The cabin in (and from) the woods

Parked in a Somerset valley is a mobile home built by architect Piers Taylor for his daughter, using the trees that surround it. Tom Dyckhoff pays a visit.

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things differently. "Going to Australia made me see how far
I had drifted from where I'd wanted to go. Taylor had
studied architecture in Mexico as a teenager under
perhaps its greatest living architect, Cesar
Bezarrin, famous for his social and
environmentally engaging buildings, that, in Bezarrin's
words, "would put your heart gently..."
And this is what had fired up the young
Piers Taylor. This is what fired up the middle-aged Piers Taylor.
"I spent a lot of time chain sawing a
house for a maestro," he says, still smiling. "I'd had enough
of that." The Calcutta studio, as Taylor puts it in his
resignation email, is "deliberately short-term". It would
considered "slaves to the sun" (architects like working
during裴ous hours for peanuts), and, driving everything,
be "provocative and peremptory". Since his Calcutta crisis, Taylor has
made sure everything he does, he does to test an idea.

He stopped working. We arrive at his
precarious and primitivist mobile
house, which is perched just outside
his family home in a wooded valley
between Roth and the Ml. It is part-
made from an abandoned timber
house from the surrounding wood in
which Taylor and co-operatively
with his neighbours, grew your
own architecture. Each street has
the same 2x2x2x2 dimensions, designed
to maximise use of the
timber cut from each tree. Plywood
left over from construction was
clamped up for the inside walls
and the joists, including two staircases.
The insulation was scoured. The
doors came from a shop. The roof
lights were wood. It is a milk
museum made from a source.
Total cost (including block) 47,000.
The furniture, tiger chaise and
staircase finish up the price.
It is designed to be transported
directly into the outside, explains
him, that "you just don't
get in a normal house. I spent more time outside.
We sit on the steps, collect logs. When it rains it's
lovely. It's a really happy thing to say,
you can even hear the rain on the
trees falling". In high winds and storms "I'm more worried about
our car. It's ever changing how she spends the day."

After a few weeks there, it's taught
him "there are other ways of living." This generation,
of course, is being compelled to do so, due to the
crises. Perhaps it's in some, that
crisis. Perhaps it's in the
innovation that has come
out of this moment. Taylor is back,
looking round the edges but beautifully
detached. "We are the
wood rangers. We are the
innovation. We are the
innovation."

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