THE MODERN ESTATE™

OUR EXCLUSIVE
VIEW OF
PHILIP JOHNSON'S
RENOWNED
PRIVATE ESTATE
IN NEW CANAAN,
NOW OPEN TO
THE PUBLIC

the glass house

COME VIEW
HIS HOME
HIS ARCHITECTURE
HIS WORLD
HIS ART

SEE IT NOW

Before a shovelful of dirt is turned, a 3D rendering can show owners how their new house will look—inside and out—from every angle

"But I can't visualize what it's going to look like when it's done!" That, quite likely, is one of the first things you'll utter—or mutter—when presented with a set of architectural plans. (Architects hear this complaint all the time.) When those renderings on paper, so very two-dimensional, fail to conjure up mental pictures of your three-dimensional house-to be—its interior and exterior walls, its roof plan, and its elevations (the vertical appearance of your home on all sides, including siding, windows, stonework, and chimney)—you may even ask yourself, "Am I smart enough to plan a new, custom-designed home/addition/renovation, or am I simply in over my head?"

Don't worry—you are neither the first nor the last layman to consider an architect's drawings unfathomable. Clients have found it hard to visualize architectural designs since the first set of comprehensive paper plans for the construction of domes and cathedrals was presented, reportedly by Brunelleschi, in the 15th century.

It took 600-odd years, but inventors have finally found a way to bridge the visual gap between paper plans and elevations and a real, three-dimensional structure. Over the last quarter-century, computer-drafting programs have translated the ideas of architects into graphics
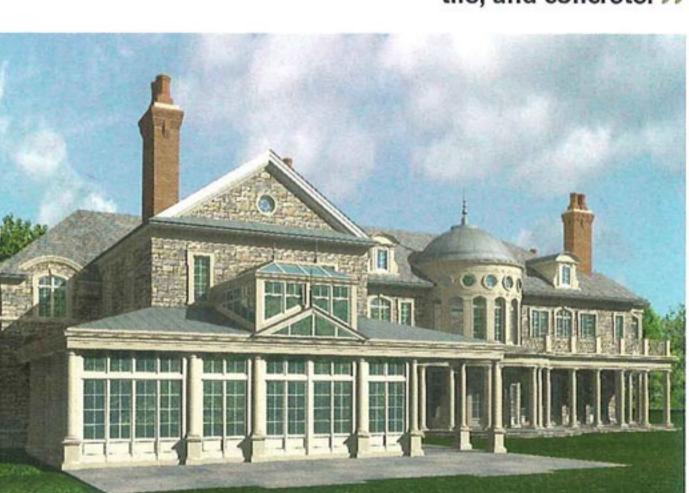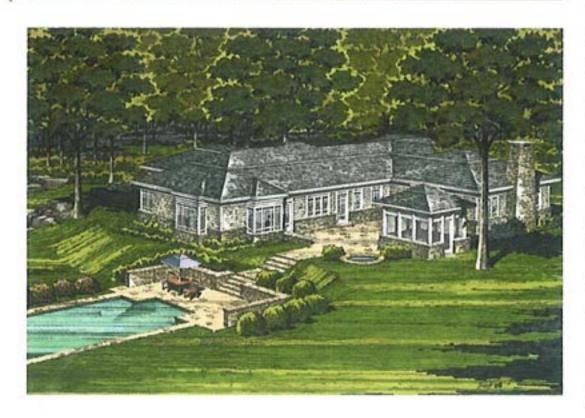
that can make their plans seem three-dimensional. Now, with the assistance of powerful desktop computers, you, the client, can see your design brought to life from every angle. Indeed, before a shovelful of dirt is turned or a nail driven, you can simulate what your house would look like if you should decide to add various building materials and colors, siding, stone, roofing, and a remarkable array of other details.

If you or your children own an Xbox or

Above: This house and its landscape are so clearly expressed in this three-dimensional computer rendering (this is the front elevation) that it would be difficult to make errors during construction.

> **"Visualizing a kitchen through 3D computer rendering lets the client and architect be proactive—correct mistakes and misjudgments before they take all-too-solid form in wood, tile, and concrete."**

Top: This is a 3/4 view through separate elements and along the side. The crystal clarity and absolute completeness of the computer-generated 3D image leaves nothing to the imagination.
Above: A beautiful but flawed attempt to show what a proposed house will look like. Hand-drawn renderings like this are severely limited in expressing the actual form, massing, and details of a project. There's only a single view—no facility for animated "walk-arounds" or "walk-throughs."

any other sophisticated game device, you already know how impressive 3D rendering technology can be. Building interiors, exteriors, and even complete models of well-known cities like London have been made to look so real that you may want to reach out and touch them.

Hiring a 3D Expert

Many companies advertise their 3D rendering and animation services. You can find these listings by going online and Googling "3D Architectural Rendering." But in my opinion, your architect should do the job. For one thing, the architect may be reluctant to release completed electronic files of your design to an off-site rendering and animation service. But—even more important—he or she not only starts out knowledgeable about the project but also will be able to adjust the renderings after discerning and repairing errors in the design. Indeed, the "electronic construction" of these 3D models is based on your architect's actual floor plans and elevations; therefore, the 3D models may expose errors that, uncorrected, would result in costly delays and change orders.

Complex spaces like kitchens—newly important to the homeowner as an aesthetic focal point and family gathering space—can be viewed as completed items within a three-dimensional computer model. Designed with open vaulting, floor-to-ceiling cabinets, islands with

seating, and commercial gas ranges and appliances, a kitchen can cost as much as a condominium does today or as much as a house would have cost 20 years ago. When I was a kitchen designer with a high-end kitchen design and installation company I saw how useful it was to make 3D renderings an integral part of the design package. Visualizing a kitchen through 3D computer rendering lets the client and architect be proactive—correct mistakes and misjudgments before they take all-too-solid form in wood, tile, and concrete.

The Cost

No table of standard fees can be provided, because every architect and designer will have his or her own fee structure. However, here are some guidelines, based upon the fees currently being charged by several practicing architects in the New York–Connecticut area. A three-dimensional rendering of the home's exterior may start at about $2,000; a full animation of the interior and exterior of a complex home might start at about $20,000. The cost will vary according to the project's complexity and square footage. Not only are these renderings useful (by calling architects' and builders' attention to looming errors), but they offer clients the pleasure of seeing how their artistic input will be incorporated into the dream home that is slowly rising on its muddy construction site. **TME**

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