





Ih

STORYTELLING

TOWN, POND, BRAMBLE. WOOD, STONE, STEEL. EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE.

Meaning is everywhere we look, if we are tuned in. When we are, our eyes are opened to forces that have influenced our past and present, as well as the deliberate intentions that shape our future.

Before this place could become a home, it had to undergo a series of transformations. The first of these occurred in the mid-1700s when the earth was turned and a barn was raised on a parcel of land nestled in Hebron, Connecticut. The structure most likely housed the stables and tack room of a horse breeder who ostensibly surveyed and selected this site for its remote attributes. Here, a pioneering spirit could prevail and one could raise a herd for market under one's own mark instead of the "diamond" brand imposed by the already

vestigial Colonial Assembly. Here, even in a settled and parceled Connecticut, the frontiersman could find purpose and independence.

Though, a century later, the function of the barn would inevitably change with the advent of industry, its determined, efficient spirit would endure. An investor would claim the plot and construct a concrete structure adjacent to the barn. It would more than adequately support the punishing weight of smelting and plating equipment. This business would see substantial successes until a change in values would come about with The Great War. The business would never fully rebound, and would ultimately collapse in the foreshadow of The Great Depression.





MAKING

THE WONDER OF TIME IS IN THE RECLAIMING OF THINGS. EVEN IN FALLOW PERIODS, WITH PATIENCE, YOU'LL FIND RENEWAL EVERYWHERE.

Another century passed and nature had taken over the property. A wave of vegetation had grown into the barn and through the factory building. In a blink—in one lifetime—an ample history was broken down into its core components: artifacts, hints of memories, the residue of lives past. This is how we came to know and care for this place.

In 2011 we purchased the land and what remained of its structure. Amidst all that came before us—the barn, the factory, the ensuing ruins—we vowed to build a home that preserved and extended both the history known and unknown. Likewise, we committed to capturing not only the patina, but also the stories of the new inhabitants who would come to call this place home.





HISTORY

PHASE	
01	Horse Farm
PHASE	
02	Foundry
PHASE	
03	Home CURRENT

THE LAND GROWS OPPORTUNITY

HEBRON HOUSE







FIG
03

SPACES DESIGNED
FOR FLUID MOVEMENT
+ QUIET MOMENTS



FIG
04

LIFE



HARMONY

IN THE BALANCE OF THE CONTRASTS

With *Hebron House*, we worked to harness the energy trapped between disparate things—between nature and structure, found and made, given and taken. The central energy of the house moves through these juxtapositions. It comes alive where crisp leather chairs brush up against a worn, time-stained wooden table; where steel girders and rough-hewn beams face each other like neighboring sentries. In this house, you're encouraged to reject the fight between oppositional forces in favor of honoring the fluid continuity between all things.





FIG
06

FIG
07

HOMAGE

THE ESSENCE OF HISTORY MADE RELEVANT

Found artifacts are more than decorative elements used to evoke the past. Rather, they are functional pieces keeping the past alive.

FIG
08





FIG
09



FIG
10





FIG
13

VISION

FIG
14

THIS SPACE IS A CONTAINER AND A REFLECTION
OF ALL THAT WE ARE AND HOPE TO BE.

The flow of the house facilitates the need to gather while respecting the need for privacy. What makes us human finds expression throughout this house and accounts for its comfort and its serendipity.

Echoing the frontiersman's need for security in open spaces, the master bedroom is situated with a clear sight-line to the first floor of the house. Connection and security are synonymous. At the same time, the bed faces the soaking tub, creating intimate moments. Through the layering of meaning, this space becomes a home.



FIG
15

JUXTAPOSITION

AT THE INTERSECTION OF FOUND AND ENGINEERED
YOU'LL FIND THE SOUL OF THIS HOUSE.





