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The Poetry of Architecture

A Connecticut writer's studio becomes a metaphor for creativity itself

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靈感小屋

創 作 靈 感	提 供 著 源 源 不 斷 的	為 這 裏 的 主 人	一 座 隱 逸 的 小 屋	山 林 中
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The studio sits perched on a picturesque rock bluff, with a cantilevered room projecting out above the ravine below.

於山崖之上，挑出式的結構和三面玻璃幕牆讓屋中的人仿佛漂浮在一片山林之中。

“You’re in a 180-degree glass box.
You feel that you’re not tethered to the ground at that point.”

A pen. Some paper. A bit of inspiration. A quiet place to think. Of all the things a writer needs, it’s the last one that’s the hardest to come by.

That was the challenge posed to New York-based architect Eric J. Smith by one of his long-time clients: build a writer’s studio that would function as a tranquil sanctuary where he might fully embrace a lifelong love of the written word. In so doing, Smith created not only the perfect place to write, but a four-walled metaphor for the act of writing itself.

“The building represents the creative process,” Smith says. “You approach it from what’s a very solid, almost impenetrable structure—there’s only one portal going through.”

As Smith points out, that effort to open the door (whether literal or figurative) will be immediately familiar to anyone who has stared at a blank page. “When you’re looking at a blank piece of paper, you have to find your way in: What’s the inspiration; what’s the thought?”

For Smith, that parsing started with a proper consideration of what had come before. Smith’s firm had already worked on two previous projects on the 25-acre estate, about an hour northeast of Manhattan, renovating the main house in a grand, 1920s New England style, which honoured the design traditions of the region.

This time, however, the owner shared a distinctly different vision: a small, stripped-down, essentialist space whose sole purpose would be to enhance and amplify the work going on inside.

Smith faced two diverging roads: he could design a bold, *bauhaus*-inspired monument that would dominate the landscape and stand outside the property’s existing design language. Instead, he opted for a road less travelled: bring

traditional and contemporary design together in a way that respected not only the client’s vision, but the rich history of the region, as well as the ebb and flow of the land itself.

“That was an interesting dichotomy,” Smith says. “It was as if maybe we had discovered the remnants of an old springhouse, or root cellar, or some other building that was there, and it was kind of in ruin, and we kind of restored it, and then we repurposed it. [The idea] was to strip it all down to just stone, wood, steel, and glass. Each of those are honoured into themselves, as if [the building] had been there for a long time and the forest grew up around it.”

From the outside, the studio is a study in architectural counterpoint, with modern elements interacting with traditional materials to create a beautiful harmony with the surrounding site.

On one hand, a solid, levelled-off cube clad in traditional stacked stone gives the studio a feeling of mass and substance—a thick-walled, castle-like feel intended to shelter the poet from the distractions of the everyday. On the other hand, exposed steel beams create a cantilevered room surrounded on three sides by floor-to-ceiling sliding glass panels—an airy, floating feeling intended to open the mind and help the imagination soar.

The glass offers a view of a picturesque wood, where a gently flowing brook chatters and babbles in the hollow below the studio.

“The cantilever allows you to project yourself out into the future, out into the space,” Smith says. “You’re in a 180-degree glass box. You feel that you’re not tethered to the ground at that point. You’re in the middle of the woods—you [feel] breezes there, you can hear what’s going on. It’s very exciting that way.”



Smith deliberately compressed the dimensions of the entrance hallway to better emphasize the expansive space of the writer’s room beyond—a metaphor for the opening of the imagination. 穿過略有擠壓感的書架走廊，進入到視野開闊的工作室時，會感覺面前豁然開朗，正如尋找創作靈感的過程。

The end result is a kind of creative refuge from the hustle and bustle of modern life, a place where the action of entering in and moving through serves as an echo for what happens in the mind. “The idea is that you decide to enter into this kind of creative space by leaving everything behind you,” says Smith.

Walking past the built-in bookshelves in the narrow hall to stand in the spacious central room gazing into the woods beyond, you feel outside the realm of human endeavour: The walls sink into the ground, the glass melts away, and you become one with both the physical and the metaphysical.

And as Smith says, that was the point.

“[You] walk up through the woods, [then] you’re forced into a very small pocket of space before it then expands back out. So your mind recalibrates. Everything kind of quiets and settles. And then it expands to bigger ideas.”

Which, as any poet or architect will tell you, is a pretty good way to describe the act of creation. Your eyes wander into the woods (literal or figurative), and you notice something: a lonely cloud; a bird coming down the walk; a wet, black, bough; a red wheelbarrow.

Your spirit wakes from its slumber. Your pen has motion now, and force. And you begin to write about the rocks, and stones, and trees—and all the bigger ideas that come with them.



Above: The studio was built to resemble an old springhouse, a root cellar, or a farm outbuilding that had been repurposed and carefully restored.
Opposite: The studio marries a clean, almost minimalist aesthetic with traditional New England materials such as stained wood and stacked field stone.



