

Modern Cabin in the Woods

Naples, Florida

Architecture Joyce Owens | Fort Myers, FL



Joyce Owens, FAIA, RIBA, calls this home a modern cabin in the woods in East Naples. Photo by Tina Sargeant Photography.

Joyce Owens, FAIA, RIBA, includes in every one of her houses a moment to pause just after the entry. From that spot, just behind the double doors of this East Naples house, one can see throughout the home and the lush, wooded acreage that surrounds it. There is a resounding sense of place.

“This is what the house is all about,” she said. “It ebbs and flows. From one place you can see something else. You’re always able to see the outdoors from wherever you are.”

The modern cabin, as Owens calls it, is more than 5,000 square feet on five acres that started as a virgin site. Owens and the owner walked the land before starting construction, planning how to keep the native Florida pines and excise the exotic plants, all while keeping the natural feel of the lot.

“It was a little bit tricky,” she said. “It was more effort than you think.”

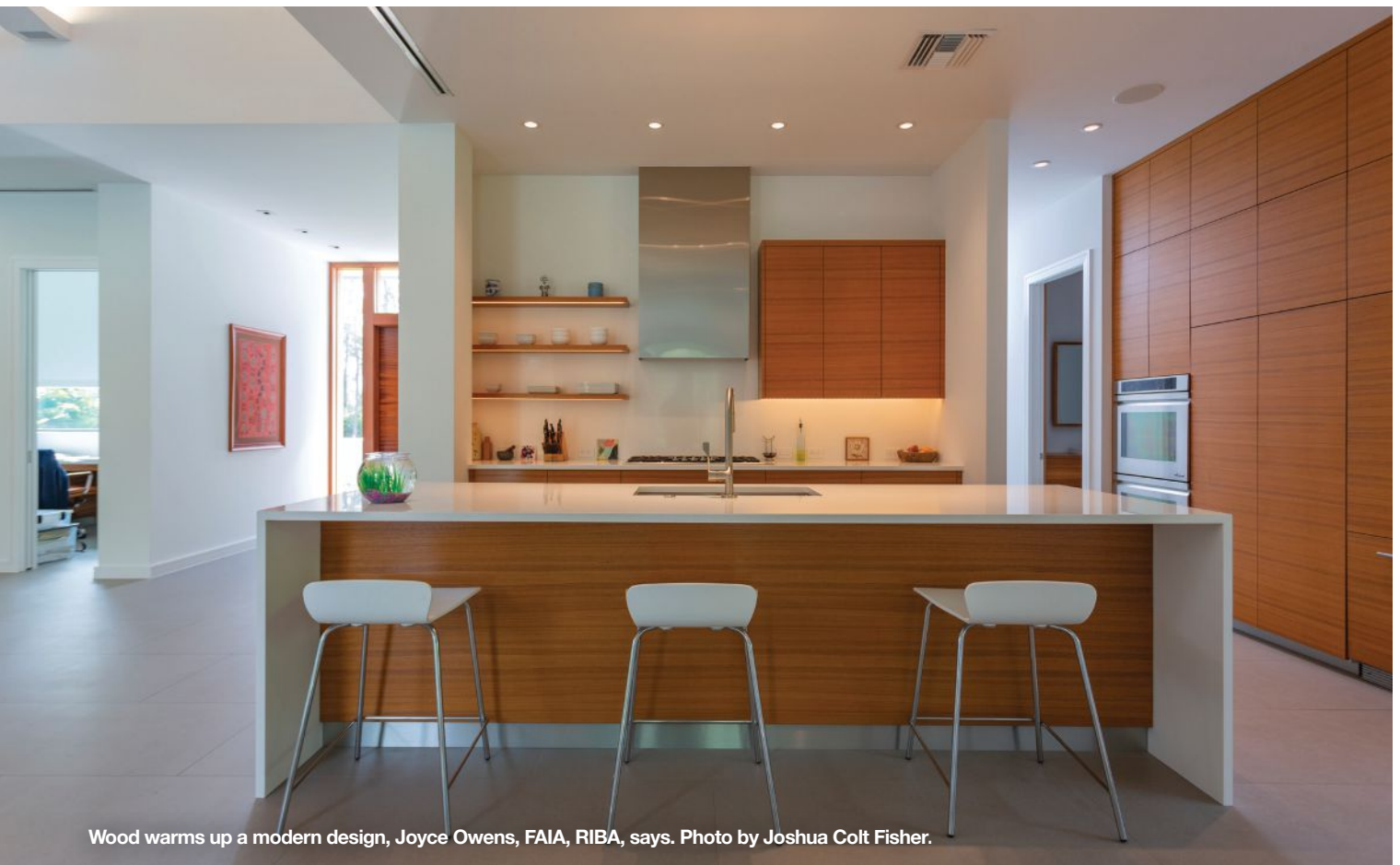
The owner was concerned about fire and did not want trees too close to the house. On the other hand, the house could not be too close to the neighbors or to the street. Plus, with sustainability and efficiency a goal of the home’s owners, the home had to be oriented to respond effectively to the climate, taking advantage of the winds and sun throughout the year.

