

# Young architecture from New York

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Nina Rappaport, New York

## Young Architecture from New York

**In growing a new architectural practice in New York City there is always the debate as to how to keep ones own stylistic preferences, and also please the client, who might not be so contemporary. The innovative architecture is not often found in the skyscrapers, public buildings or major facilities but in the smaller scale projects, interiors and summer residences, where New Yorkers are willing to make smaller risks. Young architects explore their theoretical ideas in teaching and writing when projects have to be more practical. However, the five young New York architectural firms presented here have been able to develop new and bolder ideas each with a different approach to architecture and design.**

The firms *Architectural Research Office (ARO)*, *Greg Lynn FORM*, *Marpillero & Pollak*, *Dean & Wolf* and *Hariri & Hariri* have developed their own voices in contemporary architecture. They dismissed post-modernism early on and question deconstructivism; no -ism is attached to what they do. Evident is a new boldness and a thoroughness of investigation, often seen in the architecture of the Netherlands and the perfection of craftsmanship and details in Switzerland.

Each architect represents a different approach to design yet they are united by their experimentation and dedication to modern design, contemporary materials and abstract forms. Coming from different directions, they define the territory in which architecture is made from context to geometries and materials. While ARO initiates a project with the clients needs and site to arrive at a form, Greg Lynn FORM begins with what the computer can do to create form; Marpillero & Pollak focus on the urban situation; Dean & Wolf begin with site and the intertwining of program and materials and Hariri & Hariri's interest is in materials and tectonics. Some are closer to each other than others, some overlap and there are some gaps, but distinctly separate they present a broad overview of architecture in New York by the younger architects today.

### Architecture Research Office

Architectural Research Office (ARO) was founded in 1994 by three architects, Adam Yarinsky, Steven Cassell and Thomas Jenkinson (no longer with the firm). Yarinsky and Cassell had met at Princeton University. They met Jenkinson working in the office of Steven Holl. With Holl they studied a language of abstraction and ways to convey ideas through materiality.

ARO works empirically from the particular to the general, beginning with the physical and social context of the project such as program, site, budget, clients needs and special requirements. They investigate the nature and the way something should be built - and then they design. Using rigorous studies they work on a reciprocity between form and concept. The title of the firm says a lot about what they do. Their work, Yarinsky says, «is about strategy, how to pull it all together, relationships between the pieces of circumstances and conditions.» And further, «we do have formal predilections, which is a modern language, but not a specific formal agenda. The goal is not the objectification or representation of ideas in our work but rather the embodiment of ideas through the way that form is used and the relationships it creates. The way something is then used is what gives it a meaning for the space and makes it beautiful.» They are also connected to the way a culture builds as a social process of architecture.

ARO has primarily built residential and commercial work in addition to exhibition design for the Civic Lessons, a traveling exhibit on New York City public architecture sponsored by the American Institute of Architects and for the Henry Dreyfus show at the Cooper Hewitt Museum of Design.

### 54 Thompson Street, New York

In 1996 in Soho ARO renovated the base building and then each separate interior space of 54 Thompson Street. The 1,200-square-foot lobby has a sculptural installation of steel plate and etched-glass wall panels to create a series of overlapping planes with the south wall painted in a warm blue. One enters the space in a gradually narrowing hall that leads to the restrained 4,000-square-foot gallery, Art et

Industrie, on the first floor and then up to the second floor. An outdoor space at the corner of the site was enclosed to create a sculpture garden with gray crushed stone surface. Panels of thin steel plate wrap around the corner for a fence that both reveals and conceals the thinness. ARO is currently constructing a two story apartment in the upper floors of the same brick building with an interior stair connecting the two floors.

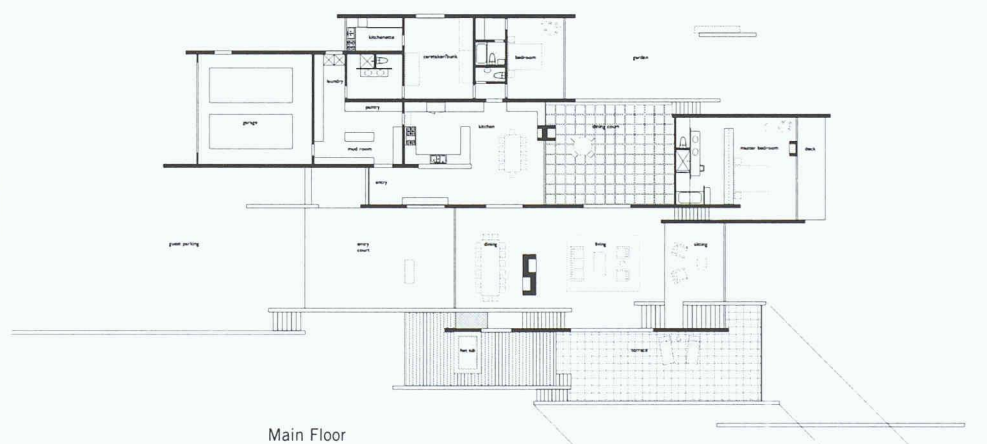
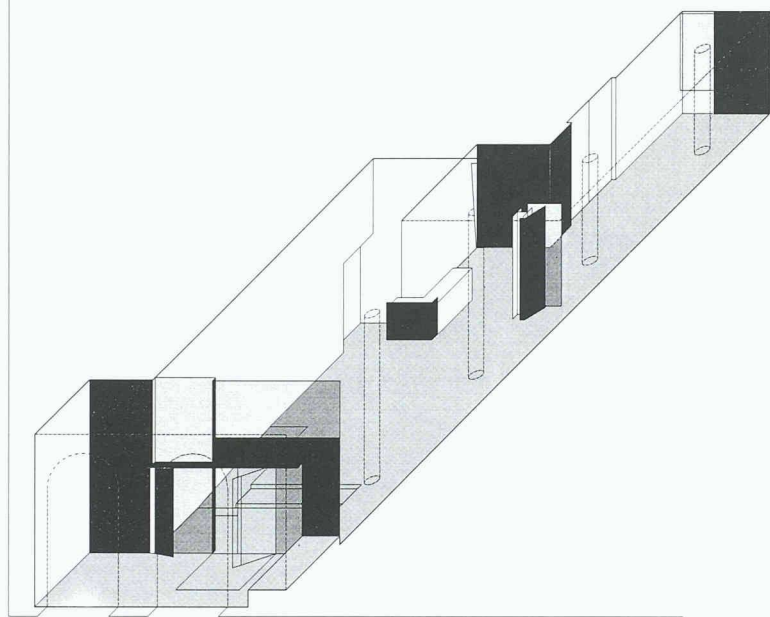
### Sunshine Mesa House, Telluride

