

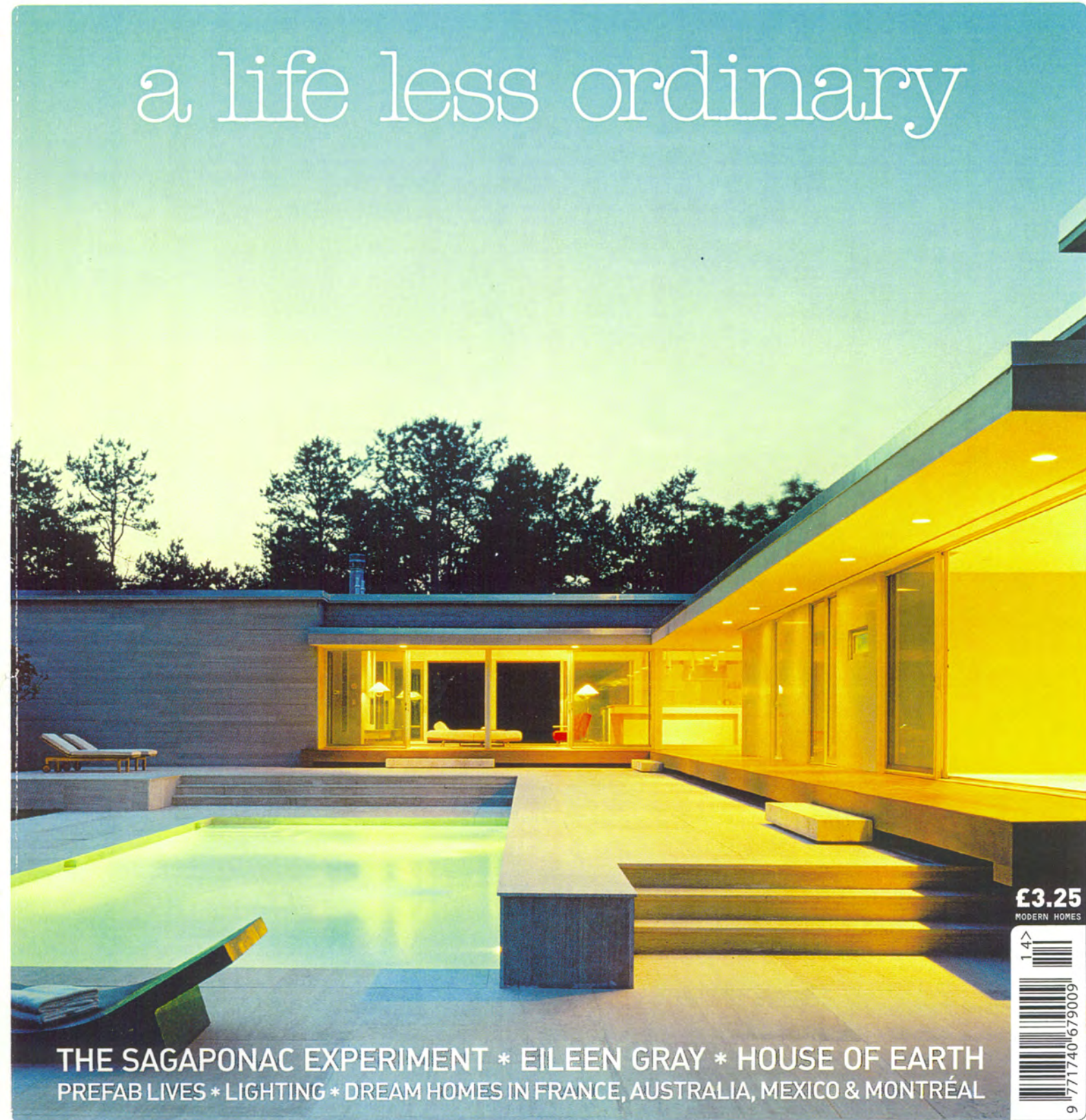
THE BEST HOMES, INTERIORS & DESIGN

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spaces

the look for your lifestyle

a life less ordinary



THE SAGAPONAC EXPERIMENT * EILEEN GRAY * HOUSE OF EARTH
PREFAB LIVES * LIGHTING * DREAM HOMES IN FRANCE, AUSTRALIA, MEXICO & MONTRÉAL

£3.25
MODERN HOMES



A photograph of a modern, single-story house at dusk. The house features large glass windows and a flat roof. The interior is warmly lit, and the exterior is illuminated by recessed lighting. A swimming pool is in the foreground, with a lounge chair and a stack of towels nearby. The background is filled with tall pine trees.

a life less

ordinary

At best, it seems an unlikely location. The house is located on wooded land in the middle of potato fields between the fashionable East and South Hampton's on Long Island, New York. But this is where architects Hariri & Hariri have made their mark on a landscape which is already very special.

