“I live, practice, teach, and build in northwest Arkansas,

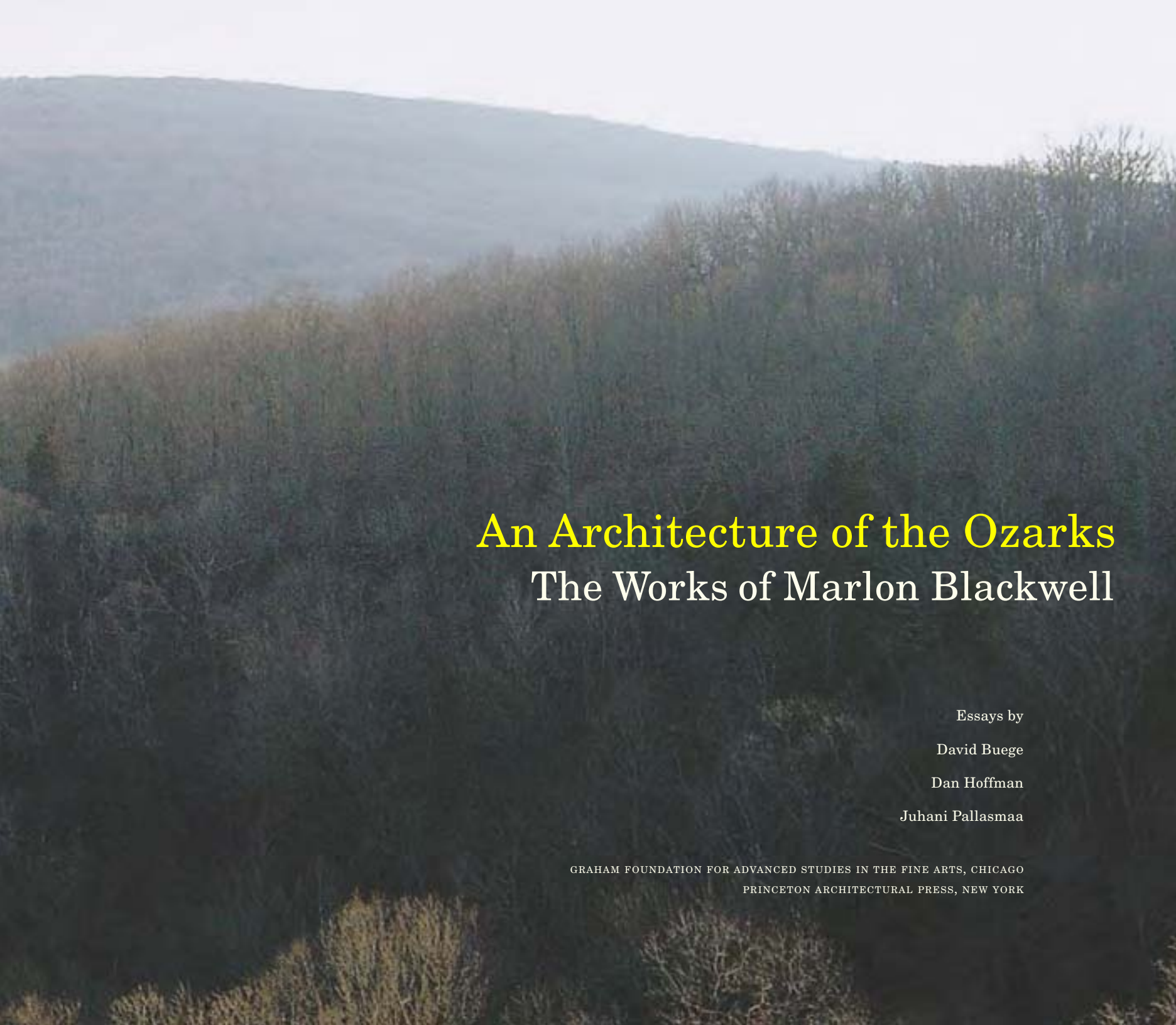
in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains. It's a place considered to be in the middle of


nowhere, yet ironically, close to everywhere. It is an environment of real natural

beauty and, simultaneously, of real constructed ugliness. This land of disparate

conditions is not just a setting for my work—it is part of the work. In these conditions


I do not see a negative, but instead, a source of deep possibilities.”



An Architecture of the Ozarks
The Works of Marlon Blackwell

Essays by

David Buege

Dan Hoffman

Juhani Pallasmaa

GRAHAM FOUNDATION FOR ADVANCED STUDIES IN THE FINE ARTS, CHICAGO

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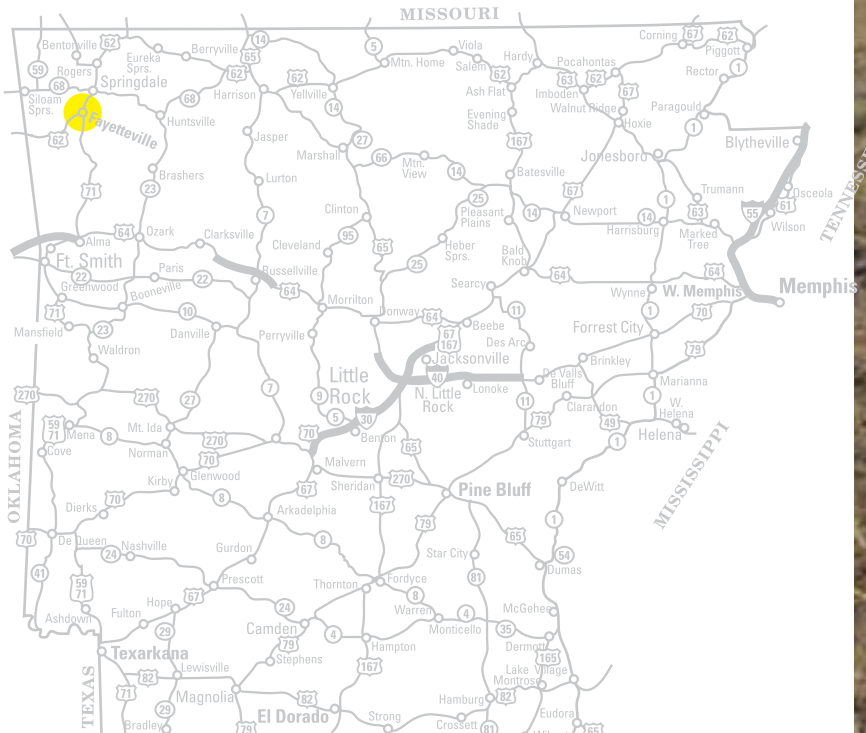


ARKANSAS

0 40

David Buege

Architecture or Entomology

THE OZARK MOUNTAINS are an old and diminished range, mostly within Missouri and Arkansas and just beyond the normal reach of Oklahoma's tornado alley to the west. Topping out short of what most would accept as mountains, these hills and their thin rocky soils aren't naturally fit for agriculture, though they've become fertile ground for trucking companies and poultry and the birth of the new Wal-Mart nation. An ambivalent place, not quite the South or Midwest or West, the region suffers a little from proximity to those regions, taking on aspects of each. Hardwood forests predominate here—red oak and white oak and hickory. Scattered fallow pasturelands

1
Buffalo River,
Ozark Mountains, Arkansas

covered in white drifts of clover mask the failed efforts of farmers. Chiggers, red bugs, hide in tall grasses, waiting to burrow into the unwary. Prosperity has brought the usual changes and growth, and many more people, but the Ozark region continues to be the sort of place in which one might imagine living as Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*.

The Boston Mountains of northwest Arkansas are a local condition of the more widely distributed Ozarks. The White and Buffalo rivers cut through here, roughly west to east toward their confluence, then on toward the Arkansas Delta and the Mississippi River. [fig. 1] Passing canoeists on the Buffalo, especially, see their history and geology and the current state of their slow erosion from mountains to hills. The Grand Canyon of Arkansas is nearby, just off Highway 7 near the town of Jasper. This one is forested and green, not dry. Soils here are udults: hapludults, paleudults, fragiudults . . .

Depending on one's literary predilections and awareness of architecture, any reference to architecture in the Ozarks will surely bring to mind either Al Capp cartoons or the name Fay Jones. The architecture imagined is mostly wood, more than likely: mean and deeply weathered, or kerfed for scale and crisply stained, respectively. Dogpatch, the town, appeared on the Arkansas map until its recent rehabilitation as Marble Falls. Some history may best be forgotten.

THE ARKANSAS OZARKS are the setting for the town of Stay More and its denizens, the Stay Morons of Donald Harington's novels, including *The Architecture of the Arkansas Ozarks*. They also figure heavily into Harington's great *Let Us Build Us a City*, in which he takes us to Arkansas' failed cities, those places with "city" in their names and aspirations, but not in their fabric. He takes us, too, into the heart of the Ozarks and somewhere close to David Lynch's America.

The Ozarks are a rich reservoir of attractions, American roadside tourist culture of the sort that is celebrated in the books of John Margolies and others: the cabin-motels and miniature golf courses; diners and cafes and gas stations; and the various outlets for bait and tackle. Religious kitsch is found throughout the Ozarks, in this once northern coast of the ever-expanding Bible Belt. The seven-story Christ of the Ozarks monument in Eureka Springs is a destination for many of the pilgrims making their way to Thorncrown Chapel; or, maybe it is the other way around. [fig. 2] There are the ubiquitous hand-painted signs with various and emphatic exhortations to Get Saved, and colorful printed placards stapled to power poles with 1-800 numbers aimed at those wishing to lose weight.

Fayetteville, Arkansas, is the Washington County seat and home to the University of Arkansas, the state's land-grant institution. Fayetteville, described in a recent university promotional brochure as the "penultimate college town," serves as the unofficial capital and intellectual stronghold for the Arkansas Ozarks. It is best approached by driving through the hills of the Ozark National Forest and the ten-miles-per-hour hairpin curves of Highway 23, the Pig Trail, as many Razorback football fans do on Saturdays in fall. Approached from the south, Fayetteville (the birthplace and boyhood home of Edward Durrell Stone) offers more than a passing resemblance to an Italian hill town, if you squint. [fig. 3] Prominent on the university campus, one can imagine twin-towered Old Main to be possessed by old monks, save for the canned electronic-carillon music.

Fayetteville provides sufficient tolerance and comfort for those whose politics lean far left, far right, and anywhere in between. (The real estate market was hot in the rural Ozarks, in anticipation of this new millennium and the social collapse that was to have been precipitated by those missing first digits. For Sale: 400 Acres with Cave . . .) There are still remnants of an indigenous hippie population, and they frequent the same restaurants and bars as power brokers, politicians, and local tycoons. Bill and Hillary Clinton spent some time here together. They are remembered fondly; they are loathed. The

FROM LEFT 2 Emmet Sullivan, Christ of the Ozarks, Eureka Springs, Arkansas, 1966; 3 Fayetteville, Arkansas; 4 The Jesus Barn, Fayetteville, Arkansas

infamous Governor Orville Faubus lived in nearby Huntsville, in a Fay Jones house. Athletic directors, famous writers, and billionaires now live in Fay Jones houses. Fay and Gus Jones live in one, too, an early one on a Fayetteville hillside, once bucolic, not so long ago. Bucolic was quickly supplanted by commercial, however, in the form of gas stations and liquor stores and Fayetteville's first significant shopping center. Landscape views became roofscape views; good trees are the only defense.

A builder, not a critic, Marlon Blackwell is inclined to accept the conditions of this world as they are, with all of their messy contradictions, and to work with or around those unencumbered by paralyzing idealism. Seemingly provoked toward anger only by the indifference exhibited in the worst of the architecture of strictly commercial practitioners, Marlon works comfortably in this complex, disheveled culture, especially when allowed to work in settings offering nature's last vestiges. His eyes always open to apparent ironies and eccentricities, and he tends to see and record things with the eye of a photographer, despite his professed enthusiasm for the *seeing-is-forgetting* work of Robert Irwin. A single postcard may open a new world for him: a pig in pearls or a landscape with cows *and* a Mondrian painting become mnemonic devices that remind him of where he is, and of where he isn't. In Ozark landscapes there are trailers and sheds, and sheds built to shelter trailers, and a failing barn on the by-pass in Fayetteville tattooed solid with polychrome fundamentalist prayers like a Howard Finster painting, and more like an Agnes Martin painting than one might think. [fig. 4]

Seen from the air while flying in at night, the most common and characteristic element of the unselfconsciously composed rural landscape of northwest Arkansas is the long, thin rectangular chicken house, alone or in clusters, recognizable by geometry and the soft, warm glow of lines of light. A little reminiscent of Dan Flavin, perhaps, but probably more like James Turrell. Who'd have known that something close to spiritual light might emanate from a chicken house?

HIS CHEEK

WAS ROUGH

HIS CHICK VAMOOSED

AND NOW SHE WON'T

COME HOME TO ROOST

BURMA-SHAVE

FAY JONES IS the most accomplished and widely known of Ozark architects; there have been quite a few notable others, several of whom have had a close connection to Jones or to the




FROM LEFT 5 E. Fay Jones, Thorncrown Chapel, Eureka Springs, Arkansas, 1980; 6 restaurant in Ex-Convento de Santo Domingo, Oaxaca, Mexico, 1979; 7 Towerhouse, Sana'a, Yemen, 1997; 8 Keenan TowerHouse, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 2000

architecture school at the University of Arkansas. Marlon has established himself as the leading contender as Jones' local heir apparent, at least in terms of broader notoriety. Jones' edge-of-the-prairie architecture has been most emblematic of contemporary work in the region, and his canonical Thorncrown Chapel (1980), the clincher for his AIA Gold Medal, is an appropriately modest Ozark-postcard equivalent for the Empire State Building or Eiffel's tower. [fig. 5]

"I would not be at all distressed if I could only use a simple gable roof, post and beam, and a simple rectangle for the rest of my life," Jones has said. In relatively more modest projects, like the Reed House at Hogeye, Jones has made the simple gable form rich and respectable again, but he may be the last to do so for a while, given the growing taste in the Ozarks (and everywhere else, it seems) for "gated communities," and shoddy, ersatz mansions, and suburban houses disguised in neotraditionalist, new-urban drag. Averse to these things, and distancing himself from them, Marlon opposes them with buildings that, if not narrowly or stylistically or truly regional, are at least critical. Fay Jones has remained aloof from popular tastes and loyal to something closer to Frank Lloyd Wright's version of America than to indigenous Ozark culture. Similarly, Marlon's architecture responds to the particular conditions of specific sites, but influences, though partly and sometimes ironically local, are mostly collected from other places and from other things.

PEDRO

WALKED

BACK HOME BY GOLLY

HIS BRISTLY CHIN

WAS HOT-TO-MOLLY

BURMA-SHAVE

MARLON HAS BEEN an inveterate traveler from birth, a military brat with instincts like those of vagabonds, restless and curious; in the way of Kerouac's *On the Road*, Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*, Least Heat-Moon's *Blue Highways*, and with more than a hint of Bruce Chatwin. Bright flowers, shallow roots. He'd have been the perfect tour guide on Magic Bus excursions from London to Afghanistan, when that sort of thing was still possible. His students at the University of Arkansas have had something close, on the streets of Mexico City or traveling through Mexico and Guatemala, on the Inca trail in Peru, and late one night in a karaoke bar in Española, New Mexico. Trailer For Sale or Rent, Rooms to Let Fifty Cent . . . [fig. 6]

In Yemen in July of 1997, as members of a multidisciplinary "delegation" of academics, we spent an evening in the moonlight shade of date trees, sitting beside a Harry Dean Stanton hotel pool in the desert oasis town of Terim. Digesting

the camel we'd had earlier for lunch and tolerating nonalcoholic Heineken, we watched a huge bat swoop down periodically to grab a drink from the pool without leaving any perceptible ripple on the surface of the water. From everything that one experiences in that extraordinary country, there are ripples. In the summer of 1998, just a few years after reunification and the last Yemeni civil war, Marlon and a group of architecture students from the University of Arkansas were traveling through the desert of Yemen in a caravan of Toyota Land Cruisers, protected by hired Bedouins with AK-47s who rode perched on the running boards. The stunning terrain of the *wadi* was littered with the detritus of war. Burned-out and rusted Cold War–era tanks sat like Corten steel toads, their extruded-curve profiles and random array suggesting something like an American trailer park, missing only certain details like circular-lite windows or turquoise aluminum skins. While students may have simply seen them as burned-out tanks, Marlon undoubtedly saw in them the potential for something more, etched in memory and added to his store of images that might find some later life as architecture.

HER CHARIOT

RACED 80 PER

THEY HAULED AWAY

WHAT HAD

BEN HER

BURMA-SHAVE

JAMES KEENAN'S DESIRE for a tree house came from memories of his grandfather, and of the tree house that they built together when he was young. His impulse to act on that desire was timed perfectly to coincide with Marlon's recent experiences in Yemen—especially those in *muffrages*, the public room located at the top of most traditional Yemeni houses, where guests are received and where men gather each afternoon to chew qat, the mildly narcotic leaves of shrubs grown in Yemen's mountains [fig. 7]—which suggested some of the qualities necessary for the perfect room for an Ozark hillside treehouse with panoramic views. [fig. 8] The rooftop terrace enclosed in tall walls atop Luis Barragán's own house in Mexico City is likely the inspiration for the tower's open-air terrace above the Keenan *muffrage*. The Northwest Arkansas Mall is seen in the distance, emphatically and distastefully beige, with the chicken-feed elevators of Springdale farther north up the dreadful Highway 71b strip. White and vertical, these offer more than a passing resemblance to the Keenan TowerHouse itself. Locals protested, in letters to the local papers, that the architecture of the Tower House looks to them like a trailer stood on end. (Of course it does . . .) Borrowing words from Greil Marcus, this is the culture of "that old, weird America." We see what we are predisposed to seeing; some saw trailers, but not the less obvious counterpoint of vertical slats of wood, the analogous bark of the trees of the Ozark forest. Most who were offended by the tower probably thought they'd never seen anything like it before; even fewer are likely to have ever tried.

Beyond American roadside tourist culture and the hard surface of state highways, down dirt roads and up long driveways (most of them protected by dogs), one finds the world where Marlon worked five summers under hot southern sun, selling Bibles to help pay his way through the architecture program at Auburn University. What better preparation could there be, for an architect who didn't want to knuckle under to the weight of convention, than selling Bibles in the Bible Belt to people, most of whom already owned at least one? To this we may trace Marlon's pit bull-like persistence. He won awards for his efforts each of those five years, and solidified the self-confidence (or whatever it is) that makes him a tough man to say no to. At one season-ending banquet, surrounded by other


Ronald Reagan

Bible sellers, and dressed like a young Elvis Presley in a white leisure suit and a shirt open nearly to the gulf coast of Alabama, he got to shake the hand of the late Ronald Reagan. [fig. 9] This may at least partly explain why he has seen the Coen Brothers' *O Brother, Where Art Thou* so many times; with a strong sense of identification, and the memory of that one night in the jail in DeKalb, Mississippi. "Pete's been turned into a toad . . . "

An architecture student picks up a lot of baggage in the course of an education. For years Marlon's own students produced careful studies of insects (they have recently moved on to cacti) in drawings made from specimens from the entomology collection at the University of Arkansas. Of a quality worthy of the best of scientific illustration, these studies were the basis for transformational processes, leading to buildings that emphasized fields and patterns and complex vertical surfaces. At Auburn, Marlon experienced his own first rounds with influential teachers—formative influences discernible even today in his architecture, and in his own teaching. There was the rigor of Bill Gwin, who provided Marlon's first introduction to the architecture of Louis I. Kahn. Nick Davis, old school, heavy with Sullivan and Wright, modeled deep convictions and romantic notions of architecture and architects. In Mexico, Stefan Doerstling taught Marlon how to travel. Bob Faust, dedicated Friend of Kebyar and a passionate builder—of a Bruce Goff house on the Mississippi gulf coast, and his own impressive design-build projects around Auburn, including apartments in which Marlon lived for a time—delivered criticism like an ice-cream headache: "You know Marlon, in the hands of a designer this could have been a pretty good project." Faust taught black laminate and two-by-two battens how to sing and taught Marlon how to hear them. Pencil lines-on-plywood, carefully aligning fasteners in a small project for a critique space in the architecture school in Fayetteville, quietly pay homage to Faust. [fig. 10] Faust introduced Marlon to the architecture of Goff, with whom he shares at least an affinity for Quonset huts. [fig. 11] Marlon was married in Goff's ShinenKan, the Joe Price House in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, which had a goose feather ceiling and the voracious color of ceramic tile in the greatest shower stall in the history of western civilization. (Sadly, the house burned shortly after the wedding.)

After graduating from Auburn, a few years of internship in Lafayette, Louisiana, offered some experience and first opportunities to build. The stiffer professional world of Boston then provided some polish and doubt. Moonlighting while working in the Boston office of Graham Gund, Marlon built the first of his signature works, approximating the brick-industrial forms viewed from his Boston loft in the composition of June Moore's wood-and-block house in the mountains of North Carolina.

For a young architect, doubt invariably leads to graduate school. The impact on Marlon of time spent in Urban Design studies in Syracuse University's program in Florence is tough to measure, but the opportunity to teach in Syracuse for the year following his graduate studies clearly allowed the influence of Werner Seligman, and various subtle forms of retro-modernism, to rub off on Marlon. The unbuilt, Aaltoesque Boat House, [fig. 12] with windows like chameleon eyes (a recurring trope in Marlon's work), offers allusions to some of Le Corbusier's work as well, most explicitly the Villa Savoye. The DragonFly and BullFrog houses followed, as Marlon turned to nature, or postcards of nature, as a reservoir of ideas for architectural form. Variants on the Villa Savoye idea, compositionally centripetal and invoking landscapes similar to that of the villa, these animate propositions suppress the more conventional privileging of technology in projects of this type in favor of the study of posture, weight, and, implicitly, landscape. The more recent Shotgun Club [fig. 13] and Fred and Mary Smith Razorback

9
Ronald Reagan, Marlon Blackwell, and Sam Moore, Varsity Company (Thomas Nelson Publishing) Awards banquet, Nashville, Tennessee, 1976



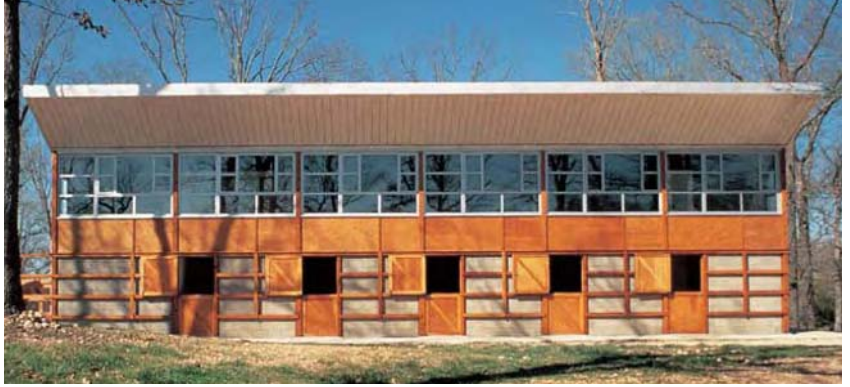

FROM LEFT 10 critique space, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1994, wall detail; 11 Quonset hut; 12 HouseBoat-BoatHouse prototype, 1995; 13 Shotgun Club, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 2000

Golf Facility extend these studies, refining and realizing aspects of them. The Arkansas House, with allusions to the domestic architecture of Louis I. Kahn, illustrates a subtle change, maturation perhaps, in the architectural vocabulary Marlon is inclined to use.

Marlon's architecture is more readily and closely associated with roads than streets. While selling Bibles, Marlon found himself immersed in the objects and icons of cultural landscapes that struck deep chords, on dirt roads and back roads, and in the living rooms of strangers. Are those rusty old automobiles still there because it is too much trouble to remove them, or because they still hold some intrinsic value? This world, and its dogs, far removed from cities and excessive wealth and (conventional forms of) sophistication, presented many of the stories he still tells today. Marlon is a storyteller, a cigar-smoking George Burns of the Ozarks. Like Fay Jones, Marlon has a strong affinity for local craftspeople, and his projects invariably exploit their potential, though more in essential elements (like handrails or hinges) than in the ornamental. They expand his sense of what is possible, and he has learned that many things are more affordable using the skills and craft of local people. He listens to their stories, and they listen to his.

