

Todd Saunders  
Architecture in Northern Landscapes



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Birkhäuser  
Basel



TODD  
SAUNDERS

ARCHITECTURE IN  
NORTHERN LANDSCAPES



In the sound of a few leaves,  
Which is the sound of the land  
Full of the same wind  
That is blowing in the same bare place



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## Preface

In the frenzy of 21st-century production, it is easy to forget just how much architecture has morphed over the last century. In this particular instance I do not mean in its formal codes; or in the technology that dictates what is and isn't possible structurally or climatically; or even in terms of the legal codes that regulate environmental performance or impose minimum safety standards. I am referring to architecture as a profession: the quotidian *modus operandi* of the architect. Architecture today is an urban-centric profession. It distinctly favours large structures over small structures. Its ambition is to placelessness: ties to geographic specificities are eschewed. Its generative structures expand rapidly or die out. It is as preoccupied with its own representation as with the spatial experience it generates. It does not favour deviations from the pre-ordained path of growth or failure.

Over the past decade, the practice of Todd Saunders has consolidated itself as one of the exceptions to this normative standard. It has thrived as one of the few practices preoccupied with architecture's relationship with the landscape, the countryside, a spatial category considered at best unfashionable and at worst irrelevant to the contemporary condition. It has explored vernacular materials and techniques and sampled them, adapted them, and reposed them in surprising and unexpected manners and contexts. It has worked on projects with modest budgets, giving them all the dignity and value and identity of large urban projects. It has limited its output to a handful of specific regions – mostly in remote areas of Norway and Canada – coming to know and understand them intimately in the process. It has been widely published, but has not become obsessed with the production of images to the point of losing contact with the spatial experience that lies at the heart of architectural production.

After ten years, the practice finds itself at a turning point. How does one operate a “technology transfer” and bring this experience and knowledge to the next level? Can these techniques be applied in different, denser, more conflicted contexts, without corrupting their innate purity? Could a new understanding of the city come not from within but from without, from the countryside, from those spaces both society and the architectural profession have turned their backs on? These are questions for the next ten years, perhaps. This monograph chronicles the paths and processes that have shaped the studio's first decade.

## Introduction

The architecture of Todd Saunders relates explicitly to landscape, from Norway's dense forests and steep-sided fjords to the boulder-strewn coastline of Newfoundland. Saunders, a Canadian, has lived and worked in Norway since 1996, following an apparently straightforward career path underpinned by a daring and self-starting philosophy toward both life and architecture.

After finishing a postgraduate degree in Architecture at Montreal's McGill University, followed by a period of European travel, the architect established his firm, Saunders Architecture, in the western Norwegian city of Bergen. Setting up independently straight after graduation is a significant rarity in the architecture world, where long-term practical experience and a well-established client network are usually the path to a successful practice.

From the outset, Todd Saunders associated architecture with the art of creating place. His studio explores the role that form and texture play in the perception of space, as well as how materials and shape can act as triggers for memory and as generators for harmony and interaction. His architecture is about how space relates to place, working within existing natural as well as manmade contexts.

Saunders now has more than 10 years of professional experience. His initial focus on residential design has expanded to include a number of larger commissions that bring the discovery and warmth of the domestic realm into commercial and cultural buildings. His architecture retains a modesty of scale as well as a carefully measured ambition, atypical in a media age that prizes image above all else. The work of Saunders Architecture is infused with the spirit of place and a respect for craft traditions and vernacular forms, while remaining unashamedly modern and authentic, avoiding all pastiche and imitation. The uncompromising synthesis of modernism with landscape gives his architecture a romantic yet powerful identity, influenced and inspired by nature, craft, locality, and pragmatism.

From the earliest works undertaken by Saunders' studio, then in partnership with the Norwegian architect Tommie Wilhelmsen, nature has played a primary role. Their first project, a small cabin on Hardanger Fjord, was a statement of purist intent, a hand-built structure set on the densely forested shore, its wooden deck and curved living space literally shaped to preserve the surrounding trees. The architects lived and worked on the site, combining the construction with their teaching at the Bergen School of Architecture. Materials had to be carried to the site, and the topography of the plot determined the form of the final building, with its sculptural wooden deck pared back to elemental forms, intended to weather naturally.

At the heart of Saunders' work is the straightforward treatment of the relationship between nature and architecture, the evolution of an atypical, even rebellious, thread that emerged from the classic Modernist teachings of the mid 20th century. At the same time, his work has theoretical and spiritual origins that go back even further; the archetypal "house in the woods" continues to hold a strong romantic resonance, even in a fundamentally rural country such as Norway. Saunders' work belongs to a low-key, more pragmatic strand of modern

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design, where functionalism is combined with spirited form-making, vernacular materials, and a strong sense of place. In this respect, the projects in this book offer an alternative vision of contemporary architecture, far removed from the technological utopianism that permeates the visual culture of the 21st century.

Rather than step back from capital “M” Modernism and retreat into an artificial shell, indistinguishable from the slick sheen of the computer-generated rendering, Saunders is comfortable bringing practical tradition to contemporary architecture. His buildings and structures owe little to the unnatural purity of the strict machine aesthetic but a great deal to the rough poetry arising from the juxtaposition of natural and man-made forms using sympathetic materials. These are buildings that alternate between sitting lightly on their surroundings and weaving them into their fabric.

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The *Hardanger Retreat* project signposted the way: saplings are accommodated by holes in the deck, while terraces, rocks, and terrain all abut the living spaces, a synthesis of the integrated architecture practiced by Scandinavian modernists and the more theatrical application of geographic elements as architectural talking points, as used by their contemporaries on the East and West coasts of the United States.

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Saunders’ *Salt Spring Island House* design operates along similar principles, seeming to hover weightlessly over a creek to create a tableau reminiscent of that most iconic of 20th-century houses, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater. The house’s two main components are raised up on stilts above the site’s dramatic topography and work with the natural terrain and orientation as the main points of reference, carefully highlighting instead of competing with the surrounding nature in their fine, mid-air architectural balance.

Fundamental to Saunders’ work is the question: Should architecture complement or conquer nature? Saunders believes that nature is strong enough to deal with form-making, and that the juxtaposition between the two works to each other’s advantage. “We need strikingly contemporary forms in natural landscapes,” he once wrote, noting that natural beauty is strong enough to be enhanced – not spoiled – by architectural interventions and that it is only the built environment that can provide the context from which to appreciate the landscape, rather than the transient views from a car or boat.

Here the landscapes of Canada (especially Newfoundland) and Norway come into play. Some of the world’s most spectacular and unspoiled natural environments, these topographies have an unparalleled influence on Saunders’ approach.

Whereas the traditional role of the residential “retreat” is a place from which to escape from modern life, Saunders’ work demonstrates not only that the contemporary world is entirely compatible with nature but also that the landscape can be accommodated rather than submitted to. The stripped-back, rural life is the central theme in Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, the writer’s 1854 memoir of two years spent in a modest cabin in the woods by

Walden Pond in Massachusetts. Thoreau's monkish experiment was ultimately a rejection of newly encroaching industrialization and the enthusiasm for raw, unabashed capitalism that was starting to define modern America, and his book continues to symbolize – and romanticize – the near-impossible dream of synthesizing life with nature. It introduced the concept of a new domestic archetype, the rural retreat, and with it an Arcadian, rather reactionary view of housing aesthetics.

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Saunders' *Villa Morild*, with its dramatic location in Norway's fjord country, is a standalone country house in the Arcadian mode, very much a model retreat for a young professional couple disenchanted with the challenges of urban life. However, fitted with high-quality materials and contemporary irregular sculptural shapes, and containing the owners' digital-age computer programming workspace, the house is anything but backwards-looking and retrograde. Instead, the house is the epitome of the zeitgeist, made possible by the geographical freedom provided by digital communications, combining a computer programmers' practice and a modern family home in a remote location. The brief resulted in a design that acts as a bridge, visually and functionally, between these uses and the striking natural scenery. An examination of Saunders' customary palette of organic materials and tactile, naturally aging textured surfaces such as timber, stone, and occasionally metal, is central to understanding his work. The consistent use of wood underscores the importance of creating a relationship with nature. Saunders comes from a country with a long-standing tradition of building with wood. From Canada's log cabins to its vast swathes of sustainably managed forests, wooden construction is a central spoke in the country's building industry. Likewise, Saunders' adopted home, Norway, has a similar approach, with a modern building industry using environmentally friendly local timber sources and wood-frame construction techniques that go back centuries.

Saunders' work frequently has a close relationship with the forested shores of Norway's fjords or the abundantly green countryside of Canada, exploiting the specific materiality of timber to deepen the link with their surroundings. "I didn't start using wood as a preference. In Scandinavia and Canada it is the material of choice for smaller projects, so wood has always been there. I look out of my window and there are just trees – it is really the material that you would use in most projects in Norway," he says. "It is also more economically efficient than other materials, such as concrete. The interesting thing is that I never realized it. I never really think of myself as a 'wood' architect." This last observation is characteristic of Saunders' pragmatism, informality, and almost intuitive way of working and thinking about architecture and construction.

The utilization of wood in contemporary architectural practice continues to develop, as new production techniques improve its structural strength, fire resistance, ease of production, and construction. Ever since Scandinavian architecture pioneer Alvar Aalto adopted timber as his main material of expression, it has come to represent a more humane, pragmatic modernism, as opposed to the dogmatic certainties expressed in the International Style's fascination with Machine Age processes and new technologies.

While Saunders uses wood for its connotations of simplicity, warmth, and modesty, he also weaves it within contemporary forms, avoiding the repetition of stereotypes and the contrived shapes with which it is traditionally associated. “Wood is a much more forgiving material and has a human quality to it; if you mess up with it, it is no big deal. It is also more flexible, almost elastic in a way. You can mold it and turn it and twist it,” he explains. Wood’s materiality reflects both the architect’s quiet nod to tradition and forward-thinking sense of experimentation.

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Apart from the seamless integration of wood in both his organically shaped and more sculptured, geometrical designs, the architect has also helped introduce cedar as an alternative timber in Norwegian construction. Being familiar with this particular wood type’s qualities from his Canadian background, Saunders regularly adopts the use of cedar. “Cedar is used in the wet parts of Canada. It’s also very wet in Norway so I thought it would work very well; it is now becoming popular,” he says in regard to the early *Villa Storingavika* project. In addition to cedar, Saunders has worked with larch, pine, and others, mostly indigenous Norwegian woods. Contrary to Scandinavian tradition, wood is left unpainted; instead, the projects often use transparent stains to maintain the wood’s natural physical appearance.

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Saunders has extensive carpentry experience, garnered from working on a part-time basis with one of Norway’s best-known carpenters as well as frequent collaborations with specialists. In particular, his work with the carpenter and now architect Mats Odin Rustøy brought him a far greater understanding of the material’s qualities and advantages. His own personal involvement in building a number of his early projects, such as the *Hardanger Retreat*, has equipped him with an in-depth insight on timber’s properties, versatility, applications, and craftwork.

Craft is an integral element in Saunders’ approach. In order to bring domestic form and scale to internal space, and to embrace landscape through the addition of the abstract, these structures need to be rigorously detailed and crafted. In his 2008 book *The Craftsman*<sup>1</sup>, Richard Sennett recalls the words of the philosopher Martin Heidegger, and his idealist “hut in the Black Forest” as a retreat against the complexities of the modern world. Although Heidegger’s preoccupations were ultimately focused on the potential ills of modern technology, his bucolic idealism illustrates that the sudden influx of modernity raised questions about how technology, in art, architecture, design, and life, could be related to the natural world.

Although this retreat into nature might seem reactionary today, it illustrates a then contemporary uncertainty about the validity of Modernism’s triumphant victory over nature, which it proclaimed to have bent to the will of humanity. Yet it wasn’t long before a form of modern architecture emerged that drew upon the forms, materials, and subtle patinas of nature,

1. *The Craftsman*, Richard Sennett, Yale University Press, 2008.

exaggerating, rather than playing down, the importance of embedding such elements into the landscape, enhancing both outlook and inner life in the process. While Heidegger's extreme conservatism was allied with the more anti-urban, anti-functionalist, and anti-tech-nocratic aspects of modernism, an emerging number of architects and designers were aligned to the functionalist movement, all of whom understood the value of the quotidian, the strength of tradition, and the psychological value of space<sup>2</sup>.

It is this path that Saunders takes through the forest, preferring the modest modernism of Scandinavian pioneers like Aalto, Arne Jacobsen, and Arne Korsmo, through to Jørn Utzon, Sverre Fehn, and Ralph Erskine, to the hard edges and relentlessly “unnatural” white renderings of traditional modernism. In simplistic formal terms, this choice is symbolized by a preference for gentle curves over hard edges, for wood over concrete, and for plans and layouts that submit willingly to topography.

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Crucially, this approach doesn't preclude strong abstract forms. Nowhere is this more evident than in the *Aurland Lookout*, a signature project designed for Norway's National Tourist Routes program. This state-sponsored artistic intervention acknowledges the drama of the country's landscape and suggests that the only honest architectural response is abstract and modern, yet sympathetic in terms of materials and integration with the land itself.

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Aligned with the interpretation of modernism dotted through Saunders' work are the elements of industrial prefabrication and the “self-built.” Connected to craft, industrialization, and an economic – in every sense – approach, Saunders' experimentations with “do-it-yourself” building may have its origins in the “prefab cottage kit” and his Canadian roots. The log cabin archetype is popular in both Norway and Canada, and its exponents are pioneers in the idea of prefabrication that offers a variety of forms and layouts. In 2005, Saunders responded to a brief from Toronto-based BlueSky MOD3 for the design of a series of prefab vacation cabins. The aforementioned *Hardanger Retreat* offers an example of tailored self-building, designed and hand-built by Saunders and Wilhelmsen.

Interviews, pp. 118–122, 128–131

Prefabrication and self-build may both inspire and inform Saunders' work, but a very functional and hands-on philosophy is at its core, reflected in various levels of his architectural process. From his design methods to his approach toward his clients, a sense of pragmatism toward the role of the architect is omnipresent in Saunders' career. “Todd is always very interested in establishing a personal connection and in doing something for the client that he feels makes sense as a design in an abstract way, but, which would also enhance the lives of the people who will use it,” says the Swiss architect and former collaborator Olaf Gipser. Zita Cobb of the Shorefast Foundation, Saunders' client at Fogo Island, cites the architect's casual but intuitive way of thinking: “[Saunders] is fresh; he doesn't use

2. See *The New Modern House: Redefining Functionalism*, Ellie Stathaki and Jonathan Bell, Laurence King Publishing, London 2010.



tired, borrowed words to make things sound good. So sometimes you need to hear more from him, but it just isn't ready to come out." According to Cobb, Saunders' dedication goes beyond the superficial formalism of making icons, and toward a real understanding of and empathy with the people his buildings are designed to serve.

While discretion and modesty are key characteristics of the projects illustrated in this book, informality and approachability don't imply a lack of ambition or quality. As the multi-published winner of several national and international competitions and fellowships, Saunders is at the forefront of contemporary Norwegian architecture. He was featured in the "20 under 40: Young Norwegian Architecture" exhibition at the Norwegian Architecture Association in 2004, and received an Architectural Review Award for Emerging Architects, nominations for the Mies van der Rohe Prize in 2006, and the Wallpaper\* Magazine "Best Public Project" award in 2007. He is cited in architecture magazines and blogs around the world, and the Huffington Post notably included him in its "5 Greatest Architects Under 50" list in 2011.

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Another expression of Saunders' approach is the use of physical architectural models for the development of spatial procedures and design studies, a method he also employs on the building site itself. For example, on the *Villa Storingavika* project a model was used to communicate ideas to the builders during construction, rather than just relying on drawings. This hands-on approach is integral to his working method, a physical tool for exploring space-making. "One time I didn't get a house built and there was no model of it, so this became my 'superstition'. If I don't build a model for it, the project won't get built," he jokingly notes. "In the office we have about forty to fifty models lying around," he says. "You look at them every day, in different angles and light. It is always a different view you see with models; they are very honest. Computer-generated renderings are necessary, of course, and I use them all the time, but they can play tricks on you."

Saunders' ongoing relationship with academia illustrates his confidence and commitment to applied work as opposed to purely theoretical experience. As well as being involved with the Bergen School of Architecture since 2001, the architect has taught in Canada, Scandinavia, and England. "I have only good things to say about teaching. Some of the students I taught have subsequently come to work in the studio and it is amazing to see them grow," he says. Saunders' workshops frequently involve full-scale installations and experiments, promoting active participation in architecture and construction. Examples of his workshop teachings include the Oulu project, a student workshop at the University of Oulu in Finland, and a Water Treatment Workshop in the small west-coast Norway village of Vallersund.

Despite Saunders' ongoing travels between two continents, the work produced by the studio is anything but vague or mid-Atlantic in character. Both Norway and Newfoundland share certain characteristics: the densely forested landscape, the proliferation of large bodies of fresh water, and, perhaps most important of all, a coastline that acts as a source of sustenance, economy, and culture. Cobb draws strong parallels between the lives of Norwegians and Newfoundlanders: "We are people of fish – especially cod and seals."

This admirably raw assessment of the cultural synergies doesn't appear to have any immediate architectural implications. However, Saunders' work combines the pragmatic with the romantic, drawing artful beauty out of functionalism. Functionalism is inherent in the local vernacular of Norway's west coast and Newfoundland. Architecture can sit within a landscape, yet must also act to impair, repel, and re-shape the elements if it is to provide functional shelter.

Stylistic and philosophical antecedents to Saunders' work are not immediately obvious. Saunders rarely talks specific historical influences, and his creative collaborators describe his method as being unusually direct and geared toward problem solving, with a strong sense of place and emphasizing purpose over theory. However, his buildings also share the consistently pragmatic qualities of the more ordinary, everyday, and restrained strand of modernism. The past decade has seen a resurgence of interest in this new functionalism, with the sparse aesthetic and theoretical functionalism of 20th-century architects like Dom Hans van der Laan and Hugo Häring attaining new prominence. The influence of Häring and van der Laan was rarely felt throughout most of the century; their religious and agricultural functionalism found little favor with corporate or residential clients. The new architecture is low key, rooted in reverence for the everyday, the practical, and the well-worn, rather than the artificially sublime triptych of space, light, and air. This is especially strong in Saunders' residential work and reconstructions. Architecture is always subservient to function and technology, with the latter offering opportunities rather than needing to be used for its own sake. In van der Laan's 1983 book *Architectonic Space*<sup>3</sup>, the architect, monk, and educator chronicled the evolution of the window from an opening in a wall to a frame around the opening, as technology evolved and architects became rather more interested in the view than the opening itself.

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This shift from object to frame is much in evidence in the work shown in this book. Saunders has described the *Hardanger Retreat* as a “piece of furniture,” a revealing insight into his treatment of architectural forms and volumes. Where the site or program demands that a building must address issues of status and prominence, it does so by referencing domestic scale and volume: the *Aurland Lookout* reads as a corridor in the landscape leading to a window looking onto the sky. Likewise, the *Stokke Forest Stair* at the Sti For Øye sculpture park in Stokke or *Solberg Tower and Park* the museum in Sarpsborg are both architectural furnishings that appear to have been parachuted into a sylvan landscape.

See pp. 142–145

The artists' studios in Fogo Island loom out of the mist like beached fishing ships, wrecks, or a scattering of abstract objects on the shore. The *Aurlandsvangen* project in is another sizeable building with a very domestic sensibility, knitted together by Saunders' connected surfaces and complex volumetric relationships.

By combining the language of modernism with the spirit of the vernacular, Saunders' buildings demonstrate an understanding of place and memory without descending into pastiche. For this reason, these works are romantic, in that they celebrate the picturesque through contemporary artistic expression. By referencing the romance of cultural memories, of Canadian folk tales and Nordic myths, the log cabin as the nexus of family life, the retreat into nature, and the Waldenesque house in the woods, Saunders unconsciously acknowledges an uncomfortable truth: the dense dark forest is the antithesis of modern architecture, and perhaps will always remain so. This is something that Aalto knew so well, kinking his unadorned forms so that they complemented, rather than contrasted with, their verdant surroundings.

Finally, a word on place and nationality. Saunders' education and early working life took him to Austria, Germany, Japan, India, Finland, Latvia, and Russia. His CV includes landscape architecture, residential design, and hands-on carpentry. Settled in Bergen for 16 years, he believes strongly in the importance of a hybrid culture. "Striving to be one nationality or another is completely uninteresting to me and is a dead-end when it comes to the advancement of any society," he says.

Like any cultural undertaking, architecture tends to be grouped in terms of national output, with local architecture "scenes" providing a convenient shorthand for tracking emerging names, manners of working, building types, and aesthetic sympathies. To date, Saunders' architecture has strongly resisted such a label, existing instead in a physical and spiritual zone in the mid-North Atlantic. His work does the opposite: rather than drift between contexts, it is firmly anchored to its site, merging a robustness of form and material and resulting in buildings that have a rare and coherent spirit of place.





Fogo Island

Fogo Island  
Newfoundland, Canada





Fogo Island  
Newfoundland, Canada

Interview pp. 128–131

Few might know Fogo Island, a small and secluded island off the coast of Newfoundland in Canada, and even fewer will have visited it. This North Atlantic piece of land is home to the Fogo Islanders, who through the centuries have adapted to the island's particular geography and have developed their own traditional way of life, built mainly around cod fishing.

When a local charity, the Shorefast Foundation, launched plans for an inn and a series of artists' studios on various locations and approached Saunders about it roughly five years ago, the architect immediately jumped at the opportunity. The organization, supported by former fiber-optics entrepreneur Zita Cobb, is committed to preserving the islanders' traditions but aims at rejuvenating the island through the arts, culture, and social enterprise. However, this 2008 commission had an additional and far more personal resonance for the architect. This would be a chance to not only experiment with traditional architectural forms, methods, and materials in a unique location, but also to work in Newfoundland, where Saunders grew up.

