

A large, modern rustic house at dusk. The house features a dark shingled roof, a stone foundation, and large glass windows and doors that are illuminated from within, showing interior furniture. A swimming pool is visible in the foreground, reflecting the lights from the house. The background shows dark trees and a twilight sky.

Rustic Heritage

Halper Owens Architects LLC looks to New England's vernacular roots for architectural inspiration

TEXT BY DAVID HUDNALL
PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MORAN



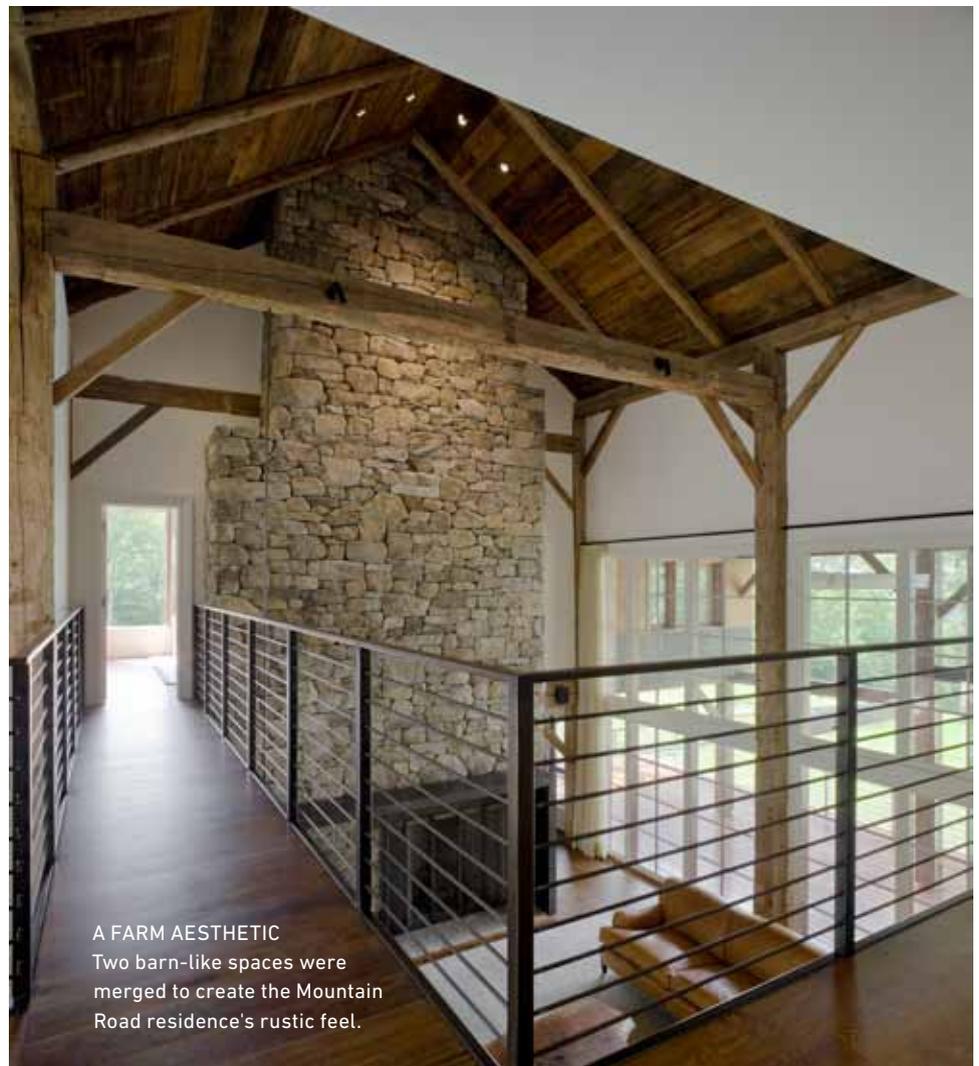


JON HALPER AND REESE OWENS MET IN the early 1980s in New York City. Young architects, they shared an office in one of the recital studios in Carnegie Hall. “We were surrounded by musicians, artists, architects, models,” Owens says. “It was an extraordinary environment.” Though they operated separate practices, they often found themselves helping one another. In 1987, they decided to formalize the partnership into Halper Owens Architects LLC, and they began designing small apartments and offices together.

