

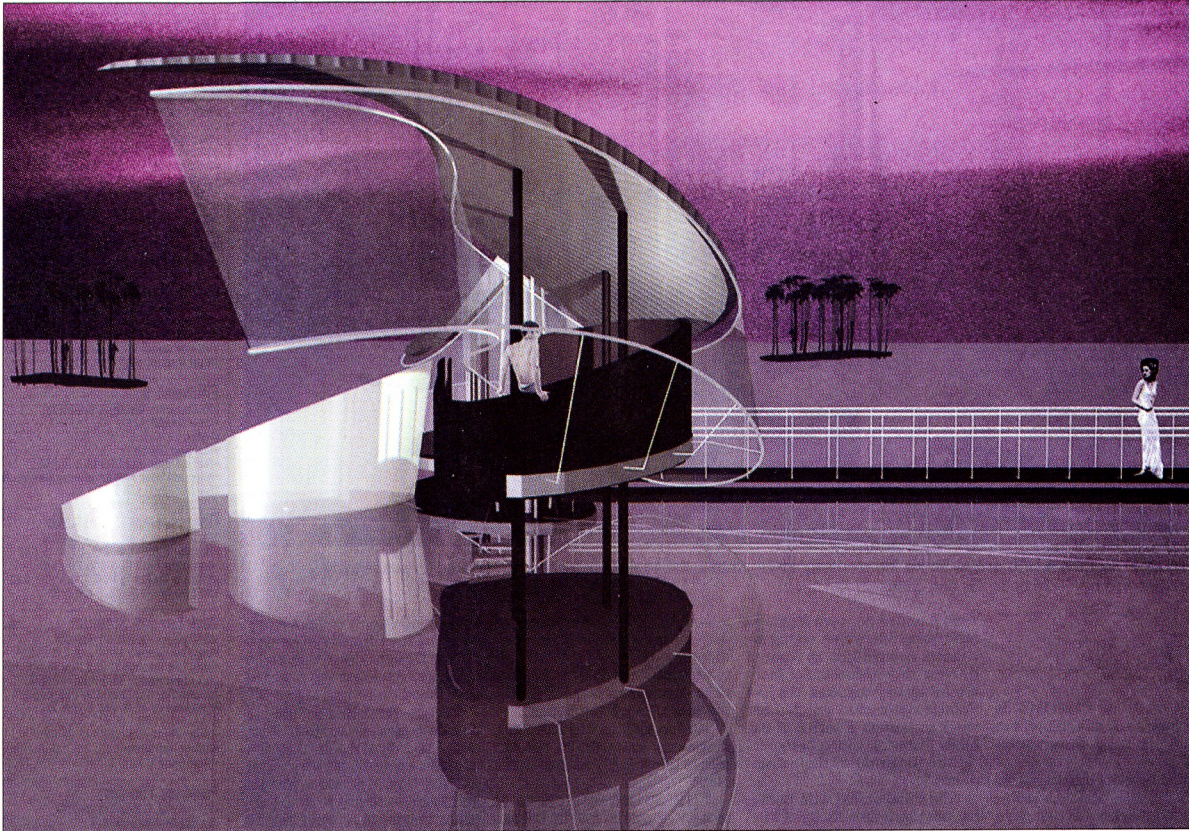
THE TIMES

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SECTION D



AN "ECO-SPA," designed by Lindy Roy for the Okavango River Delta in Botswana, would include floating guesthouses to reduce its environmental impact.

Creating brave new spaces

Fantastical design based 'in reality'

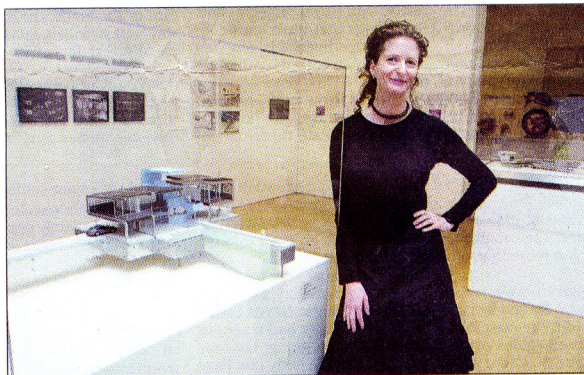
By Robert Taylor
TIMES STAFF WRITER

IS LINDY ROY the architect of the future? As a computer-savvy designer, she is part of a new generation that doesn't do its thinking at a drafting table with pencil and paper but with the kind of software originally devised to create cars and jetliners.

