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VOL. 1, 2018

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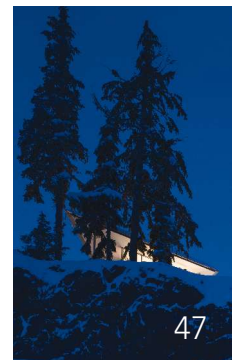
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Photo: David Sundberg/Esto

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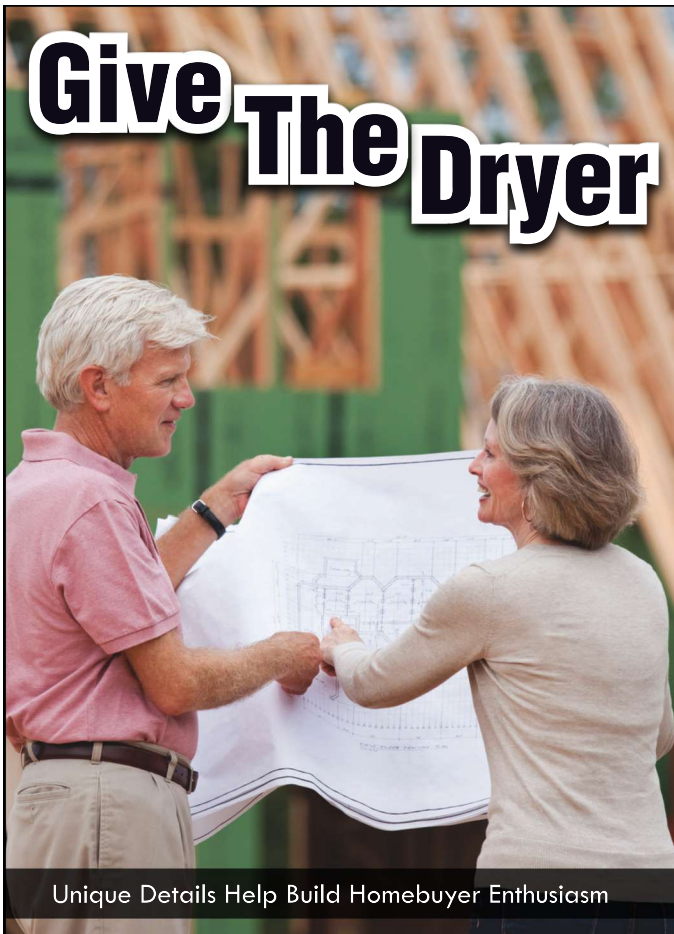
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Game of Themes



There's a reason why editors choose themes for each issue of their magazines. For our part at RD, we could simply publish beautiful houses each time and call it a day, but I think having a filter to run everything through helps put each house in perspective. As an editor, a theme gives me bearings on what to search for and directs me in what to winnow. If I still really like a project I've had to eliminate, I'll set it aside for a time and see if a new theme emerges for me to develop. The theme for this issue is private oasis, encapsulated perfectly in the cover photograph of Cutler Anderson's House on a Pond.

The themes we pick are broad by intention, because their dynamism comes out of each point of exploration. As you page through the magazine, you'll find most of the features and even our back page follow the theme in direct ways, with large, artfully designed houses on ample parcels of land. It's pretty easy to have a private house when your neighbors are nowhere near you. But it's not impossible to conjure areas of privacy even on tight sites.

One of our featured houses is hard by its neighbors on a busy beach. Yet, its talented architect managed to carve out zones of seclusion and engagement within its small envelope. On the roof deck, there's a sheltered hot tub, immersed in the ocean view but away from prying eyes. This is where the oasis part of our theme plays out. Indeed, an oasis can be something as simple as a bathtub, just out of earshot in a house full of noisy children. It doesn't take much to provide humans with a measure of escape from the worries of the world.

As I write and edit each story, I find waves of our theme continue to wash over me. What about the idea of a private oasis within a private oasis? The Ravine Residence, which begins on page 34, is nearly 9,000 square feet. Its large, bridge-like great room spans a ravine, elevating occupants directly into the best sight lines. Curtain walls everywhere usher the lovely landscape throughout the house. But, guess where the owners' favorite spot is? A small covered deck that backs up to the trees. It's protected and private, but directly dialed into the sounds and sights of nature.

Architect Jill Neubauer, whose firm we profile beginning on page 13, takes the idea of the small sheltered place even further. She designs beautiful new homes and renovations on Cape Cod in Massachusetts, and her projects certainly have many moments of prospect and refuge in their beautiful settings. But she likes to make the experience of the natural world and landscape even more immediate and primal. On her own property and for clients, she's designed something she calls a "glamp"—it's part tent, part cabin, and only lightly protected from the elements. Placed off in the woods or on some quiet corner of the property, it slows life down, redirecting it inward and outward at the same time. A private oasis, indeed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "S. Claire Conroy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

S. Claire Conroy
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claire@SOLAbands.com

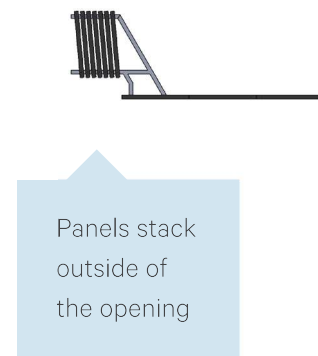
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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 5

After the Fire

ARKIN TILT ARCHITECTS
BERKELEY, CALIF.



Photo: Ed Caldwell



Photo: Ed Caldwell

Photo: Michel Couvreaux

Left and above: David Arkin and Anni Tilt found their straw-bale houses performed well in the Wine Country fires. The Rosenberg/Zuckerman house is shown on both pages, before and after the fire.

Based in Berkeley, Calif., and recently celebrating 20 years in practice, Arkin Tilt Architects is dedicated to sustainable design and construction. The husband-and-wife team of David Arkin, AIA and LEED AP, and Anni Tilt, AIA, live and breathe responsible residential design, and their clients in the bay area and beyond come to them primed for their thoughtful approach. David's training includes work for sustainable design pioneers Sim Van der Ryn and Obie Bowman, FAIA, and Anni, who also has a degree in civil engineering in addition to her M.Arch, worked at Fernau and Hartman Architects, also leaders in ecological design. Over the years, their research into materials and methods has deepened their dedication to straw-bale construction. After the California wine country firestorm hit last October, resulting in 44 deaths and more than \$9 billion in damage in Sonoma and Napa counties, David and Anni were particularly anxious to learn how the many straw-bale houses and outbuildings they designed for the area had fared.

They're happy to report that their projects performed very well, despite the extremely adverse conditions. Not satisfied with just the survival of the buildings, they've made it a priority to learn where weaknesses and vulnerabilities occurred so they may address them going forward—in repairs, rebuilds, and new construction.

What's more, with permission from their clients, they've made eight straw-bale house plan sets available free of charge to those who lost homes in the fire, complete with structural calculations donated by their office mate, Kevin Donahue

Structural Engineers. Those plans can be found on the website strawbaleplans.com

RD: David, the information you've been accumulating about the fire damage has a purpose beyond the firm's education, yes?

DA: Yes. I'm a founder and the current director of the California Straw Building Association (CASBA). Anni and I have just come back from the Rocky Mountain Natural Building Conference, organized by the Colorado Straw Bale Association. Everyone was very interested to hear how buildings survived the fire. Insurers were especially interested, as some can't currently underwrite straw-bale policies. We finally have a code for straw-bale construction from the International Code Council, which is helping. So, in my role as the CASBA director, I'm collecting anecdotal information. We're doing a survey of sorts.

What are your findings so far?

DA: We've done probably 20 to 30 projects in Sonoma, Napa, and Mendocino, along with a few more remodels to help family out. A good number were directly in line with the wildfires or at the boundaries. Nearly all of our projects survived. Yay, straw bale!

It's not a guaranteed, of course. You still need sturdy wood frames, metal roofs, and good fortune. In some firestorm areas, the best building wouldn't survive.

Where we did see damage, it was because of some element apart from the straw-bale walls. For instance, on the Rosenberg/Zuckerman project, there was a wood barn door close

to the ground. It caught on fire. Going forward, we're going to pay extra careful attention to what is at the base of the buildings, close to the ground. We saw that patios and porches made a difference, especially patios that run further out beyond the porch columns.

AT: We found that with heavy timber, redwood did better than Douglas fir. Redwood is more fire resistant.

DA: We early on did a PISE house up in wine country. That's David Easton's term for rammed-earth construction [builder/consultant David Easton of Rammed Earth Works]. It was 18 inches of solid PISE. Today, our energy code would not let us do that; we would do it with a thermal break and use straw bales...At any rate, the wood frame caught on fire, but not the walls.

AT: On the PISE house, we used a wood cribbing detail. It was so beautiful with light coming through, but it was not good for fire. How fireproof your exterior walls are is another piece of the puzzle. Any exposed wood can be a problem. So, we're looking at cement board for a project we're doing in Nevada, and we're looking at metal siding. The devil is in the details of the whole picture. You have to watch your eave vents, so we're looking at eave products with intumescent coatings, like Vulcan. You have to make the soffit of non-combustible materials. It seems from the evidence of the fire, those kinds of details can make a difference. We're already designing for State of California Chapter 7 for Wildland Urban Interface standards, but you have to go further than that.

DA: A Class A roof makes a big difference, too. Our go-to for roofs is metal, and we've already seen that metal roofing can help a lot. There are lots of tools in the tool box.

Along with insurance industry concerns about straw bale, there appears to be a misconception among the lay public and even firefighters that it's more vulnerable to fire than conventional building materials. Why is that?

DA: Most people don't understand there are certain assemblies of straw-bale plaster walls that even exceed code. There is one assembly with lime plaster and bales stacked on edge that can last 2 hours, according to ASTM testing, and another for clay plaster in bales laid flat than can last an hour. Most residential doesn't usually achieve an hour.

Some people complain that when fire reaches the straw-bale walls, they smolder. But when the bales are densely packed, the flame-spread index and smoke-developed index is within the limits. If you've ever thrown a phone book into

Photo: Michel Couvreaux



Photo: Ed Caldwell



Above: Arkin Tilt's plaster supplier noted that the pink hue on the walls is from the fire heat drawing out the natural iron oxides. The soot brushes off.

a fire, it takes a long time for the oxygen to get through the densely packed pages. It takes a long time to burn.


AT: Also the plaster really does slow down the fire by keeping the oxygen out. We did a straw bale studio and the roof burned, but the finish on the walls remained intact. Another aspect that's interesting is that you don't have the structure collapse when there's a fire.

The effort to rebuild in wine country will be huge, especially for a region that already saw shortages of skilled labor. You've made straw-bale house plans available to people who've lost houses to the fire, to help speed up the recovery. What else is a priority for the firm?

AT: Although people want to rebuild quickly, and counties are helping, we want to do it in as healthy and as low-carbon a way as possible. And we're part of a group working on that. We'd like to see more net-zero construction to replace what's gone. We'd like to see more accessory dwelling units on individual lots to help alleviate housing shortages and affordability issues.

DA: Building smaller is another opportunity. We had a fellow who contacted us and would like to replace 2,400 square feet. But if we can get all that livability in 1,800, why not do that?

Beyond the architecture and the building, you have to extend thought and care into the landscape. They can work together to give you a better chance for survival. When the fires come again—and they will come again, wouldn't it be great if more houses survived?

AT: It's not that we didn't think about fire before—we did—but it's amplified the consideration. Not just in California, but everywhere through the West. And yet, we still have to make sure that we create something that's livable—we can't just build fortresses. 

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 6

Architecture That Grabs the Heart

JILL NEUBAUER ARCHITECTS
FALMOUTH, MASS.



Photo: Meredith Hunnibell

Above: Jill Neubauer, AIA. Right: Paine's Creek Residence, with gorgeous water views, is in the works.



Rendering: Courtesy Jill Neubauer Architects

Designing for a living is different in a small coastal town than it is in the big city, especially if your specialty is residential. There's both more and less of every opportunity. There's a greater variety of smaller jobs, because clients tend to stay with local architects for those; and there's often big-city competition for the marquee vacation home projects. Such is the case in the largely second-home community of Falmouth, Mass., which is also the gateway to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. Jill Neubauer, AIA, has lived and practiced in Cape Cod for more than two decades, and she has a portfolio of smart, problem-solving projects to show for it. However, in the last decade or so, while those city-slicker architects were snooz-

ing, her firm has also added a roster of lustrous new homes to its collection. It's clear those vacation home clients are catching on to the homegrown talent at their doorsteps.

"We're like the town doctor here, and it's an important role," Jill says. "We don't have a singular aesthetic. We're all over the map with what comes in the door—we'll show up for that work and enjoy doing what's important to other people." And that means luxurious second homes for the weekend community and small, life-changing jobs for the resident scientists and everyday folk. It also means lots of renovation work to wonderful, old, troubled houses. No matter what the job, Jill and her firm aim to bring a little heart and

soul into the work, to add the kinds of features and special delights that make a place memorable for years and generations to come.

"Right now, we're working on a new modern, all-white house on a creek that's going to be one of my favorites. It's all glass and simple, with views all around. At the same time, we're working on an old house, trying to fit in a new shelf," she says. "I love the fact that we're doing all of this at the same time." Sometimes that new shelf makes all the difference in someone's enjoyment of a house—the small conveniences, the subtle transformations.

Jill was awakened to the power of small details as a child growing up in Wisconsin. A favorite memory is of

repeated visits to her grandparents' humble lake house over the years. And every day, it informs how she designs for the largely vacation community on the Cape and how she designs for herself and her family. "I'm absolutely driven by the sentiment, and how peo-

"How are we going to make it so... the kids come back year after year?"

—Jill Neubauer, AIA

ple live in these homes," she explains. "My maternal grandparents had this magnificent, tiny log cabin. It was so aesthetic and so beautiful. And I hold that in the cells of my body—what that smelled like, coming back year after year. It was so simple, but so visually rich and warm. And that repetition year after year was an important part of the experience. When I'm helping people on

a second home, I think about, 'where is that richness and how are we going to make it so when the kids come back year after year, they have that sense of anticipation and excitement?' Everything revolves around making it so these houses grab your heart."

This particular kind of heart surgery has nothing to do with imposing stylistic interventions, and everything to do with intentional design. "In every project, I'm trying to build a bench or a nook, like the one in my grandma's house," says Jill. "Those pieces—it doesn't matter if it's a modern space or a traditional space—they're what help make a house a destination."

Lucky Pines

In Jill's work, place is as important as space, and that's why, when she designed and built her own family's house in the late 1990s, she chose an especially poetic site—4.5 acres of pine woodland on a kettle-hole pond that recalled her grandparents' Wisconsin property. "The land grabbed me because it was

like northern Wisconsin. I already had a story to begin with because of the site I'd chosen," she says. But there were other filters at play as well, including her Masters in Architecture from Harvard Graduate School of Design and her marriage to a landscape architect. "You take that log cabin and run it through architecture school, and what you get is a log cabin crossed with a warehouse," she quips. "I'm still there and I love it, I just wish it were more warehouse than log cabin at this point."

"Growing up in Wisconsin, Frank Lloyd Wright was a huge influence—how his houses reached out into the landscape and made it space," she says. "And, of course having been married to a landscape architect for 25 years." From the start, Lucky Pines took its cues from the vegetation and colors of the site. Its three stories are supported by structural columns made from mature pine trees—their bark peeled, but the imperfections of lost branches left intact. Contrasting modern and rustic elements are everywhere—the shed roof,

Photos: Meredith Hunnibell



Left and below: Although Cataumet Cottage retains the basic footprint and organization of the 1970s existing house, everything about it is refreshed and enlivened. The new boys' bunk room is the heart-grabber.





