

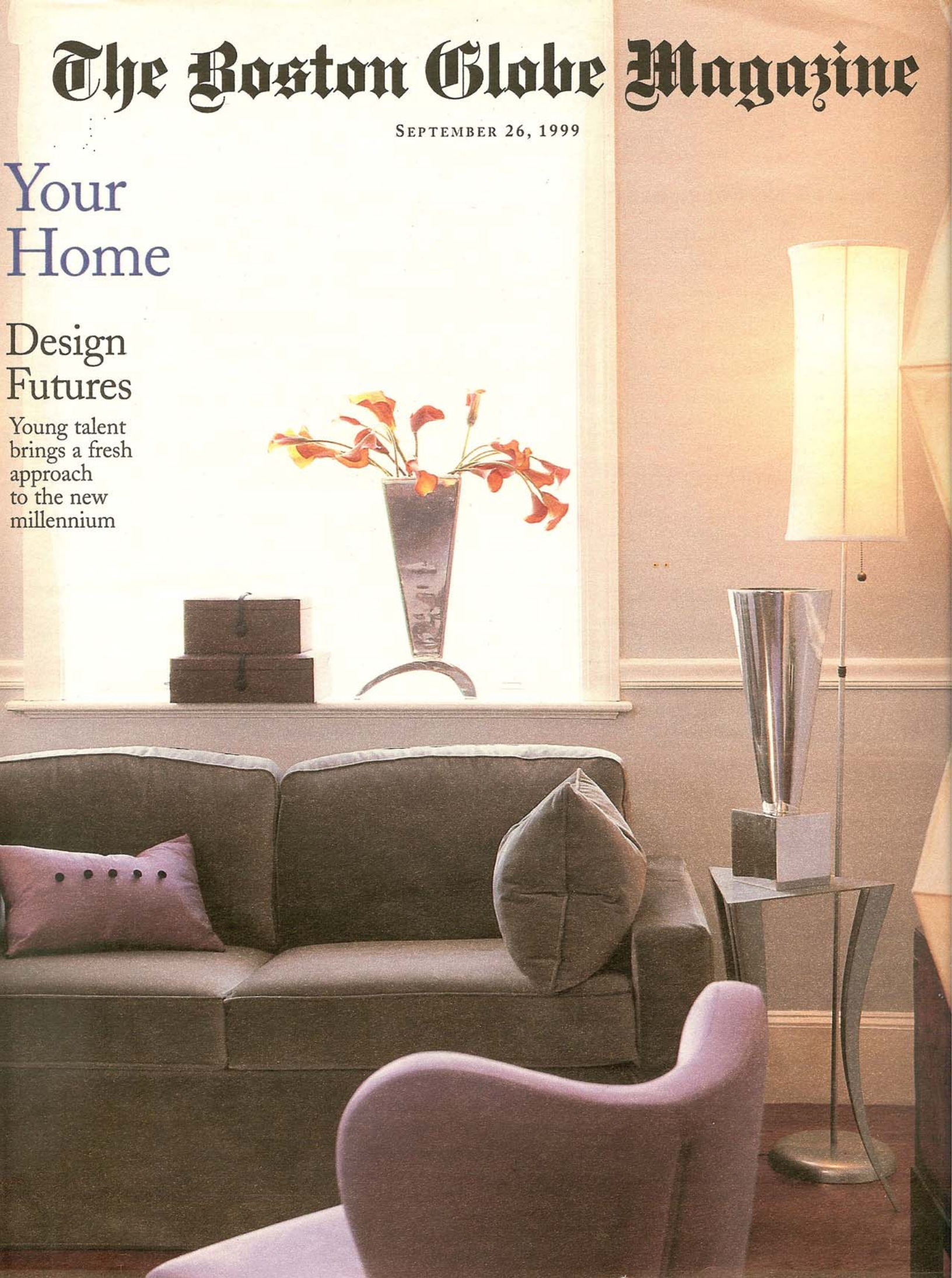
The Boston Globe Magazine

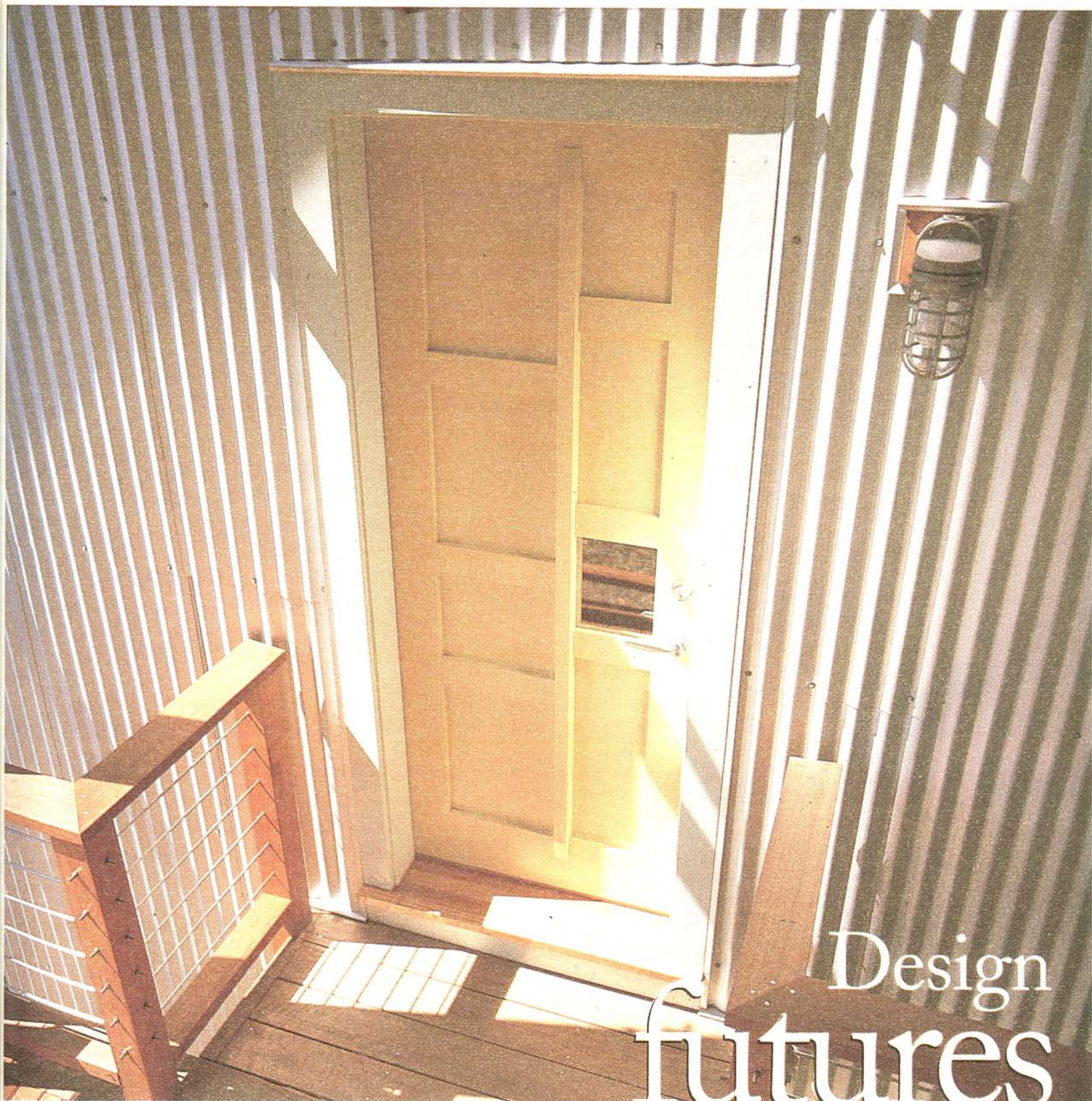
SEPTEMBER 26, 1999

Your Home

Design Futures

Young talent brings a fresh approach to the new millennium



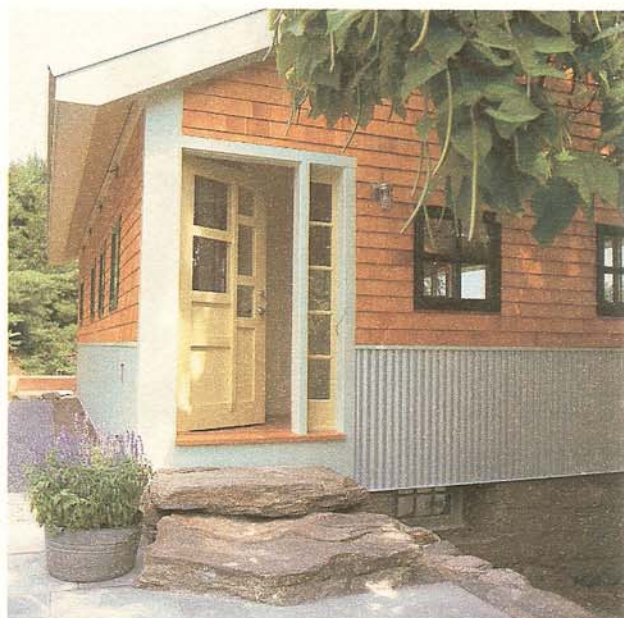


Design futures

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There is no millennial crystal ball to tell us where home design is heading in the 21st century. But we can peek into the future via the talented cadre of young up-and-coming design professionals featured in this Your Home section. Their projects run the gamut from a tiny cubical of a condo transformed by shimmering colors and city-sleek furniture to a barn converted with rugged corrugated steel and a chunky timber observation tower. Whether his or her background is in fashion, art, architecture, or interior design, each professional presents a point of view that is fresh, yet, we believe, has staying power. Herewith, we present designers to watch in the next century.





PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC ROTH

OPPOSITE: PILL'S REINTERPRETED BARN IS WRAPPED IN CORRUGATED METAL AND WOOD SHINGLES. THE OBSERVATION TOWER LOOKS LIKE A FUNKY FIRE ESCAPE. ABOVE, LEFT: THE BACK DOOR OPENS ONTO THE TOWER AND HAS JUST ONE GLASS LIGHT. RIGHT: INSIDE, THE MAIN STUDIO OCCUPIES ROUGHLY 750 SQUARE FEET OF UNINTERRUPTED OPEN SPACE BENEATH A 13-FOOT CATHEDRAL CEILING.

