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RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

FOR ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS
OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES

VOL. 1, 2024

The Forever House



Photo by Dori Baldinger



"We chose Western Window Systems because we just have a comfort level that they have the competency to figure out some of the technical specifics in a complicated home like this. They have everything we need to execute and actually bring something at this level together and make it look beautiful like it does today." **Tyler Jones, CEO and founder, Blue Heron**

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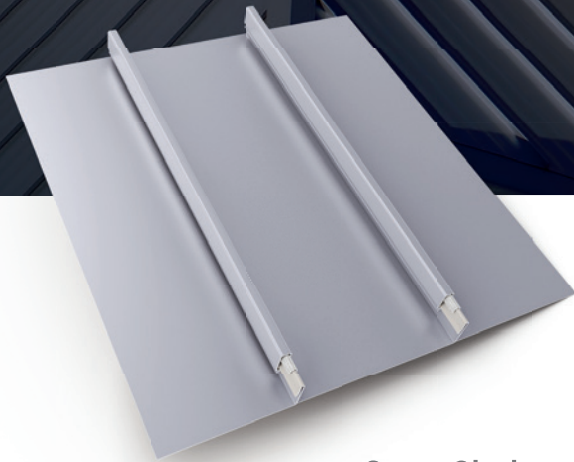
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Snap-Clad
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RD

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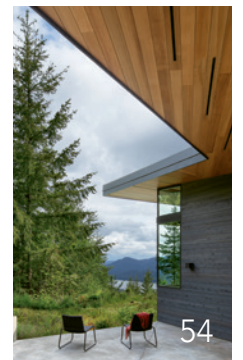
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Welcome to Volume 1, 2024, of *Residential Design* magazine. We are the only national professional publication devoted to residential architects and custom builders. We're dedicated to providing you with expert insight and substantive information on 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.

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.

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

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The Last, Best House



We cover many wonderful houses in this magazine, but the most meaningful have been the custom-designed houses for clients who understand themselves deeply—who really know how and where they want to live.

By the time the stars and bank balances have aligned to grant them the wish of a lifetime—a house tailored just to them—their programs are well seasoned and compelling. Usually, more transitory requirements have fallen by the wayside—the kids have moved out, the daily commute is no more, and location is no longer dictated by external forces. This is a golden time, where choices and desires come directly from the heart. These are the forever houses, where their owners can imagine themselves happy and satisfied for the long term.

Although we often cover such houses, this is the first issue where we have deliberately sought them out and collected them all in one place. What's fascinating is how different these forever houses are from each other. They give the lie to what a well-known architect once told me—that everyone is basically the same and wants the same things in a house. I was younger at the time, and that sounded profound to me. Now, I'm not so sure. Maybe he didn't listen to or understand his clients closely?

Yes, architects need to understand the rubric, of course, but then they must remain open to all the nuances of individuality that give it character and life. Within our forever house collection, we have a remote house in the Bahamas, a house built atop the ashes of Northern California's devastating fires, an ultra-urban house in a San Antonio historic district, and a house on a Washington hilltop designed for creating and showcasing art.

Each client had a different lived experience that led them to these wonderful places and gave them the foresight to hire gifted, sensitive architects. The ones we feature here—Max Levy, Amy Nielsen and Richard Schuh, Cotton Estes, Risa Boyer, and Dan Wheeler—are especially adept at solving problems without sacrificing what's truly important. And, equally impressive, they never impose a stylistic approach upon their clients.

Instead, the appearance of the houses they design derives naturally from decisions made to suit the site and the clients' needs. The house Cotton Estes designed for the urban couple in San Antonio prioritized their desire for low maintenance. The shape and organization of the house emerged from their desire for multiple outdoor living spaces on a tiny lot. The house Amy and Richard designed in California fire country aims to combat the continuing threat of conflagrations in the area, while also maximizing the property's unparalleled views of the recovering landscape. Max Levy's Bahamas house frames and underscores the beauty and function of the place.

There's more, so keep reading. And let us all imagine our last, best house.

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

S. Claire Conroy
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A Letter from the Chair



Kevin Harris is AIA CRAN's chair for 2024.

Dear Crannies,

It is with great pleasure that I begin 2024 as the Chair of CRAN National; it is a real honor for me.

As an AIA national cornerstone partner, AGS Stainless is committed to supporting the members of the AIA as they grow their practices. As the director of sales and marketing for AGS for the past 11 years, it has been my privilege to work with many AIA components by sponsoring their trade shows, advertising in their regional magazines, participating in local events, and providing continuing education to their members. These continue to be truly rewarding partnerships for us.

When I first learned of AIA CRAN, I knew I needed to get involved in this amazing Knowledge Community. Why? Because, to a large extent, my company owes much of its success to residential architects. Eight times out of 10, it's the architect who truly understands the value a well-designed and engineered product brings to a custom home.

I saw joining my local CRAN chapter in Seattle as a great way for me to give back to the residential architects to whom AGS is so indebted. I also see it as an opportunity to help remove the artificial divide between the specifiers of architectural products and the suppliers of those products.

I am the first product supplier to join CRAN national leadership, and I take my role as an advocate and ally of the architectural profession very seriously. We are all working toward the common goal of creating the best possible buildings for our clients—we are in this together. And together we bring value to AIA's Knowledge Communities.

Looking Forward

In 2024, there are a few areas in which I would like to see CRAN National continue to make progress.

- Engage with young architects to encourage them to consider residential architecture as a career and help them get on the path to licensure.
- Help them graduate and then get hired by a residential architectural firm.
- Continue to share the successes of our individual chapters with all the other chapters. There is no need to reinvent the wheel at every chapter by developing home tour events, residential design award programs, etc. Let's continue to lighten the load on our volunteers by continuing to share best practices.
- Continue to advocate for the inclusion of building science in residential design.
- The CRAN Symposium should be further developed to continue to be recognized as the most important educational and networking event for residential architects in the U.S.

For me, supporting CRAN both locally and nationally is a labor of love. Speaking on behalf of both the CRAN executive committee and the advisory group, if you are a residential architect, a custom builder, or an architectural product supplier who is not yet a member of CRAN, I encourage you to get involved by joining your local CRAN chapter. Together, we can continue to make a difference! Questions? Suggestions? Call or write to me at the contact points below.

Sincerely,
Kevin

Kevin Harris, Assoc. AIA
Director, Sales & Marketing, AGS Stainless, Inc.
Chair, Executive Committee, AIA National Custom Residential (CRAN) Architects Network

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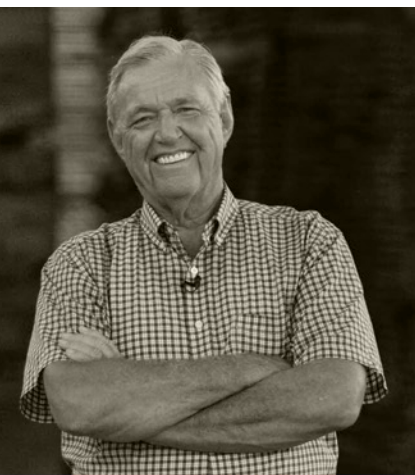
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Shoberg Homes built A Parallel Architecture's 2023 Residential Design Architecture Award-winning Rollingwood Residence in West Lake Hills, Texas.

Photo: Courtesy Shoberg Homes



Matt Shoberg, president of Shoberg Homes, "dreams big."

Austin Outfitters

SHOBERG HOMES
AUSTIN, TEXAS

With its growing portfolio of high-end houses in and around Austin, Shoberg Homes has established itself as one of the city's foremost custom builders. The company's tagline, "Dream Big," embodies a business philosophy that has enabled it to compete in Austin's hot homebuilding market. Driven by the confluence of the energy, technology, and health care sectors, Texas has long been a leader in U.S. housing starts. Austin currently ranks fifth in the nation for residential real estate construction, with permits issued for more than 37,000 units over the past 10 years.

President Matt Shoberg and his wife and CFO, Paige Shoberg, have been part of this business landscape for nearly that long. Now 40-some employees strong, they have a firm

Photos: Casey Dunn



Built by Shoberg Homes, A Parallel Architecture's West Lynn Residence in Austin restores a traditional Georgian-style house and marries it with a contemporary new addition.

hold on the luxury home market that has skyrocketed in the last five years. At any one time, the company is working on seven to 10 residential projects with budgets ranging from \$7 million to \$20 million. And although Matt describes himself as a “high D”—a visionary who operates “at 30 to 50 feet at my best”—that volume still allows him to manage each client relationship, at least from a bird’s-eye view. “We don’t want to be a faceless company; I want all my clients to know I’m available,” he says. Extending that mindset, Shoberg Homes’ success is partly due to a vertical integration strategy that allows it to control many elements of the construction process—a winning play in an

industry where less-nimble builders often oversell themselves because the demand is there.

The trajectory has been slow and steady. Matt began purchasing and renovating rental real estate for his own portfolio in 2003 while living in Lubbock, Texas. The following year he graduated from Texas Tech University with a degree in construction engineering and did a brief stint in commercial construction, followed in 2005 by a move to Austin, where he continued to buy and renovate houses. Paige, an Austin native, is a pro in her own right, having grown up in a construction family spanning three generations. By 2007, “we decided to give it a go on our own,” Matt says. That year they built and

sold their first luxury spec house near the Austin Country Club, which caught the attention of a client who hired them to build a new home. “We introduced him to an architect we knew through a small network we had at the time, Jim LaRue,” says Matt, who was then 27. “He designed an amazing home that made the 2010 AIA tour. About 3,000 people came through, mostly in the architecture community. It was a big springboard for us, introducing us as a young, energetic builder.”

It was an inauspicious time to start a construction company, on the cusp of the 2008 housing crash. But the couple slowly began to form relationships with prominent architecture firms such as Lake Flato, Alterstudio, A Parallel Architecture, and others. As the economy recovered, business began to grow. Over the next five years they took on one or two custom homes at a time, with Matt handling construction and Paige keeping the books, managing projects, and doing some interior design. In 2011 they hired their first project manager, and then more field personnel. Doug Tumlin joined them in 2017 and soon rose to vice president of operations. And in 2019, Scott Griffin was hired as a production manager. Having trained as an architect and run his own design/build firm for 18 years, working in Houston’s gated communities, he was quickly promoted to vice president of construction.

Deep Dive

And so, by 2018, with two executives providing solid management support, Shoberg Homes was positioned to grow exponentially in tandem with market demands. Indeed, the abundant opportunities mean that most of their projects are within a 5-mile radius of the office, except for a concentration of custom houses in the Driftwood Golf & Ranch Club community about 20 miles south. “Except for continuing to service Driftwood, we have no aspirations to grow outside of Austin,” Matt says.

In addition to expanding the revenue stream, the Service & Maintenance division, launched in 2020, allows them to keep client relationships going. “It’s a differentiator as well,” Matt says. “People like the person who built the house to be involved in its upkeep, and we benefit from the relationship because they let us show their home to potential clients or architects, even from 10 years ago.” A dedicated service manager has the company’s labor force at his disposal. “Because we have 11 carpenters, he can take two or three without



Photos: Casey Dunn



The client for the Rollingwood Residence requested a 7,000-square-foot house, a three-car garage, and front and back yards—all on less than half an acre. Shoberg Homes managed it all with a high level of care and craft.



Completed in 2022, the Pickwick Residence was designed by the 35-year-old firm LaRue Architects.

affecting production,” Matt says. “He also works with our subcontractor base to maintain systems such as HVAC quarterly and semi-annually. And we will do small projects for past clients.”

