



The 18,000-rpm Race Car Factory

It's no secret what goes into Formula One racers and Mercedes-Benz SLR supercars – at least, not anymore. The glass walls and partitions of the McLaren Group's new headquarters in Surrey, England, expose its inner workings for all to see. The 125-acre site accommodates assembly lines, driving arenas, design studios, a wind tunnel for testing cars, and a staff of roughly 900 people. Architect Norman Foster, who designed Hong Kong's brash new airport (the world's largest), had to work under extraordinary constraints because the McLaren building sits smack in the center of a greenbelt. His biggest restriction: The complex's roof couldn't be higher than 33 feet. The result is a graceful, spacious structure that arcs around a central, preexisting lake. Those who checked out the facility this winter caught a glimpse of the latest F1 car design, which debuts in March at the Australian Grand Prix. — **Matthew Stibbe**