On a 60-acre meadowed mesa near Telluride Colorado, ARO is completing the design of a vacation house with views of the jagged mountains. The plan weaves rectangular overlapping forms in layers within the landscape like geological formations. Stepping down the hillside, the 8,000-square-foot house is integrated with the landscape. The house is positioned according to two sets of views which are at right angles to each other so that each room is oriented outward with a large window wall. The exterior walls are custom made Corten Steel shingles on sandblasted low concrete foundation walls. Some of the exterior walls are brought into the house creating a sense of parallel planes sliding in and out. The smooth white plaster walls and colored concrete floors of the interiors create a pristine setting for an art collection in contrast to the outer textures.

### Westfield House, New Jersey

A house in early design phase in Westfield New Jersey is more of a dominant figure in the land in contrast to the Telluride House. The 9,500-square-foot house is taking the place of a smaller house on the site, often done in American Suburbs, to create a larger house. The task was how to manipulate the scale so that the building doesn't overwhelm the site. The owners wanted a conventional pitched roof, which ARO wouldn't normally design, so they devised a way to create a non traditional slate roof with dormers and the edges articulated to make the form more appropriate to the spatial arrangements of a new house. They are creating a roof that is a continuous surface that facets like folded origami paper, rather than add dormers.

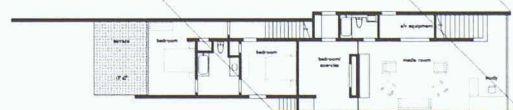
Architecture Research Office (ARO): Residential  
Lobby at 54 Thompson Street



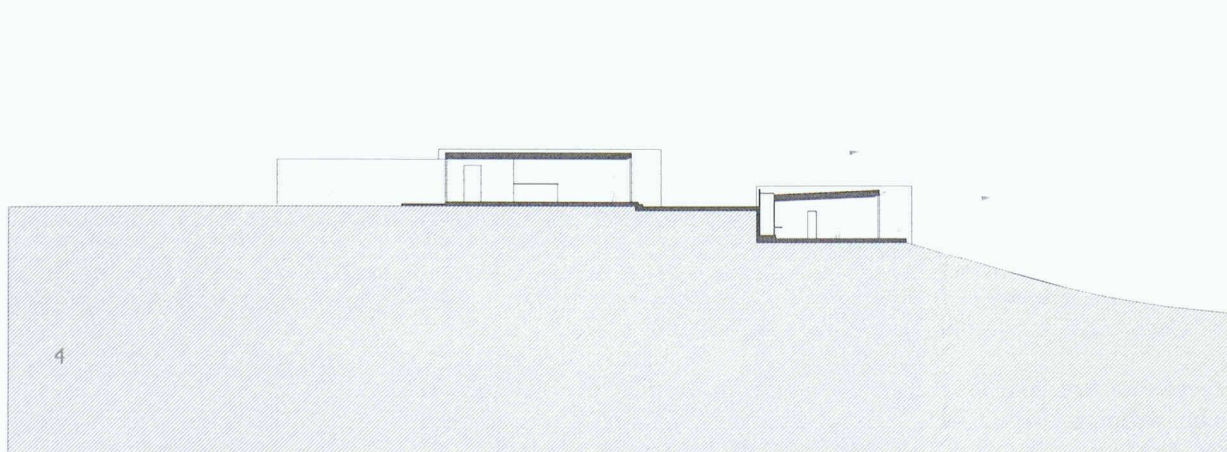
Main Floor

Architecture Research Office (ARO): Sunshine  
Mesa House

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Lower Floor



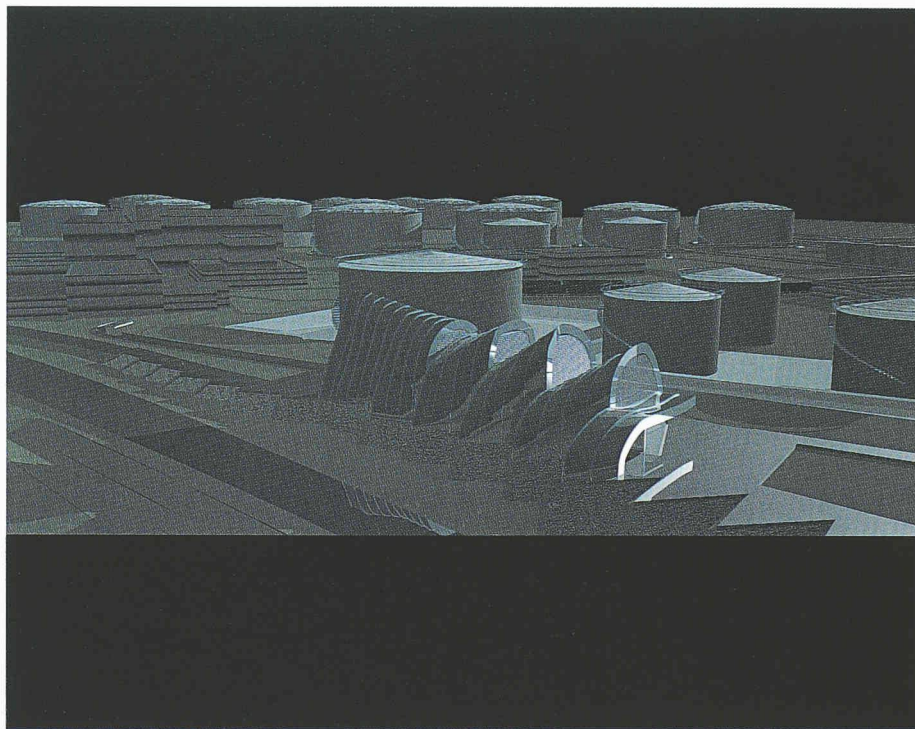


## Greg Lynn FORM

After receiving his architecture degree from Princeton University, Greg Lynn worked for Peter Eisenman and then opened his own office called Greg Lynn FORM, and began teaching computer design at Columbia University. For the past year he has been working in collaboration with Douglas Garofalo and Michael McInturf in a firm called M.Form. Each architect is based in a different city, one New York, one Chicago and the other Cincinnati and they come together for larger commissions with different areas of expertise. In an expedient solution for young small architecture firms, they exchange files and information over the internet without having to set up a huge office.

