

R O T O  
ARCHITECTS



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A photograph of a modern interior space. The ceiling is white with several recessed circular lights. A large, white, angular architectural structure dominates the center of the frame. To the left, there is a wooden cabinet. In the background, a shower area with a glass partition and a wooden bench is visible. The floor is made of large, light-colored tiles.

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## ROTO ARCHITECTS DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

**The best works come out of the best working relationships when people are committed to searching for common ground while working co-operatively and constructively on meaningful projects. Thirty years of practice has reaffirmed that cooperation is an evolutionary imperative.**

Our curated team of professionals, have worked on diverse projects for corporations, government agencies, and individuals on a wide array of projects. In particular, we all have experience with this project type. Most projects in our experience are realized within aggressive budgeting and scheduling parameters and often with limited resources and conflicting objectives but with abundant optimism, limits can be a source of innovative thinking and inventive outcomes.

We begin projects, in workshops talking and drawing as we define the problem and its component parts to explore alternative approaches. Our creative dialogue presents new ways to think about a problem and deepens our understanding of how best to convert a vision of a client into high performance, exceptional architecture. Our long term experience provides a sensible framework for approaching each project with an open mind and fresh eyes to leverage the uniqueness of people, place, and program. We have a signature process, not a signature style.

RoTo brings a trans-disciplinary outlook, with an architectural mind, to every aspect of a project and filters it through the conceptual and practical lens of what it takes to realize a project. As ideas emerge and specific issues are raised, we distill words into diagrams, and then precise drawings and models, advancing the project and the dialogue until the client moves in. Conservation (local memory) and Change (global identity) as our city grows and changes, the old comes down and the new goes up. The speed of change (global) challenges the depth of our memory (local). At the scale of the city, erasure is a form of institutional memory loss. For some of us who have witnessed these losses, focusing on conservation and change is essential to any form of progress. We see both as symbiotic; Cultural and Environmental Sustainability. Our work with endangered cultures and ecologies have been the medium for developing insights, and practice protocols about the value and purpose of conservation, restoration, sustainability, and mediation. Our approach is to know the place, the people, the resources, and then the architecture emerges. Life gives Form to Architecture.

We believe that it is possible to create an architecture that is both practical and poetic within any parameters or constraints. We believe the spaces, places, and forms we create have the potential of being inspiring and familiar. We have learned much from our client-collaborators. Indigenous Communities have taught us how to listen with all of our senses. Buddhist Communities have taught us how to see with fresh eyes and an open mind. Artists have taught us how to rely simultaneously on intelligence and intuition. Civic Leaders have taught us how to have a long-term vision in a short cycle world. Marginalized Ecologies have taught the basis for reviving and sustaining life in its most complex networks. Lives lived in local places have taught us where our humanity begins, and, children and students have often reminded us of the relationship between play and creativity.

## FIRM PROFILE

RoTo Architects is an international practice, led by Michael Rotondi, FAIA, an internationally recognized teacher-practitioner. RoTo Architects is based in Los Angeles with a satellite office in Sonoma County.

Since its' founding in 1991, RoTo Architects has worked with diverse groups and individuals, (Civic Leaders in the public and private sectors, American Indians, Tibetan Lamas, commercial developers, artistic directors, education communities, wildlife conservators, cultural curators, and many non-profit leaders) on a wide array of projects of varying scope, complexity, and resources. We have learned the value of working collaboratively and the benefit of listening with open minds, heightened curiosity, and a sense of great purpose. We also understand the necessity of sustaining the integrity of a clients' long term vision and core principles that guide us working with a sense of urgency in short cycle world. Also, with abundant optimism and advanced skill sets we've learned, that limited resources, aggressive schedules, and conflicting objectives can be a source of innovative thinking and lead to inventive outcomes.

Although we have many years of experience and have broad expertise, we try to approach each project with an resilient mind and fresh eyes knowing that each project has different parameters and constraints, based on their environmental, social, cultural, and market contexts. We've learned how to work efficiently and effectively at a pace that meets these aggressive schedules but in a way that allows us to anticipate the unexpected with beneficial outcomes.

Currently, we have a diverse portfolio of commissions we are working on, a new television production and broadcast facility in Los Angeles, a large aquatic center in Long Beach, CA, a 160-acre wildlife sanctuary for wolves in California, a self-sustaining research, retreat and conference center in Hawaii, a prototype couture store, a Buddhist Monastery and Temple in California, and an amusement park.

As a body of work, these projects exemplify a capacity to see to the center of any problem, work at any scale, and synthesize complex systems into a coherent and high performing whole. The Team Leader, Michael Rotondi brings trans-disciplinary interests and knowledge to every aspect of a project and filters it through the conceptual and practical lens of what it takes to realize a project. He has long-standing experience in both Enterprise and Academia, leading large teams with creative and technical knowledge and expertise, which was evident some years ago as the Director of Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) with its international faculty and student body.

RoTo Architects has a sister company, Rotolab, an innovation engine dedicated to addressing the epic challenges and major shifts facing current and near-future education and enterprise. RotoLabs' interests are real world projects situated at the nexus of architecture, neuroscience, games, and cooperative technologies.











