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# RD

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN



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On the Cover: The Morgan Phoa Library and Residence by SPF:a and William Kent Development.  
Photo: Roland Halbe

# RD

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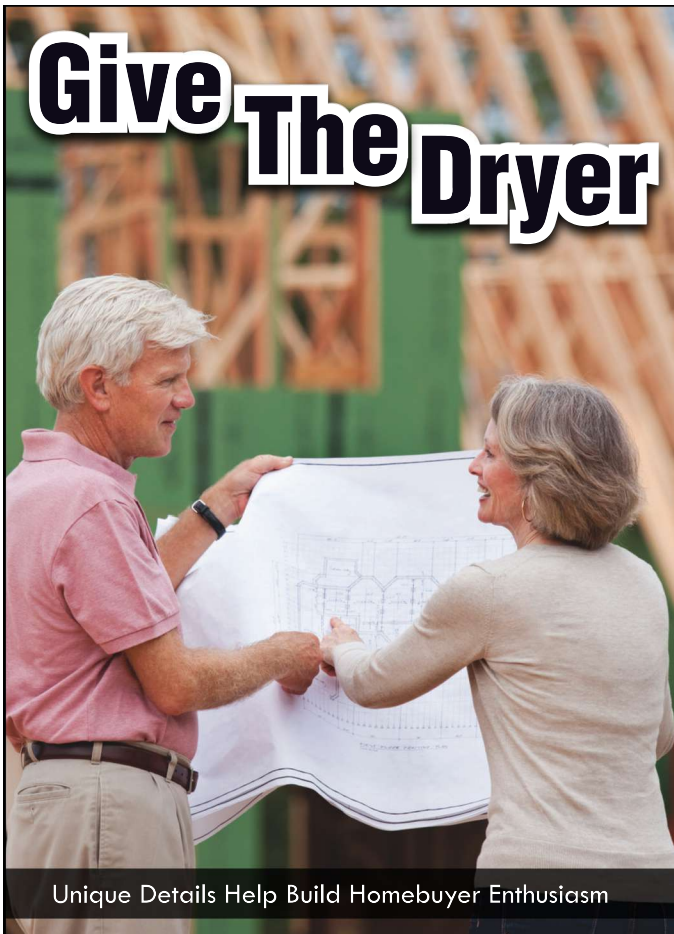
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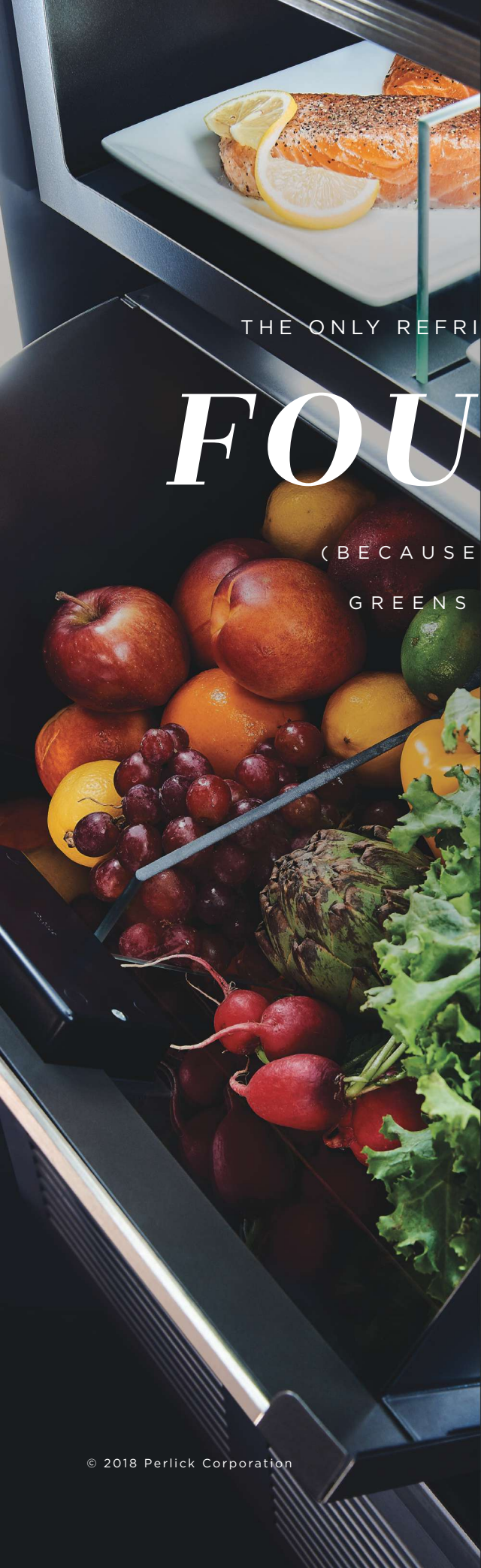
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## Saving Graces



As our existing housing stock ages, our definition of what constitutes a historic house expands. We haven't quite embraced the '70s and '80s eras yet, but the decades of '50s and '60s are solidly in their golden years. That's a blessing and a curse.

The Mad Men swagger of these houses makes them both dashing and dangerous. They ignite our fantasies of brass cocktail caddies swinging Manhattans and martinis, but they are destined to disappoint us with the rot that lies at their core.

Earlier houses were often built from old growth and handhewn materials, which yield generous returns when rehabilitated. They also withstand more readily the common problems of moisture and deferred maintenance, protected, as they were, by traditional detailing. Our '50s and '60s modern houses were not so fortunate in their construction materials and methods, and they were more ambitious in their design than building science of the day could support.

Bringing them back to life is not a facelift, it's major surgery. The more layers you peel away, the more horrors you're apt to discover. None of the deep fixes these houses require will be considered "fun" money by your clients, such as proper moisture barriers and insulation.

It almost doesn't seem worth renovating these houses, when you could build a better house for only a bit more money in some markets. Still, they win clients' hearts and overtake their minds, just like a handsome but flawed love interest. Everyone thinks they hold the magic formula to reform them.

And maybe, at this point, we really do. In this issue, our Design Lab feature looks at renovations of notable houses from the '20s through the '60s. They are all dazzling in their own ways, but one house in particular stands as a testament to what today's materials and methods can do for a sexy, but troublesome, midcentury modern house by the ocean.

The Hamptons house was designed by modernist Abraham Geller in the early 1960s, and remained in the hands of its original owner until she gave it up at age 96. It was placed on the market and left to the fates as a "tear down or remodel" property. The fates were kind in this case, and the house found sympathetic, angel buyers who wanted to renovate.

With Stuart Disston, AIA, of Austin Disston Patterson, at the helm, new manmade cladding materials replaced rotting wood, new drainage systems better support the daring, double-diamond roof design, and advanced window systems optimized the ocean views. In all ways, the house is transformed and transfixing.

Given its pedigree and poise, this house deserved its happy ending. So, too, did the more solidly built houses by Ulrich Franzen and Wallace Neff we feature in this issue. Apparently, there's no resisting the charms of dashing, dangerous, architect-designed houses. I think I'll call that a blessing.

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

S. Claire Conroy  
Editor-in-Chief  
claire@SOLAbands.com



# Question Conventional Boundaries



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Residence, Burr Ridge, IL Architect: Michael Buss Architects, Ltd. Installing contractor: Complete Flashings Builder: McNaughton Brothers  
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## Distinctive Design

"We wanted something unique to us. We liked the idea of a distinctive roof. And the longevity and low maintenance aspect of metal was important, too."

-Owner, Residence, Burr Ridge, IL

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 6

# The Workaround

JON ANDERSON ARCHITECTURE  
ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.

Photos: Kirk Gittings Photography



*This page:* After 40 years of living on the same downtown Albuquerque block, architect Jon Anderson finally designed and built his own house there—but it was subject to stringent design review standards that required stylistic harmony with neighboring structures.

**Jon Anderson, FAIA, of Jon Anderson Architecture**, has lived and worked on the same block in Albuquerque, N.M., for 42 years. A smart buy in 1975, while he was at his first job out of architecture school, got him a half acre and several old houses near the city’s downtown. He raised his family in one of the homes and rented several others out. After he left a 12-year gig with Antoine Predock’s firm in 1991, he took over one of the rentals and opened his own office. Jon’s 15-person practice handles a mix of residential and commercial work, with K-12 school projects now a strong revenue stream for the office. With his children grown and launched in their own careers, Jon finally got around to designing his own modern dream house with his wife, Laura. He already had permission to tear down one of his rental houses and went about securing approval of his design from the Landmarks Commission, which has jurisdiction over the neighborhood. Then he hit a few snags.

His concept, with its decidedly modern exterior, was rejected by the commission. It pressed for something more in keeping with the prevailing bungalow style of neighboring houses. It was a disappointment, for sure, but given his deep roots and financial commitment to the area, Jon couldn’t abandon the effort. So he went back to the drawing board and designed a different house, one with a bungalow-friendly exterior and some surprising, satisfying twists.

**RD: You’re a modern architect and wanted to build a modern house. How did your plans blow up?**

**JA:** There are two big requirements for new buildings in my neighborhood: A new house has to be of appropriate scale to surrounding buildings; and patterning of windows and doors has to be compatible with others in the area. So I did a modern house with stucco, burnished block, and metal fascias.



*This page:* Jon and his wife, Laura, love music and entertaining friends, so the house devotes most of its square footage to those purposes.

When I first submitted it to the Landmarks Commission, they seemed to really love it. I went back several times and we made some changes. Then it came time for the six commissioners to vote on it. Only one commissioner voted yes—the one architect on the panel—and all the others voted no. I was pretty shocked because one of the things the guidelines stressed was they didn't want to replicate historic styles.

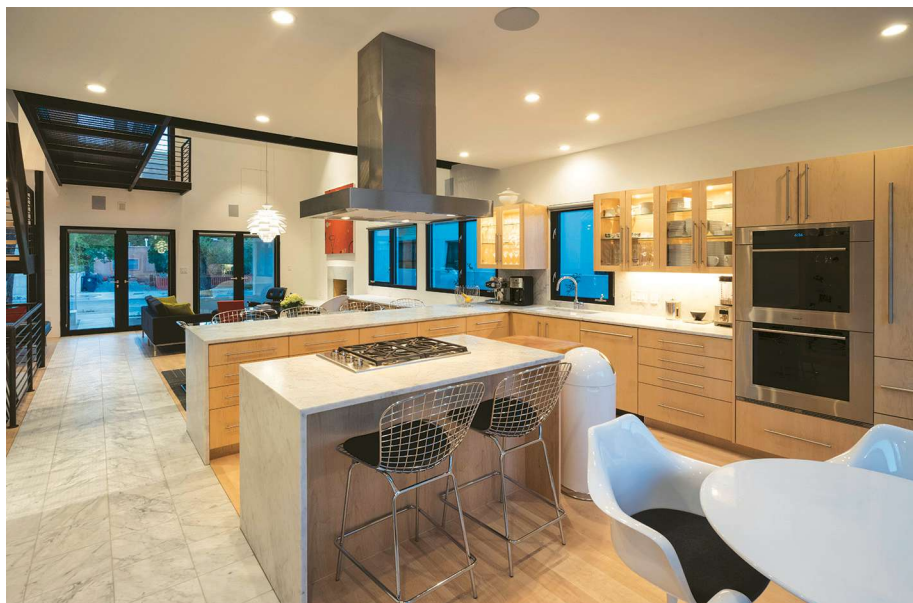
So I took it to the city council, which was a huge deal to do. But they refused to hear it, and said they would abide by the decision of the commission.

I let the whole thing sit for two years. Then I decided to bend my principles and do a house I knew would get approved.

**Tell us about the goals of the new design.**

JA: We set out to downsize, but we ended up with about the same size house. The new house occupies a footprint of about 1,000 square feet. My wife plays the piano, so we needed a music room for her 7-foot grand piano. We also love to listen to music and have a high-tech stereo inside the cabinets in that room. There are six sets of hardwired speakers, four in the house and two outside. We play LPs and stream music.





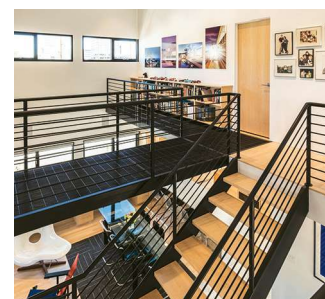
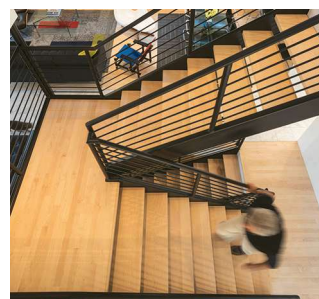
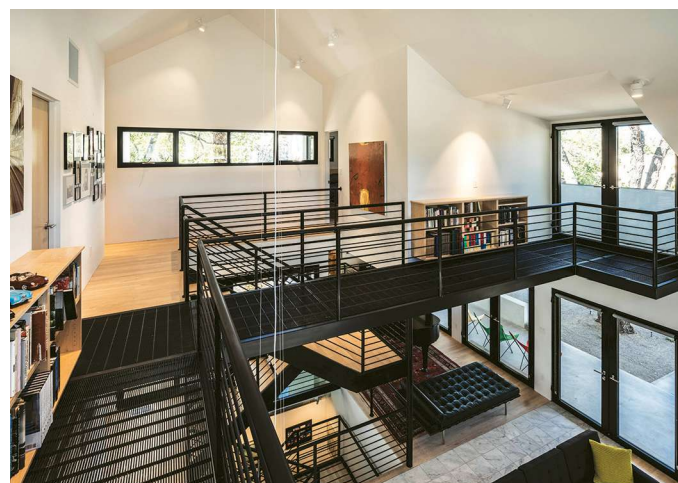
This page: Jon and his wife love the look of Carrara marble, so their builder, Paul Kenderdine, installed waterfall slabs in the kitchen and matched them with honed 12x12 floor tiles for a “stripe down the middle” of the house. The centerpiece of the building is the steel open stair, which was site-built and field-welded into place.

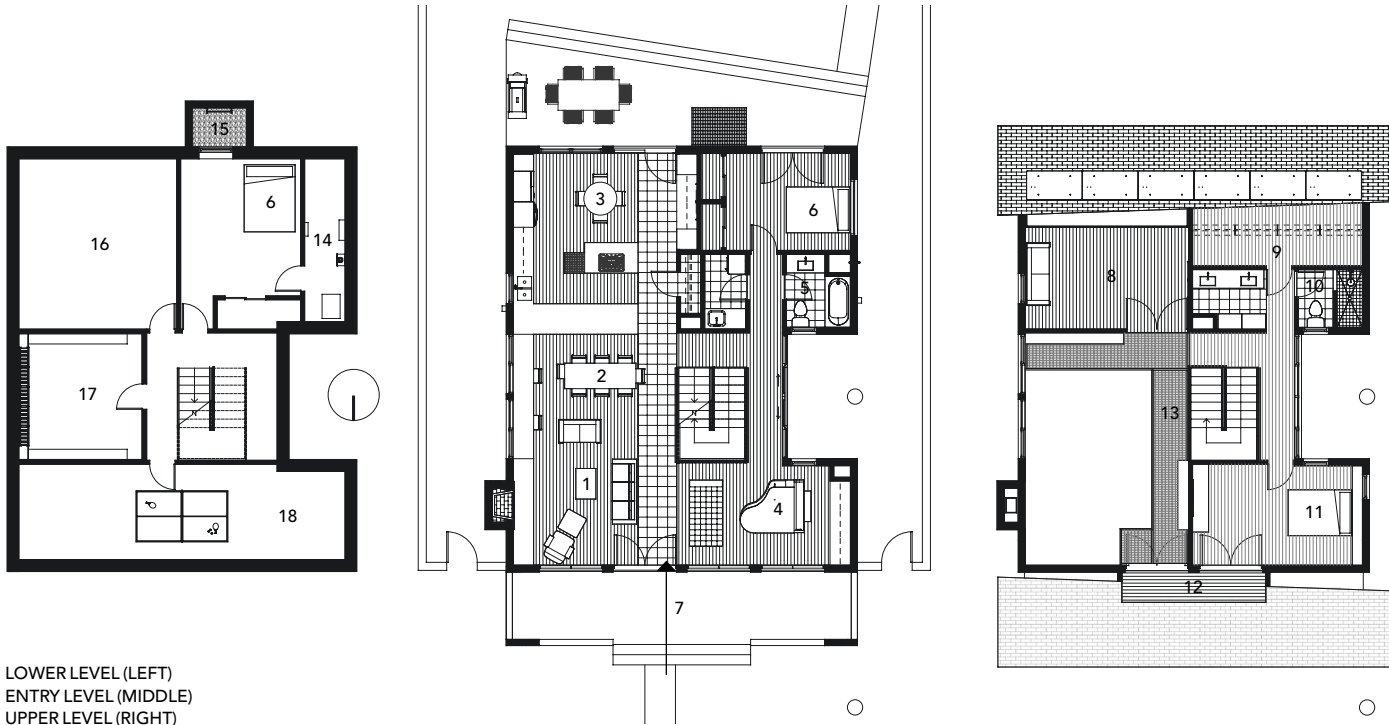
On the top floor, we have a 600-square-foot master suite and a media room. The first floor and lower level have bedrooms for when the kids come to stay. My son lives in Vancouver, Canada, so when he visits it’s usually a longer stay.

