



# THE MAD HOUSERS

534 Permalume Pl., Atlanta, GA 30318 · (404) 806-6233 · www.madhousers.org

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit our website to view the full calendar and directions to our warehouse.

- Dec 3, Wed: Panel Build. Warehouse, 6:30pm
- Dec 7, Sun: Hut Build. Warehouse, 10am
- Dec 10, Wed: General Meeting. Jake's Ice Cream Inman Park, 6:30pm
- Dec 17, Wed: Panel Build. Warehouse, 6:30pm
- Dec 21, Sun: Hut Build. Warehouse, 10am

## THE ITALIAN JOB

**SALMA ABDULRAHMAN**

This May, the Mad Housers built three huts in Milan for an exhibit at Triennale di Milano, the world-renowned architecture and design museum. The exhibit, "Casa per Tutti" (House for All) dealt with alternative building methods, and socially and economically aware housing.

Triennale, located near downtown Milan, is one of Italy's most prestigious design museums. The "Casa Per Tutti" exhibit, organized by Fulvio Irace and sponsored by the Politecnico di Milano (Milan Polytechnic University), showcased sustainable designs that were environmentally friendly and cost efficient. Although based in Milan, Triennale exhibits have been held all over the world including Japan, India, and Norway.

Gabriele Neri, architect and curator at Triennale, contacted us via e-mail in December 2007 about taking part in their exhibit. Initially, we provided them with our online hut specifications and assembly instructions, but the Triennale design review board upped the ante by offering to fly two Mad Houser volunteers to Italy to build our signature huts. We jumped at the opportunity to represent the Mad Housers at our first international build.

Once we arrived in Milan, our job was to build two full size huts in the main exhibit area of Triennale, and a third hut in the Urban Center Design Gallery. The Urban Center, located inside the Emmanuel Vittoria Galleria, is just steps from the Duomo in downtown Milan.

Before the materials and tools arrived at Triennale, we made some last minute changes to make the build smoother, including leaving out cinder blocks since



there was no need to raise the huts off wet ground. And the Urban Center hut would need two doors (an exit and entrance) as well as ramps to meet safety standards.

The most difficult design issue was how to move the hut panels into the Urban Center gallery – the entrance was only 4'x7'. At 8'x8', the side panels were too large to fit through the front doors, even if carried at an angle. We decided that the side panels could be split down the center, carried into the Urban Center in halves, then reassembled into full panels. It would require shoring up the split center of the panel to make it more stable, but it would allow the panels to fit easily through the doorway.

When we received the first shipment of materials, we were amazed to find perfectly cut sheets of sanded birch plywood. Unlike what we normally use, this was furniture grade plywood. We soon learned that almost all construction in Italy is done with brick, concrete and metal— only furniture makers use wood.

Over the next three days, Triennale provided a constant stream of volunteer help, including architecture students and museum workers. Everyone was excited to see the huts come together one by one.

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*(Italian, Continued from page 1)*

We began by pre-assembling the Urban Center hut at Triennale to make sure the new split side design would work. Then we built the Triennale museum huts. We left off one side of the roof and some of the plywood on one wall for one of the Triennale museum huts. The result was an eye-catching exploded view, allowing visitors to see the interior of the hut all the way down to the studs. The loft appeared to float in mid-air and gave visitors a cut-away view of the roof.

We were exhausted by the time we reached the final day of construction. At the Urban Center in downtown Milan, workers dismantled the previous exhibit to make room for our hut. As we carried in panels and tools, they removed models of skyscrapers, tore out carpet and

dismantled display cases.

As we built the Urban Center hut, we decided not to hang doors in the front and back entrances, saving us time and materials. The final step was to paint the hut the color of Triennale's logo: fire-engine red.

We're excited to now have a European hut build under our tool belts! Nick will post a set of metric hut specifications and instructions to the website. Hopefully what worked in Italy will work in other European countries as well.

