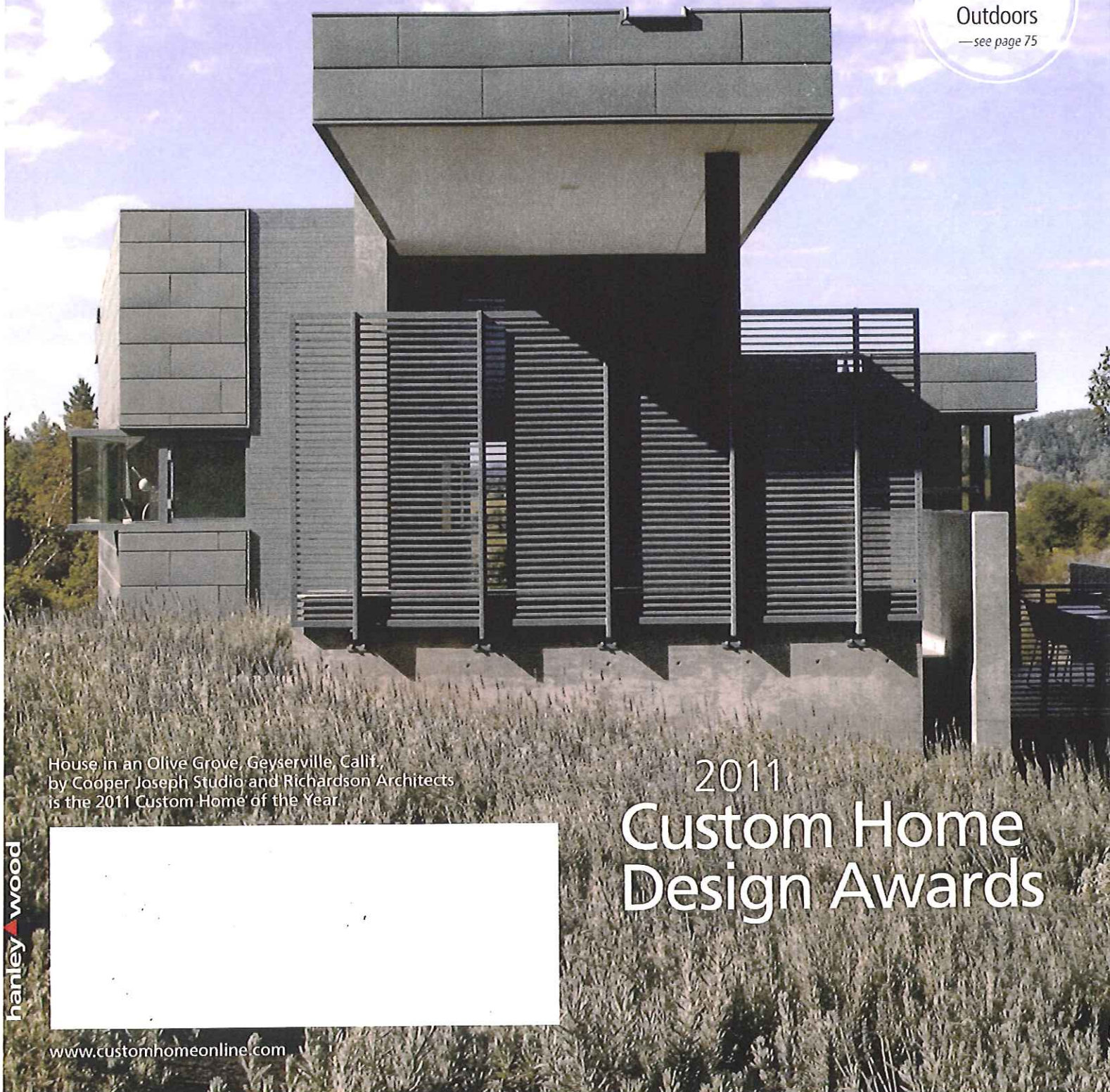


# Custom Home

The Art and Craft of Custom Home Building / May/June 2011

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House in an Olive Grove, Geyserville, Calif.,  
by Cooper Joseph Studio and Richardson Architects  
is the 2011 Custom Home of the Year.

2011  
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# Custom Home of the Year

House in an Olive Grove, Geyserville, Calif.

