OMB Control No. 1024-0018
expiration date 03/31/2026

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Vincelette Futuro, House
Other names/site number: Futuro House, K04751
Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 4388 Deep Grass Lane
City or town: Houston State: DE County: Kent
Not For Publication: [ ] Vicinity: [X]

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

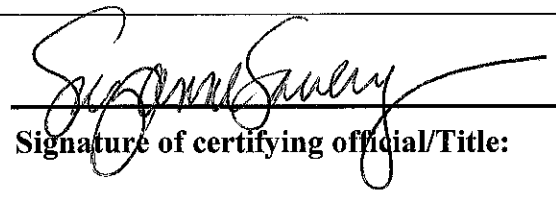
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _X_ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property _X_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national _X_statewide _X_local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

_X_A ___B _X_C ___D



November 16, 2023

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Vincelette Futuro | Kent, Delaware
Name of Property | County and State

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Roger G. Reed — December 26, 2023

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:	X
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Vincelette Futuro
Name of Property

Kent, Delaware
County and State

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	X
District	
Site	
Structure	
Object	

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	4	buildings
		sites
		structures
	1	objects
1	5	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Other

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: SYNTHETICS: fiberglass, polyester foam, acrylic windows, steel frame

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Vincelette Futuro rests at 4388 Deep Grass Lane in Houston, Delaware. Trees seclude the startling, otherworldly structure on a one-acre wooded lot. Matti Suuronen, the renowned mid-twentieth-century Finnish architect, achieved the house's distinctive shape through a manufacturing process that molded plastic into the Futuro's elegant curves. The structure's shell consists of a central fiberglass and polyester resin layer that sandwiches a core of polyurethane foam between an outer and inner layer of polyester plastic.[1] In the eastern United States, Futuros were manufactured in an Atlantic City, New Jersey[2] factory, delivered by truck in sections, and

[1] Pamela Voight," The Futuro: History, Design, and Construction in Finland and the USA," Docomomo Journal, 6, (December 2022): 43. https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.66.05.
[2]The factory may have been on Delilah Road in Pleasantville, Atlantic County, New Jersey; however, I have been unable to verify and document this information. Source: Rick Grenada, About South Jersey Facebook group, Jan 16, 2022.

assembled on-site.[3] Concrete piers form a foundation for the metal frame that cradles the Futuro 24 inches above the ground. The building measures 26 feet in diameter and 13 feet high.

The weight of the original prototype was 5511 lbs. At 500 square feet, the Futuro features a compact design that includes a central living area as well as a wedge-shaped bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom.[4] The Vincelette Futuro has remained at 4388 Deep Grass Lane since June 7, 1977. The structure has been well-maintained and continuously occupied by the owners, Barney and Carol Vincelette. There have been only minor cosmetic changes to the home's interior and façade. The period of significance begins in 1969 when Futuros were licensed and manufactured in the United States and concludes in 1977 when the Vincelette Futuro was installed at its current location. The nominated property contains the Vincelette Futuro (contributing), an arrangement of solar panels (non-contributing), and four manufactured sheds (non-contributing). In this period of significance, Americans exhibited intense interest in the space race and moon landing. Their interests are evident in the popular culture of the era, including literature, film, clothing, décor, and architecture. These trends are particularly pertinent to Delaware because two notable Delaware businesses, the DuPont Company and ILC Industries, Dover, made key contributions to the space program. The Futuro's flying-saucer-like appearance was exciting, new, and novel, and it resonated with many people throughout the state.

Narrative Description

The Vincelette Futuro retains high levels of integrity in the areas of feeling, association, materials, and design. The property retains moderate levels of integrity in the areas of setting due to the construction of independent, noncontributing sheds and workmanship due to moderate changes made by the owner over time to accommodate its function as a principal residence.

The Vincelette Futuro rests in a flat, wooded lot 90 yards from State Road 384 and faces southwest, turned slightly towards the front of the lot. The ellipsoid shape gives it a futuristic style, and it is composed of fiberglass and polyester plastic called glass fiber reinforced plastic (GRP), a product first developed for use in aircraft. "The shell is 2" thick stressed fiberglass that sandwiches polyurethane foam insulation" between two layers.[5] The Futuro is supported by four sets of 3" diameter steel legs of equal length as well as a central foundation piece.[6] The legs rest on concrete piers, and the foundation and struts cradle the convex shape of the house. (Photos 4 and 6). The weight is approximately 5,500 pounds unfurnished.

Dr. Barry Vincelette purchased his Futuro from Joseph R. Hudson in February 1977. Before its relocation to Deep Grass Lane on June 7, 1977, it was on display at Five Points in Lewes, Delaware, where it had been used as a model and sales office for New Dimensions, Ltd., owned by Joseph Hudson. The Vincelette Futuro was manufactured at an Atlantic City, New Jersey plant

[3] Ron MacArthur, "2015: It's still a space oddity," *Cape Gazette* June 23, 2015. https://www.capegazette.com/article/2015-its-still-space-oddity/85582 Accessed May 22, 2023.
[4] "Facts on the Futuro II Fiber-Glass House," undated. Futuro Corporation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: 2. https://thefuturohouse.com/pdf/4_page_fact_sheet_pa_all./pdf
[5] Facts on the Futuro II, 1.
[6] Facts on the Futuro II, 2.

for The Futuro Corporation Ltd., with offices in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. All Futuro houses from the New Jersey factory were delivered on specialized lowboy trucks in two halves. The halves were bolted together and placed by crane onto four poured concrete piers with embedded bolt studs. The feet were attached to the studs with nuts on each of the four feet. The original bolts on the Vincelette Futuro have been replaced with stainless steel ones.

Futuro Houses lack a traditional facade, but when viewed from in front, typically, five bays are visible. (Photo 1). The entrance to the Futuro adds to its otherworldly appearance by way of a retractable 5-step staircase that evokes imagery of classic flying saucers from science fiction novels and films, although this was not the architect's intention (Photo 3). The exterior skin is a polyester resin gel coat with pigmentation permanently embedded in the plastic.[7] There were no existing guidelines on care or preservation for most of the Futuro's lifespan; however, regular painting with white latex housepaint or marine paint protected the house's appearance for several decades. Recent scholarship and preservation efforts by museum and preservation professionals have produced guidelines only readily available in English since 2021.[8]

The house remains white, the original color of the Vincelette Futuro. It is constructed of sixteen equal segments that narrow to a central point. Each segment is composed of two pieces. The seam between the lower and upper pieces is below the widest point. An embedded steel band girdles the bottom half to provide structural integrity. The windows are situated above the seam. (DE-KentCounty_FuturoHouse_003) The structure's footprint is a perfect circle with sixteen elliptical equidistant windows. (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_005) The windows are made of acrylic glass. In addition to the main windows, the United States model has two downward viewing windows for a total of eighteen.[9] The door is under one window next to a seam between eight sections, four upper and four lower. The original Finnish and European models have four down-viewing windows; however, the US model eliminated two of the four windows to increase usable square footage.

