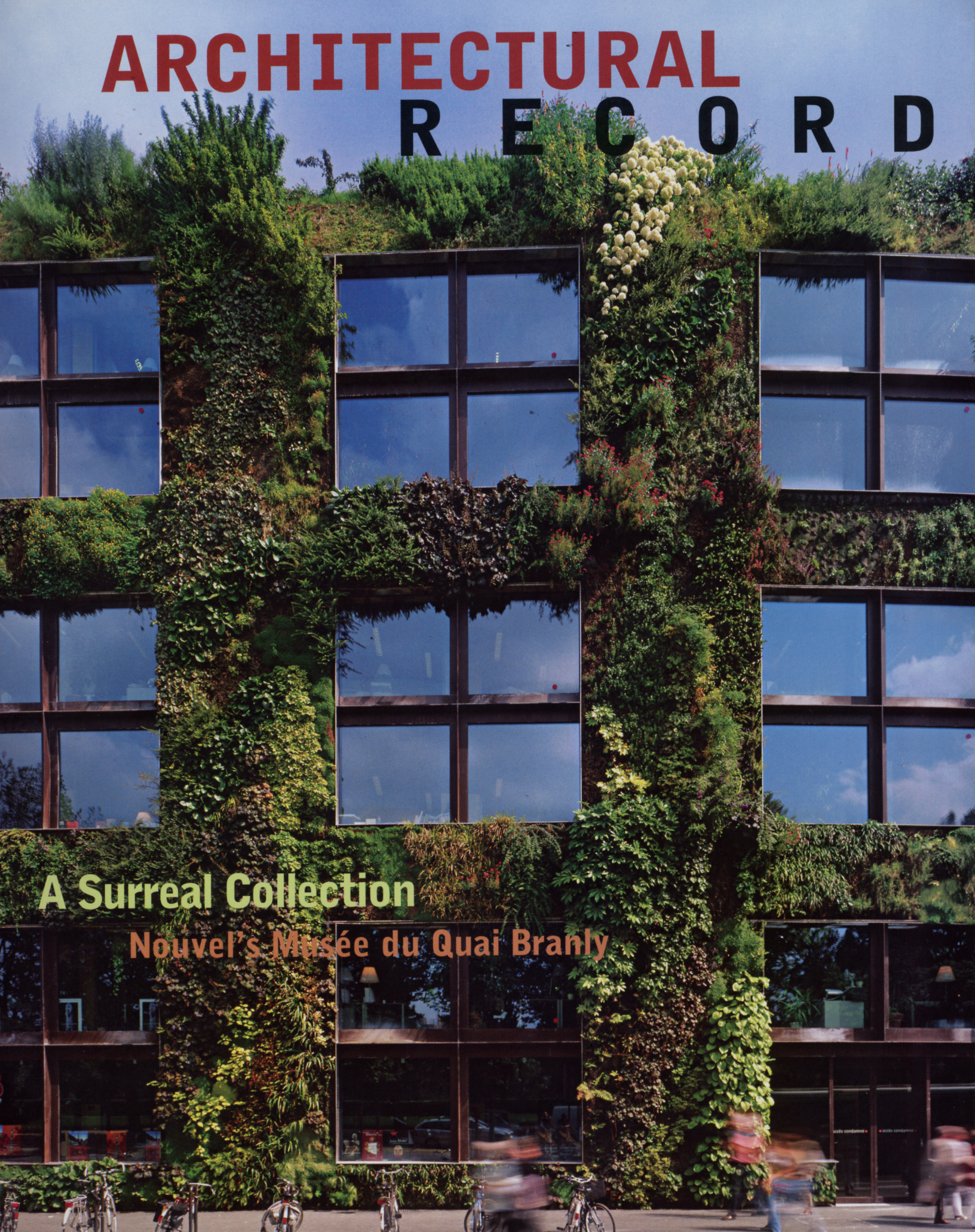
ARCHITECTURAL RECORD



A Surreal Collection

Nouvel's Musée du Quai Branly

Bantam Weight

The heavyweights may seem to get all the attention, especially as Peter Eisenman rolls out a 63,000-seat football stadium in Arizona, SOM watches the construction of its 160-story Burj Tower in Dubai, and a roster of celebrity architects generate designs for the $7 billion CityCenter in Las Vegas. But here we inaugurate a serial feature (which will appear a few times a year) dedicated to projects modest in scale and program, but great in design and craft, demonstrating that physical size is no indicator of architectural merit. While RECORD has always been an advocate of great architecture at any scale, we intend to use this feature to highlight what has been our longstanding interest in small projects.