2011 Custom Home Design Awards

Architects' preliminary design sketches typically include arrows shooting out from the living spaces toward important views. In this compact but powerful Northern California house, those arrows remain, in the form of walls and glass bays that fan out toward vistas that extend over an olive orchard to distant fields and rolling hills. "The idea was to stay away from boxes," explains New York-based architect Wendy Evans Joseph, "to crash open the corners as much as possible."

The building is equally expressive in its section, which descends in three levels from its entry to a two-story, glass-walled living room. "My intention was always to do something very dynamic with the landscape and to use the sec-





Strong geometrical forms and soft, muted colors give this new house an assertive yet respectful presence in its rural landscape.



tion,” says Joseph, who describes the basic scheme as “a stair moving toward the view.” The resulting grandstand arrangement provides elevated views from every space in the house.

Working with partner Chris Cooper and West Coast collaborator Heidi Richardson, Joseph underscored the building’s directional quality with a two-story wall of exposed concrete that slices through the structure, dividing it into public and private zones. The house’s bedroom, at the entry level, overlooks the living room through an opening with operable screens. A second opening, in the living room, creates a cave-like seating recess with a private window. The product of a challenging monolithic pour, the wall anchors not only the building’s geometry, but also its grayscale color scheme. “We kept this very quiet palette,” Joseph says, “and made the impact with the forms and the spaces.”





In an 850-square-foot house, one judge noted, “there’s no room for error,” and here, “every shot is a winning shot. This is a jewel, and it’s hard to argue with a jewel.” Even among a strong field of award win-

ners, House in an Olive Grove took Custom Home of the Year honors by universal acclaim. “With 20 projects on the table,” noted another judge, “it was a resounding ‘Yes.’”—*B.D.S.*

Contained on its uphill side (top, right), the building opens toward the view in both plan and section (top, left; bottom, left). The concrete wall that slices through the building offers a view from the bedroom to the living room, where it contains a private, windowed seating nook (above). The interior palette follows the same grayscale theme as the exterior.

Entrant/Architect: Cooper Joseph Studio, New York; Architect of record: Richardson Architects, Mill Valley, Calif.; Builder: Redhorse Constructors, San Rafael, Calif.; Structural engineer: Tysinger & Associates, Novato, Calif.; Living space: 850 square feet; Site: 25 acres; Construction cost: Withheld; Photographer: Elliott Kaufman. / Visit [www.customhomeonline.com](http://www.customhomeonline.com) for additional images and products.



A screen of ipe slats obscures the existing house's gabled roof and provides a sense of enclosure at an elevated deck. The renovated interior centers on a two-story living room (bottom).



Entrant/Architect: Cooper Joseph Studio, New York; Builder: Redhorse Constructors, San Rafael, Calif.; Landscape architect: Jacobsen Landscaping, Cloverdale, Calif.; Structural engineer: Tysinger & Associates, Novato, Calif.; Living space: 2,700 square feet; Site: 25 acres; Construction cost: Withheld; Photographer: Elliott Kaufman. / Visit [www.customhomeonline.com](http://www.customhomeonline.com) for additional images and products.

2011 Custom Home Design Awards

## Merit Award

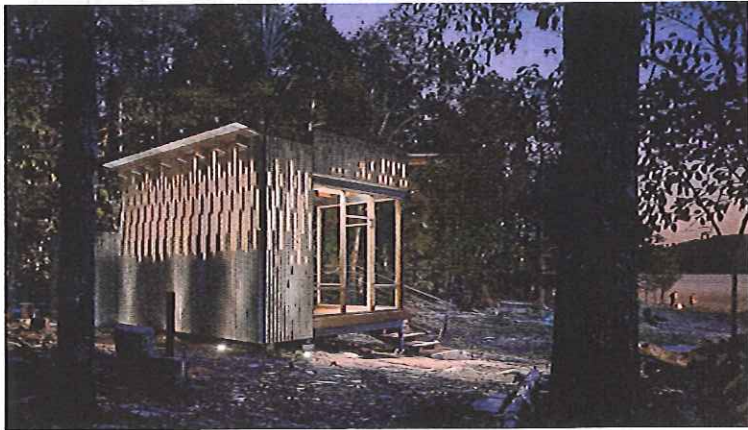
Renovation  
House for Locavore Farmers, Geyserville, Calif.

