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# BRIDGE FOR DESIGN



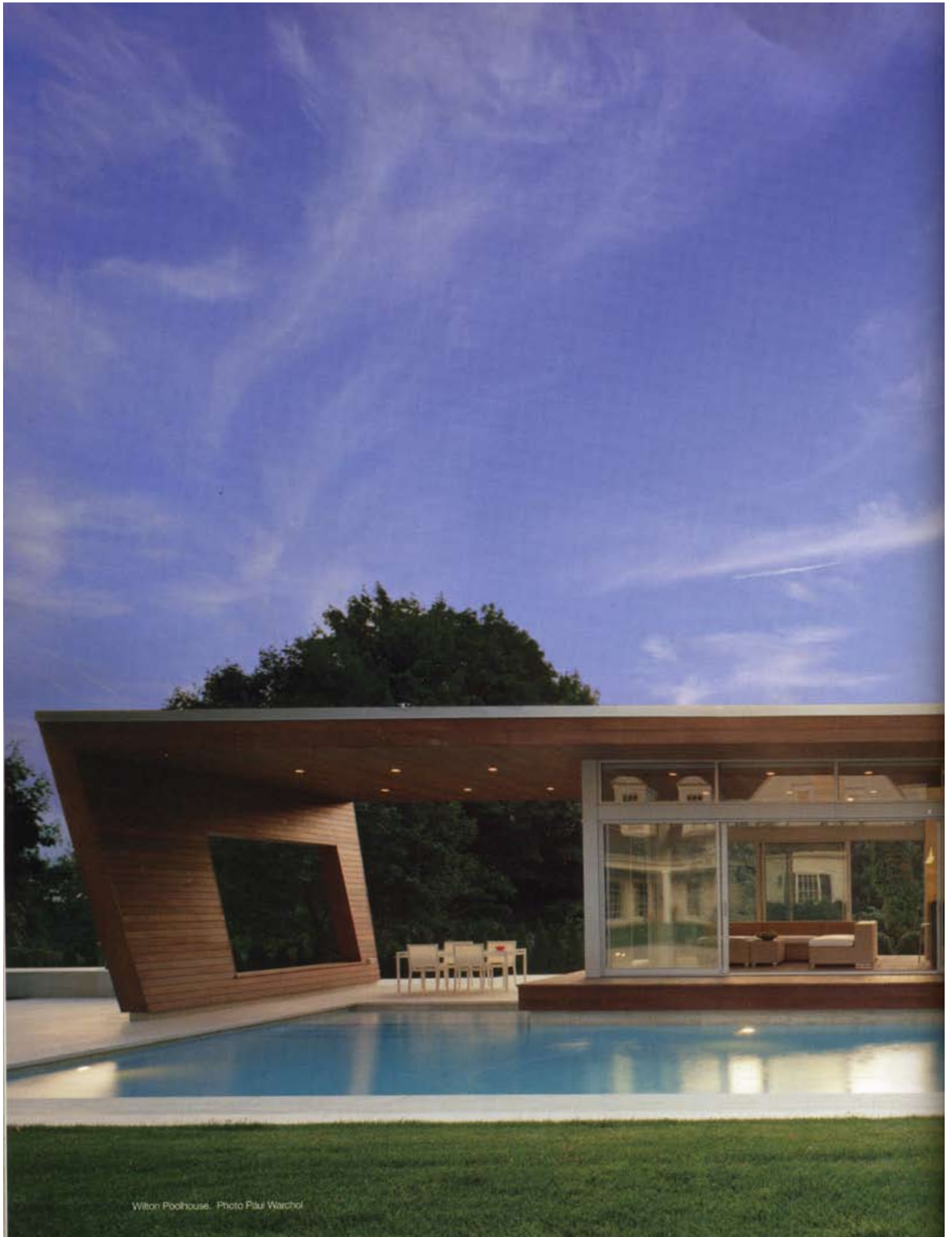
Pages

64-74

Established in 1986 by Iranian born, Cornell educated sisters **Gisue Hariri** and **Mojgan Hariri**, New York based Hariri & Hariri is one of the most progressive American firms of their generation. For nearly 25 years, they have imbued conceptual, residential, commercial and institutional projects with their own unique brand of 'sensual Modernism'. In 2010 the firm was included in the prestigious Architectural Digest 'AD100', and selected for inclusion in the Guggenheim's 'Contemplating the Void' exhibition, a celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Frank Lloyd Wright's landmark museum. They have been honoured with numerous awards including the American Academy of Arts and Letters Academy Award for Architecture and were inducted into Interior Design Magazine's 'Hall of Fame' in 2006. The firm's designs have also been featured in several exhibitions and publications worldwide including the 'Unprivate House' exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York and The US National Building Museum.  
[www.haririandhariri.com](http://www.haririandhariri.com)



THE INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE FOR INTERIOR DESIGN



Wilton Poolhouse. Photo Piotr Warchol





Wilton Poolhouse Photo: Paul Varhol

# HARIRI & HARIRI

**M**ANY ARCHITECTS CITE THE GRANDFATHERS of Modernist architecture, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier, as inspiration for houses built in a harmonious juxtaposition to nature. New York based architecture consultancy Hariri & Hariri have instinctively embodied the muse of those architectural cornerstones of the 20th century and taken it into the next generation of American Modernist architecture.

Wilton Poolhouse in Connecticut is a minimal structure allowing maximum access to the tranquility of three acres of countryside. Designed in the shape of a line drawing of a ship afloat on the water, a timber frame in warm ipe Brazilian walnut wraps lightly over the glass living shell, giving it the outline of an ark. It's as if the building is sailing through the changing seasons of New England. Transparent glass walls slide open to the environment, and cut-out windows in the angled timber hull, aft and stern, create a lengthwise through-draught of uninterrupted views of the scenery along an external corridor of decking.

