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VOL. 1, 2022

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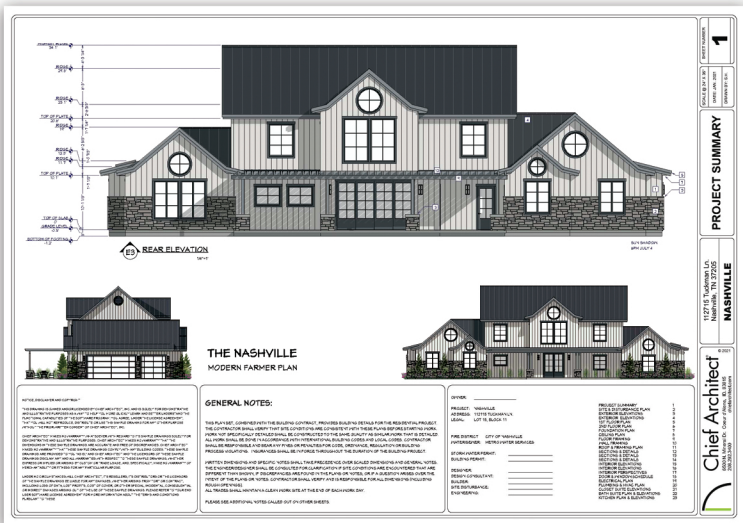
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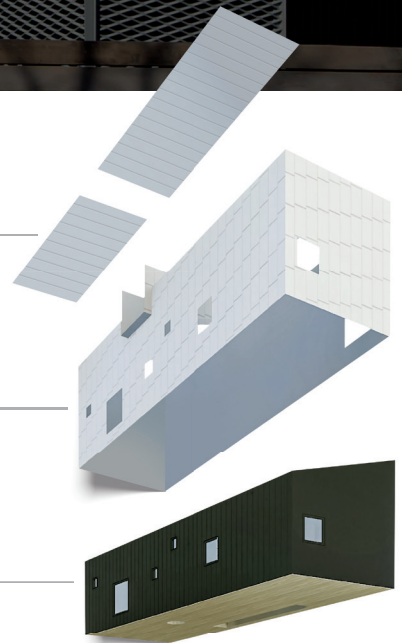


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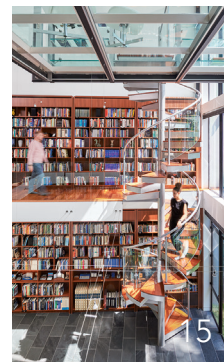
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On the Cover: Casa Schneider by Ibarra Rosano Design Architects. Photo: Bill Timmerman.



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Get Me Rewrite



As an editor, I know that everyone needs an editor. Everyone benefits from a little push-back to do their best work. I also know of residential architects who wish they could practice their art without clients dictating what they can or can't do. They dream of the mythical deep-pocketed, check-signing, hands-off patron. Imagine what they could achieve!

Somehow, they believe, that without the constraints of pleasing a paying customer, they would hit new heights of creativity and invention. Perhaps that's true, or perhaps it's not. It's quite possible that, instead, they would spin out of control into self-indulgent excess or punishing austerity.

Clients serve a higher purpose beyond their check-writing abilities. They are like editors, and architects are often better off when clients keep hold of the balloon strings, making sure that over-inflated designers don't veer off into the clouds—or tangle with trees and power lines.

Real budgets also serve as a kind of de facto editor, setting rational limits of size and scope on projects. These constraints combine with those of the site and jurisdiction to make residential architecture among the most compelling of the building types. Despite the dreams of complete freedom, the practice as a whole really is better for having these bumpers in place. And more architects are catching on to this.

As the discipline of modernist residential architecture has matured, it has incorporated these constraints and others to evolve into a more dignified and humble aesthetic. Architects have absorbed these lessons and learned to edit themselves, striving more adroitly for solutions that are sensitive to precedent, site, and program. Nowadays, architects often find themselves editing their clients, instead of the other way around.

This virtuous circle of discipline and rigor yields wonderful results. One of the best aspects to emerge from this evolution is a new fearlessness and humility about looking to the past for better ways forward. Our cover story is a case in point. Architects Luis Ibarra and Teresa Rosano borrowed from Latin American precedents for a multigenerational house in Tucson, Arizona. It's a courtyard design (an even earlier precedent) that balances privacy and neighborhood proximity, and tempers hot days and cool nights. It uses traditional elements, but executes them in creative, sculptural ways. The mix achieves a kind of timelessness that straddles the future and the past, while seeming fresh and vibrant.

Our Design Lab projects also plumb the diversity of this new inclusive and modest modernism. Reinvention doesn't require a blank slate, and, in fact, it can't exist without what came before. All it needs is a sharp editor.

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

S. Claire Conroy
Editor-in-Chief
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A Letter from the New CRAN Chair for 2022

Stepping into the role of CRAN Chair for 2022, I am all too aware of the challenges faced by my predecessors, particularly over the last two years. Lindsay Cullum-Colwell, AIA, in the early weeks of her chair responsibilities for 2020, faced the daunting task of shifting our focus from our annual Symposium to a series of virtual learning sessions. Following her lead, and facing the same issues with Covid, Tom Meiklejohn III, AIA, did an admirable job of steering CRAN through a second year of rough waters and virtual sessions.

Their efforts and leadership helped keep our organization afloat through difficult times. But they did not act alone. CRAN is a group of volunteers who, from my observation, each pour great effort into keeping this ship afloat, sacrificing compensable hours. There is not room enough in this article to thank each by name, but I doubt that is necessary. This is a dedicated group of volunteers, who from year to year, as roles and responsibilities change, rise to meet the challenges presented. I ask that you please seek out the list of volunteers on our website to better know us all. Historically, our greatest challenges have been two issues: distance/separation and a need for more volunteers.

The culture shock of Zoom-type meetings for so many over the past two years has been our normal mode of operation since the beginning. The advent of Zoom has only made things easier, for CRAN is composed of members from across the country. We deliberately seek a diverse membership — geographically, racially, economically, in gender, in scale of firm, scale of projects, style of work, etc.

And we are always seeking new members to work with us. By design, volunteers have a limited set of years in CRAN, and at the Executive Committee level, we each rise in responsibilities year to year, from secretary through to chair, until we are no longer directly involved. CRAN seeks to be a voice for all residential architects, to connect us all toward designing and building better homes throughout the country. So, we need voices from as many diverse sectors as possible to best represent the needs and trends in our field.

We have heard criticism that at the symposiums we appear to be a closed group, cliquish. This couldn't be further from the truth. Admittedly, after months (going on two years now) of working "together" and meeting virtually on a regular basis, we are all anxious to meet in person at the annual symposia. The camaraderie that draws us together is also one that we are excited to share.

Presumably, as chair, I won't face the same challenges that Lindsay and Tom had (fingers crossed). What I see as my greatest challenges are to amplify our voice in the community and to increase our membership and diversity. I feel fortunate as chair to be able to say that this year we will once again hold an in-person Symposium! We will also maintain our series of online sessions which proved so beneficial in the past. Look for more information on both through our social media sites. Our Symposium will be in Chicago, September 8th–11. Please come join us; and while there, come speak with us and consider volunteering. Or, even before then, if you are at all interested in what we do, contact us to learn more and consider joining. From personal experience, I can say it has been a far more challenging and rewarding experience than I ever imagined.

Thank You,
Blake H. Held, AIA



Photo: Courtesy AIA CRAN

Blake H. Held, AIA

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Architecture Awards 2022

The 2022 RD Architecture Awards program recognizing outstanding residential architecture is now open for entries. Winning projects will be published in Volume 3, 2022 of Residential Design magazine and recognized with a special event held at the 2022 AIA Conference on Architecture.

Deadlines

Regular deadline to enter: February 4, 2022

Late deadline (\$50 late fee required): February 18, 2022

Completed entries due: February 25, 2022

Questions

Please contact

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Visit RDArchitectureAwards.com to learn more about the program and how to enter.



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Worth the Wait

LIBRARY FOR 10,000 BOOKS
 POTOMAC, MARYLAND
 MCINTURFF ARCHITECTS

What is a library in the age of streaming information and entertainment? This question looms large at the public scale but resonates on the private level as well. It used to be de rigueur that large custom homes had richly detailed paneled libraries. Nowadays, we're more likely to see a few built-in shelves here and there.

However, when the clients for this custom home outside of Washington, D.C., first approached McInturff Architects more than a decade ago to design a "forever" family house, they knew it must comprise a library as its primary feature. They had big dreams for their riverfront lot that entailed extensive outdoor landscaping and entertaining areas, too, but with a limited budget, they understood the project would have to be phased over time.



For the first phase, the firm designed a fully functional two-level house around the empty shell of the future library pavilion. There was a bedroom pavilion, a combination kitchen and great room pavilion, and a flat-roofed garage wing with an in-law suite.

The house occupies a double, radial lot in an equestrian community overlooking the Potomac River. The street side is on grade, then the lot drops 200 feet to the river. “The pavilions are topped by butterfly roofs that bring in amazing river views in winter and foliage views in summer,” says Peter Noonan, AIA, project architect for phase one. “And they grab light—filling the interiors with natural light.”

