



EYE ON DESIGN

Pfeffer Torode Architecture

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PHOTOS BY PFEFFER TORODE ARCHITECTURE

For any company, new or long-standing, that wishes to stand out above others, a “breakthrough moment” is not just something that is wished for; it’s something that is depended on for the very survival of the business. With offices in Nashville and Montgomery, Pfeffer Torode Architecture is a quickly-expanding and innovative architectural design firm that got its start in 2009. In the summer of 2012, it experienced a “breakthrough moment” that changed not only the course of the company, but also the landscape of Alabama and Tennessee. The breakthrough moment that led to its current success and wide-reaching recognition came when the firm sought a new approach to architecture, an approach that has become its routine.

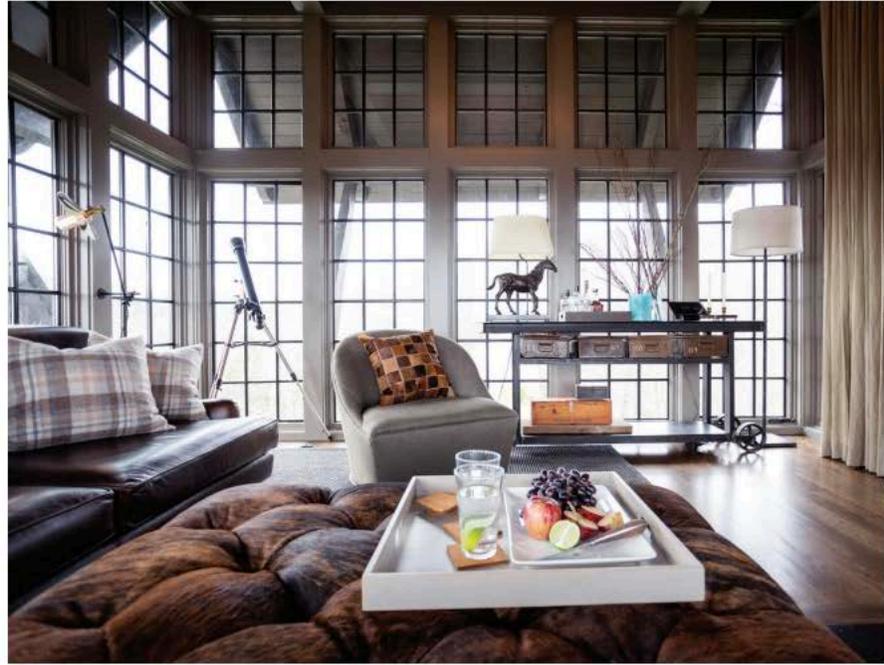
From the beginning, the Pfeffer Torode team pursued opportunities to create a splash of color in an industry that can sometimes be plastered with black and white. Though they didn’t know this project would be their breakthrough moment, in 2012 they ran across a most unexpected opportunity: a treehouse-building competition for a summer exhibition at a local botanical garden. They were ecstatic about the chance to display their creativity in this one-of-a-kind environment. As a newer firm, they had nothing to lose, and as they would soon learn, so much to gain.

Due to the founders’ strong competitive nature, the small team had worked tirelessly on two literary-inspired treehouse designs. “One of our all-time favorites was the Walden Treehouse. We drew all of our inspiration from Henry David Thoreau’s cabin near Walden Pond,” says Jonathan Torode, a partner at the firm. The main aspect of the Walden Treehouse is a spiral staircase that wraps around the tree and leads up to the house. Their treehouse was also built with interaction in mind, which led to the architects including swings, a balcony, birdhouse, and rain chain. The Pfeffer Torode team also chose to follow Thoreau’s lead and source all materials from nearby Amish mills, or from sassafras and cedar root from around Arrington, Tennessee.

Both of their designs ended up winning the treehouse competition and allowed the firm to make its mark on one of Nashville’s most beautiful examples of Southern design: Cheekwood Estate & Gardens. Overnight, this startup design firm of talented architects gained notoriety all over the metro area and basked in the excitement of this important, defining breakthrough. “It was really incredible. Here we are, this small boutique design firm, and now suddenly we’re on billboards all across Nashville,” says Jamie Pfeffer, partner and Nashville native. After the competition,







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Pfeffer Torode decided to donate the Walden Treehouse to Cheekwood Gardens for a fundraising auction. Unexpectedly, an anonymous donor bought it for over \$40,000, and then donated it right back to Cheekwood, which has made the treehouse the longest summer feature to date.

When the Pfeffer Torode team is not participating in unique, innovative treehouse competitions, you can find them designing anything from stunning lake houses to atypical pool houses to observation towers or even party barns. Their knack for uncommon ancillary structures and beauty inserted in the everyday home is what appeals to their clients from all over the South. “We love being invited to practice any sort of style that we would need to. Being a young firm, we have to be a bit more flexible, but we’ve been lucky to have

some more modern, unusual designs. I think what has come out of that is that we have a much more eclectic, diverse style,” says Scott Torode, a partner.

The characteristics of the South shine when people see Pfeffer Torode’s designs. The firm varies on style and approach but still makes structures respond to the environment by basing many designs on experiences within Southern homes. With all three of the partners being raised in the South, one can see the Southern inspiration in their works, even with the creative twists in their approach. “What influences us is our history, and there is so much history in the South. We have seen prosperity and poverty. We’ve seen the South’s contrasts between old and new. We’re comfortable with the contrasts of the South and enjoy adding them to our designs.” □

Check out more of Pfeffer Torode Architecture’s work at pfeffertorode.com.