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On the Cover: Old Quarry House by Gray Organschi Architecture and JIG DesignBuild. Photo: ©David Sundberg/Esto

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Clean, Well-Sited Places



Architects and custom builders struggle routinely to demonstrate their worth to potential clients. Why should anyone go through all the trouble to hunt down a lot, pay a premium for a custom design, and then wait for a year or more to have it constructed? The process is laborious, expensive, and excruciatingly slow. It's full of hazards and uncertainties. It's a wonder anyone ever chooses this path to owning a new home.

Savvy buyers do so because they've learned, often through previous homeownership, about all the shortfalls, shortcuts, and missed opportunities inherent in existing houses and production-built new houses. More buyers would take custom route, too, if they truly understood that what most houses lack is actually possible to have—if they knew that custom homes can satisfy like no other kind of house.

Thoughtful, tailored solutions to family needs or interests make custom houses more useful and meaningful to their owners. The luxury of choice—where things should go and what they should be made of—is also a fulfilling experience. What really sets custom homes apart, however, is that they are specifically designed for their sites. In the hands of talented architects and custom builders, these houses are intimately and inextricably linked to the landscape. They are transformed by what's around them; the combination of house and site elevates both; they could exist nowhere else.

This is where so many production and speculative builders go terribly wrong. Their houses are typically a generic plan on an available lot, perhaps with a touch of customizing done to suit a "presold" buyer or code requirement. The siting of the house is driven by a host of business concerns unmoored from design—density-per-acre pro formas or orientation on a street grid, for instance. So much money is spent, and so much opportunity lost.

In this issue, we look at houses that appear to emanate organically from the sites they occupy. Some were costly to build; others just look they were because of how well they're integrated with the landscape, and how clean and well-conceived their designs are.

Simple materials thoughtfully deployed on the exteriors and interiors; outdoor living as carefully considered as what goes on indoors; and a flexible arrangement of space for everyday life—these are a few of the best qualities of a custom-designed house.

Architects and custom builders are among the few pros in the homebuilding industry who understand how to extract and distill the most important elements of a project and its site, and turn them into something far greater than the sum of the parts—a place to live that's deeply satisfying and personal. This is the true value of what they do, and its worth is beyond measure.

S. Claire Conroy Editor-in-Chief Claire@SOLAbrands.com

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VERBATIM

Photo: Brad Feinknopf

Social Graces

STUDIO MM NEW YORK AND KERHONKSON, N.Y.





Photo: Courtesy Studio MM

Above left: Architect Marica McKeel. Above: Completed last year, TinkerBox will eventually become the guest house on its 10-acre site. Arch Daily named it one of the website's 50 most popular houses.

Common sense would suggest that going out on your own as a sole proprietor during the height of a deep recession is not the best idea. But that's exactly what Marica McKeel, AIA, did in 2010 after three years of working in Santiago Calatrava's New York office. She founded Studio MM, PLLC, and decided to focus her efforts on residential practice. Just seven years later, the firm is thriving and Marica has built several attention-grabbing houses in the Hudson Valley. She's also built a booming social media enterprise that's nearly as noteworthy as her architecture. As it happens, the two are tightly entwined, and mastering social media early on may be a key source of her burgeoning success.

RD: Marica, you got started in New York City, but most of your work is upstate. How did that come about?

MM: One thing I worked on when I was at Calatrava was his house in upstate Connecticut. I learned I loved working on residential architecture and I loved site visits up there. When I started my own firm, it was during the downturn. The positive thing about that was I had a lot of time to concentrate on what I wanted to do and who my target market was. I am in New York City, and it's not like there's no competition here. So, I decided to focus on the Hudson Valley and modern design. If you have the opportunity to work upstate, take it. We first got to know of you through Twitter. It was like you came out of nowhere, and then suddenly you were everywhere and connected to everyone. How did you manage that? I started with a blog on my website. I had read an article about a man who sold swimming pools [Marcus Sheridan] whose business was struggling during the downturn. He began writing a blog on his website and simply answered the kinds of questions he would get from potential customers. He discovered that by writing the questions and answering them on his site, his website would rank high up in Google searches about swimming pools. And that led to more customers for the business.

I also bought one of those "Dummies" books. But a big influence is Gary Vaynerchuk, who wrote *Jab*, *Jab*, *Jab*, *Right Hook*. He is extremely analytically smart. And his ideas influence my whole media strategy: Give, give, then you can ask.

What is the "give" and what do you "ask" for?

My takeaway was you have to provide real content on your website not just promotional, marketing material. So, I began to answer the typical questions I would get from clients. My first blog series was about the process of working with an architect.

I try to keep the blog casual and friendly, like a conversation. It began to work. I got a phone call, and the woman on the other end



Above left: The interior of TinkerBox makes the most of its small open-plan space. Above right: A recently completed house on Lake Wylie in South Carolina.

thought I was just the receptionist. Before I could correct her, she began talking about how excited she was to work with me, and how she felt she knew me from the writing, and that she felt she trusted me. That's when I realized I had to keep blogging.

So, producing content is the key to getting potential clients to your website, and from there you build their trust and interest in working with you. What role does social media play in that goal? Once I began the blog, I had to find a way to get people to the blog. So, I joined Twitter. Then I realized there weren't many potential clients to be found there, but there was a community of architects there-a lot of residential architects. I made a lot of friends that way. I was working solo for a long time, so it's been very helpful and encouraging having peers to bounce ideas off of. Having worked for a big commercial firm, this was a surprise: Residential architects are better at sharing resources and experience. Maybe it's because we're somewhat underdogs. But it's more important than focusing on being competitive. There's this feeling that if we all get together and promote the value of architecture, that's going to make a far bigger difference for all of us.

Tell us about the shared blogs that came out of this exchange.

The "#HouseoftheDay" blog came out of a group of us on Twitter. Our thought was, if you have something you can post every day, that makes things easier. Keith Palma [Cogitate Design, PLLC, Raleigh, N.C.] decided we should have a theme. I enjoy it because it's focused on residential.

ArchiTalks is the monthly group blog. It promotes small firms, so we can write about more than just architecture and more than just surface stuff. Each of us prepares a blog that we publish on our websites on the same day and on the same topic, and we share each other's posts. We have a Google spreadsheet that Bob Borson [Malone Maxwell Borson Architects, Dallas] started, and the topics are decided a year out.

OK, we've talked about the web blog and Twitter. Can you tell us how you built a following of a quarter million on LinkedIn? How has such a huge audience there helped your business?



Because I was posting so much material on the blog, I found LinkedIn was a good option for getting the word out about it. And LinkedIn offered to promote us because we were such big content producers.

A lot of my clients are on LinkedIn. But they're not typically looking for their architect there. I have to admit I don't think we've completely figured that one out. The large following there hasn't led to a client. What I can do there is help promote other people in architecture.

You're also on Facebook and Instagram. Where do they fit in?

My website blog is more professional. On Facebook, I can be more excited and let my hair down a bit. That's where my personality comes out, and clients can get to know me and know whether they want to work with me.

Instagram is probably my favorite place. I can be a lot more real. You don't have to say as much, or be as witty or clever. It's easier.

I can use all of those to get followers to my website. All of social media is a tool for feeding the website, so Google thinks you're an expert.

Everyone reading this is going to ask how you do it all. How can you produce so much content and get your day job done? Do you have help?

I didn't have any help until about a year and a half ago. Then I hired someone amazing who does everything in our office that's not architecture. I still write every blog post, but she helps me with social media. The handoff was slow at the beginning, but we talk about what we're going to do every week, and we have a spreadsheet with every post on it, and I approve it. But I don't have to be the one putting in all the time on it anymore.

Why did you hold on to the blog instead of delegating it?

I love it and I hate it, but that one has to be me. I know what it brings in as far as business development and client trust.

All of it is about getting the word out and answering the question, "Why should you pay an architect to design a home, when you could just buy one or work with a builder?"

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The Secrets of the Trees

JOHNSEN SCHMALING ARCHITECTS MILWAUKEE



Above: Brian Johnsen and Sebastian Schmaling.

Ever since they appeared on the residential architecture scene a little more than a dozen years ago, Johnsen Schmaling Architects has continued to surprise, delight, and sometimes confound. The first project of theirs to attract notice was the Parts House Pavilion, a whimsical rooftop entertaining space in their hometown of Milwaukee. Colorful, versatile, and clever, the pavilion structure transformed a neglected space atop a condo conversion building. As zany as the space seemed at the time, there was wisdom in the whimsy. With Johnsen Schmaling, there always is.

Apart from their obvious talent for creating distinctive residential buildings, the firm partners have a special knack for elucidating the intellectual underpinnings of every design decision they make. There's a rationale for every choice, and they make sure to document that process thoroughly. This bread crumb approach helps them immeasurably with their clients and with award juries, because appreciation for their work invariably deepens with a fuller understanding. They are the rare firm that seems able to quantify what most consider qualitative choices.

First and foremost, the foundation of each design begins with the landscape and





Left and above: Mountain House mimics the topography of its hilly site in Big Sky, Mont., and takes its palette from natural elements of the landscape.



Above: Looking out on the Rocky Mountains in the distance, Mountain House embraces the changes its corrugated Cor-Ten steel exterior will undergo as it ages.

context it occupies. Now, plenty of firms will tell you they are inspired by a project's surroundings. They may even show you a poster board festooned with samples from the site—bark, lichen, pebbles—that is intended to serve as a kind of Rosetta stone to the work. But few if any can track every little twist and turn along the way to the final result with such clarity, self-possession, and conviction.

