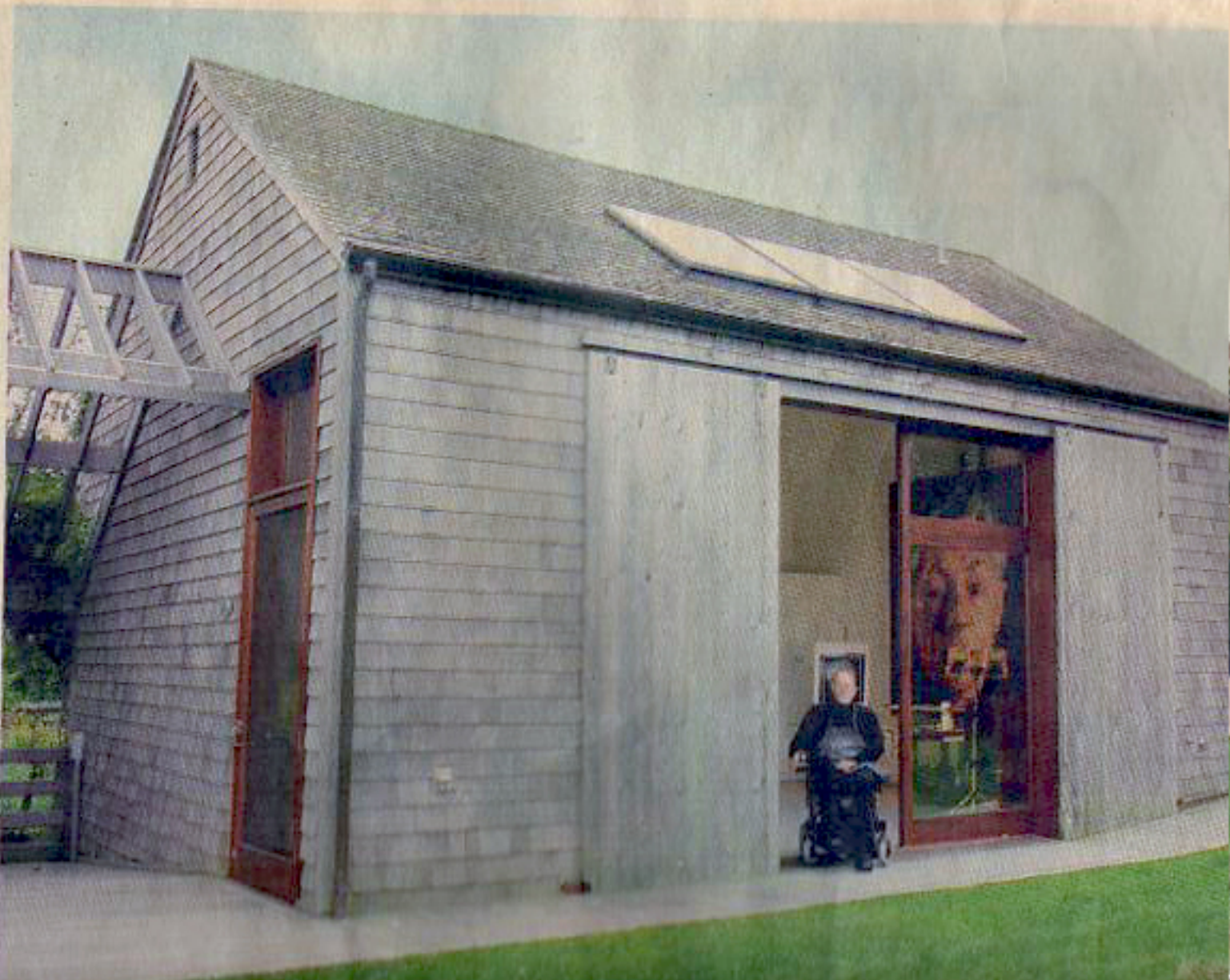


## ARCHITECTURE

# The Artists' Architect, Building For Art's Sake



For Richard Gluckman, form carefully follows artistic function.

By DAVID HAY

WORTH KELLY, his shirt hanging from his paint-splattered jeans, stood in the doorway of his snow-white gallery, flipped some switches. Slowly, lights in the pitched skylight shifted and paintings on the walls blazed with

by the architect Richard Gluckman. The 50-foot space lies at the southern end of the artist's recently enlarged studio out in the town, N.Y. A taut scrim under the skylight serves the gallery's boxlike form and modulates the amount of natural light that falls on the canvases. But the room is also a viewing space: thanks to Mr. Gluckman's design, it has also become an essential part of Kelly's creative process.

Light changed, bringing out the intentions of the work. At the same time, and one painting would solve the other."

Decades, Mr. Gluckman, now 57, has become the artists' architect, designing gallery spaces in Chelsea for clients like the artist's wife, Susan Gluckman, and Mary Boone and larger spaces like the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh and the Museo Picasso in Málaga, Spain. In the case of career following title, he became an architect for artists, designing personal work spaces for some of the most important figures in contemporary art.

On to Mr. Kelly's, Mr. Gluckman designed houses and studios for Chuck Close, Richard Serra, and is now working on environments for Don Gummer, Lawrence and Louise Lawler.

Mr. Gluckman starts his projects by immersing himself in his clients' existing work: its colors and relationship to the spaces. Then, on a walkthrough of an artist's studio, he closely observes the artist's art-making process.

At Don Gummer's studio in Manhattan, Mr. Gluckman studied how the artist fashioned his less steel and glass sculptures. At his work stations, the modern and showroom," Mr. Gluckman learned how the artist might fit into a Queens. Once Mr. Gluckman understood the pragmatic needs of each client, he began to grasp how a sensitive design could support the artist's art.

