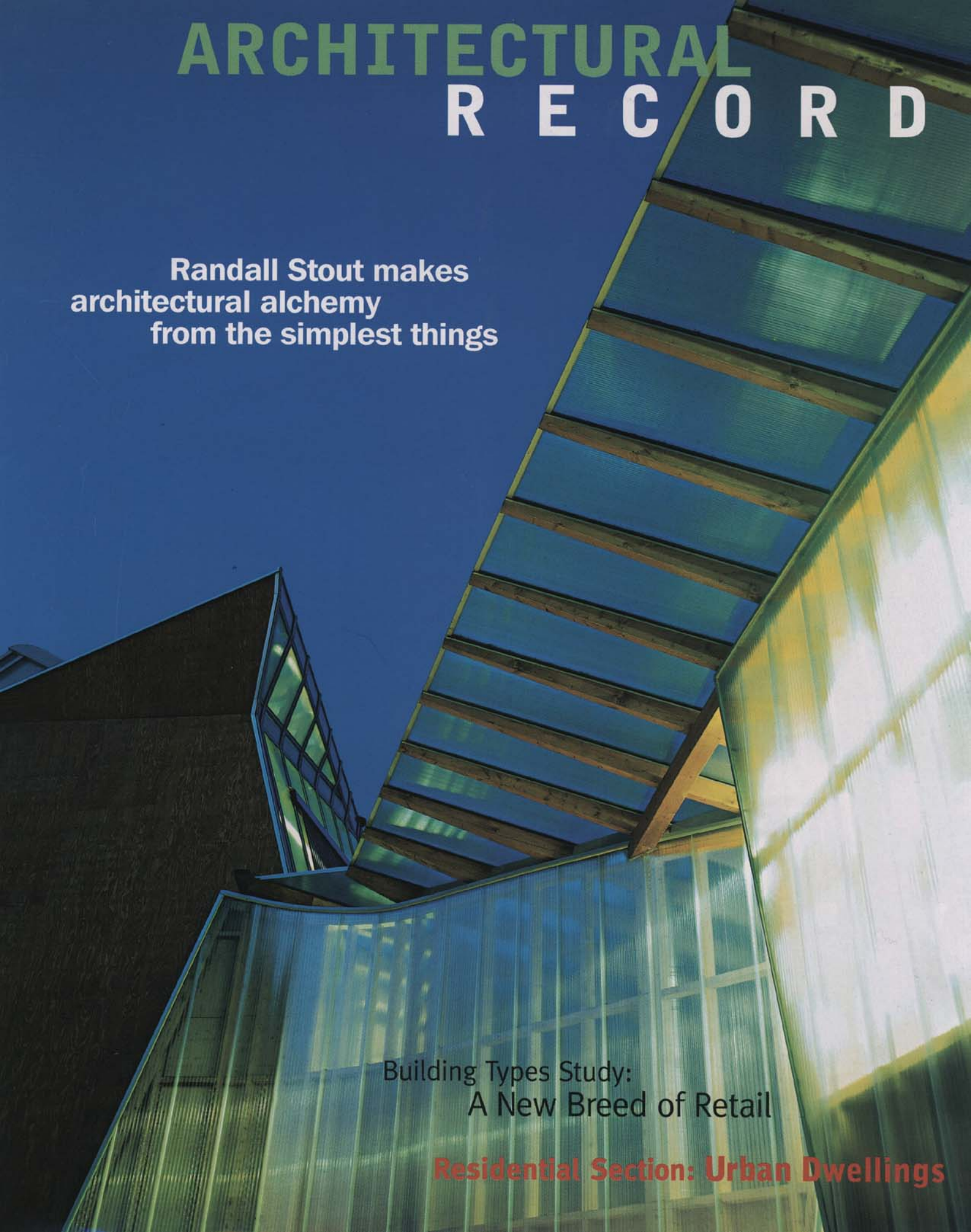
ARCHITECTURAL RECORD



Randall Stout makes architectural alchemy from the simplest things

Building Types Study:
A New Breed of Retail

Residential Section: Urban Dwellings

In aerial view (opposite) the building's exuberant forms abstractly resemble a reclining sunbather, though any one-liner readings are obscured at ground level (this page).

Randall **Stout** brings evocative form and energy-channeling innovation to his **STEINHUDE** pavilion for boaters, bathers, and sunworshippers

By David Hay

When you think about it, die-hard sunbathers never really lie on beaches peacefully. They're always shifting to take advantage of the moving sun. Their body positions, though sometimes awkward, inspired Los Angeles architect Randall Stout while designing the Steinhüde Sea Recreation Facility.

