

# True Life

Steven Harris Architects

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**“I envision my home as the physical, spatial expression of my interior life. I want a home that looks like how it is inside my head.”**



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he says. “How I live is  
who I am. My house is  
my definition: I want to  
see myself everywhere.”**

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# A True Life Story

**A.M. Homes**

Long before they met, they dreamed of how they would live, each in their own mind had a scenario, a stage set, a style.

“This is how I see myself, this is how I wish to be seen, this is what I want my life to be like when I am grown up,” he says.

“You’re forty-five,” she says.

“Like I said,” he says, pulling out a file. “These are pictures I’ve clipped, photos I’ve taken.”

She pulls a few things from her purse, “And these are things I’ve lifted from other people’s apartments, my boyfriends’ and girlfriends’.”

“You took the actual objects?”

She shrugs, “Is that a bad thing?”

“It’s stealing,” he says.

“It wasn’t like I didn’t pay for it on some level,” she says. “Trust me.”

“I’m not sure I do.”

“Are we okay to go forward?” we interject.

They nod and continue together. “We chose you because we like your aesthetic, we heard you

listen, we believe that you get who we are, you understand who we want to be. And how we want others to think of us.”

“I envision my home as the physical, spatial expression of my interior life. I want a home that looks like how it is inside my head.”

“Yes,” we say. “We are translators of a sort—you arrive with a hope a dream of how things might be. . . .”

“I’m a little frightened,” she says.

We comfort her, “You’re not alone, there is a history that goes back to the beginning of time, prehistoric stone circles, the pyramids, cathedrals of Europe, each generation literally building upon the last, as the engineering, the material possibility, expands or contracts, there is everything from the international to the deconstructed.”

“I need a place to lie down,” she says.

“Most certainly,” we say. “That’s a given.”

Oblivious, he goes on, unrolling a scroll, “I made a list of my desires.”

“I made a list of my needs, it’s shorter,” she says, resting her head on a pillow.

“And next to my desires,” he says, “I wrote my fears, things I can not abide, let’s call them tarantulas—plaid sofas, faux wood, etc. It has to do with how I grew up—among the Normans (Norman Rockwell, Norman Bates).”

“I’m not sure I ever grew up, maybe the new place should have a playroom?” she says.

Is she daydreaming or hallucinating? We don’t ask, we simply respond, “We’ll call it a media suite.”

And we pause. “How many square feet are we talking about anyway?”

“It’s a shoe box,” she says.

“It’s Manhattan don’t apologize,” he says. “It’s big.”

“It’s really kind of small,” she repeats her initial offering.

“We prefer not to make any comments about size, it’s really a question of what you’re used to or can get comfortable with.”

“It needs some paint,” she says.

“A gut renovation,” he says.

“We have a limited budget,” she says.

“Anything is possible,” he says.

“You get the idea,” she says.

“We’ll do some drawings, come up with some ideas, something we can show you.”

“A book of dreams?” she asks.

“We’re thinking perhaps something more true to life,” we say.

He carries on, “I’m thinking of an iconic sort of place, classic, but not crippling. I don’t want to live in my mother’s house.”

“A promise, a hope, an imagining of how things might be.” Is she speaking to us or talking to herself?

“How I work is how I live,” he says. “How I live is who I am. My house is my definition: I want to see myself everywhere.”

“An hourglass figure,” she says.

“Head square on the shoulders,” he says. “Sublime but ordinary, contemporary and lost in time; never dated.”

“Let’s talk about some of the basics,” we say.

“We think, creating space, as creating art one can live in—there’s truth in it, a literal reality check.”

“A rolling expanse of lawn, a view of hills in the distance,” she says.

“I thought we were talking about a small apartment in the city?” We need clarity.

“A kind of secret hide away,” he says. “Isn’t it interesting how wherever we go, we shift, we become something else, some other aspect of ourselves, and although nothing is said something is allowed, and something is forbidden? There is a tone to it all; I will stay forever, I can never go back. When is a house a home and when is it just a place where I get my mail?”

“I want to be able to sit inside and look out at the world, a tree, the sky,” she says.

“Can you get me the moon? I think that’s what I’m asking,” he says.

“I need a light of my own, my own side of the bed,” she continues, from deep in her own world.

“A pool—water everywhere. I want to swim out from inside the house; I want it to look up at me at night like a mirror reflecting; I want to see myself in the water, floating.” It’s as though he joins her, they are each in their own world, speaking from parallel universes.

“The flickering of flames, a fireplace, a hearth, a place to warm the heart,” she says. “And nap. I need a nap right now. I do my best thinking when I’m sleeping.” And then as though talking in her sleep, she continues, “A bookcase, a fireplace, a bookcase that turns into a staircase that leads to a free-standing fireplace, is there any place for such a place? Visit me in the kitchen, come for dinner, stay for the week, there’s always room at the table. I want it to be more, but look like less—no clutter. A window seat where there is no window, a front door in the middle of the room. I’m thinking of surfaces that are soft, but not slack, or untidy, something that is truly playful,” she says.

“I see it as challenging, spirited, like a gyroscope, a spinning top, a thing ever in motion,” he says.

“I want to be alone. I want to be together with you. I want to be able to watch you. I want to see you watching me,” they speak together as if reciting lines of poetry.

“It has to work for a blind person, someone who relies on touch, on echo, on the fall of footsteps.” While they are talking, we keep hearing an old message we can’t bring ourselves to delete.

“I want to be open to the world, the donkey who visits me while I’m brushing my teeth.” Another client is calling long distance. We put the caller on speakerphone.

“Have you ever tried to brush the donkey’s teeth?” we ask.

“No but I do keep carrots in the bathroom as treats,” the client says.