The entertaining spaces are much bigger than our old house and are what we emphasized in the design. We wanted a great open kitchen, because when we have guests over or the kids are in town, we cook. Guests can sit and have a glass of wine or chop vegetables, if they want. It’s a perfect setup for that kind of entertaining. We have several workspaces, an eat-in bar, and a casual dining area. It’s funny, at one time I thought I would be sitting at the bar most of the time, but I usually end up sitting at the table.

The other critical aspect of the design was that we wanted it as energy efficient as possible. We’re going for LEED Platinum. We hired a consultant, but it’s still a ton of work. Once we’ve gotten that platinum certification, we’ll go for Net Zero.

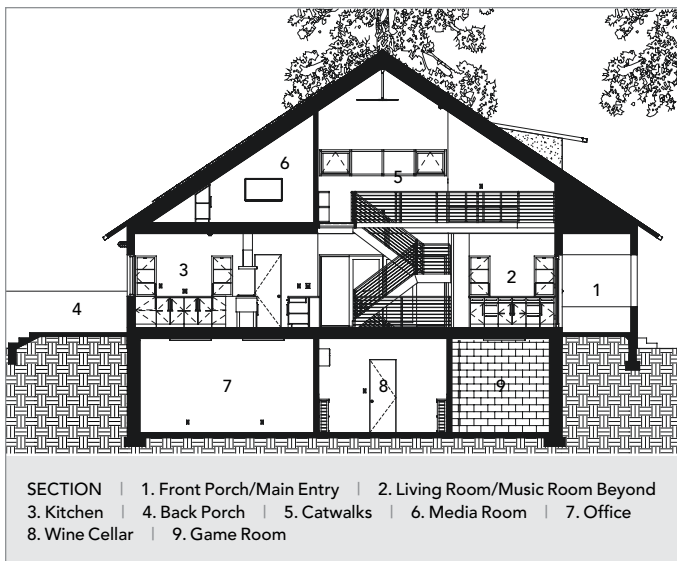
We have a solar array on the roof, and the year before I installed the array our power company stopped paying for excess power. But we can run the whole house with it—the heating, air conditioning, appliances, lighting—and we power the guest house and garage. I even have a Tesla that I can charge with it in the garage. We do have gas cooking and a gas water heater, but I think I can make up for those with the excess power.





LOWER LEVEL (LEFT)  
ENTRY LEVEL (MIDDLE)  
UPPER LEVEL (RIGHT)

1. Living Room | 2. Dining Room | 3. Kitchen | 4. Music Room | 5. Bathroom | 6. Guest Bedroom | 7. Main Entry | 8. Media Room  
9. Closet | 10. Master Bathroom | 11. Master Bedroom | 12. Balcony | 13. Catwalk | 14. Services | 15. Egress Ladder | 16. Office  
17. Wine Cellar | 18. Game Room



SECTION | 1. Front Porch/Main Entry | 2. Living Room/Music Room Beyond  
3. Kitchen | 4. Back Porch | 5. Catwalks | 6. Media Room | 7. Office  
8. Wine Cellar | 9. Game Room

One of the most dramatic design elements is the steel stair. How does it fit into the overall design and how was it built?

JA: I built the garage behind what was the rental house 25 years ago. It's a three-car garage with guest quarters above. I built it myself. It's real, traditional 24-gauge corrugated steel with a crystalline texture. It used to be shiny and now it's a nice warm gray.

I would have loved to do corrugated steel for the new house. But the commission would not let me do that. They wouldn't even let me do a corrugated roof.

So we did a steel stair inside the house. I wanted a high ceiling in the main area—the interior is open to the 27-foot-high ridge. The steel stair rises from the basement to the upper-level master. Its structure preserves the openness of the space and allows light to pass through. There's also a section of glass floor for light transmission into the basement.

The stair was custom built by a steel fabricator—a father-son operation. They've done a ton of work for us over the years. They fabricated the stringers in their shop and then site-built everything else. We didn't want any bolted connections, so they jiggered it up and field-welded the pieces in place.

The treads are 2-inch-thick maple with recessed clip angles. The stringers are steel tube. The treads do not deflect. The stair does not move; it doesn't even vibrate. Although, I have to admit the cats were a bit leery of it at first.



*This page:* The new house wraps around a majestic tree, and incorporates a garage building Jon built 25 years ago to create a courtyard. Preserving the tree drove the floor planning and overall design of the house.

Although the exterior design is instantly recognizable as a bungalow, when you look closely, the detailing is quite modern. Can you explain how you played with the form?

JA: The exterior is a traditional, three-coat cementitious stucco—not synthetic; it’s the real thing. The color coat is manufactured here in town. It has a float finish that’s sponged to float the aggregate out to the top. It’s a finish that can express the sharp edges of the architecture.

We had wanted a lot of big windows and glass on the exterior, but the commission wouldn’t let us do big windows. So I found very big terrace doors that were designed for high-rises and used them instead on the front porch. The porch is on the north side, so we didn’t need the deep overhang for sun protection, but it’s lovely to sit out here even in a light rain.

The doors do have manual, chain-drive roller shades for privacy, and other windows are shaded as well. Remotes can be added to them later, if we want. The shades for the large 12-foot sliding glass door on the west side, though, operate on a remote.


That’s the side where you see the pitched roof cleave to allow a tree to pass through?

JA: Yes. That tree is 90 feet tall, 80 to 90 years old, and 18 inches in diameter. We carefully demoed the old house around it. And then we basically notched the new house to go around the tree, and laid out the plan around that concept. It made sense to get a lot of glass around the west face of the notch. The electronic shades for the glass filter about 20 percent of the heat gain.

The roof is essentially a cold roof. One of the issues of doing the composition shingle roof is they won’t let you install it over insulation. So it’s insulated with 2 inches of urethane foam sprayed in, then there’s a plastic membrane vapor barrier. There’s a second roof built with 2-by-4s, and that’s sheeted and shingled. Air moves through and out the ridge vent. It’s cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

You’ve lived in the neighborhood for more than 40 years. Why did it take you so long to build your own house?

JA: I was always so busy. We started the firm doing residential work; now we’re doing about \$100 million in public school work. It’s the public school work that’s allowed me to build a house and buy a Tesla.

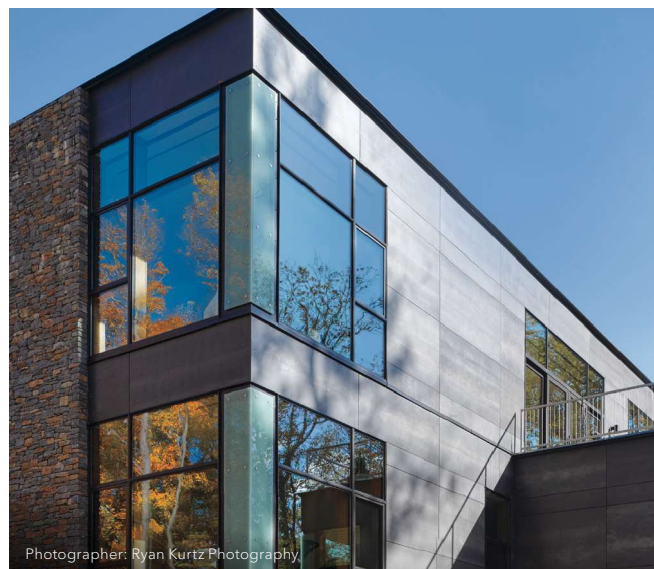
But, you know, we live close to downtown, close to concert venues and restaurants, and I commute 65 feet to work—if I could get away with it, I’d love not to drive at all. 



# Beyond the Glass

HOW PELLA ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES HELPED CREATE A MODERN MASTERPIECE.

River Birch House | Jose Garcia Design | Cincinnati, OH



Aiming to create a strikingly modern residence with narrow sightlines, expansive glass and natural materials, Jose Garcia Design turned to the Pella Architectural Support Services team. From preliminary drawings to installation advisory, Pella worked with the acclaimed firm and contractor to deliver solutions that met challenging design requirements – and created one of Cincinnati’s most innovative structures.



JARON VOS  
Manager, Architectural Services

## AT THE DRAWING BOARD

Pella’s experts started by drawing up plans for Garcia’s extra-large window combinations. Using design parameters provided by structural engineers, the team developed several conventional mullion-reinforcing options that would withstand wind loads at spans greater than 14 feet.

“Conventional reinforcing options are too wide for a project like this, so the width of the mullions was very important,” said Jaron Vos, manager of Architectural Services at Pella. “So we designed a one-inch custom extrusion that was deeper than the frame but could hold a narrow width.”

## A NEW USE FOR TRUCK BED LINER

A span this long required a unique solution. To obtain the right structural capacity, the depth of the aluminum extrusion needed to extend beyond the window frames and into the interior. This design presented the potential for condensation. And though the extrusion would be insulated by wood trim, the team wanted to be sure that condensation would not be an issue.

After utilizing thermal modeling and conductance testing, Pella’s architectural engineers concluded that a coat of truck bed liner applied to the extrusion would solve the issue.

“It has durability and low thermal conductivity. Plus, it’s thin enough to not interfere with the trim,” Vos said. “Once the interior trim was installed, the condensation concern was alleviated.”

## SMART INSTALLATION PRACTICES

Because large combinations and custom extrusions were new to the installer, a field services specialist from Pella Architectural Support Services worked on-site to advise on the installation procedures.

“With specialized engineering, drafting, testing and field services, we can say ‘yes’ to an architect’s vision, help contractors make those visions reality, and provide customers the looks and performance they want,” Vos explained.

### ARCHITECTURAL EXPERTISE FROM BEGINNING TO END

Design and performance analysis

**Thermal analysis**

**Custom extrusion design**

**Preliminary design drawings**

Custom product design

**Installation shop drawings**

**Field services and on-site training**





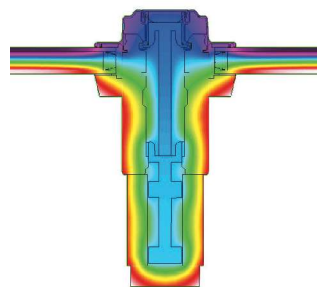
Photographer: Ryan Kurtz Photography

## We owe this project to one thing – truck bed liner.



When Jose Garcia Design needed a custom aluminum extrusion for their contemporary masterpiece, we were game. But Pella's thermal and performance analyses determined that condensation might be a problem. So the Pella Architectural Support Services team got creative, recommending a coating of truck bed liner to deliver a building envelope that exceeded performance requirements – and helped our client achieve their most ambitious goals.

FROM CONCEPT THROUGH COMPLETION.



Thermal model represented is specific to this project.

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Photo: David Papazian



## The Mod Squad

GIULIETTI | SCHOUTEN ARCHITECTS  
PORTLAND, ORE.

When you think about Pacific Northwest Architecture, it's the work of firms like Giulietti | Schouten Architects in Portland, Ore., that come to mind. Their 30-year practice has solidified their place in the residential fabric of the city and its surroundings, as demonstrated by their dominance in local awards programs and shelter magazine coverage. They are exemplary at what they do, but they are also emblematic of residential firms across the United States. From time to time, they'll design a no-holds-barred coastal home, but

their bread-and-butter commissions are houses for typical urban professionals.

Dave Giulietti, AIA, launched the firm in 1987 and spearheaded its dedication to residential work—new houses, remodels, and condo build-outs. Tim Schouten, AIA, joined in 1993 and was elevated to partner in 2001. Despite some ups and downs in the economy, the firm has remained admirably stable, maintaining a staff of 6-10 people along the way. “We did not feel the slowdown until about 2010,” Tim recalls. “And fortunately, we had



Photo: David Papazian



Portraits: Sally Painter

This page: Cliff House reuses the site of a former ranch house. Linked to an upper driveway by a bridge, the house pushes out to views of the Columbia River Gorge and Mount Hood. Above, left to right: Partners Dave Giulietti and Tim Schouten.



a number of projects underway that carried us through.”

Nowadays, the firm is going gangbusters, and has developed a bit of a specialty in resuscitating the area’s midcentury houses into stylish, high-functioning dwellings. “The market has been very good for us, particularly in the last three years,” says Dave. “Each year has been our best year ever, and each year has beat the previous year. I don’t see it slowing down, but as a business owner, I’m always worried about it.”

Having survived slowdowns, however mild, has taught the firm the importance of keeping remodeling jobs in the mix of work—even smaller ones that some architects might spurn, especially when busy. “As long as we can give good design, we don’t mind doing smaller projects. We will still do a kitchen remodel or a bathroom,” says Dave. “There are always remodels, it seems. Even when the economy slows, we always tend to have work.”

According to Tim, remodeling work has other virtues, as well. “Portland can be humbling sometimes,” he says. “It’s these smaller projects that help keep us grounded—we’re not in New York or a larger city. Our services need to appeal to everyone.”



Photos: David Papazian

*This page:* Although recognizable as a midcentury modern, nearly every element of the 1957 Myrtle Mid-Century was upgraded and improved. A second-story addition increases the bedroom count, while leaving the main building free to showcase its dramatic pitched roof.



*This page:* For the Rangers Ridge remodel, the team worked within the schema of an existing ranch house, located on the edge of a canyon overlooking the Deschutes River. A series of additions provided more and better glazed openings to the view and a more felicitous arrangement of interior spaces.

## Upward Battle

Remodeling instead of building new frequently has the edge in Portland for a variety of reasons. For one, the number of easy, buildable sites is dwindling. What's left are the steep sites that are, perforce, more expensive to build on. Another is the cost of entitlements. "When we remodel a house, there are modest savings if we can reuse the foundation or some of the framing, but the big savings comes from System Development Charges [SDC]," Dave explains. "They can easily be \$18,000 to \$24,000 a house."

"We had a \$1 million project on an unimproved street, and the SDC wanted \$365,000," says Tim. "We had researched it early, but the amount was still a surprise. We had to fight it down to \$93,000. If we had done a remodel, none of those fees would have been accessed. But because it was a tear-down, they applied."

Says Dave, "They've adjusted it since, but that house still would have about \$72,000 in fees."

The fees are a sticker shock, for sure, but the other big challenge these days for the firm is the rising cost of

construction. "Costs have escalated tremendously. And I'm starting to feel like it's going to affect projects ahead," says Dave. "We have plenty of people asking for design services, but the expectations about cost are unrealistic. We hear 'Oh, my God' a lot."

So, Dave and Tim have gotten seriously proactive about communicating the tough news as early as possible. They don't want to get caught in an endless cycle of design, bid, redesign, and rebid—with the consequent spiral of disappointment that accompanies such value engineering. "Before we even start



*This page:* The Road's End Beach House was a new build for a retiring couple who wished to age in place. There are master suites on both levels of the 2,600-square-foot plan, and stunning water views from all key rooms.



Photos: David Papazian



designing, we break the news to clients. We want to do it before the contractor does,” says Dave. “We use an early cost estimate and calculate whole projects—fees, professional services, permits, site work, site development, site building. We never want to design a house they can’t build. Everyone needs to know up front if we have to reduce the program or increase the budget. And we ask them to bring the contractor in during design development. At the very earliest meetings, we’ll give them a square foot range based on images they bring in and the

difficulty of their site. A typical range here might be \$350 to \$450 and, in some cases, \$450 to \$550.”

“We want that message out soon, because even recently we had a couple come in and ask us to design a 4,000-square-foot house for \$700,000,” Tim adds. “Doing that preliminary cost assessment helps us reassess design requirements. Instead of an endless program of spaces and uses, what if we group that exercise room with an art studio? It does help pull in the reins on the wish lists.”

