

CANADIAN INTERIORS

50
YEARS

Taking it easy

Superkül goes to the lake

Hot stuff for the kitchen

An appetizing new tapas bar





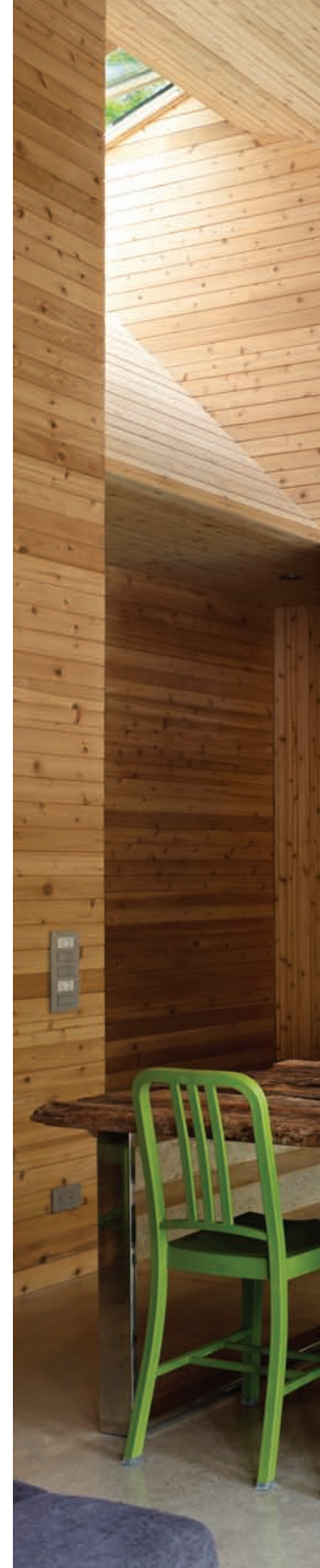
Sacred ground

In Ontario's Lake of Bays region, Superkül's impeccable Stealth Cabin rests lightly on the land.

—By Leslie C. Smith



Ship to shore Like a boat that carves through the water yet leaves no trace of its passage behind, the cabin was crafted to disappear into the woods. A blunted prow holds the screened dining room (at right in the top photo; at left above).



Sometimes, Meg Graham says, she and her husband, Andre D'Elia, find themselves having to talk clients down from sheer square-footage overkill. Co-principals of the trending Toronto architectural design firm Superkül, they enjoy the challenge of a smaller space and understand that artistic clarity often comes from concision. Then, too, whatever they do must connect rationally to its contextual setting.

In the case of the Stealth Cabin, completed in 2012 in Ontario's Lake of Bays region and presented to the media a year later, Graham and D'Elia were lucky enough to have found two clients whose views dovetailed with their own approach. For them, they created a compact 1,500-square-foot abode that "nestles into the topography and doesn't dominate anyone's view." In fact, the low-slung

home sits 100 feet back from the shoreline and, even with all lights blazing, would be hardly visible to the handful of neighbours who share the same small lakefront.

The client couple, both doctors from Toronto, both lovers of the outdoors, had been camping on the 37-acre property with its 1,300 feet of shoreline since they'd bought the place several years previously. Graham and D'Elia began working on



Easy does it The orientation of the great room (shown in opposing views) affords everyone a glimpse of the great outdoors and a throughway straight from the master bedroom to the screened porch; an “oculus” skylight slices through the ceiling, allowing in an abundance of light and air. The kitchen’s practical minimalism is offset by the dreamy inclusion of an inset book-reading nook (below), complete with personal plate-glass window and natural-themed artwork. Warm cedar and cool grey form the main colour scheme, punctuated here and there with shots of apple green.



cabin concepts for them in 2006, discussing with the pair which layout would leave the least ecological imprint on the land. “We spent some time with the clients on-site,” Graham recalls, “getting the right orientation – the prevailing winds, views, sun, topography. We ate dinner with them in a tent in the pouring rain.” The designers also learned that they would have to reconcile the wife’s love of the modern

aesthetic with the husband’s desire for a traditional log cabin.

The answer presented itself serendipitously: “Andre saw an overturned old wooden boat nearby. We worked with that form. It’s a natural fit for this environment, a simple structure but with a lot of genius to it – a kind of formal efficiency.”

Like a boat that carves through the water yet leaves no trace of its passage

behind, the Stealth Cabin was crafted to disappear into the woods. Covered in cedar planks, shakes and shingles that will mellow bark-brown with age, its wide stern contains three bedrooms facing the forest. A blunted prow holds the screened dining room, ribbed with cedar slats to minimize the sight of any cars parked in the gravel driveway beyond, maintaining the illusion of timeless isolation. But it is



Within and without The veiled mystery of the cedar-ribbed dining porch (shown opposite at day and at night) does not fully reveal itself until you enter the space; although its exterior represents the blunted prow of the cabin's boat-inspired shape, the roof's peak offers a more traditional, pointed-bow motif. The master bedroom (below), complete with built-in cedar accoutrements, sits two steps up from the kitchen. Floor-to-ceiling plate-glass windows overlook the forest, which is echoed in a fanciful "paper-cut" picture of a tree filled with birdhouses by Toronto artist Ed Pien.



in the broader central beam section where the real living takes place.

A contemporary open-concept kitchen and living room is lined, like the rest of the house, top to bottom with FSC-certified cedar boards, a satisfying nod to the log cabin craving. The bevelled ceiling stretches up at a steep angle from the nine-foot outer rim of sliding screen-and-glass doorways to a 15-foot cathedral height, where a remote-control "oculus" skylight slices through the centre thickness. Sun and air stream down through this and along other axes to the point where, the wife says, "we rarely use the overhead fans in the summer." On colder days, including in the winter when the couple use the year-round-access cottage as a retreat for cross-country skiing, guest quarters in the northern half of the house can be closed off via a sliding pocket door, to reduce energy consumption. Radiant heating under the main area's lightly

polished concrete floor plus a high-efficiency wood-burning stove/fireplace by Stuv are all that are necessary to keep things cheerfully toasty.

In the rest of the Stealth Cabin's small, cosy spaces – children's, adult and master bedrooms, two bathrooms, a mudroom and tiny home-office tucked in beside it – the mimicry of a boat's underside with all its obtuse slopes and angles becomes most noticeable. The painstaking feat of fitting each cedar board just so was handled by Wilson Project Management's team of construction experts. Local landscape designer Shawn Gallagher saw to it that each window opening frames both broad views and close-up focuses filled with attractive, non-invasive plants and native trees.

The intimate surroundings Superkül created suits the clients' lifestyles right down to the ground on which their house rests so lightly. There is even a tent

platform positioned a touch closer to the lake, kitted out with a canvas yurt for extra guests or whenever the owners want to get even nearer to nature.

Still, there is such a sensory richness to the Stealth Cabin – so much light and air, so many beautiful sightlines, always the faint, evocative odour of cedarwood – that it's hard to imagine spending time anywhere else. "It transports you," says Graham, searching for the right words. "You really feel like you're there when you're there."

It appears many others too would like to experience this same inchoate feeling. In the short while since making its public debut, the Stealth Cabin has been featured in several international publications and has already picked up two prestigious accolades: a 2013 Interior Design Best of Year Honoree and a 2014 Ontario Association of Architects Award of Design Excellence. ❧