Lynn designs on the computer using computer animation to generate the form. The title of his firm is thus appropriate, as the making of form dominates his work. Geometry is used as an abstract expression, not to create the tectonics of building. Lynn discusses a desire to create forms that are «blobs», not attached to the normalcy of gravity or a need for verticality in construction – the interior and the exterior would be continuous. He is trying to achieve these forms in his first projects now under construction. Lynn notes that the most successful blob-forms so far have only been used for roof designs; the rest remain as computer images from futuristic musings.

Greg Lynn FORM: H2 House

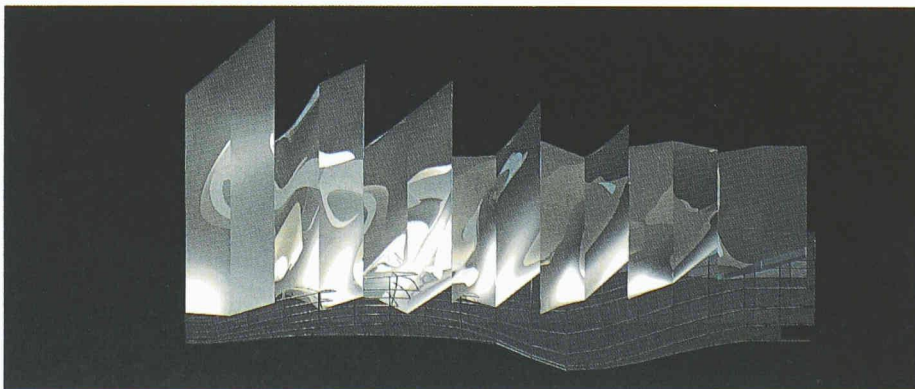
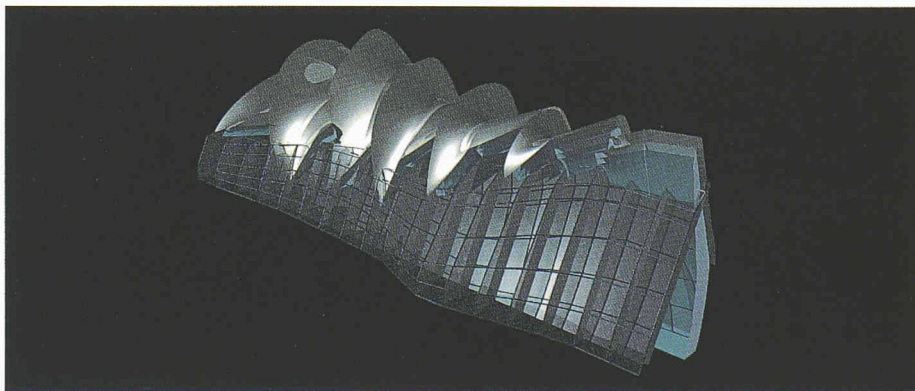


## Korean Presbyterian Church of New York

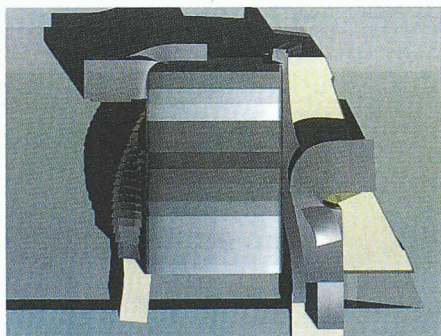
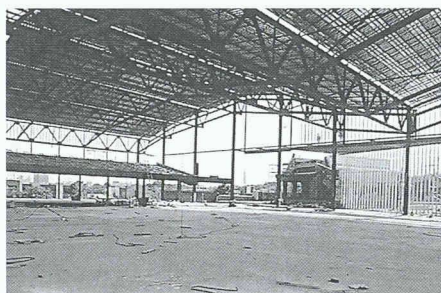
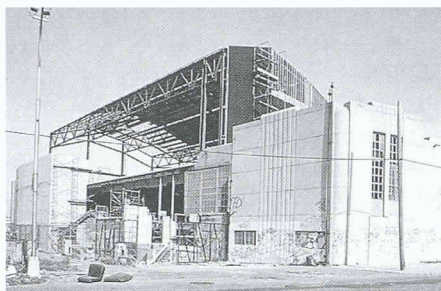
In an industrial zone in Queens, on the north side of the railroad tracks across from historic Sunnyside Gardens, Lynn, McInturf and Garofalo are transforming the 88,000-square-foot Knickerbocker Laundry building, originally designed in 1936 by Irving M. Fenichel, into a 135,000-square-foot church and community center.

The existing building's Art Deco entry facade will be restored with its metal windows and pre-cast concrete cladding, while a new program will be superimposed on the old. The congregation enters the new building from the parking lot over two bridges that span an access road and lead into the building's circulation spines at the second floor main lobby and at the sanctuary. In a unique construction, the spines are undulating square synthetic stucco tubes that curve through the building and snake between existing structural bays and between floors.

The 44,000-square-foot first floor includes a 600-person wedding chapel, a 1000-person cafeteria, and offices in origi-







Greg Lynn FORM: Korean Presbyterian Church

nal front facade. Eighty small classrooms, five multi-purpose meeting rooms and a daycare center will be located in the basement level. Using the original building's extra column load for a small addition, the architects are building up 25 feet to create the main sanctuary for 2500 people with a mezzanine on the west side. The new two story form rises from the building in standing seam metal walls and a curved zinc coated flat seam roof. The curvature of the roof was created by maintaining equal dimensions for the 135 feet long by 8 foot deep trusses and by varying the distances between the columns instead. Through the use of computer animation and morphing, the architects were able to make the roof fit over the 60 foot high 120 long space: the structure could be adjusted while maintaining the same volume of space. A second form is carried through the sanctuary space to the north wall in a vertically faceted cocoon-like structure to house a terrace and lobby. It is an independent structure opening up from 16-feet wide to 40-feet wide, two to three stories high, continuing out the side of the sanctuary.

