

* The Guide to Modern Design

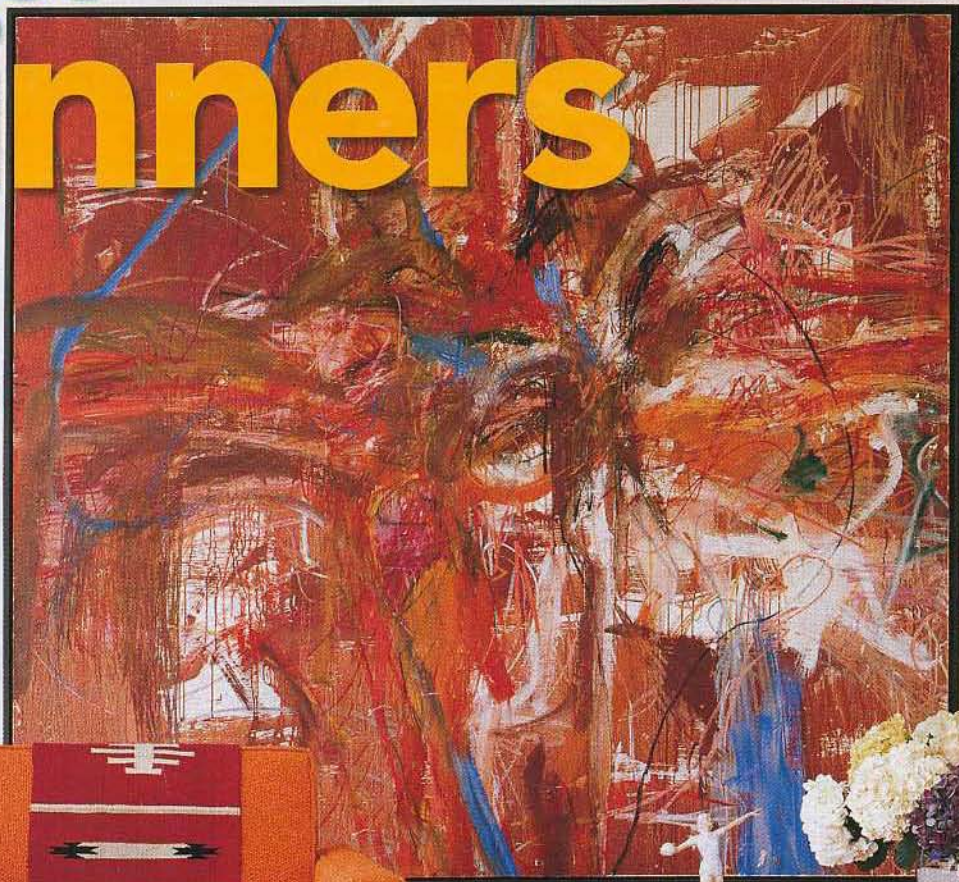
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PANDORA'S

DESPITE A HELLISH BUILDING TRIAL BY FIRE, THIS STYLISHLY CUSTOMIZED MODULAR HOME IS HEAVENLY.



BOX



Quincy rests atop a Tibetan rug in the living room of Andy and Michael Smull's home in Annapolis. Right (from top): An ipe-wood walkway with radiant heat leads to the front entrance; "team members" Jack FitzSimmonds (carpenter-cabinetmaker), Andy Smull, John Del Sesto (contractor) and family friend Matthew Girard.





An Achille Castiglioni pendant light fixture from Flos adds a contemporary twist to the dining room's eclectic mix. A snake-shaped folk art birdhouse is from the Adirondacks; the table was fabricated from two slabs of West African bubinga wood (the flooring is bamboo). Opposite: The Bulthaup kitchen contains a Kohler sink and appliances by Miele, Asko, Sub-Zero and Wolfe.

Andy & Michael Smull, Annapolis, MD When they honeymooned in Annapolis 33 years ago, Andy and Michael Smull fantasized about a home on the Chesapeake Bay, an idea that was well beyond their means. Years later the bay view crept back into their heads, despite daunting real estate reality. So when an agent told them that an affordable property was available, Andy rushed to the scene. And, yes, it was a crime.

The skinny one-acre lot held two derelict shacks. "It looked liked no one had loved it ever," recalls Andy (a successful dog photographer). But when she caught the backyard view of 336

acres of protected parkland across Harness Creek, a tributary of the Chesapeake, she saw only potential. The couple moved in and made do until inevitable deterioration forced an upgrade.

While considering architects to realize her bayside dream, Andy came across an article on custom modular housing. She liked the idea and the photograph in the magazine, so she called the architects, New York-based Robert Luntz and Joseph Tanney of Resolution: 4 Architecture.

Luntz and Tanney quickly perfected a plan for Camp Smull, as the house is now known. But client-based custom modular



housing is still in its early stages of perfection, and actually getting the six modules built to the architects' specifications proved to be both costly and time consuming. To be fair, Tanney notes, the process has gotten faster and simpler with each new project, but the Smulls' pioneering effort did prove difficult.

Andy and Michael (a consultant for people with disabilities) razed their old home and moved into an 850-square-foot converted garage with their three dogs and cat, Squeeky, to wait for their house. They waited a year. When the modules finally arrived they came with bent trim, off-square construction and

faulty wiring. "All I saw at this point were dollar signs," recalls Andy, who credits contractor John Del Sesto with rescuing the house.

Del Sesto and his team worked assiduously to rebuild the delivered pieces to match the design. Andy provided coffee and pizza—even threw birthday fetes for the crew. Still, construction was no party. In the end, the 2,500-square-foot home cost them over \$1 million, more than double their budget.

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WRITTEN BY MEGAN O'NEILL.**



The decks at the back of the house look out on Harness Creek. The cement-board chimney connects to three fireplaces, including the outdoor wood-burning one on the top floor. *Opposite:* Bruiser (left) and Beast get frisky with Andy next to furniture from Ikea. The square chimney vents were custom-made by Carter Fabrications.

up Smull is finally finished exactly as Andy envisioned it. She has signed off on every wood, fixture and nail, and she is filled with the outcome.

The ground level of the home, which contains the master bedroom, has concrete floors with radiant heat and a little private nook to complete with an outdoor shower. One flight up, the kitchen, dining room and living room flow seamlessly into one another, making "living and entertaining in the house a pleasure." The third floor holds an entertainment room, bathroom and Michael's office and adjacent "cigar deck."

Andy credits Tanney and Luntz with an inspired design, but she is especially grateful to Del Sesto. "The story of this house is really the story of a love of a client for a contractor and a contractor for a client," she says.

Having taken a one-year hiatus from her career to be on-site for the construction of Camp Smull, Andy proudly considers it her greatest personal achievement. "It was an incredible experience for me," she says. "That year of my life was a gift—the good, the bad and the ugly."

In hindsight, Andy laughs about their struggle to build a home tailored to their lives—after all, camp is supposed to be fun. But camp is also about bonding and lifelong friendships. As far as Andy is concerned, getting to know the people who made this house her home is what she considers the biggest gift. "The guys still come by; they are family now," she says. "It has been a magnificent adventure, but if I had to do it all over again, I'd build it from stick." ❁

See Resources, last pages.

