

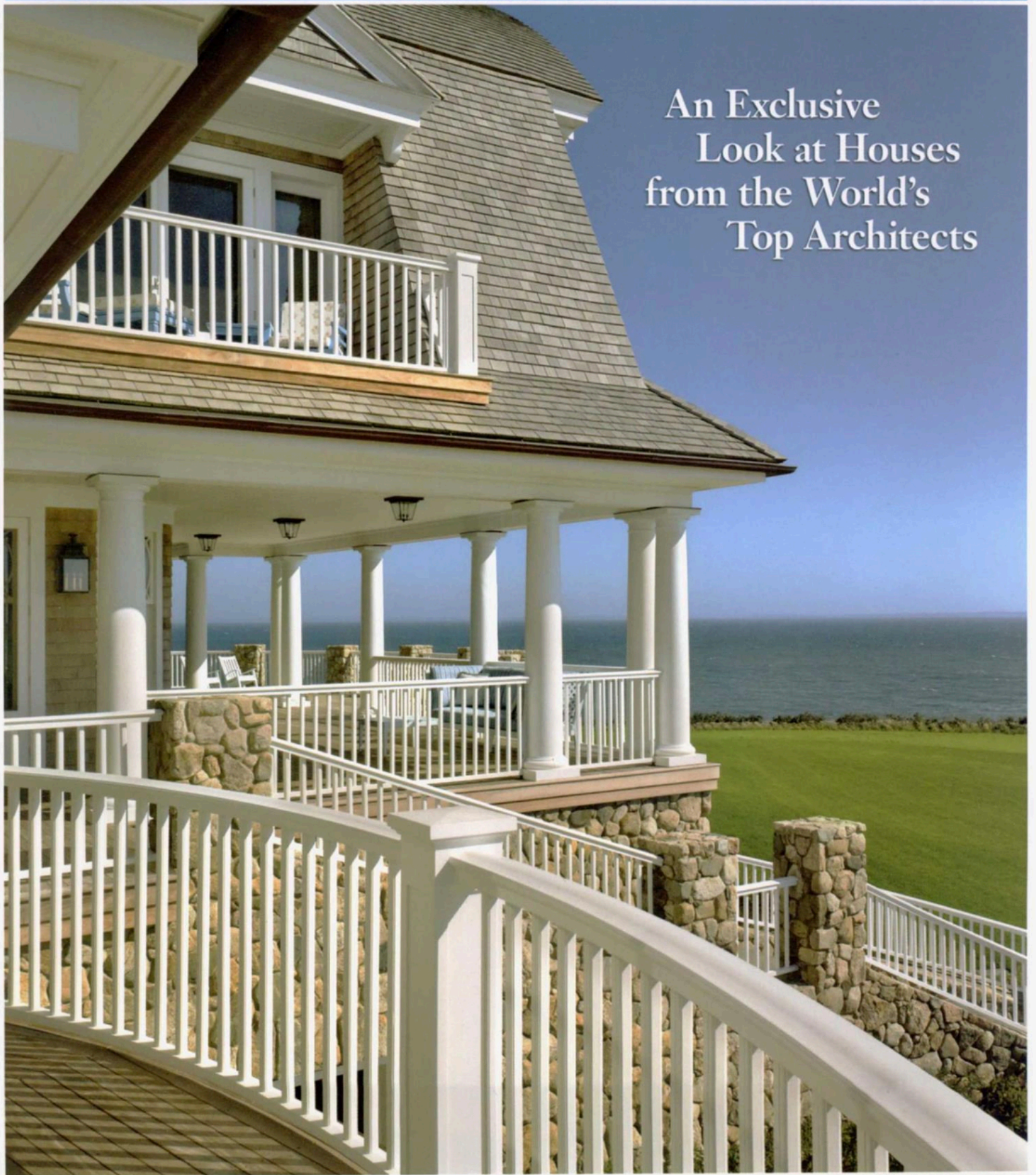
# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF DESIGN

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## THE ARCHITECTURE ISSUE

An Exclusive  
Look at Houses  
from the World's  
Top Architects







# Stepping Up to the Views

A LOFTY EXPANSION TRIPLES  
THE SIZE OF A VACATION HOUSE  
IN THE BERKSHIRES

"This is a view house," says architect Chad Floyd, of Centerbrook Architects and Planners in Connecticut, who rebuilt Susan Adler's Massachusetts retreat, set on a striking hillside in the Berkshires. "Capturing views of the verdant valley below and the mountains beyond was a key factor in its design."



