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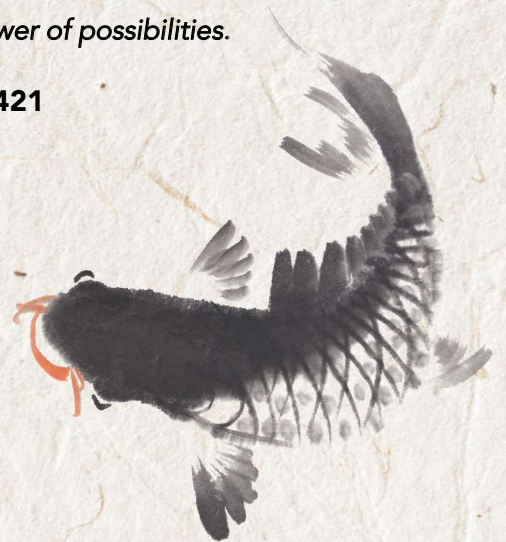




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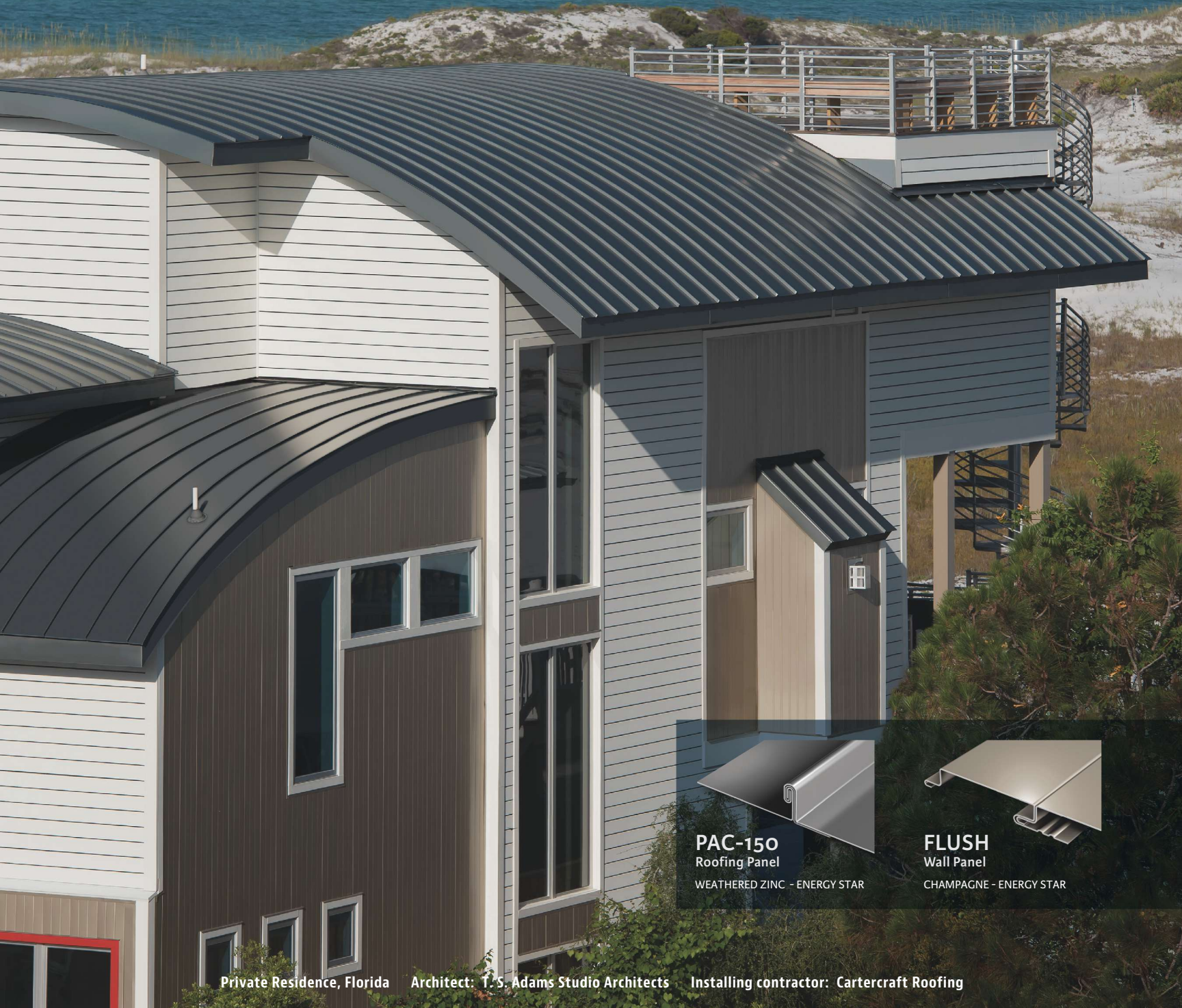


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Photo: Rob Karosis Photography



Welcome to Volume 4 of *Residential Design* magazine. We are the only national professional publication devoted to residential architects and custom builders. We're dedicated to providing you with expert insight and substantive information on high-end residential design and construction.

Our print edition is published quarterly. And our newsletter is published twice a month. If you are not already a subscriber and would like to be, please go online to: ResidentialDesignMagazine.com/subscribe.

If you have an exceptional single-family residential project you'd like us to write about, or an interesting and instructive business story you'd like to share with other professionals, please email Claire@SOLAbRANDS.com.

We look forward to having you join our *Residential Design* community.

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 4



Strong Medicine



What a year it's been. It feels like we've seen or experienced one catastrophe after another—hitting many of us quite literally where we live. As we put the finishing touches on this issue of the magazine, I reached out to the professionals we're featuring from Northern California wine country, where so much acreage is still on fire and so many precious lives have been lost. Fortunately, they and their properties are fine at this writing, and they're already starting to think about what's ahead.

As I was working on this issue, I, too, had some setbacks. Atlanta, where I live, was hit by Hurricane Irma's residual force. It caused the first-ever tropical storm warning issued for the city, which is four hours away from any coast. We lost power, and a massive fallen oak tree blocked our road for two days. We consider ourselves lucky, compared to what happened to others.

In June, my family visited a Caribbean paradise in the U.S. Virgin Islands called St. John. We met up with some friends who own a second home on the remote Coral Bay side of the island. Irma hit St. John as a Category 5 hurricane, devastating much of the fragile infrastructure there. It will take an untold amount of time before the island functions again for its residents and for the tourists who are the life's blood of the economy. We're told our friends' house is intact, but who knows when they can get to it again.

Several days after Irma tore through Florida, bringing with it massive flooding, the AIA Custom Residential Architects Network (AIA CRAN) made the difficult decision to cancel its annual symposium, scheduled for Miami just a few days after Irma hit. A year's worth of very hard work by its leadership was shelved.

Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Maria. Puerto Rico, St. Maarten, Barbuda, St. Bart's, and many more. So many lives and property lost; so many disruptions profound and reverberating. Storms, floods, mudslides, cyclone winds. And now fires, spreading with explosive force through California and, before cooler weather hit, Wyoming and Montana.

Those who've lost houses face tough decisions. Insurance, if they're lucky enough to have good coverage, will only pay to replace the house they had—flaws and all. Learnings from these disasters are not easily or cheaply applied to the next round of building, but they must be. In California, some houses had a fighting chance against the fires—metal roofs, stone walls, real stucco or metal exteriors constituted some of the resilient materials. On the islands, block and rebar were essential survival tools.

These disasters challenge residential architects and custom builders to glean as much as they can about what helped and what harmed the buildings they built. It's a matter of health, safety, and welfare. It's a matter of life and death.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "S. Claire Conroy".

S. Claire Conroy
Editor-in-Chief
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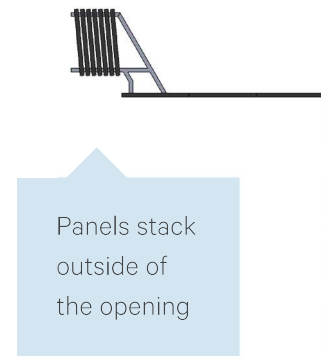
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Cars and Material Culture

JONATHAN SEGAL FAIA AND DEVELOPMENT
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA



Photos: Courtesy Jonathan Segal FAIA

Jonathan Segal's latest mixed-use project, Fort Stockton, incorporates the Art Moderne showroom of a 1935 Ford dealership. The vertical fins were inspired by classic car details.

Jonathan Segal, FAIA, has spent more than two decades honing his skills as an architect/developer and sharing his wildly successful business model with other architects through lectures online and around the country, and the Master of Real Estate Development program he cofounded at Woodbury University. During that time, he's completed 25 mixed-use rental projects in the San Diego area, including North Parker in 2014, a 27-unit market-rate apartment building that includes two very-low-income units, plus five commercial spaces housing three restaurants, a beer-tasting bar, and his own architecture office. He parks his sizable collection of classic cars in the building's large garage, where he hosted a series of benefit seminars during the past year. Jonathan sees many connections between his passion and his profession, and the geometry of car fins is inspiring his newest work.

RD: You are in the process of selling North Parker. Why now?

JS: I want to build a 400-foot-tall building, and I need the capital because my business plan doesn't include partners or investors. Second, I think we're at a historic bottom for capitalization rates and multifamily building values. As interest rates go up, the rents have to go up or the building will become less valuable. The only other option to hold value is for the building to be less expensive

to own and operate, and that is not going to happen. Now is the time to take some of the chips off the table and get out of a portion of your portfolio.

What are you working on now?

We're a month away from finishing Park and Polk, an eight-story apartment and retail building in a middle-class-to-upscale neighborhood, but not high-end. On the boards is Fort Stockton, another eight-story concrete mixed-use rental building that incorporates a 1935 Ford dealership. We also just bought a 1925 Mission Revival-style home designed by Parkinson & Parkinson Architects in Mission Hills, between La Jolla and downtown San Diego. It's on a 35,000-square-foot lot, and we are rehabbing the entire 9,200-square-foot house. Wendy and I are selling the Cresta, our five-year-old house in La Jolla, and will move there.

How are Fort Stockton and Park and Polk different from your previous work?

North Parker was the last of our exterior-circulation apartments built as a three-story frame on a concrete base. We build everything out of concrete now. Concrete is more expensive, but the architecture becomes more sculptural and an object rather than

Photo: Courtesy Jonathan Segal FAIA



Left: Jonathan brought together his two passions—cars and architecture—for a nonprofit visiting speaker series in his garage. He calls it the Jonny Club.

decoration. We have different opportunities with the language of the building. Concrete is beautiful and has longevity. Our new language is glass and concrete.

What are you experimenting with at Park and Polk?

It has 56 units with retail on the first floor, and it will have our first roof deck, and also a 9,000-square-foot subterranean garage where I'll keep my car collection. It's like the James Bond bat cave. You drive in, push a button, and it takes you down two floors. And on the rental units, we increased the size of the decks so they feel like outdoor rooms. Some are 9 feet by 15 feet outside a floor-to-ceiling glass wall. We're starting to understand that the outdoor room is as important as the indoor room. We gave the city 11 percent of our allowable units, which they'll rent for 30 percent of market rate. In exchange, we were allowed to increase the density by 50 percent. It's a pretty good deal for everyone and is something every building should be mandated to do.

Given your love for cars, it seems serendipitous that Fort Stockton is being designed around an old car dealership.

Yes, the dealership has a cool Moderne object on the corner that we saved. The composition includes three buildings. The eight-story tower, 30 feet wide and 130 feet long, is a backdrop to a smaller two-story building. The Ford dealership was in the middle, and we pulled it to a corner. Each building talks to the other. Vertical fins on the tower make it graceful and serve as a brise-soleil on the east side.

You just finished a 14-lecture series that benefited an animal rescue group. How did that go?

I had 14 friends who are in my generation come and talk about their work in my garage where all my cars are—I call it the Jonny Club. We averaged 110 people. We went on tours and had a stand-up dinner at my place at the Q, and Sunday morning breakfast out. We raised \$50,000, enough to save more than 150 dogs in Tijuana.

What inspired you to start a classic car collection?

There were a lot of cool European cars around when I was growing up in Manhattan Beach, Calif., and I'm a big fan of James Bond. When I sold our portfolio of lofts in 2006, I purchased a Ferrari Lusso that I had been coveting—350 were made in 1963 and 1964—and there we go. I didn't understand the depth of cars until I got into collecting, and I'm still learning.

Tell me about your cars.

We have 14 cars in the collection, mainly 1950s and 1960s European and American cars and some new Porsches. We just had an all-original 1956 Maserati at a car show in Europe that won best of show. My son and daughter and I flew to Paris and bought it at auction. We also restored a Maserati that won first place in its class at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance show.

How does car design influence your architecture?

Architects study early architecture to understand the previous works. Cars are the same thing for me. Looking at Italian design, how the industry started in Northern Italy in Milan and Turin, it's exciting to learn about a history I knew nothing about. We are putting vertical fins on buildings that emulate the vertical grilles of some earlier Rolls-Royces and Lincolns, cars of the 1950s, which are about movement in and out, how a car is sculpted. My son Matthew and I take the cars apart ourselves and restore them; we learn how things are built. This is one-off craftsmanship, in cases where they made only one. There is excitement about designing the paint—whether it's dark or light influences the shape of the car. If the car is big, you want a darker color. It's the same with architecture; you can make a room feel bigger with an over-scaled window. There's a parallel between architecture and cars in how you manipulate it to make it better. RD

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Memory Work

ROBERT HUTCHISON ARCHITECTURE
SEATTLE



Photo: Jill Hardy, Photographer

Above: Robert Hutchison.

No one would look at the work of Seattle-based Robert Hutchison Architecture and call it traditional in style. But the firm is especially open to considering the needs and wishes of its clients. Sometimes those wishes are more emotional than tangible; sometimes they have more to do with the past than the present.

Such was the case with House for a Mother and Daughter. “The mother is an artist and is tapped into the symbolic meaning of things,” Rob Hutchison explains. “She came to us and said, ‘I need a gable roof.’ She held up her hands to form a triangle, and said, ‘I want a New England gable roof and square windows.’ She did not want the almost-flat roofs other architects wanted to give her. We’re open to working with people in whatever way works best.”

Rob, too, is tapped into the symbolic meaning of things and the profound emotions that architecture can elicit. He’s just back from a six-month stint at the American Academy in Rome, Italy, thanks to winning a slot in this year’s prestigious Rome Prize program. The prize is a paid



Photo: Mark Woods Photography

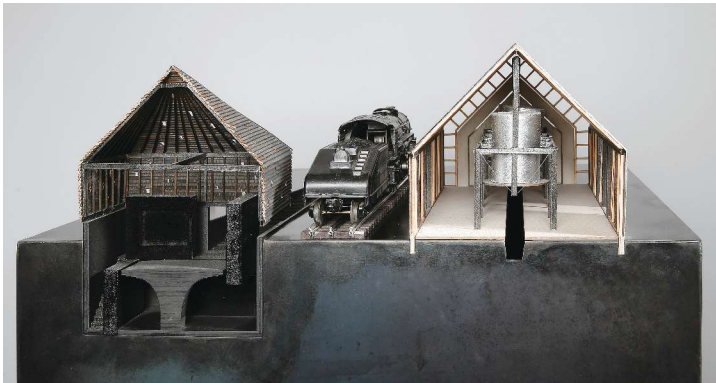


Photo: Mark Woods Photography

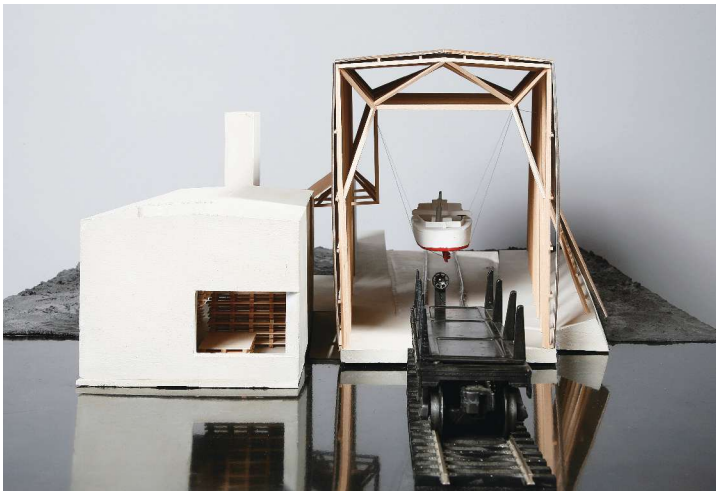
Above: The client for House for a Mother and Daughter wanted a pitched roof—and not the “almost-flat roof” other architects tried to give her. The form elicited strong associations for her, imbuing the new building with important connections to the past.



