

Skow Residence “El Sombrero”

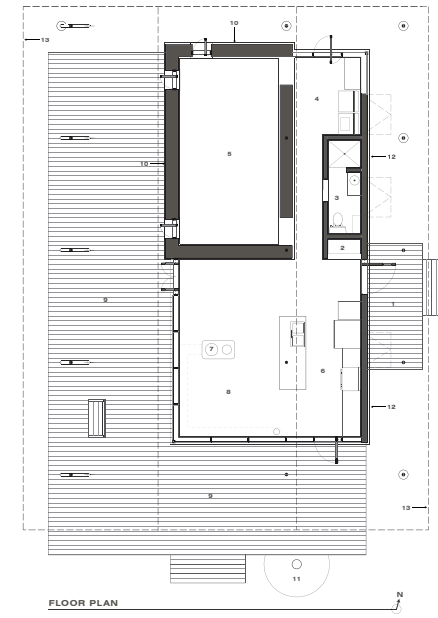
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Having received a typical Navajo “home build kit”, the clients, Harold and Helena Skow, had already completed a CMU foundation to accept a traditional rectangular gable-trussed home. Unable to complete the building the Skow’s turned to students from the nearby University for help. The students decided to utilize the existing foundation and virtually all of the build kit materials stock piled on site in their design.

While walking the site with the clients on their first visit some students took note that Harold wore a large brimmed hat which shielded the harsh sun from his face and neck. When asked about the protective garment Harold commented that everyone should have a sombrero in the desert. Inspired by his comment and resisting the idea of a traditional gable roof house, the team chose to turn the trusses upside down and create a sombrero for Skow’s home.

Programmatically, the 800sf, 2-bedroom home is separated into 2 volumes. The private volume, containing the bedrooms, is wrapped in highly insulative straw bale construction and is located to the north, providing a sense of comfort surrounded by natural earthen plaster and security from the desert elements. The public volume containing the living room and kitchen/dining room opens up to the southwest, providing spectacular views and a connection to the landscape while allowing direct solar gain, in the winter, through two walls of orientation-specific solar glazing. A large deck wraps the western and southern sides of the home and brings the ‘livable’ space outdoors for much of the year, while an eastern entry porch provides shaded outdoor space to gather during summer afternoon hours.



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