

TEXT BY
Marni Elyse Katz

PHOTO BY
Nat Rea

Garage Scale

In a leafy Boston suburb, a place to park cars and repair vintage scooters grows into a bucolic sanctuary.

A three-story mahogany screen partially veils the backyard retreat designed by Flavin Architects for Ed and Kathy Kelly in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Incorporating a renovated garage, it includes both closed and open spaces and a potted rooftop garden.

outside

To call architect Colin Flavin's three-story steel-frame structure with mahogany slat screens a "garage" would be misleading. While there's room for parking and a Vespa workshop behind the double-wide red door on the ground floor, the spaces above feel and function more like a country retreat. "The clients wanted something innovative to complement their traditional Dutch Colonial," says Flavin, principal of Flavin Architects. "A bit like a garden folly."

The new building in Kathy and Ed Kelly's backyard in Wellesley, Massachusetts, conceived to replace a ramshackle garage, also offers a sheltered outdoor gathering place, an indoor study, and a rooftop garden, all with contemplative connections to the landscape. A boulder in front,

tipped up just so, lends the aura of a Zen garden. Sunlight streams through the screens, leaving rhythmic patterns on the stucco walls of the covered porch. Floor-to-ceiling windows in the air-conditioned study frame the wooded view and allow the couple to see through to the side yard beyond. On top, flowers and vegetables thrive in wood and aluminum planters.

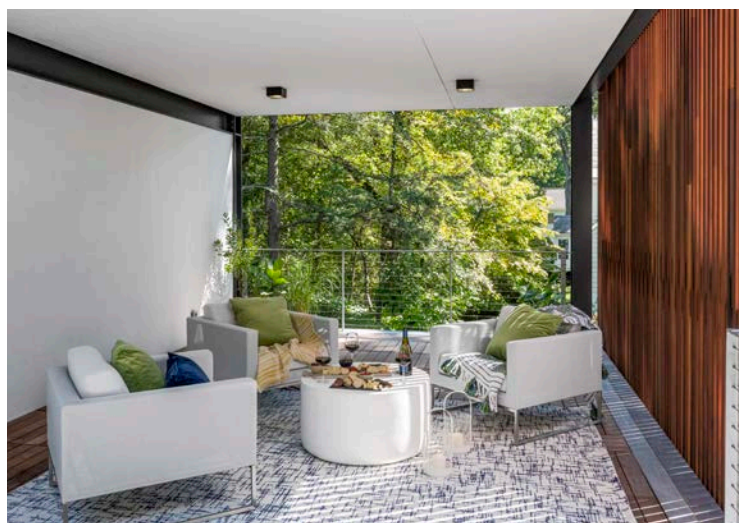
Flavin found inspiration for the roof deck in the roof terrace of Villa Savoye, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret's 1931 masterpiece. Rather than leave the third level completely exposed, Flavin continued the steel frame upward to reinforce the idea of an outdoor room. "It's as though you left out the windows and could add glass later," he says. "But hopefully not." >

The modern structure is in striking contrast to the area's predominantly traditional homes, including the Kellys' own Dutch Colonial. A Cor-Ten steel planter running along one side is filled with Carex Ice Dance (opposite, top). "The plantings are minimalist, yet rich in color and texture," says landscape architect H. Keith Wagner. The covered porch (opposite, bottom), furnished with a table and chairs from Crate & Barrel and a rug by Calvin Klein, is the perfect place for drinks with friends.

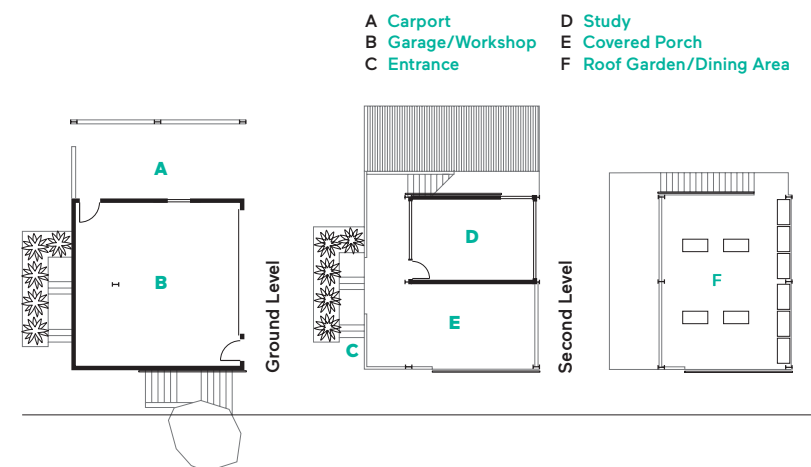
PHOTOS: PETER VANDERWARKER (THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE, BOTTOM); NAT REA (OPPOSITE, TOP); ILLUSTRATION: LOHNES + WRIGHT

