

# RD

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN



FOR ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS  
OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES

VOL. 4, 2023

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# RD

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN



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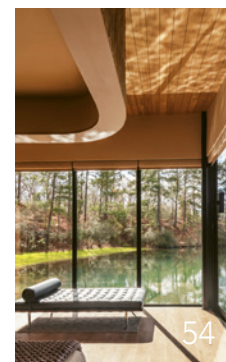
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On the Cover: Signal Hill by Bates Masi + Architects. Photo: Bates Masi + Architects





Welcome to Volume 4, 2023, of *Residential Design* magazine. We are the only national professional publication devoted to residential architects and custom builders. We're dedicated to providing you with expert insight and substantive information on high-end residential design and construction.

Our print edition is published every other month. And our newsletter is published twice a month. If you are not already a subscriber and would like to be, please go online to: [ResidentialDesignMagazine.com/subscribe](https://ResidentialDesignMagazine.com/subscribe).

If you have an exceptional single-family residential project you'd like us to write about, or an interesting and instructive business story you'd like to share with other professionals, please email [Claire@SOLAbRANDS.com](mailto:Claire@SOLAbRANDS.com).

We look forward to having you join our *Residential Design* community.

# RD

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

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## The Value of Nothing



I just read a rather depressing article in The Wall Street Journal. It was about an entrepreneur in a small town in Maine who runs a grain mill. The mill sources its raw ingredients from local farmers and supplies milled grains to other local businesses—a pasta maker, a pizza dough maker, and so on. This entrepreneur wants to develop an adjacent piece of property and double the size of her business. The property is in a desirable part of town and would serve as a catalyst for more employment and growth for the town.

The depressing part? The building would cost more to construct than the bank will appraise it for. The potential impact of this new development is not quantifiable by any measure that would result in full funding for the endeavor, so it's on hold for now.

Part of why the project's economics are so skewed (it's budgeted at \$7.4 million and appraised at \$2.4 million) is attributable to the increases in construction and material costs. Higher interest rates factor in as well. But the biggest problem is the lack of comparable properties in and around this small town in Maine—nearly an hour away from Portland and Bangor—to convince the banks to lend. It is a vicious circle—there will never be comps if there must be comps to build in the first place. There can be no eggs without ever hatching the first chicken.

This is a very tough problem for rural America, as the Journal story points out, but it's a perennial problem for custom residential—its clients, its architects, and its builders—in any part of the country. The cost to build a one-of-a-kind house of real design rigor, quality materials, and high performance is nothing a bank would ever underwrite in full. And thus, the best custom residential design is often confined to those clients who can fill the funding gap, or swallow the entire bill themselves.

Quality custom design has never been so far out of reach for even well-off professionals—more so if they want to build something specific to their needs. Take a look at the vacation home on page 21 that architects Charles Haver and Stewart Skolnick designed for themselves on Fishers Island, New York. They kept the footprint small because they didn't need a big house, yet its 1,200 square feet consumed \$1,500 a square foot for good materials, construction for coastal conditions, and the surcharge for bringing everything in from the mainland. Plus, it took the best custom builder in the area 18 months to finish. This math does not count design fees or the purchase price of the scenic double lot.

No bank would assess the house, with just one bedroom, as you or I would—especially after the architects donated a lot to the local land conservancy. Our appraisal system understands nothing about merit. It is amorally transactional and abysmally shortsighted. Consider the true worth of that donated lot that can never be built on. As the famous commercial says, it's priceless.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "S. Claire Conroy". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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



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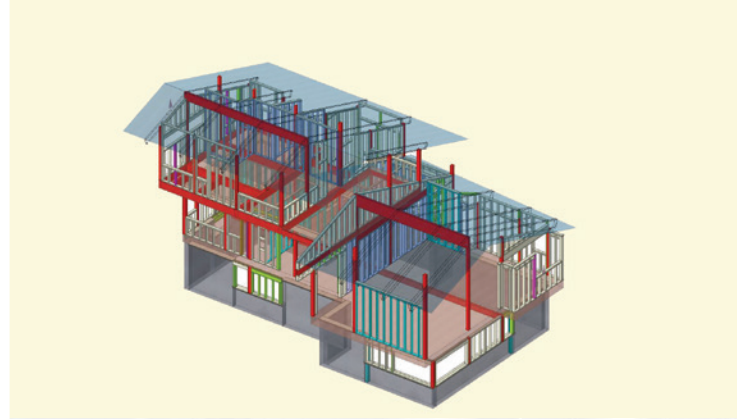
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# Notes from the AIA CRAN Forum in San Francisco

BY BLAKE H. HELD, AIA

In the sense that a forum is a venue for open discussion, CRAN takes its role in producing them seriously each year—and none more successfully than the CRAN Forum at the AIA Conference in San Francisco this June. As in past years, the talents of CRAN’s own John DeForest, AIA, and Luis Jauregui, FAIA, collaborated with RD magazine’s chief editor Claire Conroy to assemble a panel of architects willing to share their personal experiences in the field. The panel’s goal was to build a common understanding of the issues faced by all of us in residential architecture practice. And once again, Claire moderated for an engaging hour of conversation. The theme of “The Arc of Practice from Startup to Transition” included a panel of five architects, representing varying firm sizes, differing years of practice, and unique origin stories.

Visually, the differences were not as obvious. Being an assemblage of architects (I think that’s the right term—like a gaggle of geese or a murder of crows), the panel attire ranged from wearing all black to some black; and the work was presented as ostensibly contemporary in style. The point here was not to parse the merits of Traditional vs. Contemporary, as CRAN remains style neutral in its support of residential practitioners. Instead, the conversation was focused on tracing the journey of practice. In experience, each of these architects brought forth concepts, successes, and lessons from which we all can learn and to which we all can relate.

First to speak was Mahya Salehi, AIA, whose nascent firm, based in the San Francisco Bay Area, opened just before the pandemic hush. Yet her obvious talent and perseverance has led to a thriving young practice of seven, plus a canine muse. Oonagh Ryan, AIA, from Los Angeles, has had her practice for nine years. Each collaborates with a small cohort of architects and designers. John Maniscalco, AIA, and Josh Aidlin, FAIA, represented larger firms and longer experience in practice, while Anne Mooney, FAIA, whose practice operates in both Los Angeles and Salt Lake City, talked of balancing a teaching career alongside the practice she shares with her spouse.

The key to the success of this forum was the invitation, at the start, for audience members to contribute to the conversation. The panel discussion quickly evolved into a true open forum with ideas and experiences shared equally in dialogue with the audience. For the attendees curious about what CRAN is, there was no better introduction. CRAN exists to strengthen the conversation around residential design.

And the conversation continues, next under the backdrop of the Wasatch Mountain Range, as the AIA Custom Residential Architects Network convenes in Salt Lake City and Park City, Utah, from October 11 to 15, 2023, for the annual national CRAN Symposium. This year’s theme is “Living in the West, Building in the West.”

The symposium will meet at Le Meridien / Element Salt Lake City Downtown with presentations from nationally recognized architects, planners, and practice management experts. Attendees will also spend two afternoons touring notable residential projects in the Salt Lake Valley’s historic neighborhoods, as well as mountain cabins and ski-in properties in Park City and Powder Mountain resorts.

The AIA CRAN Symposium is the recognized residential design event bringing together residential architects, product and system suppliers, and emerging professionals to share knowledge and expertise. Registration and full program details will be available in late July at the AIA CRAN website. Come join us to share and learn from each other!



Photo: Courtesy AIA CRAN

Architects (left to right) Anne Mooney, Josh Aidlin, John Maniscalco, Oonagh Ryan, and Mahya Salehi joined RD editor Claire Conroy at the CRAN Forum.



# Advancing the *Art* of Timber Construction







The team at Birdseye especially loves working for other creatives. The 2022 Annex is exhibition and workspace for sculptor Richard Erdman. Photos: Michael Moran Photography



other builders and architects, we'll be able to take opportunities as they come along. Maybe they will want to use our woodshop. Our market is not that big. We learned a long time ago that if we adopt a competitive attitude, we confine ourselves to a niche market. We are willing to take on anything interesting that looks to add value."

For the client, that means you don't have to take the whole Birdseye package. Birdseye the builder will construct houses by other architects, and Birdseye the architect will design houses for other builders to construct. And a client's builder can turn to Birdseye for anything on its menu of individual services, including site work, metalwork, and the aforementioned woodwork.

So far, this à la carte approach has kept the company, now an ESOP, busy. And its size offers upward mobility in a variety of trade and professional areas. Always reaching for the best execution in craft and design tends to attract the people who care about doing great work—learning more and stretching themselves. Brian sums it up: "We want to work in cool places, with cool people, on cool projects."

### Hammer in Hand

Brian, who grew up in Michigan and worked at large firm Quinn Evans after completing architecture school, made his way east to learn the craft of building. Vermont, with its strong artisan tradition, was a natural destination. "I didn't want to go back into the office environment—into the monoculture of an architecture office," he recalls. "I wanted to understand how to build. I wanted my hands acquainted with a hammer. There's a history of design-

## The Familiar Made Unique

BIRDSEYE  
RICHMOND, VERMONT

It's not easy to be a great custom builder, able to execute the most challenging handmade detail, and it's no walk in the park to design award-winning houses for the country's most educated and sophisticated clients. Each is so difficult, in fact, that it's extremely rare to find a design-build firm bringing their A game to both disciplines. Typically, one side of the business will outshine the other, revealing the weaker link in the chain. Located in Richmond, Vermont, design-builder Birdseye has been doing both for decades, reaching new heights with each successive project.

The custom building side of the company has been at it for nearly 40 years and the design side for 27. With 70 employees, it's not a small operation, and yet it manages to stay nimble with



Brian Mac heads up Birdseye's design division.

a culture of cooperation with other builders, architects, and artisans. Says Brian Mac, FAIA, the company's head of design and chief spokesperson, "We try to be friends with everybody. We figure if we can build a community with





Team members: Top row, left to right: Brian J. Mac, FAIA; Andrew Chardain, AIA; Helen Worden; Peter Abiles, AIA. Bottom row, left to right: Brennen Donnelly, Assoc. AIA; Mike Casey, AIA; Will Lones, Assoc. AIA; Tyler Whalen, Assoc. AIA. Not pictured: Jeff Kamuda, AIA; Adefarakan Oluwapelumi

“We don’t hire for the project, we hire for the workload. Because I’ve gone through so many cycles in the economy, I know that while we’re busy now, there were times when we were struggling to get work.”

And that’s part of the resilience a design-build model offers residential professionals—one side of the house can smooth bumps in business for the other. Birdseye’s construction side also has a property management division to service the houses it builds. Even in recessions, houses need care and attention. This is especially true of second homes, which comprise about half of the company’s project portfolio.

If a local slowdown were to hit Vermont, the architecture division is prepared to work further afield and has designed projects in the Hamptons and Rhode Island. “We have a really cool project going in Columbus, Indiana,” Brian notes. “We’re working with another design-build firm and they’re doing the drawings. I see those types of collaborations as an opportunity. We would be open to taking on a project in, say, California. But, on the building side, it’s

build in the Mad River Valley—a legacy of craft and construction.”

Brian worked for a residential construction company for a couple of years before meeting Birdseye owners Jim Converse and John Seibert while playing hockey. Jim and John had been friends and business partners since graduating from the University of Vermont. “Like

everything here, the idea of opening an architecture division was very organic,” says Brian. “So that’s what I did 27 years ago. Right now, we have seven full-time people on the architecture side—five licensed ones, two trying to get licensed, and two interns for the summer.

“We’re trying to establish a strong culture around the workload,” he adds.



Birdseye designed the award-winning 2020 Field House in South Kingstown, Rhode Island, to reinforce the clients’ connections to the lush landscape.



Photos: Michael Moran Photography



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Cunningham Quill Architects | Anice Houchander Photography



Photos: Jeff Clarke



Completed in 2005, the craft-intensive Hill Section Home was a whole-house remodel. Located in downtown Burlington, Vermont, the house references local history and Japanese influences.



difficult to take people out of our region and away from their families.”

