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Design Workshop: Connecting Our Built and Unbuilt Worlds



Renderings of an unbuilt project in California show how using place to inspire architecture is worth getting right



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At a basic level, our homes are little more than pragmatic containers for our everyday lives, charged with holding the assortment of objects that define who we are and the specifics of how we interact with the world. This is because home design often prioritizes functional requirements above all else.

But what if your home's design was derived from the unique place where you live rather than simply rational solutions to functional necessities? What if the places you retired to for relaxation, the living spaces, even the bathrooms, were arranged according to a larger order?

If that were the starting point, the result might look something like this.



Though unbuilt, these renderings imagine a project with a grander plan in mind. Termed the Four Eyes house, it was dreamed up by Edward Ogosta Architecture of Culver City, California, a firm that believes in “making buildings with experiential depth.” It was conceived as a weekend retreat in the Coachella Valley east of Los Angeles for a family of four.

In this rendering, an apparently simple, minimalist composition of rectilinear forms appears stationed in an austere landscape.



Outward appearances can be deceptive though. Simple forms conceal complex spatial variety and experience. The design consists of four mysterious vertical towers, each with a different orientation linked informally on the ground floor by the primary living spaces.

These four sentinels rise above the flat, shadowless landscape marking distinct constructions in the natural environment. Each tower houses a single private bedroom positioned to capture views while offering shade, creating an oasis of sorts.

By modulating between solid and void, open and closed, the architect designed primitive forms along with our most basic building elements — the floor, the roof, the wall and the



window — to forcefully manipulate the inhabitant's experience. The sitting room seen here is bound by two angled walls and faces southwest. The angle of the walls correlates to the human field of view — roughly 60 degrees, connecting the interior with the exterior and a broad, panoramic view.

By angling the walls this way, the architect allows the interior space to capture light during a greater portion of the day and suggests there are larger forces at work in the design. Clipping the walls in a rectangular arrangement would've precluded this relationship and an opportunity to control the light entering the home. The angle along

with the strong contrast between the windowless interior and the sun-washed exterior move the eye outward.



Located between towers are the public spaces — the kitchen, dining, living, porch and entry. This in-between area, accessed via grade level, is also the most permeable. Situated between floating roof and floor planes, it feels impermanent — almost as an encampment beneath a tarp, sheltered from the sun but little else. It's positioned to allow the inhabitants to experience the changing winds, the storms, the night air.

Traditional notions of enclosure, privacy and shelter have been eschewed to heighten a connection to the land. There's a friction between the structure, the user and the environment. They all feel vulnerable in different ways.



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The living spaces are primarily bound by walls of glass. The solid bases of the towers and the roof planes modulate the light. Crisp shadows delineate the time of day on the interior surfaces, creating moving pools of shade along with an ever-changing hue of sunlight.

