# SECOND NATURE 02

## ‘Islands as a State of Mind and the Psychology of Edges’

Daisy Billowes explores island life as a psychological condition rather than a geographic fact.

## ‘An Inhabited Pathway: Navigating Hill House’

Lee Halligan & Marcus Haworth reflect on the newly completed project Hill House, in Turks & Caicos.

## ‘Living Lightly on the Land: The Barefoot Project’

A 1:100 building model for our Barefoot project on Providenciales that responds to the wind-pruned dunes.

02

# Contents

It's funny during winter. Our attentiveness to sunlight is heightened because of how precious it seems. That's for those of us in the UK. We're in its depths at the moment, days are grey, shortened, sunlight conserving itself. The Caribbean is doing the opposite. Bright, exposed, and unapologetically awake. You step into it and realise how much of your mood, your pace, and even your thinking is choreographed by the sky above your head. There's a contrast in that, and it's the undertone of this edition. Winter usually encourages hunkering down, refining, making things smaller, but this issue isn't about retreating. It sits in a playful reality, in a friction between seasons and time-zones. You can find that climate actively participates, rather than sits on the sidelines like a benched rugby player. You can only influence the game if you're in it.

So that's what sunlight does, it influences our designs and even how we live. I felt this to be particularly poignant in Greg's interview with Matt Gorvin where they discuss how primary school kids pick up on the efficiency of living with solar power. Their movements change throughout the day to utilise what they're presented with.

Both Hill House and Channel House touch on this too. There's a pathway you follow throughout the day to utilise different kinds of spaces. It's special when your subconscious works with a building and finds these things guide you to a better way of living. I've started to see the fluidity of building a space that sharpens those boundaries; it presents views and shifts with the weather patterns. As someone who hasn't studied Architecture I'm now completely enthralled with external circulation and internal courtyards.

Then you've got the beautiful architectural models. Light becomes tangible on a smaller scale. The Atrium and Barefoot models are, of course, beautiful presentation objects but they are also utilised as instruments to test the behaviour of light. Jared & Will's curation of Lee's drawings bought to light how the elements themselves draw.

The design charette we hosted was something special. If you're given two hours to design something practical using a discarded material, do you think the constraint would enable better design? Paige's winning door weight proved that and more; even small objects can carry intent, weight, and atmosphere. Light appears again in nature's own skylight reference at the Indian Caves in North Caicos.

Lee's Road Trip Records in Sardinia with Alberto Ponis widens the lens again. We need other people's experience of handled light, landscape and movement to bring home that understanding until it mutates in your own work.

If there's one thing this issue holds onto, it's that light handles behaviour. In the tropics, we see this as the clearest reminder that the environment is not a backdrop but rather presents a path. I see it as being in the room with you, always, shaping everything.

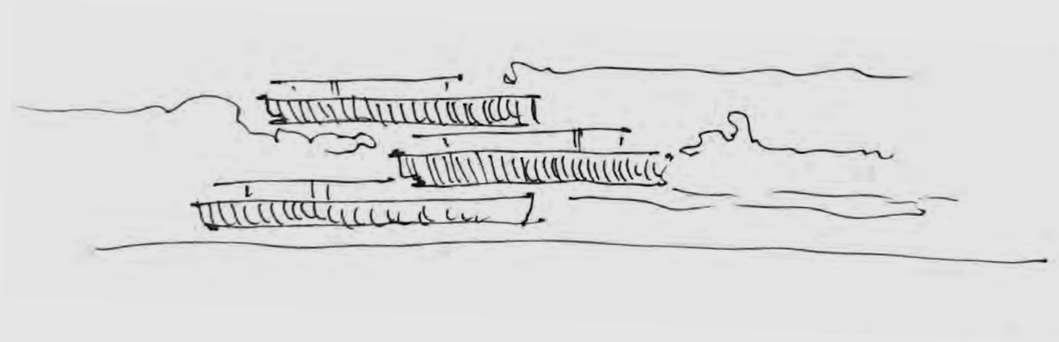
Daisy Billowes
Practice Director

# An Inhabited Pathway: Navigating Hill House

An interview with Lee Halligan & Marcus Haworth on the completion of Hill House.

As Hill House moves from concept to lived reality, Lee Halligan and Marcus Haworth reflect on how sequencing, slope, and movement shaped a home embedded into the hillside rather than placed upon it.

Photography: Jack Hobhouse



Hill House has now moved from concept to reality. How did witnessing it alter your vision of what a home on the hill could be like?

LH I think the surprise for me was something none of us realised. Everyone visits and says they feel like they're on a boat because of how the levels work. They cut out any sense of the hill falling away beneath you. When you're in the bedrooms, you really only see the sea. I think that's a surprise. We just thought we were trying to sensitively embed the house into the hillscape, but I hadn't appreciated that experience being so significant.

DB You mention inspiration from Alberto Ponis's 'Inhabited Pathway', and Frank Lloyd Wright's notion of Architecture belonging to the hill. How did those ideas initially translate into tangible design decisions?

LH The key thing that unlocked the Alberto Ponis concept was staggering the buildings: the top guest house, the middle living, and the bottom master suites. Those forms shifting diagonally across the site was the key move that related to the inhabited pathway. Once you shifted the buildings diagonally across the site, it was about opening up the view. That forces a diagonal meander rather than any sense of the straight route through the home.

MH Yeah, I think what stayed true to the original concept is the sequencing and flow, from the top of the hill through the house, right down to the bottom.

DB There's a large, wide staircase from the master up to the middle level that makes it feel like walking up the stairs in itself is an event. Do you think there's a staging in those experiences— working yourself through the levels?

MH Yeah, that staircase is more inclined for groups of people transitioning down, but then there's a contrast with some of the internal stairs, which are more winding and intimate. They deposit a single person, or a couple of people down to their bedroom. So there's a mixture between the two, of what is shared in more social areas against the more intimate.

LH It's funny, when you walk in that home down the front external staircase, you're immediately drawn down to the ocean. They're actually not too meandering, but the daily experience of the house, you go down quite sneaky, curving stairs that are opposed to one another. I think that must be really enjoyable, how much variety there is. Particularly going down to the master suites, it feels a bit James-Bondy. It feels like; "oh, where am I going..." and then the reveal of the ocean, without any sense of the land, once you get to the bedrooms. That's quite a nice surprise.

MH The way the house was designed with the sloping nature in the levels, it created those surprising moments. You never quite see what's down on the next level, you don't get an idea of it until you actually come down there and then it reveals itself. That's far more interesting, I think, than when you walk into a house, walk through the front door and that's kind of it. Hill House has a lot of moments where you get that initial reveal, but then there's a lot more layering to it.

LH It's hard to know because we've drawn it, built it, lived it through and through. I'd love to know how someone who hasn't seen a photo or visited before just opens the front door. I'd like to know how that feels. The top-lit bathrooms are a little bit of a surprise as well. You don't know that you're actually embedded into the hill at that point.

DB I really enjoyed your comment about the staircase. There's one from the main living space down to the bedrooms where the mouth of the stair rounds open. A sort of curved, natural mouth opening up to gently lead you around.

MH It definitely feels soft there, you're right. It kind of spits you out into a little office space. It's very sculptural, the way it's been done.

LH There's a great moment when you're halfway down those stairs and you're looking out across the deck to the pool, and then just as you get to the bottom of the stairs you're in a thicket of trees, facing out into the little pocket courtyard off the office.

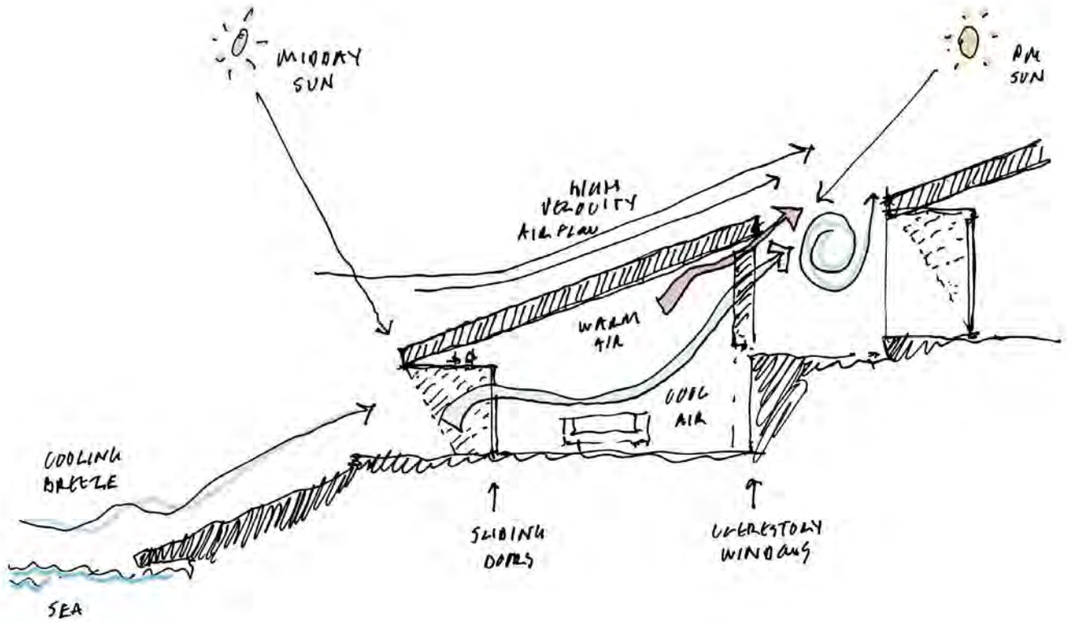
DB Can you tell me a little bit more about the slope that Hill House was built on? It's quite steep— am I right in saying 14 degrees?

MH Yes, we took the average slope of the hill through the section of the site which we then took up to the roof line.

DB When you first had an idea of the site, did you know exactly how you were going to carve into it? How did you begin to think about how to utilise that degree of hill?

LH The perfect scenario was to cut in and use the same amount you cut in to then create platforms where you needed to. It was basically a bit of a CAD exercise to find the perfect balance, where you don't suddenly get a buried window, or an awkward drop-off. It was quite a careful exercise. A bit of luck too, I think.

MH There was a careful 50-50 balance between the cut and fill. I don't think any of us quite realised how challenging that would end up being. The site isn't solid rock and so it took a lot of work and effort to bury that bit of hill.




[above] Environmental strategy for passive cooling

DB Are there any spaces in the property that utilise the darkness you might get from being embedded in the hill or are they all quite light because of the outward face?

MH The outdoor covered rec room's conception is part of that negative space. It almost feels a bit cave-like in the back, it cuts back into the rock. We actually re-purposed a lot of the excavated stone to clad the walls. We tried to keep the idea of a cave that was open at the front, and then the darker spaces we used for functional rooms; the guts of the house.

DB You briefly mentioned earlier about the mono-pitch roofs. They lean away from the winds and are angled to harness breeze for natural ventilation. How did you optimise this?

LH I think the word wind-pruning is lovely. We definitely talked about that. When you look at this particular side of Providenciales, that gets the trade winds, nothing's very tall. The minute you go over the hill and down onto the driveway, things grow with quite a height. The wind pruning— where you see the plants forming that shape of the wind— is exactly what we wanted to do with the building. So, you ask about how that influenced the design; clear story windows are able to pull in air from a lower level and take it out at an upper level. It's a great strategy if you don't want to live with AC. Many people will be able to live in that house so happily by opening up a window at the high clear story so it pulls in the breeze at their wish to really cool those spaces. It's brilliant.

DB That's very clever.

LH Yeah— the wind that's hitting the roof is going to speed up and then there's a negative pressure about where the window is open that will naturally want to pull. All you'll need is a little bit. You're not relying on the wind pushing in at the lower level, you're relying on it being pulled out at the higher level. So you only need your window open a little bit for it to work.

DB Can you talk a little bit about the surrounding landscape? You've mentioned wind-pruning?

LH Oh yeah, even in the little stuff. Everything is wind-pruned, sculpted over in one direction. That's why we were quite averse to people peppering houses with the palms in the wrong places. We do actually have some lovely palms in those shaded pergolas, but it's a lot more protected, and it feels like a different space. If you stick palms all over that hillside, they'll look like they're suffering. So we've restricted them to the calmer side of the house, where it's out of the wind.

DB Can you talk me through the shaded pergola and what makes it one of our best to date?

MH It was designed with a cross slatts route, so the shading alternates in a grid format. The idea was to shield you from the sun both in the morning and the evening, and it has this dramatic shifting shading pattern on the floor. The double colonnade idea was an effort to kind of open up the view, and to feel more lightweight.

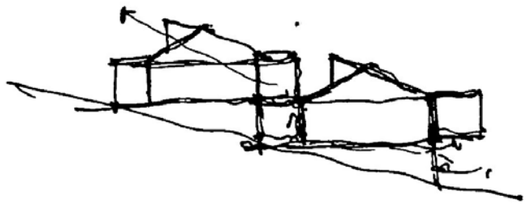
DB And you've lifted it up off the floor slightly?

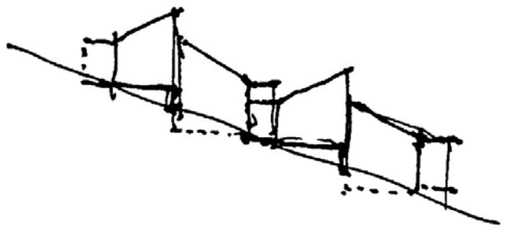
MH Yeah, exactly. It's a real light-touch on the terrace. With the main bulk of the structure up at the top we were trying to just be as light on the bottom as possible. I think it's probably the most detailed and complex one that we've achieved so far.

