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MAINE DOMAIN

A family wanted a home that would tell a new story about their lives. A designer and architect collaborated to build them one to last for generations.

INTERIOR DESIGN BY *Julia Wood*
ARCHITECTURE BY *Ruard Veltman Architecture + Interiors*
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Opening spreads: Entryways are pronounced features of a new house in coastal Maine. The way into the home's study involves passing through an arched multi-paned door that pivots in place, while the residence's main entrance features a pair of French doors that meet a telescoping stairway leading down to the living room. This page: A massive antique French mirror in the living room is visually balanced on the opposite side of the room by a limestone fireplace designed by Ruard Veltman. White leather tufted sofas, chaises, and poufs are carefully positioned amid an assemblage of antique oars, an antique table made of petrified wood, a brass candlestick, and a vintage vessel by the fireplace.



The marble-topped kitchen island is illuminated by a grouping of custom-designed tarnished silver and frosted glass orbs. The vintage mortar and pestle on the surface, which assumes a new use as a vase, is from Foxglove Antiques and Galleries. The natural-finish oak beams that course the ceiling are reclaimed. Barstools set at the island are made of wood and iron.



Opposite: A view into the family room reveals a blackened steel sconce, designed by Ruard Veltman, affixed to a multi-hued stone wall. The custom banquette runs the length of the window wall and is set against a grey oak table evocative of a French 1960s design, which is topped with a bread bowl from Foxglove Antiques and Galleries. This page: A seating area on the other side of the family room features a lounge chair upholstered in leather and paired with a custom sofa designed by Veltman. The custom table is made of antique oak.

One of the striking details in the master bedroom is a small window set high in the wall behind the bed—one of many subtle architectural details that distinguish the house. Veltman designed a bed and tall upholstered headboard for the space, which includes ebony-finished nightstands supported by narrow plinths. The draperies are made of an outdoor canvas.



The railing of the staircase that accesses the family room evokes the kind of wooden fencing used to corral horses. Flooring is composed of natural bluestone. By day, the room is flooded with natural light; by night, a pair of bronze pendants with fluted and frosted white glass imbue the space with a warm glow.



REFINEMENT IS ABOUT removing unwanted elements. It's the stripping away of anything unnecessary, of improving by clarifying. Refinement also suggests elegance, sophistication, and good taste.

This is the story of a highly refined new home on the coast of Maine, developed from the ground up, both inside and out, by North Carolina-based Ruard Veltman Architecture + Interiors. The finished house is an uncluttered and unfettered study in stone, wood, plaster, and glass that's now home to an energetic family with four young children. "I think the expression of structure—or sometimes the lack of it—can be really beautiful, and that's hard to do," says architect Ruard Veltman, adding, "In our work, we always resist the temptation to 'doll it up.'"

The resident family—eager to engage in winter sports and embrace a lifestyle centered on the outdoors—relocated from Charlotte, North Carolina, to Cousins Island, Maine, north of Portland, overlooking the secluded Casco Bay. Their intent was to plant new roots in a family home with architectural significance: a place for their children to grow up in—and return to. "This is a family that gets out and does things," Veltman emphasizes. "They're the kind of family that packs a picnic and heads outdoors."

The land slopes gently toward the water, so for the house to fit the site vertically, Veltman designed the structure as a "split level," though his interpretation of that form is wholly original. Taking cues from the local vernacular, the house combines a cedar shake roof and local fieldstone, setting up a mix of American and European Arts and Crafts architecture that adapted well to the five-acre lot—a parcel able to accommodate a sports court that converts into a hockey rink for the winter season. The entire family, including two large dogs, embraces life on the waterfront, where they paddle board, kayak, and swim.

Julia Palen Wood has been with the firm since its inception and serves now as its Senior Interior Designer. "The mudroom we designed for this family is probably the muddiest of any of our homes," Wood says with a laugh. "It's lockers and bluestone floors, and it's all about boots and hockey sticks and big wet dogs returning from a swim."

Beyond the mudroom, the firm's aesthetic is evident in tranquil rooms that appear spare but not spartan. Light-filled interiors emphasizing textural contrasts over color

and pattern, they are spaces that exude a calm simplicity and an almost church-like stillness.

For all of the firm's projects, Wood is part of the entire architecture design process. "I'm involved in the overall development of the house," she explains, "assisting with all the interior finish details. I help select appliances, kitchen and bath fixtures, tile, hardware, cabinets, countertops, lighting—pretty much everything." Here, Wood specified antique oak flooring with dents and knotholes, which her clients appreciate because scratches from the dogs simply add to its character, and the ceilings are detailed with reclaimed oak beams. "We left those beams raw, juxtaposed with white plaster walls; plaster allowed us to create a lot of beautiful architectural shapes, which add a lot of movement to the house."

There were several furnishings the clients didn't want to leave behind, and the living room features a fourteen-foot-tall antique French mirror the couple purchased at auction years ago. "It traveled from Atlanta to Charlotte to Maine," says Wood, "in one piece, miraculously. And we designed that living room specifically for that mirror. We had to create the room to fit it, which dictated the scale and proportion of that space." And as Veltman adds, pointing to the close collaborative nature of his work with Wood, "We designed a massive sculptural limestone fireplace opposite the mirror in order to provide balance."

The modern white leather furnishings in that room contrast with the gilt of the mirror and allow it to be the commanding piece. "This was really a once-in-a-lifetime project," says Wood. "We loved these clients and loved seeing them in the house. We get random notes from them saying, 'I'm sitting here, seeing this, and I love this spot and what you created for us.'"

Wood describes her long working relationship with Veltman as a true collaboration. "One of us will have an idea, and as we develop it together, it just gets better. It's also really wonderful when you have a client who trusts you, and this house is really the product of a great relationship."

Veltman says he especially appreciates hearing from clients after they are living in the home for a while. "There are quiet moments in which people observe the play of light and shadow, or are seeing for the first time certain details of their home. I love how it makes them—and me—feel, and it's about a genuine appreciation of art and architecture. And the beauty of it all is that they get to live in it." ■

Outtakes



As architect Ruard Veltman says, referring to interior designer Julia Palen Wood, with whom he collaborated, "I feel very fortunate that we're a combined team that can do both the architecture and the furnishings. It's wonderful when you have clients who trust that it's going to be great." Clockwise from above: The living room fireplace is a study in minimalism; the house embodies a vernacular traditional profile and a thoroughly contemporary one; views are afforded from the banquette in the family room; the structure of the house is expressed; a pair of brass lanterns from Bevolo Gas and Electric Lights help illuminate the view of the landscape from the porch; an African water jug from Foxglove Antiques & Galleries is positioned on a coffee table in the family room, noted for its fireplace composed of cut limestone.

"The family wanted a house that connects to the land." —Ruard Veltman

