



Architecture

... It's a Family Affair

by **Tim** Maldonado

During this past year, I've had the great pleasure of serving as Vice President of SARA/NY Council. Recently, I invited SARA colleagues to our week-end home in New Jersey, following a SARA National conference held in Morristown. Under construction, about 200 yards from the main house, is the product of my son's master's thesis in architecture, a studio / accessory building. When asked if I'd write about the experience of designing my own week-end home, I couldn't help but propose this multi-generational story.

As an architect with primarily residential projects, my own home is often a "testing ground" for new concepts and details, to the delight, and sometimes dismay, of my wife, who is a painter. Elaine and I met in college. A few years after we married, we invested in 10 acres of land in north western New Jersey, an hour's drive from midtown Manhattan, where we continue to live most of the year. The land, located in the most western corner of Morris County, is somewhat mountainous and heavily wooded with hemlock, maple and beech and includes a rushing stream

that feeds into the Musconetcong River at the base of the mountain. In winter, there's a lovely view of the mountains looking west towards Pennsylvania. In our younger days, it was a good place to spend a Sunday afternoon or camp with friends. Our son Craig, now an architect in his own right, played in the stream with pebbles and stones, where one morning we were thrilled to find he had played his way into discovering the arch! Thanks to new preservation measures in the state of New Jersey, the spot is still insulated and idyllic, backed up to a Green Acre set-aside and a wetlands preserve.

Our house will forever be a work in progress (I'm sure every architect understands this concept...). It's a modernist construction, with spare, spacious interior spaces, accented by my wife's drawings, ethnic textiles and pottery. Entering, one faces a wall of glass without shades or blinds, deliberately clouding the difference between interior and exterior. The home is perched quite high on the mountainside (We hit bedrock early on...) and has far reaching vistas in all directions. To maximize the advantage of the site, and functionally integrate



the beautiful exterior with the home's interior, there are 3 separate cantilevered decks, totaling 1500 square feet in area... The largest of the decks is triangular and supports a sunken year-round hot tub. It juts out almost 30 feet off the side of the mountain and clearly provides the most dynamic experience in the house. The first floor is wide open, with my wife's painting studio central to the living spaces and intersecting vertically with my studio on the second floor. Key to the overall design is the home's integration with the forest. The "natural house" was always in our minds.

About 15 years ago, we created a path meandering further uphill to reach a newly built swimming pool. Extensive stone walls that I worked on with my son throughout his childhood mark the way and again conceal pool machinery. Despite the well-known work entailed in maintaining a pool, it has been the centerpiece for many summertime parties and peaceful escape on warm days. With a wall of blue hydrangeas creating a backdrop at the diving end, the pool area is set with large rectangles of bluestone all around; moss casually fills in the seams.

When my son was preparing his master's thesis in architecture, my

wife recalled that her painting teacher, Robert Gwathmey, asked his now famous son to design a house for him. Well, a mother doesn't let go of this kind of idea easily! Craig's thesis, intended as a sculpture studio for his mother (Elaine was originally a sculpture major at Cooper Union.) was soon underway! The son would now have to interface with the father's architecture. I asked Craig to comment on the experience and he wrote: "A potentially 'oedipal' design challenge would always be part of the project... I had to be very respectful of the primary, father-designed house nearby."

The studio designed by my son is a thousand square foot "brutalist" structure. It differs from my modernist house, but both buildings are clearly integrated by a common goal: design that grows naturally out of the site. The studio has concrete walls, lumber milled on site, handcrafted windows and details, with stone dug from the stream and bluestone slabs for a floor. Sloping glass ascends vertically for two stories at unexpected angles and is held in place throughout by hand-welded mullions. Our own oak trees, exposed and fully intact except for their bark, are the key structural elements in the studio, keeping the building perfectly in tune with the surrounding nature. Erecting the interlocking eighteen

inch diameter oaks that span twenty-five feet was a huge challenge, and a very unusual experience for the local building inspector and the structural engineer. The studio is located uphill from the main house and is situated on a small clearing. A winding path lined with fern and rhododendron, taking you past the pool, connects the studio and the main house.

Building with my son when he was little forged a special bond that is integral to these structures and to our lives. Today, two fully mature architectural visions will forever tie two generations, and tell the story of a family and of their artistic visions. I have done many projects in my 40-year career, but this building experience will always be unparalleled in its unique purpose and one family's sense of place. ■



Society of American Registered Architects / New York Council

13th Annual Professional Design Awards Dinner

Under the watchful eye of Lady Liberty people gathered for the SARA New York Council's 13th Annual Professional Design Awards Dinner. Once again, the location was the southern-most tip of Manhattan at the Battery Garden Restaurant that afforded a spectacular panoramic view of New York's Harbor. Drinks were served both inside and outside on the patio as the weather was magnificent, people milled around as they viewed the winning entrant's designs on the presentation boards.

The setting was so ideal that when it came time to make way up to the second floor for dinner most people lingered behind and when they did go up they immediately gravitated towards the two decks so as to soak in every last image of the majestic views of the water.

Finally seated and in place and with one-hundred and twenty people on hand, the festivities took off. NY Council President Jeff Vandenberg, ARA was the MC for the evening and after a brief introduction presented the five jurors that had the task of selecting the design winners from over 120 submissions. They were: Shelley Smith, Arpad Baksa, Donald Cromley, Scott Duncan and Martin Holub. Their selections were impeccable and each and every one of the winners was most deserving. There were 24 jurored selections along with the four honorees.

Multiple award winners were FXFowle Architects, Scarano Architects, Marble Fairbanks and Handel Architects. Student winners came from Pratt Institute, Penn State University, NYC College of Technology and the National University of Singapore.

The Council's highest award: the Medallion of Honor was bestowed upon Susan Szenasy, Editor in Chief of Metropolis Magazine for her relentless dedication to the pursuit of excellence in design. Hom+Goldman earned the Firm of the Year award for their prolific compilation of superb work here in the metro area.

As the night drew to a close and people began to make their way out, only one conclusion could be drawn by the event: that design is alive and well and that the night was a success and that it yet again underlined SARA's motto: 'Architect Helping Architect'.