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APRIL 2008

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A photograph of a modern living room. In the center, a black grand piano is positioned against a wall with a textured stone finish. In front of the piano, two beige tufted armchairs are arranged around a glass coffee table with ornate legs. The room features several stone pillars and a ceiling with recessed lighting. The overall aesthetic is contemporary and sophisticated.

# DESIGNED for Living

By Shannon Jackson Arnold | Photography By Mark Heffron and Joe De'Maio

# A Lakeshore Home Marries Form and Function in a Way that is Both Beautiful and Personal

**W**ith houses, there is a fine line between good design and livability. Focus too much on the design, and you create a museum piece where no one feels comfortable sitting down. Give too much over to livability, and you end up with just a place to eat and sleep.

At its best, home design should be a combination of the personal and transcendent, of form and function. It sounds easier to achieve than it often is: You've probably walked into a lovely house that feels like no one really lives there. Or visited a house that is so ordinary, it fails to inspire. When home design works, the effect is seamless, and the feeling it creates — an ethereal combination of order, elevation and art — helps explain the transformative power of our homes.

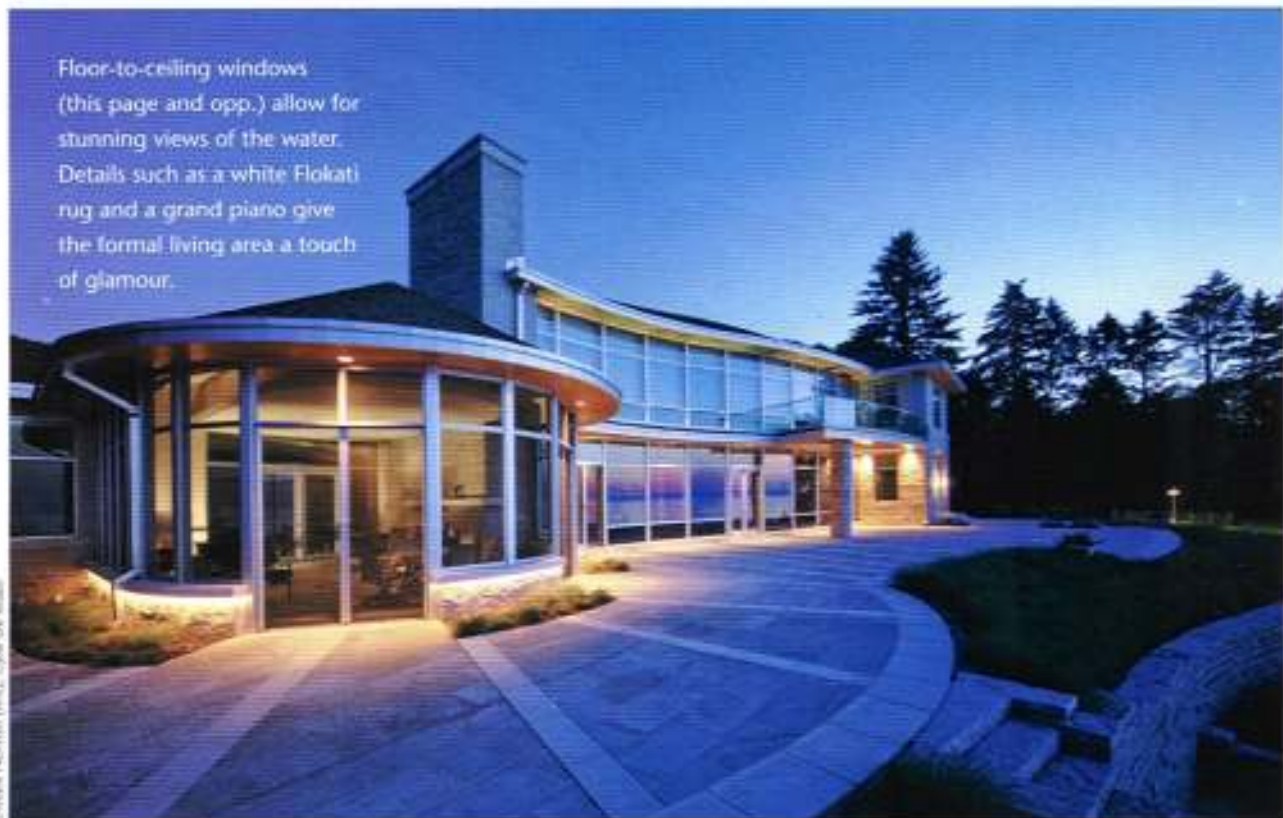
A fine example of this delicate interplay of design and daily living can be found in a North Shore home created by Deep River Partners, a design/build firm based in the Third Ward. The house is more than an architect's showcase, however — it is a very personal testament to the homeowners, their love of their young chil-

dren, and their desire to create a casually elegant home with a California flavor here in Wisconsin.

Certainly, it helps that this project started with a primo site: an expansive and unobstructed view of the shoreline. "The lake is so awesome. How can we compete with that?" says Deep River's Richard Sherer, the architect of the home. "We can't compete with that, and we don't want to."