LH I think the reason why specifically it's one of our best is although it was originally designed to be Category 3 [hurricane rated], it became a Category 5 rated structure, and that's very difficult to achieve with the split posts without being super chunky. We're pleased that it still retains a lightness, despite that. There's also a uniqueness to the idea of rotating the orientation of the timbers from each grid in a simple pattern which mimics the trees— a better fit for the setting.

MH What's brilliant about it is partly to do with the scale. It creates such a usable covered shaded space instead of an empty terrace that would be incredibly hot and uncomfortable during the day. It's a super functional space, which the client loves, but it creates little pockets of social areas, which you naturally navigate through throughout the day. There's a covered lounge, which moves to a shaded dining area, which then opens further out into a little bar area. Our clients really enjoyed that flexible space, whilst retaining a natural flow of movement depending on the time of day.







[top to bottom] Hipped Roofs, Variable Roofs, Sloped Roofs to assess best environmental conditions

DB Is there anything in the initial concept and early stages that surprised you when it became a reality?

MH I think the pool was surprising— it was just so successful. I hadn't quite appreciated that until we started. The infinity edge, being so high above the sea, offers a super dramatic effect where the water looks like it's just disappearing. A bit like the yacht visual that Lee was talking about. It kind of just falls off into the ocean, but the ocean is about 40, 50ft further down.

LH I'm really drawn to the diagonal view from the back corner of the kitchen, looking across to Dick Penn Cays. It's just the view of those little islands— as I walk through the home, I keep looking diagonally across, from arrival, or when you arrive at the driveway, or at the top of the hill, you see the islands diagonally. It's the most wonderful view that will never change. I think we didn't appreciate how much of a focus they would be.

DB Hill House was designed to appear as a rock escarpment nestled into the hillside. How did you go about selecting the exterior materials to reflect this, and how do you think that they perform now that the building is complete?

MH So the local stone was reused from when we excavated the site. That was a pretty easy decision for us; to utilise what is native to the site and repurpose it. We've successfully placed it on the plinths of the building and again back at the cave bar. Over time the exterior will darken, and it will feel a lot more like the ironshore landscape surrounding it.

LH I think the raked render is a nice way to make it look more organic, less urban with the strata— the layers. It's not quite as strong as we'd hoped, but still important. When you're up close, there's a nice texture grain that relates to the strata of the hill and the rock, but it doesn't really pick up in photos. When you're up close, it's a nice little detail.

DB Can you tell me a little bit about the planting strategy that we had?

MH The strategy was to keep the native planting around the house. We had to scar the land a little bit around the house for the construction, but the ambition with the landscape designer [Landscaping by EA] was always to just re-plant it and bring it back in. So it felt like the house had not touched the hill beyond its footprint. For the rest of the house, again very native. We wanted plants to be drought resistant and low maintenance, not an artificial palmscape that you see too much of on these hills.

DB Ah, yes, there's a wonderful cactus garden as you look down onto the sea from the mid level too?

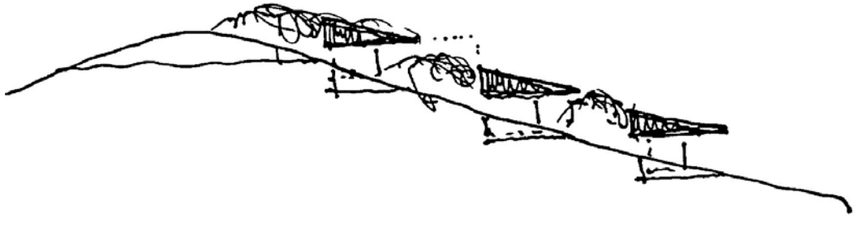
MH Yeah. We designed some lovely green roof areas where we had some visible zones of flat roofs. We went with an agave palm garden up there, which was really fun and a little bit quirky for the island actually, the more desert landscape.

LH All credit to Sean and Angela [clients], I mean they were just wonderful, and they bought into so much in this house that is unique and original. Keeping that native landscape was so beautiful, with the textures and all that greenery. It would have been terrible if suddenly there was pink bougainvillea strewn across the pergolas because that's not what it's about. We wanted something robust and hard-wearing, something that was going to weather elegantly.

MH Natalie [Landscape Designer] calls us 'Salt of the Earth' people; we don't want the kind of flowery colours and bougainvillea here. We want to keep it true to the landscape.

DB Designing and delivering Hill House has its own sense of gravity, but now that construction is complete, was there anything during the process you didn't foresee, or you've learned about?

LH I think the logistics of building on a slope are very, very complex. We didn't appreciate the hardness of the rock in places, and building



[above] Roof profile that emulates wind-pruning of the hill

from the bottom backwards all the time. You've even got to plant backwards, the sequencing of it. I hadn't appreciated the logistics of it. You want flat platforms, so even once you've built those levels, every day the guys are going up and down, up and down. There was a funny moment when the workers' toilet was teetering on the edge of a 20ft drop, just because there was no room left.

DB Finally, Is there anything that you're particularly proud of in Hill House?

MH I think what I'm most proud of is that every space has some element of beauty and detail. There isn't one space that got heavily compromised in lieu of another. Every space has kept that same level of thought and detail– you have a very similar experience in each room. Another thing that slightly surprised me was just how successful the circular roof lights were. They're a little surprise moment when you walk into the bathroom, seeing the sky above you. Even when it's raining, you get that sensory experience. A bit like James Turrell.

LH I've got two things, which I think I'm really proud of. When the client, Sean, turns to you and says he's pleased that he bought into the idea from day one. That is really rewarding. The concept was right, you know? It's really nice when he reminds you that he's bought into something unique. I think the second thing is; you can drive around the island now and there are people trying to stick three-story buildings down the road and they're just a lump of house sticking on the hill. We've managed to achieve a sizable home of, effectively three stories, that never looks more than one story. It's not a socking great platform with a 20 metre wall drop off from the pool, but instead is a sensitive navigation of the land.

# Islands as a State of Mind and the Psychology of Edges

## A Landscape Lesson by Daisy Billowes.

The simplest definition of an island is the one that doesn't tell us much. Britannica claims: "An island is a piece of land completely surrounded by water that is smaller than a continent." Useful, but rather stagnant. I believe islands are not solely defined by scale and geography but instead defined by sentience. By the edges they bring, their thresholds, their communities. By the psychological weather that rolls in and never quite leaves.

To live on an island (and here I'm drawing from personal experience), whether that is the UK, the Isle of Man, Syros, Turks & Caicos— is to live in a loop of arrival and departure. It's to understand that a boundary isn't an end, but an invitation to think about what's beyond. Islands turn geography into philosophy. They are, as Homer knew in The Odyssey, testing grounds for identity. Every island Odysseus visits (Aiaia, Ogygia, Ithaca) forces him to face something elemental. The sea isn't just a body of water; it's the psychological membrane between the self and its undoing.

Seamus Heaney understood this too. His poem 'Storm on the Island' (1966), though often read as a commentary on the political tensions of Northern Ireland, is equally, and perhaps more profoundly, an exploration of the complex relationship between humans and their environment. It studies how we build, prepare, and psychologically armour ourselves against the unpredictable forces that surround us. That is why I'm referencing it here: because the poem doesn't just describe weather but instead it describes being weathered. The island in Heaney's poem is both place and psyche, a metaphor for exposure, resilience, and the quiet architecture of survival.

North Caicos, Turks & Caicos

Heaney begins ‘Storm on the Island’ with an act of defiance and pragmatism: “We are prepared: we build our houses squat.” It’s a declaration and a warning. Preparedness becomes the first line of defence and shelter is instinct. It’s both a reference to the physical and psychological architecture of the poem. To live on an island is to accept the terms of nature. To build squat is to build wise. In the Hill House interview with Lee & Marcus earlier in the issue, they talk about the challenges of building on a sloped hill out towards the sea. Not a lump of vertical concrete, but a sensitive, low lying approach. Heaney’s compact syntax is short and muscular, a mirroring of the low-slung houses on islands which can be seen as fortresses against both weather and history. This captures something universal to island life: the understanding that to endure, you must first adapt. For example, thick, stone cottages are recurring across my home landscape on the Isle of Man.

Blee Halligan builds in the tropics as a way to utilise the wind not just in worst-case scenarios, but also to keep things cool when the temperature ramps up. These buildings inhale and exhale. Shelter, I like to see, is the first act of community— whether you belong to Heaney’s rural Ireland, Homer’s Ithaca or any island that knows both the generosity and cruelty of weather.

What I find particularly interesting is: to live on an island is a communal thing. Everyone shares the same horizon, the same unspoken understanding of what it means to live surrounded by water. Community is a lived geography rather than an abstract notion. On the Isle of Man, people leave their doors unlocked and their cars running because, as they’ll tell you, where would you go? There’s no need for suspicion when the edges are already drawn. But how wide do the edges need to be for the suspicion to filter in? Smaller than a continent? Island life is




[above] Syros, Greece

built on shared experience. It's a collective memory of both survival and celebration. Blackouts, birthdays, hurricanes, weddings, even the rhythm of the sea— everything folds into the same narrative. The edge of the map becomes the edge of a tribe. Heaney's plural 'we' in his poem does the work for that solidarity: a collective pronoun built to withstand impact. The same 'we' means nailing shutters, sharing water, rebuilding together. Even when the supermarket shelves thin out if the ferry can't make it over for storms, there's an unspoken camaraderie in it. Islands make togetherness almost visible.

Heaney's coastline is a "tame cat/ Turned savage". With a moment of visual ferocity it almost is a moment of betrayal when the domestic goes wild. The image of a cat particularly resonates with islands, from tropical, right across to the Greek island of Syros. The Isle of Man is even famous for tail-less cats. Referring back to Heaney's 'turned savage'— summers can bring the most idyllic beauty on islands' beaches, but when the switch hits, the sea turns into this temperamental companion. A shift from the familiar to the feral in an instant. It's the suddenness of weather, the unpredictability of the sea. Every island shares that visual violence: spray against windows, air turned liquid, the boundary between inside and outside erased. It's sea-mist that crawls through gaps, or it's sand whipped into alleys, it's salt that crusts onto walls, writing its own scripture. Even in the wind pruned landscape the weather becomes a literal transcription of exposure into endurance.

All islands are sculpted by the wind. The Trade Winds for instance, are not just weather, but history. They sculpt with their spices and stories, bringing a consistency and reliability for navigation. The air moves through these places like memory, as a

reminder that to live on an island has always depended on attentiveness, not resistance. They've carved not just coastlines but temperaments— teaching everything they touch to bend. You can see it in the landscape so clearly. Trees are permanently tilted towards the leeward side, their trunks twisted into gestures of endurance, and the houses follow suit. An environment that leans into the wind, a geography of adaptation. If the wind is both history and identity, then with it the sea brings the scent of salt, and the promise of continuity. A knowledge that life on an island is always in motion, never still.

My old home in the Aegean, Syros, glows differently. Light bleaches the edges of white washed buildings. The Greek islands really do make myth visible, and the sea still performs the script that Homer wrote. Heaney's constant reference to 'empty air' and 'it is a huge nothing that we fear' cements this idea that air itself becomes a character, a pressure, a god. Exposure to this is reciprocity, and that, I believe, is the lesson. To live on an island, is to learn the shame of limits— physical, emotional, architectural— and to learn that those limits are also freedoms. The sea can bring peace and calm, but also separation, a boundary, and with it a howling force of mother nature. It is both presence and absence. Standing at the edge of any island, you begin to realise that boundaries are not confinements but lines that sharpen understanding. That's the paradox of island life: it isolates you just enough to see yourself more clearly.

An island is not just what you see from afar, a small land mass surrounded by water, but an interior condition. It's a way of being that oscillates between containment and release, solitude and connection. Islands remind us that endurance and beauty are often the same thing; that to live exposed is to live awake. They turn geography into a kind of philosophy, teaching us, through their highs and lows, that survival can be an art form.



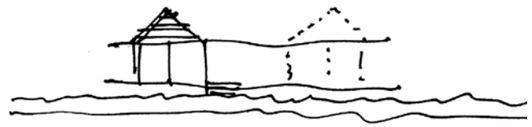
[above] Syros, Greece

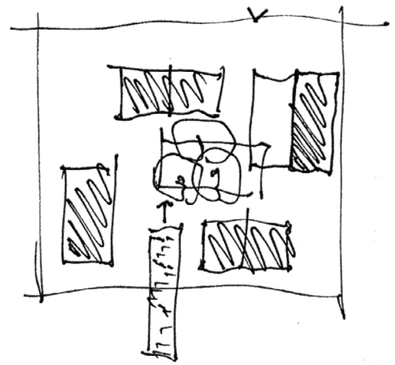
# Nature and Coolth at its Heart: Atrium House

A 1:50 section model of the Atrium project.

