life-like experience before building begins.

A strange thing happened this past year: Nobody visited. Stripped of show and distilled to domesticity, slowly, home began to look a bit different. If you ask architecture partners Bobby McAlpine and Greg Tankersley, it began to look like a country house.

“I’ve found that people transfer more of their hearts to their second residence,” explains McAlpine. “A primary home asks, ‘How do I present myself to the world?’ Whereas the second home is all-eyes-off. It’s the truth.” Arguing the shift, the architects cite growing requests for insular amenities like spirited-away offices, accessory dwellings devoted to health and hobby, and outdoor rooms. In the same thread, they’ve observed a return to country home traditions of yesteryear in a departure from open-concept floor plans to “destination kitchens” and defined dining rooms, and in a fresh emphasis on workhorses like mud rooms and cloak rooms. For Tankersley, “beautiful, casual spaces that speak of humility” crystallize the mood switch. “I don’t think anybody finds ego attractive anymore,” he adds.

With e-design now de facto, it’s an interesting time for realizing these shifting ideals of luxury. Architect Peter Pennoyer offers a robust menu of in-house services, from virtual renderings that allow, say, finish sampling under different lighting exposures, to 3D-printed resin models that are accurate down to exterior brick count. The final tier? Virtual reality, a custom, hyper-realistic model in the cloud that clients access via headset, allowing them to “visit” and further specify their home before ground breaks. The technology has proved valuable on the back end, too. “During Covid, we’ve had meetings between our Manhattan office and our engineers in Connecticut where we’re all ‘together’ in a house in Florida, slapping Post-it notes on a virtual wall,” he laughs. “I think it challenges us to do things that are even more special for each project.”

Technology is also fighting climate change. In California, architect Mary Ann Schicketanz has been championing sustainability for decades. Net-zero principles are as integral to her practice as permits, yet looking forward, she says, will require a more radical stance. “We build the same way we did 5,000 years



ago—one stone on top of the other. We’re lucky as design professionals, not just because it’s an active market, but because it’s an exciting time of innovation in material development and production.” Energizing her outlook of late, Schicketanz has partnered with several like-minded prefab home companies on executing her designs. As opposed to trucking in materials and labor, the approach cuts time, energy and a staggering amount of construction waste. “Producing highly customized homes off-site,” she says, “is really the future.”

A home in Tennessee by Bobby McAlpine and Greg Tankersley boasts a connecting barn that doubles as a play area for grandchildren and an easily convertible party space.

In a sea of change, authenticity’s stronghold sets a reassuring undertone. Extended time at home “has taught us what serves us as a friend,” says McAlpine. “Decades ago, we were building houses that we learned to want whereas now, people are asking what the truth is about their life.” Adds Tankersley, “Clients are designing forever homes. I don’t think you can build more green than that.”