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A Pivotal Notion

FLUID ARCHITECTURE IS TURNING THE WORLD AROUND, LITERALLY.

By Joanna N. Seidler

It's a family room...it's a bedroom...no, it's a garden. Actually, it's all of those things...and more. With fluid architecture, a term coined by Rex Beasley, a functional architect and the president of California-based FutureSpace, a home's structure is anything but static. Rooms can be moved from place to place and the indoors can be brought outside. This latest home structure trend dramatically changes traditional architecture by allowing home owners to make structural changes very easily and quickly.

Traditional home architecture is stationary and creates a profound boundary between indoors and outdoors, Beasley says. He notes that in a standard home, even if a room has a lot of glass, there is only the perception of being outside. "The outdoors are still pretty far away," he comments. Fluid architecture however, softens and eliminates these barriers with the simple push of a button. For example, in a home in Altadena, Calif., Beasley has created a bedroom on tracks that slides

from the interior to the exterior of the residence, virtually doubling the room's size. And if it starts to rain, a sensor automatically sends the room and its occupants safely back inside.

"It's essential, even good for our souls, to be outdoors easily," Beasley comments. In the home, he has also installed a reversible 8-foot-wide wall that reveals an entertainment center with a big-screen television on one side and a wet bar and food service counter on the other. Moveable walls can also be outfitted with a fireplace, shelves or even a waterfall.

Although the walls are versatile, they do come with a price. Depending on its features, one of these walls could cost \$11,500. And to make an existing 12-foot by 14-foot bedroom moveable, expect to pay at least \$45,000. The price for similarly outfitting a living room that is 22 feet in diameter could soar to \$150,000.

Beasley's concept challenges the "bigger is better" thinking of the last decade. "What is a big home about?" he asks. "It's about many different rooms serving different purposes. With fluid architecture, one room can act as three rooms." For example, Beasley relates that a 2,440-square-foot

creating structure



Photos courtesy Rex Beasley, FutureSpace

With the touch of a button, fluid architecture can expand and change a room, as well as open it up to the outdoors.



house can feel like 3,600 square feet because rooms could have multiple purposes and looks. “The house actually acts bigger,” he says.

But does fluid architecture always require extra square footage? No. For some moveable features, no extra space is required at all. One could simply add screens to allow a room to open, not move, to the outdoors. “These screens are translucent and glow in the sun and in night landscape lighting,” he says. Another example of space-conscious fluid architecture is a living room that simply pivots to the outside, not occupying any extra square footage than it did initially. “This is perfect for remodels where there is no room to add on,” he notes.

Fluid architecture is ideal for beachfront locations, where land is at a premium. Speaking of location, which is best suited for fluid architecture? “The Southwest, from Santa Barbara to Santa Fe [N.M.], because the climate allows for an indoor/outdoor exchange,” Beasley says. But those locations are also well-known for rolling blackouts. Even though the walls and rooms are powered by electricity and automated by remote, they can be moved by hand if necessary, he adds.



The goal of fluid architecture is “to make architecture do more and function more,” Beasley says. “To create a movement that is more responsive to people’s needs. It’s all about being user-friendly and functional.” Born a decade ago, what does fluid architecture have in store for the future? Beasley, for one, plans to introduce many more innovative designs over the next 20 years. “This is the beginning of an evolution,” he concludes. **UH**