The main entry facade is a Kalwal Fiberglas system with rectangular window openings to provide views out to the Manhattan skyline. The more solid facade, constructed of vertical standing seam metal, faces the railroad. The circulation towers for the elevator and stairs, the bathrooms and a choir rehearsal space are the edges of the building. In keeping with the original factory, the materials and construction systems are industrial, but a new amorphous form and program transforms the old.

### The H2 House, Vienna

The OMV Aktiengesellschaft in Vienna commissioned Greg Lynn FORM to build a permanent and traveling exhibition hall and experimental energy house in Schwechat, Austria, adjacent to the highway, in the industrial area near Vienna. In conjunction with a local Austrian architect, Martin Treibsborg, the project will be a demonstration house powered by a hydrogen fuel cell that generates electrical energy, pure water and heat through the controlled combination of hydrogen and oxygen.

The form of the building was made through the simulation of the automobile movement on the highway. It is the sweep of the car in motion. A series of surfaces reveal the interior of the building as a sequence when viewed from the highway. These forces were translated into the surfaces through the construction of a flexible skeleton system. The interior of the educational facility has two spaces, one for ex-

hibits and the other for the mechanical systems. A translucent fabric screen, for projecting visual images, divides the space. When the mechanical room, on one side, is illuminated the projection screen becomes transparent so that the visitors can see behind into the experimental energy system of the house. Using computer simulation, Lynn modeled the solar angles for the appropriate placement and shape of shading devices and photo voltaic cells.

The building will be constructed with glue laminated wood beams as primary structural members, using computer aided manufacturing systems. It will be clad in zinc standing seam roofing with a wood plank interior finish. The hydrogen gas energy will be generated using photo voltaic electrolyzed production.

### Marpillero & Pollak

The team Marpillero & Pollak, one an architect and urban designer and the other a landscape architect and architect, work on projects independently and then collaborate on designs of urban public spaces.

Linda Pollak studied architecture and landscape architecture at Harvard University where she now teaches. She has received numerous grants. She designs public art installations and urban spaces with a focus on ways to link nature with the city. Pollak believes that «you can not take nature for granted. Nature is not necessarily something constructed; the ground is not a second plane but it is part of the whole and should not be polarized.» This unification of figure/ground then directs her designs.

### Terrace, 500 Park

Pollak's approach is exemplified in her design for the terrace on the top of 500 Park Avenue which she completed in 1992. The terrace relates to many scales at once; that of people in the space, the existing building, and the surrounding high rise buildings in an abstracted surface so that it is similar to a building elevation laid out on the ground. A floating planar urban terrace incorporates water and grasses between a series of rectangular strips of jagged cut blue stone that has a both Japanese serenity and contemporary abstract form of planes of shapes. Fountain jets of water are scattered between the blue stone pavers at the entrance to the apartment. Stone planters on the parapet walls with the striations continue the horizontality, but on a vertical surface. To construct the thin terrace installation Pollak created a grided metal framework in a raised floor like that in a computer room, beneath



which there is an independent plumbing system. To cope with the wind, the grid is floating and self leveling with enough weight to keep it from blowing.

Italian architect Sandro Marpillero received his architecture degree from the Institute of Venice and then studied urban design and architecture with a Fulbright grant at Columbia University. He combines his architectural practice with teaching at Harvard, Columbia and Princeton and writes for international magazines about architecture and urban design. In approaching a project, he first analyses what «being in a space can be in order to create a site specific installation and position the individual in the city, to demonstrate the relationship between the individual and the city.» He addresses the «psychology of being» in the city or in the space, which takes into account different scales and the individual's situation and constitution in the city which also relates to the collective. In 1990 in Udine Marpillero designed a public housing development, while in New York he primarily designs residential and commercial interiors. Using the history of the site as a point of departure he creates new designs for interior furnishings and building elements.

#### West 67th Street

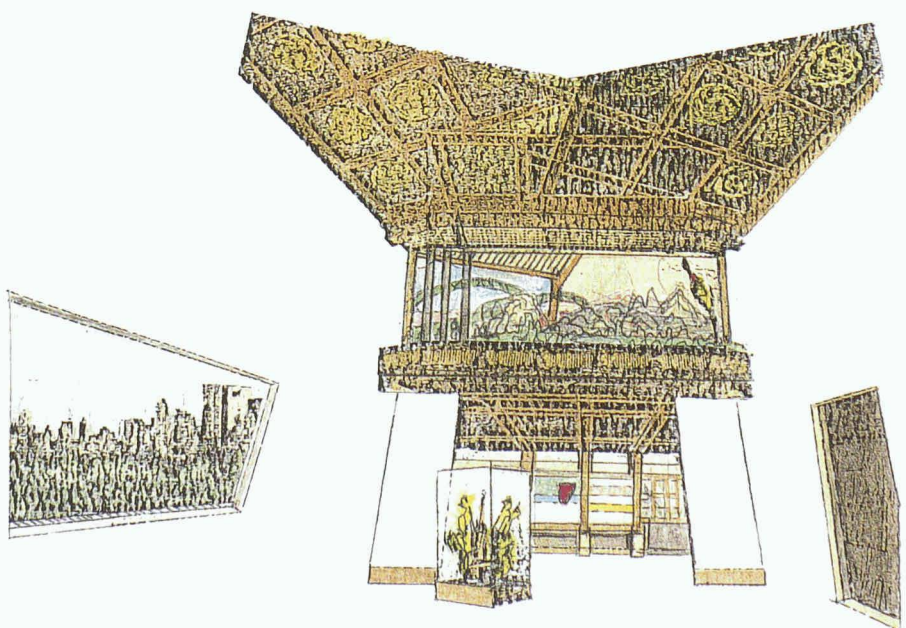
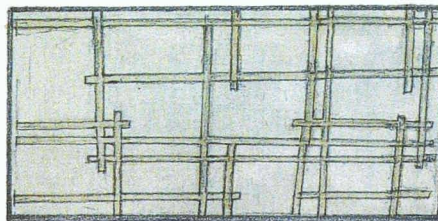
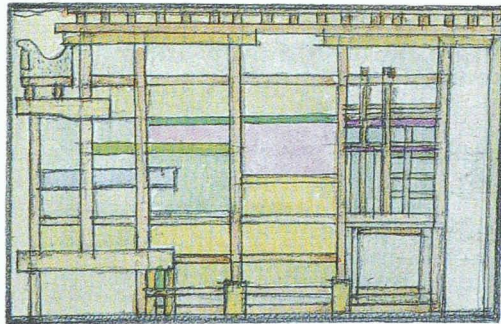
Marpillero is renovating an apartment at 2 West 67th Street. The original interior design was completed in 1916 by the Japanese/American architect Iwahiko Tsumanuma for Burton Holmes. The highly detailed interior with Japanese art and carvings includes a copy of the Buddhist Temple of Horyuji in Nara. Marpillero is using the existing materials and palette with a focus on the history of the space to maintain the original ambiance and materials. The main room of the 3,500-square-foot interior with the temple, will be restored with additions of bas relief panels, special lighting systems, a cabinet for a mask collection display and tromp l'oeil paintings. Using the geometric structures of Ando Hiroshige's prints he is designing a cabinet to house masks and paneling. A modern kitchen, pantry and corridors will be added while the antique walk-in closet with a gold leaf ceiling will be restored.

