SIMPLY REFINED

On a private peninsula, this waterfront wonder beckons family and friends in East Coast style

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Beer in hand while kicked back and relaxed on the deck of his soon-to-be client's Lake Minnetonka residence, John Kraemer, vice president of John Kraemer & Sons, wasn't simply lounging on a beautiful Friday afternoon—he was interviewing (and, what he would find out the next day, being hired) for a job as choice builder on a full-home remodel.

Following Kraemer's referral, PKA Architecture was selected to join the project, and Brooke Wagner Design, a California-based interior design firm the clients worked with on a prior beach house project, wasn't far behind. The design team worked tirelessly on the planned remodel, that is until Plan A turned into Plan B, and then, Plan C: Not only did the clients decide to pivot, tear down, and start anew, but they also happened upon a new site—a 2 1/2-acre wooded property on a private peninsula across the lake.

"They came to us and said, 'Hey, there's a property in a neighborhood down the road we looked at today,'" Kraemer recalls, incredulously. "They went ahead, bought the lot, and kept the same team together. All of a sudden, PKA—instead of designing a remodel of an existing home [as originally planned]—was designing a new home on a new site altogether." Architect Tammy Angaran, PKA's director of operations, remembers it well. "Since we were quite far along in creating construction documents, we worked really hard to minimize the amount of rework," says Angaran. "Luckily, with a few minor adjustments to the plan layout, and with the help of Travis Van Liere Studio to position it, we were able to get the home to fit the new site perfectly."

But that's not to say the location itself was perfect—at least not at first. Before officially breaking ground, the landscape firm spent time stabilizing the property and optimizing its 400 feet of shoreline to allow the build of the East Coast, shingle-style home to commence. "The first big move was figuring out how to choreograph the experience of entering and approaching the house," says Travis Van Liere, principal of his eponymous firm, who engineered an intentionally sparse planting program along the driveway for a refined entrance that feels nothing short of signature.

Although its H-shape exterior with cedar shingle siding and double gables suggests a more traditional aesthetic, the interior delights with an unexpectedly modern twist—one designer Brooke Wagner describes as "upscale, transitional, luxurious, and organic." This is effortlessly on display throughout the home's five bedrooms, seven bathrooms, and numerous gathering spaces both indoors and out—all of which culminate in a summer lake home with ample space to host family and friends. "This home was built with the ultimate guest experience and entertainment in mind," says Dustin Propp, senior project manager at John Kraemer & Sons. "From the guest bedrooms with balconies overlooking the lake to the golf and games on the lower level, it provides plenty of excuses for guests and family to want to return."

Entertaining in Excellence

Multiple outdoor terraces and hangout hubs blend with the home's architecture for ultimate entertaining, including a lower terrace (with a living area, spa, and hot tub off the exercise room) and an outdoor dining space where the homeowners can host under twinkling string lights—a getaway Travis Van Liere likens to a "garden room." Meanwhile, discreet low-voltage LED lighting from TouchStone adds a soft, subtle ambience to trees and pathways. (And in case there weren't enough activities to keep visitors busy, a second lot exclusively houses a pickleball court!)

The Place to Be

Surrounded by glass-panel railings to ensure uninterrupted views, the screen porch—with retractable Phantom Screens, a fire table, TV, and ample seating to host—boasts the best views of the lake, Kraemer says. Angaran adds, "[It's] really one of the best places to be in this home."

Anyone who has the pleasure of visiting would be remiss not to notice the immaculate attention to detail, which is immediately showcased with a pair of impressive Italian steel and glass front doors that sets a timeless tone for the remainder of the residence. "As soon as you enter, you are greeted with the large windows, incredible daylight, and long views out to the lake," says Kristine Anderson, managing principal at PKA.

Triple-pane, black-frame Marvin windows capture views of the water while sanctioning floods of light to wash over the curated interiors. The oh-so sophisticated, yet family-focused selections center on durable materials, natural stones, and softer elements in what Anderson describes as a "light-filled, approachable, not too precious [way]."

This thoughtful approach is elegantly translated through the home's 9,390 square feet, which is strategically segmented by grouping back-of-house, private, and public spaces together. Each is aesthetically married to the other through Wagner's tailored approach that starts with the "jewelry" of the home, aka lighting, which establishes an energy and "adds a layer of beauty and detail," she explains. "After that, we start with the textiles and furniture, namely the rugs because they anchor the space—and then comes the color palette. The interior elements bleed out to the exterior and vice versa."

