

The Opening of Evangeline

Precious Metals

The Canvas with Will Barnet

Maine HOME + DESIGN

June 2008

MH+D Exclusive

AIA Award-Winning Designs

Cape Elizabeth

A Shingle Style Home
with Cinematic Roots

+

A Waterfront Home Reinvented
in Boothbay Harbor



The State of *Our State's Design*

AIA Maine crowns its winning designs

by Joshua Bodwell

Maine architecture is dead. Long live Maine architecture!

These are truly revolutionary times for the state of our state's architecture—from the new wave of assured and refined residential designs to the renewal and reinvigoration of our urban landscapes.

If ever there were restrictions on architectural design in Maine, they have been cast off; today's architects are limited only by their own vision. While the diversity of contemporary structures is staggering, there is an underlying vernacular that binds together Maine's myriad architects—it is the language of geography and climate, a bold and positive reaction to our state's landscape and economy.

Every two years, the Maine chapter



of the American Institute of Architects (AIA Maine) solicits the best of Maine architecture for a competition aimed at raising the state's already high standards of design. *Maine Home+Design* is honored to present, for the first time, the winners of the AIA Maine Design Awards 08.

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE

From a field of nearly forty entries, the competition's three jurors—each a nationally prominent peer from outside the state—quickly reached a consensus in selecting this year's top winner: the House on the Barrens by Elliott Elliott Norelius Architecture in Blue Hill.

Sited along the edge of a tree line atop a gently sloping field, the home's juxtaposition of three distinct yet connected structures evokes the aura of a rambling New England farm in its purest, most elemental form.

"Fresh, fresh, fresh," says juror Andrea P. Leers enthusiastically. "This design may recall the old, but it is entirely original. It has such beautiful and well-planned proportions."

Bruce Norelius, the partner who oversaw the design with project architect J.T. Loomis, says the homeowner's support inspired them to progressively pare down the design. "They were really into reduction and never afraid the house would get *too* simple," he recalls.

"The sense of restraint here is stunning," marvels juror David N. Hingston. "The irony is the huge band of windows and the great detail with which they were executed."

Leers agrees with Hingston and points out the home's simplicity. "There is almost no trim or ornament. The forms are pure volumes, pure shapes."

"This is a *very* sculptural way to break down a house of its size," concludes juror Timothy Love, "and wonderful in that



Photos: Brian Vanden Brink

MAINE HEART SURGICAL
ASSOCIATES, PORTLAND



AIA AWARDS 08

it is neither stridently contemporary nor stridently traditional.” Love sees the House on the Barrens as a prime example of a “new ‘post-style’ era, where good design is unself-conscious.”

The home’s spare interior spaces feature elegant maple built-ins, a mix of concrete and bamboo floors, and sweeping windows. “Quiet” is the word that comes to mind when Norelius considers the home. “In the end,” he says, “the high level of dialogue we had with the homeowners was one of the hallmarks of this project—they gave us the starting point of simplicity.”

Elliott Elliott Norelius Architecture also received awards for Excellence in Architecture from AIA Maine in 1997 and 2001.

HONOR AWARDS

The format of the AIA Maine Design Awards 08 is simple: projects must be from 2003 or later and executed by architects with their primary office in the state. Both commercial and residential designs are considered, and although the projects do not have to be located in Maine, all of this year’s winners are. The jurors selected four projects to recognize with Honor Awards.

Portland’s Congress Street is the main artery at the heart of Maine’s largest city. Over the years, it has seen both boom and bust, decline and rebirth. The AIA Maine Design Awards 08 jurors believe the two projects they selected are significant additions to this important cultural and economic thoroughfare.

MAINE HEART SURGICAL ASSOCIATES, PORTLAND

Architect Patrick Costin led Harriman in designing a new office space for Maine Heart Surgical Associates, just down the hill from Maine Medical Center. Costin transformed an existing



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utilitarian commercial structure into a beautiful three-story building with a mixed façade of brick, metal, and glowing wood.

