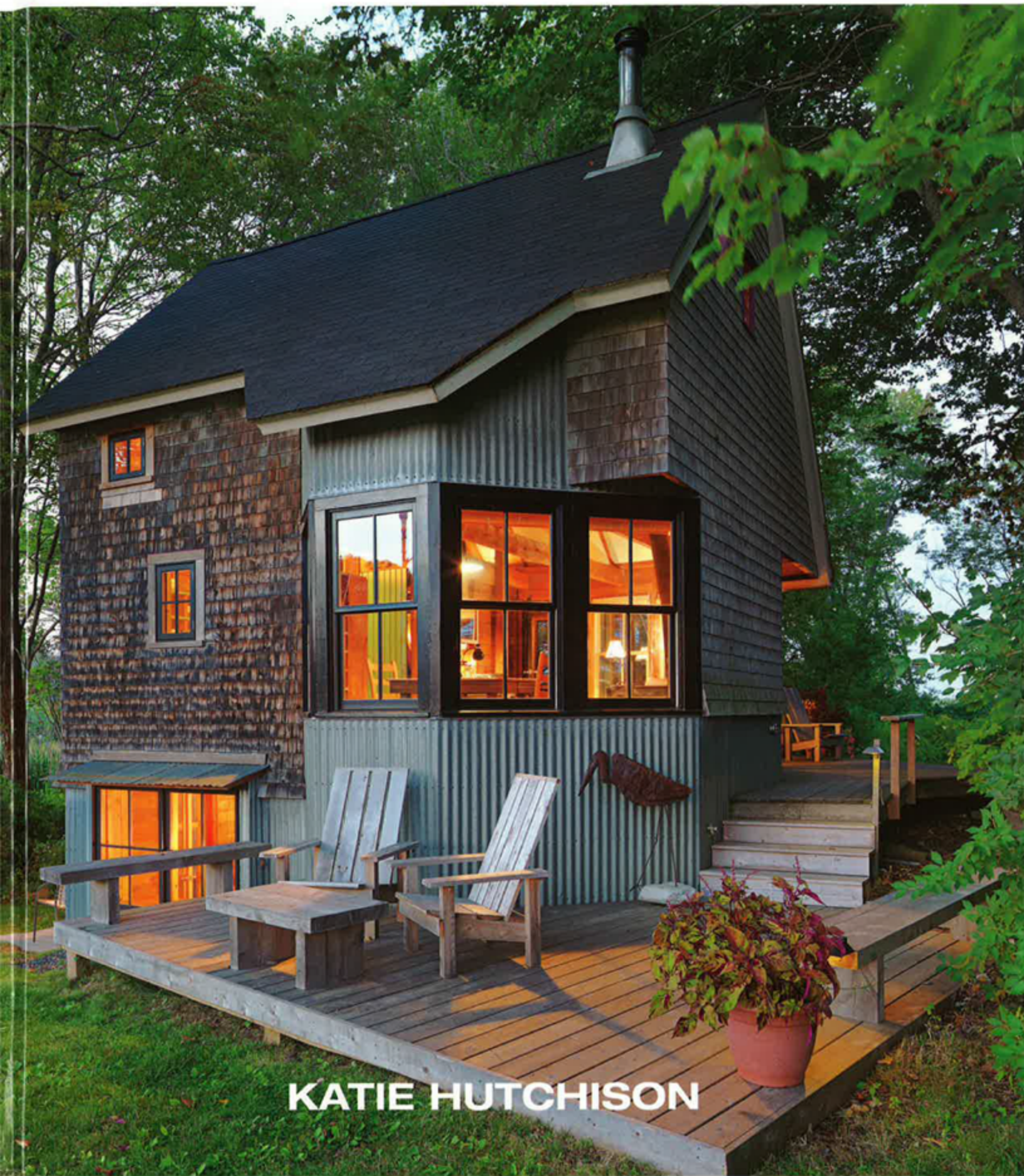


the **new** small house



KATIE HUTCHISON

SETTLED INTO THE LANDSCAPE



Contemporary construction . . . that's comfortable to live in.

TROLLSTUA HUSET, which the homeowner loosely translates as Troll's Den in reference to Norway's mythical cave-dwelling trolls, was designed to replace a former failing ranch house. Regulations for the shoreland overlay zone in which the property is primarily located allow a new dwelling that's replacing a teardown to expand the floor area and volume by 30% each. This meant that a more conventional two-story home under a more steeply pitched roof would readily exhaust the volume limit. Plus, the stairs such a house would require would consume valuable floor area that could be put to better use elsewhere.

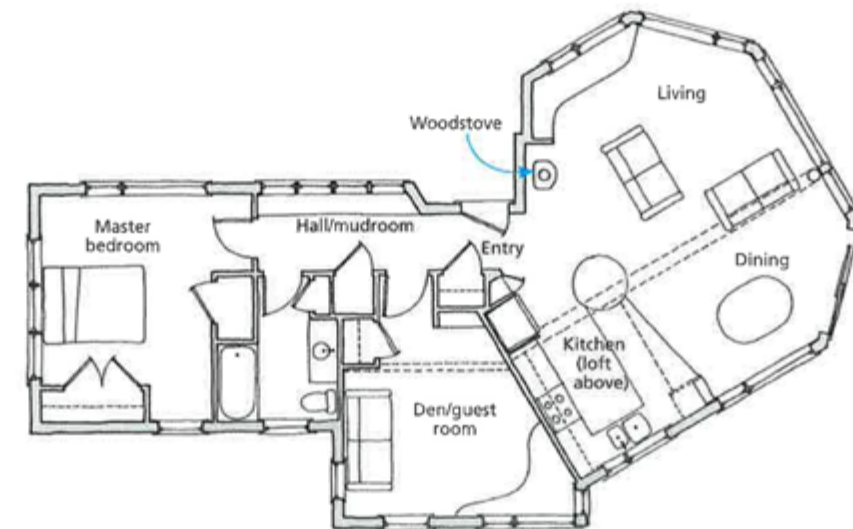


Nestled between trees and oriented toward views of the river and sunlight, Trollstua Huset recalls the grass-roofed mountain dwellings of the homeowner's Norwegian heritage. "It's literally flowing nature on the building rather than placing it in nature," notes architect Will Winkelman.