It may be reasonably argued that Marlon's architecture is influenced more from his time with Syracuse than from his time in the Ozarks. His projects exhibit a significant degree of influence from California case study houses and midcentury modernism, and Australian Glenn Murcutt, though these influences are probably received most directly from other sources. Save for the occasional eruptions of unnecessary (or not defensibly functional) and expressive surface articulation and the use of illustrative wood on the face of the building, most of the compositional principles of the BarnHouse are vintage, doctrinaire Syracuse. [fig. 14]

The BarnHouse sits on a small plateau overlooking the Illinois River, designed to accommodate humans and horses and exotic automobiles under a single shed roof. Cows (*sans* Mondrian painting) graze in the distance, all part of the building-landscape composition. The paddock and its fence, an attenuated building face, illustrate Marlon's interest in (relatively) subtle patterns and layering of space created by the color and light of materials, in this case wood and concrete and aluminum. With this project, Marlon shifted the origin, or the compositional premise, from the plan to the section by extruding the section horizontally, rather than the now standard or conventional (easy, dumb, functional) extrusion from plan. With a resulting emphasis on profile, this premise is found in the Keenan TowerHouse and the 2Square House as well. It is often seen, too, in vintage mobile homes, though it is a different experience by ninety degrees and usually frontal rather than


FROM LEFT 14 BarnHouse, Wedington, Arkansas, 1994, south elevation; 15 Moore HoneyHouse, Cashiers, North Carolina, 1998

in profile. Marlon's somewhat contradictory composition of flat faces and articulated profiles suggests a weird, or unusual, two-and-three-quarter dimensional quality.

With the help of this monograph, we may begin to assess Marlon's architecture at this early-midpoint in his career. Once selected as one of forty-under-forty prominent architects, he is now one of thousands *over* forty, and close to something like Yogi Berra's fork-in-the-road. Fay Jones held fast within a narrow range of convictions, and smaller-scale building types, steering clear of the pitfalls of commercial architecture and the shallow intentions of most developers. Marlon's aspirations, beyond a fundamental need to build, remain somewhat more obscure.

The butterfly-roofed HoneyHouse, Marlon's second North Carolina project for June Moore, recalls shed-sheltered trailers, one element of vernacular landscapes for which Samuel Mockbee felt a similar enthusiasm. The HoneyHouse, a carport and a single room in which to extract, bottle, and store honey, was designed to capture light, a deep grid in the spirit of Le Corbusier's many *brise-soleil* variants. One stunning steel-and-glass wall, fabricated in the Ozarks and shipped to North Carolina to be assembled on site, gives warmth and substance and a luminous quality like that of the honey itself. This one wall, for now, may provide us with the single most compelling moment in Marlon's architecture to date. [fig. 15]

Dan Hoffman

The World Is My Imagination
A Drive with Marlon Blackwell

A FEW YEARS AGO, I found myself in a car with Marlon Blackwell traveling through the back roads of central Arkansas, a place of damp hollers, forests, and farms. I had come to know of Blackwell's work from colleagues and publications and wanted to take a closer look. [fig. 1]

Since the early 1990s, I have become increasingly interested in architects whose work develops outside the "jet stream" of high architectural culture that flows between New York, London, Tokyo, and Los Angeles. Given their distance from these centers, local architects are free to pick and choose from a

1
Ozark Road,
Ozark Mountains, Arkansas

2
chicken houses,
Johnson, Arkansas, 2004

diverse mixture of local, regional, and global influences. Driving around Fayetteville, one of Arkansas' major cities and the home of Blackwell's practice, one senses that this is a land of transitions—from the rolling hills of southern Appalachia to the flat lowlands of the Gulf coast, from the lush forests of western Alabama to the prairies of eastern Texas and Oklahoma.

In recent years the presence of international economy and culture has made itself felt through the national and international success of a number of local businesses such as Wal-Mart, J. B. Hunt Transport Services, and Tyson Foods. Their presence can also be felt in the string of office parks that have sprung up along the interstate that passes by Fayetteville, large transshipments centers for trucks, and an assortment of huge chicken farms built in the surrounding farmland. [fig. 2] A regional airport and a spurt of suburban development around the city have also accompanied the growth of these industries.

The drive around Fayetteville provided glimpses of these economies and cultures, each bend in the road revealing a curious juxtaposition: a gleaming glass office building next to a field of soybeans, an immense metal shed across the road from an old farmstead, a new subdivision near a collection of mobile homes and log cabins. Blackwell appeared to accept the landscape as a given, his dry and even voice providing running commentary sprinkled with facts and anecdotes. A small yard packed with old cars and trailers sparked a monologue on dragonflies and metal siding, a warehouse along a railroad siding set off a meditation on the qualities of black oak bark and the detailing of wood screens, and a passing glass-clad office building was the occasion for a discussion on the development of the trucking industry and the struggle to find a fabricator that would install a custom-detailed glass wall.

Moby's latest CD throbbed quietly in the background. A gift from one of Blackwell's colleagues, its sampling of southern black folk riffs and international house loops smoothed the somewhat jarring flow of passing images and fittingly accompanied our travels. Like anything seen from great distance and speed, the view from the jet stream is smooth and undifferentiated. The scene from the ground, on the other hand, is full of discontinuities. Putting the two speeds together requires a certain intuition and skill. Blackwell's quiet, lilting voice, tinged with a slight southern twang, smoothed over the passing scenes. Architecture is built of many things. Like Moby, architects working close to the ground (or region) must find a way to knit together these diverse influences and tendencies, find a universal beat within the local grain.

With its combination of traditional and international-scaled economies, the new South has become a fertile ground for the mixing of cultures. Blackwell's sensitivity to this new landscape has its roots in his undergraduate education at Auburn University in Alabama and his relationships with Chris Risher and the late Samuel Mockbee in Mississippi. [fig. 3] Mockbee's work with the Auburn Rural Studio showed how modernist design principles, such as structural expression, clarity of function, and innovative use of materials, can be inflected and deepened through a respect for local circumstance and culture without resorting to nostalgia or kitsch. His work revealed that one of modernism's essential tenets of the phenomena of individual expression, when crossed with another belief that springs from a fascination with found or everyday objects, can result in works of uncommon invention. The result is a newfound respect for the role of the artist-architect as a cipher connecting seemingly disparate and distance cultural forms and layers.

Throughout his many observations and anecdotes, Blackwell kept returning to the question of how things are

3
Rural Studio, Yancey Chapel,
Sawyerville, Alabama, 1995

made. In retrospect I have come to see these observations as useful, critical tools for reading the surrounding environment. He pointed out that structures occurring in the so-called "low" end of the economic spectrum were signified by assemblies made from a combination of ready-built components and hand-made adjustments. For example, the mobile home that we passed on our tour was constructed in a factory, while its roughly built porch was obviously fabricated from scratch from a combination of purchased and scavenged material, the mark of the unpracticed hand clearly evident in the crude brace nailed to one of the corners. [fig. 4] The corporate office park resides at the middle of the economic spectrum with all of its building and landscape surfaces "designed" and assembled from standard, commercially available construction systems by a team of design professionals. Given that these products are available through national and international distribution streams, the resulting designs have a quality of placelessness. Most of the office parks are done in the postmodern style with framed, pedimented entries attempting to provide a local feel to what it obviously a nonlocal economic activity. Blackwell accepted the presence of these buildings and their highly conventionalized codes of appearance as an inevitable fact, happy for the link that they provide to the distribution chain of the larger economy and saddened by their lack of a substantial connection to the local culture and environment.

At the high end of the spectrum, architectural work splits into two streams. On the one hand we find a small group of architects (working for the most part on residential-scaled projects) reviving local styles and craft traditions. On the other we find an even smaller group of architects who gain inspiration from the full scope of the built environment, mixing and matching found materials and invented techniques with reference to local and international precedents. These artist-architects (there are generally one or two operating in a region at any given time) assume the responsibility as a primary interpreter of the local tradition through the invention of new hybrid forms and motifs that are then adopted by students and other architects.

Blackwell fits squarely into the latter category. This became clear to me when we visited the Thorncrown Chapel by Fay Jones. Blackwell was clearly moved by the power of this work and the way that it spoke to the particular qualities of the place. As we walked through, he pointed to the clever use of standard-dimensioned lumber and its deft siting across the downward slope of the wooded site. Visiting the chapel was a way of paying respect and weighing the responsibilities that such a position entails.

But Blackwell is different from Fay Jones. He can spin a yarn. As we drove around he told me all sorts of stories—stories about his clients and their passions; about turtles, beetles, and butterflies; about contractors and what they knew; about Mexico and Rome. Each account contained a moral fragment—how a small-time trucker took a risk and got rich hauling chickens, how a school teacher's passion for religion produced a masterwork of architecture (the Thorncrown Chapel). Like the great folkloric narratives of the South, the stories were all about the virtues of patience told with a strong dose of irony and wit. Like the stories of Uncle Remus, they all celebrated the inventiveness and uniqueness of individual characters who, like the clever fox, can talk a bird out of its tree.

One can see this sensitivity for individual character in Blackwell's work, each project uniquely crafted to its circumstances: The Moore HoneyHouse with its rusted-steel egg-crate display of the client's honey jars, [fig. 5] the BarnHouse





FROM LEFT 4 trailer home with addition, Johnson, Arkansas; 5 Moore HoneyHouse, Cashiers, North Carolina, 1998; 6 BullFrog House prototype, 1992; 7 2Square House, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1998; 8 Arkansas House, northwest Arkansas, 2004

with its live-in barn and corral, and the Keenan TowerHouse with dreamlike profile and commanding views. In each case, Blackwell has given expression to a client's individual passion: a passion for bees, the love of horses, and a childhood desire to build a tree house. These interests were not explicitly addressed by the clients when they approached him with a commission. His talent lies in finding the "punctum," or point of access, that transforms an otherwise ordinary program into a highly personalized interpretation of the client's desires and dreams.

In a number of cases, Blackwell's aptitude for interpretation is merged with his own obsessions, such as his interest in animate forms. References to small insects and animals abound, bringing a sense of character and narrative to his work. For example, the tapered dragonfly body that is the inspiration for the DragonFly House project is used in a number of built structures such as the Guardhouse for the Blessings Golf Clubhouse (with the body-carapace in an upturned position) and the TowerHouse (with the body-carapace in a reversed, upturned position). The low, weighty character of the bullfrog evoked in the BullFrog House project [fig. 6] reappears in built projects such as the BarnHouse and the blocky mass of the 2Square House. [fig. 7] And while it does not specifically refer to an animal, the Corten steel–clad addition to the Arkansas House [fig. 8] engages in animal-like behavior as it consumes its frail host with volumes of fresh, new space.

The childlike fascination for these forms reminds one of philosopher Gaston Bachelard's meditations on "miniature" phenomena, where the daydream of inhabiting small places and things is associated with the desire to inhabit new, imaginative worlds. The thought of flying in the body of a dragonfly or curling up inside of a frog releases our childhood imagination and makes possible a host of magical associations. Scale shifts abound as the house grows in size while we shrink accordingly. Gravity alters its burden as we soar above the earth or settle in at the bottom of a deep, full stomach.

BLACKWELL'S MUSINGS UPON animate form poses a myriad of detailing challenges that, consequently, spurs a flood of tectonic invention. How can a building be wrapped by a single, hard skin? How can a screen made of wood slats evoke the bark of a tree? [fig. 9] How can the delicate legs of a dragonfly be transformed into the supports for a house? Expanding upon the modernist faith in the construction detail as a conveyor of meaning in architecture, Blackwell gives his details a programmatic imperative. As an example, the butterfly roof of the HoneyHouse is supported by an X-shaped truss that mirrors the shape of the roof, whose profile in turn recalls the outspread wings of an insect. The aforementioned honey-jar-display shelving is made of sections of plate steel welded together in a cellular lattice reminiscent of the honeycomb pattern that





FROM LEFT 9 Keenan TowerHouse, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 2000, wood-fin lattice; 10 BarnHouse, Wedington, Arkansas, 1994; 11 June Moore House, Cashiers, North Carolina, 1990, north wall; 12 Cozart Office Building, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1996; 13 Terminella Office Building, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1998

stores the honey in the hive. The result is a structure that holds to the modern logic of construction while evoking the image or sensibility of its narrative program.

Blackwell's ecumenical approach to building craft expands beyond the highly crafted HoneyHouse to include common building systems. The BarnHouse, for example, is inspired by the wood plank horse fences typically used in the area as well as the conventional southern practice of building a wood-framed roof over an existing mobile home, securing it to the earth and extending the life of the structure. The resulting layered effect is put to use in the BarnHouse by extending the paddock fence enclosure over the lower story of the house where it is applied as a decorative lattice. [fig. 10] The unusual programmatic combination of barn, garage, and house mixes suburban and rural typologies and are further evidence of Blackwell's innate sense of programmatic poetics.

The June Moore House, on the other hand, derives much of its spatial and tectonic inspiration from the turn of the century brick- and lumber-frame industrial buildings found in many of the older southern cities. Here the concrete block is primarily used for spatial enclosure while lumber framing is used to support a collection of tightly scaled volumes and vertiginous spaces that recall the inner workings of an industrial structure. Large roof overhangs recall cantilevered shed roofs over railroad sidings and, although the house is located in the woods on the side of a mountain, one is reminded of a grain silo along a railroad spur at the edge of town on a hot summer's day. [fig. 11]

Other projects are less explicit in their associations while still maintaining an intensity of detail. The two commercial renovation projects, the Cozart and Terminella office buildings, are about as far as one gets from the animate qualities of the HoneyHouse. Here the typical hollow metal-and-glass storefront system inserted into the existing building mass is given a tectonic weight and significance through a carefully scripted compositional play. [figs. 12+13] The result is a highly refined facade that might be more at home in Sweden or Denmark rather than Fayetteville, Arkansas. Like any local architect, Blackwell takes an occasional spin on the jet stream of architectural culture, connecting his work to places other than his own. What sets Blackwell apart from locally inspired architects is that he takes his imagination with him on the journey, mixing local and global flows to create an architecture that speaks to its place through an intensely personal vision. "The world is my imagination," says Schopenhauer. I would say that the same applies to Marlon Blackwell.

I have returned to Fayetteville a number of times since my first trip. Marlon always picks me up himself for the drive into the city. I look forward to his stories and the new buildings that have gone up since my last visit. The road twists and turns as I settle in for the ride.

Juhani Pallasmaa

Place and Image

ARCHITECTS AND LAY travellers alike admire the unique qualities of indigenous architectures. Those unarmingly unpretentious buildings echo the characteristics of their geographic contexts, sites, local materials, and crafts; they seem to express the essence of their specific culture. The vernacular building traditions of the world strengthen the experience of cultural variety and the awareness of place—the very sources of our geographic and cultural curiosity. These locales address all our senses at once, and they speak pleasantly of the continuity of tradition and the passage of time. [fig. 1]

1
Antioch Church,
Jacket, Missouri, 1930s

Vernacular architecture touches us through its innocence, its lack of self-conscious expression, combined with unfailing rationality, causality, and economy of means. This is the "architecture without architects" brought to the consciousness of the architectural world in the mid-1960s by Bernard Rudofsky's seminal exhibition and book of the same name.[1] These are human artifacts that possess the unarguable logic of natural phenomena.

In contrast, our current industrialized and consumerist culture seems to erode the very ground of architectural specificity and leaves us unaccompanied in a desolate world. Franz Kafka gives a shattering expression to this sense of isolation, helplessness, and agony: "I am separated from all things by a hollow space and I do not even reach to its boundaries."[2]

Has our technologically advanced construction lost its capacity to create a sense of specificity and place? Are the unifying and alienating forces of scientific rationality, technological logic, accelerated mobility, globalized market, and a universal lifestyle transforming the geographic and cultural grounding of architecture into an impossibility? Are we eventually doomed to dwell in surroundings of universal kitsch, as Milan Kundera grimly prophesied?[3]

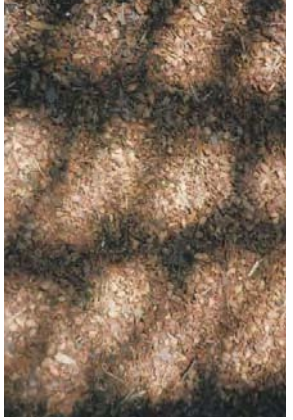
Modern art was decisively stimulated by the arts of indigenous cultures. The aesthetic sensibilities of modern architecture, likewise, were fertilized by vernacular images, such as Mediterranean towns, farm constructions, and early industrial edifices. Why should architecture of the beginning of the third millennium lose its interplay with these unselfconscious building practices?

The art of architecture is usually thought of and presented as a collection of buildings designed by individuals of exceptional, specialized talent. The real culture of building is, however, more determined by the construction of voluminous masses mimicking the prevailing conventions of the time and generally takes place outside the attention of influential architectural critics and historians. The British architectural historian Sir J. M. Richards once made a significant comment regarding the relations of modernity and vernacular culture: "One of the most serious problems of modern architecture is that it has not been able to generate a convincing vernacular."[4]

In his influential essay "Prospects for a Critical Regionalism" (1983), Kenneth Frampton substantiated the notion of "critical regionalism" introduced in 1981 by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre.[5] This is a program that promotes the ethical requirements of site specificity and an authentic expression and experience of a place. Critical regionalism is a resistance against the homogenizing forces of consumerism and commodification. Many of us probably share this yearning, but can we generate any regional expressions in our specialized and rationalized societies without falling into the fabrication of a themed architecture, in the manner that market forces today manipulate and appropriate ethnicity or fictitious historical narratives? In his essay, Frampton wisely warns the reader of populism and of "the simplistic evocation of a sentimental or ironic vernacular."

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN a contemporary architectural vocabulary and a timeless vernacular one, and the expression of local specificity through architecture come to mind when encountering Marlon Blackwell's buildings and projects. Blackwell's explicit objective is to re-create an architecture that resonates with the landscape and cultural context of the Ozarks and that ultimately provides a sense of domicile. He does not, however, romanticize the architectural heritage of his region. He describes his native environment as a combination of "real natural beauty and, simultaneously, of real constructed ugliness."[6] It is a determined ethical choice not to turn one's back to an undesirable reality and to confront its elements.

2
Dogtrot Farmhouse,
Philadelphia, Mississippi

FROM LEFT 3 BarnHouse, Wedington, Arkansas, 1994, wall detail; 4 Keenan TowerHouse, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 2000, patterned light on the crushed pecan shell floor in stairwell; 5 Cozart Office Building, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1996; 6 Terminella Office Building, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1998, window beacon infill

"This land of disparate conditions is not just a setting for my work—it is part of the work. In these conditions I do not see a negative, but instead, a source of deep possibilities,"[7] writes Blackwell. He defines his architectural mission as follows: "I will focus on such issues as individuation and local specificity, on the relationship between craft and technology, and on the processes necessary in the development and production of tectonically rich buildings and environments."[8] [fig. 2] He aims to rechannel the existing economic, cultural, and technical forces to produce an architecture that reenchants and humanizes these very conditions.

Blackwell has taken a difficult and also somewhat unfashionable position in an architectural world obsessed with another kind of architecture: the elevation of the ego of the author rather than the revitalization of tradition and the imagery of an intellectualized, abstracted, and universal style. Blackwell is highly conscious of the contradictory and frustrating reality of the art of architecture today, and he does not approach his task lightheartedly or naively. An architect who desires to create a more responsive architecture, set in a dialogue with its multifarious contexts, needs a refined and patient capacity for observation and listening. The architect cannot dictate how the world ought to be or merely engage in an architectural monologue. Blackwell acknowledges this imperative: "The intent is to develop thorough observation and abstraction. . . structures that can simultaneously recall their lineage and comment on the present."[9]

The feasibility of a new regional and localized expression arises from the strategy of suppressing the homogenizing forces of today's construction practices and strengthening unique local ingredients. This methodology is practiced by Blackwell and clearly articulated by him:

> *These tactics [his personal design approach] allow local conditions to inform and generate systems of articulation, expressive details that generate expressive form, and the configuring of local crafted assemblies with standardized products and assemblies to produce a hybrid tectonic. . . . All of this is . . . in the support of "immanent form" or place-specific architectural form, and is set in opposition to the increasing and inexplorable standardization, bland and ubiquitous, of most contemporary of construction.*[10]

One of the most powerful sources of meaning in architecture is typological identity. In its obsession with emancipation and independence from any convention, modernity has denied the roles of both tradition and typology. Both in his words and works, Blackwell acknowledges the possibilities of building

types in providing visual and unconscious contextual ties. The BarnHouse, for instance, practically weaves together the characteristic Arkansas barn fence and the pole-barn type to create an ensemble that resonates with its regional setting. [fig. 3]

Blackwell aims for the multi-sensory and emotional impact of vernacular traditions: "I seek to provide for my clients an architecture that can be felt as much as it is understood, an architecture that is as immediate and tactile as it is legible."[11] He is clearly in opposition to the prevailing focus on the one-sided conceptual or retinal image. He strives for an architecture of realism and emphasizes the tactile dimensions of architecture. [fig. 4] Haptic qualities tend to evoke an air of nearness, intimacy, invitation, and care, as opposed to the arrogance and sensory repression characteristic of purely retinal imagery. Tactility strengthens the experience of the real.

For Blackwell buildings are generators of and frames for experience. Profound and touching architectural experiences arise from the tectonic realities of construction, truthful materiality, and the existential charge of the imagery, not from fictitious pictorial fabrications.

> *The aim . . . is for broadening our understanding of architectural space, in buildings that are conceived as the setting for experience that resist the defending and limiting prejudices of the scenographic, space that deflects tendencies towards the pictorial, and that recognizes the necessity for translation of heterogeneous, multivalent aspects of experience into immanent form*.[12]

In Blackwell's view, the strength of thought and subtlety of expression, or clarity and mystery of the work, are not exclusive qualities but contribute to a complex experience of a place.

Today's publicity-hungry architecture craves novelty, the spectacular, and the exceptional. The (mis)understanding of poetic content as something fantastic or unbelievable is regrettably common. Blackwell supports an architecture that aims to poeticize the ordinary and everyday. He is interested in the innate layering and multiplicity of poetic images; he seeks to reveal the metaphysical enigma behind commonplace events and objects. In the words of the photographer played by John Malkovich in Michelangelo Antonioni's final film, *Beyond the Clouds*, "We know that behind every image revealed, there is another image more faithful, and yet another behind the last one, up to the true image of the absolute mysterious reality, that no one will ever see."[13] It is this rhizome of suggestion and association that projects an air of mystery on everyday objects and matters.

> *I use the term* everyday *. . . to refer to the multitude of modest constructions with low aspirations and little finesse, buildings comprising the vast majority of structures, some designed by architects, many that are not, mostly lacking in tectonic substance and civic presence. . . . My projects are . . . examples . . . to illustrate a potential for invigorating the culture of the everyday with the detail. In each project I attempt to use a combination of tactical operations to insure some measure of resonance between detail, form, and place.*[14]

Instead of seeking extraordinary tasks or expressions, Blackwell focuses his effort realistically and responsibly on the standard tasks of everyday life, humble in their architectural potential, yet capable of providing a sense of identity and dignity. The Amish and Shaker cultures offer inspiring and soothing examples of an aesthetic sensibility that projects divine simplicity, sensuality, and dignity to the humblest utilitarian objects of everyday life. The profound formal simplicity of artistic aspiration is rewarded by the inexhaustible richness of genuine, poeticized images. The real artistic talent is not in the capacity to invent and fabricate, but in seeing the implicit meaning and value of human situations.

7
Audesse Garden House, Wenham, Massachusetts, 1988

8
Audesse Residence, Wenham, Massachusetts, 1988

Many of Blackwell's commissions have been additions to existing structures or alterations of fairly banal utilitarian buildings, such as the conversion of an old Goodyear Tire Building into the Cozart Office Building (1996) [fig. 5] and a Cadillac dealership into the Terminella Office Building (1998) [fig. 6], both in his hometown. Most of these types of commissions have dealt with rather mundane functions and situations, with the exception of the project for the Audesse Formal Garden (1988) in Wenham, Massachusetts. [figs. 7+8] This addition, engaged in a dialogue with the symmetrical formalities of a Neogeorgian mansion, calls for a different contextual reading and response.

Blackwell's architecture does not aspire for visually cool and perfected abstractions. His structures move, gesture, and appear deliberately unresolved, or consist of seemingly conflicting ingredients. This restlessness gives them an added emotional impact; they cannot be put aside as mere aestheticized compositions.

As much as Blackwell is motivated by nature and local materials, zoological imagery is a common inspiration for his buildings.[fig. 9] His unexecuted projects for the DragonFly House [fig. 10] and the BullFrog Villa [fig. 11] make explicit physiognomic references with the levity and humor of a fairy tale. They critique the pretentious seriousness and unquestioned stylistic codes of contemporary architecture, just as vernacular architecture frequently does unintentionally. The projects that do not deliberately aim at physical resemblance often pursue a metaphorical affinity to animal imagery. The Keenan Tower House [fig. 12], for example, evokes a caddish fly larva with its casing. The pattern of vertical boards of its stair shaft deliberately recalls the texture of tree bark interpreted as an enlarged abstraction of the biological original. The Guardhouse at the entrance to the Blessings Golf Clubhouse [fig. 13] also elevates its top part in a bestial gesture, not unlike a prairie dog's upright pose.

