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Renderings of various views of Wing House, including from above. BELOW: A part of the 747 being placed on site.

LANDED PROPERTY

THE RECYCLING LIFESTYLE TAKES ON JUMBO PROPORTIONS

IT IS NOT UNUSUAL TO HAVE A PRIVATE PLANE CUSTOM-FITTED TO FEEL LIKE A FLYING HOME. But what about a home built largely from a plane? Francie Rehwald takes the relationship between man and jet to the next level by constructing her house out of a decommissioned jumbo jet.

Called Wing House, Rehwald is using USD40,000 worth of parts from an old Boeing 747-200 jumbo jet from a scrapyard in the Mojave Desert to build her dream home. The parts were too big to truck on the roads to the 55-acre (22.26-hectare) site of the house in the hills of Malibu, California. The pieces had to be airlifted by helicopter, with sections of highway being closed off to allow for, the transport.

Rehwald, whose family owns Mercedes Benz dealerships across California, had approached architect David Hertz in 2005 to construct an environmentally friendly home out of recycled industrial waste. She wanted her house to look "feminine" and, oddly enough, Hertz came up with the idea to use parts from a jumbo jet. As Hertz explains on his website: "It soon became apparent, that in fact, an aeroplane wing itself could work. In researching aeroplane wings and superimposing different aeroplane wing types on the site to scale, the wing of a 747, at over 2,500 square feet (232.26 square metres), became an ideal configuration to maximise the views and provide a self-supporting roof with minimal additional structural support needed. As we analysed the cost, it seemed to make more sense to acquire an entire aeroplane and to use as many of the components as possible, like the Native American Indians used every part of the buffalo."

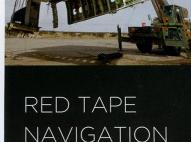
WING HOUSE

by Thusitha De Silva

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It took a long time to get the necessary government approvals to build Francie Rehwald's Wing House. The Malibu site lies under an LAX flight path and the Federal Aviation Administration raised official concerns at a planning permission commission early in the process. The reason for the FAA's concerns was that once built, the house could look like a crash site from the air with debris strewn across a wide area. The FAA required that the house be marked, and Hertz agreed to paint numbers on the wing pieces to alert pilots that Wing House is not a crash site. In all, Rehwald and Hertz had to get permission from 17 different government agencies in California.

The house and various surrounding structures are built out of aircraft pieces that measure 230 feet (70 metres) long, 195 feet (59.4 metres) wide from wing tip to wing tip, and 63 feet (19.2 metres) tall. The plane's wings form the two main roof sections of the multi-level house. All the sections of the jet plane will be used in some aspect of the project — which includes buildings such as a cockpit meditation chamber and a fuselage art studio. The first class cabin deck is the guest house, while an animal barn for housing endangered species is made from the lower half of the fuselage that formed the cargo hold.

Rehwald considers herself a staunch environmentalist and believes that the structure will be a sustainable, green alternative to conventional construction. Hertz notes on his website that the green aspect of the project was important: "The recycling of the 4.5 million parts of this 'big aluminium can' is seen as an extreme example of sustainable reuse and appropriation. American consumers and industry throw away enough aluminium in a year to rebuild our entire commercial aeroplane fleet every three months." But the concept of the house has had its critics, who feel that there are other options to recycling planes that do not require the construction of a USD2-million luxury mansion. The house is scheduled to be ready by the end of this year.