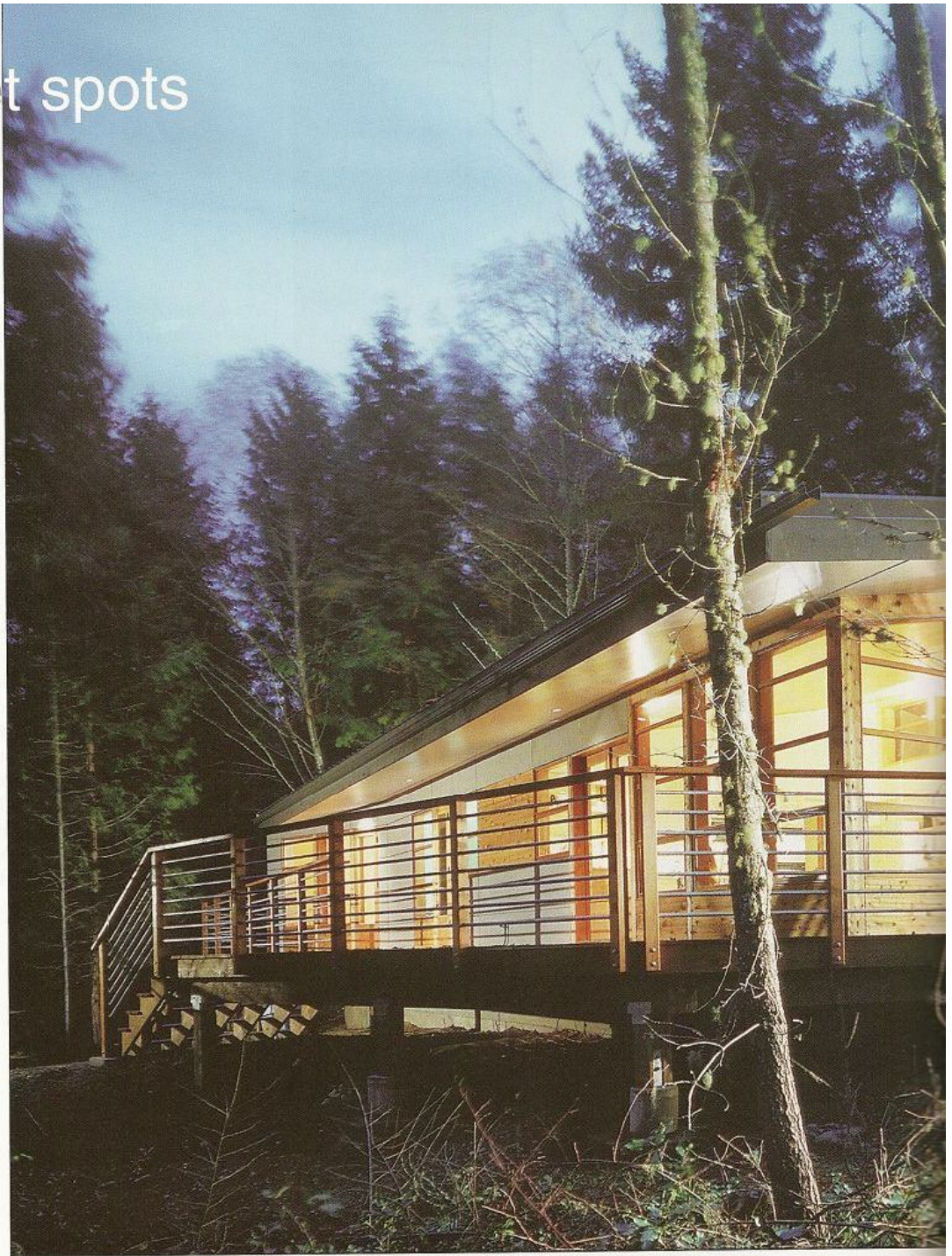


## sweet spots

Like most vacation homes, the cabin connects strongly with its natural surroundings. Ample decking gives it plenty of sheltered outdoor space, and operable windows let cooling breezes venture inside.