Above and right: The Buzzards Bay Residence harnesses a handicap of the site (a stand of trees in conservation) and makes them an important leitmotif of the design—on the exterior and interior.

steel beams and other exposed structure inside, smooth plaster walls, metal windows, and a metal garage door that opens the dining room to the garden.

Jill has added on to the project over the years, albeit more lightly and always with a master plan in mind. A barn for the horses has an oak timber frame infilled with pine and cedar, but also polycarbonate, so the animals and those tending them benefit from natural light. There’s a chicken coop, a workshop, a tree house, and a storage shed with a guest room above it. Together, they create outdoor rooms and private spaces to enjoy the refuge of the woods or the prospect of the pond.

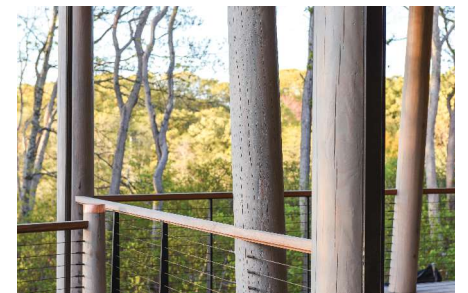
Even 20 years later, Lucky Pines is a nexus of invention for the architect. It’s here she developed her particular brand of “glamp”—a structure that’s part tent and part cabin. It’s the runaway space everyone craves, immersed in nature, permeable to the sights and sounds that quiet and exalt us.

Ranch Dressing

The small towns of Cape Cod swell to capacity during the summer season, and that puts a burden on housing. It’s the time of year everyone thinks about expanding their house to squeeze in extra guests and family. Jill thinks her glamps can help lighten the load, as they did for the Cataumet Cottage Renovation.

The project required all manner of interventions to make it livable and lovable, but none of them could add much square footage. Still, it was the firm’s task to make the little ’70s box a family’s dream come true. “Our client had grown up summering here. Now a young couple, they were very happy to be able to buy a small place, where they and their little boys could be close to family and part of a very wonderful community,” she recalls. “But it was a dog of a house—so sad and icky. It was mildewy, with standing water in the basement.

“We went back to the bones of it, and we did a little addition that allowed



us to make a neat bunk room for the boys. The organization is basically the same and the house is still small, but we now have three nice bedrooms, a sitting/sleeping area, and better access to the kitchen. And we suppressed the deck, so the railings aren’t blocking the view anymore. There’s an openness and easiness to the house, and it isn’t hard for them to take care of.”

The modesty of her description is readily apparent when you see before and after photos of the house. The renovation is a complete transformation, from a dull and lifeless box to a fresh, lively, and lovely family home. Those small memorable details are there in spades. The boys’ bunk room is a spot



Left: Truro Beach House marked a perfect alignment of clients, site, and budget. The house has geothermal heating and cooling, a residential wind turbine, and solar panels. But view, site, and architecture are the memory-makers.

Photo: Durston Saylor

they'll dream of when they're back at their primary house. While half the couple knew Cape Cod intimately, the other half is from the Midwest where a different set of associations spell home. "That's why we grabbed that Nebraska snow fencing and used it on the walls," says Jill.

The boys will also miss their very own glamp when summer comes to a close. Theirs is located in the woods, a stone's throw and a world away from the main house. "We furnish them with bean bags and rugs. They become an outpost room," Jill explains. "We'd like to do even more of these rooms, because they really help take the summer pressure off the house and they do so inexpensively. It can cost \$100,000 to do an extra bedroom here."

The boys' glamp is made of a special canvas the firm sources from

Denver and is free of toxins, an aspect Jill scrutinizes in all the materials she specifies. Healthy materials, energy efficient design, and responsibly sourced products are givens on every project, whether or not the clients ask for them. "I come from a family where we lean into social consciousness. And, for the most part, our clients also want to be leaders in this way," she says. "When you're building a new second home, you can build a better box and you should. Our evolution was in looking at the components. If we're building a better box that conserves energy and is really tight, why are we still putting in these toxins? And why contribute to deforestation, when we can use FSC materials? It became these tiers, and at the center is the sweet spot—and that's the client. I get to bring my clients along on this journey."

Story Core

What never gets lost on the journey is the story line. The dialogue between story and site was the topic of her Master's thesis, and that conversational thread continues through every project the firm takes on—large job or small, old house or new. The narrative builds from the clients, their history, the place, the community.

For the recently completed Buzzards Bay Residence, what began as a story of anger and angst became an important leitmotif in the design. The clients, who had a longtime vacation home in Falmouth, bought the property next door, planning to build a new modern home for themselves and pass the existing home on to their children. Then, they learned a grove of spindly, crooked trees that blocked a view of the bay for the new house is protected.

“Those trees drove them crazy,” says Jill. “But they’re in conservation. So, I took those trees and abstracted them, and brought them into the new house. Where they’re structural, they’re straight; otherwise, we have them leaning and filtering views within the house, just as they filter the views of the bay. I thought, let’s make the forest their own.” Thus, a source of pain became a pleasure, and a happy ending to that particular story.

There are new chapters ahead in the ongoing story of the firm—a variety of handsome custom homes are in the works, juggled with those small transformative renovations, and added to the mix is an exciting foray into affordable housing. In conjunction with the Housing NOW Partnership, the firm entered a local competition to redevelop a property in the community. “The original building the developer had proposed was cruel to anyone who had to look at it or live in it,” Jill recalls. “It was time to show up and lean in. And that began a journey for me of attending public hearings and speaking up as an advocate for architecture. We can’t subject people to buildings with no internal or external dignity. It’s a matter of aesthetic justice.”

The firm’s design was a finalist, but Jill retained the rights to it and is exploring its development into a viable kit of affordable components—for one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and work-space units, plus add-on accessory dwelling units. The components could expand the space and scope of the dwelling over time as the owners’ needs change, not unlike Jill’s Lucky



Photo: Meredith Hunnibell

Photo: Charles Mayer



Rendering: Jill Neubauer Architects



Top and above left: Jill’s own house, on a 4.5-acre site overlooking a pond, is a laboratory for her evolving ideas about design. Her “glamp” structures are part tent, part cabin, and all immersion in the natural landscape. Above right: Jill is exploring a kit of parts for much-needed affordable housing.

Pines compound, but with less expensive panelized construction, perhaps. She’s exploring the possibilities with Unity Home’s factory-built process. “Working on this has been a nice shift from just doing homes for individuals,” she says.

Also on tap is a possible expansion of the firm’s reach into Vermont. “I just love it up there—I’m really more of a mountains and snow person,” she adds. Currently, her office in Falmouth is an 1800s antique barn. It’s an open, bustling working environment of 12 people. “We all sit in one space together. We work in teams collaboratively based on the size of the project. I do

everything by hand, and I’m involved in the design of every project and client relationship. It’s a friendly but rigorous environment. Still, family and life come first, job comes second. People have flexibility and freedom to show up for their kids’ stuff. I’ve lived that way, and I want them to be able to do it, too.”

You can’t grab other people’s hearts with your work if you don’t allow yours to lead from time to time. Says Jill, “I feel incredibly fortunate to be part of this community—to have their support and to support them. It’s a great place and a great time to be a residential architect.”

—S. Claire Conroy

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 7

A Passion for the Project

MAINBUILT
CLIVE, IOWA



Photo: Courtesy Mainbuilt

Mark Main swore he would never become a custom builder. Having grown up in the business, helping his builder father, Mark knew exactly what the job entailed. So, after college, he went off to law school “for a bit.” But gravity is a hard force to overcome and so is the siren call of the family business. He returned full-time in 1990, and has been at it ever since. “I found when I had an ownership position, I liked it a lot more,” he says. That’s very good news, because Mark is among the best builders in his area. He’s the one the most demanding architects ask for, knowing he’ll get even the most complicated details done just right.

His father, W. R. “Bill” Main, now almost 80, is fully retired, and Mark gets his taste for difficult design problems from him. “He got into construction right out of high school, working for a carpentry business,” Mark recalls. “When he was out on his own in the early ’60s, he was fortunate to have a few clients who wanted these high-design details. I grew up doing the work. I really learned it on



Photo: BNIM | Photographer © Assassi



Photo: BNIM | Photographer © Assassi

Above and left: Although simple and evocative in form, BNIM’s Midwest Retreat called upon its builder, Mark Main, to deliver extremely precise details and rigorous energy goals.

the job, working with architects and designers.”

Mark’s company has been around long enough to have figured out what works for the business and what doesn’t. He’s determined that development isn’t their niche, and speculative building doesn’t add value to the mix either. Currently, he and his half-dozen employees are kept busy with custom homes, remodeling, and restoration work. Custom building jobs are the lion’s share at about 70 percent of the business. He’s

got a full-time bookkeeper, two construction supers, a couple of laborers, and now a “global project manager.” The latter’s role is to be the “mini-me” every business owner requires to stay productive. “I needed someone to make sure the plumbing fixtures were ordered right—to take care of the daily stuff that takes me off the jobsite,” he says. “I don’t want to take my eye off the job.”

There is one business extension Mark has found to be synergistic with his contracting business. He’s part

Photos: BNIM | Photographer © Assassi



Above: All wood inside the Midwest Retreat and outside is reclaimed and left with its natural preservatives intact. Below: A residence designed by Robert J. Neylan Architects embraces woodland views.

Photo: Courtesy Mainbuilt



owner of the Iowa branch of Minnesota Cabinets, along with the founder’s son, Rick Ponstein. Together, they operate the 12,500-square-foot showroom and work with the seven affiliated designers. Through the showroom, Minnesota Cabinets sells custom cabinets, of course, but also countertops, flooring, and sinks, faucets, and lighting.

Mark’s goal is for Mainbuilt to handle a few of the biggest kitchen installs, and for some of his custom homes to use Minnesota Cabinets as a source, but there isn’t a one-to-one correlation between each company’s jobs. “I’m involved enough to be in every weekly meeting,” he says. “And I know most of the major projects, but not all of the smaller ones. With the contracting business, we try to focus on the things we do that we do better and make money on and that’s the big jobs.”

Still, as someone who’s lived through a number of new homebuilding recessions, Mark understands the value of some diversification. “When new homes slow down, remodels pick up, so it’s good for the company to have that diversity,” he explains. “Also, we can spread some of those running expenses—like bookkeeping—across the businesses. Mainbuilt has its offices in the showroom building as well, although our name is not on the building. We are still two separate businesses.”

Architects’ Builder

Yes, Mark has designers available to him through the cabinet business, but his custom home work is almost exclusively with architects. One of his most recent and challenging projects is covered in this issue, beginning on page 34. Designed by BNIM, the Ravine Residence combined a difficult site, demanding building performance goals, and exacting architectural details—all in one nearly 9,000-square-foot project. It’s obvious that Mark didn’t take his “eye of



Above: BNIM's Ravine Residence achieved its thin roof profile through Mark Main's dogged persistence with suppliers. The design also relies on the exacting alignment of every material and detail.

the job” on this house, which is already winning local and regional awards.

“Mark’s work on this house was just outstanding,” says Jonathan Ramsey, AIA, of BNIM. “This kind of house can’t just happen with our vision and drawing. It’s not just me working on a project like this. He was instrumental in getting it done—without many questions or issues. We worked with him on a previous house, the Midwest Retreat, and when you find somebody this good, you stick with them.”

It’s interesting that Jonathan picked the word “vision,” because Mark uses the very same language to describe the special magic that has to happen on an ambitious project: “Each home has a style, and each architect has a vision. Everybody involved—architect, client, supplier—everyone has to buy into it. If it’s a modern home or minimalist, it will have certain themes. We need to know what they are. To reach the goal, we need to know what the target is.

“When we work on a remodel of a traditional home, we have to get back

to what the vision *was*,” he continues. “Then, it’s a process of sitting down with the owner or architect and figuring out where can we get a product like that, or do we have to make it?”

Indeed, sourcing products is a big part of the job and one that keeps Mark on his toes. His biggest problem is finding one central authority to vet all of the kinds of products and materials he needs and to ensure the performance standards he has to hit—there simply isn’t that single source. Or, there is, and it’s him. “Sometimes I feel like I have to be a scientist. They call it building science for a reason.”

Manufacturer reps are an important resource for him. For the roof on the Ravine Residence, he worked closely with a foam insulation maker to ensure he had the right combination of products to deal with the thermal burdens, the moisture, and still get the roof “to breathe.” Coming up with a winning recipe allowed the architects to get the unventilated, thin roof they wanted. And that’s quite the trick in Mark’s Zone 5 climate. He explains, “Zone 5

has lots of freeze-thaw cycles. The extremes are over 100 in the summer, and -15 below zero in the winter. We have thermal issues and moisture issues. You have to figure out how to manage the water and the vapor on the inside of the house. On the outside, you have to do deeper footings. Expansion and contraction cycles are extreme. Steel here has to be insulated, sealed, and thermally broken.”

Delivering this level of design rigor is not just about the science, it’s also about the art. “You need to always think three steps ahead,” Mark says. “We have great subs, but sometimes we have to slow them down. We have to explain, ‘This job is different from that spec home you worked on last month.’”

“Everyone needs to have a passion for the project, and a passion for each detail. It takes more effort, and it requires the right mindset. This is when my OCD kicks in,” he jokes. “But that’s fine. This is what I like. I never want to build the same house twice.”

—S. Claire Conroy





Land Trust

An environmentally attuned house reveals the natural dynamics of its landscape.

BY CHERYL WEBER

ARCHITECT: CUTLER ANDERSON ARCHITECTS

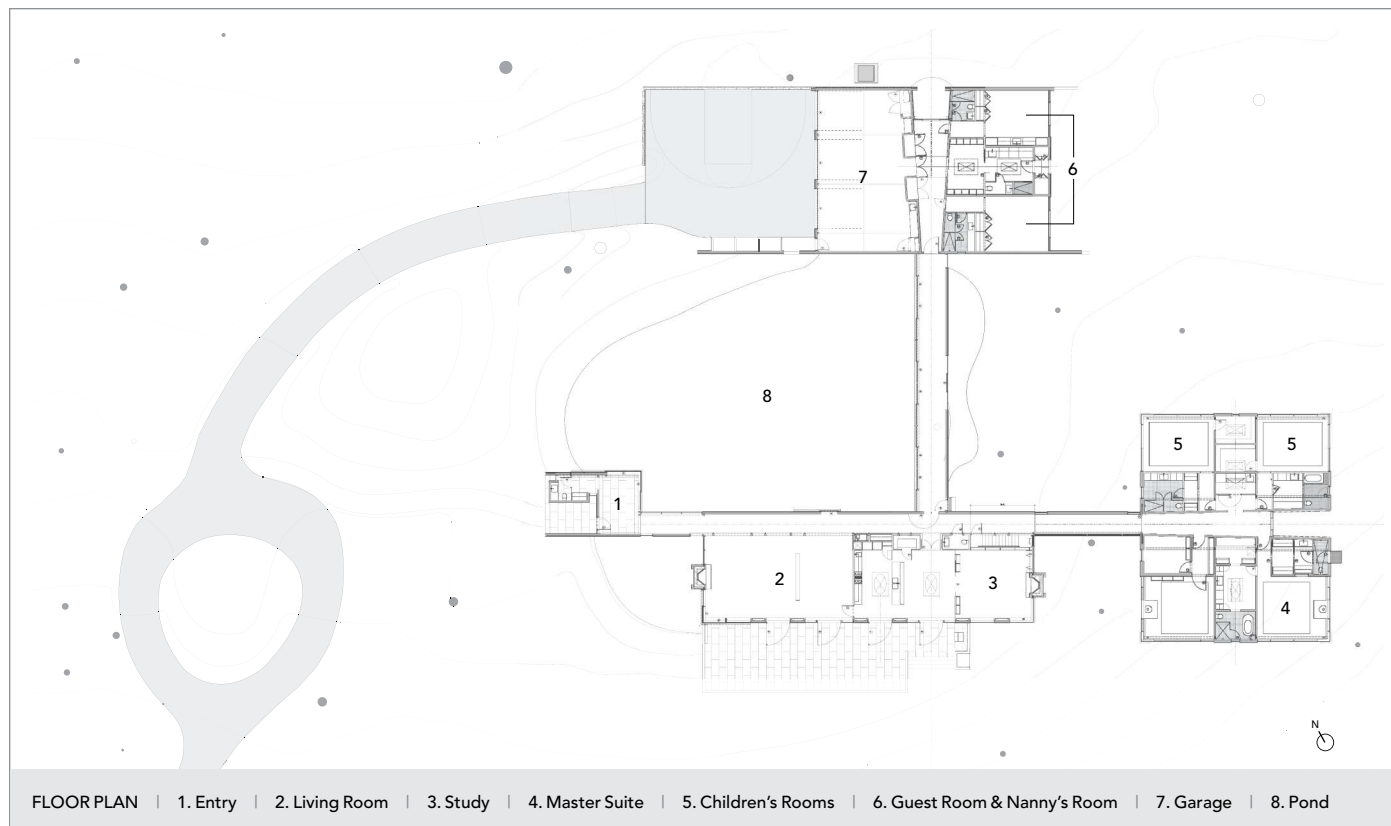
BUILDER: A. PAPPAJOHN COMPANY

LOCATION: NEW ENGLAND

Architecture is, by definition, site-specific, or, as architect James Cutler, FAIA, would clarify: landscape-specific. Whereas site suggests something merely physical, the word landscape connotes a living, dynamic place that we engage with on multiple levels—emotional, spiritual, conceptual. Like all Cutler Anderson Architects' projects, the house he designed in southern New England is carefully tuned to the nuances of its terrain. It doesn't just sit in a long, sloping meadow dotted with young oaks and maples. It pivots and pirouettes, encloses and exposes, bringing landscape views full circle in an effortlessly choreographed way, to the delight of the owners.

