

# Studio and Library



Tesuque, New Mexico  
Completed March 2003  
Gross area 2000 square feet

# Concept Statement

The So-called “Santa Fe Style” of architecture has, in recent years, become a cliché of deformed adobe walls, over-scaled, nonfunctional vigas, and inappropriately “appropriated” ersatz details from older buildings incorporated into oversized, multi-million dollar “trophy” homes. Instead of “less is more,” the prevalent designs in Santa Fe today express an “irrational exuberance” for undisciplined “kitsch” masquerading behind the misguided belief that this represents the continuation of an authentic, indigenous regional “style”.

**CLIENT & PROGRAM:** The client of this project is an established, commercial photographer with strong visual and aesthetic sensibilities, who requires a studio of spatial simplicity, functional efficiency with human scale and proportions. The main space elements include a high ceiling light filled studio for portrait and group photography with critical dimensions dictated by the camera lens most suitable for full height full frame images of standing subjects. In addition to auxiliary spaces (darkroom, kitchen, bathroom) a mezzanine sleeping area and a library gallery for research and display of the photographer’s extensive collection of books and prints.

**ARCHITECTURE:** This building, located on a 7 acre site, represents an environmentally sensitive approach to sustainable contemporary architecture derived from the specific site and program requirements rather than from pre-conceived and misinformed notions of local “style.”

**FORM :** the building evolves directly from the shape of the narrow hilltop site; the complexities of the multi-functional program; and the restraints of local zoning and building codes. The restricted building site required precise placement of the footprint to avoid cutting large pinion trees and to meet Santa Fe County slope regulations. The steep western slope and geological form of the hillside is reflected in the curve of the north-facing library wall, which is fenestrated only at the extreme east and west ends, leaving an unobstructed 12’ high, 60’ long wall for artwork display, The long south elevation also allows a 15’ high, 40’ long wall in the main studio to flexibly accommodate the photographer’s needs. Great care has been given to the preservation and maintenance of the natural site while the building “fits” the topography, following and enhancing the general nature of the terrain.

**MAJOR MATERIALS and SYSTEMS:** Utilizing a combination of new materials and techniques with traditional, proven materials familiar to local craftsmen, this building signals a new freedom and imagination for the architecture of the Santa Fe area. Concrete foundations/reinforced concrete slab-on-grade w/ hydroponic under-floor heating. Concrete/foamcore insulating exterior walls – long-span wood roof trusses w/ rubber membrane roof. Shop painted steel windows and doors w/ Lo-E double glazing and a 13’ high x 18’ wide steel overhead glazed garage door.

Minimal window openings for controlled photographic lighting. General lighting is line incandescent or low voltage. Passive solar heating in main studio, No cooling system required due to efficiently insulated walls and roof. An underground gray water storage tank holds harvested waste and roof water for indigenous plant irrigation. Stainless steel modular kitchen – custom designed wood cabinets and book shelves. Custom designed photographic darkroom with waste water, chemical, and air filtration systems.

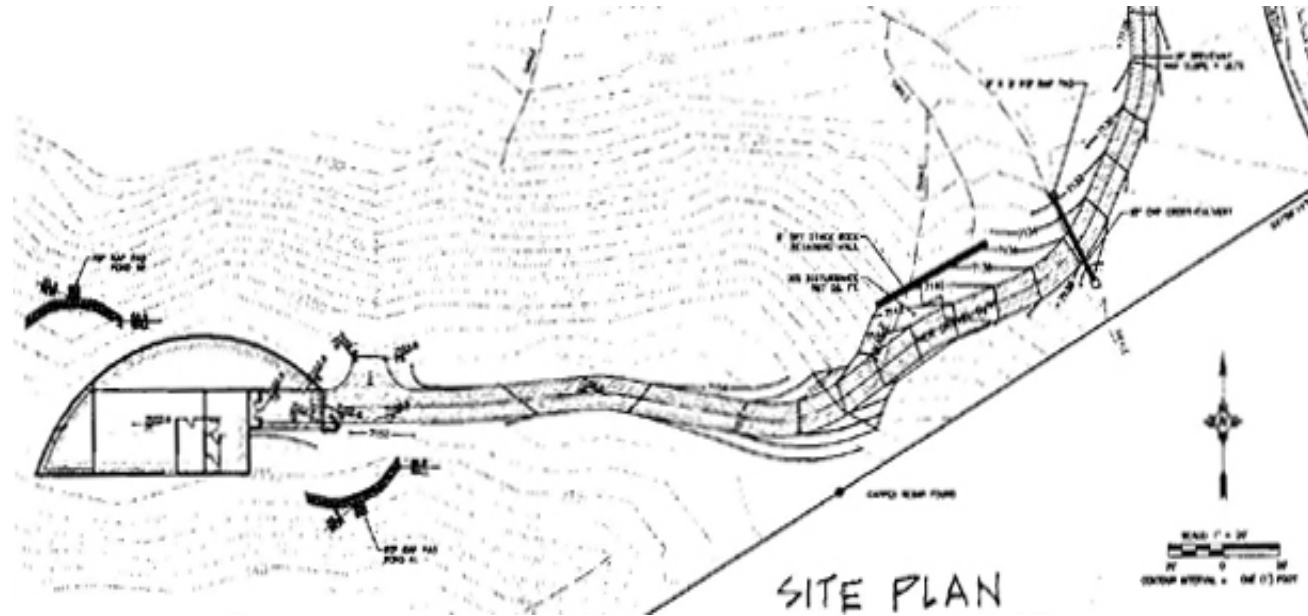
**COLORS:** Local regulations strongly encouraged the use of exterior stucco to maintain continuity of materials in the community. The stucco colors are all developed by the architect from observations of the local natural environment, the juniper and pinion forest, and colors of indigenous vegetation: desert gray/green (chamisa), Russian sage blue, and iron-oxide (ox-blood) red.

**ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CONSERVATION:** The insulating values of the walls and roof combined with minimal windows on elevations with maximum sun exposure contribute to a highly efficient, energy conserving building. The long east-west orientation of the flat roof is designed to receive photovoltaic solar collector cells tied to the electric grid which will result in a positive production of electricity in a second-phase of construction.

**BUDGET AND ECONOMY:** The structural systems in the building save time and labor, provide integral mass, support, and insulation, and result in economies less expensive than traditional adobe construction. The project cost did not exceed \$200 per square foot.

**PHILOSOPHY OF DESIGN:** This entire project mirrors the philosophy which the architect has pursued throughout a long career: to eliminate inessential, decorative elements in a distillation of site advantages and constraints and the functional program into an expression in which the occupant/user interaction with the building becomes the main focus of the design.

# Site Plan



The building is situated atop a steep hill overlooking the Jemez mountains to the west . The gravel access road is intended for minimal use and deliveries. Daily pedestrian access is by a gravel path from a parking area below.

## Aerial View



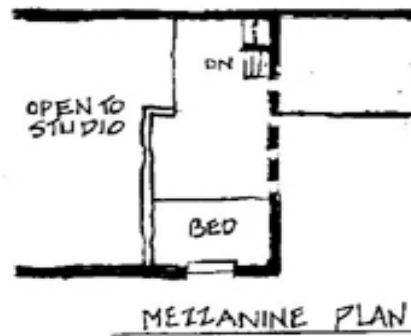
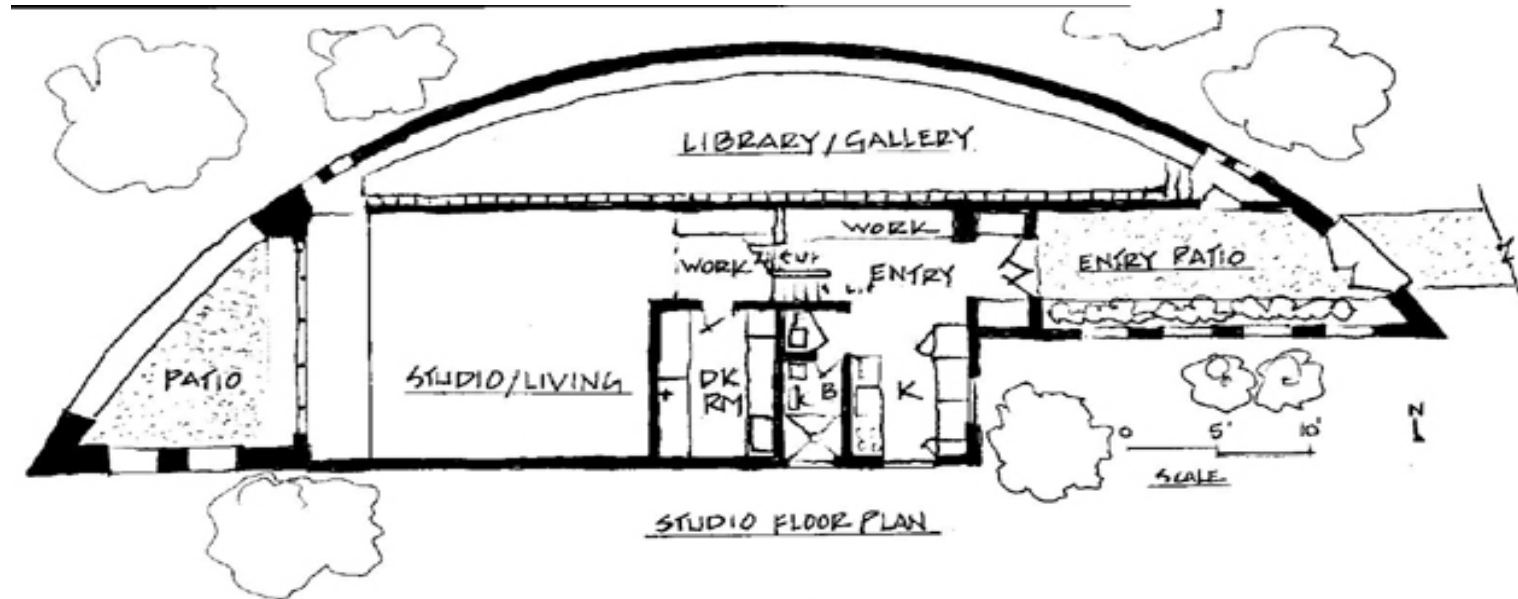
View of the North Curved Wall Library and West Patio

