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On the Cover: Split Box House by DiG Architects and Post + Beam Builders. Photo: Alexander Herring

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PUBLISHED BY

**SOLA
GROUP**

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Evanston, IL 60201
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Mission Impossible?



When I set out hunting for our Design Lab houses, I wasn't looking for houses on difficult sites. In fact, I was seeking out houses with strong indoor-outdoor connections, ones that—in some magical way—enhanced their natural settings. Somehow, though, the houses I chose all happened to occupy deeply flawed lots. This surprised me, because they had all transformed their sites so successfully, they appeared perfectly matched.

I was well aware, however, that our Case Study project was on a terrible site. Split Box House is just a few miles from my own house, and around the corner from a friend of my son's. I'd been watching this impossible build, mired in a muddy hole, for quite a while. It soon became apparent that it wasn't a typical Atlanta spec home going up, but a house with real architectural chops. Who would possibly build such a good house on such a horrendous lot? If you guessed an architect, you are correct. David I. Goldschmidt, of DiG Architects, selected the mud pit as the location for his family home—and then proceeded to turn it into a tour de force.

Nathan and Lisa Kalaher of PlaN Architecture didn't intend to choose a problem site for their home, but it ended up that way. In 2008, they bought a scenic, wooded lot along the Missouri River in South Dakota. As they were waiting to build, a 500-year flood ravaged the site. Their wooded property was now fully exposed and clearly in harm's way. As part of a flood control project, the land was built up and their homesite was now on a levy above the 100-year-flood mark—but they weren't taking any chances. They raised the lot 8 feet above the street elevation and tapered it back down to a gentle slope. Then they went about carving out privacy for the house now situated in an open prairie.

Aidlin Darling's project for clients in Palo Alto is also in a flood plain—and the top 2 feet of soil were expansive clay. So the team raised the building up 18 inches and anchored it with grade beams down to stable soils. Then they conjured an amazing house that opens wide to a beautifully curated lot—with mature redwoods and live oaks carefully preserved during construction. It's on a third of an acre, but it feels like 30.

Studio Dwell's impossible mission was to build a house with privacy, light, and protected outdoor views on a busy corner lot in Chicago. However, principal Mark Peters, a veteran of urban builds, understood just how to titrate the complex formula. The result is a building that enlivens the corner, while also establishing a courtyard for private outdoor views and activities.

Last comes our Parti Shot project, a house suspended over a creek in Napa Valley. Designed by Fougerson Architecture, it reimagines what a modern Fallingwater might look like today. And yes, it, too, is an impossible site—impossible and impossibly beautiful.

For those who ask, “Why hire an architect?” This is why.

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

S. Claire Conroy
Editor-in-Chief
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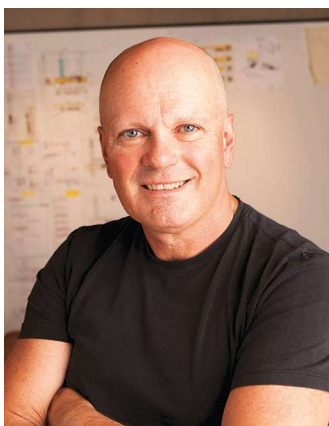
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New Horizons

MACKAY-LYONS SWEETAPPLE ARCHITECTS
 HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA; AND DENVER, COLORADO

Photo: Riley Smith



Above: Brian MacKay-Lyons.
 Right: MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple has opened an office in Denver, in part to service work on the ski resort, Horizon (shown in renderings), at Powder Mountain in Utah.

Renderings and sketch: Mackay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects



Brian MacKay-Lyons, FRAIC, is busier than ever these days exploring opportunities for the firm he founded in 1985. In addition to being a full professor of architecture at Dalhousie University, he oversees a staff of 23 in Halifax; has a small studio in Kingsburg at Shobac, the working family farm he’s developing with his trademark modern, fishing-village-like cottages; and is building a satellite office for six people in nearby Lunenburg, a UNESCO World Heritage town. Last September the firm also established a permanent presence in the U.S., where, among other commissions, MacKay-Lyons is bringing his ethic of vernacular economy to the design of a socially minded ski resort community at Powder Mountain in Eden, Utah. We caught up with him to learn more about these recent developments.

RD: Last September, you opened an office in Denver. Tell us why you wanted a U.S. presence.

BML: More than half of our work is in the U.S., and we needed an office closer to our clients. I think creativity is valued more in some parts of the U.S. than in Canada. The culture of architecture patrons fueled development of the modern architectural movement in the U.S.—people like Frank Lloyd Wright had

careers that could only have happened there, designing custom homes for people who are intellectually curious. Halifax is very conservative. Many clients we get to work for here in Canada have left and are returning home more worldly and a little more creative. At the end of the day, we just want good opportunities to make architecture and get paid for it. We’re Canadians—we’re not going anywhere, but it’s a global world now.

RD: Why Denver?

BML: We wanted to be in the mountains of the West because that’s where a lot of our work is these days. We thought Denver would be a great city to do it in because it’s very progressive, and there’s a school of architecture there that I’ve lectured at several times. So there’s good access to potential employees, and Denver is a place where you can keep employees because it’s a great place for them to live.

RD: How big will the Denver office be?

BML: It’s pretty small at this point, but as more contracts are signed, more people will be hired. Currently we have two employees in Denver and plan to hire maybe three more in the next short while. We have Americans working there,



This page: The cabins at Horizon range from 1,200 to 3,000 square feet, with bedrooms on the lower floor and open living on the upper. A series of ramps help the community cope with winter snowfalls of 60 or more feet.

and people from Halifax go down there to work on specific things. We're renting space in a co-op building downtown. If the office grows to a certain point, we will build something. We don't have a design on being a big firm; we just want to go where people want to do something exciting.

RD: What U.S. projects are in the pipeline now?

BML: My background is in urban design, so we're designing sometimes individual homes and sometimes communities, like the Horizon neighborhood at the top of Powder Mountain in Utah, part of the Summit development. There are 30 houses at Horizon and they're ticking along—eight will be done in the next couple of weeks. We're also doing several custom homes for folks nearby, and we have clients in other places too. We're designing a ranch for one of the owners of Summit.

RD: You've said that you see architecture as having a cultivating influence on the landscape, like a sustainable farmer, so it looks like something that's always been there. What vernacular traditions and archetypes are you excited about exploring in this location?

BML: People interpret regionalism as a limited perspective; it's not a style, but a professional skill. There's a famous book called *Ways of Seeing*, by John Berger, about how you develop your instinct for seeing place, your skills of observation. When you travel to a place, you see it clearer than the locals

do. I've lived in Japan, Tuscany, California. We're kind of like travelers who have an eye for place, like climate, culture, landscape. At Horizon, community and privacy have to be in balance. Buildings are jammed together in the positive sense of creating community, courtyards, and microclimates. The community aspect is one of those things that's more or less universal. Ironically, it looks like a fishing village in Nova Scotia.



RD: What is distinctive about Horizon's climate and landscape?

BML: It is high desert, 9,000 feet, with incredible solar gain, and bright because of the sun reflecting off the snow. Horizon is on a very steep mountainside that gets 60 feet of snowfall each winter and has some of the highest wind loads in North America. The units are on stilts because if you have 60 feet of snow during the winter, you can't get into the house except from the second level. We used the topography to create 40-foot bridges that take you into the house without huffing and puffing or shoveling the staircases. Or you can drive straight into the second level and sleep down below. You want the bedrooms below because you've got partitions, which are good for resisting wind loads. You want glass high up and cross walls down low. You're not trying to resist nature but work with it.

We've developed a pedestrian path system and places to do things together, like fire pits. The paths crisscross under the bridges a bit like Snakes and Ladders, so people get to say hello—community through circulation.


RD: You've developed four cabin types ranging from 1,291 square feet to 3,009 square feet, and are also designing a lodge. What are the go-to building materials in this location?

BML: We spend a lot of time in Nova Scotia worrying about building envelopes because we have condensation problems and the highest weathering rate with 265 freeze/thaw cycles a year, so materials are torn apart by climate. When we got out to Utah, we realized that materials dry out rather than staying wet and rotting, which is a liberating thing. But it's really hard to build at 9,000 feet. The season is short, like in Canada, and it's difficult to get materials there. The desert doesn't have lumber to speak of—the vernacular was corrugated iron flown in from Europe. We're bringing cedar in from the Pacific Northwest. We try to be locavores, but it's not a religion.

RD: What attracted you to the Powder Mountain development?

BML: We started out thinking it was a place for privileged people, but you get there and realize that there's no Kool-Aid, no cult. It's public, not a closed community; many of the people who are there are impact investors with social agency on their mind. We're doing a house for clients who build schools in the nine poorest countries in the world, for families that make less than a dollar a day.

Summit Powder Mountain is home base for the Summit Series, kind of like TED Talks. It is an intentional mixed-use community, and the founders are interested in all kinds of diversity—gender, racial, religious, and price point, so that people who work there can afford to live there. In Jackson Hole, servers in restaurants have to come over a mountain pass from adjoining states because they can't afford to live in the area, and people die doing that. This is something the owners at Powder Mountain are very aware of and trying to solve. And they are determined to build on only a couple hundred of the 10,000 acres, ever—to create community/density and leave most of it alone. We identify with many of the things they're trying to do.—*Cheryl Weber*




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The Jewel in the Craft

FINNE ARCHITECTS
SEATTLE

Seattle-based architect Nils Finne, AIA, just returned from his son's wedding in Miami. Most parents of the groom might pay for the rehearsal dinner, and maybe chip in for the wedding reception and the honeymoon—all very welcome contributions, for sure, but pretty pro forma. Nils, on the other hand, designed a 9-foot-by-8-foot, vaulted steel chuppa with lacy, laser-cut steel panels, and had it shipped from the fabricator in Seattle. There was some drama when the piece arrived “completely mangled,” as he puts it, but they were able to get it resolved and installed with just 25 minutes to spare before the ceremony began. Such is the life of an architect, a profession where creativity, construction, and emotional clients all collide.

Nils wouldn't have it any other way. He believes it's the intersection of all these elements that gives meaning to architecture. He's looking for his work to have relevance and resonance for years to come. To that end, he shuns fashion in favor of careful fabrication, practicing what he calls a “crafted modernism” that revels in bringing human beings and materials together in ways that shape and change them both.

“The chuppa transformed the venue—a rather neutral Herzog & de Meuron building—into something magical,” he says. What's powerful about the canopy isn't just the beau-



Renderings this page: Finne Architects



Photo: Courtesy Finne Architects



Natural light is a precious commodity in the Pacific Northwest, so Nils (pictured) applies his Nordic know-how to bring in as much as possible—often through manipulations of roof structure, as in this house under construction on Bainbridge Island. Intricate, sculptural metalwork is a firm signature.

ty of its form, but also the sheltering space it creates within for the wedding couple. Now that the wedding is over, the chuppa will morph into a garden trellis and aide-memoire at the home of the bride's mother. “Perhaps it will grow covered with vegetation and rust over time,” Nils muses. “I haven't experienced a wedding before where there's a continuous reminder of it in a piece of architecture.” Clearly, the notion gives him pleasure.

Kitchen Experiential

Nils first captured national attention several decades ago with his artful renovations of Seattle houses. His “crafted modernism” was most evident in the kitchens, which are routinely design-intensive spaces under any circumstances. His, however, stood out as especially sculptural and inventive, with meticulous attention to detail. Perusing the intricate custom cabinetry, art glass counters, and sinewy metalwork that

Photos this page: Benjamin Benschneider



characterizes them, it's easy to perceive Nils as not only a natural architect, but a born furniture maker as well. It was and is his other great love and calling in life.

Every custom project his firm does is imbued with these dual skills, "furniture becoming architecture, and architecture becoming furniture," he says. "Furniture is kind of an experimental design laboratory for me. I can design things

A deep infusion of Nordic influences permeates how Nils sees buildings.

at a scale and level of cost that allows me to push on it more. And then it can track back to a piece of architecture."

Among his signature works are finely wrought steel stair railings, each as carefully conceived and executed as the chuppa. Beyond the built-ins, he also designs light fixtures, tables, and other objects of everyday utility and otherworldly beauty. His custom houses take 18 months to two years to build, because he's constantly innovating as they come together onsite: "Tweak, tweak, tweak—that's what we do.

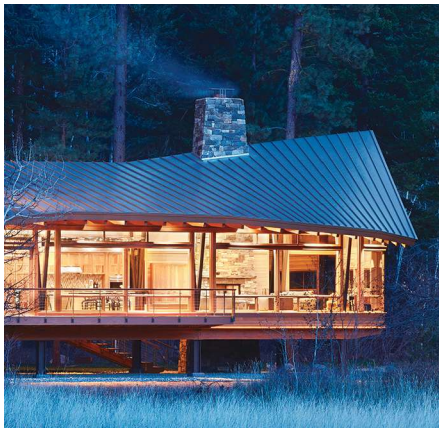
"We spend about 35 percent of our time in construction," he says. "We spend a lot of time on details, shop drawings—every component of the house." For a recent house in Venice, California, the firm executed "75 architectural sheets, 140 pages of specifications, and 80 sheets of steel shop drawings"—all with a staff that fluctuates between two or three other architects.

Staying small and managing a workload of four to five projects a year keeps Nils close to every decision and client. "I'm like a blanket over all the projects," he says. "And I'm always talking with my clients. I spend a lot of time making sure they're happy and it's going well."



This page: The firm is currently busy with new builds, but Nils still has a fondness for remodels. "I enjoy searching for the soul of an older home and inserting rich, modern elements. To paraphrase Sverre Fehn, 'Only by manifesting the present can we engage the past.'" Pictured: Lake Forest Park Renovation.

