

“KAMP KIPPY” ACADIA SUMMER ARTS PROGRAM

Architects: Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc.

Location: Mount Desert Island, ME

Area: 6,000 gsf

Completion Date: 1998

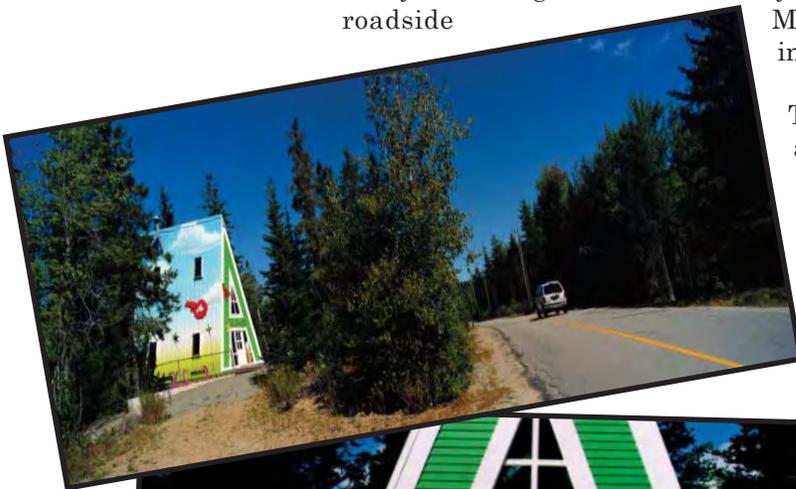
The Acadia Summer Arts Program (ASAP), or “Kamp Kippy,” is a residential fellowship for artists and arts administrators located on Mount Desert Island. Artists are scattered all over the island to work on their own projects out of ASAP-owned houses and studios as well as rental properties. Artists come together for dinner and individual presentations three evenings a week, sharing their work with the larger group.

The Extraordinary in the Ordinary

For over 150 years, artists, photographers and architects have been busy appreciating the spare, elegant functionality of the simple shingled sheds and barns of rural Maine. Mount Desert Island is home to some of these great 19th and 20th century shingle-style “cottages.” But there is another roadside, vernacular tradition, equally indigenous -- that of big lobster signs, A-Frame cabins, trailers, lawn ornaments, and old cars and tractors rusting on the edge of blueberry fields. Unlike the corporate malls and strips of suburbia, the “Maine Strip” is still the province of “Mom and Pop,” so “ordinary” buildings are decorated with extraordinary, idiosyncratic signs and roadside

symbols. People of “good taste” love to hate this everyday, Maine. These work-a-day buildings have been the inspiration for the Kamp Kippy project.

The Kamp Kippy A-Frame For Art is both a “Duck,” an “A” and a “Decorated Shed” -- itself a sign that identifies Kamp Kippy along a main rural road. The building functions as a library/video viewing room, with sculpture studio space below. The interior section is softened both visually and acoustically by concave and convex translucent Plexiglas panels. The rear deck tiers down into the woods to form a small courtyard amphitheater with outdoor performance and lecture seating for 75.





This simple building is all about vernacular conventions: conventional elements such as windows, doors, gables, materials, and explicit signs and decorations have been manipulated to be both *ordinary* in their symbolic meanings and *extraordinary* in their scale and formal expressions. This results in the A-frame shape, flamingos, Ma and Pa Farmer signs, whirligigs, Kamp Kippy sign, mosquito zapper, *trompe l'oeil* sky, et cetera.

This use of ordinary signs and symbols in the A-Frame For Art is not a cynical or deprecating gesture, but a lighthearted attempt to use these pervasive pieces of Maine popular culture in a way that will help us all to see the beauty in these everyday objects. We can not only “improve” the world by using our educated tastes and design skills but also by opening our eyes and our hearts to appreciate what already is there -- learning to “love” what we love to “hate.”