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EMBRACING REGIONAL STYLE

The friendly modernism of three
contemporary New England homes

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Design Spotlight: Standout Detailing



A MELLOWER MODERN

Three New England contemporary homes show modern architecture's softer side

By Stacey Freed

True or not, modern design is described by many as cold, characterized by relentless straight lines and hard, shiny surfaces. To satisfy desires for a more inviting kind of contemporary, designers and builders are responding with a modern-rustic style. Homes fit the local vernacular and are sited to take best advantage of their surrounding landscapes, with large windows and easy access to the outdoors. Interior design incorporates natural elements and finishes with varied textures to create a comfortable, lived-in feeling. The following three projects, all winners of the annual Marvin Architects Challenge design competition, provide examples of this warmer modernism.

CAPTURING THE CAMP SPIRIT

Each summer for many years, architect Jacob Albert's clients rented an apartment in a 100-year-old waterfront camp on the Massachusetts coast. When the property next door came up for sale, they purchased it with the intent of building their own camp-style home. "They wanted to capture the spirit of the informal and rustic house they'd rented," Albert says.

Because the site is on the water, it is heavily regulated, and so

Albert decided to stay within the footprint of the existing dilapidated house that would be razed. "Our challenge was to unite the given shape of the footprint with a feeling of the old camp, called 'Big Camp,' next door," he says.

To create the camp style, Albert designed "a thin construction with a gabled roof and a porch supported by tree trunks," he says. The shingled house, made of Alaskan yellow cedar, is reminiscent of other local turn-of-the-century homes. "It will turn a silvery gray as time goes

on, and it's a traditional color palette for the New England Coast," Albert says. There's a stone fireplace, abundant windows, exposed rafter tails, and a wood interior painted white.

According to builder Joe Chapman, VP of Doyle Construction, in West Tisbury, Mass., "There's not one piece of drywall in that house. Not one." His challenge was dealing with a house full of wood that he knew would swell and contract. "We had to line up the reveals [the joints between the boards]," he

With abundant windows and light-filled rooms, Little Camp, by Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects and Doyle Construction, straddles modern and traditional styles.



Little Camp, on the Massachusetts coast, is a 5,000-square-foot home built on the existing footprint of a dilapidated house. The interior is entirely made of wood, with strategically placed design elements that account for shrinking and swelling.

says, “which is made tougher by boards shrinking and swelling at different rates.” In some areas, such as the ceiling of an upstairs sunroom, he “masked” the eventual wood movement by placing vertical ribs on top of the horizontal boards. The ribs look like narrow, exposed rafters and create shadow lines that draw the eye away from possibly uneven reveals.

Chapman’s other challenge: perfecting the roof layout with its various pitches, which made it difficult to create nice and even exposed rafters. “Working it out was basically mathematics,” he says. The design all adds up and seamlessly fits in its place by the water.

PROJECT Little Camp, Coastal Massachusetts

ARCHITECT Jacob Albert, AIA, Albert, Righter & Tiftmann Architects, Boston

BUILDER Doyle Construction, West Tisbury, Mass.

SIZE House: 5,000 square feet; guest house: 900 square feet

PHOTOGRAPHER Brian Vanden Brink