

homework

The Modern Playhouse

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About a year after we moved into our midcentury modern home in Denver's Krisana Park neighborhood, our son, Alexander, was born. His little brother, Peter, followed a couple of years later, and soon my wife, Jessica, was making the case for a backyard clubhouse for our boys. Of course, not just any clubhouse would do. We couldn't picture one of those snap-together plastic concoctions amid our tract's Eichler-inspired houses. The architecture was a big part of what drew us to Krisana Park in the first place, just as it has put the enclave on the map in recent years for other lovers of glass walls, beamed ceilings and clerestory windows. We wanted our kids' home-away-from-home to reflect some of that same spirit.

the mother of invention

Problem was, we couldn't find much in the way of out-of-the-box midcentury clubhouses despite the resurgent interest in the genre overall. So, Jessica suggested I try my hand at building one of my own design from scratch. She assured me I was good at that sort of thing; never mind that I am not an architect, builder or carpenter and never have been accused of having any aesthetic sense. She said that I would wind up enjoying the experience and that Alexander, who was soon to turn 3, could even help. That was in the winter of 2008; by spring, she had me convinced. In late May, we broke ground.

I started out thinking it would be completed in a few weeks, but absent a hard and fast schedule, it wound up consuming most weekends last summer. At least we set a firm can't-miss deadline: Alexander's birthday party. We decided we would celebrate with a ribbon cutting in addition to a birthday cake. Lots of kids would be invited, so the pressure was on.

The design was truly cocktail-napkin stuff. I wanted it to be sturdy and decided to employ the basics I'd picked up from repairing household decks over the years. I wanted it raised off the ground on the highest part of our yard to give the kids a vantage point and also to support a slide and ladder. I figured it would be



The shed-roof play structure shares an MCM palette with the house.