Take Mr. Serra, whose work and environments are known for their attacking physicality, size and importance when designing for Richard Serra, Mr. Gluckman explained. "Some sort of expressionism has to act as a vital part of his own use of material."

When completing a New York loft for Mr. Gluckman designed a house in Breton, Nova Scotia, and a warehouse in Brooklyn. Now he is continuing to build a new studio for Kelly in the same space," the architect said — a work of Long Island.

Things to be almost industrial, defined by steel and with good light," Mr. Gluckman said by telephone.

size of some of his towering steel sculptures can soar as high as 20 feet, he said. His Long Island City studio, which is a year, measures 80 by 100 feet, and has a high ceiling. "Richard understands floor circulation in and around the studio for a lot of overhead space," Mr. Gluckman said.

Mr. Gluckman's first experience working with Kelly was in 1977, when he helped Dan Flavin install fluorescent light along a wall in the Upper East Side residence of Flavin and Philippa de Menil. "Dan helped with the construction and the design."

At a meeting with Mr. Flavin proved that Mr. Gluckman found himself working with a lot of artists whose work was not site-specific. "Flavin and Serra and Holzer all acknowledged that a piece of art couldn't exist without the space in which it existed," Mr. Gluckman said. (Robert Ryman is known for his all-white paintings, and Jenny Holzer for her grammatical signs.) In most instances, those spaces were lofts



Robert Ryman

in 19th-century buildings. So in his first commission to create a gallery space, the Dia Center for the Arts on West 22nd Street, Mr. Gluckman brought that style, with its exposed masonry and heavy timber construction, to an early 20th-century poured-in-place concrete building. He opened it up, an adaptation that suited the Minimalist artists that Dia was showing.

Architects like Frank Gehry and Richard Meier impose their own distinctive signatures on gallery spaces, but Mr. Gluckman's firm, Gluckman Mayner, highlights the relationship between artworks and their surroundings. The spaces may appear unadorned, but they are not simply blank slates. "We do not do neutral spaces," Mr. Gluckman said.

At the Kelly studio, a concrete-block warehouse off a tree-lined country road, Mr. Gluckman toyed with the idea of adding sculptural forms to the additions he was building at either end. Then he realized that he would be echoing the forms of some Kelly sculptures on the property. The roofs remained simply pitched.

Early in the design phase, Mr. Gluckman also proposed adding a covered entrance to the studio complex that would extend into the driveway. The artist objected. Mr. Kelly saw the stu-

dio walls, painted a subtle gray hue, as continuous flat planes on which to place his sculptural pieces, so the door had to remain flush with the exterior wall. Mr. Gluckman not only acquiesced but developed the flat-plane notion further in a cleft bluestone patio at the southern end of the complex. On one side of the patio, he designed a stucco-covered wall facing the windowless exterior of Mr. Kelly's viewing gallery. The stucco wall proved the perfect backdrop for "White Curve," a painted aluminum sculpture.

In designing a house and studio near Water Mill, on Long Island, for Chuck Close, Mr. Gluckman made it a priority to connect the artist to the outdoors. Though Mr. Close, 65, has made a career out of reconfiguring the human face, the landscape around his home — summer wildflowers, autumn foliage — is a vital inspiration.

"The light bouncing off the water and into the atmosphere makes light here different from any place I've ever worked," he said. "When I haul a painting back into the city, at first I can't even see what I've got" because the dim city light drains the color out, he said.

Mr. Close and his wife, Leslie Rose Close, craved a sense of openness, so Mr. Gluckman raised the ceilings and realigned the rooms and

hallways in the couple's modest clapboard house, built in the late 1960's. He lowered and enlarged all the windows to ensure clear views from wheelchair height. (Mr. Close has been a quadriplegic since he suffered a spinal clot in his neck in 1988.) It was as if Mr. Gluckman had imagined him as a viewer in a gallery, with the landscape serving as artwork.

During a reporter's recent visit, Mr. Close, in his signature black circular glasses, T-shirt and jeans, entered his studio in his wheelchair and gestured toward a new low window that allows him a view of the bright perennials and vegetables in his wife's garden. "Early in the year, the garden is a lurid green and acid yellow with a lot of pinkish purple," he said. "The colors absolutely sing, and I'll put them directly into what I'm painting."

Unlike Mr. Kelly's studio, where work was done on a motorized easel, Mr. Close can raise or lower the canvas to reach a section he needs to work on. And to give Mr. Close more mobility, Mr. Gluckman designed a five-foot-wide mahogany-slatted boardwalk to surround the house and studio. (A master bedroom is situated between the two buildings.) It allows Mr. Close to move easily from the house to the garden, a pond at the foot of the lawn or to a small enclosed swimming pool.

"I'm at my most productive here," he said. "It almost makes up for what little I get done the city."

Mr. Gluckman declined to reveal the price on any of the artists' projects but said he kept the construction budgets down by opting for straightforward industrial materials like plain plywood paneling found in Mr. Kelly's library. "They're budgeted at well under half what we charge for doing a contemporary loft in the city," he said. The biggest payoff, he insisted, "is that you get to see these artists at work."

"Sometimes a meeting won't get started because they want to show you what they're working on," he said. Still, Mr. Gluckman said, he is careful not to mimic the artist's style in his own designs: "To make a deliberate attempt to match their work? They would hate that." All the same, Mr. Gluckman admits that he is tempted to quote his clients in other projects. "If I was designing the shape of a skyscraper, I'd absolutely want to rip off one of Ellsworth's exquisite outdoor forms," he said of Mr. Kelly's curved sculptures. "But I'd make sure to credit him."

