

# RD

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

FOR ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS  
OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES

VOL. 4, 2022

## Vacation in Mind



# RD

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN



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# Vacation in Mind

When designed with the landscape as a priority, every house lives like a vacation home.

BY CHERYL WEBER AND S. CLAIRE CONROY





# Wabi-Sabi

EMIGRATION CANYON, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH  
SPARANO + MOONEY ARCHITECTURE

**Wabi-Sabi, a house** for a young family tucked into Utah’s Emigration Canyon, could also be called Yin-Yang. Yes, it revels in the earthy imperfections of nature, but it also balances the opposing yearnings of the human heart—one for stimulation and one for repose. It strikes the perfect poise between urban house and rural escape—just 15 minutes from Salt Lake City and a world away.

Designed by Sparano + Mooney Architecture, the house taps into its site opportunities with two cantilevered volumes, one oriented to peaceful mountain views and one trained on

Salt Lake’s kinetic cityscape at the undulating canyon’s base. The domestic program occupies the mountain view volume, located to the north and arranged on an east-west axis. The public volume steps down with the hill and splays southwest toward the lights of the city.

## Mountain Blend

As careful as the house is to capture views for its occupants, it also does its best to preserve the views for others. “It’s not a canyon that’s heavily traveled, but quite a few hikers do go by,” says Anne Mooney, AIA. “We did try to



The entry sequence traces the topography of the sloped site, moving through screened views of the canyon panorama and stopping along the way at a built-in “mudroom” bench.



*This page:* The house's cantilevered volumes nestle below the ridgeline, preserving views from the road. Outdoor living is clustered in patios that also serve as fire breaks. A blackened steel firepit warms cool nights, and a board-formed concrete dog run protects the family pet from predators.

reduce the mass of the house and embed it in the site. Those cantilever volumes float off the ground, but we were careful to ensure that sightlines were preserved and that we did not build on a ridgeline. It's such a spectacular place.”

The street above the house sits on the ridgeline, but hikers who might gaze down from the road would see Wabi-Sabi's vegetated roof camouflaging the volumes as they mimic the surrounding terrain. Cedar cladding stained black and glazing shaded by screens help the house recede into the shadows of the canyon walls.

The firm's design targets LEED Gold and complies with Architecture





*This page:* The two volumes split at the entry hall, with one stepping down to the great room and the other continuing on to the family wing. Both kitchen and living area take in the sweep of the canyon's descent into Salt Lake City, while the bedroom wing terminates in a mountain view.



“Those cantilever volumes float off the ground, but we were careful to ensure that sightlines were preserved and that we did not build on a ridgeline.”

—Anne Mooney, AIA

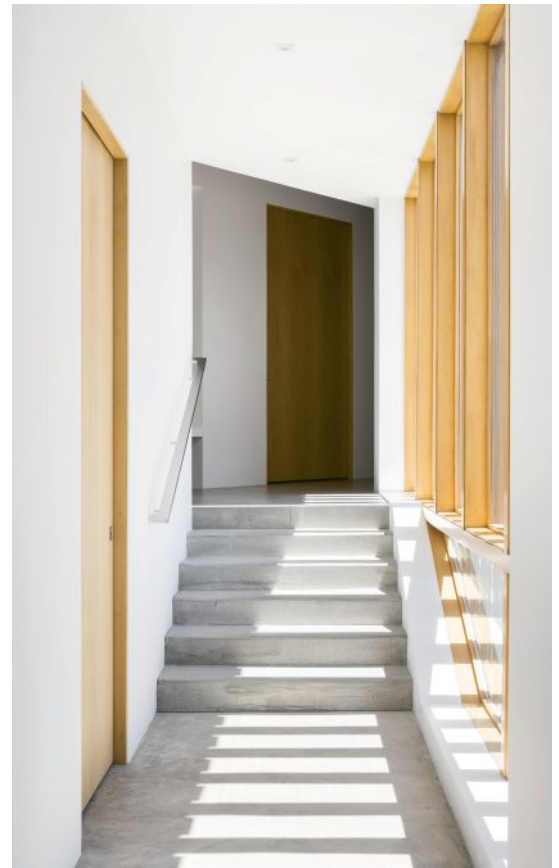
2030 goals. “LEED is nice because it hits different areas of sustainability and water conservation,” says Anne, who is LEED accredited. In keeping with those benchmarks, the architects took great care to reduce construction waste by dimensioning materials in standard sizes. As architect Nate King, AIA, explains, “We worked with our wood supplier pretty early on to determine the height of the home and reduce overall waste. We ultimately chose Select-Tight-Knot cedar for its tighter knots and longer lengths.”