“More about us, we want your attention,” they say, banging their hands on the table.

We’re thinking.

“Tiles, cement, mortar, more grass on the roof and paste it down with dung—that’s one way to make a house a home, a bear skin rug, antlers on high, a Sub-Zero, a double dishwasher, a washer dryer where I can see my clothes tumbling ‘round.”

“What should we take away from this?” she asks as she’s getting ready to go.

“You leave with whatever you brought—a dream, an expanding sense of possibility. You leave feeling that when we are done you will live in a place that knows you, that comforts you, where you are safe. You will feel at home. This is only the beginning,” we say.

“This is the way we live,” he says. “This is how we know who we are.”

And as they leave we hear them talking to each other.

“I want. I want. Why is everything so hard?” he says.

“I want it to be effortless and inevitable,” she says.

*And we think to ourselves, I want it to be the thing you remember me by. I want it to be an introduction, a beginning. I want you to know there will be more.*

# Introduction

**Steven Harris**

A point of contention I have with contemporary architecture is that it has become obsessed with the building as an object. The object becomes a commodity, then a style, and finally a brand. In our efforts to resist this, we start from an experience, an absolutely ordinary experience. Climbing a stair, cooking a meal, bathing—the kinds of simple, banal things people do every day. In considering what we wanted this first book of our firm's work to be, we realized what better way to get at the relationship between architecture and the lived experience than to break it down into these quotidian activities. Thus, the chapters of our book were born: Climb, Clean, Enter, Lounge, Cook, Sleep, Swim, Study, Play, Dine, Cultivate, Warm, and Drive.

Often in looking through an architect's monograph you are hard-pressed to tell which image goes with which project, or even if there is more than one project represented, because of how astonishingly similar everything can look. And if you want that style, you go to that architect, and that is what you get.

It is a product, and while it can be quite beautiful, it can betray a lack of connection between what is built and how one actually lives.

Instead, we aspire to an architecture that resists commodification, one that suppresses overt authorship and branding and that flirts with anonymity. Our work is marked by a distrust of what is fashionable at any given time if it is not rooted in the daily lives of those who occupy the spaces. As a result, each space we create is genuinely of its moment—perhaps influenced by trends, but not defined or consumed by them. And it follows that they are all unique. Each has its own context, and the differences from one to the next arise because of this fundamental truth: People are not the same and do not occupy spaces in the same ways.

In looking through the pages of this book, it is immediately evident that the projects do not all look alike and are not all of one style. The images reflect work for very different people in very different places.



But interestingly enough, once you begin to compare images that appear to be dramatically different from one another, similarities and relationships arise amid the juxtapositions and contrasts. While richly varied in character and encompassing a remarkable range of moods, the collection of images nonetheless reveals a common discourse that unites the body of work.

Whether for a multi-structure compound in the country or a pied-à-terre in the city, our design strategy is purposeful and specific. Spaces are precisely crafted and carefully thought through so that each element finds itself in place. Two adjectives I have always loved are effortless and inevitable. If you can make something feel like that, you have won; because it does not call attention to itself, and yet everything falls together perfectly, making the space a pleasure to inhabit.

Our architecture is made to be walked through and lived in, not just looked at. We pay careful

attention to how people spend their time, and the mundane and intimate daily activities are not merely acknowledged, but glorified. There is an inherent beauty in the repetition of personal routines, and good design should allow, enable, and indulge these familiar patterns, rather than prescribe or dictate them. This has been our ambition over the past twenty-five years, and we reflect on this characteristic of our work with pride and the utmost intention to continue to remain true to how people live.

Ultimately, spaces derive their meaning from personal experiences, rather than a submittal to external standards and imposed schemes. I can only hope this book succeeds in celebrating the potential for innovation, singularity, and the sublime within the ordinary and the everyday.







**Climb**

Your experience of a staircase depends on whether it is designed to bring one room into another or to separate them. For example, the staircase in a townhouse in New York City's Greenwich Village gives the sense of a scroll unfurling from above, inviting you up to the penthouse. Here the stair extends one room into the other, encouraging one to explore the space upstairs. On the other hand, the little zebrawood spiral staircase at a house in Ormond Beach, Florida, creates a totally different experience. Think Superman's phone booth. Going up the stair is like entering a magic cabinet and emerging into a space distinct from both the floor below and the stair itself. In this case, the staircase intentionally separates rooms to amplify a sense of privacy.

A building's site can inform the design and character of a staircase. For a house on a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Cabo San Lucas, the opportunity to literally carve a staircase from the previously unexposed rock was serendipitous. We didn't know the rock was going to be there until we began building, but the discovery allowed us to use the natural site in a dynamic way and create the stair from the rock itself.

Staircases may also reflect the character and culture of a building and its surroundings. The stair on the outside of one of our first houses, in Atlantic Beach, Florida, is derived from the watchtowers of fire wardens seen in the woods of the northern part of the state. The stair atop another Florida beach house is based on the tuna towers of sport fishing boats. Just as a fisherman climbs the tower to spot fish, you're up there to look out at the sea.























































17  
Climb







**Clean**

There are so many things you can do with a bathroom, but it ultimately has to be functional and true to how someone lives day to day. One of the most interesting bathrooms we have designed belongs to a Russian urologist who reads medical journals in the bathtub for up to four hours at a time. For such a unique use, we designed a stainless steel bathtub that not only fits his body perfectly, but also recycles hot water so the bath will stay warm for the requisite four hours.

Bathrooms can also take on the character of a place or site. At a house in Croatia, one bathroom was very popular with the donkey that lived on the island. The donkey would stick her head in through the window, so in the morning while brushing your teeth you might turn to the left, and there she would be. A bathroom in a Florida house playfully utilizes cheap broken ceramic tiles, the kind you might find in local roadside motels that advertise “clean” rooms for fifteen dollars a night.

