



**DD**  
Residence  
Agate Pass Cabin

## Into the woods

### Seattle

**Preface**  
After persuading the owner to sell up, Alan Maskin spent more than a decade refurbishing his spruce hideaway. With a neat floorplan and intelligently placed windows, this peninsula cabin is at one with its surroundings.

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The grey patina that often settles over the Pacific Northwest is immediately forgivable when you come across a place such as the Agate Pass Cabin. Nestled among foliage and a cluster of small houses on the Kitsap Peninsula – a short hop from Seattle – it's a home that feels a million miles from the hubbub of the city.

Every weekday architect and cabin owner Alan Maskin travels back home from downtown Seattle by the sleepest of transport modes: the car ferry. The commute to the island of Bainbridge allows for contemplation as the Space Needle that dominates Seattle's skyline shrinks in the background, before it's time to jump in the car for a 20-minute drive. The final leg involves crossing a bridge onto the mainland west of the peninsula, which leads to the 1930s-era cabin.

It's here that Maskin changes from his dress shirt into a uniform more becoming of Washington state's rugged outdoor types: a plaid shirt, jeans and leather boots. His home is a wonderfully unflashy compact structure of corrugated zinc and cedar shingles, with large windows.



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- 01 Original wood was saved and reused on kitchen casework and the former porch was transformed into an office and dining room
- 02 Maskin's design intervention delineates the house's different eras



“I like living small; it’s the right way to do it,” says Maskin. “You can live small as long as it doesn’t feel that way.” And it doesn’t: the cabin gives the impression of being far larger than its 100 sq m due to the extension that created the upstairs bedroom. This is accentuated by a constant connection with the outdoors, including the small external deck leading from the bedroom – the perfect place to pick up a pair of binoculars and do some eagle spotting.

Maskin used to live in Seattle’s Capitol Hill neighbourhood before deciding he wanted to be further out. “I had a dream about a cabin by the water,” he says. “I told my partner’s brother – he’s a building contractor. He said, ‘I know this place but it’s not for sale.’” Unperturbed, Maskin decided to ask the woman who lived there if she’d consider selling; she said she’d been thinking about it for a while. His inquisitiveness paid off.

But there was work to be done: linoleum tiles covered the fir flooring in the porch and the layout was poorly conceived. The much-needed refurbishment meant Maskin spent 12 years sleeping in the gable attic (the original bedroom). Work commitments and red tape also delayed completion but he consoled himself on his ferry commutes by sketching out the perfect refurb.

The result was worth the wait: wooden flooring is back on show, the living-room roof has been raised by removing the attic and stairs lead up to a master bedroom above the kitchen, dominated by an east-facing floor-to-ceiling window shaped by the room’s new gable roof. It’s here that the weather teases and delights with shocks of pink and orange thrown up at first light, sparkling on the water of the Agate Pass in the distance. A black 1960s Eames chaise produced by Herman Miller makes for the perfect vantage point. “It’s also the only place with a decent mobile phone signal,” says Maskin with a chuckle.

There’s a strong connection to nature throughout the home thanks to the strategically positioned windows that were suggested by Jim Olson, a partner at Olson Kundig, the firm Maskin owns. In



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the bedroom, small openings in the two sidewalls below the roof afford views of the skyline and treetops, while cleverly obscuring any view of the neighbouring property. Light is maximised, from the orange-hued acrylic cut into the steps that flood the bathroom under the stairs with warm light, to the corrugated zinc sheeting that paints beads of light on the floor depending on the angle of the sun.

The interior design is warm but pared back, a requisite for a residence of this size. The living room is dominated by a huge 1970s wood burner made by Rais that Maskin keeps stoked for cosy evenings spent curled up on one of two leather sofas (one of which he designed himself).

The small but ordered kitchen continues the theme with repurposed wood that was once the attic flooring, now used as finishing for the cupboards. Wood also lends a sense of place and history to the house: the long table in the converted porch is about 100 years old and pockmarked from use; the Scandinavian mid-century tables in the bedroom have



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## Highlights from Maskin’s art collection

### 01

#### Big Ed by Scott Fife

Fashioned from screws, sheetrock, cardboard and mud, this giant head is mounted to the wall of the bedroom and is also visible from outside the house. The bust is an oversized tribute to artist Ed Kienholz.

### 02

#### Last Stand: Cedar by Karen Rudd

One of many wood references in the cabin, this great trompe l’oeil sculpture of a felled tree is made entirely from cardboard and fixed to the living room wall.

### 03

#### : ) by SuttonBeresCuller

A challenging piece that could be seen as an ironic reference to home surveillance and homeland security: two CCTV cameras made from bronze. “I’m not disturbed by provocative artwork,” says Maskin.



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cigarette burns on them; and the stunning 1930s Dutch door leading from the porch into the living room bears the tell-tale scratch marks of an eager pooch.

Uncluttered it may be but the Agate Pass Cabin has plenty of warmth beyond the glow of the wood burner. And while the dominant hue is earthy brown, Maskin throws in plenty of colour, from the Afghan rugs in the living room to his impressive art collection, which he jokingly calls his “Christmas-bonus collection”. One of the most striking pieces is a set of cast bronze security cameras mounted on the living room wall. “I think people walking their dogs may not understand that it’s art,” he says with a grin. One gets the sense that security in this idyllic strip of the American north-west isn’t exactly an issue. — (M)

- 01 Cabin exterior (and eagle-spotting deck)
- 02 Various woods are found throughout the cabin
- 03 Converted porch and pockmarked table
- 04 Converted office space
- 05 Dining room with a view
- 06 Eames chaise longue in the bedroom
- 07 Cosy living room and 1970s Rais stove
- 08 Removing the attic floor created a cathedral ceiling in the living room