Perhaps that's because both partners are professors of architecture practice (at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee) as well as firm leaders. They are at once steeped in theory, practice, and practicality. They're accustomed to breaking concepts down to critical elements for students and for budget-conscious residential clients.

Leaves of Glass

The next big firm project to capture national attention and award recognition was Camouflage House in 2007. Designed as a weekend home on Wisconsin's Green Lake, the 2,700-square-foot, low-slung structure uses a meticulously patterned façade to mimic the solids and voids of trees on the heavily wooded site. An almost musical composition of tongueand-groove cedar, glass, and colored Prodema wood-veneer panels alternately conceals and reveals the landscape and lake beyond.

The partners based the color palette of the house, and especially of the Prodema panels (variations of browns, reds, yellows), on a year's worth of site visits, tracking the changing of the leaves through the seasons. Those Prodema panels project forward from the façade about 4 inches, adding another variation of layer and depth to the structure as well. Over time, the cedar silvers out, but the veneer panels hold their hues.

The project was a breakthrough for the firm. It garnered local, regional, and national design awards. The following year, the Architectural League of





Top to bottom: Linear Cabin is a natural evolution from the firm's award-winning early project, Camouflage House (*above*). Both are resolute in their horizontality as they meet and somehow mimic the verticality of surrounding trees.





Above left: Although an urban project, East Side Infill now under construction also takes its color palette from local context. The slats on the exterior are "a play on clapboard siding." Above: The tiny Studio for a Composer is one of the firm's most poetic buildings.

as one of its Emerging Voices for 2008. Although now more than a decade old, the house still pleases Sebastian's design eye and aligns tightly with the firm's ongoing mission. "One of our revelations is that we still like Camouflage House all these years later. This is a building we probably would design similarly again," he says. "It taught us a lot of things: The rhythm shift and overlay of trees as you walk through a forest, the vertical lines, the changing colors of the leaves, the bark of the trunks. We took the language from that and translated it into Camouflage House-the idea of verticality, even when you have a horizontal house, the undulated skin and colors of the façade panels.

New York selected Johnsen Schmaling

"Camouflage is applicable to many of our buildings. We still think that's an appropriate way to respond to the site: We develop a palette that allows a building to blend in with its context, rather than standing out in contrast to it."

Undulation Education

On the strength of its home-turf accomplishments, Johnsen Schmaling is increasingly called upon to design outside Wisconsin's boundaries. "We are as busy as everybody else these days, which is a big change since 2011," says Sebastian. "We're up to eight people now, and half our work is out of state. We're not just relying on the small pool of potential clients in our neighborhood." Oftentimes, though, the jobs out of state have a Wisconsin connection.

Such was the case for the Mountain House in Montana, whose client is from Wisconsin. Even in a new and unfamiliar location (in this case, the Rocky Mountains), the lessons from Camouflage House remain applicable.

Blending in amid the backdrop of Big Sky country means responding to terrain, in addition to other natural elements. And that's no small challenge with an orthogonal structure. For Mountain House, the firm used "a series of flat and gently sloping volumes and planes" to track the undulating topography. The canted roof responds to the mountain ridges at a distance.

Pitching the roof made sense in harsh snow country and as a response to the landscape. It's a move the firm has zero qualms about, despite a prevailing notion that modern houses should have flat roofs. "You can't just take a style and transplant it around the country. It becomes intellectually void and empty," says Sebastian. "When people ask us for a modern building, we don't know what that means. Imbuing a building with another level of





Above: 510 House has recently won an American Architecture Award from the Chicago Athenaeum. Again, the roots in Camouflage House are readily discernable.

meaning is what makes it so interesting. You have to tie it to the landscape.

"We are not trying to deny that these are man-made products, but they blend in and then reveal themselves," he concludes. "They're not about using their manmade-ness to stand apart."

Mountain House's façade echoes the colors of the site, much as Camouflage's exterior does. An evolution in materials has clearly taken place all these years later, but the careful balance of constancy and change remains. Like the Prodema panels, charred cedar cladding will hold its color long term and protect against the elements. Mountain House also employs clear cedar that will silver over time and corrugated Cor-Ten steel that will age to an earthy patina as ruggedly beautiful as the landscape.

No Gut, No Glory?

Multiple site visits and exhaustive studies go into the evolution of Johnsen Schma-

ling's designs, whether residential or commercial, single-family or multifamily. Elements are distilled, extrapolated, and then reapplied to the final concept.

The team generates axonometrics, diagrams, renderings, and other graphics. And they build "a lot of physical models at all scales and levels of sophistication rough and fine," says Sebastian. "We explain graphically the bark structure we see and how that resulted in the façade system. It's very different from the gut-feel approach. Our clients say they wouldn't have understood it without the backstory of how we got there."

This rational, methodical process stands in opposition to how some other architects divine their design solutions. Indeed, many creative professionals talk of tapping into an almost trancelike state of artistic flow that feels like a higher power or divine guidance.

If you believe in the left brain/right brain assignment of labors, does that mean our analytical skills lie wholly divided from our creative powers? Or does that trancelike state more plausibly originate in an open, functioning pipeline between the two hemispheres?

Says Sebastian, "Our buildings are a hybrid of something that is inspired by subjective elements of the landscape and packaged in a rational object that is not organic in a stylistic sense. We use a reductive process of organizing our own observations and translating them into a tectonic language—it's instrumental to the way we work."

Even if the firm's buildings are tightly rooted in the rational world and the process by which they are designed is a highly edited one, they total much more than the sum of their parts. They evoke their own exalted state that elevates them above the ordinary. The paring away of unnecessary distractions reveals a pure and poetic heart. Maybe they're "not organic in a stylistic sense," but given their ability to elicit an emotional response, they are almost organic in a functional sense.

Into the Void

If Camouflage House was the prototype lake house in the woods for Johnsen Schmaling, Linear Cabin is a natural progression. Located on Alma Lake in St. Germain, Wis., the 900-square-foot "cabin" is just one-third the size of its forebear. It, too, explores the idea of solids and voids, of horizontality amid the vertical woods. But this iteration is even more distilled and extracted.

There are three modules to the whole—a storage room (lake toys), service room (kitchen, bath, laundry, utility), and a "sleeping box" (containing two bunk rooms). These modules comprise the "solid" portions of the building, and between them two see-through "voids" serve as carport and "hearth room," respectively. One continuous flat roof connects the components. The carport lies open to the elements, and the hearth room appears similarly open, but is glazed with 15-foot-wide lift-slide glass doors. The closed modules are clad in locally sourced, blackened pine planks. A varnished, lightercolored cedar reveal continues along the roof line and to the ground at the north end of the building, creating a subtle, almost halo effect.

In its resolute simplicity, the house exudes a kind of inevitability about its presence in these woods. The effect is quite deliberate. "We truly believe that a building wants to grow out of the site. Once it's built, it becomes a logical component of the landscape," Sebastian explains. "Deep down, we are real rationalists, but we have a poetic vein. We are sort of trying to analyze what we see, digitize it in a way, and reassemble it into a building."

Lyrical Stillness

The word "poetic" may best apply to one of the firm's smallest buildings, Studio for a Composer in Spring Prairie, Wis. The







Top to bottom: Two more single-family houses now under construction show their solid grounding on their sites and in the scenic landscapes they occupy. The center photo is a model study for the house shown at the top.

studio space is just 315 square feet, but glass window walls at either end connect it to infinite space outdoors. The rectangular room sits atop a storage volume and a vegetated roof—landscape brought within the boundaries of the building. Locally sourced weathering steel skin introduces an element of unpredictability and imperfection to the otherwise strictly controlled composition. Another multiple award-winner, the jewel box building struck a major chord with critics.

Materials that weather, materials that

withstand change, taut volumes of carefully orchestrated interior space and exterior skin—a tuning fork struck on the ground and resonating to a perfect tone. These are characteristics all Johnsen Schmaling's buildings share.

Even when their projects occupy urban sites, they find something meaningful to root them in. A recent breakthrough project, Belay MKE, allowed the partners to employ their book of spells at a larger scale—an 18,000-square-foot, mixed-use building with 46 apartments. Instead of bark and leaves, the building draws from the human-built fabric that surrounds it. "It doesn't matter if it's rural context or urban context. There is history baked in that you cannot deny," says Sebastian. "This was a brownfield site. It had a noticeably raw character, even 30 years after the shops have closed."

There are other new buildings in the vicinity, but according to Sebastian, they're lackluster. "They're inspired by the cheapest cladding they can find. We need to find cheap cladding, too, but we work hard to find something with more sophistication. Other buildings tend to use three or four different materials, because the developer is afraid the building will look too monolithic. We're not afraid of the masculine, strong volume, clad in one material that can change over time. We're proud that we were able to convince this developer that weathering steel was a good idea. There are people who look at this and see only decay."

Once again, the firm's penchant for support materials and intensive research made the case for their design choices. Their ability to work imaginatively and, yes, poetically, within limited budgets is endearing them to forward-thinking developers. There's another multifamily project in development for Sacramento, Calif. And meanwhile, the single-family commissions keep coming in—urban, suburban, and rural. All will receive the quietly powerful and deeply considered Johnsen Schmaling process, intertwined on an almost atomic level with landscape, site, context, and program.