From Bramante's Tempietto in Rome to Mies's Barcelona Pavilion, small buildings have defined key moments in architectural history because they offer an opportunity to create pure forms with exquisite detail that respond to their site with utmost specificity. This trend proves that diminutive projects can transcend the parameters of their dimensions.

In this issue, we present three unique projects from around the world: a 200-person chapel rising from the jagged Finnish landscape, a photography studio in Northern California inspired by an arcadian barn, and a new garden pavilion thriving in a historic Dutch town that formerly had resisted new construction.

With vastly different programs, geography, and stylistic approaches, what unites these projects is not only their scale, but also the architects' careful response to site and fine attention to detail.

These buildings prove that architecture need not be size XL, but can be small and discreet without compromising its capacity to provoke and compel. *John Gendall*

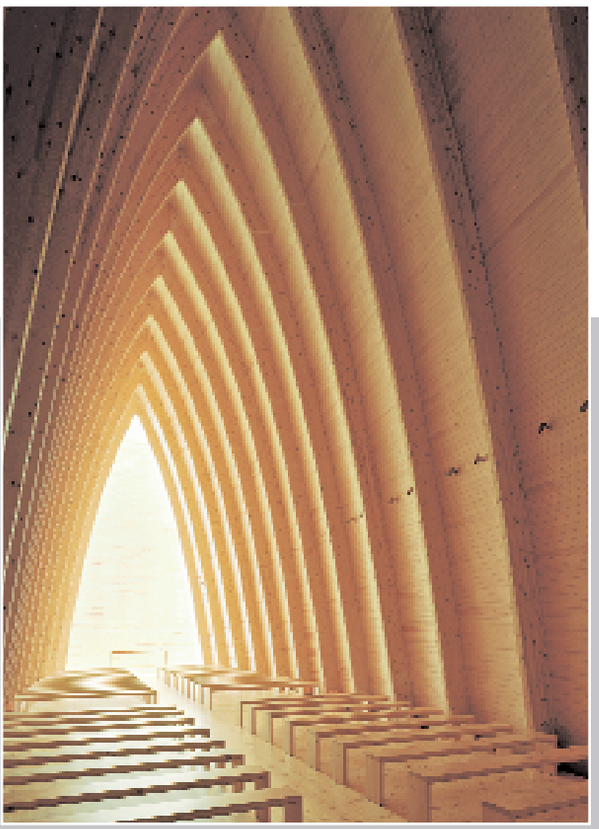
A trio of projects show that small moves can make for prizefighters

1. St. Henry's Ecumenical Art Chapel
2. Photography Studio and Workshop
3. Light-Catcher

Champions

FEATURE

St. Henry's Ecumenical Art Chapel
Turku, Finland
Sanaksenaho Architects



Perched atop a hill on an island near the Finnish city of Turku, St. Henry's Ecumenical Art Chapel appears at first glance like an imposing metallic monolith closed off to the austere landscape that surrounds it. But it soon becomes clear that the copper-clad form is very much a building, actively engaged in a dynamic relationship with its environment and its visitors.

"We designed the church and its landscape so that the visitor is always in a state of approaching," says prinicipal architect Matti Sanaksenaho of Helsinki-based Sanaksenaho Architects. A path ascending the hill winds toward the building's southern elevation, where the hilltop setting offers spectacular views of the island. The visitor then walks along the chapel's edge before entering the portal, to the west. A small foyer provides a transition from the exterior to the nave, while a ramp connects the foyer and sanctuary, articulating the transition from profane to sacred.