Supporting the private lives and diverse interests of its employees has been a priority at Birdseye since Day One. “When I started on the building side, the company worked four 10-hour days and took Fridays off. We’ve been doing it as a company for 40 years,” Brian explains. “It made sense from a construction standpoint, that the painters or other trades could come in on Friday. Then our people have a weekday to go ski or whatever. They have one day

they can count on when the kids are in school and they can really get things done. We’re all pretty avid outdoors people here, we aren’t killing ourselves. If you are enjoying living here, you will bring your A game to work.”

#### Authorship and Authenticity

Is the best architecture determined by how recognizable the architecture firm is that designed it? Must it reflect a singular style or point of view that advances and innovates over time? Birdseye’s design work has certainly

evolved over the course of its nearly 30 years, but it also shows a willingness to explore different ideas and, gasp, different precedents. And then, sometimes, a client just wants something that looks like a barn.

For Birdseye Architecture’s part, they are on board for any project that will challenge them professionally and put them in the path of creative clients intent on building something meaningful. Maybe that barn will turn out to be a live-work studio, as was the case with the 2009 Music Barn, made from a

The 2020 Lathhouse in Sagaponack, New York, draws from the agrarian tradition of slatted structures that allow ventilation while providing shading.



Photos: Michael Moran



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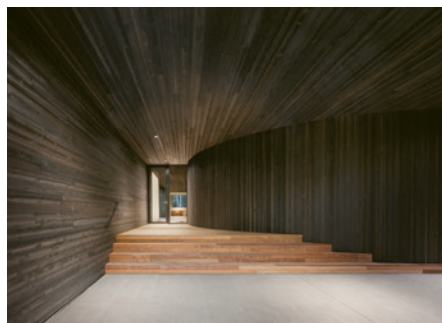






Photos: Michael Moran

Designed and built by Birdseye, the 2021 Terrapin house anchors its hillside site between forest and meadow, and sifts views both near and far.



reclaimed timber frame structure fitted out with professional recording equipment and acoustics.

Or maybe it will become the 2019 Bank Barn project, a Net-Zero retirement home for a cosmopolitan couple returning from a lifetime of work abroad. The Bank Barn garnered numerous regional and local awards and attracted extensive national press coverage. Its timeless, iconic shape resonates with nearly everyone, while advancing the discussion of what modern life can and should look like.

The 10 years between the two barn-inspired projects shows a big leap forward in Birdseye's confidence as architects. Although it's always tricky to discern why the recipe of architect, client, builder, site, and budget results

in such a marked departure from prior work, it's still possible to follow various breadcrumbs along the way that led to this point.

Brian cites the 2017 Woodshed project as a personal and professional epiphany, while graciously crediting the clients for setting the bar high. "The clients were from Boston and were well versed in architecture," he recalls. "They had a bigger library about architecture than I did. Their knowledge made me understand I don't know everything about architecture. They gave me an opportunity to come up with an idea that we may not have thought of. They became great collaborators. The project got a lot of press and won a lot of awards. And it settled in my head that there is an artfulness to what we can do—connecting the familiar with the unique. It helped give me a language around what we're doing. And it gave me a clearer path for how to move forward and how to talk about what we're doing."

From Woodshed and Bank Barn in rural Vermont to the 2020 Lathhouse in the Hamptons—another multiple award-winning, agrarian-modern house—the design language has grown

more fluent and melodic each time.

But just when you think you know what to expect from the firm, they come up with something completely different. The 2021 Terrapin house is nobody's barn—instead, it's a full-on machine for immersion in the verdant Vermont landscape. Look more closely at the portfolio, however, and you'll find its DNA in Mural House and Vista House.

"I look at our portfolio as our datum for where we are," Brian explains. "What are the common elements of what we are doing, and how do we take those and not make it look the same? How do we get to the unattainable level, while always trying to get there?"

"By building a team around you that can allow you to think that way," he says, answering his own question. "We have extraordinary talent around here that can take on the blocking of incredible ideas. And it enables a much bigger stance in taking on more ambitious projects."

### A Thousand Words

Yes, it's critical for an architecture firm to learn how to talk about its houses and to find a language for how it turns





Also designed and built by Birdseye, Bank Barn takes the ubiquitous New England structure and elevates its architectural rigor and its building performance. When its solar array is installed, it will achieve Net Zero.

and the photographs—they are the archive of our work. You walk away with a photograph, and that’s all you get. And I love working with photographers, because you see the work through others’ eyes and you see the art unfold before you.” It, too, tells the story of the house.



### Design Build Design

When skilled, dedicated players are involved, design-build can result in a virtuous circle, bringing out the best in all and keeping the endeavor authentic—in service to the client, appropriate to the place, but always with the goal of lifting everyone a little higher.

ideas and concepts into reality. The skill is important for speaking with clients, the press, building departments, and skeptical neighbors. And just as a house is a story of the family who lives there, the firm’s portfolio is the story of its trajectory in architecture.

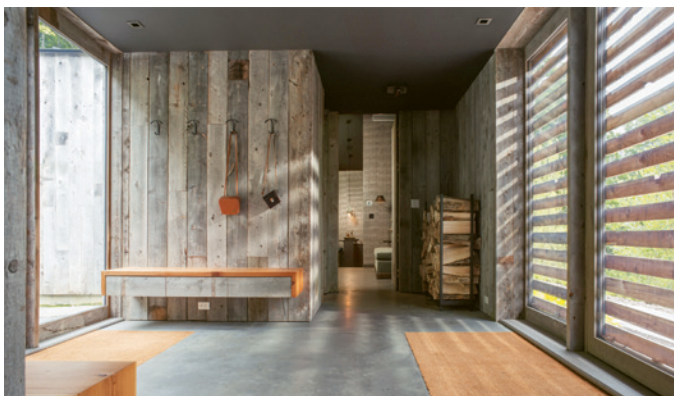
Part of Birdseye’s success derives from its eloquence with words and visual language, of course, but a key

element has been its commitment to documenting its portfolio with top-notch photography. It shines the light on what the firm has done and is doing, connecting all the dots into a sophisticated continuity.

“We typically will go into the project telling the client that we have to photograph it,” Brian says. “Because in the end, all we have are the drawings

“Rather than just being stylistic about architecture, we think about the craft of it,” Brian says. “We try to make sense of the vision, and how architecture can play into the art of living and really inspire people in the way they live. People long for the familiar but also something of this moment. It’s all about our editing process and how we bring that concept to life.”

—S. Claire Conroy



Pushed by the clients to innovate the design for this guest and entertainment space, Woodshed marked a breakthrough for the firm’s regional modernism.





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# Pointer Perch

FISHERS ISLAND, NEW YORK  
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It's possibly not a coincidence that this project evokes the statue of the world's most loyal dog, Hachiko, poised forever outside a Japanese train station awaiting the return of his master. Resembling a dog in a dutiful sit, this building on Fishers Island, New York, gazes toward the sea, its window wall focused on the horizon.







*This page:* One do-it-all room satisfies the couple's streamlined needs. The compact kitchen enjoys sunrises and sunsets through flanking windows.



It awaits the return by ferry of architects Charles Haver, AIA, Stewart Skolnick, AIA, and their dog Keeper from their full-time home and work in Connecticut. The weekend home, Pointer Perch, is named for Keeper's breed, and it's the culmination of years of learning how the family likes to live on vacation.

"We had a second home on Fire Island and it was low maintenance, really simple, and very small," Stewart explains. "We outgrew Fire Island and were looking for a different lifestyle. Real estate on Fire Island was very soft, so it took a long time to sell the house and that served us well, because we had time to think about what we really needed in our next house."

"It was a two-bedroom residence, and the truth was, we didn't have a lot of guests and the second bedroom was not really being used," he continues. "It made us evaluate what we really did need. And that was just a very simple one-bedroom with an open living space."



# My Vision: Balance windows & walls to create a gallery merging art & natural vistas.



Steven Marks | Project Designer | Marks & Marks Design | Oakland, CA

Nestled in Sonoma Valley, this getaway property was under renovation until wildfires took it back to the foundation. Rising from the ashes, this contemporary craftsman style home was reimagined with resiliency, a connection to nature and dramatic views captured through Kolbe's VistaLuxe® Collection windows and doors.

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“We knew we wanted a small house, and we knew we needed to be up high to get the views,” Charles adds. “That led us to the upside-down plan. It’s very unusual to have the public rooms weighted toward the top, but we were basically making a tower to look out.”

The “upside-down” floor plan places the living space, compact kitchen, and powder room

at the top level. The main level contains a single bedroom, full bath, laundry room, and the entry hall. And an open lower level functions as a mudroom and storage area for all the appurtenances of beachside life.

Exterior materials were selected with low-maintenance and durability first and foremost, but, of course, aesthetics were never far

Ornamental ceiling timbers add character to the spartan interiors. A handmade bronze stair rail with lamb’s tail flourish was a special splurge.

## Pointer Perch

Fishers Island, New York

**ARCHITECT/INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Charles M. Haver, AIA, and Stewart R. Skolnick, AIA, Haver & Skolnick Architects, Roxbury, Connecticut

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Charles M. Haver, AIA, Stewart R. Skolnick, AIA, Haver & Skolnick Architects in association with Jeff Edwards, Race Rock Garden Co., Fishers Island, New York

**BUILDER/CABINETMAKER:** Skip Broom, H P Broom Housewright, Hadlyme, Connecticut

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Kevin Chamberlain, DeStefano & Chamberlain, Fairfield, Connecticut

