

New England HOME

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

Points of
Distinction

Bespoke details add personality

So Close and Yet Far Enough

A flex-space dwelling built in their backyard gives one family just the elbow room it needs. *Text by LARRY LINDNER | Photography by NAT REA*



Only about ten steps from a family's Weston, Massachusetts, home, architect Adolfo Perez and interior designer Rina Okawa created a 625-square-foot *hanare*, Japanese for "detached dwelling." Sited for tranquil views of a wooded area, it's used by the wife's parents

when they visit from their home north of Nagasaki.

The design team also built a 625-square-foot hangout for the couple's three teenage children with the same great views—and a 625-square-foot retreat with a wraparound deck for barbecuing

The corridor, or *engawa*, around the perimeter is not a corridor in the way Americans think of it, says interior designer Rina Okawa. In Japan, a corridor is about connecting the indoors to the outdoors.



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THE INSIDE
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EXPRESS IT.
WE CHOSE TO
EXPRESS IT.”

—Architect Adolfo Perez

and connecting with nature, elements missing from the main residence.

How? It's all the same build. The design collaborators borrowed from the Japanese tradition of squeezing more than one type of use out of a single space. “At night,” Okawa says, “many people have a futon mattress on the floor for sleeping. Come morning, you store it away and pull in a table and other furniture, and the space becomes a living room.”



ABOVE: In siting the *hanare*, a mature Japanese maple tree was preserved, standing tall between the new structure and the main house. **LEFT:** The reddish color on the stucco matches the accent color seen on the main house's top floor, while the stained sapele mahogany slats are an intentional Japanese-style design element.



No, the kids don't skateboard. The client discovered Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* skateboard collection at the MoMA Design Store and just liked it. The floating shelves were installed because she wanted "to have some reading material available for the family," Okawa says.

In this multipurpose dwelling, three couches fold out to become full- and queen-size beds, so the visiting parents can easily turn their living space into sleeping space. And when they're not there, the three kids can have private time with their friends, including sleepovers. That is, the same structure serves as both an intimate and restful retreat and an open volume conducive to socializing. It's made

more open still by a butterfly roof. "You can hide the roof on the inside of a home or express it," Perez says. "We chose to express it," which makes for higher ceilings and a larger-looking room within the restrained square footage.

There's also room in the dwelling's 300-square-foot basement level for storing outdoor furniture and other effects and even for a Ping-Pong table, expand-



ABOVE: The neutral colors are meant not to disturb the colors of nature tapping on the windows, so to speak. “But the client likes to be a little bit playful,” Okawa says, which explains the turquoise ottoman. Busk + Hertzog sofas convert to comfortable beds. **RIGHT:** The oak slats on the bathroom vanity riff off the slats outside the dwelling’s door.

ing the kids’ hangout options.

For Okawa, the design challenge was “to make the space as calm, peaceful, and sophisticated as possible for the parents but also fun enough for teenagers.” To that end, she chose an uncluttered approach featuring furniture with straight, simple lines that are easy on the eye but allow for unfettered movement among young people.

Her approach succeeded. All three generations of the family love retreating to the *hanare*.

EDITOR’S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

ARCHITECTURE: Adolfo Perez Architect

INTERIOR DESIGN: ZEN Associates

BUILDER: Scott Williams Construction