The high-performance building envelope comprises a 12-inch-thick double-framed wall assembly with a thermal break, closed cell insulation, and blown-in blanket insulation. The roof assembly combines 6 inches of rigid insulation and 16 inches of cavity insulation. Glazing is strategically placed to reduce heat gain and facilitate natural





*This page:* Sleek interior finishes keep the eyes moving to framed views of canyon, mountains, and city. The clients, who collect art, requested space to display their favorite pieces.



ventilation. And the firm worked in symbiosis with the site to maintain the natural flow of stormwater runoff.

“It was about nestling within the natural site and almost being one with the landscape,” says Nate. “The two volumes are the same proportion and there are integrated pathways along the natural topography. The whole idea about indoor-outdoor relationships was a critical way of thinking on the project.” John Sparano, FAIA, concurs. “Living outside is an integral part of building in the intermountain west.”

### Mind the Pets

Concrete patios form the key outdoor entertaining spaces on the hilly property. Off the great room, a southern patio captures vistas from canyon to city, with a custom blackened steel firepit for cool nights and a board-formed concrete dog run to protect the family



dog from predators. “There are coyotes, bobcats, and mountain lions in the canyon,” Anne observes. Another west-facing patio tucks beneath the cantilevered primary bedroom suite, providing shelter from the sun and privacy for a hot tub.

The patios also serve a more essential purpose—as a fire break. “There are fire issues up here, and, although the house is clad in wood, it’s designed to resist fire,” says Anne. “There are no overhangs except for the cantilevers, the base is concrete, and the wall assembly has a fire rating.”

“We worked with the fire department to incorporate defensible space,” Nate adds. “We curated the landscape within 50 feet to be less prone to fire

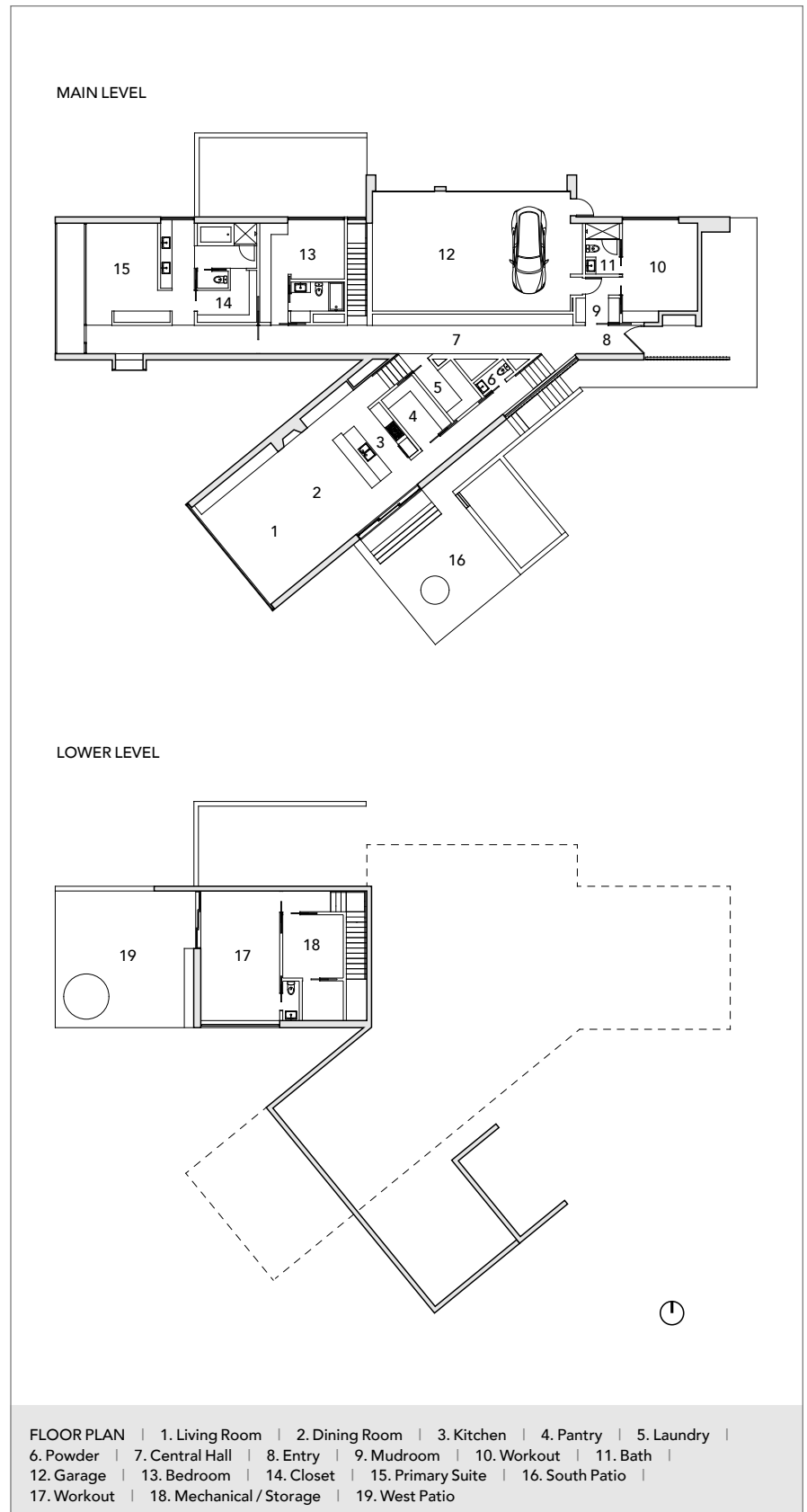
“The whole idea about indoor-outdoor relationships was a critical way of thinking on the project.”