*“we had to make [the cabin] durable so the owners could rent it*

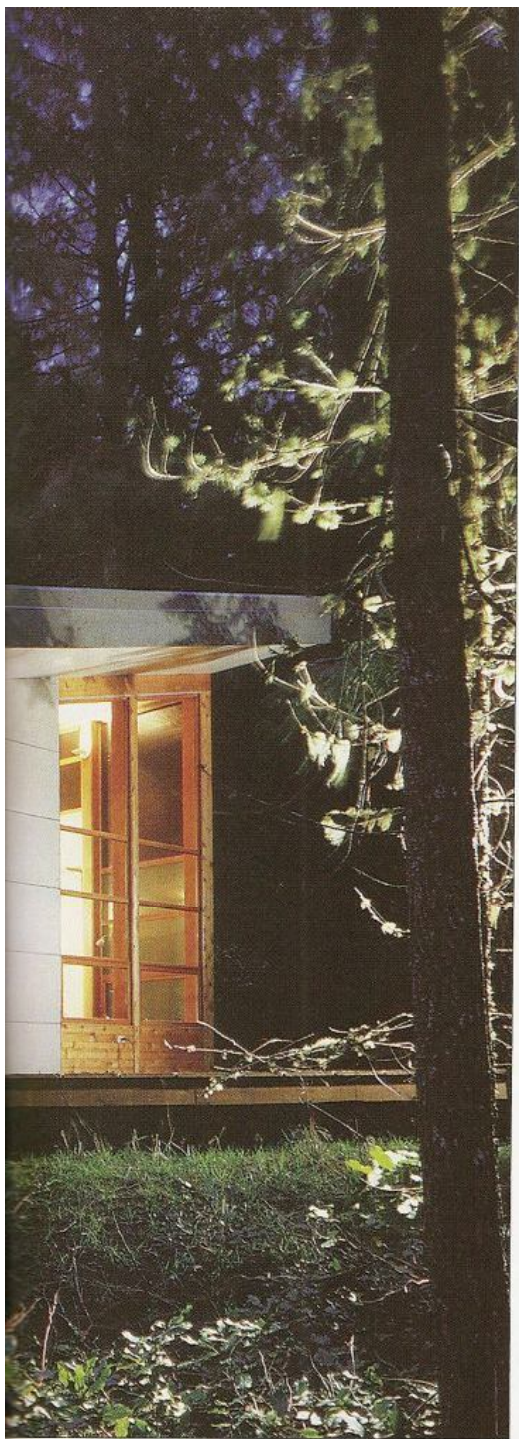
sweet's

## vested interest

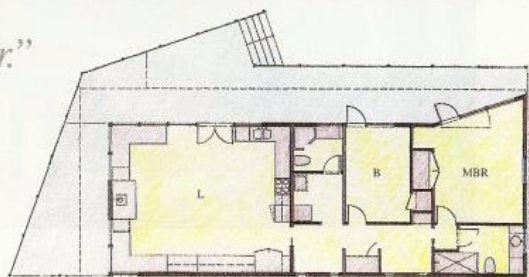
**G**oeff Prentiss, AIA, had a very good reason to make this weekend cabin in Washington state's San Juan Islands a project he'd feel proud of. He can see the house from his own cabin, which lies right across the water on a neighboring island. The Seattle-based Prentiss, who's vacationed in the San Juans his whole life, found himself intrigued by the challenges his client's wooded site posed. "The problem here was that the lot was north-facing, so the house wouldn't get a lot of light," he says. "We also had to make it durable so the owners could rent it out for most of the summer. And they asked for some flair."

The clients' lean budget added another wrinkle to the situation. Labor in the San Juans is very expensive, so the less complicated and time-consuming the house was to build, the lower the costs would be. "The owners wanted a gable-shaped building when they came to us," says Prentiss. "I told them a shed roof would be less expensive and more interesting." They agreed, and the resulting roof sits atop a simple rectilinear box that holds a blissfully basic floor plan. The master suite takes up the east end of the house, abutted by a bedroom for the owners' teenage son and a hallway lined with bunk beds for more sleeping space. An open kitchen and living area fill the home's window-lined west side.

Low-key materials complement the laid-back plan. Sealed 2-by-4-foot fiber-cement panels, which the contractor sawed down from standard 4-by-8 sheets, cover the exterior. Behind them is a protective rain-and-ice membrane—"fancy Saran wrap," as Prentiss calls it. The custom Douglas fir-framed windows were a permissible luxury, since most were cut to the same 2-by-4-foot size to keep costs down. Also custom are the metal shelf brackets used throughout the house; Prentiss realized he could have them crafted for less money than they'd cost at The Home Depot. Floors and ceilings of sealed birch plywood bounce daylight around each room.

