

Studio Professor

Henri T. de HAHN

Studio: Cowgill Hall 4th Floor
MWF 1:10 – 5:00pm

Seminars: TBD

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Shaker Village, Pleasant Hill

“I became even more site specific and looked at the site or other circumstances for inspiration of the form. The form itself is not guided anymore by an underlying principle but rather is the outcome of a situation derived from the site... the site and the program determine the architectural form more than any preconceived notion or idea about what MACK architecture is.”

MARK MACK, Architect

“For if the intervention is to find its place, it must make us see what already exists in a new light.”

PETER ZUMTHOR, Architect

PROJECT 2: Wall House

Assignment given: Wednesday, October 1, 2025

Assignment due: Wednesday, December 10, 2025, 1:30pm, room 400

Introduction:

Congratulations, based on your first project of the HOUSE OF LIGHT, clients have identified each of you as their architect for a project in the Kentucky landscape. The Lüthi family -Agnes, Roger, and their twin sixteen-year-old sons Tristan and Vincent have recently moved to Kentucky. While renting a house on Gratz Park in downtown Lexington, they would like you to assist them in creating a **summer** home, modest in scale and in function, but something very special for them and their two sons who will be soon attending the University of Kentucky.

Agnes is a former Swiss detective with the Lausanne police and Roger an architect by education. He has never practiced; instead, he formed an NGO two decades ago to assist [Doctors Without Borders](#). He organizes relief efforts for countries in crisis (currently assisting with the influx of middle eastern refugees) and uses his architectural education to be a leader in providing temporary shelter and food distribution around the world. In practical terms, this means that he has some strong ideas –which are not always well thought out - but he has made the commitment to hire you as the architect, based on the strong recommendation of your former professor. Most importantly, Roger has three guiding principles that he learned as a student and

that he has used in each of his everyday life situations. He invites you to incorporate them within your overall attitude towards this project:

- Search for an *economy of means*
- Define a *principle of settlement*
- Create a *model of life* that you structure and give form

Project:

The basis of this project is that the Lüthi's fell in love with a piece of property outside of Pleasant Hill, the site of the Shaker religious community, and believe that their property was settled by members of the Shaker community. Being European, the Lüthi's love history and are particularly fond of living in renovated spaces, thus their interest in this site and the interest in the Shakers and their important contributions to a way of living. To learn more about the Shaker, they invite you to read a blog that might give some inside thoughts on why the Shakers are 'part' of their lives ([The nature of being: Shaker architecture](#)). However, the Lüthi's insist that they do not want a replica of Shaker architecture and expect this summer retreat to be part of the 21st century.

The story about the ruins on the Lüthi's property is uncertain, but what is known through research is that they date back to the American Civil War, around 1862-63. A Shaker family was to build several structures and only the ruins are visible today -a robust stone retaining wall with a set of stairs and a built-up basement on the lower portion of the site, and a 2-foot-high foundation for possibly a barn, storage or a house on the upper portion of the site. There is not much more known about the site to the exception that one majestic tree has survived. Roger has drafted a site plan which includes all the basic elements that will give you a sense of the place (to be distributed on Wednesday, October 1, 2025).

Your clients invite you to develop three functions:

1. an entrance sequence from the lower part of the site to upper level of the site.
2. a MODEST summer home that should accommodate their family; a space to cook and two spaces to bathe, necessary public spaces to dine and entertain, spaces for nocturnal rejuvenation, and ample basic storage as furniture, and,
3. a swimming pool.

Of course, the design should also make a statement about contemporary integration within the beautiful landscape, something that Roger believes the Shakers accomplished in such a beautiful and subtle manner. To assist you in your task, Roger provides the following suggestive prompts but insists that you should foremost rely on your creativity and not try to find out what they want. Do not forget that Roger is an architect by training!

Sequence of spaces is key to any architectural design. Be it as how one approaches a site, a building or how the interior functions are distributed within a building. Giving hierarchy and order is key for a successful spatial experience. Most often architects use a primary and secondary circulation path to celebrate spaces and places.

Building/Pavilion should be understood like a summer home and should reflect the character of being on vacation to enjoy long weekends away from the city life. While the required functions are important (inside and outside activities), you should think about every aspect of a program (thesis, idea) regarding domesticity and living. In fact, why not think of a model of life for this family and what it means to own, inhabitant, and entertain. Think of the differences between a house, a home and a dwelling and what qualifies each of them.

To understand the importance of a model of life, Roger would like you to reference a short paragraph from one Leonardo Ricci; one of his teachers:

We chose a place which, although it was without gentleness and humanity, permitted us to experiment with a new way of living [model of life], in regard to the relationship between a man and his own house. The variety of a house and the process to the final form of a building can come about in a thousand ways.

I shall describe mine. My wife and I did not reason this way, for example: that we needed so many bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, two baths, etc. We started from something different. We asked ourselves what it meant to awaken. How we would wish to open ourselves to the world each morning, to the life of a day. We asked ourselves what it meant to go to sleep, that is, to close our day. What it meant to eat, to be among ourselves or with friends. How to give the children their own private place to develop their own natures, and also a collective place so that they would learn to be with other, even if for now only among themselves.

Leonardo Ricci, from Anonymous 20Century

Swimming pool is a dream for the Lüthi family and while modest in scale (they absolutely do not want either an Olympic pool or some kind of ostentatious Las Vegas pool) they expect something elegant and functional that provides a wonderful summer activity.

Landscape: There is in fact only one tree on the site and Agnes (who is an avid gardener and loves landscaped sites) requested to think about how to landscape their site. This means that anything that you do regarding all outside interventions should be integral to the project and that design strategies about how the house is seen as an extension of the landscape and the landscape an extension of the house, be carefully considered, explored and forcefully expressed in your final proposal.

One more important feature. While an architectural structure is like the skeleton for humans, you should not only think of a structural principle to bring loads from to the ground, but consider your structure as being able to DEFINE space. To assist in this endeavor, think of the three vertical structural types that we have been discussing since the case study project. Again, Roger would like you to refer to a blog that brings clarification about [structure](#).

Columnar structure
Wall structure
Column and wall structure

Also, a simple research project on the three vertical structural systems will accompany this requirement and will be conducted by student throughout the remainder of the project.

Schedule:

You have a total of eight (10) weeks to accomplish this task minus a number of days spent with family during Thanksgiving. Currently, I would like to maintain the schedule of charettes rather open, yet I will give you important milestones as we proceed through the end of the semester.

Friday, October 3:

While you are finalizing the site plan in the manner of Dieter Kienast, I invite you to already give some thoughts on what it means to create a summer house/home
Please do not forget to send me an electronic copy of our in-progress site plan at hdehahn@vt.edu

Monday, October 5:

Review of the Dieter Kienast
Distribution of the site plan and analysis of the plan for Wednesday

Wednesday, October 7

Charette exercises 1:30 – 3:00pm
Break 10 minutes
Student presentation 3:15 - 5:15pm

Other milestones are to be announced accordingly.