

My Place: John Christakos's Steel Cabin

Many of the items in this furniture maker's modern cabin came from his own store--and eBay.

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Minnesota may be the Land of 10,000 Lakes, but John Christakos, CEO and co-founder of the furniture company Blu Dot, found his waterfront property in another state. Both his \$30 million company and his primary residence are in Minneapolis, but Christakos was drawn to this remote part of Wisconsin because it reminded him of Minnesota's thickly forested Boundary Waters region, where he and his wife, Debby, used to camp before they had kids. Designed by architects Troy Kampa and Doug Danks, the 1,700-square-foot house cost \$300,000 to build. It's basically a rectangle divided into two sections--a two-bedroom, two-bathroom main house and a two-bedroom, one-bathroom "bunkhouse"--separated by a covered deck and fire pit. Christakos, his wife, and their four young children spend about every other weekend here in the summer, often with friends in tow. (The house is winterized, but they have yet to visit in the colder months.) They swim, canoe, fish, and play board games--there is no TV, cell phone reception, or Internet access. This winter, Christakos plans to build a freestanding replica of the bunkhouse to accommodate his friends and their growing families. "Then we'll get a nanny to put the kids to bed after dinner," he jokes, "while the adults have cocktails from 6 p.m. on."

The Ambiance "It's a modern building but we wanted it to feel like a cabin--warm, cozy, and woodsy."

The Mural "This is made of contact paper cut out with an X-acto knife. It's by Santiago Cucullu. We got to know his work from shows at the Walker Art Center and Midway Contemporary Art, a nonprofit gallery whose board I sit on."

The Deck "The fire pit has a poured concrete base, and the deck is made of ipe wood from Brazil. This is our favorite spot. The kids love roasting marshmallows, which has become a nightly ritual before bed."

The Kitchen "The kitchen cabinets are Ikea with doors that I custom made. I bought the refrigerator and dishwasher new from eBay. I've also gotten a lot of taxidermy on eBay--a deer head for the bunkhouse and hoof lamps."

The Floors "The floors are made from clear Douglas fir, which has a beautiful tone, no knots. Some boards have more sap you can see in the lighter streaks, which produces a stripey pattern."

The Furniture "Not all of it's from Blu Dot--I like to mix it up. The sofa and chairs are, but the tables are by Brent Comber, a designer from the Pacific Northwest. The rug is leftover Flor carpet tiles from a Blu Dot trade show booth."

The Exterior "The cabin is made of Cor-Ten steel, which is used to make ships and outdoor sculpture (think Richard Serra, one of my favorites). It rusts to a beautiful crimson-brown and then sort of seals itself."