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The Lake Effect

THIS STUNNING POOL HOUSE ON CONNECTICUT'S LAKE WARAMAUG COMBINES A BARN-LIKE COUNTRY AESTHETIC WITH MODERN LINES AND FURNISHINGS

BY MATT SCANLON • PHOTOS BY JOHN KANE / SILVER SUN STUDIO



The concept of a pool house, even for those with sufficient funds and incentive to manage the endeavor in a deft way, rarely gets executed beyond a relatively simple cabana and barbecue area as surrounding elements of the main aquatic event. What architect James Dixon was offered however, in designing a pool house on a 200-acre estate in Connecticut's Litchfield Hills, was a chance to, essen-

tially, build a home outside of a home—one that embraced leisure, modernity, and livability in one artful swoop. The result is one of the most inspired pieces of recreational design we've encountered (not least because it mimics the look of a reclaimed barn, though is an entirely new construction), and not surprisingly, was a Design Excellence Award winner from the American Institute of Architects of

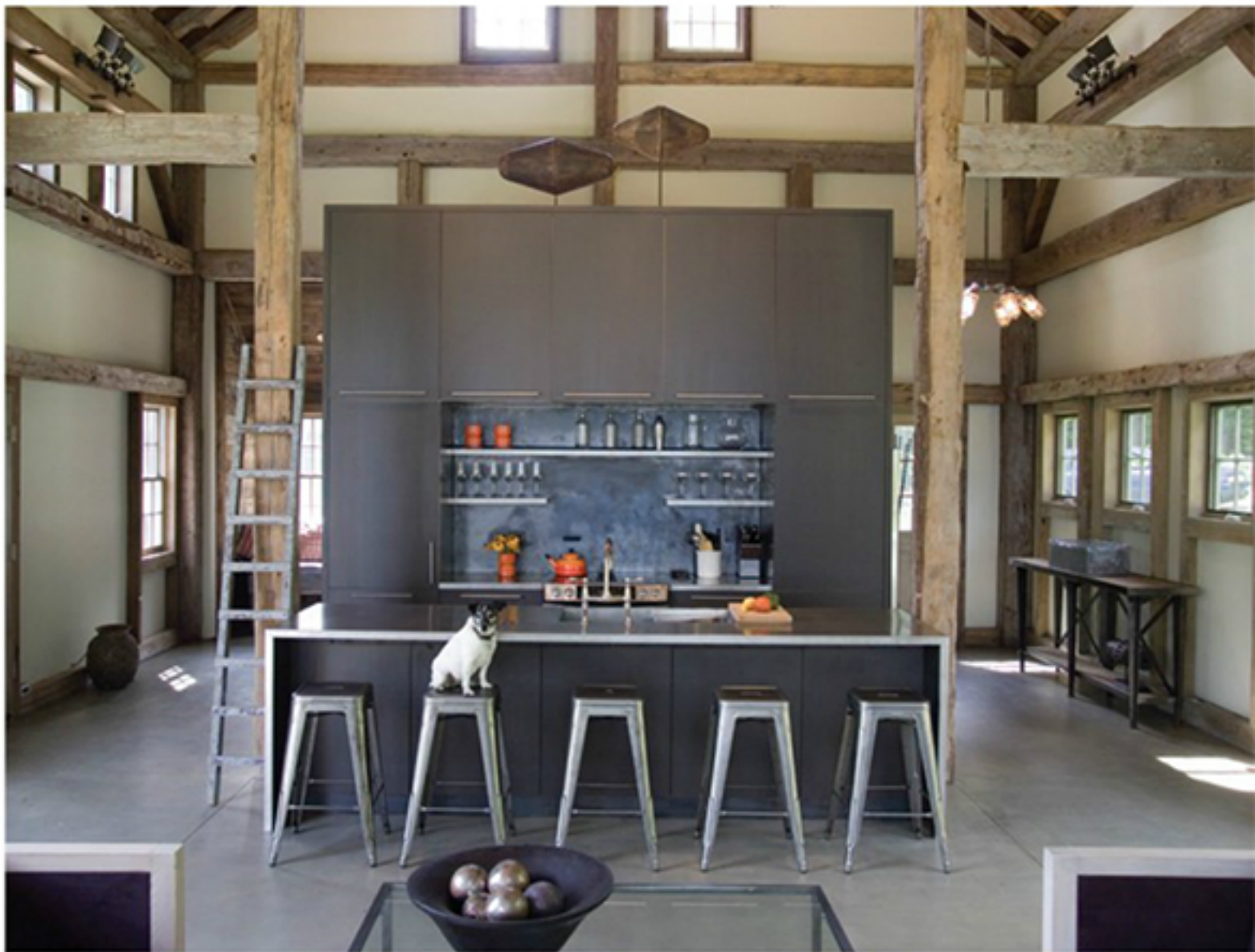
Eastern New York. The Design Awards Jury praised its incorporation of sleek, contemporary interior features into a classic barn form, saying, "It is an elegant marriage of the timber frame with well-proportioned and organized modern elements." The Jury also noted that the building, "...exhibits a lovely clarity of form and detail, based on the traditional rural farm vernacular."

INDUSTRY: What was your process? What needed to be done structurally? Aesthetically?

James Dixon: Selecting the site was the first step. We wanted full southern exposure for the pool, and the ability to enjoy distant views of the surrounding coun-

INDUSTRY: How else did the design respond to the site?

JD: The pavilion features an exposed, custom-designed timber frame built with reclaimed antique beams. Steel and glass doors open on three sides of the building to catch breezes and take advantage



tryside. It was also important that the building be nestled comfortably in the landscape. From the beginning, the client liked the idea of a vernacular barn form, but we all agreed the interior should feature modern elements. The kitchen and bath are contained in a large millwork cube which does not engage with the structural frame. The custom steel and glass doors also add interest.

of the changing light throughout the day. A large screened porch provides spectacular views of the countryside. When seen from a distance, the project resembles a group of farm buildings, but with the sliding doors open, the pavilion has a streamlined, modern flair. The result is a structure versatile enough to accommodate children in wet swimsuits by day and an elegant candlelit dinner by night.

HOME DESIGN

INDUSTRY: What environmental considerations were in mind as far as the choice of construction materials or overall design?

JD: The custom timber frame was crafted from reclaimed wood beams. It not only adds a satisfying patina to the building, but also increases the sustainability of the project.

INDUSTRY: What are the views and natural light like, and to what extent did they influence your choices?

JD: The views were *critical* in siting the structure. We worked closely with landscape architect Dirk Sabin, who was instrumental in establishing a viewshed to distant Lake Waramaug. The screened porch was specifically located to capture these views.

INDUSTRY: What was the biggest challenge overall?

JD: Trying to convince the client to let me spend the summer here [laughs]. I didn't succeed.

INDUSTRY: And the biggest budget hurdle?

JD: We hired Peter Kirkiles to hand-build the custom steel and glass doors, some of which are sixteen feet high. It would have been much cheaper to simply pick out standard doors, but we knew we needed something special here. The clients were willing to splurge, knowing they were supporting local craftsmen and getting a unique product. ●

Established in 1999, James Dixon Architect PC specializes in high-end residential architecture and design, including historic preservation, apartment renovation, and new country homes for clients in New York City; Dutchess County and Columbia County, NY; Connecticut; the Berkshires; and other locations in the U.S. and Europe. Dixon is a member of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), and provides LEED-Accredited Professional design services. More information can be found at JDixonArchitect.com or by calling 518.392.6800.

