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**E**ven as he sat on the floor expressing his earliest architectural visions, Paul Macht was probably wondering whether or not his LEGO set was biodegradable. The environmentally sensitive architect has carved out a niche in a genre he calls “natural modernism.”

Think visually stunning meets ecologically correct. “Our area of emphasis attracts ‘green’ clients who tend to desire a strong connection to the landscape. They are interested, for example, in houses that feature lots of glass, as well as passive solar energy

panels, which can provide passive solar heat gain.” Though the look may be simple and clean, the mechanics are anything but. “We’re talking about state-of-the-art technology to maintain maximal indoor air quality as well as the perfect balance of heat exchange between the interior and exterior,” explains Macht, who is part architect, part physicist. “To become a better designer, it’s important to really understand how it all works.”

It is a science that is constantly evolving, says Macht, who is excited about a new eco-innovation that keeps heat—and money—from going down the drain. “The newest little gimmicky thing is reclaiming heat from hot water that goes down the shower drain,” he explains. “It’s easy and inexpensive to include in new construction and not impossible to add later.”

Not new, but still sexy to green designers: a roof that is basically landscaped like your lawn. “Sod roofs provide added insulation and also help curb flooding problems,”

says Macht. “Additionally there is the benefit of photosynthesis which contributes to carbon neutrality.” Simply put, for those of us who are not physicists, this means we walk softly and keep our footprint on the eco-scape to a minimum.

**SUSTAINABLE FANTASY**

Look for Macht’s dream house in the city or the country...not in between. All glass, with a southern exposure and view of a fabulous garden, this modern masterpiece will approach zero energy, which means input and output will be perfectly balanced. Macht would have a walk-out deck off the master bedroom, a shower with no door, ventilation that would facilitate maximum fresh air and heat exchange, and just one other detail: total control over both the design and building process.

“Ideally we would be involved from start to finish to insure a result that is truly green and sustainable,” sighs the wishful Macht. “Every

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decision has energy and global warming implications. It’s not just about the energy the house actually uses; it’s also about the energy used to make the house. The health of the occupants as well as the planet has to do with every aspect of the building process.”

**TRICK OF THE TRADE**

Keep an open mind, urges Macht. If both client and architect bring a strong agenda to the table, creativity can be stifled. “Go with the flow and be open to learn as you go through the process,” he advises. “Try not to cling to ideas that are without depth. Instead constantly reevaluate what is important. Think about how you want it to feel as opposed to how you want it to look.” Often the right path is very different from the original vision, says Macht, who encourages clients to pay more attention to specific function rather than size. “With construction costs rising as we speak, less can be more,” he notes. Instead of cheapening a larger space, he says, it may be wiser to sacrifice square footage and build a house that includes all the bells and whistles relevant to your specific lifestyle.



Home is where the design sense is, Paul Macht shows off his custom-built Jenkintown home.