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OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES

VOL. 2, 2019

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- Gabriel Keller, principal, Peterssen/Keller Architecture





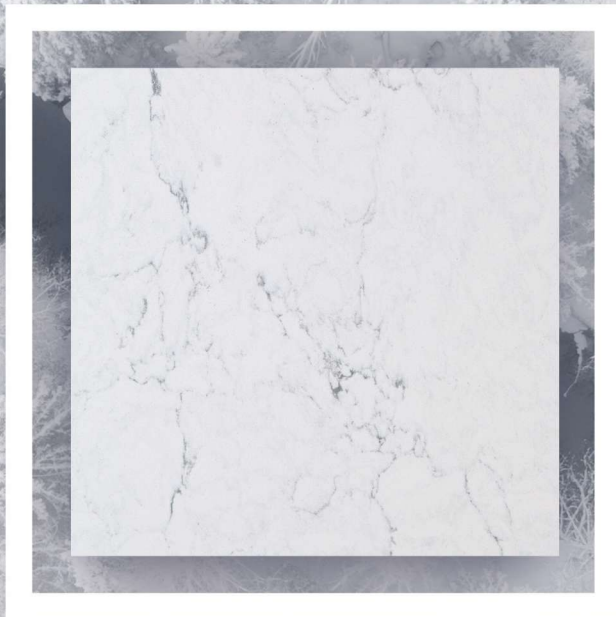
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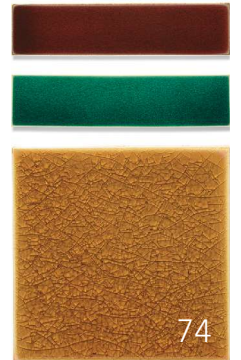
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On the Cover: MC38 Residence by Substance Architecture and Stroub Construction.
Photo: Paul Crosby

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Creative Constraints



I love talking with architects about what inspires the work they do. Although, I have to admit I am sometimes amused to hear them talk about pebbles on the beach and lichen on driftwood as design catalysts. But you have to start somewhere, and if it's your task to design a house on a pristine site with no visible neighbors around, you might as well start perusing the flora and fauna—and maybe the local history books at the town library. In this issue, we made it a bit easier on our featured firms—we picked projects that had solid context to guide their invention and, in some cases, reinvention. Context is both a constraint and a springboard, and the tension between the two often yields the most creative, original results.

Architect Paul Mankins, FAIA, of Substance Architecture designed our Case Study house amid a bounty of constraints and liberties. In fact, it was sometimes difficult to tell one from the other. The project is a recent revise of a remodel Paul designed for his twin brother back in 2002. The original house was by a notable disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright and located on a precipitous site in San Francisco. On Paul's first remodel, site constraints combined with deference to the original architect and his brother's budget limitations. On the second go-round, the first two factors remained in play, but his brother's budget was more generous. So the toughest challenge came as a bit of a surprise—external constraints had morphed into internal ones. Chief among them, how do you revise and improve upon your own work as an architect? Daunting, to say the least.

However, Paul was smart and humble enough to invite a fresh set of eyes to help him figure it out. He tapped project architect Jessica Terrill, who had a great filter for what to keep and what to reinvent. Working together with Stroub Construction, the fantastic custom builder who managed the first remodel, the team's reimagined house is better in every way. At the same time, says Paul, the house has become even more like itself—an even more accurate distillation of the original vision.

Most of our Design Lab houses and our Verbatim project are more straightforward examples of contextual responses to neighborhood and building code influences. All are located in areas known for traditional design, and their architects carefully considered how to reinterpret the existing fabric. Each architect tweaked precedent to deliver a strong house that answers clients' needs without overwhelming the scale and tenor of the neighborhood.

Modern architects might call most of the houses traditional, and traditional architects might argue the houses are actually modern. We might call them transitional, but that's a muddy word with little inherent meaning. When architecture is fresh and inventive, it may elude stylistic definition. But maybe that's one constraint we can all do without.

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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Photos: Benjamin Cheung



A House for Grandmother

SMOOK ARCHITECTURE & URBAN DESIGN
WESTBOROUGH, MASSACHUSETTS



Clay Smook, AIA

Although Clay Smook, principal of SMOOK Architecture, has done his share of houses over his 30 years in practice, this was his first suburban commission. Trained as an urbanist at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, Clay's residential work has occurred largely in second home areas, so he was quite eager to take on a project with infrastructure and context. This new 2,800-square-foot house and garage building in Needham, Massachusetts, occupy a tear-down site in a neighborhood of traditional houses, many older and original to the period and others built new to look old.

RD: Your practice is largely commercial. What draws you to residential design?

CS: I've been doing houses since my 20s. When I was in architecture school, I was passionate about doing houses, so I worked for someone who, old-school, taught me how to do the drawings. We designed houses in Rhode Island. Coastal Rhode Island was an affordable area back then.

Then a friend's parents hired me to do a 1,500-square-foot house with a budget of \$40,000. I did everything, including sizing the beams. An architect stamped the drawings—things are so litigious now, I always have a structural engineer's stamp. By the time I got to grad school, I had done five or six houses. Now houses in that same area can cost easily \$2 million.



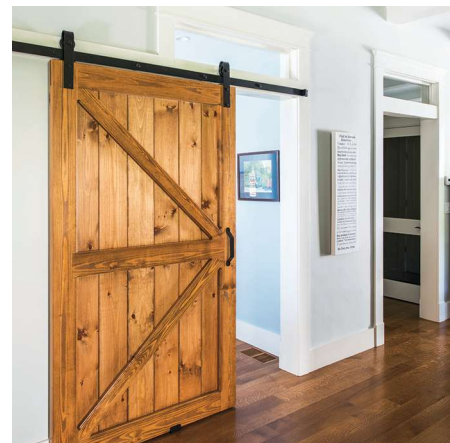
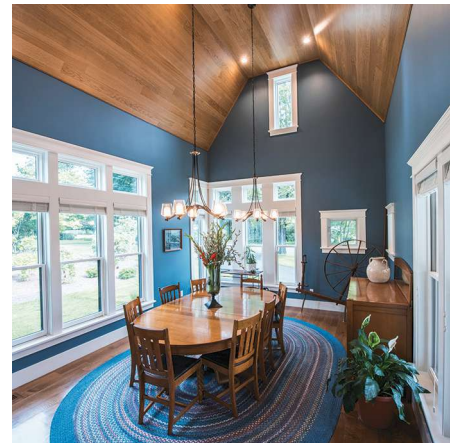
Clockwise from above: Nestled in a neighborhood of traditional houses, this new house and garage play with precedent through a modern lens. The dining room brings together a multigenerational family. Its asymmetrical fenestration adds a contemporary touch. The house is accessible for its 80-year-old occupant, but optimized for absorbing extended family and friends.

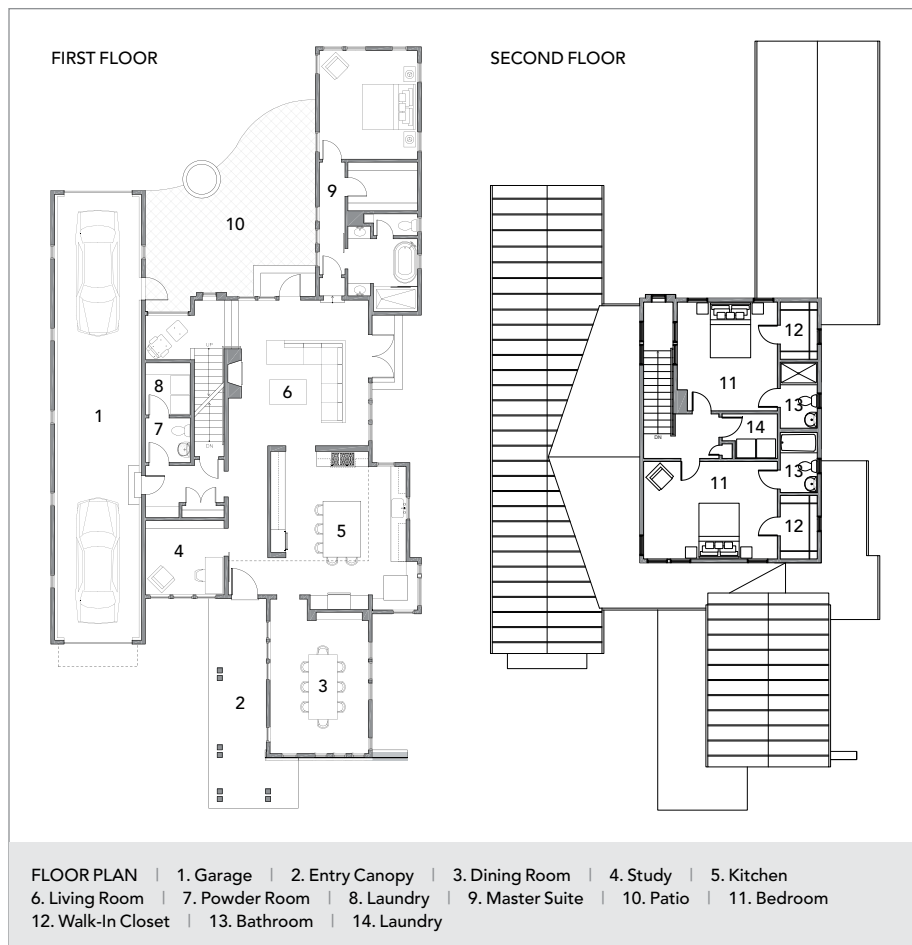
What attracted you to this project?

This is my first suburban home—everything else has been vacation homes. That it was actually on a street with other houses was super exciting to me. If it’s on a street, what does that mean for the house and what does that mean for the street?

My clients owned a two-story, hipped-roof Colonial—the house everyone in the neighborhood loves and envies. They bought the house next door on a double-wide lot. They bulldozed the house, divided the lot into two and sold one off to a developer. The developer built a Shingle-style home with a steeply pitched gable roof. That left us with a deep, 80-foot-wide lot, and provided the context.

My clients wanted to build a new house for the wife’s 80-year-old mother, so she could move from Western Massachusetts. The husband is a car enthusiast and wanted a garage to store a future collection. They wanted the house to be a comfortable, adaptable home for the mother, and a gathering place for Sunday dinner with the extended family. The thinking is that they will downsize into this house someday.





Tell us first about the garage. It has some tricks up its sleeve. They knew they wanted at least a two-car garage, but any more bays require a special permit. I really wanted to make it able to accommodate three, so we designed a long, narrow tandem garage where you could fit a third car in the middle someday. It's also tall enough with its 13-foot stud height that you could install a lift and get six cars in there.

There are doors at both ends. The rear driveway is grass with pavers, and the front is at the street. In the winter, you would only dig out the front.

When I go looking for design inspiration, I like to go back to original sources. The owners grew up in a rural area with tobacco barns. So I thought about iconic covered bridges—long and thin and simple. I imagined the structure as red or white when I designed it. But it would have been a one liner in red. So we went with grays, blues, and whites for the whole project. Taken together, the buildings play into the New England pattern of big house, little house, back house, barn. Like a house that grew over time.

Those different elements pull apart to create a kind of courtyard for the house. What else does the configuration accomplish?

It's really designed around two courtyards.

I grew up on Long Island, and we had a 20x50 ranch house next to Levittown. Over time, my father added on to it to create a courtyard. For me, tying a building from outside to inside is more than just about glass. I think about the voids and not just the solids, the infrastructure. On any given day in the office, we're designing houses or whole edges of cities. I don't really differentiate in my mind between the two.

Orienting around a courtyard lets you introduce multiple exposures of light and view in the house. For instance, the mother's bedroom wing stretches back into the lot. It creates a cloistered area, bounded by the big house and the garage.

The dining room occupies the "tongue" that sticks out at the front of the house. It has a triplex of exposures—east, west, and south light. With the porch element, it creates another courtyard area.



The grandmother's bedroom extends deep into the backyard, forming a courtyard with the tandem garage. The tall, thin stair hall window and chimney are "gift wrapped" in trim and color. The garage was inspired by New England's covered bridges.

We break the program into smaller pieces, narrower forms, so we can get double and triple exposures in most areas.

And we like to play with form. The porch is a flat roof element—thin metal over classic columns. It bridges the gap between contemporary and traditional forms. We also play with the scale of elements and the size and arrangement of cladding. There's the long window at the stair that we wrapped in color, along with the chimney. We call that gift wrapping.


Also, I don't let forms collide very often. Initially, you think the dining room volume collides with the house, but it doesn't. If you look carefully, you can see a window peeking out on the second floor. That's one of the bedrooms for the grandchildren.

The upstairs has a very efficient layout for them. Two bedrooms large enough for beds and extra chairs, bathrooms and closets for each.

Many new houses de-emphasize the dining room, but this one was a focal point of the design—the central gathering place for the extended family.

The clients wanted a place for Sunday night dinner with friends and family, so this room is the cornerstone of the design. It has a gabled roof, but its proportions are contemporary, as are the asymmetrical windows. The approach to the house is along the porch, which echoes the main house entry. It's very warm and welcoming. People walking by constantly stop the homeowner to ask about the house.

This is a well-traveled street in Needham. I'll meet people from the town and I'll say I did a house there, and they'll ask if it's the one on Kingsbury. We're now doing about six houses because of it.

Our client calls this her house of love and light. We're doing multimillion-dollar projects, but this is probably our greatest one, because it has so much meaning to so many people. 

