

# MHD

MAINE HOME + DESIGN

## AMERICANA EMERGES

A SOUTHERN MAINE GETAWAY WITH  
19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY CHARM

SEPTEMBER 2023



### ART AT HOME

BLENDING ARTISTRY AND DESIGN  
ACROSS THE PINE TREE STATE

# NEW & IMPROVED

On an oddly shaped plot, creative design decisions lead to a modernist haven

BY KATY KELLEHER // PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF ROBERTS

The homeowner was clear with architect Paul Attardo of Attardo Architecture and Design from the start: he didn't want a McMansion. The coastal property, located near Reid State Park in Georgetown, had been in his family for years, but the house—a "little old A-frame," as one of the homeowners describes it—was run down. "This was a challenge," he explains, "to build something that is midcentury modern informed, that would maximize the views of the water and the ocean, that would fit in the footprint, and that wouldn't overwhelm things." Attardo had been recommended to him by a neighbor: "He said Paul was wonderful with light. And he designed a place that is soaring with space and filled with light."

In a little over a year, Attardo's vision for a midcentury-inspired, irregularly shaped, cleverly oriented home had been erected, thanks to the quick and efficient work of Bosso Construction builder Vincent Bosso. "We demolished the original house in June of 2020, and we finished in July 2021," Bosso says. "While it was a challenge to work through COVID and social distancing, and while I was worried at the beginning that it might not happen because of price fluctuations in materials, I think it went really well." The homeowner agrees: "We got lucky in our timing. We got in just under the wire."



It was quick, but it wasn't always easy. The first tough task that fell to Attardo involved maximizing the buildable space. The house was the shared property of two brothers, and while they didn't need dozens of bedrooms in the new house, they each wanted their own suite with plenty of privacy. Quiet could be hard to come by, since one side of the yard abuts a well-worn path used by neighbors to access the shared beach. Plus, with setbacks and restrictions, the actual space available was "amoeba-shaped," says the homeowner. "I couldn't imagine how you could build something in that shape that would look good." Fortunately, Attardo could see past the restrictions. "If you consider the predominant elements, including the view, sun, and access, then the pieces begin to fall together," he says.

"This is essentially an assembly of buildings, in a small village-like space," Attardo explains. The central (and largest) building is the "primary space," an open-concept living area with views of the water. This structure is flanked by a garage on one side and a bedroom wing on the other. "They're all connected with simple shapes that allow us to turn on an axis to accommodate setbacks and capitalize on the view and sun," says Attardo. "We broke it up so we could have dramatically less volume but an equal amount of square footage. From the street, it feels much more inviting. Something tall and voluminous wouldn't be as inviting." This clever construction suited the homeowners' minimalist and modernist tastes while providing visual interest to the otherwise staid exterior. "We used good, natural, traditional Maine materials with

(Opening spread) On a wooded peninsula in Georgetown, architect Paul Attardo designed an airy, warm all-seasons getaway for a pair of globetrotting brothers.

The central space features an open floor plan and plenty of large, triple-glazed windows (opposite, top). An orange Anne Truitt drawing provides a pop of color and hints at the exciting art collection to come (opposite, bottom).

Marimekko cushions from the 1960s (above) act as a "tribute" to the homeowners' mother and her colorful midcentury modern taste.



longevity to them," says Attardo of the cladding. White cedar shingles paired with white cedar trim, accented by Douglas fir, and punctuated by large, triple-glazed, muntinless Andersen windows give the house a "recognizable and approachable" feel. Attardo continues, "We wanted it to be sparse on the inside, too, so that one of the brothers could build his art collection."

With this factor in mind, Attardo lined up the windows so that visitors to the Georgetown house can see through it from the driveway. "The view corridor through the house will eventually house a sculpture," Attardo says. "Right now, there's an antique bookstand there, and that is also a beautiful piece in itself." Currently, the central living area is defined by the presence of an orange Anne Truitt drawing that hangs above an inherited nineteenth-century

partners' desk. "It was such a personal thing to be able to acquire this drawing and to have it here," says the homeowner, who counts the midcentury modernist sculptor and painter as a friend. "It pulls the whole room together, I think." With the help of a design-minded colleague, the homeowner (who lives most of the year in Singapore) created a color scheme of "white, black, and gray, with a touch of orange and natural flooring" that will serve as a backdrop to his collection of antiques and artworks. "The built-in shelves give the space a warm feeling," he says. "It looks a little random—it is a little random—but it reflects my family." The house was outfitted with select new purchases, like a large gray sofa from BoConcept and a floating, rotating fireplace, as well as pieces from the old family cottage and items from the brothers' childhood. "In

"The main living space has the tall volume, the dining, living, and sitting area. Immediately adjacent to it is the kitchen (above), which allows for immediate service and connection," explains Attardo. "The furniture can also be moved to accommodate larger or smaller crowds."

Quartersawn oak flooring with a honey-colored finish (opposite) was used throughout the project to add warmth.



a sense, it brings our immediate family history together in one place." A pair of bright cushions from Marimekko sit on the window seat and act as "a tribute to my mother." He adds, "That's mid-1960s. My mother, at some point, was very into Marimekko. These pillows aren't in great shape, but they have that look. I got more placemats that are Marimekko, too."