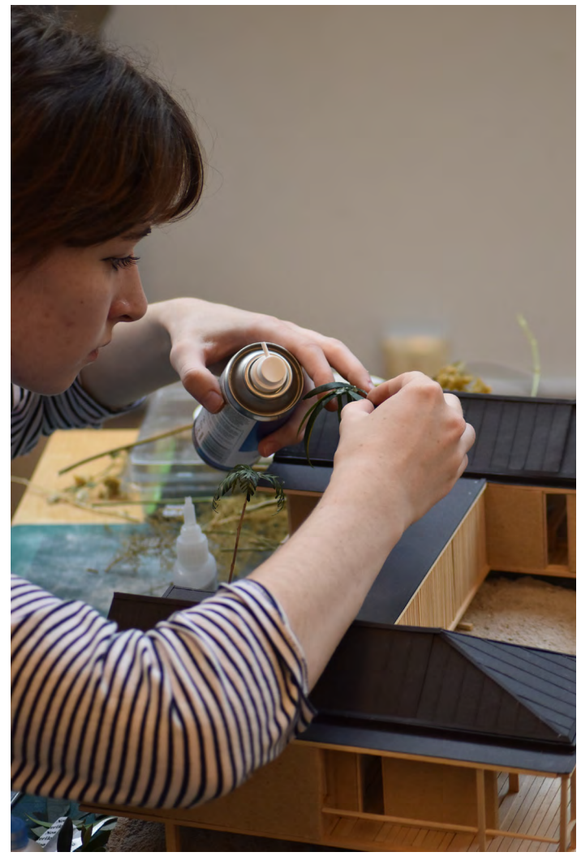
Documentation of a 1:50 section model of Atrium House, revealing how enclosure, shadow, and internal courtyards shape the architecture.

Photography: Blee Halligan





[above] Concept plan & elevation from the ocean



# Sunseeker: Building a Solar Future

An interview with Matt Gorvin from Renu Energy TCI by Greg Blee.

Solar expert Matt Gorvin discusses the realities of transitioning island energy systems and the long-term economics of clean power.

Photography: Daisy Billowes & Jack Hobhouse

Could we start with your views on the future for the world of energy, the opportunity you saw on Turks and Caicos, and the importance of what you have ended up doing?

MG I guess it's evolved from fairly primitive thinking when it comes to energy. The fascinating concept is that if you can produce energy that's sustainable and at a low cost, it can put you at an advantage. Energy could be an enabler of growth, of development, and put communities in a strong position. Coming to TCI, it became apparent really early on, that we had one main source of energy. That source of energy was provided by diesel combustion. While that was a system that clearly worked, it didn't seem like a particularly sensible economic way of doing it. I looked at the opportunity and said, well, this is simply a matter of time. Within the space of 5 to 10 years, we've seen an almost tenfold reduction in the cost of the equipment for solar, and an increase in the productivity of the material. To compare the two, we're all of a sudden at a place where you can say, well, whether or not it was competitive at the outset, it certainly is now, and it's continuing to become even more efficient. That was essentially the start of the business case.

GB What were the headwinds of rapid expansion of this technology?

MH It's one thing being able to describe what the technology can do, but it's much harder to actually build something, make it run, and make it commercially viable. So the next step was figuring out how we take this knowledge, build it, and persuade people— most of whom come with their own preconceptions about what solar is. There was a kind of prevailing narrative here that you weren't allowed to utilise solar clean technologies. It was essentially locked up with the local authority in the grid. It took a long time to build trust, demonstrate that these things worked, and indeed win over to the extent that we could explain to the local authority that this was something that should be considered.

GB What was the government's reason for capitulating or wanting to support you?

MG I think we've, to some extent, cajoled them into doing more than perhaps they would have done. They've got an established business model, and they know how their business model works. They know their cost, their inputs. In essence, we were asking them to rethink their business model. Now it wasn't quite perhaps as fundamental as that, but the reality was, if they could comprehend how this alternative means of generating power could be incorporated, and if that could be done at a lower cost, with the reliability required, my encouragement was, they should really try. One of our first projects was with Fortis [TCI utility company]. We did a pilot project where they said, 'Okay, show us how this works', and they chose four sites. We built these sites and essentially presented them with the data. That was the tipping point, because at that point we could say, do we agree that this is safe? Do we agree that this does what we said it would do? And the answer was yes. So they found it difficult to say no. They didn't adopt it at the level we would have hoped, but the people that lived there were adopters. We work closely with you, as architects, and you were energised and enthused enough to talk to your clients about it, and that's how it grew.

GB There is very little industry here— there's very little product productivity beyond service industries. So suppose my question is, what is the benefit?

MG Good question, and you're right. We don't have a large industrial base, but what we do have is a service industry. Let's take water, for example. Most of the water here is produced by RO [reverse osmosis]. The largest component of the cost of the water production is power, because the RO plants are powered by water. The five biggest energy consumers on this island are resorts. So while in good times, arguably, they can charge high prices, there may come a time when competition increases and other islands become more attractive, and if we have a significantly higher cost base as a result of power, we're uncompetitive, right? My argument would be to make this a competitive place versus the rest of the Caribbean. One of the major elements would be the cost of servicing these businesses.

And if you can bring that down, it makes the whole place more competitive. Water, then, is something that is totally fundamental to existence on these islands.

GB Are there any other fundamentals, or any economic growth areas that would be enabled via widespread adoption of solar? Agriculture, potentially leading to food security? Would that be enabled if you had widespread adoption of solar?

MG That's another good example. If you think from an agricultural perspective, primarily, we've got pretty poor soil. We do have lots of sunlight, but we are also prone to storms, hurricanes, bad weather, bugs etc. One of the big, big opportunities for this island would be to look at vertical farming, hydroponics, that kind of stuff that's controllable. One of the drawbacks to doing that would be the high cost of energy, because all of these things are essentially directly related to the cost of energy and water. If we're thinking about making this place more sustainable and more resilient, there's no reason there couldn't be a thriving business based on the backdrop of lower cost energy that enables that kind of farming. That would be a very powerful thing, for the restaurant community, the people who live here; to have access to high quality, lower cost produce.

GB AMAN, for instance, where you're doing a project now, they have a hydroponics Front of House, presented as part of the experience of being there. Even until recently, it was always treated as some kind of weird scientific model that wasn't about soil and earth and nature. It's tipped into something that seems to be interesting and valuable when you're talking about health. Historically, you'd go to places where you hope there to be fruit on the trees and great rich soils that would enable root vegetables but actually, the idea that you could go to the most expensive hotel in the world and see the production of food by hydroponics, you're almost giving a commentary on the on the environment that you're in anyway. It's not rich and fertile, it's actually poor and dry and arid.

MG Yeah, it's interesting to change how you might present those. Increasingly people are becoming much more conscious of what gets put on their fruit and vegetables to aid growth. It's not only about how it's commercially viable, but if you can demonstrate that you go about this production in a way that doesn't use commercial grade chemicals, which predominate the major food production systems of the US and Europe. Power can be an enabler of that, because it provides water. If you can produce food in a controlled environment that gives you consistency with the right kind of nutrients and ingredients to nurture the growth in a way that you can demonstrate is chemical free— that's a pretty powerful story.

GB If you have an energy source which is decoupled from a central system, it seems that the opportunities really lie in outer islands, the more remote islands. If you can provide stable, plentiful, cheap energy, places like Salt Cay might become more of a viable place for a holiday home, for example. Have you seen that developing?

MG That absolutely is the answer. If the traditional model of power is a centralised power production plant, there's huge inefficiency, and a huge cost to set it up at a scale that would work. Micro-grid technologies unlock that. It unlocks the potential of outer islands to become viable for some very high-end eco-tourism. To turn it on its head, I would also argue that we shouldn't look at it as one or the other on a grid system. There's nothing to stop us building systems at scale that feed legs off the grid, or back-feed legs of the grid. If you divided the grid up into five or six groups in a more distributed model, you could infuse the grid with low cost energy.

GB Let's talk about Tesla. I suppose there are two points to this. One is mobility, which seems to be extremely under-served on these islands, you know, pay-to-play charging. And then Musk. How we should deal with that as a problem in terms of, you know, a liberal idea of democratising energy over the last few years. How do we square that circle?

MG We work very closely with Tesla, and they've been a great partner to us. They provide us really good quality products, and they've always been exceptional when it comes to warranties and returns and the like. Tesla has foresight. They have seen where this is going and made sure they're on it in terms of energy, energy storage, solar, and vehicles. When we built South Bank with you, we encouraged all of the homeowners to add an EV charger. In this environment, we often have an excess of energy, at certain points in the day batteries are full and the homes are consuming everything they need. Our encouragement was, hey, if you have any car, you basically get free power for large portions of the day. I think the challenge with these environments is you need really robust vehicles. The hesitation around electric vehicles, when they don't require so much in servicing and maintenance, is when they go wrong, they go badly wrong, and people are nervous of that. If there was a place in the world where adoption could really work, it's here. I was quite into this three or four years ago, but we've drawn back a bit to draw a breath, because politically, it's challenging. We've got a very strong, unionised taxi organisation, and they're quite politically motivated. The reality is, until they are bought into this idea, it's going to be quite a difficult thing to mobilise.

GB So what's the future of this energy source? Is it improved technology, lower capital cost, higher take up or— is there a kind of hybrid energy where diesel still has a part to play in the Caribbean? Or could we move totally to a sustainable fuel source system, where we wouldn't need the oil and gas industry? How does that look in the medium-term future?

MG In environments like TCI, where we already have a grid, we already have infrastructure in place, it makes no sense to tear all that out. It's better to gradually retire the asset over time, and scale up the solar and/or other methods as is required until between 60-80% is renewable, and the balance is provided by diesel. Let's say we have a bad storm and it's very overcast for several days. In those scenarios, you may need more diesel to keep the grid running and on a really hot summer's day, you're running off your solar and storage. So essentially, you're building a hybrid model that can be resilient but also flexible.

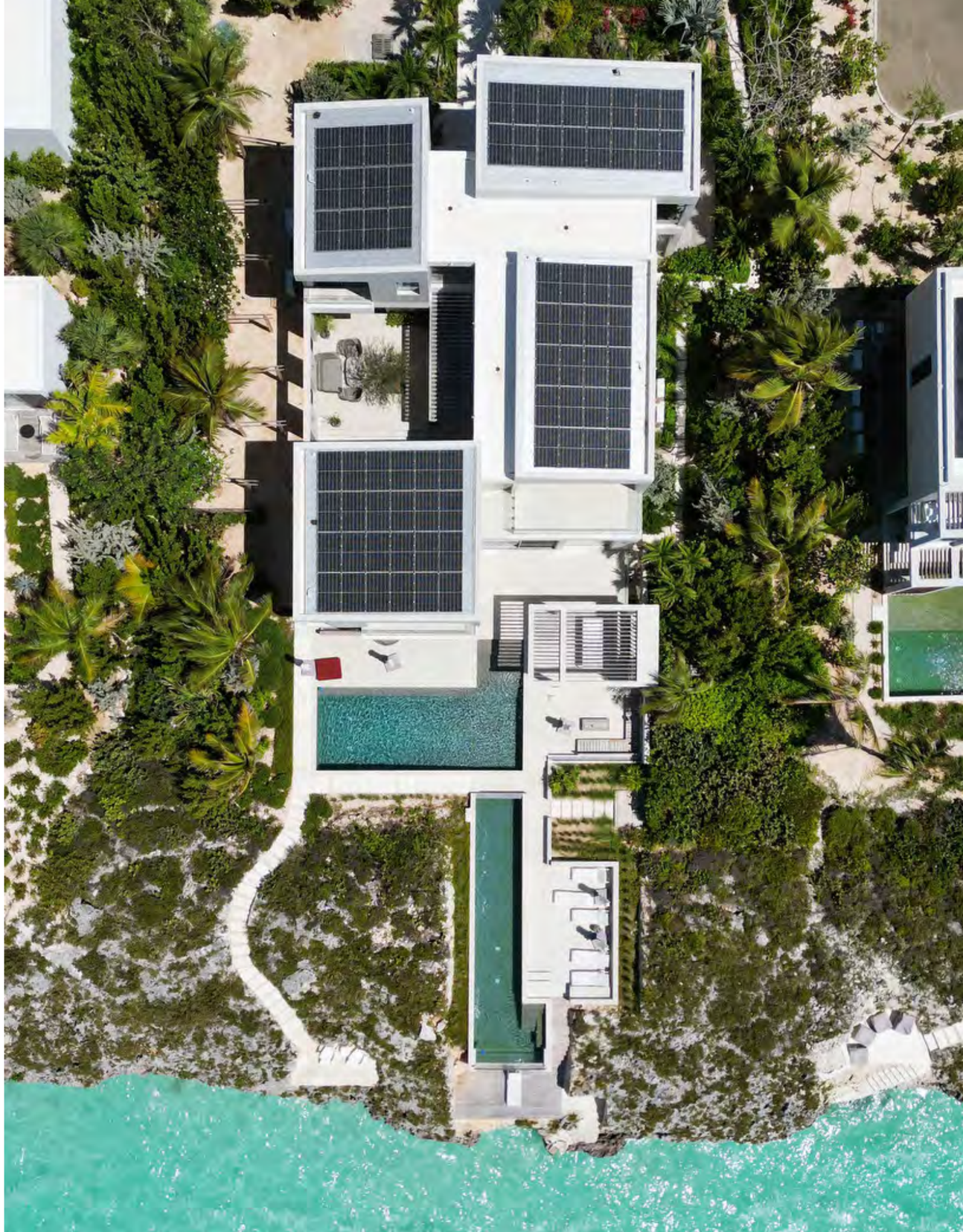
GB Do you see it to be a purely solar-based future in this kind of region? Or what other technologies do you see have become a hybrid model?