The evocation of animal imagery in Blackwell's buildings is deliberate; in fact, in his architecture courses he has repeatedly assigned insects or turtle shells as objects of study and analysis and as sources of inspiration for generating novel architectural structures. This approach of using nature as a starting point for human invention, sometimes called biomimicry, is rapidly gaining ground in numerous fields of inquiry, from chemistry and medicine to computer science.

Blackwell's architectural surfaces tend to be layered and multidimensional. In his Cozart and Terminella office buildings, the flat, utilitarian buildings are given a civic character by the three dimensionality and depth of the new facades. At times his surfaces appear as being in the process of peeling off; at others, they seem to be defending the entire tectonic structure with an organic shield. However, all buildings are entities, architectural creatures, and one of the fundamental qualities of a strong architectural work is that it constitutes a singularity. Even within the framework of layered meanings they are consistent throughout, as all animal species are, each one in its own right.

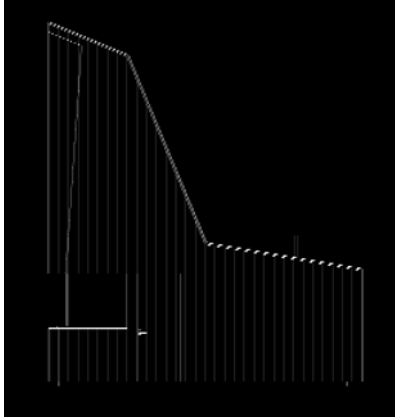
In contrast to the aspiration for stylish purity common in today's architecture, Blackwell's buildings are frequently hybrids, combining unrelated parts, images, materials, and construction techniques. His buildings, such as the June Moore House [fig. 14] and the BarnHouse, often express duality. The former possesses a masonry side that faces the ridge and the open landscape and is juxtaposed to a timber facade that confronts the direction of entry. The metal end walls of the latter structure differ from its wood and concrete block facades. This strategy of architectural hybridization (an approach mastered by Alvar Aalto in Finland) gives rise to narrative readings—the unrelated parts suggest different origins, references, and functions, and they acquire their full artistic motivation as components of the collage.

Blackwell's buildings resonate with their surroundings and enter into a dialogue with the natural landscape as well as with their man-made settings; they also concentrate the visual energies of the site and refocus them through the architectural ensemble.

The opening and articulation of views and light has a central role in Blackwell's architecture: "Perceptions of the view occur in motion through overlapping frames and provide a filmic sequence of experiential meaning."[15] The architect's attraction to cinematic strategies, also apparent in the contemporaneous work of Jean Nouvel, Rem Koolhaas, Coop Himmelblau, and others, and spawned from his interest in light and spatial experience, is clearly articulated in the June Moore House.

9
Ponte Vecchio
Florence, Italy, 1345 and 1564,
the addition to the Ponte
Vecchio clings to the side of
the bridge like an insect.



FROM LEFT 10 DragonFly House prototype, 1994; 11 BullFrog House prototype, 1992; 12 Keenan TowerHouse, south elevation; 13 Blessings Golf Club Guardhouse, 2003

This structure is conceived as a dam against the sloping terrain that spectacularly dramatizes the distant view toward the vast valley below and the mountain range beyond. The numerous apertures of the structure that are not visible during the approach to the house direct one's attention to multiple directions, to distant and intimate views, front and back, up and down. Steep steps accelerate the experience of vertical levels through the movement of the body through space. [fig. 15] The advance toward the building is akin to the build up to a cinematic climax; the encounter relieves the psychological tension in the same manner that the climax provides narrative conclusion.

The visitor begins his/her journey of the Keenan Tower House from the bottom of the stairwell, walks across a surface of pecan shells, which creates a stimulating sound and makes one conscious of the earth and its gifts, ascends around the central void, which accentuates the increasing elevation and the surrounding foliage of trees, and arrives at the living space on the top floor with an unlimited panorama of the distant landscape. [fig. 16] The journey ends in the rooftop space, accessible by a secret hinged stairway. This ultimate location frames the sky in the manner of James Turrell's skyspaces and opens to carefully framed directional horizontal views.

In the Moore HoneyHouse, [fig. 17] the steel-plate storage shelves echo the cellular pattern of the beehive wall. The hexagonal bee cell is appropriately transposed to a rectangular, man-made storage structure. This idea of a thick wall, a "honey wall," exudes a poetic air; honey is a primordial material of life, an archetypal source of nourishment. Blackwell creates a powerful juxtaposition: the organic luminosity of honey plays against the toughness and coarseness of steel. The space is lit by light passing through the glass honey jars. The honey jar becomes an optical lens and a source of colored illumination.

Looking at the honey jars against the mountain landscape, one is reminded of the monumental organizing and structuring power of the simple jar set in a landscape in Wallace Stevens' poem "Anecdote of the Jar":

I placed a jar in Tennessee
And round it was, upon a hill
. . . . . .
The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.[16]

It is the primary task of architecture to "domesticate" meaningless space and measureless time for human habitation. Architecture frames, scales, focuses, and redirects reality in the way the poet's jar reorganizes and cultivates the experiential landscape; it tames the wilderness.




FROM LEFT 14 June Moore House, Cashiers, North Carolina, 1990, south elevation; 15 June Moore House; 16 Keenan TowerHouse, skycourt; 17 Moore HoneyHouse, Cashiers, North Carolina, 1998

NOTES

1. Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture without Architects* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1965).
2. Franz Kafka, letter dated 16 December 1911. As quoted in Erich Heller, *The Disinherited Mind* (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1959), 200.
3. "Modernism has put on the robe of Kitsch," writes Kundera. Milan Kundera, *Romaanin taide* [The Art of the Novel] (Juva, Finland: Werner Söderström Oy, 1987), 168.
4. Sir J. M. Richards' comment at the University of London after Juhani Pallasmaa's lecture in December 1987.
5. Kenneth Frampton, "Prospects for a Critical Regionalism." First published in *Perspecta: The Yale Architectural Journal* 20 (1983): 147–62. The notion was coined in A. Tzonis, L. Lefaivre, "The grid and the pathway," *Architecture in Greece* 5 (1981).
6. Marlon Blackwell, "A House in the Trees: the TowerHouse," *OZ Journal* 25 (2003): 66.
7. Ibid.
8. Marlon Blackwell, "Articulating the Everyday" in *(Re) Viewing the Tectonic: Architecture / Technology / Production* (lecture and subsequent paper, session D12, A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture+Urban Planning, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2000), 40.
9. Marlon Blackwell, "A House in the Trees: the TowerHouse," *OZ Journal* 25 (2003): 67.
10. Blackwell, "Articulating the Everyday," 41.
11. Ibid., 40.
12. Ibid.
13. *Par-delà les nuages* [Beyond the Clouds], film, directed by Michelangelo Antonioni and Wim Wenders, 1995, France, Italy, Germany.
14. Blackwell, "Articulating the Everyday," 41.
15. Marlon Blackwell, "At the Edge In the Frame," *OZ Journal* 22 (2000): 53.
16. Wallace Stevens, *The Collected Poems* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 76.

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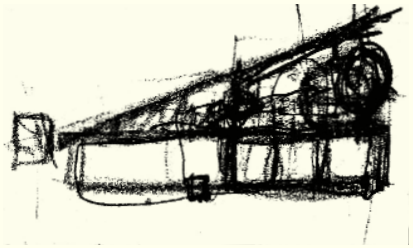
5-10
WALTON'S
Wal-Mart
Visitors Center

Works

June Moore House

Cashiers, North Carolina
1988–90



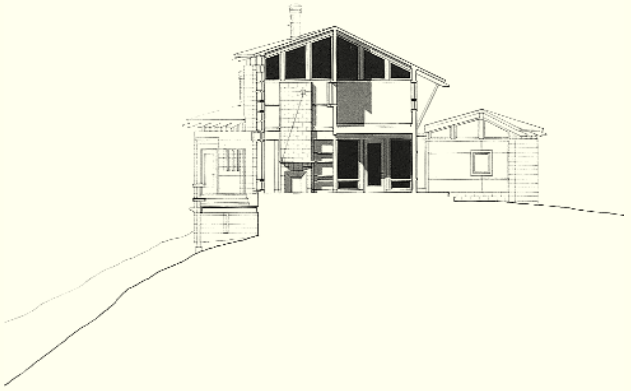
ABOVE
conceptual sketch

OPPOSITE
northeast view

MY FIRST RESIDENTIAL DESIGN was for the late June Moore, an ex-girlfriend's mother (never burn your bridges). June wanted the house to take advantage of the views of the surrounding landscape and to prioritize privacy. Set between vistas of mountains to the north and woods to the south, the house has two distinct faces. The split-personality scheme is an extension of the parallel yet opposing characteristics of the site and its owner, a politically and fiscally conservative free spirit who drove a Z28 Camaro.

A rocky, thickly wooded terrain gently slopes up from an access road to a granite ridge that traverses the site and drops dramatically behind this juncture, revealing an immense valley below and spectacular mountain range beyond. Along the precipice of the ridge, there is an intense downward pull into the receding void of the landscape. The sun moves across these mountains and creates an ever-changing canvas of light on the panorama.

A massive concrete block wall is aligned along the ridge and anchors the structure physically and symbolically—it is a formal edge between the house and the wilderness. The wall edits and reorders the expansive panorama into discrete views through openings in the wall chosen to highlight particular features of the landscape, compressing distant vistas and figures into the immediate context, perceptually resisting its "pull." The large opening beneath the perched study tower acts metaphorically as an entry into the landscape. The experience of the expanding landscape, from this vantage point, is echoed in the opening of the interior space into a double-height central space visible upon entry.

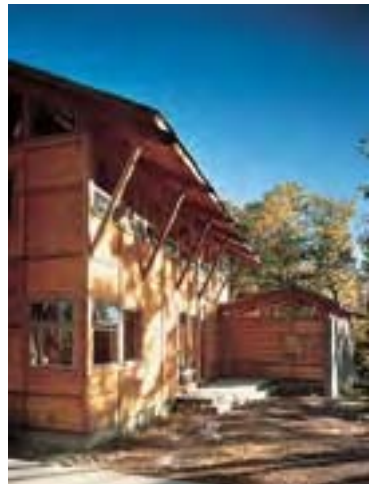


A composition of traditional vernacular forms, present in the southern portion of the building, gives way to an idiosyncratic ordering of frames and volumes along and perpendicular to the concrete block wall. The northern concrete wall, articulated in both the interior and exterior of the house, conflates the concept of inside and outside. This theme of the bleeding of interior and exterior recurs in the continuous clerestory windows that separate the roof from the wall and allow the roof to "float" above the wall. The framed sky and foliage remain a constant presence along the edge, maintaining sustained visual contact with nature.

ABOVE
sections

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
southwest view; downspout detail; oblique view from southwest corner

PAGE 44–45, FROM BOTTOM LEFT
panorama looking north; cladding detail; guardrail detail

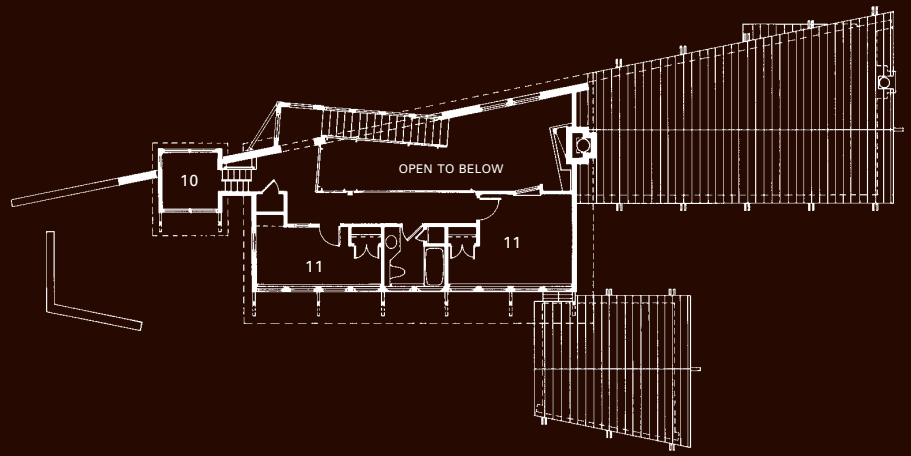


"The site and view are inhabited simultaneously; the house plays with and compromises the notion of a singular perspective."

LEFT
interior view from second level

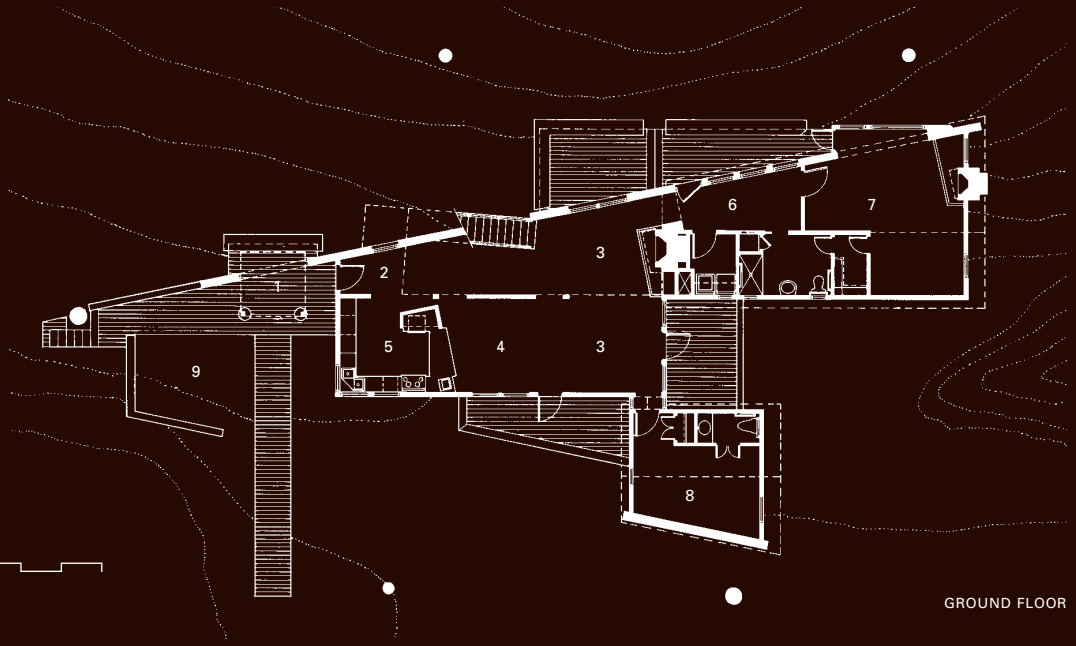
BELOW, FROM LEFT
interior view from entry;
bedroom fireplace; living area

OPPOSITE
floor plans

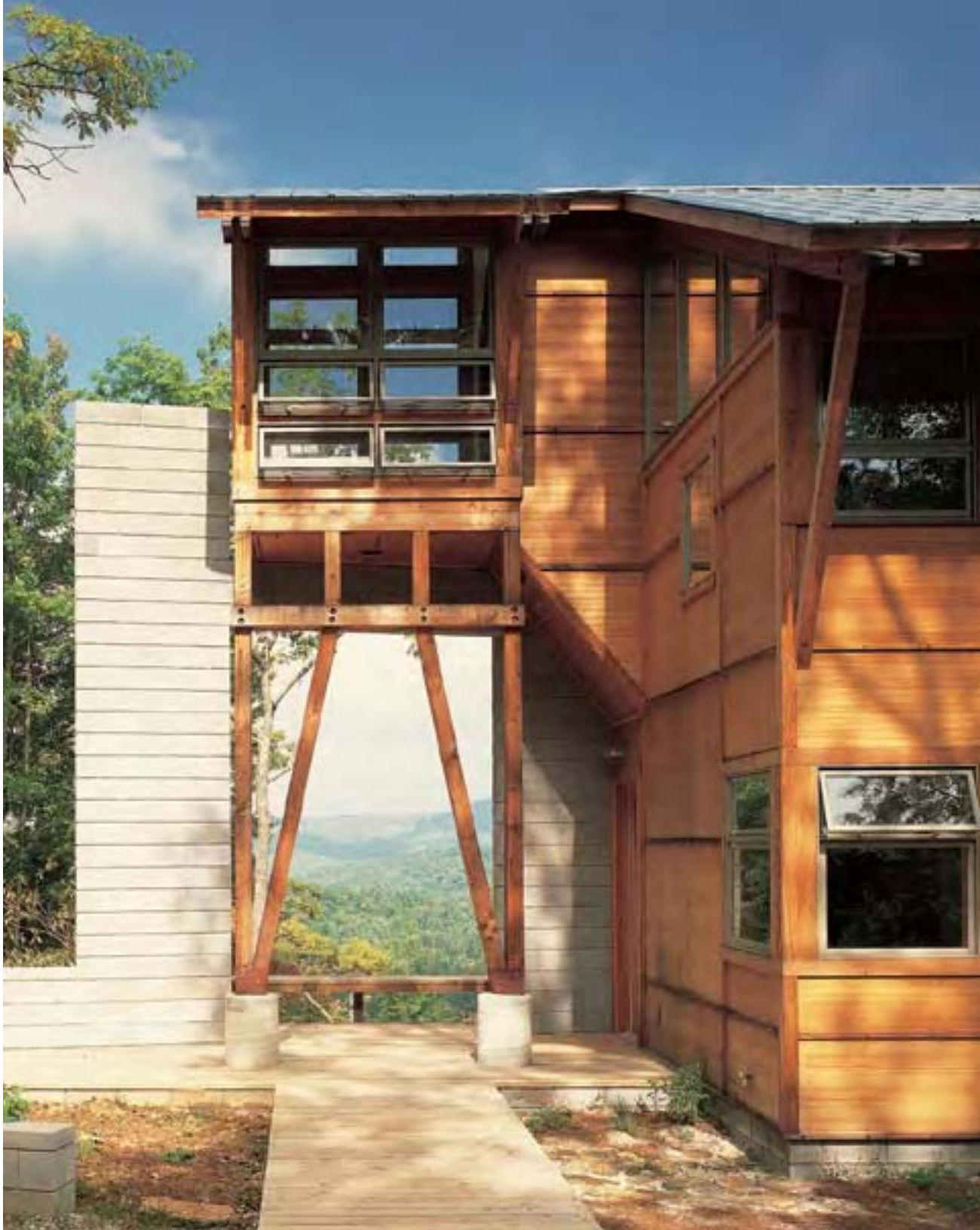


SECOND FLOOR

1 GATEWAY
2 ENTRY
3 LIVING AREA
4 DINING AREA
5 KITCHEN
6 GALLERY
7 MASTER BEDROOM
8 MOTHER'S BEDROOM
9 VEGETABLE GARDEN
10 STUDY/OBSERVATION TOWER
11 BEDROOM



GROUND FLOOR



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ABOVE, FROM LEFT
elevator penthouse, Boston, Massachusetts, 1989, the view outside of Marlon's former loft in Boston manifests itself in the relationship between the observation room and the concrete; block wall south view with tower wall

BarnHouse

Wedington, Arkansas
1992–94

ABOVE
Willard Dixon, *Mondrian with Cows* (II), 1997, this painting underscores the often ambivalent and sometimes subversive relationship between artifact (culture) and nature, between rational and pastoral concepts of the land.

OPPOSITE
wall detail

THIS "HYBRID-HOUSE," with a mixture of both domestic and professional programs (the BarnHouse includes residential spaces and a garage in addition to horse stables and a paddock), developed from our observations on how a boundary makes place out of space and how a frame is used to articulate form. The intent was to provide a sense of order—an integrated relationship between coexisting but discrete spatial conditions of artifice and land. High above the Illinois River valley, on a three-sided sloped hill, the BarnHouse and its open paddock are intimately linked with the pristine, adjacent forest by a wooden fence, which is the unifying element that provides scale and lateral support for the structure.

Along the south facade, the operable second-floor window wall provides expansive views of the landscape beyond and takes advantage of the prevailing winds from the southwest. A generous roof overhang allows for shade on the south facade in the summer and lets sunlight in during the winter months.

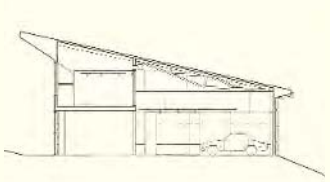
A palate of common materials—wood, concrete block, and metal—underscores the utilitarian nature of the structure. We see construction as a rationalized process: our use of a patterned bolt layout, used to attach the siding and fence rails to the structural columns, and the predrilled ribbed metal panels affirms this position.

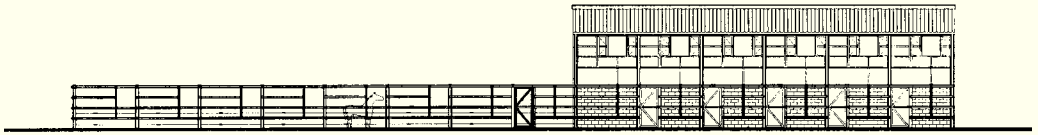
The interior living area embodies many of the concerns expressed in the exterior. Museum stud walls define the spaces and create a sense of openness. At the ground floor, a structural column system that references local pole-barn construction, provides interchangeable spaces that can accommodate either vehicles or animals. Both inside and out, careful attention to construction

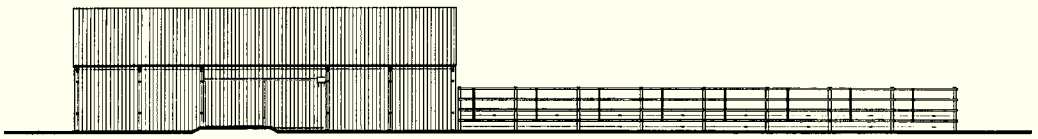
detail and the choice of material finishes creates a system of structural articulation that helps inscribe the BarnHouse within its natural setting. The primary assertion throughout this project is that architecture is a studied relationship between building and land.

LEFT, FROM TOP
section; paddock-building, south elevation; paddock-building, north elevation

OPPOSITE, FROM TOP
south view; view from site looking west







OPPOSITE
paddock-building, west view

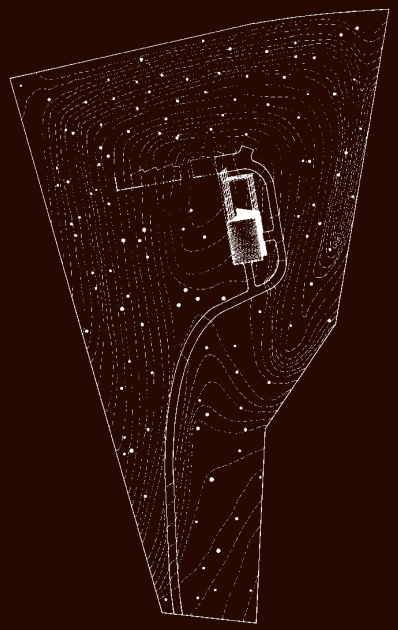
TOP, FROM RIGHT
horse pasture off Highway 45, northwest Arkansas; trailer with addition, Fayetteville, Arkansas

BELOW
wall-paddock fence

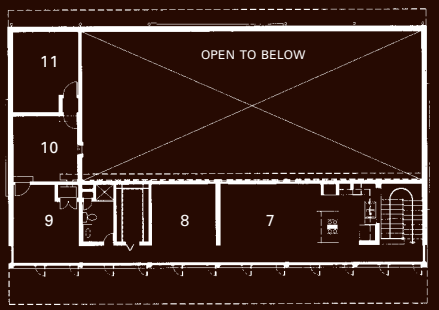
LEFT
second-floor living area

BELOW, FROM LEFT
garage interior;
stair-rail detail

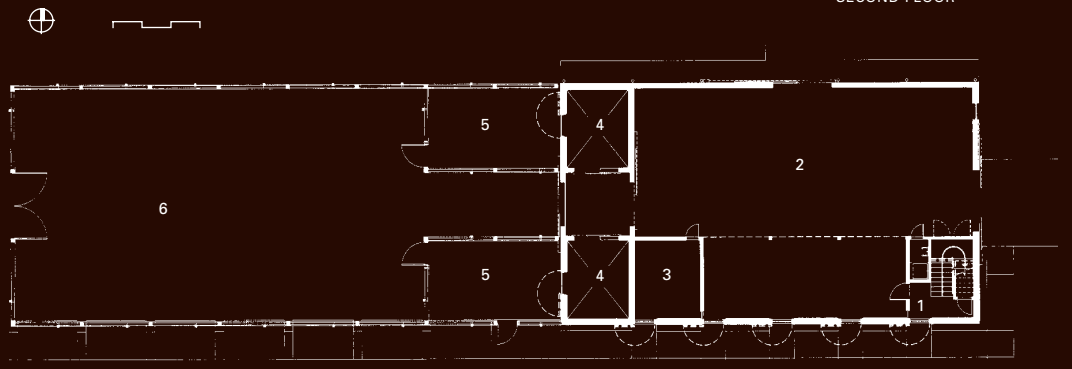
OPPOSITE
floor plans



1 ENTRY HALL
2 GARAGE AREA
3 OFFICE
4 STABLE
5 CORRAL
6 PADDOCK
7 LIVING AREA/DINING AREA/KITCHEN
8 BEDROOM
9 STUDY
10 GUEST BEDROOM
11 STORAGE



SECOND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

"As I reflect upon the quality of spaces we made for the animals and the folks, it seems that they both got a pretty good deal."