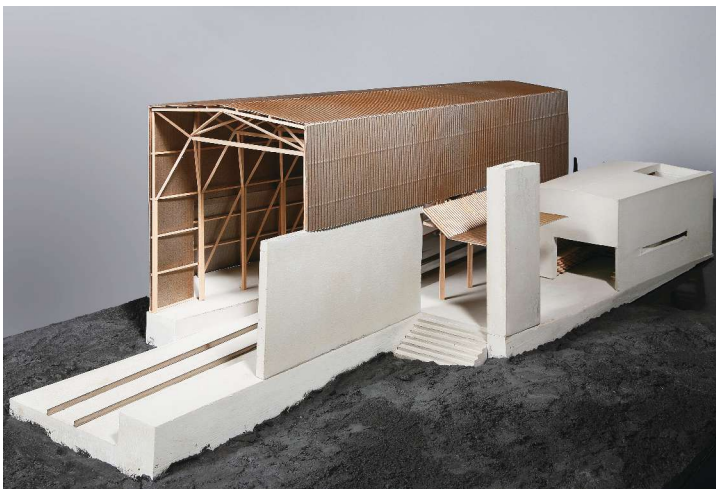
Top to bottom: Two of the firm's conceptual Memory House projects explore Rob's personal experience of losing his father, who dreamed of making wine on his riverfront property. Rob had earlier designed a winery building for his father (unbuilt), and it became the existing condition for two later conceptual projects: Chapel and Columbarium building and Memory House for a Widow, which incorporates a boathouse.



fellowship that endows accomplished professionals in the arts and humanities with the time and creative space to pursue their best ideas. While there, Rob did some heavy lifting on his Memory Houses project, which will culminate in an exhibition at the Gallery4Culture in May next year and ultimately, he hopes, a book on the same subject.



“What is a Memory House?” you might ask. For Rob and his firm, they are a series of eight conceptual projects that will be fully conceived and executed to the point of construction—but not built. Well, they will all be built as detailed physical models and rendered in a number of other different ways, but they will not be constructed on site. So far, the firm has completed four of the eight structures and, although they are not all strictly for human habitation, all explore the idea of shelter.



Bitter Fruit

The idea for the long-term exploration began with a very personal experience for Rob. His father, with whom he was very close, developed dementia as a side effect of a rare illness. For Rob, who lived 3,000 miles away from his parents, this meant a quicker unraveling of their relationship—as they were without the aide-memoire of physical presence to prompt his father.

Struggling with how to stay close from afar, Rob thought of an unbuilt project he had designed for his parents some time



Left and below left: Courtyard House on a River is kept intentionally small to minimize intrusion on the site. Dark cladding harkens to Rob's fellowship in Norway and the traditional Scandinavian buildings he toured while there.



Photos: Mark Woods Photography

ago. It was a plan for a winery building his forward-thinking father had wanted to construct on their scenic riverfront property on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. At the time, just a few residents had ventured to grow wine grapes in the region known best for chicken farming. Sadly, his parents decided to sell the property and the winery was never built.

As Rob stood on the precipice of losing his father, it occurred to him that he might direct his thoughts and emotions into a new building designed for the former family property—this one conceived as a purely conceptual project but with the rigor of a client-driven commission. The Chapel and Columbarium followed.

“What I decided to do, was have a conversation with my father in a way I

could not in life,” Rob explains. “I decided to design a new building adjacent to the winery, but the rule was that we couldn’t change anything about the winery.”

The theoretical Chapel and Columbarium became an actual crucible for Rob’s feelings of loss. “It was an exploration about what memory means,” he says. “And it opened up interesting conversations about the role of memory in all of our lives, and in my own place as an architect. After we had just finished building the chapel to a high degree of resolution (we knew all the materials and how the materials would work), my father passed away.”

The chapel’s roof is covered in black pine tar like the churches in Norway. While in graduate architecture school at the University of Washington, Rob spent

time in Norway on a research scholarship, assisting on some projects for architect Einar Jarmund (who became a mentor) and traveling extensively throughout Scandinavia. Both experiences continue to influence his conceptual and constructed work, most obviously manifesting in his fondness for dark exteriors on buildings, perhaps ahead of the current vogue. “The darkness of those buildings has always been very powerful to me. But I’m not going to say that’s why all our buildings are black—I’m not interested in validating all of these things,” says Rob.

With the project complete, after a fashion, the architect continued to follow life’s course and settled on his next allegorical project, Memory House for a Widow. It imagines a duo of buildings at the water’s



Photo: Mark Woods Photography

Above: Cantilever House wrestles with steep Seattle topography and a tight site to carve out pleasing indoor and outdoor spaces. A mother-in-law unit is on the lower level; main living spaces are above, where they can connect in a continuous sweep to patios and views.

edge and explores the journey from life to death as a boat ride from one shore to another.

Despite the highly personal origins of the Memory Houses, Rob's goal is to construct a framework for each that invites the public in. The Rome experience of networking with professionals from diverse creative disciplines underlined the need for each "house" to have a narrative or allegorical story that's accessible to others.

Hail, Fellowships

Given how ethereal this current research project is, it's a surprise to learn that Rob's initial education and training was as an engineer. His first career was for a structural firm that specialized in renovations to existing buildings, many of

them historic. His favorite part of the job was the "reverse engineering" process it required of him before he could devise a plan for repair. In some ways, the detective work also laid down a narrative about the original construction.

The work whetted his appetite for further immersion in architecture, and so he pursued a graduate degree at the University of Washington. His next move was to the stellar Seattle firm of Miller/Hull, where he managed a variety of residential, commercial, and public projects at all scales. He continued his theoretical explorations on his own time, and eventually founded a general practice firm with classmate Tom Maul.

They split amicably in 2013 after 12 years together, in part so Rob could nur-

ture his special mix of the theoretical and client-based pursuits without imposing upon a shared firm. Also in the mix is his work as an affiliate professor at his alma mater. "I started realizing that it wasn't fair to a partner to be doing other things focused on individual experience," Rob notes. "And I have an amazing family and wife excited about doing such things—including the travel."

Real clients, conceptual architectural investigations, teaching at the university, and international travel for commissioned work and scholarly research constitute a gratifying recipe for 360-degree inspiration. Each inevitably informs the other, and the built work certainly benefits. "All this work ends up playing back into my practice on a realistic level," says Rob.

Photo: Lara Swimmer



Photo: Courtesy Robert Hutchison Architecture



Top: Studio for a Writer began a long client-architect relationship that has continued from this building's inception more than 10 years ago to this day. The building actually creates three spaces at once—a garden area, an outdoor room, and a studio space. Above: The Memory Chapel plan became “central” to the plan of Dadu Dadu, a new detached accessory dwelling for Rob’s neighbor. The neighbor plans to occupy the new 799-square-foot unit (1 square foot smaller than the city allows) while renting out the main house.

“The chapel plan became central to Dadu Dadu house [an accessory dwelling unit designed for a neighbor]. The fantasy houses actually do have us think about things independent of a client that can roll back to our work.”

His scholarly savvy keeps Rob abreast of fellowship opportunities to endow the unpaid work. And his small office of three fulltime staff is happily along for the ride, working on both the client and conceptual commissions. “I’m not going to say I’m an incredible businessman,” Rob admits. “But we try to keep the installation and conceptual projects to about 25–30 percent of the work, and the real work at about 75 percent. I’m not interested in just doing the fantasy work.”

That’s a good thing, because the “real work” is gathering steam, with the firm earning recognition for Courtyard House on a River and other evocative projects. Yes, many of them do have blackened exteriors. Those Scandinavian houses are deeply embedded in Rob’s memory as he helps weave new memories for others.

–S. Claire Conroy

The Announcement of the Decade

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Like Kowalski, the comet we only see every ten years, the core set of **AIA Contract Documents** is only updated every ten years. This ensures your design and construction projects are protected against changing industry trends and needs.

Many architecture firms go beyond the everyday practice of architecture to include site evaluation, historic preservation, facility support, and commissioning services. For these firms, the heavily revised Architect Scope documents address changes to the industry landscape.

Some of the major changes to the Architect Scope documents include:

B203-2017, Site Evaluation and Project Feasibility allows the architect to assist an owner in selecting a site and determining the feasibility of a project. An owner can use the services provided by the architect in B203 to decide whether a site, or sites, are suitable for a project, or to determine the development potential of a site.



B205-2017, Historic Preservation was reorganized into four categories: Historic Assessment, Existing Buildings Assessment, Preservation Planning, and Specific State and Federal Services. These categories align with the typical chronology of services an architect might provide on a project with historically significant buildings or features. B205 also clarifies the architect's responsibility regarding hazardous materials on a project with historically significant buildings or features.

B207-2017, On Site Project Representation allows the owner and architect to establish the scope of the on-site project representative's authority to act on behalf of the architect. B207 also includes enhanced and clarified responsibilities for the on-site project representative.

B210-2017, Facility Support was restructured into the following six service categories: (1) Facility Condition Assessment, (2) Facility Performance Assessment, (3) Operations Assessment, (4) Space Management, (5) Maintenance Management, and (6) Digital Facility Management System. B210 was also modified so that it can be used to hire an architect to perform facility support services on one or multiple facilities.

C203-2017, Commissioning was updated to reflect changes in the industry. The C203 now includes: provisions describing the consultant's role to assist in preparing the owner's project requirements, commissioning-related design reviews, consultant's role in commissioning during the construction phase of the project and a detailed description of the consultant's commissioning plan.

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Photo: Courtesy Earthtone Construction

At once old school and cutting edge, Andy Bannister, president of Earthtone Construction, builds some of the most beautiful Northern California wine country houses and estates. His 50-person, \$22 million company also constructs, renovates, and maintains multifamily housing in the more urbanized parts of Marin and Solano counties. The mix enables his company to embrace new ways of building in the high-end work, while still keeping a foot in the real world of market-rate housing for the other 99 percent. It's a wise business plan, because multifamily work tends to remain strong even when single-family construction slows.

Andy knows you can't put all your eggs in one basket; he's learned that firsthand through his nearly 40 years in construction. Lest you think he's older than he is, keep in mind he started as a teenage apprentice for a 200-year-old construction company in England. Now he's leading his own company with two partners in Sebastopol, Calif. They'll be celebrating 20 years in business at the end of the year.



Photo: Ed Caldwell

Above left: Andy Bannister is the go-to custom builder for many of Northern California's residential architects. Above: Earthtone built Arkin Tilt Architects' off-the-grid, straw-bale Healdsburg Family Residence on 170 acres.

Twenty years in Northern California means at least two recessions weathered. Even though the area is now experiencing boom times, Andy keeps those hard-won lessons at the top of his mind. The last recession was, of course, the toughest.

"A lot of folks in the construction industry make the mistake of not preparing for downturns. We saw a lot of colleagues fall by the wayside while seeking the feast," he says. "We've grown to 50 people and \$22 million a year, but we're not out buying lots of toys and getting in too deep. In the last recession, we had managed to save enough cash to get through. We even took advantage of the downturn to expand."

Constraint in a boom and expansion in a bust sounds counterintuitive, but it's paid off for Earthtone. During the lengthy

recession of the last decade, Andy took the opportunity to lower his rent and renovate. The confidence he showed in the company's future impressed the few clients who were left and inspired them to move forward as well. "It was leap of faith," he admits. "But we thought, 'this isn't going to last, it'll come back.' It was sort of funny, because right when we were remodeling the office space, that was when we got a new home to build and a remodel. And then things started picking up again. It's just about having the confidence. Stay lean, calm down, and carry on."

Confidence is great, and it will get you far in almost any line of work, but we must not elide over the importance that having cash on hand played in the company's survival. That's where "constraint in a boom" becomes the resonant lesson.



Photo: Jeremy Jachym

Above: Earthtone is also known for saving the day when other builders make a mess of things. Such was the case with Modern Timber-Framed Home, constructed of material from an old Texas barn. Right: Working with architect Amy Alper, Earthtone salvaged as much of the existing house as it could to create Vineyard Farmhouse (see full story, page 58) in the Russian River valley of Sonoma, Calif.



Photo: ©Eric Rorer Photography

Calm Down and Carry On

Constraint in a good economy doesn't just mean not overspending, it also means not overextending to grab every job. Andy is aware his company has gotten a little too busy of late, and he plans to pull the reins in a bit. "We're in a growth year this year," he says. "We'll try to taper that down to about 12 percent a year. We have four decent-sized residential projects going now—either new construction or major renovation. One is a large estate that will keep us busy for a few years. And we have five multifamily complexes we're working on. The multifamily projects are especially gratifying because they're for regular folks like us."

Andy doesn't want to overwhelm himself, his partners, or his staff with too much work just to chase the dollars,

because maintaining a good quality of life and great quality of work are key factors in the company's longevity and excellent employee retention. "We have value invested in our people. Anybody that knows us, knows that it's not just lip service," he says. "We're not demanding that they work 60 to 80 hours a week like some other companies are."

"I built this company not just to make buck. It's great to make money, but I've also not made money," he laughs. "I've built this company to be sustainable and last beyond me. I want it to be a vehicle for people to grow and explore, to find a path. That's what gets me up in the morning. I love being an employer and being a part of our employees' lives. I love sharing that passion for what we do."

So, striving for stability and what he

calls "mindfulness" are paramount in his approach to business. The mindful mantra extends from internal employee relations to how the company manages a job site or interacts with neighbors. Many of the sites the company works on are difficult or dense, requiring extra care and consideration. One such site was a long, narrow infill project for architect Amy Alper, AIA, in the town of Sonoma, Calif. "It took a lot of thought to figure out how to get material in there and not upset the neighbors," Andy recalls. "So, we built it from the back to the front. But even when we're working on a job out in the country, we want our people mindful of how they're driving—and when they're on site that they're not playing loud music."

Andy applies mindfulness to building science and construction as well.

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Spec Home, Newport Beach, Ca
Design by Ultra-Mod Interiors
Photo by Jeri Koegel



Photo: Ed Caldwell

Above: The Healdsburg Family Residence follows the natural topography of the site. The house gathers heat and light in cooler months and shades the harsher summer sun with deep overhangs and “shade fins.”

He’s worked with straw bale, structural insulated panels (SIPs), and concrete SIPs, and anything else a cutting-edge California architectural firm can throw at him. He’s a member of the U.S. Green Building Council and is LEED AP. The tenets of green building are baked into the business, but they’re tempered by his strong practical streak. His definition of sustainable construction is more expansive than some, perhaps. “To be sustainable, a project must also be affordable. It’s got to be practical, and make sense from a socio-economic standpoint,” he explains. “We’re not about pushing a sustainable project that’s 20 times more expensive than a conventional project.”

The best results, he insists, come from the simplest move—applying insulation and vapor barriers properly. “In the past installation of the insulation was never really that great. Builders would frame the house, put in the electrical and HVAC, and then just shove batts in. That caused more problems than it solved because it created these weird convection currents,” he explains. “Over the last 10 years or so, with improvements in building science, we can measure how insulation really

performs. We’ve learned that good installation of the material is critical to the performance.”

