

MARK JOHNSON AND JENNY STAFF JOHNSON | WWW.HOMETTA.COM

Once in a while you stumble across a very creative idea that fills a niche in this town where there just truly aren't many housing choices: a bungalow in the Heights, Montrose or Southamptton; a few Mid-Century Modern in Glenbrook Valley - and then there are Tuscan Tudor Georgian French Ranch. I met with Mark and Jenny Johnson in their Mid-Century, now very modern, home in Avalon Place to discuss their plan to bring small, semi-custom modern homes to the masses.



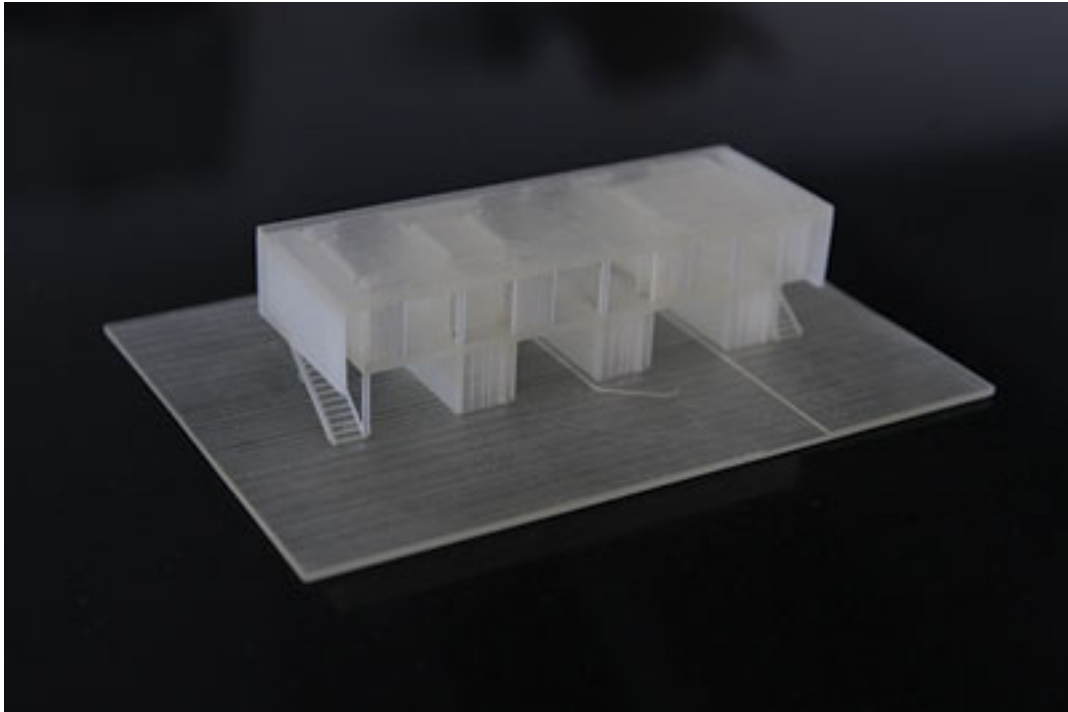
mark johnson | jenny staff | sandra gunn

Education background: Both: Bachelor's in liberal arts; Mark: Master's in teaching, Jenny: Master's in public affairs

Honors/Awards: Treehugger Best Architecture Idea Award, Best of Green Awards 2010; Greater Houston Preservation Alliance Good Brick Award; Houston Heights Association Community Improvement Award; Houston Business Journal Special Recognition. Mark was chosen as a speaker at TEDx Houston 2010.

Current projects: H-Town, a virtual 3-D neighborhood where visitors can tour our houses via their avatars.

Specialty: Selling plans for small, beautiful modern homes by 30 of America's best young, award-winning modern architects. We focus on delivering small home plans that maximize beauty, quality and sustainability without being oversized. They fill the gap in between large, fully custom architectural homes and the mass-produced builder housing that is so often ill-designed.



What drove you to architecture? What do you love most about it?

We started as builders in central Houston and were frustrated by the lack of choices for urban housing beyond the bungalow and the 3-story townhome. We wanted to try something new and started recruiting our friends who were doing excellent work in their architecture practices to help us address the problem. We're most excited about the opportunity to improve the built environment and give homebuyers more options for excellence in their housing choices.

How did you come to live/work in Houston and why have you chosen to make this your home?

We love the opportunity that Houston affords, and the openness of the people to try new things.

Tell us about your home and its green elements.

Our home is a 1956 residence that was designed by the firm Wilson, Morris & Crain, the same firm that designed the Astrodome. After living in it in its original condition for almost five years, we moved out and undertook a major renovation and addition designed by Interloop Architecture. We love the way it interprets classic mid-century elements with a modern slant (literally - the new part of the house is built on a nine degree angle). Though we settled on a rather large square footage to accommodate our growing family and our business, we tried to mitigate the size by choosing cladding, insulation and other systems that would minimize our energy use. We're hoping to get a Smart Meter soon so we can monitor and improve our habits even more! Most importantly, our home was designed and built to last, and we hope one of our children will want to inherit it one day.

Who is your favorite architect and why?

Well, we work with so many wonderful architects that it would be impolitic to choose just one; however, we just returned from a trip to New York where we admired the New Museum building in the Bowery neighborhood, designed by Japanese firm (and recent Pritzker Prize winners) SANAA.

Itching to work on?

We're investigating several innovative collaborations with architecture studios that will help more people access small, beautiful modern homes. Partnerships across disciplines will be key in improving housing delivery systems in this country, and we want to work with designers, builders and others who are trying to solve our housing problems in a meaningful way.

Best places in Houston to hang out?

Discovery Green, Brasil, Armando's.

How can children be encouraged to appreciate architecture?

Exposure will usually do the trick. We take our kids to a lot of art museums, which usually has the side effect of showing them interesting buildings, both old and new.

FAVORITES

AUTHOR Larry McMurtry

CLOTHES DESIGNER Jenna Lyons for J. Crew

HOBBIES Reading, travel, hanging out with our three kids

MEAL Sushi and cold beer

BEST ENCHILADAS Ninfa's

STORE Kuhl Linscomb

SPORTS Scrabble

MUSEUM Lawndale Art Center

ON YOUR IPOD Spoon, Lyle Lovett, Charlotte Gainsbourg

CAR Anything German

VACATION SPOT West Texas

FANTASY DINNER PARTY GUEST Anthony Bourdain, President Obama, Kate Spade, Joan Jett

Sandra Gunn, trendspotter and top producing Realtor for 26 years, can be found at Boulevard Realty, 4408 Morningside Drive or at sandragsunn.com | Hair by Riara | Makeup by Asher Kuhl Linscomb | Photography by Jaime Lagdameo

