

Live/Work

Working at Home, Living at Work

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Foreword by Sarah Susanka

STOCK OPTIONS

Radcliffe Bailey mixes old family photographs and vignettes of black history into brightly colored abstract paintings as improvisational as jazz. His large artworks are created in a studio connected by an enclosed bridge to the house where Bailey lives in a neighborhood west of downtown Atlanta. The setup is as fluid as the artist's brushwork, allowing for togetherness when the divorced father's young son and daughter visit as well as seclusion for painting alone. "I wanted an open space that I could work in," notes Bailey, "and with a skip and a hop, attend to a child."

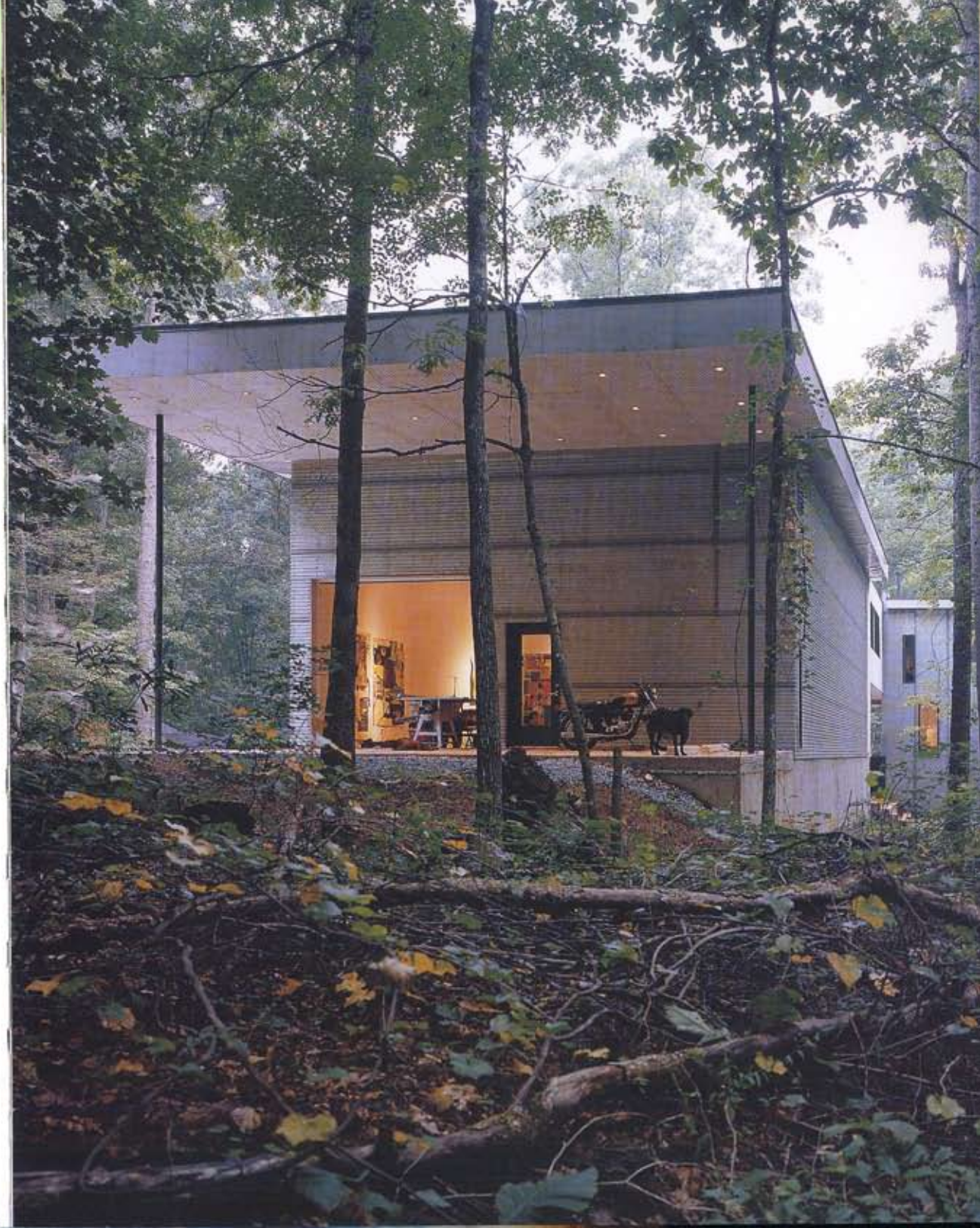
Nestled into forested acreage adjoining a nature preserve, the house and studio complex takes advantage of the views while providing enough introspective space to create and contemplate art. "I avoided having windows in the studio because I needed as much wall space as possible to paint," explains Bailey. "And I didn't want to stare out at the woods all day." To design the two-bedroom home and studio, he tapped the noted Atlanta architects Mack Scogin and Merrill Elam, whose freewheeling design sensibilities are in sync with his collaged shapes and colors. "I felt like I was commissioning a sculptor to shape a piece that would sit on my property," adds the artist.

Working outdoors

A covered porch at the end of Radcliffe Bailey's studio provides a sheltered place to create sculpture next to the trees.