A working model

“Designing this studio was everything I envisioned architecture to be”

By Paula Tully Gold | “If you study hard, you will be an architect.” As a young boy growing up in Newton, David Pill read this bit of wisdom emblazoned across the bottom of a Bazooka bubble gum comic. Something about its odd specificity captured his imagination – so he kept it. Then he forgot about it. • Not until his senior year at Lake Forest College in Chicago, where he studied philosophy and art history, did the allure of architecture hit him full force. He went on to Washington University in St. Louis where, in 1987, he earned a master’s degree in architecture along with a reputation as an inventive iconoclast. “I just wasn’t that *Continued on Page 90*”

Paula Tully Gold writes about home design and architecture for several national magazines.



DAVID PILL SEES ARCHITECTURE AS INVENTIVE.

A working model

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interested in the 'beginnings' of architecture," says Pill. "Even today, I don't put a lot of weight on what has been. I feel very strongly that architecture should be inventive and reflect what comes from within you — not from the traditional, historical roots of architecture."

If David Pill sounds confident, he is. And with good reason. Degree in hand, he moved to Boston, where he worked at The Architects Collaborative for five years, then struck out on his own in 1992 at the age of 29, founding Pill Maharam Architects with his wife and fellow architect, Hillary Maharam.

Right away, the duo was named the grand winner in *Metropolitan Home's* 1992 Home of the Year competition. Their entry? A log house designed for a prime site on the shores of Sebago Lake in Maine. Soon afterward, an assignment from Nynex / Bell Atlantic blossomed into a string of commercial projects that continue to put bread and butter on the table.

Along the way, Pill has managed to exercise his artistic muscle through intriguing residential work, like the home he designed for an actress living in an exclusive Hudson River Valley village, and by dabbling in sculpture and furniture design.

But none of these accomplishments has been as satisfying as creating his own studio on the grounds of the 1711 farmhouse he shares with Maharam, their 5-year-old son, Jake, and their loyal border collie, Luna.