This little rocky island off Newfoundland is a powerfully elemental, remote piece of land. Its climate of sunny winters, moderate summers, and the Labrador Current's notorious gales match its striking geography. Fogo Island and the nearby Change Islands have some of the oldest settlements in the country. The islanders' life has evolved in response to the climate and the available natural resources. But as the global economy has changed, so has fishing, and the community has been left struggling in the face of declining catch and offshore factory fishing.

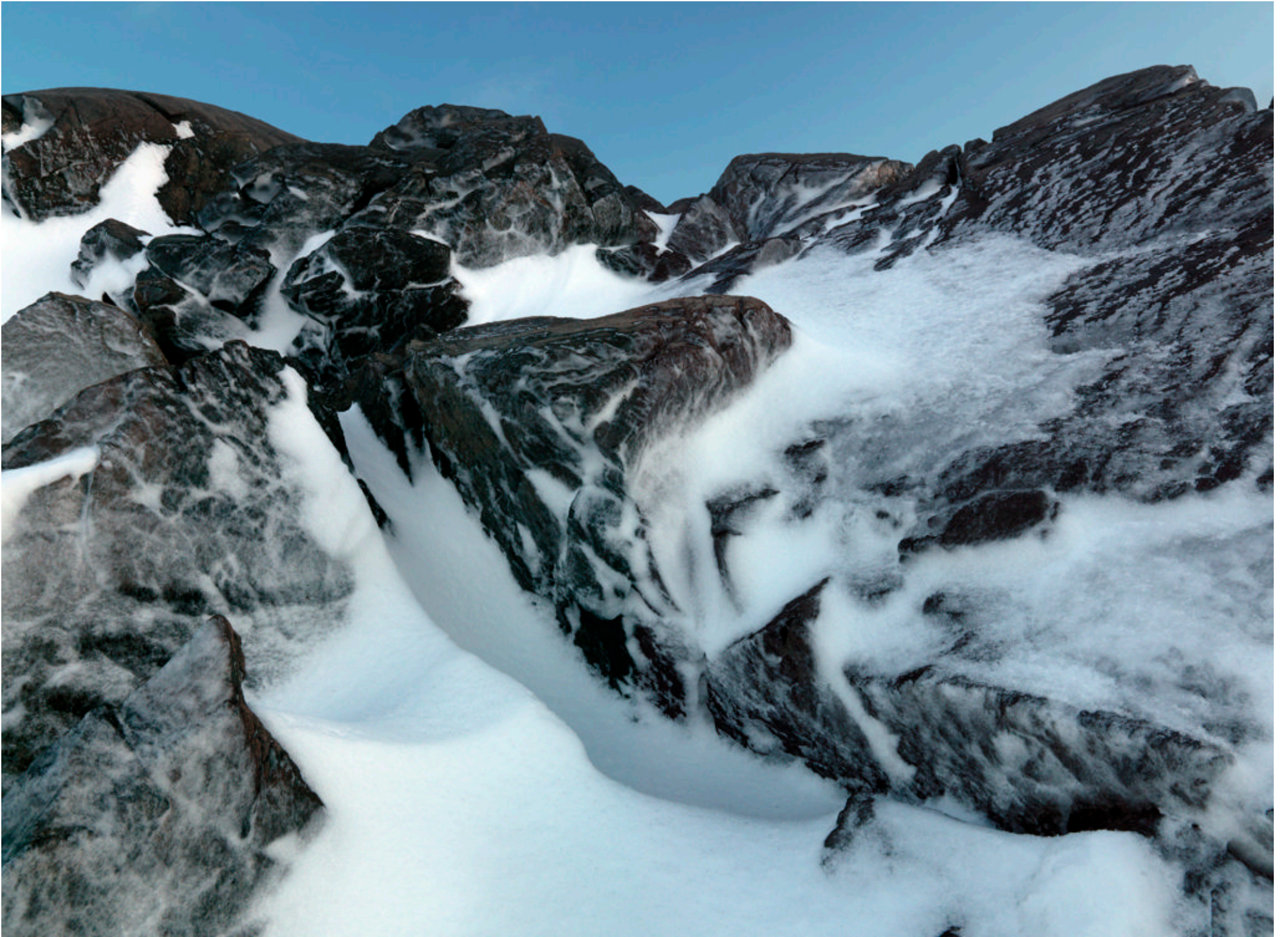
The fragile and gorgeous nature of Fogo Island was key to the project's development. "It is so beautiful there, but it's a different, very rough kind of beauty," Saunders says. The Fogo Island Arts Corporation (or Arts Corp) program emerged from the Shorefast Foundation, and the latter embarked on a series of commissions: a network of artists' studios in various locations around Fogo Island. Saunders' concept for the studios revolved around creating a series of strong geometric shapes, which would create a contrast, but without competing with the surrounding environment.

A 29-room inn on the island, created by Saunders in collaboration with local and international craftsmen and designers, completes the project. The Fogo Island Inn includes a restaurant, a library, a small conference facility, a wood-fired sauna facility designed by Norway-based architects Sami Rintala and Dagur Eggertsson, an art gallery, and a small E-cinema.





Traditional covered fishing wharf on Fogo Island, designed for unloading, preparing, and curing fish all under the same roof.





















Scattered across the landscape are the wooden saltbox houses that form the traditional residential typology for Newfoundland.







NEWFOUNDLAND HAS A  
DIFFERENT, VERY ROUGH KIND OF BEAUTY.

THE LANDSCAPE APPEARS HARSH,  
BUT IT IS ALSO FRAGILE.

ARCHITECTURE HAS TO SIT LIGHTLY ON THE  
LAND, YET ALSO BECOME A PART OF IT.





A "flake," or traditional fish drying rack, a remnant of the vernacular infrastructure of the island's fishing industry.







The Studios  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada

The Fogo Island Arts Corporation is a contemporary arts experiment, incorporating culture, sustainable tourism, and social enterprise that would take a leading role in the area's regeneration. The project involves six studios, all clad in local timber and constructed by local builders and craftsmen, that host artists from all over the globe. The artists work near the island's communities, in the studios, over several-months-long residencies.

Used all year round, the studios offer their residents a unique experience of the range of climatic transitions and seasonal changes on the island. Placed in remote locations on Fogo Island, the studios are complemented by the artists' residences, which were created by restoring a number of traditional Newfoundland saltbox-type homes in nearby island communities.

For about two years before starting construction, Saunders designed different studio types for each location (a customized one for each of six of the communities on the island). Wood is featured as the main construction material, and this as well as the construction methods used, refer back to local traditions. Some structures stand on tall pillars, some project toward the seawater, while others reach high up toward the sky.

Saunders explains: "It feels like doing contemporary architecture but based on what's been there before. Most traditional buildings there are amphibious, only half on dry land, almost like walking off the land and into the water." Of the total of six studios planned, four were completed by late 2011, with two more being built within the following year. "You can say they are 'strangely familiar.' They look strange but on a closer inspection they are in fact built with very familiar methods," the architect says.

The Fogo Island Arts Corporation program kicked off in the summer of 2010. Along with the library, inn, restaurant, and art gallery, the residencies' program is putting Fogo Island on the map as a prime cultural, ecological, and culinary tourist destination, while at same time safeguarding its local traditions.

Long Studio  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada





Long Studio  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada

131 m<sup>2</sup>  
Completed 2010

The first studio to be finished in 2010 was the 131-m<sup>2</sup> Long Studio to the north of the Joe Batt's Arm community, also close to the Fogo Island Inn's site. Perched on a seaside and stretching toward the water, this is one of the largest studios in the Fogo Island scheme and it references in shape traditional seaside buildings and fishermen's houses in the area; these visual quotes were crucial during Saunders' work at the Fogo Island project.

Made locally, mostly out of wood (exterior rough-sawn spruce and interior spruce planks) and standing on pillars, the structure's overall shape incorporates a mix of internal and external areas. A small concrete foundation on one side helps ground the overall structure securely. The straightforward linear volume creates a long comfortable floor plan ending at a protected terrace on the mainland side and a floor-to-ceiling opening toward the ocean, from which the resident can observe the area's dramatic weather changes.

Seasonal activity is also accommodated in the layout's arrangement. Spring can be enjoyed on the covered front porch areas, while the open central courtyard is for summer use. The fully enclosed and protected main body of the structure provides shelter in winter and autumn. Internally, provisions were made for a kitchen, resting, and bathroom facilities, as well as the necessary workspace to accommodate art activities.

The strategically framed views highlight the link between the clean white wooden interiors and the surrounding nature, at the same time effortlessly enhancing the interior's natural light. Carefully placed openings, such as skylights, still allow for generous floor and wall space in the atelier. These remain available to facilitate the resident's work.

Solar panel power as well as greywater, rainwater, and waste treatment on site makes the structure fully self-sufficient.



Long Studio reaches out across the landscape, a slender tube that frames sea views for the occupants.





The long, linear top-lit space contains a recessed kitchen behind sliding doors and separate bathroom, in addition to the generous studio space. The landscape – and the seasons – are ever-present.





The Long Studio has been designed to accommodate the seasons, with a covered porch for use in the spring and the body of the studio providing shelter in the winter and autumn.













**OUR ARCHITECTURE IS CONTEMPORARY, BUT IT  
HAS ITS ROOTS IN WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.**

**THESE BUILDINGS ARE STRANGELY  
FAMILIAR, IN THE SENSE THAT THEIR FORMS  
MIGHT BE UNCONVENTIONAL, BUT ON CLOSER  
INSPECTION THEY REVEAL TRADITIONAL  
METHODS AND MATERIALS.**





The white-painted wooden cladding on the interior surfaces bounces light deep inside the studio space, while the black external walls soak up winter sun and give the angular forms a bold presence in the landscape.





From a distance, the Long Studio's pure geometry transforms it into a bold sculptural presence on the horizon.



Tower Studio  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada



Tower Studio  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada

48 m<sup>2</sup>  
Completed 2011

The 48-m<sup>2</sup> origami-esque Tower Studio sits in rocky Shoal Bay and can only be accessed via a long timber boardwalk found by hiking along the shore from the nearby community. Reaching up to 9 m, the angular shape dominates the horizon and it resembles a lookout platform, or a slightly twisted tower. The three-story slate-black studio is wooden throughout, clad internally in whitewashed plywood.

As the visitor climbs up, the floors keep rotating; the result is a roof terrace that sits at a 180-degree angle in relation to the ground-level footprint. The volume's twists and turns help create recesses and angles that can host openings, such as the structure's single window – an angled skylight on the first floor. On the ground floor, a recess marks the building's entrance.

The dark, blind and twisted appearance of the structure is impressive, so perhaps it comes as no surprise that it was one of the most challenging Fogo Island studios to build. Its winding form was nothing like what the local builders had previously experienced. A large-scale model created at the construction site helped the team visualize the result.

The structure was completed in late 2011 and is designed to be as eco-sensitive as possible, to avoid disturbing the delicate eco-system around it. It uses photovoltaic panels to power the interior and it includes a ground-floor kitchenette, a wood-burning fireplace, and a composting toilet. The second level contains the studio and the third mezzanine level offers additional workspace.

The interior detailing is immaculate, securing a smooth final result for all the vertical, horizontal, and inclined surfaces. A minimalist narrow white ladder leads to the roof terrace, offering spectacular views of the land around it. A restored traditional house nearby acts as the artist's main residence, when not in the Tower Studio, working.

Drawings, pp. 104–105



A twisted wooden form, the Tower Studio rises up from the rocky ground to provide viewpoint and presence.







**AN ABSTRACT AND MODERN  
ARCHITECTURAL RESPONSE TO THE LANDSCAPE  
CAN BE MADE STRONGLY SYMPATHETIC  
THROUGH THE USE OF NATURAL MATERIALS  
AND THE WAY THE STRUCTURE MEETS  
THE GROUND.**





Tower Studio's shape creates its openings, such as the structure's single window, an angled skylight on the first floor.





The three-story slate-black studio is wooden throughout, rising high and dominating the horizon.



Bridge Studio  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada



Bridge Studio  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada

29 m<sup>2</sup>  
Completed 2011

One of the smallest studios – spanning a mere 29 m<sup>2</sup> – the Bridge Studio was conceived as a place for contemplation. It includes space for its own small library and is located next to the freshwater Handy Marsh pond in Deep Bay, the smallest community on Fogo Island consisting of just about one hundred and fifty inhabitants.

Completed in June 2011, the studio can be reached from the Deep Bay community via a winding path through the rock-strewn landscape. Small wooden steps and ramps are strategically located along the way to help the visitor negotiate the rocky path, while a nearly 5-m-long bridge connects the orthogonal wooden structure's main body – which stands on six pillars above ground – with the nearby hillside.

The studio features a generous glass entrance as well as a large square window at the opposite end of its single bright and airy room. A purposefully placed built-in desk sits inside, right behind the window, ensuring uninterrupted views of the pond. Internally, the floor expands in two levels, mirroring the discreetly sloped ceiling. The lower level consists of the entrance lobby and a wood-burning stove; just three steps up, the upper level houses the library and office area.

Isolated and serene, Bridge Studio is the ideal artist's or writer's retreat. It also echoes traditional fishing structures, especially through its numerous counters and wooden surfaces that reference cutting tables used historically in the area in cod fishery.

Like all the other studios, Bridge Studio can make the most of the island's sunshine by harvesting solar energy through photovoltaic panels mounted on a hilltop close to the structure. Similarly, as with the rest of the studios, Bridge is paired with a sensitively restored traditional Newfoundland saltbox house located nearby, where the artists can stay during their residency when they are not working.











WOOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE.

IT HAS A HUMAN QUALITY AND IT ALSO HAS  
A FLEXIBILITY, AN ELASTICITY.

YOU CAN MOLD IT AND TURN IT AND TWIST IT,  
BUT IT WILL ALWAYS BE WARM AND INVITING,  
PART OF THE LANDSCAPE.







Containing its own small library, Bridge Studio is located next to a freshwater pond in Deep Bay.



Oriented toward the freshwater pond, Bridge Studio overlooks the water, while accessed via a small bridge.



Squish Studio  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada



Squish Studio  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada

28 m<sup>2</sup>  
Completed 2011

Squish Studio, a 28-m<sup>2</sup> bright white distorted trapezoidal volume, was built in 2011 and is located near Tilting, the island's predominantly Irish community on Fogo Island's east coast.

Featuring painted wooden walls both externally and internally, Squish Studio may be small in size, but what it lacks in mass it gains in magnificent views. Its angular volume extends lengthwise to form a sheltered triangular terrace at the end of the structure overlooking the landscape inland. The covered sides of this terrace protect the visitor from the area's strong winds and also act as an entrance porch.

Due to the difficult and irregular ground underneath, the studio needed to be raised on pillars in order for the floor level to be kept evenly horizontal. A trapezoidal-shaped, single-level floor plan accommodates the atelier's main room, which includes built-in shelves and cabinetry (all made out of whitewashed spruce planks) and a wood-burning stove. Apart from the main opening leading to the terrace, a series of narrow windows are integrated playfully at different heights in the side walls, but still leaving plenty of wall space for the artists to work with.

Using off-the-grid heating, power and wastage facilities, the studio can be autonomous. Offering dramatic views and a peaceful haven, and protection from the elements, Squish Studio is striking during the day. But at night it really comes alive, softly glowing when illuminated from within like a lantern or lighthouse perched at the rocky coastline strip.



The bright white Squish Studio was built near Tilting, the island's predominantly Irish community.













**THESE STUDIOS ARE ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN BUILDING, LAND, AND OCEAN.**

**THE WHOLE PROJECT FACES NORTH,  
ORIENTED TOWARD THE ATLANTIC COAST.**



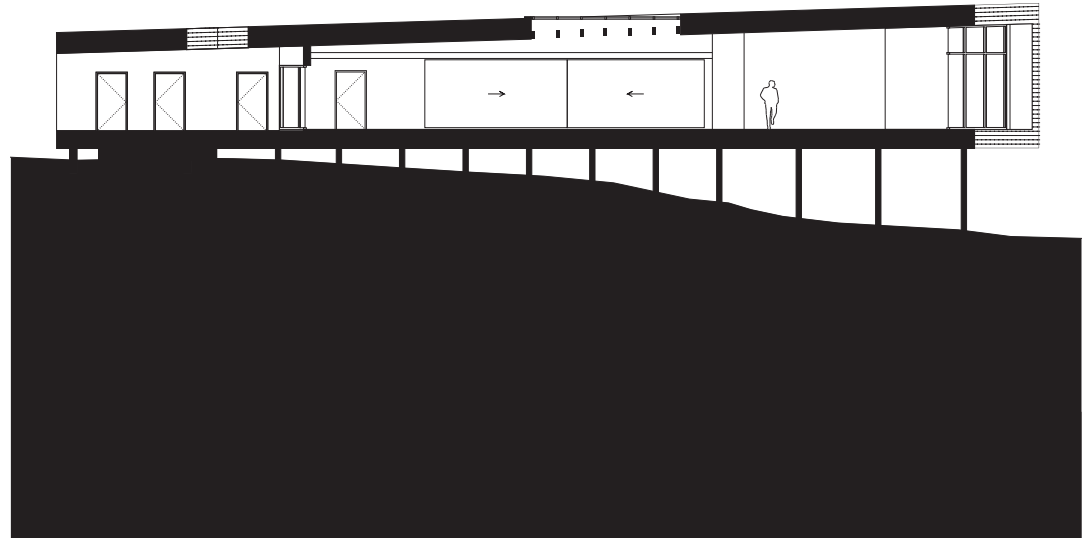


Set against dramatic rocky coastal scenery, Squish Studio stands out, protecting the visitor from the elements.

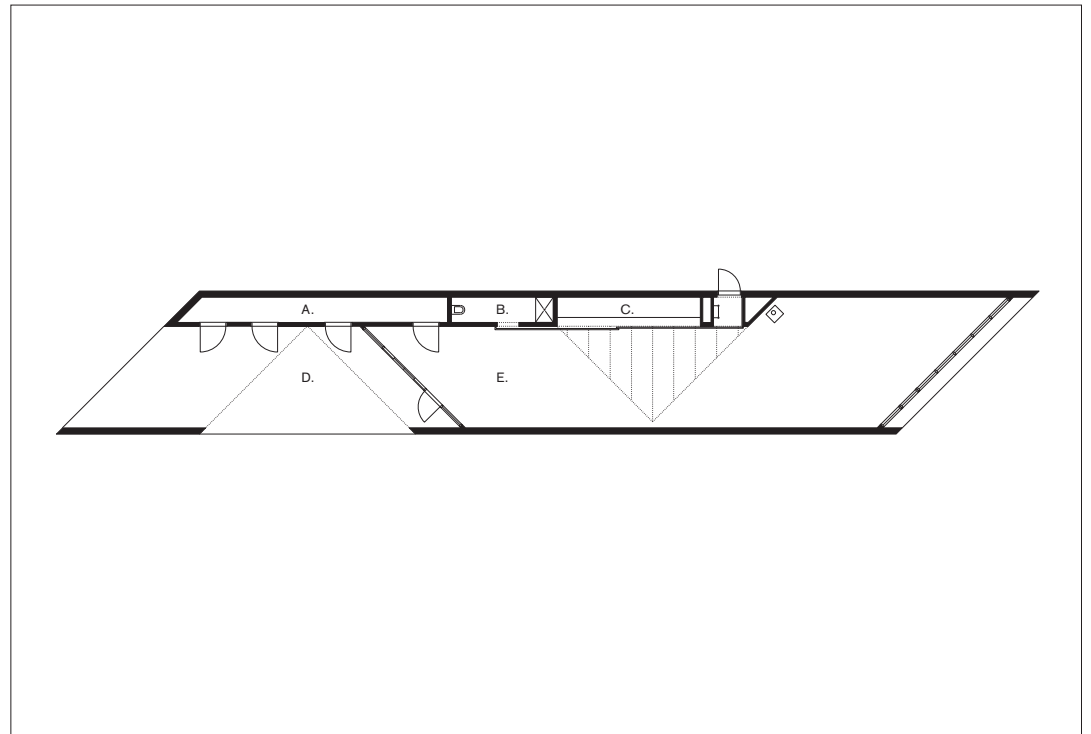


Drawings

Long Studio  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada



See pp. 46–63



Elevation Long Studio (top)

Inside: 131 m<sup>2</sup>  
Total footprint: 211 m<sup>2</sup>

Floor Long Studio

- A. Storage
- B. Bathroom
- C. Kitchen
- D. Exterior
- E. Studio



Tower Studio  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada



See pp. 64–75

Elevation Tower Studio (top)