2Square House (Farah Residence)

Fayetteville, Arkansas
1997–98

ABOVE, FROM TOP
models, scheme #1, scheme #2, and scheme #3

OPPOSITE
west view

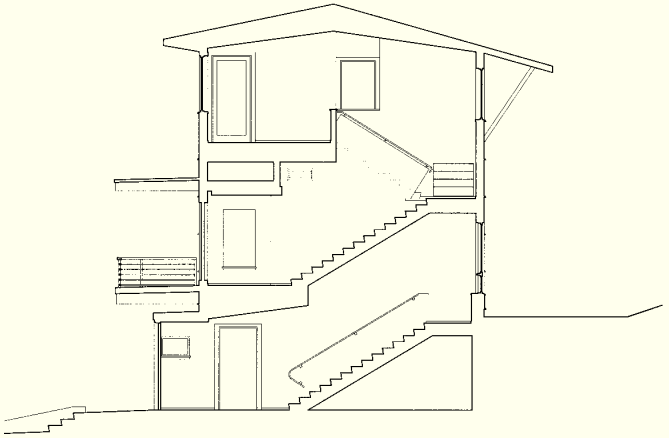
THIS MODEST HOUSE IS A SUBURBAN MODEL that demonstrates that a house can be unique, efficient, and affordable in the context of today's banal, cookie-cutter home market. The built scheme is the last in a series of three design proposals: the first scheme was an extruded shell stepping down the slope of the site; the second, a great butterfly roof set against the hill. The 2Square House (known by the owners as a "house for two squares") is a carefully crafted "dumb box." The formal character of the box is enriched by an expressive, yet economic, system of articulation—custom-designed siding of painted and stained exterior plywood sheets, with custom-milled redwood battens and trim. The crisp profiles of the horizontal battens provide scale, as regulating lines and units of measure, and echo the clear presence of the horizon also referenced in many other dimensions of the building and site.

A strategy of visual framing, a carefully choreographed sequence of movement that manipulates the views from the interior, was developed to address the two disparate physical aspects of the site—the intimacy of the immediate inclined wooded terrain and the immensity of the landscape beyond. Using the minimum size possible for a two-car garage (23-foot square), a plan diagram of two squares was generated. This module was duplicated, and the two identical volumes were joined together by a series of stairways that ascend the slope of the site.

The modest depth of the house allows for ample cross ventilation. The fenestrated stairway also forms a ventilating shaft—which

LEFT
section

OPPOSITE
bay window seat

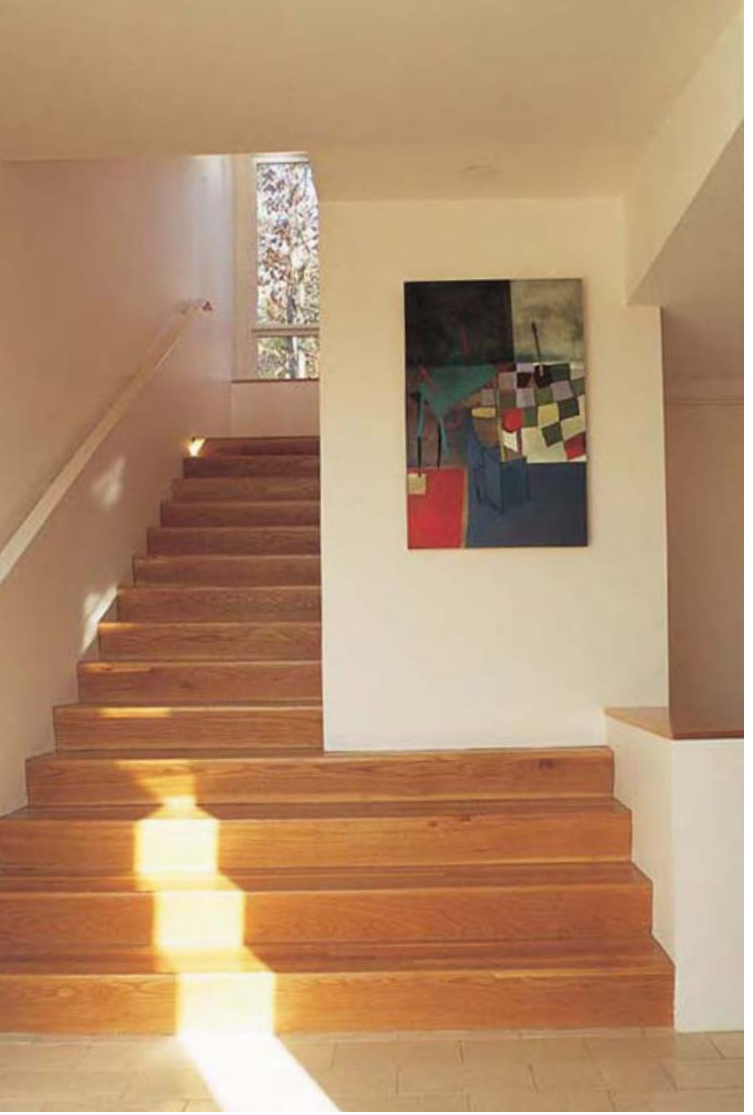


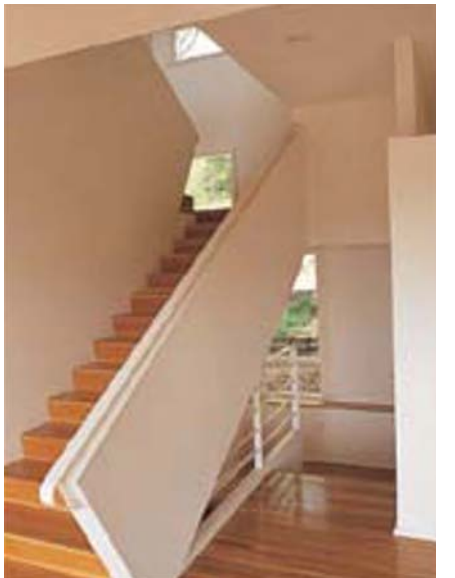
helps cool the interior spaces naturally—that ascends from the entry foyer to the primary living floor. There, beyond a wall of windows and doors and through a covered cantilevered redwood deck that extends the living area along the west facade are endless panoramic views of the landscape. The gallery/sitting room, the transitional space of the house, is centered at the cross axis of the house and provides stunning views of the Ozark foothills to the west. It is the ideal place to take in the sunset, to behold the horizon.




OPPOSITE southwest view ABOVE, FROM LEFT northwest corner; window detail; exterior view of covered deck at second floor; exterior corner detail BELOW, FROM LEFT east wall detail; exterior view of entry foyer; east view



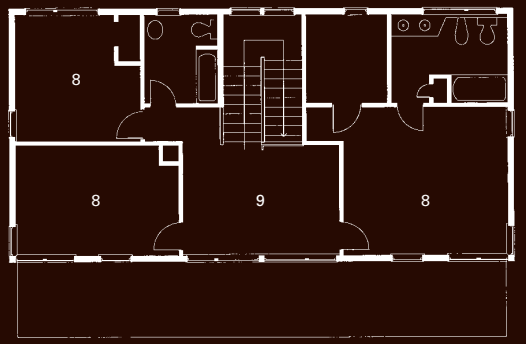




ABOVE
view of stair from entry

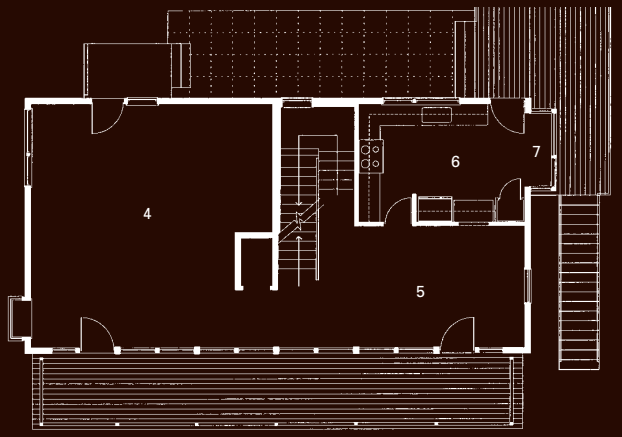
RIGHT, FROM TOP
corner composition; breakfast nook; stair at second floor

OPPOSITE
floor plans

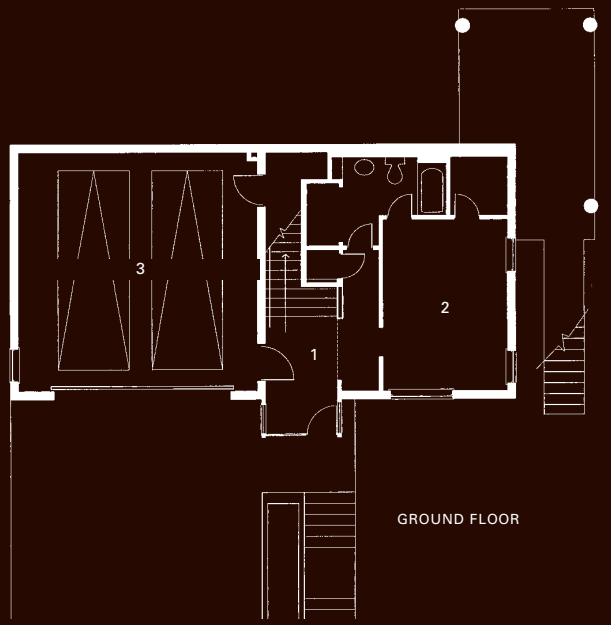


THIRD FLOOR

1 FOYER
2 GUEST BEDROOM
3 GARAGE
4 LIVING AREA
5 DINING AREA
6 KITCHEN
7 BREAKFAST NOOK
8 BEDROOM
9 GALLERY

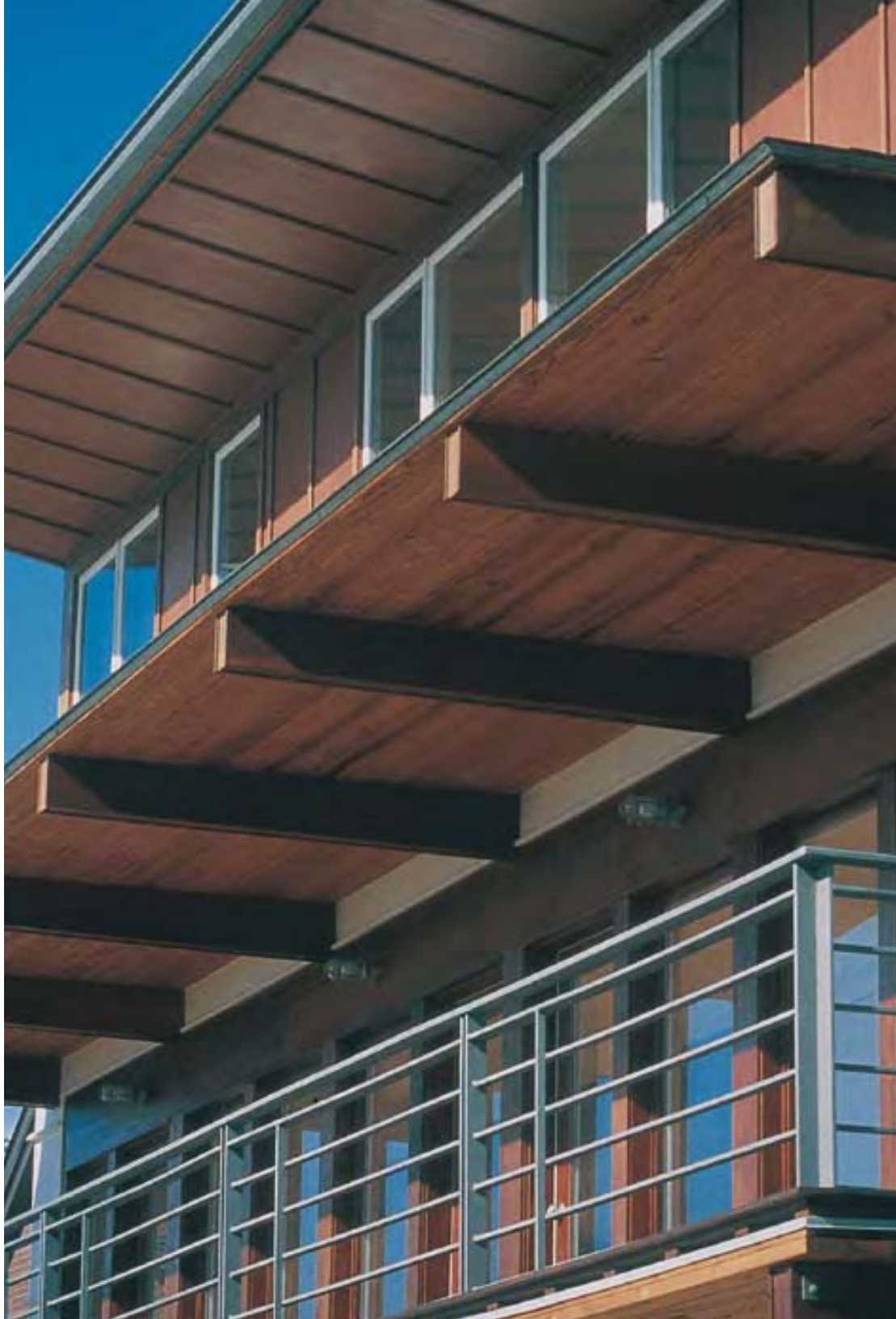


SECOND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

"The simple box form of the 2Square House is not only efficient in its use of space and materials, but allows for minimal intrusion on the land."



Prototypes: Roadside Houses for the New American Landscape

BullFrog House

DragonFly House

HouseBoat-BoatHouse

SINCE 1992 I HAVE ENGAGED IN ongoing research concerned with reading and interpreting the American landscape. I have developed design prototypes that refer to the rich, found reality of this terrain, as opposed to idealized, nostalgic images of what might constitute a cultural landscape. The convergence of urban, suburban, and agricultural patterns, and the resulting typological and semiological ambiguities, provide the sources from which I extract models for typological transformations and interventions. The combination of selected characteristics of things made and things born—from the mobile home to nature—allows for a kind of architectural husbandry, a wrinkled emergence of strangely familiar forms. Over the last ten years these prototypes have provided a "bucket of ideas" from which we have drawn for use in the conceptual and formal development of subsequent commissions. Most of our built projects to date are descendants of these early investigations.

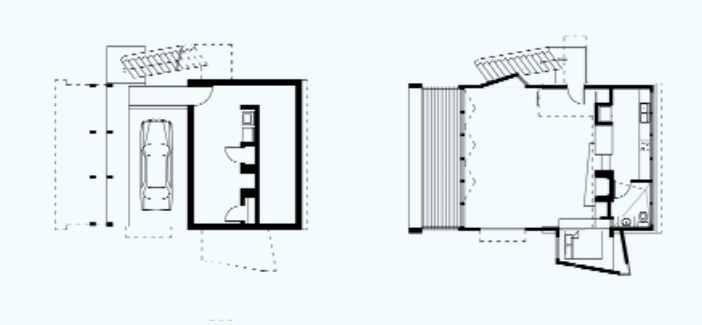
OPPOSITE
BullFrog House,
photomontage

BullFrog House

1992

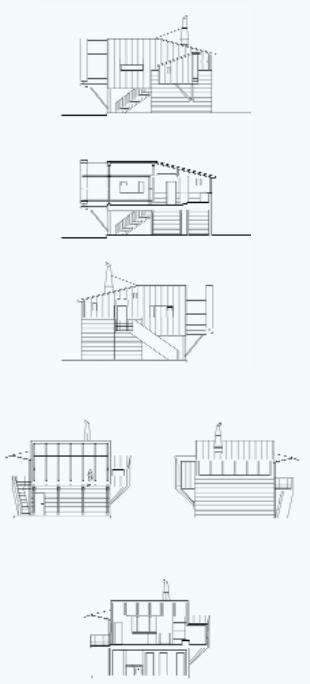
THE WORLD'S SMALLEST VILLA, this contemporary house (cabin) prototype for one (or perhaps two) inhabitants, attempts to capture or borrow a landscape by way of a monumental frame, a lens that inscribes its interior space with a particular view. Seasonal and atmospheric change is visually intensified within the frame, keeping in play a direct dialogue between nature and artifice.

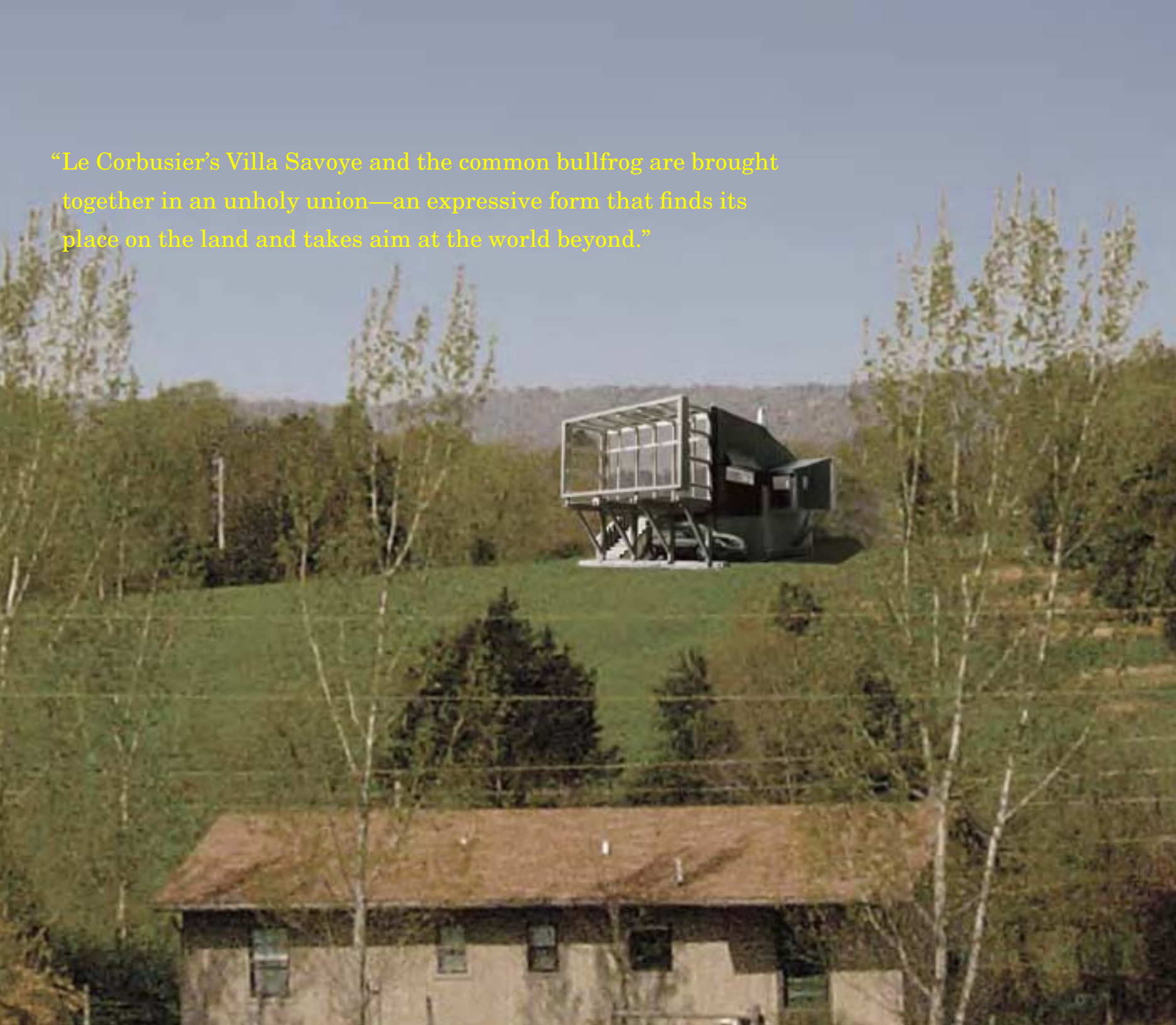
The structure hunkers down—it nests—in the earth, with a concrete base, yet also perches on columns to support the upper deck. Space between the base and columns is allotted for one vehicle. A sculptural stair is extruded from the building to economize space and provide access to the piano nobile. All necessary spaces for living the good life—kitchen, bath, fireplace, dining, living, guest loft—are available at the main level, including a private sleeping carriage suspended from the side of the building, whose shape is a mutation of its parent form.



BELOW LEFT
ground- and second-floor plans

BELOW RIGHT, FROM TOP
side elevation; section; side elevation; front and rear elevations; section




"Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye and the common bullfrog are brought together in an unholy union—an expressive form that finds its place on the land and takes aim at the world beyond."

RIGHT
plan sketch

BELOW, FROM LEFT
bullfrog; Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye, Poissy-sur-Seine, 1920–30

OPPOSITE
photomontage

DragonFly House

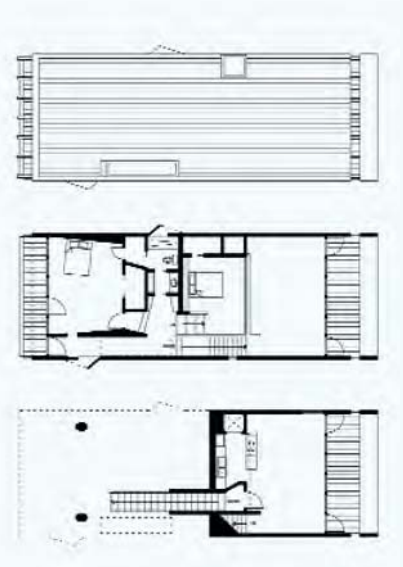
1994

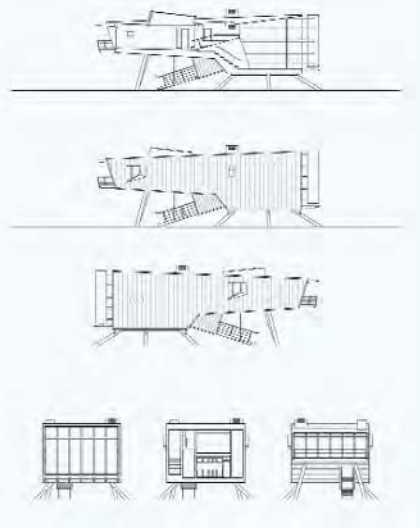
WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU cross a dragonfly with a camper? The DragonFly House, of course. A (re)vision of the American cabin or camp house, this prototype is suited for a variety of sites—in flood plains, on lakes, atop mountains or buttes, with dense foliage or in the open desert—and provides open views. To minimize its impact on the earth, the tiered body of the building is elevated between five and eleven feet, on eight inclined steel piers imbedded in concrete. The space beneath services multiple functions—as a shaded parking area, a terrace, and an entryway from the underbelly of the structure.

