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Architecture by Maryann Thompson, AIA
Interior Design by Thad Hayes
Landscape Architecture by Douglas Reed, FASLA
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A MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE
NESTLES INTO THE LAND

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When they were there in the mid-'70s, Louisiana State University was known as a party school. But Doug Reed and Thad Hayes, who were studying landscape architecture, did not do much partying. Friends and roommates, they worked constantly. When they sat down for serious discussions, as all college students do at one time or another, they did not ask about the meaning of life. They asked instead about the meaning of design. "It was very philosophical," says Hayes, "and we got deep and heavy into our projects."

After college, both found success in the North, Hayes as an interior designer in New York, Reed as a landscape architect in Boston. But even as they were "madly pursuing" their careers, as Reed phrases it, they remained close friends with a common aesthetic: a commitment to sparseness and spatial clarity. So when Reed and his partner, Will Makris, an M.B.A.-admissions consultant, decided to build a weekend house an hour south of Boston, it was only natural

ABOVE: "It's meant to feel ephemeral and diaphanous, as if it were lightly inserted into the meadow," architect Maryann Thompson says of the weekend house she designed for Doug Reed and Will Makris on 42 acres in rural Massachusetts. RIGHT: In the living area, as throughout, designer Thad Hayes chose simple, monochromatic furnishings that didn't compete with the views. The pair of T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings lamps are from Karl Kemp.



"Every decision was based on the landscape," says Hayes, who collaborated with Thompson, Makris and Reed, a landscape architect, from the outset. THESE PAGES: Window walls spanning the living and dining areas emphasize views of the meadow and the tidal river beyond. Milton Avery's *White Wave* rests on a console. The Japanese screen is circa 1850. Donghia sofa fabric.





“I know when a room has enough,” says interior designer Thad Hayes.



“The entire house is grays, beiges and browns,” notes Hayes (above), who was inspired by the hues of sycamore bark. **LEFT:** The galley kitchen, by Poggenpohl, is part of a hallway that runs through the residence. “There’s a spatial ambiguity that I love,” comments Thompson. “Cooking and living and eating come together in a very fluid way.”

that they chose Hayes to design the interiors. It was also only natural that they picked Maryann Thompson, an architect who had often worked with Reed, to design the house itself. Not only did she share the former roommates’ artistic vision, but, like them, she also has a master’s degree in landscape architecture. For all three, the land on which the house was to sit—42 acres on a tidal river—was not just part of the design equation. It was the equation, the beginning, the middle and the end.

“The pioneering landscape architect Jens Jensen said that we’re drawn to the scenery we knew as children,” says Reed, who saw in that corner of southeastern Massachusetts a piece of the Louisiana he had known as a boy: low-lying woods, meadows and wetlands and a river so unhurried that it almost speaks with a southern accent.

“Though I make my home in Massachusetts,” he says, “it has become more and more important to connect my early life in Louisiana to my life here.”

“It’s a magical piece of land,” says Thompson, and her challenge was to design a magical house. She began by asking Reed and Makris to answer 13 pages of questions. “Describe the general feeling you want in the house,” was her first request. “Open and airy,” was one of their responses. “Quiet and serene,” was another. With those 13 pages to guide her, Thompson drew up five different plans and presented the two partners with five different models. “Seeing the models was a wonderful way of expanding our minds about the possibilities,” says Reed. It also helped them determine exactly what they wanted, and the model they chose was the simplest, the quietest and the most serene.



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“The precision may make it look severe to some people,” says Hayes, “but the fabrics are tactile, and the house is made for comfort.” LEFT: Cedar paneling in the master bedroom, as elsewhere, reinforces the interior’s relationship to the outdoors. The painting, *Day and Night* by Monique Prieto, “reminds Doug of the river’s edge,” Hayes remarks. Drapery fabric from Donghia.

Thompson’s goal, to make the residence one with its surroundings, was so successful that, viewed from the river, the house is almost invisible. “Maryann started every meeting by saying, ‘This is all about the horizontal,’” recalls Makris, and “horizontal” became the mantra. “The meadow is like a prairie,” explains Thompson, “and I wanted to fit the house into it horizontally. We placed it parallel to the river, and there are layers, little bands, that reach from the house to the water. Even the grass—it’s four feet high in places—is in bands.”

“Open and airy,” Reed and Makris had stipulated on the questionnaire, and open and airy is what they got. Windows rise from floor to ceiling, and cedar cladding was placed on a wall inside rather than outside, as might be expected. The result is a deliberate ambiguity that fools the eye, making it uncertain where the outside ends and the inside begins. “I call it exteriorizing the interior,” says Thompson. “When you’re inside the house, you feel as if you’re in the meadow. It’s like being in a tent.”

Back in Louisiana, Hayes and Reed had fallen in love with a sycamore tree. “The sycamore is a messy tree, and a lot of people won’t plant it,” says Hayes. “But it’s elegant and stately, without the pretense of the oak, and the coloration of its bark is quite beautiful.” Remembering

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“The guest room has the same bed, the same side tables and the same rugs as the master bedroom,” Hayes says. “It was a very democratic approach.” The gouache is Sol LeWitt’s 1998 *Irregular Form*. OPPOSITE: A raised and covered section of the bilevel mahogany deck is “the primary outdoor living space,” says Hayes. “It’s a great hang-out spot.”



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their early romance with the sycamore, Reed sent Hayes photographs of its bark. “Look at the bark,” he said. “Just look at it.” Hayes did look, and he saw what Reed had hoped he would see—colors that ranged from creamy white to mossy green to beige and gray brown. “It’s a natural palette,” says Hayes, “quiet and monochromatic. They’re colors that fit into the landscape.”

Though he confesses to having had a few moments of nervousness when he started work for such a close friend, Hayes knew instantly how the interior should look. “There was clarity from the start,” he says. “The design was all about reducing things to their essence and using only honest materials. If the concept is clear and has a strong foundation, it’s easy to let go. It’s almost like removing yourself so that the house can take on a life of its own.”

“Sleek and minimalist,” Reed and Makris had written on their wish list, and Hayes needed no further instruction. He chose living area fabrics in the muted colors of the sycamore, and he picked furniture that is comfortable but unobtrusive. “When you have a great

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view, the landscape becomes the focus, and the furniture can be quiet,” he says. Taking simplicity a step further, he made the master bedroom and the guest room almost identical. “There’s an economy to the house,” says Hayes, “and it made sense for it to be practical. The common link in my projects is my ability to edit, to make a project complete but not full. I know when a room has enough.”

Reed, the landscaper, also knows when enough is enough. He and Makris are editing the land as well, slowly removing the hedgerows and plants that have intruded on their meadow and river views. But they have also added a few trees. Sycamores, of course. □

Visit ArchitecturalDigest.com for our exclusive video interview with Thad Hayes.