



**Move**

# HOUSES

**Sean Top**

**Prestel**

## Tim Pyne and MAE Architects, UK

M-House, 2002

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Loft-living has shifted from a bohemian pursuit to the mainstream property market. Creating a home in a redundant warehouse was for a long time the preserve of eccentric artists, but has since mutated into a property developers' dream and contributed considerably to turning house buyers on to a different type of home. The M-House (pronounced "mouse") aims to do the same for trailer homes. It is a transportable dwelling that marries the up-market style of a smart loft apartment with the production and distribution process of the trailer home.

The portable house began life as a commission for a one-off prefabricated home to be located by the edge of a creek in Essex, southeast England. MAE, the architects behind the project, came up with a design for a house in two halves: one containing the lounge, kitchen, and dining area and one containing three bedrooms and two bathrooms. The two halves are designed to be transported separately and then fastened together on site. The idea was certainly not a new one. However, what distinguished it from other modular homes was the quality of its

construction. The client, Tim Pyne, quickly recognized the potential for such a dwelling and developed it further with the architects for production on a commercial scale.

Although legally defined as a mobile home due to its size, the M-House complies with many of the strict building regulations applied to site-built houses. The walls are thoroughly insulated and structure is self-supporting so any interior partitions can be removed. Exterior finishes range from aluminum panels to cedar shingle and the timber-framed windows are quite unlike those usually seen on a trailer home.

M-House isn't revolutionary in terms of its technology but that was never the intention. "People are often suspicious of the new," says Michael Howe, the project architect. M-House is inspired by the traditional trailer home but brings to it the attention to detail and high specifications you'd expect to find in a well appointed apartment. Loft-living introduced a new language to domestic architecture and M-House takes that language to the trailer park.



In addition to providing homes on dry land the M-House may also be floated on a barge and the architects have developed a similar dwelling for use on roof tops. The open-plan interior, high-specification materials, and top of the range appliances give M-House the feel of an upmarket apartment, yet it is legally defined as a trailer home.

