

A Small Lake House for a Big Family in Indiana

Though perfect for two, the Culver home is also fit to host large weekly gatherings.

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BY ANN ABEL DEC 25, 2021



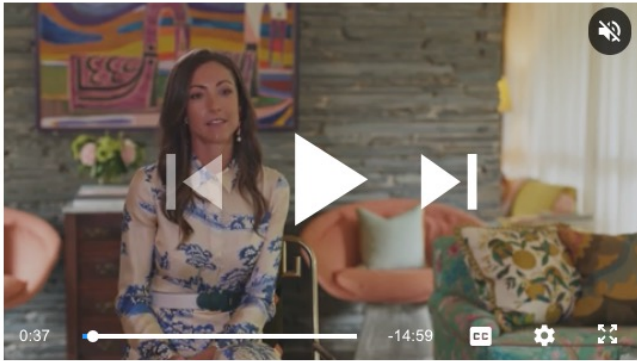
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Tom Stringer had already designed several houses for one couple in Indiana, including a large lake home, which went through several expansions as the family grew. And then they ran into a common problem: Their kids had grown and moved out, and they were left with a property that was simply too much house for two people.

But at the same time, they knew that their children—and their spouses and children—would continue to visit. To the tune of dinner for 18 every week. “They needed a three-bedroom home that would allow them to host family but not feel lonely when it was just the two of them,” explains Stringer.

When they gave their big house to their kids and built a new, smaller home for Stringer to design, his solution was “little spaces with room for big crowds.” He started with a very simple great room concept, in which the living room had a sitting area on either side and a big table in the middle, which can be for games or cards when called for and set to host the whole family.

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The other special feature of the home is its large wraparound stone porch, which was designed by architect [Stan Dixon](#) (with surrounding grounds by landscape architect [Hoerr Schaudt](#)). It incorporates intimate areas that feel cozy for two people, as well as a table for 24.

“I have a long history with cottages,” notes Stringer. “They’re homing mechanisms for families.” His design is “going back to clean basics, black granite, black slate, wood. It’s crisp and young but rooted in tradition. It’s simple, clean, and a little bit carefree.”

Tour the inviting residence below.

Foyer



The first thing you see upon entering is the table that bifurcates the great room, explains Stringer. “It has clean lines and simplicity.”

Living Room



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One of the subtle things that Stringer is most proud of is that the upholstered pieces have all been redesigned and lifted. “It’s not a comfort chair.” Rather, stylish furniture and family heirlooms have been subtly raised to be more comfortable. And the Swedish kilims are interesting because they’re signed by the weaver. They’re also reversible, which comes in handy for the changing seasons and also for last-minute stains that must be hidden before they can be cleaned.

Sofas and arm chairs: TSDP. **Tufted lounge chair:** Jonas in Raoul fabric.

Benches: Formations USA in Kari Fisher fabric. **Oval side table:** Ironware

International. **Side table:** Madeline Stuart. **Drink table:** BK Antiques. **Floor**

lamps: Visual comfort. **Armchair:** Minton Spidell. **Rolled armchairs:** Jonas. **Area**

rugs: Watson Smith. **Ceiling fixtures:** Paul Ferrante.

Kitchens



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The client has a resident chef, but the family likes hanging out in the kitchen. So the family kitchen is sunny, with windows on three sides and a farm table (raised to counter height) takes the place of a kitchen island and is more social. The more useful kitchen is hidden behind the first one.

Island pendants, wall sconces, and flash mount lights: Hector Finch. **Counter stools:** Mulligans in Classic Cloth fabric. **Island table:** Custom by TSDP. **Cabinet:** Swedish Karl Johan 19th-century cabinet from A. Tyner Antiques. **Window treatments:** Kathryn Ireland fabric and Samuel Sons trim.

Dining Area



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The table is a “relic” from one of the family’s other homes that was sitting in a warehouse, and Stringer sent it out to have it bleached and “casualized” for the cottage. It’s a good example of one of Stringer’s principles for the project: “Everything is well-patinated, so there are no worries about drink rings or scars from kids’ games.”

Dining table and consoles: Antique from client’s collection. **Dining chairs:** Dennis and Leen (distressed white painted finish) in Osborne & Little fabric. **Tiered end tables:** TSDP (Tom Stringer Design Partners). **Tiered cocktail table:** Rose Tarlow.

Primary Bedroom



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“The Rose Tarlow bed and Gustavian secretary soften the room,” says Stringer.

Bed: Rose Tarlow from Holly Hunt. **Fabric:** Edelman Leather. **Bedside lamp:** Stephen Gerald. **Shams:** Brunschwig & Fils fabric. **Lounge chair:** Milton Spidell with Sister Parish fabric. **Accent table:** Noir. **Rug:** Michael Denburg. **Wallcovering:** Phillip Jeffries.