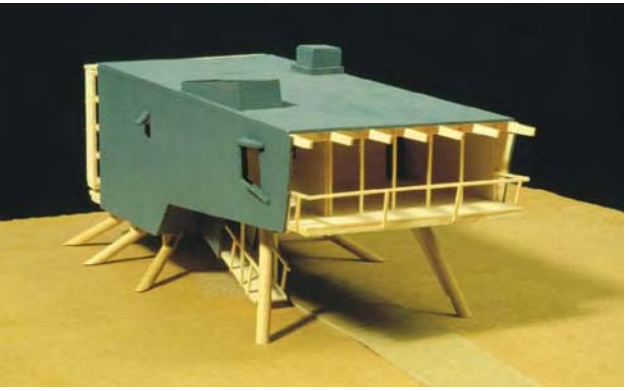
BELOW LEFT, FROM TOP
roof plan; second-floor plan; first-floor plan

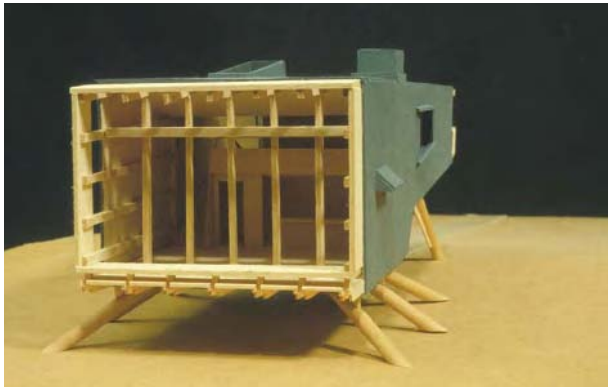
BELOW RIGHT, FROM TOP
section; side elevation; side elevation; front elevation, section, and rear elevation

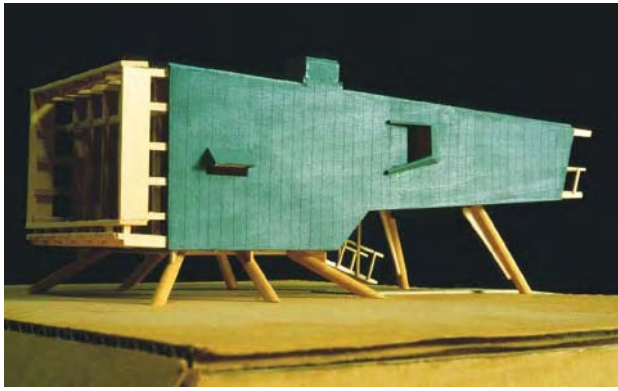
OPPOSITE, FROM TOP
dragonfly; camper, Ponca, Arkansas; photomontage











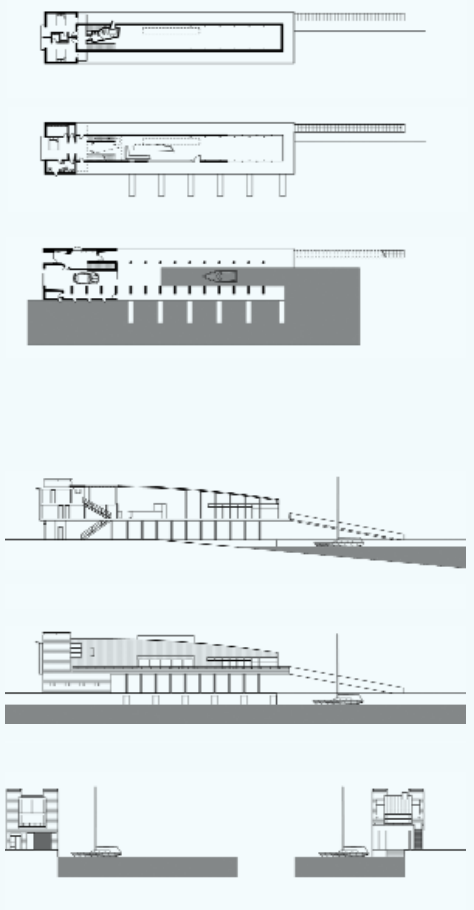

"The structure touches the earth lightly and
strikes an unexpected pose upon the land."

HouseBoat-BoatHouse

1995

FOLLOWING THE 1993 MISSOURI and Mississippi River valley floods, folks who had lost their homes (some for the third time) were taking their insurance money and re-creating the exact same house on the same lot. In response, I proposed a new single-family house that addresses issues of living between two natural, yet at times antagonistic, conditions—land and water—and reconceives the relationship between structure, land, and water in an integrated manner.

A barge or keel boat is the visual inspiration for the structure. The hull of the boat is stable, yet the cargo containers create ever-changing forms as they are stacked and restacked during loading and off loading. This volume-form is supported by a poured-in-place reinforced concrete structure (a tray with columns and piers) and anchored to the site with concrete piles. A concrete bulwark articulates the water's edge and provides material continuity. All interior living spaces are oriented within a curved two-level volume. Like the many mutations of the cargo piles, there are multiple forms that the second-level volume can take. The discrete interior forms merge to establish an interior landscape—self sufficient and autonomous—surrounded by a continuous exterior deck; an experience of remoteness and immediacy is allowed with the surrounding environment.



RIGHT, FROM TOP
third-floor plan; second-floor plan; ground-floor plan; section; side elevation from water; front and rear elevations

"Designed to be situated along navigable waterways with active flood plains, this prototype rethinks the nature of dwelling."

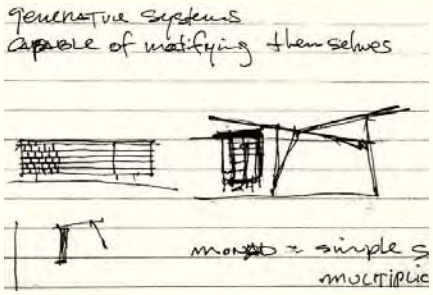
ABOVE, FROM LEFT
Mississippi River in Louisiana; river barge on the Mississippi River; mobile home on piers, Black Warrior River, Alabama

RIGHT
photomontage

OPPOSITE
photomontage

Moore HoneyHouse

Cashiers, North Carolina
1998



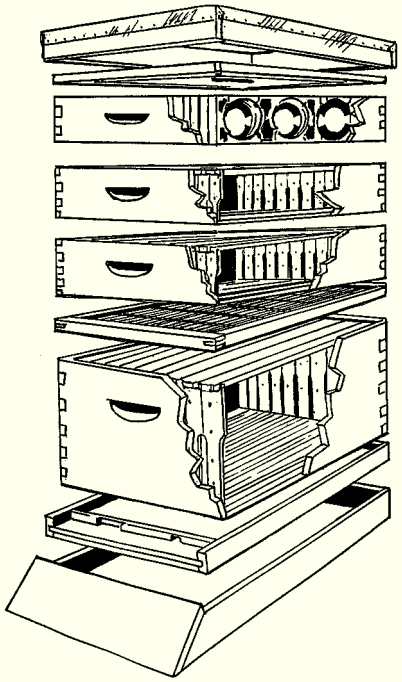
ABOVE
generative sketch

OPPOSITE
view from access road

JUNE MOORE IS A BEEKEEPER. The prized sourwood honey produced by the bees in their beehives in the adjacent forest is sold along country roads and at local markets. June wanted to add two structures to her home: an apiarian structure for the purpose of processing and storing honey and a carport/outdoor work area. The inverted metal-wing roof of the carport is a counterpoint to the roof forms of the existing June Moore House.

In an effort to allow the HoneyHouse to evolve from within its own condition, the ordering methods of modern beekeeping and its ongoing domestication of bee activities and behavior was examined to develop the primary architectural elements. The modern four-sided hive box is organized as a series of shallow orthogonal frames that articulate and separate the brood chamber below from the "super" (honey chamber) above. Moveable frames allow the stored comb honey to be removed without upsetting the brood chamber. While the Cartesian frames delimit the space of bee activity and make it manageable, they have virtually no effect on the constructed organic patterns of the bee colony's day-to-day activities. The tense interplay between the efficiency of the beekeeper's equipment and the bee's willingness to adapt to it is central to the continual production of honey and the survival of the colony.

I had learned from experience that local craftsmen were often hard to keep on the job due to so many hunting seasons—squirrel season, deer season, turkey season, dating season, etc. In order to control costs and ensure timely construction, the primary architectural elements were conceived as a kit of parts. This facilitated



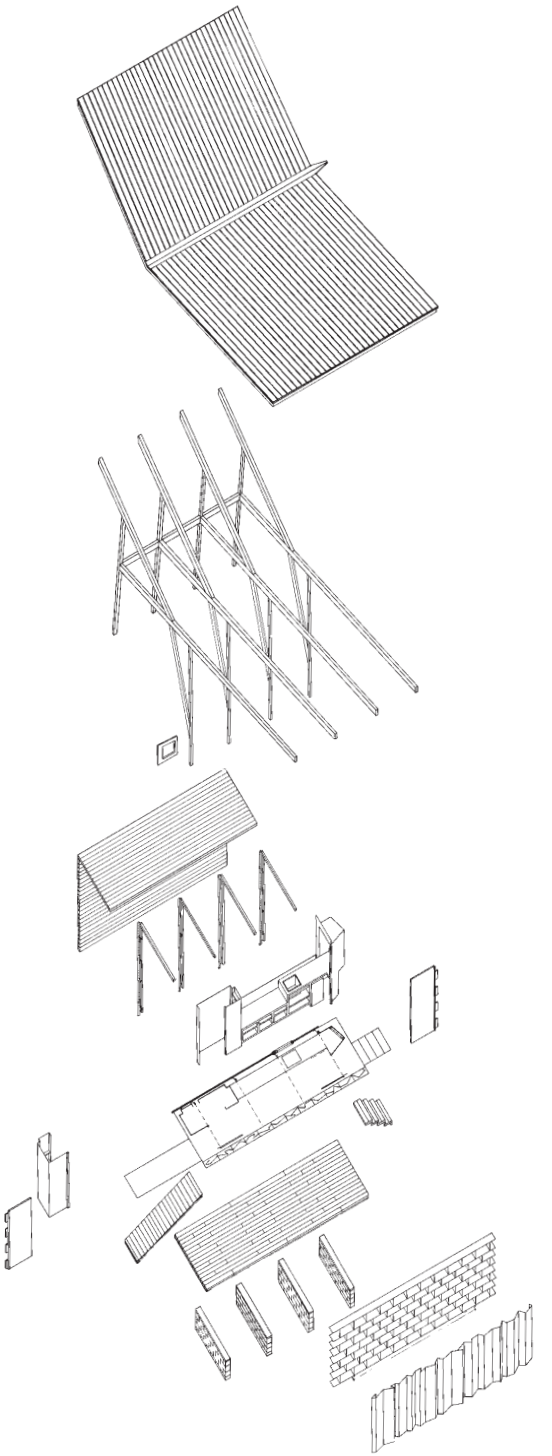
the fabrication of the elements in Arkansas for shipment to the site, along with our crew from Fayetteville, who assembled the entire structure on site in one month.

The structure's single most prominent and complex architectural element is a unique load-bearing steel plate and faceted glass wall that acts to organize the storage and display of honey, filter natural light, and provide a rich mosaic of reflections of the surrounding foliage. The multiple spatial configurations within the wall exhibit conditions of transparency, translucency, and opacity, depending upon one's perspective, the season of the year, and the time of day. The wall is both frame and edge—a frame that reorders the view, an edge that becomes the view.

ABOVE, FROM LEFT
transfer of food between bees;
bee-box diagram

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
southwest view; honey-wall
shop fabrication; west view





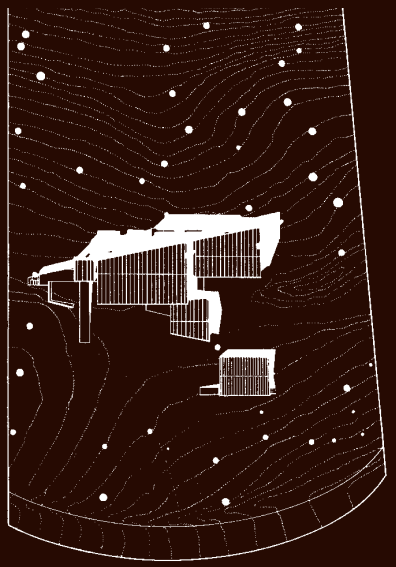
LEFT
carport structure detail;
exploded axonometric drawing

OPPOSITE
south view

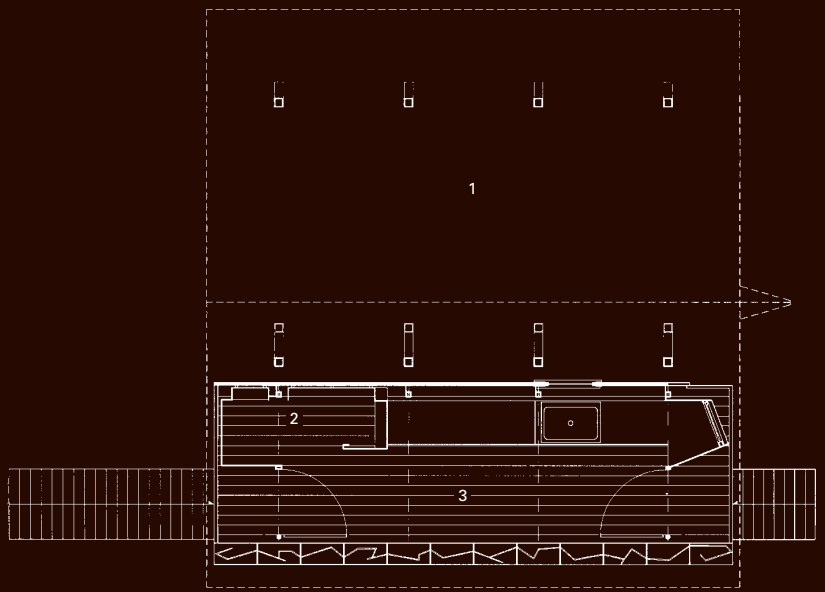
ABOVE
east view

RIGHT
honey wall, corner detail

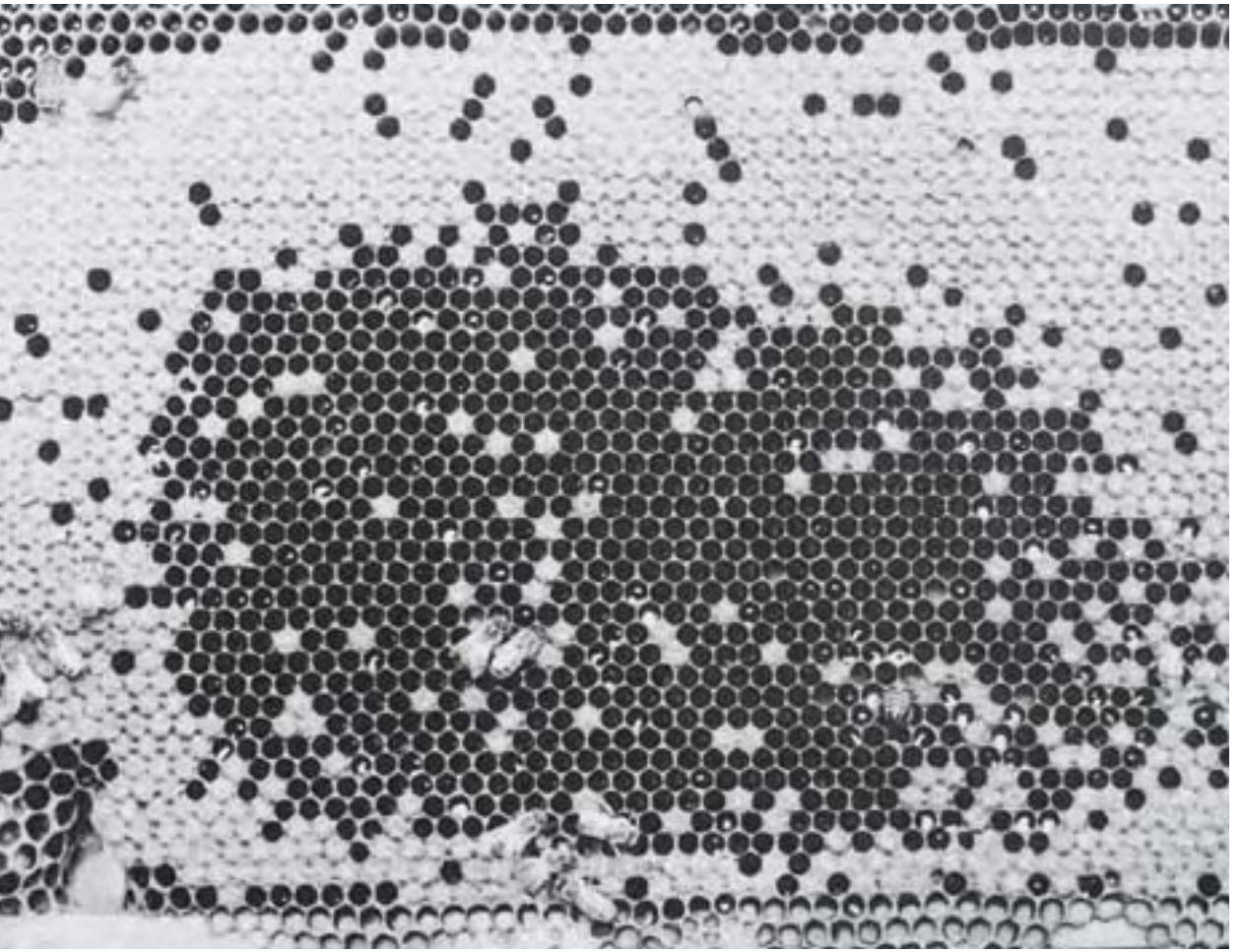
OPPOSITE, FROM TOP
site plan; ground-floor plan



1 CARPORT
2 TOOL STORAGE
3 WORK AREA




“The HoneyHouse is a volumetric response to
the confluence of natural and rational processes.”



Keenan TowerHouse

Fayetteville, Arkansas
1997–2000

ABOVE
feed mill, Springdale, Arkansas

OPPOSITE
tower above trees, northwest view

AS A CHILD, THE OWNER SPENT many memorable days and nights in a tree house erected by his grandfather. In homage to these memories, he wanted to build a live-in tree house. We often say in the Ozarks that about the only thing you can grow well here are rocks; befittingly, we could not find a single tree suitable for a tree house on the 57-acre site. In response, we proposed a house among the trees—a structure that would soar through the trees, carving the sky.

As the late-afternoon November sun fell across the textured bark of the trunks of hickories and oaks, it articulated the hollowed and raised spaces between the bark's ridges. This observation inspired the design of a wooden lattice, made of white-oak fins, which filters and reflects light and establishes a visible datum at the height of the tree canopy. Approached frontally, the lattice appears transparent and displaces weight to the metal skin above. As you circle it, the voids between the oak fins perceptually collapse, providing a sense of gravity that "grounds" the tower. This organic condition contrasts the white cladding of horizontal standing-seam steel panels that enclose the east elevation and the upper program elements. This material tactic references the predominantly white-metal-clad industrial and agricultural structures that pierce the tree canopy in the landscape beyond. Here, the structure takes its place within an existing "other" order seldom seen, or understood, from the ground.

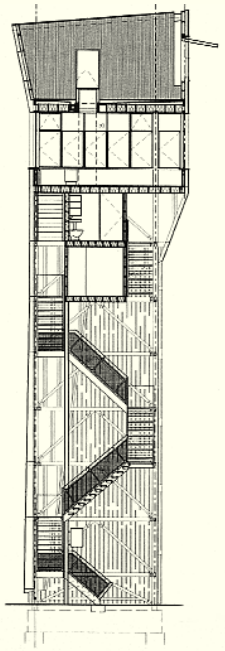
Local creek and river stones comprise the ground surface at the tower's base. Inside the skin—the husk—of the building, an

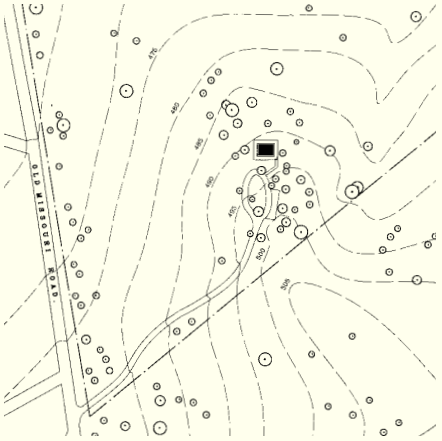
acoustical transition is made in the stairwell court as footsteps fall onto the floor covered with crushed pecan shells.

The program for living is simple—an interior room for viewing the expansive horizon in all directions and an open-roof exterior room that frames the sky above and the land below. One is invited to feel the breeze, stargaze, anticipate the passing of clouds above, or sleep out under the night sky.

BELOW, FROM LEFT
section; site plan

OPPOSITE
southwest view





LEFT
stair-court entry looking east

OPPOSITE, FROM TOP
stair court looking up to underside of mechanical storage room; tower base of local creek stones, river stones, and crushed pecan shells

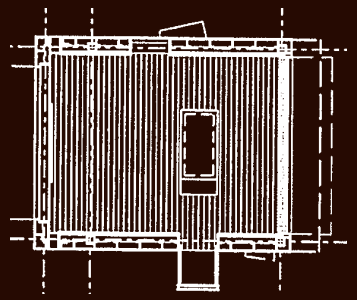
LEFT
stair up to observation/living level

BELOW, FROM LEFT
balcony at skycourt looking south; oak-fin lattice detail; bathroom looking north

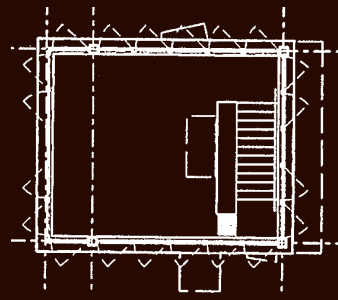
OPPOSITE
skycourt looking west

PAGE 112, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
observation/living area looking northeast; observation/living area looking south; skycourt looking southwest

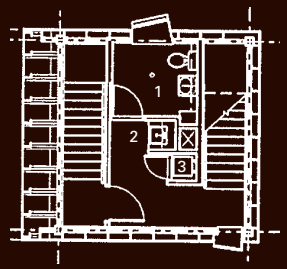
1 BATHROOM
2 KITCHENETTE
3 DUMBWAITER
4 STORAGE



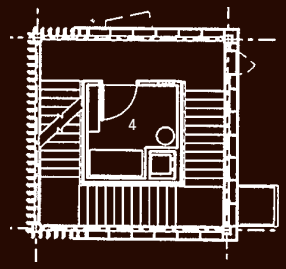
SKYCOURT — LEVEL 6



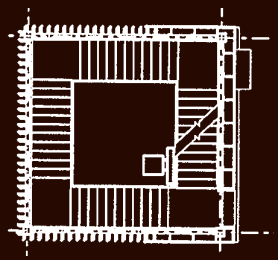
OBSERVATORY — LEVEL 5



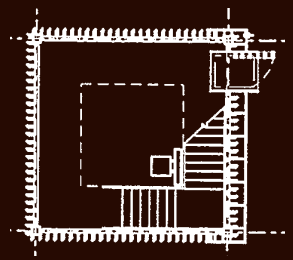
LAVATORY — LEVEL 4



UTILITY ROOM — LEVEL 3



STAIRWELL — LEVEL 2



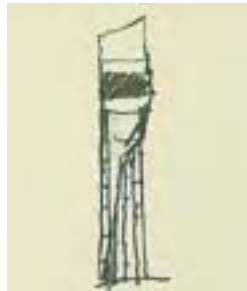
ENTRY — LEVEL 1




ABOVE, FROM LEFT
east elevation; northeast night view;
winter shadow; southwest night view

OPPOSITE
southwest view from Old Wire Road

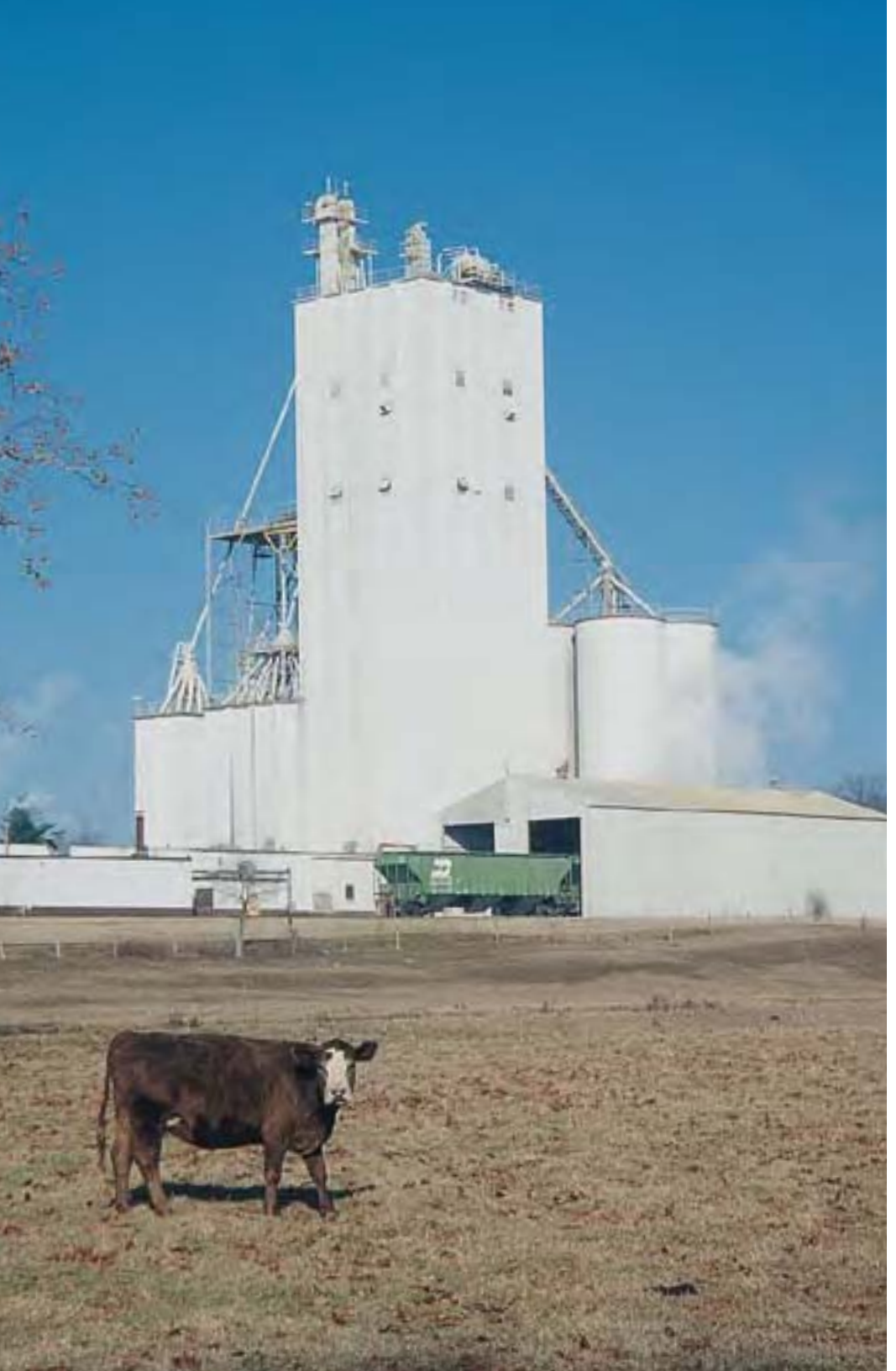
"Oriented on the cardinal points, the TowerHouse intensifies the presence of solar and lunar movements, and of seasonal change."






