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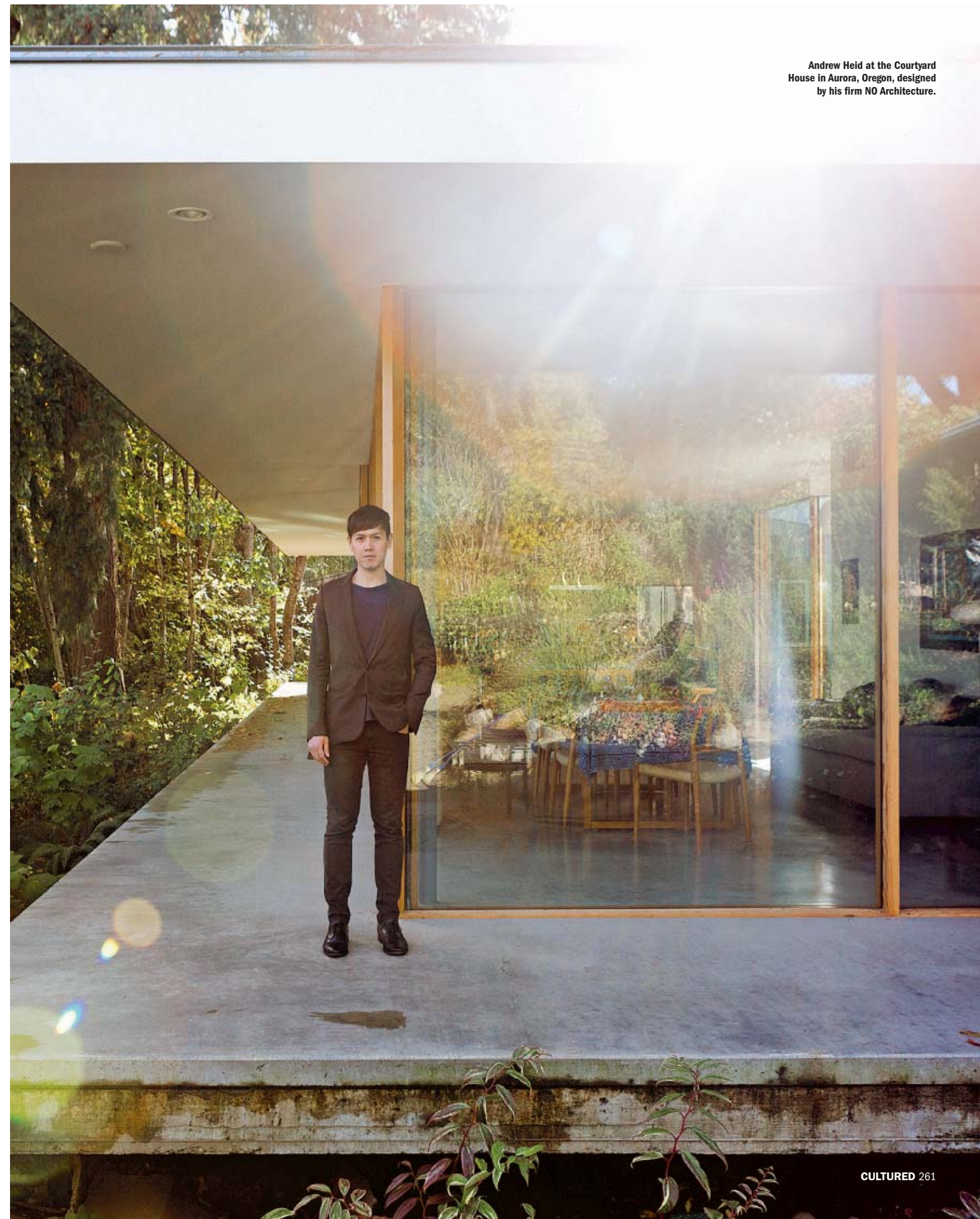
THE MOMENT IN ART

JOHN GIORNO AND UGO RONDINONE AT PALAIS DE TOKYO, PARIS

THE TOPOLOGIST

Architect **Andrew Heid** wants you to be connected to your environment—preferably in a house of his design.

BY STEPHEN TREFFINGER PORTRAIT BY ARTHUR HITCHCOCK



Andrew Heid at the Courtyard House in Aurora, Oregon, designed by his firm NO Architecture.



Andrew Heid's C.V. is about as top-flight as they come. After studying architecture at Yale, the Architectural Association in London and at Princeton, he worked at REX and OMA in New York and Rotterdam. He formed his own firm, NO Architecture, in 2009, when he was 29 years old.

When asked what he and his staff do—in the broadest sense—he laughs, pauses, then replies, “That’s a difficult question. Maybe another way to say it is, what are we not doing? We’re not interested in a lot of things. We’re not interested in this kind of profusion of materiality that Rem Koolhaas is interested in. We’re not interested in the hyper-fetishization of the digital, which is what a lot of the contemporary, younger people are interested in.”

Among a long list of what does interest him are young Japanese architects such as Sou Fujimoto, Akihisa Hirata, Kazuyo Sejima (“a kind of a hero”) and Ryue Nishizawa. “They’re sort of untheoretical, but they have the most poetic, direct way of working. And what they’re really working on, I think, is how to express the kind of interconnectedness we have in this postindustrial epoch or culture that we live in.”

Two early projects—an award-winning entry for New York’s High Line park and a second for an “environmental restoration area” titled “This is Not a Park” in Berlin—show an early connection between Heid and those he admires. “I still feel like nature and ecology figure very prominently in the DNA of who I am and what we do here, even though we don’t necessarily practice at that scale all the time now. At the scale of our practice, houses, particularly in the countryside, are where we can do interesting work.”

One such project (arguably his most personal) was the house he commissioned for his parents. It was inspired, in part, by his design thesis at Princeton: a make-believe hotel and restaurant in New York’s Hudson Valley. It consisted of a single-level, cantilevered

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volume inserted into a hillside. His father loved it and told him this is what he and his mother wanted for their home, much to Heid’s surprise. “I was pretty shocked that this project was what they wanted. It was a lot more architecturally ambitious than I ever imagined that my parents would want to sign up for.”

Unlike a traditional suburban house which usually has a living and dining area separated by a corridor from the sleeping area, his parents’ house is one where “every space becomes a living space during the day, and every living space can become a sleeping space at night. It maximizes the efficiency of the floor plan,” he says. This is accomplished by a matrix plan, where everything is interconnected. A pair of L-shaped walls house the bathrooms, kitchen and closets. And while a central glass courtyard creates an open loft feeling, pocket doors in the walls can create privacy when desired.

Recently, NO completed proposals for a library extension in Switzerland and a town hall in Norway. An ongoing project is a 4,300-square-foot private residence in Maryland, which could clumsily be called a steroidal version of his parents’ house, with multiple courtyards and a series of volumes in a loop configuration. “It pushes the ethical boundaries of what architecture should be about. But I do think, even at this scale, we can make something that actually has a relationship between the inside and the outside. And makes the client, as a person, aware of his relationship with other people and with nature.”

Ultimately, Heid sees the compartmentalization of the room-and-corridor plan as a disastrous cultural relic we still live with: a holdover from 17th century English country houses, a way to segregate the social classes and create microclimates around fireplaces. “So anything that is not that—the matrix plan, the open plan, the perimeter plan—is a way to really change the way people live in a positive way.”