

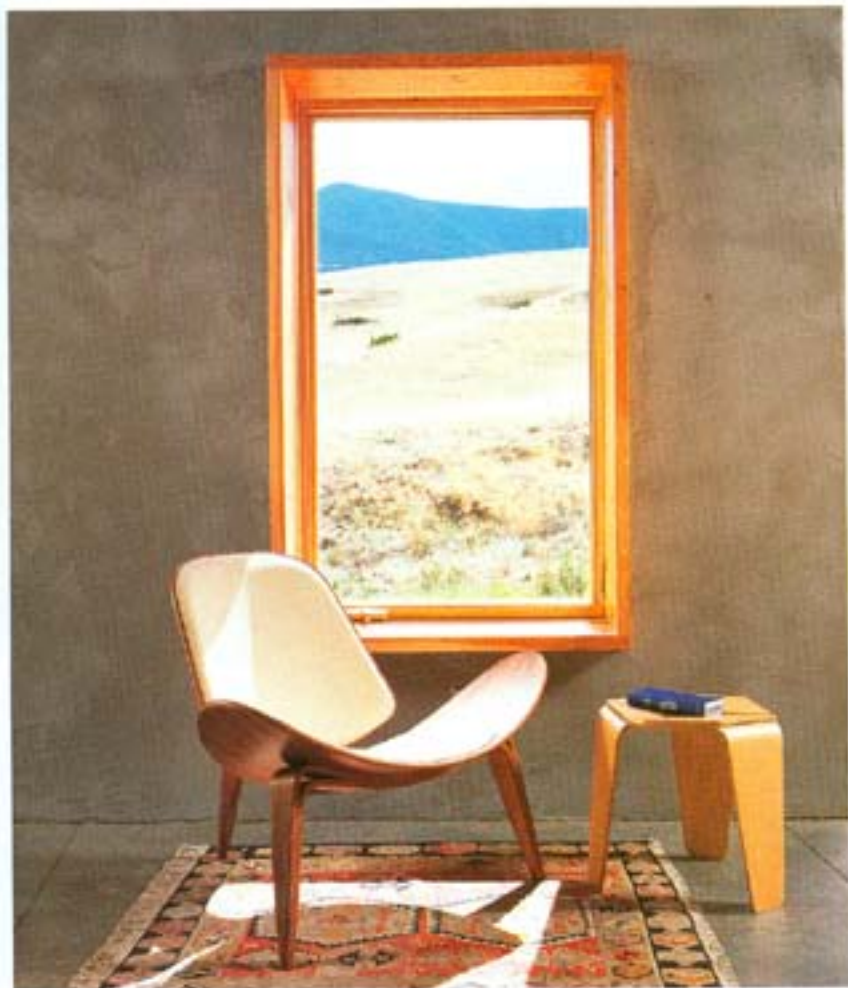
For their own house and design studio near Livingston, Lori Ryker and Brett Nave took inspiration from the Montana landscape of mountains and rolling grassland. The buildings, clad in Douglas fir, steel and glass, "are situated between the folds of the hills," says Ryker, "appearing, disappearing and sliding down the natural slope."



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

LORI RYKER AND BRETT NAVE INCORPORATE
SUSTAINABLE IDEAS AND CONTEMPORARY DESIGN
IN THEIR HOUSE NEAR LIVINGSTON, MONTANA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL WARCHOL / TEXT BY MICHAEL ENNIS



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The house and design studio that Lori Ryker and Brett Nave built for themselves stand in the mythic West, on rolling prairie just outside the old frontier town of Livingston, Montana. Surrounded by mountain ranges and one of the nation's largest and most pristine wilderness areas, this is where Crow Indians once hunted and Lewis and Clark trekked, where Hollywood storytellers like Sam Peckinpah and Robert Redford followed in the footsteps of western legends such as mountain man Jim Bridger and hard-drinking frontier woman Calamity Jane.

But Ryker and Nave, wife and husband principals in the firm Ryker/Nave Design, didn't come to Livingston eight years ago to dwell in the area's fabled past. "The pioneering spirit is about discovering the new," explains Ryker. "The problem with the myth of the West is that it's been stuck in nostalgia." In addition to pushing western regionalism far beyond Wild West clichés, Ryker and Nave have championed sustainable building that aspires to be as innovative aesthetically as it is friendly to the environment.