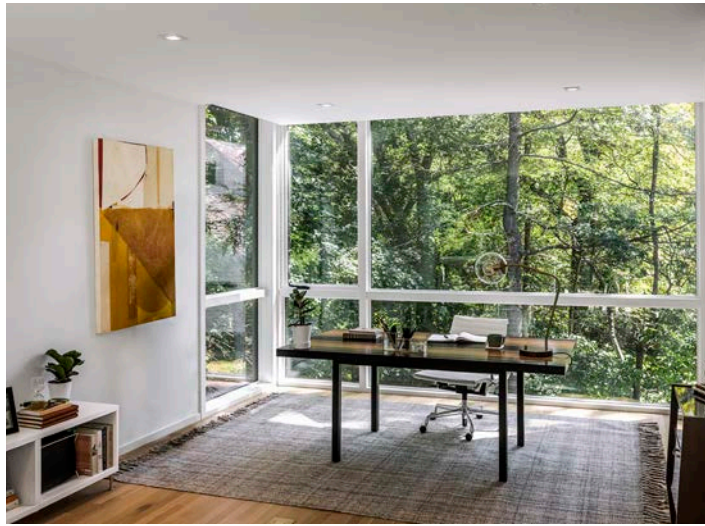


"We've gotten great feedback about the structure from the community. We stepped it down and set it back, so it became more interesting than aggressive." COLIN FLAVIN, ARCHITECT