While Shoberg Homes is fortunate to attract top talent at the management and master carpentry levels, Austin’s subcontractor market is thin, and costs are evidence of that, Matt says. An in-house millwork operation started in 2021 helps ease the pressure to source outside partners. The Shop Fine Millwork employs an additional 14 craftsmen, allowing the company to control quality, scheduling, and costs on these homes that are typically fitted with bespoke materials. “Continuing to integrate vertically is an important part of our vision,” Matt says. “We’ll continue to pour effort into the finish work in our homes, adding more artisan trades such as plaster and paint, and potentially solid surfaces like tile, all the things you see and touch.”

The shop is just one way to avoid a pitfall that can catch out less-astute local builders—overpromising and under-delivering. “There are more clients than qualified builders to handle demand,” Matt says. “You can sell into a market void that’s there; the challenge is being able to perform. I’ve avoided that like the plague because it’s the catalyst for failure. The product will not be good enough for a luxury home, and you’ll get a black eye. Austin is a small, tight-knit community even though it’s big, and is architecturally significant. There’s a lot of conversation. If you trip up on the opportunity that’s out there, you can set yourself up for disaster. We set clear boundaries on what we can do.”

Managing client expectations is another way to mark those boundaries. Even the most affluent clients are surprised at what it costs to build a house, he says. “Many builders underquote, but you always have to answer that question later. The client ends up paying it, but they’re not happy, or they can’t pay it, so the quality has to dip.”

Shoberg’s cost-plus fee model is meant to create transparency. “Early on we take them through several homes, both finished and under construction. They’ll say they like this or that. Then we have a real conversation about the range of what it might cost to build something similar.” He and Doug prepare a preconstruction cost analysis for the clients, comparing their project with one they’ve built in the past, before delving into line-item pricing.

“Prior to sending it out for bid, we do an internal deep dive into their specific project and share

Photos: Chase Daniel



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Photos: Ryan Ford



Completed just last fall, the Ledgeway Residence by McCollum Studio Architects was featured on the prestigious AIA Austin Home Tour.



it with them. That's another gut check on whether the project is in line with their budget expectations." If it's not, but is close, a project engineering session explores ways to find value, looking at structure, finishes, materials, and square footage. Robust management technologies are another lever at their disposal. Recently the company upgraded to Procore, a platform that many commercial companies use to increase operational efficiency.

To Market

It is this rigor that keeps architects returning; Matt estimates they've completed about 50 projects with architects in Austin. And while their portfolio overflows with enviable imagery, the focus on performance allows them to market through networking and word of mouth rather than relying heavily on social media and other overt forms of promotion. "We want the story to be told by what we do, not by what we say we do," he says. "The story will tell itself, but you have to be patient."

Their story also resonates with Realtors. Like most builders, they are deeply entwined with the real estate community. Paige, Doug, and marketing director Tina Romero are licensed Realtors with Moreland Properties, in effect extending an open invitation for one-stop services: When a past client wants to sell their house, it's natural to turn to a known entity or to ask for help finding a lot and studying constructability.

Meanwhile, the company's organizational structure provides a firm footing for continued smart growth. "I believe I can see where we'll be in five years, but my team is the real gears getting us there," Matt says. While he plans to limit the number of projects to 10 to maintain the personal touch, he will likely pursue larger projects in the next decade, supported by an evolving finish shop.

"It sounds like a cliché but it's not: We want to be considered the best by setting high expectations and exceeding them," he says, "to be transparent and trustworthy while performing among the best in the country."—Cheryl Weber

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Two Gables

GLENCOE, ILLINOIS
WHEELER KEARNS ARCHITECTS

The aptly named Two Gables residence in Glencoe, Illinois, might appear premeditated, but its symmetrical form emerged organically to serve its homeowners, a couple who had recently become empty nesters. The challenge, says Laura Cochran, a project lead at Chicago-based Wheeler Kearns Architects (WKA), was to “create spaces that felt intimate when it was just the two of them, but could easily grow when they had family over.”

A napkin sketch of two connected volumes along with inspiration images of modern vernacular architecture shared by the husband helped shape Two Gables’ character and program of a glazed “pavilion” for large groupings flanked by a distinct “sleep shed” and a “living shed” for family gatherings, says WKA founding principal Dan Wheeler, FAIA.





A last-minute twist of the main residence from its east–west axis frames views out between trees and provides a visual separation from the pool house.



The couple also wanted a fresh start from their previous residence of 25 years—a charming but creaky mid-19th-century Victorian that was the oldest house in town. “Our new home,” the wife explains, “was a reaction against what that house lacked and a very deliberate embracing of what we wanted looking forward: a home that would be efficient, logical, serene, and easy.”

With that directive, Laura says, “selecting the finishes was straight-

forward.” From Two Gables’ clean geometry to its muted palette and minimal number of materials, the design team created a sanctuary for the homeowners’ next chapter of life.

Setting the Scene

WKA initially oriented the residence along an east-west axis on the 1-acre site with a ravine to the west and north. A climb on a tall ladder just prior to the foundation pour led Laura to suggest

twisting the house clockwise—still within its zoning envelope—to better frame views from the living shed through the property’s soaring oak trees. The twist also increased privacy from the street in the front and created a visual separation from the pool house in the back. “It breaks the recreational aspect away from the residential,” Dan says. Though the family thoroughly enjoys the pool, Laura adds, “it isn’t something you want to necessarily look at year-round.”

To bring as much natural light inside, the rear elevation is primarily glazed, providing breathtaking views of the lush backyard. On the façade, one prominent window on each shed opens the couple’s individual offices to views of the surrounding garden, designed by Scott Byron & Co.

Cognizant of the local climate, WKA prudently insulated solid wall portions with 3 inches of mineral wool and 4 inches of closed-cell foam for a combined R-value of 35. An air cavity formed by a Knight Wall Systems rain-screen standing nearly 5 inches from the wall sheathing provides an additional insulating air pocket, as well as a chase for downspouts.

Accoya’s acetylated wood siding by Delta Millworks arranged in a stack





In the central pavilion, a muted palette complements the sculptural pendants and art, including the “Can I Get a Witness?” installation with photometrics by Lux Populi’s Thomas Paterson.



bond with ¼-inch joints creates the monochromatic exterior while also dictating the sizes and locations of the home’s deep windows and discreet garage door. “There was a lot of coordination there,” Laura says.

Interior Serenity

The quiet exterior palette continues inside Two Gables. Acetylated wood siding appears as wall and door finishes, still with the ¼-inch tolerance. Ceilings, walls, mill-

work, and surfaces are largely white. The homeowners’ aversion to area rugs led WKA to delineate programmatic spaces with white oak flooring, treated to mute its inherently warm hue and inset within large-format porcelain tile that emulates concrete.

In the glazed pavilion, a series of acetylated blade shutters rotates collectively to provide natural light or, conversely, privacy. An accent wall finished in Venetian plaster intersects with custom

Two Gables

Glencoe, Illinois

ARCHITECT: Dan Wheeler, FAIA, principal; Erica Ulin, AIA, project architect; Laura Cochran, project team, Wheeler Kearns Architects, Chicago

BUILDER: Power Construction, Chicago

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Scott Byron & Company, Inc., Glencoe, Illinois

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Enspect Engineering, Merrillville, Indiana

LIGHTING DESIGNER: Lux Populi

PROJECT SIZE: 8,697 square feet

SITE SIZE: 1.03 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Kendall McCaugherty, Hall + Merrick + McCaugherty

KEY PRODUCTS

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EXTERIOR FINISH: Senergy stucco

FAUCETS: Kohler

FLOORING: White oak by Carlisle

GARAGE DOORS: Raynor Garage Door with custom detailing

HARDWARE: Accurate with FSB lever trim

LIGHTING: Juno, BEGA

LIGHTING CONTROL: Lutron

OUTDOOR GRILL: Lynx Grills

PAINTS: Benjamin Moore

RAINSCREEN: Delta Millwork Accoya over Knight Wall System

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

ROOFING: PAC-CLAD Petersen standing seam; single-ply membrane

SLIDING DOORS: LaCantina Doors

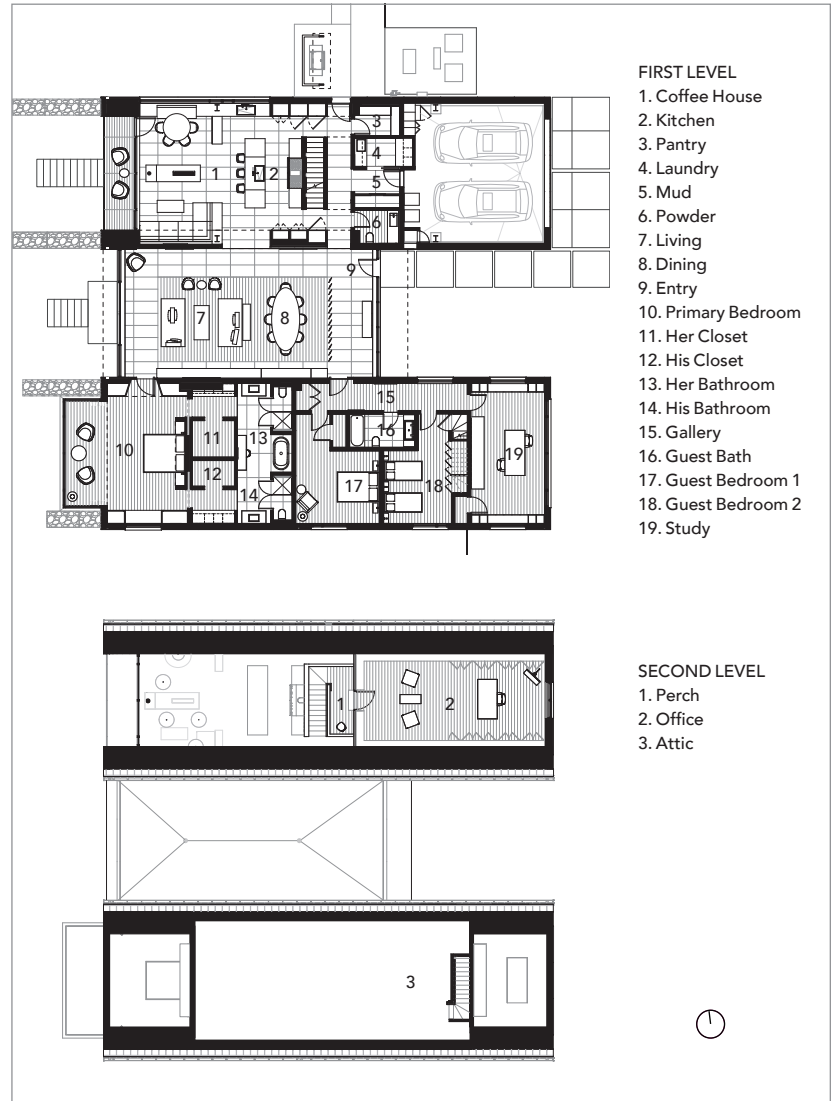
TILE: Tithof Tile

WASHER/DRYER: LG

WINDOWS: Marvin



The coffee house serves as a multipurpose communal space for family and includes a Vestaboard display-backed television mounted on a rotating post.



millwork that morphs from a fireplace hearth into the top of a server and then into bench seating. A clay-lime product applied to the millwork creates the semblance of a continuous concrete surface, a treatment that was repeated for the powder room sink.

