

ARCHITECT'S
VIEWPOINTAmerica,
home of
the hulkBy ARROL GELLNER
Inman News

America is a big country, and we Americans think big. We've always been enormously proud of our very biggest things, whether they're works of nature such as the Grand Canyon or man-made ones like the Empire State Building. Bigness is a defining quality of our nation.

But not everything that's big is necessarily great. Sometimes big is simply silly. Consider the blundering inability of a Hummer to fit in a regular parking space. Or the way kids walk around gulping soda from cups the size of scuba tanks. Or the way baby carriages — which used to be just slightly larger than a baby — are now more like baby-market SUVs.

The things inside our homes are getting bigger too, as a trip to an appliance store will quickly confirm. Like those colossal baby carriages, appliances are being pumped up to SUV-like proportions.

Many washing machines and dryers, for example, are now raised up on huge pedestals for "convenience," not to mention being slathered with enough fake chrome to shame a Lincoln Navigator owner.

The typical wall oven, which used to be made in a modest standard width of 24 inches, has been incrementally larded up to 30 inches. And where single ovens were once widely thought to be up to most baking tasks, nowadays double ovens are considered de rigueur.

After the demise of the huge old ranges of the postwar era, stoves shrank to a longtime standard width of 30 inches. Now they're growing again — to 3 feet wide, 4 feet wide and more. At the top of the heap is a \$36,000 French-made residential range that's 5 1/2 feet wide. It's not much smaller than a pipe organ, and just about as complicated.

Refrigerator makers, to their credit, have finally reduced the depth of their products to match that of a typical kitchen counter. On the other hand, the other dimensions have grown completely out of proportion to this adjustment. Refrigerators have ballooned into swaggering giants boasting television screens and Internet connections, and measuring 3 feet or 4 feet wide and 6 feet and even 7 feet high.

One has to wonder what's behind this trend. Our families are smaller, so we cook less food. Today's appliances are more efficient, so we should be able to make them smaller, not larger.

The answer to this riddle is simple. Domestic appliance makers have gotten wise to what Detroit has long known: Selling little things makes little profits, while selling big things makes profits that are really, really — well, you know the word.

Arrol Gellner is an architect with more than 25 years' experience.

Home of the Week



Photographs by BART BARTHOLOMEW

DOWNTOWN DELUXE: Oversize windows, exposed brick and open space give the penthouse a gallery-like ambience.

Crackers-and-brie scene

There's puttin' on the ritz, and there's putting out the Ritz. A building converted to upscale lofts does both.

By RUTH RYON
Times Staff Writer

IT is the antithesis of the California ranch-style house and the epitome of an upscale, downtown loft.

The Biscuit Company Lofts penthouse villa, with four stories of living space, is the biggest of the 104 residential units built this year in L.A.'s Biscuit Co. building. Constructed by the National Biscuit Co. in 1925 at a cost of \$2 million, the seven-story Nabisco building — with its attractive brick exterior, granite entries, terra-cotta ornamentation and inch-thick maple floors — served as the company's West Coast headquarters.

The penthouse was converted from the original water tower by Santa Monica architect Aleks Istanbulu. It has a rooftop terrace with sweeping views of downtown and three bridges spanning the L.A. River.

Exposed brick walls, steel-frame construction, oversized doors and large windows give the loft building a modern look.

About the area: Biscuit Company Lofts is part of a work-live neighborhood being created by developer Linear City on Industrial Street, bounded by Mateo and Mill streets. The Toy Factory Lofts, Royal Claytons restaurant, a gourmet grocer, boutique gym and men's shop are already operating. New sidewalks and a traffic-pattern change make the area more pedestrian-friendly.

Asking price: \$4.9 million

Size: The three-bedroom loft has 3,500 square feet of living space, but its terrace offers an additional 2,500 square feet of private outdoor space for parties and gardens.

Features: The penthouse has 30-foot-high ceilings and its own elevator. Among the common amenities are a pool, an entry lobby, a doorman and an on-site parking garage.

Where: 1850 Industrial St., in the downtown Arts District.

Sales office: 1855 Industrial St., Unit No. 6, Los Angeles; (213) 670-0114.

ruth.ryon@latimes.com



REASSIGNED: The building, once Nabisco's West Coast headquarters, was converted into lofts as part of a work-live neighborhood project.



HEAVY ON THE METAL: The sleek, polished look extends to the kitchen in the four-story penthouse, which has a rooftop terrace.