

RD

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN



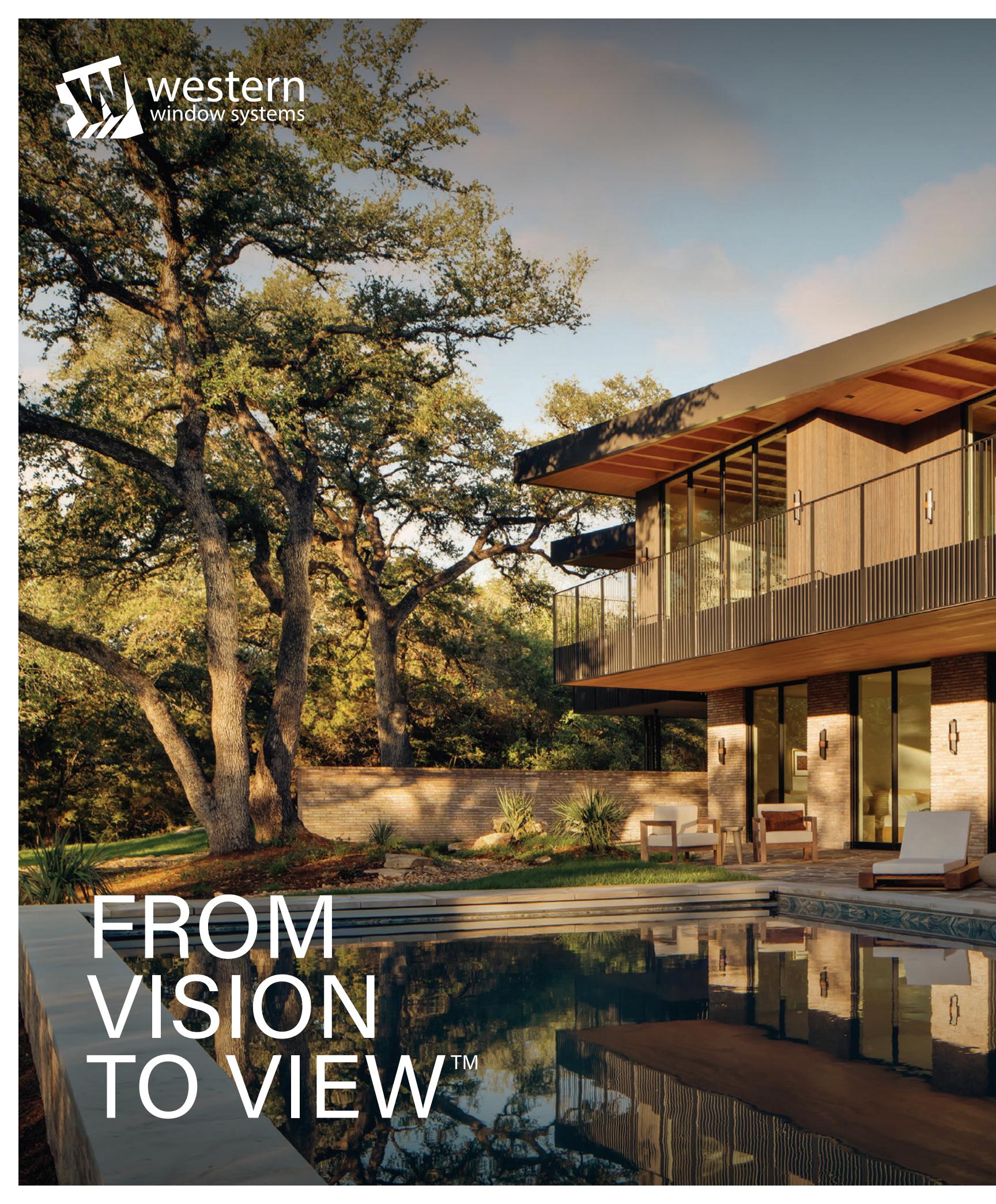
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VOL. 6, 2025

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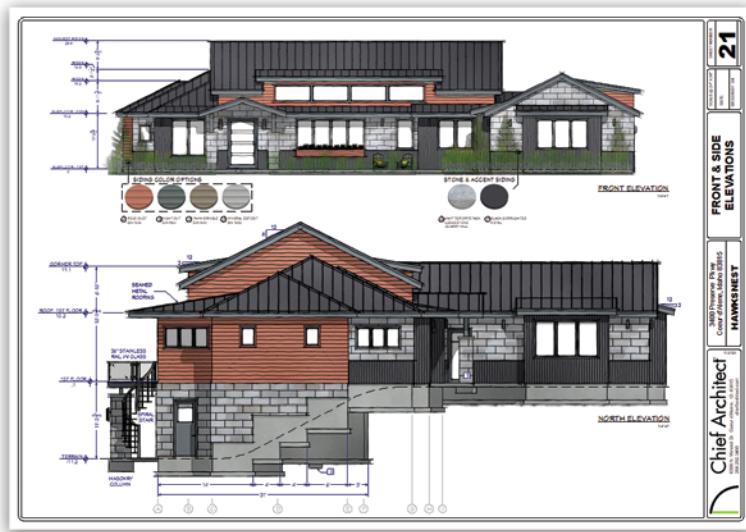
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Beyond Style



Have you noticed, there's lot of bad modernism cropping up these days? Modern design has been ascendant for the last several decades, and that was refreshing—up to a point. You know when major window manufacturers and cabinet makers address a trend with product introductions that the movement has gone mainstream. There has to be a very big market for them to make that investment. And apparently, now there is. However, once absorbed into the mainstream, prevailing styles can lose their luster.

We've always had inferior examples of every architectural style, but for some reason, at least to me, poorly executed modernism is especially painful to see. Every element intended to be dynamic—a roofline, the fenestration, the arrangement of volumes—is instead heavy-handed and clumsy.

Much of the wrongdoing is a matter of proportion. Modernism was never about excess, but many of these speculative modern houses are aimed at high-end luxury buyers. Builder/developers try to woo those buyers with sheer, eye-popping size—huge kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms, outdoor entertainment areas, spa features, and so on. In Atlanta, where I live, it's not uncommon to see one of these huge, motley modern houses on a quarter-acre lot. And, no doubt, a benign '60s ranch house was scraped off the lot to make way for the new, chic behemoth.

Americans do still love their big houses and they love a deal, so there is an appetite for these unfortunate creations. And builders will continue to bring them to market at a competitive price, chasing style but sacrificing the costs of architectural design time, material quality, and site size to do so. Alas, these houses are, like empty calories, ultimately unsatisfying. In the worst cases, they are a pox on the neighborhood of older, more modest houses.

We all know Mies van Der Rohe's observation that "less is more." When it comes to building resolutely big houses, the flip side is also true: more requires more. To do a large house successfully takes more design talent, more skillful craft, more acreage to spread out the program without overwhelming the site. And it calls for much, much higher-quality materials. I would argue that it also benefits greatly from design thinking that rises above a recognizably specific style.

This issue is devoted to houses that are stylistic chameleons. Modernists might call them traditional, and traditionalists might call them modern. Some are sizeable, too. But, with ample design talent, craft, and acreage applied, they are successful examples of their own individual aesthetics. They are beyond trends bound to lose their luster over time. They're unlikely to offend the neighborhood. And, most important, they are certain to satisfy and delight their owners for a long time to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Claire Conroy".

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The Conversations of CRAN

This year's CRAN symposium in Alexandria, Virginia, was my sixth. So I recognize the patterns and the people. And I continue to marvel at both. I hope others do as well. Just as it was with my first conference, I never leave here without being enthused about what we do and feeling so grateful to meet these unbelievably talented and passionate people. CRAN celebrates great residential architecture, inspiring us to be better architects. Artificial Intelligence may be looming, but the intelligence here is real and not artificial. And that's our strength; it's easy to feel we're the last humanists in a binary age of zeros and ones.

Architects are a quotable lot, from Mies' "Less is more" to Kahn's famous quip, "I asked a brick what it wants to be." (An arch, by the way—it wants to be an arch.) But with an ear to the ground, I heard it all around us. Virginia Tech's Christine Walker began her presentation on the thermal building envelope by stating, "The best defense against liability is competence." I think I'll store that one away for future use. During the roundtable discussion on resilience, Leo Marmol, FAIA, slipped in almost unnoticed, "Let me show you what happens when design leads." Indeed, I'll save that one too.

CRAN is the connection and comfort of community. We may not find it elsewhere. As residential architects—most of us from small firms—we juggle



Photos: RD Staff

The annual symposium house tour took attendees to projects by Colleen Healey and KUBE.

the hand grenades of the everyday: schedules, budgets, human resources, and zoning codes. And then there's the actual design work. The everyday of our design profession is much harder than we let on. But here at CRAN, we get community, and that esprit de corps is vitally important.

I can recap just a handful of conversations — each is its own podcast in waiting. At dinner with old and new friends, we recounted the laughter and the tears of starting our own practices. In the sponsors' hall, I was asked by another architect to describe my biggest failure and most memorable success. Let me count the ways. Anywhere else, it would just be a bad interview question, but here it is asked in earnest and spins off in a hundred other stories. In passing, I was happy to tell a vendor how reluctant I was to use their product, but it has now become a staple in our office. With resilience as the theme, I spoke with another about air conditioning loads and the benefits of screening the glass in a changing climate. It's the most important thing. The takeaway of it all? CRAN draws smart and interesting people.

The Alexandria symposium was as successful as they come. I overheard several complain that the house tour was too long, but then in the same breath say they couldn't decide which home to eliminate. That is a very good problem to have. From Hugh Newell Jacobsen's

early Four Pavilions house to the Del Ray Passive House by Cedar Architects, with the paint barely dry. Every home was an inspiration and a standout. The architects and homeowners who gave so freely of their time cannot be thanked enough. The passion and the joy are self-evident.

In a CRAN first, but I hope not a last, our incoming AIA president, Illya Azaroff, FAIA, was here for both the opening presentation and our closing roundtable discussion. And Stephen Ayers, FAIA, the interim VP and CEO of the AIA, was also in attendance. Thank you both. The residential architecture community is a small one and often underrepresented; it's encouraging to see and talk with AIA leaders. They must have had or overheard the same conversations I did, for there's a lot to hear.

Next year, CRAN heads to the middle of the country to San Antonio, Texas. I'm sure many of the faces will be the same. And I hope for some new ones. It's well worth it, and I encourage you to come. The CRAN Advisory Group and incoming president Ellen Perko, AIA, will spend the next year behind the scenes organizing, preparing, and setting the theme. We can expect the symposium to be just as successful as this year. But in the end, it's really about the conversations.

*Mark Asher, AIA
CRAN Advisory Group*



AIA's new president Illya Azaroff, FAIA, at CRAN.



THE ART OF THE STAIR

VIEWRAIL



Photos: Paul Dyer

Stage Director

RICHARD BEARD ARCHITECTS
SAN FRANCISCO

Growing up in Houston, Texas, Richard Beard, FAIA, had a courtside view of the building industry. His grandfather was a land planner, and his father was a contractor who built spec and custom homes in a variety of contemporary and traditional styles. When Richard was in his teens, he took note when one of the designers who worked for his father, Sam Bass, found a way to improve the standard suburban house. “He came up with the concept of a courtyard house for the typical Houston subdivision. The courtyard filled the house with light and air and gave it privacy from the street. I saw how an innovation could make a difference in the marketplace,” he says. “It worked so well, and was so popular.”



Photo: September Days

Principals Richard Beard, FAIA, and Brett Moyer.

For nearly 50 years, Richard has been similarly inspired to give people “a better life through design.” For the first act of his career, he oversaw residential projects at BAR Architects, becoming the firm’s first non-founding partner. Like the late Howard Backen (the “B” in BAR), Richard went on to establish his own substantial practice in 2014. It has grown to a staff of 25 over the last decade, including partner Brett Moyer and associate partners Rebecca Lischwe and Daniel Widlowski.



Based in San Francisco, Richard Beard Architects focuses on custom residential work, which includes new construction as well as historic renovations. Among the latter is a thoughtful update of Joseph Esherick's 1961 McIntyre House in Hillsborough, California, an iconic but not particularly livable 9,000-square-foot home (Case Study, RD V5, 2021).

"Some of my favorite houses are modern houses, but it is not easy to make them feel comfortable," notes Richard. "A lot of times, they don't exude warmth and charm."