A few bold, and sometimes counterintuitive, moves utterly transform the character of this Northern California residence. Given the building's spectacular hillside site, architect Wendy Evans Joseph says, "The intention was to make this place more in tune with the landscape and not necessarily bigger." Joseph replaced a large swath of north-facing wall with glass and wrapped the building in a screen of narrow ipe slats that dramatically alters its profile. "You really don't see the existing sloping roof from any perspective," she notes.

To improve a prosaic living room, Joseph simply removed the floor, opening a dramatic two-story space at the core of the house. Flush white oak millwork bridges the two levels, unifying an interior that, as she points out, "is actually smaller than it was. But it feels bigger; you see everything from everywhere." Our jury liked what they saw, calling the project "a powerful renovation; very creative, very nice spatially." As one judge remarked, "It's taking [the original house] a long way, but it's got so much of the existing structure intact."—*B.D.S.*



This lakefront retreat employs off-the-shelf materials—including walls of spaced cedar 2x4s—to sophisticated effect.



This tiny building affords its owner a peaceful, low impact waterfront retreat while also meeting an unusual requirement. Because it's located in the flowage easement of a hydroelectric dam, explains architect Brandon Pace, "it has to be permeable on three sides. You have to let water flow through the building." Pace's solution—unfinished cedar screen walls affixed to a welded steel structural frame—demonstrates how much functional art can be wrought from a stack of 2x4s. "We tried to get what looked like a random pattern from something that's really carefully controlled," says Pace of the wall panels, which were shop fabricated and trucked to the site.

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## Grand Award

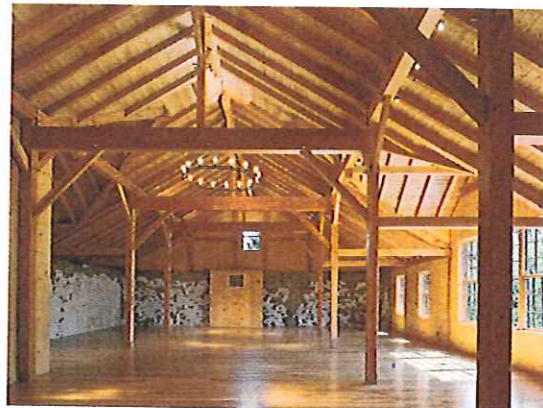
Accessory Building  
Cape Russell Retreat, Sharps Chapel, Tenn.

Sheltered within are a seating area, a small kitchen, and a bench large enough for a nap. A rooftop photovoltaic panel charges a bank of batteries, housed inside the bench, which powers the lights, refrigerator, and ceiling fans. A 400-gallon cistern stores rainwater harvested from the butterfly roof. Our jury called the project "beautiful" and "concise." One judge noted, "It's a folly, but in the richest sense of the word."—*B.D.S.*

Entrant/Architect: Sanders Pace Architecture, Knoxville, Tenn.; Builder: JTI Construction, Knoxville; Living space: 176 square feet; Site: 0.94 acre; Construction cost: \$268 per square foot; Photographer: Jeffrey Jacobs. / Visit [www.customhomeonline.com](http://www.customhomeonline.com) for additional images and products.



The architects kept as much of the barn's original stone walls, built in 1743, as possible. "We were trying to be very reminiscent of what had been there," says Peter H. Zimmerman.



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## Grand Award

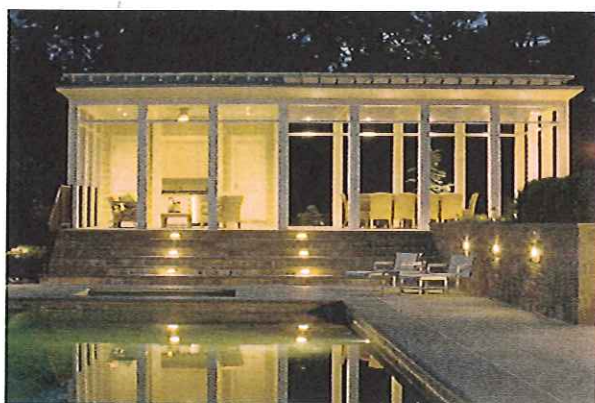
Accessory Building  
Sweetwater Farm Winery, Glen Mills, Pa.

