

# Decor Maine

ISSUE NO. 4

LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN MAINE

## THE *Art* ISSUE

**SIX**  
*can't-miss*  
**GALLERIES**  
*from Portland  
to Vinalhaven*

*An art professor's*  
**TAILOR-MADE**  
**HARPSWELL**  
**HIDEAWAY**

**A Circa 1790s**  
**BELFAST CAPE**  
*with a* **GALLERY-  
LIKE INTERIOR**

### **BEST IN BAR**

THE ABBEY'S *buzzy cocktails*  
bring a **JAMES BEARD**  
**NOMINATION** to Maine





Architecture and construction firm Woodhull prides itself on creating structures that do not diminish the natural beauty of their surroundings.

*Behind*

PINE COVE

*Architecture, Construction, Cabinetry & Millwork* **WOODHULL**  
*Metalwork* **JIM LARSON AND NELSON METAL FABRICATION** *Engineers* **L&L STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS**  
*Landscape Installer* **PINNACLE LANDSCAPE & DESIGN** *Tile* **MORNINGSTAR STONE & TILE**

AN ART PROFESSOR'S BESPOKE WONDER IS HARPSWELL'S LATEST MASTERPIECE.

*written by* **BRIAN SHUFF** *photographs by* **TRENT BELL**





Set on four acres, the home enjoys a landscape of hills, ledges, spruce forest, and a stunning view of the cove. "It's really one of the nicer properties I've had the privilege to work on," Caleb says.



The property consists of three structures: a main house (with a carport doubling as a covered porch seen here), an art studio, and a guest house.

O

n approach from the water, Woodhull's Pine Cove seems to stand in perfect balance with its environs. Surrounded by mossy rock ledges and a tranquil spruce copse, the home's exterior—somehow both dramatic and secretive—brings coastal forest modern to its apogee.

"You have an option," says principal architect, Caleb Johnson, "and it isn't a right or wrong

option, but it's the option of whether you're trying to make a contrasting statement. If you're putting an object in a field, or on a hill, or nestled into a cliff, do you want that object to contrast with the landscape, or would you rather it blend in?"

Clearly, the latter prevailed at Pine Cove. The main building (there are three in total, spread across four acres) fits gently in a crook of ridge-line overlooking the cove. "We took a very detailed survey and designed a structure to the

precise contours of the land," Caleb says. "No clear-cutting. No blasting. We couldn't improve what was there naturally, so instead we tried to be unobtrusive, especially on the water side."

Note how the rooflines rise at angles nearly parallel to the incline of the ridge.

Note how the ground floor (including the living room, dining room, kitchen, and primary bedroom) grazes the landscape such that one can walk from enclosed space directly onto pine duff without one step of elevation change.

"If you look at the siding," says Caleb, "you'll see we also did a lot to play with the exterior texture." The result is an astonishing compliment to the bark of the enveloping spruce. Vertical panels mimic the trees' narrow trunks. "We don't order factory," Caleb says. "We manufacture our own siding, so we get a chance to toy around with it quite a bit, to get the character exactly right."



“We took a very detailed survey and designed a structure to the precise contours of the land.”

—CALEB JOHNSON, PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT



Soren deNiord Design Studio intended for the swimming pool to feel like a secluded pond; installed by Pinnacle Landscape & Design. **(OPPOSITE):** A Spartherm U70H fireplace gets a massive upgrade thanks to a custom Jim Larson metal surround.





A print shop on site. Charles Beneke (one of the owners) is an artist and art professor based in Ohio.

This bespoke approach carries inside the home.

One clocks instantly the interior's robust millwork package. "It's deceptively simple," Caleb says, "but this is some of the most sophisticated millwork we've done. It's a major feature of the place, and it's very carefully thought out." He draws particular attention to the kitchen, to a floor-to-ceiling pantry unit with edges that curve around and continue on to become walls in the next room. Like most of the house, they are solid wood construction. "Those are individual boards fitted together. The amount of time we put into these is staggering," says Caleb.

Woodhull fabricates all of its millwork in-house (they have a shop in Brunswick), allowing for profound degrees of customization. Other high points include the exquisite rounded kitchen island; the library, with its much-elevated track and bracket motif, plus display angle shelving for the owners' extensive catalogue of art and design books; and the stone floor mudroom off the carport, which features cubbies for boots, a hidden closet for mechanical and storage (you can spot the vents of its secret door to the left of the stairs), and an enlarged platform and entry step that give the space a cozy oversize vibe, like a favorite hoodie.

"You can't just go out and buy this stuff," Caleb says. "It's totally bespoke. Everything you see—the wood products, the metal, the siding, the guards going up the stairway, everything—is one-hundred percent made for this house."

It's an ethos that holds beyond the purview of millwork.

"We worked with a very talented stone and metal artist named Jim Larson," Caleb says. "He did the fireplace for us."



“A carefully considered millwork package throughout is a major feature of the place,” says Caleb. Woodhull does all millwork in-house, which ensures each piece is unique to the home it inhabits.



(Clockwise L-R) **1:** A RAIS Viva 100L fireplace with side glass. Ash built-ins by Woodhull. Almost all storage throughout is built-in and/or hidden. **2:** A small cottage known as “The Octagon” serves as a guest house for visiting artists. **3:** With much of the house leaning into boxier forms, such as the backwall refrigerator unit—we enjoy the break in form of the soft touch of the rounded island edges. **4:** Family heirlooms play wonderfully with contemporary design. Both the ornamented mirror and sofa seen here have been in Sarah’s family for generations. **5:** Cove view from inside The Octagon. **6:** The countertop is from Stone Surface in Naples, ME, with a Kohler sink and tub. Shower hardware by AXOR.





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—CALEB JOHNSON, ARCHITECT

The fireplace is an undeniable show-stopper. Cold rolled steel gives the hearth a dose of color and interest, and the material will eventually patina, much like copper, along with the accrual of myriad other stains, marks, scratches, even rust.

“The point is: we love to make things,” Caleb says. “That’s what we really enjoy, and that’s what we prefer to do. And making things, to us, is not a matter of ordering someone else’s idea off a catalogue, or getting too excited because something came from Italy. We just like to make it. Design it, source it, craft it, as locally as possible.”

It’s an ethos that jibes with the homeowners as well, makers themselves. (The second building on the property is a studio and print shop, and the third, a small guest cottage for visiting artists.) “Charles and Sarah were ideal clients,” Caleb says. “They wanted a design forward home that was respectful of the land, respectful of Maine, and pushed the boundaries of what a home could do for them. Most people build one or two houses in a lifetime, if any, so I understand when it’s a foreign thing to clients that they don’t get a lot of practice with, but Charles and Sarah engaged like pros. They had great eyes for quality, open minds, and really made the process quite wonderful.” The results speak for themselves. ■



Wall and hearth cladding by Jim Larson, with Calico's Champagne wallpaper.