Even in the bathroom, views to the outside through windows and skylights can play an integral role in how the space is experienced. The bathtub of a house in Oldwick, New Jersey, has windows at its foot and side so that when the owner is lying in the bath she can look out to the garden or across to other interior rooms. There is a relaxing nature afforded by the lavender color and the connectedness to nearby spaces and the surrounding landscape. An outdoor shower at a house in Mexico is open to the air and has carved stone walls, so you are effectively showering in an extension of the surrounding landscape as it integrates with the built environment.





































































**Enter**



Peter Carl, a professor of architecture at the University of Cambridge, wrote his thesis at Princeton on the psychoanalysis of the place of arrival. Essentially, he examined how you arrive somewhere—the various stations and degrees of movement into a space, how you go from being outside to being inside. To Carl, there is no line at the doorway that divides outside and in. There is the porch; there is the stair; there is the door; there is the thickness of the doorjamb: it is all of that, and it is fascinating to think about the spaces that you enter before you actually enter. There is a gradual transition that begins as early as when you exit the main road while you are driving, or when you step into the elevator to go up to your apartment.

Circulation through spaces and between rooms is essential to the experience of being in a home. Hallways and passageways give views to art and fireplaces and furniture in the rooms beyond, and entry halls allow for a moment of pause to set your keys down, take in your first impression of a space, or enjoy a homecoming after being away. We are intrigued by how clients enter in stages from the street or driveway, where they set down their belongings, and where they sit or go next, and it is important to design with these habits in mind.































































# Lounge



Lounging takes place both indoors and out. A place to sit back or sprawl out is the obvious universal requirement. Beyond that, the mood of the room, the connection to nearby spaces, and the view to what's around are the important elements that come into play.

Some of our favorite moments have to do with how one occupies the edge of a room. For example, there is a window seat at a house in Croatia where you are practically in the window. Window seats have this extraordinary intimacy about them, but you are also right there connected to the outside. It brings to mind Vermeer, who liked to portray women sitting and sewing or reading at the window. Proximity to windows and the outdoors is critical in some cases, especially when there are sweeping views to enjoy. At the same time, it depends on where you are. We made the living room of a Park Avenue apartment very warm and enveloping to provide a sense of tranquility and serenity, an escape from the bustle outside. In this space, lounging is internally focused.

The way outdoor lounging areas are experienced has the potential to shift based on the time of day, the weather, or design elements. The lit outdoor living area at a house in Palm Beach, with a vivid blue night sky and illuminated green grass, has an atmosphere that is slightly surreal and Edward Hopper-like in hue and brightness.









































































A photograph of a kitchen cabinet with a glass door. The cabinet is filled with various dishes, including stacks of plates, bowls, and a large bowl. The word "Cook" is overlaid in white text on the glass door. The cabinet has a silver handle and a silver knob. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on the dishes.

**Cook**



The established protocol for designing spaces for cooking and dining tends to be inconsistent with the lived experience. One traditional paradigm for the kitchen requires it to remain tucked away behind closed doors, while the dining room becomes an idealized room. Each space is contained and sealed off. Very few people actually live that way anymore, and in fact, it's often quite the opposite. A kitchen that we design may open to a dining room or a sitting room, or become a destination in itself, a gathering point for family and friends.

People have very different approaches to cooking, so in thinking about kitchens, it is critical to understand what this activity means for a client. Functionally, it is important to know how much storage space to provide, as well as the appropriate surfaces and appliances needed for the type of cooking and entertaining that will take place. If appearance comes before function, a kitchen will inevitably fail. This is not to say that program and function supersede aesthetics; rather, they go hand in hand.

For some, cooking is a more utilitarian act; however, it can be an act of community, generosity, and love. Even for those who rarely cook, the kitchen is still the central place people gravitate toward during parties and gatherings.

















































































A white door is shown in a close-up, slightly angled view. The door has a small window at the top left with a white frame and a metal latch. A silver handle is visible on the left side. The door is set against a dark, possibly black, background. The word "Sleep" is written in large, white, bold letters across the center of the door.

**Sleep**

The act of turning the light off and closing your eyes is more complex than you think. Whether you sleep facing the right or the left, if you enjoy drifting off to the blue glow of a television or the roar of a swamp cooler—these habits have a significant impact on how we design a bedroom. What you see when you wake up is a critical part of your experience of the room. A small window in one bedroom at a house in upstate New York is carefully placed to allow a peek out to the landscape. A floor-to-ceiling glass wall in a Miami Beach condo opens the bedroom toward the ocean beyond; when you open your eyes you see the sunrise over the Atlantic.

Bedrooms in Croatia and Mexico feature exposed stone walls mixed with mid-century and modern furnishings and fittings, connecting the spaces to their natural landscapes and creating an elegance that maintains a modesty and simplicity suited to their surroundings. One bedroom in Croatia was designed to be cross-ventilated and catch the breeze from the sea, negating the need for air conditioning.