"We look at space as a fluid, open material ready to be sculpted, or articulated. Traditionally space was looked upon as a rigid, formal, defined element," says Mojgan Hariri.

Hariri & Hariri is a partnership of Gisue Hariri and her sister Mojgan Hariri. Born in Iran they both came to the US to study architecture in the mid-1970s. "I grew up in an environment where the Empress, Farah, had already been studying architecture at the Sorbonne in Paris," Gisue Hariri explains.

"At the age of 12, I announced to my family that I was going to be an architect. While I was determined to pursue this path, I had no realisation that one day it would be a way of life, a way of seeing the world. My father's profession required that we live in the desert near the oil fields. Isolation encouraged my imagination to run wild and develop ideas that a more conventional childhood would have found odd, and we often had to invent our own world, toys and games."

There were no female lecturers or professors on the faculty when the Hariri sisters arrived at Cornell University in the 1970s. Hariri & Hariri's architecture has a highly structural, masculine strength that sets their work at the forefront of contemporary architecture. "Most of the professors did not want to see any curvilinear elements, human figures, landscaping, or trees in any of our drawings," says Gisue Hariri. "This attitude was a mystery to me as two Modernist architects we studied, who became a well of inspiration, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier, both had human figures and natural elements in their drawings as their whole philosophy was based on human scale and connection to nature."

Pound Ridge House, a wilderness bunker standing in an elevated position in five acres of woodland, articulates its strength in relationship to the rock outcropping and tall trees. Inspired by Noguchi's stone sculptures, the structure is linear, with a warehouse-style rectangular steel internal staircase set against the outer wall. The steel frame is sub-divided into boxes, while interior walls of translucent opaque fibre-glass windows, small oblongs like a paper Japanese screen, allow light to diffuse softly into the living space, and emit light softly into the night, like Noguchi's translucent Akari lamps that inspired it.