Inside: 48 m<sup>2</sup>  
Total footprint: 31 m<sup>2</sup>

Floor Tower Studio

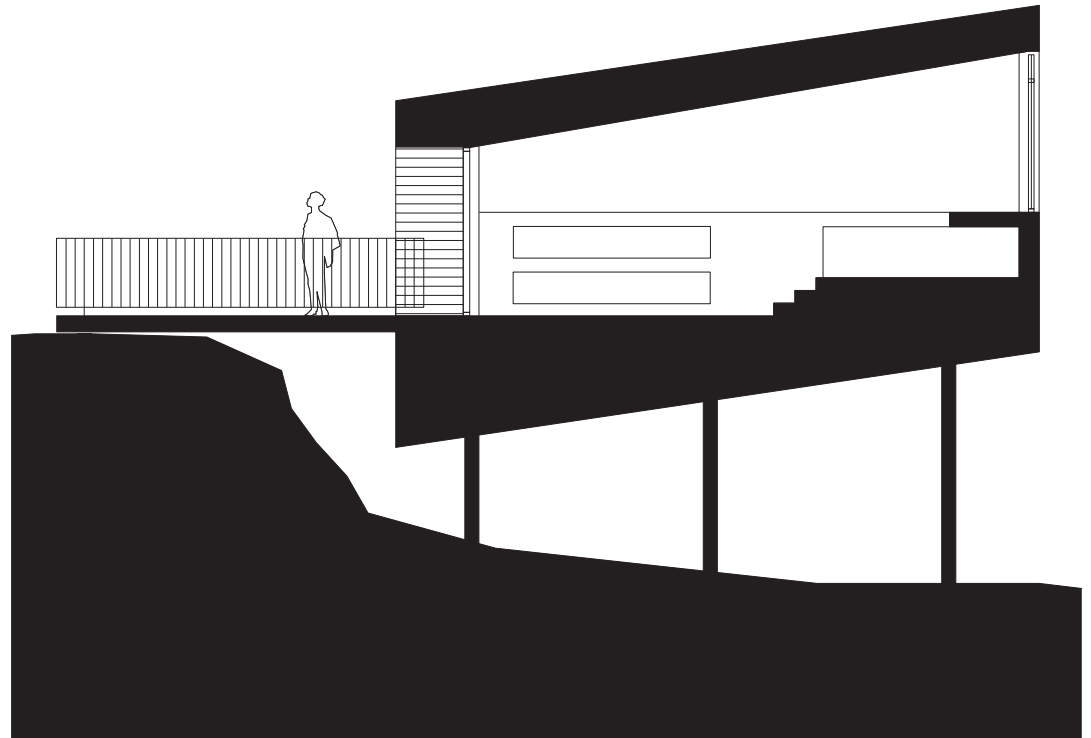
First floor  
A. Entry and kitchen  
B. Bathroom

Second floor  
c. Studio

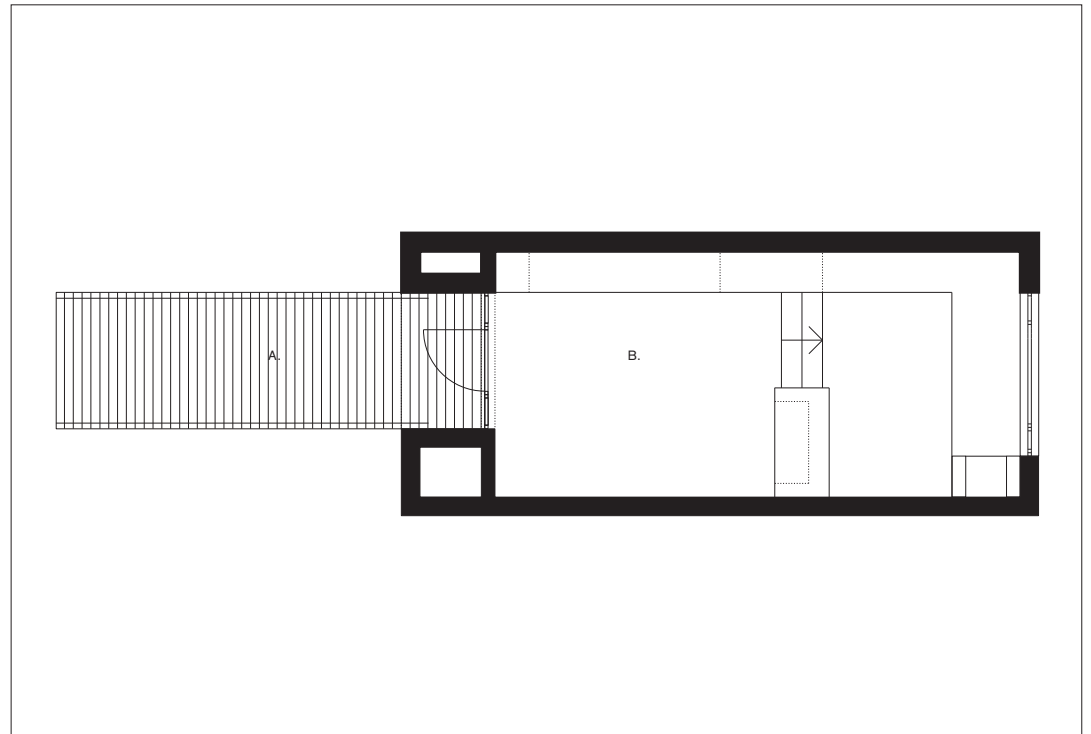
Top floor  
D. Void  
E. Gallery



Bridge Studio  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada



See pp. 76–87



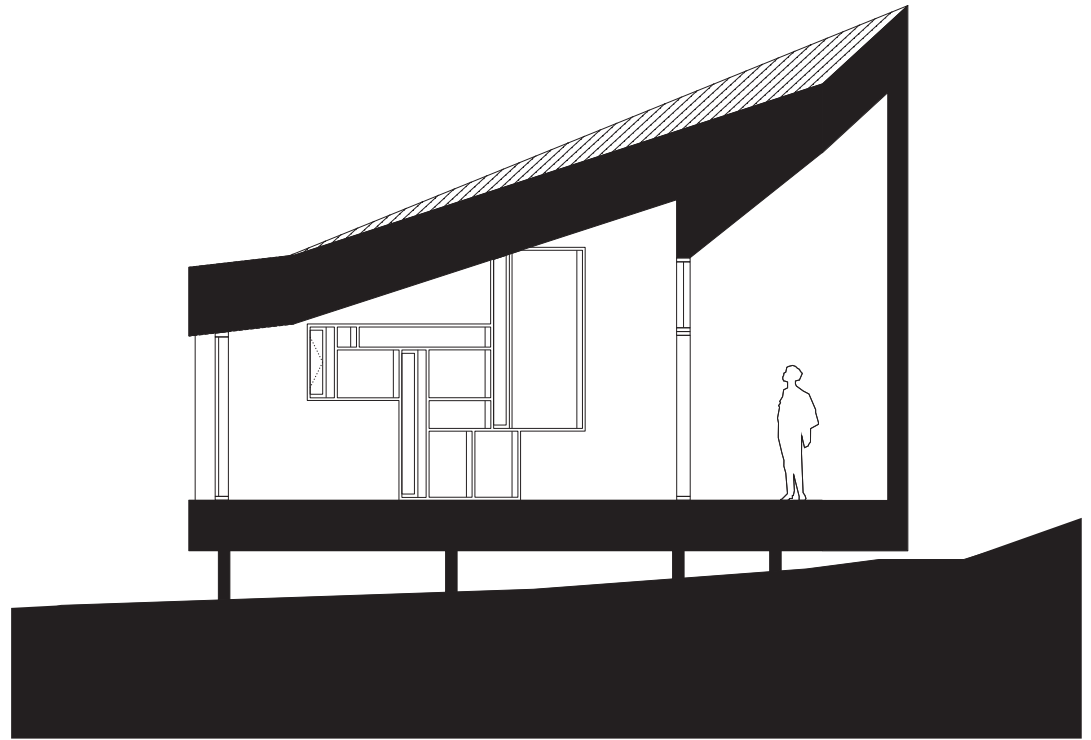
Elevation Bridge Studio (top)

Inside: 29 m<sup>2</sup>  
Total footprint: 49 m<sup>2</sup>

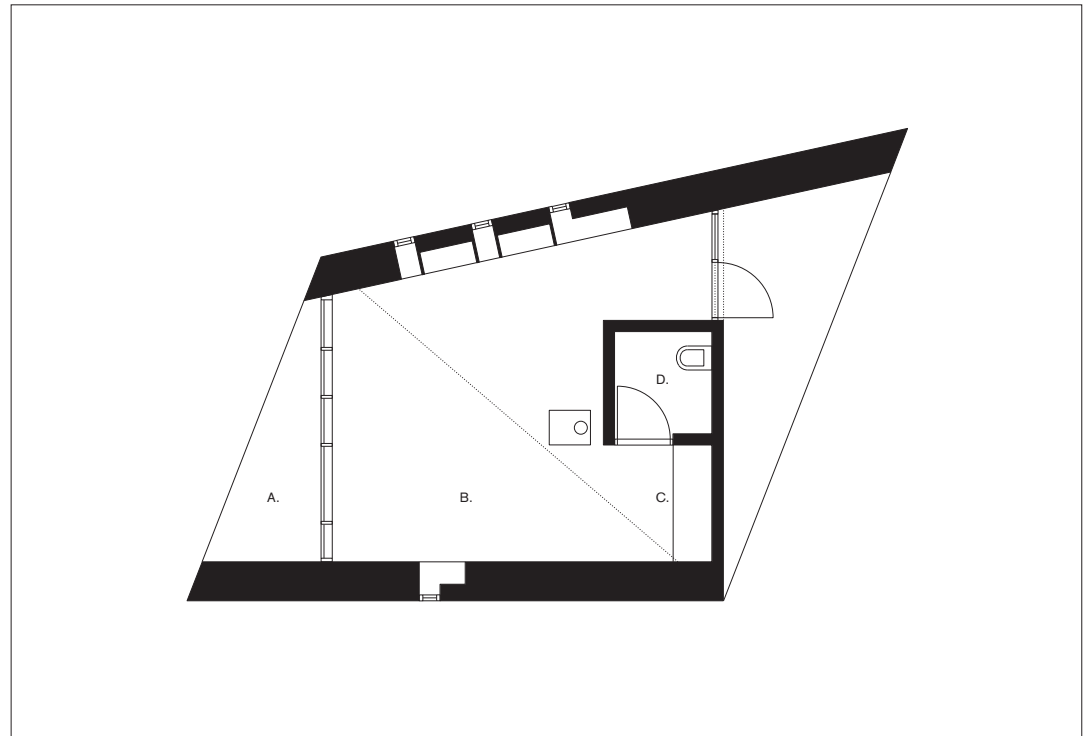
Floor Bridge Studio

A. Bridge  
B. Studio

Squish Studio  
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada



See pp. 88–99



Elevation Squish Studio (top)

Inside: 28 m<sup>2</sup>  
 Total footprint: 52 m<sup>2</sup>

Floor Squish Studio

- A. Exteriör Area
- B. Studio
- C. Kichen
- D. Bathroom



## Construction Images







Shown here under construction, the 130-m<sup>2</sup> elegant Long Studio framed up to include three rooms, while combining open and closed areas (left).

The Tower Studio was constructed entirely out of wood, and rose up to a final total height of 9 m.







Under construction. The white trapezoidal volume of the Squish Studio was constructed of wood by a team of local builders (left).

Under construction. Set on a remote location by a freshwater pond, timber-framed Bridge Studio was raised on stilts and can be reached via a small footbridge.



# ESSAYS

THE COLLABORATOR  
AN INTERVIEW WITH OLAF GIPSER

THE MODERN HOUSE  
PLACE, PRAGMATISM, AND CULTURAL MEMORY

THE PROCESS  
AN INTERVIEW WITH ZITA COBB

The Collaborator  
An Interview with Olaf Gipser

Following a successful long spell at the renowned Dutch practice UNStudio, Swiss architect Olaf Gipser set up his own firm, Olaf Gipser Architects, in 2005. Gipser met Todd Saunders just before starting his solo career and their close friendship soon expanded into business collaboration on several, mainly residential, projects. Gipser currently practices as well as teaches at local and international university institutions from his Amsterdam base, his academic achievements feeding into his research-based architectural practice and vice versa.

ES: How did you and Todd Saunders meet?

OG: I think it goes back to 2004. I came to the Netherlands in 1998 and worked for seven years at UNStudio as a project architect. In 2003 I got a teaching position at the Bergen School of Architecture as a side job. I went there every two weeks and met Todd Saunders, who was also teaching there at the time. He is very open, outspoken, easy to engage with and very interested in people. Apart from the immediate sympathy for each other, what connected us were the similarities in our respective biographies. We both had left our home countries and chose to do extensive traveling, being exposed to some of the most innovative and inspiring people and trends in our field. Todd, for instance, had a very early and deep concern for sustainability and was systematically studying various approaches by leading practitioners. Later, we both established our respective practices in foreign countries. We both integrated easily in our host countries while making the most of our “foreignness.”

ES: How did you start working together?

OG: A short time after I started my own practice, Todd offered to work together on a residential project for which he just had secured a contract. The client asked for the design of a house with an artist’s atelier on a stunning site in a fjord up north of Bergen. Todd and I share a great fascination for nature and landscape, which undoubtedly stems from our growing up in the countryside. We developed the design of this house as a kind of conversation with the spectacular landscape around it. We conceived the building as a single platform, combining house and atelier, that played with the steepness of the site, following and counterbalancing the landscape, reacting to surrounding vegetation, and bridging a little stream that ran down the site. Unfortunately, we never got beyond the building permit, but we enjoyed the collaboration so much that soon after this, we started something else.

ES: How many projects have you developed together in total?

OG: We worked intensively together on one more residential project. Todd had a contact in Denmark, through which we got invited to participate in a pilot project for prefabricated low-energy houses in Roskilde in Denmark. We were the only foreign team among well-known Danish architects. In a collaborative kick-off session, Todd and I developed ideas for two houses. We each worked on one, in our respective studios in Bergen and Amsterdam.



We had set up a schedule of regular exchanges and reviews via email and Skype, and met in person during visits with the client and engineers in Copenhagen. Later in the process, when we were working on the preliminary construction documents, the municipality discovered that they gave our two plots the wrong surface calculations; the houses were too big and had to be completely redesigned. But once we did that, the client cancelled the whole project. Some time after this, we collaborated once more on the conversion of an old mill in Hageneset, Norway, into a larger business complex. The existing building, an impressive monument with pre-industrial and industrial components, had to be transformed into a post-industrial workspace for creative business. It was an invited competition where we got the prize, and it is currently ongoing. Since then, we have been keeping in touch on a regular basis, following each other's work and discussing it critically.

ES: Even though for external reasons the projects you worked together on are not built, at least for the moment, the collaboration must have been very interesting. Do you and Todd have a similar approach?

OG: Firstly, there is a very important personal appreciation and emotional connection. Friendship came first and the idea to collaborate second. To work together on a design, to have ups and downs, to be open for critique and to challenge each other require trust and appreciation and a certain atmosphere of intimacy. Todd pays attention to his interaction with people and has a magic way of generating proximity and focus.

ES: So what are the common elements? How do you work together?

OG: We share certain fascinations. As mentioned, we have a great love and passion for landscape and nature. We're aware that our increasingly urban culture and urbanized lifestyle have generated a renewed concern for nature, manifested in the omnipresent discourse on sustainability, as well as the tremendous demand for recreation and tourism. But nature and (urban) culture have ceased to be simple opposites. The notion of "nature" is a very heterogeneous and an ever-changing cultural construct, and architecture is one of the instruments to frame urban perceptions of nature. The question of how to interact with nature has been at the base of many of our discussions.

Another shared view is that architecture should not be "overdone." We share an appreciation for simplicity. I think we both consider the design process as a journey in striving for the essence of an assignment and location through developing a project- and location-specific language with a certain economy of architectural means. Furthermore, I have tremendous respect for the extent to which Todd is interested in the client and the people he designs for.

ES: Was it an easy collaboration?

OG: It was pretty smooth as neither Todd nor I are confrontational. We are both a bit stubborn but with Todd's irresistible humor it's been great fun ... and certainly very inspiring.

ES: Do you see any parallels in your careers? I know Todd set up his own practice straight away, which in the architecture world is quite rare and also could be considered quite brave. You chose a different path. Do you think that difference affected your approach?

OG: There is indeed a big difference on how Todd and I approached the profession. Todd is a very self-made and hands-on type of guy. Take, for instance, one of Todd's very first projects, the Hardanger Retreat, a small weekend house that he did with Tommie Wilhelmsen. It takes an admirable amount of confidence, guts, and energy to self-initiate the design of a project, look for a site to build it, buy the plot, get the wood together, build the thing by yourself and some of your friends, and bring it with tremendous dedication into the media. Obviously, Todd unifies several very interesting qualities. By contrast, I've been involved as student and teacher for an extensive time in academia, being attracted by a more theoretical and reflexive approach to architecture. My period at UNStudio allowed for a continuous exploration of such an attitude within the safe harbor of an established office, before I finally started my own practice. Todd is someone who makes immediate and productive connections with people, landscapes, and projects. I approach things in a more abstract way.

ES: Did you start your own practice straight after your time at UNStudio?

OG: Yes. Parallel to setting up my own practice, I continued to be involved in academia. Todd started up an architectural practice grounded on residential commissions, and this is based in the Norwegian tradition of rural living in single-family houses and weekend cabins. This wouldn't work here as, by contrast, housing in the Netherlands has been characterized since the beginnings of the 20th century by large-scale industrial production with institutional players and specialized architectural offices. It's been only recently that policy making opened up the residential market for smaller-scale work and more architects.

ES: Do you see elements of the collaborations with Todd in your work today? Or, in other words, are there parallels in your and Todd's work today?

OG: For me, Todd's work is characterized by his exploration of architecture in its often-dramatic encounter with untouched nature, and we share this interest. Interestingly, while we both come from a shared understanding of our Western urban culture, we're faced with very different "types" of nature. Nature in the Netherlands is undoubtedly man-made and cultural. For instance, we're currently working on a visitor center for a Dutch wetland nature reserve that is essentially a large outdoor laboratory of redeveloping a precultural coastal eco-system. Nature here is not preserved but developed. The architectural language of the visitor center seeks to balance between seamless integration into the reserve's ecological processes – its water management and vegetation types – and a contrasting vocabulary of an infrastructure project. My collaboration with Todd has helped me develop along those lines.

ES: Looking more closely at your work, I can perhaps see geometric similarities between your and Todd's architecture, but your forms and surfaces are more sleek and smooth with a seamless finish, while Todd works a lot with wood, which offers a different range of textures. Do you agree?

OG: I do have a certain fascination with geometry and surfaces, and I believe I'm sharing this with Todd. But you are right to observe that Todd's use of surfaces is still slightly different. I believe this has to do only partially with personal preferences. It reflects also the different environments we've been operating in – Todd working in the rough material space of Nordic landscapes while my office is operating in the dense and constructed urban realm of the Netherlands. Furthermore, it might also be related to the fact that Todd has been engaging very directly with the building process, while I give priority to conceiving and drawing. But the presence and handling of materiality in Todd's architecture has inspired me much and has found its way into my work.

ES: Apart from architectural materiality and the architecture/nature theme, what else did you take from your collaboration?

OG: Todd creates something with people and for people. The very immediate, the often-emotional and tremendously personal relationship he has with his clients and collaborators impressed me very much. I come from a background where people are slightly more distant and the building process is an institutionalised and formalized practice. By contrast, Todd is very informal. He has a very direct way of relating to people and I can see it in his work. That is among the strongest things I took from Todd.

ES: Would you like to share a memory of your collaboration?

OG: There is a little anecdote that springs spontaneously to mind, which may reflect how pleasant our collaboration was. Todd's office is located directly in front of what the Norwegians call an *allmenning* – that is, a wide public pedestrian space which connects the upper part of the city with the lower, originally conceived as the public realm that connects the mountain with the sea. So you can see a lot of people going by; it is like a promenade, a catwalk. Looking with Todd out of the window, this passage becomes an animated stage as he always makes the most amazing observations about passersby. We might be in the middle of the design process – really concentrated and trying to figure out a problem – and Todd, from one second to the other, can make the most remarkable and observant comment just by looking through the window! I guess what I mean to say is that Todd is extremely serious and systematic but he also has an amazing ability to keep humor, self-irony, and a healthy level of distraction in his work.



The Modern House  
Place, Pragmatism, and Cultural Memory

Contemporary architectural movements are thrust upon studios, not fought for, and smack of journalistic shorthand rather than long-gestated manifestos. To label this work purely because of its geographic location or materials sensibility would be to miss the point. There are larger parallels to be drawn, connections to be made across the oceans and through the message boards, monographs, conferences, and workshops that characterize the collaborative practice of architecture today.

Todd Saunders' work belongs to an ongoing tradition within contemporary architecture, work that has a strong aesthetic, social, and spiritual association with place, landscape, and memory. Sitting astride two continents, the work preserves a continuity of latitude, an approach to building in northern geographies that is sensitive to vernacular patterns and cultural memory, without jettisoning any of the qualities that make these buildings so contemporary in approach.

The Fogo Island project is a particular case in point drawing as it does on the local vernacular architecture for both housing and the structures that once served the long-standing – though today hugely eroded – fishing industry in the region. Saunders' architectural response to the demands of the Fogo cultural program, with its ambitious aim of revitalizing the isolated local economy and generating a new focus for the region, has resulted in a set of structures that uses abstracted, angular forms with a folk memory of the landscape, evoking the original fishermen's huts and houses that predated the era of factory fishing.

On Fogo, traditional houses are “launched,” like boats, sitting atop the rocky landscape and designed to be moved with seasons, jobs, and other shifts. Brightly painted, with ad-hoc architectural features rich with recycled components from the generations of structures before them, homes sit alongside the “tilts,” the temporary structures built by fishermen to function as home and workplace before their real houses were finished. The Fogo Furniture project mirrors this state of persistent, ongoing craftsmanship, marking the start of collaborations between international furniture designers and local designers and makers that will include community workshops and collaborations. Saunders Architecture appears to operate at the margins of modern architecture, a geographic periphery that has provided the freedom to explore form, material, and program, set adrift from any definable movement.