Between the ages of four and twelve I completely rebuilt my bedroom nine or ten times. At one point, there were spaceships on a brown sky; at another, an eight-foot tall billboard image of a green olive. As children, we often create magical worlds in our bedrooms. A young girl's bedroom in an Upper East Side townhouse features window shades laminated with black and white cityscape scenes. She has privacy when the shades are down, but the atmosphere and the architecture of the city can still be enjoyed rather than shut out. At a house on the beach in Florida, a children's bedroom doubles as a playroom with painted trees and twin unicorn headboards, capturing the air of fantasy and imagination the beachside has for a child.









































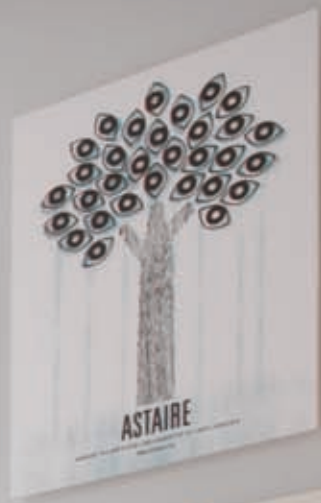
































**Swim**



Swimming pools are among my favorite things to design. The pool at one Florida beach house is everything a pool is about: there is a proper lap lane for swimming, as well as a very shallow section to lie and get a tan. There is a spot to sit and relax on a ledge in the water, and there are even little yellow cocktail tables built into the pool that give you a place to put down your drink while swimming. The unabashed visual liveliness of this particular pool meshes seamlessly with the rowdy culture of its locale—the festive seaside communities of Daytona Beach and Ormond Beach, Florida.

Seen at dusk, the pool at another Florida house evokes a more serene mood, a sort of Lana Turner or Joan Crawford ghost-of-Palm Beach feeling. In a completely different moment, the swimming area in the pond at a house in Columbia County, New York, recalls *The Swimming Hole*, the Thomas Eakins painting of all the boys diving into the water from a rock. The experience of the pool at a house in Mexico uses an old Richard Neutra trick, collapsing the space between the pool and the Pacific Ocean down below.

The wonderful thing about the pool in Oldwick, New Jersey, is that the pool house, designed after a corn crib, nods to the intrigue of being able to watch people by the pool without being seen. While an undergraduate at New College in Sarasota, Florida, I lived for a year in a well-known Paul Rudolph guesthouse (the one with all the wooden jalousie windows), and I always loved being able to sit behind the windows and look out, knowing those on the outside couldn't see in.



















































A photograph of a study desk. At the top, a window looks out onto a white building with a green tree. Below the window, the word "Study" is written in large white letters on a grey wall. In the foreground, a dark blue desk holds a black telephone, a pencil, papers, a turtle shell, and a long wooden object.

# Study



A teacher of mine once said that all you need to start your homework is fresh air and good light. With the portability of laptops and mobile phones, the office no longer needs to be a permanent and confined room, yet there is a sense of peace about a space set aside for reading or working. Whatever form they take, studies and libraries are best when they are tailored to how they are used day to day. A welcoming fire and tall bookshelves paired with a desk and a couch give a sense of coziness and comfort in an Upper West Side townhouse built for a writer. A desk space in a film studio in Manhattan's Lower East Side is clean and spare, separated from the surrounding studios without being too disconnected.

Often a view out can be inspiring and a nice break for the eyes. A desk in a bedroom in Miami Beach lets you have it either way; the bedroom wall can remain closed or swing open to views of the Atlantic Ocean. A dark, wood-paneled library in an Upper East Side townhouse is softened by light spilling in through floor-to-ceiling French doors and windows. A painting studio at a house in Croatia has enormous sliding doors that allow the room to fully open to the outdoors, giving views of the landscape down to the Adriatic and out to the other islands beyond.



























































A photograph of a child's play area. In the center, a brown rocking horse with a white mane and a pink saddle sits on a dark grey mat. The mat is bordered by a light-colored concrete path. To the right, a wooden deck is visible, and a garden bed runs along its edge, containing various green plants and small yellow and purple flowers. The word "Play" is written in large, white, bold letters across the middle of the image.

**Play**



Creating spaces for enjoying fun activities is just as critical as making time for leisure at home. Sometimes it is as simple as a piano or a gaming table set for checkers, chess, or backgammon in a living or sitting room, and other times an entire room is devoted to play. A townhouse on Manhattan's Upper East Side enjoys a private gym with a glass and steel ceiling. An Upper West Side playroom houses a pool table and opens on both sides to outdoor terraces. In both cases, the rooms are light and airy and connected to the outdoors.

The materials used in areas for play can be evocative, adding to the experience of a space. For the back garden of another New York City townhouse we developed a swirling poured rubber floor for the garden's main space that was inspired by landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx's sidewalks along Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro. We were able to create more expansive outdoor places for play at a house in Columbia County, New York, with its sweeping croquet lawn of plaid grass and mown paths carved through the meadows.

































WORLD

BERENICE ABBOTT CHANGING NEW YORK  
ROBERT FRANK  
PASSAGE





















**Dine**



The dining table is the forum for everyday life. It's where you eat, but it's also where you read the paper, play bridge, plan a vacation, pay your bills, do your homework. Often the dining table is the only clean horizontal surface in the house. We seem to spend half our lives there, so defining how this space relates to a house and its surroundings is essential.

Historically, the dining room was referred to as "The Hall." It consisted of a table in a large nondescript room set apart from the rest of the house. Now, the dining room often has a relationship with or is part of other rooms: the kitchen, the living room, the library. The concept of the dining room has become more fluid, and can extend to the outdoors. In the case of a New York City townhouse, a rear garden turns into a dining room surrounded by walls carpeted in ivy.

But above all, the dining room is a social space. The success of a dining room table is measured by how long people linger after a meal. We often choose comfortable chairs that roll and swivel, so you can sit and relax with your company. You can also enjoy breezes and views of your surroundings when dining rooms have windows on opposite ends, such as those at houses in Croatia, Miami Beach, and upstate New York.



































































A vibrant garden scene featuring a variety of plants. In the foreground, there are large, rounded green leaves, possibly from a squash or pumpkin plant. Behind them, tall, thin grasses in shades of green and yellow dominate the middle ground. To the right, a cluster of small purple flowers adds a splash of color. In the background, there are more diverse plants, including some with white flowers and a large, light-colored rock on the left. The overall atmosphere is one of a well-maintained and diverse garden.

