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into their own

As they celebrate their 20-year anniversary, Tomecek Studio moves into a new live/work building they designed in LoHi, exemplifying the team's deeply intellectual and inventive approach to space and material.

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IMAGES: Parrish Ruiz de Velasco

TOMECEK STUDIO IS KNOWN FOR ASKING THE BIG QUESTIONS.

Within the Denver community, the architecture firm has gained a reputation for its intellectual approach, inventiveness with space and material, and responsiveness to natural environments. “In our projects, we’re always searching for the DNA,” says founder and principal Brad Tomecek. “What does the space need to help it come into being? What does it want to become?” he asks. These are the ideas that guide the practice.

Recently, the firm has moved into a brand-new office—a combined live/work space in LoHi with rental units attached. The urban infill structure exemplifies the team’s ethos: mixing straight edges and sweeping, rounded shapes, the design simultaneously fits into the existing infrastructure of the block and pushes the neighborhood forward in an appropriately modern direction.

While all Tomecek Studio projects are personal to the team, this time, the architects became their own clients. They began the process as they always do, with a site analysis—seeking to understand how to orient the build, where the light falls, who the neighbors are, what the viewpoints are, and so on. Ultimately, inspired by the lot’s required alley site triangle, they decided to plant their footprint with a curving eye toward the downtown skyline. Instead of repeating the Highlands’ traditional, blocky 1930s geometry, the team’s imagination led them to a spherical perspective, an allusion to layering and interlocking forms.

“With this project, maybe the question is: does it look forward without ignoring the past?” says Tomecek. “We never want to replicate what already exists. There’s too much technology and building wisdom out there. But, does it feel good? Does it fit?”

The two-story outer volume juxtaposes against the 45-foot recessed form in scale and material, organically blending old and new, hard and soft, active and passive modalities. The high ceilings and large windows lend themselves to an airy feeling, bright with natural light and a serene interior aesthetic (“clean, but not static,” according to Tomecek). Altogether, the space is ideal for both sides of the live/work brief—productivity and restoration. “We needed this space to live well on both fronts, and to work well,” he says. Now ready to welcome clients and guests on West 30th Avenue, the space offers a fluidity of use and sensibility, a showroom that illustrates the overall Tomecek essence. →95

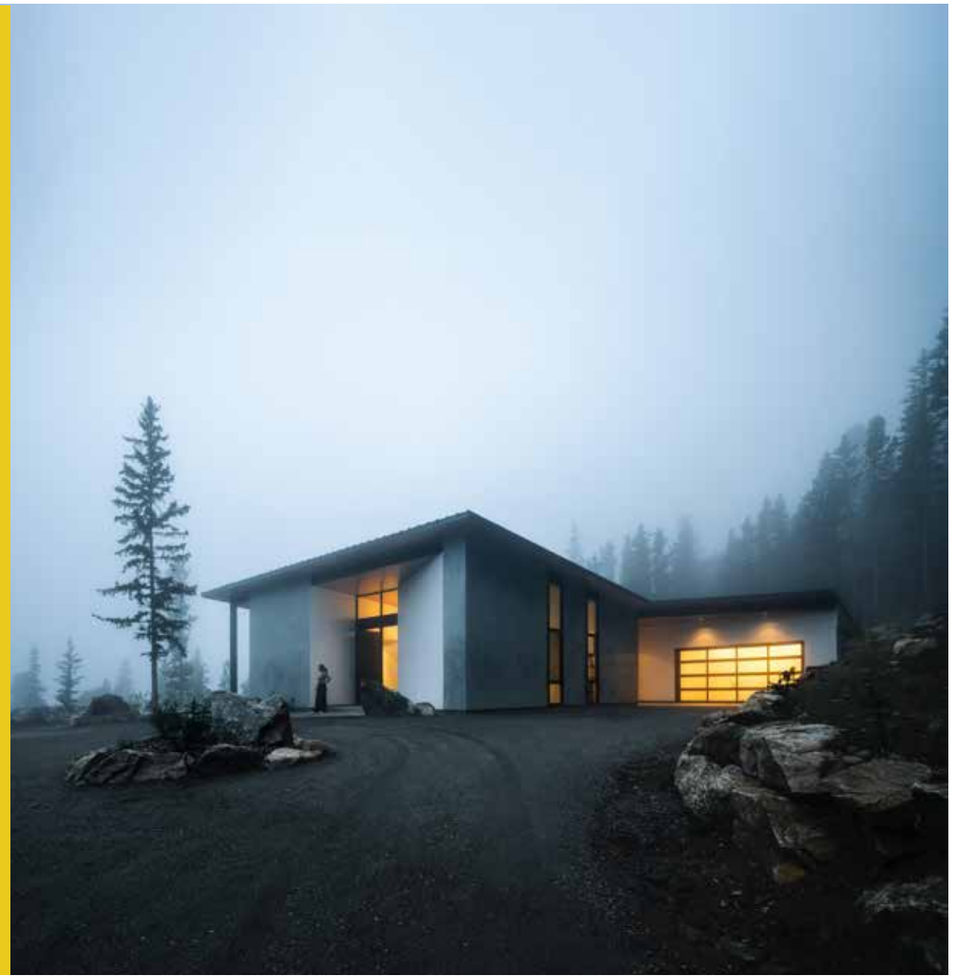
An evening view of the new Tomecek Studio workplace exterior highlights the building’s expansive windows, architectural curvature, and organic urban infill placement. “We aim to solve the problems of geometry artistically,” explains founder and principal Brad Tomecek. “To create a fluidity—you see how things start to peel away…then there’s a contextual overlay with the city.”

into their own

The office's curved volumes allow for moments of both integration and relief. While the various spaces are acoustically connected across the floor plan, privacy and reflective work can also be achieved.