### Glazed and Confused

Apart from permitting fees and program inflation, the other substantial cost center clients often don’t grasp is technological. The Portland area is blessed with gorgeous views, but also contends with a wet and windy climate. The former argues for lots of glazing, and the latter for a house built like a bunker. What’s more, it takes a house built like a bunker to secure all those wide, glazed openings that showcase the views. On the midcentury remodels, these upgrades present a special challenge.



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A high-end, modern bathroom with a sophisticated design. The space features a combination of dark, veined marble walls and large, horizontal wood panels. On the left, a white vanity with a large, rectangular mirror and a modern faucet is visible. In the center, a glass-enclosed shower area with a rainfall showerhead and a handheld shower wand is set against the marble wall. To the right, a large, white, rectangular bathtub is partially filled with water. The floor is made of dark, polished tiles, and a patterned rug is placed in the foreground. The lighting is soft and focused, highlighting the textures and materials of the space.

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 9

“We have an in-house list of improvements we know we’ll need to make on most remodels,” says Dave. “We definitely anticipate, just by code, that on any project over a certain amount of work, we have to bring the whole house up to seismic levels. We know we will be re-insulating and installing new electric service and new plumbing. All those

pieces tend to have to be done. With the midcentury houses, we’re usually faced with no insulation and moisture barriers at all. So the problem becomes how do you deal with that and keep the roof slim and trim?”

Also on the list are spatial improvements. “Sometimes adding just 4 feet in the kitchen can make a world of

difference,” says Tim. “The midcentury moderns here are mostly outside the central city, and therefore more affordable. So they’re attracting younger people who are willing to move farther out for better space. They’re attracted to the modern aesthetic, which is very popular out here, but also because these houses offer more flexible floor plans and better outdoor living opportunities than the small lots and vertical houses in the city. Still, we usually have to improve those indoor/outdoor connections. And we have to expand the kitchen and open it to the living and

“We’re not in New York or a larger city. Our services need to appeal to everyone.”

—Tim Schouten, AIA

dining areas. The master usually needs some enlargement, as well. People don’t necessarily want bigger master bedrooms, they want bigger closets and a better, bigger master bath.”

For the new construction work or the whole-house remodels, the firm battles the climate with rainscreen systems, high-tech insulation and moisture barriers, and as simple a roof structure as possible to fight water infiltration. They avoid skylights in favor of windows on vertical planes—clerestories, monitors, and, of course, walls.

To capture those gorgeous views, they turn to steel moment frames or steel portal frames. “The moment frame is dictated by the wind speeds here. The wind load requirements are more stringent than those for earthquakes,” Tim explains. “We have 120-mile-an-hour winds on the coast. So uplift, and how that roof is connected all the way down

Drawings: Giulietti / Schouten Architects



*This page:* What if your clients love the zoom-zoom midcentury style, but want an entirely new house? Such was the case for Patton New-Century, which will occupy a rare, 3-acre site sandwiched between two wetlands in Southwest Portland. A small existing building will be converted into an ADU.



**AIA** Contract Documents

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Before they broke ground, HBG Design ensured the **Guest House at Graceland™ Resort** was protected with AIA contracts.

**AIA Contract Documents used:** B103-Owner/Architect Agreement for a Complex Project, C401-Architect/Consultant Agreement, E201-Digital Data Protocol Exhibit, plus associated administrative G-forms.

Learn more about this project at [aiacontracts.org/residentialdesign](http://aiacontracts.org/residentialdesign)

Photography ©Jeffrey Jacobs

FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 10

 **AIA**® Document B103  
Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and  
Project

AGREEMENT made as of the  
in the year  
(In words, indicate day, month and year.)

BETWEEN the Architect's client identified as the Owner:  
(Name, legal status, address, and other information)

day of

## PRO-FILE DESIGN

to the foundation, are major considerations. We have to think about how we keep that roof from blowing off. If clients want big indoor/outdoor sliders, that calls for large overhangs. If they want that 24-foot slider, we have to prepare them for a \$30,000 steel moment frame. Sometimes, we ask if they could make do with a 12-foot slider and fixed windows on either side.”

Clients used to be able to save money on HVAC equipment, given Portland’s formerly cool climate. But global warming means more strings of hot days, and most houses now need air conditioning in addition to heat. “We used to be able to install just radiant in-floor heat, which everyone loves, but now to cool the house we need to have heat pumps and ducts as well. So clients often elect



Photo: Sally Painter

There’s really no guessing that the Valle Vista House is a renovation. It is completely transformed from top to bottom to suit the clients’ taste for modern, open, light-filled space. Working within the footprint of the existing house, the team reached up to add a new master bedroom level.

to go with dual heat pumps and drop the radiant,” Dave notes.

These are just a few of the changes the firm has witnessed over decades in practice. The most substantial shift, however, is the booming taste for modernism. “We spent years remodel-

ing the city’s old bungalow, craftsman, and Tudor-style houses, but now the work is predominantly modern,” says Dave. “We’re in a great period for modern architects. We’ve really come a long way.”

—S. Claire Conroy

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 13

# The Sweet Spot

GOLDBERG GENERAL CONTRACTING  
CHICAGO

Chicago is renowned for its world-class mix of architecture. Fine contemporary, iconic modern, and important traditional work peppers the city and its lakeside suburbs. When clients tap architects to create or update a top-notch example of residential design, architects often turn to Goldberg General Contracting to execute the vision. Architects trust company founder Jacob (Jake) Goldberg like one of their own, and that's no surprise because, at heart, he is.

Jake is the son of an architect who studied with Mies Van Der Rohe at the Illinois Institute of Technology and an interior designer. After a brief foray into speculative real estate, he discovered what he truly loved to do is build—the good stuff. And as he's led his 30-year-old business with partner Jeff Berry, their sweet spot of mastery has grown to encompass the best modern work and the most rigorous restorations Chicago can offer. On the one hand, the company builds new houses by Brad Lynch of Brininstool & Lynch, and on the other, exquisite restorations by John Vinci, FAIA, of VincilHamp.

The company's size has remained remarkably static since its founding at 35 office and field personnel. Jake calls the size “boutique” and says it's been a conscious decision not to go bigger or diversify into luxury speculative building. He thinks that's part of the reason his firm was spared the worst of the recession. “We were lucky not to self-destruct, because we did not get too ambitious. We didn't succumb to the lure of quick money, and instead



Photo: Hall + Merrick Photographers



Above: The Ravine House is a new modern project from Goldberg General Contracting. Designed by Robbins Architecture, the house occupies a site atop a deep ravine along Lake Michigan. GGC flexes between modern and traditional work with remarkable ease and excellence. Left: GGC founder and president Jacob Goldberg.

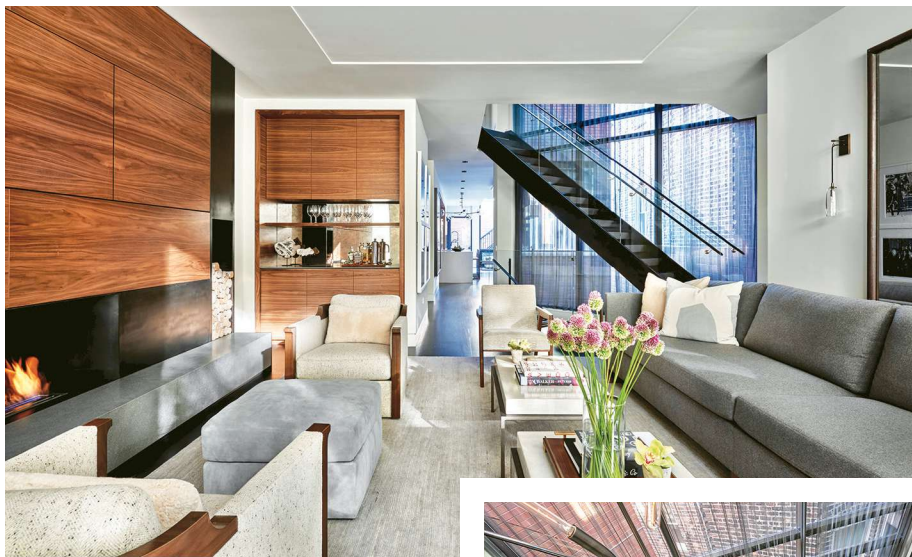
focused on the art of building,” he explains. “I see people who've made a lot of money doing speculation, but I've also seen others who've gone under because they mistimed the market.”

Jake and Jeff divide tasks geographically, for the most part. With city dweller Jeff preferring the urban projects and Jake, who lives in Wilmette, enjoying the North Shore houses. “We operate as senior project managers. We have the same job descriptions—chasing leads—but we generally maintain our own architect relationships, unless one of us is inundated.”

Although good word-of-mouth from clients is important to the company,

Jake is convinced his best stream of work comes from architects. “Our goal when we do a job, is the architect is going to become an associate of ours, so we can refer work back and forth. When we make the process work together, it helps them be successful with the client. If we please the owner, they may refer one friend to us, but architects offer a continuing flow of projects.”

That's where the trust comes in and benefits the company long-term. “Our appreciation and understanding of architecture have always given us a great insight into the process, so we can help architects flesh out their designs and make them come to life,” he continues.



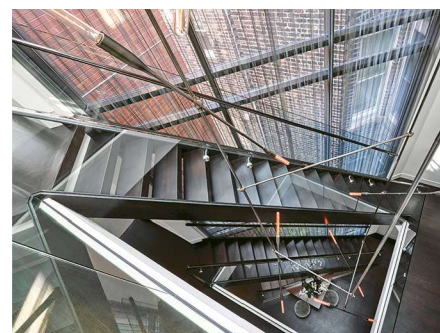
Designed by dSPACE Studio, GGC's renovation of Skylight House added a third level, new window openings, custom walnut cabinetry, and a steel-and-glass stair, among other improvements. *Below:* GGC and architect Seth Romig converted this 1886 three-flat townhouse into a commodious single-family home.

Photos: Tony Soluri Photography

“So we’ve focused on collaboration, making the architects’ experience enjoyable to them, and making them feel like we’re in their camp.”

The builders don’t lose track, however, of their role as client advocates and stewards of the budget. In fact, Jake is not a fan of design/build delivery be-

cause he thinks checks and balances in the client/architect/builder relationship are critical to the success of the project. “It really works best as a triangle,” he explains. “I don’t think design/build is in the best interest of the client. The client is leaning on us to keep the architect from pushing things financially, and it’s our job to protect the client from getting off track from the budget. Ultimately, it’s their project.”



ingly, this team is stretched thin by the volume of “paperwork” generated by the company’s complex jobs. “If I could afford it, I’d have a second project manager full time on a computer in a jobsite trailer, just handling all the data we have to deal with.”

Some of the folks with aching joints get reassigned to “using their brains more than their bodies” —as lead carpenters, for instance, laying out the work and directing other carpenters and trades. This can free up the site manager to handle more of the computer and other administrative tasks. But it’s a continuing conundrum for the company about how to strike the perfect balance between skilled manual labor and sophisticated managerial talent. Jake’s not even sure those two strengths coexist in one human, even though that’s exactly who he needs on the team.

### Knees Shoulders Data

With a steady workforce of longtime employees, Goldberg General Contracting is facing many of the same problems as other established builders—an aging pool of talent and a dwindling flow of new workers willing and able to do the hands-on work. “We’re starting to see knee issues and shoulder issues,” he says. But his biggest problem currently is the deluge of data.

A typical big project supports a senior project manager (Jake or Jeff), a site manager, and a lead carpenter. That used to be the sweet spot of leadership on a residential project. But, increas-



Photo: Tony Soluri Photography



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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 14

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Photos: Eric Hausmann Photography



Thanks to Vinci I Hamp and GGC, a 19th-century dairy in Lincoln Park is now a striking courtyard house. Historic exteriors were preserved and exuberantly modern interiors inserted.

“We get hundreds of emails a day. The sheer volume is overwhelming—not to mention texts and phone calls,” he says. “So, you have to keep a record of all that communication. And then there are the ASKS [sketches for clarification], RFIs [requests for infor-

mation], change order documents for increases or decreases to the contract, submittals for shop drawings, product approvals for the architect, cut sheets on equipment and products going into the project, all the subcontractor agreements, and scheduling. And any

sophisticated project is going to want a Gantt-type chart.”

Whew. Those are just some of the tasks required of Jake’s project managers. “The scale of some of the residential jobs we’re doing these days is almost like a commercial job,” he notes. “It could last two or three years, and it could be over \$10 million.

“What’s interesting for me as a business owner—I’m not just trying to impress the client, but I’m also trying to impress the architects,” he explains. “If they see a project manager who’s rough around the edges, then they might be perceived as having the goods. Or, others might see them as underqualified because they make spelling errors and typos on written communication. Do I go with the college-educated guy who’s articulate, but can’t answer a real physical question? There are a lot of judgment calls about personality types and expectations. I have to make the decision of who is right for the mix, among those who are available.”

Obviously, the company gets it right more often than not. That Jake and his partner sweat these details is just evidence of the care that goes into every project. In fact, attention to detail is the company’s secret to excelling at both modern work and meticulous historic restoration. “We’ve come to realize they are both similar in that they come down to conscientious execution,” he explains. “What you’re doing needs to be relevant to the context of the project. Ultra-modern work and historic restoration is an unexpected alignment, but over the years, it feels logical that the same firm could do both.”

Well, perhaps not just any firm.  
—S. Claire Conroy

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 15



A woman with wet hair is leaning against a gold shower fixture in a bathroom. The fixture is a tall, modern design with a curved spout and a handheld showerhead. The woman is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a wall with a light-colored, veined marble pattern.

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 16

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- (B) Gain favor with the termite king by marrying his termite daughter.



- (C) Use termite-resistant redwood timbers.



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# Conveying Your Value to Clients

BY MARICA MCKEEL, AIA, STUDIO MM ARCHITECT

**What is the value of an architect?** This question is one that the American Institute of Architects has spent a lot of effort trying to answer for the public through marketing and media. It is one of the most important questions in our profession today. As residential architects, the value that we bring to a project is far more than merely the finished product.

I was speaking with one of my peers the other day and he commented that he doesn't feel as if many people he speaks to about designing their home actually appreciate all that an architect does. I was thinking about that later and realized, if we as architects aren't the ones talking about what we do and explaining the value of our profession, why should we expect our clients to know?

Below is an excerpt from the Frequently Asked Questions post on our website. This is one way we try to convey the value of an architect to the public. Please keep in mind that my audience is people who are thinking about building a home and considering working with an architect. My audience is not architects.

We have received a lot of positive feedback from people who visit our website saying they appreciate our honesty and openness in explaining how we work. It helps them understand that what they imagine is an intimidating process (this may surprise you, but we have heard that more than once) actually sounds like a lot of fun. And many of those people have become clients.

I'm not sharing the answers below to suggest that all architects should provide similar services or that one process is the right one. Far from it. I'm sharing the following text as an example of how we tell our story. Even sharing such a simple thing as answers to questions your clients ask you the most begins to explain the value of an architect.

## Can you walk me through the process for a typical project?

Sure. We are involved in your project from the very beginning through final completion and happy clients. This may sound a bit corny but that's why we do what we do, so it's extremely important to us. We are there to guide you through and make sure the process of designing your home goes smoothly.

There are essentially four phases of design: Schematic Design, Design Development, Construction Documents, and Construction Administration. SD and DD are our "design phases" where we have the most interaction with our clients and are working closely with them to create their dream home.



Studio MM Architect designs houses in close collaboration with its clients—among them, Lake Wylie House in Lake Wylie, S.C., (shown above) and Lantern House in Kerhonkson, N.Y. (shown next page).

## Schematic Design Phase

We start the Schematic Design (SD) Phase with an information-gathering session—Pre-Design—in which we ask you a lot of questions about how you live and how you intend to live in your new home. This is our chance to get to know you better and learn what you're really looking for and need in your new home.

We rely on your input and active collaboration to make your new home the best it can be. Every decision we make during this phase is made in tandem.

## Design Development Phase

Over the course of Design Development (DD) we spend lots of time talking about interior and exterior aesthetics and functionality. While we've finalized a floor plan, we still need to discuss exactly how closets and bathrooms lay out, determine window placements, and make large-scale decisions about materials and the forms of the house. This phase is often when clients really feel the design coming to life. It becomes easier to imagine everyday life in their new home when they can "walk through" how they will use their kitchen and what the fixtures and finishes in their personal spaces will be.