**Cultivate**



We have always believed the spaces between and outside buildings are as important as the enclosed areas within. This perhaps is most apparent at the more expansive compounds—in New Jersey, New York, South Africa, and Croatia, for example—where courtyards and terraces formed between the multi-structured houses become critical and figured exterior spaces. But it holds true in the city as well. The glass-walled penthouse of a townhouse in Greenwich Village and its adjacent roof garden with cherry trees enjoy a reciprocal relationship. The bamboo-lined private garden of a West Village townhouse is the exact same size as the house itself. Its fully blind walls on three sides allowed the addition of a glass rear facade to the townhouse, so from each floor inside you see the garden beyond, and from the garden you get a dramatic view looking back at the entire house.

Outdoor spaces essentially become garden rooms that seamlessly integrate with the experience of the interior spaces of a home. At a house in Columbia County, New York, these exterior “rooms” include a thyme terrace, a croquet lawn, and a fire pit in the outdoor living area. With the cityscape as its backdrop, the rooftop of a Tribeca apartment provides areas for lounging, cooking, and dining, and even spaces where the client’s dogs can roam about.

Ultimately, cultivate is about a relationship to the environment, how you see and experience the connection between where you live and the outside world. Characteristically, our structures often arise from a conception of the surrounding landscape, in how they are situated, how they open to the outdoors, how strategically placed windows give views out. And it can be just as powerful to be on the outside looking in.



























































A photograph of a campfire at dusk. The fire is burning brightly in a metal fire pit, with several logs visible. In the foreground, two metal chairs with mesh seats are positioned on a grassy area. To the left, a blue building with horizontal siding is partially visible, with a warm light emanating from an opening. The background shows dark trees and a sky with soft, orange and blue hues from the setting sun.

**Warm**



I have always loved fires. Even as a child growing up in Florida, I would cajole my mother into turning down the air conditioning to make the house cold enough so that we could have a fire.

Having a fireplace in the living room is the most obvious choice, since it is a room inherently based on comfort and gathering. Beyond that, a fireplace is a welcome addition to a dining room, a library, a bedroom, and so on. There is the whole sense of the fire being at the center of things, and that it is dynamic—you are able to watch it and see it move. The outdoor fire pit at a house in upstate New York brings people together—they huddle, they gather. So there is the communal factor, and then there is the physical aspect of warmth.

Fire can also have an aesthetic impact on the way a room is experienced. The glass-enclosed penthouse of a West Village townhouse is warmed visually (and literally) by twin fireplaces. A house in Mexico enjoys accents of dancing gas-fed flames in the living room and master bedroom, and in a house in Croatia, a massive black steel hood provides a striking visual impact against the restored fifteenth-century stone walls.



































































A landscape photograph taken at dusk or dawn. In the foreground, there is a dark, calm body of water reflecting the light from the sky. A grassy bank rises from the water's edge, illuminated by a warm, golden light that creates a shimmering effect on the grass. In the background, several trees are silhouetted against the sky. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and the overall color palette is dominated by blues, greys, and warm yellows.

**Drive**



As someone who is totally car-obsessed, I have given a lot of thought to cars and how they interact both aesthetically and functionally with houses. The whole concept of drive is about engaging with how you approach a house in a car, because I think that is an essential part of arriving. You have to understand how people reach their houses each day and what they're really doing to get there.

The experience of coming home starts way before you are at the front door, and the driveway is an important part of the approach. For a house in Columbia County, New York, we studied the topography and worked with landscape designer Margie Ruddick to regrade the land and carve a winding driveway into the terrain. The driveway has a relationship with the contours of the land, and the house appears, disappears, and reappears as you approach, so it is a very lyrical experience. It would be unfortunate to land at a carved out shelf and then walk up to this unique terrain; this way you are already in the topography as you arrive.













































120









iv-v  
**Greenwich Village  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
1999



5  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991



10  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991



16  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
1999



22  
**Upper East Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
1992

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## Climb

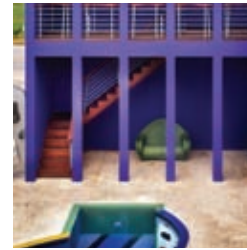
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6  
**South Street Seaport  
Loft**  
New York City  
2001



11  
**South Street Seaport  
Loft**  
New York City  
2001



17  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991



23  
**South Street Seaport  
Loft**  
New York City  
2001



1  
**Upper East Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
2005



7  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



12-13  
**House**  
Elaphite Islands, Croatia  
2008

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## Clean

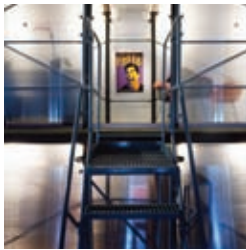
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24-25  
**House**  
Elaphite Islands, Croatia  
2008



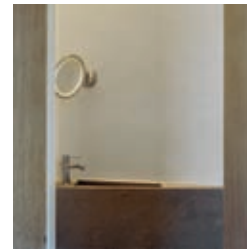
3  
**Greenwich Village  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2008



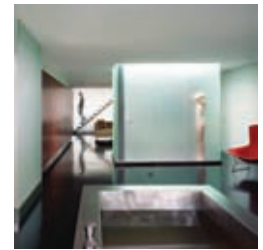
8  
**Lower East Side Studio**  
New York City  
1996



14  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
2009



18-19  
**Upper West Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
2007



26-27  
**South Street Seaport  
Loft**  
New York City  
2001



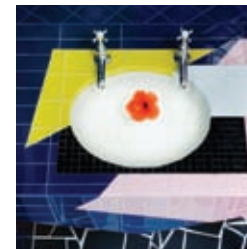
4  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991



