



Green Design on the Black Warrior River

The Rural Studio's Architecture for the Poor

Nia Garner
February 3, 2004

Samuel "Sambo" Mockbee, FAIA

■ Biography

- 1944-2001
- Fifth generation Mississippian
- 1987 – Progressive Arch.
Honor for "charity
houses"
- In 1991 he joined the Auburn
University faculty
- Awarded the "Genius Grant"
in 2000
- Awarded donation from Oprah's
Angel Network



Samuel Mockbee's Philosophy

- Citizen Architect
- Sustainable architecture
- Challenge: Finding the balance between environmental considerations and economic constraints



The Rural Studio History

- Auburn University, Department of Architecture, Rural Studio
- Established in 1993, by Dennis K. Ruth and Samuel Mockbee
- The Rural Studio began designing and building homes that same fall.
- Provides housing for the poor using salvaged and inexpensive materials



The Rural Studio Mission



- To allow students to put their educational values to work as citizens of a community.
- Abstract ideas based upon knowledge and study are transformed into workable solutions forged by real human contact, personal realization, and a gained appreciation for the culture.
- The Rural Studio seeks solutions within the community's own context, not from outside it.
- A vision of a process to make housing and community

The Rural Studio

- Duration of project: full academic year
- Students: undergraduates leave campus to live and work in economically depressed rural community
- Budget: \$30,000 for each construction
- Completed 17 major projects and several repairs





Mason Bend, Alabama

- Population: 80
- Hale County
- Black Belt
- Four families
- One of the United States poorest communities
- Families lack electricity and running water

The Bryant "Hay Bale" House

- Client: Shepherd & Alberta Bryant (elderly couple with three grandchildren)
- Site: on the Black Warrior River
- Insulation: Hay Bales, "Sun-visor": corrugated acrylic
- 24" thick walls – stucco covered hay bales
- 60 sq. meter structure
- \$16,500 to build



The Harris "Butterfly" House



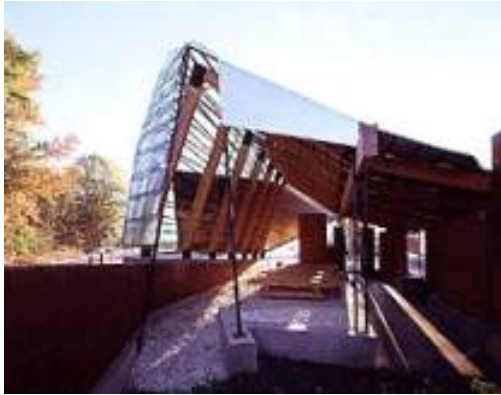
©Timothy Hursley



©Timothy Hursley

- Client: Anderson and Ora Lee Harris
- 60 sq. meters
- 1 bedroom house
- Butterfly roof facilitates natural ventilation
- Openness of the house and size of porch are intended to suit the climate and inhabitants

Recycled Materials



- Land donated by the Harris' in return for their new home
- Mason Bend Community Center
- Materials: Rammed Earth and 90 car windshields
- Students visit junkyards, farms, construction sites, and lumberyards for salvageable materials