For the next decade or so, the library pavilion anchored the center of the house as “what the commercial world calls a clean dark shell,” says Mark McInturff, FAIA. The grand fireplace and chimney, clad in the same locally quarried stone as the home’s front façade, was put in place, but the rest was a blank slate.

For the firm, those intervening years “allowed us to achieve an extraordinary level of detailing,” says Mark. When the project moved forward again, Mark and Peter were joined by David Mogensen, AIA, project lead on the library interiors.

“The way the part of the building works as a whole, you walk in at the upper level into what seems like a one-story space,” says David. “But it opens up dramatically to the back.”

Behind the entry hall and central chimney wall, the new trilevel library pavilion soars toward the view. A sitting area overlooks the library’s principal level below, which, because of the lot’s slope, opens up to the rear yard and, after phase three, terraces and other landscaping.

This lower level comprises what is now the formal entertaining zone of the house, including dining space for 40 guests, a fireside living area, and a bar. Flanking the library are his and hers offices. Floating high above all this is the coup



This page: Because the lot slopes down to the river, the entry hall is at the home’s upper level. The level comprises casual family spaces and bedrooms, plus an in-law suite. The stair leads down to the library’s main entertaining space. (There’s also elevator access.) Behind the chimney wall, a mezzanine lounge overlooks the library’s great hall.



Built a dozen years ago, the “100-year house” was intended to look as if built atop a ruin. Locally quarried stone, copper, steel, and glass anchor it to its hilly site and ensure it will endure for generations.

de grace—a glass-wrapped aerie. “Although it was part of the original conception and planned for structurally,” says Mark, “we had not worked out how to get up there, how to hide the wires for the electrical, the HVAC, the lighting, and the sound system. That’s where David came in. He took the parti and detailed it down to a NASA level of assembly.”

Although the library is a feat of design engineering, and careful execution by contractor Justin Barrows of Added Dimensions, it’s the romance of the space that moves Mark’s heart. “I just love it,” he says. “Put a kitchen where the bar is and I’m done, I could live there.” —*S. Claire Conroy*

Library for 10,000 Books

Potomac, Maryland

ARCHITECT: Mark McInturff, FAIA, principal in charge; Peter Noonan, AIA, project architect (main house); David P. Mogensen, AIA, project architect (library interior), McInturff Architects, Bethesda, Maryland

BUILDER: Added Dimensions (library), Takoma Park, Maryland; West Wing Builders (main house), Falls Church, Virginia

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Gregg Bleam Landscape Architect, Charlottesville, Virginia

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Neubauer Consulting Engineers, Bethesda

PROJECT SIZE: 12,600 square feet (all spaces, including garage); 1,700 square feet (library only)

SITE SIZE: 2.1 acres

PHOTOGRAPHY: Anice Hoachlander, Studio HDP (library); Julia Heine (main house)

KEY PRODUCTS:

COUNTERTOPS: Black Galaxy granite

CUSTOM CABINETRY/MILLWORK: Allegheny Millwork

CABINETRY HARDWARE: Häfele, Forms+Surfaces

DISHWASHER: Bosch

DOOR HARDWARE: Bartels, Halliday Baillie, Omnia, SOSS

FAUCETS: Newport Brass (bar)

ICEMAKER: Scotsman

LIGHTING: BK Lighting (exterior); Buschfeld, Contrast, BRUCK, Lumini, Juno

LIGHTING CONTROL/WINDOW SHADING SYSTEMS: Lutron

METAL GRATING: McNichol’s

OTHER HARDWARE: CR Laurence

OTHER INTERIOR PRODUCTS: Gaithersburg Glass, Majer Metal Works

PAINTS/STAINS: Benjamin Moore

PIZZA OVEN: Earthstone Ovens

RADIANT HEATING: Warmboard

SINK: Mirabelle (bar)

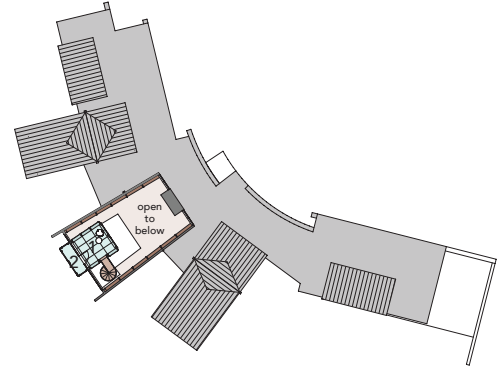
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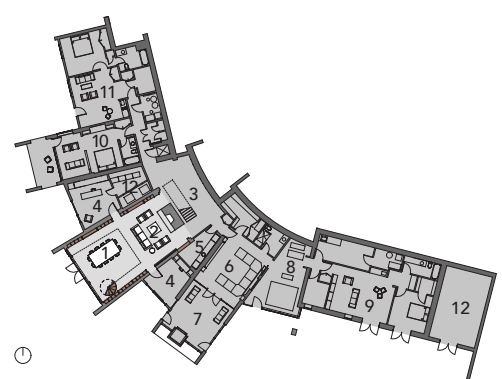
FLOOR PLAN | 1. Study | 2. Terrace

UPPER LEVEL



FLOOR PLAN | 1. Library/Dining Room | 2. Library | 3. Gallery/Hall | 4. Entry | 5. Kitchen | 6. Great Room | 7. Mudroom | 8. Primary Bedroom | 9. Bedroom | 10. Garage | 11. Terrace | 12. Mechanical

LOWER LEVEL



FLOOR PLAN | 1. Library/Dining Room | 2. Library/Nook | 3. Gallery/Hall | 4. Office | 5. Bar | 6. Media Room | 7. Screened Porch | 8. Exercise Room | 9. In-law Suite | 10. Guest Room | 11. Au Pair Suite | 12. Mechanical/Storage

Inner Sanctum

A Tucson house draws on Mexican precedents to create a multigenerational, modernist retreat.

BY CHERYL WEBER

CASA SCHNEIDER
TUCSON, ARIZONA
IBARRA ROSANO DESIGN ARCHITECTS

Casa Schneider takes an unusually literal approach to the ideal of site-specific architecture. Consisting of two oblique bars that don't quite touch, its sun-washed white plaster walls trace the contours of a wedge-shaped lot in Tucson's Mercado district, a newish planned community near downtown. With its sharp-edge geometries and Bauhaus-inflected windows, it would seem to break with tradition, but is, in fact, a riff on the Mexican row house, a typology that Tucson has not embraced since Spaniards ruled the area.

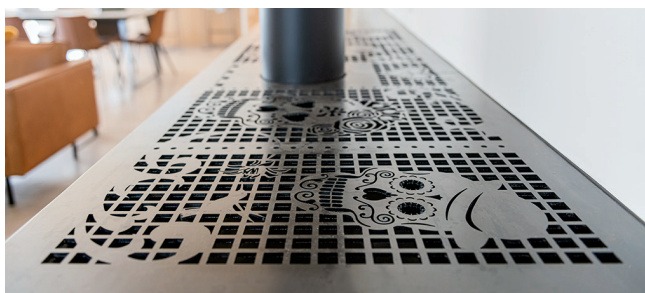
Tucson has been undergoing a transformation and an influx of new ideas, says architect Luis Ibarra, who designed Casa Schneider with his wife and business partner, Teresa Rosano, AIA. This suburban-meets-urban enclave is on a remediated brownfield with access to light rail. "The concept for the development was to do a Mexican thing in terms of planning," Luis says. "Zero lot lines where houses touch, like row houses, are a foreign concept out here. Back in the day when the Spanish were here, row houses were more common, and the developers thought it was a good planning model. They developed a small







This page: The main living area is one big room opening to a protected courtyard. A perimeter of built-in oak and raw steel cabinetry segues from kitchen duty to dining room sideboard, finally terminating in a fireplace and flanking storage. Custom fireplace venting in a Day of the Dead sugar skull pattern depicts each family member.



area of downtown with a bunch of multistory row houses, sort of retro but open-minded about modern style ideas.”

The building couldn't be more different from the client's previous house, which Ibarra Rosano completed in 2000. The firm's first new-home commission, the Garcia Residence was a modest concrete block, steel, and glass house on a steep desert lot with commanding views of the Tucson Mountains. It caught the media's attention and helped launch the couple's career. In the two decades since, the owner had gotten married and had two children. "He and his wife wanted to be more in the city and set up a house they could age in," Luis says. "So they called us and said, let's do it again."

An important part of the brief was to devise a multigenerational setup so that the husband's widowed mother could live with them. She now occupies the studio above the garage, which is accessed by both an elevator and an exterior spiral stair. "They all cook together, and she watches the kids when the parents are working," Luis says. "The house really facilitates all these connections, including to the community. The mom was in this little suburban house without a lot of connections to people. Now she takes the dogs for walks and has a lot of autonomy."