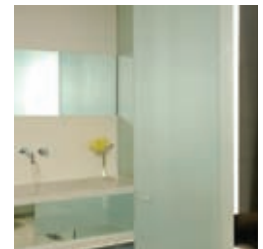
9  
**House**  
Napa Valley  
2008



15  
**House**  
Atlantic Beach, FL  
1988



21  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991



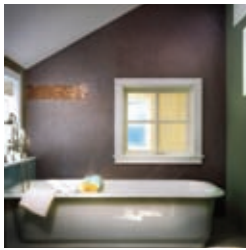
28-29  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



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# Lounge

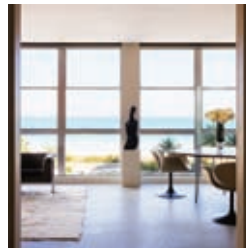
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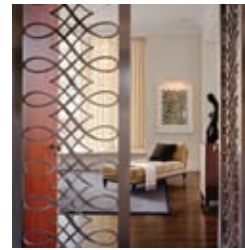
30  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



36–37  
**Apartment**  
Miami Beach  
2008



44–45  
**Apartment**  
Miami Beach  
2008



52  
**Upper East Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
1999



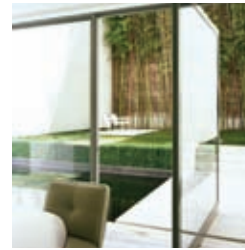
31  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



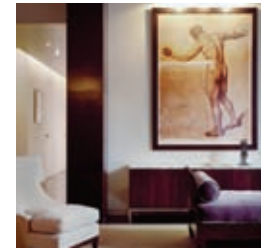
38–39  
**House**  
Elaphite Islands, Croatia  
2008



46–47  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991



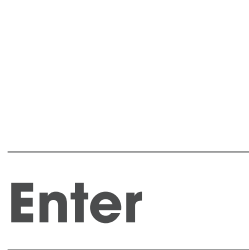
53  
**West Village Townhouse**  
New York City  
2006



58–59  
**Upper East Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
2003



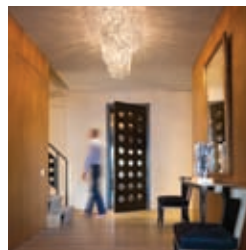
32–33  
**West Village Townhouse**  
New York City  
2006



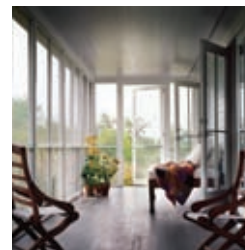
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# Enter

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48  
**Tribeca Apartment**  
New York City  
2009



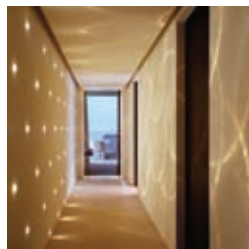
54–55  
**House**  
New Preston, CT  
2001



61  
**House**  
Elaphite Islands, Croatia  
2008



34  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



40–41  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



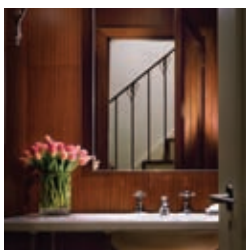
49  
**Greenwich Village  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2008



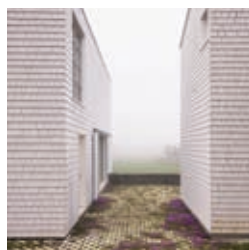
56  
**House**  
Kent, CT  
1990



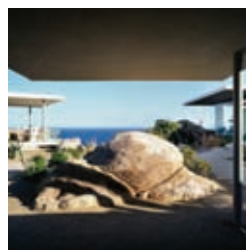
62–63  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991



35  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
1999



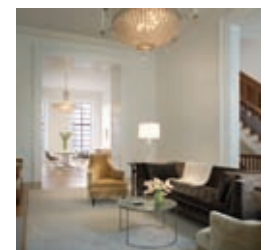
43  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
2009



50–51  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



57  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



64–65  
**Brooklyn Heights  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2007





66-67  
**House**  
Palm Beach  
2003

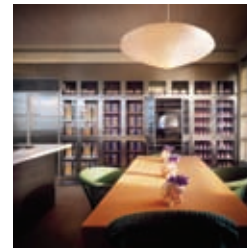


73  
**Greenwich Village  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2008

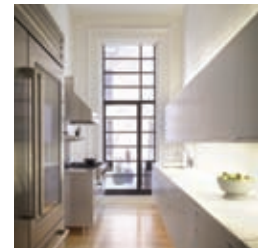
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# Cook

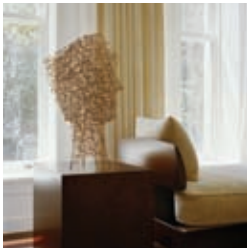
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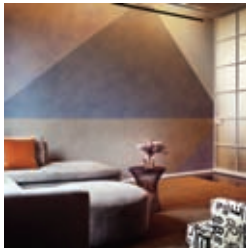
86-87  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991



93  
**Brooklyn Heights  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2007



68  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2005



74-75  
**Upper East Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
2003



80-81  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



88  
**West Village Townhouse**  
New York City  
2006



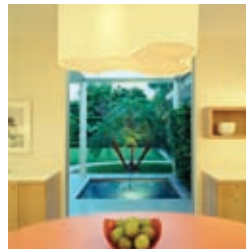
94-95  
**Greenwich Village  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
1999



69  
**Greenwich Village  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
1999