PRINCIPAL **MICHAEL ROTONDI, FAIA**  
RoTo Architects

IN PRACTICE Michael Rotondi is an architect/educator, recognized internationally. He has practiced and taught for thirty-five years, and defines both as one activity. Teaching is the research part of the broader practice, where more experimental ideas, hypothetical projects, and techniques are tested. The professional studio RoTo Architects, Inc., is where these ideas are implemented in real time and at full scale. He has always been based in Los Angeles, co-founding 2 international practices, as a partner of Morphosis, (1975-1991) and currently, RoTo Architects (1991-present). His longtime work as a cross-disciplinary educator-practitioner is the basis for an open-minded approach that produces outcomes as unique as the variables that define the projects. Since its founding in 1991, RoTo Architects has designed a wide range of projects of varying type, scope and complexity. As a body of work it represents a expertise in solving any one of a kind as well as more conventional problems with precision, economy and invention. Mr. Rotondi has experience working with a diversity of forward thinking clients in a wide range of fields; education, culture production, civic and government leadership, entrepreneurs, conservationists, indigenous people, and spiritual teachers. The portfolio includes the following project type:

CONTEMPLATIVE - Spiritual Retreats, Temples, Monasteries  
INSTITUTIONAL - Education, Black box Theaters, Health Care (Cancer Center, Dialysis)  
ENVIRONMENTAL - Restoration-land planning, Animal Sanctuaries, Wildlife Center and Hospital  
CULTURAL - Native American, Hawaiian, and Tibetan  
RECREATION/SPORTS - Aquatic center, Gymnasium, Sports Complex, YMCA  
COMMERCIAL - Restaurant, Retail, Hospitality, Entertainment, Re-purposed Industrial, Shopping Centers  
RESIDENTIAL - Single Family, Extended Family, Co-Housing, Multi-Unit, Meditation Hermitages  
CIVIC - Civic Center, Public Broadcasting, Public Plaza

IN EDUCATION Prof. Rotondi is an educator with an international standing. He was a co-founder of SCI-Arc in 1972 along with 50 other colleagues. In his various leadership roles over the forty years since its founding, he has participated in creating and growing a school that is recognized internationally among the best. He succeeded Founding Director Ray Kappe as the second Director after creating and directing the Graduate Program. His charge was to reinvent the school after the first fifteen years, providing leadership in formulating an educational vision that would give the Institute, the faculty, and the students a platform to participate in defining the discussion-debate emerging within the Discipline internationally. He is currently a Distinguished Faculty and Trustee Emeritus at SCI-Arc and Professor of Architecture at Arizona State University (ASU). Prof. Rotondi has taught and lectured throughout the world for many years on Architecture, Education, and Creativity. He has been recognized and awarded many times for design practice and teaching. Among the awards are, Progressive Architecture P/A, AIA Awards, American Academy of Arts and Letters for Architecture, AIA College of Fellows, LA/AIA Gold Medal, AIA/SFV Lifetime Award, and in 2013, he was voted by his peers, among the "30 Most Admired Design Teachers in America."





# 1 CARLSON-REGES HOUSE

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

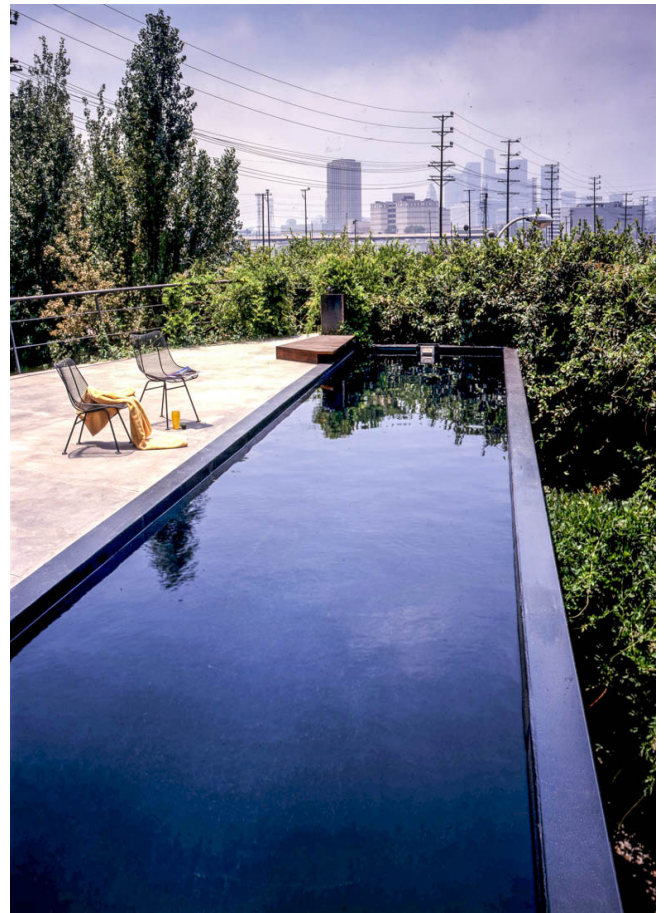
**This was like a fictional project for my students. The house is for a couple—he is an urban industrial recycler and builder, she is an art collector.**

They have a kennel with thirty world-class show dogs on a twenty-acre industrial site. This house was built by the owners with materials from their salvage yard. The architects and owners worked improvisationally and opportunistically within a pre-established spatial framework and a code of design-build. One of the clients is a builder; the other breeds and trains show dogs and is active in the Los Angeles Arts community. The couple has lived for some time in what was once an electric company cabling structure north of downtown Los Angeles. The stripped classical concrete and steel structure is surrounded by a yard that contains a collection of building materials and industrial artifacts collected from two generations of work and urban renovation. During that time the client/builder and his family have acquired considerable skill and experience in the renovation of large scaled industrial structures but prior to this project had not collaborated with an architect.