The Vincelette Futuro has been well-maintained and retains many original character-defining features supporting its period of significance, 1969 to 1977. The appliances in the kitchen are original, except for the small refrigerator and freezer. The house retains the original layout and floor space of 500 square feet.[10] The entrance to the Futuro is through a retractable staircase. Upon entering, a wedge-shaped bedroom sits to the right, while a wedge-shaped bathroom is to the left. On the far side of the bathroom is the kitchen. These spaces open to the main living area that comprises the rest of the Futuro. The entry ramp was originally equipped with an electric cable system that passed the cable through a steel pipe. In 1992, Dr. Vincelette replaced the worn system. The replacement system is comprised of a boat winch with a circuit design that operates through toggle switches or a remote control that activates a relay switch. The steps have strips of light-emitting diodes that flash blue while the steps are coming down. The blue lights shut off, and green

[7] Facts on the Futuro II, 1.
[8] Anna-Maija Kuitunen's thesis, "Futuro no. 001 – documentation and evaluation the need for preservation," laid the groundwork in 2010.
[9] The European models had four downward viewing windows.
[10] *Donaldson Futuro is 520. 500 per Dr. Vincelette*.

light-emitting diodes light up in their place when they are turned on. The bathroom and bedroom retain the original cabinets, counters, fixtures, furniture, and hardware.

Interior Alterations

The interior exhibits few changes from the original American design and carries the home's inherent character, maintaining the special arrangement and many of the fixtures. The most significant change is the removal of a central conversational fireplace. While charming and sufficient for a vacation home, the fireplace did not meet the owners' needs as the primary heat source in a continuously occupied residence. Its removal allows a plastic bubble above to act as a skylight. A 36-inch plexiglass dome forms the skylight (Photo 15).[11] Additionally, The HVAC systems have been updated and moved from the "crawlspace" underneath the floor of the Futuro into the living space for ease of access. The original under-the-floor heating system, ductwork, and air conditioning compressor have been replaced with an energy-efficient geothermal system installed in 2016 (Photo 10). The indoor portion of the new HVAC system takes up four square feet of floor space. Tinted plexiglass has been added to the single-pane windows for insulation. The original molded plastic coffee tables have been replaced with theater seats.

Solar Panel Arrangement

The property contains an arrangement of noncontributing solar panels that were installed in 2014. The solar panel array consists of 5x5 panels measuring 16 feet 8 inches by 27 feet 6 inches (Photo 18).

Manufactured sheds

The property includes four noncontributing sheds. The east shed measures 16 feet by 24 feet. The remaining three sheds are 12 by 8 feet. The sheds were built by high school students at Polytech High School in Woodside, Delaware. They are conventional wood buildings with 2x4 boards for the framework. They house a laundry, exercise room, and storage space.

[11] The dome was purchased from https://www.eztopsworldwide.com.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [X] A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [X] C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- [ ] A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- [ ] B. Removed from its original location
- [ ] C. A birthplace or grave
- [ ] D. A cemetery
- [ ] E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- [ ] F. A commemorative property
- [ ] G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Architecture
Social History

Period of Significance
1969-1977

Significant Dates
1969 (date of manufacture)
1977 (when building was moved to Deep Creek Lane)

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Futuro Enterprises, Philadelphia

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Vincelette Futuro is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the State and Local levels of significance under Criterion A in the area of Social History. The distinctive futuristic style and form of the Futuro captivated audiences in the United States when it was first displayed in 1969. While the Futuro House lacks a serial number, the factory only produced Futuro Houses for approximately one year.[12] Almost instantly, the Futuros amassed an American following.[13] Its popularity was largely due to Americans' fascination with space, Cold War-era science fiction, and dramatic developments in American aerospace technology. The Futuro held particular appeal in Delaware because ILC Dover, a division of the International Latex Corporation, later known as Playtex, engineered and produced the first space suits, including those worn by Astronaut Neil Armstrong and others. In addition, the DuPont Company provided much of the research and several key products required for the suits and other components of the Apollo Program. Furthermore, the Futuro tapped into the era's passion for mobility in a new way. The Futuro was exotic, sleek, modern, and movable. It became a cultural icon and symbol of a new future that promised Americans a kind of freedom in an era of insecurity. It indulged their passion for science fiction and space and allowed Americans to fantasize about a radically different future. Space age materials could solve construction problems, lower costs, and create leisure time with their "maintenance-free" promises.[14]

The Vincelette Futuro is eligible under Criterion C at the State and Local levels in the area of architecture for its intact, preserved form. The Vincelettes have maintained their residence with few changes, thus preserving a rare example of a singular style and novel construction materials. The Vincelette Futuro House is the only Futuro House in the State of Delaware to maintain full-time residential occupancy since its installation. While the Futuro was not the first structure to employ synthetic materials, it was the first serially produced plastic house.[15] The Vincelette Futuro remains intact and is the best example of a surviving Futuro with exceptional integrity. It is also an excellent example of the broader category of synthetic mobile housing. Furthermore, it retains the vision of the internationally renowned architect Matti Suuronen.

Criterion Consideration B was considered but ultimately not selected because Futuro Houses were designed as movable building stock.

[12] By mid-1970, Leonard Fruchter's Futuro Corporation was in bankruptcy as evidenced by a demand from Polykem to pay the balance of licensing fees. September 24, 1970. Charles Cleworth Archive, https://thefuturohouse.com/images/cleworth/fruchter_olander_1_1.jpg.
[13] MacArthur, "2015: It's still a space oddity."
[14] Philips, 107.
[15] A small number of experiments, such as the House of Tomorrow, utilized plastics, but none were serially produced or marketable.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Social History

In 1977, Dr. Barney Vincelette, a Georgia schoolteacher, pilot, veteran, and scholar of physics and applied mathematics, encountered his Futuro for the first time in Sussex County, Delaware. According to Dr. Vincelette, he flagged down the owner of the Futuro from his plane. A startled Mr. Joseph Hudson was giving a flying lesson, but he returned to the airfield at Dr. Vincelette's behest. He was ready to make a deal on a model. Mr. Hudson's three Futuros were left over from a business he began in 1969 as a Futuro dealer. He hoped to sell the unusual units as vacation homes in the beach towns of southern Delaware; however, supply problems made the venture unsustainable, and the company closed within two years. In 1977, Mr. Hudson was happy to finance the deal and ship the Vincelette Futuro to Georgia by truck; however, Georgia refused to allow the unit to enter the state, so Hudson set it up on the Deep Grass Lane lot, and Dr. Vincelette moved to Delaware to live in his prize possession. Dr. Vincelette's enthusiasm for the design and his willingness to relocate are consistent with the early popularity of the Futuros; however, he was driven by a passion for mathematics rather than science fiction. He considered the ellipsoid shape to be mathematically perfect.

Delaware is fortunate to have one of the few remaining Futuros. Despite the positive public reception, worldwide, fewer than one hundred were produced. Joseph Hudson came into possession of three when he recognized their business potential and entered an agreement with Leonard Fruchter, a Philadelphia real estate developer who acquired a license to produce the Futuros from Polycom, Ltd. in Finland. Hudson believed Delaware's beach towns were an ideal market for vacation homes. Fruchter, too, thought he could capitalize on the market for second homes. He formed a corporation headquartered in the city and contracted a factory in Atlantic City, New Jersey, to produce the models.[16] While many advertisements focused on the Futuro's possibilities as family vacation homes, the group most interested was affluent younger men. Carl-Johan Olander, an engineer and agent at Polykem, noted that it was primarily men in their early 30s who showed great interest in the Futuro. Women were less fond of the floor plan and its lack of storage.[17] In 1970, the Futuros were heralded as ideal bachelor pads in Playboy Magazine. As sleek, modern abodes that embraced technology, they fit a specific profile that appealed to the magazine's readers.

Joseph Hudson acted as a dealer for Delaware and formed a company called New Dimensions, Ltd. to market Futuros as vacation homes. Sussex County, Delaware, was home to a thriving tourism industry in several vibrant beach towns where the real estate market for beach getaways was strong. New Dimensions' advertising proposed a "total vacation package" that included a half-acre of land and a Futuro fifteen minutes from the beach. Among its selling points were being

[16] Futuro, p.28
[17] Futuro p. 151. The Futuro was featured in *Playboy* as an ideal bachelor pad in 1970. Portable Playhouse," *Playboy,* September, 1970, 179-181.

