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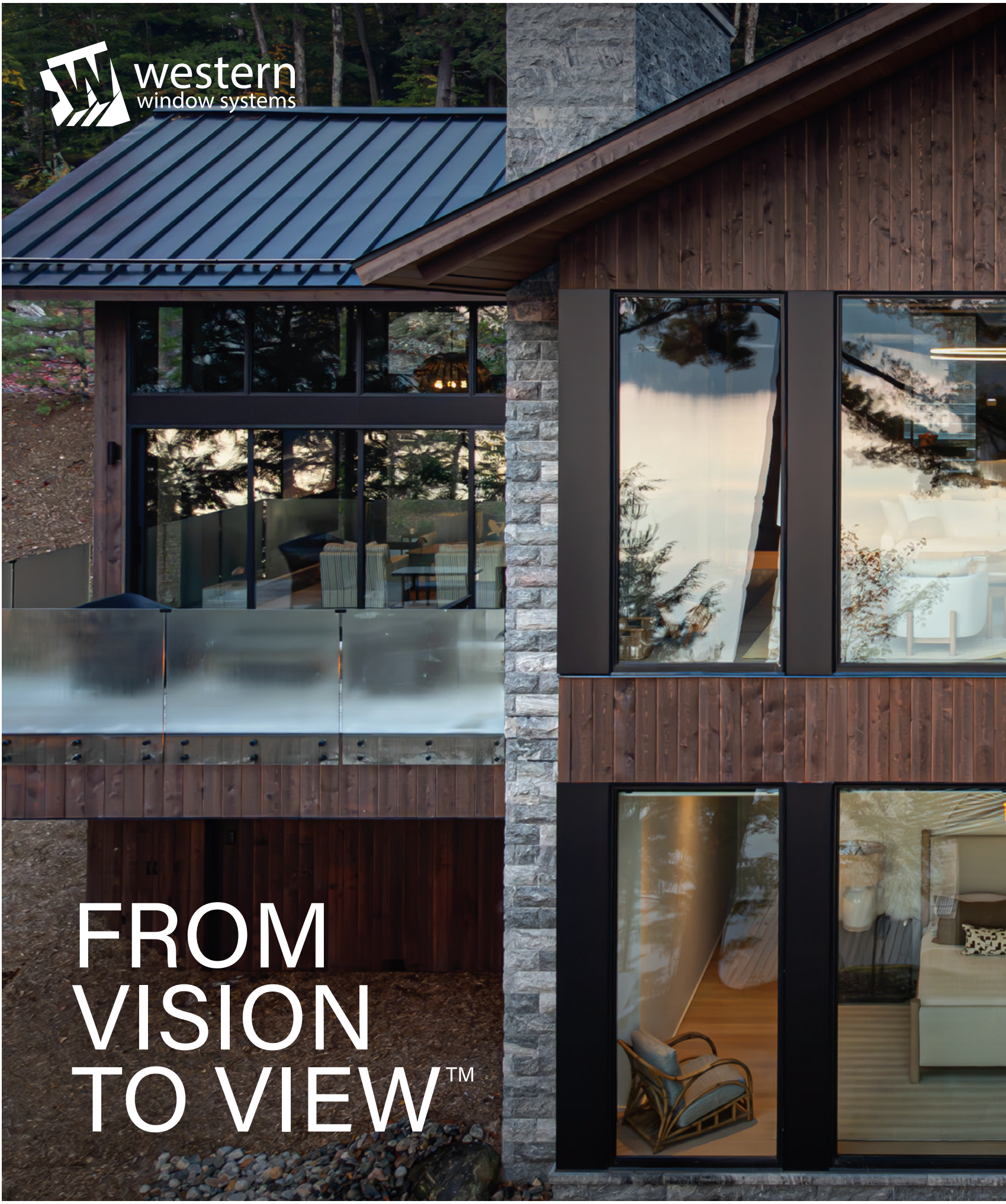
VOL. 4, 2025

Shape Shifters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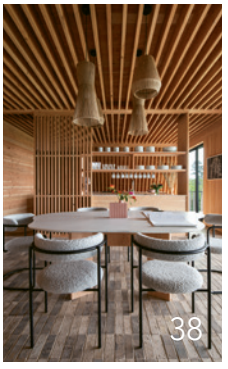

On the Cover: Big Sur House by Field Architecture. *Photo:* Joe Fletcher.

Welcome to Volume 4, 2025, 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**.

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

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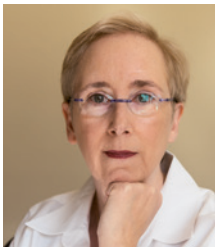


When people shop for houses, they have a hierarchy of priorities they consider. Cost, location, square footage, the number, size, and condition of the bedrooms and baths, and, of course, the functionality and appeal of the kitchen. If they have young children, the school system is also top of mind. What comes last on this list? Typically, the site—or yard, in common parlance—occupies a lower tier of concern.

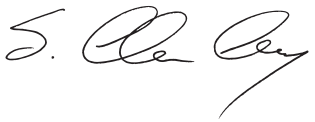
House hunters may have broad observations about whether the yard has room for children to play or for a dog to run, or a place for a grill and outdoor seating arrangement. But unless it's an obvious Superfund site or flood zone, the yard is seldom the dealbreaker in the transaction. Production builders understand this and go to great lengths to manipulate the land to squeeze in all the interior features buyers think they want. It's not until later, after homeowners have lived in their new house for a while, that they begin to awaken to the flaws and compromises of these manipulations.

In Atlanta, where I live, the new house market is largely controlled by speculative builders and developers. Unfortunately, the city and its suburbs is not a naturally flat plateau—we are in the piedmont of the Blue Ridge Mountains. When a builder here purchases existing plans to develop—usually a large box with the popular style de jour applied—those plans rarely address the topography. So the bulldozers come out and, where the land cannot be flattened enough, steps are added—lots of them—to get into the box at the front or out of the box in the back. Every day is a mountain climb for the poor owners.

Even when placed on a relatively rare level site, these generic houses are not designed to optimize the specifics of where they are—except possibly to remove windows when neighboring houses are too close for comfort. Living inside these houses—held at arm's length from their sites—is a dull, blunted experience, no matter how many shiny bells and whistles they may contain.

When we think about architect-designed custom houses, we also tend to think of the house itself first. Is it rigorous and strikingly original? Yet, their subtle superpower comes from how they translate the land they occupy. Living in these houses is the opposite of the builder box letdown—it's a heightened, fulsome experience. So much so, that skillful architects often design zones of respite where occupants can quiet the senses for a time.

This issue we call "Shape Shifters" is about the exercise in translation that happens when an imaginative architect carefully observes and accommodates the clients' site—fitting the program to the site rather than subjecting the site to the program. When the clients are trusting and adventuresome, this collaboration yields highly original, compelling results. These houses don't dampen the spirit, they set it free.



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Miele

Photo: Paul Warchol

Michigan Lake House was inspired by the work of artist Louise Nevelson, who "sculpts with light and shadow," says Katherine Chia.

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DESAI CHIA ARCHITECTURE
NEW YORK CITY

New York City–based architects Katherine Chia and Arjun Desai draw inspiration from many artists. For instance, they are longtime fans of Louise Nevelson, known for her monumental assemblages of wood, painted a monochromatic black or white. "She sculpts with light and shadow," says Katherine, FAIA. "If you look carefully, you can see how the shadow is created within the form. That definitely influences how we design deep pockets of space, like at the Michigan Lake House."

The cantilevered roof of that house qualifies as a monumental sculpture. Less of a plane and more of a volume, the 20-foot-deep by nearly 7-foot-tall black wooden box is a poetic piece of infrastructure that shields an outdoor terrace. Looking at it from below, you see the exposed rafters and deck of the vaulted overhang's "deep pockets of space," with its attendant shadows.

Photos: John Lei

Arjun Desai, AIA, and Katherine Chia, FAIA

More recently, Desai Chia Architecture completed the Stanfordville House, a sculpture with its own reflecting pool: Two overlapping shed volumes form an origami-like shape that is mirrored in the home's pool. "We flipped the roofs back and forth to create different volumes and qualities of light," says Arjun, AIA. "We treat light as a material—it plays a huge role in how we design."

Clients trust the firm to take these kinds of big swings, in part because they understand the artistic aspirations behind them. "Art makes architecture approachable," says Katherine. "Our clients understand that art is conceptual. When we show clients an image of an artwork and they hear about how a concept in art can translate into an architectural concept, they usually get very excited. It's a way to engage with architecture intellectually without it being a bunch of scary buzzwords."

The design community has recognized Desai Chia Architecture's functional art with numerous accolades, including a 2018 national AIA Honor Award. Of the renovated industrial loft, the jury notes read: "This is exquisitely detailed and crafted so much so that it appears one would be living in artwork. It has a beautiful implementation of light with a minimal palette."

Early Beginnings

The two principals, who are a married couple as well as business partners, have quite a bit in common besides a similar sense of aesthetics. They are both familiar with different cultures: Katherine's parents immigrated from Taiwan, while Arjun is from India. Both grew up with modern architecture: Arjun spent time in Chandigarh, known for its Le Corbusier buildings, and Katherine was raised in a house that was designed by an acolyte of Frank Lloyd Wright. And either can speak to the benefits of a liberal arts education: Arjun studied architecture and math at Bennington College; Katherine was a math major at Amherst before switching to fine arts.

When they entered MIT's graduate program in architecture in 1988, they were also both interested in how architecture impacted people's lives. "The program was focused on how architecture, environment, and society intersect," notes Katherine. She was particularly drawn to the theory and criticism courses taught by the late Stanford Anderson, an architectural historian who "championed an approach to design….as a research activity that allowed multiple factors and issues to be taken into consideration," as another former student, MIT architecture professor Mark Jarzombek, puts it.

After graduating during the recession of the early 1990s, Arjun got a job at Swanke Hayden Connell, working on large civic projects. Meanwhile, after brief stints at a couple of firms, Katherine landed a rare opportunity to work

Photos: Paul Warchol

Inspired by the work of Donald Judd, Stanfordville House has portico and terrace columns set at 45 degree angles. "You create a viewfinder and sculpt the angle of the view," explains Katherine.

Photos: Paul Warchol

LM Guest House, a tantalizingly transparent pavilion, marked the firm's first standalone house in 2013.

for architect Maya Lin. She had heard from a friend that Maya was looking for someone who had a background in both art and architecture, and resolutely went through the white pages, calling numbers until she reached the right Lin. For the next three years, Katherine was Lin's sole assistant, helping to figure out how to bring artistic visions to life and working closely with vendors and craftspeople. "Seeing and being part of the making process was an incredible learning experience for me," says Katherine.

One such project was Maya's first iteration of The Wave Field, a 10,000-square-foot landscape installed in 1995 at the University of Michigan's School of Engineering. Katherine recalls, "It's a series of these undulating wave forms. So first we studied images and videos of waves, and then built these maquettes by sculpting the waves out of clay. At the time, we didn't have access to parametric modeling software, so we just sliced the clay forms into increments, and then we laid those pieces of clay down and traced the profile of the waves. So that's how we created the series of drawings that Maya gave to the landscaper to form the contours out of earth. Then she and I flew out to the University of Michigan and stayed there for about a week. Each day we went in after the landscaper had completed a section of rough grading, and we raked the fine grading."

Outside In

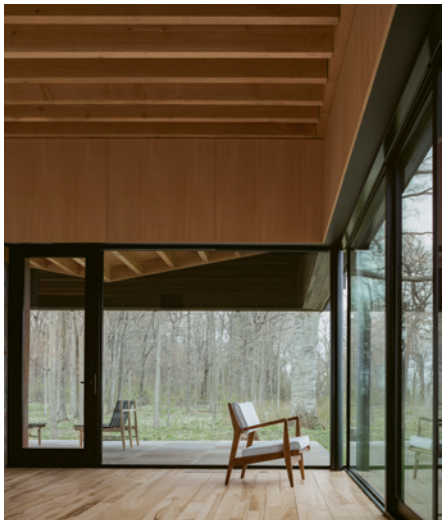
By 1996, the couple had enough side projects to both work full-time for themselves. Their first standalone house was a collaboration with global engineering firm Arup. "We were lucky," says Katherine. "We reached out to Leo Argiris and Seth Wolfe [at Arup], and they were incredibly supportive. We wanted the façade to dissolve and merge

with nature so you could be inside and feel like you were outside. They understood the challenge, which was to have the minimum amount of structure carry the maximum amount of roof load."