MG Wind, obviously would be one. The issue with wind is that people are worried that the blades fall off, or they rust, or need maintenance. There may also be several months of the year where it's just constantly blowing and several months of the year where it's not blowing at all. The second thing is, from an infrastructure standpoint, it's a lot bigger. It's not like everyone can have a wind farm in their garden, right? You need to do this at scale, and a grid that wants to accept power into it. It requires the buy-in of the government utility and an investor.

GB Beyond wind, is there any more funky technology? I don't know if it's viable, but what about sargassum? Could that be viable as a biofuel?

MG Yeah. You'll remember several years back, we talked about a micro-grid project where sustainability was one of the key requirements. We looked at using waste to produce energy. If you're on a small private island, one of your biggest challenges is how you get rid of waste, so there's a biomass opportunity there to kill two birds with one stone. Where this all leads, of course, is that in order for the transition, you need people to think in a connected way about energy, rather than energy just to be a kind of plug in to the system. We have to have more systemic thinking.

GB Going back to that point about the grid being like the foundation of the decision making, if you like. The first moment that we have a big storm, we have outages that disrupt whole neighbourhoods. This idea of micro-neighbourhood power generation, does distributed power seem to be more realistic?



MG That's exactly where I stand. If you were to divide this island into, say, six areas which are connected by the grid so energy could be shared. There's an excess in one area, so it flows to an area where there's a deficit, let's say. If the grid failed, that section that's disconnected could still operate as a micro-grid. From a resilience and sustainability perspective, we don't need to scrap what we've got. We can actually strategically plug into this grid, wind and solar, such that we back feed the amount of energy we might want.

GB I've seen on the news there's a rapid expansion of solar in Spain, and how the cost of energy plummeted because there was such an excess. Is the concern for a monopolised energy company one to keep the costs high in order for the whole thing to be viable when you've got smaller nations?

MG This is why regulation is important. All our clients produce under a model of self consumption, but what you can't do is sell it. If it's not regulated correctly and you get an over-supply of power onto a grid; one— it's dangerous, and two— you've got to do something with that power, right? You end up with a situation where you've got too much energy in the day, not enough at night. You could have consortiums, different finance initiatives, whereby people could invest in clean energy that, under contract, sell it to the grid right at scale for a rate that's agreed for a 20 year period. There's no shortage of people that would invest in that scheme, but there's viability.

GB So what are the risks in your business right now, over the next 5 to 10 years?

MG In this small environment, the risks are primarily around the way in which legislation unfolds. So the government, the utility, could have a large impact on our business model, for good and for bad. They could say they want to keep the grid as it is, or even do less because there's an excess of clean energy. Other challenges would be geopolitical issues. Lots of our equipment is manufactured offshore, including China. It becomes evident that there could be some big supply chain disruptions, or tariffs etcetera, that could cause a real hump for us.

GB And if you think in 20 years time, have you handed your business over to your son? You're in the rocking chair?

MG No. My burning ambition is not to have a ginormous business, but to have a business that's had an impact in the right areas. A lot of what we've been doing is to move the needle on the infusion of clean technology. If we can move to small island community where we can essentially create the infrastructure, provide the power, we can demonstrate how to power these otherwise uninhabitable spaces. In 20 years, we've kind of proved this concept, and I think that's very achievable with technology that's available.

GB What are the opportunities you're seeing in your new projects? What are you offering?

MG We're able to offer developers an option to provide safe, low cost, reliable energy, but uniquely from renewable sources. That's a powerful story when you're developing a very sensitive island ecosystem. Developers want the architecture to be sensitive. One of the first things that people in TCI experience when they move here are the expensive power bills. We can offer a lower cost base on a long term basis. The final thing is an introduction to new business models. If you have distributed power sources, distributed or cooperative ownership so people are vested in their infrastructure, their network, they become part of it. So at one point you might be buying power, at another point you might be selling power. And if your home over produces power for a period of time, you have a credit. And if you draw back, you have a debit. If the grid needs support, your battery could be used or discharged to help support the grid, and you get credit for that. This could be a much more networked, integrated kind of system.

GB Do you think the sort of gamified nature of seeing your energy consumption has an impact?

MG Once clients have access to this, their consumption patterns move to be in alignment with the sun, which is crazy. They do their washing or cooking during the day and move their life patterns a little bit. About four years ago, we did a show for schools

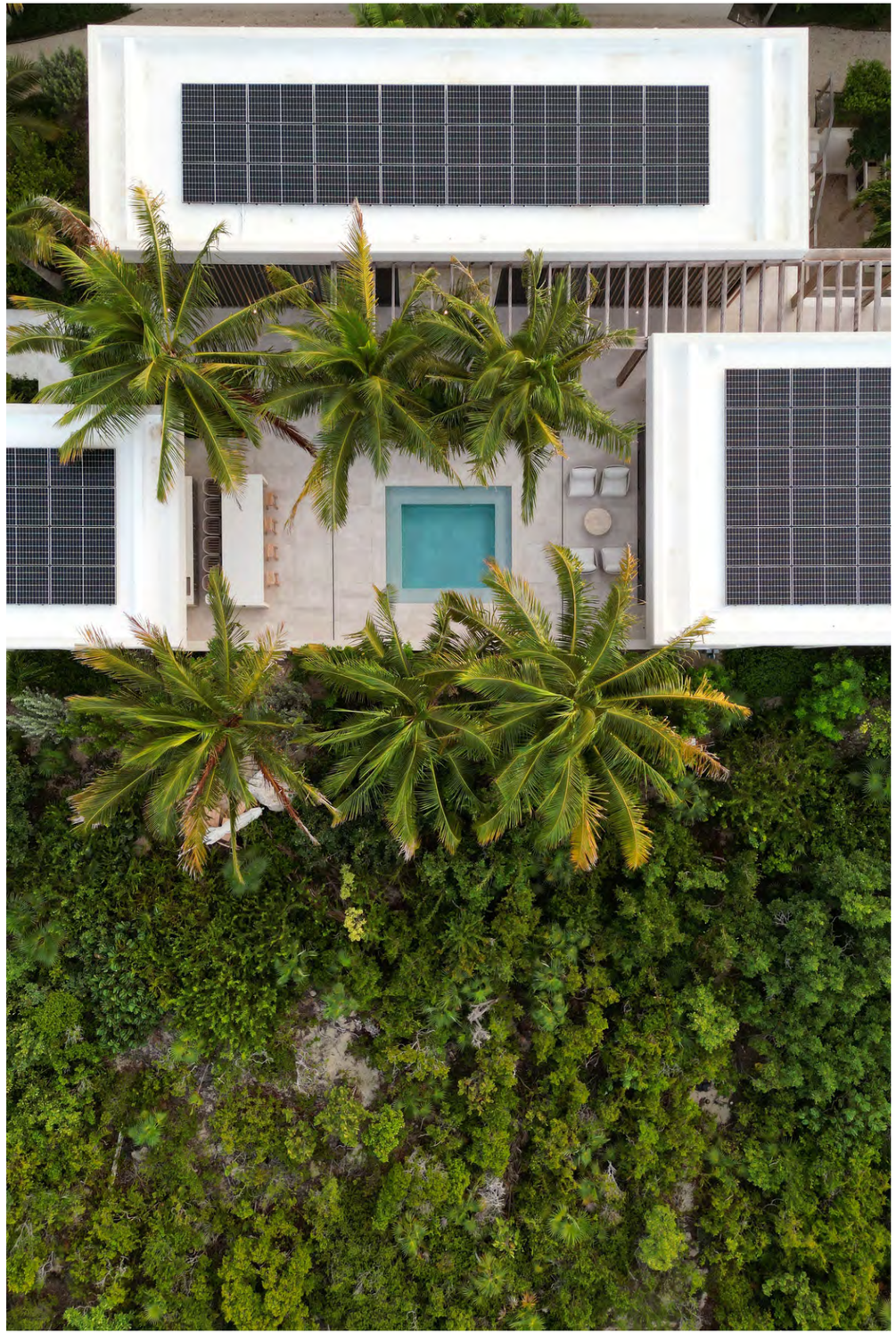
program where we built a small system at my son's school. The idea was that the kids could get access to the information and understand that these things on the roof produce the energy, and they could see how the energy flows work. Last week I saw the headmaster again, and he said the science teacher ran the classes where they talked about this. The knowledge of how and when we consumed energy drove new behaviour—and that was with school kids. That's fast.

GB Have you converted any of your clients from gas-guzzling-private-jet-flying to someone that has fully bought in and changed the way they live?

MG Yeah, there's one guy. The day I can create something compelling enough for that sort of guy, I know I've cracked it. They're normally totally different characters that you need to learn how to crack, so they're pretty helpful in our growth. One of the biggest learning points was, how do I understand the position of some of these people, how do I answer those questions? We don't have all the answers, but over time, we can build something that then fulfils their needs, or answers their concerns.

GB Thinking about life as an ecosystem of parts, your business is providing a major component to how Blee Halligan considers architecture. Our ambition is to create desirable, soulful buildings that push boundaries. I like the term Radical Simplicity. Our conversations and your motivation is really pushing boundaries in a place where it's not easy to do that, and that's given me energy, and I want to thank you.

MG I appreciate that, the feeling is mutual. It's not necessarily an easy path, but none of these things are. I've always wanted to build with the architecture, rather than in spite of it. That's when you can really unlock value. I think that's where the big opportunity is.



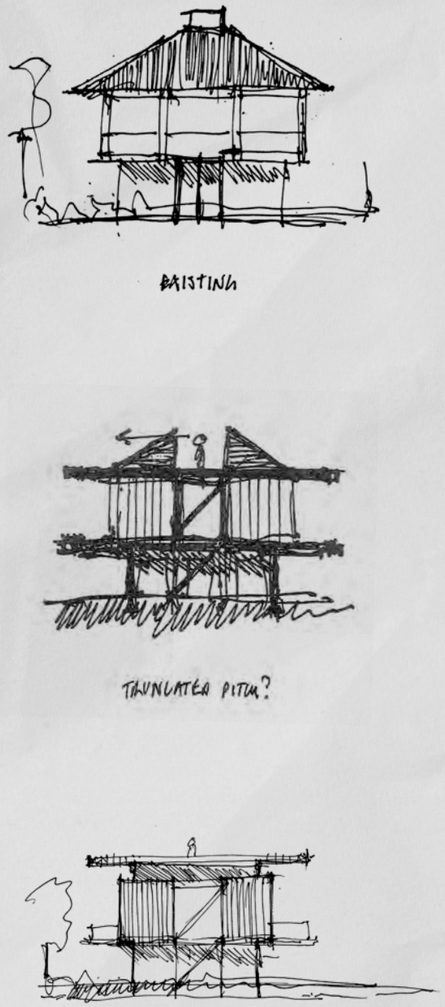
# From the Drawing Board: The Sun Draws Too

## Jared Leslie & Will Fry curate a selection of drawings by Lee Halligan that explore how architecture is shaped through exposure.

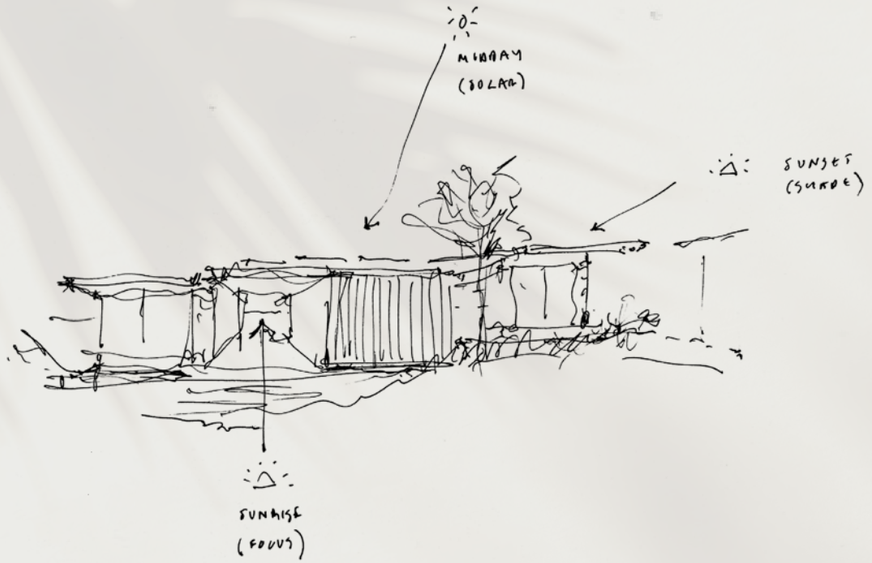
To design in the islands is to draw with more than graphite or ink. The earliest sketches are often quiet conversations with the environment. A drawing left in the sun fades unevenly, another touched by rain gathers texture, another shifted by wind finds a new line. These moments remind us that the environment is never passive; it shapes even the most tentative gesture. In the studio, our sketches continue that dialogue, mapping the paths of sun, wind, and view to understand how architecture might belong to its setting. Each line becomes an act of discovery, a way of learning how place begins to draw itself.