Photo: Benjamin Benschneider



Above and right: Finne Architects raised the bridge-like Mazama House to better capture views and hoist it above the winter snowpack. The undulating roof permits light penetration while also activating the interior structure.



Photo: Benjamin Benschneider

Nordic Tracks

That's wise, given that his work requires patron-like support and confidence in the outcome. Not every client would want to underwrite the undulating roof structure of the Mazama House or the Venice House, for instance, but the ones who do gain a spatial experience like no other. Part of the payoff is in the quality of natural light (a precious commodity in the Pacific Northwest) and another is in the activation of form and materials—both inside and outside the house. “Roof structure offers enormous architectural potential,” he says. “For starters, the roof is an aperture for light. If done correctly, bringing light in through a roof structure creates a luminous interior environment. It brings in a soft light over wood surfaces that can make them really glow.

“It can also be a way of transforming space and bringing in a sense of sequential drama to a room,” he continues. “How people enter a room, how the eye unfolds and opens up the space—like making your hand into a fan shape—creates a sense of movement and surprise.”

Nils, a Norwegian American, has spent a great deal of time in Scandinavia and is deeply influenced by its architecture and architects, in particular Sverre Fehn of Oslo and Juhani Pallasmaa of Helsinki, both of whom he came to know well. This infusion of Nordic influences permeates how he sees buildings—their purpose and their possibilities. He avoids the typical modern architect's fondness for “skin condition” buildings, preferring to embrace “sheltering gestures,” as seen in the deep overhangs of the Port Ludlow House and Deschutes House.

“If you have a skin condition, the transition from inside to outside is kind of brutal, like a knife—that line cutting you,” he explains. “With roof overhangs, you create shade, preserve the outside of the structure from the effects of weathering over time. And you have a gradation in transition from interior to exterior. A 5-or-6-foot overhang gives you a shaded zone, and a much calmer, subtler way to move outside.”

Scandinavians' love of craft is well-known and admired, and Nils thinks it

derives from the long winter hours they spend inside their houses. It's vital that their interior world is warmly, richly detailed and constructed of high-quality, long-lasting materials. It is not a “throwaway culture,” he points out. It's a lesson he applies to his own work at all scales.

Photo: Tom Bonner



Above: The recently completed Venice House creates an oasis in a dense neighborhood. Its hyperbolic paraboloid roof adds drama to exterior and interior spaces.

Photos this page: Benjamin Benschneider



Above and right: Located along the Deschutes River in Bend, Oregon, the Deschutes House cantilevers key rooms into the view. Deep overhangs shield the building from sun and snow. A fireplace detail of Montana stone and steel.

Jewel Box

Once upon a time, the kind of craft Nils designs into his buildings was done by highly skilled carpenters and other trades. Indeed, he thinks it's craft and detail that people seek when choosing older houses or traditional architecture. But, he maintains it's perfectly possible and desirable to infuse modern architecture with a similar level of craft and detail. If that craft rises to the quality of sculpture—everyday sculpture you can touch and engage—all the better. These days, such work is delivered via CAD files, CNC machines, and water-jet cutters. Although possibly less romantic than work done by hand, the results are no less beautiful and durable.

Nils cites the example of a jewelry box he designed for his wife. It's adorned with intricately executed CNC milling. He thinks there's a timeless quality to the appearance and effect of the milling. "You could put the box in a drawer and pull it out years later and not know when it was made," he says. "That's what I'm striving for with the houses I design—that same timeless quality. I want you to be able to look at them years later and they would still blow you away." —S. Claire Conroy



Above: Finne Architects often weaves custom light and furniture designs into its remodels and new builds.

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Life Lessons

ROB CARLTON, AIA, CARLTON EDWARDS
ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

There are a lot of skills they don't teach you in college; chief among them is how to run a business. This is especially true of architecture school, where the emphasis is on design thinking and not profits and pro formas. Lucky for design/builder Rob Carlton, AIA, that his postgraduate training was at the entrepreneurial architecture firm, Looney Ricks Kiss in Memphis. LRK has always led the way among firms that work with developers, with one eye on design rigor and the other eye on market

forces. They design real world projects for real people, and it was a solid education for a young designer right out of school.

“Working for Carson Looney taught me a great deal about the housing market from the perspective of commerce,” says Rob. “The homebuilding industry was a foreign thing to me before I got there. And it was exciting to be a part of their developing architecture for new urban communities.” Ultimately, though, the interlude was a cul-de-sac

on Rob's path to a career in custom residential design and construction—albeit an important one. Not only did he acquire a few of those skills not taught in school, but he made significant professional contacts that pay dividends to this day (and some personals ones, too).

It was a time of great opportunity and bounty in the early 2000s, so Rob



Rob Carlton, AIA

Photo: Ben Photography

Photos this page: David Dietrich Photography



Clockwise from opposite page: Many of the firm's design/build commissions are located in gated communities with design restrictions. So the mountaintop Wildcat Residence evokes the mandated idea of "American Piedmont." The energy-efficient Windsor residence occupies a steep site in North Asheville. The Balsam Mountain Residence orients to capture 270-degree views.

moved on to a town and to architectural work that were more in keeping with his zeitgeist ("I had sworn I would never live in Memphis," says the Tennessee native). The place that beckoned was the mountain town of Asheville, North Carolina, and the small generalist firm, Samsel Architects. "I was looking for residential and they had a growing portfolio of residential work, but honestly it was the city that hooked me. It has great culture, a very creative environment—it's not your typical Southern city."

The Road Ahead

He got there right before 9/11. But, he says, given this decade's Great Recession, the dip in the economy back then felt more like a blip in his forward trajectory. Indeed, the next few years were boom times in Asheville. The development of Biltmore's vast landholdings was moving full speed ahead, along with other high-end communities around the nearby mountains and lakes of South Carolina. Rob was in the thick

of it, expanding his list of connections among developers, builders, and other influencers. He was helped along by his wife, Dawn, a property manager at the time with her own relationships with developers and builders.

Thus around 2005, Rob felt it was the right time to go out on his own. Oops. "I could see all this building

going on. I knew all these builders, I had all these relationships, and I had just passed my licensing exam," he recalls. "I knew I loved this work, and I wanted to do it every day. The seed was planted, and it felt like there was no failing. Had I known what was around the corner, I might not have done it. But it was great for a couple of years."





Photo: David Dietrich Photography

This page: Featured on last year's CRAN Symposium tour in Cincinnati, the LEED Platinum Grandin Terrace Residence was designed for environmentally conscious empty nesters. Key functions are located on the main floor and secondary rooms on the lower level of the steeply sited house.

Having survived some intervening years of struggle, business is great again, although Rob notes that market exuberance is more rational these days. He feels the firm is better anchored now against rogue waves the economy may spawn. During the slowdown, he picked up his contractor's license, so he's able to build many of the houses his Asheville office designs—capturing more dollars on each project and maintaining quality control. And he's expanded the business cautiously into Memphis (2013), with former LRK alum Jeff Edwards at the helm there, and into Nashville (2016), with Matt Zink, AIA, who interned in the Asheville office 10 years earlier. Jeff brings a great residential client base in another region, and Matt offers an additional revenue stream in restaurant design. They are each design directors in their locales, and Rob's office supports them on the business side. Only the Asheville office offers construction services.

"The past recession was certainly a backdrop to these decisions to diversify—geographically and into design/build," says Rob. "We want to be ready for the next big thing, but we'll only move toward these opportunities if they're about delivering good design."

"Adding construction services was definitely born of necessity, but also a desire to be close to the work and close to all aspects of the decision making," he continues. "By its nature, architect-led design/build is integrated project delivery. It's the buzzword in the industry now, but it's just the nature of how we go about our work every day: a builder sitting next to an architect, hearing phone calls—both good and bad. The awareness of what's happening on your project is instantaneous—instead of the lag and draw down of time and energy that's so inefficient."

Given how much and how fast the firm has grown in the last few years, efficiency is very much on Rob's mind.



Photo: David Dietrich Photography

Foremost on his to-do list is refining how the office collaborates—in Asheville, with the other offices, and with clients. So, he's investing in the best tools and technology he can find. "We produce our drawings in Revit. But we're also adopting BIM360, so we can be more collaborative inter-office and intra-office. Day in and day out, we use Enscape to study the details—the visualization it affords is irreplaceable," he explains. "Enscape will export to an Oculus

headset, so we can get clients into the space. It's great for explaining concepts and resolution at a level we could never do before—it gets them more engaged in the project. And I'm very confident it will save money on change orders."

The virtual reality (VR) tools have had the unexpected benefit of supporting Rob's burgeoning workload as both a designer and managing principal. "I'm 46, and already a dinosaur versus the 24-year-olds in my office," he says. "I'm probably not going to learn Revit, but I will engage with VR and it enables me to stay on top of the details."

After rolling out VR tools in the Asheville office, Rob is moving ahead with their deployment in the other offices. "To attract and keep the best talent, you have to have the best technology," he says.



Photo: David Dietrich Photography

Designed and built by Carlton Edwards, the Piedmont Residence, which overlooks a lake in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, won a 2013 AIANC award.

It's clear the young people coming to his firm will receive the same first-rate education in business management he did back at LRK. Looney Ricks Kiss grew too big too fast, forcing a Chapter 11 reorganization at the nadir of the recession, so Rob applies those lessons,

as well, by taking proactive measures while times are good: diversification into different revenue streams, different markets, and acquiring the right tools to trim waste. It's all a means to a single end, however—delivering good design. —S. Claire Conroy

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 12

A Brief Reflection on 35 Years in Architecture

BY STUART NAROFSKY, FAIA



Stuart Narofsky,
FAIA

Last year marked the 35th anniversary of the start of my architectural practice. Normally, a milestone like this has one reflecting on the past—the successes, failures, memorable projects, and perhaps projects that should never have been taken on in the first place. However, two events occurred in the fall of 2018 that changed the way I looked back on the paths I've taken and the convergences that have determined my current ways of thinking about architecture and design.

Those two events were the death on October 18 of Robert Venturi, founding principal of Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates and author of the 1966 treatise “Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture”; and October 23, the centennial of the birth of Paul Rudolph, the former Yale architecture dean whose often controversial work is now being rediscovered and reconsidered in two New York exhibits.

Studio Days

I attended the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) back in the 1970s, when the architecture program was in its infancy. My class of '78 was the first to graduate with an accredited degree. As with most newly established programs, there was no formal pedagogical theory or philosophy that motivated us. These were interesting times, to say the least—a dire economy, a bankrupt city, and a profession with unemployment hovering near an all-time high. So our exposure to the architecture profession was predominantly from our instructors, who were disciples of Mies van der Rohe's “less is more” credo and “form follows function,” the phrase coined by 19th-century master Louis Sullivan.

“Plan and Section” were drilled into us. With little construction work going on, many architects were devoting time to theory and experimentation. Thirsting for more knowledge and inspiration, a group of us started the school's first lecture program. As a member of the lecture committee I had the opportunity to meet some of architecture's future “stars”: Michael Graves, Robert A.M. Stern, Peter Eisenman, to name a few. Paul Rudolph was also among the speakers, a once

influential practitioner and educator whose work was considered passé at the time, dimming in the light of postmodern thought. Although Mr. Venturi never lectured at our school, his work and ideas were much talked about.

Within the school's studios, camps began to emerge. There were the New York Fivers (influenced by the New York City Five—Eisenman, Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, and Richard Meier), the Wrightian clan, and the ever-growing group of Venturi disciples. In one instance, students with an aversion to the growing postmodern movement put up a picture of Philip Johnson's proposed AT&T building and used it as a dartboard.

Professional Path

During Mr. Rudolph's lecture at NYIT, he visited our studio and, impressed with the work he observed, asked me and a few other students if we would be interested in working for him—specifically to build a model of his proposed complex for the New Haven Government Center. Of course, I jumped at the opportunity—my first job in the profession. As there were only five of us in his office, I benefited from working firsthand with the master—a memorable experience. I worked there until the spring of '78, when I left to complete my thesis.



Photos: Phillip Ennis

Above: Model for Paul Rudolph's proposed New Haven Government Center

During my time in Mr. Rudolph's office and while developing my thesis, a group of us set out on a pilgrimage to Scottsdale, Arizona, to meet Paolo Soleri and experience his visionary desert city, Arcosanti, and to see Taliesin West, Frank Lloyd Wright's winter retreat. These visits had a great impact on my thinking and ultimately on the design of my thesis, which was an organic and visionary scheme to redesign the center of Flushing, New York, my hometown.

Upon graduation, I contacted Mr. Rudolph to see if I could return to his office, but he had very little work so he was unable to accommodate me. That summer I visited and applied for positions with many of the architects I had met while on the lecture committee. Eventually, I secured a drafting position with a small design firm on Long Island, where I spent four years.

While there, I was mostly designing white minimalist alterations and additions to post-World War II housing boom ranches on Long Island's "Gold Coast," along with some new homes. I enjoyed the work I was doing and focused on refining my skills. I became interested in more sustainable ideas and studied the work of architects Luis Barragán and Emilio Ambasz, as well as a few local early green thinkers such as Malcolm Wells, William Morgan, and John Johansen.

Fork in the Road

I offer the details of my early experience and influences as a way of expressing the dichotomous situation I found myself in at the start of my private practice. In 1983, I secured my first private commission: an alteration to an Upper East Side townhouse. As I was developing the parti for the design, I struggled with two distinct approaches: a minimal intervention like the ones I had designed on Long Island, or a historically influenced (Venturi harking) approach. I veered and took the Venturi way. I have since come to believe the ideas and vision of post-modernism were brewing within me, or perhaps it was just time for a change. The project was a great success and led to a string of similar-themed projects.