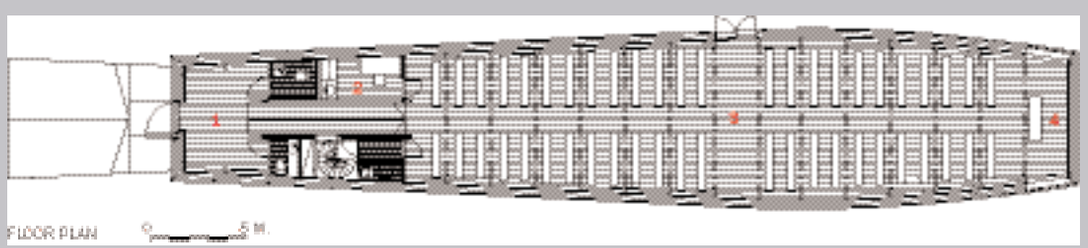
In keeping with the formal conventions of Christian churches, Sanaksenaho oriented St. Henry's toward the east and created a procession of soaring pointed arches down the nave. But from those traditional foundations, the architects gave the building a cultural and site specificity.

Completed in 2005, the 200-seat chapel draws on local materials, including abundantly and readily available wood. Reaching 36 feet high, pine trusses culminate in the pointed arches, recalling a Gothic cathedral. Laminated pine paneling encloses this load-bearing structure.

The exterior's copper skin departs from the church's otherwise traditional materials. But even though copper cladding is rare in traditional Finnish architecture, this surface forms a direct and thoughtful dialogue with its setting. As the material changes over time, it will develop a green patina meant to complement the surrounding pines. Material temporality also transforms the building's interior, where pine paneling will season to a reddish hue.

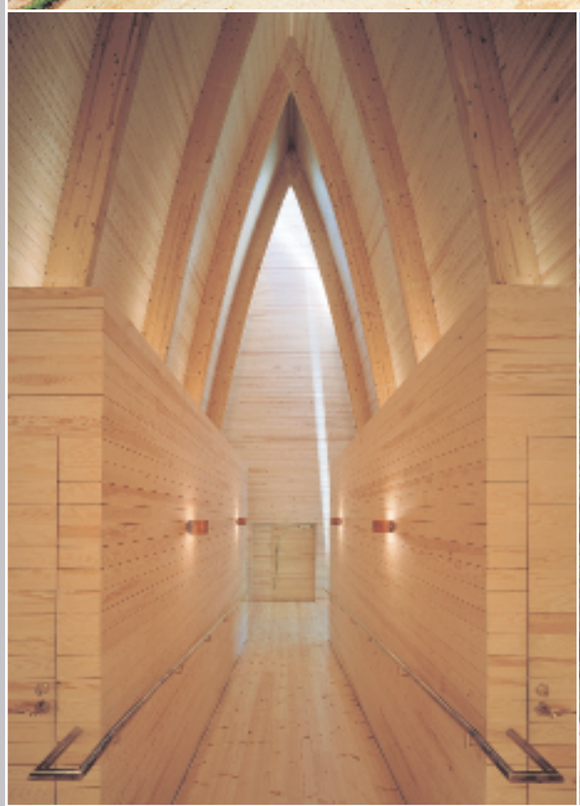
The husband-and-wife team of Matti and Pirjo Sanaksenaho designed many aspects of the architecture with an eye toward intensifying both spiritual and sensory experience. They called for pine floorboards, waxed and fixed in a way that makes them creak with use. Custom wood benches, simple and backless, provide seating while keeping spatial interruption to a minimum. And drawing on medieval and Renaissance precedent, art is displayed throughout the nave. It changes periodically, and is chosen to support the liturgy.

On the long elevations, the copper cladding stops short of the chapel's eastern end, allowing for a vertical strip of glazing. Filtering indirect light into the interior, this fenestration gives the apse, and the altar within it, a mystical, luminous quality. As Matti Sanaksenaho puts it, "We used three materials: pine, copper, and natural light." This light element underscores the designers' emphasis on the spiritual experience of approach. By illuminating the altar, they signify the ultimate, ethereal, destination of the visitor's approach, marked simply with daylight. *J.G.*



1. *Foyer*
2. *Prayer room*
3. *Nave*
4. *Apse*

Designed to merge with its setting over time, the church is clad in copper, whose patina will later complement the surrounding landscape. A vertical strip of glazing allows daylight to illuminate the church's altar.