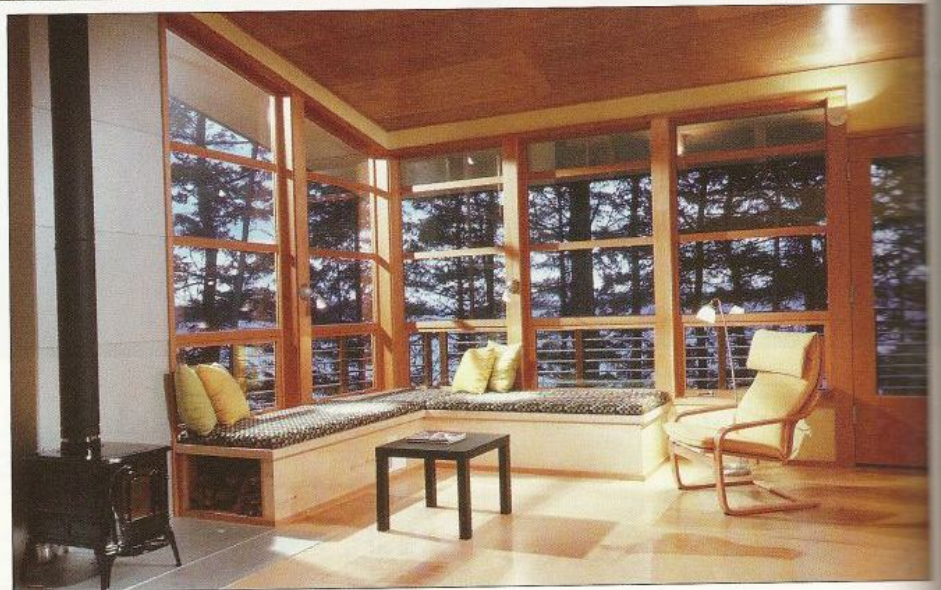


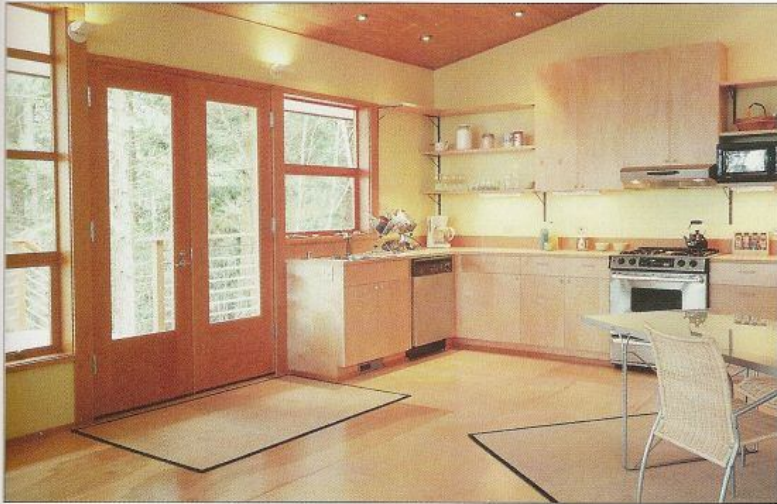
*and they asked for some flair."*



## sweet spots

Wherever he could, Prentiss found ways to simplify the cabin's design. A shed roof (right) crisply articulates the home's form, while built-in benches double as firewood holders (below). Open kitchen shelving and clean-lined cabinets (far right) hit the same back-to-basics note.

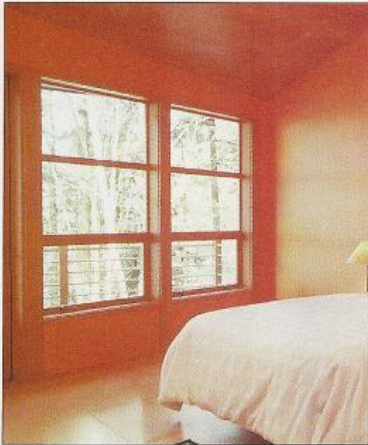




sweet spots

With all of its functional, no-frills building elements and the tedium of sheetrock walls, the house needed a jolt of pizzazz to come alive for both the owner and the architect. "The site is so dark and the materials so straightforward," says Prentiss, "that we needed to do something to add panache." The low-tech, cost-effective answer: paint. A light chartreuse jazzes up the kitchen and living room, while coats of peach and tangerine give the master bedroom a lift. Even the hallway picked up yellow walls and multicolored skylight shafts. The effect is so exuberant, unexpected, and delightful, it's a shame Prentiss can't also see inside the house from his spot across the water.—*m.d.*

details



**project:**  
Lopez Island cabin, Lopez Island, Wash.  
**architect:**  
Prentiss Architects, Seattle  
**general contractor:**  
Ravenhill Construction, Friday Harbor, Wash.  
**project size:**  
1,350 square feet  
**construction cost:**  
Withheld  
**photographer:**  
Steve Keating

Bright colors add visual interest to the master bedroom (top left) and the hallway skylight shafts (top right). The rhythm established by the 2-by-4 fiber-cement panel cladding (above left) continues with custom 2-by-4 windows and 2-foot-tall strips of galvanized metal flashing behind the wood-burning stove (above right).