

CHARLES ROSE ARCHITECTS INC

PROJECT data

COPPER HOUSE

Belmont, Massachusetts USA

Commissioned by: Newly married couple with children

Scope: Major addition, renovation. Contemporary two-story bar joined to existing three-story Colonial; on 1st floor new kitchen, dining and living space; master bedroom and individual offices for couple on 2nd; renovation of spaces adjoining addition to match open, contemporary feel.

Charles Rose Architects rarely work on renovations. In this case, the original house was a Colonial box with vinyl siding; it was poorly sited, and a garage cut it off from a spacious yard. Yet it had charm: cozy rooms, a downstairs bedroom suite, and ample usable space. The project called for—in essence—adding a house to the existing house, and the complexity and challenge proved too hard to resist.

Our design created a slot for the addition by demolishing the garage and using surplus driveway space. This move anchored the new house in the landscape while ensuring that it wouldn't eat up valuable green space, despite its large scale. The most challenging aspect was one of fit: by style and scale. Stylistically, we were marrying a modern glass and copper house to a Colonial. Moreover, integration was daunting: the high-ceilings and open volumes of the planned addition did not align with the Colonial's tighter and more compressed spaces.

To confront the central challenge—of stitching together old and new—we used strategies that both hid and heightened transitions. Outside, we put a new wrapper on the Colonial: a cedar box. We kept practically everything as it was: window frames became sculptural indentations; old panes were replaced with single sheets of glass. Inside, we put a three-story atrium, topped by six large skylights—where old and new meet. We made this the formal entryway: The front door leads visitors into a small vestibule that opens into the atrium. A steel-and-glass stair climbs from the stone atrium floor to upper level of the addition. A second sculptural stair—a steel-and-glass bridge—crosses the atrium and links the second floors in the addition and the Colonial, heightening the contrast. A curtain wall of glass runs the length of the kitchen and living spaces, bringing the outdoors inside. The plan is open; the ground-floor stair, granite dining room server and bluestone fireplace are designed to delineate room areas.

Materials: Bright copper; cedar; painted steel; mahogany and Alaskan yellow cedar windows; flagstone; beech; bamboo; rosewood; patinated stainless steel.

Completed: 2004

“To temper the aggressiveness of the angles made by so much glass, concrete and steel, [Charles Rose] used rich woods: mahogany to frame windows, and rosewood, mahogany and bamboo in the floors. Also, subtle colors....The walls (the palest pumpkin and yellow) reflect the summer greens and autumnal reds and golds of the surrounding maples and honey locusts. In this way, the house feels almost organic. The copper shifts color with sun and snow; the cedar is a willing canvas for rain. It’s quite a contrast to the predominant Victorians and Cape Cods, which don’t embrace the frigid New England winter so much as hunker down and bear it.”

Paige Williams, “Glossy Skin, Vinyl-Clad Heart,” *The New York Times*, December 15, 2005

Awards:

Boston Society of Architects Design Honor Award

Select Publications:

Cleary, Mark, editor. 200 Houses, The Images Publishing Group Pty Ltd., Australia, 2011.

Charles Rose, Architect, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2006.

Beaver, Robyn, editor. A Pocketful of Houses, The Images Publishing Group Pty Ltd., Australia, 2006.

Maynard, Nigel F.; Hutchins, Shelley D. “Architects’ Choice: Keeping It Real,” *Residential Architect*, April 2006.

Williams, Paige. “Glossy Skin, Vinyl-Clad Heart,” *The New York Times*, December 15, 2005.

Beaver, Robyn, editor. 100 More of the World’s Best Houses, The Images Publishing Group Pty Ltd., Australia, 2005.



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