

Maison L in Yvelines, France

2012-10-19



[Maison L](#), in Yvelines, France, is an addition to an 18th-Century orangery designed by Christian Pottgiesser.
Photo: Courtesy [architecturespossibles](#)

In the corner of the rolling site of a former chateau near Versailles is a heavily restored orangery whose origins can be traced back to the late 18th Century. The building was already home to a couple with four children when they hired architect Christian Pottgiesser to expand it. [Maison L](#), in Yvelines, France, has been awarded the 2012 RIBA Manser Medal for best new house.

The project brief called for an extension that would minimally impact the mature landscape and views from the orangery. These requirements naturally suggested the new home's rambling plan and the use of indigenous stone for retaining walls. But the home's most prominent features are a series of five three-story towers, clad in board-marked concrete, that extend from the home's rockery



Inside the cavernous living space of Maison L, looking at the base of a bedroom tower. Photo: Courtesy architecturespossibles

Further limitations were imposed on the project by the local building code, which mandated an 8-meter (26-foot) height limit. One solution that allowed for more building within the height limitation was the creation of a large, irregularly shaped semi-subterranean living space, buried two meters (6.6 feet) underground. The space encloses the base of all the towers, which intern serve to break up the cavernous space into informal rooms. Daylight is admitted to the living room from long skylights at the edge of some towers, washing their beton brut walls with light, and through the occasional window or glass door along the room's downhill side.



Maison L ground-floor plan drawing. Image: Courtesy architecturepossibles

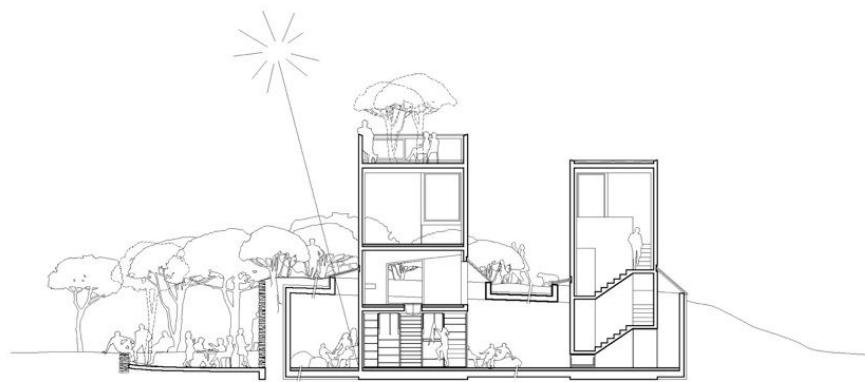
The code also called for a gabled or hipped roof but allowed, in exceptional cases, for flat roofs as long as they do not exceed 25 square meters (270 square feet) each. The five three-story towers were designed in response to this requirement. Each tower has one room per floor -- comprising dressing/ storage, bathroom, and bedroom

spaces -- with the circulation winding up through them.



A patio space defined by the walls and towers of Maison L Photo: Courtesy architectespossibles

And by borrowing some area from each of the children's towers, the architects were able to provide for a somewhat larger bedroom tower for the parents, with a planted roof terrace that offers great views, not only of the garden and the surrounding district, but also more distant views of "La Défense", the business district of the modern Paris.



Maison L section drawing. Photo: Courtesy architecturepossibles

Previous winners include Hampstead Lane by Duggan Morris (2011), Acme for Hunsett Mill (2010), Pitman Tozer Architects for The Gap House (2009), Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners for Oxley Woods (2008) and Alison Brooks Architects for the Salt House (2007).



Skylights wash daylight along the walls of the towers to illuminate the living space of Maison L. Photo: Courtesy architecturespossible

This year's judges include: Michael Manser CBE, architect; Lady Jill Ritblat; and Tony Chapman, Hon FRIBA, RIBA Head of Awards.

Project Credits

Architect: architecturespossible

Client: Private

Structural Engineer: Joel Betito Contractor: Les Constructeurs de Suresnes

Contract Value: Confidential

Date of completion: August 2011

Gross internal area: 616 square meters (6,630 square feet)

Site Area: 5,000 square meters (54,000 square feet)



View of Maison L from adjacent field. Photo: architecturespossibles



Tower stairs. Photo: architecturespossibles



An irregularly shaped window and door arrangement of Maison L. Photo: architecturespossibles



Tower shower. Photo: architecturepossibles



Peeking through the tower stairs. Photo: architecturespossibles

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