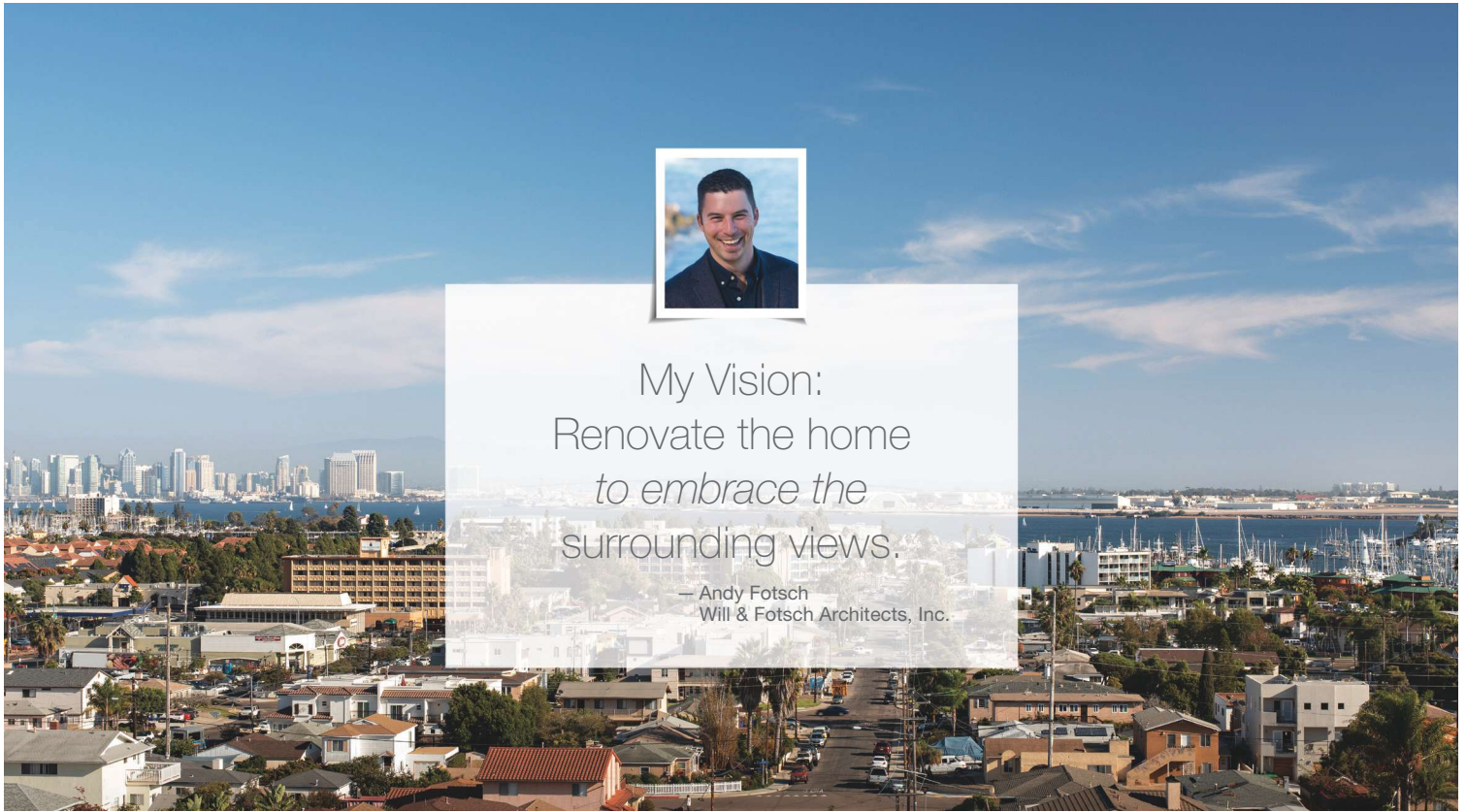
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— Andy Fotsch
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Going Big

P/K ARCHITECTURE
MINNEAPOLIS

Photo: Courtesy P/K Architecture



When you think about residential architects, often the image that comes to mind is of a sole practitioner working in a little studio at the back of her house. And this is not inaccurate—more than 75 percent of all architecture firms in the United States have fewer than 10 employees. For most, this is the sweet spot of sustainability for a sole proprietor or, perhaps, a partnership of two principals. Minneapolis-based P/K Architecture [formerly known as Peterssen/Keller] has 27 architects, designers, and staff on the payroll. Not only is the size unusual for any architecture firm, it's especially rare for one primarily focused on residential work.

Even at this size, the firm limits the scope of what they do on each project. They don't, for instance, offer interior design services and they don't want to add construction services either. The partners—Lars Peterssen, AIA; Gabriel (Gabe) Keller; and Kristine (Kris) Anderson—consider interior designers and custom builders as strong allies and sources of business, ones they wish to nurture and not undermine as competition.



Photo: Paul Crosby

Top left: P/K partners Gabriel Keller, Kristine Anderson, and Lars Peterssen. Above: The Calhoun Pavilions Residence links three "pavilion" volumes around garden and courtyard spaces. The L-shaped plan grabs views of Lake Calhoun and the downtown skyline.

What they do offer that's not always true of firms this size is stylistic diversity. The design staff is willing and able to work on traditional and modern

"The things you have to do as principal when you're small take away from design work."

—Gabriel Keller, Assoc. AIA

houses—along with ones that play somewhere in between. No matter what the style, whether new construction or remodel, a large or small project, the work is top-notch and award-winning.

The Sweet Spot

The three partners have worked for large firms and small ones. And they come most recently from a previous firm led by Lars, called Domain Architecture & Design. In starting P/K 10 years ago, they sought to establish a truly collaborative practice, where work and credit is shared throughout the office at every level. In Gabe's experience, the bigger firm size facilitates this approach because it frees the partners to concentrate on design.

"We've discovered that certain sizes work best. For instance, one to 12 works, but after that you have to jump up to 18 or more to make it work again,"

Photos this page: Paul Crosby



Above and right: The Cottagewood Beach House was designed for one of the best custom builders in Minneapolis, a testament to the team at P/K. Below: Square Lake Cabin in Stillwater, Minn., was designed for three siblings as an easy getaway from the city; each bedroom has an equivalent view.



he explains. “The things you have to do as principal when you’re small take away from design work—you have to do your own marketing, business development, office management, human resources. Once we got to 15 people, we realized we needed a goal for getting larger and for hiring a marketing manager. An in-house marketing manager helps bring in interesting work and helps us capture more of the boom times.”

At 27 people, the firm has the coveted marketing director, plus a financial administrator, office manager, and a materials resource manager. There are also project managers, designers, drafters, and several interns. The core team for each project is a principal and a project manager, says Kris. “We try to split up the work among the three of us, because we always want to be involved in all the projects and we all get to work on practically everything. One day we might be working on something modern, one day on something traditional—or a multimillion-dollar project or a tiny house.”

Says Gabe, “Every project has a principal and a project architect pushing to make it better. Some may prefer traditional or modern work, some really enjoy both. When a client comes in, we decide who the best fit is; each time it’s different.”

Great Room

P/K occupies its own low-rise commercial building, with room to grow to 30. Everyone’s favorite space in the building is a 40-by-40-foot workroom. “We created it when we expanded the office,” says Gabe. “The room is surrounded by industrial metal drawers with samples and worktables in the middle. We draw from showrooms across the country for the samples. It’s helped us harness a more fun design process—now that we can grab natural stone counter materials and put them together with cabinet



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Photo: Paul Crosby



samples, for instance. It's revolutionized how we work."

"It's light-filled, with inspiring materials," Kris adds. "Our materials resource manager helps us track down what we need for the room and researches other sources." The expansive space facilitates work within the office and with clients, interior designers, landscape designers, and builders. "We like to get in there and have fun with everyone," says Gabe. "We want to make sure everyone's voice is heard."

As it turns out, quite a few of the firm's clients are interior designers and builders themselves. One of the area's best custom builders hired the firm to design his own vacation home

on a lake. The partners' willingness to collaborate is likely at the heart of that, along with its openness to all architectural styles and all levels of engagement. "We're a full-service architecture firm that handles everything from initial concepts to construction documents," Kris explains. "But we have a large number of people who will come to us not knowing what they want to do. We can take them through a master design phase and then pause, talk to a builder, and get a basic cost."

Adds Gabe, "If the clients have a tight budget, sometimes the best value from us is to provide a napkin sketch. Of course, we'll make sure liability is laid out clearly if we're offering



Photo: Spacecrafting

reduced services. But it's up to us to allocate the clients' budget where they can get the best value. What we're known best for is listening to our clients. We listen to what home means to them, whether that's very traditional or modern. Lars, Kris, and I enjoy it all; it's part of our history, a part of where we came from."

Nice Work

It's been a long, cold winter in the Midwest, but a busy one for the firm. For the second time in two years, the partners are taking the entire office and significant others on a retreat. Costa Rica is this year's destination, where everyone can decompress, thaw out, and visit the site of a large project in progress.

Says Kris, "It's another way of us bonding together, a chance to see the gorgeous surroundings of the site we collaborated on. And it's a thank you for all the hard work."

—S. Claire Conroy

Photo: Spacecrafting



Top left and right: In deference to its neighbors' scenic rights, Sunfish Lake Residence hugs its hilly site, yet still manages to capture sweeping views of the lake. *Left:* Tucked between two traditional houses, Pelican Lake Modern shoehorns onto a tight, narrow site to secure stunning water views.

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Photos: Courtesy Rodwin Architecture



True Green

SCOTT RODWIN, AIA, RODWIN ARCHITECTURE AND SKYCASTLE CONSTRUCTION
BOULDER, COLORADO



Scott Rodwin, AIA

Scott Rodwin, AIA, is an architect, but his No. 1 mantra in the design and construction business is “respect the builder.” Maybe that’s not

such a surprise because, in addition to his architecture firm, Rodwin Architecture, he owns a construction company called Skycastle Construction. Together, the 12-person design-build firm achieves a high standard of sustainable residential work that Scott says would be very difficult to accomplish without providing both pieces of the puzzle.

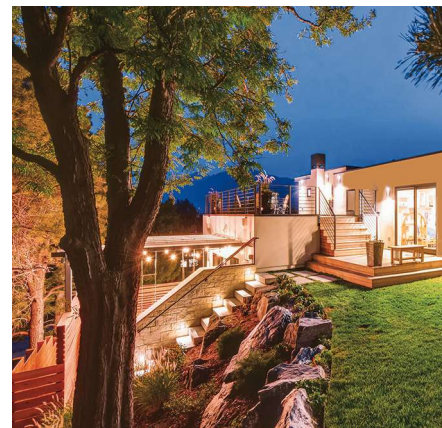
The company builds within a radius

of about 1½ hours of its base in Boulder, Colorado, an area that’s benefited and suffered from an extended housing boom. Delivering construction services was key to the company’s survival during the last downturn, but it’s also essential to its success today, when building talent is in such short supply.

“The cost of building is sky high,” Scott explains. “And that’s because in the great recession we lost a lot of skilled tradespeople. Since then demand has consistently increased. Also, the quality of the houses has ratcheted up. It used to be that the rules were very relaxed in certain areas, and less skilled workers built lower-quality houses.”

Boulder has long been a stronghold of tough green building standards, but surrounding areas are catching up and, at the same time, buyers are demanding better houses. “Now, as people have moved from the coast and brought higher expectations, they’ve pushed the design quality and construction quality,” says Scott. “Fifteen years ago, very few people were doing pier construction, which is essential with our clay soils. Today, we’re seeing a lot of cracking in those houses—cracking foundations, porches that sink or rise, garages that crack.”

When Scott founded his architecture firm in 1999, he was an early apostle of sustainable residential de-



Previous page: Rodwin Architecture and Skycastle built Gunung Mas as a passive and active solar ranch house. Edge House (left) attained LEED platinum. Deck House (above) is another Rodwin/Skycastle design-build.

sign. In 2020, he says, every house in Denver will have to meet the equivalent of LEED Gold. “Ten years ago, we were out there on the fringe. There were architects who had green building in their DNA, like James Cutler, but they weren’t concerned with certifications at the time. In the green building world, the saying goes, ‘you get what you verify.’ The architects and builders who led the way in green design insisted on verification and certification to keep the bar high.”

Scott has been an important one of those leaders. In the early years of his architecture-only firm, he made it a point to attend every reputable conference on sustainability he could find. By the turn of the millennium, his firm was winning local and regional awards for green design and he was teaching others how to do it right. Every time a project garnered attention for design, he insisted upon discussing its high-performance aspects. He documented them on the website as well, in great detail. “We had beautiful wrappers, but they contained energy-, water-, and material-conserving measures. We got good at telling that story.”

Edge of Tomorrow

A significant turning point came when Scott accepted the commission for Edge House. It was both a commission and a challenge, he recalls. “It was in 2007, and it changed everything for us. The client called us up from Germany and said, ‘You are going to design a house for us.’ His brief to us was, ‘I want a house that is a model of sustainability. I have reviewed your green building codes,

“I have reviewed your green building codes, and I laugh at them.”

—a Rodwin client

and I laugh at them. I want this house to be the greenest house in America.”

Scott, who had educated himself on everything from straw-bale to net-zero, was happy to accept the challenge—especially with a shaky economy looming on the horizon. The design came together nicely, but, midway through construction, the first builder began to self-destruct. “He was a criminal,” says Scott. “A criminal who actually went to jail. The owner fired

him.” Another builder finished the job.

This experience spurred Scott to start his own construction company. “Here we had this great house on the verge of being destroyed by a bad contractor. And I already had folks in my office who dreamed of the design-build, master-builder model. I even had a guy in my firm, Brandon David, who had started as a builder and then become an architect. It was 2008 and work was running out. I turned to Brandon and said, ‘we either have to do more on the buildings we do, or we have to let people go.’” Brandon, who has degrees in architecture and environmental design, was gung-ho, and is now Skycastle’s co-owner and general contractor.

Get There First

Once finished, Edge House gained traction fast. It achieved LEED Platinum, won Green Home of the Year from the Colorado Home Builders Association, First Place in the Colorado Residential Sustainable Design Awards, in addition to great coverage in the mainstream press. The timing was perfect for the new design-build firm to capitalize on the exposure. And the Skycastle team



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focused fast on getting up to speed.

“We worked hard to build the best construction company and to integrate it really well with the architecture firm,” says Scott. “It was profitable right out of the gate, and it gave us control of the design from start to finish. The quality is higher, and the most surprising thing is the liability went down.

“The scariest thing about design-build is that it’s two entirely different professions. You have to have respect that fact,” Scott warns. “So, whenever we didn’t know something, we hired somebody who did. We hired supers with 30 years of experience. It’s a lot cheaper to pay them than to be sued. We pick up mistakes before they get in the field and correct them. We’ve never been sued because we fix things quickly.”



Wedge House is a design-build remodel of a 1973 ranch, resulting in a high-performance house with geothermal heating and photovoltaics.

What Scott’s firm does is no longer “fringe,” and competition is growing. Still, he’s way out in front, with two decades of experience, achievements, and market reputation. He’s led with design, backed it up with construction chops, and infused it with concern for the environment and the well-being of his clients.

He’s designing and building true green homes that he hopes will become as commonplace as organic food, once also a fringe item. Says Scott, “Green building has been running a parallel course to organic food. And now every Kroger and Safeway has an organic food section, which helps bring prices down. I’m optimistic green building will become more affordable and accessible before too long.” —S. Claire Conroy



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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 13

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 14

A Call to Action

BY LUIS JAUREGUI, FAIA



Luis Jauregui, FAIA

Since I launched my firm in the early '80s, I have dedicated my practice entirely to residential design-build. My very first design-build project was a four-unit lot in 1982 with a construction loan at a whopping 18 percent interest, standard business in those recession days. I had a blast with the design as well as with the construction and seeing the project through to completion. Thankfully, it presold at framing stage and with enough margin to sustain me, because from then on I was hooked on the concept of not being limited by architectural income for the rest of my career.