On each project, Jim does a preliminary land survey himself so he can get to know the place. Once he thinks he understands the landscape and the clients' needs, he starts to design. Thirty miles from Manhattan, the property is part of a narrow corridor that bisects a 750-acre nature preserve and a 40-acre conservation area. What Cutler observed, when he walked the property, was a small natural pond 400 feet downhill to the south, a field that meets a forest to the north, a forest gradually going to meadow on the east, and visible neighbors to the west. There was also a fairly big drainage area to the north.

At this point in Cutler Anderson's practice, its clients self-select. They want what the firm does and are willing to suspend precon-



ceived notions of what their house will look like. “We’re okay designers but are really good at revealing what’s beautiful in the living world,” Jim says. “The clients had deep empathy for that and backed us all the way.”

After interviewing dozens of architects over a five-year period, the husband-and-wife clients chose Jim not only because they liked his aesthetic, but also because of his experience with environmentally smart building systems. The husband, a longtime environmentalist, was familiar with LEED construction through his involvement in a number of conservation organizations. “I wanted to put that knowledge I gained into my own home,” he says.

He and his wife had developed five design criteria for their dream house: a low-maintenance exterior and interior; no petroleum products used for heating or cooling; the use of only wood, glass, stone, or steel; the use of passive systems to move water and capture as much energy as possible—and, of course, a strong connection to nature. In the 1960s, an arborist living in the site’s previous house had planted beautiful specimen trees such as tulip poplars, maples, and Douglas fir, which were now in their mature glory.

View Finder

The new house’s axis is oriented south, and its public spaces have a long, controlled view of the meadow and lower pond. Following the natural grade, you enter from the west on grade, but as you follow the axis east, the land drops away toward the forest. This is where Jim placed the two children’s bedrooms and the master suite, lifting them as a unit on concrete piers so that the house’s elevation does not change from one end to the other. Bedrooms are private spaces, he says, and he used the land’s existing contours to enhance that quality. “Keeping the bedrooms off the ground was important for us because bedrooms are a place to sleep, and if you are going to experience the landscape, you want to have the windows open and not use curtains,” Jim says. “Bedrooms need to have a sense of defensibility. We were moving into a small area of forest, so if we rotated the building just right, we could locate those bedrooms through the trees and didn’t have to cut any down.”

At almost 8,000 square feet, the house is large, but it’s separated into three pieces—four if you count the clever entryway—arranged along an axis and cross-axis. Visitors park their car in a brushy thicket a short distance from the



Clockwise from above: Architect Jim Cutler elevated the house on concrete piers so it could navigate the contours of the site without level changes.





Jim orchestrated the experience of the pond like the maestro he is. But it irked him that the sky brightened over the water upon approach to the house: "If I could have closed off the sky view, I would have," he says.

house and walk to the entrance, a cypress-clad box enclosed in thickly planted shrubs. As they step inside, its glass walls reveal a huge excavated pond, and a magnificent sugar maple on the right. “The experience of the pond is carefully shielded,” Jim says. As you approach the house, “the only inkling of the water is that the sky is so much brighter over that area. If I could have closed off the sky view, I would have.”

Another reason to separate the entry, which contains a powder room and closet, was to make a pure pavilion of the cypress-clad living, dining, and kitchen volume—Jim describes it as a “great raft of wood.” Moving from the entryway, guests enter this main living space over a short corridor with water on both sides.

The family approaches the house by car from a different direction, but the journey is no less pleasurable. Jim uses buildings to reveal different aspects of the landscape in relation to the owners’ household routines: How do they drive in? How do they get out of their car, get an armload of groceries to the kitchen? What do they experience doing that? What tools can be used to amplify those experiences?



Above and below: The combination living-dining-kitchen volume is, says Jim, a “great raft of wood,” appearing to float above the natural pond.





The water is ever-present in the owners' daily lives. They park in the garage across the pond from the main house and enter a cross-axis hallway that reveals a specimen tree at one end. In the other direction is a long, enclosed walk to the kitchen, over the water. The walkway wall opens up momentarily on the east side to frame a mature linden tree with a hooked branch. "We opened the walkway on that side so they would experience the tree," Jim says. "And actually they do. They tell me they stop and look. It's giving someone the opportunity to connect with a place through how you choreograph their daily movement. It has nothing to do with style or shape, just with looking at the real world. Shapes are personal; this concept is universal."

The excavated pond is another example of amplifying the clients' emotional engagement with the land by riffing on its natural features. As he drew the buildings into the plan, Jim started to see he could impound water draining from the north. Most of the pond water is replenished from the roof of the buildings, which are pitched to dump rainwater into the pond; downspouts supply the rest. "We have a secondary well

to make sure it's topped up if necessary, but most of the time it fills up naturally," he says. "Buildings take an enormous amount of water off the earth and run it into a pipe. We tried to have the buildings infiltrate their water back into the earth and avoid gutters and downspouts."

Movement through the public spaces always engages the pond. For example, a single glass panel opposite the dining table frames a water view, so that the dining area straddles the wet realm and the dry meadow below. That slot also opens a sight line to the cypress-clad garage, with an attached guest suite, across the pond. Built slab-on-grade, the garage's lower part is cast concrete that cantilevers over the water and then drops down in a candy cane shape so that the pond liner is hidden under the crook.

"Living with the pond is a fantastic experience," says the husband. "It's a surprise pleasure having constant wildlife intrusions so close to the house. You wake up and see a blue heron sitting on a rock, looking at you, or a million frog eggs across the top of the pond. There's a constant biology lesson going on, and my son's friends are always playing in the pond. It's very interactive."



Above and below right: The pond is a canvas for sightings of wildlife and aquatic creatures. "There's a constant biology lesson going on," says the owner. The roof drains directly into the pond, capturing runoff to restore itself.





Telling a Story

If the design scheme captures the character of this rolling field-and-forest landscape, the Douglas fir–framed structure describes how the buildings hold themselves up. “The most ubiquitous physical force we experience is gravity; architecture doesn’t defy it; it describes it,” Jim says. “The column goes to the beam, the beam goes to the rafter, the rafter carries the roofing, and the roofing keeps the rain out. We want to show how those things are connected. Not like Lincoln logs; it has to be fastened together with the human hand.”

Where there are glass walls, the columns and beams sit inside the glass, and the beams overhang the columns, which makes the beams stronger. The beam and column system “clarifies the nature of the columns and the loads, and it means the columns aren’t the corner because the corners go to glass,” Jim says. His design incorporated the owners’ request for “infinity” floors: the windows were dropped about eight inches below the floor surface, with a gap between the floor and window so that “it’s like sitting on a platform,” the husband says.

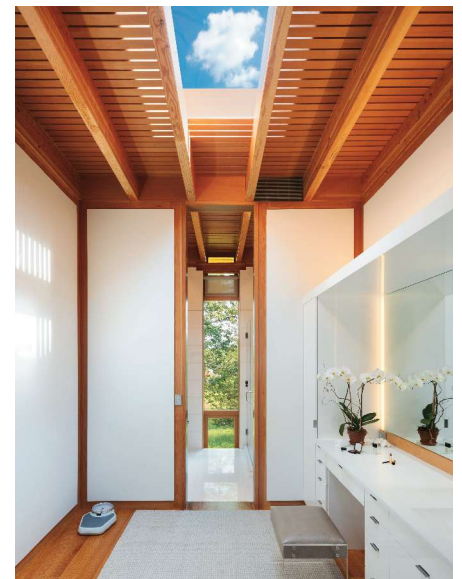
With 569 pages of construction details, putting the house together was like solving a Rubik’s Cube, says Bill White, project executive at A. Pappajohn Company, which built the

house. “We had to literally turn pieces to figure it out and every wall had a different nuance. Floor joists don’t go to the windows, and doors are flush so that when you’re walking down the corridor to the bedroom wing, you don’t see the doors. We couldn’t hire just any framer, and we had two supers looking over the details, because if anything was missed, it would come back to bite you every step of the way.”

Without traditional structural corners, the main living space’s two 6-foot–by–12-foot sliding doors were hung from steel-reinforced, cantilevered beams. “In summer when the whole house is open, it feels like a big tent,” the husband says. Four-foot overhangs on the south mitigate heat build-up in summer and admit precious sunlight in the winter. And a giant maple shades the west side, where there are few windows. This net-zero-energy house also has about 2,800 square-feet of solar panels that send excess energy to the grid, and two solar hot water panels. A battery backup was also installed to run the house briefly if the power goes out.

The clients’ conservation ethic often collided with their wish for view corridors. “You run into massive conflicts to connect with nature,” the husband says. “Seventy percent of the wall surfaces are glass, which is not good for insulation. But that was the point where we said, if we’re going to spend

Opposite and below: Meadow views are nearly as lovely as pond perspectives. A study looks across to the master bedroom wing. “Infinity floors” plunge corridors and rooms directly into the natural landscape.





House on a Pond

SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND

ARCHITECT: James Cutler, FAIA, principal-in-charge; Meghan Griswold and David Curtin, project architects, Cutler Anderson Architects, Bainbridge Island, Wash.

BUILDER: A. Pappajohn Company, Norwalk, Conn.

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Amy Hirsch Interiors, Greenwich, Conn.

LANDSCAPE: Pond design by Anthony Archer-Wills Water Garden Design, Copake Falls, N.Y.; landscape design by Cutler Anderson Architects, the owner, and DeVore Associates Landscape Architects, Fairfield, Conn.

ENGINEER: Tucker Associates, Wallingford, Conn.

PROJECT SIZE: 7,877 square feet

SITE SIZE: 4.35 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: © David Sundberg/Esto

KEY PRODUCTS

BATHTUB/MASTER: Wyndham Collection

BATHTUBS/SECONDARY: Kohler

COOKTOP: Miele

DISHWASHER: Miele

DOORS: Simpson Door Company

FAUCETS: Kohler, Grohe

HARDWARE: Cutler Anderson, Reveal Designs

LIGHTING: Juno, Lutron

MICROWAVE: GE Profile

OVEN: Miele

SINKS: Lacava, Kohler

SKYLIGHTS: Crystalite

TOILETS: TOTO

WASHER/DRYER: Maytag

WINDOWS: Quantum

WOOD STOVE: Rais Malta



Above: Trees were just as important as pond and meadow for this project, so the architect pulled the program into separate volumes spread across the site to save them.



Look for a new 240-page monograph on Cutler Anderson's houses, due this spring from art publisher Oscar Riera Ojeda.

more money on heating, even though the energy use is below average for a house in this region, let's do it to afford views that connect us to nature." Windows and doors are triple-pane, and their mullions are reclaimed redwood with a water-based polyurethane coating. "There are no stains in the whole house," the husband says. "The mullions will weather naturally to gray," as will the building's cypress rain-screen cladding.

Without soffits, chases, or registers, the mechanical system is invisible. The house is heated and cooled with a geothermal system and radiant flooring. The building envelope was heavily insulated and the stud cavities used as a plenum to carry air-conditioning, which comes out of a slot hidden behind ceiling panels.

Reality-Based Architecture

Environmentally sound and aesthetically glorious, the house's interior is all warm Douglas fir wood, with commodious spaces meant for entertaining. Acoustical concerns led to an overall aesthetic of wood-slat ceilings above exposed rafters. Jim was worried about noise because the north wall's large, solid surface makes it highly refractive, and the south wall, mostly glass, has a tremendous amount of reverberation. To mitigate sound, the construction crew laid 1x4 boards three-quarters of an inch apart on top of the ceiling rafters, then topped them with black fabric and acoustical batting so all sound absorption happens in the ceiling.

Jim prefers to use cable lighting rather than ceiling fixtures because you can see the negative and positive wires, and they demonstrate how electricity gets to the light source. He used dowels to "avoid the ugly hardware that usually comes with cable lighting." The crew drilled a hole in each rafter and slid a dowel between them. The electrician installed the transformer and fasteners, ran the two cables out from the fixtures and drilled them through the dowel, then turnbuckled them tight against the dowel.

For Jim, the emotional parts of our lives are the important ones, because they're what make us human. "We're looking at reality and trying to define what's beautiful about it," Jim says. "We choreograph the work to amplify every tangible experience to the point where it is emotionally compelling." He says he was genetically predisposed to these lessons learned from his former teacher, Louis Kahn, who changed his view of the world.

Jim adds that a lot of "architecture seems so shallow—like fashion, like style; ninety percent of it ignores the real beauty of what's outside your window every day. There's no limit to the shapes and styles that can be derived from just looking at tangible reality and trying to define what's beautiful about it. If there's a big idea on this building, it's to just do that." RD



Private Oasis

Three land-loving houses strike the sweet spot between prospect and refuge.

BY S. CLAIRE CONROY





Ravine Residence

RURAL IOWA
BNIM

BNIM is well known for its environmentally responsible design work—and that’s an understatement. The firm has been instrumental in the creation of the USGBC, the organization’s LEED building standards, and the AIA’s Committee on the Environment. For the most part, firm architects have applied their research and practice to large-scale projects. Single-family custom projects have not been a singular focus. But at the core of their approach to what they call “human purposed design” is a “deep commitment to humanity as the origin of inspiration, innovation, and prosperity,” and this is perhaps the best way to address a custom residential project. It’s a given, then, that BNIM architects such as Rod Kruse, FAIA, and Jonathan Ramsey, AIA, are primed to listen to their clients and to please them in simple and profound ways.

The clients on this project had a wild idea for their rural 9-acre site in Iowa: They wanted a house that would span a large and prominent ravine, like a bridge



Opposite, left, and below: The Ravine Residence immerses itself and its occupants in the landscape. The same palette of materials used on the exterior and interior, along with a wide-opening, glass-and-steel pivot door, further underscore the holistic experience.



would cross a creek. Nonetheless, the BNIM team did their due diligence and investigated the entire property for the location for the house. “When they came to us, they were curious about whether it was even possible. They had seen the Midwest Retreat project we had done—on a much bigger piece of property—and really liked it,” recalls Jonathan, who was project architect for the house. “In the end, it did make sense to site the house over the ravine. We try to touch the land as lightly as possible and it accomplished that. And we were excited about it as a unique gesture.”