“It feels like a complete building now—it has been *recomposed*,” compliments Leers, who is a principal at Leers Weinzapfel Associates in Boston.

The mahogany-like wood on the exterior is canberra, a South American hardwood known for its straight grain and resistance to rot. “We wanted to build a cutting-edge medical practice but soften it for the patients,” says Costin, “and the wood was conceived to take the edge off. I think the floating quality of the wood box is quite successful.”

490 CONGRESS STREET, PORTLAND

Architect James A. Sterling’s work with 490 Congress Street goes far beyond a renovation—it is nothing short of a reinvention. The building was originally two stories, but now it is five. It was formerly all commercial, yet now it is a mix of commercial and residential. It was once covered in a mix of funky commercial sidings, and now the coated-copper siding makes it stand out from its brick neighbors.

“I walked up and down Congress Street thinking about this building,” says Sterling, “and I was struck by this notion of a basic grid, but broken up with great texture rather than flat sheets of glass.”

“This palette pushes beyond the neighboring brick buildings,” says Leers, “and the upper balconies push beyond the brick envelope.”

“It feels great to start putting people back on Congress Street,” Sterling says. “When I came to town in 1976, Portland was people from one end of town to the other.”

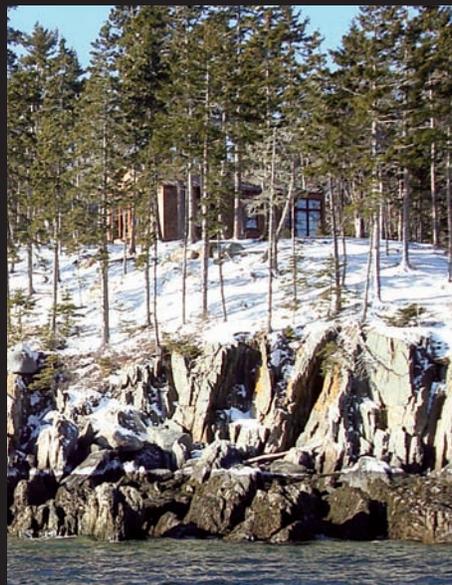
The homes selected for Honor Awards share a feature not uncommon

490 CONGRESS STREET,
PORTLAND





ISLAND HOUSE, COAST OF MAINE



AIA AWARDS 08

in Maine: the coast. In many ways, however, the two designs couldn't be more dissimilar. While one is tucked away on an isolated island peninsula, the other is located smack in the middle of busy Higgins Beach in Scarborough.

ISLAND HOUSE, COAST OF MAINE

For Sam Van Dam, of Portland's Van Dam Architecture and Design, location was everything when he got down to designing his award-winning project. "That *peninsula...*" says Van Dam with a wistful tone. "It was such a pleasure to work on that property, and we did our best to save everything we could." This included making detailed topographical drawings identifying the location of every tree on the property so the natural landscape would remain intact and undisturbed as the home was fit to the site.

Conceived as two cabin-like structures perched on pilings and connected by an L-shaped hallway "bridge," the home is just 24 feet at its widest dimension. "This allows the light to pour in," says Van Dam. Finished on the exterior with red-cedar shingles and copper roofing, with Douglas fir and southern yellow pine on the interior, the home effortlessly relates to its surroundings.

"I was impressed with the focus on quality over size," says Love, the founder of Boston-based Utile. "This project isn't interested in a showy image as much as quality."

HIGGINS BEACH COTTAGE, SCARBOROUGH

As Whitten Architects began re-imagining an existing cottage on Higgins Beach, Rob Whitten remembers two key words that came to mind: *simple* and *fun*. "We knew we were creating for a barefoot world, and we wanted to keep that 'off-duty' quality," says the architect.

AIA AWARDS 08

Hingston, a principal at New Jersey's Clear Canopy Design Studio, calls the home "just right for Higgins Beach."