This page: The courtyard is the true heart of the house, mediating between the two-story bedroom wing and the volume containing the great room and in-law suite. A sculptural Cor-Ten stair leads to the in-law suite and a roof deck, but there's also an elevator for easy access. An outdoor fireplace slots under a plaster wall that also serves as a blank screen for projecting movies.

Pinch Points

Whether designing for a wide-open desert or a semi-suburban plot, the firm's superpower is its ability to use a tricky piece of land as a springboard for felicity and surprise. As the architects say on their website, "These sites often yield very exciting designs if you respect the 'rules' of the land. The challenge in working with these sites is to harness the energy and spatial qualities that are already there without damaging or dominating them."

In this case, the buildable plot wraps around a bend in the public plaza at the front of the house, while the garage is entered from an alley behind it. Luis and Teresa created a "bent trapezoid" by drawing simple, two-story rectangles that slip past each other, resulting in a triangular void that became an enclosed courtyard. One bar houses the garage and an open kitchen, dining, and living room. The other contains the primary suite and a stair hall leading up to a sitting room, two bedrooms, and a bath. "The two boxes fitting inside the property line end up creating this courtyard space outside the living room," Luis says. "We do a lot of courtyards but have never done one with that shape. It was quite fun and a good space in the end."

Twenty-one feet tall, the courtyard wall extends the line of the main bedroom bar toward the east, where it meets the garage corner. Narrowing to a point, the two walls don't quite touch. An 8-inch gap lets sunlight through, while a 7-foot-





Clockwise from above: The main bathroom and bedroom are divided by a rift-sawn white oak headboard, a material also used for closets in the bath and adjacent hall. The children’s shower conceals shelving behind a partial wall of Mexican tiles. A casual family sitting room tucks in off the children’s bedrooms on the second level.



high slot of frosted glass closes it off from the alley, keeping the dogs inside. “It was a simple way of getting closure and revealing the two planes that pinch into that corner,” Luis says. “It’s open above the glass, so you have a release of this space, and you have a sense of the alley on the other side and the cars coming and going.”

This release also occurs on the front of the house. Where the two volumes meet at the entrance, a blade of glass runs from the

“The challenge in working with these sites is to harness the energy and spatial qualities that are already there without damaging or dominating them.”

—Luis Ibarra

ground to the roof. Those gestures set up a dynamic dialogue between public and private space. “These two walls want to touch, but I like keeping the tension of them not touching and the energy of the space,” Luis says. “The two rectangles are edging a plaza community space, and it helps to maintain that same concept of separating. But it doesn’t feel constrained. Even there you’re connected to the expanse of the site.” He adds, “It’s very different from what we did for their first house, where we also connected the inside to something outside. When we got this urban site, we thought, what will we do here that plays off some of the themes we created in the first house?”

Folds and Facets

With the site and floor plan sorted out, the exterior evolved as an update of traditional architecture. It is built of concrete block with integrally colored plaster, like Tucson's oldest dwellings, but composed as a modernist abstraction. Angled window wells protrude from the smooth plaster walls on the north and south, casting shadows that shift in the desert sunlight and diffusing the interior light. "In a lot of Mexican houses, you find these windows cased in cut stone, often with a bit of a flair but very symmetrical," Luis says. "When we were playing around with how to represent that, we had the idea of bending and folding the planes to distort the light; really, what those stone carvings are doing is playing with light and shadow. We were trying to do that in a very minimal way. They're kind of like distorted pyramids mounted on the wall. The planes are twisting slightly; as they twist, there is a different coloration and aspect to the light. Each one has a slightly different angle, and on the inside you can sit in the slanted pockets. In my mind they have chameleon eyes, looking in different directions."

Most of the windows are operable casements, and Luis originally envisioned molding the surrounds in precast concrete. His builder had a better idea. "I got really nervous about

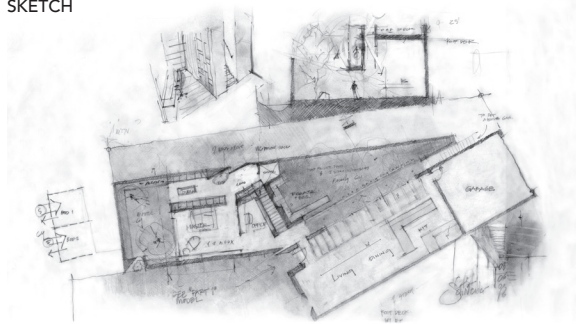
weight; how do you shore them up temporarily?" says general contractor and architect Page Repp Jr., AIA. "We devised a different approach, in which a steel frame would create the overall shape, and you insert the window in that and finish it conventionally. Luis was able to make those windows more dramatic in the steel frame version than he would have been able to in the concrete version." One of the architects at Page's firm, Repp+McLain Design & Construction, modeled all the windows, designing and cutting individual steel ribs on a plasma table in the office.

A dark, origami-like gate on a front corner of the house underscores that motif. Two stories tall, it is made of rusting steel, with trapezoidal elements zigging back and forth and frosted glass inside the faceted openings. More sculpture than gate, it encloses a yoga patio that opens out from the primary bedroom—another private space on a public edge.

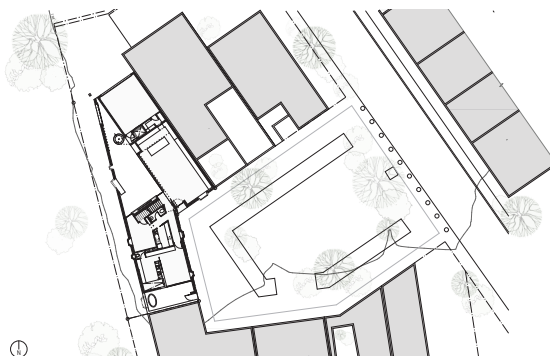
Touchstones

In fact, it is the two-story wooden door that clearly marks the entrance. Although it appears as one continuous door, the top 6 feet, 8 inches is a fixed panel that forms a parapet enclosing a "sky courtyard" and roof garden. Inside the story-and-a-half main level, the earthy surfaces continue. Drywall with a

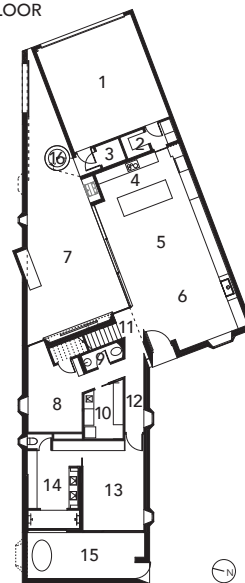
SKETCH



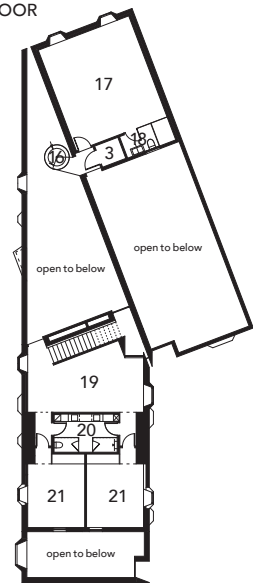
SITE PLAN



1ST FLOOR



2ND FLOOR



FLOOR PLAN | 1. Garage | 2. Drop Off | 3. Elevator | 4. Kitchen | 5. Dining | 6. Living | 7. Courtyard | 8. Gym | 9. Powder | 10. Laundry | 11. Stair | 12. Hall | 13. Main Bedroom | 14. Main Bathroom | 15. Garden | 16. Exterior Stair | 17. Studio | 18. Bathroom | 19. Sitting Room | 20. Guest Bath | 21. Guest Bedroom



This page and opposite: A private garden off the main bedroom contains an outdoor bath and sitting area. Its sculptural gate evokes the fenestration deployed elsewhere on the house. Both it and the main entry combine an operable door with an integrated fixed panel.




fine silica finish produces a warm, plastered look, while rift white oak plywood ceilings have battens that reference the exposed beams in Tucson’s barrio houses. “I thought the beams would be expensive and not necessary,” Luis says. “What I was really after was rhythm, and I took from the Midwest a board and batten ceiling that gives some nice warmth and is better for the environment.” Cooking appliances are hidden behind an oak millwork wall that wraps through the dining and living areas as counter-height storage topped with black raw steel. The effect is simple and serene.

Also contained within the millwork is the living room fireplace. Its vent system is made from raw steel, laser-cut in the “sugar skull” pattern of a classic Mexican party banner. With characters depicting the family members, it replicates the papel picado (poked paper) technique in a Day of the Dead theme. “When we were trying to solve the venting problem with the fireplace, it was about the same time people were starting to talk about the parade,” Luis says. “I had the idea of creating not just a series of holes, but something a bit more fun.”

Concrete flooring flows out to dark concrete pavers in the courtyard, which in some ways is the house’s emotional

center. Movies are projected onto the two-story stairwell wall, and a linear fireplace radiates warmth on cool nights. Of course, a courtyard is also a timeless strategy for relieving desert heat, and this one goes a step further. Cool air is piped down through the fireplace chimney, making it a comfortable place to gather even in the summer. Opposite the living room, a bench bends into the north wall, softening the severe geometry. Here too, a spiral stair supplies patina and a sculptural presence. Made of a single sheet of Cor-Ten steel, it curls up to the rooftop garden and in-law flat.