"We are not about aesthetic fireworks," says Sebastian in conclusion. "All architects are under pressure to create something noteworthy, but it can't be disconnected from the project itself. That usually doesn't work. Our buildings are quiet and calm, and it takes spending time with them to appreciate them." —S. Claire Conroy "All architects are under pressure to create something noteworthy, but it can't be disconnected from the project itself." —Sebastian Schmaling





Above: One of the firm's most ambitious and complicated buildings to date, Belay MKE draws its inspiration from its gritty industrial context. The multifamily complex, also an award-winner, has spawned a growing portfolio of urban developer work.



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Unflappable

PRUTTING & COMPANY CUSTOM BUILDERS STAMFORD, CONN.



Stop for a moment and think about the massive amount of faith and trust a custom home client has to muster to go forward with a high-end project. For architects and custom builders, creating and executing one-off designs is an everyday job. There is financial risk, of course, for the pro, but it's nothing remotely like the risk the client must bear. In a way, a custom home client is a developer, with all the inherent pressures and potential pleasures that entails.

Every custom home built from a new design is a prototype. It's never been built exactly this way before, and it's everyone's educated guess that it will function properly and delight as anticipated. With traditional designs, there is more precedent to rely upon—more tried and true materials, details, and building technology to bolster the project. That's part of their appeal, in addition to the emotional responses, memories, and other associations they tap into. David Prutting, of Prutting & Company Custom Builders in Stamford, Conn., knows how



Left: David Prutting. Above: Toshiko Mori's addition to Marcel Breuer's 1951 house in New Canaan, Conn.

to construct both traditional and modern houses, and has done both for more than 40 years, but it's largely the modern work that's lifted his company into the topmost echelon of builders in his region.

Custom clients just trust him. And so do the most demanding architects. For the guy who started in business as a roofing contractor, that's a pretty big accomplishment. He got his start in 1975 reroofing shingle houses in Cape Cod. When work dried up on the Cape, he followed a friend's advice and lit out for Houston, where oil-fueled boom times were going full tilt. "You tripped over work down there; there were job sites everywhere. I was an entrepreneur," explains David. And his full-service contracting firm was born. "Forty-two years later, here I am," he says—back in New England for decades and the best in the business at high-end remodels and new custom homes.

Yes, David has long-term experience in the building business. But there are other reasons clients and architects—and skilled trades—put their faith in him. Some of that has to do with the entrepreneurial side he mentioned. He doesn't just build beautiful houses for other people, he knows what it's like personally to be signing the checks on an ambitious custom project.

Bring in Da Noyes

Sixteen years ago, David and his wife and business partner, Deborah, bought a dilapidated midcentury modern house in New Canaan, Conn. The house, designed by Eliot Noyes in the 1950s, was highly experimental and theoretical. Built lightly with the inferior materials of the day, it





Top: The Eliot Noyes house David renovated with Joeb Moore & Partners. *Above:* KieranTimberlake's Pound Ridge House in Pound Ridge, N.Y., reflects its wooded site.

had not aged well and was certainly not up to modern life in the new millennium.

Now, David could have simply repaired the existing house, but it would have functioned only as a shrine to midcentury architectural thought and not as a viable dwelling. Perhaps some would have been fine with freezing it in a bygone time, but David was interested in something more challenging. To help him plan an extensive renovation and reinvention, he hired Joeb Moore, of Joeb Moore & Partners in Greenwich, Conn.

Joeb's work at the time was singular in its sensitivity to existing conditions and in the level of invention he was capable of bringing to any new additions. He's an architect who thrives on theory and research in architecture, and he applied the full force of his talents on the Noyes remodel. As did David. Ultimately, Joeb's new architecture allowed you to read the original Noyes house as a distinct building, then went on to create its own fresh dialogue and interaction with it.

Bring in Da Stars

This amazing work helped solidify the reputations of both builder and architect with clients and pros alike. David's career now reads like a shortlist of well-known, accomplished, and technically demanding architectural firms: Toshiko Mori, Cutler Anderson, Olson Kundig, Bates Masi, and many more. "We want to work on the more demanding, stimulating jobs. We want to work with the top designers who do good plans," says David. And they keep coming back. He and his team of 19 have built multiple houses for these architects and scores of others.

Why do they keep returning to David? Maybe because nothing fazes him. Not even Jim Cutler. "I've encountered no one else in my career who draws all his details himself," says David, with considerable awe and admiration of Jim. "He hands you a book with everything drawn. Masonry work, framing details, window install details. You have to be up to the challenge to work with him."

Meeting the high standards of the standard-bearers is one thing. David has

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Spec Home, Newport Beach, Ca Design by Ultra-Mod Interiors Photo by Jeri Koegel



Above: David and Deborah Prutting's current home, a New Canaan townhouse by Joeb Moore & Partners.

"We want to work on the more demanding and stimulating jobs." —David Prutting

aced this, as well as finessing relationships with high-powered clients. Here his experience, good humor, and dedication to getting the work done right go a long way toward allaying fears and tensions. But there are new complications these days for custom builders at this level of the profession. Chief among them is the advent of the "owner's representative."

Alas, the era of hard-won trust is eroding, and for a pro like David, it feels like a substantial loss and a needless stumbling block to the successful completion of a great house. "My first experience with an owner's rep was a guy who said he was there to keep an eye on the architect. I respect it, but I don't think you need it," says David. "And we had one who was a table pounder. There was intimidation with that guy. Most

PRO-FILE BUILD

of them are team players, and we are too. I have nothing to fear, but if clients ask me if I think they need one, I'll tell them no."

He posits that the concern comes from those who bring city thinking to the countryside. "Everyone who's had work done in Manhattan feels they've been ripped off. The typical contractor invoice is a lien form," he quips. "Then they come out to the suburbs, they feel they need protection. Like a bodyguard."

Ahead of the Game

For David, much has changed over 40 years of business, but managing subcontractors has not. He believes in building the best team and treating them well over the long term. "Sure we push them on price," he says, "but we don't want to leverage subs to the point where they're losing money." And unlike many builders lately, he has no problem tapping good trades. "They find me," he says. Worse come to worst, he notes, all his supers are "punch-list quality" and always able to get the job done.

In addition to the proliferation of owners' reps, another new twist in the everyday lives of high-end custom builders is the lengthy and extensive preconstruction phase. "We now do mock-ups *all* the time. Small sections of the building—exterior skin, siding trim, roofing, overhang, corner detailing stone veneer exactly as it will get built," he explains. "We have a job in Greenwich, where we're doing eight of them. And everyone has to approve them—the landscape architect, the architect, the clients—everyone has an opinion."

Unfazed and unflappable, he laughs. "Hey, we are set up to deal with demanding architectural needs. We know how to deal with submittals. And we know what the owners need. We assure them they're going to get what they want. That's the definition of a custom builder." —S. Claire Conroy



VINTAGEVIEW.COM/RD



What's on the Agenda at the CRAN Symposium



Photo: Courtesy Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau © Kikor.com

The 15 members of the Custom Residential Architects Network (CRAN) Advisory Group invite you to attend the CRAN Symposium 2017, September 16 through 19 in Miami. The 10th annual gathering of top custom residential architects follows the completely sold-out symposium in Sonoma, Calif., last fall. This year will prove just as exciting and informative, so make your reservation early. The venue is the gorgeous Intercontinental Hotel in downtown Miami.

Saturday's program includes an affiliate reception for CRAN chapter leaders to get together and network with their peers. Local CRAN leaders will be able to learn what programs and tours have been successful in other chapters and hear what's going on at the national level. If you have thoughts about starting a CRAN chapter, come and find out how it is done. Later, a cocktail reception will allow guests to meet other architects and vendors, followed by a fabulous dinner cruise.

On Sunday, we'll have the most popu-

lar event of the symposium: the home tour. One of the houses confirmed so far is a home designed by Alfred Browning Parker, FAIA, "Miami's maverick modernist." Buses will take attendees to several contemporary and period homes in the Miami area. A stop at the historic Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables for lunch and an informative talk by Allan Shulman, FAIA, are included.

On Monday, we delve into the practice of residential architecture. Steve Mouzon, AIA, will be our keynote speaker, followed by Randolph C. Henning, author of "The Architecture of Alfred Browning Parker;" CRAN Advisory Group member Kevin Harris, FAIA; building science expert Mark LaLiberte; residential architect Marica McKeel, AIA; and small firm expert Rena Klein, FAIA.

On Tuesday, we'll wrap up with a panel discussion about rising waters moderated by Shawna Meyer, AIA, senior associate at Kennedy & Violich Architecture and a founding collaborator of aPC Workshop,

Custom Residential Architects Network

an AIA Knowledge Community





with panelists Alan Berger, urban design professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Martin Pedersen of the Common Edge Collaborative magazine; and Chris Meyer, AIA, of aPC Workshop. Next, there will be sessions led by architect Michael Imber, FAIA; business consultants Nicole Lemieux and Jeff Echols; and architect Max Strang, FAIA.

Monday and Tuesday evenings feature cocktail parties and our ever-popular networking dinners with sponsors and other architects. Significant others and friends are encouraged to register for the dinner cruise, the house tour, the cocktail parties, and the networking dinners.

Once again, I encourage you to register now to avoid missing the best CRAN symposium yet. Earn 18.5 learning units and have fun!!