STATUS Completed

SIZE 12,000 SF

CLIENT Richard Carlson, The Brewery Art Colony









## 2 JOSHUA TREE HOUSE

JOSHUA TREE, CALIFORNIA

**This house in the unique landscape of Joshua Tree National Monument in California is set between two large mounds facing a distant, western view.**

The original casita had been altered several times in a haphazard manner and we were hired to create simple forms, open volumes and a low-maintenance house. The client wanted us to frame special views but not panoramas to encourage people to go outside to experience the landscape as vignettes. The main addition is a cube 25 feet on each side. Adjacent to that is a long, narrow storage building with a roof deck. Three young architects teamed with us to design and construct this project. This project explores various types of efficiency, experiments with technique, and modulates space and light. We used the design-build process as a teaching method to explore ways of building inexpensively and efficiently.

STATUS Completed

SIZE N/A

CLIENT N/A







### 3 NEW JERSEY HOUSE

BERNARDSVILLE, NEW JERSEY

**Our client asked for a house that feels traditional but looks contemporary, a large, light-filled house with an intimate feel, and a house with continuous inner spaces.**

The house, in a semi-rural part of New Jersey, is sited on a knoll that is both forest and field. Our design maximizes the views and experience of the surrounding landscape. Although many activities require distinctly bounded areas, the interior is fluid and contiguous, with one space transitioning seamlessly into another throughout. All the main areas are easily accessible to exterior spaces including decks, patio, porch, garden and pool.

STATUS Completed

SIZE N/A

CLIENT David Tieger









## 4 VIEW SILO HOUSE

LIVINGSTON, MONTANA

**The site consists of fourteen acres at the edge of the cobbled alluvial fan of the Absoroka Mountains, and the house sits on the edge of the only sheltering feature in a valley famous for its winds, Marlboro country views, and storms.**

The client wished to be above the sky's horizon to experience the phenomenology of the sky by "climbing up to it." After searching for a silo to reclaim, we opted to create a new view silo. The view silo was designed to occupy the smallest practical footprint of earth and the narrowest possible sliver of sky. The building tapers and appears to twist in a form generated in a mirroring of the ancient Yellowstone River bank. The 1,500 sf program is organized vertically.

STATUS Completed

SIZE N/A

CLIENT Private









## 5 CDLT 1, 2

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

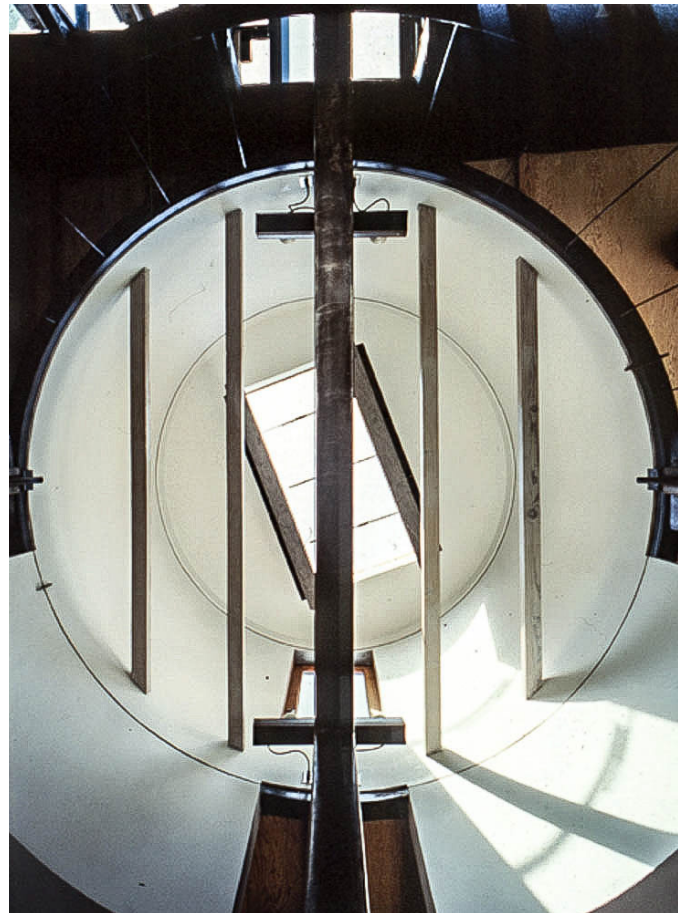
**Our interest in working at full scale in an improvisational manner led to the design for the CDLT 1,2 house.**

The direct experience of testing ideas by immediately building them enabled us to close the gap between conception and inhabitation. Sketches were used in lieu of working drawings and at the close of each day the contractor trained lights on areas needing resolution. Each component became the impetus for the next idea after evaluating the consequences of the previous decision. The additive process of building reflected our desire to unite idea and construction. The house became a constructed daily journal – conceptual fingerprints recorded its creation. No “eraser” was used, literally or figuratively. The rule-based system provided structure for decisions that would be made over a five-year period, ensuring coherence. Our established hierarchy of materials was strictly enforced; the size and type of materials were determined by their functions. The rules also facilitated communication between architect and builder. Because the builder had degrees in literature and music composition, we were able to discuss, in the abstract, the rhythmic nature of ordering systems. These discussions created a frame of reference for his decisions and he often sought a visual equivalent for musical concepts and notation.