Sustainability can also mean not expending time, money, and effort on renovating a building that will never function efficiently or satisfy its intended use. Andy is often called upon to evaluate existing buildings and determine their feasibility for new uses. One example is on page 58 of this magazine, the Vineyard Farmhouse project designed by Amy Alper. The original house, although sited well, was poorly built and did not take advantage of its scenic surroundings; its floor plan was dark and closed off. The owner was cost conscious and wanted to save as much of the existing building as possible.

“Sometimes it can be so much work to keep something that’s subpar anyway. You often don’t save as much money as you think,” says Andy. Ultimately, he and Amy saved some walls and the foundation, and managed to give the client what he really wanted at a price he could afford—a house that functioned well for his vineyard business and his life. You could call it the success of mindfulness over matter.

—S. Claire Conroy

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In the Wake

BY SHAWNA MEYER, AIA, AND CHRISTOPHER MEYER, AIA

From the Editor: In light of the cancellation of the AIA Custom Residential Architects Network (AIA CRAN) annual symposium due to the aftereffects of Hurricane Irma, the leadership asked two of its panelists to present their thoughts on climate change and residential architecture in this essay.

“**Rising Waters,**” a panel discussion proposed to forefront dialogue on what it means to construct, live, and sustain communities within littoral regions, was planned for the September’s AIA CRAN Symposium in Miami. Edge communities inhabiting territories within fluctuating water bodies was scheduled as the focus of the discussion, posing the central question: How do residential architects, working at the scale of a single intervention, begin to own a conscious understanding of their projects within the greater context of the surrounding environment? As the conference backdrop, Miami’s dense urban coastline emphasized the reality of these hard-lined, urban/natural or land/water edges. However, Hurricane Irma—apropos to the cause—brought localized flooding and power outages, ultimately forcing the cancellation of the symposium.

The fall of 2017 has witnessed the arrival of a seemingly continuous series of significant storm events in the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. Hurricanes Harvey and Irma made landfall in August, hurricanes Jose and Maria in September, and Hurricane Nate in October, marking an intense period of storms and establishing new levels of storm severities and effects for many territories.

As with past storms, recent events will be categorized by their impact on humans and quantified through the number of human lives lost and economic destruction. The insatiable need to comprehend storm events under these finite anthropocentric categories—human lives and economic dollars—neglects focus on an environmental dialogue between affected communities and the territories they inhabit. As architects, engineers, planners, and governments mobilize to rebuild and re-envision these communities, we must diverge from the improvised and reactionary approach to reconstruction. Displacing reactionary methods with an ecological and environmentally integrated approach would transform the discourse around residential architecture. What augmented role can ecology play in the future dialogue and construct of the evolving littoral-edge community? How can humans continue to build and inhabit the wet zones in a symbiotic partnership of ecology and community, instead of a domineering role of control and disruption?

Contemporary planning regulations and protective infrastruc-



Photos: Courtesy Shawna and Christopher Meyer

Left: The original low-lying structure for this Cocodrie, La., house subject to repeated flood events, has been expanded to extend above the floodplain. The result is a series of linkages and armatures connecting various volumes, with no clear expression of program, form, or function—an architectural mash-up. Below left: The vacant, stilted framework remains as a reminder of the intense environmental forces in the Mississippi Delta.

tures established by government entities such as the early Military Topographical Engineering Commission, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency set in motion cycles of reactive planning rooted in contrived methods of control. These practices, coupled with existing community and residential typologies, evolved from the collision of forces intent on preserving a static existence within a continuously evolving, fluid environment. Architectural responses to wet environments often include transformations of existing structures (raised and stilted homes), appendages or armatures extending pre-floodplain structures, and new constructions adapted to a policy-driven floodplain datum.

Littoral communities and their associated structures suffer from reactionary policy, insurance frameworks, financial interests, and disparity in social classes generating an architectural mash-up void of intent. Scrutinizing current approaches, designers and planners need to displace unary human-centric agendas with a diverse set of interests—including environmental trajectories, building science, and inhabitation. The question facing the profession of architecture in the near future is two-fold: Can architects produce buildings responsive to the surrounding environmental conditions without falling victim to the appliqué of baseline policies that serve an agenda of protection rather than coexistence?

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The introduction of these ideas by designers and policy-makers will serve to shift expectations of clients, dwellers, and developers—offering a clear and coherent lens to engage environment through construction. Reserving reflections on antiquated policies of control and the practice of protective infrastructures for a separate dialogue, we can focus on the charge of the residential architect and the ability to develop a new set of living expectations.

As architects, we must draw upon our understanding of environmental impacts and embrace the responsibility to lead clients, developers, and community leaders in an ecological discussion. Residential architecture and urban planning strategies may include explanations of wet zones that would allow extensions of hydrological systems as well as planned methods of retreat. Clients must face the importance of the commitment to construct a dwelling within a littoral territory, and its potential to affect surrounding environment and ecological networks.

Wet Zones and Extensions of Hydrological Systems

The linking element among all littoral communities is the existence of a fluctuating edge. It's commonly perceived by inhabitants as the line or moment of separation between one distinct environment from the other—wet and dry, static and fluid. Perhaps naively, communities inhabit littoral zones and establish neighborhoods in regions precariously close to that edge. The miscalculation is in the perception that the edge is permanent, controllable, and unchanging. Whether the edge is defined as a manmade levee wall or berm, a natural ocean shoreline, a constructed seawall, or delta landforms, it should be understood as fluid and subject to the relentless pressure to change. The edge has no fixed shape and cannot be engaged as a hard line dividing one environment from another—it is a zone of give and take that yields to the strongest pressure.

For architects and planners to acknowledge this behavior, design proposals should express certain flexibility. Landscapes configure themselves seamlessly between wet zones and dry zones. Natural elements such as depressions, swales, and channels are examples of ecological buffers serving to accommodate fluctuating water zones. These buffers can respond to the fluctuating effects of water on land without the kinds of disruptions to built structures that litter manmade materials into the environment. Similarly, public open spaces, placed strategically within the urban fabric, can create transitional zones or batteries to dissipate encroaching waters until the surrounding environment can reabsorb them. The assemblage of buildings into neighborhoods and urban centers can cultivate a much-needed cohesion between structures and the environmental character of place; these subtle nuances have a guiding voice in design.

Planned Retreat

At the severe end of the spectrum, the act of retreat acknowledges environmental pressures as guiding principles for inhabitation, or lack thereof. In such dense urban instances as New Orleans, Miami, and Manhattan, the thought of these communities resettling or retreating to higher ground is perceived as an impossibility. Highly populated urban centers spawn endless typologies of supporting infrastructure available to seamlessly integrate protective systems and environmental control structures, perpetuating habits of human command over nature. Cultural agendas and embedded knowledge of place rooted in centuries of habit render large-scale change non-negotiable, however seemingly inevitable.

For Mississippi Delta communities such as Isle de Jean Charles, La., retreat may be the only option. Rising sea levels, erosion, increased storm severity, and storm surges have begun to push residents out in search of drier ground. Isle inhabitants take with them an innate knowledge bound to the intimacy of place through their experience of the dramatic transformation of the delta. The knowledge gleaned in facing the unrelenting forces of nature will offer a powerful resource in understanding the future its former residents will be forced to call home.

The role of the residential architect has the capacity to create great change in human habits through the buildings people live and work in. The innovative aspirations presented in the Case Study Project from 1945–1966 are recognized as a collective and conscious effort to interpolate change in the practice of American architecture with dwellings “designed to redefine the modern home” (Elizabeth Smith, *The Complete CSH Program*). A similar movement is needed within the contemporary discipline to address urban planning, the materiality of buildings, and the construction techniques within littoral communities. The reshoring of urban planning strategies submerged by encroaching waters and the replication and reconstruction of buildings toppled by environmental forces represents an unwillingness to acknowledge the shortcomings in our efforts.

About the Authors:

Shawna Meyer, AIA, is currently Senior Associate at KVA in Boston, and co-author of Pamphlet Architecture 36. Christopher Meyer, AIA, is founding principal of aPC and co-author of Pamphlet Architecture 36. PA 36, to be published in spring 2018, references the dialogue that exists between two distinct yet infinitely connected environments: land and sea, or terra firma and aqua firma. Architecture should be responsible for any possible outcome; through these means, the pamphlet projects a strategic set of methods for subsisting in affected zones, grounded in the specificities of culture, context, and condition.

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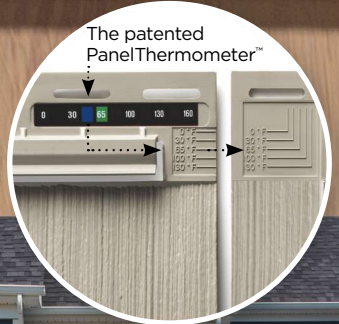


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Vernacular in Vermont

The classic American farmhouse may be the perfect modern home.

BY S. CLAIRE CONROY

ARCHITECT: SMITH & VANSANT ARCHITECTS

BUILDER: G.R. PORTER & SONS

LOCATION: EASTERN VERMONT

Mention the words “New England farmhouse” and nearly everyone in the United States can conjure an image in their heads of what it looks like: a white gabled building wrapped in a protective porch, anchoring its surroundings with dignity and sobriety. And yet, despite everyone’s familiarity with its basic forms, there is no textbook “farmhouse” style. More surprising still, the popularity of this unofficial style is growing all over the country. There are a number of reasons for this, but chief among them is its chameleon-like curb appeal—especially in rural areas, of course—and its aptitude for accommodating modern life within the walls.

Most custom residential clients are not like architects—they don’t typically want their houses to generate attention from others. Such was the case with the clients for this second home by Smith & Vansant Architects in Vermont. The 80-acre site is a landmark piece of property in its own right, so its new owners wished to add a house in keeping with the context of the area and one that presented as lean a profile as possible from the road. In consult with Smith & Vansant’s Pi Smith, AIA, and Ira Clark, AIA, they concluded a farmhouse was the perfect fit. But its emblematic form was just the jumping off place for a new family house in a beautiful setting.







“It’s a really interesting site, and most of it is quite visible from the road that heads out of town,” Ira explains. “The area is designated as a scenic corridor. There are hay fields that dip down and rise again. It’s an area that everyone knows, which is why the clients felt a need to preserve the view. We made sure to site the house and the driveway so all the near viewshed remains. We worked hard to stay out of a prime agricultural field, wetlands, and pieces of granite ledge.”

Smith & Vansant have been designing new and remodeled houses and commercial buildings in and around Vermont and New Hampshire for more than 20 years. They are intimately aware of local sensitivities and feel them keenly as well. They are adamant about designing buildings that respond to the needs and desires of their clients while remaining respectful of manmade context and the natural environment.

All of these concerns come before any consideration of stylistic goals. Thus, you’ll find a wonderful variety of buildings in the firm’s portfolio, all executed with a precise eye for proportion and detail. Meadow House presented the kind of commission the firm relishes—one that blends a love of familiar forms with an embrace



of modern aesthetics as well. Says Ira, “Our clients wanted the house to fit in, but they wanted modern materials and a modern floor plan, too.”

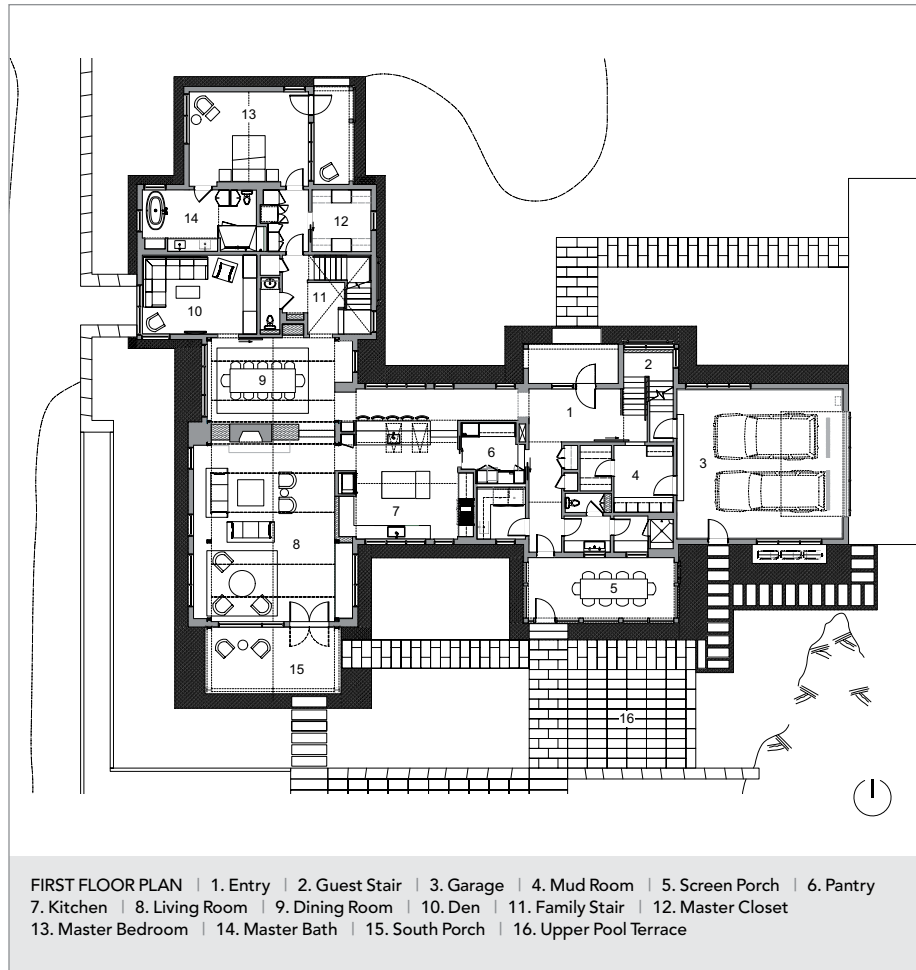
Heavy Metal

“One of the clients had a dad who was in the steel industry, so they wanted as much steel in the house as possible,” notes Pi. Therefore, the farmhouse finds itself with steel siding and roofing, and steel structure in the porches and elsewhere in the interior. On the exterior, the corrugated steel siding is bounded at openings and other transition points by fiber cement in panels and laps. The roadside elevation relegates steel to the entry gable volume and the broad side of the master bedroom wing. From afar the materials suggest conventional farmhouse wood laps and perhaps even board and batten, but it’s the horizontal lap siding that reads most clearly to passersby. Metal was a frequent component of farmhouse roofs, and therefore its abundance on Meadow House is no cause to blink.

There are many such evocations of tradition that unveil a modern twist upon closer scrutiny. From the outside of the house, modern is in the details and their execution—the way materials turn a corner, the litheness of roof profiles, the Mondrian-like sizing and organization of windows. “The gable forms stack up in a familiar New England manner,” Ira



Clockwise from opposite page: Steel columns and beams, wood ceiling panels, and polished concrete floors extend from the covered porch inside to the living room. In the living area, the steel columns are inset with wood. Two steps up from the living room, the dining area marks a flooring change to wood. The wood floors continue up the stair wall of the family wing.