Bolstered by a booming economy, they moved their operation to a loft in SoHo and took on increasingly prominent projects: a corporate headquarters in New Jersey, a New York town hall, a California retail store. In 1990, the economy collapsed while Halper Owens was working on a luxury resort for an entire island in the Bahamas. “It was an opportune time to flee New York,” Owens says.

Owens moved to Litchfield County, Connecticut, where he had grown up; Halper settled an hour away in Greenwich, Connecticut. But they resolved to keep Halper Owens intact—and it still is. “Naturally, we worked more independently after the move, but we continue to collaborate and rely on each other for guidance,” Halper says. “And there are clear advantages to the arrangement—we can share our resources and our staff of six architects, and we can better average the inevitable peaks and valleys of small-office workloads.”

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A FARM AESTHETIC
Two barn-like spaces were merged to create the Mountain Road residence's rustic feel.

“[Rustic houses] allow for a lot of flamboyance, but they’re also deceptively labor-intensive to design and build despite their vernacular roots.”

REESE OWENS, PARTNER

WIDE-OPEN SPACES

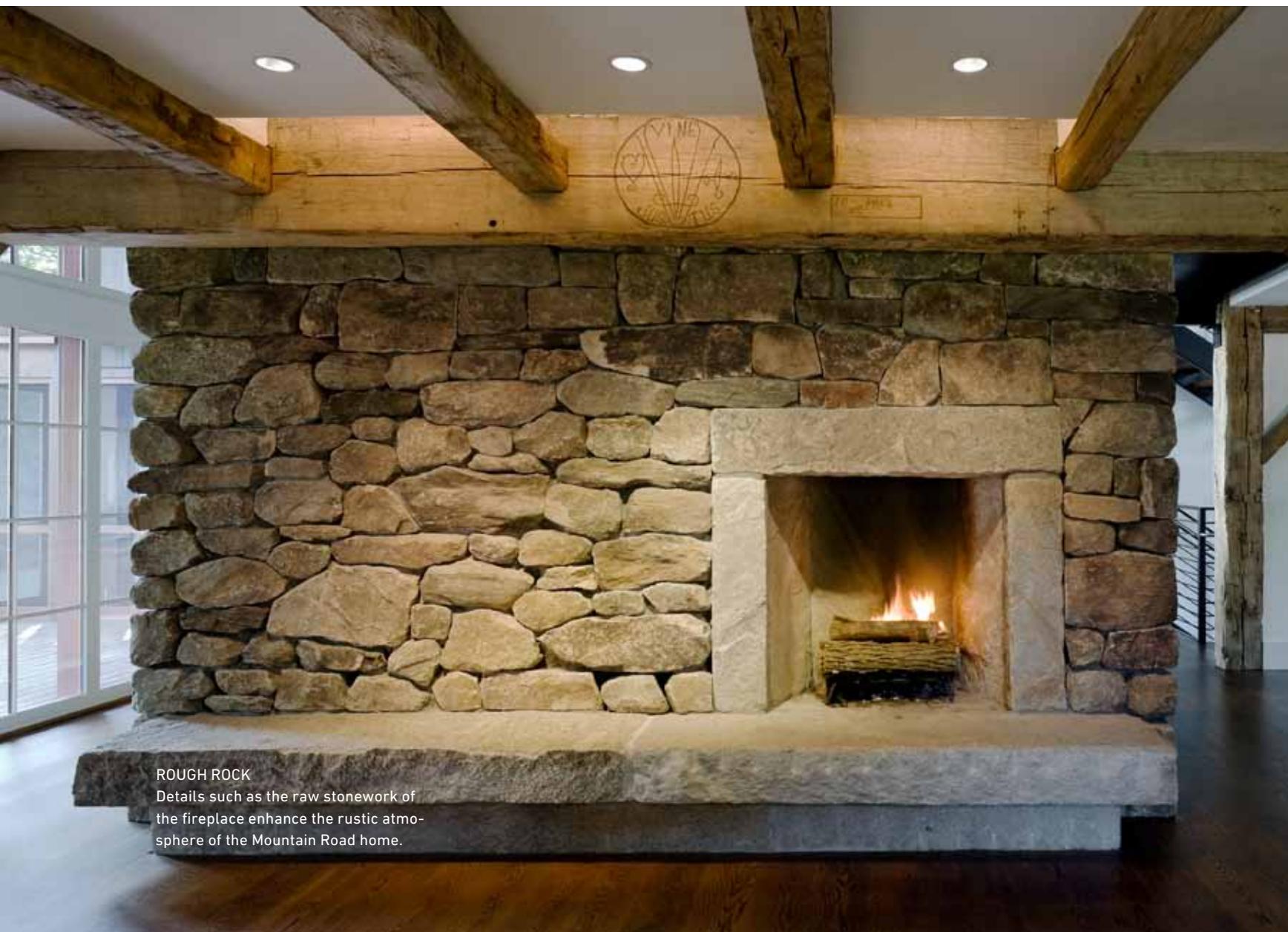
The grand central court of the Mountain Road residence connects the spaces of the home’s interior in a free-flowing fashion.