## Construction Documents Phase

During the Construction Documents (CD) Phase we are hard at work on extremely thorough drawings of the project. I think it is most easily described with the following quote:

"This is the part where we take all of our schematic ideas and design decisions made during SD and DD and document the details needed for the contractor to build your home."

We document material connections and details, coordinate drawings with our structural engineers, and specify exactly what features, finishes, and fixtures will be used. This often takes more time than our clients expect, but it's essential in order to build the house to our high standards.

### Construction Administration Phase

Construction Administration (CA) takes place over the course of the project's construction. We work with the contractors to examine details in the field, make any necessary adjustments, have conversations with our clients about any new design decisions to be made, and work together to ensure we create a successful project. Our presence during this phase is extremely valuable and necessary, as our established lines of communication with the contractor and the client allow us to solve any issues that may come up.

Ultimately, as we've stated before, our measure of success is a happy client. One of our favorite parts of designing homes is the chance to work with clients that trust us with their personal stories and dreams. This is the inspiration that leads to high-quality, unique designs.

### How long does it take?

Construction for a new home typically takes between 8 and 12 months. If you are building in the Northeast it is important to consider winter and its impact on construction schedule. Depending on the weather, the ground could be frozen between the months of December and April, so no construction should be scheduled to begin during those months. If the foundation is already in the ground prior to the ground freezing, construction can continue through the winter.

### What are our responsibilities?

#### How involved will we be during design?

All of our houses are custom-designed, ensuring they are the best fit for each of our clients. We don't require too much of your time, but we do encourage a lot of involvement throughout the process. During the SD and DD phases, when we are initially establishing the design of your home, we consider the client to be a vital part of the team. We understand that our clients are busy, too, so we have developed methods to simplify the "decisions needed" and can tailor our process for each individual client. For us, the most important part of our process is to ensure happy clients. As long as we establish expectations early on, the process is structured to run smoothly.



### I've heard horror stories... How can we be sure we know what we're getting into?

We completely understand that designing and building a new home is a significant undertaking. Having gone through the process ourselves multiple times, we know that our clients are often hesitant to take the first step. That's why we're here. Throughout the process we strive to be extremely communicative and present, answering questions and explaining next steps, working together with our clients to make all design decisions, and actively guiding our clients through the process.

### How do we make sure our project stays on budget?


We can control the budget because our goal is to know all of the answers—and therefore all of the costs associated—before we even send our drawings to the contractor for a bid. This is why we put so much time and effort into the entire design process. And why we ask our clients so many questions during the SD and DD Phases.

At the start of each project we discuss budget with our clients. We also discuss budget at every one of our design meetings. We typically approximate cost for a project based on a cost per square foot, and we update our clients through the process as to any changes in the design that might affect the budget.

### What's the first step in getting started?

The best way to start the process is to contact us and set up a time for a phone call to discuss your project and any questions you might have. While we make an effort to give you as much information as possible online, we know that each project and each client will have unique concerns for us to discuss.

If, after our phone call, we both believe we would make a good team, we should set up an in-person meeting to discuss the project further and to begin building a good working relationship. We want our clients to feel comfortable sharing their story with us, and we find that this first meeting is often a great indication of how fun the process can be.

Our goal in sharing this information is to help potential clients understand more about the process of working with an architect and to lessen their apprehension about reaching out to us and starting a dialogue about working together. The more we talk about and promote our profession, the more we are proving the value of working with an architect. 



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# Angles of Repose

A family of four finds light and magic under an origami tent.

BY CHERYL WEBER

LOCATION: ALEXANDRIA, VA

ARCHITECT: DAVID JAMESON ARCHITECT

BUILDER: PUREFORM BUILDERS







Playing off the gabled peaks of older houses in the neighborhood, David Jameson designed a modern house of almost temple-like exaltation. While its glazed origami roof forms open to natural light, stone walls carve out privacy from the busy street.

**David Jameson, FAIA, has a knack** for the conceptual. Consider the names he’s given some of his residential projects: Bar Code House, BlackWhite Residence, PushPull, Jigsaw, Warp and Weft. The most recent example is the Hull House, so named for its vaulted interior in which living spaces unspool under rakish folded rooflines. Jameson took as his starting point the gabled roofs of older houses in this upscale neighborhood near Alexandria’s Old Town district, just across the Potomac River from the nation’s capital. But he employed the gables in a new way, bending them into copper-covered shapes inspired by origami and supported by exposed, splayed steel piping.

From the front, the house appears as a craggy building behind a high, stone-clad service wall; from the back it’s all glass, opening to a patio and pool. The result is an alluring combination of the industrial and the glamorous, a glass house and a garrison near a busy street.

Although the neighborhood dates back to the turn of the last century, inventive modern houses are cropping up in this enclave of urban professionals. In fact, aesthetically, the clients—a couple with two kids—gave David virtually free rein on the design. “They said, we just want to build a modern house, but we’ll let you create what it is,” he says. David took a page from their former house nearby—a single-story bungalow with high ceilings. They had opened up the kitchen, living and dining area, and bedrooms, blurring the boundaries between public and private spaces. “To me it was an interesting opportunity,” David says. “A lot of clients wouldn’t want glass, and to be exposed from outside the bedrooms. In this project we celebrated the same thing they had done in the bungalow renovation and allowed light to filter between various bedrooms and the living area of the house.”



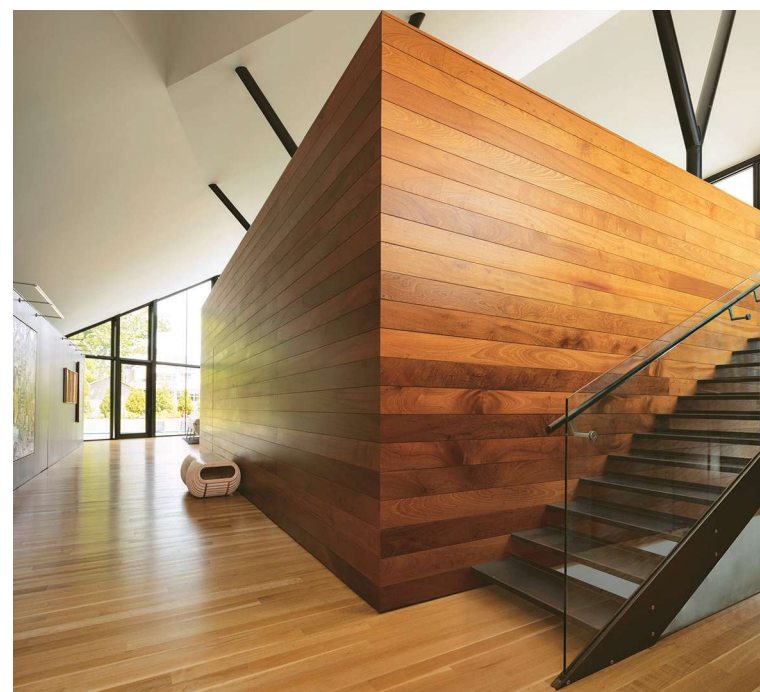


*This page: Wood, stone, and plaster "boxes" section off private and service spaces within the otherwise open "tent."*

### Shape Shifting

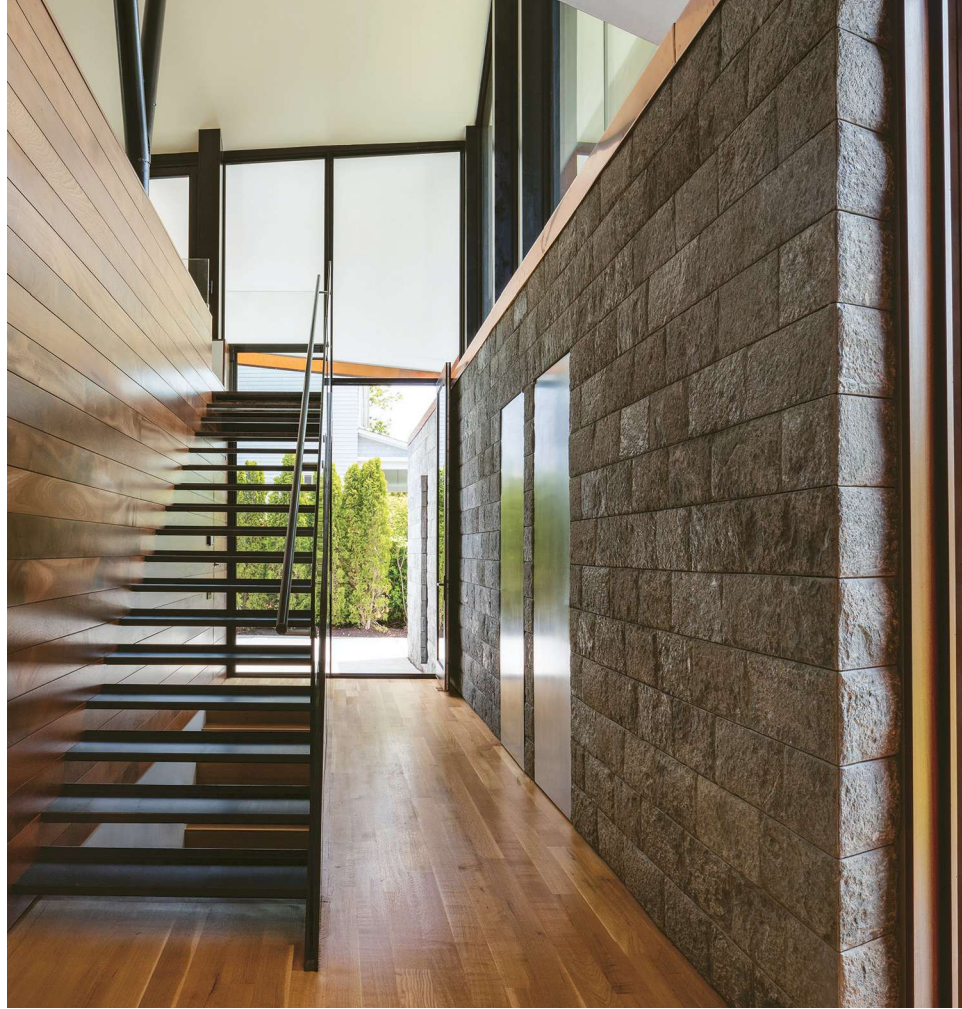
To say that David took this idea up a notch is an understatement. Diagrammatically, he describes the design as a simple, folded origami tent draped over three service areas and circled by glass. The bar-shaped entry volume facing the street is clad in stone on both sides; it contains the laundry/mudroom, coat closet, and bike storage on the right, and the bath and closet for the front bedroom on the left. Inside the front door to the right is a roughly 25-foot-by-30-foot garage volume. Wrapped in sapele mahogany inside and out, it reads as a three-dimensional box that defines the entry gallery and, around the corner, the kitchen's back wall. To the left of the entry, a plastered core contains the baths and closets for the middle bedroom and rear master suite.

Architects often use the proverbial nod to the neighborhood as an opportunity to riff on familiar forms, and that's true here



## CASE STUDY

*Right, opposite page:* Starting on the left side of the stone bar at the front and moving around the house, the walls are all glass to the point where the copper roof drops down on the right side of the house to designate a privacy zone between the kitchen and the neighbor's house. The copper roof becomes the garage face, and then the wall returns to glass between the garage and stone wall.



too. The sleight of hand starts at the street, where three steeply pitched roofs acknowledge the community's older houses. The ridgelines extend like the prow of a boat, reaching out to shield the south-facing glass gables from the summer sun.

"One of the pressures of the project was that it's one lot in from a busy street," David says, and the house responds to that pressure both physically and figuratively. The folded roof planes are visible from the street, but there are no views into the house. The entry path parallels the offset angle of the busy road, and visitors enter through the 7-foot-thick, stone-clad volume.

Moving inside, the rooflines change shape. "The second you get past the first apex point of each roof, they start to splay in different directions, so that by the time you get into the house, the roofs are different than what you'd expect from the front," David says. "Everything except the core structures is an undulating open space that shapes above you in different ways."

Indeed, the interior spaces seem to ebb and flow. The roof folds down to its lowest point at the dining table to make the space feel intimate. Along the east side of the house it extends down to shield the kitchen from the neighbor's house, then folds to become a wall along the garage. Another low point is over the bath bar that defines the edge of the bedrooms, and from there the roof explodes upward in different

directions. It's at its 22-foot apex over the living area and fireplace, a minimalist steel column separating the dining and living zones.

"The tallest point is also the place where the back wall of the house fractures to create a serrated rear exposure, so the space pressures out, while the dining room is pressured in as the ceiling comes down," David says. "This creates completely different experiences even though you're beneath one gestural roof."

### Team Effort

Architects working in urban historic districts have to jump through hoops to get their plans approved, and this house was no exception. To meet the requirement for a gabled roof, the firm had to survey the low and high roof point of houses within 300 feet and design within those averages. Hence the house presents as three simple gables no higher or lower at any point than the neighboring roofs. "If you're just driving by, you don't see immediately that the ridge line doesn't go straight back and disappear, but turns and connects to something else," David says. "We used time-honored materials found in Alexandria, such as stone for the walls and copper for the roofs. When you drive up and down the street, it's a different expression but the same voice as houses from 150 years ago."



## CASE STUDY

Given its adventurous designs, the firm has developed a rapport with local review agencies and seeks approval for a scheme as early as possible—even before showing the client to avoid disappointment if it doesn't fly. In this case, the planning director worked with the team to bring the gray areas into line with the allowable bulk and square footage. The fact that the roof was 22 feet tall in the center meant that it could conceivably contain a second floor, which would increase the floor-area ratio.

“He said, ‘Look, we understand that the thing is morphing in space, and if we cut one section, it’s maybe not in total compliance at this sliver, but if we move a foot away, you’re in compliance,’” David says. “He agreed because the department wanted something that does more than mimic the relics of a bygone era, and here was a client willing to live on one level.”

With that hurdle cleared, the team created three-dimensional digitized models that the clients could walk through virtually using a cell phone app. “It’s amazing how, at a very simple level,

“The clients didn’t need closure between the living and private spaces, so other than acoustically seal them with glass, we didn’t have to have some miscellaneous wall jutting into roof structure,” David says. “It floats on steel columns above everything else.”





A vista across the pool and yard peeks at the neighboring gabled houses—from a discreet remove.

modeling has become a tool you can use to have the client walk down the yellow brick road with you,” David says.

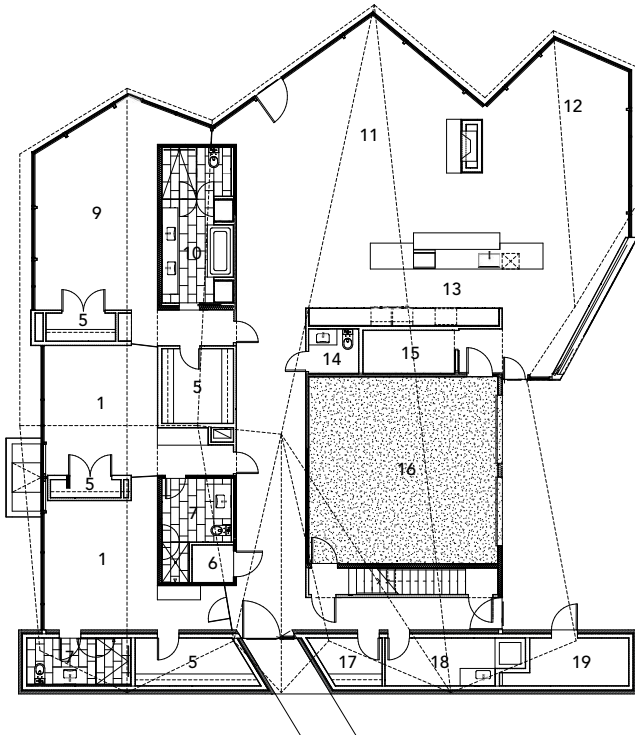
In reality, though, the house’s magical appearance required an extraordinary level of engineering. The design team sat with the roofer to draw up the roof plan, working out the joints for every single copper seam. “What you don’t see is that each of those panels is a slightly different width so that one rake hits the next rake,” David says. “They can’t be the same dimension because the lines would never connect.”