I have always been a big advocate within the design industry for design-build, known commonly today as project delivery, and encouraged my fellow residential architects to jump on this moving train. In the commercial and institutional worlds, as well as in production homebuilding, design-build is a standard project delivery system that is big business, and mostly controlled by the construction companies.

Project delivery is gaining much buzz and acceptance within the residential design industry, and owners (our clients) are excited about design-build entities that offer the convenience and expertise of all-in-one service while demystifying the complexities of procuring a custom home. It's a win-win for all parties, and fortunately many architects are beginning to get it—although, for some reason, as a group we have traditionally looked down on homebuilding. The more builders embrace design-build, the more architects seem to turn away.

Custom builders are proactively adapting their services and associating their companies with designers and architects because they recognize the demand and the marketability of this project delivery system.

Design-build is daunting, yes, requiring a whole new skill set as well as a sense of entrepreneurial spirit, but these are things residential architects can either hire or partner to achieve. We need to expand our services to meet the new market demand, to become more competitive and marketable, and to ensure financial security.

Photos: Piston Design



This page: Jauregui Architecture/Interiors/Construction captures the entire design-build scope for the luxury houses it creates, including the Modern Lake House (top) and the French Modern project (above).

There are myriad advantages to design-build, both for our clients and for our own firms. Those advantages include:

One-Stop Shopping. Combining all services under one roof makes it especially convenient for your client. It also sets your company apart and likely will bring more business your way. I expanded our services about 15 years ago to include interior design and furnishings, following the example of larger commercial design firms. I was nervous about how this might be received, but our clients embraced it immediately



This page: Jauregui also supplies interior design and furnishing services on its ultra high-end projects, providing a turnkey new-home solution to its clients and an additional revenue stream to the firm.

and we've been providing whole-house interiors and furnishings ever since. This put the cherry on top of our full service to our clients, provided by a company of professionals led by architects.

Saving Time and Money. Decisions can be made at the design table without undue delays. You lead the team on design as well as cost and keep your client informed about cost throughout the design process, rather than after when adjustments are more expensive to make. Your team provides thorough construction documents together with a take-it-to-the-bank cost estimate prior to construction, minimizing construction start delays and change orders, and reinforcing critical path scheduling. Think of comprehensive construction documents as your and your clients' best friend.

Quality Control. Clients frequently hear that design-bid-build leads to optimized quality control because the architect oversees the builder's work. Unfortunately, the reality is that only a small percentage of residential architects remain involved through the construction process. An architect-led design-build firm that provides comprehensive construction documents and is responsible for on-site work is the best assurance for quality results for the client, since the ultimate liability lies with the builder.

Higher Conversion to Construction. What better way to bolster financial stability than to have a solid design-to-construction projection of projects spanning one to two years forward? Your clients will be willing to make the design-build transition with you if you have an established record for quality and high integrity. While it does require some leap of faith, our conversion rate is over 95 percent, and we have not provided design services only or build services only in 20 years.

Selling a Product. Another of the great byproducts of operating a design-build firm is the ability to produce your own homes for sale. We have averaged one to two speculative homes for sale every year since the '80s, expanding our firm's activity and income potential nicely, and carrying us through some recessions with additional cash flow.

This is a call to action. While the commercial track may be too complex and well established to tackle, we can still make it happen in custom residential. If we don't do it now, home-builders are going to totally dominate custom design-build, while we ruminate about how little work we're getting.

I'm continually sharpening my tools to keep up with the competition and to keep the phone ringing. And ringing it is. Owners (clients) are actively seeking out proven single-source providers of quality design and construction for the convenience and ease it promises. Obviously, it requires a great team to back up the promises and it's not the easiest approach, but I find it totally gratifying each and every day.

Being a residential architect is pretty awesome, and design-build brings great potential for controlling your own destiny. Maybe we need to think in terms of providing a product (a home) in lieu of providing services. Most of us already have an established brand, not unlike that of high-end designers, recognized by our clients. Let's move beyond project delivery to product delivery and make design-build the vehicle that drives our success home.

A founding member of CRAN, Luis Jauregui, FAIA, is also a Distinguished Alumni of the College of Architecture at Texas A&M University, and past President of AIA Austin and the Home Builders Association of Greater Austin.

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 Solutions 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 Solutions

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 Solutions at Pella. “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 Solutions 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

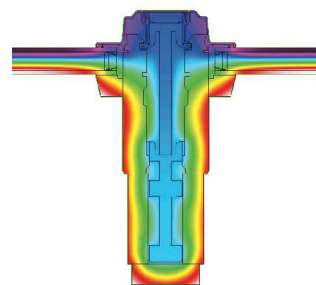


Photographer: Ryan Kurtz Photography

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 Solutions 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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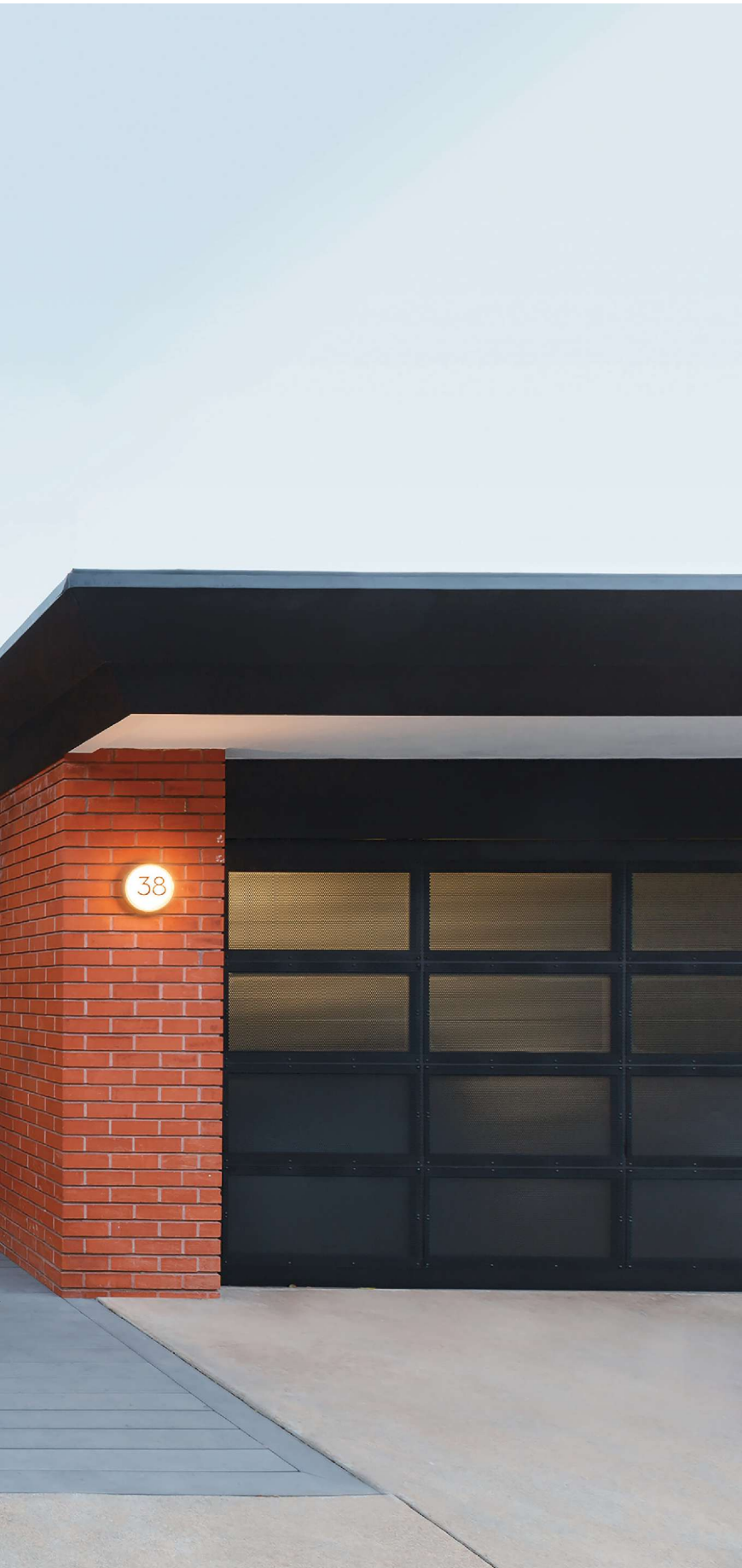


pella.com/beyondtheglass

FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 15

CASE STUDY





De Novo

A two-time gut remodel remasters a pedigreed midcentury house.

BY CHERYL WEBER

LOCATION: SAN FRANCISCO

ARCHITECT: SUBSTANCE ARCHITECTURE

BUILDER: STROUB CONSTRUCTION

It must be gratifying to return to the scene of a previous project 15 years later and find that your decisions were solid—and then be offered a chance to take them to the next level. Paul Mankins, FAIA, would know. In 2002 he did a top-to-bottom renovation of this mid-20th-century San Francisco house designed by Aaron Greene, a Frank Lloyd Wright associate who designed the Marin County Civic Center with Wright in the early 1960s. And in 2017 Paul was asked back to do a full refresh.

Significantly for Paul, the house is owned by his twin brother and his brother's husband. When they bought it in the early 2000s, it had sat on the market for six months despite its pedigree and spectacular setting. Perched on a precipitous slope on the northern face of Twin Peaks, the house has a panoramic view of the Golden Gate Bridge to the west, downtown San Francisco, and the Oakland Bay Bridge to the east. "It was not poorly maintained but had been subjected to one bad decision after another," Paul says. "Most people realized they'd have to gut it."



This page: The land for this midcentury house drops off at an almost 45-degree angle, providing unobstructed, full-sweep views from the Golden Gate Bridge to the Oakland Bay Bridge.



At that time, Paul looked at photos of the original house and set about restoring its formal logic. But the second time was the charm. Not only had the couple's tastes evolved since the 2002 remodel, but the trajectory of Bay Area real estate values meant that Paul was given virtually carte blanche to tune it up. "They weren't just looking to pad it around the edges," Paul says. "They wanted it wholesale reconsidered."

Time and Materials

The house is located immediately above the panhandle of Golden Gate Park, where the topography gets challenging and the streets are not part of a grid. It literally sits on stilts because the land drops off at almost a 45-degree angle, and the back of the house is several stories above grade. "Not much of the house is on grade because the land drops off so quickly," Paul says. "Neighbors to the north are probably 100 feet below, so nothing obstructs the view."

It's hard to say what previous owners were thinking when they added bits and pieces over the years, because the house has handsome bones. The roofline defines three distinct zones that carry from front to back on each level. A sky-lit, gabled central roof runs south to north from the entry to a bay at the back. On either side are two flat-roofed boxes, one encased in brick, the other originally in stucco. Those roof planes organize the living spaces. Upstairs, the entry hall is flanked by a powder room, kitchen, and dining area to the left, and the garage and living room to the right. Paul's first remodel opened up the 44-foot-long back wall of the house to create a continuous living area overlooking

"I think we re-imposed a rigor in 2002 that is still viable. What we did before is 15 years old, but it's not a mess."

—Paul Mankins, FAIA

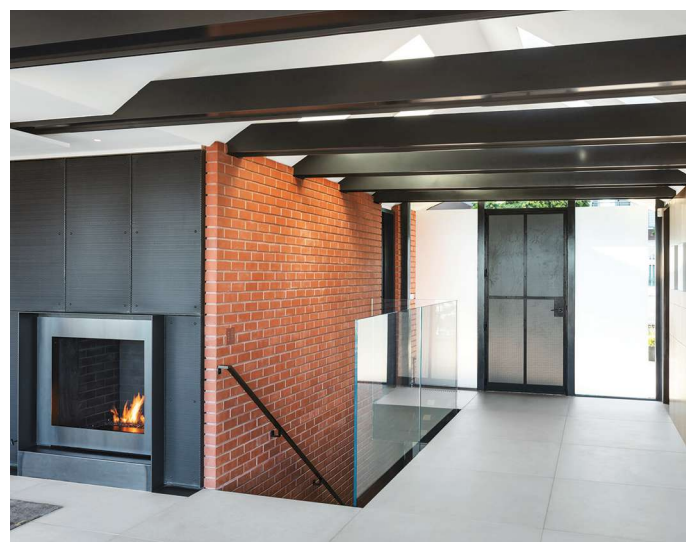
the view. At that time the design team also realized that the window wall and floor plan were organized on a rigorous 4-foot grid and wanted to reinforce it.

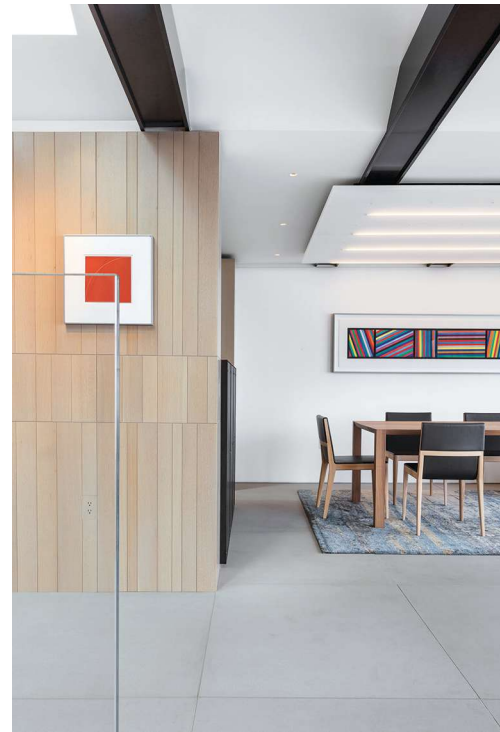
Fifteen years later the house was still in immaculate condition, but the owners wanted an interior that felt warmer. "Earlier we used monolithic black Burlington stone on the floors, plus cherry cabinetry and yellow-gold integrally colored plaster to warm it up," Paul says. "They loved the house but wanted something lighter."

What constitutes success can mean different things at different times. Still, it can feel tricky to destroy your own work and start over. "I think we re-imposed a rigor in 2002 that is still viable," Paul says. "The house was a mess, so you could consider wholesale changes; you knew it wasn't going to get worse. So there was a freedom that came with that. This time when we came back to it, what we did before is 15 years old, but it's not a mess."

