

# LUXURY HOME *quarterly*

REFAB, OUTSIDE  
THE BOX

**HUF HAUS & dotGreen Inc.**  
REDEFINE PREFAB LIVING IN AMERICA

+ A PEEK INSIDE *the Hawaiian*  
*island estates of Zak Architecture*



# HUF HAUS REVISITED

AFTER A YEAR IN  
THE AMERICAN MARKET,  
GERMAN COMPANY  
HUF HAUS  
HAS A FOOTHOLD

TEXT BY ZACH BALIVA

HUF  
EST. 1912  
HAUS



ART  
HUF 9 HAUS  
BLACK

**I**T MIGHT SEEM STRANGE that Old World-based HUF HAUS is now in a Cleveland suburb, but the successful prefab housing giant has made no secret of its intent to expand. Over the past several years, the German company has brazenly pushed across many parts of Europe and also into China. Then, in 2007, HUF HAUS discovered a way to ship their panels by water. The breakthrough opened still newer markets across the ocean, and dotGreen Inc.—HUF HAUS’ US sales and marketing office in Cleveland Heights—was born. *Luxury Home Quarterly* featured dotGreen in the spring of 2010, and since then president Alexander Kolbe has been hard at work to crack the US market and prove that HUF HAUS homes are set apart from traditional American prefabricated products.

Next year marks HUF HAUS’ centennial, and the current HUF house model is similar to the company’s hallmark design developed in the 1970s. Although business grew at healthy rates for many years, shipping methods prevented HUF HAUS from expanding beyond Europe. “England accounted for almost half of our revenue in 2007, and we wanted to come to the United States,” Kolbe says. Although expatriates, tourists, and members of the military who had seen a HUF house in Europe would often call from the US to make inquiries, water-based shipping would not work for the company’s wall panels.

That all changed when HUF HAUS got involved in a luxury prefab project in China and found a way to manipulate their designs so panels would fit in a container of 40 feet in length. “This was a major breakthrough, and we became a global player,” Kolbe says. Just one year later, dotGreen opened to the public.





le in Germany build a home once in  
lifetime and pass it on to their off-  
g. We are building homes that last.”

ANDER KOLBE, PRESIDENT



HUF  
SPECIAL GREY  
HAUS

ted actively marketing in January of  
ring a New York-based PR firm and  
s in magazines. In just one year, he  
er 1,000 inquiries, and HUF HAUS  
completed its first US home near Seattle.

ny of its American counterparts, dot-  
s no specific floor plans. “When some-  
a HUF HAUS home, we meet them on  
nd start with a blank piece of paper,”  
. The approach allows his designers to

factor in views, sunlight, wind, neighborhood,  
client requirements, and other issues. When  
clients request more guidance, Kolbe uses HUF  
HAUS models ART 3, ART 6, ART 8, and ART  
9 as starting points.

Kolbe and staff have learned a lot in their early  
months. “American homes are usually larger with  
more bedrooms, bathrooms, and walk-in closets,”  
he says. “They are generous and grand when com-  
pared to European homes.” Kolbe has made sure

to solicit feedback and is now developing specific  
homes for his American customers. Because dot-  
Green homes are fully customized, the plans he’s  
developing will still be used only as inspiration—  
Kolbe wants to cater more to his new audience.

This year, dotGreen will continue to roll out  
classic American floor plans. Examples include a  
12,000-square-foot mountain lodge, a sprawling  
subtropical Florida cabana, and a single-story  
ranch house. “We plan to offer a broad portfolio



HUF  
ASSORTED  
HAUS

### Top Design Elements of HUF HAUS Homes

1. German engineering is known for its admirable qualities, including reliability, precision, and longevity.
2. Homes are preconstructed in a controlled environment to produce the best possible structure available—not the cheapest.
3. The design is manipulable. All homes are fully customizable, from their floor plans and technical specifications to the selection of materials.
4. Expansive glass allows for frameless floor-to-ceiling glazing, bringing nature indoors while giving each home a timeless, modern appearance.
5. HUF HAUS makes a minimal environmental impact. Due to the extensive amount of work completed in the factory, the firm can put up prefab luxury homes with limited disturbance to the surrounding landscape.







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HUF 6 HAUS  
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### HUF HAUS

HUF HAUS is underway on an American project that will use European passive-house methods to dramatically reduce energy dependency and ideally achieve LEED Gold status. The company strives to demonstrate how far it can push today's technologies, and common sustainable elements of a HUF HAUS home include the following:

- insulated roofs and walls with R-Values of 32.4 and 34.5 respectively
- triple-glazed windows with R-values of 9.5
- passive-solar design elements (large overhangs, etc)
- air- or ground-source heat pumps
- tandem heat pumps for water and home
- underfloor radiant heating
- programmable thermostats
- LED lights
- Energy Star appliances
- cross ventilation
- proper shading of window and doors
- dual-flush toilets
- gray-water systems
- rain-water harvesting;
- photovoltaic modules for electricity.



ART  
HUF 6 HAUS  
WHITE







of homes, specifically designed for US customers, that we will then customize," Kolbe says.

Kolbe has discovered one strategy that helps Americans embrace the idea of the luxury prefab. "I avoid the word 'modular,'" he says. His product comes from Germany, which can help overcome negative stereotypes associated with factory homes. "DotGreen provides proper German engineering," he says. "The way we build has nothing in common with a typical prefab home." Modular homes are cells of rooms, often limited to the width of the truck in which they are shipped. HUF HAUS uses panel construction that creates single wall sections up to forty feet in length. The walls are not limited to forty feet because they can be placed in a row. "Our method gives us maximum flexibility, and we can be absolutely unique," Kolbe says.

At dotGreen and HUF HAUS, the idea of luxury is in the details. "Stick-build homes have luxuries on the surface but use hollow walls with no

thermal mass," Kolbe says. "Our products are made of solid wood panels with amazing insulation. They are eleven inches thick and incredibly sturdy." A HUF house, therefore, offers certain advantages over a conventional home, two of them being peace and quiet. Second-floor footsteps and mechanical noise are both eliminated through the use of concrete ceiling panels with a floating screed pad and additional sound insulation. The homes also boast massive thermal properties and are fitted with exterior blinds. The electric shades are adjustable to any height and angle to block the sun and cool the house, and, in combination with the clerestory windows, they create a natural airflow throughout each home.

Other extras include upscale products, and dotGreen uses an internal kitchen and furniture company for built-ins, kitchens, and walk-in closets comparable to full dressing rooms. Door frames are perfectly flush with walls and invisible when shut thanks to hidden hinges. Even the homes' posts and frames are glue-laminated from

spruce so they do not warp or rip. Everything is meticulously detailed, designed, and constructed in the HUF HAUS factory.

Naturally, HUF HAUS and dotGreen are introducing some standard European features. All glass panels are frameless, and exterior doors are heavy-duty. The windows have a distinctive European mechanism enabling them to either open inward like a door or tilt inside vertically to capture fresh air. Waterproof exterior balconies use gorgeous frameless railings, and roofs feature durable concrete tiles in place of shingles.

Prefab and durability do not always go hand in hand, but that is an American perception Kolbe looks to challenge. "People in Germany build a home once in their lifetime and pass it on to their offspring," Kolbe says. "We are building homes that will last." On all continents, HUF HAUS maintains its high level of quality, and soon Americans too could be handing down the company's home's from generation to generation. ■

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