



The New Wood Architecture

Naomi Stungo

1. View of the music studio (left) and the painting studio (right). Windows are brushed aluminium, the doors are of steel and wood, and the roofs are finished in lead-coated copper.
2. The cedar boardwalk creates a serpentine path through the complex.

Cut off by swampy creeks and overgrown with twisted scrub oaks, pine forest and palmetto bushes, New Smyrna Beach is the perfect retreat. Every year musicians, painters, sculptors, dancers and actors gather here at the Atlantic Center for the Performing Arts where, away from the distractions of everyday life, they focus on their work in a series of artist-in-residence programmes. The design of the Center is key to this sense of 'getting away from it all'. The six buildings which form the main creative studio spaces were designed by the young American husband-and-wife team, Maryann Thompson and Charles Rose. Their work generally combines strong geometric shapes with an interest in landscape architecture. At the Atlantic Arts Center, the result is a striking series of bold forms half-hidden in the thick vegetation. Because the studios are secluded, residents are able to concentrate exclusively on their work. Not that the centre is a solitary place – far from it. The boardwalks between buildings provide perfect opportunities for chance meetings and, because of the way the units are laid out, there is always the sense that some other activity is happening just around the corner. The design of the six studios is fairly simple. With the exception of the sculpture studio (which, because it houses heavy machinery and sculptures, has a poured concrete floor and boardmarked concrete walls), the studios are largely timber. Raised up on concrete piers above the dense veg-

etation, their primary structure is a hardwood frame which is left exposed and clad in stained cypress. Inside, the buildings are clad in a hardwood-veneered plywood, horizontal cedar panelling and painted plasterboard. Each building houses a single activity and, although the basic structures are the same, each differs in its details. The music studio is deliberately insular: a box without windows. Daylight enters only through the large skylights, focusing attention on the work in hand. The dance studio has a window that looks on to vegetation on one side, as well as a ring of sandblasted windows 3.5 metres (15 feet) above the floor; the result is that light floods into the space without there being distracting views out. The painting studio, meanwhile, has high-level windows and three tall lightscoops on the roof. Topped off with glass and with louvres down their sides, these diffuse the light coming into the space and, by stack effect, ventilate the air-conditioned studio and avoid it becoming filled with paint fumes. One of Thompson & Rose's inspirations for the project was the architecture of other hot, tropical areas, hence the lightscoops and the studios' southern overhangs. The buildings highlight the weather patterns across the site. Light, wind and convection currents are integral to the way the studios work. In this way, residents on the various programmes do not only live in the dense vegetation; they also live with it.

