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ARCHITECTS' ANSWERS FOR PROBLEM PROJECTS



Coastal Construction's Tofino Panorama house

A House on the Rocks

It took large doses of common sense to construct this precariously perched home

Building the remote Tofino Panorama House in Tofino, Canada was more like a logic puzzle than a construction project.

The site's dramatically sloping ground, set 150 feet above sea level, could barely accommodate a car, let alone a brand new house. To add to the challenge, architect Leith Anderson designed the home as "a closely-packed composition" of three smaller, independent volumes—a main house, a coach house, and a studio—and embedded them at different levels into Vancouver's rocky mountain ground.

Project manager Troy Freeborn of contractor Coastal Construction was the one responsible for executing Anderson's design. To prepare the site for foundations,

"Crews carried a lot of materials to the studio, which is sixty feet above the main house, by hand."

—TROY FREEBORN, COASTAL CONSTRUCTION

Freeborn and his team used a rock hammer, a device that Freeborn explains "is less damaging to the surrounding vegetation than conventional blasting." They then installed the fieldstone they'd removed to pave an open-air patio between the main and coach houses. As soon as the coach house was enclosed, Freeborn set up a

workshop where a team of workmen could fabricate woodwork for other structures. Since construction equipment couldn't fit onto the site, the finished pieces had to be carried by hand. "Crews carried a lot of materials to the studio, which is sixty feet above the main house, by hand up lots of stairs," Freeborn recalls.

Coastal's hard work paid off. The home, with its heavy timber frame roofing and sleek glass railings, takes full advantage of its location high above the ocean, offering views for miles, making the laborious building process entirely worth it. ❧

BY NALINA MOSES

PHOTOS BY VINCE KLASSEN