



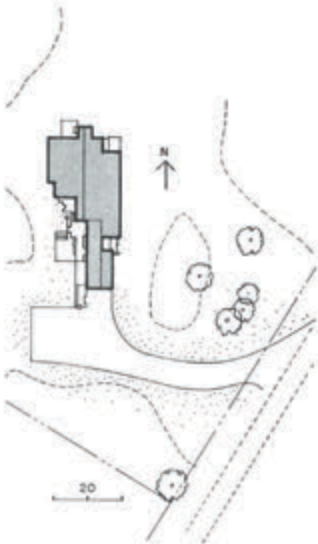
Frantz 3

Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts

By Richard C. Tremaglio



For once, the architectural photographer's convention of unpopulated spaces seems true to life: Richard Tremaglio's retirement house for Beatrice and David Frantz is, in fact, a home that awaits its owners. Year-round residents of Martha's Vineyard, the Frantzes are still firmly ensconced in another dwelling Tremaglio designed for them only a few miles away from the new house. "Frantz 1," a rambling assemblage of personal mementos and hand-crafted structure, was conceived on site and built between 1968 and 1972 through a collaborative effort of architect, client, and friends (see *RECORD*, May 1982). "Frantz 2" is a remodeled tower in the Azores. If each of those buildings is virtually an autobiographical essay, neither was intended as a definitive work; looking ahead to future chapters, the Frantzes foresee a time, maybe five or 10 years hence, when they will need a smaller, more manageable establishment. To that end they providently acquired a secluded two-acre lot and engaged Tremaglio to devise "Frantz 3," a compact yet comfortable retreat that could be rented out until they decide to move in.



The architectural heritage in the Frantzes' neck of the woods, never one of the Vineyard's more fashionable resorts, runs to unpretentious shingled bungalows and ranches. "I hoped to refer to these precedents but also transform them—gently—in a complex mixture of wood-framing methods," the architect says. The seemingly casual arrangement of his manifold transformations belies a coherent esthetic and functional order. Working outward from a "four-poster" of concrete columns (one of which he pushed outside to mark the entry), Tremaglio dovetailed post-and-beam structure, partitions, and movable screens to form a nest of discrete rooms and overlapping spaces. The layout is uncommonly adaptable, permitting the house to be zoned for summer or winter use, and for occupancy either by multiple tenants or by the owners downstairs and a servant or nurse in the loft above.

Outside, the calm horizontals of roof planes and a stringcourse at second-floor level unify the subtly varied rhythm of frame, cladding, and fenestration, and securely link the carport to the main body of the house. Indoors, the masonry columns and a brick hearth reinforce the symbolic focus of a family living and dining area, which is clearly visible from the downstairs bedroom. The Frantzes wanted a house where if one spouse is eventually bedridden, he or she would never feel shut off. Indeed, even a solitary resident need not complain that "nobody's home," according to Tremaglio: "You can sit alone at the table and it's almost as though the three columns are friendly company. They seem to say that you and the things the building is made of are all part of the same place." *D. B.*

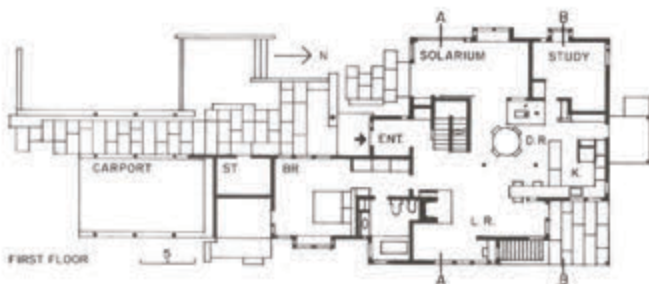


Though he generally avoids historical decoration, Richard Tremaglio explains, "I've always picked up clues from the local environment." His design for the Frantz residence reflects study of the modest cabins and ranch houses that characterize this relatively untraveled part of the island, rather than the classical mansions, Shingle Style villas, and gingerbread cottages that constitute the picture-