**MECHANICAL ENGINEER:** Delbert Smith, CES Engineering, Middletown, Connecticut

**PROJECT SIZE:** 1,200 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 3.1 acres

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** \$1,500 a square foot

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Robert Benson Photography

### KEY PRODUCTS

**CLADDING/MILLWORK/MOULDING/TRIM:** Alaskan yellow cedar

**COUNTERS/BACKSPLASH/SHELVES:** Honed Calacatta Oro Marble

**DECKING:** Custom ipe

**DISHWASHER:** Bosch

**ENTRY DOORS:** Custom mahogany by Fairfield County Millwork, Bethany, Connecticut

**FAUCETS:** Newport brass (kitchen), Phylrich, Sonoma Forge (outdoor shower)

**FLOORING:** Rift and quartersawn white oak

**HVAC:** Mitsubishi heat pumps

**LIGHTING:** Bevolo (exterior); Dennis & Leen, Paul Ferrante, Lantern Masters, Hacienda Lights

**LIGHTING CONTROL:** Lutron

**PAINTS:** Benjamin Moore

**RANGE:** KitchenAid

**REFRIGERATOR:** Bosch

**SINKS:** Franke (kitchen); Signature Hardware (primary); Cheviot (powder)

**TOILETS:** TOTO

**WALLBOARD:** Custom painted tulip poplar wallboards

**WASHER/DRYER:** Miele

**WATER FILTRATION:** Aquasana

**WINDOWS/FRENCH DOORS:** Loewen



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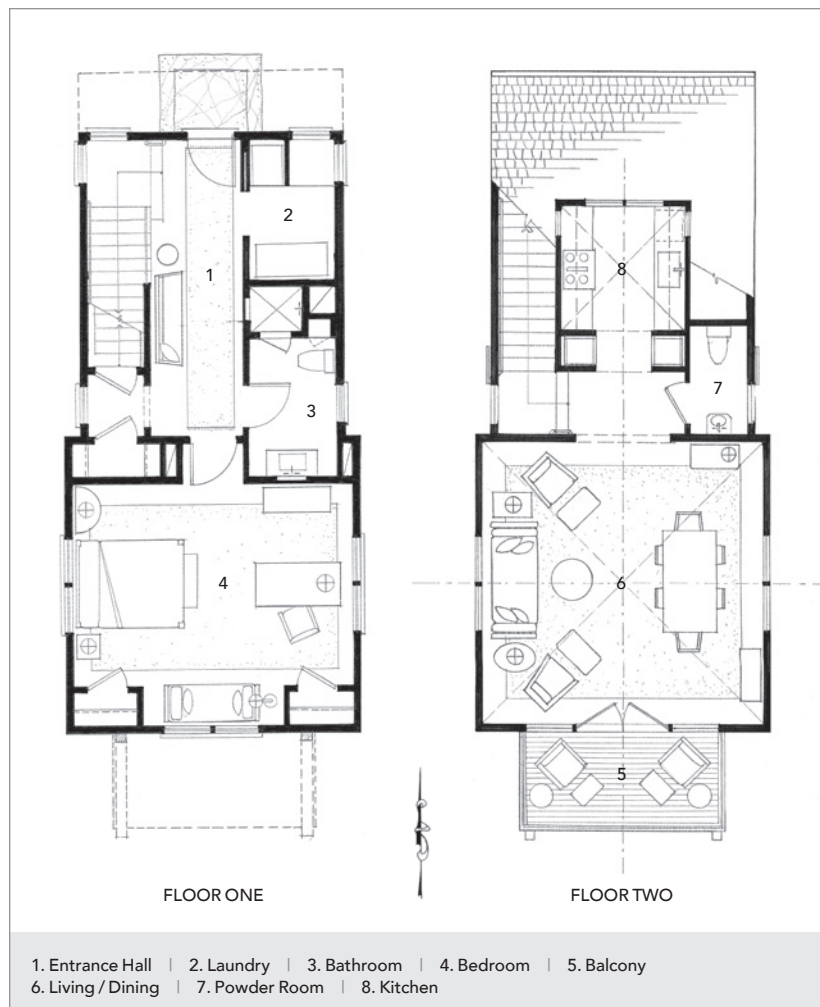
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from mind. “We chose Alaskan yellow cedar because we wanted a material we could use on both the walls and the roof,” says Stewart. “Usually people go with red and white cedar for roof and walls, but it never weathers the same. The only painted surfaces are the lower door and front door. The windows are aluminum clad in a dark gray. We had to deal with a whole list of coastal proximity code issues, and every week there is at least one day when you have gale-force winds. But we worked with a very conservative engineer and the structure is very robust. You don’t really feel those winds inside.”

The architects kept the interiors crisp and spare. Says Charles, who also runs an antiques business, “We wanted them to serve as a backdrop for European antiques and Modern art. The floors are white oak in a combination of rift and quartersawn, with just a water-based sealer. It looks like almost no finish on the floors. And the horizontal planking has a nickel gap. We had everything—including the furniture and artwork—in place on move-in day, as we do with our clients.”

Although the skinny house, as the locals call it, is a mere 1,200 square feet, the architects’ meticulous detailing took 18 months to build. “We know as architects, the first thing to do is find the best builder possible,” says Stewart. “Our builder has been working on the island for 30 years. But we asked him how long it would take to build, and he said nine months. We told him, double it.” Unsurprisingly, the architects were spot on.

—S. Claire Conroy







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# Cattle Ranch Remix

Montauk's centuries-old, rambling stone walls are reimaged at Signal Hill House.

BY CHERYL WEBER

ARCHITECT: BATES MASI + ARCHITECTS

BUILDER: MERIT BUILDERS

LOCATION: MONTAUK, NEW YORK

**From the approach,** Signal Hill's pair of low gabled "cottages" creates a picture of breezy simplicity befitting a rural marine environment. But they belie the program packed into this 6,000-square-foot family house at the east end of New York's Long Island peninsula. Paul Masi's sleights of hand allow the house to unfold into the terrain from its perch atop a rise, facing Lake Montauk in one direction and the Atlantic Ocean in another.

That dynamic setting is what attracted the New York City-based clients to this 5-acre property, originally part of the oldest cattle ranch in the U.S. In the early 1990s, the land was subdivided and individual parcels were sold off. One of the highest points in Montauk at an elevation of about 70 feet, this lot's 365-degree panorama takes in sunsets over the lake and sunrises toward the ocean. The location has a special resonance for Paul, too, because it is











close to the first house he designed in 1995 with the firm's founder, Harry Bates, who died last year at age 95.

Like most of the homes Bates Masi has designed in these parts, Signal Hill emphasizes a connection not only to the outdoors but to the indigenous landscape. Using Montauk's glacial deposits as a local character reference—remnant livestock pens built from glacial rubble are still seen in the fields—Paul organized the house around view corridors. The first floor is sunk into the sloping meadow, its central living space bracketed by stone retaining walls that extend east and west into the landscape. “To not be overbearing on the site, because the beauty was the





To temper the large home's impact on the prominent site, the architects burrowed the common spaces into the meadow. Above them, a shared deck divides the children's wing from the parents' realm.





site, we took the idea of burrowing into the hill,” says Paul, AIA. Because the first floor is largely concealed, “on approach it looks like a one-story house hovering above the tops of the grasses; as you get closer you see the expanse of the project and how it’s interacting with the landscape.”

The story line reveals itself gradually. From the entry on the east, the retaining walls direct visitors on a path through billowy grasses to a front deck and a vista straight through the glass-enclosed living volume, which reads as a void in the hill. The stone walls continue through the house, carving out space for the kitchen, living area, and dining room before extending into the backyard and tapering into the ground. There, a second deck connects to a lawn that drops down to the pool on the southwest. The wall extensions not only frame the lake view but also provide much-needed shelter from the wind. “We used weather data to map the wind direction,” Paul says. “The people living there previously said it was so windy you couldn’t even sit outside.”



Light woods complement the soft grays and earth tones of the stone walls and help keep the focus on the 365-degree views.

The glassy living area is bracketed on the north by a powder room, mudroom, and two guest bedrooms, and on the south by a den and deck canted toward the pool. The two cedar-shingled volumes hover atop the stone walls, breaking down the scale. Each wing has its own stairway to the second floor. Directly above the living area, a sweeping ipe roof deck connects the volumes, whose vaulted ceilings update the traditional structures they recall. The second story of the north pavilion aligns east-west to overlook the lake and Long



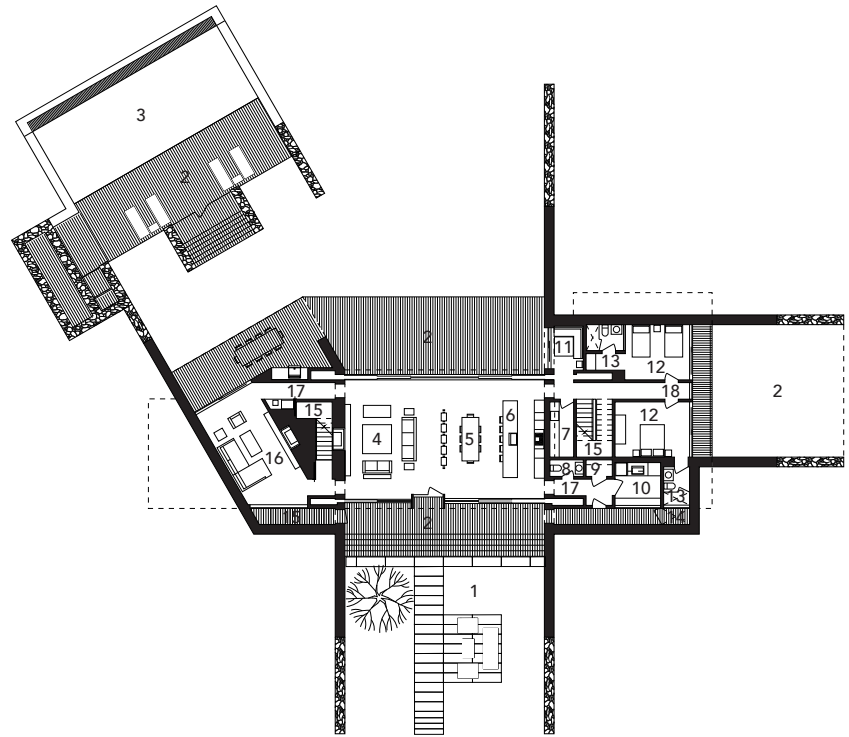
Island Sound. It houses three en-suite children’s bedrooms and a lounge and outdoor shower. In the south pavilion, the cantilevered primary suite, office, and private deck offer expansive views of the nature preserves, ocean, and lake.

“Up on top, the bedroom volumes are separated because their kids are older—there’s one volume for the three kids and another for the parents,” Paul says. “The deck unites them in the middle, and the land slopes up. You can walk right out to the landscape from the upper deck.”

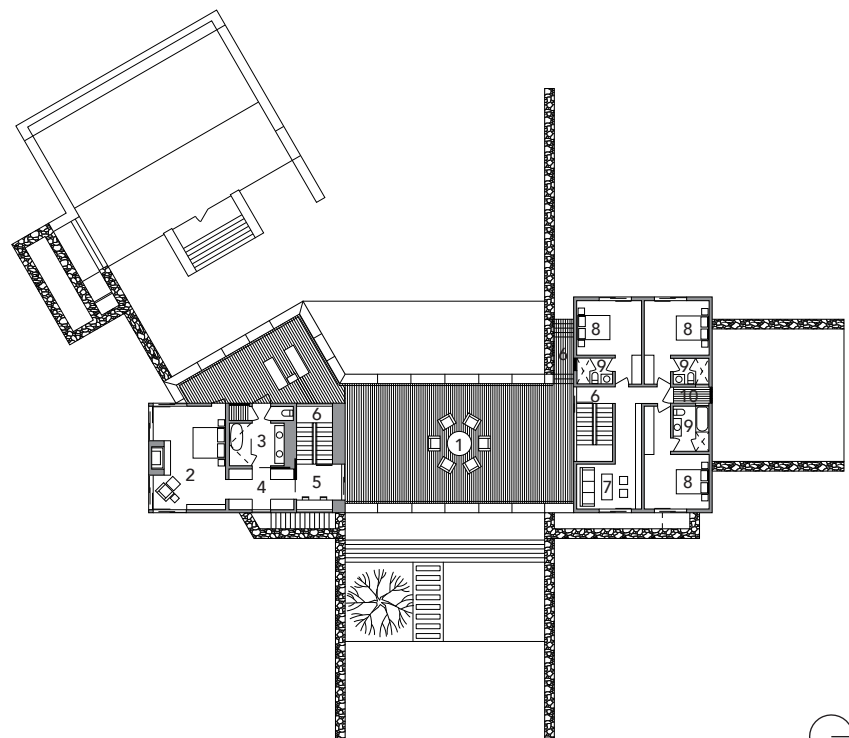
### Open Minded

Slicing through the first floor, the stone retaining walls became an anchoring point whose grays and tans echo the colors of the beach and boulders. But as is often the case, achieving their artless look took careful deliberation. “We wanted a random-stacked stone wall, something truly organic and not thought about, which was very difficult for the masons to do,” Paul recalls. “They kept repeating big, small, big. It took a lot of trial and error to get the effect we wanted. They started rotating crews, which helped a lot.”

Those walls set the tone for the interior’s design and material palette. White oak cabinetry, floors, and ceilings integrate with the architecture rather than calling attention to themselves, while keeping the focus on the outdoors. Likewise, lighting, switch plates, and registers are designed to disappear. Button electrical outlets above the kitchen counters, for example, read as simple circles drilled into the stone wall. Against it, the whitewashed oak cabinets appear almost as freestanding furniture. Here too, a row of structural columns holds up the second-floor deck, doubling as a see-through divider between the cooking/dining zone and living room. Fitted with open shelving, they create a place to display candles and family pictures.



