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issue 33

Cloister House  
Chivelstone House  
Glenstone Museum

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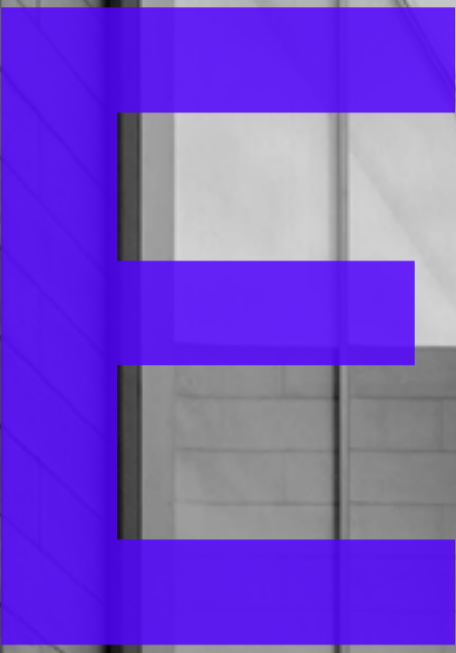
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# ISSUE 33



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# CLOIS HOUS



# CLOISTER HOUSE

Cloister House  
Perth, Australia

MORQ  
Architecture





in far-flung Perth, at the edge of the Australian continent...a house of recycled rammed concrete construction, inscribed around an intensely planted courtyard

There are echoes in the interiors of this house of Valerio Olgiati's Villa Além, in the Alentejo region of southern Portugal (C+A Issue 25). There, on the crest of a hill in a forest of cork trees, Olgiati placed a house of raw concrete at the end of a walled court and garden, of barely lit interiors to mitigate hot sun and light; the planning a staged processional journey.

Here, in far-flung Perth, at the edge of the Australian continent, architects MORQ, have made a house of recycled rammed concrete construction, inscribed around an intensely planted courtyard; softly lit, drawing most light and air from internal walls of glass stepping into the courtyard and, like the house in Portugal, designed to temper harsh sun, wind and intense light.

By way of contrast, where the house in the Alentejo stands in a forest, the Perth house, in the suburb of Floreat, sits at the front of a subdivided lot on a high traffic street, flanked by unremarkable suburban brick and tile piles. It stands as an impenetrable bunker. Step inside, however, and you are confronted with a series of remarkable spaces, low and tall, some divided by massive beams of concrete, the striated nature of the concrete the same inside as outside, drawing soft light from the lushly-planted courtyard just out of arm's reach.

Its architects, Matteo Monteduro, Emiliano Roia and Andrea Quagliola – the MO, the R and the Q of MORQ – run practices in Perth and in Rome. In Cloister House they have produced a house that not only speaks to their clients' brief, but also resonates with their longstanding interest in the courtyard houses of ancient Rome.

Their clients, a couple in their sixties planning for retirement, wanted spaces that tempered and moderated Perth's almost blinding summer light – one has a heightened sensitivity condition to harsh light – as well as seeking a calm and peaceful retreat. A domestic sanctuary, if you will.

This is a house of sequences – a "loop of habitation," as the architects describe it – organized around the courtyard space; of rooms divided by moments of compression beneath deep room-dividing concrete beams; luring you to openings placed on the diagonal and around corners, offering orchestrated glimpses into the courtyard. Along this sequence of encounters, moments of suburban life are objectified by the presence of soft light in shadowy settings. The architects speak of their love of chiaroscuro paintings and the need to make architecture that recedes.

A tall, narrow dining room opens onto the principal living room, a chamber of grand scale, 4.2 metres tall, the spaces separated by a low concrete beam. The kitchen, a long south-facing space, opens entirely onto the lushly planted courtyard. A deliberately placed north-facing concrete beam at one end of the courtyard bounces light into the kitchen. The courtyard is also designed to be used as an external dining space; a luscious, cool, green moment. It works as a stark counterpoint to the house's interior dark mass.

The dominant materials: dry rammed-concrete walls with a red oxide mix, the colour of chocolate and the consistency of earthen strata; off-the-shelf cement paving slabs, which are amplified well beyond their humble origins, giving density and scale to the floor; and a variety of timbers – mainly used for ceilings, windows and cabinetry – stained and oiled to a rich red-brown. Thresholds between rooms are also marked with timber inserts.

The roughly compacted rammed concrete was poured in 700mm-high stratas. Seldom has it been used so relentlessly as here. The red oxide mix adds warmth to finished surfaces, rather than the standard grey mix, which can appear washed out in Perth's harsh light. Walls are detailed with square corners rather than chamfers, adding to the sense of clear, uncompromising mass. Commenting on the house's bunker-like exterior, the architects explain that the house was designed "from inside-out...the exterior is the result of a spatial concept, not the other way around." The ensemble cultivates deeply primitive resonances in the imagination, binding matter, room, sequence, garden and sky. The client, they state, wanted a house that felt 1,000 years old. **Joe Rollo**





the house not only speaks to the clients' brief, but also resonates with the architects' longstanding interest in the courtyard houses of ancient Rome









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Ground Floor

0 1 2 3m



- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 01 Entry       | 07 Master Ensuite |
| 02 Dining Room | 08 Master Bedroom |
| 03 Living Room | 09 Walk In Robe   |
| 04 Kitchen     | 10 Planted Patio  |
| 05 Bedroom     | 11 Outdoor Dining |
| 06 Bathroom    |                   |

**Project Statement**

This project offers an innovative and sustainable typology in response to the issue of suburban developments of small lots. A house that is both mindful of its carbon footprint, and pleasurable to live in, where the daily routine of the inhabitants unfolds around the beautiful vegetated void.

