



## Five Houses, Ten Details (Writing Matters)

*Edward R. Ford*

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Edward Ford's forty years of practicing and teaching architecture have focused on one area: the architectural detail. Yet, despite two hugely influential books (*The Details of Modern Architecture*, volumes 1 and 2), numerous articles, and lectures given from Vancouver to Vienna, there are two questions Ford has, remarkably, never answered: "What is a detail?" and more importantly, "What is a good detail?" Ford is an architect as well as a writer, so it is not surprising that rather than answering these questions in a third book, he spent six years on the design and construction of a house. Building it was not an exercise in the application of ideas about detail; it was, rather, a mechanism for answering those two simple questions.

*Five Houses, Ten Details* presents five designs all by Ford, all for himself, all for the same site only one of which was built. Each unbuilt design evolved or was abandoned for a variety of reasons. Many simply cost too much; others were based on presumptions that proved inaccurate or unproductive. All, to some degree, are present in the final design. Each of the five designs explores a different aspect of architectural detail: how it acts to connect to or disconnect from a site; how it is expressive of material; how it acts to reveal structure; how it articulates the act of construction; and how it can be inconsistent, in a beneficial way, with the remainder of the building. Detail for Ford is not an accessory to architecture but its essence. Each design in *Five Houses, Ten Details* explores and articulates one aspect: site, structure, material, joinery, or furniture at the expense of the others. Each architectural exploration leads to a larger understanding of construction and a larger understanding of how details communicate. Woven throughout with historical references and specific examples of his design process, *Five Houses, Ten Details* is an accessible and at times personal account of one man's exploration of architectural detail.



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