

ARTI FACT

Eco Demo



GREEN BUILDING COULD BE CALLED A TREND OF THE MOMENT, but it had its moment at mid-century, too. Florida's Revere Quality Institute House, recently listed in the National Register of Historic Places, presaged today's eco-minded construction by over 50 years. Designed in 1948 by Ralph Twitchell and Paul Rudolph, the house was one of eight commissioned by the Revere Quality Institute and *Architectural Forum* to promote "more cost effective and livable" housing stock. **TWITCHELL ESTABLISHED THE SARASOTA SCHOOL**, an architectural style that flourished at mid-century in the city of the same name. Taking cues from both the Bauhaus and regional forms, the style fused elements such as flat roofs, minimal ornament, raised floors, and verandas with climate-friendly construction resistant to the Sunshine State's humidity, termites, and hurricanes. **BUILT USING LAMOLITHIC CONCRETE TECHNOLOGY**, a construction system that employs reusable steel forms, the house is kept cool in the summer by six-inch-thick walls, jalousie glass windows, and overhanging eaves, while the convex hearth of the copper fireplace promotes efficient warming in winter. An enclosed courtyard, complete with grass carpet, brings the outdoors in, and a flue for the fireplace doubles ingeniously as the kitchen stove vent. Both hurricane-proof and fireproof, it is "a one-of-a-kind design . . . comfortable and visually distinctive," notes the National Register nomination. **PLANNED AS A DEMONSTRATION HOUSE**, it was an international sensation, drawing 16,000 visitors. Eventually, it was sold to Twitchell's future wife, Roberta Healey Finney, and the architect himself moved in a year later, where he lived until his death. A 2007 restoration returned the 1,000-square-foot structure, now a guesthouse for a two-story structure next to it, to its original appearance, right down to the Tennessee White and Georgia Red terrazzo flooring. "We went back to the same quarry to get the same stone," says construction superintendent Derek Chipman. "The house is really a piece of art."