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In complete contrast to the other oversized showcase houses, they decided to build one composed of two simple rectangular volumes forming a simple L-shape, but with the idea of forming a stage.



Developer Coco Brown and architects Gisue Hariri and Thierry Pfister

Sagaponac. It may not sound particularly special but this is the name of a totally unique housing development in one of America's most sought-after and influential areas. Ordinary, it is not. When developer Coco Brown bought the 150-acre site in 1991, he immediately turned it into 35 lots. The original owners had planned a much more densely built-up housing development. Luckily it failed. Brown decided he was going to do something quite out of the ordinary.

When Brown began this project in 1994, it was with the help of his architect friend Richard Meier. For starters, he decided to turn this piece of real estate into an architect's dreamscape. He asked some of the world's top architects to design homes for the site. When we say, renowned, we mean exactly that. Many are either winners of or have been short listed for many of the world's top architectural awards such as the Pritzker Prize, the Nobel Prize of architecture. The architects invited to participate included, Shigeru Ban, Sir Richard Rogers, Henry Cobb, and Zaha Hadid, plus the Hariri sisters, Gisue and Mojgan.

Apart from enticing an extremely prestigious list of architects to work for him, Brown then managed to get them to work for low fees. He accomplished this remarkable feat of magic by tempting them with the idea that not many developments these days have any major architectural input. Gisue Hariri explains that, "This was very exciting because looking to the future

'It isn't often that you get to design a house with absolutely no restraints, no one telling you what they want or, for that matter, what they don't want.'

we could then show developers that good architects are a good investment, and that building houses like these can be very profitable, as well as aesthetically rather successful.'

Each architect received a particular assignment. The Hariri sisters immediately began planning what they would do. 'It was very personal and very unusual. It isn't often that you get to design a house with absolutely no restraints, no one telling you what they want or, for that matter, what they don't want. We had carte blanche to design whatever we wanted.' This is not to say that they didn't realize that it would have to appeal to many different people. It was, after all, a residential area and the house would eventually be lived in. 'We totally relied on our own artistic vision and experience but it was still quite a challenge.'

They first began by looking at the past history of the Hamptons. During its heyday in the 20s and 30s, it was highly fashionable among artists, writers, and painters as a residential area. Living there generally meant that you were into a very flamboyant lifestyle. That is not to say that it wasn't also an area where one went to see, as well as be seen. Sailing, spending time on the beach, entertaining, and more than a touch of voyeurism were all part and parcel of its inhabitants and guests. 'It was a place to people-watch; celebrities went there to holiday and the area enjoyed a reputation as quite a sexy place to be.'





'Of all the places I have designed, this one is so special that I would have loved to have actually lived in it. Indeed, all the world is a stage in the case of this house.'

In complete contrast to the oversized showcase houses that others were designing, the sisters decided to build a house composed of two simple rectangular volumes. The result is in the form of an L-shape but with the idea of forming a stage. The centre is the main living areas with a swimming pool, terraces, and a covered porch with a shower. This space is visible from all other parts of the house and even, at times, easily on show to the neighbours. This was intended, in fact, to become a stage for display. The private pool, in this case, is an area that acts similar to a beach scenario. 'But if you decide you actually want some privacy, or if you are away,' points out Gisue, 'you can pull down the metal shutters mounted on the exterior walls.'

Actually, the sisters were inspired by one of their favourite Giacometti sculptures; his 'Figure in a Box between Two Boxes which are Houses.' This sculpture depicts a figure standing in a void between two rectangular shapes. This is clearly the source of the inspiration for the Hiriri's.

The house is built above the ground so it appears to hover and float on air. It has a ramp to the main entrance. The house has no doors or windows in the usual sense. What it does have however is huge eight-foot glass panels which cleverly make the exterior part of the interior. The open plan kitchen-cum-living area leads into the master bedroom and

Only time will tell if this will change the way developers look at their projects in the future. They serve very well as a showcase for some of the best modernist buildings being built today.

bathroom. The room is dominated by the mammoth glass panels. This has the effect of keeping the space very light. Everything is designed to be translucent with glass tiles, glass walls, and even translucent storage cupboards.

The other leg of the house has a simple sitting room which overlooks the pool, plus several guest rooms and a library. All the rooms look out onto the terrace and patio. 'This is where a great deal of the 'action' takes place. The house is meant to be lived in from the inside out. We are now building an artist's studio which will really provide the finishing touch and complete it.'

The Hariri's have now become fast friends with the owners. They had lots of ideas about the type of house they wanted before they even saw this one. It turns out that this house fits all of their criteria. Both sisters are very happy with their client's feelings about the design because 'it is so special to us. We wanted the people who eventually lived there to enjoy our dream and to find a space which fitted perfectly into their personal lifestyle.'

Gisue has designed many houses in her career but she adds 'Of all the places I have designed, this one is so special that I would have loved to have actually lived in it myself. That's really something for an architect to say, since we are not easy to please. But this time, it was different.'

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