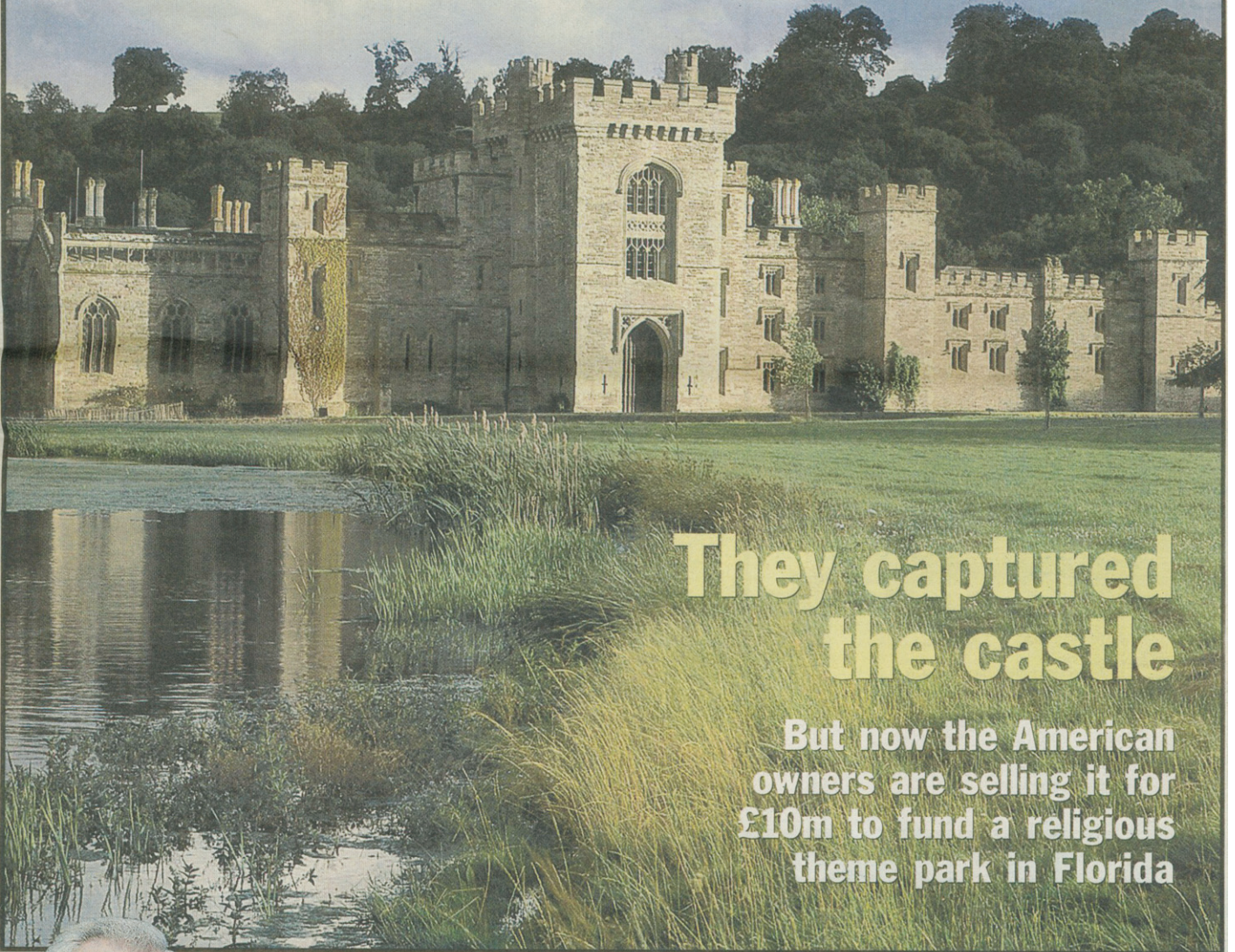


THE SUNDAY TIMES

Section 10

Home



They captured the castle

But now the American owners are selling it for £10m to fund a religious theme park in Florida



