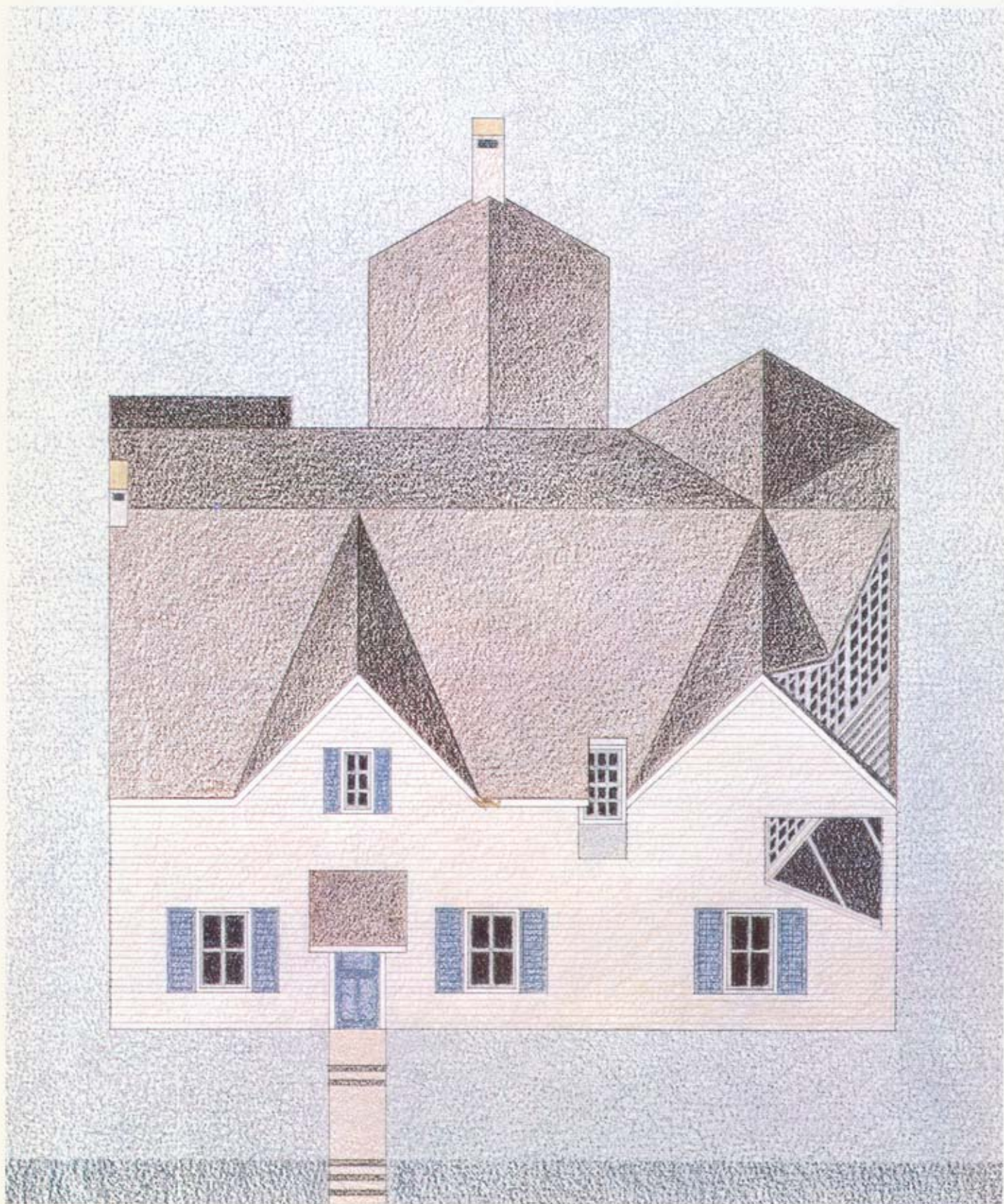


# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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# Architecture: Peter L. Gluck

