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GREEN BUILDING & DESIGN
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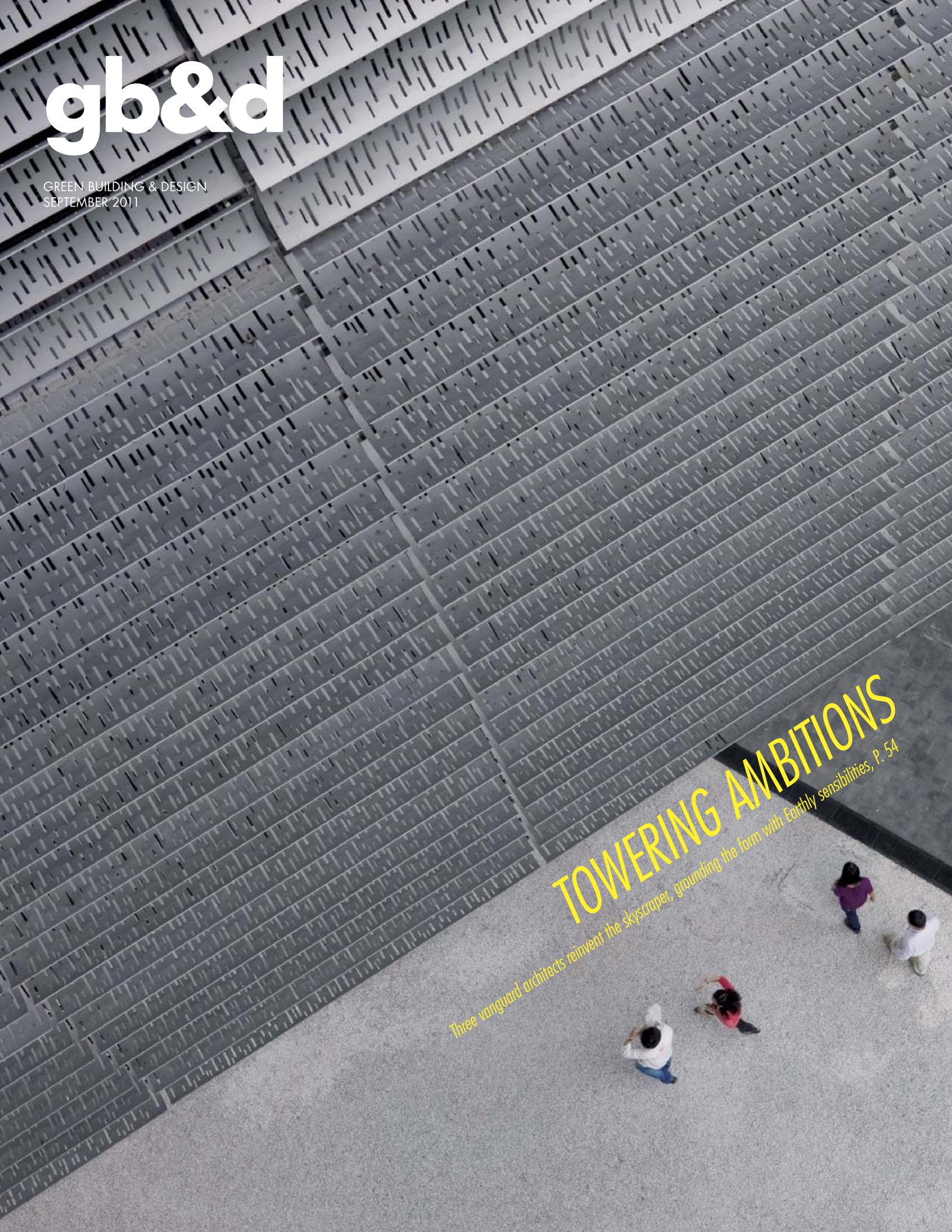