He has been interested in historic architecture, however, since his days at Rice University in Houston, where he found his classes about the history of architecture unexpectedly fascinat-

Opposite and this page: On the Westridge residence, cedar shingle siding and standing-seam metal roofing blend with the surroundings. On the interiors, the exposed ceiling, large rafters, and vertical cedar siding give the tall space a barn-like informality. Shaded clerestory windows usher in additional lighting without glare.

ing. "I had this sudden realization that architecture reflects the culture of the time. It lags a bit more because it is so capital intensive, but it's a record of cultural expression," he says.

After joining BAR Architects a few years after graduating in 1977, he worked on some multifamily housing projects that would prove to be extremely influential. Tasked with designing high-end senior multifamily housing in Japan for a creative and demanding client, he thought deeply about how to infuse tradition into contemporary architecture. "What really struck me most of all about Japanese culture was the reverence for the passage of time. They have a cyclical view of time, rather than a linear one. The seasons and their yearly cycle are key. So the orientation to landscape, the change of seasons, and light are very, very important. What's the light going to look like in the fall? How are the gardens going to be integrated with daily life?"



One way the senior complexes integrated the outdoors was via an extended entry sequence; after passing through the main entrance, residents would see various views of landscapes and outdoor elements along the way to their individual units. In traditional Japanese homes, the garden and the house are one, and the garden gate is the de facto “front door.” Richard describes the difference thus: “To exaggerate, an American home in a subdivision

has a front door that no one ever uses, and a garage that you never drive into. Instead, you park and go straight through the back door. In Japan, it’s completely different. The journey to the house is as important as the building itself. Crafting these sequences of how you experience the building and how it integrates with various views of gardens is an enriching process, creating a different way of living that is much more rewarding to people.”



Echoing the extended entry sequence of traditional Japanese homes, you pass through a courtyard to reach the Peninsula Residence's front door. The modern house relies heavily on stone, both within and without, to convey warmth and permanence.



Photos: Paul Dyer



In addition to a reverence for tradition and culture, the firm's portfolio showcases its ability to work with others who have a strong design vision. "We have a heightened interest in interiors and landscape architecture and the integration of those disciplines," says Richard. "We try to keep really talented landscape designers and interior designers as our friends and collaborators on all of our projects. And it really pays off."

Set Design

To get a sense of the rewarding environments that Richard Beard Architects designs, Westridge is one of the firm's first projects (Richard began working on it at BAR Architects but completed it after going out on his own). The one-story, 7,500-square-foot home is in Portola Valley, in the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains, and is designed to help the homeowners commune with nature. "It feels very rural even though it is so close to the whole Bay Area," says Richard. "You want to experience this beautiful outdoor setting and an amazing climate. It has an enormous amount of exposure, whether it's to that big view of Windy Hill [an area landmark] or to enclosed courtyards or other garden areas."



In renovating Cole House, a historic 1880s farmhouse near Calistoga, the firm focused on preserving and restoring the exterior and updating dark interiors with exposed wood ceilings, painted wood paneling, and crisp modern detailing.



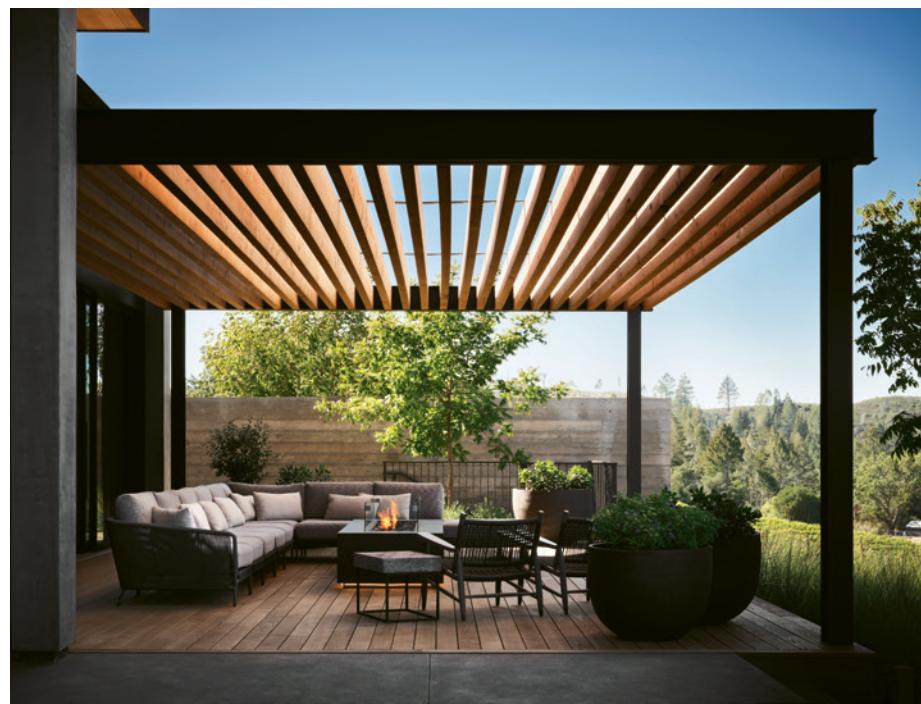


Photos: Douglas Friedman



compressed space à la Frank Lloyd Wright—before entering the lofty living room, where the big view is unveiled.

Another house, also on the Peninsula, has an even more cinematic entry sequence. You approach what looks like a stone farmhouse building from the old country. The wooden door, with an inlaid herringbone pattern, is highlighted by a small copper sconce on either side. Passing through the door, you are outside once again, in a courtyard, walking alongside a narrow pool of water. The pool reflects the sky and a small grove of dogwood trees, which change from green to red in the fall. In front of you is the modern world: The home's foyer is a soaring glass-walled volume, with a sculptural elliptical staircase that ascends into the double-height space. Before you even go through the steel-framed glass door, your attention is captured by the vast lawn that you can see extending behind the 2½-acre property. “Everybody is photokinetic, so you’re always drawn to light,” notes Richard.



To maximize natural light and outdoor exposure, the house is only one room deep and is designed as a series of linked pavilions. “You take the building and pull it apart, which makes for a much more engaged composition with

the landscape,” he adds.

The entry to the house is a carefully choreographed sequence: You get out of your car, then walk through a garden to reach the front door. You’re momentarily in the low-ceilinged foyer—a tightly

The Peninsula Residence is the home of clients who wanted something contemporary but also warm. The design team broke the 12,000-square-foot home down into a series of volumes, using just a few materials: limestone, glass, black metal, cedar. “Because the program is so large, this house is assembled like a village, with varied rooflines that provide a romantic view of the home. You don’t ever feel like you’re looking at one huge house,” he says. And what does the residence say about our culture today? “It’s a modern expression of the desire for permanence and stability,” he says.

Working Across Time

Lest you think that Richard Beard Architects only works on a certain scale, consider Cole House, an historic 1880s farmhouse outside of Calistoga. The 2,400-square foot, one-story building was in terrible shape when the owners acquired the winery property. The interiors were depressingly dark: The stained wood beadboard had turned nearly black, and the oak parquet flooring was sadly worn. To renew the interiors, the design team removed the beadboard, flipped it around, and painted it white. The oak parquet was hiding a Douglas fir subfloor in good condition, which was sanded, stained, and finished. The attic was reduced to raise the ceiling heights, but not entirely removed in order to retain space for insulation, HVAC, and homeowner storage. The ceiling was exposed, showcasing the rafters and joists, adding to the rustic appeal of the home. “It’s so incredibly charming,” says Richard. “The wraparound porch just kind of gets everyone.”

Later on, the firm returned to design a new main residence farther up the hill, overlooking the winery and Cole House. “The early, character-defining historic buildings on the property were rare survivors of a time that no longer exists,” notes Richard. “For the new house, the



The firm returned to the Calistoga property to design an entirely new main residence just up the hill from Cole House. While completely contemporary, the Diamond Mountain residence similarly brightens interiors with warm woods and soaring ceilings that invite natural light and views.

clients wanted a break from that history and the daily work setting. So it seemed natural to turn toward modernity and more relaxed living.” Leaving the gabled past behind, Diamond Mountain, an 8,500-square-foot home, is sleek and linear, leveraging its panoramic view. The materials are glass, steel, board-formed concrete, and black painted wood. To soften up the sharp lines, the

ceilings and soffits are lined with clear western red cedar planks.

“The house has broader views of the geography, bolder uses of materiality, and even a slight Japanese feeling,” says Richard. And, as is true of the firm’s work in general, he adds, “The path through the building is as important as the building form in delivering the experience.”—Lydia Lee



The rebuilt façade includes two angled walls at the outside corners to complement the angled entrance. The former sunroom was restored as a welcoming lounge.



Kivett Redux

FORWARD DESIGN | ARCHITECTURE
WESTWOOD HILLS, KANSAS

At first glance, one might think this modern home just outside Kansas City, Kansas, has retained its original 1957 design by renowned local firm Kivett and Myers. However, several additions had changed and compromised its integrity over time—among them, a sunroom that lacked a foundation. Today, the house is structurally and visually intact due to a meticulous renovation by local firm FORWARD Design | Architecture.

“The goal at the end of the day was to be an invisible hand,” says FD|A founding principal Christopher Fein, AIA. In fact, Kivett Redux was the first project for which the firm commissioned “before” photographs. “We knew [our changes] would be subtle,” he explains. But even side-by-side photos don’t reveal the extent to which existing aspects were demolished and rebuilt over a 3½-year remodel.

Although the past additions had disqualified the house from historic registration, the owner was committed to restoring the original design intent—to an extent. For example, the unsupported sunroom was formerly an open courtyard, but the homeowner didn’t want to remove it and have less square footage. Instead, FD|A would right past wrongs and roll them into the unified vision.



A New Era

With its new foundation and newly rebuilt and insulated walls, the sunroom has become a welcoming entry lounge for the house. Single-pane windows were replaced with insulated glass units that appear to slip into the frame of the angled entry wall, a Midcentury design signature. FD|A removed and replaced a clunky built-in bar and sliding patio door that went nowhere with a large picture window that reveals the landscape, designed by Plaid Collaborative.

Original oak cabinetry and bench seating were integrated and refined in the millwork. For the keen observer, the project retains the misaligned cabinet door pulls, offset by an inch or so, as a reminder of the formerly sloping and unsupported floor.

U-Shaped to Useful

Where the home's entryway stair once led up to an awkward bifold door to a primary bath, FD|A enlarged the landing and created a more formal "grand

hall." A new skylight tops a lightwell that telescopes down from the sloped ceiling and ends with a level base. "It's our low-tech version of a James Turrell moment," Christopher says.

A past rear addition had joined what was initially two bedrooms. The resulting primary bedroom was oversized and U-shaped, centered around the bathroom and a darkroom, used by the home's previous artist owners. FD|A restored the original pair of bedrooms and carved out space for a second bathroom.



As the renovation's most visible gesture, the new, rear window wall unifies the modern design and connects the upper and lower floors to views of the verdant, 60-foot-deep backyard.



A long island of teak millwork and Corian separates the kitchen from the main walkway and helps visually anchor the structural column.

The primary bedroom, the bottom of the former U shape, still feels spacious, particularly with the remodel's most dramatic move: a double-height, 3-foot-by-28-foot rear addition with a window wall façade. The glazed bump-out erases a former hodgepodge of windows on the north elevation and brings in generous north light and views of the tree-filled, 60-foot-deep backyard.

Living Down Low

The lower level is where the owner, Christopher believes, spends most of his time. A large column centered

in the space coupled with a dropped beam ceiling had given the space strong basement vibes, and ductwork under the concrete slab was causing mechanical issues. The remodel remedies both the ceiling and floor. The ceiling beams were upturned, and the column shifted out of the main circulation path.

Radiant piping embeds in a new concrete slab, poured extra thick to help compensate for a bold design choice: no control joints. With the layout now open, neither Christopher nor the owner liked the idea of breaking up the exposed concrete floor with joints.

Two years later, the concrete remains free of cracks.

The relocated round steel column now defines a circulation zone between a long, narrow kitchen, living room, and dining area, and frames a composition of white dowels along the back edge of the kitchen island. Says Christopher, "It is a spatial device to separate the kitchen. We went back and forth [on its inclusion], but it helps define that kitchen volume while leaving the space open."

