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A Community of Forms [Adding Up and Multiplying Initiatives]

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A Community of Forms

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This is a large house with a courtyard that fits comfortably into a place that doesn't welcome such things. It is the largest house on the New England island where it is located, and we had to keep it under a strict height limit while at the same time making it livable.

Thus we broke the house into a number of pavilions, which we arranged in two long strands, forming an entry courtyard that welcomes cars gracefully and allows the four children to ride their bicycles safely. At the same time, the house fits into the landscape, nestling like cottages in the low scrub oak forest.

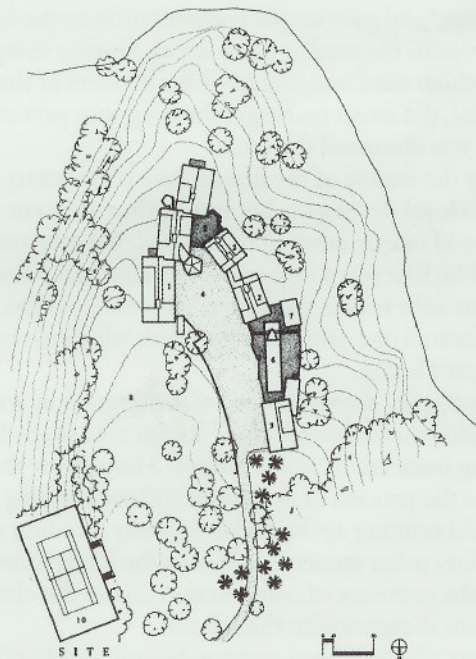
The house is located on a thumb-like peninsula that points southward towards a wonderful pond, with beach dunes and the ocean beyond. The owners wanted to keep the house as close to the tip of the peninsula as possible, paralleling its shoreline to maximize views south down the long pond and the sea, east to a marsh and forest beyond, and west across the pond to horse fields. In this way, the peninsula shaped the form of the complex. The courtyard creates a long, protective center that shelters visitors from northwest winter winds and wicked Nor'easter storms. The buildings ramble around this core with curved roofs that hang low, like those of a provincial farm house. The front door is located under a central tower that announces its importance.

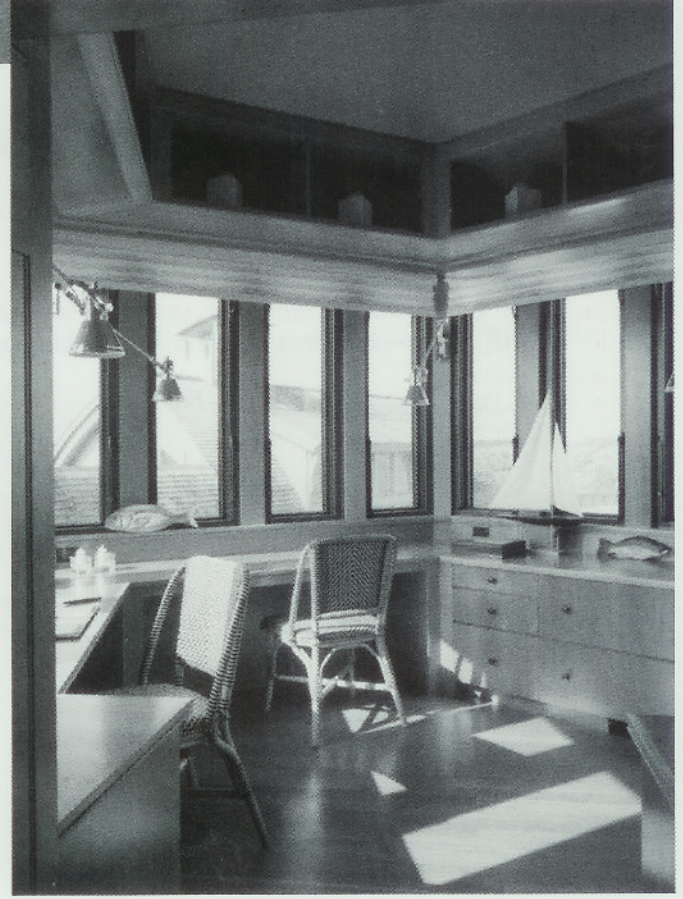
Inside, the house is a linear array of spaces that are jumbled like toys in a box. Passing through, one reorients oneself to each new space as well as to the outside. This enhances the sense of movement through the house and stimulates more awareness of the transitions from space to space. Nonetheless, each space is a recognizable, figurative shape that provides a chance for the occupant to center oneself within it.

The wide, main door under the tower opens into an oval, two-story entry hall with a staircase meandering around its side. This space leads to two long halls, one of which is nicknamed the Shaker Hall, the other which is a gallery with grand art in it. The Shaker Hall has closet doors lining both sides, providing access to all the storage the house will ever need. The gallery leads to other figural spaces: a little library, a simple rectangular dining room and, beyond that, the large, two-story living room and its oversized fireplace.

The roofs of the pavilions had stay low to conform to the local building code. But they all have a kind of gusty feeling to them, as if they are being blown by the wind. They recognize where they are, on an island. The tops of the chimney caps, and even the pool pavilion, trellis and roof over the back door feel as if they are being lifted aloft. The window in the living room that looks out to the ocean

is seemingly wind-borne. There is a breezy feeling upstairs as well, with the shapes of the roofs and dormers exposed. Thus the inside and outside are related, our dwellings and outgoings are allied in making a resonant place, and that pleases us.





Pond House

Opposite page: Site plan with landscape. Courtesy Centerbrook.

Above: Entry courtyard (top), second floor study (right) and play hall (left).

Photographs by Jeff Goldberg, ESTO.