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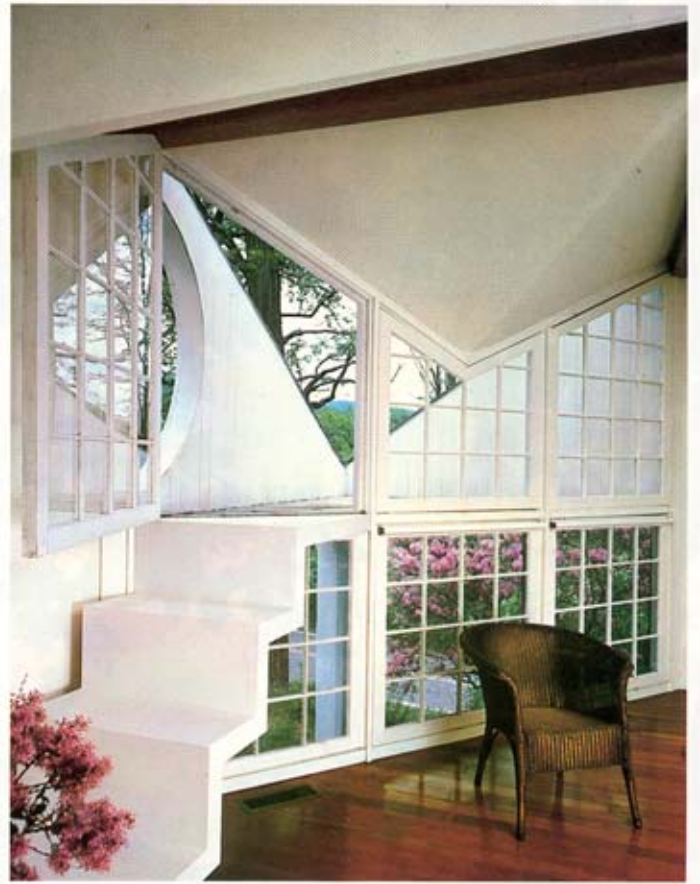


Architect Peter L. Gluck added a complementary modern extension to the 150-year-old traditional farmhouse in Olive Bridge, New York, where he and his family retreat from their busy life in New York City. ABOVE: The proportions of the original farmhouse have been doubled by the addition, which has windows that are traditional in form, yet modern in size and placement. OPPOSITE: The eroded side elevation of the new structure basically conforms to the existing style, yet reflects the personal aesthetic of the architect/homeowner.

THE DESIGN OF AN ARCHITECT'S own home can present a special challenge. When building for himself, there is an implicit desire to make a statement, a signature. Because the project is so personal, the presumption grows that it must reveal the designer's innermost musings, not simply about house design, but about the condition of architecture, as well. Often this leads to self-consciousness or attempts at a perfection impossible to achieve. Other times, the error is in the direction of timidity, of a conservatism that prefers the certain recompense of safety to the risk of experiment.

For architect Peter L. Gluck, the question of self-expression was framed by the fact that his home was to be made by adding on to an existing house of strong visual and historic character. Mr. Gluck's project virtually doubled the size of a 150-year-old traditional farmhouse in New York's Ulster County. One of the striking qualities of these old buildings is their "addability." Simple and straightforward in vocabulary and construction, such houses have an inherent malleability that permits expansion with no obvious affront to integrity or coherence. One good-sized







OPPOSITE: An extension has been created in the Kitchen by projecting a bay window from the Jenn Air oven. To traditional multipaned windows the architect adds a modern touch: He has the corner panes abut each other directly. OPPOSITE ABOVE LEFT: In the Study, an antique chair and hooked rug harmoniously coexist with modern recessed lighting contained in a dropped soffit. OPPOSITE ABOVE RIGHT AND ABOVE: The Master Bedroom is on the upper floor of the extension. Integrated into the house are new, modern forms such as a stairway leading to a deck that appears to be suspended at mid-level in space.

room in this house had already been added, thirty-five years ago, and despite its awkward placement and crude construction, the addition still seems thoroughly of a piece with the original structure, in no way suggesting that it is nearly a century and a half more modern.

As the architect explains, "Such a strategy of self-effacement was clearly less than an ideal solution. On the other hand, neither was the kind of intervention that uses the old, existing structure only as a foil for some modernist extravagance. The difficulty for me was in adding on, in a way that was respectful, complementary and consistent, to the original structure, yet conveying the appearance of a modern extension. The solution lay in an attitude of respect that grasped the spirit, more than the letter, of the existing style." This is a fairly narrow line to tread, but here the architect has done so successfully. The expanded house presents no challenge to a sense of unity, yet neither does it compromise in its assertion of difference.

