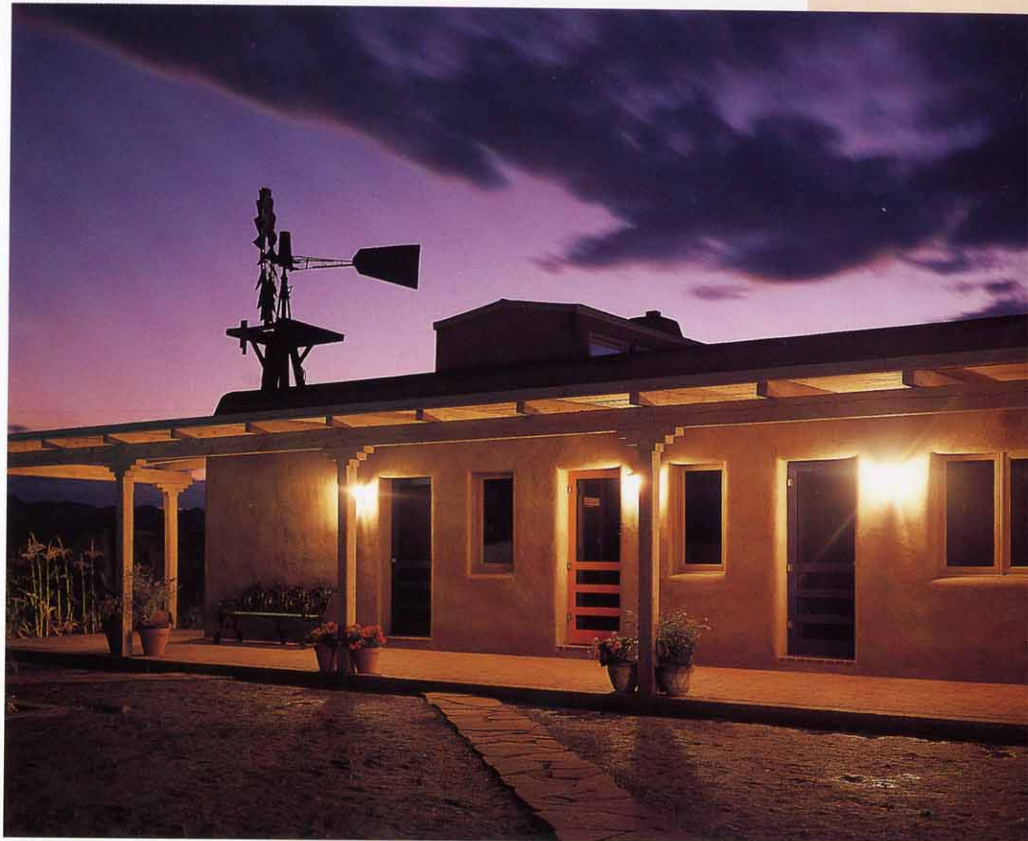


Mud Hut Redux

More than a beauty, it's art. An outcropping, really, looking like part of the land, part of the Magdalena mountains beyond. Nicknamed "The Mud Hut" because of its honest-to-god adobe construction, yet tongue-in-cheek because, at 3,500 square feet, it's far from a hut. "What I'm most proud of," states architect Anthony Anella, "is how the house fits into the landscape. The forms of the house echo the forms of the mountains in the distance. The details resonate with the cultural context."

The Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, which attracts literally hundreds of thousands of waterfowl each winter, is the primary reason for locating on this remote six acres of mesquite- and creosote-covered desert adjacent to the Rio Grande Valley. That and The Owl Bar in nearby San Antonio, a state institution, home of the best greasy green-chile cheeseburger in the world.

Raymond Plank, founder and CEO of Apache Oil Corp., uses his Mud Hut as a winter retreat, a warm-weather respite from the winds, snow, and cold of Wyoming, his primary residence. In 1990, Plank hired Anella to help design and build a vacation house where he could entertain while maintaining his privacy. Anella conceived a hacienda-style plan with two wings—a private master bedroom wing on the east incorporating a large bedroom and bath and a spacious living room; and a larger, more public guest wing on the west consisting of two guest rooms, two studies, and large dining room/kitchen.

