

January 8, 2019

Martha's Vineyard Commission
The Stone Building
33 New York Avenue
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Architectural Design Narrative for the renovations of The Yard for Dance

The design concept for the diminutive "campus" of the The Yard for Dance is to create a naturalistic setting for a cluster of structures that evoke the character and sensibility of Up-island Martha's Vineyard. Keeping in place two existing shingle clad houses, three new structures are laid out to retain the character of a compound devoted to an informal atmosphere to facilitate the study and performance of dance and movement arts. The new structures include the Performance Theater, the Rehearsal Pavilion, and a new residence called "The Way Back Yard".

The Theater is a double gabled structure intended to refer to equine barns, with a simple profile and roof overhangs to provide shade and shelter from the elements. The gables present themselves to the visitor as they arrive, and a large barn door is placed under one. This door allows an indoor-outdoor connection for summer events to the clearing in front, affectionately called "The Shell Area" for its ground cover of seashell fragments. The original Theater barn door is preserved and located as an entrance to one of the studio spaces inside the theater. Window and door openings are trimmed in red-stained board, a "signature" feature of the existing "Front Yard" house near the entrance to the compound. In a manner similar to the existing layout, the Theater is connected to the middle existing residence – called the Back Yard – by a low-profile, one-story structure containing back of house functions for the theater (bathrooms, dressing rooms, storage) with a deck on top for the residents. In addition to providing a semi-private retreat for the artists, this deck also provides access, via pathway traversing the sloped grade surrounding the structure, to the Back Yard for ADA compliance.

The Rehearsal Studio continues the gable motif, contains an office space for staff, and houses a dance studio intended to support classes open to the public as well as rehearsal space for visiting artists. The location of the Pavilion is intended to shield the presence of the parking area from the street, and to face the Theater barn doors across the driveway. The orientation of the Pavilion has the added benefit of supporting a P.V. solar panel array.

The new Residence is located at the rear of the compound for the resident artists. This two-story house will have five bedrooms, and a narrow profile, repeating again the gable motif to the south. The detailing of this building will be similar to the other two new structures.

Each of the new structures will have a metal roof for durability, which in turn folds down one side to form a "shell". Under this shell is shingle siding and wood trim, creating a lively contrast between cool metallic finish and warm, natural wood which, like most Vineyard structures, weather to a soft gray. It is a quiet synthesis of the contemporary with the traditional.

All structures will meet the Massachusetts building code, and all new structures, as well as the existing residences, will meet accessibility requirements of the A.D.A.

Landscaping will be consonant with Up-Island native plantings and, where necessary, simple retaining walls of field stone so prevalent in the area. There will be a significant investment in landscape to create bio-swales and drywells for storm water management.

Sincerely,

Blake Middleton, FAIA
Partner