Built on a tiny island on Steinhüde Meer, northern Germany's largest fresh-water lake, this bathhouse looks from above like a figure leaning into the sun. But the form is not merely lyrical: The 4,850-square-foot structure relies on photovoltaic panels, built into a glass roof, for its energy needs.

The architect, who rarely designs forms that can be read as one-liners, was careful to camouflage the metaphor. "Only in aerial photographs do you read the full human figure," notes Stout. Indeed, from the ground, this playful wood-and-glass building hardly resembles a sunworshipper caught in the woods. A berm separates it from a nature preserve, and approached from the rear, the building has a low, curving roofline that anchors it visually to the earth. Such rustic materials as stained marine plywood further link the form to its natural setting, and translucent polycarbonate walls, reminiscent of a greenhouse, reinforce a strong connection between indoors and out.

Viewed from the water—a favored vantage point on warm, breezy summer days—the effect is different again. A 270-degree aluminum-and-glass facade wraps the building's towering front, suggesting an inviting combination of rest stop and lighthouse. At night, says Stout, the beacon effect is even more evident. This vertical element, as he proudly explains, "becomes a glowing object on the landscape."

The genesis of this $900,000 project was something of an accident. Stout first worked in Germany in the early 1990s as a project architect for Frank Gehry. Since going out on his own in 1996, the younger architect has received seven German commissions, ranging from the North Minden Power Plant to an aquatic center in Melittabad. Over lunch in Wormsdorf in late 1996, Stout was introduced to the town's mayor. At the time, the region's town leaders were soliciting designs for experimental windmills they hoped to display during Expo 2000 in Hanover, 40 miles away. The mayor suggested to Stout the idea of designing a windmill for an 11.4-acre island, barely a mile from Wormsdorf.

David Hay, based in Los Angeles, frequently writes on architecture and the arts.

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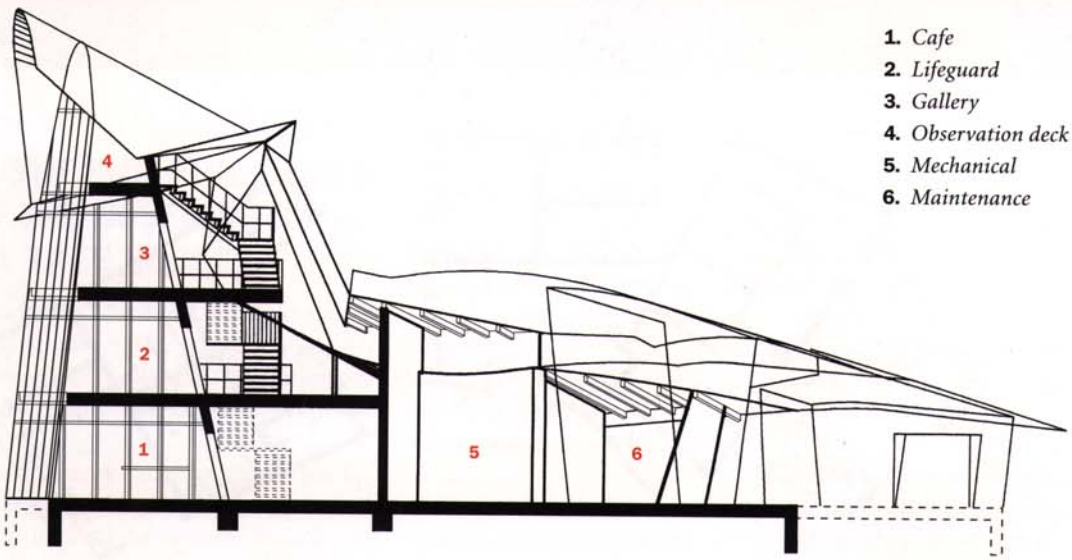
On his flight back to Los Angeles, the American architect responded with a two-building program: an exotic stainless-steel windmill, which would house an observation deck, and next to it a recreational facility. Green Party members who sat on Wormdorf's design committee argued that the windmill might entrap birds, and so Stout was asked to incorporate the entire program into one structure. He came up with a model based on the reclining human form, which delighted his clients, representing the town of Wormsdorf.