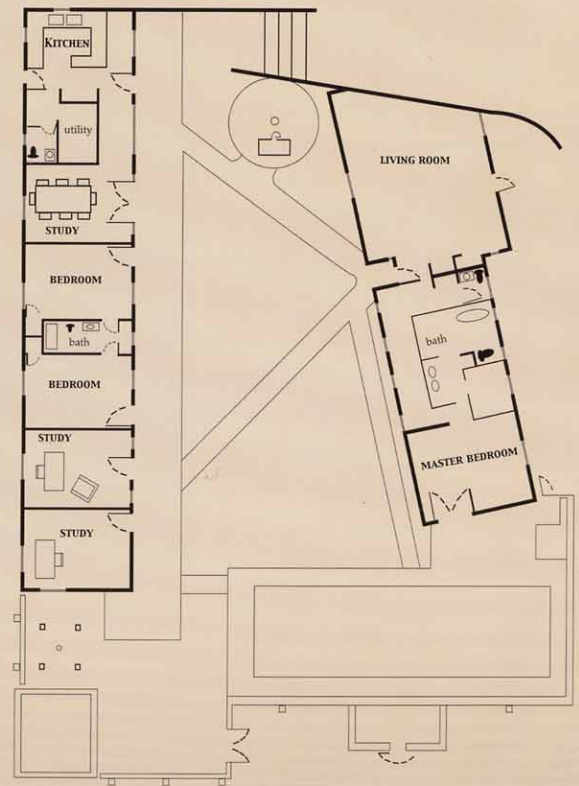




LEFT: Hand-plastered mud walls give the interior a soft, undulating surface with a wonderful texture. Remnants of straw are still visible in this dining room wall.

OPPOSITE: An eight-foot-wide portal facing the central courtyard admits morning sun into the guest wing, while providing afternoon shade. While massing of the house has a modern feel to it, all the Spanish Colonial details are present—wood beams, corbels, and posts. **FLOOR PLAN:**

Contemporary version of hacienda floor plan, designed by Anthony Anello.