Our clients came to us in search of a house where they could dwell peacefully for the coming chapters of their life. The site however posed many constraints to achieving this sense of sanctuary and repose: a small lot fronting a high-traffic road, with no surrounding vegetation. This is not an altogether unique condition, symptomatic of the (often mishandled) suburban densification.

We saw this as an opportunity to not only answer our clients' wishes but to also respond to the broader issue of suburban development on small lots. This project engages an ancient concept in order to offer an innovative response to this problem. By reducing the number of outward openings, it was possible to occupy the perimeter of the lot and gather all the outdoor spaces in the centre of the house. As a result, the house looks into a private, green and shaded garden that is both pleasurable and climate responsive. Strong winds and harsh sun are the major climate challenges when you design in Perth, Western Australia. Durable environmental solutions must be embedded organically in the design, as additive solutions inevitably perish in the elements. The central courtyard mediates the sunlight and facilitates cross ventilation, extracting the heat from the house during the warmer months.

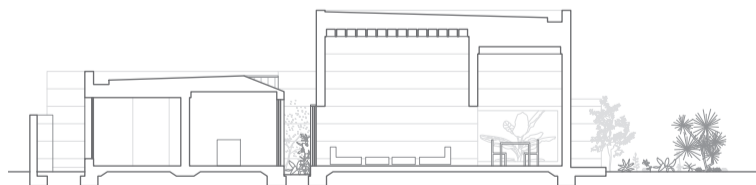
The rammed concrete perimeter walls not only give the house much of its presence, but also support a very sustainable way of building: these walls are constructed with stabilized recycled concrete rubble from demolition sites, mixed with recycled steel rust oxide. The construction technique also provides the walls with high thermal inertia supporting the overall energy efficiency of the house.

The house does not concede to unnecessary form making, rather it relies on the materiality of the building to produce a sense of presence and timelessness. The enigmatic volume conceals the central courtyard, which is only revealed upon entering the house, generating both a sense of curiosity and surprise. The detailing is raw, yet refined, and reveals the tectonics of the building.

We are interested in materials that tell you a story and, in seeking the idea of timelessness; we felt we needed a material that was monolithic and able to weather over time. Constructed following an ancient Roman technique called pisé, rammed recycled concrete walls comprise the entire vertical structure. Rough sawn red hardwood is oiled and used for the exposed roof structure, and humble garden pavers give a uniform rhythm to the floor, inside and out. All of these materials softly and subtly reflect the light that enters the courtyard and is chromatically filtered by the vegetation. The sense of calm is extraordinary. MORQ

09

remarkable spaces, low and tall, some divided by massive beams of concrete, the striated texture of the concrete the same inside as outside



Section A



Section B

0 2 5m



**Project** Cloister House  
**Location** Perth, WA, Australia  
**Architect** MORQ  
Matteo Monteduro, Emiliano Roia, Andrea Quagliola,  
Mark Jecks, Elliot Lind  
**Builder** Subiaco Homes  
**Rammed Earth Contractor** Perth Stabilized Earth  
**Structural Engineer** Hera Engineering  
**Landscaping** Alessio's Gardens with MORQ  
**Photography** Giulio Aristide

Chivvels

House

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12

Devon

Peterz



# Chivelstone

Chivelstone House  
Devon, England  
Atelier Peter Zumthor

# England

# Peter Zumthor



# Archivels

# How

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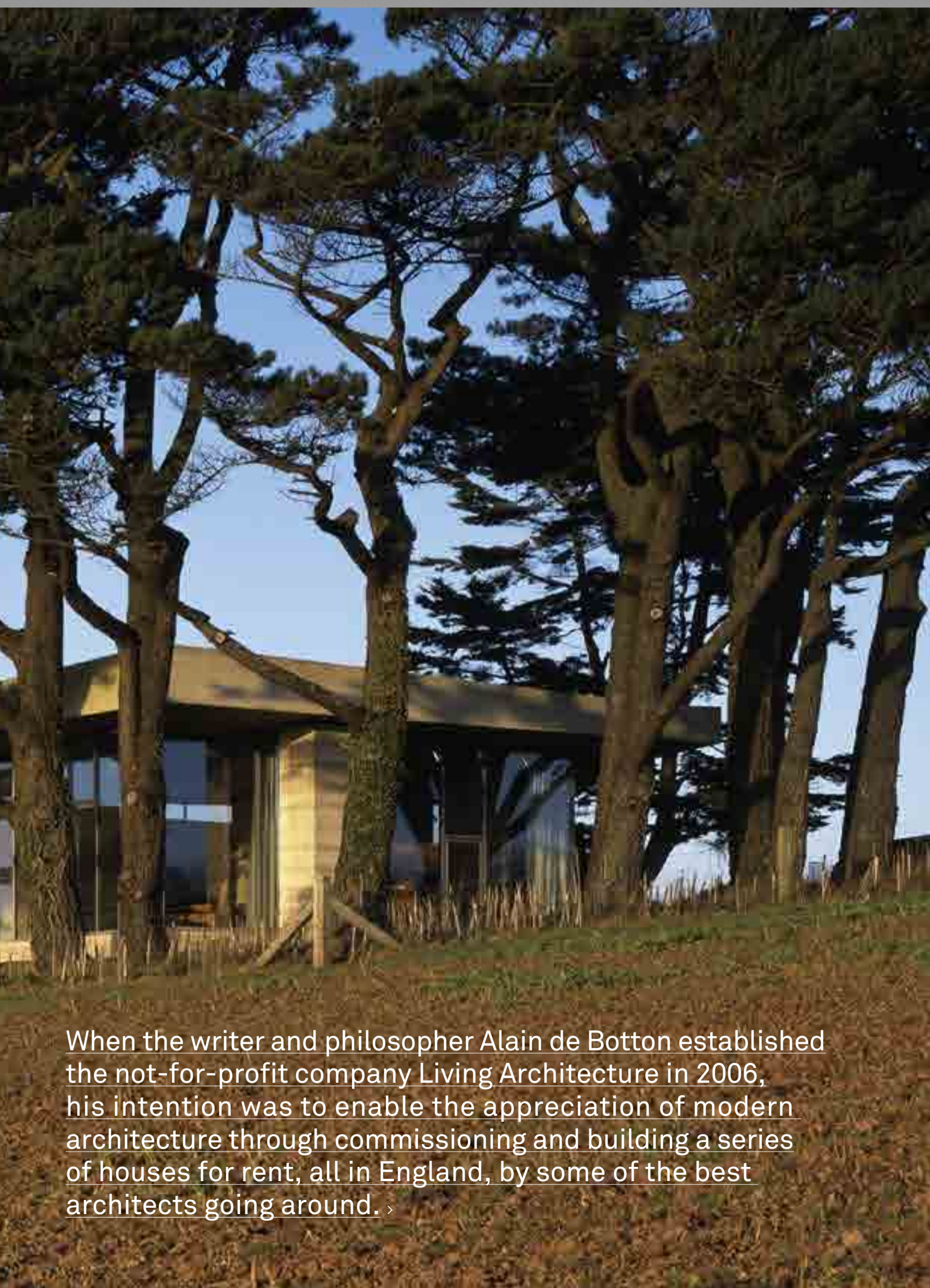
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When the writer and philosopher Alain de Botton established the not-for-profit company Living Architecture in 2006, his intention was to enable the appreciation of modern architecture through commissioning and building a series of houses for rent, all in England, by some of the best architects going around. >