Top: Bryskin alteration, 1983.
Above: Ennis Residence, 1986



Above: The Fried Residence, 1989

Turn in the Road

By the end of the '80s, I was growing concerned with the derivative formula driving each project. It seemed I barely considered the essential elements of design that were so important back in school and in the offices I had worked at previously. I began to retrace my steps and also hit the books: Mies, Louis Kahn, and the work of midcentury masters Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra. Reinvigorated, I was looking for a project to apply my current ideas and again change direction.

A New Path

While I was returning to the basics of modern critical design criteria (site, program, resource, spatial relationships, and so forth), the Long Island suburban architectural community around my Port Washington office had evolved from post-modernism to neo this and neo that.

With designers having no formal training in classical architecture, most of what was being built was compromised. I felt I was on the right path and avoided the "McMansion craze." Since then, our current practice still approaches each project by applying the same fundamentals and incorporating sustainability, resiliency, and, yes, "richness of meaning" and the occasional "touch of humor"—hat tip to Mr. Venturi.



Left to right: The Doshi Residence, 2005; the Klaynberg Residence, 2017

Stuart Narofsky, FAIA, is past chair of CRAN and former president of AIA Long Island. He and his partner and wife, Jennifer Rusch, oversee a boutique design studio in Long Island City, New York.



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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 13

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Box Populi

An architect solves a precipitous problem with a set of artfully stacked boxes.

BY S. CLAIRE CONROY

LOCATION: ATLANTA

ARCHITECT: DIG ARCHITECTS

BUILDER: POST + BEAM BUILDERS

Modern houses are popping up on urban and close-in suburban lots across the country. While not fully centered in the mainstream yet, it's obvious the market for modern is growing. One strong indicator is that many of these houses are speculative projects, which are typically conservative ventures geared toward the common ground of buyers' tastes. No one would build them if they didn't think there was a real appetite for them. Alas, a large portion of these speculative houses aren't very successful from a design standpoint. They miss the mark in the massing, the detailing, and a myriad of other flaws. Atlanta is replete with these kinds of mediocre moderns, but buyers' hunger for something fresh and different means they still sell and the cycle continues. When a good modern house turns up here, it's a truly noteworthy occasion. Such was the case with Split Box House, which emerged from its hilly, muddy site last year like a beacon of hope—finally someone was building a good modern house in the city. It captured everyone's attention—and a starring role on Atlanta's annual tour of modern homes.

You can probably guess the punchline from here. No, this was not a speculative project; it was not even a simple custom home—it was an architect's own house for himself







This page: Fiber cement rainscreen cladding, foundation walls, and fenestration arrange in precise patterns to activate the home's otherwise serene exteriors.

and his family. Sometimes architects are their own best patrons—if they can convince their spouses to come along for the ride.

For David I. Goldschmidt, AIA, and his family, it was a long journey in years to this point, but a short trip from their rental house in the same close-in neighborhood. “When my wife and I moved here from New York, we had to find something quickly. So we rented a 1950s, three-bedroom ranch,” he recalls. “We thought we would just stay a short time until we found something we liked, but it took us eight years to locate the right property. I liked nothing. There were one or two houses to buy in the neighborhood, and they were OK, but we

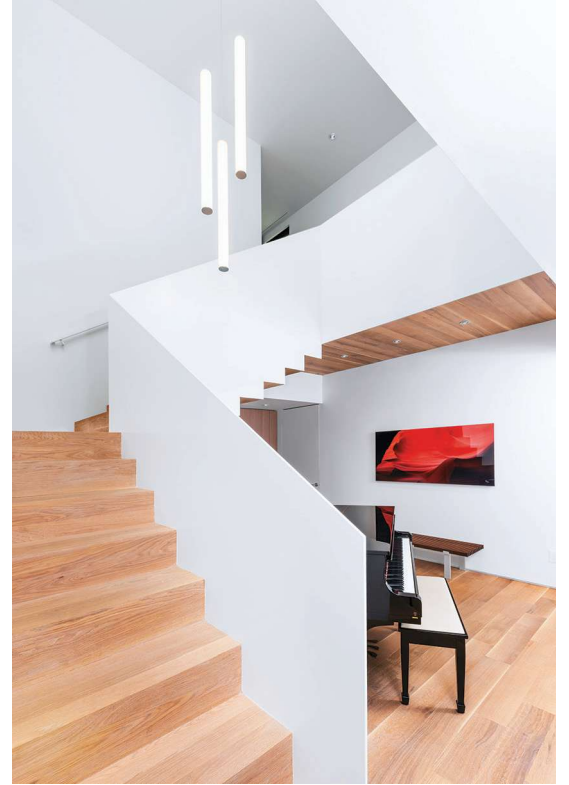
would have had to renovate. We put bids on two properties before this one. One ended up as a bidding war and I was too cheap to pay another \$2,000 for it. It would have been less expensive in the long run—and an easier build. The other property had a huge, steep hill—even worse than this site.”

Although the lesser evil, this wooded urban lot was no walk in the park by any means. Says David’s general contractor, Wyatt Anderson of Post + Beam Builders, “It’s basically a hole. It is the most difficult site I’ve ever had to deal with.” Still, it had some virtues going for it. The location is close to two of Atlanta’s biggest employers—the Centers for Disease Control and Emory University—and it’s a mature

neighborhood with plenty of greenery, parks and trails, and convenient shopping nearby. Best of all, the lot was deep and wide—nearly 300 feet to the back of the property and 110 feet fronting the street. There was elbow room to get creative.

“No developer would have touched this site,” David admits. “They would have moved on to something easier. But we like the challenge. The more constraints there are, the more opportunities. If it’s a normal, flat site, what do I do? And the width of it gave me the ability to play.”

If you drive through the neighborhood, you can see how decades of builders and architects have coped with the topography—which drops 15 feet or more from the road in some areas. “There are a couple of houses where people drive across a bridge to get to their house and then park underneath. We thought about a bridge, or an entrance terrace with steps to the house. Instead, we did a series of terraced steps descending to the house—but everyone still walks down the driveway.”



This page: A minimalist palette of white walls, white oak floors and trim, and walnut built-ins temper the Tetris-like complexity of the interiors.





The Hole Story

David had eight years to ponder his design, but without a specific site he could only narrow down the aesthetics and approach he hoped to take. “I had an idea of how I wanted to do the house—the minimalism and the detailing,” he says. “When we got the property, I devised the general idea of coming down the site, going through a hole, and continuing down. The whole house would step down the hill and work with the topography. Then I could figure out the massing.”

Architects have a penchant for taking something easy and designing in complexity. Speculative builders, on the other hand, tend to stay with the easy and layer on decoration. Had David wanted to build the cheapest, most straightforward modern house he could, he would have simply plopped a glass-filled cube on the lot, as so many are doing in the city. But he wanted to do more than just employ the site, he wanted to engage it at every opportunity. So he started with the usual house box, “cut” it to suit the programmed square footage, divided it into public and private functions, and then split and rotated the box into perpendicular volumes.



This page and opposite: Storage walls line the circulation hall on the south side of the house, while glazing opens up to curated northern and eastern views of the wooded lot. Skylights placed in deep, angled ceiling recesses bounce soft light into interior spaces.





This page: The ipe-lined “hole” created by the split boxes is the home’s tour de force. Breeze travels down the hill from the street, says David, moderating temperatures in the outdoor room.

A public main level is the long bar that runs lengthwise down the lot, and the private second level orients widthwise parallel to the street. The second level spans across to join a ground floor guest suite, forming the “hole” to the back of the property.

The hole is much more than the sum of its parts, however. In many ways, it’s the central delight of the house. Lined in ipe, it becomes a fully articulated outdoor room—a grand front porch, of sorts. It asks the eye to stop, rest, and enjoy, while simultaneously beckoning it on to the curated landscape beyond.

“A square is the most efficient house to build,” David

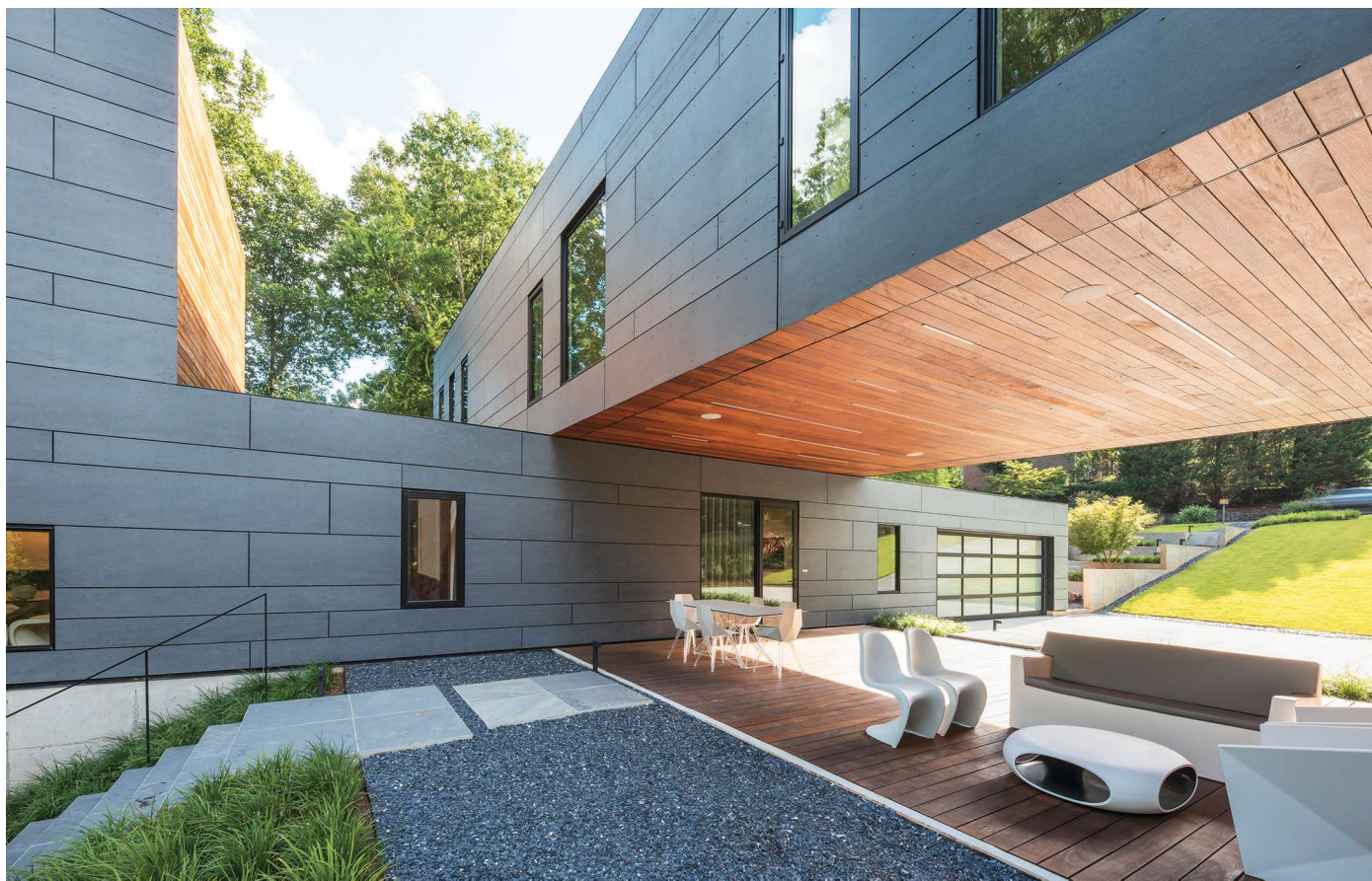
“No developer would have touched this site. But we like the challenge.

The more constraints there are, the more opportunities.”

—David I. Goldschmidt, AIA

admits. “Ours, because it’s two long bars, is not the most cost-effective. But it allowed me to frame every interesting view to the back of the property. At first, I didn’t even want windows on the front of the house. But my wife wouldn’t go for that.”

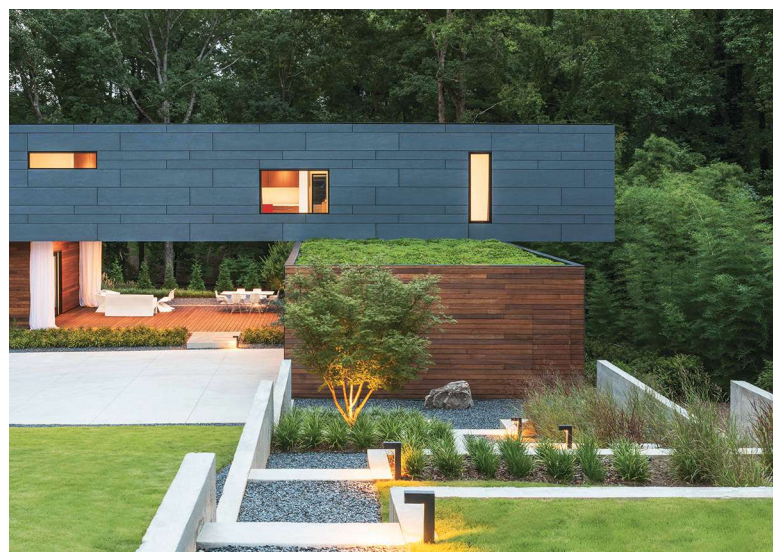
David is good humored when describing the dynamic of designing for his own family—in a punchy, Henny Youngman kind of way: “It was *interesting* having my family as a client. In general, it worked out OK. I would narrow things down to a few choices, and my wife would pick the one I liked the least. And then I’d overrule her,” he jokes.