The LM Guest House, which was completed in 2013, deservedly caught the eye of the national press. The 2,000-square-foot glass-walled pavilion, located in New York's Duchess County, clearly echoes Philip Johnson's famed Glass House. Four structural steel posts within the core support a steel-framed cantilevered roof, and a glass curtain wall runs around the perimeter. Meanwhile, the ceiling, floor, and walls are expressed in white oak.

But it also improves upon the original concept. For one thing, Johnson built the separate Brick House in order to have the privacy that the Glass House didn't afford. This dwelling has a system of slatted wood screens that provide privacy on demand. Its minimalist simplicity also integrates significant sustainability features, including a solar array and geothermal cooling and heating. "This was an opportunity to knit together architectural concepts with structural integrity, sustainability, and landscape," says Arjun. "It tied together a lot of themes which we've since carried forward in our work."

After reading about the LM Guest House, another client contacted the firm to design a vacation house, which became the aforementioned Michigan Lake House. While similarly geared toward fostering a connection with the outdoors, this project took an entirely different form, specific to this client's needs and the climate. To create a large protected terrace for year-round use, the architects designed a deep cantilevered overhang. The butterfly roof of the overhang (and the other volumes of the house) are part of a natural stormwater management system. Instead of allowing uncontrolled runoff to erode the high bluff, the butterfly form collects rainwater— "like a pair of cupped hands," says Katherine—and channels it into a central scupper and into a dry well. From here, some of the water percolates into the ground and some is collected for irrigation.



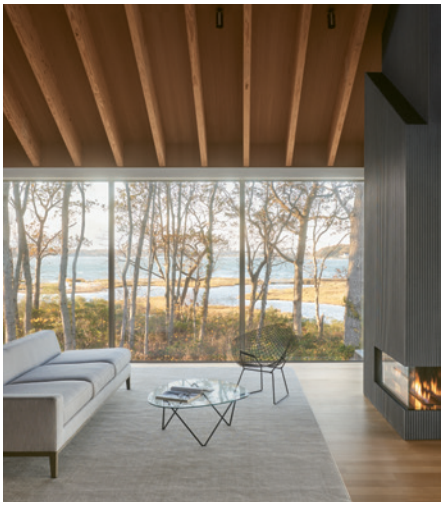
Photos: Paul Warchol

Michigan Lake House's perpendicular butterfly roofs create a dynamic pattern of exposed rafters. The roof forms control damaging runoff.

The architects also spent time researching what kind of materials would weather well in the area's torrential rains and snow. As part of their investigation into Shou Sugi Ban, the traditional Japanese charred wood finish, they visited old buildings in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka. The project became one of the first to use this finish in the U.S. (Louise Nevelson would approve.) "There are lessons to be learned from different cultures and building methods around the world," notes Arjun.

While the Shou Sugi Ban siding is from Delta Millworks, much of the wood used for the interiors is extremely local. Learning about the plight of Michigan's native ash forests, which have been decimated by the non-native emerald ash borer beetle, the archi-

Photos: Jake Balston



Osprey House's pitched roof enables a vaulted ceiling for both the interiors and roof overhang. The living room overlooks wetlands and the lake.

tects suggested culling damaged trees from the site for the project. The client contracted with a local lumberyard to harvest the trees and kiln-dry the wood so it could be used for the home's floors, ceilings, and many of its furnishings. "It's not inexpensive, but it brings the legacy of the old-growth ash forests of Michigan into the house for posterity," says Katherine.

Another indoor-outdoor retreat is Osprey House, located on New York's Shelter Island at the edge of a nature preserve. Modeled after an osprey's nest, it is designed as a high perch for observing nature. To that end, the architects placed the living and dining area on the second floor, and put the bedrooms below. They also helped the client make a critical decision about the aerie's orientation. Though the view of the larger lake is to the north, the architects suggested that the most prominent view be to the east, where there are also wetlands and trees, and thus more bird and wildlife activity. Limiting the house's northern exposure also had the benefit of reducing solar gain.

These detailed compositions demand a lot of time and focus, and it's clear how Arjun and Katherine's partnership benefits their work. "Architecture is creative, and even the technical side is creative," notes Katherine. "So it's great to have somebody who's really in lockstep with you to talk through those issues, and knows how much effort it takes to resolve them and have the final results look effortless. When it takes extra time on the weekends, we know we're in it together."—*Lydia Lee*

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> "I like to think of the windows as picture frames. You are literally moving and positioning the location of the windows to frame what you believe to be art: nature and the exterior."
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> — *Anne Lukan, Interior Designer*

Prairie Road Retreat

SEARL LAMASTER HOWE
HARBERT, MICHIGAN

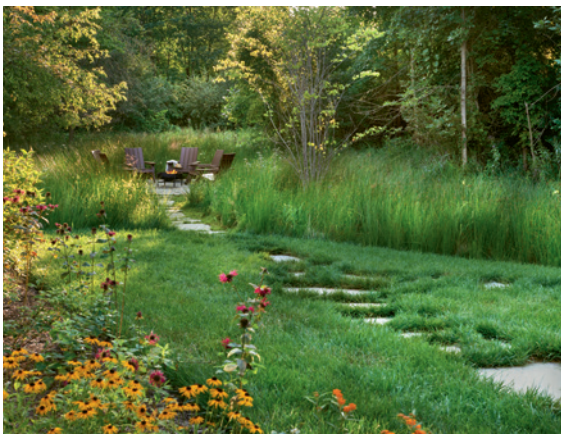
The town of Harbert, Michigan, sits on the shores of Lake Michigan, but the nearly 8-acre site of Prairie Road Retreat is more savanna than beachfront. Designed as a second home for three generations of a family comprising toddlers and septuagenarians, the 4,572-square-foot ranch by Chicago-based Searl Lamaster Howe (SLH) is neighbored by a maple grove to the west and conifer forests and wetlands to the east.

Architectural Amuse-Bouche

An approximately 300-yard-long driveway ends in a turnaround and open-air carport that redirects the eye to the main, asymmetrical Y-shaped house to its north. Both structures have distinctive, low-slung silhouettes topped by hip roofs of corrugated aluminum that appear to float atop walls of glass, stone, and siding. "[The carport] became this little model for the house itself," says SLH principal Greg Howe, AIA. "It shares the same building language."

An absence of gutters combined with the hip roofs' crisp eaves directs precipitation into a gravel bed drip edge along much of the buildings' perimeter. "For drainage, we're not dumping half of the house's load on one side versus the other," Greg explains. "And on a site that's so expansive, to cluster [plantings] against the house didn't seem right."

A mixture of open and private spaces inside and out enables the different generations to spend time together and apart. To break down the scale of the large main house, the design flanks a long volume of public living areas with private sleeping areas. "The bedroom



The dining room's proximity to the entry offers a casual eating space close to the outdoors. An expansive central island topped with a quartz slab supports entertaining and communal cooking.

wings wrap the entry, but the [living wing] juts off the main core of the house and is rooted more in the landscape," says SLH principal Pam Lamaster-Millett, AIA.

Material Goods

Because the house is intended to last multiple generations, durable, low-maintenance materials prevail outside and in. Foundation walls of stone sourced from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, transition into pebbled concrete walkways of local aggregate below and into thermally treated pine-slat soffits above. Dark bronze, anodized aluminum windows and sliding doors run tight against the wood soffits, Pam says, creating "a sense of continuity between the eave and the wood ceiling inside." Matching the wood stains of the exterior soffit and interior ceiling took time, she concedes, "but it was important to have that sight line that extends your eye from the ceiling, right out through the windows and eaves, and into the landscape."

A dining table for 10 sits immediately inside the glazed foyer, reminiscent of Midwestern-style summers when

families “stick the kids at the table on the front porch,” Pam says. “It’s a big, casual eating space that feels open to the outdoors.” A built-in serving buffet provides storage for a half-dozen china collections, inherited from various family members over time.

A partial wall separates the dining room from the middle volume of the house, comprising an open kitchen and living room. Large-format, monolithic porcelain tile covers interior floors and provides a neutral backdrop to the warm pine slat ceiling and cladding on the wall’s end caps, and the dark ash cabinetry. “We went with ash on the heaviest use spots because it’s more resilient than pine, and certain ash [species] have a more rustic feel than oak does,” Greg says.

In the vaulted living room and sunroom, dark glue-laminated beams nod to the aluminum windows and sliding doors. The solidness of a stone masonry wall rising between the living room and northernmost all-season sunroom is tempered with a double-sided fireplace. On the living room side, Greg says, a long, blackened steel plate mantel balances the “heaviness of the stone” while creating a well-composed wall plane.

The owner’s primary suite exemplifies her love of color and looks out to the entry. Her sister’s adjacent primary suite mirrors the layout.

Illuminating Brilliance

Natural light incoming through the living room and sunroom’s glazed walls reduces the need to use electric light fixtures, here a subtle mix of black suspended and wall-mounted cylinders and a slender up/down linear pendant. “We didn’t want to clutter the pine ceiling any more than we needed to,” Greg notes.

The house’s ubiquitous eaves overhang the building by 1½ to 5 feet, shading the extensive glazing and reducing solar heat gain. At night, recessed lights in the exterior soffit assuage the blackness of the land just beyond the house. “Having landscape lighting and recessed lights in the eaves helps mitigate that wall of darkness,” Pam says.

The dual use of outdoor and indoor lights also borrows a page from renowned lighting designer Richard Kelly, whose projects include Philip Johnson’s Glass House. “Lighting the exterior surface of the glass and keeping direct sources of light inside pulled away from the glass reduces the reflectance

Guest bedrooms offer variety in accommodations. Terrazzo counters and backsplashes are colorful and resilient.

at night," Greg says. "There is more transparency from inside to out."

In the bedroom wings flanking the living corridor, the client's love of color comes through on the walls and furniture finishes. The east wing contains two primary suites, for the owner and her sister, while the west wing accommodates eight guests and comprises its own office, family room, and outdoor terrace.

Completed in fall 2023, Prairie Road Retreat has become a "luxe state park" for the client, Pam says. "Being able to accommodate different generations in a way that's beautiful and effortless was so important."—*Wanda Lau*

Prairie Road Retreat

Harbert, Michigan

PROJECT CREDITS

ARCHITECT: Greg Howe, AIA, and Pam Lamaster-Millett, AIA, principals; Dana Burgess, Assoc. AIA, project manager, Searl Lamaster Howe, Chicago

BUILDER: Lowell Smith, Dunes Development General Contractor, Harbert, Michigan

INTERIOR DESIGNER: David Thompson, Thompson Interior Studio, Chicago

LANDSCAPE DESIGNER: Anna Brooks, Arcadia Gardens, Stevensville, Michigan

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Erik Majcher, Atlantes, Ann Arbor, Michigan

PROJECT SIZE: 4,572 square feet (main house); 200 square feet (carport)

SITE SIZE: 7.86 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Tony Soluri

KEY PRODUCTS

APPLIANCES: Best (vent hood); GE Appliances (wall oven); LG (washer/dryer); Thermador (dishwasher, range, refrigerator/freezer)

CABINETRY, MILLWORK, TRIM: Berrien Custom Cabinet

CEILING AND SOFFIT: Thermory USA

CLADDING: Geolam

COUNTERTOPS AND BACKSPLASH: Cambria; Wausau Tile (primary and guest baths)

DOORS: TruStile Doors, Loewen

DRYWALL: USG

FAUCETS: Signature Hardware (kitchen)

FIREPLACE: FireRock

FLOORING: The Fine Line Tile

GENERATOR, BACKUP: Generac

HARDWARE: C.R. Laurence (baths); Emtek (interior doors); Loewen Windows (entry)

HVAC: Mitsubishi Electric; Panasonic; Trane

INSULATION: Rockwool (acoustical)

LIGHTING, EXTERIOR: Dals Lighting

LIGHTING, INTERIOR: Andrew Neyer (sunroom cylinder pendants); CB2 (baths flush ceiling, kitchen sconce); Crate & Barrel (family room pendant); Hinkley (bathroom sconces); Juniper (dining room sconces, living room linear pendants); Kuzco Lighting (powder room pendant); Lithonia (closets); Lutron (controls); Visual Comfort (recessed, cylinders); WAC Lighting (living and sunroom sconces); West Elm (family room sconces)

MANTEL: Tithof Tile & Marble (living room)

PAINT: Benjamin Moore (interior)

PLUMBING FITTINGS: Phylrich (primary baths)

ROOFING: McElroy Metal

SHOWER DRAIN: Schluter (primary baths)

SINKS: Native Trails (primary baths); Blanco (kitchen); Duravit (powder room)

STONE: Fond du Lac Natural Stone

TOILETS: TOTO

TUB: Hydro Systems (primary bath); Duravit (guest baths)

WALL TILE: Roca (primary and guest baths); Design & Direct Source (powder room)

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A house above the sea makes way for Big Sur's craggy landscape.