The house is large, nearly 9,000 square feet, so it was important to make it as efficient as possible—not just with active measures, but with passive ones as a priority. “Our strategy is always to make the no-cost moves first,” Jonathan explains. “We do everything we can to set it up right. So, orientation



Above: Stairs off the bridge lead to a lower level where family space will be built out later. A tall concrete plinth keeps more vulnerable materials up above the snow line.

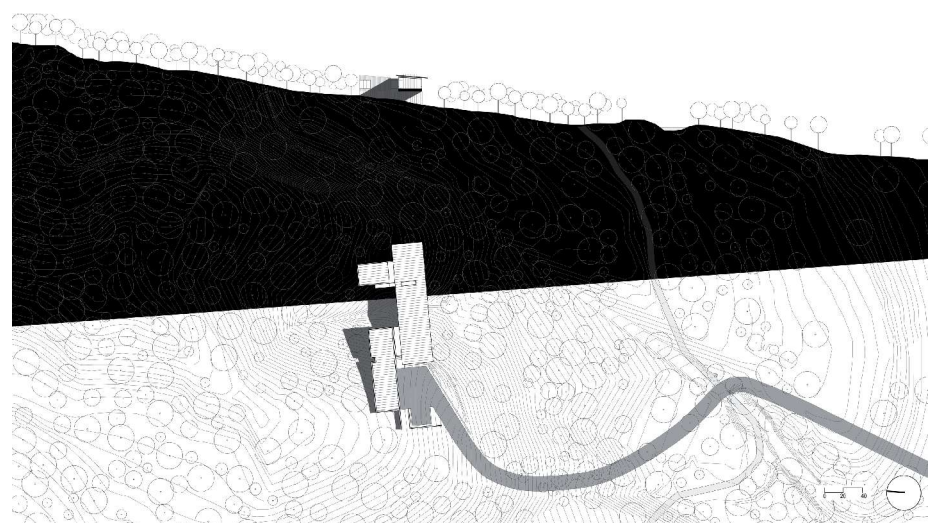
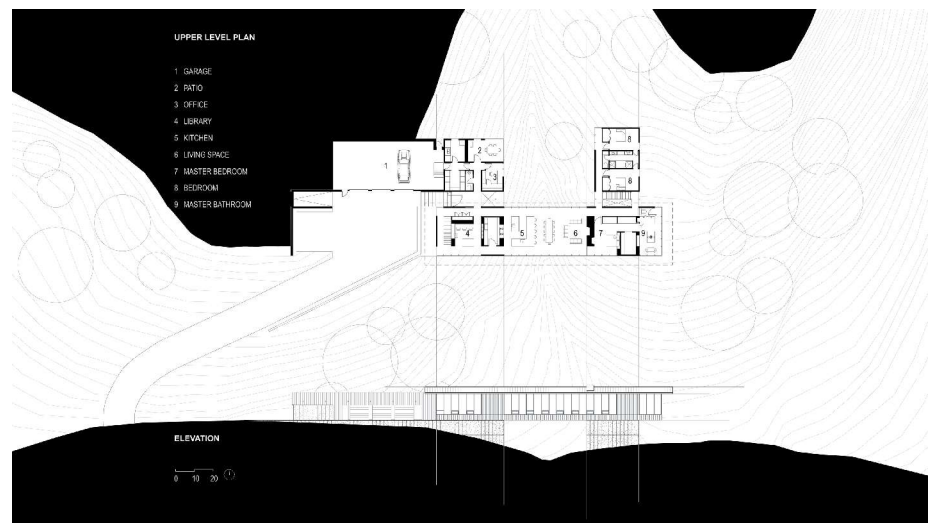
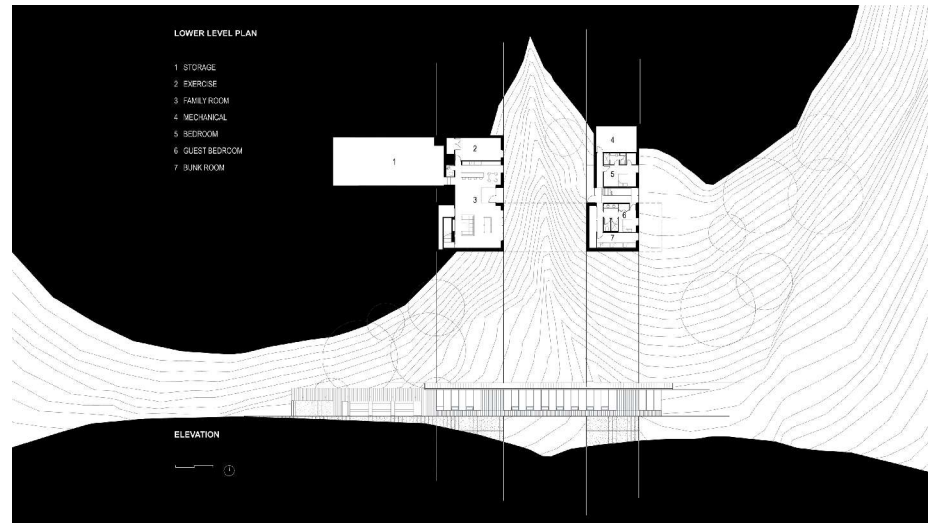


is always front of mind. That was one of the reasons that spanning the ravine made sense. In a lot of other places on the property, we would have had to get further out of the ground.” The house shades itself against heat gain from the south—with a 6-foot overhang, and there are high-tech solutions such as geothermal heating and cooling. The system takes care of 50 percent of the water heating needs, too, says Jonathan.

The Road Taken

No residential project is successful unless it’s functional for everyday life and it supplies a measure of delight to uplift the soul. The clients on this project, a full-time residence, drive across the site and over a creek to get to their house every day. The journey to the house is as much a part of the experience as the dwelling is—and the heart of that experience is the immersion in nature. “They just really love being in the house and experiencing all the seasons and nature that happen all around them,” Jonathan says. “The topography, vegetation, and the landscape—the house wraps around and over the landscape. It helps form and frame the landscape.”

Framing the landscape was a key driver for every design move and orchestration of program. Central functions occupy the bridge portion of the house—kitchen, dining, living—taking advantage of large spans of curtain wall that face north and south. The southern window wall, with its big forest vista, continues beyond the bridge to provide views for the ends of the house as well—the master suite and, at the opposite end, a library/workspace. Meanwhile, every circulation route aligns with glass and views, so all movement through the house is rewarded with a delightful scene. “The master bath is enveloped by cedar trees,” says Jonathan. “And the counters in the kitchen reflect the sky. You’ll see





Above: Precise alignment of flooring, windows, columns, and other elements keeps everyone's focus on the view. A vanity lifts off the floor to emphasize the floating tree-house effect.

a spot moving across them, and it's the reflection of vultures flying by."

Enabling those uninterrupted vistas and keeping the overall house design light and precise required very careful planning up front. For instance, support columns are painted black and aligned with window frames so they disappear. Service areas for the kitchen are zoned in one block in the pantry. And nearly everything that's necessary but unsightly hides in the fireplace wall. "We used the fireplace block for a lot of the mechanical systems, the air intake and anything else that is an outlet and needs to go through the roof," says Jonathan. "We used wood trusses for the spans and for the roof, so we were also able to block out openings in the trusses to run major utilities. And we used closed-cell foam in the roof, so we didn't have to ventilate it and could keep it thin." Execution of these elements was of paramount importance, and so Jonathan called upon Mark Main of Mainbuilt, with whom he had worked on the

award-winning Midwest Retreat. "He is outstanding. This can't just have happened with our visions and drawing. His work was instrumental." [Learn more about Mainbuilt on page 19.]

A bounty of thought and planning went into the major and minor delights of the Ravine Residence, and yet one of its most loved features was a wonderful surprise: a covered patio, located at the service end of the house, that was originally meant to be a screened porch. It doesn't share the big southern view that the main living area showcases; instead it faces north. "The patio is nestled in there, with the hill rising behind it. The wing beyond forms another wall, which expands the space but gives it definition," Jonathan says. "Some of my favorite moments and the clients' are to the north. Nature comes into play and envelopes them. That roof overhead provides a sense of shelter. There are sights and sounds. Leaving the patio open instead of screening it in—that small move made all the difference."

Ravine Residence

Rural Iowa

ARCHITECT: Rod Kruse, FAIA, principal in charge; Jonathan Ramsey, AIA, project architect; Dana Sorenson, AIA, BNIM, Des Moines, Iowa

BUILDER: Mark Main, Mainbuilt, Clive, Iowa

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Ted Lare, Dana Cox, Ted Lare Design + Build, Cumming, Iowa

PROJECT SIZE: 8,795 square feet

SITE SIZE: 9 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Kelly Callewaert

KEY PRODUCTS

DOORS: Modern Steel Doors

LOCKSETS: Yale

PIVOT DOOR HARDWARE: RIXSON

GARAGE DOORS: Wayne Dalton

ROOFING: Firestone Building Products

UNDERLAYMENT/SHEATHING: Huber Engineered Wood

WEATHERIZATION SYSTEMS: Keene Driwall Rainscreen

HVAC: ClimateMaster Geothermal Heat Pump System

FIREPLACE INSERT: Heat & Glo

LARGE FORMAT TILE: Fiandre

COUNTERTOPS: Vicostone Quartz

CABINETS: Minnesota Cabinets

CABINET PULLS: Mockett

KITCHEN RANGE/WALL OVENS: Wolf

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Sub-Zero

VENT HOOD: Thermador

DISHWASHER: Thermador

FAUCETS: Delta, Hansgrohe

SINKS: Lacava, Duravit, Kohler

TOILETS: Kohler

TUBS: MTI Baths, Kohler

TILE: Daltile

LIGHTING: Bega, Cree, Delta Light

LIGHTING CONTROL: Lutron

WINDOW SHADING: Lutron

PAINTS/STAINS/COATINGS: Diamond Vogel



House on the Point

WATER MILL, N.Y.
STELLE LOMONT ROUHANI ARCHITECTS

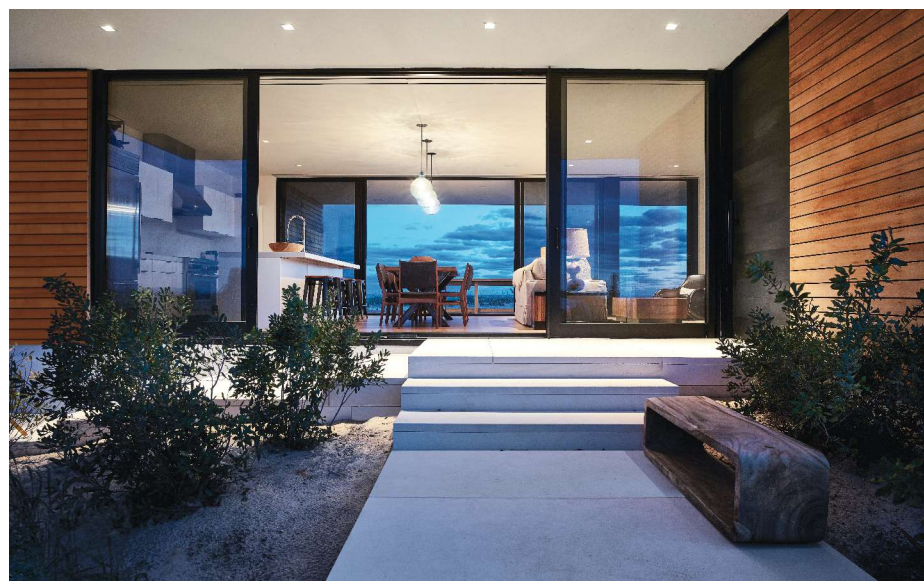
A private oasis doesn't require vast acreage to accomplish—that is, if you have a skillful, experienced architect guiding the design. The clients for this house in Water Mill, near the better-known Hamptons, were wise in their choice of Viola Rouhani, AIA. Her firm, Stelle Lomont Rouhani Architects, are practically the town architects for the area, having also designed the house next door and an additional five or so houses on the same road. The firm knows the codes, the conditions, and the culture here, right down to the unique biome of the street. And it understands how to harness the entire potential of special sites with tight dimensions and close neighbors. Whether a renovation or a new house, the architects' goal is always to maximize the quality of the owners' experience of the project and of the place.



Clockwise from far left: The house shields itself from neighbors with careful fenestration and screens. The entry door is to the side, but a street-facing sliding-glass door turns the great room into a de facto front porch.

In this case, what was intended as a renovation ultimately turned into an entirely new house. “The site is really beautiful, but the house was in a precarious position so close to the shore,” Viola explains. Located between Mecox Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, the original house had the best of both views, and the worst exposure to storms. “We started working on the renovation about six years ago, and then we were hit with Hurricane Sandy. The house didn’t take a beating, but it gave the owners pause. It made them think they should move it back a bit. In speaking with code officials, we learned that if we made the project fully FEMA-compliant and energy-compliant, they would let us build new.”

The catch was, the house had to stay the same size—no added square footage, no wished-for basement. Still, there was the opportunity to get the 2,400-square-foot house just right. The biggest challenge was to strike the



best balance of privacy from immediate neighbors and exposure to the gorgeous views at the front and back and the clients’ vibrant network of nearby friends. Complicating the task was that the clients also wanted five bedrooms, so carving out that one spacious great room everyone wanted was a game of inches.

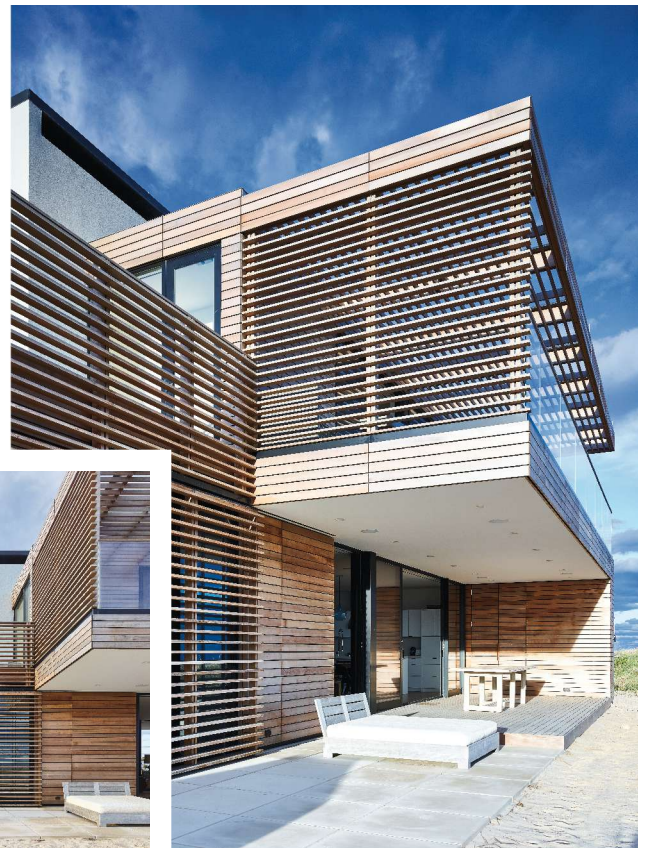
Viola’s solution was to keep the bedrooms as small as possible. “A lot of what we do out here has nothing to do with spending time in a great big, beautiful bedroom. It’s about engaging with outdoors as much as possible,” she explains. “It’s about the house being a perch that you can use to access



the outdoors. Glass doors that open onto decks, making it feel like it's all a big porch. These clients have so many friends in the neighborhood, it was really important to them to have the house as open as possible. Neighbors come over all the time." So, although there's a proper entry door off to one side of the house, the true beacon of welcome is a set of sliding doors that link the great room to the street. On the other side of the room, a matching slider opens onto the back deck and ocean.