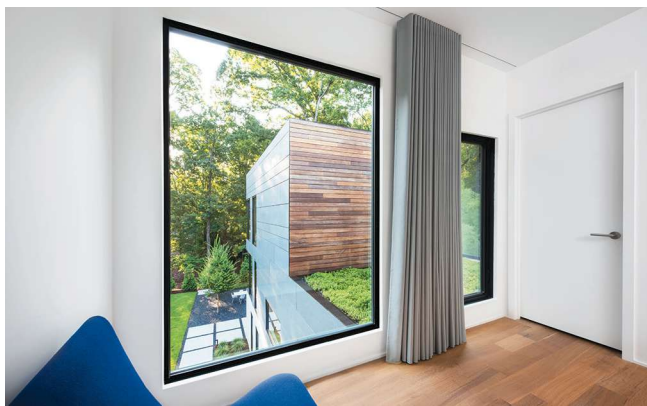
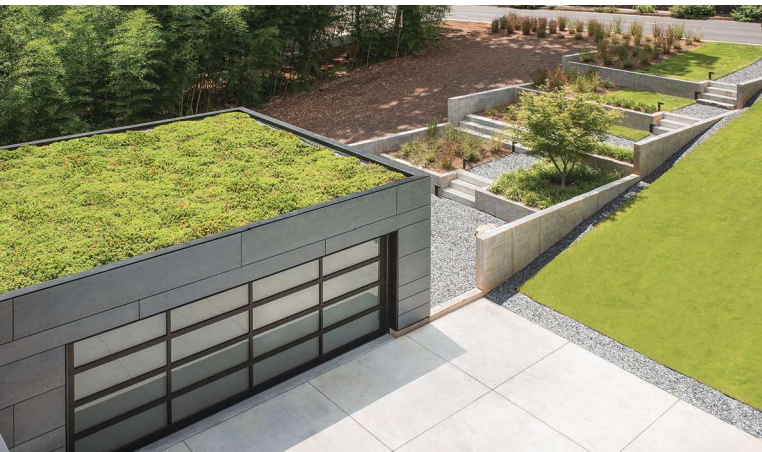


This page: A series of terraced plantings descends from street level to reach the house. But, perhaps lured by the ipe-clad "hole," visitors tend to walk down the driveway.

Ultimately, it was a successful collaboration that influenced especially the internal organization of the house. Bedrooms for the couple and three young children are clustered on the second level, for instance, instead of the market's typical master on the main floor. Spanning the hall between them are computer homework stations (illuminated by those windows at the front of the house), where foot traffic keeps the kids out of internet trouble. "Hallways are usually wasted space anyway, so building the nooks with cabinets above and desks below made good use of it. And it meant the kids' bedrooms aren't grossly oversized," says David. "We didn't want them to go into their rooms and hide." The children's rooms are democratically proportioned, but each has its own arrangement and personality.

The main level, which comprises a combination kosher kitchen, dining, and living area, makes use of its long, south-facing circulation spine for runs of built-in walnut cabinets. "People want to live in a modern house, but they don't have places for all their crap," David quips. "So we have storage walls to put all the junk in. We have a million cabinets that are nowhere near full.





This page: The green roof eliminates streetside views of white TPO. An operable casement window allows access for maintenance.

Having all that cabinetry means we don't have to store things in the basement or have a garage full of stuff."

The unencumbered basement benefits from the site's topography, which allows for a family room completely above grade. An additional guest room with dedicated bathroom and a small reading area occupy the less commodious areas. David took the subterranean basement area of the site's previous house to make a "hockey room," where kids can burn off steam without harm to finished spaces.

Pattern Play

Architects love reveals and, for the most part, builders loathe them. Wyatt and partner Ryan Howard definitely mustered some deep reserves of patience in executing David's fiber cement rainscreen cladding. "Those panels were the toughest part of the job," Wyatt recalls. "But they're also the most impressive aspect of the house. Every reveal lines up with a window or door. I had done a small rainscreen before, but nothing of this size and complexity. It was a real learning experience." (David managed the concrete contractor himself to ensure equal precision for the foundation walls formed on a 3-foot module.)

Overall, the architect, who is also LEED accredited, is very happy with how the cladding functions. Not only does it cope with Atlanta's countless days of rain, the air gap it creates keeps the house cooler during the hot months. Other green moves include placing the glazing to the east and north of the house, skylights daylighting the kitchen, living area, and stair

Split Box House

Atlanta

ARCHITECT: Principal-in-charge
David I. Goldschmidt, DiG Architects,
Atlanta

BUILDER: Wyatt Anderson and Ryan
Howard, Post + Beam Builders, Atlanta

INTERIOR DESIGNER: DiG Architects

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:
Core Landscape, Atlanta

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING:
PEC Structural Engineering, Decatur, Ga.

CIVIL ENGINEERING: Crescent View
Engineering, Marietta, Ga.

PROJECT SIZE: 4,878 square feet

SITE SIZE: .77 acres

PHOTOGRAPHY: Alexander Herring

KEY PRODUCTS

CLADDING: American Fiber Cement, ipe

COUNTERS: Caesarstone

FAUCETS: Kohler, Axor, Aquabrax

FLOORING: White oak

COOKING APPLIANCES/DISHWASHER:
Miele

GARAGE DOORS: Custom, LiftMaster

GREEN ROOF: LiveRoof, TPO

HOME CONTROL: Savant

HVAC: Ruud

LAVS: Duravit

LIGHTING: C Lighting, Satco

LIGHTING CONTROL: Lutron

MASTER TUB: BainUltra

PAINTS/STAINS: Benjamin Moore, Sherwin-
Williams, Messmer's, IdeaPaint Magnet
White Board

PASSAGE DOORS: EzyJamb

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Thermador

SECURITY SYSTEM: Honeywell

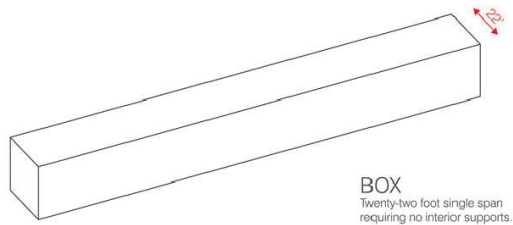
SKYLIGHTS: Velux

THERMAL/MOISTURE BARRIERS:
VaproShield Revealshield

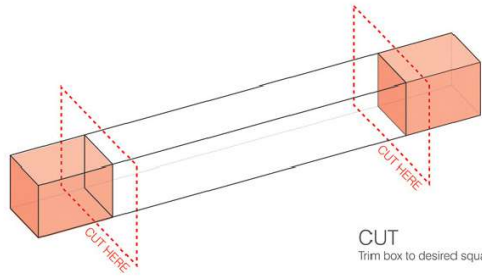
TOILETS: Duravit, Icera

WASHER/DRYER: LG, GE

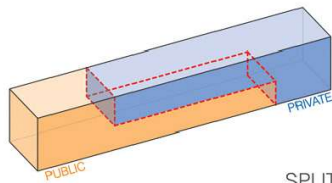
**WINDOWS/WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS/
ENTRY DOORS:** Western Window Systems



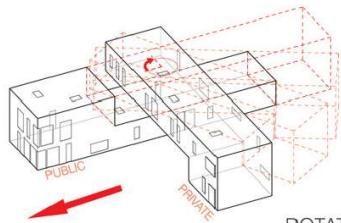
BOX
Twenty-two foot single span
requiring no interior supports.



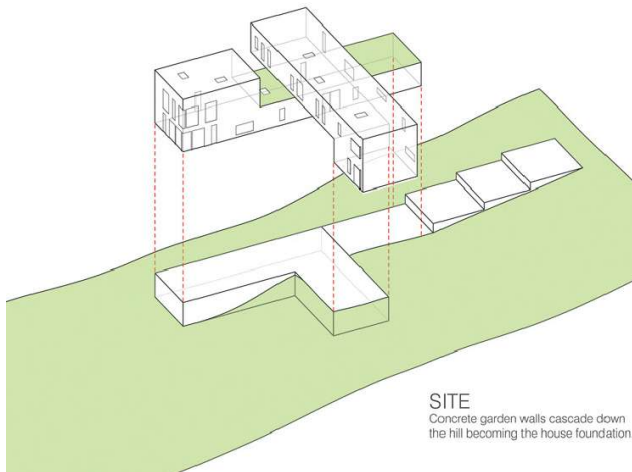
CUT
Trim box to desired square footage.



SPLIT
Box is divided into public and private
functions.



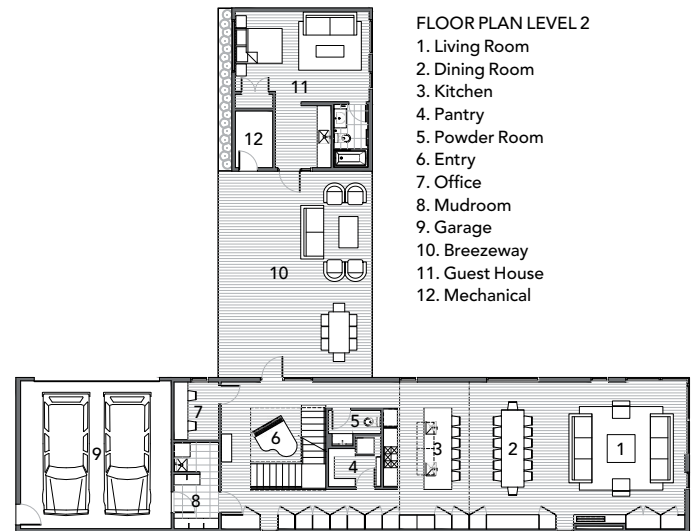
ROTATE
Turn private functions ninety degrees
to maximize views.



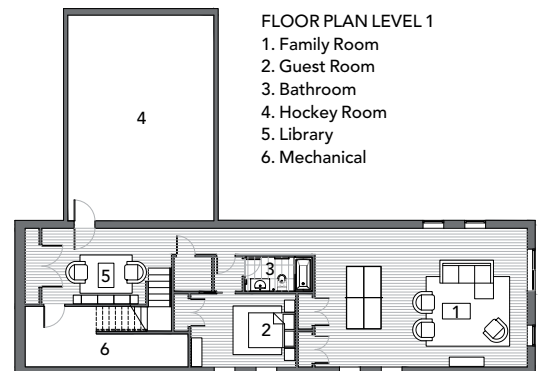
SITE
Concrete garden walls cascade down
the hill becoming the house foundation.



FLOOR PLAN LEVEL 3
1. Bedroom
2. Laundry
3. Bathroom



FLOOR PLAN LEVEL 2
1. Living Room
2. Dining Room
3. Kitchen
4. Pantry
5. Powder Room
6. Entry
7. Office
8. Mudroom
9. Garage
10. Breezeway
11. Guest House
12. Mechanical



FLOOR PLAN LEVEL 1
1. Family Room
2. Guest Room
3. Bathroom
4. Hockey Room
5. Library
6. Mechanical



Fenestration is oriented to specific views of the nearly 1-acre site, enhanced by strategic plantings and modifications to the slope.

hall, and, of course, the live roof. “Functionally, it handles some of the water run-off on the site,” he explains. “But aesthetically, because we’re down so low, if you were standing on the street or looking out from the second floor, you would otherwise be looking at white TPO. I hate when you’re in a nice house and you see a crappy roof. But I created the problem by splitting the house in two, so I had to solve it.” Maintenance access is provided by a large operable window.

Speaking of windows, pattern is also at play in the fenestration—both in service to framing particular views and to the larger goal of activating the façades of the house. “If they were all the same size and shape, the house would look kind of static,” says David.

The application of wood trim achieves the same purpose—enlivening and adding warmth to the house both inside and outside. David’s logic for where it’s placed follows the idea of

those “cuts” to the box. “We applied it wherever the house got chopped—ipe outside, white oak inside, and engineered walnut for the walls. Every time the building gets ‘cut,’ it becomes a different material. I thought the window wall could have been wood inside, too, but my wife said no.”

With some guidance by Core Landscape, David manipulated the property to master the hill’s transitions and to slow the flow of water on site. Vegetation was selected to that end, as well, and to provide curated glimpses of nature from those strategically placed windows. A low foundation wall toward the back of the lot creates a flat spot for the kids to play.

In addition to the accolades on the home tour last year, Split Box House has recently won merit recognition in AIA Atlanta’s Residential Design Awards. It seems the city might be ready for some good modern houses, after all.

—S. Claire Conroy



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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 14

Nature Curated

Three suburban houses harness the strengths of their difficult sites.

