



Hilltop Cottage  
Mackay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects

# Shingled Out: Contemporary Cottages

BY SUZANNE STEPHENS

**THE SHINGLE STYLE** keeps coming back. Or maybe it never went away. In 1955, Vincent Scully vigorously investigated this late 19th-century manifestation—with its picturesque vernacular architecture of casually assembled masses clad in cedar shingles. His book *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style* paid homage to those such as Henry Hobson Richardson, Stanford White, and Frank Lloyd Wright, who explored the textures of the wood shingle, as well as others who experimented with the verticality and flatness of board-and-batten construction (aka the Stick Style).

Later, in 1974, with *The Shingle Style Today: or, The Historian's Revenge*, Scully examined the way modern architects, such as the young Robert Venturi and even younger Charles Gwathmey, reinterpreted this design approach in the 1960s and '70s. Their version of the original Shingle Style still made abundant use of the cladding, stressed horizontality, and thoughtfully considered the relationship to the landscape, but added layered planes, diagonal elements, and truncated geometries to the mix.

Today, the Shingle Style—and to a degree the Stick Style—tenaciously persists. Several

contemporary architects continue to mine the style, adapting it for 21st-century living—as reflected in the houses shown here that span to both coasts of North America. In these examples, the walls and roofs are not shaggy but wrapped in such a way that stresses simplicity. Each also features a play on the hipped roof and minimal or nonexistent eaves that emphasize purity of form. Inside, the lavish use of wood planks or framing members, assiduous craftsmanship, the dependence on the square plan, and precise proportions unite them even more as sisters under the skin. ■

Dune House  
Waechter Architecture



Mohegan Trail  
Bates Masi + Architects







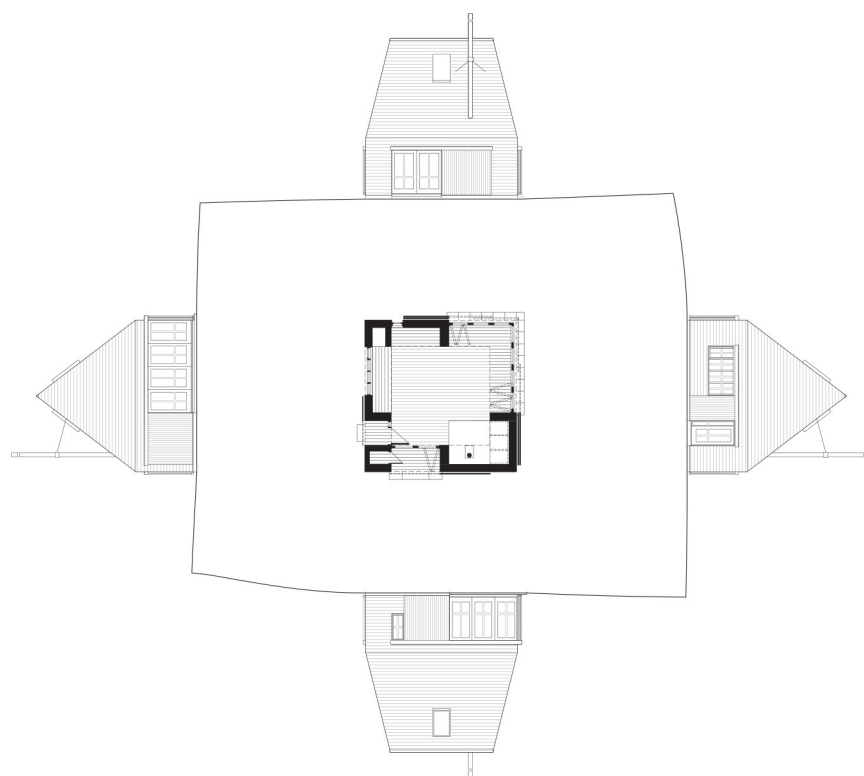
## Hilltop Cottage

New Brunswick  
MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects

**THIS STEEPLY** hip-roofed pavilion proudly sits on a gentle mound in New Brunswick, overlooking the Saint John River. It is one of several structures that the Halifax, Nova Scotia, firm of MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects (MLSA) built for a client who commissioned this cottage to celebrate his 90th birthday on the spot where he had been betrothed many years before.