Two of the bedrooms are located on the main floor and share the only bathroom for the level; various mechanical systems that would otherwise go in a basement or crawl space are here as well. On the second level is a central family room, two smaller bedrooms that share a bathroom, and the master suite and master bath. A balcony runs

Clockwise from above: If you live at the beach, sand will come into the house. Viola likes to mitigate the problem with decks that lift off the ground and with light-colored, forgiving flooring.





Clockwise from above: Seaside houses often save their best views for upper levels. Viola captured the best opportunities here with side and back decks. The side deck has an outdoor fireplace to extend the season, and a hot tub concealed in cedar siding. The master bedroom dances between privacy and openness with screens and glass.



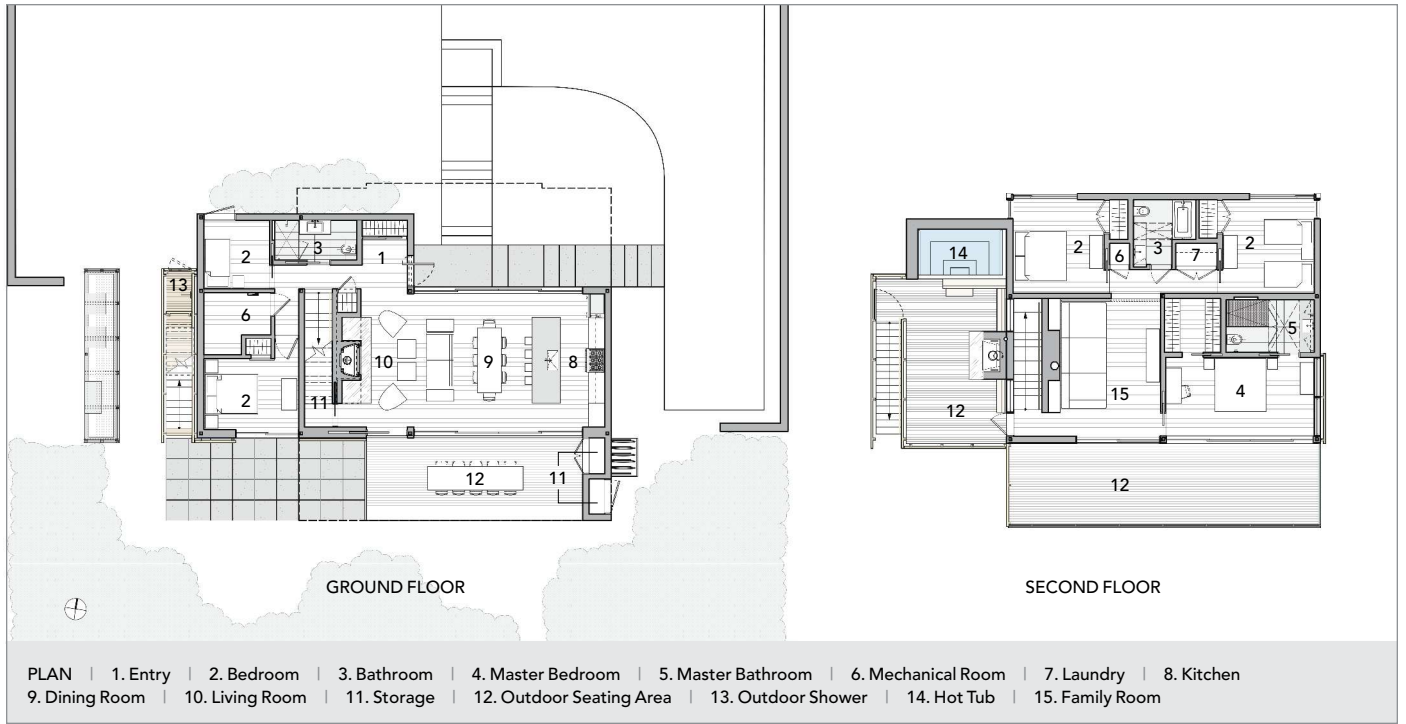
along the back of the house, providing the master and family room with the best views in the whole project: a full swath of Atlantic Ocean. Careful screening at each end preserves the panorama while providing a measure of privacy and sun control. Because this view is too good to waste, there's another deck on the side the house, with an outdoor fireplace and hot tub—all kept more private but still permeable to sight lines with cedar screening.

Climate Ready

As open as the house feels, it's built "like a little bunker," Viola says. "The whole area is considered a hurricane zone. We design now for the 100-year event with winds up to 140 miles per hour. Wind gusts up to 50 miles per hour happen on an annual basis. The house sits on piles and has a steel super frame. The windows are all impact resistant. It's so solidly and rigidly built, you would be surprised by how sturdy it feels and how quiet."

And yet, its skin matches the light and lean aesthetic of the once-humble summer community. "The houses here used to be simple wood structures, so you could get in the shade, and they were closed up for the winter. It was really nice for us to have clients who appreciated the modesty of those







House on the Point

Water Mill, N.Y.

ARCHITECT: Viola Rouhani, AIA; Luca Campaiola; Damen Hamilton; Alexa Baker; Jessica Twiggs; Stelle Lomont Rouhani Architects, Bridgehampton, N.Y.

BUILDER: Fountainhead Construction, Bridgehampton

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: LaGuardia Design Group, Water Mill, N.Y.

PROJECT SIZE: 2,405 square feet

SITE SIZE: .93 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Matthew Carbone

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS/DOORS: Kawneer

**WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS/
SLIDING DOORS:** Arcadia

DOOR HARDWARE: FSB, Accurate

HVAC: Weil-McLain, Carrier

FIREPLACE INSERT: Heatilator

OUTDOOR FIREPLACE: Earthcore Isokern

COUNTERTOPS: Caesarstone

KITCHEN RANGE: Wolf

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Sub-Zero

WINE REFRIGERATOR: U-Line

VENT HOOD: Wolf

DISHWASHER: Asko

WASHER/DRYER: LG

FAUCETS: Dornbracht

SHOWERHEAD: Kohler

SINKS: Kohler

TOILETS: Duravit

TUBS: Kohler

OUTDOOR SHOWER: Calazzo PILA

LIGHTING: Tech Lighting

LIGHTING CONTROL: Lutron

WINDOW SHADING: Lutron

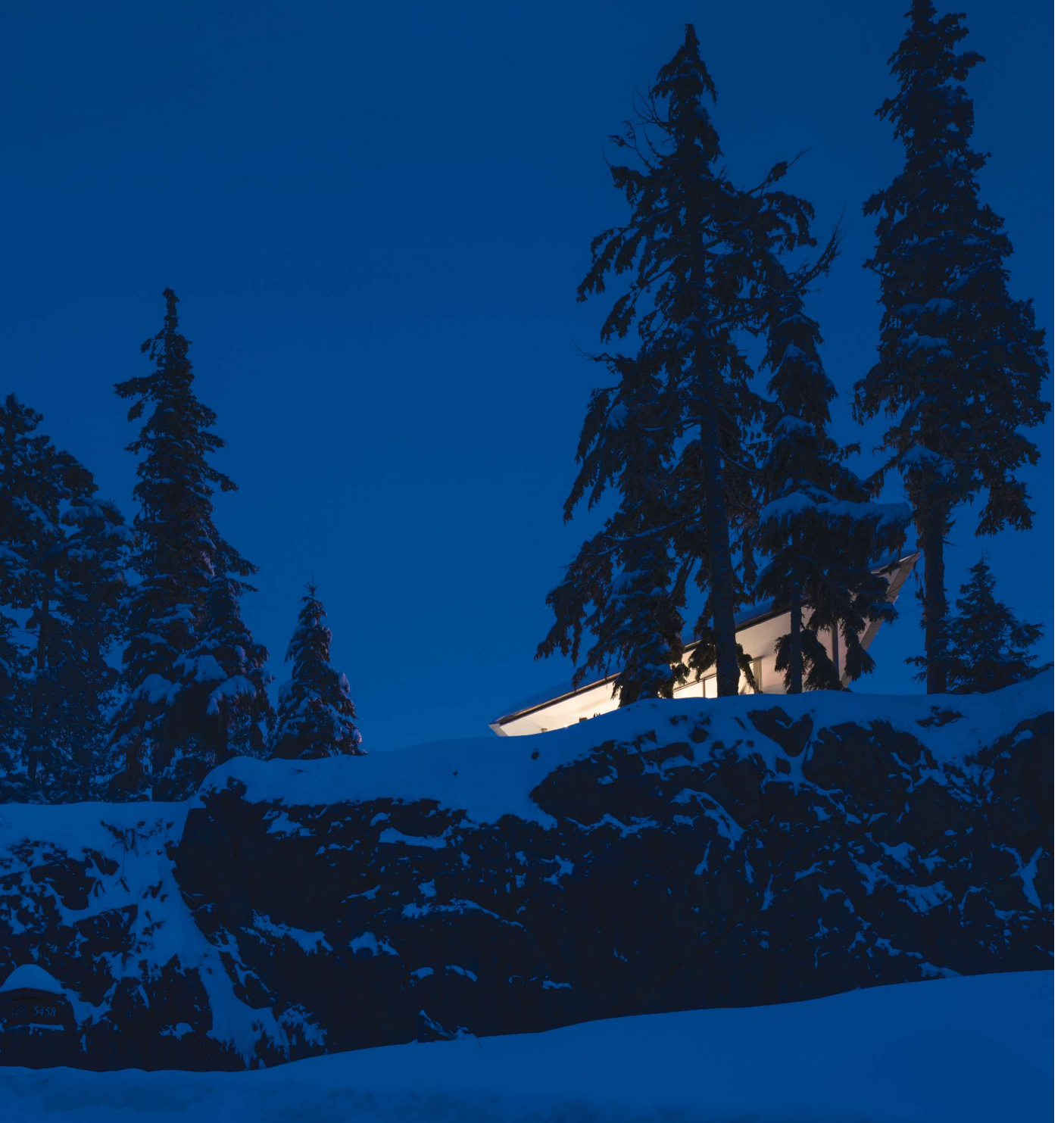
PAINTS/STAINS/COATINGS:
Benjamin Moore

original houses. We evoked them with Western red cedar, which is a durable, stable, and rot-resistant material.

It forms a rain screen, and there's a waterproof layer behind it. It helps the siding last a lot longer."

The overall effect is a meticulous little jewel box perched between sweeps of sand and sea. Its defenses masquerade as decoration. "We pay a lot of attention to composition," Voila says. "We want the house to appear as if it were carved out of one volume, rather than having pieces put on. We are intentional about what is open and what is not."

That's the nature of an oasis—it's open and protected at the same time, with everything you need to feel at peace.



Whistler Residence

WHISTLER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA
BOHLIN CYWINSKI JACKSON, IN ASSOCIATION WITH
BOHLIN GRAUMAN MILLER ARCHITECTS

Everyone's idea of a private oasis is different. For some, paradise is a tropical beach and endless summer. For others, it's the mountains and four changing seasons of beauty and recreation. It was most assuredly the latter for the London family who commissioned this house in the Canadian ski mecca of Whistler, British Columbia. They wanted the house as much for its green seasons as for its white ones, and among their most important requests was a big, green lawn for their athletic family and visiting friends. They desired a complete antidote to drizzly, dismal London life.



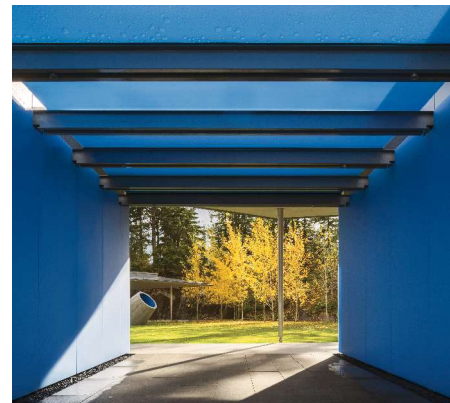
Above and below: Between a wedge of rocky ledges is the motor court and entry to the insular property. The low-slung clad buildings are actually garages. At their center, an opening topped in blue architectural glass leads to the front lawn and the home's big reveal.

The clients were not newcomers to Whistler when they approached Bohlin Cywinski Jackson and their Canadian affiliate, Bohlin Grauman Miller, to design their family's mountaintop getaway. They had first owned a condo at the foot of a ski lift, and, later, a log home on a golf course—another avid interest of theirs. They had lured their friends from all over the world to the resort village, and they, in turn, bought houses there as well. So, the clients had plenty of time to deliberate about their next and much bigger commitment to Whistler.

They knew they wanted a place for large-scale entertaining, and hanging

out with immediate family. And then they found this 7-acre site, already carved into a circular shape and planted with 21 300-foot-deep geothermal wells by the developer. After a failed attempt to work with a local architect, they approached BCJ, whose Seattle office is half a day's drive or so from the site. Robert Miller, AIA, was the principal in charge; David Miller, AIA, (no relation) was the project architect.

Even for a firm as capable as BCJ, this was a formidable undertaking. The house itself approaches 9,000 square feet, and access to the site was difficult, even in good weather, for construction





crews and suppliers. Thrown into the mix were the 2010 Winter Olympics, which brought everything to a halt for their duration, and, during the same period, changes to Whistler's building regulations. Coupled with clients who were very engaged in the planning of the house, design development was necessarily slow and thoughtful. "Our process is a very collaborative one anyway," says Robert. "And, because the project had such a long timeline, we had a pretty large group involved. Many people from the firm moved on and off, but everyone was excited to work on it."

Stone Soul

There were a set of "givens" on the project that dictated the siting and shape of the house. That circular pad for one, the nearly two-dozen geothermal wells for another, and the mountain's rocky ledge. Everyone's goal was to get as much of the house and as many of the outdoor features as possible aligned with view corridors. "We did lots of studies about how to site the house," David explains. "Ultimately, the main house is based on each room having



Top and above: A roof that soars and bends like a boomerang connects the guest wing and main house. Poking out of the ground like stalagmites, board-formed oculae are both sculptural and functional. But the grandest gesture is a two-story stair, suspended from a harp-like array of steel cables.



Above and right: A double-height chimney pierces the roof and rises through skylights, its mica-speckled stone shimmering in the light.

its own character and view. And the guest house looks back up to a smaller mountain behind the view.”

The first big move—what you could call the jumping-off place—was the stunning cantilevered pool that appears to hurdle off the mountain and into the view. “We started with the pool and worked our way from there,” says Robert. “Then, the house is positioned between the lawn and the rough.”

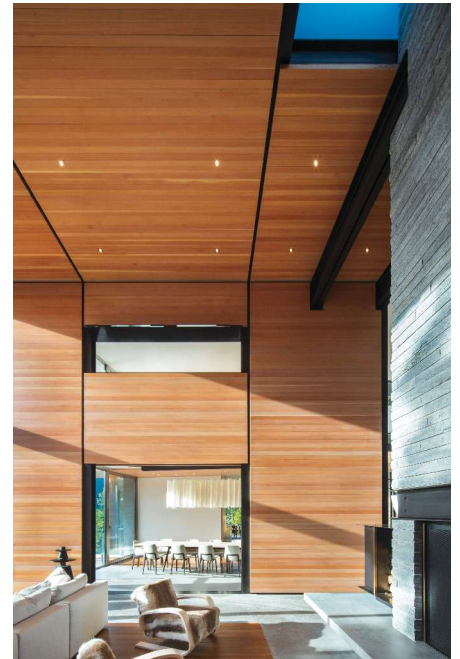
A special team handled the rock work for the swimming pool. “The only blasting we did was for the pool,” Robert recalls. “To get the pool to slice through that rock ledge, we had an explosive artist. They drilled a series of holes around where the edge would be, then slowly blasted off layers until they got the slices where the pool should be. And when cracks in the rock would emerge where they didn’t want them, they would fill them with epoxy. It was the closest you can get to an art form in explosives.”



