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Just for Fun

A MUSKOKA FAIRY TALE

Architecture by Lorne Rose
Interior Design by Lori Morris
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You'd think building your own vacation home from the ground up would be a daunting task for a 30-something, white collar kind of guy.

Not so, says the owner of this 4,880 square foot country mansion on the southern tip of Ontario's Muskoka region. "It's one of the best experiences I've had." He says his secret was not to sweat the little details. Instead, he focused on creating an abode for family, friends and fun – and hired a talented crew of professionals to help him realize his dreams. "From a project perspective, it was just great."







Much of the wood used in the construction of the cottage was reclaimed from demolished barn. Antique Persian carpets add both colour, warmth and personality to the rooms. The walnut drop leaf table houses antique silver steins.



One of those professionals was Toronto architect Lorne Rose, who describes the job as child's play. Like a young boy fiddling around with building blocks, Rose assembled four modular cubes into an L-shape to form the structure of the house, keeping it simple with crisp, clean lines, square windows and peaked roofs.

"It's a Modernist twist on how to lay out a cottage, but in a traditional, child-like form," says Rose. His

muse for the project was American architect Hugh Newell Jacobson, a man best known for his pavilion-based residences and compositions of simple, gabled shapes.

Just like a fairy tale, this home is an adventure. Perched on a rock, the cottage is extremely difficult to access by boat, thanks to the surrounding rocky waters. "No one goes in there unattended," says Rose. "It's a dangerous spot. No boats go in front because it's very

rocky, so if you don't know where the rocks are, you are going to lose a propeller."

Instead of blasting and leveling the land, the young property owner insisted Rose incorporate elevation changes into the design. As a result, you can walk in one entrance at grade level and walk out another door at a completely different level.

Rose also created an element of surprise in the interior architecture



Custom pantry doors are reflected throughout the kitchen. Appliances include SubZero fridge and freezer, and Jenn Air gas cooktop, warming drawer and double oven. ABOVE: Built-in window seats are covered in charcoal leather with sumptuous throw pillows.



A Dutch, turn of the century cabinet is the feature site line upon entry, and is further enhanced by the stone wall behind it.

by slowly revealing things to visitors. "I don't like when you open up the door and it's the one-liner. Everything's exposed." Instead, coming in the front door, you're faced with the back side of the ceiling-high, ledge rock fireplace. Visitors must explore to see more.

Similar elements are used in the interior design. Extra-wide hallways feature niches and built-in window benches created by designer Lori Morris. The benches are

repeated in the kitchen and offer a little hideaway for anyone using them. "Window seats are always comfortable, always cozy. They're very appealing," Morris says.

She also strived to bring the outdoor, natural feeling inside. Exposed beams reclaimed from an old barn are everywhere, while the millwork on the walls is highly distressed and "antique painted" grey to look like weathered cedar. The floors are made



Custom bronze and coloured glass owl sconces showcase the powder room wall and give a playful yet sophisticated feel to the space.

of recycled barn board that was sanded down and stained.

Antique treasures also add to the charm, mostly European pieces Morris found all over the world. One beautiful armoire still has its original finish and dates back to 1870. "At the end of the day, I wanted to have this place feel aged. I didn't want it to feel new."

The design is tailor-made to fit the lifestyle of its owner and his young family, who love their



ABOVE: Heavy textured linen drapes with contrasting surround detail, set the symmetrical tone of the room. Pictured is an embossed leather sofa with chenille seats and a Persian patchwork carpet.

OPPOSITE: The oversized hallway is framed with exposed post and beam archways with storage and window seat surrounds. Beautiful landscape paintings set the tone.



sports and water activities. They also love to entertain. Right next to each other are an eat-in kitchen island, dining room table and wet bar. The owner is especially proud of the multi-coloured, hand-carved bar stools he acquired from www.sticks.com, and personally helped design with his own slogans and

images. "The entire cottage is built for family and friends. We love having people there, and it was the entire genesis of the cottage to build a place that was entirely family and friend oriented."

Hence the all-season Muskoka room equipped with heaters for the winter, putting greens, a tennis

court and basketball hoop. Inside the home, visitors and kids are free to get lost in the home's nooks and crannies. And space a-plenty to enjoy, there is. The second floor has six bedrooms, with a seventh "nanny bedroom" in the basement.

"It does have a lot of personality because there are so many



interesting and exciting things to look at in the textures of the fabrics, the materials, the carpets, the drapes and all the pieces around it," Morris says. Like the Harry Potter-style owl sconces in the powder room and lantern-style lighting in the great room.

Both designer and architect appreciate the homeowner's laid back attitude toward home building. "He sort of let me go and have fun with it," says Rose.

There was one little detail, however, the homeowner insisted on that initially got a poor reception: the deep, Ralph Lauren-type blue

stain on the exterior. Rose envisioned French Canadian red. In retrospect, he respects the choice. "It stands out."

A decision no doubt settled over a game of pea knuckle, marbles or a simple arm wrestle. This whole dream project, after all, was child's play. ♣



RIGHT: The master ensuite is framed with posts and beams. The window coverings are linen embroidered, soft roman blinds. Antique treasures also add to the charm, mostly European pieces Morris found all over the world. One beautiful armoire still has its original finish and dates back to 1870. "At the end of the day, I wanted to have this place feel aged. I didn't want it to feel new," says Morris.