"We don't see architecture in a conventional way," says Ryker, a native Texan who earned her master's in architecture from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design and a Ph.D. from Texas A&M University. "We knew we were going to have to show that a building can be rooted in contemporary times without being industrial or cold and that it can respond not only to a specific place but to how we should live, which is where the environmental part comes in."

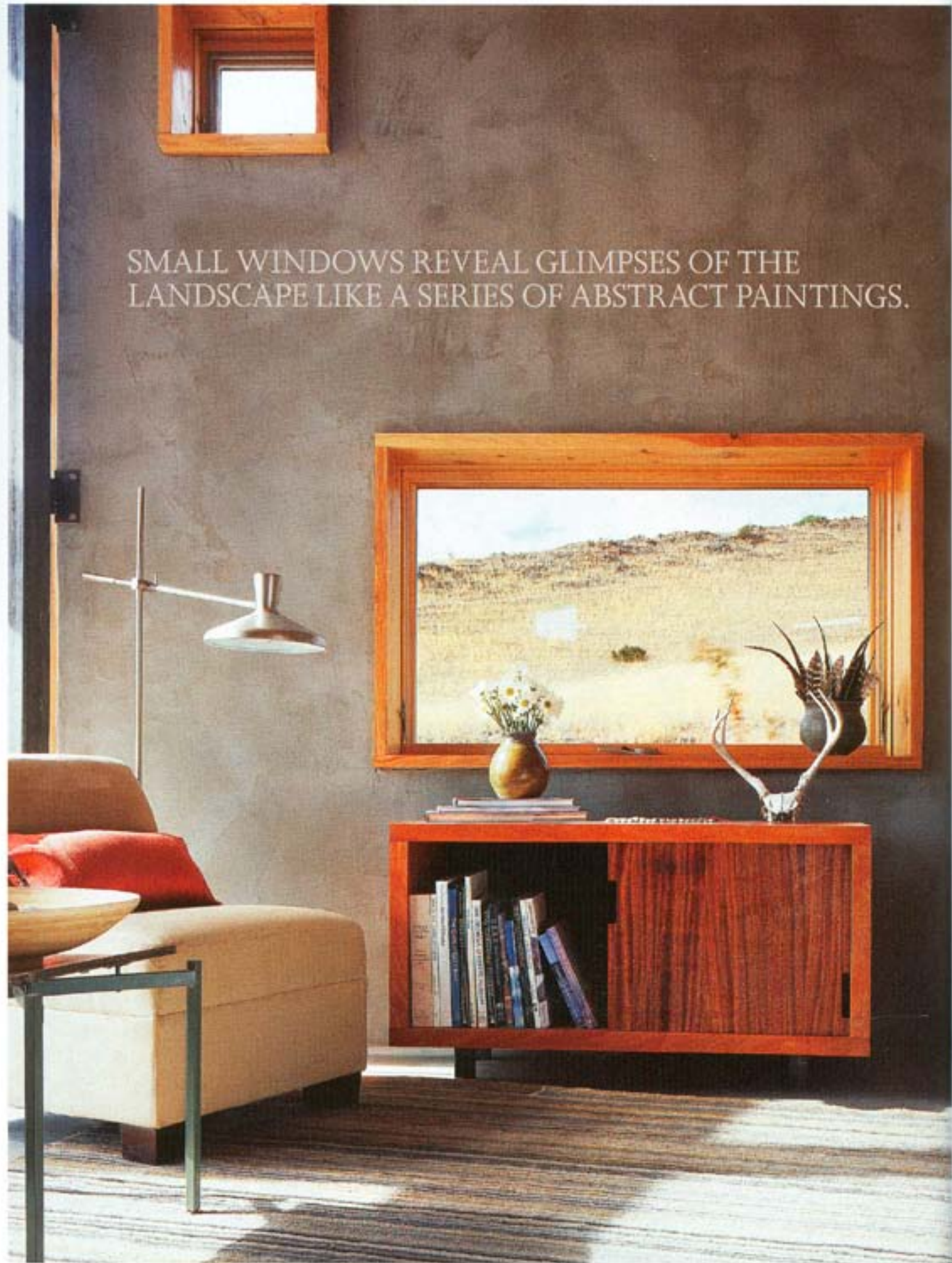
The result is a house that challenges conventional thinking at every turn—almost literally—as it flows in subtle but unexpected angles up and down a grassy hillside. Unlike the palatially scaled ersatz log cabins that are popular in the region, this house doesn't strive to stand out against Montana's big sky but instead is nestled into the land. "You're living on the same plane as the land out-