Using SketchUp and Revit, the design team studied carefully where the sun would track over seasons, and its relationship to the view opportunities. In some cases, the architects simply opted to send people out long projecting decks to experience full immersion in the mountains—those decks echoing the pool’s dramatic posture. “The building responds particularly to different times of year and different views,” says Robert. “Having the time during the design phase to really consider that was great.” David adds, “It’s really hard to describe or even capture in photos, but the house is very experiential.”

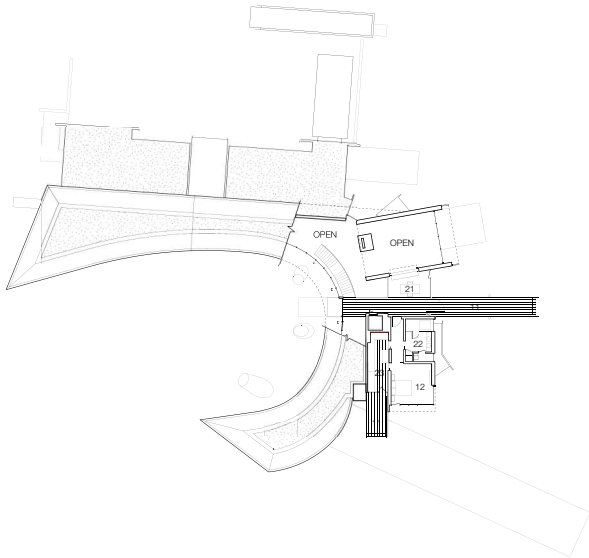
Quiet Side

New visitors to the site would never expect the monumental house they ultimately discover. The first views appear beyond two rocky ledges, where a low-slung storage shed and what seems to be two clad volumes form a motor court. Only the glass-enclosed chimney rising from behind hints at what’s to come. Once inside the court, the clad volumes disclose their big reveal, a central portal lined in blue architectural glass leading to the house and lawn. And those clad volumes? They’re really garages, with bi-fold lift doors masquerading as walls. The garage to the left serves the main residence, and the garage to the right is for the guest wing.



Above right and below: Warm Douglas fir paneling used throughout the house balances the cooler surfaces of steel and glass.

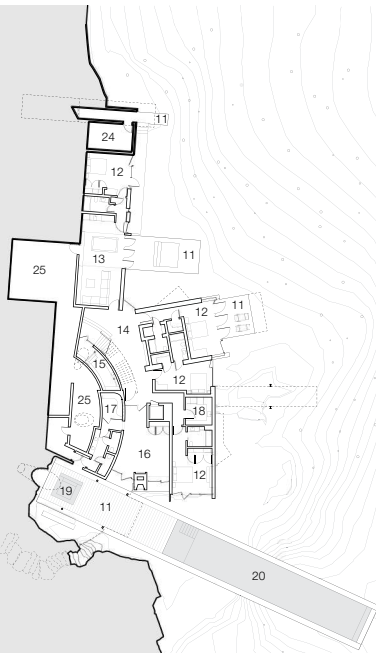




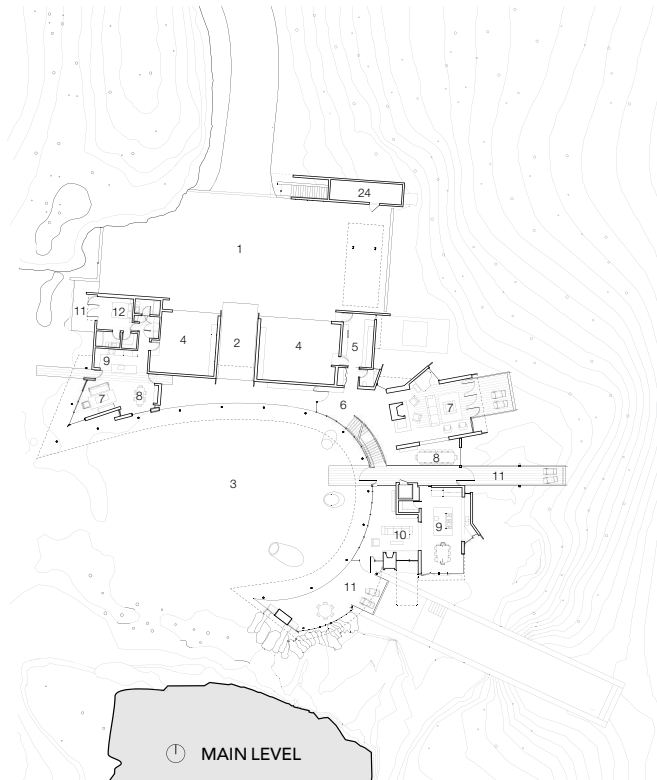
🕒 UPPER LEVEL



🕒 SITE PLAN



🕒 LOWER LEVEL



🕒 MAIN LEVEL

1. Parking Court | 2. Entry Court | 3. Courtyard | 4. Garage | 5. Mud Room | 6. Foyer | 7. Living | 8. Dining | 9. Kitchen | 10. Family | 11. Deck
 12. Bedroom | 13. Games Room | 14. Library | 15. Wine Room | 16. Exercise Room | 17. Steam Room | 18. Laundry | 19. Spa | 20. Pool | 21. Office
 22. En Suite | 23. Dressing | 24. Storage | 25. Mechanical

Passing through the portal, a framed scene of lawn and house entices. Once on the other side, the full breadth of the house unfurls like a fan toward the mountain, with majestic board-formed concrete-and-glass walls and great swooshes of covered walkways. Along the lawn, a series of oculae protrude from the ground. Sculptural and practical, they perform different purposes: one merely services mechanicals; one is open to the elements, allowing snow and rain to drip down into the hot tub below; and a third contains a light tube, ushering daylight into the wine cellar. “They’re like Corbu’s light cannons. The sun is directed right on the center line of the cannon. In the cellar, there’s a spot of light on the floor that’s at a perfect angle on the summer solstice,” says Robert. “It happens around 3 p.m.,” David adds, “which is not a bad time of day for a bottle of wine when you’re on vacation.”

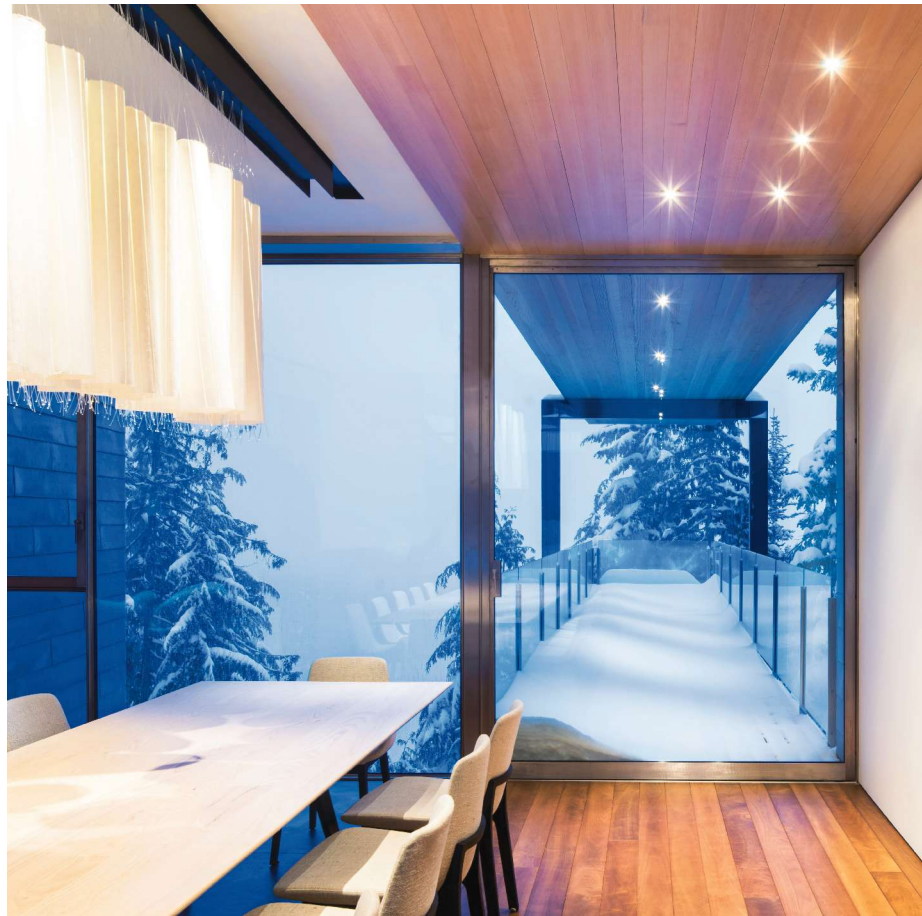
The wine room is on the lower level, along with a recreation room, secondary bedrooms, exercise room,



Clockwise from top right: Only a drone can capture the dramatic sweep of the monumental house and landscape. By contrast, the master bedroom is a quiet, zen-like space. Lighting is concealed in the folds of the Doug fir headboard. The infinity-edge pool was blasted into the rock ledge by an explosive artist.



This page and opposite page: Even in winter, protected access to rooms and views are always available. The projecting decks convey owners and visitors directly into the mountain vistas. Pivot doors can pause wide open in moderate weather.




and steam room. On the main level, family areas are at one end of the house and principal entertaining areas are at the other end, closest to the guest wing. The living room rises to double-height to capture the full rise of mountain peaks. The central fireplace and its chimney follow suit, climbing up through the roof and terminating in custom glass-and-steel skylights. “In the mountains, fireplaces are essential. We went through lots of iterations of the design. We wanted to keep it clean-lined, but also have something that’s a totemic element in that space,” David explains. The skylights usher in much-needed natural light and, when open, act as a thermal chimney to let heat escape during the

summer months. “Light comes down and emphasizes the patterns in the stone. There’s a little mica in it that shimmers,” says Robert. A custom blackened-steel wood holder completes the piece.

Flooring is radiant-heated integral concrete, with swaths of walnut to define warm zones of refuge in the house. Doug fir paneling climbs the walls and ceilings of the living room, and reappears as a custom headboard in the third-floor master bedroom. The projecting decks are wood salvaged from a windfall on the mountain.

The dance between wood and concrete has its grand culmination in the soaring two-story stair. “We wanted to elevate the staircase, so it can be viewed

as something beautiful to look at both inside and outside of the house,” Robert recalls. Suspended on cables, it’s a floating “ribbon” of wood as it rises to the top level, but turns to solid concrete as it descends to the lower floor. “The builder tuned it like you would tune a harp. More than any other element, it speaks to the quality of the contractor,” he adds.

Says David, “The client was very engaged; every team member was really engaged—everyone was firing on all cylinders for this house. And the project manager, Mike Ciebien, was especially thoughtful. He would tell his people, ‘you’re never going to work on a project like this again, so you’d better do your best job.’” 



Whistler Residence

Whistler, British Columbia, Canada

ARCHITECT: Peter Bohlin, FAIA, principal; Robert Miller, FAIA, principal in charge; David Miller, AIA, project manager; David Guthrie; Adrienne James; Niklas Koenig; Emma Nowinski; Terrence Wagner, Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, Seattle, in association with Bohlin Grauman Miller Architects

BUILDER: Mike Ciebien, project manager, Durfeld Construction, Whistler

INTERIOR DESIGN:
Bohlin Cywinski Jackson

LANDSCAPE DESIGN:
Bohlin Cywinski Jackson

PROJECT SIZE: 8,700 square feet

SITE SIZE: 7.6 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Nic Lehoux

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS/DOORS/SKYLIGHTS:
Capoferri Serramenti

GARAGE DOORS: Schweiss Doors

ARCHITECTURAL GLASS:
Garibaldi Glass, Starphire

KITCHEN RANGE: La Cornue (main house), Wolf (guest house)

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER/WINE REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

DISHWASHER/SPECIALTY APPLIANCES/WASHER/DRYER: Miele

FAUCETS: Dornbracht, Gessi, Vola

SINKS: Franke, Duravit, Julien, Kohler

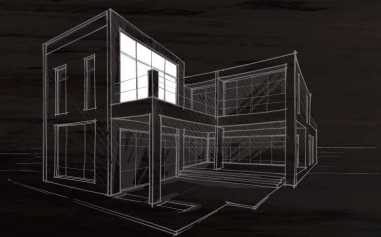
TOILETS: Duravit, TOTO

LIGHTING: Lucifer, Lumina, Flo

HOME CONTROL: Bang & Olufsen

WINDOW SHADING: Lutron

PAINTS/STAINS/COATINGS:
Benjamin Moore, Armourcoat



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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 8

Notes From the Symposium

After Wright—Rudolf Schindler, Richard Neutra, and Antonin and Noémi Raymond: Pathfinders of Regionalism and Sustainability

BY JOHN DEFAZIO, AIA

In 1910, Ernst Wasmuth published “Constructed Buildings and Designs by Frank Lloyd Wright” in Germany. What became known as the Wasmuth Portfolios illustrated not just Wright’s innovations in tectonics and planning, but a breakthrough in the very nature of architectural space. Wright had “broken the box.” It is said all work ceased for the day when the folios arrived at the Berlin offices of Peter Behrens, where a young Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier) were all apprenticing at the time. A new generation of architects would soon flock to work with Wright. Four of them—Czech-born-and-trained architect Antonin Raymond and his wife, French-born American artist/designer Noémi Pernessin, and two young Austrian architects, Rudolf Schindler and Richard Neutra—joined Wright’s employ through the 1910s and ’20s. This past fall, the Raymond Farm Center for Living Arts & Design gathered Barry Bergdoll of Columbia University and the Museum of Modern Art, Judith Sheine of the University of Oregon, writer/lecturer Barbara Lamprecht, and William Whitaker, curator of the University of Pennsylvania’s Louis I. Kahn Archives, to participate in a day-long symposium, “After Wright—Rudolf Schindler, Richard Neutra, and Antonin and Noémi Raymond: Pathfinders of Regionalism and Sustainability.” These distinguished scholars picked up the story of Wright’s influence from there.



Above: Antonin and Noémi Raymond were very involved in the design for Wright’s Tokyo Imperial Hotel. After a falling out with the architect, they left to start their own firm in Japan.

Tokyo and the Farm

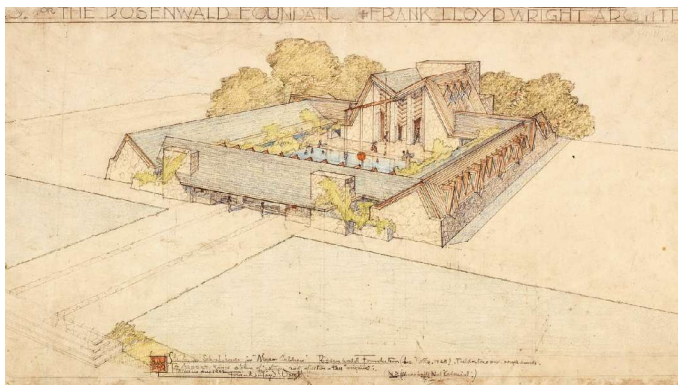
Barry Bergdoll’s kickoff presentation, “Tokyo and the Farm: Wright’s New Departures in the 1910s and 1920s,” started by pointing out that although the Wasmuth Portfolios brought great fame to Wright, this was a terrible time for the architect, “filled with personal tragedy and professional setbacks.” Quoting Wright scholar Anthony Alofsin, FAIA, of the University of Texas at Austin, Bergdoll described how these “lost years” were actually rich ones creatively for Wright, who was incubating the concepts and forms that distinguished his work in the decades to follow. Displaying a “bird’s-eye” rendering that Noémi and Antonin Raymond prepared for Wright’s rebuilding of Taliesin East, Bergdoll conjectured that this unique perspective view was a contribution of the Raymonds’

Photo: Courtesy John DeFazio/CRAN

and one that skillfully illustrated Wright’s concept of integrating buildings into the landscape—to be “of the hill” rather than “upon the hill.”