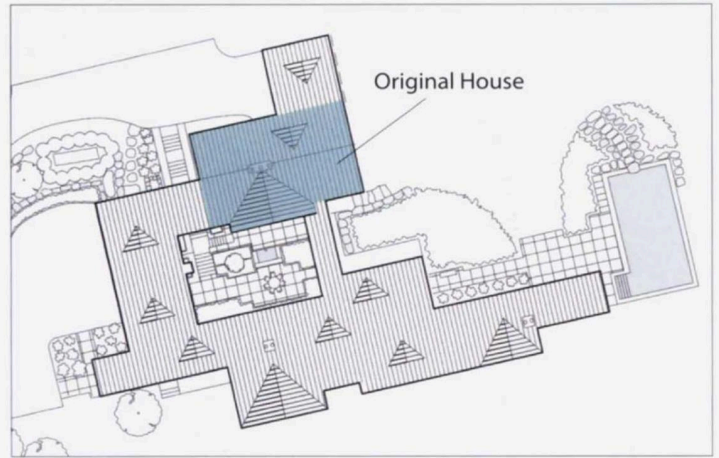








BEFORE PHOTOGRAPHY AND PLAN COURTESY  
CENTERBROOK ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS, LLP



ABOVE RIGHT: Floyd incorporated the original house on the site (above) into the new design, stepping additions down the hill in three levels. BELOW: Landscaped by Elizabeth Bartels, the grounds include a central courtyard “structured in descending terraces that respond to the slope of the hill,” Floyd says.

OPPOSITE: For the great room, as throughout, Adler, an interior designer and a collector, wanted to create “a traditional aesthetic within this large, soaring contemporary space,” she explains. The pair of French figwood armchairs are circa 1918. Sofa mohair from Glant.



Some clients working with an architect for the first time are a little unsure of what they want, and together they work through the uncertainty toward final decisions. But Susan Adler, an interior designer, knew exactly what she wanted for her new vacation house in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, because for years she and her husband, Herbert, had

been, in her words, “addicted collectors.”

“Our program was amazingly specific,” she recalls about the early stages of the design process. “There were the screens we bought in China, a primitive carved wood goose planter, a gazillion light fixtures—including six pewter Art Nouveau sconces—a totem pole, a late-19th-century post office window, antique mantels, our six-foot-long model of an Art Déco

streamlined train with interior lighting—plus all the furniture, from Biedermeier to English and Scottish Arts and Crafts. We had also bought a suite of Victorian furniture covered in an Egyptian Revival print that we decided would be the basis of an Egyptian Revival room. And then there was Herb’s extensive collection of art books.

“We bought these things without any





idea of where we'd place them," she explains. "We were collecting for this not-yet-designed house. But they were all things we needed to use, and Chad found a place for them."

That would be Chad Floyd, of Centerbrook Architects and Planners, in Centerbrook, Connecticut, a firm that specializes in what might be called comfort architecture—buildings that are intentionally so

relaxed in concept and permissive in aesthetic tolerance, they easily absorb what Adler calls the tchotchkes of a lifetime. Floyd is not a member of the design police; he never said no to that last bit of antiquity or to any cherished piece of eccentricity. He simply provided a specific place for each thing in a plainspoken style with strong architectural gestures that tie it all together.

He designed the entrance hall, for example, to be grand enough for an imposing bespoke console by David Linley, balanced on a carved and gilded eagle, over which Adler placed a mirror that she also commissioned from the English craftsman. To connect the new wing to the original, Floyd added a staircase bordered by shelves for the art book collection, and you're tempted to pull out a volume and



The 40-foot-long curved “screen” that divides the hall from the kitchen “is a variation of the architect’s signature use of English-style lattice throughout,” notes Adler. The eagle console is by David Linley. OPPOSITE: The galley kitchen. Franke sinks, Wolf range and Sub-Zero refrigerator, at Abt.com.















**OPPOSITE:** A stair hall, lined with bookshelves and illuminated by French Art Nouveau sconces, joins the old and new wings. **INSET AND ABOVE:** Although Floyd preserved the slope of the original roof, he revamped the entire look with standing-seam metal roofs and a façade punctuated by latticework.

**BELOW:** The house “is furnished in the ultimate eclectic style,” says Adler, who filled the master bedroom with Arts and Crafts pieces she collected with her late husband, Herbert. The 1890s candlestick on the Arts and Crafts mantel is by W. A. S. Benson. Duralee drapery fabric. Stark carpet.

