

THE ELEMENT OF WATER

ESKUCHE DESIGN AND RANDOLPH INTERIOR DESIGN CREATE AN
EMPTY NESTER PERCH OVERLOOKING LAKE MINNETONKA.

BY KATIE DOHMAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SPACECRAFTING

THIS LAKE MINNETONKA HOME IS A STUDY OF CONTRASTS — between light and dark, the element of water and its rippled reflection. An empty nester couple was ready to give up their traditional Bloomington digs for something fresher and lighter. More modern, but not cold or hard-edged.

But first, the original house had to come down. With the help of architect Peter Eskuche and Mikan Custom Homes, the footprint was moved, pushing the future structure closer to the street to allow for more “front yard” overlooking the lake and boasting not only the best light but also ideal places for grandkids to play.

The narrow lot made designing tricky. The 4,500-square-foot house is a mere 40 feet wide, but the priority was to feature expansive water vistas. “We maximized every square inch we could,” Eskuche recalls, noting that it was a true accomplishment to create a home with all views facing one direction: the lake.

The owners expressly wanted water views immediately upon entering the front door, but this ultimately proved physically impossible. That said, interior designer Sarah Randolph took it as a challenge to set the tone for the entire abode right there in the foyer. She sourced a striking Area Environments wall covering through Holly Hunt, customized the color and hung it upside-down for an ethereal effect. Then one step to the left and — *ta-da!* — there’s Lake Minnetonka in all its purifying glory.

The foyer stairway is drenched in natural light, thanks to sun studies Eskuche did on the property before finalizing designs. Three-inch white oak treads almost float up to the second floor, and a gauzy, showstopping light fixture dubbed the Wrinkle bobs above.

Then came the main living and entertaining space: a great room crowned by a Visual Comfort light. Thanks to the residence’s easy-flow layout, it opens up to the lakeside “social kitchen” and dining area. A moody, sexy scullery is accessible from both the foyer and kitchen, which includes a large wine fridge, double ovens and overflow storage.

Another standout feature? The bar, which was a priority for the husband. With a backsplash of glass tile, it’s designed to feel like a reflection of the shimmering surface of the water. “It’s another spot with contrast, which we thoughtfully placed throughout the house — a really dark punch of color right there,” Randolph shares.

Off the kitchen is a space that also serves as a contrast to the rest of the house. As Randolph explains, “I told them, ‘You need to think of this room like wearing a cashmere suit.’” Phillip Jeffries wallpaper creates a woolen effect, enveloping the perfect place for the owners to snuggle up and watch TV — that is, when they aren’t gazing out the expansive windows.

“The powder room is another pièce de résistance,” Randolph notes. A sink was configured from huge agate-like onyx slabs and backlit to stunning visual effect. Not bad for slabs that were accidentally smashed when a forklift driver got his shoelace caught up on a pedal. “I knew we would chop it up and glue it back together,” she says. “It’s absolutely mind-blowing.”

The lower level features another living area with a Italian-tiled fireplace, a bar, a bathroom, and two guest bedrooms with coordinating (but not matching) wallpaper. And a preppy, coastal bunkhouse accommodates the smallest of sleepover friends.

But perhaps the most special moment in the entire residence, Eskuche explains, is the birdhouse oasis, located just off the owners’ suite. This 12-by-12-foot spot isn’t overly large, but it’s supremely secluded and boasts one of the best lake vistas. Positioned around a fire pit with capabilities to drop screens for privacy and bug control, it’s a respite from the often-busy household.

“The upstairs balcony isolates them from everything; if they have a ton of people in the house, they can go up on the porch for some quiet,” Eskuche comments. “Overall, they didn’t do any space in this home subpar. It was such a fun project to design.”

