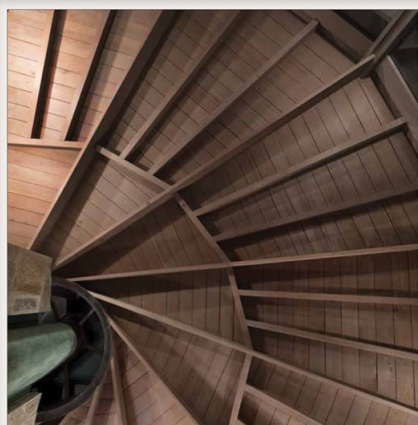




THE FANTASTIC SEASHELL OF THE MIND



The ARCHITECTURE of MARK MILLS

JANEY BENNETT

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Mark Mills was a visionary architect, a Frank Lloyd Wright apprentice whose innovative designs grow beyond Wright's work to uniquely blend structural principles and the organic forms of seashells. When he heard Wright say that seashells are Nature's perfect architecture, Mark made that idea the foundation of his life's work. As seashells change their forms to meet the needs of their inhabitants, so Mark adapted structural roof systems to shelter his clients, and he made them spectacularly beautiful. If the sky is Nature's umbrella above us, Mills's ceilings were the umbrella over his clients' lives in their homes. The ceiling revealed the skeleton of the building, exposed, visible from every part of the interior, since the interior walls were partitions that did not interrupt the view of the ceiling system. He used to joke (joking but not kidding) that he put so much thought and care into his roofs because the clients couldn't hang their knick-knacks on it and wreck its design. From any place within Mark's houses, there is a sense of being under the entire shell of the roof. We may be in the living room, but we are also in the entire house at all times. They are, for him, shells for humans. *The Fantastic Seashell of the Mind* is thoughtfully illustrated and brings together Mark Mills's own thinking behind his houses along with the insights of his wife, colleagues, and original clients and owners of Mark Mills houses. It is written to appeal to both architects and a general readership.

Janey Bennett is an architectural historian and award-winning novelist (*The Place Surface of Things*). She first wrote about Mark Mills's architecture in 1993 for *The Journal of Taliesin Fellows*. The structural elegance of Mills's architecture stayed with her and, after Mills died, she felt she had to honour his work with a larger and more thorough publication.