In 2002 Paul was a partner at the Des Moines, Iowa, firm Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck and worked on the project with Matt Rodenkamp, AIA. Soon after the renovation was completed, Paul started Substance Architecture, and Matt joined him two years later. This time around Paul worked with a different project architect, Jessica Terrill, AIA.

This page: The goal for this second remodel was to lighten, refresh, and simplify the palette of materials and to further optimize the living and sleeping spaces.





This page: A new blackened steel fireplace surround contrasts with new, lighter-colored flooring. A brick wall carries through from the exterior on the first level and now to the sleeping level below as well.

“Matt is a spectacularly talented architect, but if the same project architect had been assigned to it, it would have been harder to say, what do I change?” Paul says. “A new one was able to say, I respect what you guys did but I’m listening to the client in a different way and hearing a different set of needs about warmth of material palette. Jessica was able to say, ‘these things clearly worked and we’re going to keep them, but this new set of issues has emerged. How do we keep the best of the last renovation and address some of the new changes?’ We simplified the plan greatly in 2002, and we further simplified it now.”

Clean Sweep

Paul stayed with his brother and brother-in-law for a few days before starting the second redesign. That visit brought to light some functional issues on the lower level containing an office and the bedrooms, where most of the plan changes ended up taking place. Once again, the gut renovation was based on Aaron Greene’s strong organizational logic and led to all-new materials in a limited palette designed to unify the home’s spaces.

On both floors, the design team strengthened the organizational planes on the southeast and southwest by extending

the exterior materials inside. Upstairs, the brick on the garage wraps inside the house along the entry hall/garage wall. Paul had replaced this wallpapered-over brick during the 2002 remodel with new brick, and this time he added it to the south wall of the living area “to get a reading, from the inside, of that block of masonry that makes up the garage.” He also extended the brick along the stairwell and into the master suite downstairs, where it makes a right-hand turn into the bathroom. “It establishes the formal idea that there’s this brick piece that anchors the west side of the house and contains the service functions—garage, master bath, and dressing area,” he says.

The companion west side is wrapped in rift-cut oak that forms a wooden box on two levels—it defines the kitchen and powder room upstairs, and the guest suite downstairs. Millworkers matched the wood to the wood-look porcelain rainscreen chosen for the west-side exterior so that the transition appears seamless. “We found this porcelain material that we figured out how to install as a rainscreen and then had a millwork company match it for the cabinetry and paneling, which they did in a completely convincing way,” Paul says. “We didn’t want the wood to change color outside but not inside. It’s imperceptible that it’s not wood outside.”

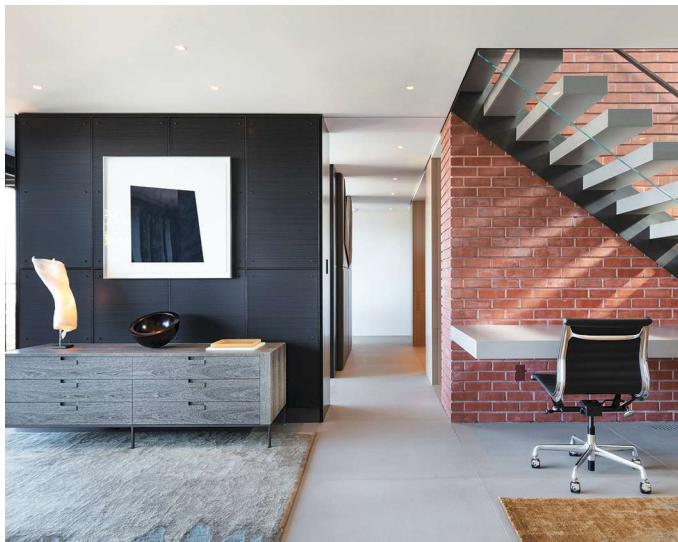
In another moment of clarity, the central stairway that made a 90-degree turn into the hallway downstairs was reoriented as a straight run and dematerialized with open treads and a glass enclosure. This move opened the entry hall upstairs; downstairs it created a larger middle room that flows from the front to the window wall in back. “The lower level doesn’t get cave-like because the stair doesn’t block the views,” Paul says. “It’s just a series of planes projected off the wall.” The newfound space is used as an office and lounge, with a desk tucked under the stair—an extension of one of the treads.

Opportunities for shape-shifting also arose with the revelation that the north wall of the garage was not load-bearing. On the lower level, this meant they were able to take down the wall, redeveloping the master as a series of spa-like spaces including a bedroom focused on the view, a luxurious bath, and an elegant dressing room outfitted with art and a Poliform closet system.



This page: The kitchen is transformed from its original integral plaster walls and cherry cabinets to brighter, rift-sawn oak walls and cabinetry and perforated steel screens.





Following the Lines

Surely there aren't many contractors who can say they've gutted the same house twice, but Paul was fortunate to be able to hand off the job to Stroub Construction, the local builder who executed the first renovation. "We only saw the house three times when it was under construction," Paul says. "There was a high level of precision and we knew they could do it. In a house that is not brand new and sags in multiple directions, they were very good at figuring out how to compromise."

"There's a complexity to the way Paul works in that all the details relate throughout the house; it's a finely woven fabric," agrees Mike Cummings, who was the project manager for both renovations. For example, mortar joints in the brick line up from the basement to the top floor, where they align with the exterior brick.

"If there's a seam, I can assure you it's lining up with something else," says company owner Steve Stroub. "The brick corner at the living room fireplace was what laid out the entire building. It creased a point on the lower level that gives you a dimension for a brick-wrapped column and relates to the width of the opening at the master bedroom and partition walls downstairs."

The detailing sometimes created a structural puzzle. Embedded into the load-bearing stairwell wall is a 12-foot-by-6-foot tubular steel beam with a piece of steel welded to it to create the cantilever. A cold-rolled steel trim piece covers the structural components, and the stair treads are wrapped in Caesarstone. The structural system had to be virtually immovable because if there was any give at all, the treads might have cracked, Cummings says.

The stairwell's 3/4-inch glass was another test of skill and strength, requiring about eight men to carry into the house. It forms a guardrail around the stairwell opening at the entryway and down along the stairs. The enormous, sloping stairway section, made of two pieces of glass with a seam in the middle, hangs from through-bolts drilled into the first-floor joists and rests on a small point on the lower-level floor.

Visual tricks were part of the playbook, too. The wall design at the bottom of the stairs echoes the entry treatment on the floor directly above, where translucent glass

This page: The biggest changes happened on the lower level. The stair was reoriented as a straight run and rebuilt as an open system, bringing more light and space into a new central lounge area. The brick wall from upstairs now wraps the same quadrant downstairs as does the rift-sawn oak wall, reinforcing the design language and plan logic.

THE ORIGINAL HOUSE



THE 2002 REMODEL





This page: The team discovered the bedroom wall was not load bearing. Removing it allowed them to create a series of spa-like spaces. A leather partition/headboard wraps seismic X-bracing.

panels flank the dark, perforated steel front door. Downstairs, a Robert Mangold print hangs on a black middle panel, with etched mirrors on either side that look like translucent glass. They reflect daylight coming in from the north window wall.

If the ability to remove the bedroom wall was transformative, seismic requirements also inspired the master suite's axial layout. The bed sits against a shear wall containing a thin steel seismic frame. Its large X-brace was incorporated into the bed's headboard, which is covered in leather that folds back like lapels along the X. The design opens a line of sight and sunlight into the master bath behind it, where a column of water, on axis with the X-brace, fills the oval tub from the ceiling. Beyond is the closet/dressing room, with its luxe rug and inviting ottoman. "Hidden in one corner of the closet is a stacking washer/dryer, so the clothes don't really go anywhere," Paul says.



MC38 Residence

San Francisco

ARCHITECT: Principal-in-charge: Paul Mankins, FAIA; project architect, Jessica Terrill, AIA, Substance Architecture, Des Moines, Iowa

EXPEDITER: Acanthus Architecture & Design, San Francisco

BUILDER: Steve Stroub, owner; Mike Cummings, project manager; Jordan Guthrie, construction supervisor, Stroub Construction, Sausalito, Calif.

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Monte Stott & Associates, San Francisco; IMEG, Des Moines

SITE SIZE: .25 acres

PROJECT SIZE: 2,800 square feet

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHER: Paul Crosby (2018), Farshid Assassi (2002)

KEY PRODUCTS

CLADDING: Marazzi Treverk Tile

COOKTOP/OVEN: Gaggenau

COUNTERTOPS: Caesarstone

DECKING: Cali Bamboo, Slate Bamdeck

DISHWASHER: Gaggenau

FAUCETS: KWC, Ava (kitchen), DXV (coffee bar); Grohe, Vola (baths)

FIREPLACE: Spark Modern Fires

FLOORING: Rieder, Fibre C

GARAGE DOOR: Northwest Door, Conceptual Metalworks

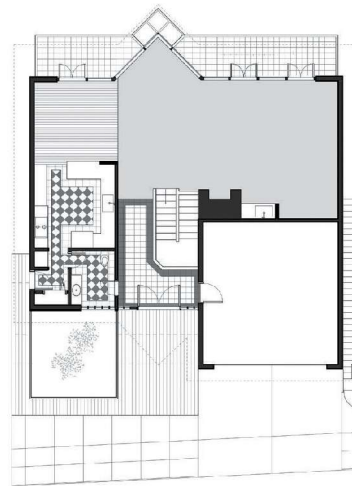
HOME THEATER COMPONENTS: Inca Corporation

KITCHEN CABINETRY HARDWARE: Mockett

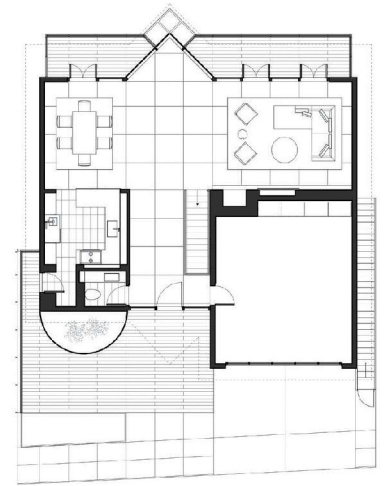
LIGHTING: Lutron (controls); Vibia, Delray (interior), Bega (exterior)

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

TUB: Blu Bathworks (master), Kohler (ceiling mount bath spout)



UPPER LEVEL BEFORE



UPPER LEVEL AFTER



LOWER LEVEL BEFORE



LOWER LEVEL AFTER





Reorienting and rebuilding the stair and opening a former partition wall connects the new lounge area fully to the stunning view and the natural light it brings with it. The blackened steel panels reappear as the fireplace wall on the main level.


Redo, Reinterpreted

There were fewer problems to resolve upstairs, but it too has a new level of purity and polish, with just a handful of materials employed in a consistent way. Four-by-4-foot cement tiles tie the flooring together on both levels and incorporate heat registers. “The registers in front of the windows are laser-cut concrete tiles backed with a stainless steel plate because the tiles are fairly thin,” says Steve.

Perforated metal panels partially screen the kitchen from the dining area. Here and in the living room, floating 3form resin panels embedded with LED lights define the seating areas in this large room, as do the Driscoll Robbins custom rugs. “We had to get approval to hang the panels because they do weigh quite a bit,” Mike says. “We tapped finish screws into the steel strut and had to make sure they lined up; the fasteners are structural and part of the design.” And the kitchen’s perforated metal panels reappear around the fireplace, which

consists of the original firebox with a linear flame inserted.

Outside, the semi-circular planter was updated with perforated metal; Paul also replaced the entry decking and garage door and added the porcelain rainscreen. “The rainscreen was hung on a steel structural system; we had one of our best tile setters do it,” Mike says. And photovoltaic panels—set at a lower angle than would be ideal so you can’t see them from the street—generate most of the house’s electricity.

In that spirit, the result is not just a repackaging of the previous renovation but a truer expression of what the original was after. The way Paul sees it, the house has become more like itself. “There are certain funny plan things that I think, why didn’t we do that last time?” he says. “But there were things we did before that are still valid, and we reinterpreted those. The character of the house is radically different, so much lighter. It’s a better house now, to be honest. They’ll live with this for the next 20 years.” 



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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 16

Conscious of Context

Three very different projects mine precedent for creative inspiration.

BY CHERYL WEBER AND S. CLAIRE CONROY





Casa Linder

DALLAS
BUCHANAN ARCHITECTURE

It has always been the job of architects to provide alternatives to the one-plan-fits-all-lots approach to residential design. But in some neighborhoods, these efforts go against the grain of current trends. Case in point is Casa Linder, a very different-looking building that burrows deeply into Dallas' past. In a neighborhood of oversized developer homes that max out height restrictions, Casa Linder reintroduces its community to the power of place.

This old East Dallas neighborhood is a classic, with mature trees, parks, and recreational activities. It is also close to



downtown, which makes its gradual transformation from older bungalows to multistory mega-homes a familiar story. When the clients purchased the 55-foot-wide by 220-foot-long lot, however, they couldn't bring themselves to use a builder house plan. The married couple—a creative director at a large advertising firm and a buyer for Neiman Marcus—have two teenage boys and asked Buchanan Architecture for a highly social house with room for entertaining.

“They had gone to a builder before they came to us,” says Russell Buchanan, FAIA. “They used to live across the street from us; we’ve been friends for 20 years. So we put a program together and it was one of the rare times when the design and form came together almost instantly. Within a couple of weeks we were on track and working on the project.”

Pod Cast

The lot itself was a conundrum—long, narrow, and running north-south, exactly against the best solar orientation. The newer houses around them sat back about 30 feet from the street, leaving a deep empty lot with a garage off the alley at the back of the property. “In an aerial view you’ll see huge houses with wimpy little breezeways that go 150 feet back to the garage,” Russell says. “I think it’s because the developers already had plans drawn, so they put the house at the front and the garage at the back and figured out how to connect the two.”

Russell took a different approach. His research showed that before Dallas was settled in 1845, it was part of the Blackland Prairies, and the early dwellings were one-story structures made of readily available wood and corrugated metal, which was invented in 1820. Inspired by the wife’s fondness for reclaimed materials, Russell drew a row of four taut, gabled pods clad in



This page: Pulling the house to the front setback line and running it as a series of pods along the west edge of the property created a progression of shaded outdoor areas.

recycled corrugated steel and reclaimed Wyoming snow fencing. The building sits close to the street and runs all the way to the back alley, which made room for a more usable side yard. Each section—kitchen/great room; two bedrooms and a study, powder room, and utility area; master suite; and garage—is connected by a continuous hallway on the west.

There's magic in the rhythm and symmetry. The house is laid out on

Before Dallas was settled in 1845... the early dwellings were one-story structures made of readily available wood and corrugated metal.

a 4-foot grid and based on a perfect square; the pods are 20 feet wide and 20 feet tall at their peak, and separated by patios that are all the same size, including a notched front porch that engages the neighbors.