ABOVE, FROM LEFT
oak-bark detail; north night view;
interior steel-cladding detail;
looking down on stairway

OPPOSITE
southwest oak-fin detail



LEFT
grain elevator, Springdale, Arkansas

OPPOSITE
northeast night view

Arkansas House

Northwest Arkansas
2002–04

As I find it in the memories of my childhood, it isn't a complete building; it has been broken into pieces inside me; a room here, a room there, and then a piece of hallway that doesn't connect these two rooms, but is preserved as a fragment by itself. In this way it is all dispersed inside me.

—Rainer Maria Rilke

ABOVE
design sketch

OPPOSITE
south view of new light monitors

THESE WORDS OF THE POET underscore the significance of experience, meaning, and memory (history) in our relationships with a house. The original Arkansas House was damaged in 2002 due to an electrical fire, and our challenge was to add new elements that acknowledge its past but also opened up possibilities for rethinking and reshaping its spatial character. We had only three weeks to design our interventions and then worked out the details after construction began—one fragment at a time.

The large central space, called the "great room," is naturally lit from all sides and fills the center of the house with light and views to the sky. With the children's spaces at one end of the house and their father's at the other, this room unites the family in one grand social area. At the end of the mezzanine of the great room, a flying wall, a vertical tableau, "floats" in space, the composition of its rusted metal shingles choreographed to the music of Neil Young and The Band.

The concrete block piers that articulated the corners of the previous structure have, over time, settled differently, leaving few

plumb surfaces. Our solution was to float cherry and walnut veneer panels over the pier walls and along the ceiling to form a detached interior skin—a surface that acts as a liner to the exterior clad in weathered steel shingles. There is a quiet resonance between old and new spaces enveloped in the warmth of various woods; they combine for a new material presence that softens their differences.

Comfortably astride the old house, the shell forms empathize, with their rusted steel shingles and their angular shapes, with a rusted barn nearby; the effects of weather and dripping tree sap provide their aged surfaces with a raw and visceral character.

BELOW, FROM TOP
north-south sections;
east-west section

OPPOSITE, FROM TOP
south night view; rusted barn,
Johnson, Arkansas

LEFT
east view of addition at rear

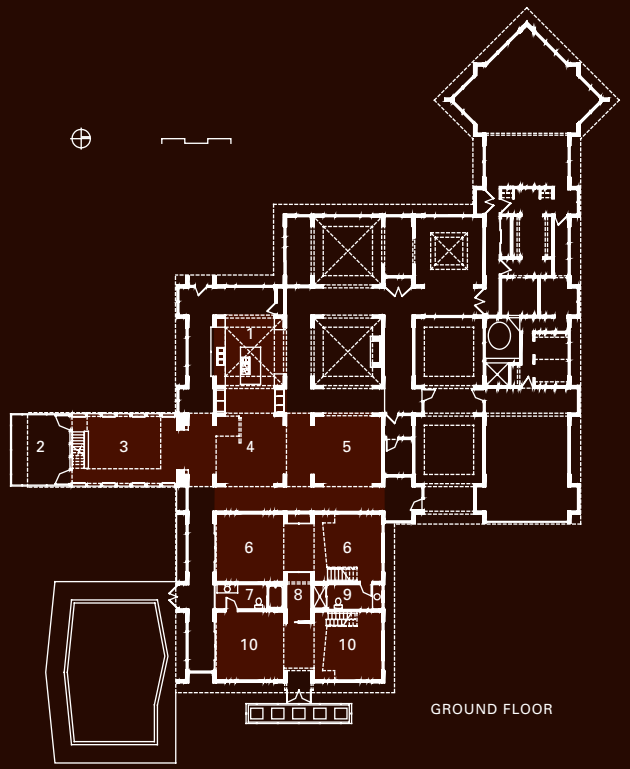
BELOW, FROM LEFT
great-room mezzanine looking south; south view in spring

OPPOSITE
great room

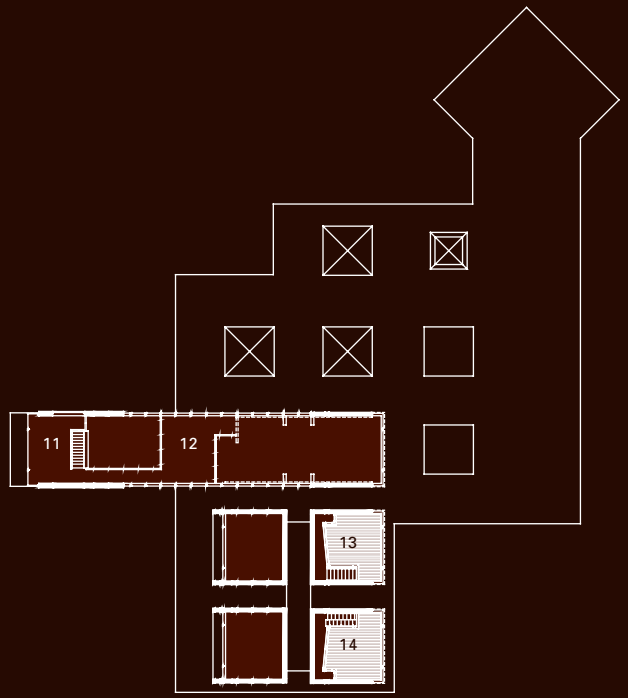
ABOVE
flying-Corten steel wall at great room

RIGHT, FROM TOP
loft at girl's room; kitchen;
loft-stair detail at girl's room

OPPOSITE
floor plans



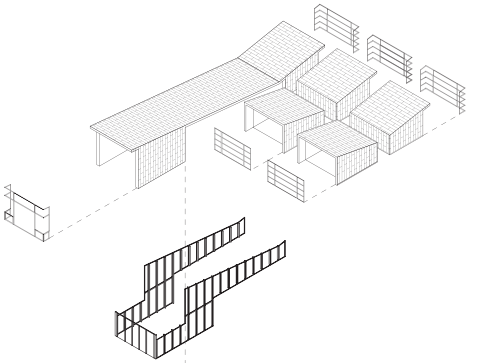
GROUND FLOOR

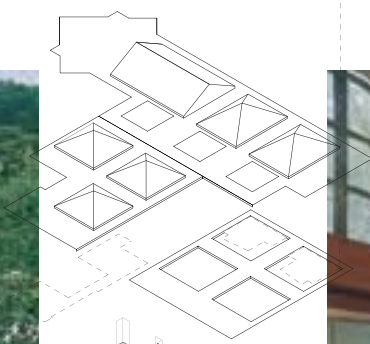


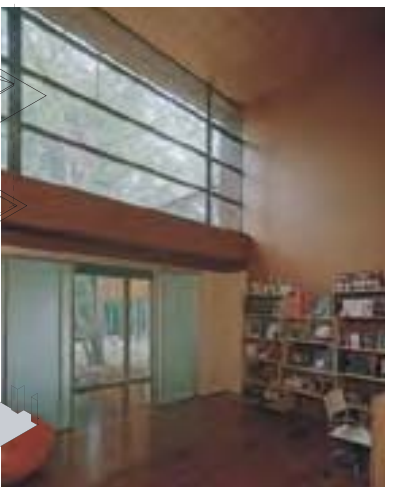
MEZZANINE LOFT

1 KITCHEN
2 COVERED PORCH
3 LIVING AREA
4 SITTING AREA
5 GALLERY
6 BOY'S LIVING AREA
7 GIRL'S BATHROOM
8 CLOSET
9 BOY'S BATHROOM
10 GIRL'S LIVING AREA

11 MEZZANINE
12 LOFT AREA
13 BOY'S BEDROOM
14 GIRL'S BEDROOM





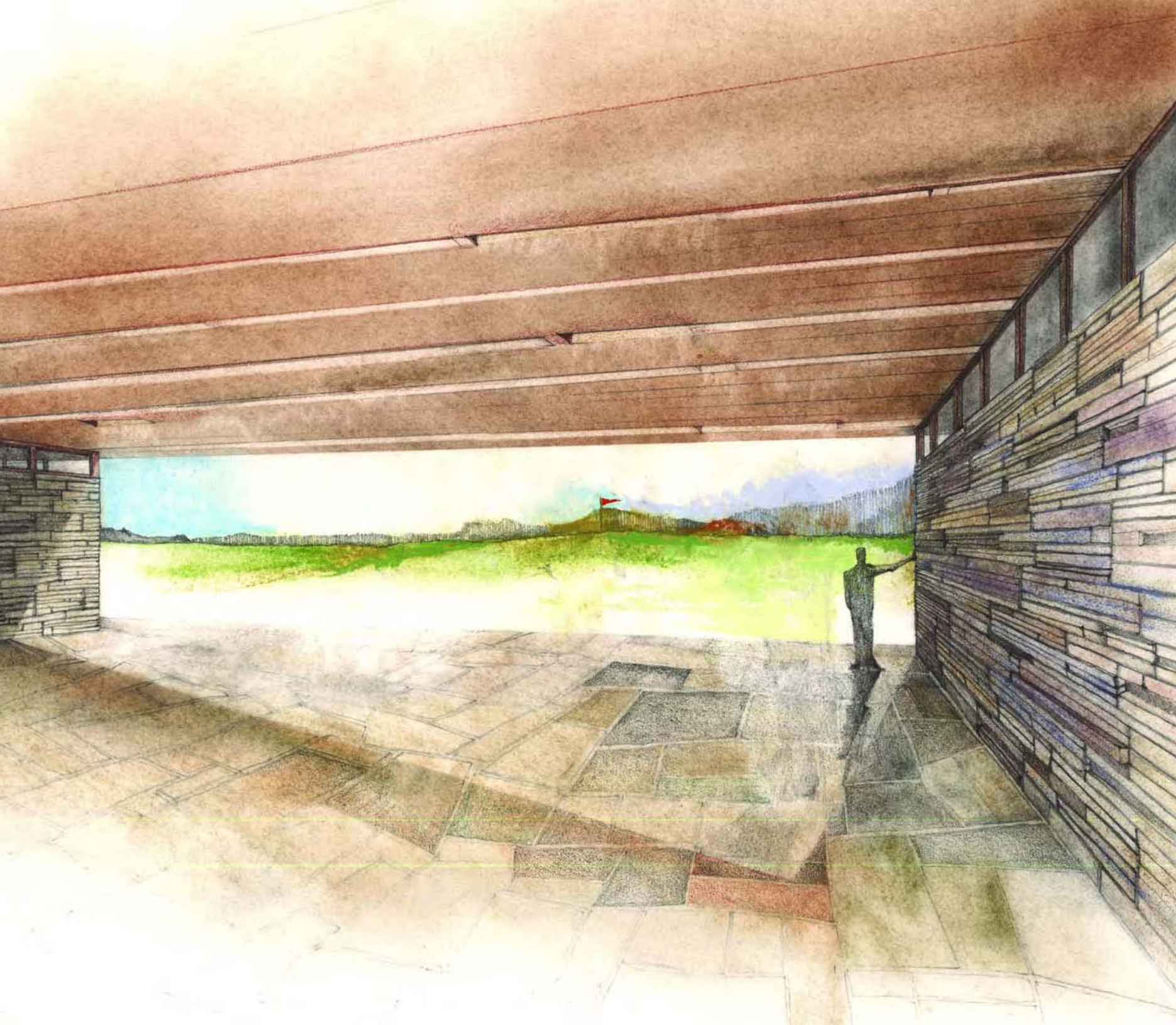


BELOW, FROM LEFT
roofscape view of new light monitors;
exploded axonometric drawing;
boy's living area

OPPOSITE
wall-glass detail


“Out of the ashes, a new structure emerges, a history continues;
the old is transformed in the shadow of the new.”

ABOVE, FROM LEFT northeast view from entry drive; great-room mezzanine looking south; rail detail BELOW, FROM LEFT great-room roof detail; great-room mezzanine looking north; boy's living area looking south OPPOSITE great-room flying-wall view



Blessings Golf Clubhouse
Blessings Guardhouse

Johnson, Arkansas
2002–present

ABOVE
Burns Park, North Little Rock, Arkansas

OPPOSITE
drawing, portal view looking east

THE HILLS AND VALLEYS, and the moments where the two merge, define the Ozarks for us. This juncture is where we chose to build the simple, bar-shaped clubhouse—from a north-facing slope over an Osage Indian archaeological zone to an artificial hill. This bridging of two landforms created an entry portal, a breezeway to the main entrance of the clubhouse, that frames the eighteenth green, acts as a threshold to the golf course beyond, and is an event space for golf tournaments. Aligned with its counterpoint, the Razorback Golf Center to the north, the clubhouse has evolved from its initial concept as a bridge emerging from within the hill to more of a stand-alone structure set at the base of the hill. With its footprint minimally contacting the land, it is, in effect, a covered bridge.

Local dry-stacked stone was used to form a strong mass at the base of the clubhouse and at the edge of the cart storage building wall along the swimming pool. The copper-clad second-story volume sets up views primarily to the golf course through large glass-window walls and porches. Its relationship to its stone base is one of detachment.

The Guardhouse was conceived as a copper-clad beacon to light the vehicle entry and be an iconic figure for the golf community. Its form is a disembodied fragment of a local gambrel-roofed barn. The Guardhouse was relocated to the clubhouse entry, redesigned, and scaled to the size of an automobile.

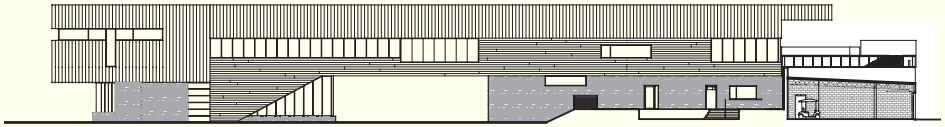
When John Blessing, owner and originator of the golf facilities, first asked us to take part in the design competition for the club, I

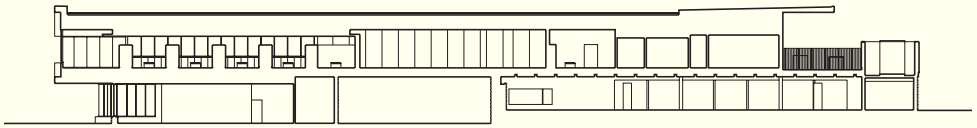
was hesitant, not being a golfer or knowing much about golf. His response was simply "its not just about golf, its about people and space!" As the construction of the clubhouse progresses, I am reminded that no matter the building type, scope, or size, in the words of Rudolf Schindler, "the perception of architecture is not in the eyes, but in the living."

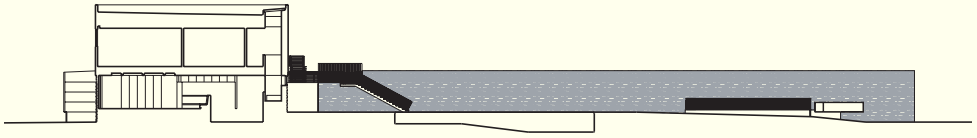
BELOW LEFT, FROM TOP
current clubhouse west elevation;
clubhouse east-west section;
clubhouse north-south section

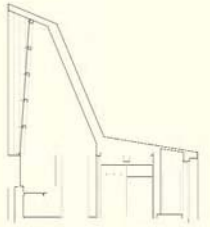
BELOW RIGHT
guardhouse section

OPPOSITE, FROM TOP
competition rendering, initial west view; rendering, guardhouse at clear creek golf community







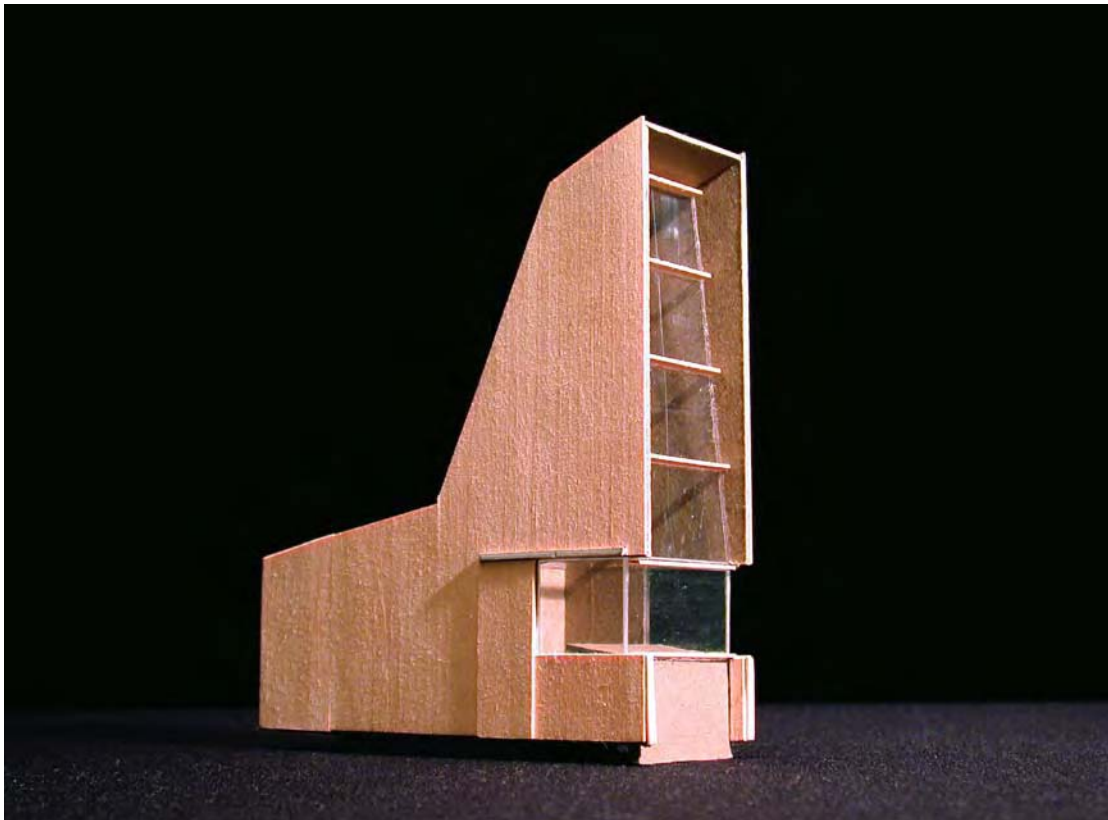


LEFT
competition rendering,
initial site plan

BELOW, FROM LEFT
golf-course restroom structure;
west view of cart-storage
facility and offices

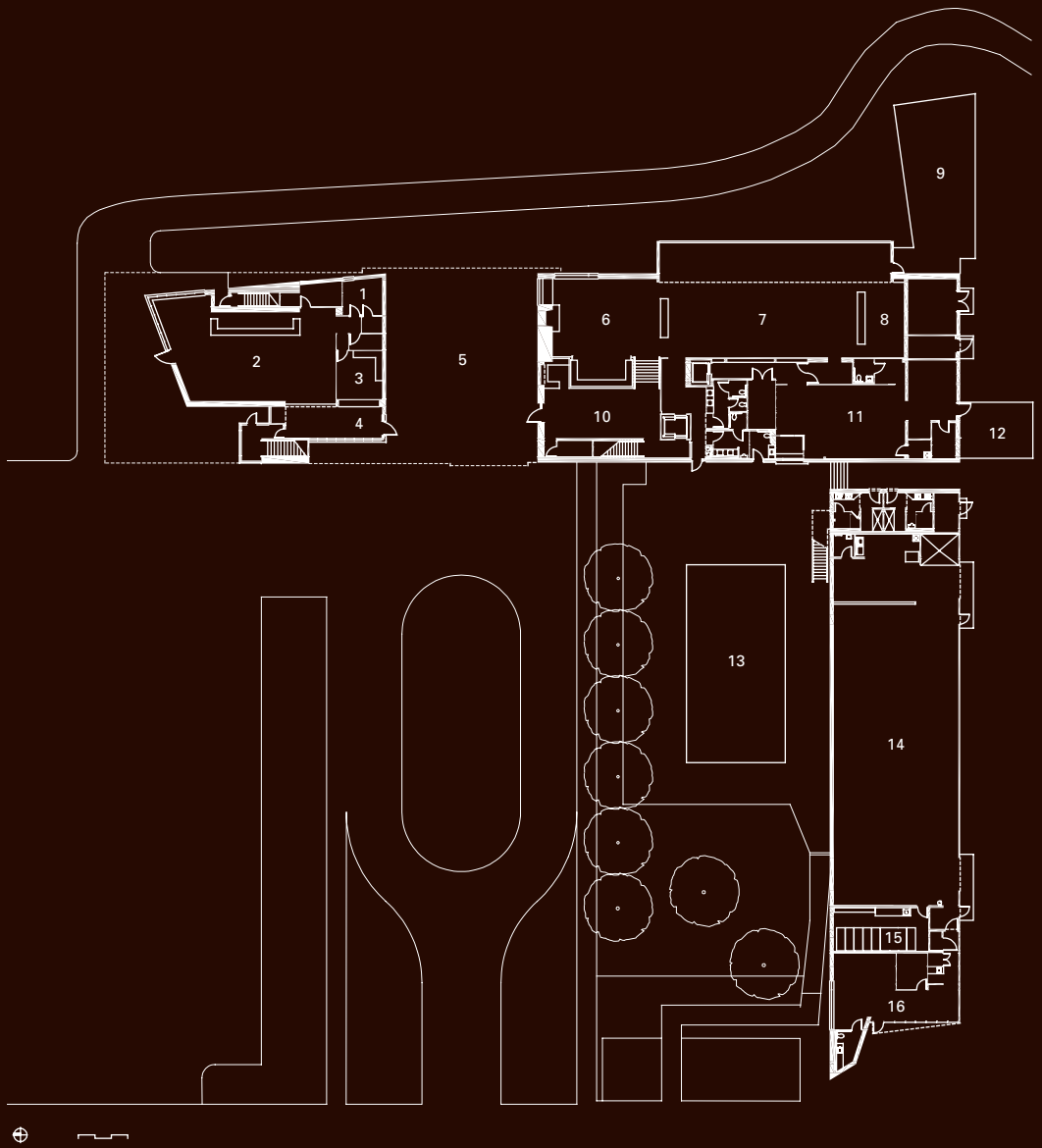
ABOVE, FROM LEFT
barn, Tontitown, Arkansas;
transformation diagram