Then there was the driveway to consider. Owens wanted — and got — an approach to the home that felt beautiful and important. The drive slices across the front, giving a guest a full view of the home’s modern lines against the pines.

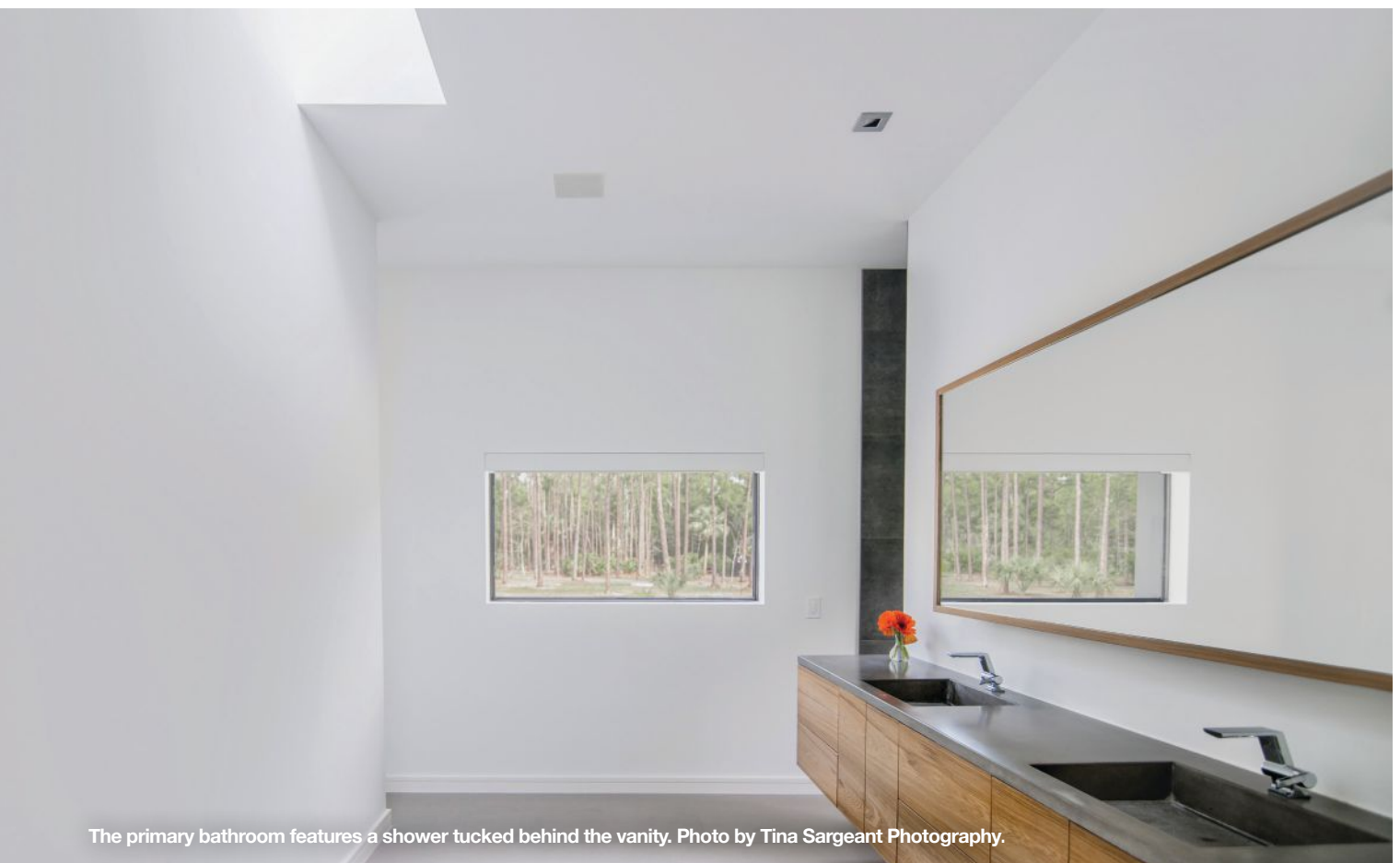
To increase efficiency, Owens designed the house to be built with insulated concrete forms and pre-cast hollow-core concrete planks.



The wood on the ceiling extends out into the exterior space. Photo by Joshua Colt Fisher.



