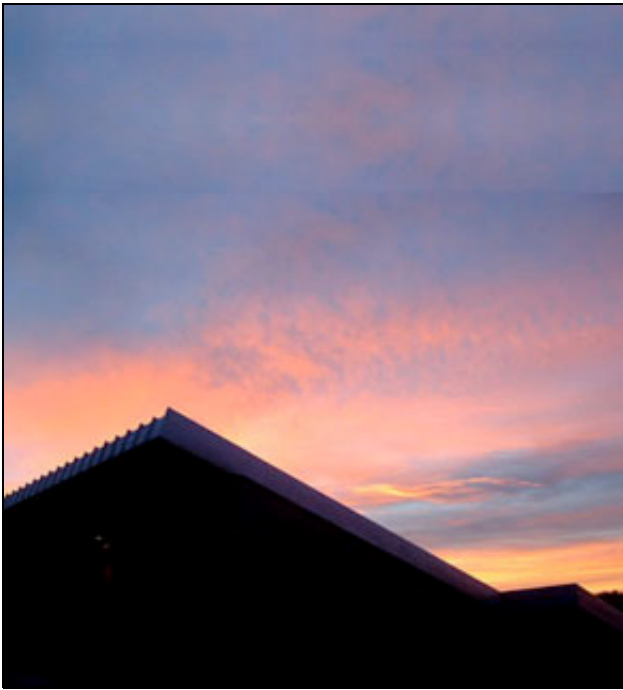


ART BUSSE

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Float House

From the building site there are sweeping views of the Oakland Hills, the San Francisco Bay, and the Santa Cruz Mountains beyond. Although the site looks down on city life, it is surrounded by regional park land. The combination of the vantage point and rustic setting produced a kaleidoscopic display of natural phenomena that changed with the season as well as with the day of the week and hour of the day..

I wanted to do something in recognition of the natural surroundings, something simple and peaceful, that would acknowledge, rather than resist, the downward slope of the hillside. Watching the fog continuously spilling over the hilltop ridges affected me most - the way it floated ever downward. I had also been impressed by photographs of Italian architect Renzo Piano's Genoa studio, on a similar site, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. My thought was to capture the feeling of the hillside within the four walls of the house.

Soon, a gesture came to me - I would rise up on my toes, lean forward to the point of losing my balance and, then just before falling forward, I would throw my arms out like wings to either side of my body and float forward and down. This was the sensation that I wanted

to create upon entering the house, and while proceeding down through it. I repeated the gesture over and over to reinforce it as my design intent. I found a piece of music that carried the same feeling and played it whenever I worked on the drawings. Almost all of my drawings were done at the site where I had a trailer set up for both living and working.

Piano's studio has glass side walls, but my house has neighbors on either side in close proximity. I decided on a scheme that has thick, blank walls from the ground to several feet above head height and then glass above separating the walls from the single sloped continuous shed roof. This provides for privacy while giving the impression that the roof is floating above the walls.

From within the entry door one can look down through the house's three levels and out the glass wall at the back to the forested hillside below. The ceiling mirrors the slope of the hillside and creating an exciting feeling of being carried down the hill, while the floors give the impression of being cut back into the hillside and add a reassuring sense of stability. The floors are Brazilian cherry and lead, in three drops, to the rear decking in mahogany of a similar color - the same color as the surrounding eucalyptus forest floor.

I choose deep, rich and natural colors for the walls - dark browns and greens - while painting the ceiling white. The interior surfaces have just enough texture to soften the light. Even the tiles on the upper decks, bathrooms, and fireplace surround, being unglazed porcelain in dark colors, look to be suede and leather rather than ceramic.

Overall this design demonstrates how the simple (some would say harsh) geometry of modern architecture could, once aligned with the less rigorous geometry of the site, and mediated through the careful selection of material, texture and color, produce a natural and easy feeling to compliment its drama, and intensity.

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