Having made the decision to orient the house north-south and eliminate overhangs that would detract from the pure forms, Russell took other measures to mitigate heat gain. He pushed the house close to the west property

This page: The pool was a late addition to the plan midway through construction. Russell Buchanan added the carefully curated, 10-ton gabion wall for privacy from the street. Its rough-hewn qualities mesh with cladding of salvaged Wyoming snow fencing and weathered corrugated steel.





The long spine connecting the multiple house pods is set against the west wall to reduce heat gain. A deep, wood-clad overhang shades the living area window wall from excessive sun, but its upswing holds it out of view.

line, where a two-story neighbor shades the house, and a windowless hallway keeps out the hot western sun. The courtyards break apart the building to capture northern light, and cathedral ceilings in the great room and master suite also scoop in light. The middle section containing the boys' bedrooms has a flat ceiling to allow for an attic containing an HVAC unit, which drops air into the great room to the south and the master suite to the north.

Block Buster

For Russell, the one-story house paid homage to the neighborhood's history and the existing cottage that was torn down. But the neighbors saw it differently. The rising, barn-like forms were lampooned in no time. "People across the street put signs in their yards that said 'barnyard' with a big arrow; other signs had a donkey or a chicken," Russell recalls. Protesters notwithstanding, the architectural plans disappeared from the jobsite four times. "The con-

tractor felt like it was developers, but it may even have been other architects who couldn't believe the house was that long and narrow," Russell says.

If anything, the thefts underscored the irresistible appeal of a fresh face on the block. Early on, some people had also been upset that the house sat so close to the street, but that sentiment soon faded too. "Until we did this project, there were no houses that went up to the front yard setback of 25 feet," Russell says. "Ours projected out about



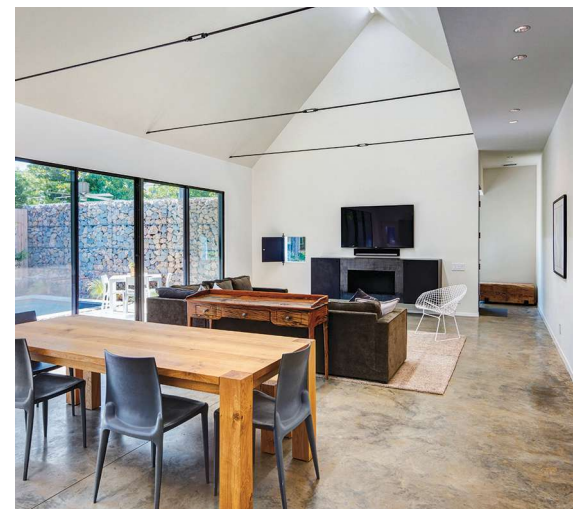
5 feet more than the others. But since this house went up, every new house on the block is at the 25-foot setback, so we were real trendsetters there.”

Traditional-minded neighbors might also have been surprised to see an 8-foot-tall gabion wall going up along the street. The same height as the porch roof, it screens the pool directly behind it, outside the great room. “The pool was not originally in the budget; we added it midway and needed to provide an enclosure,” Russell says. “The gabion wall seemed to fit the vocabulary of the rest of the building.”

Twenty-four feet long, 2 feet wide, and filled with roughly 10 tons of rocks, the wall sits on a concrete grade beam on concrete piers, with rebar extending from the top of the grade beam to the wall’s full height to provide lateral support. And while the wire cages almost seem like a DIY project, it was more expensive to build than a masonry wall,

Russell says, and it took a few tries to blend the multiple batches of rock just right. “I can say that gabion walls are a good choice, but you need to research how they’re built and provide some oversight so it’s done correctly,” Russell says. Now, “finches and wrens have started to nest in the cracks and crevices. It becomes almost a living wall.”

Directly behind that wall, the cantilevered roofline outside the great room on the east is part of a complex structural system that undergirds both the east roofline and the front porch overhang. “A custom-made steel beam at the house’s front corner allows the engineered joists to be supported together on the same point load, perpendicular to each other,” says Erik Glissman, construction supervisor for Constructive General Contractors, which built the house. The underside of the east-facing roofline is pitched up to bring morning sunlight deeper into the great room.



This page: Kitchen materials are sleek and budget conscious, including laminate-fronted cabinets and Corian counters accented with hot-rolled steel elements.



The slab-on-pier foundation serves as the finished floor, which required extra care during the parade of trades through the jobsite. The rest of the material palette takes its cues from the colors and patina of the floor.

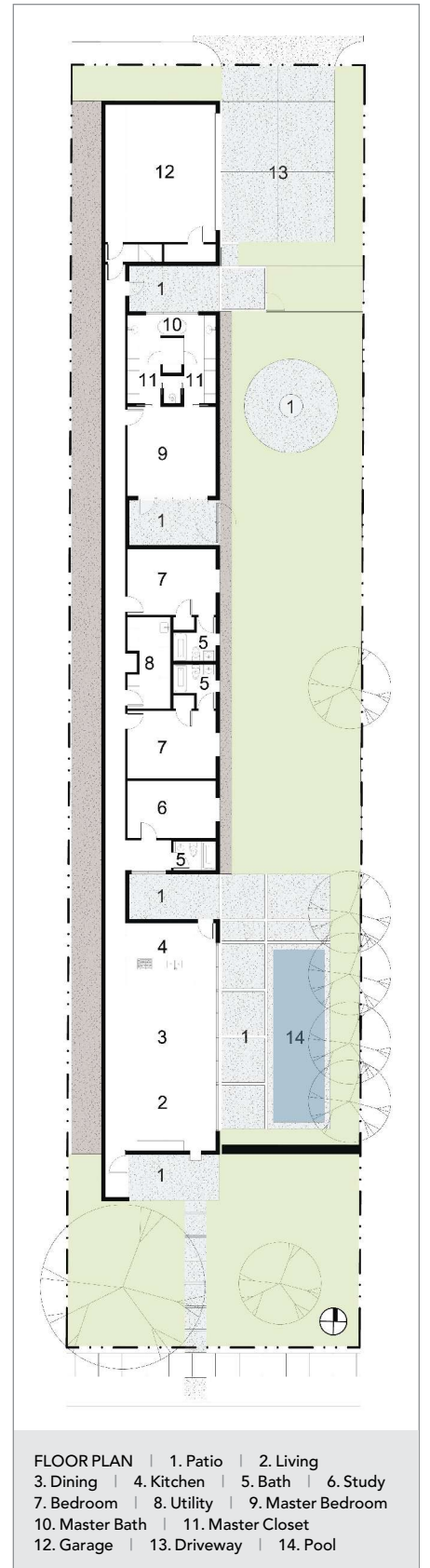
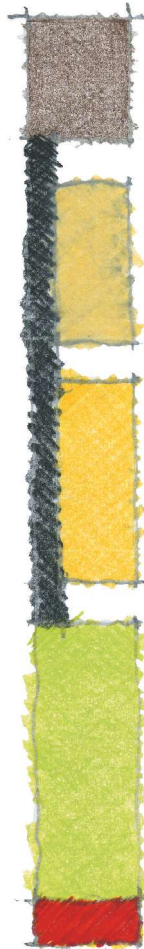
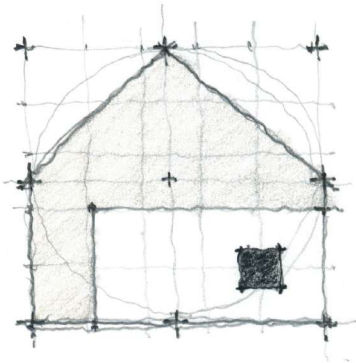
Modern Mash-up

Material choices were economical overall, and key to keeping construction costs under \$200 per square foot. The slab-on-pier foundation serves as the finished floor and required special jobsite protocol. After the pour was hand-troweled and cured under a film of water for seven days, “all trades had to work without ever marking the concrete in areas that would be exposed,” Erik says. “Chalk lines could not be

pulled through any open areas and had to be a light blue, non-permanent pigment. Once the home was dried in, multiple layers of floor protection were installed but could not be taped to the concrete. We had a crew remove the flooring protection and meticulously clean the concrete surface regularly. Plumbing and electrical stub-outs had to be located extremely precisely in order to fall exactly in the center of where walls would be built prior to

pouring concrete, instead of using void boxes and patching after the fact.”

The concrete floor informed the interior material palette. In the open kitchen, laminate cabinets have a linen-like quality and hide appliances, creating a neutral backdrop in the great room. And the laminate-clad island was fitted with a Corian countertop with integral double sinks. Hot-rolled steel makes several appearances, too. It ties together the cooktop vent hood and the





Casa Linder

Dallas

ARCHITECT: Russell Buchanan, FAIA, and Gary Orsinger, AIA, Buchanan Architecture, Dallas

BUILDER: Rick Fontenot, Erik Glissman, Constructive General Contractors, Dallas

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Charles Grossman, Santec, Dallas

POOL/LANDSCAPE: Tal Thevnot and Ross Burke, Aqua Terra Outdoors, Carrollton, Texas

PROJECT SIZE: 3,700 square feet

SITE SIZE: .25 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: \$193 a square foot

PHOTOGRAPHERS: James F. Wilson, Wade Griffith, Danny Fulgencio

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETRY: Formica, Lab Designs

CLADDING: Centennial Woods, Recla Metals

COUNTERTOPS: Corian

DISHWASHER: KitchenAid

DOOR HARDWARE: Bravura

FAUCETS: Hansgrohe

FIREPLACE: Spark Modern Fires

HOUSE WRAP: Tyvek

HVAC: Carrier

LIGHTING: Bega, Lightolier, Bartco, Juno

MICROWAVE: KitchenAid

PAINT: Sherwin-Williams

RANGE: Wolf

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

TILE: Horizon Italian Tile

TOILETS: TOTO

This page: The front window cube was an afterthought, but is the talk of the neighborhood and a fun decorative niche at Halloween.

fireplace surround, while the media cabinets on the fireplace wall are wrapped in a black laminate called Leather.

Outside, the snow fencing was milled as tongue in groove and constructed as a rainscreen on furring channels, like the weathering steel. “It doesn’t expand and contract like most of our woods because it’s been cured for so long,” Russell says. With the addition of aluminum-clad windows, “the whole house exterior is maintenance free except for occasional cleaning, which is what virtually every owner wants.”

The owners say the house has become a favorite on the block, perhaps a break from the bulky buildings that

weren’t designed for their lots. And a small, 2-foot window cube at the front porch continues to intrigue passersby. “It was an afterthought,” Russell says. “They didn’t want people walking up and looking through the window, so we added a hot-rolled steel door inside with a finger hole to provide privacy but also accessibility. On holidays they can put a pumpkin head or elf in the window.”

While the house stands out, it’s not a splashy architectural statement but a mash-up of simple prairie forms with modern space planning and detailing—and an example of the imaginative skills architects bring to the ever-evolving neighborhoods we call home.

—Cheryl Weber



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Madison Passive House

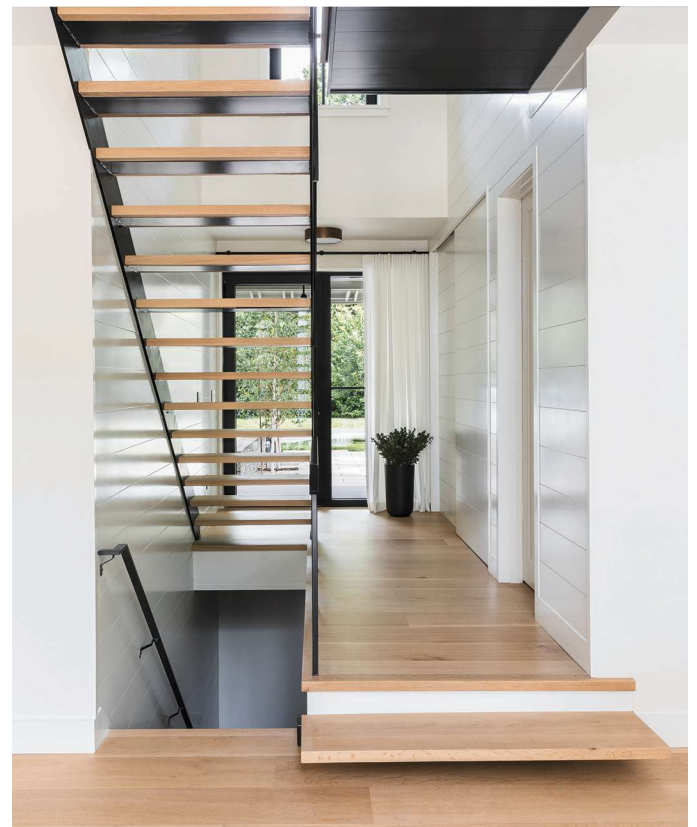
MADISON, NEW JERSEY
MOWERY MARSH ARCHITECTS

Can a house with modern European sensibilities slip into a suburban New Jersey neighborhood without offending the neighbors? What's more, can it achieve Passive house certification without looking a little forced? This unassuming but self-assured house by Mowery Marsh Architects does both, even though it was built by a general contractor who knew next to nothing about Passive house standards. It is an example of how creativity in its purest form is also about collaborating, making connections that lead to dynamic buildings and streetscapes.

The owners, who are from Belgium, lived just down the block when they bought this lot containing a one-story teardown. Although the existing house

was dilapidated, the lot was deep and had beautiful mature trees. The couple envisioned a light-filled, four-bedroom house with tall ceilings, minimal detailing, and flowing spaces. This seemingly easy request, however, challenged the architects from the start.

"They had a great design sense and the palette they were interested in excited us, but we're on this street of houses with 8-foot ceilings and dinky porches," says Jennifer Mowery, AIA, who designed the house with her husband and business partner Brian Marsh, AIA. "They wanted 10-foot ceilings. How would we give them what they wanted and make this house not feel like a monster on the street?"



Opposite and this page: Woven into a traditional New Jersey neighborhood, this stealth Passive house masquerades as a conforming bungalow-style home. Mowery Marsh played with the scale and a run of dormer windows to conceal light-filled, double-height spaces within.



This page: The commodious kitchen extends into the lot to form a courtyard patio space by the pool. The L-shaped arrangement also lengthens sightlines from inside and outside the house, and allows multiple exposures of natural light.

Warm Modern

The two partners were able to realize their clients' aesthetic goals and preserve the street scale, in part, by drawing an L-shaped floor plan that projects into the backyard. The front reads as an updated bungalow with its front porch, a long dormer like the neighbor's, and a second story tucked under the roof. A columned porch hung with four timeless "barn lights" reinforces the familiar rhythm of the house's two-over-two punched windows.