The funky exoskeleton is a combination of steel roof beams infilled with wood framing. Tree columns under the ceiling— $3\frac{1}{2}$ -inch steel piping that reaches up from bearing

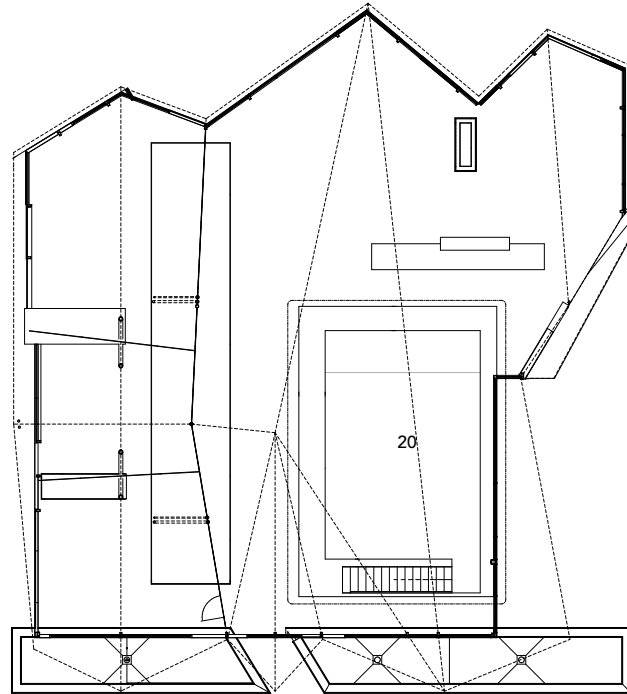
points—support the various roof angles. The splayed supports create a more dynamic composition than a point-to-point load and allowed for shorter spans and half as many structural elements.

The front wall was a collaborative effort, too. David showed the owner of a local stone yard his vision for the wall, which was to look natural but rhythmic from outside to inside. Boulders were quarried and cut into exactly the same 8-inch height, and range in length from about 30 to 60 inches. The result is that “there’s a crispness to the wall that’s very tectonic,” David says, “not just organic, messy stone, but all sawn material and crazy-tight joints.”

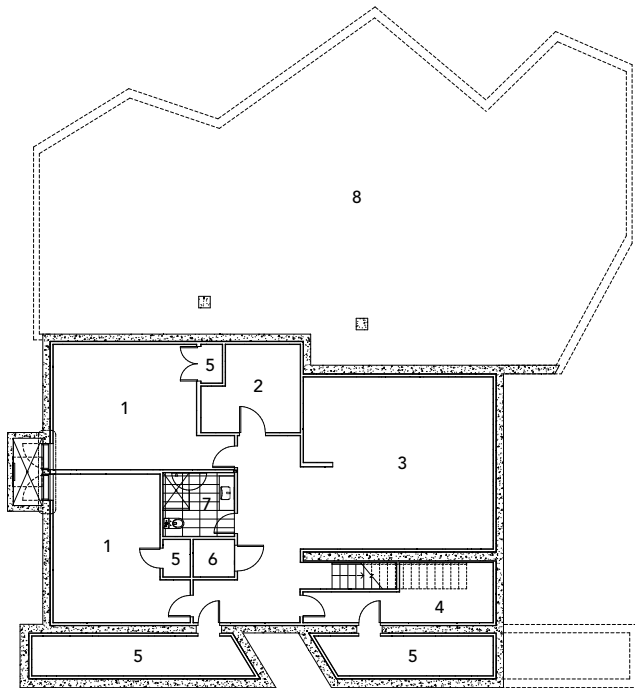
MAIN FLOOR PLAN



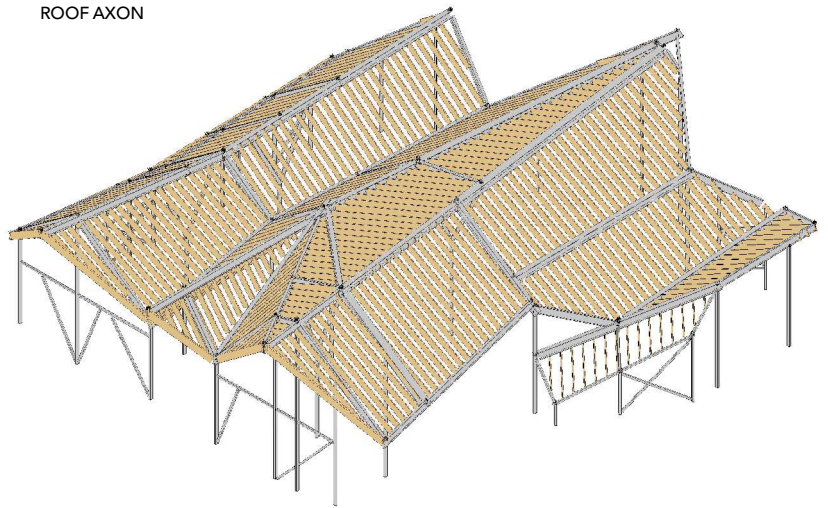
MEZZANINE LEVEL



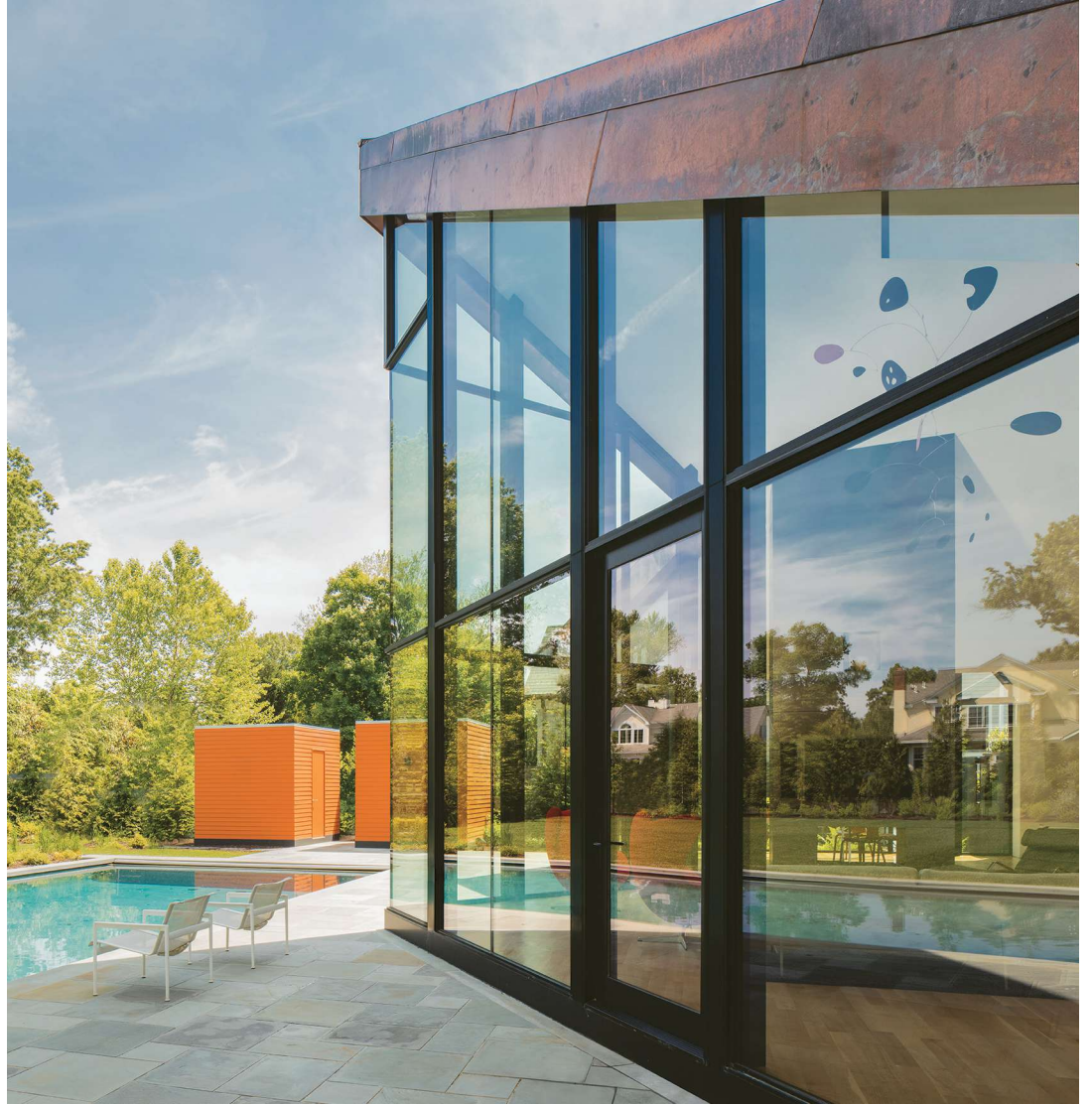
BASEMENT PLAN



ROOF AXON



- 1. Bedroom | 2. Mechanical Room | 3. Home Office | 4. Storage
- 5. Closet | 6. Future Elevator | 7. Bath | 8. Crawl Space | 9. Master Bedroom
- 10. Master Bath | 11. Family Room | 12. Dining Room | 13. Kitchen
- 14. Powder Room | 15. Pantry | 16. Garage | 17. Coat Closet
- 18. Mudroom/Laundry | 19. Bike Storage | 20. Mezzanine



*Right:* The rooflines break apart as they meet the pool terrace, creating a fractured back wall that makes the master bedroom terrace feel private.

### Art on Demand

That same material rigor occurs on the interior. In the entry gallery, open-tread stairs lead to a multipurpose office with a built-in desk and conference table—a perch on the garage roof that has views of the entire house. The stairs are minimally detailed with steel plates, steel stringers, glass rails, and sapele treads that align precisely with the reveals in the garage siding of the same material. A second flight of stairs leads down to a basement playroom, mechanical room, and storage.

The sapele box makes a mystery out of the service functions, sandwiching a powder room and butler’s pantry between the garage and galley kitchen’s back wall, where those continuous wood panels also hide cabinetry and appliances. Opposite, a Silestone-wrapped island provides a commodious work surface.

If the front of the house reads as a fortress, the back is a glass pavilion gazing north over the pool terrace. David’s team designed the dining table to scale, and two egg chairs in the

living room swivel so the couple can turn around and enjoy the backyard view or keep an eye on the kids in the pool.

The double-pane, argon-filled low-e glass is fitted with a privacy shade that can be raised from the bottom to 8 feet, 4 inches along the back wall. A geothermal pump supplies hot water for the radiant-heated floors, and the air conditioning

has an additional heating system that blows air against hot-water coils, washing the glass wall with warm air through grills positioned along the top of the glass.

With exterior walls made almost entirely of glass, the design factored in a series of panels for displaying art—several in the back wall and one

in each outer bedroom wall. These consist of fritted spandrel glass that doubles as diagonal bracing. As far as placement, “they already had the art, and we knew how the shear walls needed to work proportionally,” David says. “At first glance you can’t tell there’s an art panel, but if you look closely, you can see that the opacity of the glass is different.”

“Everything except the core structures is an undulating open space that shapes above you in different ways.”

—David Jameson, FAIA



While the front elevation's stone walls temper the copper roof peaks and glass, the rear elevation unfurls them like the wings of a soaring bird.

Continuing around to the west side of the house, trees are planted in front of a fence, so the bedrooms feel like they're outside. The roof drops to about 18 inches above the bath bar, where glass acoustically privatizes the three bedrooms from each other and the living space, but light can travel between the rooms.

Servicing those rooms is the bathroom-and-closet core with a gray plaster finish—a serendipitous decision that came late in the game. As David tells it, “There were these gray dumpsters that sat in the front yard. Every time we went to the jobsite, their color became more compelling, until the client said, ‘Let’s use plaster the same color as the dumpster. We actually peeled off a bit of the paint and took it to the paint store for custom mixing. When they said, ‘What shall we call this?’

we said, ‘Dumpster Gray.’”

At 3,600 square feet, the house is not exactly small, but it is intimately scaled compared to most other new homes in this premium market. The goal wasn't to produce as many square feet as possible to maximize the appraisal value, but to craft an intricate jewel box with quality finishes.

“Here was a client willing to live with three bedrooms and a single place to cook, eat, and live,” David says. “They don't need the ubiquitous guest rooms one and two or a giant mudroom. Living within that folded tent on one floor is compelling, and you couldn't do that with a second story.” Far from being a replica, it's a singular, shimmering expression of how the owners want to live. RD





## Hull House

Alexandria, Va.

**ARCHITECT:** David Jameson, FAIA, principal-in-charge; Ron Southwick, architect; Oscar Maradiaga, David Jameson Architect, Alexandria, Va.

**BUILDER:** PureForm Builders, Alexandria

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** David Jameson

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Gregg Bleam, ASLA, Gregg Bleam Landscape Architect, Charlottesville, Va.

**SITE SIZE:** .51 acres

**PROJECT SIZE:** 3,600 square feet

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Paul Warchol

### KEY PRODUCTS

**COOKTOP AND OVENS:** Bosch

**DISHWASHER:** Fisher & Paykel

**COUNTERTOPS:** Silestone

**DOOR HARDWARE:** Omnia

**FAUCETS:** Hansgrohe

**GARAGE DOORS:** Crisway

**INSULATION:** Icynene

**LIGHTING INTERIOR:** Lightheaded (Dasal Industries)

**LOCKSETS:** FSB

### PAINTS/STAINS/COATINGS:

Benjamin Moore

**REFRIGERATOR:** Thermador

**SINKS:** Mirabelle, Duravit

**TOILETS:** Duravit

**TUB:** Americh – ICE

**THERMAL AND MOISTURE BARRIERS:** Henry

**UNDERLAYMENT/SHEATHING:** AdvanTech

**WINDOWS:** Western Window Systems



A photograph of a modern outdoor courtyard. In the foreground, there is a concrete and gravel patio area. A low concrete wall runs across the middle ground, topped with a dark, perforated metal screen. Behind the screen, several agave plants are planted in a bed. In the background, tall, mature pine trees stand against a clear blue sky. The overall scene is bright and well-lit, suggesting a sunny day.

# Invention and Reinvention

Breathing new life into  
three neglected masterworks

BY S. CLAIRE CONROY AND CHERYL WEBER



## Morgan Phoa Library and Residence

LOS FELIZ, LOS ANGELES  
SPF:ARCHITECTS

When the new owners of this historic, early Wallace Neff house called SPF:a to discuss a renovation and library addition, Zoltan Pali, FAIA, was only mildly interested. “I had been intimately involved with a Wallace Neff project before,” he recalls. “This one was on a property that was once much larger. But I worried that clients who would buy a house like this were probably really into historic architecture.”

Notwithstanding the name-brand provenance, renovations are not always the most exciting projects for architects to undertake. They have to find a way to fall in love with the old building while also tapping into a vision of how to contribute something new. Whether the “something new” aims for iteration or inven-



Opposite and this page: By day, the anodized bronze screens protect a vast collection of volumes in the new library from harsh sun, while activating the interiors with filtered light and shadows.

tion is a decision all parties must agree to—the clients, the architect, and, as was the case here, the Office of Historic Resources in Los Angeles.

Zoltan Pali was struggling with these questions when he and his wife and partner, Judit Fakete-Pali, decided to head over to the Getty Villa for a stroll through the galleries. (They know the museum better than most because they served as executive architects for the Machado + Silvetti renovation and expansion.) They capped the visit off with lunch at the museum café and a glass of wine. That’s when inspiration hit.

In his visits to the Spanish Revival Neff project, Zoltan hadn’t consciously noted the ornate precast concrete screens on the windows. But on his lunchtime sojourn to the Getty Villa, originally modeled after an ancient Roman country house, he noticed similar screens on the old building and they triggered an epiphany: They were the path forward on this project. He just had to get his clients and the Office of Historic Resources to agree with him.

### Three-Part Harmony

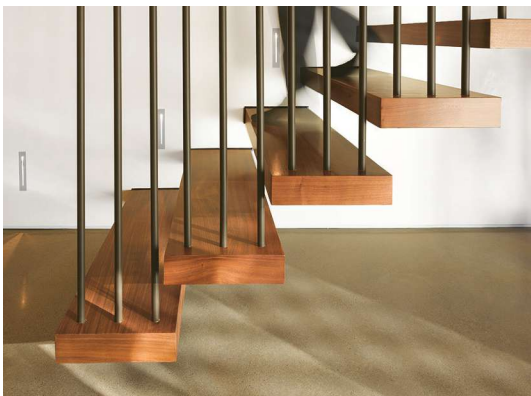
The screens provided Zoltan with a design language he could innovate. The other part of the puzzle was addressing the clients’ program requirements. In early meetings, they had presented their list: renovate the north end of the house, which is the casual, family wing already “remuddled” by a previous architect; add a substantial library and office area; work in storage and charging stations for a collection of electric vehicles; and put in a swimming pool.

