

Lure of the Lake

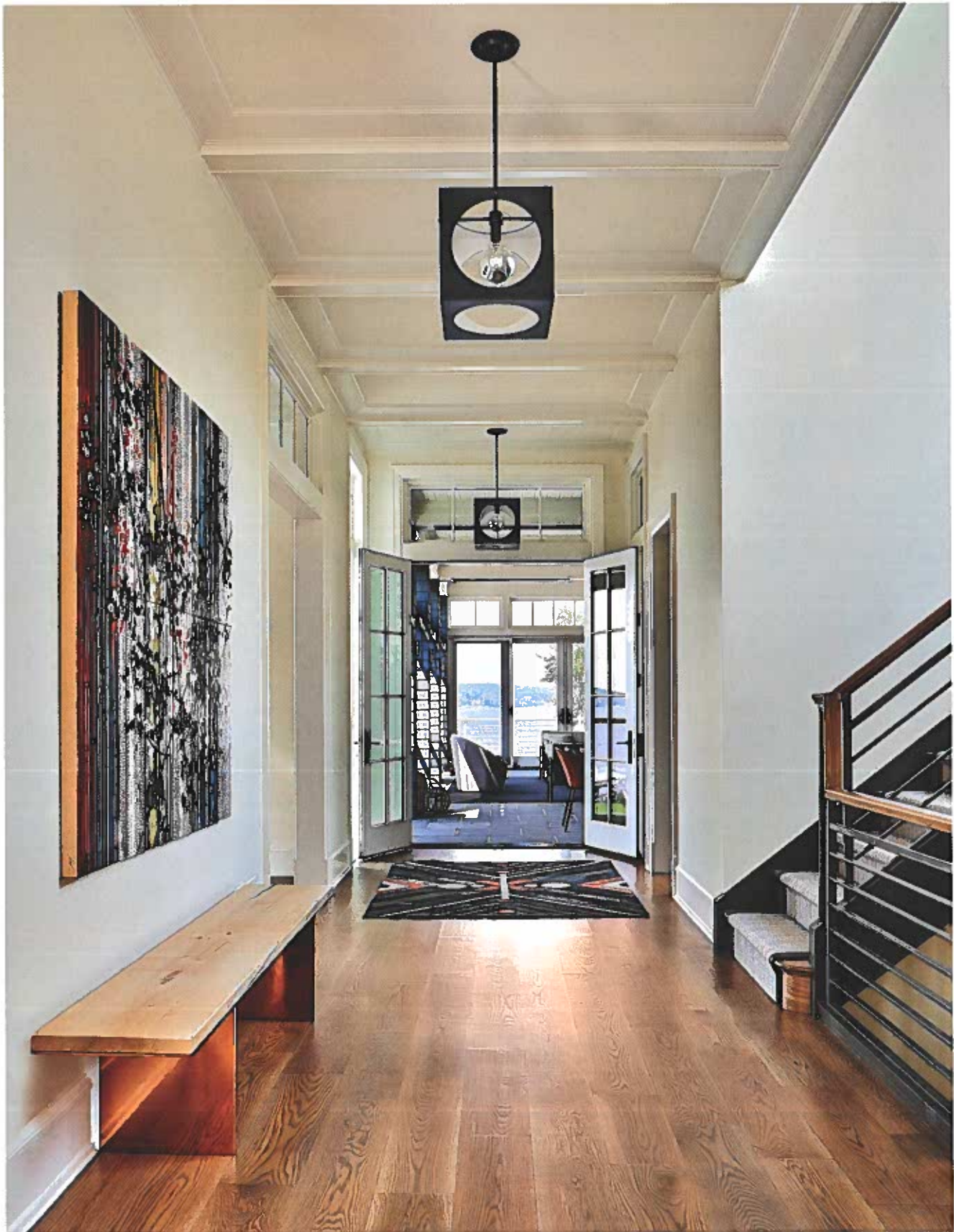
Amid Gilded Age mansions and nouveau chateaus, a design team puts a fresh take on a Lake Geneva summer house.

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Architecture: Fred Wilson and Elissa Morgante, Morgante Wilson Architects **Interior Design:** Jennie Bishop, Studio Gild
Home Builder: John Matustik, Matustik Builders **Landscape Architecture:** Scott Freres, Red Spade Environments



"This house has classic architectural details that can go either way: super-modern or more traditional," designer Jennie Bishop says. In the foyer, the design team leaned toward the former, choosing a bold hair-on-hide rug that Studio Gild designed with Oscar Isberian Rugs, a Lagomorph Design organic-meets-industrial bench and The Urban Electric Company pendants.

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here's a footpath that follows the 21-mile shoreline of Wisconsin's Geneva Lake. It winds right through the backyards of summer homes built by legendary families such as the Schwinns, the Wrigleys and the Maytags. But beyond the obvious opportunity it provides—up-close ogling of blue-chip estates—it offers a unique perspective on the lake house in all its forms, from Tudor lodge to turreted Queen Anne.