GROUND-LEVEL PLAN | 1. Garden | 2. Deck | 3. Pool | 4. Living | 5. Dining | 6. Kitchen  
7. Pantry | 8. Powder Room | 9. Closet | 10. Mudroom | 11. Breakfast | 12. Bedroom  
13. Bath | 14. Outdoor Shower | 15. Stair | 16. Den | 17. Hall



UPPER-LEVEL PLAN | 1. Roof Deck | 2. Primary Bedroom | 3. Primary Bath | 4. Closet | 5. Office  
6. Stair | 7. Lounge | 8. Bedroom | 9. Bath | 10. Outdoor Shower





## Signal Hill

Montauk, New York

**ARCHITECT:** Paul Masi, AIA, principal in charge; Aaron Zalneraitis, AIA, project architect; James Willis, project team, Bates Masi + Architects

**BUILDER:** Scott Armusewicz, Merit Builders, Southampton, New York

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Jenna Chused, CHUSED & Co., New York, New York

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Christopher LaGuardia, LaGuardia Design Group, East Hampton, New York

**PROJECT SIZE:** 6,325 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 4.8 acres

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Bates Masi + Architects

### KEY PRODUCTS

**CABINETS:** Custom by Bates Masi + Architects

**COUNTERTOPS:** Stone Source

**DECKING:** Mahogany

**DISHWASHER:** Gaggenau

**FAUCETS:** Watermark

**FIREPLACE:** Stuv

**FLOORING:** Hakwood

**OUTDOOR GRILL:** Wolf

**OUTDOOR REFRIGERATOR:** Sub-Zero

**OUTDOOR SHOWER:** Outdoor Shower Company

**RANGE:** Wolf

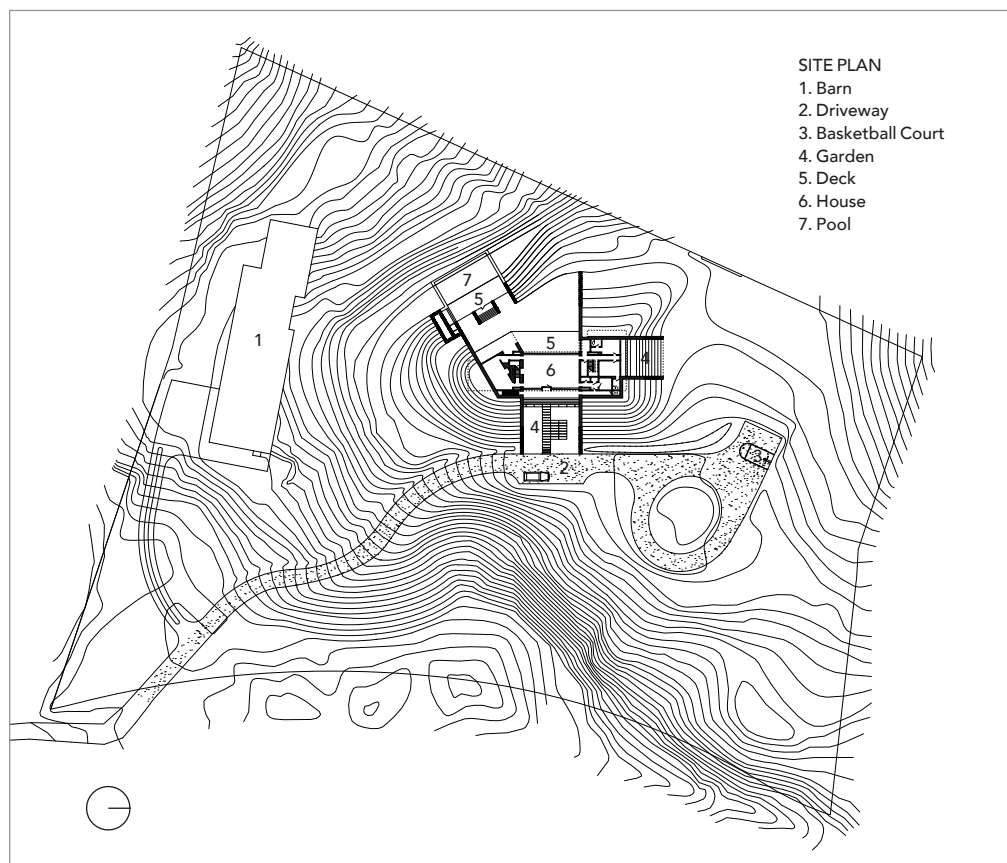
**REFRIGERATOR:** Gaggenau

**SINKS:** Custom, Elkay

**TOILETS:** TOTO

**TUB:** Signature Hardware

**WINDOWS:** Arcadia







Generous deployment of stone walls protects occupants from strong winds and allows full enjoyment of outdoor areas on the stunning site.

A sense of transparency infuses every room. “They are a family that really enjoys the outdoors,” Paul says. “Being able to have outdoor elements that connected through the house was important. The doors fully pocket on both sides of the living room, the dog runs in and out; the experience of living expands out to the landscape, and the living area becomes a covered pavilion between the two bedroom volumes.” Around the corner from the kitchen, the breakfast nook’s doors also pocket into the wall, opening it fully to the deck and backyard. The south portion of the deck is angled toward the pool, which was pushed to the side to keep it out of the living area’s sight

line. Partially built into a hill, the stone pool cabana is outfitted with pocketing glass doors, a sink and refrigerator, and a stone countertop that complements the landscape rubble.

A subtler touch is the baths’ black-framed shower enclosures that echo the house’s black-framed windows, further diminishing the distinction between inside and out. No doubt one of the delights in the children’s pavilion is the outdoor shower on the north side, where a roof cutaway opens it to the sky. Directly below, a deck extends out from the guest suites, and a pair of stone walls cuts down into the landscape, bringing natural light to a basement gym.






### Living in the Landscape

For all the character the stone offered, building on glacial till presented some challenges. “The excavation would expose a boulder the size of a car,” Paul says. “We had to make a decision right there whether to pull it, leave it, or roll it down the hill.” The clay soil was another hurdle. Although two 75-foot-deep soil borings failed to reveal any problems, the excavator hit a large vein of clay about 8 feet down, between the two test spots. “Building a house on top of clay that is holding water is risky because the soil can liquify, especially on top of a hill,” Paul says. “The engineer was worried that we were adding all this weight, with the stone walls, that would settle over time.” Although they considered putting the house on pilings, the solution was to use larger footings to disperse the load and add lightweight fill for drainage around the house. The structure is wood framed, with a bit of steel inserted for the 15-foot cantilever.

Signal Hill embodies the architect’s understanding of the setting and the history of the land. The house carves into the

natural hill but also frames the views in multiple directions, including across Long Island Sound to Connecticut. “The owners do a lot of entertaining and local fundraising, and the hilltop spot provides an ideal place for guests to experience the sunset,” Paul says. “One of the owner’s parents is a surfer; I see him in the ocean at 6 or 7 in the morning when the sun is rising. It was nice for us to design this architecture around this particular place for their lifestyle. It doesn’t overpower the landscape, but it’s impactful when you’re there.”

Bespoke but not self-conscious, the house is a convivial fit for this family’s daily life. “When we go by there, the doors are open and everyone is running in and out of the house, some with surfboards,” Paul adds. “It seems like it felt natural for them when they moved in. We’ve had clients who said they were nervous about damaging things or moving something out of place, but these clients didn’t skip a beat. To me, it seemed like they’d always lived there.” 





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# No Barriers

Three bold vacation homes deliver full immersion in nature.

BY CHERYL WEBER AND S. CLAIRE CONROY





## House at 9,000 Feet

INTERMOUNTAIN WEST  
MACKEY-LYONS SWEETAPPLE ARCHITECTS

**Aerodynamics don't often** figure into the design of single-family homes, but it was top of mind for House at 9,000 Feet, whose location experiences some of the strongest winds in the U.S. The home's eye-catching shape doesn't just deflect wind, however; its compressed oval form also grew from the site's 26-foot height restrictions and the wishes of the clients, who asked for something sculptural yet modest. "One of

the client couple wanted it to make a statement; the other person wanted it to fit in," says Brian MacKay-Lyons, FRAIC, Hon. FAIA. While the form says design with a capital D, the use of red cedar on both the exterior and interior recalls the humble barns in the valley below.

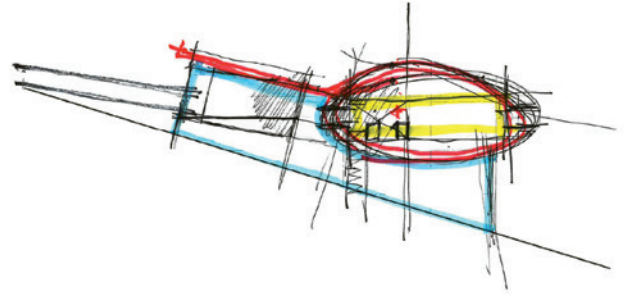
From the road you can see right over the roof. And what a view it is, of tilting mountainous terrain dotted



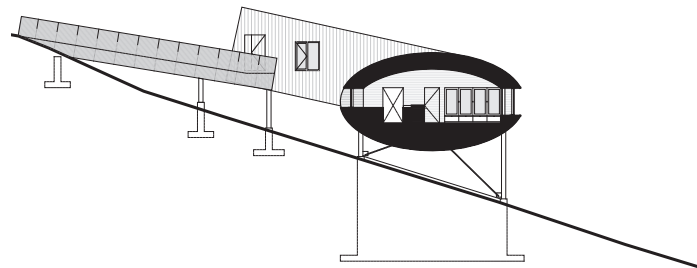




PARTI SKETCH



TRANSVERSE SECTION AT KITCHEN



The cocoon of a house is designed to contend with strong winds, 40-foot-deep snows, and blazing summers. It descends the slope from a top-side garage and entry to ground-level ski-in/ski-out access.







with pointy evergreens and layer upon layer of distant peaks and valleys. Alighting on the side of the steep mountain and reached by a bar-grate driveway ramp, the house's curved underbelly rests lightly on a splayed concrete cube and four steel posts.

The concrete acts as a shear wall, and the stilts were a way to deal not only with the precipitous downslope but with the region's snowfall, as much as 40 feet annually. "It's a flying building rather than a floating building, because getting concrete on top of the mountain is very difficult and expensive," Brian says. "The idea was to touch the land lightly and not have any more concrete than absolutely necessary."

Within the rectilinear streetside volume, the garage opens to a small mudroom, where a skylit metal-grate stairway drops down to the main living level—the big cedar-clad tube—and to two lower bedroom levels in the concrete cube. The ground floor is set up for



Interiors follow the aerodynamic clamshell shape of the exteriors, while also concealing various channels for utilities. Color-matched clear red cedar lines ceilings and walls, while blond clear white ash covers harder-working surfaces.





The home's clamshell shape forms "one big smile" of glass toward the views. A deep soffit controls the glare off the snow in winter and the strong sun in summer.

skiing in and out, and a fifth level housing an underground gym is currently being built beneath the bedrooms.

One hundred feet long, the home epitomizes the firm's eye for the exquisitely plain as well as their curatorial approach to panoramic views. The floor plan was arranged for one-level living when the couple is there by themselves: a central gathering space for cooking, dining, and living is flanked by the primary bedroom and a media room at the eastern end of the extruded tube, and a screened porch on the western end.

On the long south side facing the valley, Brian designed a clamshell-like opening inset with a glass wall for passive heating, and a continuous window seat that compresses the view for dramatic effect. The bench seat creates



a "Pac Man-shaped volume you sit in, which squishes the view," he says. "The 5-foot-tall window slot is one big smile that wraps around three sides of the project, from the sunset deck to the primary bedroom on the east."

Outside, the clamshell's soffit shades the seat, preventing the interior from overheating during the summer and mitigating glare from the winter sun re-



flecting off the snow. "That's where the clients hang out and watch the weather go around the building," Brian says.

As if the house emerged fully formed, the exterior and interior contours are identical, their respective curves clad in velvety, color-matched cedar. "One hundred percent of the space inside is the form on the outside," Brian says, summing up the design.





## Wood Work

Many of MLS's houses are wood-centric, and here too the soul of the interior comes from the architectural fit-out of

ash and cedar. What to use where was based on the wood's wearability: clear red cedar, a soft wood, for walls and ceilings; durable, blond clear white ash

for areas that take a beating, such as floors, cupboards, countertops, furniture, and built-in seating, including the foyer's boot bench.