John Lee Stewart, AIA CRAN Chair 2017

Continued on page 34



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CRAN Symposium Preliminary Schedule



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Steve Mouzon, AIA: "Incremental Art Deco Revival"

Steve Mouzon, AIA, is an architect, urbanist, and photographer from Miami. He is the author of "The Original Green" and founder of the New Urban Guild, which helped foster

the Katrina Cottages movement and hosts Project:Smart Dwelling. Mouzon Design produces a number of townbuilding tools and services. The house plans have been featured repeatedly as "Home of the Month" in Southern Living, Coastal Living, and Cottage Living magazines. Steve is Town Architect at several new hamlets, villages, and neighborhoods around the country, using a unique method that communicates principles, not just particulars. Steve is also a principal of the New Urban Guild in Miami. The New Urban Guild is a group of architects, designers, and other New Urbanists dedicated to the study and the design of true traditional buildings and places native to and inspired by the regions in which they are built.

FEATURED SPEAKERS AND SESSION TOPICS

MAX STRANG, FAIA: Firm Monograph

ALLAN SHULMAN, FAIA: The Tropical Home in Miami STEVE MOUZON, AIA: Incremental Art Deco Revival RANDOLPH C. HENNING: The Residential Architecture of Alfred Browning Parker, FAIA KEVIN HARRIS, FAIA: The Forever Home MARK LALIBERTE: Resiliency in Residential Construction MARICA MCKEEL, AIA: Moving Beyond a One-Person Firm RENA KLEIN, FAIA: Your First Hire; When, Why, and Who RISING WATERS PANEL DISCUSSION: Shawna Meyer, AIA, moderator; speakers Alan Berger, Martin Pederson, Chris Meyer MICHAEL IMBER, FAIA: Beautiful Drawings and Their Role in Creating Classic Architecture NICOLE LEMIEUX: What Do Clients Think About Working With Us? JEFF ECHOLS: How to Find Clients Through Social Media

For more details about the symposium as they develop, and for information on how to register for the symposium and make hotel reservations, see the symposium website at: *network.aia.org/cran/home/symposium/2017symposium*

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A Warm and Welcoming Place

A down-to-the-studs renovation honors the spirit of a '70s seaside house.

BY S. CLAIRE CONROY

ARCHITECT: GRAY ORGANSCHI ARCHITECTURE BUILDER: JIG DESIGNBUILD LOCATION: GUILFORD, CONN.

There is a magic to the earthy, site-hugging contemporary houses of the 1970s. They were honest, sensitive to their natural surroundings, and architecturally ambitious. So, too, were their designers, who felt emboldened by new ideas, technologies, and materials. Their owner clients were not the super-rich 1-percenters but regular working professionals. Closer scrutiny reveals these seemingly unremarkable professionals as the innovative, creative, and memorable people they really were. "Patron" is too detached a word to apply to them; these clients were fully engaged in the purposeful place-making of these inspiring, experimental buildings. These were passionate, deliberate undertakings and an adventure for all involved.

Such was the case with the Old Quarry House project in Guilford, Conn., designed by Carlton Granberry, an architect of some local renown. Occupying a precious and precipitous promontory overlooking Long Island Sound, the house is a stone's throw from Yale University, which has supplied benefactors and guiding spirits for the dwelling from its inception through a recent revitalization.



Inset: The original 1970s house by architect Carlton Granberry had loads of charm but dubious build quality. Above: Sensitive but to-the-studs renovations substantially improved the delight and livability of the house. Opposite: Pulling formerly dropped steel header beams up into the floor package and lowering 3-foot sill heights unveil floor-to-ceiling water views.

The original house was commissioned by a Yale professor and his oceanographer wife, who established a laboratory in the little scenic harbor it overlooks. She proved instrumental in local ecological preservation groups, caring deeply for the environment that surrounded and sustained them and made their house such a special place.

They loved the house and lived for decades with its delights and its intrinsic flaws. Alas, those '70s architects were often enamored of new, untested, and largely underperforming materials and methods of the day. Perhaps that was how working-wage people could afford striking, custom-designed houses back then, but the reality is that many buildings of the period were not durable, and certainly not up to today's standards of energy performance and quotidian comfort. Fast forward to our current decade, Old Quarry House found new stewards, all with Yale pedigrees, to take on its challenges and its opportunities. The new owners both work at the university, and the firm that spearheaded the renovation, Gray Organschi Architecture in New Haven, Conn., has deep ties to the institution as well. Wife-and-husband team Lisa Gray, FAIA, and Alan Organschi went to architecture school at Yale, and Alan continues to teach there, in addition to his work with the practice.

The new owners were, of course, captivated by the site, which lies within a kayak paddle of the Thimble Islands. The "Old Quarry" that gives the project its name is a rich vein of pink and black granite that weaves its way up the New England coastline and has provided the stalwart bases for the Statue of Liberty, Brooklyn Bridge, and Grand Central Station, among other iconic structures. The land the house occupies was quarried at one point in its past, likely in the late 1800s. According to an article in the New Haven Register, many of the quarry workers of the period originally resided on the sound's rocky islands, "rowing themselves to work each day."

Ethical Architecture

"The site is kind of near where we live, in an old quarry in Guilford," says Alan. "Tony Smith built some houses out there, and Carlton Granberry built a lot. Unfortunately, his architecture was ahead of the technology of the times." The firm's clients, who are also friends, bought the house with the expectation of renovating it. "One of the reasons the former owners sold the house to our clients was they said they would not tear it down."

As often happens, the deeper the clients and firm delved into the project, the more evident its flaws became. Still, there was no turning back. "There's this weird threshold of tinkering versus reimagining," says Alan. "It was a balancing act on that thin line of completely reskinning and celebrating what were very latent architectural ideas. We ended up doing a complete gut renovation of the building—down to the framing."

That, of course, drove up the cost of the project significantly. But everyone involved felt that it was a mission of mercy to preserve and renew a building





UPPER FLOOR PLAN

Opposite: "Peeling up" the corners of the ceiling at the north end of the house brings much needed light into the primary living spaces.

that had gotten so many things right, not least among them its modesty of size and profile along the coastline.

"A lot of these houses get torn down," says Alan. "And tall shingle houses are put in their place with no relationship to the site. Our clients could have commissioned any design or scale of house. So, we appreciated the modesty of the scale of their goals. They were on board with an ethical approach of how to treat the property, as well as the neighbors and the view from the water."

Others are not so scrupulous, Lisa and Alan point out. "This piece of land is a promontory. Just across from it had been a turn-of-the-century, Shingle-style country home with huge oak trees on the property. Whoever bought it tore down the genuine Shingle-style house, removed the oak trees, blasted the granite outcroppings, and put in three pumpedup, pseudo Shingle-style buildings in its place. It was a total destruction of the landscape," says Alan.



LOWER FLOOR PLAN

Down to the Studs

Gray Organschi's practice thrives on research. In addition to their rigorous and inventive design aesthetic, the partners have an insatiable curiosity about materials and methods—so much so, that Alan created a complementary company, JIG DesignBuild, to plumb best practices in building construction. The company is licensed for residential construction and managed all phases of the deconstruction and rebuilding of the Old Quarry House.

Alan shares what he learns on the job site with his students at Yale, where he leads a building technology class. He is also on the steering committee of the Cities and Climate Change Network and is pursuing research into the use of "new wood technologies for midrise, high-density housing and infrastructure." His theory is that the lower embodied energy and renewable nature of wood makes it a better alternative to steel for many applications.



Lisa's special interest, in addition to the firm's architectural work, is interior design and furnishing, which she pursues under the name Gray Design. Whether in new construction or remodeling, the architects are especially interested in improving building performance over the long term, while carefully weighing performance returns against costs to the environment and the overall budget of the project.

In this project, that balancing of metrics was all-consuming: "What's poignant to us is the design sensitivity of the period was just not matched by the technical capabilities," says Alan. "Today's knowledge is so much better, as is the technology. It was like restoring a piece of artwork not designed for longevity. But they had big architectural ambitions."

Although big on style, what Granberry's original house didn't have much of was insulation. "It was leaky and poorly insulated. It had a resin roof that was replaced but was still not nice. Tar paper was the only moisture barrier," Alan explains. "Masonry was put on plywooded stud walls. All of the studs and plywood were rotten, and the masonry was pretty much freestanding. We reverse engineered the walls to create a thermal break and make them properly insulated. We used high-density spray foam insulation and pressure-treated studs.

"We hired an expert crew to dismantle the project. It was a really intensive primary deconstruction procedure that required intensive knowledge of steel and wood. When we first gutted it, we surveyed what steel we had and redeployed it. There were header beams that were dropped headers, and we pulled them up into the floor package. Now, ceiling and soffit plane are the same, instead of walls with punches through them. The whole process was surgical."



Above: Cypress boards laminated in triple thickness delay the full reveal of the interiors. Visitors can see straight in but not at an angle.

Sound Decisions

Although Granberry made many good design decisions given the norms of his time, there were many ways his original could stand improvement. Once Gray Organschi was into the bones of the building, it made sense to perform some corrective surgery to the architecture itself.

The basic plan was sound. And coincidentally, both former and new owners shared similar requirements: a house that could accommodate return visits from adult children. "Our clients wanted a bedroom on the main level and a communal living, dining, kitchen area. They wanted two bedrooms for their adult children and a guest room. All these spaces were there in the original," says Lisa. "The three extra bedrooms were essentially bermed into the hillside. So, there was a major effort to make them less basement-like. We worked hard to get two exposures for each."

While all the desired elements were present in the original, they were rough around the edges. "There were technical

issues," says Alan. "The layout and massing were right, but the organization of the rooms was compromised by the cheap building at the time." In addition to brightening lower bedrooms, the firm carved lower-level lounge areas inside and outside, so everyone could have private run-away space.