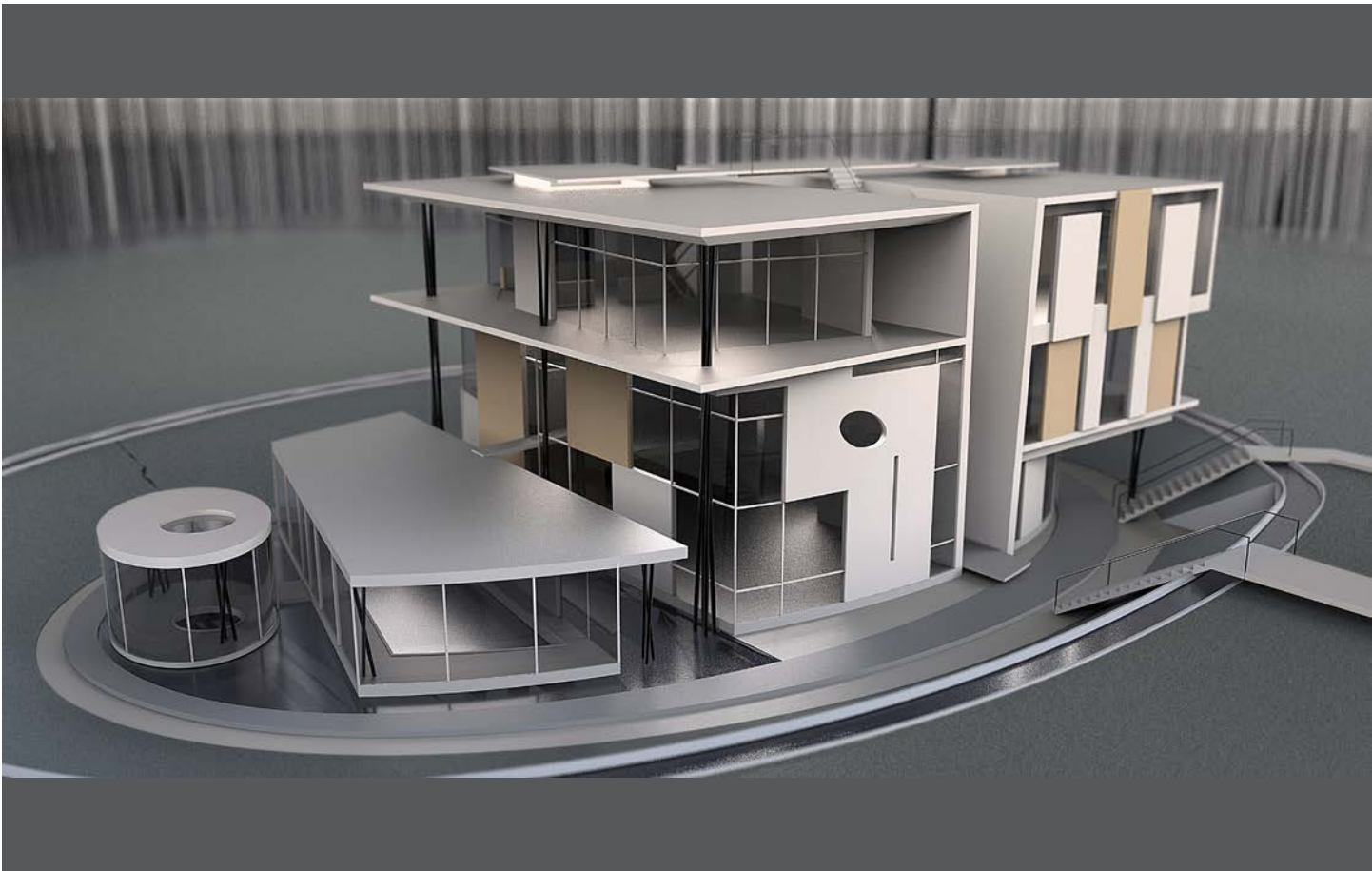
STATUS Completed

SIZE N/A

CLIENTS Benedetto Rotondi









## 6 SUZHOU GARDEN VILLA

SUZHOU, CHINA

**My experiences in Suzhou Gardens and the study of Chinese Arts, Music, and Mythology has given me a basic knowledge and insight that has guided us through a creative process that intentionally focused on the nature of traditions embedded in the classical Chinese Garden Villa, as we attempted to answer the following questions:**

“is it possible to transform traditional into contemporary concepts?” “is it possible in a fast paced contemporary world to construct a metaphor of poetry, music, calligraphy, and painting in a garden villa for the 21st century?” “is it possible to make a place that is conducive to solitude and communal life?” We believe in all cases, yes, it is possible. The two concepts presented here are the first phase of our work in search of a Chinese Garden Villa for the 21st century.