The architects selected all the furniture and designed the rugs. "The interior isn't cluttered with stuff from the home show," Brian says. Rather, "it's like a helmet you're inside of, a landscape-viewing instrument." Pressed against the north wall, the galley kitchen has a 24-foot-long island encased in soapstone, which acts as a fireplace surround or "totem" facing the great room.

### House at 9,000 Feet

Intermountain West

**ARCHITECT:** Brian MacKay-Lyons, principal in charge; Matthew Bishop, project architect; Izak Bridgman, Alastair Bird, Isaac Fresia, Ben Fuglevand, Sawa Rostkowska, Diana Carl, Jesse Martyn, Lucas McDowell, Jennifer Esposito, project team, MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects, Halifax, Nova Scotia

**BUILDER:** Brigham Wilcox, Edge Builders, Salt Lake City, Utah

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** MacKay-Lyons Architects

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Blackwell Structural Engineers, Halifax, Ontario

**MECHANICAL ENGINEER:** Harris-Dudley Co., South Salt Lake, Utah

**ELECTRICAL ENGINEER:** BNA Consulting, West Valley City, Utah

**CIVIL ENGINEER:** Talisman Civil Consultants, Salt Lake City, Utah

**GEOTECH SERVICES:** Intermountain GeoEnvironmental Services, South Salt Lake, Utah

**PROJECT SIZE:** 5,500 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 4.3 acres

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Nic Lehoux

### KEY PRODUCTS

**ACCESSORIES:** Quadro, Boffi

**APPLIANCES:** Bosch, Whirlpool

**CABINETS:** White ash, plain sliced and book matched

**CEILING:** 1-by-2 Western red cedar shiplap, clear vertical grain

**COUNTERTOPS:** Cambria Kenmere, clear ash butcher block, black soapstone

**DOORS:** Loewen

**ENERGY:** Tesla Powerwall, hydronic in-floor radiant heat

**FIREPLACE:** Stuv wood-burning insert

**FIXTURES:** Quadro, Blanco, Catalano, Boffi, Kohler

**FLOORING:** Kahrs Ash Gottenburg

**FURNITURE:** PP Mobler, Cassina, Skagerak, Carl Hansen, Terassi, Walter Knoll

**GARAGE DOORS:** Northwest Door

**HARDWARE:** Emtek, SOSS, Richelieu, Blum

**LIGHTING:** Maset, Artemide, ALW, Lightheaded Lighting, Q-Tran LED, RAB Lighting

**PAINT:** Benjamin Moore, Navajo White

**SKYLIGHT:** Aladdin

**STEAM SHOWER:** Mr. Steam

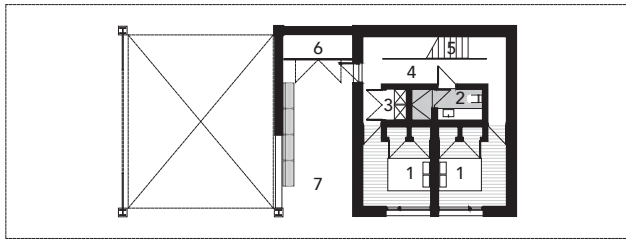
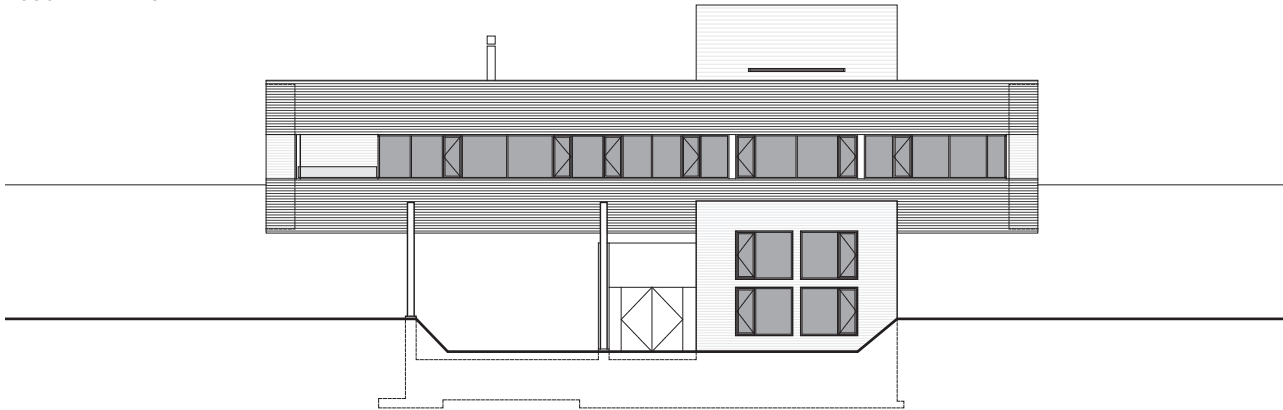
**TILE:** 1-by-2 colored glass tile

**WINDOW SHADES:** Lutron

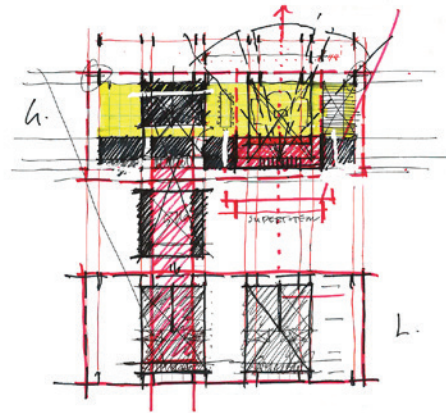
**WINDOWS:** Loewen timber curtain wall



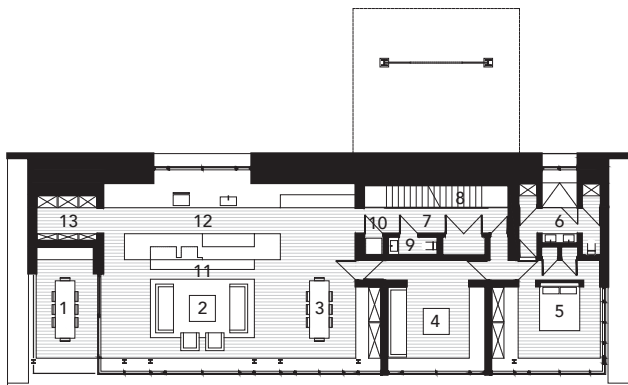
SOUTH ELEVATION



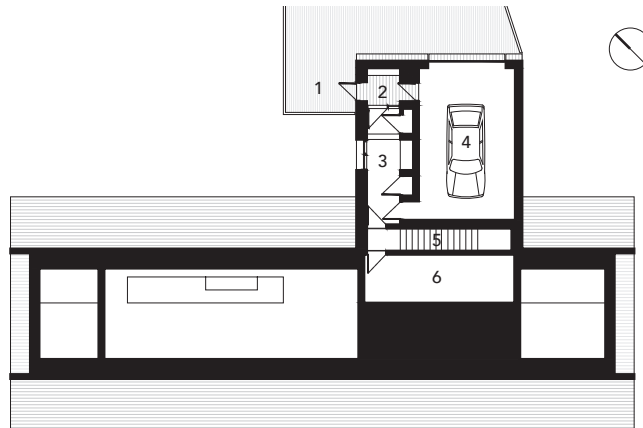
GROUND FLOOR PLAN | 1. Bedroom | 2. Bathroom | 3. Storage  
4. Hall | 5. Stair | 6. Mechanical Storage | 7. Ski in/out



CONCEPT SKETCH OF FLOOR PLAN



MAIN FLOOR PLAN | 1. Covered Deck | 2. Living | 3. Dining | 4. Media  
5. Primary Bedroom | 6. En-Suite Bath | 7. Hall | 8. Stair | 9. WC |  
10. Laundry | 11. Hearth | 12. Kitchen | 13. Pantry



UPPER FLOOR PLAN | 1. Entry Bridge | 2. Covered Porch | 3. Mudroom  
4. Garage | 5. Stair | 6. Mechanical Room





Salt Lake City builder Brigham Wilcox assembled a “crackerjack crew” of carpenters who could build the radiused ceiling and dedicate months to the finish work at this remote site. Rather than “fetishizing craft,” in Brian’s words, the design’s details are mostly deployed to hide things away. “The lines of the curved ceiling are pretty unforgiving; there are mirror-image channels for the lights and HVAC venting, and the grooves had to hit at the same spot on both sides—one 8 feet off the center line to the right, and one 8 feet off the center line to the left,” Brigham says. “The finish carpentry had to be extremely symmetrical, so the layout matched across the ellipse.”

Outside, 2-by-6 small-knot cedar wraps the entire circumference of the house, which was framed with radiused steel. The cedar boards were fastened atop a galvanized channel

“The 5-foot-tall window slot is one big smile that wraps around three sides of the project, from the sunset deck to the primary bedroom on the east.”

—Brian MacKay-Lyons,  
FRAIC, Hon. FAIA

exoskeleton and white PVC waterproofing membrane, and finished with a galvanized-steel knife edge. “It became sculpture, not just structure,” Brigham says.

It is sculpture, yes, but also a vividly lived experience—everything is calculated to express the connection to the vast landscape. That quality is reinforced with the building’s curved belly—a manifestation of Brian’s visceral appreciation

for inhabiting the underside of buildings on stilts. “I grew up playing in shavings under wooden boats in construction in shipyards,” he says. “If you have to build up high, you may as well make a thing out of that space between the land and building, where you don’t see any sky. It’s my favorite place in a lot of our projects. This curve shape is a lot like one of those boat hulls I might have known as a child. It’s about an archetypal experience more than about a shape or a look.”

Indeed, this viewfinder of a home is swept up in its setting. The convergence of materials and geometries creates a cocoon-like abode that nevertheless invites the outdoors in, and vice versa through the built-in ski ramp. Like many MLS projects, its carefully considered moves place House at 9,000 Feet lightly on the land, but also in direct communication within nature—an ideal stance for any vacation getaway.—Cheryl Weber





## Sea Ranch Meadow II

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SONOMA, CALIFORNIA

TURNBULL GRIFFIN HAESLOOP ARCHITECTS





“At Sea Ranch it’s about being a good neighbor to the site and the context you’re building in.”

—Eric Haesloop, FAIA



**The spare richness** of the early Sea Ranch houses is evident at Sea Ranch Meadow II, which came along last year, some six decades after Charles Moore, William Turnbull Jr., Lawrence Halprin, and their cohorts began building this outpost along Sonoma County’s northern coastline. Carrying out the ethos of design driven by nature, the timber home’s sloping rooflines and stepped floor plan rise and fall with the land that has watched it all unfold.

Part two of a small weekend compound Turnbull Griffin Haesloop Architects designed for the client 15 years ago, this newest piece was tailored for the empty-nester couple. Their intent was to turn the original 1,100-square-foot house and guest house over to their kids, who have growing families of their own. The architects were happy to add the next layer to the property, although it meant undoing some of their previous careful work to block views between the lots.





“Originally, we had built the guest house to screen our clients’ view of anything the neighbor might be building,” says Eric Haesloop, FAIA. “The person who owned it proposed a big, ugly house on that site.” So when his clients later purchased that still-empty lot, they puzzled over how to make a connection. “We thought, ‘Oh no, we overachieved—we did too good a job of blocking the lot,’” Eric says. “Then we realized we could cut a passage through the guest house, like a gatehouse, that links the properties by a footpath.”

Indeed, the resulting pathways create a cohesive whole. By remov-

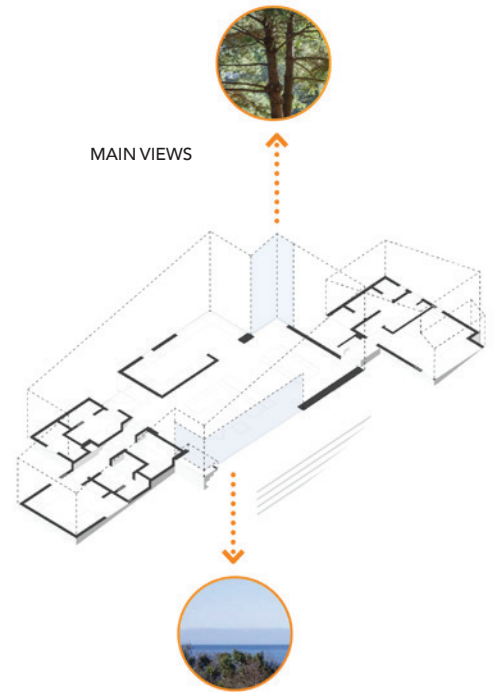


ing a hot tub in the central breezeway of the bar-shaped guest house, the architects created a decked path that cuts straight through the guest house and continues on to the new dwelling and its parking lot.