*We'd like to thank Triennale for the wonderful opportunity to visit Milan and build huts for an international audience! We'd also like to thank the Mad Housers volunteers, donors and supporters. Without you, none of this would have been possible.*



## **CLIENT INTERVIEW: L**

**ANDY D**

*L [name withheld by request] was the first client to ever receive a "Low Rider" hut. The following is the result of two interviews conducted on April 27<sup>th</sup> and May 4<sup>th</sup>.*

### **How did you come to be homeless?**

Early childhood experiences...before six years old, I guess.

### **What did you do for the next twelve years, until you turned eighteen?**

I was really crazy in high school. I didn't really become any better until I was thirty-three or thirty-four, you know, when I was in Florida.

### **What happened when you were in Florida?**

You remember the old primal scream, primal therapy, gestalt therapy? I started studying that when I was in Orlando. That's when I really began to remember and I would cry every day, this was for about a year. Almost every single day. I would remember everything. Finally, that ended.

### **So, when you were thirty-three or thirty-four, were you already out on the street?**

Oh, yeah. Since 1983, except for jail and living with [a friend]. I lived in Florida for about four years, then I came back to Atlanta.

### **What took you to Florida?**

Gosh, I've been there so many times. I would live with my parents in Atlanta, but I always had this impulse, "go to Florida; live

on the beach". I must have moved in and moved out probably at least ten, fifteen times.

### **What did you do when you moved out?**

Uh, construction work.

### **Did you have a place to stay?**

Oh, yeah, I had an apartment.

### **Why did you move back in and out with your folks?**

Oh, I could not keep a job.

### **Why not?**

At that time, it wasn't so much the alcohol; it was behavior.

### **So when you were twenty-nine or thirty, you went to Florida?**

Yeah, I think I've been to Daytona Beach about three or four different times.

### **What did you do when you were in Florida?**

Worked at a hotel.

### **So you had a place when you were down there?**

Uh huh.

### **So that was three or four years and what happened then?**

Finally got fed up and went back to Atlanta.

### **What did you get fed up with?**

Oh, golly, I don't really know, but I just better go back to Atlanta.

### **When you came back, did you contact your parents?**

Oh, no, I completely gave up on my parents. I moved under the bridge on Peachtree Road. I was under that bridge,

Andy, almost three years. ... Man, it is a dangerous place now.

### **So that was about three years, what happened next?**

Then I moved over... When I first got here... Do you know I've been here and over there [pointing] ... This is almost, at least fifteen years that I've been here and over across the tracks.

### **And why did you leave Peachtree Road... because it got dangerous?**

Oh man, a guy with a pistol came under there, and uh, no, it was three, three guys. And I thought I was going to fight them, I had a big steel piece of pipe, and uh, but when I saw that pistol, I said, "the fight is over."

### **So what happened?**

I ran, went to the store, and called the police. The police finally got there; that's when I moved.

### **What are your biggest challenges, living outside?**

[stammers] I think it's doing laundry. [chuckles] I think food would be number one. In the other location, [the police] came by one time and said everything was fine, not to worry. They came back later and arrested me for trespassing. My court date still has not come up and that was thirty months ago.

### **Where do you get food?**

Out of dumpsters. College kids around here throw away food, clothing... Two weeks ago, I found a twenty in a garbage bag.

### **Do you ever beg for money?**

I quit that.



"When I saw that pistol, I said 'the fight is over'"

*(Continued on page 3)*

(L, from page 2)

**Why did you quit?**

It was too disgusting.

**Is there any benefit to living outside?**

Just the privacy, I guess. But I want to get back into the mainstream, getting employed, restaurant work, photo ID...

**So that's kind of like a goal of yours?**

Oh, yeah, finally where I get a normal paycheck – you know, a piece of paper with a company – so I can start saving money.

**What do you want to do when you start saving money?**

Finally, this is pretty far-fetched now, but an apartment, the very cheapest, obviously...got to have that monthly budget down to a 'T'. Once I get my ID, I need to kind of stay on a roll. I'm still exercising, I'm watching my diet a little bit closer, I try to wait three to four hours between meals, I just kinda need to keep things going.