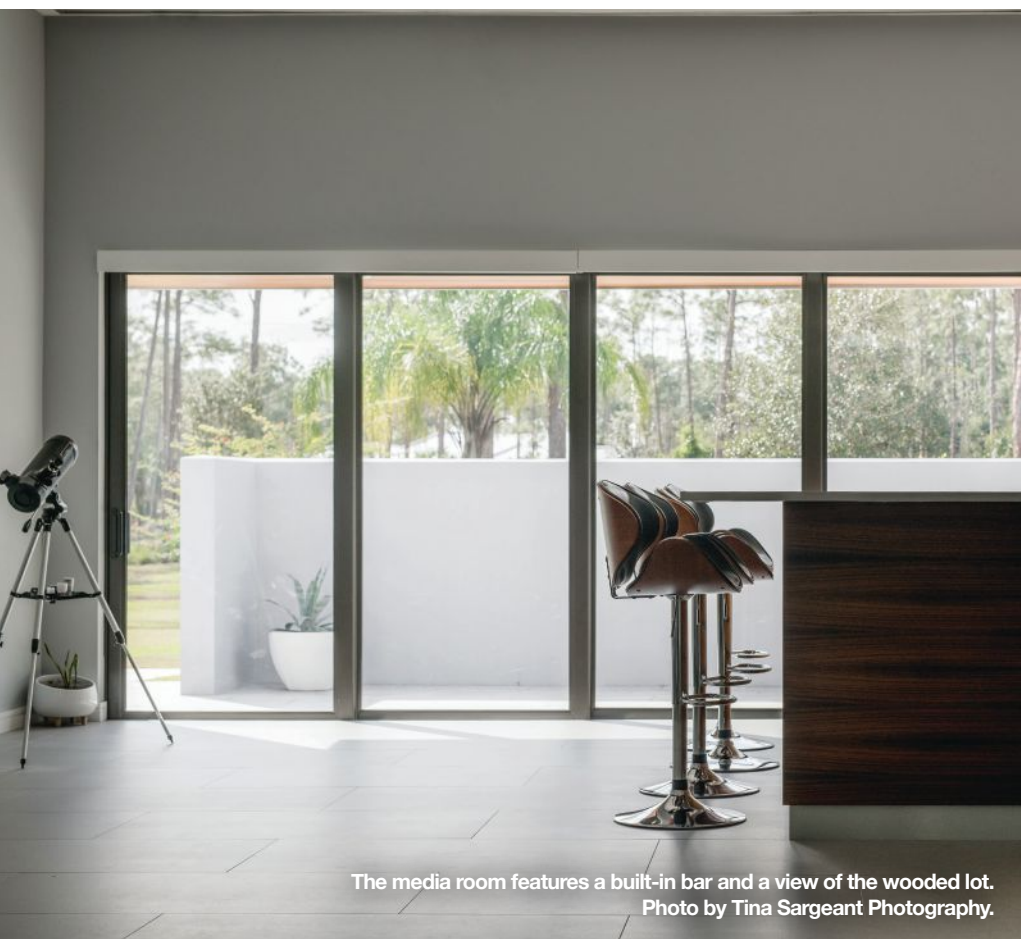
Wood warms up a modern design, Joyce Owens, FAIA, RIBA, says. Photo by Joshua Colt Fisher.



The primary bathroom features a shower tucked behind the vanity. Photo by Tina Sargeant Photography.



The pool area of the modern cabin in the woods.
Photo by Tina Sargeant Photography.



The media room features a built-in bar and a view of the wooded lot.
Photo by Tina Sargeant Photography.

WOOD IS A RECURRING MATERIAL IN THE HOUSE, GRACING ALMOST EVERY ROOM.

"They're incredibly good at maintaining a constant temperature on the inside of the house," Owens said, which reduces energy costs. The concrete also makes the home more solid against Florida's sometimes-harsh climate.

"It's built to last and it's built to be sustainable," Owens said.

Part of the sustainability comes from large overhangs to protect from sun and rain and thoughtfully placed windows that allow natural light in while reducing heat gain.

The dining room, which features a built-in floating sideboard, was built around the owner's dining table, a family heirloom. It also features vertical windows that open,



The dining room was built around a family heirloom dining table.
Photo by Joshua Colt Fisher.

allowing for cross ventilation in the main living space, reducing a dependency on mechanical climate control systems. Fixtures throughout the home are minimalist and simple, giving the interior an elegance that also emphasizes the reliance on natural light.

Wood is a recurring material in the house, gracing almost every room: a bespoke bar in the media room, a built-in desk and shelving in the office, custom kitchen cabinetry and the ceiling in the common living area. That wood ceiling extends outdoors to the soffit and the ceiling of the outdoor living space, marrying the inside to the out.

“Modern architecture can be a little cold,” Owens said. “Wood makes it very rich.”

It also accents the clearstory windows in the living room, which elevate the roofline of the space, giving it a gravitas in the design.

Outside, the owner chose native plants that Owens arranged in rows around the front of the home.

“That was the whole reason he had bought the five acres,” Owens said. “He loves his plants and wanted everything to be natural.” ■