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> In all eight houses have been completed: John Pawson at Llanbister in mid Wales; Hopkins Architects in Cockthorpe, Norfolk; Jarmund/Vignsnæs Architects in Thorpeness, Suffolk; MVRDV inland of the Suffolk coast, near the towns of Walberswick and Alderburgh; NORD Architects on the shingle beach at Dungeness, near Romney Marsh; FAT Architects and Grayson Perry in Essex; and a one-room installation above Southbank in London (since closed) by David Kohn Architects. Each offers guests the chance to experience the uplifting, spiritual effect of thoughtfully designed dwellings immersed in the landscape

The last, and clearly most expensive, is this house at Chivelstone, Devon, by Atelier Peter Zumthor. Aside from the temporary Serpentine Pavilion of 2011, this is Zumthor's first permanent project in the UK. It took ten years to make and complete.

Sitting on a high point of land on the site of a former 1940s house that once stood there, this is a house of rammed concrete and horizontal bands of glass beneath a large cantilevered roof, framed against a semi-circular copse of Canadian Monterey Pines that once formed part of the earlier house's garden.

The mass and weight of the concrete and expanses of glass pull off the trick of appearing both monolithic and transparent at once. The openness of the glazing – triple glazed full height panels from a German manufacturer – gives a 360-degree connection to the outdoors, framing the Devon meadows like a series of canvases. What the architecture does, Zumthor has been quoted as saying, is to frame and heighten the experience of its surroundings within the expansive, rolling hills of a peninsula in south Devon, where the air gains luminosity from the nearness of the sea.

The massive walls of rammed concrete – in fact, it is a double skin of concrete, with an insulating layer between – were mixed, shoveled and rammed by hand and built up layer by layer, the ragged joints between one day's work and the next clearly visible. "Block, block and a roof," is how Zumthor describes the building process. The masonry is visible and naked.

Zumthor describes the house as being in the tradition of Andrea Palladio's columned porticoes in the countryside of Italy's Veneto region. "He built for the aristocracy, in the countryside, creating places in which to relax, celebrate the landscape, have another life away from the city. This house's function is similar, but here it is not for the aristocracy, it is for ordinary people to enjoy."

The house is divided into two self-supporting wings – of three and two bedrooms each – set at a roughly 120-degree angle adjacent to each other, their roofs piercing the vertical glazing of a grand main living-dining-kitchen space, topped by a cantilevered roof supported on five columns, three internal and two external.

Nowhere is Zumthor's slow, organic and exacting approach better exemplified than in the laying of the limestone floor, which covers 220sqm of the house's total 375sqm. It took two years to find the Blue Limestone – sourced from a small quarry in Somerset – and eight months to put down. Slabs of the stone were cut into small tiles and laid, no more than four at a time, to make the tessellated floor.

Furniture pieces and light fittings designed by Zumthor were used throughout. And various woods – wenge, maple and pear wood – were employed to lend warmth to bedrooms. **Joe Rollo**

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a house of rammed concrete and horizontal bands of glass beneath a large cantilevered roof, framed against a semi-circular copse of Canadian Monterey Pines