The farmhouse is on 1½ acres of former farmland in Winchester. Across the yard, just 90 feet from

the house, sits the studio, a once-dilapidated barn / garage. Despite an array of structural problems, Pill saw promise.

He gutted the building but kept its original footprint and overall shape while slightly elevating the roof line. What evolved is an airy, sun-saturated haven that exudes creative promise, like a freshly sharpened pencil.

The main studio occupies roughly 750 square feet of uninterrupted open space, in which Pill hones his architectural talents. Below, the same amount of space is divided into two bays; one is used for storage, the other as space for Pill to sculpt or build furni-

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ture. Inside the main studio, the ceiling rises to 13 feet at its peak, and a bank of oversized windows lines the southern wall, exposing a breathtaking view of treetop after treetop.

Though the generous dimensions and profusion of natural light give the studio undeniable warmth, it is Pill's mix of materials and textures that gives it an edgy excitement. For example, the flooring, laid over a radiant-tube heating system, is Resindek, a formaldehyde-free particle board traditionally used in warehouses. Pill's twist? He flipped the battleship-gray finished side, exposing instead the texture of the particle board, which appears soft, like cork, when viewed as an unbroken ex-

panse.

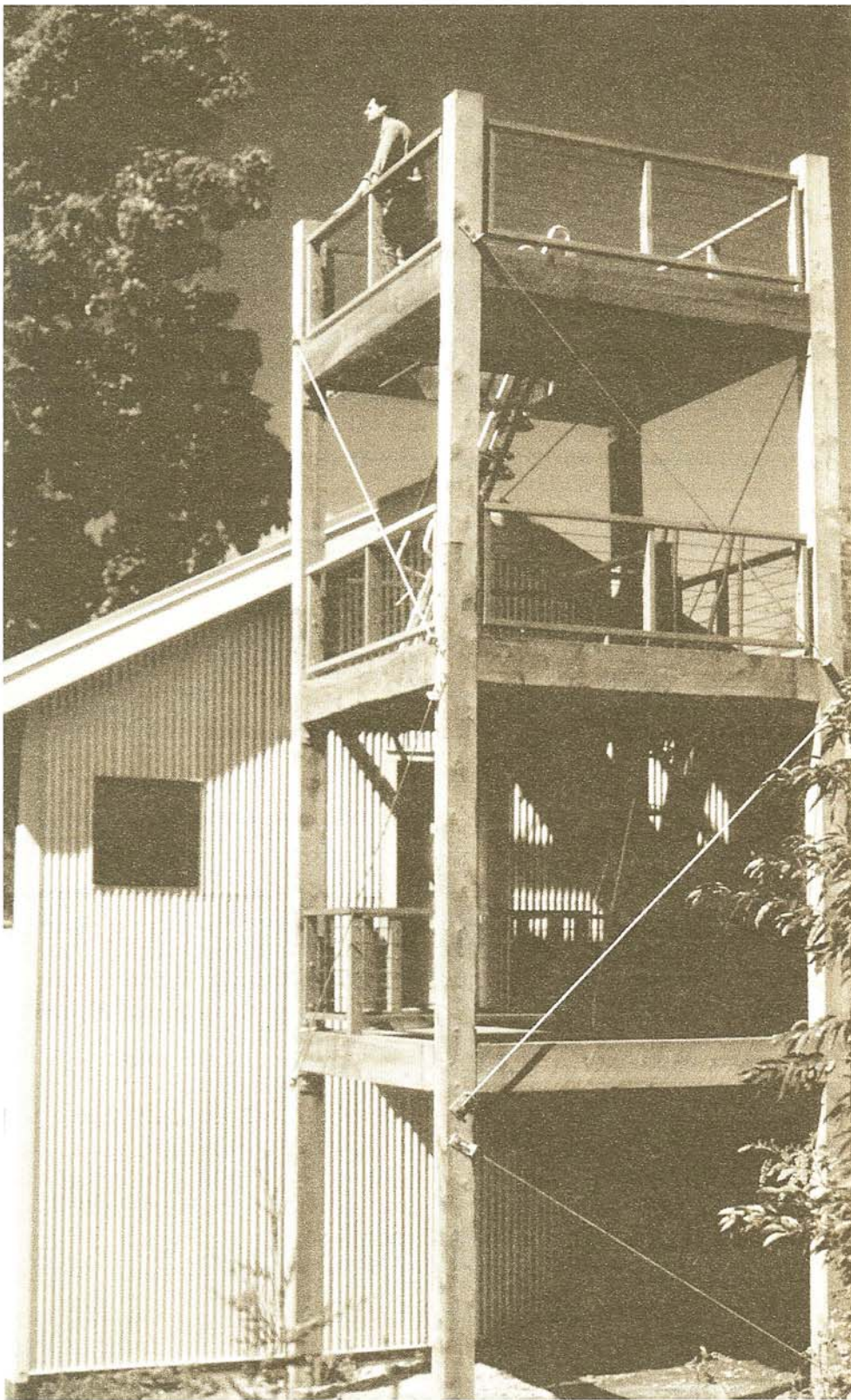
Custom-built cabinetry, crafted from birch and maple, then topped in slate, radiates the crisp order of a chemistry lab. Overhead, four exposed tie rods hold the building together, but they look more like sculpture than structural necessity. Above the tie rods, crisscrossing timber collar ties add visual punch and, says Pill, "bring back an element of the barn."