STATUS N/A

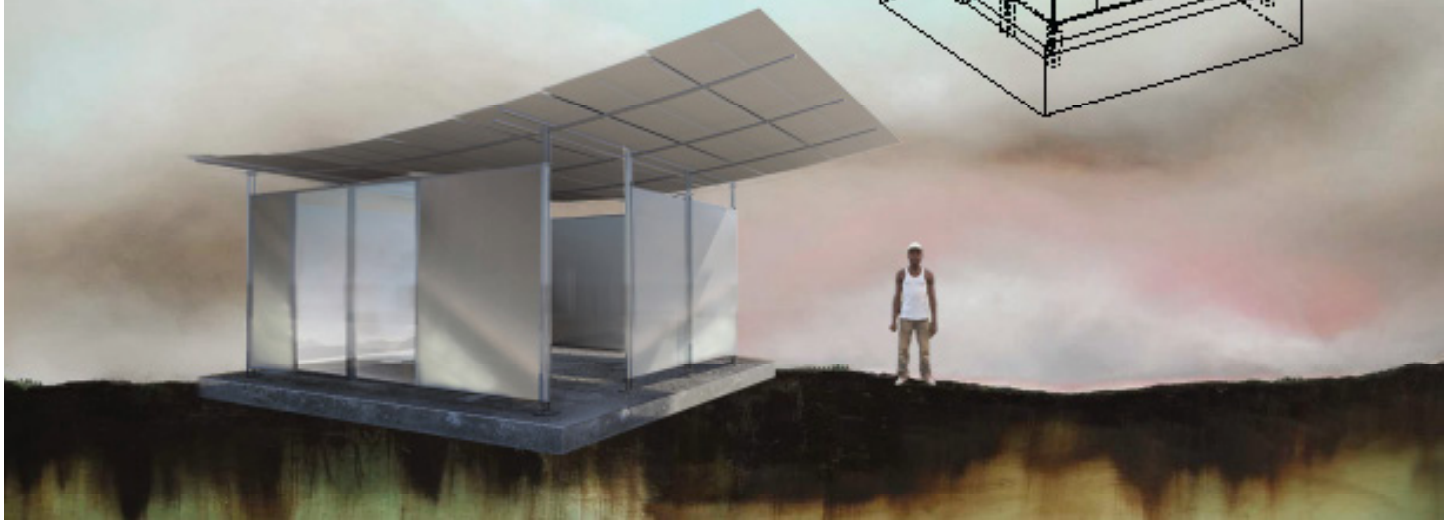
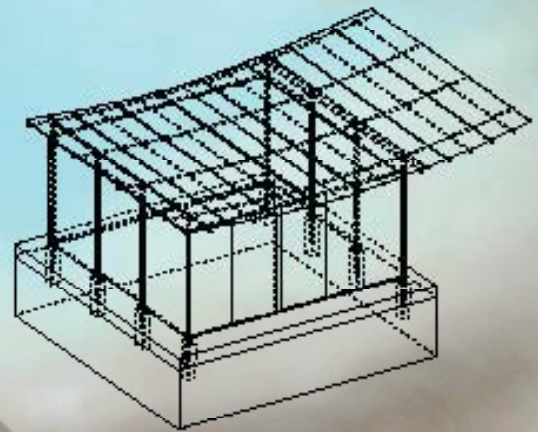
SIZE N/A

CLIENT Private

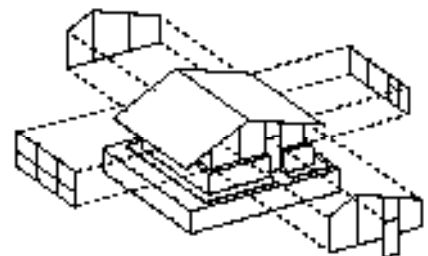
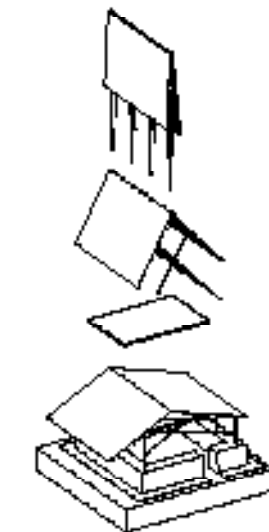
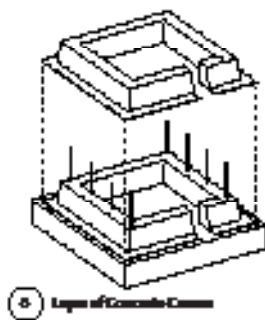
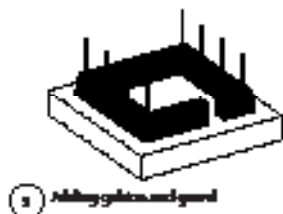
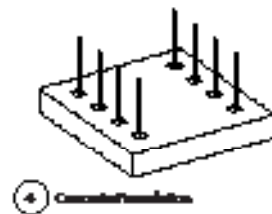
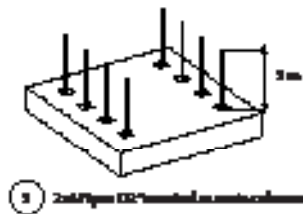
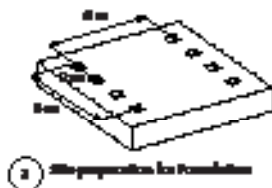
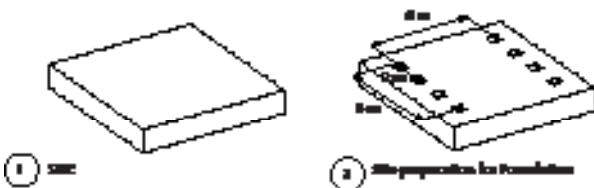