**Do you have any advice for somebody who is homeless or about to be homeless?**

[My] advice would be to seek psychological help, or at least counseling. I'm assuming that there's a whole lot of homeless people who don't even know how to do that. And of course, if you have faith in God, pray. I think some people are so out of it; they don't know how to get psychiatric help. Oh, me...I just have it so good in a lot of ways. My most basic needs are being met and, oh me...I have got to get back into the working world.

**Why is that important to you? What more do you want that pushes you to get back into the mainstream?**

This is somebody else's land or the state or city or whatever it is. This is not going to last forever. Every now and then, I think about, what if I had a girlfriend? [laughs] I'm fifty-eight. I mean, what is minimum wage? Five-fifty? Five-something? And man, rent is not going to be coming down any time soon, you know. Ooh, me...I'm really at step one, you know.

**So your biggest motivator is that your arrangement is not permanent, and at some point, you could be told that you need to get out of here.**

Uh huh. Yeah, I need to start filtering back into the mainstream...if I made two to three dollars above minimum wage, that would be big time for me. If I could barely afford rent somewhere...stove, refrigerator, heat, a bath! Clothing, music, TV... God, that's what's really motivating me now.

L now has a state ID and a Social Security card. He still lives in a Low Rider.

## VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW: CHAD JUBYNA

SALMA ABDULRAHMAN

Chad Jubyna is a Mad Housers volunteer of 5 years. Salma spoke with him after the group finished a hut build and broke for lunch.

**I noticed you ordered your lunch in Spanish... are you fluent in Spanish?**

I do speak fluent Spanish, and I try to practice it wherever I can because I don't get that much opportunity here in the States. I took four years of high school Spanish, and I was always interested in becoming bilingual or multilingual. I always thought it would lead to more opportunities for travel. I took classes in college, and after that I got to go down to Latin America and South America. I got to live in Chile for a year teaching English. That's where I really became fluent. Then I subsequently got jobs teaching and as a tour leader in Latin America, so I just kept going from there.

**Do you speak any other languages?**

I can speak a little bit of Portuguese because I lived in Brazil for six months. I'm also focusing on French right now. I'm just trying to build my languages as much as possible. I figure it will help me with jobs in the immediate future.

**What are some of the places you've been?**

A lot of South America, a lot of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize... and then also across the United States. I was driving a van with 13 passengers all over the US and Mexico. I got to see the great national parks that the US has to offer, for example Yosemite and the Grand Canyon. So that's been terrific, that's what I want to get back into again, but I'd like to go see places like Asia and Europe as well. Same thing with Africa. Just get to see and compare and contrast the different countries within those continents.

**I'm just curious, what do you bring back as souvenirs?**

Well I have three younger sisters and my parents that I'm always getting gifts for. One time I carried a whole ceramic church – decent size, about a foot and a half tall – and I carried that on buses all over South America so I could bring it back home for Christmas for my parents. It's always a

challenge carrying things. (laughs)

**Have you had any exciting experiences as a tour leader?**

Yes, my very first tour... We were in Belize and we were scheduled to go out to one of the cays, the little islands there. We were going to be staying for a few days. The



hotel was supposed to pick us up by boat, and we waited over an hour and nobody ever came to pick us up. So another guy, just some stranger who had a boat, offered to take us. After waiting a little longer, I reluctantly went with him.

We were about half way in the bay between the mainland and the cay when all of a sudden we see the other guy who was supposed to pick us up. We wave him down, and he comes over, and our guy turns off his engine. But the other guy's boat smacks right into his boat, and all of sudden there's a hole and water coming into the boat, and people are panicking. And I'm in there throwing everybody's luggage into the other boat... that was a little bit of excitement for my first tour..

**It sounds like you're a natural at leading people!**

Well I don't know about leading people, I don't know if I ever looked at it like that. I just always wanted a job where I could travel and be adventurous and see new things. Travel's always been a goal of mine, ever since I was a kid. I think that's where languages fall in as well. I knew that languages and travel go together, so that's always been in my blood I guess.