BY CHERYL WEBER

BIG SUR
ARCHITECT: FIELD ARCHITECTURE
BUILDER: HUNT BROTHERS CONSTRUCTION
LOCATION: BIG SUR COAST, CALIFORNIA

When the owners of this Big Sur property called Field Architecture to commission a house, Jess Field, AIA, was already well-acquainted with the rugged California coastline. He and his father, architect Stan Field, had spent many years surfing together in Northern California and marveling at the landforms at the edge of the continent. "They have a complex geology resulting from unique tectonic action taking place just below the surface," he says. "It creates a clash of surfaces, some old, some new. The softer rock erodes faster than the hard rock, revealing all these nooks and crevices."

In fact, Jess' interest in wild landscapes began decades earlier. It came from his father, who got his first house commission in his native South Africa in 1972. Wondering how he could possibly

Above: A glass bridge spans the ravine, connecting the entry volume to the main building on the other side (top). Cleft-cut stone walls with smooth-sawn, chamfered faces reflect light in different ways and abstract the effects of erosion on the rocky coastline.

intervene in the pristine landscape of giant boulders on the undeveloped outskirts of Johannesburg, Stan spent a week camping on the site. He developed two rules of engagement with the land, Jess says. One was that no boulder could be moved; the other was that no parts of the structure could touch the rocks.

"I was born a few months after that was completed," Jess says. "When I was growing up, there were pencils on every surface, and I was drawing and sketching from an early age. When I joined my dad's office formally about 20 years ago, after my graduate studies at Berkeley and spending time in other offices, this was a kind of unifying interest—how to continue this dialogue between what we make and what nature makes. It leads us to properties that are nature focused and became our passion and calling."

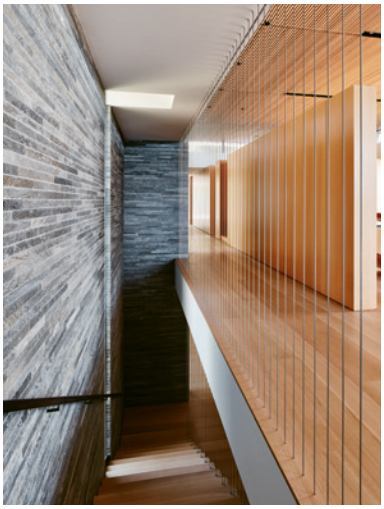
In this case, his clients had merged two back-to-back properties, one containing a stick-built house that had reached the end of its expected lifespan in the harsh coastal conditions. As his team explored the land with the builder, they discovered a section of soft ground that was revealed to be yard waste deposited over decades of use. Beneath it was a rocky ravine—a finding that dramatically changed the reading of the land.

The architect-designed living room chairs and dining room table repeat the home's carved forms, as does the kitchen island. Steel railings become a scrim in the stairwell. In the office, a low window slices a view of the garden.

Although the clients initially panicked when they realized their seemingly flat site was split in half topographically, they soon came on board with Field Architecture's solution: to create an entry structure on one side of the ravine and a living structure on the other, connected by a glass-enclosed bridge. As Jess recalls that conversation, "The owners said, 'Are you expecting us to carry our groceries over a bridge?' We said, 'Yes, this is what the site demands."

Excavating the ravine and reestablishing the topsoil and native plant species restored its eco-function, including the path for a seasonal stream. This earthwork created not just a riparian corridor but opportunities for bringing sunlight and natural ventilation into the building's two volumes. Each one is nestled into the high side of the land on the east. The entry volume contains a garage and minimalist foyer, or genkan, where a spiral stair descends to a guest room. Across the bridge, the east-west oriented main volume houses an open kitchen, dining, and living area on the first floor, with three bedrooms, a laundry, and a small wine cellar below. Two offices east of the living zone are rotated slightly north to align with the topography, as is the garage.

"We took the long bar and twisted it to fit nicely into the contours of the land," Jess says. "The building grows out of the high side of the land, giving it a formal balance and a quietness." It's a place of refuge from the other side of the house that looks out from the cantilevered deck on the west and a pool terrace on the south, where the land starts to fall away toward the Pacific.



Faceted Forms

Seeking to anchor the architecture into the site as nature composed it, Jess created a series of faceted stone walls that "give the illusion that the ground has eroded over time and revealed the building." He set a datum for the height of clerestory-topped walls, which read as stone monoliths with two different textures. The main face of each wall consists of natural cleft stone, which breaks up the light hitting it, while the chamfered faces are sawn and smooth, giving them a slightly greater sheen.

"Not only does it echo the banked facets of rock faces in the ocean, but it's almost a feeling that the forces of erosion are shared between the architecture and landforms," Jess says. "The effect is quite magical. In afternoon or early morning, there's a feeling of the house blending into the rock formations of the coast." Laid in thin, striated courses that nod to the cliff faces below, the stone also takes on the practical task of storing the sun's heat and releasing it slowly when temperatures drop at night.

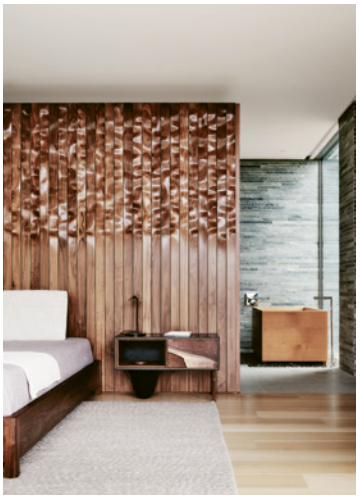
Inspired by the ocean and the surrounding Monterey cypress trees, the house's thin, floating roof forms lunge toward the south. "There are few places on earth as dramatically flat as the sea at the horizon," Jess says. The trees' pointed horizontal branching habit supplied another design cue that resulted in cantilevering rooflines with a subtle double taper. They rest on columns inside the stone walls, clipping the high summer sun while allowing it to reach the center of the home in the winter.

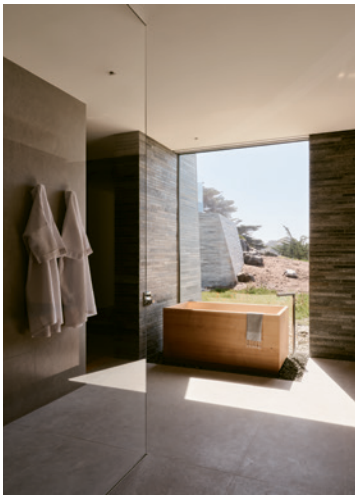
Cracking open one of the doors lets in sea breezes that help to exhaust the hot air at clerestory level, creating a gentle breeze throughout the house. Those passive measures, along with high-performance glass and deep walls with ample space for insulation, are paired with a large rooftop solar array to offset energy demands.

Hard and Soft

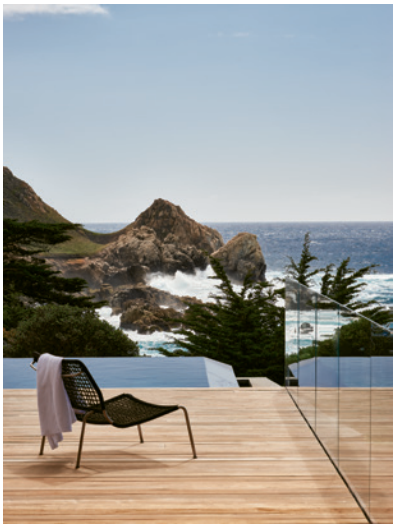
Indeed, all the interior spaces are oriented with the sun's winter and summer arc in mind. And vantage points to the horizon are balanced by inward-facing views that immerse the occupants in the landscape. "I lived in Japan for a while and loved the concepts of borrowed landscape and orienting the body toward the landscape in a very sensory way," the architect says. "We wanted to see the house almost as a lens through which we experience the landscape in a highly choreographed way."

The entry paving continues into the arrival building, which contains a bench for removing shoes and a step up onto the wood floor. This platform provides a glimpse of the ravine and trees and, turning left, an expansive view of the bridge and the meandering streambed. On the other side of the bridge, a right turn leads into the great room. "You walk from the compression of the narrow bridge to the expanse of the Pacific wrapping south to west," Jess says. And while glass walls pocket away on the west and south, the big views are modulated with solid sections that anchor a fireplace or seating.





References to nature are present everywhere. Undulations in the primary suite's walnut headboard reflect the recorded tidal elevations for each week of the year.



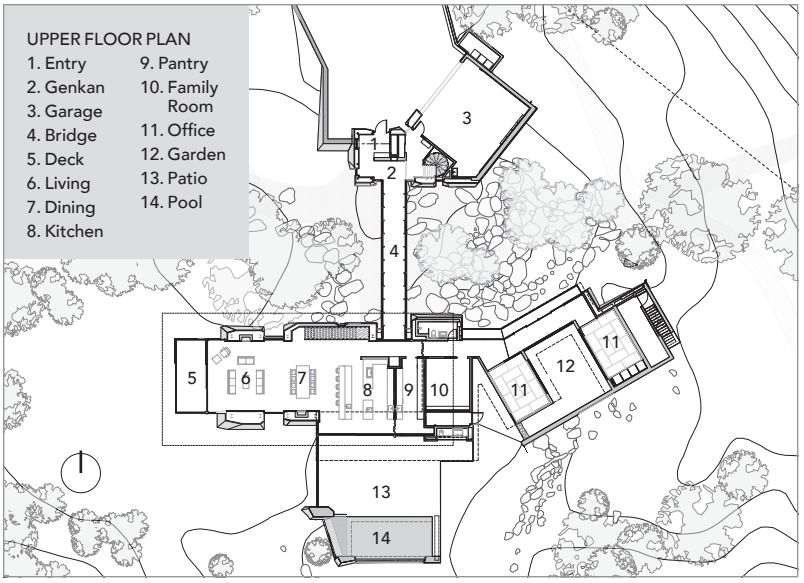
For example, the living room's fireplace wall contains an art niche for a cyanotype commissioned from West Coast artist Meghann Riepenhoff. Created from a series of photo paper exposures in the tide pools below the house, it is one of several art pieces the team commissioned to showcase the work of up-and-coming female artists. In addition, the architects designed the living room's "Big Sur" chairs featuring adjustable leather seats with cubbies in the back for blankets. Carved out of claro walnut slabs, the angular chairs reference the building's massing.

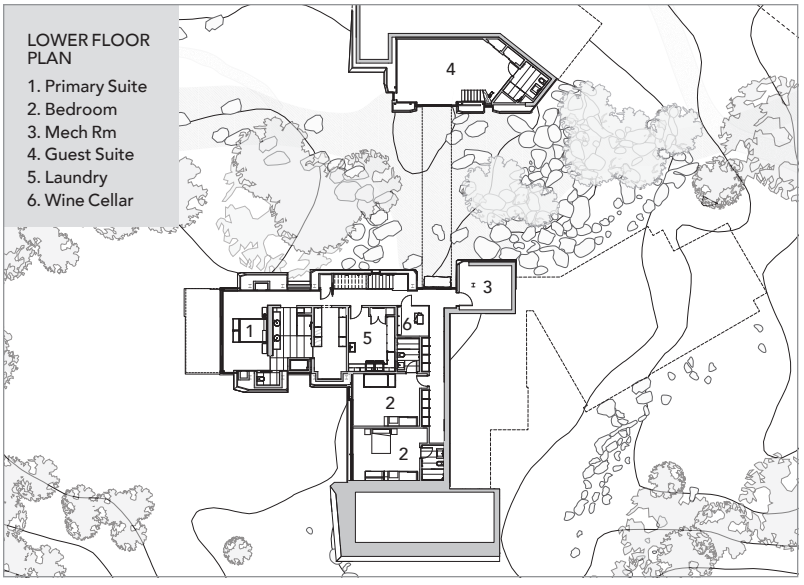
So does the 16½-foot-long kitchen island, whose tapered base recalls a skiff or an island in the sea. With a bar top fashioned from a slab of California laurel to match the dining table that the firm also designed, it floats above oak flooring that was used throughout the house, along with steamed beech millwork. "We think about the inside as a dialogue between the hard, cool stone and soft, warm wood. It marries something rugged on the exterior befitting the intensity of the coast and the big rocks in the landforms, with this beautiful lining of the soft wood that's pleasant to interact with and walk on in bare feet," Jess says.