It is in these moments that we're reminded that true design begins not with control, but with receptivity, where architecture becomes a record of the environment, not a conquest of it. In learning to receive rather than impose, we begin to draw differently. The paper becomes more than a surface; it becomes a record of encounter, a quiet collaboration between intention and circumstance. It becomes a place of listening; of understanding how light, wind, and water shape what we imagine. From these quiet exchanges, form begins to take shape; not imposed, but found.

In this sense, sketching becomes a rehearsal for building, as both are acts of translation, turning observation into structure and impression into form. The process teaches us to see not only what we draw, but what draws back: light guiding form, wind shaping openness, rain revealing structure, and place filling the gaps in between.



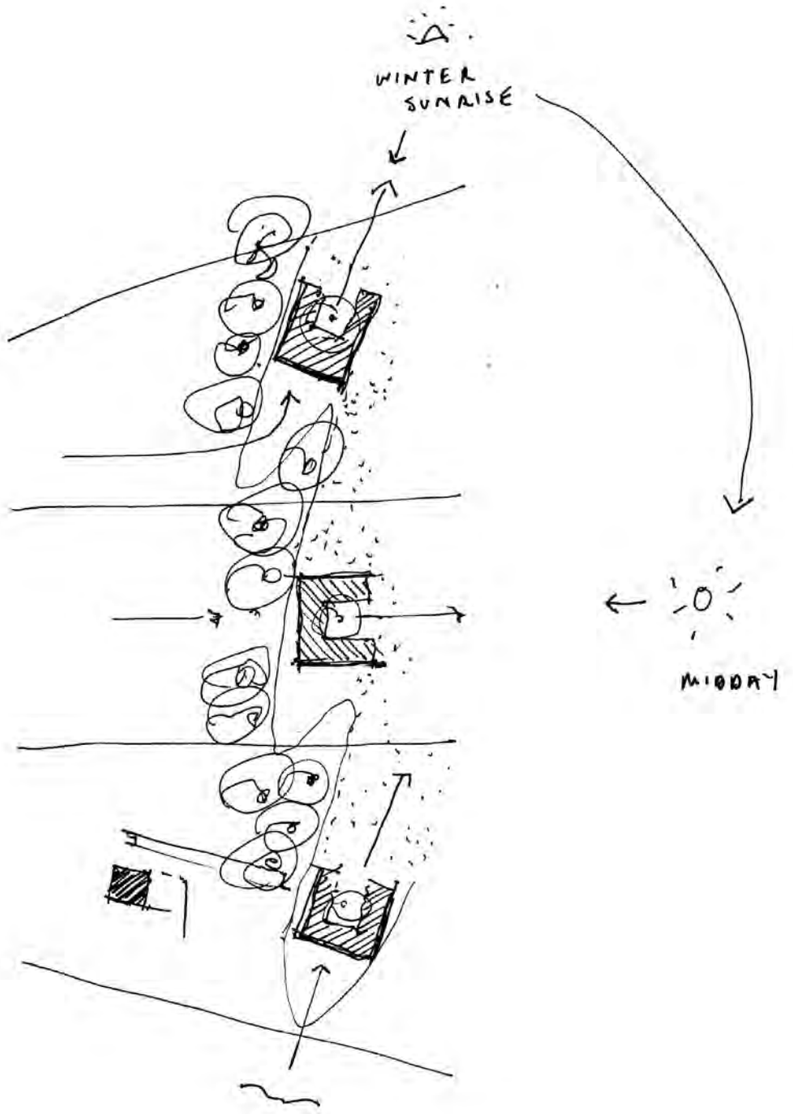
Roof variables for a stilted home in Thompson Cove




The Sun

The sun in the Turks and Caicos is relentless yet revealing. Its light sharpens edges and erases them in equal measure. A sketch left beneath it fades unevenly, recording the passage of hours. In design, this becomes a study of exposure; how shade, glare, and reflection define comfort and form. The sun is both critic and collaborator, showing the limits of materials and the poetry of shadow.

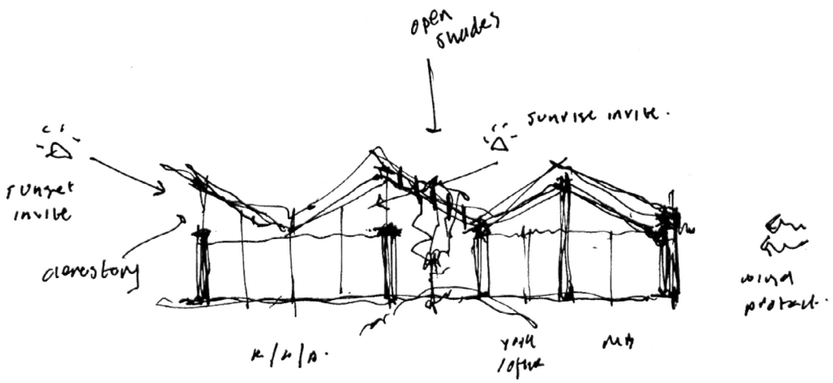


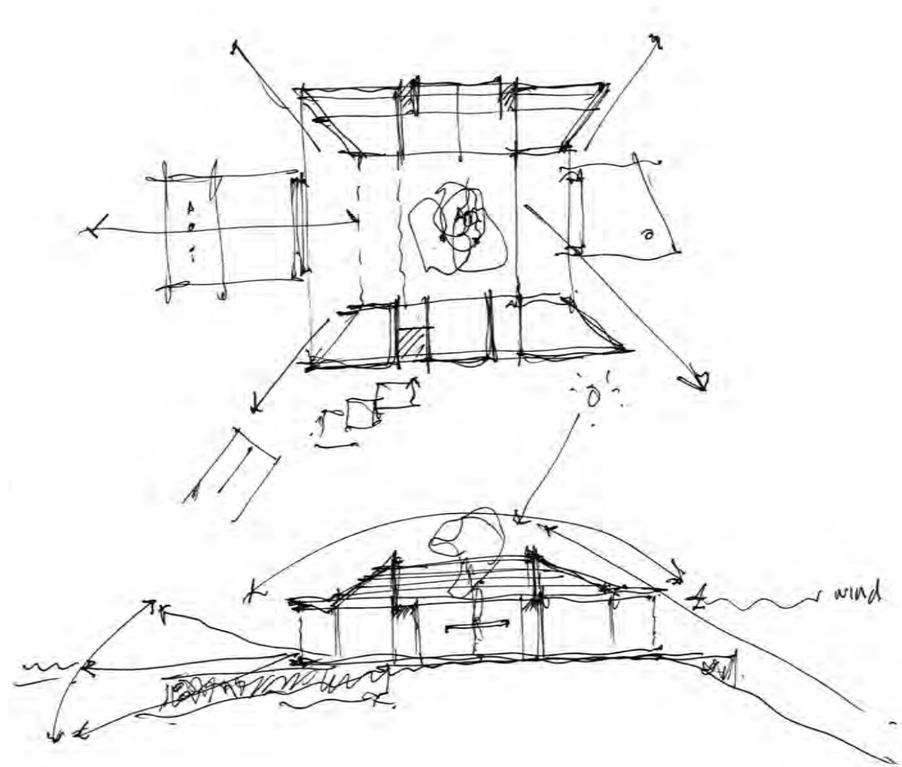



[left] Sunpath studies for Seasage Hill House
[above] Sunpath study influencing building placements at Krygier Gardens, Delaware, US

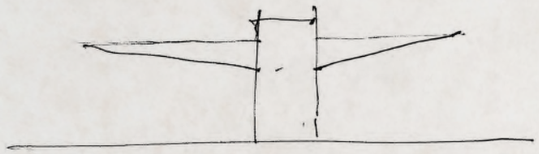
## The Wind

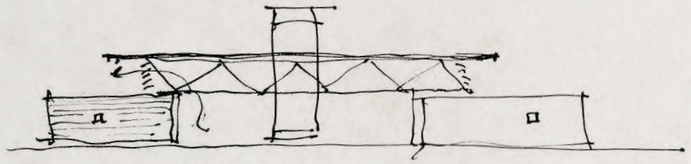
The wind arrives uninvited, smudging graphite and shifting the line's intention. It tests the fragility of precision and rewards flexibility. In the islands, wind defines structure, orientation, and breathability. The architect who sketches with the wind learns that openness is strength, that architecture must yield to endure, just as the page must accept the movement of air to remain alive.

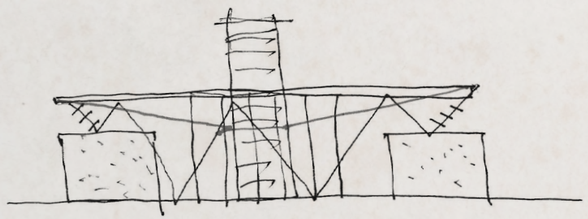



[above] High-point and low-point roof studies for Barefoot project
[right] Projected courtyard studies, Highland Villas, Apes Hill, Barbados





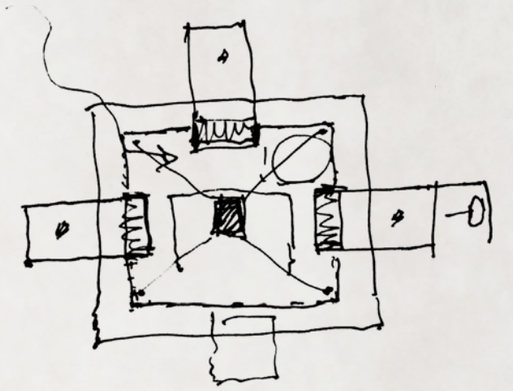


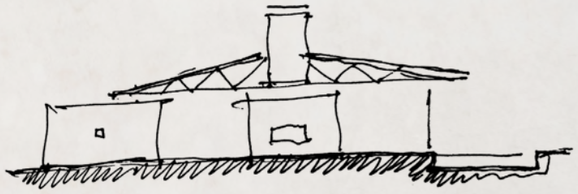
## The Rain

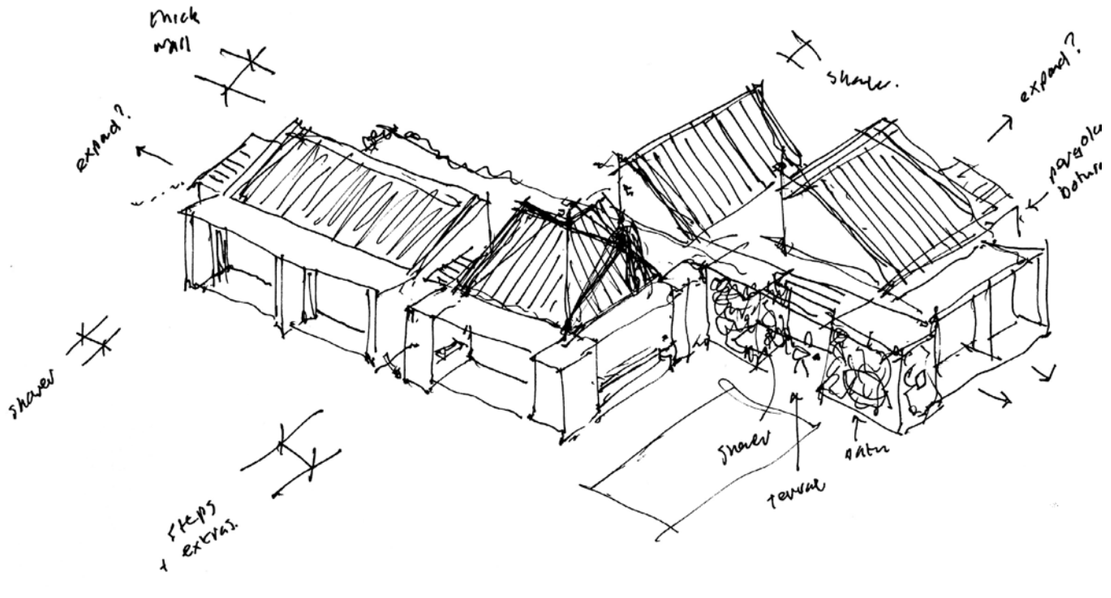
A drawing caught in the rain dissolves into something new. Pigment becomes tide, line becomes current. The paper records weather as texture. On the islands, water is both giver and eroder of life, its salt ever present in the air and on the surface of things. Designing here means tracing the paths of runoff, the reflection of light on wet stone, the rhythm of falling water. Rain teaches that architecture must absorb and release, not resist.