Instead, the home, which was built in 2005, stands in partnership with the lake. The back half of the house is a bold statement: a wall of glass is curved to mimic the undulating shoreline below. ("The wall looks like the lake sounds," says Susan Sherer, Richard's older sister and the interior designer for Deep River.) Most of the rooms are oriented to the lake, with floor-to-ceiling views of the waves and seagulls. The radiating lines in the ceiling beams, the window mullions and the stone terrace draw your eye to the water. The interior wall colors, warm shades of buff and beige, mimic a

Floor-to-ceiling windows (this page and opp.) allow for stunning views of the water. Details such as a white Flokati rug and a grand piano give the formal living area a touch of glamour.



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Two garages flank the front of the house (above), framing a landscaped courtyard. Waking up in the master bedroom is a treat, with unobstructed lake views (left). The first level features an open floor plan, which encourages mingling between the living area and the large kitchen (opp.).

Pacific sunset. And the landscaping, with terraced beds of three varieties of low-lying grasses, creates the feeling of sand dunes. "I like that the architecture captures the lake in all its many moods," says Richard.

In contrast, the front of the house is a contemporary interpretation of Midwestern Prairie style with strong lines, a stone façade and two garages that flank the house to create a courtyard. Where the back of the house echoes the lake, the front of the house sets a politely welcoming tone in keeping with the neighborhood.

These disparate styles are connected both indoors and out through repetition of materials, shapes and textures. Lannon stone, aluminum and cherry-stained wood are repeated throughout. The stone used for the front gateposts, for example, is also on the street façade, some interior walls and columns on the main floor, and on the back terrace. "There's a reason for everything, from the pattern on the stone to the stain used on the wood for the front gate," says Jeff Hershberger, a senior landscape architect with

David J. Frank Landscape Contracting of Germantown, who worked on the home. "The average guest might not notice a singular detail, but the combination of everything, it all ties together."

Such careful choices give an order of calm and a quiet integrity to the home. There is a feeling that every part of the house has its place. From the four bedrooms to the exercise room to a garage/studio attached via a covered walkway for the man of the house, each space thoughtfully matches the homeowner's lifestyle and personality. "You never want to leave," says the homeowner. "My blood pressure immediately drops when I drive down the road toward home."

Critical to the family was creating a space where children are welcome and all ages can gather. "This house is very much about the kids," the homeowner says. "Casual, not opulent and kid-friendly." An open plan on the first floor where the living area, kitchen, screen porch and outdoor terrace flow together facilitates



Open On Main (top left); EdMark Interiors Design, LLC; Open On Main



A polished boulder sink adds an organic touch to the powder room (above). The stair rail (opp.) was custom made for the house, reflecting the harmonious blend of natural and contemporary design elements.

mingling. Surprisingly, the kid-friendly features manage to be practical as well as pleasing: A walk-in closet off the main living area stores toys and videos neatly out of view. A mudroom large enough to hold the family's coats, shoes and sporting equipment is conveniently concealed by two frosted glass pocket doors. The sleek gooseneck faucets in several of the bathrooms turn upright into bubblers. And lit cubbies with glass doors are built into the kids' bathroom walls to showcase their latest collections in a way that is both artful and utilitarian.

Deep River began this house, as they do all projects, by first giving the clients a thorough assessment to establish design criteria. This questionnaire went beyond "how many rooms do you want?" to ask deeper questions — "what brings you joy?" and "what was your favorite room as a child?" Having this information creates a kind of design mission statement, which Richard says "helps us translate the client's story into their surroundings." The answers guided every step of the design process on this house, from choosing lighting to selecting wall colors.

Unlike a traditional home design process where fixtures, flooring and other design features are chosen after the drawings are finalized, Deep River works from the beginning with a team of interior designers, lighting consultants, metalsmiths, landscape architects and other specialists to view the house as a whole. As Richard considered how to translate the clients' vision for this house into a layout, Susan simultaneously worked on sourcing the perfect polished boulder sink for the powder room, the white Flokati rug in the formal living area, and a custom stair rail that was simultaneously modern and naturalistic at the same time. The landscape designer angled the firepit to align perfectly with the view from the guest room. And Steve Klein, a local lighting consultant, showcased the architecture through a dramatic use of light. In the living room, this meant uplighting the stone so that it appears to shimmer. In the media room, a fiber optic star ceiling emulates watching a movie under a nighttime sky. "Richard is the only architect I know who uses lighting to define his work," says Klein. "For every single device in that house, there was a specific reason to be there."

And while it is the details that make the house, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. "We wanted to design a house where you walk into space and feel familiar, comfortable and at ease," says Susan. "We want the design to elevate the spirit."

The house — with its strong horizontal lines, repeating patterns and breathtaking water views — does manage to transport you, even on a winter Wisconsin day, to a space of California dreamin' that fits these homeowners perfectly. "We love it here," says the homeowner. "After we stayed here the first week, we couldn't believe we didn't have to check out and go home."

See "Resources," page 65

Delafield-based writer **Shannon Jackson Arnold** is the author of *Everybody Loves Ice Cream: The Whole Scoop on America's Favorite Treat* (Emmis Books).

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