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Safe Arbor

A serene French country house expresses a reverence for wood.

PHOTOS BY
Hervé Abbadie

PROJECT
House in the Grove
ARCHITECT
Arba, arba.pro
LOCATION
Veneux-les-Sablons,
France

Arba, the architecture firm founded by Jean-Baptiste Barache and Sihem Lamine, designed a 1,786-square-foot residence for Dominique Jacquot 45 minutes outside Paris. The house is her sanctuary from city life.

“What we love most is that wood is a material that continues to settle into its environment with time.” —Sihem Lamine, architect



The house has four varieties of wood that relate to one another with a similar material vocabulary. “It is all about finding ways to assemble pieces of the same nature,” says Lamine.

Glass doors printed with a serigraphy technique (above) are on two sides of the house. Jacquot sits at a dining table and benches designed by Arba and built by Menuiserie Ressay.

Dominique Jacquot didn't have many parameters in mind when she started imagining her house in the countryside, 45 minutes outside Paris. One requirement, however, was plenty of wood. She ran across architect Jean-Baptiste Barache's wooden A-frame house in Normandy and liked that it was “pure and poetic.” So she enlisted his firm, Arba, to “create and invent”—as long as an open living plan and a space to practice yoga were

part of the deal. Following Jacquot's basic brief, the architects chose northern pine to frame the two-bedroom structure, untreated larch wood for the cladding and window framing, ash for the ground floor, and spruce for the attic.

The modest structure is heated by a wood stove, uses a solar vacuum tube for hot water, and recycles rainwater to run the washing machine and toilet. Consequently, the house is low-emission,



Though it's built with sturdy framing, Arba's House in the Grove doesn't skimp on transparency. At the top of the gabled volume, battens form a double layer with louvers that allow daylight into the two bedrooms (above).



and for its remaining energy needs, it's linked to a 100 percent renewable grid supplied by the French company Enercoop.

“Our attitude integrates humility, compactness, smoothness, reduced scales, and respect for the existing vegetation,” Barache's partner, Sihem Lamine, says of the design. “Our process is to create buildings while stripping the architecture from every arrogant gesture toward its environment.” □