Casa Schneider makes many poetic moves, but for Luis, it is also about the passage of time. “The clients enjoyed the other house and talked about never leaving it,” he says. “But this new project alludes to the idea that our bodies change. The other house was full of steps, which was a challenge for his mother. This one has steps, too, but it’s organized with the kids on the upper level, parents below, and an elevator for mom. What’s cool is that all the spaces get used every day. It’s almost like the house has become part of their family because of the way it participates in their daily lives. That, for me, has been a mark of success.” 



Casa Schneider

Tucson, Arizona

ARCHITECT: Luis Ibarra and Teresa Rosano, AIA, principals in charge; Janeth Vega-Flores, Sarah Luck, Ibarra Rosano Design Architects, Tucson, Arizona

BUILDER: Repp+McLain Design and Construction, Tucson

LANDSCAPE DESIGN: The Garden Gate, Tucson

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Harris Engineering Services, Tucson

PROJECT SIZE: 3,647 square feet

SITE SIZE: 0.1 acre

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Bill Timmerman, Damien Rodarte

KEY PRODUCTS:

CABINET HARDWARE: Hafele

COUNTERTOPS: Caesarstone

DOORS/WINDOWS: Weiland from Andersen

ELEVATOR: Symmetry Elevators

FAUCETS: Hansgrohe, Grohe, Badeloft

FIREPLACE: Montigo

LIGHTING: Artemide, Turbino

LINEAR SHOWER DRAIN:

Schluter Systems

OUTDOOR FIREPLACE: Spark Modern Fires

OUTDOOR GRILL: Lynx Grills

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Sub-Zero

SINKS: Franke

SKYLIGHTS: Wasco from VELUX

TILE: Daltile, Elite Tile, Itona Tile

TOILETS: TOTO

TUB: BainUltra

VANITIES: WETSTYLE



A Fine Dance

Today's custom modern design finds richness and warmth in seeming simplicity.

BY S. CLAIRE CONROY AND CHERYL WEBER

Spring Harbor House

MADISON, WISCONSIN
JOHNSEN SCHMALING ARCHITECTS

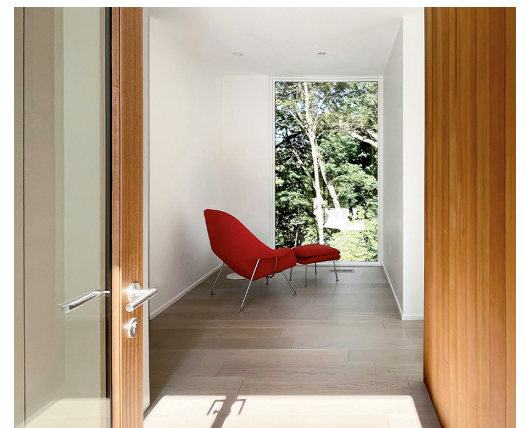
It's no secret that there are more buyers interested in modern houses these days than there have been since the last century. But many don't think they can afford to build their own new custom version, unless they've hit it big in Silicon Valley. That's likely true if they want to build in Silicon Valley as well, but if they're willing to look farther afield to locales like Wisconsin, they may find their dream is attainable. The trick is to find the talent that can turn the dream into a workable reality.

The good news is that every state in this country has firms that can compete with the best coastal firms. That's great for ordinary humans who want an architect-designed house, such as the clients for this project in Madison. They struck gold with Milwaukee's Johnsen Schmaling Architects—one of the best firms not only in Wisconsin, but in the nation.

Alas, they did stumble with a first attempt using a local firm, one that



Conceived as a series of stacked boxes, the modest house negotiates a very steeply sloped site. Within the boxes' flat frames, beveled and lapped siding subtly activates the façade. Warm cedar siding wraps window and door openings, like the interior flesh of an apple once it's carved.





translated their request for a modest modern oasis into plans for a looming and bloated Prairie-style structure. The style is lovely, of course, when done properly, but it was not meant to be tall. The point was to harmonize with the horizontality of the Midwestern prairie. It was a solution particularly ill-suited to this steeply sloped lot.

The clients discerned the misfit quickly and wisely moved on to Johnsen Schmalig. “They are super-modest people who wanted a small, unassuming house, so the previous plans were inappropriate,” says Sebastian Schmalig, AIA. “They wanted a house that emphasized aesthetics, quality, and details, too.”

These qualities align perfectly with the firm’s interest in “radical simplicity,” which aims to reduce ornament and flourish to what’s essential to the structure of the building. And that structure—more often than not—is based on a system of stacked boxes.

The system enables a site solution that copes with elevation changes, while still delivering on the sleek vision of a low-slung, ground-hugging modern dwelling. These houses can somehow defy gravity by climbing vertically while still reading as largely horizontal. “In this case, the program was quite small, but it was a very difficult site,” Sebastian explains. “Our clients owned the land and an existing old stone house



Interiors are spare, with a limited palette of materials and an economical use of space. The main living area is one big room. A custom cabinet separates the kitchen zone from the living room, serving as storage and sideboard on the dining side while concealing a television with a lift on the living side.



on the property. They subdivided the parcel and sold the old house with a reduced footprint.

“We are seeing this more and more—the densification of the suburbs,” he continues. “But they found out from the zoning folks that what they were left with was a tiny buildable footprint for the new house. Even though the program was small, we needed every inch of the buildable area to fit it all in.”

Turnaround Strategy

The program was relatively compact to keep the house affordable without sacrificing careful detailing, but also because the clients are on the road a great deal. “They’re in sales and travel a lot, so they knew they didn’t need a huge house,” says the architect. But they did



Cedar reappears on the interiors, cradling occupants in its rich warmth. Flooring is white oak, and the custom television cabinet is stained to match. The long kitchen island and counters are white Neolith.



Above: At the rear, the house opens to private, forested views. Both the exterior covered terrace and interior fireplace lounge cradle occupants in warm cedar siding.



The primary bathroom on the second level continues the theme of modest appointment, with a palette in keeping with the rest of the house.

need a garage for their van and to store and organize their merchandise. They also wanted three bedrooms, to secure the home's resale value.

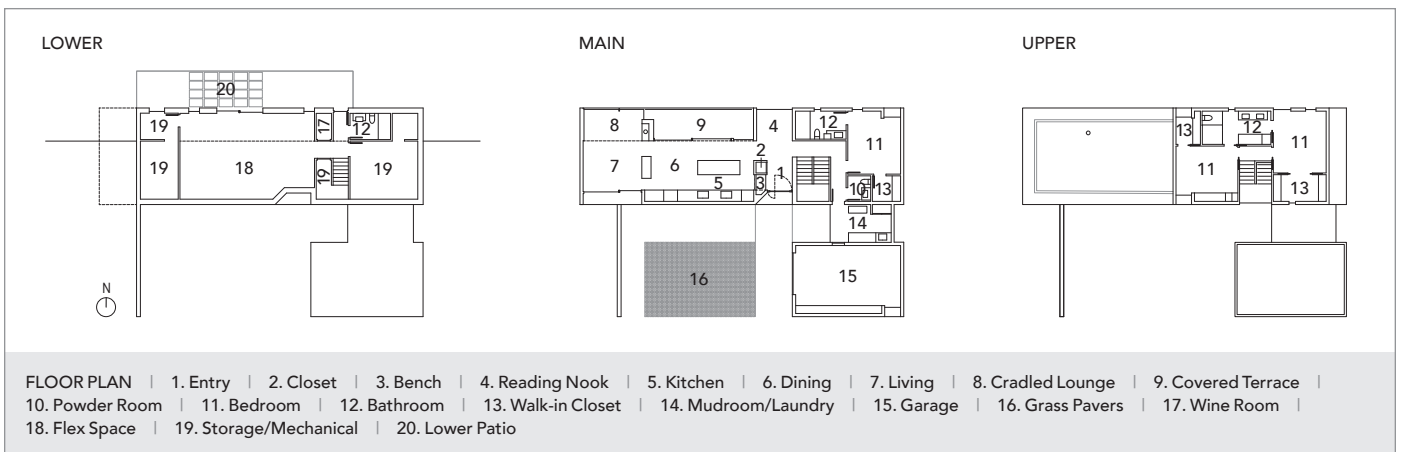
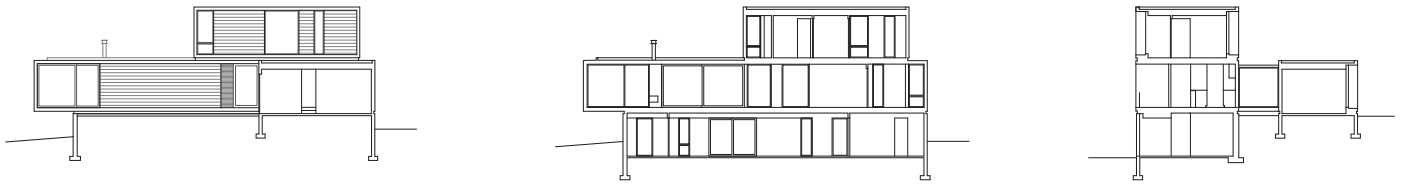
Carving out real estate on the hilly site for the one-car garage and maneuvering room to enter it, however, was no small feat. "The northern edge of the driveway is steeply sloping, and we needed to create parking access," Sebastian says. "A concrete retaining wall allows flat vehicular access, and the grass pavers are a compromise that a front yard should not be paved. That set up a nice plinth we could stack our boxes on top of, while not looking like a three-story block."