"virtually maintenance free," handsomely furnished with a wall-hugging 23-foot sofa, shag carpeting, and air conditioning. The total cost installed on site, with sewage and electricity, was $19,800. The advertisement also promised that two-bedroom, two-bath models were on the way and claimed that two could be clustered with interlocking sections. Advertising from the Futuro Corporation employed the image of flying saucers, calling the homes "Flying saucers you can live in" and promising that the flying saucers in the sky were not an invasion but "the house of tomorrow, today."[18] Fruchter used a New York public relations firm, Bernard Kaplan Associates, INC., to develop his advertising campaign.

As a native Delawarean and pilot, Mr. Hudson was drawn to the Futuro. He owned Hudson Fields, an airfield that hosted air shows, scout camps, and eventually outdoor concerts, and he loved all aviation-associated things. He began his aviation career as a crop duster and appreciated that aviation technology had leaped forward at an astonishing pace.[19] Before his passing, he was inducted into the Delaware Aviation Hall of Fame. He owned and lived in one of his Futuros at the Eagle Crest/Hudson airfield along Eagle Crest Road. New Dimensions, Inc. used a model as an office. In a short time, he received seventeen orders; however, there were insurmountable delivery problems. Only three or four of the seventeen were delivered. Ultimately, Leonard Fruchter's Futuro Corporation filed for bankruptcy while Mr. Hudson tried to find a buyer who could continue production.[20] To further complicate matters, the expense of petroleum skyrocketed in the early 1970s, driving production costs too high for sustainable profits.

The Futuros produced by Fruchter's company varied slightly from the original European floor plan because research suggested that American women preferred more privacy and floor space than the prototype allowed. The Vincelette Futuro follows this modified floor plan. Before the sale and move to its present location, it had been a New Dimensions model at Five Corners in Lewes, Delaware.

Mobile Home Trends in Delaware

The history of mobile homes is pertinent to the social history of Futuros. New Dimension's advertising promised a great deal to a viable market, but ultimately, it failed. Supply problems were the primary reason, but there was an additional complicating factor. Even though the Futuro became a cultural icon beloved by many, not everyone was thrilled to have Futuros in their neighborhoods. Lewes, Delaware's town council classified them as mobile homes in 1970, thus excluding them from many subdivisions and lots within the town limits.[21] The Futuros were not inexpensive, but they were mobile and manufactured. They simply could not escape the stigma of trailer parks and mobile homes in a tourist-rich beach town. Two decades earlier, Americans had a romance with the modernity of mobile dwellings. In the early years of the Cold War, the idea

[18]"Flying Saucers you can live in," Futuro Corporation, 1900 Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, (undated. Most likely, 1970.)
[19] Christian Hudson, "Sussex County Pilar Joe Hudson Dies at Age 90," WRDE April, 25,2022. https://www.wrde.com/news/sussex-county-pillar-joe-hudson-dies-at-age-90/article_d27d61be-c4f5-11ec-8258-f7ec5a17e352.html
[20] Ron MacArthur, "2015: It's still a space oddity," *Cape Gazette* June 23, 2015. https://www.capegazette.com/article/2015-its-still-space-oddity/85582 Accessed May 22, 2023.
[21] "Space Homes Mobile? Lewes Says They Are," Delaware Evening Journal, August 10, 1971, 1st edition.

that workers could move to new locations as needed with their housing was revolutionary. Over time, however, mobility and the temporary nature of mobile homes came to be associated with poverty and crime. So, in addition to the difficulty of finding financing, potential Futuro owners encountered zoning problems and found that they could not even buy homeowners insurance. Leonard Fruchter's office published a fact sheet with pricing that folded the cost of insurance into the purchase price as a solution to the problem.[22] The 1968 average home in the United States cost $22,300, so the Futuro at $19,800 was a sizable investment for a vacation home but still within the reach of many middle-class Americans.[23] In 1969, a doublewide was $5000 compared to $25,000, the median price of a site-built home.[24] Despite the evidence that Futuros were in an entirely different class, they did not escape discriminatory policies. Historically, zoning regulations have often restricted mobile homes exclusively to mobile home parks on the fringes of cities and towns separate from land zoned for single-family residences. Restrictive covenants also barred Futuros from many neighborhoods.

Dr. Vincelette experienced some of these problems. In addition to being barred from Georgia, he could not secure a loan from a traditional bank, so Mr. Hudson provided financing. In the Vincelette Futuro's period of significance, most states allowed local municipalities and townships to regulate mobile homes with the objective of protecting the property values of traditional houses and neighborhoods.[25] Covenants could also ban them in housing developments. In 1971, the Town Council of Lewes, Delaware, classified Futuros as mobile homes so that they would be prohibited in the town and popular housing developments.

Social History and Cold War Context: Space Age Materials, Plastics, and the Romance of Science

The thrill of the first moon landing was particularly intense in Delaware because of the involvement of two of the state's most successful companies, DuPont and ILC (Playtex). In the DuPont company magazine, *Better Living*, an advertisement read,

> Three courageous men have unlocked a new world. A universe of new worlds awaits. A further challenge to men's imagination and "daring. A challenge that will be met. And when it is, DuPont will be ready –with new products and technology – as we always have been. As we were for many needs of the space program. The "moon-walk" suit, for example. Twenty out of the twenty-one primary life-support layers that make up the suit contain materials developed by our research. Materials that were critical to the success of the mission. Fibers. Films. Plastics. Elastomers. Materials designed to meet man's needs. In Space. On Earth. Today. Tomorrow.[26]

ILC received equal praise, "As they walked, hopped and loped around in lunar dirt, Armstrong and Aldrin were protected from the hostile environment by a 21-layer spacesuit made almost

[22] "Futuro Facts." Futuro Corporation, 1900 Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (1969 or 1970.
[23] Esther Sullivan, *The Mobile Home in America and Americana: Mobile Home Parks and Americans' Tenuous Right to Place*. University of California Press, p. 31-33.
[24] Sullivan, 32.
[25] Sullivan, 48.
[26] "Hello Columbus" Advertisement. *Better Living Magazine*, September/October 1969, p. 28

entirely with raw materials developed by ILC Industries of Dover, Delaware, the designer and manufacturer of the $100,000 suits."[27]

The spacesuits and moon landing were the ultimate success of the Cold War era military-industrial complex and a symbol of American achievement in world leadership. The protracted struggle to gain this position was arduous. Between the end of World War II and 1969, Americans experienced a host of insecurities, threats, and tribulations. One of those was a post-war housing shortage. As science drove the Cold War forward, more Americans pinned their hopes on science to solve social problems. The idea of inexpensive, durable, modern housing was a dream come true since the shortage discouraged many young couples from achieving the American dream. Levittown-style housing developments (mass-produced housing) released some tension, but Americans continually looked for new solutions. Answers provided by plastics and industry seemed exciting, modern, and optimistic when the ever-present threat of nuclear war worried many Americans so much that Miltown, the first antidepressant, flew off pharmacy shelves at startling speed.[28] Science fiction featuring flying saucers and space travel offered a different kind of escape. Rather than predicting the future, it often illuminated what people feared most. The 1950s and 1960s saw dozens of films and television shows such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *It Came from Outer Space*, *Lost in Space*, *The Outer Limits*, and *The Twilight Zone* feature flying saucers. This genre provided an outlet to explore fears, but it also offered people the hope that should humanity destroy the earth with nuclear weapons, a future was still possible by launching out into space. Nothing (aside from developments in the arms race) could have seemed more like science fiction than houses made of space-age plastic.

