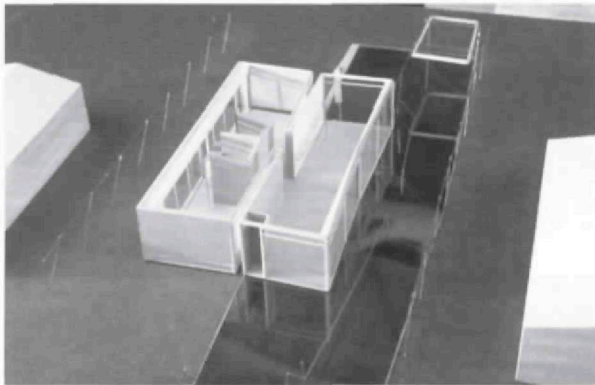


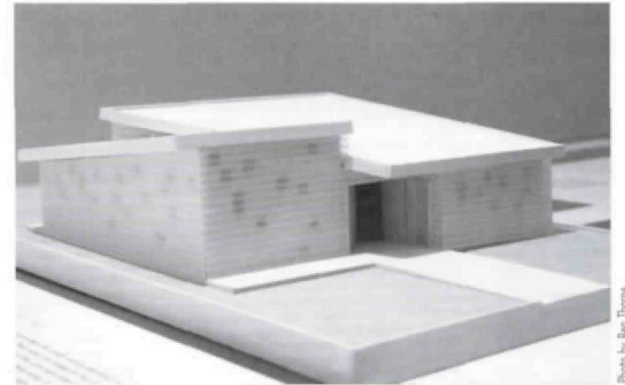
# AFFORDABLE IMAGINATION



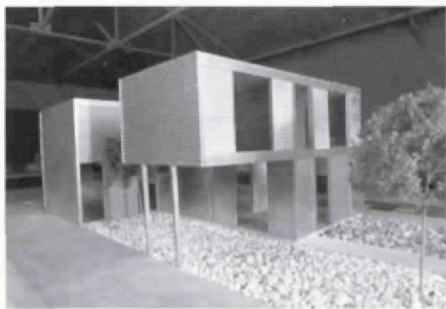
*Glass House @ Two Degrees*, by Michael Bell.



*Domestic Topographic Package*, by Keith Krumewiede with Carol Treadwell.



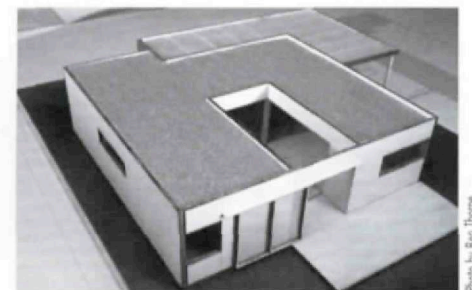
*Hopscotch Trot*, by David Brown with Bert Samples.



Untitled, by Stanley Saitowitz with Federico Devera.



*16 Houses: Owning a House in the City*, installation at DiverseWorks, November 6 through December 19, 1998.



*Variable House*, by Sze Tsung Leong and Judy Chung with Hos San Chang.

Early last year, Mardie Oakes, who works as project manager for the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation, happened to run into an old friend from her days as a student at the Rice University School of Architecture. That friend was Michael Bell, who had gone on to teach architecture at Rice, and as the two caught each other up on what had been happening in their lives, they found they shared a common concern — how to bring architecture and good design to affordable housing.

The results of that chance meeting ended up on display last November and December at DiverseWorks as *16 Houses: Owning a House in the City*. Bell, with the backing of the Fifth Ward CRC, the Rice School of Architecture, and DiverseWorks, commissioned 16 architects to design single family dwellings that would fit into Houston's Fifth Ward. As a starting point, they were given the budget breakdown of a typical Fifth Ward, mid-range house of approximately 1,100 square feet and told to keep their costs to around \$65,000 (the price of one of the Fifth Ward CRC's more popular housing types). The house would have to fit on a 50 by 100 foot lot and conform to Fifth Ward setback regulations. But beyond that, the architects were allowed to let their imaginations run free.

According to Oakes, when deciding who to ask to participate, an attempt was made to get a mix of young and old, established and upcoming, local and national architects. In some cases, the

architects collaborated with artists, which added to *16 Houses'* visual appeal, if not always the practicality of the designs. Still, the show presented an intriguing selection of structures that ranged from variations on the conventional — such as William Williams and Archie Pizzini's *Flip Flop House*, which added a profusion of narrow windows to a basically standard floor plan — to something more unusual, such as Mark Wamble and Dawn Finley's *Binderhouse*, in which modular sections are clipped together to create what looks like a futuristic trailer, and Lars Lerup's *The House That Roared*, which uses the notion of a river running through the house to create a fluid flow of space.

*16 Houses* proved to be a popular show, says DiverseWorks director Emily Todd, and not only with the gallery's regular crowd. Residents of the Fifth Ward came by not just out of artistic interest, but to see what might eventually pop up in their neighborhood. By the end of January, the board of the Fifth Ward CRC was to have chosen six out of the 16 designs for construction. A proposal has been submitted to a lending institution for \$75,000 to fund a site superintendent to oversee the work, though any actual building would have to wait on buyers for the houses. Mardie Oakes, though, is confident that by year's end the houses will be, if not all completed, at least started.

Meanwhile, *16 Houses* is moving to Austin, where it will be on display at the University of Texas School of Architecture through February. Mitchell J. Shields

# 16 HOUSES