These deceptively simple "boxes" belie the careful attention and minute detailing invested in their design and execution. "We're trying to develop a language with seemingly repetitive details," he continues. "Structure, flashing, roof termination—each requires a unique response to make it work."

The repetition of detailing helps unify the whole, while also imbuing a sense of "serenity," as the firm calls it. When materials do change in hue or application, they do so in a complementary way—such as the introduction of cedar



SECTIONS



siding within the openings for windows and doors. The cedar is installed vertically, like the painted paulownia siding. The subtle difference is the cedar is applied flat, while the paulownia is lapped and inset within a flat frame.

“The way we thought about these boxes was as continuous smooth frames,” says Sebastian. “The three-dimensional frame is filled in with vertical beveled siding. And there are no external pieces that don’t belong to the box itself—no additive pieces. The cedar is like the inside flesh of an apple you carve into to expose. Anytime we go beyond the thin surface layer, we

“This is a very disciplined building. It’s very hard to do this reductive approach and make it look like simplicity.”

—Sebastian Schmalig, AIA

use the cedar to create a distinction. It’s challenging to resolve no external pieces and to avoid the flatness that’s a danger with an approach like this.”

Those “smooth frames” appear on the east and west façades, including the

west-facing garage “box.” Within the flatness of the garage wall—in this case, thermally stable poly ash—the doors are barely discernible, blending into the overall pattern of siding.

With even greater subtlety, the beveled paulownia siding changes direction in the frame of the second-level box, varying and enlivening the rhythm of shadows while maintaining the overall harmony of the components. “This is really hard compositionally to do,” says Sebastian. “It’s a fine dance. This is a very disciplined building. It’s very hard to do this reductive approach and make it look like simplicity.”



The firm's stacked boxes facilitate cantilevers over site imperfections. Here, the blunt ends of the boxes employ flat-applied siding, while the broad sides are either glazed or beveled lap siding.

Serenade

Like a lullaby, the repetition is reassuring and soothing—a perfect antidote to cacophonous days spent on the road. The interiors go even further in suppressing the visual noise—white oak floors, white walls, white Neolith counters, punctuated with warm, rich woods.

The exterior's cedar-wrapped openings come inside to form a “wood cradle” for the fireplace nook, and oak cabinetry stained to match keeps the balance on the opposite wall, expanding the cradle effect.

The floor plan is economical, eliminating redundant spaces while still providing little getaway zones—a glazed reading nook in the entry hall, for instance, that overlooks the forest beyond; a small terrace for al fresco enjoyment; a small patio off the lower level.

This is what modern design does best when it's done well—it turns down the noise of the outside world and cradles us in a calming embrace.

—S. Claire Conroy

Spring Harbor House

Madison, Wisconsin

ARCHITECT: Johnsen Schmalig Architects, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Brian Johnsen, AIA, and Sebastian Schmalig, AIA, principals in charge; Matt Wendorf, Angelina Torbica, project team.

BUILDER: Aldo Partners, Verona, Wisconsin

INTERIOR DESIGNER/LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Johnsen Schmalig Architects, Milwaukee

PROJECT SIZE: 2,090 square feet, plus 550 lower-level flex space

SITE SIZE: 0.35 acre

PHOTOGRAPHY: John J. Macaulay

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETS: Custom

CLADDING: AllPrime paulownia, cedar

COOKTOP: Fisher & Paykel

COOKING VENTILATION: Wolf

COUNTERTOPS: Neolith

DISHWASHER: Miele

DOOR HARDWARE: Inox

ENTRY DOOR: Quantum (pivot)

FASCIAS/TRIM: Boral (poly ash siding)

FAUCETS: Franke (kitchen), Grohe (primary bath), Hansgrohe (secondary baths), Kohler (showers)

FIREPLACE: Regency City Series

FLOORING: Havwoods, Blanco

GLASS RAILINGS: CRL TAPER-LOC

HVAC: Trane

INSULATION: Dow

LANDSCAPING: Wausau Tile (pavers), Soil Retention Drivable Grass

LIGHTING: WAC (exterior), Halo, Birchwood, JESCO

LIGHTING CONTROL: Lutron

MICROWAVE: Bosch

PAINTS/STAINS: Sherwin-Williams

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Fisher & Paykel

ROOFING: Johns Manville JM TPO

SINKS: Ruvati (kitchen), Duravit (bathrooms)

THERMAL AND MOISTURE BARRIERS/SHEATHING: Huber Engineered Woods ZIP System

TOILETS: Duravit Darling

TUB: Lyons Linear

VENTILATION: Panasonic

WASHER/DRYER: Miele

WINDOWS: Marvin

WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS: Quantum

WINE REFRIGERATOR: U-Line

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Casa Mancusi

CAVE CREEK, ARIZONA
MANCUSI DESIGN

Architecture's sphere of influence was on Nick Mancusi's mind when he began designing a starter house for himself and his wife a few years ago. The couple, graduates of the Taliesin School of Architecture, had first decided that an existing house would best fit their budget. They didn't imagine themselves as the typical architecture patrons. However, an analysis of the resale market put them on a different path. Small homes that required a lot of work were selling for \$400,000, Nick says, and he figured renovations would cost another \$100,000. That half-million-dollar entry point posed an intriguing challenge: could they design and build a modern house they liked for the same

cost? It turns out they could. The result is the 1,728-square-foot Casa Mancusi, as much a structure as a narrative about building smartly and simply.

Economy and sustainability were top priorities. "We had two goals," Nick says. "One was to prove that architecture doesn't just have to be for the elite. We wanted to show that you could build a house that's cost-competitive with tract homes, rather than succumb to the dreariness of most of them. The second was to be as responsible and honest as possible with the site."

The lot, in Cave Creek just outside Phoenix, was a bargain. Three-quarters of an acre with beautiful desert views, it was discounted because the steep

grade of shale and volcanic mud was considered unbuildable. Nick knew he could construct something dynamic and affordable by adapting the house to the land. Such ideals were central to the Taliesin school, taking cues from the natural environment to create architecture that embraces the landscape. "For Frank Lloyd Wright it was, how do you grace rather than disgrace the landscape?" Nick says. "For us it was, how do I touch the desert as little as possible? It can take 70 years for a saguaro cactus to grow an arm; whatever you touch in the desert will look that way for a long time." In addition, "minimizing the difficulty to build, in theory, makes things cheaper," he says. "We considered how



Opposite and this page: In the Frank Lloyd Wright tradition, Taliesin-trained architect Nick Mancusi left much of his desert site untouched when building a new home for himself and his wife. Reducing site intervention also helped keep costs down on the budget-driven project. Underneath his house, he tucked in a small architecture studio for his firm.



This page: Standard 8-foot-tall windows and sliders rest on the 8-inch-tall supporting beam for the house, achieving the minimum ceiling height needed for the interiors without the expense of custom units. Glazing is restricted to the north and east sides of the house to minimize heat gain. The durable gray floor tiles used throughout were just \$3 a square foot.



little we could dig for the footings, and how little we could cut.”

Designed as a 24-by-60-foot rectangle, the house runs east-west in 12-foot-long modules. The sloping driveway, which required minimal

“We had two goals. One was to prove that architecture doesn’t just have to be for the elite. The second was to be as responsible and honest as possible with the site.”

—Nick Mancusi

grading, ends in a two-car carport under the overhanging west end of the house. From there, exterior stairs rise along a site wall on the north to the front door, where the extended roofline creates an entry patio on the east. This patio and the living room form a 24-by-24-foot pad that rests on the rock grade. Beyond, the kitchen and dining area are open to the living room. Stretching behind them along a side hallway are the den, laundry, and guest suite. The main bedroom—comprising the last 12 feet of the house—hovers over virgin desert.

Below, adjacent to the carport, a walkout architecture studio and storage room were tucked under the kitchen/dining area. This concrete-block structure also retains the hill. “The cut for that space was about 8 feet deep, and we used the fill to level out for the carport, which goes under the den and laundry room and guest room,” Nick says. Supporting the overhang is a 48-foot-long glulam beam—a cheaper alternative to steel—spanning from the living room pad. On the opposite end of the house, the cut for the entry patio and living room pad was also minimal—about

5 feet deep—and the solid rock eliminated the need for a retaining wall.

