



For years I dreamed of designing a house built into a hill. Set on the crest of the hill, the house would form what appeared to be a casual, single story courtyard. You would enter this courtyard by walking under part of the house, as if the structure were embracing you. Outside this enclosure, the house would respond to the downward slope of its site; additional stories would be found below the courtyard level, the house filling in as the land fell away. And it would be an upside-down house. The roof would allow for big high-ceilinged public rooms up top, capturing sunlight and sea vistas. The bedrooms would be placed down below, with their own private access to the landscape. At night, you'd sleep more comfortably, as the bedrooms would be cooler.

I actually designed such a house for a site in the Rocky Mountains, but it was never built. Years later, the same clients gave me a second chance, on a bluff overlooking the Atlantic. The project also enabled me to explore the boundary between modernity and tradition. How modern can you make a shingle house without losing what we all love about that style's history? The forms, details, and materials in this house are all recognizably traditional. The gables would be familiar to a resident of Newport in the 1880s, as would the double-hung, divided-light windows, oak floors, and the stone podium. Inside, all but two of the rooms are finished in reclaimed sinker cypress, a material I'd encountered in shingle cottages constructed at the start of the twentieth century.

At the same time, the house is modern in its minimalism. There are no mouldings or trim pieces, rake boards, or window surrounds, no brackets, pilasters, or pediments. The interior is also spare, with simply detailed horizontal planks, paneling, and stonework. The rooms are symmetrical, but they are linked asymmetrically and episodically, and the plan is open. The only doors are those at the study and screened porch, so one room flows into the next. There are the double-

hung windows of yesteryear, but there are also expanses of glass that are purely contemporary. Floor-to-ceiling windows pocket away, most dramatically the view wall in the master bedroom.

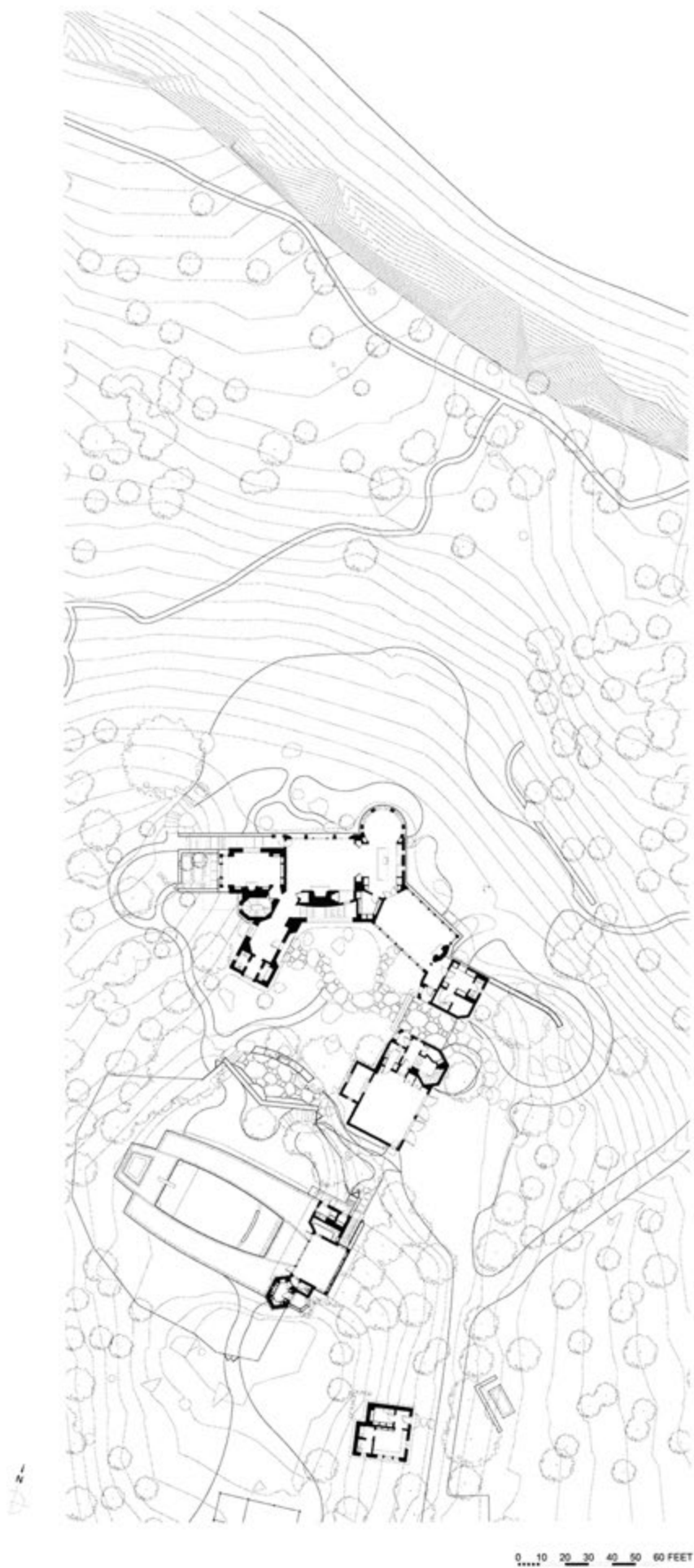
We also stretched the materials beyond traditional limits. The most striking example is the main stair where the paneled wall is sheathed in 27-foot-long curved cypress boards. In a house of many angles, the sweeping curve of this hall is a distinctive transition from public to private realms.

