

**Rock Creek House**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**NADAAA**

TEXT BY IAN VOLNER  
PHOTOS BY JOHN HORNER



Nader Tehrani was born to roam: Raised by diplomat parents who bounced between the U.K., U.S., and their native Iran, the 53-year-old architect and his firm, NADAAA, have exhibited an intellectual approach that finds opportunity for function and signification in such disparate locales as Gwangju, South Korea, and Newton, Mass. Since being named Cooper Union’s dean of architecture, Tehrani has continued to push his office forward while swinging between studios in New York City and Boston, and his ability to marry pedagogy with practice is borne out in a project completed this year: a house in Washington, D.C.

An expansion of a 1920s structure on the edge of scenic Rock Creek Park, the house shows how Tehrani can train his mental firepower on the domestic concerns of an affluent family in a quasi-suburban setting. Expanded from two levels plus a basement to four finished floors, the building’s brick envelope is the launching pad for an irregular pattern of windows that hint at the new and more sectionally complex interior: a warren of nooks and crannies, of private spaces that peek into public ones, and of privileged views into the park beyond. “We basically kept the ghost of the existing order,” says Tehrani, who kept most of the rooms in or close to their original alignment.

The biggest shift by far is in the northeast garden façade, which ceased being load-bearing and became a curtainwall. “A reconstructed Frankenstein monster,” as Tehrani calls it, the approach allowed for even more windows, the new openings furnishing castoff bricks used to pop up the attic into the new upper floor.

The house’s signature moment—if NADAAA can be said to have signatures—is in the central stairwell, a bristling array of wooden banisters. Aesthetically and practically, it recalls the vertical metal louvers in the firm’s Melbourne School of Design (with John Wardle Architects), with warmer materials and more subdued details as befits a residential project. Everything about the house, in fact, seems to find Tehrani in a more toned-down mode. “What we’re doing nowadays is decomposing, erasing, curating,” he says. “We’re eliminating the marks, so you come and pay attention to the irreducible aspects of the project.”

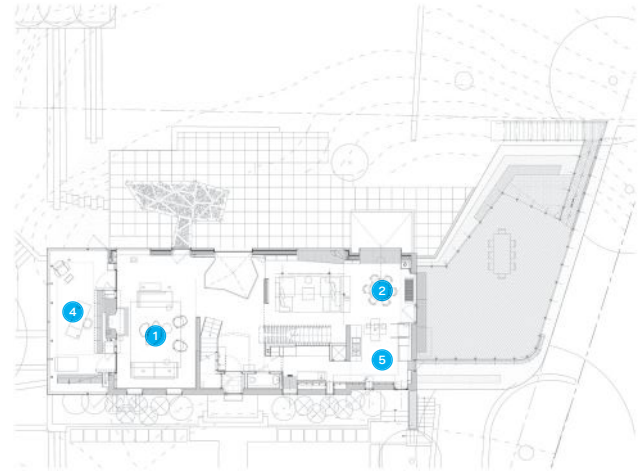
Fourth-Floor Plan



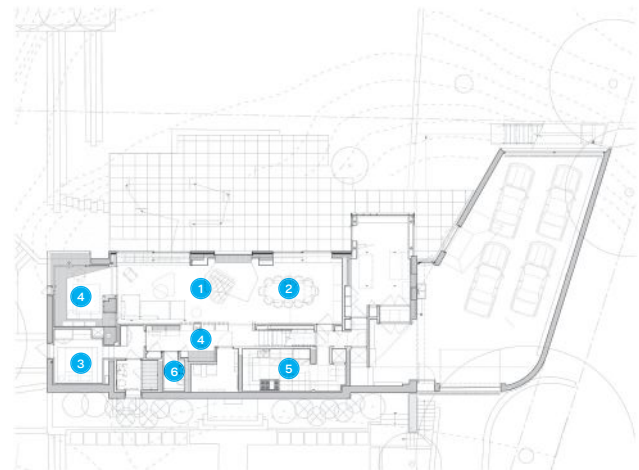
Third-Floor Plan



Second-Floor Plan



First-Floor Plan



- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. Living room | 5. Kitchen    |
| 2. Dining room | 6. Bathroom   |
| 3. Bedroom     | 7. Study nook |
| 4. Office      | 8. Playroom   |





*Previous Page:* As renovated and expanded, the four-level house (seen here from the north), contains eight bedrooms as well as seven full bathrooms and two half baths.

*Top:* The new butterfly roof channels water off the southwest side of the house.

*Above:* A CNC-milled metal trellis on the northeast façade provides shade near the backyard pool as well as a deck off the second floor.





*Opposite:* C.W. Keller + Associates fabricated the millwork using quartered anigre from Brookside Veneers over a euro-birch core.

*Above:* The wooden banisters in the central stairwell, seen here looking northeast into the third-floor study nook, are deflected to allow light to pass through while blocking views into the bedrooms.



*Top:* The master suite containing Molteni&C closets takes up nearly half of the second floor. A two-sided Stûv fireplace is open from the bedroom through to the bathroom next door.

*Above:* The master bathroom features an egg-shaped bathtub and separate shower, both by Agape.



*Top:* Located at ground-level on the southwest side of the house's sloping site, the second-floor kitchen features Bulthaup cabinets and appliances by Miele, Asko, and Gaggenau.

*Above:* Sliding glass doors provide access from the first-floor living spaces to the northeast patio.



Above: Carlisle Wide Plank Floors in white oak run throughout the house.

#### **Project Credits**

*Project:* Rock Creek House, Washington, D.C.

*Client:* Withheld

*Architect:* NADAAA, Boston and New York City · Nader Tehrani, Katherine Faulkner, AIA (principals); Harry Lowd (project manager); Sarah Dunbar, Remon Alberts, John Houser, Stephen Saude, Jonathan Palazzolo, Lisa Lostritto, Parke MacDowell, David Richmond, Dane Asmussen, Ghazal Abbasy-Asbagh, Mahdi Alibakhshian, Sina Mesdaghi, Tom

Beresford, Dan Gallagher (project team)

*Landscape Architecture:* Landworks Studio

*Structural Engineer:* Simpson Gumpertz & Heger

*Mechanical Engineer:* Allied Consulting Engineering Services

*Contractor:* Abdo Development

*Lighting:* Hinson Design Group

*Size:* 10,193 square feet

*Cost:* Withheld