Opposite the island, the sink counter masks a thick concrete foundation wall, in front of which the contractor

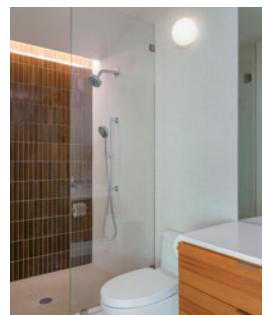
framed another wall for plumbing infrastructure. Where the foundation wall thickness decreases by 8 inches—at about counter height—FD|A camouflaged the transition with custom upper cabinets, eliminating the need for a stepped wall. Christopher enjoys turning constraints, such as “weird existing conditions,” into design features. “You get more bang for your buck doing that.”

Modern Cowboy Flair

FD|A aimed to match the interior color and material palette with the aesthetics detailed on the original drawings. The mix of warm reds and browns suited the preferences of the owner, a rodeo competitor, medical professional, and owner of several Western artwork pieces.

The design did temper the fire-engine red bricks of the living room fireplace, which was restored into working order and finished with a textured limewash. White powder-coated hardware pulls designed by George Nelson complement the house’s cream tones.

Even with the modern glass north elevation, Christopher believes the once-disjointed house of additions now appears “like one unified whole.”—Wanda Lau



The owner’s aesthetic, lifestyle, and art collection inspired the warm wood and tile finishes.

Kivett Redux

Westwood Hills, Kansas

PROJECT CREDITS

ARCHITECT: Christopher Fein, AIA, founding principal, FORWARD Design | Architecture, Kansas City, Missouri

BUILDER: Hurst Construction, Kansas City, Missouri

INTERIOR DESIGNER: FORWARD Design | Architecture

LANDSCAPE DESIGNER: Plaid Collaborative, Kansas City, Missouri

PROJECT SIZE: 2,050 square feet

SITE SIZE: 0.25 acre

CONSTRUCTION COST: \$300 per square foot

PHOTOGRAPHY: Bob Greenspan

KEY PRODUCTS

APPLIANCES: Fisher & Paykel (dishwasher, ovens, refrigerator/freezer); Maytag (washer/dryer)

CABINETRY, MILLWORK: Custom

CLADDING: Painted cedar

COOKING VENTILATION: Futuro Futuro

COOKTOP: PITT Cooking America

COUNTERTOPS: DuPont Corian

DECKING: Ipe

FAUCETS: Elkay (kitchen); Kohler (shower); IKEA (secondary bath)

FIREPIT: Plodes studio (distributed by Design Within Reach)

FIREPLACE: Portola Paints (lime wash)

FLOORING: Concrete

GARAGE DOOR: Custom

HARDWARE: Hume Modern (cabinetry); Emtek (doors)

HOME THEATER SYSTEM: Samsung (television)

LIGHTING, EXTERIOR: Kichler

LIGHTING, INTERIOR: Arne Jacobsen for Louis Poulsen (grand hall wall lamps); Vode Lighting (dining room); Flos (down-

lights, primary bath); Juno (recessed)

LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS, WALLPLATES, SWITCHES: Lutron Designer (controls); Sillites (receptacles)

PAINT: Benjamin Moore (exterior and interior)

PAVERS, PATIO, RETAINING WALLS: Cor-Ten Steel

RAILING: Cable rail

ROOFING: EPDM membrane

SINKS: Elkay (kitchen); Kohler (primary bath; IKEA (secondary bath))

SKYLIGHTS: VELUX

TILE: Heath Ceramics (kitchen, primary bath)

TOILETS: TOTO

TUB: Hydro Systems (secondary bath)

VENTILATION, BATHROOM: Fantech

WINDOW WALL SYSTEM: Fleetwood Windows & Doors

WINDOWS: Original and replaced direct-set insulated glass



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TRANSLATING SENTIMENT INTO A BLUEPRINT

When pulling up the home’s winding drive it all appears so effortless—but it required years of collaboration to complete. The team, including Bill Costello, CEO of Streeter Custom Builder, Charlie Simmons, founding principal of Charlie & Co. Design Ltd., and interior designer Linda Engler, founder of Engler Studio Interior Design, as well as the family themselves, trusted each other implicitly. As part of their initial research, this core team pored over old family images to help inform architectural details.

“When you have the ability to create and sculpt environments that take advantage of light, you certainly want to do that... Marvin gives us the tools to create these wonderful spaces.”

— Charlie Simmons, Charlie & Co. Design, Ltd.



AN OBSESSION WITH NATURAL LIGHT

In general, Scandinavians appreciate natural light, so light was a crucial design element for the home. The staircase, for example, sitting opposite the entryway, runs three stories with floor-to-ceiling windows as a backdrop, drawing guests inside.

“There are views for days. To have the light come in, it gives the connection that feeds our soul and makes us feel whole.”

— Linda Engler, Engler Studio Interior Design



ROLLING HILLS. HORSE BARNS. A HAPPY FAMILY.

“One of the things that was really important for our client was to feel at one with nature,” Simmons said. From how the home was situated on the property, the landscaping that harkens back to Sweden with its hilly pastures, to the use of expansive glass all throughout the house to easily soak up the surroundings—the team never lost sight of the client’s desire to bring the outdoors in.

So, how did the family feel upon walking into the space for the first time? “They really felt like they were home,” Simmons said.

marvin.com



In Situ Veritas

Focused outward and inward, an Aspen getaway provides layers of experiences for the owners and their young kids.

BY CHERYL WEBER

HIGH MEADOW RESIDENCE

ARCHITECT: LAKE FLATO ARCHITECTS

BUILDER: KAEGBEIN FINE HOMEBUILDING

LOCATION: ASPEN, COLORADO

To wander the land around High Meadow Residence in winter is to be immersed in the vastness of mountains draped in snow and scrabbled with pine, spruce, and fir trees. In the foothills of this dramatic landscape are clumps of quaking aspen, their creamy trunks rising like sculptures in the bright alpine light. Naturally, this special place played a huge role in the design of a getaway for a couple with young children. Situated on the edge of Aspen, in the Roaring Fork Valley, this pastoral area still feels like the ranchland it once was. In





Top: A low window lets light into the media room while preserving the stone massing along the outdoor "entry hall." **Above, left:** A desk fits into the connector between the living pavilion and primary suite. **Above, right:** The kids' barn's charred wood siding slips into the foyer. **Right:** The post-and-beam structure sits outside the living pavilion windows, allowing the openings to be independent of columns.



winter it's all snow, but in summer the house has a long view across a meadow of high grasses, a foreground to the mountains.

Lake Flato are experts in designing rugged landscapes, having built a portfolio of structurally expressive buildings set on working Texas ranches. "Our philosophy with houses, or anything, is about leveraging the connection with the outdoors," says Ted Flato, FAIA. "We think of buildings as portals to the environment. Living spaces immediately invite your eye to go out to the wonderful, broad landscape. If you can leverage the landscape, you can build a lot less."

There are neighbors, of course, and to create the illusion that the house is alone in the big outdoors, the architects devised a three-part scheme. A large timber living pavilion acts like a big breezeway that connects two gabled volumes, reminiscent of western homesteads. Deep overhangs create porches on both sides of the building—one side facing east toward the infinite borrowed meadow, the other looking into a courtyard along the front of the house. This public zone is bracketed by a fieldstone-clad primary bedroom volume where the land rises on the right, and a two-story, charred-wood kids' barn built on the downslope on the left—a logical move that puts some space between the adults' and kids' bedrooms, while creating a comfortable place to come together in the middle.



The house was designed for close-up views of the aspen stands already on the property, as seen from the living/dining areas and breakfast nook.

The new dwelling is the opposite of a house previously on the site—a relic of a time when Aspen was primarily a winter playground. “The inclination in cold climates was not to spread things out but to put it into a box,” says Ted. “The big difference is that summer has become a bigger deal in Aspen than it used to be, so you want something that engages the landscape and you’re not just worried about keeping the heat in.” The decision to build new led to another opportunity: to frame close-up views of trees. “One of the best challenges of laying out the site was how to preserve and celebrate these gorgeous aspens that had grown up around the existing house,” says Dan Carter,





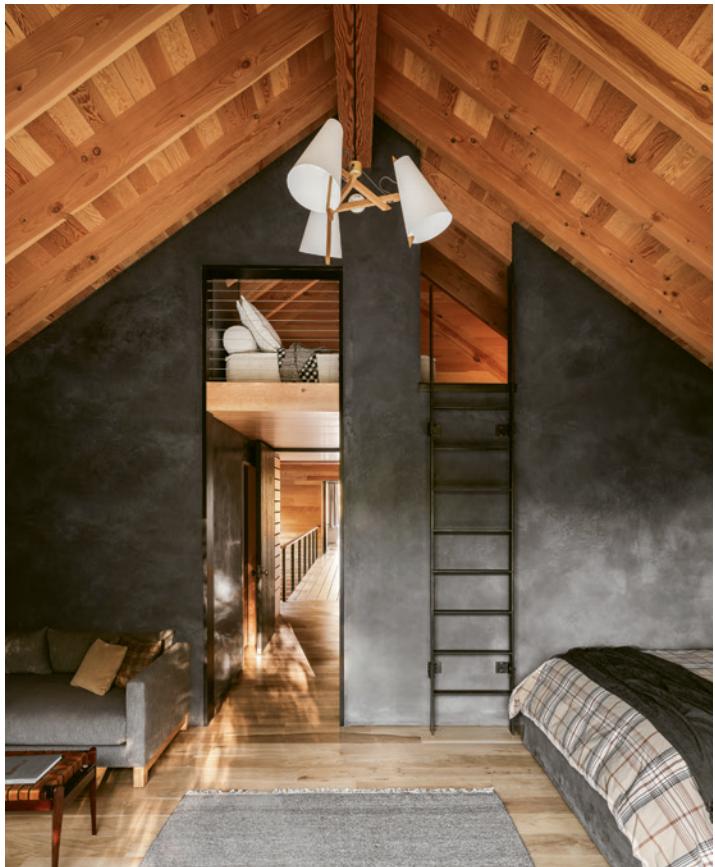
AIA. “It was a lot of fun to get everything to work around them. The house feels like it’s been around much longer than it has because of that, and the light through the trees is really spectacular.”

The site’s natural features drove the program locations. The primary suite sits close to the property line because that edge could be solid, whereas the kids’ barn on the north needed space to spill out. “There was a natural hedgerow of trees on the north side that we could leverage and have our own meadow between it and the house,” Ted says. On the street side, the barn and stone-clad garage slide past each other, creating the threshold for an inviting entry sequence. “You come in between a series of walls, and you’re in what we consider the entry hall, but it’s an exterior space,” Ted says. “You



The primary suite volume provides a restful sanctuary on the south side of the house. Freestanding closets separate the sleeping area and bath, which opens to a private patio. The bath’s swirling marble surfaces are a graphic foil to the snowy landscape.

The kids' barn piques the childish imagination, with a catwalk overlooking an open area where hay would traditionally be stored. This floor contains two bedrooms and baths and a loft under the pitched roof. *Below:* A daybed and desk provide a quiet perch.



don't have to build a giant hall; you have an alley between two spaces—the garage and barn, with some landscaping. Then you come to the front door. It's a space that allows you to breathe before you come into the house."

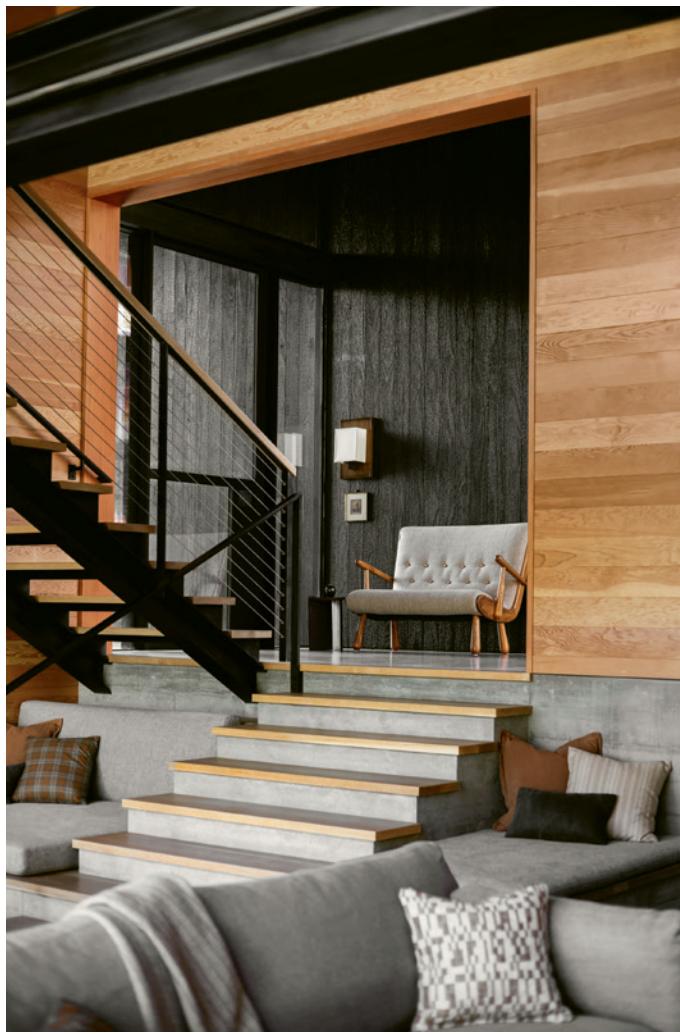
Skin and Skeleton

The composition embodies Lake Flato's approach to buildings, in which the design is inseparable from the way it's made. "The ornament of a building is how it's made, usually," Ted says. "The textures come from how you're going to make it. We love talking about: what is it going to be like when you

walk onto the site and people are building it? Will they ask, 'Why did you do this?' We don't want the why, and we want to celebrate their work."