History at home

Television don David Starkey has redone his Highbury home in classic 1930s style

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Paris for profit

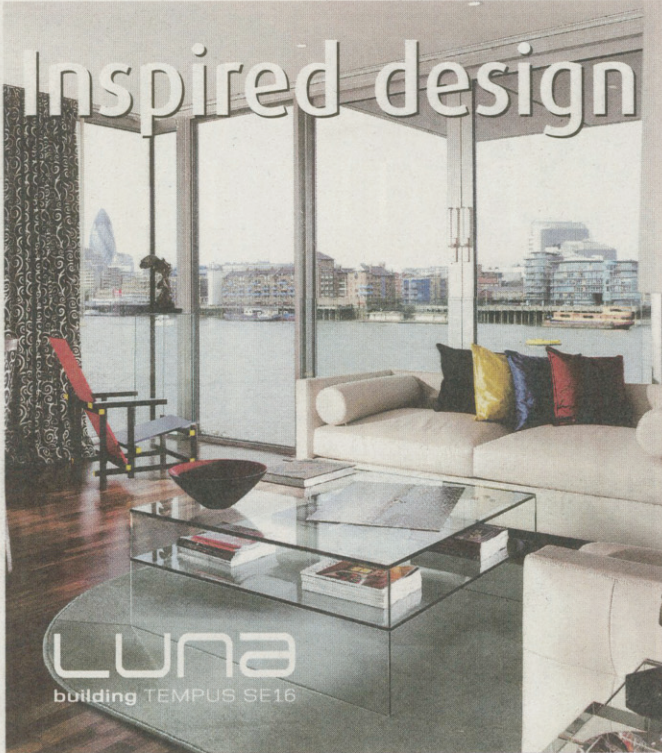
Rosie Millard gets some hot tips on making money from her French apartment

pages 28-29



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APRIL 24, 2005



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Jeremy King's design in Hertfordshire links the house to the new extension

Big ideas for small projects

From granny annexes to garage conversions, architectural ingenuity has achieved great results without busting the budget. HUGH PEARMAN reports

We all know that building is expensive. Just getting somebody to lay a few courses of bricks costs a lot of money. As for architect-designed stuff — that's for rich people, surely? As it happens, no.

For every one-off complete new house you see with a price tag of £1m-plus, there are many other small extensions and alterations, fully architect-designed, and costing a fraction of that. It's what most architects do.

The "small projects award" run by The Architects' Journal with the Royal Institute of British Architects (Riba) every year throws a spotlight on this growing market. The cost of the projects on the shortlist

range from as little as £750, for a tiny playhouse designed and built by an architect couple for their children, to the cut-off point of a quarter of a million.

Remember, although you have to pay an architect's fees, their work may well increase the value of your house by more: good design has a market value. This year I looked at the shortlisted projects outside London.

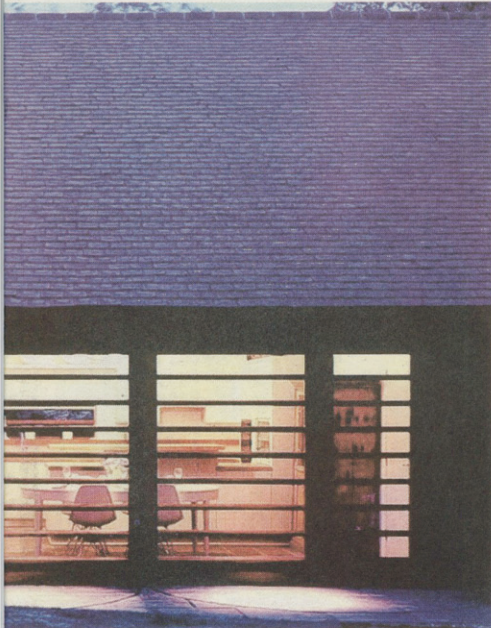
I like the look of four: a garden room in Leeds costing £57,000; an extension to a 1960s house in the Wiltshire Downs for £80,000; a very different extension to a 1950s bungalow in Scotland, also costing £80,000; and a large extension to a Hertfordshire cottage coming in at £135,000.

The declared winner is the Bell House extension in Stirlingshire, overlooking the Campsie Hills. By Nord Architects, this is a very architectural place with two large living spaces and a study. The upper living room, right up in the peak of the tall pitched roof, is quite something. Built in the local purplish red brick, it's a modern take on the barn. As is a Hertfordshire project, by Jeremy King Architects.