The southeast-facing patio fronts aluminum-clad double-glazed windows and double-glazed glass sliding doors with transoms above, which open to the river view and are topped by a twisting, soaring roofline.

Architects: Will Winkelman and Eric Sokol of Winkelman Architecture
Brunswick, Maine
1,090 sq. ft.



Instead, the architects suggested a collection of new one-story elements to house two bedrooms, a full bath, and an open kitchen/dining/living space with a loft to comfortably serve one resident and several overnight guests all within the regulated modest area and volume limit. They conceived of a roof that would start low and nearly flat toward the back over the more private bedrooms and gently rise toward the entry. Another roof over the combination kitchen/dining/living

area would start at the height where the bedroom roof left off and then twist and rise more dramatically toward the best views and sunlight. This design causes the roofing material to be visible as you approach the house from the entry path, making a big statement on a small house.

The homeowner, who is of Norwegian descent, was familiar with grass roofs from her travels in the Scandinavian mountains and had grown to appreciate how they help settle



Planted mostly with sedum and grasses that are prevalent around the house, the roof requires little maintenance other than the occasional weeding and planting of supplemental material. A hefty copper chimney anchors the entry and reflects warm tones and light as it vents the woodstove.

structures into the landscape. Will and project architect Eric Sokol recognized that planted roofs would be well suited to the twisting low-slope rooflines they had been proposing, which don't lend themselves as well to more conventional roofing materials. The team quickly realized that investing in quality planted roofs would recall the homeowner's Norwegian roots and address a number of issues: It would further insulate the high-performance building, manage runoff, and help integrate the house with the landscape. Chunky Maine-sourced tamarack siding and trim further tie the exterior to the natural environment.

In plan, the rooms tuck between existing oaks and white pines and are oriented toward the nearly 180° river view. "When we do space planning, we don't start with a box and figure out how the furniture would fit; we start with how furnishing would want to be arranged relative to the site, and then we build the walls around it," explains Will. It's a



The 1-in. tamarack, a locally sourced material that's rot resistant and more affordable in long lengths than cedar, is arranged vertically, like wainscot, to suggest a base and then horizontally to emphasize the massing of the house and low-slope of the rafters. The 8-in. coursing relates to the wide trim dimensions on the eaves and is meant to reflect the rugged wood dimensions you find in nature.

The open kitchen/dining/living space is awash with daylight and mostly locally sourced materials. The exposed rafters are hemlock; the wall finish is eastern white pine; and the floor is slate, chosen for both its capacity to absorb passive solar gain and to transmit radiant heat.



A built-in ship's ladder (that does double duty on the back as shelving) provides access to the loft spillover space for guests like the homeowner's three nieces, while the lower ceiling formed by the loft creates a more intimate kitchen workspace. Cranberry-brown granite countertops complement the color of the slate floor.

The galley kitchen, complete with bar stools at the peninsula, is capped by a loft above, which is partially hung from an imposing steel beam. Beach stone knobs provide an organic contrast to clean-lined red birch cabinets here in the kitchen and also in the full bath.



The sloped spruce cathedral ceiling springs from the entry area just beyond the Danish woodstove, which has a soapstone finish and efficiently supplements the radiant floor heat system. A built-in desk provides an opportunity for privacy within the generous open kitchen/dining/living area while still providing a breathtaking view toward the river and its surrounds.



The front hall is a modest transitional zone cloaked in warm pine where the slate floor from the open kitchen/dining/living area is first introduced. A small niche with a built-in bench affords just enough room to sit down and take off your boots.



The unique footprint of the den/guest room accommodates an organically shaped built-in corner desk with inspiring views through corner windows that bring the indoors out and the outdoors in.

site-sensitive approach that provides each of the primary spaces—the bedrooms and open kitchen/dining/living space—with views and daylight in three directions. “I stand in the kitchen while I’m cooking, and I see the whole landscape in front of me,” says the homeowner, who from the peninsula counter enjoys borrowed views across the multipurpose open dining and living space. Even someone enjoying the pocket for privacy that the loft affords can share the view open to the common space below.

Though Trollstua Huset does appear to grow out of the ground as a cave opening might, the sense of light and airiness within is anything but cavelike. This is thanks in part to the form of the climbing cathedral ceiling over the multipurpose area. “The combination of the glass and wood and just the funky angles everywhere really gives it a more modern feel on the inside,” notes the homeowner. An exposed steel beam supporting exposed long rafters, muted eastern white pine walls, a minimalist Danish woodstove, spare red birch cabinetry, and cable lighting further contribute to what Will describes as a “crisp crafted feel,” which is also often associated with Scandinavian design. The homeowner adds,

“I wanted contemporary construction that was at the same time comfortable to live in.”

Though site conditions and regulations largely influenced the total square footage and volume of Trollstua Huset, the homeowner concludes, “I’ve been pleasantly surprised at how perfect the size is for me. I think that is attributed to the way that the space has been allocated.” It also easily accommodates her visiting extended family of seven, in addition to her vast collection of Norwegian trolls.

