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OASIS ON ELK LAKE

ARCHITECT KEN RICHMOND DESIGNS A HOME THAT CAPTURES THE CARIBBEAN COLORS OF ELK LAKE WHILE FEELING COMPLETELY ORGANIC TO THE NORTHWOODS.

BY ELIZABETH EDWARDS / PHOTOS BY TODD ZAWISTOWSKI





IN 2009, JOHN AND LISA DYKEMA bought a small fixer-upper cottage on the west side of Elk Lake. The purchase had come after years of consideration about where in Northern Michigan, exactly, they wanted to have a summer cottage. While the Dykemas live in Wisconsin, John is from Michigan and often vacationed in Northern Michigan—many of those visits on or near Elk Lake. Over a period of summers, the family “tried out” rentals on various Up North bodies of water, including Grand Traverse Bay and Torch, Big Glen and Elk lakes. Eventually, the couple opted for the cottage on Elk Lake because of John’s connection to the area and its gorgeous shades of Caribbean blue.

As excited as the family was about their new summer home, there was a problem. It

THE HOME’S SEAMLESS CONNECTION TO THE OUTDOORS ADDS TO ITS TIMELESS, ORGANIC SERENITY.

was tiny, and the Dykemas have four very tall boys—the shortest of them standing 6 feet, 3 inches tall. The cottage just wasn’t big enough for all those long limbs. When a lot (with another small cottage on it) went up for sale next to their cottage, the couple jumped at the chance to purchase it and decided to take both cottages down and build a home tailored to their family.

Besides having more space, Lisa dreamed of an Up North home that lived like a tropical beachfront escape—a barefoot-friendly dwelling with an abundance of windows to flood the home with light and views of Elk Lake. Also high on her wish list: A glassed-in front entry that would allow a view of the lake through windows on the lake side. “I wanted to feel like I was home, but also on vacation the moment I pulled in the driveway,” Lisa says.



Lisa researched Northern Michigan architects on the web, as well as in back issues of *Northern Home & Cottage*. Architect Ken Richmond soon rose to the top of her list. When they met, Richmond impressed the couple with his enthusiasm and inspirational ideas for their site. As importantly, the Dyke-

mas trusted him to fuse their ideas for a home with a tropical ambiance into a design that fit into the Northern Michigan landscape. "That's where Ken really took charge and gave us what we wanted and made our home look like Northern Michigan," Lisa says.

With plans for the house rolling, Richmond recommended Midlake Builders, among several other contractors. After the couple met with Midlake owner Bob Schmerheim, they knew they had their design-and-build team. "Midlake was wonderful," Lisa says. "Their workmanship was awesome, and if there were any problems or questions, they were on it immediately, contacting us and solving the issue."

The home, finished last summer, is everything the couple envisioned and more. Set on a slope above the lake, the property is blessed with three different directional views, up, down and across Elk Lake. Richmond took full advantage of those views with





a plan that “rambles” along the ridge in cabin-like living spaces (master suite, great room, study, guest wing) all connected by glassed-in hallways. While the Dykemas had originally requested a one-floor home, Richmond couldn’t resist designing in two watchtowers—one for John’s office and another as the gateway to an upper-level deck and a space that the couple is planning to turn into a bunk room. “Going to the second floor gave another layer of panoramic interest,” Richmond says. “Each lookout has a separate view.” Needless to say, the couple is thrilled that Richmond pushed for the towers.

BESIDES HAVING MORE SPACE, LISA DREAMED OF AN UP NORTH HOME THAT LIVED LIKE A TROPICAL BEACHFRONT ESCAPE.

By cladding the exterior in materials native to Northern Michigan—stone, wood shingles, cedar posts and planked white pine—Richmond assured that the home would fit into its Northern Michigan setting. “All the elements make it feel casual and campy, like an Up North compound,” Richmond says.

The interior was a team effort between Richmond, the





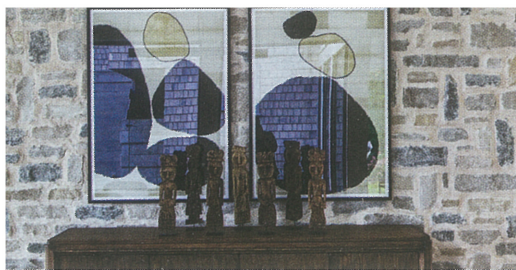
Midlake crew and Lisa's interior designers Melanie Kachan and Melissa Couture-Peterson of Designs of the Interior in Wisconsin. "I love rustic, modern and contemporary styles, as well as antiques and primitive art," Lisa says of her tastes. Blending those eclectic styles feels effortless in the home with its classic backdrop of white oak floors, wooden beams (several that are antique), interior stone walls and huge windows that let in the Elk Lake views. Lisa is particularly enamored with the cabinetry work of Gary Cheadle of Woodbine.

"He was phenomenal—an artist," she says. "I wanted white oak cabinets but I wanted the finish totally natural—not shiny or waxy. He created something special to seal everything."

The home's seamless connection to the outdoors adds to its timeless, organic serenity. A patio at the entrance of the home offers a lake view through one of the glassed-in hallways. On the lakeside, a patio sheltered by three walls gives way to an open-air patio set against a band of lawn that in turn eases down to the beach area and to a stone terrace set into the slope. Both Lisa and Richmond credit landscape designer Anita Silverman with the graceful, subtle landscaping that perfectly complements the structures.

The home is everything John and Lisa wanted and more, right down to the view of the lake that is visible through the glassed-in foyer—the view that gives Lisa an "Ahhh, I'm home," feeling, each time she pulls into the drive. 🏡





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