BY CHERYL WEBER
AND S. CLAIRE CONROY



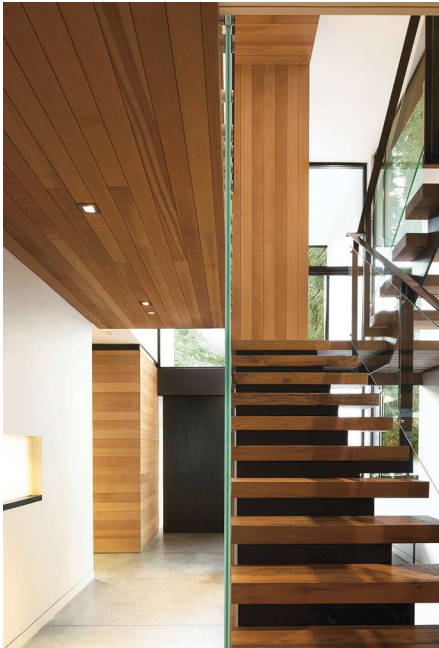
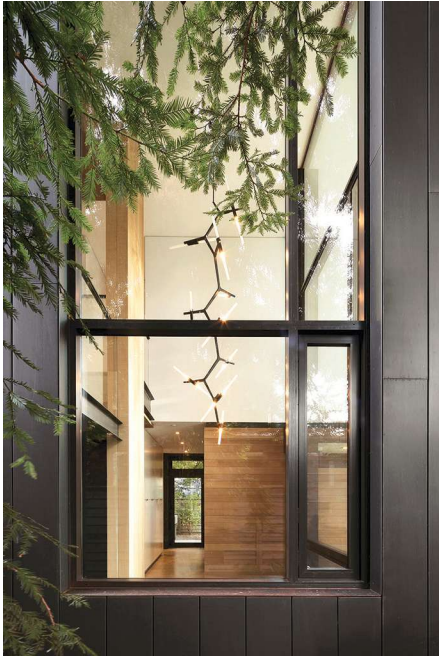


Tree House

PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA
AIDLIN DARLING DESIGN

Dense suburbs are a challenge for architects trying to give their clients both privacy and a restorative view of the landscape. Some houses reconcile the two startlingly well, even on a third-acre lot—and without fences or walls. For example, the house that Aidlin Darling designed for a young family in Palo Alto plays off its two mature stands of trees, flipping back and forth between introverted and extroverted, nested and exposed. Like a tree house, it gets the family close to nature while screening them from the neighbors.

“One thing we like to explore is the psychology of spaces, and in certain residential projects, the dynamic between public and private space,” says principal David Darling, AIA. “The earliest sketches



This page: Palo Alto requires new houses to project a neighborly demeanor, so this house wraps its entry hall in glass. During the day, mature redwoods shield street views into the house, and at night, the home exudes a warm glow, dappled through the trees.



Above and right: Wherever possible, punched windows frame leafy views. The minimalist palette combines zinc, sawn red cedar, and white walls that animate with the shadowy movements of the trees.



started to suggest this idea of nests—sleeping nests—in the canopy of trees.”

The house’s position on the site underscores this quality. The flat, flag-shaped lot is narrow at the street, widens toward the back, and contains a majestic grove of redwoods on the left near the front and two monumental-scale live oaks on the right, “midway up the flagpole,” David says. He slipped a slender, two-story house between those trees, with interlocking vertical and horizontal volumes and a floor plan that shifts to grab living and viewing zones outside the building envelope.

The result is an almost magical house that balances expansive outdoor living with pockets of privacy. Either way, nature is never far away.

Light Cubed

Palo Alto takes neighborliness seriously; its planning code called for respecting people’s privacy while also showing evidence of life at the front of the house—no turning your back to the street. “They would encourage a garage in back and living in the front, but this lot was so skinny that it wouldn’t have made sense to do that,” David says. He drew a

one-story garage that overlaps the glassy two-story façade behind it and incorporates a sheltered entryway. Zinc detailing ties the garage to the rest of the house, and glass slots emit light to the street.

Both levels of this bar-shaped, steel-and-glass structure are organized along a central spine that runs from front to back on the narrow leg of the lot. The first floor’s kitchen, dining room, and living room are arrayed on one side of the spine facing west into the oak trees. The side yard is an extension of all those spaces—cooking, living, and dining can occur inside or out.



To the left of the corridor are an office, family room, and workout room. Upstairs it is the bedrooms—“floating sleeping pods”—that gaze into the trees, while another study, a laundry, and a master bath line the other side of the hall.

A theme recurs: the blurring of indoor-outdoor boundaries verging on illusion. To the left of the two-story entryway, a glass wall frames the stand of redwood trees. “Once you’re in the house and look back, it’s pretty pronounced as a frame,” David says. “One of my favorite pieces of architecture is the VDL house by Neutra. It was very experimental, and after it burned down and was redesigned it had all these interlocking spaces. He even used reflection, either with water or a mirror, to play a Cubist-like game with the volumes. We tried to create those interlocking spaces so that when you enter the house, there are mirrored surfaces that allow you to

see the redwoods behind you.”

Translucent glass in the stairwell and corridors refracts daylight into the center of the roughly north-south-oriented house. The design also makes liberal use of skylights and clerestories, which wash ceilings in light.

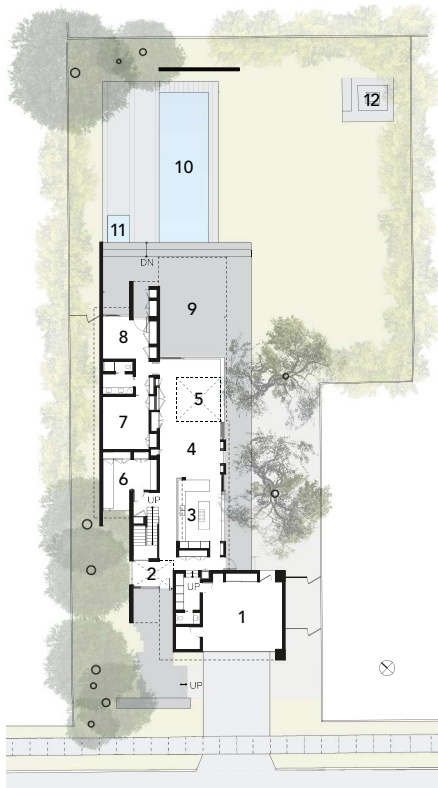
With the landscape bracketing the architecture, the material palette was kept simple and modest. The garage volume’s sawn red cedar reappears inside, providing a warm inner liner that resonates with the trees. David used it to wrap some of the walls and ceilings and domesticate the outdoor seating space that extends the living room into the landscape. The living room wall opens on a sliding track, and the ceiling carries the wood beyond that line.

In keeping with their intimate tree house vibe, the second-story bedrooms have oak floors and punched windows that frame views of the leafy canopies,

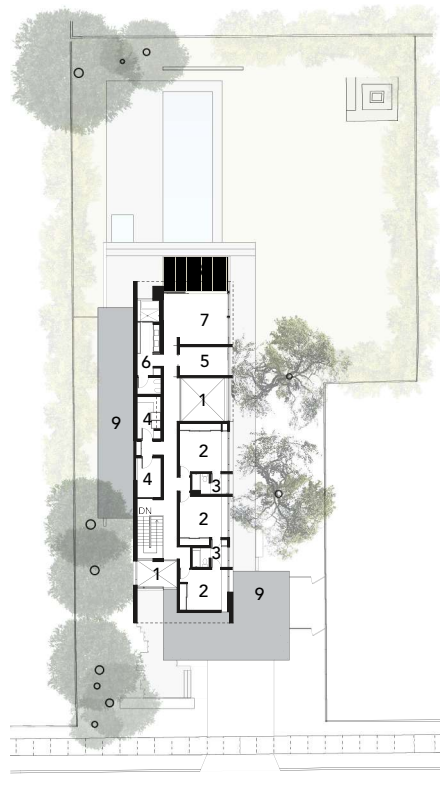
This page: Indoors and outdoors blend seamlessly when window systems are unfurled to the garden.



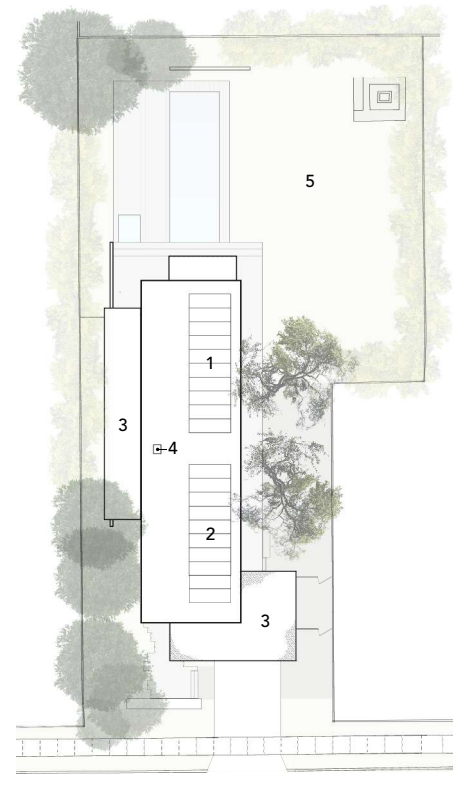
This page: Recessed window tracks, continuous concrete floors, and warm red cedar blur the transition between indoors and out. Key interior rooms on both levels orient to views of majestic live oak trees.



MAIN FLOOR PLAN | 1. Garage | 2. Entry
3. Kitchen | 4. Dining room | 5. Living Room
6. Office | 7. Family Room | 8. Work Out Room
9. Outdoor Living | 10. Pool | 11. Hot Tub
12. Fire Pit



UPPER FLOOR PLAN | 1. Open to Below
2. Bedroom | 3. Bathroom | 4. Storage
5. Master Closet | 6. Master Bathroom
7. Master Bedroom | 8. Master Deck
9. Lower Room



ROOF PLAN | 1. Solar Thermal Panels
2. Photovoltaic Panels | 3. Lower Roofs
4. Whole House Fan | 5. Backyard

though the master suite opens to a large deck above the back porch. Most of the upper-level walls are white-painted Sheetrock—a canvas for the constantly changing shadows cast by sinewy trees. Downstairs, the concrete flooring has a terrazzo-like finish—an echo of the river rock outside.

Supporting Roles

That concrete floor turned out well despite the fact that it's also the structural slab.

“With a bigger budget, we’d do a structural slab reinforced with rebar and then pour the architectural slab over it, which gives us more control over finish and cracking,” David says.

“Concrete is such a dynamic material and if not mixed perfectly, poured at the right temperature, and cured at the right speed, it tends to crack—where and how much is the question. We had a contingency plan in case it didn’t go well, but they hit the nail on the head.”

Indeed, every project forces decisions about balancing the budget—especially when surprises like poor soil are unearthed. Construction manager Brian Blackford recalls that the top two feet of soil turned out to be expansive clay. The solution was to use grade beams anchored down to the stable soils—a less expensive alternative to pier construction. “On top of the grade beams was a structural slab, which

became the concrete floor,” Brian says. “That floor was ground and polished, and then we had to protect it throughout the entire length of construction. We couldn’t polish it after the walls were up.”

The resources saved by forgoing a second pour were likely diverted to craning in the 7,700-pound cantilevered beam that draws a clean line across the atrium above the living room, supporting the master bedroom and deck. “Contemporary homes are very challenging to build in general because there is no decorative trim to hide variances in ceilings and walls,” Brian adds. “I think it turned out quite well; it was a nice design to execute.”



This page: A nearly 4-ton steel beam underpins the living room atrium and supports the master bedroom and deck as they cantilever over the outdoor seating area and into a close-up view of trees and water.





Going High, Going Low

The lot's location in a flood plain also informed the design. Lifting the building about 18 inches on a concrete plinth put it above the high-water mark and created an ad-hoc bench that people can sit on outside the main living spaces. A reservoir near the fire pit at the back of the lot absorbs excess water.

As this project shows, site-specific architecture can call out the salient qualities of even a small suburban plot. And a close reading of the landscape can infuse architecture with a lightness it might not otherwise have. For example, the living spaces at the side

and back of the house have a horizontal connection to the pool and a vertical relationship to the tree, David says, and lights hanging from the live oak reinforce those physical extensions.

"Privacy is afforded just by virtue of being low in the landscape with things floating above you, and on the upper level by being in the canopy of trees," David says. "That concept is one I'd like to play with again on another project, but it's particularly relevant to this site because of the dense suburban context. The goal is that when you walk into the house, you forget where you are—out of sight, out of mind." —*Cheryl Weber*

Tree House

Palo Alto, California

ARCHITECT: Principals Joshua Aidlin & David Darling; project designer Melinda Turner; project team Kent Chiang, Zac Rockett, Aidlin Darling Design, San Francisco

BUILDER: De Mattei Construction, San Jose, Calif.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Surface Design, San Francisco

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Berkeley Structural Design, Berkeley, Calif.