AVOIDING CONSTRICTION
Because it is a family home, designing a flowing interior was key. Here, the bedroom blends with an office space.

PRAISE-WORTHY

The four-bedroom Mountain Road residence near Kent, CT, earned a 2009 AIA New England Design Award.



ROUGH ROCK

Details such as the raw stonework of the fireplace enhance the rustic atmosphere of the Mountain Road home.



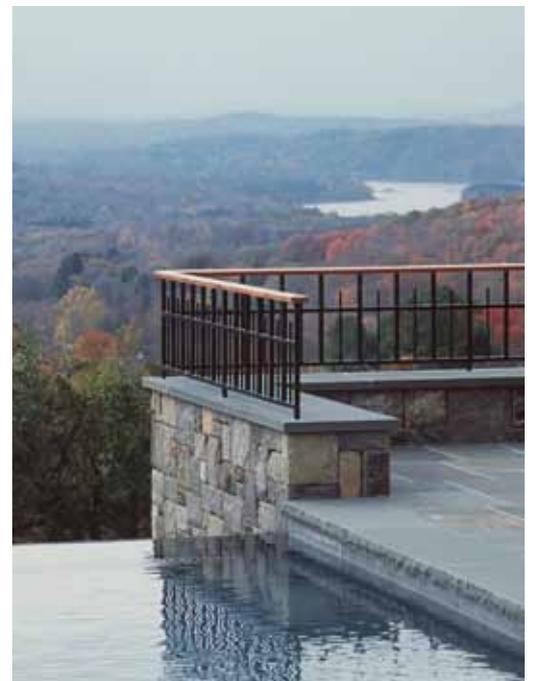
OLD WOOD MADE NEW

Aged timbers working as support posts and ceiling beams maintain the historical charm in the Mountain Road residence's otherwise modern kitchen. The thick segments of wood used throughout the home are not artificially aged; they once held up real haylofts.



A MESSAGE FROM HOLLANDER ASSOCIATES

Edmund Hollander Landscape Architects specializes in translating their clients' dreams into beautiful, dramatic landscapes. These landscapes are designed with the underlying principle of creating a design tailored to the client's lifestyle while balancing with the surrounding natural environment. Working closely with designers such as Halper Owens Architects, Edmund Hollander translates the details and themes of the built structures into every element within the garden—creating a landscape which seamlessly blends the structures to the gardens and, finally, the gardens to nature.