#### Petrosino Park, New York

When Marpillero and Pollak work together, an urban landscape project has the potential to display a history of a site and the workings of urban landscape. A competition was held by the StoreFront for Art and Architecture in 1996, for the left over triangular shaped site between Lafayette and Kenmare Streets, called Petrosino Park. Marpillero & Pollak submitted a pro-

posal which, although did not win, is of interest in the way they interpret and represent landscape. The site is not natural, not beautiful, and not really a park. «It represents landscape in a park», says Pollak, «rather than make the space a gap, between two areas in the city, we would build it as a seam that stitches together the neighborhood and the scales would be layered, but you don't see the layers.» They proposed linking the park to its urban

fabric by designing a new subway entry, creating a walkway wall whose lines would recall the outline of previous buildings on the site; and designing a market place with an extended wood inlay porch for a gathering place. A media wall would enhance the relationships between different scales in the neighborhood. The historical context of what was there before; fields, orchards and a fortification wall would be recalled by the new urban space.

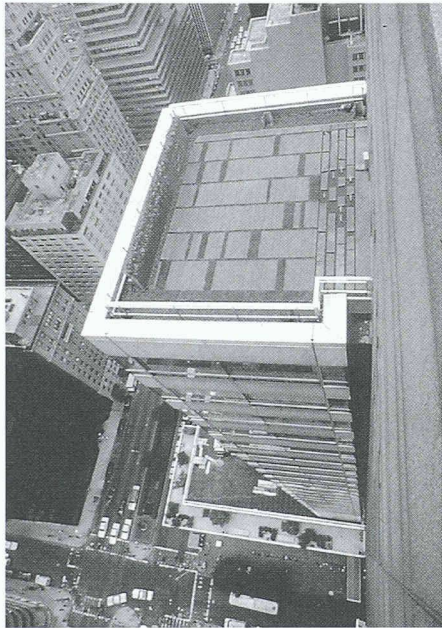


1. SITE : AT THE EDGE OF THE PARK, ABOVE THE TREE LINE
2. SITUATION : ENTERING UNDER A CONTINUOUS CEILING PLANE
3. FOREGROUND THE PARK FOR SCREEN, MASKS, WINDOW

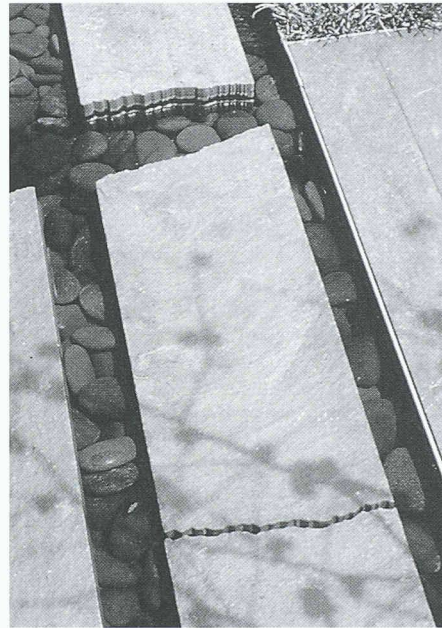
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Sandro Marpillero: 2 West 67<sup>th</sup> Street. Cabinet Study (left page)



Linda Pollak: Terrace, 500 Park  
Marpillero & Pollak: Petrosino Park (below)



## Dean & Wolf Architects

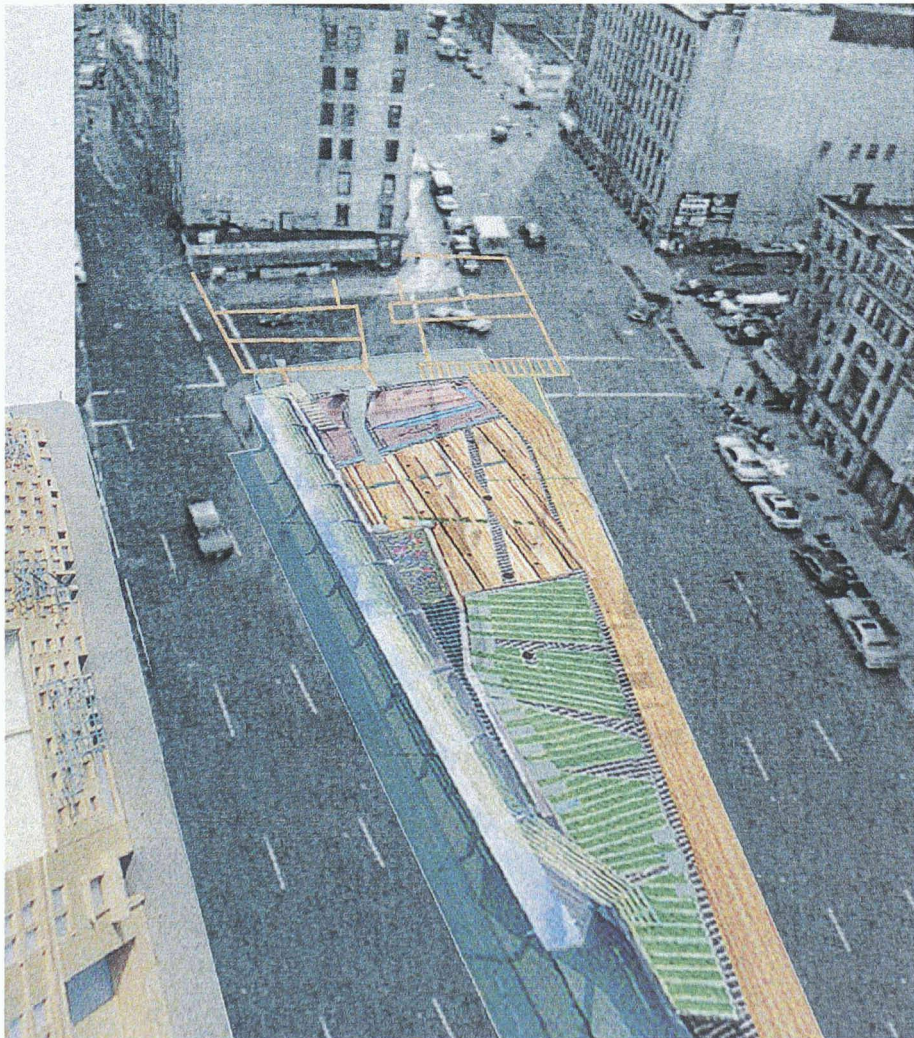
Kathryn Dean and Charles Wolf studied architecture together at the University of Oregon in the early 1980s, before coming to New York to work for large architectural firms. After a year in Rome with American Academy fellowship they returned to New York and gradually established an architectural practice in 1991. They combine their residential and commercial work with teaching design studios at Columbia and Parsons School of Design.