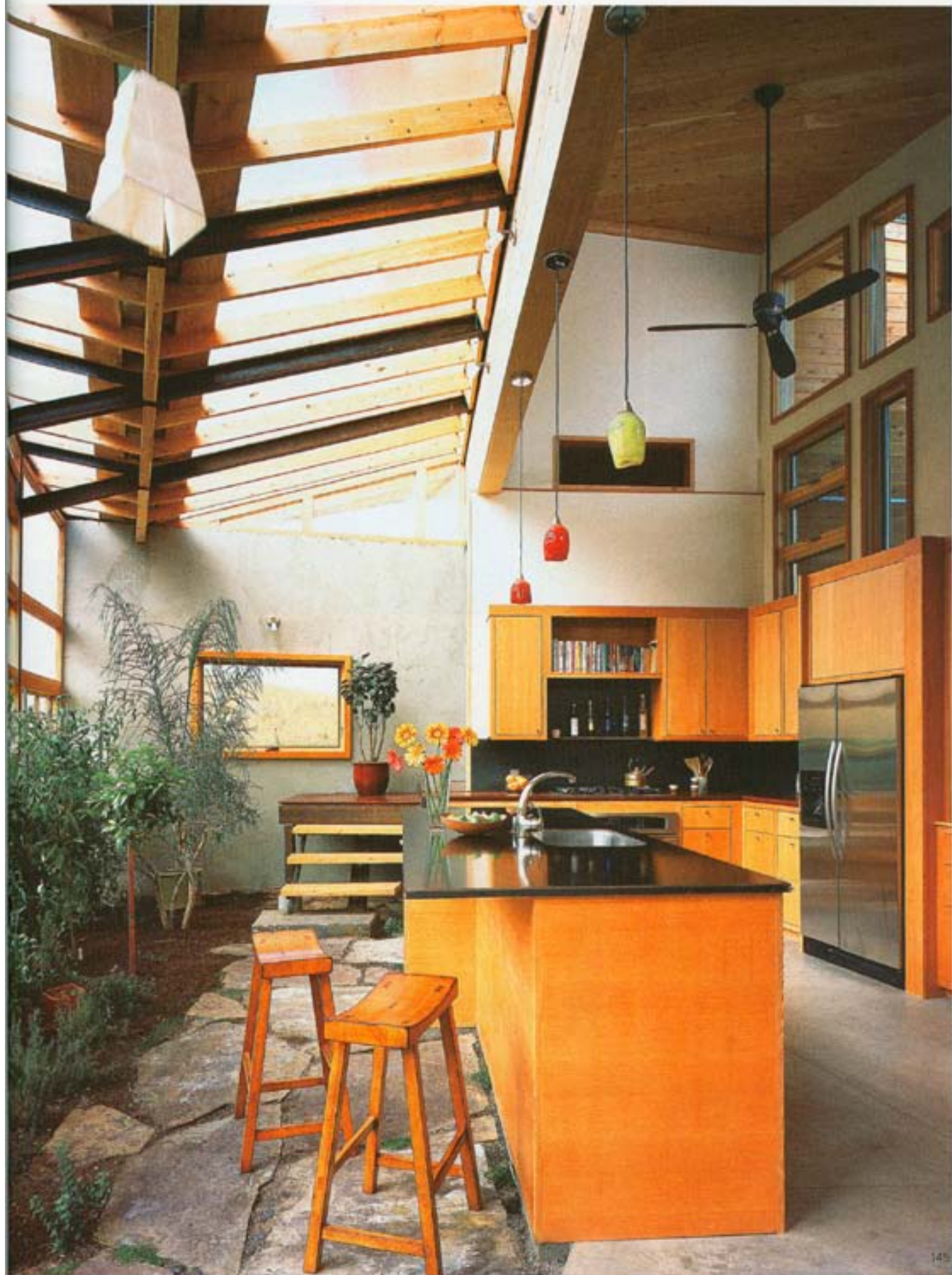
above left: A Hans Wegner chair and an Offi stool are set on a Turkish rug by a window near the entry.

opposite: A hallway leads from the guest wing to the main living areas. A custom steel track allows a sliding wood-and-cotton-fabric door to close off the guest bedroom (right). Nave designed the side table, made of salvaged aromatic cedar. The flooring is massaranduba, a sustainably harvested South American wood. The pendant is from Garcia Art Glass.