Saunders' status resonates with a small but significant number of contemporary practitioners, architects who are primarily concerned with issues of pragmatism, functionalism, and practicality. The Canadian architect Brian MacKay-Lyons [b. 1954] is a case in point. Working together with Talbot Sweetapple (originally from Gander, Newfoundland, as is Saunders), MacKay-Lyons' work can be loosely grouped with an informal regionalism that is in evidence around the world. Saunders has been in contact with MacKay-Lyons since 2008, when the former gave an impromptu lecture at Ghost Lab, the latter's regular design-build workshop held on his farm at Upper Kingsburg, Nova Scotia, from 1994 to 2011.

For MacKay-Lyons, environment and culture breed substance. “There are connections to be drawn, tentatively, between Canada and Norway,” says MacKay-Lyons, “North Atlantic sea culture has to do with a certain view, a directness, a poverty. The idea that wood is a dominant building material, for example. Also, the people who grow up in a fishing culture have a different sense of landscape and there’s a kind of pragmatism.”

For MacKay-Lyons, and many of the architects, critics, and theorists associated with Ghost Lab, scale is a defining characteristic of this architecture. The Ghost Lab itself began in 1994 as a means of giving Dalhousie University students hands-on experience of building. Over the years, the workshop evolved into a conference, and along the way its temporary pavilions have evolved into solid, permanent buildings that hunker down into the 60-acre plot with an air of long-standing permanence.

“Firms are usually good at the domestic or civic scale and there’s not a lot of crossover,” he says, “Louis Kahn did very few houses, whereas Glen Murcutt usually stays on the domestic scale.” As [Leon Battista] Alberti says, “the house is a like a city.”<sup>1</sup> MacKay-Lyons elaborates, “A lot of what you do on houses can be expanded – the town hall is the public living room.” Saunders is also primarily concerned with the domestic scale, and even public buildings like the Vangen Nature Centre and World Heritage Building or the *Torngasok Cultural Center* deal with their programming on a very human level, without overwhelming those who have to use the buildings.

See pp. 200–203

“Buildings are not of the land. I think of our buildings like boats,” says MacKay-Lyons. “They’re not the land – you can move them around. To be ‘sensitive’ is not necessarily about understanding the place. If you look at a fishing village, it’s not romantic. It’s just there.” This reference to the approach that underpins communities like those on Fogo Island offers up a new way of working, one that MacKay-Lyons and his contemporaries, as well as younger architects like Todd Saunders, are embracing in the contemporary idiom. “Our work is pretty audacious to some. It shares the pragmatism of farms, fishing, and shipbuilding,” says MacKay-Lyons. “Frank Lloyd Wright said you should never build on top of a hill, but I think that’s absolutely wrong. Sometimes the most gentle thing is counterintuitive.”

MacKay-Lyons cites the work of other architects around the world, many of whom he has a close personal relationship with. Glen Murcutt and Peter Stutchbury in Australia, Juhani Pallasmaa in Finland, and Tom Kundig and Rick Joy from the United States, among many others. Kundig describes this loose, informal grouping as “pragmatic regionalism,” summing up the importance of place and the disdain for hollow, stylistic “functionalism.” For MacKay-Lyons, the ethos spawned by Ghost – a bold, sustainable, hands-on approach to design for human scale – evolves from the hardy frontier conditions of these northern territories.

1. “If (as the philosophers maintain) the city is like some large house and the house in turn like some small city, cannot the – atria, xysti, dining rooms, porticoe, and so on – be considered miniature buildings?” *On the Art of Buildings in Ten Books* by Leon Battista Alberti, MIT Press, 1991, p. 23.

“Pragmatism has reached its maximum in the New World – it’s a great North American tradition but it means something different here [in Canada],” he says. “It’s tough, democratic.”

“The vernacular is always modern. Pragmatism is a search for what makes sense. We are self-consciously making modern architecture. We’re always questioning capital ‘A’ architecture and what it’s good for,” says MacKay-Lyons. “Those conditions apply to Todd’s work as well. I’m sure the model of our practice had a big influence on Todd. I saw him lecture at Dalhousie in Halifax a few years ago, and he visited Ghost Lab in 2008 and lectured there. I then visited him in Bergen and did a few lectures in Norway. We’ve been in contact ever since.”

The challenge for a sensibility like pragmatic regionalism is scale. Saunders’ large civic works reference domestic forms, but also use their program as a means of fostering wider engagement between building and city. With buildings that adhere to MacKay-Lyons’ analogy of town square as living room, Saunders’ structures are enhanced by the fluid, open relationship between built fabric and public realm. The difficulty is how to build on the quality of the material culture tradition that can be used in small-scale projects in the landscape, and translate the sensibility to larger buildings with different material qualities and technology. Pragmatism takes on a different, more prosaic meaning, and the relationship between architecture, landscape, and place becomes more obtuse.

The work of Todd Saunders shares many qualities with this emerging architecture of modesty and modernism, buildings that are subservient to function and place. The alternative, design that seeks to crush context and vernacular form beneath a sleek, neo-consumerist shell, has no place in the wide expanses of wilderness that characterize Newfoundland and Norway. Architecture and place are inextricably bound, and never more so when the landscape is such a dominant feature of life and culture.



The Process  
An Interview with Zita Cobb

Zita Cobb and the Shorefast Foundation appointed Todd Saunders as the main architect for their Fogo Island's geo-tourism project in 2006. A native Newfoundlander, Cobb left Fogo Island at the age of 16 when her family moved to Ontario in search of better opportunities in mainland Canada. However, her love for her birthplace remained strong. After working in the fiber-optics industry and becoming senior vice president of JDS Uniphase, Cobb retired from the technology industry at the age of 42. Together with her brother Anthony Cobb, they established and funded a charity named the Shorefast Foundation. In addition to the Cobb family funding, both the Canadian government and the government of Newfoundland contributed funding to the Shorefast projects. Today the charity uses a social entrepreneurship model to spearhead a multi-million-dollar initiative to bring cultural and economic resilience to the island.

ES: Could you please give us a bit of background history on the Fogo Island project?

ZC: Our projects here on Fogo Island are by definition all about people, culture, and community. Our motivation is the well-being of this place and the people who live here. Fogo Island has almost everything it needs in order to become an important destination for geo-tourists – people interested in place, culture, and people – but not quite all. A “shorefast” is a tether that joins a cod trap to the shore, an important word from our fishing heritage and a good metaphor for our work. We set out to add some missing infrastructure here – infrastructure that, while being demand-generating, will tell the story of our lived experience out here at the edge of the continent – and speak for the people and the place in a way they would be proud of. It's a tall order.

ES: How did you meet Todd? How did he end up getting the commission?

ZC: I interviewed a number of architects for the project but could not get comfortable enough with any to trust them with such an important project – a project that, whether we liked it or not, would “brand” Fogo Island. Most of the people I spoke to were not from here and didn't really understand the important nuances of the place. Ultimately, I didn't feel they would devote the necessary time and open-mindedness to grasp what the place had to say and live up to the trust that would be placed in them.

I heard about Todd from a friend, Cynthia Daley, who knew I was grappling with an architect decision. She had just read an article about Todd. I was intrigued – a Newfoundlander with his practice in Norway. I think I knew he was the right person for the job even before we spoke. I called him out of the blue and reached him on his cell phone – I think he was kayaking at the moment I called. Things were pretty clear from there. We spoke, I came to Norway, we met, we talked – it was obvious.

ES: What were your first impressions of him?

ZC: Todd is a bundle of sensors – he looks and acts porous. Aside from his own personal history in Newfoundland and his already deep understanding of the character, anguish,

and triumphs of the outport communities like Fogo Island, he understood what we were trying to do. He understood the importance of the project to our culture. I trusted him right away.

He understood that working on our project meant being a servant of the community – of its geography, of its history, of its dreams, of its people – those gone, those still here, and those yet to come. I think it was a “master” he wanted to serve. And he does serve. Not by taking direction about the form of his work but by dedicating himself to understanding the purpose of his work here; he uses his skill and his vision to serve the purpose and needs of the place and the project.

ES: So I understand that finding somebody who would have a special connection with the island was key – but was it a conscious decision from the beginning?

ZC: It never occurred to me to look for someone from “here” ... not sure why. I was just looking for someone who could think with all their body and soul, someone who was always reaching to give their very best (you have probably noticed that there is so much mediocrity in the world). People like that can connect even if they are not genetically linked to a place. As it turned out, Todd was both.

ES: Did you have any aesthetic requirements, any idea of what you wanted the project’s architecture to look like, before you approached Todd?

ZC: We often describe our work as “finding new ways with old things.” We didn’t want to be simply converting old buildings but wanted to create something that was built on what came before, something that reflected the way of thinking our ancestors had. My test was always “If those people got out of the graveyard and came to look at what we’ve done, what would they say?” We certainly wanted something that was “of this place” and, as much as possible, buildings that could be built by local people using local know-how and local materials.... At the same time, we needed a design strength that would be seen by the rest of the world as being outstanding contemporary architecture.

ES: Having now worked with Todd for more than four years, what do you feel is his best quality as a collaborator? Was there something that you found particularly challenging in the development of the project?

ZC: Todd feels. He also thinks, of course, but his work is so clear when he feels his way forward. We really trust his feelings about what should be and what shouldn’t be, and when he is “moved” he can communicate powerfully with so few words. It just comes out of his heart through his mouth. I love that about him.

The duality of that attribute is that he is not a person to articulate the ideas and values behind his work if asked in an abstract setting.

I recall we had a meeting with everyone working on the project, very early on. One fellow in the room was a communications consultant and he was looking for Todd's words that he could use as input to his work on how to tell the world what we were up to. But Todd just wasn't giving enough for him to work with – maybe because he was still feeling his way in the design.... It was inside him but it wasn't ready to come out.

Some architects (whole schools of them, actually) seem to have developed a very odd and somewhat pretentious language to describe perfectly ordinary things. Todd is not like that. He is fresh; he doesn't use tired, borrowed words to make things "sound good."

ES: I am sure in every project there is a series of unexpected turns and problems, which may have to do with the relationship between client and architect, but also external factors. Was this the case also with the Fogo project?

ZC: Oh yes, we have crises every week.... And for sure it taxes all of us. We have very long teleconference calls a couple of times a week. Todd's designs are challenging to implement here and this demands every single person to come to work and think about everything they are doing from first principles. We can't just rely on what they've done before or what we think we "know." It is hard to do that every day and all of us sometimes just want something to be regular.... And it isn't.

Some of the issues arise because of differences between Canadian and Norwegian practices, but most appear because Todd's approach is unknown here. We certainly have bun fights from time to time. If this was easy, it might have been done long ago. It isn't easy.

ES: Norway and Canada share quite a few aspects, like the climate and their northern geography. Would you, as a Canadian, see more cultural parallels?

ZC: Norwegians and Newfoundlanders have a lot in common (Canada is too big a grouping to compare). We are people of fish – especially cod and seals.

ES: Having worked with him, would you say that Todd's architecture is Canadian? Or perhaps Norwegian?

ZC: I don't know how to categorize Todd's work. To me, it just is Todd's work. He has Newfoundland in his soul and perhaps Norway in his brain.



## Projects

Aurland Lookout  
Aurland, Norway





Aurland Lookout  
Aurland, Norway

2200 m<sup>2</sup>  
Completed 2006

The Aurland Lookout had its genesis in a Norwegian project to promote and enhance the country's spectacular landscape through a series of architectural viewpoints and rest stops. In 2002, Saunders and Tommie Wilhelmsen were invited to participate in the competition (taking the call while on site in Hardanger), even though the architects had yet to complete a single building. "We did five sketches, thinking we had nothing to lose, and then drove three hours back to Bergen during which time we developed the strategy for the design," Saunders said. Designed in just three weeks, their concept scheme, 640 m over Aurland and 20,120 m from Tokyo, was awarded first prize. Saunders describes the project as being distilled into the "simplicity of one line," the almost literal placement of a gangplank jutting out from the side of the mountain, overlooking the fjord and town below.

The Lookout is a walkway into the void, a piece of architectural theater that tempts the visitor with the promise of an apparently suicidal path into the air high above the landscape. The architects describe the landscape above the fjord as being like an "open room," its walls delineated by distant cliffs and mountains, the floor a dense carpet of pine trees. The project was built from structural steel, set into a concrete base and clad in planks of straight and curved pine.

As the 30-m-long, 4-m-wide deck reaches the farthest point from the road, it rolls forward, plunging down into the abyss. The deck itself also curves away, but the visitor is halted at a 1.2-m-high glass balustrade that runs the 4-m width of the walkway, set at a slight angle to minimize reflections and maximize the feeling of an unimpeded view. The galvanized metal handrail atop the wooden walls follows the kink poetically but ultimately pointlessly down the hillside. The Lookout is paired with a small structure housing toilets and a parking area set about 100 m along the road, with similarly precipitous views.

The project was completed in November 2005 and was officially opened in June 2006. An early rendering of the scheme garnered international attention, as well as a number of awards, encouraging the Norwegian Tourist Board to prioritize the construction of the Lookout in their series of new works. The Aurland Lookout is a minimalist statement, with great engineering strength concealed beneath a surface structure of deceptive simplicity and fluidity. A completely flat platform, it transforms the visitor's perception of height and landscape, making the modest building feel like the tallest in the country.











Aurlandsvangen  
Aurland, Norway





Aurlandsvangen  
Aurland, Norway

1500 m<sup>2</sup>  
Planned completion 2014

This large, multi-functional structure is located on the waterfront in Aurland, down the valley from the Aurland Lookout on a site that overlooks the expanse of the Aurland Fjord, a World Heritage Site. The brief was for a competence center for the local environmental think tank, including business and conference space, publicly accessible areas, as well as an exhibition area for the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. As a result, Saunders' building represents a departure from the residential scale that had hitherto been the focus of the office, especially with regards to the extremely varied program.

The resulting design has been governed by five key elements, beginning with the need to give something back to the local community. The building had to be wooden yet also anchored in contemporary architecture; it had to relate closely to the local architectural style; it had to contain inspirational office spaces; and it had to be a welcoming public space. To this end it is not just a standalone building, but an object that knits the community together.

As part of the design, a nearby traffic roundabout will be removed and replaced with a new park and promenade. In addition, the building plays with the notion of a "fifth facade," with a fully accessible roof that doubles as an extension of the public realm. Saunders traces his interest in functional roofspaces back to a visit to Agra, India, where the multi-functional domestic roof acts as "a whole new surface for the town." The three-story Center is clad in wood, with staircases "cut" into the plank-clad roof slope to form a path that is threaded up from ground level to a terrace. This path lifts and turns as one ascends, culminating in a rooftop landscape that places one at the heart of the wider landscape (and even reveals the *Aurland Lookout* in the far distance).

See pp. 134–141

Self-consciously designed without "an ugly side," the Center must address the water's edge as well as the row of traditional fishermen's houses that make up the water frontage. It is intended as a piece of large-scale sculpture perched on the edge of this very small town. The surrounding park helps integrate the design even further, with a set of small-scale jetties reaching out over the water to provide spots where fishermen can catch the rich mix of sea trout and salmon common in these waters.



Fogo Island Inn  
Fogo Island, Canada



Fogo Island Inn  
Fogo Island, Canada

4000 m<sup>2</sup>  
Planned completion 2013

See pp. 44–115

Although comfortable and modern, the twenty-nine-room Fogo Island Inn is not intended to be about reclusive luxury. Instead, Saunders aimed for a timeless design, “made just for Fogo Island.” “The basis of the project is the inimitable views toward the Atlantic coast; the whole project is facing north,” explains Saunders, who describes the wooden building as “almost an anti-hotel.”

The Inn includes a restaurant run by a noted local chef, together with a library, an E-cinema, and a contemporary art gallery. Four floors of rooms are topped by a sauna by architects Sami Rintala and Dagur Eggertsson. All the spaces are a collaboration between Saunders, people, and selected invited international professionals.

A charette in 2009 and a workshop in 2010 (called the Aesthetics of Outport Interiors) were organized by the Fogo Island Arts Corporation. These kick-started the separate process of commissioning the furniture and interiors. To source design that would be both site-specific to the island and contemporary, Cobb, Saunders, and Elísabet Gunnarsdóttir, Director of the Fogo Island Arts Corporation, knew they had to engage both international designers and local craftspeople.

Having visited the site, the chosen designers started on their individual commissions in spring 2011. “Once a design was agreed upon, a local builder was chosen to produce a prototype. In the summer of 2011, the designer came back to the island to refine the design. Production began in the autumn of 2011,” says Shorefast’s Joseph Kellner, who oversaw the furniture commissions. For the local craftsmen involved in the furniture making, this job goes beyond the Inn. “They will be able to continue to make and sell the items, keeping the majority of the proceeds. A sum is going back to the designer and another is going into a community fund to finance workshops or tools and machinery,” says Kellner.

The list of collaborators is long and bursting with talent. Dutch designer Ineke Hans contributed with seating design; British-based Nina Tolstrup of Studiomama worked on the lights; and designers Donna Wilson and Sheridan Coakley created two chairs, with Wilson producing fabric designs and Coakley’s upholsterers helping to train local people in the craft. Other collaborators included the Glass Hill studio, which produced the dining room chairs, bar stools, and library and study chairs; designer Simon Jones offered the collapsible, foldable, and stackable chairs, tables, and benches; and Éline Fortin of studio Bipède designed a set of wooden chairs. British artist Yvonne Mullock oversaw the 200 quilts produced for the guest rooms. Canadian artist Elisabeth Belliveau created painted canvas mats, while designers Kym Greeley and Martine Myrup braided them. Anthropologist and composer Justin Armstrong is behind the sound design, and Frank Tjepkema looked after the restaurant lighting. Myrup, Greeley, Wilson, and architect Nick Herder all individually designed wallpaper.

The task of designing an unpretentious, yet meaningful and quietly innovative hospitality space is no mean feat. Although complex, the lengthy process resulted in an exceptionally well-thought-out, harmonious space. Construction completes in late 2013.



Halvorsen Hansen Addition  
Bergen, Norway





Halvorsen Hansen Addition  
Bergen, Norway

40 m<sup>2</sup>

Completed 2005

The Halvorsen Hansen Addition is a first exploration of an explicit type of contextualization – the house extension. Without compromising the modernist aesthetic developed in earlier, standalone residential projects, Saunders paired a traditional structure with an undeniably new form that complements the contextual and formal characteristics of both site and house.

Much of Bergen's vernacular residential architecture takes the form of gable-roofed houses, neat, presentable, and a testament to centuries of residential development. In location alone, the Halvorsen Hansen Addition marks a departure from a portfolio of hitherto very rural, standalone projects, which drew their form from nature, landscape, and the juxtapositions between modern materials.

While the side addition is a relatively common way of extending domestic accommodation in these low-density suburbs, Saunders' brief was to extend the original century-old house without resorting to pastiche. The solution was to add a compact modernist box, set off at the side of the main house, using the same combination of rendered stone and wooden cladding so as to appear a literal extrusion of the original house. The site is set on a slope, with the lower ground floor dug into the hill. The new extension follows the same format, set over two stories with a terrace on the flat roof.

The new element is a kitchen extension, an airy room that brings late afternoon sunlight into the house and creates a new social and family hub around the large kitchen table. In all, the plan created an additional 30 m<sup>2</sup> of living space, while the slope of the site allows for a 20-m<sup>2</sup> storeroom below the kitchen. The two walls of glazing overlook the garden and Bergen beyond, while red-painted fir cladding adopts the same detailing as the parent structure. The form of the extension is as if the house's ground floor has been pinched and extruded, a slice of shutter board-clad domestic form that is modulated by cuts, slots, and walls of glass, rather than the traditional arrangement of the fenestration on the original house.

From within, the extension dematerializes into its surroundings. Cut into a steep bank, it serves as an extension of the terrace, a platform perched on the city's populated slopes. This role as a place of contemplation and consideration is enhanced by the 25-m<sup>2</sup> roof deck, reached by an open-tread wooden stair integrated into the rear of the addition.

Saunders often speaks of the stoic and straightforward nature of his work, characteristics he attributes to the influence and absorption of Norwegian culture. "Architecture is straightforward and practical in some ways, yet highly poetic on many other levels," he writes, believing that juxtaposition, form, and materials can convey feelings that go beyond the functional. This project, like many of Saunders' works, is a domestic space, a place that will resonate with the clients' life and activities, their memories of the house as it once was, overlaid with the fresh architectural treatment.



Hardanger Retreat  
Kjepsø, Hardanger Fjord, Norway



Hardanger Retreat  
Kjepsø, Hardanger Fjord, Norway

20 m<sup>2</sup>

Completed 2003

Few first buildings are as poised and coherent as this small, service-free one-room retreat on the edge of the Hardanger Fjord in western Norway. Set into a narrow wooden deck that in turn sits just above the forest floor, the Hardanger Retreat appears complete and fully formed. Modern architecture, despite its accompanying rhetoric and mythology, rarely has an intimate connection with the land. For the overwhelming proportion of contemporary human habitation in the developed world, any direct link between inside and outside, floor and soil, and roof and stars is a contrivance. Yet to be truly at one with the landscape is no longer a hardship or even a right. Instead, this contrivance is invariably a luxury, a chance collision of site, ambition, and the necessary funding.

The Hardanger Retreat is a modest building, born of opportunism, enthusiasm, and optimism. Instead of lamenting the lack of opportunities for young architects, Saunders and Tommie Wilhelmsen bought the site with the intention of building their first, highly speculative project. Initial progress was anything but smooth. The architects bought the land without permission to build, which they were initially refused. Terse negotiations were then required with the local municipality. Once permission had been secured, the next challenge was the remoteness of the site – 80 m from the nearest road – which meant construction materials had to be flown in by helicopter.