Dean & Wolf approach a project by analyzing the site or location of the project whether it be a freestanding house in the country, or a loft in an existing building in New York, and the relationship of the idea of the program to that site, which are then unified in the final designs. «The site and program are a double glove [...] each glove fitting different concerns and the differences need to be reconciled», says Dean. They desire in each project to create an appropriateness which is landscape specific, «the marriage of the human landscape (mind/thought) with the landscape of the earth (body/sensuality)». In approaching design both from the physiological and the psychological base, their work then grows with constant analysis of every other element, form, structure and materials, to create an inhabitable space.

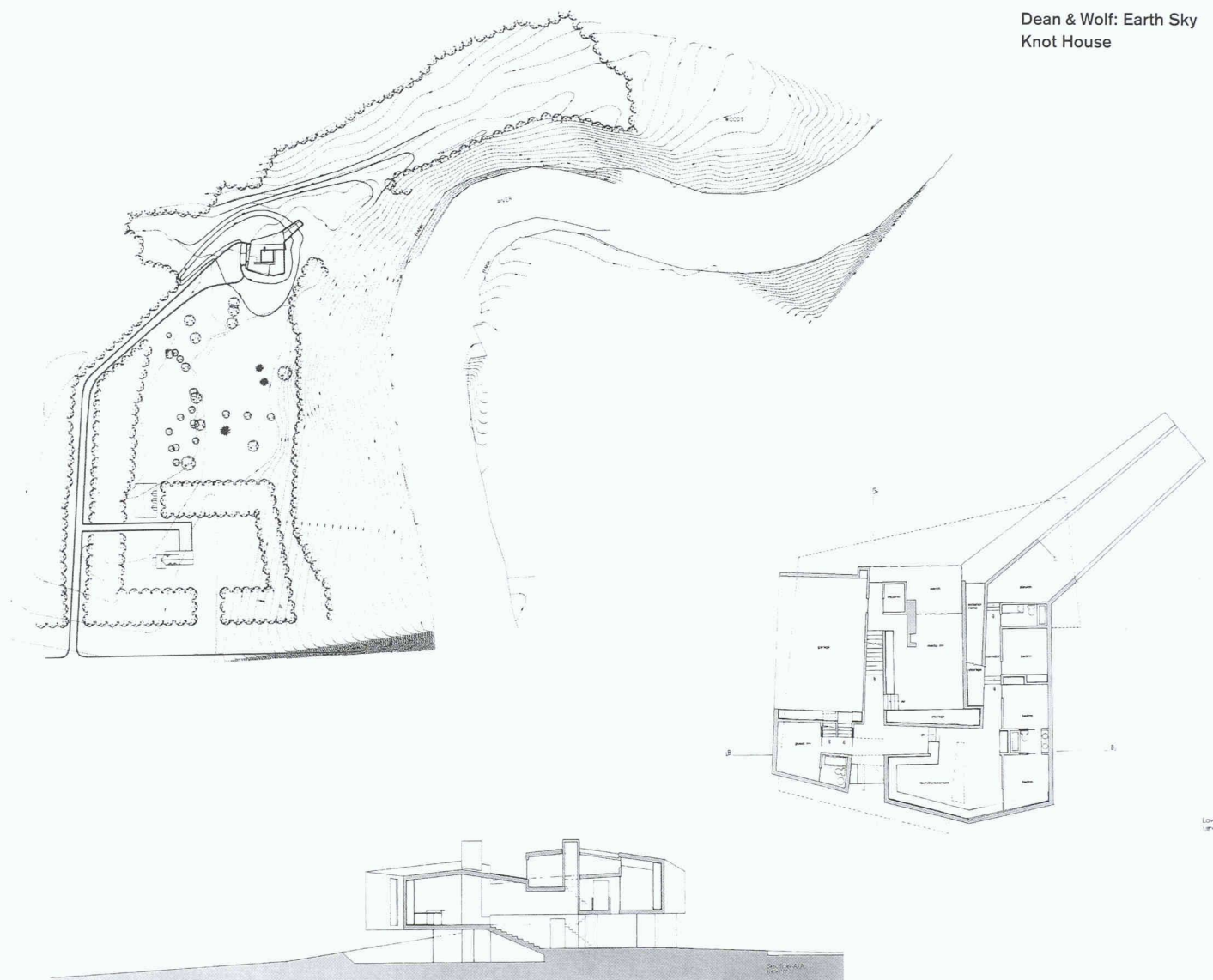
## Earth Sky Knot House, North Dakota

In a design investigation of two years, Dean & Wolf are working on a house in North Dakota, Dean's home state. On a site which has a slight hill, significant in these flat lands that were divided in one mile increments for the original homesteading, the landscape is the wide open sky. This 42-acre site sits at the end of the Cartesian grid where it is violated by the Red River which curves through the traditional farmstead. Using photographs to study the site they designed the house as a knot between the land and the sky in a poetic analysis.