FIG
16

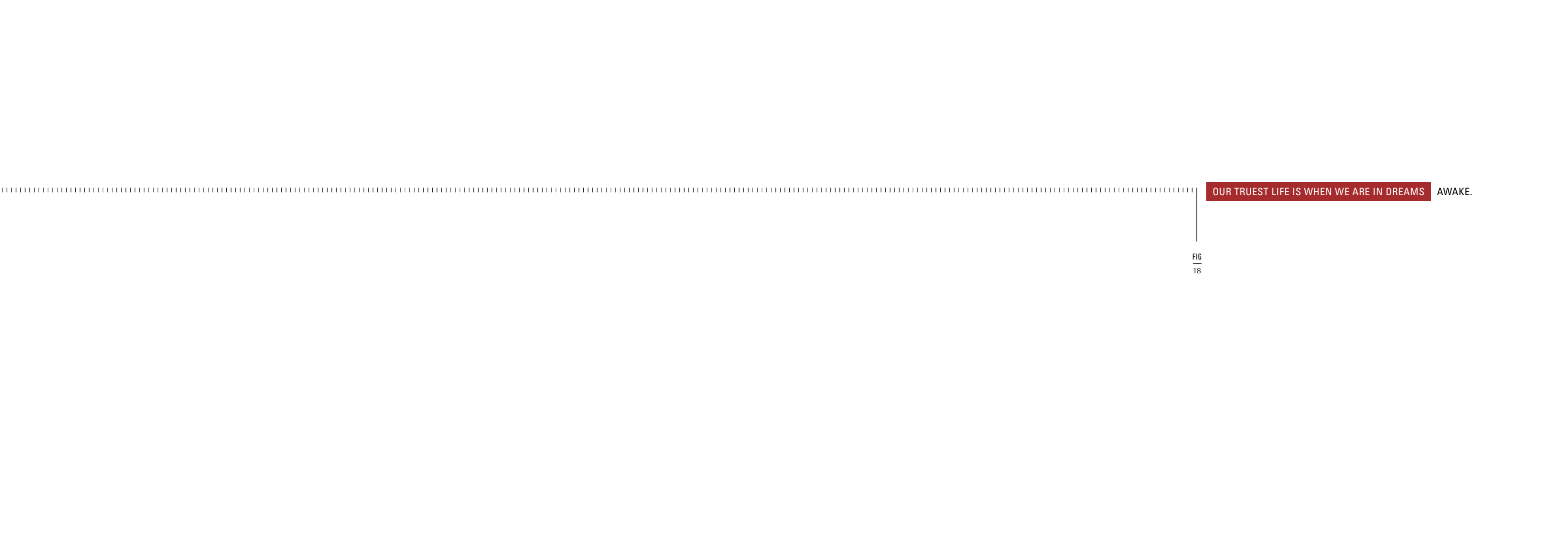
INTENTIONAL

WHERE ARTIFACTS BECOME ARTISANAL

Throughout the house, found elements are turned into functional objets d'art. They make us aware of the known and open pathways for the new.



FIG
17



OUR TRUEST LIFE IS WHEN WE ARE IN DREAMS AWAKE.

FIG
—
18



REVEAL

BELIEF IS THE FOUNDATION.

TRUTH

I spent a winter alone in the stillness of the Hebron woods bending rebar in preparation for the next concrete pour. It was the very peacefulness I had imagined when, to inspire my design process, I manufactured the narrative of this land. I envisioned a horse barn and a smelting plant and how they might have evolved and dissolved one into the other. I set out to build a container for all of it—the quiet, the back story, the Yankee efficiency, the dappled light.

STRUCTURE

To me, CAD lacks emotional connection—there was no place for it in the design of this house. Instead, I drafted by hand. With a pencil as an extension of my mind, the design became warmer, more organic, more human. I maintained this personal connection throughout the process of developing *Hebron House*, building a large portion of the house myself. I touched nearly every part of it and believe this accounts for the sense of intimacy embedded within.