Pill grappled with how to incorporate a bathroom and kitchenette without disrupting the studio's open floor plan. His solution is a wall in the shape of a "J." The hook of the J holds the kitchenette, while the stem conceals a powder room and storage closet. "At first, I didn't want to put that wall in, but now I think it is central to the feeling of this space. It's more of a sculptural form than a functional wall," says Pill.

Bathed in a rich butter-cream yellow, the wall is one of just three spots of vivid color in the studio. The other two are the doors designed by Pill and built by Kevin Whitney of Thomas Buckborough and Associates, the Concord firm that handled the construction.

Like the tie rods, the doors move beyond function and into the realm of art. Mondrian-like in feel *sans* the primary colors, they are divided into non-symmetrical geometrical panels, some of which are windows. Both are painted a shade of green that borders on chartreuse, but the front door contains five windows while the back door has just one, made even more unorthodox by its positioning next to the door knob.

The back door opens onto an observation tower that Pill added to the building. Made of rough-



A TOWER OF ROUGH-HEWN TIMBERS AT THE REAR OF THE BARN PROVIDES VIEWS OF BOSTON.

hewn timbers and resembling a funky fire escape, the tower houses two observation platforms, the higher of which offers a sweeping view of Boston.

It's also a terrific spot for Pill to set up his telescope and sink into his love

of astronomy. Though the tower rises approximately 25 feet, only 3 feet of the tower pops above the roof line, because the entire structure is set snugly into a gentle slope.

The materials Pill chose give the renovated barn's ex-

terior a farlike feel. The lower third of the building is wrapped in corrugated metal, serving as an industrial-strength wainscoting. Pill finished the remaining exterior in natural shingles similar to those used on the original building. The roof,

too, is crafted of corrugated metal.

The landscaping, most of which was designed by Maharam, who no longer practices architecture, helps the building recede naturally into its pastoral surroundings, as does some top-notch masonry by Rick Pierce of R. L. Pierce of Hudson. Stone steps wind up the slope to a bluestone patio, out of which rise three huge fieldstone slabs casually stacked as stairs to the front door.

The entire structure sits nestled under the shade of a magnificent old catalpa tree that cradles Jake's treehouse and obscures the building from view during the summer months.

"Designing this studio was everything I envisioned architecture to be when I was in school," says Pill. "If I did it all over again, I don't think I would change a thing."

As for that prophetic Bazooka comic? "Weird, isn't it?" says Pill with a laugh. "What's even stranger is that I kept it. . . . I should probably frame it or something." □

RESOURCES

The general contractor for the renovation of David Pill's barn was Kevin Whitney of Thomas Buckborough and Associates of Concord. Stainless-steel rods are from Tri Pyramid Structures Inc. of Westford. Slate is from Vermont Structural Slate in Fair Haven, Vermont, and was installed by A & S Installations of Revere. R. L. Pierce of Hudson did all of the stone work.

In the photo of the interior of the studio on Page 57, the armchair and side table are from Machine Age of Boston, and the stackable storage unit was custom designed by Studio FKia of Boston.