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CHICAGO

perspective house of the month

TOSHIKO MORI DESIGNS A MODERNIST HOUSE IN PICTURESQUE CAMDEN, MAINE, THAT IS EMBEDDED IN THE EARTH BUT OPENS OUT TO THE VIEW.
BY SUZANNE STEPHENS



The team designed a house so that the living-dining area and the master bedroom overlook the water (left). A lap pool in the zigzag plan connects the main house to the guest quarters at the top of the slope (bottom, left). The architect's choice of Scandinavian-modern furnishings (below) appealed to both the original and new owners.



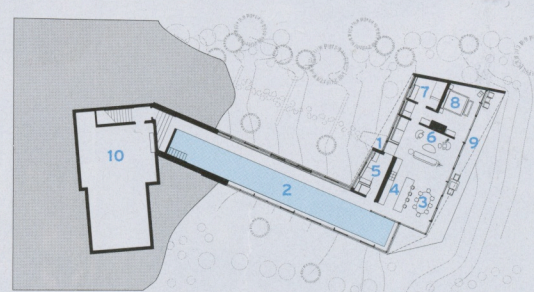
THE CLIENT wanted a low-key, modern two-bedroom house with an indoor lap pool. True, his surname makes you think he might veer toward something grander and more traditional, but O. Stillman Rockefeller has an experimental streak and so spurned “the tyranny of the Shingle Style” prevalent in coastal Maine. His site of less than an acre, however, presented a challenge: a narrow, sloping parcel in Camden, overlooking West Penobscot Bay. But Rockefeller found New York-based architect Toshiko Mori to solve the problem. “We had to provide maximum views of the water without the owner being able to see neighboring houses,” she says. “It had to be strictly framed.”

Bringing in Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates to compose the landscaping artfully, the client and architect decided to place the guest quarters and garage at the top of the hill, on the foundations of a former house. Mori came up with a Z-shaped

plan that descends the slope so that the main house is at the lower end. An enclosed 82-foot-long lap pool links the two volumes of the 5,400-square-foot complex.

Mori, who had worked for Edward Larrabee Barnes, particularly admired that architect’s strategy for the Haystack Mountain School in Deer Isle, Maine (1962), where a cluster of wood pavilions spills down a forested hillside to Jericho Bay. “Ed broke up the program into a series of volumes connected by a deck,” notes Mori. “Here, the pool is the connector.”

Her zigzag steel-and-wood frame building, with a sedum roof, is clad in white Atlantic cedar, alternating with large expanses of low-E glass. An overhang shades the living-dining area and the master bedroom on the east, and the house employs geothermal heat pumps and other features to lower energy use. But despite Rockefeller’s love for the house, he had a big problem



POOL LEVEL PLAN

0 20 FT.
6 M.

- | | | |
|------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1 ENTRANCE | 5 POOL BATH | 9 MAIN DECK |
| 2 POOL | 6 LIVING | 10 GARAGE/
GUEST |
| 3 DINING | 7 MASTER BATH | |
| 4 KITCHEN | 8 MASTER
BEDROOM | |

with the outdoor lighting from a neighbor’s cottage and nearby lighthouse and so sold his only 1-year-old home last year. Still, he says, “I’m so proud of building this house. It’s Toshiko’s signature work.” ■