As MLSA partner Brian MacKay-Lyons explains, the design's inspiration came from two sources: one is the shieling, typically a stone-walled, hip-roofed rectangular hut found in rural areas of Scotland; the other one is the house that architect Charles Moore designed for himself in Orinda, California, in 1962. MacKay-Lyons, who worked for Moore in his Los Angeles office, had always admired the Orinda house's roof, capped by a rectangular monitor that encloses two skylights. Accordingly, the architects inserted two intricately detailed skylights in the New Brunswick pavilion to illuminate its volumetric one-story interior. The walls and roof, tautly clad with eastern white cedar shingles, are combined with vertical cedar strips that form sliding barn-style doors. In addition, MLSA omitted the eaves, which the firm considers its most emblematic detail. It adds to house's "monolithic monumentality," says MacKay-Lyons.

PHOTOGRAPHY: © MATTHEW MACKAY-LYONS



GROUND-FLOOR PLAN AND ELEVATIONS

0 15 FT.  
5 M.



Inside, 4-foot-thick pochéd walls enclose a hearth, storage, a kitchen, and a sleeping alcove. The 28-foot-square plan is open to the northeast corner, where oak and glass doors fold back under a deep overhang to allow its occupants to view the landscape "like a panopticon," says principal Talbot Sweetapple. The roof's wood trusses were fabricated off-site from local spruce and bolstered by a ring-beam system to keep all intact, so that no steel is needed for the corner cantilever. The interior's shiplap walls and ceiling comprise 4-inch-wide eastern white cedar boards with ½-inch joints and, combined with floor planks made of reclaimed pine, attest to the modesty of the house's materials.

As a serious gesture to sustainability, the house is off-the-grid. No bathroom—only an outhouse—no running water, no electricity. If the owners want to cook, they make use of a small propane stove, and, for illumination, they light propane lamps. The rusticity of the construction exudes a strong sense of intimacy and coziness, further emphasized by furnishings and upholstery, which appear as if they had always been there.



Daylight enters through the open and closed northeast corner (this image, opposite, and above, right). Two skylights are carved into cedar boards (above, left).





## Dune House

Manzanita, Oregon  
Waechter Architecture

**THE SITE** was tight (only about 5,000 square feet) and the new 1,800-square-foot cottage would sit cheek-by-jowl with a row of houses facing the Pacific Ocean. In designing this one-story residence, Benjamin Waechter, principal of the firm he founded in 2007, looked closely at local materials and building traditions, as well as the setting of sand and seagrass. The resulting structure, with its gently sloped, almost-pyramidal roof, is completely clad in eastern white cedar shingles, including both the roof and rainscreen walls, which Waechter detailed with minimal eaves.

In order to enhance the view of the ocean and preserve privacy by blocking unnecessary glimpses of the neighbors next door, Waechter enclosed a rectilinear space in each corner of a square plan. These well-proportioned components contain an office and two bedrooms, plus a pantry and sauna, all pinwheeling around a central space. This is where the architect located the dining hall, under a vaulted ceiling that is topped with a light monitor; a sitting area adjoins it on the western perimeter, facing the ocean, and the kitchen opens to the east, overlooking a garden. “From the center of the house, you have the big view toward the ocean versus the framed view to the garden,” says Waechter. A subtly indirect choreography of moving around the interior spaces, he notes, begins at the entrance, and continues to an opening on the back.

The interior walls, ceiling, and floors are sheathed in white oak planks that create a crisply detailed yet warm enclave. Because of the temperate climate on the north coast of Oregon, the house can depend on passive ventilation for cooling: the light shaft that rises off-center in the dining room ceiling sucks the hot air out. In the cooler months, radiant-floor heating warms the living spaces.

The slightly ascending hipped roof confers a certain modesty of scale, yet the rippling effect of the cedar shingles on the exterior and the crispness of the wood paneling and flooring inside give the cottage an unexpected, striking presence.

PHOTOGRAPHY: © PABLO ENRIQUEZ



Windows are strategically placed to block views of the neighbors (above). Inside, a sitting area faces the seagrass and ocean (opposite, top), as does a bedroom (right). The kitchen has a framed view of the garden (opposite, bottom).



GROUND-FLOOR PLAN

0 10 FT.  
3 M.