Because Aspen is an expensive place to build, post and beam construction was a logical choice for the open main living volume, using prefabricated Douglas fir beams. This method also prioritized the view. The wood-framed structure sits outside the thermal envelope of windows, which disappear into the floor. "It allowed us to have doors that were independent of the columns and we could roll the whole room out, so it can be a complete pavilion," Ted says. "To the right is the grounded courtyard, to the left is the meadow with nice, low-angle light across the big open field."

For builder Keith Teahen, one of the more challenging aspects of this pavilion was to perfectly line up the window framing with the mortise-and-tendon structural posts that stand outside them. "You had to work backward to execute that correctly," he says. Dark-stained walnut cabinets and a blackened steel storage wall and fireplace wall create a clean, simple look. Within that room, a breakfast bay pokes out under the broad roof. And a mudroom and media room connect the pavilion to the garage, defining one edge of the entry walk and offering a place to cocoon. Their outer wall is a continuation of the stone façade that "hides" the side-entry garage volume. A linear, floor-level window brings light into the media room without interrupting the massing or creating an unwanted view in from the front walkway.

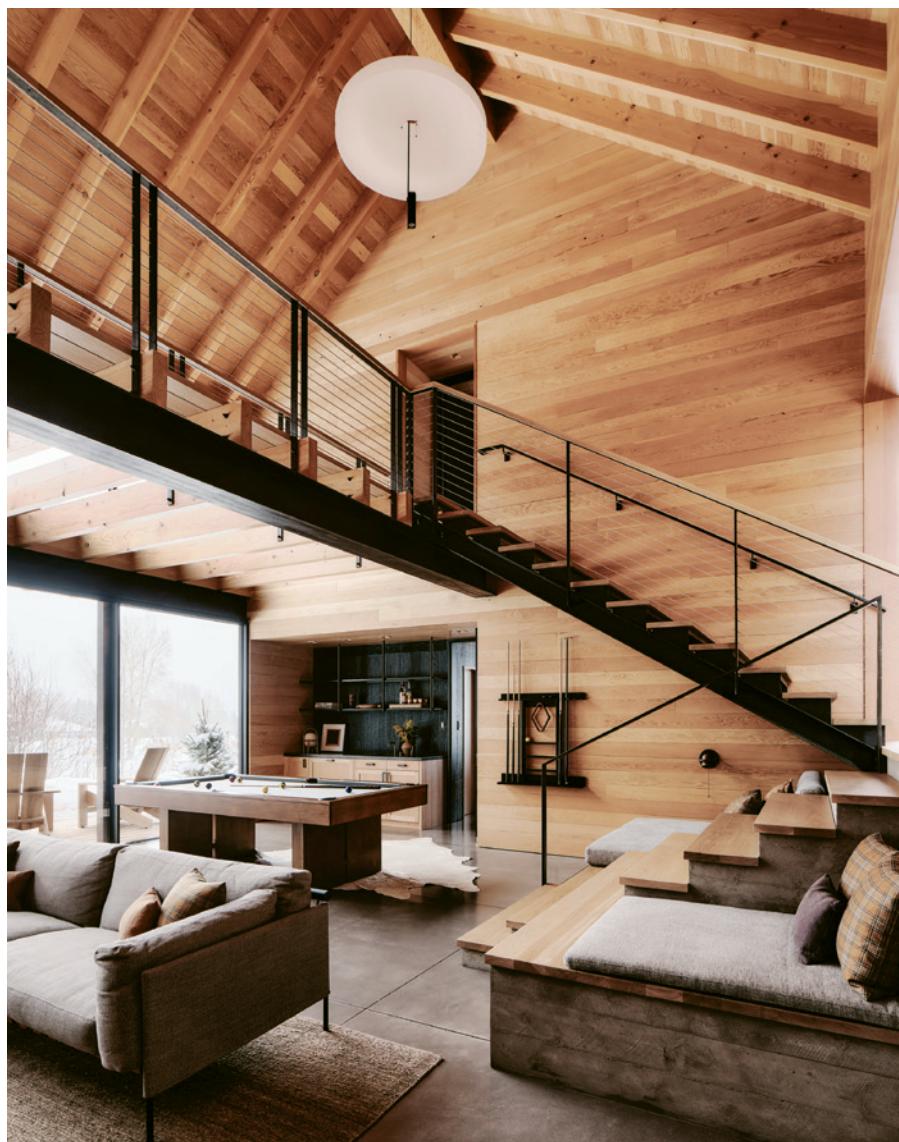


The playful kids' barn is entered at midlevel, left of the entry hall. A steel beam supports the catwalk's joists, which extend outside to cover a porch.

While the main living space is the most open, with its series of columns, beams, glass, and sliding walls that open to the outside, “the other wood-frame buildings are more skin buildings with wood on the inside,” Ted says. “The notion of skin also informs how we make the building.”

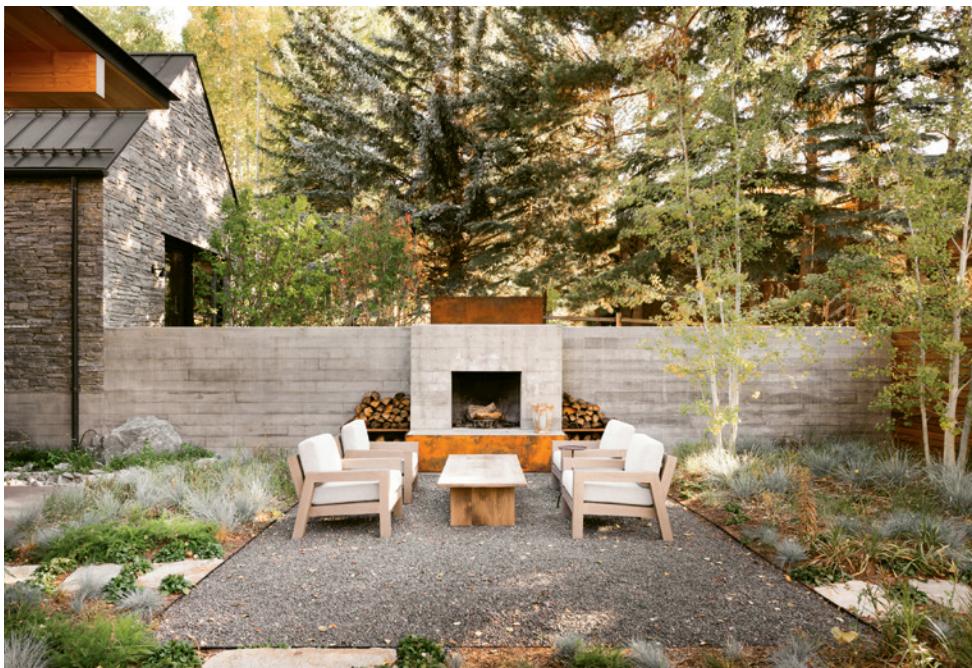
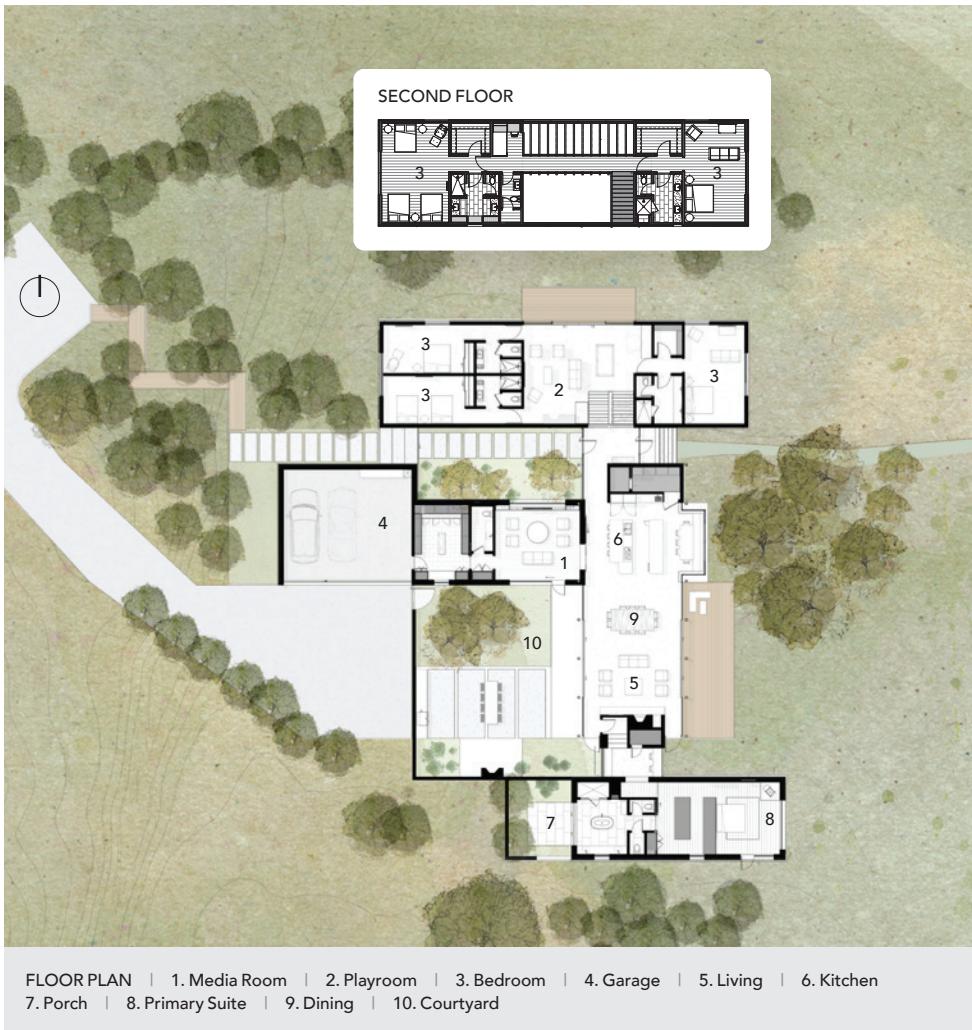
Entered to the left off the main entry, the kids' barn feels like a single story because you enter at midlevel. That move allowed for a playful stair to a catwalk above the common area that connects two bedrooms under the roofline. A few steps down from the midlevel is a game lounge bracketed by three more bedrooms. This volume has charred wood on the outside and Douglas fir inside. The architects ran the charred wood wall inside along the foyer that links the two volumes.

While the burnt wood cladding was an aesthetic choice, it was above all a practical one, Ted notes. “We were lucky enough early in our career to get to go to Japan. That trip was very influential, both for the idea of borrowed landscape and courtyards, and also the timeless buildings in Kyoto built in the 1600s, which are so honest, with columns and beams and



rolling walls. But we were also impressed with the practical nature of those buildings, like burning the wood to be durable in a place that had a lot of rain. In this case, we wanted black wood not because it's black, but because it's durable. It doesn't require any stains and handles the moisture you can get in Aspen.”

The barn is the one place where a single piece of steel was used to create the long span. This beam supports not just the bridge above it, but joists that cantilever to become a porch roof on the north side. Finishes are precise and seamless, such as the shadow gap between the polished concrete floors and wood walls. “Anything that looks so clean is the most difficult to produce,” Keith says. “To keep the edges perfect, we had to finish the concrete floors before building on top of them and keep them protected throughout the job. But the architects did an amazing job of integrating it into the setting. It photographs so well because it's one with the environment—it's so warm, even with the contemporary finishes of concrete and metal.”



