

MITCHELL BEAZLEY

CONTEMPORARY
WINDOWS

AMANDA BAILLIEU





SCOGIN ELAM & BRAY

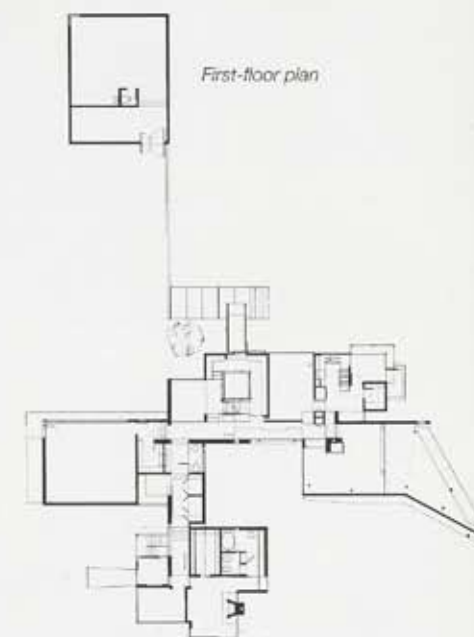
NOMENTANA RESIDENCE, LOVELL, MAINE, 1997

While the Modernist picture window frames the landscape and keeps the outside at bay, the windows in the Nomentana Residence by architects Scogin Elam & Bray play a very different role. The client, a painter and interior designer, wanted to be close to nature, but living alone and having experienced another sort of nature (in earthquake-prone Los Angeles) she wanted her new house to act as a kind of cloak, with windows that allowed her to look across into different parts of the house, as well as out to the spectacular views.

The unusual pinwheel-shaped plan of the Nomentana Residence is a development of the idea that the house has a motion of its own. "The house is about a forced movement that becomes a companion you constantly have to deal with as you move through it," says Scogin. The various rooms are expressed as a series of small, differentiated volumes yet there seems to be no hierarchy to the plan. The guest bedroom for example is bigger than the main bedroom, and while all rooms have views there is no one place where the view is considered better. Yet moving through the house offers a range of different experiences, from the hallways with their generous window walls reinforcing the idea that nature is everywhere, to a glazed two-storey "impluvium" in the centre of the house that draws in views of the sky.

The decision to lift most of the house on wood and steel columns so it mingles with the trees is an obvious way of bringing nature closer; more unusual is the jutting angular porch on the south façade which has a large opening punched through its thickness. "That gesture is another way of wrapping the house around nature," says Scogin. "The hole lets snow and rain and light come through the house. Nature comes in and falls out."

The Nomentana Residence is a result of form added onto form, spaces adjoining defensively or clustering around each other to resist the long Maine winters. Helped by the positioning of the windows the rooms always seem to be in visual and spatial communication, reaching out to nature without trying to contain it.



far left A window is punched into the cement-board panel of the living-room terrace. The terrace, whose extraordinary sharp angles contrast with the boxy forms in the rest of the house, has views onto a nearby lake.



above Bookshelves and an industrial-looking staircase wrap around a glass-enclosed interior courtyard, or "impluvium", which is there to draw not just light but rain and even snow into the heart of the house.

above right The master bedroom features a seat along the windows to take advantage of the forest views. The architect's interest in locating buildings in the perfect spot is a legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright, yet the angular geometry, cantilevers, and complicated plan owe more to deconstruction, a style usually seen in the city.

right The house is almost frustratingly hard to read, appearing as a series of white boxes; but the overall objective was to give the client as many views out as possible while also allowing her to see across into other rooms to counter any feeling of isolation.