## HOUSE 3



## HOUSE 2





## 7 HAITI HOUSE

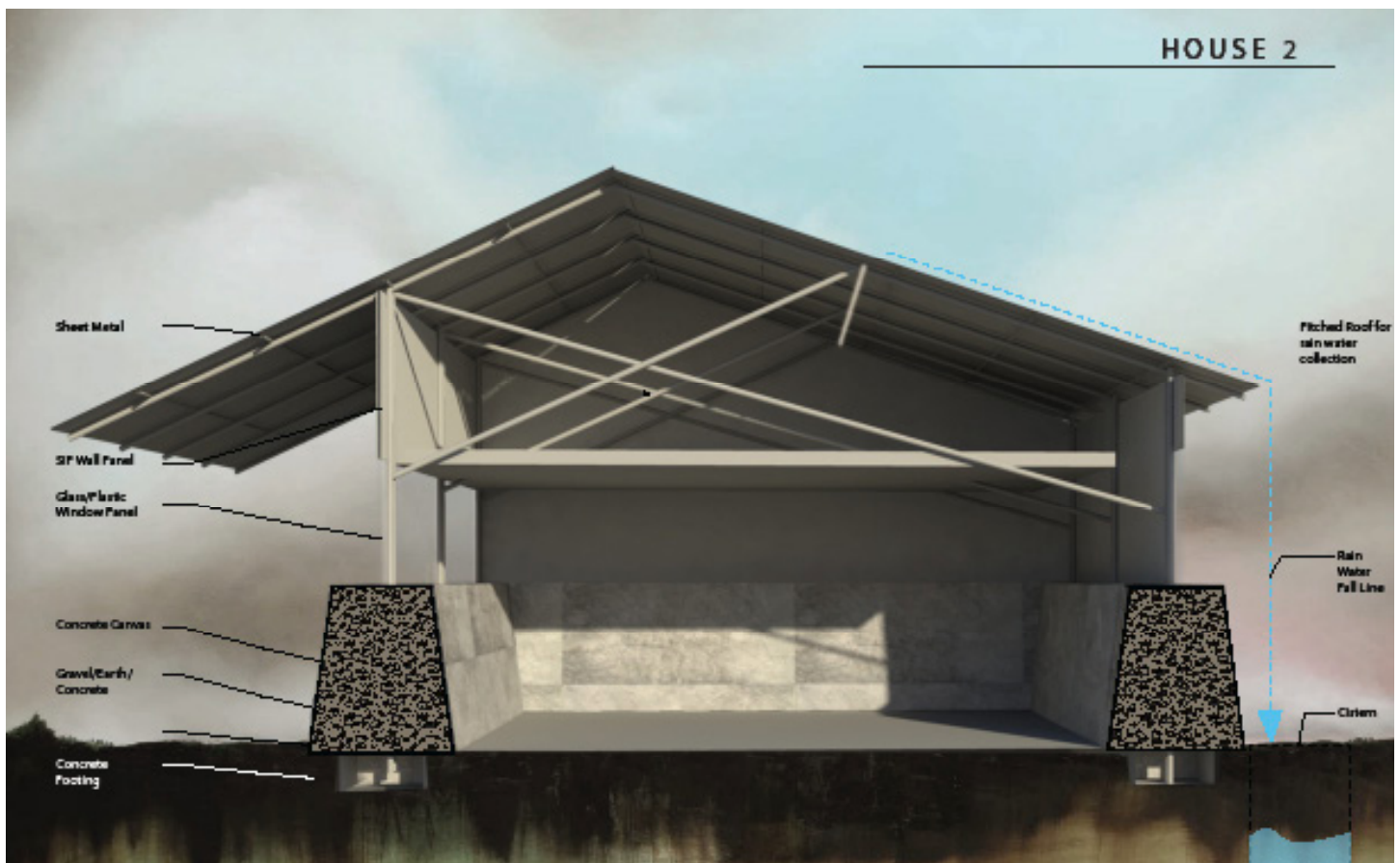
HAITI

**The Haiti Incremental House addresses 3 key aspects that will address the housing shortage in Haiti, finance, labor, material and time.**

The earthquake killed 55,000 people and destroyed 250,000 houses. Rebuilding is slow because of limited resources and their distribution. As the local people wait for the government to do something they live in tents or makeshift structures. Many know how to build and could do the work if they had the material and tools. The biggest hurdle, for them, are the regulations and rules established by first world banks which make borrowing enough money to construct a house for \$5-7000 impossible unless they have established credit. Even a credit worthy local who has been in the same job in the same location for 30 years can only borrow \$1500 per year.