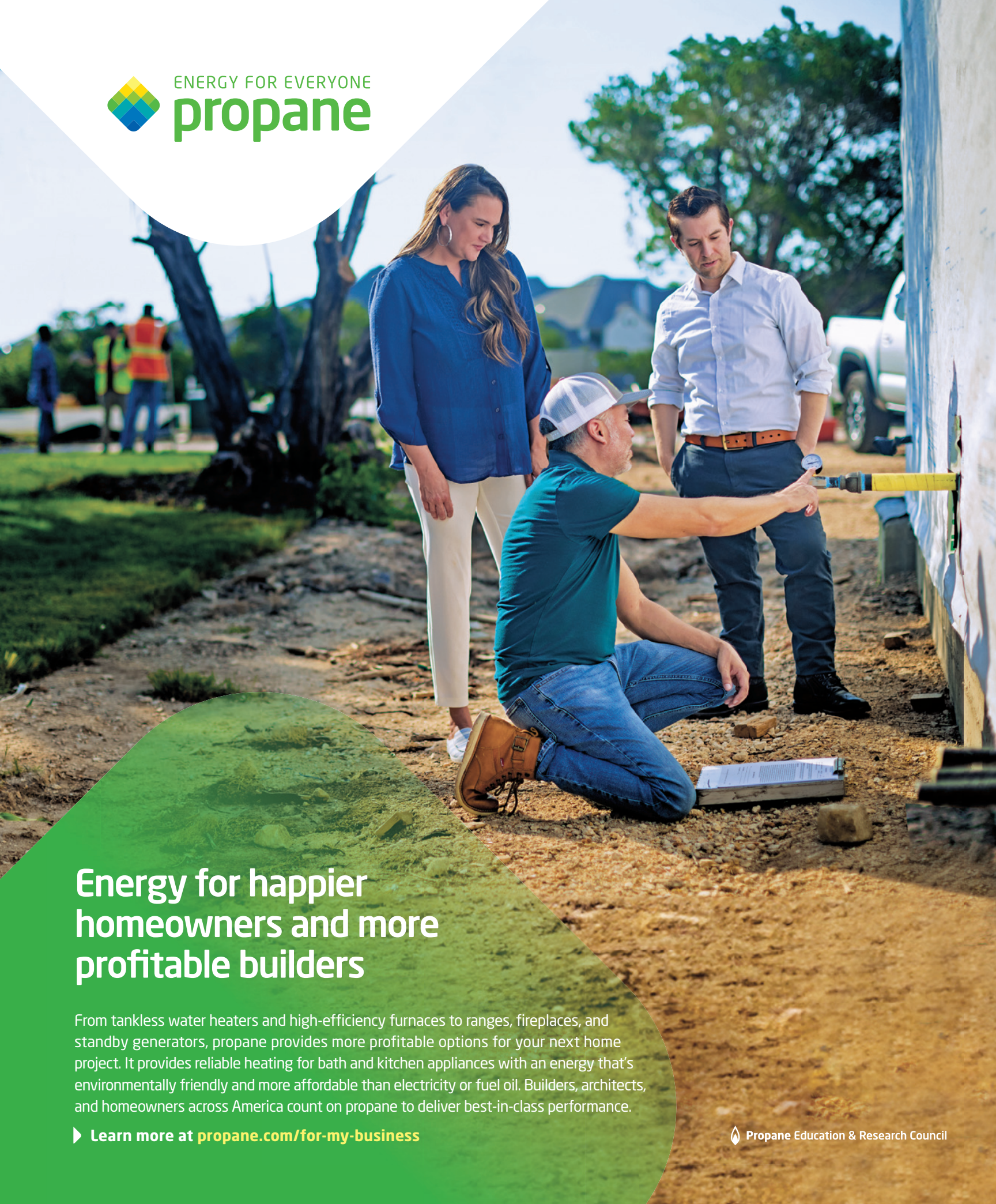
Noticeably absent is the presence of building system infrastructure. “As with all of our work,” Wheeler says, “we try to hide mechanical grilles and so forth.” A gap between the pavilion ceiling and wall perimeter both creates the look of a floating plane and vents return air for the residence and exhaust for the fireplace.

The vaulted ceilings of the sheds are finished in white-painted wood planks,

gapped to dampen noise in the imperceptible black duct liner above. “The two things that are least understood and most impactful in residential design are acoustics and lighting,” Dan says. “There’s nothing more disturbing than having a party where people can’t hear themselves and then say, ‘Who designed this thing?’”

Lighting designer Lux Populi helped ensure track light fixtures and downlights are subtle, scarce, and deliberately located at functional, seating, and display areas. Wall washers highlight the couple’s art collection, which provides pops of colors against the muted backdrop. The balance of luminaires includes both





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The design prioritizes natural light and views out to the landscape. In contrast to the white and gray palette, steel structural members are expressed in black.



sculptural statement pieces and paper globe pendants that helped keep the project on budget, Dan says.

The globe pendants are strategically suspended to give the husband clear

views from his second-floor office to the backyard beyond and to the multi-purpose “coffee house”—kitchen and seating areas—below. “He loves his wife, and he wants to see her as much as

possible,” Dan explains. “If she’s at the breakfast table, watching TV, or in the kitchen, they’re both within this triumvirate space where everything feels cozy and intimate.”—*Wanda Lau*





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“Bigger windows, tall French doors, and skylights completely transformed the spaces. Light just started to pour in.” — *Jules Moore, Designer*

Capturing Light and Color in the Bahamas

A new house frames and intensifies the natural wonders of its location.

BY CHERYL WEBER

ARCHITECT: MAX LEVY ARCHITECT

BUILDER: HIGGS CONSTRUCTION

LOCATION: HARBOUR ISLAND, BAHAMAS

Harbour Island in the Bahamas is an enviable place to design a getaway house, and Max Levy, FAIA, is uniquely qualified to do the setting justice. Just a half mile wide and about 3 miles long, the golf cart-only island is known for its clear light, purple-and-turquoise waters, and pink sand beaches. In that sense alone it was a plum commission for Max, who is known for juxtaposing architecture and nature in memorable ways. “When you first visit, the profusion of color and the clarity of the light is so striking, I just thought, you have to bring those qualities into the life of the house,” he says.





CASE STUDY



His client's family has owned property on Harbour Island since the 1950s but had never built on it. For years, she and her husband, repeat clients living in the architect's Dallas home base, rented a house for island stays. They finally decided to build on this bluff, some 60 feet above the harbor. For architectural precedents, Max looked to Dunmore Town, an 18th-century British village on the island whose buildings have horizontal wood siding painted in vivid colors.

Strong geometries organize the Bahamas Cottage, all in service to capturing the views and colors of the island. Arrivals at the house are by golf carts, which have their own circular turnaround in contrast to the rectilinear house.

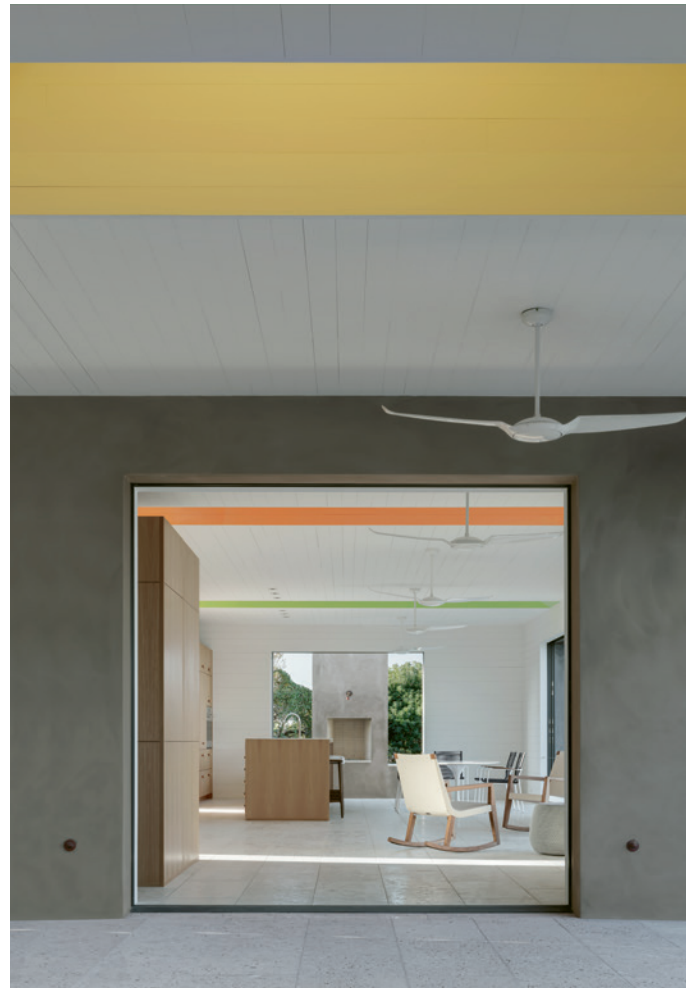


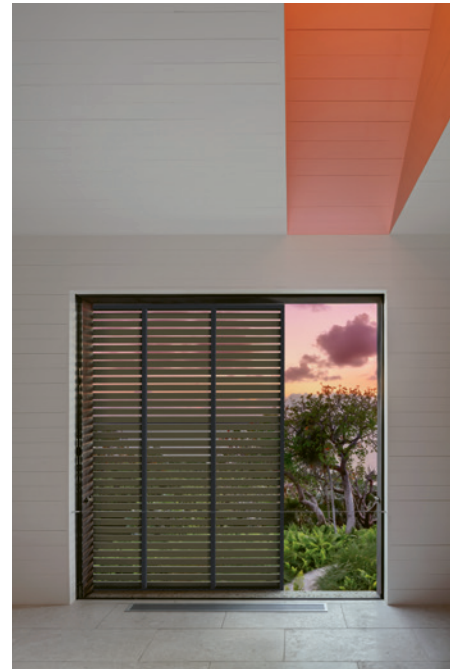


The first glimpse of the water on this thickly vegetated site is through the entry breezeway, which precisely frames an exquisite view.

Over time, however, reinforced concrete block has become the best way to build in response to seasonal hurricanes. Simple and sturdy, the house's 22-by-88-foot floor plan is divided into four 22-foot-square living spaces, each lit by a square roof monitor. Those strong geometries register immediately on arrival, suggesting a sense of order within the tangle of wilderness. A long sand driveway passes through a dense jungle, or coppice, and ends at a circle of lawn where golf carts are parked and turned around. From there, a pathway leads to a cart storage building on the right. To the left is the house, whose breezeway is a portal to the spectacular setting.

"Coming through that jungle, that's your first view of the harbor," Max says. "The breezeway frames and intensifies the view." The land slopes down toward the water, so that "if you continue straight at the breezeway you wind up on a sun deck—the roof of the guest house," he says, which is reached over a narrow wooden walkway. The main house's





Each compass direction has its own colorful light well/monitor. Tasty Apple takes the south view; Coral Buff echoes western sunsets.



interior organization is understood at a glance: to the left of the breezeway is a living/dining/kitchen zone that flows out to a deck and monolithic fireplace for grilling; on the right is the primary suite.

Color Story

Max often recalls the impression Louis Kahn’s Kimball Art Museum made on him as an architecture student. Not quite complete when he toured it, the building didn’t yet have artificial light fixtures or art, imparting the pureness of a “magnificent ruin,” he says. It was a windy, partly sunny day, and the underside of the sunlit barrel-vault ceilings were alternately lighting up and going dim as clouds blew across the sky. The phenomenon was surprising, he says, because he hadn’t noticed the weather when he was outside. “It was a dawning moment about architecture reframing awareness with nature, in this case with light.”