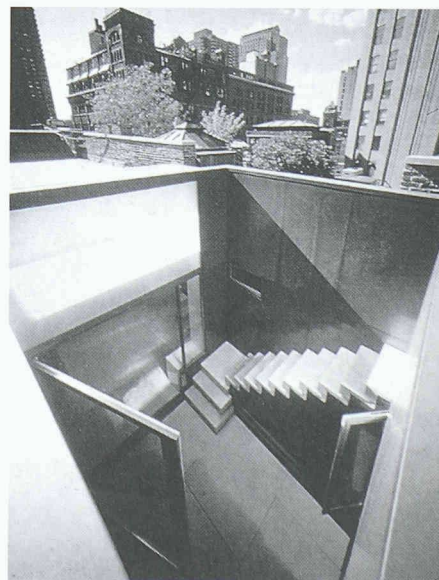
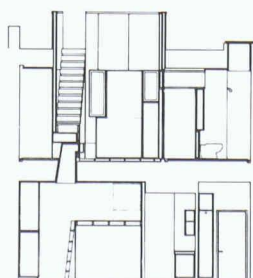
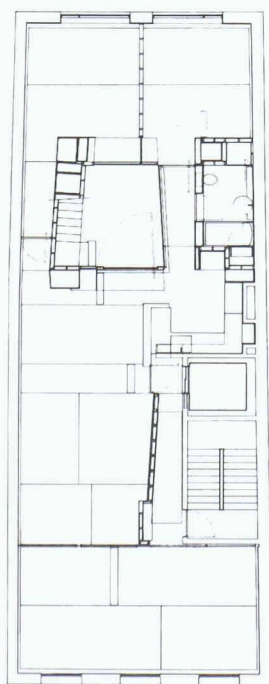
The owners bought the property for romantic reasons in contrast to their practical work life, so Dean & Wolf set up two dialogues with the house; one in the relationship of the romantic versus the pragmatic use of the landscape, and another between the land and the sky which then intertwine. In the design process they used tiny white paper models to explore these connections and divergences. The house is connected, on the body scale, to the land and soft meadows through a long ramp, with a turf roof, so the meadow slides up over the house like a walking path, entering the house in a tactile way. The drive-





Dean & Wolf: Earth Sky  
Knot House

Dean &amp; Wolf: Loft





way and the back of the house become significant in their connection to the practical and rational world. The relationship to the sky, the intellectual side, is made through a roofscape of projections that links the house to a view from the upper floor living and dining rooms and kitchen.

A tower element projects upward, which frames the views between the ramp and the main stair so that they look at each other and brings the interior inside. One view is «slow», the other «fast», so that you are seeing things in two ways. One side is tactile, the walking, and the other is schematic, the driving-by quickly. The materials will relate to the color of the landscape and to the weight of the structure. The lower floors will be masonry or concrete and the colors will be similar to the natural prairie. The form of the house is like a curvilinear knot, pulled down and around; a gesture, with a place within it. Dean & Wolf are concerned with the «nature of the place and the land, but not just in terms of a site relationship and a program but how to work them together in a unified seamless way.»

### Tribeca Loft

In their own recently completed 1700-square-foot loft apartment in Tribeca, which won an AIA award, there is a relationship to the city and how people inhabit the city. The apartment is also one of the most resolved of their projects in terms of materials, since they were both the architect and client and general contractor in charge of construction. Wolf actually did 35% of the construction work.

The focus is a 150-square-foot light court, creating a double interior, to connection to the sky and bring the outdoors to the indoors. An open narrow concrete stair leads up to the roof and space for a future roof terrace. To create the courtyard, they cut through the existing roof deck with its steel beams and concrete and framed the new opening with steel and then build the exterior enclosure. It was very labor intensive with hand made bronze framing and copper windows. «Materials were selected by analyzing the kind of space that suggests a certain kind of occupation so that the material informs the other ideas», says Dean. The apartment is a coating of surfaces, so that different rooms are separated by different materials, from copper sheeting in the living room to the maple wood cabinetry in the bedrooms, as an inner lining. Sand blasted glass panels framed in bronze, divide the living room from the front office and can slide behind the stair bulkhead to open up the space.

### Hariri & Hariri

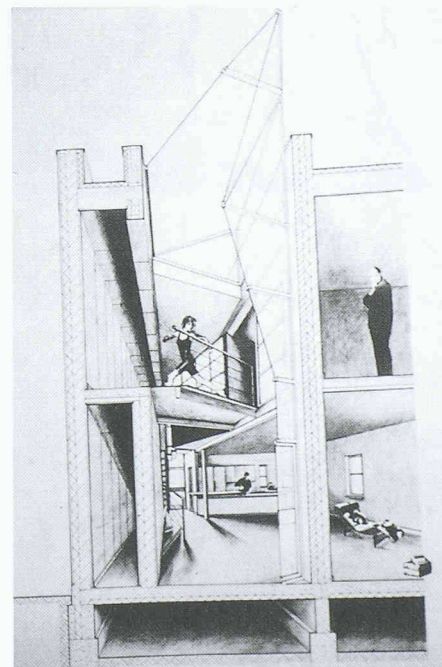
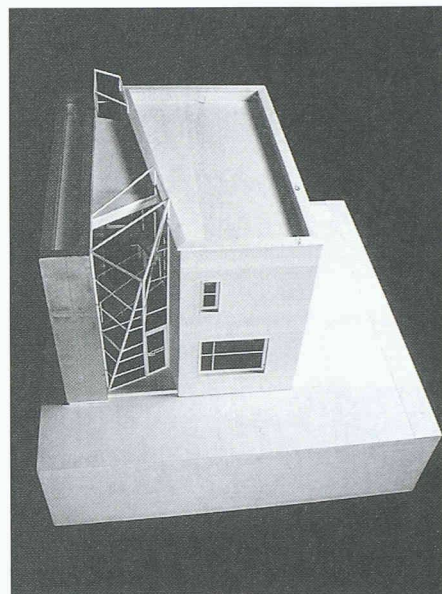
Gisue and Mojgan Hariri, sisters originally from Iran, received their architectural education at Cornell University and stayed in the US. They set up their own practice, Hariri & Hariri, in New York City in 1986, after having worked for other architecture firms. Not only do they participate in exhibitions and lectures and teach design but they already have a book published about their work by Monticelli Press.