Securing more natural light was also a priority for the main level. As were tweaking the pacing of the entry and unveiling of the view. "During the period this house was built, people thought of the shoreline as a nice thing to see, but they didn't regard it with the same reverence we do today," Alan says. "The choreography of the entry, the unfolding of the view, and the relationships to the outdoor areas were all rather ad hoc."

The first big move the firm made here was to lift the corners of the flat roof at the north end to create clerestories. "In the living area, you now get very even light from four directions. It relieves the horizontality of the space. Before, it felt heavy and dark; now, it feels luminous," says Lisa.





Top: The architects tracked down stone from the original local quarry and replicated mortar from the period to repair the chimney wall. *Above:* The new clerestories and some tweaks to the existing floor plan ensure that all rooms have multiple exposures of natural light. *Right:* A new custom stair provides connection and privacy for guest quarters in the lower level.



Then they slowed down the view's reveal with louvered screens and doors on the exterior and reworked the entry hall to block straightforward sight lines. The louvers "pull the delay into the landscape," says Alan. "The way the entry worked before was too immediate."

Another consideration in this new arrangement was that the best views come from the harshest compass points. "We spent a lot of time trying to balance the fact that you're looking south and west to the water," Alan explains. Louvers help where they can, as do deep roof overhangs, floor-toceiling curtains, and the bountiful trees carefully preserved on-site. The louver motif continues down to the lower level, where it appears as railing for the stairs, fostering connection and separation at the same time.

New window walls further lighten the formerly dark interiors, replacing the three-foot sill heights of the original house. The high-quality, German-made windows were a splurge, for sure, but they transform the space and offer an important upgrade to the original low-performing fenestration.

Interestingly for a house of this caliber, the new windows are double-pane not triple. Here's where the firm's penchant for research informed the decision-making: "We did an analysis of what benefits we'd get from triple glazing, and the R-value system of double-pane pays back more quickly," says Lisa. "With the extra embodied energy needed to make triple panes and the extra structural support for the added weight, we determined the double-pane units would recover their cost more quickly, with minimal impact on performance." After all, Alan adds, "we're not living in Northern Canada."

Complementing the new windows is a new bespoke interior of maple paneling. The panels harken to one client's Japanese heritage and were sourced



Above: The waterfront house climbs down the hill rather than sitting atop it, preserving the modest footprint of the original house and coastline topography.

from another parcel of forested land he owns. The architects treated the maple with a water-based urethane that makes it reflective. The floors and ceiling are bamboo, with a bleach coat to prevent them from ambering. The overall effect is a kind of "Scandinavian feel," the architects observe.

Elsewhere on the main level, they closed off one side of the original double-sided fireplace to create an office. The team sourced filler stone from the same quarry used for the existing house and recreated the yellowish-brown mortar of the period, which is similar to what architect Paul Rudolph used on his Brutalist Yale Art and Architecture Building, Alan notes.

Screen Gems

Granberry clad the original house in brown-painted wood siding. In the spirit of that look, Lisa and Alan experimented with charring cypress boards using the Shou Sugi Ban method. "We charred it, then wire brushed it so it has a light undertone," says Alan. "It captured the brown gestalt of the period. And these days, there's so much acid in the air that real cedar turns black anyway instead of gray. We created it in our shop as an experiment, and





Old Quarry House

GUILFORD, CONN.

ARCHITECT: Lisa Gray, Gray Organschi Architecture, New Haven, Conn., principal in charge

BUILDER: JIG DesignBuild, New Haven INTERIOR DESIGNER: Gray Design, New Haven

PROJECT SIZE: 5,200 square feet

SITE SIZE: 2.91 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld PHOTOGRAPHY: © David Sundberg/Esto

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Top left and left: A music studio for the client has its own entry and supplemental natural light drawn from one of the north-facing clerestories.



Above: Visitors walk by the master bath at the left, but a structural wall and laminated cypress screening block glimpses in. Inside the foyer, the stair wall to the lower level keeps the dramatic water view out of sight until visitors enter the main living areas.

then subbed it out to a shop in Austin, Texas."

Triple-laminated cypress boards form the louvers. "They're spaced so they're the structural mullions of the windows at the joints," Alan explains. "The laminations are so thick, they are very stable. They pull away from the glass so you can get a squeegee behind them. You can see straight in but not from an angle. They delay your ability to see everything from outside. As Granberry intended, you don't understand what you're going to see."

Charred boards cover the bifold garage doors as well, forming a pleasingly solid backdrop to the rest of the house's veiled transparency. To the north, a raised roof corner brings warm, indirect light into a private, stone-clad studio for one of the clients, who's a musician and music professor.

After the extensive reworking, the main level "functions like a one-bedroom house," says Lisa. "Our clients don't feel like they're in a big empty house when they're by themselves," which they are in between visits from their adult children.

Says Alan, "The whole team had an awareness that this was a rare and special site. Whatever we did needed to be right for that site."

"We love doing the houses. We get deep into the details and the relationships with the people," Lisa concludes. "This project was especially close to our hearts, and the result is quite a warm and welcoming place."

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 18







The House in the Landscape

Whether the setting is rural or urban, skillful siting sparks nature's power to delight. BY S. CLAIRE CONROY





Opposite: A careful composition of small gabled buildings brings out the best aspects of a spectacular site on Hood Canal. *Above:* A series of French doors opens the main volume to a large, south-facing sun deck.

The Coyle

QUILCENE, WASH. PRENTISS + BALANCE + WICKLINE ARCHITECTS

Sometimes, the landscape is so breathtakingly beautiful, it needs no architectural intervention to bolster its natural attributes. This 12-plus-acre site at the tip of a long peninsula that joins Hood Canal, just a couple of hours west of Seattle, is such a place. Across the acreage is a cornucopia of Douglas fir forest, meadow, harbor waters, Hood Canal views, and to top it all off, a long-range prospect to the Olympic Mountains. Neither the owners, who have Danish roots, nor the architects, Dan Wickline and Geoff Prentiss of Prentiss + Balance + Wickline Architects in Seattle, felt the need to compete with the setting. The goal instead was to rein in the program and steer clear of any choices that would mar the spectacular setting.

Along with all that natural beauty, there was also one bare-bones building on-site to make some use of—but it was just a step above a beach shack. The owners had made do with the shack for some time, so they knew the property well and how they wanted to use it. Although they didn't want to replace it with anything grand, they did want better functionality and a bit more space for extended family and friends. They had in mind something akin to a Danish summer house—typically a small, one-story building of dark wood and simple gable forms, not unlike a





BUNKHOUSE FLOOR PLAN

Clockwise from the left: Bedrooms are kept small and basic, and all interiors are light and bright, in keeping with the Danish summer house ethos. When French doors are opened to decks, the entertaining space nearly doubles in size.

MAIN HOUSE FLOOR PLAN









Clockwise from the top left: Stringent editing keeps interiors and exteriors visually calm, allowing the breathtaking natural landscape to hold center stage.

Monopoly house.

Their program, while disciplined by American standards, was a little too expansive for the one rudimentary building to accommodate, so Dan split the plan apart into three separate volumes totaling 1,700 square feet. The two new volumes were placed adjacent to each other but pulled slightly apart and rotated to catch different views. One contains the master bedroom, and the other comprises kitchen, dining, living spaces. The primary entry hall joins them. The third volume is the old shack—relocated, renovated, and repurposed into a bunkhouse.

"We pressed the two volumes toward the west side, close to the edge of the forest," says Dan. "There was a pretty big area of meadow to put the house on. But it makes sense to press it back to the forested edge to have access to the views." Across the meadow to the south lies the Hood Canal view. To the west is another small canal that runs along the property. (The word "canal" in these parts actually means fjord.)

The long end of the main volume faces



Above: Smaller decks off the west side of the master bedroom and living volumes share views of the nearby Douglas fir forest and a smaller inlet that runs along the property.

The Coyle QUILCENE, WASH.

ARCHITECT: Geoff Prentiss and Dan Wickline, Prentiss + Balance + Wickline Architects, Seattle BUILDER: Todd Hulbert, Hulbert Custom

Construction, LLC, Port Townsend, Wash. PROJECT SIZE: 1,700 square feet

SITE SIZE: 12.7 acres (in 2 lots)

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Alexander Canaria and Taylor Proctor

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS AND DOORS: Sierra Pacific ROOF WINDOWS: VELUX CABINETRY: Ikea KITCHEN APPLIANCES: Samsung, Frigidaire, Kenmore, Whirlpool KITCHEN FAUCET: Hansgrohe KITCHEN SINK: BLANCO KITCHEN ISLAND: Richlite WOODBURNING STOVE: RAIS SECONDARY FAUCETS: Grohe SHOWER ENCLOSURE: Aquatic LIGHTING/LIGHTING CONTROL: Juno PAINTS/STAINS: Benjamin Moore

the premium southern view and opens to a large sun deck with a series of budget-minding French doors. "Once those French doors open up, it basically doubles the living space," says Dan. There's also a smaller deck off the master bedroom. "It looks to the west toward the forest. It's more intimate and serves as a getaway from the main space."

Southern and western exposures may seem profligate to pros in other parts of the country, but in coastal Washington, "when there is sun, you want the sun," Dan explains. The moderate climate also eliminates the need for air conditioning. No bugs means no window and door screens either, so everything can stay open to catch the coastal breezes. All three buildings are warmed by convection heaters when needed, and the living area has an efficient wood-burning stove. "We tried to keep everything very simple. The rooms are small; the bedrooms are just for sleeping. But you can imagine having a lot of people over, with lots of energy flowing back and forth from the main space."

