



Michelle Kaufman

Is Prefab Dying?

Today there has been a death in the Green Building world.

Michelle Kaufman, of Michelle Kaufmann Designs, the designer of the celebrated “Breeze House” and other popular green homes, has closed her shop. She has announced the end of this way of doing her green homes business was due to “The recent closing of a factory partner as well as the gridlocked lending faced by homeowners, has proved more than our small company can bear.”

I have also heard that Marmol Radziner has also closed its factory designated for the modular green homes, like the one he built for himself on Palms Bl. in Venice CA. That home is currently for sale and I will put it up on my website so you can see it. It is beautiful in everyway and it is in a prime location. It is a show piece home, but finding it hard to find its buyer. It is harder for buyers to spend the same money today that they spent three years ago. Financing is just harder and the threat of job loss more real, to even those in tinsel town.

That left us at Homegirl Inc. thinking it is time to re visit our thoughts of last year.

Last summer, we met to discuss the possibilities of marketing green prefab homes to our clients. We believed that the design based model currently in place was not working. Designer fees and custom plans were required for each home being built. Many were designed and only a few got done due to the homes becoming too costly. Once all the factors got put into the price tag, nine times out of ten, the homeowners were forced to abandon the dream. Theses homes were essentially custom built homes and being manufactured one at a time. This left the builders with all the costs and none of the volume, thus none of the discounts. Of course the model would eventually fail.

We concluded that volume manufacturing had to be more integral to the model. More people would have to be reached at an affordable price. A large base of clients would have to be ready to go before anything would be built.

Michelle Kaufman says she is now exploring, " ...different methods for making this happen." And maybe she will come to this conclusion too. "The reinvention and innovation continues." She says. "It might be time for then (these houses) to leave the nest and go out into the world in a new way.

We believe it is.



MK Breeze House



MK Lotus