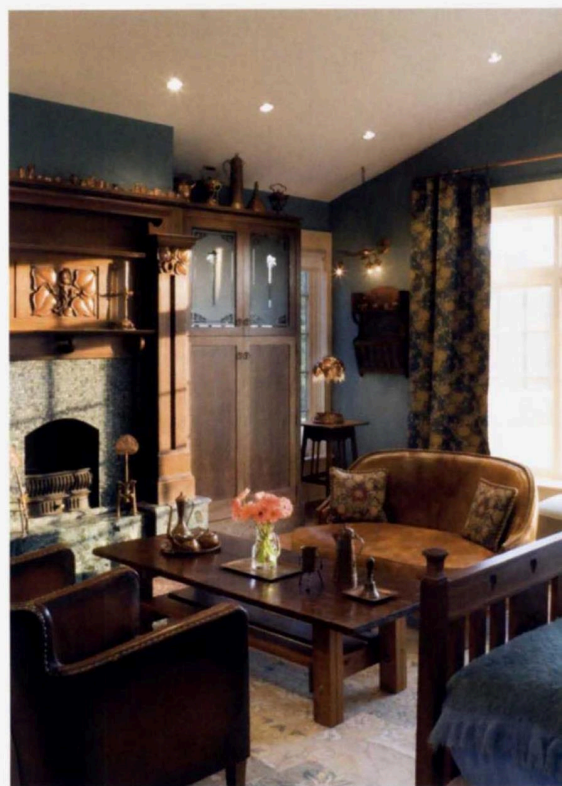
browse on a step. The doorway at the end of the staircase is decorated with a bronze elevator surround, and just beyond, on a pedestal, there’s an eagle lamp, wings spread, consummating the flight of stairs like the *Victory of Samothrace* at the Louvre. “When I saw that bird, I thought it was either hideous or marvelous, and I decided it was hideously marvelous,” she says. (Not coincidentally, “Adler” means eagle in German, so there’s a large collection of eagle statuettes.)

But the sum total of micro decisions does not architecture make. Floyd concentrated as much on the big picture, starting with the existing house standing on the sloping 40-acre site, which faced the panorama of a pastoral valley. The split-level house was inappropriately suburban for this rural landscape, but if it was plain and charmless, it had the convincing virtue of already being there: At 2,700 square feet on two floors, it represented a sizable chunk of usable square footage. The task was to overhaul the structure while

subsuming it into a larger house. Floyd brought together the existing house and the new with a single, large-scale gesture: The original roof sloped down with the hill toward the view, and the architect simply extended the roof at the same angle. What is now a standing-seam metal roof flows in one unbroken line. “I kept the roof slope pretty much the same as the hill slope,” says the architect. “It’s a simple idea, one roof with the center carved out as a courtyard.”

At the end of a two-story trellised loggia at the lower level of the house, the new front door opens to a corridor lined with a subtly curved 40-foot-long gridded wood screen (bordering the sleek galley kitchen) that sweeps past the living and dining rooms to a trellised porch off the swimming pool. All the major rooms face the view for which the Adlers originally bought the property, while the kitchen faces the protected courtyard, which can be used well into the colder seasons. The

*continued on page 310*





An intimate dining area is arranged on the pool porch, which shares a roof with the residence. "The pool porch and, by extension, the pool are integrated into the house's overall composition," Floyd says.





*continued from page 275*

To the left at the top of the stairs, an *ipe* (Brazilian walnut) bridge leads to the entrance proper and three choices. (1) Straight ahead you find a long screen porch, with *ipe* floors and gorgeously curated views of the sundeck, pool and Honga River; the master bedroom opens off the far end of the porch. (2) Immediately to the left from the entrance is the guest room. (3) To the right you enter the main living area, or lodge. This magnificent room, with battleship-gray concrete floors and clear vertical-grain Douglas fir walls, has a portal window (a signature Jameson detail) looking northeast, with views of the pool and the river, and an enormous wall of windows facing another section of the river to the southeast. The ceiling of the lodge slopes up, back to front, and the line of the front roof rises on the left—which means that all the top windows in the southeast wall are trapezoids. The master bedroom and guest-house have exactly the same shape and walls of windows, with no shades (Bernstein rises at 6:15 with the sun and the dogs; Minnemann sleeps in). With a river two miles across out front, no one worries about privacy.

The architect selected furniture that complements the lodge—the clean, functional elegance of Danish Modern designers Hans Wegner, Poul Kjaerholm and Børge Mogensen and a countertop of aluminum lathe shavings embedded in

Only about half of the  
3,000-square-foot camp  
touches the ground.

resin (“the refined and the raw,” he says). He gave his clients 20 safari lanterns as a housewarming gift—to set on the deck or in the fire pit, or to light the way to the guest cabin at night.

