



gehry and venturi's re-visited houses make road trips

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Two buildings designed by well-known American architects re-located early this year. In January the move began for Robert Venturi's Lieb House which dates from 1968. The 204 m² building is going to travel over land and water, from Barnegat Light near the northern tip of Long Beach Island, to Glen Cove, which is situated 200 km to the north, on the northern shore of Long Island. That is – if everything goes according to plan. The house, which at the time of going to press (late February) was still standing on a temporary parking space, has not yet been granted planning permission at the new site, but already had to move from its original location. It was under threat of demolition by a property developer who wanted to build a new house on the site. A couple in Glen Cove, who live in another of Venturi's houses, decided to buy the small building, after mediation by architect Frederic Schwartz and Venturi's son Jim, and to use it as a guesthouse.

A Frank Gehry guesthouse dating from 1987 was supposed to be re-located in February from Orono in central Minnesota 120 km south to its destination in Owatonna. The guesthouse sided a now restored 1952 Philip Johnson home overlooking a large lake. Its 214 m² are divided between six interconnected but autonomous geometric doodles – cubes and wedges made of limestone, galvanized metal, Finnish plywood and aluminium strips. The design sees no shortage of whimsy, with oblique windows of varying sizes, and a jutting black metal pyramid decapitated to fit a skylight. At the time of going to press, the structure sits literally deconstructed, almost fully removed from its foundation, individual elements wrapped in protective casing, perched on stilts above frozen Minnesota ground.

Originally, the home would have travelled to University of St Thomas' Gainey Conference Center in Owatonna on 9 February, but according to spokesman James Winterer of the university there were delays because of bad weather. The majority of the move will take place in the dead of night to reduce traffic problems. The guesthouse, which was donated to the private university in 2007, will house meetings, social gatherings, Gehry 'memorabilia' and the occasional tour group.

Amputated from their intended context, Gehry's and Venturi's displaced buildings challenge the idea that a structure is not only the sum of its parts, but also its backdrop. Gehry's house, which survived demolition whispers some years back, won't be the only structure dealing with 'issues' in Owatonna – the city is an architectural Frankenstein of sorts, also hosting a controversially remodelled Louis Sullivan bank.



ROBERT VENTURI'S LIEB HOUSE ON THE MOVE.

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