

MODERN SHOESTRING

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE ON A BUDGET

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FIELD HOUSE

ELLINGTON, WISCONSIN

WENDELL BURNETTE ARCHITECTS

\$200.00 PER SQUARE FOOT

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Field House, a beautiful, large vacation home in Wisconsin's Fox River Valley, is aptly named for its spectacular agrarian setting. Located on the highest point of a gently sloping 16-acre farm property, the house is surrounded by newly planted apple, pear, and plum orchards and fields of seasonally rotating crops—wheat, corn, soybeans, alfalfa, and oats grown to supply nearby dairy farms. Although a high-end, luxury home, Field House, commissioned by an oncologist working on the East Coast, was relatively inexpensive to build. This was due to a meticulous, efficient design and the involvement of a quality commercial builder as the general contractor.

The 5,000-square-foot building is essentially a 24-by-96-by-32-foot box clad in galvanized zinc. The designer of the house, architect Wendell Burnette, took inspiration from local buildings: grain silos, dairy barns, and tool sheds. All the materials that are part of the house, including the dramatic rolled-metal siding, were utilized in their existing standard dimensions. "I am interested in the notion of economy, of using standard products to achieve elegance in unexpected, different ways," professes Burnette. Erecting this structure required commercial construction techniques rather than traditional residential building methods.

After completing the schematic design phase, Burnette interviewed two local contractors. Miron Construction, the biggest contractor in Wisconsin, won the job, although this was only the second house the company had ever constructed. Burnette says he was "impressed with the workmanship and the Wisconsin work ethic."

The materials and the neutral color palette add to the calm, peaceful aura of the site. White limestone masonry, standard block from nearby quarries, draws the visitor in; the same limestone serves as gravel on the drive and entranceway. The floor is simple black concrete, and the main door is cedar. Walls and ceilings are mill-finished, oiled steel, and built-in cabinetry is American black walnut. The rooftop, the owners' private sanctuary, has a secret observatory reached by a silo ladder. This silvery wooden oasis has no railings past a certain point, and the only deck furniture is an iconic white Marc Newson chair floating in the landscape, not unlike this house that floats in a sea of fields











