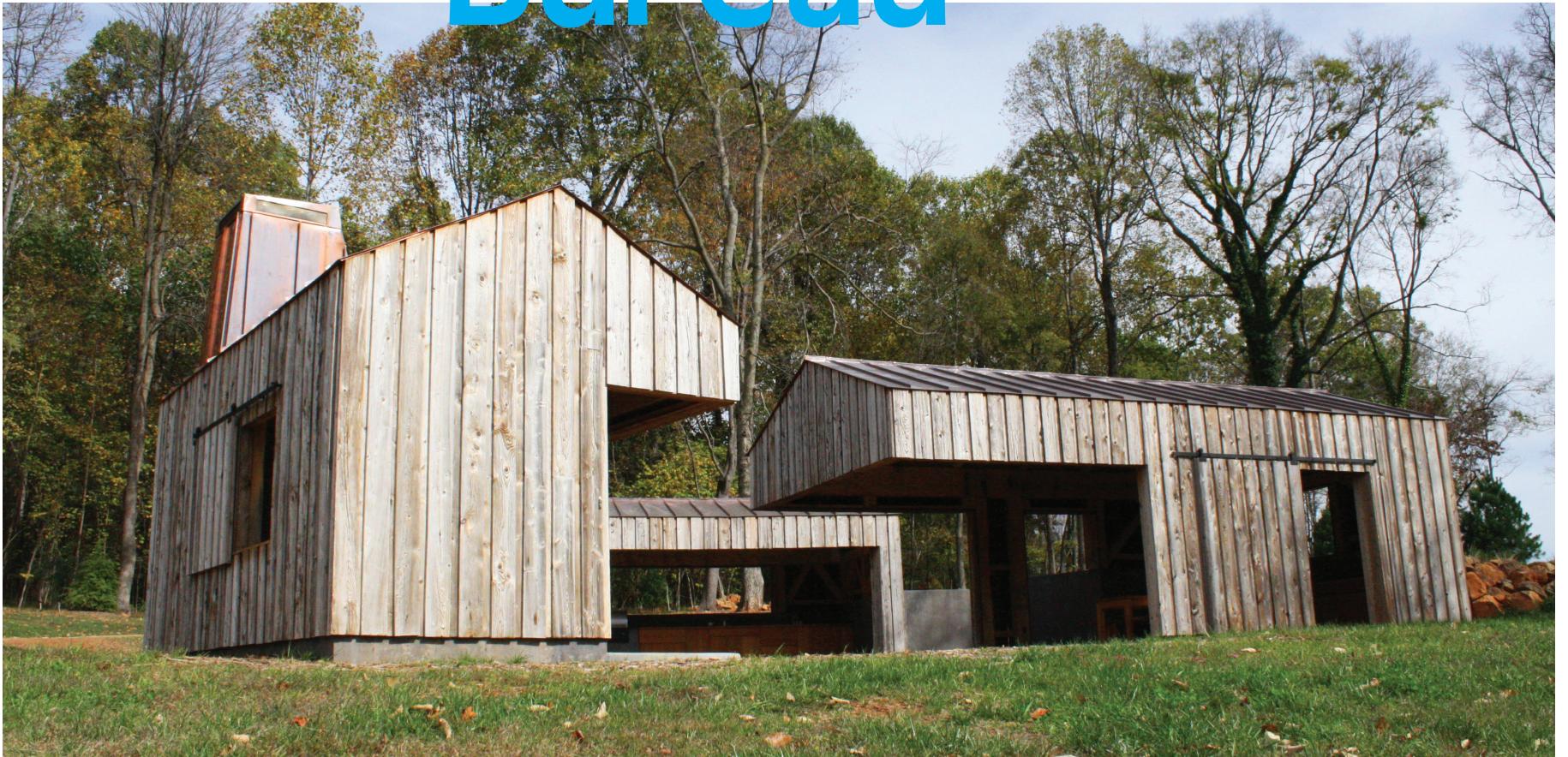


Peter
Culley

Spatial Affairs Bureau



TRI-COASTAL MINIMALISM

What drew you to Los Angeles, and what do you think about the design environment here?

On my very first visit to Los Angeles in 1993, I was lucky enough to discover the city through the lens of architectural, urban and cultural history. It got me straight to the Case Study Houses, the Huntington Library, the importance of Disneyland to the American story, roadside pop architectures, the Watts Towers and the then-Schoenberg Institute at USC. I saw that Los Angeles is a truly open-minded site of investigation that has a different rule system from other cities I know, partly due to the plethora of influences and emigre thinkers. This is particularly productive for me when balanced by London where I return regularly, which has very distinct orthodoxies that are often more polished but less rule-breaking. Overall, I am attracted to what I call Los Angeles' 'accelerated history' - so much iteration in just over two hundred years.

What was the move like, from the Blue Ridge Mountains and Charlottesville, VA to Venice?

At the conclusion of a ten-year period working with previous employer Rick Mather Architects on the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts project, commuting between London and Richmond, I decided to be based in Charlottesville as a nearby place to start Spatial Affairs. The intensity of city life and the calm of a rural one are equally important to me, and between Los Angeles, Richmond, VA, London, and an off-grid cabin on a river estuary in England that I escape to for some of the year, I have a pretty good exposure along the gradient.

How would you describe Spatial Affairs Bureau?

This question comes up all regularly, since our portfolio ranges in scale from a ticket machine to a 2-mile long 'bridge-park' with some smaller, some larger private houses, and arts and creative office projects in-between. We work over three time-zones in

the US, plus London, and so I suppose it's not the most obvious studio to typify. But the strategic approach is consistent across scales and location. I retain creative oversight in all projects, and I'm told it's possible to track design attitude through each of the projects. I called the company Spatial Affairs Bureau, partly being light-hearted, but also to remind me that each project has, or should find, its own story.

Tell us a bit about Feral Office.

Feral Office is run by Los Angeles-based Berenika Boberska, who I met teaching at Woodbury University, though we were both students at London's Bartlett School of Architecture in London in the '90s. Berenika is a good example of how Los Angeles supports truly radical thinkers. I think we have been an interesting balance for each other for the 'New Walled Cities and Hinterlands' research project about future urban logics for Los Angeles.

What's next on the horizon for Spatial Affairs Bureau?

In Los Angeles we currently have four private house projects on site and a further one in final stages of design development; in Ojai we are designing a self-supporting rural compound on one of the fire-ravaged mountain tops; in Richmond VA we are developing the city-changing BridgePark project with engineer Buro Happold; in Memphis we are about to conclude our interior work on a 50 000 sq. ft arts center and 450-seat; and in London construction has started on site with a 5000 sq. ft art studio, gallery, home and rental apartment for rising-star artist Rana Begum. We also have an ongoing relationship with The Metropolitan Museum in New York and hope to complete a final component of the 5th Avenue Plaza redesign, that was implemented by a team lead by landscape architect Olin in 2015. Our jumbo asymmetric parasols developed for the same project are also being organized as a range for general production currently.