**Where have you lived growing up?**

I was born in Canada, actually. I was born in Edmonton, Alberta in western Canada. My mom was from there, but my dad was from Connecticut. They met in Chicago, and when I was a baby we moved to the Chicago area and lived there for a few years. Then from second grade through sixth grade I was in Connecticut, and then sixth grade through the first year of college

*(Chad, continued from page 3)*

I was in Springfield, MA and since then my family's moved down to Marietta, GA.

**So you've made your way south with your family?**

Yeah, I was in college when my family moved to Georgia and then I transferred the following school year to Georgia College in Milledgeville, GA.

**What did you study there?**

I have a degree in psychology with a minor in music.

**Where do you see yourself five or ten years from now?**

Ideally I'd love to have my own tour company. Maybe a combination of English school and tour company. That would be my ultimate goal. I've always wanted to have my own business, so that is where I would love to see myself five years from now. And if I'm not able to do that, then moving up within a tour company within the upper management aspect of a tour company.

**And when did you first start volunteering with the Mad Housers?**

About five years ago there was an article in the AJC, right before Thanksgiving... and I remember I actually started the exact same day as another volunteer, Andy Dufek, started.

**What unique skill do you feel you contribute to the Mad Housers?**

Well, I don't know about unique skills, but I'm a very energetic person. I feel like I contribute a lot of energy to the physical demands of the Mad Housers. Whenever there's something that needs doing, something heavy to be carried, I like to be there.

**And let's not forget you have a truck...**

I do have a truck although that's a relatively new acquisition for me.

**Recently you worked with Spanish speaking clients, and on our Mad Housers client flyer.**

Oh yeah, I had the opportunity to translate our new client flyer into Spanish; I'd love to do translations any time the Mad Housers needs me. It's fun and it's great practice as well.

**And you spoke with potential clients?**

It was Nick, and a friend of mine, and myself... we went up to Gwinnett county because we'd heard about the prospect of some new Spanish speaking clients in that area. We actually did come across a camp of Spanish speakers, and we hope to return there in the near future.

**What kind of response did you get?**

I think it was positive overall. We spoke with some people and it looks promising,

so that's why we're going to make a return trip to that area.

**What are your impressions of working with the Mad Housers?**

It's great, I love working with the Mad Housers. Everybody's so easy to get along with. I think we all have the common denominator of wanting to help the homeless, and that's something I've always wanted to do. I wish our country were more interested - more government and more people. That's why it's great to find a group of people who are committed to doing such a noble thing. It's such a positive feeling for me to be a part of that.

**What are your impressions of homelessness in other countries you've visited?**

Well a lot of the countries I've visited in Latin America are a good bit poorer than the United States, and you do see homelessness everywhere. In a lot of the slums of Latin America, there are makeshift shacks that are very similar to what you might see homeless people using here. But there you have whole communities of that, they call them "new towns" and they're almost tolerated, like a normal part of society. It's a little complex to try to explain. You do see in Mexico City or, say, Rio de Janeiro, you see actual neighborhoods of put-together shacks. Whereas you wouldn't find that here so much in the US. It's more just individuals putting together their own things in the woods somewhere or living under a bridge somewhere. So they actually have communities, and they become organized and start to make demands. I know in Peru, they call these people "invaders", but they work together as groups and communities and once they're established the government can't kick them off that land. And after a while they'll start demanding water and electricity and things like that. That was in Peru, in Lima especially.

**How do you want to work with MH in the future?**

Well... I love the Mad Housers concept and I believe in what they do. I like the way it's set up - it's laid back, but at the same time we get a lot done. But if you can't make it one week, that's OK, it's not gonna ruin the organization. The flexibility is really nice. I think in the future, I'd like to continue what we're doing. It's just nice to help as many people as possible. Continuing to find new clients is the greatest challenge of the Mad Housers. We can always come up with the other things, the supplies and the donations, and the volunteers to put the huts together. But I think finding the clients is the biggest challenge.