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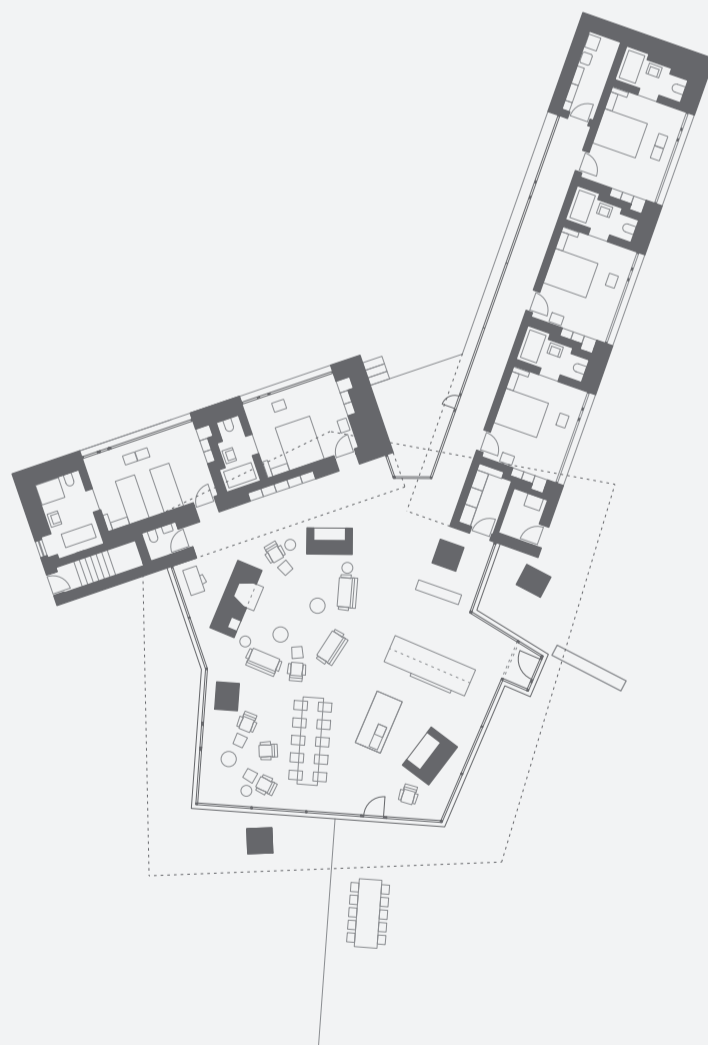
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the architecture frames and heightens the experience of its surroundings within the expansive, rolling hills of a peninsula in south Devon, where the air gains luminosity from the nearness of the sea



# stone



Cross section



Long section

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## Project Statement

Chivelstone House was conceived as a short-term retreat for small groups of people to vacation in, rest, study or work. It consists of two blocks of bedrooms and a large roof. Its basic materials are the materials and colours of the region: stone, compressed concrete and wood. Large windows frame the landscape in the bedrooms. The living area is under the large roof plate. It is glazed all around and the landscape flows right through it. The powerful piers supporting the roof stand freely in the room, and in combination with the freestanding cabinet units they give it an open-plan layout. There are areas for cooking, eating and a fireplace, a library, niches with easy chairs where one can read a book, even nooks near the kitchen where children can play while their parents are preparing meals.

The house, which our client built to replace a residence from the 1940s, sits on a hill above the hamlet of Chivelstone, surrounded by a circle of Monterey Pine trees planted around the former house: a gift from America, the locals say. The view of the green Devon landscape with its gently rolling hills has a calming effect. The sea is nearby. The Atlantic coast is less than an hour's walk away. The only reminders now of the old house, besides the Monterey pines, are traces of modifications, small stone retaining walls built with the local technique known as 'shillet on edge,' and a hexagonal flower bed with a concrete surround, said to have been constructed by the former mistress of the house. The spot on the hill has a cheerful serenity that seems to derive from its history. **Extract from the monograph "Peter Zumthor 1985–2013. Building and Projects"**



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# Chivelstone

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Project Chivelstone House  
Location Devon, England  
Architect Atelier Peter Zumthor  
Structural Engineer Jane Wernick Associates  
Landscape Rathbone Partnership  
Environmental Design Transolar, Integration (UK)  
Construction management Simon Cannon Ltd  
Concrete Frame Woodmace Concrete Structures  
Photographs H el ene Binet

# Peter Zumthor

stone

England

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# PAVILL

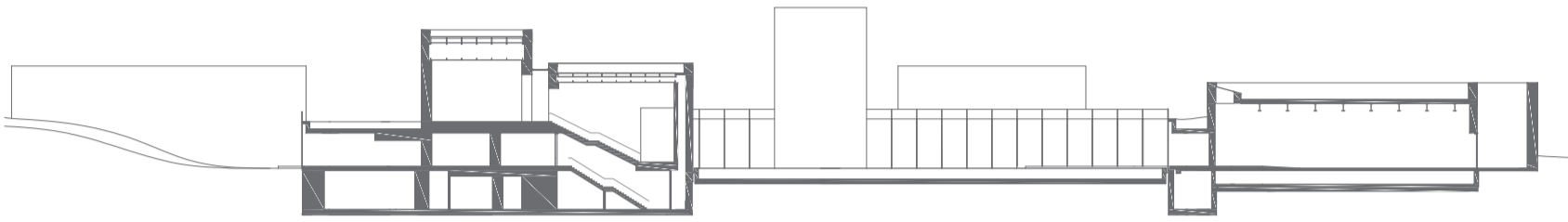
Pavilions  
Glenstone Museum  
Potomac, Maryland,  
USA

Thomas Phifer  
& Partners

# PAVILIONS



Picture a walk through a woodland, across a bridge where a creek bubbles below to a meadow, and as you follow a gravel path and turn up a gentle slope, an ensemble of windowless cubic forms comes into view, their pale gray walls of poured concrete block softened by swaying grasses and Black Eyed Susans that crowd up to the building's edges >



Longitudinal Section

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> In this idyllic procession from a distant parking lot to the front door of the new Pavilions gallery at Glenstone, a private contemporary art museum in Potomac, Maryland, every move has been choreographed to create an extraordinary melding of landscape, architecture and art.