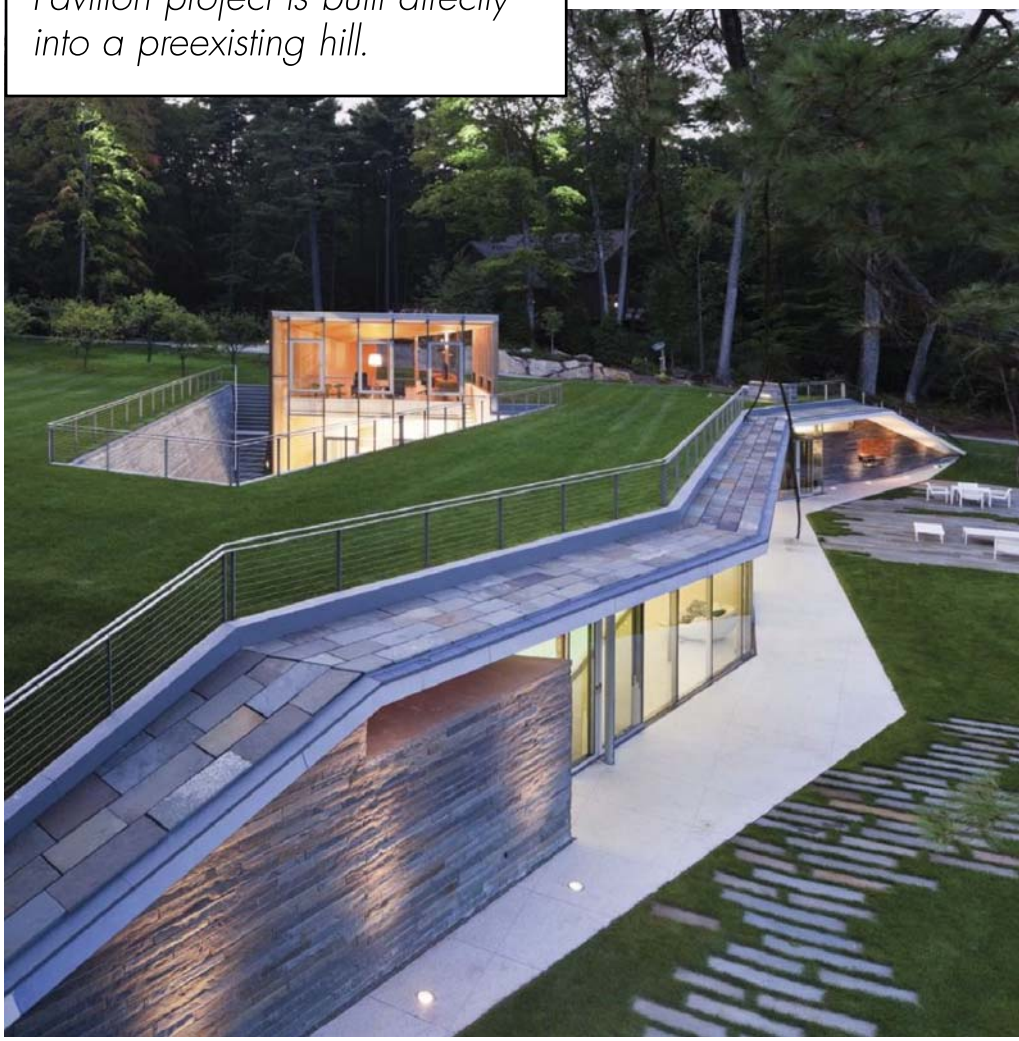
TOWERING AMBITIONS

Three vanguard architects reinvent the skyscraper, grounding the form with Earthly sensibilities, *P. 54*

Building a Better Way to Build

Peter Gluck and Partners, Architects reprises its role as a pioneer as it blurs the line between architect and builder

Peter Gluck and Partners' Pool Pavilion project is built directly into a preexisting hill.



A lot happened in the progressive movement of the 1960s. John F. Kennedy was elected president. Martin Luther King Jr. made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Astronauts landed on the moon. And nearly half a million people descended on Woodstock, New York, for the nation's most famous rock concert. Also, Peter Gluck discovered architecture.

"I graduated from the Yale School of Architecture in 1965—it was a very optimistic period," says Gluck, whose firm, New York-based Peter Gluck and Partners, Architects, is known for its design-build approach. Inspired by the ethos of his time—peace, love, and community—Gluck spent his weekends during school building houses on Long Island with his classmates. This on-the-job tradition was institutionalized by the Yale School of Architecture in 1967, when it established the mandatory First Year Building Project requiring all first-year architecture students to both design and build a structure.

It was that experience that inspired Gluck to start his firm in 1972. "One of the things that helped to form my practice was the fact that in the 1960s there was a culture of getting things done," Gluck says. "We were young and enthusiastic, and we felt we would learn more by doing things than we would by working in an office."

Peter Gluck helped initiate the design-build culture with his classmate David Sellers in the 1960s, which later inspired the Yale School of Architecture's First Year Building Project, which requires all incoming architecture students to design and build their own projects.

His hands-on approach to architecture evolved further in 1973 and 1974, when Gluck spent two years designing for a large construction firm in Japan, where the common practice is for builders to handle virtually every aspect of their projects. "Japanese construction firms both design and build," Gluck says. "Here, the process has become completely Balkanized. There are silos of people who take care of different parts of the project, and the construction process has become a gigantic mess because of it."

