

Architects Linda Searl and Joe Valerio know a thing or two about that. When they built their very modern home people didn't know what to make of it. "Once," says Searl, "when we had food delivered, the guy walked up and said, 'Oh, I thought this was a disco.' A lot of people didn't even think it could be a house."

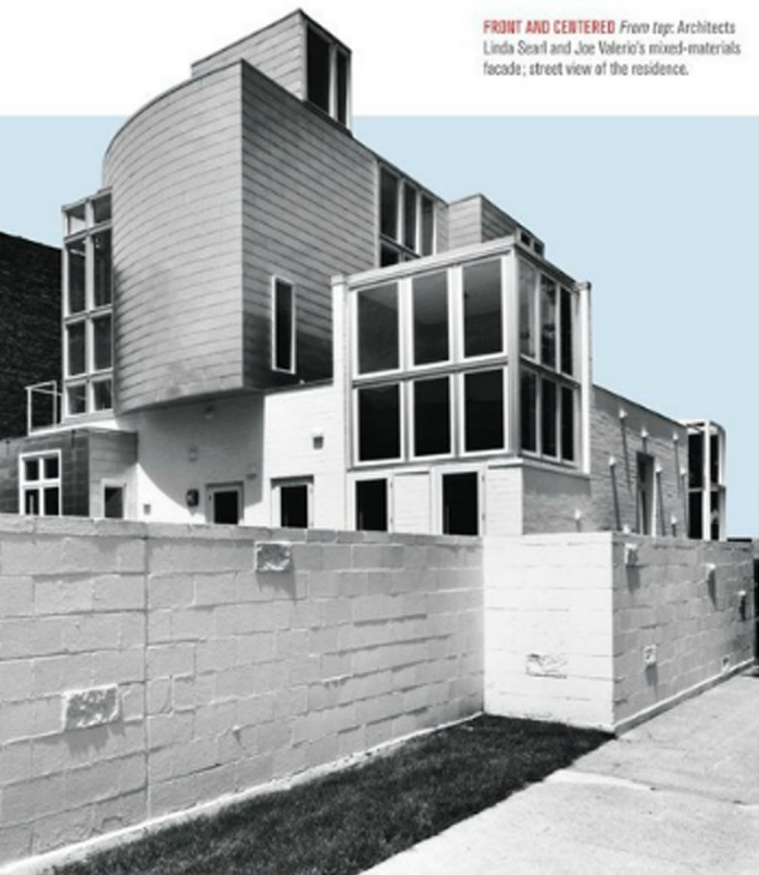
Situated at the corner of Ohio and Oakley, the house is a constellation of staggered boxes sheathed in white-painted masonry and aluminum

shingles. "When we moved in that neighborhood, there was nothing much here that we needed to relate to," recalls Searl. "There was a warehouse across the street on north side, and we still have a school with a big, blank gymnasium wall on the east. We thought the best thing we could do was something that would enliven the street. So our idea had a lot to do with the energy of an urban corner."

Highly animated, almost explosive with dormered elements, the Searl/Valerio residence doesn't play it safe. But it doesn't snub the neighborhood either. While some of its windows are placed high on the walls to lighten the interiors without exposing them to the streets, the ample fenestration itself is a sociable touch—and the perfect geometric accompaniment to



FRONT AND CENTERED From top: Architects Linda Searl and Joe Valerio's mixed-materials facade; street view of the residence.



Full Frontal

Façade fetish, anyone? A new breed of Chicago home puts its coolest front forward **By Thomas Connors**

the homeowners' contemporary furnishings, some of which they designed themselves. And while some elements, like the elliptical protrusion off the second floor, are real eye-catchers, equally engaging are the randomly projected rusticated blocks that punctuate the masonry façade... ■