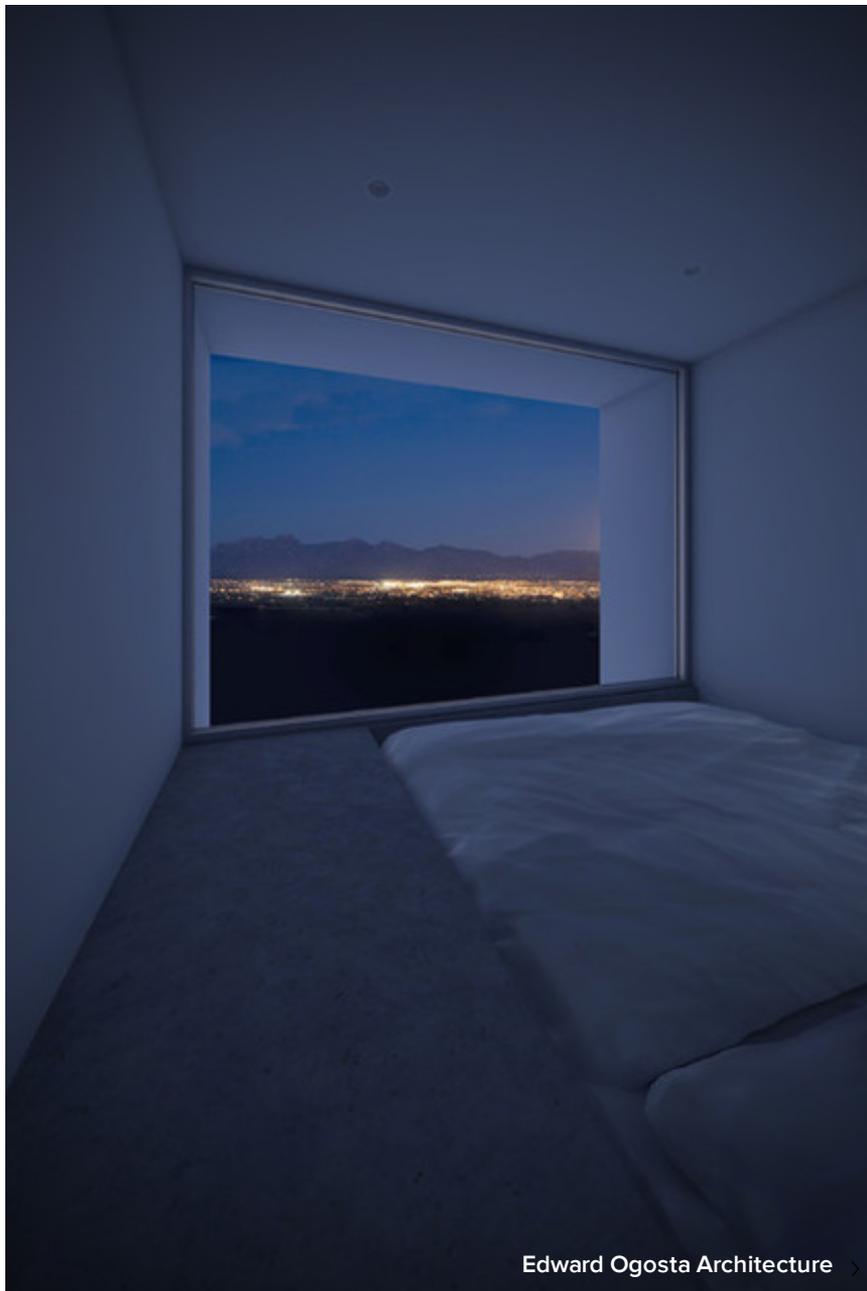
Circumscribing the passage of time enriches the interior spaces and marries the inhabitants to the circadian rhythms of the site. It's a powerful gesture because it's rooted to deeper ideas about place. It's asking deeper questions of its inhabitants. This deferential attitude I find quite appealing. The project reacts to the environment rather than subjugating it.

Each tower is named not for the bedroom or owner of that bedroom but for its position and



orientation. The “sunrise bedroom” (seen here) with a slot window faces east; the “mountain bedroom” faces a mountain range visible to the south; the “cityscape bedroom” faces the city lights to the west; and the “sky bedroom” replaces the roof with a plane of glass to reveal the cosmos.

Each tower is roughly of equal size and accommodates only a bed. The experience is meditative and monastic in the way it deprives the senses. It forces a quiet reflection. These deeper connections to places are possible only when we remove ourselves from the expected, everyday experience of life.



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It's not unlike the experience of travel. When we're removed from a known and comfortable environment, we're more sensitive and open to new experiences, and those create powerful lasting memories.

Moving upwards into each tower is also a carefully designed experience. The sky and mountain towers are accessed via scissor stairs of differing configurations traversing intermediate spaces. The cityscape bedroom is reached via a circular stair, and the sunrise bedroom via the ladder seen here.



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In this way, vertical movement is celebrated. It enhances the perceived physical disconnection of these private spaces from others and from the earth. It also creates a morning and evening ritual specific to each bedroom. Going to bed at night and rising in the morning are heightened, celebrated events. These aren't merely rooms collected and presented for use; rather they contain surprise gifts of experience.

Each bedroom was designed to be used by anyone. There's no distinction between master bedroom or guest bedroom or child's bedroom — they're meant to be appreciated by all depending on mood or whim.



The exterior of the home is rendered in bright white. It's the canvas against which we can appreciate the infinite variability of the sun's light, from the welcoming and warming early morning light, to the harsh and unrelenting light of mid-day and finally transitioning to the relaxing, contemplative light of early evening.

Views to the exterior from inside the towers are tightly controlled, as visible here in the carefully positioned openings on the exterior facades.

I find that the most appealing architectural solutions leverage the latent, unappreciated and often mundane aspects of our world — the passage of time, the changing of seasons, the weather, capturing breezes, creating darkness and embracing light. This project resonates deeply on all of these accounts.



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Yet, it remains unbuilt.

Perhaps it will remain just that, a collection of ideas in digital space, on paper and in the imagination. A dream. Or perhaps the inspiration and the ideas about place and creating deeper connections represented here can find life in your projects and your practice.

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