SMALL WINDOWS REVEAL GLIMPSES OF THE
LANDSCAPE LIKE A SERIES OF ABSTRACT PAINTINGS.







previous page, left: Wood-framed windows set into a pigmented plaster wall flood light into the living room, where a side chair from Pottery Barn offsets a Crate & Barrel rug. The custom mahogany cabinet was designed by Nave.

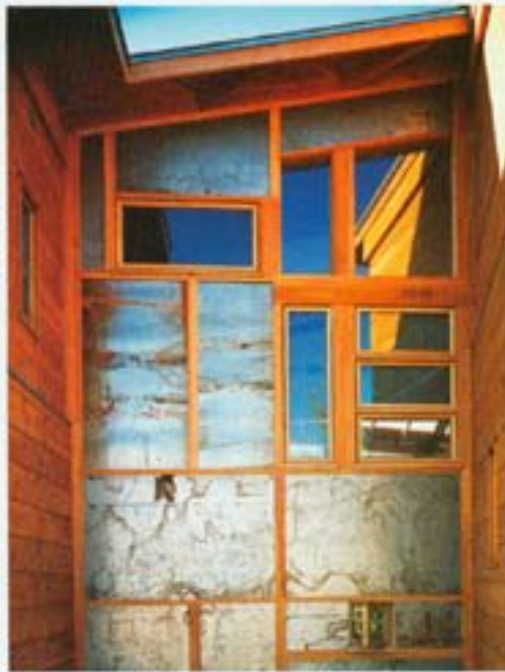
previous page, right: A polycarbonate roof collects rainwater and allows the kitchen to double as a greenhouse. "It extends nature to the inside," Ryker says, "and permits passive solar gain in the winter." The refrigerator is from KitchenAid, the sink and fixture are by Franke.

side," says Nave, who was raised in Alabama and educated at Auburn University's School of Architecture. And as his partner notes, the essential metaphor is no longer the West's storied human history but its sublime natural history. "This house wasn't derived from any architectural vernacular," Ryker says. "The form and how it sits are specifically a response to the landscape. That's it."