“There is a lot of dynamism with the main bedroom cantilever and walls that shoot out of the desert, but they’re just the gestures that were most cost-effective to build on the lot,” says Nick, who is also a licensed contractor and learned the trade from his father, a general contractor. He and some friends placed the footings, poured the concrete, set the rebar, and framed the house—another incentive to minimizing the construction difficulty.

The relative lack of structural gymnastics also allowed the couple to spend money on glass expanses that make them feel like they’re part of the Sonoran Desert. The long north wall has 48 feet of floor-to-ceiling glass and the short east side is all glass, while the west wall is windowless to minimize heat gain,



This page: Economical track lighting eliminates unsightly cans. With just one interior door, light and views flow from the great room to the main bedroom’s Arcosanti bell.





Nick, a licensed contractor who built the house with help from friends, matched ambition with capabilities. Above: Strategically placed walls in lieu of doors provide privacy where needed. Below: After completing work on the block walls, the team rented a sandblaster to reveal the aggregate, creating a textured backdrop for the studio's maple millwork desks.

and there is minimal glass on the south. “I love the fact that the house is so small but feels so big on the inside because of simple things we did,” Nick says. Some

of these were structural. For example, “along the north elevation, the bottom of the joists aligns with the bottom edge of the beam, creating an 8-inch ‘curb,’” Nick says. “This allowed me to place 8-foot-tall windows and sliding doors on top of the beam to achieve 8-foot, 8-inch ceilings—essentially a wall of glass—using standard-size sliding door and window units.”

Off the Shelf

The clean, white interior adds to the feeling of spaciousness. With only one interior door—on the guest bath—Nick used wall planes to divide space. “I find it’s a lot more interesting for a home,” he says, adding, “When you live in a glass house, you don’t have a lot of space to hang art. We have a lot of artist friends and like to show off their work. These small walls create a gallery-like

view of each piece.” The long hallway also doubles as an art gallery. The main bedroom’s placement at the far end of the house provides privacy, yet a Soleri bell over the bedside table is a focal point from the living room. In the future, the 4-foot-wide hallway can be fitted with a pivot door if necessary.

Throughout, drywall and \$3-per-square-foot gray floor tiles provided inexpensive finishes. The tile is easy to maintain, keeps the house cool, and extends the interior out to the patio. A rigorously imposed order supplies polish—every function is defined by color or material. “If there’s a wall plane or work surface, it’s white,” says Nick. “If it’s cabinetry or millwork, it’s maple; if it’s metal, it’s black—fridge, faucets, and window and door frames.” In the living room, maple bookshelves rest on metal brackets. Kitchen cab-



Casa Mancusi

Cave Creek, Arizona

ARCHITECT: Nick Mancusi, AIA, Mancusi Design,
Cave Creek, Arizona

BUILDER: Mancusi Design

PROJECT SIZE: 1,728 square feet

SITE SIZE: 0.75 acre

CONSTRUCTION COST: \$260 per square foot

PHOTOGRAPHY: Bryan Black

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETRY: IKEA

CLADDING: Sto Stucco

COOKING VENT HOOD: IKEA

COOKTOP: Whirlpool

COUNTERTOPS: Silestone

DOORS/WINDOWS: Western Window Systems

FASTENERS: Simpson

FAUCETS: Delta, Blanco

FLOORING: Daltille, Marazzi

HOME CONTROL SYSTEM: Apple Home

HVAC: Rheem

LIGHTING: Halo, Juno

LIGHTING CONTROL: Leviton

MICROWAVE: Whirlpool

OVENS: Whirlpool

PAINTS, STAINS, COATINGS: Dunn-Edwards

REFRIGERATOR: Bosch

SECURITY SYSTEM: Nest

SINKS: Delta

SKYLIGHTS: VELUX

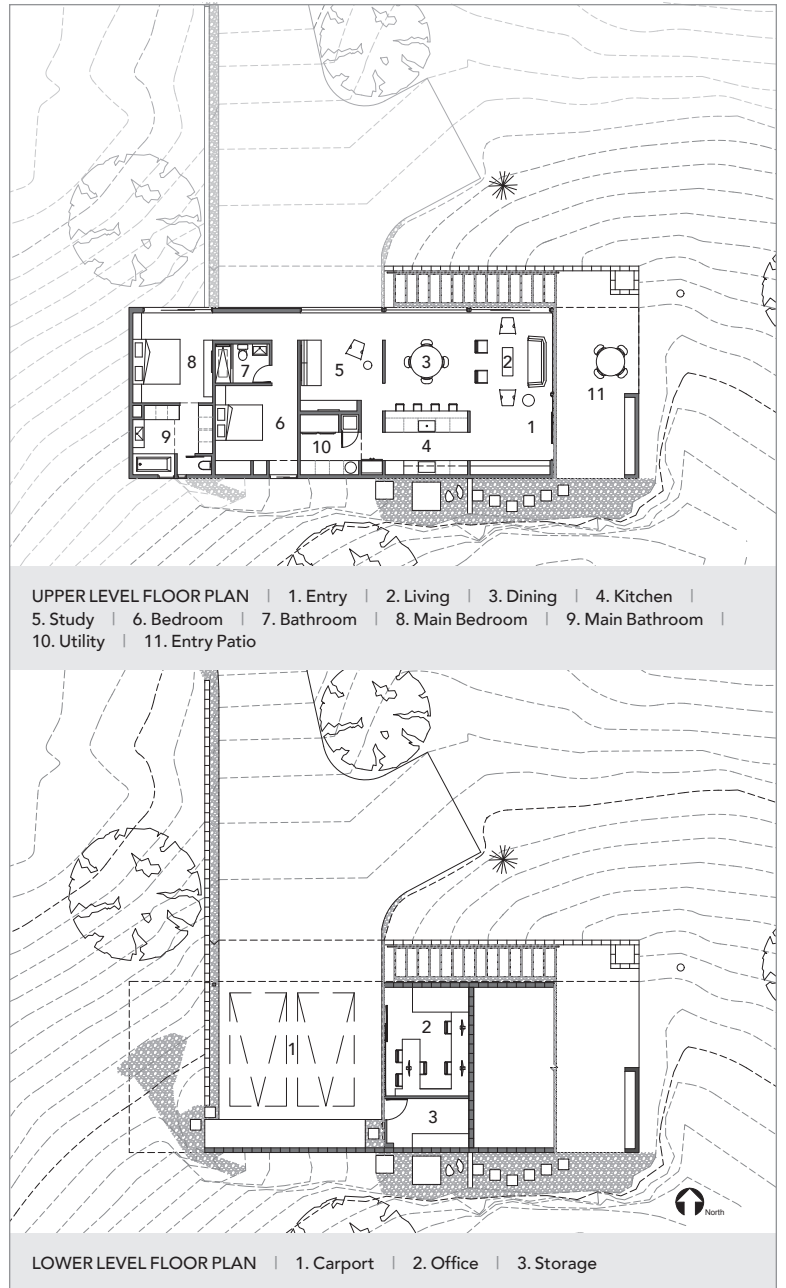
THERMAL AND MOISTURE BARRIERS: FortiFlash

TOILET: Duravit

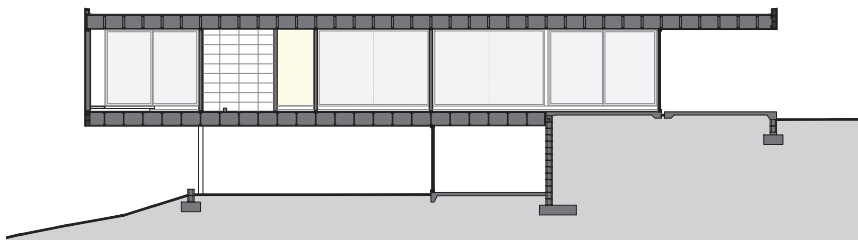
TUB: MTI Bathtub

VENTILATION: Broan-NuTone

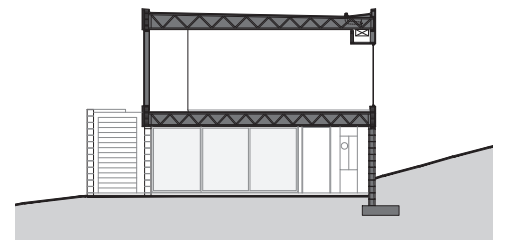
WASHER/DRYER: LG



EAST WEST SECTION



NORTH SOUTH SECTION





inets are from IKEA, topped with quartz countertops that wrap up the backsplash. Track lighting, another economical choice, highlights the artwork and eliminates the clutter of can lights.

Within that white canvas, pops of color—pink on the patio wall, yellow along the hallway—express the shear walls. At the entry, the pink stucco wall (a nod to Luis Barragán) backdrops a built-in bench, and on the north, the yellow wall is offset on the stucco exterior so it reads structurally. Inside, a drywall reveal suggests that the yellow panel runs from inside to outside.

The lower-level office, where Nick works with a small staff, was designed to be comfortable for three people. It has concrete block walls and a glass wall facing the carport. “After we finished doing the block work, we

“As an architect, you want to be able to show not only what you can do, but experience it.”