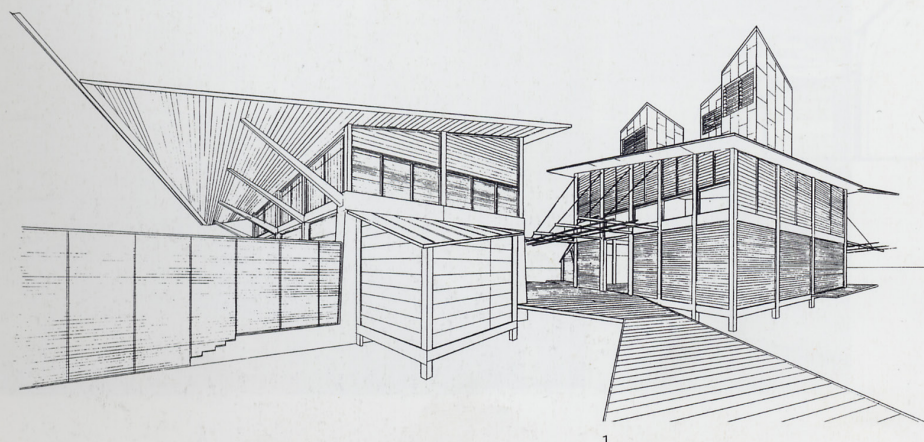
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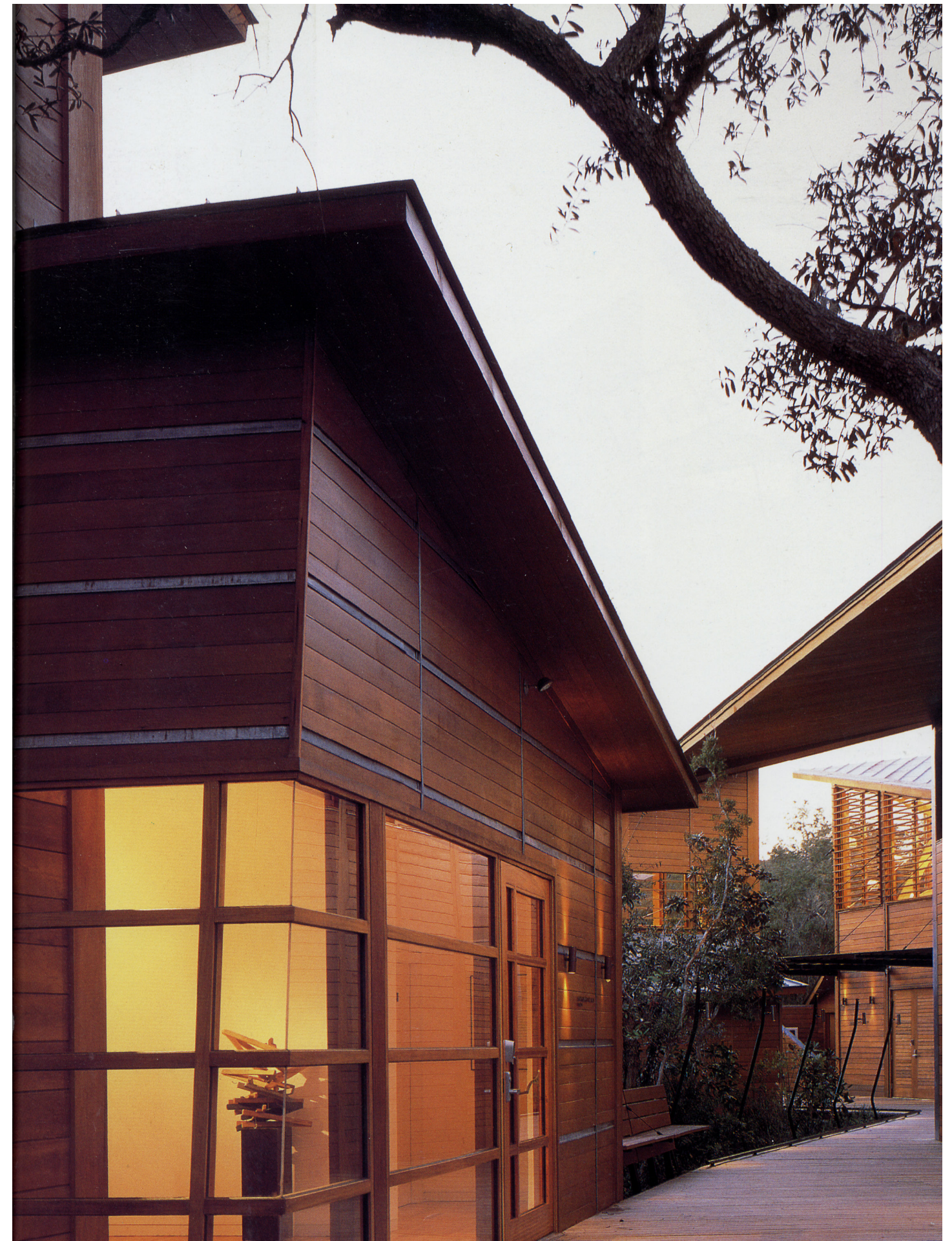
New Smyrna Beach, Florida,