The idea of using plastic as a building material gained credence in World War II and the early 1950s. Plastic held the promise of flexibility since it could be molded into virtually any shape, was easy to clean, required little maintenance, and was waterproof.[29] During the war, the Monsanto Chemical Company developed multiple products with wartime applications. Research and development were expensive, so the company had a clear financial interest in making plastic marketable. A new plastics industry could thrive if plastic materials could be incorporated into architectural practice. Monsanto's attempt to popularize the idea of plastic buildings and win over the American public developed into the House of the Future project.[30] During the war, the company developed a product called Fiberglas for use in aircraft. The new material was glass fiber reinforced plastics (GRP) with important characteristics: it was lightweight, strong, and weather resistant, and it could be penetrated by radar. The Lockheed Corporation incorporated the new technology, "using an interior and exterior reinforced structural tension shell of GRP held together with interior structural foam plastic, Lockform…" Lockheed used the technique of foamed-in-place, double

[27] John Roberts, "Apollo Eleven: A timeless touchdown on a dusty sea," *Better Living Magazine*, September/October 1969, p. 9. https://digital.hagley.org/Better_Living_23_05?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=3944d2207d6508d5fedd&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=1#page/6/mode/2up.
[28] Andrea Tone provides an excellent discussion of mid-century anxiety in *The Age of Anxiety: A History of America's Turbulent Affair with Tranquilizers*, Basic Books, 2012.
[29] Stephen Phillips, "Plastics," in Cold War Hot Houses, p. 91.
[30] Phillips, p. 92.

shell construction for other structural aircraft parts such as the ailerons and rocket exit doors of the Lockheed F94C Starfire."[31] Monsanto was a significant contributor to the Manhattan Project.

The Futuro earned a place in American architectural and cultural history, although its origins are deeply rooted in Scandinavia. Its manufacture, design, and short-lived popularity in the United States stemmed from a confluence of several American trends tied closely to the pursuit of space flight and Cold War Americans' romance with science and technology. After World War II, new confidence in technology's ability to solve problems such as housing shortages, overpopulation, and poverty increased while science offered the promise of protection from the threat of nuclear war, communism, and Soviet invasion. Science fiction, a form of popular culture, came to reflect the fears and ambitions of a population under extreme stress; however, success in the race to the moon engendered a sense of optimism and excitement that permeated elements of popular culture ranging from television and movies to style trends in housewares. The mix of optimism and insecurity caused people to imagine a future where humanity might live beyond the bounds of Earth.[32] As Stephen Phillips noted in *Cold War: Hot Houses*, "Suuronen's Futuro houses reflect the confidence in the possibilities of new building materials like plastics. Building envelopes made of fiber-reinforced plastics characterized the prosperous post-war decades of economic strength within architecture and design."[33]

The Futuro reflects a wave of interest in plastics among scientists and architects. Plastic could be molded into limitless shapes, but as a building material, curved shapes achieved rigidity and stability.[34] Thus, curved shapes dominated the ideals that emerged from research labs. Monsanto even hoped to combine its research on atomic energy with plastics to create enhanced plastic construction materials.

There are no comparable structures to the Futuro, but Monsanto's House of the Future (with cantilevered wings projecting from a concrete core) was as close as anything could come, however; it was not mobile. It was displayed as a novelty at Disneyland for a decade, but it lost its appeal as time wore on. When Disney decided to remove it, it proved almost impossible to destroy. Wrecking balls simply bounced off the outer walls, and disposal created environmental concerns. Unlike the Futuro, consumers never seriously considered that one day they might live in a Monsanto house.[35]

Criterion C: Architecture

The Origins of the Futuro: Finnish Background and American Adaptions

In 1965, the Finnish architect Matti Suuronen agreed to design a holiday ski cabin for a friend. The only requirement was that it would be "quick to heat and easy to construct in rough terrain."[36]

[31] Philips, 94-95
[32] Philips, 127.
[33] Pamela Voigt, "The Futuro: History, Design and Construction in Finland and the USA," *Do.co,mo.mo_Journal* 66, p. 40
[34] Philips, 109.
[35] Phillips, 123.
[36] Home, Marko and Mika Taanila, "From Snowy Slopes to the Foot of Minaret," in *Futuro: Tomorrow's House from Yesterday,* 2002: p. 12

Suuronen chose his materials, a revolutionary combination of fiberglass-reinforced polyester plastic sandwiching polyurethane foam insulation. Working with an R&D team at Polykem, Ltd., he proceeded to develop an eye-catching ellipsoid design. He and Polykem hoped to produce a product that could be easily serially produced, combining trends in modular design and public demand for mobile housing units that sprang from post-war housing shortages. Adding a futuristic aesthetic captured the imaginations around the world.[37] While Suuronen claimed that his design was based on mathematics and that he never intended to design a "spaceship" or "flying saucer," its popularity sprang from a cultural fascination with outer space and science fiction. Some of his designs involved a full sphere, however, the shape proved to be difficult. As Pamela Voigt noted in her study of Futuros, Suuronen explained, "'The key factor is pi. It is pure mathematics. Since it is pure mathematics, it was easy to make the first wooden mould. We just followed mathematical guidelines. There were no alternatives. The measurements came from math.'" [38]

When the prototype emerged in 1968, this saucer-shaped piece of modern engineering promised to deliver a mobile, mass-produced structure that could be adapted for myriad purposes.[39] Plans were adjustable, but the base model offered a kitchenette, a bathroom, and a living room with six molded plastic chairs that converted to beds. For the American market, models catered to different cultural values, adding a bedroom for privacy, replacing the chairs with a couch, and shrinking the hatch in favor of more interior floor space. The floors were also raised for the same reason.[40] Original furnishings and equipment in the United States, produced by the Futuro Corporation, include a 23' curved sofa with 5" dense foam; two cocktail tables that convert into a double bed when joined to the sofa, a 5" thick mattress (stored separately), a double wall barbecue and fire pod, hood over, and round storage unit below; a curved Formica-topped pedestal dining table and four molded plastic chairs. The flooring was heavy "Kodel shag carpet and rubberized padding that covered the floor, sofa kick plate, and sidewalls up to the window ledges."[41] The Vincelette Futuro retains the original Formica covering the counters and walls, with only minor repairs.

Polykem and Matti Suuronen believed the Futuro would be a popular seller; thus, the design was licensed to manufacturers around the world. However, only about one hundred were produced. Fewer than sixty remain intact, and many are in poor condition.[42]

In 1969, Leonard Fruchter won the first license to commercially produce units in the United States. Headquartered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, his company, The Futuro Corporation, was poised to take advantage of the East Coast market. A press release issued by the public relations firm Bernard Kaplan & Associates emphasized the Futuros' versatility, proclaiming that they were ideal

[37] Monsanto Plastics, "The House of the Future" Ekistics, January 1958, Vol. 5, No. 28 (January 1958), pp. 14-17
[38] Voight, p. 41.
[39] Facts on the Futuro II suggested several uses, including Vacation Houses, Year-round Dwellings, Ski, Hunting, or Fishing Lodges, Beach Houses, Guest Houses, Sales Offices, Studios, Penthouses atop existing buildings, Motel Units, Resort Housing, Classrooms, Dormitory Units, Retirement Homes, Cabanas, and Executive Suites.
[40] Lanza, 113.
[41] Facts on the Futuro, p. 3.
[42] Marko Hom and Mika Taanla eds., *Futuro: Tomorrow's House from Yesterday* (Jyvaskyla: Gummerus Kirjapaino Oy, 2003), 8.