—Nick Mancusi

decided to sandblast it because we like the textures,” Nick says. “We rented a sandblaster and made a mess, but it was totally worth it because it exposes the aggregate. There’s this beautiful backdrop of concrete with maple millwork for the desks.”

Show and Tell

With costs carefully managed, the final figures did not disappoint. The price of the land (\$75,000) and house, which has solar panels on a light-reflective

roof, came to \$400,000, putting his costs at \$188 per square foot. (That figure includes a \$30,000 sewer system, which many new homes don’t need.) Nick estimates that the cost of a GC would have brought the construction cost to \$260 per square foot, or \$450,000. “We got more than we imagined, and it was less money than a fixer-upper would have been,” he says, “so it’s a pretty good win.”

This scrupulous attention to efficiency now informs his client work too. “As an architect, you want to be able to show not only what you can do, but experience it,” he says. “I get to live in what I preach from a philosophical standpoint, and I don’t think I’d change a thing about how I did it. I love waking up and having the desert say good morning.”—Cheryl Weber



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Metal Lark

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SALA ARCHITECTS

It's a special kind of building that embraces its surroundings in all seasons, especially in the cold North. The ideal for every weekend getaway is to blur the distinction between exposure and enclosure, but to turn that kind of architecture into a comfortable rental takes a skilled architect and a particularly adventurous client. Both were on hand

in the making of Metal Lark, the first in a handful of eco-friendly structures that will sparsely populate a 140-acre site. Once used as farmland swapped between corn and soybeans, the property had been converted to a meadow filled with prairie grass and wildflowers.

This wasn't the first time builder Kevin Fossum worked with the owners,

having previously built their retreat house close by. They are a retired couple who live an hour and a half away in the Twin Cities. They went in on this business venture with their son, whose affinity for Pacific Northwest architecture led him to David Wagner, AIA, formerly of Seattle, who built a house he admired near his own Minneapolis

home. Those connections helped the team to coalesce quickly around the big decisions.

The first was where to build the house. The owners were intent on a tower-like structure, and the site offered many possibilities. One was a lovely hillside with a territorial view of the lake, but it had no physical connection to the shoreline. The team also explored

“We’ve done as much as we can to make this project sustainability driven.”

—David Wagner, AIA

a steep wooded bluff before selecting a spot along a tree line. “Over decades, a farmer will put a barbed wire fence in and trees start to grow along the edge,” David says. “Thirty or 40 years later a line of trees marks the landscape as an artifice of this old fence line.” On this unique edge where the land dropped away to the lake, “we sensed we could create a nice approach for vehicles, park on one side of the trees

and create a short path through them to the tower. There’s almost a threshold experience of passing through the tree line to get to the house.”

One of the hallmarks of Pacific Northwest architecture is large expanses of glass to bring light inside on gray days. Deep overhangs protect buildings from rain, and here they would be needed to offset rain, snow, and sun. The Northwest is also known for architecture that expresses structure, and for warm modernism rooted in wood construction.

This scheme ticks all those boxes. The 35-foot-tall tower sits on a rise on the east edge of the oaks, maples, and ash, which provide a windbreak and shade the building from the low western sun. Canted southeast for better solar exposure and lake views, its 20-by-20-foot footprint consists of two levels plus a half-level on the ground for storage

and mechanical equipment. Visitors enter over a bridge at the middle level containing a mudroom, bedroom, and bath. The bridge continues straight through the building to a cantilevered viewing platform on the opposite side. Upstairs, the top floor is one large open space for the kitchen, dining, and living area. Folded into a cabinetry wall, a double bunk pulls down to accommodate extra guests.



This page and opposite: Visitors traverse a bridge to enter the tower structure at the bedroom level. The bridge morphs at the other end of the mudroom/entry into a viewing platform that overlooks the lake.





Shell Game

The tower's transparency and cantilevers called for steel framing, but "steel and cold temperatures don't go well together," David says. The team developed a steel exoskeleton that was custom-fabricated by Northshore Steel

on Lake Superior, which was then infilled with wood-framed wall, floor, and roof systems. While three glass walls on the second and third levels create a spectacular perch from which to gaze over the land, Cor-Ten steel acts as a wind brace, wrapping the northwestern entry

side and portions of the side walls. "The idea was to create something durable," David says. "It became this nice shell that feels almost like the building is a full glass cube from outside, with this warm coat that slips around it to protect it. The angles provide a little extra dynamic expression—a tall, outward thrust—as the hillside drops away." The Cor-Ten wall assemblies are 12 inches thick and packed with insulation to ward off winter's prevailing winds.

To achieve the floor-to-ceiling glass, David was able to spec residential windows rather than a pricier curtain wall system. "We could get away with it because of the wind bracing we did to the exterior out of 2x4 Douglas fir, running from the floor plate to the ceiling framing to create a strong back fin that braces the windows," he says. Punched window openings in the Cor-Ten steel are fitted with zinc sheet metal



This page: The house adopts a Pacific Northwest aesthetic of honesty in structure and materials. Douglas fir cabinetry, window frames, and exposed ceilings warm the interiors, as do radiant oak floors.

casings that pop out and repel weather. The same treatment occurs on the front door, tipping out to mimic the shape of the Cor-Ten shell. One Cut Construction's crew forklifted the heaviest, 700-pound windows into place and built the industrial-style roof.

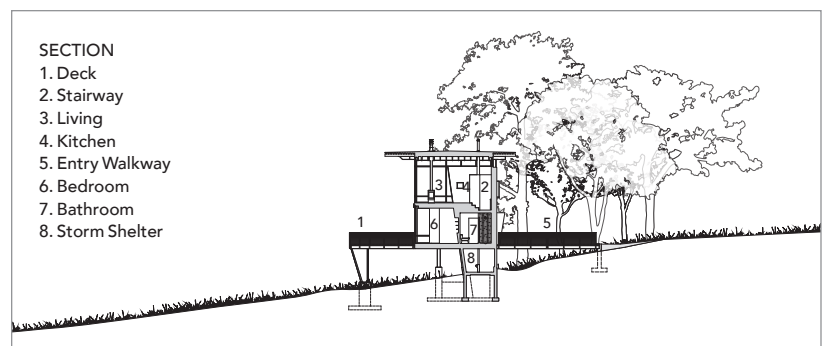
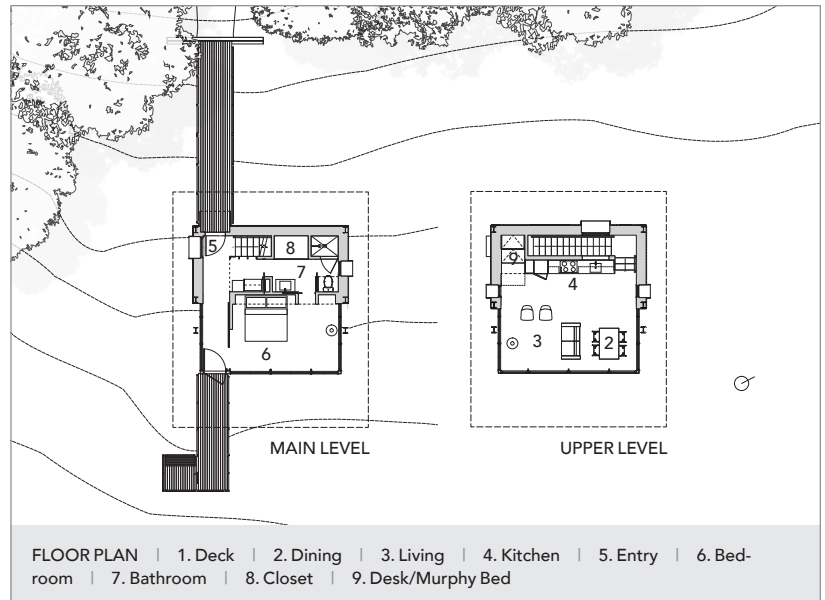
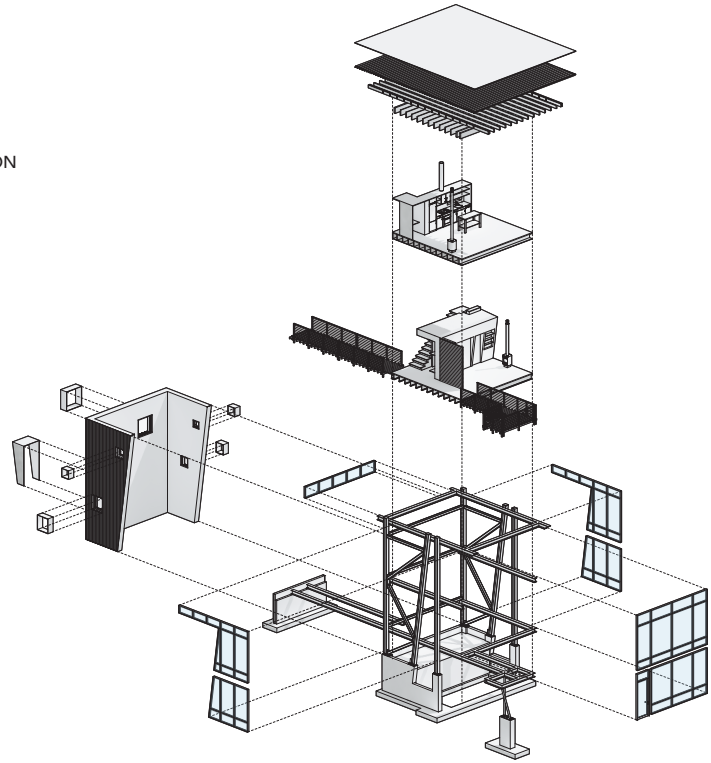
Viewed from across the meadow, the house becomes almost an abstraction, its simple geometries flattening to two dimensions. David chose a structural corrugated steel roof deck to achieve a thin edge on the left and right roof cantilever. "Looking at the roofline from the ground up, you see the galvanized heavy metal soffit and 3x8 fir beams that cantilever out in a pretty large overhang," says One Cut's owner, Kevin Fossum. "The roof sandwich consists of LVL beams exposed on the inside, topped with 3x8 fir timbers going the opposite direction and spray foam, then perpendicular 2x3s. On top of that assembly is the galvanized steel edge that you see on the soffits, three-quarter-inch plywood, and a rubber roof with tapered foam to create a slope."