The Bahamas Cottage’s four colored light chimneys are

a play along those lines—and a hat tip to the town’s vibrant historical architecture. Arrayed along the roof ridge and glazed on one side, each chimney faces a different compass direction. Inside they fan out into painted, sherbet-colored light wells that track the slope of the roof. The east-facing light well in the breezeway is painted in Benjamin Moore Bana-Appeal, and the living room’s west-facing light well is Coral Buff. The chimney in the dining/kitchen/living area faces south and is painted Tasty Apple, and the north-facing chimney in the primary suite is Mystical Blue.

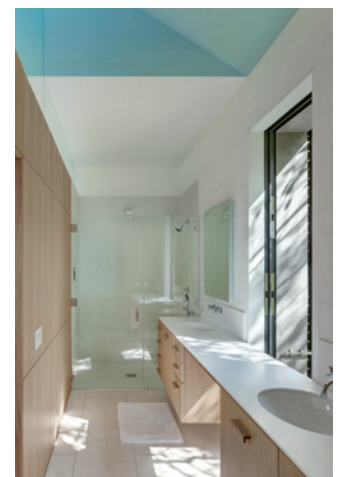
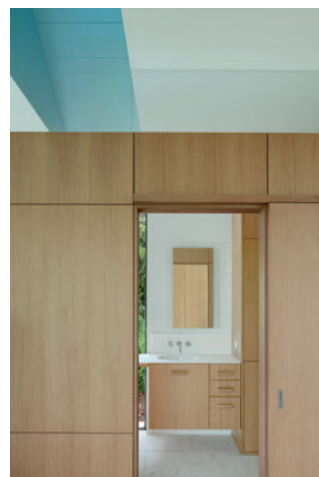
The hues appear simultaneously soft and saturated. “Choosing the colors went on and on. The blue was the hardest—first it was too aqua—but we finally got it right,” Max says, adding that it matches the color of the water—or at least one of its changing hues. “The client made many, many trips with many paint samples. The pink was chosen to match the sunsets, a pageantry of light. It had to be something operatic, which is tricky because you don’t want a blaring pink thing over your head. We had to really play around with that one to get it to relate to the sunset but be gentle to the interior. If you were to hold the swatches in your hand, they look too pale, barely tinted with color. But when they reflect off each other, the color intensifies. We kept making the colors lighter and lighter.”

Ship Shape

Measuring 1,880 square feet, the interior is intended to have an improvisational quality; in the main living space, the furniture could go anywhere. To that end the material palette is limited and continuous throughout the house. Floors are local coral stone, and the walls and ceilings are lined with horizontal 1x6 tongue-in-groove painted pine. A cavity between the pine siding and concrete block shell

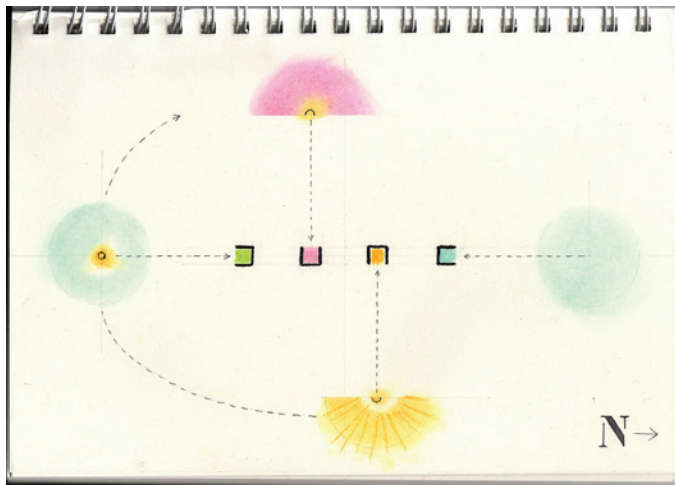


The hue for the primary suite’s north monitor is Mystical Blue, capturing the clear waters beyond. Local coral stone floors, painted pine ceilings, and custom white oak cabinetry defer to the view.





Choosing the color palette was a balance of art and science, as every hue intensified in the brilliant island light.



Bahamas Cottage

Harbour Island, Bahamas

ARCHITECT: Max Levy, FAIA, principal in charge; Tom Manganiello, project architect, Max Levy Architect, Dallas

BUILDER: Higgs Construction, Harbour Island, Bahamas

INTERIOR DESIGN: Robyn Menter Design Associates, Dallas

LANDSCAPE DESIGN: Terrain Design, Nassau, Bahamas

PROJECT SIZE: 1,880 square feet; outbuildings 625 square feet

SITE SIZE: 1.125 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Charles Davis Smith, FAIA

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETRY: Case Kitchen & Design

COOKTOP: Wolf

COOKTOP VENTILATION: Wolf

COUNTERTOPS: Krypton

CUSTOM SUNSCREENS: Drophouse Austen, welded aluminum frames

DISHWASHER: Asko

DOOR HARDWARE: FSB

EXTERIOR CLADDING: Parex USA (plaster), Accoya (siding and sunscreens)

EXTERIOR DOORS: Fleetwood

FAUCETS: Dornbracht

FLOORING: Stenke coral stone

ICEMAKER: KitchenAid

LIGHTING: Hunza, Leviton, Electric Mirror

LIGHTING CONTROLS: Lutron

OUTDOOR FIREPLACE: Isokern

PAINTS: Benjamin Moore

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

ROOFING: Copper Works Nassau

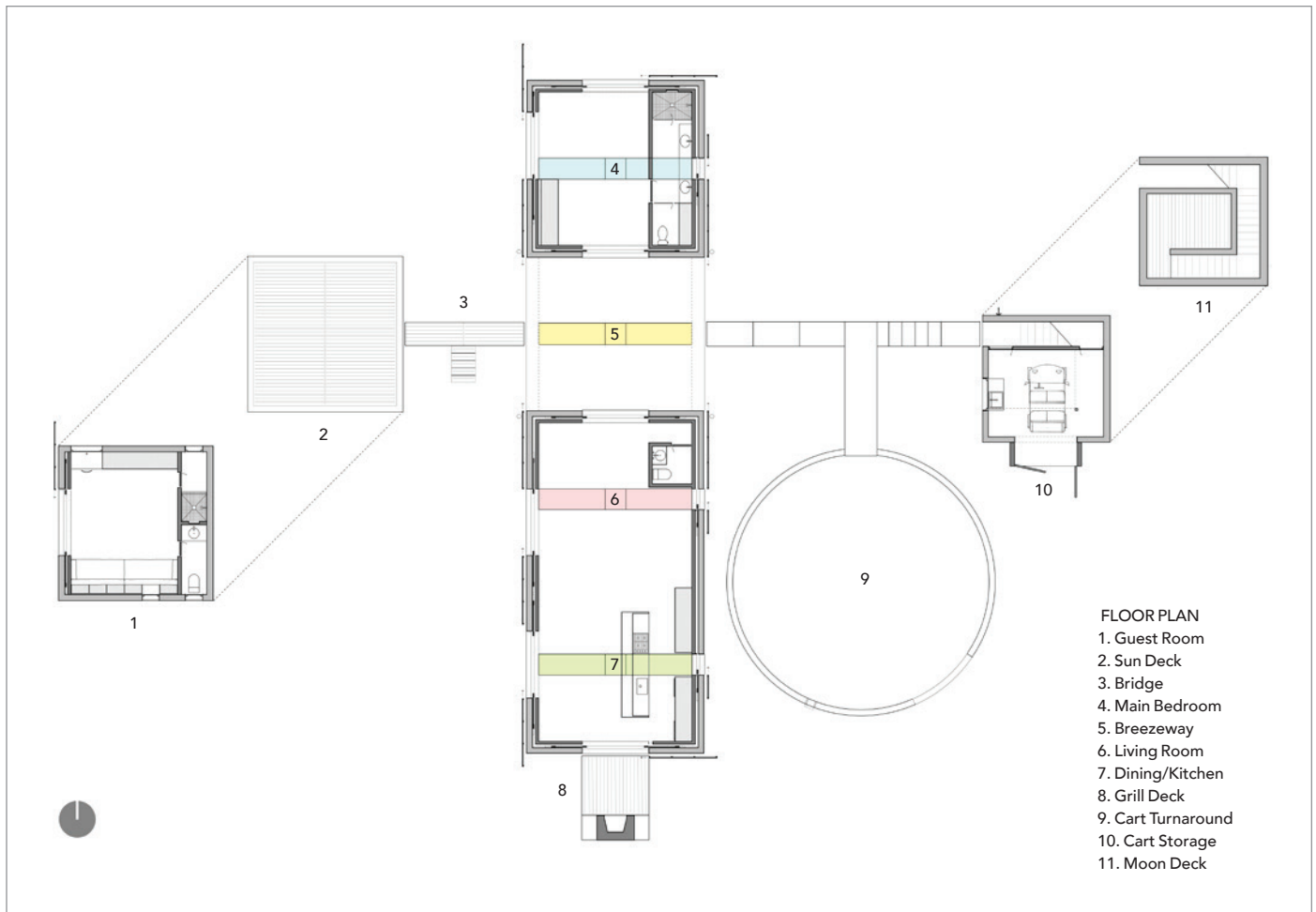
SINKS: The Galley (kitchen), Kohler

TOILETS: TOTO

WALL OVENS: Wolf

WINDOWS: Fleetwood

WINE REFRIGERATOR: KitchenAid



allows all the glass to retract into the walls. “Then the place feels like a habitable ruin,” the architect says. He decided against curtain walls, opting instead for large punched openings that provide a sense of shelter and curate the views. “If you want a panorama, you step outside,” he says.

This project benefited from the island’s long tradition of fine carpentry—in the 18th century it was a center for shipbuilding. A local contractor and crew built the gray-plastered concrete block exterior. Affixed to it are Accoya wood sunscreens that roll across the openings on brass tracks; they moderate the late afternoon sun and latch to protect the glass in stormy weather. “The trickiest thing was procuring materials on an island and the pandemic quarantines,” Max says. “The Bahamas had one of the strictest quarantines in the world, probably, which slowed down construction maddingly. Every screw and board was barged in and we had to wait months to get a missing item.”

Nevertheless, the finish work came together flawlessly. Rift-sawn white oak casework is expressed as inserts



When opened to the elements, the concrete forms of the house and cart storage building are meant to suggest a habitable ruin.





into this simple container. In the primary bath, for example, a white oak partition is treated like a piece of cabinetry to preserve the sense of a square in the primary suite. Above it, a glass transom makes the blue light well visible from the bedroom. “You’re always aware of the ordering geometry of the house,” Max says. “The breezeway is a square; the living/dining/kitchen area is two squares; the guest house is a square. So is the cart storage building and most of the windows.”

Sandwiched between the concrete block outer wall and Accoya-lined inner wall, an open stairway winds up through the ziggurat-like cart storage building and lands at a “moon deck” with eastern views of the Atlantic. On the other side of the house is its counterpart: a guest house containing a study with built-in bookshelves and a pair of twin beds laid end-to-end to double as a sofa. Its private deck faces the bay, and a trail leads to a staircase that descends to the beach.

This getaway converges with nature not just poetically, but practically. Its copper roof will soon turn green and disappear into the surroundings. In addition, gutters and downspouts channel water to a 2,000-gallon cistern buried under the breezeway, which supplies water for the house and landscape.