PROJECT SIZE: 5,870 square feet

SITE SIZE: .30 acre

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Adam Rouse

KEY PRODUCTS

COOKTOP AND OVENS: Miele

COUNTERTOPS: Carrara marble, Corian

DOORS AND WINDOWS: Fleetwood

EXTERIOR CLADDING: VMZINC

FAUCETS: Elkay, Waterworks, Hansgrohe

FINISH MATERIALS: stained rough-sawn cedar

GARBAGE DISPOSAL: Insinkerator

HVAC: AO Smith, Taco Comfort Solutions radiant floor system

LIGHTING: Halo, Lutron

PAINTS/STAINS/COATINGS: Benjamin Moore

PHOTOVOLTAICS: Design Build Solar Thermal

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

ROOFING: IB

SINKS: Blanco, Kohler, Elkay

STRUCTURAL GLASS: West Coast Insulated Glass Products

TOILETS AND TUB: Duravit

VENT HOOD: Arc Zephyr

WASHER/DRYER: Samsung

WINDOW SHADING SYSTEMS: Mecho Shade Slimline



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House Etch

CHICAGO
STUDIO DWELL

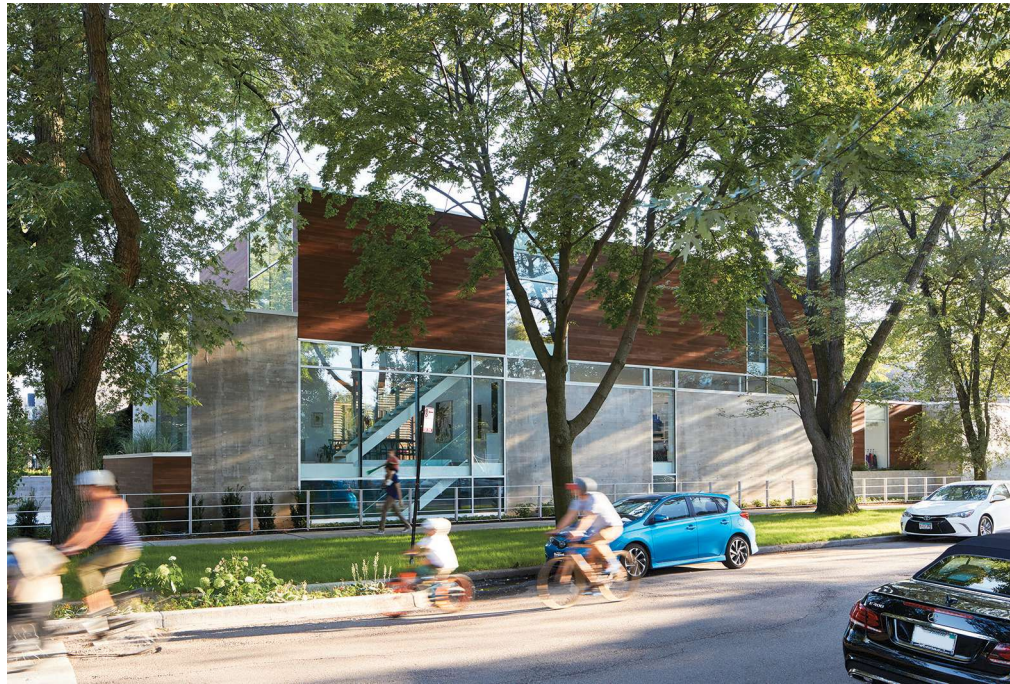
Satisfying custom clients' often conflicting desires is no easy task for residential architects. Chief among them is the call for abundant natural light and privacy from the street and neighbors. Compound the problem with a dense, city-bound site—and a corner one at that—and you have a knot only expert architects can unravel successfully. Mark Peters, AIA, of Studio Dwell is such an architect, with deep experience in the challenges of urban dwellings—both single-family custom and multifamily projects for developers (which have their own set of contradictory goals to reconcile).

For this project in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood, Mark had not only his expertise going for him, but also a dash of good luck: His clients tapped him to help find just the right lot. It was a process that took more than two years, but resulted in a commodious piece of property that's both deeper (165 feet) and wider (44 feet) than the city's typical 125-by-25-foot lots. Its location on a northeast-facing corner enabled Mark to site the house at the sweet spot of solar orientation and program function.

The long hunt for the lot served as an extended period of due diligence into the nuances of the clients' needs, desires, and overall life rhythms. "I talk to clients about how they think they want to live, and how they really live," he explains. "They usually have a program that's kind of a fantasy. I try to get at their daily routine—how they wake up, how they relax, how they go to bed. I pull out the reality."

For this couple with three children, there were some critical must-haves. Paramount were places to blow off energy inside and outside the house. So the basement is essentially a rec room for the kids, and there's an ample courtyard for outdoor play.

The couple also loves to entertain on a grand scale, so the house cleaves



This page and opposite: Not everyone sees the virtues of a corner site, but Mark Peters is a veteran of urban design and the deft balance of competing requirements for daylighting, views, and privacy. From the exterior, public realms appear as sections of board-formed concrete walls and glass; private areas are wrapped in cedar siding punctuated by strategically placed glazing.



This page: The main floor is raised 5 feet above the street level and pulled in from the corners, adding a subtle buffer from the urban hubbub.

“I’m always thinking about how the house looks from the street—during the day and at night with the lights on.”

—Mark Peters, AIA

into public and private realms. The public space, or great room, absorbs the lion’s share of glass, which faces the intersection of the corner lot’s two streets. Because the first level is raised 5 feet above street, it gains a measure of detachment from the hustle and bustle. Expanses of glass are carefully choreographed with sections of wall to relieve any feeling of overexposure. The stair to the second level and basement is located here, too. Its open risers and glass rail combine with the glass walls to bring

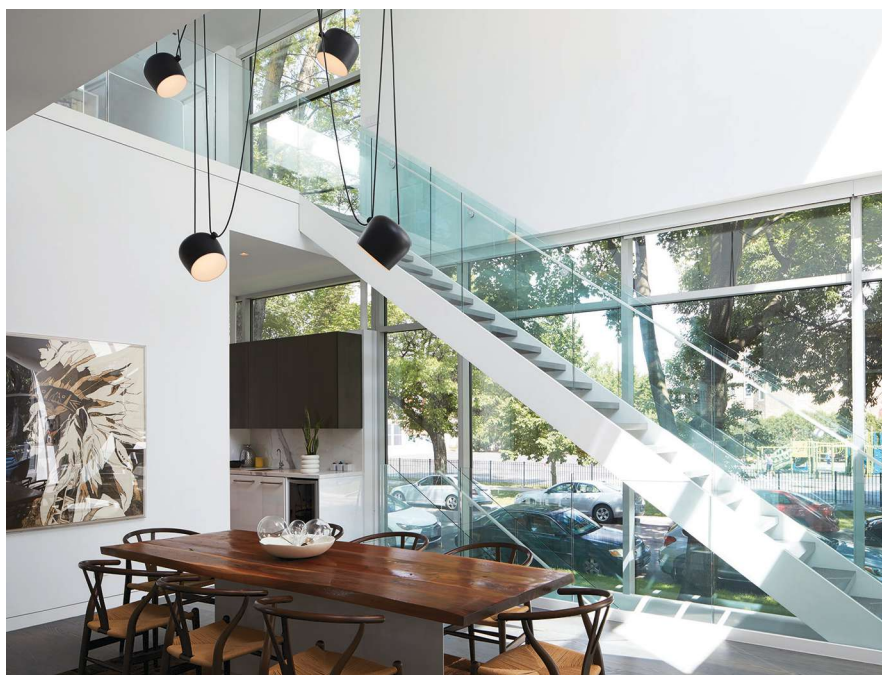
much needed daylight into the lower level rooms.

The connected kitchen and family room flip the ratio of glass and wall to provide more privacy for everyday life. On the street-facing side, clerestories top walls of cabinetry and then descend into floor-to-ceiling sections of window. The sections provide a glimpse to the street, says Mark, but a “controlled glimpse.”

On the courtyard side, accordion glass door systems open the house fully

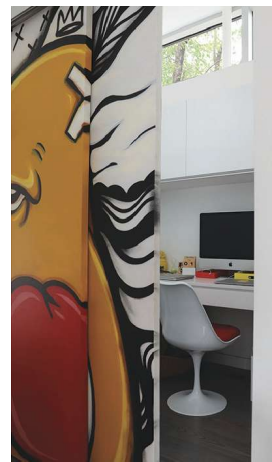


This page: Placing the main stair adjacent to the window wall allows light to penetrate the open risers and glass railings into the basement.



to outdoor living—a grilling zone, terrace, lawn, hot tub, and the basketball court. It's the south side of the house, so the design team cantilevered the second-level master bedroom to shade the terrace area and protect the interior from excessive heat gain.

All this is to say the firm achieved that precious balance of light and privacy. “Having done this for years and years, I’ve developed some techniques. We take a look at our surrounding area, if there are sidewalks nearby or a close neighbor. For some areas, we know we’ll need to light and vent,” says Mark. “We take windows and we push them hard to the floor and to the ceilings. We also know we’ll get better light out of a smaller window pushed up to the ceiling plane than a 5-foot-by-5-foot window punched into the wall. The light will wash across the ceiling, and its location high on the wall helps with privacy.”



This page: The kitchen and family room are largely protected from street views by thick storage walls. Clerestory windows help moderate the light while maintaining privacy. On the courtyard side, window systems open the kitchen to outdoor life. A clever homework nook is accessed by a sliding wall adorned with custom graffiti art.

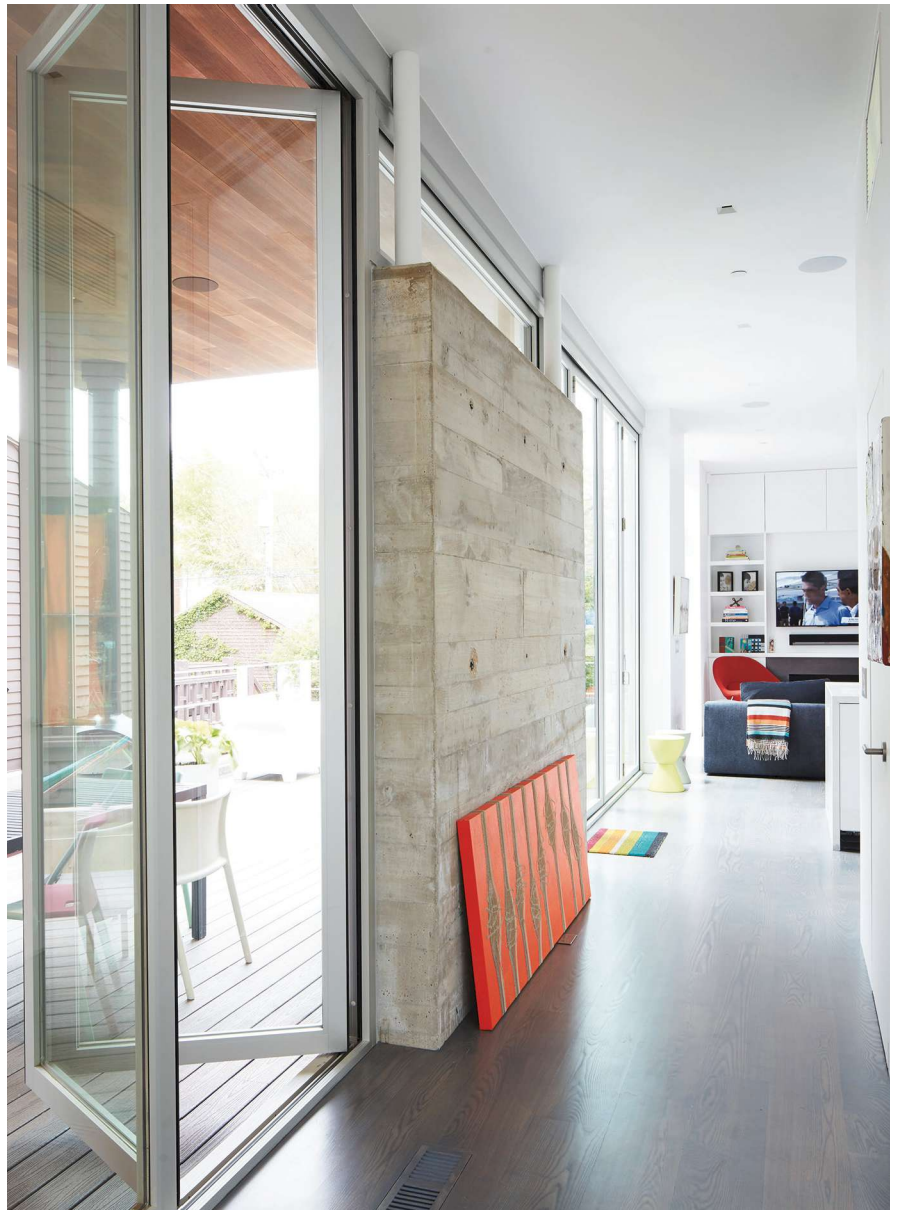


Moderno Chicago

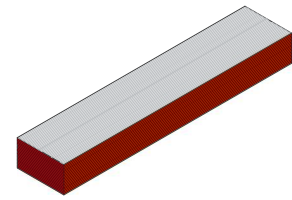
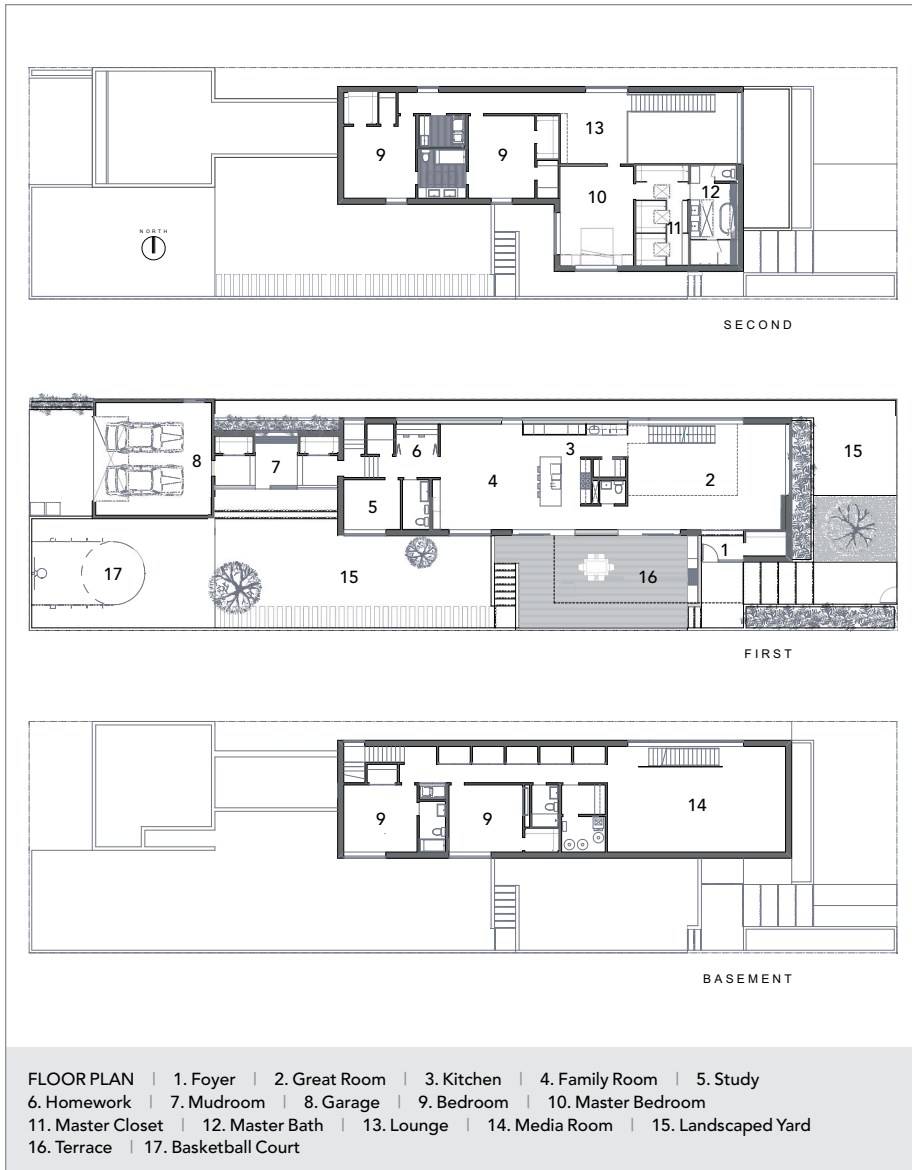
One of the clients has Latin American heritage and a special passion for the region's modern architecture. "She loves that heavy concrete Latin American modernism," says Mark, "so we wanted to use those ideas and forms." The firm extrapolated the aesthetic into a palette of board-formed concrete, cedar siding, and glass, and arranged them in a pattern of solids and voids, transparency and opacity.