Entrant/Architect: Peter Zimmerman Architects, Berwyn, Pa.;  
Builder: E.B. Mahoney Builders, Bryn Mawr, Pa.; Living  
space: 8,100 square feet; Site: 300-plus acres; Construction  
cost: Withheld; Photographer: Tom Crane. / Visit [www.  
customhomeonline.com](http://www.customhomeonline.com) for additional images and products.

This adaptive reuse of an 18th-century barn captivated the judges' collective imagination. "They found a use for a building that was basically derelict," said one juror admiringly. "It's a noble reuse on a historic property."

Architects Peter H. Zimmerman and Chris Hoffman had to gut most of the interiors because of structural instabilities. They rebuilt a post-and-beam frame within the original stone walls. And they replaced failing portions of those walls, indicating the new sections with red-painted, board-and-batten siding on the exterior. The newer elements beautifully complement the existing stone, as do the salvaged doors, flooring, and hardware that have been restored or repurposed on the interiors. Somehow the building's fresh identity as a winemaking and wine storage space, as well as a reception and meeting venue, seems a natural outgrowth of its original function as a barn and granary.

The architects also opted to replace the roof, adding a cupola that brings light into the heart of the structure. "We liked the notion that at night you could have an oculus lit up like a lantern," Zimmerman says.—*M.D.*



2011 Custom Home Design Awards

## Merit Award

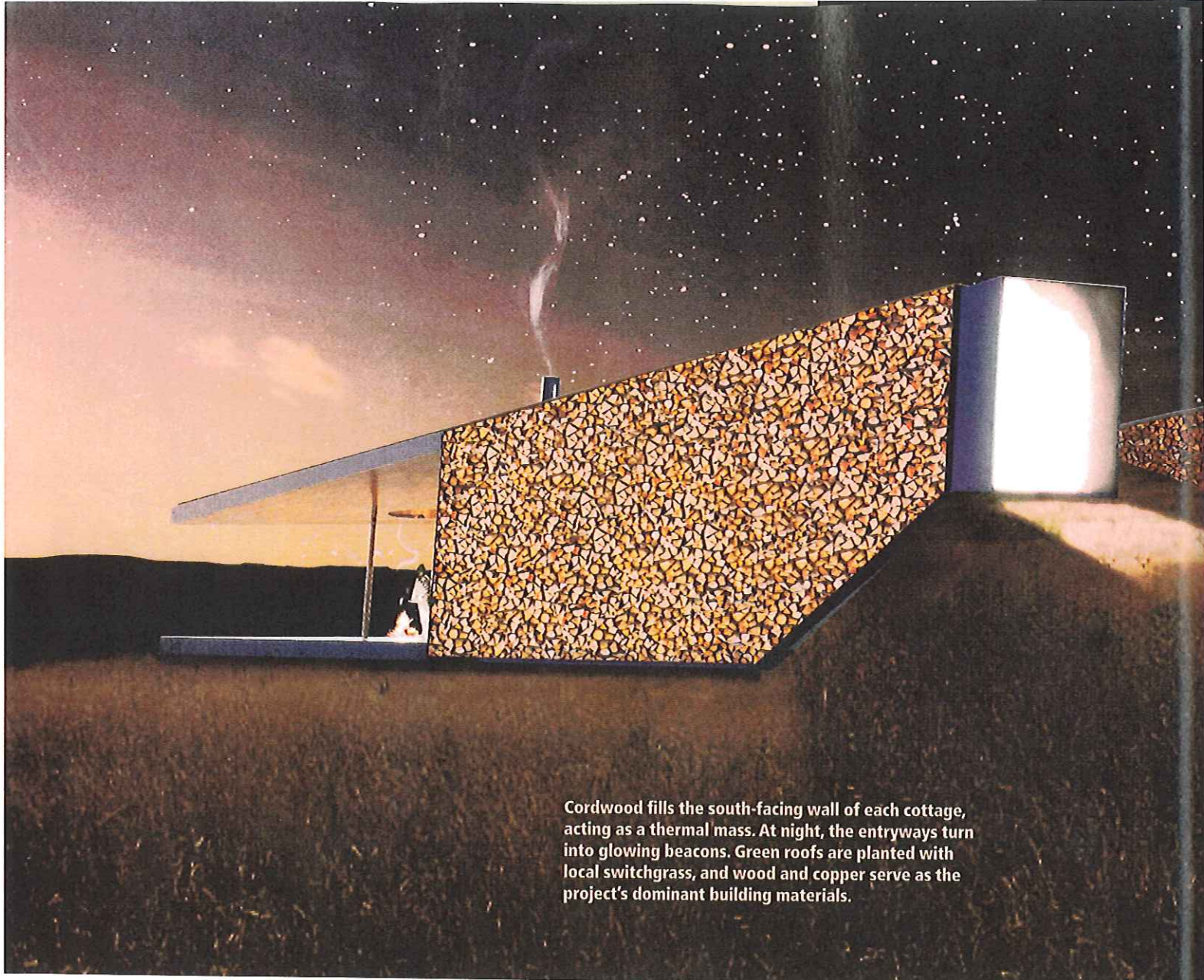
Accessory Building  
O'Brien Pool Pavilion, Greenwich, Conn.