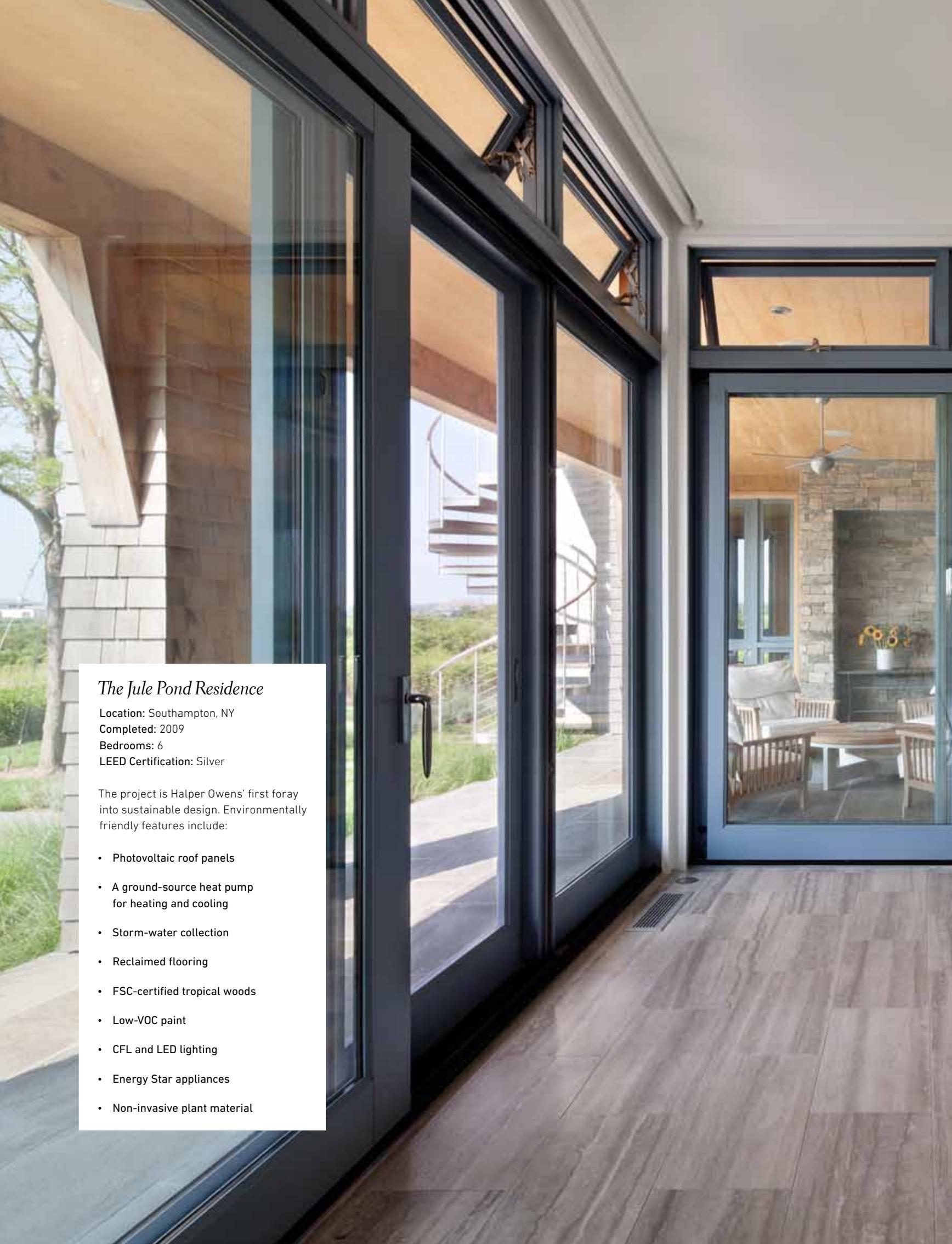


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The Jule Pond Residence

Location: Southampton, NY

Completed: 2009

Bedrooms: 6

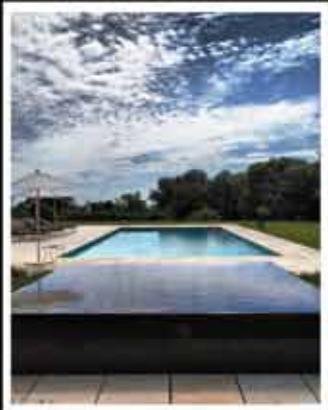
LEED Certification: Silver

The project is Halper Owens' first foray into sustainable design. Environmentally friendly features include:

- Photovoltaic roof panels
- A ground-source heat pump for heating and cooling
- Storm-water collection
- Reclaimed flooring
- FSC-certified tropical woods
- Low-VOC paint
- CFL and LED lighting
- Energy Star appliances
- Non-invasive plant material



"We build gorgeous"