It's clear something else is going on, though, and the crisp, black-and-white exterior is a clue. Visitors step up onto the long, metal-roofed front porch and into a two-story entryway with a stairway to the right and a mudroom and powder room to the left. From there they step down into the great room containing a

living and dining area with large expanses of glass, and the kitchen beyond. The slightly raised front porch and foyer was a way to give the clients their 10-foot ceilings without creating too much massing outside. "The mudroom and front stairs are compressed, but not much, because that area is open to above," Jennifer says. "It meant taking pieces of the puzzle that everyone has and rethinking them, making them more pure and clean."

Inside, building a modern dwelling in an older neighborhood also suggested a more nuanced approach to the double-height living space. The architects finessed this by designing a one-story window wall at the back of the house but inserting a bridge at the second floor with the two kids' rooms on one side and a guest room and master suite on the other; this allowed for a two-story window slot



This page: The clients asked for tall ceilings and an abundance of light. Mowery Marsh placed the extra height over circulation spaces, where it contributes an element of grandeur and ushers light deep within the house.



at the back that creates the airiness the owners were after and floods the first floor with light. “I personally like living spaces that have some intimacy,” Jennifer says. “The house has a two-story space, but it’s not the space you’re hanging out in. It’s nice to treat circulation with a kind of grandeur.”

Other moves also nudge it toward hominess rather than grandeur. Extending the kitchen into the landscape

“How would we give them what they wanted and make this house not feel like a monster on the street?”

—Jennifer Mowery, AIA

allows the owners to experience the house exterior while they’re inside and to see into the kitchen from the living room. That connectedness “creates a story,” Jennifer says. The footprint also gave the architects more skin on which to place windows. “The kitchen and the master suite above it aren’t huge spaces but feel quite generous because they get light from three sides,” Jennifer says. The L shape makes the master bedroom feel like a sanctuary, tucked into the trees at the end of the finger, with a balcony overlooking the yard.

The owners splurged on wide oak plank flooring with a matte finish, which gives the house a Nordic feel and marries well with the natural palette of black metal windows, walnut cabinets, and creamy white walls painted Benjamin

This page: The master bedroom is atop the kitchen wing and benefits from three exposures of natural light and an extra measure of privacy from the children’s rooms.



Moore China White. Most modern designers would go for a purer white, and the wife hesitated, but she was pleasantly surprised at how well it worked, Brian says. “The colors we presented were very warm, not stark white, and she said she would never have picked the white, but she loved how it gave the house warmth throughout and avoided a cold modern box with black windows,” he says.

“Back in the day when people used creamy whites, they were pairing them with tan and beige, and everything felt muddy,” Jennifer adds. “This lends a little softness, so that when you do striking navy blue in the bath, it still seems homey and inviting. It’s something we play with in all our projects.”



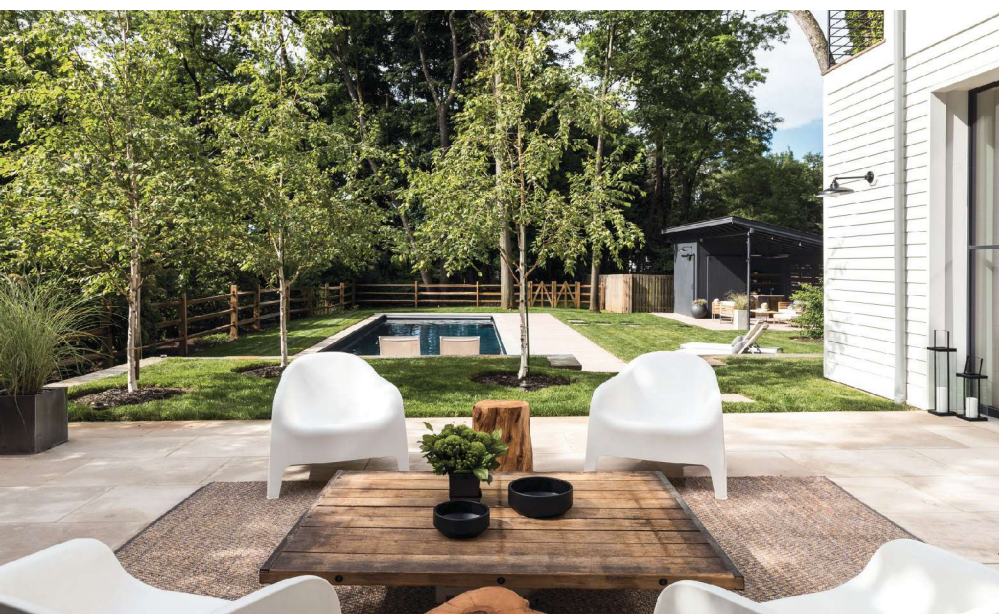
This page: The sleek modern palette of colors and materials is softened with a creamy white paint hue. The color keeps the house homey and inviting, while still providing contrast for bold touches.



Passive Aggressive

This is Mowery Marsh’s first certified Passive house, though a previous renovation fell just short of the requirements. Because most of their clients don’t have Passive house goals, Mowery and Marsh try not to lead with the conversation, but it’s a layer of rigor they apply to every commission. “Once you do Passive house construction, you can’t go back because the detailing of a regular house is so bad,” says Brian, who is trained in Passive house standards. These owners were familiar with the concept, however, and saw the value of getting the house certified. “They thought, absolutely, why wouldn’t you build this way?” he says.

It took some serious networking to find a Passive house-trained subcontractor who could oversee critical tasks such as insulation and air sealing. The general contractor, Mike Passafiume, embraced the building science aspects and said, “You tell me what you want me to do, and I’ll do it,” Brian recalls. “But I knew from past experience that



This page: Crisp, modern detailing distinguishes the house from historic bungalows. What isn't visible are all the Passive house measures behind and under the skin.

wasn't going to work." Brian found Jason Endres through a supplier of Passive house materials. Jason is certified through PHI, a European standard, and this would be his first Passive house project, too.

If the building lives on the suburban edge aesthetically, it is buttoned down at heart. Mike's crew used conventional 2x6 framing and screwed TGIs, or wood I-beams, outboard of the 2x6s to create a thermally broken, 12-inch exterior cavity filled with dense-packed cellulose and wrapped with a vapor barrier. "We had to have blower door tests even before we insulated, to check the airtightness of the taping and barriers they put up on the outside of the house," Mike says.

EPS rigid foam further insulates the envelope—12 inches around the

Madison Passive House

Madison, New Jersey

ARCHITECT: Jennifer Mowery, AIA, and Brian Marsh, AIA, Mowery Marsh Architects, Hoboken, N.J.

BUILDER: Mike Passafiume, Home Improvements Plus LLC, Long Valley, N.J.

PASSIVE HOUSE CONSULTANT: Jason Endres, Endres Home Builders, Nutley, N.J.

BUILDING SCIENCE: Levy Partnership, New York

SITE SIZE: 0.6 acres

PROJECT SIZE: 3,400 square feet

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHER: Haris Kenjar

KEY PRODUCTS

COOKTOP: Thermador

COUNTERTOPS: Caesarstone

DISHWASHER: Miele

ENTRY DOORS: Emtex

FAUCETS: Watermark (kitchen)

GARAGE DOORS: Clopay

HVAC: Mitsubishi mini-splits

INTERIOR DOORS: Trustile

LIGHTING: One Forty Three, Rejuvenation, Cedar Moss, Atelier de Troupe

POOL DECKING: Resysta

PORCH LIGHTS: Barn Light Electric

OVENS: Miele

REFRIGERATOR: Thermador

ROOFING: Sheffield Metals

TILE: Nemo

THERMAL AND MOISTURE BARRIERS: Intello

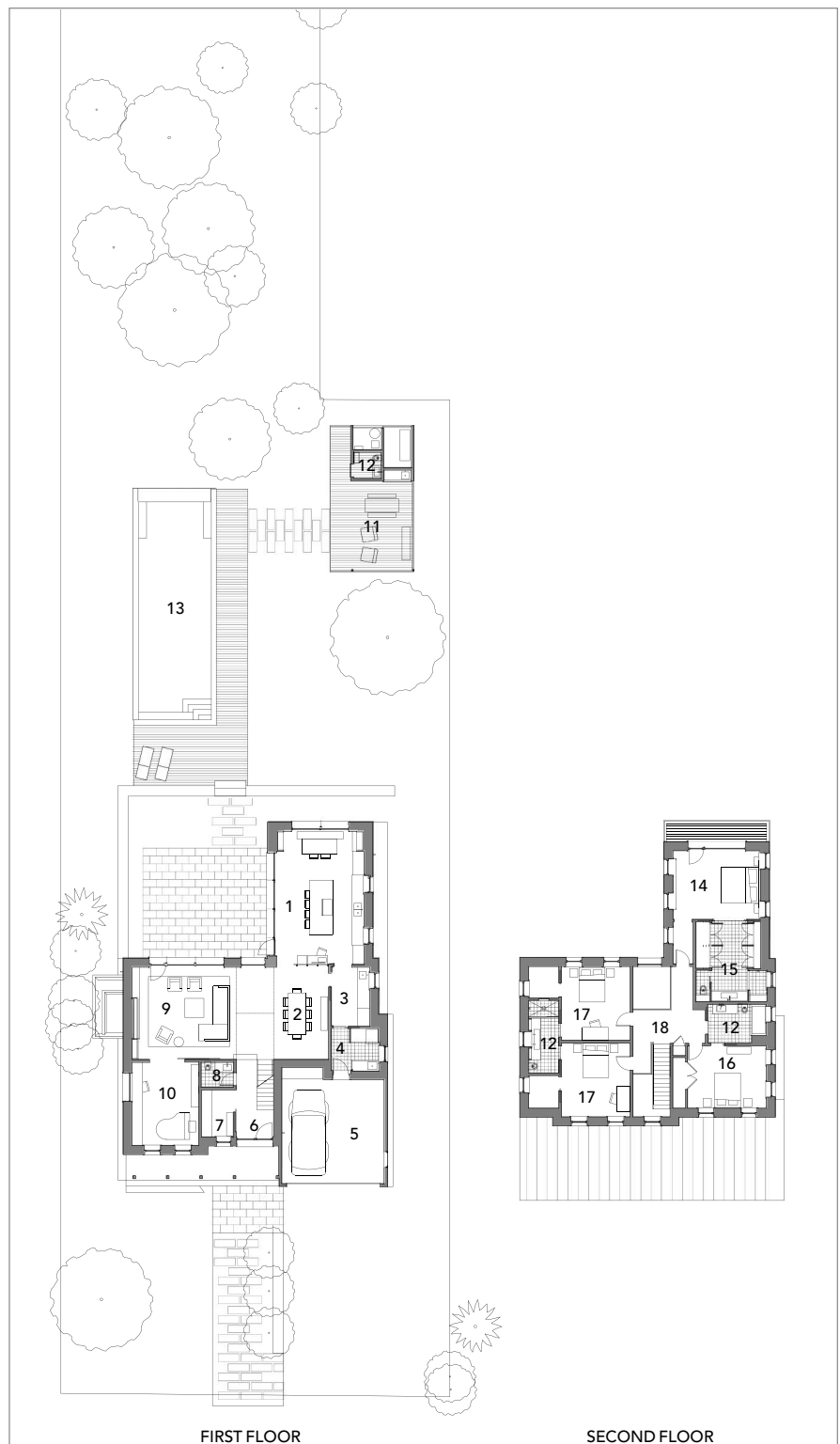
UNDERLAYMENT/SHEATHING: ZipWall

WASHER/DRYER: Bosch

WEATHERIZATION: Mento

WINDOWS AND EXTERIOR DOORS: European Architectural Supply

WINE REFRIGERATOR: Miele



FLOOR PLAN | 1. Kitchen | 2. Dining | 3. Pantry | 4. Laundry | 5. Garage | 6. Entry
7. Mudroom | 8. Powder | 9. Living | 10. Music Room | 11. Pool House | 12. Bath
13. Pool | 14. Master | 15. Master Bath/Closet | 16. Guest Bedroom | 17. Boy's Bedroom
18. Hall



This page: Mowery Marsh cleverly hid the full height of the house at the street elevation. In the back, its height combines with the L-shape to carve out an oasis of privacy.

foundation and 8 inches under the basement slab, plus foam glass under the foundation footings. “Our goal was to thermally break the foundation from the ground so you have the entire concrete mass acting as a thermal battery,” says Jason. “It sounds corny, but the house operates like a beautiful symphony. You have the ERV that’s constantly exchanging air, the triple pane windows, and the insulation, all doing their part to be passive.” The exterior was finished with Boral cladding, which has a crisp edge but looks like wood.

While acknowledging that the build-out was “a lot more involved” than on a conventional home, Mike was impressed with how well the house hit its targets. “It’s a cool design and barely

needs any heat—and sound-wise, too; it’s very quiet inside,” he says.

Perhaps the most rewarding outcome for Mowery Marsh was assembling the team that could make this happen. “I think it’s significant that nobody on this construction team had ever done a Passive project,” Jennifer says. “You have to find someone who really wants to do it right. They have to have the drive to really futz with the details of every penetration.” The couple also welcomed the opportunity to design a forward-thinking house in an older established neighborhood. “We wanted people to understand that even in a suburban New Jersey town, you don’t have to be shoehorned into your vernacular but can still do something that belongs,” Jennifer says. —Cheryl Weber



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There's not much to love about houses designed and built in the 1980s, especially ones blessed (or maybe cursed) by bountiful budgets. The existing structure for this down-to-the-studs remodel was, says architect Joeb Moore, FAIA, “a mutt of architecture. I don’t even know what style to call it. It was a bit of an oversized ranch with an applique of colonial elements. It was just a very poorly conceived and proportioned house.” Certainly, the house committed

more than a few design misdemeanors (round-top windows, anyone?), but the biggest crime was squandering a spectacular site on Long Island Sound.

Joeb and his clients, who are also good friends, deliberated for some time about whether to tear down the house and build anew. The clients had grown tired of the traditional house they owned next door to this one and wanted something fresh and modern, something to complement and show-

case their burgeoning, serious art collection. This house also occupied a better site, with closer proximity to the water, aspects they hoped a redo would harness. Ultimately, the determining factor was the area’s restrictive building codes. If they tore down the house, they would have to reduce the square footage by a third. With three children and the growing art collection to accommodate, no one felt the sacrifice was worth it.