Already on the property were the original house, a carriage house, and a small tree house. The once large estate had been pared down to just under 2 acres, much of it steeply sloped and cut through with retaining walls.

The clients initially suggested incorporating the new library in the north end renovation and Zoltan did studies of how that might work, but the idea didn’t spark any good solutions—not until it dawned on him to combine the library with the garage in an entirely separate building. The answer to the puzzle was a “separate



Above: Precast concrete window screens on the original Wallace Neff house inspired the metal library screens.



*This page:* The entry hall to the new library is compact, but an open stair and plenty of natural light make it feel more expansive.

piece of the same proportions and materiality as the original house,” and Zoltan knew the perfect place to put it.

“The carriage house is on the west end of the property, the main house is on the east, and to the north is a hill,” he explains. “In the gap between the west end and east end was a natural spot to add something to the property, but there was a hill. So, we thought, let’s tuck this library and electric car storage into the hill and align it with the old carriage house.”

The new building could provide the vessel for invention and remove the burden of the main house stretching beyond its natural capacity. But were the clients “really into historic architecture” or would they be willing to add a new structure to the property?

### The Buy-In

The answer to both questions is “yes.”

The house, originally designed and built in 1926 by Wallace Neff, was also renovated by him just a few years later after a fire destroyed much of the second floor. (Newspapers of the time mentioned a heroic family dog who roused everyone in the nick of time.) In the second iteration, the architect eliminated the upper floor of the two-story building and moved the master bedroom to the first level.

Because this is L.A., the house’s history includes a number of celebrity owners—among them Madonna and Katey Sagal, co-star of *Married With Children*. (The latter may have been responsible for the pink kitchen cabinets.)

Enough had been altered over the years prior to the house being placed on the historic register in 2008 to argue for a more liberal interpretation of renovation.

After a series of meetings with the clients, Zoltan learned his clients were not opposed to a new building and not rigid about its style, so the next question became “what it would look like?”

Zoltan thinks through problems by modeling potential solutions—physical models he can hold and manipulate. So he took the notion of the screens he had at the Getty Villa and churned them through a series of 3D creations. “I presented the clients with a dumb little laser-cut model of what the screens might look like,” he says. “I thought they weren’t going to like it, but they



*Clockwise from above:* A previous renovation captured the original attached garage as service space. A new grid of paved and pervious driveway tie together old buildings and new additions. The original ashlar pattern at the front entry provided inspiration for the driveway patterning. The library addition, existing guest house, and new retaining walls carve ribbons of garden in the hillside.

loved it. We decided to go to the historic resources department with it, and they loved it as well.”

“Same proportions and materiality as the original house” meant the new

**“Everything is neatly organized on a mathematic module.”**

—Zoltan Pali, FAIA

building would “use the general shape—the simple gable idea and basic form of the house—so there wasn’t a foreign object on the site. Same form and same tile roof,” Zoltan explains. “The screens would be something that would give the

new building its own identity but tie it to the existing buildings.”

Not everyone could go to the Office of Historic Resources and get approval for such a loose idea. But Zoltan had kept them informed through design development, and the firm has an impressive track record of sensitive historic rehabilitation. In addition to the Getty Villa, SPF:a tackled renovation of the Hollywood Pantages Theatre, and the Crescent Drive Post Office as part of the Annenberg Center for the Arts complex. As often as not, the firm prefers a light touch on historic buildings and to add new buildings that complement them functionally and aesthetically—essentially the same plan they had for this project.





### Timeless Motif

The perforated screens that form the façade of the library/garage addition are highly abstracted from the concrete window screens of the original house. “We digitized them, modified them, and used their base proportions to create a series of bronze anodized aluminum panels—in upper-portion and bottom-portion designs.”

Like the screens on the old house, the new screens serve the practical function of shading interiors from the strong California sun. This is especially important for the library interiors on the second level, where the clients store nearly 5,000 volumes, including some rare editions. When the sun begins to set, the clients can slide open glass doors on the interior and swing open the upper panel screens to form “a series of little Juliet balconies.” Glass partitions function as safety railings.

Although the new building’s material vocabulary shares a common language with the existing buildings, the pertness of its planes contrasts with its nearly century-old companions. There’s a photograph that shows the rear of the old carriage house and the adjacent library building, linked by an outdoor stair. The pitch of the carriage house roof has a gentle, old-house sway to it that stands out from the military bearing of the library roof.

The two buildings nestle up to a series of retaining walls that capture flat ribbons of garden space on each ledge. Those controlled collisions of building, stair, hill—along with the stucco and red tile—remind Zoltan of his grandparents’ Hungarian hill town.

By day the screens of the library and garage put forth the cool reserve of Spanish lace, but at night, they are aglow with warmth and invitation. Inside, the stacks are clustered to the center of the room to allow circulation on both sides. There’s a kitchenette,



*Above and left:* A light-touch renovation revived the formerly pink kitchen. Acing the cross-vault geometry was the team’s toughest test.

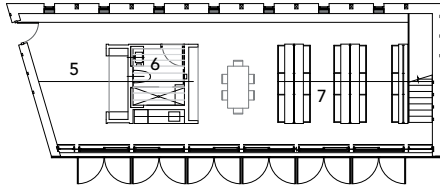




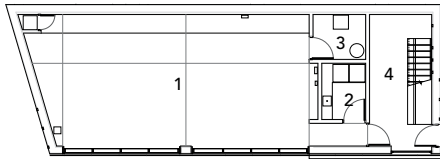
Above: Renovations within the existing house were subtle and sympathetic, but transformative—such as the new passage to the pool addition. Right: Custom casework weaves seamlessly into new vaulted niches, their wooden grills echoing the screen motif.



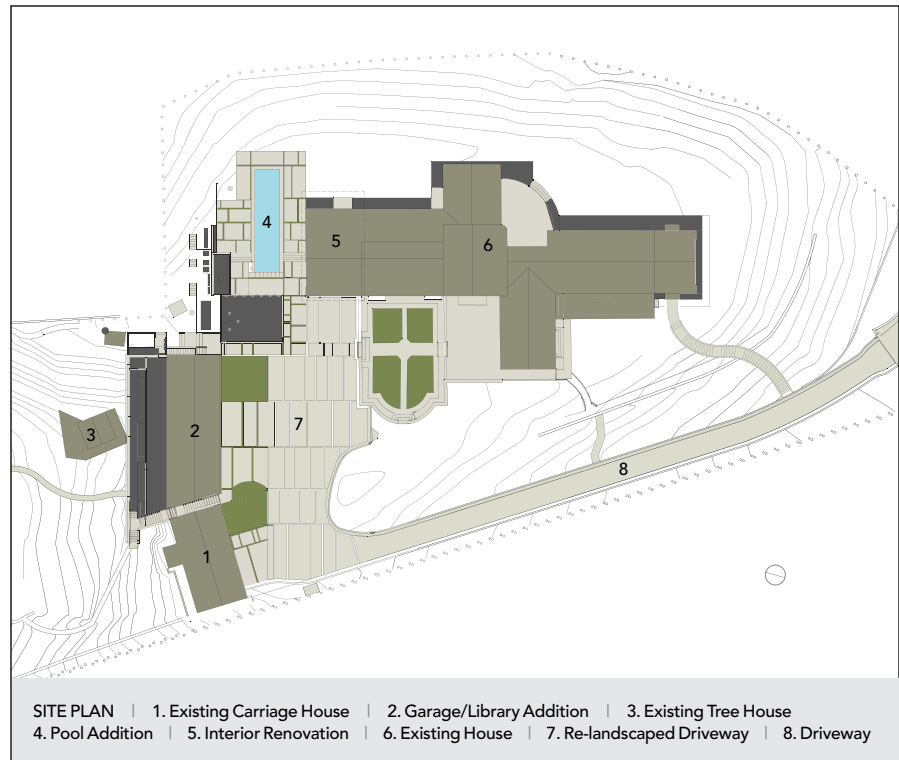
SECOND FLOOR: PRIVATE LIBRARY



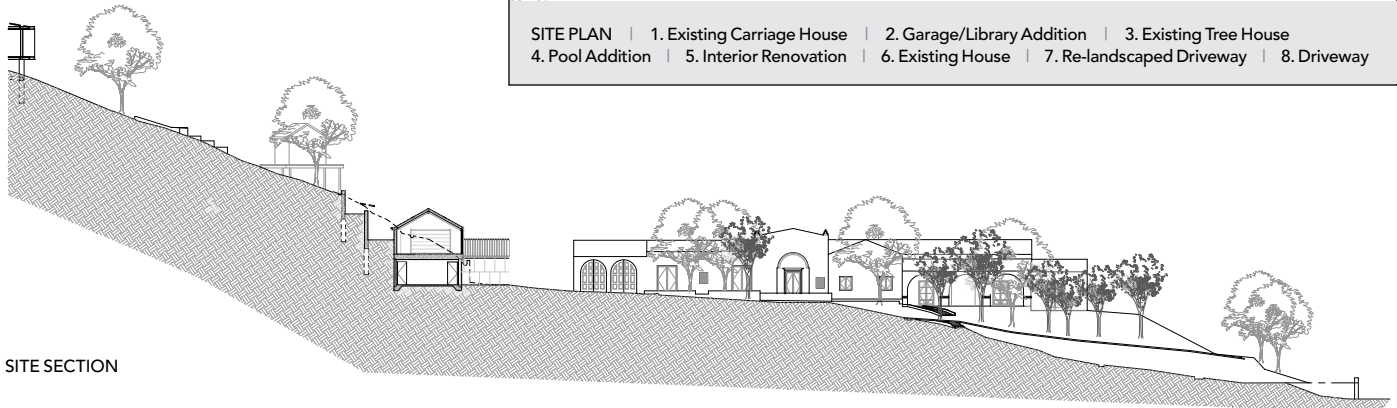
FIRST FLOOR: GARAGE



FLOOR PLANS | 1. Garage | 2. Storage  
3. Mechanical Room | 4. Stair Hall | 5. Reading Room  
6. Powder Room | 7. Library



SITE PLAN | 1. Existing Carriage House | 2. Garage/Library Addition | 3. Existing Tree House  
4. Pool Addition | 5. Interior Renovation | 6. Existing House | 7. Re-landscaped Driveway | 8. Driveway



SITE SECTION

small conference area, and a lounge with comfortable seating. Says Zoltan, “There’s a place for the books, a place to work, and a place to write. It’s a place to do the work that is not for money.”

There’s also a small bathroom with a shower, so the space can double as overflow guest accommodations. “Everything is neatly organized on a mathematic module,” he adds. “The shape of the gable, the volumetric expression of it—we really enjoyed those. And the screen elements that fold out like shutters.”

When the sun is shining in, the computer-carved screens cast shadows like artwork on the floors of the garage and library. For the clients, one of whom is a mathematician and the other who is an artist, the screens are the perfect synthesis of their two disciplines.

**Inside Job**

The main house rehabilitation, freed from the task of accommodating the new library, focused on restoring Wallace Neff’s aesthetic, undone by previous renovations. “My first

comment when I saw the interiors was, ‘what happened here?’” says Zoltan.

“The previous architect had taken that north end and turned it into something you’d see in a Cape Cod house—all clapboard. And the kitchen—it was Bulthaup, but in a dark pink! It all had to be rethought and redone.”

Not only did the interiors need realignment with the original aesthetic, they also had to tie in with the new pool and terraced outdoor areas. Again, the solution drew heavily on mathematics—in this case, the geometries

of the cross vaults. “Elsewhere in the house, Wallace had started this series of beautiful plastered cross vaults,” Zoltan explains. “We had to recreate the geometry to be indistinguishable from the old. We did laser-cut models to show the framers—who were like finish-level carpenters—that the lathe had to be very accurate.”

The team also set about restoring tile floors and other elements damaged or altered over time. A new opening to the pool area echoes the grand-scaled arched windows throughout the house, and the pink kitchen received a facelift in a calmer wood species to harmonize with the hexagonal tile floors.

Although primarily a job of reimagining and reinvention, there were still some opportunities for invention in the main house. For instance, the architects designed lovely casework (a desk, shelves, and consoles) that tucks into

arched niches. The built-ins play with the screen motif, cut in wood instead of metal or concrete. “The cabinets were engraved with a CNC milling machine,” say Zoltan. “All these elements that were once done by hand, we have to tackle with computers to even approach the precision of the originals.”

In the library, built-ins have a modern edge, such as benches that swoop under windows and join up with low bookshelves.

### Pattern Language

Viewed in site plan, the re-landscaped driveway and pool terrace evoke the patterning of a Klimt painting—a hybrid blend of ornate, organic design language and the orthogonal orderliness of modernism.

“We needed to create a more thoughtful paving experience,” says Zoltan.

“There were traditional tiles leading to the front of the house—a staged red grid, almost like a running bond ashlar



*This page:* Code required a fence for the new pool, so Zoltan made it as beautiful as the rest of the property.





The screen façade appears almost solid by day, but shimmers at night, exuding warm and welcoming light.

pattern. We created a similar pattern off the geometry of the new and old buildings, like shifting grids, that allowed us to manage different alignments. If you take it piece by piece, it shifts and moves, but it regularizes as a whole. To make the ground plane a cohesive thing is an old trick. It's what old campuses do as they add new buildings.”

Sympathetic and artful additions and alterations can breathe new life into a property and underscore the value and character of all the components. The critical move here was to relieve the burden on the older house of a more complicated program. A nip here, a tuck there, and in grand Hollywood fashion, it's ready for its close-up again, albeit with a dashing new co-star sharing the limelight. —S. Claire Conroy

## Morgan Phoa Library and Residence

Los Feliz, Los Angeles

**ARCHITECT:** Zoltan E. Pali, FAIA, principal-in-charge; Siddhartha Majumdar, AIA, project architect, SPF:architects, Culver City, Calif.

**BUILDER:** Bill Gordon, William Kent Development Inc., Los Angeles

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Korn Randolph Inc., Pasadena, Calif.

**PROJECT SIZE:** 3,300 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 1.81 acres

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** \$900 a square foot

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Roland Halbe

### KEY PRODUCTS

**WALL PANELS:** Arktura LLC

**WINDOWS:** Arcadia T200

**WINDOW SYSTEMS:** Western Window Systems

**COUNTERTOPS:** Caesarstone

**APPLIANCES:** Miele, GE Appliances

**FAUCETS:** Waterstone, Hansgrohe

**SINKS:** Kohler, Duravit, Dornbracht

**EXTERIOR LIGHTING:** Bega

**INTERIOR LIGHTING:** Louis Poulsen Lighting, Bartco Lighting, USAI Lighting

**LIGHTING CONTROL, SHADING:** Lutron

**PHOTOVOLTAICS:** PermaCity Solar



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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 19



## Double Diamond House

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QUOGUE, N.Y.

AUSTIN PATTERSON DISSTON ARCHITECTS



**It's the rare 1960s-era** Hamptons beachfront house that isn't torn down and replaced with something bigger and better when it changes hands. That's especially true if the building is in disrepair and has never been updated. Potential buyers were looking to do just that to this unusual house in Quogue, says Stuart Disston, AIA, who accompanied several prospective clients to the house to discuss teardown possibilities

when it was on the market. So he was thrilled when the new owner commissioned his firm to restore it.

"Growing up, I'd always loved the house, sitting there in the dunes with its beautiful abstract geometry," says Stuart, whose family has summered in Quogue for several generations. "The black lines and pure geometry reminded me of Mondrian's work, and the black pines gave it a wonderful look."

Sited near the crest of Quogue's tallest, 30-foot dune, the house has views of both the Atlantic Ocean and Quantuck Bay, and its double diamond roof and zigzag ramp stand out among the area's Shingle-style dwellings. In spite of its sorry state, the house had an interesting pedigree. Completed in the early 1960s, it was designed by New York-based modernist architect Abraham Geller. In addition to synagogues,



*This page:* The house's double diamond roof lends its maximum ceiling height to the living room. Although much of the original building was preserved, much was also replicated—including a new white brick fireplace. Some period furnishings conveyed with the sale and were restored; a majestic mural by Norman Bluhm remained in place.





*This page:* The original kitchen was small and cut off from the view, which supplied license for reinvention. To open it up, the architects annexed space from a former housekeeper's room.

