

2016 WOOD DESIGN AWARDS - WINNER

Western Red Cedar

James Tuer, JWT Architecture and Planning, Bowen Island, BC

Buddhist International Society Retreat, Bowen Island, BC



“The beauty of Western red cedar is evident throughout...clean lines, interesting architecture and the curved roof add a distinct quality to the structure.”

- jury comments

High resolution images available.
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Western red cedar was the natural choice for this retreat. The owners completed a much larger project in Steveston, their main temple, in the traditions of Chinese architecture. For this second smaller sanctuary space they desired a structure that fit with the local culture, climate and setting. Cladding the building in cedar, both through the exterior and within the main sanctuary’s ceilings, draws a connection between the ancient traditions of Buddhist architecture and the contemporary methods and culture of building on the west coast of British Columbia.

The curved roofs provide a striking architectural form on the exterior, and create a Zen-like floating cedar boat-like metaphor on the interior, adding both tension and serenity to the primary sanctuary space.

The cedar material chosen is free of knots (clear) and has a ‘fine line’ reveal between boards. Deep curved glulam Douglas fir beams were used to create the curvature of the roof in the primary structure and the Western red cedar interior ceiling finish highlights that form in contrast to the maple floors and gypsum wallboard wall finish. The curvature sets up a dramatic display space for the three large Buddhas that are the focal point of the interior space.

Western red cedar was also used in the perimeter fencing and gates – all done with a similar design aesthetic that combines traditional Buddhist architectural forms found in classic gates from Kyoto, Japan with a western and modern interpretation.