High Meadow Residence Aspen, Colorado

ARCHITECT: Ted Flato, FAIA, principal in charge; project team: Steve Raire, FAIA; Dan Carter, AIA; Colin Gorsuch, AIA, Lake Flato Architects, San Antonio, Texas

BUILDER: Keith Teahan, Kaegebein Fine Homebuilding, Carbondale, Colorado

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Constanza Collarte, Collarte Interiors, Miami

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Blue-green, Aspen, Colorado

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: KL&A, Carbondale, Colorado

STYLIST: Lisa Rowe, Los Angeles

PROJECT SIZE: 7,600 square feet

SITE SIZE: 1.5 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Joe Fletcher Photography; Shade Degges

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETRY: Boffi, custom blackened steel, custom white oak

CLADDING: Delta Millworks (barn), Silver Heritage Quartzite (garage, primary suite)

COOKTOP/RANGE: Boffi

COUNTERTOPS: Boffi stainless steel

ENGINEERED LUMBER: Frasier-wood (living pavilion)

FINISH MATERIALS: Douglas fir, plaster

FLOORING: Concrete, white oak

HVAC: Radiant, forced air

INSULATION: ZIP System

LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS: Lutron

PASSAGE DOORS AND HARDWARE: Douglas fir, Sun Valley Bronze

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

ROOFING: Zinc standing-seam metal roof

VANITIES AND PEDESTAL LAVS: Boffi

WINDOWS/WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS: Panoramah!



Time Out

All those building surfaces support the design's sense of comfort and delight. The barn is a dynamic space that feels attached but separate—a realm unto itself. When they aren't playing games or curled up on couches, the youngsters can sit on the stairs or retreat to kid-sized eddies built into the catwalk, including a daybed and desk. In the childish imagination, it comes close to being a real barn. "You're viewing down over furniture and out to the meadow. It's a type of barn experience, with rooms below and above, and a bigger volume for hay. People make houses to look like barns; this space can be a barn when Aspen becomes more rural someday," Ted jokes.

Indeed, a big part of this home's appeal is the range of experiences it offers in close proximity to each other. While the barn flows out to a side field for throwing football, the main pavilion centers on the view of the big public meadow and mountains. Clad in fieldstone, the primary suite reads as a monolithic, gabled structure with a private porch. Entered through a small office connector, it is a place to decompress while enjoying the view through a big window. Closets float between the bedroom and a bath, whose swirling marble surfaces come alive in the winter-white landscape.

Designed outdoor spaces might seem gratuitous in an already stunning landscape, but the courtyards make the oppo-

site case. Once the architects know where a project is headed, they often bring in the area's top landscape architects to fit the house to the land. Aspen-based Bluegreen helped finesse paths, plantings, and details in the entry courtyard and the board-formed-concrete walled courtyard off the living pavilion, which offers outdoor dining and seating around a fireplace. "We don't ever draw a line between landscape and house—or between architecture and interior design," Ted says.

In fact, this project triggered the firm's decision to bring interior design into its practice, led by an architect. It's something they'd been considering for a while, since their San Antonio office is surrounded by makers of furniture, upholstery, and metalwork. In this project in particular, "the interiors are truly informative to the experience of the house," says Dan, who worked with Constanza Collarte, a Miami-based interior designer whom the client brought in. For Ted, it's an opportunity to be more thoughtful early on about how people live in the house. "As you get into a more in-depth approach, you start thinking about, maybe we should tweak this," he says. "It's one more opportunity to refine something you've already spent time on."

Embracing that idea, all these ambience-giving gestures were aimed at enhancing the sense of living in this majestic landscape, if that were possible. As it turns out, it is. 



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A Sense of Peace and Place

Three meticulously designed custom homes slip into their surroundings with quiet perfection.

BY CHERYL WEBER



Fern Hill Passive House

MOWERY MARSH ARCHITECTS
POCONO MOUNTAINS, PENNSYLVANIA

Married architects Jennifer Mowery, AIA, and Brian Marsh, AIA, have a talent for translating Passive House principles into elegant homes that murmur rather than shout. While their intrinsic comfort comes from a set of prescribed building standards that result in quiet interiors with even temperatures, their scale and finishes are a noticeable part of their appeal. So is their openness to the outdoors, belying the conventional notion that Passive Houses have a signature inward aesthetic.

Brian honed his Passive House skills while working with well-known architect Dennis Wedlick, FAIA, years ago, and now the firm builds most of its houses to those stan-





dards. This project, in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains, was designed for an older couple with no children. It's considered their main residence, though they have a winter home in Florida and the husband spends several days

each week in New York City for work. Outdoor enthusiasts—he loves hunting and fishing—they were drawn to this property overlooking a glacial lake. Even though it's their primary home, they wanted it to feel like a retreat.



That was fitting for this nature-minded community, where new homes are not allowed to be visible from the lake. Brian and Jennifer finessed this in several ways. Situated on a slope that drops down to the water, Fern Hill





replaces an old cabin that sat 4 feet below the driveway. “We wanted it to be nestled into the grade—friendly on the front but not too high up on the back,” Jennifer says. While the foyer steps down to the great room, the garage is level with the living areas, and the grade was brought up along the front façade. Organizationally, its three gables—the primary bedroom, great room, and den—are oriented east toward the water, aligning with view corridors that had already been cleared.

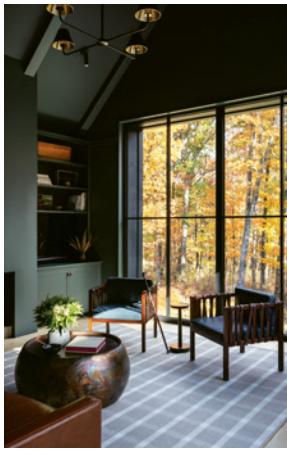
The exterior’s native stone and dark cementitious siding all but disappear into the surrounding woods. Its massing and materials suggest a streamlined mountain lodge, and the texture-rich interiors strike a balance between intimate and open, relaxed and refined.

Inside Out

Inside, it functions day-to-day as a one-level house with generous outdoor openings. Just off the central kitchen/dining/living zone is the wife’s art



The kitchen’s white oak cabinetry fits cleanly into the great room walls, while exposed beams and hardware echo the home’s vernacular vibe.



The den’s moody walls and open ceiling evoke the feeling of a hunting lodge. Its dark green paint also helps the interiors disappear, drawing the eye outward to the stunning landscape.





Left: The wife's art studio sits just off a hall linking the great room and primary suite. Above and below: The primary suite is one of three gabled volumes directed toward existing view corridors to the lake.

studio and the primary suite. On the opposite side of the main living space, a bar/pantry, powder room, and laundry connect the kitchen to the garage entry, while a screened porch with a flat roof—an infill between the gables—faces the backyard. The wing behind the garage contains two en-suite guest rooms and a den. Upstairs are a loft, bath, and a bunk room for visitors with kids, while

the L-shaped basement contains a gym, wine storage, and mechanicals.

For years, the couple had been coming to a rustic cabin they owned nearby. Here they were interested in combining the coziness of a hunting cabin with bright, airy spaces. “That’s why we have some deep, dark rooms, like the workshop attached to the garage, which is outside the Passive envelope,” Jennifer says. The den, furnished with plaid carpet, is painted a moody dark green. “What’s fun about dark spaces is that people don’t realize how much that helps you see outside,” she adds. “The window mullions and dark wall drop out of your vision, whereas in the white spaces you’re feeling the volume a bit more.” Each volume’s gable end has floor-to-ceiling window walls that open to the lakeside terrace. The porch, which shares a back-to-back fireplace with the great room, feels snug and protected, yet it, too, opens to the terrace through a folding window wall with motorized screens.

Reclaimed wood beams warm up the great room’s white oak cabinetry and light-reflective quartz countertops. The kitchen backsplash’s Calacatta marble pattern reminded the clients of pebbles in a riverbed. “We were gauging how





the kitchen can feel like it fits the big volume but scaled to the user and having some charm,” Jennifer says. “We often package kitchens in the wall—no soffits or tops of cabinets. Here it has a clean inserted look, but the detailing isn’t slick; it feels suitable to the character of the rest of the house.” Floors are white oak in the main rooms, while the transition zones and porch are paved in large-format porcelain tile that has an inside-outside quality. In the powder room and the bunk room under the eaves, woodsy botanical wallpaper also references the natural setting.

Human Scale

Jennifer and Brian worked with a local mason to source and lay the exterior’s native stone. While they prefer the look of dry-laid stone, the mason used some mortar to assuage his concerns about water infiltration. He raked the joints in a way that gives it the texture of dry-laid stone. “A lot of stone in the area is very flat—we wanted to avoid it feeling like a terrace on a wall,” Jennifer says. “You have to sculpt it, almost, to get those parts and pieces to fit together.” The cementitious siding, made from fly ash, has a nickel gap, echoing the interior ceilings.

The architects followed the Passive House playbook for constructing the



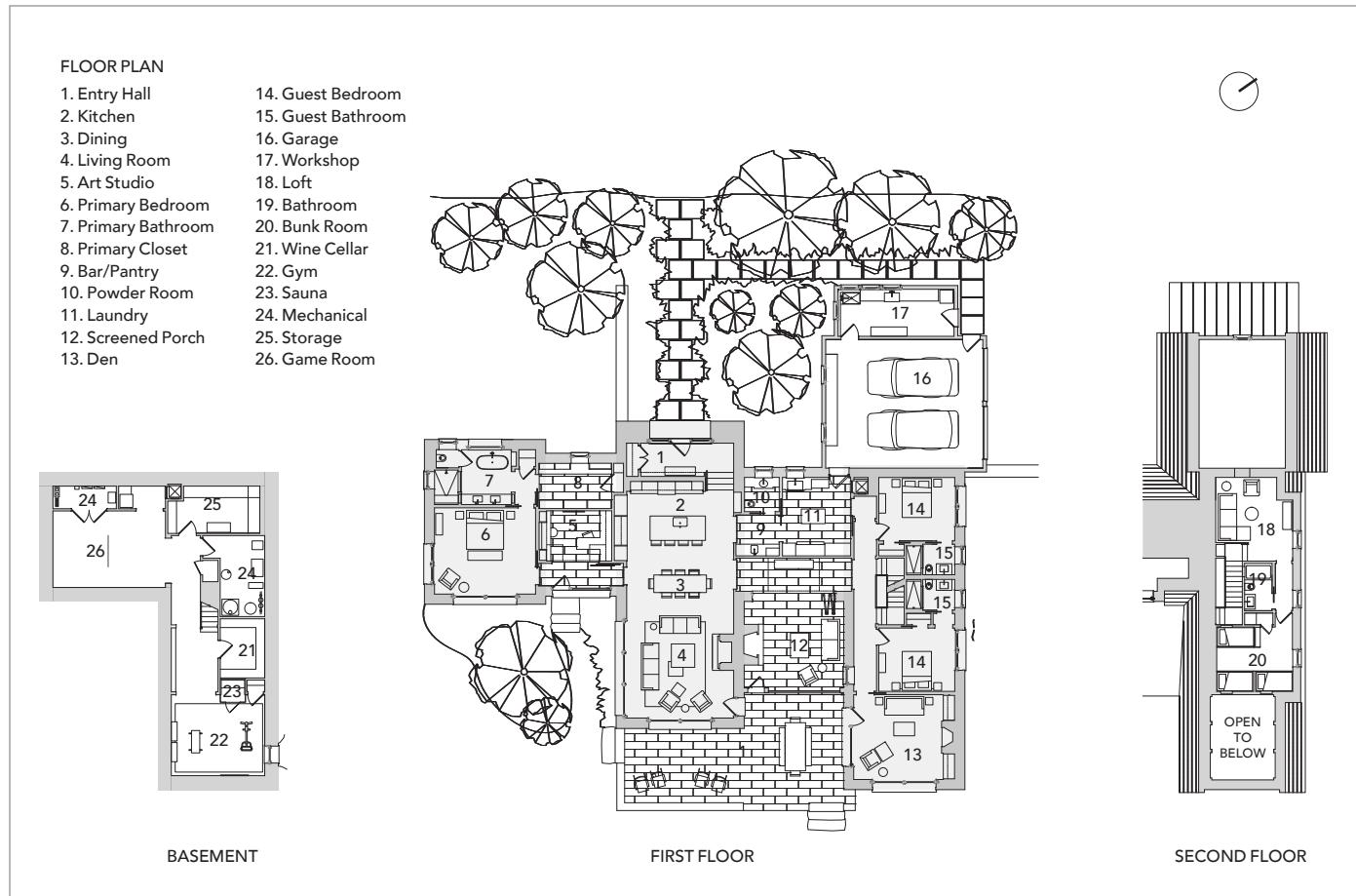
Tucked under the eaves above the guest wing and den, a bunk room, bath, and lounge provide a getaway for visiting guests with children.

make-up air system that compensates for the air being drawn into the fireplace from an airtight house. Sharing that same masonry chimney is a conventional wood-burning fireplace on the screened porch. A third fireplace in the den is a sealed-front gas unit with dedicated intake and exhaust. “The house doesn’t need this much heat, and it takes a lot of coordination to get that to work and be healthy, but we try to give people everything they want,” says Brian.