The idea of "carved solids" is a throughline in the home's detailing. On the stairs to the lower-level bedrooms, the wood treads are tapered, like the geometries in the rest of the house. They are suspended on steel cables that form a scrim-like guardrail in the stairwell, lit by a two-story window and integral skylight that frames a tree.

The lower level is L-shaped, with the primary suite under the living and dining area facing west. A laundry room and wine cellar sit under the kitchen, and a perpendicular hallway leads to two kids' bedrooms under the pool patio. The conversation between hard and soft materials continues in the primary bathroom, where a wood tub sits in a glassy space between stone walls that extend from outside to inside. Gray limestone floors complement the walls with a warmer tone and a softer feel underfoot.

A bedroom partition, doubling as a headboard, is an art installation the architects call "Tidewall." Thick planks of claro walnut were carved to depict the tidal elevations for each week of the year. Light bounces off the 52 undulating strips at different angles, creating a glistening effect like that of water in sunlight. "It feels like going to sleep amongst shimmering waves," Jess says. "The tide chart shows the height of water above median sea level, and you can see how it relates to the moon's phases. It captures the magic of a place without making it overly literal and is a wonderful way to bring our creativity together with a beautiful sense of craftsmanship, allowing the architecture to keep working to be an echo of what inspired it." He adds: "It took several trials to get the wood finish just right. Furniture-grade was too glossy, so we reapplied a lighter coat that produced the right amount of sheen."





Window on Nature

Alongside the formal gestures that make way for the landscape, the scheme is sprinkled with small moves that invite nature studies. Stepping stones outside the guest bedroom under the entry volume beckon visitors to venture out beneath the bridge. There, a recirculating fountain built into the rocks lets guests enjoy the sound of water and produces white noise that screens the sound of traffic on Highway 1. Wall niches, including one at the entry and another in the primary bedroom, offer places to display found objects, such as shells. And a low ribbon of window provides a ground-level glimpse of the wind-sheltered garden between the two offices.

Outside, the symbiosis between natural and manmade continues. A small plunge pool with a hot tub incorporates natural rock forms, reflecting the tide pools below the house. So does the firepit on the sheltered southeast side of the house, an additional spot for enjoying the land. “On the coast, my view is that it’s better to not over structure the landscape but rather feather it into the native areas to maintain this incredible rugged and rich landscape,” Jess says.

He adds, “This residence is shaped by the confluence of what nature makes and what we make. The beauty of the Big Sur coast is that you have all these little ravines, and each one creates the microclimatic conditions for a unique ecosystem to form. One side is sheltered from the wind, while the other isn’t. Life takes hold in these nooks and crannies. That’s what Big Sur is all about.” The house excels at celebrating those conditions and creating a healthy relationship with the land, rather than one displacing the other.

Big Sur

Big Sur Coast, California

ARCHITECT: Jess Field, AIA, and Stan Field, SAIA, principals in charge; Jeffrey Pilotte, project architect, Field Architecture, Palo Alto, California

BUILDER: Hunt Brothers Construction, Monterey, California; Dowbuilt, San Francisco

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Field Architecture

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

PROJECT SIZE: 7,536 square feet

SITE SIZE: 2.27 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Joe Fletcher

KEY PRODUCTS

CLADDING: Gray quartzite

COOKTOP: Gaggenau

COUNTERTOPS: Black granite

DECKING: Ipe

ENTRY DOORS/HARDWARE: Sun Valley Bronze, custom

FAUCETS: Axor

FLOORING: White oak

HOME CONTROL SYSTEMS: Lutron

MILLWORK: Berkeley Mills, Giles Healey, custom

OUTDOOR BUILT-IN GRILL: Lynx

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Sub-Zero

WASHER/DRYER: Electrolux

WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS: Sky-Frame

WINDOWS: Reynaers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Shape Shifters

A trio of unusual sites inspires robustly original architectural responses.

BY CHERYL WEBER

Mohegan Trail

NEW SHOREHAM, RHODE ISLAND
BATES MASI + ARCHITECTS

With its sharp angles and crisp apertures, Mohegan Trail is an abstracted saltbox house in form and a force against nature in function. Located on Block Island, about 15 nautical miles from the Rhode Island coast and the East End of Long Island, New York, its construction with small-dimension timber reflects the limitations of transporting materials by passenger ferry and the scarcity of local labor. Unlike some of the Hamptons beach towns, this seasonal resort community has an informal character and a family-friendly vibe, says Paul Masi, FAIA, who was hired to design the house for a family of five. Those characteristics dovetailed

Echoing the façade treatment, exposed Douglas fir studs create a rhythmic pattern that becomes solid to provide shear strength or a backdrop for art. Threaded rods hold the 2x6s together and tie them to the foundation.

neatly with the need for construction simplicity. Even so, the design's clarity and creative detailing made art out of basic building blocks.

The long, narrow lot sits between two shrub-covered cliffs overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Their sheer faces expose two different soil geologies—grayish clay on one side and sand on the other. This condition inspired the house's earthy palette of unstained cedar siding and interiors lined almost exclusively in Douglas fir. Its massing grew from the code requirement that any footprint larger than 45 feet square had to be broken into individual components.

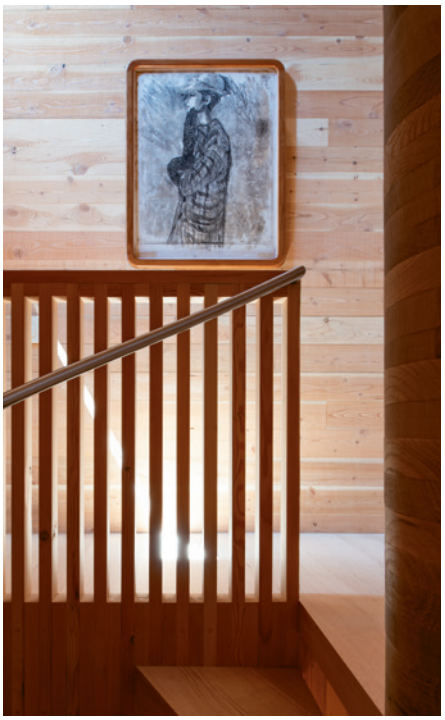
"We took it upon ourselves to say, we think we can make everything work in one volume," Paul says. Maxing out that measurement, the first floor has a central entryway that looks straight through the house to the ocean, while the great room—kitchen, dining, and living area—opens to a covered rear deck. Flanking the entrance on the street side are a guest suite and a spiral stair, with a laundry and pantry tucked behind it. Upstairs are three

more bedroom suites—two facing the water and one facing the entry garden—while a basement level contains bunk beds and a rec room.

Saltbox Assembly

In developing the design, Paul mined the island's climate and remote character. The 45-by-45-foot footprint presents the house as an object in the windswept landscape—a long tradition in these parts. While the construction is straightforward, the detailing is not. "The house has a language expressed inside and outside," he says, that came from the meager resources. Since there is no freight ferry or barge service, getting a crane to the site was out of the question. This

Meticulously aligned joists, studs, and vertical slats expose the structure's supports, while the Douglas fir cabinetry and refrigerator panels make a whole of the parts. Unglazed clay tile flooring recalls the clay deposits found on site.



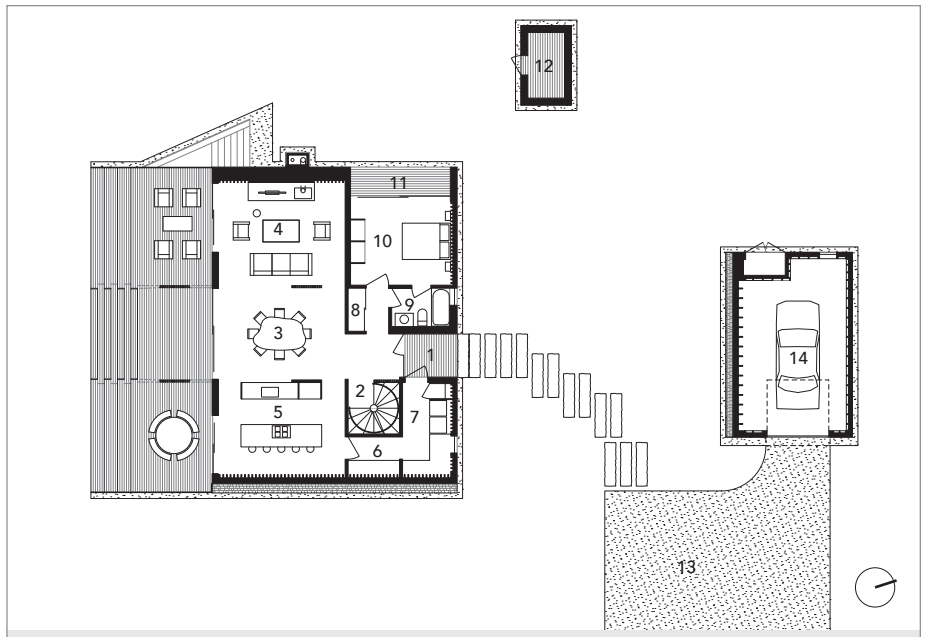
forced a pragmatic approach. "We thought about what's really necessary," he says.

The house's long, northeast-facing roof is a bulwark against harsh winter winds. "It gets extremely windy on the bluff," Paul says. "Bringing the roof down to the ground plane references the saltbox and protects the house. It's incredibly strong because the roof is tied all the way down to the foundation." A pair of wood screens on the south-facing rear of the house serves a similar purpose, supporting the deeply cantilevered porch roof and holding it down against strong gusts coming off the ocean. And copper flashing around the foundation repels moisture and insects.

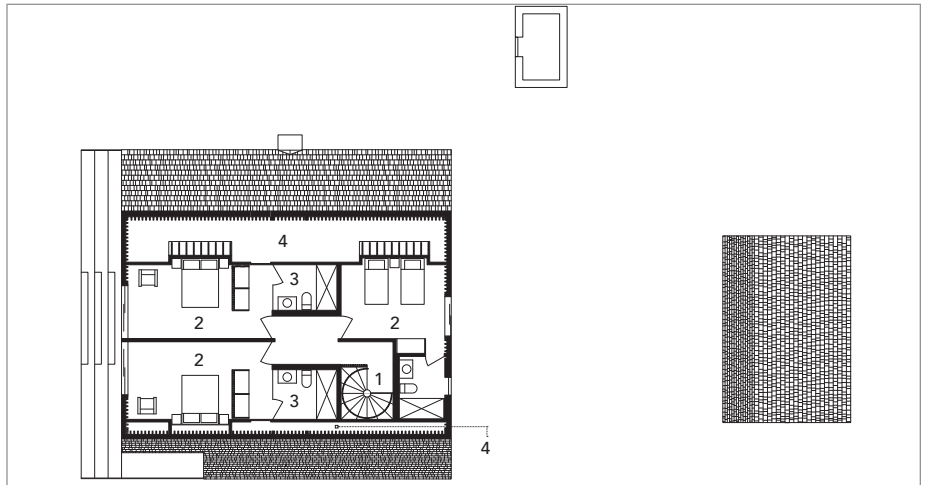
Artistry elevates ordinary materials: stair treads emerge from rings on the spiral stair's center column; a copper-paneled headboard echoes the copper-clad foundation.

