



THE PROGRAM WAS BASIC, and for architect Michael Sant its solution was instantaneous. The client, a corporate executive and the chairman of his family foundation, needed a conference barn for the latter to be set amid 117 acres of Virginia horse farm country. Spatial requirements stipulated a pair of work areas for the client and his wife, who is president of the foundation, and meeting space to accommodate as many as 16. Aesthetic considerations, however, required a poetic sensibility, and Sant's delicately nuanced interpretation led to his commission.

The clients—Sant's father and stepmother—initially retained another architect to oversee the project, and merely asked Sant to critique the plans. Ultimately, however, he was given full rein when the other designer's proposal was deemed unsuited to the site's 18th-century house, stables, pool, and outbuildings. "This job required more listening to the place, feeling its tempo, and trying to crystallize its beauty." Architectural language, he decreed, should have domestic and rugged qualities, and the clients concurred.

Given the beauty of the landscape, a pavilion following in the tradition of the great glass boxes (Mies' Farnsworth House and Johnson's Glass House) seemed like an appropriate response. Sant's version, however, would be tempered, eschewing the austerity associated with the *echt-modernist* type and embracing degrees of embellishment and warmth linked to context. "I wanted to create an object that takes its beauty from craftsmanship and a sense of purpose, much like a canoe." Hardly a glib remark, Sant's analogy would come into play once the building was up.

The conference barn is a tri-partite box anchored on a raised plinth and capped by a gabled roof with a full-length skylight. With roots in a utilitarian hay barn, Sant's updated version is based on a timber structure of reclaimed Douglas fir. Sliding glass doors reach seven-and-a- →



Previous spread: "I walked into a beautiful situation," says Sant of the 117-acre site. His main challenge in building the 20-ft.-by-50-ft. conference barn "was not to ruin the setting but enhance it."

Opposite: The canoe, "a beautifully crafted object with a purpose," served as design inspiration. Sant had his own model specially crafted to function as a lighting fixture. Green frieze wool upholstery beneath slipcovers offers an alternative scheme for settees, one of them a sofa bed.

Above: View of the project's exterior.

Right: The conference barn opens to 117 acres of Virginia horse country.

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Left: The door and shutter treatments endow the building with seven-and-a-half ft. of transparency. Fieldstone comes from the property; bluestone is a local product.

Opposite: Sliding glass doors and a shutter system operated by counterweights enable the pavilion to be opened to surroundings. Plywood cabinetry features Douglas fir veneers.

SOFAS: **CAPPELLINI THROUGH DIVA**. CHAIRS: **MINOTTI THROUGH DIVA**. LEATHER CHAIRS AND OTTOMAN: **COACH FURNITURE THROUGH BAKER, KNAPP & TUBBS**. STOOLS: **BEACON HILL**. FRIEZE WOOL: **CORAGGIO**. CUSTOM COFFEE TABLE: **FRANK & FRISCH (ALUMINUM FRAME)**. AERON CHAIRS: **HERMAN MILLER THROUGH JULES SELZER**. CANOE: **NORTHWOODS CANOE**. CABINETRY: **GAITHERSBURG CABINETRY**. UPLIGHTS: **VISA LIGHTING**. COUNTERWEIGHTS, SLATS: **TRIPLE R WELDING**. SLIDING DOORS: **BROTHER'S SASH & DOOR**. RECLAIMED TIMBER: **G.R. PLUME COMPANY**. LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: **DCA LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS**. MECHANICAL ENGINEER: **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRUCTION SERVICES**. STRUCTURAL DESIGN: **STRUCTURAL CONCEPTS**. CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION: **PLUMMER CONSTRUCTION**. CONTRACTOR: **J.D. EICHER CONSTRUCTION**.



