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MAINE HOME + DESIGN

THE ARCHITECTURE ISSUE

HIDDEN GEM

A HISTORIC RETREAT ON MDI GETS A VISIONARY REVAMP

DESIGN FOR DESIGNERS

A HOUSE IN THE WOODS SINGS A MODERN SONG



THE ART OF THE NAPKIN SKETCH

DESIGN THEORY | WILL WINKELMAN

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Continuing Ed



Architect

Will Winkelman of Winkelman Architecture

ON AN ARCHITECT'S BROADENED EDUCATION THROUGH HANDS-ON WORK ON HIS OWN RENOVATION

“It was a fantastic education for an architect with a passion for residential work, to learn how to frame and square a wall, frame a roof, install windows, build windows, build a kitchen, do roofing, run trim, and apply siding.”



MH+D ASKS WINKELMAN TO TELL US MORE.

Q. When did you initially build your home on Peaks Island?

A. I built the house I live in with the help of my wife, and friends, over the course of seven years. We started the process in the early 1990s, right about the time I was beginning to take on residential clients as an architect. Hands-on building was a tremendous influence on my designs for clients. It gave me great respect and humility for builders, for what they do and achieve.

This Design Theory reveals how an architect has learned from his own intensive renovations over the last 26 years. This piece isn't about how I designed and built my home (which, by the way, was designed in 1988 and was the third house I had ever designed). It is how living in the house has taught me so much about the things I didn't know then, as a young architect. The maintenance cycle is what taught me.

Q. It's common to push off a major renovation (I speak from experience). What was the ultimate catalyst?

A. Due to the unfortunate onset of COVID, we started spending more time in our house like the rest of the world. We exclusively worked remotely, and the major repairs became unavoidable: new roof and repair trim, replace most of the siding where rotted or too weathered, and new windows throughout. A renovation like this cannot help but bleed to the interior, so interior finishes begin to be re-imagined as well. Our contractor, Peter Warren of Warren Construction, calls this “filleting” a house. It's a good analogy because it entails slicing and dicing a lot of ways. This required effort, of course, for a restless mind, is a great opportunity.



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WITH AIA MAINE, WE PRESENT TO YOU A DESIGN
CONCEPT FROM AN ARCHITECT'S POINT OF VIEW.



Hundertwasser house in Vienna

Q. What was the first lesson you learned during this process?

A. The first lesson was the importance of the embedded maintenance in any build. The home I designed for my family early in my career was very cost-effective but if I had spent a little more on materials, it might have resulted in a higher quality building envelope, thus a longer life and less maintenance. I wish I had known this back then and it is a lesson I project onto current clients now: spending now for higher quality materials versus spending less and suffering a repeated maintenance cycle in the future. This was the catalyst for version 2.0 of our house. But inversely, if the maintenance cycle hadn't pushed me to recreate, this architect couldn't have explored a more nuanced level of understanding and appreciation for daylight, art, and the evolution of an initially traditionally styled house into a more contemporary presentation, successfully.

Q. When did you notice the aesthetic of the house changing?

A. We started by simply replacing windows but with that, we began to pursue a very different aesthetic. Our traditional windows with painted trim had transoms with divided lites, common in a traditional cottage. We instead maximized the glass openings of most of the windows in pursuit of daylight. I rediscovered once again the essential power of daylight. Being home during COVID, through multiple seasons, had me paying close attention to where and how the daylight moved through the house during the day and the time of year. I found myself chasing these puddles of daylight, as our congested window openings became clean, large openings of glass.

Q. Anyone looking at your firm's designs can see the dramatic connection the houses make with nature. Can you explain how this came into play when renovating your home?

A. This is a topic I preach about all day long, connecting architecture to nature, but here, in this renovation, I deeply experienced it firsthand, which reinforced its importance and power.

We went from a home design conceptualized in the '80s and '90s that had a very traditional feel/skin. Its massing and siting is very much a response to the views and the light and privacy and maximizing the experience of nature on our site, but the character of the windows/windowing was seeded in love and appreciation of island cottages.

This renovation, 25 years later, reflects our evolution and interest in a cleaner and more contemporary feel while respecting the traditional lines of the home. Thus, we made a huge leap from transoms to simple, large single pane glass openings. Since our home is adjacent to a large wetland and the ocean lies across the street, it was tremendously transformative. The views of these larger windows pull nature into the home.

We are always advocating for this as designers in our practice, but to find it firsthand, in my own home, in the context of renovating openings that already existed, was delightful. The windows end up being like a frame to work with art and the art is wild nature just outside.

Q. How important was collaboration during this process?

A. Since this was done at the height of the pandemic, I was home all day every day, while the work was being done (not just as a homeowner, but as a detail-obsessed architect). The educational process started every morning when our contractor and lead carpenter, Danielle Bernier, arrived. It was very influential on how I think about detailing our conventional residential millwork, influenced by daylight and by being builder friendly as well.

Q. Your wife, Kathy Hanley, is a sculptor. Has your approach to blending art and architecture changed at all through this process?

A. The blending of art and architecture has always been a fascination of mine, and the renovation presented the opportunity to further that. One opportunity was a structural strut or a brace that was required for a bay window where my wife built a very large branching piece, a trademark of her work, that integrates as a structural component. Being part of the hands-on creation and installation of this was fantastic. It wasn't just asking for or designing for the piece of art, it was about getting my hands dirty, collaborating.

Another artistic element is teed up to happen soon. When I was in college, I stumbled upon an artist named Friedensreich Hundertwasser, whose paintings and graphics are very vibrant and architectural, but also very organic and naturalistic. It turns out that this artist has a whole

manifesto about nature being dominant to architecture, and that nature can very easily intertwine with architecture beautifully and organically. In the context of our home, we have a four-story tower, with three small pockets/planters that are part of the symmetric tower top. Our vision is to plant each of these three corner decks with plants. Two of these corner planters are going to have small fir trees, as well as grasses and other plantings. This presents a beautiful conundrum from the exterior, as one looks at the top of the four-story tower and sees trees growing, as well as the grounding that happens when one is inside, looking out from a treehouse-type experience at the landscape with grasses and rose hips and small trees that are pressed against the windows. On some level, that's art at its best, and perhaps at its most subtle.

Q. Almost done, but we need to discuss materials! Can you tell us a bit about your selection process for 2.0?

A. We used boarded siding on our fourth-floor tower walls and the roof, which has a rather severe exposure to wind-driven rain and the sun. We worked with a treated wood called Kebony that is a sustainably harvested and treated wood with a 30-year longevity warranty; it weathers to a uniform gray. The detailing of this roof was done in collaboration with our lead carpenter Danielle, and it reimagined what had been a traditionally detailed roofline, of eaves and rakes, to become a very different presentation of a singular sculptural form.

We used metal trim to cover the pine trim that wrapped around all our traditional forms that had not yet deteriorated but were in great need of maintenance. To eliminate the need for future painting, we used a folded metal wrapping of a Roofinox metal that is a tin-coated stainless product. The tin coating develops a soft patina over the course of a year or two, a living finish if you will. It will also not need any maintenance and will last a long time in our salt air climate.

For a variety of reasons, we chose to stain all the exterior siding black along with black window frames. Our office has been intrigued with dark siding for several years as a device to help a building recede into its surrounding landscape. We've tried color matching the bark of trees. Dark siding tends to blend into the shadows of the forest, especially in the winter. For our house, where the form with the tower was idiosyncratically special, the dark siding with the light roof and patinated gray trim helped the complexity of the building form calm down while articulating the parts more clearly.



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