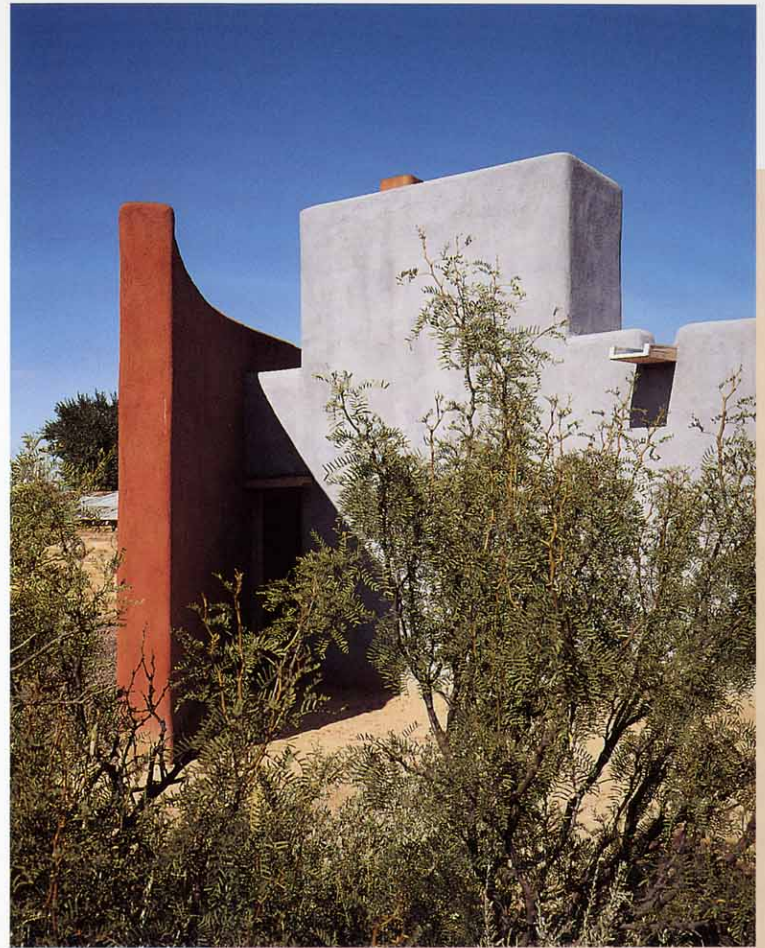


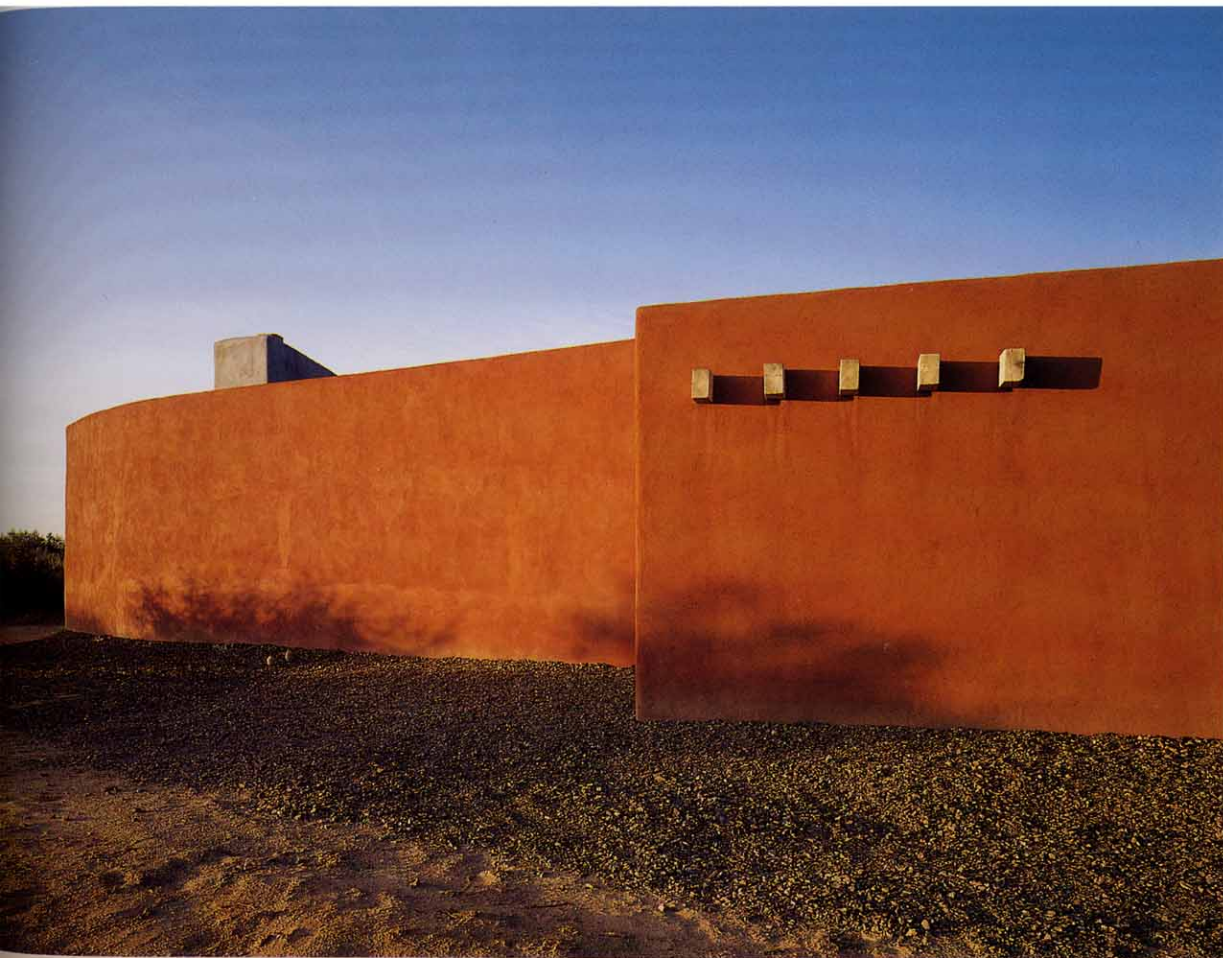
The two wings are actually separate buildings, each with its own foundation and roof, yet tied to each other by a surrounding adobe wall (in the Spanish Colonial tradition) and facing each other across a central courtyard (see floor plan, previous page). Guests come over to the living room for cocktails in the evening while the host visits the guest wing for breakfast and dinner.

Completed in 1991, the Mud Hut is a modern Spanish hacienda with a central courtyard, but instead of four enclosed wings surrounding the courtyard, it has two. Taking the place of the other two wings are a high adobe wall on the highway side, and a lap pool with surrounding low wall on the south side. Entrance to the compound exists through a slot where the walls overlap—a cornstalk gate denoting the threshold between the natural and the man-made landscape.

Behind the walls the courtyard opens to the south and to the sun encompassing a desert garden, lap pool (off the master bedroom), working windmill (a 1932 Chicago Aeromotor with a rustic wood structure, original to the site), and an outdoor eating area recalling the design of a kiva, complete with firepit and wind deflector. The wind deflector corresponds in mass to a fountain by the pool, helping to center the courtyard.

Structurally, the Mud Hut has load-bearing, sun-baked adobe walls and ponderosa pine beams. Stucco covers the exterior while interior walls are hand-finished mud plaster. Hot water pipes installed in the subfloor warm Saltillo tile flooring, thus radiating healthful heat throughout the house. All windows and doors are wood. To obtain light-filled interiors, Anella placed clerestory windows high in the walls of the master bedroom and bath, kitchen, and both studies.





LEFT: Square wood ceiling beams project onto the exterior, much like traditional vigas in Pueblo-style architecture.

OPPOSITE ABOVE: On the exterior, four different colors relate to different aspects of the natural landscape. The reddish color of the west wing relates to the river side of the site—salt cedar, cottonwoods, and willows. The curved east wall has a purple tinge reminiscent of the purple-colored bark of the four-wing saltbush dotting the desert. The bodies of the house sections match the color of the ground, while the mass of blue-gray chimney echoes the sky.

OPPOSITE BELOW: An iron cornstalk gate at the point where the two surrounding walls meet allows entrance into the central courtyard as well as the hacienda-style house.