Roof pitch studies for collecting and shedding rainwater
Desert House and School of Exploration, Great Sand Dunes National Park, Colorado, US



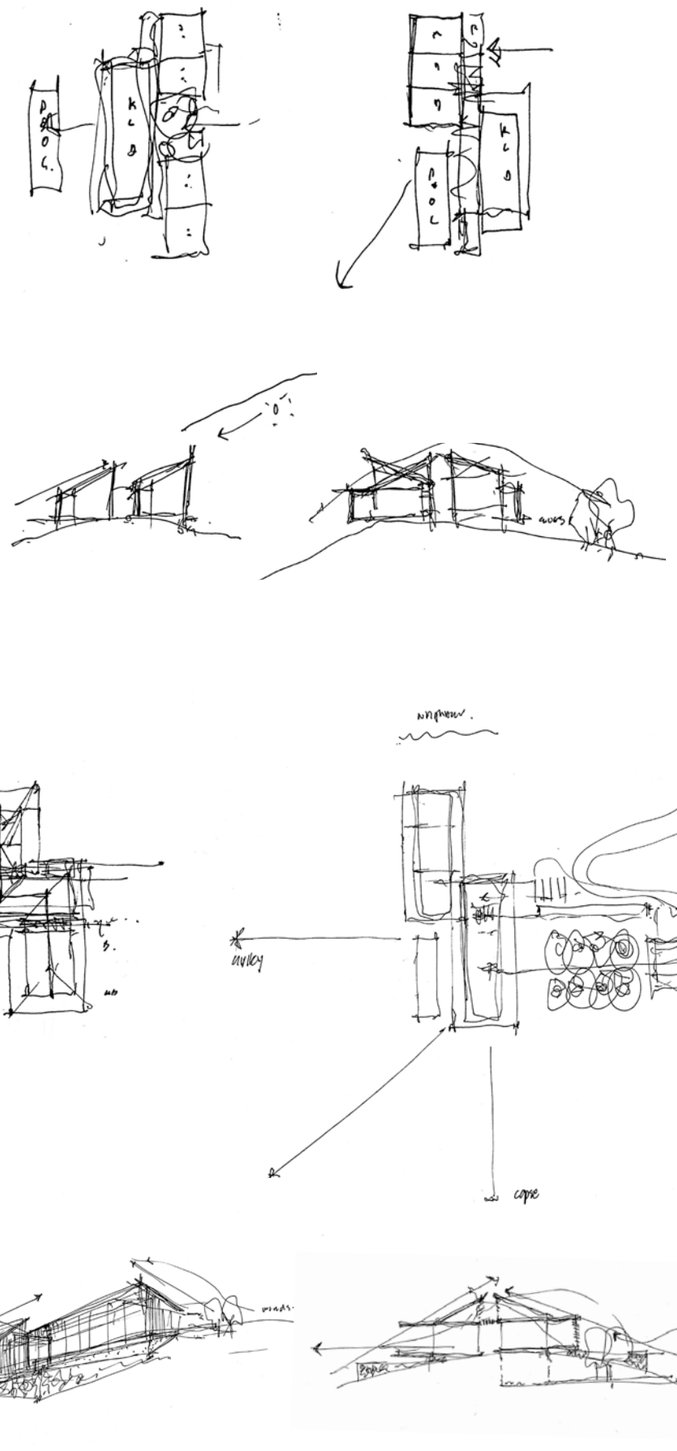





## The Place

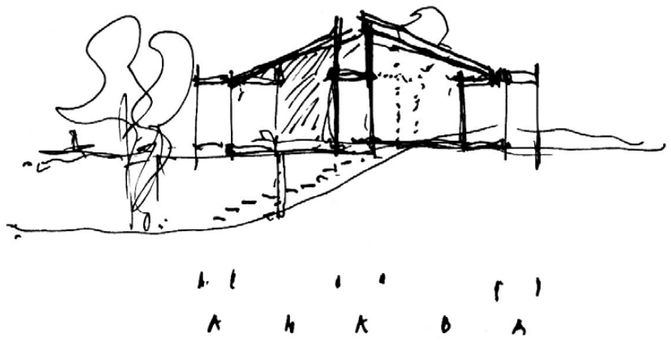
Place is the quiet collaborator, the constant background hum that informs every line. In the Turks and Caicos, place is limestone and horizon, mangrove and coral, heat and silence. It insists on specificity. The hand that sketches within it learns proportion through palms, shade through overhangs, rhythm through waves. Here, drawing becomes a way of belonging. An act of attunement to the land that will, inevitably, draw back.






Plan & section fitting with topography for Highland Villas, Apes Hill, Barbados

'S'

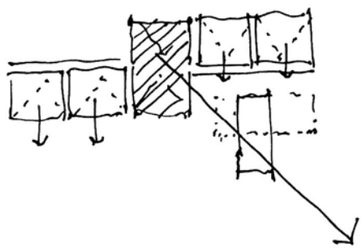


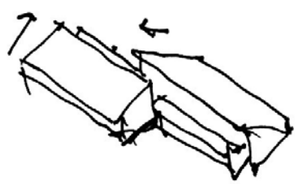
OR?

'L'

... how do we turn the 'L'?

S

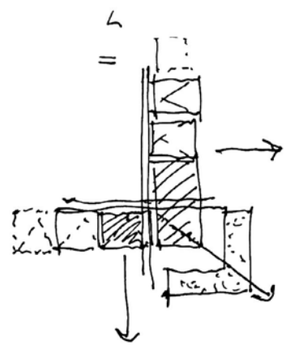




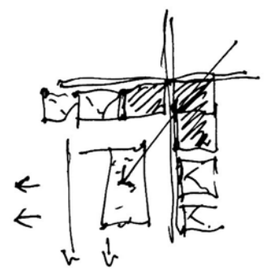
- ALIGNED

L

=



... OUTWARD?



... INWARD?

# Topographic Teachings: Alberto Ponis in Sardinia

## Our latest Road Trip Records; Lee Halligan takes us on a tour of Northern Sardinia.

Photography: Lee Halligan

From the 1960's onwards, Sardinia's northern coastline was discovered and altered radically by a boom in summer tourism. The idea that tourism is always damaging and that it concretes over and erases the natural terrain is too often a sad truth, but Alberto Ponis's work is testament to a different path that encourages the integration of second homes with an absolute precision into the landscape.

Ponis worked with a critical attitude to development that is closely inspired by nature, landscape and the island's agricultural building traditions. His buildings appear to work in symbiosis with the rugged natural surroundings, and they are positioned with a great care and sensitivity into the island's pink granite boulder-scape, often accessed only by foot and without vehicular access.

Our research into Ponis's portfolio has uncovered a rich archive of beautiful hand drawings that display the care to which the land has been measured, rocks surveyed, and buildings tailored to suit. Some buildings tilt and twist to fit within the tortuous topography, whilst others appear to be draped over the land like a cloth and directly express the imprint of the bulbous boulders beneath.

On a trip to visit his built works last summer, we scoured maps and surveyed the hillsides to uncover a number of his buildings that were so well embedded into the terrain that simply seeking a glimpse from above on a faraway peak, or climbing down a deep canyon to take a photograph from a hidden cove below, became a topographic teaching in its own right.

**Casa Bak,** Punta Sardegna, [left] by Alberto Ponis, 1968.

A main house and guest house that fit like cogs between the granite boulders. Each part radiates as far at they can to fill the rock voids without tampering with the boulders or trees. A sinuous pathway links the two, squeezing stone steps between the house and granite faces, leading to a clearing for dining under an immense oak tree, with views over to the archipelago of La Maddalena.

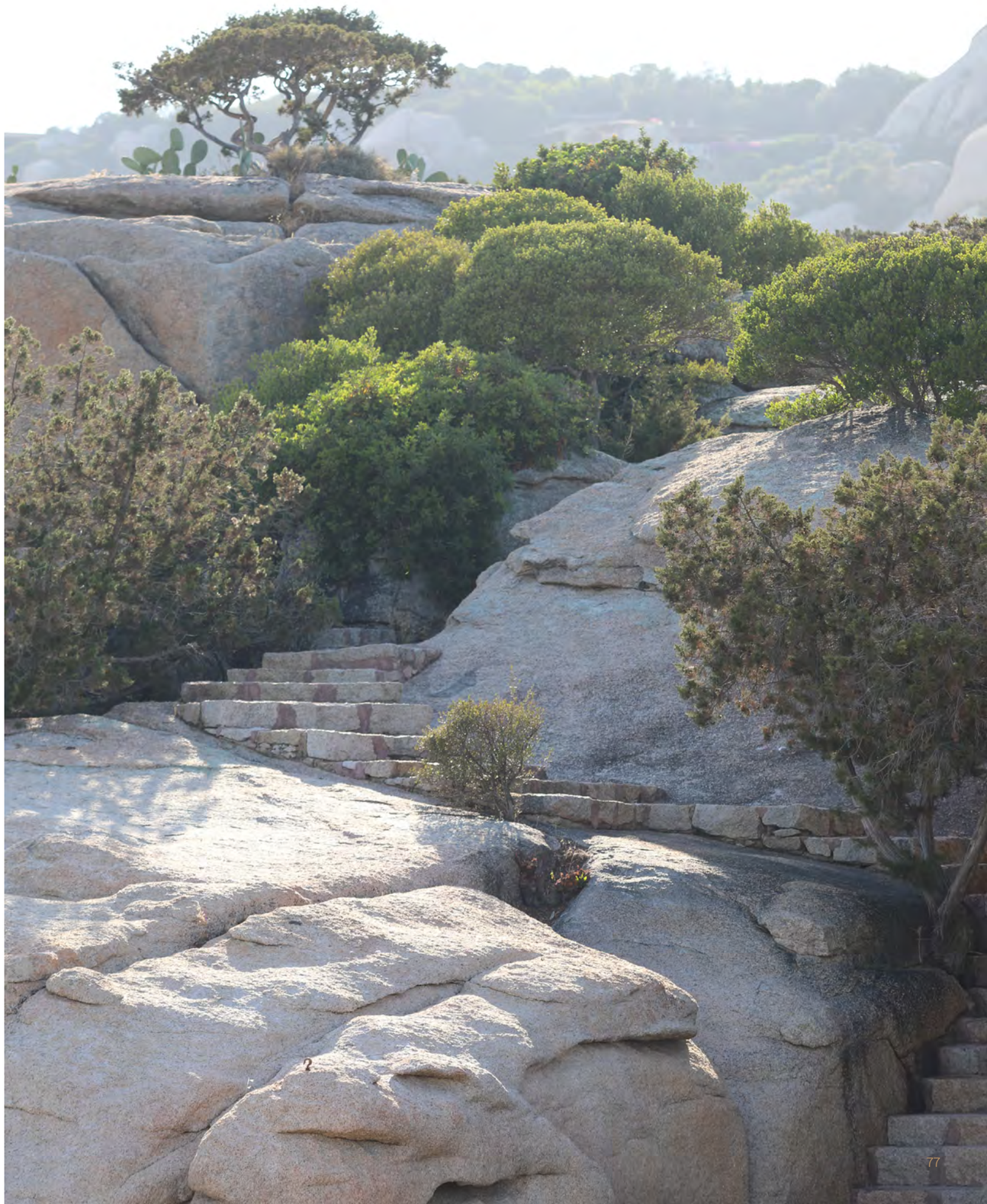
**Maisonettes Porto Rafael,** Punta Sardegna, [below] by Alberto Ponis, 1973.

A composition of 40 houses that appear like fissures in the rock, stepping in section and undulating in plan to work with the natural terrain. Nothing is forced and nothing is removed. The 'scallop' shaped roofs provide small private terraces in the cavities between each dwelling, just like the weathered hollows in the surrounding rocks.

Maisonettes Porto Rafael, by Alberto Ponis, 1973

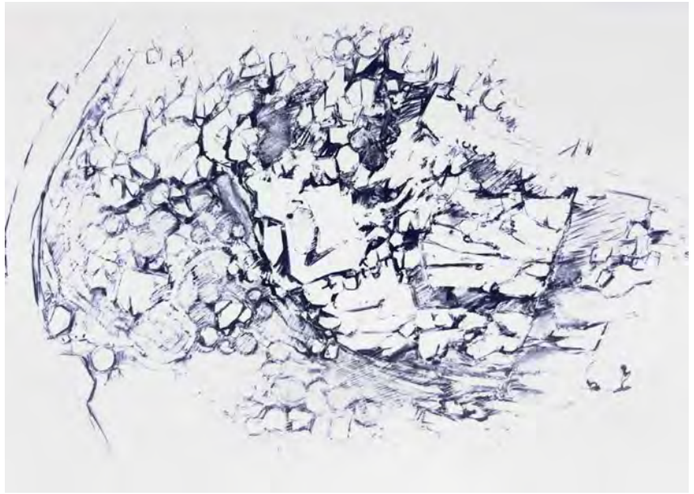
**Porto Rafael Yacht Club Pathway,** Punta Sardegna, by Alberto Ponis, 1965.

A path connecting a small beach with a small bar and yacht club. Ponis worked with a single mason effectively drawing the pathway ‘live’ on site with wooden pegs, string and the mason’s basic tools. The path meanders tightly through crevices, navigating huge boulders, and bridging small hollows to create a piece of architectural infrastructure that is perfectly formed, and almost imperceptible.



**Casa Martínez**, Punta Sardegna, by Alberto Ponis, 1966.

Casa Martínez is a bit of an outlier in Ponis's work as it is very visible in the landscape, whereas most of his homes try to hide completely. Ponis's pursuit here was for an 'integrated compositional language' with the rocks and shrubs of the site and the mountain backdrop of Monte Altura. The house, like the rocks and shrubs, appears to have be been shaped by the wind over millennia.



**Casa Scalesciani,** Costa Paradiso, by Alberto Ponis, 1977.

Clinging precariously to a cliff top, this is a house that appears to be simply draped over the rugged topography. It has an elongated, winding floor plan, that ensures every room has a view of the sea.

**Casa Hartley,** Costa Paradiso, [left] by Alberto Ponis, 1970.

'A verdant, relatively flat area nestled among rocky outcrops, one of which stands right in the middle of the view to the sea. It thus acts as a central mullion in a window, forcing the viewer to look around it to the right or left. This is what inspires the fan-like floor plan, laid out on the gentle slope'. - Alberto Ponis

**'Il Cisto' Housing,** Costa Paradiso, [below] by Alberto Ponis, 1977.

Six homes sited on sloping land that feature a fragmented section and stepping plan. Courtyards for each unit are in the fissure between the sloping roofs, like a fault line, providing privacy and light to each home.