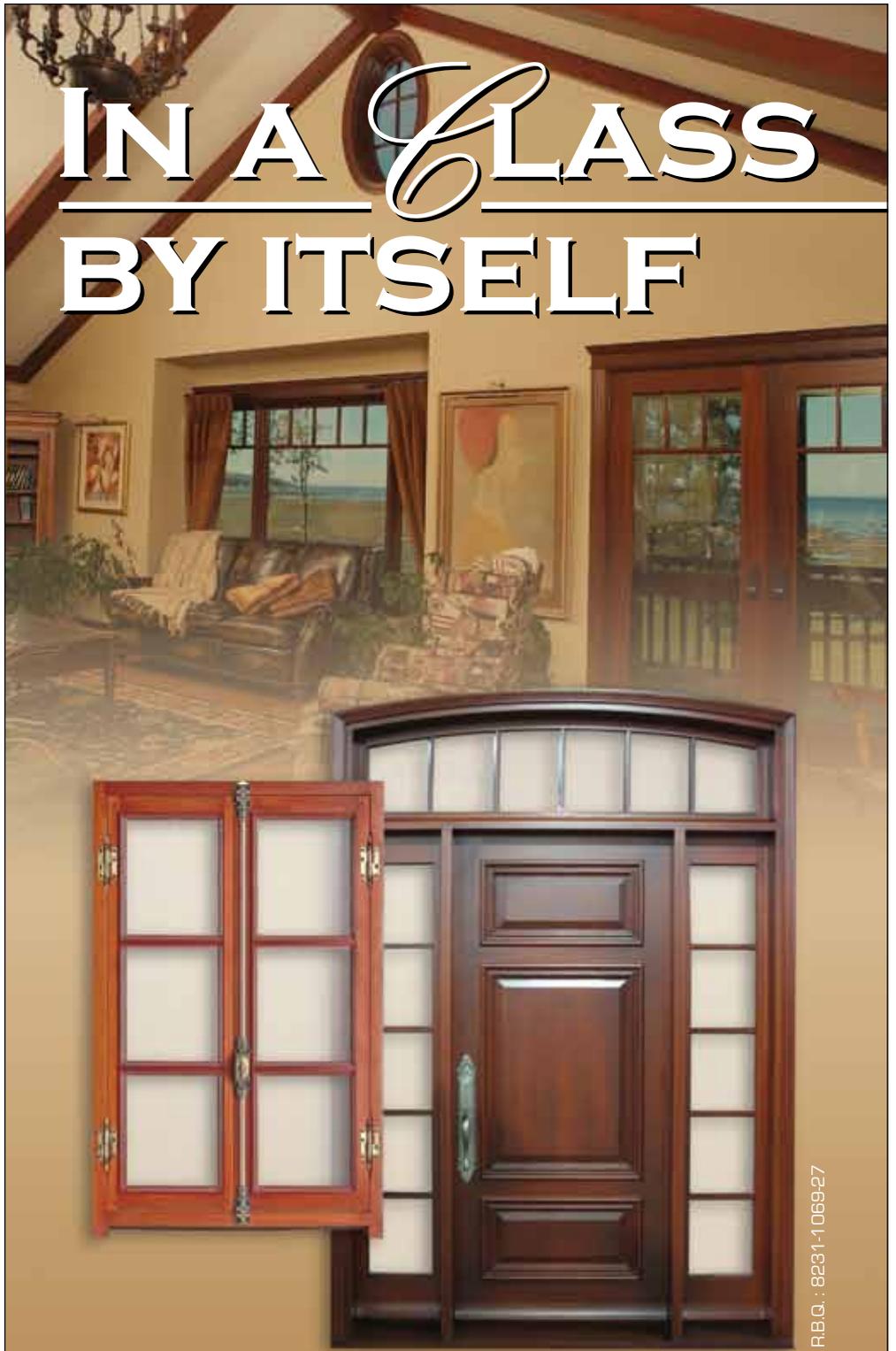
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SUN AND SAND

Located in a neighborhood association with private access to the Atlantic Ocean, the Jule Pond residence, completed in 2009, is a full-time summer house for an active family. "It was organized to take advantage of sun and views and to provide access to multiple outdoor living spaces from all the primary living rooms," Halper says. Nearly the entire south façade of the main floor features large glass sliding doors and operable transoms, allowing the outdoor living spaces to flow inside.



A MESSAGE FROM BELISLE ANCESTRAL DOORS AND WINDOWS

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Though the firm primarily focuses on projects in the New England region, it has worked in ten states, preparing contextual designs that incorporate the nuances of various sites' climates and terrains. "We don't autograph our projects or recycle a house design for multiple clients," Halper says. "The common denominator is less about the project and more about the type of client who perceives that good design is necessary and adds value."

New England's strong architectural heritage provides exciting fodder for Halper Owens' designs. Lately, the firm has embraced a number of rustic projects—lodge-like homes made of logs, bark siding, boulders, and even twigs. "It allows for a lot of flamboyance, but those houses are deceptively labor-intensive to design and build despite their vernacular roots," Owens says.