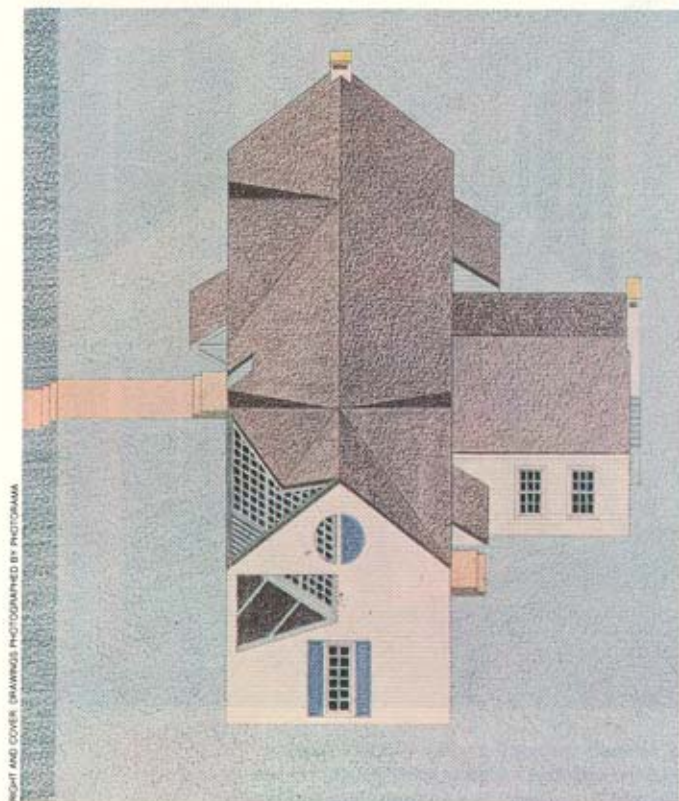
According to Peter Gluck, the location of the addition

was directly constrained by existing conditions. The placement of a stairway, a weakened foundation on one side, and the opportunity to capture a view all conspired to dictate that the extension be sited to one side of the old, original farmhouse. Existing architectural forms helped determine the structure: the decision to extend the original roofline set the dimensions; and the decision to repeat the gable motif—the strongest single formal element of the old house—largely shaped its volume.

The result is an addition whose outline would fit into a cubic envelope eighteen feet on each side. A study and bath are on the lower level, and a bedroom is above. Slightly smaller than the original house, the addition projects a pleasant ambiguity. On the one hand, the two parts taken together—because their overall form is strong, simple, and regular—suggest a unitary object, one house. On the other hand, it is clear that the house has grown, that something has been added on to the original unit.

This ambiguity is the subtle arena in which Peter Gluck

The major corner  
makes the strongest statement about  
the addition's newness.



RIGHT AND COVER: DRAWINGS PHOTOGRAPHED BY PHOTODRAMA

ABOVE LEFT AND COVER: In his expressive axonometric drawing, the architect depicts the original house, with a room added on to the back thirty-five years ago, and the present eroded addition. ABOVE RIGHT AND OPPOSITE: In theory, the form of the extension is sculpted from a cube of space, which gives the impression of a three-story structure, even though it is only eighteen feet high.

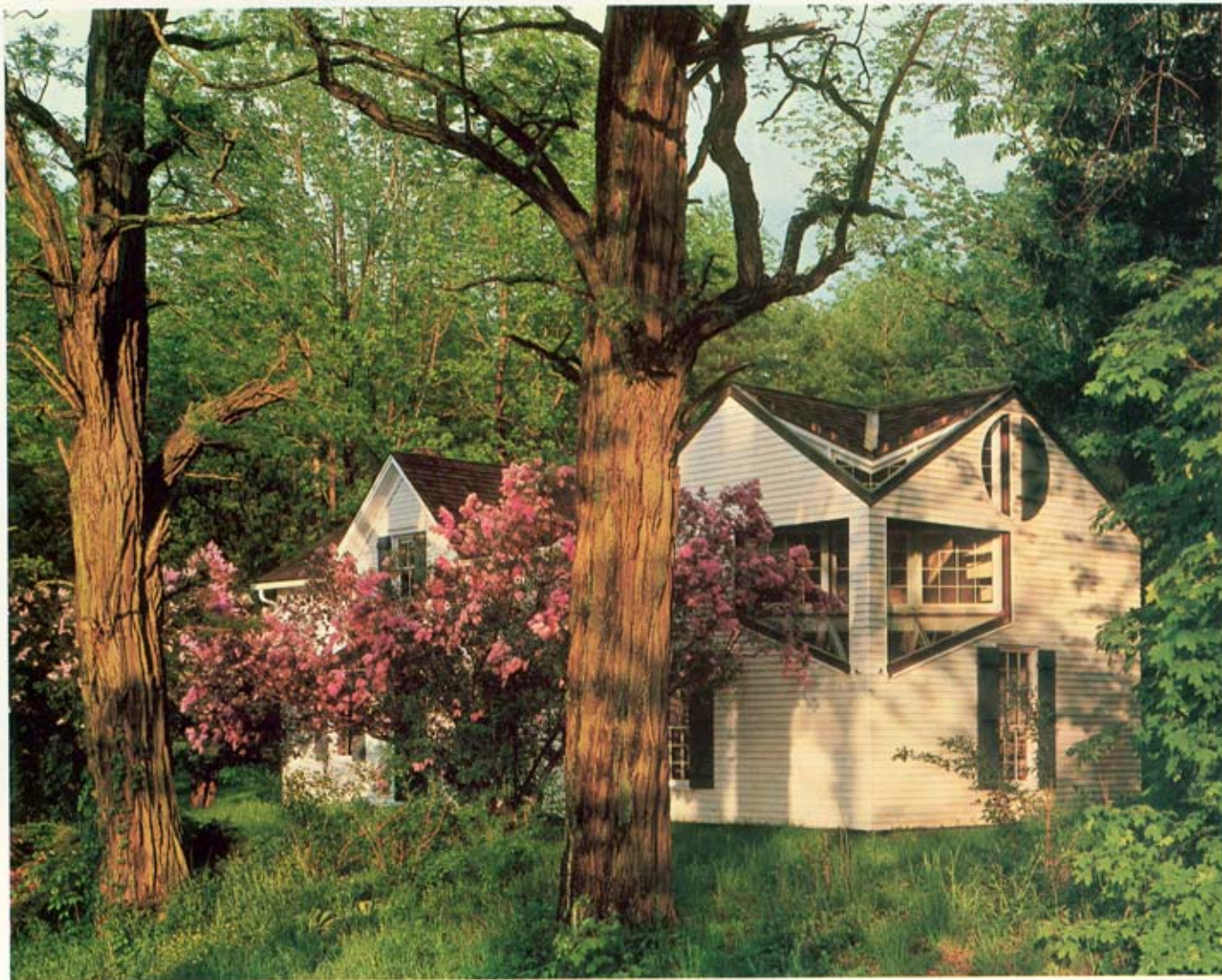
asserts the architectural character of the new elements of the house. Rather than staging any direct confrontations with the original house, the architect specifies the newness of his intervention through a kind of commentary, inventing new forms through a modest deformation of the old. His working method is not a historicist's game of memory, but rather, a critical comment on the act of recall, an acknowledgment that every memory distorts.