beach houses and ski lodges that could accommodate up to eight people.[43] Fruchter intended to market the Futuro to American distributors as second homes.[44]

The Futuro as Art: Festivals, Shows, Exhibitions

Many scholars and collectors consider Futuros to be art. As objects of beauty, Futuros have become prized in museum collections.[45] New scholarship has rapidly emerged in the past few years as preservation and restoration projects have proliferated. For example, in 2007, when the Futuro prototype was accessioned at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuninen in Rotterdam, there were few, if any, guidelines for the preservation of plastic buildings. Much research and extensive preservation projects have produced new scholarship, some of which has been translated into English. As Lydia Beerkens notes in her assessment, "With the investigation into both the technical state of preservation and status (cultural value) of the Futuro no. 000, the museum underlined its importance to the world's cultural heritage and the Futuro houses globally."[46] The Swedish Army bought three and adapted them to use on top of observation towers at training areas. One is now in the collections of the Swedish Airforce Museum.[47]

The ideas embodied by the Futuro have captivated people around the globe. Their elegant shape, remarkable versatility, and the dream of mobility have captured imaginations and evoked a sense of excitement and hope for generations. Americans in particular have had a romance with their spectacle. Although mass production and easy relocation proved untenable in the long term, they remain culturally relevant.[48] On March 1, 2022, US Lighting Group Incorporated announced the formation of a new company, Futuro Corporation, LLC. Their press release promises, "Futuro Houses offers a self-sufficient, cost-effective, energy-efficient housing solution for an off-grid lifestyle. Futuro Houses, with its revolutionary designs and state-of-the-art wood-free fiberglass and carbon fiber composite construction, perfectly fits into a market looking for longer-lasting, futuristic material houses in a smaller footprint with the amenities of a traditional home."[49] While the new iteration looks a little less like a flying saucer and a little more like a flying hamburger, the Futuro has come full circle.

[43] Kaplan, Press Release, p 1.
[44] Home and Taanila, 28.
[45] Tyurkay and Pottgiesser, 77.
[46] Lydia Beerkens, "Matti Suuronen's 'Futuro" – Prototype 1968 after 50 Years," DOCOMOMO Journal 66 (December 2022)61.
[47] Andersson, Ingela and Karl-Martin Svard, Int. J of Herit, Archit., Vol. 2, No. 3 (2018) 417-424.
[48] Beerkens, 62. Beerkens argues that Futuros mobility is somewhat mythical. Although they were designed with mobility in mind, disassembly and reassembly can cause damage. The expense of helicopters is beyond the means of most people. Reinstalation requires skilled labor.
[49] "US Lighting Group Forms Futuro Houses LLC, a Manufacturer of Fiberglass Pre-Fab Off-Grid Houses, to Diversify its Products and Markets," https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/us-lighting-group-forms-futuro-houses-llc-a-manufacturer-of-fiberglass-pre-fab-off-grid-houses-to-diversify-its-products-and-markets-301493148.html.

Table of Comparisons Vincelette Futuro (Delaware) and Donaldson Futuro (California)

Vincelette Futuro (Houston, Delaware)	Character-Defining Features	Donaldson Futuro (Idyllwild, California)	Character-Defining Features
• This 500 square foot Futuro, resting on its rural site since 1977, has continuously been occupied as a private residence by its original owners. • Located in a rural area of Kent County, Delaware the Vincelette Futuro is situated approximately 90 feet east of Deep Grass Lane outside the rural community of Houston, Delaware. The Futuro, concealed by trees. Is not visible from the road. • Its compact, futuristic design weighing 5,511 pounds includes a central living area as well as wedge-shaped bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom. This Futuro has been well maintained by the owners who have made minor cosmetic changes over the years. • Its period of significance begins with its manufacture in 1969 by the Futuro Corporation in Philadelphia and ends with 1977, the year in which the Vincelettes acquired their land and set up their Futuro.	• The Futuro's original white exterior color has been maintained by its owners for more than forty years. • A retractable five-step staircase evokes imagery of a classic flying saucer. • Its original spatial arrangement remains intact. The removal of the inadequate central fireplace allows for the plastic bubble above to serve as a skylight. • Out of necessity, an efficient geothermal heating system was installed in 2016. • Prior to the Vincelette's purchase in 1977, this Futuro served as the model and office for New Dimensions Ltd. the development office of Joseph Hudson who was also an agent for the Futuro manufacturer. Its original location was at five Points in Lewes, Delaware. •Preservation of original features include Formica covered walls and counters. Appliances, except for the small refrigerator and freezer, are original. The bathroom and bedroom retain their original cabinets, counter, fixtures, furniture, and hardware.	•Structural reinforced fiberglass polyester plastic portable home containing 520 square feet. • Extensively restored to its 1969 period of significance using academic research and professional preservation standards. • The Donaldson Futuro was manufactured by Futuro Enterprises in Philadelphia in 1969 was transported to San Diego and delivered to Stan Gru, a Futuro Enterprises salesman. • In 2004, it was relocated to Idyllwild and professionally restored. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2021.	In-kind or replicated materials include the steel leg supports and bolts, acrylic bubble windows, and popcorn ceiling. Surviving features include the original circular storage console, interior wood doors, faucet, range, built-in seating and coffee tables, bedroom built-in counters and drawers, bed platform with underneath storage, and the bathroom's original faucet, sink counter as well as cabinet with mirror, and the cantilevered toilet and shelf. Moved to several California locations the Donaldson Futuro was used as a Naval training station, an Air Force recruiting office, and as a storage facility. Reference: https://thefuturohouse.com/pdf/CA-Riverside-County-Futuro-DRAFT.pdf

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
____ previously listed in the National Register
_____previously determined eligible by the National Register
_____designated a National Historic Landmark
____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
_____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _K04751_____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _1.10 acres_____

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.920238 Longitude: -75.514493
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or
UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:
2. Zone: Easting: Northing:
3. Zone: Easting: Northing:
4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
The nominated property is bounded by Kent County tax parcel 5 00 17200 02 5100, with Deep Grass Lane to the west and residential parcels to the north, east, and south.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The boundary of the nominated property follows the boundary of the current tax parcel 5 00 17200 02 5100. This tax parcel has not changed since the period of significance, when Dr. Vincelette purchased and moved the Future House to the lot.

---

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: _Dr. Stephanie Holyfield and Ms. Valarie Shorter _____
organization: __N/A _____
street & number: _940 Mabetown Road _____
city or town: __Tazewell_____ state: _TN___ zip code:_37879 ____
e-mail: shfield@udel.edu _____
telephone:_ (302) 750-7022_____
date: September 2023 _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Vincelette Futuro | Kent, Delaware
Name of Property | County and State

HARRINGTON QUADRANGLE DELAWARE-KENT CO. 7.5-MINUTE SERIES (2016) 38.92023838086782, -75.51449328667313



Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Futuro House

City or Vicinity: Houston

County: Kent State: DE

Photographer: SHPO Staff

Date Photographed: May 4, 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_001)
Southeast view of the dwelling, looking northwest.

2 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_002)
Northeast view of the dwelling, looking southwest.

3 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_003)
Detailed view of the door, looking northwest.

4 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_004)
Detailed view of the base, looking north.

5 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_005)
Window detail, looking north.

6 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_006)
Structural support detail, looking north.

7 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_007)
Interior view looking west.

8 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_008)
Interior view of windows, looking north.

9 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_009)
Interior view of ceiling, looking north.

10 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_010)
Interior view of mechanical systems, looking east.

