



ARCHITECTURE, PRAGMATIC & WISE

17 PROJECTS FOR HOW WE LIVE TODAY (OR MAY SOON...)



Artist Spencer Finch documents ordinary things that go by unobserved: the paths of bugs in a garden, the shifting hues of the Hudson River throughout the day, the color of the sky over the twin towers on September 11, 2001. He then translates this data into art. In *Trying to Remember the Color of the Sky on That September Morning*—a work commissioned for the 9/11 Memorial Museum—he hand-painted 2,983 squares, each square in a unique shade of blue for every person killed in the September 11th attacks and in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. In her book, *Spencer Finch: What Time Is It on the Sun?*, author Susan Cross writes, “Finch carefully records the invisible world, while simultaneously striving to understand what might lie beyond it. Whether he is relying on his own powers of observation or using a colorimeter, a device that reads the average color and temperature of light, the artist employs a scientific method to achieve poetic ends.”

Science and poetry—like Finch, architects constantly balance these elements. They draw rooms and walls, confer with engineers, measure angles, consider loads and constrictions—all while imagining what happens, what *will* happen, within those walls. They must know how a room works, how to create spaces that contain (and even invite) togetherness, ease, enjoyment. Places for quiet when we need quiet. And spaces that are easily altered to squeeze in extra guests when the house is full. Like mediums sensing ghosts, searching for the past, architects must perceive the invisible future within those walls...the *soon* to be.

Architects stitch their homes into the landscape, taking not only beauty into account—things like views and light—but also how melting snow will drain away. They must consider height restrictions, energy efficiencies, and ventilation, as well as the vernacular of what surrounds our homes—taking the context of our larger neighborhoods into account, making our homes fitting additions.

Architects are balancers of our budgets, finding fast, inexpensive solutions. And they know when to splurge on soaring windows with custom casements to frame a striking view. They organize the circulation of our homes and teach us how the space connects us with the outdoors. They make plans for us to age in place, shaping the elements of our long-term vision, so that our homes can grow over time, as our lives and budgets allow.

We are touched daily, even years and years later, by the decisions architects make. Each of the 17 projects contained in this issue reveals a blend of science and art. Each takes data, blends it with poetry, and makes a home. Each transforms a master plan into a way of life.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY & AESTHETICS: A GRACEFUL COMBINATION



A wooded bluff above the Cousins River estuary is the location for a high-performance home in southern Maine. Sited in a clearing to take advantage of solar gain, the home features south-facing windows that illuminate its open floor plan. Natural light is filtered further inside through translucent glass sheathed in custom casework.

A pine forest dominates the view from the home, and spindled vertical trees surrounding the site provide contrast to the low horizontal lines of the single-level home. A covered walkway stretching between the house and garage helps connect the buildings to the landscape. The single-level design offers aging-in-place capabilities, with access to the screened porch, deck, and walkway on the same level as the house.

The owners modified a predesigned 1,600-square-foot three-bedroom plan to fit their needs. The open floor plan is oriented to solar south, with vaulted interior spaces under the shed roof. Built-in cabinetry and shelving provide spatial separations in the open plan, creating a diversity of spaces. Custom casework and a built-in daybed frame the living area in Baltic birch plywood, while custom ash millwork adds warmth to the bedrooms and kitchen. The concrete floor is not only modern; it is a critical component of the home's energy performance; the high thermal mass of concrete acts as a heat sink helping to maintain and regulate interior temperatures throughout the year.

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