The board-formed sections of concrete juxtapose with sections of actual wood boards—and glazing in strips and blocks separate the two. "We conceived of the public zones as the board-formed concrete areas and the cedar sections as the private areas," Mark explains. "We didn't want the contrast between the two materials to be too obvious, so we went for an etching quality to both."

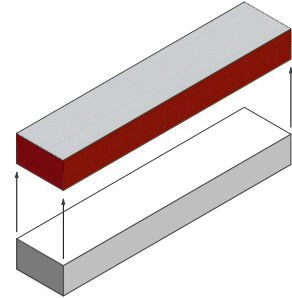
It turns out that executing the more rustic finish was much harder than one might suppose—much more difficult than achieving a smooth finish would have been. "I'm from the farm, and board-formed concrete used to be the easy way to build," he notes. "But now it's a difficult process with liners. There's a lot of labor involved to make it look natural. Sometimes it doesn't work and can look forced or fake."



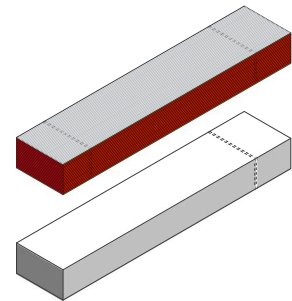
Clockwise from top left:
An Eames-inspired minimalist coat area. A private terrace off the kitchen/family room is shaded by the cantilevered master bedroom.



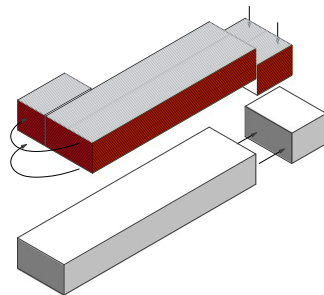
1 ETCH CASTING BLOCK



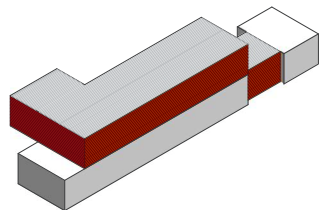
2 STRIP MOLD FROM BLOCK



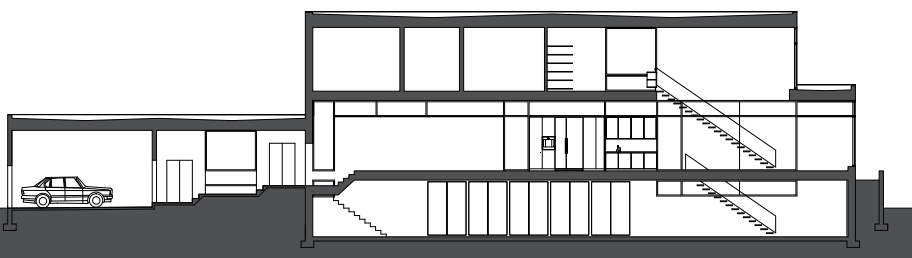
3 BISECT MOLD & BLOCK



4 SHIFT ELEMENTS



5 REASSEMBLE MOLD WITH THE ETCHED CAST BLOCK



SECTION - SOUTH



Clockwise from above: The view from the basement rec room to the first level. The cheerful mudroom hall from the garage also accesses the outdoor play area, hot tub, and basketball court.

Thankfully, the project had a talented and fearless builder in George McLeod of McLeod Builders. He and Mark have collaborated on a number of tricky projects. “He’s one of our best builders. He’s very open to doing new things and his craftsmanship is just great,” says Mark. “If I could put him on every house, I would. He’s the kind of contractor who asks his questions months in advance—not while holding a hammer on the job.”

Such forethought was essential on this project, especially when it came time to build those concrete walls. “We laid the forms on the ground and board formed the wall on top,” Mark recalls. “We built shims so some of the slurry would press through. Then the forms and wall were tilted up into place. Because we were pouring a full basement and a full first story, the walls were 20 feet tall in one pour. It looked so huge, it was surreal.”

Using building materials as finish materials is a key component of





modern architecture, but it can be a nerve-wracking one for sure. The board-formed concrete isn't just relegated to the exterior, it comes inside in the kitchen near the terrace and most prominently in the fireplace wall—two very high-profile areas. “We used pine boards with a release agent,” he says, “and added a little water to bring out the grain. Then we applied a sealer that creates the effect of some transparency and iridescence.” The unique mix of roughness and polish complements the smooth walnut floors and sleek white cabinetry, marble counters, and walls, in addition to all that glass.

Deploying the materials and executing the program, all while maintaining solid control of the composition are what set skilled architects apart from lesser ones. “I’m always thinking about how the house looks from the street—during the day and at night with the

lights on,” says Mark. “At night, those clerestories become like veins of light, an artery that courses through the house.” —*S. Claire Conroy*

Above: The house comes alive at night with shimmers of light on glazing and iridescent board-formed concrete walls.

House Etch

Chicago

ARCHITECT: Principal-in-charge Mark Peters, AIA; project architect Jon Heckert, Studio Dwell Architects, Chicago

BUILDER: George McLeod, McLeod Builders Inc., Wayne, Ill.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Studio Dwell

PROJECT SIZE: 6,500 square feet

SITE SIZE: .17 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: \$1,850,000

PHOTOGRAPHY: Marty Peters, Marty Peters Photography

KEY PRODUCTS

ACCORDION DOOR SYSTEM: LaCantina

CABINETS: Ernestomeda

**COOKING APPLIANCES/
DISHWASHER:** Miele

COUNTERS: Marble, Silestone

DRYWALL: USG

ENTRY DOORS/WINDOWS: Kawneer

FAUCETS: Dornbracht, Grohe

FIREPLACE: Spark Modern Fires

KITCHEN SINK: Blanco

LOCKSETS: Omnia

Question Conventional Boundaries



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530 House

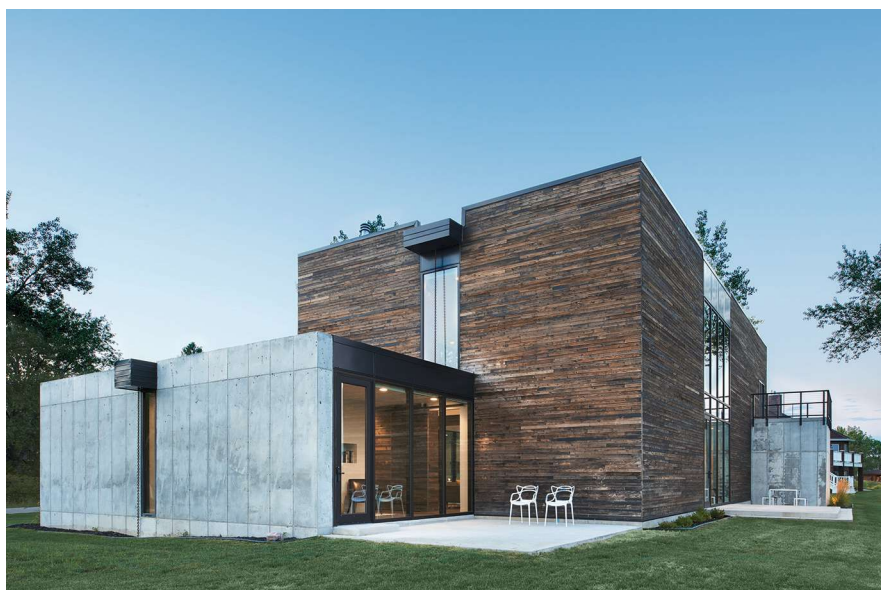
DAKOTA DUNES, SOUTH DAKOTA
PLAN ARCHITECTURE

There's no mistaking the 530 House from the road. For neighborhood kids and pizza delivery drivers, the wall-size street number is its defining feature, stenciled strikingly on a white panel inside the glass foyer. But that's probably its least compelling aspect. Designed by Nathan Kalaher, AIA, and his wife and business partner Lisa Kalaher, AIA, for themselves and their two young sons, the house has gorgeous views of the Missouri River. "It feels like the land is with you as you move through the house," Nathan says.

When the couple bought the riverfront lot in 2008, it was positively bucolic with a woods and prairie. But an asset can also be a threat, and in 2011, a greater than 500-year flood wiped the slate clean. Luckily the house existed only on paper at that point, but the event forced a redesign when the land was built up as part of a flood control project. The exposed site was now on a levy, and there were no trees to provide privacy.

Located in a South Dakota suburb about 5 miles from Sioux City, Iowa, the lot has views of agricultural lands across the Missouri River and an alluvial plain to the south; to the east and west are other homes, and a woods is on the north.

Although code allows homeowners to build at the 100-year-flood mark, the couple wasn't taking any chances. They brought in an earthwork crew to raise the lot 8 feet above street elevation on a gradual slope. That puts the house about 20 feet above the river's normal level. It also seemed wise to forgo a basement that could fill with water. "That is not typical where we live because of storms," Nathan says. "In some ways the house is detached from the site, sitting fully on top as opposed to engaging it, which also poses a potential threat during weather events." That base is covered too, though, with a concrete storm shelter tucked under the master bedroom deck.



This page and opposite: 530 House, with its giant address mural showcased in the foyer, is a favorite destination among package delivery professionals. Raised 20 feet above the river, the house is designed to withstand periodic flooding from the Missouri River.



Above: The address wall shields the kitchen and family room from public view. A sleek Poggenpohl kitchen is the heartbeat of the house, which is geared to welcoming extended family and friends.

Opposites Attract

A program of competing needs continued to drive the design. Topping the list was a desire for dedicated family and guest spaces. “We’re a social family; we like a lot of connectivity and contact, and Lisa has a lot of siblings; we knew we’d have a fair amount of company,” Nathan says. Sectionally, the plan provides for separate but connected living spaces, each with direct access to the outdoors, and the three-dimensional volumes reflect that organization. The

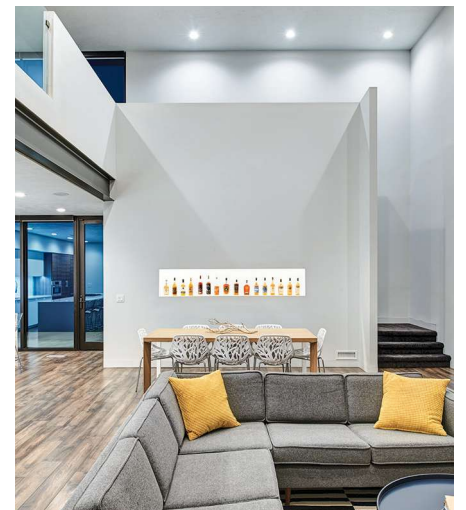
“It feels like the land is with you as you move through the house.”

—Nathan Kalaher, AIA

geometric house is composed as a main two-story cube clad in western red cedar, and an interlocking one-story cube for guests. Pulling the concrete-walled guest volume forward made possible a raised plinth at the house’s front

entryway and void for a guest patio in back. “There’s not a lot of juxtaposition of form, but where there is, it provides privacy here and there,” he says.

Visitors enter the front door, step around the house number, which screens the public zone from the street, and enter a two-story communal space containing the kitchen, dining table, and living room. Around a corner is the guest suite, which houses a reading room, bedroom, and bath. Upstairs in the two-story volume, a family/play-



Clockwise from the top: Although located in a subdivision, the house feels almost isolated, with its long views to the river and prairie. Dark-stained cedar feature walls add another layer of interest to Sheetrock walls and niches optimized for displaying art and collections.



Clockwise from above: The contrasting light and dark scheme continues throughout the house, including the guest suite and its bathroom. The first floor suite can flex into a master suite, if needed in the future.