No wonder her work, now on display at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, looks so fluid. The museum's curator of architecture and design, Joseph Rosa, pointed out that digital design and production methods are resulting in new forms that are "smooth, supple and morphed."

At the museum, the computer-generated renderings, sleek model buildings and video images suggest a fantastic world of the future. They seem unreal at first, but as Darrin Alfred, a curatorial associate, pointed out, construction drawings exist for everything. If this is the future, it's being built right now.

Roy, born in South Africa in 1963, has



GREGORY URQUIJAGATIMES

ARCHITECT LINDY ROY'S model of a pool house, shown here in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, first took shape on her computer.

completed just one project so far: a New York showroom for Vitra, the Swiss furniture maker. The old warehouse has been remodeled with bridges, balconies, glass balustrades and lots of natural light.

Other designs include:

- An "eco-spa" resort with guest-

houses floating among the papyrus on the Okavango River Delta in Botswana in southern Africa.

- A streamlined, modular outpost for extreme skiing near Valdez, Alaska, with helicopter pads on the roof.

- A bar in New York City's meat-packing district with seating suspended

EXHIBIT

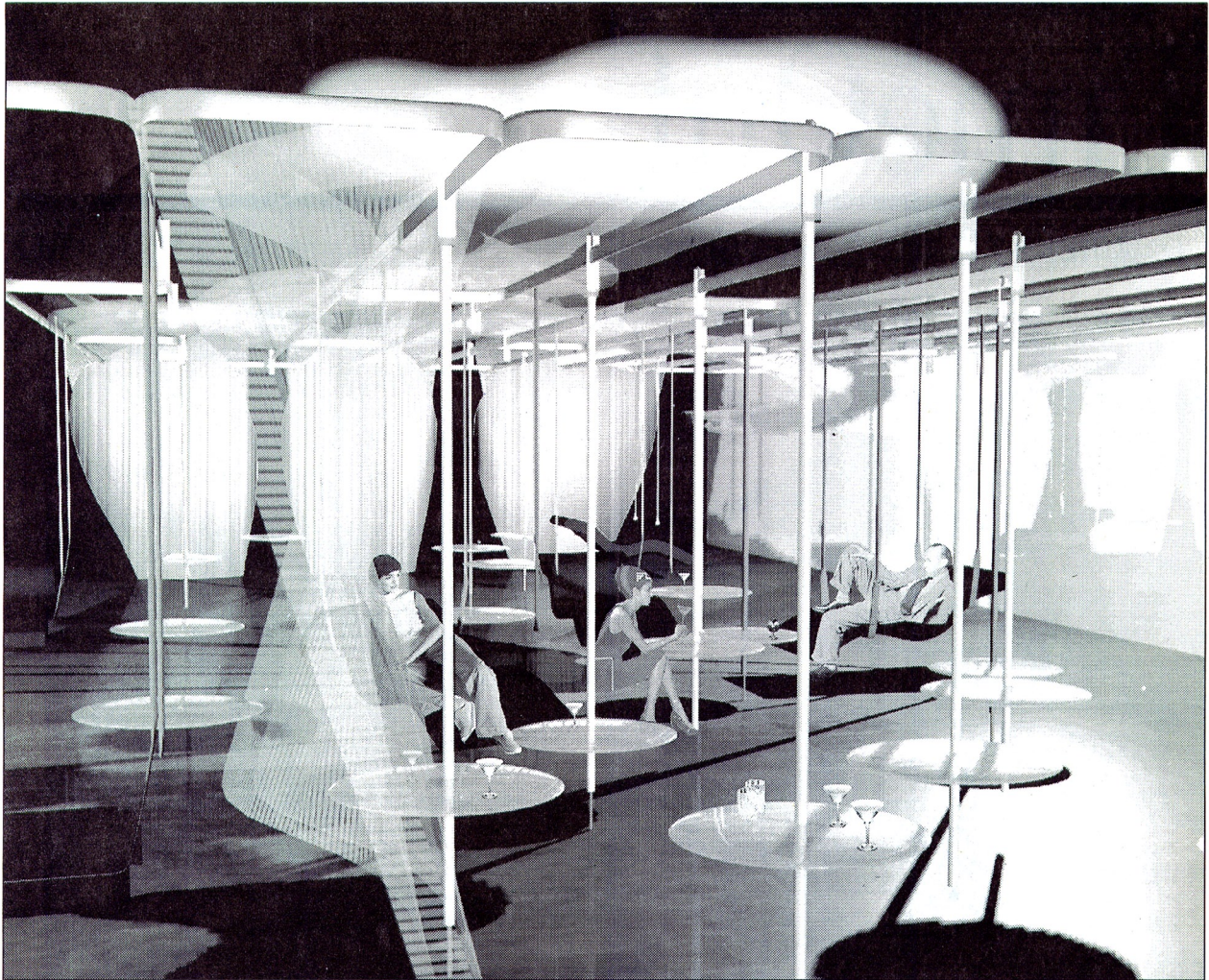
- **WHAT:** "ROY/design series 1," architecture by Lindy Roy
- **WHERE:** San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
- **WHEN:** 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Thursdays, 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday-Tuesday through Sept. 7
- **HOW MUCH:** \$10 general, \$7 seniors, \$6 students; free the first Tuesday of each month
- **CALL:** 415-357-4000
- **ONLINE:** Roy's designs and projects can be explored through an interactive feature at www.sfmoma.org/roy