## Mohegan Trail

Block Island, Rhode Island  
Bates Masi + Architects

Because Paul Masi, a partner at Bates Masi + Architects, has a strong affinity for the East End of Long Island, he wanted a second home for him and his family to be in the same general area as their year-round house in Amagansett, New York. So, he built a cottage on Block Island, an area that is arguably remote, since it is only accessible by passenger or car ferry.

The reason the Masis escape: to get away from the summer traffic of those searching for the high life in “the Hamptons.” Block Island instead offers tranquility and little traffic, just over 14 miles away. On its southern coast, the architect found a narrow two-acre parcel of land along the Mohegan Trail, which spills down the rugged bluffs to the beach. Masi eventually replaced a small house on the property with the larger 45-foot-square cottage. The zoning allowed construction of two stories—a main floor with a bedroom, plus a top story with three bedrooms—and a mostly below-grade level for a lounge and bunkroom. The hard part was actually constructing the house, since both materials and labor had to be transported by passenger ferry.

Masi’s scheme for his 2,400-square-foot saltbox cottage also included a freestanding

The main house and garage, clad in cedar shingles and vertical boards, are located off the Mohegan Trail (opposite, top). The living area and its deck (opposite, bottom) face south to the bluffs and the Atlantic Ocean. Inside the house, Douglas fir framing members create a strong linear pattern in the dining and living areas, offset by clay tiles for the floor (right and below, right). An oak column and spiraling treads create a sculptural stair (below).



PHOTOGRAPHY: © BATES MASI + ARCHITECTS





## IN FOCUS

Copper appears as a lustrous, unpatinated interior finish for the headboards of two beds on the upper level.

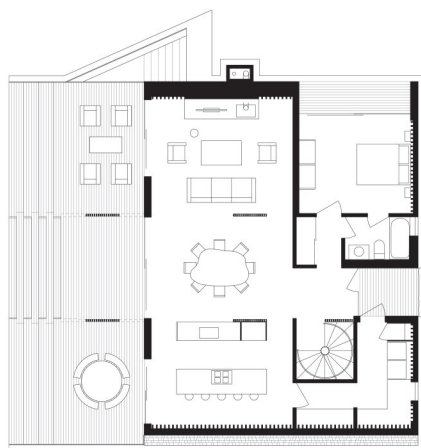
garage. Both structures have shed roofs carefully wrapped in cedar shingles, and vertical walls of tongue-and-groove boards. The house's frame, built of two-by-fours, two-by-sixes, and two-by-eights, could be assembled by hand and meant that heavy components such as trusses or steel members would not be needed. However, because of high winds, the architect butted the stud walls together, then through-bolted them with threaded steel rods anchored to concrete foundations to create four shear walls.

In addition to cedar shingles and boards, Masi relied on minimal eaves, and ran a flat copper trim around the base of the wall and the edges of the windows. The flinty patinated copper also wraps around the narrow chimney shaft outside, in addition to surfacing exterior walls tucked under the main deck's overhang and the alcove of a bedroom porch nearby.

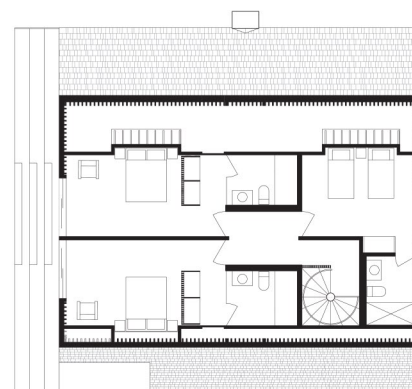
The dynamic linearity of the interior's dimensional framing members is offset by screen walls of tongue-and-groove boards, all constructed with Douglas fir. In addition, clay found on the site was baked into unglazed tiles, in the dimensions of Roman brick, for the ground-level floor.

The tour de force, however, is a sculptural spiral stair where oak disks form a column supporting open treads rotating around it. The stair, in turn, receives soft illumination through a rectilinear glazed notch carved into the roof.

In its entirety, Masi has created a natural yet sophisticated retreat from the increasingly popular tip of nearby Long Island. He and his family need not worry about traffic following them to this sanctuary, at least for now. ■



GROUND-FLOOR PLAN



UPPER-FLOOR PLAN