The design of cultural experience has been evolving at Glenstone since 2006 when its cofounders, Mitchell Rales and his wife Emily Wei Rales, opened a 2,150-square-metre gallery, designed by the late Charles Gwathmey, to show art from their Glenstone Foundation collection on what was then a 50-hectare site.

With a significantly growing collection and the property expanded to 93 hectares – the land undergoing a transformation at the direction of Adam Greenspan, design partner at Berkeley-based PWP Landscape Architecture, planting 8,000 trees and helping to site large-scale outdoor sculpture by artists such as Richard Serra, Ellsworth Kelly, and Jeff Koons – in 2010 the Rales's commissioned architects Thomas Phifer and Partners of New York to design a new 15,800-square-metre museum. The final brief called for a museum of eleven galleries, nine designated for the long-term installation of works by nine contemporary artists — Cy Twombly, Robert Gober, Pipilotti Rist, Charles Ray, On Kawara, Martin Puryear, Michael Heizer, Lygia Pape, Brice Marden and Lawrence Weiner. Phifer's concept was to create the 'village of buildings' that you see as you approach. Though the structures vary in size and scale they are, in fact, all part of a singular concrete and steel building, with an interior circulation route around a central water court, spread across three levels, largely embedded in the earth.

The main entrance and foyer is a relatively small space on the ground floor; the new galleries, known as "rooms", are one level below grade, as is the water court and museum offices. Two levels down is a basement for art storage and conservation. It is a powerful composition, with the striking architecture heightened by a limited palette of materials, exquisite details, and the deft deployment of daylight and deep shadows.

The seeming simplicity of the architecture echoes the vision that Mitchell and Emily Rales sought for viewing art: no crowds, visitors limited to about 400 a day; and no distractions; a bookstore and two cafés have been exiled to small cedar-clad and glass buildings elsewhere in the park. Once inside the museum, you confront a wall piece by conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner. A text in 30cm block letters perfectly fills the faces of several of the poured-concrete blocks that are the museum's fundamental building component, inside as well as out. In all, 26,000 concrete blocks, measuring 30×30×180cm and cast off-site in plywood forms over two years, were stacked to construct the new museum.

Thomas Phifer and his team worked closely with the living artists, and the estates of those who are dead, to tailor specific conditions for each of the artists' rooms. Six of the eleven rooms bring in daylight from above, while another room is open to the sky.

To avoid direct sunlight on artwork, either light wells with a glazed panel at the top or monitors, with clerestories wrapping around them, protrude above the poured-concrete ceilings.

The day lighting features presented major engineering challenges. For example, to span the 23-metre width of the column-free spaces of the temporary gallery, Phifer and his team turned to engineers at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, who invented a ceiling system using steel trusses, two for each of the five monitors, somewhat visible through the translucent glass of the clerestories. The poured-concrete ceiling slab is hung from the trusses, while the concrete slab on top of each monitor rests on them. **Joe Rollo**