“When you first visit, the profusion of color and the clarity of the light is so striking, I just thought, you have to bring those qualities into the life of the house.”

—Max Levy, FAIA

Seascape, landscape, and skyscape are all manifested within the house, an achievement Max shares with the owner. “One thing I love about this client is that she is so consistent about interior material,” he says. “Once she decided on a floor material and a wall material, she wanted it used throughout the house. I love that because it makes a house very serene and allows views out of the house to become like artwork.”

Indeed, the spartan palette sharpens the focus, and the simple chimneys register an architectural regard for the light and color of the natural world. 

THE PERFECT VIEW
DESERVES THE FINEST FRAME



Image Courtesy of PDET Photography

WEATHER SHIELD.
WINDOWS & DOORS

WEATHERSHIELD.COM



German craftsmanship has long been admired by consumers across many industry sectors. Camina & Schmid has embraced its German roots and created some of the most celebrated contemporary, modern fireplaces and tiled stoves sold in Europe. Founded in Osnabrück, Germany in 1997, Camina & Schmid has focused its manufacturing on solid wood-burning fireplaces and tiled stoves. With headquarter facilities in Bissendorf, Germany, the company has expanded its manufacturing base in 2022 by opening their new, state-of-the-art production facility in Rathenow, near Berlin. The materials used are mainly sourced from Germany and Europe. Wood and gas-burning fireplace appliances are sold exclusively through specialized dealers and stove heating installers.

Camina & Schmid made the decision to enter the U.S. market in the spring of 2020. For the first eighteen months Camina & Schmid toured the whole of America, seeking to listen and learn. We asked professionals across the U.S. hearth industry to start with a blank slate and share with the Camina & Schmid team what they wanted and did not want in a brand-new flame-out-of-log gas fireplace offering from Germany. The pointed responses to that question

fueled the from scratch design of the product line the company introduced to the U.S. market in 2023. What makes Camina & Schmid stand out is that while the product line is engineered and manufactured in Germany, it was truly designed by Americans, specifically and exclusively for the American market. The company listened to the market and has delivered a product line reflective of the wishes and suggestions heard from coast to coast.

Camina & Schmid's product offering centers around the company's flame-out-of-log appearance, quality German engineering, construction and materials, and unmatched installation and service simplicity. Great attention was paid not only to creating a beautiful flame picture, but to making life perfectly simple for those installing and servicing the units. The company also presents an impressive flame pattern that fills the firebox, created by the unique ceramic logs molded from wood sourced in German forests. The tungsten filaments incorporated in the logs light up on contact with the flame, creating a realistic wood fire glow effect. In addition, the moonlight-feature creates an interior light adjustable in colors across the full RGB spectrum. The flames can be set in different stages for heat management, and the double glass with no screen barriers or cooling fans between panes is a big plus.

Users don't just want a cozy, warm home. They want an efficient and safe heat source that is also beautiful to look at. In addition, the fireplace must leave many design options open so that it can be optimally integrated into any interior. Camina & Schmid has consistently implemented these requirements into its products, and the U.S. offering is both well-rounded and boutique in size range.

For such a young company, Camina & Schmid has certainly made a name for itself among European and American consumers. In the U.S. in particular, the company makes a concerted effort to connect with potential hearth consumers that are set on featuring a natural, realistic flame picture. As true today as it ever was, fire comforts and connects us. Harnessing that sentiment within the home will forever have its place. The human condition has wired us this way. Camina & Schmid delivers a gas fireplace experience that looks and feels every bit the genuine article.

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The Forever House

Three very different clients approached their architects with the same request: Make this our last and best house.

BY CHERYL WEBER AND S. CLAIRE CONROY



House for a New Beginning

SONOMA, CALIFORNIA
NIELSEN:SCHUH ARCHITECTS

Building in California's wine country is a risky proposition and has been for the last decade. Given the predictable occurrence of widespread, devastating wildfires, many homeowners are rightly reevaluating their dwellings. That was certainly true for Amy Nielsen and Richard Schuh's clients, whose previous home burned to the ground in the 2017 Tubbs Fire. That series of connected fires torched nearly 40,000 acres, including much of Richard and Amy's own land. Fortunately, firefighters were on hand, and they did not lose the buildings.





Their clients weren't so lucky. "It was like a blast furnace coming through their site," says Amy. "They were on vacation and came back to nothing." The large house had just been renovated and contained tribal artifacts they'd collected over a lifetime of travel to

remote places. But as often happens, losing everything made them rethink their priorities. After the insurance issues were settled a few years later, they purchased a piece of land down the road from their previous house that had better solar exposure and more open views.

"They just decided to start in a new place, which was a wise idea because you have to gently remind clients that it's not possible to recreate their original house," Amy says. Rather than building another big house they'd have to fill with furniture and other finds, they

The front elevation hunkers down against the most likely approach for future fires, while other exposures direct glazing toward the stunning panorama—still recovering from the last burn.





asked the architects to design a compact dwelling where the architecture and landscape are the art.

Nielsen:Schuh Architects excels at this approach. They've built modern California houses of all sizes that fully embrace their natural surroundings on ranches, mountains, and wineries. Here, though, it took some work to reimagine the immediate setting. Before

the fire came through, a sizable white stucco house sat on the graded land, leaving a large pad and swimming pool. "That's not how we approach it; normally we try to work with the natural contours," Amy says. "There was a big flat field of debris with dug-up rock piles 10 or 15 feet high."

The landscape upheaval resulted from having to clear out the former

house's foundation. "Clients talk about replacement construction costs in the event of fire, and though we had an awareness of that, it went to a whole other level after these fires," says their builder, Sam Turner of Gracie Con-



The clients, who had lost collectibles from a lifetime of travel, asked for architecture and the natural setting to serve as art for their home. Refined built-ins balance rugged materials, while views take center stage.



dig. There’s an emotional aspect because it was recent.” As grim as the landscape appeared, however, there were unexpected pockets of resilience. Some of the old oak trees began to show signs of life, and the architects took on the challenge of creating a unified setting for the house—a place where the owners could enjoy the outdoors and watch the vegetation recover. Boulders were maneuvered into more natural-looking positions and will eventually be covered in moss and lichen. Other debris was used to define the driveway and form an edge between the built and wild landscape.

Richard and Amy organized the floor plan around the existing pool. Oriented east-west, the bar-shaped living/dining/kitchen space faces south to the pool. A terrace wraps three sides of this volume. It joins the pool terrace with an appendage containing two en-suite guest bedrooms on the west. On the other side of the house, an east terrace flows out from the kitchen and meets the detached primary suite. Deep overhangs create a covered walkway between the two buildings. “They wanted a separate pod for the primary bedroom, like going to a wilderness hotel,” says Amy. “Spending time outside was one of their goals.”

While the glassy rear of the house is open to the deep pool that doubles as an emergency water source, the front façade is at once inviting and skillfully shielded from wildfires that typically arrive from the north. Its clerestory roofline offers just a sliver of exposure. “Even though the north wall is opaque, the roof lifts up and you can see a hint of the light coming through and the structure beyond,” Amy says. A series of stone walls and a 44-foot-long steel planter direct the approach and keep embers away from the house. The guest wing was pushed slightly forward, resulting in a folded wall that draws visitors to the front door.

With its high melting point, the vent-free steel shell is built to repel



“They wanted a separate pod for the primary bedroom, like going to a wilderness hotel,” says Amy. “Spending time outside was one of their goals.”

struction. “The rule of thumb was that in the worst case, the house burns to the ground and you built on its infrastructure. These fires taught us that’s not a fair assumption. You go backwards, having to remove footings, rework infrastructure. The scenario is way worse than we thought it would be.”

Adds Amy, “FEMA requires burned remnants of houses, which are often toxic, to be removed in an approved way. Often foundations aren’t suitable to be reused because the fire can destroy their strength and performance. In all that bulldozing and digging up, excavators aren’t thinking about how they’ll put it back in a nice way for the landscape.”

Playing Defense

To Sam, the site initially felt like an “ancient ruin” with the ghostly outline of the swimming pool and diving platform. “During the foundation excavation you’re seeing debris coming up; it felt like an archaeological

House for a New Beginning

Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, California

ARCHITECT: Amy Nielsen and Richard Schuh, Nielsen:Schuh Architects, Sonoma, California

BUILDER: Sam Turner, Gracie Construction, Sonoma

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Nielsen:Schuh Architects

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS: Summit Engineering, Santa Rosa, California

FABRICATOR: Iron Dog Fabrication, Santa Rosa

PROJECT SIZE: 2,513 square feet

SITE SIZE: 9.73 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Ethan Gordon Photography

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETS: Larkin Furniture, custom

