

Maine Home

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+ DESIGN



AIA MAINE
DESIGN AWARDS



The Far Cabin, Midcoast

Winkelman Architecture

Honor Award

Project Architect: Joanna Shaw, Winkelman Architecture

Structural Engineer: Albert Putnam Associates

Landscape Architect: Richardson & Associates

Photographer: Jeff Roberts

From the Jury: In addition to the thoughtful siting and blended integration of the building onto the site, we were impressed by the Far Cabin's size. In just 570 square feet of shelter, the project achieves all the "architecture" of its much larger residential competitors.

The Far Cabin is designed to capture natural light patterns sweeping through the space, reflecting the playful relationship between nature and structure. Weathering beams spring from the rising ledge, gently carrying the cabin over boulders and mossy terrain.

Respecting the site was Winkelman Architecture's first priority. The structure is perched on a ledge, anchored to the site on one end and soaring southward to capture summer breezes within a treehouse-like screened porch. Where topography rises, a series of thoughtfully placed board-formed concrete piers tether the building to the ledge below, allowing the terrain to flow through. The materiality of this building is essential to its character. The firm sourced regionally harvested lumber to frame the roof, positively driving cost and carbon footprint. The selected palette of materials embraces raw textures, and the natural weathering steel cladding visually darkens and recedes into the forest with time. The canopy of hemlock rafters is concealed from bird's-eye view by a vegetated roof, reintegrating native vegetation in the footprint of impact. The cantilevered structure respects the existing terrain; untouched boulders and native mosses thrive below. The cabin's piers were selectively located between trees, preserving roots and vegetation tight to the building's perimeter.

The plan carves out spaces for sleeping, reading, writing, preparing food, and bathing (both indoors and out). The 420-square-foot interior space opens to a 150-square-foot screened porch. In the summer a family of four sleeps comfortably within spaces veiled by segmented walls; children sleep cozily on the window cushion and in the screened porch. The goal is to live minimally with places to sleep and bathe, and the ability to cook outside over a fire and to live in the space connected to the land.

The architect's desire to be respectful to the site defined the types of utilities that would be available, including seasonal water. In the winter, the space can be warmed with a wood stove. The concrete-slab floor captures warmth from the wood-burning stove on cool nights and holds a cozy temperature until the morning hours. With a nearby well for fresh water but no running winter-water the ritual of collecting water and living in seclusion has been truly embraced.