**Stazzo Pulcheddu** by Alberto & Aldo Ponis, 1974-82.

A harmonious integration of a modern village into a hillside. All homes feature sloped roofs that echo the angle of the hill, with no fences or walls to separate and privatise the land. The dwellings cluster and coalesce with one another in small hamlets of typologies that knit into the topography in subtle swathes. The roof-scape reveals sunken courtyards and rooftop patios, with cool cloisters and shaded passageways connecting the homes.

**Casa Rangoni,** Costa Paradiso, by Alberto Ponis, 2006.

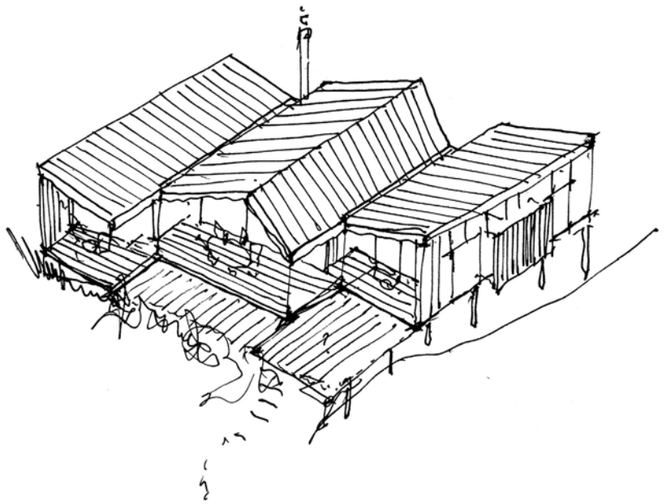
Based on the ‘stazzo’ typology of ancient shepherd’s huts that are found throughout the Gallura landscape, this home has an agrarian feel, set on a hillside above the sea. There are echoes of the stazzo typology in the elongated plan, the lateral overhang, the loggia with its five stone columns, and the roof truss that separates the living side from kitchen-dining side, bookended by bedrooms.

# Living Lightly on the Land: Barefoot Project

A 1:100 building model of the Barefoot project.

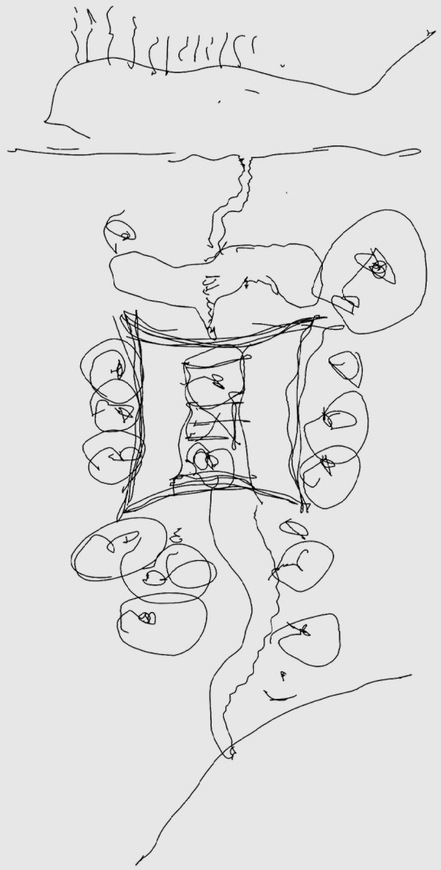
Photography of the Barefoot model, demonstrating the architectural evolution of a home that responds to its wind-pruned dune site and shifting light conditions.

Photography: Blee Halligan



# Between Inside and Out: Breaking Ground on Channel House

An Interview with Marcus Haworth and Paige Stapleton by Daisy Billowes.



Marcus Haworth and Paige Stapleton discuss a brief that demanded organic form, a banyan-centred courtyard, and fearless experimentation.

Visualisations: Blee Halligan

The brief for Channel House explicitly rejected the ‘white box’ and instead asked for a flowing, organic design. Can you talk through how you interpreted that directive, and how it shaped your design narrative?

MH From the outset the client had this love for quirky, unusual spaces. A key reference was Casa Las Olas by Young Projects in the Dominican Republic. We actually went to visit it with the clients, just to get a feel for it. They came with this desire for something really unusual and unexpected. More so, they were against doing just a white box.

PS I think the key element at Channel House is the central courtyard. The clients wanted a large banyan tree, and the entire house was designed to revolve around it. Almost as if every room engaged with that courtyard space. They also liked the idea of external circulation. They weren’t worried about having to step outside to get to the kitchen. That brought up a lot of challenges during the project and things we had to work through, but it was also pretty exciting.

MH It was definitely a design challenge around how to do the AC, the insect mitigation, all those kinds of little quirks.

PS I remember early on Stacey [the client] talking about all these organic curves and forms that she wanted from the house. We were hesitant at first because we weren’t sure how we’d actually create those flowing shapes, especially building on the island where the local workforce wasn’t used to them.  So, the brief was exciting but at the same time it was a bit overwhelming because, how do we deliver something that is quite so organic?

MH Yeah, it was pushing the boundaries from the outset wasn’t it, about everything that was typical to build in the Caribbean.

DB What were the challenges or outcomes of designing around the Banyan tree?

PS Firstly it opened up the opportunity for breezes to flow right through the house, and as a result almost every room has dual-aspect, so no rooms butt up against each other. Everything’s pulled out and they’re all flowing next to that courtyard space.

MH There’s a lot of blending of inside and outside spaces. That kind of easy transition flowing through the house paired with the quite beautiful landscape already on the site really cements it into the design. It comes right into the house and is supplemented with the new courtyard.

DB How did you envision the courtyard’s role— not just aesthetically, but atmospherically and socially?

PS I mean, you can’t really move from room to room without being seen from that courtyard.

MH It’s sort of become this jewel inside the centre of the house that is used as a social gathering space to hang out, but it’s also a transition space. You’re locking in that little bit of nature to the heart of the house. It’s open at the top, right, so you get a lot of sensory moments in there as well which transition depending on the time of day.

DB I can imagine if there was a big storm and you needed to take some food from the kitchen to the living room or something, would you just get drenched?

PS This was a big conversation with Mike [the client]. He was quite adamant to seal the courtyard in bad weather. It was almost like; get me hurricane screens, get me rain screens. Whereas, we kind of had to convince him that the building, especially the courtyard, came alive when it rained. It’s OK to walk between rooms, because you’re covered and interacting with the environment. When it’s not raining the tree creates dappled light and a shaded area in the courtyard, blurring into indoor space. It’s almost like you’d forget that you were outdoors when you open up the sliders to the kitchen. It’s a nice blurring of boundaries.

DB If we talk about the wedge-shaped plan, broader on the beach and narrowing toward

the palms— can you explain the relationship between plan form and these movement flows through indoor–outdoor transitions?

MH It started more wedge shaped, like an unusual kind of building that opened out onto the channel. And then through development, that's become more rectangular. We've managed to keep a sweeping curve on the front and back of the house which is drawn from the shape of the lot and the channel that it's on. It has a curved beach side which makes it seem slightly wider. It sort of guides you around the house, so you're always addressing little different bits of the view. It's more of a journey with layered viewpoints. So as you enter the front door, you're actually entering into the courtyard. You're entering from outside, back into outside, and your first impression as you go through the door is that beautiful courtyard. You travel around that, and then you're entering a space where the ocean view unfolds as well.

PS I think there's always been this idea of having this heavy base, something that's grounding the building and the land, and then the upper floor is a timber canopy, like you're walking in the trees.

MH It came from Lee's original sketch of a mangrove actually. The site looks up the Mangrove Cay which is a national park full of mangroves. Lee's sketch, which the client adopted, led to a more rooted base, with the lightweight treetop design.

DB Ah, and with a Mangrove of course, you can see through all their roots, right?

MH Exactly, those heavy circular trunks on the building paired with the canopy above.

PS That's what was so great about the client— they were happy to experiment with that and ran with it. It's quite rare to be given the opportunity to try something new that we'd never done before.

MH The plan pin-wheels around the courtyard and the open atrium. Downstairs, on either corner, you've got these concrete trunks. They house a spa on one side and a cinema on the other, and as you go through the courtyard, you go to the kitchen and the living space. But upstairs, all the bedroom accommodation is up there, and that sort of pins on each corner as well. So each corner has a bedroom and they all revolve in a kind of external circulation around this atrium. There's also a sunset pool on the second floor with a little bar area and from there you have a view back out towards the West.

PS It almost felt obvious to put the cinema and the spa in those drums, because they're treated differently to spaces you're using every day. They're more insular and you can control the environment when you go into these spaces. It's a completely different experience to the rest of the house, which has long views, the little courtyards and double height spaces. We have an internal atrium in the kitchen and then we have an external atrium where the tree is. So it's always quite grand and then you go into these two drums and it's like a very insular experience.

DB It's nice that they're a space to retreat. And in those spaces, you don't necessarily want to be with anyone else.

MH Yeah, meditative spaces.

PS I think also what's key is the external stair.

There's a spiral stair coming off the outdoor courtyard. We've had challenges that come with that, like drainage, wind, how we could install a hurricane screen on the top floor for when it's really bad weather, all whilst trying to keep it looking quite sculptural.

MH The staircase is one of my favourite parts of the house. It's this beautiful shell-like thing, made from concrete, all poured in situ.

DB Staircases sometimes can be quite a central part of a building, but having it come off the courtyard, did that throw the symmetry at all?

PS Not necessarily. It felt like the tree took the place of where the staircase would normally be, but because the plan upstairs is pulled out around this courtyard, it opened up spaces for the stair to sit in. De-compartmentalising the house and the floor plan opened up these negative spaces. It sort of transitions from this heavy base that goes up to the tree-top first level which feels like the stair was a destination in itself, not a separate element. The fact that we're casting it on site contains that same energy as the drums either side. It's quite elegant, I'd say and brings a little more flourish.

MH I guess the hard part we've had to think about is if you're going from your kitchen to your bedroom at night and there's a hurricane or it's horizontal rain— what is that experience? That's why we went with the poured concrete finish— it's enough to take a beating from the weather, but not so precious that materials are going to tarnish over time.

PS It's nice to think of it not as a stair, but as a sculpture. It's a total focal point that felt really balanced next to a tree that was natural and organic and had a lot of texture. They really complement each other.

DB We've mentioned the weather contributing to different kinds of natural lighting, the dappled sunlight on the tree, but can you expand a little on the initial lighting concepts?

MH It's been a really useful collaboration working with Orsman Lighting. The lighting was super important for the client, so we brought on a lighting designer. It's been a great learning experience for us because we've got to see a focus and dedicated development of that.

PS I remember we had a meeting with them [Orsman] and we presented some work in progress renders, which were different to the ones that they've previously seen, and they immediately rejected it. It was all a bit white with not much texture. The bluntness was so helpful to hear, so we worked with them to retain a lot of texture which showed us how hand in hand materiality and light go together, to bring out the features as much as possible.

DB How did you calibrate artificial and natural lighting to complement each other across different times of day and different spaces?

MH They use the term 'Quiet Lighting'. The lights are meant to be imperceptible, so it's a secondary, more natural thing— it's not a floodlit house all the time. They play a lot with the shadows and darkness, and that in itself creates quite a lot of mood and atmosphere as you're walking through. It just feels a lot more natural to your eye.

PS 'Sculpting Darkness' was another great term, as if they don't think of it as lighting, but anti-darkness.

DB This project incorporates specially curated furniture. How was the conversation between architecture and interiors managed— particularly to ensure that furniture feels integral, not decorative?

MH There are definitely some organic forms. The kitchen island is a kind of kidney bean shape, which the client wanted— something curvy and unusual— but it has helped to straighten a few edges and rationalise a few parts of the house along the way. A lot of the built-in furniture is rounded, but in the more rectilinear space, you get these little break

moments, these breathers almost. Stacey [the client] has also sourced a lot of artisanal, local craft which is a first for us— clients driving that. She went to North Caicos and enlisted a basket weaver, for instance. A woman that hand-weaves rope and baskets and she's spinning some rope to wrap up the columns. It's been really nice to have these moments of local craft— things you could only find by going to the museums, visiting North, and really making an effort to seek these people out.

DB These entry points that clients may bring in must open up some really innovative thinking. What opportunities did that collaboration open up?

PS That collaboration with the client has been great, they've been so involved which has really made it their home.

MH The most liberating was the client's brief of anti 'white box'. They didn't want a white surface anywhere, they wanted quirkiness. That gave us the opportunity to really push ourselves to do something unusual, and maybe question something more than we typically would. Instead of the usual cost cutting route of making something white, it was always a decision of where to cut down size to keep that quality. So it was usually a quality over quantity decision.

DB Is there anything that pushed you in an architectural sense on this project?

MH It has got to be the concrete drums— something we're casting on site in one form. We've never really done a big concrete curve on that kind of scale.

PS The client had seen the Lina Bo Bardi 'Restaurante do Coaty' where they had cast it with bamboo.

