

STARING DOWN CITY STYLE

# THE LOOKER

THE  
DESIGN  
SCOUT

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Architect Neal Schwartz inserts photos of 19th-century loggers into modern 3-D computer renderings for a cluster of cabins in woodsy Boonville.



# Home Depot Time Machine

Incorporating 19th-century specters into a modern cabin’s architectural renderings. By Lauren Murrow



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1. A bygone logger with futuristic taste: the Eames rocker. 2. Schwartz’s Boonville Cabin perches atop a pair of wooden skids raised on hand-drilled concrete piers. 3. The structure is supported by a series of wooden moment frames. 4. Sloping wall panels channel natural light from the skylights above. 5. Nineteenth-century lumberjacks in front of a rendering of the cabin. 6. Two skylights run the length of the cabin.



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An architectural rendering serves as an illustrative blueprint, a 3-D modeled vision of a building not yet realized. It doesn’t usually involve ghosts. But as the renderings on these pages demonstrate, sometimes the best way to envision the future is by grabbing hold of the past.

Such was the case when architect Neal Schwartz of Schwartz and Architecture was hired to design a home and a cluster of small cabins on a 20-acre plot in Boonville, a rustic Anderson Valley town that’s perhaps best known for having created its own folk language, Boontling, in the 19th century. “It’s this quirky and insular kind of community tucked away in the hills,” Schwartz says. As he and designer Christopher Baile began drawing up plans for the site, they were intrigued by the potential for a contemporary guest cabin in

what was formerly logging country, where skid trails crisscrossing the land still mark the path of the lumber. The pair started compiling photos of Northern California logging communities from the 1860s and ’70s for inspiration. “The logging huts they built back then had all the qualities we wanted for these cabins,” says Schwartz. “They were relatively inexpensive, mobile, flexible, and modular.” The photos from that time mark the early days of the camera, depicting washed-out images of campsites, dining establishments, and dance halls.

Consulting the grainy logging-camp photos while mocking up Schwartz’s modern-day cabins, Baile found himself going down a Boonville rabbit hole: He began to insert black-and-white figures from the past into his 3-D modeled computer render-

ings. The effect was oddly evocative, an artful reference to the storied site they were building upon. Better yet, it was fun. “There was this playfulness to the work,” recalls Schwartz. The pair’s collages grew increasingly elaborate, designed for both their own amusement and that of Schwartz’s clients. Though the physical mashup of the images was a fairly quick Photoshop job, the process of matching the right figure to a certain scene, one that Baile likens to making conceptual art, often took days. “We decided we wanted to tell the story of the cabin’s design using this anachronistic technique,” says Schwartz.

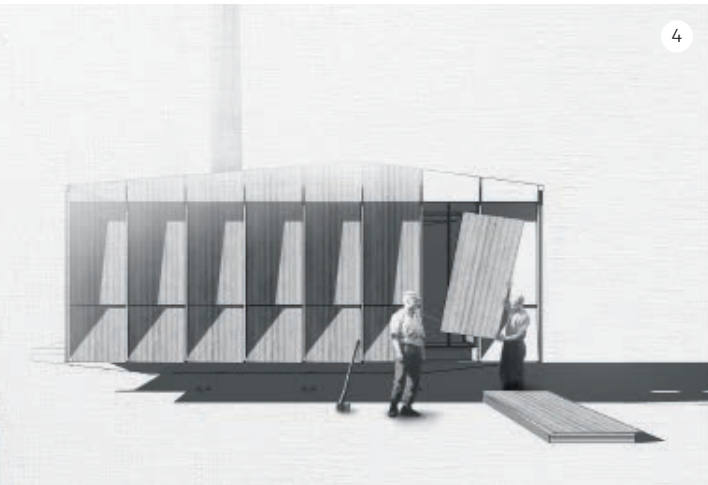
Taking inspiration from the archaic logging huts, the pair envisioned a series of simple structures made from conventional building materials easily found at Home Depot. The 32-by-16-foot Boonville

Cabin will include a bedroom, two closets, and a full bathroom. It will perch atop a pair of wooden skids raised on hand-drilled concrete piers, a loose translation of an old-school logging technique. Two hidden skylights on opposite sides of the cabin are designed to channel natural light from above, lending “a chapel kind of feel,” says Schwartz. Wooden moment frames will link a series of canted wall panels, allowing rays of sunlight to be cast down the length of each 4-by-8-foot segment.

“Originally, the thought was: How cool can the light be in these cabins? How modern can we make them?” recalls Baile. But it was the collision of old and new that ultimately hooked the architect and designer. “It ended up being about how to fold in modern details while maintaining that rustic, logging-town feel,” says Schwartz. ■



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CHRISTOPHER BAILE WITH SCHWARTZ AND ARCHITECTURE