

# THE GREENAISSANCE MAN



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## NATHAN KIPNIS

**WHY WE LOVE HIM:** Like a renaissance man, Kipnis has mastered disciplines ranging from arts to sciences. Yet in new age style, his oeuvre tends to all things green. His penchant to build fantastical Lego edifices and fully-wired wooden forts led him to choose architecture as a profession before 10. But when the oil embargo hit in 1973, "I realized our resources are limited and we're all going to have to buy into energy conscious design." That's when he knew he wanted to specialize in green design, though there was no name for it yet. But semantics didn't stand in his way; today Kipnis can wax poetic on environmentally sound technology, science, design, politics, values and sports—not to mention his still stellar skateboarding. "On a good day, I can crank nine old-skool 360's," he says gleefully.

**WHAT HE HAS DONE:** Kipnis was in the vanguard when he enrolled in the University of Colorado at Boulder for its environmental design program, then went to Arizona State for a Master of Architecture in energy conscious design. And true to his calling, he's made green design his priority ever since he began practicing in 1985. "At first I'd be lucky to do one green project a year," he admits. But Mayor Daley's 1999 Green Homes for Chicago initiative gave sustainable building a kick-start; Kipnis designed one of the five homes selected to be built and has been going full-tilt with green work ever since. His projects have earned high Energy Star ratings and spreads in national shelter magazines, including *Renovation Style*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Coastal Living* and *Natural Home*.

Q. How would you describe your style?

A. I hate that question. I don't have one. Each project is an opportunity to use the rules that make sense for a specific site and the clients. None of my projects look the same.

Q. So is there a recurring theme in your work?

A. Yes...it all takes sustainability and environmentalism into account. You could say 'high design, low carbon.'

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