In keeping with the Danish summer house theme, interiors are light and bright; where there's wood, it's pine. Exterior cladding is tight-knot cedar siding with a dark stain. "Dark colors tend to blend into the landscape better," says Dan, "and darker pigments last longer. Even charred woods fade over time." Charred wood was originally considered but cut because of cost.

Plans are in the works for a fourth gabled structure. It will function more like true Danish summer houses, which were originally directly at the shoreline. The owners often spend all day down at the water, so the new building will provide some basic comforts and storage, as well as shelter from sudden storms. Says Dan, "It's a day-use building. You'll get to it down a steep dirt road. What's nice is, you walk the property as a way of living in it. It really is an amazing place."



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Grills, cooktops, pizza ovens and the like, plus the surrounding workspace.

🗇 Dry Zones

Counterspace used for food prep, plus cabinetry and storage space not dedicated to supporting any of the other three functional zones.

🕻 Wet Zones

The sink, surrounding countertop and any storage primarily used for sink-related activities.

DI MARKINA MA

🗱 Cold Zones

Refrigerators, freezers and other cold storage spaces, plus the adjacent countertop areas.



Fantasia Residence

SEBAGO LAKE, MAINE ECK/MACNEELY ARCHITECTS Who better to design your house on a gorgeous piece of property than an architect who's also a landscape painter? Jeremiah Eck, FAIA, of Eck/MacNeely Architects, is that and more. He's also the author of a number of books about residential architecture, including one that gives us the name for this Design Lab feature and the overall theme for this issue: House in the Landscape.

Although his practice is in Boston, Jeremiah knows Maine intimately, having spent many interludes painting its scenery *en plein air*. His painting is representational but through an interpretative filter. It captures a moment in the present already beginning to fade to the past. Similarly, his architecture blends traditional evocations and modern influences—the present and the past floating along a fluid continuum.

For this house on a 5-mile-long peninsula joining Sebago Lake, Jeremiah's mental image was that of old Maine summer camps. But he elected to filter that image through a lighter and brighter lens. The wonderful, honest materials of the old camps are all here, skillfully applied to an open, casual plan





Opposite: Low landscape walls and a low, sheltering roof define protected outdoor zones for enjoying the lake view. *Above:* Although both volumes are physically connected by the single-height entry vestibule, the house functions like a compound with separate buildings for sleeping and living/dining.

that's as much about living outdoors as in. "Most Maine camps tend to be kind of dark," says Jeremiah. "We thought, if we could pull them apart and connect them back, we would have a kind of compound.

"So we created living space with a bunch of zones—not just inside and outside," he explains. "There are partially covered zones, partially uncovered ones. There's a big screen porch that's one big space but with multiple zones. An old-fashioned low-slope roof runs all the way around, connecting the kitchen/dining with the master."

The low-slope roof is standing-seam metal, and the taller volumes are cedar shingle to match cedar shingle and HardiePlank cladding. "The low roof is sometimes solid, sometimes cut back, sometimes filled with a kind of trellis," says Jeremiah. "There are wonderful shade and shadows happening. I wanted to create these areas where you can sit out of the sun or in it, or out of the rain."

Beyond the shadows' throw of the house, the expansive ipe deck appears to extend, dock-like, directly into the water. (It's a trick made possible by the gently sloping site and the prestidigitations of landscape architect Stephen Stimson's low stone walls.)

A carefully framed slice of this view from the "deck-dock" to the water provides the big impact of the front entry. Approaching the double front doors, you can see through their glass directly to the deck and out to the lake. The front hall, which also links the



bedroom wing and the public spaces of the house, is part of the lowered roof run, so the view through it is compressed. There's still much more to see if you continue through the house and on to the back deck. "A sense of belonging to the lake immediately was important," says Jeremiah.

Dining Hall

To the right of the entry hall are the kitchen and dining areas, and the family's mudroom entry. All are single-height spaces.

Moving on toward the water views is the big, open living room –a "story-and-ahalf volume." Says Jeremiah, "One could make the argument that it feels like two different buildings connected—the bedroom wing and the public wing, and that the single-story kitchen area is like that space at summer camp where everyone came together to dine."

In the main room, a double Rumford fireplace divides living area and screen porch (a single-height space). On the living side, it's finely executed with stone and wood trim. On the screened porch side, it's more rustic—just stone and a simple mantel. The stone is the same used for the exterior landscape walls.

Instead of exposed joists in the living area, Jeremiah elected to use his engineer's "stainless-cable and pull-truss" system. "I didn't want the heavy beam thing hanging over you." The ceiling is elegantly finished in fir panels and given a light wash to help brighten the space. The screened porch, on the other hand, is permitted the "heavy beam thing." Fir joists continue through the room to the outdoors, forming the structure of the roof overhang. The flooring is ipe, like the deck, but stained to hold its color. The wood used for the screen structure is mahogany.

"This is one of the most colorful projects we've done," says Jeremiah, "because of this mix of the natural mahogany trellis, ipe deck, shingles that are a subtle green, a deeper green metal roof, clear wood shingles. They all add up to a palette that looks very natural. It fits right in with the evergreens and the birch trees. And in the fall, when the leaves turn, it stands out."







 FIRST FLOOR PLAN
 1. Screen Porch
 2. Living Room
 3. Dining Room

 4. Kitchen
 5. Back Entry
 6. Outside Dining Bar
 7. Deck
 8. Front Entry

 9. Mudroom
 10. Bedroom
 11. Entertainment Room



Left and top left: Although inspired by rustic Maine camps, the house relegates the typical heavy rafters to the outdoor decks and screened porch, using a lighter steel-cable and pull-truss system for the living room.

Fantasia Residence SEBAGO LAKE, MAINE

ARCHITECT: Jeremiah Eck, FAIA, Eck/ MacNeely Architects, Boston

BUILDER: Greg Lanou and Andy Seymour, Wright-Ryan Homes Division, Portland, Maine

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Lisa Hillson, Lisa Hillson Interiors, Boston; Jessica Goble, Lexington, Mass.

KITCHEN DESIGNER: Donna Venegas and Michele Kelly, Venegas and Company LLC, Boston

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Stephen Stimson, FASLA, Stephen Stimson Associates, Cambridge, Mass.

PROJECT SIZE: 4,500 square feet

SITE SIZE: 3.9 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: \$350 a square foot PHOTOGRAPHY: Brian Vanden Brink

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS: Kolbe Windows & Doors

CABINETRY: Custom

KITCHEN APPLIANCES: Thermador, Sub-Zero, Marvel, Bosch, Insinkerator KITCHEN FAUCET: ROHL

KITCHEN SINK: Franke

SECONDARY FAUCETS: Axor, Hansgrohe, ROHL

BATH FIXTURES: Kohler

TOILETS: TOTO USA

OTHER APPLIANCES: Electrolux

INSULATION: Icynene

THERMAL/MOISTURE BARRIERS: Tremco EnviroDri



Above: A single-height entry reveals the lake view but beckons visitors to the full deckside panorama.

All Seasons

The murky palette was one of the reasons those old Maine camps seemed dark. Another reason was they employed far fewer expanses of glass because of cost and comfort in cold weather. In fact, many were not winterized at all.

This house was designed for comfort year-round, and that's a challenge with so much glazing. Triple-paned windows help cut drafts and energy bills. "Nearly every house we do now uses triple glazing," says Jeremiah. "There used to be such a difference between what architects could do with modernism in California versus what we could do in New England. But that's changed a bit. These improved windows are part of what allowed us to make this house as open to views and light as it is. Now we can ask, 'What are the things you really want to enjoy?' and then, 'How can we get it as efficient as possible?'" At Sebago Lake, sources of enjoyment are myriad. But the play of light over the water is among the greatest pleasures it provides. All those windows and the splitapart plan position the Fantasia Residence especially well to frame those fleeting scenes of delight. Says Jeremiah, "The sunset across the lake is pretty spectacular." No doubt, it is: a beautiful moment in the present already beginning to fade into the past—captured by Eck/MacNeely.





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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 21

2017 Update to AIA Contract Documents

Changes Every Residential Architect Should Know

To keep up with industry trends and important court decisions, every 10 years AIA Contract Documents are reviewed and updated. Among others, changes include a title change for residential project contracts, a new Sustainable Project Exhibit that may be used with any contract, and modifications to the BIOI agreement that provide clarity on how progress payments are calculated.

"It is critically important that architects learn about the 2017 revisions," says Kenneth Cobleigh, Esq., Managing Director and Counsel of AIA Contract Documents. "Many of them impact the role and responsibilities of the architect directly. Others impact the roles and responsibilities of the owner and the contractor, and the architect will need to understand those revisions in order to provide advice to the owner and to adequately perform contract administration services."



BI05 Title Changes

New title changes better reflect the complexity and risk associated with the specific project, rather than just the type of project. For example, the title of B105[™], Standard Short Form of Agreement Between Owner and Architect was changed to indicate that it is a short form contract, whereas the previous title "for a Small Commercial or Residential Project," may have suggested that it should be used for a residential project without consideration of complexity and risk. Someone performing residential work could use B101–2017, Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Architect, B104[™]–2017, B105, or several other documents, depending on the complexity associated with the project.

Single Sustainable Projects Exhibit

E204–2017, Sustainable Projects Exhibit, is now a single document setting forth the roles and responsibilities for each of the project participants. Once the owner determines that the project will involve a sustainable objective, E204 can be incorporated into any of the owner-architect and owner-contractor agreements, and incorporated into each of the other project agreements to address the unique issues associated with pursuing the owner's sustainable objective.