**Inspired by a traditional Indian building type, this pool pavilion seamlessly combines an open trellis and a full-coverage roof.**

perch overlooking the pool. "You're kind of looking down at where the kids are," Saniee explains.

An abstracted homage to traditional Indian pavilions, the building combines a trellised dining area, a covered seating area with a small kitchen, and an enclosed dressing room/bath. A cleverly detailed cornice obscures the transition from open trellis to full-coverage roof. Our jury praised the pavilion's contribution to the site plan. "It's not really a stand-alone building," noted one. "It's got all the merits of being an accessory building, but it contributes to a larger building. It speaks well to the house."—*B.D.S.*

Entrant/Architect: Saniee Architects, Greenwich, Conn.; Builder: H&Y Construction, Brookfield, Conn.; Landscape architect: Sean Jancski Landscape Architects, Rye, N.Y.; Interior designer: Beth Joy Goldstein Interior Design, Forest Hills, N.Y.; Living space: 700 square feet; Site: 2 acres; Construction cost: \$350 a square foot; Photographer: Neil Landino. / Visit [www.customhomeonline.com](http://www.customhomeonline.com) for additional images and products.



Cordwood fills the south-facing wall of each cottage, acting as a thermal mass. At night, the entryways turn into glowing beacons. Green roofs are planted with local switchgrass, and wood and copper serve as the project's dominant building materials.

2011 Custom Home Design Awards

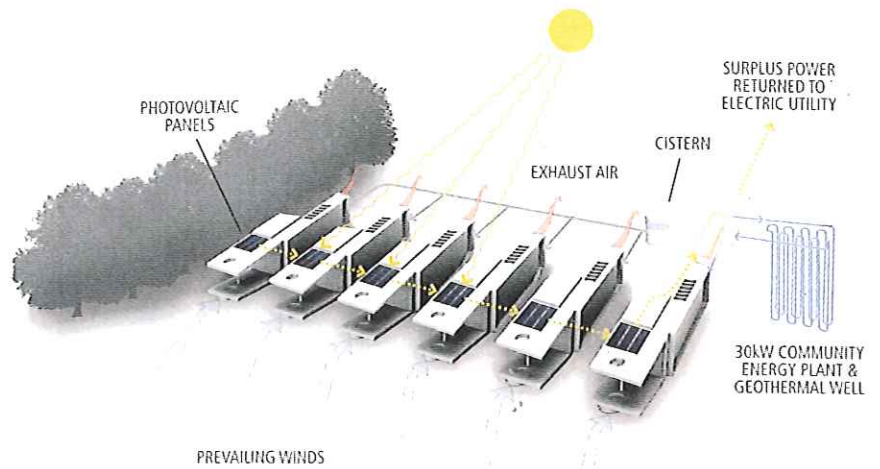
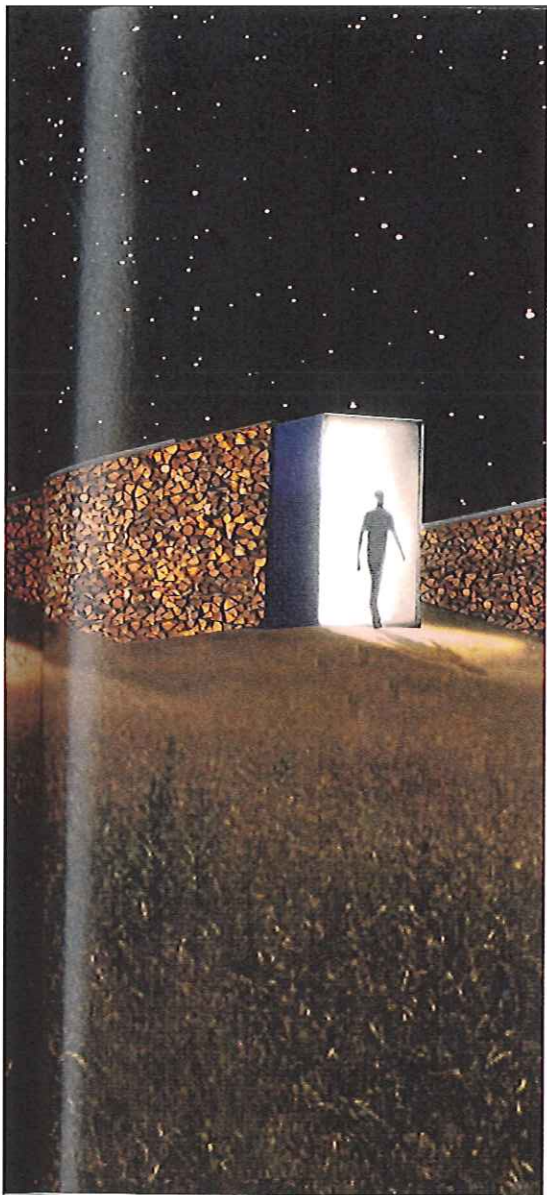
## Grand Award