Construction was challenging for the builder, working on his first Passive House. “It was an interesting thing to learn and execute,” says Josh Anns, who runs Anns Construction with his father, George. “We constructed a whole other layer around the outside to house the extra insulation.” Its conventional 2x6 structural walls act as a utility chase, then thin TJs were attached to Zip wall sheathing with a smart air barrier, which allowed for 12 inches of blow-in cellulose insulation in



Attached to the garage, a workshop sits outside the Passive House envelope. Its utilitarian, yet pristine built-ins and dark walls update the hunting lodge concept.



Fern Hill Passive House

Pocono Mountains, Pennsylvania

ARCHITECT: Jennifer Mowery Marsh and Brian Marsh, Mowery Marsh, Hoboken, New Jersey

BUILDER: Anns Construction, Greentown, Pennsylvania

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Elaine Santos Design, New York, New York

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Square Acre Studio, Madison, New Jersey

BUILDING SCIENTIST: Bldgtyp, Brooklyn, New York

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Proper & O'Leary Engineering, Troy, New York

PROJECT SIZE: 3,360 square feet, plus 750-square-foot garage/workshop

SITE SIZE: 1 acre

PHOTOGRAPHY: Mike Van Tassell

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETRY: Master Design Cabinetry

CABINETRY HARDWARE: Schoolhouse

CHIMNEY SHROUD: American Chimney Shroud

CLADDING: Boral TruExterior

COOKING VENT HOOD: Sub-Zero

COOKTOP AND OVENS: Dacor

COUNTERTOPS: Caesarstone, Calacatta marble

DISHWASHER: KitchenAid

FAUCETS: Waterstone, Restoration Hardware

FLOORING: KD Woods white oak

GARAGE DOORS: Artisan Custom Doorworks

HOME CONTROL SYSTEMS: RTI

HOME THEATER COMPONENTS: Sonance

HVAC: LG ducted mini-split

HOUSEWRAP: Solitex Mento wrap, Tescon Vana tape

HUMIDITY CONTROL: Santa Fe Compact

ICEMAKER: Cafe

INSULATION: FOAMGLAS, Neopor GPS, Greenfiber cellulose

LIGHTING: Volt (exterior), Tech Lighting, Halo, Urban Electric, Rejuvenation, Lulu & Georgia, Cedar & Moss, Circa Lighting, Wo & We, Lostine, Roll & Hill

LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS: Lutron

PAINTS/STAINS/COATINGS: Benjamin Moore

PASSAGE DOORS / DOOR HARDWARE: Emtek

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

ROOFING: Certainteed Landmark shingles

SECURITY SYSTEM: Luma

SINKS: Kohler, Duravit, Kohler Whitehaven

THERMAL AND MOISTURE BARRIERS: Intello Plus

TOILETS: Duravit

TUB: Victoria & Albert

VENTILATION SYSTEM: Zehnder ERV, Electro Industries (make-up air)

WALLBOARD: Garden State Lumber T&G nickel gap

WASHER/DRYER: Whirlpool

WATER FILTRATION: Aquasana

WINDOWS/WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS: Ikon Windows & Doors

WINE REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero



the walls and roof. The final siding layer was then installed over a rainscreen system. With this assembly, along with thermally broken, triple-glazed windows and robust air sealing membranes and tapes, the home meets Passive House standards, even though the homeowners did not seek certification. “The living room area is spectacular with all that glass,” adds George.

In drawing the scheme, the architects were careful to give even the most dramatic spaces a human proportion. To that end, the punched openings, while still quite large, sit within deep apertures created by the 20-inch-thick walls. “It creates a lot of shadow and sculpts the outside of the house,” Jennifer explains. “That’s what gives it the old-world feel. We are bridging that heavy construction with a lot of glass that has more modernist sensibilities.” Even the tub that sits against a big window in the primary bathroom is comfortable to use in the dead of winter, they say, given the consistent tempera-

ture of the circulating fresh air.

The clients have mentioned that living there feels like being on vacation, Jennifer says, which was always

the goal. “A lot of people want a house where they’ll feel at peace and can live in for 20 years. It’s like a cocoon that feels very solid and permanent.” **RD**





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Tierra de Paz

COTTON ESTES ARCHITECT
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Cotton Estes's design for this Texas house was inspired by the Spanish colonial missions that stretch south along the river, about 7 miles from downtown San Antonio. These historic buildings—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—sit just a quarter-mile from her clients' property, which is tucked up against the national park that runs the missions' preservation and eco-restoration efforts. The clients' own plot of land also borders an acequia that was once used to irrigate the farmland around the missions, and it was this sense of peace and place that drew the clients. After their land was clear-cut in the 1980s, a small forest of mesquite trees grew on the hot, dry site, buzzing with cicadas and other wildlife.



When they hired Cotton, the young couple were just starting a family and trying to envision what their forever home would look like on this tranquil spot. Over the course of design, the scheme became radically smaller, downsized from seven bedrooms to three. “The process of questioning what they need led us to a very distilled program,” she says. “Originally, we were looking at a courtyard type of house. We ended up inverting that.”

Cotton’s design approach resulted in a home that lives much larger than its 2,240 square feet. Taking cues from the missions’ austerity and quality of light, she devised a soaring central living space under a pitched roof. Patio extensions in each cardinal direction separate this “inverted courtyard” from the one-story bedroom and service volumes that rotate around it.

“The living room became the courtyard where the family can come together from the outer reaches of the home and be connected to the outdoors,” she says. “This common space almost feels open air because it





has light from four orientations and skylights.” It’s a poetic version of the clustered mission buildings. “There is a disordered grouping of single structures enclosed by a wall,” she says of the missions’ organization. “The quality of light between those buildings is something I was really drawn to in this courtyard typology—how much you invite the outdoors in, and the shape of the space between those individual volumes that manipulates light in different ways.”

Interlocked

The house rises from the land like a small compound, creating a sense that the boxy, stucco-clad bedroom volumes are sliding in and out from the gabled roof. A volume to the right of the entry contains two children’s bedrooms and a bath. Sitting slightly forward on the opposite corner is an office/guest suite facing the entry, along with a laundry, mudroom, and powder room. Another flat-roofed wing on the northwest contains the primary suite at the back of the house.

In the main living “courtyard,” floor-to-ceiling openings allow the interior functions to flow seamlessly outside. “The mission outposts often feature clear and simple cuts in the masonry where it meets the wood





Milky plaster lends an earthiness to the walls. The western red cedar ceiling seems to float above them, reminiscent of mission outposts with masonry bases and lighter elements above. A thick support column houses the ovens, out of view of the living and dining rooms. The bar disappears behind fold-back doors.

roof framing,” Cotton says. The entry on the south provides a view through the house to the northern fields. Absent of existing trees, this area is being seeded with tall native grasses to help restore the soil. The living room patio overlooks this zone. A dining terrace to the east gets dappled light through the trees, and the shaded dog patio on the west incorporates a storage cabinet.

“The dogs are a big part of the clients’ lives,” Cotton explains. “They foster many dogs at a time. The circulation of dogs and where they are allowed and not allowed was a big consideration in the program. The entire west yard is for the dogs, and the west patio is a protected space to store all their leashes and food and toys; they come and go from the laundry room as they please.”

Light Box

Inside, all is organic harmony. Hydraulic lime plaster coating the 9-foot-tall walls lends a rooted, earthen feel and echoes what builders were using several

hundred years ago. Milky and matte with a slight sheen, “the plaster has no chemical additions and is incredibly versatile,” Cotton says. “It takes a lot of artistry to work with, and we worked with an amazing plasterer here who had the touch.”

In the living space, the western red cedar ceiling is stained with a semi-transparent water-based finish. A quarter-inch reveal traces the horizontal joint between the ceiling and walls, as though the wood ceiling is floating off the heavy base. Here, a trio of skylights are pressed into the south wall. “Tall ceilings can become dark and feel vacuous unless they are well-lit from above,” the architect says. “We tried to use wood sparingly, where it really counts. The skylights are to honor the wood and shine a light on it in those tall spaces.”

Subtle detailing also highlights ordinary materials. The living room ceiling’s paneling continues straight up into the skylights, and, under them,





narrow slots serve as HVAC supply vents. They reference the slatted wood exterior detailing, which appears on the carport and the gable ends of the metal roof. They're especially prominent above the dining patio, where a lit cavity behind the gable end brings the pattern into

relief at night. "You see something similar when you approach the house at night, when light shows through the side of the carport," Cotton says. "In daytime it looks like just a vertical wood wall and at night it becomes a lantern. The wood panels connect back to the agrarian vernacular of a masonry base with lighter elements above."

Nuanced materials tie the interior and exterior together, becoming more refined as they move inside. The exterior's knotty-grade western red cedar transitions to a finer vertical grain on the interior. The patios' bush-hammered concrete is scored on a 2-by-4-foot grid for slip resistance. Inside the slab-on-grade home, the scoring expands to 4-by-8, doubling as control joints, and the living area was hand-scattered with 1-inch limestone aggregate during the pour and then polished, lending a richness resembling terrazzo. "Our hope was that no single finish would shout, but would reward closer attention," Cotton says.

A flat ceiling differentiates the kitchen/dining area from the living room, providing scale and framing the outdoor connection. There, a



Top: The southeast-facing study has a view of arriving visitors. *Left and above:* A corridor off the main living space connects the dog patio on the left to the primary suite.



Tierra de Paz

San Antonio, Texas

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

BUILDER: Long House Builders, San Antonio

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Justin Davidson, La Paz Landscape, San Antonio

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Spaulding Structural Engineering, San Antonio

PROJECT SIZE: 2,240 square feet

SITE SIZE: 2.29 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Dror Baldinger, FAIA

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETRY HARDWARE: Emtek, Richelieu

CLADDING: Western red cedar, U-Stucco

COOKING VENTILATION: Bosch

COOKTOP: Bosch induction

COUNTERTOP: Daltile, Lueders limestone

ENTRY DOORS: Weather Shield

EXTERIOR LIGHTING: Schmidt Ceramics + Woodworks

FAUCETS: Grohe, Waterworks, Hansgrohe

FINISHES: Emil Group, bathroom floors and walls

HVAC SYSTEMS: Trane, American Standard

ICEMAKER: Scotsman

INSULATION: Sto Corp., Carlisle SynTec

INTERIOR LIGHTING: Noguchi, Kuzco, WAC, Juno, Schmidt Ceramics + Woodworks

OVENS: Bosch

PAINTS/STAINS/COATINGS: Benjamin Moore, Bona, Vasari plaster Carrera White Sand

PASSAGE DOOR HARDWARE: Omnia, Casson

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Fisher & Paykel

ROOF WINDOWS: VELUX Skylights

ROOFING: Berridge Manufacturing Company

SINKS: Ruvati, Scarabeo, Kohler

THERMAL AND MOISTURE BARRIERS: Huber Products, Sto Corp.