The architects were teaching at Bergen Architecture School while they undertook the work. During the six-week build, Saunders, Wilhelmsen, and one of their students, Mats Odin Rustøy, lived in a nearby barn, designing and building as they went – what Saunders describes as “a very pure experience, up in the mountains, amid the changing landscape.”

Larch and oiled birch plywood was used for its simplicity, ubiquity, and the ease with which it could be shaped and formed. Saunders speaks of taking a sculptural approach to this structure, and the way the wrap-around form erases the joints between the floor, wall, and ceiling. “It looks more like a piece of furniture than a building,” he says. Saunders believes that the project is a perfect fit for its site, a linear slab in the wilderness with a deck that adapts itself to the existing terrain – and trees – by simply accommodating them into the fabric of the structure.

The Retreat is also a reaction against the relentless upscaling of the traditional Norwegian summer house. “Everyone has a summer house, and they’re getting larger and larger and more like just being at home,” Saunders says. Without water or electricity, the Retreat is little more than elemental shelter, a sculptural form that conveys modern intentions, traditional methods, and, above all, a statement of intent that pointed to the path ahead. “It cemented our faith in making our ‘own’ architecture in our ‘own’ way,” says Saunders.



Hand-built on site, the Hardanger Retreat is a piece of furniture in the remote landscape (previous spread).



The retreat is oriented toward the water, leaving a simple, abstract wooden form in the woods to greet approaching visitors.





Hytte Tyin  
Tyin, Norway



Hytte Tyin  
Tyin, Norway

215 m<sup>2</sup>  
Completed 2011

Set in a landscape of traditional winter holiday cabins on the edge of the Jotunheimen National Park, the design of this modest retreat was shaped by the strict regulations regarding location, size, and roof pitch, the latter due to the high annual snowfall and the unsuitability of a flat roof. The Tyin Cabin was designed for the owner of an organic bakery, a nationwide chain of highly environmentally aware stores. As a result, the client wanted to translate the ethos and ethics of his business into his winter cabin, and the brief called for the building to go far beyond the regulations. Set into the slope overlooking the lake, the cabin's sloping grass roof is asymmetrical, reaching down almost to the ground on the lower side of the hill. From above, it reads as part of the landscape, especially when drifts of snow obliterate the difference between the contours of the land and the edges of the building. Insulated with shredded denim, with an independent boiler system for the under-floor heating, the project also uses technically advanced insulated glazing. The Hytte Tyin has realized the client's dreams of an outdoor life.



The Tyin Cabin is nestled into a slope, allowing drifting snow to partially cover the structure for added insulation. High environmental performance was a fundamental part of the client's brief.

Lund Gård Kindergarten  
Geilo, Norway



Lund Gård Kindergarten  
Geilo, Norway

860 m<sup>2</sup>  
Competition entry 2010

“Generally, ninety percent of what architects design doesn’t get built. But with us, ninety percent of what we draw gets built. We very rarely have the time to experiment without knowing that the project will get built,” explains Todd Saunders. “We always test new things, of course, but it always has to come down to reality. We wanted to do a project that we knew wasn’t going to get built, so we could take the experimentation to a different level.”

This project was inspired by Saunders’ own children, and was part of a competition, although the objective was never the win. “We didn’t care about winning. I wanted to see how I, as an architect, could use my skills, talent, and position to make a building that is good for kids,” he explains.

The design was produced in collaboration with an array of specialists – young architect Thomas Tysseland and his architect father, Magnar; playground specialist Ketil Dybvig, who builds play areas together with the parents and children concerned; musician Eirik Glambek Bøe, who is an architectural psychologist; and professor in child psychology Ida Margrethe Knudsen, who specializes in kindergartens.

Laid around a central courtyard, the building includes covered as well as open outdoor spaces, while the main structure has four different entrances, two for the older children on one side and two for the younger one the other. Each leads to its respective group’s common area via a rough closet and a more refined closet. “It is a functional, simple plan and at the same time, each of the four corners of the square gives the kids an identity – they know what their own entrance to the building is,” he says. There is also a separate common area for the staff, a pillow room for the younger ones to sleep after lunch, bathrooms in the middle, and a wild playground area outside.

The interiors are wooden – even the ceilings – and each play area is furnished with a floor-to-ceiling mixed cupboard and shelf area where the children’s toys can be stored easily and safely at the end of each day. Openings at different heights and variety in the shelves’ and cupboards’ design adds a further playful element and allows different light qualities during the day.

“There is a feeling of freedom when you know the project is not going to get built,” says Saunders. “And it is an extremely useful exercise, a personal study. We tried to be realistic but broke the rules where we felt that they needed to be broken. We are doing more competitions now as a form of research on building types, not just to win commissions – they are an incredible learning platform.”



The Lund Gård Kindergarten incorporates covered outdoor play spaces beneath its zig-zag roof structure.



Salt Spring Island House  
Salt Spring Island, Canada



Salt Spring Island House  
Salt Spring Island, Canada

120 m<sup>2</sup>

Completed 2012

Salt Spring Island House was designed for a large plot of land on Mount Tuam on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia. The picturesque site, set within a fir forest, includes a seasonal creek with three waterfalls and offers expansive views from the greater Vancouver Island toward Washington State, the San Juan Islands, and the Olympic Mountains.

The client, landscape architect Nancy Krieg, met Saunders in the Channel Islands when she was the master planner and lead consultant for the Durrell Zoo eco-lodges project, on which Saunders had worked. Krieg was originally from Ontario but had bought land on the island to build a house and move to permanently. An art atelier was also in the brief, to accommodate her growing creative interests. A keen admirer of the Scandinavian design ethos, she turned to Todd: "With his Canadian background and insight as well as his instinctive grasp of the Scandinavian design on mountainous terrain, I thought he would be an excellent executor of my dream. We were on the same page; play and joy are integral with creativity and our similar sense of humor was key."

Saunders' design had two distinct parts. "I designed them as two little pods, related but also non-related," Saunders explains. "They are similar on paper, but when you place them differently within the site, they develop different personalities." The site played a key role in the design decisions, and Krieg agreed: "It was important to me that the buildings did not overshadow the landscape but, rather, became an extension of the existing surrounding beauty. The waterfall is and always will be the 'hero.' The view commands the site."

Two separate structures were placed on either side of the waterfall, one containing the living unit and the other the studio space, which also acts as a guest room. The cantilevered studio volume is located at the top of the second waterfall, while the house sits about 7 m below at the waterfall's foot. A light aluminum bridge connects the two. The entrance is accessed via a plateau that links the complex and the main road. The bridge stands on stilts and partly crosses over one of the waterfalls. All structures touch lightly on the ground and were designed so that the existing trees remain intact, "allowing the natural runoff to flow beneath the structures and the existing flora and fauna to remain as undisturbed as possible," Krieg explains.

The two volumes, standing on pillars, were designed with an external corrugated steel cladding. The interiors are simple and functional, mainly in cedar wood. However, while the atelier features an open-plan interior with a terrace on its west side, the cottage's living and resting areas are placed vertically, so that they have different views and orientation (facing south and east, respectively), each offering a distinct experience. By keeping the volumes low, light, and diverse, Saunders created a live/work complex that makes the most out of its location while remaining respectful of the surrounding nature.







Solberg Tower and Park  
Sarpsborg, Norway





Solberg Tower and Park  
Sarpsborg, Norway

2000 m<sup>2</sup>

Completed 2010

Sarpsborg is a green, flat, and calm piece of South Norway and a traditional stopover for travelers on the route to and from Sweden. In 2004 the Norwegian Highway Department, together with the regional government and several municipalities, approached Saunders for a new project in the area; uniquely, there was no predetermined brief.

“The project leaders had been following my work and asked me to do something in the area, although they didn’t have a specific idea of what they wanted me to do,” Saunders recalls. “In a way I had to almost come up with the program myself, it was very free and creative.” Focusing on the site and aiming to identify its challenges and advantages in order to define its problems and opportunities, Saunders worked closely with the client, not only to develop the optimal design solution, but also the brief. “We discussed what we needed, and the architecture came out of that,” he explains.

Sarpsborg is one of the first glimpses of Norway the travellers from Sweden experience. It was therefore important for the client that they would be able to slow down and spend time discovering the locale. The forest and coastline there form a beautiful, yet largely unknown part of the country.

The neighboring highway’s speed and noise only enhance the traveler’s need for a break and reconnection with nature, so a green resting space was on the top of the list. A low walled ramp spirals around the rest area, defining the 2000-m<sup>2</sup> area’s limits, while spring-flowering fruit trees adorn the courtyard. Within it, Saunders, working with graphic designer Camilla Holcroft, designed seven small pavilions, showcasing information on the local Viking rock engravings, an exhibition which continues on the ramp’s walls. “The surrounding forest is full of Viking engravings but no one knows about them because everybody just drives through trying to get to Oslo,” says Saunders. The structures also offer the option for temporary artist exhibitions.

The design’s aesthetic was developed in relation to the area’s existing architecture, using minimalist and geometric contemporary shapes that contrast with the local farming villages’ more traditional forms. The main materials were beautifully aging CorTen steel for the exterior walls and warm oiled cedar for the courtyard’s design elements and information points. Local slate and fine gravel pave the ground level.

The area’s flatness meant that the beauty of the surrounding nature could only be enjoyed from a certain height, so the creation of a tower quickly became a main part of the brief. The ramp’s asymmetrical walls rise to form a simple nine-story (30-m)-tall lookout structure on the site’s northern edge. Named Salborg (meaning “sun mountain”), the tower’s views are truly dramatic and highlight the area’s natural and historical attractions.





The landscaping creates a sheltered, artificial world, detached from the surrounding environment but still using natural materials that will weather with age.





Viewed from the Solberg Tower, the landscaping is geometric and precise.



Stokke Forest Stair  
Stokke, Norway





Stokke Forest Stair  
Stokke, Norway

40 m<sup>2</sup>

Completed 2012

This sculptural installation was designed for the Sti For Øye sculpture park in Stokke, set amid the Vestfold oak forest to the south of Oslo. Working alongside landscape architect Rainer Stange to create the infrastructure for a woodland walk past a series of artists' installations, Saunders proposed a series of steel and wooden walkways set at the highest point of the site, looking east toward Slottsfjellet, or "castle mountain." The designs, of which one would be chosen and ultimately constructed, played with the idea of an artificially facilitated foray above the forest floor, an elevated viewpoint that would otherwise be unavailable to the visitor.

The three designs were whittled down from a set of twenty original ideas, a process Saunders calls a "form of Darwinism," an architectural evolution whereby only the fittest concepts survive. The key proposal was for a skewed rectangular walkway, its sides twisted into stair forms resembling a Moebius strip. With wooden cladding on the outer surface, rusted CorTen steel on the interior structure, and glass balustrades to emphasize the thinness of the structure, the installation forms a loop that visitors have to ascend and promenade around before stepping down the other side.

Saunders calls this form a "one-liner in the landscape," a stairway to nowhere that works through the simple act of raising the viewpoint a few feet in the air. The second and third final options removed the loop element but emphasized instead a solitary staircase, giving the object a surrealist appearance or a memory of a long-lost ruin, the last remains of which still exist in the depths of this remote wood.

As with all Saunders' landscape-based projects, be they residential, sculptural, or commercial, the site was intensely and thoroughly surveyed, resulting in a contour map accurate to 25 cm. "It's an absurd thing to place a staircase in a forest, but in a flat landscape you need some verticality," says Saunders, "so it's important that the object reads well in the landscape." Meticulously observed as a component of its surroundings, the Viewpoint is the solitary functional object in the art park.

The final structure was flown in by helicopter. The careful surveying ensured that not a single tree had to be cut to accommodate the new stairway to the sky, and the ambitions of the project were realized.





The final design for the stair evolved through constant design revision and model making. A simple, open-tread stair leads the viewer on a journey to a view, a simple but surreal statement.



Summer House Alendal  
Vignafjord, Norway



Summer House Alendal  
Vignafjord, Norway

100 m<sup>2</sup>  
Planned completion 2014

The Summer House Alendal is an object adrift in the landscape, set upon a remote rocky promontory overlooking the Vignafjord, to the south of Bergen. Unlike earlier projects, such as the original Hardanger Retreat or the Summer House in Åland, the Alendal project is placed high above its rocky, wooden waterside site, not intertwined with the trees at the water's edge.

Created for an entrepreneur and submarine designer, the house is intended to provide an equal amount of internal space and external covered space. The three-bedroom house is wrapped in a loop of timber, a curved facade that forms walls, roof, floor, and deck with an infill structure providing a glass and timber-paneled living area. The rest of the loop is left open to the elements. The lightweight timber construction sits upon a solid concrete base; Saunders integrated the foundation slab onto the edge of the rocky landscape, allowing the structure to rest lightly above it.

The fluid mix between inside and outside space is a deliberate response to the views from the terrace, across the water, down the slope, and back inside to the living space. Entered from the rear of the house, along a footpath that's inaccessible to cars, the house reveals itself with the view as a backdrop, a view that's first obscured, then opened up by the entrance sequence, framed by the curved timber of the terrace. The three elements – inside space, outside space, and outside covered space – direct the views out and across, with a broad flight of steps descending from the front into the landscape itself.

From water level, the house looms over the outcrop like an artificial promontory, the prominence of the "wrapping" structure deliberately overshadowing the in-filled living space. The floor plan reads as two intersecting rectangles, with the covered living space cantilevered away above the slope and a corner of terrace thrusting out from beneath the canopy. Floor plan and roof twist in different directions, making a distinction between inside and outside that is further blurred by a glass-walled room that forms a transition between the terrace and the living space. The Alendal project prefigures Saunders' work on Fogo Island, where the programmatic requirements of small-scale studios allowed for the structures to have a pure, unmediated relationship with the surrounding landscape.





Summer House Sogn og Fjordane  
Rysjedalsvika, Norway



Summer House Sogn og Fjordane  
Rysjedalsvika, Norway

80 m<sup>2</sup>  
Completed 2007

“This little vacation cabin is essentially two separate, freestanding parts linked together by a common floating roof above them,” explains Todd Saunders. Summer House Sogn og Fjordane – named after the West Norway county where the cabin is located – is set on a rocky slope within a rich pine and heather forest peninsula in the Rysjedalsvika district, four hours north of Bergen. It was designed by Saunders in collaboration with architect Tommie Wilhelmsen in 2003 but built four years later.

The vacation house was commissioned by a doctor and a computer programmer, both of whom hailed from that part of the country. As heavy rainfall is a common condition in the area, protecting the owners from the rain was a key driver behind the design. Within the structure’s overall 80 m<sup>2</sup>, Saunders and Wilhelmsen created space for the family’s holiday needs while also incorporating the surrounding nature through the creation of generous outdoor areas and openings framing the fjord’s beautiful vistas.

“The composition is disarmingly simple and restrained,” says Saunders. Indeed, one rectangular element contains the parents’ accommodation (a kitchen and sitting area as well as a bathroom and bedroom are included); a second smaller volume houses the children’s two bedrooms. Both are sheltered by the third element, a long roof hovering overhead, protectively covering the circulation areas and terraces with views toward the fjord.

All the interior surfaces are created in birch plywood, while the wooden structure features two different shades of natural stain, based on the shades of colors of the surrounding pine tree barks. Metal columns support the roof and the whole structure floats above the ground, creating as minimal an interference with the existing natural landscape as possible.



Summer House Sogn og Fjordane: the deck is the focal point of this modest vacation cabin.

Summer House Åland  
Åland, Finland



Summer House Åland  
Åland, Finland

45 m<sup>2</sup>

Completed 2002

The Åland project was an exercise in creating a compact, flexible summer house for a Swedish doctor with a young family. Designed by Saunders and Tommie Wilhelmsen, the 45-m<sup>2</sup> retreat was built over a few months during the summer of 2002. Saunders collaborated with his former carpenter Mats Odin Rustøy, who also worked as an architect in the office, together with three students from the Bergen School of Architecture.

Inspired by the clients' sense of experimentation and love of radical architecture, Saunders and Wilhelmsen were lucky enough to have as much support from the family as they needed in order to create this delightful residential space within the restrictions of limited site and budget. Located in the Åland Islands, a small Baltic Sea archipelago to the north of Stockholm, the site is just 40 m from the sea shore. The new house takes advantage of stunning views across the archipelago from its enclosed location amid the tall green trees of a young pine forest.

The house is a very basic retreat, designed as a continuous long, folding wooden structure. "It's one of those buildings where the architecture speaks for itself," says Saunders, "It has always been quite hard for the office to talk about it." All of the house's functions and elements were included within that main central frame, which, through its vertical and horizontal movements, created space for all the necessary parts a basic vacation house requires – from walls, floors, and ceilings, to staircases and built-in furniture.

This unique design approach had its advantages: "Every square centimeter of the project is utilized – we were very pragmatic about what should be in the cabin," Saunders says. This way the architect has created a truly transformable space, inviting the owners to use it freely and imaginatively as they wish: "One can eat breakfast under the morning sun on the terrace, or twenty people can sit along the front of the cabin watching the sunset."

The layout is extremely flexible. The kitchen and bedroom can be united or separated by the adjustment of glass sliding doors, and the entire house can be opened up to the surrounding pine forest, effectively transforming the interior into a viewing deck. As environmentally conscious as it is functionally efficient, the wooden retreat uses materials produced at a local sawmill. It is insulated with chemical-free woven linseed fibers, and chemical-free cold-pressed linseed oil protects the woodwork.

In addition to the environmentally friendly and locally sourced materials, Saunders and his team were wary of disturbing the existing landscape. The house was therefore designed to sit on pillars in order to preserve adjacent tree roots. The end result is formally simple but also a vindication of the original approach. "It is almost spooky how much it looks like its original model," Saunders concluded. "We built a lot of models when we were working on it and now it looks exactly like the models! It is very rare but it worked out so well, it is perfect."





Torngasok Cultural Center  
Nain, Labrador, Canada



Torngasok Cultural Center  
Nain, Labrador, Canada

1300 m<sup>2</sup>

Planned completion 2014

Nain is the northernmost community in Labrador, located 200 km south of the Torngat Mountains National Park. The park, established in 2005 through the Land Claims Agreement, is a 9600-km<sup>2</sup> (3700-mi<sup>2</sup>) natural wilderness, located at the very northern tip of Labrador. Nain is also the administrative headquarters for the Nunatsiavut government – the new self-government regime for Labrador Inuit created through the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, which came into effect in December 2005.

The new Torngasok Cultural Center will act as a focal point for the town and a cultural centerpoint for the region, with a special focus on outreach programming for the Inuit communities in Nunatsiavut. It will also host the Nunatsiavut government's cultural programming and accommodate Parks Canada's administration and visitor reception and orientation center.

"The building is the gateway to the national park, and it's the cultural center for the town and the region and the headquarters for the Nunatsiavut government," says Saunders, who won the competition for the design after being invited onto a long list of nine firms, from which three were short-listed.

In recent years, the Canadian government has built tranches of highly functional but very prosaic housing, and the vernacular tradition is slim. "The problem was that the Inuit have no architectural reference points; their culture is based around constant movement between summer and winter hunting grounds, with dwellings that were demountable and adapted to the local conditions," Saunders says. He cites his admiration for the traditional summer lodging, sod houses that were dug deep into the ground for warmth, then covered with a tent. "They were soft and elegant, handmade and unique, so we started with the idea for a softer, non-architectural form."

The spruce cladding is hand cut, not off-the-shelf. The interiors also feature wood. Of particular importance is the proposed inclusion of directly carved surfaces, because carving – be it soapstone or spruce, is integral to Inuit culture.

"This will be one of the first buildings to give an identity to the Nunatsiavut government," says Saunders, adding that there are a lot of parallels with the self-determination struggle of the Sami people in northern Norway. The brief called for a building that could both convey the Inuit story and provide "a compelling reason for visitors to come to Nain and spend time in Nunatsiavut." The oval-shaped building references the traditional sod house, a physical link with structures excavated throughout the region.

In 2014, Nain will host the 12th General Assembly of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, and the 1300-m<sup>2</sup> building will be one of the focal points of the event. "I felt that the town didn't have a common space, so this is the town's living room," says Saunders.



Villa Brussels  
Brussels, Belgium



Villa Brussels  
Brussels, Belgium

980 m<sup>2</sup>  
Competition entry 2011

Untypically for a residential commission, Villa Brussels was developed for a competition. High-end event planner Etienne Russo is well known for his work with the production company Villa Eugénie, creating fashion shows and events for the likes of Chanel, Hermès, and Lanvin. When Russo kicked off a search for the right architect and design for his family home in Brussels, he decided to do it through an international selection process.

Saunders was selected, together with Britain-based architect Zaha Hadid, as one of the two finalists, chosen over nearly a hundred participants. “It was one of the best, most liberating briefs we have ever worked with,” recalls Saunders. The house would span 980 m<sup>2</sup> and was to include living as well as entertaining spaces and a large landscaped garden.

Saunders’ design placed the living areas on the ground levels and more-private spaces on the upper floor. A lower-level garage sits next to a swimming pool and doubles as a space for parties and guest entertainment. The garden was created in collaboration with German landscape architect Trevor Sears, and environmental consultants Atelier 10 ensured the design had low energy consumption and a small environmental impact.

The white-painted structure was created out of high-quality refined concrete, which allowed for the highly sculpted curved shapes of the house. “The whole design was a study on how to bring light into the house. It is a shame we didn’t have the chance to build it, but the whole process was an amazing adventure,” says Saunders. “Meeting Etienne and his team was exhilarating and being selected from such a high-level list was fantastic news. I hope we will have the chance to work together in the future.”