Stout was assisted in the design process by longtime colleague Hartwig Rüllkotter, an architect based near Hanover. Working in each other's offices and via the Internet, the architects completed a computer-generated model of the scheme. Here, Stout had another lucky break. A German prefabricator, IHV Objektbau, wanted to experiment with new production software that could read Form Z, the very design

Project: *Steinhüde Sea Island Recreation Facility, Badeinsel Steinhüde, Germany*
Client: *City of Steinhüde (City Works—Recreation Department)*
Architects: *Randall Stout Architects—Randall Stout, AIA, design principal; Tim Williams, Friedrich Tuczek, Wes Adachi, Richard Claridge; Archimedes—Hartwig Rüllkotter, project principal; Corinna Hohkamp*
Engineers: *IHV Objektbau (structural)*
Consultants: *UTEG (project management); Jurgen Kotter, Dirk Rabeneck (energy)*
General contractor: *IHV Objektbau*

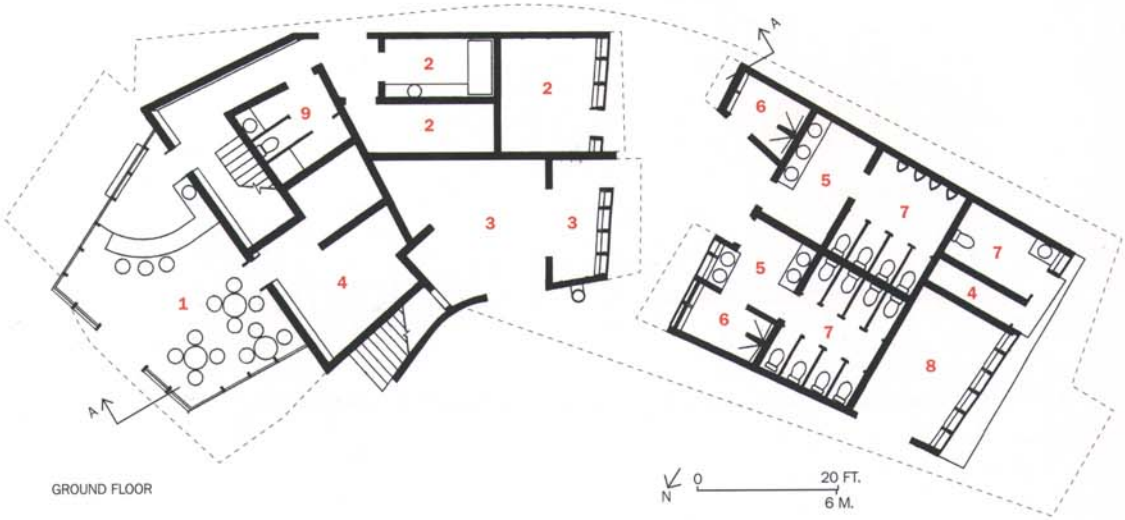
The building's complex roof forms (this page and opposite) are angled to catch the sun's rays. The roof glazing is laminated with photovoltaic cells that provide power for the recreational facility, as well as its small fleet of photovoltaic-operated rental boats. The building's towerlike end faces the lake (opposite, below) and glows like a lighthouse at night.