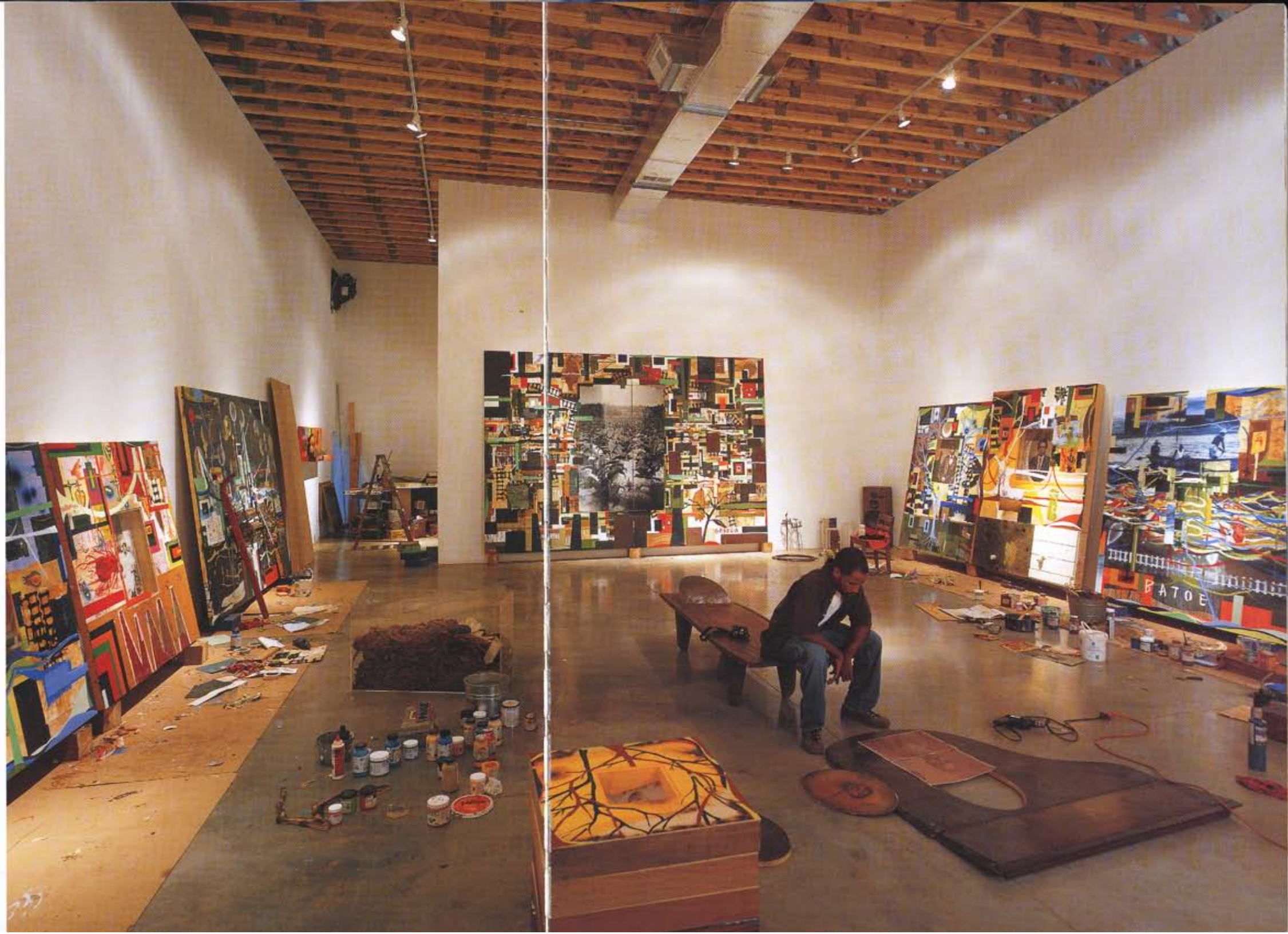
Linking

Projecting from the house's second story is a bar-shaped wing linking house and studio. The fiber cement-paneled bridge projects over the entrance to create a sheltering porch and a carport. The projection is a visual play of solid and void—sculpture designed to uplift the property.



Painting

Bailey creates his colorful artworks in a 2,000-square-foot studio. Viewing windows as a distraction, he opted instead for more wall space. Light filters into the space through plastic-covered gaps in the eaves, a low-cost alternative to skylights.



Constrained by a tight budget and an easement for a gas line on the property, the architects organized the living spaces into a cube and the work area into a shoebox; each two-story building comprises about 2,000 square feet. On the ground level, the house and studio are separated by a deck and a carport, and on the second story, they are linked by a wide, enclosed bridge, which is used as a library, work area, and guest room.

Although straightforward, the design proved expensive to build. Bailey turned to John Wieland, an arts patron who owns several of his paintings, to provide a more economical solution. As one of the largest homebuilders in the Southeast, Wieland specializes in efficient construction, providing everything from exterior cladding to kitchen equipment from his own building supply companies. He agreed to construct Bailey's house and studio from those stock items, leaving the architects to translate their custom design into standard materials. "That led us to find ways of using the elements in different ways, such as taking windows that are limited in size and grouping them into bigger windows," relates Elam, who managed to preserve the design's modern intent with large expanses of glass and crisp planes.