"IT'S A HOUSE, UNTIL IT ISN'T...UNTIL YOU BRING SOMETHING TO IT THAT'S BEYOND STANDARD. YOU CAN PUT A ROOF ON IT, YOU CAN PUT A FIREPLACE INSIDE IT...BUT, ARCHITECTURE CAN BE SO MUCH MORE. THAT'S HOW I THINK ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY OF SPACE." –Brad Tomecek

into their own



Echo Mountain Retreat, located above Echo Pass in Idaho Springs, Colorado, showcases Tomecek Studio's deep and masterful integration of nature's landscapes, solid volumes, and holistic materiality.

The building marks a milestone for Tomecek Studio, as the firm celebrates its 20th anniversary and begins its next chapter, informed by a continuation of their original philosophical agenda. "This is the trajectory we've been working on for over two decades now," says Tomecek. "Funny enough, they say that architects begin their careers at 50. So, I feel like I'm just at that halfway point," he jokes.

While the founder has a growth mindset about the work itself—a desire for the challenge and rigor of the firm's projects to constantly evolve—he isn't interested in team expansion at this juncture, preferring to remain lean and closely involved in all day-to-day operations. The uniquely hands-on approach renders the studio distinctive amongst its peers, motivated more by exploration than profit. Rather than big budgets or institutional prestige, Tomecek cites his main drivers for taking on new clients as: Are we going to have fun doing this?

"It's a journey that you take with people, pulling out what they're really looking for, uncovering their needs," he says. The architect finds so much passion in the problem-solving and puzzle-piecing of the craft, creating a poetics far beyond the mechanics.

Over the years, Tomecek's most thrilling briefs are the ones that allow for divergent thinking and open-ended interpretation. Some of the architect's favorite projects have included a Salida, Colorado, residence atop a cemetery property, and a Sunset Pavilion for a local parks system in Firestone, Colorado. The Cemetery Residence looked to traditional forms of burial to inform its programmatic design, invoking symbolism of life, death, and transformation through liminal space. Meanwhile, the Sunset Pavilion utilized a carefully diagramed set of perforations to highlight the sun's movement through the equinox seasons, encouraging visitors to pay closer attention to Earth's natural elements. While differing in form, both projects respond to their environment's site-specific needs in creative, intentional, and organic ways.

Looking ahead, the firm is excited by upcoming projects that bring new challenges. A community center for a church asks questions around gathering spaces that foster spirituality and communion, while a multi-generational, multi-family home invites inquiry around the distinctions between shared space versus

ABOVE: The Shield House, located in Denver, offers another take on spherical solutions to urban infill questions—this time intended to provide privacy and shade, the curved metal wall redirects light and viewpoints with imaginative flair.

BELOW: The Sunset Pavilion, commissioned for a parks system in Firestone, Colorado, features carefully diagrammed perforations intended to act as a lens to view the sun's changing movements. By design, visitors are encouraged to engage peacefully and thoughtfully with the landscape.

Photos: Top, Raul Garcia, Above, Tomecek Studio

"WITH THIS PROJECT, MAYBE THE QUESTION IS: DOES IT LOOK FORWARD WITHOUT IGNORING THE PAST? WE NEVER WANT TO REPLICATE WHAT ALREADY EXISTS. THERE'S TOO MUCH TECHNOLOGY AND BUILDING WISDOM OUT THERE. BUT, DOES IT FEEL GOOD? DOES IT FIT?" –Brad Tomecek

The office was drafted to foster collaboration and dialogue. The Tomecek team is small, but mighty—everyone plays an important part in bringing clients' dreams to life. The architecture itself encourages that connectivity through fluid volumes.

privacy in the domestic realm. Ever innovative with technology and sustainability initiatives—ranging from prefabricated units to alternative building systems and net-zero energy usage—the studio plans to continue exploring untapped possibilities with their signature curiosity, placing the beauty of nature at the soul of all their work.

To Tomecek, a house is never just a house. As an adjunct professor at the University of Colorado College of Architecture and Planning, he's concerned with imbuing this message to his students—always seeking depth through semiotic meaning and material transcendence. "It's a house, until it isn't," he says. "Until you bring something to it that's beyond standard. You can put a roof on it, you can put a fireplace inside it... but architecture can be so much more. That's how I think about the opportunity of space." Now, he and his team have created the perfect place to explore all its possibilities.

PROJECT CREDITS

ARCHITECT
Tomecek Studio

BUILDER
One Residential

CABINETRY
Thurston Kitchen + Bath

APPLIANCES
Roth Living

FURNISHINGS
Rifugio Modern

EXTERIOR
Bighorn Metals

WINDOWS
Alpen + Weathershield

COUNTERTOPS
Cosentino + Moderno Porcelain Works