11 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_011)
View of mechanical system to operate the exterior door, looking northwest.

12 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_012)
Interior view of backlite mechanical systems located in the center of the dwelling, looking east.

13 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_013)
Interior view of skylight, looking north.

14 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_014)
Environmental view of shed and solar arrangement, looking northeast.

15 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_015)
Western elevation of noncontributing shed, looking east.

16 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_016)
Environmental view of three noncontributing sheds, looking northeast

17 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_017)
Environmental view of driveway, looking east.

18 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_018)
Detailed view of noncontributing solar arrangement, looking east.

19 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_019)
Exterior view of Futuro House with three noncontributing sheds, looking east.

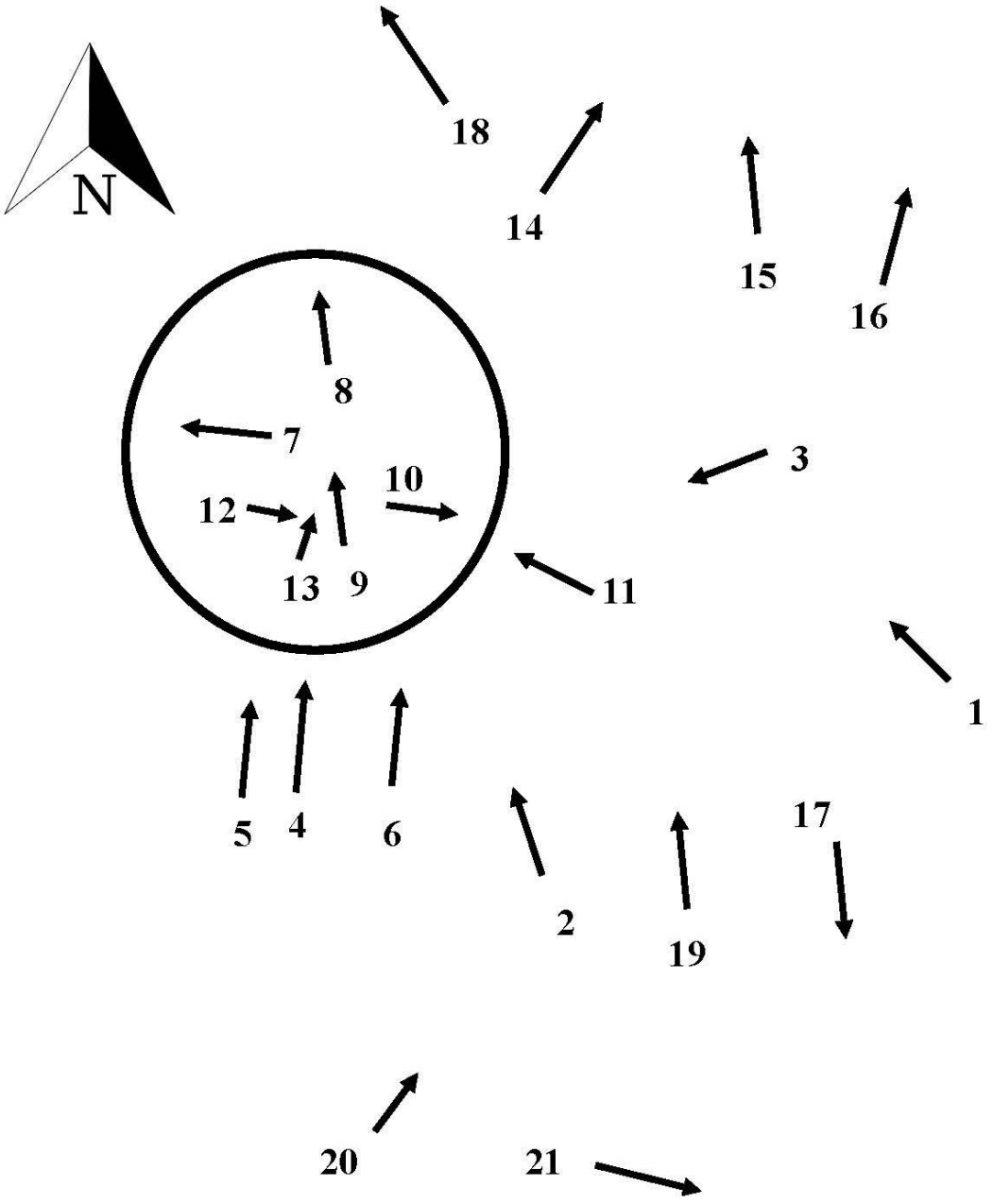
20 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_020)
Environmental view taken from Deep Grass Lane, looking east.

21 of 21 (DE_KentCounty_FuturoHouse_021)
Environmental view of Deep Grass Lane, looking south.

Vincelette Futuro
Name of Property

Kent, Delaware
County and State

Photo Key



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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.
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Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
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Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

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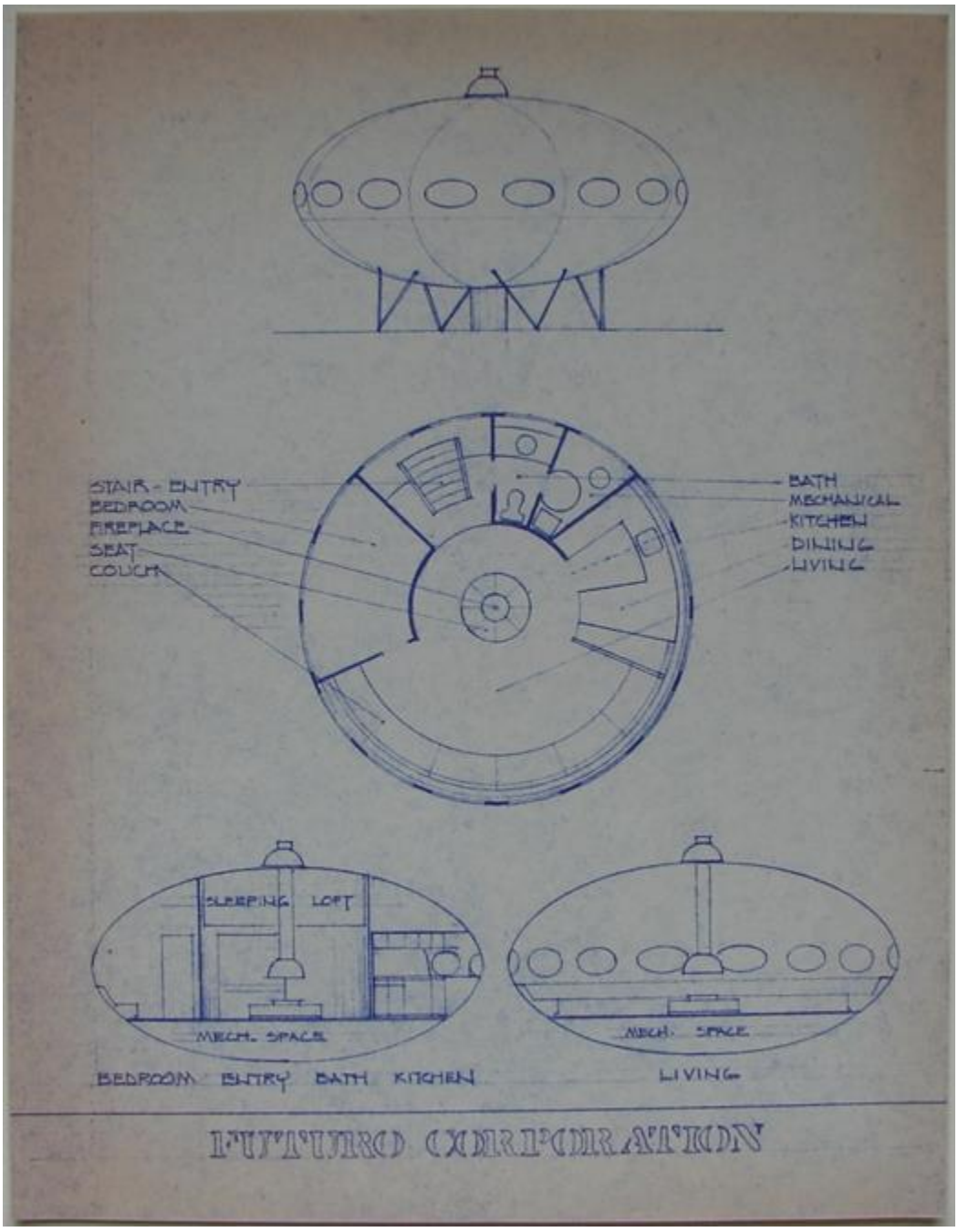


