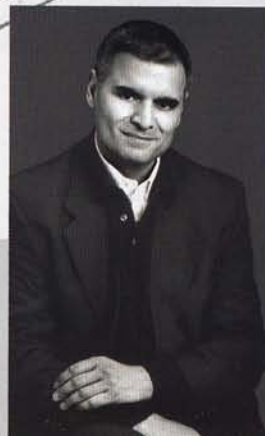
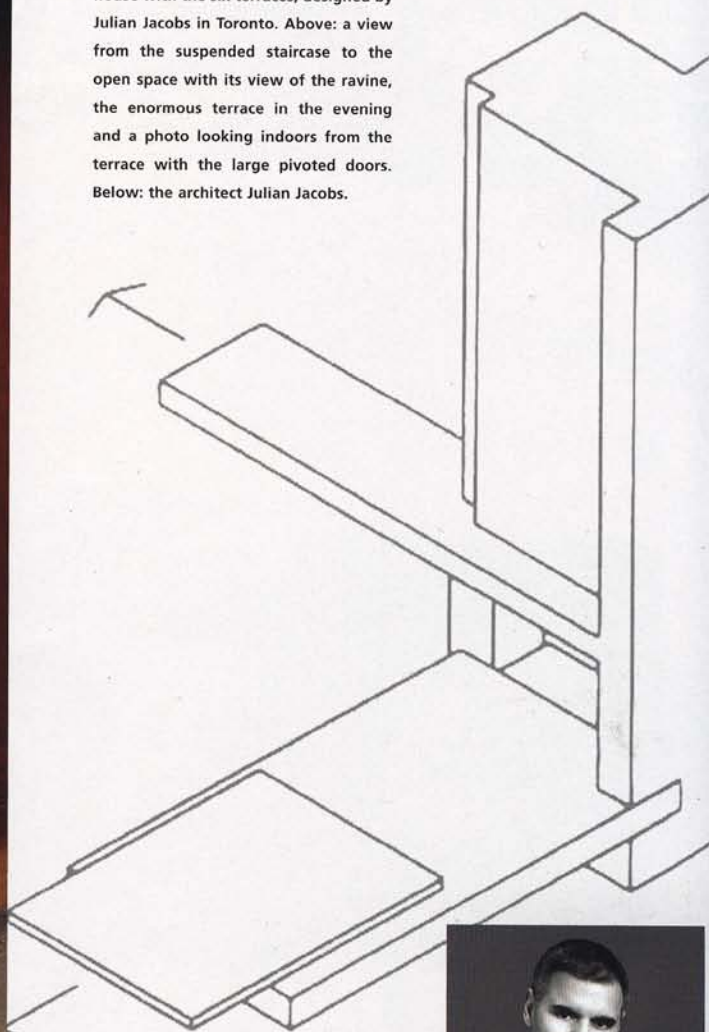
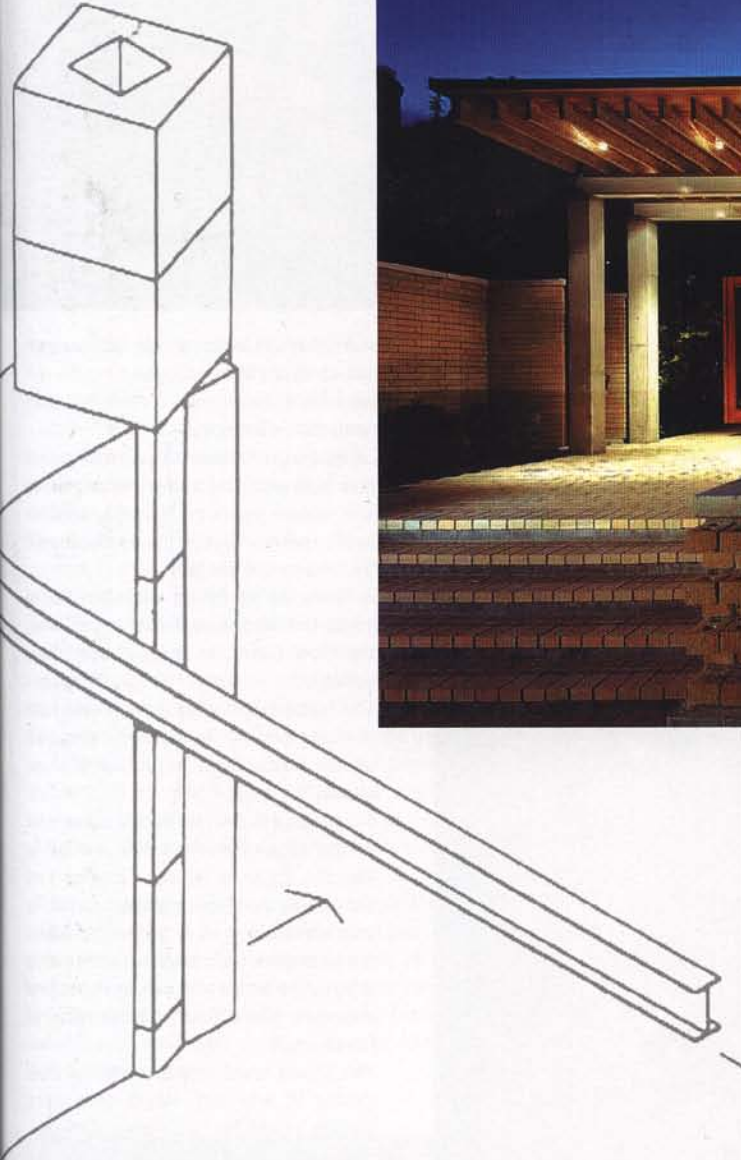