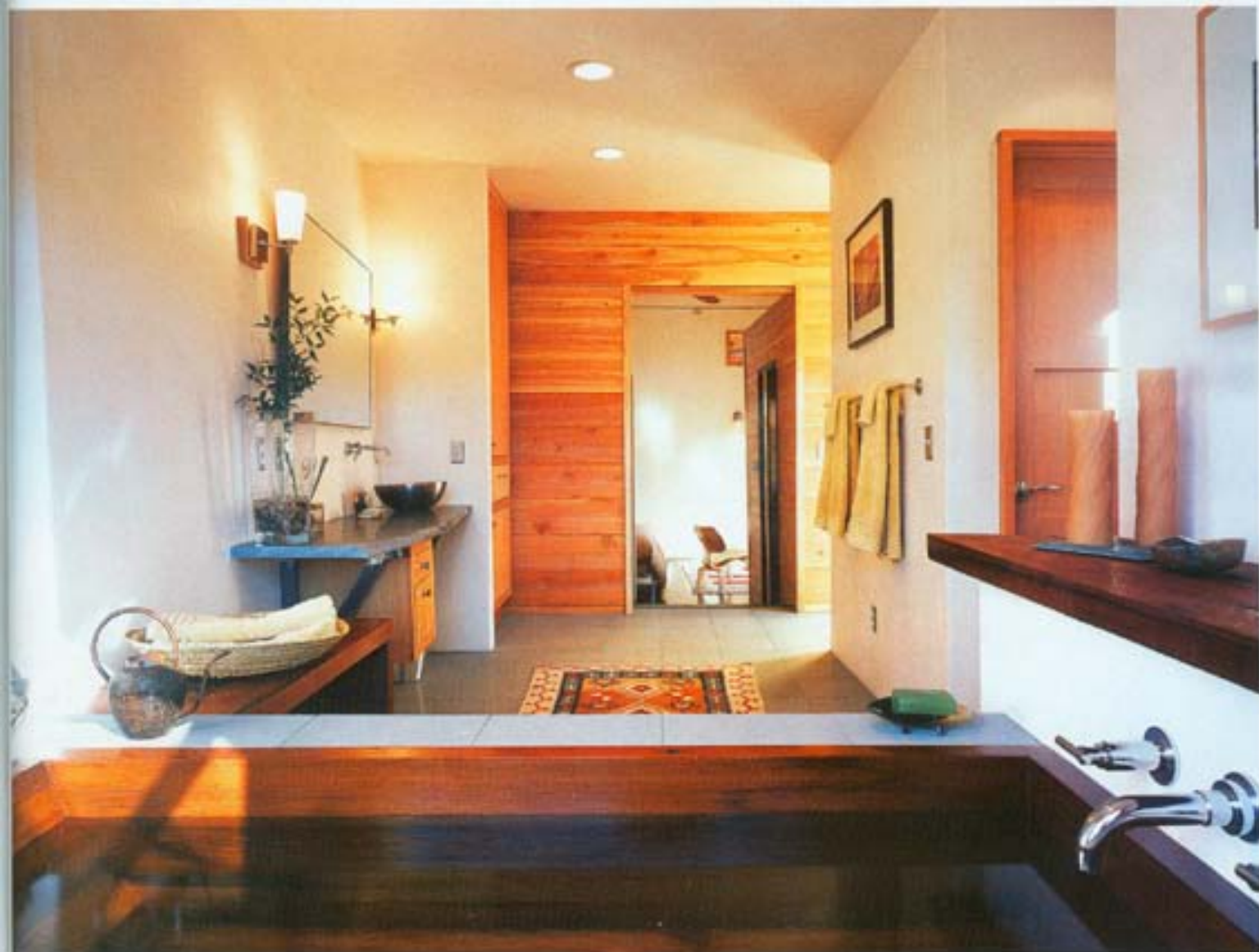
Inside, the ground-hugging design opens up spectacularly. While the northern exposure is punctuated with small windows that reveal glimpses of the landscape like a series of abstract paintings, the southern flank features fourteen-foot-high glass in the living room and a kitchen that is half greenhouse, its large garden of herbs and tomato vines shared by a pair of resident ducks. "The idea was to blur the distinction between outside and inside," says Nave. Yet surprisingly, all that transparency also represents a remarkably effective passive-solar-heating strategy.