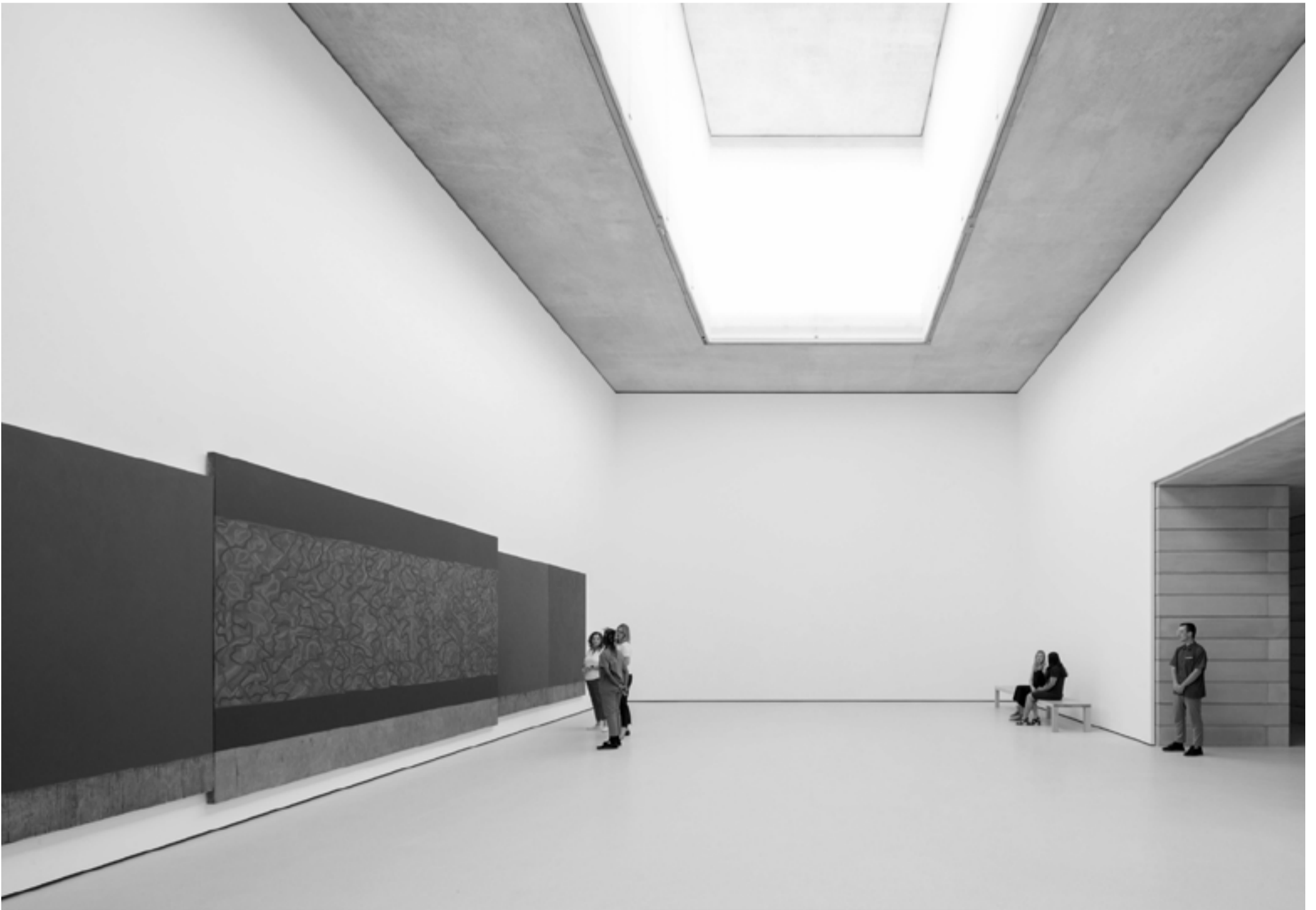
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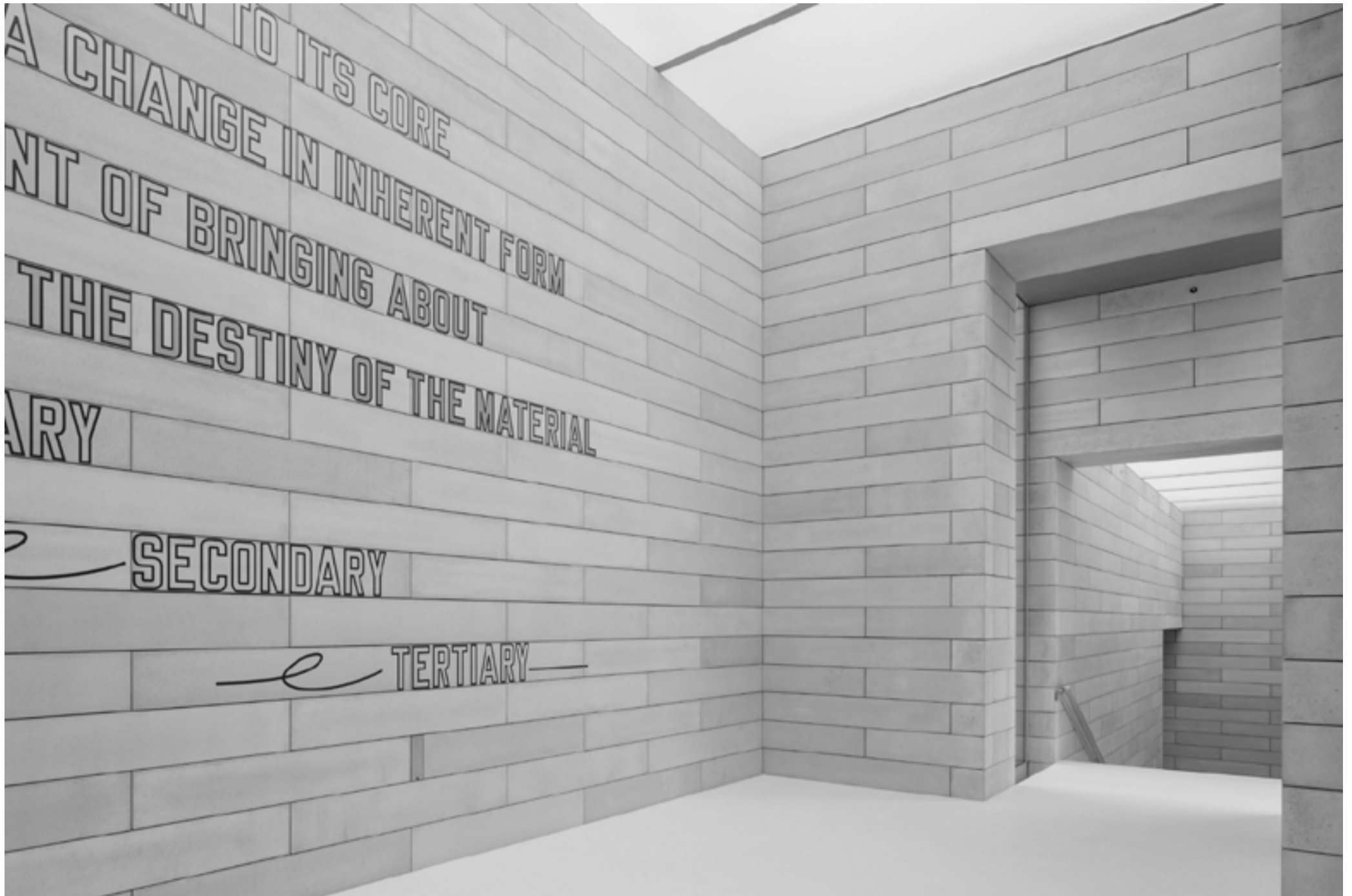
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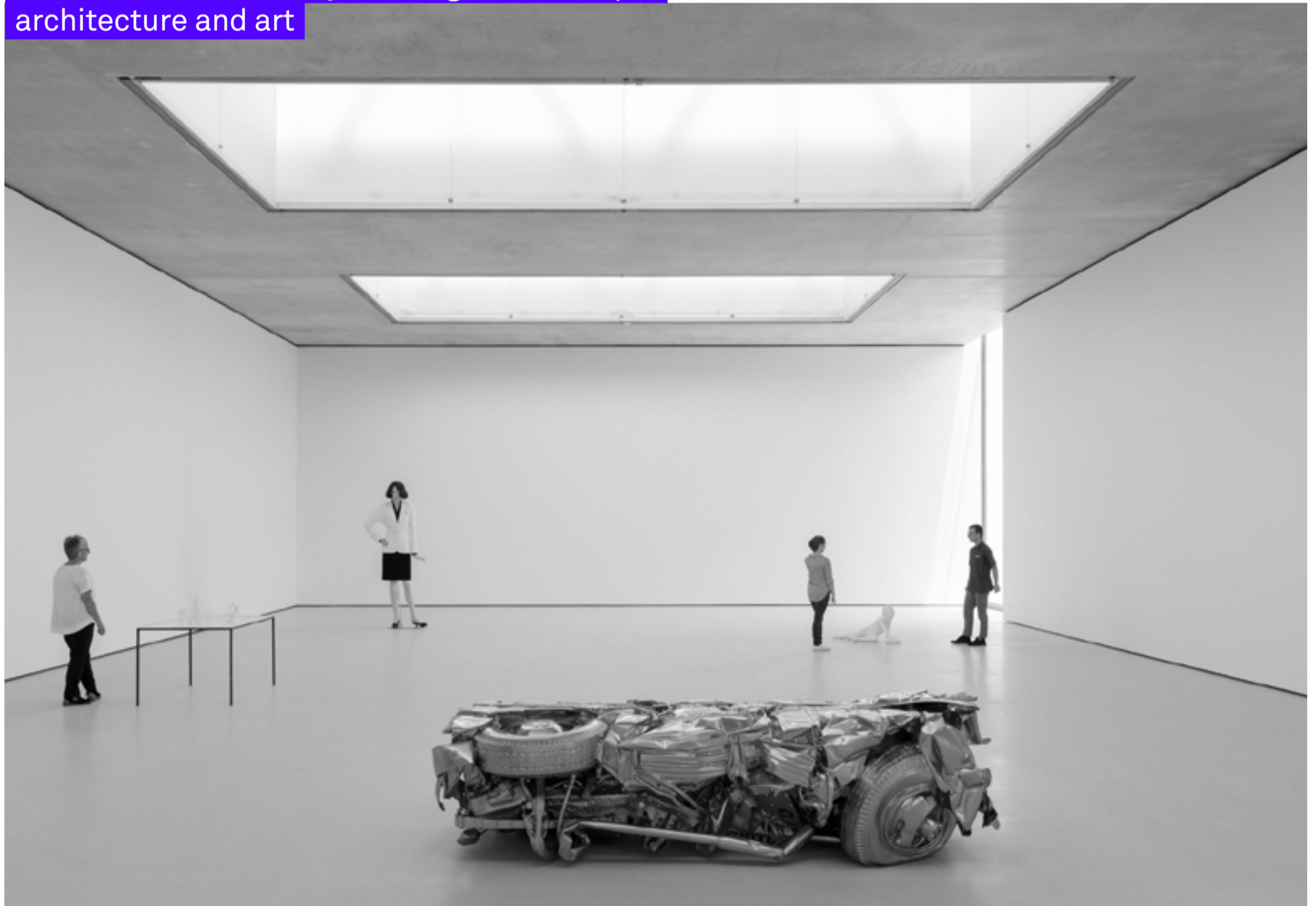








