



3. Modern Modular

The freeways of America are becoming increasingly clogged by trailers hauling the component parts of instant houses; ready-made suburban sprawl. Joe Tanney and Rob Luntz, partners in New York practice Resolution: 4 Architecture, have been watching this trend with interest. 'You see more and more of this instant housing,' says Luntz. 'And it's pretty much all awful.'

The pair have built a reputation for creating some of Manhattan's most sophisticated urban spaces and they have now applied some of that sophistication to the home-delivery house. Last year, they launched Modern Modular: 'We want to create the loft apartments of modular homes; lots of long, linear, interconnected open spaces.'

The plan is simple. In construction terms, they are staying firmly within the box. In terms of design, Modern Modular is a revolution. 'We are working within the normal manufacturing constraints of modular housing,' explains Luntz. 'When we show our designs to manufacturers, they say: "Sure we can build these things. But who the hell is going to buy them?" We just tell them that we'll take care of that. I think we can hit a significant part of the market and there has been tremendous interest so far.'

The company has created a system based around simple oblong boxes, but offering almost limitless permutations. And the key selling point is price. 'We can build one of these for \$125 per sq ft compared to the \$250-\$400 you would normally pay for a custom-built house. The whole point is that we wanted these houses to be accessible to people who would love a modern, architect-designed home, but would no way be able to afford one normally.' And Modern Modular can design, drop and decorate your dream home in record time. 'You just have to get in a queue, but these places are pumping out two houses a week.' The company is building a network of manufacturers around the country who need to be within 500 miles of the delivery site to make the insta-build economical.

Tanney and Luntz offer a wider range of cladding than the average modular house builder, but still insist they can finish a project in six months compared to at least 12 for an average custom-designed new build. It is still early days for the company, but it already has four projects on the go, including second homes in North Carolina and Lincoln, Massachusetts and a Beach House in the Hamptons.

In the long-term, the partners see wider applications for their modular buildings; as social housing and as family homes that can grow with the family and the budget. As Tanney explains, the pair want to weave 'mass customization into the fabric of the American domestic suburban landscape'.

www.modern-modular.com

Photographer Julian Dufort

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British Architect Tim Pyne is also making the most of overlooked nooks and crannies with his M-house (pronounced 'mouse'). Essentially an architect-design trailer, built in a shopfitters factory in Canterbury, the M-house is suitable for a multitude of sites, including roofscapes. 'Building an M-house, you don't have to do anything clever, just do it well – it's like a large shed,' says Pyne, adding that, 'A lot of people are going to use them as offices.' Fully finished and fitted out, an M-house will set you back some £148,000 (£115,000 empty). Pyne believes that around 20 customers are waiting to take delivery this year, and is currently looking to set up in the US and Holland. 'England's proving to be quite a conservative market,' says Pyne, adding that it took James Dyson some 15 years to make his ubiquitous cleaner a commercial success.

Pyne has alternative suggestions for finding that elusive space: docks. 'I've been living on a houseboat for 12 years,' he says. 'We've looked at using docks and making the M-house float. We were in Amsterdam and they're really pushing floating environments.'

One Dutch firm with its finger firmly on the pontoon is Amsterdam's Tangram Architects. The firm has already completed the 'Waterdwellings', floating homes that make the most of the canal-filled Netherlands. 'With 382 inhabitants per sq km, the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in Western Europe,' says the firm's Indira van Klooster, 'Virtually every square millimetre is in use.' Tangram, in common with many urban practices, realises that high densities are only possible with the inclusion of supporting transport and amenities.

The market is crying out for innovative ways of making space, so let *Wallpaper** guide you through five firms hoping to make a very individual impact on the way we live today. Whether it's soaring proposals like the Skyhouse, Modern Modular's home-delivery homes, Michael Jantzen's transformable, adaptable environments, the instant buildings of Doug Garofolo or the urban interventions undertaken by Jeff Kirby's Urban Lab, these are tomorrow's instant environments. >>