## East Entry Elevation



The East Elevation presents a sharp prow which completes the curve of the North wall and forms the portal to the Entry Patio

# Floor Plan

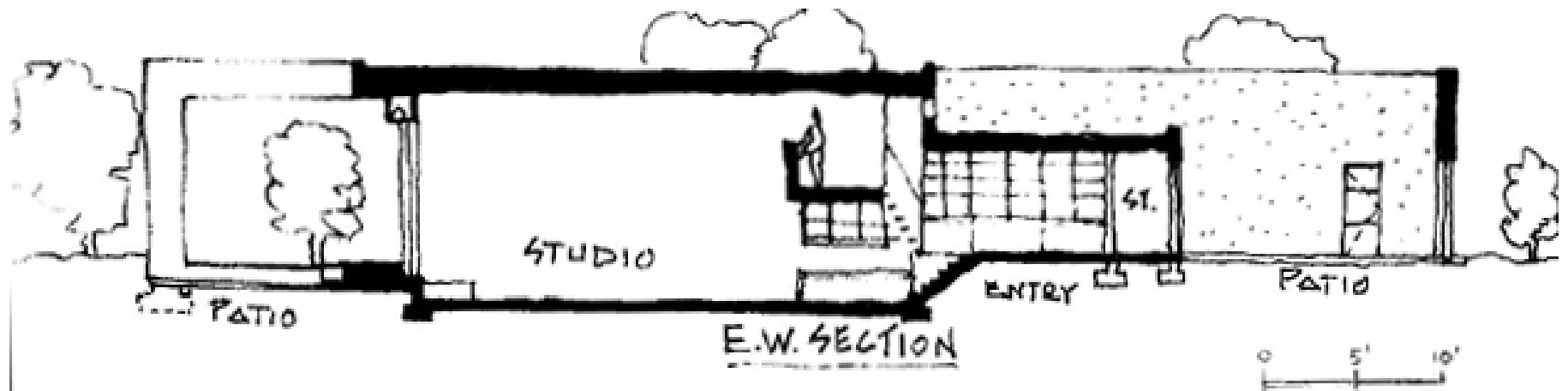


## South Elevation



The South Elevation extends along the ridge which drops sharply into treed arroyos . The gray green stucco walls are punctured by 3' X 3' steel windows in the kitchen and bath areas and the patios by 4 ' X 4' view openings which also serve for photography settings

## East- West Section



Due to height restrictions the main studio is recessed below grade in order to achieve a 15' clear ceiling height. The entry patio is at grade level with stairs leading up to the mezzanine and down to the studio

## South Patio Elevation



## Entry Patio Looking East



# Kitchen



## Kitchen with Glass Bathroom Wall



A full height translucent laminated glass wall separates the kitchen and bath

## Mezzanine Sleeping Platform

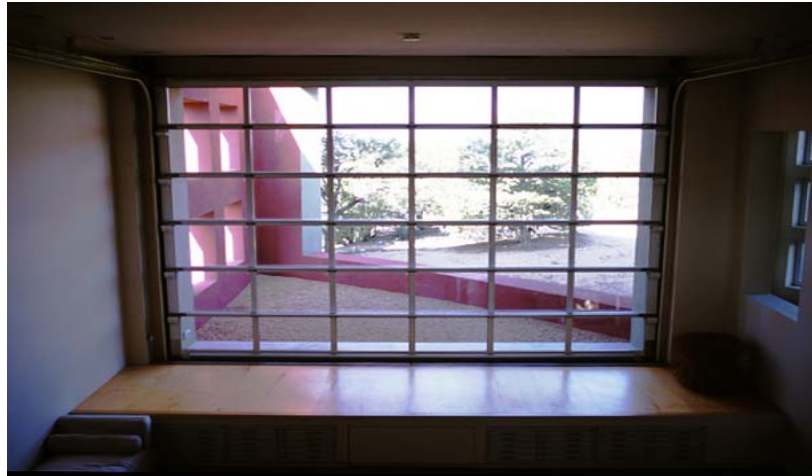


The mezzanine is reached from the main entry by a steel “ship’s ladder.” The built-in bed platform is shaped by the need to extend the photographic enlarger through the 7’ darkroom ceiling . The bed platform contains custom maple drawers, telephone and television capabilities.

## Studio looking East to Mezzanine



## West Overhead Garage Door



The 13' high by 18' wide door opens to extend the studio into the natural landscape

## West Elevation



## West Patio looking Southwest



# Library



The curved Diamond plaster Library wall and “banco” serve as display for art work. The 12’ high by 65’ long wall of gridded plywood bookcases stores the owners extensive collection of books and prints