every move has been choreographed to create an extraordinary melding of landscape, architecture and art





**Project Statement**

To provide access to a larger portion of its collection and enhance its service to the public, Glenstone has completed a major expansion of its museum facilities and landscape. The centerpiece is a new building, called the Pavilions.

Embedded into a rise in the landscape to give the outward impression of discrete buildings rising out of the earth, as in a traditional hill town, the Pavilions is organized as a ring of gallery rooms surrounding a large landscaped water court. Rooms of varying sizes, configurations, and light conditions house single-artist installations and a multiple-artist survey of works from the Glenstone Foundation collection. The building significantly expands Glenstone's indoor exhibition space, from 840 to 5,480 square metres, and also provides increased office space and support facilities. A strategic master plan and site design by PWP Landscape Architecture more than doubles the area of restored woodlands, meadows and streams accessible to the public, from approximately 50 to 93 hectares. The expansion also provides a new public entrance and arrival building, two freestanding cafés, and a centre that highlights environmentally sustainable practices at Glenstone.

Located on 93 hectares in Potomac, Maryland, near Washington, DC, Glenstone is a museum of modern and contemporary art that offers visitors a seamlessly integrated experience of works from its collection, architecture, and landscape. Its first exhibition building, known as the Gallery, was designed by Charles Gwathmey of Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects and opened to the public in 2006. The natural setting, designed by Adam Greenspan and Peter Walker of PWP Landscape Architecture, incorporates major works of outdoor sculpture within meadows and unspoiled woodlands.

