

MODERN COMFORTS

A Lake Michigan family home delves into the softer side of contemporary living.

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Architecture and Interior Design: Elissa Morgante and Fred Wilson, Morgante Wilson Architects Home Builder: Rocco DeFilippis, Legacy Custom Homes, LLC Landscape Architecture: Carrie Woleben-Meade, Mariani Landscape

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ome residences compel one to stand on ceremony, their slick surfaces and precious materials undoubtedly beautiful yet ultimately untouchable. Steve and Leslie Shapiro imagined something far different for

their family's Highland Park abode overlooking Lake Michigan. Yes, they appreciated a clean and crisp aesthetic, how vast planes of glass and unbounded rooms could capture the sun-soaked lakeside experience. But with six kids and a bevy of family and friends, first and foremost "they wanted people to feel comfortable," notes architect and designer Elissa Morgante, who alongside her husband, architect Fred Wilson, set out to create a relaxed yet refined modern place for them to gather. "This would be a classic, contemporary home with warm finishes and furnishings," Wilson says.

The front façade created by Wilson establishes this delicate balance, substantial yet unpretentious with its streamlined gable roof and stucco walls surrounding a large courtyard, which accommodates a four-car garage for the couple's stunning automobile collection. Landscape architect Carrie Woleben-Meade added softness around the dwelling's perimeter with perennial grasses and colorful flowering plants, like autumn moor grass and violet catmint. This looser, romantic palette adds "a little more texture in contrast to the stronger, simpler lines of the architecture," she explains.

Once inside, the home immediately unfurls into the expansive living space, with the pool, sweeping lawn and lake filtering through a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows. Despite the open layout, Wilson still carved the great room into distinct entertaining enclaves by creating "a kind of enfilade," he explains. Instead of hallways, spaces run into each other but remain defined by architectural structures. For example, the double-sided fireplace serves both the living room and four-season room while French doors allow light to circulate between the two. On the other end, a freestanding bar delineates the more formal dining area from the kitchen, allowing for cocktail hour on one side and morning coffee on the other. Lining the connecting spaces are custom built-ins constructed by builder Rocco DeFilippis to cleverly conceal supporting steel columns. These floating bookshelves ground the center while framing the lake vista beyond. "Everything flows

together, but spaces still have definition," Wilson notes. "And I like that you're not just confined to the room you're in, as you're borrowing views across the house and out into the landscape."

These partial partitions help break up the white walls, as do organic textures, like the lead-gray stone fireplace surround with graphic white veins and ebonized oak panels above, which deftly slide away to reveal a television—essential for the couple as die-hard Ohio State Buckeyes fans. Overall, "we used a very natural palette," Morgante says. "No crazy wallpapers and lights. Instead, we wanted materials that had a quiet relationship with the landscape and view."

Varying wood tones in particular evoke specific moods. In the four-season room that seamlessly connects to the pool through pocketed doors, whitewashed shiplap creates a cabana-like ambience alongside the all-white upholstery and gauzy drapery. Meanwhile, dark chevron wood veneer adds dimension to the couple's bedroom, cloaked in smoky velvet finishes, from the custom headboard to the lush rug. And amber-hued white oak panels bring organic warmth to the central stairwell, illuminated by custom minimalist fixtures designed to mirror the railing.

Morgante continued her subtle hand when fleshing out each space, sourcing furniture with simple silhouettes and juxtaposed textures. "It's really about the whole composition," the designer notes. "Each piece is beautiful independently, but you get this rich layering when you put it all together." Large, festive dinners center around the live-edge dining table with a pragmatic vein of steel running through the center as a built-in trivet. More intimate family meals naturally gravitate to the warm walnut kitchen table extension built directly into the island. Ornamentation remains understated, like an armchair lined with leather fringe or an area rug with rippled patterns akin to a Zen sand garden. Ranging in shades of black, taupe and gray, "colors are very rich, but quiet, intended to be deferential to the beautiful blues and greens outside," Morgante adds.

One almost never loses the sights and sounds of Lake Michigan while wandering from space to space. Yet the home feels most alive when its rooms are also filled with the family's loved ones, their raucous game-day cheers and poolside laughter mingling indoors and out. "They are a family that is all about having fun and celebrating life," Wilson says. "When you walk in, you feel that." ■



Husband-and-wife team Fred Wilson and Elissa Morgante established the modern aesthetic of this lakeside home from the outset with stucco walls and a sleek steel-and-glass door by Loewen. A border of catmint and autumn moor grass designed by landscape architect Carrie Woleben-Meade adds charm.



Windows encircle the sunny family room, made simultaneously welcoming and chic with a custom sectional, fringed Bradley USA swivel tub chair and Mos Design coffee table grouping. A Moroccan wool rug from Oscar Isberian Rugs grounds the space.

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Cocktail hour comes alive in the dining area, complete with a bar featuring a honed marble backsplash from Tithof Tile & Marble and cabinets by nuHaus. Baker armchairs surround a custom live-edge oak dining table with metal inlay.



Above: The daughter's airy bedroom is swathed in lush textures, like the shimmering Fabrica carpet, Pottery Barn platform bed covered in dove gray microsuede and ripple-fold drapes crafted by Ludwig Interiors. A Four Hands accent table completes the reading area.

Opposite: Poolside entertaining organically flows from fire-pit conversations along the Crate & Barrel sectional to sunbathing on Allegro Classics platform beds to lunch around the Teak Warehouse concrete dining table. Two CB2 rocking chairs turn toward the lake view.