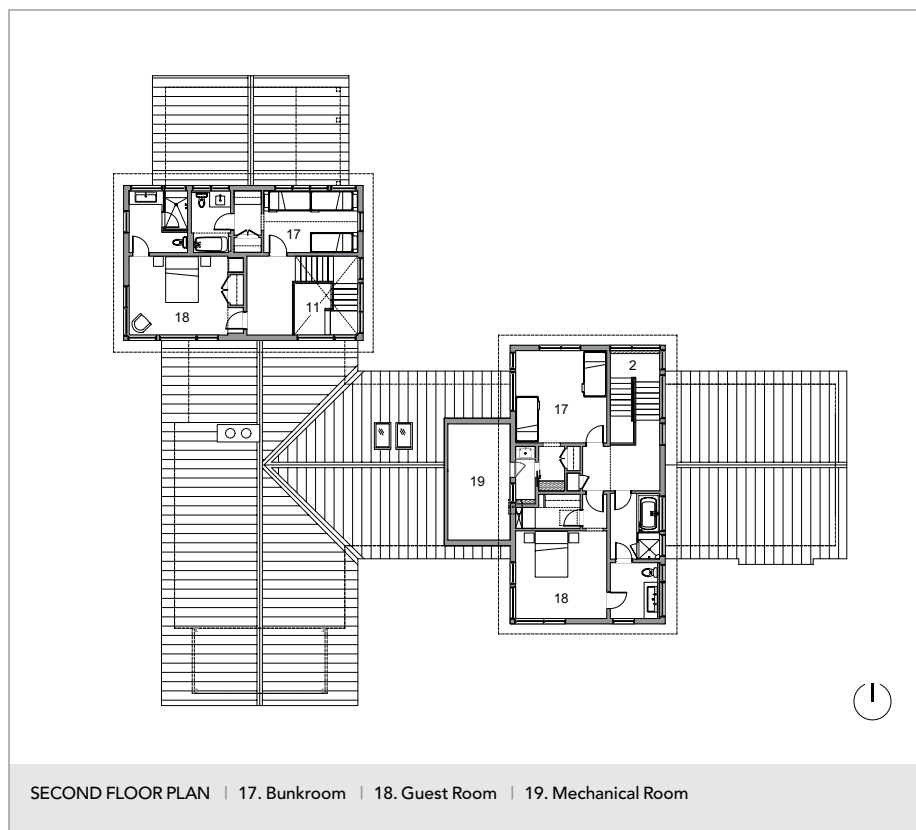
explains. “The novelty of the fenestration becomes more apparent as you get closer—the whole modern vocabulary reveals itself as you approach the house.”

In plan, the house is essentially “two boxes—one zoned for family and one for guests,” says Pi. “And they all meet in the middle in the kitchen.” The master suite is on the main level of its wing, and children access second-floor bedrooms via a family stair. On the other side of the house, guests have their own stair to second-level accommodations. The main level of their “box” contains shared spaces, such as the main entry, screened porch, and a bathroom that does double duty for the pool, and family service areas, such as the mudroom, laundry room, and passage to the pantry and garage.

“The house needed to feel comfortable for a family of four when they are there just for the weekend,” says Ira. “But then it also needed to accommodate larger-scale entertaining and longer visits with guests. A distinct guest wing helps manage the sense of scale.”

Blending In and Standing Out

Even though their exteriors are so adept at appearing traditional, farmhouse interiors lend themselves to looking very contemporary. The secret in both cases is those gable forms. On the inside of the house, they easily become dramatic volume spaces. Matched with generous glazing, these spaces connect visually and physically to the outdoors





Above: Polar white stone counters, polished concrete floors, and stainless steel appliances are warmed by builder G.R. Porter's custom wood cabinetry. A pantry provides direct passage between the garage and kitchen.

in the modern manner we've all come to appreciate. In this house, a covered gable porch overlooking the pool extends its volume back inside to the living room and dining room. The steel structure that supports it continues inside as well. On the interior, the steel beam recesses are infilled with wood. "The wood helps keep the modern warm," says Pi. "You'll see mahogany nosing up to steel or lining the underside of soffits. It's a little surprise at close range."

"We like to blend the industrial materials with more natural hand-shaped materials," Ira observes. Polished concrete floors cover the kitchen and living room, while two steps up, wood floors line the dining room and central passage along the kitchen to the entry. Wood-paneled ceilings appear throughout, as do custom wood built-ins and barn doors that slide on steel tracks.

"Our clients wanted the principal areas to be largely open to each other, with a certain amount of control. We actually played with some 3-D modeling to explore the degree to which the kitchen should be open or closed down," says Ira. "With all of the principal spaces, you have views back and forth. None of them feels like a confined room."

Using level changes and flooring and ceiling cues to zone rooms and functions were experiments for the firm. "Since we were bringing everyone by the kitchen, we wanted everyone to feel they were going by it but are not in it," Pi explains. "It's reinforced by the soffit. All of the public rooms have the wood ceilings with the subtle gray tint. There's a secondary route to the kitchen as well—the grocery route with step down to the pantry level."

The firm worked closely with interior designers dpf Design



Above: A ragged granite ledge marks a natural transition between the cultivated landscape and pool deck and the wilder meadow.

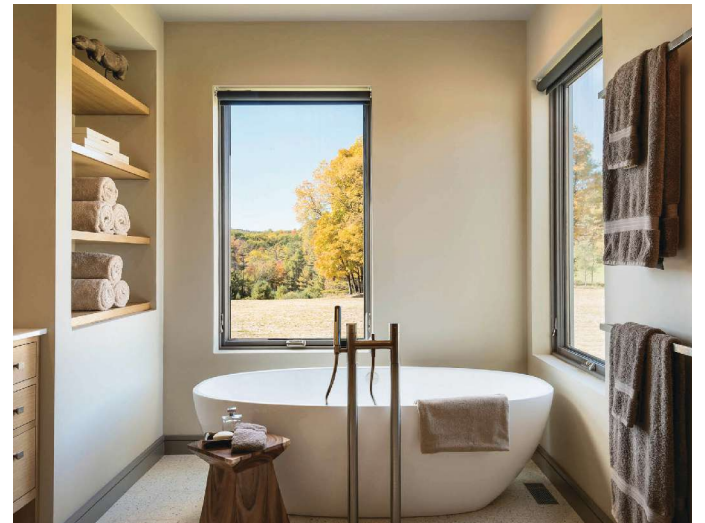
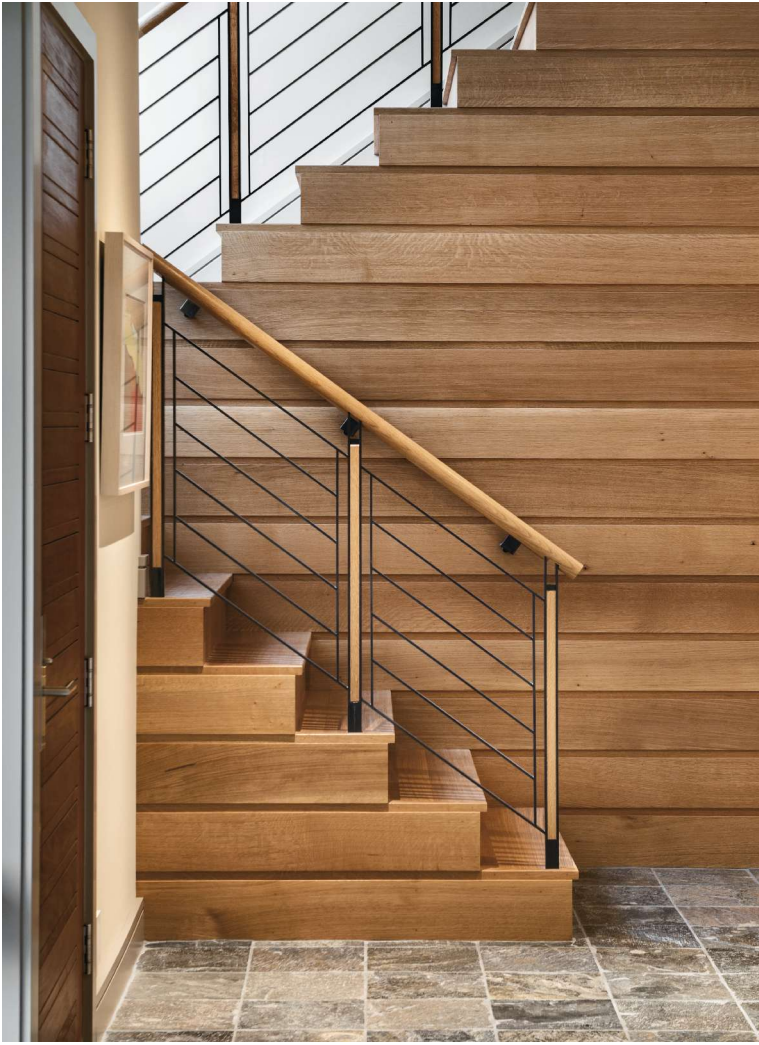
on finish choices, furnishings, and lighting. “It was very collaborative,” says Pi. “We’ve been working with them for 20 years. They dealt with all the furnishings, and generated tile palettes for the bathrooms. We worked closely on the casework and color for the window frames on the inside.” Ira finishes the thought, “We decided where some of these oak panels would go. They decided about some of the washes. And then our builder made large-scale mockups of the elements to show everyone.”

Both architects concur that builders Tim and Tom Porter of G.R. Porter & Sons did an amazing job pulling all of the parts together. “They outdid themselves on this house,” says Pi. “They’ve done some modern work before, but we’d worked with them more on traditional projects, and they embraced it. The mockups that they did were quite a helpful tool. A lot of

this is a leap of faith for the client—they’re trying to interpret from drawings, but they’re not seeing what we’re seeing. Even 3-D modeling helps. But with the big samples they can touch, they are able to see and understand the juxtaposition and the texture.”

Smooth Landing

No one builds a house on 80 acres without wanting to engage with the land. For these clients that desire was balanced with a mandate to keep the weekend property low maintenance. “The clients were interested in a house that shaped the outdoor areas,” says Ira. “On the entry side, as you curve in from the north, there are a couple of porches that face that. And poolside, the outdoor areas are bounded on two sides—by the ridge edge and by small trees to the east. We were able to use



Clockwise from top left: The guest wing's stair hall also links to the garage, mudroom, and foyer. The first floor master bedroom and bath have bird's-eye views of the meadow and forest. The main hallway from the entry to the dining room and living area passes by the kitchen. The hall's wood flooring and level change from the kitchen maintain its formal remove.

these broken-down building forms to shape those spaces.”

Pi continues, “The most compact aspect of the house is from the road. Isn’t until you walk around to the back of the house that you get how big a house it is. We were all very conscious of how it appeared. We worked hard at breaking the house into smaller forms.”

Carving the foundation for the 5,400-square-foot house was no easy task either. In Vermont, it often takes a fair amount of blasting to clear the way. (“There’s a reason people moved west!” Pi jokes.) But the architects left most of the rocky landscape intact, including that ledge that serves as a natural boundary between the curated outdoor areas and the meadow’s edge. The owners wanted the minimum amount of lawn to please family and guests; beyond that, the grasses are left wild, with periodic bush hogging and a rough-cut path here and there.

A powered cover for the pool allows the owners to secure it when they leave, and it eliminates the need for a fence that might block the vista of the meadow. “Around here there are a lot of places with views, but this client wanted rolling meadows,” says Ira.

Eventually, the weekend house will become a full-time retirement home, so energy efficiency and build quality were a long-term concern and worthy application of investment. The owner has installed ground-mounted photovoltaics as a hedge for the future and has an outlet for an electric car in the garage.

Those low-maintenance exterior materials were also deemed more durable than the usual complement of natural woods found on New England



Above: Mahogany screens shield private areas while allowing air and light to pass through. Precise attention to detail and transitions between materials give the farmhouse its modern edge.



Above: A large screened porch functions as both sheltered outdoor and indoor space. It provides passage to the pool bathroom and shower.

houses. “What our builder and we are finding is that previous materials don’t hold up as well as they used to. We’ve worked with corrugated metal before, but fiber cement was new to us,” says Ira. “When we do use wood, we’re looking for wood with longevity—cedar instead of hemlock and pine, for instance.”

With Vermont’s frigid winters and dramatic temperature differentials between outside and inside, a rigorous building envelope is always a critical component of construction. “We make an effort to beef up specs in walls and roofs, and to use insulation with low toxicity,” Ira explains. “Usually, it’s a combination of dense-packed cellulose, rigid insulation board, Roxul mineral wool, and a soy-based spray foam. We install air-source heat pumps with a boost from an efficient boiler system. There’s the usual array of energy recovery ventilators and a fresh air system. And the house is wrapped in a smart vapor retarder that allows the walls to dry in every direction.”

Double-pane windows are the firm’s go-to. Although they have used triple-glazed units on some projects, they can’t always justify the hit to the budget or the architectural aesthetics. Says Pi, “They often ramp up the budget—and the cost of construction here is high anyway. We’ve been focusing on the whole picture of efficiency. Also, we like to play with divisions in our windows, and that gets much harder to do with triple-pane windows.”

The firm arranged windows for maximum effect on the interiors as well as the exteriors. Sight lines across the open plan inevitably terminate in some glimpse of the meadow, pool, or other pleasing vista. “We took advantage of those long views through the house with axial windows, so you’re always moving towards the light,” Pi explains. The windows are a combination of custom and stock, says Ira. “Our window company, more than many other, has

CASE STUDY

Meadow House

EASTERN VERMONT

ARCHITECT: Project team: Pi Smith, AIA, John Vasant, AIA, Ira Clark, AIA, Stephen Branchflower, White River Junction, Vt.

BUILDER: G.R. Porter & Sons, Inc., Norwich, Vt.

INTERIOR DESIGN: dpf Design, Inc., White River Junction, Vt.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Janet Cavanagh Landscape Architect, S. Strafford, Vt.

PROJECT SIZE: 5,400 square feet

SITE SIZE: 80 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Rob Karosis Photography

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS/DOORS: Marvin

CLADDING: Vicwest, Eter-Color

ROOFING: Galvalume

SOFFITS: Nantucket Beadboard MRX

HOUSEWRAP: GREENGUARD

INSULATION: Dow XPS, IKO Ener-Air, Demilec Heatlok Soy

VAPOR BARRIER: Pro Clima Intello Plus

ENGINEERED LUMBER: Trus Joist

DOOR HARDWARE: Emtek

HVAC: Mitsubishi, Viessmann

HUMIDITY CONTROL: Nortec

RADIANT HEATING: Uponor

RADIATORS: Runtal

ENERGY RECOVERY VENTILATOR: RenewAire

HOT WATER HEATER: ACV Triangle Tube

BATHROOM VENTILATION: Fantech

KITCHEN CABINETRY/COUNTERTOPS: Custom

CABINETRY HARDWARE: Rocky Mountain Hardware, Schaub & Company

SLIDING BARN DOOR HARDWARE: Rustica Hardware

RANGE/VENT HOOD: Wolf

MICROWAVE: Wolf

DISHWASHER: Bosch

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Sub-Zero

WINE REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

WASHER/DRYER: Electrolux

FAUCETS/SINKS/TOILETS: Duravit, Dornbracht, Icera, Aquabraxs, Phylrich, Jado, California Faucets, KWC, Lenova

HOME CONTROL: Honeywell RedLINK

LIGHTING CONTROL: Lutron

LIGHTING: Artemide, Flos, LBL Lighting, SONNEMAN, Illuminating Experiences, Corbett Lighting, LZP Lamps, WAC Lighting, Arteriors, Foscarini, Lightyears

PAINTS/STAINS: Benjamin Moore




Above: The rear elevation of Meadow House reveals the complexity of the plan and structure. This is not your great-grandmother's Vermont farmhouse.



made it easier to go to a custom unit without incurring a substantial premium.”

Where the spaces would benefit from more natural light but need to preserve privacy, too, the architects placed custom mahogany screens over windows and other openings. The screens add another of those “hand-shaped” warm elements to balance out the sharper industrial palette. They layer on texture and richness to the otherwise “simple, white gable forms,” as Pi calls them, and strike a proper note of New England reserve on the public side of the house.

As Americans move farther away from their rural agrarian roots, it appears more of us find resonance in evoking its enduring images. But it’s not just wistful thinking—the farmhouse is truly an American archetype. Its basics are as flexible and functional today as they were a hundred years ago. We’ve been perfecting this building for a very long time, tailoring it to each circumstance like a Savile-Row suit. Even updated with modern flare, the 21st century farmhouse is stalwartly beyond style and fleeting fashion. It is an American classic. 