RIGHT
model, guardhouse

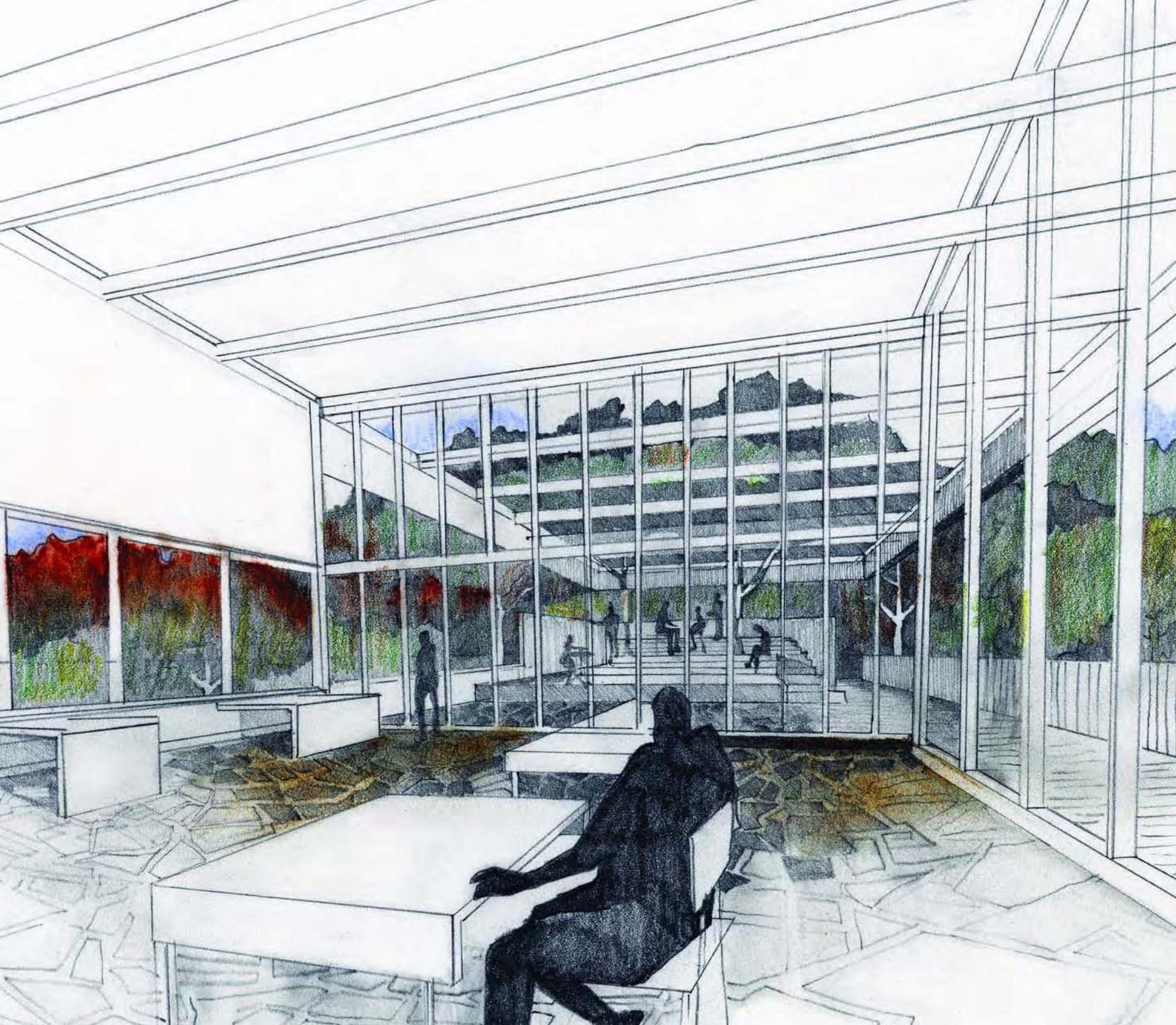


ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
men's sky-lit hot-tub area;
dining room; entry lobby;
men's locker room

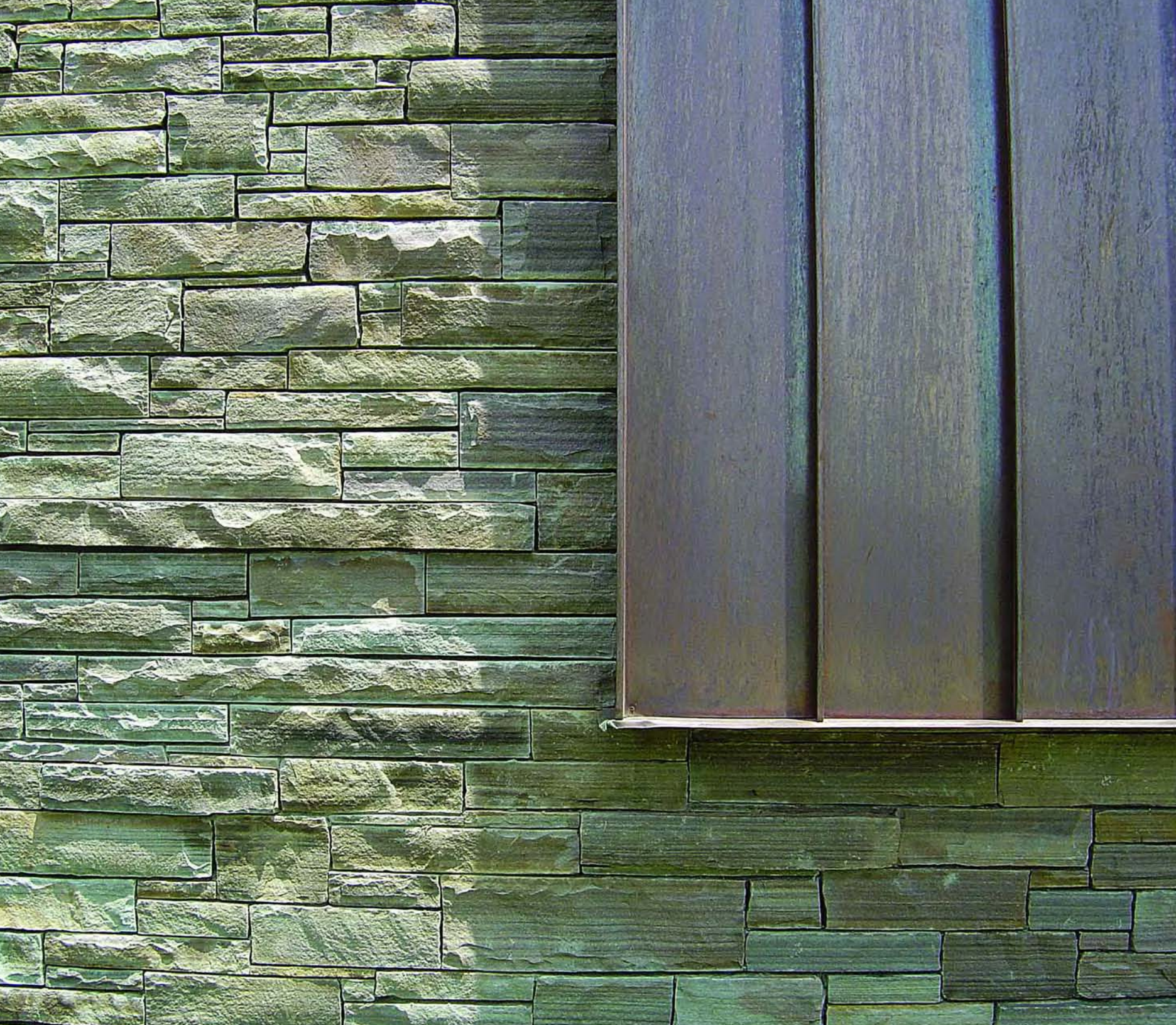
OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT
site plan and ground-floor plan



1 OFFICE
2 PRO SHOP
3 OFFICE
4 ENTRY
5 PORTAL
6 LOUNGE AREA
7 DINING AREA
8 PRIVATE DINING
9 DINING TERRACE
10 FOYER
11 KITCHEN
12 LOADING DOCK
13 POOL
14 GOLF-CART STORAGE
15 GOLF-BAG STORAGE
16 OFFICE




“This structure is an animate form that receives the visitor beneath its
cool and shaded underbelly, not unlike the clefts and caves found nearby.”



Fred and Mary Smith Razorback Golf Center

Johnson, Arkansas
2003–04

ABOVE
farm shed, Johnson, Arkansas

OPPOSITE
copper and stone wall detail, west side

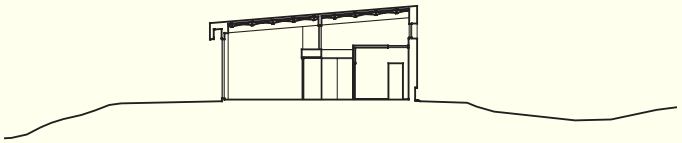
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS RAZORBACK golf team and Blessings Golf Club members share a golf course and a practice facility in the Clear Creek valley. Practice tees and putting greens of plush zoysia grass surround the facility. A series of hitting bays face east to the practice course; sandwiched between the hitting bays is a large meeting room with a glass wall that acts as a lens through which golfers can mentally project their game onto the picturesque course. The activities of the east side, with a greater direct link to the golf course, are appropriately transparent and open. In contrast, the thickened wall or zone of the locker rooms and offices along the west side has a sense of density and weight.

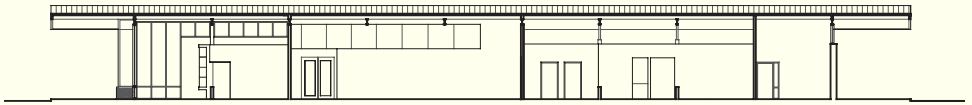
The standing seams of a copper wall, carefully aligned with those of the roof, form a folded shell, an elytron, that extends beyond its stone body as cantilevered wings that shelter terraces at each end of the building. The copper skin loosely wraps the building and provides a sense of imperviousness to the activity around it. Acting as a silent mask, the copper-clad wall conceals the building's internal activities from motorists along the adjacent state highway and also provides a sense of time in the change exhibited by the developing patina of the copper. An orthogonal (box) set against the tree-lined valley, the building's surface is given volume by its minute separation from the stone base beneath. This strategy of disengaging the wall from its base adds an element of mobility, levity, and autonomy to the shell.

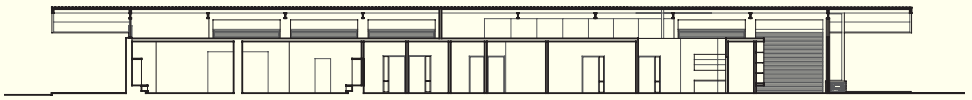
When I first examined the building site, it was late afternoon. Just beyond the long shadows of trees, the west face of a simple metal-clad farm shed glowed in the disappearing sunlight, peacefully poised in the valley. The shed has since been razed, but its qualities, I hope, are found again in its reincarnation.

LEFT, FROM TOP
north-south section;
east-west sections

OPPOSITE, FROM TOP
southwest view; north canopy







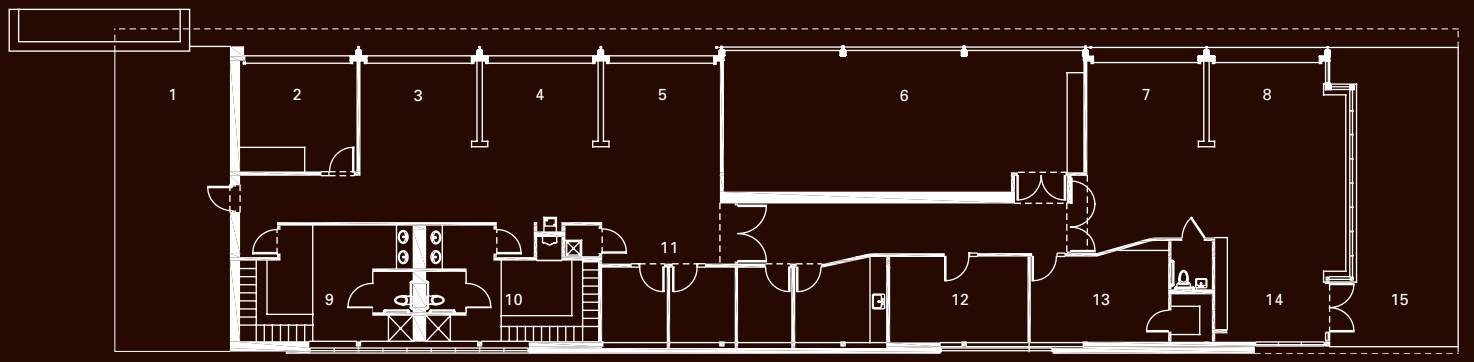
RIGHT
pre-patina copper-wall detail

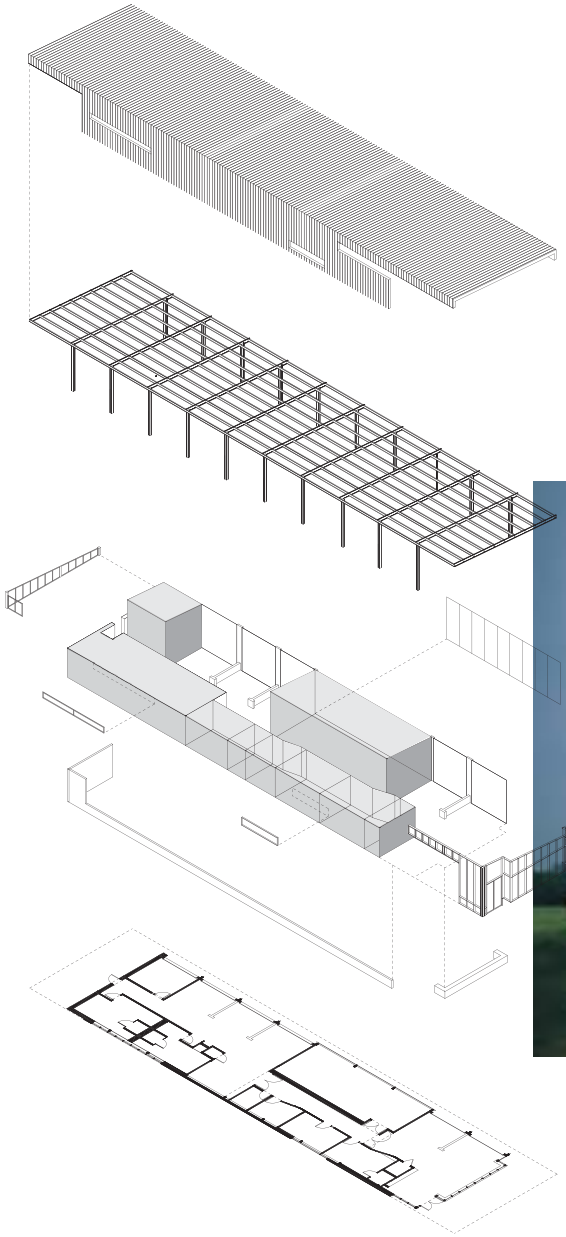
OPPOSITE
southeast view

ABOVE, FROM LEFT
team meeting room; northwest view from clear creek; interior view from offices

OPPOSITE, FROM TOP
site plan and ground-floor plan

1 NORTH TERRACE
2 VIDEO PRACTICE
3 PRACTICE A
4 PRACTICE B
5 PRACTICE C
6 MEETING
7 PRACTICE D
8 PRACTICE E
9 WOMEN’S LOCKER ROOM
10 MEN’S LOCKER ROOM
11 INDOOR PUTTING
12 OFFICE A
13 OFFICE B
14 LOBBY
15 ENTRANCE TERRACE





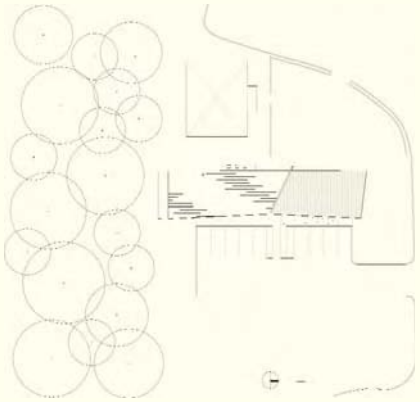
RIGHT
exploded axonometric drawing;
west view from state highway

OPPOSITE
southwest night view

"The Razorback Golf Center transfigures the conventional metal building type, so often used for university sports buildings, by embodying the precision of movement necessary for golf in the meticulous articulation of the formal elements of the structure itself."

Srygley Office Building

Johnson, Arkansas
2003–04



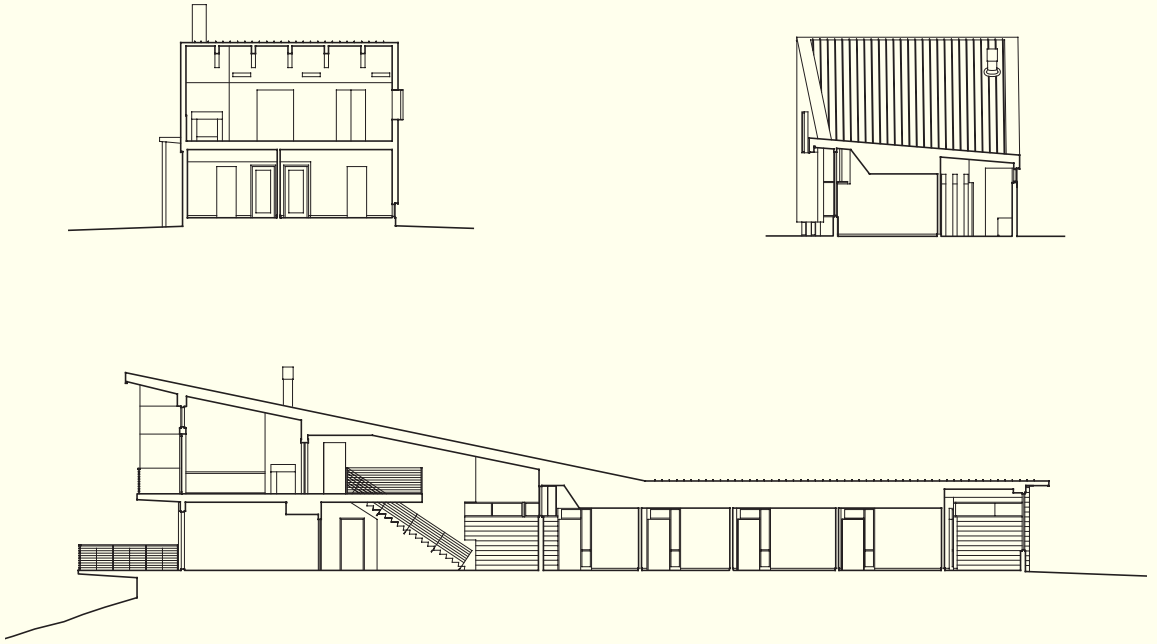
ABOVE
site plan

OPPOSITE
southeast view from creek

MOST OF MY PLACE, my surroundings, has become suburban—filled with space rather than form. The gentrification of farmland is characterized by commercial development and office parks—indistinguishable from nearby gated communities—and consists of clusters of office "homes" arranged in a neighborly way. Banal, hermetically sealed, unresponsive to the land, and asserting notions of utility with little finesse, these buildings are pervasive in the built environment—the space of the everyday.

Situated in a small office park, the Srygley Office Building consciously ignores (with the owner's support) much of the given covenants of commercial architecture and the prevailing orientation—front facade to the street—of other offices. Stretching north and south, the building's masonry base is inflected at the center of its east elevation to provide a "slipped entry," for access between an angled, sandblasted concrete-block wall and a metal-clad shell—an industrial exoskeleton that acts simultaneously as wall and roof.

A central lobby space conjoins a one-story level of offices and work zone with a two-story area of spaces dedicated to personal activities—exercising, smoking cigars, tasting wine, and cooking. The convergence of these two interior areas is manifested at the exterior with a folded roof—actually two roofs pitching in different directions that unite to invigorate the building's profile and expression. The upstairs cigar room, enveloped in walnut panels and flooring, extends through a folding glass wall onto a shaded deck. This is an exterior room, with the foliage of trees filling in and completing its open side. At the south end of the building, rooms open out to decks with views to a creek below and are screened from the



nearby shopping mall by local oaks and sycamores that line the creek banks.

Under construction at the time of this writing, this building is presented, like others in this book, in support of place-specific architectural form and is set in opposition to the inexorable standardization of most contemporary construction . . . and ideas.

ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
north-south sections;
east-west section

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
northeast view; front entrance;
northwest view

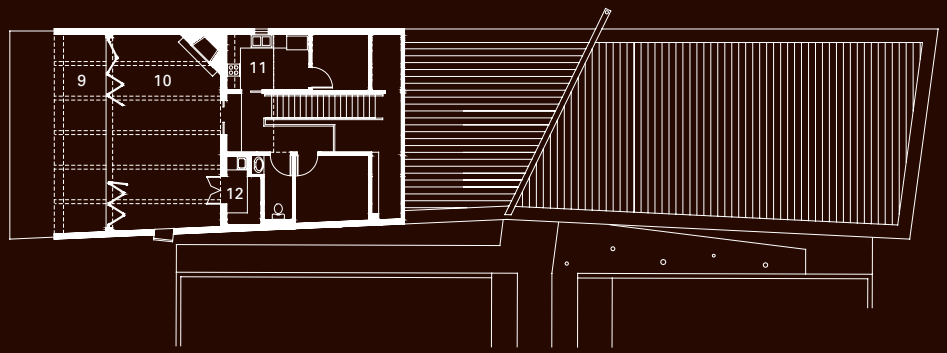
ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
office; telemarketing room;
lobby; cigar room

OPPOSITE
southwest view of terrace

LEFT
lobby and reception area

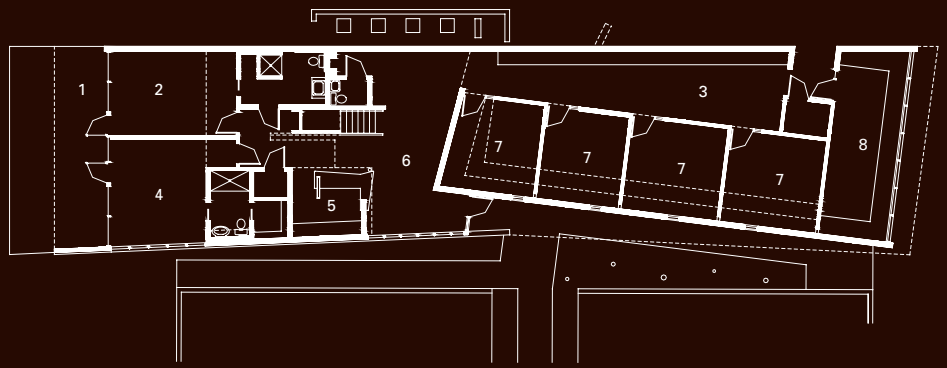
BELOW, FROM LEFT
workspace; view of lobby
and office from second floor

OPPOSITE
floor plans



SECOND FLOOR

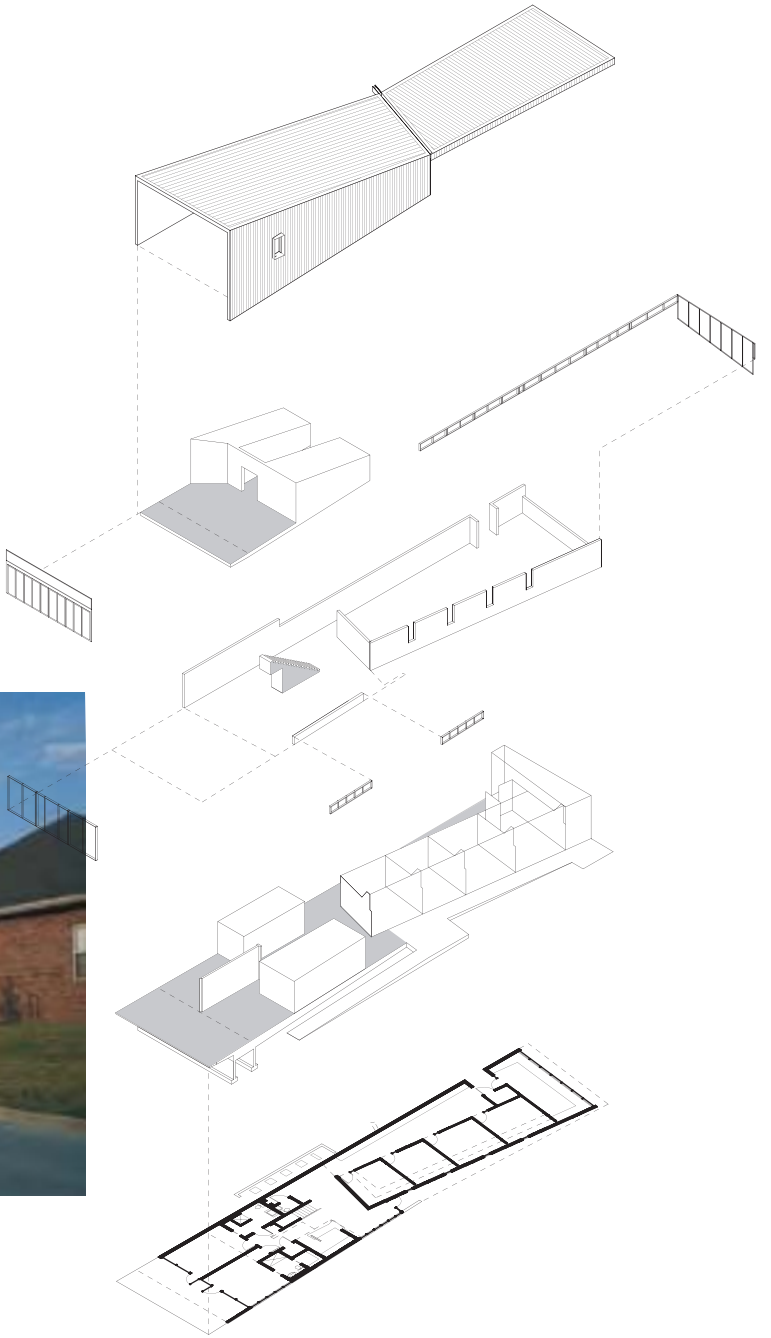
1 CANTILEVERED DECK
2 EXERCISE ROOM
3 WORKSPACE
4 CEO OFFICE
5 RECEPTION
6 LOBBY
7 OFFICE
8 TELEMARKETING ROOM
9 EXTERIOR DECK
10 CIGAR ROOM
11 KITCHEN
12 WINE STORAGE



GROUND FLOOR

BELOW, FROM LEFT
view from entrance drive into Shelby Square office park; exploded axonometric drawing

OPPOSITE
cigar room



"An open challenge to what a suburban office building can be, the Srygley Office Building proposes an alternate possibility."

