



Marco Morelli's 10'x 14' writer's studio in his Longmont backyard.

Trends

A MODERN ESCAPE POD

A local writer finds sanctuary in a pre-fab shed made in Colorado. BY SARAH GOLDBLATT

IT HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED THAT CREATIVITY FLOURISHES IN SOLITUDE. FOR Marco Morelli, a Longmont-based creative writer, the proverbial image of a cabin in the woods persisted as the ideal place to hone his craft. But what he had was an improvised office tucked in the spare bedroom of his 100-year-old farm-worker's cottage—which was fine until his first child was born. The doting new father found it nearly impossible to accomplish any gainful work, particularly once his office was taken over by the baby.

Morelli's effort to find workplace seclusion outside the home led to options that were either too costly or, in the case of a co-op, too noisy and distracting. The self-proclaimed homebody wanted to be close to his family, dogs, and garden, yet still required contained escape from the domestic context of his life.

Morelli envisioned a place along the lines of author Michael Pollan's diminutive writer's refuge in New England to focus his thoughts. In *A Place of My Own*, Pollan details his inquiry into architecture and its relationship to nature through the design and construction of an intentional space "to read and write and daydream." But unlike Pollan, Morelli didn't have the luxury of time or money to consider a site-built option or explore the feng-shui or flow of "chi" in his backyard. Feeling a sense of urgency and lowering his expectations, Morelli searched the Web for pre-fabricated options. What he discovered was Studio Shed, a





A Zen-like San Francisco Bay Area Studio Shed office.



A Studio Shed artist's studio (this photo and below) flooded with natural light.



home-grown solution that was a perfect fit.

Back in 2006, Boulder-based Olympic mountain biker Jeremy Horgan-Kobelski built a backyard shed to store his family's collection of bikes. His friend (and business partner) Mike Koenig, also a bike racer, appreciated the shed's crisp, mid-century modern aesthetic and light-filled interior and asked if he could duplicate it for himself. Studio Shed was born.

Horgan-Kobelski explains that what started out as a small line of utilitarian storage sheds has evolved into a customizable modular system. The company has developed a convertible set of parts allowing space-seekers to configure their own structure online to suit their needs and aesthetic preferences. Once an owner has approved the drawings for their shed and site constraints have been addressed, the selected design moves into fabrication in Studio Shed's factory. "I like to say it's custom, but not custom," says Jason Plumb, VP of Product Development. "Our customers have the ability to tailor a product to their needs from a set number of parts and pieces, like Legos."

According to Plumb, the typical Studio Shed project takes four to six weeks from inception to assembly, and prices start at \$6,000. Following thirty hours of fabrication time, a complex choreography of flat-packing the wall panels for shipping takes place. Windows, roofing and siding are nested within the wall panels to minimize the shipping envelope and maximize the protection of individual parts. With an experienced crew, on-site assembly takes two to three days. And while the company continues to refine the process to be more pre-fab than design-build, they don't want to diminish what makes their brand unique—engaging their customers. "Our clientele want to be part of the creative process," explains Plumb. "They are progressive thinkers who want well-designed space, detached from their home, in which to immerse themselves in their pursuits."

Once Morelli hit "send" to order his 10' x 14' shed, he waited, like an expectant father, for his Studio Shed to arrive. With the help of neighbors, he prepared the foundation and poured the concrete, while pumpkin vines expanded around the empty slab. About a month later, on a searing August day, his backyard retreat arrived on the back of a flatbed truck, neatly wrapped and stacked. As the walls went up in the course of the next 48 hours, Morelli describes feeling a sense of joy and gratitude to see it there for real. And that's no small deal. As he explains, "This was not just a nice place to work. It was an incubator for my vision of what I want to contribute to this world." 

ARTIST STUDIO: ALLEN KRUGHOFF