So, it fell to Joeb, project architect Thalassa Curtis, AIA, builder David Prutting, and team to transform the 7,900-square-foot “mutt” into a purebred. Among the design flaws they faced were poor visual connections to the water at the rear and an awkward entry sequence at the front. There were low ceilings, too—everywhere. And then there was the pervasive homeliness

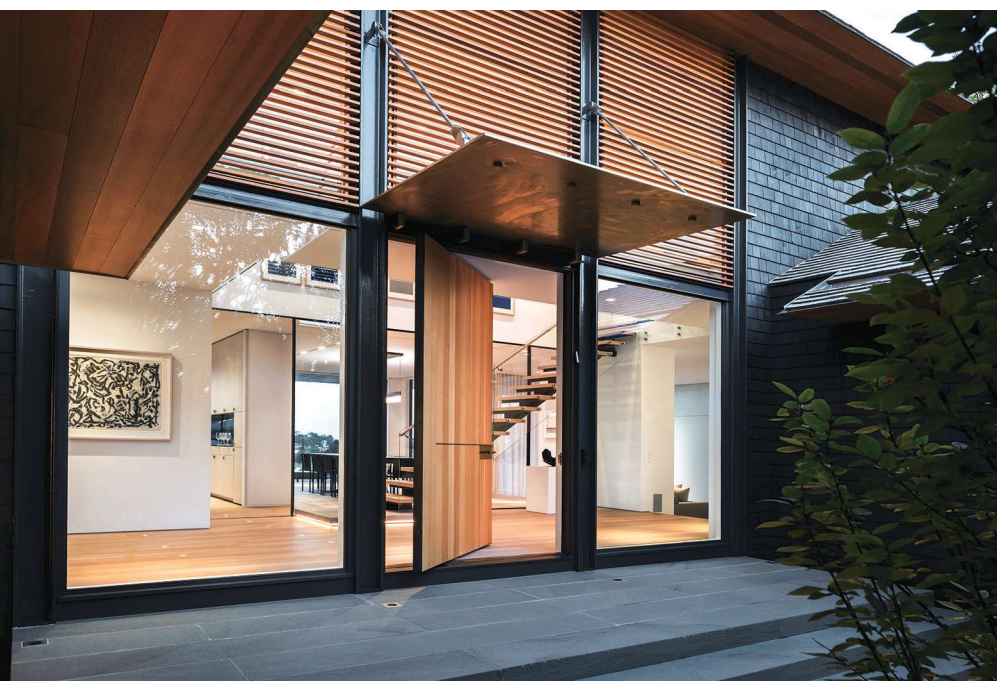
of the aesthetics. All this needed fixing within the footprint of the original house and the height restrictions imposed by code.

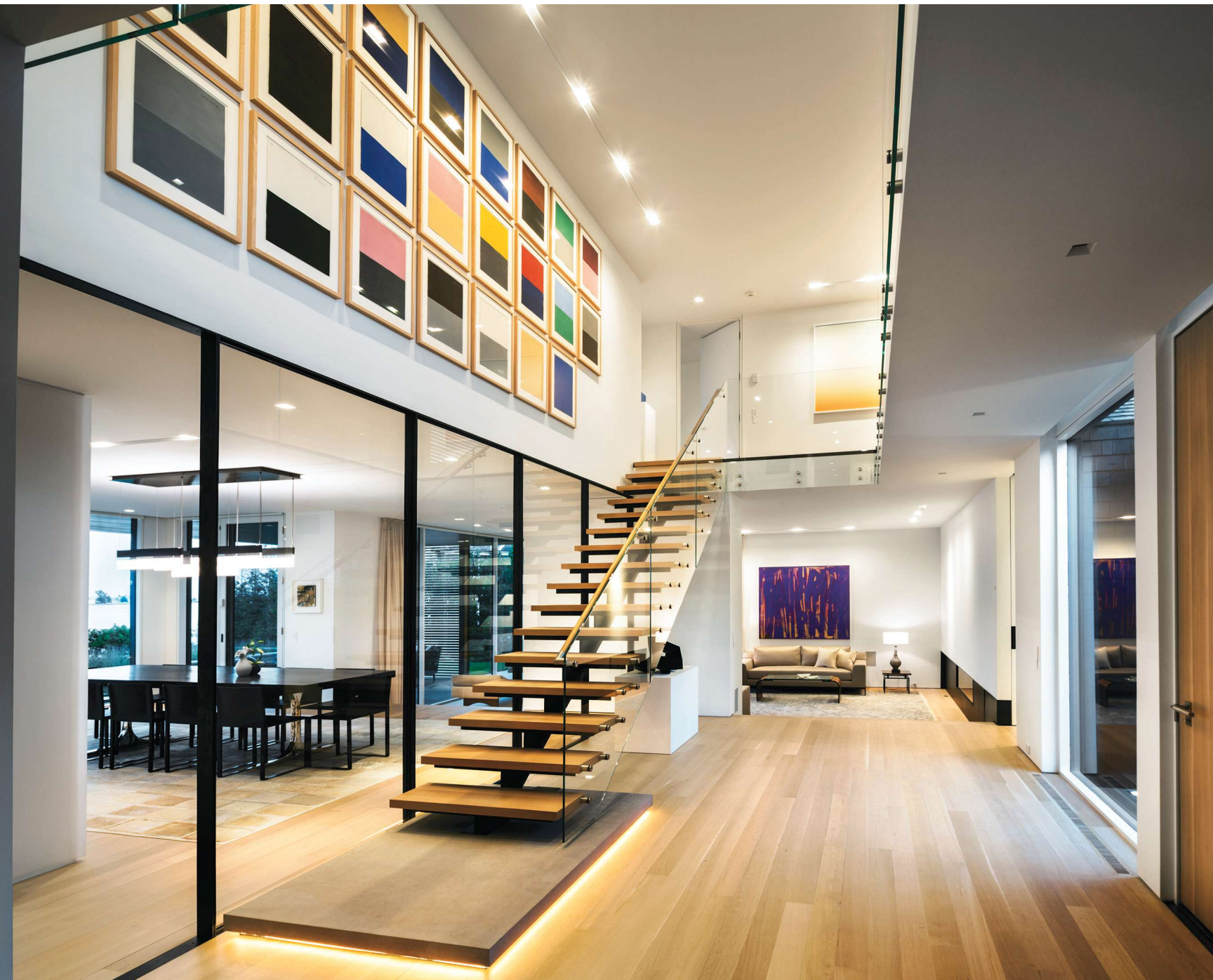
The big move was to raise the ceiling height. “We did a series of studies and investigations of how we could keep the house’s footprint and strip it down to the studs,” Joeb recalls. “And what we found was, if we tore out the floor

plan and the crazy spiral stair, then we could raise the first-floor ceiling from 6’8” to 9 feet. It was a profound change, and what we were left with was quite adaptive. We raised all the windows and doors to that height as well, and that allowed us unbroken views of the water while moving through the house.”

The rear of the house is now nearly entirely a curtain of glass, trimmed in black steel and recessed behind deep overhangs to shield from the southeastern exposure (there are wood screens and hidden window shades, too, throughout). The team extended the roof elements to achieve the overhangs, sistering rafters and bringing edges to a sharp, modern point. The soffits are clad in warm mahogany, in contrast to the deep gray of the shingle siding—a color choice that caused a months-long debate.

“I felt very strongly that we needed the color to neutralize this house,” says Joeb. “It took 15 different samples to get just the right semi-gloss feel and light play. Sometimes it reads as gray, sometimes as black. Over eight months, we kept putting up the samples. And then finally, I said, ‘You just need to trust me. I’m certain it’s the right thing to do. And they did.’”





Opposite and this page: The reconfigured house balances horizontal and vertical elements to create a harmonious whole. A new entry sequence builds drama for approaching guests. And the double-height foyer functions as an art gallery for the clients' growing collection of modern art.



The dark color and deep overhanging roofs contribute an almost Asian feel to the house. “We had previously extended roofs on a lake house by Peter Ogden, and it really transformed it,” Joeb explains. “It brings the scale of the house down. Understanding proportion and the scale of the body is the fundamental character of beauty. There’s a dialogue to scale, and a dialogue to contrasts—that’s what modern is about. When we extended the rooflines here, it made the house more horizontal and quiet. It sits on its hillside like a cap. The overhangs cast their own shadows, making the siding even darker and suspending the house in space.”

Prologue to Dialogue

Sorting out the entry sequence was another priority of the redesign. Joeb’s office devised a master plan with landscape architect Edmund Hollander of Hollander Designs to mitigate the awkward approach of the rear lot site. “Rear lots tend to have a very narrow drive, then it forks open to the water views. Getting a sense of arrival is very difficult,” says Joeb. “The approach could not be axial; we had to come at it from an oblique angle.”

Visitors arrive at the guest motor court, proceed past a cedar wall divider that shields the family motor court, and continue down a formal walkway of pavers set in grass. They pass through a “trapezoidal funnel shape” and into a “bosque” of tall trees that establishes the entry court. The trees create a vertical allée that directs to the 9-foot-tall-by-7-foot-wide front pivot door. The vertical threshold segues into a two-story foyer and gallery space. Beyond, visitors see a breathtaking, horizontally framed water view.

There is a trick to that view—a manipulation of perspective created by the disappearing-edge pool and the slope of the site down to the water. The



This page: Gutting the original house down to the studs and raising the ceiling height enabled the team to open views to the Sound at the front of the house and back through the house from outdoor areas at the rear.



pool and sea seem to merge together into a single watery plane.

“We were hoping for a progression of spaces. And that was very key in section,” says Joeb. “The entry garden, the two-story entry gallery, passing through the dining room, and seeing past this cascading infinity pool, 40 feet above the sound. When you’re standing in any of these areas, you feel the pool is part of the Sound. When you turn to the left or the right, away from the water, you engage the galleries and the art.” The installed art participates in the dialogue of vertical and horizontal, as well. An example is the polka dot triptych that tops the long, low fireplace in the living room, both referring subtly to the horizontal water view.

In Between

Although the renovation moves the house solidly toward modernism, the kitchen redo splits the baby at what some would call “transitional.” This room was the domain of the wife, who worked closely with Thalassa to achieve the utility and look she wanted. “She wanted a kitchen where she can reach her plates,” says Joeb. “So, we measured down to the inch what could be reached. As a result, the kitchen works incredibly well.” The gently paneled white cabinetry is sharpened by clear hardware and steel elements, and, he adds, the room’s “bilateral symmetry keeps it clean, minimal, and modern.”

The kitchen’s positioning pivots easily among informal dining, formal



This page: The kitchen strikes a transitional look with paneled cabinetry, sharpened by modern steel elements and carefully controlled symmetry.



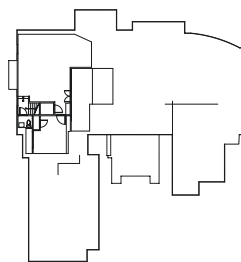
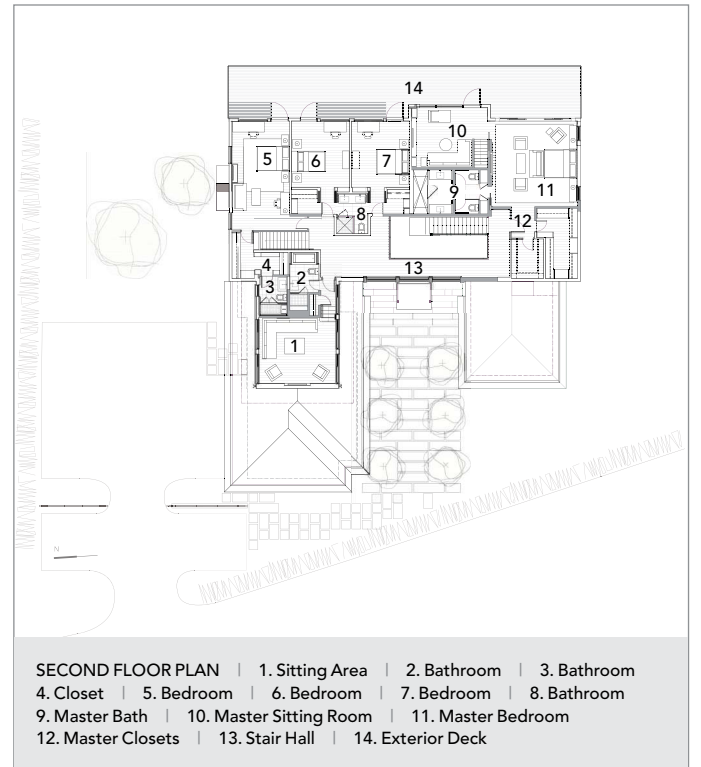
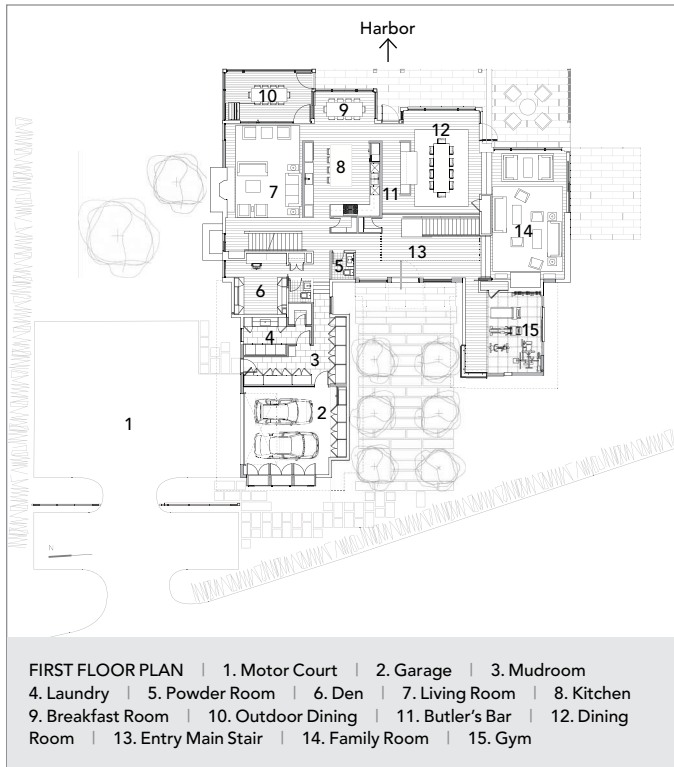
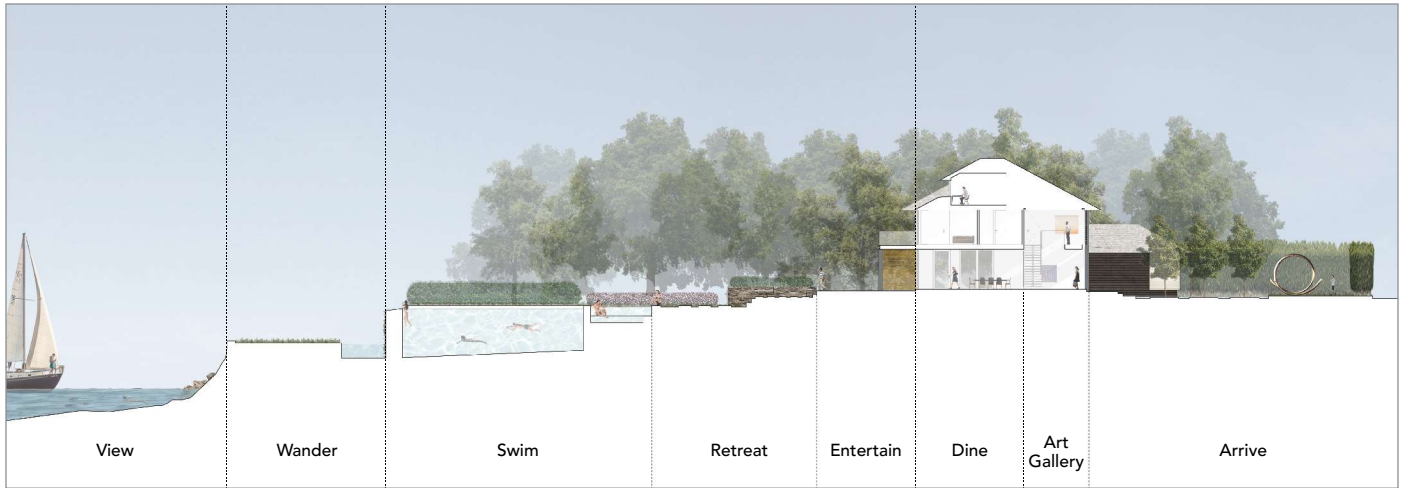
dining, and an outdoor covered eating area overlooking the water. The new covered porch addition, allowed because it is not conditioned space, continues across the back of the house and marks a fresh, modern line for the rear elevation. “This really helped unify the massing, which was a bit out of control,” Joeb explains. “We were able to simplify and use that line to create incredible transition spaces. They also help protect the house from southeast exposure and afforded a transparency and reflection to the glass.”