Gluck wasn't interested in messes. A modernist, he was interested in efficiency, and in 1986 he had an epiphany. Since 1972, his firm had designed a wealth of diverse projects, including private residences, hotels, and corporate headquarters. Its latest project, however, was an addition on a Connecticut home that was originally designed by famed German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

"We drew the designs, and the client bid it out to a contractor, but it was clear the contractor simply couldn't build it," Gluck says. "In order to protect myself, I actually had my people on the site doing all the construction work. Not the physical work but all the supervising. I spent all the time a contractor would spend without getting any of the rewards a contractor was paid. So I thought to myself, 'Something's wrong here.'"

On his next project, Gluck presented his client with an unusual proposition. "I went to the owner and said, 'Listen, I can build this

In 1992, Peter Gluck and Partners expanded its practice to have architects handling construction management of the firm's designs on-site.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Pool Pavilion by Peter Gluck and Partners was conceived as a rift in the landscape. Less a building than an earth form, the structure houses almost all its amenities below ground.

THIS PAGE: The Floating Box House includes one solid section hovering over a ground-floor section that is composed almost entirely of glass and offers views of the Austin, TX, skyline at night. In the yard, the skylights and outdoor pool glow, steps lead down to the sunken courtyard and art gallery, and the entire house is surrounded by a wealth of Texas live oaks.
OPPOSITE PAGE: The requisite bulk of the Cascade House, due to its many amenities (a lap pool, a spa, and a basketball court) and guest suites, is hidden beneath landscaped green-roof terraces cascading down the bluff to the lake.

building,'" he says. "I said, 'I know more about building than most of the contractors we work with. And I know much more about the building I've just designed than they do. So how about I just build it?' That was the beginning, and we've been building our buildings ever since."

His commitment to design-build architecture inspired Gluck to found ARCS Construction Services in 1992. ARCS uses the same architects who design the project in the office, who then go out on-site to supervise and ensure the built results. "Because of the huge amount of litigation, architects have been told they should limit their role in the construction process," Gluck says. "As a result, contractors have taken over, and architects have become marginalized. The contractor will hire an architect in the same way he'll hire a plumber. What we do is the opposite. We do design-build projects that are architect-led. It's the way it used to be done; there wasn't always this distinction between those who design and those who build."

In the spirit of the decade that launched his career, Gluck rebels against the architectural establishment. The result: his buildings are more affordable and also more sustainable. "There's so much waste in a normal construction job, it's unbelievable," Gluck says. "Because we both design and build our buildings, our cost savings are 30, 40, sometimes 50 percent. It's important to us that our clients get the most for their money. So we're very interested in sustainability. It's deeply embedded in our design principles."

In fact, Gluck is committed to smart environmental designs that are appropriate to each client's requirements and budget. Current projects include candidates for LEED Silver or Gold certification, and common strategies of Gluck's buildings include daylighting, burying the bulk of the building mass to reduce heating and cooling loads, geothermal energy, and green roofs.

Peter Gluck and Partners takes an architect-led design-build approach to architecture.

PHOTOS: ©Paul Warchol Photography.

Many of Gluck's buildings are socially responsible too. One of his most noted projects, for instance, is The East Harlem School in New York City, which is an independent inner-city school that provides affordable, high-quality education for low-income families. "I'm a modernist, and one of the aspects of modernism is social impact—trying to make things better for mankind," Gluck says. "So, we do a lot of not-for-profit work in the inner city. The design-build process allows us to do that because we can build inexpensively."

Low-cost doesn't mean low-quality, however. No matter what the project, Gluck's goal is always marrying cost-effective solutions with innovative design and careful construction. "We're trying to push the profession to accept and recognize the power of architect-led design-build," he says. "We're trying to improve the role of the architect and hopefully build better environments in the process."
—Matt Alderton

All of Peter Gluck and Partners' projects employ sustainable strategies tailored to each client's requirements and budget, and several are current candidates for LEED Gold and Silver certification.

A good example of the firm's sustainable work is Gluck's Pool Pavilion project, a recreational facility that's part of a family compound on New York's Lake George. The structure's built into a preexisting hill and conceals a 75-foot lap pool, a sauna, a steam room, a kitchen, and a theater below its sod-covered roof, which literally blends into the land around it, thus preserving the site and allowing the building to take advantage of latent ground heat. The building also incorporates active geothermal heating and cooling to reduce overall operating costs.

Gluck's Cascade House project in Winnetka, Illinois, is similar. Buried within a bluff on Lake Michigan, the house was constructed on top of geothermal heat wells and features a swimming pool, a spa, and a basketball court—none of which is visible from above because most of the home's enormous footprint unfolds below the surface on the side of the bluff, mitigating its impact on the site.