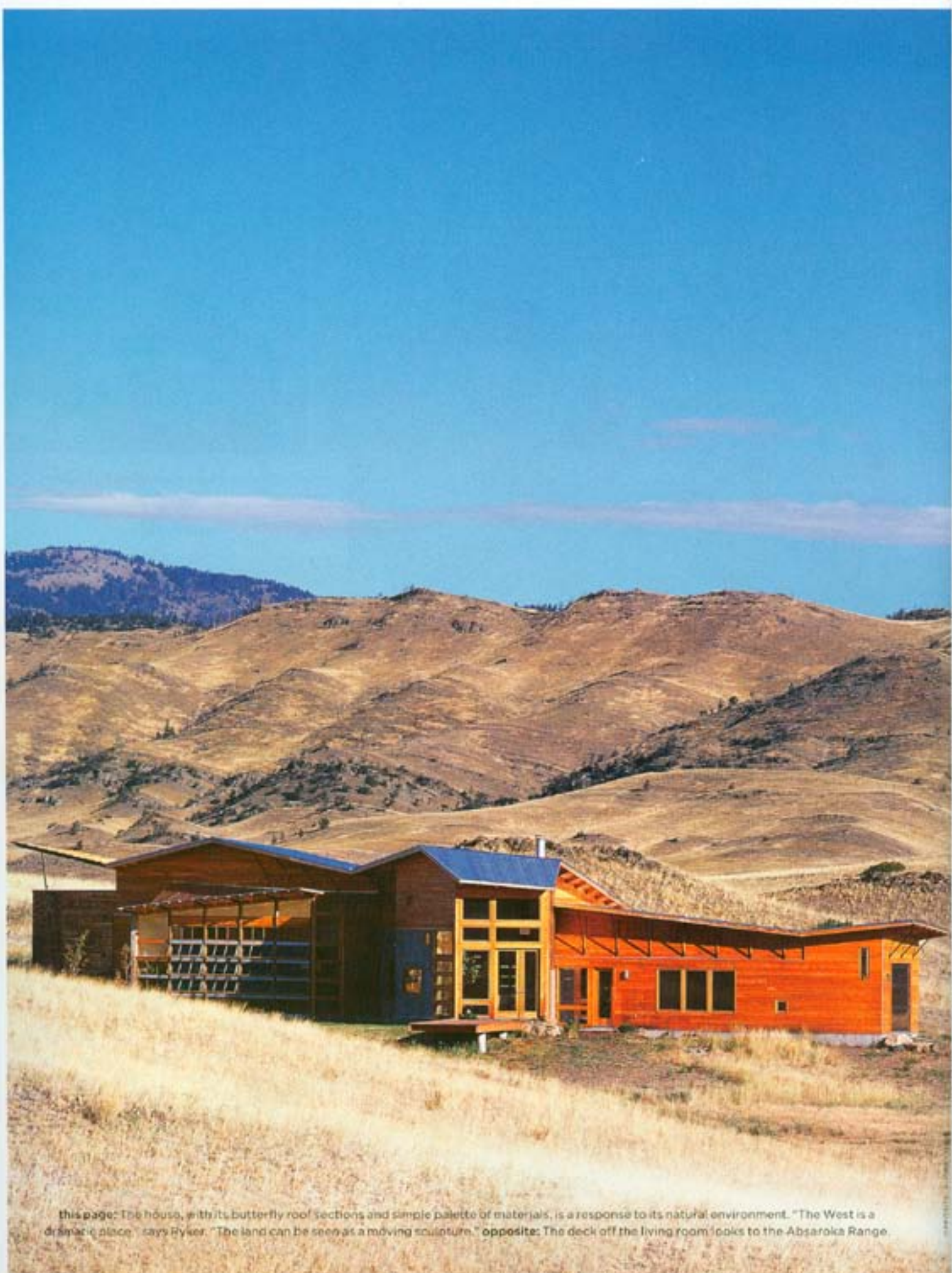
Green design was a passion the couple shared long before sustainable became a buzzword, and Ryker has elevated the discussion with her recent book, titled *Off the Grid: Modern Homes + Alternative Energy*. "What I tried to accomplish with this book," she says, "was to show that these alternative technologies can be integrated into a design without detracting from it." Ryker and Nave's house is a tutorial in responsible building and aesthetics. Planks of blond Douglas fir, milled locally, sheathe some exterior and interior walls, while floors in the private areas, with radiant heat tubes, are a contrastingly dark massaranduba, a certified renewable Brazilian hardwood. The roof, with three butterfly sections, echoes the profile of the mountain ridges behind it. But for all its visual excitement, the butterfly configuration also provides a series of peaks and valleys that effectively channel rainwater to collecting areas, where it's used along with recycled bathwater to irrigate the outdoor garden.

This iconoclastic green house is both a cozy home and an object lesson for the next generation of architects. "If all we have is sustainable building," says Ryker, "we'll create some buildings that use less energy, but we won't inspire the world to change." +



opposite: The master bath volume is clad with rolled standing-seam metal. "The Douglas fir-and-metal-trellis awning will provide shade for a future roof deck," explains Nave. **above, left to right:** Ryker and Nave in the dining area. Windows and rolled steel panels trimmed with wood cover the kitchen's north exterior wall. The study features a steel-and-glass door, hinged at the top, that opens to the landscape. **below:** The master bath's reclaimed-redwood soaking tub—with a Grohe fixture—was designed by Ryker and Nave, who also created the soapstone sink counter.





this page: The house, with its butterfly roof sections and simple palette of materials, is a response to its natural environment. "The West is a dramatic place," says Ryker. "The land can be seen as a moving sculpture." **opposite:** The deck off the living room looks to the Absaroka Range.

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LONGER THE WEST'S STORIED
HUMAN HISTORY BUT ITS SUBLIME
NATURAL HISTORY.