Left: a detail beside the entrance to the house with the six terraces, designed by Julian Jacobs in Toronto. Above: a view from the suspended staircase to the open space with its view of the ravine, the enormous terrace in the evening and a photo looking indoors from the terrace with the large pivoted doors. Below: the architect Julian Jacobs.



text: Pauline Prinsen - photos: Richard Johnson - Peter Sellar



## THE HOUSE WITH THE SIX TERRACES

"There's a strange contradiction in modern architecture. People accept that commercial buildings are highly modern in conception and design, but in the residential setting the majority far prefer traditional stereotypes. Odd: in the morning they don't put on 17th-century clothes and go to work on horseback!" Julian Jacobs is probably not the only architect to have reached that conclusion. And so he jumped at the opportunity to design a modern house: the house with the six terraces in Toronto.





Above: one part of the large open space containing the kitchen, dining- and sitting-rooms – all give onto the ravine behind. The large degree of openness lessens the distance between interior and exterior.

Below: the kitchen, which is part of the large open area, with the 'dancing' cabinets – they are suspended from steel wire. The consoles are custom made, from cherry wood. Right-hand page: view from the windows in the large open area, in which the main functions of the house are contained in an open-plan arrangement. Far right: the 'chasm' open staircase, with treads which are virtually detached; they have been sawn breadthwise using the strength properties of the specially produced wood.

The prevailing view that modern architecture lacks intimacy and warmth is something that preoccupies the architect Julian Jacobs.

"Modernist is all too often equated with impersonal. I wanted to disprove that idea with the house with the six terraces."

In the Canadian city of Toronto, in the Forest Hill district, a surrealist pastiche prevails, of Georgian, Shingle style and Loire castles. Among these 'relics', Julian Jacobs has built a modern house for Naomi and Victor Pamensky which, in the architect's opinion, proves that conventional houses do not have a monopoly of charm and warmth.

He is evidently not alone in his views, as his design won the Ontario Association of Architects award for the best single-family house, and, with their Woodworks Award, the Wood Council of Canada added their approval.

The fact that he called it the house with the six terraces is primarily because all the rooms have access to outdoor spaces.

"The house is built on an attractive plot on the edge of a ravine. We wanted to blur the distance between interior and exterior as much as possible, and so it was important to have optimum contact between the interior and the surrounding nature. The house also makes a personal statement to the South African roots of the clients."

The clients were very thorough in their choice of architect. When they were looking round for a suitable designer, they saw on the list of Governor General's Award winners the name of Julian Jacobs, with his Emery Yard. And that appealed to the Pamenskys; they wanted their house to reflect their South African roots.

An important consideration was that they wanted an interior brightened by sunlight. The glazed window walls, which open in various ways, are important in





this context. For instance, part of the roof and the north facade have been made from glass to show the imposing 'chasm' staircase to full advantage. By using PSL (parallel strand lumber) wood – technically modified wood – the architect was able to achieve large spans with a minimum of support. "This may be the biggest cantilever in the world for a beam of wood laid sideways," Julian Jacobs says.

The house's open side, where the dining- and living-rooms and the kitchen are situated, looks out over the ravine. The functional areas are on the more enclosed street side.

The Azores Islands ceiling in the kitchen/dining room exemplifies Jacob's 'release of constraint' technique. He takes a banal form and gradually, by changing one structural parameter at the time, transforms it into something fresh.

The pièce-de-résistance of the house is the vast terrace with its two oversized mahogany doors and enormous overhang. The doors meet at right angles without the customary intervening doorjamb. When opened, the full height of the wall intersection dissolves. Here aesthetics and functionality blend seamlessly.

"I like to suggest a merging of form and function, yet behind every detail in this house there is a conceptual plan," according to the architect. Julian Jacobs was born in Montreal and studied architecture there. He set aside his ambitions to become an artist and in 1979 moved to Toronto, where he set up his architecture studio. He also runs an interior division – Interior Associates – together with Gail Weininger.