At the Mountain Road residence—a remotely located, four-bedroom weekend home in Kent, Connecticut, for which Halper Owens received both a Connecticut AIA design award and a New England AIA design award—the design called for the use of a timber frame from an early 19th-century Dutch cow barn. Two barn-like volumes were arranged around a loose court, establishing a comple-



“We don’t autograph our projects or recycle a house design for multiple clients.”

JON HALPER, PARTNER

mentary environmental relationship with the rustic landscape and the barn frame. It’s a family home, so keeping the interior plans interconnected was a priority: a large room (known as the Great Room) is situated in the center, surrounded by beams that once supported haylofts. The living spaces that surround this center room fall within the antique frame—even the outdoor spaces and attic loft. “The barn’s simple stylistic aspirations result in a plain but textured interior of timbers, plaster, oak floors, blued steel, and glass,” Owens says. “It’s richer than a simple shelter.”

Its commitment to concepts like the Mountain Road home extends beyond luxury homes; Halper Owens has designed for Ralph Lauren retail stores, the Westport Rowing Club, and the Mayflower Inn & Spa over the years as well. But Halper notes that the approach with commercial projects is harmonious and complementary in its relation to residential work. “Those projects all have domestic qualities that are critical to their commercial success,” he says.

“We enjoy all scales of projects,” Owens says. “This is, after all, a service business. If a client values our participation, we participate. Architects joke about this, but we have actually had a commission for a dog house.” ■

A MESSAGE FROM EAST COAST BARN BUILDERS

East Coast Barn Builders/Ed Cady & Sons Builders is a nationally recognized building firm specializing in high-end custom homes of prominence. Our projects many times feature antique barn and house frames of Dutch and English origin. We are the largest preserver and mover of vintage post & beam frames in the country.

ECBB/ECSB’s role in the project was to supply and reconstruct an antique Dutch barn frame we located and preserved and to perform all the necessary steps to make the house weather-tight. It was a pleasure working with the Halper Owens team and Daniel, the project manager. Their attention to detail is unparalleled.

A MESSAGE FROM PERKINS & CADY

Perkins & Cady: millwork and hardware of distinct quality featuring LePage windows and doors. We craft a modern tradition and offer a unique collection inspired by classic designs.

A MESSAGE FROM DAVIS RAINES DESIGN

Davis Raines Design, a boutique interior design firm. We work closely with clients to create stylish and livable interiors and the details that make their house a home. Our design complements the outstanding architecture and craftsmanship of Halper Owens and East Coast Barn Builders.

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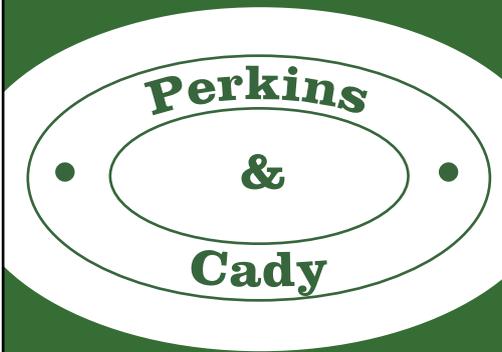
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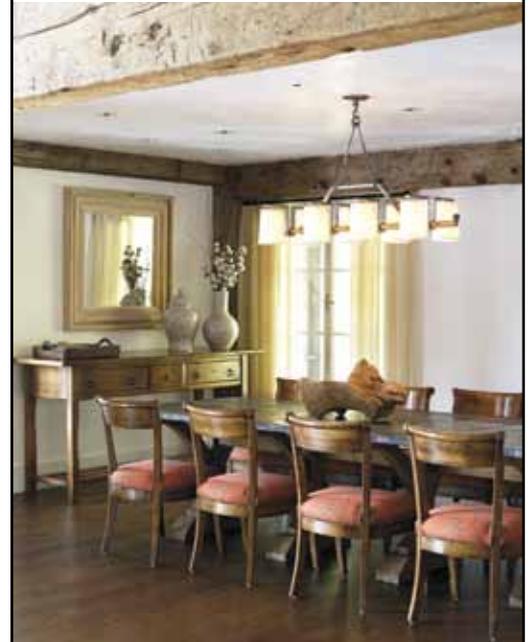
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