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## BETWEEN FRIENDS

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHARLIE MAYER

WHEN A PAIR OF WORLD TRAVELERS DECIDED TO ESTABLISH A HOME BASE, THEY KNEW EXACTLY WHERE THEY WANTED TO COME HOME TO: A LUSH, 22-ACRE SPREAD IN THE RESORT TOWN OF HARBOR SPRINGS, MICHIGAN. Cradled on Little Traverse Bay, the retreat has for decades served as a getaway for generations of Chicagoland, Detroit and St. Louis

**INTERIOR DESIGN** Tom Stringer, Tom Stringer Design Partners

**ARCHITECTURE** Steve Rugo, Rugo Raff Ltd., Architects

**HOME BUILDER** Jeffrey Ford, Evening Star Joinery

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE** Douglas Hoerr, FASLA,  
Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architects

**BEDROOMS** 3 | **BATHROOMS** 7 | **SQUARE FEET** 12,000





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residents who flock to its tranquil shores. The husband spent summers there as a boy, and the property included the home his parents retired to nearly 40 years before. But though the location was prime, the structure standing on it was not.

"It had a lot of dreadful 1970s detailing," says Chicago-based designer Tom Stringer, of Tom Stringer Design Partners. "Some bad choices had been made." The residence, a contemporary style house with a detached building that held a garage, office and studio, was a far cry from the modernist home his clients envisioned. "The challenge was to renovate and expand, yet, because of the homeowner's attachment to the house, keep its spirit intact," says Stringer. It was a tall order, but one the designer was confident he could fill. After five successful previous projects with his client, "We're longtime collaborators and friends."

It's a sentiment echoed by the entire design team, comprised of architect Steve Rugo of Rugo Raff Ltd., Architects in Chicago; landscape architect Douglas Hoerr, FASLA, of Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architects, also in Chicago; and

#### STYLE SELECTION

With a kiln-dried hardwood frame and stainless steel tubular legs, this modern ottoman makes for a comfortable and versatile piece. *IKOpod*, price available to the trade; [dakotajackson.com](http://dakotajackson.com)





**POINTS OF LIGHT**

Mahogany chairs by Promemoria, found at Manifesto in Chicago, encircle a zebrawood table designed by Tom Stringer. The ostrich-egg chandelier is another custom design; the antique Amritsar rug is from J. Iloulian.





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Harbor Springs-based builder Jeffrey Ford of Evening Star Joinery. "We immediately began discussing the idea of public versus private spaces in the house," says Rugo. "The conceptual stuff then fleshed out easily." What developed was a plan to add onto the existing buildings, and join the two with a corridor, creating a defined courtyard. The new H-shaped structure would house an enormous master suite, storage space and garage on the right; kitchen, living room, dining room, offices and guest rooms on the left; and a dramatic entry pavilion in between.

So where a dated, poorly functioning home once stood, a massive, low-lying house has risen, designed to melt back into its surroundings, as much a part of the scenery as the native plants that bloom nearby. Broad gridded walls of steel, mahogany and glass sit under palapa-influenced copper roofs, the latter a nod to the home's former manifestation. Inside, plaster

#### **GREAT PLANES**

Walnut bar stools by Bright Chair pull up to the kitchen island. A custom-designed Tucker Robbins satinwood table and slipcovered chairs from Thomas Lavin sit beneath a trio of Solis Betancourt lanterns from Holly Hunt.

#### STYLE SELECTION

Lending a modern twist to a classical form, this urn sculpture is cast in industrial concrete with indented surface details.

*Grape Urn, from \$410; kathydalwood.com*



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walls and painted wood ceilings meet seamlessly—a lesson in architectural precision. “Usually, casings will run over jambs, and baseboards and casings may be two different planes,” says Ford. “But everything here is a single plane; it’s perfectly flat.”

For the home’s interiors, Stringer chose a palette rooted less in color than in texture. “The essential building blocks of the design are leather, bronze, glass and bush hammered limestone,” he says. “We sought a restrained envelope that would remain modern, with the understanding that the objects housed within would constantly be in flux.” Many of those objects, found in such far-flung locales as northern Thailand, Australia, Hong Kong, South Africa, Tanzania and Zaire, were collected by Stringer and the homeowners on their shared travels. “They’re fantastic, because they’re both beautiful and representative of a mutual experience,” says the designer.

Outside, Hoerr orchestrated a scene that reads well from every viewpoint in all four seasons, no small feat in an area with up to eight months of harsh weather. Spaces closer to the house, such as the main







#### LAP OF LUXURY

A copper and bronze Quan Yin statue gazes across the pool, a late addition to the design that's one of the wife's favorite things about the house. Russian sage forms a living wall to one side.





**MIXED MEDIA**

A Tom Stringer for Texstyle sofa upholstered in Holly Hunt fabric faces a turn-of-the-last-century Chinese bearing platform, now used as a coffee table. The Tibetan wool and silk rug is by Sam Kasten.



**PUT TO BED**

Tables by Jiun Ho and Gérard flank a sofa in one of the master bedroom's two sitting areas. The brushed nickel and rock crystal lamps are by Erika Brunson; the rug is by JSL Carpet.



#### STYLE SELECTION

This slipper chair redefines elegance and ease with a springs-and-horsehair structure, deep-channel detail and dark mahogany wood frame. *Avery, \$6,320 to the trade; romanthomas.com*



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courtyard, terrace and lap pool, were given a stylized, recognizably man-made treatment. "But as soon as you step down out of those walls, the program becomes this rolling, more native Michigan feel," says Hoerr. Year-round beauty was guaranteed in the entry courtyard with heated flagstone walkways and a reflecting black-bottom pool. "The snow melts as it hits the path, and the water glistens and softly steams. It's really romantic," enthuses Stringer, who calls this collaboration between close friends his most rewarding. "From architect to landscape architect to client to the builder who realized the whole vision, it was an exhilarating experience." **L**