



## BUILDING THE HOUSE FANTASTIC

"Architects can experiment with texture more in small spaces," says Phyllis Richardson, author of *XS: Big Ideas, Small Buildings*, a book about modern architecture on a human scale. "Smaller buildings invite touch, are more approachable, more welcoming. People are still impressed by big architectural projects but with smaller buildings the reaction is stronger: you'll hear people saying, 'Wow! Isn't that fantastic?'"

Though some of the structures in the book are modern-day follies, all have an underlying practical purpose. Martin Ruiz de Azúa's inflatable 'Basic House' (2) folds away to fit in the owner's pocket and was designed to be a cheap and portable temporary shelter. It costs \$50 (about £35), so it's affordable, and could be used to help refugees or people made homeless after a natural disaster. Another, 'Icos' (6), was designed for scientists to live in while observing the fragile forest canopy. Richardson says architects are becoming more aware of how their creations relate to the environment: "Do they affect the landscape, do they enhance it? I can't think of any architect who isn't thinking about this."

So are these buildings art or are they architecture? "That's one thing we explore in the book," she says. "It's a touchy subject with architects, but yes, a lot of them are art, they're sculpture." After seeing so many imaginative projects, did Richardson conclude that less is more? "Hmm... I think *smaller* is more," she ponders, "Or at least I would say that by the end of the book I had decided that smaller isn't less." (*XS: Big Ideas, Small Buildings*, Thames & Hudson, £14.95), CELIA WOOLFREY