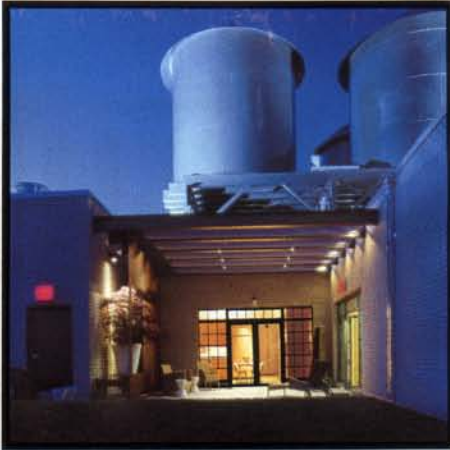




CITATION

FIGURE AND GROUNDS

A Minneapolis rooftop loft by Anmahian Winton Architects inverts expectations of landscape and living room. **By Thomas Fisher**



In a rehabilitated Minneapolis flourmill, this elegant, airy penthouse, designed by Boston architects Anmahian Winton and Minneapolis landscape architect Thomas Oslund, inverts our idea of figure and ground. Architects typically design figures on the ground, but here, the building itself is the ground, its rooftop providing the base upon which exterior and interior elements stand.

Oslund treats the lawn as a figural platform framed in steel. He does the same with steel-framed terraces and planters, each sitting on a gravel base that recalls both roof ballast and Japanese gardens. Two meditation rooms, wrapped in black-stained mahogany slats, stand as another figural element, set against the parapet's white cement-board cladding.

This "objectified" landscape, as Oslund calls it, continues inside. He and Nick Winton worked closely to ensure continuity between exterior and interior. "We raised the floor to be level with the garden," says Winton, a move that ensured spatial flows and room for the mechanical runs. The Douglas fir floor and ceiling provide a rich, reddish surface in the living space for a series of "islands," with rugs and cabinets defining areas for eating, conversing, and relaxing. A prow-shaped library stands as the most prominent feature in the room, with a curved, elevated wall directing visitors from the front hall to the rear seating area.

The raised floor also enhances the view through the large windows to the nearby Mississippi River and Minneapolis skyline. The dynamic activity outside those windows makes them vertical figures of their own, with a sliding fir-clad wall, designed for artwork, that also serves as a screen against the western sun.

Also in fir, the kitchen "pod," as Winton calls it, separates the entry vestibule from the living area, while a set of nested figures-within-figures characterizes the private quarters. Winton envisioned the carpeted bedrooms and corner study "as a Pullman car," with perimeter circulation along the window wall and interior, and automated drapes and shades providing privacy. An inner circulation path among these rooms also highlights the figural character of the central bathroom, service, and storage block.

This play of figure-as-ground and ground-as-figure seems appropriate in a city that has thrived on having "objectified" the agricultural land of the Midwest, turning that ground into vast stretches of fenced-off, food-producing figures. Architect and landscape architect accomplish something extraordinary: They remind us that we've been inverting figure and ground for a very long time.

Thomas Fisher is dean of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota.

Loft and Terrace, Minneapolis, Minnesota

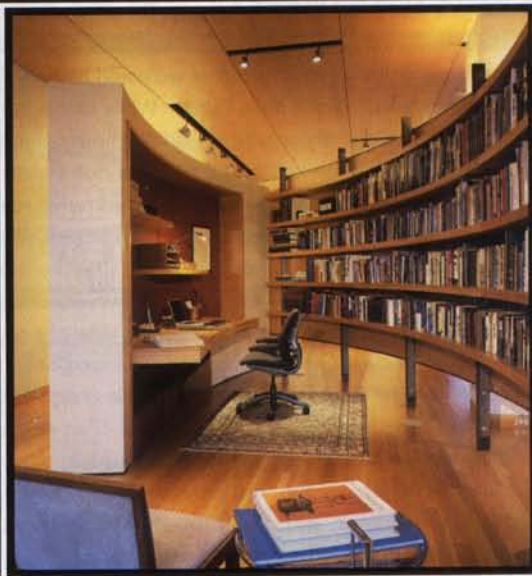
architect | Anmahian Winton Architects, Cambridge, Massachusetts—Nick Winton, Alex Anmahian (principals); Cornell Anderson, Gary Rohrbacher, Aaron Stavert, Lilly Smith, Andrea Korber (project team) **landscape architect** | Oslund & Associates, Minneapolis, Minnesota—Thomas Oslund (principal); Peter Vevang (project designer) **interior designer** | Gunkelmans **associate architect** | James Dayton Design, Minneapolis **engineers** | Gregorian Engineers, Mattson MacDonald Engineers (structural); Atlantic Heating, NewMech (M/E/P) **consultants** | Lam Partners (lighting) **general contractor** | Kraus-Anderson **area** | 7,200 square feet **cost** | \$1.5 million **photographs** | George Heinrich

Specifications

metals | Corten steel **wood** | Douglas fir; mahogany lattice **pavers** | precast concrete **cement panels** | James Hardie **waterproofing** | American Hydrotech **stone** | Dresser Trap Rock **skylights** | Wasco Products **locksets** | FSB **carpentry** | Marcon **cabinetry** | O'Keefe Woodworking **cabinet hardware** | Colonial Bronze **carpet** | Weskuske **drapery** | Boussac **furnishings** | Flexform; Knoll; Mario Bellini **uplights** | Belfer **downlights** | Lightlior; Elliptipar **task lighting** | Artemide **plumbing fixtures** | Duravit; Dornbracht



A restrained and fairly common intervention—the rooftop loft—gives near-iconic status to existing water tanks and a new elevated green (facing page). A sculptural library element and perimeter circulation relieve an otherwise static interior (below). The indoor-outdoor program connects occupants in new ways to the urban landscape (above).



- 1 meditation rooms
- 2 lawn
- 3 dining terrace
- 4 living/dining
- 5 library
- 6 kitchen terrace
- 7 kitchen
- 8 bedroom
- 9 lobby
- 10 sitting room

plan ——— 12' →