**"Walking up
the trunk of a tree"**

Inside the two-story living room, a sculptural staircase winds around the fireplace chimney to a mezzanine laundry room and the upper-level bedrooms. Here Bailey has found places to stand and enjoy all the architectural angles.

Dining

On one side of the sculptural staircase, a dining table contrasted with Philippe Starck's transparent polycarbonate Louis Ghost chairs is in easy reach of a built-in sideboard and the adjacent kitchen.



On the exterior, unfinished fiber-cement boards and corrugated fiberglass panels are simply bolted onto the walls, with the stainless-steel connections left visible. The translucent fiberglass is placed over silvery, reflective insulation so when hit by sunlight, the facade glows. "The budget didn't get in the way of the architects' creativity," says Bailey.

Inside the house, the ground-floor living area is airy and sunlit from the industrial-sized window assemblies framing views of trees and greenery. Centering the two-story space is a sculptural staircase winding up around the fireplace chimney to a mezzanine laundry room and upper-level bedrooms. "It's like walking up the trunk of a tree," observes Bailey. "There are lots of places to stand on and enjoy the different angles of the house." The top floor, in contrast, is more inwardly focused, with closets and bathrooms placed at the building perimeter. "This makes the bedrooms feel more protected and creates a change of environment within the house from the more transparent level below," explains Elam.

Bailey's studio resembles a big warehouse with wooden ceiling joists and few windows, allowing him to mount canvases on the walls and to paint in the shadow-free, artificial light he prefers. "If he changes his mind and wants to go to daylight, it's a simple procedure to put skylights in between the joists," notes Elam. At one end, a roll-up garage door opens onto a deck where Bailey, who studied to be a sculptor, links with three-dimensional work. "Space away from people and space away from your work are both important," he maintains. "This house gives me those options."



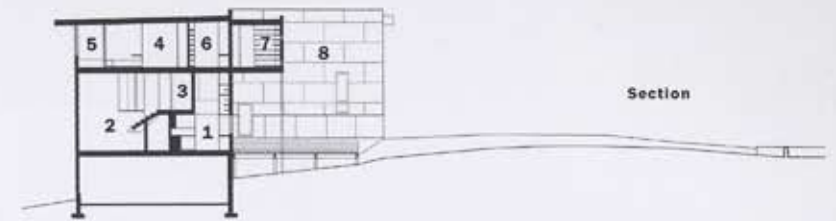


Climbing

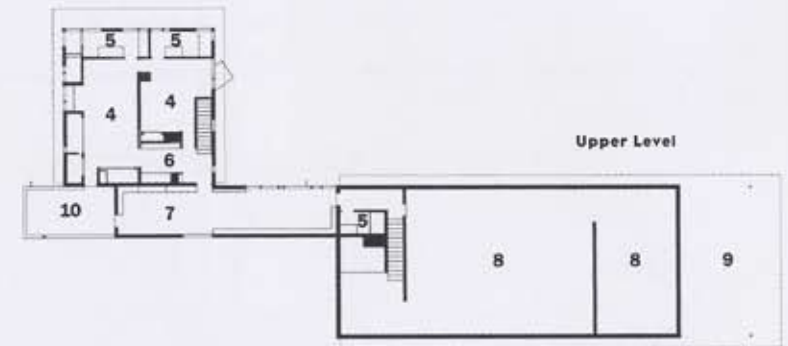
The staircase leads from the living room past a built-in bookshelf on the mezzanine. There angular nooks and crannies offer places to take in both outdoor and indoor vistas.

Sleeping

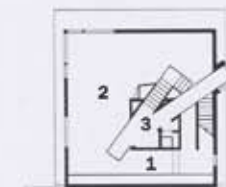
The main bedroom suite on the top floor offers several vantage points to enjoy treetop views, including a deep window seat with storage for books.



Section



Upper Level



Mezzanine/Studio Level

- 1 Kitchen
- 2 Living/Dining Area
- 3 Mezzanine
- 4 Bedroom
- 5 Bathroom
- 6 Office
- 7 Library
- 8 Studio
- 9 Outdoor Studio
- 10 Deck

LESSONS LEARNED

Get creative with off-the-shelf elements. Here standard building elements were recast into inventive architecture. Stock windows are grouped into larger areas of glass, and inexpensive fiberglass and cement-board are fastened with stainless-steel bolts to create a streamlined look. Over time, the house and the studio can be upgraded with finer finishes.

Build in nooks and crannies. "The house is full of unexpected areas where you can pull up a chair and stare out into the woods," states Radcliffe Bailey, pointing out windows at the ends of hallways and in closets. An alcove off the mezzanine and an angled bay window provide cozy places for thinking about the next creation. A deck off the studio provides an outdoor alternative to the main work space.

Turn a hallway into a room. The bridgelike corridor connecting Bailey's house and studio is wide enough to serve as a second work area, a guest room, and a library. Horizontal windows are spaced to accommodate shelving and still provide views.