



Afloat on a Fjord

The four-inch diameter columns that support this coastal retreat are almost invisible, and allow the house to appear as if it's floating among the trees.

Nature hasn't gone easy on coastal Maine. Eons ago, a vast, slow-moving glacier scored north-to-south gouges offshore to form the only fjord on the East Coast of the United States. Today, an island called Mount Desert, at 44 degrees north, remains a latitude of extremes. In the winter, residents get eight hours of daylight battered by wind, sea, and ice; in summer, they're lucky to get eight hours without light. Happily, local architect Carol A. Wilson's studio design for an actress and her screenwriter husband offers a measured response to nature's prodigality.

In order to create the 1,500-square-foot, live-in studio with forest and fjord views, Wilson pared down a larger design. "People don't realize that small can be beautiful," she says. The architect crowned the site's 50 percent grade with a long shingled box that sits on 16 four-inch-diameter support columns; less than a tenth of the

building rests on the ground. This gives the house an unexpected levity, allowing Wilson to exploit the views while having a minimal impact on the site. The clients also encouraged other green efforts: Much of the wood used comes from certified forests, while structural insulated panels (SIPs) minimize heat loss through the roof.

Inside, bath and kitchen form a box within the box, surrounded by living space on the west and office on the east. Because one side of the shed roof is lower, ceilings in the living room stoop to eight feet while the office tops out at 16—an unusual juxtaposition of intimacy and space. The home's glassy workspace opens onto trees and water, and is where the couple chooses to sleep because of a bay window that cantilevers from the side of the house, 20 feet aboveground, that contains a luxe day (and night) bed. "We call it our 'bay bed,'" says the client, "and we sleep in the trees." ■