CLADDING: Bridger Steel, Syar Napa/stone

COOKTOP: Miele

COUNTERTOPS: Sonoma Cast Stone

DISHWASHER: Miele

DRYWALL: USG

ENGINEERED LUMBER: Lock-Deck, Disdero Lumber Company

ENTRY DOORS/HARDWARE: FSB

FAUCETS: Dornbracht, Hansgrohe AXOR

FINISH MATERIALS: Maple, Claro walnut

FIREPLACE: Ortal

FLOORING: Cast-in-place concrete

HARDWARE/CABINETS: Blum, Hafele America

HVAC SYSTEM: Mitsubishi

INSULATION: R-Max, Carlisle, Manville

LIGHTING: Juno, Louis Poulsen, Foscarini, Sonneman, Stickbulb

LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS: Lutron

OUTDOOR SHOWER: Hansgrohe AXOR

OVENS: Miele

PAINTS: Benjamin Moore

PASSAGE DOORS: FSB

REFRIGERATOR: Miele

ROOF/TRUSS SYSTEM: Iron Dog Fabrication

ROOFING: Taylor Metal Products

SINKS: Galley, Sonoma Cast Stone, Stone Forest, Blanco

SURFACING: AKDO tile

THERMAL AND MOISTURE BARRIERS: WeatherBond membrane roof

TOILETS: TOTO

TUB: Duravit

UNDERLAYMENT/SHEATHING: DensDeck, Georgia Pacific

VENTILATION: Fantech

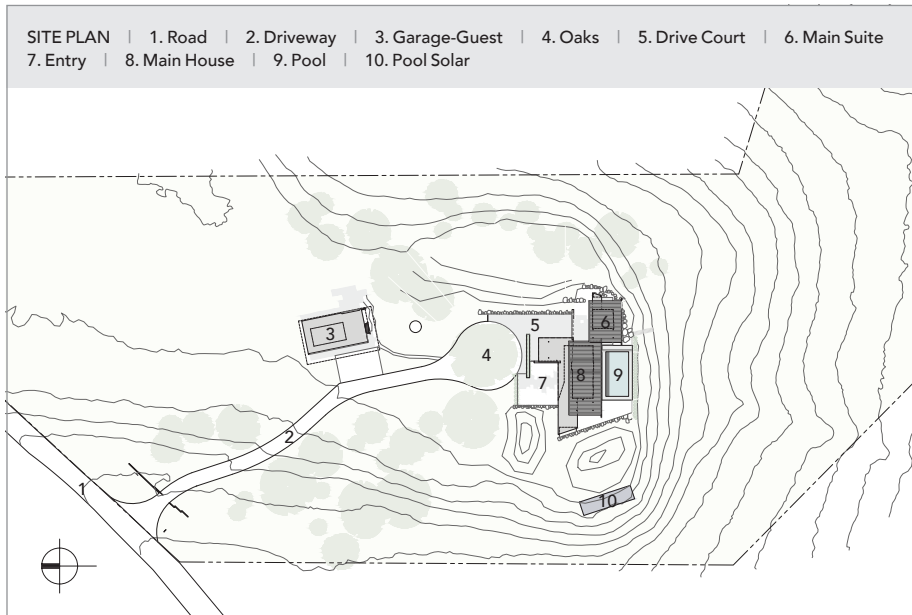
WASHER/DRYER: Miele

WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS: Fleetwood

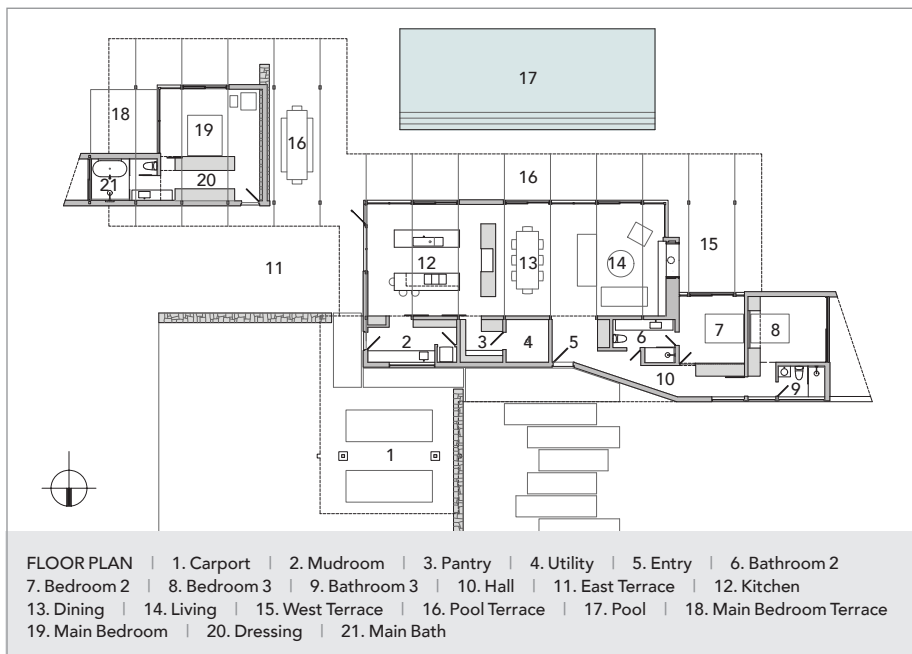
WINDOWS: Fleetwood



Stretching east-west, the bar-shaped living/dining/kitchen space opens south to the deep pool, which doubles as an emergency water source.



Hardy materials—corrugated steel, Napa stone, and concrete—offer high melting point resistance to future fires.



California wood with a figural grain, the live-edge slabs were fabricated into rolling doors, and a walnut dining room partition became a focal point behind the table. The slab doors are hung on a steel valance that runs through the house and outside. Another rough-but-ready piece of sculpture is the living room’s hefty steel fireplace and corresponding concrete hearth. “The layout for the fireplace was important all the way back when we were pouring the footings and foundation,” Sam says. “There are no walls around it, just a glass window system that butts directly into the fireplace assembly.”

“We tried to keep with rugged but refined natural materials,” Amy says. That includes thick concrete for the countertops and radiant-heated floors, which carry out to the terraces. Drywall was treated as infill panels that lighten the interior, along with maple cabinetry in the kitchen and primary suite. There, a geological formation outside the bathroom inspired the clients’ request for an al fresco shower experience. “It’s

any future conflagrations. Cor-Ten and solid steel cladding, paired with a Napa stone base on the primary suite, add pleasing textural variations to the monochromatic exterior. The Cor-Ten on the main north wall has heavy-duty 2½-inch corrugations, while on the ends and pool side the infill panels are smooth or more finely ribbed and run horizontally. Within the roof system, a structural decking layer spans 8 feet be-

tween the exposed steel superstructure framing. Ceilings and soffits are tongue-in-groove fir backed by fire-rated sheathing and insulation.

Rugged and Refined

Ever mindful of the clients’ desire for the architecture to provide the art, Amy and Richard worked with a local woodworker to source Claro walnut for some of the interior finishes. A Native



a rugged section that ties into a higher rock outcropping; they thought it would be great to walk out and have a shower in the rocks,” Amy says.

The house is designed to live lightly on and off the grid. High operable windows on the north side pull in cool breezes from the valley. A solar array mounted on an existing steel-frame building heats the pool and runs the bedrooms’ mini-split heat pumps, and the house has a required graywater system.

Although the site feels remote, it’s just a 10-minute drive up the hill from the town of Santa Rosa, where the wife

“It was like a blast furnace coming through their site. They were on vacation and came back to nothing.”

—Amy Nielsen

has a busy medical practice. After several years of renting, she and her husband enjoy the house as a refuge, Amy says—hopefully one where they can rest a little easier than in their previous residence.

“When we first drove up the long, winding road to this site, my partner Richard and I were both shocked by how devastated the area was, even a year after the fire,” Amy recalls. “I remember saying that these people must be very brave to rebuild in such a landscape with reminders everywhere of how dangerous it can be. But as soon as we met them on their property, we understood their dream of building a new beginning there, and we really wanted to help them realize that dream. It ended up being one of our most rewarding projects.”—Cheryl Weber

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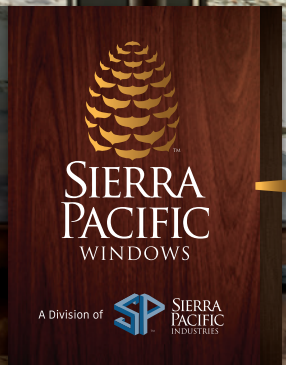


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Academy Highlands

BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON
RISA BOYER ARCHITECTURE



Designing a full-time residence for retirees can be particularly rewarding for architects. By the time most clients reach that milestone, their habits and hobbies are well formed, and they know exactly what they want from their home. Satisfaction can come from taking the design in unusual directions, because the brief is typically liberated from formulas for bedroom count, private and public zones, and even resale value.

Risa Boyer's older clients found their forever homeplace about 10 minutes from downtown Bellingham, in the hills overlooking Lake Whatcom. They were living





in Portland and had come up empty in their search for a property that felt remote but was close to civilization. While visiting Bellingham they fell in love with this 20-acre site, about an hour and a half from Seattle and 30 minutes from Vancouver, British Columbia. “They were taken with the amazing view and being surrounded by trees,” says Risa, AIA.

Its design grew out of the land’s contours and the clients’ desire for multifunctional studio space. The couple—he is a musician; she is a metal



artist who formerly worked out of their garage—wanted a one-story house with space for art shows and entertaining. On the verdant plot, they built a

two-part house that hinges along the natural ridgeline and elegantly enhances the way they occupy the house and site. With its board-formed concrete



Upon arrival, visitors see straight through the house to a postcard view of the lake. The main room, containing kitchen/living/dining, is presided over by a large board-formed concrete fireplace.

site walls, weathered steel planters, stained cedar siding, and see-through carport and terrace, it is all but invisible amid the lush Northwest vegetation. The commodious carport joins a canted studio on the left with the bar-shaped house on the right. The studio was designed to accommodate large, mobile steel panels that the client uses to display her work. “She sets up art gallery walls with them and wanted to roll those out into the carport for shows,” Risa says. “The idea was that the carport could be a multipurpose space. They also use it for entertaining.”





Wall-height glass in the main bedroom suite opens to a private deck with an outdoor shower. A clerestory brings in soft light.

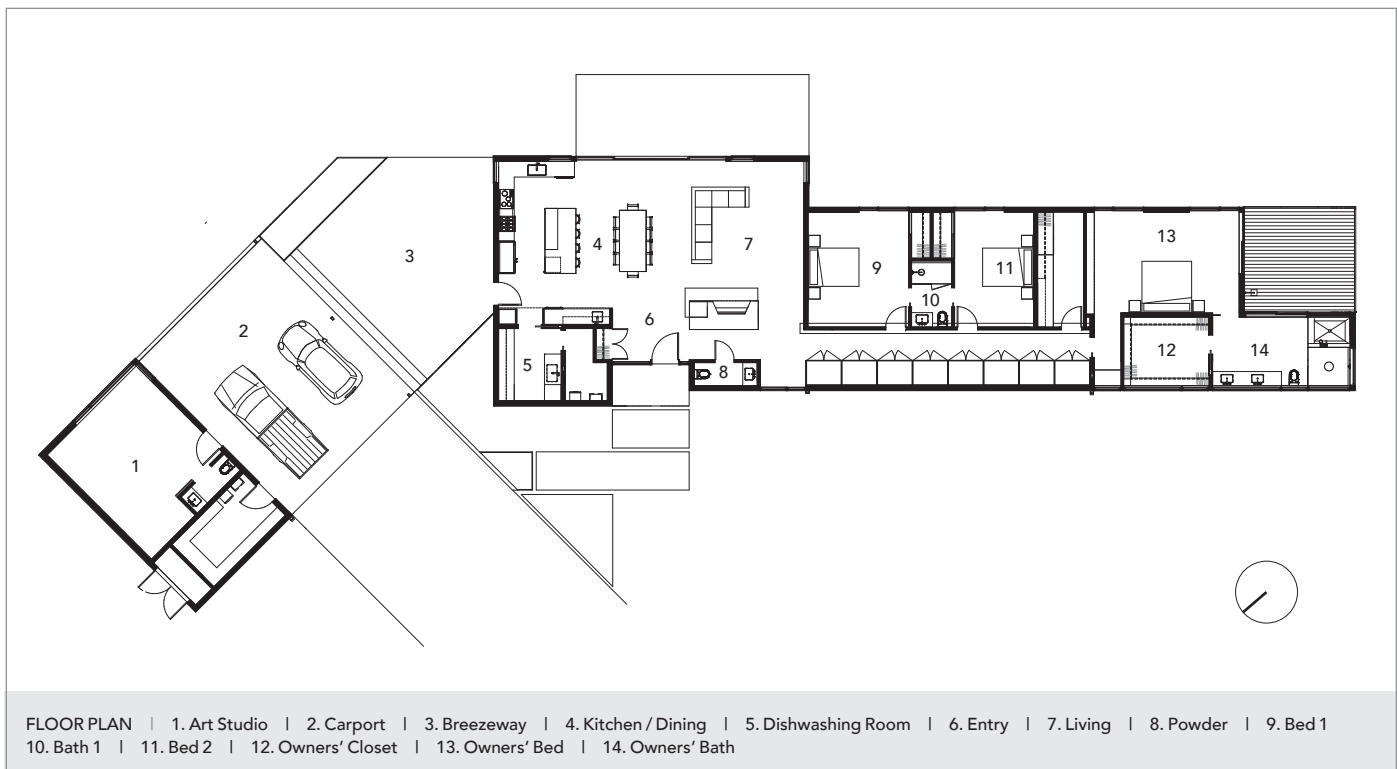
Double Visions

If the home's rectilinear layout seems straightforward, it's the handling of materials and details that elevates the design. The continuous standing seam metal roof has a 1½:12 pitch toward the view. It narrows to a jaunty angle as it spans the outdoor terrace between the carport and house, before popping up



into a clerestory over the main living space. Visitors arriving at the glassy entryway can see straight through the house to a postcard view of the lake and

hills through floor-to-ceiling windows along the rear. This main room, presided over by a board-formed concrete fireplace, contains the open kitchen,





dining, and living areas. To the right of the foyer is a closet-lined corridor leading to two bedrooms and the primary suite at the far end of the house.