Crediting the work of University of Washington architecture professor Ken Tadashi Oshima, one of his co-curators for the MoMA exhibition, “Frank Lloyd Wright at 150: Unpacking the Archive,” Bergdoll spoke of what an incredible undertaking Wright’s Tokyo Imperial Hotel really was—in planning, engineering, and ornamental design. It was the Imperial Hotel that brought the Raymonds to Japan in 1919—Antonin as project architect and Noémi to work on the interiors and fine art. After a falling out with Wright in 1922, the Raymonds parted ways with his firm to establish their own practice in Japan. Bergdoll paraphrased a letter from Wright to Antonin: Well, good luck but do not go about leaving anything resembling my own individual work planted in Japan—be yourselves.” Bergdoll noted that, although the Raymonds went on to develop their own fusion of modernism and Japanese craft, their work still reflected many of Wright’s imperatives—especially architecture’s relationship to nature—and their interest in materials, especially wood frame and reinforced concrete.

Bergdoll turned to the idea of regionalism itself, noting the social critic Lewis Mumford’s book, “The South in Architecture,” and Mumford’s correspondence with Wright at the time. Bergdoll cited Mabel O. Wilson’s contribution to the “Unpacking the Archive” show, which featured a little-known Wright project, The Rosenwald School, “a progressive school for negro children” proposed for the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute of Virginia (now called Hampton University). Bergdoll pointed out that Wright adapted the court typology of other Rosenwald Schools to the warm southern climate by incorporating a sheltering loggia, and that his “teepee-like” central gathering space for the school harkened back to indigenous Native American architecture.



Wright’s unbuilt, climate-sensitive design for a Rosenwald School.

Bergdoll then spoke of MoMA curator Juliet Kinchin’s contribution to “Unpacking the Archives”—the “Little Farms Unit: Nature, Ecology and the Community”—which focused on Wright’s idea of “a pocket farm as a building block of settlement.” Wright would later incorporate the Little Farms Unit into his Broadacre City Plans of the 1930s. Bergdoll stated that we should not conflate Wright’s Broadacre concept with the suburban sprawl that followed World War II. Wright conceived something much different, a “rural urbanism” of “being within nature and working the land.” According to Bergdoll, the Raymonds and Wright both credited hard work, and farming in particular, with forging individual character. He referenced the Raymonds’ New Hope Experiment at the Raymond Farm in New Hope, Pa., and its parallels to Wright’s Taliesin Fellowship in Wisconsin, “where apprentices and staff would work the land and learn the practice of architecture and of life.”

Schindler and Wright

Judith Sheine’s presentation, “Schindler and Wright: The Second and First Space Architects,” shifted the focus to Wright’s revolutionary innovations of the first decade of the 20th century and how in its third decade, Rudolf Schindler expanded upon them. In his very first projects, the Kings Road House and Lovell Beach House, Schindler advanced an abstract formal spatial language he called “space-architecture.” Sheine pointed out that these buildings lacked ornament, reflecting Schindler’s understanding of (and agreement with) the theories of Adolf Loos, whom he knew from his studies in Vienna. Sheine then demonstrated that although Schindler rejected Wright’s use of ornament, he deeply respected Wright’s forming of space and use of natural light. In an unbuilt project, “Translucent House,” which Schindler designed for Aline Barnsdall (Frank Lloyd Wright’s Hollyhock House client), Sheine noted that their courtyard organization and battered walls are virtually the same. But, in Schindler’s version, Hollyhock House’s monumental ornamented brow is supplanted by a floating lantern-like form. Schindler would adapt another Loos concept, “the Raumplan”—interlocking, split-level volumetric rooms within a compact formal cube—and combine it with Wright’s concept of flowing internal and external space in his California hillside projects, the Wolfe House, the Oliver House, and the Manola Court Apartments.

Sheine then turned her attention to Schindler as builder. Schindler was often the contractor on his own projects. He was constantly seeking to reduce costs, first by experimenting with tilt-up concrete construction and later with reusable formwork, but eventually he abandoned concrete all together and shifted to a “light wood-frame system with a thin plaster skin.” In the 1936 How House, Schindler

went even further, reducing the external cladding to mere building paper pinned down by wood battens. Schindler developed and patented “the Schindler Frame” system, published in the May 1947 issue of Architectural Record. It was perfectly suited to the California climate, creating thin walls and roofs, and keeping costs low by leaving much of its construction exposed.

Although Wright denied ever being influenced by anyone, Sheine speculated that “inspiration” between Schindler and Wright went both ways. Schindler’s reductionist palette and experimental wood construction systems can be seen in Wright’s Usonian houses of the same period. Sheine concluded her talk reflecting on the legacy of Schindler, particularly in his use of space, natural light, cross ventilation, and rough-frame construction. In a series of images, Sheine concluded with an overview of Schindler’s lasting impact on the work of California architects, among them Raphael Soriano, FAIA, Charles Moore, Ray Kappe, FAIA, and the subsequent generation that included Frank Gehry, FAIA, Frank Israel, and Thom Mayne, FAIA.

Photos: Courtesy John DeFazio/CRAN



Clockwise from the top: Once a Wright apprentice, Schindler and his work (Lovell Beach House, Wolfe House, King’s Road House are shown) may have influenced the master himself.

Private Residence, Greater Boston Area
Architect & Designer: Adolfo Perez Architect
Photo: John Horner



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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 9

Neutra's Trickery

Barbara Lamprecht, author of “Neutra: The Complete Works,” opened her presentation, “How to Stretch Space: Richard Neutra’s Strategies for Trickery,” with August Schmarsow’s 1893 scold to architects, “Why do you wring your hands about which historicist styles to use? Do you not remember that architecture’s *raison d’être* is the body’s movement through space... [the body] is the ‘creatress’ of space.” She then postulated that, although there is no direct evidence that Neutra knew of Schmarsow’s challenge, Neutra may have been the first to embody it in his work.

Lamprecht discussed how Neutra was fascinated by the 1874 book “Principles of Physiological Psychology” by Wilhelm Wundt, which concerned sensory systems and the effects of environmental stimuli. A doctor’s son, Neutra held a deep interest in life sciences—in evolutionary biology, Gestalt psychology, and cognitive sciences. It would lead him to reject

Photo: Courtesy John DeFazio/CRAN



All of Wright’s acolytes adopted his goal of merging building and nature, demonstrated here in Neutra’s design for the Kaufmann house in Palm Springs. The client, Edgar Kaufmann, commissioned Wright’s Falling Water.

Cartesian dualism, the separation of mind and body, and to reject any notion of a “man vs. nature” dichotomy. To him, they are part of a single system. Lamprecht stated, “It led Neutra to recognize humans as both plastic and fixed, unique and generic, individual and universal.” Neutra was famous for his probing “client interrogations” that blended “the elements of architectural programming, a cross between a medical examination and a psychologic analysis.”

Lamprecht pointed out that Neutra’s interest in the landscape had preceded his coming to America, and that his first employer—the Swiss landscape architect/theorist Gustav Ammann—had sought to “merge man with nature.” Neutra’s first independent projects were works of landscape architecture—a forest cemetery in Luckenwalde, near Berlin, and, in

America, the landscape designs for Wright’s Barnsdall House, and Schindler’s Lovell Beach House and How House. Neutra’s 1930 trip to Japan only intensified his concept of merging of building with landscape.

All of these elements come together in what Lamprecht called “Neutra’s strategies for trickery—of making small spaces feel gracious and more expansive.” She referenced Neutra’s 1937 Miller House in Palm Springs, Calif., as an example of using foreshortened spatial functions and tectonic framing devices that “borrow” the natural landscape, making the modest 1,164-square-foot house seem as vast as the Palm Springs desert beyond. According to Lamprecht, one needs to understand Neutra’s use of the distant horizon line. Although it may have its origins in Wright’s notion of the horizontality of the Midwestern prairie, for Neutra, it’s more primal. It goes back to our emergence from the forest into the expanse of the African savanna. Yet, there doesn’t need to be a distant desert or plain, “it is distance itself that creates the serenity.”

Lamprecht shared an image of Neutra’s “spider leg” post-and-beam design in his 1966 Ebelin Bucerius House in Navegna, Switzerland, and showed how it framed the distant ridgeline of the Alps, seemingly bringing it closer and making it part of the experience of the house itself. Lamprecht emphasized that such “trickery” is not to be thought of as a “fake” experience. “To Neutra, this is how we are hard-wired, both physically and psychologically. These spatial devices create a very real sense of the body in space, and the occupants feel fully present in the landscape.”

The Raymonds and the Place of Personality

William Whitaker’s closing presentation, “In this Room: The Raymonds and the Place of Personality,” brought the symposium literally home. Whitaker spoke briefly of the Raymonds’ relationship to Wright as they were assisting in the completion of the Imperial Hotel, citing Noémi’s peacock mural drawing, prominently displayed at the Oshima-curated room at MoMA’s *Wright at 150* exhibit. Whitaker emphasized Noémi’s encouraging Antonin to make a clean break from Wright’s “rigid style” as they were planning their Reinanzaka House. They had started design shortly after they had lost their Japanese-style home in the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923—the same quake that made the Imperial Hotel famous for its survival. Set on the high hill known as the Reinanzaka, in the Shinagawa ward of Tokyo, the new house was not only to be their home/studio, but a showcase for their forward design thinking and Antonin’s expertise in earthquake-resilient and fireproof concrete construction. However, Whitaker noted that the house also showed distinctly Japanese features—placement directly on the edge of the street, a compact garden court, and, rather than

dedicated rooms in the Western style, a single large, open flex-space easily modified with movable folding screens. In this, their very first independent work, the Raymonds were integrating culture, region, climate, and seismic building conditions, while building in a totally modern abstract idiom.

Whitaker highlighted the success of the Raymonds in this pre-World War II period—building schools, churches, factories, office buildings, banks, clubs, and residences, as well as a parade of embassies and diplomatic buildings. He went in depth on the 1927-28 Italian Embassy Villa at Lake Chuzenji—an early synthesis between Western (and somewhat Wrightian) modernism and Japanese vernacular building traditions. Whitaker explained the Raymonds’ use of salvaged bark from trees for the building’s timber framing and exterior sheathing, applied in a folk checkered pattern. Whitaker then

Photo: Courtesy John DeFazio/CRAN



The Raymonds’ first independent work was their Reinanzaka house and studio in Tokyo, blending Western and Eastern influences in earthquake-resistant design.

contrasted the embassy to the Raymonds’ 1930–33 concrete Akaboshi Kisuke House in Tokyo. Although it was thoroughly International Style and could easily have been built in Switzerland or France at the time, Whitaker pointed to the house’s tatami mat floors and reminded us that tatami is a Japanese system of proportion called “ken” and very different from Western module systems. He also noted that Noémi’s bent tubular steel chairs were designed so that they can easily glide without damaging the tatami mats.

At this point, Whitaker credited the Raymonds with mentoring many young Japanese architects, among them Kunio Maekawa, Junzo Sakakura, and, most notably, Junzo Yoshimura, who helped the Raymonds deepen their understanding of the subtleties and philosophical dimension of traditional Japanese architecture. The 1931 Weekend Cot-

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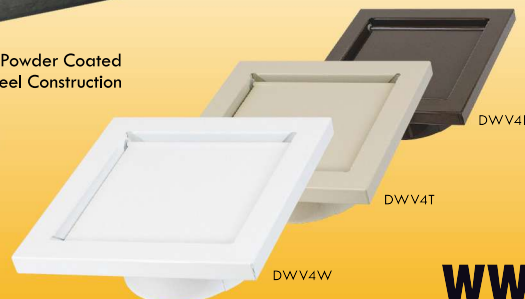
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For their summer studio, Karuizawa, the Raymonds used local materials and traditions to integrate the house in the landscape and climate—a truly regional approach to building.

tage of Shiro Akaboshi in Fujisawa demonstrates the strong influence of Yoshimura on the development of the Raymonds' fusion of East and West, modern and traditional.

Whitaker then posed the question, “What is regionalism anyway?” He spoke about the Raymonds' own Karuizawa Summer Studio in Japan's Nagano Prefecture, which was inspired by the Errázuriz House, an unrealized project Le Corbusier designed for the coastal resort of Zapallar, Chile. Whitaker, first forgiving the Raymonds' “borrowing” of the Errázuriz' butterfly roof and Corbusien internal ramp, then dug deeper, identifying the differences between the buildings. The Errázuriz House was to be bearing-wall masonry; the Karuizawa Summer Studio is timber frame with wood sheathing—well-suited to the climate. The Errázuriz House was to be set upon the ground; the studio is elevated on a concrete plinth. The Errázuriz House was to have a tile roof, and had no solar protection systems; the studio uses thatch over the metal roofing to keep it cool and traditional roll-down screens called “sudare,” to protect its glass from summer sun. Whitaker noted that Noémi furnished the studio with rustic chairs derived from saplings of the same local species of trees used for the structural timbers. This is regionalism.

Whitaker then spoke of the Raymonds' tour de force, the 1936-45 Golconde, or dormitory, for the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, India. It's considered the first modern work of architecture in India, and a young George Nakashima was the project architect. Simple in concept and finely executed in detail, the Golconde features glassless apertures protected from the sun by adjustable concrete louvers. Sri Aurobindo Ashram is the first Brutalist work of architecture to be found anywhere, preceding Le Corbusier's own Béton Brut projects by nearly two decades, and is an exemplary work of “critical regionalism” some 50 years before the term was even coined.

Whitaker then invited us to consider the room in which we sat—the main room of the Raymond Farmhouse. In 1937, with war looming in Japan and Europe, the Raymonds returned to New York. In 1939, on an 18th-century Quaker farm in Bucks County, Pa., they created a summer studio/home, similar to their studio in Karuizawa. They carefully modified the farmhouse, removing a warren of walls and creating a single unified flex space similar to their 1924 studio home in Reinanzaka. The detailing throughout reflected the Raymonds' modernist-craft fusion, used first in their country houses in Japan but now juxtaposed to the 18th-century colonial details the Raymonds chose to retain. The double-hung windows, six-panel doors, stairs and banisters, and fireplaces, remain side-by-side with modern sliding glass doors and windows, and shoji screens and fusuma panels. All is visually held together by natural finishes on the newly added materials and by original casework that was stripped to a natural finish. The Raymonds removed the 19th-century, one-story wood-frame kitchen to the south and, cutting a two-and-a-half-story swath through stone wall, created a three-story bank of windows and sliding doors to flood the interior with natural light and open the view out to the farm ponds and meadow beyond. To the east, the Raymonds tore down an earlier two-story addition and replaced it with a modern farm kitchen, mud-room, and laundry on the main level and two bedrooms on the second. Noémi designed built-in cabinetry throughout.

Whitaker then shifted the focus to the quality of the room itself, and how it embodied the Raymonds' lives and philosophy of “honest, natural, simple, economical, direct” and



For their house in Bucks County, Pa., the Raymonds significantly altered the original 19th-century dwelling to engage the landscape.

of the eclectic layering of time: “Noémi’s modern furniture and textile patterns next to the 19th-century antiques from her family home in upstate New York or those [they] found in Bucks County, or on their travels through China, India, Mexico, interspersed with their own artwork and that of friends and master craftsmen.”