Curves appear elsewhere in the project, reflecting my interest in the relationship between massing and the changing effects of sunlight. This study began many years ago, when I first encountered the ancient pueblos at Chaco Canyon and the brick ruins of Rome. They were sensuous in shape, so that rather than shadow suddenly giving way to sunlight, the illumination of a curved element would unfold maybe over minutes, perhaps over hours.

A striking example involves a pair of matching gables, which are very slightly tilted back so that they glow with sunlight an hour ahead of the rest of the elevation. Similarly the windows are set deep into the facades with canted walls on either side so that they ease slowly into and out of the shadows. These small alterations in form, devised in response to the site and its relationship to the sun, transform what might have been a fixed experience into something animated and changeable.

It has been said that architecture is a long, patient search. As this house suggests, the gestation and clarification of ideas and themes can take years, as can the opportunity to put them into practice. It also takes time to absorb the lessons they have to teach. Yet I find that each house our firm designs enables us to apply and advance the knowledge gained on the previous ones, and that is certainly true of this one.

—Tom Kligerman



PREVIOUS SPREAD: A view through the breezeway across the entry court to the open front door and the landscape beyond the house.

BELOW: The entrance, at left, is a stone pavilion, which abuts the shingled house, with a screened porch at right. The row of windows at center admits light into the grand stair leading to the lower level, while clerestory windows in the curved twin gables bring southern light into the living room. OPPOSITE: Above the breezeway is a guest suite. The screened porch to the left is a link to the main house.





BELOW AND OPPOSITE: The stair to the guest suite is in a tower adjacent to the entry breezeway. Sheathed in reclaimed sinker cypress from the Florida panhandle, the boards are graded so that the darkest are at bottom and grow progressively lighter as they ascend the tower walls.





The domed breakfast room on the upper floor sits in a tower at the end of the kitchen with spectacular views of the Atlantic. The windows pocket slightly to permit natural ventilation. **OVERLEAF:** The downhill elevation reveals the lower level, which is clad in fieldstone. The master bedroom sits beneath the living room; a guest suite is set in the tower below the breakfast room. The gables are slightly back-tilted to catch the early light before it illuminates the facade beneath them; the "scooped out" eyebrow windows slip into and out of the shadows as the sun progresses.











ABOVE: A full-height pocketing door faces the front door in the cypress-paneled foyer. OPPOSITE: Horizontal cypress paneling continues up the curved wall of the stair, where the 27-foot-long boards align with the steps. OVERLEAF, LEFT: Cerasus white oak and leather-lined bookshelves are built into the library walls. OVERLEAF, RIGHT: Stainless-steel guard rail cables pick up on the horizontality of the planks inside and the horizon line beyond.