Riverbend House. Photo Jeff Goldberg



Pound Ridge House. Photo Harry Zernike





Sternbrauerei Salzburg, © Hariri and Hariri - Architecture



Riverbend House. Photo Jeff Goldberg

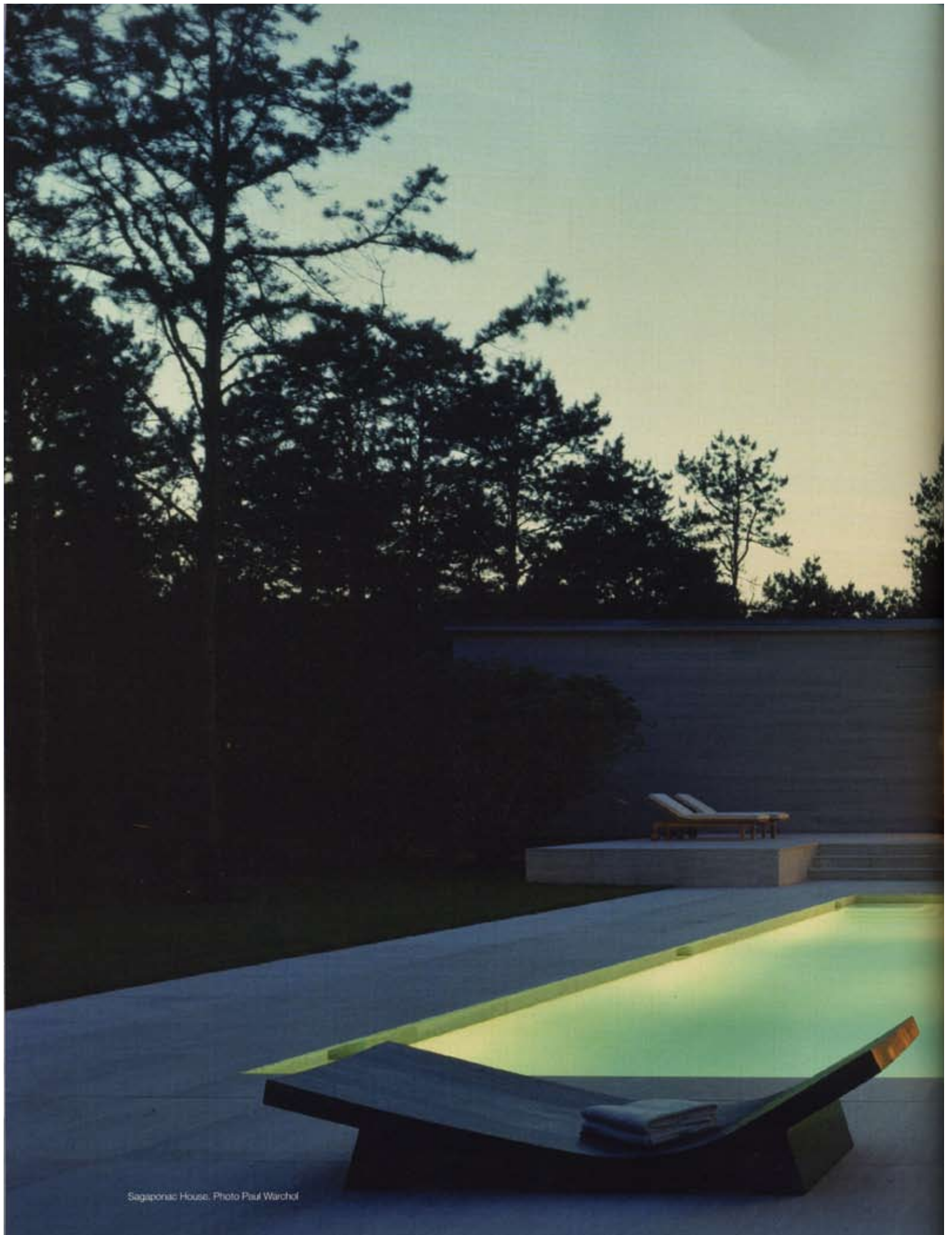
Barry's Bay Cottage, a waterside retreat by the lakes in Canada, is a prow-pointed timber structure designed as a schooner, its own decking creating a link like a jetty down to the creek. Riverbend House in Great Falls, Virginia, built on land sloping down to a winding river, has the imposing immensity of an ocean liner. A curved wall along its length contains the vast open plan living space within, and an uptiled overhead sail of masonry at the prow to counterbalance the heavier structure.