When Chicagoans John and Sarah Cobb and their daughter would amble along the footpath during vacations spent at their home off the water, they'd often imagine the place they would add to that mix. So when a rare lakefront lot came up for sale, they decided to build it.

The couple envisioned a contemporary take on the stone-and-shingle cottages of the Northeast, a home anchored by a dramatic catwalk—a concept they had spotted in the portfolio of architects Fred Wilson and Elissa Morgante. So the Cobbs hired the duo and a design took shape, with that striking detail at its core. "I've always loved those interstitial spaces," Wilson says of the catwalk concept, "so I thought, 'Let's explore that idea of walking through the trusses.'" The suspended hallway—perhaps the most challenging detail tackled by builder John Matustik—spans the home's double-height great room, passing through the steel chimney and connecting the top-floor bedroom wings.

On the main floor, that feature accomplishes a goal that was paramount throughout the house: to strike a balance between grandeur and comfort. "The Cobbs wanted the house to feel like it could absorb 15 of their family and friends but also be comfortable when it's just the three of them there," Wilson explains. "The bridge provides a bit of a virtual ceiling, allowing you to feel the vaulted scale of the house but bringing it down so you don't feel tiny in the space."

The contrast between the home's front and rear elevations strikes a similar balance. The front, which leans traditional with mullioned windows, is a "more neighborly" one-and-a-half stories tall, Wilson says. The rear soars a full three stories—thanks to the site's natural slope—expressing a more contemporary language: a standing seam metal roof, steel balcony handrails and wide

windows topped by steel I beams. Uniting the two sides are walls of native Lannon stone and slate-blue shingles.

The slate blue nods to Wilson's passion for incorporating color. He and Morgante proved how cleverly it can be done in the interiors as well. Take the kitchen: There, set among airy white shades with touches of metal and white-oak floors, a serene blue hue grounds the large island, which features a Mondrian-inspired end piece welded from solid steel.

"It's a chilled-out, cooler palette, into which we tried to infuse some warmth," says designer Jennie Bishop, who furnished the house with help from partners Melissa Benham and Kristen Ekeland. "So it was chunky soft sisals on the floors, stripes on the dining chairs, wallpaper in the bedrooms and a throw everywhere you can sit." And, perhaps most impactfully, a rusty-toned suede on the great room's laidback armchairs. "They're kind of like that New York friend who comes to dinner looking effortlessly tousled—and so much cooler than you do," Bishop says of the seats. "They're wrinkled to start with, and they just get better with age."

Which is exactly what the Cobbs wanted. "We said, 'We want to be able to sit in every seat in a wet bathing suit, and to leave a melting popsicle on any table for two hours—after that, we can be flexible,'" John says. Bishop capitalized on that freedom, incorporating bold yet bulletproof furnishings such as a cinnamon-colored quilted chair in the breakfast nook, blue kitchen counter stools that are intentionally "a little clash-y" with the island, and a custom dining table inset with a metal trough. "I want everything to have enough interest that it's not boring," she says, "but I don't want anything to be over the top."

Landscape architect Scott Freres echoed this sentiment when describing his role, which encompassed land contouring, plantings, and designing the property's bluestone terraces and limestone pool deck. "Everything here is about the lake," he notes, "so putting in lots of plants just to decorate was not the right approach. Sometimes you have to recognize that the game is not to fight against what you're given, but to borrow from what's already there." And on this storied stretch of waterfront, that turned out to be more than enough. ■

To create a great room that could handle wet swimsuits and cocktail parties, the designers chose casual yet refined furnishings in durable materials: an outdoor fabric on RH Modern sofas, a laid-back rusty suede for Studio Piet Boon armchairs, bleached ash and tumbled stone from Paris Ceramics for a custom coffee table and a rustic metal trough inset for a custom wood dining table by Studio Gild.