FIG
21

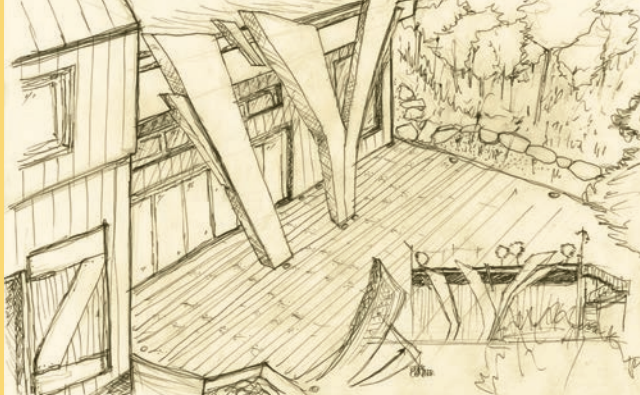


FIG
20



FIG
22



FIG
23

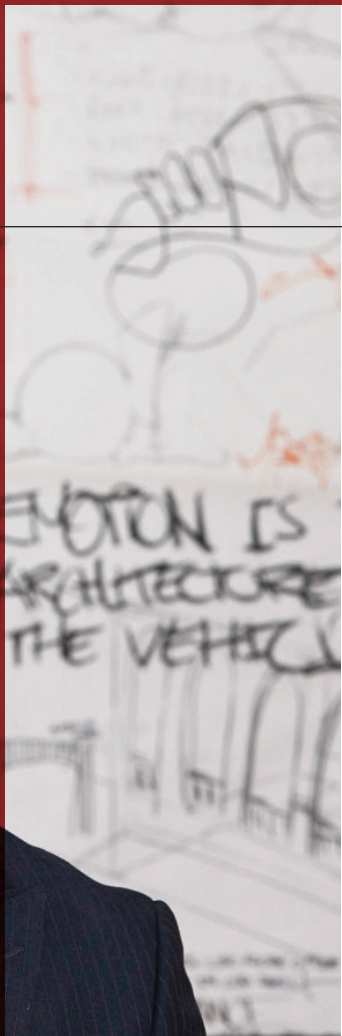
HOME

Hebron House was originally designed for my sister, whose divergent interests set the context for how the spaces would be activated. She is an equestrian who values quiet spaces for reflection. She is also a gatherer invested in friends, and family, and hearth. These contrasts called for a flexible, fluid design. I interpreted this as an invitation for the occupants to make the house their own, to enliven it with their experiences, to add to the texture, and ultimately, to leave their mark.

WE CREATE STORIES TO REVEAL GREATER TRUTHS
AND WE BUILD HOUSES TO PRESERVE THEM.



FIG
24



BENJAMIN OLIVER

THE CANVAS AND THE BRUSH

The *Hebron House* project chronicled in this book represents an important milestone in Benjamin Oliver's unorthodox journey from graffiti artist to architectural designer.

Early in his career, Benjamin explored graffiti as a means of creating large, emotive artwork. Concurrently, he and his father established, built and ran McCarthy Concrete. As the practice grew into one of the most respected construction companies in New England, Benjamin immersed himself in this new craft, creating expressions on a larger, more permanent scale than he had previously imagined. His passions for art, construction and sustainability ultimately merged in his study and practice of architectural design.

Benjamin Oliver's designs are approached with the belief that everything we do has an overarching social and environmental impact. Each project is developed through the parallel lenses of emotion, function, sustainability, and material quality. Care in the detail facilitates intimacy between the spaces and the occupants, drawing them in to a visceral interlacing of form and function as conceived by the designer.

For Benjamin Oliver, concrete is both a canvas and a brush to be used in expressing a point of view about fine architecture. "As an artist, my passion is to craft an experience that elicits specific emotions," he says. And in *Hebron House*, his first completed project, that passion is resonant.



NOTES

FIG
01

With *Hebron House*, the desire to reduce energy and environmental impact took many forms. Only three trees were removed to allow for the footprint. Materials were locally sourced. The design minimizes the personal and environmental impact of standard home maintenance. The focus is on longevity, sustainability and flexibility.

FIG
02

Encouraging interactions is key to the livability of this remote location. The public spaces—living room, dining room, kitchen, and pantry—are all aggregated, creating opportunities for deep exchanges.

FIG
03

Hebron House has few instances of decorative details. Rather, functional artifacts are used to infuse the space with narrative. Here, visual cues from a local silver smelting facility reference the imagined history of the site.

FIG
04

The flooring and all of the wooden beams were harvested from a circa 1926 barn just down the road from the *Hebron House*.

FIG
05

Along with the material used in the house, the vistas have also been thoughtfully curated. Continuous lines unify the house from the front porch, through the communal spaces, and extend the experience of the structure to the outdoors.

FIG
06

In keeping with a philosophy of connected, multi-use public spaces, structural beams are employed to organize the discrete areas without isolating one from the other.

FIG
07

Homage: This word is rooted in respect, honor and ceremonial appreciation. The process of developing *Hebron House* was deeply influenced by this consideration.