Whitaker ended his presentation with an image of Antonin and Noémi sharing a meal on the terrace of the Kôgai-chô Studio they built for themselves in Nishi-Azabu district of Tokyo, shortly after their return to Japan in 1949. There, they reestablished their offices, successfully taking on more than 250 projects in the post-war years. Each summer they would return to the Raymond Farm to be with family. In the 1970s, they would retire there, their work and partnership having spanned more than 62 years.

The Group Discussion

I moderated the discussion that followed, starting with the observation that Schindler, Neutra, and the Raymonds all embraced the European avant-garde’s advancement toward pure abstraction, while Wright, as evidenced by his Imperial Hotel, Hollyhock House, and Textile-Block Houses of the same time, seemed to be doubling down on the idea of an architecture of “integrated ornament.”

Then I posed the question to the panel, “Just what set these European-born American architects and designers apart from their contemporaries?” Bergdoll, Sheine, Whitaker, and Lamprecht agreed that these architects were very aware of the avant-garde work on the Continent—in fact, their ambition and belief in the movement compelled them to innovate to stay ahead—but working with Wright and experiencing his work first-hand had set them on a different path. While these architects banished all ornament from their work, they advanced the abstract form/space that was Wright’s great innovation. What also remained was Wright’s near-spiritual understanding of nature, landscape, and dwelling within it.

Sheine and Lamprecht credited the mild California climate, dramatic terrain, and bohemian lifestyle for freeing Schindler and Neutra to experiment with spatial and psychological relationships more radically than Wright was capable of at the time. Wright would leap ahead in his seminal works in the 1930s, ’40s, and into the ’50s, but in many ways he was building upon lessons learned from his two West Coast protégés. I then pointed out that the Raymonds understood that the Japanese already had a profound relationship with nature. For the Raymonds, modern architecture was a means of returning to nature and turning away from the corrupting Western colonial architecture that invaded Japan in the second half of the 19th century.



Photo: Courtesy Stuart Narofsky, AIA/CRAN

“After Wright” symposium speakers in group discussion at the Raymond Farm Center in New Hope, Pa.

These architects were responding to the particular places and cultures where they were building. Their work was specific to their sites and climates—it was regional, not universal. Schindler, Neutra, and the Raymonds saw modern architecture not as a zeitgeist of a new technological society—as many of their European contemporaries theorized—but as part of human expression, one that places us fully in the world. All these factors combined as they searched for and created their own responsive modern architecture, and contributed to what would become known in the ’40s and ’50s as Regionalism, in the 1980s and ’90s as Critical Regionalism, and the Sustainability movement we see in global architecture today.

John DeFazio, AIA, is an architect and planner, and director of the Raymond Farm Center for Living Arts & Design. He teaches at Drexel University in Philadelphia and at New York Institute of Technology in New York City. “After Wright: Pathfinders of Regionalism” was organized and hosted by the Raymond Farm Center, co-organized with the AIA New York Cultural Facilities Committee, and assisted by the Center for Architecture + Design of Philadelphia. It was sponsored by AIA CRAN. The Raymond Farm Center for Living Arts & Design is a non-profit based in New Hope, Pa., at the former studio/home of the designer-architects Noémi and Antonin Raymond. In addition to our mission of preserving and revitalizing the historic structures that make up the Raymond Farm, the Raymond Farm Center is a forum in art, architecture, design, and culture, and an artist-in-residency, serving the Bucks County community and the greater Philadelphia/New York region.



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2



3

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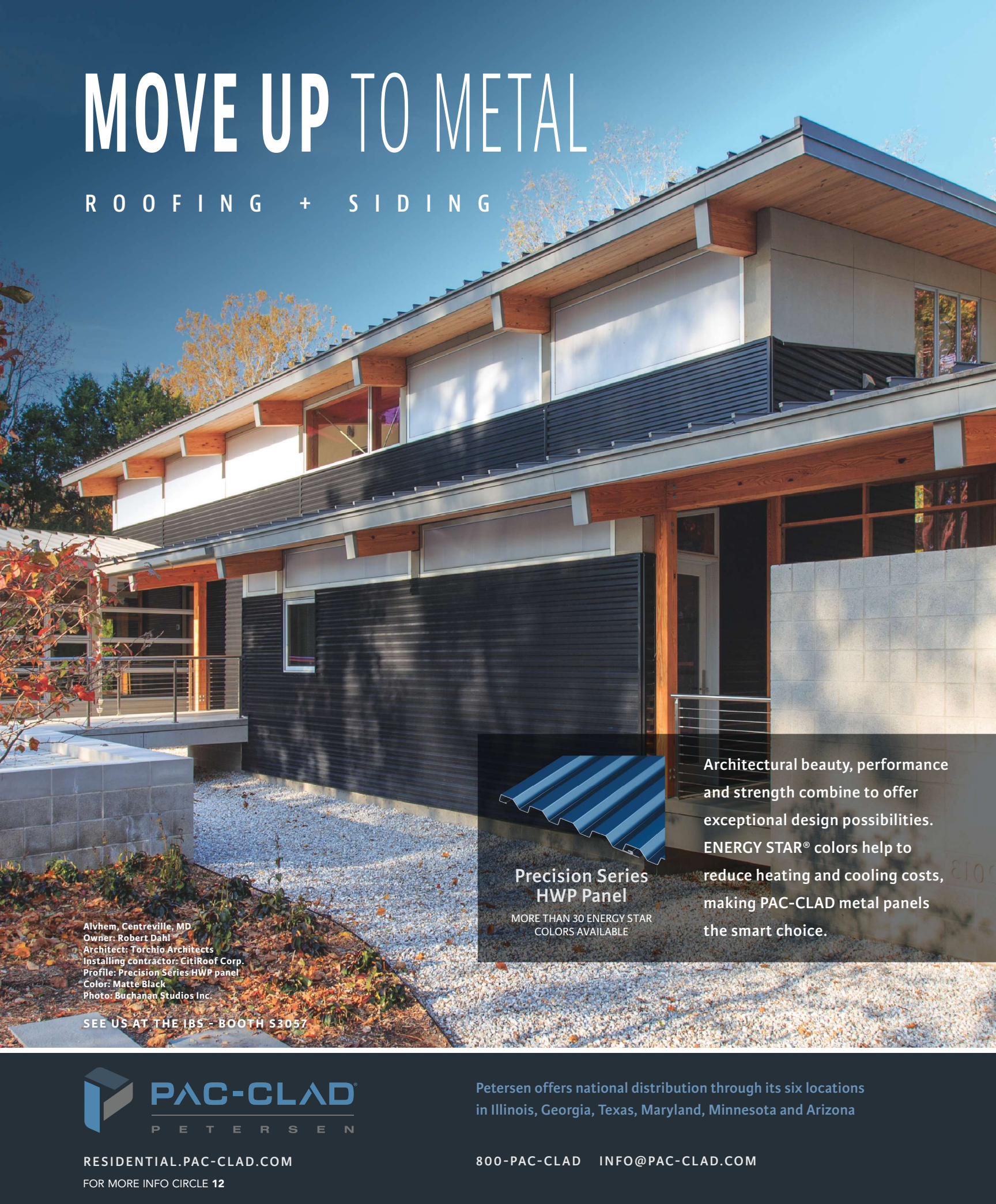
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4. COOL SCHOOL

Sherwin-Williams goes cool with its color of the year pick. Oceanside is “a fusion of rich blue with jewel-tone green.” Can ‘80s teal be far behind? Sherwin-williams.com
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5



6

5. TALL ORDER

Weather Shield has upgraded the sills for its bi-fold doors, in both the contemporary and premium lines. Openings up to 24 feet wide and 10 feet high are supported. Weathershield.com
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6. SAIL AWAY

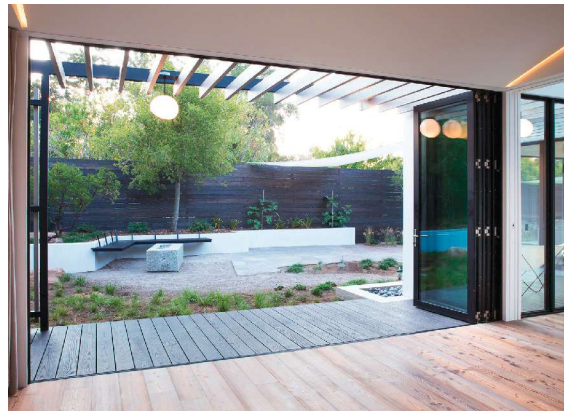
Trivento evokes the “classic bateau bathtub” with modern vessel flare. It’s 65 inches long and made of Victoria + Albert’s Englishcast material. Vandabaths.com
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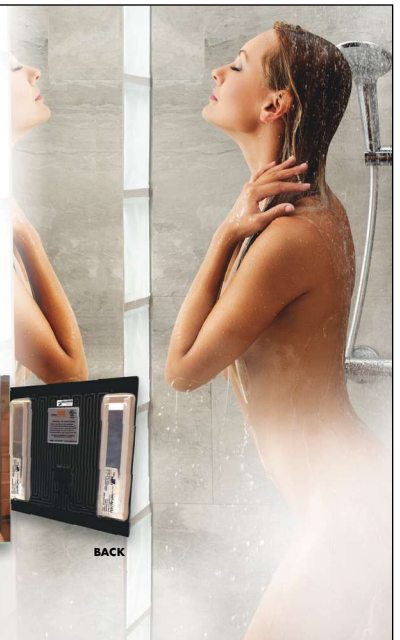
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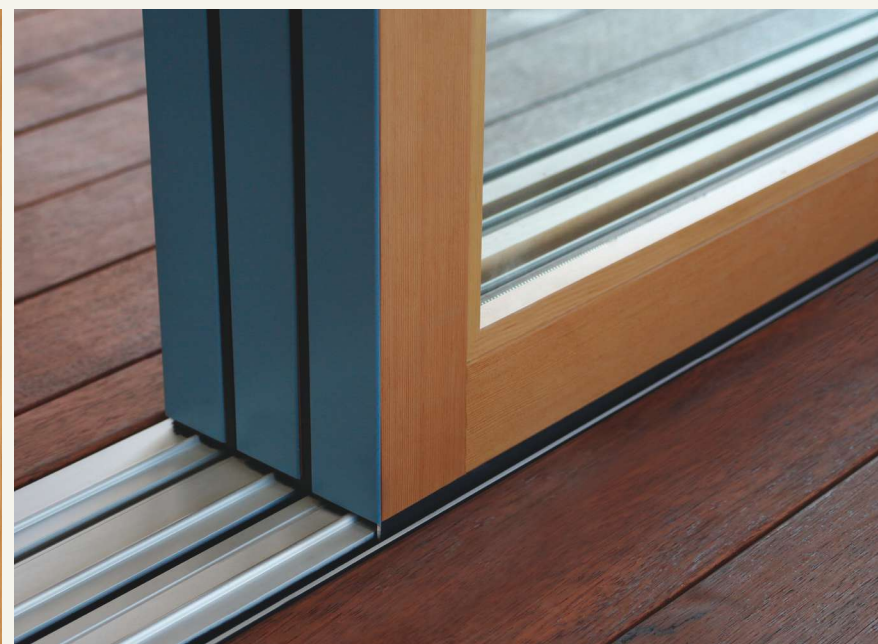
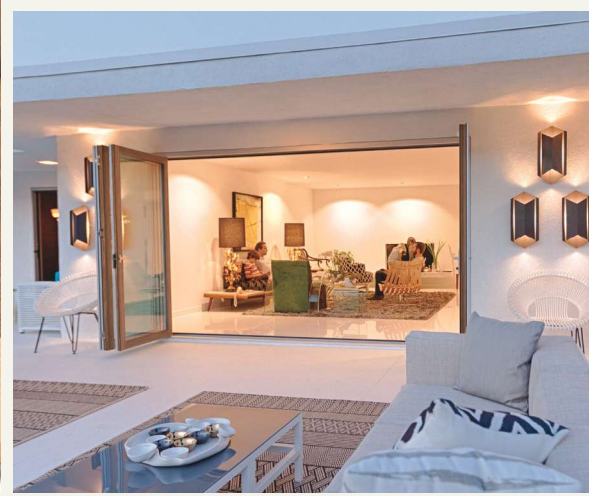
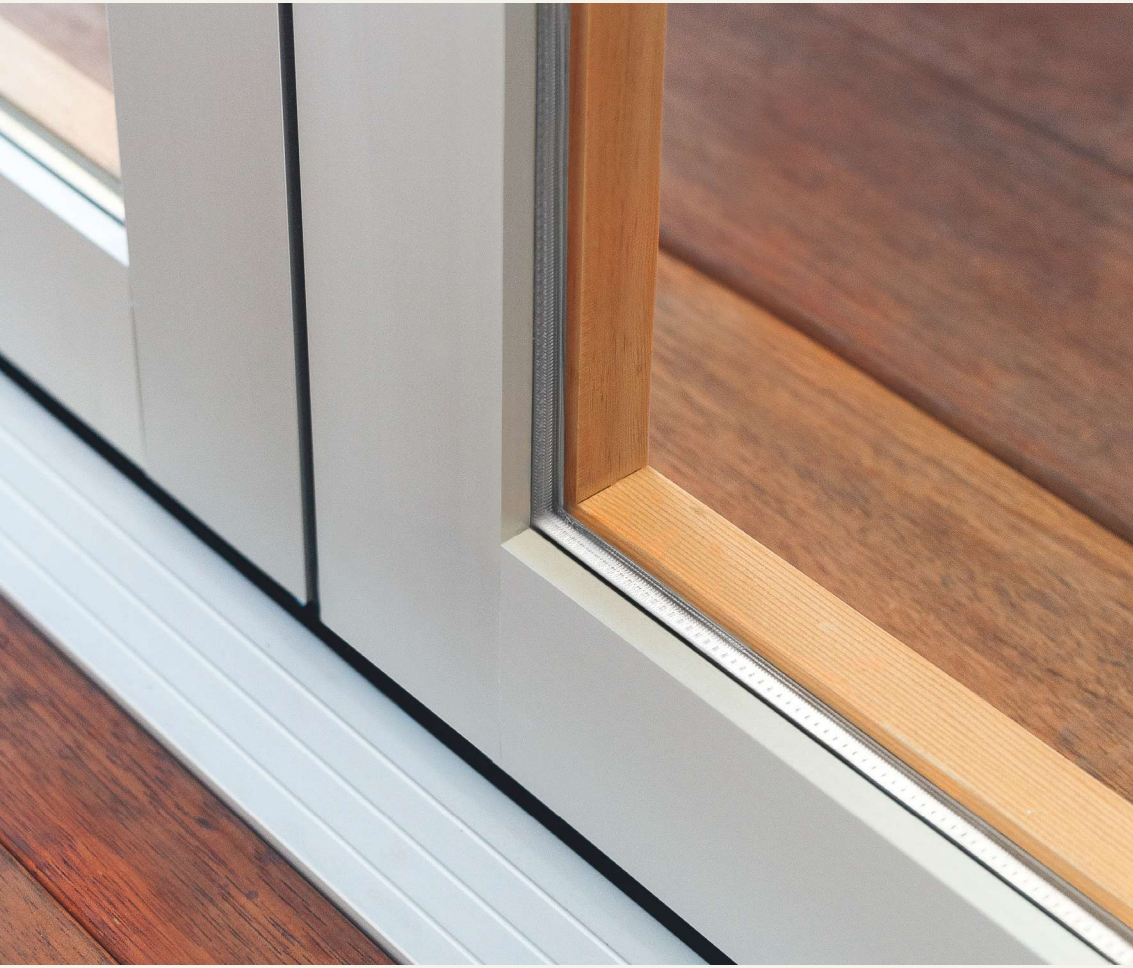
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