“At Sea Ranch it’s about being a good neighbor to the site and the context you’re building in,” Eric says. The 2,000-square-foot house and garage are made of three simple, shed-roof volumes. The large central roofline tracks the slope east to west across the lot and the tree line behind it, while the primary bedroom and detached garage roofs tilt up toward the meadow. The land’s natural contours are expressed inside, too. The foyer

steps up to a large living and dining room. Straight ahead on the south, a 22-foot-long wall of sliding glass opens to a stone patio and the bucolic meadow. East of the living space, the semi-detached primary suite sits a few steps higher, and a bunk room on the west is slightly sunken.

“It’s a pretty simple vacation house program,” Eric says. “While the other house has a very open kitchen, they wanted a separate kitchen because they liked the idea of not having to clean up immediately. A breakfast nook in the corner gets eastern light, and the great room, with a big TV at one end, is a place for all the generations to spend time.



Revisiting your own work is never easy as an architect, particularly when you did it too well the first time around. But, in adding onto this family compound in Sea Ranch, Turnbull Griffin Haesloop managed to sort out the site plan challenges, while evoking what the clients loved best about the previous buildings.





Cedar shiplap ceilings nod to the material of choice at Sea Ranch. In the kitchen, they stop just short of a skylight. Neolith counters and dark limestone floors confer the durability a family compound requires.

The owners' bedroom is raised up a bit, and then the bunk room on the opposite side of the house is for grandkids.”

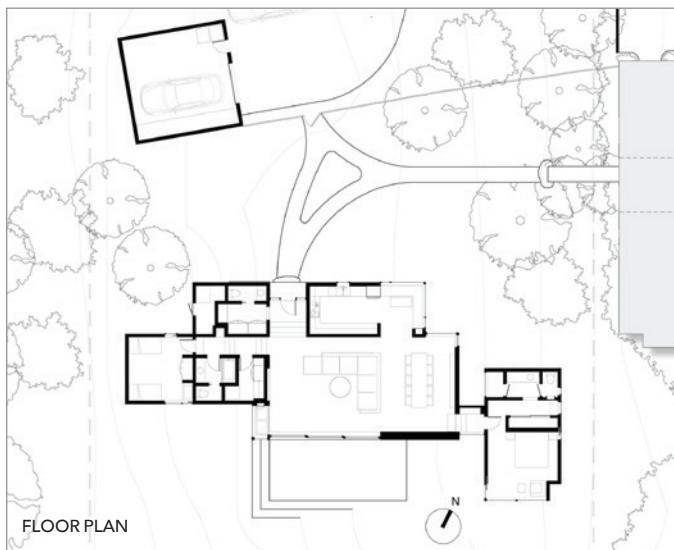
### Light Craft

In every room, the architects made poetic use of sunlight. For example, an operable skylight in the living room's southwest corner deposits a shaft of light that acts as a sundial, tracking the time of day. This wash of light balances light from the large bank of sliding doors on the south, along with two windows placed diagonally in the great room. A set of vertical windows on the northeast corner frames the property's tall firs, while the horizontal window seat on the southwest takes in a patch of blue ocean.

The light throws the three-dimensional wood ceilings into relief. Super-durable red cedar has become the exterior cladding of choice for Sea Ranch, Eric says, and here it reappears as shiplap on the sloped ceilings—a throwback to old rowboats. “The first house had beautiful cedar ceilings the owner really liked, but it was all exposed construction with insulation above,” he says. “Now with energy codes and aiming for Net Zero and more efficient construction, this roof is super-insulated, with a foot-deep space above it filled with spray foam. We wanted to have a crafted ceiling, like we did with the exposed construction. We do build houses differently now than 15 years ago; it was fun to think about a different way to give expression to this tactile quality.”

Sourcing all that cedar was not easy. To avoid splicing, builder Eric Jackson ordered 20-foot-long, 1-by-6-inch clear vertical-grain



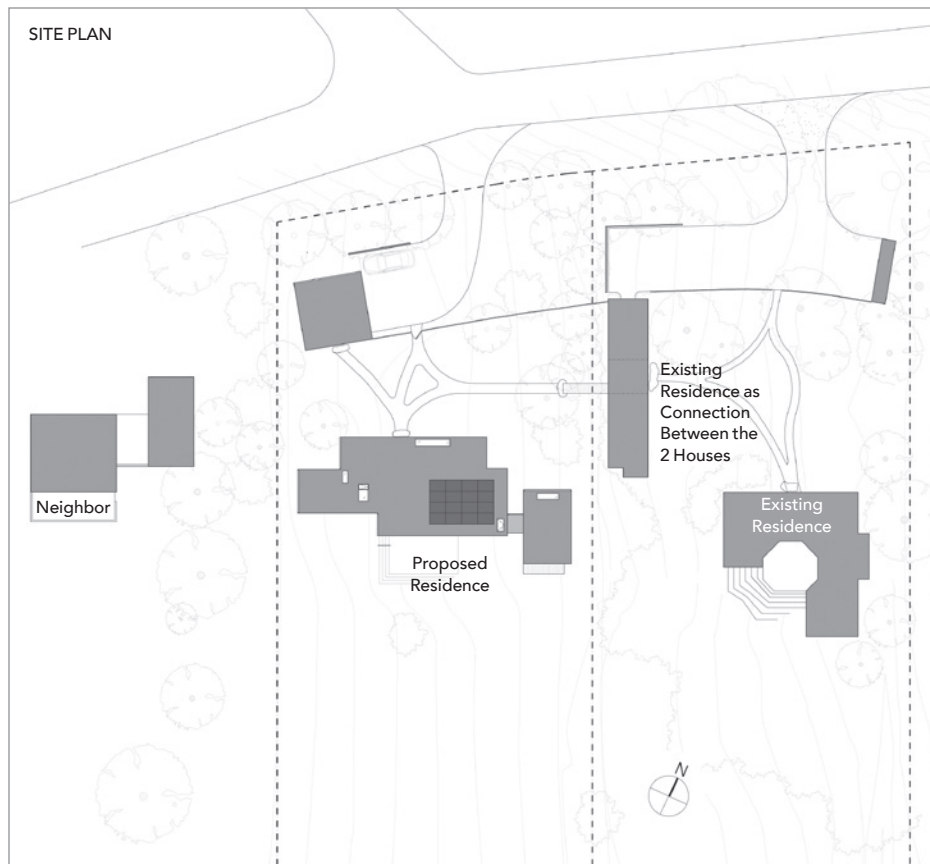


tongue-and-groove cedar boards with a saw texture and square edge. “We purchased all the clear logs available in Northern California and still needed more,” says the builder. “It’s hard to get that much clear cedar in 20-foot lengths. Our lumber supplier in Healdsburg contacted his Canadian sources. As logs were coming out of the forest, they

pulled some and shipped them down to us, which took about three months.” The continuous shiplap ceiling ties the dining room in the main living space to the enclosed kitchen, where it stops short of a skylight slotted along the outer wall. And the wood ceilings stop 1/16th of an inch short of the finished Sheetrock walls, creating a shadow line.

Window placement is all about capturing highly specific and edited slices of view. The main bedroom is for the senior generation, with bunk accommodations for the grandchildren. Rooms change level to follow the topography of the site.





### Wood for Thought

“I love the old Sea Ranch houses,” Eric says. “We’re working on an iconic condo with 10-by-10 posts and beams. That’s not how you build today, but we’re looking at how and where we use wood.” In addition to the ceilings, he used it to line discrete spaces set into crisp, light-washed walls, such as the breakfast nook, the primary bedroom bay, and the living-room-to-bedroom connector, where built-in niches hold the owners’ collection of Japanese objects.

On a visit to a lumberyard, the design-focused couple claimed a strikingly textured log for their bed headboard. They also worked with the architects and a local metalsmith to design and build the walnut dining table and sideboard from fallen trees and sustainably harvested slabs.

In keeping with a nature-first ethic, materials are plain but perfectly detailed: white oak floors for

## Sea Ranch Meadow II

Sonoma, California

**ARCHITECT:** Eric Haesloop, FAIA, and Mary Griffin, FAIA, principals in charge; Yan Huang and Sara Dewey, AIA, project team, Turnbull Griffin Haesloop, Berkeley, California

**BUILDER:** David Hillmer, Empire Construction/Pioneer Construction; and Eric Jackson, White Barn General Contracting & Electrical, both of Gualala, California

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Owner, with Turnbull Griffin Haesloop

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Joni L. Janecki & Associates, Santa Cruz, California

**METAL FABRICATOR:** Joseph Farais, 3D Studio, Oakland, California

**TABLETOPS:** Ed Clay, Carneros Studios, Napa, California

**WOOD SLABS:** Evan Shively, Arborica, Petaluma, California

**PROJECT SIZE:** 2,038 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 0.6 acre

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** David Wakely

### KEY PRODUCTS

**CLADDING:** Western red cedar

**COOKING VENT HOOD:** Miele

**COOKTOP/RANGE:** Wolf

**COUNTERTOPS:** Neolith

**DECKING:** 6x6 redwood blocks

**DISHWASHER:** Miele

**ENTRY DOOR HARDWARE:** Baldwin

**EXTERIOR LIGHTING:** BK Lighting

**FAUCETS:** Dornbracht, VOLA

**FOUNDATION:** Concrete slab on grade

**INSULATION:** DuPont™ Styrofoam™ Brand Cavitymate™, Icynene

**INTERIOR LIGHTING:** EST Lighting, Milpitas, Ingo Maurer

**LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS:** Lutron

**OUTDOOR GRILL:** Wolf

**PAINTS/STAINS/COATINGS:** Benjamin Moore, custom white

**PASSAGE DOOR HARDWARE:** Emtek, Omnia, Green Street

**PHOTOVOLTAICS:** Sol-Ark inverter, Simpliphi batteries, LG wall panels

**REFRIGERATOR:** Sub-Zero

**ROOFING:** Owens Corning Supreme 3-Tab shingle, Onyx Black

**SINKS:** Berlin, Duravit

**SKYLIGHTS:** CrystaLite

**THERMAL BARRIER:** PREPRUFE, W.R. Grace, BITUTHENE, Adcor, AQUAFIN

**TOILETS:** TOTO

**TUBS:** Kohler

**VANITIES:** Duravit

**VENTILATION:** Panasonic

**WASHER/DRYER:** LG

**WINDOW SHADING SYSTEMS:** Hunter Douglas

**WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS:** Fleetwood

**WINDOWS:** Milgard

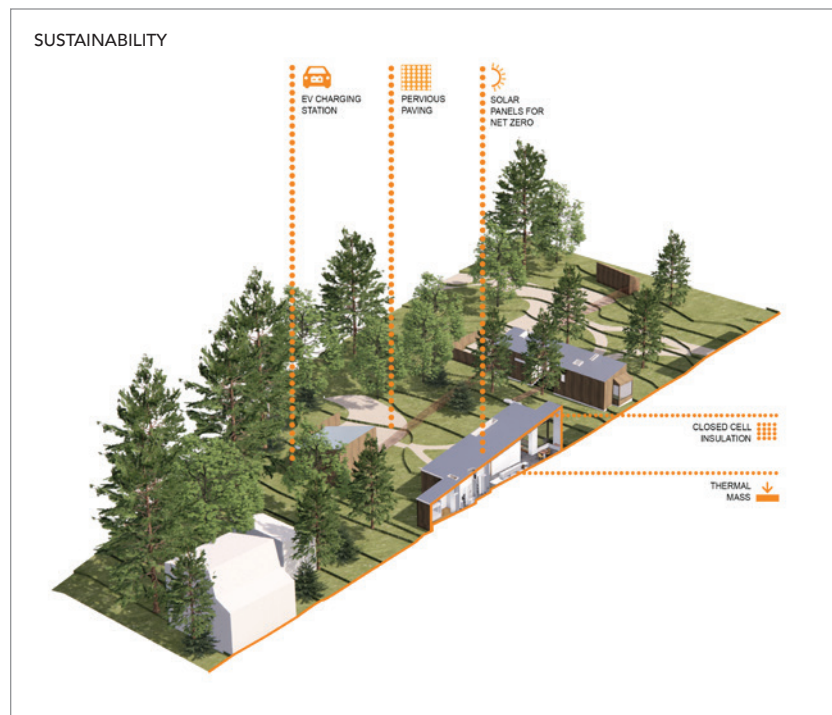




the bedrooms, painted wood cabinets, durable Neolith countertops, and dark limestone floors set in a Japanese pattern that's characterized by random angled cuts. The radiant-heated stone provides insulated thermal mass to maintain a comfortable indoor temperature. And the long, sloping roof is an ideal surface for the photovoltaic array, which generates surplus power.