PHOTOGRAPHY: © JUSSI TIAINEN (THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE)

The barn panels slide to cover or uncover four large glass doors, opening up cross ventilation and end-to-end views through the building. The polycarbonate forms a double-skin assembly for large translucent sections of roof and wall.

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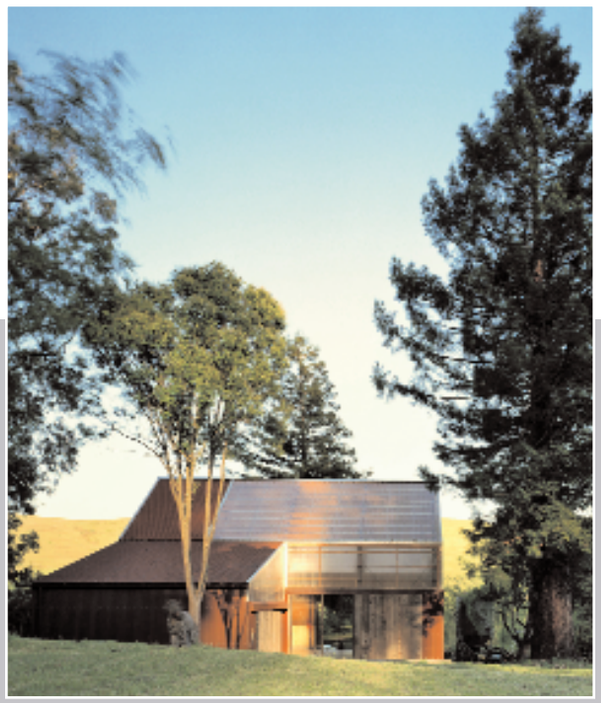


Daylight Photography Studio and Workshop

Marin County, California

Kennerly Architecture & Planning

On a 79-acre working ranch in western Marin County, California, where coastal fog rolls in from the ocean across hilly grasslands, stood a 19th-century barn that its owners envisioned turning into a photo studio. But when their architects, Owen Kinnerly, AIA, and Sarina Bowen, found the aging farm structure too dilapidated to save, the clients decided to demolish it and build a barnlike, 2,400-square-foot structure on the existing footprint. The siting, however, was just the beginning: The engagement between old and new would go far beyond the location and the floor plan.

"All the older structures in this environment embody a frankness of purpose and a stark relationship to the land that is softened over time as the natural context molds itself to them," Kinnerly observed. When the clients showed the architect an old photo of the original barn, taken when the surrounding cedars and redwoods (now giants) were mere saplings, Kinnerly saw how the trees had grown up around the structure, with their branches shaped by its gable. He then realized that this was the aesthetic he and his clients wished to preserve.

And preserve they did, literally and conceptually. They salvaged 40 percent of the original siding and 30 percent of the floor planks. The inclusion of an elevated floor slab, an existing retaining wall, and foundation piers drilled into the ground eliminated the need for grading and minimized the building's impact on subsurface water. Near a creek between pastures, the new structure virtually floats on the land, with the majestic trees framing and shading it.

"There's nothing contrived, ornamental, or unnecessary about the design," says Kennerly. The exterior walls consist of corrugated Cor-Ten steel, corrugated polycarbonate sheeting, and large panels of the recycled barn redwood.

On the interior, a main work area rises to an office loft on one side. Stored farm equipment occupies a lower volume, separated from the main space by a partial-height wall of salvaged redwood. Crowned with a pitched roof, the central unobstructed interior volume maintains the cross-sectional proportions of the old barn. A set of muslin sails, which can be raised or lowered, help control sunlight streaming in through the translucent roof and walls. Radiant heating in the concrete floor slab and natural ventilation from the glazed sliding doors, along with fans high in the gables, contribute to the building's environmental attunement.