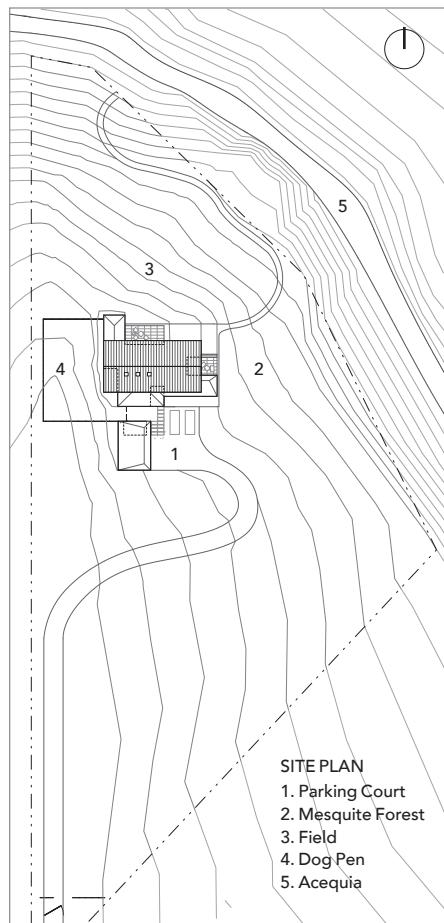
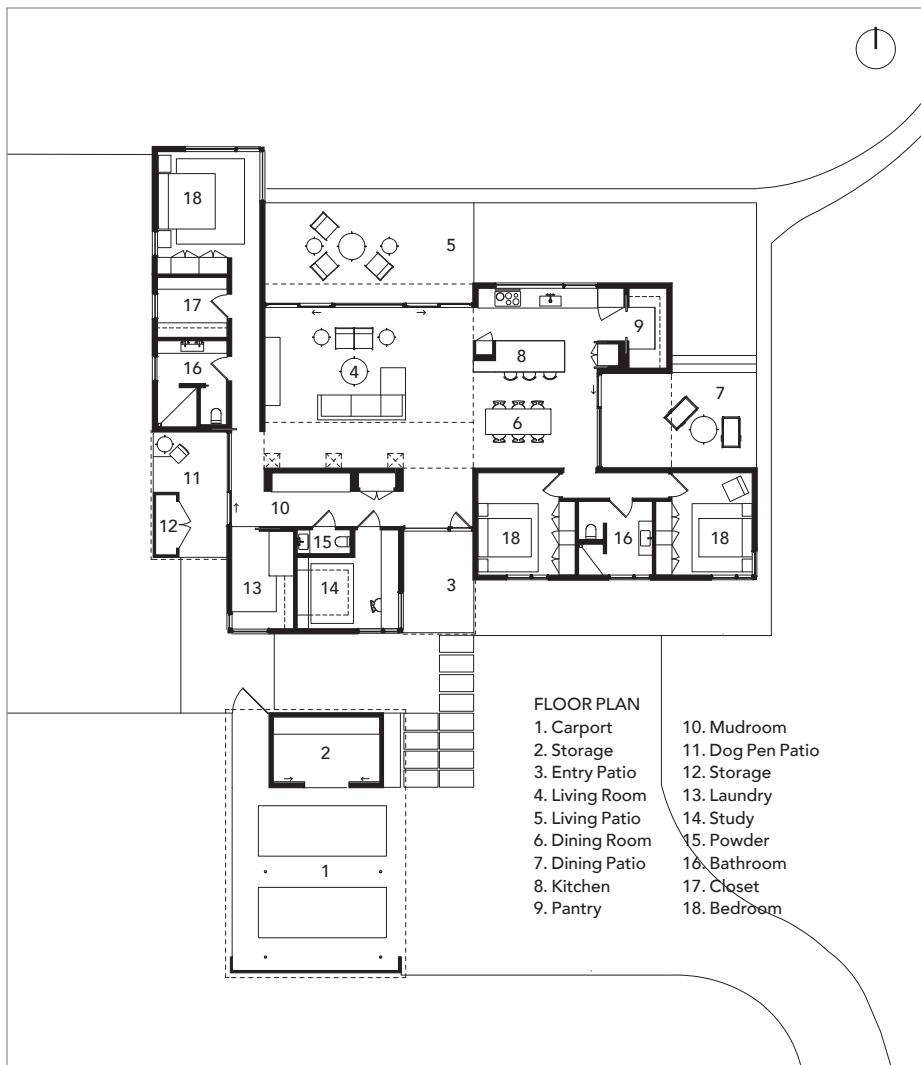
TOILETS: Duravit

VENTILATION: Panasonic

WINDOW SHADING SYSTEMS: Tektrim

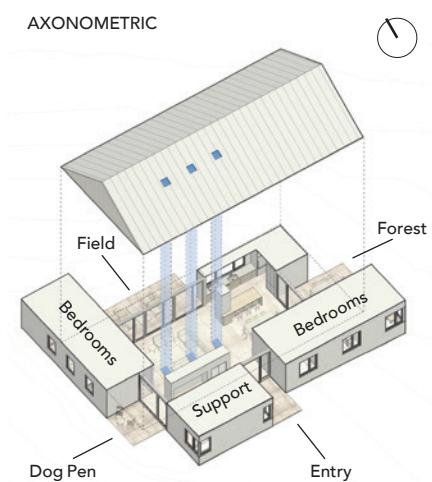
WINE AND BEVERAGE CENTER: N'Finity

WINE REFRIGERATOR: Bosch



thick support pillar suggests additional separation; it houses a built-in oven and microwave, keeping them out of the main view. On the far wall is a hidden bar whose white doors fold back to open the cabinet completely. In lieu of upper cabinets, a walk-in pantry allowed for a large window over the working wall. Paired with the white oak kitchen cabinets are quartz countertops with a slight movement that mirrors the plaster walls. The quartz's high-gloss finish reflects northern light deep into the kitchen.

"The clients' energy is focused on the common spaces," Cotton says. Bedrooms are basic by comparison, with built-in reading lights and corner windows, but not much furniture. One constant is the custom lighting—flush-mount, conical ceramic wall sconces



with a matte finish on the outside and high gloss inside. Designed by one of the carpenters who has a ceramics degree, they point upward to light the ceilings on the interior, while the



outside lights point down in deference to the resident wildlife. "They trace the outlines of those private volumes, like runway lights, directing you outward," Cotton says.



Inspired by neighboring missions, the house evokes a small compound, with bedrooms and patios rotating around a central living space, or courtyard. Above: The primary suite overlooks a native meadow.

This house is one of many she has created with builder Mike Long, who is also her life partner. Except for the environmental review that was required, the operation was straightforward given the flat site and plenty of room for staging. “There was not a lot of head-scratching because the mastermind architect resolved all those things,” he jokes. “But the framing had to be spot-on because of the considerable detailing. The person reading the drawings had to be able to see six steps ahead to the finished wall before the framing was completed.”

Indeed, the detailing amplifies the design in ways that delight the owners. “They were surprised positively by the daylight,” Cotton says. “They often will text me photos of the lighting at all different times of day or night and say, look at this! At a glance, it looks plain or austere but is brought to life by the changing light and connection to the outdoors.” RD



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Bar House

JOEB MOORE & PARTNERS
NORTH FAIRFIELD COUNTY, CONNECTICUT

From his office in Greenwich, Connecticut, Joeb Moore, FAIA, has spent nearly 20 years perfecting, among other things, the art of designing modern buildings that innovate the traditional forms of this region's farmland. The firm's work often starts with primitive shapes that are then creatively manipulated in honor of the land's rise and fall, distant views, ecological or cultural history, or the clients' program. For Bar House, that formal rigor helped to meet a strict budget while subtly celebrating all those conditions.

With its 12:12 pitched roof and a footprint measuring 148 feet long and 26 feet wide, the building is based on the region's 19th-century long barns. Their length came from the need for multipurpose spaces that could house grain, livestock, and equipment under one roof, often in distinct bays for each use, and with doors on one or both sides of the long elevation. Those simplified geometries were just the starting point on this project, but they made the four-bedroom house easy to build on the 4½-acre plot that backs up to protected land.

The owners had seen Joeb Moore & Partners' work on social media and soon realized they knew some of the firm's patrons, says Devin Picardi, AIA. "They had a beautiful house in the area, but the wife grew up on the West Coast in a Midcentury Modern home and loved the open plan. It was always her dream to do a house of her own." While the husband was quite happy where he was, he also appreciates art and architecture, Devin says, and supported his wife's dream.

"He's very understated and reserved and pragmatic, so this was a big challenge for them to reach out to do a house, which is a big time and money commitment," adds Joeb. Fortunately, the clients were in no hurry. As architects like to say, every project has three





variables—time, cost, and design—and he advises clients to prioritize two. “The husband cared about cost, and the wife, an interior designer, about design, so this went on for several years through many iterations,” he says.

Viewing Boxes

The bar-shaped building hugs the top of a wooded hill with views over the Housatonic River. Rectilinear dormers slide into notches in the triangular roof, creating northern and southern

Rectilinear dormers slide into roof notches, creating a cadence that deconstructs the form of New England’s historic long barns. *Below:* First-floor living spaces, such as the library, float in the middle of the plan and are divided by furniture-like built-ins.

exposures and a rhythm that abstracts the traditional gable form. This move allowed the architects to tuck two en-suite bedrooms, a game room, and an office into the roof volume, so that as you come up the drive, it reads as a one-story building rather than dominating the hill.

The dormer slots take cues from the window placement and dimensions on the main and walkout lower level. “Where the dormers fall, they relate to openings and spaces below and frame views to the specimen trees and the river,” Joeb says. To the north is a woodland with rock outcroppings, to the south the view of water, meadow, and state forest.





Those “light boxes” not only define the second-floor room locations, but also the vertical circulation—a stairway between the family room and library. Arriving at the front door, you can see through to the view behind the house. Circulation spines running east-west connect the public social spaces—garage, mudroom, kitchen/dining area, and family room—to the private spaces—the library and primary suite on the east. While the three dormers are spliced into the roof, the fourth notch marks the separation between the house and garage, with a corresponding ground-level void that serves as a porch with motorized screens. In the future, a loft can be built in the attic space above the garage, accessed from the adjacent dormer.

“Simple, subtle moves have a fairly dramatic effect on how you experience the house,” Joeb says. “Gaps frame views without creating a glass façade that says, oh, here’s the view

beyond. We think of fenestration as a formal language that creates a syncopation almost like music, and those scores run horizontally with the grain of the building.” The basement rooms, which walk out to the pool, include a sauna, closet, bath, lounge, gym, office, and fourth bedroom.

Carving out the basement, rather than building up or out to gain the needed space for visiting grandchildren, was a lifestyle, circulation, and budget strategy, as were the stairs—stacked between two walls rather than floating. While the floor plan lets the couple live on one level, the vertical spine supports





their privacy when the grandkids visit: the children move between the upstairs bedrooms and the lower play area. “They put their money into the square footage,” Joeb says. “This is a legacy home; she wants family to come here with their kids.”

Push and Pull

The long-simmering design gave the team time to find and expertly execute the soundest solutions, particularly on aspects driven by price. For example,

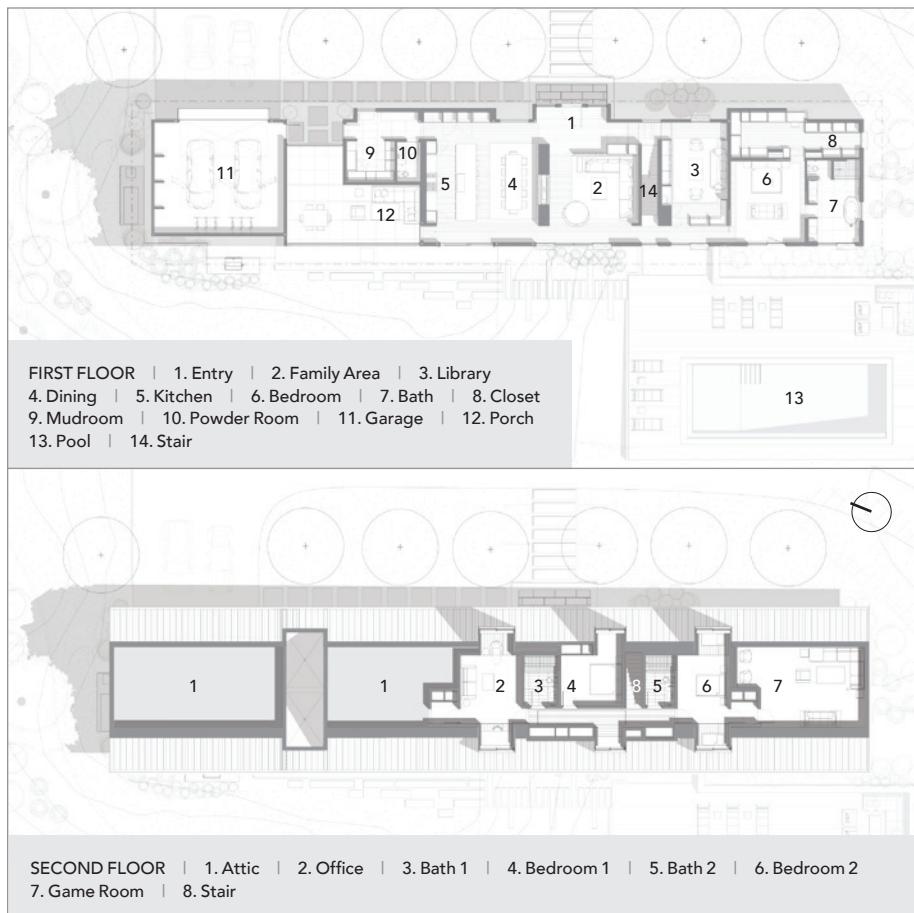
on a site where every move required blasting into the glacial till, the house was designed to balance cut and fill. A ledge that needed to be removed was crushed on-site and reused. The grid of floor trusses allowed them to preplan mechanical systems in the floor rather than creating interstitial spaces to house them, and the interiors are column-free. The repeated, prefabricated wood trusses effectively reduced waste, accelerated construction, and kept the project within budget.