The Marvelous Middle

They're a little bit country, they're a little bit rock 'n roll: three houses that vamp the vernacular.

BY S. CLAIRE CONROY





Opposite: Three distinct volumes zone Owl Ditch Ranch's main house. An adult wing comprises a first-floor guest suite and second-floor master. A glass-enclosed stair connects to the double-height living/dining volume. Then another two-story wing contains the mayhem of four boys and garage/mudroom services. *Above:* Traditional ranch house materials come together with sharp, modern detailing.

The mountains call many people to them, but there's a particularly irresistible beckoning to those who spend their day-to-day lives in the flatlands of commerce. The entire state of Wyoming has worked diligently to establish itself as a financial haven for the wealthy, all while serving up some of the most picturesque landscape in the country. Nowhere is this phenomenon more prominent than in Jackson, Wyo. Flatlanders feel perfectly at home here in "The Hole," an eerily level, basin bisected by the sinuous Snake River. Yet surrounding the town are some of the highest elevation mountains in the United States. And what's especially unusual is there are no foothills here—access to those mountains for hiking or skiing or simply admiring from the basin is immediate.

The absence of foothills is an artifact of the Teton fault which, over the course of millennia, has thrust the mountains up from the earth's crust while pushing the basin down. The dramatic topography and snowy climate (an average of 70 inches a year) combine with the vast national park acreage of Grand Teton, Gros Ventre, and Yellowstone to make Jackson and its adjacent villages

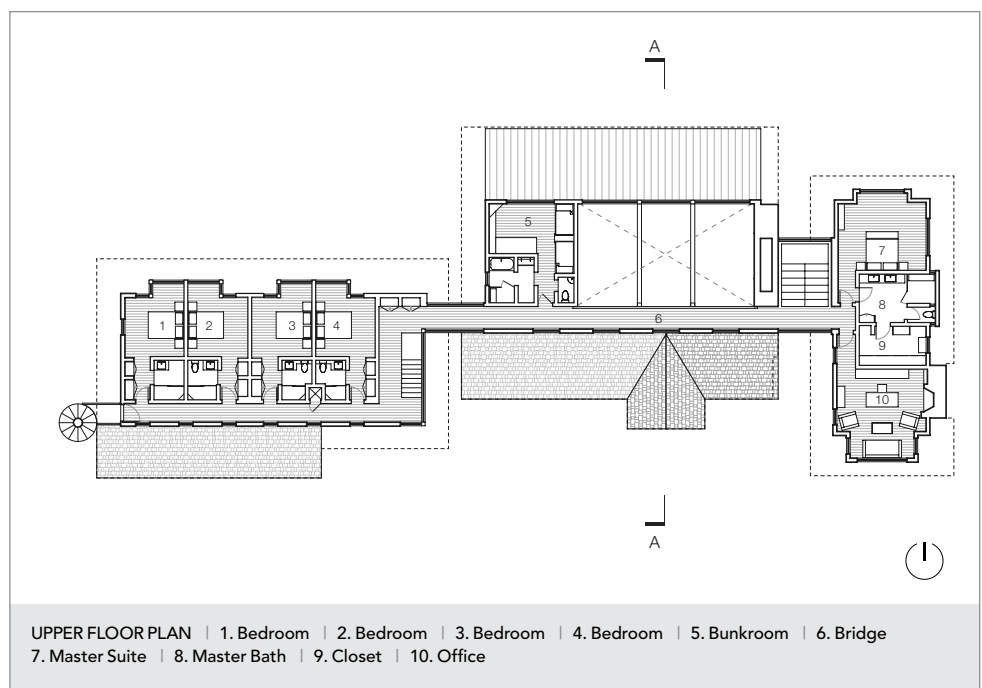
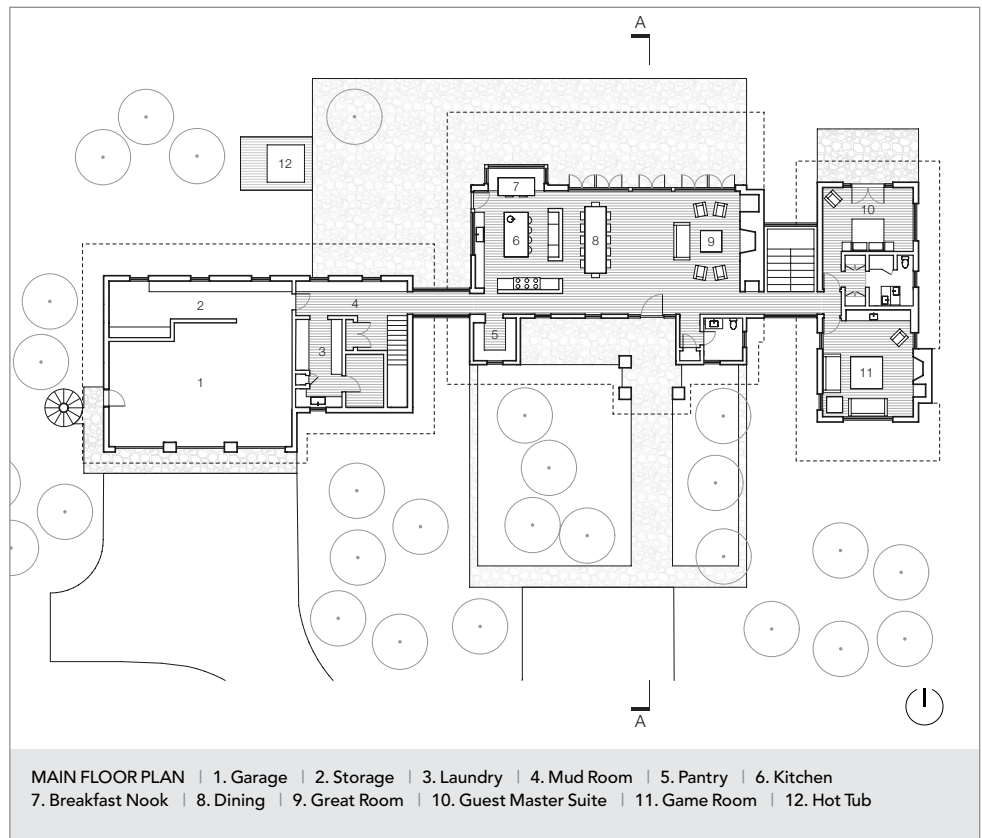
Owl Ditch Ranch

JACKSON, WYO.
CARNEY LOGAN BURKE ARCHITECTS

a highly desirable year-round destination for recreation. So, it's no wonder that along with the Tetons, you'll find the titans of Wall Street, Washington, Hollywood, and other centers of wealth generation vacationing here, seeking immersion and escape in Jackson's natural beauty. They are among the fortunate few who can afford to buy or build a house here, where the median list price for single-family homes is just under \$2.5 million, according to local real estate experts.

With so much land in conservation, prime lots are also pricey. And it's expensive to build here—materials are trucked in from afar over the mountains. But what really adds to construction costs is its geology: Jackson is classified as a Seismic Design Category D area, which is similar to much of inland San Francisco. The Teton fault, part of the Intermountain Seismic Belt, is capable of earthquakes to 7.5 magnitude—although the last one of that force was nearly 4,000 years ago. Still, mild earthquakes happen with relative frequency, and the basin is kept protected from floods by a dam and a series of levees that control the Snake River's flow in snow melt season.

The buyers of this 10-acre parcel along the Snake River were vacationing in the area when they stopped by to see the listing in North Jackson. They were immediately taken by its setting, mostly wooded with a man-made pond, facing west to the Grand Teton range. On the property was a dated 1980s main house and an old log guest house. The original house did not meet their needs as a family (two adults and four rambunctious boys), nor did it meet current seismic standards, so the couple enlisted Carney Logan Burke (CLB) to design a suitable replacement and John Jennings of Peak Builders to construct it.





Clockwise from top left: An exercise and party barn is runaway space for the boys. Salvaged wood clads its exteriors and interiors. The double-height living/dining area links the two sleeping wings with a second-story bridge. The stone fireplace surround is Montana Moss rock, also used on the exterior.

Geologic Time

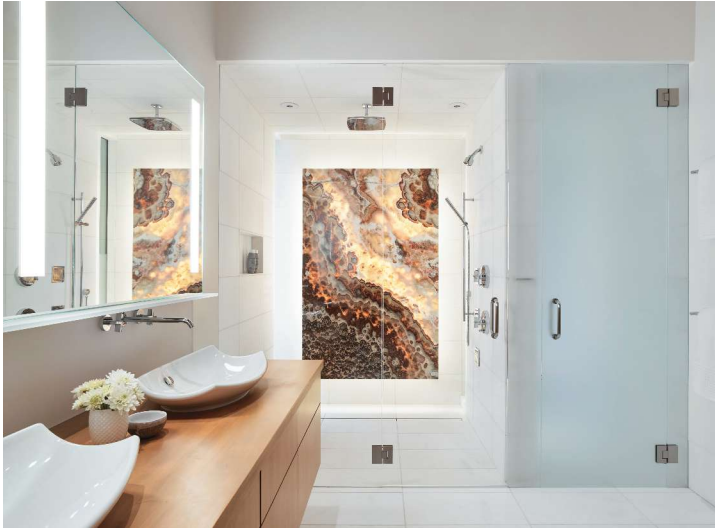
And then everything ground to a halt, as the husband's day job grew more demanding of his attention elsewhere. It took nearly five years of fits and starts for the project to reach the finish line. Meanwhile, the family crammed into the rustic, 800-square-foot log cabin on visits back (John Jennings renovated it enough to be livable) and continued to meet with the firm periodically to discuss the master plan for the property.

Although not great for the balance sheets of architecture firms and custom building companies, taking time to live on a property and to get to know its rhythms and character is always helpful to the owners. During the extended project hiatus, the wife collected finds from all over the world that she asked to have incorporated into the new house. The husband, too, developed an inventory of items to include in his private office space. And each of the four boys had a say in how their rooms would look.

Over time, the wife's tastes emerged as



Left: The glass stair hall is the home's big modern move. It leads to the master suite and home office. The open treads and slender wall and railing connections allow breathtaking views of the Grand Teton mountains beyond.



Clockwise from top left: In the master shower, a slab of onyx is mounted on steel rods and lit from behind. Kitchen windows frame majestic mountain views.



somewhat more modern than the husband's—a common wrinkle architecture firms must smooth out. The subdivision also imposed constraints on the design—for instance, gabled roofs and rustic exterior materials were mandates.

Principal-in-charge John Carney, FAIA, and his colleagues constantly work the possibilities of the region's design vocabulary, exploring that continuum between traditional and modern. Everyone here is drawn to the place for its earthy colors, its jagged edges, its wild and prickly roots. Although, no one wants to lose the dusty patina that permeates its appeal, the continuum is a rich vein to mine—and CLB is among the best firms at doing so.

Baby Steps

After the log cabin renovation at Owl Ditch Ranch (ODR), as the compound is called, the next addition was a 1,000-square-foot “barn” building. Built by the ever-patient John Jennings, it was intended as a party structure and exercise studio. While the main house took shape, it provided the family with welcome breathing room from the close quarters of the cabin.

The simple building makes liberal use of reclaimed wood and weathered steel, evoking the appearance of an old outbuilding on a working ranch. Salvaged wood, says John Carney, “is a double-edged sword here. It’s so popular

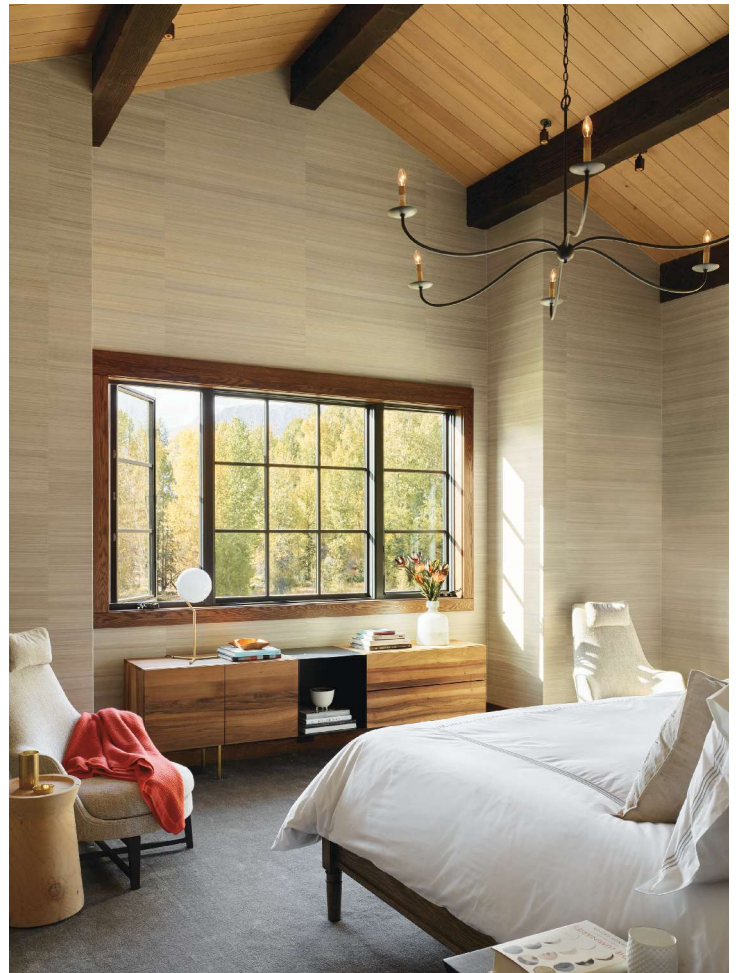
and so in demand, that people now put up snow fencing, leave it to weather for six years, then replace it with new fencing and sell off the old.”

At first glance, the building seems a straightforward interpretation of a small barn, but the differences are in the detailing and generous application of glazing. “We used hand-forged nails, steel flashing, and steel connectors. The random-width wood cladding is installed both vertically and horizontally,” says John. A deep, inviting covered porch makes you think this little building is all you need to feel at home and protected from the elements.

Inside, the workout room is bright and energizing. Whitewashed wood ceilings



Above: A clever bunkroom absorbs friends of the four resident boys. Right: All the bedrooms—including the master—make use of wallpaper to set them apart and add warmth in the winter months; the ceilings are tongue-and-groove hemlock with antique-finished oak trim.



and white painted walls are punctuated by rough-hewn, wood-framed windows, exposed beams, and sliding interior barn doors. Exercise machines face a large window wall overlooking the view of the meadow.

On the other side of the barn lies the “party room” (really more of a family room) with kitchenette, big sectional couch, and game-size television. There’s a full bathroom, too, making the building viable as overflow guest space. In the party room, the salvaged wood wraps the walls, and the wood floor is dark stained. We won’t call it a “man cave,” but you get the picture.

Survival Zones

When it came time to build the main house, the first priority for the clients was a plan that would take advantage of the site’s views and opportunities for indoor-outdoor living. The second priority was a scheme that could absorb those four teenage boys with a minimum of fuss and disruption. “The house,” says John, “is very much zoned.”

John and project manager Maria James devised a three-part harmony solution: three separate volumes, containing a wing for the boys and their visiting friends (to the south and over the garage for acoustic isolation), a wing for the parents and their

guests (to the north), and a shared family gathering space at the center. The wings are linked to the central kitchen and great room building by two double-height glass connectors or hyphens, allowing sight lines through the house at both interstices and west to the mountains. Overlooking the great room, a bridge borrows views of the Tetons through a clerestory and provides second-level access between the wings.

The boys, who were given four separate-but-equal bedrooms to decorate as they chose, have both an interior back stair to spirit them up from the first-floor mudroom and laundry area, and an



Above: Material choices in Jackson's subdivisions are heavily regulated, but that doesn't mean they can't be applied with modern sensibilities and techniques, as shown in this sidelong view of the rear porch.

exterior spiral staircase to convey them directly outside.