We proposed to address this problem by conceiving a micro-finance / incremental borrowing and building model, combined with a do it yourself approach, and a partnership with the largest importer of material supplies and IFC, a local bank. The building material sector will bundle the materials in \$1500 packets, available for purchase annually, with a set of instructions for semi-skilled DIY. There are several strategies and house designs to choose from.

STATUS	N/A
SIZE	100 SM
CLIENT	Private-Public Partnership









## 8 SEDLACK HOUSE

VENICE, CALIFORNIA

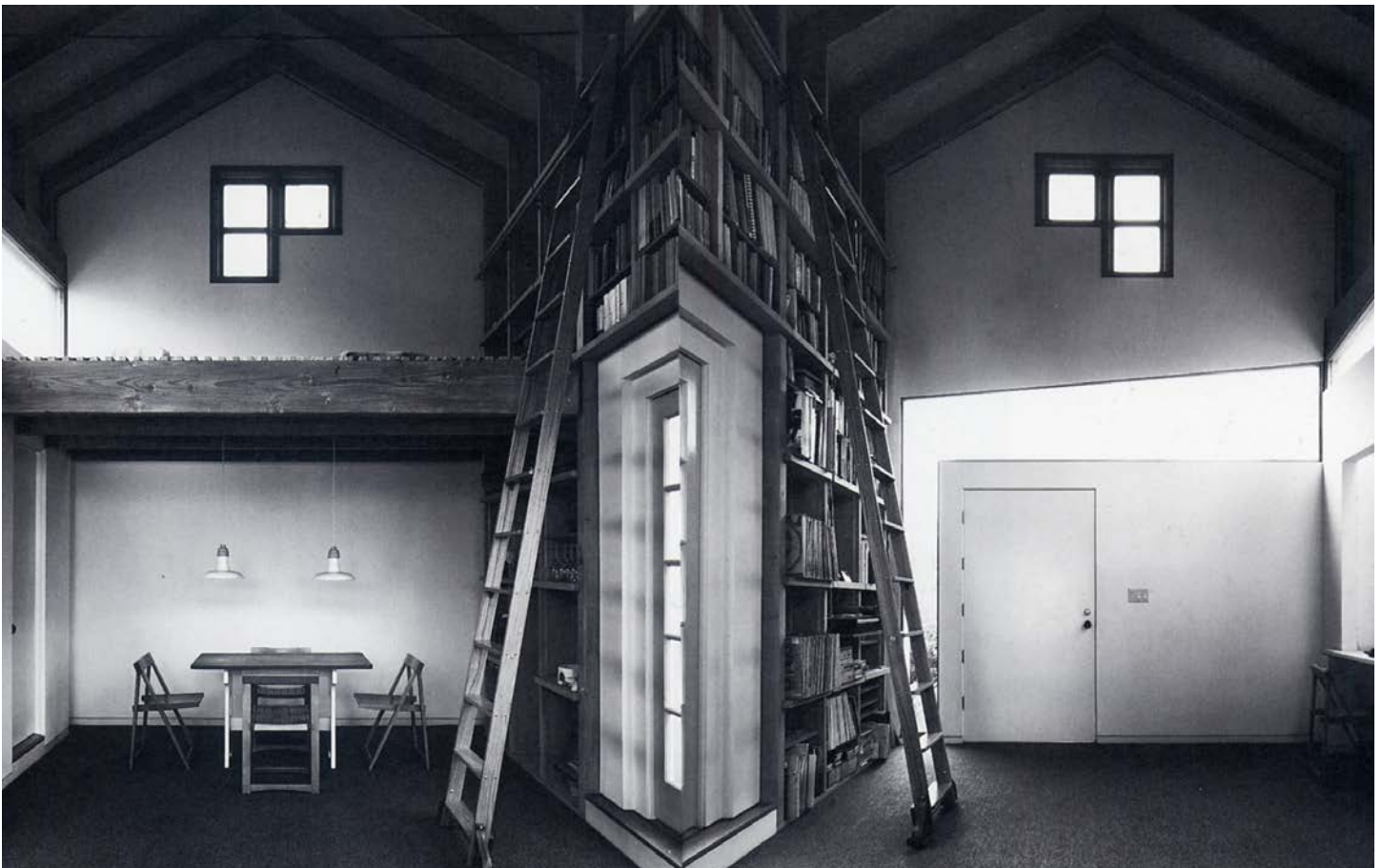
### **A small living 'pod' in a dense urbanized part of Los Angeles.**

This building is placed over a one-car garage to the rear of a single family residence and consists of a single room and study used as a retreat. We wished to minimize the impact of the new building's appropriation of a large part of the yard and allow a coherent, ideal object to emerge. To accomplish both of these goals, we created a topiary wall which camouflages the building and allows the idealized object to develop out of a contingent condition. We could then use the building to explore the relationship between architecture and landscape. The topiary wall is thick enough to make room for three small rooms that service the main space: a bathroom, a balcony and a desk alcove. An entry arcade at ground level leads to a stairway rising to the doorway. The materials refer to those already used on the site, and also describe the different parts of the building.