Figure 2: New Dimensions, INC. promotional material for Futuro Houses – the Fiberglass Vaction Home

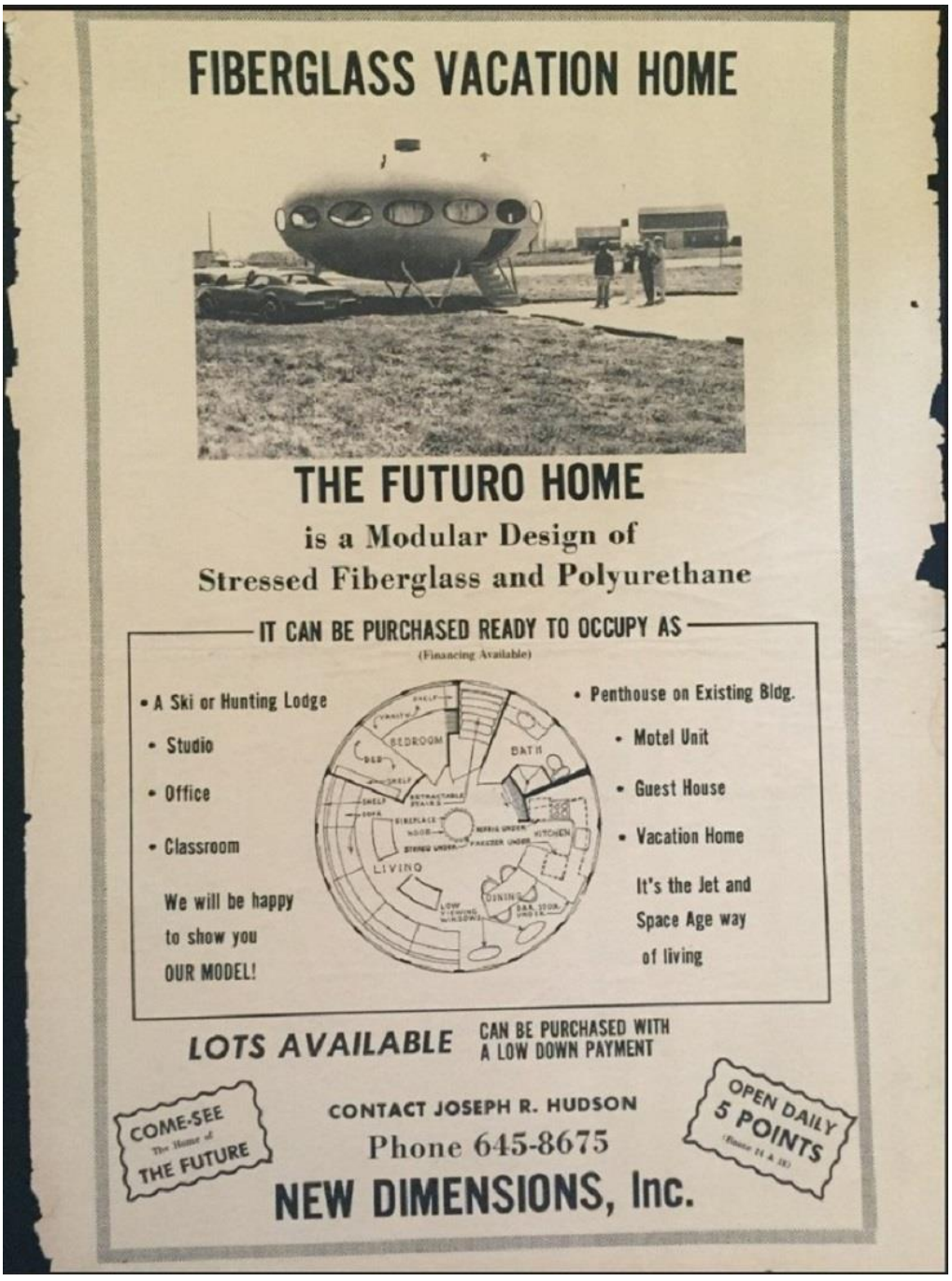


Figure 3: New Dimensions, INC. advertisement, providing pricing and specifics for the sale of Futuro Houses in Delaware



For $19,800 we'll . . .

give you 1/2 acre of land and an ideal and unique vacation home only 15 minutes from the beach

- *New Dimensions of Delaware, Inc. can now offer you the total vacation package – a Futuro II fiberglass home and clean country living – both in close proximity to the beach.*
- *The Futuro II, a Finnish designed modular home, is virtually maintenance free; its sealed up saucer shape and unique ventilation system (with air conditioning standard) all but eliminate dust and humidity. The Futuro comes complete, handsomely furnished with its wall hugging 23 foot sofa, shag carpeting, dimmer controlled lighting, and fireplace – – ready to move into.*
- *An eliptical 2 bedroom, 2 bath model will be available soon. And for larger families 2 or more units may be clustered with interlocking sections. Use the Futuro as a penthouse on an existing building, a motel unit, a guest house, an office or as a summer vacation home.*
- **1/2 ACRE LOTS 200 x 125 – $2,800.**
- *You can have your Futuro Home installed on one of our country lots located just east of Milton 4 miles off Route 14 for $19,800 installed with sewage and electricity, complete! The minimum square footage is 25,000 with choice cleared or shaded lots available. There are stables nearby and the area is perfect for riding. You get all the advantages of shore living without the resort traffic and problems of crowding. But most importantly . . . without the high cost.*

1 BEDROOM MODEL – COMPLETELY FURNISHED & AIR CONDITIONED – $15,600
2 BEDROOM, 2 BATH – COMPLETELY FURNISHED & AIR CONDITIONED – $23,400

FUTURO MODEL LOCATED AT INTERSECTION OF RT. 14 & 18 AT FIVE POINTS, LEWES, DEL.

New Dimensions of Delaware, Inc.

645-8675

Rt. 1 Box 272
Milton, Delaware 19968

Joseph K. Hudson

Figure 4: Leonard Fruchter signing the license agreement with Polykem, Inc.



Leonard Fruchter (front left) and Carl-Johan Olander (front right) signing the U.S. licence agreement.
Leonard Fruchter (edessä vasemmalta)
ja Carl-Johan Olander (edessä oikealla) allekirjoittamassa
Yhdysvaltain lisenssisopimusta.