Typically, when you turn a barn into a habitable space for humans, you lose the character of the original farm structure because a barn needs to breathe, whereas a studio, for example, needs to insulate itself from the elements. Though the architects demolished the original barn, they translated the idea of "breathing" into the skin's layered translucencies. The glazing, its weathered wood covering, the polycarbonate panels, and Cor-Ten steel elegantly give the rough, boxy form a sense of openness, lightening the load visually.

Outside the studio, pastoral farm life continues. Occupying the land inconspicuously, the reconstituted barn serves as a symbol of regrowth, providing a modern interior, while its rough but elegant exterior defers to the agricultural vernacular. *Jane F. Kolleeny*

1. *Equipment storage*
2. *Main work space*
3. *Entry/work court*
4. *Storage*
5. *Office loft*
6. *Bathroom*

Light-Catcher

Soest, the Netherlands

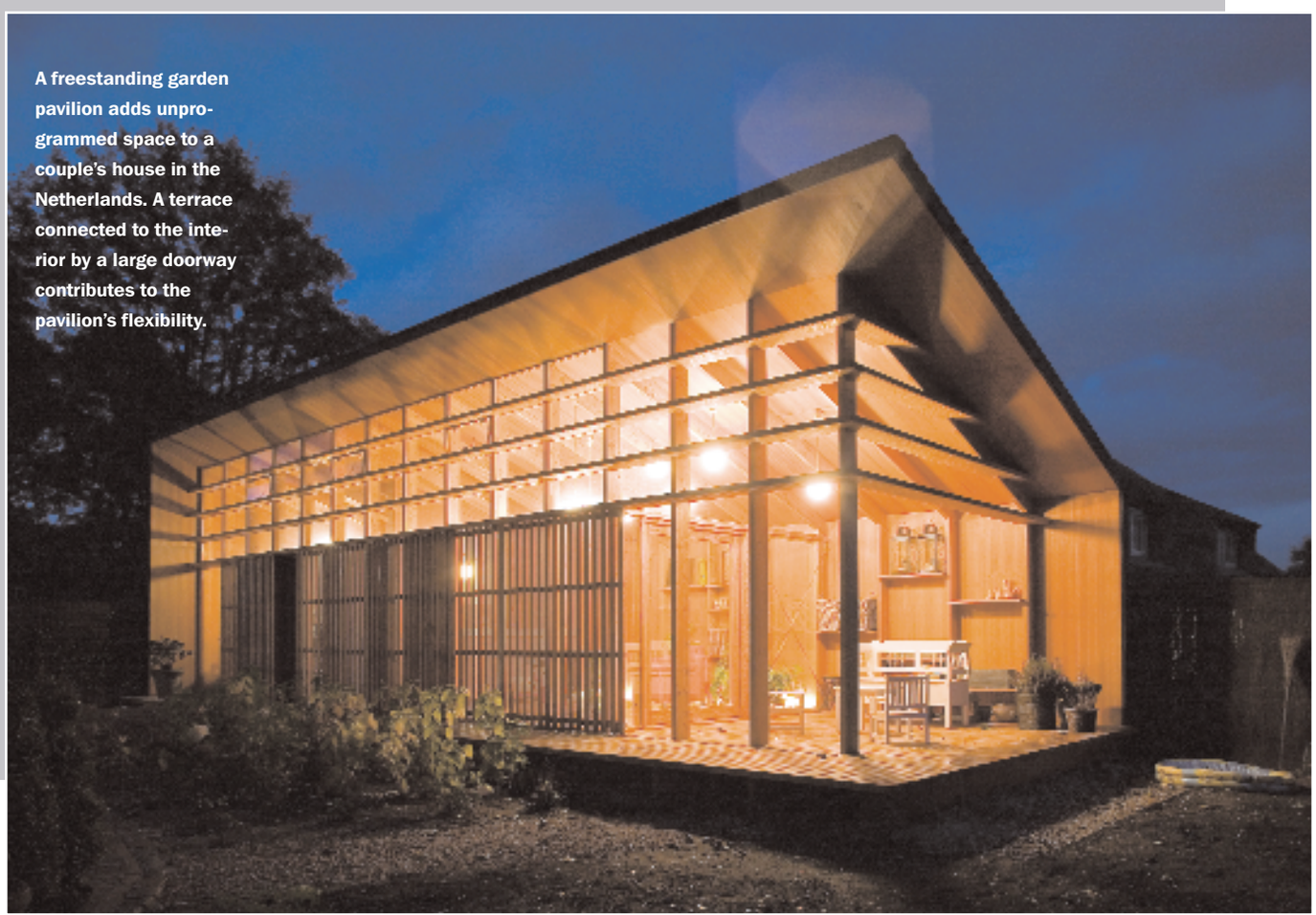
rooijakkers + tomesen architecten

Quiet as the Dutch village of Soest tends to be, a loud protest greeted the proposed expansion of a historic house. The opposition by neighbors and town officials rose up when a couple, a dentist and a business consultant, sought to expand their 1782 home to add spaces for entertaining guests, potting plants, and working on craft projects. Preservation guidelines strictly protected both the house and its village, forbidding any expansion to the original building, not even underground interventions.

So the owners reframed their approach, turning to the Amsterdam-based firm of rooijakkers + tomesen architecten, which proposed a freestanding pavilion in place of two dilapidated barns in the clients' yard behind the house. Because these farm structures suffered from poor condition and high asbestos-toxicity levels, the architects were permitted to tear down the remains and replace them with a new garden pavilion, now known locally as the "Light-Catcher."

Considering this protective situation, partners Theo Rooijakkers and Paddy Tomesen thought it best to minimize their building's visual impact. So they submerged, below grade, one of the 1,454-square-foot pavilion's two stories and created a poured-concrete basement, lining some of its surfaces in raw larch and leaving others exposed. They placed robust timber beams across the top of the cellar, vaulting the floor above it by 20 centimeters (.66 feet), and glazed the gap along the building's perimeter, forming a clerestory strip for the lower level. This feature not only lets daylight into the basement, but makes the building glow when the lights are on at night—hence the moniker Light-Catcher. In lifting the main floor, the beams give that plane a floating appearance, especially when illuminated from below in the evening.