Jameson actually grew up on Maryland’s Eastern Shore and at the time thought there was no architecture in the area—just fishing shacks and barns. He has since come to appreciate the “proud little buildings” around the Chesapeake Bay. Today, of course, even someone who does not value those lovely vernacular structures could not say there is no architecture on Upper Hooper Island. □

*continued from page 288*

Coy, “the upper for soaking and watching, the lower one for swimming laps.” Water gushes over a steel bevel and down a rock face to create a soothing sound. “The clients were committed to the same ideas we were,” he says. “The watchword was *purity*.”

The house also performs something like a large-scale sundial that marks the movement of the sun throughout the day. The architects orchestrated the light coming down through a 15-foot-long skylight set above the main staircase. The wedge of glass that protrudes from the entrance fa-

“We wanted to create  
these little moments as  
you circulate around the  
crescent,” says Barnes.

cade captures western light and sunsets. On summer evenings a beam of light streams through this aperture and saturates the living area with a fiery orange glow. “It’s almost like Stonehenge,” says Coy.

The crescent-shaped plan comes to a point at the eastern end, beneath a steel trellis, where the owners like to sit on summer mornings. “We eat breakfast outside beneath the trellis, when the light is low. Sometimes there’s a haze rising off the water, and it envelops the house.” The same chimney that serves the living area fireplace also accommodates this terrace with an outdoor fireplace, extending the usability of the space.

The building was set back on the harbor side as far as possible, allowing for a lawn and the preservation of grassy wetlands that taper down toward the water’s edge. Instead of jumping up from the shoreline and screaming its presence as a sculptural object, the house’s concave form helps the architecture settle into the site and become one with the landscape. Clusters of boxwood were planted to help soften the transition between building and landscape. “We tried to pick up on the architectural themes,” says landscape designer Craig Socia, who used native shad trees, Japanese maples, river birches, stone benches and a half circle of perennials to further echo the lines of the house. □

*continued from page 308*

Adlers wanted to live on one floor, so the lower section, organized in a long stretch perpendicular to the wings, works as a smaller building within the larger whole (sadly, Herbert Adler died before construction was completed). The combined structures total 7,000 square feet.

“Other than the use of English lattice, it’s a very simple house outside, because the architects knew we had extraordinary stuff for the interior,” says Adler. “The concept was that when you walk through the front door, you confront an interior that’s visually rich. The interior architecture is very simple, with clean lines.”

“Both as a collector and as a decorator, Susan has a lot of ideas, and she brought things together in an eclectic manner,” says Floyd. “It was hard to know what was coming next, and we had to make the architecture receptive to her next level of design without being visually competitive. So I kept it fairly quiet and tried not to make spaces that were huge and high and dramatic, which would dwarf small objects. At the same time, I was trying to

“I kept it fairly quiet and  
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spaces that were huge and  
high and dramatic.”

create a place that would hold everything without overwhelming the house. We had to strike a balance. When I began to see their collection, I decided to build a frame for these things, like the curving wall in front of the kitchen; otherwise they’d get out of control.

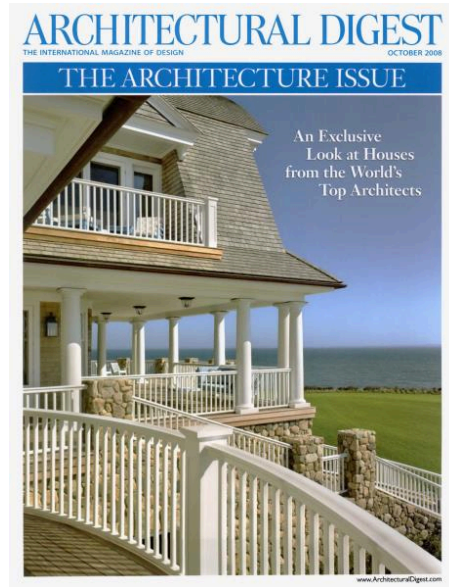
“I think of my role as a stage designer who gets a script and talks to the director,” he continues. “My script was my conversation with the Adlers, as well as my understanding of the site and the Berkshires, and I tried to stir all this up into a design. Sometimes architecture requires setting the ego aside, and what I ended up with is nothing I’d come up with on my own. The house I designed is unique in my work, because I do think it’s my response to the Adlers’ script.” □

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