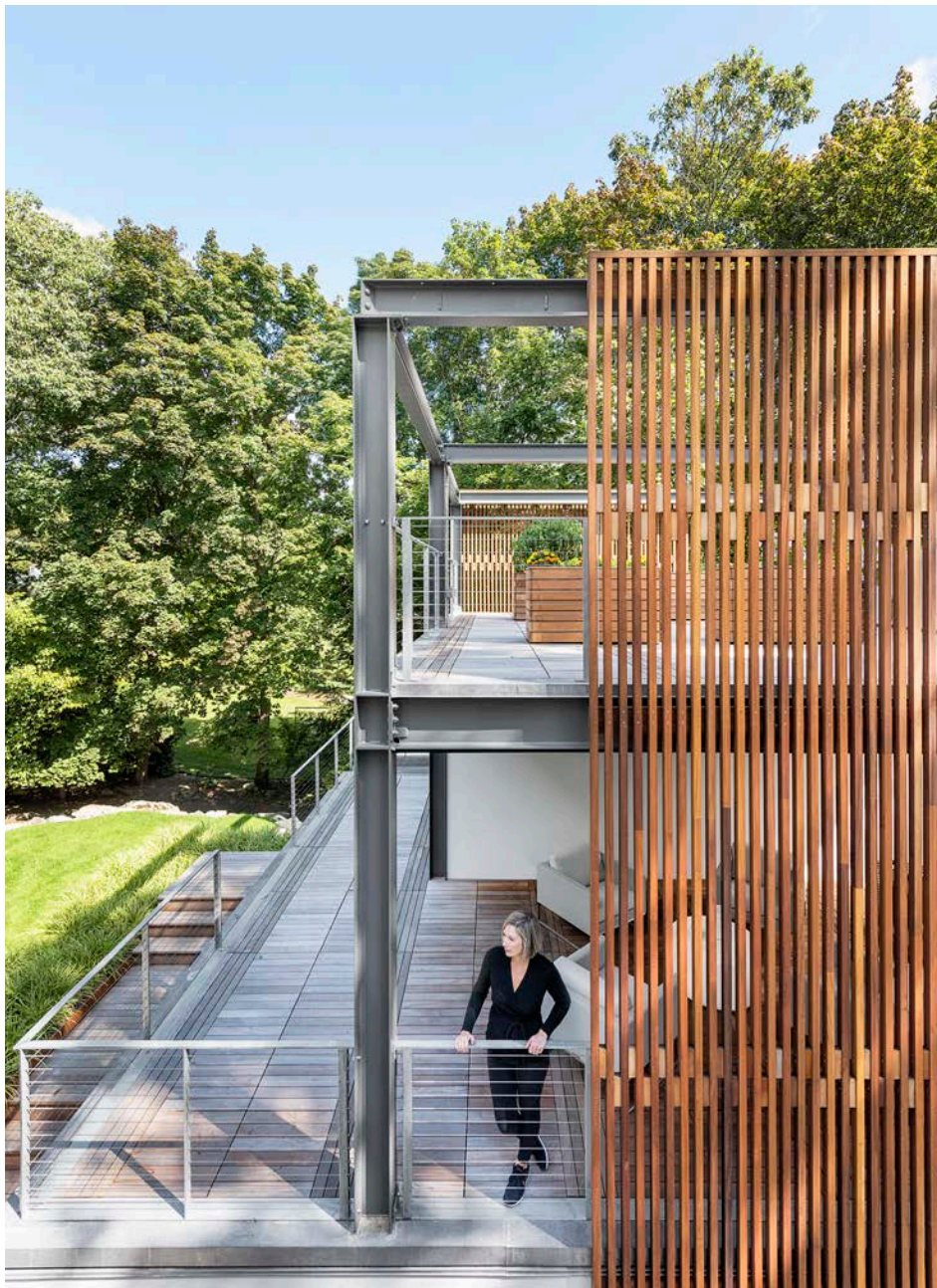
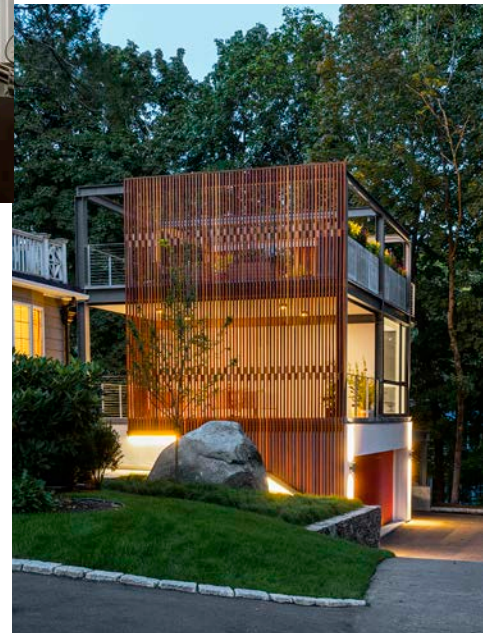
Lantern Studio N
 DESIGNER Flavin Architects
 LOCATION Wellesley, Massachusetts





Ed's study (left) is the only enclosed room on the upper levels. In the evening, the slats reveal a glow from within (below), giving the project its name,

Lantern Studio. The screen stops short of the frame's end (bottom). "We wanted to peel it back, so you could see the steel beneath," says Flavin.



Landscape architect H. Keith Wagner nestled the building into the site, which required substantial regrading, and helped devise the circulation scheme. Granite stairs run behind the front boulder, going from the driveway to a wide granite terrace at the back of the house. Low wood steps tucked behind a Cor-Ten steel planter lead to the new building's second level, and a third, industrial-style staircase at the back ascends to the roof deck. "It's utilitarian, like a fire stair, but also playful, like a climbing structure," Flavin says. "There's a 'Look, Ma, no hands' thing happening."

One of Kathy's favorite features is that the screen's transparency changes depending on your angle of approach. Flavin admits he can't take credit for the effect. "That's just what happens with slats," he says. "It's fun and serendipitous."

The architect also notes that the screens don't stretch across the entire front or back of the building. Instead, he "peeled" them back to reveal the structure's bones. "People say it looks like it may not be finished, and they wonder how we might continue with what we've done," he says. "To bring forth that element of imagination is wonderful." ■

PHOTOS: PETER VANDERWARKER (TOP AND RIGHT); NAT REA (BOTTOM)