With architect Kevin Moquin providing the project's thrust, the home's handsome, pale-gray exterior and dark, standing-seam metal roof was dotted with bursts of bright red. Inside, hardwood floors are mixed with the occasional whimsical square of red Marmoleum. Beadboard walls and ceilings magnify the "cottage" vibe, while the kitchen's white tin ceiling is contrasted with stainless-steel counters and lower cupboards.

The small house lot and rigorous setback requirements led to the addition of a vertical "tower" to the home. "That upper porch transformed the whole house," says Leers. "It's so playful."

WHAT LEADERSHIP REALLY MEANS...

After poring over the submissions to the AIA Maine Design Awards 08, the jurors couldn't help but note a surprising lack of "overtly green projects." Yet many of the submissions did incorporate a considerable number of sustainable, environmentally friendly elements; they just didn't play up these features.

"In other parts of the country," reflects juror David Hingston, "Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) components are almost always touted as part of a submission's presentation." Hingston, who has practiced in the state, believes that Maine architects don't need to advertise how "green" they are because designing more intelligently and sustainably has been common practice here since long before LEED.

If the AIA Maine Design Awards 08 are indicative of statewide trends, and Maine's architects are leading the LEED charge, they are doing it with a rare combination of style *and* humility.



HIGGINS BEACH COTTAGE,
SCARBOROUGH



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CRAFTSMANSHIP

Time and again, the jurors for the Maine Design Awards 08 noted that the winning projects were “finely crafted, with a focus on craftsmanship and quality.” For every great design there are countless craftsmen who meticulously execute the architect’s vision. We salute the builders of each project alongside the winning architects.

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE

Elliott Elliott Norelius Architecture

Neill/Barnes Residence, Sedgwick
Builder: Jon D. Woodward & Sons

HONOR AWARDS

Harriman

Maine Heart Surgical Associates
Office Building, Portland
Builder: Langford & Low, Inc.

James A. Sterling

490 Congress Street Residences, Portland
Builder: Wright-Ryan Construction

Van Dam Architecture and Design

Island House, Coast of Maine
Builder: Cold Mountain Builders

Whitten Architects

Higgins Beach Cottage, Scarborough
Builder: Warren Construction Group



See Resources for more information.



USM Childcare Center, Gorham; photos: Jim Millay, Chestnut Street Lofts, Portland; photos: Jim Millay, Pool and Bath House Facility, Millinocket; photos: Caleb Charland.

NOTED BY THE JURY

Although under no obligation to do so, the AIA Maine Design Awards 08 jury felt compelled to spotlight three projects that addressed important community purposes. Here is what the jury had to say about these projects of special merit:

TFH Architects: USM Childcare Center, Gorham.
Architect: Scott Teas

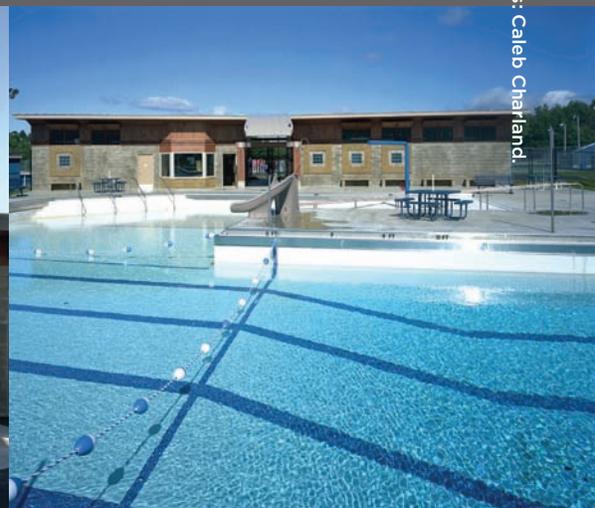
“Plan, image, scale, and setting aspires to good goals for children. Variant on the shed using an industrial palette.”

TFH Architects: Chestnut Street Lofts, Portland.
Architect: Scott Teas

“Interesting exercise in a palette of materials that shows variety, while responding to economic drivers.”

Arcadia Designworks: Pool and Bath House Facility, Millinocket. Architect: Patric Santerre

“Projects like these are huge signposts for small communities.”



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