FIG
08

This tie ring evokes the barn period of the house narrative. Source: *The Junk Shop of Canton*, Canton, Connecticut.

FIG
09

Every surface, cabinet, and drawer in the kitchen was selected for its functional contribution. This is most evident when the room is teeming with people and activity. The reclaimed 1920s brick back-splash is white-washed with an anti-bacterial coating.

FIG
10

A pulley at the passageway to the kitchen is an homage to the utility of the room. Or perhaps, the austere functionality of the room is an homage to the pulley. Paradoxes such as these are found throughout the house and invigorate the spaces.

FIG
11

In the guest bath, plywood was used to form a mold for pouring a concrete display wall. The texture and residual wood pieces in the wall contribute to the transformational quality of the house.

FIG
12

Imperfections are deliberately amplified behind the twin mirrors in the master bath. As occupants prepare for the day, the wall stands as a reminder that character is beauty and loses itself luster when hidden.

FIG
13

Most of the lighting at *Hebron House* comes from hidden LED sources. They create an ambient glow that contrasts with the streaming natural light that punctuates the spaces. Doors are made from locally sourced wood; hardware from *Better Barns Hardware*, Collinsville, Connecticut.

FIG
14

Low, dividing brick walls are integrated with steel beams to offset the 15’ peak of the master bedroom. The enclosure evokes the vestige of an abandoned barn and houses a wardrobe closet in a manner reminiscent of a tack room.

FIG
15

At *Hebron House*, beauty is accentuated where craftsmanship and meaning come together. By reducing every surface to its essence, underlying structures are exposed—the deliberate nature of the building process and also the integrity of the house.

FIG
16

Manufacturing one-off pieces was the norm for *Hebron House*, underscoring the improvisational spirit found in the house narrative. This chandelier was inspired by the vision of dangling chords from a hay trolley at the end of a working day.

FIG
17

In the imagined origin story of the house, an expanded foundry grows out of the shell of a barn. This hallway eludes to that point of intersection—the juxtaposition graduated by more contemporary design devices.

FIG
18

A quote from Henry David Thoreau, who also notably declared, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately.” The spirit of Thoreau is infused throughout this space.

FIG
19

To avoid disturbing the woods, construction took careful planning and phasing of trades. The higher the structure reached, the more the team felt a part of the woodland. The curious wildlife would come by to inspect the progress and was a living reminder of the respect for nature intrinsic to this project.

FIG
20

This is an early sketch of the sculptural aspect of the facade. Referencing the trees on the site, the form plays with the light and shadows spilling from the surrounding branches and leaves.

FIG
21

Innovative techniques were developed for constructing *Hebron House*. For example, the standard use of ties were circumvented to avoid dating the space with the evidence of modern building processes.

FIG
22

Reaching 32' into the air, this is the point of origin for the house. All of the considerations for the house—meaning, orientation, layout, scale—would emanate from this massive exoskeleton.

FIG
23

With so much vertical concrete, the house had to be carefully considered. Here, planes rise up and begin to form vessels that will later be filled with experiences.

FIG
24

How people come together and find intimacy—the forum and the refuge—dictate the flow of this house. It transcends architecture to define “home”.

Notes closed

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

From the initial concept and sketches, through the rigors of building, and culminating with the honing of the smallest details, *Hebron House* was committed to true “green” design. We let environmental values impact our best practices for both the structure and its surrounding land. The following is a list of key elements:

- House site selected for minimal impact
- ICF wall construction, and added 1 1/2” reclaimed polyiso to interior – R30
- 8 1/2” reclaimed polyiso on roofs – R50
- Light-colored standing metal roof
- Triple-glazed windows with insulated fiberglass frames
- The majority of windows are south facing
- Mini split-air source heat pump for heating and cooling
- 6.2kw electric solar PV system on roof
- LED lighting throughout the home
- Water reducing fixtures throughout
- Locally sourced or FSC certified lumber and lumber components.
- Low or zero VOC finishes on all surfaces.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Benjamin Oliver'.

© 2014 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

BENJAMIN OLIVER : ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

PHOTOGRAPHY : DAN DEALY + LANNY NAGLER

BOOK DESIGN + TEXT : CO:LAB, HARTFORD, CT