



## CITATION FOR DESIGN



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### A House in the Woods

Ulster County, New York

**William Reue Architect LLC**

New York, New York

A House In the Woods is a single-family home located on a densely forested 8.5 acre lot at the base of the Shawangunk Mountains in Ulster County. The 4800 square foot residence is the result of the studied relationship between two opposing geometries – a long sculptural wall clad in Cor-Ten weathering steel and a mass of stratified bluestone that appears to have emerged from the boulder-strewn earth. The use of natural materials and strategic siting make the house completely invisible to the outside world and yet keep it very tightly stitched into the natural one.

The site boundary is defined by a row of 77 Norway spruces, the singular element that guides visitors to the entrance of the secluded property. The curved wall of the building is heroic, yet pragmatically justified. Its slight bend creates a shallow entry court and amplifies the sound of the small stream that runs parallel to the house. Additionally, the curved wall operates as a spine that organizes the interior spaces as a series of cinematic portals to the landscape, each window framing a particular view that impacts the character of the interior as the seasons change.

The interior of the house is an exercise of modesty and restraint. Material selections were based on the owner’s mandate to develop an interior consistent with her values of simplicity, order, and durability. The boldness of the austere aesthetic is tempered by the richness of its materials, resulting in a refined and classic habitable composition.

Consistent with the owner’s sense of environmental stewardship, the design and construction for A House Woods’ followed the rigorous guidelines of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). The building’s high performance thermal envelope consists of 14 inch thick Structural Insulated Panels that tightly interlock and custom-designed quadruple pane windows constructed with FSC-certified wood. The house also employs a direct-exchange geothermal heating system, a rainwater harvesting system that irrigates the row of Norway Spruces, and many other “green” building technologies. The roof structure was designed to accommodate photo-voltaic panels and future wind turbines. However, even without these two features, the house has a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) Index of 44 which is approximately 56% more energy efficient than a typical new home. The project was certified LEED-Silver in February 2013.

■ JURY COMMENTS: *Not all bold gestures work, but this wall with a house attached to it is successful on a number of levels. Here, the architecture organizes the landscape, which is an uncommon feat. The house is clearly organized, and with the choice of materials on the interior, manages to hold its own with the Richard Serra-like wall, against which the seasons are measured, or reflected.*

## AWARD OF MERIT



Photo Credits: Paul Teeling

### The Bath House

Western Massachusetts

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The Bath House is residential spa and bath house project. The small building is nestled in the landscape next to the main house in Western MA. The bath house started out as a need for a second bathroom in the clients’ existing house. In order to maintain the historical components of the house, it was agreed that the second bathroom would need to be built separately from the house. This led to the creation of this now retreat spa bath house used as a place for relaxation, reflection and entertainment.

The building’s exterior and interior reflect the warm hues of its surroundings. A multifunctional entertainment/lounging room and a spa/second bathroom comprise the indoor space, which is integrated with the outdoors via two doors. A dramatic 10’ x 10’ counterbalance door on a gear lifts up and outward to reveal a stunning view of the sky from the stone hot tub, recessed in the floor. At the east end, double doors provide an additional entrance and connection to the landscape and gardens.

A variety of details add to the space’s unique ambiance, including a built in fireplace, custom bar, entertainment center, and built-in seating. The bathroom, which features a spa shower, is created from a variety of stones including galaxy schist and white alabaster. The sink is carved from a solid block of ashfield stone. The fixtures are lacquered brass, and the millwork is reclaimed chestnut. An outdoor shower has movable screens to provide user privacy. As the building’s exterior wood grays over time, the building will further blend with its environment and will match the existing barn.

A sustainable project, most of the bath house’s materials were locally sourced. The area’s terrain and shifts in weather patterns played key roles in the placement of the building, clerestory windows, and screens, and the selection of solar panel types and roof materials. The stone, energy saving glass, radiant floors, and rain and hot tub water collection system are all vital components that helped shape the design. The reclaimed maple wood interior gives the space a warm feeling.

The firm used reclaimed chestnut wood for the building’s millwork, sustainably grown maple floor planks for the interior walls, and stone quarried near the house. The sustainably grown cedar on the exterior comprises removable screens that serve as hidden doors for privacy while concealing vents and electrical outlets on the exterior of the building. On the interior, the screens provide soft, diffused natural light.

The roof of the bath house is zinc and has custom-fitted solar panels that cover the roof and heat all of the hot water in the building (showers, sinks and hot tub), producing enough to also supply the main residence. The water from the hot tub is treated with natural enzymes, allowing it to be collected in a cistern along with rainwater. Once collected, this water is used to hydrate the property’s lawn and gardens.

■ JURY COMMENTS: *Taking its form from the local context, this exquisite tiny bath house is clean, clear in its organization, and appropriate to its setting. It brings the outside in, and manages to fit a program of requirements neatly around the perimeter, allowing the space to be appreciated in the purity of its volume. The exterior cladding serves as a semi-translucent screen to great effect.*