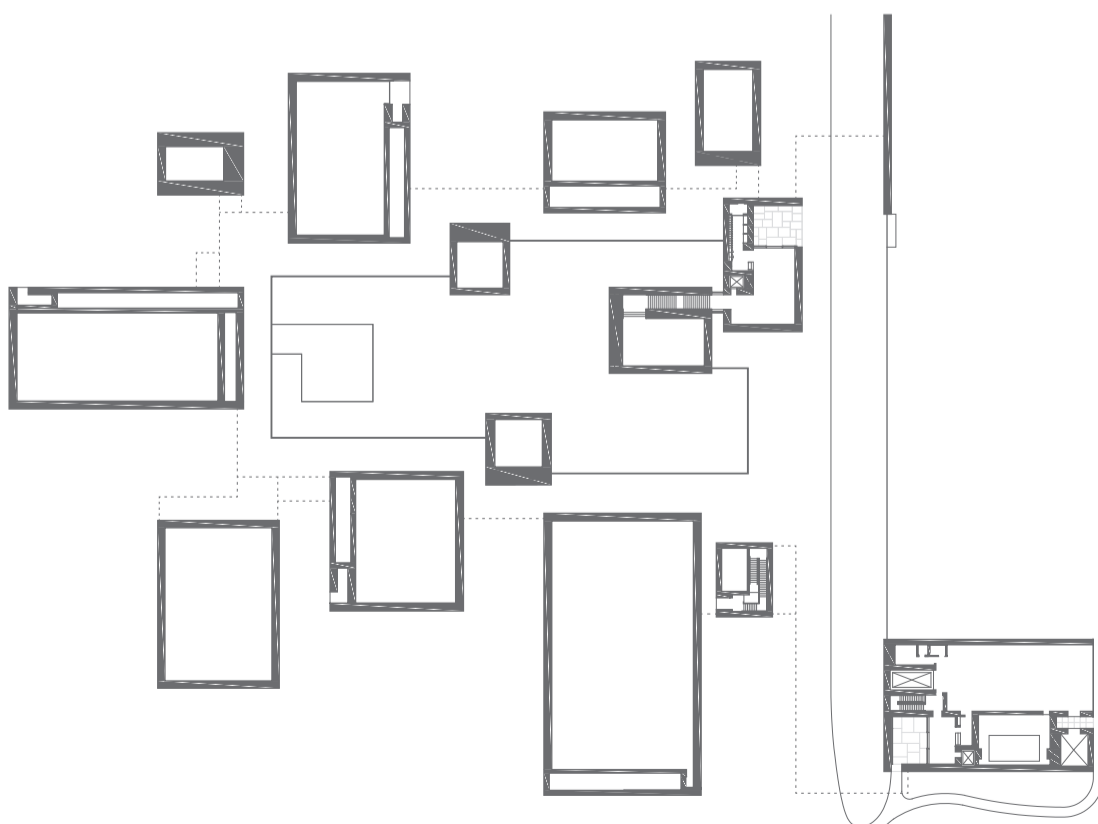
The new landscape design integrates walking paths, bridges and restored meadows and woodlands. More than 6,000 trees of 55 native species have been planted across the grounds, bringing the total installed at Glenstone to 8,000, and approximately 13 hectares of existing pastures have been developed into sustainable meadows with a range of indigenous flora. The Pavilions' Water Court is richly planted with water lilies, irises and rushes, creating a dynamic landscape that changes throughout the seasons. The visitor entrance is framed by dry-stack stone walls constructed by a master craftsman with stone sourced from a nearby quarry.

Natural lighting is fundamental to the construction and design of the Pavilions. Most rooms have large clerestories or lay lights to provide balanced natural light from above. One room is open to the sky. The play of light and shadow varies throughout the day; and as the seasons change, the light fluctuates, revealing subtle qualities in the artworks and providing a more natural, nuanced viewing experience.

The Pavilions' design emphasizes materials that evoke a direct, elemental and timeless dialogue with the surrounding landscape. The exterior is made of 26,000 stacked blocks of cast concrete. This finish deliberately contrasts with the smooth precision of the windows, which have been specially engineered using glass panels as large as 2.7 metres wide and 9 metres tall, and are set flush into stainless steel mullions. The glass surfaces and concrete blocks form a seamless skin that bridges the building's indoor and outdoor spaces. **Thomas Phifer and Partners**



Plan Galleries



Plan Entry

Project Pavilions at Glenstone Museum  
Location Potomac, Maryland, DC, USA  
Architect Thomas Phifer & Partners  
Project team Thomas Phifer, Gabriel Smith, Andrew Mazor,  
Michael Trudeau, Rebecca Garnett, Jonathan Benner, John Bassett,  
Bethany Mahre, Petra Pearsall, Remon Alberts, Greg Bonner,  
Robert Chan, Isaiah King, Elijah Porter, Lamare Wimberly  
Structural Engineers Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP  
Mechanical Engineers Altieri, Sebor, Wieber LLC Consulting Engineers  
Plumbing Altieri, Sebor, Wieber LLC Consulting Engineers  
Electrical Altieri, Sebor, Wieber LLC Consulting Engineers  
Fire Protection Altieri, Sebor, Wieber LLC Consulting Engineers  
Civil VIK A, Inc.  
Geotechnical Schnabel Engineering DC  
Photographs Iwan Baan





The Pantheon, Rome, Italy

# REARVIEW

Almost 2000 years after it was completed, the coffered concrete dome of The Pantheon, in Rome's Piazza della Rotonda, remains one of the wonders of world architecture. Architects and fans of architecture consider it one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. Standing on the site of an earlier temple commissioned by Marcus Agrippa during the reign of Augustus (27BC–14AD) and completed around 126AD by the emperor Hadrian, the dome remains the largest unreinforced concrete dome in the world. Crushed pumice aggregate and void formers placed in its section were used to lighten the massive superstructure. With an internal diameter of 43 metres, the dome is marked by an open oculus, 9 metres in diameter, which also stands at 43 metres from the floor. With a portico of two rows of large granite columns beneath a pediment, the Pantheon is one of the best-preserved of all ancient Roman structures, in large part because it has been in continuous use throughout its history. Since the 7th century the building has been used as a consecrated church, Santa Maria dei Martiri.

Photograph: John Gollings