Hariri & Hariri's outlook is directed to the essence of the basic nature of materials and the physicality of the project as a form, in a sculptural way seen in the details and tectonics. When they begin they say, «what are we going to make this with, say metal. Can we bend, tear and fold it. Or, say plaster, it can create a more curved organic form that we can then balance between the rectilinear and the curvilinear.» They also analyze what elements of their work comes from their Iranian culture; which they are not trying to identify as a way to examine the contemporary situation, but to provide an equilibrium and balance to their life.

Many of their forms are explosive and dynamic, moving through and out and interconnected, but the spaces are about solitude and spirituality which also relates to their background. Gisue feels that they «talk about things that are not present, otherness which we don't see, that give a feeling of where we came from.» She says that it is «not enough to create a tactile environment. They hope to achieve an experience of matter, that is not even there through the quality of light, color and weathering of materials.

### Spartan House, The Hague

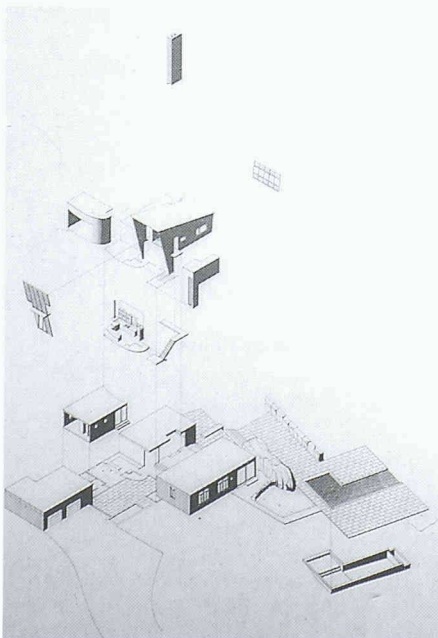
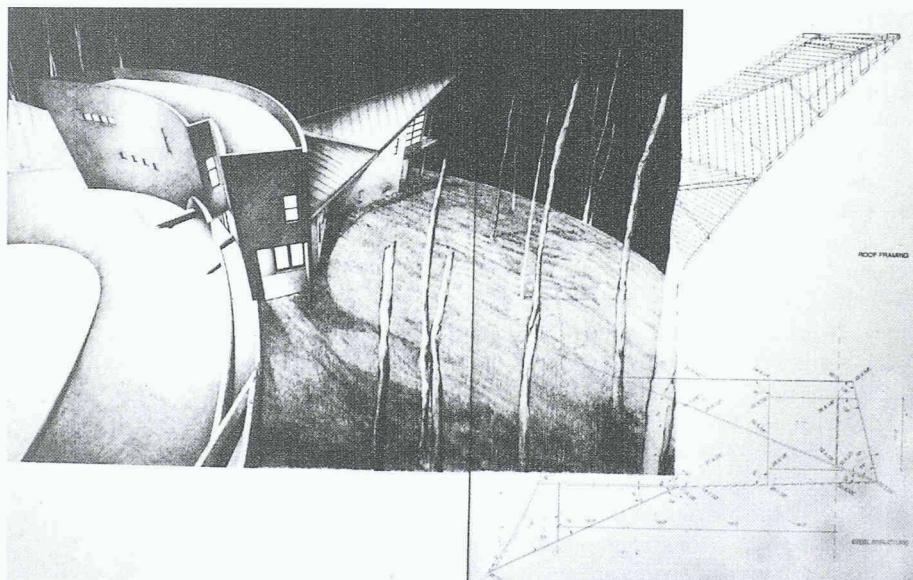
Recently Hariri & Hariri completed their first project in Europe, the Spartan House in the Hague, Netherlands, for the developer, Geerlings Vastgoed, who invited eight architects, including Henry Ciriani, Stefano de Martino, Frank Israel, Bernard Tschumi and Steven Holl, to each design a simple 1,200 to 1,800-square-foot house for a speculative site as part of a festival three years ago. The eight houses, very tight in area, had to have three to four bedrooms, with a specific height and parameters. The area was planned by OMA for two rows, one facing a canal, and the other on a boulevard. Hariri & Hariri wanted to connect the two sites by cutting their house into two parts to create a passage-way from one to the other which evolved into an enclosed double story space. The house is divided into two parts: one for circulation, storage and laundry, clad in cor-



Hariri & Hariri: Spartan House



Hariri &amp; Hariri: Riverbend House



Hariri &amp; Hariri: Greenwich Connecticut House



rugated metal inside and out, and the other side for living, constructed in brick. The space in-between, as a spilt between the two parts, is covered with a glass skylight and becomes a significant occupiable space.

### Riverbend House, Great Falls

Earlier this year, Hariri & Hariri completed a 5,000-square-foot house commissioned on speculation by a developer, in Great Falls Virginia. Without a specific client, they had to consider the general idea of, what is the American Dream House. They looked at the importance of having the garage close by, but they also tried to push the dimensions. They asked what is the meaning of the backyard, can it be a carved landscape, and how should interior spaces be arranged.

Beginning with materials, they selected stained cedar, glass, stucco, and steel frame, an unusual hybrid in American houses. One volume curves along the hill side responding to the topography, in its wood structure clad in cedar that contains a double height central hall, kitchen, bedrooms, guest and master bedroom. The other volume is a steel frame structure with stucco and glass walls that includes the public rooms, living, room and dining room. This volume is lifted up on pilotis, like Le Corbusier's work, so that an outdoor room is created underneath and has a feeling of weightlessness. The roof is a folded angled metal form like an umbrella over the house. The juxtaposition of the two volumes allows you to see outside and inside at the same time.

### Greenwich Connecticut House

Another house is under construction as an addition to a 1930's flat roof small house in the country. Hariri & Hariri's were inspired by the rocky landscape so that the addition rises forth from the rock formations and penetrate the earth. The new structure is in stucco in contrast with the rock and the existing wood clad house. Their goal was to open up and lighten the entry area, so they made a double height volume but they also needed to create privacy. They choose Kalwal Fiberglass panels for the facade, that hangs from the curtain wall structure and filters the light like a shoji screen. It is very open in feel but you can't look inside. They focus on the volumes, one curved and one angled, in contrast to the existing building so that the formations emerge from the earth.

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### Bilder

1-4: ARO. 5-7, 10: Greg Lynn FORM. 8/9: N. Rappaport. 11-15: Marpillero & Pollak. 16-21: Dean & Wolf. 22-26: Hariri & Hariri.