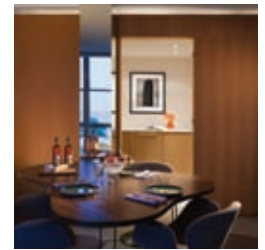
76-77  
**House**  
Palm Beach  
2003



83  
**House**  
Palm Beach  
2003



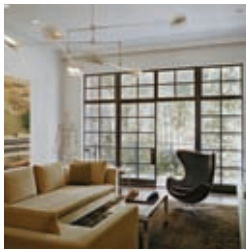
89  
**House**  
Palm Beach  
1996



96  
**Apartment**  
Miami Beach  
2008



70-71  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



78-79  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2005



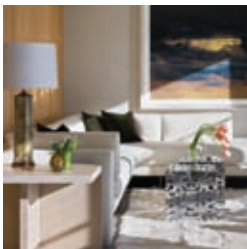
84  
**Upper West Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
1993



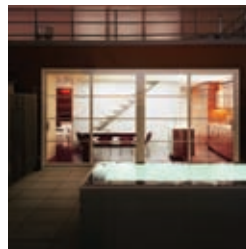
90-91  
**House**  
New Preston, CT  
2001



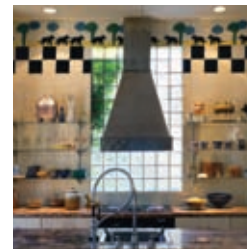
97  
**Upper West Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
2007



72  
**Apartment**  
Miami Beach  
2008



85  
**South Street Seaport  
Loft**  
New York City  
2001

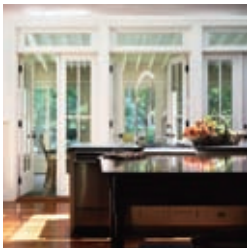


92  
**House**  
Atlantic Beach, FL  
1988



98-99  
**Upper East Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
1999

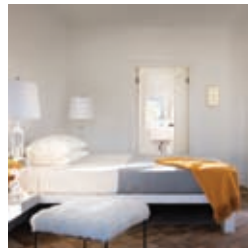




100–101  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



108–109  
**Apartment**  
Miami Beach  
2008



116–117  
**House**  
Elaphite Islands, Croatia  
2008

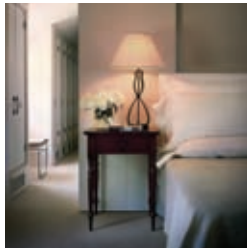


130–131  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
2009

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## Sleep

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110  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



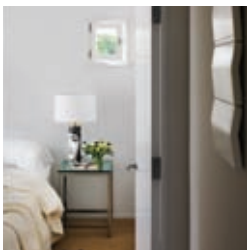
118–119  
**Upper East Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
2005



124–125  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



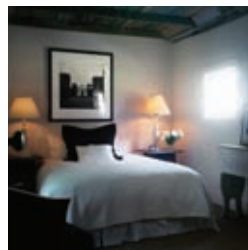
132  
**House**  
Palm Beach  
2003



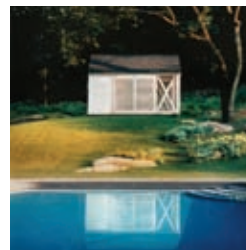
102–103  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
2009



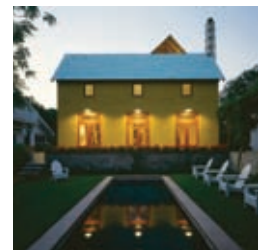
111  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
1999



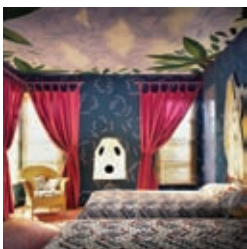
120–121  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



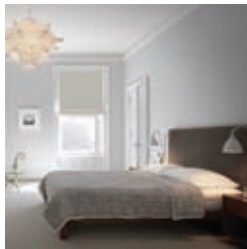
127  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



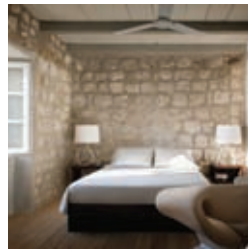
133  
**House**  
Atlantic Beach, FL  
1988



105  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991



112–113  
**Brooklyn Heights  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2007



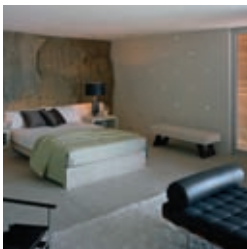
122–123  
**House**  
Elaphite Islands, Croatia  
2008



128  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



134–135  
**House**  
Napa Valley  
2008



106–107  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



114–115  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2005



129  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991



136–137  
**House**  
Cape Town, South Africa  
2009



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# Study

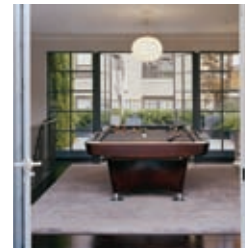
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144–145  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



153  
**Greenwich Village  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
1999



160  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2005



166–167  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
2009



138–139  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994

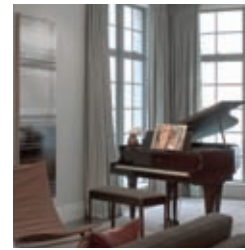


146–147  
**House**  
Elaphite Islands, Croatia  
2008

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# Play

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161  
**Upper East Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2004

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# Dine

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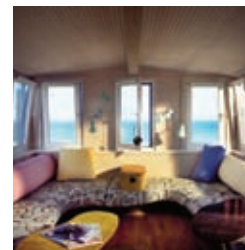
141  
**Apartment**  
Miami Beach  
2008



148–149  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
1999



154–155  
**Upper East Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2004



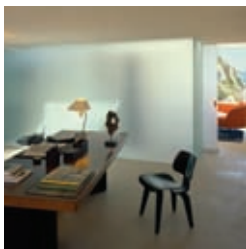
162–163  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991