Figure 5: Floorplan of a Futuro featured in *Playboy*, September 1970

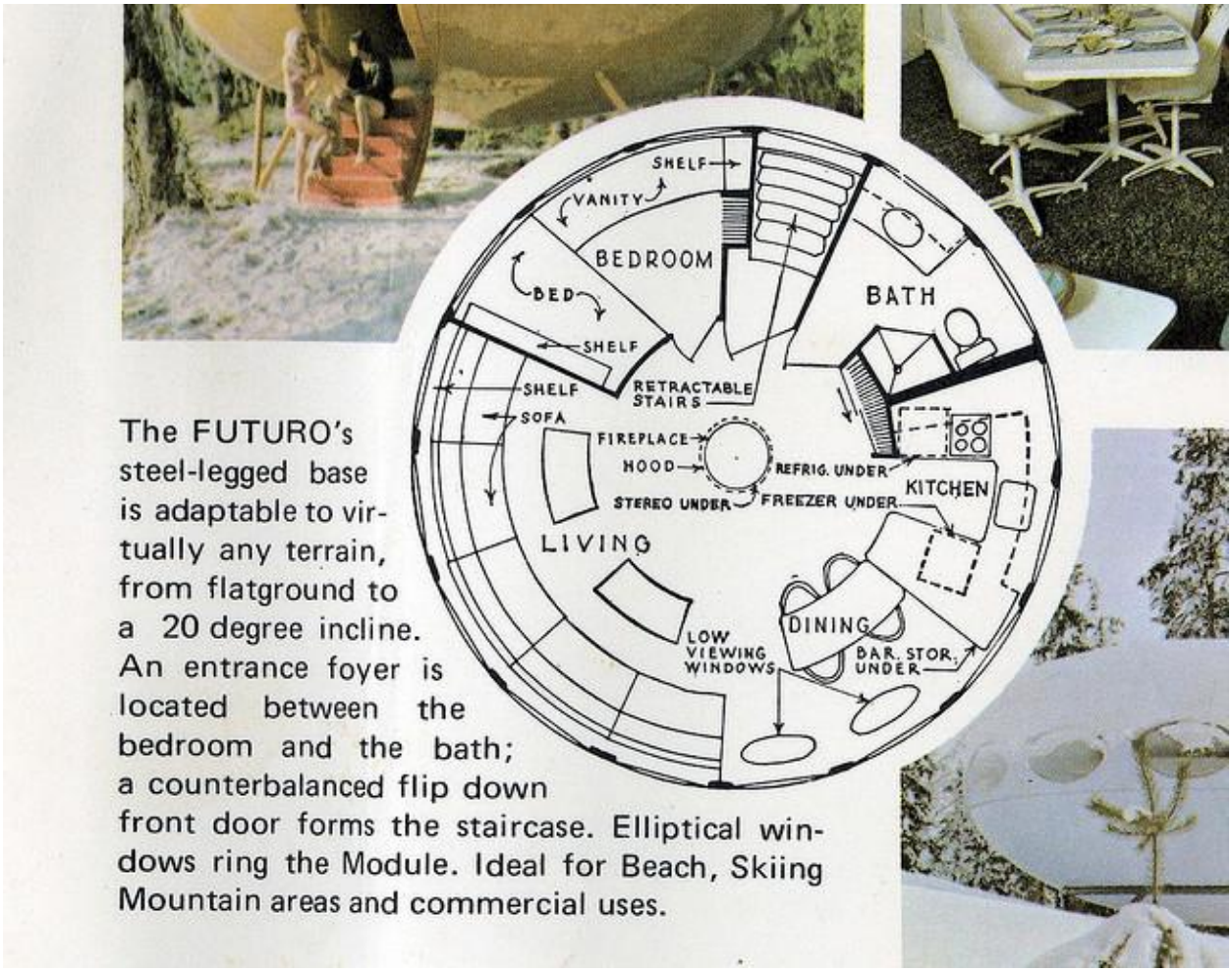


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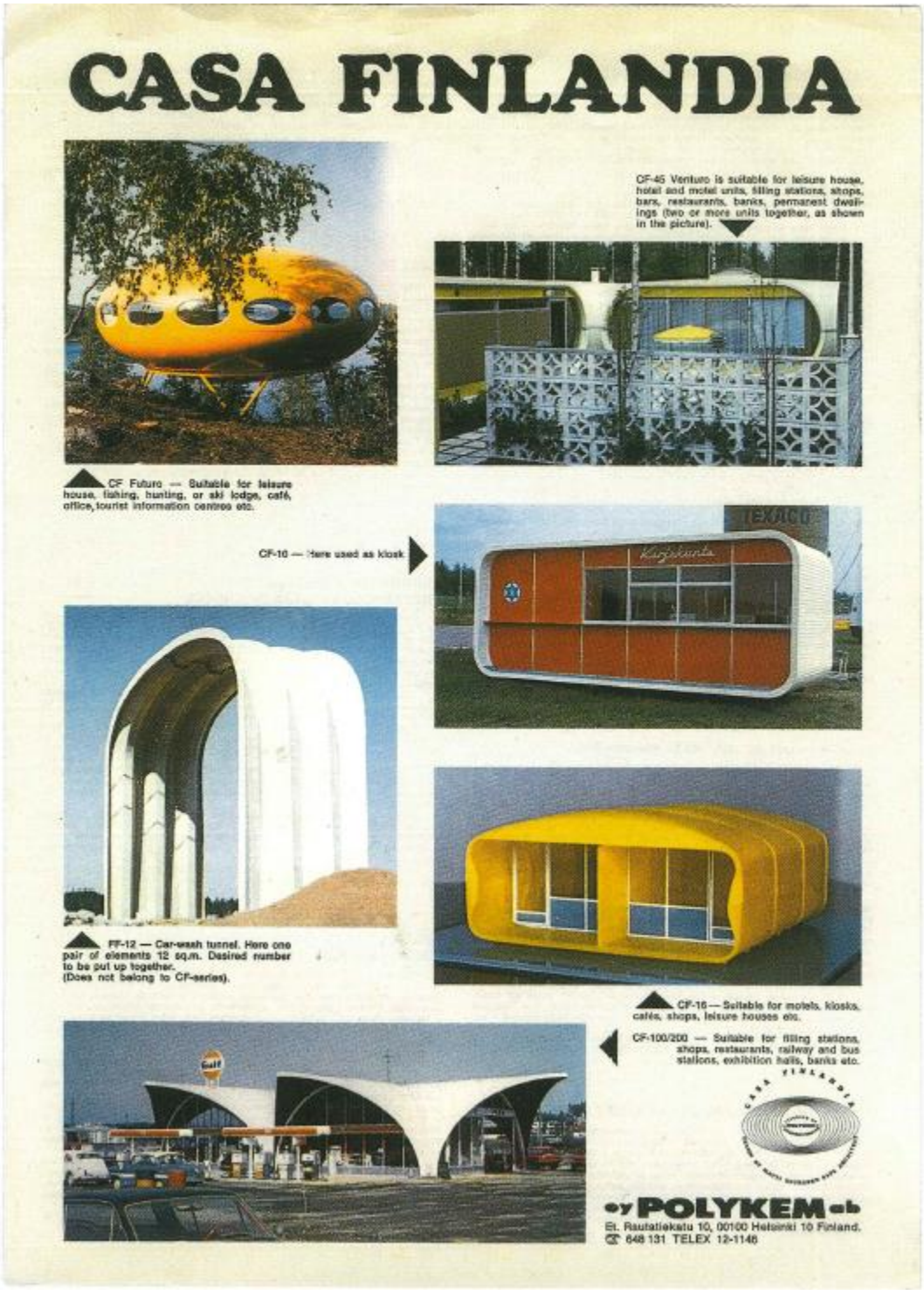


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