For Paul, the local architecture is defined by its scale within the larger landscape. “These homes are not excessively large for a summer community,” he says. “We thought about the house as an object perched on the hill, with a plinth of copper around the base.”

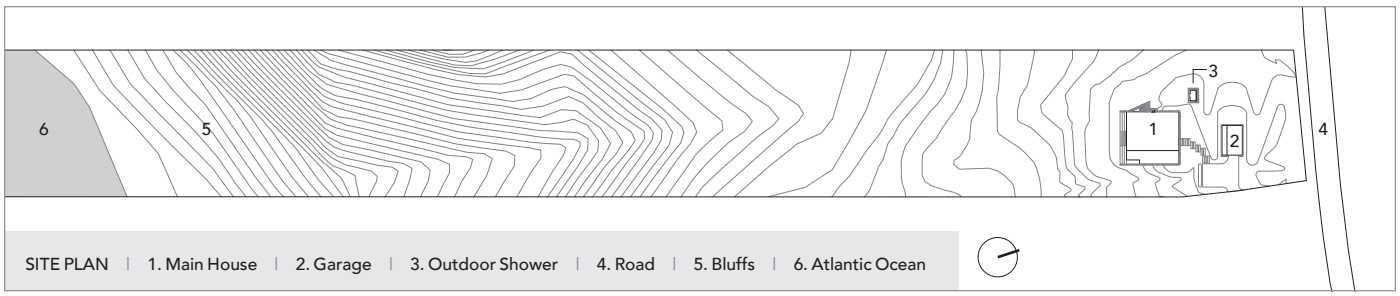
The building’s iconic saltbox shape is most recognizable on the street side. Its roof notch—a modern insertion—slices east-west, letting light into the stairwell. Subtle details add interest to the taut composition. While cedar shingles cover the roof, the building’s gable ends are clad in spaced, 2x4 cedar boards that foreshadow the interior treatment. The gapped boards cover several small windows on the front façade, creating a ghosted effect. At the entry, the boards become wider and are butted together—another reference to some of the interior treatments. They define the entrance by bringing the front door and an offset window above it into a lighter-colored field.



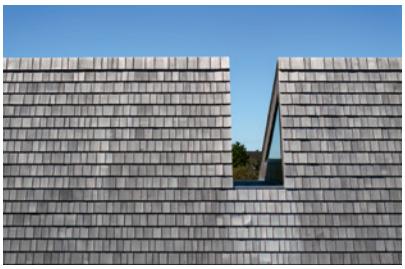
GROUND LEVEL PLAN | 1. Entry | 2. Stair | 3. Dining | 4. Living | 5. Kitchen | 6. Pantry | 7. Laundry | 8. Closet | 9. Bath | 10. Bedroom | 11. Deck | 12. Outdoor Shower | 13. Driveway | 14. Garage

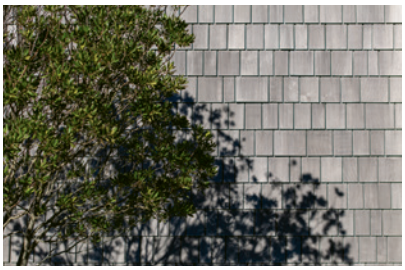


UPPER LEVEL PLAN | 1. Stair | 2. Bedroom | 3. Bath | 4. Mechanical



SITE PLAN | 1. Main House | 2. Garage | 3. Outdoor Shower | 4. Road | 5. Bluffs | 6. Atlantic Ocean





A glassy roof slot above the stairwell and thoughtfully composed cedar patterns refresh the traditional New England saltbox dwelling.

The design team chose tongue-in-groove cedar decking to sheath the structure, rather than plywood that can delaminate if exposed to moisture. The sheathing is encased in 6 inches of rigid insulation, and old-fashioned felt creates a weather barrier that is more permeable than modern options, allowing the structure to dry out if it gets wet. "We used naturally weathering materials such as copper and cedar, and no paints or stains," says Paul.

Inside, the joists and studs are on full view. Rather than using massive beams placed 16 inches on center, Paul specified smaller members with 6-inch spacing, which were easier to transport and to handle on site. "Guys with ladders put it up; it was available in local lumberyards and creates a beautiful pattern," he says. Indeed, the rooms read as wood boxes, with pattern and texture supplied by strategically exposed wall studs and vertical screens that help support the house.

Interiors are lined in construction-grade Douglas fir, including the kitchen and other cabinetry. Echoing the façade treatment, some of the wall framing is infilled with tightly spaced boards to create shear walls that double as places to hang art. "This detail emerged in areas where we needed more reinforcement," such as the backdrop to the wood stove, Paul says. "Threaded rods hold the 2x6s together to create the panel and are bolted directly to the foundation."

Mohegan Trail

New Shoreham, Rhode Island

ARCHITECT: Paul Masi, AIA, principal in charge, Bates Masi + Architects, East Hampton, New York

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Bates Masi + Architects

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Summerhill Landscape, Sag Harbor, New York

PROJECT SIZE: 2,400 square feet

SITE SIZE: 1.8 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Bates Masi + Architects

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETRY: Custom design by Bates Masi, built by Peragine Millwork

COOKING VENT HOOD: Best

COOKTOP AND OVENS: Bertazzoni

COUNTERTOPS: Corian

DECKING: Ipe

DISHWASHER: Bosch

FAUCETS: Brizo

FIREPLACE: Spartherm

FLOORING: Cle tile

OUTDOOR SHOWER: Calazzo

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Fisher & Paykel

SINKS: Corian by Evans and Paul

TOILETS: Kohler

TUB: Zuma

WASHER/DRYER: Speed Queen

WINDOWS: Arcadia

Elevating the Ordinary

Other architectural gestures underscore this casual, handmade ambiance. Unglazed clay tile on the first floor is a nod to the site's soil deposits. The swirling stair, built by a friend on Long Island, is a kit of parts with four profiles that repeat as it spirals upward. The rotating treads extend seamlessly from a pole made of stacked wood rings that ascend from the lower level to a platform on the second floor. In every room, casework plays off the exposed studs. Wood side tables in one of the bedrooms were hung on the wall, and a pleated copper panel forms the bed headboard in another.

"The knotty, construction-grade wood got us excited about using an ordinary material in a unique way," says Paul, whose firm did most of the general contractor work. Every interior element expanded from the 6-inch on-center framing: cabinetry, wood screens, flooring, and HVAC grills.

> "We took it upon ourselves to say, we think we can make everything work in one volume."
>
> —Paul Masi, FAIA

"The biggest puzzles were logistics. In the winter there are two passenger ferries a day, and more in summer, but they are crowded with tourists," he says. "We used some local craftsmen to frame the house, but everyone else had to be moved there from Rhode Island and Long Island."

Inevitably, this led to tricky construction scheduling. "The people who did the brick tile were excited about it, but after two weeks of being on the island, they were going stir crazy and went off-island to see their families," Paul says. Still, he attributes the project's success to the care these workers took with common materials. "Most of the construction out there is very ordinary," he says. "This required another level of thinking and a higher level of craft. I commend a lot of the craftsmen for making that effort to hit these alignments."

A final piece of art resides inside the front door. A callout to the house's copper details, the design team used copper furniture tacks to create a topographical wall map of Block Island. A star pinpoints the house's location, and a void indicates the empty flat spaces of the harbor and wetland. Projects like this one require everyone to go the distance, not just in travel but in command of the details. "There is an element of difficulty in getting to the island, which makes it exciting and memorable," Paul says. Thankfully, Mohegan Trail does that journey justice.

Architect: Wright Design **Builder:** Morgan-Keefe Builders **Interior Designer:** Wright Design Interiors Studio **Photographer:** Rebecca Lehde with Inspiro 8 Studios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PTR House

POTOMAC, MARYLAND
ROBERT M. GURNEY, FAIA, ARCHITECT

Sometimes, even suburbia presents the opportunity to design something unexpected in response to an unusual site or client. Bob Gurney's client, an entrepreneur who starts and sells companies, adamantly did not want anything like the pseudo-traditional dwellings in this neighborhood of large lots just outside Washington, D.C. Its dog-legged shape inspired Bob's creativity, but no more than

the optimistic owner himself. “A lot of clients want something like I’ve done before. This was a client I could try something different with, and they would be receptive,” he says, admitting that it forced him to step out of his comfort zone.

Not only were the owners open-minded, they expected to be shown something unusual. Just to be sure, Bob presented two schemes—a dark, angular structure and an orthogonal design that more closely resembled his modernist portfolio. The first scheme prevailed.

Designed for a couple with a college-age daughter, the polygonal-shaped shell expands and contracts in response to views, sunlight, and the need for screening. Corrugated metal roof planes fold down over sections of the charred wood walls, providing both privacy from the main road and a thickened wall system for noise control. Within the envelope, irregularly shaped glass panes are divided by mullions that abstract the site’s tree branches.

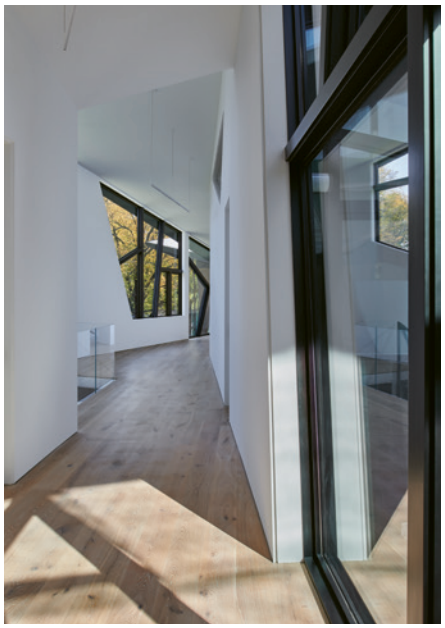
For the architect, this risk-taking required a different design approach. "I worked with two graduate-student summer interns, one doing the drawings, the other doing models," Bob says. "We'd build one and cut it up and rework it. We designed the whole thing off sketches and 3D physical models and didn't go to the computer until it was fully designed. It was a fun process."

Making Space

The building's shape and floor plan grew from a desire for the main living area and primary suite to have the longest views across the 2-acre lot. "Spatially, it became this challenge of where to have high ceilings to get natural light, and where to close down because of noise and unwanted views," Bob says. "We worked on lots of different volumes with models. The roofs also had to slope in a way that water would drain from them properly, and we wanted the geometry to reflect the fluidity of what was happening on the interior. Simple models got more complex as we were trying to solve different problems."

The cantilevered second-story office offers a soothing sense of compression under soaring ceilings. Angular windows frame snippets of view. The kitchen island echoes the office's prow form. Sunlight projects patterns at the roofline's peak.

Oriented roughly north-west-southeast, the long volumes are bisected by an entry hall with a guest bedroom behind it. The roof volume on the right contains the open kitchen, stair hall, and living/dining area, with a second-floor bedroom and office. This section's butterfly-shaped roofline soars steeply to its highest points more than 20 feet above the stairwell and the living room, allowing the office's acute angle to cantilever over the living/dining space. Window walls let in southeastern sunlight and views of the rear garden, while the roof folds down to become a wall along the



front elevation, partially closing it off from the road. This metal plane floats away from the charred wood walls that contain the windows, providing a place to run ductwork and add another layer of insulation.

The windows arrived as individual units that builder Al Otto's crew mulled together during installation. "Because the windows are spaced only 2 inches apart from each other, it wasn't possible to have adequate structure with conventional framing lumber," says Al, who relished the opportunity to be creative on this geometrically challenging project. "Instead, we used 1-inch steel tubing to form the support structure between the units." To fasten the window units in place and achieve a good thermal break in such a tight space, they used a self-adhering membrane and the manufacturer's matching 925 sealant. "On the exterior side, the windows are finished with a preformed 2-inch mullion cap," Al says. "Our tolerance for installation had to be within a 1/16 of an inch for the entire window formation for the caps to snap into place correctly."

The opposite end of the house contains a garage and guest suite on the first floor, with a primary bedroom and gym room above. Beyond the garage, the owners host art events in a long, detached gallery that juts into the landscape on the northwest. The primary suite looks down on the gallery's planted roof and playful pattern of circular skylights. Nearby, a vermillion corrugated metal building with a yellow door holds the gallery's mechanical equipment.