—Nate King, AIA

danger and added natural irrigation to keep the site less dry. It is fairly remote up there.” There are sprinklers inside the house as well.

Originally, the plan was to wrap one volume in zinc and one in shou sugi ban, which would have also added fire resistance, but budgetary constraints came into play. Instead, the stained cedar cladding achieves a similar look. At the front of the house, the cedar morphs into a screen as part of an entry procession punctuated by glimpses of the panoramic view. A “mudroom” bench tucks into a niche along the way, addressing the view.

“You can sit on the bench, take your shoes off, and elongate that threshold experience before you go in the front door,” says Anne. “We wanted the







The west patio off the lower level offers private mountain views and shelter for a hot tub. Rough board-formed concrete walls move inside the adjacent workout room and flex space, segueing into polished concrete floors.

entrance to be an orchestrated experience—to see the cladding dissolve from a solid mass into a screen and to acquaint the visitors with the view.” Once inside, guests are drawn down the stairs of the public volume toward the great room and cityscape beyond. Family, however, can follow the level path straight to the



private bedroom wing, terminating in the mountain view.

Materials on the main levels are bright and warm—white walls, white oak flooring, and white Caesarstone surfacing. Tile floors in the hallways were laid out to reduce waste. “Every end cut is on the opposite side,” says Nate. “We try to select materials pretty quickly after we have the schematics,” Anne adds, “so we can alter to accommodate certain products rather than cut to fit.”

Below the primary suite, a workout space with a powder room shares the exterior’s board-formed concrete walls and concrete flooring, handy for trips back and forth to the nearby hot tub. Inside, the floors are radiant.

The original plan for the house was to run the gantlet of LEED Gold certification, but the COVID pandemic set the timetable back. Even if the glittering goal falls by the wayside, the firm is unfazed. “The standard is embedded in our process whether our clients ask for it or not,” says Anne.

With LEED the metrics are clear, but what it doesn’t calculate is the value of designing a custom home that lives like two houses—a primary dwelling and a vacation escape, negating the need to build both. —*S. Claire Conroy*



## Wabi-Sabi

Emigration Canyon, Salt Lake City

**ARCHITECT:** Anne G. Mooney, AIA; John P. Sparano, FAIA; Nate King, AIA; Jun Li (renders); Drew Olguin (model builder), Sparano + Mooney Architecture, Salt Lake City

**BUILDER:** Living Home Construction, Salt Lake City

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Sparano + Mooney Architecture (in collaboration with the client)

**ENGINEERING:** McNeil Engineering, Sandy, Utah; Structural Design Studio, Salt Lake City

**LANDSCAPING/SPRINKLER SYSTEMS:** Kappus Landscape Sprinkler LLC, Salt Lake City

**PROJECT SIZE:** 4,000 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 9.96 acres

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** \$400 a square foot

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Matt Winqvist (exteriors); Lucy Call (interiors)

### KEY PRODUCTS

**CLADDING:** 1x6 western red cedar

**ENTRY DOOR:** Iron Door Works

**FASTENERS:** Hilti; Simpson Strong-Tie

**FAUCETS/SHOWERHEADS:** California Faucets

**FIREPLACE:** Heatilator

**GARAGE DOOR OPENER:** LiftMaster

**HOME/LIGHTING CONTROL:** Control4

**HVAC/HUMIDITY CONTROL:** Bryant Heating & Cooling

**KITCHEN APPLIANCES:** Thermador

**PAINT:** Benjamin Moore; Tnemec

**ROOFING:** TPO; green roof/rock ballast

**SINKS:** ROHL (kitchen); California Faucets (primary bath); Lacava (utility)

**SKYLIGHTS:** Aladdin Industries

**TOILETS:** Duravit

**TUB:** Dornbracht

**UNDERLAYMENT/SHEATHING:** AdvanTech by Huber Engineered Woods

**VENTILATION:** AprilAire Air Cleaners

**WASHER/DRYER:** Asko

**WINDOWS:** USI Supplier; Weather Shield

**WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS:** Weather Shield