While Hariri & Hariri draw upon nautical influences in their designs, these are resolutely realised on dry land, and they apply their architectural scope to remote retreats, city lofts, cultural centres and high density urban planning, with equal aplomb.

One of their latest projects nearing completion is a mixed-use development of contemporary apartments, art gallery and spa in Salzburg Austria, standing like hewn boulders of ice beside its mountain. Characteristically, the towering sculptural architectural statement of their structure compresses the tension of chiselled sharp angles of surrounding mountainous rock face or urban high-rise landscape.

"Sternbrauerei Salzburg project is one of our most significant projects, not only in terms of size and scope, but more in terms of a master plan that relates to the city and its natural elements, the mountains and the Salzach River," says Mojgan.

"The architecture of the buildings simulates the rock formations and each is formed as if it is chiselled from the mountain. It is a dialogue between the mountain and the architecture, and it will be the most contemporary work of architecture in Salzburg,



Sagaponic House. Photo Paul Warchol







Park Avenue Loft, Photo Paul Warchol

"We have also taken the geological, rock-like formations and crystalline forms and have developed lighting, products and a new collection of jewellery for Swarovski and our upcoming bath product for Italian manufacturer Rapsel."

Gisue and Mojgan Hariri's creativity is undoubtedly enriched by the depth of their cultural experience; the poetry of Persia expressed in the sculptural formations of desert rather than in extraneous detail in furnishings. "The desert tends to strip everything down to the essential without diminishing its extraordinary presence and beauty," says Gisue. "One finds sensual lines and magnificent vistas that embolden the senses and a void that is constantly being tested and carved by the fierce wind. Where would my architecture have been without the desert?"

"Sensuous architecture has always interested us," she continues. The timber outline of the Poolhouse ark is echoed in the New York flagship coffee shop of the Colombian coffee bean growers association, where a timber outline of a coffee bean delineates the façade and bar. Inside the coffee shop, undulating sculpted internal walls ripple like waves, or shifting sands after a wind storm.

A curviform wraparound ceiling/wall formation of an interior in Hariri & Hariri's Park Avenue Loft also plays with the non-linear internal structure outlining the living space. But these are rare exceptions to their towering angular structural statements and cubicle block formations.



Park Avenue Loft, Photo Paul Warchol



Hariri & Hariri are very much a New York architecture practice; a proposal for the Weeping Towers, an arts centre on the site of the Twin Towers, has eleven towers and a cloud-shaped façade with sprinklers set to 'weep' on the anniversary of the disaster. But tiny clues to their Persian heritage can be glimpsed occasionally – for instance in the fountain with a mosaic pool sunken into the floor in the atrium of a loft in Greenwich Village, New York; and in the ribbon-like form of a gold mosaic vertical fireplace mantle in the Carnegie Hill residence in Manhattan.

The artistic interest of Hariri & Hariri is evident in their portfolio of loft apartments for art collectors, the interiors designed with a strong architectural emphasis. In the Carnegie Hill residence, towering floor-standing vase sculptures by Jason Lamberth make an art statement against a backdrop of dark block wenge furniture and a Bendheim glass wall partition system.

An urban art beaten metal splashback in the art gallery-like space of Perry Street Loft in New York is an edgy breakaway from marble and granite as a kitchen worktop material, and the metal ribbon staircase in the Soho loft is an experimental art installations in its own right. "Our first architectural experiment was building a very sensuous hybrid stair all made out of steel. Stimulation of the senses is part of creating a pleasurable experience," says Gisue.