Warm Modernism

A snug variation of this aesthetic reappears on the interior finishes. These are simple and durable, befitting a hard-use rental: black slate tile on the mudroom floor; Sheetrock walls; Douglas fir cabinetry, window frames, and exposed rafters; and white-washed, engineered oak flooring with radiant heat.

A relief from the glassy façade, punched windows open unexpected sightlines. Stairs to the main level ascend behind a canyon of cabinetry and emerge into the bright upper space. An interior window at the kitchen sink provides a view through a high exterior window on the stairs. "You can look out and see who's arriving in the driveway," David says. Another window at the entry brackets an outdoor view from the staircase.

AXON





The stair acts as a cooling tower, with operable windows and ceiling fans drawing out hot air. “We’ve done as much as we can to make this project sustainability driven,” David says. In addition to the passive strategies, a bank of solar panels in the meadow behind the building supply roughly two-thirds of the power needs.

“Both the homeowner and the architect had a lot of good ideas,” says Kevin. “Between the three of us, it turned out really well.” The various short-term tenants seem to agree. According to David, the owners’ business venture has been “wildly successful” so far. “It’s booked out as far as they want it to be,” he says. “Open dates fill within hours.” Part house, part viewing platform, its integration of industrial and organic, indoors and out, elevates the experience of shelter.—*Cheryl Weber*

Metal Lark

Frederic, Wisconsin

ARCHITECT: David O’Brien Wagner, AIA, principal in charge, SALA Architects, Minneapolis

BUILDER: Kevin Fossum, One Cut Construction, Grantsburg, Wisconsin

INTERIOR DESIGNER: SALA Architects, Minneapolis

CONSULTANTS: Northshore Steel, Two Harbors, Minnesota; D.P. Juza Woods + Fixtures, Shell Lake, Wisconsin

PROJECT SIZE: 900 square feet

SITE SIZE: 140 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: \$575 per square foot

PHOTOGRAPHY: Gaffer Photography

KEY PRODUCTS

CLADDING: Cor-Ten Steel, VMZINC, Richlite

COOKING VENTILATION: Zephyr

COOKTOP/OVEN: Bosch

COUNTERTOPS: Caesarstone

DISHWASHER: Bosch

DOORS/WINDOWS: Loewen Windows

FAUCETS: Hansgrohe

FIREPLACE: Jotul

FLOORING: BOEN, Daltile

HVAC SYSTEM: Warmboard-S

LIGHTING: Vista Light, MP Lighting, WAC

REFRIGERATOR: Whirlpool

SINKS: Ruvati, Duravit

TOILETS: Kohler

VENTILATION: Panasonic



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Cucina Mendocino kitchen designed by Martha Vega | www.danmarcabinets.com



Problem Solvers



1



2



3



4

1. IN SINKS

For the first time in its nearly 70-year history, Delta is expanding beyond its faucet portfolio to offer kitchen sinks. Three collections of workstation sinks (Lorelai, Rivet, Everest) are available in undermount or top-mount configurations, each with an array of useful accessories. DeltaFaucet.com/Kitchen/Sinks

2. GREAT PRETENDER

Tilemaker Nemo celebrates the charming imperfections of concrete in a new line of flooring and wall coverings called Opus 2.0. Five sizes of squares and rectangles are rendered in eight shades of warm and cool grays, including Ash, Carbon, Clay, Flint, Graphite, Gravel, Salt, and Sand. Nemotile.com

3. HIDDEN ASSETS

Homeowners have a love-hate relationship with window screens—they love the function but hate the look. Taking aim at the haters, Pella is introducing a “Hidden Screen” feature for its Pella 250 Series of vinyl windows that deploys when you need it and disappears when you don’t. Available late 2022. Pella.com

4. TRAY BIEN

From high-design plumbing company Duravit comes Architec Slim, a new shower tray solution that’s smart looking and low-profile. The self-leveling units are made in an array of standard shower sizes and, in larger versions, can be installed to meet ADA requirements. Duravit.us

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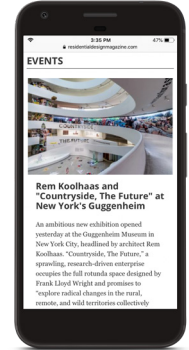
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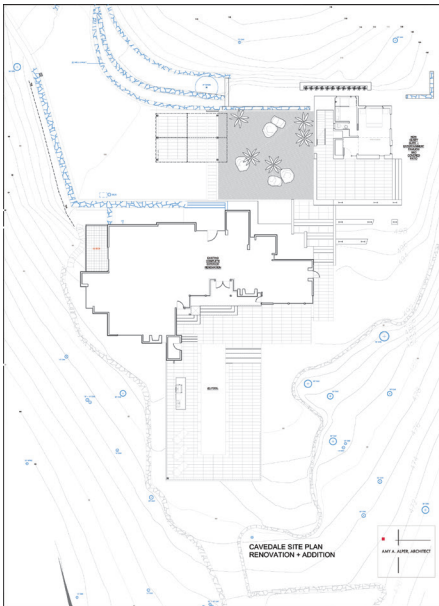
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Scenic Overlook

SONOMA, CALIFORNIA
AMY A. ALPER, ARCHITECT



Architect: Amy A. Alper, Architect, Sonoma, California; builder: Skaggs Construction, Santa Rosa, California; landscape architect: Merge Studio, Sebastapol, California; project size: 2,900 square feet (existing house); 2,000 square feet (addition); site size: 19.25 acres; rendering: Bluehand.

When the **October** 2017 Tubbs Fire tore through this property in California Wine Country, it destroyed the guest house and heavily damaged the entry façade of the main house—an '80s contemporary with wood and stucco siding and failing commercial storefront windows. Neither the guest house nor the main house took advantage of the stellar, 270-degree views from Mount Tamalpais to Sonoma Mountain.

“Until the fire, the couple who own the house considered it ‘good enough,’” says architect Amy Alper, AIA. “They live in Silicon Valley and go up on weekends.” But the fire provided a tabula rasa to reinvent what the property could do for the owners.

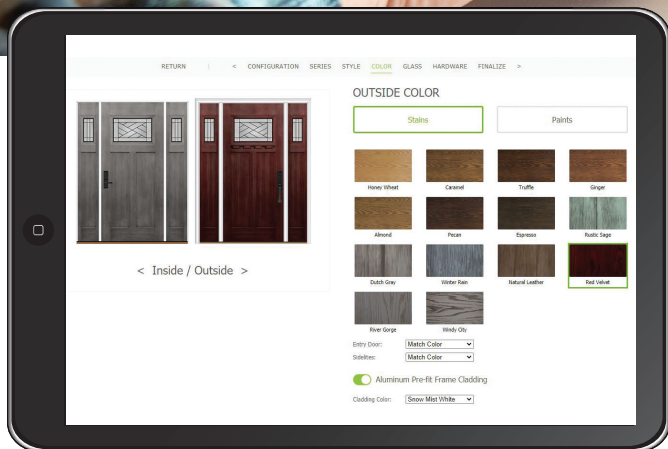
The first order of business was to fortify the existing house for greater fire resistance. Neolith sintered stone on a high-strength mortar bed replaces the wood siding and is coated to resemble Cor-Ten, and “a layer of fire resistive was added with a three-coat elastomeric stucco finish,” says Amy, in place of the original stucco. All new windows and doors and a landscaping refresh were also part of the scope of work.

A new guest pavilion, however, is the dream space. Atop a first-level guest suite, an elevated entertainment room takes full advantage of the view sweep with indoor and outdoor lounge areas. Materials for the pavilion will mirror the new skin of the main house, with an additional metal mesh screen to shade the terrace. “The design intent of the whole project was born of designing the pavilion first,” says Amy. “The aesthetic goal was to be as fine-boned as possible.”—*S. Claire Conroy*

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