On the Boards  
Cottages at Fallingwater, Mill Run, Pa.

The judges enjoyed Marlon Blackwell's bold scheme for six guest cottages on the campus of Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater. An entry in an invited competition held by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, his plan calls for the units to occupy a meadow overlooking views of the Allegheny Mountains. The jury called the project "a very interesting idea."

Visitors enter each cottage through light monitors at the top of the sloped site, and then experience the view as they move through the building. At night, the monitors glow, evoking the traditional coke ovens once common to the region. The project exhibits environmental sensitivity, incorporating low-impact siting and landscaping with a closed-loop geothermal heating system, photovoltaic panels, and passive solar design. And Blackwell included large porches and fire pits to encourage interaction among the cottages' guests.

He walked a line between relating the project to Fallingwater without directly echoing Wright. "We wanted to reference Wright's approach to the land, more than anything else," Blackwell says. "But we had to allow these things to maintain their own identity."—*M.D.*



Entrant/Architect: Marlon Blackwell Architect, Fayetteville, Ark.; Landscape architect: Ed Blake, The Landscape Studio, Hattiesburg, Miss.; Living space: 900 square feet per cottage; Construction cost: \$172 per square foot; Renderings/drawings: Courtesy Marlon Blackwell Architect. / Visit [www.customhomeonline.com](http://www.customhomeonline.com) for additional images.



8-foot-tall walls made of concrete masonry units support the structure and protect it from floods. A garage-style door saves space, as does a fold-up kitchen that transforms into a simple living room wall.



2011 Custom Home Design Awards

## Merit Award

On the Boards  
The Crib on Nanjemoy Creek, Nanjemoy, Md.

Entrant/Architect: Broadhurst Architects, Rockville, Md.; Builder: Added Dimensions, Takoma Park, Md.; Living space: 400 square feet; Site: 27 acres; Construction cost: \$275 per square foot; Renderings: Broadhurst Architects. / Visit [www.customhomeonline.com](http://www.customhomeonline.com) for additional images and products.

A few years ago, architect Jeffery Broadhurst built a one-room weekend getaway for himself and his family. The project was widely published, and it attracted the attention of a Washington, D.C., client who wanted something similar for his property on the Chesapeake Bay. Harsh storms often sweep the area, so the new house would have to be as sturdy as possible.

Accordingly, Broadhurst designed a steel-framed structure with panelized walls, flooring, and roofing. Its pieces are meant to be built in the shop and then assembled on the site. The 400-square-foot project resembles traditional corn cribs, with slanted sides and a pitched roof, and is raised 8 feet above grade to prevent flooding. "I love it," said one judge. "I want to build it."

The interiors feature a flexible kitchen that closes into a cabinet when not in use. Above the kitchen lies a windowed loft bedroom that's accessed by a fold-up ladder. "We were trying to be as efficient with space as we can be," Broadhurst says.—*M.D.*