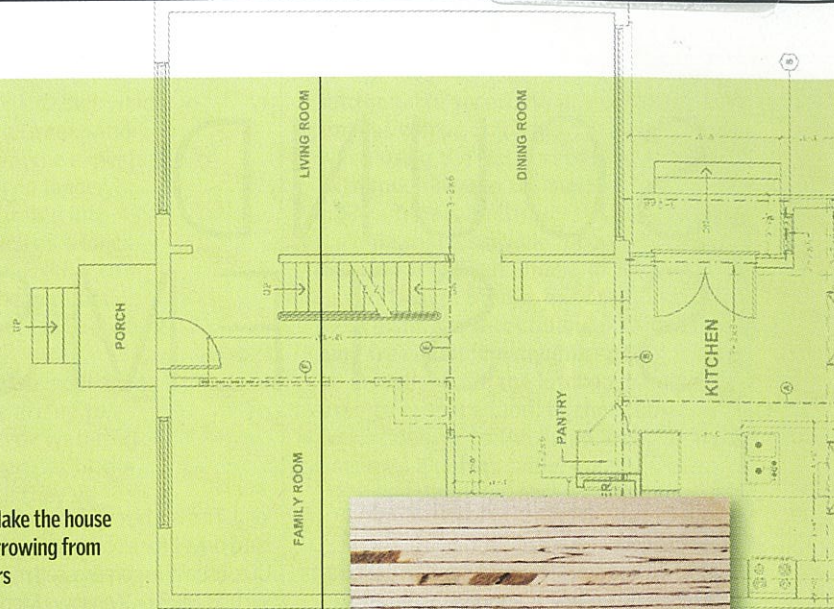


FUTURE DESIGN



SPACE RACE Make the house feel bigger by borrowing from the great outdoors

is one that involves less building in a given space. Parts of a house can be made in a factory, where quality and costs are controlled. There's much less wastage in a factory; prefabrication is the way of the future."

With the emphasis still on sustainable design, architects will continue to design innovative houses using both face and structural brick in combination with high-tech lightweight materials such as rendered polystyrene and Sycon, a cladding product launched late last year by James Hardie and 20 years in the making.

Altering the molecular structure of materials from static to dynamic is expected to be mainstream by 2020. The best examples of this will be phase-shifting glass, which will have the ability to change from transparent to translucent as the need for privacy arises, and climate-adaptable polymer wall lining, which will absorb room warmth from the sun during the day and re-radiates the heat into the room at night. This will make a vast difference to the way ordinary materials are used.

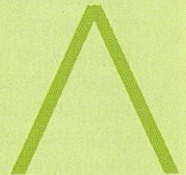
Coming, too, are intelligent textiles; woollen fabric interwoven with metal fibres that conduct electricity is just one example. The fabric can turn the arm of your sofa into a TV remote, signal your blinds to open when the sun comes up, even warm your socks.

Customers will go online with their architect or builder to choose components that suit their lifestyle. His and her kitchen benches, perhaps? Or perhaps a personalised bathroom arrangement that caters to his preference for a huge shower and her liking for privacy.

Simonds Homes recently launched what it claimed was Australia's first online home-creation website on the domestic market. Their Fusion program allows home buyers to build their house on screen, mixing and matching floor plans from various options,



TREE HOUSES Solid timber Eco-Core panels come from ecologically accredited plantations



deciding how many bedrooms work best, experimenting with living spaces, formal areas and facades before committing to a final design. It also allows the homeowner to keep track of the budget.

The smart house will be environmentally efficient and low maintenance, and will incorporate modular, recyclable components that can be extended, repaired or even moved to a different site. You'll be able to specify the number and nature of the rooms, as well as how they are placed. It will mean that the house can be disassembled as lifestyles change. It can grow, then contract, from full house to empty nest.

"Lifestyle" has been occupying the minds of both object and technology design buffs everywhere. And the environment is on everyone's minds. Finalists in next month's Australian Design Awards include a waterless urinal, a ceramic kettle, a 100% recyclable PET ceiling tile, and a rainwater filter.

Ideas are colliding; living will soon be closer to the Jetsons than we could ever have envisioned. — ROSE-MARIE HILLIER

AUSTRALIANS HAVE TECHNO-LUST

— we want the latest gadgets, the newest model, and bragging rights to the best digi systems, yet our biggest lifetime purchase, the family home, is built essentially the same way as it was nearly a century ago.

Building houses remains a labour-intensive cottage industry. We build in a rectangle; materials, such as bricks and tiles, are rectangles; and rectangular rooms are the norm. But times are changing. Architecture is looking into the future, and the future is prefabrication and "clever design" that turns on quality space, where, for example, you make a house feel bigger by "borrowing" space from outdoors and choosing building materials suited to climate and location.

According to architect Caroline Pidcock, president of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council and member of the Climate Change Coalition Team: "Good design