postcard image of Martha's Vineyard architecture. At first glance, viewed through the trees, the Frantz house suggests a bungalow that just grew over the years as its owners tacked on a verandah here, a shed there. It is a relaxed effect that suits the Frantzes' quiet way of life, and gives their home an immediate air of "belonging." On closer examination, of course, massing, elevations, and the mix of materials

prove to be anything but ingenuous or haphazard—just as Beatrice and David Frantz are hardly simple backwoodsmen. The entry sequence, for example, has been gracefully contrived to shield the front door from the public road to the east (preceding pages) yet still afford a measure of processional drama. By filtering light and glimpses of foliage and sky, the slatted garage enclosure, overhead trellises, and

open porches ease the transition from landscape to architecture, just as staggered flagstones blur the foundation line, and extruded posts and beams imply continuity with the building's internal structure. Rather than ignore the garage as a regrettable appendage, or disguise it as a mock barn, Tremaglio has integrated it into the body of his design. In similar fashion, a porch and peak-roofed bay dignify the back



door (opposite) which overlooks a customary short cut to the waterfront used by area residents. Gray bleached cedar shingles and painted trim come straight from the familiar Vineyard palette, but the intricate articulation of the facades is very much the product of Tremaglio's own philosophy. Always an advocate of building method as a generator of form, the architect has also recorded the process of decision-

making in the visible fabric of the house. Just as Tremaglio first conceived the plan as a four-square group of concrete columns, which he then modified (transposing one pier to the entry porch) and elaborated to suit his program, he initially ordered the enclosing walls into a series of regular gabled pavilions, which in turn could be expanded or cut away. Like pentimenti, inset panels of slate imply the

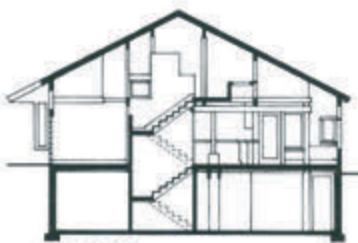
displacement of primary window units, and vertical copper strips (e.g., under the right-hand gable slope in photo opposite) trace the hidden intersection of interior partitions with exterior cladding. Tremaglio contrasts this almost obsessive calculation with his approach to earlier designs: "When I started on the first Frantz house I was a product of the '60s. I lived on site and I encouraged ad hoc

involvement by clients and builders, in the hands-on spirit of the time. Times have changed, though, and partly through my teaching at MIT, I've become more interested in methodological discipline and economy of means. I now feel that I can reach this degree of order better through drawing in the office than by being out in the field struggling for a consensus on which kind of nail to use."

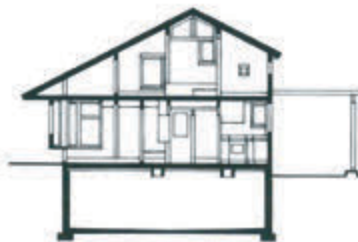


WEST ELEVATION

In winter, sliding partitions can be closed to seal off the solarium (top photo) and increase the thermal efficiency of a wood stove and fireplace in the main living/dining area. During the warmer seasons, clerestory windows, glazed ceiling hatches, and skylights open for ventilation. Meticulous craftsmanship is apparent throughout in exposed structure and finish details that seem to define space without containing it; the effect is equally reminiscent of Japanese architecture and *de Stijl*. "I wanted to bring out the collective quality of space," says Tremaglio. "It is a gathering of people, furniture, and structure." Floors are oak, trim is clear pine, kitchen cabinets are cherry, beams are fir, and first-story ceilings are mango plywood. Tremaglio rightly placed great faith in his contractor: the construction foreman was once a shipbuilder and most of his crew were "local boat types." The few surprises they presented were happy. Having roughly sketched out a curved opening for headroom at the top of the stairs, for example, Tremaglio returned a week later to find a perfect wooden arch in place, complete with imposts. Caught off guard by a "post-Modern" detail that he would not have designed himself, Tremaglio asked the foreman how it came to be. "This is what all the architects around here are doing now," he was told. Tremaglio chose to leave the arch in place as "part of the whole collage."



SECTION A-A



SECTION B-B

Frantz 3
 Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts
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