

Hybrid cabin

Article by: LYNN UNDERWOOD

Star Tribune

December 5, 2009 - 3:22 PM

On one side, there's earthy log siding. On the other, it's cold glass and Corten steel. And the low, slanted roof is planted with green sedum rather than layers of asphalt shingles. But the rustic retreat with a modern edge feels like it's always been a part of Joe and Patsy Duffy's 100 pine-covered acres near Minong, Wis.

That was the Duffys' goal when they hired architect Christian Dean of CityDeskStudio in Minneapolis to design a new cabin as a year-round getaway for their two adult children and three young grandchildren.

"The kids' cabin had to have fieldstone and logs to relate to the other buildings on the property," said Joe Duffy, creative director of Duffy & Partners in Minneapolis. "But yet have a contemporary aesthetic."

The other buildings on the Duffy compound include an old-fashioned log cabin and a smaller guest cabin built in the 1980s, as well as a new two-story studio/cabin where Joe and Patsy stay.

Dean worked with his partners, architects Bob Ganser and Ben Awes, to design the two-level 2,500-square-foot cabin, which combines the rustic simplicity of a traditional log home with a modern sensibility.

To give the cabin the feeling that it's nestled into its sloping, lakeshore site, they created a manmade berm, which almost conceals the cabin from sight. The lakeside of the cabin is a full, two-level walkout with walls of glass that allow for an unobstructed view of water and woods.

Rustic and green

The cabin is clad in traditional half-log siding but trimmed with industrial Corten steel. Dean also incorporated the rusted steel in a cantilever over the entry and in a balcony off the main living area.

"The weathered steel has a certain patina and its rusty brown tones feel rooted and organic," said Dean. "It complements the stained logs and blends in the surroundings."

Dean placed the logs horizontally in varying sizes to create a graphic pattern. "Alternating sections between small and big logs didn't cost any more," said Joe. "But it's so much more unique."

The cabin's high-tech green roof system did cost more.

"But it's there forever and environmentally sound," Joe said.

The roof is constructed of an insulated rubber membrane and layers of pre-vegetated sedum mats, open-mesh and soil. The plants absorb rainwater and cool the cabin in the summer. The sedum, which has red and yellow flowers in the summer, is also a pretty sight from the other cabins, which sit high above it.

Inside out

Dean's plan to mix functional contemporary elements with organic natural materials continues inside the home. For example, the kitchen, dining and living rooms form a single, open space with massive lakeside windows. The ceiling timbers, aged reclaimed Douglas fir salvaged from an old lodge, meet at a steel center beam. The flooring is distressed oak. In the kitchen,



From the lake, the cabin is a two-level walkout

Provided photo, Chad Holder, Star Tribune

textural concrete countertops are juxtaposed with dark stained oak cabinets.

On one end of the great room is a handsome fieldstone fireplace that matches those in the other cabins -- with one significant difference: Dean's fireplace is low and horizontal, rather than vertical, so it doesn't block lake views.

"Christian turned it on its ear and made it a contemporary structure as opposed to the traditional fieldstone fireplace," Joe said.

The fieldstone extends to the lower level, where Dean punched out circles within the stone, creating little caves for the grandkids to climb into. He also built a bunkhouse and playroom down there.

The kids' cabin has become a year-round gathering place for the Duffy family, which spends winter weekends cross-country skiing on the 6 miles of trails they groom themselves or ice skating on the frozen lake.

"Sitting next to a fire, looking out the glass during a snowfall, is really majestic," said Joe. "And very peaceful."

Lynn Underwood • 612-673-7619

© 2015 Star Tribune