Repeating Geometries

Pops of color also appear in the black-and-white interiors, which take their cues from the dark cladding. Regarding the exterior, the architect's original idea was to use Galvalume with the charred wood, before deciding on all black. "We felt it would be better if the colors were consistent—to become more about the form than a change in materials," he says.

But if the front elevation seems largely inscrutable, the interiors are awash in light and views of the gardens

The jutting office made room for a light-filled library, sitting area, and desk space for two. A red mechanical shed and planted art-gallery roof are visible from the primary bedroom.

A charred wood wall defines the entrance to the art gallery on the north end of the house. Circles of sunlight and sky enliven the interiors.

and sky. Apple-red metal columns support the office overhang that slices through the main living space, providing a moment of compression under the expansive ceilings. There, a hot-rolled steel fireplace separates the dining and living area, while the Corian-clad kitchen island appears to be carved from a single material. This all-white space is enriched by a gray marble backsplash that rises from countertop to ceiling, recalling a cosmic galaxy.

Behind the kitchen, the stairway's welded wire railings and metal frame pick up on the house's angles. "It's a minimalist palette; this project is more about the space than the materials," Bob says. Concrete floors are switched

PTR House

Potomac, Maryland

ARCHITECT: Robert M. Gurney, FAIA, principal in charge; Claire Larsen Andreas, AIA, project architect, Robert M. Gurney, FAIA, Architect, Washington, D.C.

BUILDER: Al Otto, Timberworks Construction, Frederick, Maryland

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Therese Baron Gurney, Baron Gurney Interiors, Washington, D.C.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Kevin Campion, Campion Hruby Landscape Architects, Annapolis, Maryland

PROJECT SIZE: 6,000 square feet

SITE SIZE: 2 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Anice Hoachlander, HD Photo

KEY PRODUCTS:

BACKSPLASH: Marble Systems

CABINETRY: Allegheny Wood Works

CLADDING: Western States (metal), Nakamoto Forestry (wood)

COOKTOP AND OVENS: Miele

COUNTERTOPS: Corian

DISHWASHER: Miele

ENTRY DOORS: Marvin

FASTENERS: Simpson

FAUCETS: Graff

FIREPIT: ORE Fire Dish

FIREPLACE: The Bio Flame

FLOORING: Classic Floor Designs

GARAGE DOORS: Clopay

HARDWARE: Mockett

HOME CONTROL SYSTEMS: Lutron

HVAC SYSTEMS: Owens Comfort Systems

LANDSCAPE AUTOMATIC GATES AND GATE OPENERS: Campion Hruby Landscape Architects

LIGHTING: Bega (exterior), DMF, Sonneman, Foscarini, Flos

LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS: Lutron

ROOFING: Western States, Furbish (green roof)

PAINTS, STAINS, COATINGS: Benjamin Moore

PASSAGE DOORS: Emtek

REFRIGERATOR: Miele

SINKS: Kraus, Nameek's, Duravit

SKYLIGHTS: DALYTE

THERMAL AND MOISTURE BARRIERS: Henry Company Blueskin housewrap

TUBS: ADM

UNDERLAYMENT/SHEATHING: ZIP System

VANITIES: Duravit

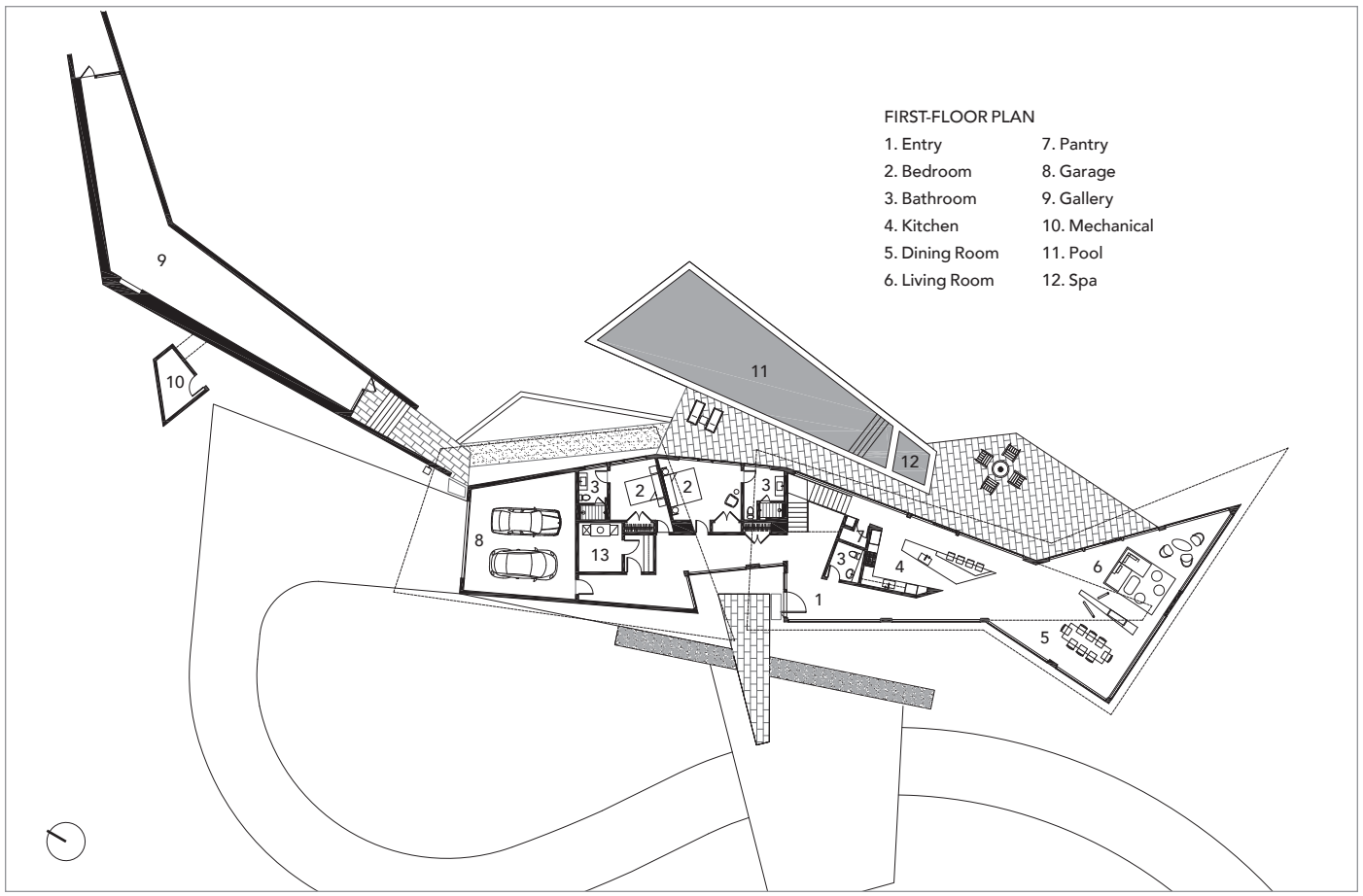
VENTILATION: Panasonic

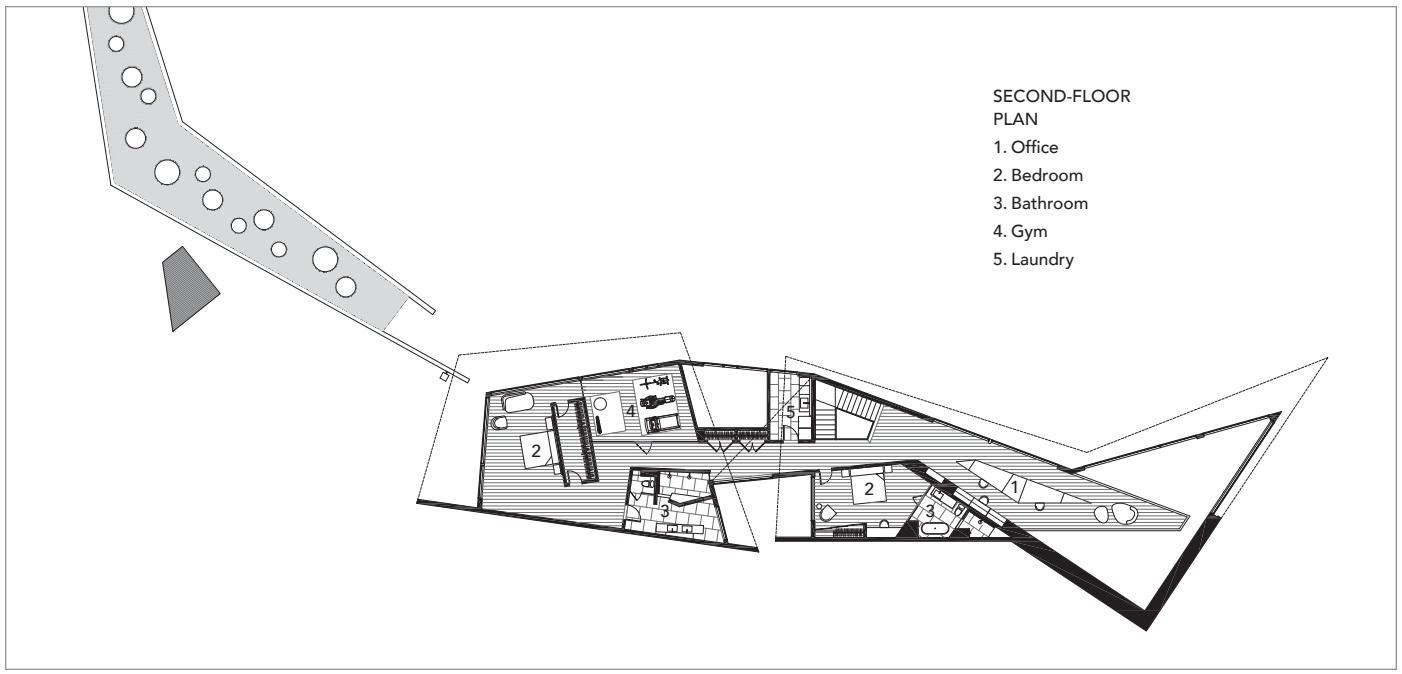
WASHER/DRYER: GE

WINDOWS: Marvin direct-set series

WINDOWS SELF-ADHERING MEMBRANE AND SEALANT: Henry Blueskin

WINE REFRIGERATOR: Miele





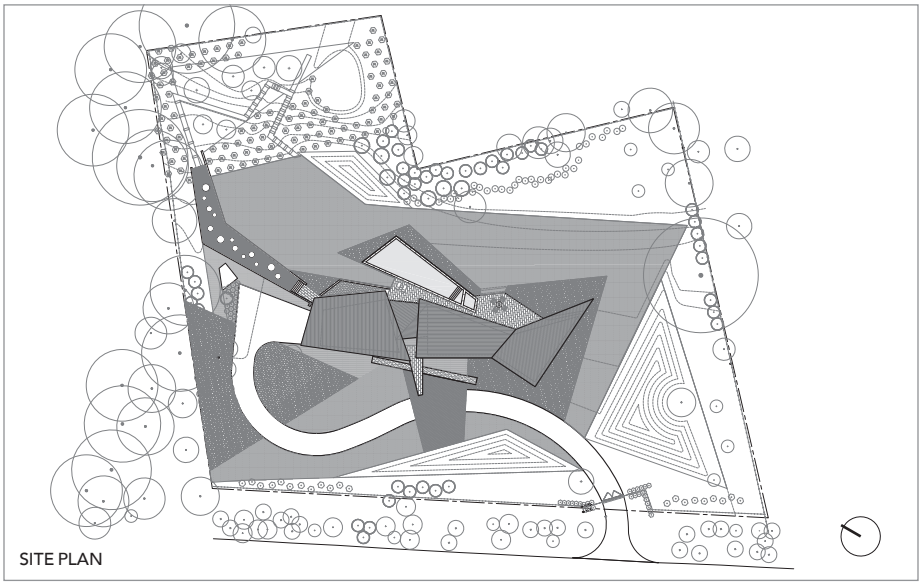
out for wood on the second level.

Projecting the prow-shaped office over the lofty living space made room for a library and a long, angled desk where the couple can both work.

