

high speed muskoka-chic



text: Robyn Prince
photos: Alaia + Hans Fonk

Left: Shirin and Oliver Bock in their Muskoka cottage at Lake Joseph. It is an out-and-out party house and furnished in a style visualised by Shirin.

Above: the cottage on the lake side. This is where the boathouse is also situated – again designed by Shirin. Overleaf: the circular living area at the corner of the house. The furniture is sturdy and makes for a logical transition between the natural surroundings and the house interior. David Beaton of Studio B, Toronto, assisted the Bocks in their choice of furniture.

The Chris Craft sweeps past, narrowly missing the boathouse, at more than 100 kpm, twin turbo-charged motors screaming. Oliver Bock is at the helm and he likes high speed. His cottage at Lake Joseph, one of the Muskoka Lakes north of Toronto in Canada, was designed and appointed by his wife, Shirin.

This was to be a house plus boathouse in their interpretation of Muskoka-chic, but without paddles, quilts and cut-outs of moose and bear. The interior's sturdy design is geared completely to entertaining, with the circular bar at one corner of the cottage as the focal point.





Below: the bathroom on the land side of the house, adjoining the master suite. Here it feels as if you are part of the garden – again designed by Shirin Bock.

Right-hand page: the central living area following on from the formal entrance hall is the hub of the house and in fact connects up all the other rooms. The furniture is an eclectic mix of Baker and McGuire (Studio B) plus items by Lambert. Top right: the seating area at one of the corners overlooking Lake Joseph. Here too the rafters have been left exposed.

Below that: the locally-built kitchen, designed by Shirin, and fitted with Miele appliances.

He likes speed! Oliver Bock used to take part in powerboat racing, and his Bugatti Veyron isn't exactly what could be called a shopping trolley either. He and his wife Shirin live in Vancouver, but in the summer months they can generally be found at their cottage at Lake Joseph. Lake Joseph is one of the Muskoka Lakes, the main town being Port Carling on the Indian River. It is an idyllic area, a two hours' drive north of Toronto, with beautiful lakes and a scattering of tree-becked rocky islands. Everything revolves around the cottage and boathouse culture.

The cottages mostly nestle among the natural vegetation, the boat-houses being the most visible feature. And they're often well worth admiring: traditional wooden buildings beside the water affording ample space for mooring, as well as accommodating several boats inside. You will not only find modern craft here – the lakes are an el dorado for restored 'classics'. This is the right place for them – for maintenance and restoration at Port Carling's boatyards.

The Bocks' property also comprises a large cottage, nestled among the trees, and a lake-side boathouse. It stands on a semicircular plot, which inspired Shirin to make the house semicircular as well. She not only designed the actual house, but also the house's interior and the

and chairs from McGuire, Dedon and Baker. The other furniture I designed myself and had it produced locally. Also, there are some Lambert furniture items and accessories," Shirin explained.

She went on: "The house has been designed for entertaining. I've created rounded areas at the corners where guests can sit. One such area contains the bar plus beer dispensing system and large wine refrigerator. It's probably one of the most frequented places in the house!"

The cottage can be reached by land. The formal entrance is on the land side. It opens into the large living area which soars right up to the rafters. As in most of the rooms, the roof beams are exposed. The living area with its large fireplace is in effect the space that accesses all the other rooms. It is abutted by the formal dining area with a large glass wine cabinet. The spacious kitchen is located diagonally behind the dining area. It was constructed by local craftsmen and contains Miele appliances. The kitchen leads into the bar. The semicircular living room with large fireplace is at the front of the house. Here again, the roof beams converging at the top form a visually important architectural element.

The house has seven bedrooms and seven bathrooms in all, plus a



Overleaf

The roomy master suite with large lunette window. In the background, an outdoor zone equipped with a screen (as is customary in Muskoka cottages) against over enthusiastic mosquitoes. Shirin designed the rug herself – like most of the other rugs in the house – and had them made in Nepal.

surrounding gardens. She called in the architect Peter Groza to help elaborate the plans. The house, garage and boathouse have been built in vernacular style, consisting of a wooden frame with stonework, and wooden doors and window frames.

"The semicircular shape of the house has enabled me to create maximum views of the water. Indoors, I have made a rugged, comfortable interior in keeping with the Muskoka cottage style, but more modern and devoid of the customary quilts and other rustic attributes. Instead, I opted for large fireplaces in grey stone, combined with sturdy furniture. When selecting the furniture I was helped by David Beaton from studio B of Toronto. We went for an eclectic mix of sofas, tables

home theatre. Life is lived largely on the cottage's waterfront or on the terraces, which are decked out with Dedon outdoor furniture.

The garden is a composition of boulders and flowering plants arranged between the natural vegetation of tall pines. A rocky path leads to the boathouse and the lake. The boathouse was the first part of the project to be completed, in the 2007-2008 period, followed a year later by the cottage itself. There are two more bedrooms in the boathouse, on the first floor. Spacious terraces are located below, and there is space for four boats. "The cottage and the boathouse are actually the areas where we and our guests like to hang out during the day and the evening", as Shirin put it.





