

Railroad Apartments

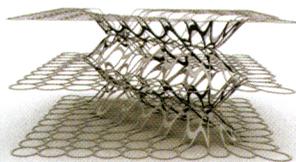
Story SHONQUIS MORENO

An international team of students builds a new kind of mobile home for artists-in-residence



project in September 2005. The team made a couple of site visits, but primarily relied on the Internet and a blog to plan the project. (The international hobnobbing engaged not just students but some of the locals who have been trying to reinvent the area as a design and tourist destination since the collapse of its steel industry in the early '90s.) In the end, it took only two and a half weeks this past June to construct a pair of modular, movable and sustainable living spaces for the Formens Hus, Scandinavia's newest design institution, which owns the land and will use the houses to host future artists-in-residence.

Perched atop an abandoned railway bridge near the Formens Hus, with a lush view of the forest-lined Black River, the houses take their inspiration from the traditional Swedish cabin, a *friggabod*. Students took advantage of the railroad tracks by creating a pair of "mobile homes." These twin sleeping/living spaces, designed by the Parsons students, can either be used as a single unit or rolled apart to form two separate structures. Konstfack students created built-in, modular furnishings that function as build-it-yourself kits or can be used in disaster relief efforts. Finally, a delegation of American and French faculty constructed a permanent kitchen-and-bath cabin that will serve as a "docking station" for the two houses during the winter months when they will not be in use. "Students learned a greater awareness of dwelling habits and an appreciation for how design might imaginatively address the everyday, while using local materials and manufacturing know-how," says Parsons professor Robert Kirkbride. "They also learned to appreciate the poetics of place." **SO**



URBAN PLANNING <

Name: Saad Alayyoubi **School:** Pratt Institute, Bachelor's in Architecture, 2006 **Current Occupation:** Graduate student, Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture **Advisors:** Ed Keller and Chris Perry **Project:** Reflexive Infrastructural Membranes

Saad Alayyoubi has envisioned a new infrastructure for New York's East River waterfront, one that doesn't rely on landfill, the traditional method for extending Manhattan into the water surrounding it. Using a membrane that integrates a combination of floating plant masses (to remove pollutants from air and water), anchored pontoons and a modular pier structure, the architect enables city dwellers to live, work and play on the water. Alayyoubi's sophisticated and futuristic structure consists of a flexible pier inspired by organic cellular forms; it can be configured differently according to the varied needs of public and private users and adapt to the character of adjacent neighborhoods. This "swelling membrane," as Alayyoubi describes it, generates mixed-use space, expanding the bases of the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges, for instance, to provide structural reinforcement and commercial space, while creating an inhabitable environment within. **LW** iona.creid@gmail.com