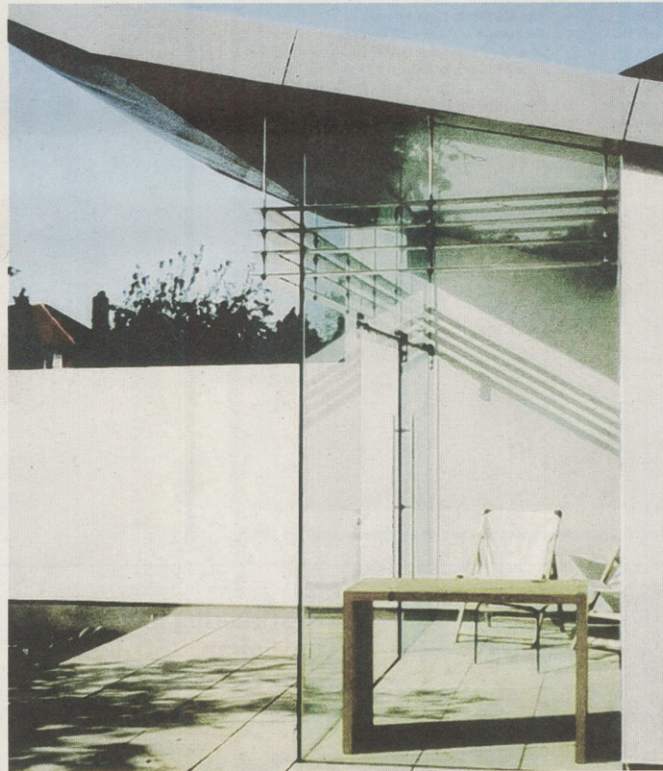
This is typical of a new genre: the combined living and garage space. The task was to graft on a building that contained a kitchen/living room, a utility room, new entrance and double garage to a listed, half-timbered cottage in a conservation area. King

Charlotte Wood

The Riba winner: the Bell House extension in Stirlingshire, Scotland



Cauwood added a glass wall to a 1960s house



A contemporary living space overlooking a Leeds garden by Bauman Lyons and Maggie Pickles

did this by designing a little building similar to a low barn that stands apart from the old house, connected to it by a linking entrance hall.

Although less radical than the winning Scottish example, this is still a modern barn, with one wall almost entirely of glass, cunningly disguised by timber louvres.

In Leeds, owners Tony and Anne Ray wanted a garden room and garage, detached from the main house. Architects Bauman Lyons and Maggie Pickles designed a back-to-back arrangement where the garage is conventionally at the side of the house, but which then carries on and opens up into a very contemporary living space overlooking the garden.

With its razor-sharp uptilted roof this is an evolution of that old standby, the glass-box extension, done with great panache.

The extension to a house the architect James Cauwood, of the Oxford-based practice Jessop and Cook, designed outside Marlborough in Wiltshire, is different again. It's a 1960s property and planners usually don't care so much about those.

However, this one stands in an officially-designated area of outstanding natural beauty, so they cared hugely. In fact, they pretty much dictated how big the extension could be, what shape it should be and what it could be made of. Surprisingly, that still left a lot to design.

Cauwood is a young architect in his first real job. This extension — to house Sheila, the mother of his girlfriend's aunt Rosemary — became the real-life project that gained him his architectural qualification. It was a classic exercise: a rural

granny flat, to be part of the house but self-contained. Cauwood calls it "micro-living".

Although the planners insisted that the extension should be a seamless extrusion of the existing house — same height and shape, same

materials — that gave Cauwood scope because "same materials" includes glass. Thus the rear facade of the new bit is pretty much a wall of glass facing onto the garden. It's really a one-up, one-down: kitchen and living area down below, bedroom up

above — but Cauwood connects the two spaces by having a double-height space, with the bedroom, as a sleeping platform, overlooking it. It has all worked very well. Cauwood sees it as an example of the new way people are now thinking about their homes.

"It's a growing area of work," he says. "Increasingly people want to express themselves architecturally. It's hard to make a profit out of these small projects — I certainly wasn't doing this one on a business basis — but architects like to do them when they can because they are interesting jobs."

For such small projects to work out, he suggests, it's vital that the design should be agreed — and fixed — early on. If you, as the client, keep wanting to alter things or add things, then costs will inexorably rise, it will end up over your budget, and your architect — even on a typical 10% fee — will have lost money because of all the extra time involved. Some clients fall out with their architects over this.

And lots of architects do this work because, like Cauwood, they like it, because there are more and more people wanting it and because — if everybody is realistic — both sides can find ways to make it affordable.

We're living in something of a golden age of domestic architecture. Never mind the huge mass-built estates — it's individual owners and their architects making the running.

■ See all the shortlisted schemes at www.ajplus.co.uk/small-projects. To find an architect, contact Riba, 020 7307 3700, www.ribafind.org