

FROM A DISTANCE, an art studio (FAR RIGHT) and barn-shaped music studio (FAR LEFT) seem organic extensions of the house. Viewed from the side (FACING PAGE), the structures become a study in color, texture, and geometric forms.



# three dimensions



An artist and a musician each get a studio in a complex modeled on classic New England farmhouse design

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**THE ART STUDIO** features homasote walls, to which the artist tacks drawings and works in progress. High north-facing windows allow natural light into the space and the height of the shed roof creates a sense of spaciousness.

## THERE WERE THREE THINGS

John Battle's clients said they needed when they first visited him at Battle Associates Architects in Concord, Massachusetts.

"A house, a painting studio, and a recording studio," says Battle. "They had found a lovely piece of land in a western suburb and were ready to build something that really works for their life and their work."

The wife in this creative couple is an artist; her husband is a musician. They wanted a comfortable and functional home that would take advantage of the verdant views of woods and pond; not too big but with room for their grown daughter and guests to visit, wall space to display their art, and light to illuminate it. Each needed a sizable studio, and each of those studios had to be designed and equipped to meet very specific needs.

"They came to me in 2013, after they had seen the new art center our firm designed for Bard College [in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York]," Battle says. "She wanted to be able to step into her studio without having to go outside, but she did not want to have to walk clients and visitors through the house in order for them to visit her studio.

"He needed major sound insulation and acoustic work,"

**ARCHITECT JOHN BATTLE** calls the design a "modern farmhouse." Modeled on traditional New England forms, the main house (RIGHT) attaches to outbuildings so they can be accessed without going outside. The barn's interior is far from traditional (FACING PAGE), but its exterior shape and color are an unmistakable nod to the past.

Battle says. "Plus a way to bring huge pieces of equipment in and out. And both studios had to be enough removed from the house to make them autonomous." In addition, the clients wanted the residential space and studios to be energy-efficient.

It took Battle awhile to find the right design approach. "In the beginning, I tried to mask the three elements, to make them all into one building. It looked awkward," he ruefully recalls.

His solution draws on a traditional New England farmhouse





**THE BARN SHAPE** provides a practical envelope for the music studio, where wood-lined walls baffle and soften sound and a high peaked ceiling helps it travel through the space. To be neighborly, the owner thoroughly soundproofed the structure.



IN THE LIVING ROOM, a windowed bay overlooks the backyard pond, home to several varieties of fish, which the artist/wife catches with flies she hand-ties herself.

design in which a linear orientation connects a main house to one or more ancillary facilities, such as a barn, a privy shed, or a stable. Battle's plan places what he calls a "modern farmhouse" between a shed (the art studio) and a barn (the recording studio). The art studio is connected to the house via a breezeway that has its own entry. In the 1,100-square-foot space, the wife paints, makes prints, and engages in whatever medium appeals to her at the moment.

The house, which measures just over 2,000 square feet, is oriented to the back, where large windows overlook a pond that provides ever-changing views. From the entry hall, stairs rise to the second floor, while the living room, dining room, and kitchen are to the right. Pale maple and bamboo flooring, white walls, simple window shades, and clean, minimalist trim create a light-filled, contemporary environment that draws eyes to the view and to the art. "We don't decorate, we collect," says the wife as she points to pottery, paintings, sculpture, and photographs. "Every object has meaning."

The living room is focused on a modern wood-burning fireplace. On the opposite wall, two doors, one on each end, lead into the kitchen. "If you have two ways into a room," says Battle, "it makes it feel bigger."

The kitchen capitalizes on the vista with a rectangular bay lined with glass. A deep ceiling cove subtly adds importance to the space.

"The homeowners were certain that they did not want a double-height ceiling in the living room or any other such drama," Battle says. "They insisted that the house be the right scale for day-to-day living."

"When John first did the ceiling in the kitchen, I was afraid that he would say that we had to put a great big light pendant in there," says the wife. "If it's trendy or showy, it's not for me."

The music studio is on the other side of the kitchen, where a hall leads past a pantry, mudroom, and screened porch. The shape of the 740-square-foot barn lends itself to the soaring wood walls outfitted with acoustic baffling that allows the sounds to rise and travel. Individual booths for recordings have acoustically isolating doors. At the gable end, garage doors facilitate moving equipment in and out.

A composer and performer, the husband says he works "in every musical genre except for classical." He is especially fond of his office, located in a balcony high above.

"Putting his studio and his office into a barn was my idea, and it works beautifully," says Battle. "He got very pumped about being able to sit at his desk and look down into his studio." Attention to the acoustic elements also pleased the client. "He's a bit of a night owl," says Battle. "Now he can be up all hours and play loud music and not bother the neighbors." ■

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THE SERENE MASTER bedroom is simply finished with built-in storage. The kitchen (BELOW) has cabinetry by Kochman, Reidt + Haigh Cabinetmakers of Stoughton, Massachusetts, a cove ceiling, and a sitting area facing the view of the pond.