Carnegie Hill Residence. Photo Holly Hunt (Christian Leight)

Designing architecture on a scale appointed to lead the cultural statements of the era, Hariri & Hariri's portfolio includes proposals for the new digital technology Museum of the 21st Century in Manhattan, New York, a sculpture park and digital gallery with curved screens for Rockland Center for the Arts, Koma concert hall and museum space for the Korean-American population of Los Angeles, and a cathedral for the new millennium at St Marks Coptic Village in Toronto, Canada.

Hariri & Hariri may cite artists of the 20th century such as Alberto Giacometti, Isamu Noguchi, Alexander Calder and Henry Moore, and in their natural dialogue between structure and environment in their rural residential retreats, they are ensuring the continuity of the great Modernist architects' heritage.

"Such architects helped me articulate what my inner voice already knew; the simplest things in life are the most complicated, magical and extraordinary," says Gisue. "What became important to us was to create memorable experiences, moments and structures."

However, the thrust of their work is towards the future. Hariri & Hariri fearlessly embrace the technological developments that create a cityscape from the imagination of a technological generation. They are accelerating the concepts of architecture into the uncharted territory of the virtual world being created for the 21st century, intuitively incorporating the thoughtform speed of communications and nano-technology into the fabric of their buildings and development of new materials. We expect to see this in cinema complexes but Hariri and Hariri are honest in pointing towards the virtual world within our homes.



Greenwich House. Photo Jason Schmitt



Madison Avenue Private Equity Offices. Photo Paul Warchol



Digital House © Hariri & Hariri - Architecture

The Digital House is a groundbreaking concept proposed by Hariri & Hariri just before the turn of the new millennium. It projects current trends for single-person households, and families with teenagers living in separate pods under one roof, with the capacity for working, shopping and studying remotely by internet, and linking to social networks via digital communications technology.

The Digital House is organised around a touch activated digital spine with active-matrix liquid crystal screens as walls. Using liquid crystal flat display screens used by NASA's space shuttle fleet, Hariri & Hariri expanded the technological capacity of the Digital House to encompass a global virtual social life, and the inner world of the dwellers' dreams is projected onto visual screens as digital wall art and entertainment.

"Every time there has been a big breakthrough in architecture is through discovery of a new material. Concrete, steel and glass have all allowed us to look at architecture differently, each material is suitable for a different kind of form," says Mojgan.

"If AMLCDs (active-matrix liquid crystal displays) could be developed as transparent building blocks, or what we call 'Digital Block', they could become the material of choice for architects and builders. Even though technology has been going forward with an unimaginable speed, ten years later our project is still in the 'visionary category'."





Perry Street Loft. Photo Paul Warchol



Juan Valdez Flagship Cafe. Photo Paul Warchol



Wespang Towers: ©Hariri & Hariri - Architecture

Some people find the Digital House unsettling. "My point of view is that technology has only helped and advanced our comfort and our environment and the way we live," says Gisue. "I am looking forward to developing our 'Digital Block' as I envision not only the architecture of our buildings will change, but our cities will become giant receivers and transmitters of information. Can you imagine our homes and cities talking to one another?"

Gisue looks to the future. "I see it as part of evolution, we will lose an earthy connection and we will gain other things. I am very optimistic about it. It's like when the first light bulb was invented and people didn't have to light candles. We are dealing with things that to me are like magic!"

"Architecture is not about making a flamboyant form or structural gymnastics but creating environments that expand architecture's possibilities," says Mojgan. "It gives people the pleasure of exploring space. Great architecture is one that challenges our perception of life and living and finding an alternative mode of seeing and acting upon the landscape."

"Architecture is more than construction of buildings... it is where our dreams transcend realities of life," says Gisue. "It is a commitment that will carry you to places you had never dreamed of or knew could exist before you began."

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