Over the main level, 15 larch trusses form a light structure to support a roof made of the same wood. In deferring subtly to the community's *(continued on next page)*



A freestanding garden pavilion adds unprogrammed space to a couple's house in the Netherlands. A terrace connected to the interior by a large doorway contributes to the pavilion's flexibility.

PHOTOGRAPHY: © LUUK KRAMER

Louvered shutters make the daylight exposure on the ground level adjustable, while a thin clerestory strip at grade allows natural light into the basement.

PHOTOGRAPHY: © LUUK KRAMER

(continued from previous page) preference for status quo, the architects clad the north and west elevations, facing the town, in larch, creating enclosed facades reminiscent of one of the demolished barns.

But on the south and east sides, which open toward the couple's yard, the pavilion has floor-to-ceiling glazing, which lets the web of fine structural members stand out. Louvered shutters, integrated into the frame, allow for privacy and adjustable light levels. The glazing stops three trusses short of the pavilion's edge to provide for a covered terrace on the west side. For the interior, Rooijakkers and Tomesen integrated shelving between the trusses.

Because the pavilion is not eligible for residential zoning, the largely unobstructed indoor space remains "unprogrammed," giving the clients ample flexibility for social gatherings or craft and planting activities. A generous doorway onto the terrace, along with the adjustable shutters and the overall sense of openness, make for a flexible space that capitalizes on both the interior and exterior areas.

Intent on building with the highest level of craftsmanship, the architects spent time in the carpenters' workshop, learning how the pavilion would be built. The resulting sensible structure and fine details proved key to getting the pavilion approved by the village. In this historic setting, Tomesen concedes, "the building does not look totally traditional." But the detailed craftsmanship, modest scale, natural materials, and soft luminosity all bring the Light-Catcher into poised harmony with its surroundings. *J.G.*

1. *Studio*
2. *Atelier*
3. *Terrace*
4. *Storage*
5. *Living room*
6. *Closet*