**What would you like to see MH do**

**differently or improve upon?**

I think Mad Housers is doing everything they can and what they should be doing, but at the same time it would be nice to be able to help more and more people, because you see hundreds of homeless people, and you hear about the number of homeless that are out there. It would be nice to maybe have brainstorming sessions about, not necessarily ways that Mad Housers could expand, but maybe just thinking of new ideas of how we can help more and more people.

It would be nice to get a group of people together at a cafe, maybe once a month, like an invitation of people and ideas, to have a brainstorming session. Because I just don't think our government is doing enough. And since we have great people like we do with the Mad Housers, who are interested in helping the homeless, maybe we can attract more people with new ideas, who can maybe start organizations themselves that go in other directions. Maybe we can be the spark...



Photo by Michael Mumper

**BUILDING A BETTER ORGANIZATION**

Salma Abdulrahman, Nick Hess, and Cindy Mitchell (not pictured) took part in a free non-profit training seminar. The 3-day seminar, taught by Konzept Consulting Group, was organized and hosted by Sevananda, a local natural foods store and co-op in Little 5 Points. The seminar provided valuable training in legal issues, Board of Director development, fund raising, grant writing, volunteer recruitment and networking.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2008 — 2009**

- Salma Abdulrahman — President
- Cindy Mitchell — Vice President
- Susan Lee — Treasurer
- Michael Ann Price — Secretary
- Will Barton
- Kurt Haas
- Nick Hess
- Frank Jeffers
- Shauna Mettee
- Gerry Weber

## ABOUT MATERIAL DONATIONS

Folks frequently contact us about donating non-construction materials, such as clothing, for us to distribute to our clients. Sadly, we don't really have the resources to properly store or distribute these items, but never fear — here are three great Atlanta locations that will put your donations to good use!

### FURNITURE

Our landlord, the **Furniture Bank of Metro Atlanta**, has experienced a significant decline in furniture donations the past month. At the same time the need for their services is greater than ever. Please tell your friends and family to think of the Furniture Bank if they have household furniture they want to donate. All donations go directly to families moving out of homelessness, battling HIV/AIDS, and fleeing domestic violence. They don't sell anything & all donations are tax-deductible. Most needed Items:

- Mattresses and box springs
- Dressers
- Dinette sets
- Coffee tables and end tables

*The Furniture Bank offers free pick-up in Atlanta and Fulton, Cobb, DeKalb and Gwinnett Counties. Donations can be scheduled by calling 404-355-8530 ext. 222 or via the Online Donation Form at [www.furniturebankatlanta.org](http://www.furniturebankatlanta.org)*

### CLOTHES + TOILETRIES

Stop by **Metropolitan Artifacts** in Brookhaven, and donate your extra pillows, blankets, sheets, and toiletries. Store owner Bruce Cusmano collects the donations and distributes them to local homeless shelters. Bruce collects these donations all year long so don't forget him after winter is over!

- individual sized toiletries
- coats, scarves, gloves, hats
- soap, shampoo, lotion
- feminine products
- razors, shaving cream
- toothbrushes, toothpaste
- towels, washcloths
- bed linens, pillows, blankets

*Metropolitan Artifacts is at 4783 Peachtree Rd, Atlanta, GA 30341, or call 770-986-0007 for directions. Items can be dropped off Monday-Saturday from 10am – 5pm.*

### BICYCLES

**Task Force for the Homeless**, in partnership with the **Sopo Bicycle Cooperative** of East Atlanta is developing an Earn-a-Bike Program, open to any and all people served by the Task Force. The primary goal of the program is to give clients a free, sustainable, and convenient way to get around the city, bridging the gap that exists right now between access and income.

After completing volunteer shop hours, a client will be eligible to earn his own bicycle equipped with lights, locks, a helmet and water bottle. Clients will also be eligible to earn bikes by meeting other criteria, such as sustaining full-time employment.