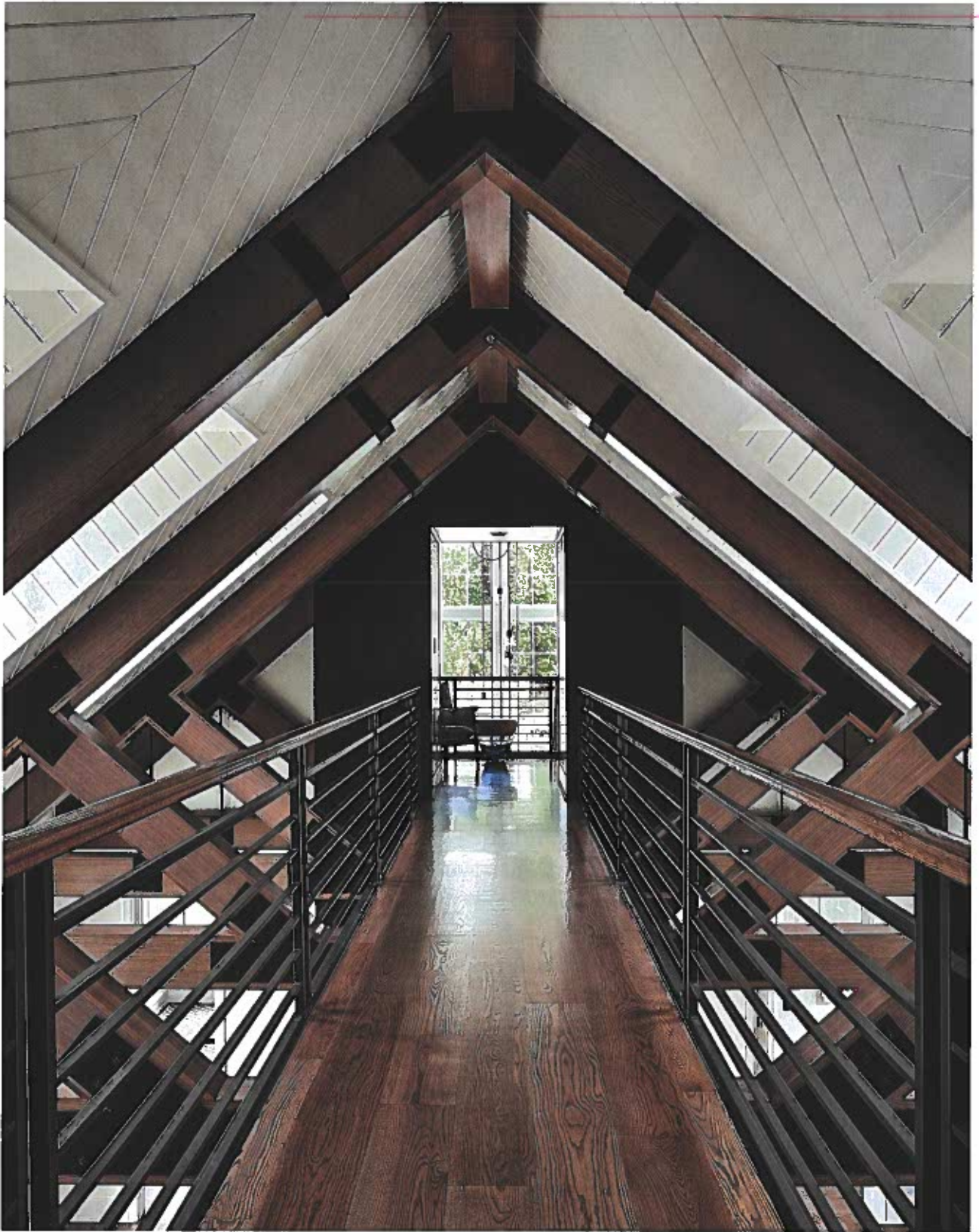


Above: The kitchen island's steel detail, fabricated by Migala Metal Designs sets the tone for the room. The motif repeats on the wall of cabinetry by JR's Custom Cabinets, where the steel forms double as door pulls. Crossville's Sideview glass mosaic wall tiles in matte Tungsten bring the metallic finish to the backsplash.

Opposite: The breakfast nook called for custom furnishings, including a large round table designed by Studio Gild and a built-in banquette. Moroso's Patricia Urquiola-designed Mathilda armchairs feature bright red armbands, while a Circa Lighting pendant provides a soft glow without distracting from the view.







Above: A dramatic catwalk—flanked by dormer windows providing views of the lake on one side and the front yard on the other—spans the vaulted great room, connecting the home's top-floor bedroom wings. The hall passes beneath massive wood trusses and through the steel chimney on its way to the home's main staircase.

Opposite: The grand staircase provides one of the home's more modern design moments, thanks to sleek wood-and-steel railings and Tech Lighting's customizable Mina Locus fixture, whose optic-crystal orbs float from the third floor all the way down to the first. The reclaimed-wood artwork is by Michelle Peterson-Albandoz of Las Manos Gallery.



Right: A Morgante Wilson Architects-designed live-edge wood vanity and striated blue tile from Renaissance Tile & Bath create a casual vibe for the bunk room's adjacent bath, while Circa Lighting sconces and unlacquered brass Waterworks faucets dress things up with a bit of polish.

Opposite: For the main bedroom, Studio Gild designed a custom wood-and-metal bed and nightstands in hues inspired by sand and water, then added two Atelier Areti brushed-brass light fixtures for drama.







Above: "There's a beautiful roll to the property, so we tried to preserve and plant that so it became a feature," says landscape architect Scott Freres, who, with field director Zac McConnell, installed minimal foliage that never deters from the view to the lake. RH chaise lounges line the gunite pool, which has a dark interior for a natural look.

Opposite: Sweeping staircases connect the home's bluestone patios to a limestone terrace that Freres positioned 36 inches higher than the pool deck "so when you're sitting there, you're looking clear out to the lake," he says. An RH sofa, West Elm lounge chairs and Cane-Line crocheted footstools cozy up to the fire pit.