



enlightened lakeside

AN INSPIRED ARCHITECT & ENGAGED HOMEOWNERS
PULL ON AGE-OLD ARCHITECTURAL PRINCIPLES TO
CREATE A FRESH TAKE ON WATERSIDE LIVING.

TEXT BY ELIZABETH EDWARDS // PHOTOS BY DAVE SPECKMAN

THE DRAMATIC FRONT ENTRANCE HELPS FILL THE HOME WITH LIGHT.



THE STUNNING PORCELAIN-TILED FIREPLACE ADS INTIMACY TO BOTH SIDES OF THE GREAT ROOM WHILE PRESERVING BEAUTIFUL, AIRY SIGHTLINES.





ARCHITECT KEN RICHMOND DESIGNED THE UPSTAIRS BATHROOM WINDOWS TO MAKE THE ROOM FEEL LIKE IT IS HOVERING OVER THE WATER LIKE A SHIP'S BERTH.

Architect Ken Richmond and his wife, artist Joan Richmond, spend a lot of time in Italy. Ken's passion for the country, which Joan shares, began with a couple of college abroads there years ago. Based in Rome, they've toured the entire country, including the renowned Amalfi Coast where villas nestled into the sides of the Lattari Mountain look over the cobalt waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Which, I strongly suspect, is why, when standing on the porcelain-tiled terrace of this home overlooking the intensely blue, 19-mile-long Torch Lake, I felt as though I were in a villa. Not that Richmond, or the discerning homeowners, would ever desire a literal re-creation of an Italian villa in Northern Michigan. The homeowners imagined a contemporary rendition of an American lake house when they hired Richmond, who has made a reputation for his beautiful cottage designs—each distinct yet all evoking some sense of Northern Michigan lake-country vernacular architecture.

But like the skilled and wise architect that he is, Richmond is guided by ancient principles: perhaps the foremost being to work with the land, not against it—a feat that is particularly difficult when the site is hard to build, as in a parcel with a steep slope on one side, and a road on the other. As in the case of much of the Amalfi Coast. As in the case of this Torch Lake lot. All too often, the modern fix is to scrape the site and create a plateau.

Richmond chose the ancient solution: snuggling the roadside part of the house into the hill. "That side of the house is buried three feet, which makes the house look much smaller from the road and blend into the site ... I love that," Richmond says.

On the waterside, the homeowners understandably wanted as much outdoor space attached to the home as possible (their beautiful beachfront is many steps down at the bottom of the slope). So Richmond planned the home's design around a luxuriously generous terrace and then shaped the home around it in a kind of loose U. Or as he explains it: "I think of that house like a bridge. It feels like it is strung out across the hillside and then there is this spaciousness looking out at the water."

A home snuggled into and strung out along an ancient hill with a terrace that overlooks a cobalt inland sea ... you get where I am going.

Being as conscious of the local vernacular as he is of the local topography, however, Richmond added exterior elements that reflect traditional Northern Michigan cottage design. The two wings attached to the "bridge" (which houses the great room) ➤



TOP: THE KITCHEN TUCKED AT THE BACK OF THE GREAT ROOM IS SHIELDED FROM THE ROAD VIEW BY DEEP EXTERIOR EAVES. SMALL BUT VERY EFFICIENT, IT IS OUTFITTED WITH KEN'S TRADEMARK PANTRY DESIGN THAT LOCATES THE REFRIGERATOR IN A SPACIOUS PANTRY OFF THE WORK AREA.

BOTTOM: THE STAIRCASE LEADS TO AN OPEN BRIDGE THAT LOOKS OVER THE GREAT ROOM AND LEADS TO THE GUEST WING.



for example, don't mirror each other—one is two-stories, the other is a single story to give the effect of an old structure that was added on to over the years. Dark stained, rough board and batten siding and deep eaves also help ground the structure in its Northern Michigan environment.

That said, the home is anything but your grandmother's cottage, as in the stunning and contemporary two-story grid of windows that flank the front door—an entry that is set on the side of the home away from the road—and that floods the great room with light. Likewise, light pours in from the wall-sized glass Nana door between the great room and that fabulous terrace and its incredible Torch Lake view.

Richmond has filled this home with other smaller but significant touches including a sleek floating staircase that climbs to a floating bridge that leads to the adult children's suite, windows that are set at purposeful angles to catch the gorgeous lengthwise views of Torch and several window niches that hover over the water like a ship's berth.

Structural engineer Angelo Vozza of Avanti Engineering worked with builder Roger Gribi to execute the design. The homeowners captained the decisions on the interior finishes, working with Nowak Cabinets on minimalist modern-style kitchen cabinets in warm wood tones. They also chose to clad the floor, fireplace chimney and face in coordinated porcelain tile that flows out on to that terrace—and feels like a contemporary take on marble.

After two summers spent in their home, the homeowners understand that their architect designed them a home for the ages: classic yet contemporary; organic yet fresh and light as a new day. "We just love it," says the homeowner. 🏡

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