To get the program up and running, they need donations of bikes, bike parts, locks, helmets, water bottles, messenger bags, time, skills, knowledge and financial contributions.

*To find out how you can help, please contact Jeremy Wisham at [jeremy@homelesstaskforce.org](mailto:jeremy@homelesstaskforce.org) or 404-230-5000 ext#126.*

## ODDS AND ENDS



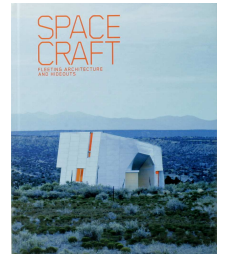
We have a new hut design, the “hi hat”, which features the same base as our “classic” hut but has a much higher shed roof . Three have been deployed so far.

Special thanks goes to the **North Decatur Presbyterian Church**, who helped us put together the first hi hat prototype.

There's an **Athens chapter** of Mad Housers starting up! Contact Jay at (315) 404 1690 for more information.

The Mad Housers welcomes **Cindy Mitchell** as our new Vice President! Congratulations Cindy!

We've been mentioned in a German book of architecture, “**Space Craft: Fleeting Architecture and Hideouts**”.



## FEEDBACK FORM

- I'd like to volunteer
- I'd like to make a donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- I have materials to donate
- I'd like my donation to go to the Athens chapter
- I know someone who needs shelter
- I know a campsite
- Please remove me from your mailing list

*You can use the back of this form for additional details.*

*Mad Housers, Inc. is incorporated as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. All donations are tax-deductible.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State & ZIP

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number       Call me

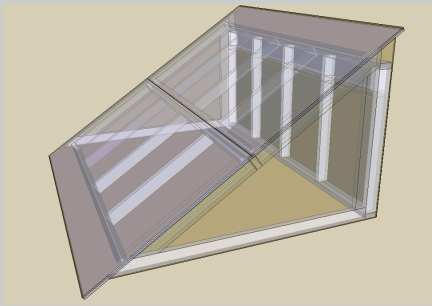
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Email Address       Add me to your email list

Send all correspondence to:  
The Mad Housers, 534 Permalume Pl., Atlanta, GA 30318

## TECH: SKETCHUP: QUICK N' EASY CAD

NICK HESS

Building a hut isn't difficult. Drafting hut blueprints, however, can be difficult and tedious, and requires some specialized skills. In the past twenty years, computers have come to the rescue through computer-aided design (CAD) programs; unfortunately, using CAD programs also can be difficult and tedious, and requires specialized skills. As a result, the official



From plan...

Mad Houser plans on the website have been scans of old, almost obsolete hand-drawn blueprints, which lacked various design improvements - until recently.

Over the past few months, the Mad Housers have started using Sketchup, a free, simple, yet powerful 3D modeling package given away by Google, to update, improve and clarify our designs.

Furthermore, Sketchup has allowed us to quickly design new prototypes on the computer before spending hundreds of dollars in lumber and hours of volunteer time in construction.

Working with Sketchup is almost as simple as working with an ordinary, two-dimensional drawing program, but with a wicked trick: its ability to 'pull' a flat polygon into a three-dimensional solid object. Extruding flat shapes into solids makes it easy to turn a flat drawing into a solid model. Furthermore, solid objects can be grouped together and turned into 'components', which can then be duplicated as many times as needed.

Using Sketchup, the Mad Housers pulled rectangles up into solids to build stud and plywood components, glued those lumber components together to make panels, and snapped the panels into structures. Projections of the models were then turned into new blueprints and put online.

*The models, along with updated blueprints and assembly instructions, are now available for free on the Mad Housers website at <http://madhousers.org/construction>*



To prototype

## UPCOMING ART AUCTION

The Mad Housers wish to give a shout-out to local Atlanta metal artist Derrick Spivey, who has generously donated several pieces for auction. They range from wall hangings to yard sculptures. We'll be auctioning the pieces on eBay the first week of December — check our website for more information.



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