USA, 1997

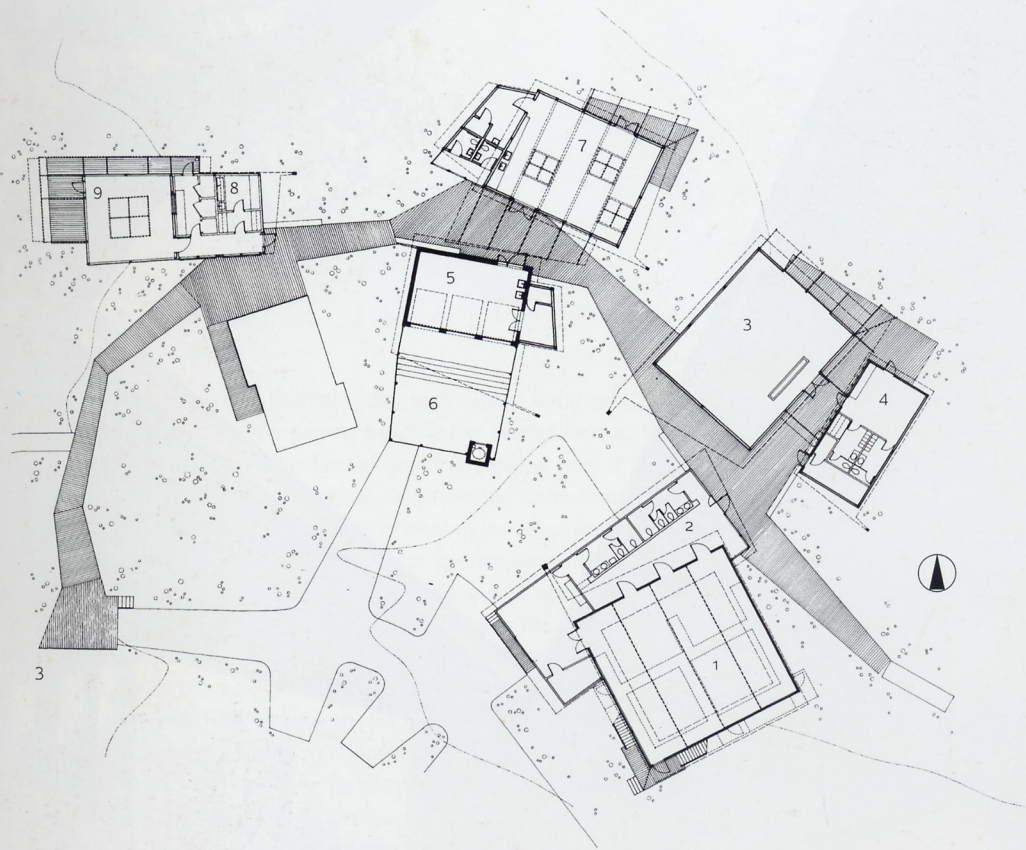
Thompson & Rose Architects



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- key**
- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1 black box theatre | 5 sculpture studio |
| 2 gallery/reception | 6 outdoor work area |
| 3 dance studio | 7 painting studio |
| 4 dressing room | 8 audio room |
| | 9 music room |



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3. Site plan.
4. Aerial view of the site almost hidden from view in the swamps.
5. View of the painting studio illuminated at night, with lightscoops prominent.