A home's fit-out can be ultra-specific when clients are freed from their professional lives. Both like to cook, and side-by-side gas and induction cooktops under a single vent hood let them indulge their individual preferences. Additionally, there is a high-temperature oven for his pizza-making pursuits and a second oven for her baking. Rather than installing a traditional dishwasher, the wife requested a dishwashing room. "She was involved in commercial kitchen design and managed kitchens for big restaurants, so she loves a commercial

dishwashing setup," Risa says. "We created a room for it off the kitchen with a commercial dishwasher. They also store a lot of glassware there because they entertain so much."

Down the hall in the private realm, the first bedroom has sound-dampened acoustics and doubles as his music room. "It's as far from the primary bedroom as we could get it in this small floor plan," Risa says. "They don't have a ton of guests so felt fine having a shared bath between the guest room and music room." Along the hallway, built-in floor-to-ceiling cabinetry takes care of their storage needs, including kitchen accoutrements and cases of wine that were formerly kept in their basement.

"Using steel and putting the window headers in the roof diaphragm allowed us to run the windows into the ceiling, so it looks like the glass is supporting the ceiling."

—Jerry Richmond



Under the low-slope roof, the primary suite feels both intimate and expansive. The bedroom and bath have wall-height glass that opens to a private deck with an outdoor shower, and a northwest-facing clerestory brings soft light into the watery-blue-tiled bathroom. There, a sunken tub has a view into the trees and beyond. “We sunk the tub to get it out of the way and have it feel integrated,” Risa says. “She enjoys the Japanese ritual of washing her feet before she goes to bed and wanted to sit down and do that without having to climb over a bathtub.”

Spirited Away

At the request of the owners, the house has a modern yet moody feel. Its wood tones and organic textures were inspired by the surrounding trees. These include tongue-in-groove cedar siding and clear cedar ceilings that continue outside on the soffits and carport. A local wood shop fabricated the white oak casework and the kitchen cabi-

nets made of prefinished Shinnoki. Soapstone and brushed stainless steel countertops and a blackened steel

vent hood reinforce the earthy-refined vibe, as do the radiant-heated concrete floors and cast concrete fireplace. “The fireplace was originally drawn as a ground CMU block façade, but the homeowner really liked the look of board-formed concrete,” says builder Jerry Richmond. “He showed up every morning and wire brushed the wood to pop the grain.” In the primary bathroom, terrazzo tile lends a polished touch to the sunken tub, along with glazed ceramic wall tiles.

Meticulous construction yielded a taut building envelope that hides the roof framing in a 12-inch cavity. “The top of the clerestory glazing goes right up to the roof in the main room,” Jerry says. “Using steel and putting the window headers in the roof diaphragm allowed us to run the windows into the ceiling, so it looks like the glass is supporting the ceiling. The main living area is almost all steel framing and contains a moment frame for shear, because there’s so much glazing.”

Academy Highlands

Bellingham, Washington

ARCHITECT: Risa Boyer, AIA, principal in charge, Risa Boyer Architecture, Portland, Oregon

BUILDER: Jerry Richmond, Indigo Enterprises Northwest, Bellingham, Washington

CABINETMAKER: Northwest Woodslayer, Bellingham, Washington

ENGINEER: Grummel Engineering, Portland, Oregon

PROJECT SIZE: 3,307 square feet

SITE SIZE: 20 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: \$485 per square foot

PHOTOGRAPHY: Jeremy Bittermann Photography

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETS: Shinnoki Ivory Oak

COOKTOP: Miele

COUNTERTOPS: Barroca soapstone and Caesarstone quartz

ENTRY DOORS AND HARDWARE: Kolbe

EXTERIOR CLADDING: Cedar T&G

FAUCETS: Hansgrohe, Blanco

HOME THEATER: Creston

LIGHTING: Tom Dixon Melt Pendant, Lotus LEDs, Sonneman, Modern Forms, WAC

RANGE: BlueStar

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

SINKS: Elkay, Duravit

TOILETS: Duravit

WALL OVEN: Wolf

WINDOW SHADING SYSTEM: Crestron

WINDOWS/WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS: Kolbe



Passive strategies were employed to keep the house cool and supply all its water needs. Deep overhangs shade the interiors in summer, and four 5,000-gallon tanks collect the more than 60,000 gallons of rainwater the roof sheds each year. They are buried in the woods beyond the primary bedroom. “Because of the shallow bedrock we had to do a creative septic system as well,” Risa says. “A Glendon BioFilter system sits above grade and has piles of sand that plants can grow over, so it’s

hidden away in the woods.” In addition, a required fire truck turnaround in the acid-etched concrete driveway provides space for guest parking.

The house is a deeply personal reflection of the couple’s creative ethos. “They feel it’s their sanctuary and don’t need to travel,” the architect says. “Having both space for her to do her artwork and him to do his music, it feels like they’ve got what they need up there, but having the proximity to town is really nice too.”—*Cheryl Weber*

“They were taken with the amazing view and being surrounded by trees.”

—Risa Boyer, AIA



Barrera House

SAN ANTONIO
COTTON ESTES ARCHITECT

We all have a different idea of what our last, best house might look like and where it might be. Some dream of the mountains, some of the beach, and possibly a smaller portion wants full immersion in city life. Having lived and traveled all over the world, the clients for this house were determined to go 100% urban in San Antonio, Texas. The complication for architect Cotton Estes, AIA, was a program that called for a “diversity” of outdoor living areas, a workshop, and a pool—all on less than a tenth of an acre.

“Tracy and Don had a huge program and a half-size lot,” says Cotton. “And the lot is in a historic district where we had to observe the existing setbacks

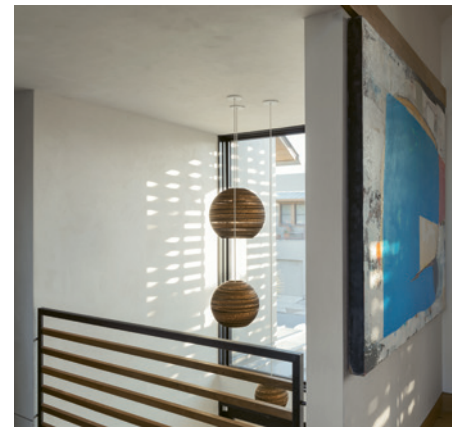


of single-story 1910s and '20s bungalows. We were extremely tight on land area.”

What helped make it all possible was her clients’ talent for living simply and for deaccessioning burdensome belongings. Multiple previous moves had eliminated any instincts to hoard. “They are readers but had gotten rid of all paper books. They had really pared down,” she notes. And while they wanted a variety of outdoor spaces, they were willing to eliminate single-purpose indoor rooms in favor of multifunctional zones.

The result is a two-story, two-bedroom house under 2,000 square feet, with a single open entertain-





This page: Barrera House cleaves to the setback restrictions of its historic neighborhood and matches the neighborly antecedents of front porches and terraces. Across the street is a newer development of two-story houses designed by an architects' collective.

ing, cooking, and dining area. The upside-down plan puts the primary living zone and main bedroom upstairs for greater privacy from the neighbors, and a guest room and television den on the ground level for sound separation.

A tandem carport with driveway does double-duty as the husband's workshop. And the home's cruciform plan with a cantilevered second level leaves enough room on the site for a courtyard and lap pool at the back.

Two second-level terraces offer elevated outdoor terraces with different exposures. There is something of the Rubik's Cube in this puzzle's ultimate solution. "We really used every square inch of the lot," notes Cotton.

Even so, no important function feels underserved. If anything, every aspect of the plan has its own measure of delight. The workshop/carport, clad in thermally treated slatted wood, invites breezes off the pool to the rear. A swing gate at the carport's front connects the



space to the driveway when Don needs more room for his projects.

The wood slats rise up to the second level to shelter the southwest porch off the dining area from strong sun and passersby. “The thermally treated ash is an extremely durable material,” Cotton observes. “It can stand up to the Texas sun, and we used simple butted joints to protect from any warpage.” The slats reappear at the rear elevation and elsewhere, providing privacy from nearby neighbors. Eventually trees will fill in another layer of natural screening for the pool and courtyard area.

Tower Power

This sought-after location in downtown San Antonio is called the Lacava Historic District. It’s a walkable neighborhood of smaller houses and friendly front porches, balconies, and terraces. “You can walk to theaters and nearby restaurants,” says Cotton.

The area is also notable for being near the location of 1968 HemisFair, one of many cities’ visionary world’s fairs that conjured an optimistic, forward-thinking future for society. The anchor structure on the fairgrounds is the 750-foot-tall Tower of the Americas, designed by O’Neil Ford. It remains a popular landmark



for the city, with a revolving restaurant at the top and public space at the ground level.

“It’s a unique location and the tower is the tallest building in the city,” says the architect. “You can go to the top and see the whole city. It’s a gathering place with parties and fireworks.” It’s also highly visible from the site, and one of the reasons the clients were drawn to the property.

“We explored a lot of schemes that oriented strictly to the tower, but in the end decided to let it be more of a discovered moment.” That discovery happens on the second level, where the living area’s gabled window wall perfectly frames the tower to its peak. The rear terrace off the room shares the view, making it a primary focal point.

Given the interior square footage constraints, the clients and architect had some tough decisions to make



The clients asked for a minimalist aesthetic devoid of visual noise. Architect Cotton Estes concealed the steel structure with rigid insulation and a plaster finish. Built-ins for the living room and kitchen recess with the steel frame.

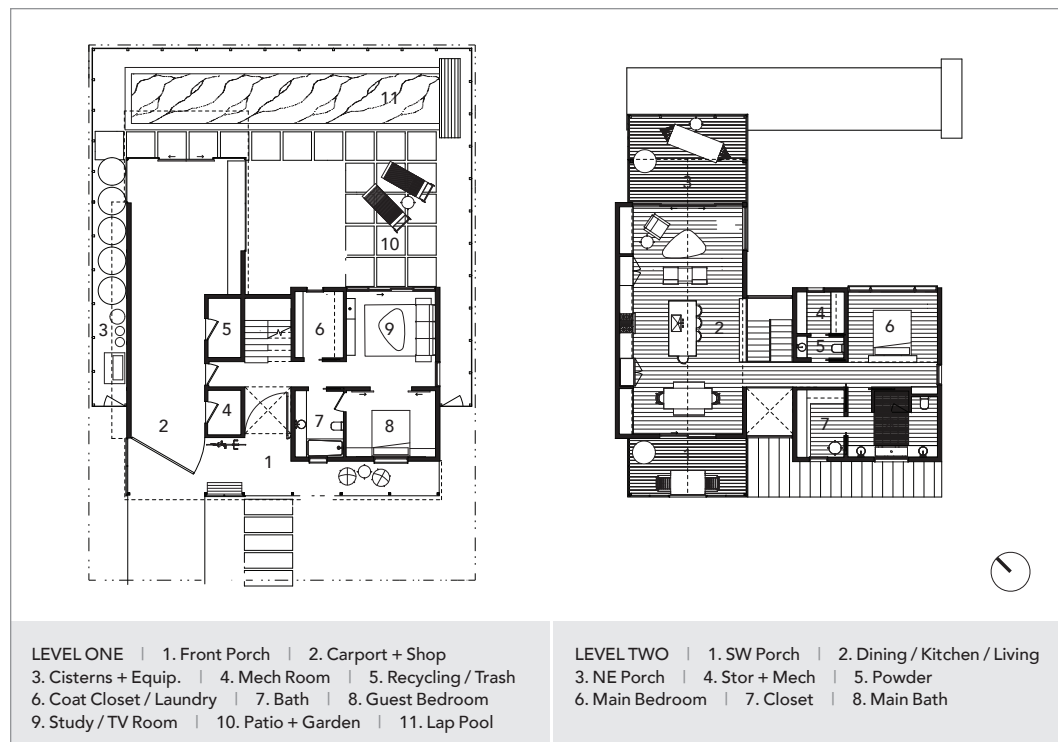


for the central living area. “We went through a programming exercise to identify how these spaces would really be used on a day-to-day basis,” recalls

Cotton. “Tracy has an acute noise sensitivity, so the TV being part of the living room was always a problem. Moving it downstairs to the den

enabled the upstairs living room to be much more of a conversation area. And because visitors and activities always ended up in the kitchen for my

“We really used every square inch of the lot”
—Cotton Estes, AIA





Opposite and this page: The main suite's "smart" headboard reduces the clutter of lamps and chargers. A planting trough provides privacy for the bath. The compact courtyard is an urban oasis.



clients—they like to entertain and host meals—we placed the kitchen in the middle of the space. The informal areas, porches, and living room emanate

from there.”