Villa G  
Hjellestad, Norway



Villa G  
Hjellestad, Norway

368 m<sup>2</sup>  
Completed 2009

A commission for the creation of an entirely bespoke house is an architect's ideal, a blank slate that allows for limitless experimentation, material richness, extravagant detailing, and no aesthetic compromise. In practice, such commissions are infrequent and rarely come without strings. In the case of Villa G, Saunders was approached by a client with previous experience of building his own house, creating a certain weight of expectation but also a rare understanding of the architectural process.

Villa G is one of the most elaborate residential projects undertaken by Todd Saunders' studio. A generous family home wrapped up by a ribbon-like facade of wooden slates, the villa has a generous floor plan, incorporating a detailed, highly tailored program of works for a client with a large young family. Clearly demarcated zones, from the children's area downstairs to the parental oasis above it, give the house a formal/informal character. The informality of the main children's space – "large enough for team games" – is juxtaposed with a series of conventional rooms opening off it, whereas the first floor has a far more open plan.

The two spaces are united by a steel staircase, a unique item made from a single length of folded 1-cm-thick steel, bracketed by thick slabs of glass. Weighing nearly a ton, the staircase had to be lifted into position by crane, down through the rooflight slot that now filters daylight to the downstairs floor. The latter has been designated as the children's zone, containing three bedrooms, a family room, and utility spaces, including a climbing wall and generous amounts of empty space. Living spaces are placed on the floor above, so as to maximize the views across the island-dotted horizon and retain as much natural light as possible as the days grow shorter during the winter.

The exterior facade is clad in white-stained planks of spruce, with three different standard widths used to create a striated appearance. The material nods to the local vernacular, while the upstairs floor, with its external staircase, terrace, and large expanses of glass, denotes a very contemporary, sculptural sensibility. Inside, the happy blend of high-tech equipment and traditional craft finishes continues, a testament to the client's stated love of gadgetry and technology. Frameless glass partitions divide the spaces in the master suite, allowing light to penetrate deep into the plan.

Bold contemporary furnishings and modern art are paired with the white walls and oak floors, with all the detritus of family life concealed behind a carefully calculated amount of storage space, integrated within thick walls. Lighting is controlled via a central system, while the long kitchen, with 8 m of unbroken work surface, was supplied by the Danish mass-market brand Kvikk. Concealed outlets and extensive storage space means the rooms can be kept as clutter-free as possible, maintaining an unbroken and uninterrupted view through the living space to the water beyond, a reflection of the simplification of the design as a whole.





Villa G is first and foremost a family house, tailored for its occupants as a series of formal and informal zones, with the kitchen at the heart of the house and the views never far away.



Villa H  
Bergen, Norway





Villa H  
Bergen, Norway

410 m<sup>2</sup>  
Planned completion 2013

Located on the banks of the Nordåsvannet Fjord, Villa H is a generously scaled house that wraps around an existing structure on the site. Arranged in an L shape, with two large internal courtyards beneath an oversailing, angled roof, the Villa is divided into a series of clearly differentiated zones for a client with a young family.

The entrance to the house takes one past a three-car garage integrated into the main superstructure, then through a generous courtyard and into an entrance hall, beyond which the living area, located at the angle of the "L" opens up to views north across the water. Living, eating, and cooking spaces are all placed in this zone. To the east lie the parents' quarters, accessed via a passageway past a second internal courtyard. Two separate bathrooms and a dressing area complement a master bedroom with waterside views. The childrens' rooms are to the south, with a separate living room. External stairs create a set of varying routes around the house and gardens.

The lower ground floor is given over to service functions, reached by a long, shallow stair that steps down on the west facade from the entrance courtyard. At critical points the roof is angled up and over the floorplate, creating covered terrace areas at the northwest point of the plan to form a generous outdoor eating area. These terraces "peel off and press back," streamlining the plan and sculpting the relationship between inside and outside space, of which there are eight separate zones within the form of the house.



Villa HC  
Bergen, Norway



Villa HC  
Bergen, Norway

180 m<sup>2</sup>  
Completed 2008

Villa HC is a radical renovation, the complete restructuring of a 1950s villa in an established Bergen neighborhood. Although the house was well-sited, with lake views and an elevated plot, the clients quickly found that the original house was too small for a family of five. Saunders was asked, quite simply, to expand the available space. The original structure had a steeply pitched roof containing a small attic. Expansion within the original fabric of the building was impossible. It wasn't until the client revealed that the architect could have carte blanche to re-jig the fabric – but not the footprint – of the structure that Saunders agreed to take on the project.

Saunders describes the house as an “exercise in quiet restraint,” with limited budgets and big ideas. By excavating the basement, enough space was available to build three separate floors, albeit with low ceiling heights, small bedrooms, and modestly sized staircases. According to the architect, this “tightness of space” is one of the key characteristics of the space, with a human scale that has more in common with the original house, rather than an open-plan contemporary space.

The new floor is open plan, with a large sliding window that allows the outside in during the summer; a glass railing ensures views are unimpeded. The kitchen and living area have been relocated into this space, separated only by a “subtle divide” that preserves a distinction between each space while retaining the open planning. The openings are slots in the new wooden facade that wraps the entire box, rising the full height of the facade at the front of the property and stepping down to a more intimate scale at the rear, where the front door is located.

The facade is modulated by the abstraction of the overlaid cladding, cascading down over the volume of the original two-story structure to emphasize the change in scale. White-stained vertical cladding on the first two floors is therefore overlaid with the dark wood stain of the horizontal elements. A new terrace, in light-colored wood, expands the available living space, with one of Saunders' trademark slotted staircases sandwiched between two high wooden walls.

Despite the addition, the house is still compact, at just 60 m<sup>2</sup> per floor. The new master suite is located on the middle floor, together with a living room, while the clients' three children are accommodated on the ground floor, giving them easy access to the gardens.

The flexibility of wooden structured buildings, coupled with long-established methods and means of weatherproofing, turns Villa HC into a three-dimensional composition, a series of interlocking forms that interprets the values of modernity as a form of clay sculpture that enfolds an armature and enhances it.



Villa Mohn  
Bergen, Norway





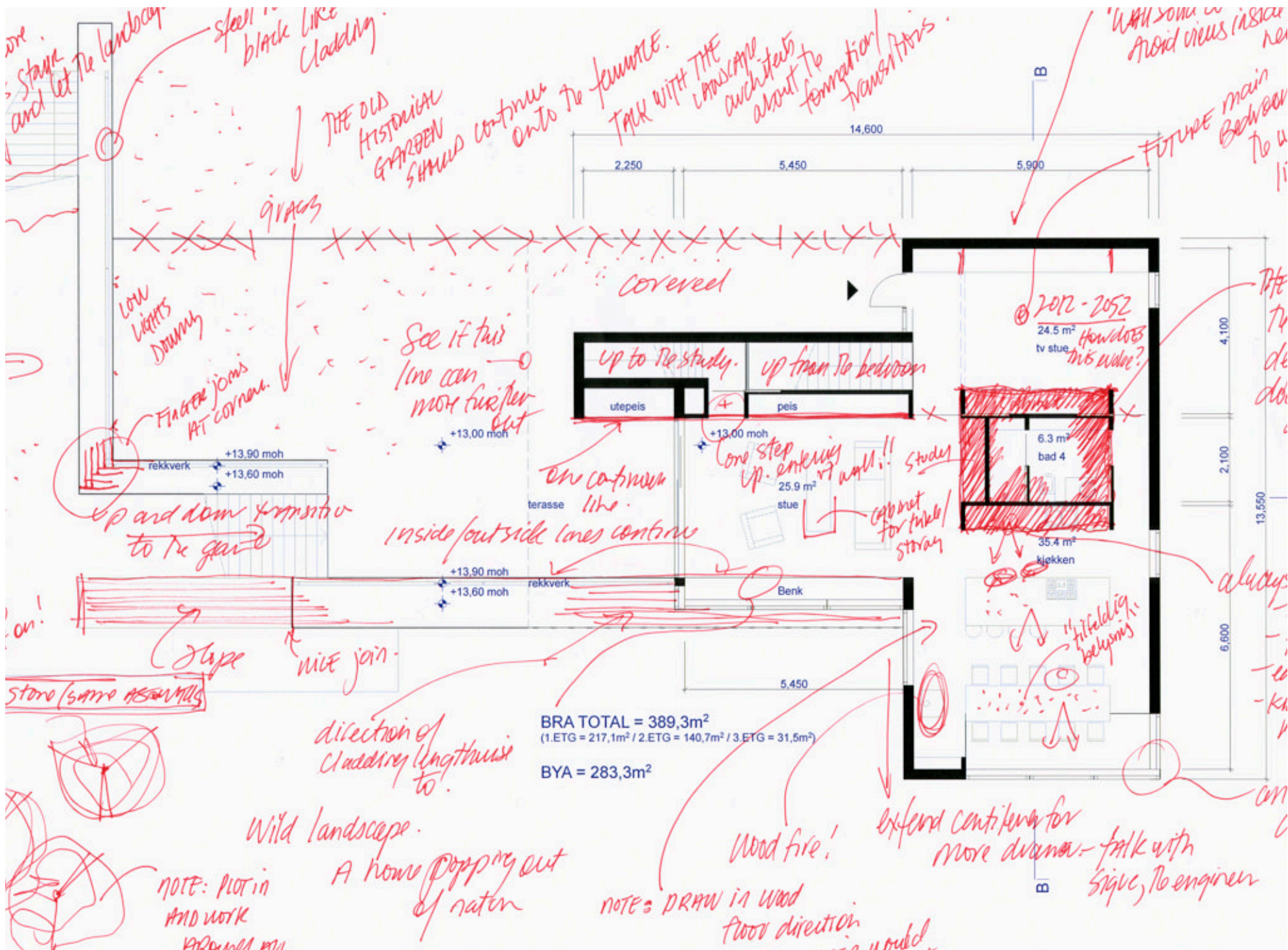
Villa Mohn  
Bergen, Norway

280 m<sup>2</sup>  
Planned completion 2013

Described as a “house for a nature-loving family,” the Villa Mohn has been constructed on a plot formed from the client’s parents’ garden, on the site of an old greenhouse alongside another plot for a house for his sister. An earlier design had been approved for the site, after a long and protracted design and development process, so the clients approached Saunders with some trepidation.

The design shown here was developed in just a few weeks and was an instant success with the clients. The site overlooks Nordåsvannet, the large fjord to the south of the city, and the house is arranged so that living areas are placed on the first floor above the bedrooms to maximize the views. The open-plan living area is subdivided by a box containing the services at its heart, off of which the kitchen/dining area, TV room, and living room all pivot. A large terrace, with direct access to ground level via external steps, opens off this space, partially covered by the overhanging upper floor, where a library and separate terrace offer up the best views.

On the first floor, the dining area also cantilevers out over the sloping site. The Villa Mohn features expansive external space, much of it covered – a common Saunders device to maximize every inch of built space. The four bedrooms at ground level are paired with a functional two-car garage, complete with slaughter bench for butchering hunted deer meat. Externally, the house is clad in black-painted wood, with a natural stone finish where the ground floor meets the garden.



Villa Moldbakken  
Bergen, Norway



Villa Moldbakken  
Bergen, Norway

200 m<sup>2</sup>  
Planned completion 2014

Built on a site in a large domestic garden, the Villa Moldbakken has a complex interlocking plan to make the best use of limited space. Designed for a Norwegian-Scottish couple with extensive experience in working with architects, the house is designed to be “the place they’ll spend the rest of their lives.” The site, in Bergen, is urban, and the views and light rights of neighboring properties had to be taken into account when shaping the pitch of the roof and the placement of the house. The lower ground floor is a garage and workshop to accommodate the client’s hobby of mountain bike racing. Living space is placed above the bedrooms on the ground floor, with a thick wall separating the utility areas from open-plan living. Raised up high, the living rooms have a view of city and ocean. Finished with wood facades over a structural concrete core, the house involved deep excavations to maximize the potential of the tight site. “Everything we took away we replaced,” says Saunders of the green roof above the garage area that doubles as a lawn.



Villa Morild  
Gulen, Norway





Villa Morild  
Gulen, Norway

230 m<sup>2</sup>  
Completed 2010

A young couple, both computer programmers, approached Todd Saunders in 2007 for a suitable space to house their growing family and their flourishing business – Villa Morild. Their brief was particular when it came to the life/work relationship. They worked from home, so they needed the two functions to be close but also as separate as possible. “The tricky part was that while at home, you shouldn’t see the office, and vice versa,” explains Saunders.

The available site was on a wind-blown coast about two hours north of Bergen called Mjømna, in Gulen, the beautiful southwestern part of Sogn og Fjordane county. The woman of the couple spent her childhood in the area, inheriting a plot of land on what used to be an old sheep farm.

In order for the workspace and house to be separate enough, Saunders’ volume studies led him to a linear coiled floor plan. By placing the office on one end and on a raised level, giving it stunning wide views toward the sea, he achieved a pleasant and efficient workspace with no visual contact with the house. The house, on the other hand, was on ground level, a long living and kitchen area at one end and a row of four bedrooms at the other. The rooms wrap around a protected courtyard, which opens up on one side.

In many ways the house follows the area’s residential typology; however, on closer inspection, its particular character becomes clear. “It is a completely foreign form, yet all the parts and materials are very familiar to this area. The rules from traditional buildings on coastal sites are adapted and applied to a new house,” Saunders explains.

On floor plan, the house’s soft-textured but sharp-edged white wooden shape is especially irregular. The reason behind its asymmetrical forms is Saunders’ aim to achieve the best possible orientation for each of the rooms, at the same time creating a series of semi-open spaces. By pushing in some walls he was able to create covered decks, which also led to the unusual angles. The strange shapes also reflect on the house’s external views and overall perception, creating a playful end result. “This house plays tricks with your eyes,” says Saunders. “While the interior layout logic is pretty clear, it changes shape and form as you walk around it.”

In contrast, the interior was kept simple, featuring white-painted walls and elegant Dinesen wood flooring. Saunders was also involved in some of the furniture design, creating, for example, a built-in wooden bookshelf in the living room. An external staircase leads to the rooftop, which is partly transformed into a vegetable and herb garden.

Completed in mid-2010, Villa Morild is a play on shapes, but also a warm and safe family home set against the surrounding nature’s wildness. “This house stands proud and exposed on the edge of the ocean, yet the form wraps around itself, creating a silent courtyard in the middle,” concludes Saunders. “It is based on protection and exposure all at once.”







Villa Storingavika  
Bergen, Norway



Villa Storingavika  
Bergen, Norway

304 m<sup>2</sup>

Completed 2007

It took Saunders almost a year to complete the concept for this large villa on Norway's west coast, but at least in terms of the design process and development, the project remains one of his favorites.

Saunders was called on to create a new house on the site of an old one for a family and their two children, with very specific brief: a house for the couple with an independent floor for their children, both students, who visit during school holidays. The design was drawn slowly and in close collaboration with the clients, Eli Bakka and Jan Sem-Olsen. "The house developed over time and when finally we fixed the ideas, everybody knew that they were good ones because they were well tested. It brewed slowly and to perfection," Saunders says, explaining how this process also infused the design with hints of the owners' distinct personalities. For example, the black wood is a playful reference to Bakka's black-centered fashion sense.

Bakka and Sem-Olsen maintained a strong connection with the particular site in the Bergen suburbs, a fifteen-minute ride from the city center. Sem-Olsen's family had always owned a cottage on the site, and Saunders took full advantage of this in his design analysis and studies. "You could say that they had an almost fifty-year experience in the area," he explains, adding that the site's coastal position and local residential typologies, with their wide, open-plan interiors, were among his main references.

The design was developed using many architectural models, even at the construction stage of the project. "We had this really big model of it at the construction site and after the frame was up we never used the drawings, just the model. It was almost like the drawings didn't need to exist any more." Oriented toward the sea, Villa Storingavika is a synthesis of low rectangular volumes, with a distinctive upper-floor veranda jutting out 6 m toward the sea, but still firmly planted in the ground by three strong poles. The two-level villa, completed in 2005, is arranged across the upper part of the relatively small site, a linear design that makes the most of the stunning views toward the archipelago. The plot size urged the architect to work toward emphasizing the inside – outside relationship by creating as many outdoor areas as possible.

Saunders chose to use Canadian cedar wood, rarely seen in Norway but a familiar material for the architect. The facades are made of glass and wood, shaped by the alternation of two wood types, light-colored oiled cedar and black-stained fir. The interiors are clean and white, with wooden flooring and simple, utilitarian detailing.

"I wish all of my projects could be like Villa Storingavika," says Saunders, who stresses the importance of the close collaboration with the clients and the luxury of ample time. "This house was the first one I did on my own, after collaborating with other architects, and I spent a lot of time on it. It was very personal and a real labor of love."







The exterior of the Villa Storingavika shows the house nestling into the rocky slope behind it.







Villa Tyssøy  
Bergen, Norway

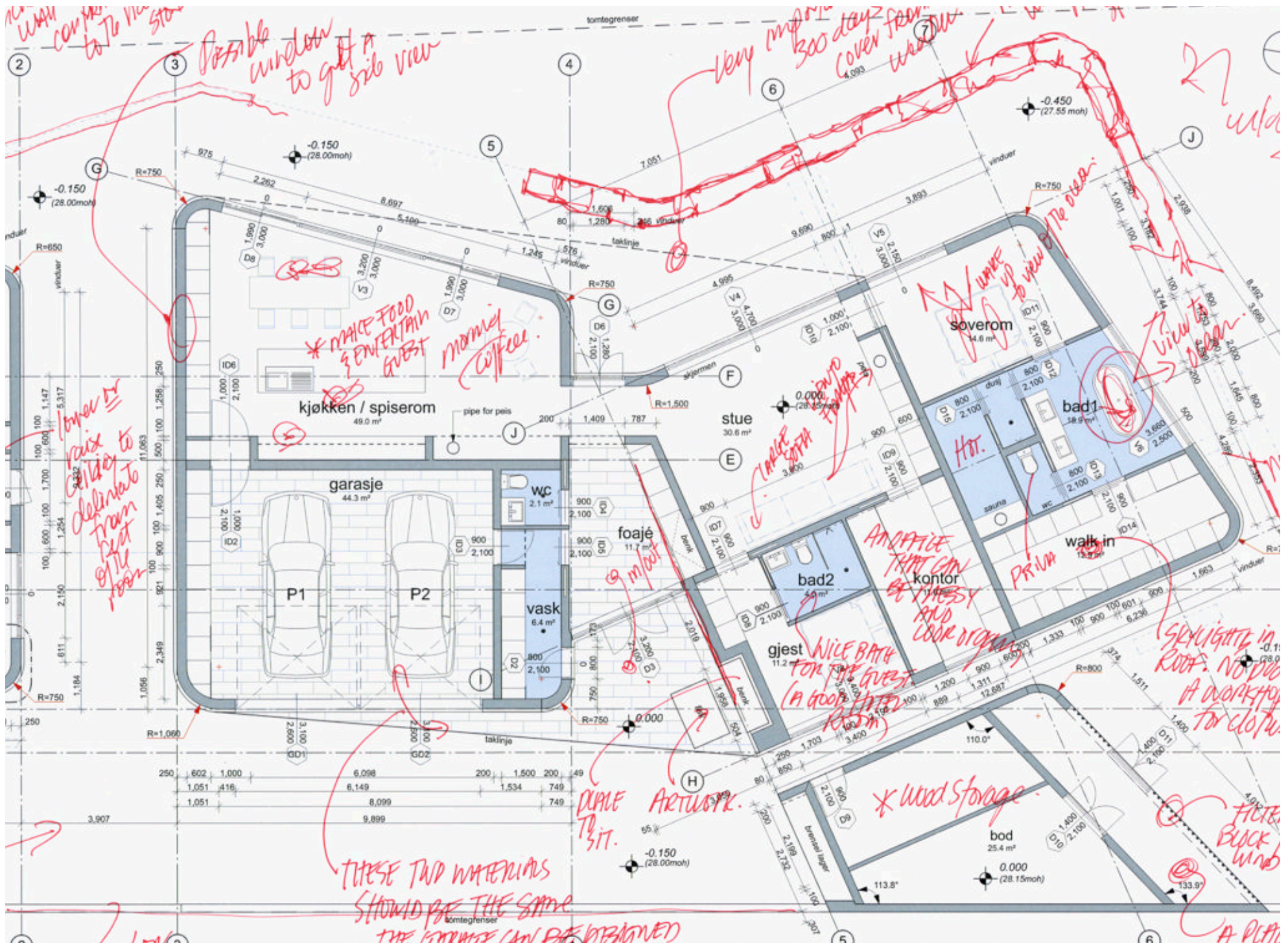


Villa Tyssøy  
Bergen, Norway

260 m<sup>2</sup>  
Planned completion 2013

Named for the small island it stands upon – and also the family name of the clients, who have lived in this region for many generations – the Villa Tyssøy is a modest house for a modest client. Designed for a husband and wife, with a small annex for a teenage son, the villa is located on the small island of Tyssøy, which lies to the southwest of Bergen and is connected to the mainland by a bridge.

Saunders describes the 260-m<sup>2</sup> house as a “foreign form in a traditional landscape.” The white-painted cladding is the same as other, more conventional, structures on the island, while the form is kept soft through the use of gently curving facades, set beneath an oversailing roof that creates covered terrace areas – or niches to protect against the elements. The wooden structure sits atop traditionally constructed dry slate walls, which serve to bed it into the landscape and make another connection with the location, vernacular, and the history.