Small or large, none of these thoughtful gestures is lost on the owners. "They are effusive about living here," Eric says. "Part of what's so satisfying as an architect is that the owners are so visually aware and have a very sophisticated design sense. Sometimes the details don't get valued, but in this case they are fully appreciated."

—Cheryl Weber







## Riverside Lake House

RIVERSIDE, TEXAS  
COLLABORATIVE DESIGNWORKS

**The COVID pandemic** reoriented our allegiance from city syncopations to the soothing sounds of nature—the pulsating bleats of tree frogs on a misty evening. James Evans’ clients had owned this remarkable property about 90 minutes outside of Houston for 25 years, occupying a lackluster house high above the smaller of its two private lakes. But just before the pandemic hit, they had decided to move forward on a new house with better access to the biggest and deepest lake.

During design development, they pushed James to locate the house closer and closer to the water, resulting in a house that isn’t just on the lake but *of* the lake (to borrow from Frank Lloyd Wright). The small glass house appears to alight on its shimmering surface as a seagull would, dipping in for the catch of the day and a quick sip of its spring-fed water.





“When I first drove onto the property, it was unbelievable,” James recalls. “It’s just far enough from Houston that you feel you’re going somewhere. And once you’re there, it feels like you’re out in the country. It was a former limestone quarry and when they were digging the lake, they hit a natural spring. The water is phenomenal.”

The clients had just wrapped up “an extensive restoration of a historic house” in Houston, says James, and were ready for something very different in their new retreat. “They had recently seen Philip Johnson’s Glass House and Mies van der Rohe’s Farnsworth House when the river floods.”

They had also decided to preserve the original house on the smaller lake as guest quarters, freeing the architect to keep the new project compact, emphasizing its outdoor connections rather than interior space.







The 100-acre property enjoys enviable privacy, although neighbors have been known to fish the lakes from time to time. Nonetheless, the clients were on board for an unfettered connection to nature.

As such, it contains just one dedicated bedroom, a den that can flex as a guest room, two full baths, a mudroom/laundry area, and a great room with kitchen, living, and dining. There's a glassy perimeter topped by the butterfly roof, and a curving brick-clad core that provides a bit more privacy from the shoreline.

The butterfly roof was a flight of fancy, but it solved some practical problems. "When we got to that point in looking at the design details, we showed our clients 10 or 12 different rooflines," he says. "This one just seemed like the right decision. When the roofs were flat it felt like they closed the house in too much. The modified butterfly gave you the views, the shade, and sat on the landscape in a comfortable way."





Materials were chosen with budget and Texas humidity in mind, including LVT flooring and thermally modified wood for ceilings, soffits, and decking.





The clients, who admire the craft of Frank Lloyd Wright houses, sought out the walnut accents in the primary bedroom and bath. Roman brick, set in horizontal strips, traces the floor plan's core.

Managing the size of the house was key to its success. Although eye-catching for sure, it doesn't overwhelm its setting. Instead, the walls of glass facing the water mirror reflections of the lake—except at night when interior lights reveal the views inside. Not everyone could abide such transparency in their home, but the clients knew what they were getting into, says James, and were solidly on board.

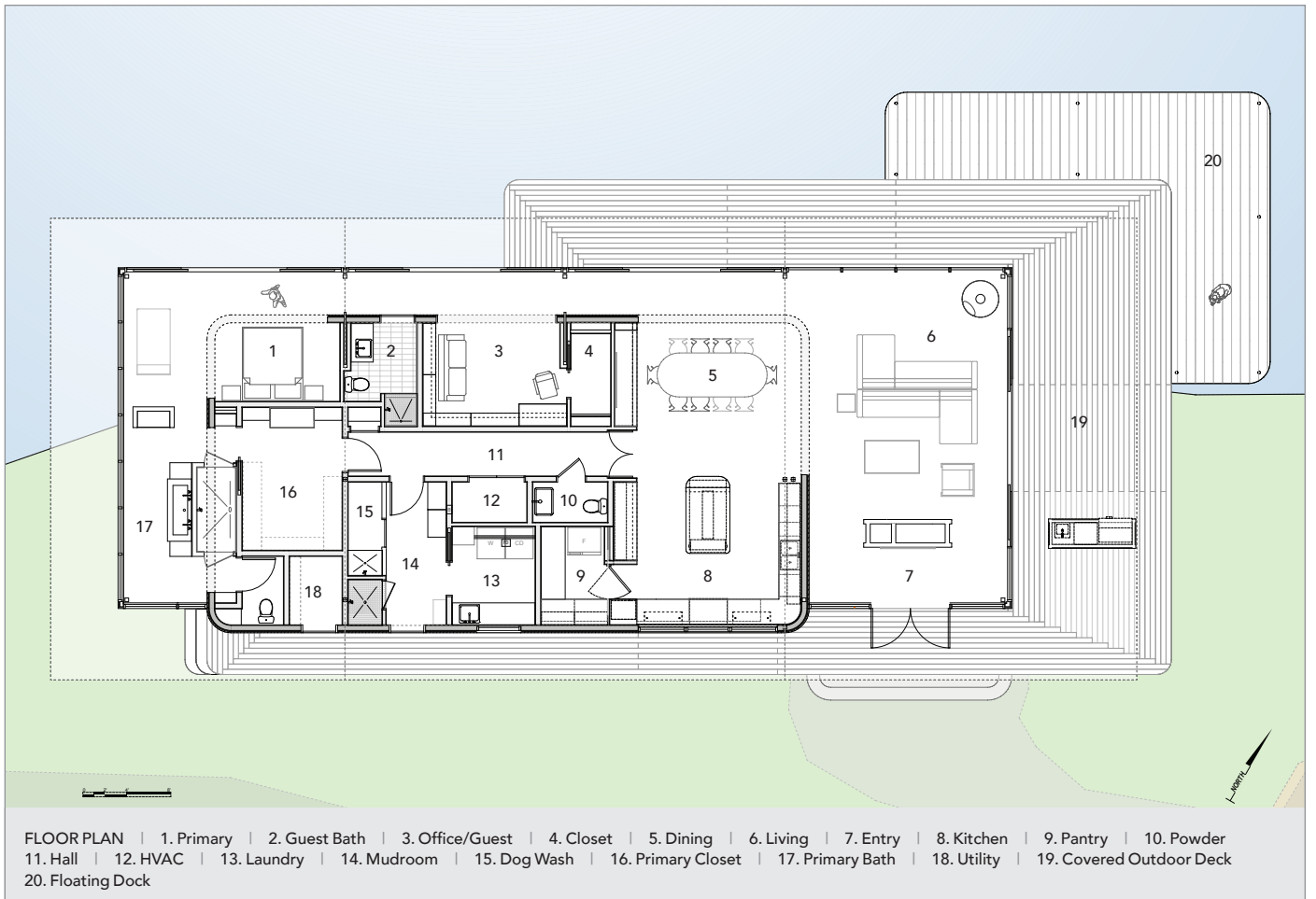
And on board is not an exaggeration. "It is basically in the water," the architect says. "The foundation is six feet in the water. We had to drain out the area and then put in the pilings and concrete." There's a fixed deck on steel posts attached to the floor and a second floating deck that provides the owners with easier access to watercraft. "There's a lot of similarity to a boathouse."

The house makes good use of its water access in other ways—a geothermal system taps into the depths to condition the house. "You need a minimum depth of 20 feet, but this lake is 45 feet deep—it's a legitimate lake," James explains. "We've done quite a few geothermal systems, but this is the first time I've done one with a water source. It's less expensive to do it this way and it works

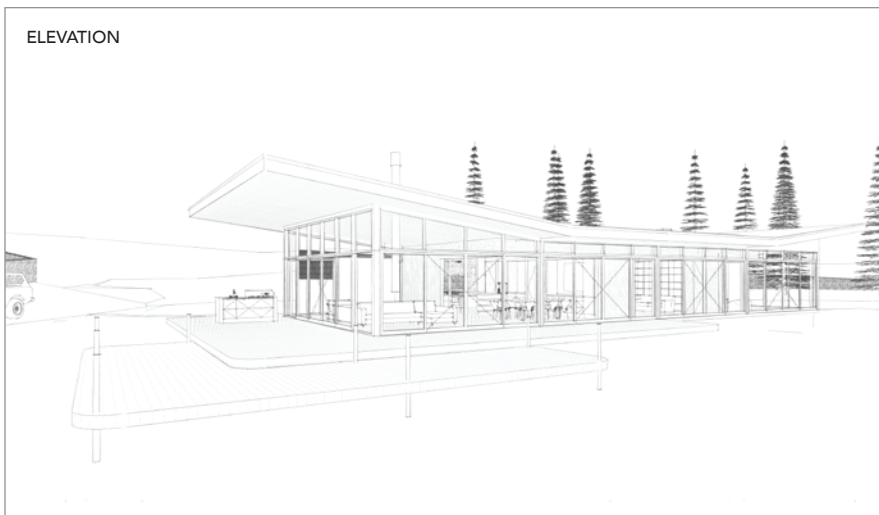
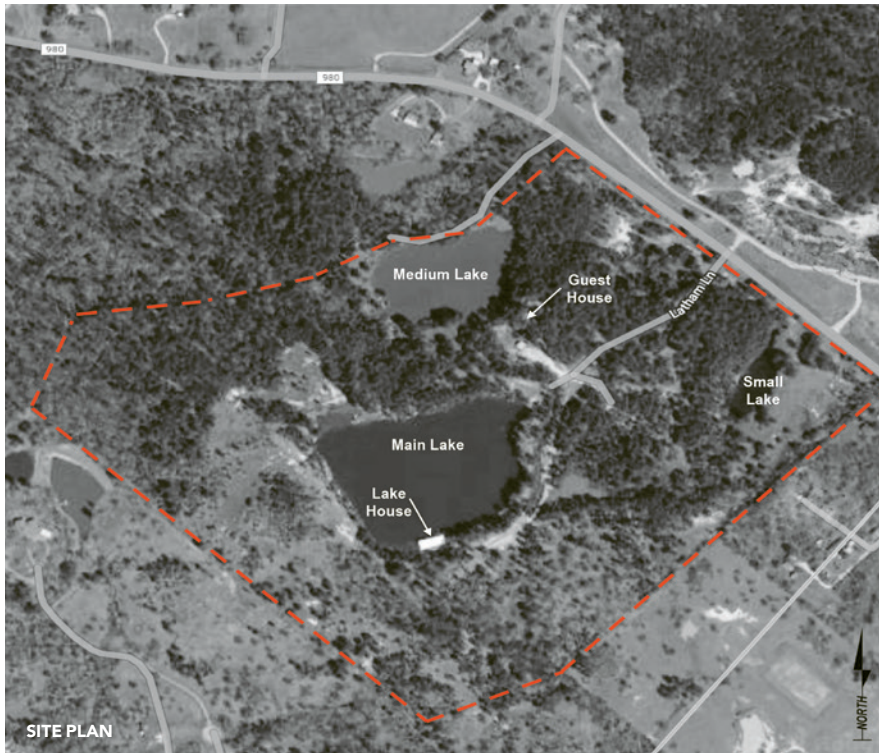


“The modified butterfly gave you the views, the shade, and sat on the landscape in a comfortable way.”