These geometries repeat in the landscape. Given that the buildable area was a virtual blank slate, the team created a series of landforms to make use of dirt excavated for the foundation and pool, rather than paying to haul it away. With two grassy berms in front and a more trapezoidal rise and fall at the narrow point of the backyard, they provide additional acoustical and visual screening.

"A lot of clients want something like I've done before. This was a client I could try something different with, and they would be receptive."

—Robert Gurney, FAIA



SITE PLAN

After designing the pool terrace, driveway, and a trapezoidal parking court at the front entry, the team invited local landscape architects Campion Hruby to sculpt ornamental grass garden beds that respond to the architecture.

"For us it became a comprehensive project in terms of where we have lawn, where we have tall grasses, and the way the drive meanders through the site," says Bob. This approach carried through with walks around the property, like the path at the far side of the gallery that weaves through a bamboo grove.

"They wanted a house that would read as a piece of sculpture and was unique and made them happy every time they came home," he says. "They're very private people, and this place gives them a lot of pleasure." RD

Lake Tahoe Cabin

INCLINE VILLAGE, NEVADA
RO|ROCKETT DESIGN

Incline Village's three cabins dot a mountainside above Crystal Bay, an inlet of Lake Tahoe. For the client, the dark-stained buildings bring back fond memories of the lakeside cabin where he spent his childhood summers. For Ro | Rockett Design principals Jason Ro, AIA, and Zac Rockett, AIA, the project was an opportunity to create a one-of-a-kind spatial experience that brings the site's geological features into focus. Linked by a glass bridge that skirts a giant boulder, the three gabled structures are an example of the inventive customi-

zations that can occur when the land is allowed to take center stage.

Despite his nostalgia for the location, the repeat client was developing the house for sale. Thus, the only design direction he provided was for a cabin-like dwelling for a large imaginary family. A five-bedroom house stretches the cabin concept, however, and rather than trying to fit the program into one structure, the architects quickly began exploring ways to break it apart and link the parts together in an interesting way.

What transpired was a series of buildings that step down a steep incline toward the lake, each with a walkout lower level. "We started with the idea of a cabin with a pitched roof and a scale that almost feels like an object," Jason says. "You can recognize the cabin, but the spatial experience is sequential as you walk through." The first cabin contains a discrete garage and front door at the street, descending to a guest suite and enclosed glass bridge. The ground-level bridge angles around a large granite rock outcrop, passes the primary suite cabin with a bunk room, bath, and laundry beneath, and leads into the great room cabin. Located closest to the water, this volume also contains two downstairs bedrooms and a rec room. The great room and a covered outdoor deck span the entire east-facing façade, where a 43-foot-wide retractable glass system opens to the deck.

Each cabin is calibrated to the landscape. "Because the buildings aren't in perfect alignment—some bending to

An existing boulder provided an impetus for the project's footprint. The glass bridge bends around it, navigating between the primary suite and the great room cabin overlooking the lake.

Swathes of steel anchor opposite gable ends of the great room, defining the kitchen's back wall on the north and fireplace storage on the south. A 43-foot-long sliding glass wall and deck span the east side of the building.

acknowledge the road and get around the boulder—we started to offset the forms enough that you create pocket gardens as you step down toward the lake," Jason says, adding that the drop in grade provides privacy from the road. The middle cabin's lower-level bunk room emerges to a pool terrace with a firepit and hot tub, while the lakefront cabin's back side circulates out to a deck on the upslope and a private garden featuring the boulder.

Custom Fit

All architecture arises from constraints, and there were plenty on this site. "We've found that constraints are generally really good drivers, an additional ingredient to throw in," Jason says. "The kink in the bridge wasn't originally there—at first we envisioned an orthogonal bridge. As we started to fight the contours on the hillside, the arrangement caused us to bump up against height limits." It also bumped up against the large boulder

they didn't want to disturb. By bending the bridge, they were able to both preserve the boulder and conceal a long view into the rec room. Now the view emerges only as one rounds the corner.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency imposed its own "scenic scoring" on the view from the water. With its black-stained western red cedar siding, applied vertically to echo the grain of the forest, "the house is threaded through the landscape and doesn't announce itself too boldly," says Zac. "All glazing that faces the water had to be super low reflectivity—less than 3 percent. They are quite stringent, for good reason, but it made for a pretty involved process."

So did the construction logistics. With almost no parking on the narrow road, builder Joe Stewart shuttled crew from a hotel a half mile away and stored the building materials in a resort parking lot nearby. Concrete stem walls retain the cut on the back side of each cabin. To hold up under some of the heaviest snow loads in the country, most of the superstructure, including the bridge spans, is steel with wood framing infill.

"The great room has a big steel moment frame to create the large opening and to hold the sliding door system," Zac says. "The glass does the structural work, so you can bury the frame entirely with nothing in the way of the view. Its tracks are flush at the sill and the header; all you see are these narrow vertical strips. The glass panels can open from the middle or on two ends, forming an operable wall that seamlessly connects you to the deck, about 20 feet above the ground. And the glass railing has minimalist steel supports; it's all about the lake once you're out there."

Blackened steel reappears in the lower-level rec room. *Above:* The lake is on full view in the primary bedroom and bath, where a limestone wall brings the outdoors in.

Local Focus

Echoing the exterior, the interior material palette was deployed as a series of defining elements. An example is the kitchen's back wall, where matte-black laminate cabinets and a black granite countertop read as a dark block anchoring the gabled end of the great room. The countertop projects past a full-height window, offering the cook a view down to the lake.

Across the room, blackened steel on the fireplace hearth and surrounding cabinetry doors creates a similar impression. Those dark swathes offset the warm white-oak walls, floors, ceilings, and casework, which hides the refrigerator and other appliances. "We tried to let the kitchen be as quiet as possible so you're not staring at two ovens at your dinner party," Jason says. "Then the white oak island becomes this furniture moment with a beautiful gray slab countertop with integral sink. We lowered the faucet switches down into the sink with a secondary ledge, so they don't protrude from the countertop."

Lake Tahoe Cabin

Incline Village, Nevada

ARCHITECT: Zac Rockett, AIA, and Jason Ro, AIA, principals in charge; David Kornmeyer, Andrew Alexander Green, Anthony Giannini, Ro | Rockett Design, Sausalito, California

BUILDER: Joe Stewart, SierraCon, South Lake Tahoe, California

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: CFBR Structural Group, Reno, Nevada

CIVIL ENGINEER: Tieslau Civil Engineering, Tahoe City, California

GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER: Reno Tahoe Geo Associates, Reno, Nevada

MEP ENGINEER: Melas Energy Engineering, Nevada City, California

LIGHTING DESIGNER: Revolver Design, Berkeley, California

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Design Workshop, Stateline, Nevada

PROJECT SIZE: 5,500 square feet

SITE SIZE: 0.41 acre

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Adam Rouse Photography

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETRY: Victory Woodworks

CABINETRY HARDWARE: Sun Valley Bronze

CLADDING: Western red cedar rainscreen

COOKING VENT HOOD: Thermador

COOKTOP: Gaggenau

COUNTERTOPS: Salvatori stone

DISHWASHER: Miele

ELEVATOR: Inclinator

ENTRY DOORS: Custom FritsJurgens

FAUCETS: KCW, MGS, INOX, Jentle Jet

FIREPLACES: Ortal, Isokern

FLOORING: Listone Giordano

GARAGE DOORS: Clopay

GARBAGE DISPOSER: InSinkErator

ICEMAKER: Sub-Zero

MILLWORK: Victory Woodworks

OUTDOOR GRILL: Wolf

OVENS: Miele

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Gaggenau

ROOFING: Metal Sales Standing Seam

SKYLIGHTS: VELUX

SIDING VENT, FURRING AND BATTING STRIPS: Cor-A-Vent

SINKS: Custom, Salvatori, MTI Jentle Jet

SNOW GUARDS: Rocky Mountain Snow Guards

STAIR RAIL: Q-Rail frameless glass guard rail

THERMAL AND MOISTURE BARRIERS: Sopraseal

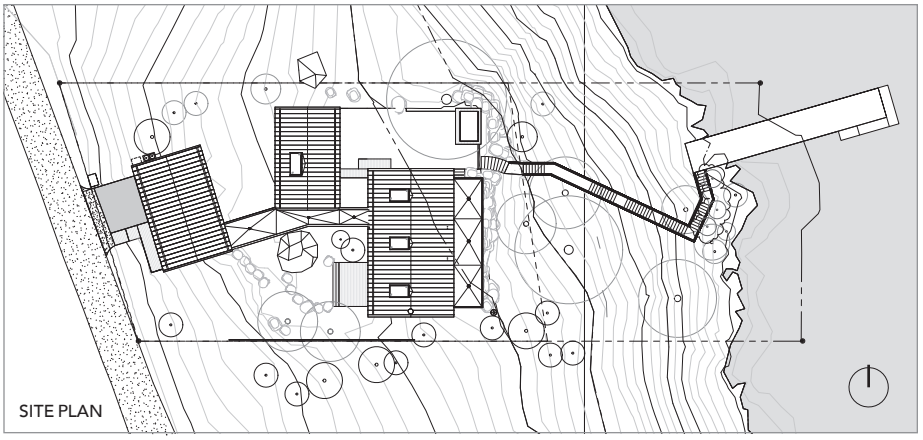
TOILETS: TOTO

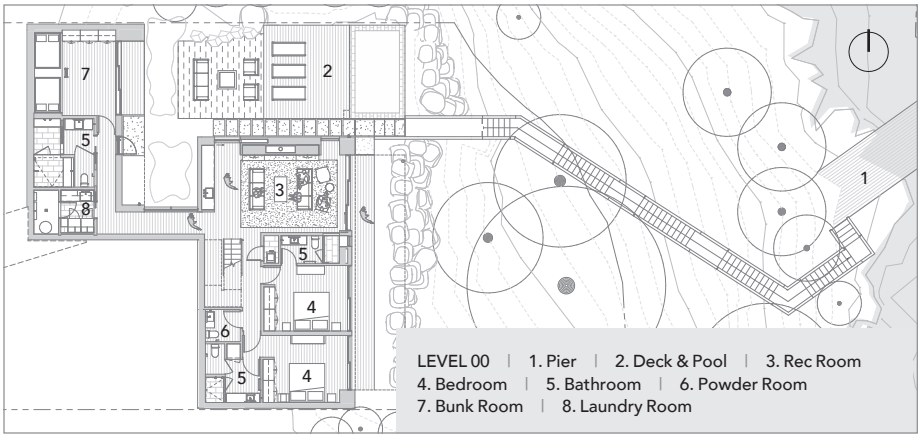
TUBS: Blu Bathworks

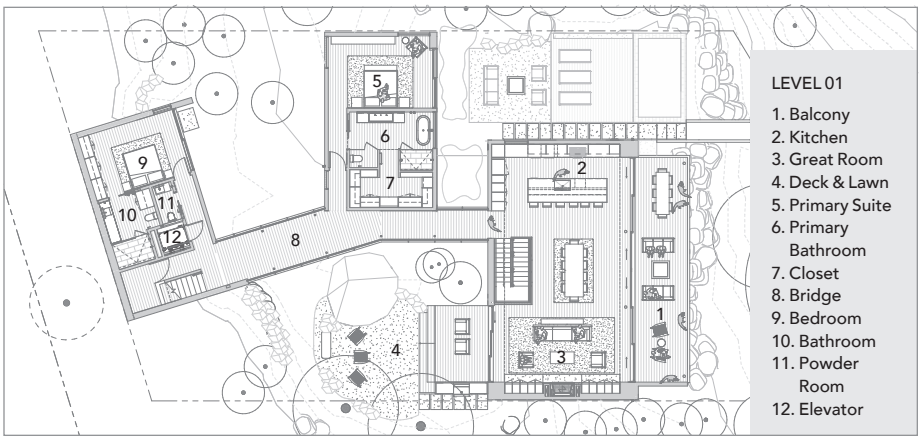
VANITIES/LAVS: Salvatori

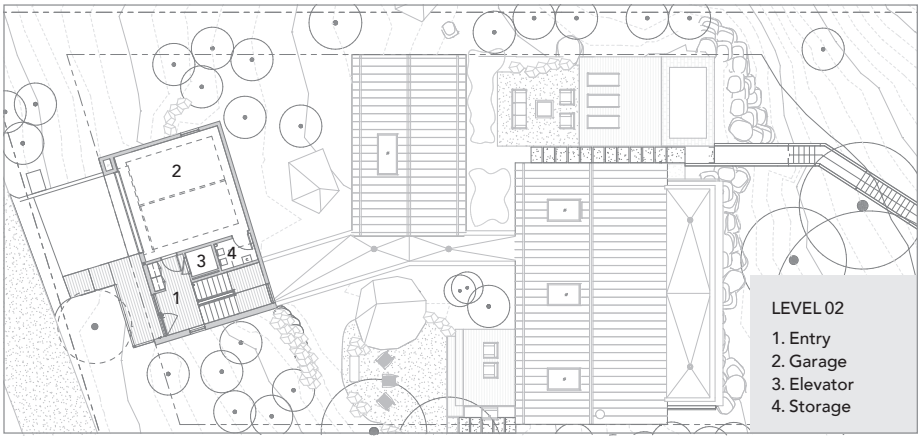
WASHER/DRYER: Whirlpool

WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS/WINDOWS: Panoramah!









