

Boston home

Outside Interest

SUBLIME SUMMER LIVING



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VOLUME 25, NUMBER 3 — SUMMER 2025



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ON THE COVER Photograph by Jane Beiles. **THIS PAGE** Photograph by Nat Rea.

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The southern façade of the house admits an abundance of light, even in the wintertime. Long horizontal lines counterpoint the undulating terrain.

Site Specific

A SECLUDED 4-ACRE
WOODED LOT PROVES TO
BE THE IDEAL FIT FOR A NEW,
CONTEMPORARY-INSPIRED
FAMILY HOME.

BY KYLE HOEPNER / PHOTOGRAPHS BY NAT REA

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The front entry occupies a niche “carved out” of the home’s exterior. Roofs at different heights complicate and enliven the transition from “out” to “in.”

OPPOSITE

Landscape architect Michael D’Angelo devised the angled front walk with its two slightly offset segments. Bedrooms for the family’s children are located on the second floor.



WHEN MATT HODGSON AND HIS WIFE, KORTNEY, DECIDED THAT IT WAS time to depart their two-bedroom South Boston condo and relocate their growing family to larger quarters in the suburbs, they didn’t at first come up with any promising options. “The home prices were just insane,” Hodgson recalls—their search began while the COVID-19 pandemic was still in full swing—and “we just did not love anything we were seeing.” After touring a succession of unsuitable dwellings, the pair decided to switch gears and shop for land instead. Their luck improved dramatically when they came across a beautifully wooded 4-acre lot in Concord, located on a quiet cul-de-sac, which also

included a portion of a private pond. “We were wondering, ‘What’s wrong with it?’” Hodgson says. “‘There’s *got* to be something wrong.’”

And yet, happily, there wasn’t anything wrong. So the acquisition was made, and the couple began planning their build on the site. Following some preliminary work with an architect who proved not to be the right fit, they connected with Colin Flavin, the founding principal of Boston’s Flavin Architects, whose designs they had seen online and whose clean, contemporary style matched their preferences perfectly.

Determining how the house would sit most lightly on the land



LEFT

Glass railings on the main stair do nothing to detract from the openness of the house, while the span of a steel beam above provides an understated division between functional areas.

The upstairs hallway is anything but a dull circulation corridor, with its complex wall surfaces and windows of varied shapes and sizes on almost every side.

ABOVE

The kitchen, designed in collaboration with SieMatic, sits behind a slatted partition, with tall cabinets that seem to fade into the room's architectural envelope.



was important to both clients and architect. “We wanted to keep as many of the trees as possible,” Hodgson notes. He hired a surveyor to document the locations of some three hundred trees on the property, and the positions of the home and its driveway were laid out based on that map to cause minimal disturbance.

The completed structure is a long horizontal bar that spans a shallow ravine, standing atop a partially buried concrete plinth. Its south-facing side looks out over a gentle slope down toward the pond, which is intermittently visible through a screen of foliage. Part of the slope was cleared to make room for a natural meadow where wildflowers bloom in the warmer months. Black paint covers most of the home's exterior, while patches of a warm sepia color mark the areas where a sheltered front entry and a cantilevered rear porch almost appear to have been excavated from the mass of the building. “Many of our homes have generous overhangs,” says Flavin, who collaborated on

the design with senior designer Ben Thompson, “that tie back to Frank Lloyd Wright or maybe [Richard] Neutra. Here, we wanted to be a bit more measured with our elevation, so we thought about this more as a block that we would carve into.”

A complex rhythmic interplay of vertical and horizontal striations also enlivens the home's façade; broad lateral bands extend across the top of each story, almost like the entablature on a classical temple, occasionally overshooting a corner to enclose empty space. It's as if the edges of the house are beginning to dissolve, blurring the line between the surrounding environment and what's going on inside.

Indoors, the main public volume is broad and open yet subtly divided into more intimate sections for living, dining, and cooking, with a media lounge and wet bar placed to one side. Tall, slatted partitions sequester the front door and staircase from the rest of the floor so that, rather than having everything



immediately visible, there is a journey of discovery as you round a corner to fully experience the next space. A concrete-faced open fireplace mediates between the dining and living areas. The media lounge is set off by a change in scale, where a high, sloped shed roof (designed to accommodate solar panels) meets a lower, flat one. A row of north-facing clerestory windows at the join provides additional illumination to balance the flood of light that enters through broad expanses of glass on the southern side.

The interior architectural envelope is a crisp white—"the opposite of the exterior," Flavin says—although some touches of gray and black do appear here and there, along with muted orange and caramel hues that harmonize with the wide-board white-oak floors. Furniture choices were made by the clients, with Hodgson being especially involved in the selection and installation of the home's lighting and electronics.

"Everything is also rightsized," Hodgson observes. None of the rooms are unnecessarily large. "It's easy to go big these days," he continues, "but we chose quality over quantity, and I think that was 100 percent the right choice." For Flavin, the crux of the design was "trying to find that fine point between a total connection to the outside and a sense of comfort and enclosure for the house." The resulting residence is bold but far from overpowering, existing as a pure, calm, quiet presence within its hidden clearing.

ABOVE

The couple's serene bedroom floats about 5 feet above grade—lifted up enough to have a sense of separation and security yet still be closely tied to the landscape.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Exterior walls in the main space have solid plaster at both base and top, helping very large windows nevertheless feel contained. Dense woods outside strengthen the impression of privacy.



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