—James Evans, AIA







## Riverside Lake House

Riverside, Texas

**ARCHITECT:** James M. Evans, AIA, Collaborative Designworks, Houston, Texas

**BUILDER:** Owner

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Andra White

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS:** BEC Engineers and Consultants, Houston, Texas

**PROJECT SIZE:** 2,630 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 107 acres

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** \$266 a square foot

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Joe Aker, Michael Hart, James Evans

### KEY PRODUCTS

**BATH VENTILATION:** Broan

**CEILING/DECKING/SOFFIT:** Arbor Wood

**CLADDING:** Reclaimed thin brick, Roman size set vertically

**DISHWASHER:** Bosch

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

**FAUCETS:** Delta, Kohler, Brizo

**FIREPLACE:** Fireorb

**FLOORING:** Vesdura

**GEOHERMAL SYSTEM:** WaterFurnace 5

**GRILL:** Blaze Grills

**HARDWARE:** Emtek, Häfele

**ICEMAKER:** Summit

**INSULATION/HOUSEWRAP/THERMAL AND MOISTURE BARRIERS:** Huber ZIP System

**INTERIOR LIGHTING:** Arterior, Progress, Belfer

**LIGHTING CONTROL:** Legrande Adorne

**OTHER INSULATION:** Huntsman Ultra Select open-cell spray foam

**OTHER SYSTEMS:** AlpinePure HEPA filtration and ERV; Ultravation UV Purifier

**PAINTS:** Sherwin-Williams

**ROOFING:** TPO

**RANGE:** Bosch Induction

**RANGE HOOD:** Best

**REFRIGERATOR:** Frigidaire

**REFRIGERATOR DRAWER:** Summit

**SINKS:** Kohler

**TRASH COMPACTOR:** Whirlpool

**WASHER/DRYER:** GE

**WINDOWS:** RAM Windows

really well. Plus, there's the benefit of not having condensers that make noise—and there would have been no place to hide them.”

The owners acted as their own general contractor, knowing that the remote house was a tough sell to professionals. A caretaker and James kicked in some hands-on labor amid the various trade shortages during

COVID and to help keep the relatively modest budget on track. “It did elongate the timeline, but I was not terribly busy at the time and we have built a number of projects,” says James. “I brought in about 30 to 40% of the contractors. And the owner and I waterproofed the windows together and installed the vent hood.”

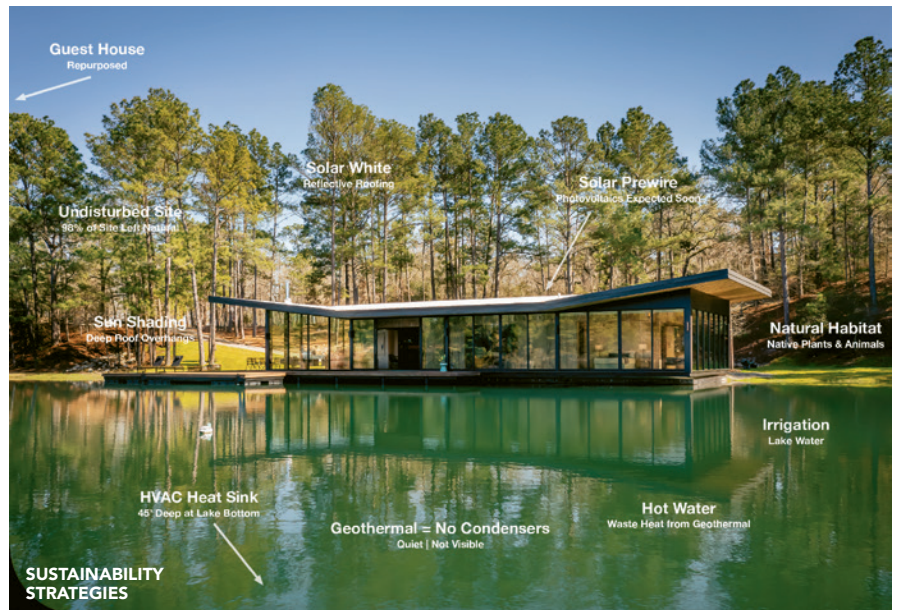




The owners also brought in an interior designer friend who helped select some finishes. Crafted walnut accents here and there are meant to evoke Frank Lloyd Wright touches, for instance. Other materials were chosen for their resilience to the humid environment and lakeside location—thermally modified wood for the ceilings, soffits, and decking and LVT flooring for the interiors. The reclaimed brick was sourced in South Texas.

“Overall, there are some things here and there I might have liked to have been done better,” James concludes. “But, for what it is and how it was built, it turned out nicely. When you open everything up, you’re pretty much living outside.”

—S. Claire Conroy





# Durably Modern



1



2



3



4

## 1. SO VEIN

Made in Italy by Laminam, Crossville's new Sahara Noir large-format porcelain tile panels suggest Tunisian black marble. The pattern is part of Laminam's I Naturali collection, which improves upon the fragility of the original inspirations. Suitable for walls and floors, indoors and outdoors. [Crossvilleinc.com](http://Crossvilleinc.com)

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Antoniolupi's Street line of sinks is designed by AL Studio as a modular system. Available in a plethora of sizes and formats, with marble tops in Bianco Carrara, Rosso Levanto, and Marquinia or any Corian colorway. [antoniolupi.it](http://antoniolupi.it)

## 3. TRIPLE THREAT

Fisher & Paykel's new Series 9 refrigerators and freezers now offer a trio of cooling zones. Refrigerators incorporate Chill, Fridge, and Pantry modes; and freezers include Freezer, Soft Freeze, and Chill settings to hold different foods at their optimum preservation temperatures. [Fisherpaykel.com](http://Fisherpaykel.com)

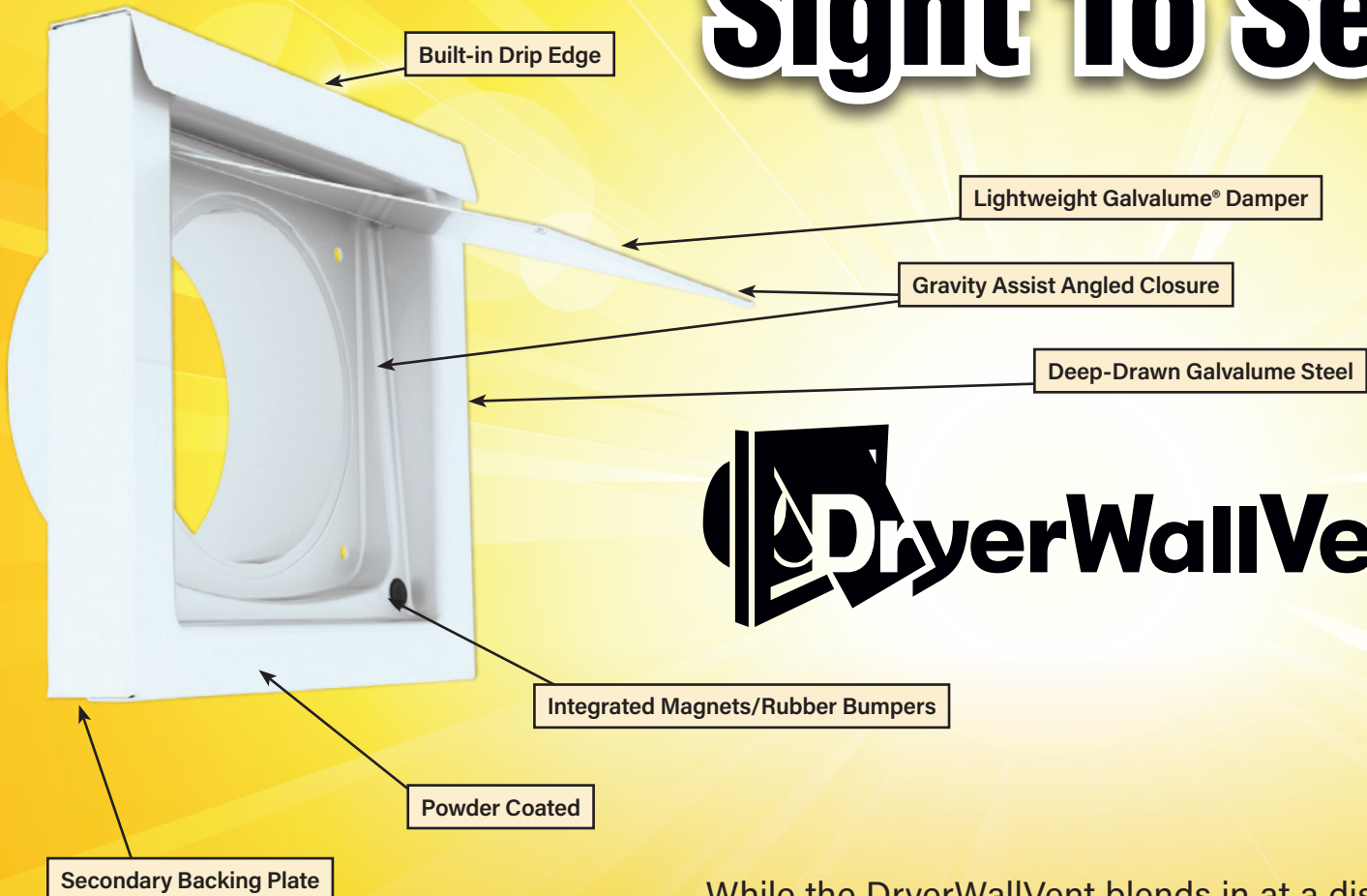
## 4. EARTHY ANGELS

Two new thin-profile, textured veneers from Eldorado Stone aim for timeless, modern looks. Riverwood (above right) is a panelized stone veneer with hints of wood grain, knots, saw cuts, in gray, brown, and white hues. LoreioBrick is a long-format thin veneer in four colors from dark to light. [EldoradoStone.com](http://EldoradoStone.com)



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## Squeeze Play

LAKE TAHOE CABINS  
INCLINE VILLAGE, NEVADA  
RO | ROCKETT DESIGN

**Humans have a primal desire** to live by the water, even if it means assuming some hardships to do so. In the case of this second home project on the steep shores of Lake Tahoe's Crystal Bay, the challenges fell to Ro | Rockett Design to solve. "It's an incredible landscape of prehistoric boulders strewn down these hillsides. The water is almost Caribbean blue and super clear," says Zac Rockett. "But it's also a seismic area and the snow in winter is so heavy and wet, they call it Sierra cement."

Heavy snows, immovable boulders, stunning views to capture, and a steep descent from the roadside combined with the client's affection for his childhood cabin to drive the design. The firm's solution—three connecting cabin-like volumes that "kink around a massive boulder" and climb down the hill—secures lake views for key rooms in the house and carves out multiple outdoor destinations.



A 55-foot-wide window wall of low-reflectivity sliding panels sourced from Portugal opens the great room to the water view and helped the project pass the local design review conducted from a boat in the lake. "It was quite the squeeze play to make it all work and get the right elevations to grade," Zac concludes. —*S. Claire Conroy*

Project: Lake Tahoe Cabins; project size: 6,000 square feet; site size: 0.41 acre; architect: Zac Rockett, AIA; Jason Ro, AIA; David Kornmeyer; Andrew Alexander Green; Anthony Giannini, Ro | Rockett Design, Los Angeles, California; builder: SierraCon, South Lake Tahoe, California; landscape architect: Design Workshop, Stateline, Nevada; structural engineer: CFBR Structural Group, Reno, Nevada; renderings: Zore Studio, Trnava Slovakia



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