對頁：工作室的外觀設計著重在融入周圍的環境，像是舊建築被翻新了的感覺，完全不顯突兀。上圖：建築的整體結構採用了現代的極簡主義設計，但材料選用了傳統的新英格蘭風格常用的木材和石材等，並刻意營造出古舊感。



“To me, the start of any project is the site. Success is that the building looks like it’s always been there, and it was meant to be there.” —Eric J. Smith
設計師Eric說：「對於我來說，任何一個項目都始於它所在的地點。成功意味著讓建築最終看上去就像一直在那裏，就應該在那裏。」

「這樣懸空的設計，讓你像是將自己投射進了未來，像是打破了空間的桎梏。」

對於一位作家來說，最難尋的是靈感，而一個安靜舒適的空間無疑會有利於他們潛心思考，創作出精彩的作品。紐約建築設計師Eric J. Smith便遇上了這樣一個富有挑戰的項目，他的一位老顧客是位作家，需要打造一間特別的工作室。

「這幢房屋代表著創意。」Eric說：「整體是封閉起來的，只有一個入口可以進入其中。」也許因為身為建築設計師的Eric也經常需要尋找靈感，他非常理解作家顧客的需求和感受。當工作室最終完成時，所呈現的效果像是將作家的心聲用石材、木頭和玻璃構建到了現實中。

「當一張白紙擺在你面前時，你不得不搜刮些東西出來，靈感在哪裏？有甚麼好點子？」幸運的是，Eric之前總是能想出不錯的方案。他的公司最近經手了一個項目，在曼哈頓東北方大約一小時車程的一塊二十五英畝的土地上，一幢新英格蘭風格的二十年代老宅在Eric的精心打造下煥然一新，同時還保留了舊有的時代特色。

不過，這個作家工作室的新項目與傳統大宅顯然是完全不同的類型，一個宏偉，一個小巧；一個醒目，一個私密。但相同之處在於，兩者都有對舊建築的尊重和敬意，而不是單純打造一座滿足功能性和便於建造維護的新房子。

Eric認為好的建築需要尊重所在的環境，正如那幢二十年代的老宅，只有修舊如舊才能融入當地社區一直保存和延續的風貌。這座作家工作室所在的地點，相比之下歷史更加悠久，是一片茂密的山林。「我們的設計思路非常有趣，假設樹林中的那處山崖上曾經有過一座廢棄的建築，已經破敗不堪，我們對它進行了翻新。最終，它又恢復了當初的樣子，像是矗立在那裏很久了，周圍的樹木都長成了一片森林。」

透過一排排挺拔的樹幹，這座外牆主要由石頭砌成的小屋，像是一座隱藏在山林中的堡壘，方方正正，踏實堅固，為房主提供了最可靠的保護，讓他寫作時免受各種俗務

干擾。進入小屋那唯一的入口，巨大的鋼樑挑起一座懸空的露臺，上面用玻璃牆圍出了一間書房。這種彷彿漂浮在空中的感受，確實令人有種想要放飛思想的衝動。

更驚喜的是，這裏不僅有便於張開想象翅膀的地形，還有實際存在的靈感源泉。小屋的下方有一條在山谷中流淌的小溪，安靜下來，可以聽到流水的潺潺聲。Eric說：「這樣懸空的設計，讓你像是將自己投射進了未來，像是打破了空間的桎梏。你在一個全景的玻璃盒子中，周圍是綠樹叢林，微風輕拂。」

在這樣一個空靈的空間裏，儘管你獨自一人，卻仿佛不是一個人在思考。你的身體和思想都像是融入進了周圍的自然環境中，可以自由呼吸它的能量，汲取它的智慧。「當你來到這個空間，所有其它東西都拋在身後了。」

站在大門前，小巧的屋子內部一覽無餘。在通往露臺書房的走廊兩側，是兩排高大的、原木的書架，天花板上鑲嵌著玻璃，讓光線自然投射下來，像是行走過一片散發著書香的森林。「穿過走廊時，你會感覺像是在擠過狹窄的通道。」Eric解釋說，「這也正像在苦苦思索，尋找靈感的時刻。然後，當來到露臺上的玻璃書房時，視線又陡然開闊。」像是在這個小小的空間裏演繹了一回「山窮水盡疑無路，柳暗花明又一村」。沿著進門處左側的樓梯還可以走上屋頂，沒有了玻璃牆和天花板，視線更加開闊，完全身處在周圍的自然環境中。

當心融入自然，平靜下來，你會開始注意到一些平日裏容易忽略的東西。把目光投向山林，也許草叢中會突然蹦出一隻野兔，大概《愛麗絲夢遊仙境》就是以此為靈感的吧！也許天空中正漂浮著一朵形狀酷似航船的白雲，它又會駛向何方呢？小溪中的水流似乎比往常更湍急一些，是因為昨夜的那場雨嗎？玄妙的靈感也許並沒有那麼難以尋覓，它一直隱身在周圍的環境中和日常的生活中，只是需要一雙善於發現的眼睛和一間牆壁由玻璃圍成的書房。🏡