STATUS Completed

SIZE N/A

CLIENT Private









## 9 VENICE 3

VENICE, CALIFORNIA

**A small house added onto an existing one in a dense urbanized part of Los Angeles.**

The building consists of three articulated parts. The largest element is a rectilinear volume containing the work area on the ground level and a bedroom above. The second piece, which runs along the northern edge of the first, is a long, thin space, containing a dressing room on top of a library. The third element has three compartments. These parts transform themselves from mere skylights to a skylight over a two story volume to a small, semi-attached rear building that includes a future kitchen, a bathroom and a deck. The addition was conceived of as a prototype for a scaled-down urban house for a small family on a restricted urban lot. The character and the physical organization of the new structure allow it to operate as a separate area as an extension of the existing house, as a separate area to be used for members of an extended family, and a separate dwelling that could be rented or sold. The addition is made of concrete slab, wood frame, asphalt shingle walls and metal wall panels.

STATUS Completed

SIZE 850 SF

CLIENT Ann Bergren





## SELECTED HONORS & AWARDS

2014	<b>The 2014 Richard Neutra Award for Professional Excellence</b> College of Environmental Design / Department of Architecture, California State Polytechnic University Pomona	1998	<b>AIACC Design Award</b> Warehouse C
			<b>AIACC Design Award</b> Teiger House
2013	<b>Design Intelligence 2013 30 Most Admired Design Teachers in America</b>		<b>AIACC Excellence in Education Achievement Award</b>
2010	<b>Los Angeles Business Council Architectural Award for Retail</b> Madame Tussauds	1997	<b>FAIA - College of Fellows inducted for Design and Education</b>
	<b>Hollywood Arts Council Architectural Arts Charlie Award</b> Madame Tussauds	1996	<b>American Wood Council's Design Award</b> Nicola Restaurant
			<b>AIALA Award, Honor Award</b> Carlson-Reges Residence
2009	<b>Southern California Development Forum (SCDF) Award for design</b> Madame Tussauds		<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Sinte Gleska University
	<b>AIA/LA Award, Gold Medal Award</b>		<b>AIACC Award</b> Carlson-Reges Residence
2008	<b>Los Angeles Business Council, Community Impact Award</b> CD7 Neighborhood City Hall	1995	<b>AIACC Award</b> Dorland Mountain Arts Colony
2007	<b>AIACC Design Award</b> Prairie View A&M University		<b>Sunset Magazine Honor Award</b> Carlson-Reges Residence
	<b>AIA Los Angeles Twenty-Five Year Award</b> 2-4-6-8 House		<b>LA Business Council Urban Award</b> Nicola Restaurant
2005	<b>AIALA Award</b> Prairie View A&M University		<b>Los Angeles Architectural Foundation Award</b>
	<b>AIALA Award</b> CD7 Neighborhood City Hall	1994	<b>AIACC Award, Honor Award</b> Nicola Restaurant
	<b>Concrete Masonry Design Awards Merit Award</b> UCSD La Jolla Playhouse		<b>AIA Certificate of Appreciation</b>
		1993	<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Citation Circolo Restaurant
2002	<b>AIACC Award</b> View Silo House	1992	<b>American Academy of Arts &amp; Letters Award in Architecture</b>
	<b>Wood Design Award</b> View Silo House		<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> CDLT 1, 2 House Addition
1999	<b>AIA National Design Award</b> Carlson-Reges Residence	1991	<b>AIACC Award</b> Salick Health Care Corporate Headquarters



1991	<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Yuzen Vintage Car Museum	<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Kate Mantilini
1990	<b>AIACC Award</b> Politix Retail Stores	<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Prototypical Restaurant
	<b>Interior Award</b> Leon Max Showroom	1986 <b>AIALA Award</b> Angeli Restaurant
	<b>AIACC Award</b> Leon Max Showroom	<b>National AIA Award, Honor Award</b> Bergren Residence
	<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Arts Park Performing Pavilion	<b>AIACC Award</b> 72 Market Street
	<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Higashi Azabu Tower	1985 <b>AIALA Award, Merit Award</b> 72 Market Street
1989	<b>AIACC Award</b> Cedars-Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Center	<b>AIALA Award, Merit Award</b> Lawrence Residence
	<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Arts Park Performing Arts Pavilion	<b>AIALA Award, Merit Award</b> Bergren Residence
	<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Crawford Residence	1985 <b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Venice III House
	<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Higashi Azabu Tower	1984 <b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Hermosa Beach Commercial Center
1988	<b>AIALA Award</b> Cedars-Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Center	1982 <b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Western-Melrose Office Building
	<b>AIACC Award</b> Kate Mantilini Restaurant	1981 <b>AIALA Award</b> Sedlak House
	<b>National AIA Award, Honor Award</b> Kate Mantilini Restaurant	1980 <b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Flores Residence
	<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> 6th Street Residence	1977 <b>Competition Honor Award</b> Sacramento Energy Efficient Office Building
1987	<b>AIALA Award, Honor Award</b> 6th Street Residence	<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Riedel Medical Building
	<b>AIALA Award</b> Kate Mantilini Restaurant	1974 <b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Sequoyah Educational Research Center
	<b>Progressive Architecture Award</b> Cedars-Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Center	