Since he was marooned in Singapore during the pandemic, the homeowner wasn't able to be on-site for much of the construction. However, his interior design consultant was willing to do some legwork to outfit the kitchen, bathrooms, and living area. "It was 3 a.m., my time, and we were on the phone while she was at this quarry in Massachusetts," he recalls. "She was walking me through all these pieces, and when I saw the black-and-gray granite, I thought, *That will be great.*" The stone slab

was large enough to top the kitchen island and countertop as well as serve as a backsplash, and there was even some left over for the laundry room. In the bathroom, they installed black slate tile to continue the monochromatic color scheme, plus floating vanities and toilets for easy cleanup. Since the owners are planning on using the cottage for years to come, "I wanted the bathroom to be ADA accessible," this homeowner says. "I'm very photosensitive, so I also wanted to have windows with the highest UV protection possible. They're like looking through sunglasses—in a good way."

Unlike the old A-frame, the new build is set a little way back from the water, and higher on the land. This gives the owners extra space to expand downward (there's a lower level that may someday be fitted into another bedroom or a wine cellar) while fundamentally changing the views

(Opposite, clockwise from top) The "bedroom pavilion" was laid out to offer "multidimensional views," says Attardo: "It also allows for the bedroom wing to be detached from the main living space, and I say detached in a broad sense." Each of the brothers' bedrooms has an en suite bathroom. "You'll notice that none of the toilets or vanities touch the floor," one homeowner says. "It makes it much easier to clean." The homeowner wanted to make sure his bathroom would be ADA compliant so that as he ages he'll be capable of enjoying every element of the house.

The amoeba-like buildable space demanded a clever floor plan, which in turn led to a roofline that rises and falls gracefully (above, left). From the road, visitors can see straight through the house (above, right). Someday, this central view corridor will house a collection-defining sculpture.



from the house. Attardo's "tried and true" Andersen windows are tight and sound-proof, but they let in one noise, according to the homeowner: "I can lie in bed and listen to the ocean." As for the coastal views, he says, "Right away, you think, *impressionist painting*. It's that special light. There's this undeveloped land across the water. It's extraordinary."

Although he's still building out the furnishings and amassing his art collection, this homeowner is proud of how the design balances tradition with innovation, family memories with new comforts. "In part, this [project] was a tribute to how our parents thought about this space. It was a casual, beachfront house where you could watch the tide go in and out, that would be warm and informal. It isn't just a look. It's a character," he says. While family feels right at home visiting the Georgetown cottage and soaking in the familiar views, it's also made a real impact on first-time guests, thanks to the materials, design, and decor. "People walk in here and their jaws drop. They can't believe this place." **MH+D**

"We used good, natural, traditional Maine materials (above) with longevity to them," says Attardo. On the deck (right), white cedar shingles pair beautifully with white cedar trim and Douglas fir accents.

"There were roughly 34 to 36 corners, as far as the foundation went," says builder Vincent Bosso. Although the unconventional shape (opposite) posed a few challenges at the very start, the project went up quickly. "It was great," adds Bosso. "Great to work with them."



ARCHITECTS: **PAUL ATTARDO, ATTARDO ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN; JAMES ROBBINS**  
 BUILDER: **BOSSO CONSTRUCTION**  
 LOCATION: **GEORGETOWN**

**A** Kitchen                      **C** Living Room                      **E** Bedrooms  
**B** Dining Room                      **D** Powder Room                      **F** Bathrooms

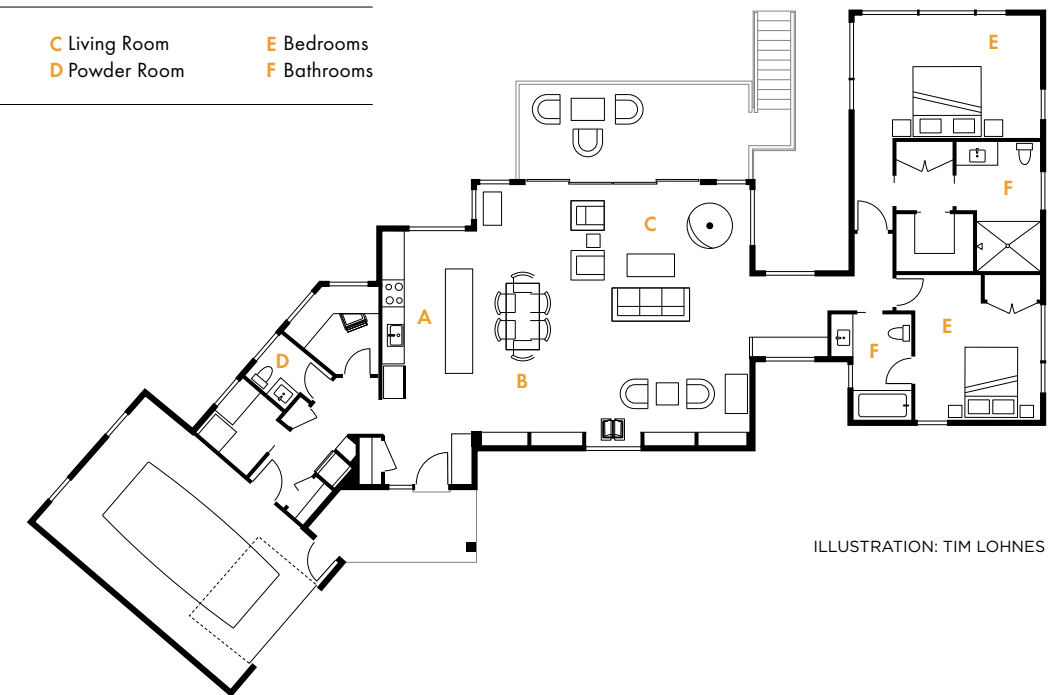


ILLUSTRATION: TIM LOHNES