Van Liere confirms, stating, "We try to integrate materials used on and in the home out into the landscape," referring specifically to a color-matched monolithic retaining wall stone that complements the house. Boulder walls, stone stairs carved into the hill, and paving stone "chosen to blur the inside and out" were carefully selected in the name of connection.

And, if you ask the team, that's what this lakeside abode is all about: casual comfort, informal laughter, and authentic connections. "The spaces are made for gathering," Anderson says. "Everyone is either in the kitchen, lounging in the living room, or at the countertop at the island." Might as well add "relaxing on the deck" to that list, where a celebratory beer or two to congratulate a job well done is certainly in order.

Gorgeous in Gray

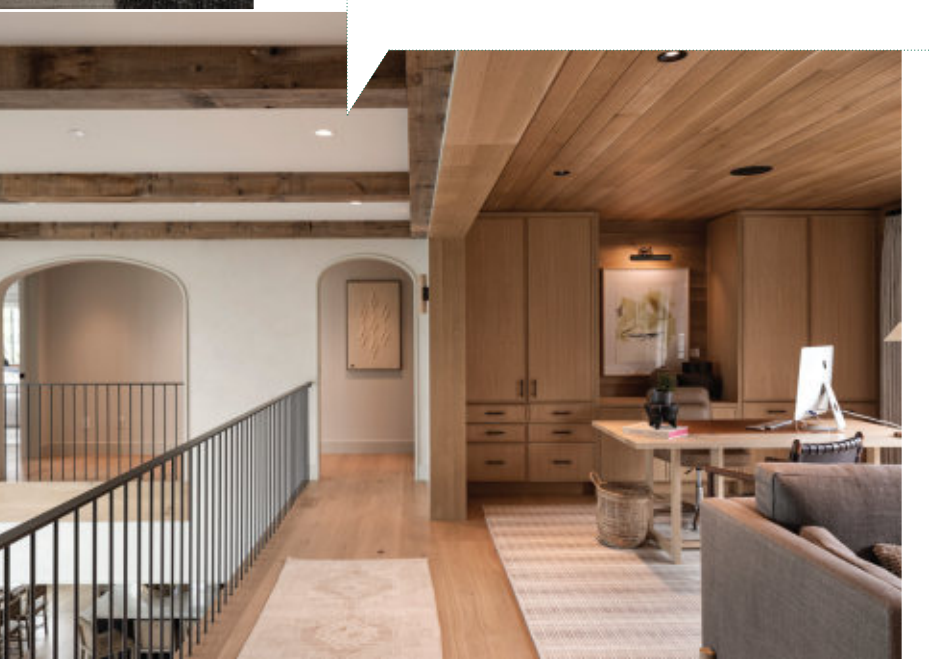
Vertical planks in satin-finish Farrow & Ball Plummett 272—a deep gray named after the lead often used by fishermen to weight their lines—detail large storage cabinets in the mudroom and dedicated laundry zone off the three-car garage. "There are a lot of horizontal lines with grids of windows, especially when you do stonework, so I like to switch it up and make walls look taller with vertical planking," Wagner says. "We're not really going for a nautical vibe, but these Cape Cod-style homes have vertical planking that stands the test of time over decades [and] centuries."

Consciously Custom

The kitchen, which connects seamlessly to the butler's pantry, small bar area, and outdoor kitchen, houses a high-quality list of materials—from Italian Brombal steel windows behind the range and hood to a honed Calacatta Altima marble island with a wire-brushed black oak base. Its modern amenities and conveniences include a coffee center, 24-inch wine tower, and multiple dishwashers, ovens, and sinks. Custom banquette seating overlooks the lake and replaces a more traditional dining room—a space the clients decidedly opted to omit from their floor plan, preferring a more casual, comfortable approach to dining.

Something Special

"When you walk through that pair of entry doors, you really know you're opening something special," says Angaran, referring to not only the doors themselves but also the view out the floor-to-ceiling windows that invite an unmatched indoor-outdoor connection. Designed to live informally and be an inviting space for guests to congregate, the great room features a 12-foot gas fireplace, soft woven rug, and cozy furnishings that beg to be snuggled up on—creating an undeniable ambience and feeling of pure respite.

Wrapped in Warmth

A dedicated office and adjacent seating area overlook the great room and act as a "bridge" between the upper level's two wings—both of which house guest suites with private balconies, plus a bunkroom on one side that's tucked into a gable for visiting nephews and nieces. Sunlight filters through custom Brooke Wagner drapery and splashes over white oak cabinetry that defines the wood-wrapped office, while softer elements, like archways, make statements of their own. "They wanted a casual home that felt friendly and inviting," says Anderson. "Elements like the arched openings and reclaimed beams help achieve this."