Stone accents tie into the tones of the granite landscape. Cleft-grade limestone clads a gable end wall in the primary bathroom, where the vanity countertop, trough sink, and backsplash are a swirl of gray-and-white marble. Gray, "KitKat"-like wall tiles in a guest bath and raked tiles in the powder room lend textural interest within the neutral color scheme.

"In projects where we have a major vocabulary of three or four materials, the bathrooms might receive a beautiful stone slab so there's always a focal point," Jason says. "Especially when projects are developed for sale, we try to err on the side of neutral but use enough detailing and design to make it feel bespoke and custom, allowing the end user to bring their own lifestyle into the home."

This approach works just as well for regular clients, he adds. "We like to imbue the architecture with a timelessness and universality so that as

projects change hands, they don't need to be changed. A lot of North Tahoe is so rooted in 1970s architecture. We're always asking how we can freshen things up and not get so specific that it gets left behind as time passes."

Lake Tahoe Cabin also acknowledges the wild creatures that enjoy their lives here. In addition to careful excavation around rocks and trees, disturbed areas were replanted with natives that support insect habitat and pollinators, and bird-safe glazing minimizes hazards for birds. It's a well-considered house that blends into its surroundings and stands out for its ability to coexist with nature. RD

Resilience in Practice

BY MARK ASHER, AIA

This year, the Custom Residential Architects Network Symposium returns to the East Coast with resilient architecture top of mind. The architects of CRAN will gather in Alexandria, Virginia, a city that beautifully embodies the rich history and forward-thinking spirit we seek to honor in our architecture. While our nation's capital wrestles with the future, nearby Alexandria is a colonial city steeped in the past. The contrast seems fitting for a profession that must so often balance both.

The symposium takes place under the banner of "Resilience in Practice." In architecture, trends come and go, but "resilience" isn't one of them. No longer an abstract aspiration, it has become a design imperative. Rising sea levels on one coast and wildfires on the other buffet our profession and our conscience. But we are a resilient profession. Architects are constantly re-inventing themselves, their work, and their practices. At our core, we are inventors.

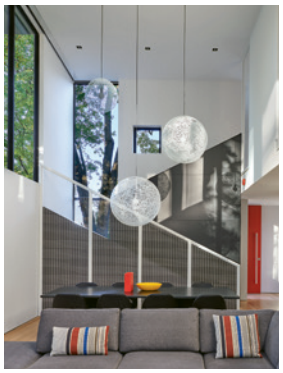
Reflecting the skills and diversity of the practice of architecture, this year's symposium includes several award-winning residential architects and allied professionals as speakers. Among them, renowned architectural photographer Anice Hoachlander, Allied AIA, who will share her insights from project to portfolio. Deborah Buelow, AIA, of Cedar Architects discusses the lessons of Passive House design. Christine Williamson, assistant professor of architecture at Virginia Tech, presents her commonsense approach to the building sciences. Kermit Baker, Honorary AIA and chief economist for AIA National, provides his business outlook. And Brittany Meyer, director of public policy at the AIA, outlines the organization's federal advocacy efforts on behalf of affordable housing, climate-responsive standards, and codes modernization.

Photos: Anice Hoachlander

CRAN Tour: Barnes Vance's Shingle-style house overlooking the Potomac will open to symposium attendees.

Also on the program are architect Robert Gurney, FAIA, and interior design partner Therese Baron Gurney, who have compiled an inspiring body of work and an equally impressive list of design awards. Robert and Therese share their experiences and unique approach to collaboration, where exterior composition and interior design merge to create an enhanced architectural experience.

In a CRAN tradition, a local historian—in this case, Bill Conkey, AIA, historic preservation architect for the City of Alexandria—guides us through the town's rich history and preservation efforts.



CRAN Tour: Robert M.Gurney, FAIA's Hempstead House, a renovation of a 1990s home in Bethesda, Maryland, features interiors by Therese Baron Gurney, ASID.

And, in a CRAN symposium first, the president-elect of AIA National is a featured speaker. Illya Azaroff, FAIA, is an internationally recognized leader in disaster mitigation, adaptation, regenerative design, and resilient planning strategies. His expertise and election to AIA president could not be more timely, and we look forward to seeing him. Illya will also participate in a panel discussion focusing on the architect's role in disaster response and recovery.

The year's home tour promises to be a spectacular event. The Capital Area CRAN is a bountiful environment with three active chapters. Several architects speaking at the symposium have featured projects on the tour—Deborah Buelow and Robert Gurney mentioned above, along with award-winning founder of KUBE Architecture, Janet Bloomberg, FAIA; David Jameson, FAIA; Richard Williams, FAIA; and Barnes Vance.

CRAN Tour: KUBE Architecture's Dual Modern house in Kensington, Maryland, is a renovation and addition to a house by local Mid-century Modernist Charles Goodman.

We anticipate a truly inspiring lineup of sessions with exceptional insights and access to these homes. Of course, the hallmark of the CRAN symposium is the ongoing connection of residential architects. We are a unique facet of a unique profession. CRAN itself embodies the architecture of community. And community is inspiration. Please join us in Old Town Alexandria this September to reminisce with old colleagues, make new friends, and be inspired.

Out with the Ordinary

1

2

3

4

1. GAME VROOM

Architects enjoy designing game rooms for clients, but cringe to see them outfitted with homely equipment. Enter a new collaboration between Brandt Design Studio and renowned Italian car company Pininfarina. The Vici pool table is first in a series to include ping pong, mahjong, "and beyond."
Brandtdesign.studio.com

2. SMOOTH MOVES

Going gas-free doesn't mean life in the slow cooking lane. Wolf's Professional Induction Range claims "lightning fast" burners. The largest zone has 5,500-watt boost to ensure the largest cookware feels the heat. "Dual VeriFlow" convection ovens promise multi-rack circulation.
Subzero-wolf.com

3. DOOR PRIZE

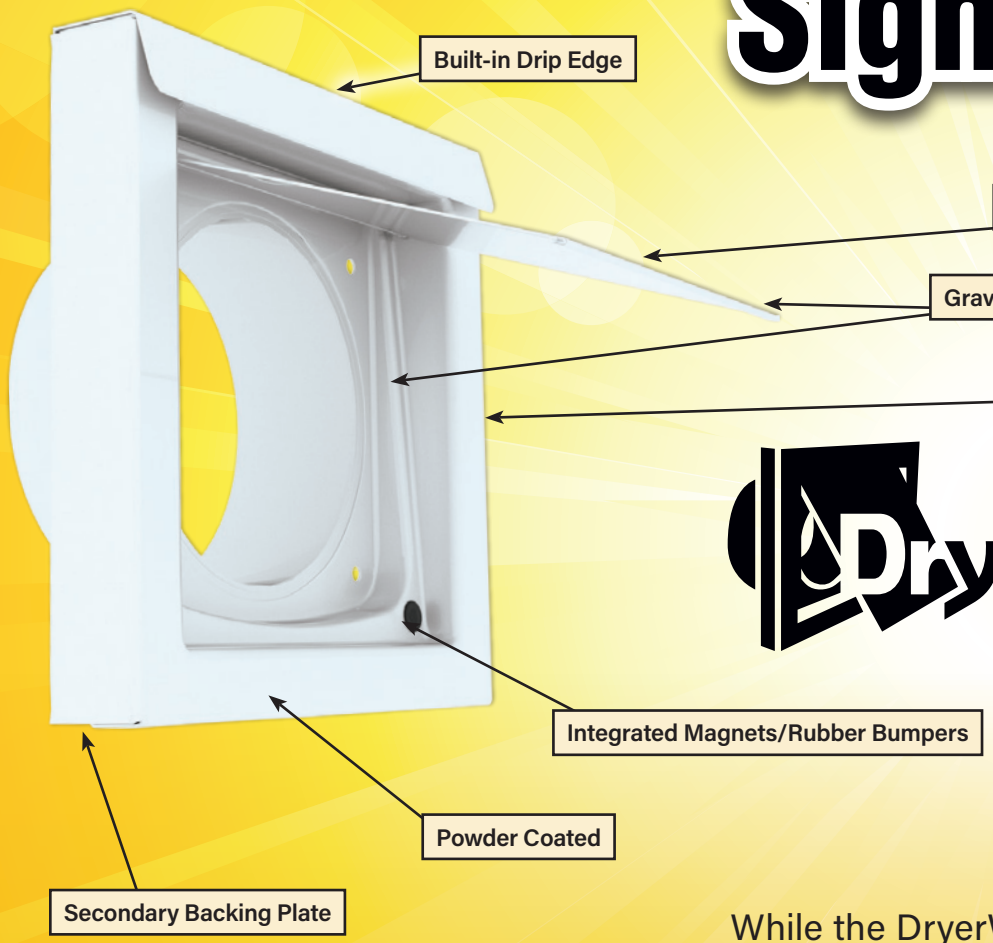
Kolbe is partnering with Pawport on a pre-installed pet door option for some of its window and door products. The weather-sealed Ultimate Door System uses a Bluetooth smart tag on the pet's collar, eliminating unwanted visitors. Functionality can also be controlled by smartphone app.
Kolbewindows.com

4. COLD COMFORT

Hot tubs are a coveted item in many abodes, but the latest indulgence is the ice bath. Teaming with wellness guru Dr. Jonathan Leary of Remedy Place, which claims it's the first social wellness club, Kohler is launching a line of products geared to self care, including the x Remedy Place Ice Bath.
Kohler.com

Upon Closer Inspection Excellence Stands Out

Sight To See



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Barn Dreams

CERTON CREEK FARMS
CLAYTON KORTE

Sometimes when clients ask for an architect's help on a farmhouse, what they're really craving is the outbuildings a farm property necessitates. What the heart truly wants is a tractor and all its accoutrements. Indeed, Brian Korte's client found the firm from its standout work on light industrial buildings, such as wineries, ranches, and barns. "He saw one of our vineyard barns published," says Brian. "And he has a few acres of vineyards planted, along with all sorts of other fruits."

But there was also a vintage farmhouse to deal with, and it was not the stuff that dreams are made of. "It was kind of amazing someone was living there," says Brian. "It's a dog of an 1,800-square-foot house." Project architect Josh Nieves concurs, "It was not plumb in any way."

Together, they determined to keep elements of the stone foundation and existing wood framing ("it's about being good stewards") and weave in a simpatico new structure to facilitate the client's rugged rural life. "He didn't want anything that would need paint," says Brian. "The shingles will gray, the weathering steel will patina, and the zinc will turn a dull gray—it will all be its own thing over time." A tight thermal envelope, ground-based PV array, and triple-glazed Zola windows will counter Michigan's harsh winters.

And the coveted barn? It will be a simple rectangle, Josh explains, "with the same roof structure and cladding as the western addition to the house but a little less precious." Less precious, perhaps, but likely no less loved.—*S. Claire Conroy*

Architect: Brian Korte, FAIA, principal; Josh Nieves, project architect, Clayton Korte; site size: 120 acres; project size: 2,640 square feet (house, conditioned), 1,588 (barn); renderings: Clayton Korte.

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