

## arieLOFT: A Prefab Sanctuary in the Woods

by Lloyd Alter, Toronto on 04.27.09

**DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE (PREFAB)**



There are few inventions more elegant than a wood strip canoe; they are light, fast and flexible. Martin Liefhebber of Breathe Architects, who has been doing green design since before the term was invented, was inspired by the lean elegance of the canoe in his design for the new arieLOFT, premiering at the [Green Living Show](#).



Arieloft rendering at side of lake.



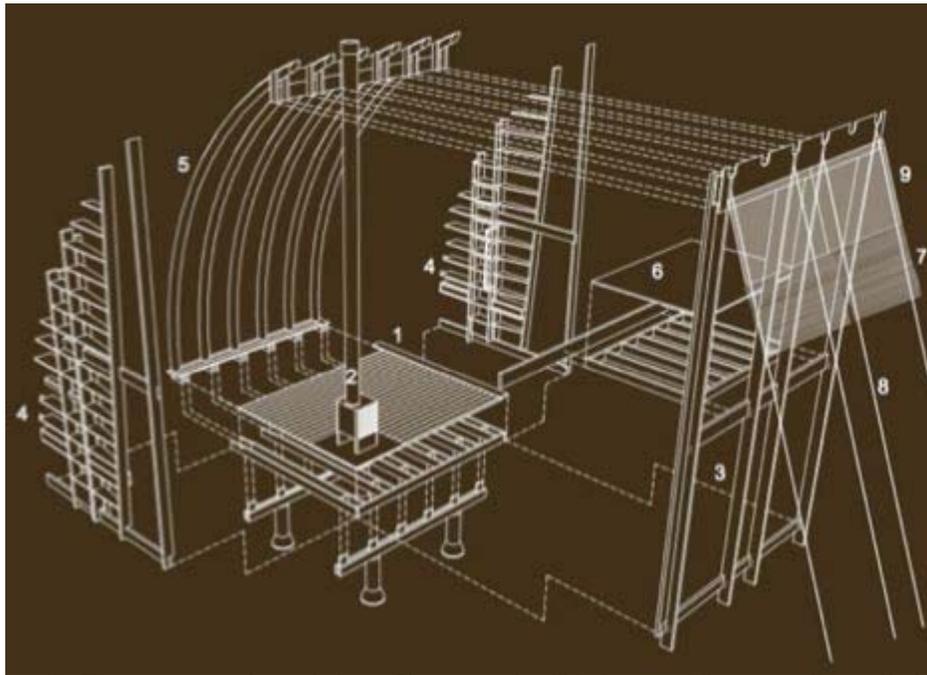
It is really what we call a "bunkie"- or as Adria Vasil described it,

"a beautiful sail-like structure that, at the end of the day, is essentially one fancy-ass tent. Made head to toe of Eastern white cedar (a lot of which is FSC-certified), this 10-by-11-foot self-contained room with sweeping 17-foot ceilings even has a second-floor loft big enough to fit a queen-sized bed. "



It is a minimalist structure, built like a canoe with an economy of means but a generosity of ends. Martin says:

"Scarcity is not because we don't have enough. It has come about because of the way we consume. We make design decisions which perpetuate the unsustainable practices, which deplete and abuse the planet's resources".



Features include 1) sunporch, 2) epa approved wood stove, 3) screened wall to keep out the mosquitoes, 4) shelving, 5) curved roof, 6) a sleeping loft, 7) a shade awning, and 9) solar panels for lighting.

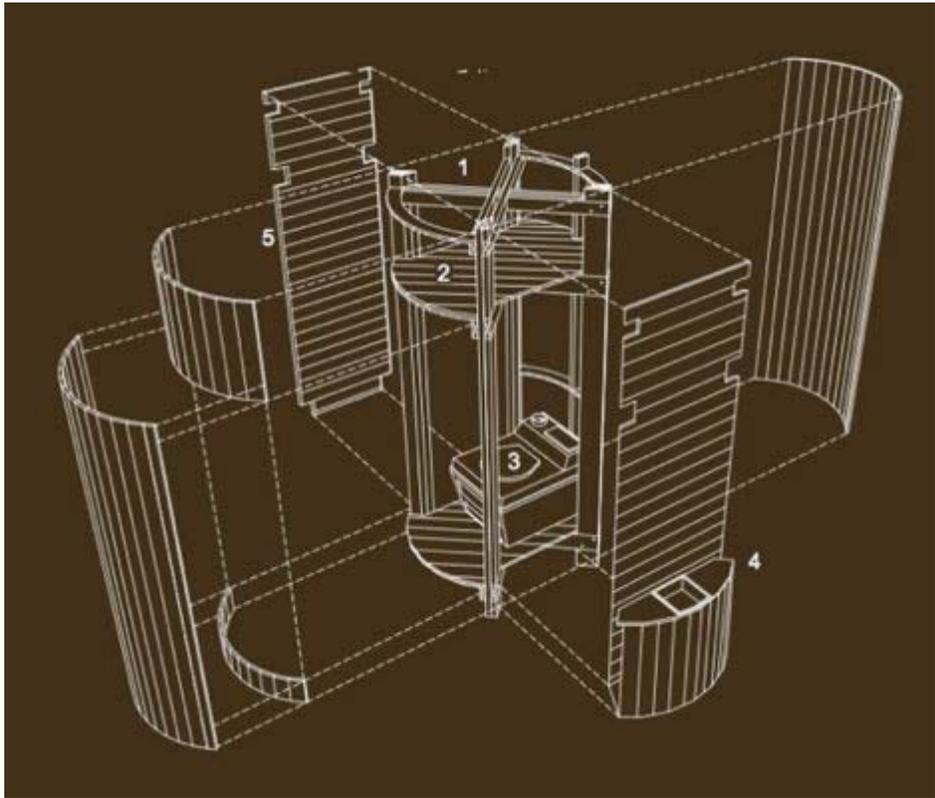
Martin's philosophy:

"Architecture is really fascinating. It's all about everything – it's about living, it's about construction and it's about making our environment. So I took a real interest in having the environment that I create to be as good as it can be from a health perspective and a pollution perspective, all kinds of things. I wanted to have buildings that run on solar energy, buildings that take rainwater, and take water that we use, like sewage, and clean it up so that we see architecture and cities not as a continued burden on our way of living but we see it as something that actually fixes the environment. We all know that the environment is in deep trouble and we need to have really good design to see if we can actually still fix it. I've never been interested in regular architecture because its always about building buildings that have to look good."

-I am not certain about Martin's last statement, because in fact his buildings have always looked good. His Healthy House, [in TreeHugger here](#), now almost fifteen years old, certainly still does.



Also spectacular is the Fons, "providing for responsible sanitation." this round tower has a composting toilet, a sink, a shower, and a rainwater collection system and cistern at the top. A very elegant curved sliding door rotates around the unit.



We talk to Martin about the the Aerielloft.