Over in the parents' wing, the first floor contains a guest suite and a family sitting room. The glass connector on their side of the house has a steel-and-glass stair that accesses the master bedroom and the husband's office, while supplying uninterrupted views of the mountains. Windows and doors in the connectors are thermally broken steel units from Italy.

Of course, the dramatic use of glass and steel is the big modern move within the otherwise traditional lodge-style building. However, there are smaller moves as well—for instance, those gabled roof elements preordained by the subdivision. John likes to get the roofs as thin and the pitch as moderate as possible while still hefting the area's heavy snow loads. "I will never allow a big, thick cold roof where you don't need it," he says. Elsewhere, blackened copper connections turn up on edges to sharpen details; all cabinetry has plain, slab-front doors; and a steel pergola shades the back patio. Dry-stacked Montana Moss rock appears on the exteriors and interiors of the house—on the fireplace wall and in the glass staircase connector—but its application is crisp and clean. Material selection and use is decorative and practical: On the exterior, the rock protects the house up to the winter snow line, where more vulnerable



Above: Another glass connector links the boys' wing with the bridge to the parents' wing, while also showcasing the Grand Tetons beyond.

materials would be exposed.

Generous porches at front and back help hold snow and direct its melt, sheltering the wood elements of the exterior—reclaimed siding, notched half-logs, and hand-hewn fir beams and columns. All the wood has been worked in some way—weathered and salvaged, wire-brushed or sandblasted, and even burned in the Shou Sugi Ban tradition. The porches also provide essential shade and sun control for those western mountain views.

After more than 6,000 square feet of choices, curations, and collaborations with

homeowners and other team members, a new house was born. But is the result “traditional” or “modern”? Are the criteria standard enough for everyone to agree upon them? A modern architect might survey Owl Ditch Ranch's main house and barn and call them traditional, while a classicist might insist they're modern. No matter; once the punch list is done and the homeowner takes the keys, the argument is settled. Architects may enjoy parsing the finer distinctions of style, but most clients are just happy to call this comfortable middle ground on the continuum “home.”

Owl Ditch Ranch

JACKSON, WYO.

ARCHITECT: John Carney, FAIA, principal in charge, and Maria James, project manager, Carney Logan Burke Architects, Jackson

BUILDER: John Jennings, Peak Builders, Jackson

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Owner and Cynthia Harms, Carney Logan Burke

LANDSCAPE DESIGNER: Mark and Bonny Hershberger, Hershberger Design, Jackson

PROJECT SIZE: Main house, 6,192 square feet (conditioned); fitness barn: 1,000 square feet (conditioned)

SITE SIZE: 10.7 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: ©Matthew Millman Photography

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS/WINDOW WALLS: Brombal, JELD-WEN.

ROOFING: Cedar shakes

CLADDING: Reclaimed wood vertical siding, 12-inch hand-adzed spruce slab siding with synthetic chinking

DOOR HARDWARE: Rocky Mountain Hardware

COOKTOP: Wolf

VENT HOOD: Wolf

OVENS: Wolf

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

WINE REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

DISHWASHERS: Miele, Fisher & Paykel drawer

KITCHEN FAUCETS: Rohl Perrin & Rowe

KITCHEN SINK: Rohl Shaws

SECONDARY FAUCETS/SHOWERHEADS: Kallista, Kohler

SINKS/LAVS: Kallista, Kohler, Duravit

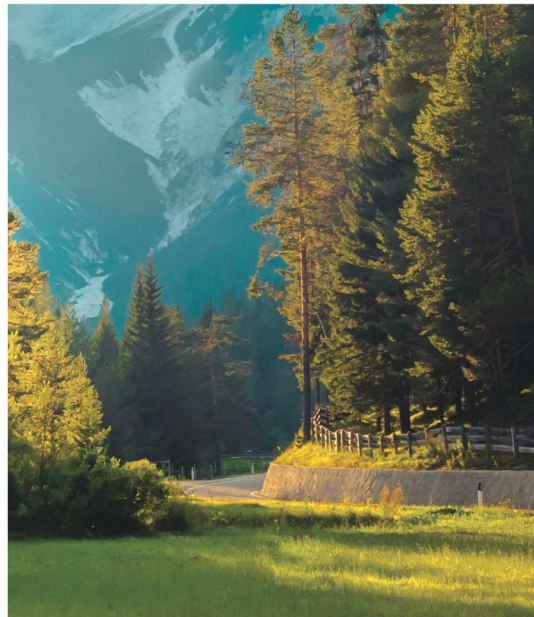
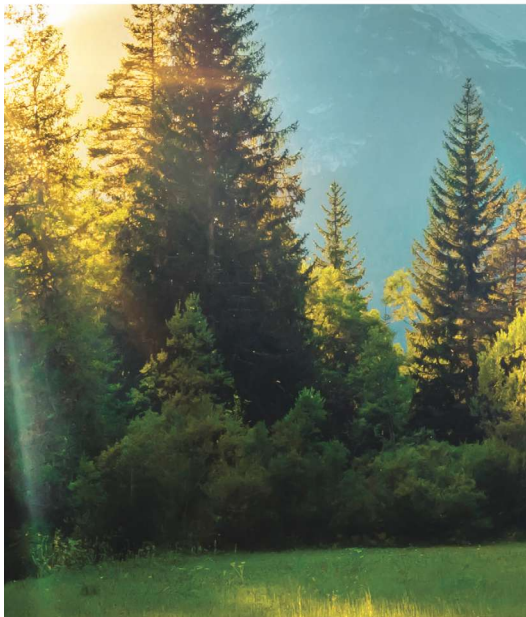
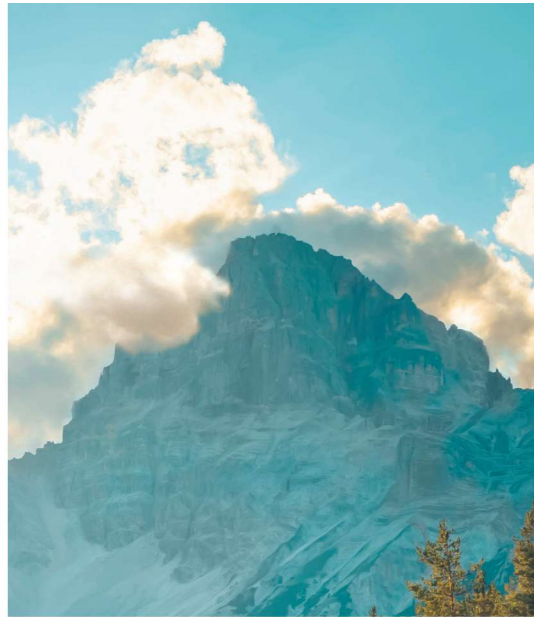
SHOWER DOORS: Vigo

TOILETS: Toto

TILE: Daltile, Florida Tile, Arizona Tile, Island Stone, Heath Ceramics

SHADING/SUN CONTROL: Lutron

LIGHTING: Halo, Iris, Lucifer, Belfer, B-K Lighting, Leviton, Metalux, Rebel, Hevi Lite, Edge Lighting, Delta Star, Schoolhouse



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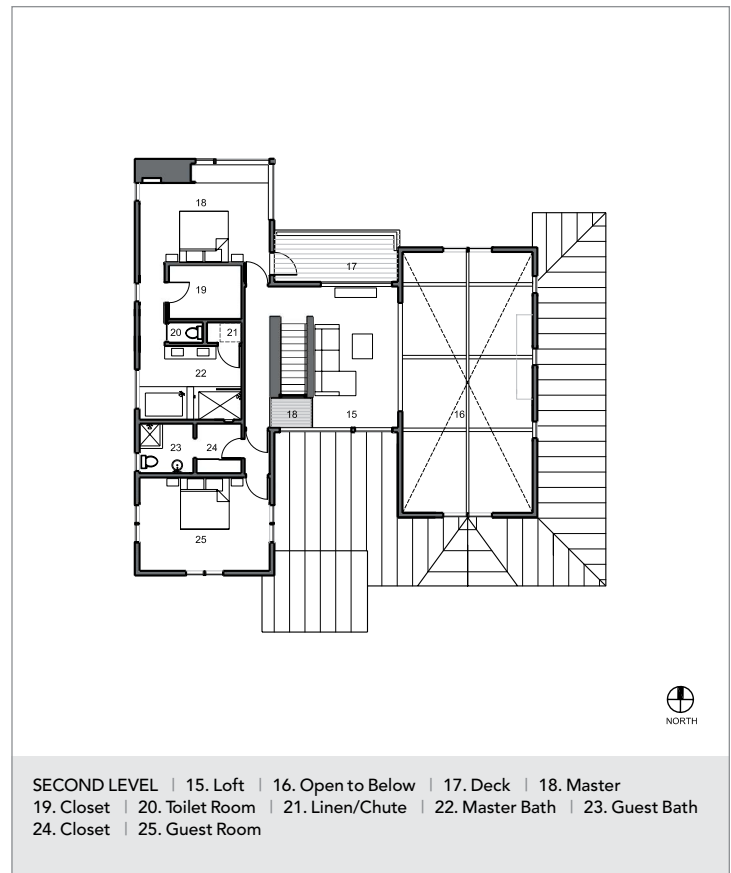
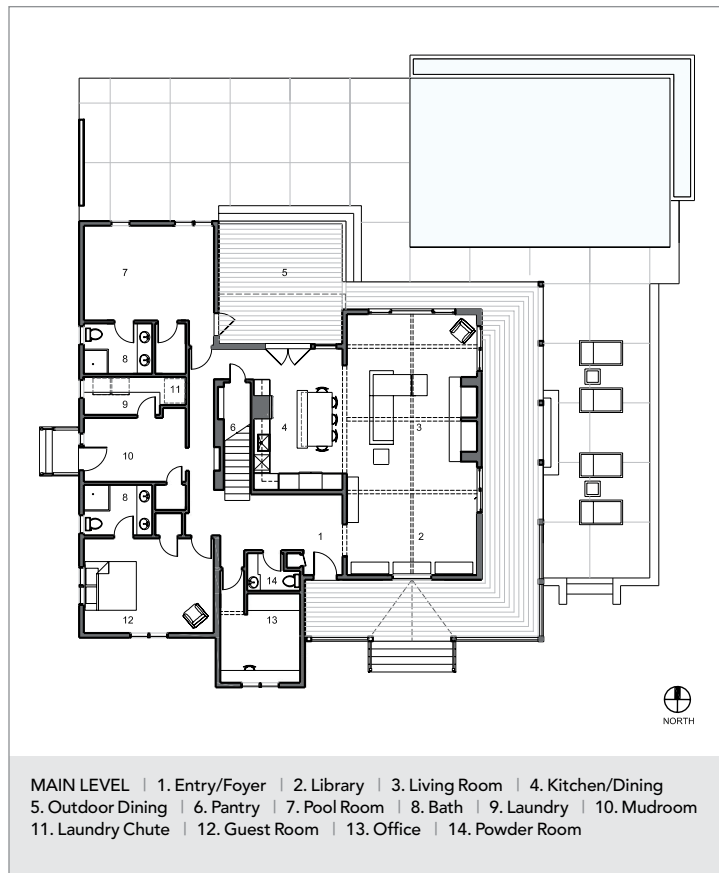
Vineyard Farmhouse

SONOMA, CALIF.
AMY A. ALPER, ARCHITECT

When it comes to renovations, pulling threads is an expensive proposition. A client comes to you with a house on a pretty piece of land. They're price sensitive and they think to themselves, "All it needs is a few tweaks to tailor it to my needs." Amy Alper, AIA, had such a client for Vineyard Farmhouse in the Russian River appellation of Sonoma. His main prize in purchasing the property was its established vines, but he also needed a house that supported his remote work in the tech field and his aspiration to grow pinot noir grapes for the wine industry.

The existing house was a rather lackluster single-level building, mostly likely sourced from a plan book—but that was not its worse trait. "My client bought the property for the view and the vineyard," says Amy. "The house was cold, it was dark, and it didn't engage the landscape." Custom builder Andy Bannister of Earthtone Construction describes it this way, "It was a funny old house built in the 1970s. It wasn't very well put together—really it was more like a cardboard box."

Nonetheless, it was at the tail end of the recession when the design work began, so everyone was concerned about costs. "When we started, some clients were still pulling the plug on projects. Others went ahead, but looked for places they could cut," Amy recalls. So, she and Andy set about saving what they could of the existing structure. "We leveraged a lot. Everything came down to the foundation, and a handful of main-level walls that we were able to leave intact and work with." At least the funny old house was sited on the sweet spot of the property.



Twins That Aren't Twins

Along with saving bits and pieces of house, Amy's chief challenge was to balance the client's desire for views of the vineyard from inside of the house and his need for privacy from workers tending the vines outside. Seasonal field hands often arrive very early in the morning to beat the heat, and they work on vines hard by the house.

Given the layout of the property (including two existing red barns that were to remain unchanged), Amy thought the new house should establish a certain presence on the site. Her solution: an iconic vernacular farmhouse form but with obvious modern updates.

"Essentially the plan is a twin gable-end and basilica form. One of the

twins is primarily private space, and the other is more about the public spaces," she says. "The idea was in keeping with the rural character of the property. And there's a kind of ever-presence and intrigue in 'what is a farmhouse?' Here, there is a constant overlay of the modern. Rooms are open to each other; there is volume. And that higher-volume space allows for bigger windows and passive airflow through the building."

The twins are fraternal not identical, and their differences play out on the exterior in the directions their siding is applied and the size and arrangement of their fenestration.

Traditional farm materials such as lap and board-and-batten siding, hog-wire

guardrails, and rough-hewn wood beams appear inside and out, but the introduction of steel—in connections, handrails, custom lighting, and the fireplace wall and surround—underline the more modern aesthetic at work.

The "private" twin contains the owner's master bedroom suite on the second level, a walk-out balcony, and a guest room. On its main level are a guest suite, mudroom and laundry, plus a room and full bath to service the pool area.

The space between private wing and public holds overlapping private/public functions, such as the open kitchen and home office on the first level, and the loft sitting area on the second level.

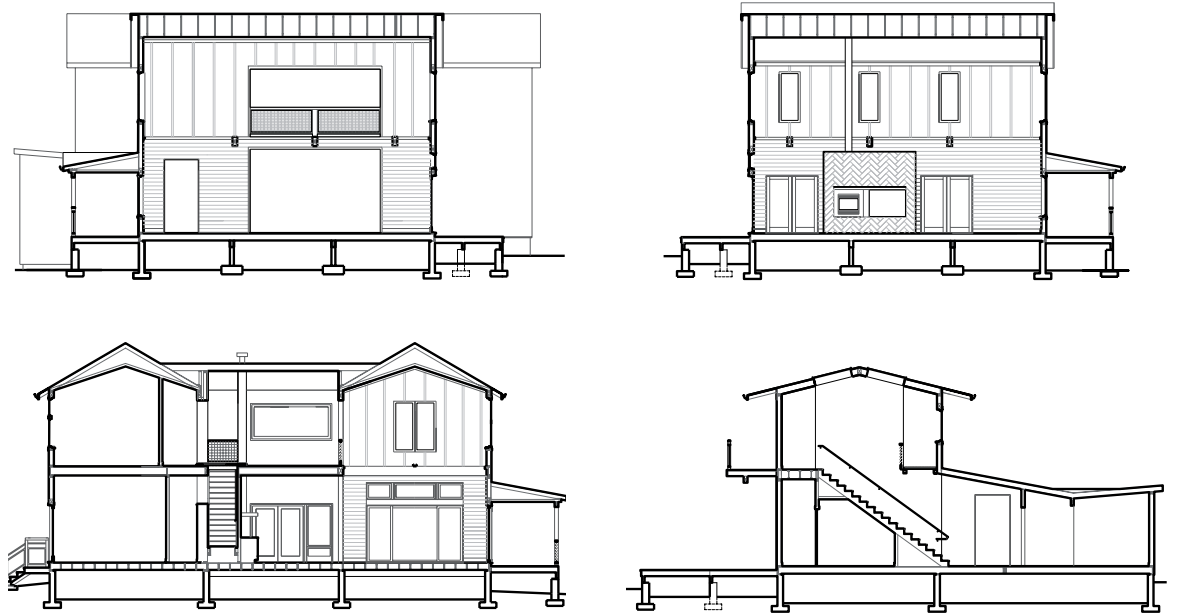
In the loft is the owner's favorite view, a



Above: A double-height living room and loft space allow the Vineyard Farmhouse to borrow light, air, and views from all directions.