Afterword

Architecture has no absolute value in itself—
it is only the making of a streambed,
the stream itself is the main thing.

—Aulis Blomstedt, Architect-Designer

I HAVE DIFFICULTY idealizing the world, difficulty with utopias, manifestos, covenants and unending -isms about how things (architecture) ought to be and the dogma that comes with such thinking. In reality architecture doesn't happen very often and when it does it is usually controversial. We live in a largely pixilated world, one of multicolored tonality with a multiple value range—laying between the simplified duality of black and white, paradoxical and incongruent, with no absolute value, that we are so often presented with by society and its so-called leaders. We are complicit in our attempts to resolve one to the other by privileging one over the other. An attempt to operate between dualities, with resonance, seeks no such resolve and so I choose to work—to build:

- between things born and things made
- between the world as we find it (being) and the world as it is given (circumstance)
- between local traditions and globally emerging traditions (con-traditions?)
- between orders of the land: the mathematical (rational) and the pastoral (picturesque)
- between the ideal and the improvised

I work from a conviction that architecture is larger than the subject of architecture. I try to look at the world with a wide-angle

microscopic lens to generate ideas and actions from concrete experiences of the everyday that form the basis of inspiration and potential for making. Passionately and patiently within my place, the place of the everyday, I am focused on the task most fundamental to building well—the crafting of light, material, and space. Here the physical presence of architecture is understood as craft, a work of the hand as much as the mind, and the stature of the tactile is elevated to (at least) that of the visual and compositional. We experience in this tactility the sort of nuance that is similar to what we read in the expressive character of the human face—surface and form as a visage with a visceral presence that is read in a visceral way. It is embraced by this experience, and the forces of nature are imprinted upon it, especially through light and shadow. . . in the way of Aalto and Kahn in the best of their work. Rich and complex, the qualities and densities characteristic of architecture achieved in construction and with the passage of time demand of us our complete engagement with its material presence; no privileging of an idea or the experience of an idea—just experience itself.

Leonardo da Vinci spoke directly to working from one's place, one's day-to-day observations of the real, when he said, "It should not be so difficult for you to look into the ashes of a fire, or stains of a wall, or clouds, or mud, or like places in which you may find really marvelous ideas." With each project that is what I try to do—to find truly marvelous ideas out of the muck of my own condition.

The last three years have been an enlightening and strangely wonderful period of transition, from sole proprietor to having a full-time staff and an office larger than my spare bedroom. Located on the downtown square of Fayetteville, the office is constantly abuzz as we bounce ideas around, debate and question strategies, and solve the problems that inherently arise as projects move from the level of conceptualization to the level of realization.

In turn, we are now able to take on projects, in addition to those of a residential scale, that are larger and more public in nature. We welcome these opportunities as they allow us the possibility to further engage cultural and economic forces, real and imagined, that are largely left unchallenged and untouched by the deepest and most ennobling possibilities that the broad realm of architecture has to offer.

It is my hope the designs and projects presented here challenge the conventions and models that often blind us to other possibilities. Hopefully we've demonstrated that architecture can happen anywhere, that there is humor and inspiration and dignity in the world as it is given to us. Heidegger said it best—"We don't want to get anywhere, we just want to get to where we already are." I look forward to the present.

Acknowledgments

OUR CHARACTER AND SENSIBILITIES are shaped by our experiences of being in the world—where we've been, who we've met, what we feel, how we've learned—makes us who we are. It is an expansive venture.

I often feel I have worked all my life; I have worked at a variety of jobs—paperboy, yard worker, store clerk, day laborer, disc jockey, Bible salesman, and furniture salesman. Each job provided me with a rich and unique set of experiences, a plethora of tales and stories and lessons in living. In a strange way they have all contributed to and shaped my view of things and situations as an architect. Likewise, the people I have had the privilege of meeting over the years, and in some cases developing meaningful relationships with, have given me insight about the particularities of life and the endless possibilities for the search that is conducted inward.

I was blessed early on with very supportive parents, Othella and William, who constantly encouraged me in my education and aspirations to accomplish something larger than myself. My greatest accomplishment is my relationship with my wife and partner, Ati, and our two children, Zain and Iman. Their love and support provide countenance and perspective no matter the nature of successes or failures I am presented with each day.

As an undergraduate at Auburn University I was an often difficult, immature, and resistive architecture student; fortunately I had good teachers who constantly challenged me and urged me to question, "how might it be otherwise?"—in particular Bill Gwin, Bob Faust, Nick Davis, and Stefan Doerstling. Ten years later at the graduate program with Syracuse in Florence, Italy, two very special critics, Mark Shapiro and Thomas Schumacher, opened up the world of international design and history for me.

Teaching has been critical to my pursuit of knowing why we do what we do, and essential to my practice of architecture. I deeply

appreciate the teaching opportunities extended to me by Dan Bennett, former dean at the University of Arkansas, Jeff Shannon, current dean and, program chair, Stanford Anderson at MIT, Neville Clouten, former dean at Lawrence Tech University, Bruce Abbey, former dean of the School of Architecture at Syracuse University, and Dean Cynthia Weese at Washington University in St. Louis. Teaching with Peter Eisenman and the elusive Chris Risher of Mississippi has given me a lifetime of experiences. They are the teacher's teachers and were kind enough to allow me a view into their world; Peter always underscoring the importance of *knowing enough to know that you don't know* and Chris urging me to stay put and discover what lies beneath your feet. Having good colleagues, Tim de Noble, Ted Krueger, Yume and Russell Rudzinski, Julie Snow, Ed Blake, Patricia Kucker, John Humphries, Kory Smith, Tahar Messadi, Sanford Kwinter, Chris Calott, Scott Wing, John Forney, David Murphree, Stephen Perella, and Ethel Goodstein here in Arkansas to teach studio with over the last twelve years has made teaching all the more rewarding.

There have been so many good professional colleagues I've come to know, some only briefly, that it is hard to know where to begin. Between 1993 and 1995, as lecture chairman at Arkansas, I invited, among others, the artist Robert Irwin, Swiss architects Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, and Peter Zumthor, and the author and music critic, Greil Marcus to speak here. Though I spent collectively no more than mere days with these folks—the insights and experience of interacting with them have been immeasurable.

In recent years I had the pleasure of getting to know and being inspired by the late Sam Mockbee, and to come to develop a comradery with other architects working in the margins—Wendell Burnette, Coleman Coker, Rand Elliott, Frank Harmon, Rick Joy, Brian MacKay-Lyons (the material culture dude), Dan Rockhill, and Michael Rotondi. A very special thanks goes to my friend and mentor the late Fay Jones whose humanity and great works have demonstrated the poignancy possible with a life in architecture.

I strongly believe that architecture must be felt as well as understood. There is no substitute for a phenomenal engagement with a work of architecture. Sharing the work with others demands that we use other means of evocation—in particular, photographs and publications. The resolute abilities of photographers Tim Hursley, Richard Johnson, and Kevin Latady portray the spirit of each project through images in light. I am also very grateful to Robert Ivy, editor of *Architectural Record*, for his commitment to publishing the works of architects he describes as working "outside the centers of fashion." Many thanks especially to Linda Lee and Brett Yasko for their pleasant persistence and creative direction in getting this book fit to print.

I am filled with gratitude for the generous and critical words provided by Dan Hoffman and Juhani Pallasmaa, friends whose works and writings I've long admired and who have given me hope for the future of architecture. David Buege has been my program director, colleague, mentor, and, most importantly, a good friend and confidant who has given direction and honesty toward my ongoing evolution.

Many thanks for the hard, loving work and dedication my staff brings to each project—I am honored by their efforts. Over the last several years this includes Chris Baribeau, Gail Shepard, Scott Scales, Tony Patterson, Julie Chambers, Yume Rudzinski, Matthew Griffith, Jose Ribera, Bret Flory, and Chris Brown.

Without clients who trust you with their resources and hopes, without builders and engineers who are willing to use their skills and creativity in realizing your design intentions, none of what has been realized would be of any consequence. I am deeply indebted to the clients, builders, and engineers who have worked with us to enrich the experience of the everyday through architecture.

Marlon Blackwell
Fayetteville, Arkansas
July 2004

Project Credits

June Moore House
Cashiers, North Carolina
1988–90

SITE AREA: .85 acres
BUILDING AREA: 2,300 sf
CLIENT: June Moore
PROJECT TEAM: Marlon Blackwell
Kent Duckham, Chuck Rotolo, Tim Mulavey
ENGINEER: John Looney, Structural Engineer
GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Cashiers Valley Construction
PRIMARY MATERIALS: (exterior) ribbon-cut marine-grade mahogany plywood, ribbed-tin roof, CMU block; (interior) pine floors, douglas-fir framing and trim, gypsum board
DESIGN AWARDS: 1991 *Architectural Record*, Record Homes Excellence in Design Award; 1991 *Southern Living Magazine*, Home of the Year Award
PHOTOGRAPHER: Kevin Latady

BarnHouse
Wedington, Arkansas
1992–94

SITE AREA: 8 acres
BUILDING AREA: garage/stables: 3,024 sf; second-floor living: 1,200 sf
CLIENT: George Schmitt
PROJECT TEAM: Marlon Blackwell
ENGINEER: Joe Looney, Structural Engineer
GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Tubb Robinson
PRIMARY MATERIALS: (exterior) douglas-fir framing and plywood, ribbed galvalume siding, sandblasted concrete block; (interior) OSB plywood, fir trim and deck, white-oak millwork
DESIGN AWARDS: 1999 Gulf States Regional AIA Design Merit Award; 1998 Arkansas AIA Design Honor Award
PHOTOGRAPHER: Richard Johnson

2Square House (Farah Residence)
Fayetteville, Arkansas
1997–98

SITE AREA: .25 acre
BUILDING AREA: living: 2,545 sf; garage: 529 sf; decks: 600 sf
CLIENT: Montez and Mounir Farah
PROJECT TEAM: Marlon Blackwell
Jason Ward, Meryati Johari-Blackwell
ENGINEER: Joe Looney, Structural Engineer
BUILDER: Montez Farah and Marlon Blackwell
PRIMARY MATERIALS: (exterior) painted superply plywood, redwood battens, trim, and deck, painted steel rails, architectural shingle roof; (interior) white-oak floors, limestone tiles, painted wood trim, gypsum board, maple millwork
DESIGN AWARDS: 2000 Arkansas AIA Design Merit Award
PHOTOGRAPHER: Richard Johnson

Prototypes:
Roadside Houses for the New American Landscape

BullFrog House (1992)
DragonFly House (1994)
HouseBoat-BoatHouse (1995)

PROJECT TEAM: Marlon Blackwell, Aaron Young

Moore HoneyHouse
Cashiers, North Carolina
1998

SITE AREA: 1 acre
BUILDING AREA: HoneyHouse: 192 sf; carport: 288 sf
CLIENT: June Moore
PROJECT TEAM: Marlon Blackwell
Meryati Johari Blackwell, Dianne Meek, Phil Hadfield
ENGINEER: Joe Looney, Structural Engineer
GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Razorback Ironworks + Pat Meek
PRIMARY MATERIALS: (interior/exterior) steel tube and plate, glass, tongue-and-groove pine boards, concrete block, ribbed galvalume roof
DESIGN AWARDS: 2002 *Architectural Review*, ar+d Design Awards, prizewinner; 2000 Gulf States Regional AIA Design Honor Award; 1999 Arkansas AIA Design Honor Award
PHOTOGRAPHER: Richard Johnson

Keenan TowerHouse
Fayetteville, Arkansas
1997–2000

SITE AREA: 57 acres
BUILDING AREA: volume: 21,015 cf; living: 560 sf; skycourt: 320 sf
CLIENT: James Keenan
PROJECT TEAM: Marlon Blackwell
Meryati Johari Blackwell, Dianne Meek, Phil Hadfield
ENGINEER: Joe Looney, Structural Engineer
GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Razorback Ironworks + Pizzini + Don Lourie
PRIMARY MATERIALS: (exterior) horizontal standing-seam siding, white-oak fins, battens, and deck, pecan shells, creek stone, river stone, steel stairs, rails, and windows; (interior) white-oak floors and trim, ceramic tile, gypsum board, maple millwork
DESIGN AWARDS: 2001 Arkansas State AIA Design Honor Award; 2001 Gulf States Regional AIA Design Honor Award
PHOTOGRAPHERS: Richard Johnson and Timothy Hursley

Arkansas House
Northwest Arkansas
2002–04

BUILDING AREA: existing house: 6,400 sf; existing garage: 530 sf; new additions: 2,050 sf
CLIENT: Name Withheld
PROJECT TEAM: Marlon Blackwell
Yume Rudzinski (project manager), Tony Patterson, Chris Baribeau, Matthew Griffith, Jon Boelkins
INTERIORS: AntePrima + Meredith Boswell
ENGINEERS: Jim Gore, Structural Engineer; Tim Geary and Associates, Mechanical Engineers
GENERAL CONTRACTOR: JW Enterprises (Jim Williams)
PRIMARY MATERIALS: (exterior) weathered steel shingles, steel windows, Brazilian-walnut deck; (interior) walnut and cherry floors, walnut and cherry veneer plywood, glass tiles, cherry millwork
PHOTOGRAPHER: Tim Hursley

Blessings Golf Clubhouse
Blessings Guardhouse
Johnson, Arkansas
2002–present

BUILDING AREA: clubhouse: 21,700 sf; cartbarn: 6,500 sf; guardhouse: 192 sf
CLIENT: Name Withheld
PROJECT TEAM: Marlon Blackwell
Gail Shepard, Meryati Johari-Blackwell, Tony Patterson, Chris Baribeau, Scott Scales, Julie Chambers, Chuck Rotolo, Herb Crumpton, Jose Ribera, Matthew Griffith

INTERIORS: Meredith Boswell
ENGINEERS: Tatum Structural Engineers; Hathaway Symonds Archer, Mechanical Engineers; CEI Civil Engineers
GENERAL CONTRACTOR: May Construction + David Swain + Johnny Brewer
PRIMARY MATERIALS: (exterior) dry stacked stone veneer, copper cladding, aluminum windows; (interior) walnut and cherry floors, carpet, walnut and cherry veneer plywood, ceramic tile, cherry millwork

Fred and Mary Smith Razorback Golf Center
Johnson, Arkansas
2003–04

BUILDING AREA: 5,000 sf
CLIENT: University of Arkansas
PROJECT TEAM: Marlon Blackwell
Meryati Johari-Blackwell, Tony Patterson, Herb Crumpton, Bret Flory, Matthew Griffith, Chris Baribeau
ENGINEERS: Butch Green, Structural Engineer; Tim Geary and Associates, Mechanical Engineers
SPECIFICATIONS: Specifications Consultants, Inc.
BUILDER: Kinco Constructors, LLC (Andrew Mincks, A. J. Wiles)
PRIMARY MATERIALS: (exterior) dry stacked stone veneer, standing-seam copper siding and roof, aluminum windows; (interior) stained concrete floor, carpet, gypsum board, exposed steel structure, cherry millwork
PHOTOGRAPHER: Tim Hursley

Srygley Office Building
Johnson, Arkansas
2003–04

SITE AREA: .75 acres
BUILDING AREA: main building: 4,000 sf; porches: 635 sf
CLIENT: Bob Srygley
PROJECT TEAM: Marlon Blackwell
Gail Shepard (project manager), Meryati Johari-Blackwell, Bret Flory, Julie Chambers, Chris Baribeau, Matthew Griffith
ENGINEERS: Butch Green, Structural Engineer; Tim Geary and Associates, Mechanical Engineers
CONTRACTORS: EWI Constructors, Inc.
PRIMARY MATERIALS: (exterior) ribbed white metal siding, white standing-seam roof, sandblasted-concrete block, aluminum windows, nana wall system; (interior) stained concrete floor, carpet, walnut flooring, ceramic tile, gypsum board, burnished concrete block, walnut veneer plywood and trim
PHOTOGRAPHER: Tim Hursley

Biography

1956–1973

Born in Furstenfeldbruk, Germany, on November 7

Grew up near air force bases in the Philippines, Alabama, Florida, Colorado, and Montana

Was a high school wrestler, who unsuccessfully wrestled a bear

1974–1980

Studied architecture at Auburn University

Traveled and studied in Mexico and Guatemala

Selected as one of Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities

Worked in the rural South as a Bible salesman for five summers, for the Thomas Nelson Publishing Co., and was a top-twenty salesman each year

1981–1985

Moved to Lafayette, Louisiana

Worked in the offices of Corne, Sellers and Associates, Architects/Engineers; Lindrea Howe and Associates, Architects/Planners; and Landry and Associates, Architects

Worked as a dance club disc jockey and Scandinavian-furniture salesman

Lived with a pit-bull terrier named Bogart

Built first private commissions, the Main Stop Convenience Store and the Bryant Chiropractic Clinic, in New Iberia, Louisiana

1985–1990

Moved to Boston, Massachusetts

Worked in the offices of CBT Architects, Graham Gund Architects, Inc., and Payette Associates

Became registered architect

Received the Louisiana AIA Design Honor Award—the Bryant Clinic

Was a Massachusetts Artist Foundation Award finalist—the Audesse Formal Garden House

Lectured at the University of Miami and Oasis Artists Studio in Boston

Met Meryati Johari in Miami

1990–1992

Moved to Florence, Italy, as a graduate student in the Syracuse University MArch II Program

Traveled throughout Switzerland, Belgium, France, Spain, Germany, Netherlands, Austria, and the Czech Republic documenting modern and classic architecture

Accepted the *Architectural Record* House Award as well as the *Southern Living* Home of the Year Award—the June Moore House

Acted as visiting professor at Syracuse University

1992–1994

Moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas

Accepted a position as assistant professor at the University of Arkansas

Led students on an architectural study tour to Guatemala

Co-founded the University of Arkansas Mexico Summer Urban Studio

Lectured at Miami Design Alliance and Ft. Smith AIA Convention

Married Meryati Johari in Malaysia

1995–1996

Selected by national jury as one of 40 top designers under 40 years old

Lectured at Miami Design Alliance and Arkansas State AIA Convention

Led students on an architectural study tour to Peru

Married Meryati Johari in Bartlesville, Oklahoma

1997–1998

Co-taught design studios with Peter Eisenman

Led students on and architectural study tour to Macchu Picchu via the Inca trail

Promoted with tenure to associate professor

Presented with the Architectural League of New York Emerging Voices Award

Visited Yemen as a Malone Fellow with the National Council on U.S.–Arab Relations

Lectured at the University of Tennessee, Tulsa AIA, Arkansas State AIA, and the Architectural League of New York

Led students on a three-week architectural study tour to Yemen

Received the Arkansas AIA Design Honor Award—the Cozart Office Building and the BarnHouse

1999–2000

Son, Zain, was born

Lectured at the Rural Studio in Alabama, Kansas State University, University of Kansas, Dalhousie University, University of Michigan, and Monterrey Tec in Queretaro, Mexico

Co-taught design studio with Chris Risher and Ed Blake

Received the Arkansas AIA Design Honor Award and Gulf States Regional AIA Design Honor Award—the Moore HoneyHouse and the Terminella Office Building

Accepted the Gulf States Regional AIA Design Honor Award—the Cozart Office Building and the BarnHouse

Presented with the Arkansas AIA Design Merit Award—the 2Square House (Farah Residence)

2001

Acted as visiting professor at MIT

Daughter, Iman, was born

Sold his Alfa Romeo Spider and bought a minivan

Lectured at MIT, North Carolina State, Harvard GSD Career Discovery, Arizona State University, Dallas Architectural Forum, University of Maryland, and Tulane University

Moved office to Fayetteville downtown square

Received the Arkansas State AIA Design Merit Award—Masons on the Square, 16 West Center St. Loft (unbuilt), Tyson-Combs Gun Club (unbuilt)

Given the Arkansas State AIA Design Honor Award and Gulf States Regional AIA Design Honor Award—the Keenan TowerHouse

2002

Acted as visiting professor at MIT and Lawrence Tech University

Lectured at Auburn University, Mississippi State University, Louisiana State University, Washington University in St. Louis, Louisiana Tech University, and Cornell University

Selected as prizewinner for *Architectural Review* ar+d Design Award—the Moore HoneyHouse

2003–2004

Appointed Ruth and Norman Moore visiting professor at Washington University in St. Louis

Co-taught design studio with Julie Snow and Yume Rudzinski

Was a Bruce Goff Visiting Critic at the University of Oklahoma

Exhibited Keenan TowerHouse at Rockhurst University Green Lease Gallery in Kansas City

Lectured at Royal Institute for British Architects, University of Oklahoma, Clemson University, Alabama State AIA, University of Texas at Arlington, University of Texas at San Antonio, University of Colorado, University of South Florida, RomaTre University, Rome, Italy, and the Kansas City AIA

List of Associates

1987–2004

Meryati Johari-Blackwell
Yume Rudzinski
Gail Shepard
Julie Chambers
Chris Baribeau
Scott Scales
Tony Patterson
Jose Ribera
Herb Crumpton
Stuart Fulbright
Matthew Griffith
Chuck Rotolo
Bret Flory
Chris Brown
Jon Boelkins
Jena Rimkus
Zach Cooley
Valentina Gagliano
Jorge Ribera
Josh Siebert
Cary Blackwelder-Plair
Katie Bennett
Jason Wright
Jim Foster
Arch Trulock
Phil Hadfield
Dianne Meek
Jason Ward
Jay Dickerson
Aaron Young
Tim Mulavey
Kent Duckham
Jim Heroux

OPPOSITE
Marlon Blackwell Architect
associates at War Eagle Bridge,
northwest Arkansas

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2004

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2003

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2002

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2001

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2000

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1998

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1996

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1995

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1991

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1989

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Baribeau, Chris M.: 2, 6–7, 8, 26 far right, 38 row 5 third from right, 57 top left, 174
Baribeau, Chris M. and Scott A. Scales: 11, 191
Baribeau, Chris M. and Laura Terry: 136
Bennett, Katie and Jason Wright: 96 right
Buege, David: 16 second from right, 38 row 1 third from right
Burnette, Wendell: 192
Columbia River Bar Pilots: 89 top center
Dadant & Sons, Inc.: 92, 102
Dixon, Willard: 53
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Johnson, Richard: 5, 21 top left, 21 top right, 26 second from left, 26 second from right, 27 second from left, 27 second from right, 27 far right, 32, 37 far right, 38 row 1 second from left, 38 row 1 second from right, 38 row 2 far right, 38 row 3 third from right, 38 row 4 second from right, 38 row 6 far left, 38 row 6 far right, 52, 55 top, 56, 57 bottom, 58, 60–64, 67–70, 72–75, 90, 93 top, 93 bottom left, 94, 95, 96 left, 97, 98, 100, 101, 103–5, 109 bottom, 110 bottom row, 112 bottom right, 114, 117 top, 118 second from left, 118 second from right, 118 far right, 119, 121
Latady, Kevin: 34, 37 far left, 37 second from left, 40, 43, 44 top, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50 right, 51
LeClere, Jeff: 81 bottom left
On, Otto: 38 row 1 third from left
Patterson, Tony: 20 right, 140 top
Patterson, Tony and Laura Terry: 38 row 4 third from right, 139 top, 144
Rajs, Jake: 15 right
Ridlon, Adam: 137
Scales, Scott A.: 4, 15 left, 20 left, 26 far left, 28, 38 row 2 second from left, 38 row 4 second from left, 38 row 6 second from right, 125 bottom
Seaman, Richard: 83 top right
Shaw, Greg: 81 bottom right
Slater, Russ : 38 row 3 second from right
Watson, Jennifer: 31
Wilson, T. Kelly: 139 bottom