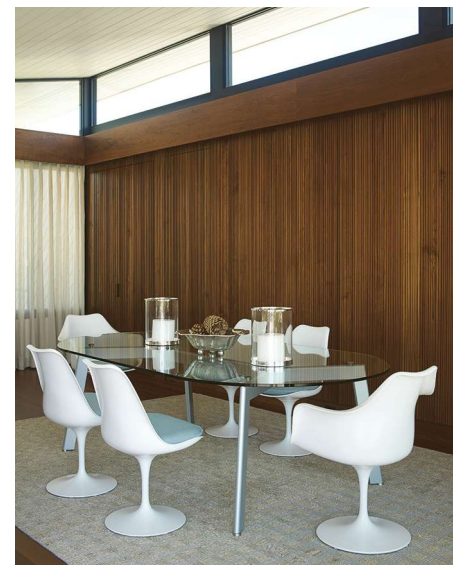
apartment buildings, and single-family houses, he is known for Cinemas 1 and 2 on 3rd Avenue in Manhattan, one of the first multiplex movie theaters in the nation, and Aaron Davis Hall, a performing arts auditorium at the City College of New York.

Fortunately, the house had had just one owner. She was 96 when she sold the house, and “it was like taking the wrappings off and finding something in pretty good condition that hadn’t been bastardized,” Stuart says. Strikingly simple, it consists of two boxes that contain the private/service functions—a kitchen and small bedroom on the east; and a master bedroom, sitting room, and third bedroom on the west. In the center is a clerestoried living pavilion with the double diamond roof. The diamonds form a butterfly shape and high ceilings on the interior, which was wrapped in teak and had hidden doors leading to the kitchen.

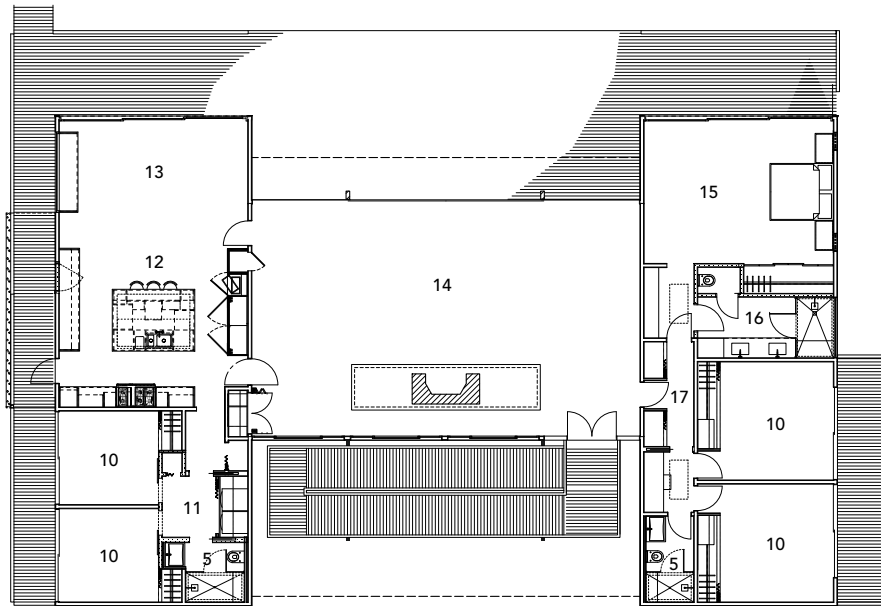
### Shell Game

Stuart saw his task as shoring up the house’s existing features, modernizing the building materials, and refinishing the interiors—including the period furniture, which conveyed with the sale. “The materials were not sophisticated. It was a matter of looking at the details and saying, how can we do it better in terms of structural systems, insulation, and keeping it weathertight,” he says.

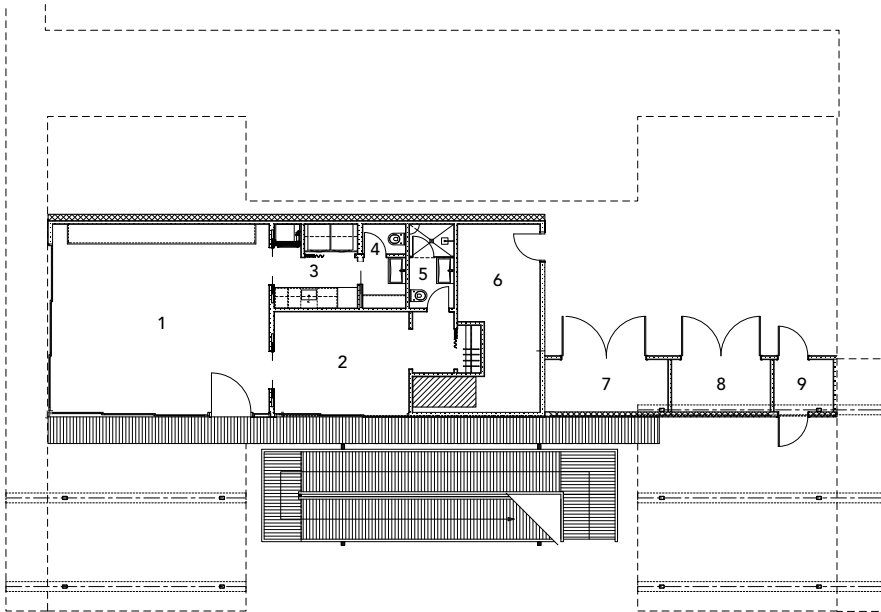
Inside and out, the gut-renovated house looks virtually the same as the original except for a few well-placed moves: The design team reversed the zigzag entrance ramp so that the lower section folds to the outside rather than the inside. They also opened up the kitchen to the former housekeeper’s bedroom/sitting room and views of the ocean. “I have some regrets about opening the kitchen; it was completely original, including the 1960s clock



SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



FLOOR PLAN | 1. Living Room | 2. Guest Bedroom | 3. Cabana | 4. W.C. | 5. Bath  
 6. Mechanical Room | 7. Bike & Kayak Storage | 8. Storage Lockers | 9. Garbage Recycle Area  
 10. Bedroom | 11. Laundry | 12. Kitchen | 13. Sitting Room | 14. Living Room  
 15. Master Bedroom | 16. Master Bath | 17. Hall

built into a soffit above the range,” Stuart says. “But today we don’t have housekeepers doing the servicing. We wanted to see the view from the kitchen.” Downstairs, the unconditioned cabana room was replaced with guest quarters that serve as a hangout space for the pool. And a new enclosed outdoor shower gives beachgoers a place to wash off before entering the house.

Structurally, it was a different story. The house had to be virtually rebuilt because the base of its steel supports had rotted through, including the supports holding up the diamond roof, and some of the roof framing was missing. While FEMA flood regulations did not require

“It was a matter of looking at the details and saying, how can we do it better?”

—Stuart Disston, AIA

the house to be raised on its foundation, the entire building was jacked up to make it plumb and level, and reinforced with structural steel. “With modern homes there is little tolerance for anything not truly level or plumb,” says builder George Vickers. “We made sure everything we reworked was true within an acceptable tolerance. The house in general was a pleasure to work with.”

Building technology has come a long way in the last six decades. New drains were installed to get water off the reverse roof pitch. And to satisfy the client’s request for a relatively maintenance-free exterior, the cladding consists of composite materials. The white diamond parapets are covered in an Azek PVC system. “The diamond roof set the style of the house, and the Azek panels allowed us to bond the parapet wall seamlessly, which we believe was the original intent if they could



*This page:* Architect Stuart Disston had long admired the eye-catching house on visits to the area as a child. It stands in striking contrast to the Shingle-style houses in the beach community,

have used this material,” Stuart says. Initially, the crew had also installed PVC—colored gray—on the flanking rectilinear volumes, but it soon became clear that the gray surface would absorb far more heat than the white surface and could therefore become unstable. “Temperature rises can cause problems with PVC products,” George says. “Because of the temperature differential over its lifetime, we would have had more movement than we wanted to see. We ended up using a Boral fly ash system for the gray areas.”

The graceful, 70-foot entry ramp was rebuilt with structural steel and ipe decking, and the sides, formerly marine plywood, were wrapped in white PVC so they look like solid masses in keeping with the architecture.

The update also took advantage of today’s more sophisticated glid-

ing window systems. The builder installed larger expanses of cast aluminum-framed glass on the ocean side—wall-to wall this time to honor the restorative views and the original design intent. New insulation and a hydro-air heating system keep the house comfortable in the off-season.

### Midcentury Mood

Walking into the house is like stepping into a Mad Men stage set. Original and custom-made items included in the sale were carefully restored, including indoor and outdoor furniture, a fireplace sculpture, lamps, vases, books, and a large painting by abstract expression-



ist Norman Bluhm that hangs on the living room wall. The construction crew rebuilt the brick fireplace to match the original. They also restored some of the wood furniture, the living room's teak flooring, and the distinctive handmade teak wall with a vertical routed texture that separates the living and dining area from the kitchen. New versions of the original wall-washer can lights were sourced and installed.

"We essentially modernized everything, approaching it with an aesthetic that would match the spirit of a 1960s modern beach house," Stuart says.

"We used a lot of synthetics, trying not to get overly fussy." In place of traditional midcentury 1x3 baseboard trim and window and door casings, the trim sits flush with the Sheetrock, separated by a thin channel or riglet.

Despite its good bones and breeding, the house has a laid-back vibe befitting its place in the sand, and the clients have fully embraced it as a summer residence. They even tend the restored vegetable garden tucked into the side of the dune. "The owners love it and are there as often as they can be," Stuart says.  
—Cheryl Weber



This page: The exteriors were in various states of disrepair, typical of less durable materials of the period. The team replicated key elements with cutting-edge, weather-worthy substitutes. An outdoor shower is a new addition.



## Double Diamond House

Quogue, N.Y.

**PROJECT SIZE:** 3,830 square feet

**ARCHITECT:** Stuart Disston, AIA; project manager: Josh Rosensweig, Austin Patterson Disston, Southport, Conn., and Quogue, N.Y.

**BUILDER:** George Vickers, George E. Vickers Enterprises, Westhampton Beach, N.Y.

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Giovanni Foronie Lo Faro, Bridgewater, Conn.

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Susan Leitner, New York

**PROJECT SIZE:** 3,830 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 2.1 acres

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Tria Giovan

### KEY PRODUCTS

**CLADDING:** Boral TruExterior and Azek PVC

**COUNTERTOPS:** Glassos

**DISHWASHER:** Miele

**FLOORING:** La Moda Tile

**KITCHEN AND BATH CABINETS:** Henrybuilt

**PAINT:** Benjamin Moore

**OVEN/RANGE/COOKTOP:** Wolf

**REFRIGERATOR:** Sub-Zero

**ROOFING:** EPDM

**SINKS:** Kohler

**WINDOWS:** Fleetwood



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# Franzen Project

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GIBSON ISLAND, MD.  
RILL ARCHITECTS

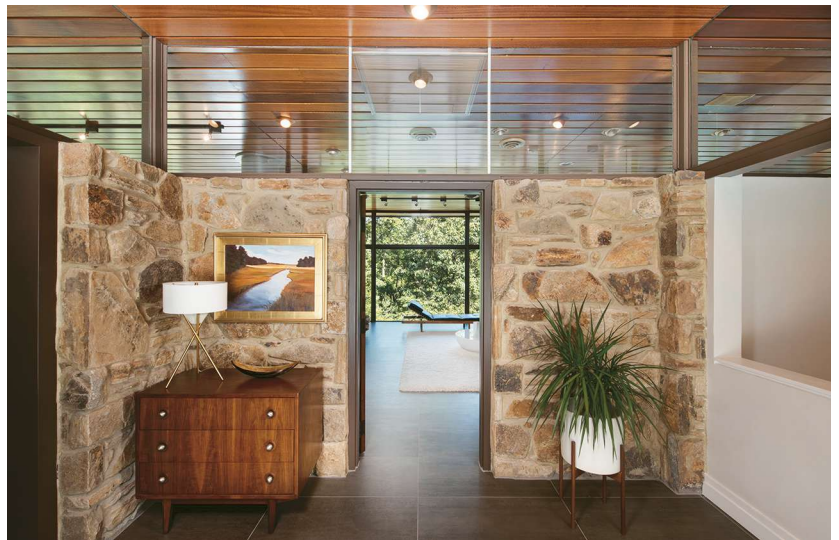
**When a good house** in a good location has been around for a long stretch, chances are it will have faced a number of interventions to keep up with modern tastes and lifestyles. Such was the case with this example built in 1962 on Gibson Island, a thousand-acre promontory between the Chesapeake Bay and the Magothy River, linked by causeway to mainland Maryland. Originally conceived as an upscale sailing community, the island was developed in consultation with Frederick Law Olmstead, and much of its acreage was set aside as green space. Its inhabitants are a mix of full-timers and weekenders, and the houses reflect those differing needs and ambitions.

This house was designed by Ulrich Franzen, a German-born architect who studied at Harvard under Walter Gropius and went on to a notable career as a modernist. His own house in Rye, N.Y., was in the first issue of *Architectural Record's Record Houses* and, coincidentally, strongly resembles the Double Diamond House by Abraham Geller we're also featuring in this issue of *RD*.

The original client was a salesperson for Bethlehem Steel, according to an article in *The Washington Post*, and the house is purported to have been the first built from the company's weathering steel. Certainly, its prominence in the design is striking, along with the stone and glass that accompany it.

Although the site is one of the highest points on the island, water views are limited. Instead, the main draw is the woods and the cloak of privacy they provide—it's the perfect refuge from city life.

*Oppsite and this page:* Steel, stone, glass, and wood set this midcentury modern house by Ulrich Franzen apart from other houses in the Maryland sailing community.





## Redo Redressed

Over the intervening years, the house had several remodels. The most recent renovation (before it sold to the current owners) added an elevator to the center of the house and a resistance pool in the lower level, but left many of the finish materials in their original condition. Everything was a little rough around the edges and, worst of all in hot, steamy coastal Maryland, the house had no central air conditioning.

The design-savvy clients called in architect Jim Rill, AIA, of Rill Architects and Horizon HouseWorks to help whip the place into shape and adapt it to their specific tastes and needs. “The previous architect didn’t know these customers,” Jim says graciously. The owners handled the interior furnishings themselves and were very hands-on with finish selections and other details. His role, as he perceived it, was to “re-inspire the house and re-inspire the landscape.”

“The woods had started to take over. And some of the changes to the house impeded the light and views to the outdoors. The elevator had closed the flow,” he recalls. Still, the house had maintained a good deal of its original integrity. “A lot of houses of this period are run down and beat up, but this one was unique. It was a real piece of art to start with, but one that had been caked over.”

The team did not set out to do a word-for-word translation of old into new, but one that recovered the poetry of the original while injecting a refinement and polish missing from the earlier, more earthy aesthetic. “We’re not forensic people,” says Jim. “But we understood what the architect and original owners set out to do.”



*This page:* Jim Rill’s redo focused on subtle refinements to the floor plan and finishes, and substantial fixes to a previous renovation.





One of the biggest challenges was adding central air conditioning within the open plan. New sleek flooring in large-format tiles replaces the former rustic ashlar tile, substantially freshening the overall look of the interiors.



Clockwise from above: New barn doors allow the master bedroom to remain open to views and light when guests aren't around. A polished master bathroom injects a naturalistic touch with a pebble shower floor. A new lower-level rec room sits atop the filled-in lap pool. And a combination bedroom/office inserts itself into the reconceived landscape.



### Out and In

First order of business was to excise the light-blocking elevator and fill in the lower level swimming pool. “I’m sure we dumped a bunch of construction debris in there,” Jim quips. A new, outdoor swimming pool was installed at the back of the house and a sliding window wall inserted to link it to the rec room. New large-format porcelain tiles replaced the rough-hewn, ashlar tiles on both levels.



Walls were removed and door openings enlarged with barn-door systems to expand light and views within the house and outdoors. A new central air conditioning system was inserted as seamlessly as possible. “It was about redoing all the electrical and mechanical systems while not killing the design,” Jim explains. “And it took real craftspeople to execute. There was almost no place to hide things with the partial walls and flat roof, but air

conditioning was essential. It is hot as heck out there.”

Placed atop those stone partial walls, the glass transoms (some of which were relocated) usher light throughout the house and are what make the solid roof and ceiling appear to float. The airy effect

“The changes allowed the house to expand the vistas, to outreach into the landscape.”