Top and above: Amy had the wood-clad windows painted black to resemble steel, adding modern flare to the farmhouse forms. Metal tiles in the fireplace surround extend the cultivated industrial look. The upstairs loft is runaway space for the owner when the fields are being worked.



Below: A pony wall holds the shower valve, so it can be turned on without getting wet. There's a mountain view just beyond the foot of the tub.
Bottom: Special care was taken to frame the expansive views from the master suite.

panorama of the Mayacamas mountains to the east. The ceiling is only about 9 feet high here, but the room benefits from the expansiveness of the double-height living room it overlooks.

The loft borrows welcome breezes and fresh air from below, aided by an adjacent stair topped by operable skylights and plenty of windows that open. Early in the morning when the vineyards are bustling with activity, the owner can enjoy his morning cup of coffee at a relaxing remove, high above it all.

Sweet Symmetry

A deep, shading porch wraps the public wing of the house, continuing from the front around to the side and terminating just past the living room wall plane. Coming up the stair to the porch at the front of the house, visitors encounter a big window and a view straight through the living room to the rear.

The front entry is actually to the left and passes into a foyer where space is compressed. “It’s more of a traditional foyer,” Amy notes. Turning and entering the living room provides the big “ah” moment of release.

“The notion of sequence was important,” she says. The original house had the porch stairs oriented directly in front of the entry. “Regardless of any formal architectural concepts going on, my basic consideration at all times was, ‘How are we engaging with the view?’”

Even so, Amy adds, “the project needed a certain amount of classic symmetry.” That symmetry is most powerfully perceived in the living room. Doors and windows align as they should, and even the battens on the walls hit the perfect terminus at every





Above and opposite page: The only notable aspect of the existing house was its siting, which Amy retained. “When you’re outside eating or relaxing, you engage with the lines of the vines and then the views beyond. There’s not a bad time of year to be there.”

transition. These are the details good architects make sure to draw perfectly, and good builders execute with precision.

Exposed beams span the room to join the mezzanine level, and are bisected by a perpendicular custom-made metal channel. “The beams modulate the volume, and they provide an opportunity for lighting,” Amy explains. “The channel hides LED uplights and provides a place to hang the central pendant. The uplighting really adds warmth and complexity to the space, in addition to function. And we get virtually full illumination of the

ceiling without downlights.”

Symmetry plays out in more subtle ways, as well. For instance, the herringbone pattern that appears in the metal-tiled fireplace wall turns up in smaller scale as marble herringbone tile for the kitchen backsplash—fireplace and kitchen are directly opposite each other, of course.

Says Amy, “There’s a play in texture and a change in scale between the fireplace and the kitchen. The entire space is about a layering approach. The building blocks are texture, light, detail—these

are the classics of architecture regardless of the style.”

When Amy needs some inspiration for the vernacular work her clients often request, she doesn’t have to look far afield from the agricultural and residential precedents of her home base in Sonoma and Napa.

“The forms are primary to the rural areas out here, and are so compelling architecturally,” she says. “That intersection between the vernacular and the modern—it’s a very satisfying place to play.”



Vineyard Farmhouse

SONOMA, CALIF.

ARCHITECT: Principal-in-charge Amy A. Alper, AIA, Amy A. Alper, Architect; associate architect Dirk M. Smolak, Sonoma

BUILDER: Andy Bannister, Earthtone Construction, Sebastopol, Calif.

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Amy A. Alper, AIA; material sourcing, Rochelle Silberman Design

LANDSCAPE DESIGNER: Allen Land Design, Santa Rosa, Calif.; Bluestone Pool and Landscape, Napa, Calif.

PROJECT SIZE: 3,550 square feet

SITE SIZE: 7 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: \$300 a square foot

PHOTOGRAPHY: ©Eric Rorer Photography

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS/DOORS: Kolbe Windows & Doors

CLADDING: James Hardie

ROOF WINDOWS: VELUX

DOOR HARDWARE: HOPPE, Emtek, Basel

VAPOR BARRIER: DuPont Tyvek

COUNTERTOPS: Silestone, Caesarstone

RANGE/VENT HOOD: Bertrazzoni

DISHWASHER: Bosch

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Jenn-Air

KITCHEN SINK: Rohl Shaws

KITCHEN FAUCET: Brizio

SECONDARY FAUCETS: Hansgrohe, Cheviot

SECONDARY SINKS: Kohler

MASTER TUB: Victoria + Albert Baths

TOWEL HEATER: Amba

BATHROOM VENTILATION: Panasonic

LIGHTING: Robert Abbey, Tech Lighting, architect-designed custom by Fabrication Fabworks, Inc.

PAINTS/STAINS: Benjamin Moore, Penofin, Old Masters





Opposite and left: Rehkamp Larson and Lifespace Construction presided over the careful subdivision of a former farm to create this new modern farmhouse property near Minneapolis.

Old Farm New

LAKE ELMO, MINN.
REHKAMP LARSON ARCHITECTS

Jean Rehkamp Larson wrote the book on farmhouse style—really. Published in 2004 by Taunton Press, *The Farmhouse* helped make a name for her and the firm she runs with husband Mark Larson, in Minneapolis. So, too, did their award-winning residential work, which spans quite a few styles from traditional to modern and creative variations in between.

For this new house on a recently divided piece of farm property in Lake Elmo, Minn., Jean’s clients sought a building

with both presence and propriety at the same time. They specifically wanted a “modern farmhouse” that would complement and incorporate a number of existing farm buildings they planned to keep and use. Their site and its neighboring area (located 25 miles or so from Minneapolis and about half that from St. Paul, Minn.) still has a rural look and feel, making a new farmhouse a contextual addition and not just a nostalgic nod.

While her book broadcast her reputation for understanding farmhouses and



Left and below left: Polished concrete floors and broad planks of pine trim connect first-floor rooms. A more copious use of windows and window walls sets the new farmhouse apart from its antecedents.

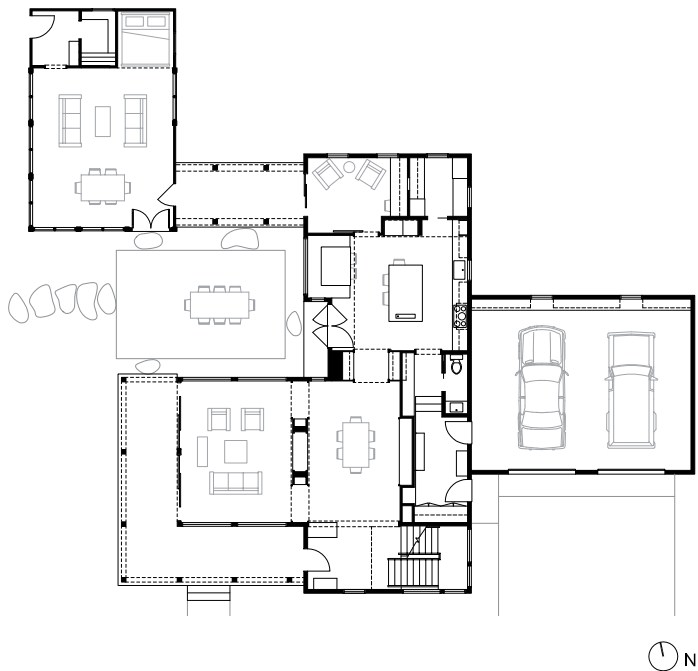


has consequently attracted more work in the style, Jean hasn't tired of finding new ways to expand on their definition and expression. "I have done a lot of other projects along the way, so it's not the only type of work I've done since writing the book," she says. "But I always welcome more opportunities to do farmhouses. They have such beautiful proportions. They can be more modern or more traditional because they're based on a simple volume."

Loving Glaze

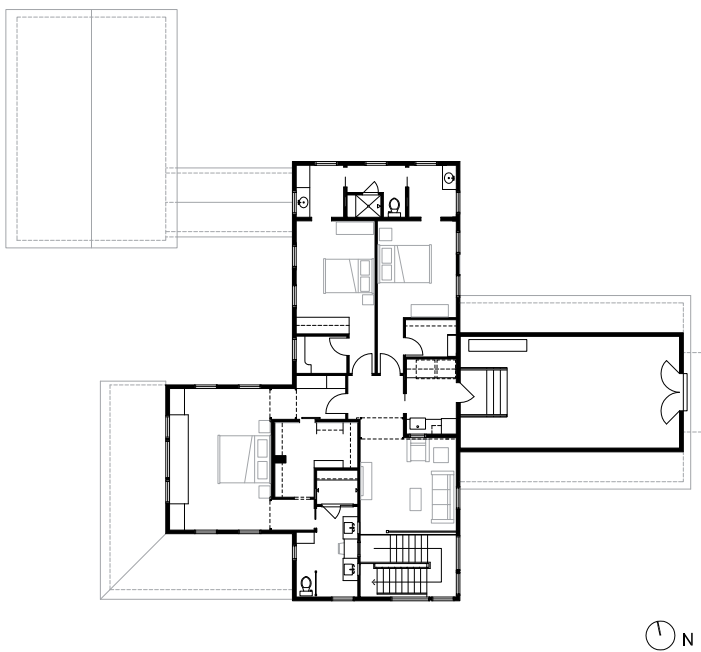
What tends to separate the originals from new interpretations is more generous application of glass—in windows and doors. As Jean explains, "We now have the elements under control, so we can apply lots of glass—which was at a premium before—and we can flood the place with light. The floor plans can be much more open because the kitchen is also now part of the main event. Overall, there's greater flow between rooms."

There's also greater connection to the outdoors, both physically and visually. Gone from the modern farmhouse is the single, hinged kitchen door as the only passage to the backyard, clattering closed a dozen times a day. Indeed, this house has multiple means of egress, usually through double doors or wide patio doors. And even when there's no door to walk through, there is floor-to-ceiling glazing to see through. Outside is only just a glance away.



Although certainly a farmhouse in style, scrutiny of the plan shows it is also a courtyard building in organization. Major rooms wrap around an existing in-ground swimming pool, still in great shape 40 years after it was built. No one room is terribly large in the three-bedroom house. The biggest self-contained room is the screened porch. It's an essential part of any program in Minnesota, where, Jeans says, "the mosquitos are epic." It's not a "sunroom," but a true porch room open to the breezes and, she points out, "to the acoustics of the outdoors. Windows would ruin it. And in the summer, it's also a sleeping porch."

The porch floors are concrete, as are the floors throughout the main level of the house. In the house, they provide radiant heat to supplement the forced air system. Farmhouse lap siding is everywhere, too—painted white on the screen porch, where it segues into board-and-batten toward the ceiling, and left as natural pine with just a whitewash in the kitchen banquette area and in connecting spaces between rooms. The pine trim widens to frame the tops of windows and doors—it even morphs into a kind crown molding along the ceilings. "It's an honest material panel—in both the modern sense and the farmhouse realm," Jean says. "It's the idea of timber. It looks hardy."



Above: Existing buildings were refurbished, repurposed, or reconstructed. Material from an existing grainery was salvaged for the new garage.

Beacons in the Night

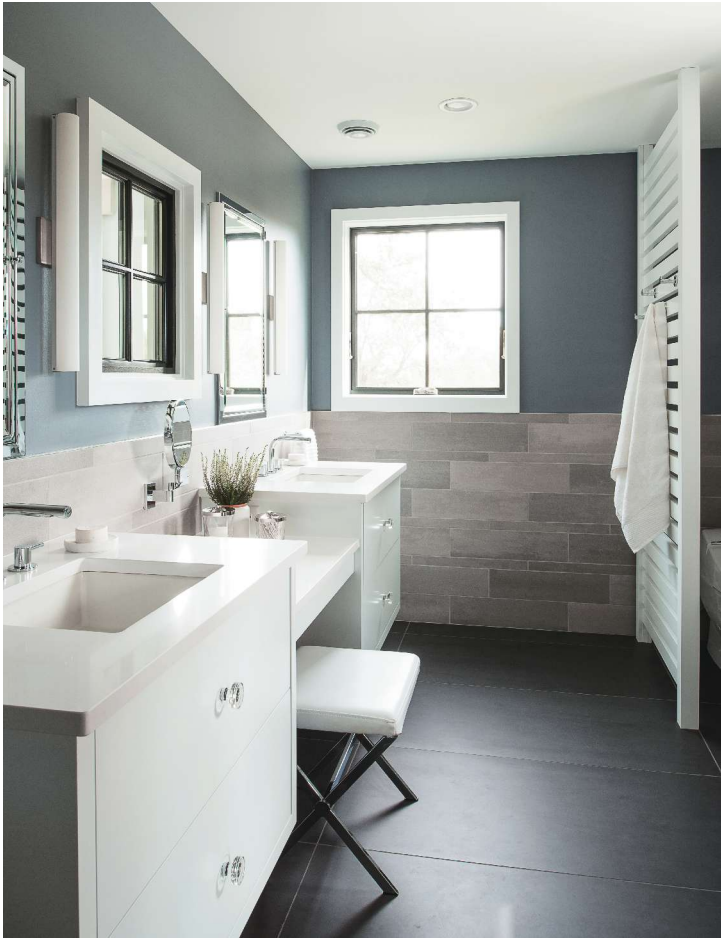
On the exterior, the engineered lap siding wraps the main house. “The garage and pool house are a board-and-batten that matches the profile of the existing buildings. It’s almost an ogee,” Jean says. Lap siding is, of course, traditional, but its modern progeny, engineered board, is a step forward in longevity and ease of maintenance.

A metal roof caps the side porch, which shades the living room from southwest sun and eliminates the need for window coverings on the private, 10-acre property. “It is the perfect prospect and refuge,” she says. The metal is farmhouse vernacular, but the way the porch sits up on short piers and the tight orchestration of how other portions of the house connect to foundation and ground are distinctly modern. “The piers involve a lot more concrete work, but they allow us to line up the porch columns. The columns are just painted timbers with checks in them, which is a little more rustic,” she says.

Limiting the sizes and shapes of fenestration is another contemporary move. For the grand stair and entry hall, they are ganged at the main gable end and stacked three-units high. The stair climbs up from the lower level (not visible from the exterior) to the main level, onto a landing, and then up to the second level. A loft on the second level sitting room is open to the stair volume, borrowing natural light from its wall of windows.

The stair is a centerpiece of the design, and not just for its windows. Its steel stringers and continuous raw steel handrail were fabricated by a local





Clockwise from opposite page: A modern glass-and-steel stair looks out on the rustic farm buildings beyond. The master bath minimizes grout lines with large format floor tiles. The master bedroom benefits from the gable's volume ceiling. A commodious screen porch is a three-season oasis.




Scandinavian artist. The treads are glulam timbers stained black.

“The slimmer and sleeker it gets, the more expensive it gets. In this case, it didn’t need to be anorexic, but we did want it to be airy,” Jean explains.

“The site is so private, there were no worries about feeling exposed,” she adds, describing the stair hall. “There are wonderful views from inside out to the barn; and looking at the wall of windows when you’re on the outside signals the entry to the house.

“I think of these old farmhouses as beacons in the distance. The white buildings and the lights glowing from within—it’s all a clear beacon to call you home,” she says.