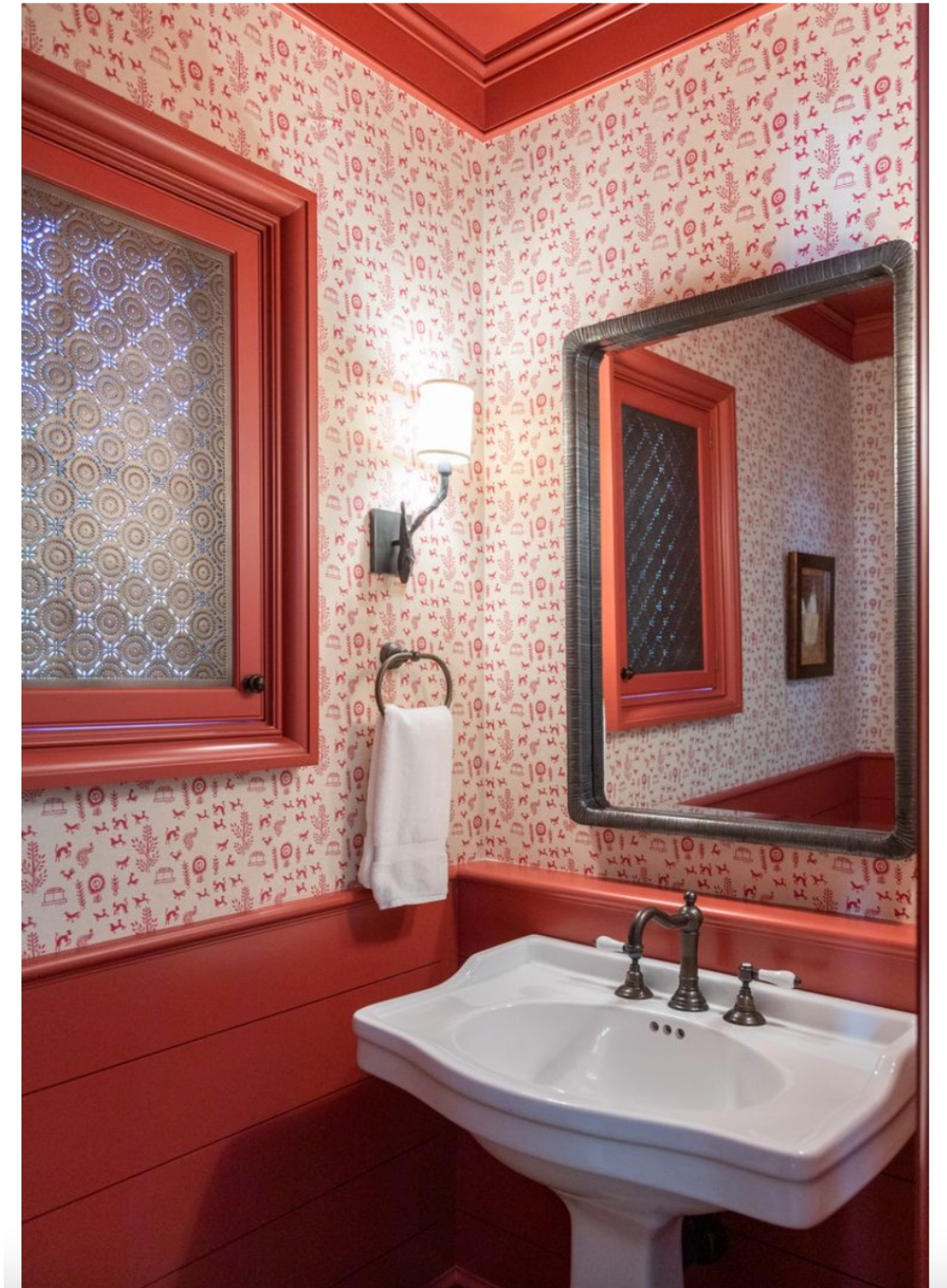
Kids' Bedroom



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This one is a “bit of a fantasy,” note the designer, pointing to the tree-themed bunk bed and hidden play space behind an armoire. He used simple laser-cut details instead of wallpaper. It’s meant to “feel like summer camp, drawing from my memories as a child.”

Powder Room



“I played a game with pierced tin instead of window treatments,” he says. And as for the wallpaper, “my client loves animals—the family has a wildlife preserve in Africa.”

Patio



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The J-shaped outdoor living area has screens and heaters for year-round use, including family Thanksgivings.

Sofa, dining chairs, lounge chairs, and chaises: Janus et Cie. **Armchairs:** Century Furniture with Great Outdoors fabric. **Side tables:** Cast concrete by Formations USA, through Holly Hunt. **Coffee and dining tables:** McKinnon and Harris. **Area rugs:** Marc Phillips. **Lighting:** Remains Lighting.