

Building Sanctuary

A Lake Michigan home plays off its sublime site.



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To create a style that Jamieson calls Northern Modern, he used pitched and flat roofs, clerestory windows that make the most of the site's 45th parallel light and natural materials that blur the boundaries between interior and exterior. Jamieson worked to preserve as many trees as possible on the wooded site. Garden Goods in Traverse City assisted with landscaping that includes Japanese maples for a bold red statement in the summer and boxwood for a four-season evergreen presence.





THIS PAGE: Carved out of the wall, the Vermont slate hearth is a modern interpretation of a traditional fireplace hearth—and meant to draw the line of sight without interruption to the landscape outside the window. The Jamie-designed wooden box tucked into the hearth disguises the entertainment center. OPPOSITE: The stair railing system is powder-coated steel with stainless steel cables and a cherry handrail.

In 2004, Robert Jamieson was commissioned to design a residence in his hometown of Traverse City. The final product would be a modern, minimalist composition that, on the outside, plays off its exquisite, wooded site on a Lake Michigan bluff, and on the inside, presents spare, harmonious spaces that serve easily for entertaining or quiet evenings at home.

The fact that Jamieson, a 1991 graduate of Traverse City Central High School who was then living in New York City, achieved this warm yet crisp-lined home with its Zen-like spaces, is something of a feat, given the complexity of what Jamieson was juggling at the time. The story of the Traverse City home can't be told without revealing that simultaneous to the project, Jamieson was managing the design team for the World Trade Center Memorial that honors the 2,980 people who lost their lives on September 11, 2001.

On that terrible morning, Jamieson was flying back from Seattle to New York City and his job at the mega-international architectural firm Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates (KPF). His friend and former colleague, Michael Arad—the young architect whose design, *Reflecting Absence*, would beat out more than 5,000 competing designs in 2004 to become the World Trade Center Memorial—had already moved on to a job at the New York City Housing Authority. The tragedy and Arad's triumph reunited the colleagues—with Jamieson moving from KPF to assist Arad in the fulfillment of his design for the memorial at Ground Zero.

Dividing time between a globally significant project and the Traverse City residence was “really no big deal,” says

Jamieson, who currently heads up new store design and construction for the hip retail chain Anthropologie. “I am used to designing/working at all scales and on multiple projects at once. In a way, the differences probably helped because they were their own unique entities that I could separate my thinking about,” he continues. “The big difference is that with the memorial, I was managing a larger design team trying to execute Michael's (Arad) vision. With the house, it was my vision. The process of working with the client to come up with a design that embodies how they want to live their lives is much different than a large-scale public project with multiple stakeholders.”

Busy as he was in New York City managing Arad's design, Jamieson turned to John Kerridge of Kerridge Architecture & Construction to manage the Traverse City project. “John was great—I partnered with him very early in the design phase,” Jamieson says. “Since he is both an architect and a contractor, I had someone with eyes and ears on the ground who could be an advocate for the design during construction.” Proof of the quality of the Kerridge team's work, says Jamieson, is that the home has been lived in for six years now and it still looks new. ▶





ABOVE: Jamieson designed the kitchen, and MasterCraft Cabinets in Grawn constructed the cabinets from select cherry veneer—meaning that every other piece of veneer is turned over so adjacent leaves are opened like a book, creating a symmetrical pattern of prominent visual characteristics from panel to panel. BELOW: A collage of materials—flagstone, cedar and stucco—on the rear facade break up the home's overall mass, as does the cedar sunscreen. The order of the materials, beginning with the heavy flagstone at the base and ending with creamy stucco, lend levity to the rooflines.



Vastly different as they are, both projects share a quest for serenity. In the case of Reflecting Absence, that healing tranquility will be found in two massive voids set within the Twin Towers' footprints, filled by water cascading 30 feet into pools which spring from below bronze panels inscribed with the names of the 2,980 victims of 9/11.

Some 650 miles away in Traverse City, Jamieson defined placidity as a V-shaped embrace of the tree-punctuated Lake Michigan vista. Generous windows and glass doors flood the interior with views of the outdoor landscape. Clean lines and minimalist detailing such as flush interior molding, ensure that little detracts from the views. Warm natural materials—cedar, stucco, pale green Vermont slate, cherry flooring—work to blend the home into its Lake Michigan setting, and define the term Jamieson uses to describe it: Northern Modern. With its inspirational views and soft lake breezes, the home feels a universe away from the chaos and destruction of 9/11—a gentle reminder of the ability of design to provide sanctuary.

"Reflecting Absence" will open to the public on September 11, 2011. 🏡

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