Progress Payment Calculations

Finally, the document that will affect architects the most is BIOI, Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Architect. Among a number of other changes, BIOI now provides greater clarity on how progress payments will be calculated when the Architect's compensation is based on a "percentage basis."

To get free samples of the 2017 Owner/Architect agreements, visit **aiacontracts.org/residentialdesign**



AIA Contract Documents





Sundial House

SANTA FE, N.M. SPECHT ARCHITECTS

Santa Fe, N.M., has the dual distinction of being the oldest state capital in the United States and the highest in elevation, at nearly 7,200 feet. Its physical beauty, nestled between vast mountainous state forests, and its history as a cultural and arts mecca make it a very desirable place to live or to visit. It's not, however, an easy place to build a house. Even beyond the city boundaries and its very strict style and construction requirements, severe height restrictions limit what architects and builders can accomplish with exterior elevations.

Architect Scott Specht, AIA, had somewhat of a reprieve with Sundial House because he and his clients chose a building site about five minutes out of town and out from under the harshest of city building restrictions. Still, Scott had to cap the height of this second home to 14 feet—from the average point. Given the topography of the 8-acre ridge-top site, that actually meant digging down and recessing the building into a series of courtyards.

Scott practices in Austin, Texas, and New York, primarily, so he's dealt with conditions similar to Santa Fe's huge range of temperature and weather. From Texas, he understands extreme heat, which the city suffers during the summer. And he's coped with snow loads for houses in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. However, Santa Fe's arid high-desert climate was a new challenge. Summer months can also produce heavy monsoon rains; therefore, houses still need fortification against moisture.

Wild Weather

Coping with wild swings of weather and the city's water and power constraints informed the design in many ways, as did the architect's professional commitment to sustainable design. The first major move was to keep house size under control. Ultimately, it came in at 2,500 square feet, accommodating the couple and their visiting children and grandchildren. The second move was to optimize construction methods to conserve energy. For ideas on that, Scott looked to local building traditions.

"Climate and microclimates have to be considered," Scott explains, "and that's where looking to traditional construction methods is important. Thermal massing works really well to







Above: Deep cantilevered overhangs shade windows and outdoor areas. Inside, a skylight runs the length of the house, casting shadows through the Glulam beams. *Left and below left*: All cabinetry in the house is custom rift-sawn oak given a natural finish; oak floors and Glulam beams are stained dark.

cope with the very extreme temperature swings—absorbing the heat during the day and releasing it at night when the temperature drops. We ended up deploying that quite a bit." The local tradition of adobe construction accomplishes the same thing, but for this house, Scott and builder John Wolf, of Wolf Corp., used insulated concrete forms with a stucco finish and a slab-on-grade foundation.

At 7,200 feet and higher, the sun is scaldingly strong and natural shade is hard to come by. Scott kept this in mind in the design phase, coming up with a series of deep overhangs to cool the interiors and protect exterior entertaining space. "In Santa Fe, 'portales,' or porches, are used to create shade," he explains. "We have 12-foot cantilevered overhangs to shade outdoor areas. There are not a lot of shade trees here because the hilltop gets scoured by wind. There's a shaded courtyard that's recessed. And we put three pear trees that will bloom and grow there, and provide some shade over time."

Flat Top

Despite the need for shade and winter's snow loads, flat roofs are the norm in Santa Fe construction. Scott looked no further than local tradition for how to engineer the roof system. "It's a spray-



FLOOR PLAN



EAST ELEVATION



BUILDING SECTION EAST/WEST

foam roof on a plywood deck and has gravel on that. It provides great insulation value. This is what people do in the area because it works well and is very durable." When clients balk at the idea of flat roofs and possible leaking, Scott puts their minds at ease with this factoid: "I always use the example of Walmart and Target. Would they build all those flat-roof buildings if they leaked all the time?"

Big-box lessons aside, flat roofs are the prevailing style in Santa Fe's adobe and Pueblo Revival styles. There's something powerful about letting the surrounding mountains have the peaks and valleys to themselves.

Another charming aspect of adobe construction is its hefty roof beams, or vigas. Typically, they were left exposed inside and continued through exterior walls. For Sundial House, Scott has evoked the tradition but with Glulam beams given a dark stain and kept inside the interior envelope.

A narrow skylight runs 125 feet along the length of the roof. It casts shadows down through the Glulam beams and over the chunky reliefs of the board-formed concrete walls. "You can almost tell the time of day by the progression of the light," says Scott. "There's a nice progression of sunlight through the house, not unlike a sundial. It's just beautiful."

A carefully controlled palette of white oak covers the floors over a hydronic radiant heating system and appears in riftsawn form in the custom kitchen cabinets, the office built-ins located in the hallway, and the master bedroom. The same dark stain on the Glulams is applied to the oak floors. Says Scott, "We like the look of a consistent whole."





Left and below left: A small covered courtyard just off the compact kitchen is the best place to watch the sun setting over the mountains to the northwest. *Opposite:* A deeply inset "portale," or porch, runs the length of the house, providing protection from the sun and views of another picturesque mountain range.

Desert Green

Although the house is on public water and has its own well on-site (albeit a slow producer), fire and firefighting are real concerns in the desert climate. To address this, Scott devised a rain-water collection system that captures runoff from the roof and directs it into two 10,000-gallon galvanized steel rainwater tanks. One is designated for fire resources and one for irrigation.

Down the slope from the building site, a solar field of 16 ground-mounted photovoltaic modules supplies much of the power for the house, says Scott. And the one-car garage has a rapid charge system for an electric car.

These active conservation strategies and others, combined with the passive strategies of shading, thermal massing, and the like, have already earned Specht Architects and the Sundial House the Jeff Harnar Award for Contemporary Architecture. The prestigious regional award, sponsored by the Thornburg Foundation in Santa Fe and the University of New Mexico School of Architecture + Planning in Albuquerque, honors modern work that is also sensitive to site and environment.

Sundial House's architecture is indeed sensitive to site, environment, and several centuries of Santa Fe building traditions. But that doesn't stop it from also deploying some dramatic flair on its hilltop ridge. There's a grand, muscular concrete arch that stretches from the roofline of the house across the driveway and then appears to soar over the cliff. "You drive through that arch to get to the parking court in the back," says Scott. "I love the idea of these concrete walls becoming almost land art."



Sundial House SANTA FE, N.M.

ARCHITECT: Scott Specht, AIA, Specht Architects, Austin, Texas, and New York BUILDER: John C. Wolf, Wolf Corp., Santa Fe **INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Noirine Hayes, Dallas LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: James deGrey David, David/Peese Design, Austin **PROJECT SIZE:** 2,500 square feet SITE SIZE: 8 acres **CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld PHOTOGRAPHY: Taggart Cojan Sorensen

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS/DOORS: Fleetwood Windows & Doors SKYLIGHTS: VELUX DOOR/CABINET HARDWARE: Emtek, Sugatsune **CABINETRY:** Custom **COUNTERTOPS:** Caesarstone KITCHEN APPLIANCES: Miele, Sub-Zero, Zephyr KITCHEN FAUCET: Hansgrohe KITCHEN SINK: Kohler MASTER/SECONDARY SINKS: Lacava

SECONDARY FAUCETS: Dornbracht, Graff TOILETS: TOTO USA OTHER APPLIANCES: Bosch LIGHTING: Tach Lighting HOME CONTROL: Control4 WINDOW SHADING: MechoShade **INSULATING CONCRETE FORMS:** BuildBlock HOUSEWRAP: DuPont Tyvek GARAGE DOORS: Cloplay



Graphic House

FAYETTEVILLE, ARK. MARLON BLACKWELL ARCHITECTS Designing a house that integrates beautifully with its natural surroundings is certainly helped by having a large and scenic rural site and an ample budget. For this project in suburban Fayetteville, Ark., the architects were graced with none of the above. What Marlon Blackwell, FAIA; his wife and partner, Meryati Johari Blackwell, AIA; and Bradford Payne, Assoc. AIA, of Marlon Blackwell Architects, did have was clients with vision and tenacity.

The firm, which has won multiple design awards for a variety of building types, has a special interest and facility in bringing small budgets to life. So, when a





Opposite: Graphic House was built for a designer client who admires the Case Study houses. Top right and below right: Each façade is its own distinct composition.

graphic designer and his wife approached them to build a small family house on a nondescript suburban lot with just \$150 a square foot to spend, the team agreed to take on the challenge. They thought of it as a kind of case study in high-design housing for regular people.

"We met with the client over beer and bourbons at a pub for about a year," says Marlon. "What he admired about the Case Study houses was the desire to make the homes affordable. Part of our mission is, architecture is for anyone. It seems people who get architecture are either very rich or very poor. At \$150 a square foot, you get bricks and concrete. We figured that's what a builder would get to build an average house; give it to us, and we'll make architecture."

Match a typical budget with a standard one-third-acre suburban lot, and you've got a relatively level playing field with mass-market housing. Knowing what the firm accomplished with even more humble conditions for the St. Nicholas Eastern Orthodox Church, there was little doubt they could make this three-bedroom, twoand-a-half bath project sing.

To Hill and Back

But there were a number of major stumbling blocks along the way. First off, the

Great Recession intervened. Those early pub conversations took place before the downturn rolled through Arkansas. So, the project went on hold for a time. Then, as the economy began to recover, several city complications and delays came along. Among them, officials insisted on an upgraded sewer line to the house (at the clients' expense), and required the clients to plant 13 trees on the small lot.