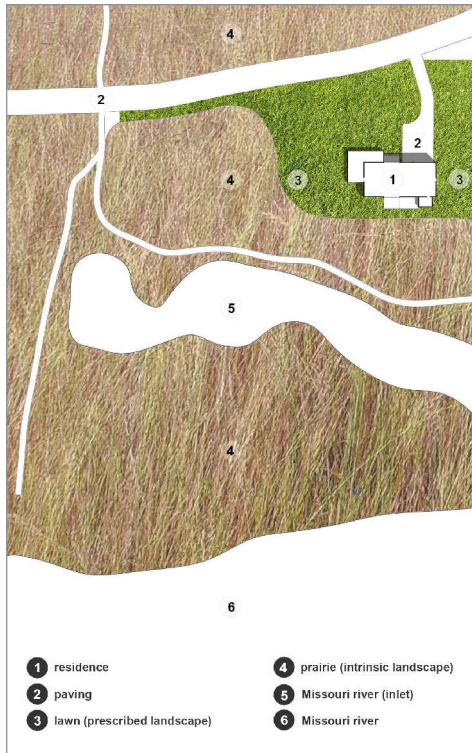
room overlooks the public spaces below, with three bedrooms behind it.

“The two-story space, which has a lot of glass, is where all the family and gathering areas are,” Nathan says. “Whenever we have company, we meet at the dining table in the kitchen, almost like a bed-and-breakfast, and disperse to living areas as we wish, each of us doing our own thing.” And if the couple thinks far enough into the future, they can envision using the guest quarters as a master suite for one-story living. “It’s possible that when we’re significantly older, we might hop down the stairs for accessibility,” he says.

Transparency and opacity are another play in contrasts. The glassy parts of the house reflect communal spaces—kitchen, living room, family room,

and reading room—and face south toward the river and agricultural land beyond, while the knotty cedar-clad exterior walls enclose the more private areas. “From inside you can’t see other houses,” Nathan says. “There is the sense that it could be 50 miles from the nearest town.”

Knots and especially natural weathering are part of cedar’s charm, marking the seasons in grayscale. But in this case the wood was stained black to even out the aging process. Given the site’s exposure and harsh weather, the different façades likely would have grayed out unevenly, the architect says. Meanwhile, the concrete walls of the opposing guest “wing”—completed a year after the family moved in—were formed with knotty plywood sheets, a variation on a theme.



Interior Dialogues

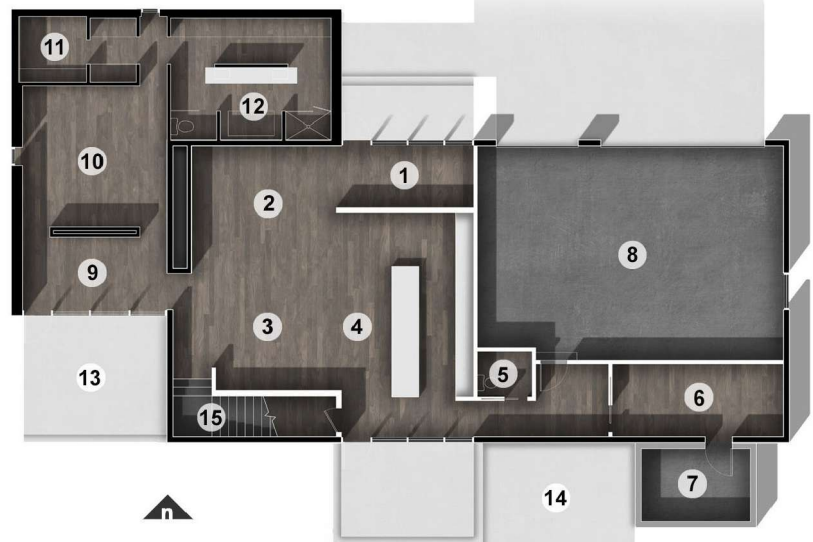
Contrasts continue inside the house, with its light and dark walls and machined and rough surfaces. The exterior’s dark cedar paneling reappears inside, where it intersects with planes of white-painted Sheetrock for showcasing the family’s art collection. And some structural members—like the steel beam in the main living area—were left exposed.

“Instead of painting warm colors, we try to get that from the material itself,” Nathan says. “The floors are hickory, and we used a comparable color panel in the white Poggenpohl kitchen. It’s important to constantly remind ourselves that there’s an inside and outside and we’re connected to both.” Lit wall niches are meant for swapping out art or everyday objects—expressing whatever family members are interested in at the

upper level

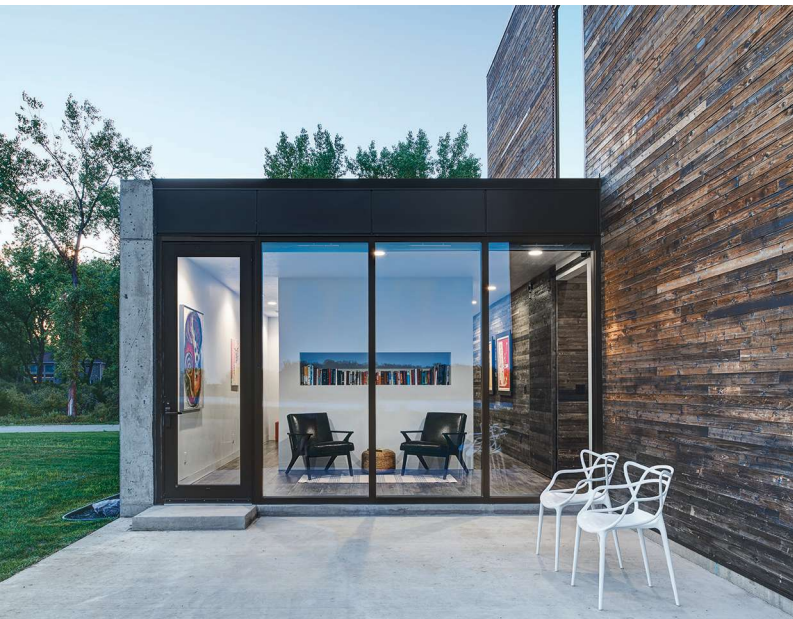


lower level



spaces:

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 entry hall | 9 reading room | 17 bedroom |
| 2 living room | 10 guest bedroom | 18 hallway |
| 3 dining room | 11 mechanical | 19 bathroom |
| 4 kitchen | 12 guest bathroom | 20 bedroom |
| 5 hall bath | 13 guest patio | 21 master bedroom |
| 6 laundry | 14 shared patio | 22 master closet |
| 7 storm shelter | 15 stair | 23 master bathroom |
| 8 garage | 16 family room | 24 master deck |



Clockwise from above: The guest suite has its own private patio and indoor sitting area. The main house has a larger patio and, because there is no basement, a storm shelter clad in concrete and patterned with plywood planks.

moment, whether it's amber-colored whiskey bottles, books, or a row of tiny Christmas trees. "The kids took a turn, too," Nathan says.

Although the rectilinear building was straightforward to build, the fit-out required deft work. With no soffits or offsets for mechanical and plumbing chases, it took a lot of construction pre-planning to execute the interior's clean lines. "We didn't have a lot of vertical spaces to go with the infrastructure, so we had to use an insulated PVC

ductwork system underground," says contractor Steve Nelson. "It will last 50 to 60 years at least and is impenetrable to soils and freeze conditions." Floor trusses were predesigned with chases to get heating and cooling to the second floor. And door installs had to be perfect, since the trimless finish required that they be on the same plane as the Sheetrock. "It took a lot of skilled labor to get everything to flow through the house," Steve says, "but it was rewarding when done—a fun project with great people."

Social Studies

About that enormous house number—an artist drew it with a stencil, lining up the vertical breaks in the digits with the mullions on the entry windows. For this social family, it's fitting that the house is famously easy to find, and that the community claims it. It was the neighborhood kids who gave the 530 House its name, and "we even received a thank-you note once from a delivery guy," Nathan says.
—Cheryl Weber



530 House

Dakota Dunes, South Dakota

ARCHITECT: Nathan Kalaher, AIA, and Lisa Kalaher, AIA, PLaN Architecture, Sioux City, Iowa

BUILDER: Steve Nelson, Nelson Construction & Development, Des Moines, Iowa

PROJECT SIZE: 4,100 square feet

SITE SIZE: 1.2 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHER: Cameron Campbell, Integrated Studio

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETRY: Poggenpohl (kitchen), Crystal Cabinetry

COUNTERTOP: Wilsonart Quartz

ENTRY DOORS/WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS: Kawneer

FAUCETS: Danze, Delta Vero

FIREPLACE: Napoleon

FLOORING: Mannington Madison Hickory Collection

GARAGE DOOR: Inco

HVAC SYSTEMS: Lennox

KITCHEN APPLIANCES: Bosch

PAINTS/STAINS: Sherwin-Williams (interior and exterior)

ROOFING: Mule-Hide Products Co.

SINKS: Kohler

STRUCTURAL GLASS: Cardinal Glass

TOILETS: Toto

WASHER/DRYER: Samsung

WINDOWS: Gerkin Window & Doors, Rhino (bedrooms)

WINE FRIDGE: GE Monogram

Timeless Appeal



1



2



3

1. PIZZA PIZZA

SMEG's Portofino dual fuel range now comes in American Thanksgiving size —48 inches. The primary oven is 4.5 cubic feet; the secondary 1.45. Ten cooking modes include a pizza function. Smegusa.com
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Circle 102 on inquiry card.

3. PRIVACY, FIRST CLASS

OMNIA's ARC collection of latchsets tucks a privacy button into a smaller, 2-inch-diameter rose, for a sleek, low-profile look. Available in satin brass and a variety of other finishes. Omniindustries.com
Circle 103 on inquiry card.



4



5



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4. ARCH OF TRIUMPH

GROHE has streamlined its low-flow Atrio bath faucet for a more modern, minimalist profile. Matches with cross handles or levers in crisp Starlight Chrome and Brushed Nickel Infinity Finish.

Grohe.us

Circle 104 on inquiry card.

5. BELLA FLECKS

Walker Zanger's large-format Fragmenta Terrazzo series of tiles are at once timeless and modern. Sourced from Italy, the 24-by-24-inch tiles come in a palette of modern neutrals.

Walkerzanger.com

Circle 105 on inquiry card.

6. WARM WAYS

The British Sterlingham Co. pares down the traditional towel warmer to a smaller, single-rail size in both modern and traditional profiles. Part of the Cascades Collection, they measure just 38 mm in length.

Sterlingham.co.uk

Circle 106 on inquiry card.

RD PRODUCTS

7. AU NATUREL

Architectural hardware that ages and patinas over time is in keeping with today's wabi-sabi sensibilities. Ashley Norton's new, handmade White Medium finish hardware pairs these qualities with a chameleon style tailored to multiple applications.

Ashleynorton.com

Circle 107 on inquiry card.



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8. DECO DAYS

Kolbe Windows & Doors introduces an elegant new matte-and-brushed-gold Dallas handle to complement its VistaLuxe series of in-swing doors. Also compatible with the company's Heritage and Ultra Series.

Kolbewindows.com

Circle 108 on inquiry card.



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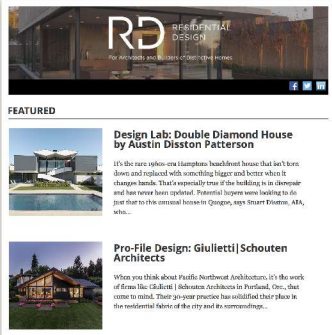
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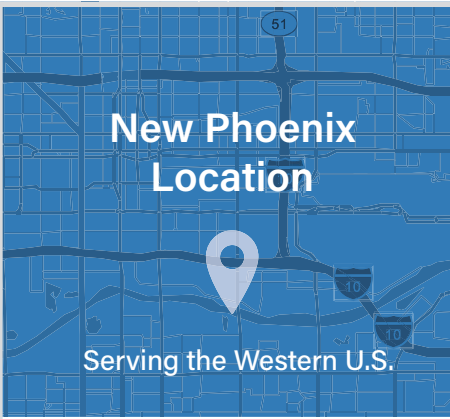


Design Lab: Double Diamond House by Austin Disston Patterson

Pro-File Design: Giulietti | Schouten Architects

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PRODUCT SHOWCASE



Creek Show

FOUGERON ARCHITECTURE
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Project: Suspension House; project size: 2,500 square feet, plus a 340-square-foot cottage; site size: 1.04 acres; architect: principal Anne Fougeron; project architect Todd Arnaz, Fougeron Architecture; general contractor: Dermot Barry, Barry Builders, San Francisco; structural engineer: Endrestudio, Emeryville, California.
Renderings: Kilograph

If you had the opportunity to design another Fallingwater, what would it look like? Fougeron Architecture faced just this question with Suspension House, an extensive remodel to a deeply flawed existing house spanning a creek bed in Napa Valley, California. “You can build something supermassive and grounded that comes out of the earth, or you can build a more ethereal, vaporous thing,” says Anne Fougeron, FAIA. Guess which path the firm chose?

“We don’t do classic modern,” Anne explains. “We tend to do something more related to the site or the client, something that looks to the future of what houses should be like or could be like.” Current codes make it impossible to build over creeks anymore, but the architects and clients were able to rebuild almost anew—by following the footprint of the existing building and by restoring the creek bed. They were also allowed to add 50 percent more square footage, so the house rises up an additional level; and a small cottage and carport replace an existing garage.

The main building is now properly anchored into the rock on flanking slopes and suspended over the creek. The “vaporous” transparency is achieved in part with custom Swiss window systems from Sky-Frame. At the front entry, slightly mottled glass siding emits a shimmering glow not unlike the movement of water beneath the house.

Immersed in nature and hovering above the stream, Suspension House is Fallingwater’s lighter, loftier reflection. —*S. Claire Conroy*

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