—Jim Rill, AIA

is in direct contrast with the heft of the stone on the interiors and exteriors. New, smooth porcelain floors recede appropriately into the background now, allowing the glass and stone to take center stage. The old tile floors had competed for attention with their scrappy texture and busy patterning.

In a nod to the stone walls, the master shower has a pebble floor, but the rest of the master bath is sleek and clean. “We updated the kitchen and did all new bathrooms in a modern tone,” says Jim. “All changes were in service to what today’s lifestyle is all about—cooking, living, and eating.”

Original mahogany ceilings were left largely intact (except for the occasional air return or other unavoidable utility). They are the lovely, glowing payoff for gazing through those glass transoms.

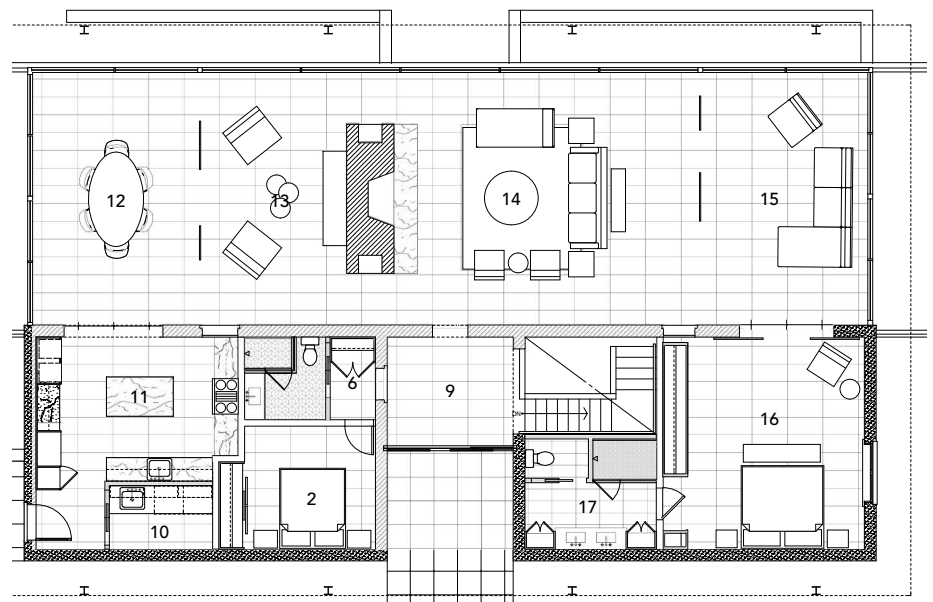
### Open and Shut

At just under 3,800 square feet, the house devotes the lion’s share of space to entertaining areas, both on the upper and lower levels. Those new barn doors allow some spaces to either close down for intimate gatherings or open up for larger-scale entertaining.

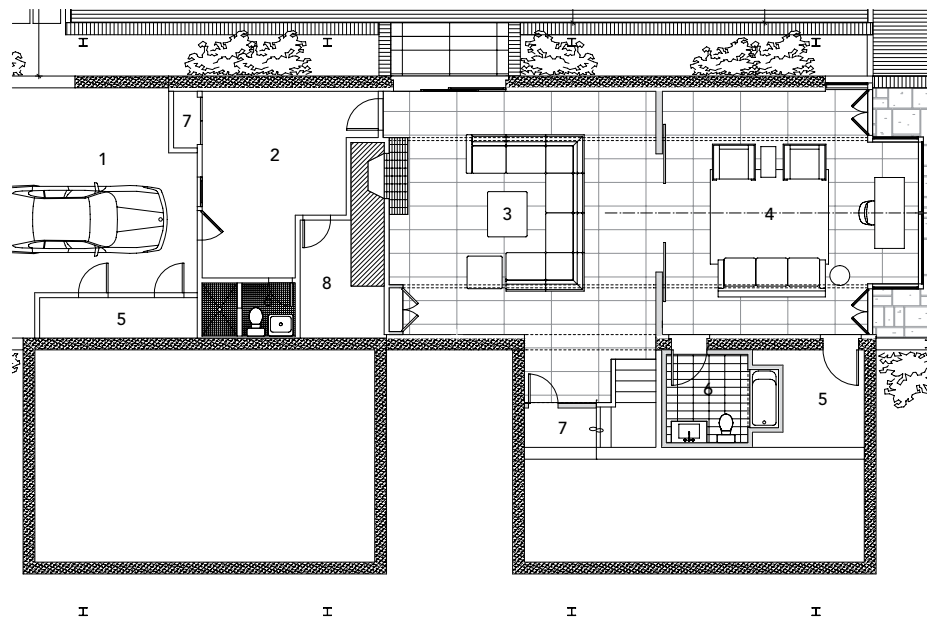
A commanding central fireplace is original to the house, made of the same stone as the walls, and terminating in steamship-like “smokestacks.” As with the transom windows, the chimneys allow light to flow above the fireplace wall, preserving the floating ceiling effect. The fireplace wall divides formal living from a sitting room and dining area. On the lower level, a new contemporary fireplace wall is faced with porcelain tile and supports a flat screen. Adjacent to the fireplace are the new glass doors to the pool, a pleasant distraction from the television.

Outside, the pool and pool deck are all new. Large raised planters help transition from the stone walls of the house to the pool terrace and then the woods beyond. An existing patio off the combination office/bedroom now links to the pool level. On the hilly site, these are the primary outdoor living areas. The upper level functions more like a tree house, with walls of glass facing the woods and a small balcony accessed from the master bedroom.

FIRST FLOOR



LOWER LEVEL



FLOOR PLANS | 1. Carport | 2. Bedroom | 3. Rec Room | 4. Bedroom/Office | 5. Storage/Mechanicals  
6. Bath | 7. Closet | 8. Mechanicals | 9. Entry | 10. Pantry/Laundry | 11. Kitchen | 12. Dining Room  
13. Sitting Room | 14. Living Room | 15. Study | 16. Master Bedroom | 17. Master Bath



Above: Rethinking and expanding the outdoor landscaped areas was a chief goal of the renovation. New sliding doors connect the lower level to a new pool and terrace. Beyond the cultivated outdoor areas, the woods reclaim the land.

## Franzen Project

Gibson Island, Md.

**ARCHITECTS:** James Rill, AIA, Rill Architects, Bethesda, Md.

**BUILDER:** Horizon HouseWorks, Crofton, Md.

**KITCHEN DESIGNER:** Shawna Dillon, Studio Snaidero, Alexandria, Va.

**PROJECT SIZE:** 3,750 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 2 acres

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Eric Taylor Photography

## KEY PRODUCTS

**WINDOWS AND SLIDING DOORS:** Western Window Systems

**GLAZING SYSTEMS:** Solar Innovations

**COUNTERTOPS:** Caesarstone

**KITCHEN APPLIANCES:** Miele

**KITCHEN VENTILATION:** Best

**TILE:** Mosaic Tile

**KITCHEN CABINETRY:** Snaidero

**FAUCETS/FIXTURES:** Duravit

**DOOR HARDWARE:** Artisan Hardware

**PAINTS:** Benjamin Moore, Farrow and Ball

Ultimately, these sharpened connections were the primary goal of Rill Architects' remodel. "The changes allowed the house to expand the vistas, to outreach into the landscape with exterior rooms and exterior courtyards—even if it was just an area of lawn or a couple of benches on the front terrace," he says. "The house is about living outside even when you're inside. It's a really wonderful place to be, whether it's a nice day or not. Those rainy, misty days in the woods are just as beautiful." —*S. Claire Conroy*

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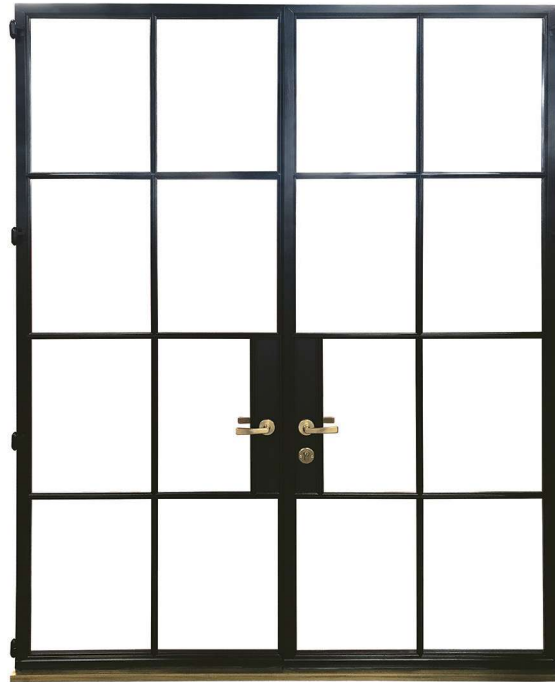
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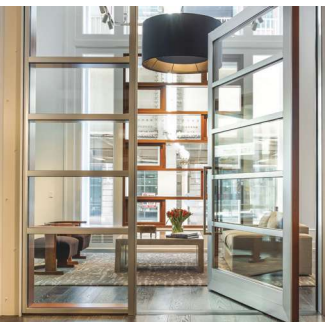
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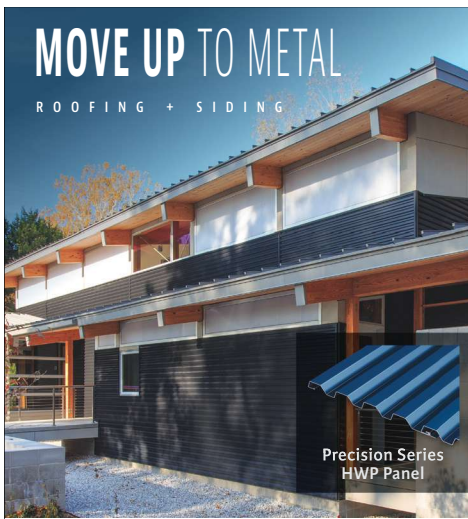
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## Uncooped

ESTES/TWOMBLY ARCHITECTS

PROJECT LOCATION: JAMESTOWN, R.I.

For architect Peter Twombly, AIA, of Estes/Twombly Architects, who works in the legendary seaside town of Newport, R.I., commissions follow a familiar pattern. His typical clients want a contemporary Shingle-style weekend house for their families, and they want it right on the water. The client for the Wilson Field House, however, sought something quite different: an unabashedly modern—but modest—primary residence for a single person. The elbow room of acreage abutting conservation land was more important to him than immersive views of the water, despite the fact that he manages yacht building for a living.

“He told us he wanted the house to belong in the field, instead of a bold architectural statement,” says Peter. “He wanted it to be transparent, tranquil, and modern, but with a touch of the local vernacular. So it has some characteristics of a New England farmhouse—but pretty loosely.” Its 2,800 square feet are apportioned to a combination kitchen/living/dining room in a low-slung volume, and a couple of first-floor bedrooms capped by a master suite in a tower volume. It’s the master suite that captures water views.

There are no nautical references, but the level of finish is as buttoned-up as a yacht, Peter notes. The exteriors are board-formed concrete, cedar shingles, standing seam metal roofing, and triple-paned German glazing. Interiors are plaster walls, white oak, and steel stairs.

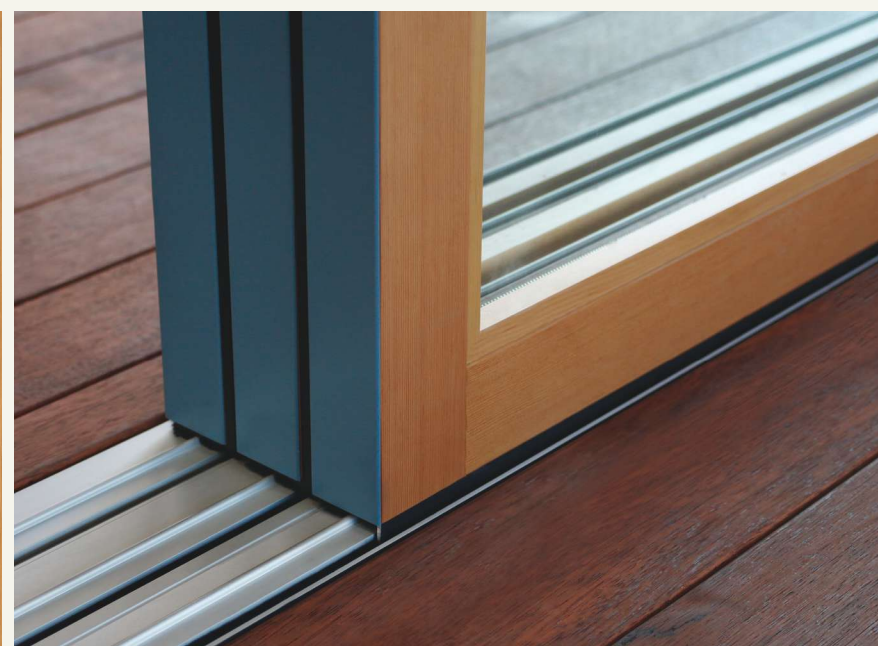
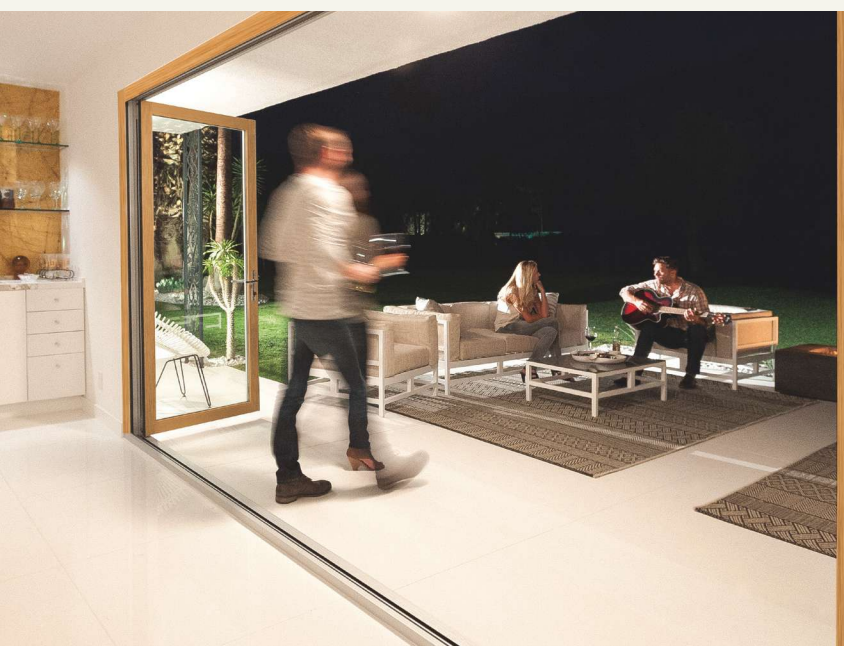
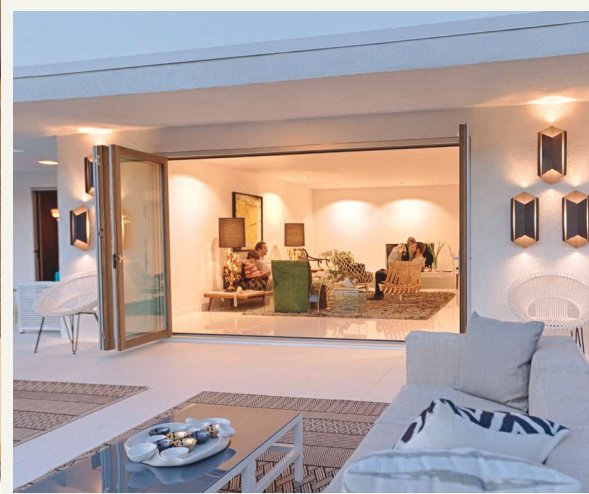
“We’ve gotten lots of positive comments on how the house nestles into the land form,” says Peter. “But then there was one guy who said it looks like a chicken coop. I guess you can’t please everyone.”—S. Claire Conroy



Photo: Robyn Reed

Project: Wilson Field House; architect: Peter Twombly, AIA, and Joseph Fenton, Estes/Twombly Architects, Newport, R.I.; landscape architect: Robyn Reed, ASLA, studio cosmo, Cambridge, Mass.; builder: Wade K. Paquin, WKP Construction, Newport. Drawings: Estes/Twombly Architects, Ezra Smith

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— Bryan Krannitz, AIA  
Krannitz Gehl Architects

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