"The lot is in the Hillside Hilltop Overlay District," Marlon explains. "There are a couple of mountains that split the city. At the top of the mountains, there is an ordinance that if you look up from the valley, you can only see trees. This house near Mount Sequoyah is covered by the ordinance."

Additionally, the clients had a difficult time unloading their generic tract house in another suburban neighborhood. "It was hard to sell the house because there were six others for sale like it in the subdivision," says Meryati.

Unfortunately, all the unexpected expenses and the delay in the start of the construction pushed the cost of the Graphic House project beyond the magic \$150-a-foot number. But, says Marlon, "it was still probably under \$180, without the extra site costs."

Cost repercussions were followed by a series of design constraints. As it happens, this seemingly ordinary suburban neighborhood also restricts flat roofs, something that was integral to the firm's design for the house. So, they countered with a roof plan at ¼-inch-per-foot slope. Success. "The review board had to accept it," says Marlon.

To L With It

One of the toughest aspects of suburban lots are the multiple impediments to privacy. This lot is on a corner, so it must negotiate houses and sightlines across two streets. The architects addressed the problem with an L-shaped plan that creates a private backyard.

The largely one-story house bumps up to include a small office and loft, that provide the husband and wife with separate work spaces. The remaining open-plan living, dining, kitchen space; master bedroom; and two children's bedrooms are kept to a single level for accessibility. The carport is at entry level as well.

The clients "wanted a house modern designed for modern living," says Meryati. "And given his graphic design profession, we wanted to create something that looked like a composition in elevation."

Marlon concurs. "That's why we call it the Graphic House. So much of what he does is in the form of icons and





Top and above: A simple palette of interior materials keeps the design clean and costs low. Cabinets are locally sourced maple. The fireplace wall is an idea taken from the Blackwells' own house: painted strips of poplar layered for texture. A skylight is placed over the wall to wash shadows over the surface.




Left: The Blackwells' L-shaped plan creates a private backyard on the tight suburban lot.



MAIN FLOOR PLAN

logos—things that are graphically expressed in two dimensions. We wanted a profile that had a clear graphic shape. So, we three-dimensionalized a two-dimensional name."

Meta Metamorphosis

That graphic quality is expressed with three major components—a light-colored brick base; a darkened wood shell or carapace that fits over it; and a meticulously placed, contrapuntal arrangement of glazed elements. "That major shell holds everything together," Marlon explains. "And in a turnabout, the rustication happens on the top and not on the bottom, as it usually does."

"There's a really nice detail where the wall doesn't hit the concrete block. Instead, it's a sliver of glass," says Meryati. "Projected from the base, glass would be the joint," Marlon adds, finishing her thought. "The joint between the base and wall is where architecture becomes a game of inches—mere inches. Those decisions become the system of articulation. And that takes the house out of the everydayness—and gives us shadow play and a sense of detail."

This is how a talented firm can take a merchant builder's bag of tricks and conjure something extraordinary. Says Marlon, "The scale of the hand is really important. So much architecture just works at the scale of the building."

Light Fantastic

Despite the emphasis on elevation, interiors received due consideration. Light comes in from those sliver windows, sliding doors, skylights, and clerestories—everywhere and on all sides of the building. And their overall effect was the greatest surprise for the clients: They hadn't expected how much a well-designed house could transform their everyday lives.

"Everything is a single width for good daylighting," Meryati



Left: All major rooms open to the private backyard.

explains. "We tried to minimize the need for artificial light as much as possible. All materials we used are low- or no-VOC.

"It's a very modest house done on a very modest budget," she adds. "But it really fits our clients' lives and their personalities. It's much healthier for their family, and it feels more private than their last house did. They really enjoy the inside and outside experience much more than they did before. And they're always texting us about how much they love the light in the house."

At night, that light glows from inside the building, and the earthy shell seemingly floats above the pale-colored base. Although it appears white from a distance, the brick base is actually a very light blue. It's a special shade that some say repels spiders. "They think it's the sky, so they stay away," says Marlon.

Down is up, up is down, and a market-rate suburban house becomes architecture. 📧

Graphic House FAYETTEVILLE, ARK.

ARCHITECT: Marlon Blackwell, FAIA, Marlon Blackwell Architects, Fayetteville, Ark., principal in charge; Meryati Johari Blackwell, AIA, ASID, LEED AP, project architect; Bradford Payne, Assoc. AIA, project manager

BUILDER: Michael Ames, Blessings Construction, Fayetteville

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Meryati Johari Blackwell

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Carl Smith, associate professor of landscape architecture, University of Arkansas Fay Jones School of Architecture + Design, Fayetteville

PROJECT SIZE: 2,598 square feet **SITE SIZE:** .37 acre

CONSTRUCTION COST: \$185 a square foot PHOTOGRAPHY: Timothy Hursley

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS/GLAZING/DOORS: Kawneer, Trulite DOOR HARDWARE: Kwikset **CABINET HARDWARE:** Emtek **CABINETRY:** Custom **COUNTERTOPS:** Caesarstone KITCHEN APPLIANCES: Bosch **KITCHEN FAUCETS:** Moen **KITCHEN SINK:** Kohler **BATH FIXTURES:** Kohler SECONDARY FAUCETS: Moen **TOILETS:** American Standard **TILE:** American Olean **OTHER APPLIANCES: GE** LIGHTING: Pablo, Moooi, Artemide HVAC: Rheem ENGINEERED LUMBER: Boise Cascade **SHEATHING:** Georgia-Pacific **UNDERLAYMENT:** GCP Tri-Flex PAINTS/STAINS: Sherwin-Williams, Penofin Verde





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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 23

A Touch of Blue

1. WINGING IT

Designed several years ago by Ludovico Lombardi, the Falper Wing sink is still entirely contemporary-looking. Vessel lavs may be on the wane, but this one will stand the test of time and trend.

falper.it

Circle 101 on inquiry card.

2. PRINCE OF A STONE

Cambria's new Princetown stone weaves royal purples and golds among a background of black and white veins. There's nothing common about it. cambriausa.com *Circle 102 on inquiry card.*

3. LIGHT RINSE

Thermador's new Star-Sapphire dishwashers are quick, high end, and customizable. The fastest cycle takes just 20 minutes to complete. And interiors offer three levels of racking, plus Star Glow, a choice of illumination colors. thermador.com

Circle 103 on inquiry card.







3

2





4. MY VERONA

The handsome Verona Classic range series is made in Italy for the U.S. market. The ovens offer plentiful cooking modes, including convection, radiant, and defrost. A pleasing light blue color is a new introduction.

veronaappliances.com Circle 104 on inquiry card.

5. CLEAN DESIGN

BLANCO's IKON apron sink pairs tidily with its ARTONA faucet for a subtly high-design look in the kitchen. Both products are available in an array of SILGRANIT colors or in timeless chrome and stainless models. blancoamerica.com

Circle 105 on inquiry card.



6. SLIM PICKINGS

Rocky Mountain Hardware put its entry door hardware on a diet. The result is a slimmer profile ideal for modern aesthetics. The new collection, called Edge, features 2 ¹/₂-inch escutcheons versus the usual 2.

rockymountainhardware.com Circle 106 on inquiry card.

7. PROFILES IN BLUE

Petersen expands its versatile metal wall panels with seven new Highline products. The company offers a wide variety of profiles and 45 different colors, 30 of which are cool-roof certified. petersen.com Circle 107 on inquiry card.

8. LOVELY GLAZE

Hard on the heels of its new contemporary casement and awning window introductions comes Marvin's complementary direct glaze window. They all share slimmer jambs and streamlined design. marvin.com

Circle 108 on inquiry card.

9. IN TRUS WE TRUST

Weyerhaeuser has improved the coverage of its fire-resistant coating on its Trus Joist line of I-joists. The new Flak Jack joists can be installed in either orientation and without a coating on the bottom flange. weyerhaeuser.com

Circle 109 on inquiry card.

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MIN/DAY PROJECT LOCATION: ALBERTA, CANADA

Located equidistant between Calgary and Edmonton in Canada is a 9-mile-long body of fresh water called Sylvan Lake. Taken by Min/Day's award-winning House on Lake Okoboji in Iowa, the owners of an "old, beat-up property" approached the firm about buying plans to the Okoboji project. But, says partner Jeffrey Day, AIA, "that's something we wouldn't do. The site contours were different, as was the climate." Ultimately, the clients opted to hire the firm for a new site-specific design.

The Okoboji project did offer hints about how to go forward, however. Both lake properties contend with a proximate neighbor, a condition Jeff and firm partner, E.B. Min, resolve with deft architecture, siting, and privacy fencing. Another challenge is the project's remote location, far from the skilled labor necessary to build a high-design house. And the clients were loath to lose high-season time at the lake. So, the team devised a solution that's about "80 percent modular," says Jeff, to be built some 800 miles away in the Method Homes factory in Seattle and finished on-site.

"We looked at a Canadian company, but we weren't all that comfortable with their capabilities. More important, their module was 14 feet versus Method's 16, which would have caused major compromises to the spaces," Jeff explains. With modular components, every dimension is critical. "It tends to lead to homes that are very cubic, so we created as many vertical elements as we could to relieve the stacked boxes look." If all goes well, the house will be done by next summer. —S. Claire Conroy





Project: House on Sylvan Lake, Alberta, Canada; design principals: Jeffrey L. Day, AIA, and E.B. Min, AIA, Min/Day, San Francisco and Omaha, Neb. *Drawings: Min/Day*.

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