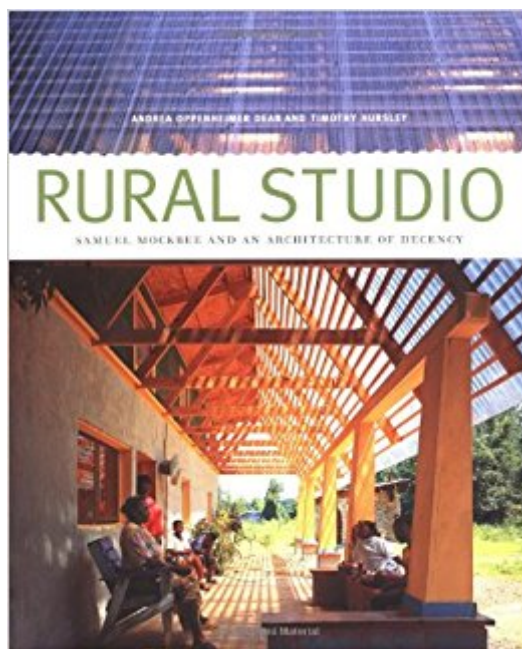


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# Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee And An Architecture Of Decency



## Synopsis

For almost ten years, Samuel Mockbee, a recent MacArthur Grant recipient, and his architecture students at Auburn University have been designing and building striking houses and community buildings for impoverished residents of Alabama's Hale County. Using salvaged lumber and bricks, discarded tires, hay and waste cardboard bales, concrete rubble, colored bottles, and old license plates, they create inexpensive buildings that bear the trademark of Mockbee's work, which he describes as "contemporary modernism grounded in Southern culture." In a time of unexampled prosperity, when architectural attention focuses on big, glossy urban projects, the Rural Studio provides an alternative of substance. In addition to being a social welfare venture, the Rural Studio--"Taliesin South" as Mockbee calls it--is also an educational experiment and a prod to the architectural profession to act on its best instincts. In giving students hands-on experience in designing and building something real, it extends their education beyond paper architecture. And in scavenging and reusing a variety of unusual materials, it is a model of sustainable architecture. The work of Rural Studio has struck such a chord--both architecturally and socially--that it has been featured on Oprah, Nightline, and CBS News, as well as in Time and People magazines. The Studio has completed more than a dozen projects, including the Bryant "Hay Bale" House, Harris "Butterfly" House, Yancey Chapel, Akron Chapel, Children's Center, H.E.R.O. Playground, Lewis House, Super Sheds and Pods, Spencer House addition, Farmer's Market, Mason's Bend Community Center, Goat House, and Shannon-Dutley House. These buildings, along with the incredible story of the Rural Studio, the people who live there, and Mockbee and his student architects, are detailed in this colorful book, the first on the subject. "I tell my students, it's got to be warm, dry, and noble"--Samuel Mockbee

## Book Information

Paperback: 185 pages

Publisher: Princeton Architectural Press; 1 edition (February 1, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1568982925

ISBN-13: 978-1568982922

Product Dimensions: 8.1 x 0.6 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 32 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #338,625 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #49 in Books > Arts &

Photography > Architecture > Vernacular #104 inÂ Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Reference > Architecture > Study & Teaching #151 inÂ Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Reference > Architecture > Methods & Materials

## **Customer Reviews**

The genius of an architect who made beautiful and functional homes out of inexpensive materials is celebrated in *Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency*. The book showcases work Mockbee (1944-2002) undertook in Hale County, Ala., where he recruited architecture students to help design and build free homes for impoverished residents. Andrea Oppenheimer Dean, a former executive editor at *Architecture* magazine, and photographer Timothy Hursley, an architectural photographer who has been documenting Rural Studio for nine years, present 132 color and 12 b&w photos of the warm, modern homes (which often incorporate recycled and natural materials like tires and hay bales) and discuss them with Mockbee, his students and the home owners. The work has been featured on Oprah, Nightline, CBS News and in *Time* and *People*. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

This book is a revelation. It displays, for the first time in book form, the accomplishments of one of the most celebrated architectural studios in America, the Rural Studio, led by Samuel Mockbee of the Auburn University School of Architecture. Mockbee ran this studio for ten years until his tragic death from leukemia last year at the age of 57, a year after winning a MacArthur genius award. His students and associates created some of the most interesting and innovative architecture in the United States by serving the humblest needs of some of the poorest people in the most neglected counties of Alabama and Mississippi. About a dozen houses, churches, playgrounds, pavilions, and community centers are represented here in elegant photographs by Hursley, the unofficial photographer of the studio, and in concentrated prose by Dean, a former executive editor of *Architecture* magazine. The book includes descriptions of each project, interviews with students and clients, instructive essays on key topics, and a complete bibliography of the Rural Studio. Recommended to studio art as well as architecture programs. Peter Kaufman, Boston Architectural Ctr. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

This book is written in such a way that anyone can read and understand the purpose behind the development of Rural Studio. Auburn University was well known nationally before two professors, initially Samuel Mockbee being the one to have the insight for the program, and then fellow Auburn

professor D.K. Ruth, developed this awesome program that put Auburn University's College of Architecture on the map internationally. These men had a vision to not only be able to give to a very impoverished area of Alabama much needed facilities, but to also allow students the unique opportunity to be able to actually design and do all the building themselves of what they designed in this area of Alabama, about 50 miles northwest of Selma, Alabama. I am quite partial to this book (and the recent one written in 2014 regarding the programs's 20th anniversary), due to having a daughter who spent a full semester her sophomore year and then many weekends during the following summer of 2009 designing and completing the building of an unbelievable home for a very fortunate family. In the process, my daughter learned to do everything from laying hardwood floors to bricking to installing electricity and plumbing to building a roof, and much much more. She then was quite fortunate to be chosen to do her thesis project at Rural Studio, as being selected to be able to do the fifth year thesis project at Rural Studio is quite an honor. She and three young men from her class are in process of putting final touches on a 5100+ square foot Boys and Girls Club for West Alabama, in particular for the town of Greensboro, Alabama. The book does a fabulous job of showing the beginning of the Rural Studio program with Mockbee's dream so well described and what students accomplished during this time. I definitely give the book 5 stars and would give it more if I could. A super book for the coffee table to share so others will be aware of such an unique program!

Its honest to the bone. Good architecture, good pictures, and simply good social efforts. Thats the whole book. Showing with honesty and integrity the efforts made by everyone in the rural studio. It doesn't have floor plans (im guessing there is a point in all these designs that somethings cant be put down in paper and other you just have to adjust) but the rest is perfect. Very honest, showing the people (the whole point of architecture) and the initial situation and the final product. Love the book, very inspiring.

Amazing program and a beautiful, inspiring book. Great photos and text.

Great book and really enjoy reading about the project.

Exciting book for anyone, especially the architect that wants to give back to society. As an architecture student, each reading of this book reminds me why I got into architecture. Architecture is a loving and sensual profession, especially when used the way the Rural Studio has.

This talented and compassionate man gave of himself to influence and help others by using art, architecture and recycled materials for shelter, community and spirit.

Another great book describing the "Rural Studio" and the vision of Samuel Mockbee.

This is a beautiful, intriguing, and inspiring book. The story and visual wonders alone plead for someone to do a great documentary film on this man, his mission, his artistry and his ingenuity. Ken Burns, where are you? Here is your next PBS-TV award-winning program on American history.

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