from the room's metal framework, which originally held carcasses.

Two other projects, a curvaceous, expansive pool house on Long Island and low-cost housing in Houston, are on the verge of being built. But "buildings" are not what Lindy Roy is all about.

"I'm not someone who is absolutely passionate about buildings," Roy said in an interview. "If you asked me to name my favorite architect, I'd have to think a moment."

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IN THIS DESIGN FOR A BAR in New York's former meatpacking district, the framework that once was used for suspending carcasses would now hold up tables and chairs.

Roy

FROM PAGE 1

Her work at SFMOMA is billed not as architecture but “groundbreaking design solutions.”

Asked how she discovered architecture, Roy recalled a visitor to her high school art class in South Africa who explained that architects don't design buildings, they make space. “I didn't know what he meant,” she said, “but it sounded like such a wonderful endeavor — creating space.”

Roy graduated from the University of Cape Town in 1985 with a bachelor's degree in architecture but left for the United States before completing her studies. “Basically, there was a state of emergency on campus. There was a very real crisis of housing and resources and enormous disparities under apartheid.”

Roy earned a master's degree at Columbia University and in

1998 founded her own studio in New York. She won a young architects competition sponsored by New York's Museum of Modern Art three years later. The San Francisco museum selected her work to launch a series of exhibits featuring young designers “at the forefront of their disciplines.”

She collaborated with Berkeley photographer Richard Misrach to document “Cancer Alley,” the stretch of the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, which is lined with refineries and chemical plants interspersed with housing. Roy's vision is to reclaim key sites by turning industrial river barges into new “landscapes” for libraries, computer labs, sports facilities and floating gardens.

She was one of six winners in a competition to design affordable housing in Houston, and several of her houses are about to be built. The prototype is a three-bedroom, two-bath, 1,500-square-foot house that can be constructed for \$85,000. To make

it comfortable in hot weather without the expense of air conditioning, the roof is “lifted and twisted into the wind,” as Roy explained, and there is a line of ceiling fans through the house.

At first glance, Roy's designs may seem otherworldly, but she insists they are “grounded in reality.”

“The African resort is not a fantasy — you lessen the impact on the site by building things that float,” she said. The proposed bar in New York's meatpacking district, which happens to be downstairs from her design studio, takes advantage of the industrial-strength metal framework at ceiling level. “It's free, so why not suspend the furniture from it?”

Neal Benezra, SFMOMA's director, said Roy's projects show that things that were once considered experimental is now “not just buildable, but eminently practical.”

Curator Rosa explained that computerized design allows architects to create three-dimen-

sional models on a computer and send the files directly to be produced. Designs don't have to be created as models then translated to detailed drawings.

“People think that computers give designers less control,” Rosa said. “Actually it means they can take more control. It's very much like the Gothic period, allowing architects to return to being artisans in control of what they're making.”

Roy is proving that architecture can be invigorated by new means of production, he added. But beyond that, they may prove to be profoundly influential. In the book that accompanies the SFMOMA exhibit, Rosa comments:

“Roy's ribbonlike surfaces, which fold gently into the structure or the landscape, point the way for a new generation of 21st century architects.”

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