



CHIC SHEDS *Clockwise from left:* DC architect Travis Price waxes contemporary with Sheila Blake's artist studio in Takoma Park and Wade Davis's writer's studio in Northwest DC. Architect Norman Smith built three stylized outbuildings on his property in Piedmont, two of which are potter's sheds.

THE RADAR HOME

BY RINA RAPUANO



OUT OF THE BOX *From posh playhouses to writer's workshops, area outhouses take on modernist airs*

A second home may be the ideal getaway, but what if you could take 20 steps and feel as if you're worlds away? Creating the illusion of escape was the aim of DC architect Travis Price when he began designing modernist outbuildings behind the homes of his clients.

"It's like going into the inner world when you enter these additions," says Price. "You're in touch with your home—you can see it, smell it, hear it—but you're just far enough away that the kids won't run out instantly. The chores are far enough away that you can forget them for a moment."

That's precisely what local author and National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Wade Davis loves about the writing studio Price designed for his Northwest DC home. "It is so beautiful that it transports you," Davis says of the spherical office that's adjacent to his primary residence. "It's become a shaman's cave. I love the fact that it's round and that my books hover like a halo above my head, leading up to the skylight."

For Takoma Park artist Sheila Blake, Price peppered her art studio with several modern architectural elements that matched the surrounding woods and her needs as a painter. He installed a foot of glass around the base of the structure for lighting and so that Blake could feel as if she "floats in nature." Price also crafted the trail to the studio to reinforce the idea of traveling to a separate and special space. "The trail takes a jog and a turn, and the path goes through the structure so that when you walk in, you keep walking out," he says of the passageway's metaphoric purpose.

While Davis and Blake were looking for work sanctuaries, Richard and Jane Stoker of Potomac set out to create a play-space for kids from the bones of a former fishing cabin. Jason Hodges, a senior designer for Barbara Hawthorn Interiors, incorporated whimsical contemporary furniture and design elements that echo the couple's love of modern art. One example is the Tucker Robbins Human Chair, which practically embraces you when you sit on it. "I think it's kind of like having a little vacation in your own backyard," Hodges says of the super-chic shed he designed. "It's very different from their main house, so it's a nice little escape."

Perhaps no one is better acquainted with the charm of small spaces than DC architect Norman Smith, who has three mini buildings on his own property in the Piedmont region of Virginia. He and his wife lived in one of the huts while their main house was being built. One of Smith's favorite features of the largest hut is the "full length and full height, west-facing glazed wall that fills the space with light but still maintains privacy," he says. "At night, the building glows like a lantern in the woods."

Even with a second home on your property, you can still jet off to your favorite vacation spot whenever you want. But knowing that solace awaits in your own backyard makes it that much easier to return home. ■

More information at www.travispricearchitects.com, www.barbarahawthorninteriors.com and www.normansmitharchitecture.com.