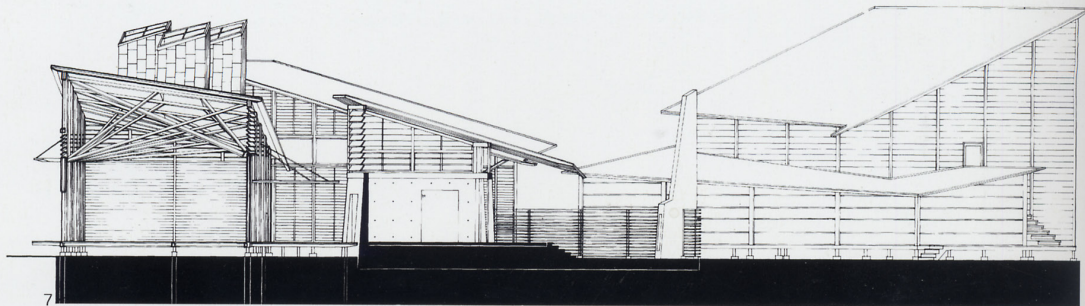




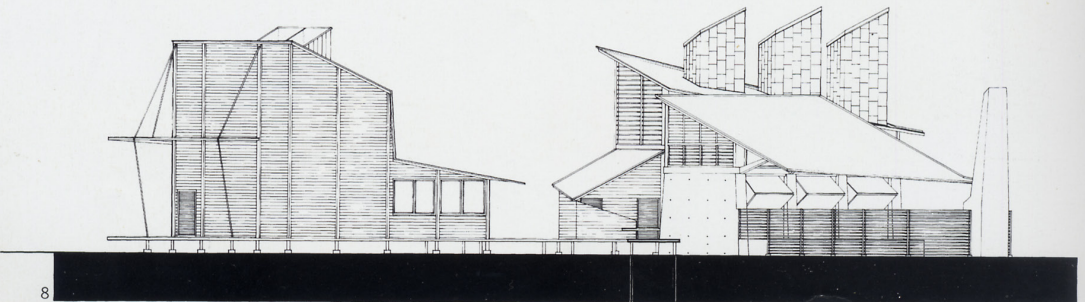
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- 6. Music studio.
- 7. Although each building differs in form, they belong to a common morphology.
- 8. The music and painting studios.
- 9. Inside the painting studio.



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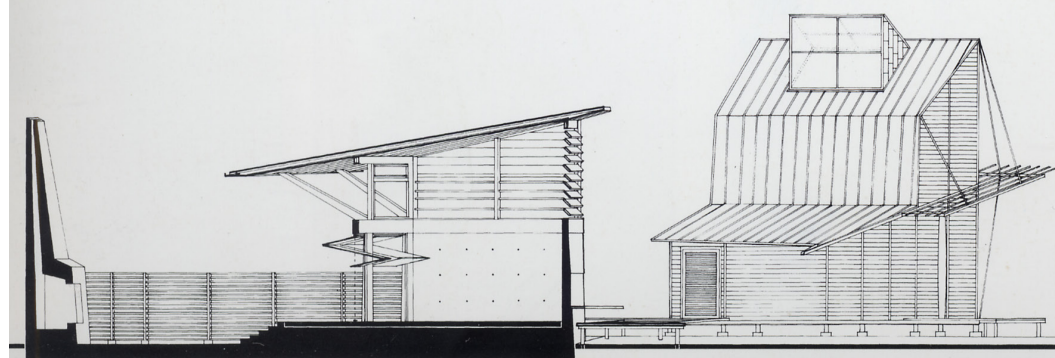
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Architects: Thompson and Rose Architects, Cambridge, Massachusetts
 Project designers: Charles Rose and Maryann Thompson
 Project team: Michael Grant, Joseph MacDonald, Warren Van Wees, Michael Breau, Francisco Thebaud, Carrie Alice Johnson, Frank Dill, Patrick Maguire, Lisa Iwamoto, Michael Rose, Tim Downing
 Client: Leeper Studio Complex, Atlantic Center for the Arts; Ted Potter, Former Executive Director; Suzanne Tetscher, Current Executive Director
 Structural engineers: Ocmulgee Associates
 Civil engineers: Jerry K. Finley
 Mechanical and electrical engineers: M-Engineering
 Geotechnical engineers: psi-Jammal Associates
 Acoustical engineers: Cambridge Acoustical
 Construction manager: Epoch Properties



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- 10 + 11. Exterior and interior of the library.
- 12. The sculpture studio and yard.
- 13. The sculpture and music studios.