MH Yeah, and then we took that and ran with it. Something like this has definitely not been done in Turks yet. It's a totally new kind of method out here. We did a lot of research on working out the textures, the construction method, everything. We're using form liners that have this pre-embedded texture onto it to pour the concrete into which will leave this beautiful cast form.

PS I really enjoyed all the conversations about materiality. I felt really connected and it was a bonding moment with the client when we took the time to hand pick all the materials for the project. It was so nice to get caught up in their excitement for everything. Even the sunset pool on the upper floor, which was quite risky for us because it's a pool above the front door— which comes with its own issues— but they were pushing us to do it. Where we might have cost cut other areas, we've still got this incredible dipping pool above the front door. It's quite rare in a project to have something so luxurious at the front.

DB Are there any materials that you haven't ever used before that you found through this?

MH There are a lot of new wood veneer types and various different micro-cement finishes with different wall coverings. I mean, the list of materials in the house is extensive. The thatching on the tiki bar for instance, that's very unusual. We've not done that before. There's also a double height 25ft tall wall, all clad in natural stone. We actually went to the DR with the clients on a research trip, specifically to look for this stone, visiting quarries. We're also working with a local stone mason to figure out how to mount 6ft wide giant boulders.

DB Was there anything you were challenged with because of the specific climate out in Turks?

MH Channel House is very much about living outside, which is very different to your typical AC'd house. This project really embraces the fact that you're protected, you're under a cover, but you're very much experiencing the surrounding landscape. Then you've got different times of the day, the movement of the sun, the view, when you might sit in those spaces. It's a design where you may enjoy one space for the morning, and then naturally flow to the other side of the house for the evening.

PS The majority of our conversations that drive the design are to do with the climate. The positioning of the louvres on the outside of the top level, shading for shelter, the horizontal wind, the drainage strategy. All these small details added to the design that was focussed around the climate. Even the roof-form above the dipping pool— we talked to the client about the solid roof because of the potential rainfall. We had to prove how you'd still get sunset views and you'd still get enough sunlight, but not direct sunlight.

DB Talk me through the remaining timeline, now we're on site? What are you most excited about during this construction period?

MH Yes, we broke ground a month ago and our pencilled competition is July 2027. I'm really excited for the landscape and lighting elements, which will come right at the end. I think this is potentially going to be the best collaboration we've done between Natalie [landscaping] and Orsman [lighting]. It's going to be amazing, the level of thought and care that's gone into design, it's going to be quite special.

PS The downstairs pool is very exciting, it's just so different to the ones I've designed before. It's incredibly organic in shape, which has already proven difficult for Marcus to set out on site. It's coral stone, inspired by Raymond Jungles landscaping. I'm quite excited to see how that sits against the ocean.

DB Lastly, tell me where you'd spend time in Channel House at the best possible time of day.

MH Sunset in the spa pool, on the upper level. The sun will dip below the roof line just as the evening is setting in, an hour before sunset. I can just picture being there, beer in hand— the best.

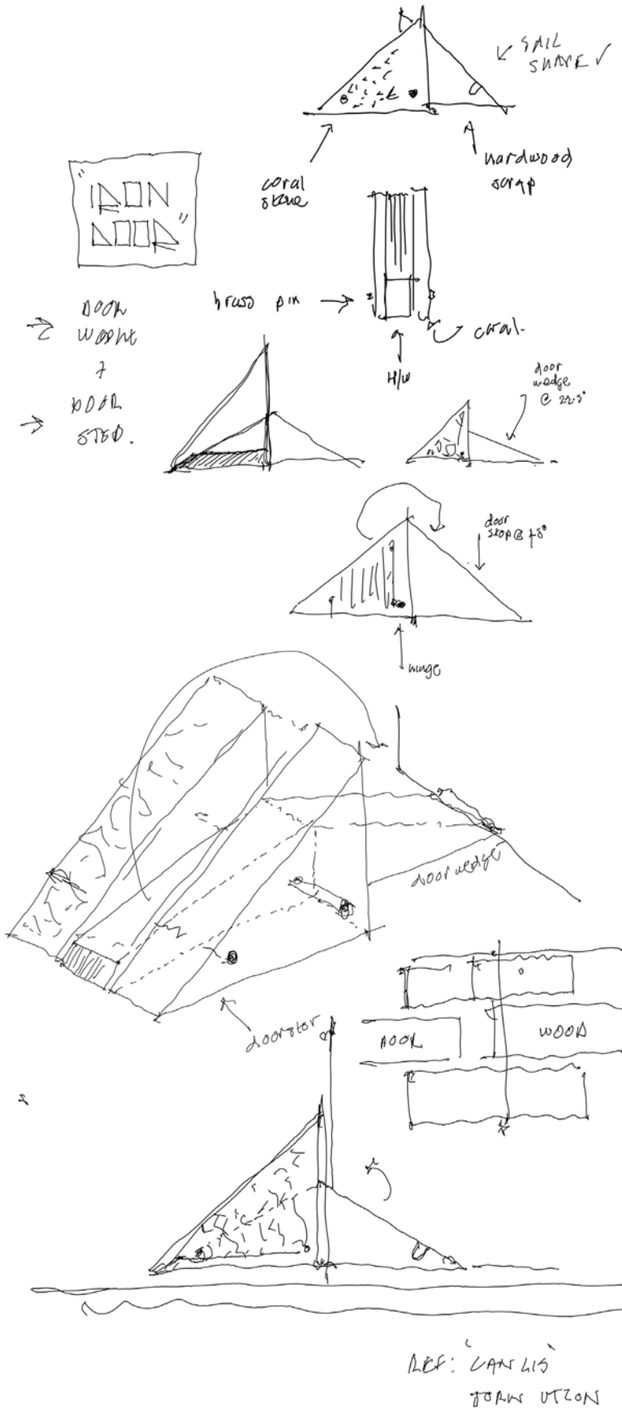
PS I'd love to experience a big tropical storm and just see the rain pour through the centre of the house— that would be magical. The building will come alive... and prove our drainage worked.

# Designing With Weight: Blee Halligan's Hardware Charette

Showcasing a two-hour design sprint in recycled island hardware.

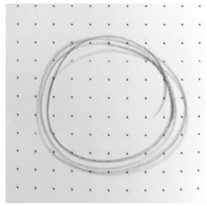
In an internal two-hour charette, the team were challenged to design something useful and durable using melted down car parts, to be cast in sand on a Turks and Caicos beach. This feature presents three shortlisted proposals alongside the final winning design, exploring how constraint, material reuse, and making-by-hand can produce objects with real purpose and presence.

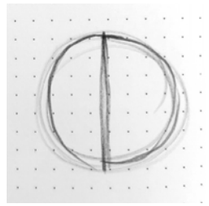
Photography: Blee Halligan




Lee Halligan: 'Iron Door': Door Wedge. Reference to Jørn Utzon's 'Can Lis' in Mallorca

**Concept**
Wabi-sabi | A Japanese philosophy that finds beauty in imperfection, impermanence, and the natural cycle of growth and decay.



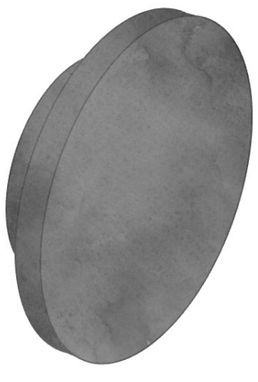




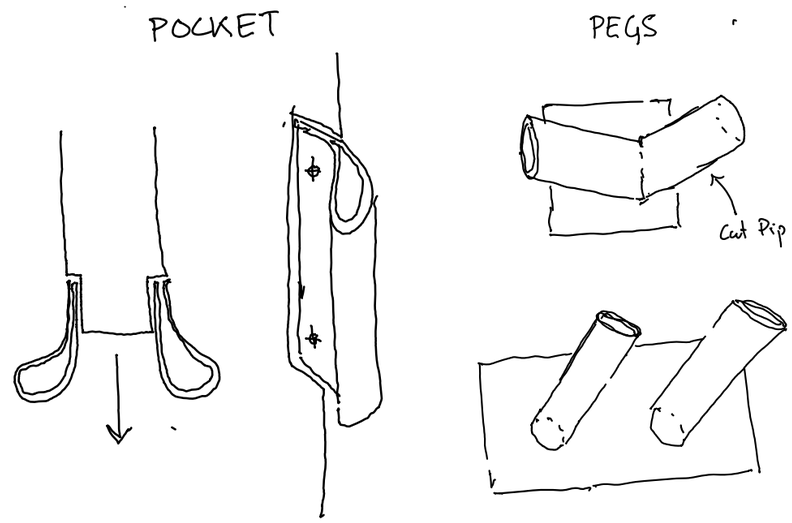


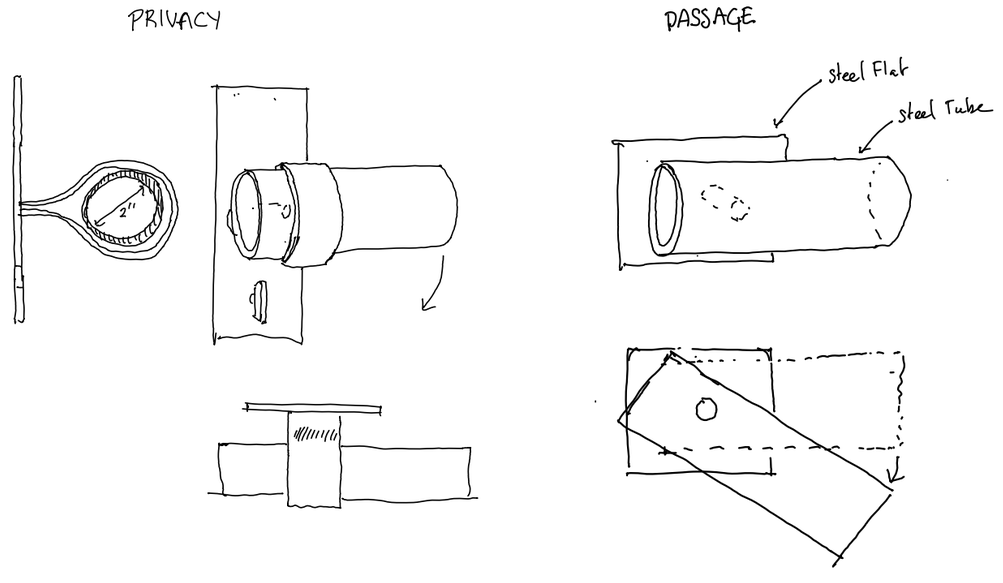
**Sketches** [left]
A single door handle
A double door handle
A door knocker

**Models** [below]
A single door handle
A double door handle
A door knocker







Indian Caves, Middle Caicos

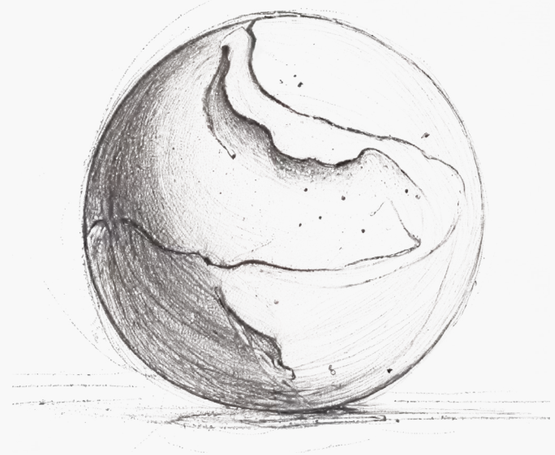
Blee Halligan

Hardware Project | 2025/26

BH-HP-01
Door Weight Mock Up

BH-HP-01

| | |
|---|---|
| Height | ~ 8″ |
| Diameter | ~ 8″ |
| Tolerance Range | ~ 1″ |

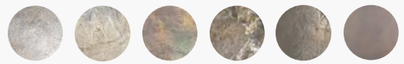


## Product Description

Inspired by the wild, untamed beauty of Turks and Caicos, these pieces emerge from the land's own irregularities. Forged from salvaged metal and cast directly in the sand, the process itself imprints subtle variations - textures, contours, and crevices that echo iron shores, hidden caves and windswept coastlines. Spherical in form yet organically irregular, every weight reflects the rugged, sculpted shapes of the landscape, creating a tactile connection to the island's spirit.

Designed with intention, each piece counteracts gusty trade winds, holding doors effortlessly while bringing a quiet, grounding presence of the natural landscape into the home. Unique in every detail, each weight develops a living patina over time, responding to light, touch, and its surroundings - evolving with the home like a fragment of the island carried indoors.

## Tonal Variation



| | |
|---|---|
| Material Origin | TCI Scrap Metal Yard |
| Method | Sand-Cast |
| Finish | Hand Polished |
| Weight | Varies ~8-15kg |
| Performance | Indoor / Outdoor Use |

Indian Caves, Middle Caicos

Door weight mock-up: Computer Generated Visuals

# Newly Completed: Jungle Gym

A raw form amongst mature trees, Jungle Gym is set in the garden of our Dawn Beach Villa refurbishment project.

The structure is set amongst the existing trees, with three sides of the façades in full height glazing including frameless corner windows, which give the experience of exercising in the garden. The material palette was kept minimal to enable a sculptural presence in the garden, with robust board-marked concrete used both internally and externally.

Photography: Jack Hobhouse

Published in London, UK
by Blee Halligan

ISSN 2978-1620