The clients had specific ideas about finishes and reducing visual noise, too, requesting natural, hard-wearing

and maintenance-free materials—and no paint. So walnut built-in storage streamlines the great room and kitchen, gaining elbow room from a cantilevered bump-out at the side of the house. Plaster is the primary coating, quartz covers counters, and the flooring is oak. To keep the ceiling unfettered, plaster-finished rigid insulation conceals the welded steel structure. A clerestory runs the length of the room above the built-ins, bringing in natural light shaded by the roof overhang.

Although compact, the room feels crafted, modern, open, and warm. The extended views through the terraces let it live larger than its square footage.

Stair Apparent

When a plan is upside-down, the front entry has to signal visitors to move upstairs upon arrival. In older mansions, there was often a grand stair in the foyer, inviting a climb to the piano nobile. Cotton's solution here was to insert a glazed connector in the cruciform structure and design a modern version of that important "lynch pin."

A glass pivot door leads from the front porch into the house, extending



the public, street-facing welcome. Visitors ascend the concrete stair, catching a view of the back garden and pool through the rear window wall, then continue up an open wood-and-steel stair to the main level.

“The stair is an unusual space for how you occupy it,” Cotton explains. “The cruciform parti allowed us very efficient circulation—except for the axial stair. It’s probably the most frequented space in the home, yet you’re never spending more than an hour in there. But it was an artistic opportunity. The concrete base and floating wood treads describe that transition from grounded earthen slab on grade to the more aerial treehouse-like spaces.”

The stair does have an earthy grandeur befitting its showcase spot, but it also evokes the humble stoops of urban rowhouses that served as community gathering places. “It’s a social stair, where you can wave to your neighbors,” says Cotton. “But it’s also an orientation piece that helps you understand how the two pieces of the house relate—front and back and side to side. It helps you read the house from the street and reduces its apparent size.”

And all those natural materials the clients requested? They’ll patina over time without requiring constant care. “They’ll age gracefully and get better over time. It’s a beautiful prompt. And appropriate for a new modern house in an historic area.”—*S. Claire Conroy*

Barrera House

San Antonio

ARCHITECT: Cotton Estes, AIA, Cotton Estes Architect, San Antonio

BUILDER: Long House Builders, San Antonio

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: AccuTech Consultants, San Antonio

PROJECT SIZE: 1,920 square feet

SITE SIZE: 0.092 acre

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Dror Baldinger, FAIA

KEY PRODUCTS

AUTOMATIC GATE OPENER: Strongway

BATH VENTILATION: Panasonic

CEILING FANS: Minka-Aire

CLADDING/DECKING: Thermory thermally

treated Ash

CLOSET SYSTEMS: Elfa

COOKING VENTILATION: FUTURO

COOKTOP/RANGE: Wolf

COUNTERTOPS: Silestone

DISHWASHER: Bosch 800 series

DOOR HARDWARE: Sugatsune, Johnson, Schlage

ENTRY DOORS: Marvin sliding doors

LIGHTING: Kichler (exterior), Juno, Vega, Graypants

LIGHTING CONTROL: Lutron

FASTENERS: Simpson Strong-Tie

FAUCETS: Grohe, Brizo (secondary, main)

FIREPLACE: Ortal

HUMIDITY CONTROL: Ultra Aire

HVAC: Mitsubishi

INSULATION: ZIP System

KITCHEN SINK: Kraus

MILLWORK/MOLDING/TRIM: Western red cedar

OVENS: Bosch 800 Series

PAINTS/STAINS/COATINGS: CUTEK, Bona, Benjamin Moore

RAIN CISTERNS: Texas Metal Tanks

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

ROOFING: Berridge standing seam metal

SINKS: American Standard (main), Kohler

THERMAL/MOISTURE BARRIER: Nail base by AC Foam, tapered rigid insulation by Carlisle SynTec

TOILETS: TOTO

WASHER/DRYER: LG

WINDOW SHADING SYSTEMS: Mecho Shades

WINE REFRIGERATION: Whynter

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4

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nobiliakitchenfurniture.com

2. CLEAN SWEEP

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kohler.com

3. STYLISH ELEMENTS

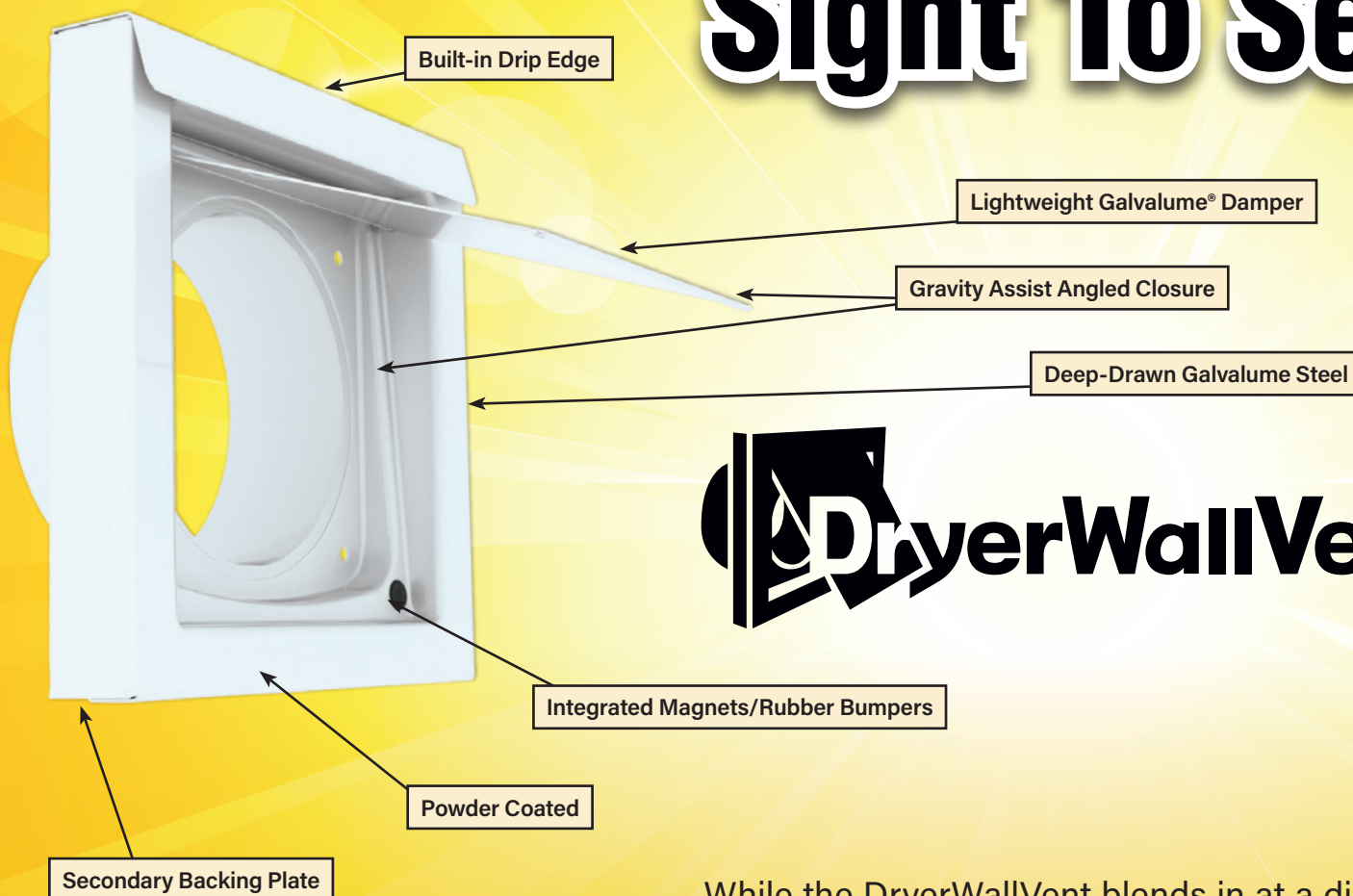
Watermark expands its Elements Collection to include a new set of terrazzo covers. Made in the U.S., they blend recycled glass, marble, and concrete in four neutral colors—Bedrock, Pebble, Pumice, and Rocksalt. No two sets are alike; all are hand-polished to a smooth finish.
watermark-designs.com

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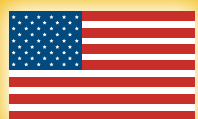
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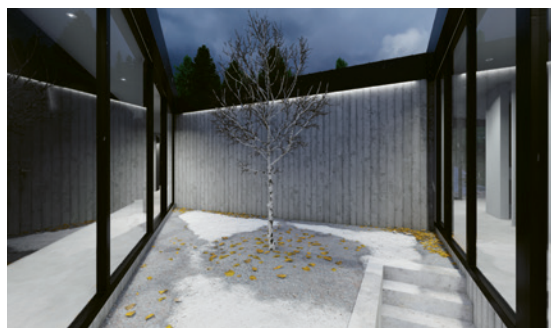
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Slicing across a rocky ridge where two valleys converge, Silver Cloud accommodates a young family and its many passions and pastimes. The main level offers the best views and contains all the principal spaces—kitchen, dining, living—plus a listening room for one of the owners, who collects records.

There's also plenty of garage/hangout space for other collections, including some fast cars, motorcycles, and some utilitarian toys, such as chainsaws and a Bobcat. They aren't all just for show—the husband enjoys cultivating the 10-acre property, clearing out the landfall for fire management and for a series of hiking trails. Supervised burns will dispose of the fallen wood, and suggested the Shou Sugi Ban charred siding for the house.

Given the rugged terrain and bounty of predatory wildlife nearby, there's a protected courtyard at the center of the house. "It's an opportunity for some soft curated space that also brings in natural light," says architect Mike Piché.

The house, approached from above, plays with shadow and light across its metal roof, dark siding, reflective glazing, and concrete block. Interiors, too, will balance light and dark contrasts. A solar farm shared by the development provides clean power without sullyng the site.—*S. Claire Conroy*

Project: Silver Cloud, Boulder, Colorado; architect/interior designer: Mike Piché, principal in charge; Drew Hubbard, Kyle Burds, Studio B Architecture + Interiors, Boulder; builder: Merrin Construction, Boulder; structural engineer: Parallel 40, Boulder; project size: 4,000 square feet; site size: 10 acres; renderings: Studio B Architecture + Interiors

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