Villa Vågen  
Bergen, Norway



Villa Vågen  
Bergen, Norway

360 m<sup>2</sup>  
Planned completion 2013

As Bergen slowly grows denser and families search for extra space on which to build, many of the city's new housing stock is found in the openings created between existing houses and within their ample back gardens. Villa Vågen is a case in point. The home for an extended family – a professional couple with children, and their parents – the building is set in an apple orchard that used to be the garden of the parents' nearby previous residence.

Nestled in an upmarket neighborhood of 1960s modern houses in the suburbs of the city, Villa Vågen's concept is simple. The structure consists of three cubes stacked on top of each other. These volumes are slightly rotated at different angles so as to create a variety of views and a series of outdoors terraces on every level.

The internal arrangement is straightforward: the teenage children took over the ground floor, their parents live on the first floor, and the very top floor is used as a library and office space, used mostly by the parents. "We needed to have them all close by and together, but at the same time we wanted to make it so that each one has their own space," says Saunders. A lower and smaller independent structure on the ground floor, to the side of the main building, is an autonomous studio for the grandparents (this type of arrangement is known in Norway as a "generation house").

The house's form is distinct and extends vertically, which is a departure from Saunders' signature long, low, and sculpted architecture. "The shape is simple, like a child's stacking wooden building blocks, almost naïve," says Saunders. "We wanted to keep it low key and focus on translating the extended family's unusually traditional living arrangement." With an overall floor surface of 360 m<sup>2</sup> and a fully wooden construction, Villa Vågen is set for completion in 2013.



First floor plan of the Villa Vagen, carefully planned to incorporate views through and out of the house.



## List of Projects, Biography, Bibliography, Acknowledgements

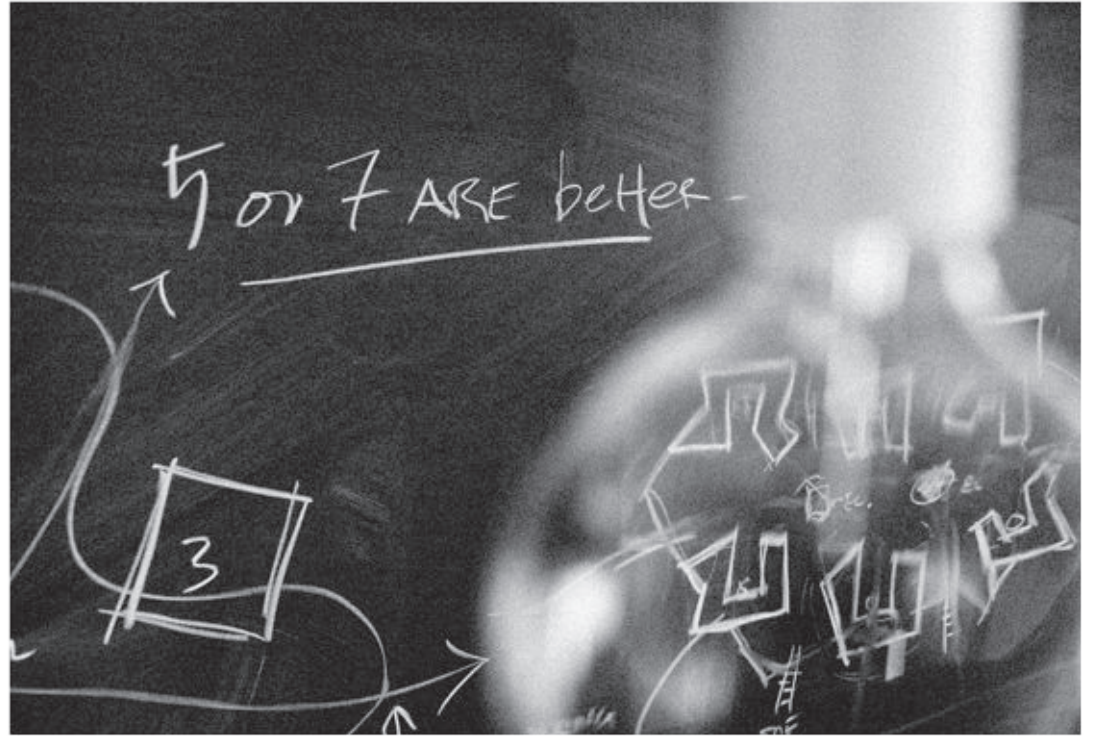
Saunders Architecture  
Bergen, Norway

In the heart of Bergen, Norway's second-largest city, is the Saunders Architecture office nestled on the second floor of an historic 19th-century building a short walk from Torgalmenningen Square. Located on Vestre Torggate, the street that links the square with Johanneskirken church on the city's highest point, the office is just a few stone steps up toward the top. This is one of the busiest parts of Bergen, bustling with tourists and students (the practice is also in the middle of the university campus), a combination that makes for a lively daily environment.

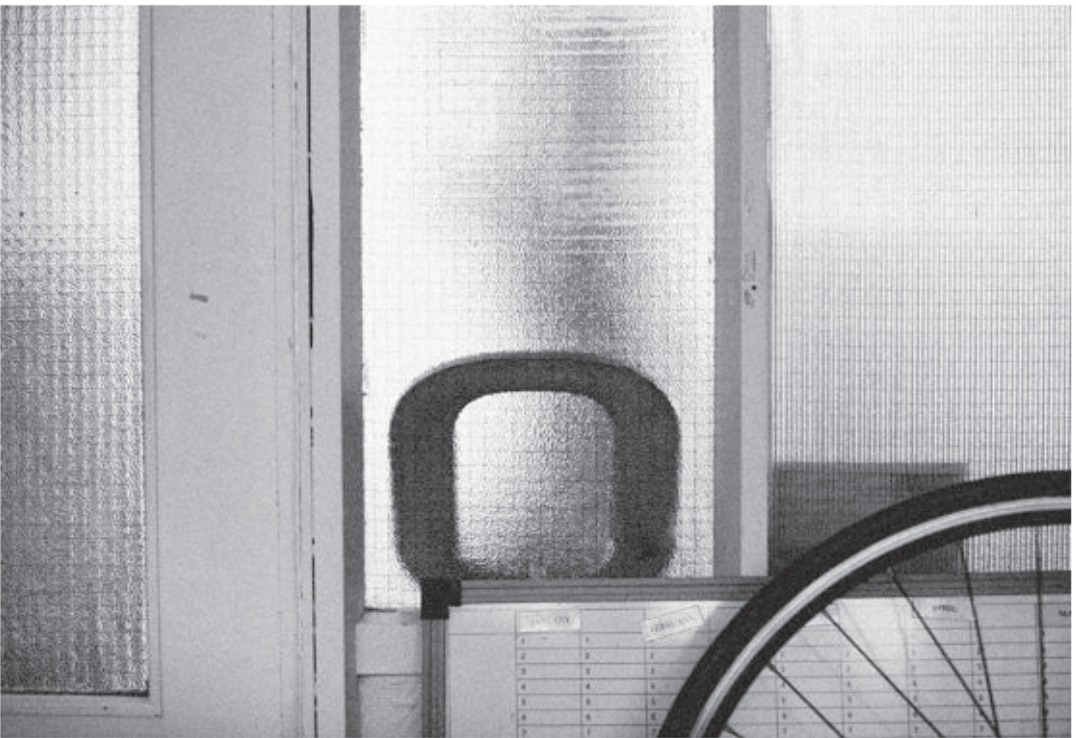
In comparison to the street outside, the Saunders office is an oasis of serene creativity, with high ceilings and open-plan airiness. Sharing space in a building full of creative companies – an advertising agency, a casting agency, and a photographer also have their base there – has provided an added source of inspiration for the architects. The area's casual, perhaps even slightly messy character is often unconsciously mirrored by the team, albeit in a distinctly more constructive way. "Given that we are in a university area, it is perhaps apt that the office often looks and feels like a classroom, or an architectural workshop," says Saunders.

Walking in from the street, the evidence of architecture-in-the-making is everywhere, from the stacked books and piles of drawings, to the numerous models lining the shelves and filling the worktops. The bicycles resting by the entrance hint at Saunders' passion for cycling, while a dedicated model-making workshop underscores how important physical three-dimensional representation is to Saunders' architectural approach.

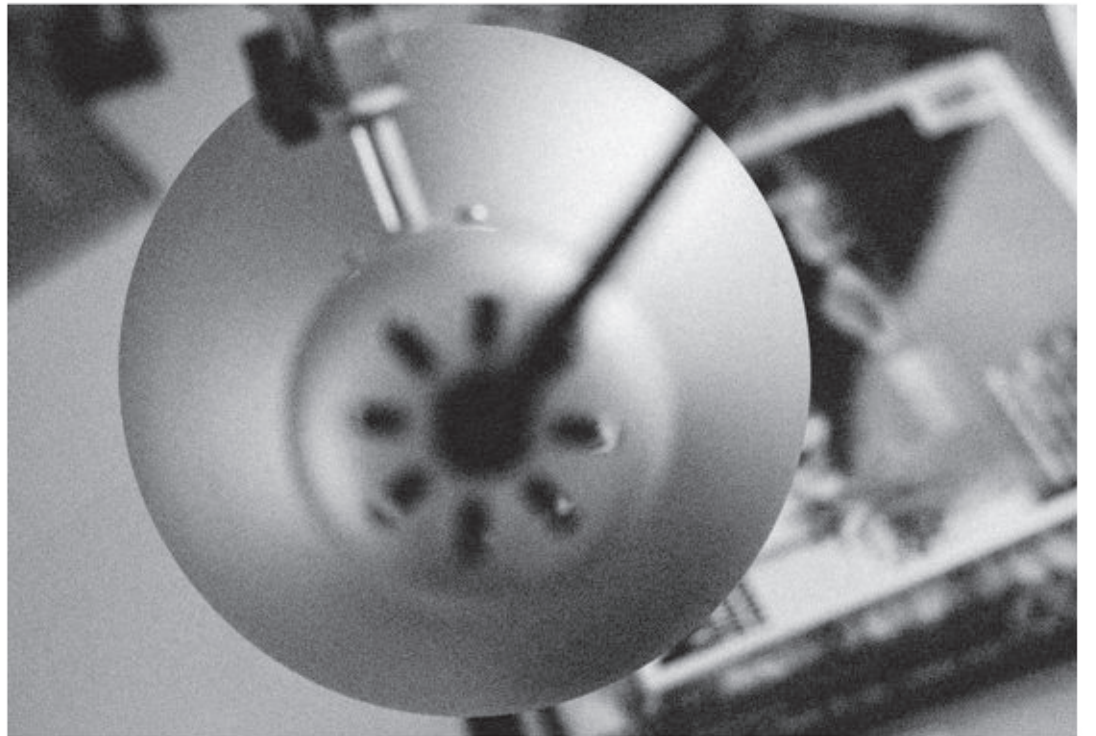
The office is small, young, and diverse, with a fluctuating number of staff members depending on the practice's workload at each given time, ranging in age from early twenties to late thirties. Considering the office's international spread of projects, it is no surprise that they come from places as varied as Finland, Hungary, Canada, and Britain.



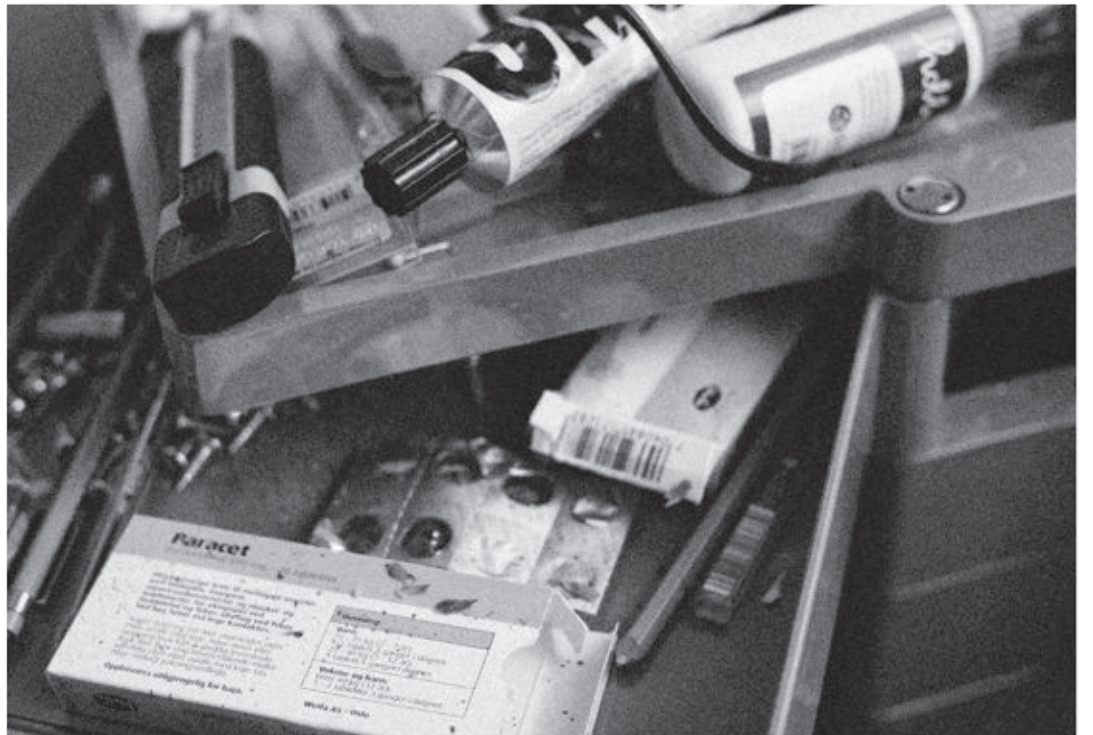
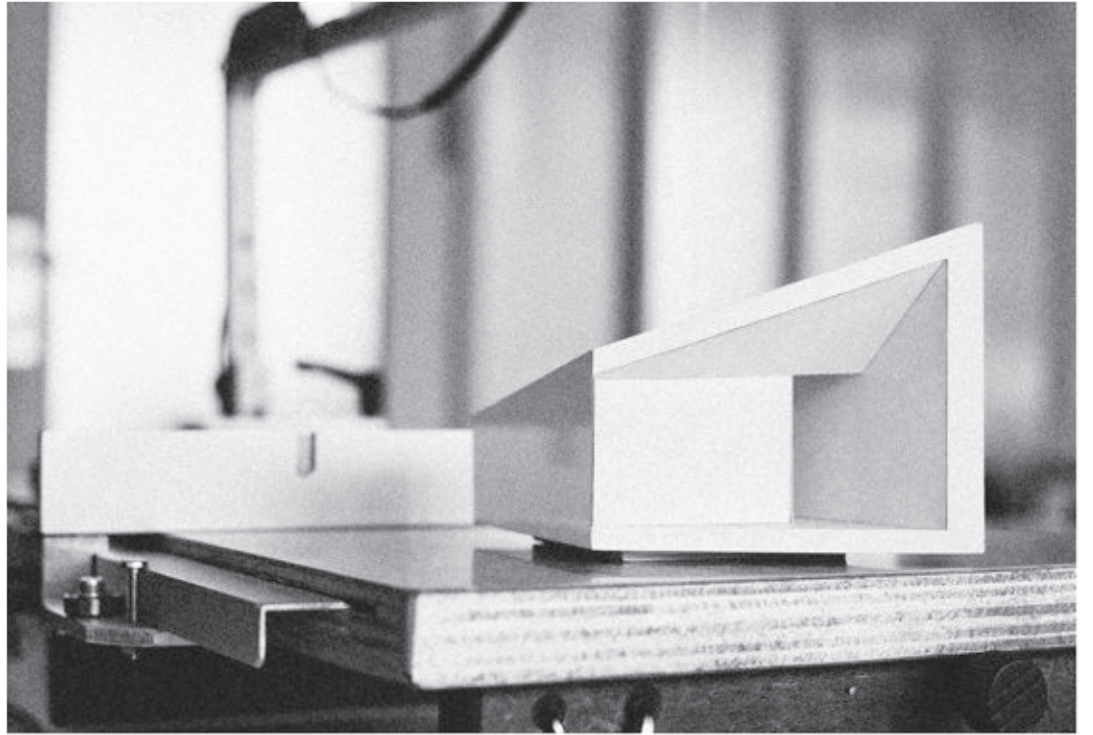














## List of Projects

- Arna Condominiums*  
Bergen, Norway  
Size: 60 units  
Client: Erstad & Lekven Utbygging AS  
Architects: Todd Saunders  
with Attila Béres  
Status: In progress
- Atelier Haverkamp*  
Bergen, Norway  
Size: 35 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Reinhard Haverkamp  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Annie Pednault and Geneviève St-André  
Status: Completed 2008
- Aurland Lookout* (see pp. 134–141)  
Aurland, Norway  
Size: 34m long, 17m high, 2000 m<sup>2</sup> landscape plan  
Client: Statens Vegvesen  
Architects: Todd Saunders and Tommie Wilhelmsen  
Status: Completed 2005, official opening 2006
- Aurland WC*  
Aurland, Norway  
Size: 50 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Statens Vegvesen  
Architects: Todd Saunders and Tommie Wilhelmsen  
Status: Completed 2006
- Aurlandsvangen* (see pp. 142–145)  
Aurland, Norway  
Size: 1500 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Nærøyfjorden Verdsarvpark  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres, and Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach  
Status: Planned completion 2013
- Blueskymod Prefab Cottage Prototype*  
Toronto, Canada  
Size: 60 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Hy Rosenberg and Richard Stark  
Architects: Todd Saunders  
Status: Completed 2005
- Brakke House*  
Bergen, Norway  
Size: 60 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Senter for Bøkologi, Bergen  
Architects: Todd Saunders and Tommie Wilhelmsen  
Status: Completed 2003
- Bridge Studio* (see pp. 76–87)  
Fogo Island, Canada  
Size: 29 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Shorefast Foundation and The Fogo Island Arts Corporation  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Ryan Jørgensen, Thomas Pfeffer, Olivier Bourgeois, and Nick Herder  
Status: Completed 2011
- Fogo Island Inn* (see pp. 146–149)  
Fogo Island, Canada  
Size: 4100 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Shorefast Foundation  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Sheppard Case Architects, Ryan Jørgensen, Attila Béres, and Joseph Kellner  
Status: Planned completion 2012
- Fogo Studio*  
Fogo Island, Canada  
Size: 60 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Shorefast Foundation and The Fogo Island Arts Corporation  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach  
Status: Planned completion 2013
- Halvorsen Hansen Addition* (see pp. 150–153)  
Bergen, Norway  
Size: 80 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Elisabeth Halvorsen and Helge Hansen  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Mats Odin Rustøy  
Status: Completed 2005
- Hardanger Retreat* (see pp. 154–159)  
Kvandal, Norway  
Size: 20 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Self-built  
Architects: Todd Saunders and Tommie Wilhelmsen  
Status: Completed 2002
- House and Artist Studio*  
Austrheim, Norway  
Size: 160 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Anne Jakobsen and Rolf Sandstad  
Architects: Todd Saunders and Olaf Gipser  
Status: In progress
- Hytte Tyin* (see pp. 160–163)  
Tyin, Norway  
Size: 215 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Richard Müller  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Ryan Jørgensen, Attila Béres, and Rubén Sáez López  
Status: Completed 2011
- Istanbul Ecological Neighborhood*  
Istanbul, Turkey  
Size: 75 units  
Client: Bio Istanbul  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres, Anja Egebakken, Joshua Kievenaar, and Aino Inkeri Korhonen  
Status: In progress
- Kjerreidhaugen Apartments*  
Bergen, Norway  
Size: 66 units  
Client: Backer Bolig AS  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach, M3 Arkitekter, and Tysseland Arkitektur  
Status: Competition entry 2011
- Long Studio* (see pp. 46–63)  
Fogo Island, Canada  
Size: 131 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Shorefast Foundation and The Fogo Island Arts Corporation  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Sheppard Case Architects, Attila Béres, Ryan Jørgensen, Joseph Kellner, Colin Hertberger, Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach, Rubén Sáez López, Soizic Bernard, and Nick Herder  
Status: Completed 2010
- Lund Gård Kindergarten* (see pp. 164–167)  
Geilo, Norway  
Size: 860 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Hol Kommune  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Tysseland Arkitektur AS, Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach, and Attila Béres  
Status: Competition entry 2010
- New York City Loft*  
New York, USA  
Size: 250 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Withheld  
Architects: Todd Saunders  
Status: Unrealised
- Oulu*  
Oulu, Finland  
Size: 14m long  
Client: University of Oulu, Finland  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Mats Odin Rustøy and 21 international architecture students  
Status: Completed 2005
- Pilegrimssenteret i Røldal*  
Røldal, Norway  
Size: 1150 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Røldal Pilegrimssenter AS  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Sarah Philipp, Michal Hanko, Zdenek Dohnalek, and Jordan Ludington  
Status: Competition entry 2012
- Rena Competition*  
Rena, Norway  
Size: 32 units  
Client: Norwegian Defense Department  
Architects: Todd Saunders, Tommie Wilhelmsen, and Halfdan Kjetland  
Status: 3rd prize in competition
- Salt Spring Island House* (see pp. 168–173)  
British Columbia, Canada  
Size: 120 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Nancy Krieg  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Ryan Jørgensen, Attila Béres, Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach, and Jim Helset  
Status: Completed 2012
- Short Studio*  
Fogo Island, Canada  
Size: 80 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Shorefast Foundation and The Fogo Island Arts Corporation  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres, and Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach  
Status: Planned completion 2013
- Squish Studio* (see pp. 88–99)  
Fogo Island, Canada  
Size: 28 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Shorefast Foundation and The Fogo Island Arts Corporation  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach, Rubén Sáez López, and Nick Herder  
Status: Completed 2011
- Solberg Tower and Park* (see pp. 174–181)  
Sarpsborg, Norway  
Size: 2000 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Statens Vegvesen, Østfold Fylkeskommune, Sarpsborg Kommune, and Fredrikstad Kommune  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres, Inês Moço Pereira, Mats Odin Rustøy, Greg Poliseo, and Mathias Kempton  
Status: Completed 2010
- Stokke Forest Stair* (see pp. 182–187)  
Stokke, Norway  
Size: 40 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Stokke Kommune and Sti For Øye  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres  
Status: Completed 2012
- Stord Community Hall and Theatre*  
Sagvåg, Norway  
Size: 3000 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Withheld  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Jostein Korsnes  
Status: 1st prize in competition, unrealised
- Summer House Alendal* (see pp. 188–191)  
Vignafjord, Norway  
Size: 100 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Jostein Alendal



Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres, and Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach Status: Planned completion 2012	Size: 1000 m <sup>2</sup> Client: City of Trondheim Architects: Todd Saunders and Arne Sælen Status: Honorable mention in competition	Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres and Zsuzsanna Kiss Status: Planned completion 2013	Client: Eirik Mjelde and Kristi Bergstrøm Mjelde Architects: Todd Saunders with Ryan Jørgensen Status: In progress
<i>Summer House Fusa</i> Fusa, Norway Size: 100 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Åsne Ådland-Dale and Kjetil Dale Architects: Todd Saunders with Mia Horve Status: Planned completion in 2014	<i>Villa 4m</i> Bergen, Norway Size: 185 m <sup>2</sup> Client: 4m AS Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres Status: In progress	<i>Villa G</i> (see pp. 208–213) Bergen, Norway Size: 368 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Withheld Architects: Todd Saunders with Thomas Pfeffer and Ryan Jørgensen Status: Completed 2009	<i>Villa Mohn</i> (see pp. 222–225) Bergen, Norway Size: 280 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Martine and Stein Christian Mohn Architects: Todd Saunders with Ryan Jørgensen and Christopher Woodford Status: Planned completion 2013
<i>Summer House Kalvenes</i> Austevoll, Norway Size: 120 m <sup>2</sup> , 90 m <sup>2</sup> , 85 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Kalvenes Brothers Architects: Todd Saunders with Olivier Bourgeois Status: Planned completion 2012	<i>Villa Aasegg</i> Bergen, Norway Size: 210 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Rune Aasegg Architects: Todd Saunders Status: Planned completion 2013	<i>Villa H</i> (see pp. 214–217) Bergen, Norway Size: 410 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Withheld Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres Status: Planned completion in 2013	<i>Villa Moldbakken</i> (see pp. 226–229) Bergen, Norway Size: 200 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Willie og Line Dawson Architects: Todd Saunders with Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach and Chris Woodford Status: Planned completion 2012
<i>Summer House Sogn og Fjordane</i> (see p. 192–195) Rysedalsvika, Norway Size: 80 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Dr. Svein Halvorsen and Inger Løland Architects: Todd Saunders with Tommie Wilhelmsen Status: Completed 2007	<i>Villa Bertelsen</i> Bergen, Norway Size: 330 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Randi and Jarle Bertelsen Architects: Todd Saunders with Michal Hanko and Ryan Jørgensen Status: Planned completion in 2013	<i>Villa HC</i> (see pp. 218–221) Bergen, Norway Size: 180 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Cecilie and Hans Christian Seim Architects: Todd Saunders with Thomas Pfeffer and Christina Maier Status: Completed 2008	<i>Villa Moldung</i> Bergen, Norway Size: 550 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Jørn and Eli Moldung Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres, Soizic Bernard, and Thomas Tysseland Status: Completed 2012
<i>Summer House Åland</i> (see pp. 196–199) Åland, Finland Size: 45 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Maria Bauer Architects: Todd Saunders and Tommie Wilhelmsen Status: Completed 2003	<i>Villa Britse</i> Stockholm, Sweden Size: 250 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Leif and Malin Britse Architects: Todd Saunders Status: In progress	<i>Villa Hjermann</i> Bergen, Norway Size: 350 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Ivar Hjermann Architects: Todd Saunders with Thomas Pfeffer and Ryan Jørgensen Status: Completed 2010	<i>Villa Morild</i> (see pp. 230–235) Gulen, Norway Size: 230 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Linn Dyveke and Njål Hansen Wilberg Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres and Joseph Kellner Status: Completed 2010
<i>Torngasok Cultural Center</i> (see pp. 200–203) Labrador, Canada Size: 1800 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Nunatsiavut Government in Nain, Labrador Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres, Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach, Rubén Sáez López, Joshua Kievenaar, and Chris Woodford Status: Planned completion 2014	<i>Villa Brussels</i> (see pp. 204–207) Brussels, Belgium Size: 980 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Withheld Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres Status: In progress	<i>Villa Larsen &amp; Sekkingstad</i> Bergen, Norway Size: 260 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Georg Larsen and Anne-Kristin Sekkingstad Architects: Todd Saunders Status: In progress	<i>Villa Murphy</i> British Columbia, Canada Size: 260 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Tara Murphy Architects: Todd Saunders with Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach and Attila Béres Status: Planned completion 2014
<i>Tower Studio</i> (see pp. 64–75) Fogo Island, Canada Size: 48 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Shorefast Foundation and The Fogo Island Arts Corporation Architects: Todd Saunders with Ryan Jørgensen, Attila Béres, Nick Herder, and Thomas Tysseland Status: Completed 2011	<i>Villa Dybvadskog</i> Asker, Norway Size: 305 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Frode Hveding Architects: Todd Saunders with Ryan Jørgensen and Joseph Kellner Status: In progress	<i>Villa Liseth</i> Bergen, Norway Size: 460 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Jørn Ivar and Marita Liseth Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres Matt McClurg, and Zdenek Dohnalek Status: In progress	<i>Villa Myklebust</i> Bergen, Norway Size: 280 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Linda and Lars Kristian Wulff Myklebust Architects: Todd Saunders with Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach Status: In progress
<i>Trondheim Town Square</i> Trondheim, Norway	<i>Villa Flatholm/Fjell</i> Bergen, Norway Size: 240 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Tom-Asle Flatholm and Heidi Fjell Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila Béres Status: In progress	<i>Villa Meland</i> Ørsta, Norway Size: 360 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Tor Egil Meland Architects: Todd Saunders with Ken Beheim-Schwarzbach Status: In progress	<i>Villa Nydal</i> Bergen, Norway Size: 185 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Nydal Bygg
	<i>Villa Foldnes</i> Bergen, Norway Size: 260 m <sup>2</sup> Client: Anne Fjell and Arne Otto Foldnes	<i>Villa Mjelde</i> Bergen, Norway Size: 280 m <sup>2</sup>	

Architects: Todd Saunders  
and Thomas Tysseland  
Status: Completed 2010

*Villa Rasmussen*  
Bergen, Norway  
Size: 240 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Henning and Nina Rasmussen  
Architects: Todd Saunders  
Status: Completed 2007

*Villa Riise*  
Haugesund, Norway  
Size: 557 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Stein-Inge Riise and Elisabeth  
F. Knutsen  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Aino  
Inkeri Korhonen and Anja Egebakken  
Status: In progress

*Villa Selje*  
Selje, Norway  
Size: 313 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Atle Riksfjord  
Architects: Todd Saunders with  
Aino Inkeri Korhonen  
Status: In progress

*Villa Soltun*  
Bergen, Norway  
Size: 220 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Hanne Flæsland and Cam Uppal  
Architects: Todd Saunders  
Status: Completed 2007

*Villa Storingavika* (see pp. 236–243)  
Bergen, Norway  
Size: 290 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Jan and Eli Sem-Olsen  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Joakim  
Skajaa and Geneviève Charbonneau  
Status: Completed 2007

*Villa Tyssøy* (see pp. 244–247)  
Bergen, Norway  
Size: 260 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Gerd Johanne Larsen and  
Hogne Inge Tyssøy  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Ken  
Beheim-Schwarzbach, Matt McClurg,  
and Rubén Sáez López  
Status: In progress

*Villa Vogt*  
Bergen, Norway  
Size: 250 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Ivar Chelsom Vogt and  
Benedicte Mjelde Vogt  
Architects: Todd Saunders  
with Ryan Jørgensen  
Status: In progress

*Villa Vågen* (see pp. 248–250)  
Bergen, Norway

Size: 180 m<sup>2</sup>  
Client: Nils and Monica Vågen  
Architects: Todd Saunders with Attila  
Béres and Zdenek Dohnalek  
Status: Planned completion 2014

*XS apartments*  
Stavanger, Norway  
Size: 52 units  
Client: Anker Invest  
Architects: Todd Saunders and  
Div.A Architects, Oslo  
Status: 1st prize in competition

## Biography

Todd Saunders, b. 1969 (Canada)	Straw and Clay Building Workshop – in collaboration with Gaia Architects, 1996–2000	Norwegian Defence Department, 3rd prize, 2002 Kvernhus Junior High School, Fredrikstad (with Gaia Group), 2nd prize, 2000 Gullhella Ecological Housing Area, Asker (with Gaia Group), 2nd prize, 2000 Ecological Garden School, Aurland, 2nd prize, 1998	National Art & Design School, Bergen, 2001 European Design for Accessibility, Oslo, 1999 Norwegian Architects for Sustainability, 1998 Norwegian Agricultural School, Ås, 1998 University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, 1998 Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada, 1998 Sogn og jord Garden School, 1996 Global Eco-Village Conference, Scotland, 1995 Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, 1994
Education	Awards, Scholarships, Honorable Mentions	Juries	
Master's Degree in Architecture, McGill University, Montreal, 1995. Bachelor of Design, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1992 Fall Semester, Exchange Student, Landscape Architecture, Rhode Island School of Design, 1991	BauNetz – “100 Best architects in the world; no. 52,” 2012 “5 Greatest Architects Under 50” – Huffington Post, 2011 Nominated for the Bergen Kommune Architecture Prize 2011; 2011 Arnstein Arneberg Award for Outstanding Architecture 2011; 2011 HISE Award 2011 – Sustainable Excellence, 2011 AZ AWARDS 2011 – Best Commercial Architecture, 2011 Nominated for ArchDaily 2010 Building of the Year – Cultural category, 2011 BOBEDRE – “10 Best Architects in Norway,” 2009 New Norwegian Blood – “Top 10 Architects under 40,” 2009 Nominated for the Wallpaper* Magazine “Best Public Project” Prize, 2007 Norwegian National Construction Prize, 2006 Nominated for the Mies van der Rohe Prize. EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture, 2006 Honorable Mention at the AR Emerging Architects Awards in London, 2006 “1 of the Next 7 Architectural Wonders of the World,” Condé Nast Traveler, 2006 Young Norwegian Architects – “20 under 40,” 2004 Norwegian National Artists Scholarship – 3 years, 2000 Kvam Herad Environmental Prize for Ålvik Schoolyard, 2000 Canadian-Scandinavian Travel Scholarship, 1995 American Institute of Architects Research and Special Studies Scholarship, 1995	Jury leader, Norwegian national competition for architecture students, 2011 Enroute Design Hotel Awards 2011, 2011 Design Competition for the 75th anniversary of the Stavanger Architecture Association, 2011 Norwegian Annual Concrete Prize, 2008–2011 Form Magazine Scandinavian Architecture Prize, 2008 Living Design, Finland, 2005	
Professional Qualifications	Registered Architect – The Norwegian Association of Architects (Member No. 7878), 2005	Lectures	
Work Experience	Architecture Competitions	Green Architecture, Warsaw, Poland, 2012 Lund University, School of Architecture, Sweden, 2012 NIL Landsmøte, Bergen, Norway, 2012 Academy of Fine Arts, Munich, Germany, 2012 Banff Centre for the Arts, Banff, Canada, 2012 Bergen Architecture School, Bergen, Norway, 2011 University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, 2011 Bergen Architect Association, Bergen, Norway, 2010 Bergen Association of Ecological Villages, 2006 Canadian Architect, “Forces to Be Reckoned With,” Toronto, Canada, 2005 Oulu School of Architecture, Finland, 2005 Norwegian Association of Architects, 2005 Norwegian Architects for Sustainability, 2005 Norwegian Ministry of Travel, 2005 Norwegian Ministry of Transport, 2005 University of North London, England, 2004 Bergen Architects Association, 2003 Stavanger Architects Association, 2002 Bergen Architecture School, Bergen, 2002	
Teaching Positions	Pilegrimssenteret i Røldal, 2012 Kjerreidhaugen Architect Competition, 2011 Master Plan for the City of Stjørdal, 2005 Stord Community Hall and Theatre, 1st prize, 2004 Micro-Flats, Stavanger, 1st prize, 2004 Lookout Point, Aurland, Statens Vegvesen, 1st prize, 2002 Modern Housing, Rena Camp, The		
Bergen Architecture School, Bergen, Norway, 1995–2011 University of Quebec, Montreal, Workshop – Contemporary European Architecture, 2006 Oulu School of Architecture, 2005			

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2012	Anna Baumann, "Verstecken Spielen," <i>Elle Decoration Germany</i> , March/April 2012, p. 112	Joseph Grima, "Architectural Archipelago," <i>Domus</i> , September 2011, pp. 42–51	Denise Maguire, "Long Studio, Fogo Island," <i>Plan Magazine</i> , June 2011, pp. 13–14
Maren Mosaker, "Utsiktspunkter," <i>Aftenposten K</i> , July/August 2012, pp. 68–77	Veronica Arias, "Casa Aaland," <i>BG Magazine</i> , March 2012, pp. 96–97	Lisa Moore, "Rock Haven," <i>Canadian Art</i> , Fall 2011, pp. 124–129	Chen Yuanzheng, "Long Studio, Fogo Island," <i>Casa International</i> , June 2011, pp. 128–133
Laurence Pivot, "Canada Insolite," <i>L'express</i> , July/August 2012, p. 138	Yoojin Jeong, "Saunders Architecture," <i>DETAILS</i> , March 2012, pp. 124–151	Catharine Fleury, "Fogo Island Arts Corporation Studios," <i>Endless Vacation</i> , Fall 2011, p. 29	Jan Boelen, "Island Life," <i>Vogue Living</i> , May/June 2011, pp. 133–134
Sarah Baldwin, "Stylish Seclusion," <i>Grand Designs</i> , July 2012, p. 23	Ingerid Helsing Almaas, "Gjensidig Tillit," <i>Arkitektur N</i> , March 2012, pp. 35–43	Jean-François Légaré and Susan Nerberg, "Enroute Hotel Design Awards," <i>Enroute</i> , September 2011, p. 66	Linda Dunlop, "Flashpoints," <i>Acura Style</i> , Summer 2011, pp. 36–37
Yang mi KIM, "Fogo Island," <i>Concept</i> , July 2012, pp. 44–77	Chen Yuanzheng, "Squish Studio, Tower Studio, Bridge Studio," <i>Casa International</i> , March 2012, pp. 29–39	"Solberg Tower and Rest Area," <i>Landscape Design</i> , September 2011, pp. 70–77	Hedvig Andersson and Dina Junntila, "Rum väljer: arkitektur," <i>RUM</i> , May 2011, p. 30
Marianne Lie Berg, "Todd Saunders: Forest Stair," <i>Domus</i> , June 2012	"Form Meets Perfection," <i>Ingenuity</i> , February 2012, pp. 52–74	Cecilie Remøy, "Solberg rasteplass – Et pionérprosjekt for formidling av kulturminner og landskap," <i>Archimag</i> , September 2011	Ivan Ferjančić, "Long Studio" <i>HIŠE</i> , May 2011, pp. 76–79
Christiane Rumetsch, "Todd Saunders, Saunders Architecture," <i>AIT</i> , June 2012, p. 16	Rowena Liu, "Tower Studio, Fogo Island," <i>IW Magazine</i> , February/March 2012, pp. 41–46	Caterina Pagliara, Progetto del mese, <i>Giornale dell'Architettura</i> , September 2011, pp. 4–5	Pei-ru Keh, "Treasure Island," <i>Wallpaper*</i> , May 2011, p. 107
Trevor Boddy, "Peripheral Vision," <i>Canadian Architect</i> , June 2012, pp. 18–24	Tatjana Licay, "Skulptur in Weiss," <i>H.O.M.E.</i> , February 2012, p. 123	Sarah Baldwin, "Secluded Studio," <i>Grand Designs</i> , September 2011, p. 19	Nina Huber, "Künstlerstudios auf Fogo Island," <i>Wohnrevue</i> , April 2011, p. 14
Peter Reischer, "Einsam auf der Insel," <i>Architektur Fachmagazin</i> , May/June 2012, pp. 30–37	Hans Petter Smeby, "Arkitekt Todd Saunders," <i>Nytt Rom – New Scandinavian Rooms</i> , January 2012	Hannah Berry, "Through a box darkly," <i>Square Mile</i> , August 2011, pp. 108–109	Baran Danis, "Villa G," <i>Konsept Projeler</i> , April 2011, p. 203
Christiane Rumetsch, "Artists' Studios," <i>AIT</i> , May 2012, p. 18	Emily Urquhart, "Bis ans ender Welt," <i>Häuser</i> , February/March 2012, pp. 120–129	Юлия Портарова, "убежище за млади архитекти," <i>Bravacasa</i> , July/August 2011, pp. 46–48	Susan Nerberg, "Rock Solid," <i>enRoute</i> , April 2011, pp. 43–46
Marie Sakardi, "Dans la splendeur des fjords," <i>Interiors Creation</i> , May 2012, pp. 108–115	Christopher Turner, "Man of the moment," <i>Icon</i> , January 2012, p. 79	Katerina Oshemkova, <i>Salon Magazine</i> , July/August 2011, pp. 156–163	Daniela Bonaretti, "Meditational Architecture," <i>DHD</i> 29, March 2011, pp. 148–153
Rowena Liu, "Bridge Studio, Fogo Island," <i>IW Magazine</i> , May 2012, pp. 70–75	Ingerid Helsing Almaas, "Seks små hus på en øy," <i>Arkitektur N</i> , January 2012, p. 8	Mingyan Zhou, "Aurland Lookout Point, Norway," <i>LA China</i> , July 2011, pp. 122–126	Sofia Pires, "Arquitetura ao serviço dainspiração," <i>ARQ&amp;DESIGN</i> , March/April 2011, pp. 19–28
Rowena Liu, "Squish Studio, Fogo Island," <i>IW Magazine</i> , May 2012, pp. 76–81	2011	Mingyan Zhou, "Red Project, University of Oulu, Finland," <i>LA China</i> , July 2011, pp. 160–163	Yvan Bossière, "Vigies d'avant-garde/ Avant-gard watchtowers," <i>L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui</i> , March/April 2011, pp. 66–69
Imke Janoschek, "Kulturinjektion," <i>Residence</i> , May 2012, p. 86	Aya McMillan, "Trad meets rad," <i>Fusion Life</i> , Winter 2011, p. 6	Mingyan Zhou, "Solberg Tower and Rest Area, Norway," <i>LA China</i> , July 2011, pp. 94–102	Rowena Liu, "Solberg Tower and Park, Sarpsborg, Norway," <i>IW Magazine</i> , March/April 2011, pp. 92–97
Ellie Stathaki, "Rocky recovery," <i>Wallpaper*</i> , May 2012, pp. 72–74	Janus Lee, "Villa G, Norway," <i>Interior Designer</i> , December 2011, pp. 8–15	Yoojin Jeong, "The Long Studio," <i>Details</i> , July 2011, pp. 100–107	Jelena Kalicanin, "Bela Kuca," <i>KUCA STIL</i> , March 2011, pp. 2–10
John Oseid, "Where are you?," <i>Condé Nast Traveller</i> , April 2012, pp. 104–105	Ingerid Helsing Almaas, "År norsk arkitektur værkligen norsk?," <i>Arkitektur</i> , December 2011, p. 56	"Studio on the Rocks," <i>Azure</i> , July/August 2011, pp. 50–51	Александр Приданн ико ва, "Место, где свет," <i>LeTaburet</i> , March 2011, pp. 96–101
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Ingerid Helsing Almaas, "Norway," <i>Architecture Today</i> , April 2012, p. 21	Einar Malmquist, "Utsikt til Oldtiden," <i>Arkitektur N</i> , Oktober 2011, pp. 43–49		
Mårten Niléhn, "7 Moderna Underverk," <i>Residence</i> , April 2012, p. 133			

Timothy Schuler, "In remote residence," <i>gb&amp;d</i> , February 2011, p. 69	"5 creative road t(r)ips," <i>Columbus</i> , September 2010, p. 84	Andréa Magalhães, "Na mochila de Todd Saunders," <i>Escola</i> , March 2009, pp. 14–20	Егор Петров, "Кислородный подход," <i>интерьер</i> , February 2008, p. 14
Miguel Ferreira Da Silva, "Inspiração no fim-do-mundo," <i>Arquitetura &amp; Construção</i> , February 2011, pp. 106–111	Joseph Grima, "Un'Arcipelago di piccole Architetture Attorno a Un'Isola Dell Atlantico," <i>domus</i> , July/August 2010, pp. 42–49	"Outdoor living," <i>Deco</i> , August 2009, pp. 156–163	Gabriel Arthur, "Herrn Todds," <i>Norr: das Skandinavien-magazin</i> , February 2008, pp. 20–22
Song Baolin, "Speciall-constructed on the Beach," <i>DI Magazine</i> , February 2011, pp. 102–109	Frederik de Watcher, "Wallpaper* Handmade... in Italy," <i>Wallpaper*</i> , August 2010, p. 174	"View from the top," <i>BHMA Deco</i> , September 2009, pp. 40–41	David McGimpsey, "The Aurland Lookout," <i>enRoute</i> , January 2008, p. 67
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