On the first level, the porch element provides covered outdoor areas and, on the second level, an expansive deck that serves all but one bedroom. The roof overhang partially shields the deck and shades interiors spaces from the sun. A glass barrier preserves the deck’s water views.

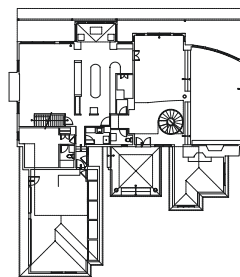


This page: A new rear elevation adds a long deck off the second-level sleeping spaces. Glass guard rails preserve sightlines of the Sound. Surfaces and materials were chosen to convey light through the interiors.

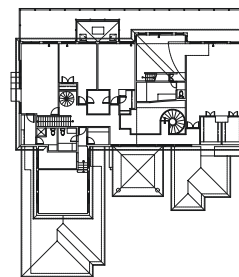




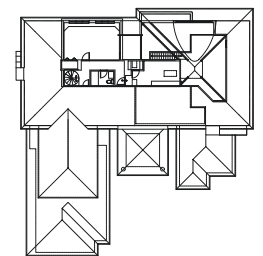
BEFORE BASEMENT



BEFORE FIRST FLOOR



BEFORE SECOND FLOOR



BEFORE LOFT



Not every builder is up to such a demanding reinvention, but Dave Prutting and his team know a thing or two about executing precision architecture. Joeb and Dave have collaborated on multiple projects. Dave even hired Joeb to renovate his former home, a midcentury work by Eliot Noyes. “I’ve worked with them for 17 years,” says Joeb. “They are a phenomenal project management group. I deal with a lot of construc-

“There’s a dialogue to scale, and a dialogue to contrasts—that’s what modern is about.”

—Joeb Moore, FAIA



tion firms from New York City up to Boston, and they are simply the best at project management and figuring out the constructability of elements. They are a true team player and collaborator. They are also the best at balancing construction science and design clarity and resolution. It’s clear they love what they do.”

It’s clear Joeb does, too. His passion for architecture is free ranging and inclusive. It can absorb a mutt of a house and detangle its knots, attend to its gaps in compartment, and reshape it into a dignified, handsome creature. Even after all the interventions, Joeb stops just short of calling it a purebred modern house now. “It’s not quite modern and it’s not quite radical contemporary. It’s really a modified modern.”

Stripped down, sorted out, and cleaned up, the building recedes into a clean, sharp frame for the art within and the stunning natural views without.
—S. Claire Conroy



Opposite and this page: The new floor plan showcases manmade art and natural beauty without forcing them into direct competition. Focus on each is carefully orchestrated and facilitated by quiet, skillful architecture.

Harbor Residence

Coastal Connecticut

ARCHITECT: Principal-in-charge Joeb Moore; project architect Thalassa Curtis, Joeb Moore & Partners, Greenwich, Conn.

BUILDER: David Prutting, Prutting & Company, Stamford, Conn.

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Sally Markham, Old Greenwich, Conn.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Edmund Hollander, Hollander Design, New York

PROJECT SIZE: 7,900 Square feet

SITE SIZE: Withheld

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: David Sundberg/ESTO

KEY PRODUCTS

ARCHITECTURAL HARDWARE: Rajack

CLADDING: Alaskan Yellow Cedar

COOKTOP: Wolf

COUNTERTOPS: Corian, stone

DISHWASHER: Miele

ENTRY DOORS/WINDOWS: Dynamic

FAUCETS: Dornbracht, Vola, Fantini, Speakman, Waterworks

FLOORING: Porcelanosa, Ann Sacks

GARAGE DOORS: Legacy Doors

HVAC: Carrier

OVENS: Miele

PAINTS/STAINS: Farrow & Ball, Benjamin Moore, Sikkens

REFRIGERATOR/WINE UNIT: Sub-Zero

ROOFING: Alaskan Yellow Cedar

SCREEN SYSTEMS: Phantom Screens

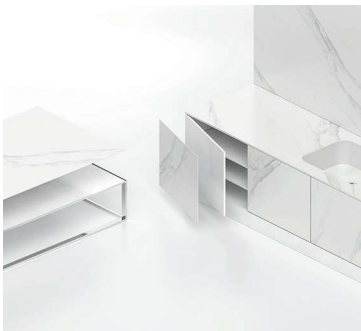
SINKS: Julien (kitchen), Caesarstone (master), Kohler, Porcelanosa, Corian

TOILETS: TOTO

TUBS: WetStyle

WASHER/DRYER: Whirlpool

On Trend



1



2



3



4

1. LEAN IN

For designers intrigued by Dekton's performance, patterning, and durability, a new slim slab enables applications for cabinetry panels, backsplashes, and furniture. Shown in the Opera pattern, the slabs come as thin as 4 mm.

Cosentino.com

Circle 101 on inquiry card.

2. TWICE AS NICE

Known for its top-notch tankless hot water heaters, Rinnai has now launched the I-Series Boiler. The boiler functions simultaneously as hydronic heater and hot water heater. A bypass valve permits precise temperature control for water heating needs.

Rinnai.us

Circle 102 on inquiry card.

3. GREEN DAY

True Residential continues to build out its palette of hues, finishes, and hardware metallics with the introduction of Emerald in its full-size and undercounter units. Part of the Build Your True program, Emerald brings the number of custom combinations to 42.

True-residential.com

Circle 103 on inquiry card.

4. ON THE LAM

Design flexibility or budget needs can make laminate a great choice. Formica offers a new palette in its 180fx series, which features large expanses of no-repeat patterning. Shown in Nero Marquina, inspired by black marble from Spain's Markina region.

Formica.com

Circle 104 on inquiry card.



5

5. BYE, BYE HARDWARE

Continuing to hone its modern door and window solutions, Weather Shield has partnered with hardware supplier HOPPE to provide slim, elegant, disappearing hardware for its Contemporary Collection of Bi-Fold doors. Available later this year.

Weathershield.com

Circle 105 on inquiry card.



6



7

6. WIDE APPEAL

Pivot doors are all the rage in high-end custom homes these days. Sierra Pacific answers the call with a new line of contemporary pivot doors up to 6 feet wide and 10 feet tall. Doors coordinate with full door and window custom packages.

Spi-ind.com

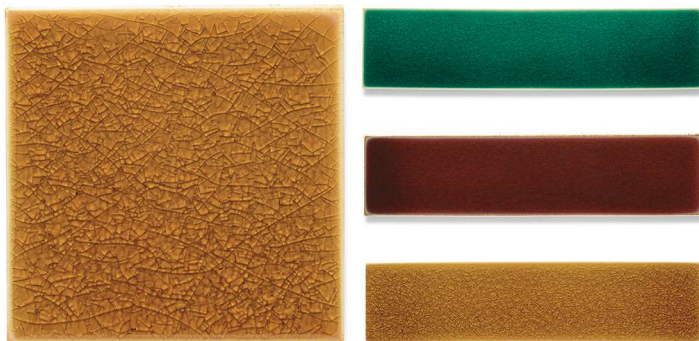
Circle 106 on inquiry card.

7. MODERNE ART

Pulling design cues from its history of making wood-burning stoves in the early 20th century, family-owned Bertazzoni introduces its Heritage series of ranges and hoods. Details mix modern with moderne, all in products engineered for best-in-class performance.

Us.bertazzoni.com

Circle 107 on inquiry card.



8

8. FIRED UP

Culled from its waste stream of unfired pottery, Kohler and Ann Sacks have teamed up to produce a nifty new collection of recycled crackle-glaze tiles.

Annsacks.com

Circle 108 on inquiry card.

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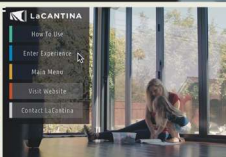


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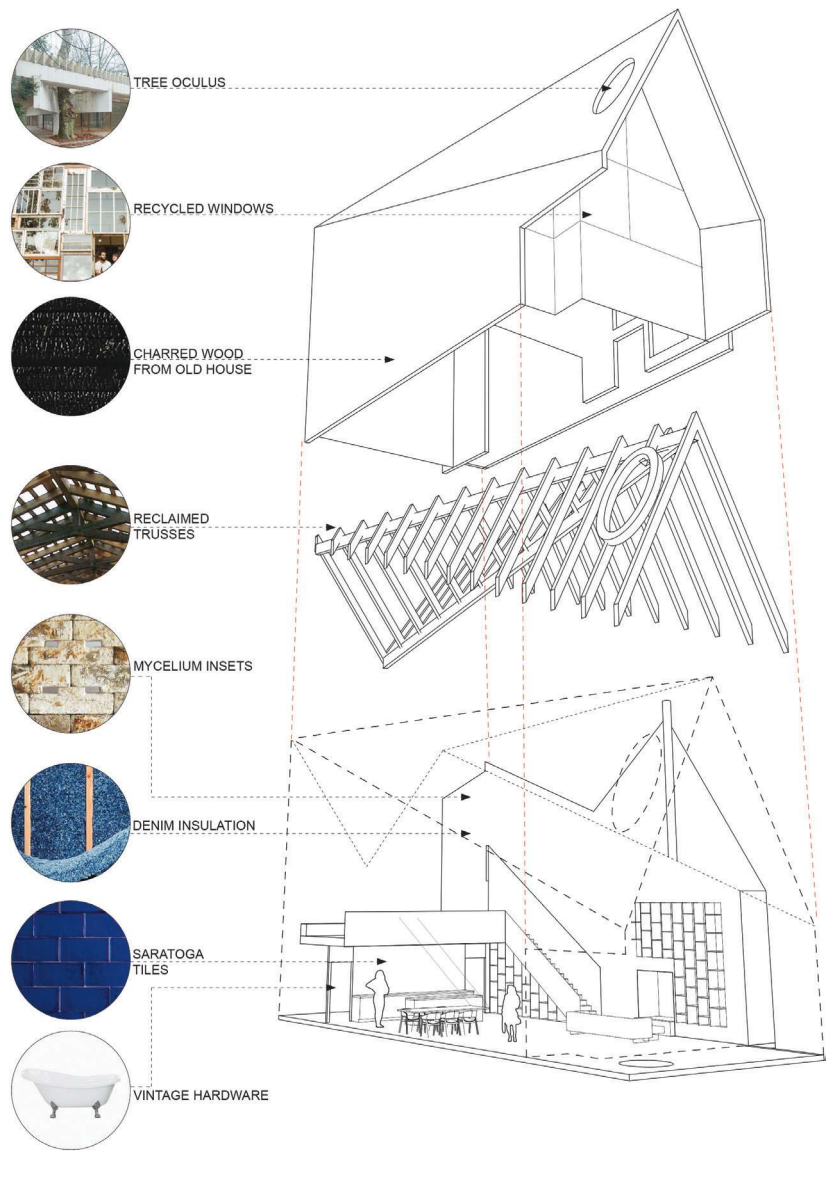
A home, an artist's studio, a temple, a phoenix rising from the ashes—K House is all of these things.

And it all started with being in the right place at the right time. Architect and Cornell professor Caroline O'Donnell and her collaborator Dillon Pranger were at a coffee shop one day, working on a book they're editing about using recycled material in architecture: *Design for a Circular Economy, The Architecture of Waste*. While perusing research materials, they drew the attention of a customer who had recently lost her log home to a fire. The idea she overheard of doing a "recycled house" resonated with her.

She had land outside of Ithaca, part of a family property. On a site visit, Caroline and Dillon saw the charred remains of the log home and knew immediately the burned wood should clad the new structure, tying the new to the old. Other material will include recycled windows and denim insulation, reclaimed trusses, mycelium insets, Saratoga tiles made from waste-stream glass bottles, and vintage hardware.

The building plays with the iconic pitched-roof image of home but is stretched to a cathedral-like peak. The pitch inverts at the rear to capture water runoff to supplement well water. A big open room serves as studio space and a gathering place/bunk room for visiting family and friends; the client has a small sleeping loft above.

"We listened very carefully to the client," says Caroline. "She was ambivalent about whether she wanted a house or studio, and she's interested in spirituality. I think it's important to try to understand what clients think they want but may not fully know yet. So we designed a house, but not a house." —*S. Claire Conroy*



Project: K House; architect: Caroline O'Donnell, CODA; collaborator: Dillon Pranger. Renderings: CODA with Dillon Pranger.

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