And if that beacon now has a more contemporary flare, it seems like a natural evolution to suit the way we like to live today. “Farmhouses are just a simple series of shapes that can let light in interesting ways,” Jean concludes. “They’re very accommodating. They don’t have a big ego. They’re happy to have a conversation with you, and to be a little more this or a little more that.” 



Above and opposite: “In life, I hate transitions,” says Jean. However, in architecture, she tackles them head-on with careful detailing and admirable function, such as this threshold between kitchen and dining areas. Although the architects have us convinced this is a farmhouse at the front elevation, poolside it reveals its true nature as an expansive courtyard home.



Old Farm New

LAKE ELMO, MINN.

ARCHITECT: Principal-in-charge Jean Rehkamp Larson, AIA; project architect Sarah Nymo, AIA, Rehkamp Larson Architects, Minneapolis, Minn.

BUILDER: Todd Anderson, Lifespace Construction, Stillwater, Minn.

PROJECT SIZE: 4,800 square feet

SITE SIZE: 10 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Scott Amundson Photography

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS/DOORS: Marvin, Integrity by Marvin, Loewen

CLADDING: LP SmartSide

DOOR HARDWARE: Emtak

BATHROOM COUNTERTOPS: Caesarstone

VENT HOOD: Vent-A-Hood

RANGE/COOKTOP: Miele

OVENS: Miele

DISHWASHER: Miele

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Sub-Zero

COFFEE SYSTEM: Miele

WINE REFRIGERATOR: U-Line

KITCHEN SINK: Kohler

KITCHEN FAUCET: Brizio

KITCHEN HARDWARE: Liberty Hardware

SECONDARY FAUCETS: Grohe

SHOWER FAUCETS: Hansgrohe

MASTER SINKS: Kohler

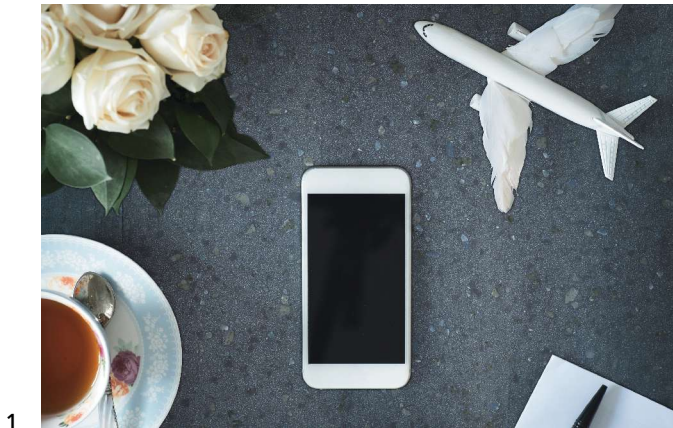
SECONDARY SINKS: Kohler

TILE: Mosa

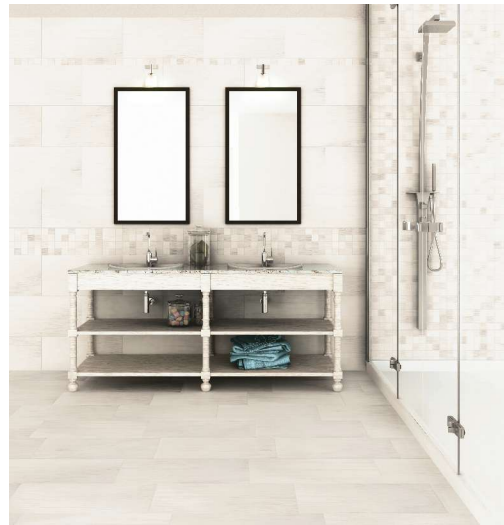
LIGHTING: Sonneman Lighting, Artemide, Nuevo, Holtkoetter, Barn Light Electric

PAINTS/STAINS: Benjamin Moore

Edge of Tomorrow



1



3



2



4

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2. HOOKED ON LIGHTING

A new line of industrial-look light fixtures, from architect Massimo Buster Minale's Buster + Punch company, allows designers to mix elements for the perfect pendant or sconce. The HOOKED collection is offered in choice of metal finishes and bulbs.

busterandpunch.com

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3. NORTHERN LIGHTS

Emser's new Latitude tile collection looks to the ethereal glow of the aurora borealis, or northern lights, for inspiration. Available hues are soothingly neutral—graphite, gray, ivory, taupe, and white—and come fabricated in large formats and smaller dimensions for accents.

emser.com

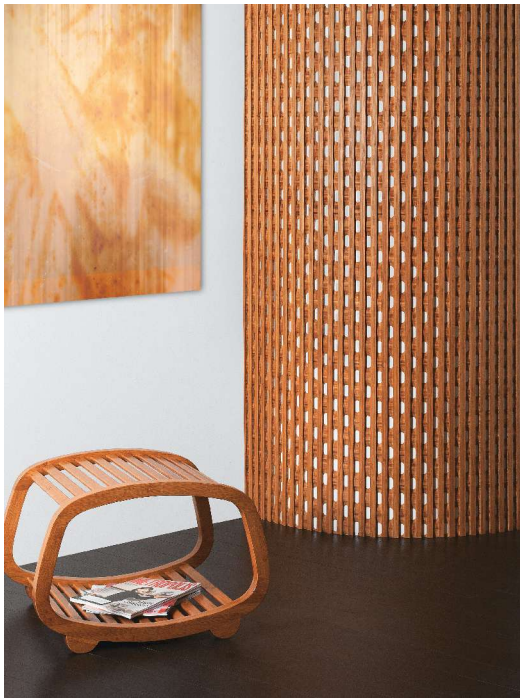
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4. MOD SQUAD

In a bow to the resurgent popularity of midcentury modern design, Nest Studio introduces its Mod Series of cabinet hardware with just the right amount of nostalgic bling. Arrayed in a variety of finishes and dimensions for your next reborn suburban split project.

nest-studio-home.com

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5



6

5. AROUND THE BEND

Smith & Fong turns a new corner with its decorative Plyboo acoustical panels. The new collection, called The Living Hinge, conceals and quiets existing imperfections with thin, CNC fabricated panels. Made in a variety of finishes and fire ratings.

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7. LOW KEY, NO KEY

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meetotto.com

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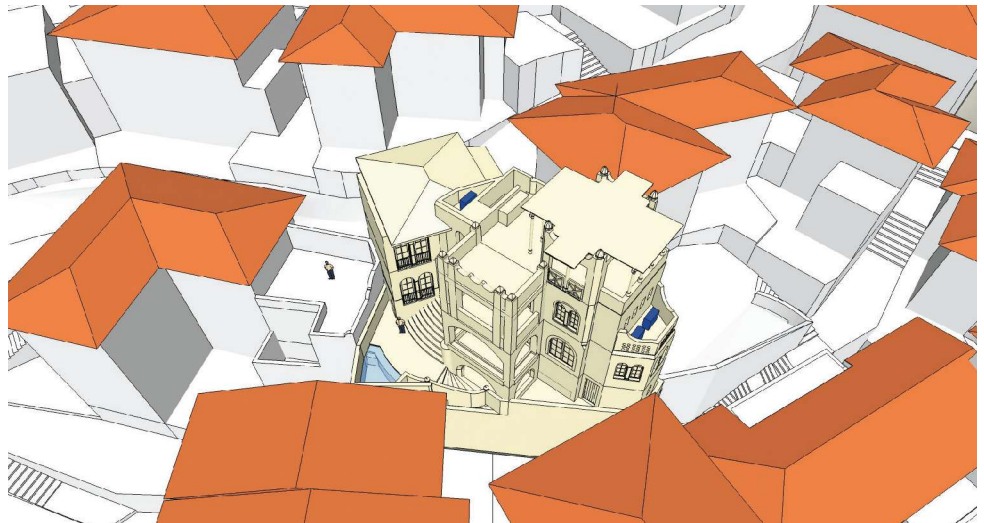
Tall Order

MICHAEL G. IMBER, ARCHITECTS
PROJECT LOCATION: COSTA RICA

In the picturesque province of Guanacaste in the paradisaical country of Costa Rica, a New Urbanist town called Las Catalinas is emerging from the jungle. Conceived in 2007 with master planner Douglas Duany's guidance, the resort comprises 1,200 scenic acres, only 200 of which will be developed. Michael Imber, FAIA, was called in at the beginning to contribute his vision of what this new town and its buildings might look like.

"I spent quite a bit of time in the jungle trying to figure out how to invent a language where there was not already a strong architectural language," he says. "So, we turned to traditionally used tectonics—the native traditions and materials. Given the prevalence of earthquakes, tropical downpours, and tropical heat, concrete was the building material of choice. Concrete allows us to build stout-looking, visually lasting architecture." Las Catalinas is designed as a car-free, densely packed hill town; footprints are small and buildings are tall. "You have to be able walk everywhere," Michael explains. "In terms of archetype, it's very close to Italian hill towns."

This project is a custom home for two families who intend to use it and rent it out through the resort, necessitating a design with universal appeal and flexible functionality. The lowest level contains bunkroom spaces, primary living spaces are on the second level, and bedrooms are on the third. "There are tight urban-like streets with pedestrians, so you have privacy issues. We internalized the house on

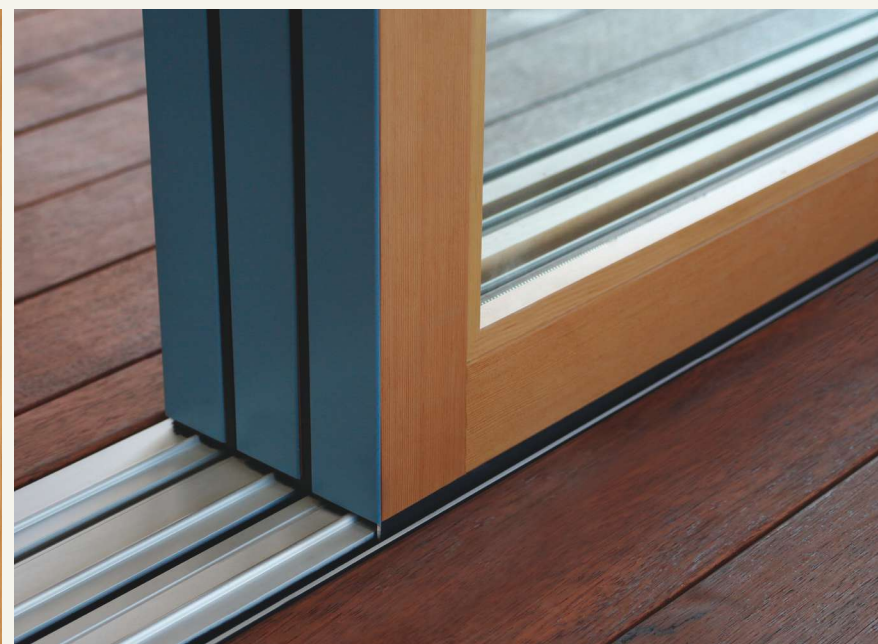
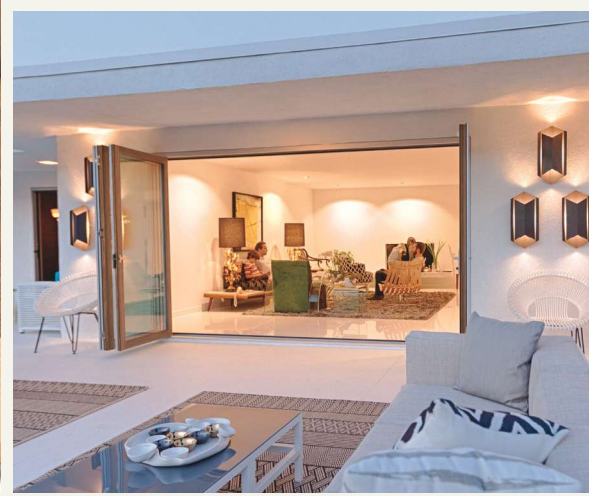
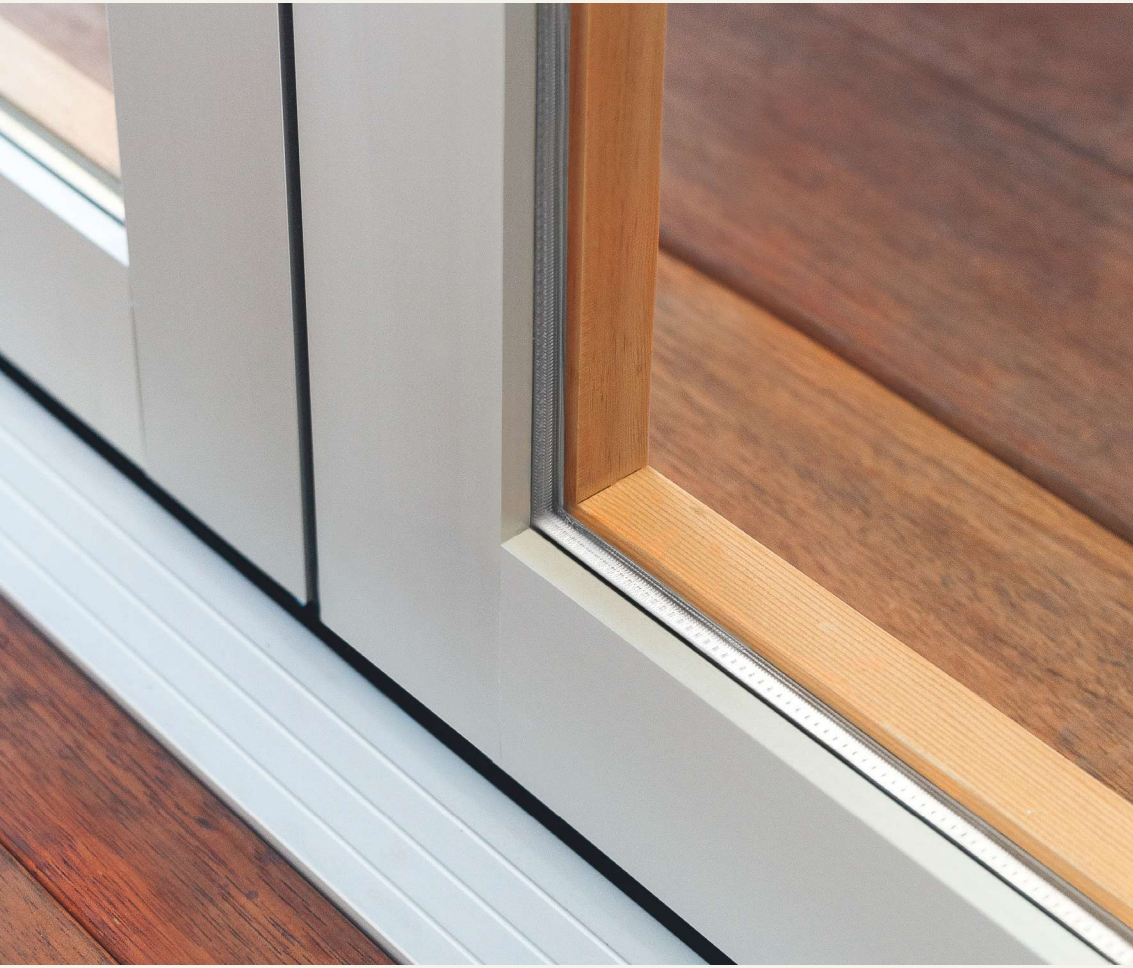


the lower levels and externalized on upper levels. And, of course, everyone wants views—you've got to design backwards from the views," he explains. Covered terraces shield interiors and outdoor spaces from the west sun, while accessing ocean views. Construction should be finished in time for the winter holidays.

—S. Claire Conroy

Project: Vogelsang/Reda Villa; project team: Michael G. Imber, FAIA, Brandan Moss, and Andrew Gander, Michael G. Imber, Architects, San Antonio and San Francisco; builder: Las Catalinas Construction. Drawings: Michael G. Imber, Architects.

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