



EAST COAST HOME+DESIGN

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ADVENTURES IN ARCHITECTURE

**Our Areas Finest Architects share with us
how their travels influence their design**





For an architect, one of the benefits—or perhaps challenges—of travel is finding ways to meaningfully incorporate what you’ve observed and learned while travelling into your work. I’ve never been as concerned about the style of a house as I’ve been about how it addresses its location and local traditions. But how do you translate ideas acquired while travelling appropriately into buildings designed for a totally different location—like Connecticut?

For this house in Washington Depot, CT, I did just that to create a simple, modest (in cost, scale and pretentiousness) and sophisticated house for a family seeking to escape the pace of Fairfield County and enjoy their land, animals and new life. For this project (and other current jobs such as a new ski house in Vermont), I actually camped out on the property for a weekend to experience it fully! The experience taught me where the sun rises and sets, and provided insight about the best light, the least noise, the best breezes and the prettiest views on the property. It also helped me understand how to create a (secretly) fairly contemporary design in a way that fits in well with its surroundings, both built and natural. The “travel” in this case was not too far, but critical to a

successful project.

As someone who has been fortunate to have lived my entire life in Fairfield County (practically in the same zip code!), I truly appreciate the need to get away from my immediate surroundings and see how the rest of the world looks and lives. To me, every work of architecture needs to be “grounded” in its context—the specifics of the site, neighboring buildings, regional architecture (even in Connecticut), the spirit of the community at large—so much so that the project seems “right” exactly where it is and nowhere else. I also believe that the simplicity of Early American architecture—barns, outbuildings, houses—isn’t a bad place to start in Connecticut, although few would describe most of my work as traditional.

In retrospect, I wonder, how else can you design the perfect home for a site in an unfamiliar place without spending a night or two there? Maybe it’s a little strange, but it seems to be a good way to approach designing a new home. I admit that sometimes it can be a little scary to do so...and that’s why I keep my sketchpad close and my bear spray closer!