Mr. Gluck makes this design commentary by manipulating scale and detail, and by quietly violating the "rules" implicit in the original style. Windows, for example, are larger than expected and asymmetrically placed. Old clapboards and new do not precisely line up, and the two differ slightly in profile. The seam at which old and new are joined is acknowledged by an uncharacteristically recessed window, traditional in form, but modern in placement.

The major corner makes the strongest statement about the addition's newness. An "erosion" of 45 degrees cuts the

corner off, yielding a gently banked clerestory-skylight on the ground floor, an angled window and a tiny triangular terrace upstairs, which captures a magnificent mountain view. The insertion of a 45-degree angle in a right-angled plan is a paramount modernist gesture. Here, though, the architect mitigates it by surrounding the cut corner with a clapboard screen wall that continues the basic wall shape extended from the old house. The ambiguity resulting from the erosion of this outline also erodes the distinction between what is old and what is new.

This artfully deliberate confusion carried out by the architect can also be found in the end-on view of the addition where he playfully subverts the scale of the façade. Here, the detailing seems to suggest a building of three stories, rather than two. But, because the house is so palpably tiny in the first place, the effect reduces, rather than increases, its apparent scale. The "extra" story, as well as the whimsical shapes of the window and screen wall openings, bring



to mind dolls' houses and their engaging miniaturization.

This sense of the miniature is perhaps at its most refined around the other side of the original house where the architect has built a little addition to the kitchen, so small it might be better called an addendum. The projection is no bigger than a modest bay window, yet it has the dual integrity of being both an extension and an object in its own right. This bivalent quality comes mainly from the sure handling of a strip of multipaned windows between the counter and the low ceiling, which both recalls the vocabulary of the old house and imparts an independent scale. As the window turns the corner, though, there is an unexpected touch. Instead of a corner mullion, one pane of glass abuts directly on the next, in a gesture that is unabashedly modern, yet so modest and precise in execution that it in no way seems out of place with the original house.

Although there are few overt references, Peter Gluck's house in the country is permeated by a sensibility close to

that of traditional Japanese building. This is no surprise, as he and his wife have spent a number of years in Japan and he feels a deep affinity for that country and its architectural design. His house expresses this in its sense of the craft of detail, in the meticulous spirit of its joinery and in its rhythmic arrangement of sturdy, simple materials.

Explaining the relation of his addition to the form and spirit of the original 150-year-old farmhouse, Peter Gluck says, "My idea was to do it the way they would have done it." This seems exactly right. Mr. Gluck has chosen to express his identity as a modern architect by working through a set of conventions and agreements that allowed him flexibility and a reasonable range for his own individual expression, in a style that had its own formal identity. It is a tribute to the architect's sensitivity and skill that neither the vision of the original architecture of the farmhouse nor his own has been compromised in the slightest. □

—Michael Sorkin