168–169  
**Brooklyn Heights  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2007



142  
**Lower East Side Studio**  
New York City  
1996



150–151  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



157  
**Upper East Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2007



164  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



171  
**House**  
Elaphite Islands, Croatia  
2008



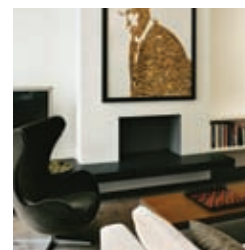
143  
**Upper East Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
2005



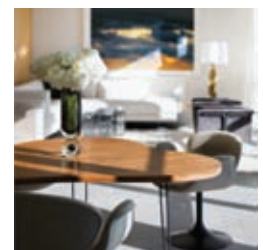
152  
**Upper East Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2007



158–159  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
2009

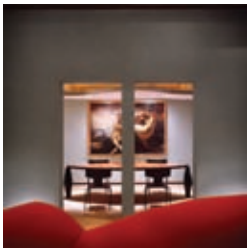


165  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2005



172  
**Apartment**  
Miami Beach  
2008





173  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991

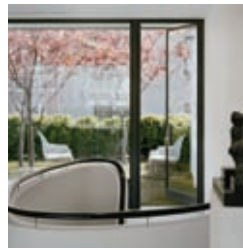


179  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
1999

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## Cultivate

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192–193  
**Greenwich Village  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2008



199  
**Greenwich Village  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2008



174  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2005



180–181  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



186–187  
**House**  
Cape Town, South Africa  
2009



194–195  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
2009



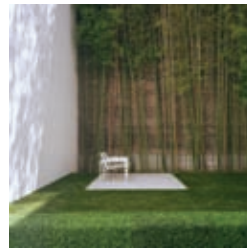
200–201  
**House**  
Elaphite Islands, Croatia  
2008



175  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
1999



182  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



189  
**West Village Townhouse**  
New York City  
2006



196  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2005

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## Warm

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176–177  
**West Village Townhouse**  
New York City  
2006



183  
**Upper East Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
2003



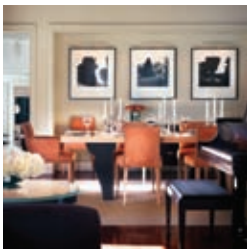
190  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2005



197  
**Tribeca Apartment**  
New York City  
2009



202–203  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
2009



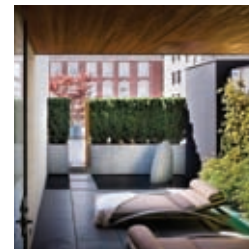
178  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



184–185  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
2009



191  
**Farm**  
Paarl, South Africa  
1997



198  
**Upper East Side  
Apartment**  
New York City  
2005



205  
**House**  
New Preston, CT  
2001





206–207  
**House**  
Elaphite Islands, Croatia  
2008



214–215  
**Upper East Side  
Apartment**  
New York  
2005



223  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



230–231  
**House**  
New Preston, CT  
2001



208–209  
**South Street Seaport  
Loft**  
New York City  
2001



216–217  
**House**  
Oldwick, NJ  
1994



224–225  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
2009



232  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
2009



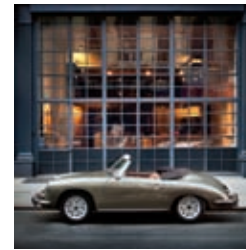
210–211  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



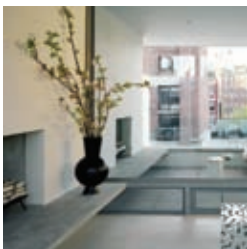
218–219  
**House**  
Cabo San Lucas  
2001



226  
**House**  
Ormond Beach, FL  
1991



233  
**Steven Harris Architects**  
New York City  
2000



212  
**West Village Townhouse**  
New York City  
2006

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# Drive

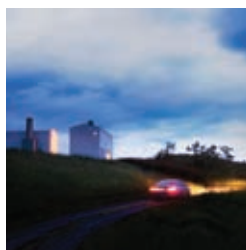
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227  
**House**  
Palm Beach  
1996



213  
**Upper West Side  
Townhouse**  
New York City  
2005



220–221  
**House**  
Columbia County, NY  
2009



228–229  
**House**  
Palm Beach  
2003



# Acknowledgments

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This firm is named Steven Harris Architects, and it is not insignificant that the word Architects is plural. From the very beginning, Lucien Rees Roberts has been instrumental to virtually every one of our projects, from both an architectural and interiors standpoint, and I am ever grateful for his integral role in the success of our work. I am also indebted to the tireless efforts of the diverse and talented people who have worked in our office over the years, in particular our senior staff and my fellow partners.

It should be noted that the majority of the work shown here preceded the establishment of Rees Roberts + Partners LLC, which was formed in 2007 to give the Landscape and Interiors departments, formerly part of Steven Harris Architects, a distinct presence within and beyond the firm. We are very grateful for the cohesive and integrated design process that results from having such breadth and depth in our office, and we continue to reap the benefits of working closely with Rees Roberts + Partners.

Our work has always enjoyed a certain richness that is partially a result of the value we place on effective cooperation and collaboration. Although it would be impractical to name every colleague, consultant, and contractor, we would like to mention Ross Dalland, Tim Will, Donald Baerman, and Jack Callahan. We are especially lucky to have been able to collaborate on many projects with the immensely talented

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Finally, we have had the pleasure and great fortune of working with the most intriguing, thoughtful, and unique clients imaginable over these past twenty-five years. We thank them for their collaboration, and for placing their trust in us.

S.H.



# Steven Harris Architects LLP

## 1985 - 2010

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