SECTION A-A

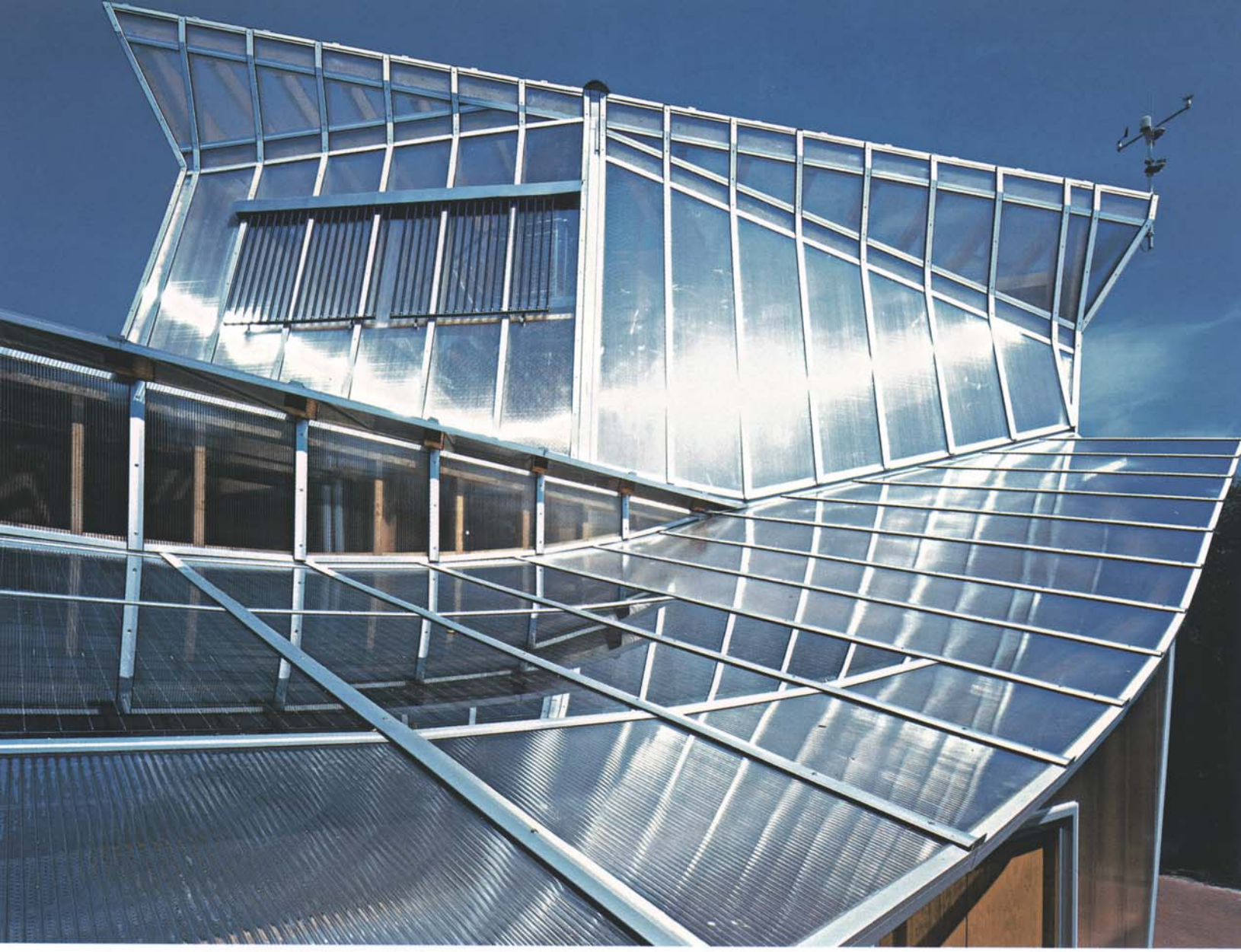
1. *Cafe*
2. *Lifeguard*
3. *Gallery*
4. *Observation deck*
5. *Mechanical*
6. *Maintenance*

The glazed and expressively configured roof (opposite) filters light into the interior. Even in a bathroom (this page), the play of light from above becomes compositionally powerful.



GROUND FLOOR

1. *Cafe*
2. *Maintenance*
3. *Mechanical*
4. *Storage*
5. *Sinks*
6. *Shower*
7. *Toilets*
8. *Boats*
9. *Staff*



program Stout had used. "So, we handed them a disk and they produced the shop drawings," says the architect. IHV prefabricated the bathhouse components, an important step since this environmentally delicate island connects to the mainland only by a low-weight-bearing pedestrian bridge. Accordingly, with sensitivity to the existing ecology, the builders carefully hoisted components from a barge with a crane during the three months of construction.

The facility opened on June 1, 2000. Although Stout modestly calls it "just a nice bathhouse for beachgoers," the building provides more than changing rooms and showers. There are storage areas for lifeguards and offices for the staff of the facility's small boat dock. The four-story towerlike section at the front houses a ground-floor cafe, a lifeguard station, and an observation deck.

"KIDS RUN ALL OVER THE BUILDING," SAYS STOUT. "THEY TREAT THE OBSERVATION DECK'S STAIR LIKE A TREE HOUSE."

Showcasing his imaginative energy program, Stout prominently installed a rapeseed-oil generator beside the stairs to the tower, that powers the building during the dark winter months. Visitors are thus boldly introduced to the facility's unusual energy source. In addition, the building's on-site batteries store enough power to recharge smaller batteries onboard 12 photovoltaic-powered rental boats docked at the marina.

Like a devout beachgoer, Stout's building takes full advantage of the summer's sunniest months: Its glazed roof, laminated with photovoltaic cells, brings abundant light and warmth to the interior. Raised five inches above the exterior walls, the roof also releases any excess heat build-up. The comfortable and energy-efficient performance of these details is very satisfying to Stout. But what thrills him most is the reception from real-life sunbathers. "The kids just run all over this building," he says with a smile. "They treat the public stair up to the observation deck like a little tree house. All around, the response from this fairly conservative community has been overwhelming." ■

Sources

Roofs: *Solon AG (glass with integral photovoltaic cells)*

Plastic panels: *Rhom (translucent, exterior)*

Framing: *IHV Objektbau (wood)*

Flooring: *Exposed strand board*

Curtain wall: *Constructed onsite with standard extruded-aluminum profiles*

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