Throughout the design process, the section was sacred. “When the project went on hold during Covid, the first thing we did was to draw the master section, first the vertical circulation, getting an open-riser stair that fit within the width of the building elegantly,” Devin says. “That informed how wide building needed to be, while also accommodating a 12-pitch roof with 4-foot overhangs and gutters, which are concealed outside the thermal envelope.”

To stay within the desired proportions and cost-per-square-foot range, the architects bumped some storage areas several feet over the foundation, creating a cadence while maintaining the compact footprint. “We take the section concept as the key driver, not the plan,” Joeb says.

Material World

A spare material palette reinforces the perpendicular relationship between the horizontal wood siding and standing seam-metal roof. Cypress was subbed for western red cedar, which had almost tripled in price over the course of design. Given a bleaching stain and oil preservative, it will weather naturally over time. When the sun shines on the hilltop, the



Bar House

North Fairfield County, Connecticut

ARCHITECT: Joeb Moore, FAIA, principal in charge; Devin Picardi, AIA, associate principal, Joeb Moore & Partners, Greenwich, Connecticut

BUILDER: Chris Washington, Washington Builders, Southbury, Connecticut

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Dean Pushlar Landscape, Brookfield, Connecticut

CIVIL ENGINEER: Stuart Somers Co., Southbury

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Marchetti Consulting Engineers, Pound Ridge, New York

KITCHEN: SieMatic, New York, New York

PROJECT SIZE: 5,800 square feet

SITE SIZE: 4.5 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: David Sundberg / Esto

KEY PRODUCTS

CABINETRY: SieMatic, Silva Woodworking

COOKTOP: Wolf

CLADDING: 54-inch American cypress shiplap with 3/8-inch gap

COOKING VENT HOOD: Best

COUNTERTOPS: DuPont Corian, quartz, marble

ENGINEERED LUMBER: LVL Beam

ENTRY DOORS: Upstate Door, Marvin

FAUCETS: Fantini, The Gallery, Dornbracht

FINISH MATERIALS: Porcelanosa, Stone Source, Rombini

FIREPLACE: Flare

FIXTURES: Robern (medicine cabinet), Ginger (bath accessories)

FLOOR TRUSSES: National Building Products

FLOORING: Plain-sawn oak, Akdo Gaja, Stone Source, I Colori

FOUNDATION: Cast-in-place structural slab/underslab rigid insulation

GARAGE DOORS: Wayne Dalton

GRILL: FBO (built-in)

HARDWARE: Rajack (cabinetry), Formani, Arc, Merit, Sugatsune (passage doors)

HOME THEATER COMPONENTS: Sonos

HUMIDITY CONTROL: AprilAire

HVAC: Trane

INSULATION/HOUSEWRAP: ZIP System

MOTORIZED INSECT SCREEN: Phantom

OVENS: Wolf

PAINTS/STAINS/COATINGS: Benjamin Moore

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

ROOFING: Standing seam over ventilation mat, Sharkskin Comp underlayment, EPDM

SECURITY SYSTEM: Napco

SINKS: DuPont Corian, Furniture Guild, Elkay

TOILETS: TOTO

TUB: MTI Baths

VANITIES/PEDESTAL LAVS: Furniture Guild

VENTILATION: Panasonic

WASHER/DRYER: Miele

WINDOWS/WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS: Marvin

WINE REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero



deep gray roof almost dissolves to white, Devin says, and its standing seams create shadow play. “The roof ribbing and the slicing of the dormers help break down the house into five volumes instead of a single one,” he says.

Interiors have a similar modernist economy. The SieMatic kitchen features lacquered and wood cabinetry paired with black metal accents. Furniture-like storage units act as dividing walls on the first floor. These open rooms occupy the middle of the plan, allowing for circulation and views on the long sides of the house.

The time spent value-engineering the design also pleased builder Chris Washington. “Because of the research

“The roof ribbing and the slicing of the dormers help break down the house into five volumes instead of a single one.”

—Devin Picardi, AIA

and exercises we went through before construction began, nothing needed to be sacrificed on the job,” he says. “We moved 100 percent forward with few if any changes.” Thanks to such discipline, the budget was able to absorb the cost of triple-glazed windows that reduce heating and cooling loads, as well

as a photovoltaic field installed away from the house.

“The husband would have lived in the other house for several more decades; he thought it was perfect and was afraid he would have buyer’s remorse,” Devin says. “But over time they have fallen in love with the house.” The owners have said that they love the house when the kids are there, and just as much when everyone leaves and they can enjoy its peace, he adds.

Indeed, Bar House interweaves economy and craftsmanship, resulting in an inventive and regionally sensitive home that met the clients’ economic goals without compromising livability or beauty. **RD**



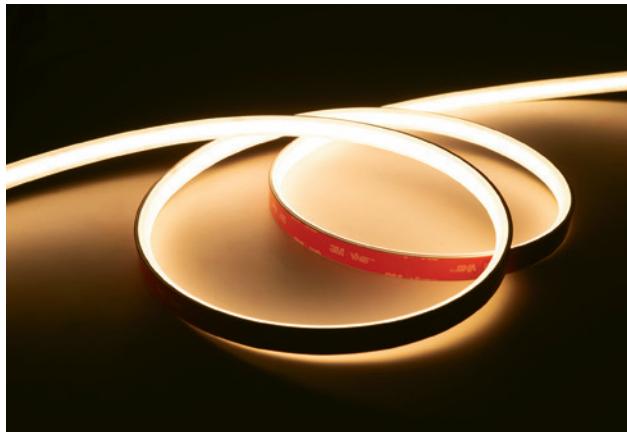
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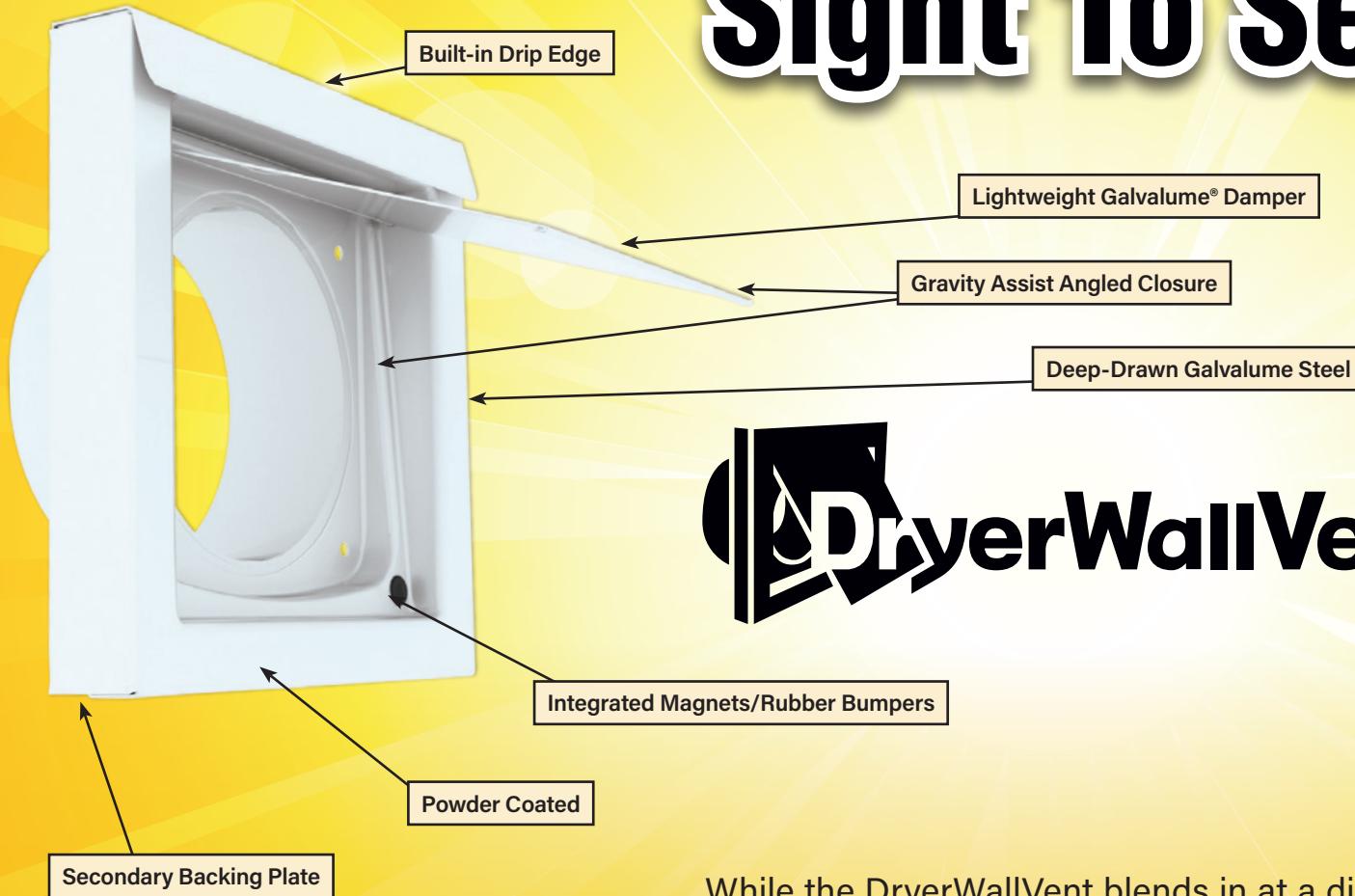
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Walker Warner's clients for this coastal project are savvy connoisseurs of residential architecture. "We have a long history with them," says Greg Warner. "They have among the largest architectural appetites I know of." Here, that appetite is satisfied through a filter of abstinence—eliminating superfluous spaces and appurtenances. Yes, there is only one sink in the primary suite.

An earlier concept aimed to surpass their previous Walker Warner home, until a series of trips to other countries caused the clients to rethink their goals. "In Japan, they saw little cottages pulled apart," says Greg. "It changed their whole outlook." Project manager Amadeo Bennett concurs, "They thought about what they really need. Then the project became an exercise in simplification and editing."

It's still a large house, designed to absorb returning adult children and their families, but it feathers the program around



existing trees and toward incomparable views. "Cottages" containing the primary suite, a combination library and living area, and the kitchen, dining, and family room are pulled apart and reconnected with glass breezeways. An additional breezeway leads to the guest wing and entry at the front of the house.

"It's the network of breezeways that make the project function," Greg explains. "It allows us to tap into the surroundings with the landscape architect. It's a quiet way to build, and it almost feels like a relief. You'll be able to look right over the project and see the coast."—S. Claire Conroy

Architect: Greg Warner, AIA; Amadeo Bennett, RA, project manager, Walker Warner Architects, San Francisco; builder: Stocker & Allaire, Monterey, California; landscape architect: Lutsko Associates, San Francisco; project size: 7,910 square feet; site size: 2.35 acres; renderings: Notion Workshop.

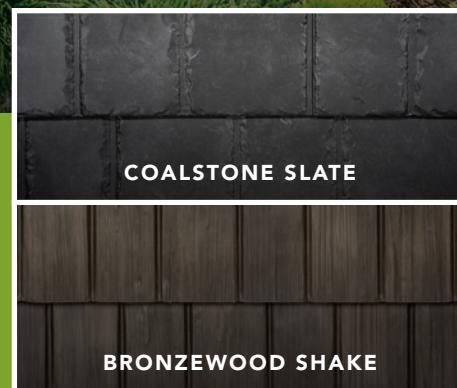
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