

a symphony of roofs



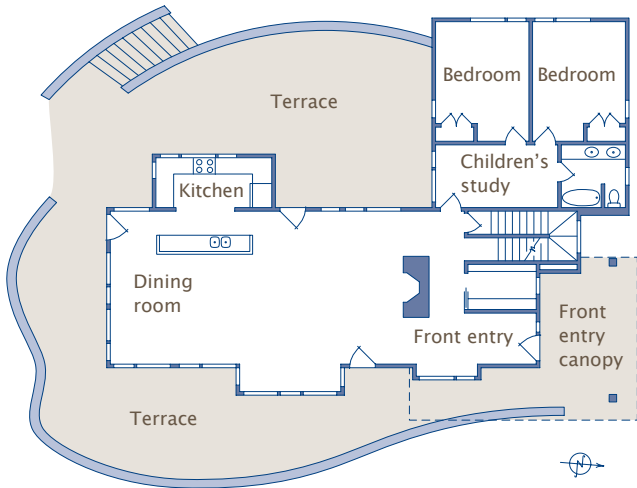
room with a view

The first time I saw this house, I couldn't help but think of a tree house. [1][2] Although the house isn't actually perched in a tree, of course, it almost seems that way from a distance, one indication of just how well it is connected to its site. In fact, it's hard to tell where the site ends and the house begins—always the sign of a well-designed home. [3]

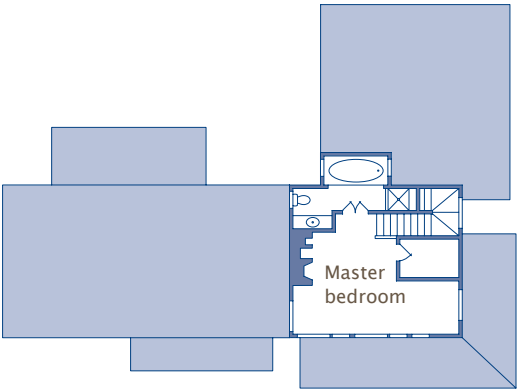


The house, designed by Van Dam & Renner Architects, rises up from the top of a hill along the Maine coast in colors that match its natural surroundings. It's capped by a striking master bedroom with commanding views of the water. [4] This room seems to pop out of the much larger first floor, which houses living and dining areas, a kitchen, two smaller bedrooms, and an entry. Above these first-floor spaces, two long, low-sloped roofs at right angles to each other work as a counterbalance to the bulk of the master bedroom above. [5] These lower sections of the house seem to hug the site and emphasize the prominence of the lofty bedroom.

The contrast between the high central tower and the roofs over the living spaces below is what gives this house its real drama. At a single glance, the roofs also tell you something about the floor plan inside. It's hard to imagine the first floor as anything other than living spaces or the second floor as anything other than a special room with a special view.



First floor



Second floor

extending the house outside



7



6



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While the major roofs help to give the exterior its overall balance, smaller roofs over two bays [6] and a cantilevered entrance enhance the effect. [7] These smaller roof extensions not only have the same pitch as the main roofs but also extend the house outward to a level stone terrace that wraps around the house and provides outdoor space for lounging, dining, or just looking at the water. Because the terrace has both east and west exposures, it makes the outside of the house appealing at different times of the day and even at different times of the year. It accomplishes something else, too. Depending where you are on the terrace, the house takes on a different scale. On the living room side, for example, you sit up against a one-story wall fully exposed to the east and south sun. [6] On the west-facing side just off the kitchen, you sit next to a two-story wall that captures southwest breezes in the summer and partially blocks harsh northeast winds at other times of the year. [8] [9] It's a totally different experience on opposite sides of the house.

Color is one of the most underrated tools for achieving harmony, but this house shows how well it can be used. Colors in the natural environment—tree bark, stone, and vegetation—are matched by the stone terrace, foundation, and chimney, the natural shingles on the body of the house, and the darker, complementary colors of windows and trim. The colors of house and site are seen as one, as they should be on any good face of home. [10]



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10

details in stone and glass



Using stone at the foundation and on the chimney at the roof helps connect the house to the colors and materials of the site.



A continuous projecting roof covers both the outside entry porch and a window bay that provides a view of the entry foyer from within.



Details mean the most when they spring from the whole house and seem to belong to it, bolstering the overall design. It doesn't matter whether the details are on the outside or inside. Here, the positioning, color, and texture of stone reinforces the nature of the house. Stone forms the base of the house, and it's used for retaining walls, terrace floors, and on the chimney, where it not only caps the roofs but also acts as a kind of pinwheel around which the rest of the house seems to spin. Even its texture is appropriate: It's laid up in a somewhat random pattern of various size stones that gives it an appealing connection to the natural landscape around it. You could imagine finding these stones on the site.

Windows provide another kind of detailing that seems to flow naturally from the rest of the house. At the entry, for example, a small bay window connects the house with the canopy above. Windows also are used to turn corners at key locations, such as the living room, the master bedroom, and the second-floor bathroom. This detail intensifies the openness of these spaces and strengthens their connection to the outside. That's especially true in the master bedroom and bath, where windows help impart that tree-house quality that drew me to the house in the first place.



Windows placed on walls across from each other allow a clear view through the house to the landscape beyond.

Large, low windows at the second-floor master bedroom and bath give this house a tree-house quality.

